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**THE DOUBLE EYE OF AN ARTIST.
GRAPHIC INTERPRETATIONS
OF WORKS OF CONTEMPORARY
ART IN POLISH INFORMATIONAL
BOOKS FOR CHILDREN AND
YOUTHS**

Information books constituted a significant part of the publishing offer intended for young readers and were present in it virtually from the very beginning of the history of the children's book. It is enough to mention the pioneering work – a pictorial encyclopedia by the Czech pedagogue, philosopher, and reformer John Amos Comenius – titled *Orbis sensualium pictus* (Visible World in Pictures), published in 1658. It is of particular importance for the topic taken up here, due to the abundance of illustrative material it contains. It is no coincidence that the work is considered the world's first picture book.¹

The terms currently in the Polish-language literature on the subject include, in addition to the most established² 'popular science books' ('książki popularnonaukowe' – J. Papuzińska, N. Paprocka, B. Staniów, A. Wandel) and slightly broader 'educational books' ('książki edukacyjne' – M. Zając, J. Friedrich) with a clear didactic element, also the designation 'informational books' ('książki informacyjne' E. Jamróz-Stolarska, K. Rybak) is increasingly used. The latter terms, along with the commonly used international category of *nonfiction* (books that are not fiction),³ significantly expand the list of represented subject matter areas, once associated primarily with the achievements of science and technology.⁴ Going beyond the traditionally understood scientific disciplines, these terms can refer to all manifestations of human activity, including the creation in the field of art – in this case, the most interesting for us. The indisputable function of these books, regardless of terminology, is to disseminate knowledge about the world around us, 'satisfy and develop readers' interests (...), develop their criticism and independent thinking, and deepen knowledge.'⁵

1 M. Cackowska, J. Szyłak, *Jan Amos Komeński Orbis sensualium pictus in: Książka obrazkowa. Leksykon*, vol. 1, ed. M. Cackowska, H. Dymel-Trzebiatowska, J. Szyłak, Poznań, 2018, pp. 19–26.

2 It seems to be a result of the Polish scientists' activity in an international research network focused on the questions of the picture book. The term 'information book' probably owes its popularity also to the compendium on the picture book *Routledge Companion to Picturebooks*, ed. B. Kümmerling-Meibauer, Oxon-New York, 2018, especially to the chapter by N. von Merveldt, *Informational Picturebooks*, pp. 231–245. For the latest review of the issue, including the very concept of 'information book' and further extensive literature, see: K. Rybak et al., *Dziecięca książka informacyjna w Polsce. Wybrane problemy*, 'Filoteknos' 2022, vol. 12, pp. 363–383.

3 Cf. competition categories for children's and youth book with the most important international confrontation BolognaRagazzi Award <https://www.bolognachildrens-bookfair.com/en/awards/bolognaragazzi-award/8382.html> [accessed 16.01.2023].

4 *Książka popularnonaukowa* [entry], in: *O książce. Mała encyklopedia dla nastolatków*, ed. J. Majerowa, Wrocław, 1987, pp. 194–195.

5 M. Matwijów, *Książka popularnonaukowa* [entry], in: *Encyklopedia książki*, vol. 2, ed. A. Żbikowska-Migoń, M. Skalska-Zlat, Wrocław 2017, p. 165.

The informational book for young people, using extensive artwork, thrived in Poland as early as the interwar period, thanks to avant-garde projects by Franciszka and Stefan Themerson from the 1930s.⁶ In the second half of the last century, the dynamic activity and rich publishing offer of, above all, *Nasza Księgarnia* (Our Bookshop – transl.) and *Państwowe Zakłady Wydawnictw Szkolnych* (State School Publishing Institute– transl.), followed since 1974 by *Wydawnictwa Szkolne i Pedagogiczne* (School and Paedagogy Publishing House), even resulted in the specialisation of artists-illustrators in specific subject ranges. Names worth mentioning here include Waldemar Andrzejewski, Mateusz Gawrys, Janusz Grabiański, Jerzy Heintze, Romuald Klaybor, Ludwik Maciąg, Stanisław Rozwadowski, Włodzimierz Terechowicz, Janusz Towpik, and Bohdan Zieleniec.⁷

It seems, however, that the popularity of iconography-rich information books, especially picture books, reached a previously unseen scale thanks to the clearly marked 21st-century revival of the Polish illustrated book for children and young people. One of the indisputable reasons for this is the international success achieved by Aleksandra and Daniel Mizieliński thanks to their original projects – with the unprecedented *Maps* at the forefront⁸ – and the large-sized books *Pszczoly* (Bees), *Drzewa* (Trees), and *Brud* (Dirt),⁹ daringly illustrated by Piotr Socha.

