In the contemporary world we can observe the phenomenon of global aesthetization. We can speak of the following types of aesthetization: of everyday life, the natural environment, politics, sport, and, even more generally, thinking. It is even possible to speak of a new version of man: *homo aestheticus*. We live in the constant process of the aesthetization of the real world: embellishment and stylization can be found everywhere.

If for Aristotle the most important part of philosophy was metaphysics, now aesthetics seems to take over this role. We can wonder if in this new situation aesthetics itself as well as aesthetic values have changed. As consequence of this global aesthetization the answer could be affirmative because the primacy of aesthetic values means that these values are no longer traditional ones. Moreover, the aesthetization of everything brings as a consequence the de-aesthetization of art and beauty. The world, however, seems to exist only for our pleasure, and this is a kind of purely aesthetic pleasure. It seems that Nietzsche’s idea appears again, of life beyond good and evil. But should we not add beyond beauty? Is it true that now we are not faced with traditional, transcendent aesthetic values but rather with ornaments, trinkets, or at least a “stylized prettiness”? Or perhaps, in spite of the fact that the world seems to be a gigantic bric-a-brac, we can still find beauty somewhere. Perhaps we can still speak of Alberti’s aesthetic pleasure based on copiousness and variety or about Ingarden’s aesthetic situation and aesthetic experience. Or is it rather just Bakhtin’s carnival pleasure?

Here I present some considerations that are closely connected with the general problem of aesthetization. The phenomenon is, on one hand, connected with the development of new media and, on the other, can be looked at from a broader perspective in terms of the transformation of industrial society into a post-industrial one. This process is accompanied by the replacement of a traditional logo-centered paradigm, which was characteristic of the modern world, with a new picto-centered one, which is supposed to define and determine our pop culture. As regards the latter, which is first of all described as a visual culture, we can speak of a new type of language: traditional logo-centrism has been replaced with a picto-centered language based on glyphs. This seems to be a return to the universal and common idea of a *lingua franca*. Thus, if
thought was traditionally considered as an equivalent of the word, now the perception of images has been substituted for thought, or we can say that we think by means of images. Many contemporary thinkers have shown the importance of visualization and the aesthetization of culture.¹

What I have in mind in considering this global aesthetization, including the aesthetization of aesthetic values, is a new aesthetic way of thinking, an idea of transversal reason, an idea of *homo aestheticus*, and, finally, a new status of aesthetics as well as of aesthetic values.

I start with the exhibition *The Immaterials* (*Les Immatériaux*) organized at the Centre Pompidou in Paris in 1985. Jean-François Lyotard was both its originator and its curator. The neologism coined by Lyotard was intended to point to a new quality appearing in the exhibition space as well as beyond it, in the space defining the postmodern intellectual condition after the end of “grand narratives.”² According to Lyotard, the character of the exhibition was purely philosophical:

We will first of all ask questions and incite others to ask questions, not only about what the material is, but also about what is associated with it: material versus spiritual, material versus personnel (in the administration, the army), hardware versus software (in a computer), matter versus form (in the analysis of a manufactured object, a natural object or a work of art), matter versus mind (in philosophy and theology), matter versus energy (in classical physics), matter versus state (in modern physics), matrix versus product (in anatomy, printing, minting and casting; the problem of reproduction and, in art, of multiples), mother versus child, mother versus father, etc.³

All of these substantially philosophical questions aimed at casting light on the postmodern condition of thinking (philosophy, science) and also creating (art):

In the tradition of modernity, the relationship between human beings and materials is fixed by the Cartesian program of mastering and possessing nature. . . . The ambition of exhibition entitled ‘The Immaterials’ is to make the visitor realize how far this relationship is altered by the existence of ‘new materials’ [which] in a wide meaning of the term, are not merely materials which are new. They question the idea of Man as a being who works, who plans and who remembers: the idea of an author.⁴

Lyotard stated in an interview that the first version of the exhibition title—*New Materials and Creativity*—made him realize the questionable nature of basic notions such as ‘material’ or ‘creation’; ‘new materials’ was thus replaced with ‘immaterials,’ and the notion of ‘creation/creativity’ achieved a new meaning.⁵ Immaterial signifies here a specific, most often computer- or electronically generated material, one that is no longer matter for any future project. Therefore the notion of immaterials would perfectly suit Lyotard’s affirmative aesthetics that postulates the positioning of any aesthetic experience on the surface of the work of art.⁶ Transcendence disappears,