

# THE PHENOMENON OF POST-TRUTH IN FILM AND THEATRE: CREATIVE STRATEGIES

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## INTRODUCTION

Today, the phenomenon of *post-truth* is widely recognised in the social, political and communication contexts, signalling circumstances where a society tends to believe emotionally charged statements, rather than objectively rendered facts; where people increasingly lean towards alternative facts, especially if they agree with the arguments expressed in these facts, while the arguments that are objective, confirmed and rational – yet do not fit their worldview – are a lot less acceptable. These changes in communication are happening on both sides: societies are increasingly inclined to believe alternative statements; and the number of such statements is rising, as they are disseminated by organisations and individuals who want to win citizens (voters, consumers, *etc.*) over to their side. While this is not a new occurrence, recently it has become more prominent and more widely discussed. The post-truth is related to *fake news*; however, it should be treated as a much wider and more complex phenomenon. As a concept, the post-truth encompasses a variety of different manifestations, interlinked due to their indifference towards the truth. In fact, we could argue that those manifestations, such as fake news, *deep fake*, *alternative news* and similar are the components of post-truth. The post-truth communication emerged in the political discourse, altering how politicians communicate with their citizens. While previously politicians, or people in power, tended to interpret an existing situation, fact or phenomenon in a way that is favourable to them (but, more or less, still agreed on the existence of objective truth), now politicians create alternative, favourable facts that are neither false nor true (most often, they are carefully selected and biased emotional statements, communicating what society wants to hear), which makes them very deceptive, because they are a lot harder to expose than lies.

Once it emerged in the political discourse, the post-truth phenomenon then spread to other areas of social life, endangering the perception of truth: increasingly, the truth is seen

not as shared and objective, but fragmented and constituted by many alternative truths or alternative realities inhabited by people insisting on the righteousness of their information “bubbles”. We can also draw a link between the post-truth and a wider context of postmodernism, which denied the existence of objective norm, engendering a possibility for different, subjective, points of view and placing them on a par with the previously unquestionable centre of power. We can even argue that the phenomenon of post-truth, due to its exclusively negative nature, can be seen as the “dark” side of postmodernism.

This changing social situation inevitably influences various artistic practices, including the research objects of this thesis: theatre and documentary film. One of the main aims of art has always been to reflect the world that surrounds it. The works of theatre and documentary reflecting on a progressively deepening crisis of truth – the post-truth phenomenon – is no exception. There are various ways that documentary films and theatre performances discuss and consider this situation, depending on their artistic ways of expression. On the one hand, and because the capturing of reality is one of their main creative materials, the documentary filmmakers feel the responsibility to defend the truth in their work and often discuss the dangers of the post-truth phenomenon. On the other hand, documentary films can become a perfect tool of post-truth, especially if used to construct a desirable narrative, pretending it to be the truth and thus devising similar alternative realities to those seen in the political discourse. Meanwhile, theatre can help to create a safe space, *i.e.* performances, where the audience is introduced to an uncertain situation, and then try to understand the transformed reality we currently find ourselves in. Some performances, especially the documentary theatre, also allow the audience to directly engage with representatives of various societal groups (particularly those stereotyped by the media) and get to know them without an intermediary. This artistic research project will take a closer look at various creative strategies of theatre and documentary film used by artists to not only reflect on, but also fight against the post-truth situation.

**The relevance and novelty of the subject.** The notion of post-truth, as well as the situation defined by it, are not new: it was first introduced in 1992, while examples related to this phenomenon can be observed even earlier. However, recently, this term has reached significant popularity, especially after the Oxford Dictionaries announced it as the Word of the Year in 2016 – a word that best describes the global situation of that year. This shows the relevance and novelty of the phenomenon. Due to gaining in popularity only a few years ago, the post-truth is not yet widely and consistently researched. We find many different analyses,

however, none of them dominate the discourse, *i.e.* the definition of this phenomenon is still being formulated in the social and academic contexts, while its investigation in the artistic field is even more novel.