Richly illustrated information books for children and young people constitute an important part of Polish publishers' catalogues, and an increasing number of Polish artists can demonstrate such titles in their portfolios. In addition to the Mizieliński duo, names worth mentioning here include Jacek Ambrożewski, Jan Bajtlik, Maciek Błażniak, Katarzyna Bogucka, Robert Czajka, Agata Dudek and Małgorzata Nowak, Emilia Dziubak, Bartek Ignacik, Nikola Kucharska, Gosia Kulik, Agata Loth-Ignaciuk, Marianna Oklejak, Ewa and Paweł Pawlak, Joanna Rzezak, Tomasz Samojlik, Piotr Socha, and Adam Wójcicki. It is worth adding that many

6 It is enough to cite just a few titles: *Pan Tom buduje dom*, *Poczta*, or *Narodziny liter*.

7 Cf. A. Wincencjusz-Patyna, *Stacja Ilustracja. Polska ilustracja książkowa 1950–1980. Artystyczne kreacje i realizacje*, Wrocław, 2008, especially pp. 71–82.

8 A. i D. Mizielińscy, *Mapy. Obrazkowa podróż po lądach, morzach i kulturach świata*, Warszawa 2012. To date, the book has been published in 39 countries – their full list and many other information on the authors' homepage: <https://oladaniel.com/maps>.

9 P. Socha, *Pszczoly* (with text edited by W. Grajkowski), Warsaw 2015; P. Socha and W. Grajkowski, *Drzewa*, Warsaw 2018; P. Socha, M. Utnik-Strugała, *Brud*, Warsaw, 2022.

of their projects are of an all-encompassing authorial nature, i.e., the artists are also authors of the texts contained in the books.

The abundance of books expanding knowledge in a manner that is both attractive (also thanks to the extensive graphic layer) and unconventional (e.g., comic-strip style) does not translate into adequately extensive literature on the subject. In synthetic studies, researchers of children's and youth's books devote their attention to different fields in proportion to the popularity of individual topics. The prevalent ones are those related to nature (animals, plants, the human environment, environmental issues, elements, the human body, including diseases), exploration of the globe (expeditions, trips) and space, history of individual parts of the world, technological development or history of discoveries and inventions. The least space seems to have been devoted to culture-shaping human activity (except cuisine, perhaps), even though its domain – literature, music, theatre, cinema, folklore, fine and applied arts – is as vast as nature. Only a part of this activity refers to the world of art and – understandably – even less to issues related to its contemporary works.¹⁰

I am not concerned here with the problem of categorising and distinguishing the picture book itself as, from my perspective, part of a larger collection of (richly) illustrated books. I do not pay attention to the recipients' age categories, either. Finally, I do not analyse the texts contained in selected publications. As the author of the article, I am primarily interested in the visual layer of the books discussed, the choice of their style and means of expression. Above all, I am interested in the effect of the application of a 'double filter', which I see in the superposition of the interpretation made by graphic designers responsible for the books' visual layer upon the works of the artists presented in them: they are a product of interpretation themselves as well.

¹⁰ This is not an appropriate place for explaining the ambiguous concept of 'contemporary art'. It is most often used in relation to all phenomena occurring in the history of art from around the mid-20th century to the present day, sometimes narrowed down to the intuitively understood modern art – from today's perspective, it means the current century. Analysing the material contained in the books devoted to 'contemporary art', it seems that their authors focus on showing innovative, avant-garde, revealing strategies, on the activities of unconventional artists using new media and technologies, focusing on transdisciplinarity, breaking the limitation of artistic disciplines, seeking, commenting on reality, taking up difficult topics.

