ELEMENTY

Subject of the issue:

Circuits and networks

ELEMENTY

Sztuka i Dizajn

Circuits and networks

Content

Drawing and photography by Karolina Jarzębak

Magdalena Ujma

EDITORIAL: 'OTHER' CIRCUITS

Many cultural circuits are functioning today without gaining sufficient attention from observers of the field of art. Many of them remain even invisible. The conceptual framework in which a significant part of the history of contemporary art is situated remains too narrow to include phenomena located in the alleged margin, despite the attempts to expand the boundaries of the discipline and make the definition of the object of its research less hermetic. The same applies to today's art criticism, which suffers from a kind of tribalism, expressed mainly in dealing with each critic's own social sphere.

According to postmodern culture theorists such as Boris Groys, the boundaries between artistic disciplines are fading. Painting or sculpture are no longer there today, neither is drawing, or even design art. Or at least they are supposed to be gone. A contemporary artist should act like a designer – the concept being the most important – and only later select the appropriate media: techniques, materials, means of expression.

At a certain level, these recommendations are justified. After all, the observation regarding design coincides with the theories of creativity, reaching deep into the past. It is the idea or concept that can be found behind a work of art or – more broadly – any creative act. However, this is not the first time that life verifies theoretical assumptions. Art disciplines are thriving today, especially painting, which is dictated by the market after all. Individual circuits – entities larger than disciplines – are in just as good a shape, with an emphasis on how art is produced and how it is perceived.

For this reason, circuits may or may not be identical to artistic disciplines. Encompassing the social functioning of art, they will involve enthusiasts of comic books and early computer games, people gathered around a gallery, or readers of biographical novels about famous artists. In the issue of 'Elementy' which we are now presenting to you, we are trying to analyse several examples of such circuits, e.g., through their representatives and methods of operation.

To begin with, I invite you to become familiar with the editorial discussion during which we try to outline the thematic field and possible ways of addressing the topic of circuits 'other' than the mainstream ones. We find examples of such circuits, we reflect on how they work and how they can be studied. Michał Zawada completes the discussion with his essay. There will be a proposal of a conceptual framework for the theory of functioning of the *artworld* and regimes of visibility, with a postulate to introduce the category of a global 'museum'. Admittedly, artistic creativity may exist outside of such a museum, but with no chance of gaining recognition. Another text establishing a theoretical framework – based on mathematics in this case – is Joanna Nikodem's essay. The author deals with topics including the distance on the Internet and wonders whether the concepts of province and centre can be used in the case of this – mainstream, after all – communication medium.

Another group of texts is formed by attempts to specify the subject by indicating areas that may meet the definition of a 'different' circuit of art we are interested in. Anita Wincencjusz-Patyna takes up the topic of informative picture books, where she distinguishes a subgroup of children's books intended to introduce young readers to the issues of contemporary art. Łukasz Murzyn reviews art penetrating metaphysical and religious areas. He sketches a panorama of the contemporary edition of such art, recalls the category of the *sacred* and discusses its diversity. Cezary Hunkiewicz, on the other hand, touches on the topic of *street art*, significant in Poland a few years ago and now waning in a broader sense. The author reflects on the reasons for this state of things and raises the issue of commercialisation.

Another group of texts are the ones that highlight people who have taken, for various reasons, an outsider's position. Piotr Lisowski shows the figure of Jerzy Ludwiński as one who consistently moved around the peripheries of the art world, at the same time constituting a one-person centre for the (post-) artistic system, along with the environment he created. Agnieszka Jankowska-Marzec takes a closer look at the process of change of the critics' opinion about the work of Jerzy Duda-Gracz, in which we can see his transition from a recognised artist to an 'accursed' one. Jarosław Lubiak interprets the entirety of Jan Honza Zamoyski's diverse creation, showing how he consistently maintained his position off the mainstream artistic life.

In her visual essay, Joanna Wowrzeczka shows the effects of activities related to the already collapsed textile industry in Cieszyn. Karolina Jarzębak penetrates the outskirts of the web and the strange similarity of cave paintings to second-rate internet artworks. Maciej Sieńczyk describes the activity of a domestic inventor and, in passing, he shows how much it has to do with creativity; parenthetically, he also deals with the art of drawing. Jakub Argasiński and Mikołaj Spodaryk talk about the pioneering years of demoscene in Poland.

The materials we have collected in 'Elementy' give but a fragmentary picture of what may be considered as research material on 'other' ways of producing, understanding, and receiving art. We hope to act as a spur to new publications and research on those areas, barely visible or invisible to researchers and critics so far.

VISIBLE AND INVISIBLE
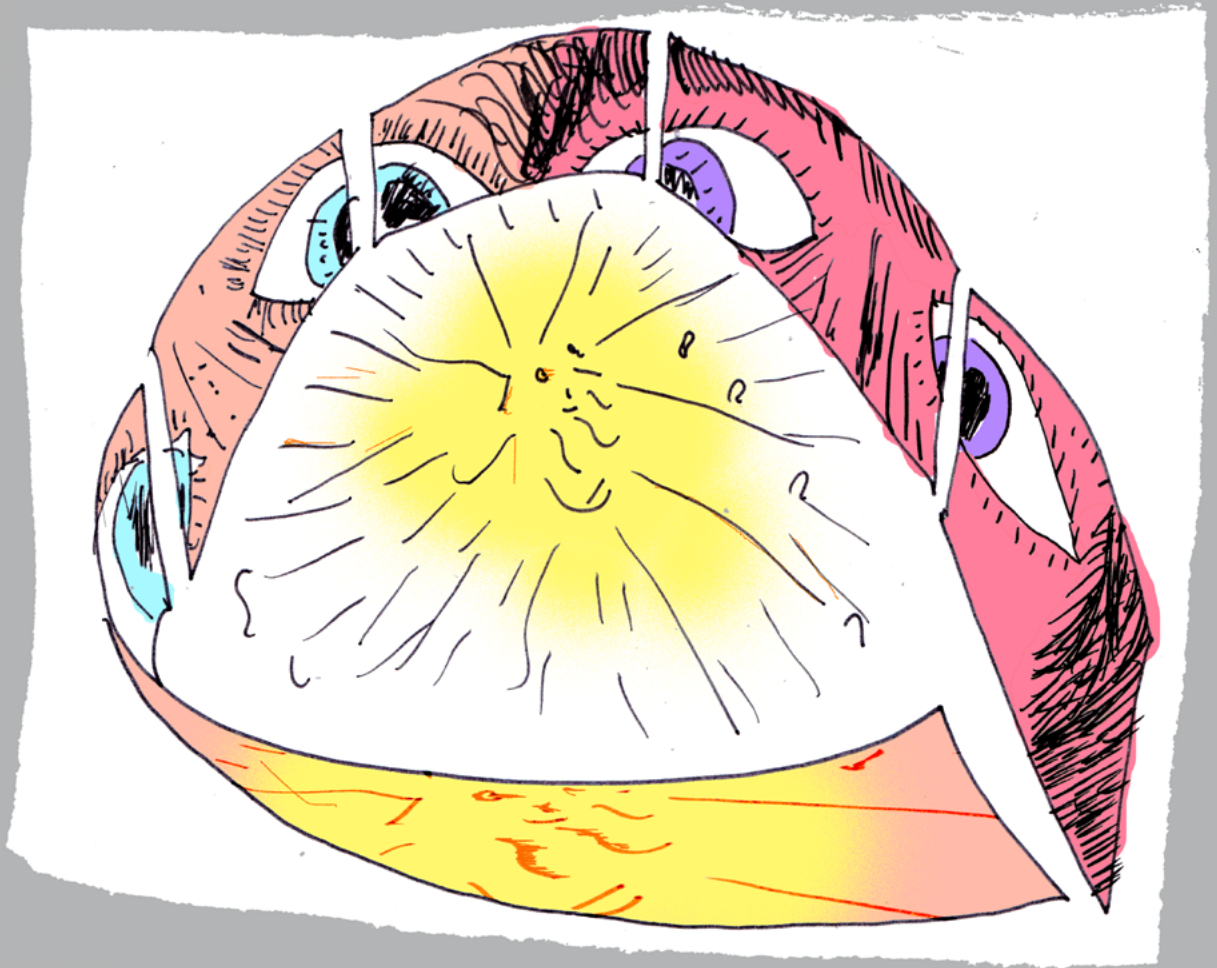
SELF-CONTAINED WORLDS?
EDITORIAL DEBATE

CIRCULATIONS

Magdalena Ujma: While working on the issue of *Elementy* devoted to the alternative systems of art distribution, I kept wondering what their alternative status would actually consist in and whether or not we could speak of their marginalisation compared with what we consider to be the mainstream. After all, if we take comic book art, drawing, or even bookplate art, each of these 'niches' has a circle of devout followers, with their distribution systems operating according to the predictions made by sociologists of culture in the early years of the Internet, namely, that we would live in the world of niche distribution systems and there would no longer be a single centre. Indeed, our speaking of marginalisation implies the existence of a centre. What is it?

Jakub Woynarowski: The 'centre' is someone who sets the hierarchy – the distribution system that purports to be the mainstream. Thus, we refer to whatever the people who organise that system consider to be the centre and periphery. Alternative systems we are interested in are poorly represented in or downright absent from the official institutional discourse. And even if they do surface there, it is only sporadically, as presentations in the spirit of 'let's see how are they doing now'.

MU: In our art history course, we learned nothing at all about design, and yet it is a flourishing field at the moment. Nevertheless, one can say that in the institutional system of art distribution, design continues to play – albeit with some exceptions – a marginal role.

JW: Assuming the impact on reality as an important criterion, design seems to be meeting it to a larger extent than a gallery exhibition. There remains, of course, the pressure from those providing the funding for a specific project. Likewise institutionally, on the part of state and local authorities or patrons financially supporting their activity. Still, when I think of socially engaged art, design meets these criteria to a larger extent…

Michał Zawada: Because of its direct influence on reality.

MU: Whereas visual arts suffer from having no agency… As for alternative streams, even in institutional circulation one can find galleries specialising in the marginalised drawing or comic book art. These, admittedly, are situated rather locally; I am thinking of the BWA Galleries in Zamość and Jelenia Góra.

JW: Speaking of drawing, it is to a certain extant represented in the mainstream of art distribution. There still is, say, the Think Tank Lab Triennial in Wrocław, which makes valuable effort to introduce drawing to a wider system of art distribution. In this context, it is worth mentioning the *Painters*

Drawing by Mikołaj Tkacz

of Illustrations exhibition, held at the Museum of Modern Art in Warsaw. However it was rather a 'one-off' event – such presentations tend to reaffirm the status of illustration as a separate phenomenon that does not take a regular part in the system of art distribution. The same is true of comic book art. It is regarded as a distinct microcosm, presented in art institutions as a thematic 'bullet-point' of sorts in order to familiarise with the phenomenon a public that is hardly well-versed therein. Nevertheless, comic book art does not belong to the mainstream of art as something permanently established, on par with other genres of it.

MZ: It is not really a matter of the distinction set by a medium or genre, but rather of the relation between institutional art and the distribution of symbolic capital. We may very well imagine the situation of an artist who possess a certain symbolic capital, active precisely in such marginalised branches of art. Let us take, for instance, Sasnal, as a creator of comic book art. Even though the medium appears to lay outside the central current of the institutional system of visual art distribution, in the hands of a mainstream artist it proves attractive for the artworld. It seems, therefore, that it is not the form of expression that demarcates the border between the well-established and the marginal. I think that we should return to the initial question, namely, whether the centre exists and – if so – what it is like. There certainly is not a single centre, albeit one is postulated by various conspiracy theorists within the artworld. Perhaps it is more akin to a network of gravitational points around which various communities coalesce. They are sure to share certain common traits, qualitative connections; however, they may just as well function entirely regardless of one another. We can consider centres being established in respective countries, regions, and local art centres. The mechanism of gravitation causes larger bodies to attract smaller ones; hence, what emerges at this juncture is a kind of hierarchical space. Smaller subjects revolve around the centre, enriching the ecosystem of the latter, but – as we are well aware – such centres may expand to such an extent that they 'devour' their peripheries. The question remains: what determines such a gravitational pull. Is it money or is it something else? I believe that in the institutional domain of art it is both the money and something less tangible, that is…

JW: … symbolic capital. I think that in the Polish conditions it may even be the dominant force because the money is rather in short supply.

MZ: At times, symbolic capital coincides with the monetary one.

Kinga Nowak: Now, to come back to marginalised art distribution systems, illustrators are indeed welcome in mainstream galleries as exceptions that are supposed to prove the rule.

JW: Maciej Bieńczyk is a good example here, as he operates at the intersection of visual arts, illustration, comic book art, and literature. Even though his presence is predominantly felt in the literary market, from time to time he is also featured by artistic institutions. Furthermore, he is – at least in theory – represented by the Raster Gallery. This shows that such instances do occur. There was also the loud *Black and White* exhibition held at the Museum of Modern Art in Warsaw (MSN), which featured comic book art and animation, as well as – to a degree – illustration, though more as instruments used by artists with established reputation in the institutional mainstream. This is the phenomenon that Michał Zawada mentioned a moment ago. There are some people active in the borderlands, such as Dan Perjovschi, who started his artistic career as a politically engaged newspaper cartoonist. I remember an attempt to introduce Marek Raczkowski intro the gallery system – I was very much interested in what that would result in, but it turned out to result in nothing.

MU: When it comes to a switch in the opposite direction, I remember Janek Koza. He had his roots in the world of visual arts.

JW: He even was – according to a classification by critics from *Raster* – considered a representative of pop-banalism, much in the vein of Grupa Ładnie. He subsequently made a turn towards satirical press illustration and remained faithful to this field. Thus, individual transgressions do occur. Still, the presence of illustrators within the mainstream of art is not all that noticeable. Occasional displays tend to reaffirm the ghetto status of this branch as an aesthetic niche. We ironically refer to this phenomenon as 'ethnographical exhibitions'. We survey them as unprofessional art.

MU: Precisely, ethnography. For instance, the art by artists with Romani background, Małgorzata Mirga-Tas and Krzysztof Gil, broke through to the mainstream via ethnographic museums.

MZ: They aspired to be recognised and waited for the institutions to be ready to receive then. Exactly the same mechanism as regards the acknowledgement of marginalised artistic groups and phenomena worked throughout the 19th and the 20th.

MU: I would like to broaden the list of examples already presented by that of photography. There are at least two streams of it. Photography is created by photographers but also by visual artists – and the two subsets tend not to intermingle…
JW: This is precisely the issue covered by André Rouille in his book *Photography: Between Document and Contemporary Art*, where he precisely

defined the two phenomena as 'photographers' art' and 'artists' photography'. A similar principle will apply in the case of comic book art, animation, and film – the mechanism is replicated in numerous areas.

MZ: It happens, at times, that an amateur who avails her- or himself of the language of photography – after all, everyone takes photographs – may find an easier access to the institutional system of art than a professional who devoted his entire life to mastering his craft. It all hinges on the process of project conceptualisation.

MU: It is only now that newspaper journalists with immense oeuvre, such as Wojciech Plewiński, are being introduced to gallery spaces.

CAPITALS

Małgorzata Płazowska: In what you have been saying, there is a clear distinction between applied art, which is more accessible, and high art. This is a lasting distinction.

MU: Pure art is at the centre.

JW: Through the notion of 'applicability', we may also be referring to a more straight-forward and easier to verify means of expressions, such as, for instance, the set of classic skills and techniques. In the case of the mainstream of institutional art, reaching for a form of expression more accessible to receivers 'from the outside' tends to be looked down upon – as an indication that someone was unable to assimilate the arsenal of means used in contemporary art, that she or he did not fully decipher its language. In 'photographers' photography', for instance, we tend to recognise traditional skills and techniques, which a casual member of the audience may find easier to fathom. What transpire here is another aspect of art situated outside the institutional mainstream, one related to its applicability or accessibility.

MZ: In this context, photography's path to emancipation within the discourse of fine arts proves very intriguing. As late as in the 19th century, photography still had to imitate the language of the mainstream medium of painting in order to be able to make its way to the system of art distribution. Likewise film had to imitate theatre and visual arts.

MU: I will refer back to what we have already said about the centre, namely, that what we find there is economic capital and prestige, i.e., symbolic capital. I would like to remind you of Wojciech Szafrański's text we published in the issue no. 3 of *Elementy*. In his take, the two capitals tend

to diverge from one another: the economic capital does not have to correspond to prestige. Such artists as Rafał Olbiński and Jacek Yerka earn millions, but it does not follow that they are recognised within the history of art. They are labelled as the representatives of 'magical realism'.

MZ: As a result, there situations when an artist doing very well for heror himself financially is completely absent from the institutional system of distribution. It makes one think. The question is whether it is a specifically Polish phenomenon or whether it is a totally universal circumstance, which would mean that there is a mechanism that governs how the artworld operates that ultimately has to produce the said distinction. It is common knowledge that painting is a 'gallery-based discipline', it turns out, however, that some of the output within the medium is restricted to the relation studio–viewer, excluding any institutions. Sometimes, besides direct selling from the gallery, there may be an intermediary element, although in the era of Instagram even an auction house with all its prestige and economic resources proves inessential. There is a gallery community that displays such art, but more often than not the latter has the status of an extra.

KN: Interestingly, studios do not require any verification and no criticism could change the existing situation. One can say that there is art that can be subject to criticism and art that cannot.

JW: The missing criticism as a criterion?

MZ: Here, the term 'critic' simply indicates a specific customer who decides whether or not to buy a given piece. This is where the crucial verification comes about.

JW: As a result, an outside observer may get the impression that this system of art distribution is to a greater extent democratised.

MZ: I am convinced that the world of such an alternative system of painting art distribution is less prone to speculations. Prices development is more stable and more predictable; it is far more like the traditional circulation of goods.

MU: The market that trades in Olbiński, Yerka and Siudmak has no need for external validation. It does not require to be recognised by what we consider to be the mainstream. It has its own authorities. It has its own galleries. It has been approached by PGS (State Art Gallery), under the previous Director, Zbigniew Buski. It is in no need of our criticism for it

has its own. Piotr Sarzyński appears to be courting that world. That system has its own artists and its own art collectors. If it needs any criticism at all, it is a laudatory one which James Elkins once wrote about as constituting a necessary complement of any artist's portfolio.

JW: Yet it is often the case that artists of the 'second circuit', in spite of having well-established financial situation, are envious of the symbolic capital offered by the institutional mainstream…

MZ: It raises the question about the reason why artists who are in demand, whose works regularly sell out and are featured in numerous auctions, will never have an exhibition in the Zachęta Gallery. There is a bilateral tension palpable here: one group enjoys financial stability, the other has access to symbolic capital.

MP: I wonder whether or not in the West there is such a great divergence between these two worlds. And if there is not, whether this is the result of the audience having a better education. After all, people there are educated in art from a very early age and by that token the two worlds converge – the world of the market and that of leading art institutions.

JW: At the same time, it is worth keeping in mind that it is the institutional mainstream that determines the canon which – even if shifting and evolving dynamically, it becomes more inclusive – continues to define what we consider worthy of the name of art. When we speak of the need for education, the following argument very often emerges: were the society better educated, people would know, say, that conceptual art is worth their interest, their money to purchase it, etc. In truth, however, it is in the interest of the 'centre' to make us believe that conceptual art is indeed a valuable enterprise, that the symbolic capital behind it prevails… Hence, thinking of the entire discourse that accompanies the institutional system of art distribution, that is, thinking of historiography, history, and theory of art, criticism – it is worth remembering that it is in the interest of the centre to shape that discourse in such a way that it would correspond to the beliefs holds therein.

MU: Creating a narrative of art without any inconsistencies and cracks, a narrative of constant development, progress, and improvement. Even though it is not true.

JW: Canon continues to evolve constantly. We have seen how the 20th century vision of art development changed since the famous diagram by Alfred Barr, and what the history of the avant-garde is now. This tale has come to feature phenomena that were previously absent from it, but it

does not change the fact that we still do not have a complete picture of the situation. We may expect it to never be complete, considering that every historical narrative tends to hierarchise reality. Something will always be deemed more noteworthy while something else will drop out of sight.

MU: Remember what Piotr Piotrowski said in his final interviews, when he was developing a comprehensive overview of the Central and Eastern European art? He claimed that the centre can be discovered in the periphery. He advocated a network history of art, that is, one revealing the horizontal mesh of connections and collaboration, for instance, between South America and Eastern Europe. It was also important for him to seek the marginal in the centres. Do you think that it can be applied to contemporary situation in the artworld?

MZ: Results of such thinking are certainly visible even though it does not reduce the existence of the centre. There are countless events, festivals, biennials outside the geographical centre; however, we continue to revolve around those initial hierarchies.

MU: But, returning to what occurs in Poland, we do see the need for prestige. The Polish society hungers for it, it has experienced social advancement and wishes to display its newly acquired status. Such aspiration may be one of the reasons behind the emergence of the market for magical realism and its derivatives. It is also noticeable that the legacy of Polish People's Republic (PRL) has ultimately turned into its own caricature; after all, during the PRL era the idea was to bring the art of modernism to wide masses – for example, through the itinerant exhibitions in the BWA (Office for Art Exhibitions) network, or the Museum of Art in Łódź. What is left of that noble idea? Yet contemporary art, the one that has institutional *imprimatur* of the major institutions of art – Zachęta Gallery, Museum of Modern Art, National Museums – has become completely elitist.

JW: This causes a grassroots backlash, encapsulated by the ever returning question: how on Earth it is possible that public institutions, spending public money, display art that nobody wants to see, whereas art that sells well and is present in the lives of Polish men and women remains totally marginalised?

KN: The collectors who aspire to be in the prestigious centre want to have their names inscribed in the history of art. I wonder whether or not the substantial amounts of money they invest will pay off, which would mean that the painters of the magical genre would in fact go down in history. Their works are not verified in any manner. Should they survive, and if so, as what?

JW: Speaking of the 'magical genre' – it is worth noting that, besides this popular phenomenon, the 'second circuit' features various aesthetics, such as hyperrealism and pop art, which also transpire into the institutional mainstream. Hence, the problem lies not only in specific stylistics – it is also the matter of the subjects tackled and the selection of artistic strategies.

KN: Financial security is greater there. Perhaps it is also easier to operate there, for there is no competition for social prestige and therefore no unpleasant clashes.

MZ: The stakes in the mainstream are indeed extremely high. Only those who have acquired symbolic prestige, in fact, are guaranteed any financial stability in the institutional path. As a result, very few benefit therefrom and arguments heat up.

MU: And what do you think about frustrated artists who aspire to be recognised within the realm of good non-commercial art, but are not? They are riled up because they believe they are no worse. And oftentimes that is the case.

JW: Such a tendency is present in all art distribution systems. There are always attitudes that are marginalised.

MZ: In the Polish context, with its strong gravitational pull towards the symbolic centre situated in a single place, such attitudes are left without an outlet, there is no other way to vent them. In more decentralised circles, one can speak of greater pluralism. It is easier to get your foot in the door there, whereas in Poland, if an artist does not gain a foothold in the mainstream, he won't find it anywhere.

CENTRES

MP: My question is whether we are to consider as the centre Warsaw exclusively, or whether other hubs, such as Kraków and Gdańsk, are strong enough to compete with the capital city?

MZ: For at least two decades, we have seen the process of symbolic capital being centralised in Warsaw, which is an unequivocal indication that there is only one such place in Poland.

JW: Warsaw has sucked it all up. I still remember a moment, roughly 15 years ago, when the potential of smaller artistic centres was analysed in terms of a real counterbalance for the capital city. But it was merely wishful

thinking, never to be realised. In this context, the history of individual exhibitions of Tomek Kowalski was brought up as a promising example, because following his debut in the Nova Gallery in Kraków he amassed some symbolic capital during a mini-tour of Western Poland in order to soon afterwards – bypassing Warsaw – open a solo exhibition in the Carlier | Gebauer gallery in Berlin.

MU: He had a high-profile exhibition in Zielona Góra.

JW: Furthermore, a part of the problem seems to be the centralisation of economic capital; after all, almost all leading commercial galleries have relocated to Warsaw or simply disappeared from the market.

MZ: When it comes to access to the institutional world of art, there certainly is a powerful tendency to shift oneself towards the centre. Thus, even if an initiative emerges in the periphery, it will need to be approved by the centre. But if we look at the problem through the lens of applicability – that is, for instance – applied social influence, we are more interested in the local. In such cases the approval from the center is of no particular importance.

MU: On the one hand, there is the distribution system that requires Warsaw's approval. The 'province' has to be given such a permit, Warsaw has to display its interest, send representatives to check and provide a verdict, something along the lines of: 'Tarnów is good because the exhibitions there are like the ones we have in Warsaw'. It is also the case of Szalona Galeria, when Warsaw-based artists set forth from Warsaw to 'enlighten' the provinces with contemporary modern art. At the same time – as you have pointed out, Michał – there is another circuit, one we could refer to as 'local'. The venues therein manage their audiences, their exhibitions well. The Offices of Art Exhibitions (BWA) in smaller cities, such as Krosno and Zamość, work in the interest of their local communities and do not lose sleep over the distant centre. They hold exhibitions, attract workshop and training participants, promote artists from within their own communities, they keep in touch with other similar hubs. They often hold open-air workshops and sales of art works.

JW: These smaller galleries need to be validated by their local community; hence, their repertoire is inevitably more syncretic – even if they do implement something from the centre, they have to take into consideration the artists active locally. Looking through the lists of participants in contemporary art exhibitions held there, we discover names that never made it to the centre. However, the lesser the distance from the centre, the more fixed

the 'attendance list'. There are many mechanisms at play here, described already in the 1990s in critical papers created in within the community of *Raster*. A major role in the 'integrated circuit' of Polish art was played by the BWA galleries, classified in terms of their dependency on Warsaw into 'crunchy and stale BWA (bread) rolls', the 'stale' ones being those that lost contact with the centre, ones where we can no longer find leaflets of Warsaw-based institutions. [laughing]

MU: I always found the Museum of Art in Łódź to be a remarkable institution because it has always striven to be its own centre and has a distinct individual (not Warsaw-centred) system of references. Likewise, albeit in another context, the Centre of Contemporary Art in Toruń.

MZ: True, but in the case of the Museum of Art there is the power of the institution as such and it has a solid base. The centre provides visibility; therefore, were we to assume that an artist aims for the universality of their message, there can be no doubt that they can be assisted by the centre. Within a local activity, we remain limited to a very specific field of visibility.

JW: If an institution's profile is that of local activity, it actually does not need an external *imprimatur*, because its mission is fulfilled through its direct on-site activity.

MU: The issue of visibility stirs a great deal of emotions. It is not even about whether or not a given institution is acknowledged by an opinion-forming and visibility-providing periodical of art criticism, but rather about being picked up on by high-circulation non art-oriented media. It is more important to be featured, even in a short paragraph, in *Polityka*, *Gazeta Wyborcza*, or something as glamorous as *Vogue*. Such were the really strong aspirations of institutions from 'the interior'; today, however, they have become aware of the way content is selected by magazines of country-wide circulation. If a journalist of *Wysokie Obcasy* likes an exhibition held in the Kronika Centre of Contemporary Art (CSW), she will write about it, but it is a matter of luck and of a chain of acquaintants that are able to reach her. Warsaw presents the interior as a curiosity. We all know that nationwide media in fact operate as the local media of Warsaw and it is a significant problem.

I would like to ask you about what this centre of ours is oriented towards, though. Are we still as dependent on the West as we were shortly after the systemic transformation? There was a debate, in the 1990s, about whether or not Polish art is dependent on the West and whether or not it should retain its specificity. As usual in semi periphery countries (as some scholars

categorise us), the motifs of native culture clashed with the cosmopolitan ones. What is the situation like today?

MZ: I believe that we continue to be dependent on the West. This dependency may have taken on a different form, but persist it does. As long as Polish institutions are oriented towards global institutions, such as documenta, the Venice Biennale, or Manifesta, we are dealing with a dependency.

MU: What a momentous event is each and every competition for the Polish Pavilion in Venice! It is discussed as if it were the key event of the Biennial itself, while in fact it is a mere speck in the rich programme of the undertaking.

MZ: But it elevates the artist to the global pantheon. From the local perspective, it is tantamount to the highest praise.

KN: We have seen some change. It was in the past a rule that an artist must be exported to the West to only later be sold in Poland. Nowadays, some of this capital can be found in Poland and sending artists abroad for them to be approved by the main centre is no longer as necessary. Which means that there are now artists who aim for the Polish audience. Having said that, most artists from the Foksal Gallery Foundation are sent abroad and only later capitalised in Poland. Nevertheless, there is much capital in Poland and art can be capitalised without being brought to the West.

MU: Take for example the career of Mirosław Bałka. After his Polish beginnings, he was exported to the West. It was only several years later that he had his triumphant presentation in Poland, in the form of the 1994 *Rampa* exhibition held in the Museum of Art in Łódź.

JW: In the case of artists who are at the same time academics, the necessity of an international career is linked with the requirements of the academic 'point-mania' and evaluation criteria. Furthermore, there is the social stereotype according to which the artist's presence abroad is evidence of their prestige. Reading biographical entries of many artists, we tend to discover that the accounts of their oeuvre open with an exhibition in a large foreign centre, even if it was held in a second-rate gallery.

MU: At the beginning of its activity, *Raster* referred to its readers as young Polish intelligentsia.

JW: The issue of the audience is almost non-existent in the Polish criticism of today. Contemporary art functions above all else as a community and

expert phenomenon, analysed by other creators and critics who vouch for its quality. One can hardly shake the feeling that it is *de facto* a vicious circle, with external spectators being nice but non-essential extras.

CONNECTIONS

MU: I have thought of Stach Szabłowski. He is a Warsaw-based critic and, concurrently, a curator. He enjoys visibility as a critic regularly published in *Dwutygodnik*, *Przekrój*, and *Zwierciadło*, a glossy magazine. And yet he does not cling to the centre. He is an exception as such. He does a lot of travelling. He has recently curated the exhibition of Bielsko Autumn. Do you think that he is able to challenge the monopoly of the centre? Admittedly, he comes with his artists, but he also gets to know others on site.

JW: It has potential. The greater the number of people who migrate somewhere – whether for reasons economic or other – the better, for information is conveyed better through direct contact, not gossip and guesswork. Incidentally, the category of curiosity about the world proves extremely important here, though it continues to be poorly represented within our community.

MU: Curators of the Zachęta Gallery never travel much in Poland. It has always perplexed me.

JW: I think that such a 'tour' should be a matter of standard, routine.

MZ: Annual tour.

MU: Another influential critic, Karol Sienkiewicz, seemingly did mention his rural background, but he does not embrace curiosity about the world unless it has been acknowledged by Anda Rottenberg and the Foksal Gallery Foundation. The popular faction of Polish art is guided by the principle: 'I do not analyse what I see, I write about my free associations'.

JW: There are also reviews in the vein of: 'I did not go and neither should you'. [laughing]

MU: I would like to return for a moment to the question posed by Małgorzata: are there any centres to compete against Warsaw? Was it Wrocław, a trend that culminated in its nomination as the European Capital of Culture? Is it Gdańsk with the Nomus?

MZ: Periphery centres need to find inner strength to decide: 'Fine, despite everything, it is worth investing in the local'. This is a process of rebuilding on the ashes. Polish cities with population over 100,000 inhabitants, that used to be lively centres, have been swallowed by Warsaw and are now rediscovering their identity.

MU: Cities have been strengthened after the accession to the EU. On the other hand, however, we are dealing with a growing centralisation in Poland. Previously enforced by the neoliberal dictate of free market, it is now further reinforced by the authorities, who – as regards culture – strive for as many institutions as possible to be controlled by the Ministry. I think that cities that wanted to become centres of culture were in the end unsuccessful. After being the European Capital of Culture, Wrocław turned out to have a good PR, but then they failed to part ways in a civil manner with Dorota Monkiewicz, who did very well managing Wrocław Contemporary Museum (MWW), and with the long-standing Director of BWA, Marek Puchała. In Gdańsk, their ambitions were also great, but the recent scandal at Nomus (though it is a branch of the National Museum) ruined the image of the city in the eyes of our community. Poznań has missed its chance. They have a great Municipal Gallery, which came under fire from right-wing activists. At the centre of these attacks was the Deputy Director, Zofia Nierodzińska, the author of a completely unique, country-wide, socially sensitive programme. Zofia left.

But I would also like to ask about other art distribution systems, other than the mainstream, that you see. Could we recognise the demoscene as one of these?

JW: In and of itself, the demoscene is a great collective bound together by periodic gatherings, known as 'demoparties', that constitute the natural nexus of the subculture. It is anything but insignificant that due to technological circumstances a typical demo is the result of collaboration of several persons – the priority here being not the promotion of an 'inspired' individual, but predominantly of the very piece as an advanced engineering structure. Even though the demoscene is in principle non-commercial in nature, it has obviously developed its own mechanisms of visibility, associated with various forms of competition. What intrigues me in the demoscene is its hardware aspect – oftentimes archaic, which fosters the strategy of 'creative constraints'. Another complication stems from the demo being generated in real time based on the code developed. Of great significance are both the performative and the material aspect of the situation, which result from the fact that demo parties are not held online but as a place-based event. Much like in the case of an art biennial, it is the culmination point that reinforces the intra-communal connections. At

the same time, the demoscene also constitutes a self-contained ecosystem, only to a minimum extent connected with other art distribution systems.

MU: Is it that the participants in the demoscene do not care about their visibility, or that the others simply do not want to recognise them?

JW: I think that the systemic issue is to be able to recognise all artistic languages simultaneously and at the same time provide deft 'translations' from one to another. I have noted a major deficit in the ability to simultaneously think in two different cultural 'dialects'. It is certainly difficult; it requires time, competence, curiosity, significant mobility… I have the impression that creators in various segments of culture use similar notions but ascribe different meanings thereto and hence cannot get through to one another. What is missing are the liaisons – personal, institutional, of any kind. Observing various circuits of art I recognise the analogies and differences between them – that is why they continue to define one another.

