

Agnieszka Kuczyńska  
*L'ART MAGIQUE:*  
THE CASE OF ZBIGNIEW  
MAKOWSKI

Zbigniew Makowski (1930–2019), an outstanding artist who never really got to enjoy the limelight, painted disturbing and visually enticing paintings. Magical? It certainly is one of the adjectives surprisingly often used to describe his oeuvre. It is worth considering, however, what this ‘magic’ consists of and what its sources were.

The access to the as yet unpublished materials<sup>1</sup> – above all, the artist’s correspondence and his *Journal* – makes it possible argue that the catalyst of the transformation, the stimulus that resulted in the crystallisation of his existing artistic and existential experiences in a new magical painting formula, was the artist’s 1962 stay in Paris.

At the moment of his departure, he was 32 years old and his interests were clearly defined. He had studied at the Academy of Fine Arts in Warsaw in the years 1950–1956. The major breakthrough in his artistic biography, a declaration of modernity after the period of involvement with socialism as a student, was his graduation painting, created in the studio of Kazimierz Tomorowicz. It is a large canvas (250 x 150 cm), influenced by Edvard Munch and metaphysical painting; it is restricted to a narrow and cold colour palette. The painting is titled *The Interior*. The objects represented therein are very ordinary. The fact that it evokes the sense of strangeness results from a series of technical devices applied: an ostentatious distortion of perspective, uncertainty as to the borders of the layers of the reality presented (both the concept of a painting in a painting and the rope directed towards the actual space work in this way); the flat patches of pure white, coming to the foreground, are also of significance. The magic of Makowski’s paintings lies largely in the ‘marvellousness’ achieved predominantly through painting techniques. Many years later, using examples drawn from old art, the artist explained how this kind of visual effectiveness works. In the painting by Domenico Veneziano, *The Stigmatisation of St Franciscus*, he pointed to the unreal, intensely red hue of the angel, the prayer book and the stigmata of the saint: ‘The use of the same colour for the angel and the breviary indicates that it participates in transcendence. Only these two things are miraculous here... — three. Also the red stigmata. These also participate in the transcendence, in the *misterium tremendum*’.<sup>2</sup> As for Makowski’s painting, it is certain that the sense of wonder is intentional; it is also certain that often, much like in the case of *The Stigmatisation of St*

1 I am extremely grateful to the artist’s Family for the great kindness they constantly extended to my work and for granting me the access to the correspondence between Z. Makowski and M. Łękawa (later M. Łękawa-Makowska, the artist’s second wife), the *Journal* he kept in France (hereinafter referred to as: *Journal* 1962), and other important archival materials, including a re-typed and annotated in 1964 version of the *Journal* (hereinafter: *Journal* 1964).

2 ‘Cudza żona. Ze Zbigniewem Makowskim rozmawiają Magdalena Ujma i Agnieszka Kuczyńska’, *Res Publica Nowa*, 151 (2001): 87.

*Franciscus*, to achieve this effect the artist used a strong colour, contrasting with the palette of the remaining part of the painting. When it comes to transcendence, it is not as straightforward as that. Be that as it may, the recurrent images of items painted in bright red in the artistic books of Makowski – such as: fire extinguisher, bucket, ladder – are based on a mechanism similar to the one used in *The Stigmatisation*. A set of such objects, visually very distinct and hence easy to find, in line with fire regulations, was compulsorily installed at every petrol station. Seen within a grey landscape, they could appear as ‘otherworldly phenomena’.<sup>3</sup>

For several years after graduation, the artist was searching for individual means of expression. He tried various formulae: matter painting, assemblage, casts and moulds of small objects in patinated plaster; he created artistic items and books. The intertwining of writing and images, typical for his books, also found its way to his paintings. In the case of papers, these were dominated by organic forms, more and more often with short texts placed within the grid of regular divisions.