'ZACHĘTY DO SZTUKI' (ENCOURAGEMENTS TO ART) OF/FROM THE ZACHĘTA COLLECTION

In illustrated books, works of art appear as a valuable and complex source of inspiration, borrowings, travesty, as an area of a special, often sophisticated game played with the recipient¹¹ at different levels, often becoming a multi-address proposal, going beyond age categories. I wrote about the diverse nature of the relationship between illustration and the heritage of art in the book *Odpowiedni dać rzeczy obraz. O genezie ilustracji książkowych* (Giving an Appropriate Picture to the Thing. On the Genesis of Book Illustrations), in the section titled *Dłużnicy sztuki* (Debtors of Art).¹² Books relating to art may deal with its history or selected phenomena. References to art history appear more often than mentions of contemporary art. Most publications present the selected person's achievements or enter into a creative dialogue with them.¹³ Often, books about art can be a proposal for the interpretation of a specific work. An excellent Polish example is, undoubtedly, the already concluded *Mały Koneser* (The Little Connoisseur) series by the Dwie Siostry publishing house, to which Elżbieta Jamróz-Stolarska devoted a lot of attention in her article *Art of the Book – Books about Art*.¹⁴

Art in publications for young people can function as an area of exploration and improvement as well as diversification of their own development. Therefore, the child's artistic creation is sometimes stimulated through activity books that encourage drawing, painting, scribbling, cutting, completing, pasting, etc. and simultaneously have

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- 11 Cf. S.L. Beckett, *Artistic Allusions in Picturebooks*, in: *New Directions in Picturebook Research*, ed. T. Colomer, B. Kümmerling-Meibauer, C. Silva-Diaz, London-New York, 2010; Beckett, S. *Crossover Picturebooks. Genre for All Ages*, New York & London, 2012; *Postmodern Picturebooks*, ed. L. Sipe, S. Pantaleo, New York & London, 2008; M. Howorus-Czajka, *Gry ze sztuką w książce obrazkowej*, in: *Książka obrazkowa. Wprowadzenie*, ed. M. Cackowska, H. Dymek-Trzebiatowska., J. Szyłak. Poznań, 2018, pp. 173–190.
 - 12 A. Wincencjusz-Patyna, *Odpowiedni dać rzeczy obraz. O genezie ilustracji książkowych*, Wrocław, 2019, pp. 206–327.
 - 13 Frida Kahlo seems to be one of the most popular figures in this type of publications on a global scale – cf. B. Westergaard Bjørlo. *Frida Kahlo Picturebook Biographies: Facts and Fiction in Words and Images*, in: N. Goga, S. Hoem Iversen A.-S. Teigland, *Verbal and Visual Strategies in Nonfiction Picturebooks. Theoretical and Analytical Approaches*. Oslo, 2021, pp. 110–123. Also in Poland, an educational activity book devoted to the Mexican painter was published: M. Kowersko-Urbańczyk, J. Styszyńska, *Idol. Frida Kahlo*. Warsaw, 2017.
 - 14 E. Jamróz-Stolarska *Sztuka książki – książki o sztuce. Wpływ współczesnych polskich wydawców na kształtowanie wrażliwości estetycznej młodych czytelników*, 'Sztuka Edycji' 2020, no. 2, pp. 7–18. Cf. also M. Howorus-Czajka, *Gry ze sztuką w książce obrazkowej*, op. cit., p. 181.

an educational value, intertwining with the information books we are interested in here. Titles with a clear cognitive character most often use reproductions of original works of art, leaving the graphic elaboration of the book to the artist, although it happens that they contain a fiction thread that gains its own, original visual form. These include publications of the Zachęta National Gallery of Art after a concept by Zofia Dubowska (-Grynberg): *Zachęta do sztuki* (Encouragement to Art)¹⁵ and *Kto to jest artysta?* (Who Is an Artist?)¹⁶

Zachęta do sztuki. Sztuka współczesna dla dzieci (Encouragement to Art. Contemporary Art for Children) was advertised on the last page of the cover as ‘the first book for children on Polish contemporary art’.¹⁷ It was created on the basis of workshops conducted by Dubowska in the Warsaw gallery, and presents various phenomena in the field of art, mainly from the second half of the 20th century, illustrating them with several dozen works by 25 artists. The book combines such works as two compositions by Andrzej Wróblewski from 1953–1954, firmly rooted in the painting tradition, marking the lower chronological frame, and a video by Jarosław Kozakiewicz titled *Transfer* from 2006 as an example of the newest art.