MU: Do you think that we need these liaisons and connections at all? I mean, the respective distribution systems are doing very well on their own, they constitute inward, self-contained worlds.

MZ: Such coexistence is completely natural and perfectly fine. I believe that trouble starts at the point when one side attempts to interfere with the other; when one side claims that the others are not 'art'.

JW: This also applies to the demoscene, which – because of its non-commercial nature – does not comply with the standards typical of the art market. People contributing to the demoscene do not see the artworld as a point of reference, while any 'outside' interest in their works is also rather incidental. I refer here to the activity of Piotr Marecki within the framework of the UBU lab project, and the recent exhibition titled *8 bits of art* which was held in the BWA in Tarnów. Another important aspect that emerges in the context of the demoscene pertains to the technological professionalisation which favours the separation of the respective art systems. It is also true of other phenomena, such as traditional graphic techniques, and authorial animation practice which 'got stuck' within the film world and only occasionally appears in the orbit of the artworld.

MZ: The exact same thing can be said about painting. Technique-oriented painting is situated in the periphery.

JW: Another important issue here is that of distribution, the ways of displaying works. Art institutions provide a limited set of established exhibition conventions, which may prove discouraging for creative communities that operate differently.

MU: But do they really need the approval on the part of the centre?

JW: They evidently do not, but it is to the detriment of the centre, which is increasingly oriented towards a single course of action. What I mean here is not really a fundamental shift in the perspective – the peripheral and hybrid phenomena we have been talking about could emerge in the discourse on contemporary art, say, as a new context or an interesting backdrop against which to observe the features of the institutional mainstream better.

MU: Concluding, I would like to return to outsiders. Is it possible to live in a geographical province and gain visibility in the centre? Two examples come to mind, both of publishing houses: the people behind the Bored Wolves publishing house live in a small village in the Beskid Mountains, while those behind the bigger and better known Czarne publishing house in Low Beskid.

Michał Bratko: Come on, Bored Wolves print their books in Kraków, they sell them in New York and Warsaw. This is no periphery… So this is living in a province but operating at the very centre.

JW: Of crucial importance is the fact of having an adequate social position – if someone's activity has already been validated by the centre, they can be wherever they like, geographically speaking.

MZ: It is all about networking. Failing to complete that stage renders growth in the periphery impossible. Monet had to first come to Paris in order to be able to settle down in Giverny, Gaugain, in order to leave for Tahiti, had to first conquer Paris. Likewise Cézanne and many others.

KN: Locally, we also see that people who have gained visibility remove themselves from social life, they do not visit, do not attend, but they do create. They can afford that luxury.

HYBRIDS

MZ: I am interested in the process of a new centre emerging, one always associated with some sort of economic and political dominance. The history of Western art has clearly demonstrated that such was the case there. For the coming decades, the centre will probably be shifting Eastward, to India and China. How long will the cultural hegemony of the West last? The economic dominance slowly transfers to the Eastern powers. After all, Chinese traditions of art are much older than European ones. Still, in the 19th and the 20th century, the country turned to the language developed in the West, from the Socrealist idiom of the Mao era all the way to the language of the galleries in the 1990s. Western galleries started to open their branches in China. And now, while gaining economic dominance, these powers have not yet developed an autonomous cultural language, but they will, I think. Meanwhile, the language of our culture proliferated around the globe and became the *lingua franca*. Everyone uses the model of art developed by the Europeans. It is, therefore, very intriguing to see the developments of the coming decades and whether or not a new language will emerge on the basis of the old one.

MU: The new centre lives in the long shadow of its predecessor. The former wants to authenticate itself by taking over the latter's language. For instance, Americans' love for Paris and the contemporary American painting created with the influence from the artists who had emigrated from France during the war.

MZ: This shows there can be no centre without economic and political dominance.

MU: In the Far East, in Korea and China, there is a performance art community. They hold performance art festivals there. Local artists were able to adapt performance art because it is congruent with their way of being in the world, their traditional training of the body and the mind. However, performative activity interpreted in the cultural codes of the East gains meanings different to the ones in the West.

JW: Perhaps being able to discover the similarity between the global language of art and local phenomena could give rise to a sort of a pole reversal? Sometimes, this way – by small steps – a major shift comes about, stemming from the fact that certain elements 'fit together', whether intentionally or not. We can consider it to be a manifestation of a hybrid structure that I refer to as the connective tissue that fills the space between the centres. The process of gradually shifting accents, of seeking analogies

– sometimes imprecise, but revealing the actual truth – may prove more efficient than a radical revolution.

MZ: This is a perfectly natural process for one to be seeking footholds, such as similarities that would foster the process of intercultural communication. But complete otherness cannot be assimilated.

JW: The principle of seeking 'fresh blood' in the artistic mainstream is similar. We need something different, but it has to be somewhat similar.

MZ: Not radically different.

JW: Obviously, we must be able to associate it with contemporary art. [laughing]

MZ: This phenomenon is connected with the very definition of art. No detailed criteria can be determined because art eludes them. Art is unnamable, as a whole realm, therefore, it has a phantasmic core. The criteria and hierarchies institutionally established around that notion are rather intuitive than set in stone – we sense what art is, and hence what the mainstream in art is, but these categories are subject to constant change.

Kraków, 14 November 2022 and 4 January 2023
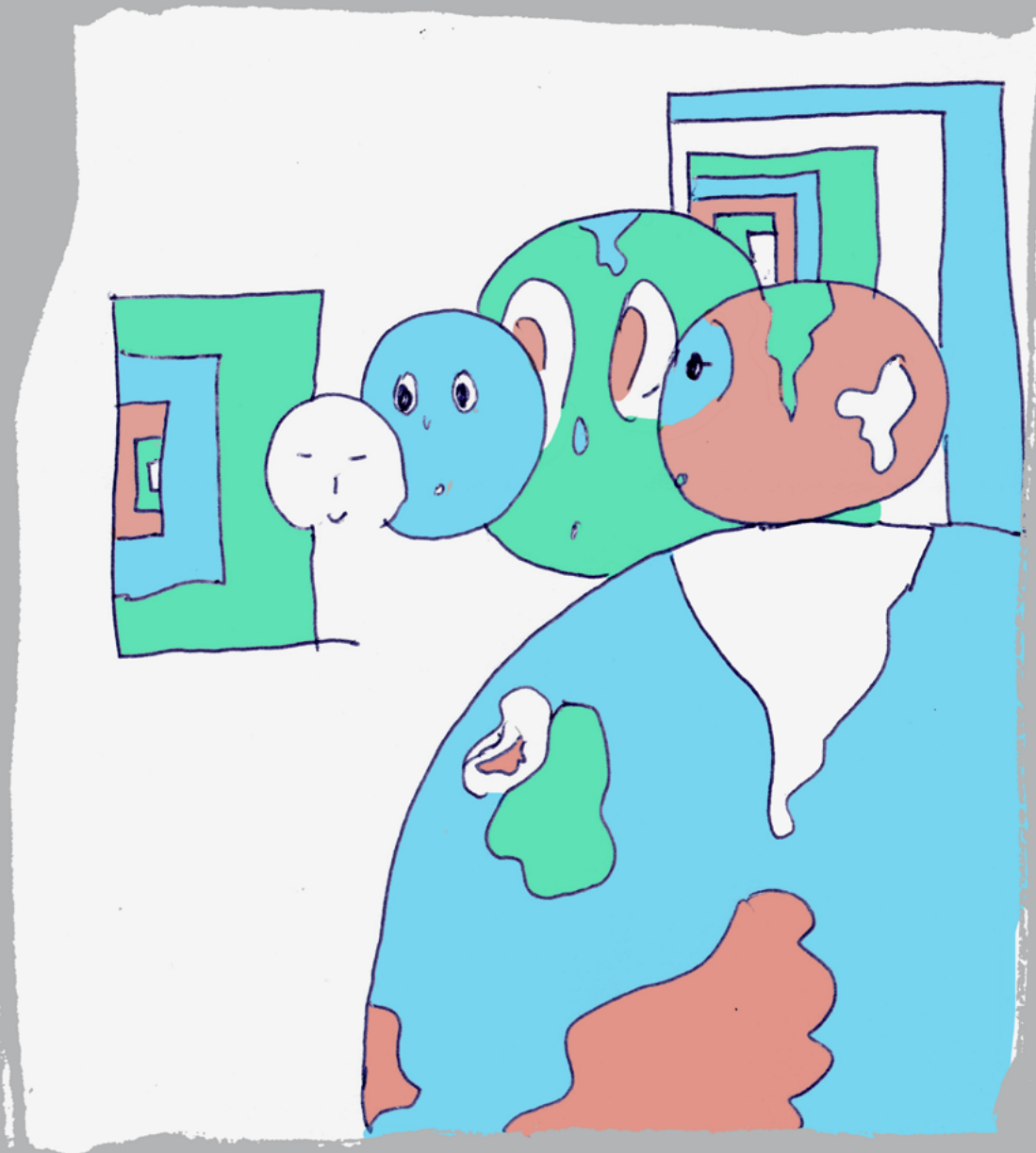
Michał Zawada

THE GLOBAL MUSEUM AND THE POLITICS OF VISIBILITY

What we used to call art operates in a highly structured and hierarchical space. Every hierarchical relationship produces a centre around which a particular order is organised. In this text, which is a reworking of thoughts expressed elsewhere,[1] I will attempt to look at how the system of institutions shaped by the historical process constructs and distributes the overarching currency of the visual arts, namely visibility, and how this currency influences the distribution of roles within the diverse and heterogeneous field of art, creating strong focal points and their peripheries. This task requires looking at artistic activities in general from the perspective of the social and political (and thus historical and material) mechanisms that determine the processes of building hierarchies and distributing prestige. The categories of centre and periphery will not be understood here in a strictly geographic-spatial context, but will refer to any manifestation of the hierarchical tensions that characterise contemporary art institutions.

That is why I ask what processes make the fundamental difference between the collections of those who speak and those we ultimately hear, as well as those who show and those we ultimately see. These are questions that need to resonate as artists confront what we call the art world in the context of global economic, social, climatic and political change. In this text I focus on the ideological conditioning of divisions and power structures within the art world. In order to better understand the system of phenomena and relations within the art world, i.e., the works, the creators, the interpretations, the audiences, the institutions and the relations between them, I will refer to them as the 'Global Museum'. It is a term that organises the totality of the elements mentioned, but it situates them within a historical and political process.

The totality of languages of art and languages about art, sometimes consonant with each other, sometimes mutually contradictory and mutually exclusive, and thus co-creating its heterogeneous landscape, is situated in the broad field of a complex system of representation. This system (or rather metasystem made up of historically and geographically variable subsystems) can be defined, following Louis Althusser, as an ideological semiotic apparatus, which is a meaningful structure, representing the real conditions of life and generating a complex stratigraphy of meanings.[2]

According to Althusser, ideologies are systems of representation consisting of concepts, ideas, myths and images in which people experience imaginative relations to real conditions of existence. This definition of ideologies as systems of representation recognises their discursive and semiotic

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1   M. Zawada, 'Języki sztuki i globalne Muzeum', *Zeszyty Malarstwa* 13, 2019, pp. 36–40.

2   L. Althusser, *W imię Marksa*, transl. M. Herer, Warszawa, 2009, idem, *Ideologia i aparaty ideologiczne państwa*, transl. A. Staroń, Paris, 1976.

nature. Systems of representation are the systems through which we represent the world to ourselves and others. Ideological knowledge is the result of specific historical practices related to the production of meaning. We need systems through which we represent the real to ourselves and others, and as humans we simply cannot live in a space that would be ideologically unmediated. Althusser wrote, 'Only on the basis of an ideological world-view is it possible to imagine a world without ideology; the utopian idea of a world from which all ideology (and not just one or other of its historical forms) has disappeared without a trace to make way for science.'[3] And further: 'Ideology is therefore no aberration or accidental extravagance of history; it is a structure necessarily accompanying the historical life of all societies. And it is only by recognising this necessity that it is possible to exert some influence on ideology, to transform it into a tool for consciously influencing the course of history.'[4] Social relations and conditions of existence actually exist, independently of our will, so our representations of social relations do not exhaust their effects. However, we can only access them through these mediations. Ideology is essentially unconscious 'and this is true even when (…) it presents itself in a deliberate form. While ideology is a system of representations, these representations themselves mostly have nothing to do with "consciousness", they are usually images, sometimes concepts, to the vast majority of people, but they impose themselves in the form of structures that bypass their "consciousness" altogether.'[5] Ideology is therefore closely linked to the problem of distributing visibility and defining hierarchies.

The Global Museum is a historically, geographically and socially (class) conditioned system that functions as an ideological apparatus. The correct identification of ideological conditioning (done, of course, from within the ideology) is only the first step. The question of actionability, which is most important from the ethical perspective, remains one of the most pressing imperatives faced by art institution practitioners.

The concept of art which, after many reinterpretations, we are using today is, of course, a relatively young creation, one might say it is modern par excellence. Its emergence is linked to the beginning of aesthetic reflection and, simultaneously, to the emergence and development of its first European public institutions in the 18th and early 19th centuries.[6] It

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3   L. Althusser, *W imię Marksa…*, op. cit., p. 267.
4   Ibidem, p. 268.
5   Ibidem.
6   Although exhibition institutions displaying objects classified today as fine arts were established as early as in the 15th and 16th centuries, the period of the Enlightenment saw a turn towards making collections accessible to a wider public, which was the case for the Capitoline Museums in 1734, the British Museum in 1753, the Royal Bavarian Collection in 1779, and the Uffizi in Florence around 1789. Making the French collection at the Louvre available

is worth noting that this is also the moment of the maturation of modern capitalism and, on the one hand, the emergence of the idea of nation states and, on the other, the beginnings of globalisation. All subsequent transformations within it, made especially in the avant-garde and contemporary periods, are based on a reconfiguration of this original concept. What we understand as art at any given time is linked to specific changing modes of experience growing out of historical and social circumstances.[7] Following Jacques Rancière's thought, art is an assumption that makes objects that would otherwise have different functions visible: this is determined by a particular division of the presentation space.[8] My proposed term 'Global Museum' helps to distinguish between inquiries rooted in an ideological definition of the field of art and reflections on the concept of art understood in a supra-historical perspective. It involves a central institutional apparatus that integrates artefacts into the circulation of the art world and therefore guarantees their visibility.

The Global Museum is a historically and geographically conditioned system representing the totality of phenomena and relations within the art world: the works and their creators, the languages of interpretation and representation, the audiences, the institutions and the relations established between them. Through interpellation, the Global Museum as ideology is responsible for empowering the aforementioned phenomena within the system. It is a decentralised, multi-level apparatus of power exercised within its ever-changing borders. Due to the lack of an unambiguous centre and the absence of constraints and barriers, we can consider this definition of the Global Museum as close to Michael Hardt's and Antonio Negri's concept of Empire, transposed onto the operation of the art world.[9] Under contemporary conditions, the Global Museum functions, like the Empire, as a global apparatus, hegemonically incorporating into its framework all the practices, individuals and artefacts it desires. The Global Museum has the power of naming and therefore exercises power over the process of empowerment. It decides what will be included and, in doing so, gives the impression of having knowledge of what the included subject wants. This desire is to get closer to the

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to the public during the Great French Revolution (1793) is an important reference point in this movement because of its political, republican context. See *The First Modern Museums of Art: The Birth of an Institution in 18th- and Early 19th-Century Europe*, ed. C. Paul, Los Angeles, 2012.

7   See J. Rancière, *Aisthesis. Scenes from the Aesthetic Regime of Art*, New York-London, 2019, pp. IX–XII.

8   Idem, *Estetyka jako polityka,* transl. J. Kutyła, P. Mościcki, Warszawa, 2007, p. 24.

9   M. Hardt, A. Negri, *Imperium*, transl. A. Kołbaniuk, S. Ślusarski, Warszawa, 2011.

artistic core of the system, while the Global Museum seeks to regulate the object of this desire accordingly.

At the centre is the idea of art, which is impossible to be grasped precisely: it cannot be defined definitively and therefore is susceptible to transformation and a continuous process of interpretation. It becomes the condition for all ideological operations carried out by the Global Museum. It is a kind of black hole that, by the force of its gravity, attracts empowered, albeit alienated, individuals and practices to itself. Being included by the Global Museum into the discourse seems to promise a rapprochement with this centre.

The Global Museum as an ideological apparatus seeking to maintain dispersed power is nowadays closely linked to the hegemonic position of global capitalism. However, this trivial statement about the incorporation into the economic and political ideological system has consequences for virtually all manifestations of activity in this field, which are easy to ignore on a daily basis. It conditions everyday life, hierarchies and valuations, regulates languages, determines their audibility and visibility, but also moderates gestures of resistance. The contemporary habitual identification of the art world with the art market (and thus with one of the most pathological manifestations of the functioning of the global market) is a perfect symptom of this process. The anti-capitalist strategies that are emerging within the contemporary Global Museum are doomed to operate within the paradigm already set by the hegemonic position of Euro-Atlantic capitalism.

Any discussion of the hierarchical and unequal distribution of roles within the art world, and therefore a debate that questions the structure that determines positions in the centre and the periphery, should try to get to the source of the processes. I therefore propose the following, certainly fragmented, set of features of the Global Museum to help better understand its gradual evolution.

a.   The Global Museum is a historically conditioned phenomenon. Historicity thus determines the constant fluctuation of its identity, subject to constant renegotiation and translation into new economic, political and social conditions. In the simplest terms, its idea crystallises at the dawn of modernity to take its mature form in the period of Enlightenment. A symbolic moment for this process is the opening of the royal collections in the Louvre to representatives of all states during the French Revolution, as well as the transformation of art academies characterised by their explicitly authoritarian character into modern schools.[10] The establishment

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10   The process of change within art education took longer, and although the French Revolution brought a redefinition of the model of how the academy

of the first institutions gradually gives rise to discourses around art: that is how the modern academic art history and aesthetics are born. This is the first time that the Museum so radically separated the art, which began to reside inside its structure, from what remains outside. In a gesture of aestheticisation, art history 'calls' selected objects 'art' in a somehow anachronistical manner, stripping them of their original functions. Boris Groys argues even more radically that since the French Revolution, art has been treated as a de-functionalised and exposed corpse of past reality (the revolution turned the utilitarian objects of the *ancien régime* into art devoid of any function).[11] Finally, and this seems symptomatic, the timing of the emergence of the Global Museum coincides with the beginning of the secularisation of the Western European societies.[12]

b.   The Global Museum as a historically conditioned phenomenon is subject to constant metamorphoses, which included several turning points: the crisis of the Parisian Salon at the end of the 19th century, the historical avant-gardes, the relocation of the centre from Europe to the United States during World War II or the dominance of the private sector from the second half of the 20th century onwards. New circumstances, whether political, social or aesthetic, provoke reactions from art institutions that adapt their language to the changed rules of the game.

c.   The Global Museum is set in a specific geographical location: Western Europe experiencing a gradual trend of abandoning absolutism. Thanks to the institutional and hegemonic tendency of aesthetics and art history, it is gradually colonising other centres that are culturally and politically influenced by Europe.

d.   The Global Museum is therefore developing in centres that are gradually gaining economic advantage and cultural dominance. The 19th century is a historic moment of a shift in the balance of economic power in favour of Europe and the Atlantic production

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functioned, it was not until the mature modernism of the 20th century that truly spectacular transformations in institutional modes of teaching were brought about.

11   B. Groys, 'On Art Activism', [in:] idem, *In the Flow*, New York-London, 2017, pp. 47–49. Text also available: https://www.e-flux.com/journal/56/60343/on-art-activism/[access: 28 December 2022].

12   The relationship between the emergence of the modern notion of art and the processes of secularisation was raised, among others, by: H. Belting, *Obraz i kult*, transl. T. Zatorski, Gdańsk 2010. See also: J. Dehail, 'Secular Objects and Bodily Affects in the Museum', [in:] *Secular Bodies, Affects and Emotions. European Configurations*, ed. M. Scheer, N. Fadil, B. Schepelern Johansen, Bloomsbury, 2019, pp. 61–74.

The Global Museum is a historically and geographically conditioned system representing the totality of phenomena and relations within the art world: the works and their creators, the languages of interpretation and representation, the audiences, the institutions and the relations established between them. Through interpellation, the Global Museum as ideology is responsible for empowering the aforementioned phenomena within the system.

and trade system as well as a period of accelerating colonisation.[13] The Museum is thus maturing with the acceleration of Euro-Atlantic capitalism, so its functioning and modes of hierarchy are closely linked to the speculative, financial model of the functioning of the economic system.

e.   The Global Museum is characterised by a tendency towards hegemony and expansion (colonisation). The definitions of art it produces, despite their historical context and European origins, tend to claim universalism, which is why the Global Museum so easily systematically appropriates the creations of different regions of the world and different temporalities.

f.   The Global Museum develops alongside the idea of the nation-state, whose crisis at the end of the 20th century affects also the functioning of the art world. The Global Museum combines the simultaneity of a global (universalist) dimension with a local, particularist one (the continuation of the tradition of national pavilions within an international exhibition endeavour such as the Venice Biennale can be given here as an excellent example).

The origins of the Global Museum are linked to a specific class (the aristocracy and the bourgeoisie), which has control over its discourses and its system of hierarchy and valuation. For this class, the gesture of aestheticising and defunctionalising objects is a tool for neutralising political orders that are hostile to it. Despite the gradual opening of the Museum to representatives of the lowest classes or marginalised groups, the most important centres of power remain in the hands of the richest and most influential actors.

g.   The Global Museum was created by men.

h.   It exploits and mythologises the creative potential of the individual; it builds on antagonism and competitiveness, later transferring them to other, higher levels (of groups, institutions, centres).

i.   Its emergence is accompanied by the creation of institutions that are supposed to protect its interests. Emerging alongside museums are art associations (e.g., the German *Kunstvereine*), auction houses specialising in works of art, public museum institutions, private galleries, biennales, etc.

j.   The Global Museum exists as a hierarchical structure that determines the constantly changing systems of evaluation. However, regardless of the methods of this evaluation and the democratisation processes taking place within it, it retains a market-driven and symbolic capital-driven tendency to hierarchise its actors. The

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13   For more on reorientation points in the history of the global economy, see: K. Pobłocki, *Kapitalizm. Historia krótkiego trwania*, Warszawa, 2017.

Museum's policy is largely based on the production of scarcity (the regulation of artistic overproduction carried out precisely by maintaining certain hierarchies and values). This phenomenon means, as Nika Dubrovsky and David Graeber recently argued, that 'even the most sincerely radical anti-capitalist critics, curators, and gallerists will tend to draw the line at the possibility that everyone really could be an artist, even in the most diffuse possible sense. The art world remains overwhelmingly a world of heroic individuals, even when it claims to echo the logic of movements and collectives – even when the ostensible aim of those collectives is to annihilate the distinction between art and life'.[14]

k.   With increasing globalisation and the spread of liberal tendencies within the Global Museum, processes of at least declarative democratisation are emerging, occurring, however, with the continued retention of a strong core of power. The Museum makes a universal, democratic promise of participation while ensuring that its core retains a strictly hierarchical, individual-based character.

l.   The Global Museum is based on the fetishisation of artefacts as commodities. The radical acceleration of capitalism and the crisis of the public support system for culture make the speculative nature of the art market accelerate.

m.   The currency of the Global Museum is symbolic capital, understood as the prestige of individuals and institutions, which is not always linked to the mercantile value of artefacts. The lowest class in the order of the art world is the dark matter, as defined by Gregory Scholette, which ensures the Global Museum's smooth functioning.[15]

n.   Under the dominance of the liberal order, a huge percentage of artistic activities declaratively isolate themselves from the political order; they adopt a neutral position. Radical actions, on the other hand, are gradually neutralised and institutionalised.

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14   N. Dubrovsky, D. Graeber 'Another Art World, Part 1: Art Communism and Artificial Scarcity', *e-flux Journal,* 2019, 102: https://www.e-flux.com/journal/102/284624/another-art-world-part-1-art-communism-and-artificial-scarcity/, [access: 9 November 2019].

15   According to G. Scholette, the dark matter of the art world consists of artists who have lost out in the race for institutional visibility. However, the presence of these invisible activities makes it possible to construct hierarchical relationships within the official field of art. See G. Scholette, *Dark Matter: Art and Politics in the Age of Enterprise Culture*, London-New York, 2011.

The Global Museum is thus a structure within which resound the languages of art produced by, among others: artists, their works, museums, galleries, art schools, local and global biennials, publishers and foundations within both the public and private sectors, critics, curators, aesthetes, art philosophers or educators. Each link in this ideological structure guarantees its functioning and continued growth.

For these languages, the Global Museum is the only global system of representation and therefore distribution of institutional visibility. That is why anyone who wishes to be heard (seen), even the most radical contestant of the Global Museum, is condemned to move within it.

The subjects of power within the Global Museum represent the full political and social image, ranging from the most revolutionary and radically democratic to the most hard-core conservative, the only difference is that subjects with a strictly conservative perspective believe that they occupy a position outside of ideology, in a pure space from which they can make moral judgements. As Althusser noted, 'what actually happens in ideology seems to operate outside of it: one of the results of ideology is the practical negation of the ideological character of ideology by ideology: ideology never says "I am ideological"'.[16] The Global Museum's subjects can both narrate/show visions of sudden transformation, emancipation and participation as well as dream of a lost (but never existing) past. However, as long as they generate their discourses within the paradigm of hierarchy and market fetishisation, they generate them within the Global Museum, which loads them with its ideological charge.

Is there any artistic activity outside the Global Museum? Yes. It is a set of phenomena often described as peripheral, regardless whether this peripherality is determined by geographical distance from the world's artistic centres, the ethnic or class origin of the artist or creator, or the niche set of technological or formal means within which activity is undertaken. However, it is the Global Museum that holds the promise

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[16]   L. Althusser, *Ideologie i aparaty ideologiczne państwa*, quoted in: http://www.nowakrytyka.pl/pl/Ksiazki/Ksiazki_on-line/?id=888 [access: 13 November 2019]. A clear symptom of this trend on the Polish scale is the recently announced substantive and organisational programme of the Ujazdowski Castle Centre for Contemporary Art in Warsaw, prepared by the newly appointed director Piotr Bernatowicz. Bernatowicz declares there the ideological purity: freedom from ideologisation understood, as he writes, as 'a mechanism of thinking detached from reality'. Such tracing of 'ideology' from the supposed perspective of ideological freedom remains not only disarmingly naïve, but imposes on us a duty of even greater critical vigilance; http://bip.mkidn.gov.pl/media/docs/ogloszenia/2019/Program_merytoryczny_i_organizacyjny_csw_-_zu_na_2020-2026_z_akceptacja_Ministra.pdf [access: 13 November 2019].

of empowering it and making it visible, which is why everyone is so eager to come to its edifice. The cultural dominance of the Euro-Atlantic region since at least the mid-19th century has guaranteed the Western concept of art as a hegemony within which the colonised regions can only carry out systematic assimilation. This process was particularly evident after the fall of the Iron Curtain or the collapse of colonial regimes. New actors entering the art scene are seeking mechanisms that are both globally legible and preserve the local particularity. This is because the process of assimilating what is radically different takes longer and is far more complicated.

Any action taken at a distance from the centre has the potential to be incorporated into the Global Museum, but carries at the same time the possibility of changing its shape, even if this change will be slight or in the long term irrelevant. Activity outside the centres of dominant discourses can become a laboratory for new possibilities and forms of collaboration. Their intensification can lead to the systematic transformation of the Global Museum and the loosening of hierarchies. However, it is impossible to imagine such a change that would not be accompanied by changes of a social and political nature, even if previous attempts at an inclusive reorganisation of the art space have proved to be short-lived and sometimes superficial. Perhaps, as Hardt and Negri argue,[17] there is an opportunity to establish a new community based on a radical multiplicity abolishing hegemony and in its stead proposing cooperative relations within social and cultural life. But will it centre around 'art'? Discussions on peripheral phenomena undertaken in many forums, the ongoing process of emancipation of those who have hitherto been excluded from the Global Museum, debates initiated in the context of events such as the documenta fifteen, curated by the Indonesian ruangrupa, produce real fissures in the creaking edifice.[18] It is impossible to ascertain their permanence, but the knowledge that the Global Museum was created as a result of specific historical transformations ensures that it is a conglomerate of institutions that can be subject to constant reconfiguration.

The process of emancipation by the excluded phenomena alone does not solve the problem of institutional hegemony. We need to be aware that processes of empowerment, however desirable within the Global Museum institution, can still replicate elite hierarchies and thus lead to further exclusions. Not every change coming from the periphery

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17   M. Hardt, A. Negri, *Assembly*, Oxford, 2017.

18   M. You, 'What Politics? What Aesthetics?: Reflections on documenta fifteen', *e-flux Journal*, 131, November 2022, https://www.e-flux.com/journal/131/501112/what-politics-what-aesthetics-reflections-on-documenta-fifteen/[access: 19 June 2023].

is by definition a desirable change, just as not every decision taken from a position of the centre is a wrong decision. It is impossible to think of the field of art as a space that is devoid of agonic dynamics, free of tensions and conflicts. Nor is there a world of complete and egalitarian visibility. However, the more the procedures for regulating it disperse, the less dominant the centres will be. The processes of expanding visibility must concern all art institutions: those dealing with creation and exhibition, but also the research and theoretical ones. It is ultimately the institutions that carry the burden of collective efforts within the visual arts.[19] As the conditions of domination are constantly changing, the processes of systematic institutional critique must also adapt to the realities of the present. Since the 1970s, the waves of institutional criticism themselves became systematically institutionalised, eventually becoming another tool for evaluating artistic practices. It becomes clear that it is not only institutions that need to be criticised, but also the strategies of criticism themselves. At stake in such critical mechanics (or 'metacritical' mechanics, which recently takes the form of instituent practices[20]) is the pluralism that is still waiting to be implemented, remaining perpetually in the realm of theoretical hypotheses and declarations often unsupported by real action. However, we should be aware that the contemporary Polish institutional and political context shows that the renegotiation of the model for the functioning of venues exhibiting contemporary art can take on a counter-revolutionary character, based on resentment and violent appropriation. This fact cannot obscure the need for constant renegotiation of current global hierarchies. However, their effects are still difficult to predict.

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19   See T. Beery, 'Instituent Practices: Art After (Public) Institutions', *Temporary Art Review* 2018, January 2, https://temporaryartreview.com/instituent-practices-art-after-public-institutions/.

20   The term was introduced by G. Raunig in 'Flatness Rules: Instituent Practices and Institutions of the Common in a Flat World', [in:] *Institutional Attitudes: Instituting Art in a Flat World*, ed. P. Gielen, Amsterdam, 2013, and defined as 'the actualisation of the future in the present becoming'.

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Abstract:

The text attempts to diagnose the hierarchical relations regulating visibility within visual arts institutions. Despite processes that increase the declarative inclusivity of art institutions, referred to by the author as the Global Museum, the reality of art circulation remains conditioned by relations to hegemonic entities. Using the concept of ideological apparatuses of the state, the author treats the institutional circulation of art as a complex, historically and socially conditioned system. Presenting the topic in a historical context allows for a better understanding of the processes shaping the division between centre and periphery within the globalised art world. The article also asks the question about possible scenarios to move beyond the closed circuit of hierarchical relationships which regulate who, within the institutional framework, becomes visible and who will remain marginalised.

Michał Zawada

Born in 1985 in Kraków. In 2004–2009, he studied art history at Jagiellonian University, and in 2005–2010, painting at the Academy of Fine Arts in Kraków in the studio of Professor A. Bednarczyk. He was awarded a Doctor of Arts degree in 2013 and received his habilitation degree in 2020. Since 2012, he has been employed in the VI Painting Studio of Professor A. Bednarczyk. Winner of the Scholarship of the Republic of Austria (Akademie der bildenden Künste Wien, 2014–2015). From 2016 to 2019, he served as Vice-Dean of the Faculty of Painting at the Academy of Fine Arts in Kraków. Author of ten solo exhibitions, he has taken part in dozens of group shows in Poland and abroad.

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PART II

CIRCUITS AND NETWORKS
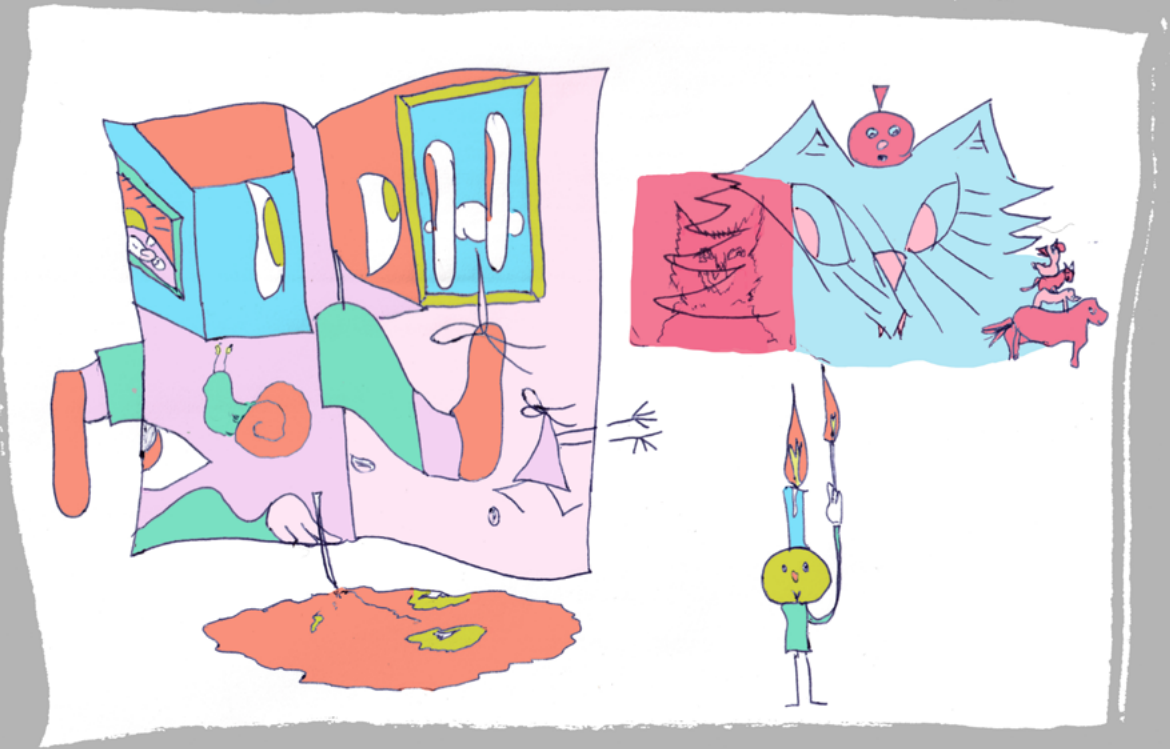
Anita Wincencjusz-Patyna

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 established[2] '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]

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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.bolognachildrensbookfair.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 forefront[8] – and the large-sized books *Pszczoły* (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 Blaźniak, 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

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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, *Pszczoły* (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.