The increased popularity of the post-truth notion, the aforementioned transformations in the politicians' communication strategies and the resulting crisis of truth, all mark a transition from the age of information to the one of experience. This influences the works of film and theatre as well as the creative strategies chosen by artists who create in the post-truth society and dedicate themselves to reflect on and critically view this phenomenon. In the field of film criticism and theory, there is an increasing number of discussions on how the documentary film should function and develop in the era of post-truth, where objectivity and truth become more and more subjective. The field of theatre also reflects on this notion and considers how it can help the audience to get to grips with this state of uncertainty. It is clear that the post-truth phenomenon informs the work of contemporary artists and that there is an increasing number of research and articles discussing the art's responsibility and development in the era of post-truth. However, due to the novelty of this phenomenon, there is still a lack of more detailed and wider research.

This artistic research project takes a renewed look at the previous creative movements and theories – such as Dziga Vertov's documentary film manifesto and *Cinéma vérité* movement, both of which aimed to portray the reality as it is and fight against any attempts at its distortion – and compares them to the current situation in documentary cinema. The film analysis also uses the documentary film modes of Bill Nichols. When analysing the post-truth manifestations in theatre, this research employs and reconsiders the well-known concepts of performativity and documentary theatre. Rather than attempting to define new creative strategies, this research project employs the existent strategies and shows their recent developments. The originality of this research lies in viewing the work of theatre and documentary film through the prism of communication, by emphasising the directors' creative position and analysing the work in the already transformed context of political art. The recent developments in political discourse gave rise to a new type of politics – the so-called politics of post-truth – which has inevitably influenced the understanding of political art. While previously we could view the political art as either oppositional or conformist, the new developments in post-truth politics somewhat adjusted the definition of political art, prompting it to seek new forms of resistance. This suggested yet another aspect of originality of the present research; namely, a closer look at the development of artistic communication and its aim

towards the social change, influenced by the developments in political communication. This research highlights various possible types of social change in the creative strategies discussed.

The theoretical and practice-based parts of this research project are closely interconnected, because the process of making the performance and the documentary film used the material gathered in the theoretical part, including the analysis of case studies, which emphasises the political and social position of the artist. The practice-based part – creating the performance of *Last Updated* (2017), which discusses manipulation; and the making of documentary film of *Investigative Journalists* (2021, forthcoming), which tells the story of investigative journalists, how their work fights against the alternative news and the post-truth communication of politicians – arose from the necessity to consider and reflect on these increasingly predominant phenomena. The discussion of the creative processes of these two works highlights the practical application methods of creative strategies. It also compliments the case studies, because the third part of this artistic research paper not only analyses the strategy which reflects the director's position towards the finished work, but also presents various creative nuances, including the use of different strategies at different stages of the creative process, the development of and reasons for the working methods, and other processes that occur during the practice.

**Research question.** How does the phenomenon of post-truth influence the creative strategies of theatre and documentary film?

**Defending arguments:**

- today, the phenomenon of post-truth plays an important role in the consideration of truth's significance and its value in the social, political and communication contexts;
- it is equally important to examine this phenomenon in the contexts of art, theatre and documentary film, because this media, including the works of art themselves, shape the societal worldviews. When making films and performances (particularly the ones dealing with political or social material), it is necessary to understand the context of post-truth they are created in, especially in order to use these works of art to reflect as well as avoid the strengthening and dissemination of the post-truth phenomenon;
- there is an increasing number of examples of theatre and documentary film that reflect, deconstruct and critically discuss the phenomenon of post-truth.

**Research object:** a multifaceted manifestation of the post-truth phenomenon in the works of theatre and documentary film. This research object is divided into smaller creative strategies of theatre and documentary film that reveal the critical approach of artists towards the post-truth situation, warning about possible dangers and threats of the post-truth era, and that also echo the needs and expectations of the audience living in the post-truth society. These creative strategies are determined whilst analysing the work of other directors and the creative practical process undertaken for this artistic research project – the aforementioned performance and documentary film. The post-truth is understood not only as a political, but also an artistic phenomenon, influencing the creative process, the choice of subject as well as the artistic and creative approach. During the creative process of *Last Updated* performance and the documentary film of *Investigative Journalists*, the post-truth phenomenon, as well as the desire to consider and understand it, influenced many different stages of the creative process: choice of subject, creative approach, creative form and other elements.