Natka Luniak,¹⁸ the graphic designer of the book, inspired herself in the art created by children, the supposed recipients of *Encouragement to Art*. In many of her illustrations that accompany the reproductions of original works of art, she referred to children’s drawings with their sincere, spontaneous imperfection characterised by a contour left open, the curved line instead of the straight one (buildings, draft of railway carriages, rows of windows), simplified human and animal silhouettes, uncertainty in reproducing more difficult shapes (fancy forms of vases, pantographs), naivety of reproduction of the visible world (spatial relations, rows of flowers in a vase), crayon colouring going beyond the contour. By combining the effects of children’s or quasi-children’s art with works by adult professionals, it directly encourages such activity while demonstrating a range of possibilities in the field of technique: prints (colourful handprints, potato stamps), stencils, assemblages – compositions made of small ready-made elements, photography, various possibilities of using crayons, pencils, markers, and paints. In the

15 Z. Dubowska-Grynberg., *Zachęta do sztuki. Sztuka współczesna dla dzieci*, graphic design by N. Luniak, Warsaw, 2008.

16 J. Dubowska, J. Bajtlik *Kto to jest artysta?*, Warszawa, 2013.

17 Z. Dubowska-Grynberg, *Zachęta do sztuki*, op. cit., back cover.

18 N. Luniak (b. 1981), graduate of the European Academy of Arts in Warsaw. Creator of the Kalimba brand specialised in toys; the offer includes dolls, puppets, plush toys, mascots. N. Luniak also designs games, puzzles, books, outfits, and accessories.

composition of double-page spreads, she is inspired by the arrangement of forms, the set of colours used, means of expression and individual motifs from selected works of art, interpreting them in a different way each time, suggesting one of the possible inspirations: technical, stylistic, content- or colour-related, and hybrid. The book is actually an artistic formulary of sorts: it contains 25 ideas for creating one's own work of art, while familiarising young participants of culture with contemporary art, explaining its intricacies and less obvious aspects, and introducing a fair amount of professional terminology.

In turn, the picture book *Who Is an Artist?*, created five years later after Zofia Dubowska's concept, was designed with panache by Jan Bajtlik.¹⁹ The cover can be associated with a kaleidoscope and aptly introduces the reader to the colourful and diverse world of contemporary artists' strategy. The visual layer includes 23 (24 with Matejko's *Battle of Grunwald*, the black and white reproduction of which is the core of Edward Krasieński's installation from 1997) works by Polish artists, mainly from the 1990s and the first decade of the 21st century. The oldest work is the undated *Still Life (The Lilac-Coloured Jug)* by Artur Nacht-Samborski (probably from the 1950s), and the most recent ones are a computer print by Tymek Borowski and a marker drawing on paper by Jaśmina Wójcik – both works from 2012.

In most cases, using the limitless potential of typography, Bajtlik composed short texts into reproductions of original works of art as answers to the title question of the publication. Naming the basic creative activity for each of the projects, the Warsaw designer was inspired by the template lettering used in the original work (Paweł Susid), in colours that dyed the painted letters (Tadeusz Dominik), or in the moulding technique (plasticine in the case of Jadwiga Sawicka, tape for Bajtlik). Sometimes it is the composition of the work that constitutes the starting point. For example, Katarzyna Kozyra's *Pyramid of Animals* was 'translated' into a column of text stretched over the entire spread – the book should be rotated to intensify the effect; in turn, rotating the shape of the boat's hull and reading new meanings in the case of Krzysztof Bednarski results in turning the signature upside down. For the suggestion of a moving image (Zbigniew Libera photographed by Zygmunt Rytko during filming), the font was blurred. A close-up of a detail