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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 recipient[11] 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), naïvety 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

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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 Krasiński'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 Rytka during filming), the font was blurred. A close-up of a detail

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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 Ą. 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* (Typoscrawl), for which he received the BolognaRagazzi Award in 2015.

In Zofia Dubowska's books, the 'original' works[20] 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

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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. Mizielińscy, 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-

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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 Hasior, 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.

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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 Krasiński, Roman Opałka, Ryszard Winiarski, Cezary Bodzianowski, Maurycy Gomulicki, Julita Wójcik, Aneta Grzeszykowska, Monika Drożyńska, Jan Dziaczkowski, 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.

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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 Krasiński five thousand times and his blue tape, Opałka's regular face recording and counted paintings, random paintings of Winairski'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.

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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.

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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.

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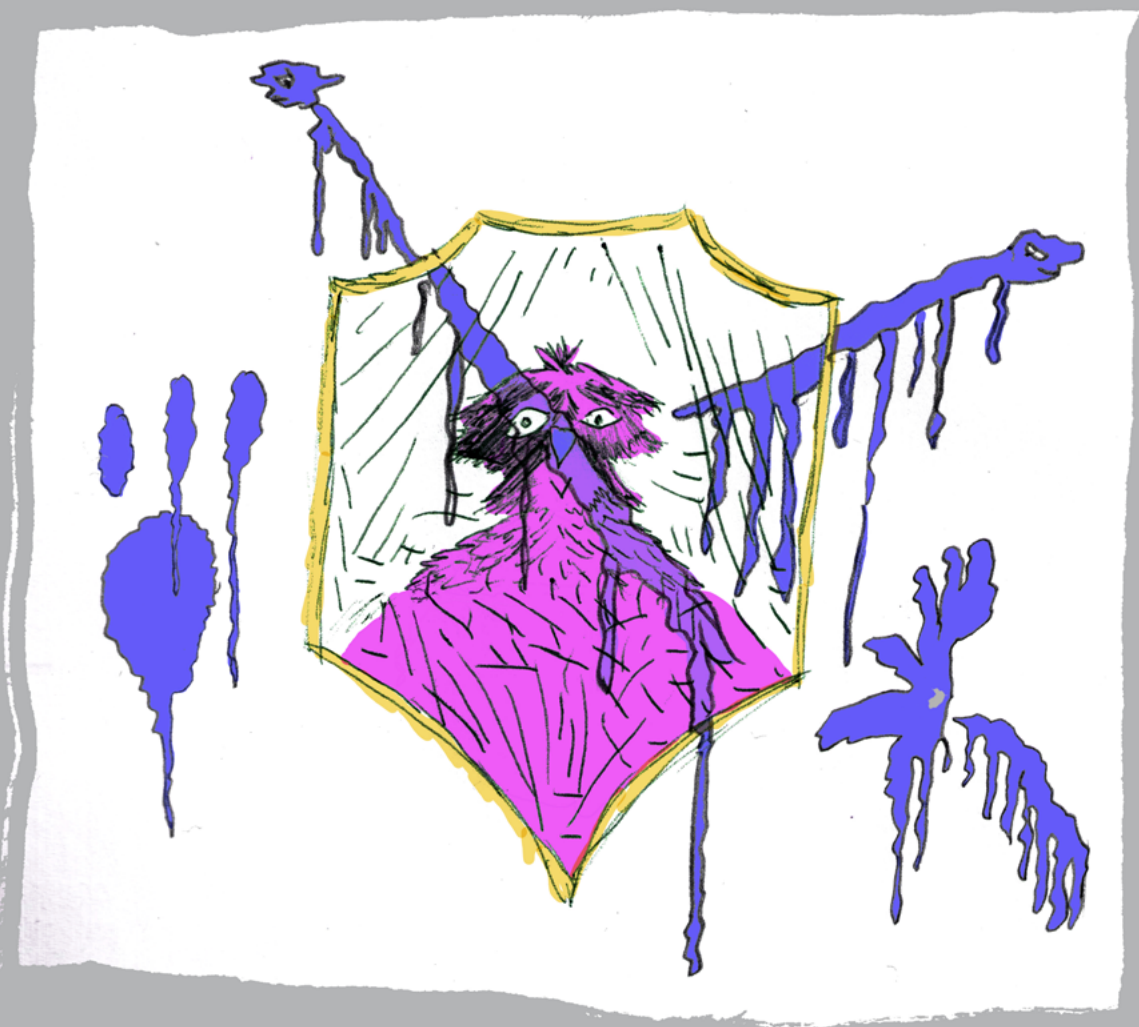
Cezary Hunkiewicz

EVOLUTIONS. STREET ART AND ITS RELEVANCE

Reflecting on the topicality of the phenomenon of street art, we can either put forward arguments indicating its marginalisation or propose coherent reasoning relating to its dominant presence in the field of art. We find both strategies to lie far from and close to the truth at the same time. What can we do, therefore, to approach the current state of things? Determine the criteria, clarify the concepts, and reconstruct the most measurable and significant events that we have observed in the field of interest to us in recent years.

Before we proceed to a proper discussion of the topic, let us make reservations that will define the scope of our interests better. Let us think for a moment about *what street art is and what it is not*. Does it exist in some universal form, or does its influence and place in the field of art depend on the region of the world (for instance)? How has the current of our interest developed and is developing in Poland compared to, for example, France, the USA, or Asian countries? These are trivial questions; however, unless we address them, we will not be able to say much about the phenomenon we are interested in.

'The difference between graffiti and street art is the same as between jazz and techno',[1] this is how Cedar Lewisohn, curator of the *Street Art* exhibition at Tate Modern in London, most briefly defined the relation between the two phenomena. To pinpoint the concepts formally: street art is a spontaneous, bottom-up, and independent artistic activity in urban space, aimed at the widest audience possible, using specific media such as the stencil, poster, etc. Street art is not and cannot be identified with graffiti, which is also a spontaneous and bottom-up activity in urban space; however, the intentionality accompanying it is not constituted by the desire for artistic activity; it is, in principle, a hermetic form of communication with other participants in this peculiar game in which *fame* and *respect* become the stake. Its characteristic form of expression is limited mainly to lettering, inclusively distributed and perceived only by the environment of graffiti makers.

The above definitions regulating street art and graffiti were necessary to formulate the first thesis of our considerations, namely that neither street art nor graffiti are elements of the current art market: in view of the adopted definitions, they are excluded as anti-institutional and anti-market phenomena. On the other hand, both could well be elements of the broadly understood domain of art, especially as the subject of considerations in the field of art history (embodiment of democratisation processes or progressive egalitarianism). On the other hand, it should be noted that the most interesting and the most revealing perspective for these phenomena would be the socio-cultural one, for example in the phenomenological perspective, looking for the essence of phenomena in the meaning of actions, motivations, and goals guiding individuals (and groups). The phenomenon perceived in this

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1   C. Lewisohn, *Street Art: The Graffiti Revolution*, London, 2009, p. 15.

way becomes the subject of sociological reflection and, as such, it allows such actions as putting forward the thesis of the relationship between, for example, the graffiti movement[2] emerging in New York, represented by socially, economically, and culturally excluded communities (Rammellzee, Jean-Michel Basquiat, Lee Quinones, or Lady Pink), and the contemporary movement that has coalesced around the slogan *Black Lives Matter*, for instance.

STREET ART IS DEAD

If we return to their roots, neither graffiti nor street art programmatically aspired to be treated as part of the field of art, and the forms of their inclusion are an interpretation and a consequence of the evolution of the phenomenon, especially its deconstruction and professionalisation.[3] In other words, street art or graffiti, considered today as an element of the art world, are no longer the same street art or graffiti *per se* that we wanted to know. They are our idea of the phenomenon, which seems to be confirmed by numerous attempts to interpret street art and graffiti in relation to ancient rock inscriptions. These analogies have no grounds, as their sphere simply concerns completely different phenomena (which results, at the very least, from the constitutive role of the contemporarily understood city as a necessary element for the existence of street art or graffiti).

The above remark is not tantamount to the rejection of the assumptions of epistemological realism (which assumes, in simplified terms, that reality is available to our cognition). Rather, it puts forward a far-reaching thesis that street art is gone. This, in turn, raises the question of an

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2   At this point, we applied a certain simplification: the discussion about the origins of *graffiti* which, of course, saw the light of day in Philadelphia, cf.: *Public Wall Writing in Philadelphia*, Philadelphia 2007; R. Gastman, *Wall Writers Graffiti in its Innocence*, Berkeley, 2016.

3   An interesting context is to follow the dynamics of the first exhibitions of artists related to graffiti. Starting from 1973 and the United Graffiti Artists exhibition at the Razor Gallery, through the *Wallstreet* exhibition, where J. M. Basquiat made his debut (as SAMO), '*New York/New Wave*' at the PS1 (today, MoMA PS1) 1981 and the groundbreaking '*Post-Graffiti*' in 1983. (See: C. Pape, *Graffiti in Galleries*, [in:] R. Gastman, *Beyond the Streets: Vandalism as Contemporary Art*, New York, 2019, pp. 138–163). Even as early as then, in New York, an opposition was emerging between experienced, commercial galleries and novice exhibition initiatives with a more socially oriented profile. The former would announce *graffiti* as a new breakthrough trend that was supposed to succeed pop-art in capturing art, while the latter approached the phenomenon with more perspective, seeing in it the potential for an experiment free from the promise of artistic breakthrough (cf. A. Waclawek, *Graffiti and Street Art*, London, 2011, pp. 60–61).

ontological nature: if something is gone, why are we still talking about it? What is this *thing* that exists instead of street art?

Before we solve this problem, let us summarise the foregoing eduction. We began with a question about the current status of the phenomenon of street art. Within the problem, we indicated the existence of two extreme attitudes, which can be called:

a.　　affirmative attitude, proclaiming that street art is a dominant phenomenon in the contemporary field of art. In the case of this attitude, we most often find references to the mediality of street art icons, the phenomenon's impact on popular culture, or its global nature;[4]

b.　　negative attitude, marginalising the influence of street art within the contemporary field of art. At this point, the argumentation may include opinions referring to the lack of institutional legitimacy, the sporadicity of museum exhibitions, or the peculiar naivety of the phenomenon, which is closer to a hobby than to a professional activity.[5] [6]

c.　　Both attitudes are misleading, not only because of their extremeness but also due to the implicit unification of street art and graffiti in the public discourse. The blurring of such a key distinction gives us an apparent conviction of describing the phenomenon, without paying attention to its inaccessibility (graffiti)[7] or the progressive breakup with the street art tradition in favour of identification with the urban art (alternatively urban contempora-

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4　An excellent example of this approach is the exhibition *Beyond Graffiti Writing*, as well as the preceding *Art In The Streets* show, which took place in 2011 at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Los Angeles (curated by MoCA director, well-known populariser and collector of abstract expressionism and pop art, Jeffrey Deitch). *Beyond Graffiti Writing* (curated by R. Gastman) had its last edition at the Saatchi Gallery in London (see R. Gastman, *Beyond the Streets*, London, 2023).

5　See also, e.g.: C. Lewisohn, *Street Art…*, p. 131.

6　The evolution and discursive transformation of some works in urban space, which turned, over time, from *delinquency* into institutionally legitimised works of *art – observed by J. Kimvall – seems to be significant in this context,* see J. Kimvall, *The G-Word: Virtuosity and Violation, Negotiating and Transforming Graffiti*, Arsta 2014, p. 156.

7　The aforementioned definitions (and the distinction between street art and graffiti) have demonstrated that neither of the two phenomena can be part of the field of art when we treat them in an objective way. The paradox arises when we want to make a meta-objective view of the indicated phenomena, because they become elusive. While the elusiveness of graffiti results from the nature of extremely [chyba brak słowa, również w oryg. – tłum.] social practice, the elusiveness of street art can be caused by the fadeaway of the phenomenon.

ry) trend. Nowadays, the concept of urban art is precisely the most complete and capacious one, giving identity to creators commonly referred to as street artists.

The widespread lack of identification with street art is significant here. The concept got blurred, in a peculiar way, by a significant group of artists and curators alike.[8] They gradually abandoned the term, considering it no longer an adequate description of the creative processes involved. Thus, it is currently becoming increasingly difficult to find the use of the name of street art in the artists' self-definition. The sources of this situation can be found in three processes: a) festivalisation, b) infantilisation, and c) institutionalisation.

Festivalisation is probably the best definition of the functioning of the street art phenomenon in the second decade of the 21st century. In Poland alone, a dozen or so festival initiatives have appeared, attributing to street art a servile role towards the local government bodies' ad-hoc promotional needs. The paradox of the functioning of street art, which, when put into the framework of official cultural events, was supposed to 'brighten the walls and colour the city', caused the art of rebellion to become the art of the authorities and the seedbed of gentrification processes. In addition, its media were narrowed down to (mainly) murals which guaranteed the visibility and spectacular effect for spending public or private (sponsorship) funds.[9] This description is a sort of mental shortcut intended to illustrate the (then) non-obvious contexts of colonising street art; those processes were possible due to the effect of novelty (the creators finally had a chance to produce large-sized paintings) and the lack of curatorial thought: the first initiatives were born out of the desire to showcase murals in the city, without due preparation, planning, grasping of urban contexts.[10] Thus, it can be seen that the progressive festivalisation (a visible fruit of which is, to this day, the so-called *muralosis*) resulted from the lack of a safety element or mediator, functioning at the intersection of artistic activities – the organisers' interest, the city, and the local communities. There will still be time to assess the festivalisation process (which was not only a Polish phenomenon); however, it is possible to point out some of its positive aspects even today. It benefitted the involved individuals, the artists who could professionalise their activities

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8   Cf., e.g., M. Filippi, *Street Art Is Dead. Again and Again. Brief State of the (Urban) Art*, 'Street Art & Urban Creativity Journal' 5, 2019, b. 2, p. 84−90.

9   Cf. M. Duchowski, J. Drozda, B. Kopczyński, et al., *Mury. Diagnoza dynamiki środowiska twórców malarstwa monumentalnego – raport badawczy,* Warszawa, 2016, pp. 104−105.

10   The panorama of the phenomenon was grasped by, e.g., W. Wilczyk, *Słownik polsko-polski,* Kraków, 2019.

and develop critical apparatus entitling them to operate both in urban space and in studio work.

Infantilisation seems to characterise the ways of conducting cultural policy towards street art which has often led to inevitable associations with naïve, banal art. This was exemplified by event promotion materials where spray and graffiti-styled typography (most often with the so-called *drips*) became prevalent attributes. In other words, the goals or intentions associated with street art were limited to the form and act, i.e., to the colouring of façades, without connecting contexts, which turned its artworks into output that did not call for any reflection. Street art slowly became a medium without a message, gaining the recipients' applause thanks to its spectacular form (murals) which, over time, began to serve yet another function: advertising. This combination of the content gap with visual attractiveness and the potential for impact led to the propagation of the idea of patriotic or national murals, which gradually began to prevail in large-sized painting in Poland, becoming a common practice widely subsidised by power-related ministries (Ministry of National Defence), institutions (Institute of National Remembrance), or local governments.[11] The most important feature of infantilisation of the phenomenon is the recognition that the role of art-related initiatives is to fill the content gap with promoted values, bypassing the design phase. In the revision of activities related to patriotic murals, it can be concluded that the content is the most important value of the work and the very fact of its communication in the urban space eliminates the deficit of artistic quality (random composition, selection of typography, and often the level of technical execution). As a result of the progressive infantilisation, an era of sanctioned caricature set in, the fullest image of which could be found in ceremonial unveilings of murals in the presence of representatives of power with ribbon-cutting rituals borrowed from official events and festivals. That is to say, symbolic behaviours closer to sports or political events than to culture.

The last indicated process was institutionalisation, understood here in great simplification as a form of objectification of individual practices, which – ordered – become accessible from the outside and structured, thus ready to be viewed.[12] An indicator of progressive institutionalisation was the peculiar desire to create places for the presentation of so-called street art: galleries and museums. While the creation of galleries focused on presenting or stimulating the phenomenon was an emanation of the environment's needs, one could observe in public discourse an electrify-

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11   See M. Duchowski, et al., *Mury. Diagnoza …* p. 45.
12   Cf., e.g., P.L. Berger, T. Luckmann, *Społeczne tworzenie rzeczywistości,* transl. E. Goździak, Warszawa, 2010.

ing race to create a place that could be called *the first* street art museum. The result was the establishment of as many as five first street art museums:[13] the Street Art Museum in St. Petersburg (2014), the Urban Nation Museum for Urban Contemporary Art in Belin (2017), the Museum of Urban and Contemporary Art in Munich (2017), STRAAT in Amsterdam (2020), and the Amuseum in Munich (2022). The aforementioned initiatives were private activities or places created by non-governmental organisations, and the basic differences observed between them were the ways of understanding street art (implying exhibition strategies). In Amsterdam and St. Petersburg, the museum was contextualised by its location in a post-industrial space, intended to correspond to the street-specific nature of this art. The German museums were oriented towards the creation of a more classic (abstracted) museum presenting paintings, graphics, and artefacts; in addition, they undertook the preparation of themed exhibitions and the building of art collections.

Initiatives that emerged in Poland did not resist the temptation to create a museum, either. This idea was promoted in 2021 by the Urban Forms Foundation, which was behind the creation of most murals in Łódź. At the press conference, however, no advanced programme or broader thematic concept was announced on this occasion, apart from the mention that the museum in Poland was meant to be modelled after Berlin's Urban Nation and to host temporary exhibitions, present performance art, and host workshops and lectures.[14]

The three processes outlined above seemed to intertwine and occur simultaneously. They were quite subtle, which is why they constituted a discreet background for the movement and the environment operating around street art for a long time. Reconstruction of the logic of actions allows us to interpret the process of killing street art as a gradual colonisation of the phenomenon and appropriation of its useful properties.[15] That was how the bottom-up nature of street art made it possible to identify it with youth, its spontaneity with freedom, and its independence

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13   A separate case was the creation of the *Museum of Graffiti* in Miami, opened in 2019.

14   See: *Łódzkie murale częścią muzealnej ekspozycji? W Łodzi ma powstać muzeum street artu*, tulodz.pl, 17 July 2021<https://tulodz.pl/wiadomosci-lodz/lodzkie-murale-czescia-muzealnej-ekspozycji-w-lodzi-ma-powstac-muzeum-street-artu/9thfj2TAHo1peL8A2cfJ>, [accessed 21.12.2022].

15   This generalising opinion cannot prevent us from noticing interesting and downright contestatory events, also conducted in the form of festivals (Katowice Street Art Festival under the curatorial supervision of Michał Kubieniec) and biennials: Out of Sth in Wrocław, Traffic Design in Gdynia. Significantly, however, both initiatives have gradually moved away from taking up the topic of street art.

with inaccessibility or uncontrollability. The mechanisms for supporting street art initiatives were to show its stakeholders as attractive and authentic. It does not matter whether it concerned local governments or commercial brands that, thanks to street art, positioned themselves as credible, creative, progressive, or open.

In the subsequent step, street art was identified with murals, and the massive nature of the creation of the latter limited their quality and reduced their functionality to the (more or less successful) decoration of urban space. That, in turn, resulted in the creation of a content gap, filled with symbolism preferred by the authorities. In this way, street art lost its original momentum but, at the same time, thanks to the universality and values attributed to it, became a phenomenon that cannot be ignored in the discourse on contemporary culture and art. That, in turn, gave rise to the need to institutionalise it in the form of initiatives using the name 'museum'.

The slow exclusion of the concept of street art as inadequate for describing the current state of things created an ideal space to introduce and sanction the concept of urban art (urban contemporary),[16] which has become a widely used conceptual umbrella, including artists and a number of initiatives, once identified with street art, but now free from the genre burden. The most popular questions that arise within the framework of urban art are no longer whether street art can be shown in a gallery or how it can be collected. It has been recognised that artists who have developed a specific and unique style in the context of activities in urban space can successfully refine it in studios and function efficiently in the art world as long as they are capable of creating works that are irreducible to the context of the place (city) where they are created. Urban art is now a basis for a meeting of creators grown out of graffiti and street art. The former group followed the path of abstraction (Futura, Pantone, Jan Kalab,[17] and others), brought performative elements (e.g., Nug, Taps & Moses, and others), introduced a symbiosis of the original typography with expressiveness in the form of the so-called *calligraffiti* (Retna, Jonone, El Seed, and others). On the other hand, artists originating from street art have successfully found their place in painting, and the experience of creating murals includes them in the urban contemporary current

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16   '*Urban art* is most often gallery art made in the street art style,' U. Blanché, *Street Art and related terms – discussion and working definition*, 'Street Art And Urban Creativity', 1, 2015, vol. 1, p. 38.

17   In the context of *urban art* positioning, it is worth recalling that paintings by Czech artists from this current: Jan Kalab, Michał Skapa, or Pasta Oner were auctioned and sold in 2021 at Sotheby's at the auction titled *20th Century Art: A Different Perspective*, i.e., the same one where works by Wojciech Fangor, Jan Ziemski, Ryszard Winiarski and others were offered.

The ability to make money and combine artistic and exhibition activities with a powerful sales machine finds an expression in Kaws' exhibition at the Brooklyn Museum, gathering contemporary urban art dilemmas like a lens. Those dilemmas are related to achieving unprecedented success related to the conquest of the market, presence in major collections, entering the international, institutional circulation of art and the lack of substantive reflection and criticism based on the discussed current. The exhibition What Party23 was an eagerly awaited event intended to build a bridge between art, design, and mass culture.

(Conor Harrington, Przemysław Blejzyk, aka Sainer). It should be noted that their exhibitions are presentations free from any street context and operate in the field of contemporary art (an example is Sainer's solo exhibition *KOLOOR* at the National Museum in Gdańsk in 2023).

The recognition of the trend by collectors and auction records that could be observed during the pandemic played an auxiliary role in the approval of urban art. It was precisely then that the works by the most recognisable artist, namely Banksy, achieved spectacular growth and unattainable prices on the art market.[18] Importantly, art auctions increasingly began to be titled with the simultaneous use of the names *urban art & contemporary*, thanks to which some auctions featured works by the most important representatives of urban art (Banksy, Invader, Kaws, Shepard Fairey) along with Hirst, Koons, or Warhol. It was a peculiar form of legitimising the artists and the whole current as full participants of the art mainstream.

BANKSY IN THE EMPIK FRANCHISE. KAWS AT THE BROOKLYN MUSEUM

Over time, the phenomenon of urban art became so attractive and reproduced from the bottom up that facing its progressive commercialisation was only a matter of time. And it is not a simple statement that artists began to function as sought-after designers, lending their style in order to combine a brand with expected values, such as (the aforementioned) creativity, youth, freedom, etc. Such practices, supported by the artists' organic reach in social media, are standard fare in the world of today's culture. After the liberation from the street art ethos and with the constitution of urban art, commercialisation became an opportunity and sometimes a destination the artists had dreamt of for a long time.[19] Leaving this thread aside, let us discuss two significant events in the field of urban art that can most fully present its current condition.

The first event is Banksy's legal dispute over the rights to his own work. The problem can be phrased in the question: how is it that the British artist's works are available in the Empik bookshop franchise for a dozen or so zlotys? This fact is a consequence of the colonisation of street

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18   The signed edition of the screen print *The Girl With Balloon* reached the price of £160,800 on 11.12.2019 at Forum Auctions, to raise to £469,800 at Sotheby's on 18.09.2020. Comparing the results of one auction house (Bohmans), it can be observed that prices for the unsigned edition of *The Girl with Balloon* increased from £87,652 (18.12.2019) to £321,600 (15.12.2020).

19   Especially for the first generation of artists originating from the USA, for whom financial success is an important indicator of success in the field of art. Individual strategies for balancing art and its usefulness in the marketing fields have become a separate question.

art, as we mentioned above. The company Full Color Black / Brandalised, taking advantage of the general availability of Banksy's works on the streets, combined with the creator's anonymity, decided to register all the iconic works as its trademark.[20] It thus gained the potential to grant licenses for the reproduction of the designs and made the author himself lose the (theoretical) prospect of income. The legal dispute was fueled by the fact that, in 2007, Banksy had declared that *'copyright is for losers'*, which became one of the arguments for the company wishing to register its trademarks. This situation makes us see more and more clearly how the strategies proper to street art can no longer be maintained and how the phenomenon itself had to undergo the necessary metamorphosis, not only to become a fully-fledged participant in the art world but also to gain the specific protection of its intellectual property.[21] So far, the result of the dispute is unfavourable to the creator, as he cannot be indicated as the sole owner of the rights due to his anonymity, and his willingness to claim the trademarks was considered to be conducted in bad faith since he does not intend to use the license in his (commercial) activity.[22]

The ability to make money and combine artistic and exhibition activities with a powerful sales machine finds an expression in Kaws' exhibition at the Brooklyn Museum, gathering contemporary urban art dilemmas like a lens. Those dilemmas are related to achieving unprecedented success related to the conquest of the market, presence in major collections, entering the international, institutional circulation of art

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20   D. Cassady, *Banksy May Lose Trademark After Court Rules Greeting Card Company Can Sell His Work*, https://www.forbes.com/sites/danielcassady/2020/09/17/banksy-may-lose-trademark-after-court-rules-greeting-card-company-can-sell-his-work/ [accessed 04.07.2023]; J. Lawson-Tancred, *A Court Has Ruled That Banksy Can Keep His Trademarks – and Anonymity – in His Battle With a U.K. Greeting Card Company*, *https://news.artnet.com/art-world/banksy-trademark-decision-overturned-2211959* [accessed 04.07.2023]; A. Shaw, *Not laughing now: Banksy loses second trademark case over famous monkey image,* https://www.theartnewspaper.com/2021/05/20/not-laughing-now-banksy-loses-second-trademark-case-over-famous-monkey-image, [accessed 04.07.2023].

21   Recent years have seen a great deal of legal disputes between brands and artists creating on the streets, including the use of a fragment of Revok's street works by H&M, the use of the Futura mark by North Face or, lastly, the legal dispute over the removal of graffiti by developers at 5 Pointz in New York.

22   Therefore, in 2019, a Gross Domestic Product shop was established, where it was possible to purchase the artist's original signed limited works by a draw. The place and shop were created to prove in a legal dispute that the artist actively used both his works and his brand. However, this did not bring the expected effect and Banksy's work and his pseudonym can be licensed by the company that had appropriated his work.

and the lack of substantive reflection and criticism based on the discussed current. The exhibition *What Party*[23] was an eagerly awaited event intended to build a bridge between art, design, and mass culture. Instead, it provoked a very interesting discussion which, admittedly, bypassed the mainstream, but may become a seedbed for the development of critical reflection on urban art. Hrag Vartanian shared a particularly shrewd remark through the pages of the portal Hyperallergic[24], where he excoriated Kaws' mid-career exhibition for linking the art of excluded people with the real estate market, merchandising, and gentrification. Moreover, he pointed to the strategic apoliticality of Kaws's works, perfectly tailored to the richest who do not want their collection to contain works criticising their behaviour, but only decorations emphasising their wealth.

Vartanian found the display pathetic, 'akin to Instagram filters or Photoshop tricks' supposed to support further sales, and he brutally compared Kaws' work to the class of Swatch watches, offered in various sizes, colours, and price points. Finally, he described the exhibition at the Brooklyn Museum as contempt for contemporary art. Kaws' mid-career retrospective exhibition exposes his lack of artistic development (Vartanian proves this by comparing works *Kimpsons* from 2004 and *Better Knowing* from 2013), while he calls the iconic figure created by the artist (*Chum*) an avatar of greed that shows absolutely no emotional complexity.

The outlined problem may only be the beginning of the systematisation of the phenomenon of urban art in its current form. It is especially due to the peculiar borderline situation of the current which begins to gradually introduce criteria for the selection and distinction of works of high artistic value from those which merely simulate these values. In a broader context, however, it is not just about calling for criticism in the field of urban art, but about gaining a kind of self-awareness both among the artists and a wide range of art recipients. Street art gradually disappears in its original form, while the urban art built on it proposes a culturally rooted and formally mature reflection, enriching the panorama of contemporary art.

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23   See: E. Tsai, D. Birnbaum (ed.), *kaws. What Party*, New York 2021.

24   H. Vartanian, *Kaws Is Terrible, But Thankfully Forgettable*, Hyperallergic, September 2, 2021 < https://hyperallergic.com/674324/kaws-is-terrible-but-thankfully-forgettable/ >, [accessed 01.01.2023].

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Abstrakt:

The article is an attempt to diagnose the current status of street art and graffiti. It strives to describe the processes of evolution of the phenomenon and the moment of the emergence of urban art which, as the currently most popular name of the trend, paved its way to the world of contemporary art. The article introduces several original definitions for the discussed phenomena and attempts to name and structure the factors occurring at the intersection of art, politics and cultural policy. In addition, it points out two symptomatic phenomena which are an important context for the development of street art: its commercialisation and management of legal disputes over the use of works that function in urban space.

Keywords:

graffiti, street art, urban art

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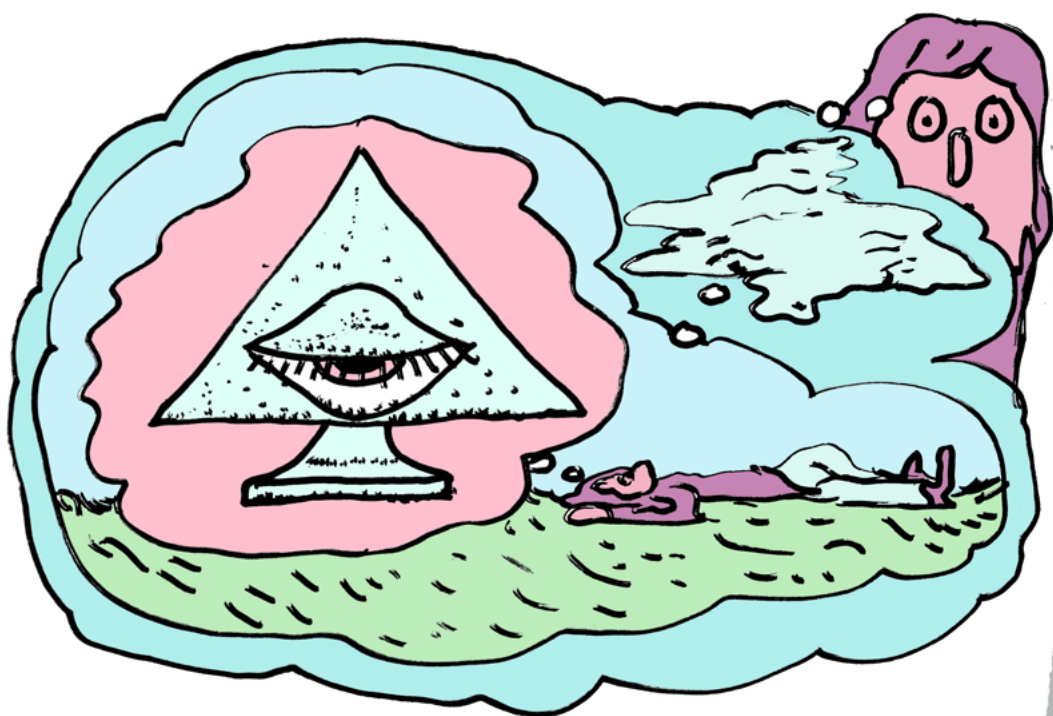
Łukasz Murzyn

METAPHYSICAL, RELIGIOUS AND SACRED ART IN POLAND: SKETCH FOR A PANORAMA

Art inspired by beliefs, art stemming from opinions that elude empirical competencies, art associated with metaphysical intuitions and general religiosity has always been a component of art history. In the culture of the West, since the era of Renaissance humanism and the Reformation, there has occurred a slow loosening of ties between art and religion. The process accelerated rapidly during the Enlightenment and was sealed by the social revolution of the early 20th century, the counter culture of the 1960s and the 1970s, and postmodernity bent on deconstructing historical structures of meaning. Art of this kind appears to be in constant decline, drifting ever further from the so-called mainstream of artistic events. The rate and the nature of the processes of art secularisation depend on the context of local cultures and the specificity of the transformations in the respective societies. A special place on this map is due to the Polish art system, as it coexists with a still relatively common Christian – and in particular Catholic – religiosity. A significant share in our collective imaginary dedicated to the religious component translates into the phenomenon of Polish metaphysical, religious, and sacred art.

One may regard as a phenomenon on a global scale the independent culture of the 1980s, it being the reaction of the local artistic milieu to the totalitarian control imposed by the authorities of the Polish People's Republic (PRL) during the period of martial law. The boycott of the official state-run art distribution system was accompanied by the artists of various media turning towards sacred spaces, which took on the function of alternative exhibition venues.[1] In correlation with the willingly assumed view of the social and political reality through the lens of Christian sensitivity and iconography, it gave rise to a distinct artistic movement which was no less incisive than the Polish critical art movement was to be a decade later. The period of gradual removal of the oppressive measures during the twilight of the communist dictatorship and the subsequent tumultuous and chaotic process of systemic transformation brought with it the disintegration of the independent culture, briefly replaced by a pluralist artistic polyphony, which subsequently, after 1993, ever more markedly gave way to the increasing dominance of art in the vein of leftist social change. During the time of the institutional hegemony of this paradigm, art inspired by Christianity was almost entirely ousted from official circulation. However, neither this 'descent into the catacombs' meant its demise, nor the 'conservative turn' of sorts undertaken by a part of cultural institutions after 2015 has been tantamount to creating artistic phenomena *ex nihilo*.