**Research aim.** To define and analyse how the post-truth phenomenon influences the fields of theatre and documentary film, *i.e.* to highlight the creative strategies of theatre and documentary film that have been established and are beginning to be used more widely by reflecting, criticising and otherwise considering the phenomenon of post-truth, and to describe the main principles of these creative strategies.

In order to achieve this aim, this research project sets out the following **research tasks:**

- to define the notion of post-truth and discuss the origin, development and possible threats of this phenomenon;
- to discuss the problem of truth in theatre and documentary film that arises as a result of the post-truth phenomenon;
- to highlight and discuss the creative strategies that emerge when reflecting and analysing the post-truth phenomenon in theatre and documentary film;
- to practically investigate and identify the characteristics of creative strategy used to analyse the post-truth phenomenon in theatre, during the creative process of *Last Updated* performance;
- to practically explore and identify the characteristics of creative strategy used to analyse the post-truth phenomenon in documentary film, during the creative process of *Investigative Journalists* documentary film.

**Research methods.** The characteristics of the research object influenced the choice of different methodological approaches. The introduction to the post-truth phenomenon is informed by the theoretical discourse and concept analysis, while the main features of this phenomenon are distinguished with the help of analytical method. The creative strategies of theatre and documentary film are highlighted and discussed using the comparative and text analysis; they are also researched empirically (during the creative processes of the performance and documentary film), and using the observation method and interpretive analysis.

**Literature and other source review.** The literature used in this artistic research project can be divided into a few different groups:

1. *The literature analysing postmodernism and its connections to the post-truth phenomenon.*

The review of postmodernism is largely informed by Fredric Jameson's *The Cultural Turn: Selected Writings on the Postmodern* (2002), while Zygmunt Bauman's *Culture in a Liquid Modern World* (2015) and Gilles Lipovetsky's *The Era of Emptiness: Essays on Contemporary Individualism* (2013) are used to consider a more critical take on postmodernism. The notion of cinematographic thought is introduced with the help of Henri Bergson's *Creative Evolution* (2004) and Andrius Gudauskas' article "The Consumer-Creator of New Media and Cinematographic Thought" (2014) and his methodology in "Philosophical Origin of Film. The Cinematography of Andrei Tarkovsky" (2019). Gilles Deleuze's concepts of time-crystals and any-space-whatever are introduced using his *Cinema 2: The Time-Image* (1985), Renata Šukaitytė's article "Reflections of Marco Augé's and Gilles Deleuze's Spatial Discourse in the Cinematography of Šarūnas Bartas" (2012) and Audronė Žukauskaitė's "Understanding Time-Image in the Film Philosophy of Gilles Deleuze" (2012) and other sources.

2. *The literature that examines the phenomenon of post-truth.*

In order to understand and examine the threats posed by the post-truth phenomenon, this research project uses *Post-truth: How Bullshit Conquered the World* (2017) by James Ball and *On Bullshit* (2005) by Harry Frankfurt. The discussion is further informed by the following articles: Sean Illing's "A Philosopher Explains America's 'Post-truth' Problem" (2018), Ignas Kalpokas' "From the Age of Information to the Age of Experience: Societal Challenges of Post-truth" (in *Mediating Social Reality: Culture, Politics and Society*, edited by Renata Šukaitytė ir Kęstas Kirtiklis, 2018), Peter Gröning's "Forget 'Fake News' – We Need A Smarter Approach to Countermedia" (2019), Richard Kreitner's "Post-truth and Its Consequences: What a 25-Year-Old Essay tells Us About the Current Moment" (2016), Oscar Schwartz's "You Thought Fake

News Was Bad? Deep fakes are Where Truth Goes to Die” (2018) and Agnė Vedegytė’s “Changing Journalism of War Conflicts” (2013). The discussion on the post-truth society, its development and the threats it faces references the following sources: Kristupas Sabolius’ *Imaginary* (2013), which analyses the relationship between imagination and audio-visual industry; *Everything You Wanted to Know about Žižek, But Were Afraid to Ask Lacan: A Selection of Works* (2005), edited and translated by Audronė Žukauskaitė, including Slavoj Žižek’s notion of interpassivity; Jean Baudrillard’s notion of simulacra in his *Simulacra and Simulation* (2002) and other sources.