Let us take as an example a work he had already commenced when leaving for the scholarship and then completed on his return, in 1963. Its biological, deliberately crooked shapes are disciplined by a structure of hand-drawn squares: 10 columns by 8 rows. This gives 80 fields in which 80 discernible motifs were placed. In this case, the number of possible placements (permutations) is immense ( $1 \times 2 \times 3 \times \dots \times 80$ ). The work-as-matrix becomes akin to a mathematical matrix of huge power. The motif of a matrix (understood as a uterus) is frequently taken up by the artist who uses it either to emphasise its biological and sexual aspect, or to focus on its modular, geometrical grid within which the aleatoric play unfolds. It appears as an ironic polemic about the cybernetics that were heavily promoted at the time, which by analysing the analogies between the principles of operation of living organisms and machines was to facilitate better control and smoother functioning of complex systems. Makowski’s work is composed of fields with organic forms which intertwine with boxes, within which in a markedly non-mechanical – albeit systematic handwriting – sequential numbers from 1 to 30 were written, and subsequent letters of the alphabet in rows. Some fields feature short texts expressing the lack of enthusiasm at the prospect of machine order being imposed onto the organic world, such as: ‘I HAVE FINALLY NUMBERED THE CLOUDS ONE TWO THREE FOUR I NUMBERED THE CLOUDS’, ‘WOULD HE HAVE ALSO NUMBERED THE NUMBERS’, ‘ANALYTICAL ANALYSIS ANAL ANALYSIS AN ANALYTICAL’.

From 1960, Makowski became associated with Galeria Krzywe Koło and then with the Phases group. Literature proved to be as important for

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3 See *Wąski Dunaj nr 5. Ze Zbigniewem Makowskim rozmawiają Krzysztof Cichon i Agnieszka Kuczyńska*, Łódź: Atlas Sztuki, 2008, 191.

him as artistic inspirations, above all James Joyce, Fanz Kafka, Samuel Beckett. He read these books, typical of his generation, carefully and with comprehension. These would leave a permanent mark on his work, initially in the form of citations and borrowed motifs, subsequently rather as the strategies of artistic activity shifted from literature to the realm of images.

In 1962, Makowski received a month-long scholarship from the Ministry of Culture and Art for a stay in Paris. All in all, he stayed in France for over four months, which had its consequences back in the country. He arrived in Paris at the outset of May 1962. The circle of his Parisian acquaintances was determined by the contacts that he had established while still in Poland via the Phases group. He soon defined his position towards the art scene of Paris: 'I've got no business with the exhibitions here, apart from surrealists – but these are the closest to me. An overflow of books on magic. Niagara Falls of tackiness'.<sup>4</sup>

At first glance, the remark may seem self-contradictory. By situating himself in the vicinity of surrealism, he must have been aware of the movement's affinity for magic and myth, and yet he complained of 'an overflow of books on magic'. During the meetings of the Phases group which he attended, one of the most important subjects must have been the still rather recent (28 Nov. 1960 – 14 Jan. 1961) International Surrealist Exhibition *Surrealist Intrusion in the Enchanters' Domain*, prepared by André Breton, Marcel Duchamp, and Edouard Jaguer in D'Arcy Galleries in New York.<sup>5</sup> The catalogue, instead of an introduction, featured a diagram indicating that the origin of surrealism was to be sought among mythical sorceresses and mages. It listed such figures as, among others: Circe, Merlin, Melusine, Prospero. In the context of New York, the genealogical diagram in the exhibition catalogue was easy to decipher as an ironic allusion to the famous diagram of the family tree of the avant-garde, created by the Director of the Museum of Modern Art, Alfred H. Barr Jr., for the catalogue of the exhibition *Cubism and Abstract Art* (1936).<sup>6</sup> The reference to esoteric movements emphasised in the title constituted the continuation of Breton's concept, which commenced with 'the occultation of surrealism' heralded in the *Second Manifesto of*

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4 A letter to M. Łekawa of 15 May 1962.

5 For more on the issue, see L. Kachur, 'Intrusion in the Enchanters Domain: Duchamp's Exhibition Identity', in A.C. Goodyear, J.W. McManus, *aka Marcel Duchamp. Meditations on the Identities of an Artist*, Washington (DC): Smithsonian Institution Scholarly Press, 2014, 149–59.

6 T.M. Bauduin, V. Ferentinou, D. Zamani, 'In Search of the Marvellous', in *Surrealism, Occultism and Politics: In Search of the Marvellous*, eds. T.M. Bauduin, V. Ferentinou, D. Zamani, New York – London: Routledge, 2018, 3.

