ARTISTIC TURNS

ART INQUIRY

RECHERCHES SUR LES ARTS

Volume XVII (XXVI)

ARTISTIC TURNS

Łódź 2015

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Artistic Turns

Łódzkie Towarzystwo Naukowe
Societas Scientiarum Lodziensis
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Sales office (+48 42) 665 54 48, http://sklep.ltn.lodz.pl, www.ltn.lodz.pl, e-mail: biuro@ltn.lodz.pl

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Edited with the financial support of the Ministry of Science and Higher Education.
Indexed by CEEOL, EBSCOhost, ProQuest, CEJSH, ERIH Plus, Index Copernicus and Ministry of Science and Higher Education.
Full- text articles are available online at www.ceeol.com and www.ibuk.pl.

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ISSN 1641-9278

Print:
2K Łódź Sp. z o.o., ul. Płocka 53/45, www.2k.com.pl, 2k@2k.com.pl

The journal is originally a printed publication
Wersja drukowana stanowi pierwotną wersję czasopisma

Circulation: 200 egz.

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INTRODUCTION

Artistic Turns

The concept of a „turn" has attracted the interest of the representatives of different disciplines of the humanities engaged in the studies of culture for a number of years. Much has been written on the *performative turn, interpretative turn, postcolonial turn, translational turn, spatial turn, iconic turn* etc. Is art just one of the areas in which those turns occur, or can one talk about the unique character of artistic turns? We would like to look into this issue not only with regard to the current cultural scene, but also taking into account the earlier cultural periods.

We propose a broad understanding of the concept of a „turn". It can be employed in the general reflection on culture, but it can also be used with reference to some specific aspects of art, e.g. when talking of a certain kind of stylistic change, or a sudden modification of the creative stance of a particular artist. We are presenting papers concerning the broadly conceived cultural and artistic „shocks", disruption of accepted orders, as well as papers discussing concrete cases of creative work proceeding in leaps and bounds, through successive *turns*.

Grzegorz Sztabiński
Paulina Sztabińska

WPROWADZENIE

Zwroty artystyczne

Kategoria „zwrotu" w badaniach nad kulturą od kilkunastu lat wywołuje zainteresowanie u przedstawicieli różnych dziedzin humanistyki. Pisano wiele na temat *performative turn, interpretative turn, postcolonial turn, translational turn, spatial turn, iconic turn* itp. Czy sztuka jest tylko jednym z obszarów, na których owe zwroty dokonują się, czy też można mówić zwrocie artystycznym, jako szczególnej odmianie? Sugerujemy rozważenie tego zagadnienia nie tylko w odniesieniu do obecnego stanu kultury, a również przy wzięciu pod uwagę wcześniejszych okresów dziejów.

Proponujemy wzięcie pod uwagę szerokiego sposobu rozumienia pojęcia „zwrot". Może ono być przedmiotem rozważań o zasięgu ogólnokulturowym, ale można również odnieść je do określonej dziedziny sztuki, np. zachodzącej w niej przemiany stylistycznej, czy wreszcie nagłej modyfikacji postawy twórczej określonego artysty. Prezentujemy więc z jednej strony na artykuły dotyczące problematyki szeroko pojętych „wstrząsów" kulturowych i artystycznych, „zmącenia" zakładanych porządków, jak teksty omawiające konkretne przypadki twórczości jawiącej się jako działalność meandryczna, przebiegająca drogą kolejnych *turns*.

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Art Inquiry. Recherches sur les arts 2015, vol. XVII
ISSN 1641-9278

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THE EXISTENTIAL CONTEXTS OF THE SO-CALLED TURNS IN THE HUMANITIES

Abstract: The starting point for my research is the famous statement of Leszek Kołakowski: "(...) in all the universe man cannot find a well so deep that, leaning over it, he does not discover at the bottom his own face." I believe that no matter which of the turns we are dealing with, it is only our own face that, in fact, each of them has to offer to us. I ask about this face in the performative, iconic and posthumanist turns.

Keywords: man, culture, science, face, freedom, turns in the humanities

Introduction

The question: "If we say the same thing differently, do we say the same thing, or something else?" still provokes many emotions and controversy, at least within the broadly-defined humanities. Sometimes the answer can be found in a somewhat paradoxical statement: to say the same thing differently means to say more. The statement is paradoxical since it implies that to say the same thing means to say less. If we want to avoid the paradox, this statement must take the following form: to say the same thing differently means to say less or more. When we say the same thing differently, we never say the same thing.

The opponents of this belief are convinced that the statements formulated in completely different eras can be compared without limitation, and the logical relationships between them as well as their mutual compatibility or incompatibility can be ascertained, as if the objective references of these statements were still

the same and were made up of the same "matter". It goes without saying that our knowledge evolves historically, and the objective references of the expressions we use change in the course of this evolution. However, there are still people who question this semantic variability of expressions. In fact, they assume – as has been described by the Polish philosopher and methodologist, Jerzy Kmita – that throughout the historical development of mankind, people have been saying the same things in the same way.

The proponents of common knowledge may claim that it is particularly science that says the same things in every moment of its historical development, although it does not say the same things in the same way. Jerzy Kmita gives an interesting example from physics that challenges this belief. The motion of physical objects was discussed by both Aristotle and Galileo. A believer in ahistoricism would say that they both talked about the same motion, but although motion was understood in the same way, Galileo determined it differently. Kmita stresses that this is an illusion. Aristotle treated motion as the movement of an object from one place to another. For Galileo, motion was the movement of an object that was always seen from a specific reference point and determined separately in each case. With this understanding of motion, Galileo was able to refute the arguments that undermined the heliocentric theory of Nicolaus Copernicus. Its opponents claimed that if the Earth was rotating, physical objects, contrary to what we can see, would fall from a certain height in a parabolic curve rather than in a straight line. Galileo noted, however, that motion should be considered relative to the extraterrestrial reference system; then its trajectory, which from our earthly point of view follows a straight line, turns out to be parabolic. The concept of motion developed by Aristotle, and still recognized today by our common sense, treats motion as a kind of twofold relationship, and perceives it in an absolute way, i.e. as if all movements were tracked by the same, permanently motionless demiurge who represents the viewpoint of the absolute, unchanging nature. Galileo, however, relativized the concept of motion to a specific point of reference.[1] Therefore, although they both talked about motion, they did not talk about the same thing. Contrary to the common belief, the problem was not that they did not think about motion in the same way. From a theoretical (scientific) – and thus uncommon – point of view, each of them talked about completely different motion. They talked about a similar thing only from the common point of view.

This is because the meaning of the concepts used in science depends only and exclusively on their definition. The accuracy and precision of these definitions is determined solely by the degree of axiomatization (mathematization) of

1 J. Kmita, *Czarnoksięstwa humanistów*, Wydawnictwo Epigram, Bydgoszcz 2015, p. 119.

science. If an expression is defined by certain mathematical (logical) operations, its meaning is generated solely by these operations. There is no room for the intuitions associated with this concept by common knowledge or linguistic convention. Therefore, scientific images of the world can differ significantly from their common counterparts as they largely ignore the obviousness which is imposed on us by our sensory perception of the world. Although we can all see that the Sun revolves around the Earth, Copernicus had the courage to say otherwise. Although there is no doubt that the velocity of a falling body depends mostly on its weight, Newton excluded the factor of weight from his theoretical description of this phenomenon.

Methodologists often talk about radical paradigmatic shifts or even revolutions in the history of natural science in order to emphasize the absolute nature of these changes. Are we faced with a similar situation in the broadly-defined humanities and social sciences? Can we also talk about radical paradigmatic shifts in their case?

Before I sketch an answer to this question, I shall make a fairly emphatic ontological and epistemological statement. Namely, no matter how much I sympathize with the most radical constructivism, I have no doubt that the object of natural science exists independently of the existence of the science itself. Therefore I admit the existence of nature regardless of the existence of the scientific – human – awareness of its existence. To put it as Kant would, the existence of material and natural noumena is independent of the existence of the scientific phenomena that represent them, and sometimes even construct them. The situation seems to be different in the humanities. The condition for the existence of their subject is the existence of the people who create this subject. Literature and art can be studied insofar as they both exist, i.e. insofar as there is someone who creates literature and art. Cognition in natural science can be compared to an angler fishing in the water, the existence of which, just like the existence of the fish that swim in it, does not depend on his fishing passion and skills; cognition in the humanities, however, consists rather in the fact that the angler fishes as long as he has the courage to be one of the fish, and to be caught on the hook he has cast himself. As Leszek Kołakowski has put it, "(...) in all the universe man cannot find a well so deep that, leaning over it, he does not discover at the bottom his own face."[2] One might even conclude that, essentially, cognition in the humanities consists roughly in practicing institutionalized narcissism, if it were possible to accommodate various forms

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2 L. Kołakowski, "Karl Marx and the Classical Definition of Truth", in: *Marxism and Beyond: on historical understanding and individual responsibility*, transl. Jane Z. Peel, Pall Mall Press, London 1968, p. 66.

of possibly destructive self-flagellation within its boundaries. Narcissism will not die only if it manages to kill its self-love; the one who hates oneself will not die insofar as he can suppress this hatred in an even momentary gesture of self-affirmation.

1. Shifts and revolutions in the humanities

Thus, we return to the basic question of whether there are any radical paradigmatic shifts or even revolutions in the history of the humanities, as is the case with the natural sciences. In particular, are the so-called "turns" in the humanities examples of such revolutions?

Each turn in the humanities proposes a new – different – outlook on their subject. But when is an outlook on the humanist reality – frequently referred to as culture – unquestionably new and different? And can it be new at all? To answer this question, I shall examine the examples of three, perhaps the most popular, turns that have taken place in the humanities in recent times. These are the performative turn, the iconic turn and the post-humanist turn.[3]

1.1 The performative turn

Performance is more and more often treated as a metaphor for culture,[4] and performativity – as claimed by Jon McKenzie – is even a new paradigm of knowledge. The performative turn should be associated and considered along with the so-called "agentive turn". Performativity becomes the object of interest as a specific type of agency, and performance is a specific way of its expression and enforcement. Theorists of culture have distinguished the following features of the performative turn: a) the focus is put on agency and the changes that occur in reality, b) the understanding of agency is extended to include non-human

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3 In her book *Cultural Turns. Neuorientierungen in den Kulturwissenschaften* (Rowohlt Taschenbuch Verlag , Reinbek bei Hamburg 2006), Doris Bachmann-Medick lists the following terms: 'Interpretative Turn', 'Performative Turn', 'Reflexive Turn/Literary Turn', 'Postcolonial Turn', 'Translational Turn', 'Spatial Turn' and 'Iconic Turn'. The terms 'antipositivist', 'structuralist' and 'poststructuralist' turns/breakthroughs were used in earlier methodological reflection on the humanities. Other terms used in the literature include: 'anthropological', 'cultural' or 'anthropological and cultural', 'Darwinian', 'dramatic', 'ethical', 'ethical and political', 'the shift in gender studies', 'linguistic', 'the turn towards things', 'narrative', 'cognitive', 'pragmatic' and 'rhetorical'. See: P. Bohuszewicz, „Po czy w ramach poststrukturalizmu. "Zwroty" badawcze wobec przełomów paradygmatycznych w najnowszym literaturoznawstwie polskim", in: "*Zwroty" badawcze w humanistyce. Konteksty poznawcze, kulturowe i społeczno-instytucjonalne*, eds J. Kowalewski, W. Pasek, Colloquia Humaniorum, Olsztyn 2010.

4 L. Bieszczad, *Zwrot performatywny w estetyce*, Wydawnictwo Libron, Kraków 2013, p. 9.

entities, c) the research is interdisciplinary or antidisciplinary,[5] d) the metaphor of the world as a book we are reading is replaced by that of a performance in which we participate.[6]

If experts are to be believed, the performative turn highlights the importance of the expressive dimension of actions and events that are actions. What comes to the fore is the practical aspect of the production of cultural meanings and experiences, rather than the semantic links or the idea of culture as text.[7] There is a decisive turn away from the hitherto mainstream concept of structure in the direction of the henceforth dominant idea of social process. As Richard Schechner succinctly declares, "Performance is a paradigm of process".[8] Performative thinking about culture does not limit it to just a closed system of meanings, but perceives it as a semantically open, change-oriented process. Performance and performativity become the new basic concepts in thinking about culture; they show that both language and reality did not exist before man, and they are still produced by him. The aim of the performative turn is to capture the pragmatic process of symbolization. The analysis of symbols is dynamic; it is not enough to see symbols just as carriers of meaning, or to decipher the meaning of particular symbols. Only the historical contexts in which symbols are used, i.e. their inclusion in such processual forms as ritual and social drama, let us grasp the rules of the symbolization process. If we wish to get to the truth of symbols (paraphrasing the formulation of Victor Turner), we need to catch them in their movement using a net of concepts, rather than paralyze them with debilitating venom. Symbolic culture is increasingly "event-driven", and participation in it requires a different kind of commitment than just using one's competence in response to ready-made cultural practices.[9]

1.2 The iconic turn

Although it is reasonable to talk of at least two concepts of the iconic turn,[10] each of them is an ambitious attempt to problematize contemporary reality

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5 See: E. Domańska, "*Zwrot performatywny*" *we współczesnej humanistyce*, "Teksty Drugie" 2007 no. 5, p. 52.

6 R. Schechner, *Performance Studies. An Introduction,* Routledge, London 2002, p. 21.

7 See: D. Bachmann-Medick, "Performative Turn", in: *Cultural Turns. Neuorientierungen in den Kulturwissenschaften*..., op. cit.

8 R. Schechner, *Victor Turner's Last Adventure*, in: Victor Turner, *The Anthropology of Performance*, PAJ Publications, New York 1987, p. 8.

9 See: A. Zeidler-Janiszewska, *Perspektywy performatywizmu*, „Teksty Drugie" 2007, no. 5, p. 43.

10 To describe the characteristics of the iconic turn, I refer to arguments presented by Anna Zeidler-Janiszewska in her article *Visual Culture Studies czy antropologicznie zorientowana Bildwissenschaft. O kierunkach zwrotu ikonicznego w naukach o kulturze*, „Teksty Drugie" 2006 no. 4, pp. 9-30.

using the notions of visual culture. One of those concepts was developed by the American professor of English and art history W. J. T. Mitchell, and the other one by the art historian Gottfried Boehm.

Mitchell's approach is representative of the new discipline – visual studies, or visual culture studies – emerging as a response to the undeniably increasing role of multiple images of various kinds and various origins in contemporary culture. The American scholar explains the genesis of the iconic turn by the so-called "paradox of the moment". On the one hand, the era of the video, cyber technology, and electronic reproduction introduced new forms of illusion and visual simulation. On the other hand, there is a fear of images, the fear that the power of the images will eventually destroy their creators and manipulators. Mitchell questions the dominance of the research strategies that were developed within the linguistic turn, he even accuses them of a kind of iconoclasm. He argues that the iconic turn is neither a return to naďve mimesis, nor a revival of the metaphysics of visual "presence". It is a post-linguistic and post-semiotic discovery of the image as a complex game between visuality, a camera, an institution, a discourse, bodies, and figurality.

Similarly to Mitchell, Gottfried Boehm also refers to the concept of the linguistic turn. Searching for a special "logic of images", different from the "logic of language", he reflects on the nature of the image, and points to the many possible meanings of the term. He stresses emphatically that image research involves an exploration of all kinds of images, their innumerable plurality.[11] Images are "painted, conceived, and dreamed", and the category includes "paintings, metaphors, gestures, and even mirrors, echo and mimicry". But what is their common characteristic, and what is the specificity of the science – Bildwissenschaft – that would deal with them? Boehm points out that this science of images must be not so much interdisciplinary as rather transdisciplinary in nature, taking tips not only from psychology and psychoanalysis, but also from natural sciences.

In contemporary culture, distrust of images is displaced by ever deeper belief in images, increasing expectations, and growing, spontaneous infatuation. German philosopher of culture, Horst Bredekamp, highlights many manifestations of the increasingly radical rejection of iconoclastic themes in contemporary culture. Archaeology and art history are reactivated as historical image sciences right before our eyes; film studies also focus on imagery rather than on the plot (as it did before). Even philosophy puts more emphasis on the imagic dimension of its reflection, and literary studies devote more and more space to the analysis

11 G. Boehm, „Zwrot ikoniczny", in: *O obrazach i widzeniu. Antologia tekstów*, ed. D. Kołacka, transl. M. Łukasiewicz, A. Pieczyńska-Sulik, Universitas, Kraków 2014, p. 275.

of the text-image relationship. The historians of knowledge emphasize its visual dimension, and legal historians research the iconology of law. It is no different in the natural sciences: while Darwin perceived beauty as one of the essential criteria of natural selection, nowadays computer visualizations are treated, at least by chemists, as the best tools serving to explain and predict the course of chemical reactions.[12]

"Visual culture thus opens up an entire world of intertextuality" – concludes Anna Zeidler-Janiszewska, citing Irit Rogoff [13] – "in which images, sounds and spatial delineations are read onto and through one another."[14] New intermedia art practices and new trends in the art of exhibition clearly go beyond the frameworks of art history, which increasingly opens up to the context of images. Focused on the study of autonomous artistic images, modern art history, however, has at the same time disregarded this context in relation to earlier images; what is more, it has been treating images from other cultural areas in the same way.

Doris Bachmann-Medick hopes that the aim of the iconic turn is to control the surging flood of images. This objective is subordinated to image analysis, which uses the conceptual apparatus worked out not only by art history and philosophy, but also by media studies, which seem to have been the first to approve of, and – most importantly – appreciate the "secular images of daily life and technology".[15] It seems right to postulate that the philosophy of contemporary culture, along with contemporary aesthetics, media studies and cultural studies – have the courage to abandon the areas of high culture, and to redefine images in confrontation with the technological media. When confronted with the new media, art history, in particular, will be able to develop its transdisciplinary expertise in image analysis, but only if it is transformed into a science of images. Becoming a science of images,[16] art history is no longer focused solely on its traditional pursuits, but has the courage to consider – officially and openly, with no elements of the academic, spying attitude – images of all kinds: images which are not only created, but also reproduced, broadcast, stored on disks and in the so-called clouds; thus it must also consider the media for storing images such as photography, film, television and computers. In this way, the process of breaking the "ancient monopoly of writing",[17] once initiated by the old-technology

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12 See: P. Zeidler, "Do visual metaphors exist?" in: *Models and Metaphors as Research Tools in Science*, LIT Verlag, Berlin, Münster 2013, pp. 99-100.

13 I. Rogoff, *Terra Infirma: Geography's Visual Culture,* Routledge, New York 2000, p. 28.

14 A. Zeidler-Janiszewska, *Visual Culture Studies*..., p. 27.

15 D. Bachmann-Medick, *Cultural Turns*..., p. 397, (my translation).

16 H. Belting, *Das Ende der Kunstgeschichte. Eine Revision nach zehn Jahren*, C.H. Beck, München 1995, pp. 77-87, 156-171.

17 F.A. Kittler, *Optische Medien, Berliner Vorlesung 1999*, Merve, Berlin 2002, p. 12.

image media, finds its modern apogee in the new electronic-digital media of the information era. Some perceive this phenomenon as a kind of return to the mystique of things, and others talk about the indisputable magic of technology. There is concern that the non-human nature of the technical images – i.e. their ontologically justified technicism and mathematical formalism – the well at the bottom of which we fail to see our own face – will largely deprive our life of human, actual and potential, intentional activities, and will thus prevent their analysis and evaluation in terms of the concept of responsibility.[18]

1.3 The posthumanist turn

Although the performative and the iconic turns were regarded as adventures of humanist thinking, experienced consistently in the human realm, they seem to have opened the gates – most likely against their own genuinely humanist intentions – to, however interpreted, non-human beings. Both of these turns are attempts at a coup against the dominant position of text in this kingdom: while in the performative turn text is replaced by performance (process, agency), in the iconic turn it is replaced by an image.

Andrzej W. Nowak is probably right when he remarks that "we have never been only human".[19] It should be noted, however, that even humanistic – i.e. only human – nature of text is not so obvious and clear: although books are unarguably only human products, traces of the Holy Book/Holy Books[20] do not necessarily lead only to men. Even though most texts deal only with the human reality, the texts which initiate numerous narratives – and are therefore most often referred to as holy texts – transcend this realm. Isn't it so that the God of the Bible is not human, and the Bible as a text was written – and, more precisely, is still being written – outside the realm of man, i.e. in His divine capital? The readers of the Bible create the human history of the Word of God. Here, a human reader meets the non-human Author. We create our own humanity insofar as we can fill it with not only human, but also non-human content. In this respect, the religious strategy of creating humanity is naturally in line with every philosophy which has its Platonic roots consistently embedded in the soil

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18 See: G. Werner,"Nie każdy zwrot ku obrazowemu oznacza to samo. O koncepcjach Gottfrieda Boehma i W.J.T. Mitchella oraz nieoczekiwanym spotkaniu z teorią mediów Friedricha Kittlera na polu (braku) teorii obrazu", in: *obraz/ciało*, eds P. Brożyński, M. Jędrzejczyk, transl. P. Brożyński, K. Doeppner, M. Jędrzejczyk, Bunkier Sztuki, Kraków 2013, p. 31. The German original comes from the book *Bild/Kritik* hrsg. B.J. Dotzler, Kadmos Verlag, Berlin 2012.

19 A.W. Nowak, *Nigdy nie byliśmy (tylko) ludźmi*, "Prace Kulturoznawcze" 2015, no. XVIII, Kultura nie-ludzka, p. 35 (my translation).

20 Although there are many Holy Books, each of them is probably the only Book in its own world.

of non-human ideas. The person who perceives him-/herself only as a human being cannot see anything. If humanism is the name for man's faith in man, it must be pointed out that the beginning of each path (e.g. religious or artistic) that leads to it can – and probably needs to – be sought in our pre-literary history. There is Abraham who valued the life of his mortal son so much that he did not kill him on the sacrificial altar; there are also the cave drawings, which our ancestors made when competing for the right to a visual representation with non-human beings, as those were the only creatures they could – because they had to – hunt then. It is only in philosophy that the genesis of humanism is undoubtedly non-mythical, because it originated with the very down-to-earth sophists, who considered the temporal condition of their life as more important than the truths they proclaimed, and therefore collected fees for their teachings.

Contemporary post-humanism does not look for non-humans in any other world. A robot with the genetic code of a nematode, a promise of eternal life in computer circuits, artificial organs, or Google Glass are just a few of the recent examples which show the increasing intertwining of the human and non-human orders,[21] as pointed out by Andrzej W. Nowak. The phrase "the end of man" is making an extraordinary career in the social sciences and humanities. This career can be interpreted in at least two ways. Namely, one can argue that the humanities are masochistically interested in a possibly radical degradation, if not annihilation, of their traditional subject. However, one can also consider this career as a sign of man's extremely high self-esteem. In the first interpretation, man gives way to non-humans due to the impact of technology and civilization; in the second one, he believes in the power of his assets (or in the asset of his power) so much that he is not afraid of their direct and active presence in his life.

Conclusions

The above-quoted statement of Leszek Kołakowski that "in all the universe man cannot find a well so deep that, leaning over it, he does not discover at the bottom his own face" applies especially to the humanities. It should be confronted with the following sentiment of a philosophy graduate: "We talk in the first person. We do not say 'we', 'they', 'all'. We are hit with a cane for such opinions as 'such is life' or 'people tend to...' or 'because generally everyone...'. It was the first and one of the most important things that I learned there. This fundamental knowledge overturned my whole world view and undermined the five years of philosophical studies. Every time when you say, 'because people

21 A.W. Nowak, *Nigdy nie byliśmy*..., p. 35.

usually...' or 'because it is so' or 'after all, everyone...' or 'because women...', in fact, you talk about yourself. You say exactly what you feel and what you think. Always."[22]

The intellectual adventure of the author of the above fragment is commented upon by Andrzej W. Nowak: "The actor-network theory (ANT) is a school of thinking in which the developed modernist perspective shuns the 'divine point of view', but on the other hand, ANT prevents a slippage into the lightness of postmodern relativism and 'being everywhere and nowhere'. Undertaking research in the spirit of the actor-network theory can be a form of therapy for traditional humanists who can overcome the habits of thought that they have developed in the course of academic socialization. [...] The situation of a professional philosopher who starts to practice analysis in the spirit of the actor-network theory is similar to that of the author. [...]. All tricks, intellectual or rhetorical stunts are contested. Generalizations, impersonal subjects, disembodied ideas, language which dispenses with the media, all these creations are no longer self-explanatory."[23]

Interestingly, the author herself does not write, "I talk", but "we talk". If we do not say "we", and we do not say "they", it means that we can only say "I". Where there is no "us", and where there is no "they", there is – there can be – only "I". This reluctance towards the plural has its rich tradition in European culture. In his work *De sancta simplicitate*, Peter Damian, born around 1007 in Ravenna, wrote: "Behold, my brother, do you wish to learn grammar? Learn how to decline 'God' in the plural. The teacher is indeed skilled! While he initiates a new art of disobedience, he introduces into the world an unheard rule of declension that is suitable for the cult of a plurality of gods."[24] The author suggests that grammar was invented by Satan, and therefore monks should not learn it.[25] Max Stirner, who lived in the nineteenth century, also consistently warned against the plural. He was convinced that man can be absolutely authentic as long as he is free from other people, i.e. as long as he is in no way interested in the realization of his freedom to be with another man. Jean Paul Sartre also

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22 M. Halber, *Najgorszy człowiek na świecie*, Wydawnictwo Znak, Kraków 2015, p. 148, (my translation).

23 A.W. Nowak, „Ontologia a aksjologia – co możemy zyskać, a co stracić używając teorii aktorasieci?", *Bez Dogmatu* 11/2015, no. 104, pp. 28-32, (my translation).

24 P. Damian, Epistula 117: *De sancta simplicitate*, in: *History of Italian Philosophy*, E. Garin, ed. and transl. Giorgio A. Pinton, Rodopi, Amsterdam, New York 2008, vol. 1, p. 12.

25 Mikołaj Olszewski believes otherwise: "Meanwhile, this fragment is clearly ironic in its central part, as its aim is to demonstrate that the seemingly morally neutral thirst for knowledge, or the desire to acquire certain abilities or intellectual skills pose the threat of pride." Mikołaj Olszewski, Introduction to: P. Damiani, Epistula 117: *De sancta simplicitate*, 1, transl. Ida Radziejowska, Wydawnictwo Marek Derewiecki, Kęty 2008, p. 7.

had no doubt that "Hell is other people". In contrast, Martin Buber believed that every "I" is secondary to either the "I–Thou" relation or the "I–it" relation. In fact, the latter is an exact copy of the "I–I" relation, because in both cases man lives in some inessential world where every element and moment can be replaced at any time by yet another substitute.

Thus, we return to the starting point of our discussion – the question of the face – our own face – which we find at the end of our cognitive explorations. Because no matter which of the turns we are dealing with, it is only our own face that each of them has to offer to us.

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EGZYSTENCJALNE KONTEKSTY TZW. ZWROTÓW HUMANISTYCZNYCH (steszczenie)

Punktem wyjścia moich badań jest znana fraza Leszka Kołakowskiego: „(...) w całym wszechświecie człowiek nie potrafi odnaleźć studni tak głębokiej – pisze Leszek Kołakowski - by pochylając się nad nią, nie odkrył na dnie swojej własnej twarzy." Uważam bowiem, że bez względu na to, w granicach jakiego zwrotu się poruszamy, każdy z nich ma nam do zaoferowania tylko naszą własną twarz. Pytam o tę twarz w przewrocie performatywnym, ikonicznym i antyhumanistycznym.

Słowa klucze: człowiek, kultura, nauka, twarz, wolność, zwroty humanistyczne

Art Inquiry. Recherches sur les arts 2015, vol. XVII
ISSN 1641-9278

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CHANGE, BREAK, CRISIS, OR FULGURATION – WHAT IS A TURN IN ART?

Abstract: The aim of the article is to find the main determinants of the changes/transformations in art that would satisfy the necessary conditions for defining some phenomenon as a 'turn'. The first part of the study presents some attempts to specify the nature of a cultural turn, and the methodological positions offered by the contemporary humanities. The point of departure here is the conception of Doris Bachmann-Medick. Assuming that the inflation of cultural turns is a signal of profound change, we will ask about the impact of such processes on art. It is not a question of the response of art to changes, but of art as a fragment of the changed reality. In this context, the article refers to Umberto Eco's concept of art as an epistemological metaphor of reality and Mieczysław Wallis's theory of continuity/discontinuity, or gradual and abrupt changes in art. The concepts characteristic of the early stages of modern consciousness have been tested according to the criteria for the contemporary understanding of transformation in art, termed 'a turn'. For this purpose, we have considered the different meanings of the concept of 'change/transformation' and of the concept of 'turn'. The material used as an example is the history of the reception of Art Nouveau, and the problem of radicalness of the avant-garde turn. The final part of the study discusses different uses of the concept of turn, employed in art in recent years. Two 'turns' have been distinguished; an affective turn, linked with the somatic one, and a social turn. Both of them can be treated as constituents of a culture-wide turn: the performative turn. The postulated direction of the research on contemporary turns in art is finding a new formula of esthetic experience.

Keywords: turn, transformation, radical change, negative and positive crises, continuity and discontinuity in art, contemporary art.

The concept of a turn has become an attractive research category in the humanities in recent years. It is used so often that it is difficult to imagine descriptions and analyses in academic research and culture without the employment of this tool. The concept is usually evoked when another turn occurs, to confirm that the change going on at a particular moment satisfies

the necessary conditions to be called a turn. The academic sources in various disciplines of the humanities in recent decades use the concept to describe all kinds of changes. They would talk about linguistic, anthropological, iconic, interpretive, narrative, dramatic, or topographic turns. The term also applies to the changes observed at the intersection of many research fields – e.g. cognitive, pragmatic, ethical or performative turns. finally, the concept is used as a general category to define the cultural turn. It should be stressed at the outset that the semantic fields of the foregoing and other turns overlap and often spread from one discipline into others; in time, many of them become universal categories signaling the direction of the changes in the whole of culture. The large number of turns made the German philosopher and culture studies scholar Doris Bachmann-Medick attempt to define a cultural turn. This scholar maintains that the number of turns in the humanities since the-mid 20th century has been so large that we can speak of an upheaval or even revolution in the studies on culture. The mechanism of the turns is similar in most cases: each new turn focuses on the cultural discourses and practices that were formerly negligibly present or marginalized. When the previously suppressed problems are introduced into the area of cultural research, a new language with its metaphors and its accompanying research tools emerges. The attraction of the studies conducted as part of such a turn consists, inter alia, in the freedom of moving between research areas without having to respect the traditional, obligatory division.[1] The greatest advantage of Bachmann-Medick's book is the attempt to give the category of turn a different meaning than that established in our culture. After all, it is not new, especially since the emergence of the linguistic turn, which, by opposing the time-honored tradition of *Geisteswissenschaften*, "the sciences of the spirit", was quickly recognized as the cultural turn. Criticism of the linguistic trend and its consequences subsequently became part of the postmodern campaign against Grand Narratives. Bachmann-Medick proposes to replace this generalized concept of a turn by its understanding as an observable trend/direction, a research project, which, with time, makes the studied phenomenon a tool of analysis. For example, theorists in many disciplines focused attention on the category of space, thereby making space the key concept in interdisciplinary research combining different viewpoints. These two features – the transformation of an investigated phenomenon into an analytical category, and interdisciplinarity, give a research trend the character of a turn. There are many turns in culture; therefore, the concept of the cultural turn should be avoided.

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1 Cf. D. Bachmann-Medick, *Cultural Turns. Nowe kierunki w naukach o kulturze*, Oficyna Naukowa, Warszawa 2012. Originally published as *Cultural Turns. Neuorientierungen in den Kulturwissenschaften*, Reinbek b. Hamburg: Rowohlt 2006.

Relationships between turns understood as characteristic trends intersecting the tissue of culture may be stronger or weaker; they develop between sometimes very distant research areas with different traditions and methodological background. "Each trend has its own features but none of them exists separately, they all exist in mutual contact, having irremovable features of *hybridity*".[2] Bachmann-Medick's conception was an answer to the need for creating new research instruments that would grasp the observable changes in the humanities.

Scholars have long had doubts whether within the humanities we can speak of turns in the sense of pragmatic changes, i.e. such models of transformation that lead to complete breaking off with the language, tools, and research practices within a given discipline. Thomas Kuhn's concept of paradigm is not easily compatible with the humanities, in which ideas change positions, influenced by new research schools, rather than die out altogether, replaced by others. The authors of the Polish publication on turns (which, incidentally, appeared before the translation of Doris Bachmann-Medick's book) compare the image of the humanities with many turns to Lotman's semiosphere, which is "full of co-existing languages, intersecting at different levels or even incommensurate with one another, which compete for recognition in the area of contemporary culture".[3] The paradigmatic concept of "turn" would be, in this understanding, a kind of "strong" turn, apart from which there would be "weak" turns within the binding paradigm. As can be seen, describing the situation in the humanities by means of the concept of turn is not easy and makes it necessary to revise the meanings established in the history of academic thought. From this point of view, Bachmann-Medick's suggestion that a turn should be understood as "directed narrative with a medium range" appears to be devoid of the problems attributed to grand narratives and paradigms that "excessively uniformize the living field of cultural events and processes."[4]

Almost all the authors who use the concept of turn as an analytical category are aware that the variability of turns is a reaction to that "living field of cultural events". I agree with the opinion that "we are witnessing the emergence of a new style of thinking – one whose dynamics and range is growing stronger".[5] The authors of the cited publication point out that as late as in 1968 the

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2 S. Krzemień-Ojak, „Nowy przewodnik po współczesnych naukach o kulturze", [A New Guide to Contemporary Cultural Sciences] *Przegląd Kulturoznawczy*, Selected texts of 2012, Part A, p. 184.

3 J. Kowalewski, W. Piasek, eds., *"Zwroty" badawcze w humanistyce. Konteksty poznawcze, kulturowe i społeczno-instytucjonalne*, [Research "Turns" in the Humanities. Cgnitive, Cultural and Socio-Institutional Contexts], IF Uniwersytetu Warmińsko-Mazurskiego w Olsztynie, Olsztyn 2010, p. 10.

4 S. Krzemień-Ojak, op. cit., p. 187.

5 J. Kowalewski, W. Piasek, op. cit., p. 1.

dictionary of Polish, edited by Witold Doroszewski, did not list the meaning of "turn" as "a significant, distinct change, variety, a new trend" and they conclude that we may be dealing with a change in viewing the world.

If changes are indeed so deep and their scale so large, then we should ask about the impact of such processes on art. It is not a question of the response of art to changes, but of art as a fragment of the changed reality. As Umberto Eco aptly puts it, art is an epistemological metaphor of the world we live in, which means that we are dealing with the "structural resolutions" or "a widespread theoretical consciousness (not of a particular theory so much as of an acquired cultural viewpoint)". They represent "the repercussion, within formative activity, of certain ideas acquired from contemporary scientific methodologies". It is "part of the poetics of the artists themselves".[6] This poetics of a widespread theoretical consciousness should naturally be understood in terms of analogy rather than reflection. The next reservation applies to Eco himself, who, as a writer and theorist at the same time, is not an exemplar of the functioning of the academic-methodological principles in artistic creativity. Nevertheless, it might be in order to refer to the concept of epistemological metaphor, which defines the relationships between the changes in science, popular consciousness, and in art because this concept is the product of a certain stage of the modern period.

To let us see which aspects of changes are particularly visible in artistic structures, Eco lists the features of the modern period that show its dynamism and quick pace of development, compelling scientific theories to be constantly verified, and thereby prompting changes in art. In his description Eco employs concepts that are part of the semantic field of the term 'turn', without explicitly using it. What he uses are the categories of transition, evolution, constant change, and transformation. He applies the concept of revolution to science, but only when speaking of the breakdown of all classical values. Obviously, the histories of a concept and of a phenomenon do not necessarily have to be parallel, but certain reflections on the different temporal horizon then (in the past) and now arise of themselves. It might seem that Eco, the theorist of the neo-avant-garde, would have many reasons for describing transformations in art in terms of a turn, as a radical change. However, the descriptions of changes in art are based on distinct philosophical assumptions, which suggest opposition against change as the break of continuity in art. I will use a short excerpt, which is a summary of the article by the French painter Georges Mathieu. It seems to be characteristic of Eco's style of thinking and, I believe, the style of many

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6 U. Eco, *Dzieło otwarte. Forma i nieokreśloność w poetykach współczesnych*, Czytelnik, Warszawa 1994, p. 165. [English citations: *The Open Work*, Harvard University Press, p. 87].

theorists of the 1960s. "The painter tries to retrace the progress of Western civilization from the ideal to the real, from the real to the abstract, and from the abstract to the possible (...) According to Matthieu the evolution of forms is parallel to that of scientific concepts."[7] It is not difficult to predict how a text with a similar context would be read by a contemporary theorist. There is no room here to study in detail the differences in the philosophical background of the theorists of Eco's generation and the scholars who started their creative work already after or during the postmodernist debate. On their scholarly path, both of them had to cope with epistemological modernism, take a stand on Thomas Kuhn's or W. O. Quine's naturalist epistemology, to be finally convinced (or not) by the postmodernist, pragmatist perspective of the philosophy of science, most fully represented by Richard Rorty. I am thinking of a general cultural debate rather than specialist discourses within the humanities, including art theory. It seems that Eco's position on structuralism and art theory only signals the confrontation between the theory of representation and the language of the language games theory. In contrast, the advocates of turns in science and art confirm the exhaustion of the debate using the "old" language which has lost its attraction because it no longer provides satisfying descriptions of the dynamically changing reality. The concept of the turn belongs to the "new" language. Regardless of the understanding of a turn, this concept has become established for good in the language of academia in recent decades. Should the overproduction of "turns" be regarded as a kind of sign of the times? Or is this a sign of the incompatibility of the cultural areas between which there is no flow of ideas, and which, consequently, mark their development with turns to signal their existence? Should we seek the common causes of extensive and deep processes taking place in culture or should we treat the inflation of the term as a manifestation of the late modern game, this time of turns?

The concept of a turn in art appears even less precise than its analogous use in science. Are we dealing with turns in art and in what sense? Are the turns in the sphere of theories and their derivative concepts in the widespread theoretical consciousness reflected in contemporary artistic creativity? To answer such questions, we should first identify the concept of "change", or "transformation" present in all semantic fields of the term "turn". "Change" is a weaker term than "turn", and it recurs in the language of art history and esthetics. It is rather a descriptive term, and it is only in specific contexts that it acquires a positively or negatively evaluative meaning. This usually happens when we add to it an adjective that defines the degree or extent of the change. A radical change is closer to a turn, and like a sudden change, it suggests a break. The

7 Ibid, p. 88 [for English citation].

Polish aesthetician Mieczysław Wallis complemented the question of a break or continuity with an otherwise modern remark about the need to recognize different competing concepts of the history of art. The history of art cannot be understood as one continuous process, as the history of one artistic tradition. In the article *O ciągłości i nieciągłości* (*Ze szczególnym uwzględnieniem ciągłości i nieciągłości w dziejach sztuki*) [On Continuity and Discontinuity (With a Special Emphasis on Continuity and Discontinuity in the History of Art] Wallis tried to determine whether sudden transitions, for example from one architectural style to another, correspond to sudden transitions or even upheavals in the social and economic fields. Do such transitions involve changes in all domains of culture? This article, once banned by Communist censorship, is worth recalling. Although it was included in the volume of Wallis's selected writings[8] several years ago, it still does not function in the literature on the subject, although it could be useful in the discussion on the concept of "turn" in art. The Polish aesthetician introduced the distinction of the processes by means of which we describe transformations in art.

He proposed to distinguish between continuity and discontinuity, and gradualness and abruptness (change by leaps and bounds) in the history of art, and he analyzed some examples of changes in the history of fine arts, mainly in architecture, using these very categories. While referring sporadically to those still interesting analyses of the particular changes in style, I will confine myself to presenting the author's general analytical remarks. According to Wallis, continuity or discontinuity in the history of art is first of all the continuity or discontinuity of artistic tradition. It consists in passing down both material products of creative activity, and the ability to commune with them: to correctly perceive, comprehend and interpret works of art, and to impart a certain amount of knowledge and ability necessary for creating such objects.[9] We can speak of continuity in the history of art in the strict sense when we mean the passing down of a certain range of themes and motifs, and consciously developing them. Wallis believed that each of the foregoing aspects may involve both continuity and discontinuity. We can speak of a radical break of continuity when one tradition entirely drives out another tradition in all its dimensions. According to Wallis, it would be only in this sense that we would be dealing with a genuine turn. He himself did not use the concept.

Closer to the contemporary concept of a turn, used in the humanities e.g. by Doris Bachmann-Medick, would be the transformations described by Wallis as continuity/ discontinuity resulting from the intersection of different traditions.

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8 M. Wallis, *Wybór pism estetycznych* [Selected Aesthetic Writings], Introduced, selected and edited by T. Pękala, Universitas, Kraków 2004, pp. 80-86.

9 Ibid, p. 80.

A new quality then emerges, involving a continuation of the selected aspects of those traditions, and a break with some of the others. Wallis gives the example of Greco-Indian sculpture – so-called Gandhara art, or Gothic-Moorish architecture – so-called Mudejar style.[10] Interrelationships, influences, and relations can embrace many traditions at once. Wallis's reflection on continuity in art history was oriented in a different direction than the inquiries of contemporary critics, and it serves here only as an example of organized auxiliary categories used in interpreting turns in art, such as change or radical change. This structuring is clearly absent from the discussions on what is (or is not) a turn in art. The concept of change or transformation in art is one of the most often cited determinants that characterize the turn.

Another pair of concepts that describe transitions between artistic forms is "gradualness" and "abruptness". Wallis characterizes this kind of change arguing that "in the history of art there are both gradual transitions, a gentle flow of some forms into others, and abrupt transitions, the emergence of new forms that are not continuations of the previous forms, transitions by leaps (and not only in the case of an invasion of a style from outside)".[11] He observes that in architecture, transition-period edifices were erected. "But these are all mixed-form buildings rather than structures with intermediate forms".[12] If we can clearly distinguish Gothic and Renaissance components in a building, this does not show that one style is gradually transitioning into another. The absence of intermediate forms confirms that an abrupt change is taking place. A new original style is arising. There is no transition, Wallis writes, between the Romanesque and Gothic styles, and between the Gothic style and Renaissance style, whereas the Baroque gradually evolved into Rococo.

There is no room here for discussing whether Wallis's vision of the history of art is right. I refer to the category of gradual and abrupt (i.e. by leaps) transitions as the conceptual tools which we can employ while characterizing changes in art. In an attempt to introduce order, as far as possible, into the conceptual chaos around the meaning of a turn in art, these basic determinants should be borne in mind. The preliminary observation summing up the survey of the already distinguished concepts, made with the awareness of the historical value of Wallis's conception, is as follows. The break of continuity in the history of art is an exception, and if it does occur, it has the characteristics of a turn. In the history of art, both at the level of artistic practice and within its accompanying discourse, many changes occur at the same time, different traditions are combined, there are also stronger or weaker ties between art with its theory and

10 Ibid, p. 82.
11 Ibid, pp. 82-83.
12 Ibid, p. 84.

the external domains of science, economy, politics, or religion. These important and necessary relativizations should be complemented with another one, to which we have been sensitized by hermeneutics: the perspective from which we make an assessment in terms of a transformation, a turn, or a break.

A very good example of a radical change in such assessments is the turn (I am using the term deliberately) in the views on Art Nouveau – from being regarded as a synonym of bad taste, it advanced to the status of "the dawn of the modern period". I have written on this subject on many occasions, therefore there is no need here to repeat the arguments in favor of this position.[13] I bring in the example of the reception of the *belle époque* art because of one more research tool, which is important in describing the change, transformation, and turn in art, i.e. the category of a crisis. Jan Białostocki regards crises in art as negative phenomena, with which I am not going to argue at this point, or as positive phenomena. Crises in the positive sense, as they are understood by René Thom, K. Burchardt, or Thomas Kuhn, contribute to the acceleration of the process of formulating new theories, new viewpoints, new values, and establishing new paradigms. Carl-Friedrich von Weizsäcker describes the "dazzling/lightning" moment, in which one perceives new roads and abruptly enters them, giving up previous habits, using the Leibnizian term *fulguration* (also employed by Konrad Lorenz). According to Jan Białostocki, the fulguration of modern art took place in the very beginning of the 20th century.[14] Following Wallis and other art historians – there is no room here to discuss their conceptions – I have tried to demonstrate that it was the Art Nouveau movement that abruptly separated from the nineteenth-century tradition and appeared at the same time, around 1890, in different points of the globe: London, Chicago, Barcelona, or Brussels. The abruptness of its break with traditions and its large-scale spread in many independent centers has all the marks of a turn in art.

The example of Art Nouveau is important for the question already raised and requiring an answer. Can negative crises in one field co-occur with positive crises in another field? Jan Białostocki leans towards the view that although art responds to the crises occurring in other areas of life, "one seldom encounters a situation in which the whole area of artistic creativity would be disrupted by a crisis".[15] Sudden "fulgurations" contradict the thesis about the concurrence of the crises in art and in other spheres of life. This approach calls into question Umberto Eco's historical conception about the analogy of the changes

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13 T. Pękala, *Secesja. Konkretyzacje i interpretacje* [Art Nouveau. Concretizations and Interpretations], Wyd. UMCS, Lublin 1995.

14 J. Białostocki, *Kryzysy w sztuce* [Crises in Art], Materiały Sesji Stowarzyszenia Historyków Sztuki, Lublin, grudzień 1985, PWN, Warszawa 1985, p. 21.

15 Ibid, p. 24.

in science and art and in the popular consciousness producing a characteristic *episteme* of the period, and it requires reserve in approaching the assumption that the problem of turns in art can be examined by analogy with the turns in the humanities in general. We should ask again: which of the accepted and acceptable meanings, or which of the semantic shades of the word "turn" could be reasonably applied to art? Let us begin with an example of a radical change which covers all fields of art.

While Art Nouveau may be an example of a "positive crisis" within art, which did not question its concept, the avant-garde is regarded as putting an end to the aesthetic paradigm in art. This thesis is not confirmed in all trends and in all periods, but the avant-garde did strongly disrupt this paradigm. There are many reasons to think that this was actually a change that, according to the present-day criteria, constituted a turn in art. It satisfied the criteria for both a turn as a radical change and the criteria set for the category of the turn in the humanities by Doris Bachmann-Medick. The range of influence of the avant-garde movements, the large number of the avant-gardes, the blurring of the boundaries between individual arts and artistic genres, and the combining of the means of expression of different arts resemble, by analogy, the conditions for cultural turns set by Bachmann-Medick. The avant-garde was indisputably a turn in culture, but it was also a radical breakthrough. Was it a medium-range turn or a turn in the paradigmatic sense, criticized as an inadequate criterion for the humanities? To answer the question of what kind of turn we are dealing with, we have to adopt a specific historiosophical strategy.