3. *The question of truth in theatre and documentary film.* The analysis of this question is informed by Dirk Eitzen’s essay “The Duties of Documentary in a Post-truth Society” (in *Cognitive Theory and Documentary Film*, edited by Catalyn Brylla and Mette Kramer, 2018) as well as Jenn Stephenson’s article “In the Post-truth Era, Documentary Theatre Searches for Common Ground” (2019). The discussion on political art references the following articles: Renata Stonytė’s “Understanding Political Cinema in the Contemporary Theory of Film and Media. Cases of Parliamentarism Dissemination” (2014), Ewa Mazierska’s “Marking Political Cinema” (2014), Hannah Arendt’s book *Between Past and Future* (1995) and other sources.

4. *The situation of documentary cinema in the era of post-truth.* The analysis of documentary film in the era of post-truth builds on the articles by Živilė Pipinytė “Forms of Reality. Documentary Film and the Truth about the World” (2014) and Renata Dubinskaitė “Language Experiments of the Documentary Theatre in Lithuanian Video Art” (2008) as well as Bill Nichols’ *Introduction to Documentary* (2001) and Stella Bruzzi’s *New Documentary* (2000) that discuss the classical forms of documentary film. This research project also refers to the following articles: Laimantas Jonušys’ “For the Truth after the Post-truth” (2017), James Camp’s “In Conversation with Werner Herzog: ‘Facts Do Not Constitute Truth’” (2014), Alissa Wilkinson’s “2017’s Best Documentaries Found New Ways to Engage Reality in a Post-truth World” (2017) and other sources.

5. *The situation of theatre in the era of post-truth.* The analysis of theatre in the era of post-truth is outlined with the help of the following articles: Martynas Petrikas’ “Theatre as Political Practice: The Case of Krystian Lupa’s *Heldenplatz* at the Lithuanian National Drama Theatre” (in *Mediating Social Reality: Culture, Politics and Society*, edited by Renata Šukaitytė and Kęstas Kirtiklis, 2018), Kristina Savickienė’s interview with Árpád Schilling in “The Light in the Auditorium” (2016), Daiva Šabasevičienė’s “The Metaphor of War. A Talk with Valentinas

Masalskis before the Premier of Árpád Schilling's Performance at the Lithuanian National Drama Theatre" (2015), Joanna Krakowska's "Auto-theatre in the Era of Post-truth" (2018), Jurgita Staniškytė's "Changing Principles of Creating Meaning in Contemporary Lithuanian Theatre" (2004), Lina Klusaitė's "Portraying the Times of Molière: Between Camera and Mask" (2017), as well as books on wider topics, including Erika Fischer-Lichte's *Aesthetics of the Performative* (2013), Hans-Thies Lehmann *Postdramatic Theatre* (2010) and other sources.

**The structure of the thesis.** This artistic research paper includes: introduction, three chapters, conclusions, bibliography, summary, list of publications and conference papers, and appendices.

The first chapter introduces the theory of post-truth phenomenon, the second chapter (which includes the case studies) discusses the creative strategies that manifest in theatre and documentary film as a response to the post-truth phenomenon, and the third – practice-as-research – chapter presents the two creative works made during this artistic research project, the performance and the documentary film.

