

Abstract

The primary goal of my doctoral research is to identify common characteristics of the concept of risk present in both experimental contemporary art and extreme sports.

A long-standing interest in extreme sports and years of analysing contemporary art in theory and practice have led me to recognise the similarities between these seemingly distant fields. They are united by risk and the satisfaction derived from taking it. Drawing on my own experiences in both sport and art, I explore how risk becomes a tool for exploration, courage, and creativity, leading to discovering new possibilities and pushing boundaries.

The following theoretical research aims to understand the analogies between risk in these two spheres, demonstrating that it serves as a means to achieve control and innovation. This research includes introspection on my practice, interviews with extreme athletes, and analyses of the relationship between risk and progress in sport and contemporary art, aiming to deepen the understanding of the role of risk in creativity and artistic experimentation.

Risk is the potential for adverse events resulting from uncertainty about future outcomes that affect essential values. Its definition varies by field, and the understanding of this concept has evolved over centuries.

Contemporary art is characterised by diversity and a lack of need for uniform style. Experimentation and risk are vital sources of innovation, allowing artists to transcend traditional boundaries and redefine artistic concepts. Fear, though less visible than in sports, influences creators, who often forgo innovative solutions in favour of safer aesthetics. As a result, financial and market pressures frequently stifle artistic development and experimentation.

Examples of artists who take risks in their work include Marcel Duchamp—who revolutionised art by introducing concepts such as the ready-made; Bruce Nauman—who explored the boundaries of perception and artistic identity; and David Hammons, whose work addressed issues of racism and power. The risks they took manifested in their formal decisions, relationships with their audience, and attitudes toward the art world. Experimental works that reject traditional elements that enable more accessible reception often face misunderstanding, marginalisation, and a lack of commercial success. Despite financial and social difficulties, all three artists continued their creative experiments, significantly pushing the boundaries of contemporary art today, albeit often at the cost of personal and professional hardships.

Extreme sports have gained immense popularity, redefining traditional notions of sport and attracting a growing number of participants. The example of Alex Honnold, who achieved the groundbreaking feat of climbing El Capitan without ropes, illustrates that risk in extreme

sports is not about bravado but rather intelligent, meticulously calculated action. Experts like Eric Brymer emphasise that the key to success lies in a deep understanding of the task, environment, and one's abilities, enabling the safe pushing of human limits.

In interviews I conducted with professional climbers, Wojciech *Dozent* Wajda emphasised that while free solo climbing was once standard in the community, it primarily represented a source of freedom for him. Taking risks in extreme sports, such as climbing without protection, required him to *turn off reflective awareness*—he did not think about the consequences of falling, allowing him to act intuitively. Krystian Maciejka, on the other hand, highlights the psychological aspect of this type of climbing, where complete focus and the calming of emotions during the climb lead to a sense of *catharsis*.

An analysis of the various stages of my creative process precedes the description of my artistic work related to the doctorate. In the final chapter, I describe my artistic language, developed with artificial intelligence, which I offer as an alternative to conservative and populist tendencies in art.