The assessment of the avant-garde in the political history of the contemporary world looks different than the recognition of its impact on the social/moral changes, its influence on the theories of culture and philosophy, let alone the role it played in intra-artistic transformations. The significance of the avant-garde for the history of modern art, and of the avant-garde discourse for aesthetics and other art sciences can be enlarged or diminished by presenting the avant-garde as a new kind of art, but also as a successive link in the chain of the history of artistic forms and ideas, or, from another perspective, by showing the avant-garde as anti-art deliberately opposing the artistic, and giving up its autonomy. What decides this issue is the historiosophical strategy: the analysis in terms of a "break", "destruction", "crisis", or "long duration", "common horizon of understanding", "the spirit of the times", or the favorite post-modernist strategy of interpreting art according to the rules of the heterogeneous "language games". The perspective of discontinuity, focusing attention on the features clearly distinguishing the avant-garde from pre-avant-garde art – e.g. going beyond the area of art, anti-aestheticism, allows us to ask about the specificity of avant-garde attitudes combining the avant-garde, the neo-avant-garde, but also the proto-avant-garde or post-avant-garde. The analysis of genetic

determinants within this research strategy attributes the principal role in the origin of the avant-garde precisely to political, economic, and cultural antinomies of the modern period. The research perspective assuming the continuity between traditional art and the art of the Great Avant-garde points to the new approach to selected elements of tradition with the simultaneous negation of other elements. When we look today at the changes in art introduced by the avant-garde, from the perspective of a turn, we can arrive at the conclusion that just as with the application of the earlier categories, in this case it is the methodological choice that places (or not) the investigated facts within the traditional aesthetic paradigm. The historical avant-garde, in an individualizing interpretation, was a radical upheaval in modern art, which it deconstructed, and it was also a revolt that started the postmodern art. In the global sense, the avant-garde caused the most radical upheaval not so much in art as in thinking about art. It exposed the utopian idea of separating the moments of eyewitnessing (evidence) from intelligibility, and particularism from universalism, creation and language of forms. I abide by my opinion expressed elsewhere that the greatest merits of the avant-garde lie in starting not only debates focused on art, but also relevant philosophical discourses on the problems of human existence in the context of identity and difference, "dispute" and "game", self-creation and responsibility.[16]

It is interesting to ask, in the context of the earlier discussion, how the avant-garde impulse ran out and whether the next "turn" was inevitable. "The avant-garde perceives the world as broken, filled with fragments, scraps of the past experiences".[17] This reflection, referring to the melancholic attitude of the avant-gardists, applies to the experiences of the second avant-garde, aware of the failure of their revolutionary intentions. In the assessments of the "avant-garde age" it was an undisputable point of reference for the subsequent changes. While discussing the subject of the role of the avant-garde and the arriere-garde in the modern philosophy of the art of the 2000s I also did not use the concept of the "turn". The concept of transformation was, however, burdened with so many reservations that already at that time I finished the part about the radicalism of the avant-garde with the words: "We can explain only the sources of the radical transformations (my emphasis, T. P.) started by the avant-garde,

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16 The opinions on the avant-garde cited in the last paragraphs come from the book T. Pękala, *Awangarda i ariergarda. Filozofia sztuki ponowoczesnej*, [The Avant-Garde and the Arriere-Garde. Philosophy of Postmodern Art] wyd. UMCS, Lublin 2000, pp. 54-55, 208.

17 A. Zeidler-Janiszewska, *Między melancholią a żałobą. Estetyka wobec przemian w sztuce współczesnej* [Between Melancholy and Mourning. Esthetics vis-ŕ-vis Changes in Contemporary Art], IK, Warszawa 1996, p. 7.

which we still call transformations in art, but with growing doubts and with an increasingly strong feeling of discursive pressure".[18]

The doubts concerned both the concept of art, oscillating towards the institutional definition, and the category of "transformation", which lost its operational sense in view of the kaleidoscopically changing image of art. In recent years it has been replaced by the "turn", appropriating some and excluding other "transformations". Intuitively, the difference consists in the degree of radicalness and range of a transformation.

The avant-garde, like earlier Art Nouveau, confirms our belief that the meaning of such terms as "change" or "crisis" in reference to art may differ from their meanings in other spheres of life. Their relationship should not be ignored, particularly when art itself gives up its autonomy, but it should be also remembered that only some of the meanings describing transformations and turns belong to the same family of concepts. As has been said above, in the language of art theory we are dealing with weak and strong turns. In the reflection on recent art there are no attempts to structure the turns that are taking place. This term defines, firstly, retrospective interpretations, as suggested by the title of a recent exhibition (September 2015) "Impressionism – Expressionism: The Turns in Art" at the Alte Nationalgalerie in Berlin. The term "cognitive turn" is used in the history of art to denote the attempts to apply cognitive research to the interpretation of specific works of art, as proposed by David Freedberg, John Onians, or Pamela Sheingorn. The American professor of history and theater explicitly uses the term "cognitive turn" in the title of her study.[19] The term "turn" is also employed to define social attitudes in the reception of art, oriented towards both specific actions by artists and certain, mostly socially sensitive, issues. In 2009, in the context of the activities of the Łódź Kaliska artistic group, the term "conservative turn" appeared in discussions, denoting the responses of the receivers of their art to the motifs associated with feminism and genderism.[20] The foregoing turns have little in common; we could say that they are part of the terminological aura of the turn as a distinctive feature of a trend in research, discussion, or interpretation.

Among the turns appearing in the literature in recent years there are also such as need closer attention because of the presence of the phenomena to which they apply in many, often very distant fields, and because of their importance for the whole of culture. One of them is the so-called "affective turn". It is a trend dynamically functioning in Western studies, of analyzing

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18 T. Pękala, *Awangarda i ariergarda*..., p.181.

19 P. Sheingorn, "Making the Cognitive Turn in Art History: A Case Study", *Emerging Disciplines*, Rice University Press, http://cnx.org/content/m34254/1.4/. [26.07.2015]

20 I. Kowalczyk, strasznasztuka.blox.pl/html.

literary and artistic phenomena from the perspective of the category of affect. The affective dimension of experience arouses interest mainly because of its extra-linguistic character, which prevents it from being easily accessible to human condition. The problems of "embodied thinking", of the corporeal, have long been present in aesthetics; there is even a subdiscipline of somaesthetics, with its own tools and terms, and its scholars investigating boundary situations, the sphere of the pre-linguistic community. It is not accidental that the ground-breaking moment for the theory of affects to appear in the field of interest of the contemporary humanities was the 1990s, when the theory of trauma was developed. The orientation of research towards the theory of affects in the humanities indicates a critical moment arising from the disillusionment with the accepted methodologies and ways of analyzing the work of art, but it is also an expression of certain theoretical helplessness as regards the sphere of the daily life. It is no accident that this sphere is described with the phrase "the theater of life" derived from the theory of theater. The range of the affective trend is very broad; it extends from the philosophy drawing inspirations from Deleuze's readings of Spinoza and the books by Deleuze and Guattari, as practiced by Brian Massumi, van Alphen, and Mieke Bal, to psycho-biological inspirations by Silvan Tomkins's conceptions developed by Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick and Adam Frank. These research currents are not linked by any distinct connecting lines apart from the general orientation towards the otherwise differently interpreted affects. "These paths probably will not cross, and it seems futile to derive some general characteristics or determine the parameters of this 'turn' in humanities research. Therefore, in this sense it does not seem justified to speak of the turn towards affects or the establishment of a new, affective paradigm in the humanities. It appears that the point is rather to shift attention and sensitivity to a somewhat different field, to show other possibilities of cognition in the world in general and in the world of scientific research, to privilege or enhance the models so far excluded, considered worse, and finally, to show new ways of practicing criticism, and, not less importantly, new ways of practicing history, including the history of literature, art and theater".[21] The opinion of Katarzyna Bojarska, critical of the rhetoric of the turn, is isolated and perhaps overly critical in this particular case.

In a profusion of local, though not insignificant turns, the affective turn, associated with the somatic turn is indisputably an interdisciplinary current of high social significance. I single out "the affective turn" because it appears that

[21] K. Bojarska, „Poczuć myślenie: afektywne procedury historii i krytyki" [To Feel Thinking: The Affective Procedures of History and Criticism], *Teksty Drugie* 2013 no. 6: *Zaafektowani* [The Affect-ridden] http://tekstydrugie.pl/pl/news/item/id,61,title,2013-nr-6-Zaafektowani.html) [26 July 2015].

the theories functioning within the scope of its influence can be and already have been employed in interpreting and understanding contemporary theater, or analyzing a large group of works drawing on the new trends in historiography.[22] They validate the existence of the sphere excluded so far from interpretation: the sphere of bodily perception, the memory of the body. Theater has always referred to and drawn on this level of perception; in performative arts in general the structure of reception is based on the affective and the symbolic. It was only the latest scientific theories and new technologies as well as multimedia art that explicitly brought home to us the problem of the affective and the somatic. Giving significance to the affective message as a part, not less important than others, of social message is without doubt a watershed in epistemological terms, and art provides inexhaustible material for research here. I would hesitate to maintain that the affective turn or the somatic turn is indeed a turn in art: its tradition is too long. However, it now plays a considerable role in the discourse of art, and the term "turn" is justified here.

Another trend in research and social practices, which, not without reason, aspires to the status of a turn, is "the social turn" in contemporary art. Leaving aside the discussion on the origin of both the term itself and the phenomenon with its many origins dating back in history, I will confine myself to only one determiner of the turn in question, i.e. to the category of effectiveness.[23]

The question of the extent to which art can/should impact social life today requires specification of what exactly this impact should consist in. How should we settle the clash between the instrumentalization of artistic practices and symbolic autonomy? Doesn't a turn consist in the transition from the sphere of symbolic influence to real action? The attempt to stage Rodrigo Garcia's *Golgota Picnic* during last year's Malta Festival in Poznań, and the events that occurred following this attempt can be treated as an example of the symbolic order, in that case represented by a work of art, clashing with reality. This kind of change is an actual interference in the established order, which is manifest for example in the polarization of social groups, and even in generating actual violence. The turn, in comparison with the ethos of socially engaged art, consists in the ability of artistic practices to effect real cultural changes. The scale of these changes does not matter, what is essential is the transition from the sphere of influence through a mental-affective experiment to the level of actual interference with the public sphere. The efficacy of art treated as an assigned task can be dangerous. The old problem of using art for political gains returns. The direction of some artistic measures, defined as a turn, requires

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22 Cf. T. Pękala, *Estetyczne konteksty doświadczenia przeszłości* [The Aesthetic Contexts of the Experience of the Past] Wyd. UMCS, Lublin 2013.

23 http://msl.org.pl/pl/wydarzenia/skutecznosc-sztuki [26 July 2015].

critical consideration without the pressure of political correctness or becoming part of the obligatory discourse of art. Different variants of the problem of effectiveness of contemporary art are presented in the book *Skuteczność sztuki*. The Effectiveness of Art] edited by Tomasz Załuski.[24]

The two turns, somatic and social, have become, to a different degree and within a different scope, part of the most discussed performative turn today. In her already classical publication, Erika Fischer-Lichte pointed out the change in the subject/object relationship in theater, and the replacement of a theatre play by an "event".[25] The process of transformation, which occurs as a result of the events characterized by different degrees of effectiveness, is not confined to the fictional world that was a laboratory of transformations for the audience. Performance, as is the case with somatic or socially engaged art, requires a real reaction, sometimes directly oriented to a specific result. Initiated by the twentieth-century avant-gardes, the process of blurring the boundaries between art and reality should be reinterpreted from the viewpoint of today's artist/performer, and from the perspective of the work/event. If we are dealing with a turn, then we should again take the transgressive potential of art into account and consider which hitherto uncrossed boundary has been traversed. Performativity can be already spoken of not only as another "turn", but a dangerous bend, fraught with many dangers. Different means of the performative impact on the viewer/participant in an event that enforce activity through bodily, affective, volitional or intellectual stimuli arouse as much hope as concern. The free use by performers of technological and electronic achievements and other benefits of civilization makes the institution of art an attractive field of political, corporate, and other influences. This danger is discerned by the representatives of performative arts: they protest against the appropriation of the name "performance" by various "actors on the public stage" (another linguistic borrowing).

Finally, I would like to ask an important question: Is there a fine line of the renegotiated autonomy of art and where does it run? This question returns to the classical questions of continuity in the history of art, of its identity, and its place in the postmodern world. I believe that it is too early to assess which transformations in art described with the concept of "the turn" will turn out to be weak turns and which strong ones, and whether they will permanently change the image of art. If we are to look for some regularities in the occurring processes, I have high hopes for the research oriented towards changing the position of aesthetic experience in contemporary culture.[26]

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24 *Skuteczność sztuki* [Effectiveness of Art], ed. T. Załuski, Wyd. Muzeum Sztuki w Łodzi, Łódź 2014.

25 E. Fischer-Lichte, *Ästhetik des Pervormativen*, Suhrkamp, Frankfurt am Main, p. 29.

26 U. Brandstätter, *Ästhetische Erfahrung*, Handbuch Kulturelle Bildung Online, 15; http://www.kubi-online.de/artikel/aesthetische-erfahrung [26 July 2015].

The aesthetic experience, first studied as a phenomenon, has become an instrument of analysis, supporting the conceptions of the aestheticization of reality in aesthetics, culture studies, or historiography. When using the principal category of this study, we can say that we are dealing with the turn that inevitably has to influence art. The artistic turns are also the search for a new formula of the aesthetic in art.

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ZMIANA, ZERWANIE, KRYZYS CZY FULGURACJA – CZYM JEST ZWROT W SZTUCE? (streszczenie)

Zadaniem tekstu jest próba określenia głównych wyznaczników przemian w sztuce, które spełniałyby warunki konieczne zjawiska określanego terminem zwrotu. W pierwszej części tekstu zaprezentowane zostały próby odpowiedzi na pytanie czym właściwie jest zwrot w kulturze i jakie stanowiska metodologiczne oferuje współczesna humanistyka. Punktem wyjścia jest koncepcja Doris Bachmann-Medick. Przyjmując założenie, że inflacja zwrotów kulturze jest sygnałem głębokiej zmiany stawiamy pytanie o odzwierciedlenie zachodzących procesów w sztuce. Nie chodzi o reakcję sztuki na zmiany, ale o sztukę jako fragment zmienionej rzeczywistości. W tym kontekście przypomniana została koncepcja sztuki jako metafory epistemologicznej rzeczywistości U. Eco, teoria ciągłości/nieciągłości, stopniowości i skokowości w sztuce Mieczysława Wallisa. Koncepcja charakterystyczne dla wczesnych etapów świadomości nowoczesnej zostały poddane sprawdzianowi wedle kryteriów współczesnego rozumienia przemiany w sztuce określanej mianem zwrotu. By sprostać tak sformułowanemu zadaniu rozważane były różne znaczenia pojęcia „zmiany, przemiany" a w dalszej kolejności „kryzysy pozytywne i negatywne" występujące w polach znaczeniowych terminu „zwrot". Materiałem przykładowym były dzieje recepcji sztuki secesyjnej, problem radykalności przełomu awangardowego. W końcowej partii tekstu rozważano różne użycia pojęcia zwrotu w odniesieniu do sztuki ostatnich lat. Wyróżnione zostały dwa „zwroty" : afektywny , łączony z somatycznym i społeczny. Obydwa można potraktować jako składowe zwrotu o zasięgu ogólnokulturowym – zwrotu performatywnego. Postulowanym kierunkiem badań nad współczesnymi zwrotami w sztuce wydaje się analiza nowej formuły doświadczenia estetycznego.

Słowa klucze: zwrot, transformacja, radykalna zmiana, negatywny i pozytywny kryzys, ciągłość i nieciągłość w sztuce, sztuka współczesna.

Art Inquiry. Recherches sur les arts 2015, vol. XVII
ISSN 1641-9278

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EMPATHETIC TURN IN THE REFLECTION ON ART

Abstract: At the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, scholars began to include the notion of empathy in their reflections on art, which was the hallmark of an extensive theoretical turn, whose consequences were to spread to other areas of the humanities and lead to the creation of a new research method specific to this field of knowledge. Such scholarly endeavors were characterized by psychological approach, expanded to include biophysiologica considerations, with an emphasis on the role of the body. Such a perspective was aimed at revaluing basic aesthetic issues, such as beauty and aesthetic experience, as well as key problems of the history of art (such as the notion of style). The article summarizes the core principles of the concept of empathy employed in the field of fine arts, and examines its use in the theories of such scholars as Robert Vischer, Theodor Lipps, Heinrich Wölfflin and Wilhelm Worringer. This will be followed by a brief consideration of the reasons why this idea was rejected by the researchers on art in the second half of the twentieth century. Against this background, my article will pose the question regarding a return to the concept of empathy (or a reemergence of the empathetic turn) in the reflection on the visual arts in this century. Its symptoms have been pointed out by some Anglophhone authors (such as Juliet Koss). One should, however, note the differences in the new approach. The former biophysiologica background has been replaced with references to contemporary research on brain functioning. Instead of concentrating on the expressive character of architecture, scholars explore e.g. an empathetic response to human images (David Freedberg) or to landscapes and still lifes (Michael Fried). The article concludes with some reflections that situate the concept of empathetic turn in the context of the theory of cultural turns proposed by Doris Bachmann-Medick.

Keywords: empathy, Robert Vischer, Theodor Lipps, Heinrich Wőlfflin, Wilhelm Worringer, David Freedberg, Michael Fried, cultural turns

The word "empathy" was introduced into the English language in 1909 by the psychologist Edward Titchener, who translated if from the German term *Einfühlung*, literally meaning *feeling into*.[1] The English version of the term was adopted in different languages and in different fields of knowledge, although today it is sometimes suggested that its actual area of application should be social psychology. In such case, empathy is understood as an "objective understanding of another [man] through efforts to penetrate the intellectual world of his experience, but devoid of affective participation, be it positive or negative."[2] In contrast to the emotional neutrality inherent in psychological research, the aesthetic sense of the term (found also in everyday life) emphasizes the emotional involvement of the observer. Such an approach to empathy is thought to have originated in the Romantic era. It has been pointed out that Byron wrote on how he was becoming part of his surroundings, establishing an emotional contact with the external world, while Baudelaire said that suggestive magic should be created that would encompass both the subject and the object, the outside world and the artist.[3] Similar views were also frequently voiced by the German Romantics.

Theoretical interest in empathy emerged mainly in Germany in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. An important point of reference for these inquiries was the introduction of the notion of *Einfühlung* in art. The purpose of its use was to find new solutions to fundamental theoretical and historical problems, or to gain knowledge on the functioning of the human mind, which was to lay the foundations for a new research method specific for the humanities.[4] These tasks were not treated as mutually exclusive. They were to be based on a psychological approach, extended to include biophysiological concerns, with an emphasis on the role of the body. Through such references, attempts were made to find a new field for aesthetics, whose position had been undermined as a result of the development of general studies of art (*Allgemeine Kunstwissenschaft*). This was to be achieved using a different method of defining the basic concepts of this discipline, such as beauty, aesthetic experience, and so on.

The postulates presented above were implemented to the fullest extent by Theodor Lipps, Friedrich Theodor Vischer and his son Robert, Hermann Lotze, Johannes Volkelt, and others. Not only did their theories combine specific problems of art with aesthetic issues, they also made those issues central

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1 Cf. Stanford *Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, entry "empathy", http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/empathy/

2 *Vocabulaire d'esthétique*, ed. A, Souriau, PUF, Paris 1990, entry "Einfühlung", p. 640.

3 Ibidem, p. 641

4 Cf. *Stanford Encyclopedia* ..., op. cit.

categories of social sciences and humanities. Besides playing a fundamental role in the evaluation of works of art, the concept of empathy could be regarded as a basis for understanding humans as beings endowed with mental life. Among the authors mentioned above, special position is often attributed to Robert Vischer, whose short texts predated subsequent comprehensive studies.

In his examination of the spatial understanding of forms, Vischer concluded that we can distinguish between passive seeing "without any special effort" (*Sehen*), and "a much more active process" of scanning (*Schauen*).[5] The former is a passive unconscious process, while the latter is a deliberate activity that consists in the tracing of shapes by human consciousness. It is in the case of the latter mode of seeing that a link occurs between optical and kinetic activities. The German philosopher says that when we are watching something attentively, it is as if we were touching it. Following a line resembles tracing it with a fingertip. Perception of full shapes is not unlike brushing them with a hand, allowing us to feel their convexity and concavity. Similarly tactile is the perception of objects as distant and close in terms of space. Sensory contact is not restricted to sight, and includes various ranges of experience. It activates parts of the body other than the eye. Therefore, Vischer makes a distinction between "immediate sensation" and "responsive sensation." The latter occurs in connection with the activation of muscles, and the transfer of visual sensations to other parts of the body. For example, a horizontal line corresponds to the spacing of our eyes, and therefore evokes a feeling of pleasure upon observation. The same is the case when we look at regular shapes that correspond to the regular structure of the human form.

Seeing, therefore, is indirectly related to the whole of our body and the sensations received by its various organs. This finds reflection in various phenomena, such as e.g. synesthesia, or cross-sensory perception. Colors may thus trigger sensations from senses other than sight – we perceive them as "hot" or "cold," "loud" or "silent," "heavy" or "light," "sweet" or" sour." Empathy also overcomes the static nature of the observed shapes. "The whole body is involved [in empathetic reception]; the entire physical being is moved. For in the body there is, strictly speaking, no such process as localization. Thus each emphatic sensation ultimately leads to a strengthening or a weakening of the general *vital sensation*."[6]

The described process involves more than just concrete stimuli, as it also takes place in the domain of ideas. Vischer claims that imagination is an act

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5 R. Vischer, *On the Optical Sense of Form: A Contribution to Aesthetics*, in: *Empathy, Form, and Space*: *Problems in German Aesthetics, 1873-1893*, Getty Center for the History of Art and the Humanities, Santa Monica 1994, p. 93–94.

6 Ibid., p. 99.

through which we mentally simulate something that has previously existed as the content of our sensations. Thus, we are able to visualize absent objects. Imagination can also refer to our "self." The German philosopher believes that careful introspection may help us discover the relations between individual parts of our body and their potential situation, and the states of objects. Thus approached, objects become counterparts of different parts of our physical self. The way in which an object is constructed in the mind finds an analogy in the structure of our body. This no longer involves just seeing, because our "self" is identified with the form of the object. The object is stationary, as Vischer writes, and yet "the forms appear to move, but only we move in the imagination. We move in and with the forms."[7] This occurs because we approach the object in analogy to our own bodily structure. Sensations can be treated as a result of the impact of external stimuli, but they can also "crystallize" as "empathetic sensation". In such cases, form becomes internalized. Vischer claims that it also becomes "clarified" and "spiritualized."[8]

Thus, empathetic sensations are not random. They are formed on the basis of the relationship between the subject and the object, where both elements balance each other. When I project myself onto a lifeless form, Vischer says, only seemingly do I surrender my own identity to it. "I seem merely to adapt and attach myself to it as one hand clasps another, and yet I am mysteriously transplanted and magically transformed into this Other."[9] Observing a static object, I can effortlessly place myself mentally within its internal structure. I can measure its size, breadth, and tensions using my own dimensions. I can make my body smaller to fit its size and match its curves, which will be accompanied by appropriate sensations, e.g. of compression or expansion, and so on. Empathy makes the static form move when we imagine it is going to move, or that it has just moved. It also lends such a form expressive properties similar to human kinesics and facial expressions. Thus, the form in question is subject to the same kind of anthropomorphization that often occurs in everyday life with regard to animals and plants. In the latter case, however, human qualities are attributed to externally observable features of appearance and behavior of a cat, dog, or some plant. In the case of empathy, however, there is a projection which consists in transferring oneself into the observed form. At the same time a split occurs, because we feel that this particular object is the source of our sensations and emotional experience. Vischer thus emphasizes that acts of empathy involve the participation of the whole person, including all vital sensations. At the same time such person is united with the world. This

7 Ibid., p. 101.
8 Ibid., p. 102.
9 Ibid., p. 104.

is why Vischer writes repeatedly about the "pantheistic impulse" consisting in the sense of oneness with the world. We go beyond the easiest form of kinship – our sense of connection with the human species – striving, consciously or unconsciously, towards unity with the whole world.[10]

Vischer's principal text from which I have quoted dates from 1873. It predated the development of the concept of empathy and its vast influence (especially in German aesthetics) by over twenty years. The most prominent figure in this school of thought was Theodor Lipps, described by the cultural critic Theodor Lessig as "the greatest aesthetician alive," while the British aesthetician writing under the pseudonym Vernon Lee considered him to be "a new Darwin",[11] because she believed his ideas to be as original and far-reaching as those proposed by the creator of the theory of natural selection. The researchers of empathetic aesthetics have located it within the Neo-Kantian school of thought. Its presumed purpose was to find a third way between Hegel's idealism and the formalism of Johann Friedrich Herbart and Robert Zimmermann. However, this idea was attributed originality and it was expected to produce a new approach to a number of key issues of aesthetics.

The author who made the most extensive attempt to modify the traditional aesthetic issues in light of the theory of *Einfühlung* was Theodor Lipps.[12] He became an avid proponent of Vischer's concept. In 1898, in the weekly *Kunstchronik*, he published a review of one of his works, with the famous, later oft-repeated example of empathy pertaining to a Doric column.[13] When we look at it, we are aware of the burden it must support at the top and the resistance of the foundation on which it is located. Thus, we transfer our own kinesthetic feelings onto the column; they then become the source of the receptive sensations we experience. Thus, writing about aesthetic experience, the German author assumed that human feelings are transferred onto the observed object, and that at the same time we accept that it is that very object that produces them. In another text, titled *Psychologie des Schönen und der Kunst*, he expounded on this subject, emphasizing that an act of empathy is not provoked by an internal action, which is then projected onto the object. Our experience of a specific emotional state is original, related to the object.

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10 Helen Bridge emphasizes the pantheistic aspect of Vischer's concept of empathy in her article "Empathy theory and Heinrich Wőlfflin: A reconsideration" in *Journal of European Studies* 2010, Vol. 41, No. 1, p. 6. Citing the 1897 work by P. Stern, the author notes, however, that pantheism is not an adequate psychological explanation of empathy, as it is not the source but the result thereof (ibid., p. 18).

11 Cf. ibidem, p. 3.

12 The most relevant book, *Aesthetik*, was published in two volumes in 1903 and 1905 in Hamburg by Voss Verlag.

13 Cf. ibidem, p. 4.

The feeling of unity between my own "self" and a foreign entity appears first, while the awareness of the duality is only secondary. Therefore, empathy is not an intellectual cognitive tool. It is a situation from life, rooted in our contact with external reality, or, as Vischer puts it, an involuntary "inclination and habitus."[14] In contact with art, however, it achieves its most complete form. "A complete *Einfühlung*," Lipps wrote, "and therefore an *Einfühlung* that is aesthetic, is not something derivative. On the contrary, it is primary to cognition." Quoting this statement, Raymond Bayer stresses that for the German author the experience of art is of particular importance from the point of view of the concept of empathy, and "an aesthetic act, aesthetic process in general, fits within that identification of me and not-me".[15]

Lipps examined many aspects of empathy. His research is important, for example, from the point of view of the psychological theory of mind. He also formulated an extensive concept of aesthetics, based on a system of traditional concepts, only differently defined. For example, he employed references to empathy in order to characterize beauty. He wrote that when his attention is perceptually focused on an object of aesthetic experience, he automatically projects his own sensations generated during earlier contacts with the objects he had dealt in different life situations, where he learned their properties. When he judges the result of this process as positive, he assesses the object as beautiful. Regarding this relationship, Lipps writes about positive or negative empathy, treating the terms as the basis for determining the existence of aesthetic value. As Bayer wrote about this concept: "psychism explains any form in the world, attributing beauty as its duplicate or shadow. Lipps' aesthetic theory, while pleasurable in character, is not based on pleasure pure and simple, or even hedonism: it is the activity of the subject that is in the foreground, not the object: [it entails] a symbolic reanimation of the whole of existence. Symbolic activity is in the heart of the problem: what counts is the intensification of the self and the joy that accompanies each value in action."[16] This comment clearly indicates that when confronted with traditional aesthetic concepts, it is empathy that dominates. The notions of aesthetic experience and beauty are revised. Beauty is not reduced to formal perfection, and the sensation thereof is not contemplation independent of one's life experiences. Lipps deliberately asserted such order, characterizing our sensation of beauty as "objectified self-enjoinment."

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14 R. Vischer, op. cit. p.105.

15 R. Bayer, *Histoire de l'esthétique*, Armand Colin, Paris 1961, p. 348 [translation mine, based on the French language version].

16 Ibidem, p. 348.

Regarding empathy, however, Lipps did not believe in the fundamental role of the processes occurring in the body of the recipient. He held this assertion to be true even in the case of performing arts, which are, after all, based on the actions of living people. He thought that recreating the tension of the muscles and nerves responsible for the actions performed by actors, dancers, and acrobats in the viewer's body is not the main basis for the sensation experienced by the viewer. On the contrary, in the course of aesthetic reception, there is a departure from the physical realm towards intellectual perceptions. Analyzing the empathetic response to the actions of an acrobat, he wrote: "But the more I mentally join in with his movements, the more these contents of *bodily sensation* that he experiences are *removed* from my consciousness ... The object of my empathy is the striving and mental action alone."[17] Thus, the observed action is dematerialized during an empathetic reception. What the recipient feels is not so much that particular physical situation, as the tension, the pressure, the aspiration itself.[18] Bodily unity with the observed object is only a starting point, while aesthetic sensations are based on the feeling of dematerialized energies. Heinrich Wölfflin believed the opposite to be true. He devoted one work to empathy – his doctoral thesis – , but the issues raised therein were addressed in some later books. It is generally accepted that he gradually retracted his original position. However, one can also assume that even if the author recanted specific solutions relating to the process of empathy, these issues still affected the scope and nature of art-related problems he examined in his subsequent work.

Wölfflin's point of view was different than that of Vischer or Lipps. While for the latter two authors art was just one of the areas that allow researchers to address the issue of empathy, for Wölfflin it was an issue of vital interest. Research on empathy was to provide solutions to the problems of art history. His doctoral dissertation (1886), where he employed such an approach, examines the question with regard to architecture. It had been often seen as a domain of construction, where technical solutions are what truly matters, and the resulting effect is purely visual. The question Wölfflin posed, however, was: how is it possible that architectural forms are capable of expressing emotions and moods? Such an effect was described as "an impression" made on the recipient, while its basis was thought to be the "expression" of the object. There was, however, a problem, namely: how can tectonic forms be

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17 T. Lipps, *Ästhetik: Psychologie des Schőnen und der Kunst. Erster Teil: Grundlegung der Ästhetik*, Voss, Hamburg und Leipzig 1903, p. 131; quoted after H. Bridge, op. cit. p. 8.

18 This view is reminiscent of the position of Robert Vischer, who wrote that when looking at a flying bird we should empathetically feel the movement, not body ("flight of a bird apart from the bird itself"); op. cit., p. 106.

expressive? Wölfflin understood the notion of "tectonic forms" in broad terms, including the products of applied arts (furniture, clothing, etc.), where, just as in architecture, there is no representation of beings endowed with mental life that convey their feelings through external symptoms. He hypothesized that the viewers' emotion in such cases was derived from kinesthetic responses of the eye tracking the lines in front of it. Such a view, considered by some representatives of the theory of empathy, was ultimately rejected because of the lack of empirical evidence. It is not true, Wölfflin said, that the ease of shifting one's gaze upon a linear arrangement consisting of fluid lines is the basis of aesthetic pleasure. The German author therefore proposed a different solution. He wrote that "Physical forms possess a character only because we ourselves possess a body. If we were purely visual beings, we would always be denied an aesthetic judgment of the physical world."[19] Since we do have a body, it teaches us about gravity, contraction, or strength. Thanks to our physical experience, we can capture the expression of architectural forms. We instinctively animate the object reading our own image in it. Powerful columns stimulate us energetically, a vast space is in harmony with our breathing, an asymmetrical arrangement is experienced as a physical defect, not unlike when one's leg is hurt, or even missing. Wölfflin notes that painting can evoke similar experiences, provided it does not depict the human form. As an example, he cites architectural elements in Rubens' paintings, which "pulsate with the same life that animates his bodies."[20] Therefore, he suggests the possibility of transferring the empathetic approach to architecture onto inanimate elements depicted in paintings, which can also be considered as expressive. He also considers applying such analysis to utilitarian art, for example footwear or household appliances.

In the discussed theory, the concept of empathy becomes the basis for a general examination of works of art from the perspective of expression. However, in his subsequent publications, Wölfflin did not choose to develop the expressive concept of art from a universally approached empathetic point of view. Instead, he focused on a problem that was important in his day, namely artistic style. At the end of the nineteenth century, this issue seemed to be one of the key concepts of the methodology of art history. Since styles underwent various transformations over the course of history, the notion of empathy (if it was to be useful at all in their analysis) should be subjected to historicizing. The German author undertook such task. As Bridge puts it, "Transposing his model of empathy at once from the universal to the historically specific and from the

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19 H. Wőlfflin, "Prolegomena to a Psychology of Architecture", in: *Art in Theory, 1815-1900. An Anthology of Changing Ideas*, ed. Ch. Harrison, P. Wood, J. Gaiger, Blackwell Publishing, Malden- Oxford- Carlton 1998, p. 712.

20 Ibidem, p. 716.

individual to the collective, he defines architectural style as the expression of the feeling of a particular people and age. The human body, in its dual universal and historical aspects, provides the essential point of connection between the two. While a style expresses the historically specific bodily ideal of an age, it is the unchanging organization of the human body that ensures the universality of our feeling for form, thus enabling us reliably to deduce the feeling of a people from our impression of architectural forms of different age."[21] Therefore, Wölfflin did not retract his earlier assertion concerning the role of empathy. He only decided to combine the general problem with the considerations relating to the historical specifics. Instead of considering the architectural work in a universal sense, he decided to take into account its temporal and spatial location, as well as its stylistic character. He also wanted to ask how the work may become the basis for empathy in other periods than the one in which it was created. These questions were to lead to a new methodological approach to art history.

The German author addressed these issues in his book *Renaissance und Barock: Eine Untersuchung über Wesen und Entstehung des Barockstils in Italien*, published in 1888. The title of the treatise places emphasis on historical and descriptive aspects, but theoretical issues were equally important for the author. Therefore, the work can be regarded as a study of empirical cases, which were to lead to general conclusions. The starting point is the application of the empathetic approach to the examined works. Wölfflin writes: "We always project a corporeal state conforming to our own. We interpret the whole outside world according to the expressive system with which we have become familiar from our own bodies."[22] However, subsequent reflections address different types of bodily attitudes and behaviors, described by confronting our bodies with works of art. For example, the "Gothic deportment," which can be felt in contact both with the sculpture and the architecture of that era, is characterized by "its tense muscles and precise movement; everything is sharp and precisely pointed, there is no relaxation, no flabbiness, a will is expressed everywhere in the most explicit fashion."[23] Listed among these features are both physical characteristics and mental qualities of humans. The recipient can get empathetically closer to them, but this does not mean that he has to accept them. They can be assessed as foreign to him. Empathy-based contact with works of art may thus have not only emotional, but cognitive character – it can help us realize other kinds of attitudes and different characters. Considered from

21 H. Bridge, op. cit. p. 9-10.
22 H. Wölfflin, *Renaissance and Baroque*, transl. K., Simon, Cornell University Press, 1966, p. 77.
23 Ibidem.

such a psychological perspective, history of art would thus consist in determining individual features of artistic styles not as a set of visually available qualities, but as characteristics of the types of mental attitudes inherent in the art in the successive periods. Wölfflin writes: "Renaissance, by contrast, evolves the expression of a present state of wellbeing in which the hard frozen forms become loosened and liberated and all is pervaded by vigor."[24]

Wilhelm Worringer examines another role of the concept of empathy in the history of art. In contrast to Wölfflin, for whom empathetic approach was associated with the perspective of the recipient of art, Worringer applies it primarily to the creative attitude of the artist. Besides, he pointed out that such an approach did not exist in all periods in the history of art. In his famous 1911 work, *Abstraktion und Einfühlung. Ein Beitrag zur stilpsychologie*, he wrote: "The aim of the ensuing treatise is to demonstrate the assumption that this process of empathy has at all times and at all places been the presupposition of artistic creation, in the face of artistic creations of many ages and peoples. It is of on assistance to us, for instance, in the understanding of that vast complex of works of art that pass beyond the narrow framework of Graeco-Roman and modern Occidental art."[25] Worringer assumed, therefore, that it applies only in the case of such varieties of artistic creation that are based on "a happy pantheistic relationship of confidence between man and the phenomena of the external world".[26] In such situations, man not only trusts his visual sensations, but also feels the need to confirm their characteristics by touch. Empathetic contact with works of art involves combined data typical of different senses, creating the impression of a full, living relationship with what is viewed. Such a situation is not found in the case of an abstract approach. Worringer wrote that "the urge to abstraction is the outcome of a great inner unrest inspired in man by the phenomena of the outside world; in a religious respect it corresponds to a strongly transcendental tinge to all notions."[27] Thus, he believed that empathy does not occur when the viewer does not trust the outside world, fears it, is constantly surprised by phenomena he cannot foresee. He does not want intimate contact with what is foreign, and feels only the desire to be reassured, which he can achieve by breaking the direct contact with what troubles him. The artist, therefore, tears the external world objects out of their natural context and subjects them to rearrangement, cleanses them of any marks of life, and tries to discover their absolute sense. One manifestation of this trend is the

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24 Ibidem,.
25 W. Worringer, *Abstraction and Empathy. A Contribution to the Psychology of Style*, transl. M. Bullock, Ivan R. Dee, Publisher, Chicago 1997, p. 7–8.
26 Ibidem, p. 52.
27 Ibidem.

geometrization of shapes in a work of art and subjecting them to strict rules of symmetry and rhythm. Such art is not born out of empathetic attitude and there is no reason for applying empathetic approach upon its reception.

Based on the presented assertion, the German author developed his concept of the evolution of the history of art. The starting point was the artistic creativity of primitive man, who lived in constant fear of the arbitrariness and incomprehensibility of natural phenomena. Therefore, he sought refuge in abstract forms, which he believed to be associated with the immutable, the non-living, and therefore divine. Abstraction, according to Worringer, is therefore born not out of the strength of intellect, but the realization of its weakness and helplessness when faced with the complexity of the outside world. As in the case of the primitive man, also in later stages of art development, each time when the strangeness and incomprehensibility of the world was experienced, the "dethronement of the pride of knowledge" led to the rejection of sensory data as the basis for creative activities. Propensity for abstraction is, therefore, instinctive. The German author expounded on the subject in his later book *Formprobleme der Gotik* (1927), where he wrote that by instinct he meant "that secret undercurrent of our nature which we detect in ourselves as the court of last resort of our feeling, as the great irrational substratum beneath the deceptive upper surface of the senses and of the intellect, and to which we descend in hours of deepest and most painful insight."[28] At its core is the belief that "the essential content of this instinct is awareness of the limitations of human knowledge, awareness of the phenomenal world's un-fathomableness, which mocks all knowledge of the intellect."[29] In the case of such duality all anthropocentric illusions are reduced to nothingness, and anthropomorphization typical of empathy is not justified.

In the above-cited book, Worringer introduced a vision of artistic changes over the course of history, which consisted in the gradual infusion of geometric, abstract elements whose primary components were drawn from the observation of the outside world. Man begins to understand external reality and gradually incorporates its components into works of art. Also his ability to feel empathy deepens. Considered from this point of view, Gothic art exhibits signs of the diminishing of the duality of man and the world (inherent in primal art), leading to a gradual weakening of the abstract character of geometrical lines and supplementing them with components based on natural forms.[30]

Worringer made this assertion evident already in his first book. He did not treat the principle of *Einfühlung* as universal. He believed that it inspired

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28 W. Worringer, *Form in Gothic*, transl. H. Read, Alec Tiranti, London 1964, p. 29.
29 Ibidem, p. 29.
30 Cf. ibidem, p. 80.

artistic creation only in certain periods and, therefore, it can be used as a basis for the aesthetic reception of artwork produced within those timeframes. Worringer did not examine the art of his own era in any detail. Herbert Read, however, applied his ideas to his own study of twentieth century art. In his book *Art Now*, Read claimed that the conditions in the modern world corresponded to those characterizing the lives of the primitive man. The English author used this argument to explain the emergence of abstract tendencies in art in the first half of the previous century.[31]

After a period of widespread interest at the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the notion of applying the theory of empathy in reflections on art was either harshly criticized, or completely ignored over the subsequent decades. For the purpose of this article, I will restrict myself to several examples that will demonstrate the problem in question. Rudolf Arnheim ranked the theory of empathy among associationist views and accused it of disregarding – or having insufficient regard for – phenomenological factors, namely the relationships between the perceived appearance of an object and the expression it conveys. He believed that associating the observed features of a column with the sensations that it evokes upon contact (such as, for example, pride, stubbornness) in the act of empathy proceeds in the same way as learning the meaning of words when studying a foreign language. "Similarly, one has to learn which expression goes with which state of mind because one could perhaps comprehend how the one was generated by the other but one would not perceive expression as directly as one does colors and shapes," he wrote.[32] Thus, empathy was reduced to an attempt to resolve the issue of artistic expression and that attempt was declared unsuccessful, because it failed to reflect sufficiently on the relationship between the recipient's emotions and the qualities of the visual stimulus. Arnheim was of the opinion that feeling needs to be seen in the work, where it occurs in the form of directional tensions between shapes and colors. Therefore, he wrote, "Even in empathy theory, the visual information served only to apprise the viewer of the situation, of which he had to draw inferences. 'The column is carrying a load' – this knowledge sufficed to endow the sight with all the feelings about load-bearing that the viewer could marshal from his own experience. There was no explicit awareness on how much depended on the particular dynamic qualities of the percept".[33]

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31 I discuss this issue in my book *Dlaczego geometria? Problemy współczesnej sztuki geometrycznej* [Why geometry? Problems of contemporary geometric art], Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Łódzkiego, Łódź 2004, p. 9–12.

32 R. Arnheim, *Art and Visual Perception: A Psychology of the Creative Eye*, University of California Press, Berkley and Los Angeles, California 1975, s. 448.

33 Ibidem, p. 448.

Stefan Morawski also criticized the theory of empathy, although for different reasons. He also examined it in the context of the issues relating to expression. He was concerned about the changing role of a work of art as well as the relationship between the artist and the audience that occurs during the *Einfühlung*. He wrote that "the theory of empathy emphasizes the spiritual projection of the self, substituting aesthetic experience with para-aesthetic or creative experience. This theory lends an arbitrary character to the "feedback" between the recipient and the work of art, meaning that the whole evocative power of experienced art is guaranteed by the recipient-subject, while no part of this power is attributed to the object itself."[34] In his article, Morawski examined the differences between individual representatives of the theory of empathy as regards the role of the "physiognomy" of the perceptually received object. He assumed, however, that compared to other components of aesthetic experience, this role is limited in each case. In the course of an empathetic contact with a work of art it is not so much that work that we enjoy but ourselves (*Ich Qualitäten*, as Lipps called it), i.e. "our free vitality of the spirit, which we project onto the observed and contemplated dance, piece of architecture, or painted landscape."[35] This is why the Polish aesthetician believed that empathy assigned too much creative power to the receiver, whilst limiting the role of the artist. One argument in support of this assertion was the fact that the process of feeling-into is similar in the case of works of art and creations of nature.

I have analyzed only two examples of the criticism of empathy theory with regard to aesthetic issues, not taking into account the objections and reservations against this theory put forward by psychologists. It is, however, also noteworthy that art historians, quite enthusiastic in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century about the prospect of employing the notion of empathy in their discipline, later renounced this view. One example would be that of Wölfflin, who called for an empathetic approach to art works in his dissertation, and who endeavored to adapt the theory of empathy for the analysis of the stylistic transition between art periods, only to abandon the physiognomic research model (i.e. focusing on the role of the body) in his most famous work *Kunstgeschichtliche Grundbegriffe: Das Problem der Stilentwicklung in der neueren Kunst (1915-1933)* and concentrate on the perceptual approach to stylistic transformations as modifications of autonomous, purely optical means of expression.[36]

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34 S. Morawski, *Ekspresja*, "Studia Estetyczne" 1974, No. XI, p. 320.

35 Ibidem, p. 320.

36 It is worth noting that in her detailed analysis of the development of Wőlfflin's conceptions, Bridge is of the opinion that he "never abandoned the idea of art as expression, but he did turn away from a model of expression based on the body as mediator between form and feeling" (H. Bridge, op. cit., p. 13). The author points to the parallels between the views expressed in the *Principles of Art History* and Lipps' views.

In the second half of the twentieth century, the theory of empathy had such a bad reputation among aestheticians and art historians that its definition was missing even from some specialized dictionaries. The situation began to change in the early twenty-first century. In her article (relevant from this point of view), Juliet Koss writes that after a century of neglect and denigration, empathy "raises its head" in the Anglophone cultural discourse.[37] This does not mean, however, an overall rehabilitation of the theory or finding a way to prove its new academic validity, but rather frequent employment of its elements when discussing various aspects of art. In order to show the scope of the issues involved, the author lists the studies on the works of Edward Hopper and Adolph Menzel, the architecture of Frank Gehry, the Surrealist project, and the whole discipline of film. The notion of "empathy" has not achieved a dominating position in any of these thematic fields, nor has it become a basis for a new school of thought. There are no departments of empathy at universities.[38] Regardless, the concept has been overtly promoted by certain artists, such as Karen Finley and Barbara Kruger. The latter has repeatedly placed large inscriptions in public places, proclaiming in various languages that empathy can change the world.

Describing the background of the modern turn towards empathy, Koss wrote: "Like the recent 'return to beauty', the resurgence of empathy would seem to signal a backlash against the oppositional aesthetics of the recent decade – a distancing from the rigorous intellectualism of poststructuralist discourse and the allegiances of identity politics. The concept's contemporary appeal may also lie in its interdisciplinary orientation. As a discussion of spectatorship, it has been applied to art, architecture, literature, film, and theater."[39] I cannot go further into the multitude of the domains expressing interest in empathy in our time, nor can I trace here the causes of this phenomenon. I will restrict myself to giving some examples of the return of this notion in reflection on art that Koss did not include in her analysis.

One of the vital domains examined from the viewpoint of the theory of empathy by aestheticians and art historians at the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries was architecture. Currently, the theory is evoked primarily in the context of the research on performative architecture. The authors representing this school view architecture as a "performing art,"[40] and seek to

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37 J. Koss, 'On the Limits of Empathy", *Art Bulletin* 2006, vol. 88, no. 1, p. 139.

38 In this regard, the situation is different than in the case of performance studies, which have stimulated numerous academic organizational endeavours, such as establishing new research centres, journals, or publishing series.

39 J. Koss, op. cit., p. 139.

40 Cf. *Architecture as Performing Art*, ed. M. Feuerstein, G. Read, Ashgate Publishing Company, Burlington 2013.

validate the assertion by referring to the principles of the theory of empathy. However, the question of empathetic reception of representational painting and sculpture is also gaining importance. Interest in the theory of empathy is further stimulated by the prospect of its potential application in film studies.