## **1. THE PHENOMENON OF POST-TRUTH: ORIGINS AND DEVELOPMENT**

### **1.1. The Phenomenon of Post-truth: The Notion and Its Articulation**

The notion of post-truth refers to circumstances, where the public opinion is influenced by emotional or sentimental statements, rather than objective facts. This could be observed during the political campaign of Brexit and the USA presidential election in 2016, both of which were run with the help of emotional and false statements that convinced the societal majority. Often, such emotional statements appeal to the citizens' desires, to what they want to hear as true facts: both the Brexit campaign and Donald Trump supporters built on the nostalgic longing to return to an allegedly better past, claiming that it was the "enemies from the outside" (an anti-immigration rhetoric) who prevented the society from doing so. This is closely related to another characteristic of post-truth – the spread of alternative news – which often relies on real facts, but is presented in a prejudicial and biased way. The alternative news is directly connected to the rejection of traditional, objective journalism, attempting to diminish the work of journalists, which can be observed in the communication of politicians, who see the media as an enemy, as well as the increasingly active work of organisations, whose

communication is dependent on alternative news (*e.g. alt-right* or “Russia Today”). The post-truth society can also be characterised by its reluctance to hear uncomfortable or unpleasant news, and the politicians – by rejecting the traditional image of a politician. Finally, the fast dissemination of post-truth phenomenon was further stimulated by the technological growth, the quick spread of information and anybody being able to disseminate this information (together with a growing tendency that the contemporary citizen *must* have and share their individual opinion about all the important events).

## **1.2. The Origins of Post-truth: Postmodernism**

Postmodernism could be seen as an instigator of the post-truth phenomenon, because this cultural movement, by eliminating the existence of a single norm and giving voice to the previously mute and disempowered manifestations existing at the fringes, simultaneously allowed for the emergence of post-truth situation which pushes the idea of destabilised reality to its extremes. The often-expressed critical view of postmodernism could also be applied to the more recent and narrower phenomenon of post-truth: this includes Bauman’s criticism of postmodernism’s “liquidity” and his notion of “fashion”, which may also be compared to the “information bubbles” (one of the more important features of post-truth), and Lipovetsky’s reference to the postmodern society as a society living in the “era of gliding”. While the postmodernism’s critique of the notions of “truth”, “norm” and their stability are seen as largely positive, the phenomenon of post-truth is exclusively negative. Both Bergson’s criticism of the linear film narrative as nonrepresentative of human life and its circumstances as well as, later, Deleuze’s concept of time-crystals could be viewed as the origin of narrative in the postmodern film and theatre, the creative form of which attempts to draw closer to the contemporary reality of life.

## **1.3. The Needs of the Post-truth Society, the Development of Post-truth and Its Dangers**

The post-truth society can be characterised by interpassivity, lack of imagination and technologically charged wishes and desires. The contemporary mediated world often hides a different reality behind the image represented by the media. A film suggests a particular view of reality, thus making us experience our own reality through its constructed fiction. This is closely related to Baudrillard’s concept of simulacra which substitutes reality for its signs. One

of the practical manifestations of simulacra is the technology of deep fake which creates a convincing, but insubstantial, form of reality. This is very dangerous to our understanding of reality and is similar to the increasingly complicated situation of journalists, where a limited journalist access to important information negatively impacts the entire society. As a result, in today's society, the media and information literacy become especially important, because we have to learn to better understand the continuously changing mediated world that surrounds us.

#### **1.4. The Problem of Truth in Theatre and Documentary Film**

The changing societal situation outlined above influences the works of theatre and documentary film. As the problem of truth becomes more urgent and complex, we have to reconsider the relationship between theatre, documentary film and the portrayal of truth as an objective reality and to take a new look at the artists' approach towards the political subjects. The performances and documentary films analysed in the second chapter of this research paper can also be seen as political, politically engaged and stimulating critical thinking.

## **2. FILM AND THEATRE IN THE FACE OF POST-TRUTH: DIFFERENT CREATIVE STRATEGIES**

### **2.1. The Post-truth and Documentary Film**

#### **2.1.1. The Works of Reflexive Documentary: The Investigative Documentary**

This section introduces a creative strategy of reflexive investigative documentary, encompassing documentary films that exist on the boundary between documentary and journalistic investigation and that aim to expose the reality as objectively as possible, discussing topics relevant to the era of post-truth and encouraging the critical thinking of the viewer. This creative strategy (and its creative form) is also used by some films for the opposing reason – to construct a one-sided and biased image of the chosen reality.