The Polish world of contemporary art is to a degree composed of a rather numerous group of artists who in their own different ways and from

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1   R. Rogozińska, *W stronę Golgoty. Inspiracje pasyjne w sztuce polskiej w latach 1970–1999*, Poznań, 2002.

their own different perspectives relate to metaphysical and religious inspirations.

On the one hand, we are dealing with art that is more or less critical of religiosity embedded within the framework of confessional conventions; on the other, the map of Polish art features a series of phenomena that are rooted in primordially understood and variously actualised Christianity. These are created by people for whom, regardless of current political climates and dominating discourses, art related to religiosity – far from lying at the margin of the artworld – is situated at the very centre thereof and appears to be the creative endeavour of the greatest profundity and value.

Artists closer to the critical attitude explore universal motifs of fascination and horror evoked by the borderline states of human existence. The art created within this circle, though it does not identify with the Christian *imaginarium*, refers to it unwittingly, transforming and transposing it in a way that can only be fully understood in its context. Works of this kind appear to constitute a part of the wider phenomenon known as post-Christianity. It deconstructs the sacred, as it is traditionally understood, and rediscovers it, albeit in dimensions that are seemingly far from obvious. A survey of artistic output produced in this vein had already been provided during exhibitions held at the outset of the 21st century. These were: *Irreligia* (2001) – curated by Kazimierz Piotrowski – which brought together artists such as, among others, Marta Deskur, Katarzyna Górna, Grzegorz Klaman, Zbigniew Libera, Dorota Nieznalska, Joanna Rajkowska, and Robert Rumas, as well as the 2002 group presentation compiled by Grzegorz Kowalski, held in the Zachęta Gallery in Warsaw, which was titled *Co widzi trupa wyszklona źrenica* (*What does the corpse's glazed pupil see*), with many others following afterwards. Among significant developments, one should include selected works by Artur Żmijewski, Katarzyna Kozyra, recently also the queer and religious works by Daniel Rycharski, as well as Bolesław Chromry's exhibition highlighting the problem of paedophilia, titled *Katechizm dla wszystkich klas* (*A Catechism for All Grades*), held in Gdansk City Gallery in February 2022.[2]

A convincing typology of this field of art has been put forth by Paweł Możdżyński,[3] who distinguished between the several movements in various ways relating to the notion of the sacred. Although benefiting from his proposal, I will nevertheless take the liberty to provide a slightly

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2   https://magazynszum.pl/katechizm-dla-wszystkich-klas-boleslawa-chromrego-w-ggm/, [retrieved on: 6.07.2023].

3   P. Możdżyński, 'Transgresyjne sacrum we współczesnych sztukach wizualnych. Próba typologii', [in:] *Sztuka wobec metafizyki. Postawy i strategie lat 2000−2020,* ed. by R. Solewski, B. Stano, Ł. Murzyn, Kraków, 2023.

altered classification of these, together with a commentary. The sacred of the body is, according to the author, predominantly the domain of performance art. What becomes the medium here is the whole psychophysical and spiritual condition of the artist. The intimate, at times extreme experience of the functions and limitations of corporeality allows artists to come into contact with what in the religious experience is related to the mystery of incarnation, suffering, and ecstasy. In this context, Możdżyński points to the works of Alicja Żebrowska, but also to the already mentioned installation and object art by Grzegorz Klaman. The sacred in nature, in turn, is explored by artists who endeavour to restore the ability to truly see natural phenomena in contemporary audiences, by encouraging them to reach beyond the perspective of humans as a species. This is where the land art and the activity of Jarek Lustych comes in, strongly rooted, as it is, in ecology and post-humanism, focused on the soundscape of water; alongside it the art of Agnieszka Brzeżańska, and projects by Tatiana Czekalska and Leszek Golec, exploring 'the sacred in animals'. The female sacred, related to the figure of the Mother Goddess, is evoked in the works by Izabela Gustowska, and Iwona Demko, whose omission in the cited study seems rather unjustified. One should also note the large number of female artists exploring esotericism and magic, reaching for the motifs of witches and *szeptunki* (spirit talkers) as figures of specifically feminine power and special metaphysical competence, inaccessible to men. The sacredness of death is in a way touched upon in such works as Katarzyna Kozyra's *Pyramid of Animals*. The artist leads the spectator through the liminal experience of inflicting death on animals within the industrial protein and so-called 'animal products' trade, a process suppressed in the collective consciousness. Another approach to evoking a sense of transgression was adopted by Artur Żmijewski, who chose as the venue for his video *Berek* (*The Game of Tag*) a gas chamber in a death camp. We are certainly dealing with a transgression of an established dimension of reality; however, what may be alarming is the direction this transgression takes. The work appears to be breaking the convention of revering the victims, while the artist confronts the – impossible to be verbalised – horror, grief, and reverence with an energetic play.

Artists whose art grows out of the post-structuralist suspicion of the traditional catalogue of universal values focus on the heretic sacred, which is syncretic and conceived of in an extremely individualistic manner. Contemporary art, however, also features the sacred of the void, which can be described as an artistically stimulated experience of nothingness. It can be accessed through abstract and minimalist art, taking the form of both paintings and – not infrequently – installations. Following in the footsteps of Malevich, such actions, using the reduction of the visual, lead to numinotic non-object sensations which reveal at once the

attractive and terrifying power of the absolute. Within this perspective, the sacred is recognised as radically 'other' and inconceivable, beyond any everyday visual experience; in a sense, it is felt because of the aesthetic rejection of visuality. It seems that, depending on the artist's intention and individual disposition of the spectator, art centred on the sacred of the void can open itself to both a positive experience of transcendence, even allowing the existence of the personal absolute, and to infernal experiences, devoid of the hope offered within the theist framework by the assumption of the divine presence and agency.

However, Możdżyński further describes the mystical sacred, hinting at the theosophical explorations of Hilma af Klint, Wassily Kandinsky, and the neoplasticism of Mondrian, whose interpretation of geometry was symbolic. Among the Polish artists, the figure of Jerzy Nowosielski is brought up in this context with his concept of abstraction as a record of the communication with beings that belong to the heavenly realm. In this perspective, the artist sees himself as a medium in actual contact with the supernatural. We are no longer dealing here merely with a vague intuition or an intellectual play on notions derived from metaphysics but with a clearly declared belief in the dual nature of reality and the possibility of establishing communication between both of its dimensions through art.

The mystical sacred appears, therefore, to be typical of the understanding of art embraced by religious artists. Within such a conception of creative process, Christian motifs emerge as positive points of reference in the works by artists faithful to the traditional media of painting, sculpture, and graphic art as well as in realisations within the newer media, in concept art, installations, video and video installations, performance art, works created with the use of virtual and augmented reality techniques, all the way to the realm of gaming and web apps for meditative and prayer practices. These feature both the traditional themes proper to religious art, centred on depicting the figures of Christ and the saints in various conventions, and symbolic representations that actualise the crucial issues of theology and Christian morality within contemporary circumstances and in relation to the civilisational and cultural challenges of today. There are also works that, using the idiom of critical and post-critical art, in various ways approach the problems that the Church struggles with nowadays. Religious artists share the conviction of the importance and great social value of art created in relation to God – who is associated with the notion of transcendental love, the genuine source of the truth, goodness, and beauty – inspired by the Gospel and moral norms stemming from it. This milieu, however, is far from being philosophically homogenous. There are tensions within it between the various sensitivities that make artists emphasise different elements of the philosophy of art they profess. There are clear-cut differences between those who perceive the truths of faith the Eastern way, mainly in

Artists closer to the critical attitude explore universal motifs of fascination and horror evoked by the borderline states of human existence. The art created within this circle, though it does not identify with the Christian imaginarium, refers to it unwittingly, transforming and transposing it in a way that can only be fully understood in its context. Works of this kind appear to constitute a part of the wider phenomenon known as post-Christianity.

light of illumination entrusted to one by the absolute, who are closer to thinking in terms of perfect models 'descending' from above, available to artists through grace, and those who in a manner typical of the Western sensitivity break through towards the religious experience, as though 'ascending' towards it from the – depicted in their art – depths of struggles with the daunting condition and challenging existential experiences of contemporary man. A less obvious at first glance tension exists also on another level. It runs between the group of believers who favour traditional skills and techniques and those who prefer the new media, and rests on their divergent concepts and interpretations of the origin of the forms of contemporary art and the different methods they choose for maintaining and continuing the Christian cultural heritage.

Some of the more conservative artists tend to treat specific physical qualities of an artwork along with the aurative and aesthetic creative strategy as conditions *sine qua non* of any artistic manifestation of the sacred. This is true not only of those fascinated by the canon of the Orthodox icon, but also of the artists hailing from the artistic tradition of the West. They look with a somewhat distrustful eye at artistic languages whose origin is associated with the ideas of the historical avant-garde insofar as that avant-garde paradigm is associated with the social and cultural revolution of the early 20th century. They manifest an even greater reserve towards the media that were defined within the counter culture, as well as the most contemporary phenomena that emerged in the postmodern era. Traditionalists seem to be seeking, as it were, an escapist return to the art forms created during the periods when the Christian culture flourished, in times free from iconoclastic transgressions and artistic violations of established social norms and religious symbols. At times, they go as far as to postulate 'emulation'[4] – the practice of faithfully imitating the old masters. Among the heralds of such an attitude we can rank, for instance, Janusz Janowski, who has since 2022 been the Director of the Zachęta – National Gallery of Art. Focusing solely on the single media of painting was also the approach adopted in the recent project titled *Namalować katolicyzm od nowa* (*Paint Catholicism Anew*) curated by Dariusz Karłowicz from *Teologia Polityczna*; on this occasion, however, some emphasis in the process of painting new images of Christ the Merciful was also placed on seeking a form adequate for the contemporary world. The Fraternity of St Francis is a community that brings together artists working in that spirit, the most prominent among them being Marcin Kędzierski, Krzysztof Karoń, and the representatives of the milieu of the Kraków-based Open Studio: Ignacy Czwartos, Jacek Dłużewski, and Krzysztof Klimek. The discussed type of sensitivity appears to be a local instantia-

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4   J. Janowski, 'Emulacja, układ ikonograficzny i konfesja', *ArsForum*, 2018, no. 3.

tion of Foster's reactive postmodernism,[5] related to the neoconservative social outlook. Members of this cohort, as part of a peculiarly understood sense of social mission, willingly enter into alliances with political factions who also subscribe to the neoconservative worldview.

Opposed to such beliefs is another group of artists, those more open to new artistic languages, through the use of which they seek to renew the transmission of the evangelical message. Even though they tend to use the already proven technical solutions and endeavour to express well-known universal truths, they operate in an experimental space because the combination of such forms with the above content opens new and thus far poorly explored venues of expression. At this juncture, a reference to the notion of avant-garde conservatism deftly coined by Zbigniew Warpechowski seems suitable.[6] It posits an optimistic attitude towards new forms of art as adequate instruments for communicating in the conditions of the rapidly transforming visual sensitivity of culture participants. Artists embracing the concept of avant-garde conservatism seem to understand the responsibility for the Christian heritage rather in terms of maintaining the balance between the unchangeable, though constantly deepened, spiritual message and the incessant enterprise of actualising the forms to communicate it. We can hardly classify them, by way of a simple opposition, in the category of postmodernism of resistance, as described by Foster.[7] The important thing for them is artistic experimentation and a certain dose of novelty, conceived of as an adjustment of the art form to the sensitivity of contemporary audiences. However, they also share commitment to the so-called universal values, alien to the idea of deconstruction and counter cultural resistance. A more appropriate reference in this case would be the concept developed by Nicholas Zurbrugg, who sees postmodernity as a reservoir of new opportunities for creation, based on advancements of modern civilisation and new ways of defining art.[8] Particular attention in this context is due to the video works by Lech Majewski; the video installations by Dominik Lejman, discreetly highlighting the key values; performance art by Zbigniew Waprechowski; sculptures by Józef Murzyn, and Paweł Jach; the videoclips by Ada Karczmarczyk (adu) benefitting from the pop aesthetic; the luminous installations by Karolina Hałatek; the graphical and floral objects by Aleksandra Pulińska; the oneiric and poetic photography of Kamila Kansy; the abstract reliefs by Krzysztof Sokolovski, marking a radical transformation

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5   *Postmodern Culture*, ed. by H. Foster, London, 1985.

6   P. Rojek, *Awangardowy konserwatyzm. Idea polska w późnej nowoczesności*, Kraków, 2016.

7   *Postmodern Culture*, op. cit.

8   N. Zurbrugg, *The Parameters of Postmodernism*, Carbondale, 1993.

of the icon canon; and much other output produced with the use of various media and techniques. The Vera Icon Community of Christian Artists has proven important for the younger generation of artists, a community of prayer and art, which consistently develops its local structures in academic centres throughout Poland.

The tripartite division of artistic attitudes in terms of the representation of Christian motifs which I have proposed here constitutes – much like all categorisations of the sort, obviously – a major oversimplification. Indeed, there are many phenomena and artists that elude simple categorisation. A good example here may be, say, the oeuvre by Aleksandra Tubielewicz, the curator of the 2021 project *Niereligia w Jezusie* (*Non-Religion in Jesus*), which stemmed from a specifically understood and – one could say – 'privatised' Protestantism. Depending on the applied criteria, her activity as an artist and curator may be classified both as post-Christian practices and as the strategy of avant-garde conservatism. Similar is the case of the symbolic installations and graphic art by Jakub Woynarowski, which constitute philosophical interpretations of motifs akin to Christian gnosticism.

Another version of the typology of that section of the Polish art scene served as an integral part of the exhibition I co-organised in early 2022 in Kraków, titled *Sztuka i metafizyka. Postawy i strategie lat 2000–2020* (*Art and Metaphysics. Attitudes and Strategies 2000−2020*). The display was organised according to an arbitrary division into three spheres: attitudes critical of metaphysics and religion; neutral attitudes that record the complexity of the nature of reality and the metaphysical needs of man; and attitudes clearly positive towards philosophically understood metaphysics as well as religion itself. The exhibition featured the following artists: Tomasz Biłka, Agnieszka Daca, Łukasz Huculak, Paweł Jach, Ada Karczmarczyk, Andrzej Kapusta, Marcin Kędzierski, Grzegorz Klaman, Kle Mens, the Nihilist Church, Katarzyna Kozyra, Dominik Lejman, Lech Majewski, Łukasz Murzyn, Tomasz Opania, Romuald Oramus, Jan Pamuła, Daniel Rycharski, Krzysztof Sokolovski, Beata Stankiewicz, Małgorzata Wielek, Tadeusz Gustaw Wiktor, Jakub Woynarowski, and Artur Żmijewski. That exhibition, much like the presentations and publications that followed, as well as the Internet site which features a constantly updated base of artists and texts, are the result of the operation of the Art and Metaphysics research team, established at the Faculty of Art of the Pedagogical University of Kraków.[9]

The team I am delighted to be in charge of contributes to the broader intellectual background of the discussed field of art. The work of our team is bolstered by art historians and theorists: Rafał Solewski,

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[9] https://sztukaimetafizyka.up.krakow.pl/ [retrieved on: 20.01.2023].

Sebastian Stankiewicz, and Bernadeta Stano, as well as artists: Romuald Oramus, Agnieszka Daca, and Stanisław Wójcicki. Among the group of scholars who have made a lasting impact on the reflection regarding the matters at hand, one should mention: Władysław Stróżewski, Renata Rogozińska, and Krystyna Czerni. Worth noting are also the numerous texts presented in the journal *Sacrum et Decorum*, edited by Grażyna Ryba at the University of Rzeszów, as well as the reflections of Małgorzata Wrześniak of Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński University (uksw) in Warsaw, Reverend Professors Tadeusz Dzidek and Janusz Królikowski of the Pontifical University of John Paul II (upjpii), and many other theorists hailing from various academic centres.

Indeed, this branch of art receives support not only from scholars. Besides media dedicated to general art issues, the promotion and criticism of the oeuvre by artists dealing with religious and metaphysical themes is provided with varying intensity by the editors of *Znak*, *Więź*, *Pressje*, *Teologia Polityczna*, *Fronda Lux*, and *Kontakt*. The list of institutions of culture welcoming religious themes opens with the Piarist Crypt Gallery in Kraków, and the Dom Praczki Gallery of Contemporary Sacred Art in Kielce. Temporary exhibitions of art to some extent related to Christian sensitivity are held, among others in: the Znaki Czasu Centre of Contemporary Art in Toruń, the EL Gallery in Elbląg, and the Municipal Art Gallery in Częstochowa, which has rendered particular service to the community by holding the Sacrum Art Triennial. Another strong point on the map is the Zielona 13 Gallery in Łódź – young, but already with several dozen presentations under its belt – run by Fr. Tomasz Biłka OP, an artist and theologian, and the spiritual guide of the Vera Icon Community. Another institutional resource, albeit not fully utilised yet, is the network of diocesan museums, of which the most active appear to be the branches in Warsaw, Poznań, Katowice, and Kraków. Exhibitions related to the discussed issues are occasionally held in many different galleries and museums throughout the country. Particular commitment to the cause has also been declared by the new Management Board of the Zachęta Gallery in Warsaw. One should also mention the Slot Art Festival held in the Lower Silesian town of Lubiąż, along with ArtKatedra – the section thereof devoted to visual arts.

Communities of people fascinated with Orthodox icons and artists specialising in the art related to church architecture mark distinct enclaves within the system of Christian art distribution. Education on icons, supported by the appropriate spiritual formation, is provided, among others, by the Warsaw-based Study of the Christian East, which benefits from the involvement of one of the professors of the University of Warsaw, Bishop Michał Janocha. A similar function is served by the International Iconographic Workshops organised in Nowica by Mateusz

Sora, the Silesian School of Iconography run by Rev. Dariusz Klejnowski–Różycki, and the Pojednanie Fraternity of Brother Marcin Świąder OFM-CAP. A major role within this field of artistic activity is played by the Icon Museum in Supraśl, as well as the collaboration established between Polish iconographers and the Chair of Sacral Art of Lviv National Academy of Arts. Meanwhile, artists specialising in realisations of church interiors and monument sculpture, as well as church art restorers, on the one hand, compete among themselves within the market – strongly regulated, as it is, by church commissions – while on the other, cooperate closely with the decision-makers in the diocesan curiae and parishes. The venue of their annual gatherings, which providing this group of artists an opportunity to present their offer and realisations, is the Sacro Expo trade fair held in Kielce.

Thus, besides a large group of active artists, the discussed branch of the art system also benefits from an intellectual, media and institutional background, which enabled the artists to endure the period of exclusion from the institutional mainstream and which may provide a basis for a robust community in the future. The necessary condition for its growth, however, is a certain level of consolidation and the cultivation of collaboration between the respective persons and institutions. The recent Synod of Artists,[10] held in Łódź in connection to the Synod on Synodiality, initiated by Pope Francis, was precisely such an undertaking aimed at stirring dialogue and collaboration between artistic communities and the Church. Thus, artists were able to voice their opinions on improving the communication within the Church and seeking synergies between pastoral duties and contemporary art, the potential of which was highlighted in the public statements by both St John Paul II,[11] and Pope Benedict XVI.[12] During the workshops and discussions, combined with a concurrently expanding exhibition, it was emphasised that, besides aesthetic categories, the creative, critical and inclusive competencies of contemporary art may also have a major and beneficial social influence, congruent with the message of the Gospel. Specific issues were also raised, for instance, a proposal to invite professional artists to serve in Parish Councils and take active part in creating churches decorations, extending everyday care over the visual aspect of the worship performed, controlling the quality of designed visual communication, publications, and seasonal decorations, as well as animating Christian cultural activity. Participants pointed out

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10   https://www.ekai.pl/lodz-polscy-artysci-wlaczyli-sie-w-proces-synodalny/ [retrieved on: 20.01.2023].

11   Joseph Ratzinger, *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, transl. by J. Saward, San Francisco, 2000.

12   John Paul II, *Letter to Artists*, 4 April 1999.

the need to reform and redefine the competencies of diocesan building committees and establish a permanent Visual Culture Council at the Polish Episcopal Conference (kep). There were calls to change the *modus operandi* of the network of archdiocesan and diocesan museums, which should be expected to be more proactive in the field of contemporary art and to collaborate with lay institutions of culture. It was postulated that an academic, philosophical and theological account of the phenomena of the most recent art be developed and the media involvement of Christian art criticism be increased. An artistic scholarship of the President of kep, connected with a periodic art competition under the auspices of the Primate of Poland, was seen as worth establishing, there were even voices that a Christian artistic academy be formed.

To sum up: regardless of any attempts to classify the contemporary art associated with Christianity, what appears to be most interesting is the discovery of affiliations, connections and mutual relations between the discussed attitudes, art forms, and stories they carry. One can certainly claim that the creative tensions and differences within the said field of the art system determine its cultural value, attractiveness and vitality, ensuring it has the perspective of *long durée* and a permanent place in the Polish artworld. The advantage of this art subsystem lies in its grassroots nature, stemming from the beliefs of artists and the needs of spectators, its unequivocally Polish originality, the resultant of our social and cultural background, a great number of engaged artists and the support of theoreticians, administrators of cultural institutions, and media professionals. Meanwhile, what continues to be the challenge is its internal integration and the ability to act jointly and fostering synergies with the aim of acquiring greater visibility and a more distinct influence on the entirety of the Polish artistic discourse. Ultimately, of great value would be an attempt to reinforce the tendency to present and analyse together – above any societal political and worldview divisions – artistic phenomena which use different perspectives to explore the issues related to metaphysics and religiosity.

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Abstract:

On the face of it, art inspired by beliefs is in constant decline. Curiously, however, metaphysical motifs continue to emerge in many contemporary artistic movements. In the Polish circumstances, we are able to recognise artists who, having adopted attitudes critical of tradition, go on to define the sphere of the sacred in their own post-Christian way. There is also a significant milieu of artists positively disposed towards Christianity, who either accept the dual nature of reality or, recognising the existence of metaphysical longings in man, explore the various ways of satisfying them. Artists who declare their commitment to Christian values are supported by a number of institutions of culture, a group of art critics, and some editorial boards of sector media. Initiatives are undertaken aimed at consolidating this community and taking advantage of the potential represented by the institutions of culture and associations linked to religious institutions.

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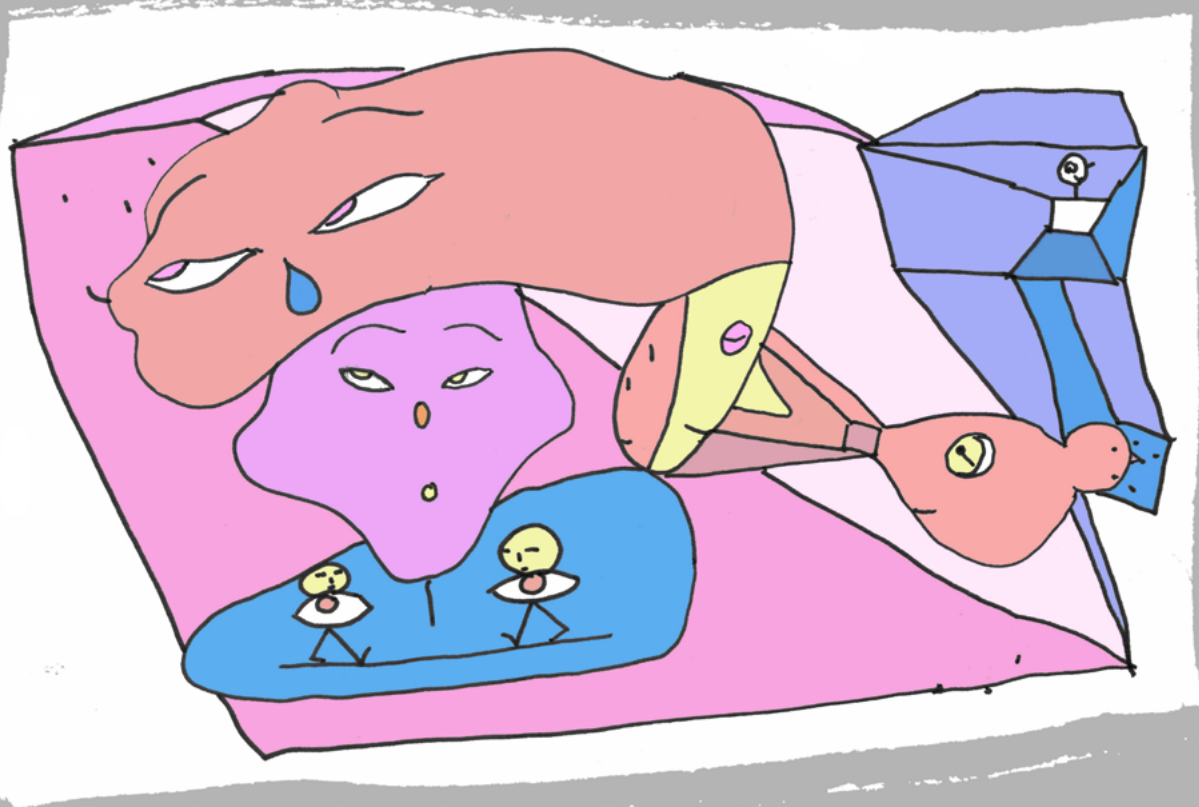
Joanna Nikodem

FLATLANDERS AND THE *GAME OF LIFE*

Has the Internet helped to change the concepts of 'province' and 'centre' and redefine them according to a new context, or is it the other way around: definitions of these concepts have existed for a long time in different forms and the Internet only made certain issues outlined decades ago take physical shape when new tools for communication were made available to the public? Can the pattern of the phenomena taking place be traced back much earlier than the date of the first message from the University of California in Los Angeles to Stanford University[1] in the discussions of a scientific, philosophical and even theological nature?

The thesis of the present paper is that, although the 'Internet revolution' as a series of socio-cultural changes is undoubtedly taking place, the nature of these changes has for the most part been described in the field of basic science for a long time. And regarding the design and art perspective, awareness of the consequences of decisions made in designing virtual networks can be strategic in the planned activity.

This article raises a number of open questions about understanding phenomena in society through abstracting the concepts of distance, dimension, neighbourhood and the survival condition based on it. The concept of transcending the world of the third dimension by means of a tool that levels existing spatial boundaries, seen as an opportunity for humanity, is contrasted with a mathematical model of multidimensional structure and an unwarranted warning related to loneliness and a 'cry that no one will hear'.[2]

FLATLANDERS

In primary school, when, during the mathematics classes, we have to deal with the domain of geometry, triangles, quadrilaterals, regular and irregular polygons, also circles, sometimes ellipses naturally appear in our imagination and on the pages of our notebooks. We learn about their properties, we measure them, we cut them out. Their flatness is entirely natural, related, after all, to the flatness of the sheet of paper on which they are created. The world described by planimetry is flat. Moving on a little further, we observe how walls are formed from polygons, walls constrain solids and the world

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1 The first message, a prototype of today's e-mail, was sent between computers at the University of California, Los Angeles, and the Stanford University as part of the ARPANET network on 29 October 1969. This was not without complications: the text that arrived from Los Angeles to Stanford consisted of only two letters: 'LO'. This was the result of a computer failure. The message was supposed to consist of the word 'LOGIN' and it was only in the second attempt that the full message could be sent.

2 'In high dimensional spaces, no one can hear your scream' is a paraphrase of the advertising slogan of Ridley Scott's film *Alien* (1979): 'In space, no one can hear you scream' referring to the mathematical construction of multidimensional spaces in which, as the dimension increases, the probability of finding an object in the immediate vicinity of a given point decreases.

we describe with equations becomes spatial. And it is still a quite natural experience, because the spatial world is the world in which we function, in which our steps, the axis of vision, the direction of reaching with the hand are determined in three dimensions. However, what if we were prepared to ask the question about the ... fourth axis?

In the field of relativistic physics, the role of the fourth axis is attributed to time. However, there is another way of defining the fourth dimension as the so-called fourth spatial dimension. This method is presented, among others, by Edwin Abbott in his science-fiction novel *Flatland*,[3] in which he leads the reader through imaginary lands of one, two and three dimensions and, ultimately, weaves ideas of a fourth-dimensional realm shrouded in mystery and constituting, in a sense, a forbidden divine realm.

According to Abbott, the Flatlanders inhabit a realm of two dimensions. As a rule, they are polygons, although as the world described in *Flatland* is also a satire reflecting in caricature form the then 19th-century configuration of the Victorian society, the author assigns to the woman the form of a segment, while the highest priest of this world is assigned a perfect circle. Leaving aside how controversial such an account of social roles and the importance of gender would be today, let us take a closer look at the Flatlanders. None of the inhabitants of this land is able to 'crawl' over their compatriot, nor are they able to see their true shape (they are only aware of the number of angles and their formality, or lack thereof); surrounded by a closed curve, they are unable to get out of it. Why? Because in order to do so, they would have to rise above the plane, to a higher dimension. It would have been as unimaginable for the Flatlander as it would have been for an inhabitant of the third dimension to get out of a closed room without damaging its walls.

Flatlanders live exclusively on the plane. Their view of reality is reduced to the view we, three-dimensionals, would have if we were looking from table top level without lifting our eyes. It is natural, therefore, that they do not recognise geometric structures other than by possibly going around the shape, learning about its sides and the angles between them. Any object that breaks the dimensional boundary and manages to rise above the plane disappears from view.[4]

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3   Polish edition of Edwin Abbott's book: *Flatlandia, czyli Kraina Płaszczaków*, transl. J. Dziedzina et al., Gdańsk 1997. The original title of the novel, published in 1884 is *Flatland: A Romance of Many Dimensions*.

4   'At the word I began to move my body out of Lineland. As long as any part of me remained in his dominion and in his view, the King kept exclaiming, "I see you, I see you still; you are not moving.»" But when I had at last moved myself

Figure 1. A two-dimensional object touching a line with its edge is visible to the occupant of a one-dimensional space only as a segment. The moment it moves away from the line, it becomes invisible to it. (Original figure from the Abbott's novel)

In theory, however, the construction of a fourth dimension is possible, although we will never be able to see its effects. Let us take one point. Mathematically, it has no dimension: no length, width or height.[5] However, if we move a point in any direction and mark the trace of this movement with a line, we get a segment that already has a dimension: length. Let us now try to move the segment in a direction that is not the direction of the displaced point, and also mark the entire trace of the displacement. We receive a figure that already has two dimensions, is bounded by four segments and has vertices it the form of four points. Following this process, let us move the resulting quadrilateral in a direction that was neither the direction of the displaced point nor of the whole segment. After marking the trace, we get a cuboid: bounded by six polygons, with eight vertices. Could we now move the cuboid to obtain a solid going out into the fourth dimension? Given the solid construction process, obviously yes. Furthermore, it is known that the solid created in this way would be bounded by eight cuboids (the next numbers of bounding structures are 0, 2, 4, 6, 8) and have 16 vertices (1, 2, 4, 8, 16); it is possible to draw its grid and this grid has a name: tesseract.

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out of his Line, he cried in his shrillest voice, "She is vanished; she is dead"', E. Abbott, *Flatland*.

5   'A *point* is that which has no part. A *line* is breadthless length. The ends of a line are points. A *straight line* is a line which lies evenly with the points on itself. A *surface* is that which has length and breadth only. The edges of a surface are lines.' Euclid's *Elements*, Book I.
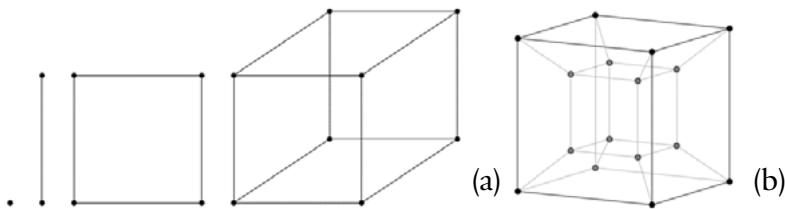
(a)   (b)

Figure 2. (a) construction of a three-dimensional space by moving a point, a segment and a rectangle sequentially, (b) tesseract: representation of the connection of edges in a four-dimensional solid

Through analogy (inferring certain properties of the object in question on the basis of its similarities to other objects), we have constructed a fourth dimension. In theory. We are able to construct solids in the fourth dimension, determine their mutual position and proportions. The only thing we, as beings of three-dimensional space, are not able to achieve is to see or even imagine such a solid.

The exercise to which the Reader's imagination has been subjected in the above paragraph was intended to shed the boundaries of routine thinking and open up a new space for associations and interpretations related to the interpenetration of the worlds: the real and the virtual, and in particular the proximity and communication in both these worlds.

The concept of defining the Internet as a fourth social dimension appears in the literature among others in Laurence Scott's *The Four-Dimensional Human*.[6] In his text, the author distinguishes between two distinct spaces: *cyberspace* (virtual space) and *meatspace*[7] (space of contacts in the real world). These spaces remained parallel until the portal connecting them ceased to be a modem, and new standards of connection allowed the two worlds to intermingle uninterruptedly. So, what was the result of this combination? Scott identifies a number of behaviours and states in social life that were not observed (or at least not with such intensity) until each citizen was provided with technology that allows them to detach themselves from the physicality of the three dimensions and disappear from sight (or interaction) with their surroundings, while appearing (mentally) in completely different circumstances. The fact is that such detachment itself is not a new state for humans, if we mention the physical and psychological symptoms of apathy, longing or falling in love, what is new, however, is that this time the person disappearing from physical space leads a quite conscious and often intense life in another reality. That

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6   L. Scott, *The Four-Dimensional Human: Ways of Being in the Digital World*, London, 2015.