The use of empathy in the interpretation of images showing human subjects has been recently examined by one of the key figures in this field, David Freedberg. He does not view the association between the artistic depictions of humans and an empathetic outlook as a modern discovery. On the contrary, he argues that the approach is deeply rooted in the tradition of reflection on the impact of images, and besides, that it has been often problematized using other terms. One example would be the concept of *invisibilita per visibilita*. It is a kind of meditation whose forms depend on the painterly or sculptural representations inspiring the production of mental images. The purpose of the meditation is to capture the invisible, that which is absent, whether in historical or spiritual sense. According to this concept, in order to get close to the invisible, one should preferably begin with focusing on the visible. However, the observed images should not only stimulate our memory, but also lead to empathy. As Freedberg puts it, "since our minds are largely gross and unmystical and incapable of rising to the planes of abstraction and pure spirituality, what better way to understand the full import of Christ's sufferings and deed than by means of emphatic emotion? (His suffering, after all, was predicated on his Incarnation as a man.) We come closer to him and more easily model our lives of his and those of his saints when we suffer with them; and the best way of dosing so is by way of images. We come to empathize, focusing on the images of Christ and his saints and their suffering. This is the view that underlies the whole tradition of empathetic meditation."[41]

The American author treats the empathy that occurs in contact with paintings and sculptures as "old theory" with a broad, extra-artistic significance. He associates it with religious practices, among other things, which serve an important role, creating "a sense of closeness to the divine."[42] Freedberg points out, however, that such empathy, despite its important spiritual purpose, also pertains to the body and the feelings associated with it. For example, in the case of the images depicting the crucifixion of Christ, one does not have to be especially pious to "be horrified at the puncturing of flesh that yields and bursts like our own."[43]

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41 D. Freedberg, *The Power of Images: Studies in the History and Theory of Response*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago and London 2005, p. 164.
42 Ibidem, p. 168.
43 Ibidem, p. 200.

Freedberg's grasp of empathy seems to be different in certain respects from the views of Vischer, Lipps, and Wölfflin discussed at the beginning of this article. A more detailed analysis would be needed to establish whether these differences are a consequence of concentrating on different research material, or if they indeed signal a different understanding of empathy. Freedberg is aware of these differences, although he does not analyze this issue in any depth. However, he draws attention to the fact that it has to do with the "modes of talking about behavior that beholders themselves can recognize, and about behavior and interactions that cannot take place without the presence of the figured object."[44] Thus, he declares that his attention will not be primarily focused on animating non-anthropomorphic elements in works of art, such as columns, through projection.[45] This decision to some extent dismisses the objection raised against the theory of empathy concerning the convergence of the "physiognomy" of the observed artistic theme with the recipient's emotions. If there is a depiction of a human subject in the painting we are viewing, the feeling of "inner mimicry" or sympathy is evoked directly. There is no need for associations, whose role was pointed out by Arnheim, citing it as the reason of his criticism of the theory of empathy. Therefore, Freedberg can write that the treatment of empathy in his considerations is "rigorously phenomenological."[46]

Freedberg notes a valid reason for the contemporary appreciation of empathy in his article on the relationship between the aesthetic experience of images and the findings of "neuroaesthetics". By this, he means the field of science which combines neuroscience with reflection on art.[47] The scholars specializing in this area had already suggested the potential use of the results of empirical research on brain functioning. They considered especially one phenomenon, namely the mechanism of mirroring, to be of particular importance in this regard. As V.S. Ramachandran put it, "Anytime you watch someone doing something, the neurons that your brain would use to do the same thing become active – as if you yourself were doing it. If you see a person being poked with a needle, your pain neurons fire away as though you were being poked."[48] Often, we feel the effect of the poking that we are merely watching

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44 Ibidem, p. 24.

45 D. Freedberg notes: "It will, of course, also have to concern itself with 'subjective states of the recipient,' projected onto [if not into] the work of art" (ibidem, p. 25).

46 Ibidem, p. 25.

47 D. Freedberg, V. Gallese, "Motion, emotion and empathy in esthetic experience", *Trends in Cognitive Sciences* 2007, Vol. 11, No. 5, p. 197.

48 V.S. Ramachandran, *The Tell-Tale Brain. A Neuroscientist's Quest for What Makes Us Human*, Norton & Co., New York 2012, p. 101.

in our own limb. It is interesting, though, that similar feelings occur in people whose limb has been replaced with a prosthetic. Such people, watching someone's hand being stroked and patted, not only saw, but actually felt the sensation of that touch in their prosthetic limb. Ramachandran says, "I suggest this happens because his mirror neurons were being activated in the normal fashion but there was no longer a null signal from the hand to veto them. [...] Imagine: the only thing separating your consciousness from another's might be your skin!"[49] This effect is described as "acquired hyperempathy."

Freedberg and Gallese draw far-reaching conclusions from such neurological research. They highlight the prerational ability to grasp the meaning of the actions, emotions, and sensations of others, associated with bodily simulations and functional mechanisms, by means of which what is observed in others activates our inner representations of various states of the body. In this way, through the processes occurring in our bodies, we engage in the emotions and sensations we are observing. When we looking at Michelangelo's *Prisoners*, our responses might take the form of a perceived activation of the muscles, mirroring the muscles of the figures depicted in the work. The same is true of the *Desastres de la Guerra* by Goya. Our empathetic reaction consists in the physical responses that seem to be located in precisely those parts of the body that are threatened, pressured, constrained or destabilized. Such "physical empathy," as the authors of the article call it, is easily converted into a "feeling of empathy for the emotional consequences of the ways in which the body is damaged or mutilated."[50]

Another consequence is the transferring of this concept of aesthetic experience to other kinds of art. The authors mention the twisted Romanesque columns, and the abstract paintings of Jackson Pollock and Lucio Fontana. In the case of the former artist, the arrangements of the patches of color on the canvas would evoke the sense of bodily involvement with the movements of the painter creating his work, while in the case of the latter, the cut canvases would be consistent with the perception of the violent gestures that produced the cuts. Freedberg and Gallese write that "This mechanism of motor simulation, coupled with the emotional resonance it triggers, as suggested by Lipps, is likely to be a crucial component of the esthetic experience of objects in art works: even a still-life can be 'animated' by the embodied simulation it evokes in the observer's brain."[51]

Michael Fried addressed the issue of "feeling-into" with regard to still lifes and landscapes in his book devoted to the work of Adolph Menzel.[52] The

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49 Ibidem, p. 101.
50 D. Freedberg, V. Gallese, op. cit., p. 197.
51 Ibidem, p. 201.
52 M. Fried, *Menzel's Realism: Art and Embodiment in Nineteenth-Century Berlin*, Yale University Press, New Haven 2002.

publication, examined from the perspective of the contemporary empathetic turn, is important both because of the topics it addresses, and its approach to the subject. Fried's text differs from the usual mode of writing about empathy, found in the studies from the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. The authors from that era sought to objectify the issue, adopting the discourse of philosophy, psychology, or art history. Meanwhile, Fried's reflection is derived from his personal experience of the interaction between himself, as a recipient, and works of art. He examines his own physical sensations upon his contact with individual images. His outlook is based not so much on assertions and their verification, as on describing his own reactions and questioning himself, often addressing the reader directly as if for the purpose of conversation. Such actions can be considered intentionally persuasive, aiming to convince us of the validity of the described empathetic endeavors. They will then become, as Ellen J. Esrock observes, "rhetorical strategies deployed by Fried to create a sense of honest communication, which makes readers receptive to his proposals and even entices them into acts of embodiment [of their's own emotions – GS]."[53] We may, however (and this suggestion does not preclude the one above) consider such mode of writing as the most legitimate one with respect to the problems of empathy, which hardly lend themselves to strictly rational analysis. When trying to generalize bodily experiences, which in this case are the foundation of expression, scholars would often omit many of their aspects – which Fried is trying to take into account in his book.

One such issue is the variability that characterizes the specific cases defined generally as empathy. The vague boundaries of this concept and the diversity of the phenomena that it covers have already been pointed out. Attempts to overcome this obstacle have included e.g. drawing a distinction between the meaning of "empathy" and "Einfühlung."[54] However, this only partially solved the problem. Fried accepts this vagueness, and even considers it to be necessary in the situation in which the described phenomenon encompasses many acts of imaginative projection of bodily experience.

The reflections of the American author also allow for a subtler take on the elusive issues related to embodiment, projection, simulation, role of imagination, etc., than the earlier, more generalizing approach. One of situations he discusses is when "the pictured scene comes to exert a quasi-hypnotic appeal on the viewer, who at once begins to 'penetrate' the picture space and emphatically respond to its contents, and finds himself (I am speaking for myself now) scar-

53 E.J. Esrock, "Embodying Art: The Spectator and the Inner Body", *Poetics Today* 2010, no. 31/2, p. 221.

54 See the notes on the subject in *Vocabulaire d esthétique*, op. cit. pp. 640–641.

cely able to tear his eyes away from the canvas."[55] During the acts of empathy, "the perceptual and imaginative effort that is required of the viewer in order to accomplish that work of seeing (and induce that near-hypnotic state) ends up animating, or reanimating, the pictorial field with projective energies."[56]

The difference between the two approaches consists (to put it somewhat simplistically) in the focus on what is external to the recipient (namely, the image and the reality depicted therein, the components of which stimulate acts of empathy), or on the inner perception, the effort of embodiment, the degree of which dictates the "animation" of what is presented. Fried's selection of Menzel's paintings as the subject of discussion in the book was highly relevant because they feature simple scenes, such as a courtyard at the back of a farmhouse, or a room with an open balcony door which lets in sunlight. However, they seem to be overflowing with life – they seem to breathe. Does this sense of a "breathing" space come from the qualities of the image, or is it "felt-into" the presented scene by the recipient? There is no conclusive answer to this question. One can only ponder the issue. Fried advocates a reflective approach, one that includes the subjective experiences of the viewer.

Another solution, based on Fried's book, has been suggested by Esrock. In her extensive article, "Embodying Art: The Spectator and the Inner Body", she invokes the psychological concepts of exteroception and interoception. The former of these terms is used to denote a sensation derived from a stimulus located outside the body. The latter refers to sensations arising from the information about the state of our internal organs (such as body temperature, pain, hunger, thirst, muscular and visceral sensations). In the case of empathy, both types of factors come into play, forming relationships that are difficult to determine. The application of the apparatus of modern psychology allows us, as in the case of the aforementioned neuroaesthetics, to explore these issues in a new context. "If we understand Fried's spectator to be projecting his or her own bodily interoception, then we need to ask what qualities the spectator is experiencing through this projection. I suggest that the most obvious quality we associate with our inner body is the feeling of being alive, for interoceptive awareness of the body is an awareness of that which is animate, living. Integral to being alive is the capacity for self-initiated movement."[57] In this way, the principle of animation, traditionally part of the theory of empathy, is interpreted from the point of view of modern psychology.

It is difficult to tell today with any certainty whether the empathetic turn observed in contemporary reflections on art is going to attain the scope

55 M. Fried, op. cit., p. 225.
56 Ibidem, p. 225.
57 Ibidem, p. 229.

comparable to that of other such turns in the history of culture studies, such as the interpretative turn, the performative turn, the reflexive turn, the post-colonial turn, the translational turn, the spatial turn, or the iconic turn. By scope I mean on the one hand the number of researchers interested in the problem, and on the other – the number of research areas in which it will emerge. However, I believe that what matters more than such quantitative criteria is whether the theory of empathy in its new interpretations has a chance to serve a similar purpose in the reflection on art as the cultural turns listed above. Doris Bachmann-Medick points out that their importance consists in the operational approaches, concepts, and analytical categories they introduced. Each of the turns adopted a different way of focusing and shifting their centers of gravity, different methods of testing their research assumptions and locating them within a particular theoretical discourse.[58] I believe that the theory of empathy fulfills the criteria of a turn. It is a sign of departure from "the grand narratives" and "the grand paradigms". It does not provide any specific "world view"; instead, it opens the way to experiments in the form of "a play of ideas free of authoritative paradigms."[59] In the reality of the modern-day humanities, the empathetic turn proves to be a contemporary method of talking about art, characterized by greater emphasis on those of its facets and aspects that have been hitherto underestimated. It also helps that it allows for many very different ways of viewing the same object, which extends our capabilities of seeing, thinking, and processing.[60]

Translated by Katarzyna Gucio

58 D. Bachmann-Medick, *Cultural Turns. Nowe kierunki w naukach o kulturze*, transl. K. Krzemieniowa, Oficyna Naukowa, Warszawa 2012, p. 8.
59 Ibidem, p. 20.
60 Ibidem, p. 30.

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ZWROT EMPATYCZNY W REFLEKSJI NAD SZTUKĄ (streszczenie)

Uwzględnienie zagadnienia empatii w rozważaniach nad sztuką, które nastąpiło na przełomie XIX i XX wieku, miało znamiona szeroko pojętego zwrotu teoretycznego, którego konsekwencje objąć miały także inne dziedziny nauk humanistycznych i prowadzić do stworzenia nowej metody badawczej specyficznej dla tego obszaru wiedzy. Cechą charakterystyczną tych badań było podejście psychologiczne poszerzone o kwestie biofizjologiczne, z zaakcentowaniem roli ciała. Z tego punktu widzenia poddane miały być rewizji podstawowe zagadnienia estetyczne, takie jak piękno i przeżycie estetyczne, oraz kluczowe problemy historii sztuki (np. pojęcie stylu). W artykule przypomniane zostają najważniejsze założenia koncepcji empatii odnoszone do sztuk plastycznych na przykładzie teorii Roberta Vischera, Theodora Lippsa, Heinricha Wőlfflina i Wilhelma Worringera. Następnie krótko rozważone zostają powody odrzucenia tej koncepcji przez badaczy sztuki działających w drugiej połowie XX wieku. Na tym tle postawione zostaje pytanie dotyczące powrotu do koncepcji empatii (lub ponownego wystąpienia zwrotu empatycznego) w refleksji nad sztukami plastycznymi w bieżącym stuleciu. Jego objawy wskazywali badacze zajmujący się obszarem anglofonicznym (np. Juliet Koss). Należy jednak zaznaczyć, ze oprócz nawiązań występują różnice. Dawne tło biofizjologiczne zastąpione zostało odniesieniami do współczesnych badań nad funkcjonowaniem mózgu. Zamiast koncentracji na zagadnieniu ekspresyjności architektury, prowadzone są rozważania odnoszące się do empatycznej reakcji na wizerunki ludzkie (David Freedberg) i motywy pejzażowe lub martwe natury (Michael Fried). Artykuł kończą refleksje sytuujące koncepcję zwrotu empatycznego w kontekście teorii zwrotów kulturowych Doris Bachmann-Medick.

Słowa kluczowe: empatia, Robert Vischer, Theodor Lipps, Heinrich Wőlfflin, Wilhelm Worringer, David Freedberg, Michael Fried, zwroty kulturowe

Art Inquiry. Recherches sur les arts 2015, vol. XVII
ISSN 1641-9278

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"THEORETICAL TURN" IN POST-AVANT-GARDE ART AND THE AESTHETICS OF DE-DIFFERENTIATION

Abstract: In this article I use the term "theoretical turn" to refer to phenomena in contemporary art that incorporate theory into their body and mode of action. I understand this incorporation similarly to Arthur Danto, Robert Jauss and Scott Lash. Within the domain of aesthetics these developments are related to a new philosophical, conceptual framework, open to the changes taking place in contemporary culture (particularly its mediatisation and aestheticisation). This involves de-differentiation and the blurring of borders between the aesthetic and the non-aesthetic rather than the Kantian criteria of differentiation. It acknowledges the tendencies of late modernity (e.g. the avant-gardes) to autonomise the aesthetic and rewrites them as a temporary element of cultural transformations. The aesthetic no longer occupies a separate domain; it concedes the existence of borders, but at the same time, points to the processes in which they dissolve.

Keywords: aestheticisation, aesthetic indistinction, aesthetic de-differentiation, aesthetics differentiation, death of art, theoretical turn in art

Introduction. Aestheticisation and de-differentiation

In one of his interviews, Arthur Danto emphasised the decisive importance of Duchamp's anti-aestheticism, not only for the progress of art, but also for the philosophical reflection on art. It was Duchamp and other artists who came after him, like Andy Warhol, who – argued Danto – gave impulse to the great debate over the insufficiency of traditional conceptual tools that aestheticians and art philosophers had been using to problematize art's sense and essence. He pointed out that Warhol was the first artist to stumble upon perceptual indistinction, and posed the following problem: there are two identical objects, one of them is a work of art and the other is not. We cannot tell them apart just

by looking at them. How do we differentiate between them? Art in its traditional sense has ended and the process of change could be observed everywhere, epitomized by the work of John Cage, the Judson Dance Group, minimalists, and Robert Morris. It was a common trend as it occurred south of 14th street in Manhattan. This was the time of bizarre experiments and new emerging questions: what is the difference between noise and music? What is the difference between a brick and a work of art that is a brick? What is the difference between a pile of felt and a work of art? These questions were coming up all the time.[1]

The blurring of borders between art and non-art that has been taking place before our eyes is a manifestation of a larger process in which social fields and cultural experiences merge and the old Kantian confidence in their mutual exclusion is overturned. If there are new "ivory towers" being built, enclaves for "the insiders", they immediately end their autonomous existence in the commercialised universality of the technologically stimulated cultural transmission. Newness and originality are still valued, though they are treated without the old "reverence" so specific to the first avant-garde; they have become short-lived coins. We are observing similar lack of freshness in the programme of making humanity happy through the idea of aestheticisation.

Saying that the world is undergoing the process of aestheticisation seems to be implying that it is, or at least should be, becoming more beautiful. Judging from sociological phenomena, from the increasingly popular beauty treatments (cosmetics, fitness, plastic surgery) or the approach towards architecture, both public and private – the meaning that we ascribe to aestheticisation is becoming an important element of the axiology of our times. At the same time, the shallowness of today's aestheticisation is becoming an object of critique for those studying contemporary cultural transformations, and an example of distance tinted with irony for the arts.

Global projects of aestheticisation as a path to common happiness are – as we know – not a new idea. Such movements as Arts and Crafts in England, or Bauhaus in Germany, aimed at integrating aesthetic values with everyday life, continuing the old Schillerian idea of the aesthetic formation of human harmony. Today this dream has been undergoing a far-reaching transformation, meaning not only its shallowing due to of a certain type of everyday life practices.

Aestheticisation is also a way of perceiving the world, and an approach towards it. The adjective "aesthetic" denotes a kind of subjective experience (a form of attention, opinion or judgement): it should be distanced, light, disinterested, aimed not even at what is being shown, but on the showing itself and the experience accompanying it. What used to be characteristic of

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1 See: Interview: "Art and analysis". Peter Osborne & Arthur Danto. *Radical Philosophy* 90, 1998.

experiencing art is diffusing into the experience of the world. This phenomenon, with roots in the distant traditions of modernity, has been recently acquiring new meanings and, as regards contemporary artistic practices, is a sphere of mutual permeation of art and life. Artists and thinkers who participated in these practices, and at the same time co-created them, included Wordsworth, Coleridge, Emerson, Thoreau, Cage, Sourieau, and many more. The silent performance of John Cage is not an act of the depreciation of art; it reveals its beyond-artistic existence and influence, dissolving the traditional definitions and fixed borders between art and non-art. It points our attention towards the new way in which the old concept of aisthesis realises itself as an act of embodying sense. Cage himself emphasised in his commentaries in 1981 that the work of art no longer resided in the art itself, but it was rather a way of experiencing our surroundings.

Contemporary art aims to change the way in which we see reality. It is a school of sensory sensitivity, it "trains" our ability to perceive. Some scholars, including Danto, note that art is often lost in the process. The integration with life resulting from such practices is, in a way, the "death of art". On the other hand, other authors claim that the unity of art and life can be beneficial. John Dewey, distancing himself from the elitist model of art, pointed out that art is the highest realisation of life; it is the art of life that cannot be reduced to the traditional "fine art" formula.

The process of aestheticisation, in a broad sense, is accompanied by new technologies and new arts. It is said that with the arrival of multimedia techniques and virtual arts, aestheticisation has been divesting the world of its sense of reality. The world loses its load of definiteness, its seriousness; we experience an increased lightness of being. This process has been described by various scholars, from Baudrillard to Paul Virilio. Therefore, one of the more important questions is how the perception and experience of beauty changes in the times which seem to devalue it. The contemporary forms of the aestheticisation of reality may perhaps be a practical way of preserving and sustaining this value despite, or maybe because of, the lack of faith in its metaphysical actuality.

The blurring of the borders between art and non-art, their de-differentiation, is an important aspect of the aestheticisation process. This de-differentiation is taking the form of a "theoretical turn", both in the arts and the aesthetics that accounts for the arts. Aestheticisation is not only a blurring of the borders between art and non-art, but also between art and philosophy. De-differentiation of art and non-art is a bilateral process: researchers mention not only an incorporation of theory into art, but also the diffusion of the aesthetic into the everyday experience, or even cognitive structures. In this article I am going to examine the issue of de-differentiation and permeation of theory into art, with

reference to several influential theoretical stances. Among these, an important role will be played by Wolfgang Welsch.

In his *Aesthetics beyond aesthetics* Welsch attempts to take the title discipline outside the traditional philosophy of art, which – according to him – could not cope with either art or the aesthetic. He claims that aesthetics thus wasted the critical and correctional potential it has towards philosophical rationalisation.[2] In a way, this wasted potential of Baumgarten and Kant has been brought back in the late modernity, or – as some may say – "our post-modern modernity". Welsch argues that the fundamental structures (and not just the surface aspects) of contemporary thought has had the aesthetic quality incorporated in them for a long time. The main argument the German philosopher makes in this respect is that aesthetics has found its way into the foundations of thinking. That is why – according to Welsh – aesthetics should reach outside the conventional philosophy of art and encompass all aesthetic phenomena, including sensual perception, certain aspects of everyday experience, and political and ethical problems.[3] Aesthetics should engage in the interpretation of both the artistic and the non-artistic phenomena, especially the art that reaches outside what is human – towards the transhuman. Welsch's project involves the blurring of these borders too. By the way, this most recent interest of contemporary aesthetics incorporates itself well into interdisciplinary studies, particularly those involving biotechnology, biophysics and Information Technology. Only a philosopher equipped with the interdisciplinary tools that will allow him to look into the mechanisms of interaction between the fields of experience will be able to see the anticipatory role of art in the processes they observe and bring out art's new formula reflecting the cultural reality of dissolving and shifting borders.

De-differentiation

Referencing Hans Blumenberg's "epochal threshold", Robert Jauss points out the particular merits of the avant-garde in characterising the new modes of experience after 1912.[4] He writes that the concept of the avant-garde was essential in forming the identity of the Italian Futurists, French Cubists or

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2 Welsch, Wolfgang "Aesthetics Beyond Aesthetics: Towards a New Form of the Discipline". In: F. Halsall, J. Jansen & T. O'Connor (eds.), *Rediscovering Aesthetics*. Stanford University Press, 2009, pp. 178-192.

3 Ibid.

4 According to Jauss, the epochal threshold would not have happened if not for Baudelaire's transformation of receding Romanticism into the emerging aestheticism that, in the imaginary museum of arts, wants to have unlimited access to all the past epochs (cf. Jauss, Hans Robert and Roetzel, Lisa C. "The Literary Process of Modernism from Rousseau to Adorno". *Cultural Critique* No. 11, Winter 1988-1989, pp. 27-61). In consequence, the historical distance

Orphists, German expressionists, but also Russian and American avant-garde movements.[5]

Jauss points out that after 1912 there was a break between auratic and post-auratic art. The post-auratic art emerged from the rubble of the belief that it was possible to return to the old, integral forms of experiencing the world. The price paid for modernity was the self-alienation of the subject, fragmented in time and space. Contemporary art turns, therefore, towards the presentation of the contingent, fragmented experience of the everyday reality – one that should recognise and aesthetically reveal the subject though a second alienation of the alienated reality. Contemporary art negates the boundaries of reality, questions the status of aesthetics and provokes the reader to reflect on whether and how fiction and reality can be differentiated in today's world. Breaking with the closed, still organic form of the autonomous work of art opens the post-auratic art to productive reception.[6]

These processes, described by Jauss, are part of a larger movement, within which the late modernity turns against the divides and the borders it has built itself. Anti-realism and giving up any reference to meaning are important tendencies in contemporary art and have added – on the one hand – to the strengthening of the borders between art and non-art (as it happened with abstract painting), and, on the other hand, to the collapse of these borders (as in the case of happening and action painting).

Scott Lash points out that the differentiation of art forms from the real world has been a trait of modern art since the Renaissance. He contrasts differentiation with the contemporary processes of de-differentiation, using the German term *Entdifferenzierung*.[7] Lash characterises the important elements of de-differentiation, such as the lack of aura in the work of art, negation of the difference between author and viewer, and the blurring of borders between art and theory, fine art and popular art, the cultural and the social. According to Lash, inspired by the famous text *Discours, figure* by Francois Lyotard, the term that corroborates de-differentiation is "the figural". Although the "differentiating" contemporary discourse favours meaning relations, "the figural" relates to the aesthetics of desire and sensation. In this realm – Lash points out – the

collapses, together with the authority of the times past. History becomes an instrument and an object of manipulation, an element of the game played on the cultural market. The "aura", inseparably linked to the temporal depth of experience, is destroyed, all schools of aesthetics become parallel and mutually oppositional at the same time.

5 Ibid.

6 Ibid.

7 See: Lash, Scott "Discourse or Figure? Postmodernism as a ` Regime of Signification'". *Theory, Culture & Society*, June 1988 vol. 5 no. 2, pp. 311-336.

hermeneutics of art is supported, and sometimes even replaced by an "erotics of art". Contemporary forms of art: music, sculpture, dance, architecture, painting, show the desire "on the surface of representation", not discriminating between life and "text". They are a complement to life as understood by Nietzsche, articulations of the pleasure principle.

It is not just in the writings of Lash, however, that we find de-differentiation indicated as the leading tendency in contemporary art, but also in those of Susan Sonntag and Lyotard. This "aesthetics of de-differentiation" is situated in a polemic tension with both hermeneutics (together with the primacy it gives to meaning, setting "text" against reality) and critical theory, which it replaces with an affirmative stance. Aesthetic analysis is a complement to art, and art – a complement to life.

Rosalind Krauss, who wrote in a similar manner about photography, points to its "surreal" character. As in surrealism, where reality itself becomes a signifier, photography creates "impressions of the real". Artaud's theatre, which Lash mentions in the context of de-differentiation processes, refers not so much to life, as it actually is life, it is life's complement. Counter to the avant-garde claims, art is not an autonomous enclave, separated from life.

One of the most important areas undergoing de-differentiation in contemporary art is cinema. Lash emphasises the similarity between cinematic experience and a dream: the primary process and sexuality explode on the surface of representation[8] – cinematic reception is a distraction rather than concentration of attention. Many aestheticians and philosophers of art have pointed towards similar readings of the importance of cinema in the creation of new experiences blurring the old borders of experience.

Arthur Danto regards cinema as being of crucial importance in the history of art. This is due to a shift from the perception mediated by meaning to the unmediated perception of the moving image. Cinema is situated on the edge of the new epoch which Danto calls "post-historical". Unlike the previous stages of art history that aimed to perfect the instruments mediating meaning, the unmediated perception of cinema crowns the progressive model of art and signals the moment it ingresses into the new paradigm. The perfecting of mimetic imaging has reached its end. Further development of art will focus not so much on representational progress, but on the constitution of art by its "world" – including its theory.

Among perceptually indistinguishable objects, only those that are perceived to be art can be elevated into "the artworld". In order to perceive something as a work of art (to distinguish art from non-art) one needs to refer to

8 Ibid.

art theory, to knowledge about art, to support oneself with philosophical and critical reflection. In this way – as Leszek Sosnowski rightly points out – the traditional relation between art and theory is reversed: in the earlier historical periods, the existence of theory resulted from the existence of art. But now, in the post-historical era, the existence of art is a result of the existence of theory. In this new reality theory becomes a necessary condition transforming an object into art.[9] Danto writes it clearly: the historical epoch of art has come to an end the moment it became clear what art was and what it meant. Artists opened the way for philosophy and at this point this task needs to be passed into the hands of philosophers.[10] To put it another way and to comment on Danto's proposition – the same rule of indistinction that ascribes constitutive meaning to theory, establishes its relationship with art.

I agree with the author of *The Artworld* that art is "embodied meaning". This meaning has its roots in our genuine relationships with the world and with other people, from interpersonal relations, to a network of symbolic links, to a constitutive role of theory for art – including the philosophical reflection on art. Theory does not "hang over" artefacts and phenomena that are thought to be art as an external, cold, conceptual instrumentation, but it constitutes its invigorating complement. This also means that it allows us to understand the unbreakable bond between the realm of experience Danto calls the "artworld" and other experiences of contemporary culture, everyday life, and human existence. Simply, it allows us to disentangle fragments of this great plexus, at least to the point where its artistic articulations become legible, or – to use a stronger word – where they can come into existence.

Indistinction and de-differentiation phenomena and their meaning for the philosophical reflection on art

I understand de-differentiation, one of the focal points of this article, as a process inherent in the late-modern loss of foundations. I believe it means a revocation of the divisions of experience that are generated by these foundations. Interchangeability and blending together of the indicative with the essential – in the sphere of cultural, artistic or philosophical interpretation – are important aspects of this process. As a result, the tension between the "logic of sense" and "logic of surface", specific to these fields, lingers. This tension has been, most notably, portrayed by postmodernist philosophers such as Derrida, Lyotard, or

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9 Sosnowski, Leszek *Filozoficzny świat sztuki Athura Danto, Wstęp* in: A.C. Danto, *Świat sztuki. Pisma z filozofii sztuki*, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego, Kraków 2006, p. 28 [my translation].

10 See Danto, ibid.

Deleuze, although it has become the object of self-reflection of a large part of late-modern philosophy, starting from Nietzsche.

On the one hand, the phenomena appearing in these fields are perceived to be "events" in the self-revealing phenomenal field. On the other hand, it is noted that they generate their own "micrologic" rules of sense and indications of a critical erasure of existing distributions of meaning. De-differentiation is therefore a dynamic process of encountering, constructing and, at the same time, revoking the existing cultural formations of sense. A process that could not be taking place were it not for the differentiation of the domains of experience. De-differentiation can "work" only together with differentiation, particularly in the realm of the aesthetic.

In his text titled *Answering the Question: What Is Postmodernism?* that was a reply to a speech Habermas gave in 1980 when he was awarded the Adorno Prize, Lyotard decisively distanced himself from the critique of the unity of aesthetic experience inscribed in Habermasian "unfinished project of modernity". Lyotard disagrees with Habermas's attempts to salvage or substitute the lost, impossible totality using the aesthetic – he refuses to treat the aesthetic, and art in particular, as a substitute totality. In the above essay, as well as in *The Sublime and the Avant-Garde, Immaterialität und Postmoderne or Philosophy and Painting in the Age of their Experimentation*, Lyotard emphasises that contemporary art is at the same time the "vanguard", symptom, and factor of the dissolution of traditional modes of world unification. It bears witness to the disintegration of reality, and in that sense it is pluralistic, heterogeneous, deeply "nihilistic" and, as a consequence – introverted, inclined to experimentation tending towards unexpected possibilities. Contemporary art is open to "events happening" (in the meaning Lyotard ascribes to this concept after Heidegger) and from this perspective sublime rather than beautiful. It cannot therefore play the role of a mythic-poetic escape from the consequences of the disintegration of today's world; it is not a form of substitute unification. Lyotard, like Adorno, is convinced of the irreversibility of the processes of dissolution of the idea of totality and the social-cultural totalities that embody this idea and that have their philosophical and artistic macronarratives. He is not, however, alone in this stance: one needs only to bring up Foucault and his microphysics of power, Deleusian "chaos" in *Difference and Repetition* – *close to art informel*, Derridean categories like sign, trope, dissemination, merging, or renunciation of sense.[11]

The collapse of the macronarratives resulted in the collapse of the categories that built them. This includes the ones that form the basis of the famous differentiation between the aesthetic and what does not fit in this domain; also

[11] See: Welsch, Wolfgang "The birth of postmodern philosophy from the spirit of modern art". *History of European Ideas* 14 (3), 1992, pp. 379-398.

– looking from a different angle – the differentiation between an aesthetic experience and all the other kinds of experience, or, if one prefers, between art and non-art.

It is now time for conclusions:

It might seem that, inscribed in the cognitively-oriented tradition of post-Kantian aesthetics, aesthetic differentiation has been deemed obsolete. However, as a result of the "theoretical turn" in art initiated by the avant-garde, it was incorporated into contemporary artistic practice. After all, theory with its distinctions is becoming – as Danto points out – an integral element of "the artworld". Be that as it may, this **post-avant-garde differentiation reclaims its formative power only working together with indistinction – an integral part of contemporary shifts in art. The interpenetration of art and life in its various forms de-differentiates the old divisions and introduces the problem of indistinction, at the same time establishing new criteria for differentiating between art and non-art.** However, these are not established along the apriori rules of its theory, relating to universal foundations, but from within the artistic practices that have made theory their integral part. These differentiations cause tension between the dynamism of cultural life and the inertia of its extant theoretical and artistic forms. Jacques Rancière is right in saying that in this aspect there is no clear cut between modernity and post-modernity, that "there is no post-modern break". We are still stuck in modernity, for which "art is art insofar as it is also non-art, or is something other than art.[12]

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12 Rancière, Jacques, *Aesthetics and its Discontents*. Translated by S. Corcoran, Cambridge: Polity Press, 2009, p. 36; see also: Rancière, Jacques, *Dissensus, On Politics and Aesthetics*. Translated by S. Corcoran. London and New York: Continuum, 2010, p.118.

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„ZWROT TEORETYCZNY" W SZTUCE POAWANGARDOWEJ A ESTETYKA ODRÓŻNICOWANIA (streszczenie)

W niniejszym artykule używam pojęcia „zwrotu teoretycznego" w stosunku do tych zjawisk sztuki współczesnej, które wcielają teorię w swój byt i sposób oddziaływania.
Inkorporację tę rozumiem w duchu ujęć Arhura Danto, Roberta Jaussa czy Scotha Lasha. W polu estetyki wspomnianym zmianom odpowiada nowa filozoficzna siatka pojęciowa, otwarta na przeobrażenia zachodzące we współczesnej kulturze (zwłaszcza na zjawiska medializacji i estetyzacji). Wydobywa ona raczej aspekt odróżnicowania i zacierania granic między tym, co estetyczne i nieestetyczne niż przejęte po Kancie kryteria odróżniania tego, co estetyczne od tego, co nieestetyczne, zaś charakterystyczne dla późnej nowoczesności (m.in. dla awangard) tendencje do autonomizacji tego, co estetyczne, czyni historycznie uwarunkowanym, przejściowym elementem kulturowych przekształceń. To, co estetyczne nie zajmuje już wydzielonej przestrzeni. Zakłada zarówno istnienie granic, jak i procesy ich zacierania.

Słowa kluczowe: estetyzacja, nieodróżnialność estetyczna, odróżnicowanie estetyczne, odróżnienie estetyczne, śmierć sztuki, zwrot teoretyczny w sztuce

Art Inquiry. Recherches sur les arts 2015, vol. XVII
ISSN 1641-9278

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NOMINALIST RE-TURN IN CONTEMPORARY ART

Abstract: Hans Blumenberg has shown (*Die Legitimität der Neuzeit*) that the appearance of nominalism in the debates of the Middle Ages had laid grounds for modernity. Nominalism assumes that only individual, concrete objects exist and that common properties are not grounded in any kind of supra-individual properties or relations that would exist independently of what is singular. In Thierry de Duve's interpretation, "pictorial nominalism" of Duchamp puts stress on a particular or a singular name, stops the process of reference and shows its "plastic being". This aesthetic idea opens up a new field that we now call "art", where art becomes a "proper name". I would like to follow his analysis, but also to re-think it the context of the present, to explore the specificity of the nominalist re-turn in contemporary art. The contemporary aesthetic experience of art as such is nominalist in the sense I would like to examine in this article.

Keywords: nominalism, feeling, *sensus communis*, Kant, Duchamp, de Duve.

According to Hans Blumenberg's monumental study *The Legitimacy of the Modern Age*, modernity originated in the late Medieval tendencies in metaphysics, theory of knowledge, and theory of language that came to be known as nominalism.[1] This first nominalist turn inaugurated a new vision of the world and man, the vision that radically broke with the metaphysical Neoplatonic view of the "great chain of being," and for the price of the feeling of cosmic groundlessness brought new ideas of man's omnipotence and unconstrained creativity. Such was, according to Blumenberg, the beginning of the "modern age". When Jean-François Lyotard writes in his *What is Postmodernism?*: "Let us wage a war

[1] H. Blumenberg, *The Legitimacy of the Modern Age*, transl. R.M. Wallace, The MIT Press, Cambridge, Mass. and London, 1999.

on totality; let us be witness to the unpresentable; let us activate the differences and save the honor of the name"[2] of course he does not repeat the same gesture of Abelard, Ockham or Duns Scotus, but he touches on the same fragile string that resonates in post-modern times as it resonated at the daybreak of the modern age: that of *nomina*.

Martin Jay observes that we can speak of the "new version of nominalism, which can paradoxically be called magical, fostering the re-enchantment of the world"[3] Jay claims the "magic" of such contemporary "nominalism" is deeply rooted in the mystical theory of language (cf. the Kabbalah referred to by Walter Benjamin[4]), but also in Roland Barthes' idea of *mathesis singularis*, presented in his *Camera Lucida*, Andre Bazin's writings on photography and film, and Marcel Duchamp's invention of "pictorial nominalism".[5] According to Jay, all those theories enable us to speak of the "counter-assertion of the world, a world more readymade than the product of the human will, a world that somehow stubbornly thwarts all of our best – or is it worst? – efforts to disenchant it. [...] a realism of proper names that paradoxically comes from the world and not the naming subject, a world that has not entirely lost its capacity to inspire awe, wonder and humility".[6] In other words: the indexical nature of the photographic image, instead of mustering the power of technical disenchantment in the age of mechanical reproduction, carries within itself, in spite of all, the lost connection between the sign and the thing, the name and its bearer, making possible a language made entirely of proper names. While agreeing with Jay and his diagnosis, I would like to propose another explanation for the strange, unobvious return of nominalism in contemporary art. I call it "unobvious" because such non-conventional, "pictorial" nominalism (as Duchamp called it) can be traced in different artistic tendencies that range from conceptual to relational art. What they have in common is that each time a work of art appears (rather than being re-presented) as a proper, i.e. singular name, a "plastic being", it evokes a feeling which momentarily creates an aesthetic community. This is the line of argumentation proposed by Thierry de Duve, the author of *Pictorial*

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2 J.-F. Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, transl. R. Durand, Minneapolis; University of Minnesota Press, 1984, p. 82.

3 M. Jay, "Magical Nominalism: Photography and the Re-enchantement of the World", *Culture, Theory & Critique*, no 2–3, vol.50/ 2009 p. 166. See also: M. Jay, "Outcast Eyes", *The Berlin Journal*, no 19, Fall 2010, pp. 44-48; *Re-Enchantment*, eds. J. Elkins, D. Morgan, Routledge, New York and London, 2009.

4 On similar analysis presented in the context of the Jewish tradition see A. Bielik-Robson, "The Promise of the Name. 'Jewish Nominalism' as the Critique of Idealist Tradition", *Bamidbar. Journal of Jewish Thought and Philosophy*, No. 3 (2012).

5 M. Duchamp, *Notes*, Flammarion, Paris 1999, p. 115.

6 M. Jay, *Magical Nominalism*, p. 181.

Nominalism. On Marcel Duchamp's Passage from Painting to the Readymade[7] and *Kant After Duchamp*. I would like to follow his analysis, but I would also like to re-think it the context of contemporaneity to answer the question of the specificity of nominalist re-turn in contemporary art, that is art which "demonstrates the way in which the contemporary as such shows itself – the act of presenting the present".[8] In this sense the contemporaneity of the aesthetic experience of art as such is nominalist in the sense I would like to elaborate below.

Nominalism and contemporaneity

To say that nominalism is a concept central to all contemporary art would be an oversimplification, but it is certainly among the main characteristics of at least some contemporary artistic and theoretical tendencies. Apart from Thierry de Duve's "pictorial nominalism", borrowed or "received" from Marcel Duchamp (which by the time of the publication of *Pictorial Nominalism*[9] had evolved into a new form) one could name a few other approaches in which nominalistic point of view plays an important role. I would like to investigate the relation between some form of nominalist thinking in aesthetics and a certain way of thinking about the contemporary in which multi- or even dyschronic perspective plays a crucial role. To a certain extent this would repeat, but on a different level, the often-cited statement by Derrida from his *Specters of Marx*, in which he puts stress on the "non-contemporaneity with itself of the living present". According to Derrida, such non-contemporaneus contemporaneity would be conditioned by "that which secretly unhinges it, (...) this responsibility and this respect for justice concerning those who are not there, or those who are no longer or who are not yet present and living".[10] However, the specter that would haunt the contemporary would be that of a peculiar category – emotion.

Nominalism assumes that only individual, concrete objects exist and that the common properties are not grounded in any kind of supra-individual properties or relations that would exist independently of what is singular. In

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7 Th. De Duve, *Pictorial Nominalism. On Marcel Duchamp's Passage from Painting to the Readymade*, transl. D. Polan, University Of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis 2005; Th. De Duve, Kant After Duchamp, The MIT Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, and London, England, 1996.

8 B. Groys, "The topology of contemporary art" in: *Modernity, Postmodernity, Contemporaneity*, eds. Th. Smith, O. Enwezor, N. Condee, Duke University Press, Durham and London 2008, p. 71.

9 For example see Th. De Duve, *Kant After Duchamp* and also "'This Is Art': Anatomy of a Sentence", *Art Forum*, April 2014.

10 J. Derrida, *Specters of Marx. The State of the Debt, the work of Mourning, and the New International*, trans. P. Kamuf, Routledge, New York, London 2006, p. XVIII.

other words, universals are not more real than the particulars which are believed to participate in them for example by the whole Neoplatonic tradition. In fact, Neoplatonism may serve here as the best possible example of the metaphysical vision of an eternal, all unifying hierarchy that suddenly collapses and gives way to modernity. Depending on personal judgment, one may say either that the project of modernity was established on the ruins of an ancient forgotten order, or finally on a firm ground. Hans Blumenberg, the author of the *Legitimacy of the Modern Age*, tries to oppose Karl Löwith's historiographical thesis that can be seen as a kind of variation on Carl Schmitt's political thesis, pointing out that "all significant concepts of the modern theory of history are secularized theological concepts".[11] Contrary to this, Blumenberg states: "Instead of secularization of eschatology, secularization by eschatology".[12] And one of the most important steps in this process is the nominalist revolution that occurred in the philosophical debates of the 13th century, whose most famous proponents are Pierre Abelard and Ockham with his razor. The paradox of the so-called nominalist crisis is that it follows from theological debates concerning the omnipotence of God. Blumenberg writes: "the interest in the rationality and human intelligibility of creation cedes priority to the speculative fascination exerted by the theological predicates of absolute power and freedom".[13] In other words, the celebrated Ockham's razor has cut away the idea of any kind of law that could restrict God's omnipotence and prevent Him from miraculous intervention into natural order. If anything is possible, then there are no given, permanent rules, which both deprives the human conduct of any metaphysical assurance and frees it from subordination to the cosmic order. From this follows the idea that humankind is also able to construct rather than merely to find the rightful order on Earth. This had huge consequences for the problem of artistic creation, introducing the idea of artistic freedom, unconstrained by any kind of preexisting form. Scholastic integrity, clarity and the proportionality of the object suddenly evaporate in the change of aesthetic norms and, as Umberto Eco puts it, "all that remains is the intuition of particulars, a knowledge of existent objects whose visible proportions are analyzed empirically (...). As for artistic inspiration, this consists in an idea of the individual object which the artist wants to construct, and not of its universal form".[14]

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11 C. Schmitt, *Political Theology: Four Chapters on the Concept of Sovereignty*, transl. G. Schwab, trans. Cambridge, The MIT Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, and London, England, 1985, p. 36.

12 H. Blumenberg, *The Legitimacy of Modern Age*, p. 37.

13 Ibid., p. 160.

14 U. Eco, *Art and Beauty in the Middle Ages*, transl. H. Bredin, Yale University Press, New Haven, Connecticut 2002, p. 89.

In a way, the medieval nominalist crisis, laying grounds for what we call modernity and triggering what Blumenberg calls the "self-affirmation of man", is relevant for us today since it has instituted our notion of historicity defined by infinite progress, but also the concept of instrumental rationality. The problem that medieval nominalism has left us is the question of the rules that human creation would abide by. As Blumenberg notes: "Rather than helping man to reconstruct an order *given* in nature, the principle of economy (Ockham's razor) helps him to reduce nature forcibly to an order *imputed* to it by man".[15] This diagnosis, I believe, resonates in Adorno's writings, where he condemns "vulgar", "philosophical nominalism" for reducing language to the tool of instrumental reason, and at the same time diminishing sensory particularities to the status of empirical sense data.[16] There is nothing pre-given, there are only givens and they are also finally realized to be the outcome of mere conventions. This approach returns in the current problematisations of nominalism in the context of the contemporary.

According to Frederic Jameson, the nominalist tendency is identified with vain and merely feigned resistance of the philosophical currencies of post-structuralism to any form of so called globalization and any form of historical thinking in terms of "totality". Jameson describes this as "the attempt to see whether by systematizing something that is resolutely unsystematic, and historicizing something that is resolutely unhistorical, one couldn't outflank it and force a historical way at least of thinking about it...".[17] According to Jameson, nominalism is thus only an empty, formal, and ultimately futile strategy to bypass the question of universality by reducing "us to empirical present (or to use empirical present as the sole pattern for imagining other situations and other temporal moments".[18] Jameson concludes that "Contemporary thought and culture are in this sense profoundly *nominalist* (to expand Adorno's diagnosis about the tendencies of modern art), Postmodernism more thoroughly so than anything that preceded it".[19]

The charge of empty linguistic reductionism that ends up with the opposition of the systematic and the radically unsystematic, of language and the ineffable singularity of empirical facticity is echoed within contemporary art theory by

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15 H. Blumenberg, *The Legitimacy of the Modern Age*, p. 154.

16 Th. Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, transl. E.B. Ashton, Continuum, New York, London, 1973, p. 312.

17 F. Jameson, *Postmodernism or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*, Duke University Press, Durham 1991, p. 418.

18 F. Jameson, *Late Marxism: Adorno, Or, The Persistence of the Dialectic*, Verso, London 2006, p. 249.

19 F. Jameson, *Postmodernism or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*, p. 127.

Peter Osborne. Nominalism becomes here "the structural libertarianism of contemporary art".[20] Putting stress on the individuality of a work of art, it destroys any possibility of collective meaning. Works of art are quasi-subjects with their own "internal world" that presents itself as an enigma. Their "unsocial sociability" can be "wise", i.e. can be conscious of the necessity of mediation as the only possible way to enter the realm of what is common, or it can be radically individual – *bourgeois*, defending only their own self-interest. In his recently published *Anywhere or Not at All: Philosophy of Contemporary Art* he stigmatizes, with reference to Adorno, this unreflective tendency to erase socio-historical mediation, even the medium itself, in favour of individual work, described as a "negation of ontology, a negation of ontology by naming, or a negative ontology of naming".[21]

Martin Jay's recent project can be placed on the other pole of the contemporary discussions concerning the status of nominalism in art. Working on the concept of "magical nominalism"[22] he suggests another way of thinking about singularity that wouldn't be excluded outside the mere conventions of linguistic practices. Such "non-conventionalist" nominalism is grounded in the kabbalistic theory of language and certain mystical linguistic ideas of Johann Georg Hamann traceable in the early writings of Walter Benjamin. Here, the linguistic reference to the world is not described in conventional terms, but as an act of creation that repeats the creative act of God. Everything that has been created bears its name – a proper name, and thus language does not articulate meaning, but the singularity of each being: "The proper name is the communion of man with the creative word of God",[23] writes Benjamin. Such "magical nominalism", according to Jay, should serve us as a tool of re-enchantment of the world in the struggle against instrumental rationality. Paradoxically, or not paradoxically at all, if one defends the indexicality of the photographic medium, the modern tool of such re-enchantment is photography. A photographic image is able to reflect the facticity of each being, according to the rules of *mathesis singularis* that Roland Barthes was writing about.[24]

We have then at least two versions of nominalism: negative, according to which nominalism ends up empty-handed, with no meaning and no referent,

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20 P. Osborne, *Anywhere or Not at All: Philosophy of Contemporary Art*, Verso, London 2013, p. 87.