### 2.1.2. The Works of Performative Documentary: The Personal Perspective and Emotion

The main features of the strategy of performative documentary are the choice of subject, which has to be of personal importance to the film's author; the author's close contact to the situation, environment or topic discussed; and an autobiographical style (not necessarily from the visual perspective). Here, a personal story told truthfully can compel us to critically view the false "truths" on the same subject; in other words, this type of documentary aims for a complete objectivity (discussed in the previous section), with the personal position and emotional engagement of the author fighting against the emotion of post-truth.

### 2.1.3. The "Rebus" Films: Documentary Experiments

Films that use this strategy experiment with their creative form, in order to expose a new take on a problem. At times, it is enough to change your viewpoint (for example, by leaving your information "bubble"), in order to critically reassess a specific situation, and the creative form of such films is dedicated for this very purpose.

## **2.2. The Post-truth and Theatre**

### 2.2.1. The Political Discourse: A Social Warning

The theatre performances using this creative strategy communicate a social warning, reveal political and social problems to the audience, presenting these from different perspectives, and use various methods to directly engage the audience. An important characteristic of such performances is the removal of the fourth wall which brings the topics discussed closer to the spectator.

### 2.2.2. The Effect of Authenticity: Documentary Theatre

A different way that theatre fights the politics of post-truth is by creating the documentary theatre, performed by real people who tell their personal stories. These performances provide the audience with an opportunity to encounter people they might not be able to meet in their everyday lives, to see them from "up close" and hear their voices. The theatre productions performed by professional actors can also apply the effect of authenticity;

here, the creative strategy builds on the artist's personal point of view, direct and honest conversation with the audience and taking responsibility for your words.

### 2.2.3. The Language of Meta-theatre: Flirting with the Real

The theatre performances that use this strategy deconstruct their own creative principles, revealing their internal structures and thus questioning the notion of truth (which is not necessarily the main question of the performance). In his description of metatheatre, the dramaturg Lionel Abel observes that this type of theatre creates a strong impression of the world projected by the human consciousness (contrary to tragedy which creates an image of the real world). Furthermore, according to Abel, in the metatheatre, there is no other world than the one created by the human imagination<sup>1</sup>.

## **3. THE CREATIVE PROCESS OF *LAST UPDATED* AND *INVESTIGATIVE JOURNALISTS***

The previously discussed theoretical and case studies chapters are closely connected to the third, practice-as-research, chapter of this research project. When I was making the first artistic work discussed in this chapter – the performance of *Last Updated* – the main research question was slightly different and more abstract, looking at the interconnections between reality and fiction in the theatre and film (one of the initial titles for this artistic research project was “*Faction: The Interconnections between Reality and Fiction in the Theatre and Film*”). I was interested in the idea of reality and fiction merging together in the theatre and film, hybrid genres and the use of different documentary elements, their meaning and application opportunities, in order to increase the direct audience engagement, allowing them to really experience the story. As a result, in the performance of *Last Updated*, I aimed to combine these ideas, creating a situation where the audience not only listens to a story about manipulation and conspiracy theories, but also find themselves in an environment where it is difficult to distinguish between what is real and what is not. During the creative process, I found the aspect

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<sup>1</sup> Lionel, Abel. *Metatheatre. A New View of Dramatic Form*. New York: Hill and Wang, 1963, p. 113.

of manipulation, the ability to manipulate the documentary elements, the most interesting, which then led me to the idea that later became the core question of this research paper – the notion of post-truth. This happened in a rather organic way: the performance explored a change in how we communicate by looking at the influencers – influential and recognisable faces trusted by the wider society – and how this society increasingly believes in the statements on a certain matter provided by these influencers (especially if these statements correspond with the initial opinion of the listener), rather than the expert opinion. The phenomenon of post-truth describes exactly this type of communication.