7   This name is meant to emphasise the perception of the body exclusively as meat, which is popular in the cyberpunk circles. The term appeared, among others, in the work of American science fiction writer William Gibson.

is why seeing a person sitting in a room with us, we do not necessarily have to be able to interact with them, they may disappear from our area of contact, analogous to Abbott's description of the Flatland citizen who floats above the plane and simultaneously disappears from the field of view of the other two-dimensional beings.

By getting beyond spatial constraints, we gain the ability to transcend boundaries, which gives us the potential to broaden our contacts analogously to Flatlanders fenced off by a line when at least one of them acquires the ability to float above the obstacle. However, Abbott's novel also carries a warning. A being, once having transcended its dimensional limitations, ceases to belong to its former life forever. Square, having learnt, with the help of Sphere serving him as his guide, about the space of the third dimension, having returned to his own world, not only experiences constant anxiety and a desire to return to the superior dimension, but at the same time has to hide his experience at risk of being misunderstood among his fellow inhabitants, which intensifies his sense of loneliness.

We will return to the issue of loneliness in its many dimensions later in the text.

CENTRE AND PERIPHERY

Looking at the on-line network of relations as a fourth dimension makes it possible to systematise the clear change in the feeling of proximity, neighbourliness and contact that has occurred over the last quarter of a century. However, we are not talking about the physical or spiritual feeling of contact. In the case of the Internet, this phenomenon should be understood in a purely practical sense. We are in close contact with someone we may never have physically seen in real life. We may constitute, together with others, the centre-interior of some structure, even if, in the physical sense, the paths connecting our places of residence would wrap around the surface of the Earth rather than aim to connect at a single point. The notion of distance has completely lost its original meaning thanks to the construction of a structure that takes the past way people communicate into another dimension.

In mathematics, however, the departure from the Euclidean concept of determining the distance between two points based on their Cartesian coordinates is not new. Both the concept of distance and the associated sphere (circle) shape, which, for the purposes of this discussion, may be an analogy for the centre and its surroundings (periphery), have their alternative definitions, directly related to the practical aspect of their application. However, from the point of view of the completeness of mathematical theory, they rigorously adhere to the prescribed conditions placed on the construction of the concept of distance.

Thus, when navigating in an urban setting, finding the nearest route from point *A* to point *B* would come down to finding the shortest route through the city streets; it is not possible to walk diagonally through buildings. If the street layout of the city was perpendicular, we would be talking about the so-called taxi distance.
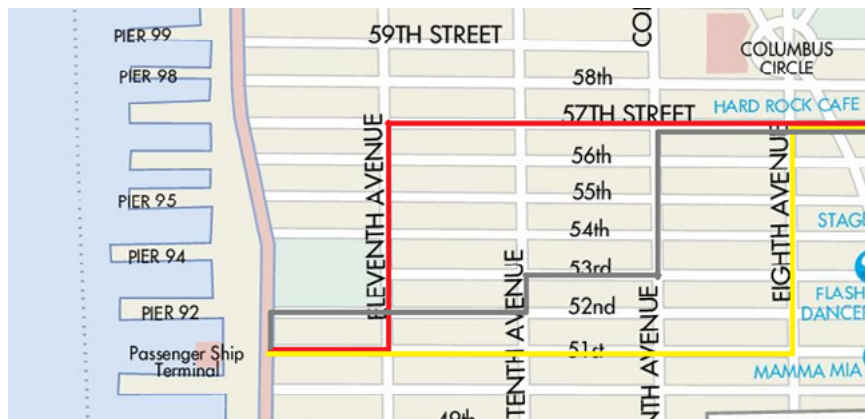

Figure 3. Determination of distance as the sum of parallel and perpendicular segments (in three variations) based on the walk from the Hard Rock Cafe to the ferry terminal on Manhattan's West Side (illustration based on content provided by Ontheworldmap [8])

This distance, defined as the sum of the distances that would have to be traversed by parallel streets, together with the sum of the distances that would have to be traversed by their respective blocks, satisfies the distance conditions defined by the three points:[9]

- the distance between points is 0 only if the points are identical;
- the distance from point A to point B is exactly the same as from point B to point A (symmetry condition);
- the direct distance between points A and B must not be greater than the length of the path from point A to point B passing through an additional point C (triangle condition).

Moving by public transport, especially suburban or national one (e.g., railway or bus lines) would impose further restrictions on the designation of point-to-point transitions, due to the fact that often there is simply no direct connection between places and all we can do is use an interchange point or a throughway. A good example is getting around between certain towns in the coastal zone – if we want to visit a neighbouring town by local transport, we very often have to either backtrack inland to a larger town and change to another bus there (central point) or reach the coast and use a tourist boat service (throughway). Both these concepts are also

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8   https://ontheworldmap.com/usa/city/new-york-city/midtown-manhattan-map.
jpg

9   R. Engelking, *Topologia ogólna*, Warszawa, 2012.

correct in terms of the mathematical definition of distance and are named, respectively, rail metrics and river-type metrics.

In all the metrics mentioned, it is possible to determine a sphere as the set of all points that are located no further than the indicated distance from the given centre. Not in every case does such a set correspond to the colloquial understanding of the concept of a sphere, but it is fully justified both formally and practically, and by analysing the shape of the resulting solid, we can easily relate it to the socio-economic concept of centre, margin and periphery. Would it be possible to transfer any of the classical definitions of distance to the Internet?

CENTRE OF THE INTERNET

One of the technological breakthroughs for determining the relevance of a given web page and thus indicating the search engine's priority in presenting the results of a query was the PageRank index.[10] It was based on the number and quality of links leading from other sites to a given page, which can be summed up in one sentence by the statement that 'a website is valid if there are links to it from many other valid sites'.[11]

The PageRank indicator of site *B* (multiplied by the so-called damping coefficient of usually 0.85) is added to the PageRank value of site *A* if site *B* directs the user to site *A* via a hyperlink. When there is more than one link on site *B*, then the PageRank of site *B* divides evenly into the number of links. Thus, if there are 10 links on this site (including one to site *A*), then site *A* receives 1/10 of the PageRank of site *B*.

How, then, do we define the concepts of distance, centre and periphery, given that the distance between sites *A* and *B* (or social network profiles) is measured not in units of length, but in the number of nodes it takes to travel that distance? It can be assumed that the structure of web links is a graph structure, in which the nodes are the specific addresses of sites and profiles, and the edges reflect the links between sites or the fact of observing a profile (in both cases it is an asymmetrical relationship – so we are talking about a directed graph). In graph theory, a sequence of edges with consecutive vertices occurring on the path is considered as the definition of a path. The distance from node *A* to node *B* is therefore called the length of the path from *A* to *B*, if it exists, otherwise the distance is referred to as infinite.[12] The definition of distance based on path

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10 The PageRank algorithm was patented in 1998 in the USA by the Stanford University (patent expired in 2019). The indicator is named after one of the algorithm's creators, Larry Page. The indicator functioned as one of the main SEO tools until it was completely phased out as an official tool in 2016.

11 H.Garcia-Molina, J.D. Ullman, J. Widom, *Systemy baz danych. Kompletny podręcznik*, transl. T. Walczak, Gliwice, 2011.

12 J. Wojciechowski, K. Pieńkosz, *Grafy i sieci*, Warszawa, 2013.

length fulfils all the conditions of being a metric (which were mentioned in the previous section of the chapter), so it is fully justified to transfer the concepts based on metrics, including the notion of a sphere with a given centre and radius, to the graph metric space. A sphere of radius r and centre K will be a set of nodes distant from K by no more than r, so no more than $r-1$ intermediate nodes will stand on the path from the centre of the sphere to the point A belonging to it.

We can use this concept of a sphere as a base for the notion of centre and periphery. If we assume that the centre is the sphere, then all sites that can be reached from the address at the centre of the sphere in no more than r steps will belong to it. The other addresses are peripheral to this site.

But is this exactly what we meant? Does such a designated centre in any way constitute the centre of the Internet? Probably not. The definition of a sphere represents a local centre, linked to a specific starting point, but it is nowhere near the understanding of the centre as the most important place, a vehicle for change, activity or a point of reference in global terms. It is impossible to carve out a centre by putting an above-average number of links on a site. Or rather, it was possible, but only in the initial phase of mass Internet access. The PageRank indicator mentioned above was intended to verify the centres thus generated by analysing the number and quality of links leading not from the site, but to it. And this, however, proved insufficient. Perhaps in economic terms, as an indicator of the profitability of advertising campaigns, the designation of the sites with the highest global metrics played its part, but in social terms it proved to fall short of growing demands, with current search algorithms relying much more on personalisation of the search results. The struggle to be 'at the centre' therefore takes on a whole new dimension.

THE *GAME OF LIFE*

Let us abandon the issue of dimension and distance for a moment and focus solely on the notion of neighbourhood and its impact on the development of the individual, while interpreting the individual itself, for example, as the nucleus, the centre of the work and creativity of a single artist, designer or author publishing and developing their activity in social media.

The cycle of existence of a website or a profile on a social network is based on a constant balance between life and death. This thread will invoke the aspect of overcrowding and loneliness as indicators heralding the twilight phase or the beginning of the development of the address under study. The discussion in the previous chapter, related to the question of centre and periphery on the Internet, made it possible to define the notion of neighbourhood as the set of all profiles that are one step away from a given centre, i.e., connected directly to the profile under

study by the act of observation, making friends or joining a group. Can it be assumed, then, that in order to enhance the value of one's place on the Internet, one must strive at all costs to broaden one's neighbourhood by accumulating as many contacts as possible?

To answer this question, we will use the example of one of the first population growth simulators based solely on the neighbourhood definition and a few simple rules. The *Game of Life* is one of the more famous examples of a cellular automaton, popular not only because of its scientific potential, but because of its contribution to the field of culture and art. Invented in 1970 by British mathematician John Conway and popularised by Martin Gardner in the *Scientific American* journal,[13] it served both research purposes – providing the opportunity to observe processes of development, decay or stabilisation of structures – and entertainment in the form of games and logic puzzles.

The game is played on a board (finite or infinite), divided into square cells. Each cell has eight neighbours – the cells that make up the neighbourhood adjoin it with their sides or corners, forming what is known as the Moore neighbourhood. Each cell can be in one of two states: it is either 'alive' (active) or 'dead' (inactive). The survival of a given cell in the current cycle is defined as follows:

- a dead cell that has exactly three living neighbours becomes alive in the next time unit;
- a living cell that has two or three living neighbours is still alive;
- with any other number of neighbours, the living cell dies: either from 'loneliness' with fewer than two living neighbours or from 'overcrowding' when there are four or more neighbours.
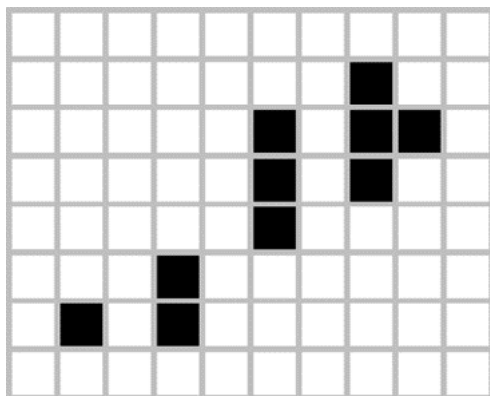

Figure 4. An example of the state of a cellular automaton
in Conway's *Game of Life*

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13   M. Gardner, 'Mathematical Games', *Scientific American,* 1970, p. 9.

How do the rules of Conway's game relate to the cycle of life on the Internet? Whether a profile or website is set up spontaneously or preceded by a series of market analyses and preparations, the key issue is to gather a specific community around the place being created. We will now focus on a very specific thread that is an attempt to describe the evolution of the size and character of this community. Let us assume, as it was in Conway's case, that one cell is one individual: an on-line profile in our case. Let us further assume that its neighbourhood includes any other profile with which it is in active contact, which in this case could mean commenting on each other's content, engaging in dialogue or tagging each other in posts. Here, of course, we have to deviate from the plane geometry considered in the original *Game of Life* because the plane described with Moore's eight-neighbourhood scheme makes it impossible to assign to cells the number of contacts that applies to web profiles; from the mathematical perspective, however, this is not a problem. We can assign two states to a cell. Conway's dead (inactive) cell would have an analogy in the form of a user profile that is dormant, passive, with limited on-line activity, or focused solely on receiving messages rather than on transmitting them. The equivalent of a live cell, on the other hand, would be a profile that has a large number of active contacts with which it regularly exchanges content and is geared towards growth and expansion, which may also include advertising contracts and influencer activities.

On the face of it, it would seem that gaining more contacts every time is absolutely desirable and guarantees the success of the profile. However, applying the principles of cellular automaton to the above description[14] leads to quite the opposite conclusion. In any case, there is a certain critical value of the number of contacts beyond which the addition of another new one entails the loss of existing ones; moreover, the process can proceed exponentially, leading to the loss of value (or to death?) of the entire profile. The phenomenon of losing contacts by exceeding a limit number of contacts has been investigated on Instagram[15] and Twitter[16]

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[14] Cellular automaton is a single-player game in which the rules of operation are determined one at a time on the basis of experiment or observation of a phenomenon in nature. However, the development of a population on the basis of given conditions is often difficult to predict and its observation can lead to new knowledge about the modelled phenomenon. Cellular automaton was used to study social networks by, among others, Li (et al.) in *Using Cellular Automata to Model Evolutionary Dynamics of Social Network* (2013) and Hunt (et al.) in *Using Cellular Automata to Model Social Networking Behaviour* (2011).

[15] P. Bellavista, L. Foschini, *Analysis of growth strategies in social media: the Instagram use case*, 24th Int. Work. CAMAD, Sept. 2019.

[16] H. Kwak, H. Chun, S. Moon, *Fragile Online Relationship: A First Look at Unfollow Dynamics in Twitter*, Proc. SIGCHI Conf, 2011.

and is closely related to the user behaviour captured in the *follow/unfollow* pattern, which consists of extensively sending out invitations to follow one's own profile while at the same time adding the profiles of invitees to our own followed ones. If there is no interest from the invited guests, the profile manager also removes their follows from the profile in question. This process, especially when carried out on a large scale and aided by the operation of bots, does not ultimately add value, as it is an artificial activity, the contact with the people invited is often one-off and – in the absence of further interaction – eventually cut off by one of the users. Moreover, as it creates chaos in the popularity rankings of profiles, it is banned by many portals, as indicated in the terms & conditions of use.[17]

THE CURSE OF MULTIDIMENSIONALITY

Returning to the issues of dimension and distance raised in earlier chapters, let us now look at the 'density' of social media contacts. Let us pose the question: will adding a new contact to a friend group broaden the possibility of effective communication among relevant users or, paradoxically, might it have a narrowing effect?

From the geometric perspective, if we deploy a certain number of points in a spatial unit, e.g., five points per one centimetre square, and then allow the points in question to 'bounce around' in a space one dimension larger – in this case a cube with a side of one centimetre – the density of point distribution drops dramatically. This can be imagined by dividing the original space, a square with a side of one centimetre, into smaller squares with a side of one millimetre, which gives us $10 \times 10 = 100$ such squares. If we arrange the points so that there is at most one point in one square, the probability of drawing a square containing a point is five in a hundred, or 5%. If we extend the reasoning from square to cube, the division results in $10 \times 10 \times 10 = 1,000$ smaller cubes, and if we keep the rule of only allowing one point in one cube, the chance of drawing a cube with a point is five in a thousand, or barely 0.5%. Furthermore, as the dimension increases, a sphere with the given radius occupies an increasingly smaller portion of a cube with a fixed edge length, so the probability that, for a given point, another of the highlighted points will be found in the surrounding neighbourhood also decreases. Hence 'In high dimensional spaces, no one can hear your scream' in the introduction to the article; – if your voice only spreads over a given distance, it is likely that in hyperspace there will be no one close enough to hear it ....

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17 'Help us stay spam-free by not artificially collecting likes, followers or shares, posting repetitive comments or content, or repeatedly contacting people for commercial purposes without their consent.' https://help.instagram.com/477434105621119.
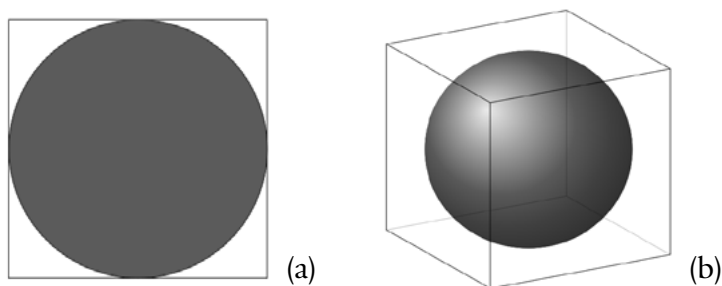
Figure 5. A sphere in two dimensions fills more of the square into which it is inscribed than a sphere in three dimensions fills a cube.

How, then, does geometric dimensional expansion relate to making more contacts on social networks? Every profile activity, including adding a contact to a friend group, liking, following, and joining a group, causes the content distribution algorithm to learn our preferences and multiply the number of suggested posts, adding more and more of those not coming from our direct contacts.

Let us specifically use the example of Facebook and the question: How does Facebook distribute content? According to the official data,[18] Facebook displays messages on a user's homepage by performing analysis in four main steps, including selecting content shared by the user's contacts, collecting signals and predictions of how likely a user is to respond to a post, and calculating the relevance index, i.e., how interested the audience will be in a post.

So, is it possible to predict who will see the content of the message we are about to edit and send out to the world, and when will this happen? We would like to believe that the message will at least be read by the owners of the profiles we have in our friends tab. But what if, for each of our friends, we are just one of several hundred or even several thousand contacts, each of whom sends at least a few messages a week? The likelihood of our post being high enough for our friends to see it on their home page decreases with every friend contact they add, just as the chance of finding a point within range of a sphere of a given radius decreases with every increase in the dimension in which it is located. Unless our profile has an advantage over others in terms of the relevance of the content published, the closeness of the relationship expressed by frequent interaction or the skilful construction of the message itself, no one may hear us. Despite the Friends tab filled to the brim.

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[18] https://www.facebook.com/business/help/718033381901819
?id=208060977200861.

Looking at the on-line network of relations as a fourth dimension makes it possible to systematise the clear change in the feeling of proximity, neighbourliness and contact that has occurred over the last quarter of a century. However, we are not talking about the physical or spiritual feeling of contact. In the case of the Internet, this phenomenon should be understood in a purely practical sense. We are in close contact with someone we may never have physically seen in real life. We may constitute, together with others, the centre-interior of some structure, even if, in the physical sense, the paths connecting our places of residence would wrap around the surface of the Earth rather than aim to connect at a single point.

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Abstrakt:

The paper presents selected issues in mathematics and algorithmics as an illustration for understanding the social changes occurring as a result of to the emergence of the medium of communication and expression: the Internet. The main themes of the paper touch on the formal definition of dimension, distance and neighbourhood, however, their development relates to themes such as the mystery of cognition, blurring in space, survival strategies, loneliness and the associated curse – more contact can paradoxically mean more silence in response to the call of the network. The text refers to literature, from E. Abbott's 1884 science fiction text to L. Scott's publication on contemporary social issues, as well as the strategy present in the *Game of Life* – a cellular automaton that simulates an individual's survival depending on the number of neighbours – and practical issues such as web positioning and publishing news on social networks.

Keywords:

## distance, dimension, crossing borders, network design

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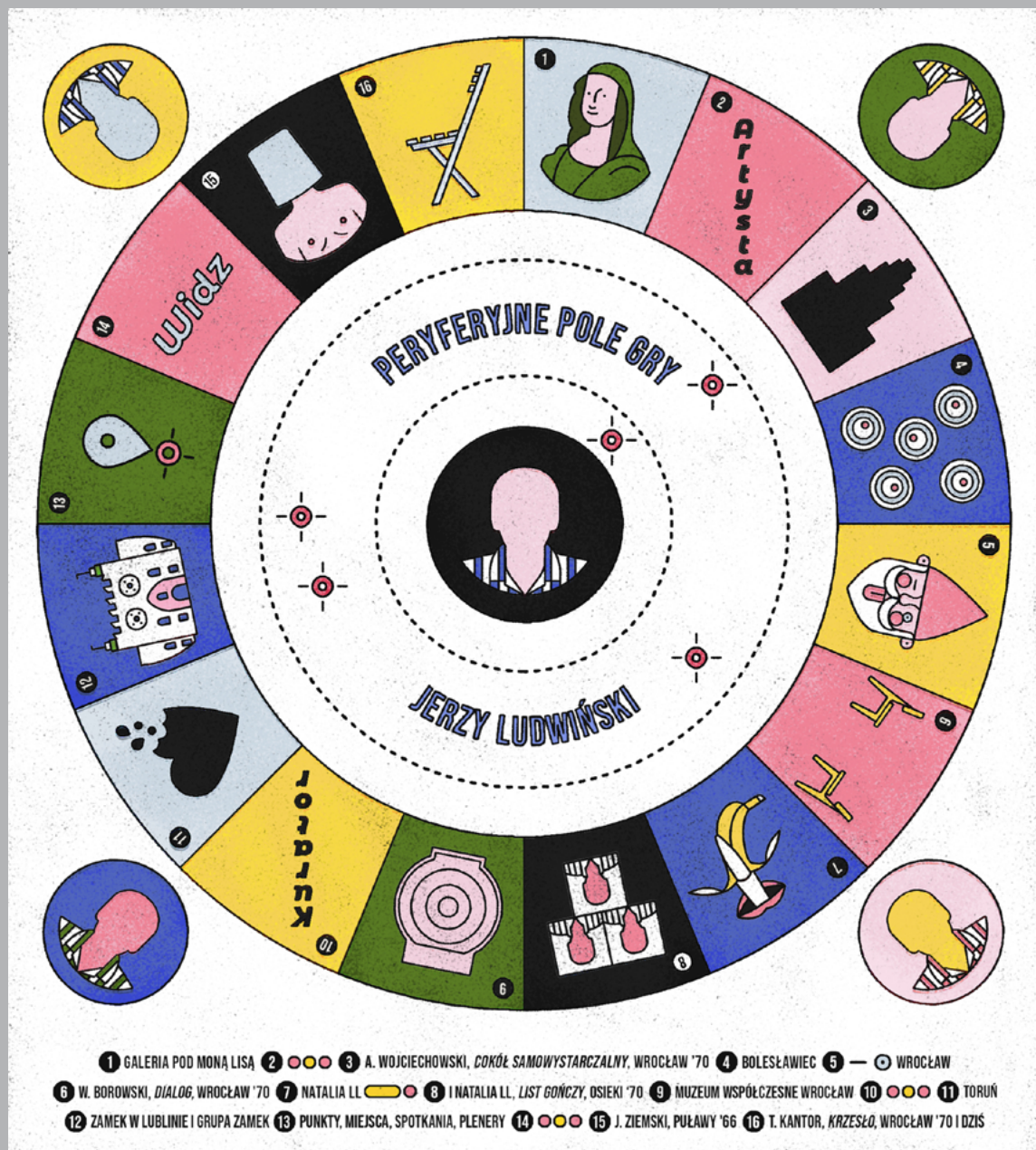
Piotr Lisowski

PERIPHERAL PLAYING FIELD. WHERE IT ALL ENDS OR BEGINS

In the spring of 1975, Jerzy Ludwiński left Lower Silesia and Wrocław for good and moved to Toruń. At that time, no one in Wrocław was thinking about creating a Museum of Current Art, the Mona Lisa Gallery had been closed for four years, the echoes of the Wrocław '70 Visual Arts Symposium had faded away, and the last chance for change, the Art Documentation Centre, was dissolved due to layoffs less than a year after it had been established by the Department of Culture. At the time, Ludwiński himself was living in Lubiąż, more than 50 kilometres away. Together with painter Małgorzata Iwanowska, they served as therapists at the Department for the Treatment of Addicts at the Provincial Hospital for the Nervous and Mentally Ill managed by Dr Zbigniew Thille. Then they move to Toruń together.

A SLIPPING PLAYING FIELD

Iwanowska recalled the moment of departure as follows: 'He did not want to leave this place. The situation was reminiscent [...] of Jurek's farewells to Lublin, after the symposium in Puławy: it was impossible to stay any longer, not even for one day. No chance of further work, no housing, no stability of any kind. So, we stood on the edge of the road. It was a dawn in May. [...] We stopped a van of some sort and set off, leaving the monumental Cistercian abbey in Lubiąż on the right, beyond the forest and the Oder. [...] Jurek looked off into the distance, sitting back-to-back [...] at the emerald Lower Silesia, disappearing in the grey mist [...].'[1] The comparison of his departure from Wrocław to the situation in 1966 and his farewell to Lublin immediately after the end of the Symposium of Artists and Scientists *Art in a Changing World* in Puławy seems significant. Both due to the exhaustion of professional opportunities and clerical resistance, as well as Ludwiński's own uncompromising approach to art and artistic choices.

The critic's actions were often in opposition to the official standards of Polish artistic culture at the time. They were oriented towards a model of action that was on the move, geared towards lively debate, active participation and constant change. Ludwiński, interested in artists who bring in new, original values, was at the same time fascinated by the disintegration of hierarchies, of canons of all structures in art. He was a participant in and to a large extent a creator of artistic life in the 1960s and 1970s. He was particularly involved in the construction of experimental institutional models, but also in the symposium and plenary movement, in which he saw the idea of a mobile artistic centre as a place for artistic manifestation as well as confrontation and dispute between artists and theorists. It was in these spaces of activity, based on ephemerality, aiming to decentralise the field of art and

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1 M. Iwanowska-Ludwińska, *Jurek. Szkice do portretu*, Toruń, 2004, p. 34.

artistic confrontation, that Ludwiński emerged most fully with his theories, passions, preferences and artistic choices.

In an interesting way, this portrait is illustrated in Natalia LL's work, dedicated to Ludwiński, with the symptomatic title *Arrest Warrant*. The installation, realised in August 1970 during the 8th Meeting of Artists and Art Theorists in Osieki, consisted of nine cubes, each covered with photographs. Three of them showed the critic (photographed in the manner in which criminals are photographed: in two profiles and en face, additionally wearing a striped shirt similar to a prison outfit), while others showed a forest in Osieki, a Cuban cigar and a receipt for a contribution to the Polish Fishermen Association, issued for Andrzej Lachowicz. The cubes could be arranged in 720 variations.

At the time, the artist commented on this specific kind of *hommage* to one of the most important figures in the Polish art world at the time as follows: 'Ludwiński's contribution to the development of new art is not to be underestimated. However, his activities did not gain full acceptance and were often even fought against by those who advocated the coarseness and backwardness of art. *Arrest Warrant* is a kind of mobile model of the construction and disintegration of a work of art.'[2] Natalia LL's work, as Anna Markowska noted, is a gesture of support for a prominent critic and, above all, a manifesto for new art and a declaration of war on the art establishment. '*Arrest Warrant,* the art historian wrote, is an existential declaration: the progressive artist and the critic feel and are treated in the Polish People's Republic as defendants. That is why they gave the cubes to selected participants of the open-air workshop in Osieki, thus crossing the boundary between art and life and making them a gift that dislocates from the public space of the open-air workshop to the private sphere of the recipients. Faced with the impossibility of an extended existence in the public sphere, the artist therefore declares her readiness to create a grassroots system of art exchange. [...] At the same time, *Arrest Warrant* takes a form that is an overt resistance to the dominant art.'[3]

It is also difficult not to see in Natalia LL's object a reflection of the main theses contained in Ludwiński's speech entitled *The Post-Artistic Era*.[4] The process he outlined showed the evolution of art, which, by

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2   Natalia LL, *Arrest Warrant,* typescript, 1970. Quoted [in:] *Natalia LL. Opera omnia*, ed. A. Sobota, Wrocław 2009, p. 44.

3   A. Markowska, 'Amour fou w nieprzyjaznych dekoracjach', [in:] *Natalia LL. Secretum et tremor*, E. Toniak (ed.), Warszawa, 2015, p. 25.

4   The speech was given on 14 August 1970. The edited text, in the form of a typescript, was published under the title *Art in the post-artistic era* as part of the exhibition *Sztuka Pojęciowa* realised at the Mona Lisa Gallery in Wrocław (December 1970), and was subsequently reprinted in the monthly magazine *Odra* (no. 4, 1971).

seeking to break down the notion of the work of art and its dematerialisation, ceased to be visible, eventually blending in and blurring with reality. Ludwiński spoke about the blurring of various boundaries, including those between art and reality, but also art and theory. At the same time, he pointed to the further dispersion of art leading to a re-evaluation of artistic phenomena and the formulation of a new, constantly evolving definition of art that abolishes all divisions.

The meeting in Osieki is the culminating moment for Ludwiński's 'Wrocław period'. In principle, the open-air workshop can be seen as a continuation of the ideological themes of the Wrocław '70 Visual Arts Symposium.[5] This is evidenced both by the composition of the participants, which largely coincides with the list of artists previously invited to Wrocław,[6] as well as by the topics discussed in the discussions, the nature of the works produced at the open-air workshop and the specificity of the entire event. According to Luiza Nader, the open-air meeting in Osieki continued and radicalised the activities that took place in Wrocław, and the meeting itself turned into a discussion on the need for a new definition of art.[7] It is worth noting that at the time of the Osieki meeting, in Wrocław, there were still lively discussions and organisational work assuming the finalisation of selected symposium projects. One of the key issues remained the establishment of the Centre for Artistic Research that was to be one of the outcomes of the Symposium.

The Centre was a natural development of Ludwiński's concepts contained in the idea of the Museum of Current Art, developed in 1966. Starting from the earlier model of the museum, also in this proposal the critic highlighted the notion of the 'playing field' as a key one. Having analysed the two programmes, Magdalena Ziółkowska wrote: 'It was Ludwiński's intention [...] to make the Centre for Artistic Research a manifestation of the 'game museum', a new incarnation of the previously unrealised Museum of Current Art. The critic transformed the Museum of Current Art into a museum without a stable location, acting as a link between the fields of changing art and static institutions. The museum was to become a 'mobile centre'. In doing so, the Centre for Artistic Research would be neither a mediator nor a binder of the areas mentioned. [...] Thus, the Centre

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5   Z. Makarewicz, 'Ostatni zjazd awangardy', [in:] *Sympozjum Plastyczne Wrocław'70*, eds. D. Dziedzic, Z. Makarewicz, Wrocław, 1983, p. 40. Cf. L. Nader, 'W stronę krytyki wizualności. VIII Spotkanie Artystów i Teoretyków Sztuki w Osiekach', [in:] *Awangarda w plenerze: Osieki i Łazy 1963–1981. Polska awangarda II połowy XX wieku w kolekcji Muzeum w Koszalinie*, ed. R. Ziarkiewicz, Koszalin, 2008, p. 66.

6   The task of constructing the list of participants was entrusted to two art historians and critics, Jerzy Ludwiński and Bożena Kowalska.

7   L. Nader, *Konceptualizm w PRL*, Warszawa, 2009, p. 393.

for Artistic Research rejected any mediation of experience, the secondary nature of established hierarchies and formalised relationships. It offered direct confrontation of diverse attitudes and participation of artists, critics, audiences.[8] The Centre was to combine both research and stimulating artistic activities, it was to remain an institution in progress, reproducing the constant variability of current art. In Ludwiński's view, the Centre was meant to be an institution interested in artistic and theoretical activities through which the content of the concept of art is enriched and its previous boundaries become increasingly outdated. 'The idea,' the critic wrote, 'is to create a playing field, not restricted to one place or any one artistic tendency. Such a playing field, in which the Centre would act as a binding factor, could lead to an accelerated development of the arts. The Centre's activities would thus be directed not to the past but to the future of art, not to the accumulation of art departments but to their emergence, not to material objects but to the artistic movement.'[9]

The first stage of implementing the idea of the Centre was the Art Documentation Centre, established on 1 May 1972 at the Department of Culture of the Presidium of the National Council of the City of Wrocław. Jerzy Ludwiński and Zbigniew Makarewicz were hired to run it as instructors for visual arts documentation. There were serious prospects that this time it would work. The drive to create this type of facility was an expression of a real need in the nationwide art community, which manifested its support for Ludwiński's idea during the Symposium.

The Centre began working on documentation for the Wrocław '70 Visual Arts Symposium, and was also involved in talks with the Art Institute of the Polish Academy of Sciences and the International Association of Art Critics (AICA) concerning the programme for the AICA Congress to be held in Warsaw in 1975. Above all, however, a network of contacts began to be created, laying the organisational and financial foundations that would enable the popularisation of contemporary art at home and abroad.[10] The Centre for Art Documentation was also visited by Richard Demarco, who was on a curatorial tour of Polish art at the time, which resulted in a later exhibition at the gallery he ran in Edinburgh.[11]

8   M. Ziółkowska, 'Sympozjum Plastyczne Wrocław '70 i koncepcja Muzeum Sztuki Aktualnej', [in:] *Sympozjum Plastyczne Wrocław '70*, ed. P. Lisowski, Wrocław, 2020, p. 361.

9   J. Ludwiński, 'Centrum Badań Artystycznych', [in:] *Sympozjum Plastyczne Wrocław '70*, op. cit., p. 154.

10   Z. Makarewicz, ibidem. Cf. KK., 'Ośrodek Dokumentacji Sztuki', *Odra,* 1973, no. 6, pp. 110–111.

11   The *Atelier'72* exhibition took place at Richard Demarco Gallery as part of the Edinburgh International Festival (20 August – 9 September 1972). It was the first presentation of Polish contemporary art abroad of this importance and

After a year of operation, the Art Documentation Centre, a joint – as Janusz Bogucki noted – ephemeral work of the national avant-garde of visual artists and the Wrocław cultural administration,[12] was closed down. Taking advantage of administrative changes and the merger of the municipal and provincial departments of culture, Ludwiński's and Makarewicz's jobs were liquidated. The action taken was interrupted, and much material and many documents were dispersed and consequently lost.

Ludwiński's attempts to revise the institutional system, from the programme of the Museum of Current Art to the activities of the Mona Lisa Gallery to the Centre for Artistic Research, represent a certain train of thought. The critic's views have evolved towards seeing artistic action as something that does not really need an institution or a place, but is a kind of playing field.