21 Ibidem, p. 82.

22 M. Jay, *Magical Nominalism: Photography and the Re-enchantement of the World*.

23 W. Benjamin, "On Language as Such an the Language of Man" in: idem, *Selected Writings vol. 1 1913–1926*, ed. M. Bullock. M.W. Jennings, The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, London, England 2002, p. 69.

24 See R. Barthes, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*, transl. R. Howard, Farrar, Straus and Giroux, New York 2010.

and affirmative, according to which nomina – names are natural signs that express the individual essence of each being.

Pictorial nominalism

"Pictorial nominalism" (*nominalisme pictural*) is a term coined by Marcel Duchamp which appeared for the first time in his notes from 1914 published later as a *White Box* to accompany his work *The Bride Stripped by Her Bachelors, Even*. The note simply says: "A kind of pictorial nominalism (Check)".[25] Another note is more elaborate; it says e.g. that "literal nominalism" assumes "no generic specific distinction between words", "no physical adaptation of concrete words", "no conceptual value of abstract words", and no "musical value". In consequence, Duchamp claims that the term is "only readable by eye and little by little takes on a form of plastic significance; it is a sensorial reality, a plastic truth with the same title as a line, as a group of lines".[26]

Nominalism in its aesthetic, "Kant after Duchamp" de Duve's version, is not just a mere *flatus vocis*, or in terms of plastic arts, *flatus pictus*. Neither is it some magical or mystical way of overcoming alienation through an unmediated contact with the *ding-an-sich*, as Martin Jay would suggest. In my opinion, Paul Rabinow uses the phrase that is the most adequate to this position, when he writes of "nominalist sensibility". Rabinow elaborates this intuition, writing that it is "the sensibility to constant change, and a certain pleasure in it and feeling of obligation to grasp and participate in the transformations, constitute one mode of modernism. [...] sensibility that seeks to shape itself in accordance with a world experienced as contingent, malleable, and open".[27]

But since the name of Kant has been mentioned here, one should remember that the act of such naming, that is the judgment of taste, is certainly not an intellectual operation (it does not subsume sensory data under concepts), and neither is it a mode of thinking of what is particular according to the universal principle, but it rather confronts us with the particular in order to find such a principle. And it does this by "dint of feeling".[28] According to de Duve's reading of Kant's "Analytic of the Beautiful", each time he instances the aesthetic judgment "This is beautiful", we can replace "beautiful" with "art". "This is art" is

25 M. Sanouillet, E. Petreson ed., *Salt Seller. The Essential Writings of Marcel Duchamp*, (London: Thames and Hudson Ltd., 1975), p. 78.
26 M. Duchamp, *Notes*, p. 115.
27 P. Rabinow, *Anthropos Today. Reflections on Modern Equipment*, Princeton University Press, New Jersey 2003, p. 67.
28 Th. de Duve, *Kant After Duchamp*, p. 312.

the modern version of the judgment of taste.[29] As such, it is subjective – it is based on a feeling of pleasure that originates from the free, harmonious play of two faculties: imagination and understanding, but it also claims universality. This universality is not empirical and it is also problematic, as we will see, if it is describable in anthropological terms, but transcendental: the validity of aesthetic judgment rests on the autonomy of the subject, who, judging something beautiful, believes to be speaking in a "universal voice". Such subjective universality is not grounded in any kind of schematism – it is not conceptual, but it is an Idea of the reason which does not determine its object, but is merely regulative. To claim that the judgment "This is art" is subjectively universal is to claim (to quote Kant), that taste is "what makes our feeling in a given representation universally communicable without the mediation of a concept".[30] This faculty of estimating Kant calls *sensus communis*, the transcendental foundation of judgment which is, as he writes, "a ground common to all". And this leads us to the proclamation of aesthetic community, based on the Idea of "supersensible substrate of humanity". Judging something as beautiful, we expect that any rational subject in our place would not only do the same, but ought to judge similarly. According to Kant, "the feeling in the judgment of taste comes to be exacted from everyone as a sort of duty".[31]

Within the artistic reformulation of the judgments of beauty as judgments of art we also find a quasi-moral obligation to the name-giver. As one can read in *Kant After Duchamp*: "every woman, every man, cultivated or not, whatever her or his culture, language, race, social class, has aesthetic Ideas which are or can be, by the same token, artistic Ideas. This cannot be proven but has to be supposed".[32] We have to put aside here all the nuances of historical reflections concerning modern and postmodern art and briefly return to the act of artistic naming. Just as "beautiful" is not a concept, but a reflexive judgment originating from the unique interplay between the two faculties, so "art" is described by de Duve as a "proper name" – analogical to the "rigid designator" from Saul Kripke's causal theory of reference.[33] To give the name of art to an object is to feel that

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29 To quote de Duve explaining briefly the core of his theory: "Suffice it to say that in the sentence 'this is art,' used as an aesthetic judgment, the word 'this' is a pointer referring to some object, and that the word 'art' is also a pointer, referring to the collection of objects the speaker has already baptized as art in previous aesthetic experiences. Hence my little one theorem theory: art is a proper name." Th. de Duve, *Mary Warhol/Joseph Duchamp* in: *Re-Enchantment*, p. 88.

30 I. Kant, *The Critique of Judgement*, transl. J. Creed Meredith, Clarendon Press, Oxford 1911, p. 41 (§ 40) http://rci.rutgers.edu/~tripmcc/phil/kant-c3-meredith-part1.pdf.

31 Ibidem.

32 Th. de Duve, *Kant After Duchamp*, p. 316.

33 See S. Kripke, *Naming and Necessity*, Basil Blackwell, Oxford 1990. The idea of the causal theory of reference can be simply explained by the example of baptism: "An initial 'baptism'

it is art and to assume that "every woman, every man" would agree: "The name is transmitted and repeated, but the baptism is renewed each time the named thing comes up for trial before a new occurrence of the feeling".[34]

Aesthetic feeling is singular and so is aesthetic judgment. From this follows that "aesthetic baptism", so to speak, is contextual – it belongs to concrete time and space and within this space-time it points to the object, which is not a thing, but according to Kant an appearance, i.e. "the undetermined object of an empirical intuition".[35] That is why the aesthetic judgment is irremediably deictic – it is conditioned by the pointers *I, here, now*. "Art" then has no meaning, it only has reference, and we happen to live in the times when we can refer to anything as art.

I would say with respect to "pictorial" or "sensible" nominalism, that through the act of aesthetic naming objects are being named so that they enter the realm of the community, and with those objects that we call works of art, our feelings from which those acts originate are shown as concurrent with them. Art makes us possibly equally free to judge (i.e. to give a name) and to create (which is also give a name), however such possibility is not empirical, but is supposed to be a transcendental regulative idea. As we can see, Kantian Idea of *sensus communis* is a way of rejecting Jameson's previously mentioned accusation of bypassing the problem of universality that would allegedly reduce us to the empirical present.

I would like to emphasize that such contemporaneity is constantly disrupted because the *tempus* attributed to the works of art, i.e. history of art, and the *tempus* of the feeling (if there is such) are dyschronic. The Kantian subject appears to be an "empirico-transcendental double", as Michel Foucault famously noted, that is united only by the "dint of feeling" that can "induce much thought", as an aesthetic idea, but no cognition. The question now is simple: to which order does this feeling belong? Is it the anthropological order of culture or the transcendental order of the universally communicable community? This is where, I think, the problem of art as a proper name, of "sensible nominalism" is structurally connected to the question of contemporaneity. That is why the essence (if there is such) or peculiarity of contemporary art is attached to the nominalist re-turn. It is important to differentiate between the conceptual

takes place. Here the object may be named by ostension, or the reference of the name may be fixed by a description. When the name is 'passed from link to link', the receiver of the name must, I think, intend when he learns it to use it with the same reference as the man from whom he heard it" (p. 96).

34 Th. de Duve, *Kant After Duchamp*, p. 69.

35 I. Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, transl. ed. P. Gyuer, A.W. Wood, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1998, p. 155 [B34 A20].

nominalism of Joseph Kossuth, who would stress that "every picture is a sentence" and the "sensible" or "pictorial" nominalism claiming that "every sentence is a picture". This second version is focused on singular objects, events that cannot be conceptually generalized and in order to communicate constantly require new relations or new constellations – such is the condition of our "liquid modernity", as Zygmunt Bauman would say.

We should contrast Adorno's remark made in his *Aesthetic Theory*, that "Unchecked aesthetic nominalism ... terminates in literal facticity"[36] with Duchamp's note "A kind of pictorial nominalism (Check)". Whether such "pictorial nominalism" had been already "checked" by the time of writing or was to be "checked", we cannot be sure. What is important, and I think that Thierry de Duve points it out exceptionally well, is that Duchamp's move towards nominalism as the essence of the creative act loses lots of its alleged conventionalist appearance, often described in aesthetic theory as the "institutional theory of art". This sociological approach stresses the importance of such social institutions as museums, galleries and the whole artistic discourse in the process of mediation between the world of ordinary objects and the world of art. An object becomes a work of art when it is baptized by one of the representatives of the world of art.[37] This is the "ascetic" side of Duchamp's move observed by de Duve. This means that the artist dispossesses himself or herself of all traditional artistic craftsmanship, of all talent, and acts as the modest founder or designator of the works.

Duchamp stresses the lack of the referential function of the word. The word is deprived of meaning-intention; "the dictionary, linguistics, phonology, and aesthetics can all be abolished", writes de Duve.[38] What remains is not a linguistic sign, but a proper name.

"Pictorial nominalism" puts stress on a particular or singular name; it operates as a kind of subversive *détournement* stopping the process of reference and showing, as Duns Scotus would say, *haecceitas*: the "thisness" of an object or its "thingness", a factuality of what is and has always been already there in the world. This view can be interpreted in terms of a radical conventionalism: there are no singular objects that would be graspable by our cognitive faculties. To gain knowledge or to have meaningful experience is to create certain

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36 Th. Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, transl. R. Hullot-Kentor, The Athlone Press, London 1997, p. 220.

37 A.C. Danto, „The Artworld", *Journal of Philosophy*, LXI 1964, pp. 571-584. George Dickie, *Art and the Aesthetic: An Institutional Analysis*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca 1974.

38 T. De Duve, *Pictorial Nominalism. On Marcel Duchamp's Passage from Painting to the Ready-made*, p. 127.

conventions according to which one can operate. On the other hand, viewed as if "from the inside" of any kind of representational system, for example a linguistic system, this nominalistic view shows that words are "pictures" that cannot be read, i.e. they cannot be translated as usual into a different symbolic code because there is no "different code" apart from language itself. Such a "plastic being of a word", to use another Duchampian phrase, opens a zero degree of language; it points to the realm where language (what is made of consonants and vowels that are readable), and non-language (what has been deprived of any intentional meaning), meet.

To suggest a slightly nad've thought experiment, one could imagine a hypothetical equation: "plastic" is to "readable" as "imagination" is to "understanding", then "pictorial nominalism" would describe the free play between the two Kantian faculties, and hence would manifest the relationship that binds together the proper name and the feeling. The condition of possibility of such relationship lies, so to speak, outside the empirical world and empirical community; it is the transcendental idea of "universal communicability of the mode of representation in a judgment of taste (...) apart from the presupposition of any definite concept".[39] It is as if our historical contemporaneity, no matter how defined, were constantly dissynchronized by the feeling that names something as art and thus obliges everyone to agree and to feel the same. I believe that with respect to the interpretation of Kant's third *Critique* such a position can be placed somewhere between the political interpretation suggested by Hanna Arendt and the radical, transcendental version presented by Jean-François Lyotard.

For Arendt in her *Lectures in Kant's Political Philosophy*,[40] *sensus communis* is not only occasioned, but fully realized by the aesthetic community of human beings who judge and share those empirical judgments with each other: "when one judges, one judges as a member of community".[41]

On the other hand, we have Jean-François Lyotard, trying to show in his radicalism that in fact there is no *radix* – root of subjectivity, whose origins precede even "I think" of the transcendental unity of apperception. In his text on *sensus communis*[42] (in which, strangely for Lyotard, the sublime does not appear) the transcendental character of the aesthetic feeling is opposed to "anthropological temptation", as Lyotard calls it. The free play of two faculties – their "euphony" – is, for Lyotard, the subjective condition of all cognition and judgment. In other words, feeling – the pure pleasure, is not only a sign,

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39 I. Kant, *The Critique of Judgement*, p. 18 (§ 9).

40 H. Arendt, *Lectures in Kant's Political Philosophy*, ed. R. Beiner, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago 1992.

41 Ibidem, p. 72.

42 J.-F. Lyotard, *Sensus communis*, transl. M. Hobson, G. Bennington in: *Judging Lyotard*, ed. A. Benjamin, Routledge, London and New York 2003, pp. 1–25.

however discrete, of the original unity of two distant systems: of natural necessity and of human freedom. It is the origin itself, the unconditioned *Ursprung* of not only objective knowledge (i.e. presentation subsumed to the determined concept) but also of the subject who is "being born" in aesthetic feeling, who is presented "à l'état naissant" – such sensible community would be placed outside any empirical, anthropological order.

The aesthetic self is simultaneously structured and fractured by the feeling that makes any communal experience possible and deferred. The aesthetic name instantiates the idea of contemporaneity as *sensus communis* – universal communicability only for a moment, in a flash of feeling, to re-turn to it once again, *usque ad finem*...

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ZWRÓT / POWRÓT NOMINALIZMU W SZTUCE WSPÓŁCZESNEJ (streszczenie)

Hans Blumenberg pokazał w swojej *Die Legitimität der Neuzeit*, w jaki sposób pojawienie się nominalizmu w średniowiecznych debatach położyło podwaliny pod nowoczesność. Nominalizm zakłada, że tym, co istnieje są jedynie pojedyncze, konkretne rzeczy, a wspólne własności nie są osadzone w jakichś innych ponad-indywidualnych własnościach, czy relacjach, które mogłyby istnieć niezależnie od tego, co jednostkowe. W interpretacji Thierry de Duve'a „nominalizm pikturalny" Duchampa kładzie nacisk na jednostkowe imię, zatrzymuje proces odniesienia i ukazuje jego „plastyczne istnienie". Ta idea estetyczna otwiera całkowicie nowy obszar, który określamy współcześnie mianem „sztuki", gdzie sztuka staje się „nazwą własną". W artykule pragnę prześledzić tę analizę, jak również chcę ją przemyśleć w kontekście współczesności, by odpowiedzieć na pytanie o charakter nominalistycznego zwrotu/powrotu w sztuce współczesnej. W tym rozumieniu współczesność charakterystyczna dla doświadczenia estetycznego okazuje się nominalistyczna w sensie, który zamierzam wypracować w artykule.

Słowa kluczowe: nominalizm, uczucie, *sensus communis*, Kant, Duchamp, de Duve.

Art Inquiry. Recherches sur les arts 2015, vol. XVII
ISSN 1641-9278

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AESTHETICS AND THE POLITICAL TURN IN ART

Abstract: It was observed as early as the mid-twentieth century that aesthetics as a philosophical theory of art differs from its objects. The products of contemporary artistic practice go beyond the horizon of traditional aesthetics. Artists are involved increasingly often and on a wide scale in the actions aimed at transforming and constructing the common space. In the face of such activities as took place, for example, as part of the 7th Berlin Biennale for Contemporary Art in 2012, traditional aesthetics seems to be helpless. That is why, if art is to continue to be the focus of aesthetic investigations, it must, as it were, redefine itself. Jacques Rancière is one of the authors who have outlined the new horizon of aesthetics. In my paper I will briefly present his conception. It provides some theoretical tools which I will use for the description and interpretation of some selected examples of contemporary socially engaged artistic practices. I will show that his distinction of the „aesthetic regime" of the interpretation of art reveals the competence that combines all artistic practices, past and present, into one concept of art: art as politics. The foundations for setting such perspective were already provided by Schiller and Kant – the classics of modern philosophical aesthetics.

Keywords: Jacques Rancičre, Zoon Politikon, Friedrich Schiller, Immanuel Kant, Berlin Biennale, Artur Żmijewski, socially engaged art.

The political involvement of art appears to be in great demand today. The notion of involvement is becoming one of the principal categories of aesthetics. Some more critical commentators even say that it is in vogue to do politics using artistic means. It is not really an issue that political art is present at the greatest events on the "art scene" – because it has always been there – but one might mind the fact that today it manifests its politicalness using devices that are sometimes difficult to recognize as artistic. The case in point was the 7th Berlin Biennale in 2012, whose curator was the Polish artist Artur Żmijewski, one of the leading figures of the "critical art" movement. The point of departure for the Biennale was the question of whether art still works. Not as a purely aesthe-

tic object, but as an instrument of social and political change. The question could be treated as an extension of the famous manifesto of *Applied Social Arts*, which Żmijewski himself had proclaimed in 2007.[1] The manifesto expressed his disappointment with the situation in which art no longer provided recipes for improving social relations. Żmijewski advocated in it the restoration – to society – of politically involved art producing concrete outcomes that result in actual change. He demanded the creation of art that leaves sterile galleries and becomes an actor in social space. He voiced this demand from the position in which the implementation of involvement in art is understood only and exclusively as radicalism and confrontation. This should be the art that deals with the topics expelled from public discourse and the art that constantly seeks new forms of communication to avoid turning into primitive propaganda. The Berlin Biennale of 2012 resounded widely in the media, the critical voices being in the majority. The artistic character of the whole enterprise was questioned. The critics spitefully commented that it was the first biennale for contemporary art at which there was no art. Indeed, there were no works there whose form would fulfil in any way the textbook criteria of traditional aesthetics. Or at least this might seem so at first glance.

One of the works was the *Peace Wall* (Nada Prlja) placed in Berlin's Friedrichstraße, i.e. in the immediate vicinity of the Berlin Wall pulled down in 1989. Although the association suggests itself at once, the reference to history was not the artist's intention. Today's Friedrichstraße is the borderline between the immigrant-populated Kreuzberg neighborhood and the Mitte district mostly inhabited by the Berlin middle class. The *Peace Wall* was meant to emphasize the difference between the two neighboring districts of the city. Crosscutting the street, the artwork made it difficult to go from one district to the other. For obvious reasons, this almost immediately angered the inhabitants of the two neighborhoods. The "wall" became the object of physical assault: it was doused with paint, and covered with inscriptions, such as "Weg Damit". The anger of the citizens was gradually becoming more and more organized. Meetings and debates of neighbors were held; a meeting was arranged with the authorities of both districts, and eventually it was decided to pull down the obstacle.

One can certainly challenge the artistic status of this project and claim that it had nothing to do with art, and the fact that it was undertaken under the umbrella of an art institution can be regarded as an abuse that questions art in its essence. But this criticism is possible only when using the concept of art ruling out its political character. However, when one adopts the perspective

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1 The text was published in *Krytyka Polityczna* 2001, no 11/12, p. 14-24. The English version can be found at: http://www.krytykapolityczna.pl/English/Applied-Social-Arts/menu-id-113.html (21 June 2015).

from which art is by nature political, Nada Prljia's project – and any other of this kind – must seem to be an obvious emanation of this nature. This point of view would certainly have to be justified first.

The reasons for this approach are provided by Jacques Rancière, and presented especially in his *The Politics of Aesthetics* (English ed. 2004) and in *Aesthetics and Its Discontents* (English ed. 2009). It is in the latter book, in the essay *Aesthetics as Politics*, that Rancière advances the thesis of a strong bond between aesthetics and politics. It is so strong that one can even speak of an inextricable connection between aesthetics and politics. It is also a feedback relationship, which means that there is no aesthetics that would not be political, and there is no politics without aesthetics. This relationship should also impact the character of art. According to Rancière, any artistic action is at the same time a political gesture. Crucial to this concept is how we understand politics. Today, in popular usage, it is understood as the mechanisms of coming to and staying in power, but its classical meaning is far broader. Rancière goes back to Aristotle, who defined man as a *zoon politikon*. Man is a political animal because he uses speech. But speech is something more than producing sounds. Owing to speech we articulate our interests, formulate our standpoints, and situate ourselves and others within the structure of social relations. It is the ability to make a public issue of the division into the private and the public, just and unjust, permitted and prohibited, visible and invisible, or acceptable and unacceptable. In this sense, in Aristotle's Athens, slaves did not have speech. Their voice was reduced to producing sounds to communicate, but they could not speak out. And whose utterance will be treated as sounds and whose as speech is a political issue. In this interpretation, politics is shaping public space, introducing new forms of sharing the common world, reconfiguring the coordinates of daily experience, or, to use Rancière's expression, the distribution of the sensible.[2] In ancient Greece the lines of the distribution of the sensible divided the world in such a way that slaves functioned merely as an *instrumentum vocale*, while speech was used by free Athenian citizens. Despite the fact that both groups used language in the same way, the social division of the world meant that the voices of some were heard, and of the others weren't. Such distribution can take place in different ways and set different horizons. For example, in Plato's *Republic* craftsmen were deprived of the right to speak; their duty was to work, which deprived them of the time needed to take part in people's assemblies, where public issues were discussed and social life was

2 "I call the distribution of the sensible the system of self-evident facts of sense perception that simultaneously discloses the existence of something in common and the delimitations that define the respective parts and positions within it" – J. Rancière, *The Politics of Aesthetics. The Distribution o f the Sensible*, transl. G. Rockhill, Continuum, London 2004, p. 12.

organized. However, that "lack of time" – as a prohibition to express opinions at people's assemblies – was the result of a distribution of coordinates of sense experience. In other words, it was part of the order predominant at the time. But no order is ever given once and for all, and can be replaced by another. For example, the order in which the necessity of occupational work does not entail the prohibition to speak at public meetings and on public issues. And the decision concerning this is a political gesture – the redrawing of the line between the permitted and the prohibited, a new distribution of the sensible.[3]

Such political gestures are inseparably connected with aesthetic issues. But "aesthetic" in what sense? We should remember that before Kant published his *Critique of Judgment*, in which he discussed judgments about beauty and the sublime, he had written his *Critique of Pure Reason*, which contains the chapter *Transcendental Aesthetic* treating of the a priori forms of sense. To Kant, the forms in which we experience the world were time and space. Also to Rancière, aesthetics is primarily time and space, but, entirely unlike Kant, he does not treat them as unchanging and ahistorical forms. Time and space are forms of dividing the world and the coordinates that organize the space of shared life, and as such they can be arbitrarily modified. Just as Adorno maintained that no social change could occur without changes in language, so too Rancière maintains that no political revolution can do without aesthetic revolutions. This problem was the subject of his dissertation published in 1981 as La Nuit des prolètaires (English edition in 1989 as The Nights of Labour).[4] Rancière argues in it that the birth of the labour movement and the emancipation of the working class could not occur without thoroughly aesthetic changes in the distribution of time and space. It is within this distribution that our place in society is determined, our identities are defined, hierarchies are established and meanings are formed: this is what the distribution of the sensible consists in.

This kind of distribution took place in Friedrichstraße on the occasion of the *Peace Wall* authored by Nada Prlja. The artist's intervention forced the inhabitants to take a stance in public space, to start a dialog, enter the process of decision-making: they were provoked into political action. Certainly, it was a kind of provocation and compulsion, but this does not change the fact that the "wall" was an aesthetic intervention. It changed the coordinates of sense experience in the way which turned anonymous inhabitants into real citizens and activated their civic potential.

What happened in Friedrichstraße as part of the 7th Biennale may perfectly illustrate Rancière's words: "Art is politics (...) through the type of time and

3 Ibid. p. 12-13.

4 J. Rancière, *The Nights of Labor: The Workers' Dream in Nineteenth-Century France*, transl. J. Drury, Temple University Press, Philadelphia, 1991.

space it introduces, through the way it divides that time and populates that space."[5] The way Rancière defines politics, particularly the way in which he relates it to aesthetics, translates into the manner of identifying art. Besides, according to his interpretation, what we recognize as art is also a consequence of some prior political gesture. Painting, sculpture, or poetry has always existed, but the concept of art binding these practices together not always has. In a sense, this kind of concept does not exist even today. The closed concept of art, i.e. one that defines necessary and sufficient conditions for something being art has never been developed. We can however speak of certain regimes of identification within which some objects are recognized as art and others are not. When today we use the expression "contemporary art", we mean the objects that have simply replaced those exhibited in galleries in the past. The term "painting" refers only to a certain system of visibility of art. Similar kind of terms are "photography", "film", "video-installation", or "performance"; there is no art without a special form of visibility and discourse, owing to which we recognize it as art.[6] In other words, it is not the properties of an object or event that determine its being part of the category ART. What decides here is a certain discourse which calls an object/event art (quite as in A. Danto's concept).[7] The ancient sculptor simply cast a figure in bronze, and the fact that we treat it as an artwork today depends on the adopted regime of identification, owing to which we recognize the object in question precisely as an artwork. According to Rancière, politics has not always existed, although there has always been some form of authority. Similarly, art has not always existed although people have always created poetry, paintings, sculptures, music, theater and dance.[8]

Rancière distinguishes three such possible regimes: ethical, representational, and aesthetic. He describes them using the example of the Juno Ludovisi sculpture – the portrait of the Roman woman Antonia Minor, who was portrayed as the Roman goddess Juno, the counterpart of Greek Hera. One of the attitudes we can adopt towards this work is to see it as an image of divinity. "In this regime, there is properly speaking no art as such but instead images that we judge in terms of their intrinsic truth and of their impact on the ways of being of individuals and of the collectivity. That is why I propose that this regime, in which art enters into a zone of indistinction, be referred to an ethical regime of images."[9] Rancière speaks of the "indistinction of art" because in this regime

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5 J. Rancière, *Aesthetics and its Discontents*, transl. S. Corcoran, Polity Press, Cambridge 2009, p. 22.
6 Ibid. p. 44.
7 A.C. Danto, "The Artworld", *Journal of Philosophy* LXI, 1964, pp. 571-584.
8 See: J. Rancière, Aesthetics and its Discontents, p. 34.
9 Ibid. p. 29.

art is not identified as such. A chair, a gold shield, and a marble statue are merely objects. They can at most differ in their status. The status is defined by answers to the question about the origin of those objects, their purpose and use, and the question about the effects that they produce. Therefore, this has to do mainly with the content of an artwork: what would be the "intrinsic truth" of artworks if not their content? If the external effects of the intrinsic truth were to be assessed, then we can speak of some recommendations or directives that an artwork contains in itself. This "ethical regime" was one within which almost all medieval and socialist-realism art functioned. "Ethical" means here "respecting a directive": whether and to what extent we accept the teaching that an artwork conveys. The artwork interpreted in terms of this regime also defines the *ethos* that individuals and the community have to satisfy.[10]

The closest to the popular understanding of art is the second of Rancière's regimes: the representational regime. The same statue of Juno can be assessed in terms of the adequacy of its presentation as compared with our conception of the figure of the goddess, i.e. whether in the sculptor's struggle with matter he managed to give it an adequate or at least convincing form. The artwork here is only a representation, and if it is treated as such, what is assessed is the sculptor's dexterity, his skill in producing an adequate image. Rancière does not write about it, but it appears that accuracy does not have to mean here the conformity of the representation to the represented. It can be a conformity to a certain canon, or simply any accepted manner of presentation. After all, non-representing Cubist and abstract artworks can also function within the representational regime of identification; the problem is to develop a form that is simply attractive.

The last one in Rancière's concept and crucial to demonstrating the affinity between aesthetics and politics is the aesthetic regime. In this regime the Juno statue acquires its properties because the sculptor rose to the challenge and convincingly portrayed Antonia Minor, or because the author included some "intrinsic truth" in the work. The term "aesthetic" does not apply here to any criteria for technical excellence or any properties of the object. It thus does not require such categories as aesthetic sensitivity, taste, value or experience. The property that allows it to be perceived as art is its belonging to a "specific *sensorium*" – it is ascribed to a specific form of sensory apprehension.[11] It is in this form and through its specificity that that the political character of art is realized. What does its specificity consist in, then? How does the aesthetic form of sense perception differ from other forms?

10 See: J. Rancière, *The Politics of Aesthetics. The Distribution of the Sensible*, p. 21.
11 See: J. Rancière, *Aesthetics and its Discontents*, p. 36.

It should be emphasized that Rancière did not choose the statute of the Roman goddess by accident. The same example was used by Friedrich Schiller in his *Letters upon the Aesthetic Education of Man*, to which, incidentally, Rancière refers. In *Letter XV* Schiller describes the Juno sculpture in the following way: "The whole form rests and dwells in itself, a fully complete creation in itself and as if she were out of space, without advance or resistance; it shows no force contending with force, no opening through which time could break in".[12] This description reveals the inactivity and indifference of the artwork: it is self-contained and appears to belong to some reality other than that in which it is perceived, which is why we can notice in it, as Schiller did, "art of appearance", and "an object of free play".[13] "Free", because it is independent of external reality; "appearance" because it does not belong to it. The only proper attitude of the perceiver towards the self-contained artwork is the state of free play. "Man is only completely a man" – Schiller writes – "when he plays", and "the whole edifice of aesthetic art and the still more difficult art of life will be supported by this principle".[14] It should be also remembered that the Letters upon the Aesthetic Education of Man were written not only to promote and develop some cultural competence: when writing those Letters, Schiller planned to educate and lead the humankind to full-fledged humanity. Why then should the term be appropriate for describing the special nature of aesthetics, so important in this project? Play is an activity which is an end in itself. It is a trivial thing, an ordinary pastime. All the more so, why does Schiller see in it the only possibility of moulding the truly human attitudes? Why is it that only through art-play can an individual attain full humanity? Rancičre answers: art presented within the aesthetic regime of identification defines artistic objects as belonging to a *sensorium* different from the *sensorium* of dominance.[15]

In order to explain that, a short excursion into Kant might be useful. His *Critique of the Power of Judgment* also speaks of *free play*. This applies to the powers of cognition in contact with the beautiful. Understanding and imagination are set in motion on the basis of what is provided by the senses. The motion consists in seeking harmony between the picture developed by imagination basing on the sensory material, and the concept provided by understanding. But this harmony is to be arrived at rather than produced. When the content of a concept determines our powers of cognition, we are not dealing with any free play. A concept is a form imposed upon sense-derived matter, therefore the

12 F. Schiller, "Letter XV", in *Letters Upon The Aesthetic Education of Man*. http://legacy.fordham.edu/halsall/mod/schiller-education.asp (22.05.2015).
13 Ibid. "Letter XXVI – XXVII".
14 Ibid. "Letter XV".
15 See: J. Rancière, *Aesthetics and its Discontents*, p. 37.

state of harmony between imagination and understanding is produced automatically. Hence Kant's definition of the beautiful drawn from the second moment reads: "That is beautiful which pleases universally without a concept."[16] Kant's aesthetics implicitly requires adopting the appropriate attitude beyond which beauty cannot be experienced. The attitude can be interpreted as a state in which the power of form over matter is suspended. Rancière interprets this suspension in anthropological-political terms. "The power of 'form' over 'matter', is the power of the class of intelligence over the class of sensation, of men of culture over men of nature. If aesthetic 'play' and 'appearance' found a new community, then this is because they stand for the refutation, within the sensible, of this opposition between intelligent form and sensible matter which, properly speaking, is a difference between two humanities."[17] All forms of dominance strive to found their validity on the self-evidence of this division. According to Rancière, this self-evidence is challenged in the "aesthetic regime of art". By suspending the distinctions and oppositions between the intellectual and the sensible, art, as "free appearance", shows the arbitrariness of the functioning concepts, and ultimately, of whole discourses. The contentual determinacy of reality does not come from it, but is only an interpretation. Meanings are moulded by and dependent on the prevalent "distribution of the sensible", which determines, classifies and assigns to individuals a specific place in a community. The playing man appears more human precisely because the play abolishes all previous coordinates of sense experience, and with them the established distribution of time, places, space and identities is no longer valid.

To illustrate the competence of art to redistribute the coordinates of sense experience, I will refer to another artistic project realized as part of the 7th Berlin Biennale, that is the *New World Summit* by Jonas Staal, popularly called "the congress of terrorists." In the space arranged like the UN General Assembly, the artist organized a two-day meeting attended by the representatives of the organizations placed on the international list of terrorists.[18] During the plenary session, the participants read out the programs and postulates of their organizations, which was followed by a panel discussion. A congress of this kind could not be held outside of the walls of an art institution, because the binding distribution of the sensible tells us that you do not talk to terrorists. But owing to this project, the identity of "the terrorist", a representative of

16 I. Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, transl. P. Guyer, E. Matthews, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2000, p. 104.

17 J. Rancière, *Aesthetics and its Discontents*, p. 31.

18 Altogether, they were seven persons representing the National Democratic Front of the Philippines (NDF), the Kurdish Women Movement, the Basque Independence Movement and the National Liberation Movement of Azawad (MNLA).

a black-listed organization, was greatly remoulded. Suddenly, it was possible to see that these organizations are simply platforms for representing the interests of the social groups which were deprived of their say and thereby excluded from democratic procedures. There is no demagoguery – the point is that the coordinates of sense experience, at least for the moment, were interpreted in a different way.

It is true that the examples of socially engaged practices are not quite the same as art as "free appearance". The latter only simulates other worlds. Its forms express its isolation and independence from the determinants of the external world, and the world that it shows is only virtual, reconstructed only imaginatively.[19] In contrast, contemporary engaged art breaks this isolation: it strives to actually enter reality and pulls all the threads of the fabric of which our world is woven. Which is why the two differ so much in their forms, and at first glance they appear so far apart that they are called with one term "art" only by accident. But according to Rancière, this glance does not look where it is necessary, because the difference is superficial and depends on the regime of identification within which art is perceived. Only its placement in the aesthetic regime reveals the competence that combines all artistic practices, past and present, into one concept of art: art as politics. And the theoretical instruments for setting this perspective of its perception were already provided by Schiller and Kant – the classics of modern philosophical aesthetics.

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19 See: Th. W. Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, transl. R. Hullot-Kentor, Continuum, London 2002, p. 135.

ESTETYKA WOBEC ZWROTU POLITYCZNEGO W SZTUCE (streszczenie)

Już w początkach XX wieku dostrzeżono, że przedmiot badań estetyki – jako dziedziny filozoficznej – stał się nieoczywisty. Także i dzisiaj produkty praktyk artystyczny wykraczają daleko poza horyzont tradycyjnej estetyki, a artyści coraz częściej angażują się w konstruowanie i kształtowanie przestrzeni społecznej. W obliczu praktyk artystycznych, jakich nagromadzeniem stało się na przykład 7. Berlińskie Biennale sztuki współczesnej, tradycyjna estetyka wydaje się bezradna. Jeśli nadal chce utrzymać w swoim polu badawczym przedmioty sztuki, musi niejako na nowo zdefiniować swoje granice. Jednym ze współczesnych teoretyków, którzy kreślą nowy horyzont tego, co estetyczne, jest Jaques Rancière. W tekście przedstawiam jego koncepcję "estetyki jako polityki" i wydobywam z niej narzędzia teoretyczne, które posłużą mi do opisu i interpretacji wybranych przykładów praktyk artystycznych zaangażowanych społecznie. Pokażę, że Rancierowski "reżim estetyczny" pozwala umieścić całość dorobku sztuki w jednym pojęciu: sztuki jako polityki. A uzasadnienie takiego ujęcia znajdziemy także u takich klasyków nowożytnej estetyki jak Schiller i Kant.

Słowa kluczowe: Jacques Rancière, Zoon Politikon, Fryderyk Schiller, Immanuel Kant, Berlin Biennale, Artur Żmijewski, sztuka zaangażowana społecznie

Art Inquiry. Recherches sur les arts 2015, vol. XVII
ISSN 1641-9278

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FROM VISUAL CULTURE TO VISUAL COMMUNICATION. THE PICTORIAL AND ICONIC TURN IN CONTEMPORARY CULTURE

Abstract: The article attempts to approximate the notions of "visual culture", "visual communication" and "data visualization", which appeared with the pictorial and the iconic turns. The pictorial turn raised the picture to the rank of a sign system, similarly to language within the poststructuralist reflection. In contrast, thanks to the changes in art history research, Visual Culture Studies came into being, necessitating a definition of the term "visual culture". Doris Bachmann-Medick characterizes the iconic turn as a late reaction of art history studies to the linguistic turn, which views a painting as a textual and discursive phenomenon. This situation gave rise to Norman Bryson's semiotics of the image, which employs the notion of "the language of images", creating the need for a definition of "visual communication". The expansion of new media poses another challenge to visual culture, which is the need to define "data visualization". W.J.T. Mitchell announced a new version of the pictorial turn – a turn towards biopictures, or biodigital pictures. These "animated icons" have been given the characteristics of life by the biological-information technology. However, the definition of "data visualization" is shaped by the "digital turn", which views it as a practice of endowing the raw, mathematical sequences of codes in databases with anthropological and cultural information. Currently, the definition of "data visualization" is also impacted by the theory of databases and software studies by Lev Manovich. Finally, I would like to ask about the risks and benefits of the pictorial and iconic turns.

Keywords: visual culture, visual communication, data visualization, pictorial turn, iconic turn

Introduction

Examining the role of the pictorial turn in contemporary visual culture, the American scholar W.J.T. Mitchell announced his opposition to the domination

of language in his famous text – his manifesto about the pictorial turn.[1] Mitchell suggests that the pictorial turn has a linguistic ground and that it had already appeared at the time when Richard Rorty announced the linguistic turn.[2] This kind of interpretation is typical for Mitchell, who investigated the image in opposition to the text or as a combination of text and image – "image-text".[3] He claims that the history of culture or the history of philosophy can be characterized as a series of "turns". The last of these was "the linguistic turn". According to Mitchell, at that time

> Linguistics, semiotics, rhetoric, and various models of «textuality» have become the lingua franca for critical reflection on the arts, the media, and cultural forms. Society is a text, nature and its scientific representations are 'discourses'. Even the unconscious is structured like a language. (...) But it does seem clear that another shift in what philosophers talk about is happening, and that once again a complexly related transformation is occurring in other disciplines of the human sciences and the sphere of public culture. I want to call this shift the 'pictorial turn'.[4]

Among the early manifestations and symptoms of the pictorial turn Mitchell includes the semiotics of Charles Sanders Peirce and the various "languages of art" postulated by Nelson Goodman. In their reflections they focus on the iconic systems of symbols, going beyond language. Mitchell also lists Derrida's grammatology and its interest in writing as a visual trace, the Frankfurt School with its explorations of visual media, and Michel Foucault's contribution to the studies of "scopic regimes" in the form of his juxtaposition of discourse and visibility. Mitchell claims that in philosophy the pictorial turn can be identified in the works of Ludwig Wittgenstein and in the changes in his attitude towards the issue of imagery.[5] In the logic of images, which Mitchell proposes, we can note two opposite tendencies. On the one hand the pictorial turn emerges as it were from the linguistic turn, and on the other hand the paradigm of language

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1 W.J.T. Mitchell, *Picture Theory: Essays on Verbal and Visual Representation*, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago and London 1994, pp. 11-34.

2 See Ibid., p. 11.

3 See Ibid., p. 95.

4 Ibid., p. 11.

5 This refers to the famous paragraph of Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations*: "A picture held us captive. And we could not get outside it, for it lay in our language and language seemed to repeat itself to us inexorably". L. Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, transl. G.E.M. Anscombe, Blackwell, Oxford 1958, p. 48, § I:115. Mitchell notes that the evolution of Wittgenstein's thought took him from thinking about meaning in the context of "Picture Theory" towards iconoclasm.

is so strong that it influences the development of visual culture studies, transforming its meaning.[6]

Visual culture

According to Mitchell, the question of the meaning of the notion of the image and its role in contemporary culture is superseding the problem of "language", unresolved by poststructuralist philosophers,[7] and ushering in the development of visual culture studies, or, as Mitchell calls them, "visual studies", rooted in the semiotics of the image and communication theory.[8] In this sense the pictorial turn can be seen as a mirror reflection of the linguistic turn, which took place in the works of Jacques Derrida, Michel Foucault, Jacques Lacan and Richard Rorty.[9] Some of the philosophers mentioned here are considered to be precursors of the pictorial turn, although in fact their conclusions relate to the text, not the image. Mitchell presents this approach as follows:

> What makes for the sense of the pictorial turn, then, is not that we have some powerful account of visual representation that is dictating the terms of cultural theory, but that pictures form a point of peculiar friction and discomfort across a broad range of intellectual inquiry. The picture now has a status somewhere between what Thomas Kuhn called a «paradigm» and an «anomaly», emerging as a central topic of discussion in the human sciences in the way that language did: that is, as a kind of model or figure for other things (including figuration itself), and as an unresolved problem, perhaps even the object of its own «science», what Erwin Panofsky called an «iconology».[10]

In contemporary culture the image emerges as a sign system, like language in the poststructuralist reflection under the aegis of the linguistic turn. Mitchell says that the pictorial turn has brought in Picture Theory[11] thanks to the changes in art history research caused by the linguistic turn. Mitchell refers in this way to the awakening of art history from its "dogmatic slumber",[12] initiated by

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6 See W.J.T. Mitchell, *Picture Theory*, op. cit., pp. 11–34.
7 See Ibid., p. 13.
8 Discussion of Mieke Bal's article "Visual Essentialism and the Object of Visual Culture" and the author's reply – J. Elkins, "Nine modes of interdisciplinarity for visual studies". *Journal of Visual Culture"*, 2003, no. 2(2), p. 232.
9 See M. Gołębiewska, *Między wątpieniem a pewnością. O związkach języka i racjonalności w filozofii poststrukturalizmu*, UNIVERSITAS, Kraków 2003, pp. 30-36.
10 W.J.T. Mitchell, *Picture Theory*, op. cit., p. 13.
11 Ibid., p. 12.
12 Ibid., p. 14.

Norman Bryson's semiology of the image. It is to this theoretical perspective that the studies of visual culture owe their way of thinking about the visual arts as "sign systems" with their own "discourse" and "textuality".

The pictorial turn did not appear directly in the area of culture studies, although it was included by Doris Bachmann-Medick among cultural turns (under the analogous German term "iconic turn"). As a confirmation of the fact that the iconic turn has influenced the research into culture and also visual culture studies, Bachmann-Medick explains that:

> When we talk about the iconic turn, we do not by any means have in mind only such phenomena as are characteristic of the culture of everyday life. Speaking about it triggers a new perception of the image within cultural studies. Together with the criticism of cognition, and even criticism of language, the iconic turn works for the benefit of visual competence, which, in Western societies, having begun in the days starting from Plato's hostility to images and with logocentrism in philosophy, is still inadequate. The dominance of language in Western cultures for a long time relegated the studies of the culture of the image to the margin.[13]

Bachmann-Medick's conclusions make us realize that the development of the pictorial/iconic turn, and hence the development of visual culture studies is carried out with the support of the critics of language.[14] The Anglophone authors involved in the pictorial turn constantly refer to linguistic theories, trying to adapt them to the task. In addition, literature, linguistics, and semiotics have become matrices for the contemporary concept of visual culture studies related to the pictorial/iconic turn.[15]

Characterizing this period in the development of art history, Bachmann-Medick wrote that "Paradoxically (...) the iconic turn was exactly when the history of art (being late) jumps on the train of the linguistic turn and begins to discover the fine arts as systems of signs, as textual and discursive phenomena".[16] In this perspective, the iconic turn is perceived as an opposition to the linguistic turn, which can be seen particularly strongly in the case of the "critical iconology" of Mitchell, dialoguing with Panofsky's *Iconology*, which proposed "the resistance of the 'icon' to the 'logos.'"[17]

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13 D. Bachmann-Medick, *Cultural Turns: Nowe kierunki w naukach o kulturze*, transl. K. Krzemieniowa, Oficyna Naukowa, Warszawa 2012, p. 390.
14 Ibid., pp. 394–395.
15 W.J.T. Mitchell, *Picture Theory*, op. cit., p. 11.
16 D. Bachmann-Medick, *Cultural Turns*, op. cit., pp. 394–395.
17 W.J.T. Mitchell, *Picture Theory*, op. cit., p. 28.

Mitchell's project goes beyond the linguistically mediated iconology of Panofsky understood "as a fractured concept, a suturing of image and text. One must precede the other, dominate, resist, supplement the other. This otherness or alterity of image and text is not just a matter of analogous structure, as if images just happened to be the 'other' to texts".[18] In this sense Mitchell claims that: "the 'icon' is thoroughly absorbed by the 'logos', understood as a rhetorical, literary, or even (less convincingly) a scientific discourse."[19] The presented situation was aptly summed up by Roma Sendyka, who argued that Mitchell's project is in fact a pragmatic project concerning the use of images in everyday culture and science, while Gottfried Boehm poses the basic question about the non-linguistic source of images, about their own 'logos'.[20] According to Boehm, the "iconic turn" has a different philosophical background, creating new theoretical perspectives for the reflection on images,[21] which have been researched primarily in the aesthetic context or, as suggested by Mitchell, recognized as a language and a discursive phenomenon.[22]

The sources of the iconic/pictorial turns are common and relate to the iconology of Panofsky.[23] In this sense, as noted by Boehm in a letter to Mitchell:

> Essentially, the name 'icono-logy' would be the comprehensive methodological substitute for what art history is supposed to achieve: the understanding and interpretation of the 'logos' of the image in its historical, perception-oriented and meaning-saturated determinedness. Panofsky, (whose authoritative reformulation of the term retains validity to this day) adopted the ancient concept of 'iconologia' and in doing so caused this balance [between textuality and visuality] to shift to the side of textuality, as you yourself have shown in your contribution on the 'pictorial turn'. When the iconic is invoked, it never implies a 'withdrawal' from language, but rather that a 'difference' vis a vis language comes into play.[24]

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18 Ibid.

19 Ibid.

20 R. Sendyka, *Poetyki wizualności*, [in:] *Kulturowa teoria literatury 2*, ed. T. Walas, R. Nycz, UNIVERSITAS, Kraków 2012, s. 170.

21 G. Boehm, *Po drugiej stronie języka? Uwagi na temat logiki obrazów*, transl. D. Kołacka, in: Perspektywy współczesnej historii sztuki. Antologia przekładów „Artium Quaestiones", ed. M. Bryl, P. Juszkiewicz, P. Piotrowski, W. Suchocki, Wydawnictwo Naukowe UAM, Poznań 2009, pp. 938–942.

22 W.J.T. Mitchell, *Picture Theory*, op. cit., pp. 11–34.

23 G. Boehm and W.J.T. Mitchell, "Pictorial versus Iconic Turn: Two Letters", in: *The Pictorial Turn*, ed. N. Curtis, Routledge, London and New York, 2010, p. 12.

24 Ibid., p. 12.

Mitchell proposed that "One way of dealing with this problem would be to give up the notion of metalanguage or discourse that could control the understanding of pictures and to explore the way that pictures attempt to represent themselves – an 'iconography' in a sense rather different from the traditional one".[25] Still, he does not provide any solutions to this problem; he writes that "The pictorial turn is not the answer to anything. It is merely a way of stating the question".[26] Boehm, who tried to work out the philosophical basis of the understanding of images,[27] goes one step further:

> Images have all too long been «read» in order to find in them a hidden meaning and subtext or a story that could be told. And yet they are not by any means only signs, reflections or illustrations, and they have an impact force of their own, which, it seems, does not give speech access to itself.[28]

In describing the relation between visual culture studies and the pictorial turn, what seems interesting is an alternative way of their development, in which art history is the intellectual centre of the contemporary changes taking place in the interdisciplinary research based on the achievements of cultural studies. Art history had to undergo changes in the era of digital technology, which creates a fertile ground for the transformation postulated by Hans Belting, i.e. the conversion art history into media history.[29] Mitchell, who believes that if

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25 W.J.T. Mitchell, *Picture Theory*, op. cit., p. 24.