*Surrealism* (1929), aimed at finding the *point suprême* – the point at which the Cartesian dualism would no longer be conceived of as a contradiction. The surrealists referred to the myth and the magical effectiveness of art because they believed it offered an opportunity to repair the world – the poorly organised world of the Western narrowly understood rationalism and pragmatism. Hence, such actions as Breton's call to create a new myth voiced in his 'Prolegomena to a Third Manifesto of Surrealism – or Not' (1942),<sup>7</sup> or in La Galerie Maeght in Paris.<sup>8</sup>

Furthermore, during the last major surrealist exhibition held in Paris before the artist's arrival – the Exposition internationale du Surréalisme, EROS (Galerie Daniel Cordier, 1959–1960) – there emerged magical motifs, on this occasion associated with eroticism.<sup>9</sup>

'Niagara Falls of tackiness' is likely to have been a reference to such publications as the extremely popular book by Jacques Bergier and Louis Pauwels *Le Matin des magiciens*,<sup>10</sup> which besides a part devoted to surrealism provided information on flying saucers and Atlantis, or the journal *Planète*. It is worth noting that Pierre Restany, who wrote, i.a., about the coming reintegration of man through technology, was associated both with fantastic realism and with *Planète*.<sup>11</sup> In the text 'Sauve qui doit',<sup>12</sup> published on 22 October 1961 as a protest against *Planète*, the surrealists (among them Breton and Jaguer) warned against the mechanisation and degradation of man, against the 'universal lobotomy', and they finished their essay with the motto: '*Les robots ne passeront pas*'. In the 1950s, surrealists published several texts in the journal and maintained contact with it but by the time Makowski arrived in France, their ways had parted for good.

7 A. Breton, 'Prolegomena to a Third Manifesto of Surrealism – or Not', in idem, *Manifestos of Surrealism*, transl. by R. Seaver and H.R. Lane, Ann Arbor (MI): University of Michigan Press, 1969, 279–94.

8 L. Kachur, *Displaying the Marvelous: Marcel Duchamp, Salvador Dali, and Surrealist Exhibition Installations*, Cambridge (MA): MIT Press, 2001; see also A. Kuczyńska, 'Le surréalisme en 1947 – Occultism and the Post-War Marginalisation of Surrealism', *Art Inquiry*, 16: *Margins and Marginalization* (2014): 87–100.

9 For more on the eros exhibition, see A. Mahon, *Surrealism and the Politics of Eros 1938–1968*, London: Thames & Hudson, 2005.

10 J. Bergier, L. Pauwels, *Le Matin des magiciens*, Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 1960. On the relationship between Fantastic realism and surrealism, see G. Parkinson, *Futures of Surrealism: Myth, Science Fiction and Fantastic Art in France 1936–1969*, New Haven (CT): Yale University Press, 2015.

11 K.M. Cabañas, *The Myth of Nouveau Réalisme: Art and the Performative in Postwar France*, New Haven (CT) – London: Yale University Press, 2013, 29.

12 <https://www.andrebretton.fr/work/56600100098670> [accessed 10 Nov. 2021].



Zbigniew Makowski, Untitled, 1963, ink,  
gouache on paper, private collection

On 6 June 1962, the vernissage of *La Cinquième Saison* exhibition was held in Galerie du Ranelagh (Rue de Vigne, Paris XVI); it was organised jointly by the Phases group and the surrealist movement. Makowski took part in the exhibition. The presentation of artworks was accompanied by the screening of films by, among others, Norman McLaren, Roman Polański, Walerian Borowczyk, and Jan Lenica. Another Pole to

participate in the exhibition was Tytus Sas-Dzieduszycki. The subtitle of the exhibition, *Greffages: papiers collés, photomontages, reliefs, constructions, poèmes-objets, collage, etc.*, referred to a horticultural term, that of plant grafting. The entire text in the catalogue consisted of selected passages from the dictionary entry on *greffe* (Fr. grafting, graft), and metaphorically indicated the inspirational function of the surrealist activities, at the same time emphasising the need for an organic similarity on both sides of the plant material for the operation to be successful. In a letter to his future wife, Maja, Makowski wrote: ‘my *objet* hangs on a separate wall beside Breton’s and Alechinsky’s. We are there *en trois*. What a great triumph indeed!’<sup>13</sup> The efforts to identify the work have thus far been unsuccessful. Makowski described it thus: ‘I found a plank, it may have been, say, 1.4 metres by 30 cm, and I covered it in laid paper which I treated with onion. The work was horizontally divided into two parts. The upper one was composed of two rows, which in turn comprised several scores of little squares which featured most varied objects: a button, a piece of lace, several had little nails driven at a slant, there was also a bottle opener in one. And some annotations. The inconsistency of the world, so to speak. The lower part was filled with a very densely written text’.<sup>14</sup> In a letter, Makowski provided an account of his impressions from the vernissage: ‘I got to know André Breton, who shook my hand and expressed his admiration of my work, which, by the way, has already been sold to one of the surrealist poets’.<sup>15</sup> ‘This sojourn marks an