The further research showed that the post-truth also encompasses changes in the interaction between the politicians and journalists: the politicians attempting to diminish the journalistic prerogative (this situation is evident in the contemporary political majority in Lithuania and many other countries), to disseminate alternative facts and to limit the media's access to information, all of which I found interesting and helpful to investigate the post-truth phenomenon further. In order to get a closer look at this situation and see the work of investigative journalists myself, I began making a documentary film about the work of journalists in one research department. The process of filming, observation of and conversations with the journalists at work, not only theoretically, but also practically revealed many similarities between the journalism and documentary film. Finally, because the journalists face the dangers of post-truth almost every day, observing their work allowed me to supplement my theoretical knowledge about this phenomenon with some practical experience.

### **3.1. The Performance of *Last Updated***

#### **3.1.1. The Playtext Writing Stage: A Social Warning**

With the help of the social warning strategy, this section determines the main semantic accents of the playtext and selects the most important and relevant questions that reveal the theme of manipulation. It also examines the opportunities for audience manipulation embedded in the playtext: inconspicuous links between the reality and fiction, the motif of experiment which holds the overall playtext together, allowing for the removal of the fourth wall and further audience engagement, and the effect of “reality invasion”.

### 3.1.2. The Rehearsal Stage: The Metatheatre

The performance scenography is selected according to the motif of experiment highlighted in the playtext, paying a special attention to the quick scene changes. This section also presents a theoretical and practical investigation into the forms of performance and acting, which demonstrates that the performance required a fragmented, non-linear direction and narrative as well as the creative strategy of metatheatre.

## **3.2. The Documentary Film of *Investigative Journalists***

### 3.2.1. The Filming Stage: The Visual Anthropology

This section discusses the links between the theoretical research and the film's subject, and the structural elements that emerged using the observation strategy during the process of filming. The visual style of the film is based on conclusions drawn during the observation process, making sure that the reality is adequately reflected in the form of the film.

### 3.2.2. The Editing Stage: The Reflexive Investigative Documentary

This stage of the research revealed the film's editing characteristics: the creative strategy of highlighting the theme (rather than the visuals) of the story in the film frame gave rise to editing based on long, uninterrupted frames. Moreover, in order to tell the story as objectively as possible, the film mainly uses the method of chronological editing. The process of editing also allowed to find different cinematic symbols related to the creative strategy of reflexive investigative documentary.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

- The theoretical part of this artistic research project demonstrated that the notion of post-truth describes a phenomenon that is not new, but has recently become increasingly popular. The post-truth can be defined as circumstances, where the emotional statements people want to believe in, rather than the objective facts, influence a wider opinion of the society. The research determined that the most serious threat posed by

the post-truth is the fact that it ignores the existence of truth. Instead of sharing the facts and their interpretations in the public discourse, we can observe an increase in the creation of alternative facts and statements, thus denying the existence of objective reality, which makes the post-truth more dangerous than lies. Furthermore, the knowledge that this phenomenon first emerged and is disseminating in the political discourse, therefore, it is not a theoretical issue, but directly informs the practical political decisions influencing the life of all citizens, makes it even worse. A different understanding of the shared truth or, rather, ignoring that it exists at all, adds to the increased fragmentation of opinion, where one societal group uses the information sources that are questioned, denied or ignored by other societal groups. Previously more or less balanced matrix of information is now split into a multitude of parallel channels, the increasing number of alternative news generates disconnected groups of people who see themselves as existing on the fringes of society, and this social imbalance, together with the emotional manipulation of the citizens, results in a negative effect on the entire society. There are two, closely interconnected, ways to fight against this condition: high-quality journalism, especially the investigative journalism, and encouraging the information literacy and critical thinking of our society.