26 Ibid.

27 G. Boehm, *Die Wiederkehr der Bilder*, in: *Was ist ein Bild?*, ed. G. Boehm, Fink, München 1994, p. 12.

28 D. Bachmann-Medick, *Cultural Turns*, op. cit., p. 391.

29 In the opinion of Hans Belting, art history or according to his nomenclature, „history of the image", has always been the history of the media. From the oldest manual techniques to the digital procedures, images highlight the „technical conditioning" that exploits their „media properties" H. Belting, "Obraz i jego media. Próba antropologiczna", transl. M. Bryl, *Artium Quaestiones* XI, ed. K. Kalinowski, P. Piotrowski, W. Suchocki, Wydawnictwo Naukowe UAM, Poznań, 2000, pp. 303–306. This allows us to understand that Belting's attempts constitute a project to create the history of the visual /pictorial media. This shift also introduces a new understanding of art history, including visual media within the scope of its deliberations. In his project of media history, the researcher does not propose the inclusion of art history in the expanded scope of media theory, or any similar annexation, but only draws attention to the fact that art history has long dealt with the issues of media, understanding them as a means of expression of creative ideas. See M. Bryl, *Historia sztuki na przejściu od kontekstowej "Funktionsgeschichte" do antropologicznej "Bildwissenschaft"* (*„Casus" Hans Belting*), Ibid., pp. 237-293. For this reason, Belting postulates the inclusion of the deliberations on the video within the scope of art history, thus indicating the areas of interest of media history. This project shows the genesis of the anthropological Bildwissenschaft considered as equivalent to visual culture studies.

the pictorial turn is currently taking place in "(...) cybernetic technology, the age of electronic reproduction has developed new forms of visual simulation and illusionism, with unprecedented powers".[30] He claims that "a pictorial turn of a culture totally dominated by images has now become a real technical possibility on a global scale".[31] This situation is relevant for visual culture studies, whose examples illustrate the contemporary transformations of the definition of visual culture.[32] Mitchell understood the pictorial turn as:

> (...) a postlinguistic, postsemiotic rediscovery of the picture as a complex interplay between visuality, apparatus, institutions, discourse, bodies, and figurality. It is the realization that 'spectatorship' (the look, the gaze, the glance, the practices of observation, surveillance and visual pleasure) may be as deep a problem as various forms of 'reading' (decipherment, decoding, interpretation, etc.) and that visual experience or 'visual literacy' might not be fully explicable on the model of textuality.[33]

Visual culture studies in the face of the pictorial turn have an advantage on art history turned into media history. But there is another alternative between art history and cultural studies, which may lead to a reflection on the image and visuality. Margaret Dikovitskaya claims that "Visual [culture] studies has not replaced art history or aesthetics but has supplemented and problematized them both by making it possible to grasp some of the axioms and ideological presuppositions underlying the past and current methodology of art history".[34] This can occur thanks to the introduction of interdisciplinary reflection initiated by British cultural studies, and then continued, among others, by gender studies, queer studies (gay and lesbian studies), and African-American studies. These theoretical perspectives made it possible to cross the boundaries between the fixed disciplines of knowledge, which has interesting applications in the visual culture studies. This point of view allows us to understand the specificity of visual culture studies, which is based on the strategy of constructing a theoretical-methodological framework. This divisions depart from the ones adopted within the humanities.[35]

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30 W.J.T. Mitchell, *Picture Theory*, op. cit., p. 15.
31 Ibid.
32 See Ibid.
33 Ibid, p. 16.
34 M. Dikovitskaya, *Visual Culture. The Study of the Visual after Cultural Turn*, The MIT Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, London, p. 72.
35 N. Mirzoeff, *An Introduction to Visual Culture*, Routledge, London and New York 1999, p. 4.

The situation of the visual culture studies described above illustrates the contemporary transformations of the definition of the concept of visual culture. Mitchell believes that the emergence of the pictorial turn can lead to a picture theory.[36] This sub-discipline falling within the scope of visual culture studies grew out of "the realization that spectatorship (the look, the gaze, the glance, the practices of observation, surveillance and visual pleasure) may be as deep a problem as various forms of reading (decipherment, decoding, interpretation, etc.) and that visual experience or 'visual literacy' might not be fully explicable on the model of textuality".[37]

Mitchell's understanding of images resides in the general concepts that anchor the different relationships between figures of knowledge. In his *Iconology*, he suggests that the image/picture is not just a special kind of sign, but also a primary concept. Mitchell then takes textuality to be the "foil" of imagery, a secondary notion that can be understood as an alternative model of representation.[38] The debate on the meaning of the term "visual culture" should consider the fact that this notion is rather confusing, understood both as a field of knowledge, and as a subject of research, and its very definition has troubled the theoreticians to quite an extent. It was perhaps Mitchell who summed up the situation most accurately, writing that one cannot adopt the generally available meanings of the words "visual" and "culture" to develop a satisfactory definition of visual culture.[39] Starting with this assumption, Malcolm Barnard decided to devote an entire chapter of his book to an attempt to define separately the terms "visual" and "cultural" to create a context for further reflection on visual culture.[40]

The described procedures lead in fact to an increasingly "global" meaning of this term. Instead of clarifying it, theorists elaborate on the new contexts in which we can talk of different aspects of visual culture, but also of visuality in contemporary culture. It is a matter for a separate discussion whether this kind of strategy is useful, or whether it leads to conceptual confusion. Suffice it to mention that after a few years Barnard abandoned the "broad concept" of visual culture to describe instead several ways of understanding paintings and other works of art that are only marginally related to their cultural function.[41]

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36 See W.J.T. Mitchell, *Picture Theory*, op. cit., p. 15.

37 Ibid., p. 16.

38 W.J.T. Mitchell, *Iconology: Image, Text, Ideology*, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago and London 1986, p. 43.

39 W.J.T. Mitchell, "What is visual culture?", in: *Meaning in the Visual Arts: Views from the Outside*, ed. I. Lavin, Institute of Advanced Study, Princeton 1995, p. 208.

40 M. Barnard, *Art, Design and Visual Culture. An Introduction*, St. Martin's Press, New York 1998, pp. 10–31.

41 M. Barnard, *Approaches to Understanding Visual Culture*, PALGRAVE, New York 2001, pp. 1–3.

In the last few years, the number of publications on visual culture studies has increased extensively, and almost each of them attempts some definition of the notion of "visual culture".[42]

But let us return for a moment to the beginning. One of the first books making an attempt to explain the term "visual culture" was *The Art of Describing* (1983) by Svetlana Alpers. The author openly admits to having been inspired by Michael Baxandall, but as the material for her analysis she choose 17th century Dutch paintings, rather than paintings from the Italian Quattrocento.[43] In the context of the present considerations, the polemic of Georges Didi-Huberman published in his famous work *Confronting Images*[44] also seems interesting. Alpers observes that the concept of narrative is relevant for the Italian Quattrocento painting, because the images belonging to this historical period are based on some story. In contrast, she claims that Dutch 17th century painting cannot be perceived in this way, because these are images that are not associated with any story.[45] Alpers questions the thesis of Alberti, who said that a painting is a kind of narrative, or *istoria*.[46] The author of *The Art of Describing* believes that the reduction of an image to narration or story is a theoretical misunderstanding. According to Alpers, the meaning and visuality of Dutch painting is to be found just under "the surface of images". What we see is all there is to see and understand, and visualization becomes a goal in itself.

From this theoretical perspective, *The View of Delft* (1658-1661) by Johannes Vermeer, analyzed by Didi-Huberman, does not refer to any earlier textual source. Didi-Huberman up to a point agrees with the opinion of Alpers, and concedes that Vermeer's image cannot be assigned to any story. He writes bluntly that "the view of Delft is just a view".[47] Alpers says that this image allows us to see

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42 Currently, the publications within visual culture studies include:
1. *The Visual Culture Reader*, ed. N. Mirzoeff, Routledge, London and New York 1998, 2002, 2013.
2. *The Handbook of Visual Culture*, eds I. Heywood, B. Sandywell, M. Gardiner, G. Nadarajan, C. Sonssloff, Berg, Bloomsbury Academic, London, 2012.
3. *Visual Culture: Critical Concepts in Media and Cultural Studies*, eds J. Morra, M. Smith, Routledge, London and New York 2006.
4. *Visual Culture Studies. Interviews with Key Thinkers*, ed. M. Smith, SAGE, Los Angeles, London, 2008.

43 See S. Alpers, *The Art of Describing. Dutch Art in the Seventeenth Century*, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago 1983.

44 See G. Didi-Huberman, *Confronting Images: Questioning the Ends of a Certain History of Art*, Pennsylvania State University Press, Pennsylvania 2005.

45 See Ibid., pp. 240–247.

46 Leon Battista Alberti has written that „The greatest work of the painter is the *istoria*. Bodies are part of the istoria, members are parts of the bodies, planes are parts of the members". L.B. Alberti, *On Painting*, transl. J. R. Spencer, Yale University Press, New Haven 1970, p. 70.

47 Ibid., p. 240.

what Delft looked like in the times of Vermeer, and one can read from it not only the topography of the city, but also the appearance of the buildings (architecture and urban planning), the landscape, and the people. In the image we thus see not only the "view" of the city, but also a set of visual signals, which may be perceived as part of "visual culture". The images analysed by Alpers also speak of the acts and techniques of seeing and capturing images, and of how the science of those times accounted for them.[48] Didi-Huberman shares Alpers's observations, writing that "what is painted on Dutch paintings of the seventeenth century is what was seen in the so-called 'visual culture' of the times (the term is borrowed from Baxandall); *it is* what was seen, seen exactly, through techniques of description and scientific measurement of the perceptible world".[49] Alpers used the term "visual culture" to refer not only to visual competence, but also to the technical conditions for creating images among specific social groups (both images "seen" and "painted"). Alpers compares 17th century Dutch paintings to other kinds of visual representation, such as maps, scientific illustrations, and various means and methods for creating images that were available at that time.[50] Her explorations thus focus not so much on painting, as on the broader category of "visual culture". At the same time, this was one of the first definitions of visual culture ever formulated.[51]

However, in his polemic Didi-Huberman talks about a completely different visual model. The image is deprived of meaning (it does not tell any story), but shows us the painter's way of seeing reality (meaning is replaced by seeing). Didi-Huberman calls this model "visual reflection", which is the ability to create a transparent and highly accurate representation of the subject (this depends on the technical skills of the painter). In the case of the The View of Delft, the subject is urban landscape. It is difficult not to notice in this painting a huge amount of detail and various objects.[52] Alpers claims that Dutch painting in

48 See S. Alpers, *The Art of Describing*, op. cit., pp. 123–124.

49 G. Didi-Huberman, *Confronting Images*, op. cit., p. 241.

50 See S. Alpers, *The Art of Describing*, op. cit., pp. 119–168.

51 See M. Rampley, *Exploring Visual Culture*: Definitions, Concepts, Contexts, ed. M. Rampley, Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh 2005, p. 12. Cf. S. Alpers, *The Art of Describing*, op. cit., p. 12.

52 G. Didi-Huberman, *Confronting Images*, op. cit., p. 164. Didi-Huberman believes that *The View of Delft* can be interpreted in a completely different way, as exemplified by a lengthy excerpt from Marcel Proust's *In Search of Lost Time*, in which we find the following description: „At last he came to the Vermeer, which he remembered as more striking, more different from anything else that he knew, but in which, thanks to the critic's article, he remarked for the first time some small figures in blue, that the ground was pink, and finally the precious substance of the tiny patch of yellow wall. 'That is how I ought to have written, he said. My last books are too dry, I ought to have gone over them with several coats of paint, made my language exquisite in itself, like this little patch of yellow wall.' Meanwhile he was not uncon-

the 17th century was connected with a theory of seeing. As an example in support of this thesis, she mentions the invention of *camera obscura*, which links the mode of painting of Vermeer, who used it, with photography. In this sense, the painting, like a photographic image, is inextricably linked with the knowledge of the depicted object, which is subordinate to the artist's perception.[53]

Although Didi-Huberman agrees with the suggestions of Alpers, he criticizes her strategy for the reduction of visuality and her one-dimensional approach. In her book, Vermeer's painting becomes a transparent "plane of representation" devoid of materiality, and 17th century Dutch painting becomes subordinated to the scientific model of seeing – a technique for reflecting and representing reality. The main theoretical assumptions contained in the book *The Art of Describing* come down to the rejection of iconicity, which makes one look for a story in the picture. However, Didi-Haberman writes that the difference between this position and the views of Alpers and Erwin Panofsky is illusory. In fact, the assumptions of Alpers prove to be insufficient, as her concept of visual culture involves the subordination of the image to the object represented and reduces painting to the process of description. This point of view is also revealed in the title of her book, *The Art of Describing*. This assumption would eliminate the dichotomy between real-life representation and its symbolization, and as

scious of the gravity of his condition. (...) He repeated to himself: 'Little patch of yellow wall, with a sloping roof, little patch of yellow wall.' While doing so he sank down upon a circular divan; (...) he rolled from the divan to the floor, as visitors and attendants came hurrying to his assistance. He was dead." M. Proust, *In Search of Lost Time*, Vol. 5: *The Prisoner*, transl. C.K. Scott Moncrieff, The Modern Library, New York 1992, p. 136. The quoted fragment is not about a description of the city. The fragment of the wall is not its representation, and neither is it a detail subordinated to the whole. The experience described by Marcel Proust refers to matter and emerges from its properties. The yellow patch of colour does not allow Bergotte to look at anything else and causes his death. This scene was invoked by Didi-Huberman to talk in a completely different context about *The View of Delft*, which is not an iconic model and diverges from the ideas of Svetlana Alpers. "Descriptive surfaces" – in the terminology of Alpers – covering the whole of the surface of the painting and identical with it are supplanted by a complex plane defined as the pan, which is connected with the traumatic experience of death. The described transformation allows Didi-Huberman to compare the garishness of the yellow colour of the wall to the visual intensity of the symbol. Didi-Huberman reminds us that in the Freudian interpretation: "The symptom is (...) a two-faced semiotic entity: between radiance and dissimulation, between accident and sovereignty, between event and structure. That is why it presents itself above all as something that 'obscures the situation', to quote Freud (...), although it is 'plastically portrayed', although its visual existence imposes itself with such radiance, such self-evidence, such violence." G. Didi-Huberman, *Confronting Images*, op. cit., p. 261. The yellow patch in Vermeer's painting draws the eye, and the fragment of the wall fractures representation to such an extent that the painting ceases to be a "descriptive surface" and becomes primarily a material surface. Cf. A. Leśniak, *Obraz płynny*, op. cit., pp. 85–87.

53 See S. Alpers, *The Art of Describing*, op. cit., pp. 169–221.

a result Alpers' book has contributed to the development of research into the mechanisms of visualization and reception, the relationship between the image and the viewer in the so-called aesthetics of reception, which assumed addressing the presumed expectations of the viewers. Such an attitude encourages us to engage in a dialogue with the image, in image – viewer interactions leading to endowing the image with meaning. The approach of Alpers resulted in the fact that defining visual culture became a discourse burdened with a large number of metaphors. It is not difficult to guess that the very phrase "the art of describing" led to the emergence of metaphors of an "(...) iconic nature which – as you might guess – affect the recipient's imagination and serve as a point of comparison, illustrating what 'something' looks like".[54] The high degree of metaphorisation of such formulations is a tendency in contemporary humanities, which strive for inter- and transdisciplinarity. Visuality has affected the ways of conceptualizing social reality, making metaphorical thinking the basic of the methodological paradigm.

Visual communication

The next issue I would like to address in this article is an attempt to define another term relating to the development of visual culture studies, which is "visual communication". It is worth mentioning that this term has linguistic origins; it derives from the idea of "the language of images". The very existence of such language is subject to criticism; many authors have questioned it mainly due to the fact that the image "does not mean anything because it does not rely on the meaning of words. Its semantic function is realized only on the discursive level: to pick up the meaning of an image is to read it, decode it in terms of verbal language, translating visual qualities into something that is different from them – an equivalent text".[55] If the image cannot be in any way reduced to a verbal text, the legitimacy of the "language of images" seems to be questionable. Building an academic subject, or sub-discipline, on these foundations, also seems unjustified. One may recall that Bryson, relying on Meyer Schapiro's analysis of Vincent van Gogh's painting *Old shoes with laces*, wrote that the image "does not surrender to the text or the title describing it; it spreads between it and itself an area of visual difference, in which it engages in a game of iterations with similar images of shoes."[56] For this reason, the concept of the "language of images" seems to be an example of "panlinguism" and "linguistic determinism"

54 A. Ogonowska, *Twórcze metafory medialne*, Baudrillard – McLuhan – Goffman, UNIVERSITAS, Kraków 2010, p. 11.

55 S. Czekalski, *Intertekstualność i malarstwo. Problemy badań nad związkami międzyobrazowymi*, Wydawnictwo Naukowe UAM, Poznań 2006, p. 200.

56 Ibid., p. 199.

(the terms borrowed from Göran Sonesson), in which "language is a universal code of meaning for non-discursive systems of signification, or in other words, constructs their level of the signified".[57] This type of thinking can be also described as an example of the reduction of visual problems to linguistic ones.

It is not surprising that the term "language of images" is very difficult to find in any theoretical text. One scholar who uses such formulations is Christian Leborg. However, the term may be part of a theoretically misguided project, because in most cases it is not implemented in practice. It regards the image – to paraphrase Derrida – as a "dangerous supplement", an element that "complements" or "supplements" writing. It implies that "Pictures become a kind of writing as soon as they are meaningful: like writing, they call for a *lexis*".[58] For this reason, Roland Barthes's semiology questioned the concept of the "language of images" because it "reduces the image as a signifier to the signified of linguistic concepts, transcendental to its visual substance".[59] However, "The image is essentially irreducible to the text as a form of verbal thought, does not present it or translate it, just as writing is not reducible to the voice expressing the thought-of meaning and does not communicate speech".[60] Thus the concept of the "language of images" prompted the formulation of the postulate of autonomy and specificity of the medium of painting, in which the figurative and iconic layer of the image can in no way be translated into verbal language or text. This postulate has been repeatedly invoked in relation to other visual media, for example the medium of film.

Turning to the definition of the concept of "visual communication", it should be noted that the term is ambiguous and vague. Analyzing the contents of one of the leading publications in the field of visual communication, *The Handbook of Visual Communication*, one may get an impression that the discipline has developed along the lines of visual studies postulated by Mitchell.[61] In this sense, visual communication can be considered a classic example of what Derrida called a "dangerous supplement" (here, to aesthetics and art history),[62] which inevitably leads to the absorption into its scope of such fields as the theory of

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57 G. Sonesson, *Pictorial Concepts. Inquiries into the semiotic heritage and its relevance for the analysis of the visual world*, Lund University Press, Malmo 1989, p. 116; cf. R. Barthes, *Elements of Semiology*, transl. A. Lavers and C. Smith, Hill and Wang, New York 1968, pp. 9–10.

58 R. Barthes, *Mythologies*, transl. A. Lavers, The Noonday Press, Farrar, Straus & Giroux, London 1972, p. 109.

59 S. Czekalski, *Intertekstualność i malarstwo*, op. cit., p. 199.

60 Ibid., p. 207.

61 W.J.T. Mitchell, "Showing seeing: a critique of visual culture", *Journal of Visual Culture*, no. 1 (2), pp. 166–169.

62 Cf. W.J.T. Mitchell, "Showing seeing...", op. cit., pp. 166–169.

perception, semiotic studies of images, or visual rhetoric. The discussion of such issues leads to the situation in which the essence of visual communication is brushed aside, or "supplemented" (by other disciplines). Thus, in order to define visual communication, other concepts are invoked to explain its nature.

This method of "supplementation" is particularly evident in the definition of visual communication given by Christian Leborg. The scholar employs the notions of the "grammar of visual communication" and the "language of images" to define the concept of visual communication. He claims that "The reason for writing a grammar of visual language is the same as for any language: to define its basic elements, describe its patterns and processes, and to understand the relationship between the individual elements in the system".[63]

It seems that the trend described above is not confined to visual communication. At one time, research on film, or film studies, took an almost central position in the humanities. In this situation, other methodologies and theoretical findings from other disciplines in the humanities were absorbed into film studies. This led to the emergence of film sociology, psychology and anthropology.

Data visualization

Biology and digital technology have jointly produced the form that Mitchell has called "biopicture". A biopicture does not resemble a representation, or a simulation, but it is rather a replica, or a "living copy", created using biocybernetic instruments. Mitchell writes:

> A new version of the pictorial turn has taken place in the last twenty years or so. It is a turn toward the 'biopicture', or (more precisely) the 'biodigital picture', the icon 'animated' – that is, given motion and the appearance of life by means of the technosciences of biology and information. The twin inventions of computers and genetic engineering have produced a new twist in the ancient trope of the pictorial turn, and especially in that aspect of images that has likened them to life forms – and vice versa.[64]

Mitchell views the turn towards the biopictures as a version of the pictorial turn. In a sense the biopictures that arise out of the development of biotechnology are alive, like the cloned sheep Dolly. Peter Zawojski notes that "the image (...) is a living replica arising as a result of the meeting of digital technology

63 C. Leborg, *Visual Grammar*, Princeton Architectural Press, New York 2006, p. 5.
64 W.J.T. Mitchell, *Cloning Terror: The War of Images, 9/11 to the Present*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago and London 2011, p. 70.

with biology, physics and aesthetics in the 'act of creation' (Bildakt), to use a term employed by Mitchell after Horst Bredekamp".[65] We can talk about creating digital images by cloning them by means of biocybernetic techniques.

The development and visualization of data in the era of the new media is stimulated by the digital turn, which has marked its place in contemporary humanities. Owing to such changes, we can already say that:

> This situation poses a new challenge for contemporary humanities. Traditional research methods no longer suffice here. There is an urgent need to employ new concepts and research tools that would enable us to process and understand vast amounts of information (big data). From this arose the idea of combining humanistic reflection with new digital tools that can be used for processing, visualization, presentation and popularization of research results. This trend is referred to today as digital humanities.[66]

The digital turn has transformed contemporary culture and has led to the emergence of "information society"[67] and "network society".[68] Competences related to digital media have become crucial in today's world, and people who do not possess them may be excluded from the community. At the same time the amount of digital data which we deal with in everyday life is increasing almost exponentially. The popularity of such websites as YouTube, Facebook and Twitter is also growing. There are also increasing numbers of bloggers, people who use mailing lists, chat rooms, or become members of online communities using social media. This trend is also accompanied by the archivization of digital data, the formation of web galleries and digital museums. Reading and collecting e-books is growing in popularity, and Amazon offers more and more books in digital form. The commercial, public and administrative importance of various media institutions and digital research centres is also increasing, just as the importance of education in the field of visual and digital media. A question may thus be posed: what will become of the world after the digital turn? Can we already talk about a post-digital society, in which the changes and transformations described here have already taken place?

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65 P. Zawojski, „Nowy ikoniczny zwrot", [in:] *Materia sztuki*, ed. M. Ostrowicki, Towarzystwo Autorów i Wydawców Prac Naukowych UNIVERSITAS, Kraków 2010, p. 470.

66 A. Radomski, R. Bomba, „Zwrot cyfrowy w humanistyce", [in:] *Zwrot cyfrowy w humanistyce: Internet/Nowe Media/Kultura 2.0*, ed. A. Radomski and R. Bomba, E-naukowiec, Lublin 2013, p. 7.

67 See.

68 See M. Castells, *The Rise of the Network Society. The Information Age: Economy, Society and Culture*, Vol. 1, Blackwell, Oxford 2011.

The answer to such questions is not simple or straightforward. It all depends on the further development of the new media. Only time will tell what kind of world we will live in. However, if the new media develop in accordance with the trends outlined here, it is expected that their development could lead to the emergence of two independent tendencies. The first one will involve even further development of the new media. This can certainly lead to socio-cultural changes affecting human civilization that have been hinted at here. The other trend will most likely arise out of the acceptance and affirmation of the new media, with a simultaneous appreciation for the old media, especially film and television. It seems that the traditional cinema and participation in various television programs will not disappear. These media will also undergo a process of digitization. It is difficult to underestimate the future of digital and interactive cinema. The importance of high-definition TV and other digital entertainment media will also increase.

In the current progress of the development of digital technology the concept of visualization is gaining new meaning. Nicholas Mirzoeff claims that "One of the most striking features of the new visual culture is the growing tendency to visualize things that are not in themselves visual. Allied to this intellectual move is the growing technological capacity to make visible things that our eyes could not see unaided (...)".[69] From this point of view, information can also be considered as something that is not visual. In his book *Postmedia* Piotr Celiński argues that "At the current stage of development of digital technology (hardware and software) visuality is primarily a practice of endowing the raw, mathematical sequences of code in databases with anthropologically and culturally accepted forms (by psychology, anthropology of perception, and visual semiotics), i.e. relating them to familiar elements of the traditional visual culture (e.g. the display screen as a reference to the TV screen, a web page as a reference to a printed newspaper)".[70]

In the era of the new media, images have the greatest cultural potential. I have written about this (as Sidey Myoo) as follows: "The concept of the picture seems to be insufficient and disintegrates when it is applied to a 3D environment and the phenomenon of interactivity. (...) What emerges here is the epistemological or anthropological observation: man is surrounded not so much by images of reality, as by the reality of the media (...)".[71] In this situation, one should inquire about the nature of media reality and/or the reality of the image.

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69 N. Mirzoeff, *An Introduction to Visual Culture*, op. cit., pp. 4-5.

70 P. Celiński, *Postmedia: Cyfrowy kod i bazy danych*. Wydawnictwo UMCS, Lublin 2013, p. 172.

71 S. Myoo, „Tożsamość człowieka w środowisku elektronicznym", *Kwartalnik filmowy* 2008, nr 62/63, p. 143.

The answer to this question seems to be problematic. It is difficult not to get the impression that the reality of the image may resemble virtual reality, which Jean Baudrillard calls the world of appearances or hyperreality. This reality produces a situation in which "Disneyland is presented as imaginary in order to make us believe that the rest is real, when in fact all of Los Angeles and the America surrounding it are no longer real."[72] Celiński constructs his definitions of data visualization on the basis of the theory of databases, put forward by Lev Manovich within his *software studies*.[73] In this context, Manovich's concept of the database called *media visualizations* seems to be particularly interesting.[74] It is a digitized database of film, photography, literature, television programs and music videos. The definition of data visualization constructed in relation to these concepts employs such phrases as "new visual environment", "the social democratization of visual economy" co-ordinated by media institutions, or "the formal opening of visual language and images".[75] One should ask therefore what these phrases mean. The answer to this question may have to involve the recognition of a high degree of metaphorization in these formulations.

Summary

In this paper I have set myself the goal of describing some changes in contemporary culture that may arise in the context of the pictorial/iconic turn and its numerous variations and transformations taking place mainly in the digital environment. Such turns lead to the creation of new terms and new trends in socio-cultural reality. In conclusion one should ask yet another question: what are the risks and benefits of these changes in contemporary culture? It seems that the main threat that we may have to face, arising out of the dynamic development of visual and digital media, is a special kind of "blindness" of which Paul Virilio wrote in The Vision Machine. We must realize that the more images will surround us on all sides, the less, paradoxically, we will in fact see with your own eyes. In this situation, we will probably need to use an increasing number of prostheses of sight, i.e. "vision machines" – visual and digital media set for this purpose. If Mirzoeff's claim is true, and if "modern life takes place onscreen,"[76] then we can expect that the number of people who will live their

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72 J. Baudrillard, *Simulations*, transl. P. Foss, P. Patton and Ph. Beitchman, Columbia University Press, New York 1983, p. 25.

73 P. Celiński, *Postmedia*, op. cit., p. 175.

74 L. Manovich, "Media Visualization: Visual Techniques for Exploring Large Media Collections", in: *The International Encyclopedia of Media Studies*, vol. 7: *Media Studies Futures*, ed. K. Gates, Blackwell, Oxford 2012.

75 P. Celiński, *Postmedia*, op. cit., p. 175.

76 N. Mirzoeff, *Introduction to Visual Culture*, op. cit., p. 1.

life within media and virtual reality will only increase. Non-mediated face to face communication will be replaced by mediated communication operating interface to interface.[77] Furthermore, if these trends continue and intensify, we can soon expect a society whose primary objective will be the dehumanization and depersonalization of the human subject and a "blind" surrender to computers.

On the other hand, the benefits from the development of visual and digital media can be as substantial for humankind as the risks. The increase in sensitivity to images can make us notice such dimensions of reality as were once unavailable to us. The ability of "visual thinking" as opposed to thinking based on the use of textual and linguistic structures may lead to a new kind of visual perception. The benefits of the pictorial/iconic turn are endless.

However, at present the questions concerning the visual and digital media have already met with serious theoretical reflection within visual culture studies and media studies. It is more and more often suggested that these two areas of research can merge into a single discipline of visual media studies. This is perhaps the first step on the path that was already determined at the beginning of the development of these fields, and within the research as it is developing today, having begun with a reflection on the visual media and picture theory, and moving towards research into new media and contemporary culture. However, we will have to wait for a definitive resolution of this problem. It is all up to the future development of the directions of research and socio-cultural trends discussed here that will help define the shape and dimensions of our existence in the future.

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77 See L. Manovich (2001).

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OD KULTURY WIZUALNEJ DO KOMUNIKACJI WIZUALNEJ. PROBLEMATYKA ZWROTU PIKTORIALNEGO / IKONICZNEGO W KULTURZE WSPÓŁCZESNEJ (streszczenie)

Artykuł jest próbą przybliżenia pojęć „kultura wizualna" „komunikacja wizualna" i „wizualizacja danych", które pojawiły się przy okazji zwrotu piktorialnego i ikonicznego. Zwrot piktorialny spowodował, że obraz urasta obecnie do rangi systemu znakowego, podobnie jak język w refleksji poststrukturalistycznej. Natomiast dzięki przemianom historii sztuki pojawiają się studia kultury wizualnej. Razem z ich powstaniem rodzi się również potrzeba zdefiniowania terminu „kultura wizualna".

Doris Bachmann-Medick charakteryzuje zwrot ikoniczny jako opóźnioną reakcję historii sztuki na *linguistic turn*, która odkrywa malarstwo jako fenomen tekstowy i dyskursywny. W tej sytuacji rodzi się semiotyka obrazu Normana Brysona, która odwołuje się do pojęcia „języka obrazów". Jest to kolejna potrzeba zdefiniowania terminu „komunikacji wizualnej".
Ekspansja nowych mediów stawia kulturę wizualną przed kolejnym wyzwaniem, którym jest potrzeba zdefiniowania terminu „wizualizacja danych". Mitchell zapowiada nową wersję zwrotu piktorialnego, który odbywa się w kierunku bioobrazów, albo biocyfrowych obrazów. Tym „ożywionym ikonom" nadano cechy życia za pomocą biologiczno-informacyjnej technologii. Jest to kolejny zwrot piktorialnym, który Mitchell nazywał zwrotem biopiktorialnym. Jednak definicja pojęcia „wizualizacji danych" jest kształtowana przez „zwrot cyfrowy", który powoduje, że „wizualizacja danych" jest praktyką nadawania surowym, matematycznym ciągom kodów baz danych bezpiecznych antropologicznie i kulturowo kształtów. Obecnie definicje „wizualizacji danych" buduje się również w oparciu o teorię baz danych i *software studies* Lva Manovicha. Na zakończenie chciałbym postawić pytanie dotyczące zagrożeń i korzyści wynikających z obecności zwrotu piktorialnego i ikonicznego.

Słowa kluczowe: visual culture, visual communication, data visualization, pictorial turn.

Art Inquiry. Recherches sur les arts 2015, vol. XVII
ISSN 1641-9278

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ART ABSORBED BY THE WEB

Abstract: The object of this study is to analyse the impact of the Web on art. For this purpose I have made a distinctions between Net Art, which emerged in the 1990s and has been developing up till now, and the phenomenon of art on the Web, which views the Web as an exhibition space. Examinig the first case, I will mention such features of Net Art as networking, the rhizome, hyper-textuality, multi-subjectivity and framed objects. In the second case, I will have a closer look at several types of museums on the Web, including ordinary galleries in the form of digitalised image collections of art, galleries or museums which use augmented technologies, and galleries designed in the 3D graphic environment.
I will also outline a broader perspective on the influence of technology on art and examine its paradigm, consisting in the accommodation of art on the Web at least in the two ways shown in the study. I will use some examples of net art works created in recent years, and will visit some museums on the Net.
This approach assumes that the development of the Web has been a breakthrough in the history of art, which is reflected in its impact on the arts on a previously unprecedented scale. One could even say that in this case, the impact is total. The Web has not only become a medium that allows us to extend the boundaries of art, but owing to its spatial character allowing it to become an exhibition space, it has even taken over the functions of the traditional art scene. Hence, I believe that the development of technology, especially the Internet, is a turning point for the arts in their development and in the methods of their presentation and archiving.

Keywords: Net Art, electronic art, interactivity, immateriality, multimedia, electronic galleries and museums, technology

I would like to show the importance of the World Wide Web for the development of art and the changes in its reception. This theme is rooted in the increasing importance of technology. Two phenomena will be focused upon: the emergence of the Web as an exhibition space, and Net Art,[1] i.e. the art using the medium of the Internet in its creative process, which came into being in the 1990s. The above-mentioned phenomena evolve because of the development of technology in the 21st centry, which has already prompted the development of Net Art into a form of Post-Internet Art[2] which is different from Net Art mainly in combining the elements of a work existing on the Net, and its other components deriving from the physical world. Net Art is oriented to the Web, but Post-Internet Art is interested in hybrid-oriented works.

1. The art created for the Web

The creation of the World Wide Web, initiated by Tim Berners-Lee in 1991, began not only to change the form of the Internet, but, above all, people's attitude towards the content published on the Web, because of the access to global and hyper-textual information. Owing to the hypertext, what was difficult to express through text or image became generally accessible and easy to understand because of its multimedia character and specific international and intercultural symbolism and expression.[3] Naturally, the artists who dreamed of publicizing their achievements or win praise for their works, had two reasons to be happy: firstly, they found a new medium for developing their art, and, secondly, they found a new exhibition space.

The artists noticed the new creative potential of the Web.[4] Their techniques also changed, which followed from the delopment of information technology. Now their works were not dependent on a physical carrier, and so since their very release, they were generally accessible.[5] An old-type material work, even in

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1 Ch. Paul, *Digital Art*, Thames and Hudson – world of art, London 2003, p. 112, and E. Wójtowicz, *Net art*, Rabid, Kraków 2008, p. 11 and 22-37.

2 Cf. B. Droitcour, "The Perils of Post-Internet Art", in: Art in America, 30 Oct. 2014, (http://www.artinamericamagazine.com/news-features/magazine/the-perils-of-post-internet-art) and Ian Wallace, "What Is Post-Internet Art? Understanding the Revolutionary New Art Movement", in: (http://www.artspace.com/magazine/interviews_features/post_internet_art).

3 The phenomenon of globalisation is directly related to the development of the Web. The importance of this phenomenon is acknowleded by Lev Manovich who proposes the concept of a cultural interface, a type of location on the Web for intercultural dialogue (L. Manovich, *The Language of the New Media*, The MIT Press, Cambridge MA, London 2001).

4 R. Green, *Internet Art*, Thames and Hudson – world of art, London 2004, p. 31-33.

5 One symbolic example is *TV Rodin* (1976) by Nam June Paik, though it is not a Net Art work. However, it made me understand the mechanism of the transfer of the traditional artworks to the Web. In this case I mean the treatment of *The Thinker* (Auguste Rodin, 1902) as

a plethora of physical copies, cannot be compared with the infinite access to the electronic space, and the possibility of reproducing the non-physical artefacts. Moreover, the new works were able to appear in many contexts, e.g. of journeys or labyrinths, through artefacts built on the rhizome link.[6] as in the case of Alexei Shulgin's *Form Art* (1997) or Olia Lialina's *Agatha Appears* (1997). We might also note the mass participation of the audience in co-creating some artworks. A good example of this is the work of Andy Deck, *Glyphiti* (2001), which attracted the people wishing to participate in common web-based graffiti making. Furthermore, it is worth noting the relation between the physical objects and their presentation on the Web, exemplified by the piece by Eva and Franco Mattes, *Ordinary Building* (2006), whose idea was to show a very ordinary building in Viterbo on the Net, which would have never attracted any tourists' attention in the physical space. We might also mention the concept of a glitch, exemplified by the work of Joan Heemskerk and Dirk Paesmans, *Motherboard* (2009). Its authors expressed various and frequently negative attitudes towards computers by disturbing their operations, which was shown through a variety of effects on the display. There is also the broad context of the Web community, which is referred to e.g. in the work by Johannes Gees, *communimage* (1999), where the recipients were building "a continent" on the Web by adding photos to the common collection. A few works by Eduardo Kac, e.g. *Uiraputu* (1999), in which he refers to the Web community of the people interested in the protection of the Amazon rainforest, and another work Teleporting an *Unknown State* (1994/96) which involved the Web community in cultivating a plant by logging into a server and lighting the lamp in the room where the plant was growing, also belong to this context. The work by Ken Goldberg, *Telegarden* (1995), in which the recipients remotely cared for a biological garden with the diameter of about one meter by watering or transplanting the plants was of similar importance. It worked by logging in to the robotic arm which could be remotely operated.

Net Art incorporates certain features or artistic techniques, owing to which it can implement the above-mentioned ideas on the global scale:

Networking. It is the property of the new art resulting from the nature of the Web, which is necessary for its existence. The poential recipient wishing to experience an artistic message of this kind has to actively surf the Web, or frequently log into a particular work. This precondition also has some other

it could appear on the TV screen. This video installation makes us reflect on the fact that *The Thinker* emerged in the entirely new space and situation, which results from the increasingly frequent process of transferring art to the media.

6 R.W. Kluszczyński, "Strategies of interactive art", in: *Journal of Aesthetic & Culture*, Vol. 2 (2010), http://www.aestheticsandculture.net/index.php/jac/article/view/5525.

aspects, e.g. the reception is as a matter of fact a-temporal and unlimited, and in principle, an infinite number of recipients could participate, depending only on the efficiency of the server. Networking is a progressive process, which produces always newer and more complicated artefacts. Such pieces as *Form Art* by Alexei Shulgin mentioned above or *Superbad* (1997) by Ben Benjamin, whose idea consisted in playing with the interface, could be hardly compared with the much more complicated work *Loophole for All* (2013) by Paolo Cirio, in which the artist shows tax evasion practices, involving the migration of the centres of operation of many companies to tax havens. The work by Cirio is an intervention, criticising tax inequalities in the world caused by the lawlessness and power of global corporations. The artist shows and/or makes us aware of the fact that the migration of tax liabilities is in most cases impossible, highlighting the inequality inherent in the power systems. He attacks the willfulness of corporations and state systems, blocking their citizens from taking up similar actions. The recipient of this work could purchase a fictitious property act of an existing company, which has its headquarters in a tax haven, and using this ”document”, he/she could develop their own business, presumably avoiding taxation.

Another work which realised the idea of networking is *Memopol* (2010/11) by Timo Toots, where he showed the importance of the Web as the source of all information, including personal information. It has relevance for all the Internet users who had uploaded, frequently unconsciously, any information about themselves to the Web. The reception of the work consisted in scanning an ID document of the recipient; then the installation connected to the Web and searched for the information about him/her. It is worth mentioning that to protect the privacy of the data, the reception situation involved only the presence of a single recipient and/or the artist in the room, and, additionally, the entrance was covered by a curtain. Searching for the information about the recipient, *Memopol* connected, as far as I could tell, mainly to Facebook. The installation used the hypertext as the information which was shown both in the form of text and images or films. The hypertextual information emerged as a result of searching and indexing of the characteristic content by collecting data from the Net, which finally changed the meaning of the concept of networking into a Panopticon. This work could make you aware that the Web could be the source of invigilation.

The rhizome. Net Art links this property with the convergence of various technologies, combining and absorbing one another, which results from the new generation of technologies. The notion refers to the technological capability of the Web, consisting in connecting and parabolizing selected contexts, and in this way making the recipients aware of their importance. One example may be the two works by Julian Oliver and Danja Vasiliev: *Newstweek* (2011) and *Men*

in Grey (2009). In Newstweek, owing to a specially programmed WiFi device, they showed the danger of information hacking and manipulation. The WiFi device changed fragments of Web information portals and sent them to the Web. If any change of the content was programmed, the entire piece of news could be interpreted by the recipient in a different way than was the publisher's intention. The change of the content was made in a hidden way, although it could be carried out in publicly accessible spaces as the device was small and was plugged into an ordinary power plug-in. In turn, *Men in Grey* is a work in which the artists walked around the city carrying suitcases equipped with electronic devices which captured and manipulated the data harvested from open wireless networks operating in the neighbouring areas. The information, saved by the suitcases, was e.g. the IP addresses of the devices used by the people unaware of the monitoring or the types of the collected data.

Multi-subjectivity. This refers to the collective experience of a work of art. It is a product of interactivity and the removal of the boundaries of space and time, which restrict the experience of traditional art. Multi-subjectivity, owing to the mediation of the Web, bases on the personal experiences of the recipients which are connected with their emotions. In turn, they become the basis for collective creation, in which the work of art emerges owing to the collective efforts of the recipients. This happens continually, in any period of time. Multi-subjectivity enables/assists transcultural experience and Web-based dialogue. Besides the *Communimage* by Johannes Gees, mentioned above, one could also list as examples many works by Ch. Sommerer and L. Mignonneau – e.g. *Life Species* (1997) or *Verbarium* (1999), in which the recipients, sitting in front of their computers, were jointly creating a garden on the Web.[7] After logging in to the server, the interface of the above-mentioned works allowed the recipient to write a sequence of letters, comparable to a genetic code, owing to which electronic creatures, resembling small animals or plants, emerged on the screen, and could then be sent to the jointly created electronic garden on the server.

Hybridity. It is a combination and interpenetration of two domains, e.g. electronic and physical realities. The process of combining such elements of the work of art could be modified by the actions of the recipients, especially in the physical domain. One example is the work by Stefan Tiefengraber *Send your unerasable text message*...(2011), in which a "spam" text message sent by the recipient was then intercepted by the installation software, went to the printer, and then the card with the printed content went to a shredder. The essence of

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7 Ch. Sommerer, L. Mignonneau, "Wonderful Life: Interactive Art by Sommerer & Mignonneau", [in:] R.W. Kluszczyński (ed.), *Wonderful Life. Laurent Mignonneau, Christa Sommerer*, Centrum Sztuki Współczesnej Łaźnia, Gdańsk 2012, pp. 151-156.

the work lay in the reflection on the sense of sending such messages, whose value consists in the act of their sending, and not in their content. A large part of text messages or posts are spam, which clog the information space, and attract people's attention only by accident.

Another example of a hybrid is the work by Takeo Saijo, *Project Fumbaro Eastern Japan* (2011). This work is based on a humanitarian relief project, similar to the charities assisting people in emergencies caused e.g. by natural disasters. This art project was created after the tsunami disaster which caused damage to the nuclear plant in Fukushima. *Project Fumbaro Eastern Japan* is still ongoing and uses the Web to create a hybrid and purpose-oriented structure. Its emergent dynamics involves exchanging information and related emotions, and it is able to creatively "prompt" people and "trigger" mechanisms without institutional obligations, i.e. hierarchically structered institutions which should take action in the case of urgent need, but do not react with necessary speed. What matters is spontaneity, familiarisation with the terrain and applying better logistics. Apparently, this type of action is efficient and flexibly adapts to the situation, but not the other way round, that is it does not adapt the situation to the structure-based actions. Such a situation triggering the creativity and spontaneity of many people is possible only thanks to the Web, with its quick monitoring of actions. The appropriate equipment on the Web makes the website *Project Fumbaro Eastern Japan* the central element of this artistic project in which humanitarian relief activity is coordinated.

Sketchiness. This is the technical aspect of Net Art. It refers to the fact that the artistic techniques are often invented by the artist. The makers of electronic art frequently start the process of creation only after they have invented the techniques they would need to use. It is difficult to treat a computer software, a camera, or a Kinekt as an artistic technique. In the case of installations they are either transformed at the level of hardware and its interconnections, or programmed in a specific way.[8] Sketchiness is the property of Net Art which influences the progress of art, resulting from the exploration of the technologies which might be valuable for art and the emergence of new technologies, as well as searching for new relationships between them.[9] Today, this could refer to such technologies as Beecon, neuron networks or Oculus Rift.

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8 One of my students used a tablet in the creative process as the controller of the installation based on the idea of Cave Automatic Virtual Environment (Cave). For this purpose the tablet software has been totally removed as unnecessary and replaced by the software serving the interactive reception of the installation (Jakub Garścia, *I.A.M.A.*, 2012).

9 "Art media are technologies that figure in a special way in making art. They might be art-making technologies, facts about which are relevant to appreciation, for example. Nothing hinges on how we spell out the special role of art media in making art. Intuitions about which technologies are art media are enough. Art forms and art media are systematically related.

A good example of a work which uses a different kind of technique is the work by Joaquin Fargas – *Big Brain Project* (2012). It is a transcontinental installation, using the tissues of rats' brains on various continents, connected on the Web. The product of the installation is a displayed image of the process of communication between the fragments of the separate brains. The displays, prepared specially for this purpose, show that the tissues communicate with each other, though one could not tell the content or purpose of this communication process. This installation involves a real remote connection between a number of cells, which is an ideation of the situation of a mega-brain, dispersed in the physical space, but unified on the Web.

Net Art is most often interactive, which changes the roles of the artist and the recipient. The latter is able to co-create fragments of the work. Those works can be received on the global scale, which results in global debates or a conflict of values, but above all, it gives the communication process a new hypertextual form, going beyond the language of images.

2. Exhibition space on the Web

The Web is a unique repository of artworks and it collects all genres of art in the various Web galleries or museums that have emerged in order to exhibit art.[10] They can be called digital, as they conduct their mission on the Web; they are also intangible, in other words they have been created from electronic substance.

The first and the basic method of presentation of the artworks are 2D galleries which collect images of various types of works, also including film documentation. Owing to them the limitations of the distribution of information in traditional forms of art have disappeared, which is their apparent advantage. These types of presentation are not most often interactive, because the recipient browses such a gallery like a database, e.g. enlarging the selected works, which is particularly important in the case of paintings. Such activity might be exemplified by the case of some famous paintings in the Museum of Prado which have been scanned in HD. This allowed the recipients to zoom in on their fragments, and thus view them in the way that would be impossible in the physical museum space. Such treatment of the paintings has contributed to

Art media are unequally distributed across artistic practices" (D. McIver Lopes, "Conceptual Art Is Not What It Seems", in: P. Goldie, E. Schellekens (eds.), *Philosphy and Conceptual Art*, Claredon Press, Oxford 2007, pp. 246-247).