13 A letter to M. Łękawa of 5 June 1962.

14 A. Kuczyńska, ‘Seulement la liberté. Zbigniew Makowski, Paris and Surrealism in 1962’, in *Paris et les artistes Polonais / Paris and the Polish Artists 1945–1989*, eds. M. Geron, J. Malinowski, J.W. Sienkiewicz, Toruń: Wydawnictwo UMK, 2018, 282.

15 A letter to M. Łękawa of 15 June 1962.

entire era in my life.' 'Indeed, in spite of everything,' he concluded, Paris is the best school a painter can have. It is ourselves that we learn here'.<sup>16</sup>

For the artist, it was a time of intense work. 'I created a painting which, so says Jaguer, will be the key to the Phases exhibition this autumn. ... It is a square painting (!), dark brown and black with strands of Paris blue and a strictly symmetrical figure that creates a sense of foreboding while retaining a dream-like quality, it is at once flat and very spatial'.<sup>17</sup> The means of art: geometric shape, composition and colour arrangement result in an oneiric and disturbing effect. The starting point must have been the state of mind and a form corresponding to it or, conversely, a form that produced the state of mind. During his stay in Paris, Makowski made a series of paintings, miniature copies of which he sketched in his *Journal* to then recreate them, with a more exhaustive description, in another book.<sup>18</sup> The inventory developed by the artist suggests that during his French sojourn, he created 18 paintings of various shapes and sizes, as well as two books: *Piero della Francesca* and *L'Homme et son image*. Works on paper and woodcuts, which – as we know from other sources – he also busied himself with, but did not record. One of these works, not listed in the register but important, was the woodcut featured as a special inset in the eighth issue of *Phases*, in 1962.<sup>19</sup>

Its very powerful form is composed of basic shapes, in terms of both the visual (triangle and a semi-circle), and the archetypal (the sky and the earth). Such a form evoked associations leading towards seemingly divergent but in fact from time immemorial perceived as convergent directions: from the cosmic scale of the mythical marriage and the union of heaven and earth to the human scale and the sphere of eros. The syzygy, i.e., a conjunction of two [opposite] elements, results in an eruption, a catastrophe, and the concurrent ecstasy. What is captured in this simple, seemingly static, graphic form, is a cosmic departure from the state of equilibrium, a flash and an illumination. Contrary to appearances, it is an extraordinarily dynamic and simultaneously mythical painting. Furthermore, its strength lies in it being grounded in the artist's private history – the cosmic landscape overlaps with a frame from his intimate memory: the yellow room, and Anna. This geometric, mythical and – paradoxically – also sensual layout became the point of origin for the majority of the Paris paintings. Makowski would later return to it in a great variety of ways. In 1964, the artist copied, redrew and annotated his French *Journal*. The short, cata-

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Z. Makowski, *Dziennik* 1962, July 1962.

<sup>18</sup> Idem, *Dziennik* 1964.

<sup>19</sup> The figure shows the drawing that served as the basis for the woodcut; however, they differ in the inscription. Currently in the National Museum in Poznań.

logue entry-like descriptions then created, for instance, extend this piece of information: 'magical with the chalice, red'<sup>20</sup> by adding: 'a small painting, v. carefully crafted, powerfully «magical»'.<sup>21</sup> The miniature drawing shows the form derived from the basic juxtaposition of a semi-circle and a triangle, on this occasion inverted and transformed into the form of a chalice from which in this layout countless little points seethe towards the sky; on the two sides of the chalice, there is the Sun and the Moon. In another painting, *Green Garden with Emblems*, we notice the characteristic signs including, among others, a flight of stairs, sword, and dice. Makowski adds that it is 'the first programmatic «symbolist» painting'.<sup>22</sup> The inverted commas used with the word 'symbolist' is significant: the work has little to do with symbolism as a movement; however, it is the first painting that features the signs that the artist would constantly return to from then on.