Ludwiński was formulating the premise of the 'game museum' considered as an institution in motion already at the stage of designing the Museum of Current Art. This is what he tried to implement at the Mona Lisa Gallery, where he developed a scheme of activities based on the principle of creating a multifaceted situation in which there would be direct contact between the artist, the curator/theoretician and the viewer. The concept of the open playing field, a consequence of this stance, has taken art out of the gallery, making it easier for it to take on tasks of unprecedented magnitude.

This concept was implemented in the form of the Wrocław '70 Visual Arts Symposium, which already encompassed the entire city space and even went beyond it. In the case of the Symposium, the social aspect was also important. What made this event unusual was that participants were expected to relate to the architectural and urban context of Wrocław. At the time, artists had limited access to public space, so many of them were quite sceptical about this assumption. In this situation, it was more important to present ideas and confront different concepts about public space than to wait for their practical implementation. It was more important to establish a playing field where different views and attitudes could clash. In a subversive way, this also included a critical aspect, which Ludwiński described as 'disloyalty to reality'. The artists used it to protest against the *status quo* that existed at the time, against the situation they found in almost all areas of life. In retrospect, he added

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was co-organised by the Museum of Art in Łódź. The Wrocław art scene was presented by Jan Chwałczyk, Wanda Gołkowska, Stanisław Dróżdż, Barbara Kozłowska, Zbigniew Makarewicz, Zdzisław Jurkiewicz, Grzegorz Koterski, Natalia LL, Andrzej Lachowicz, Maria Michałowska, Leszek Mickoś, Wiesław Paczkowski, Jerzy Rosołowicz and Jerzy Ludwiński.

12   J. Bogucki, 'Od I-go pleneru koszalińskiego do spotkania "Wrocław "70', [in:] *Sympozjum Plastyczne Wrocław '70*, op. cit., p. 24.

that it was also a defiance of political reality: '[...] the aim of all power, especially totalitarian power, is to get the whole of society to speak with one voice, while the artists at that time wanted to speak with many voices that differed from one another. It was therefore not about anti-government yelling; it was not about reacting on the same level. This was not well received, which can be well seen if we study how the results of the symposia in Puławy and Wrocław were treated by the authorities. In both cases, efforts were made to immediately cover up the case as if it did not exist at all, to destroy documentation or not to allow anything to come to light. Therefore, if you wanted to do anything, you had to act quickly and by surprise.'[13]

The Centre was the logical consequence of this sequence of events and, at the same time, the beginning of a new phase in the art movement, for which, in the critic's opinion, Wrocław was the best prepared of all Polish centres. Ludwiński emphasised here the unprecedented dynamism of new and experimental phenomena, as well as the highest frequency of artistic facts of an unconventional nature. 'In this circle,' he wrote, 'for the first time in Poland we have observed the emergence of new trends in art that have arisen here in an independent way, independently of analogous trends in world art'.[14] The Centre was to be an institution in motion, following this dynamic and fitting in with the idea of a mobile art centre associated with the open-air-symposium movement, which remained central to the formulation of the collective experience of the Polish neo-avant-garde of the late 1960s and early 1970s. In the Centre's implementation plan for 1971, outdoor actions in Zgorzelec, Bolesławiec, Osieki, Elbląg and Łagów were listed among the tasks to be coordinated.[15] In the case of the first two open-air events, Ludwiński was directly involved and influenced their nature.

The *Zgorzelec Land* open-air workshop was the last event initiated by the Mona Lisa Gallery. It took place in July 1971 in Opolno-Zdrój, a few kilometres from the Turów lignite opencast mines. The decision regarding the location was by no means a coincidence. The mine was an example of a space where nature in a near-pristine state meets the new nature created by industrial and technical human activity. At the same time, it illustrated quite aptly the problem of the exploitation of natural resources and the

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13 'Nowość w sztuce jest miarą wyobraźni artysty. Jerzy Ludwiński w rozmowie z Pawłem Politem', [in:] *Refleksja konceptualna w sztuce polskiej. Doświadczenia dyskursu: 1965–1975*, ed. P. Polit, P. Woźniakiewicz, Warszawa, 2000, p. 64.

14 J. Ludwiński, 'Aneks do programu Centrum Badań Artystycznych', [in:] idem, *Sztuka w epoce postartystycznej i inne teksty*, selected and edited by J. Kozłowski, Poznań-Wrocław, 2009, p. 241.

15 *Plan realizacji Centrum Badań Artystycznych na rok 1971. Projekty*, [in:] ibidem, p. 239.

associated destruction of the original character of the landscape. The meeting, held under the motto 'Science and art in the process of protecting the natural human environment', was devoted entirely to environmental issues. It was intended as a confrontation between artistic and scientific attitudes, with the aim of reflecting on the possibility of planning the civilisational change in such a way so that it would be compatible with the natural processes of biological change. The art itself – as the authors of the open-air workshop wrote – 'fulfils a very important function in the process of changing stereotypical thinking'.[16] Obviously, the organisers did not expect the participants to realise permanent objects, but rather broadly defined artistic proposals as a commentary on the perceived acceleration of civilisation, the overproduction of human products (including waste) or other negative factors associated with industrialisation.

In the case of the Lower Silesian Sculpture Open-air Workshop in Bolesławiec in 1971, an attempt was made to reform the event, which had been taking place since the mid-1960s, by transforming it into a meeting of visual artists, architects and critics, consisting of two sessions in Wrocław and Bolesławiec. A year later, as part of the next edition, Ludwiński, together with Makarewicz and Alojzy Gryt, tried to implement there the model of gallery called the 'Playing Field'. In October, an exhibition and theoretical session entitled *Art and Space* took place at the Bolesławiec Cultural Centre with the participation of, among others, Jan Berdyszak, Andrzej Dłużniewski, Włodzimierz Borowski and Antoni Dzieduszycki. This short-lived initiative involved the introduction of innovative concepts of spatial forms, ephemeral activities and, consequently, performative practices. The 'Playing Field' encompassed more than a specific physical space; it was intended to be an area of people's imagination, emotions and thoughts in a common pursuit.[17] The measure was enthusiastically received by the local authorities, but the provincial authorities supported by some artists from the ZPAP community blocked the initiative.[18] Soon, as we remember, the Art Documentation Centre was also dissolved.

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16 J. Chwałczyk, A. Dzieduszycki, J. Ludwiński, 'Założenia programowe pleneru – spotkania artystów, naukowców i teoretyków sztuki Ziemia Zgorzelecka 71', [in:] *Plener Ziemia Zgorzelecka – 1971. Nauka i sztuka w procesie ochrony naturalnego środowiska człowieka*, after-workshop materials, Opolno-Zdrój 1971, n.p.

17 Z. Makarewicz, 'Pole gry', *Wiadomości. Tygodnik społeczno-polityczny* 16 November 1972, no. 46/816.

18 Idem, 'Polska sztuka na zachodzie. O Jerzym Ludwińskim we Wrocławiu', [in:] *Jerzy Ludwiński. Wypełniając puste pola*, eds. P. Lisowski, K. Radomska, Toruń, 2011, p. 65.

BETWEEN POINTS THAT DO NOT EXIST

After moving to Toruń, Ludwiński still tried to develop the idea of a mobile art venue by establishing the Punkt Gallery. It was active from 1977 to 1979, first in the ᴢᴍꜱ 'Iskra' Municipal Youth Club and then in the 'Od Nowa' Student Club located in the Artus Court in Toruń's Old Town. As part of the gallery's initiation, the Flying Gallery, which had been defunct for five years and was run in 1972 in Toruń by Wiesław Smużny, was presented.

At the time, in a text accompanying the presentation, the critic described the three main groups of galleries that were on the art circuit at the time, showing the diversity and richness of the contemporary art world.[19] The first group was made up of collection galleries that usually promote one chosen strand of artistic phenomena. The second group included the game galleries, where there is a constant confrontation between the most topical phenomena. Finally, the third group was the concept galleries, for which the flow of information is most important even at the expense of an exhibition or other events. Against this backdrop, the Punkt Gallery was to remain 'a white board on which to project everything from this unlimited diversity'.[20] In its conception, it was intended to be a place without a programme – a point in mathematical terms, and therefore a concept that does not exist in reality, from which something begins or on which something ends.

Ludwiński invited artists from a variety of creative fields, constantly searching for and emphasising border areas as the ones where the most interesting things happen. New trends and genres of art were created at junctures: where methods crossed and conventions lost their meaning. Nevertheless, the Punkt Gallery itself remained a rather ephemeral creation, with few realised activities.

One such event was *Action Point III*, held between 30 November and 3 December 1978.[21] The event included performances by Barbara Kozłowska and Zbigniew Makarewicz, a show by Jerzy Kalina and a performance based on Rainer Maria Rilke's *Elegy* by Ewa Benesz. The whole event was accompanied by a theoretical session entitled *Art at the Borderline of Genres* with papers by, among others, Janusz Bogucki, Andrzej Kostołowski and literary scholar Janusz Skuczyński.

In a surviving manuscript entitled *Akcja 'Punkt'* [Action 'Point'], which can be considered the gallery's programme manifesto, Ludwiński wrote: 'One can imagine movement to such a point from all possible directions, and movement from that point in all possible directions. Realising

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19   J. Ludwiński, *Galeria 'Punkt'*, [in:] idem, *Sztuka w epoce...*, op. cit., p. 249.

20   Ibidem.

21   *Akcja Punkt III*, leaflet, Punkt Gallery, Toruń, 1978.

such a point in art is a particularly important thing. It is then that the field is cleared and everything sort of starts again. One big pulsating process. We are proposing it instead of an exhibition understood in a traditional way. Action 'Point' will take place not only in space but also in time. It will also have a research character, the nature of a kind of test, spread among artists and all people interested in art. For during the action, such a point will exist in a quite realistic manner. It will be the task of all observers to find it.'[22]

The proposed idea was derived from the concept of the playing field with a stronger emphasis on processuality and ephemerality. It seems that Ludwiński was no longer aiming for a compact structure or format of an informal gallery. The word 'gallery' itself became synonymous with and *de facto* replaced the word 'action'. 'Action', in turn, could be said to have become something that evolved from the notion of 'situation', which determined the programme of the Mona Lisa Gallery. There, Ludwiński had spoken of a 'situation' where there would be direct contact between the artist, the curator and the viewer. The exhibition was just a pretext for it. In the case of Action 'Point', it is similar, however the degree of unpredictability is even greater and the boundaries are set by points that do not exist.

THE PERIPHERIES OF ART

'Jurek was an idealist,' Wiesław Borowski recalled, 'so suggestive that he created a system of art around himself [...] he had no traditional approach to art: that art develops, transforms. Where he was, there was the centre. [...] He was passionate about the fact that Paris ceased to be an art centre in favour of New York. When he later moved to Wrocław, a certain centre was established there.'[23] Ludwiński's activity in the capital of Lower Silesia was a heroic period. It is during this time that he developed key concepts and programmes. The melting pot that formed a strong neo-avant-garde artistic milieu, defined and co-created by Jerzy Ludwiński, and which was cemented by the emergence of conceptual art. Although he himself defined conceptualism very broadly, describing it as a 'convention-free zone' that encompasses everything 'that can be thought and communicated'.[24] Ludwiński's later views were largely shaped around issues developed in Wrocław.

His critical views regarding art institutions, his efforts to decentralise the field of art, his insistence on creating dialogical situations between

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22   J. Ludwiński, 'Akcja Punkt', [in:] idem, *Epoka błękitu*, ed. J. Hanusek, Kraków, 2009, p. 270.

23   *Wiesław Borowski. Zakrywam to, co niewidoczne. Wywiad-rzeka. Rozmawiają Adam Mazur i Ewa Toniak*, Warszawa 2014, p. 167.

24   J. Ludwiński, 'Strefa wolna od konwencji', *Projekt* 1972, no. 1, p. 2.

critics, artists and the public, his visionary reflection on the transformations of art, and his somewhat counter-cultural style of being made him a figure who definitely broke out of the conventions and norms prevailing in the cultural field at the time. One can say, following Małgorzata Iwanowska-Ludwińska, that he was in some way a man of the peripheries, with these peripheries becoming the centre thanks to his presence.[25] The peripheries should be seen in several ways.

In the first instance, it can be read in a literal way, as a province, a margin in relation to the centre. The first such place on Ludwiński's path was Lublin, obviously considered in the context of the relations prevailing in artistic life in Poland at the time, with the predominance of Warsaw and Kraków circles. Ludwiński studied art history at the Catholic University of Lublin between 1950 and 1955. The university in those years was a place that attracted a multitude of young people from all over the country, outcasts, beatniks, people fleeing military service or unable to get into university elsewhere. It was an asylum welcoming all students without restriction. At the same time, it had an interesting staff, composed in large part of lecturers coming from the Stefan Batory University in Vilnius and the Jan Kazimierz University in Lviv. During and just after his studies, Ludwiński was actively involved in the development of the Lublin artistic milieu, e.g., participating in the activities of the Zamek Group (1956−1960) or editing, in the years 1959−1961, *Struktury*, a supplement to the Chełm-Lublin cultural magazine *Kamena*, dedicated to the visual arts. Both of these activities undoubtedly constituted an important testimony to Lublin's artistic life and its openness to the transformations of Polish art in the second half of the 1950s.

When Ludwiński moved to Wrocław in 1966, the art community there was well established, although Jan Chwałczyk, who proposed that the critic come to Wrocław during the Puławy Symposium, saw in his arrival an opportunity for the critical vibration that was lacking in the local environment. Chwałczyk recalled: 'In Wrocław, I worked at the BWA Gallery. Just before I left for Puławy, I had a conversation with Jerzy Nowak, the director of the Department of Culture, who asked me if I knew anyone who could stir things up a bit in that dull Wrocław art community. It was right after he brought in Jerzy Grotowski. So, in Puławy [...] Jurek came to me and said that he had talked to a friend from his studies, who at that time was some kind of activist in Lublin, and he told him that he had nothing to look for here, that he would be eaten up here, not only by his fellow artists, the union, but also the situation was such that probably nothing would be published, no catalogue from that exhibition. We are sitting on the sofa talking and then I ask Jurek: and would you come to Wrocław? He immediately replied: 'Yes'. After a few weeks or days, he was already in Wrocław.'[26] In a short period of time, a very strong community emerged centred around the Mona

25 'Człowiek-nikt'. Z Małgorzatą Iwanowską-Ludwińską rozmawia Piotr Lisowski', *Archiwum Jerzego Ludwińskiego. Jednodniówka Muzeum Współczesnego Wrocław* 26 July 2013, p. 12.

26 'Napięcia kontrolowane. Z Janem Chwałczykiem rozmawia Piotr Lisowski', *Jednodniówka Muzeum Współczesnego Wrocław* 2 September 2011, p. 9.

Lisa Gallery, run by Ludwiński, and Wrocław became the main centre of conceptual art in Poland.

In the area of the geographical periphery, we can also place the entire symposium and open-air workshop movement, which became very much a part of the landscape of artistic life in the 1960s and 1970s. The open-air workshops and symposia were important centres for shaping the self-awareness of Polish art, and were established as a result of the more general policy of the state aimed at the socio-economic and cultural activation of the territories recovered after World War II. Ludwiński regularly participated in the most important ones, such as the open-air workshop meetings in Osieki, the Biennale of Spatial Forms in Elbląg or the Golden Grape in Zielona Góra. He himself was a co-creator of such key events as the Symposium of Artists and Scientists in Puławy (1966), the Wrocław '70 Visual Arts Symposium (1970), the 8th Meeting of Artists and Art Theorists in Osieki (1970), and the open-air workshop The Zgorzelec Land (1971). There was also a whole group of smaller-scale events, attracting the artistic community in large numbers (including in Osetnica, Miastko, Trzebieszowice, Jagniątków). Ludwiński was keen to embark on an 'open-air workshop season' each time, although he was aware that at some point this formula ceased to stimulate the art movement.[27]

The peripheries, understood in yet another way, can also refer to functioning outside the official interest of the art world. Ludwiński formulated his remarks in opposition to official exhibition sites, state institutions such as BWA or museums, and, in a broader context, to the cultural policy of communist Poland. In the 1960s, he assumed that only unofficial (authorial, independent) galleries were capable of shaping the image of contemporary art. Such places, also thanks to the charisma and commitment of the people who ran them, were directed towards presenting new artistic phenomena and remained open to experimentation and risk. It is in these types of venues that the most unconventional works could be encountered and new content that showcased the image of contemporary art could be sought. This is because these galleries are observing things that are out of the ordinary, it is not the rich artistic output that matters, but the new position that is yet to provide material for discussion.

Ludwiński's struggle with the establishment was already evident earlier, in the 1950s in Lublin, where, as co-founder and critic of the Zamek Group, he tried to situate his colleagues in opposition to the aestheticism and colourism dominating the academic circles at the time. Moreover, it is worth noting that the group also included amateur artists

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27   J. Ludwiński, *Awangarda awangardy*, [in:] idem, *Sztuka w epoce...*, op. cit., pp. 74–75.

without visual arts studies, and that nationwide critics ignored Zamek, relegating the group 'to the margins, as an example of the excesses of provincial art'.[28]

Even from the perspective of the late 1970s, Ludwiński wrote about an era of outsiders, i.e., artists who function somewhere completely on the margins, outside the mainstream, focused on the sources of art and a friendly attitude to the world.[29] The blurring of boundaries and divisions also ran the risk of blurring the boundaries between the avant-garde and official art. Observing the changes in the art field of the late 1980s and early 1990s, he pointed to 'third art' as an alternative to the official manifestations of artistic life. In his text *Pałka Bretona i trzecia sztuka* [*Breton's Baton And The Third Art*]*,* depicting the situation of official art, he wrote: 'There is an ongoing bidding war for the massive blows with which the former avant-garde was associated. The visible presence of the artist is important, including at openings. The salons are dominated by important personalities. And beyond that, mass and strength. And money, which never before in the history of the art movement, was present in such quantity.'[30] Ludwiński contrasts this with the above-mentioned third art, which differs from official art in its choice of location and, above all, in its attitude.

At the time, Ludwiński was far less involved in artistic life, dividing his time between Toruń, where he lived, and Poznań, where he taught at the State School of Fine Arts, later the Academy of Fine Arts. He often thought back to the late 1960s and the revolution that took place then. He saw the shortcomings of artistic modernity, above all in the very rapid academicisation and institutionalisation of phenomena and in fashion. 'In art it is the other way around,' he said a few months before his death, 'art is where there is one person who is a separate person and a separate artist. These are people who belong to a distinct minority who are important for the world of art.'[31]

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28   Idem, *Największe pomyłki krytyki*, [in:] ibidem, p. 39.
29   Idem, *Epoka outsiderów*, [in:] ibidem, pp. 140−142.
30   Idem, *Pałka Bretona i trzecia sztuka*, [in:] ibidem, p. 184.
31   *Sztuka zmierza do maksymalnej różnorodności. Z Jerzym Ludwińskim rozmawia Rafał Jakubowicz*, [in:] ibidem, p. 330.

His critical views regarding art institutions, his efforts to decentralise the field of art, his insistence on creating dialogical situations between critics, artists and the public, his visionary reflection on the transformations of art, and his somewhat counter-cultural style of being made him a figure who definitely broke out of the conventions and norms prevailing in the cultural field at the time. One can say, following Małgorzata Iwanowska-Ludwińska, that he was in some way a man of the peripheries, with these peripheries becoming the centre thanks to his presence.

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● кк., 'Ośrodek Dokumentacji Sztuki', *Odra* 1973, no. 6, pp. 110−111.

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Abstract

This article is a reflection on the critical and curatorial activities of Jerzy Ludwiński, one of the leading animators of artistic life in Poland in the decades of the 1960s and 1970s. The reflections focus on the critic's activities, which were in opposition to the official standards of Polish artistic culture at the time: directed towards a model of action that was on the move, geared towards lively debate, active participation and constant change. Ludwiński, interested in artists who bring in new, original values, was at the same time fascinated by the disintegration of hierarchies, canons of all structures in art. He was particularly involved in the construction of experimental institutional models, but also in the symposium and plenary movement, in which he saw the idea of a mobile artistic centre as a place for artistic manifestation as well as confrontation and dispute between artists and theorists. It was in these spaces of activity, based on ephemerality, aiming to decentralise the field of art and artistic confrontation, that Ludwiński emerged most fully with his theories, passions, preferences or artistic choices.

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Agnieszka Jankowska-Marzec

'ACCURSED' OR ABSENT? CRITICS TOWARDS THE WORKS OF JERZY DUDA-GRACZ

Looking for the right adjective to describe the current status of Jerzy Duda-Gracz, I have used a term loaded, perhaps, with excess drama: 'accursed'. However, I find it justified to some extent: the work of the artist who passed away in 2004 remains not only relegated to the margins of interest of Polish art criticism but also assessed rather harshly by it. As a matter of fact, the artist ceased to enjoy good reviews as early as the second half of the 1990s. Two then-young critics, Łukasz Gorczyca and Michał Kaczyński, founders of the 'Raster' magazine, picked Duda-Gracz to pieces in the text titled *Słowniczek artystyczny Rastra* (Raster's Concise Art Dictionary), describing the world of Polish art of the late 20th century. The artist was included among the creators working in the so-called arte polo current, which they defined as 'a genre in contemporary Polish art that has a specificity similar to disco polo in music. Purely artistic values are replaced by commercial and entertainment ones in it. However, unlike disco polo, it is popular even among social elites: from unsophisticated audiences to certain circles of collectors, gallerists and critics. ARTE POLO exhibitions are also organised – and paid for with taxpayers' money – by some state museums and galleries (e.g., Duda-Gracz exhibitions at the Silesian Museum in Katowice or the Ethnographic Museum in Warsaw). (…) The greatest ARTE POLO sharks include such tycoons as the aforementioned Jerzy Duda-Gracz and Zdzisław Beksiński, whose activities cannot, in principle, be described as art. Duda-Gracz produces caricature paintings in dun hues, reminiscent of poor-quality illustrations for fairy tales. According to the author, the protagonists of these paintings are provincial and non-upper-class types; however, it is difficult to understand what these eye-nagging visions have to do with our reality and why they amuse the Polish audience so much. The record-breaking prices of Duda-Gracz paintings attained at auctions in 1996: PLN 45,000 for a large, oil-based *Tatra Fantasy*, and PLN 27,000 for *The Stroll,* testify to the degree of the amusement. Duda-Gracz likes to claim the Polishness (arte-Polishness?) of his paintings, and the New Rich audience apparently believes that the caricatures painted in oil are absolutely the best thing Polish painters can produce.'[1] This staunchly negative assessment of Duda Gracz's creative output contradicted his image in the criticism of the previous decades. In the 1970s and 1980s, he was one of the most appreciated Polish artists who enjoyed, at the same time, great popularity among a wide audience of art lovers, and 'the resonance generated by his exhibitions – as Stach Szabłowski wrote – is easier to compare with the reception of important films or generational bestsellers than with phenomena in the field of visual arts. It would also be difficult to find an artist equally viv-

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1   *Raster, Macie swoich krytyków. Antologia tekstów,* red. J. Banasiak, Warszawa 2009, pp. 22–23.

idly discussed in the PRL (communist state-owned– transl.) media.'[2] What was, then, the reason why Jerzy Duda-Gracz became almost a *persona non grata* in the Polish art world? The answer is neither easy nor clear-cut; a combination of various factors came into play. The selection of critical texts from the last thirty years of the past century, devoted to the work of Duda-Gracz, presented below, may allow a better understanding of his case; contemporary artists' opinions and two texts by leading Polish critics, Jakub Banasiak and Stach Szabłowski, analysing his phenomenon from the perspective of the second decade of the 21st century, will also be quoted.

The 1970s can be safely described as the 'golden decade' in the work of Jerzy Duda-Gracz. Born in 1941 in Częstochowa, he obtained a diploma at the Faculty of Graphic Arts of the Katowice branch of the Academy of Fine Arts in Krakow, with which he later became associated as a drawing and painting teacher in 1976−1982.[3] He made his debut in 1970 with an 'exhibition of paintings and etchings' (together with Tadeusz Siara) in the Katowice Gallery, followed by numerous collective exhibitions every year (with a break in 1975−1982, when he decided to have only solo exhibitions). The artist also cooperated as a graphic designer with publishing houses and magazines, trying his hand as a set designer in local Polish Television studios as well. He was quickly noticed by the critics, received numerous awards and distinctions, high state awards, and even a film devoted to his work, made by TVP and awarded at the 9th National Review of Films about Art (1976).[4]

He was mentioned by renowned critics in industry magazines as well as journalists writing short notes about his subsequent exhibitions for the local press; as a result, twelve years after graduation, not only did he have under his belt nineteen solo exhibitions, but also over one hundred and sixty texts and mentions devoted to them.[5] Widespread admiration was aroused especially by the artist's skills; both their level: 'perfidiously virtuoso-level technique'[6] and their character: 'old-time, traditional'. Maria Podolska was one of the first to rave over the 'juiciness of colour' and 'smoothness of texture'[7] of his canvases on the columns of the Katowice-based 'Poglądy' magazine, while Wojciech Guyski, in 'Projekt', called

2   S. Szabłowski, *Jak uciec przed Dudą Graczem (jeśli nosimy go w sobie)?*, in: *Jerzy Duda Gracz. Malarstwo i grafika,* Kraków, 2019, p. 65.

3   AASP, ref. no. 1030/112.

4   M. Sienkiewicz, *Sztuka filmowania o sztuce,* 'Przekrój', 1976, no. 1622, p. 8.

5   According to the bibliography in: *Duda Gracz. Obrazy prowincjonalno-gminne. Kresy polskie 2000. Wystawa z okazji 60-lecia urodzin*: exhibition catalogue, Silesian Museum, March−April 2000, ed. M. Branicka, Katowice 2000.

6   W. Skrodzki, *Najciekawsza wystawa roku?* 'Więź' 22: 1979, no. 5, p. 154.

7   M. Podolska, *Jerzy Duda Gracz,* 'Poglądy' 1974, no. 8.

Duda-Gracz a 'great colourist',[8] underlining that the shift of the colour solution towards one tone, applied sometimes by the artist, was intended to emphasise the distance towards tradition, which the artist respects but also plays with. Opened in December 1978, the artist's solo exhibition in Warsaw's Kordegarda (an exhibition which then set off on a tour of Poland, to visit fourteen cities) resulted in a flood of reviews that appreciated the 'value transitions of warm colours' (Nawojka Cieślińska)[9] or the 'transparency of glaze effects' (Wojciech Skrodzki).[10] Opinions on the merits of his works emphasised their connection with the history of art, in particular inspirations taken from the 16th-century Flemish painters. That reading of stylistic affinities was also fostered by the artist himself who suggested clues to critics, declaring that he was closest to the tradition of 'work well done. Like Breughel's, Bosch's, and Vermeer's to begin with (...)'.[11] In the reviews, critics tried to outdo one another finding alleged similarities between Duda-Gracz and artists working in different epochs and environments, from the Renaissance Venetians (including Veronese) to Goya to artists from the German circle of Neue Sachlichkeit, Georg Grosz, or from the home ground: Zygmunt Waliszewski and Bronisław Wojciech Linke.[12] However, their prevailing belief was that the strongest ties connected the Silesian artist with the aforementioned Dutch circles, not only because of the specific 'mannerism' of his works, but also their iconography (pastiches of entire canvases by old masters); a passion for a caricatured representation of a figure, hearty sense of humour and, consequently, the creation of a separate 'breed' of people crowding his canvases. Simultaneously, critics found him to be capable of combining seemingly contradictory currents and tendencies: the baggage of old art, the then-fashionable pop aesthetics allied with the fascination in provincial kitsch, because, as Andrzej Osęka wrote: 'Jerzy Duda Gracz paints in the conventions of old-fashioned hand-coloured wedding photograph and embroidered wall decoration (…) while maintaining a kind of aesthetic distance from the observed, captured conventions, inviting us to play a game with a gesture not devoid of coquetry.'[13] Finally, he was seen as 'a neo-traditionalist practising the art typical of the young generation, verging on cartoon'.[14] The penetration of satirical elements into his painting and graphic works, tendencies to verism, and primacy of the time-

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8 W. Guyski, *Na motywach prowincjonalnych,* 'Projekt' 1975, no. 1, p. 48.

9 N. Cieślińska, *Brawo Duda, graj tak dalej!,* 'Sztuka' 6: 1979, no. 1, p. 22.

10 W. Skrodzki, *Najciekawsza wystawa roku?,* op. cit., p. 154.

11 S. Piskor, *Sztuka, Obraz, Piękno – nie umarły (rozmowa z Jerzym Duda Graczem),* 'Poglądy' 1976, no. 12, p. 7.

12 T. Nyczek. *Osobny,* 'Sztuka' 1980, No. 3, p. 35.

13 A. Osęka, *Wdzięk prowincjonalny,* 'Polska' 1971, no. 8, p. 41.

14 M. Gutowski, *Wybory właściwe,* 'Kultura' 15: 1977, no. 14, p. 12.

liness of the message over formal research, were said to distinguish the art of the most interesting young graphic artists of that time, where Szymon Bojko, who had visited their studios, included Jerzy Duda-Gracz; he considered him a 'knight'(!) of rejuvenated Polish satire, positioning him next to Andrzej Krauze, Andrzej Dudziński, Jan Sawka, and Antoni Chodorowski, with Andrzej Czeczot at the forefront.[15] Duda-Gracz, perceived as 'primarily a satirist by temperament',[16] played a significant role in the environment of young artists cooperating with both the Krakow magazine 'Student' and the much more prestigious 'Szpilki' (he was even the winner of the Silver and Golden Pin, awarded by the magazine, for his social and political drawings); among the admirers and promoters of his work was Krzysztof Teodor Toeplitz, the editor-in-chief of 'Szpilki' in the 1960s and 1970s. Therefore, his work was received as the voice of a generation that Tadeusz Nyczek would mention years later: 'At the turn of the 1970s appeared a whole formation of artists and writers who would similarly relate to reality. In 1974, Zagajewski and Kornhauser published the book *Świat nie przedstawiony (The Unpresented World – transl.)*. They called for showing the world we live in as it really is, not as propaganda would like to see it. Through art, literature, and theatre, artists began to assert the realism of seeing the world, against the fiction imposed by the communists. Duda-Gracz was at the very centre of that current.'[17] The phenomenon of the popularity of Jerzy Duda Gracz's work did not escape the attention of the reviewers of his artistic achievements when he applied for the position of associate professor at the college. Jacek Gaj therefore explained the artist's success with his courageous attitude; the ability to go beyond social and customary norms, good taste, forcing viewers to revise their simplified judgment about the world while exposing our tendencies to conformism and avoidance of difficult truths. Gaj saw Duda-Gracz as an heir of the 'social mission' current in Polish art, hence a continuator of Jan Matejko, Jacek Malczewski, and Bronisław Wojciech Linke whose attitude was to be the closest to his. Jerzy Nowosielski, on the other hand, did not hesitate to describe him as an 'outstanding artist', emphasising that 'contact with a great artist is the most important issue in the process of initiation into painting during academic studies'.[18] He also considered the authentic relationship between Duda-Gracz with tradition to be extremely

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15   Sz. Bojko *W pracowniach młodych grafików*, 'Projekt' 1974, no. 4, pp. 15−18.

16   J. Jurczyk, *Szczecińskie interpretacje,* 'Sztuka' 1974, no. 3, p. 44.

17   *Ja tylko tak wyglądam, ale duszyczkę mam wrażliwą. Rozmowa z Tadeuszem Nyczkiem, krytykiem literackim, teatralnym i plastycznym*, in: *Jerzy Duda Gracz. Malarstwo i grafika,* Kraków 2019, p. 17.

18   J. Nowosielski, opinion of 4 April 1981, typescript, p. 4, Jerzy Duda-Gracz. Documentation of the 2nd degree qualification procedure (reviews, qualification work, correspondence), 1980–81, reference number 382/7, p. 4, AASP Kraków.

useful for students, due to the educational nature of such an institution as the Academy, adding at the same time that the painter was not a conservative. Jerzy Nowosielski tried to effectively prove that Duda-Gracz's paintings were not a 'historical stylisation' by conducting a brilliant analysis of the impact of Pieter Brueghel's creation on the activities of the Katowice-based artist. He considered the following features to be common to both painters: 'the affinity of vision and characteristics of the properties of objects; an ironic and fairy-tale-like attitude towards reality, tendencies to complicate anecdotes and inclination to metaphor'.[19] At the same time, he aptly observed that the analysis of spatial structures was conditioned, in the case of Duda-Gracz, by the lesson of cubism, which the painter had diligently studied, and the painting matter is 'fleshier, one would like to say more tangible, as if thicker' (than in Brueghel). The critic also emphasised that, besides formal differences, there are ideological ones; the metaphors in Duda-Gracz's art stemmed organically from contemporary times. Flattering opinions about his creative achievements, all the more valuable as dictated not only by courtesy but by the reliable assessment of professionals (the reviews being often an opportunity to square accounts between artists during the so-called 'procedures' (of professional qualification – transl.), undoubtedly reflected the atmosphere around Jerzy Duda-Gracz. In the 1970s, his paintings aroused vivid interest and a positive response among the then-renowned critics: Andrzej Osęka, Wojciech Skrodzki, Maciej Gutowski, and Nawojka Cieślińska. Towards the end of the decade, however, the first reviews indicating the weaknesses of the paintings of the Katowice-based artist began to appear. For Magdalena Hniedziewicz, the artist's unquestionable skill did not serve anything but show, going hand in hand with the superficiality of the view, avoidance of a genuinely sharp and uncompromising assessment of the characters presented, the more comfortable as it was aimed at people from outside his world: 'I can feel that these paintings talk about things that are supposedly close – as close a pompous official or a "merchant's wife" loaded with trinkets can be to any of us – but not really close.'[20] Hniedziewicz was concerned about 'the ease and repeatability of motifs and ideas (used, and probably even abused by the artist)'. Mirosław Ratajczak had similar dilemmas as Hniedziewicz; while acknowledging Duda-Gracz's original '*handschrift*', he expressed doubts regarding excess content overloading his works: 'too many clothes. Clothes-props, allegory, convention.'[21]

Despite the critical voices, the balance of the 1970s was definitely positive for the artist; cracks in his image did not begin to appear until

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19   Ibidem, p. 2.

