

**Vladyslava Zarubaieva**

*Kyiv National University of Technologies and Design  
(Kyiv, Ukraine)*

**Nataliia Gudkova**

*Kyiv National University of Technologies and Design  
(Kyiv, Ukraine)*

## **TIKTOK AND INSTAGRAM AS EXHIBITION SPACES: NEW FORMS OF ART IN THE DIGITAL AGE**

The digital transformation of the art world is happening very fast. It forces us to rethink traditional ways of sharing and presenting art. Social media platforms, especially TikTok and Instagram, have changed from simple tools for sharing content into full exhibition spaces. This change requires a careful and critical look at what is happening in contemporary art today (LB.ua, 2020).

For many centuries, the traditional gallery system defined how art was shown and experienced by the public. However, digital platforms have created a serious challenge to this system. Instagram, which was founded in 2010, introduced several important trends in art from vertical cinema to photo-friendly exhibitions. It changed the culture of how people perceive visual content. One of the most significant new concepts is so-called *instagrammability*, the idea that an exhibition can serve as a background for selfies. This new criterion has started to influence how exhibitions are organised and designed.

At the same time, a key question remains open: can social media be considered a legitimate exhibition space, or is it simply a tool for promoting traditional art? This question does not have an easy answer, because the role of digital platforms in the art world is still evolving (Walsh, 2005).

The shift of focus from physical reality to the virtual world has been a natural step for gallery art. In a time when visitors look at art through their phone cameras, it seems logical to move art inside the screen itself. Instagram provides a convenient platform for augmented reality (AR) art and makes its tools available to a wide range of users. In this

way, social media becomes a democratic exhibition space where anyone can participate, regardless of their location or social background (Bazilik Media, 2020).

There are several important characteristics that define how TikTok and Instagram function as exhibition spaces.

First, democratisation of access is one of the most important features. Unlike traditional galleries, social media platforms have no geographical borders or financial barriers for visitors. Anyone with a smartphone can view art from anywhere in the world. This creates a new model of interaction between the artist and the audience, making art more accessible and inclusive (Terrill, 2017).

Second, algorithmic curation plays a central role. The exhibition space on TikTok and Instagram is not shaped by traditional human curators, but by the algorithms of the platforms. This introduces new criteria for what becomes “visible” in the art world. Instead of traditional art criticism, the key indicators become engagement rate, likes, shares, and comments. This is a fundamentally different approach to how art is selected and promoted.

Third, the ephemerality of content is a distinctive feature of social media art. Unlike permanent exhibitions, content on social media has a very short lifespan. Instagram Stories disappear after 24 hours. This creates a new aesthetic of speed and immediacy, which is very different from the permanence that traditional art institutions offer.

Fourth, interactivity transforms the role of the viewer. In the digital exhibition space, the audience is not passive. Viewers can comment, repost, and create their own content inspired by what they see. This changes the traditional model of *artist - artwork - viewer* and adds new levels of interaction and participation.

Despite these shared features, TikTok and Instagram operate quite differently from each other. Instagram focuses on static visuals and the aesthetics of a single image or frame. TikTok, on the other hand, represents art through movement, performance, and storytelling. The TikTok algorithm is built on a discovery-first principle: content is

shown not only to followers, but also to a wide audience based on their interests. This creates unique opportunities for young artists who do not yet have an established reputation to gain recognition and visibility.

According to research published by Forbes, the format of continuous scrolling makes TikTok extremely engaging, which increases the chances of a video going viral. However, the art world treats TikTok with some caution. An analysis of the 100 most visited museums in the world showed that only 21 museums use TikTok, and only six of them have more than 1 00 000 followers. Among the successful examples are the Museo Nacional del Prado (1 400 000 followers), the National Gallery in London (2 400 000 followers), and the Uffizi Gallery (844,000 followers) (The Art Newspaper, 2023).

One major reason why art institutions are hesitant about TikTok is its characteristic lo-fi aesthetic, which requires informality and a light tone. Museums and art professionals are used to high-quality production and serious content. The tone that TikTok demands can conflict with the expectations of a traditional art audience. Nevertheless, economic pressures are pushing art institutions to find new ways to engage audiences through memes, humour, and presenter-oriented videos.

A separate and very interesting phenomenon is the emergence of TikTok artists who have built their entire career through the platform. For example, the American artist Michael Todd Horn (@Bijijoo), with more than 110,000 followers and 1.8 million likes, received a solo exhibition at the prestigious Saatchi Yates gallery in London in 2023 a traditional institutional space. This example shows that TikTok is becoming a legitimate exhibition space capable of building real artistic reputations.

TikTok is also changing the nature of art itself. While traditional art focuses on a static object, and Instagram focuses on the perfect frame, TikTok requires temporality, rhythm, and sound. Music becomes an inseparable part of the visual work. In this sense, TikTok art comes close to performance art and video art, but with one important

difference: it is created by a wide range of users, not only by professional artists. This raises important questions about authorship, quality, and the boundaries of what we call art.

TikTok and Instagram now function as full exhibition spaces with their own specific features, which requires new approaches to art criticism and curatorial practice (Walsh, 2007). Digital platforms do not replace traditional galleries; instead, they complement the art ecosystem by creating hybrid forms of presenting and experiencing art. The transitions happening in the art world due to digitalisation show that a new paradigm is forming one where the virtual and the real continue each other, creating a unified space that does not feel like a catastrophic loss of anything.

#### REFERENCES

1. LB.ua. (2020). Instagram-маски, AR-мистецтво та віртуальна ідентичність. [https://lb.ua/culture/2020/02/13/449727\\_instagrammaski\\_armistetstvo.html](https://lb.ua/culture/2020/02/13/449727_instagrammaski_armistetstvo.html)
2. Bazilik Media. (2020). Як мистецькі майданчики ведуть Instagram. <https://bazilik.media/iak-mystetski-majdanchyky-vedut-instagram/>
3. Terrill, L. (2017). Using social media to curate digital artworks can lead to increased and more dynamic public participation and engagement. LSE Impact Blog. <https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/impactofsocialsciences/2017/04/18/using-social-media-to-curate-digital-artworks/>
4. The Art Newspaper. (2023, April 14). TikTok, TikTok... It's time the art world stopped being so uptight and joined the world's most entertaining app. The Art Newspaper. <https://www.theartnewspaper.com/2023/04/14/tiktok-tiktok-its-time-the-art-world-stopped-being-so-uptight-and-joined-the-worlds-most-entertaining-app>
5. MuseumNext. (n.d.). Museums on TikTok – Must follow museums to learn from. MuseumNext. <https://www.museumnext.com/article/how-are-museums-are-using-tiktok/>
6. Walsh, P. (2007). Rise and fall of the post-photographic museum: Technology and the transformation of art. In R. Parry (Ed.), *Museums in a Digital Age* (pp. 292–305). Routledge.