In August, having arrived in Provence (the town of Plan de la Tour), Makowski started to keep a journal. It is a small booklet made of sewn together pieces of laid paper. The notes were taken between 3 August 1962, that is, from his arrival in Provence, to 13 September 1962, that is, almost until the end of his stay in France. We are struck by the anxiety recorded in these writings, the constantly recurring sense of existential dread, loneliness, and transience. Uncertainty as to the status of reality engenders the need to incessantly check whether or not one actually exists and what it is supposed to mean anyway. In the condensed form of a poem, it may take the following form:

'1. Alone in the room I write night and wind.  
NIGHT AND WIND WRITTEN imagine  
night and wind. At the moment of writing  
2. NIGHT AT THE MOMENT OF WRITING. Night is  
me when alone in the room HELPLESS AGAINST SLEEP  
HELPLESS AGAINST SLEEP I AM. AGAINST  
3. MY OWN SLEEP HELPLESS, I do not judge sleep  
nor do I judge the wind. That's how  
we denote define depart'.<sup>23</sup>

What brings relief is the return to objects, to naming them and recording their names, listing and numbering them, creating registers. However, it soon turns out that this meticulousness is not worth much, that we remain 'a set of noise', while at night we wake up 'helpless against our own sleep'.

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<sup>20</sup> Z. Makowski, *Dziennik 1962*.

<sup>21</sup> Idem, *Dziennik 1964*, 30.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> Idem, *Dziennik 1962*.





Zbigniew Makowski *Journal* 1962

Heidegger, Maurice Blanchot, Georges Bataille, André Malraux, Claude Lévi-Strauss, Herbert Read, and Leonora Carrington. Breton observes how the scope of the notion of magic changes depending on the field of science or art represented by those who use it. The object of surrealists' fascination and one of the reasons behind the interest they had taken in magic was German romanticism. And it is to German romanticism, Novalis in particular, that Breton refers in his introduction to *L'Art magique*.<sup>24</sup> He repeats the words of the poet: 'Love is the principle that causes magic. Love works magically'.<sup>27</sup> Breton writes that the thought of Novalis enables one to acknowledge that the phrase 'magic art' is the moment when two notions derived from two different vocabularies find a joint border and strive to enter the vernacular. As an example, he takes the sentence: 'An enchanting girl is an enchantress more real than one might be willing to believe.' 'In this way, in the eyes of Novalis, magic, even divested of its ritual apparatus, has retained all its efficiency in our everyday life'<sup>28</sup> – Breton commented.

While staying in Provence, Makowski discovered the 1957 book by André Breton and Gérard Legrand *L'Art magique*,<sup>24</sup> and he was greatly impressed by it. On 14 August, he noted in his *Journal*: 'a book on magic by Breton. Perhaps too much attention paid to identifying masks. Ethnography instead of a MAGICAL BOOK ON MAGIC. I must create the latter. Enough for today'.<sup>25</sup>

Two days later, on 16 August, he noted in the *Journal*, again in capital letters: 'NOVALIS in the foreword to L'ART MAGIQUE'. In the introduction to the book, Breton emphasised the complex area – approached differently in various branches of knowledge – of what is referred to as magic and the magic art. A large part of the volume presents the answers to a survey on these issues sent, among others, to: Martin

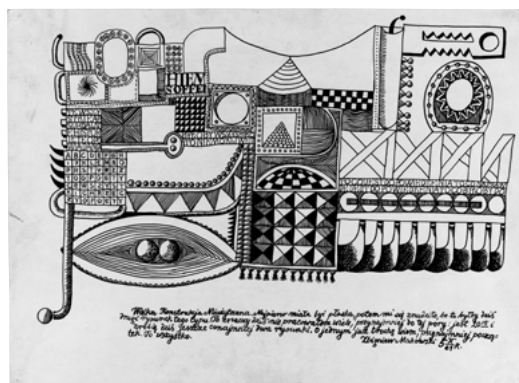
24 A. Breton, G. Legrand, *L'Art magique*, Paris: Club français du livre, 1957.

25 Z. Makowski, *Dziennik* 1962.

26 Ibid.

27 A. Breton, G. Legrand, *L'Art magique*, in A. Breton, *Oeuvres complètes*, vol. 4, M. Bonnet (ed.), Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 2008, 47–289.