20   M. Hniedziewicz, *Pastisz i publicystyka*, 'Kultura' 17: 1979, no. 35.

21   M. Ratajczak, *Mięso*, 'Odra' 1980, No. 3, p. 92.

the following decade, in connection with his political choices. After the introduction of martial law, he broke away from the milieu's boycott of exhibition institutions, showcasing his works at local BWA (Art Exhibition Bureau – transl.) galleries (Łódź 1983, Katowice 1984) and the CBWA Zachęta (retrospective in 1985), and accepting the authorities' invitation to co-create a new Association of Polish Painters and Graphic Artists, created in place of the liquidated Association of Polish Artists and Designers (which was later to be revived). Not only did he exhibit in Poland but – horrorfully – in Moscow (at the Central House of the Artist in 1987), having also represented Poland at the Art Biennale in Venice three years earlier. While flattering opinions about his work still prevailed in the official press, critics who had gone underground, to the so-called second circulation, were much less indulgent. As Anda Rottenberg wrote in 'Szkice': 'We don't know whether Duda Gracz prays, that's his business, we do know? that he collaborates (with the authorities – transl.).'[22] On the other hand, in the text prepared for the scientific session of the Association of Art Historians (unpublished, 1986), Rottenberg looked at the question of perception of his achievements from a broader perspective, asking rhetorically: 'Has anything changed in Duda-Gracz's and Dwurnik's art since they were covered with their environment's odium, but extolled by the authorities instead? For many of their former supporters, the current aversion to people also extended to these artists' work. Just like in the story of a friendship – when the artist took his friend's girlfriend, the other said turgidly: 'You've betrayed art.'[23] In turn, in an interview given more than twenty years later, Rottenberg admitted that the situation in the artistic milieu of the time eluded categorical value judgments: 'Duda Gracz suddenly became a regime artist, although he had earlier verged on the criticism of the system, in how and what he'd paint. He rose to the top and spread his wings (...) These were very difficult choices. (...) On the other hand, when a broad opposition movement arose, some artists tried to make a social climb in his company, and one wouldn't say even hammered drunk that their works represented true artistic values.'[24] Therefore, attempts to defend Duda-Gracz against the allegations of collaboration appeared in the official press. Ryszard Marek Groński wrote in the columns of 'Polityka': 'Well, that's right – any dauber, anybody envious or talentless can call Duda Gracz a "collaborator" and get away with it. Therefore, those

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22   A. Rottenberg, (as J.B.), *Duda-Gracz*, 'Szkice' 1985, no. 2, p. 72.

23   A. Rottenberg, *Przeciąg. Teksty o sztuce polskiej lat 80.*, Warszawa 2009, pp. 99−101.

24   Ibidem, p. 382.
     In the end, this valued critic considered that the work of Duda-Gracz was not an important phenomenon in post-war Polish art, and did not even mention it in her study *Sztuka polska 1945−2005*.

This staunchly negative assessment of Duda Gracz's creative output contradicted his image in the criticism of the previous decades. In the 1970s and 1980s, he was one of the most appreciated Polish artists who enjoyed, at the same time, great popularity among a wide audience of art lovers.

critics who suddenly got intrigued by sacred art have found it appropriate to keep silent about his work. Meanwhile, it was precisely the author of the paintings from 1968–1983, presented in "Zachęta" who also painted the Pietà of Limanowa, while they were busy with quite different subjects.'[25] Thus, Groński called out the critics originating from the left-wing, lay intelligentsia circles, who would once eagerly take advantage of the benefits of the communist system, to later become fascinated, in their neophyte-like enthusiasm, by works (of different artistic level) exhibited in church-owned venues. At the same time, Groński seemed to suggest that Duda-Gracz proved to be more honest compared to them, as he had never avoided religious topics (which can be confirmed by the plebeian Madonna and other works), without denying the fact of being a beneficiary of the Polish People's Republic's system of supporting artists. In addition, 1985 was the date of the premiere of a publication covering the entirety of Duda-Gracz's artistic *oeuvre*, written by by Krzysztof Teodor Toeplitz.[26] In turn, Jerzy Madeyski, in an extensive article devoted to Duda-Gracz, did not propose new interpretative clues for his art, but he quoted the Italian critics' opinions (which had followed the artist's participation in the Venice Biennale), to prove that his work did not have a particularist nature and was appreciated in the West.[27] Jerzy Madeyski, acting as the curator of the Polish pavilion in Venice throughout the 1980s, undoubtedly wanted to make his curatorial choices credible (in 1984, besides Duda-Gracz, Danuta Leszczyńska-Kluza, Andrzej Fogtt, and Bożenna Biskupska presented their works in the Polish pavilion); however, although he was trumpeted a 'success' in the national press, no international repercussions followed it. After many years, Joanna Sosnowska clear-headedly commented on the exhibition in the Polish pavilion: 'The Polish exhibition in Venice, as well as its organisers and participants, were boycotted by the milieu which would not agree with the political scene of the time. However, it must be said that the pompous arrangement of the pavilion, referring to the national tradition, did not differ in its character from what would be shown at many independent exhibitions, especially in venues connected with church institutions (…) Thus, it was often not art, but only the political context that divided artists from both sides.'[28] Sosnowska summed up her considerations with an apt observation: 'That was reflected in the situation that arose after 1989, when former regime artists, such as Duda Gracz and Franciszek Starowieyski, could be seen again among the artists supported by the new

25 R.M. Groński *Pogoda burzy*, 'Polityka' 1985, no. 8.

26 K.T. Toeplitz *Jerzy Duda Gracz*, Warszawa, 1985.

27 J. Madeyski, *Jerzy Duda Gracz,* 'Życie Literackie' 35: 1985, No. 15, p. 3.

28 J. Sosnowska, *Polacy na Biennale Sztuki w Wenecji 1895–1999,* Warszawa, 1999, pp. 189–190.

government.'[29] Therefore, the label of a 'regime artist' stuck to Duda-Gracz for good and, although it did not affect the perception of his person by the audience and the authorities, it did influence the opinion-forming criticism. However, the artist had reasons to feel satisfied, if only because of the number of texts devoted to him that had appeared in the press (approx. 250 in the 1980s). Often, in addition to a brief discussion of his work, those texts contained excerpts from commemorative books made available during exhibitions, where visitors would share the enthusiasm that his painting evoked in them. That resource was perhaps used by some critics to further validate flattering opinions about the painter, or might reflect their surprise at the phenomenon of Duda-Gracz's popularity. Lastly, the artist, as one of the few creators of the Polish People's Republic era, would appear in the youth and women's press in the 1970s and 1980s. The trend continued in the following decade, in new lifestyle magazines, including 'Twój Styl' and 'Playboy', where his work became the subject of journalists' analysis, without, however, gaining new interpretations.

In the 1990s, as I mentioned at the beginning, the critics turned their back on the artist, now relabeled an arte polo hero. Not only the young critics from 'Raster', but also Dorota Jarecka from 'Gazeta Wyborcza' could not understand the phenomenon of its popularity, as they had no doubt that it was bad art. Jarecka observed with surprise: 'His exhibition at the Silesian Museum attracted more people than the display of works of Jacek Malczewski which I had seen here previously' (1996).[30] She emphasised that Duda Gracz's art was based on stereotypes, and the paintings did not bring any discoveries, in terms of neither form nor colour. Even the caricatural capture of the character, so typical of Duda-Gracz, turned out to be 'foulness, generously sprinkled with sugar, coated with caramel, easy to swallow'.[31]

Trying to sum up that subjective press review, taking into consideration only selected aspects of Jerzy Duda-Gracz's work, we should perhaps ask ourseves what caused the turnabout towards the critical assessment of his output. To some extent, the answers can be found in two texts by contemporary critics: Jakub Banasiak and Stach Szabłowski. The former analysed Duda-Gracz's work as a 'function and symptom' of cultural policy, first in Poland under Gierek's lead, then in the martial law time, and finally in the 'Third Republic of Poland', emphasising the artist's ability to come to an agreement with any authority. By doing that, Banasiak invalidated the myth of Duda-Gracz as a moralist and non-conformist, pointing out our national vices, to emphasise instead the selectivity of criticism towards

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29   Ibidem., p. 190.

30   D. Jarecka, *Słodkie, odrażające*, 'Gazeta Wyborcza', 24.10.1996.

31   Ibidem.

him: 'In the 1970s, he would sneer at the common folk, whom the middle class would deride to heal the complex of its own recent social advancement by criticising the lumpenproletariat. In the 1980s, he was the authorities' favourite, and his canvases got filled with demonic priests leading the society, clumped in shapeless masses ; (…). After 1989, he belonged to the artistic elite: acknowledged by the critics and audience alike, respected in the parlours of those in power, on good terms with the Church, he became a symbolic figure of the Polish transformation.'[32] Many of Banasiak's pertinent theses are hard to dispute although, on the other hand, his view on the work of the Katowice-based artist seems to be overly one-dimensional. Szabłowski, in turm, rightly pointed out that the situation in which Polish art found itself – the intensive 'attunement to the international art scene, establishing a connection with global or at least European markets and opinion-forming centres'[33] also contributed to Duda-Gracz's post-1989 'falling out of grace' with the critics. This market was much more favourable to the presentation of painting of the 'Ładnie' group (just discovered by the young critics from 'Raster'), especially Wilhelm Sasnal, compared with the international star Luc Tuymans, than Jerzy Duda-Gracz, perceived as a follower of Malczewski or Wojtkiewicz. It would be also hard to omit the fact that every young generation of artists, entering the art market, has its own de Koonig drawing which must be – in their opinion – erased in an act of symbolic takeover of the art scene, or at least a significant regrouping of forces. Why was that attempt successful in the case of Duda-Gracz? Undoubtedly, there were no critics from his own generation, convinced that the artist deserved a defence. Andrzej Osęka, one of the most influential critics of the 1970s and 1980s, was considered, in the following decade, a 'fossil from another era',[34] as Jakub Banasiak wrote. Young critics from 'Raster' would comment contemptuously on his statements: 'Osęka's whinging again.'[35] Other journalists who had published texts about Duda-Gracz on a regular basis, such as Krzysztof Teodor Toeplitz and Jerzy Madeyski, were connected with press titles that ceased to appear in the 1990s; in addition, those journalists were exposed to embarrassment due to their collaboration with the communist authorities in the period following the introduction of the martial law. Similarly, Duda-Gracz's attitude in that time (considered an expression of collaboration with General Jaruzelski's régime) made his activity in the artistic milieu of the 1990s problematic for many of its participants. There is no doubt that the specific

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32 J. Banasiak, *Jerzy Duda-Gracz jako funkcja i symptom polityki kulturalnej*, 'Szum' 2016, no. 14, p. 85.

33   S. Szabłowski, op. cit., p. 73.

34 J. Banasiak, *Pająk nie żyje. Rzecz o Andrzeju Osęce, moderniście konserwatywnym*, 'Szum' 2021, no. 35, p. 58.

35   Ibidem.

'exclusion' of the artist was also contributed, to a certain degree, by the 'overproduction' of his paintings, caused by the enormous demand, leading to a decrease of creativity and the repetitiveness of formal and iconographic solutions applied. Therefore, let me repeat the question I asked at the beginning: what caused such a significant change of Duda-Gracz's status in the eyes of the critics and the unfavourable assessment of his creative achievements? I will answer it in the same way: a combination of various factors: political, social, and artistic ones. However, I am convinced that the phenomenon of this artist deserves to be re-examined, for example in the context of the 'topos of nativeness', the social reception of his art or, lastly, the market position; the author of this article intends to address all these questions.

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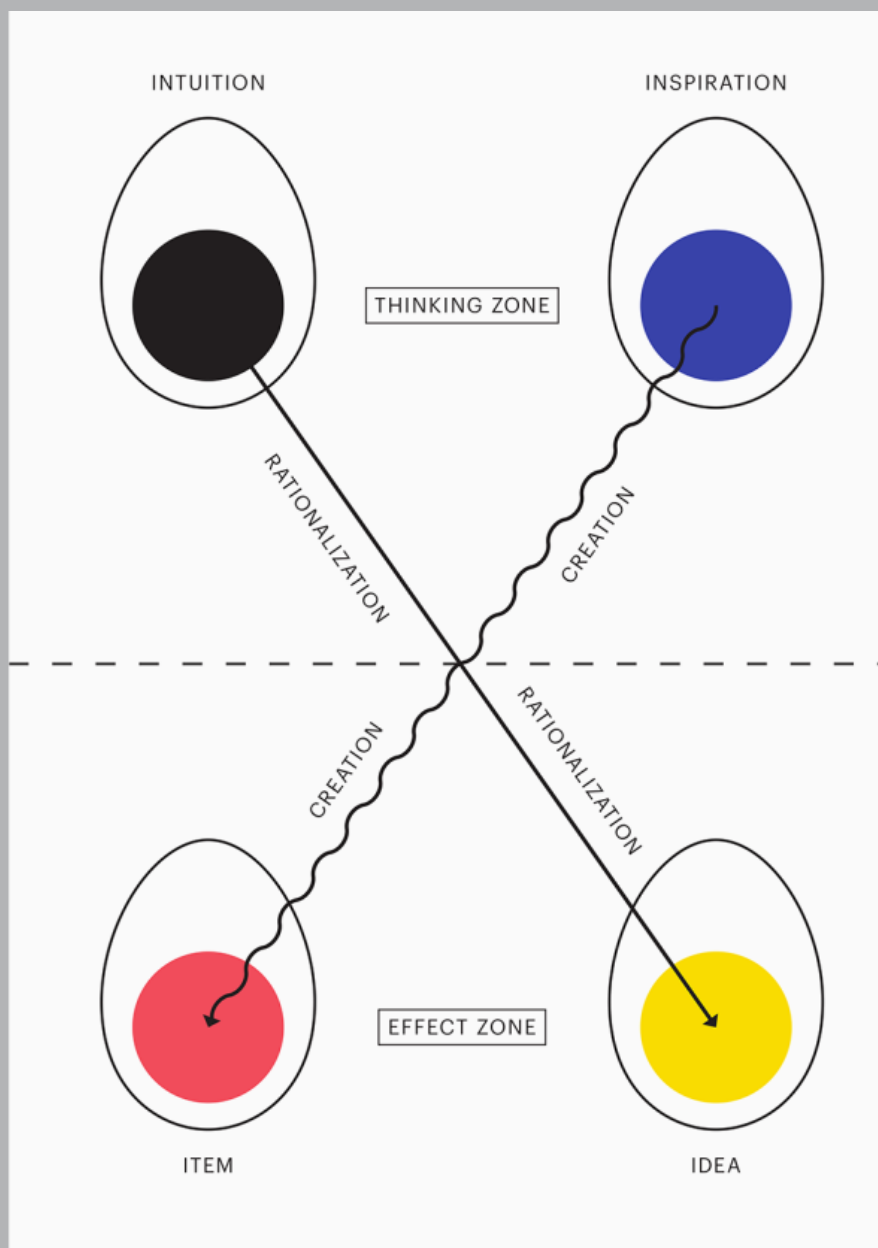- Toeplitz K.T., *Jerzy Duda Gracz*, Warszawa 1985.

Abstract:

The aim of the article is to analyse critical texts devoted to the works of Jerzy Duda-Gracz. I present the current state of research on his painting; I show the changes in the assessment of the Silesian artist's achievements in subsequent decades, from his debut in the early 1970s to 2004 (the artist's death). I quote enthusiastic opinions of critics about his work, which prevailed in the 1970s, through Duda-Gracz's ambivalently perceived relations with General Wojciech Jaruzelski's regime in the 1980s, to finish with the label of an arte polo hero, attributed to him by a group of critics gathered around 'Raster' magazine in the 1990s. I try to diagnose the decline in popularity of this artist, pointing to the combination of various factors: political, social, generational, and artistic. Finally, I reflect on the discrepancy in the assessment of his painting today; from recognised critics' unfavourable opinions, to the still unflagging popularity and demand for his works among a wide range of people interested in contemporary art.

Keywords:

art criticism, contemporary art, painting, satire, art history

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INTUITION

INSPIRATION

THINKING ZONE

RATIONALIZATION

CREATION

RATIONALIZATION

CREATION

EFFECT ZONE

ITEM

IDEA

Jarosław Lubiak

COSMOS ON A SHEET OF PAPER, INADVERTENTLY ... ON THE ARTISTIC MONADOLOGY OF HONZA ZAMOJSKI

Cosmos On A Sheet Of Paper And In A Gallery Box – that could be the title to capture all (three? what about the others?) dimensions of the universe according to Honza Zamojski. Such a title, however, would be too long and literal, and yet there needs to be room for inadvertence, enabling the birth of this cosmos. Let us therefore confine ourselves to the very sheet of paper on which the universe appears. It can be folded to create a three-dimensional form – for example, it can be bent to create a model of an exhibition space or put together to form a book.

The sheet of paper, the book, the gallery box – these are the main (though not exclusive) formats of Zamojski's artistic activity. His main medium is drawing, often transforming into graphic design. These formats and media allow Zamojski to move freely between areas and roles in art, such as artist, graphic designer, curator, as well as publisher and academic lecturer. This allows him to establish a truly transdisciplinary practice.[1]

COSMOS, WORLD, PLURIVERSUM

One of the early examples of cosmogenesis according to Zamojski is the work entitled *Gradient* from 2011−2013. It is formed of sheets of paper, planes of text or sequences of letters, words and sentences, volumes of a book, all stacked in a pile. These are 13 copies of Witold Gombrowicz's *Cosmos*, lying horizontally one on top of the other. The varying degrees of yellowing and greying of the covers define the eponymous gradient: from dark yellow to light grey.

One can imagine that just after the book was published, the stack would have looked very different – the copies would have been perfectly identical. They could serve as an illustration of perhaps one of the greatest conundrums arising from Gilles Deleuze's book *Difference and Repetition*: what is the difference between two copies of the same book.[2] In Zamojski's work, the question of differentiation in the repetition of the same is sidelined by the superficial differences caused by the degradation of the covers. As a result, each piece is different – we have 13 different cosmoses.

If we understand the cosmos as a whole organised in an orderly way, the yellowing and greying of the covers reveals the process of entropy. The cosmos is swallowed up by chaos. Was it not one of the messages contained in the Gombrowicz's work? Interestingly, Deleuze mentions this novel in *Difference and Repetition* because it provides him, together with the works of writers such as Joyce and Borges, with the evidence to conclude that 'chaos = cosmos', and, later, to develop on this basis the thesis that cosmos emerges

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1   At the same time, this constant crossing of boundaries seems to locate his practice away from the centres and the mainstream of production.

2   Cf. G. Deleuze, *Różnica i powtórzenie*, transl. B. Banasiak and K. Matuszewski, Warszawa 1997.

from chaos.[3] In this context, Zamojski's *Gradient* shows the manifestation of chaos in the cosmos(es?).

Cosmos returns in another book, this time designed by the artist himself. Publication *Robert Maciejuk, Honza Zamojski. Kosmos i kosmos i okolice* (*Robert Maciejuk, Honza Zamojski. Cosmos And Cosmos And Surroundings*) was published in 2013.[4] It is a set of reproductions of sketches, drawings, collages, blueprints, diagrams, charts, photographs and even paintings: figural elements intertwine with abstract ones, plays on plastic forms with plays on words. The whole is given the character of a story, as the last drawing features the word 'FIN'. The impressive 'album' turns out to be a narrative about the emergence of the world. It can be associated with the 'primordial soup' – that mixture from which the universe as we know it emerged (the 'concoction' of particles is supposed to have emerged soon after the Big Bang) or life as we know it on Earth (a prebiotic emulsion). Here, we are dealing with a primordial soup of plastic particles in the process of the emergence of a form. At the same time, the suggestion of a narrative structure prompts us to relate this book to Gombrowicz's novel, which it seems to mock. Zamojski's publication appears at first glance to be an anti-cosmos, the suggestion of the narrative, and perhaps even of the plot, is a joke, but, at a deeper level, the two books are connected. They propose an immersion in chaos, they show the becoming of the cosmos as chaos. Ultimately, in Zamojski's work, it is difficult to decide whether we are dealing with the formation and disintegration of forms or rather an attempt to capture in a fixed form the process of the transformation itself. Cosmogenesis is infinite in duration and becoming, and the caption 'FIN' applies only to the form of the book, for this form must have a beginning and an end.

An additional effect here is that of a doubling, in which the game of distinguishing and not distinguishing is played. Two artists, two covers, a book and an exhibition, create a constellation of worlds. Both artists belong to different generations and their artistic practices are distinct, although they have collaborated before: Zamojski curated Maciejuk's exhibition in the Poznań's Starter Gallery in 2012 and wrote *Wazony* [*Vases*], a work dedicated to the series of the painter's ceramic vases, published by the Morava publishing house in 2011. In *Cosmos And Cosmos And Surroundings*, the authorship of individual elements is not specified, the two artistic worlds merge and the viewer can only try to distinguish them on the basis of their own knowledge of style of the two artists. And at the same time, their distinctiveness is not abolished, which is clearly

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3   Ibidem, pp. 184, 281.
4   *Robert Maciejuk, Honza Zamojski. Kosmos i kosmos i okolice*, ed. J. Pieńkos, Warszawa 2013.

signalled by the two names in the title and the repetition of the word 'cosmos'. What is more, part of the print run has a cover using a drawing by Maciejuk and the other part a graphic design by Zamojski. In the latter, the word 'cosmos' in the artist's distinctive font occurs only once. The primordial plastic soup resembles a sophisticated drink: shaken but not stirred.

The game of doubles also includes the publication and exhibition *Robert Maciejuk, Honza Zamojski. Up and Down* presented at the Zachęta – National Gallery of Art in Warsaw in 2013.[5] The exhibition and the book are two completely different worlds, even though created from works by the same artists, curated by the same person as designer or informal curator. The exhibition is also an attempt to bring two cosmoses together, or more precisely to create some kind of common microcosm of them in the two rooms of the Zachęta. Cosmogenesis takes place in a different way here: it is more like folding a sheet of paper to get the third dimension, by lifting the sides to make walls. This method is revealed by a ladder folded so that it lies on the floor and supports itself against the wall. It gives the impression that it is the result of a design error. The key objects of the exhibition appear to be paradoxical spatial realisations of orthogonal representation. The central object, a schematic human figure, is a form from Zamojski's drawings 'projected' into space. At the same time, the arrangement of elements on the gallery walls repeats the compositional patterns of the graphic designs. This effect is enhanced by painting some of the walls: one of them blue, others yellow. While the usual white used in exhibition interiors is meant to dematerialise their architectural form, giving the impression that the objects are suspended in an undefined space, the solution used by Zamojski brings out the planes of the walls. The worlds of Maciejuk's and Zamojski's artistic practices, the universe enclosed in the book and the microcosm created in the gallery, constitute a pluriversum around the collaboration between the two artists at the Zachęta Gallery.

The issue of the multiplicity of worlds returns in the project WⓍRLD(S) in 2022 at bwa Wrocław Główny, where Honza Zamojski acts as curator.[6] While for the Warsaw exhibition the key issue was to play out the relationship between the two artists and between the artefacts in the gallery space, as well as between the arrangement and the audience, in

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5   *Robert Maciejuk, Honza Zamojski. Góra i dół*, curatorial collaboration K. Kołodziej, Zachęta – National Gallery of Art in Warsaw, 30 November 2013–16 February 2014.

6   *WⓍRLD(S),* exhibition within the framework of the Wrocław Drawing Triennial 2022, curator H. Zamojski, bwa Wrocław Główny, Wrocław, 20 May 2022–28 August 2022. Triennale was organised by the Eugeniusz Geppert Academy of Fine Arts in Wrocław.

Figure 2. Honza Zamojski, *Śniadanie według Fibonacciego* [*Breakfast according to Fibonacci*], 2014

Figure 3. Honza Zamojski, *Zdezorientowany człowiek* [*Confused man*], graphite on wood, 2013, fragment of the exhibition Robert Maciejuk, *Honza Zamojski. Up and down*, Zachęta – National Gallery of Art in Warsaw, 30 November 2013-16 February 2014. Works by Robert Maciejuk in the background

the Wrocław project the emphasis is put on the relationship between the two spaces. The universe of the exhibition bifurcates into two worlds that jointly catch the artistic worlds of the participants. The pretext for this idea is the architecture of the venue itself: the division of the exhibition space into two separate and distant sets of rooms. Architecturally, the two parts are symmetrical reflections of each other. Zamojski transforms this fact into the principle of the exhibition. The works of each artist are present in both galleries and in the same locations respectively.

There is a more complex relationship between the two parts of the exhibition. One room is described as light, the other as dark, although the curator emphasises: 'These are not oppositions. The lightness and darkness of the rooms symbolise nothing.'[7] They become a sign of bifurcation and doubling, making it possible to unravel the web of relationships between works in the same part and between different parts. This is done in a number of ways: repetition, 'negative-positive' reversal, reflection in content, reflection in form, and in some cases some kind of tension between one artist's works derives from their placement in this exhibition context.

The choice of artists and works is very unobvious, may even seem arbitrary, but is the result of an effort to weave an intricate web of relationships and to create a surprise effect. The emoji of amazement appearing in the title defines both the aim and the rhetoric of the project: to create an effect of surprise or even bewilderment. The bifurcation and doubling also serves this purpose, although it has an additional significance – I would venture to say that it reveals Honza Zamojski's creative philosophy. Or at least it suggests it.

ARTISTIC MONADOLOGY

Cosmogenesis, which resulted in the exhibition W⊙RLD(S), is an artistic experiment addressing the problem of incompossibility. It was introduced into philosophy by Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz to resolve the question of the relationship between the truth and the possible. It has recently been revisited by Gilles Deleuze, starting from the paradoxes of 'contingent futures', known since antiquity: 'If it is true that a naval battle may take place tomorrow, how are we to avoid one of the true following consequences: either the impossible proceeds from the possible (since, if the battle takes place, it is no longer possible that it may not take place), or the past is not necessarily true (since the battle could not have taken place). [...] Leibniz says that the naval battle may or may not take place, but that this is not in the same world: it takes place in one world and does not take place in a different world, and these two worlds are possible, but

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7   H. Zamojski, *world(s)*, n.d., https://trwro.pl/wystawy/trw2022-worlds/ [access: 15 January 2023].

are not 'compossible' with each other.'[8] Building on this, Deleuze argues that all possibilities exist virtually, but as they are incompossible, only one selected possibility is actualised.[9]

Such a situation is illustrated – and can even be experienced – in the exhibition *W◉RLD(S)*. When I am in one part of it, the other part becomes virtual – only one of them can be perceived as current at any given time. It creates a bizarre experience: when I am in the first part, I fantasise about what I will see in the other, while having moved on to the second I recall what I saw in the first. I would like to see simultaneously what I have in front of my eyes and what I cannot see. The entire exhibition is a virtual world that bifurcates and doubles into two incompossible (perceptually) worlds of light and dark parts. The number itself is only due to the spatial conditions at BWA Wrocław Główny. It is purely a sign of a potentially infinite number of worlds.

Zamojski creates cosmoses and worlds within the universe of his art. We should not understand this metaphorically, as it is actually happening. The sheet of paper can become a monad in which the entire universe is expressed. We return at this point to Leibniz's philosophy and its contemporary reading. The basic premise of his monadology is that the world is made up of monads and, as Deleuze writes, it 'does not exist outside of the monads' and 'each monad (...) conveys the entire world'.[10] In a beautiful but puzzling passage in the *Monadology* – paragraph 67 – Leibniz states: 'Each portion of matter [or Monad – J.L.] may be conceived as like a garden full of plants and like a pond full of fishes. But each branch of every plant, each member of every animal, each drop of its liquid parts is also some such garden or pond.'[11] The smallest particle contains and expresses the whole world, but as Deleuze emphasises: 'It clearly expresses only a certain limited zone or area depending on one's point of view (positioned corner). This illuminated region undoubtedly includes every body.'[12] The singularity of a monad is determined by its inherent singularities. The French philosopher specifies: 'Each monad can express clearly only a certain part of the universe: the region defined by the singularities that constitute it', and adds, 'Each unit expresses the whole universe: the singularities constituting each unit in fact extend in all directions up to the singularities of the other units, insofar as the corresponding sequences coincide, so that each unit contains the totality of a certain compossible

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8   G. Deleuze, *Cinema 2. The Time-Image*, transl. H. Tomlinson and R. Caleta, Minneapolis 1997, p. 130.

9   G. Deleuze, *The Fold Leibniz and the Baroque*, transl. T. Conley, London 1993.

10   Ibidem, pp. 60, 25.

11   G.W. Lebniz, *Monadology,* transl. R. Latta.

12   Ibidem.

world and excludes only other worlds incompossible with it (where the sequences diverge).'[13]

Leibnizian monadology, of course, will not explain for us Zamojski's artistic practice in a straightforward way, but it can provide a starting point and a reference point to grasp what is encrypted in it. Leibniz called it the 'cryptography', i.e., 'the art of finding the key to shrouded things'.[14] Three elements – the teeth? – of this key has already prompted us: inclusion (containing), expression (expressing) and singularity (defining forms of expression). If Zamojski's work is a monad, then it is necessary to recognise the singularities that condition what it expresses clearly. If his artistic practice can be described as monadological, it would be a peculiar and even singular monadology. Its distinctiveness derives primarily from the fact that it is not a theoretical science of how the world works, but precisely the practice of making it. Moreover, the artist's aim is not to explain the created world, but to 'shroud' it. Zamojski's artistic monadology is a reverse cryptography: he uses typography and ideography to create hieroglyphs and multiply riddles. The cosmos created on a piece of paper is a puzzle.

Zamojski's artistic monadology is primarily a practice, but it also contains theoretical and speculative moments. In 2014 *Four Eggs Theory* was published in the form of an exhibition and publication as part of a project at the FUTURA Centre for Contemporary Art in Prague.[15] The publication is essentially an ideographic and typographic treatise on the creative process. The starting point has the form of a hard-boiled egg cut in half along the longer axis. This shape becomes for him an astronomical model, in which the yolk is the sun and the outer line is the Earth's orbit. It is a fictional moment to identify the two shapes, as the egg resembles the figure of oval with a single axis of symmetry, while the Earth's orbit is shaped like a regular ellipse (which, strictly speaking, is not an oval). This small gesture sets in motion the whole process of fictionalisation that conditions this work. The next step is to equate the astronomical egg with a model of the creative process: the sunny yolk is replaced here by a form resembling a shooting target with a red circle in the centre, surrounded by enlarging rings of yellow, blue and black – this is the work. The artist orbits around it along the oval orbit, in a perpetual cycle of approaching and moving away from the yolk – the sun – the nucleus of his practice. The work as a process is the relationship between the four eggs – Inspiration, Intuition, Item and Idea. The artist explains how they work using

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13   Ibidem.

14   Ibidem.

15   *Honza Zamojsky: Teórie* čtyr *vajec*, kurator Michal Novotný, Centrum pro současné umění FUTURA, Prague, 02. 4-10 May 2015, http://www.futurapro-ject.cz/futura/event/13-honza-zamojsky-teorie-ctyr-vajec [access: 20 January 2023]; H. Zamojski, *Four Eggs Theory*, Prague-Poznań 2015.

his own example: 'If I were to apply the Four Eggs Theory back to myself, it would essentially look as follows: I have an intuitive need (Intuition) to organise the world of matter (Item) and ideas (Idea) around me, so, inspired (Inspiration) by the theoretical considerations of writers, poets and artists, as well as various artefacts, I am constantly thinking about how (Idea) can convey my knowledge in a logical way, for example by writing this text (Item). It all adds up to a Work that is part of a larger whole, a practice.' In the creative process, the subject experiences different states; their analysis is presented in the ideogram: the artist orbits the work along the outer line of the astronomical egg, the moment of curiosity is located at the perihelion of this orbit, while the moment of satisfaction is located at its aphelion, with boredom, disappointment and uncertainty in between. Paradoxically, satisfaction, even when singled out as a desirable outcome of artistic work, is furthest removed from the work itself, while curiosity is closest to it.

The egg here becomes a monad that contains the whole world (the astronomical egg), as well as the world of creation (the egg of the work) and the individual eggs of the creative process (first the four of Inspiration, Intuition, Item and Idea, and then more and more eggs as the analysis becomes more detailed).

Why an egg? Because it all starts with an egg. The work *Breakfast according to Fibonacci* (2014) is a ready-made consisting of two eggs, a cup with an unpoured tea bag, an apple on a plate, a bowl of oatmeal and a plate of toast. All these elements are arranged in a pattern of squares illustrating the Fibonacci geometric sequence. The lengths of the sides of the squares are in such proportion to each other that they fit into the sequence of numbers 1:1:2:3:5. The two eggs are located in two smallest squares corresponding to the number 1.

INFRAPOLITICS OF HUMORESQUE
The version of the text accompanying the *Theory of Four Eggs* exhibition at Futura contains one-sentence footnote, which is not included in the publication: 'Given the concepts we are dealing with – Intuition, Inspiration, Idea and Item – one could just as well speak of the *Theory of the Four 'I's*".[16] It is not difficult to guess why the artist abandoned this idea (and footnote): it would have precisely defined the content of his thoughts, but would have lacked pictorial power. His argument on the creative process is convincing, well-structured and logically coherent, and is also an interesting theoretical proposal. But Zamojski is not about that. His 'treatise' uses ideography and typography, reverses Leibnizian cryp-

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16 *Honza Zamojsky: Teórie* čtyr *vajec*, in: Centrum pro současné umění FUTURA, http://www.futuraproject.cz/futura/event/13-honza-zamojsky-teorie-ctyr-vajec [access: 20 January 2023].