¹⁹ J. Bajtlik, (b. 1989), graduate of the Academy of Fine Arts in Warsaw at the Publishing Graphics Studio led by Prof. Lech Majewski and the Book Design Studio led by Prof. Maciej Buszewicz (2013). Internationally renowned graphic designer. He illustrates and designs books, covers, and posters. As a press illustrator, he collaborated with numerous magazines in Poland and abroad; as a graphic designer, he cooperates with the Hermès Paris fashion house. Member of the STGU association of Polish graphic designers.

of Joanna Rajkowska's work titled *The Love of a Man Named Dog*, showing a fragment of the feet of a plaster figure and dead crickets, is accompanied by 'scattered' text, printed carelessly and unevenly (some letters are indistinct, others, in turn, blurred due to an excessive amount of paint), arranged in the message: 'Not everything they do is "pretty"':

Bajtlik uses black and colour fonts, serif and sans serif, handwriting, applies existing fonts and invents new ones. For the grand finale, he featured a parade of letters arranged into a simple conclusion: 'What artists create is called art'. Lordly block fonts with a period ornament go hand in hand with inconspicuous, ordinary characters and witty, original creations of toothed, animalised C and A. The Warsaw-based graphic designer might treat the above-mentioned publication as a kind of experimental training ground before authoring his own activity book, *Typogryzmol* (Typoscraw), for which he received the Bologna Ragazzi Award in 2015.

In Zofia Dubowska's books, the 'original' works²⁰ are placed next to a graphic commentary or merge into a compositional whole with it; this is the case, especially, for Bajtlik's design where a large part of the reproduced works is often 'overmasked'. The new quality stems from a close visual relationship, and what we look at in the discussed publications has been passed, in each case, through the gaze of two different artists. This is an example of following the individual creators' changing optics. A completely different tactic was adopted in the three subsequent works where we are dealing with a specific homogenisation of achievements of different artists through the illustrators' own reworking.

A.R.T.

In 2011, Sebastian Cichocki's book titled *S.Z.T.U.K.A. Szalenie Zajmujące Twory Utalentowanych i Krnąbrnych Artystów* (A.R.T. Extremely Interesting Works by Talented and Rebellious Artists)²¹ was published in the internationally acclaimed *S.E.R.I.A.* series from the Dwie Siostry publishing house that had also issued titles devoted to contemporary architecture (*D.O.M.E.K.*) (H.O.U.S.E.) and design (*D.E.S.I.G.N.*).²² The three books were designed by Aleksandra and

20 Understood as the source material of these publications. All the works reproduced in both books belong to the collection of the Zachęta National Gallery of Art.

21 For more information about the series, see A. Wincencjusz-Patyna, *Odpowiedni dać rzeczy obraz*, op. cit., pp. 133–139.

22 S. Cichocki *S.Z.T.U.K.A. Szalenie Zajmujące Twory Utalentowanych i Krnąbrnych Artystów*, graphic design by A. and D. Mizieliński, Warszawa, 2011.

Thanks to the fluid identity of contemporary art, which eludes any definitions and shows a different (not always new) face every now and then, this art seems to be an endless field of experimentation, also in terms of its reception. [...] Such publications seem to be all the more valuable as they teach young participants the culture of perception of such a diverse and non-obvious art, an art that escapes simple, unambiguous explanations, that opens up to different experiences and different sensibilities, while sometimes appearing for the sake of the very fact of appearing and detaching from routine, requiring nothing more from the viewer.

Daniel Mizieliński;²³ it is worth emphasising that *D.O.M.E.K.* was also their book debut.²⁴

In contrast to the above-mentioned titles, this publication presents works by artists from around the world and over a span of almost a hundred years – from the indisputable turn in art that followed the exhibition of Marcel Duchamp's *Fountain* (1917), to the 24-hour film collage entitled *The Clock* by the American artist Christian Marclay (2010). 51 short chapters, corresponding to the number of works mentioned by Cichocki, describe the works that most fully demonstrate the individual artists' avant-garde attitudes, each of them introducing a previously unknown quality to the world of art. In their project, the Mizielińskis abandoned the use of reproductions of works or photographs of objects and established a common graphic denominator for all these diverse accomplishments.