10 M. Pis Marco, "Virtually Real Museums: Challenges and opportunities of virtual reality in the Art Museum Context" (Part I/II), *Interartive. A platform for contemporary art and thought*, 2009 http://interartive.org/ 2009/11/virtual-museums.

our gaining more knowledge of the painting techniques as well as noticing the fragments of the works which could not be visible without the application of the above- mentioned technology. Such galleries also play an educational role; they could enable the viewers to obtain reproductions or artistic documentation; but they do not create the feeling of visiting a museum or walking around the exhibition rooms.

A wonderful collection of works of contemporary art, mainly avant-garde ones, is UbuWeb, which includes musical, filmic, and photographic documentation and articles. It is a kind of a database gallery which is continuously improved and itemized, which becomes more and more efficient, and it has no equivalent in the physical world. Its main advantage is the possibility to grow without limits, exceeding the potential of any real library. A similar treasure trove of documents, comprising dozens of years of ArsElectronica – Festival for Art, Technology and Society, organized since 1979 in Linz. The website of Ars Electronica presents historical documentation of the exhibitions and artistic events which took place there. Those two examples clearly show that such detailed and growing archives, bound to develop ad infinitum, is only possible on the Web. The transfer of the physical works to the Web or the documentation of artistic actions in the form of electronic recordings allows for the establishment of open museums on an immense scale, which include full and detailed information about the artworks presented there.

We may also witness the emergence of spatial museums,[11] which use the filmed spaces of a physical museum. This phenomenon is related to the augmentative technology, which uses mapped physical space. In this case the basis of the space is the filmed interior of the museum, owing to which people can apply tags, and in this way establish an interface, allowing the viewer browsing the display to feel that s/he is translocating in physical space. In such a museum, besides the information about the museum space and the presented works, visitors can see some symbols on their displays, e.g. the arrows which help them ”walk” the museum halls. Some examples of such museums include the well-known Smithsonian National Museum of Natural History or the Pitt Rivers Museum in Oxford, and also the Hermitage Museum in Sankt Petersburg or the Museum of the Warsaw Uprising in Warsaw.

The Museum of the Warsaw Uprising is a good example of the advantages of the presentation on the Web. The virtual visits include ”moving” in the physical exhibition rooms with the employment of augmented extensions. The

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11 M. Callieri, C. Leoni, M. Dellepiane, R. Scopigno, *Artworks narrating a story: a modular framework for the integrated presentation of three-dimensional and textual contents* w ACM WEB3D, 18th International Conference on 3D Web Technology, June 2013, s. 167-175 (http://vcg.isti.cnr.it/Publications/2013/CLDS13).

interface has a rich menu, allowing the visitors to obtain information in the form of written texts, archived films with soundtracks, and voice comments, as well as animations, used for enlarging and rotating some museum elements with the use of 3D graphics. It is not surpring that it is one of the best remote presentations in the world. One could even risk saying that the virtual visit is so convincing and competitive in relation to the physical museum that it could be satisfactory and sufficient.

Similarly, a visit in the Smithsonian National Museum of Natural History is an extraordinary experience. By rotating an image on the display with the aid of arrows, the visitor obtains many different photos of the objects in the physical museum, which creates the illusion of multi-dimensional display, which, additionally, increases the sense of space, also arousing the curiosity of the viewer.[12]

The third type of electronic museum uses 3D graphics, but without the filmed content, related to a building existing in the physical world. In this case the museum space is fully generated. Thus we don't speak here about augmentation; there is no combination of the physical and the digital. One can find examples of such exhibition spaces in the Second Life,[13] i.e. a 3D digital world. Since we are dealing with a fully generated reality, they are located *ex definitione* in electronic space, creating the world where the recipient "moves" in the form of an avatar.

One can distinguish at least three types of such spaces. The first includes galleries in which one can find paintings hanging on the walls in an electronically generated museum building which the recipient enters in the form of an avatar

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12 An example of Web-based artwork which is at the same time a kind of a gallery is thework entitled 99rooms. The 99 rooms have been electronically generated. The artist has not used 3D graphics, but only 2D images which have the depth and perspective obtained by the traditional methods employed in painting. The recipient experiences a kind of illusion, because while viewing this work, s/he walks into the rooms owing to certain interactive graphic elements. The recipient walks in the labyrinth of an industrial building, accompanied by romantic music.

13 "Second Life currently has many parallels with the early days of the Web. It is an exciting place that participants are co-creating while simultaneously trying to understand what it is, what it might be, and what it is good for. It has many potential contexts of use, but as in the early days of the Web, cultural heritage applications are part of that pioneering exploration. The preliminary results of this research do more than indicate the opportunities and challenges of using Second Life as a platform for museums; they suggest that it is equally important to understand how museums may become collaborative partners in an already evolving community." (R. Urban, P. Marty, M. Twidale, "A Second Life for Your Museum: 3D Multi-User Virtual Environments and Museums", in: D. Bearman (eds.). *Museums and the Web 2007: Proceedings*, Archives & Museum Informatics, Toronto, 2007 (http://www.archimuse.com/mw2007/papers/urban/urban.htm, http://www.archimuse.com/ mw2007/speakers/index.html).

(e.g. the gallery Yellow Submarine). The second type includes the open spaces where installations are located (the proscenic of interactive ones), and the exhibition space resembles a park or a garden, in which the avatar of the recipient promenades (e.g. Ars Simulacra). The third type includes spatial works, so-called islands, generated solely as artworks specially created for the Second Life world. An example of such 3D unified space is *Immersiva* by Bryn Oh (a network name, deriving from Second Life). During the recent years *Immersiva* changed three times. The recipient travels across this artwork located in Second Life. The immersion mentioned in the title indicates an additional and notable element of artistic experience[14] and at the same time the property of the electronic media. In the case of such artworks as *Immersiva* we are immersed simultaneously in the world originating in two sources: art and interactive technologies.

The exhibition spaces generated wholly in 3D graphics and deprived of augmented tags and images from the physical world, give us the sensation of immersion in 3D electronic space, which can influence the reception of the artworks displayed there. In particular, such display was not possible a few years ago, when there were no fast graphic cards, allowing for the creation or reception of the art of this type. Today, we have access to such technologies as Oculus Rift, which allows us to walk about in the amazing 3D world.

The exhibition spaces on the Web allow the recipient to get in touch with art without leaving their homes. Art becomes accessible to everyone who uses technology; s/he could be a recipient of the displayed works or a co-creator in the case of Web-based works. Moreover, owing to the electronic galleries, art education in the physical world is changing, because access to Net Art is a radical transformation, bringing apparent benefits in terms of quality. Viewing examples of artworks was formerly either difficult or impossible; this has changed in our times of the networking of art.

Finally, let us consider the impact of the new technologies on art in a broader perspective – taking into account their paradigmatic influence on art in a more general sense.

Firstly, we can note the development of the essence of art, i.e. its transformation as a result of the emerging artistic trends. In this case it is more important to focus on the development of art itself, and only secondarily on

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14 Immersion is the phenomenon of engaging people on the Web, which takes the form of spending a lot of time on the Web. It is related to the transfer of intentionality both in terms of professional activity and emotional engagement. In turn, O. Grau describes immersion as the property of art, which from its beginnings resulted from the illusiveness of art. So, immersion could be treated as a feature of cyber-culture or as a property of art. (*Virtual Art. From Illusion To Immersion*, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Cambridge, London 2003).

the analysis of the trends. Net Art has been developing the essence of art for twenty years, and today it is being slowly superseded by Post-Internet Art. The biggest advantage of this type of art is that it is new and original, rather than developing the artistic techniques with which we are already familiar. This is also true e.g. of BioArt or the art inspired by Artificial Inteligence. In this sense, we could call those movements of art avant-garde, if we mean the creation which extends the boundaries of art.

Secondly, taking into account the broad influence of new technologies and the develoment of such sciences as genetics and cognitive studies, it is clear that nowadays those disciplines are the sources of inspiration for artists, triggering the emergence of new types of art. This process was observed earlier in history, but today it has accelerated, creating totally new genres of art in short periods of time, frequently surprising and difficult to comprehend. Thus a new and future-oriented definition of art might emerge, regarding art as creative abstraction from technology and science; this might trigger a reorientation of our expectations. Art changes; because of its passion for exploration and discoveries, it often captures the essence of the phenomena occurring in reality, which is often difficult to perceive in an ordinary way. Net Art is a good example of the transformation of human reality, if we treat it as the emanation of the Web, which becomes a medium organising larger and larger areas of human daily life, including art.

The third element is the mediatisation of all art, i.e. the penetration of different media into music, theatre, ballet, painting or literature. The example of the work by Benoit Maubrey, *Audio Ballerinas* (2007) is characteristic of this case, as we are dealing simultaneously with ballet and interactive / improvised music, played on the instruments which are integral elements of the ballet costumes. The ballerinas' skirts equipped with loudspeakers, sound generators, and movement detectors generate sound, and the music created in this way becomes, in turn, an inspiration for the subsequent dances. This is the type of technology for which the advancement of electronic art does not really matter, what is important is the intervention in and radical change of traditional genres of art. In that sense the impact of technology is complete, as the change revolutionizes existing types of art.

The observed interrelations between art and science certainly result from their joint creative function. This relation is possible because of their similar properties: orientation towards novelty, exploration, and discovering. Modern technology takes a leading role in the development of man, and perhaps the type of art based on artistic techniques and the transformation of historical genres of art, shall undergo changes because of the influence of new technologies. The Web is perceived as the kind of technology which has created the ground for the emergence of previously unknown art, but also the medium which has

absorbed art in its own way. We may summarise those reflections with the remark that even if a genre of art is in no way associated with the Web now, it will find itself on it sooner or later.

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SZTUKA ZAGARNIĘTA PRZEZ SIEĆ (streszczenie)

Przedmiotem artykułu jest przeanalizowanie wpływu Sieci na sztukę. W tym celu wyróżniono dwa główne aspekty tego zjawiska, tj. powstały na początku lat 90. XX wieku i rozwijający się do dzisiaj Net Art oraz traktowanie Sieci jako przestrzeni wystawienniczej. W pierwszym z aspektów wymieniono cechy Net Artu, takie jak usieciowienie, rhizomatyczność, hipertekstualność, wielopodmiotowość, szkieletowość. Przy omawianiu drugiego aspektu wymieniono kilka rodzajów muzeów w Sieci, w tym zwykłe galerie w postaci zobrazowanych zbiorów dzieł sztuki, galerie muzeów wykorzystujące technologie augmentalne oraz galerie powstałe w środowisku graficznym 3d.
Wskazano również na szerszą perspektywę oddziaływania nowych technologii na sztukę, podkreślając jej paradygmatyczność, co wyraża się w zawłaszczaniu, przynajmniej na dwa wskazane w artykule sposoby, sztuki przez Sieć. W artykule posłużono się szeregiem przykładów dzieł sieciowych, powstałych w ostatnich latach, oraz muzeów w sieci.
Autor zakłada, że rozwój Sieci miał przełomowe znaczenie dla sztuki, co wyraża się w niespotykanym wcześniej zakresie oddziaływania na sztukę – można powiedzieć, że w tym przypadku, wręcz w totalnej skali. Sieć nie tylko stała się medium umożliwiającym poszerzenie granic sztuki, ale poprzez swój przestrzenny i wystawienniczy charakter zagarnęła nawet sztukę historyczną. Autor uważa więc, że rozwój technologii, w tym szczególnie Sieci jest punktem zwrotnym w rozwoju sztuki oraz w sposobie jej prezentacji i archiwizacji.

Słowa kluczowe: sztuka sieci, sztuka elektroniczna, interaktywność, immaterialność, multimedia, elektroniczne galerie i muzea, technologia

Art Inquiry. Recherches sur les arts 2015, vol. XVII
ISSN 1641-9278

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THE PERFORMATIVE TURN IN THE VISUAL ARTS. THE ART OF PAUL KLEE

Abstract: The 1970s saw the emergence of the performative turn in many areas of the humanities. Although its most important representatives emphasized that it did include visual arts, specific examples were usually limited to action art phenomena, bordering on performance art, painting, or sculpture. This article is an attempt to demonstrate that the performative approach to art can be traced back to the avant-garde movement of the first half of the twentieth century. Moreover, Paul Klee's concept of painting discussed here shifts the performative aspect from the artist's activity to the elements of the image, interpreted from the point of view of their interactions.
The article examines the theoretical and pedagogical writings by Klee (both published during his lifetime and posthumously), considered as the basis for the interpretation of his paintings. The artist assumed that the pictorial elements are bound by the principle of motion – a line is a trace left by a moving point, while a plane is created by the movement of a line. Associated with this theory, defined as "performative geometry," is the semantic interpretation. The whole concept leads to approaching a painting as a unique "performance" of pictorial elements.
The article also points to other contemporary interpretations of Klee's works, which examine the problems of performatics. On this basis, the author concludes that the source of the performative turn in the visual arts can be sought in the art of the 1920s and 1930s, as well as outside direct references to performance art.

Keywords: performative turn, Paul Klee, performative geometry, motion of the lines, performance art

In the opening of his *Pedagogical Sketchbook*, Paul Klee wrote: "An active line on a walk, moving freely, without goal. A walk for a walk's sake. The mobility agent is a point, shifting its position forward."[1] Therefore, it is a point that moves in a drawing or an image, and its activity is transferred onto a line. Of

1 P. Klee, *Pedagogical Sketchbook*, transl. S. Moholy-Nagy, Praeger Publishers, New York-Washington 1972, p. 16.

course, we know that it was a graphic artist or a painter that physically created the line, but his presence does not have to be clearly perceptible to the recipient, nor do we have to imagine him at work to capture the element of artistic activity. According to Klee, we have to focus on the performance of a line, not on the artist's hand touching the surface of paper or canvas with a pencil or a brush. It is the line that sets off for a walk, not the artist. That walk takes place due to the assumption that we do not look at a line as a holistically treated form occupying certain part of the plane, but we perceive it as a trace of a moving point. It is the point that is the "mobility agent," it is the point that works within the image, moving forward. Its path may pan out in different ways. It can cover the shortest distance from one place on the plane to another (straight line), it can swerve along the way to visit other places (broken line), or it can circulate freely, go backwards, and so on. Sometimes, the path is isolated (one line), but usually there are other lines accompanying it. Their route can be parallel or intersect one or more times with the direction of movement of the first point. In Pedagogical Sketchbook, Klee gives some examples of the course of a line. He presents even more, along with his comments, in his private notes published by Jürg Spiller.[2]

The artist then goes on to deliberate on figures. Broken straight lines can form the boundaries of a geometric shape (rectangle, triangle, or more complex forms). The dynamism of these shapes, says Klee, is determined by the energy of motion of the lines. When we look at the outline of a geometrical figure (drawn linearly), approaching it as a whole, we see forces operating within it and tensions running in different directions depending on the arrangement of the sides. They are related to tracking the direction of the target's movement. This effect disappears when the inside of the figure is filled uniformly with black or another color. Then the path of the moving point can no longer be traced. We are looking at a flat surface with a specific outline. Its edges are linear, but these lines do not act on their own. "We still see lines, but not linear acts,"[3] Klee writes in his commentary. However, he points out the potential to activate planar forms. It boils down to considering them as "linear results of planar action.[4] As a starting point, he chooses ideal figures – a square, an equilateral triangle and a circle. In their case, the linear internal movements are aligned and balanced. In the case of other shapes, we see the dominance of certain elements. For example, a rectangle can be stretched vertically and horizontally depending on the elongation of its respective sides. Klee marks

2 Paul Klee: *The Thinking Eye*, ed. J. Spiller, transl. R. Manheim, George Wittenborn, New York, Lund Humpries, London 1961, p. 105-111.
3 Ibidem, p. 112.
4 Ibidem.

these deformations using the lines ending with arrows pointing in the direction of the moving forces. In the case of a circle, he considers the rotational movement and its possible irregularities leading to the distortion of the figure.

The next stage of this systematic reasoning concerns the situation where figures partly overlap. This problem is analyzed mainly taking into account the linear outlines of the shapes, which allows for the examination of what is happening inside the intersecting figures. Klee traces and comments on the mutual interpenetration and isolation of the common areas, the emergence of new forms, as well as the variety of organization of the developing disparities aiming to create a new unity. He uses the previously introduced analytical procedure of identifying the nature of the figure by means of straight lines running parallel to the longer side. Applying such schemes, he takes into account the situations in which the planar outlines intersect at different angles. Commenting on those cases, he invites us to "compare the action with the scene of action."[5] The interlocking planes are not only "active" bodies, they also form the image of space. Moreover, Klee stresses that such an effect can be achieved not only through systems of lines, but also by changing the tones (values) suggestive of chiaroscuro. Concluding this part of his reflections, the artist writes that the effects thus achieved are "structures of similar or dissimilar forms, which stand close together, touch, interpenetrate or intermesh, while one absorbs of the other."[6] The comment could also refer to a representational image, showing the dynamic relationships that occur in the outside world, or to a description of a theatre stage and the relationship between the actors performing thereon.

Klee's approach to visual issues both in his notes and in his *Pedagogical Sketchbook* brings to mind the famous Euclid's *Elements of Geometry*, and more specifically its first book.[7] Although the artist makes no direct reference to this work in any of the texts mentioned above (nor, to my knowledge, in any other of his writings), the analogies are very clear. In both cases, the discussion begins with the point, moving on to the line, the plane, and figures (circles, triangles, rectangles). In Euclid's treatise, the system of definitions, postulates, and theorems is axiomatized. Theorems stem from axioms accepted as true in advance. In Klee's case, there is no axiomatization in the strict sense, but the artist clearly tends to suggest a relationship between the individual elements of his reasoning. He aims to show the relationship between the successively

5 Ibidem, p.119.
6 Ibidem.
7 Cf. Euclid, Euclid's *Elements of Geometry*, the Greek text of J.L. Heiberg (1883–1885), edited and provided with a modern English translation by R. Fitzpatrick, 2008. http://farside.ph.utexas.edu/Books/Euclid/Elements.pdf [accessed 26 Aug. 2015].

considered elements. Like Euclid, Klee also has a tendency to illustrate his arguments with drawings. Discussing the principles of ancient geometry, Euclid illustrated his assertions with systems of lines, circles, and straight lines. In Klee's writings, the importance of drawings is even greater. They are not so much evidence as the main focus and the driving force of reasoning. This does not mean, however, that the artist is limited to exploring geometric elements, treating this as his only aim. On the contrary, in both texts discussed here, at one point he presents his "semantic explanation" (as he put it),[8] pointing to the equivalents of his queries in the physical world and in the field of metaphysics. Thus, he attempts to describe specific problems using the "geometry" he created.

However, regarding the aforementioned analogies, there is a significant difference between the point of view adopted by Euclid and Klee's deliberations. The system presented by the ancient Greek author is static. It consists of a description of geometrical elements treated as fixed. He then adds theorems pertaining to them and evidence that involves the performance of some actions (for example, demonstrating that the sum of two sides of a triangle is greater than the third side etc.). Klee, on the other hand, presumes that the relationships between the individual elements are dynamic. The line is a trace of a moving point, the plane is the product of a moving line, etc. Thus, we can say that action is the essence of Klee's concept. This type of geometry can therefore be described as performative. Euclid created a system that was to be of use when carrying out specific practical tasks in construction, carpentry, land measurements, etc. In Klee's case, the geometrical explorations contained in his private notes and in his *Pedagogical Sketchbook* were meant to create a new basis for painterly practice. However, their educational nature should not be understood narrowly. This is not an equivalent of the medieval pattern book by Villard de Honnencourt. As regards their role, Klee's texts have more in common with Leonardo da Vinci's *Treatise on Painting*, where deliberations relating to resolving specific professional issues are combined with developing a general concept of this field of art. Klee focuses on the latter objective. Rather than attempting to teach students how to paint a picture, he aims to show such methods of understanding visual elements that have been hitherto overlooked. Generally speaking, the objective is to shift the focus of both the artist and the recipient from the final product to the process. It is not, however, the physical process of painting, but the process which occurs within the image. A line is not a fixed element, but is produced by a moving point – it is a representation of action. The shape of such line is irrelevant, as is its placement in relation to the other shapes that can be assessed as static or dynamic. Each line is a movement, a kind of "performance" of a point. This interest in the previously di

8 P. Klee, *Pedagogical* ..., op. cit., p. 21.

sregarded processuality could be linked to the avant-garde explorations carried out since the beginning of the twentieth century and described by the researchers studying the origins of performance art.[9] One could also regard this as a component of the performative approach to art, which led up to performance art. Marvin Carlson writes: "What it had most in common with these and other experimental movements in both theatre and dance of the early twentieth century was an interest in developing the expressive qualities of the body, especially in opposition to logical and discursive thought and speech, and in seeking the celebration of form and process over content and product".[10] Klee's experimental work is one of the components of this trend, but the artist is mainly interested in the mobile qualities of pictorial elements, not the human body. In addition, his respect for form and process does not eliminate content.

What are the consequences of the artist's processual approach? Referring to the structure of the human body, he accentuates its kinetic properties. Discussing the skeletal system (skeleton), instead of focusing on its proportions or mutual support of individual elements (as was the case with the painters and sculptors in ancient times), he concentrates on its movement. The bones provide the support, Klee writes, but the kinetics of the body is determined by the muscles. He also introduces the following categories of bodily organs: active, which issue commands (brain), medial (muscle), and passive (bones).[11] Another example he discusses is that of a water mill. Here, too, he points to the relationships between passivity and activity and different types of forces. He also tries to employ the processual approach in discussing the traditional artistic problems of spatial dimensions and balance. For him, stativity is dynamism in equilibrium.

The fourth part of the deliberations presented in *Pedagogical Sketchbook* feature metaphysical references to "performative geometry" outlined at the beginning. Klee uses the shape of a spiral as his model. "Motion here," he writes, "is no longer finite; and the question of direction regains new importance. This direction determines either a gradual liberation from the center through freer and freer motions, or an increasing dependence on an eventually destructive center."[12] Naturally, the interpretation depends on the assumed direction of movement of the point forming the spiral line. If we assume that the point moves from the center of the spiral in ever widening circles, this will be associated with increasing freedom, understood as independence from the

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9 Cf. M. Kirby, *Futurist Performance. With manifestos and play scripts translated from the Italian by Victoria Nes Kirby*, E.P. Dutton & Co, New York 1971.

10 M. Carlson, *Performance: A Critical Introduction*, Routledge, New York 2004, p. 110.

11 P. Klee, *Pedagogical...*, p. 27–30.

12 Ibidem, p. 53.

center. If we assume that the line-forming point moves in the opposite direction, its dependence on the center increases. In his drawing, Klee marked both these directions with arrows, adding the following commentary: “This is the question of life and death; and the decision rests with the small arrow.”[13]

Next, Klee examines the theme of the arrow. He presents its various elements, starting with a line, to which a blade and "feathers" are subsequently added. They give the drawn arrow a direction, important also from the point of view of its symbolic meaning. “The father of the arrow,” Klee writes, “is the thought: how do I expand my reach? Over this river? This lake? That mountain? The contrast between man's ideological capacity to move at random through material and metaphysical spaces and his physical limitations is the origin of all human tragedy. It is a contrast between power and prostration that implies the duality of human existence. Half-winged, half- imprisoned, this is man! Thought is the mediary between earth and world. The broader the magnitude of his reach, the more painful man's tragic limitation.”[14]

I have cited the entire passage because it is an excellent illustration of the transition from specific problems related to “performative geometry” by referring to the motion of objects in space, to the symbolic meanings relating to the human situation. Considering this issue, the artist takes into account the characteristics of geometric elements according to his own approach associated with movement as their origin. An aimlessly moving point can set lines indefinitely. In practice, however, a drawn line always has a beginning and an end. This situation becomes a starting point for Klee to form his next generalizing reflection: “Revelation: that nothing that has a start can have infinity.” Next, he writes in the tone of a moralizing maxim: “Be winged arrows, aiming at fulfilment and goal, even though you will tire without having reached the mark.”[15]

Another type of general references suggested in *Pedagogical Sketchbook* concerns not so much the situations and actions in human life, but rather the processes associated with the movements occurring in the physical world. Klee marks them with arrows or thicker lines. The gradual increasing or decreasing of the width of a line suggests movement, which the artist associates with the processes of ascending and descending, or moving towards infinity.

Klee’s examination of composition-related issues – namely, the arrangement of the elements on the surface of a painting or drawing – is also approached from a performative perspective, as “movement organization.” Usually, pictorial

13 Ibidem, p. 53.

14 Ibidem, p. 54. Regarding a winged man, it is worth noting that Klee made a drawing depicting a figure with a single wing, bearing the artist’s own facial features.

15 Ibidem, p. 54.

composition is conceived as a static arrangement of a certain area on the canvas or paper. Since in "performative geometry" individual elements are analyzed as the outcome of movement, their arrangement also should take "mobile factors" into account. Composition, the artist writes, can be complete "if movement is met by counter-movement or if a solution of kinetic infinity has been found."[16] This problem affects the organization of both shapes and colours. When considering the organization of colours, Klee takes into account mainly their systemic relationships (for example as part of the colour wheel). This corresponds to the systemic approach employed in the reflections on shapes discussed above. Considering the relationships between basic colours (their mutual complementarity or contrast), and between basic colours and their derivatives, Klee translates them into mobile factors. Colours approach one another or move away, they are dependent or independent of one another. Added to them is grey – a non-colour, an element from outside of the chromatic system. This creates the perceptions of movement and counter-movement of colours. As regards the organization of colours, however, the fundamental problem is their harmonization. Klee views this issue as a transition from pathos (or tragedy) to ethos, "which encompasses energy and counter-energy within itself."[17]

Critics and art historians tend to agree that the fundamental element of Klee's oeuvre is the principle of abstraction. They assume that observing objects, Klee eliminated some of their characteristics he deemed irrelevant, aiming to reveal their essence. Such an approach was associated with the Aristotelian interpretation of the category of mimesis,[18] which was considered a type of cognitive activity. Practicing art of this kind, the artist aimed to create a typical representation of an object, corresponding not to that specific, individual item, but to a more general notion, whose denotation is a class of objects. Klee's works have been also interpreted in this way by Sybil Moholy-Nagy, author of the introduction to the English translation of *Pedagogical Sketchbook*. She writes: "Paul Klee replaced deduction by induction. Through observation of the smallest manifestation of form and interrelationship, he could conclude about the magnitude of natural order. Energy and substance, that which moves and that which is moved, were of equal importance as symbols of creation. He loved the natural event; therefore he knew its meaning in the universal scheme."[19]

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16 Ibidem, p. 59.
17 Ibidem, p. 60.
18 Cf. W. Tatarkiewicz, *Historia estetyki*, vol. I, Wydawnictwo naukowe PWN, Warszawa 2009, p. 167.
19 S. Moholy-Nagy, *Introduction* in: P. Klee, *Pedagogical* ..., op. cit. p. 5. By deduction in art, the author means the mindset used in the academic art since the Renaissance, which consisted in the fact that any representation of reality was derived from the general principles of absolute beauty and conventionally accepted canons of color (ibid., p. 5).

From the perspective of this interpretation, which refers to the artist's theoretical texts, one could also make a different observation. In his paintings, Klee did not interpret the surrounding reality. He constructed his paintings and drawings using the principles of his "performative geometry" and making a semantic interpretation of the resulting arrangements of shapes and colours. This is most likely what the artist meant when he wrote in his *Creative Confession* (1920): "Art does not reproduce the visible; rather it makes visible."[20]

That statement could also apply to the performativity of painting. A painting is not a reproduction of movement observed in the surrounding world in the same sense a photograph is an attempt to register it. Movement in a painting derives from an understanding of the dynamic nature of its pictorial components. Such singular "performative geometry," whose principles Klee had formulated in his theoretical texts, can make visible on the surface of a painting various phenomena of movement that the artist may include in his work. In his *Creative Credo*, Klee stressed that "the formal elements of graphic art are dot, line, plane, and space – the last three charged with energy of various kinds."[21] However, they are only a starting point. Artistic creativity takes place, as the artist put it, in "the land of deeper insight".[22] The dead center being the point, our first dynamic act will be the line. After a short time, we shall stop to catch our breath (the broken line, or the line articulated by several stops). I look back to see how far we have come (counter-movement). Ponder the distance thus far travelled (sheaf of lines). A river may obstruct our progress: we use a boat (wavy line). Further on there might be a bridge (series of curves). On the other bank we encounter someone who, like us, wishes to deepen his insight. At first we joyfully travel together (convergence), but gradually differences arise (two lines drawn independently of each other). Each party shows some excitement (expression, dynamism, emotional quality of the line).[23]

This quote demonstrates what can be expressed with lines. Their dynamics makes it possible to show marching that runs continuously or intermittently, forwards or backwards (reverse movement) in one direction or in different directions. It may follow the path of a single figure or several different ones (multiple lines running independently), parallel or divergent, aimed at a specific target or going astray. At the same time, other lines may relate to the changes of mood of walking people (emotional quality of the line), as well as the characteristics of objects and people. Klee emphasizes that there should be

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20 P. Klee, *Creative Credo*, in: *Theories of Modern Art. A Source Book by Artists and Critics*, ed. by H.B. Chipp, University of California Press, Berkley, Los Angeles and London 1996, p. 182.
21 Ibidem, p. 183.
22 Ibidem, p. 183.
23 Ibidem.

many "elements of linear expression," they should generate infinite opportunities of "variation" and create "possibilities for expressing ideas," i.e. express the course of thought, not spatial movement.[24] Such rich semantic capabilities do not originate from the mimetic representation of appearance taking into account the process of abstraction, but from action. Klee writes: "It may be true that 'in the beginning there was the deed', yet the idea comes first. Since infinity has no definite beginning, but like a circle may start anywhere, the idea may by regarded as primary. 'In the beginning was the word'"[25] This statement is ambiguous. One interpretation is that a work of art does not begin with a view of reality that is to be presented, but with the artist's action. Its outcome, as a result of appropriate semantic interpretation, will direct us toward a narrative about certain events and states of affairs, bringing forth an image of the world planned earlier by the artist.[26] Everything depends on the artist's decision and the appropriate interpretation of the recipient.

Another way to understand Klee's idea is to assume that activity is an inherent trait of the pictorial components. It is in them that the performative element is present at the beginning. Their purpose is not to tell a preplanned story, but the narrative is the consequence of their activity. This approach to the pictorial elements in Klee's work corresponds to performance art rather than to the model of plot development in theatre. In theatre, the character on stage is subordinated to the story told in the play. Any action follows a specific script. Meanwhile, the performers, as has been repeatedly emphasized, often do not know what they are going to do when they are facing their audience. Their action develops in relation to perceived objects, sometimes in response to specific individuals spotted in the audience and their behaviour. In this sense, a performance is an experience, as defined by Carlson.[27]

It is difficult to decide which of these interpretations is closer to Klee's own views. In his texts, there are passages suggesting that both these positions are valid. The following excerpt seems to support the first one: "The Biblical story of the creation is an excellent parable of movement. The work of art, too, is above all a process of creation, it is never experienced as a mere product."[28]

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24 Ibidem, p. 184.

25 Ibidem.

26 With this interpretation, there is a convergence of artistic creativity with the performative function of language described by Austin. Performative utterances do not express knowledge about the state of things, but establish it (for example, taking marriage vows, or naming a ship). Cf. John L. Austin, *How to Do Things with Words: The William James Lectures delivered at Harvard University in 1955*, eds. J.O. Urmson and M. Sbisŕ, Clarendon Press, Oxford 1962.

27 Cf. M. Carlson, op. cit. 110.

28 P. Klee, *Creative Credo*, op. cit. p. 185.

The reference to the Scripture suggests that there is an original, content-related, narrative authorial intention, which is implemented using the knowledge of different motor abilities of the pictorial elements that play only their assigned semantic roles. The second interpretation, on the other hand, seems to be dominating when the artist writes: "Only the dead point as such is timeless. In the universe, too, movement is the basic datum. (What causes movement? This is an idle question, rooted in error.) On this earth, repose is caused by an accidental obstruction in the movement of matter. It is an error to regard such a stoppage as primary."[29] In this case, the course of movement is not predetermined. Important events involving pictorial elements that take place on canvas or paper are analogous to the situations occurring in life or in a performance. At the same time, the reference to movement in the universe in the above quote indicates that neither the original state of man nor the pictorial elements can be treated as motionless.

The fact that the artist approached the issue of motion in painting with full theoretical knowledge is evidenced by his reference to Laocoon, an essay by Gotthold Ephraim Lessing. Lessing's work makes a distinction between spatial and temporal art, important for both the subsequent view of aesthetics as science, and artistic activity. The German author associates temporal arts with movement. As for spatial arts, they were not only deprived of movement, but also should not attempt to represent it.[30] Disagreeing with Lessing, Klee writes: "For space, too, is a temporal concept. When a dot begins to move and becomes a line, this requires time. Likewise, when a moving line produces a plane, and when moving planes produce spaces."[31] Therefore, he cites the principles of his "performative geometry" as arguments in the dispute, indicating that painting is an art which takes into account not only space, but time as well.

One might consider, however, that the views voiced by Klee represent his personal artistic ideology, which helps him in his work as an artist, but has little significance for the recipient of art. The artist anticipates this allegation. He invokes Feuerbach's words that to understand a painting one needs a chair, the rationale for its role in aesthetic reception being that otherwise the recipient's legs will get tired quickly and s/he will only cast a quick glance at the painting. Klee, on the other hand, believed that works of art should be received

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29 Ibidem.

30 Lessing wrote: "But, if painting, owing to its signs, or means of imitation, which it can combine in space only, is compelled entirely to renounce time, progressive actions, as such, cannot be classed among its subjects" (G.E. Lessing, *Laocoon: An Essay on the Limits of Painting and Poetry*, transl. E.C. Beasley, Longman, Brown, Green, and Longmans, London 1853, p. 99-100.

31 P. Klee, *Creative Credo*..., p. 184.

by following the shapes with one's eyes, as only then would one be able to fully appreciate and feel the movement contained within them. "The beholder's eye, which moves about like an animal grazing – follows the paths prepared for it in the picture (in music, as everyone knows, there are conduits leading to the ear; the drama has both visual and auditive trails). The pictorial work was born of movement, is itself recorded movement, and is assimilated through movement (eye muscles)."[32] This quotation introduces the problem of the bodily nature of artistic reception and the question of the role of empathy.

According to Klee, the performative character of a drawing or painting does not consist in the fact that the process of the artist's work can be seen as a type of performance art. Klee is not interested in the fact that the energy increases when the painter works more vigorously, and decreases when he works intently, carefully arranging lines and spots of colour. Also, in his opinion performativity is not dependent on the nature of the represented object. The starting point of Klee's concept are pictorial elements, which are entitled to a certain performative quality. Their use and the establishment of the types of movement involved shapes the significance of the work. Its semantic value does not come from representing a particular theme; it has its source in the selection of the components of the painting and its composition. Therefore, Klee stresses, "Art is simile of the Creation. Each work of art is an example, just as the terrestrial is an example of the cosmic."[33] It does not reproduce its fragments, but consists in shaping them parallel to the processes taking place within it. It uses the mobile capabilities of the pictorial elements, arranging them in complete sets, analogous to the changes taking place in the world. Such creat esis, rather than the image of nature, the finished product."[34]

The above claim can be given a metaphysical sense. In such a case, the word "Genesis" is associated with the biblical Book of Genesis and understood as a reference to the creation of the world treated as a continuous process. This interpretation is most commonly accepted by the scholars studying Klee's oeuvre. However, one can also consider it in the context of performativity, assuming that it concerns the formation of meaning in the painting. That meaning is not fixed nor given in advance. "The image of nature" gradually emerges from the previously described activity of pictorial elements. A similar process takes place in performance art. Confronting performance with theatricality,

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32 Ibidem, p. 185.

33 Ibidem, p. 186.

34 P. Klee, "On Modern Art", [in:] *Art in Theory 1900-1990 An Anthology of Changing Ideas*, ed. by Ch. Harrisonand P. Wood, Blackwell Publishers, Oxford & Cambridge 1999, p. 348.

35 J. Féral, *Performance and Theatricality: The Subject Demystified*, transl. T. Lyons, "Modern Drama" 1982, nr 1, p. 173.

Josette Féral stated resolutely: "Performance is the absence of meaning."[35] The author is not referring to asemanticity, but to the special way of shaping meaning. Next, she writes that "if any experience is meaningful, without a doubt it is that of performance. Performance does not aim at a meaning, but rather makes meaning."[36] A similar situation occurs in the case of Klee's paintings and drawings. From the actions of the pictorial elements emerges the image of the world, as well as further meanings of general, conceptual character.

Based on the performaticity of pictorial elements, attempts have been made to interpret both the general creative attitude of the artist, and his individual works. The changes of the former have been analyzed by such scholars as Nedaa Elias, who stated that Klee "placed more emphasis on the formative powers than on the finished forms."[37] This position seems to me to be too radical because it suggests that the resulting visual effect is of secondary importance. Moreover, the painter showed great concern for the ultimate visual effect of his paintings. They were not sketches. This is evident when we compare his sketches published in the book *The Thinking Eye* with the reproductions of his drawings or paintings. The drawing *Difficult Journey Through O.* (1927)[38] features many lines, running together and individually, but supplemented with various descriptive elements, evocative of houses, sun (or full moon) in the sky, and so on. The whole arrangement forms a tale of a journey. The "formative power" of pictorial elements plays a prominent role, but the work is not limited to the representation of formativity. The painting also includes a narrative, which is its essential component. This aspect of Klee's work is expressed in the titles, which were considered to be of great importance by the artist.

Another example would be the watercolor *Dancing From Fright* (1938).[39] Referring to the artist's writings, the editor of Klee's notes, Jürg Spiller, says that there are two balanced types of energy in the painting: "linear-active" and "planar-active (linear-passive)." Given their "formative power," he writes that "the lines dynamize the accented motion of the planes (dynamic accentuation by rotation)."[40] But one cannot ignore the fact that for many recipients the planar elements (triangles and rectangles), as well as the lines that are the extensions of their sides, resemble schematic images of human figures. Klee amplifies this effect by adding small circles suggesting the shape of their heads. The result is a painting depicting people who make various dance-like gestures out of fear. Noting this representational effect provides a basis for an empathetic

36 Ibidem, p. 173.
37 N. Elias, *Paul Klee – Making Visible. Art does not reproduce the visible; rather it makes visible*. www. nidaelias.com (January 22, 2014) [accessed 21 July 2015]).
38 Reproduced in: *Paul Klee: The Thinking* ..., op. cit., p. 106.
39 Reproduced in: ibidem, p. 114.
40 Ibid, p. 114.

development of emotions based on one's identification with the dynamic figures of human feelings in a state of terror. Klee's concept of "performative geometry," therefore, does not eliminate the problems of empathy, but only leads to the assignment of considerable importance to the dynamic origin of the observed shapes. This question can be linked with "modernist synthetic practice," described by Ivana Wingham. The author emphasizes that Klee's work takes into account "an oppositional, dialectical mode of looking and thinking that is both synthetic and analytic," and is based on "an interplay of movements in the universe."[41] As part of this dialectic, however, Wingham focuses mainly on another aspect of Klee's concept.

She is not so much interested in the possibilities of the movement of a line, but in the role of the artist's self. As her starting point, she uses Klee's phrase from his notebooks, where he refers to "taking the line for a walk." Undertaking the task of interpreting the meaning of this metaphor, she focuses on exceeding the limits of visuality. Citing the views of Jacques Lacan, she points out that, in contrast to the phenomenology of perception of Maurice Merlau-Ponty, Lacan emphasized the movements of the viewer, his "grip," his muscle and visceral emotions, primarily in relation to the role of the eye. Thus, he stressed "his total intentionality."[42]

Wingham's other point of reference, although included for a similar purpose, are the views of Rosalind E. Krauss from the book *The Optical Unconscious*, where she writes about the "tactility of vision" and "the space of pointing." Krauss says that a subject somehow reaches for the observed, grabbing it, touching, moving his fingers on the front and the sides, and manipulating it. In this way, the viewer enters the painting by way of a projection. The author of the article believes that Klee entered his paintings, as the actions he described – the movements of a point, lines and planes, have such tactile character.

I have cited Wingham's article because it demonstrates a different approach to the performative aspect in the visual arts. In this case, performance does take the artist into account, although not because of his physical effort related to the act of painting, understood as putting portions of pigment on the canvas. The physicality and tactility are dialectically linked to the process of looking, they are a "tactile way of looking," bringing us closer to achieving "pure mobility." From this point of view, Klee's painting may be considered as a "figuration of movement."[43] The author cites the views of Robert Kudeilko, who pointed out

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41 I. Wingham, *„Taking the line for a walk" – within Paul Klee modernist practice*, LIMITS: 21st Annual Conference of the Society of Architectural Historians, Australia & New Zealand, Melbourne, Australia, 26–29 September 2004, http://eprints.brighton.ac.uk/5647/ [accessed on August 26, 2015].

42 Cited after: I. Wingham, *„Taking the line for a walk"*..., op. cit.

43 I. Wingham, *„Taking the line for a walk"*..., op. cit.

that in his notebooks Klee did not refer to purely visual factors, but to such indicators as gravity, movement, etc. In particular, he considered the issue of movement to be especially complex. The artist wrote that when a modern man is walking on a ship deck, he must realize his own movement, the movement of the ship, which can run in the opposite direction, the direction and the speed of the water current, the rotation of the earth, its orbits, as well as the orbits of all moons and planets around it.[44] Therefore, he must take into account the entire complex interplay of movements in the universe and himself on the ship as the center. I believe that this can be seen as the concept of a total performance. Klee's paintings by Klee were supposed to be visual counterparts of such sensations, utilizing various dynamic opportunities of pictorial elements.

Thus, what makes it difficult for us to join such an interplay of movements is our concentration on the shell of our body, and the division into the space inside and outside it. What Klee suggests is to indicate the points of exchange. Citing Elizabeth Grosz's idea of "volatile bodies," which entails an exchange of the external and the internal ("inside out," "outside in"), Wingham writes that according to Klee, the body is a threshold concept, due to which one thinks not only in terms of oppositions, but also in terms of optical vs non-optical. That which belongs to the sphere of seeing intermingles with what goes beyond it.[45] Developing this idea further, one may say that such an approach indicates the way of transgressing the division into the spatial and the temporal, as well as the static and the dynamic. Thus, the category of performativity enters the field of fine arts.

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44 Paul Klee: *The Thinking* ..., op. cit. , p. 79.
45 I. Wingham, *„Taking the line for a walk"*..., op. cit.

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ZWROT PERFORMATYWNY W SZTUKACH PLASTYCZNYCH. KONCEPCJA SZTUKI PAULA KLEE (streszczenie)

Zwrot performatywny w wielu dziedzinach nauk humanistycznych zaznaczył się w latach siedemdziesiątych XX wieku. Wprawdzie najważniejsi jego reprezentanci podkreślali, że obejmuje on także sztuki plastyczne, jednak konkretne przykłady ograniczane były zwykle do akcjonistycznych zjawisk artystycznych z pogranicza sztuki performance i malarstwa lub rzeźby. Niniejszy artykuł stanowi próbę wskazania, że tendencja do performatywnego ujmowania sztuki występowała już w ramach działań awangardowych pierwszej połowy XX wieku. Ponadto omawiany

w nim przykład koncepcji malarskiej Paula Klee przenosi obszar performatywności z aktywności artysty na elementy plastyczne interpretowane z punktu widzenia zachodzących między nimi działań.
Przedmiotem analiz prowadzonych w artykule są pisma teoretyczne i pedagogiczne Klee (zarówno opublikowane za jego życia, jak pośmiertnie) rozważane jako podstawa interpretacji jego obrazów. Artysta zakładał, że elementy plastyczne wiąże zasada ruchu - linia to ślad przesuwania się punktu, płaszczyzna to ślad ruchu linii. Z tą teorią, która zostaje określona jako „geometria performatywna", związana jest interpretacja semantyczna. Całość koncepcji prowadzi do ujęcia obrazu jako swoistego „performansu" elementów plastycznych.
W artykule wskazane są również inne współczesne interpretacje twórczości Klee, w których rozważane są problemy performatyki. Na tej podstawie autorka wnioskuje, że źródeł zwrotu performatywnego w sztukach plastycznych można poszukiwać w twórczości lat 20. i 30. ubiegłego stulecia, a ponadto że znajdują się one także poza obszarem bezpośrednich odniesień do performance art.

Słowa kluczowe: zwrot performatywny, Paul Klee, geometria performatywna, ruch linii, sztuka performance

Art Inquiry. Recherches sur les arts 2015, vol. XVII
ISSN 1641-9278

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THE LINGUISTIC TURN IN CONCEPTUALISM AND AFTER

Abstract: One of the most spectacular turns in the art of the 20th century was based on the linguistic reorientation of philosophy, whose extreme manifestation was Wittgenstein's non-denotational conception of meaning. It inspired the so-called analytical conceptualism that was trying in vain to overcome the heterogeneous nature of conceptism, from which it derived. This is reflected especially in Joseph Kosuth's confusion concerning the neo-positivist inspiration and one of the guiding themes of natural language philosophy which emphasizes the significance of metaphor and the fundamental role of the functor as in human thinking. The following article presents this process of inconsistent reduction of art to language, showing some of its consequences and its replacement by contextualism.

Keywords: conceptism, conceptualism, contextualism, extension, intension, linguistic turn

Attempts to compare or reduce art to language were set off by the high position of literature, especially by the special status of poetry, which, since antiquity, played a leading role in the paragone (competition) between the arts of word and image. At least since Mannerism, poetic conceptism also had an impact on the visual arts and integrated the divided fields of art in general. This tendency – to perceive an artwork as a sign continued in the Enlightenment's allegorization and the Romantic symbolization, although it was halted by the formalist tradition of Gotthold Ephraim Lessing's *Laocoon* (1766), further reinforced by the post-Kantian formalism of Konrad Fiedler in the late 19th century. He understood the experience of art as a kind of knowledge or production of reality. According to Benedetto Croce, nobody revealed the nature of artistic activity better than Fiedler, who compared it to the function of language. This

influenced the Italian aesthetician's understanding of artistic expression.[1] However, the radical formalism of the 20th century avant-garde – for example the *laocoonism* of Władysław Strzemiński or Clement Greenberg – often broke these links between the fine arts and language and became – like the more fundamental conceptism – one of the victims of the linguistic turn in Conceptualism. Conceptual artists, by an extreme radicalization of concept art, at the same time – paradoxically – tried to reduce this tradition to the unique concept of art as *idea as idea*, after the implosion of the linguistic or semiological reorientation of culture. Many articles, such as "The Role of Language" (1969, published only in 1974[2]) by Ian Burn and Mel Ramsden became the basis for the concept of artwork as text.

The rejection of conceptual heterogeneity

Conceptism is a broader category than conceptual art or Conceptualism.[3] For Henry Flynt concept art is a type of art whose material is language and concepts. Although a "concept" is a trace of the Platonic "idea" and it means an intension of a name, today – taking into account the current state of knowledge – it is wrong to assume that the relationship between a name and its intension is objective.[4] Flynt rightly pointed out the tension between the tendency to preserve the subjectivity characteristic for conceptism (and for Fluxus, which he had joined) and the inclination towards art modeled by the objective (e.g. mathematical, as in Minimalism, or logical as in the analytical conceptualism) rules of language. According to Daniel Buren, "concept" can be understood not only lexicographically as a general and abstract mental representation of an object. This word is overdetermined because it has several senses: 1. concept as project; 2. mannerism; 2a. verbiage, and 3. concept as idea and art.[5] Buren has rightly emphasized that this last – artistic – perspective allows us to transfer the

1 B. Croce, *Ästhetik als Wissenschaft des Ausdrucks und allgemeine Linguistik. Theorie und Geschichte*, E.A. Seemann, Leipzig 1905.