28 A. Breton, 'Sur l'art magique', *Le surréalisme même*, 2 (1957): 28.



Zbigniew Makowski, *Great Contraption of No Use*, ink on paper 1961, National Museum in Poznań

For the surrealists, much like for the romantics, art (both poetry and visual arts) constituted an irrational and thus particularly efficient mode of cognition, incomparably more efficient than others. An image created by an accidental juxtaposition of objects (as the definition of surrealism states: ‘the chance encounter of a sewing machine and an umbrella on a dissecting table’<sup>29</sup>) could reveal relations between pre-

viously unrelated phenomena. Such a conviction implies the existence of a complex system of analogies that serves as the foundation for the structure of the world, hidden from reason but cognisable through intuition. It is the return to the basic tenet of sympathetic magic. According to Breton, the magical and religious complex constitutes one of the most fundamental elements of human mental inventory. This manner of perceiving magic, leading to its transference from the field of nature as such to the internal world, was very dear to Makowski, much like the equation of magic with poetry and love – drawn from Novalis – is the principle for understanding ‘magic art’ in Breton’s book. It is also worth observing that Breton is above all a poet and the sources of his fascination are of literary nature. Rather apparent is their intellectual and historical character. He did not trust ‘believers’. Paradoxically, it appears that he kept ‘his preference for a rational and (semi-)scientific approach’.<sup>30</sup>

Surrealism contrasted the marvellous with the mystery (*le merveilleux contre le mystère*),<sup>31</sup> and the pursuit of profound meanings with sensual impact of direct stimuli, including the direct spiritual effect of signs. This concept appears to have had Makowski intrigued. At the same time, however, unlike the majority of surrealists, he developed a growing interest in Carl Gustav Jung. The external order of events was such: on 21 August, the artist wrote in his *Journal*: ‘I bought a book on alchemy’;<sup>32</sup>

29 de Lautréamont, *Maldoror and Poems*, transl by P. Knight, New York: Penguin, 1988, 216–17.

30 T.M. Bauduin, *Occultation of Surrealism: A Study of the Relationship between Bretonian Surrealism and Western Esotericism*, thesis, University of Amsterdam, 2012, 32, <http://dare.uva.nl/document/462796> [accessed 10 Nov. 2021].

31 J. Cheng, M. Richardson, ‘Merveilleux’, in *Surrealism. Key Concepts*, eds. K. Fijalkowski, M. Richardson, London – New York: Routledge, 2016, 240; A. Breton, ‘Le merveilleux contre le mystère’ (1936), in A. Breton, *Oeuvres complètes*, vol. 3, M. Bonnet (ed.), Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 1999, 653–8.

32 Z. Makowski, *Dziennik 1962*.

on 27 August: 'I have seen *Psychologie und Alchemie* by C.G. Jung, but in German. Hundreds of drawings. I'll go (tomorrow?) to 37 Av. D'Opera – they are supposed to have it in English';<sup>33</sup> on 31 August: 'I want to make a magic book for myself. Exclusively'.<sup>34</sup> In the list of activities performed on 1 September, we read: 'I did not buy Jung. I bought four issues of *Le surréalisme, même* and browsed through them near Louvre'.<sup>35</sup> It is difficult to say why Makowski did not buy Jung's book on this occasion: whether the English version he wanted was nowhere to be found or whether he decided to spend his money on surrealist journals. What we do know is that he would return to Jung later. Still, an almost complete edition of *Le surréalisme, même* (in his collection, Makowski did not have only the final, fifth issue of the journal) stayed with him until the end of his life. Issue No. 2 featured Breton's text 'Sur l'art magique',<sup>36</sup> in which the author recapitulated the major thoughts conveyed in the preface to the book. In the recently published encyclopaedia of surrealism, in the entry 'magic', we read: 'The surrealist concept of magic, which became the key – albeit controversial – element of the activity of the French group in the post-war period, draws both from «primitive» mythology, and from occultism'.<sup>37</sup> The surrealists were also interested in various illusionist performances and the 'wonders' from the films of Georges Méliès. In an equal measure they took advantage of occultism, the ethnographic definitions of 'primitive' magic, and the Freudian concept according to which all art evolved out of magic; they would also willingly read theoretical studies. One can hardly speak of a single model of the surrealist approach to magic. What they all shared was the interest in this kind of human activity. Breton gained most of his knowledge in this field from the books by Romantics and their academic interpretations. In an interview, he once said that there can be no question of any fideism or conversion on the part of surrealism. Quite the contrary, surrealists subordinated esotericism and magic to their own goals.<sup>38</sup> In an interview conducted in January 1962, he claimed, 'Everything is magical and the power of Watteau's painting is the same kind of fascination as the one aroused by an alchemical drawing'.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