Expressive, thick black outline and saturated pure colours, are often used in contrasting combinations. In addition to general views that provide a realistic illusion of space, panoramas and close-ups also appear. However, it is people – the artist and the recipients of art – that seem to be the most important. A caricatural hint in the figures provides a humorous element of the presented scenes. The artists themselves, depicted in simplified but accurate portrait images, are presented next to their most famous, most controversial, or best-recognised works on the first double-page spread with an information text (the subtitle of each chapter always includes the artist's name and the time of creation of their work), while the second spread is fully taken up by one large illustration. Most often, it presents the audience in interaction with the work.

Sometimes it is a bird's eye view, especially in the case of land art (e.g., Robert Smithson, Christo and Jeanne-Claude), garden projects (Ian Hamilton Finlay), and projects in unlimited space (Bas Jan Adler's cruise on the ocean), or a frog's perspective for large-scale projects (Oskar Hansen). The Mizielińskis also made use of schematic drawings and their technical character (Wim Delvoye's machine; the installation by Peter Fischli and David Weiss), adding arrows and signatures here and there to clarify the information. They also gladly use solutions known from clas-

23 Aleksandra (b. 1982) and Daniel (b. 1982) Mizieliński, graduates of the Warsaw Academy of Fine Arts. They prepared their diplomas in the Book Design Studio led by Prof. Maciej Buszewicz and Prof. Grażka Lange (2007). *D.O.M.E.K.* from 2008 was recognised as the Book of the Year of the Polish Section of the IBBY, inscribed on the IBBY Honor List and White Ravens; the license was sold to 12 countries. Their original designs *Co z ciebie wyrośnie?* (What's Gonna Grow out of You?) (2010) and *Którędy do Yellowstone?* (Which Way to Yellowstone?) (2020) were distinguished in the BolognaRagazzi Award competition.

24 The cover and title page bear Aleksandra's maiden name: Machowiak.

sic comic books, especially balloons for the audience's comments (works by Cildo Meireles, Andrzej Szewczyk, Paweł Althamer, Tino Sehgal, Robert Kuśmirowski) and sequences of framed pictures within one spread (Christian Marclay's glued art, Gregor Schneider's house).

Each time, the choice of means (multiplication, panorama, detailed diagram, close-up detail) is dictated by the nature of a specific artistic activity, project, or production. A common feature is the dynamism prevailing in the approach to these works. Most of the artists have been shown in action, at one of the stages of the creative process or in interaction with the audience; there are also scenes that depict the audience reacting to a work, often requiring movement in the process of perception.

A variety of artistic strategies: from conceptual art and performance to the gigantic scale of the open ocean; from the activity transforming a specific area, through the construction of amazing machines, to the production of millions of miniature porcelain sunflower seeds. The diversity of projects by artists from around the world was also highlighted with colour. Each mini-chapter has its own colour tone and clearly contrasts with the story placed next to it in the book.

THE SNOWMAN IN THE FRIDGE

The comic-book origin of the illustrations in the book written by the historian and art critic Łukasz Gorczyca, *Bałwan w lodówce* (The Snowman in the Fridge)²⁵ from 2017, is the talent of an excellent cartoonist and comic book author Krzysztof Gawronkiewicz, appreciated abroad as well as in Poland.²⁶ The co-founder of Raster – one of the most important Polish art galleries – used the social context of a children's novel to present the strategies adopted by 12 contemporary artists, focusing on selected specific projects from their achievements. From Poland, he chose Władysław Hasiór, Roman Opałka, Edward Krasiński, Paweł Althamer, Oskar Dawicki, Aneta Grzeszykowska, Julita Wójcik, and Joanna Piotrowska. Foreign art is represented by the German painter Georg Baselitz, the Swedish upcycling artist Klara Lidén, and the famous performance couple Marina Abramović and Ulay.

25 Ł. Gorczyca *Bałwan w lodówce*, illustrated by K. Gawronkiewicz, Warszawa, 2017.