- The analysis of selected manifestations of theatre and film demonstrated that the increased prevalence of post-truth influences performances and documentary films – the research objects of this artistic research project. The emotional engagement of their viewers, rather than the sharing of dry facts, has always been a priority for the filmmakers. However, today, there is an increasing number of documentary films that use the techniques borrowed from the art cinema to make their stories more dramatic, which, taken together with the post-truth phenomenon, becomes very problematic, making the relationship between the documentary film, the audience and their expectations more important than the one between the documentary film and the reality it portrays. However, one can also notice the opposite process: the artists becoming aware of the changed social situation and taking responsibility, making sure that the image they construct correspond to the reality and that any alterations do not cause significant social consequences (even when it might lead to a more effective artwork). In the field of theatre, as a response to the crisis of truth, the artists invite their audience to safely encounter this new reality – the age of falsity – through performances that use

their form and content to investigate various aspects of manipulation. The documentary theatre, where the audience can directly engage with the societal groups they might not otherwise have access to, also becomes important. While previously art did not aim towards the objective truth, in today's situation of post-truth, with the diminishing value of truth and its increasingly more threatening consequences, the political art becomes more and more important, with the artists contributing to the reinstated belief in the objective truth.

- This research highlighted a number of creative strategies that the makers of theatre and documentary film use in order to emphasise and consider the post-truth situation, the strategies that show how the phenomenon of post-truth influence these two artistic fields. The creative strategies used in theatre and documentary film are similar: (1) the first set of strategies aims to portray the reality as objectively as possible, communicate a social warning and discuss political topics; (2) the second set of strategies uses the opposing methods; here, only subjective and personal experience can lead towards the objective knowledge; (3) the third set of strategies pays a special attention to the artwork's structure and experimentation with it, aiming to encourage the spectator to rethink their environment their surrounding reality. The creative strategies highlighted in both theatre and documentary film do not suggest new aesthetic qualities. Instead, they focus on the author's position from the perspective of communication with the audience, because, as the changes in political understanding influence the definition of political art (in its wider sense), the artist has to adapt the pre-existent aesthetic methods to reflect this new political situation.
- The practice-as-research part of this artistic research project, which resulted in the creation of *Last Updated* performance, revealed the practical and creative aspects of highlighting the post-truth phenomenon and the methods used at different stages of the creative process. The performance was created in 2017, when the post-truth phenomenon was only beginning to be more recognised, therefore, the performance atmosphere reflected the decreasing value of truth and the blurring of the difference between the reality and fiction. The political-social warning about this situation played an important role in the writing of playtext, while the rehearsal process showed that the best way to communicate this social warning is by using the elements of metatheatre.

The main creative method uniting these strategies, found during the research process, was to draw invisible links between the reality and fiction at all stages of the performance creation: using relevant and controversial topics (some performance texts were edited for each show) at both the textual (writing of the playtext) and visual (the rehearsal process) levels; and using the “reality invasions” – having not only actors, but also well-known people, capable of influencing the public opinion, to take part in the performance.

- The practice-as-research part of this research project, which resulted in the making of documentary film *Investigative Journalists* (this is a working title, as the film is not yet finished), showed the practical and creative aspects of highlighting the post-truth phenomenon and the methods used at different stages of the creative process. While the theoretical part of this research determined that the main object of this film – the work of investigative journalists – is a way of fighting against the post-truth, the creative process not only confirmed this argument, but also allowed to examine it practically. The research showed that the use of observation helps to avoid an artificially constructed dramatic narrative. Meanwhile, the investigative nature of the film, together with the consistent documentation of various processes, the selection of the most recurring topics during editing and the emphasis on the theme, history and facts (rather than the visual aspect) narrated in the frame, helped to expose a more objective reality, especially as the film about investigative journalists, the observation and presentation of their work, becomes an investigation in itself – a reflexive investigative documentary.
- This research project contributes to the understanding of political art and widens the scope of artworks that highlight new political manifestations – the politics and phenomenon of post-truth – using specific creative strategies in theatre and documentary film. This research also reveals the influence of post-truth phenomenon on the works of theatre and documentary film and the consequences of such influence – the creative strategies based on the communication decisions, rather than a new aesthetics. This research project and its findings will be relevant to theatre and documentary film scholars and practitioners, investigating the political art as well as

the influence political and social phenomena have on theatre and documentary film. The art, created in response to the political and social manifestations occurring in the moment of its creation, can examine these manifestations, consider their possible threats and help to resolve them.