Figure 4. Honza Zamojski, *Gradient, ready-made, 13 x Kosmos Witolda Gombrowicza* [*Witold Gombrowicz's Cosmos x 13*], 2011−2013

Figure 5. Honza Zamojski, *Upadek*, 2019, painted wood, ropes, mural painting. At the 33rd Ljubljana Biennale of Graphic *Arts Crack Up – Crack Down*, curated by Slavs and Tatars, Ljubljana, 7 June –29 September 2019.

tography to create hieroglyphics, visual puzzles.[17] His main focus is what cannot, as a rule, be spoken or shown directly, namely humour.

Finally, we arrive at the issue with which the artist is associated and the importance of which he emphasises in his work.[18] It is difficult to undertake because it is based on something as difficult to grasp as the feeling. Let us try to get closer to the humour in Zamojski's work. One of his works can easily highlight this difficulty. Zamojski performed it together with Konrad Smoleński. The *Banner* (2016) is described by the artists as a permanent performance: a small group of people dressed in dark sportswear walk unhurriedly but briskly on a moving treadmill. The paradox is that if it was attributed solely to one artist, its meaning would change radically. If it were considered Smoleński's oeuvre, it would take on a dramatic character. In contrast, in the context of Zamojski's oeuvre, it takes on a humorous, even comic character.

The mechanic aspect of movements, or more precisely the mechanisation of human bodies, can be something tragic when we think of it as turning humans into robots. It will be different if we manage to see in it an exposition of the automatisms inherent in human corporeality, a disclosure of the extent to which we are all puppets without realising it. This second recognition would meet the central argument of Henri Bergson in his treatise *Laughter: An Essay on the Meaning of the Comic*.[19] Especially when he writes: 'The attitudes, gestures and movements of the human body are laughable in exact proportion as that body reminds us of a mere machine'.[20] The philosopher extends this observation by locating the source of comicality in the 'something mechanical encrusted upon the living'.[21] This mechanisation is achieved through three basic modes: repetition ('The truth is that a really living life should never repeat itself'[22]), reversal, turning into the opposite ('turn it upside down'[23]), and

17   The term "personal hieroglyph" is used by the artist himself. C. Vaz, *Interview: Honza Zamojski*, in: *Art Map*,
http://artresearchmap.com/artists/interview-honza-zamojski/ [access: 20 January 2023].

18   Cf.: M. Price, *Honza Zamojski*, in: *Vitamin D3: Today's Best in Contemporary Drawing*, London 2021, pp. 294−295; *Portfolio: Honza Zamojski*, "Contemporary Lynx" 16 December 2021, https://contemporarylynx.co.uk/portfolio-honza-zamojski [access: 20 January 2023]; P. Strożek, *Honza Zamojski*, in: Culture.pl, January 2017, https://culture.pl/pl/tworca/honza-zamojski [access: 20 January 2023].

19   H. Bergson, *Laughter. An Essay on the Meaning of the Comic*, transl. C. Brereton L. Es L. (Paris), M.A. (Cantab) and F. Rothwell B.A. (London).

20   Ibidem.

21   Ibidem.

22   Ibidem.

23   Ibidem.

superimposition, the simultaneous belonging to completely separate and independent categories (an example is to play with the metaphorical and literal meaning of words). All three modes 'consist in looking upon life as a repeating mechanism, with reversible action and interchangeable parts. Actual life is comedy just so far as it produces, in a natural fashion, actions of the same kind, – consequently, just so far as it forgets itself, for were it always on the alert, it would be ever-changing continuity, irrevertible progress, undivided unity.'[24] In Bergson's analyses, the modes of mechanisation are at the same time tricks that are used to produce a comic effect – humour is triggered when revealing modes in which life denies its vitality, falling into automatisms.

The modes recognised by Bergson can be found in Zamojski's cosmogenesis, which creates worlds through repetition, reversal, superimposition. They all appeared in the exhibition *W⊙RLD(S)* as tools for creating relationships between works in a spatial split. A constant motif in the artist's oeuvre, the schematic human figure – the graphic humanoid – which appears both in his drawings and as sculptures or installations, is created through the joint action of three tricks, in a repudiation of the great classical art motif of the representation of the human figure. Moreover, the creative process itself is subjected to 'mechanisation' – the artist uses tracing paper to create his drawings, incorporating an element of repetition, a reversal to the very core of creation. In the light of Bergson's analysis, would this not be a humoristic technique par excellence?

Bergson links the three modes to what we might call the comic condition, which he describes with puzzling terms: absentmindedness and rigidity. He writes: 'The rigid mechanism which we occasionally detect, as a foreign body, in the living continuity of human affairs is of peculiar interest to us as being a kind of ABSENTMINDEDNESS on the part of life.'[25] Lack of attentiveness, weakened relationships with others and ourselves turn us into puppets controlled by automatisms. Mechanisation also occurs when insufficient vigilance is exercised over the course of events, when their functioning falls into established ruts – this is when the 'absentmindedness in things' occurs.[26] When the action of the world descends into mechanicalness, another effect emerges, namely the rigidity 'clashing with the inner suppleness of life' and opposed to its mutability.[27] It manifests itself in empty ceremonies and rituals, puffery and pompousness of behaviour, in the callousness of social regulations 'setting itself up

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24   Ibidem.
25   Ibidem.
26   Ibidem.
27   Ibidem.

for a law of nature'.[28] Both absentmindedness and rigidity are manifestations of the unsociality with which comedy is measured. 'This corrective is laughter, a social gesture that singles out and represses a special kind of absentmindedness in men and in events.'[29] Humour is therefore a tool that reveals these manifestations and allows their causes to be corrected, in order to re-socialise the world.

Understood in this way, humour is a specific measure. Honza Zamojski's practice, however, must be distinguished from activities in the field of art that also resort to this means and are called trickster strategies. These measures can be exemplified by the work of Oskar Dawicki or Piotr Uklański. In these strategies, the joke or prank is linked to the recognition of reality as oppressive and the quest for liberation. The trickster, as Anna Markowska writes, 'does not wage war, but, feeling uncomfortable within the dominant norms, tries to break free'.[30] However, this is primarily about freeing the artistic subject, while the society is left on its own.

Whereas in trickster strategies comicality is instrumentalised in favour of individual emancipation, in Zamojski's case it is part of what might be called the infrapolitics of humoresque. As for the second term of this name, I propose it because it is the least loaded with the history of literary and theatrical comic genres, it refers to everyday situations and artistic interventions, and seems to best describe the strategy of overflowing humour employed by the artist. In contrast, the first term, coined by James Scott,[31] was picked up by Slavs and Tatars on the occasion of the *Crack Up – Crack Down* exhibition which they curated as part of the 33rd Ljubljana Biennale of Graphic Arts. The exhibition was devoted to the relationship between art and satire, including that of a political nature, and in particular to the resistance of graphic arts in the service of satire.[32] Scott calls infrapolitics 'a wide range of low-ranking forms of resistance that dare not speak in their own name', through which subordinate groups implicitly transcribe into the dominant discourse.[33] Slavs and Tatars combined this with artistic practices in which subordinated groups use comic effects to resist imposed restrictions. The collective invited Honza Zamojski to participate in the exhibition, recognising these aspects in his work.

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28   Ibidem.

29   Ibidem.

30   *Trickster Strategies in the Artists' and Curatorial Practice*, ed. A. Markowska, Warsaw-Toruń 2013, p. 14.

31   J.C. Scott, *Domination and Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts*, New Haven 1990.

32   *Slavs and Tatars: Crack Up – Crack Down*, ed. M. Constantine, Slavs and Tatars, International Center for Graphic Arts – Mousse Publishing, Ljubljana-Milan 2019, p. 8.

33   J.C. Scott, *Domination…*, op. cit., p. 19.

Due to the lack of space, I can only very briefly present the infrapolitics of Zamojski's humoresque. Above all, it confronts the absentmindedness and rigidity that characterises the functioning of art, evoking a growing unsocialisation of the art field. For this, the artist uses a specific figuration that challenges the great opposition, proposed by Gilles Deleuze, between 'Figure' and 'figuration'. 'Figuration' is what great painters like Francis Bacon manage to create 'through extraction or isolation', which opposes the mere figuration associated with the everyday and banal circulation of visual clichés in our pictorial culture.[34] For Deleuze, figurativity is something subordinate, and the 'great painters' aim to tear apart clichés by opposing them their 'Figures'. It is in them, that the pathos and ethos of the human existence and the existence of the world are to be manifested. But are we not dealing here with some kind of rigidity or perhaps even absentmindedness creeping imperceptibly? Do these 'Figures' of great painters not function like pompous marionettes when they join the commercial and institutional art circulation? Imagine one of Bacon's paintings, for example depicting the Pope, juxtaposed with one of Zamojski's drawings showing his 'little man' or with an installation in which he is drawn into space. This juxtaposition reveals the nature of the infrapolitics of humoresque, in which figuration, particularly the somewhat infantile figure of the little man, prefaces the pathos and ethos of humanism or posthumanism prevalent in the art world. It reveals that attentiveness and vigilance are often lacking here, which is why it falls into absentmindedness and rigidity, resulting in antisocial automatism. Zamojski's figuration seems to apply the Bergson's recognition: 'we are never ridiculous except in some point that remains hidden from our own consciousness'.[35]

According to the rules of monadology, the art world contains and expresses both the social world and the cosmos as a whole.

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34   G. Deleuze, *Francis Bacon: the logic of sensation*, transl. Daniel W. Smith, London-New York 2003, p. 2.

35   Bergson, *Laughter…*, op. cit.

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Abstract:

Honza Zamojski's artistic practice is truly transdisciplinary: it encompasses drawing, installation, graphic design and curating, in addition to the activity of a publisher and university lecturer. For its interpretation, I propose the notion of artistic monadology as a way of creating worlds, containing further worlds. The aim of Zamojski's work is to confront what can be called the unsocialisation of reality and the art world in particular. I refer to the set of strategies the artist employs to achieve this goal as the infrapolitics of humoresque.

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PART IV
VISUALLY
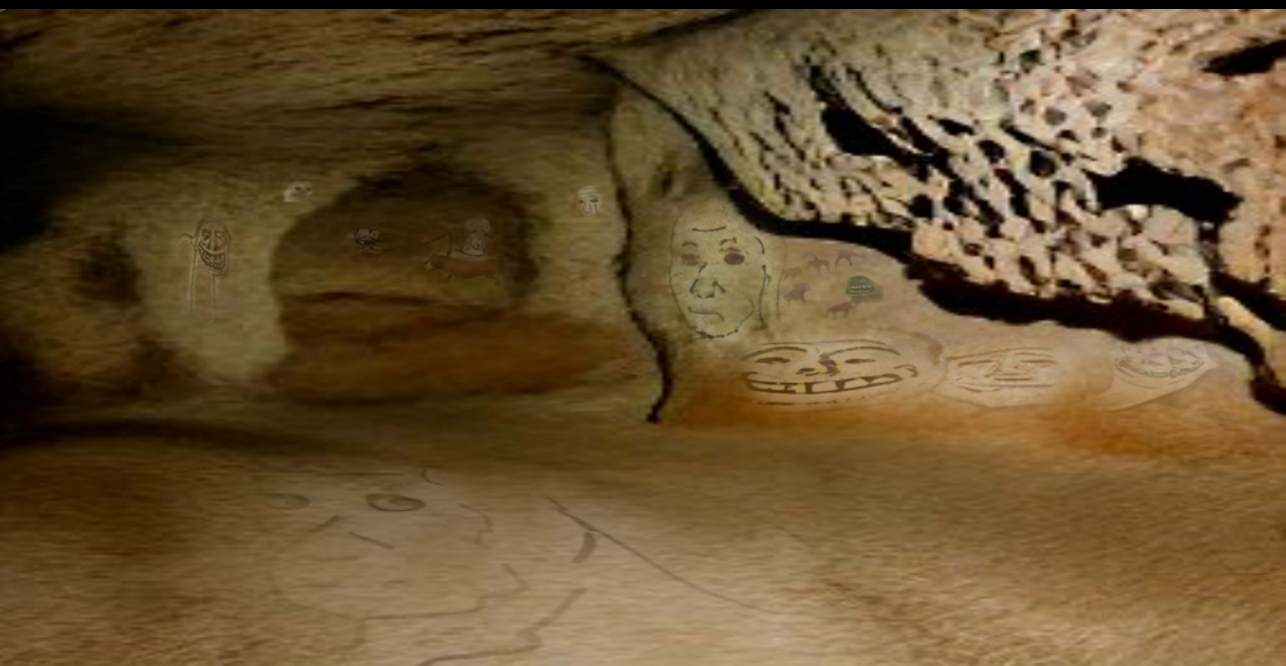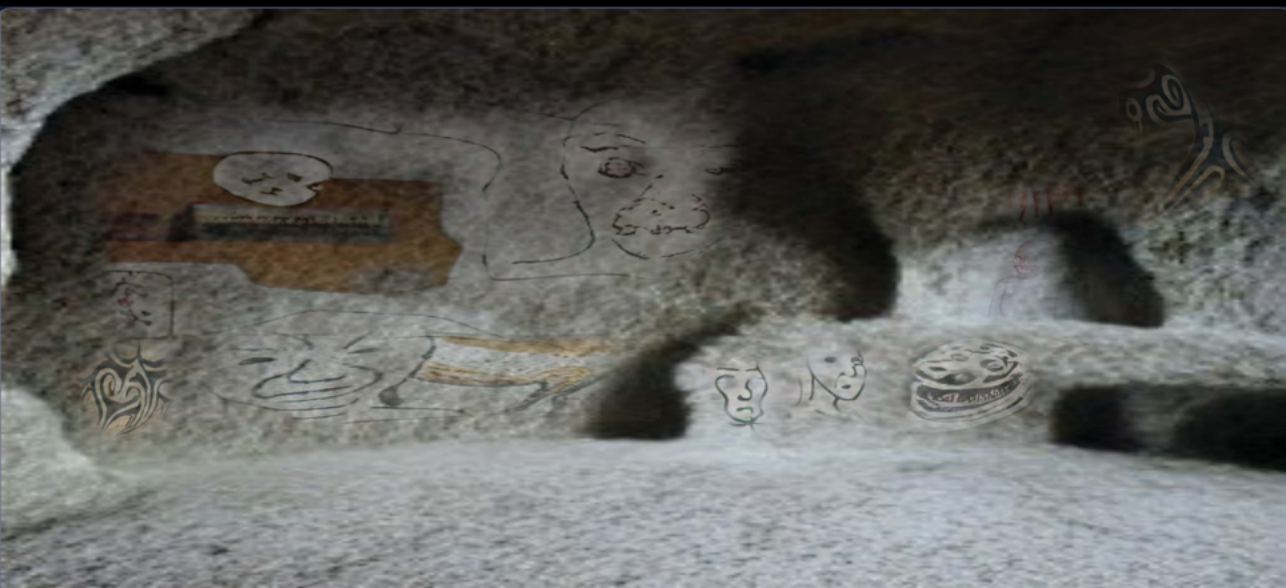
Karolina Jarzębak

MEME LASCAUX

An imagined remnant of our generation after the 'end of the world'. In this vision, the Millenials and Gen Z were forced to live in caves, as the primitive people. Driven by the desire to recreate a familiar on-line reality, they paint memes on the walls of the caves, which are also contemporary hieroglyphs. This concept was also inspired by the phrase Cave Automatic Environment, which in the metaverse language means simply a space created in VR enclosed by virtual walls. It's not only our room filled with three-dimensional paintings, which we can arrange in our own way, but also a place where you can finally be who and what you want to be.
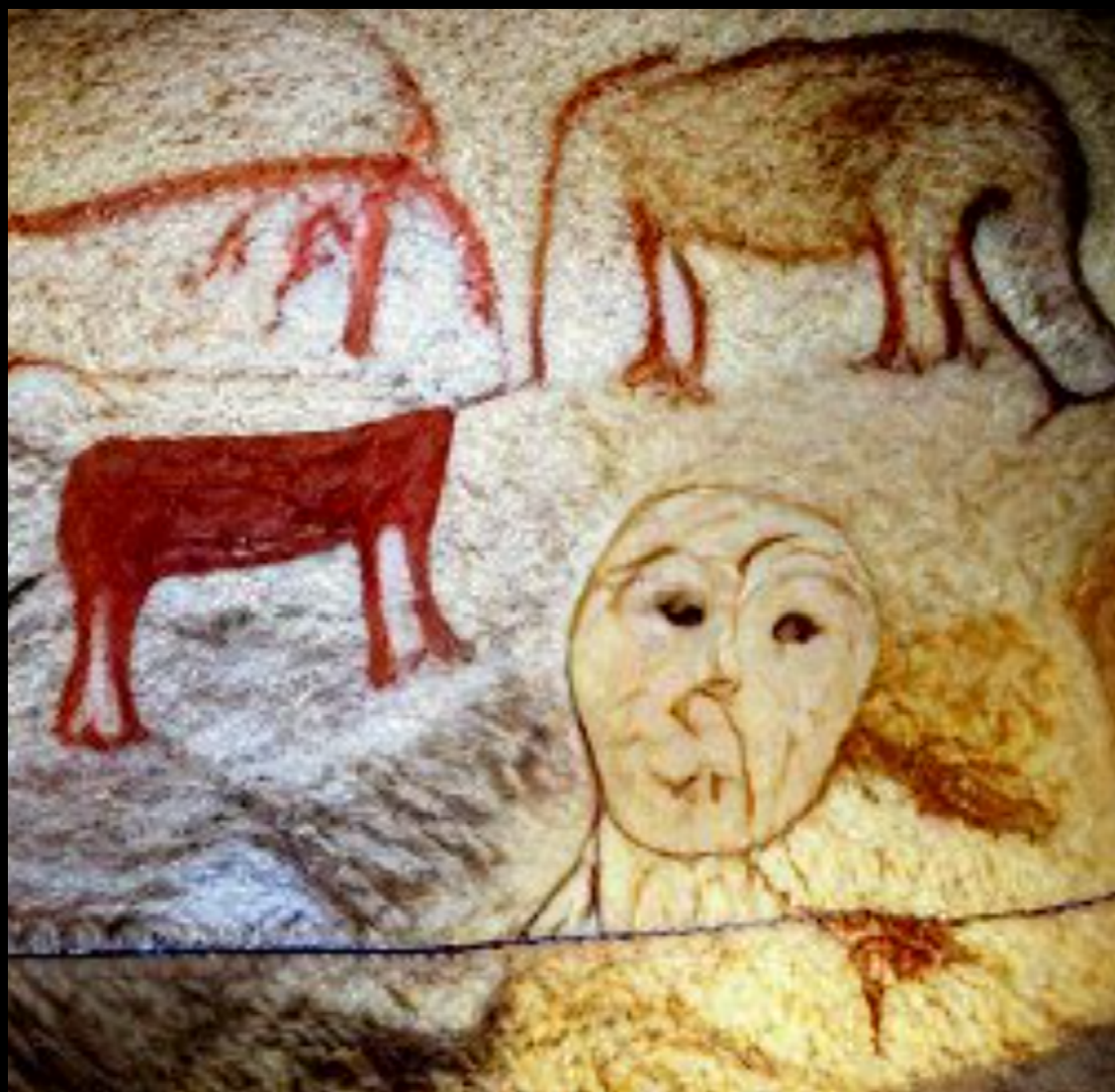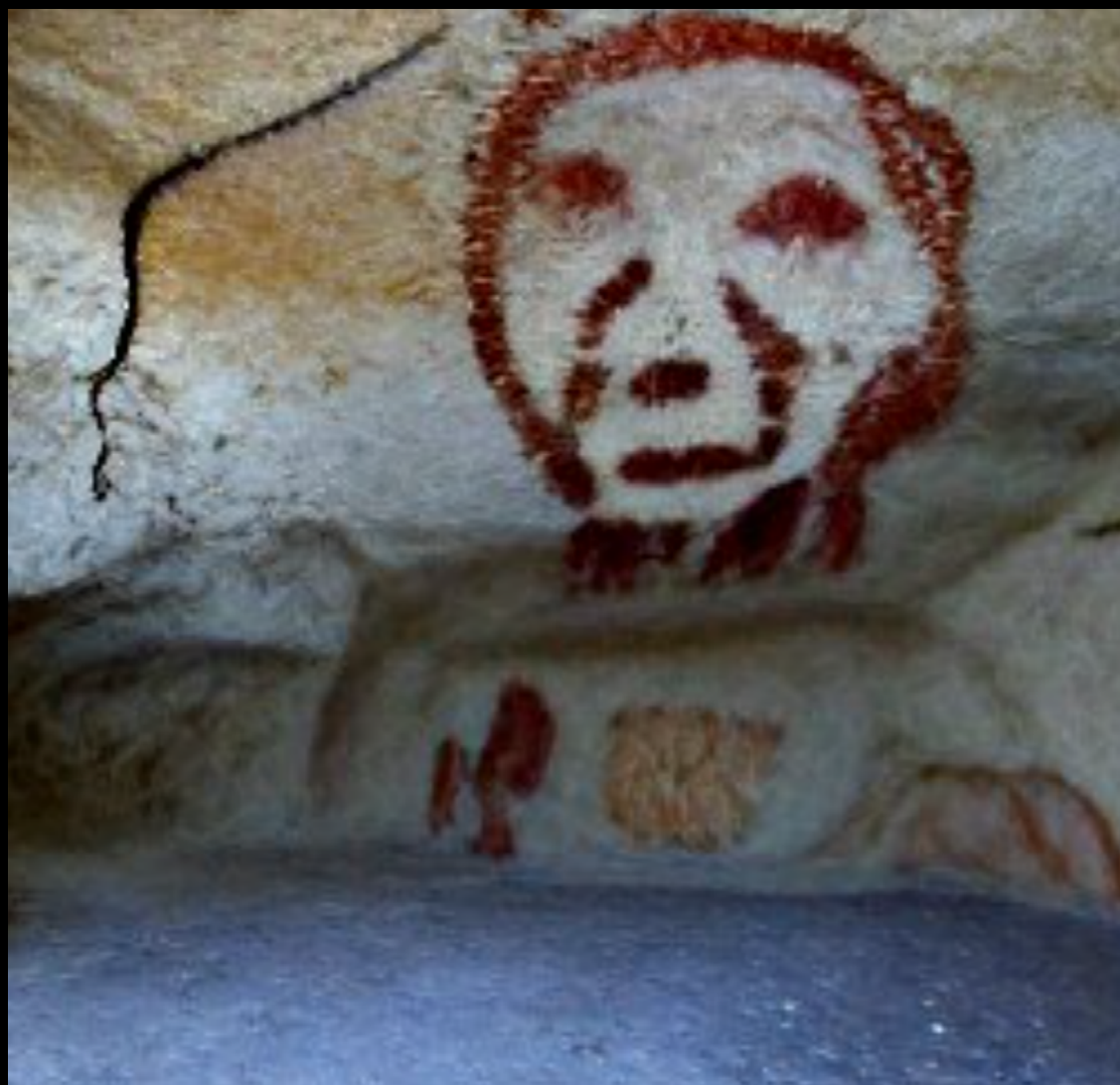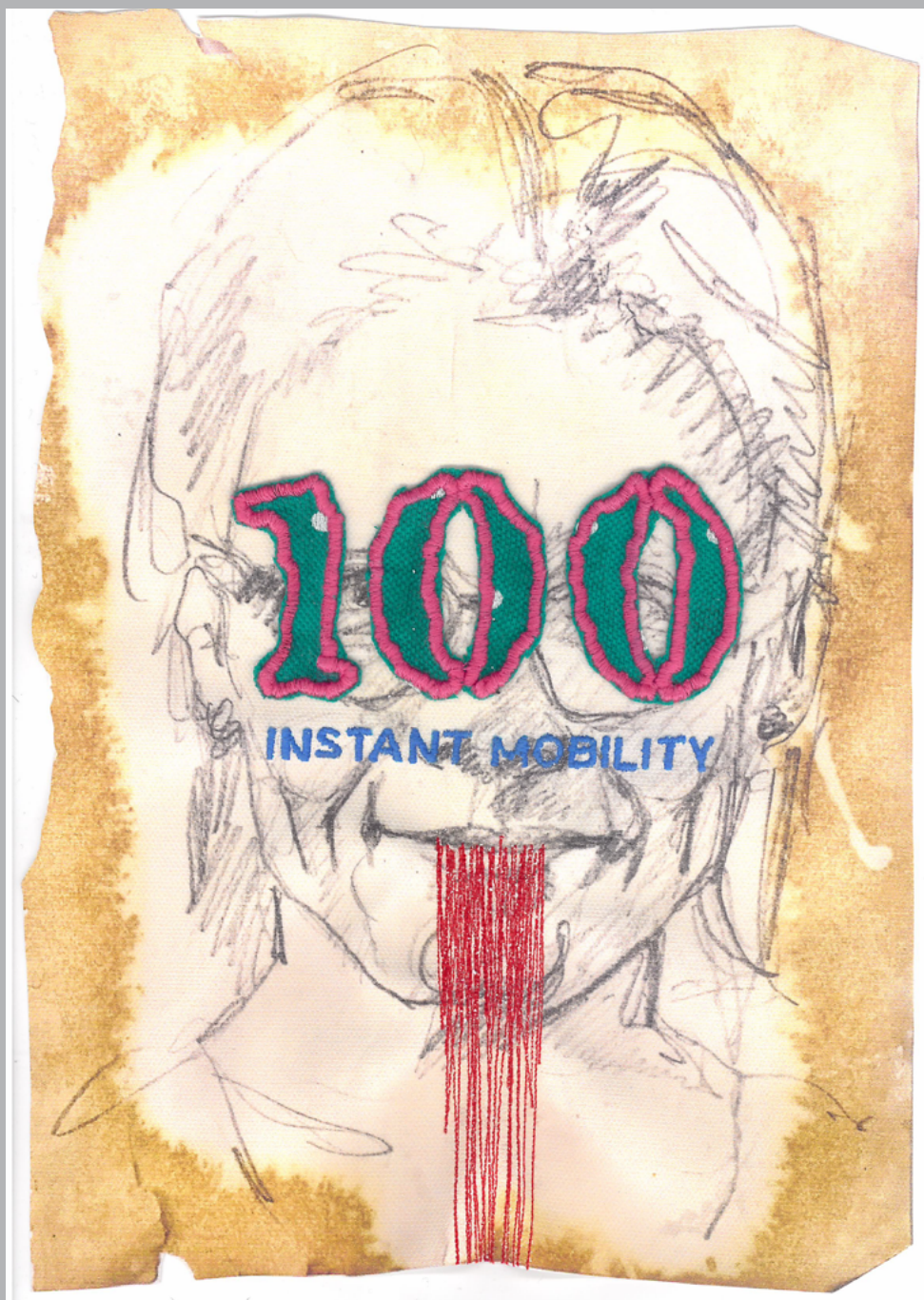
Joanna Wowrzeczka

THE PERIPHERY AND SOCIALLY SENSITIVE ART – THOUSANDS OF INSERTIONS

I asked **Professor Tadeusz Sławek** (with whom I was fortunate to consult the commoner's* dilemmas) to fill in the fundamental concept (periphery) and he sent me as response a handwritten sentence saying: **'Cieszyn: a periphery without territory – if «territory» is derived from «terreo»: to be afraid of something/someone foreign, unknown.'**

I was supported in drawing the field of socially sensitive art by **Igor Stokfiszewski**, creator of the category 'art with community'.
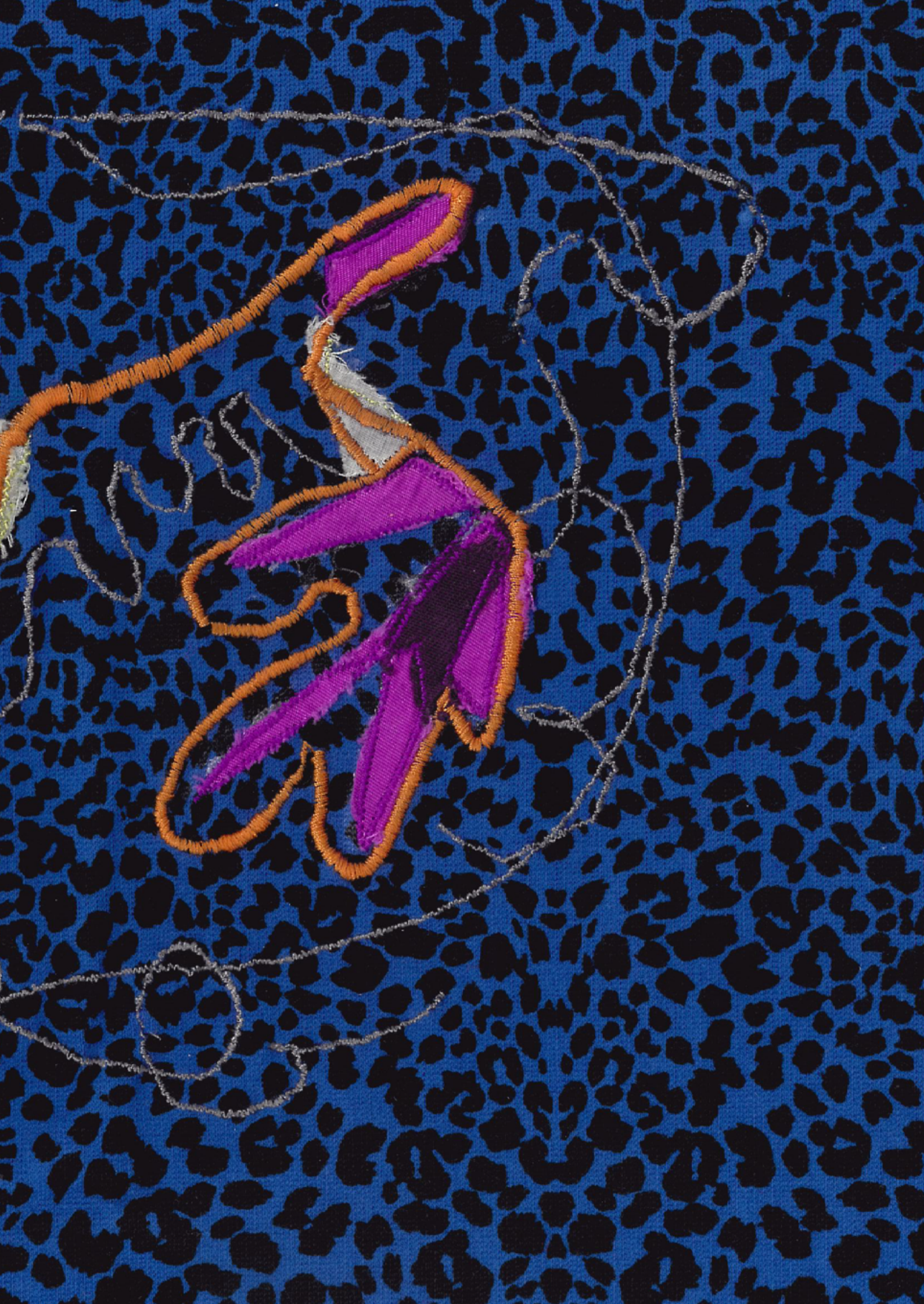
I was helped in recognizing the key role of the commoner in strengthening the territory by Łukasz Dziedzic with whom I shared the difficulties of running the Szara Gallery at the beginning of its history.

Another participant in outlining the field and definitions were: **Anna Cieplak** – co-founder of the Krytyka Polityczna community centre in Cieszyn – writer, atomic energy of many initiatives; **Urszula Markowska** (editor-in-chief of Tramwaj Cieszyński – before moving to Słupsk, she created independent media in Cieszyn); Gabriela Lazarek – hairdresser who for two years from the self-immolation of Piotr Szczęsny protested every day in the Cieszyn market against the restriction of freedom and democracy in Poland; Ewa Gołębiowska – former head of the Cieszyn Castle – reflectively building bridges between the world of third sector and institutions; **Agata Juroszek** and **Anna Grelowska** they run with me the Women's Strike in Cieszyn, and later became involved with the Krytyka Polityczna community centre, participants in the Youth Local Government Lab.

I selected from the responses received a few that gave me the opportunity to include the language coming directly from the place where I have been co-creating since 2016 the circulation of socially sensitive culture. This place previously housed the Juwenia Knitting Plant. In one of the rooms, I found binders with materials, abandoned for many years, which used to serve the female employees of that establishment until 2002 in the manufacture of clothing. One of them was a collection of patches. This captivating collection of machine-made pictures, which I painstakingly transcribed (embroidered, inserted) by hand, which was completely unprofitable in the context of the category of time, reveal the specific values of the periphery, the common good, the socially sensitive culture as well as the characteristics and obligations of a commoner. For me, personally, it was only thanks to this collision that the topic opened up.

* The term 'commoner' encompasses both the relationship to capital and the pursuit of producing alternatives. It refers to the common good. Commoner is a person who is related to the resource, the good being produced, but whose role is primarily management in a perspective not limited to oneself. Such person generates network thinking in which he or she is not the only commoner (M. de Angelis, 'Ogólny wzór dóbr wspólnych', *Praktyka Teoretyczna*, 2017, no. 3 (25), pp. 119−121). Close to the idea of mycelium and the shreds it consists of.

Cieszyn : *wyferiam*

jeśli „teritorium

bać się czegoś/kogoś

APPY

SiON

biz forto mun –

pochodu od, terreo":

obego, niezna nego.

Prosz.. o udzielanie mi wolnego w dniach:

.... gedz. ....
.... gedz. ....

.. przepracowane godziny nadliczbowe wg zlecenia
nr. z dnia

podpis pracownika

Follow Scene

XX XXXX w/08/54/3..../77

Nazwisko i imie nr. kontr.

Cieszyn.....

Do Kier.działu wzgl.Mistrza
....
w miejscu

Prosze o udzielenie mi wolnego w dniach:

.... godz. ....
.... godz. ....

.. przepracowane godziny nadliczbowe wg zlecenia
nr. z dnia ....

....
podpis pracownika

XXXXXXXX/4/54/300/77

Cieszyn,dnia ....

....
Nazwisko i imie nr.kontr.

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN strza

I WANT TO SEE YOU AGAIN jou

Proszę o udzielenie mi wolnego w dniach:

.... godz. ....
.... godz. ....

/Za przepracowane godziny nadliczbowe wg zlecenia