26 K. Gawronkiewicz (b. The artist graduated from the Faculty of Graphic Arts at the Academy of Fine Arts in Warsaw. One of the most recognised Polish comic book authors, graphic designer and storyboarder, painter. He made his debut with illustrations for 'Nowa Fantastyka', co-created *Micropolis* with Dennis Wojda. Winner of the first prize in the European Comics Competition (2003), twofold winner of the Grand Prix of the International Festival of Comics in Łódź.

As in the book A.R.T., the achievements of various artists were given the same form. Gawronkiewicz's realistic style significantly contributed to the creation of a graphic reportage of sorts. The heroes of the book – children of a gallery employee – were shown in the interiors of the visited apartments and their own home, as well as in studios and art institutions. They are pictured during everyday trivial activities, but also during activities inspired by meetings with artists or their art. They peel potatoes, mark the walls of a room with tape, build a hiding place from chairs and blankets, 'make their own hasior' from a pile of toys, watch their own movie in the park, and visit the eponymous snowman living in the fridge. This focus on action, an activity, a clear visual sign, or characteristic objects reflects the meaning and essence of the actions taken, distilling the work in its own, astonishingly accurate way. Thanks to the detailed drawing, careful style and faithfulness to the details, we believe the scenes presented in the book as if they were photographs.

Gawronkiewicz enriched each of the chapters with a drawn image of the hero of the story: an artist at work or against the background of their recognisable work. Each of the ten chapters received an impressive-sized spread-out illustration. These compositions have a different character – from the *horror vacui* of the cluttered space of Oskar Dawicki's studio and the children's room or a crowded bus interior to the large empty spaces of the gallery which dominate over the children's tiny silhouettes and Julita Wójcik's scattered potatoes. According to reality, they are dynamic in their chaos or yield to rhythmic divisions of the ordered space in the park or the landscape with the Chinese Wall. The character of the artists' work remained unchanged. Krzysztof Gawronkiewicz's graphic interpretation does not seem to have deprived them of anything valuable; all the contrary, it added the rank of a sign-symbol to the chosen artists' creation.

I SEE EVERYTHING AS ART

The book by art historian Ewa Solarz, *I See Everything as Art*,²⁷ published by Wytwórnia, is an attractive presentation of ten Polish contemporary artists: Edward Krasieński, Roman Opałka, Ryszard Winiarski, Cezary Bodzianowski, Maurycy Gomulicki, Julita Wójcik, Aneta Grzeszykowska, Monika Drożyńska, Jan Działkowski, and Katarzyna Przewańska, presented in this case through a set of their works and quotes from their statements. At the end of the publication, we can find miniature reproductions of works and photographs documenting the discussed artists' activities.

27 E. Solarz *Wszystko widzę jako sztukę*, illustrated and graphic design by R. Czajka, Warszawa, 2018.

Robert Czajka's graphic design is the visual 'connective tissue' of the book.²⁸ The Warsaw-based painter and graphic designer is a virtuoso of using the seemingly trite, flat spot of colour. He likes pure colours, with a special emphasis on their primary triad, although he also gave quite a lot of space to powder pink in this project. In his work, Czajka behaves as if he is translating painting into the language of simplified graphics, synthesising the contours, giving up details and tonal transitions, and replacing chiaroscuro with a raster of various grain sizes. He frequently applies modernist aesthetics, easily justifying the rule of the straight line. It is no wonder that he eagerly uses all rhythmic layouts: keyboards, chessboards, ladders, railings, colonnades, stairways, criss-crossed playing boards and floors, façades of residential blocks, and geometric patterns in clothing.

The strategies of the selected artists' silhouettes perfectly correspond to the convention of continuity and repetition: the word 'blue' repeated by Krasieński five thousand times and his blue tape, Opałka's regular face recording and counted paintings, random paintings of Winair-ski's *Areas*, Bodzianowski's chess games and visits from aerial lift, bubbles of Gomulicki's *Lightspurt*, Wójcik's heap of potatoes, Grzeszykowska's puppets, stitches of Drożyńska's political embroidery, Dziaczkowski's postcards and, not least, Przewańska's sidewalk cracks and ornament. Thanks to Czajka's graphic design, the artists' achievements lost their distinguishing features only seemingly; paradoxically, devoid of details, they were reduced to the essence of the message. Such is also the gallery of portraits of the book's protagonists, presented on pp. 2–3 consistently in the most simplified way possible. The sense of synthesis did not fail Robert Czajka, as anyone will see, comparing these effigies with the photographs of the artists.