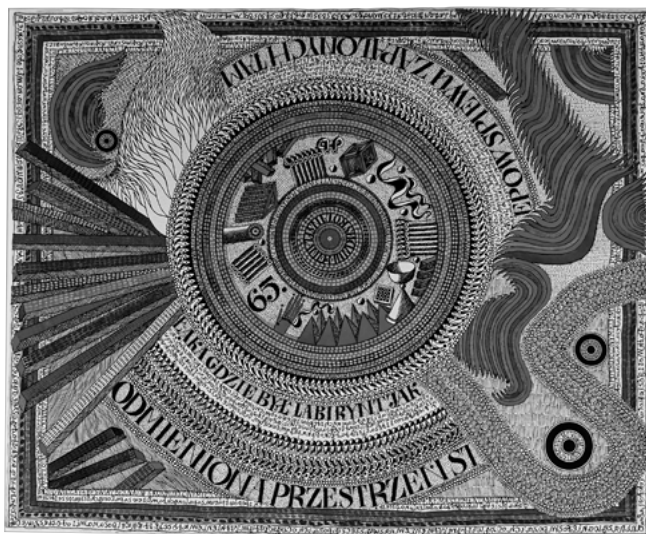
<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> A. Breton, 'Sur l'art magique', op. cit., 28–33.

<sup>37</sup> K. Nohenden, 'Magic', in *International Encyclopedia of Surrealism*, vol. 1: *Movements*, M. Richardson (ed.), London: Bloomsbury Visual Arts, 2019, 241–3.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> A. Breton, '«Le surréalisme continue à vivre comme esprit et comme mouvement à travers des groupes qui se renouvellent» nous déclare André Breton', an interview with J. Piatier, *Le Monde* (1962) 13 Jan., <https://www.lemonde.fr/archives/article/1962/01/13/le-surrealisme-continue-a-vivre-comme-es->



The interest in Breton's concept of magic art, with the basic role being played in it by the visual, sensual impact of the image and a concurrent fascination with Jung may appear self-contradictory; nevertheless, Makowski was able to combine the two motifs. Their common denominator is the alchemy that the artist could discover both in surrealism and in Jung's books. This assumption defined the artist's attitude to signs. On the one hand, following surrealists, he was aware that they may be used the same way that one uses a bright red hue – to involve affect rather than to construct meaning. On the other hand, he used the memory of the archetypal, psychologically valuable potential inherent in the *signifiants*. Signs subject to the surrealist procedure of *dépaysement*, or that are simply incomprehensible, have no lesser effect than intelligible ones, but in a different way – they attract one's attention, serving as a screen for the psyche.

In this way, the interest in the marvellous (observed as early as his graduation painting), the impulses of liberating one's memory and imagination present in the Krzywe Koło Circle, the sceptical attitude to cybernetics and structuralism were overlapped with the experiences of the journey to Paris – a journey to the West which, paradoxically, through surrealism and Jung concurrently became a journey to the East, an initiatory journey of sorts, in which magic and alchemy played a fundamental part.

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lent-nous-declare-andre-breton\_2352742\_18192-18.html [accessed 25 Dec.  
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Breton, *Oeuvres complètes*, vol. 4, op. cit., 1226.

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### Abstract:

The paper considers a short period in the oeuvre of Zbigniew Makowski – a several months' stay in Paris in 1962 – and demonstrates that the catalyst for transformations and the stimulus that resulted in the existing artistic and existential experiences crystallising in a new magical painting formula, was surrealism in its late stage, particularly André Breton and Gérard Legrand's *L'Art magique* (1957), but also the concepts of exhibitions, such as *Intrusion in the Enchanters Domain* (D'Arcy Galleries, New York 1960–1961). In the case of Makowski, these sources of inspiration are rather atypically associated with his fascination with the psychology of Carl Gustav Jung. The magic of the artist's paintings created in the 1960s consists above all in the sensual illumination, the marvellous, achieved through the use of painting techniques. At the same time, Makowski introduces a lexicon of signs that refer at once to basic sensual experiences and to the esoteric tradition.

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### Keywords:

**Zbigniew Makowski,  
Polish painting after 1945,  
l'art magique,  
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