2 I. Burn, M. Ramsden, "The Role of Language", in. Ch. Harrison, P. Wood, ed., *Art in Theory 1900-1990. An Anthology of Changing Ideas*, Blackwell Publishers, Cambridge - Massachusetts, USA 1993, pp. 879-881.

3 K. Piotrowski, „Konceptualizm jako konceptyzm", *Sztuka i Dokumentacja* 2012, no. 6, pp. 109-117.

4 H. Flynt, Henry "Concept Art" (1961) in: K. Stiles, P. Selz, ed., *Theories and Documents of Contemporary Art. A Sourcebook of Artists' Writings*, University of California Press, Ltd., Berkeley and Los Angeles 1996, pp. 820-822.

5 D. Buren, "Beware!" (1969/70) in: K. Stiles, P. Selz, ed., *Theories and Documents of Contemporary Art*, op. cit., pp.140-141.

concept from mental reality to the sphere of objecthood, and to speak about a concept-object. So a concept in this wider sense is not – as a categorematic expression – a whole which is expressible in language as a name (idea). In other words – to use Husserl's terminology – a concept appears to be a quasi-syncategorematic expression (as a functor mapping one category onto another and imitating its morphisms). A concept is inherently heterogeneous because it is a mental and sensory whole at the same time; it unifies the *siginifie* and *signifiant* as well as exposes the conditions of this differential whole. A concept is dialectical, to recall Roland Barthes' thesis popular in the 1960s from his *Elements of Semiology*: "there is no language without speech, and no speech outside language".[6]

However, in Buren's text one can see the tendency, characteristic for Conceptualism, to reduce the importance of the term "concept". Even in Sol LeWitt's *Paragraphs on Conceptual Art* (1967) and *Sentences on Conceptual Art* (1969), the term functions as an alternative to "idea" which can be simple and does not have to be as complex as "concept". According to LeWitt, "concept" implies a general direction, and ideas are its components. This dialectic heterogeneity of "concept" and the homogeneity of "idea" are present even in Mel Ramsden's famous *Secret Painting* (1967-68), in which, beside a black – probably Suprematist – square, painted on the canvas in acrylic, he placed the comment: "The content of this painting is invisible: the character and dimension of the content are to be permanently secret, known only to the artist". Similarly, a concept is responsible for the condensation of the content in the most reductive works of Conceptual art, in the linguistic theory-practice of the British fraction of Art & Language (Terry Atkinson, David Bainbridge, Michael Baldwin and Harold Hurrell). For example in *Index 001* (1972), shown at Documenta V, we can observe the surprising economy of conceptism, which Freud wrote about in his study *Jokes and Their Relation to the Unconscious* (1905). The valorization of ideas has taken place here – paradoxically – through filing and enclosing the theoretical texts of the group members in gray boxes. But the question emerges here from Ramsden's parody and Art & Language's conceptual rejection of the myth of subjectivity: is a concept the *raison d'etre* of these works, or is it only a means of exposing of their *secret* (and therefore *prior* or *central*) idea? Is Conceptualism the most extreme manifestation of conceptism in the 20th century, or should Conceptual art be rather understood as a linguistic reduction of conceptism's heterogeneity?

6 R. Barthes, *Elements of Semiology*, trans. by A. Lavers & C. Smith, Hill & Wang, New York 1968, p. 15.

Linguistic reductionism – anti-essentialism

The linguistic reduction of the heterogeneity of concepts culminates in the theoretical reflection of the group Art & Language – especially in Terry Atkinson's and Michael Baldwin's article "On the Material Character / Physical-Object Paradigm of Art" (1972).[7] However, this tendency to disambiguate art by the elevation of the idea (in Joseph Kosuth's formula "idea as idea") is not continued in the theory of Conceptualism, which smuggles in conceptism's subjectivity, and where the essence of art disappears or falls into anomie.

The Art & Language members – e.g. Ian Burn – argued that it makes no sense to analyze the nature of art because we can only say something about the nature of its concepts. Therefore, the main proposals of the group converge with the views promoted by the Anglo-Saxon analytical aesthetics (e.g. with Morris Weitz's anti-essentialism). The word "art" has only predicative – propositional or hypothetical status. Ian Burn, Roger Cutforth and Mel Ramsden have suggested in *Art-Language* magazine (June 1970) in their text "Proceedings of the Society for Theoretical Art and Analyses" that "art" does not have the status of a substantial expression (prior context) in language, and therefore it is not a subject about which we can say that it is something or not.[8] The expressions "art is" or "art exists" are grammatical illusions, because syntactically the word "art" cannot be a subject of a sentence (despite the linguistic illusion) but only a predicative expression (second context) which is predicated on the subject of a proposition. Therefore saying "art" we mean "of art", which means that an object gains the status (the function) of art – it becomes art. Using such expressions as "an object of art" or "a concept of art", we have to keep in mind this second – assertive, predicative – status of art. Art does not have a substantial context in language such that we can say that we have to do with art. The expressions "object" and "art" exclude one another because these words belong to different syntactic contexts and can be combined in a sentence only in its propositional function. Art is not determined by the temporal and spatial properties of the object (as in conceptism, and especially in the poetics of Fluxus or in Situationist aesthetics), but the basis of art is a grammatical format (with a predominance of some semantic applications of the word "art", as in "art community"). An artist states a new rule of artistry, namely that something can appear as art because it is syntactically acceptable as a new component

7 T. Atkinson, M. Baldwin, "On the Material Character / Physical-Object Paradigm of Art", *Art-Language* 1972, no 1, pp. 51-55.

8 I. Burn, R. Cutforth, M. Ramsden, "Proceedings, the Society for Theoretical Art and Analyses", *Art-Language* 1970 (VI), pp. 1ff, in: P. Osborne, ed., *Conceptual Art*, Phaidon Press Inc., London - New York 2002, pp. 236-237.

of art. It is undeniable that certain components – according to the existing genealogy and the dominant rules of use of the expression "art" – seem more appropriate here, while other elements require more justification in order to fulfill the nominative and paradigmatic function of something being art. Hence the importance of the functor "as" which allows us to predicate on any objects the attribute of artistry ("as art") and thereby to inspire further evaluation. It is easy to see that this anti-essentialist theory, despite its inclination towards relativism and anomie, suggests the existence of an original order (a regulative principle?) of art. Thus, the views of the Art & Language group were not so revolutionary, though they are coherent with the methodology of Thomas Kuhn negating cumulative development of science. This deficiency can be seen in the conceptualism of Joseph Kosuth.

Art and the end of philosophy

Kosuth slowly grew to complement these efforts of Conceptualism with the application of Wittgenstein's non-denotational conception of meaning, in order to come forward with the tautological model of art in his famous and widely discussed text "Art after Philosophy", published in the London magazine *Studio International* (October, November, and December 1969).[9] His proposal was a breakthrough in the development of modern art, as its culmination and a consequence of the linguistic turn which had taken place in Western philosophy. The intellectual climate inspiring these considerations on art led to the rejection of not only philosophical aesthetics, but also philosophy.

Kosuth begins by taking note of the crisis in the empirical sciences, citing Sir Alfred Jules Ayer, according to whom physicists today fall into dogmatism, coming close in their speculations to religion. This might be because they wish to correct their earlier scientistic attitude, characterized by anti-religious dogmatism. Kosuth tries to convince us with the help of Ayer that physics has fallen into stagnation and has perhaps ended up like philosophy half a century before, recalling the opinion of another British philosopher James Opie Urmson, who referred to Wittgenstein. The latter's *Tractatus Logico-philosophicus* (1921) opened the eyes of many philosophers believing in the wisdom of philosophy. Kosuth is committed to the Wittgensteinian claim that philosophy is neither empirical like science nor tautological like mathematics. Wittgenstein had already stated his embarrassment with traditional philosophy in 1918,

9 J. Kosuth, *Art after Philosophy and After. Collected Writings, 1966-1990*, ed. by G. Guercio, foreword by J.-F. Lyotard, The MIT Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts - London, England 2002, pp. 13-32.

when he abandoned it. These theoretical affiliations – the neo-Positivist narrowing of the scope of sense and the pedantry of the Anglo-Saxon analytical philosophy – turned the young artist against classical philosophy and the modern followers of the metaphysical tradition; especially against Hegel's thesis about the logical death of art. Hegel – in his absolutist ambitions – destroyed the achievements of the critical philosophy of the Enlightenment, arriving at the conclusion that "there is nothing more to be said". Thus philosophy had ended with Hegel, and Kosuth takes a belated revenge on him for the artists. He tries to free them from the hegemony of this kind of umbrella philosophy, aesthetics, or even theory constructed on the basis of some external, non-artistic context, absolutizing the context of art as the autonomous and self-sufficient one in the self-consciousness of the artist. Kosuth's aversion to Hegel turns him against the whole traditional philosophy focused on expressing what is unspeakable – "the unsaid". He takes the side of analytical philosophy, according to which something is unspeakable simply because it is impossible to express, i.e. is *unsayable*. The linguistically oriented Anglo-Saxon philosophy, opposed to the continental one, becomes for him an ally in this struggle for the emancipation of art that examines philosophical discourse and enquires about the "unreality" of philosophy in general. As Sir James Jeans has pointed out, with the progress of science, especially the advancement of the natural sciences based on mathematics that increasingly transcend an anthropomorphic worldview – philosophy is now stagnating. It simply dwells at the earlier misconceptions which resulted from the philosophers' focusing on the figurative aspects of scientific theories. And the better the scientific discourse overcomes these anthropomorphic, figurative limitations, and approximates the real, non-doxal knowledge of nature, the more philosophy becomes anachronistic in its problems, and its theses are difficult to defend.

From this vantage point, Kosuth sees the beginning of the 20th century as the time of "the end of philosophy and the beginning of art". He himself – in case philosophy is not quite dead yet – tries to speed up its demise. But he does not definitively specify the causal link between the end of philosophy and the beginning of art. However, he makes the suggestion that this relationship is not coincidental, and it may be treated as a crucial point in his reflection on conceptual art. He sees current art – as practiced by other artists – as a consequence of this situation and a ground for the survival of art after the end of philosophy. The religious, metaphysical, and aesthetic sources of art have not dried out, but were simply always dry and completely illusory, a mirage. Today's art – after the end of religion and philosophy – is fighting for its authority over souls. Through its sophisticated concepts, art serves what we call "man's spiritual needs". Art focuses its attention – like once philosophy (metaphysics) – on the non-physical.

The criticism of aesthetics and formalism

The model of art proposed in *Art after Philosophy* was certainly an extreme consequence of one of the leading strategies of modernism – essentialism, but – paradoxically – it had anti-essentialist implications. The ready-mades of Duchamp, who did not ask about the *what* and *how* of art, permitted Kosuth to overcome the formalist versions of essentialism (such as that of Clement Greenberg), and thus argue for the separation of the idea of art from aesthetics. Duchamp had already done this in his concept of the ready-made as a manifestation of his disdain for the aesthetic value of unique works of art. Kosuth justified this separation, rightly asserting that aesthetics relies on the opinions related to the perception of the world in general, and not only to art, to which the aesthetic function was wrongly attributed. The realization of the aesthetic or decorative values, like the realization of religious or other socially useful goals – is external to art. Naturally, the objects appearing in the context of art can be perceived in an aesthetic way, but the functioning of art is not dependent on the requirements of taste or aesthetic judgments. While any item may be aesthetically perceived –this is independent of the conclusion that it appears in the context of art as a work of art. Thus the aesthetic background is neutral to the context of art. Kosuth primarily attacks painting as decoration and a purely aesthetic exercise, sarcastically calling Clement Greenberg "a critic of taste". Greenberg ignored the earlier ideas of Ad Reinhardt, as well as the works of Frank Stella and others painters, because they were not to his taste. Contrary to Michael Fried's assertions, the formalist critique – grounded in the morphology of traditional art – is not based on in-depth research. The analyses of the formalist critics are limited to the physical properties of objects, rejecting the concept of art as a mental, conceptual process, and ignoring temporal and material change, in favour of their language fixations, as also confirmed by Robert Smithson. Formalist criticism, as an unnecessary intermediary, does not add any knowledge (or facts) to the understanding of art and its functions. It trivializes art and reduces it to mindless and commercial visual music (Muzak), as pointed out by Lucy Lippard. This criticism – aspiring to be academic – is in fact journalism (the most senseless and counterproductive profession in America, as claimed by Dan Flavin).

However, Kosuth reinterprets the context of formal analysis in some cases – such as that of Cubism, locating it in the process of a priori ideation, and recognizes some examples of art understood as an idea in the morphological variants of historical reflection on art. The value of Cubism for art does not lie in the physical or visual qualities of its images, but in its concept – in the *linguistic* rather than the sensory impact of the Cubist canvases. The physical or aesthetic values of colors and shapes – which are only servicing the formal

(sensory) components of the language of art – should not be confused with meanings as constitutive elements for the development of art as such or as non-sensory conceptualism. The morphological recognition of art does not exhaust its essence but is an a priori concept located in the context of art. The formalists are not aware that their formal innovations are often developmental factors of the language of art and are not limited to its morphological aspect. Although some formalist concepts – such as the morphology of Manet, Cézanne and the Cubists – have revolutionized painting, in comparison with Duchamp's concepts they seem to be timid and ambiguous. These formalist problems do not have any ground-breaking strength to contest the nature or function of art. Meanwhile, questioning the nature of art is just a very important aspect of understanding its function (Kosuth seems to suggest here that the nature of art – considered in its internal context – is self-resistant, to use an expression of poststructuralists referring to language or to any economy-producing sense). After Duchamp, artists have moved their attention from the form of language to what is being said, without emphasizing the phenomenal domain (appearance) but accentuating the importance of the concept, which was the proper beginning of modernist and conceptual art. As Kosuth told Jeanne Siegel, if criticism wants to retain its validity, it needs to get closer to the intentions of the artists, instead of treating their works as ready-made for their interpretation.

Kosuth gets into trouble here because he is blinded by a dogmatic kind of historicism and by a new essentialism (resembling the post-Kantian formalism of Greenberg), i.e. by an orthodox vision of conceptual evolution. He proclaims the progress of counter-intuitive concepts or conceptions of art – without the possibility of return. Nevertheless, it is always possible that art is *alive* and that even ancient art has a potential to be re-used, and therefore to be subject to revitalization. For him works of art have their value and meaning in so far as it does not reduce them to sensory, physical residues of artistic ideas, but as far as those interact with other works, generating new ideas. After all, he claims, after Duchamp all art is conceptual because it exists only conceptually. The only reason for the existence of successive generations of artists is their contribution to the process of questioning the existing concepts of art. The decisive factor here is what these artists add to the previous concepts and what new ideas they propose. Art appears as a self-reference system constructed of propositional functions, where the term "art" is a constant, realized by different variables.

Like Duchamp, Ad Reinhardt was also a precursor here. In his text "Art as Art" (1962) he wrote that the result of the fifty years of development of abstract painting was to show "art-as-art and as nothing else".[10] Kosuth seemed

10 A. Reinhardt, "Art as Art", *Art International* 1962, no 10, pp. 36-37.

to share the optimism of Reinhardt – of his main protagonist from the world of art, whose convictions he has often discussed with his students at the School of Visual Arts in New York. He especially liked Reinhardt's idea of "the last painting [that] anyone can make", and his claim that "You can paint anything, and you can paint anything out. You can begin with anything and get rid of it. I already got rid of all that other stuff. Someone else doesn't have to do it".[11] Kosuth has developed one of the most important ideas of Reinhardt – "art as art", repeating this formula in his famous superposition "art as idea as idea". In 1970 the artist gave an interview in which he answered Jeanne Siegel's question of why it is not enough to use the formula "art as idea". According to him, the repetition manifests reflection on the process of creating a work of art as an idea, and therefore the reduplication had to appear as a result or effect of the re-thinking of the acts of the earlier perception of art as an idea. This repetition is a break with the formalist recognition of Reinhardt's formula. Kosuth's tautological repetitions – such as the use of formless water, colorless glass, achromatic exposure, some functional and standard objects, and life-sized photographs of these objects, and since 1965 also words – for example, "glass" on glass, and then photocopies of complete dictionary definitions – are aimed as a counter-measure to the reduction of art to an idea as an object conceived on the ground of formalist ideology. He regards the use of language as fully legitimate material (while maintaining distrust towards the tradition of concrete poetry and poetry in general that – like the old philosophy – attempts unsuccessfully to express "the unsayable").[12]

Relying on the authority of Donald Judd, Kosuth wrote that he questioned the previous understanding of the development of painting or art in general because progress is not always associated with formal advancement within the traditional artistic genres. Judd – as the originator of the concept of "specific objects" – had previously noted that half of the best works of the recent few years were neither paintings nor sculptures. According to Kosuth, all the materials and tools of an artist – paints, brushes, canvas, etc. – should be treated conventionally as ready-mades and as elements of some kind of formal language, whose status depends on local artistic value (the use). The basic and right idea of Duchamp and Judd was that if an artist called something art, it was art (Judd regarded the terms "non-art", or "anti-art" as useless). If anyone argues otherwise, s/he is suggesting that the works themselves are art on the basis of their properties. But they are not.

In summary, it appeared that the formalism of the 1950s and 1960s was not based upon an empirical generalization, or common physical features of

11 J. Kosuth, *Art after Philosophy and After,* op. cit., p. 191.
12 Ibid. pp. 47-56.

art objects, but was merely an apriori definition of art. Formalism was an idea that had not originally resided in the material objects of art, because the intention of using a medium precedes the medium itself and determines its artistic status. Formalism was an idea that – as Sol LeWitt claimed in his "Paragraphs on Conceptual Art" (1967) – "becomes the machine that makes the art".[13]

Art work as an extensional expression

The absolutization of formal and generic problems was found to be misleading, resulting in decorative art, so it was replaced by the question: "What is the function, or the nature of art?" The question about the function went beyond the "physical-object-paradigm of art" (a term used by Terry Atkinson and Michael Baldwin) and an answer, it was thought, could be given only by the non-denotative conception of meaning advanced by Wittgenstsein, who claimed that "The meaning is the use". According to his instrumental-functional theory, language is a kind of instrument, and the meaning expressed by language is the realization of the communicative needs of the user. The meaning of an expression depends upon the way in which it is used, so that meaning cannot be found in any field of non-linguistic reality; it is produced by the very sign-creating function, by the linguistic behaviour. Kosuth – in his mosaic of quotes – places the less well-known views of such authors as Irving Marmer Copie, Torgny Torgnysson Segerstedt, and Witgenstein's trusted Finnish philosopher – Georg Henrik von Wright, whose thoughts supported him in his choice of the behavioral and functional orientation for his theory of meaning. Such a theory of meaning, neither associationist nor connotative, was perfectly suitable for the explanation of the fact that there can be various *private* codes and artistic languages. Art is simply the way in which the artist uses the term "art" or how he defines it. The nature and autonomy of art should not therefore be sought in the traditional synthetic function (mimetic, expressive, aesthetic-creative, formal), but in the work conceived as an analytical sentence e.g. as a tautology – "idea as idea". Kosuth cites Kant's distinction between the analytic and synthetic sentences in the formulation of Ayer. A sentence is analytical when its value depends only on the definitions of the symbols it contains. In contrast, a sentence is synthetic when its value is determined by the experiential facts. At the time he chose the analytical interpretation of art (to reject it after several years). At this stage of reflection he says that although the sentences of art are factual, they are linguistic in nature. He knows that he is comparing the

13 S. LeWitt, "Paragraphs on Conceptual Art" (1967), "Sentences on Conceptual Art" (1969), in: K. Stiles, P. Selz, ed., *Theories and Documents of Contemporary Art*, op. cit., pp. 822-827.

analyticity conditions of language and art which are not identical. Although he notes that there is an analogy here, his formulation ignores the obvious fact that in an analogy there is no univocal predication, and thus no ascertainment of identity as in the tautological formula "idea as idea". Kosuth too easily loses sight of the essential difference between analytical sentences and works of art. He ignores the possibility of establishing another analogy in the interpretation of art, because he believes that other options are usually irrelevant for works of art that are essentially tautologies: "Works of art are analytic propositions. That is, if viewed in their context – as art – they provide no information whatsoever on any matter of fact. A work of art is a tautology in that it is a presentation of the artist's intention, that is, he is saying that that particular work of art is art, which means is a definition of art. Thus, the fact that it is art is true a priori (which is what Judd means when he states that 'if someone calls it art, it is art')".[14]

Let us add that it may be held against Kosuth that – in describing the work of art as an analytical sentence – he sought support from I. A. Richards – British literary critic and philosopher of rhetoric – in whose opinion thinking is strictly metaphorical, and reasoning by analogy with the use of as is its essential part. Analogy is a causative link between thoughts because the meaning is formed only by the contexts constituting their causes, when – for example – they impart a generic status to a sign. To think of something is to view it as a genre (as such-and-such). An important role is played here by the functor *as*, enabling an act of comparing (analogizing, parallelizing, metaphorization), through which the mind can grasp something like an attractive trophy. Thus Kosuth's attitude does not seem consistent, but it is rather eclectic, or exploratory. It is difficult to speak about species or genres in the context of late Wittgenstein's language philosophy because such recognition is mediated by the denotational concept of meaning as a connotation of a name, denoting or designating some objects. Writing about an autonomous, a priori context of art, Kosuth – as a representative of the conceptual artists-analysts – modeled art on formal logic. Art is the self-definition of art and it may not go beyond its context for verification. Otherwise, if works of art were to be considered as synthetic propositions, and thus there would be a possibility of empirical verification of the truth or falsity of artistic statements, then art would get into serious difficulties in the future. Kosuth presents this argument basing on the reservations of Ayer. He identified the veracity of analytical statements – which compose a system a priori (e.g. geometry) – with consistency in a purely formal sense, while the truth of synthetic sentences – necessarily – with material consistency, since these sentences – or an empirical system made up of synthetic propositions – can be formally consistent

[14] J. Kosuth, *Art after Philosophy and After*, op. cit, p. 20.

and at the same time false, because they do not meet the material criteria set out by experience. Thus, the criterion of truth of analytical sentences is not sufficient to estimate the veracity of synthetic sentences. The interpretation of realism as synthetic deprives this art movement of the opportunity to establish a dialogue with the work of such artists as Malevich, Mondrian, Pollock, Reinhardt, early Rauschenberg, Johns, Lichtenstein, Warhol, Andre, Judd, Flavin, LeWitt, and Morris, whose works Kosuth interprets as analytical (proto- or conceptual) ones. This inability excludes realism from the orbit of art. Kosuth's argument also excludes expressionism. He suggests, under the influence of Ayer, that a synthetically understood expression would be only an exclamation, because pure expressionism – as a statement containing demonstrative symbols – could not express the truth of the original sentence. Kosuth views abstract expressionism as something different than an expression of the artist's psyche, for example such artist as Pollock, whose conceptual contribution to the development of art was that – instead of painting on the canvas hung on the wall – he had the idea of dripping on canvas placed on the floor. His self-expression may be of interest only to someone who knew him personally, but it ceases to be valid in the a priori context of art.

This paradoxical game with art – in which the artist, such as the ambivalent Richard Serra, does not determine whether what he does is art – only confirms that the nominative function, performed by artists and art institutions is constitutive for art. Serra himself deprives art of its empirical grounding, and thus of its synthetic character. His conviction that art appears as an empirical phenomenon isn't sustainable in confrontation with Ayer's conviction that there are no empirical sentences which would be undoubted, because only such are tautologies. According to this philosopher, the sentences grounded in experience have only the status of hypotheses, and those cannot be finally verified since verification is possible only on the basis of other empirical statements, which are after all only premises for other hypotheses. Therefore, there are no definitive synthetic sentences. The non-conclusivity of synthetic discourse also undermines the dogmatic conclusivity of the non-conceptual theory of art, reinterpreting and re-evaluating the earlier endeavours and movements of art. And even Kosuth goes so far as to concur even with Reinhardt's provocative statement that "Art is always dead, and a 'living' art is a deception".[15] Thus the assertion – that art draws strength from life, from reality, from the era, bringing up the real problems and questions of human existence – is meaningless. This often happens, but it isn't a proper criterion of being art. Although we use geometry to measure the physical space, its theorems (actually various geometries) do not apply to the physical, but are the consequence of

15 Ibid. p. 22.

certain axioms. We simply provide a physical interpretation to these theorems – which remain indifferent to the question of their empirical truth or applicability. They can only be considered from the point of view of purely formal veracity (consistency).

This becomes more evident today when civilization radically accelerates and breaks with the standardization of the visual sphere, which leads to an enrichment of experience. Kosuth rightly notes that art does not have much to say in the visual sphere. This is why one would not expect that the experiments in the domains of painting and sculpture would be able to rival television or other achievements of technology in intensifying the visual experience. These aesthetic needs can be also met by kitsch. Despite this hypertrophy of the visual, the art which considers that its natural or primary function is its use, which is free from restrictions imposed by the philosophical assumptions and assessments – may retain its unique character, its civilizational validity, enforceability, and thus vitality.

While logic, mathematics, or science can be practically used, and this does not interfere with their aspirations, the purpose of art is "art for art's sake". The attraction of art does not lie in what it uses and how it is used itself, but in the way in which it uses forms. That can be seen even in the differences of using the simplest forms in the works of the above- mentioned artists. What really matters is the conceptual invention – the ingenuity of an priori use of something in the context of art. Neither can one overlook the basic concept of using different objects to generate art. These objects may not be unique or have formal (physical, perceptual) properties that allow them to be classified as objects of art. The distinction between art objects and other objects is not easy, and the relations between them are ambiguous and not conclusive, but they are all considered – in accordance with Wittgenstein's theory – as involving family resemblances.

Kosuth does not see the difficulties that arise when on the one hand he talks about an autonomous, a priori context of art, and on the other about art as a philosophical *tabula rasa*. When the present author asked him – at the beginning of 1994 at the Center for Contemporary Art in Warsaw – whether the a priori nature of art must be considered as the a priori laws of sense in the grammar of Husserl, he did not take up this issue and did not give a binding answer. This shows that in his model of art there is tension between apriorism and aposteriorism, essentialism and conventionalism / antiessentialism.

Art as a game and text – against stylistic conceptualism

The implementation of Kosuth's program encountered serious difficulties, which he had to mention in the second part of his *Art after Philosophy*. The

selection of the quotes from his favorite artists (Duchamp, Reinhardt, Judd, and Sol LeWitt), on overcoming the hegemony of painting and sculpture (in fact conceptually dependent on painting because it repeats its fictional character[16]), ignoring the flourishing of formalist art (which had produced the complex, highly specialized, yet showing symptoms of exhaustion, abstract painting of the 20th century), rejection of the stereotype of an intuitive painter in favour of the image of an intelligent artist, similar to a poet or writer, all this demonstrates that Kosuth wanted to consolidate the position of conceptualism as contemporary art. In his unpublished reflections on poetry, he shows that not only painting and sculpture, but also poetry is bankrupt, as demonstrated by the formalization of its material in the form of concrete poetry.[17] Kosuth did not want to be associated with it, although some of his conceptual works look like a new kind of painting making use of typography. As he said in an interview with Jeanne Siegel, he wanted to avoid the accusation of cultivating a simplistic and pseudo-avant-garde formal condensation. For Kosuth as a conceptualist artist there are no better symptoms of the decay of art than when the traditional conceptual poets begin to focus on the physical material. But the current crisis or exhaustion of art – the result of formalism – also affects Conceptualism, because – as Kosuth notes – this term is applied to phenomena which have practically nothing to do with Conceptual art.

Conceptual art – instead of being an introduction to the analysis of the foundations of art – was becoming a trend similar to a style. Thus Kosuth strongly opposed any attempt to establish stylistic conceptualism, which did not focus on the conceptual – immaterial – sphere, but on the material – negative – aspect of art. The use of objects – evident in Bainbridge's or Hurrell's concepts and investigations – could not be the most important aspect of these works. The idea was to distinguish between the proper Conceptual works and the superficial, formalist, or even anti-formalist works, with an artificial, accidental link to Conceptualism, such as the works of Robert Morris, Richard Serra, Keith Sonnier, and Eva Hesse. Kosuth also questioned in 1970 the conceptual status of the artists too attached to the material aspect of art, such as Robert Barry and Lawrence Weiner, with whom he was previously associated (on the occasion of the project of Seth Sigelaub[18]), and as Douglas Huebler, who used the media instrumentally for documentation, but nevertheless this photographic documentation relates to his sculptures, which are his main message. In contrast, Kosuth connects his pure Conceptualism worked out in

16 Ibid. pp.89-92.
17 Ibid. pp.35-36.
18 Ibid. p. 81.

1966 in New York with the works from the same year made by such British artists as Terry Atkinson and Michael Baldwin (the colleagues of David Bainbridge and Harold Hurrell, also members of the Art & Language group). This group also includes On Kawara, because the wall-to-wall Japanese artist created highly conceptual work already in 1964, Christine Kozllov, who made some movies since 1966, and the works of Iain Baxter, James Byars, Frederic Barthelme, Bernard Venet, Hanne Darboven, the books of Edward Ruscha, including some works by Bruce Nauman, Barry Flanagan, Bruce McLean, Richard Long, Steven Kaltenbach, and Ian Wilson. These artists are the elite of Conceptual art which flourished from 1964 to 1969, accompanied by less obvious attitudes and works of the artists close to Conceptualism, to name some conceptual themes in the works of Franz Erhard Walther, Mel Bochner, Jean Dibbets, Eric Orr, Allen Ruppersberg, Dennis Oppenheim, Donald Burgy, Saul Ostrov, Adrian Piper, and Eugenia Butler Perpetua. He also mentioned briefly the works of John Baldessari. Unsurprisingly, owing to these very harsh judgments he did not win many friends in the art world. He confessed a year later in an interview with Jeanne Siegel that the relations between himself and the Conceptual artists were quite hostile, and he was interested in only a few of them. A lot of his American friends – such as Robert Barry, Lawrence Weiner, and Douglas Huebler – cannot understand his support for the Art & Language group in England (especially for Atkinson, Baldwin, and Charles Harrison). He himself inclines towards a cleaner, objective, theoretical version of Conceptualism, for which there is no understanding in the United States, except for the three artists based in New York: the Australian Ian Burn and the two Englishmen – Mel Ramsden and Roger Cutforth.

These divisions and rearrangements clearly indicate that Kosuth attempted to radicalize the discourse of Conceptualism and free it from the undue influence of the option associated with Sol LeWitt, recognized by Terry Atkinson as a groundbreaking artist at the helm of the constitution and consolidation of the Conceptual movement. Kosuth shared LeWitt's belief that art is not an illustration of philosophy, although he was undecided whether to separate himself completely from the influence of other formal disciplines (especially logic). However, it is clear that he wished to downplay the formalist, minimalist genesis of Conceptualism, counterbalancing the conceptual tradition with his own genealogy (starting from his *Leaning Glass*, 1965), therefore with the influences of Duchamp, Jasper Johns and Robert Morris, Ad Reinhardt and Donald Judd. He also advanced suggestions of the movement's neo-Dadaist afiliations. The confirmation of Kosuth's belief in this transgressive tradition – born of artistic dirt, because Duchamp was born of the impurity introduced by Picasso – is his insistence on the validity of such neo-Dadaist concepts as Robert Rauschenberg's *Erased DeKooning Drawning or Portrait of*

Iris Clert, and some works of Yves Klein and Piero Manzoni. It was in this context of the progressive internalization of Duchamp's legacy, that Kosuth placed his first tautological works – based on dictionary definitions, whose aim was to present an idea by de-objectifying an object.

Kosuth's neo-Dadaist depreciation of the medium as a negative aspect of art and his transfer of emphasis onto conceptual exploration, directly derived from philosophical inquiry. Highlighting the concept of a game, he tried to prevent the return of formalism to the Conceptual project and consequently to prevent its collapse. Therefore, he argued that the essence of art resides neither in painting, nor sculpture, but in the *investigation of art*. Kosuth goes even further in this argument by concluding that the function of Conceptualism is not only the creation of sentences on art (concepts), but working out the proposals for investigating all the implications of the term "art". Thus a conceptual artist goes beyond the framework of conceptual art, investigating the nature and function of art as such, its meanings, or the usage of the term. According to Kosuth, who refers to the linguistic turn, the radically understood autonomy of art and the critical independence of artists are specific to the American version of Conceptualism, and especially to the works of Kosuth himself. Although the Americans share the general views of their British colleagues, they differ in the selection of tools and methodologies useful in attaining the general objectives.[19]

It is worth remembering that the term "context" appeared at the start of Kosuth's deliberations. However, the use of this term was limited to the expression "the context of art", suggesting that art provides a self-contained context that somehow exists in itself and for itself. Only by this assumption Kosuth was able to develop further his reflections on the function of art. The occasion was the exhibition in Turin in 1970 accompanied by the multilingual publication *Function*, *Funzione*, *Funcion*, *Fonction*, *Funktion*.[20] As the title suggests, Kosuth focused in this book solely on the investigation of the concept of function. He emphasized that art exists only as a context, i.e. that it has no other properties, which excludes the understanding of art as a subject (object) or a structure; but the final and crucial context is not limited. The functioning of a set of sentences within another set makes their borders temporary and arbitrary, and the whole depends on the pursued objective. The functioning of art as a set (a corpus or a body) of sentences is viewed from two perspectives: an internal and external one. Because of the nature of the subject, the final and crucial context is unknown (except for the personal terms used), and it cannot remain in relation to any iconic wholes such as – for example – a gestalt. Thus,

19 Ibid. pp. 37-40.
20 Ibid. pp. 41-42.

"art as art" can have no – implied or real – relation to any mental object or a conceptual work of art, but only a (direct or implied) relation to a succession of investigations. Art – in the formula "Art as idea as idea" (correctly "as (an) idea") – operates like a game whose participants change the functions and the meanings of the ideas, which are non-quantifiable and non-determinable.

Kosuth contributed to the civilizational process of radical linguistic change, which rendered realism nad've. In the journal published by the New York School of Visual Arts in 1970, he quoted the views of Edward Sapir.[21] The conviction that man is in direct contact with the objective world and social reality is an illusion, because this image is always mediated by the language of the community in which he lives and the language in which he expresses his worldview. Language is not something accidental, but it is an indelible medium in which human cognition takes place. Therefore, the so-called real world is always founded upon the subconscious predispositions of language which affect the choices of different world interpretations, so it depends on the collective use of language. Language is also the means of expression in art – both in traditional and in modernist art, in which the exploration of the means has become an end in itself, in order to find new uses of media or artistic languages. A consensus has emerged as regards the exhaustion of the language of traditional art, becoming unreliable and unrealistic. Today each artist creates his own language, undermining the basis of art education. Such actions often border on the ridiculous – on fraud or parody. But the art schools, at least in the beginning, force the students to master the traditional language of art, which is treated almost as a moral obligation for the future adepts of art. The students as embryonic artists need to learn to ask questions not only about the *how*, but above all about the *why* of art – as Kosuth wrote in one of his unpublished texts.[22] The artists appreciated by Kosuth knew *how* to create art, before they went on to reflect on *why* they should do it. The modification of artistic education, which Kosuth has proposed, would consist in its treatment as a process of reading, and the school as a *library* where an instructor would suggest what *books* the students should select, focusing their attention – taking care not only of the standard education but, first and foremost, of their individual development. Its consequence would be the consideration of art works as analytic sentences and art as a self-definition of an artistic act. Kosuth has told Jeanne Siegel in the abovementioned interview that the relation of art to cultural meanings is abstract, and art itself acquires meanings not in relation to the world, but to a linguistic system. Therefore, Conceptualist abstraction of reality, society, and culture is

21 Ibid. pp. 43-45.
22 Ibid. pp. 79-82.

greater and more interesting artistically than – for example – Cubism's abstraction of nature.

It seems, however, that – already in 1970, at the time of his interview with Jeanne Siegel – Kosuth began to realize that the opening of art to various linguistic systems generating different meanings means an introduction of many heterogeneous contexts into the autonomous context of art. These contexts are necessarily accidental (contextually contingent). Nevertheless, Kosuth still abstained from considering them as a proper matter of art, ignoring the relationships between the elements that generate the randomness of art. He preferred to manipulate relationships between relationships. He did not want to rely on objects, but like Mondrian to denaturalize matter and to explore only relationships.

With this purpose in mind, Kosuth selected and compiled the views of the Conceptual artists in order to give the readers the conceptual narration as a mosaic of important quotes. This is because – as he wrote in another text in the catalogue published by the Museum of Modern Art in 1970 – the fundamental objective of Conceptual art is the understanding of the linguistic nature of all sentences of past and present art, regardless of the elements used to construct them. Kosuth did not want to be limited in his conceptual choices to single sentences or explorations that are part of art works, because he considered art as a whole in view of the fact that it exists only conceptually.[23]

Some consequences of the linguistic turn

The linguistic turn in Conceptual art was primarily a symptom of the exhaustion of the will to artistically objectify aesthetic passions (aesthetic *impetus*), and thus a manifestation of de-objectification, de-localization, and de-aesthetization of art as a finished rational product useful for religion or the state (what Kasimir Malevich wanted purportedly to avoid). Kosuth offered Conceptual art as a text which was an open set of different possibilities – aiming at the disorientation and reintegration of the reader presented with a certain collection of utterances, nothing more than a design for a potential artwork and at the same time an expenditure of energy – a concrete, sensual trace of a re-thinking of art history. It was simultaneously a manifestation of dis-continuation of the ergonomics of earlier art and a piece of multi-layer, condensed, hybrid information, resisting its categorization as an artistic form (an art object) and a market commodity. This quasi-artistic piece was intended, first and foremost, as a sketch ignoring chronology, a set of theorems, and as an aid in teaching students. Art as text

23 Ibid. pp. 73-74.

would free up talent manifested in the creation of new original theorems based on popular demand. Pleasure – although no longer purely aesthetic, and even derived from contesting aesthetics – the paradox observed by Barnett Newman – came from the understanding of the medium and the recognition of deep relationship between the quotes, from the acceptance of art as a game with a vague status. The artist found it difficult to control the recipients, since he himself got out of control – which he had triumphantly announced in the catalogue *Conceptual Art and Conceptual Aspects* (published by the New York Cultural Center in 1970).[24] Kosuth justified the thesis that art exists only conceptually by a proposal or rather a hint of an unpublished text dating from that same year. This is because man exists – perhaps – only conceptually.[25]

In *Art after Philosophy*, the conviction that thinking is fundamentally metaphorical was the basis for the functional and instrumental conception of meaning as the way of using expressions. Soon, however, Paul Ricouer argued, in *The Rule of Metaphor: Multi-Disciplinary Studies in the Creation of Meaning in Language* (1975) that substitution theory was too narrow and could not be a satisfactory explanation for the existence of metaphor, because it could not be reduced to a deviation of reasoning by analogy. Metaphorization does not consist simply in the handling of notions (names or ideas), it is a rhetorical and quasi-cognitive (heuristic) statement assuming a paradoxical intuition of the similar in the dissimilar, which is indicated by hermeneutic theory of tension, more general than the theory of substitution. This is due perhaps to the fact that in the tautological model of art we have to do with an erroneous modelling attribution, with the tension between identity and difference. Thereby, the tautological formula "art as idea as idea" was only an unsuccesful attempt to adapt conceptism to the neo-positivist or analytical paradigm of knowledge that rejects heterogeneity of concepts (generated by *ingenium* or wit) as a basis of language or acts of speech. Similarly misguided was Kosuth's crusade against philosophy in which – for example – he repeated sceptical (also philosophical) arguments put forward in support of his criticism of realism.

In the early 1970s, Kosuth thus began to look for a different model of art. In his (*Notes*) *On an 'Anthropologized Art'* (1974) and in *Artist as Anthropologist* (1975) he clearly rejected the general validity of the tautological model in favour of an anthropological model of art, and went on to try and reclaim the profundity of art, as well as overcome the opacity of the modernist practice. To him, Conceptualism was just an ethno-logic of the Western civilization. He regarded the tautological model, like any other model assuming the autonomy of art, and more generally any theory, independently of ideology and social

24 Ibid. pp. 57-71.
25 Ibid. pp. 77-78.

practice. In this return to reality, the model of anthropological art rejects the uncritical idea of human reality being simply imitated in the reflected act of semiosis (word as a mirror). The artist, adopting the attitude of an engaged anthropologist, does not contemplate (speculate), but inwardly participates in the reality under investigation. An artistic act is the implosion Mel Ramsden talked about, an implosion of a reconstituted socio-culturally mediated overview. Thus the retrieval of transparency to the language of art is not a return to a logico-semiotic interpretation of the work of art which eliminates the verbiage of a concept, but an understanding of that work as a not fully conscious symptom, as an event (ontologization of the artistic language), and with regard to its context it is related to a hermeneutical approach to which Kosuth would later clearly refer. The texts *Within the Context: Modernism and Critical Practice* (1977), *Seven Remarks For You to Consider While Viewing / Reading This Exhibition* (1978/79) and *Notes of Cathexis* (1981) were devoted to the investigation of the conditions in which the meaning-making in art could be achieved. They fit in with the thesis that artistic activity should reflect upon the hermeneutic restoration of meaning while denouncing any attempts to construct a model of art as an autonomous field and to articulate in their place a model of art whose purpose should be to work out proper means of revealing the mechanisms of culture. Following this conceptual evolution of Kosuth's views, we are struck by the radical discontinuation between the neo-Positivistic and neo-Marxist or hermeneutic inspirations, although this change looks more like the difference between the implosion of the first and second Wittgenstein. It seems to be coherent with the theory of linguistic games. In his model of anthropological art Kosuth makes use of the conception of culture as a game. Art is one of the linguistic games played within the domain of culture. The property of each game is its collective character. The "collective consciousness" makes the rules of a given game to be accepted, it ensures their credibility.

Thus, Kosuth himself has questioned the credibility of the tautological model of art in which he compared the artifacts to analytical sentences (i.e. to sentences formed by means of extensional functors whose logical value depends upon the veracity or extension of the compounded sentences). Jan Świdziński was his positive critic, comparing artworks to sentences comprising intensional functors (whose veracity depends upon the contents replacing the variables).[26] In Świdziński's view the notion of intensionality, so disconcerting

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26 J. Świdziński, *Art as Contextual Art*, Sellem Galerie St. Petri – Archive of Experimental Art, Lund 1976. See: K. Piotrowski, *Art as Contextual Art. Jan Świdziński about the Coexistence of Cultural Absolutism and Relativism*, "Exit" 1996, no 2(26), pp. 1220-1231; Idem, *Hommage à Jan Świdziński. Próba wprowadzenia do 'Sztuki jako sztuki kontekstualnej'*, "Sztuka i Dokumentacja" 2009, no 1, pp. 5-21.

to the logicians, was better at explaining the character of artistic activity than the tautological formula which does not increase our knowledge of reality while pretending to be true in any world. Thus, Conceptualism has shown not only some radical consequences of the linguistic turn in art or in culture in general, but also its limit, i.e. contextualism in art and in epistemology.[27] The contextual return to non-linguistic reality allows for the possibility that different contexts set different epistemic standards in which it is difficult or impossible to formulate skeptical arguments of Kosuth's anti-realism generated by the then linguistic turn.

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LINGWISTYCZNY ZWROT W KONCEPTUALIZMIE I PO NIM (streszczenie)

Podstawą jednego z najbardziej spektakularnych zwrotów w sztuce XX wieku była lingwistyczna reorientacja filozofii, której skrajnym przejawem była niedenotacyjna koncepcja znaczenia Ludwiga Wittgensteina. Jej aplikacji dokonał tzw. analityczny konceptualizm, który w tym lingwistycznym zwrocie daremnie usiłował przezwyciężyć heterogeniczny charakter konceptyzmu, z którego notabene się wywodził. Świadczy o tym, zwłaszcza u Josepha Kosutha, pomieszanie neopozytywistycznej inspiracji z motywem filozofii języka naturalnego, który podkreśla doniosłość metaforyzacji i myślenia z pomocą funktora as [podobnie jak]. Niniejszy tekst przedstawia proces tej niezbornej redukcji sztuki do języka, ukazując niektóre jej konsekwencje oraz jej wyraźną granicę, jaką stał się kontekstualizm.

Słowa kluczowe: ekstensja, intensja, konceptyzm, konceptualizm, kontekstualizm, lingwistyczny zwrot

Art Inquiry. Recherches sur les arts 2015, vol. XVII
ISSN 1641-9278

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IS IT JUST A METAPHYSICAL TURN?

Abstract: The paper introduces the phenomenological definition of metaphysics in art and outlines the relationship between metaphysics and 20th century art, suggesting possible "escape from metaphysics," and the reactions to this suggestion within the philosophical turn announcing "the end of art" and within the so-called "metaphysical turn". As the illustration of those "turns", the author analyzes the installations of Miroslaw Balka, James Turrell and Bill Viola. The analysis leads to the conclusion about the possible connection of the described works with the various "turns" and to the hypothesis that the methodologies of the "turns" in fact seek to unveil the metaphysics from which art had tried to escape. The metaphysics transcends the various turns. This confirms the philosophical truth that "there is no escape from metaphysics," pointing out at the same time that metaphysics in art cannot be reduced to a "turn".

Keywords: contemporary art, metaphysics, escape from metaphysics, end of art, metaphysical turn, visual turn

Phenomenologists associated with the tradition of classical philosophy believe that metaphysics in art enables it to discover ideas or participate in the world of "ur-phenomena".[1] It is essential for art and determines its identity, while philosophy just talks about it. It could happen, however, that art may be metaphysical in its essence, but may also explore metaphysics (e.g. in religious art).

1 The world of ideas is not created by the art. It is only unveiled, uncovered. See: W. Stróżewski, O metafizyczności w sztuce [About Metaphysics in Art] [in:] idem, Wokół piękna. Szkice z estetyki [Around Beauty. Essays on Aesthetics], Universitas, Kraków 2002, p. 93-134; M. Scheler, Metafizyka i sztuka [Metaphysics and Art], original: Metaphysik und Kunst [in:] idem, Pisma z antropologii filozoficznej i teorii wiedzy [Writings of Philosophical anthropology and the Theory of Knowledge], transl. S. Czerniak and A. Węgrzecki, PWN, Warszawa 1987, p. 430-461.

However, in the art of the twentieth century, it is possible to observe an attitude that may be called "escape from metaphysics" (only to a certain extent similar to the situation in philosophy). Although it sometimes referred to the case of art focused on metaphysics (especially religious art) or criticized the understanding of metaphysics, the term was often automatically associated with the more general rejection by art of its metaphysical essence.[2] Rather than on ideas or ur-phenomena, art began to concentrate on the study of the subconscious, ideological and political criticism, or on superficial, but intense experience (the intensity, however, could be also a provocation, deliberate rejection of the traditions of decorum[3]).

One response to this situation could be seen in the philosophical turn announcing "the end of art" (because art became a philosophy reaching its fulfillment as described in Hegelian thinking).[4] Such art was then able to philosophize about metaphysics because philosophy treats the reflection of metaphysics as one of its core tasks. The philosophical turn of "the end of art" would thus mean an intellectual synthesis of art metaphysical in its essence and art on metaphysics.