The activity of Polish artists presented in *I See Everything as Art* treats the whole world as a potential matter of art. It presents an unobvious approach to obvious phenomena and takes reality in double parentheses. Seemingly ordinary, it turns out to be original; seemingly comical, it becomes serious; seemingly trite, it encourages reflection. Above all, however, it teaches us to look at the world around us in an unconventional way, simultaneously becoming an engaging series of lessons about art.

28 R. Czajka (b. 1978), graduated from the Faculty of Painting at the Academy of Fine Arts in Warsaw in 2002. Painter, graphic artist and illustrator, designer of paper toys. Permanent collaborator of Teatr Lalka as the creator of visual identification and stage designer. Author of the graphic design of the award-winning work *Architekturki. Powojenne budynki warszawskie* devoted to post-war Warsaw buildings.

SUMMARY

Thanks to the fluid identity of contemporary art, which eludes any definitions and shows a different (not always new) face every now and then, this art seems to be an endless field of experimentation, also in terms of its reception. As Jean Baudrillard wrote in *The Conspiracy of Art*: 'Contemporary art makes use of this uncertainty of the impossibility of grounding aesthetic value judgments and speculates on the guilt of those who do not understand it or who have not realised that there is nothing to understand.'²⁹

Such publications seem to be all the more valuable as they teach young participants the culture of perception of such a diverse and non-obvious art, an art that escapes simple, unambiguous explanations, that opens up to different experiences and different sensibilities, while sometimes appearing for the sake of the very fact of appearing and detaching from routine, requiring nothing more from the viewer.

The effect of aesthetic unification, applied in the books *A.R.T.*, *The Snowman in the Fridge* and *I See Everything as Art*, where the graphic design was entrusted to specific artists: Aleksandra and Daniel Mizieliński – dynamic cartoonists with a flair for caricature; Krzysztof Gawronkiewicz – a purebred comic book author; and Robert Czajka – a master of synthesis – produced a 'distillation' effect which, in turn, allowed to extract the most important features of the strategies chosen by the artists presented in the discussed books. 'Summarising' the concept and the meaning of their application, probably omitting many contexts, the authors managed to focus on the most important message. The eye of the featured artist was overlaid by the eye of the artist-illustrator, who conducted an interpretation, or perhaps a specific graphic translation of sorts, in their own way. The seemingly breakneck project resulted in the issue of original, valuable publications.

²⁹ Quote after: J.-L. Chalumeau, *Historia sztuki współczesnej*, Warszawa, 2007, p. 12.

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Abstract:

The article addresses issues related to the interesting phenomenon of two overlapping artistic interpretations present in information books for children and young people. The first one is the primary interpretation, resulting from one's own sensitivity, applied by artists in their creative processes, the final result of which is the creation of works of art. The second interpretation consists in the processing of these works by an illustrator. The effects of the latter co-create the graphic layer of books dealing with contemporary art, both Polish and foreign, intended for non-adults. The author of the article looked at five examples from the Polish publishing market. These are: *Zachęta do sztuki. Sztuka współczesna dla dzieci Zofii Dubowskiej-Grynberg*, with the graphic design by Natka Luniak (2008) and *Kto to jest artysta?* by Zofia Dubowska and Jan Bajtlik (2013), *S.Z.T.U.K.A. Szalenie Zajmujące Twory Utalentowanych i Krnąbrnych Artystów* with a text by Sebastian Cichocki, illustrated by Aleksandra and Daniel Mizieliński (2011), *Bałwan w lodówce* written by Łukasz Gorczyca and illustrated by Krzysztof Gawronkiewicz (2017) and Ewa Solarz's *Wszystko widzę jako sztukę* illustrated by Robert Czajka (2018). The graphic unification, applied in these books, brought forth the effect of distillation, which in turn allowed extraction of the most important features of the strategies chosen by contemporary artists presented in the discussed publications.

Keywords:

information book, interpretation, illustration, contemporary art, artistic strategies

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