Another response may be called a "metaphysical turn". It is manifested in some artists' and curators' conscious turn to the values of classicism. For example in 2007 in Gdańsk, Donald Kuspit presented his exhibition "New Old

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2 In a sense, at least from the time of Marcel Duchamp art reflected the philosophical discussion about the possibility to escape from metaphysics identified with positivism on the one hand and Nietzsche and Heidegger on the other (although in the postmodern thinking inability to escape from metaphysics is similar in Derrida's philosophy and Duchamp's ready mades, see: T. D. Tucker, Derridada: Duchamp as Readymade Deconstruction, Lexington Books 2010). It is also possible to discuss the relationship of conceptual art with the early analytical philosophy (skeptical towards metaphysics) but finally conceptual art and minimalism show thats an escape from metaphysics is impossible (see: P. Lamarque, Work and Object: Explorations in the Metaphysics of Art, Oxford University Press 2012). The specific case of such a situation took place in Poland after the political transformation at the turn of the century. See the exhibition *Irreligia* curated by Kazimierz Piotrowski and Włodzimierz Majewski in Atelier 340 Museum in Brussels in 2002 or on the other hand (as a kind of reaction) „Catholics in Kronika" in Gallery in Bytom in 2010 curated by Stanisław Ruksza (see: Ł. Białkowski, Rozbierany twister. „Katolicy w Kronice" [Strip Twister. Catholics in Kronika], „Obieg", http://www.obieg.pl/recenzje/17839 (17. 05. 2013). See also: A. Żmijewski, Trembling Bodies, Conversations with Artists, Galeria Kronika & DAAD Berlin, 2011 or I. Kowalczyk, Ciało i władza. Polska sztuka krytyczna lat 90. [Body and Power. Polish Critical Art of 90', SIC, Warszawa 2003.

3 See: A. Draguła, Bluźnierstwo. Między grzechem a przestępstwem [Blasphemy. Between Sin and Crime], Więź, Warszawa 2013.

4 About the so called „end of art" see: A.C. Danto, Świat sztuki [Artwold] [in:] idem, Świat sztuki. Pisma z filozofii sztuki [The Artworld. Writings on the Philosophy of Art], transl. L. Sosnowski, WUJ, Kraków 2006, p. 42, and Koniec sztuki [The End of Art], ibid., p. 214 Original: The Artworld (essay, 1964); After the End of Art (1997); The Abuse of Beauty (2003).

Masters" illustrating his belief in the return of contemporary art to classical standards, idealism, the concept of beauty, universal humanism, and spirituality.[5] This met with a negative reception from the critics as a defense of quietism in art or a promotion of capitalist, commercialized, expensive art. Nevertheless, the modern revival of classicism (or the discovery of its persistence) has become popular. The presence of spiritual elements in art is still appreciated by artists and theorists not only in traditional religious art, but also in abstract art (today not so radical in its non-figuration), thanks to the deep spiritual need going beyond aesthetics.[6] In Polish art even the artists identified with the radical, controversial "critical art" began to appreciate the value of traditional, classical, "fine arts" methods and spiritual sensitivity, as was the case with Paweł Althamer.[7]

Finally, the term "metaphysical turn" appears in the context of the poetic search for meaning, as poetry still seems to be the most obvious artistic conduit for carrying such content. Metaphysical content, philosophical reflection, sensory experience, and poetry, with their aesthetic bias towards metaphysics, meet in the interpretation of visual arts. The "archaeological" discovery of one's identity or the "timelessness" concealed in our heritage and memory, in facts and objects, in the participation in reality but at the same time transcending it, in the exploration of forgotten ideas and archetypes, alternative critical and social metaphysics may be encountered in the work of Zbigniew Libera or Grzegorz Klaman.[8] It is worth noting that the art of the "metaphysical turn"

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5 See: New Masters, Subliminal Projects, http://www.subliminalprojects.com/main/past/56/new-masters/; Jacob Collins, http://www.flickr.com/photos/gandalfsgallery/5823429999/.; R. Piotrowska, M. Bochenek, Zgalwanizowani Mistrzowie w Oliwie [Electroplated Masters in Oliwa], http://www.obieg.pl/recenzje/676 (30. 08. 2015).

6 See: R. Rogozińska, W stronę Golgoty. Inspiracje pasyjne w sztuce polskiej w latach 1970-1999 [Towards Golgotha. Passion Inspirations in Polish Art in the Years 1970-1999], St. Adalbertus Library, Poznań, 2002; Renata Rogozińska, Ikona w sztuce XX wieku [Icon in the Art of the 20th Century], WAM, Kraków 2009; Sacrum i sztuka [Sacrum and Art], ed. N. Cieślińska, ZNAK, Kraków 1989 and G. Sztabiński, Poza estetyzacją. Problem duchowości w sztuce współczesnej, „Sacrum et Decorum. Materials and Studies on The History of Sacred Art" 2009, no. 2, p. 128.

7 See the conversation with Ł. Ronduda in: Stach Szabłowski, Wystawa, którą kochasz nienawidzić, część II „Co widać. Polska sztuka dzisiaj" w Muzeum Sztuki Nowoczesnej [The Exhibition You Love to Hate, part 2 „What Is Seen. Polish Art Today" in the Museum of Contemporary Art], 08.02.2014, http://obieg.pl/rozmowy/31299.

8 D. Kuryłek, Ewa M. Tatar, Teraz jest teraz. Artyści i gdańska Wyspa Spichrzów [Now is Now. The Artists and the Granary Island in Gdansk], http://artmuseum.pl/pl/publikacje-online/teraz-jest-teraz-artysci-i-gdanska-wyspa (30. 08. 2015); Ł. Ronduda, „Tożsamość tranzytowa – życie i twórczość Zbigniewa Libery wlatach 1981–2006" [Transitional Identity – Life and Work of Zbigniew Libera in 1981-2006], [in:] Libera, ed. Dorota Monkiewicz, exhibition catalogue, Warszawa 2009, p. 26; *Metafizyka społeczna. Esencjalny kwartalnik na rzecz zbliżenia estetyki z egzystencją* [Social Metaphysics. Essential Quarterly for Rapprochement of Aesthetics to Existence] 1992, no. 1.

assigns a special role to experience. Such experience is not only intense, but immersive,[9] overwhelming, and intersensory, as observed by theorists and analyzed by somaesthetics or synaesthetic studies.[10] But art seems to transcend the philosophy of experience, because it demands an opening to metaphysics which is not just an alternative, intensive reality. It is something different from reality, although it is the reality provided by experience which can give us access to the level of metaphysics. It is the special role of the experience, transcending its own philosophy, in the artistic "metaphysical turn".

On the other hand, are the phenomena described above just a matter of a "metaphysical turn", one of the many others, standing next to the "language turn", the "visual turn", or the philosophical "end of art"? Perhaps the following examples, which fit in with the search for metaphysics in contemporary art, will show the real significance of the situation described as a "metaphysical turn".

Space and darkness. The need for metaphysics

How it is by Miroslaw Bałka was exhibited in 2009 at the Tate Gallery in London, in the former Turbine Hall.[11] It was a huge steel container 13 meters high, 10 meters wide and 30 meters long. The container seen from a distance seemed to be a work associated with simple and monotonous monumental minimalism of the second avant-garde (e.g. Richard Serra, *Berlin Block 'For Charlie Chaplin'*, 1978).

The audience walked up a ramp into the container, completely dark and muted by black velvet. It was no longer the "silence of the image", but its loss along with the loss of light and perception.[12] Light, this product of physical

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9 The aesthetic category of immersion describes being absorbed, engaged and embraced during the perception of an artwork or, especially in connection with virtual reality, "the state of consciousness where an immersant's awareness of physical self is diminished or lost by being surrounded in an engrossing total environment , see: Immersion (virtual reality), https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Immersion_(virtual_reality) (30. 08. 2015) and also J. H. Seo, Aesthetics of Immersion in Interactive Immersive Installation : Phenomenological Case Study, http://isea2015.org/proceeding/submissions/ISEA2015_submission_237.pdf (30.08.2015).

10 About somaesthetics as a philosophical discipline involving the use, appreciation, and knowledge of one's own body, see: R. Shusterman, Somaesthetics:A Disciplinary Proposal, „The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism", Vol. 57, No. 3, pp. 299-313.

11 See: K. Majewska, Skala. Mirosław Bałka w Tate Modern [Scale. Mirosław Bałka in Tate Modern] „Arteon" 2009, no. 11 (115), pp. 6-9.

12 See: H.-G. Gadamer, O zamilknięciu obrazu [About the Silence of an Image], transl. J. Margański [in:] Estetyka w świecie [Aesthetics in the World], ed. M. Gołaszewska, vol. 2, Jagiellonian University Press, Kraków 1986, pp. 55-62 (original.: Vom Verstummen des Bildes, 1965). Rudolf Arnheim in his psychological theory pointed out that the function of light is to illuminate the darkness and to create the space, Levinas (in accordance with Plato) wrote that „seeing in the light [...] allows you to stand in front of the "semblance" of

radiation, physiology of vision and work of the mind now remained only in the mind – in memory or in longing for seeing and restoring the power of the senses and balance. Inside the container people were lost in darkness and silence, isolated completely from the others and from the world. The feelings of loneliness and fear in captivity, isolation, alienation corresponded with the symbolism of emptiness and darkness so different from light.[13]

The work could also bring to mind the mystical experience of "the dark night of the soul", the darkness of God's silence, a well-known experience of St. John of the Cross.[14] Bałka himself used the title to direct attention toward the existential skepticism of Samuel Beckett. *How It Is* is a novel containing a recapitulation of life carried out by the "barely there" and muttering narrator, mired in endless mud and only intermittently meeting a companion.[15]

Although for Beckett it is a hopeless situation, that grim, dark and "dirty" vision was sometimes interpreted in the context of a purgatory (also essential for St. John of the Cross' "dark night"), paradoxically reminding us about the desire of purification. Therefore, on the one hand, in Bałka's work the total darkness of the interior, the terrifying emptiness, the disappearance of the image and the loss of the senses, could evoke the metaphysics of evil. On the other hand, as the visitors are always aware that there is a way out, this installation inspired by Beckett showed how lonely isolation, the sense of oppression, the understanding of determination can be purifying and opening experience. Opening us to an image independent of physics, the senses and the mind. The experience of the metaphysics of the image would be enabled here not by

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nothingness, which is emptiness and recognize objects as if at their source, deriving them from oblivion"), the light is to master the darkness (related to the immensity) in the Bible. See: R. Arnheim, Art and Visual Perception: A Psychology of the Creative Eye, University of California Press 2004 (orig. 1954); E. Lévinas, Całość i nieskończoność. Esej o zewnętrzności [Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority], transl. M. Kowalska, PWN, Warszawa 2002 (orig. 1961), p. 223. Abot the „loss" of an image, see: J. Ranciere, Estetyka jako polityka [Aesthetics as Politics], transl. Julian Kutyła and Paweł Mościcki, „Krytyka Polityczna" Press, Warszawa 2007, p. 43.

13 The utter emptiness is left to God, Who alone can create ex nihilo (see: John Paul II, List do artystów [Letter to Artists], http://www.opoka.org.pl/biblioteka/W/WP/jan_pawel_ii/listy/do_artystow_04041999.html (03. 04. 2012). In the ancient tradition Parmenides denied the existence of emptiness. For Democritus, infinite void has sense for man only as an opposition and space for existence. As the arché - beginning it usually turns out to be filled with the most primary matter: air, water, fire ... Aristotle believed that nature abhors a vacuum (horror vacui). See eg. Stanisław Mrówczyński, Krótka historia pustki - pociągająca próżnia [A Brief History of Emptiness - Attractive Vacuum], „Polityka", 1997, no. 20, http://www.ujk.edu.pl/ifiz/pl/files/mrowczynski/proznia.html. (03.04.2012).

14 See: Dark Night of the Soul, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dark_Night_of_the_Soul (30. 08. 2015).

15 See: How It Is, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/How_It_Is (16.03.2012).

perception of light (elementary for any image) or perfect harmony. The metaphysics would be evoked "inversely", through the experience of what is absent and through the understanding that one needs the Other as an image needs light. The essence of the metaphysics of the Other is proper comprehension of the cognitive role of one's own senses. Understanding thanks to intensive, overwhelming experience, but also thanks to literary allusions and poetic inversion that the ultimate essence of sensory experience is the unveiling of the level of metaphysics. In Bałka's work the senses get to know the emptiness and the desire of light, the mind prompts the role of the world as its given heritage. However, the universal "replenishment"[16] of human identity gives only the Other whose metaphysical encounter transcends any other experience and enables the realization of ideas.

Light. About metaphysics

It may be worth comparing this work with the installation *Bridget's Bardo* (*Ganzfeld Piece*, 2009) by James Turrell. In the museum in Wolfsburg James Turrell presented a space of light in an interior of 700 m^2 and 11 meters high.[17] After seeing from the dark vestibule a rectangle resembling a flat surface of a monochromatic image in the style of color field painting (but illuminated), the visitor could surprisingly enter the rectangle (which required him to overcome his feeling of insecurity), to find himself in a room with initially illegible limits, entirely filled with intense light of varying color (blue, various shades of pink, violet, carmine, red). After some time, the visitors' eyes could distinguish the walls of this "viewing space" and a walking ramp tapered downwards. Walking down he gradually reduced his distance to the brightest opposite wall. When he came closer to it, the wall turned out to be another "sensing" space.

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16 Hans-Georg Gadamer has distinguished „complement" (related to the sensation), „fulfillment" (evoking perhaps concretization), and „replenishment" (Auffüllen) in which „ any opposition between thought and being, artist and recipient disappears" and that was is a result of research and exploitation of the own self acquires a universal dimension, because „everybody who enters the orbit of an artwork is allowed to encounter the true myself", see: H.-G. Gadamer, Koniec sztuki? Od heglowskiej nauki o przeszłościowym charakterze sztuki do dzisiejszej antysztuki [The End of Art? From the Hegelian Doctrine of the Past Nature of Art to Today's Anti-Art] [in:] idem, Dziedzictwo Europy [The Heritage of Europe], transl. Andrzej Przyłębski, Spacja, Warszawa 1992, p. 53. Original: H.-G. Gadamer, Das Erbe Europas, Suhrkamp Verlag Frankfurt/Main 1989.

17 James Turell, The Wolfsburg Project, film, form-art.tv, red. Dirk Finger, http://vimeo.com/12230931; James Turrell: the Wolfsburg project, Kunstmuseum Wolfsburg, Germany, October 24th, 2009 to April 5th, 2010, http://www.designboom.com/weblog/cat/10/view/8017/james-turrell-the-wolfsburg-project-at-the-kunstmuseum-germany.html (03.04.2012). Turrell has been using light to create spatial objects in the Ganzfeld Series since 1967.

Which, however, the visitor could not enter and which ultimately neither allowed him to discern the boundaries of the space nor to find the source of the light. Going back along the ramp, he could reach a rectangular opening letting him exit into a "normal", regular, unilluminated space. There was a definite feeling of crossing a border. A look back inside replicated the view of "sensing space" in the background, split in the center with a trapezoidal column rising upward, thanks to the reflection of the radiance resembling a luminous flux (in fact, it was the bottom part of the ramp seen from the lower level).

The „viewing space" allowed the visitor to immerse himself in the atmosphere of the piece and to experience the changes of perception under the influence of different colors, distances, and levels. It brought him closer to the "sensing space". This space, "sensed with the eyes",[18] appeared to show light in pure form, coming from an unknown source, unlimited, infinite.

The sensory experience of radiance received by the retina, the physical foundation of the image, exceeded its traditional aesthetics. The subtitle *Ganzfeld Piece*, refers to a parapsychological experiment involving a limitation of sensory data provided to human brain only to one permanent light and to one sound, which forced the mind to produce its own experiences (visual, sound, even olfactory; according to the authors there was also telepathic contact).[19] Turell constructed a kind of machinery to perform similar inexperiment on a large scale, but with a variety of colors and a more engaging space. This immersive project involved the senses, the transcendental ego, and treated the brain and its relationship with the senses as a subject of psychological research.

Nevertheless, the main purpose of the experiment went beyond focusing on mental activity; its associations led towards metaphysics through the sensation of concentrated light, its power over the senses, its still mysterious physical characteristics able to provide vision, warmth, healing, tranquility, but also able to destroy, blind and kill, its speed unattainable to man, its symbolism and sublime and bewildering aesthetics.

The artist, who is a Quaker sensitized to light, admitted that he accepts the allegorical and symbolic interpretations obvious in the case of light.[20] What is more, the title of Bridget's Bardo evoked a vision of reality transitory between death and rebirth, known from Tibetan Buddhism, and perhaps also alluded to the Christian mystic St. Bridget of Sweden, known for her visions of the birth of the Infant in radiant light and the purgatory revelations.[21]

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18 Ibid.

19 See: Ganzfeld experiment, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ganzfeld_experiment (16.03.2012).

20 See: James Turell, Art: 21, http://www.pbs.org/art21/artists/turrell/clip2.html (09.02.2005).

21 See: bardo, http://www.thefreedictionary.com/Bardo (07.03.2012); Bridget of Sweden, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bridget_of_Sweden (07.03.2012).

This work empirically analyzed the mechanism of sensory activity, building up the sense of perspective, space and colors, and experimenting with an attempt to "deceive the brain". But it also turned out to be a work about the aesthetics of light, showing not only its scientifically explained specifics, but also the idea. The work was an example of abstract, immersive aesthetics exploring experience and cognition, and focused on metaphysics in art revealed through simple beauty and the metaphysics of light. Light allows sensory experience, cognition and participation in the world of ideas as it contains cognizable concepts and beauty – highest in the Platonic hierarchy. The overwhelming experience of light turns out to be a transcendental cognitive synthesis.

Seeing the invisible

At the 52nd Venice Biennale in 2007, Bill Viola presented his video installation *Ocean Without a Shore*.[22] In a small, sixteenth-century Renaissance church of San Gallo (used today as an exhibition space), the artist placed three plasma screens in the main and two side altars. Each one was initially just a grey, empty surface. However, the experience of the emptiness and the quiet murmur that surrounded and permeated the viewer created an expectation that something would soon happen.

Then a point began to emerge from the “inside” of the emptiness. As it increased, it turned out to be a human figure, slowly approaching the plane of the screen and the viewer. It was still vague and black-and-white. Finally, the person raised his/her hands to separate the transparent water curtain located, as it turned out, between him-/herself and the plane of the screen (or the viewer, or the lens of the camera).

The person’s passage through the water curtain split it into silvery radiant streams of varying thickness. After the passage, the person stopped for a while. The colors and the details of his/her appearance, sex, age, race, weight and height became clear. Then the figure turned around and passed through the water curtain again, moved away and disappeared.

The altars where the screens were located are the places of transcendence. The isolation from external turmoil, the atmosphere of the sacrum of the church, the mysterious penumbra, the image lightening up in the altar, the low murmur, the monumental „slow motion” and the perfect quality of the high definition video (all typical for Viola) are not only immersive, but transcendentally overwhelming. The work shows how man gets to know sensory reality

22 Por. Bill Viola: Past Exhibitions, http://www.billviola.com/pastexhibitions.htm; J. Grace, Death as Presence. Bill Viola’s Ocean Without A Shore, http://www.arts.usyd.edu.au/publications/philament/issue15_pdfs/GRACE_death%20as%20presence.pdf (24.07.2010).

only for a moment, it also suggests a rising above the senses. It reveals the meaningful symbols and paradoxical metaphors evoked by the artist. Infinity is not an empty, "total" desert, but an ocean full of life thanks to water. The „crossing" of the water curtain presented water as a transforming power and metonym for human body (mostly made up of water). It was also the symbol of purification (also dangerous) and a beginning - understood as a start of „experiencing".

Perhaps the metaphysical beginning and end of human existence, can be shown by the artist only in opposition to non-existence, emptiness, suggested appearance or semblance of the void? Or to what fills the void but is not available in sensory cognition, as it is etaphysical? The figures presented by Viola did not cease to exist. They turned around and came back.

The artist seemed to confirm such an interpretation, explaining in an interview that *Ocean Without a Shore* is about the presence of the dead in our lives. The three stone altars in San Gallo become transparent surfaces for the manifestation of the images of the dead attempting to re-enter our world."[23] Viola added that he was inspired by the poem of Birago Diop, telling the story of the dead who are not gone, because they are present in the sounds of water, the wind, the rustling of the leaves, in shadows and flames... This recalls the role assigned to the artist by the Zen master Daien Tanaki or a thirteenth-century Persian poet and Sufi mystic Moule Dżalaloddin Rumi.[24] It is as if the artist wanted to verbally convey the experience of the invisible.

The artist also said that the persons passing through the water curtain immediately "sensed" themselves. This means that the human beings gaining carnality in the „real" world necessarily start to make use of Kantian cognitive categories, including time and space, which in the ocean seem to have no meaning. Nevertheless, the effect of transgression suggests that being exists before and beyond the boundary of the water curtain. The mysterious, symbolic space of the endless ocean is not just emptiness nor "heaven". "Extrasensory" being in it brings to mind the separation of just being and being-in-the world claimed by Heidegger or Lévinas trying to characterize being outside of time.[25]

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23 Bill Viola quoted in Claire Walsh, "Press Release: Bill Viola, Ocean Without A Shore, 2007", haunch of Venison, May 2007 (29.07.2009); http://www.haunchofvenison.com/media/4897/hov%20-%20viola exhibition venice%20-%20press release%20-%20final.pdf. (24.07.2010).

24 See: Death - An Anthology of Ancient Texts, Songs, Prayers and Stories, red. D. Melzter, North Point Press: San Francisco 1984, p. 190; M. Duncan, Bill Viola: Altered Perceptions, "Art in America", march 1998, pp. 62-69.

25 Heidegger finds the identity of a person in the unity of being and thinking. However, the quest for the essence of being is never fully successful, because of the inevitable entanglement of Dasein (conscious being-there, being-in the world, different to essential being) in the world. See: Martin_Heidegger http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Martin_Heidegger; Dasein,

In this way, the overwhelming sensations and meanings called in by the poetics of symbolic allusions, and finally the allegory of being readable in the comprehensive reception of the installation evoked deep philosophical reflection and led to metaphysics. Aesthetics revealed the level of metaphysics as fundamental for being (of an artwork and of humans) which is available to the senses only for a moment but essentially "is" (truly exists) not only for a moment (specific for a human understanding of time).

Viola shows that we are not able to grasp our beginning, as indeed time and space, because their essence lies in metaphysics. Therefore he clearly denies postmodern concepts because the beginning in the *Ocean*... is a mystery, but neither is it a consequence of an absence or a reference to other „signifieds"[26] and every human being acquires identity and maintains it regardless of the gaze of other people. That is why we try to reach deeper, below the surface of the senses (though with their participation). To see the Other, not just to be seen by others. To see the invisible. Because it is not an image (real or remembered) which guarantees „being" (as perhaps Hans Belting would say),[27] but an idea. In the case of humans the idea of humanity present, in spite of all, at the source of the "project thrown into a world"[28] that is visible in the world with the use of our senses and our care, but we can really see it only as a metaphysical transcending of experience, as it is was intended by Viola in his installation.

"Metaphysical turn"…

The above-mentioned works fit into the "metaphysical turn". The experience of light, darkness, emptiness, and the infinity connected with them, the border

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dasein (28.08.2015); B. Skarga, W drodze [On the Road] [in:] Tożsamość i różnica [Identity and Difference], Znak, Kraków 1997, p. 196-276 and. In the context of identity Levinas speaks of a metaphysical being outside of time, where it loses its difference. See B. Skarga, Emanuel Lévinas: kultura immanencji [E. Lévinas. Culture of Immanence [in:], Tożsamość..., p. 93, See also: Emmanuel Levinas [in:] Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/levinas/#TimTraOthThaBei (30. 08. 2015) (especially about Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence and Time and the Other).

26 See: B. Banasiak, Jacques Derrida - najgłośniejszy myśliciel XX wieku [Jacques Derrida - the Most Famous Thinker of the Twentieth Century, http://bb.ph-kna, f.org/teksty/bb_derrida.pdf, (17.05.2013).

27 H. Belting, Obraz i śmierć [Image and Death], [in:] Antropologia kultury wizualnej. Zagadnienia i wybór tekstów [Anthropology of Visual Culture. Issues and Selection of Texts], ed. I. Kurz et. al, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego, Warszawa 2012, p. 73. See also: H. Belting, Toward an Anthropology of Image, Anthropologies of Art, Yale University Press, 2005.

28 About Dasein "having-been-thrown into the world", see: Martin Heidegger, [in:] Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/heidegger/#BeiWor (30.08.2015).

and the crossing, were necessary for the artistic essence of the works, and thus immanent to them. But such artworks also showed that such experiences are immanent to human "being in the world", already able to transcend such restricted being and orient itself towards metaphysics. Metaphysics was opened up in comprehensive and overwhelming experience, immanent for humans and allowing them to participate in the transcendence. Metaphysical (social to some extent) was finally the desire for the Other.

It was shown by the "projects of experience" that metaphysics resides not only in their artistic value (metaphysical because metaphysics is obvious in art), or in the order categorically imposed on perception, but in the very perception intrinsically present in the idea of humanity. Thanks to it the senses do not "constrain" us by imposed and inevitable cognitive categories, as one might think, but on the contrary, they let us act and open us to cognition (not only experiential).

However, the experience given in the artworks begins with visual activity, with a viewing glance, and it is still an image that determines perception. The image "fixed" in our bodily abilities and intellectual cognition (body and mind are the image's medium) participates in revealing the level of metaphysics transcending its popular functions of representation and presentation.[29] In this way, the "metaphysical turn" meets the "visual turn".

Finally, these works were also examples of the presence of literature and philosophy in visual arts. This is usually identified as a characteristic of the "linguistic turn"[30] in visual arts and "the end of art" (which could be called a "philosophical turn"). The poetics of allusions, quotations, inversion, symbol, allegory, parable, or metaphors clearly indicated and confirmed the role of experience and image in the revealing of metaphysics as the essential meaning and the real function of an artwork.

…or "transturn" metaphysics?

Perhaps the susceptibility of the artworks to be analyzed in the context of various "turns" is a contemporary illustration of the persistence of the idea of

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29 About the visual (iconic, pictorial) turn see: H. Belting, op. cit.; Ikonische Wende, https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ikonische_Wende (30.08.2015) and A. Zeidler-Janiszewska, Visual Culture Studies czy antropologicznie zorientowana Bildwissenschaft? O kierunkach zwrotu ikonicznego w naukach o kulturze [Visual Culture Studies or Anthropologically Oriented Bildwissenschaft? About the Orientations of the Iconic Turn in Culture Studies], „Teksty Drugie" 2006, no. 4, pp. 9-29.

30 About the relation between linguistic and visual turns, see: A. Martinengo, From the Linguistic Turn to the Pictorial Turn – Hermeneutics Facing the 'Third Copernican Revolution', http://www.eurosa.org/volumes/5/MartinengoESA2013.pdf (30.08.2015).

the unity of arts which, importantly, reveals its essence at the level of metaphysics.[31] This situation perhaps recalls the metaphysics hidden in inter- or transdisciplinary "interturns" (or "transturns").

Consequently, it appears that the "turns" consist in searching for and "restoring" metaphysics. The metaphysics from which art has tried to escape, but which is its essence and which cannot be reduced only to one of the "turns".

Anna Zeidler-Janiszewska wrote that the special purpose of the "turns" is the opening of new fields of research.[32] They are meant to explore, to open, to reveal. But not only that: it appears that their appearance coincides with the "escape from metaphysics". Maybe they are in fact a kind of reaction to that escape. The "turns" appear in order to explore and open not only fields of research, but metaphysics. The metaphysics rejected and lost, but restored, because it is imposing itself and it has been persistent as the essence to be revealed in art. Because of such revelations art remains art. The turns are just there to show it.

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31 See: E. Gieysztor-Miłobędzka, W obronie „całościowości". Pojęcie Gesamtkunstwerk [Defending Entity. The Concept of Gesamkunswerk] „Kultura Współczesna" 1995, no. 3-4, p. 73-94. About the deficiencies of the limitation of the theory of art only to the visual turn see: M. Bal, Wizualny esencjalizm i przedmiot kultury wizualnej [Visual Essentialism and the Object of Visual Culture], transl. Mariusz Bryl [in:] Perspektywy współczesnej historii sztuki, Antologia przekładów "Artium Quastiones" [Perspectives for Contemporary Art History. Anthology of Translations of "Artium Quastiones"], ed. M. Bryl, P. Juszkiewicz, P. Piotrowski, W. Suchocki, UAM: Poznań 2009, s. 389 (where Mieke Bal calls for the establishment of critical transdisciplinary studies on synaesthetic experience and its understanding determined by culture) and A. Zeidler-Janiszewska, op. cit.].

32 See: idem, O tzw. zwrocie ikonicznym we współczesnej humanistyce. Kilka uwag wstępnych [About the so-called Iconic Turn in Contemporary Humanities. A Few Preliminary Observations], http://www.asp.wroc.pl/dyskurs/Dyskurs4/AnnaZeidlerJaniszewska.pdf. (30.08. 2015).

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CZY TO TYLKO „ZWROT METAFIZYCZNY"? (streszczenie)

Artykuł wprowadza w fenomenologiczne definicje metafizyczności w sztuce oraz zarysowuje relacje z metafizyką w sztuce XX wieku, sugerując obserwowanie w niej „ucieczki od metafizyki" i reakcje na taką ucieczkę w obrębie filozoficznego zwrotu zwanego „końcem sztuki" oraz tzw. „zwrotu metafizycznego". Jako ilustracja tej reakcji przeanalizowane zostają artystyczne instalacje Mirosława Bałki, Jamesa Turrella i Billa Violi. Ostatecznie analizy prowadzą do wniosku o wpisywaniu się dzieł w różne „zwroty" oraz do hipotezy, że metodologie różnych zwrotów służą w istocie odkrywaniu metafizyki, od której sztuka próbowała uciekać, a która transcenduje zwroty. Potwierdza to filozoficzną prawdę, że „nie ma ucieczki od metafizyki" wskazując zarazem, że metafizyczności w sztuce nie można sprowadzić do jednego ze „zwrotów".

Słowa kluczowe: sztuka współczesna, metafizyka, ucieczka od metafizyki, „koniec sztuki", zwrot metafizyczny, zwrot wizualny

Art Inquiry. Recherches sur les arts 2015, vol. XVII
ISSN 1641-9278

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THE ART OF FAILURE – THE VICTORY OF THE LOSERS

Abstract: The article describes the phenomenon of the art of failure. Traditional narrative focuses on the experience of winning, while marginalizing everything that is weak, mediocre, lost. The change comes with the end of art understood as a decomposition of the historical structures organizing artistic discourse (cf. Arthur C. Danto, Gianni Vattimo, Jean-Luc Nancy). In the post-historical plurilogue, the art of failure becomes a means of expression of the groups which have been traditionally excluded (Judith Halberstam). This in turn leads to a multi-level game between the participants of cultural life and its institutions. The author goes on to present and analyse specific examples of the art of failure accentuating their subversive-emancipatory potential.

Keywords: art of failure, end of art, queer

The discourse of modernity finds its justification in the history of victories: of democracy over non-democracy, liberalism over non-liberalism, capitalism over non-capitalism. The narrative of success, strictly inscribed into the structures of power, is present not only in the mass-media, the educational system, or state institutions, but also in art – which legitimizes the progress of civilization towards a utopia. Any trace of failure, mistake, weakness, is pushed outside the limits of language. The discourse of power transforms the past without exceptions for the sake of control over the current situation. Mass contentment and satisfaction serves as the guarantor of the safe *status quo* as the current success legitimizes everything that has led to it. Thus, the paradigm of winning has become an organizing principle of the North Atlantic civilization.

Cultural institutions are under its influence as well, and contemporary art therefore sometimes resembles an arms race. Artists master their art in order to

jump the bars set high by their predecessors or by themselves. Competitiveness, so widespread in post-industrial society, also becomes a model in the world of art. Because of this, painting, sculpture, or photography take on the character of sports disciplines, where expert bodies grant awards: cultural institutions decide who will be placed in the center, and who on the peripheries of the art scene. Success also has its economic aspect, which forces artists to constantly consider their market environment. The creator, as a producer and maker, becomes established and judged in the context of tradition, of other works, of the critical narrative, but also in the context of commodity exchange. These circumstances can serve as a trap for the art itself. It is in the interest of the artists to attain a central position and then to preserve it as long as possible. However, this is decided by the expert bodies which influence the distribution of the financial means: directly through awards, grants, and subsidies, or indirectly through their opinions which impact the market of the potential recipients/buyers. Thus, contemporary art becomes both an element and a reflection of the neo-liberal society of the 21st century.

The relentless rules of the market dictate, however, that every success is balanced by somebody else's failure. In the discussion on the global balance of power, we can hear the increasingly audible voices of the excluded groups: the disabled, the racial, ethnic, or sexual minorities, and all the others who used to be disqualified in the historical race to success. The point of reference in the construction of their own narrative may become the failure itself – understood as the set of phenomena unspoken, silenced, or displaced from collective consciousness, which reveal the vulnerability, weakness, limitedness, and helplessness of the Subject. This perspective opens possibilities for new forms of expression, which have until now been relegated to the peripheries of the art scene. Currently, whatever is far from the desired aesthetic values, or even from conforming to the rules of artistic correctness becomes noticed and appreciated more frequently. Thus, we can speak of a turn in the modern artistic discourse – a turn towards failure.

1.

The concept of failure as a narrative-organizing rule is possible due to the historical changes in the understanding of art that occurred in the 20th century. The key to understanding these changes is a close reading of the idea of *The End of Art* proposed by Arthur C. Danto, among other theoreticians. According to this American philosopher, the modern narrative on art came to an end together with the birth of Pop art.[1] When Andy Warhol exhibited the *Brillo boxes*

[1] See A.C. Danto, *After the End of Art: Contemporary Art and the Pale of History*, Princeton University Press, Princeton 2014, pp. 117-134.

in 1964 in the Stable Gallery, he blurred the demarcation line between art and reality. Since then, every item shown by an artist had the capacity to become art. Of course, cases of using *ready-mades* were known before that; however, the context of Andy Warhol's gesture is crucial here. The revolution of the 1960s in the field of art was encrypted onto the entirety of the civilizational changes that had occurred in the post-war Europe and North America: changes such as the substantial improvement of the living standards, the loosening of class divisions, and the unification of life styles. Together with the liberalization and democratization of social structures, the world of art became open to all of those who previously had had no access to it – because of their limitations with regard to artistry (the mimetic paradigm) or intellectual level (the philosophic paradigm).

This revolutionary move by Warhol showed that art history told in a traditional way is only one of many possible perspectives. For instance, the choice proposed by Ernst Gombrich focuses on the artworks deriving from the European culture in the last 3000 years whose authors were mainly white men. From its early beginnings art was of elitist character. Aesthetically valuable objects produced by the representatives on non-privileged groups were appreciated as folklore rather than the result of artistic activity in itself. This rule is most vividly manifested in state institutions such as museums, where artifacts produced by foreign cultures are placed in separate rooms, specially reserved for this purpose. At the same time, the works of European authors are classified and systematized according to the tendency of progress – the development of technology, both literal and artistic, and of artistic self-consciousness, which has its aim in confirming the historical success of the Western civilization. Those artists who do not fit the story are subject to exclusion. Nevertheless, with the extension of the notion of art itself, the narratives that have been thus far marginalized have been reappreciated.

This change applies not only to the subjects undertaken by new authors, but also to the way in which they are presented. Consider the example of the 1993 exhibition of Mary Jane Jacob, entitled *Culture in Action: New Public Art in Chicago.*[2] The curator asked representatives of various social groups to create works which would represent their values in most specific ways. One of the most controversial works was titled *We Got It!* and it was a candy bar prepared by twelve workers of the 552nd team of The Bakery, Confectionary and Tobacco Workers' International Union of America, perceived by the authors as "the sweet of their dreams". Placing such an object in institutional(ized) space would have been impossible and even unthinkable before the Pop-art turn-over.

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2 See J. Scanlan, "Culture in Action", *Frieze* 1993, vol. 13, November-December, available from http://www.frieze.com/issue/article/culture_in_action/ [accessed 8 Aug. 2015].

Moreover, prior to it such an object would never be able to trigger the interpretative processes accessible to the viewer in 1993. Events such as Jacob's exhibition present a chance to articulate and listen to narratives which until now could not have been encompassed by the historical tale on art, and the presence of their authors is thus more noticeable in the public space. As Danto has stressed, "To imagine an artwork is to imagine a form of life".[3] Basing our judgment on post-historical art, we can try to reconstruct and understand the global society of the new millennium, with all its apories and nuances.

The change that has occurred in the art of the 20th century is merely a sign of the weakening of discourse – so characteristic for late Modernity. The borders between particular disciplines become blurred. Art penetrates science, philosophy, and other social practices, loosening/losing its essence. In consequence of technological changes, including digitalization and advanced reproduction techniques, it is difficult to precisely determine the demarcation line between the harsh reality and the virtual one. This phenomenon is labeled by Gianni Vattimo as an *explosion of aesthetics*: "No longer is art to be rendered out-of-date and suppressed by a future revolutionary society; rather, the experience of art as an integral aesthetic fact is immediately to be sought out".[4] The internal divisions are becoming blurred as well. Art becomes not so much interdisciplinary as a-disciplinary. Inter-genre hybrids such as land art or body art are still far from the unequivocal division sustained by the state-owned institutions of culture. What is more, the means typical for mass media, or genres seen as "worse" are more and more often in use as a form of artistic expression. Such is the case of *Made in Heaven* by Jeff Koons who, together with his wife, recreated some scenes known from porn movies in his work.

The autonomy given to the work of art by 18th century aesthetics has become dispersed. Its status versus reality is ambiguous, remains in constant renegotiation. One of its consequences is the performative character of post-historical works. The works of art currently *happen* rather than being created; their structure is more flexible and changes together with the processes that initiate their emergence. The work of art adapts in form to the circumstances in which it is to happen, and to the goal which it aims to achieve. Banksy's murals can serve as one of many examples of this phenomenon. The British artist is always referring to the context in which his work is supposed to be created. The circumstances allowing the work to appear become its immanent part. It would be difficult to imagine that the dove of peace in a bulletproof vest would shake us equally strong within the museum space as it does on the "safety

3 A.C. Danto, *After the End...*, p. 203.

4 G. Vattimo, "The Death or Decline of Art", transl. J. R. Snyder, in: *The Continental Aesthetics Reader*, ed. Clive Caseaux, Routledge, London, New York 2000, p. 188.

wall" surrounding Palestine. In the case of Banksy, the close, even unbreakable tie between aesthetics and politics is revealed. The post-historical work of art becomes a source and a mirror of facts and reality, a moment of intensification of the meanings that function in the culture: both now and throughout history. "In short, the work of art is the 'setting-into-work of truth'"– as Vattimo notes referring to Heidegger's art theory – "because in it the opening up of a world as a context of referrals – like a language – is permanently connected to the earth as the 'other' of the world".[5]

Viewed from this perspective, "the end of art" seems to be one of the borderline points in its development and cannot be associated with a crisis, atrophy, or depletion of the creative potential of humanity. The motif of the end of art is already present in Hegel's *Lectures on Aesthetics*, according to which the process of forming truths of progressively higher generality is accompanied by the reduction of the sensual valor. Art abolishes itself and thus it assimilates itself into religion and philosophy.[6] This does not, however, lead to its negation, but rather to producing a larger variety and subtlety of the forms that it uses. This Hegelian concept was evoked by, among others, Jean-Luc Nancy, who used to consider the thus understood end of art as a starting situation, predestined each time. As Tomasz Załuski observes, "the end of art receives the meaning of an event which inaugurates the history of art – inaugurating it constantly anew, in a repetitive manner".[7] Jean-Luc Nancy claimed that there is no art form that would be able to fully express art's perfection. Thus, the selective look, or an attempt at a synthetic approach, precipitates whatever is manifested within the indefinite multitude and factuality of the particular cases. "Each one of the arts exposes in its way the unity of 'art', which has neither place nor consistency outside this 'each one' – still more, the unity of a single art is exposed in this sense only in its works one by one".[8]

The post-historical art revokes the institutional frame. It bursts the structures that had assured its further development from the inside. The moment of exposing the narrative character of the tale about the victory of the white man's civilization enabled art and its history to become the object of artistic action. The examples include the activity of the inventors of *sotsart*, the Russian duet of Komar and Melamid, who travested the convention of socialist realism, using it to expose the propagandist character of art as such. The work

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5 Ibid., pp. 193-194.

6 G.W.F. Hegel, *Aesthetics: Lectures on Fine Art*, vol. I, transl. T. M. Knox, Clarendon Press, Oxford 1988, p. 7.

7 T. Załuski, „Powtórzenie i motyw końca sztuki w filozofii Jean-Luc Nancy'ego", in: *Estetyka i Krytyka*", no. 1 (2/2006), p. 149.

8 J.-L. Nancy, *The Muses*, transl. Peggy Kamuf, Stanford University Press, Stanford 1994, p. 31.

always speaks on somebody's behalf, it is never politically neutral. Bearing this assertion in mind, the post-historical artists abandon museums and galleries, heading towards life as it is. The existential experience of being based in specific socio-economic and political background becomes a factor impossible to exclude from the analysis of current aesthetic situation. And since the world has been divided into civilization's centre and peripheries, this should also be mirrored by and in art.

2.

The categories of success and failure are strictly connected with the capitalist worldview which equates the ability to accumulate and multiply material capital with social usefulness. However, in this binary arrangement of success and failure both qualities are strictly interconnected: somebody's win comes at a price of somebody else's failure, which is best seen in the post-colonialist balance of power on the geopolitical map. The wealth of Western countries would not be possible without the economic exploitation of the population of third world countries. It is in the interest of the institutions supporting the capitalist structures to create a discourse which would legitimize its functioning. Thus, the official narrative puts the stress rather on the success of the centers than on the failure of the peripheries. As Scott Sandage notes, the success becomes symbolically multiplied when it becomes embodied by the discourse; therefore, those who have attained it cannot stop talking about it.[9] In an order thusly understood, the only correct means of communicating failure is silence. The narrative of failure becomes audible when the propaganda of success becomes silenced.

Describing the resistance movement of peasants in South-Eastern Asia, James C. Scott noticed that the weaker use different and less spectacular strategies while fighting the oppressive system, than is the case of the entities of equal rank.[10] What at first seems to be passiveness, ignorance, or even acceptance of oppression, can in fact be hidden sabotage. For instance, such anti-activities can consist in slowing down the tempo of the work, or in the negligence of duties. The situation described by Scott shows that weakness and failure are a resistance against the values proscribed by capitalist institutions. These values are supposed to ensure efficient and safe functioning of the system; they become a norm that regulates the worldviews. Whatever is placed outside of this horizon is supposed to be rejected. In the North Atlantic culture, the

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9 See: S. Sandage, *Born Losers: A History of Failure in America*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge 2005, p. 9.

10 See: J.C. Scott, *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance*, Yale University Press, New Haven and London 1987, p. 29.

recommended model proposes success understood in terms of self-development, capital accumulation, organization of private life in the form of a family, ethical activity, structured plans about the future. Any deviation from this path equals exclusion. José Muńoz considers the rejection of life pragmatism to be one of the utopian strategies of queer culture.[11] If the goals offered by social structures are unattainable, and one could perceive the attempt at organizing homosexual desire within the frames of heteronormative institutions as such, then a different, alternative model should be found or created. The failure of the queer culture is based on the fact that it will never attain its final realization and durability of heterosexual structures. The compensation is to be found in art. According to Judith Halberstram, queer art is an enormous opportunity for using the social potential of disappointment and resistance against the reality of such rigorous standards of normalcy. "The queer art of failure turns on the impossible, the improbable, the unlikely, and the unremarkable. It quietly loses, and in losing it imagines other goals for life, for love, for art, and for being".[12]

One of the examples of rejection of the common sense pragmatism is to be found in *Trainspotting* by Irvine Welsh.[13] Renton, the main character of the novel, rejects the path of social development facilitated by such institutions as school, work, or family. He motivates his idleness by disagreement with the illusion of freedom promoted by capitalist propaganda. Having to choose between a job in a corporation, a mortgage loan, and social benefits – he chooses nothing and succumbs to the destructive joys of drug intake and nightclubbing with other disenchanted people. Within the capitalist logic, the moral life becomes opposed to the fall and decay, order to banditry, control over sexuality to promiscuitism, and consciousness to intoxication. Renton cannot allow himself to choose what is commonly preferred; therefore, he tries to revoke the system by his passiveness and apathy. His strategy somehow resembles the resistance techniques used by the Asian peasants. The young Scotsman sacrifices his career, health, and other emblems of life fulfillment in order to sabotage the capitalist machinery. Here one can also notice some elements of fight against British colonialism. *Trainspotting* is set in the milieu of Edinburgh clubbers who tend to associate the standards of economic efficacy with British society rather than with their own homeland. It is interesting that resistance against imperialism takes a form of self-weakening, unlike most of the post-colonial narratives, which strengthen their identity by turning toward nationalism.

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11 See: J.E. Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity,* New York University Press, New York 2009.

12 J. Halberstam, *The Queer Art of Failure*, Duke University Press, Durham and London 2011, p. 88.

13 Ibid. p. 90.

Another realm where the dictate of success is clearly manifested, according to Halberstam, is sport. And although the idea of modern Olympic Games is referring to purely humanist values, what matters in the final stage of its realization is who will win. The Olympic Games have themselves often been an arena of international struggle, whenever the conflict which could not manifest itself openly was sublimated as sport rivalry. If we look closely at the narrative organized around various tournaments, we shall see that what lies at its very center is the extremely oppressive mechanism of exclusion: the podium is reserved only for the first three results. Other participants form an anonymous mob of rivals offered – as a consolation prize – a hope for a future win. The severity of this division was captured by the Australian photographer Tracy Moffat. In her extremely interesting work titled *Fourth* the artist presented the sportsmen from the Sydney Olympics at the moment of their realization that they have only managed to take a place excluding them from the podium. The position of a person whose distance from winning can be measured in seconds or centimeters is symbolically more difficult than that of those who have performed much worse and stayed far behind. It is always impossible to know – until the last moment – who will be granted the fourth place, and when the bitter announcement is made the failure of the loser is particualrly exposed.

Searching for alternative narratives, Halberstam turns towards child fantasies. The works designed for the youngest audience are often marked by the reversal or annulment of the logic of success and failure. In the movie *Shrek*, the main character, an ogre, decides to reject the possibility of being trans formed into a beautiful prince. If one can interpret this tale as a voice of a young spectator, the world of a child seems to be devoid of the sentiment and nostalgia for the win. "The beauty of these films is that they do not fear failure" – notes Halberstam – "they do not favor success, and they picture children not as preadults figuring out the future but as anarchic beings who partake in strange and inconsistent temporal logics".[14] It is worth mentioning that many characters from contemporary tales for children are outside the box of widely understood models of normalcy. One of the most interesting examples is Babe, an orphaned piglet who considers itself to be a shepherd dog. Of course the identity project Babe, as is the case of most queer utopias, is condemned to fail. As the British actor Quentin Crisp stated, if at first you don't succeed, failure may be your style. Being queer is designed to fail, but failure is also queer in itself, as a standing-out way of life, sort of non-conformism which creates space for articulating whatever does not fit the official discourse. For instance, the sabotaging activity of drag queens which uncovers patriarchal oppressive mechanisms aimed at women is possible only through undertaking a task which

14 Ibid. p. 120.

will never be entirely fulfilled. The cross-dressing performer will always remain an actor on the scene of the "as if" mode. A wider perspective could include in this assertion all the homosexuals who fight to be included into the structures of the "normal" society by using heteronormative regulations. Keeping the *status quo* is in the interest of the traditional narratives: exclusion is an indefeasible feature, and whoever was born to fail will remain as such. As Guy Hocquenghem claims, "Capitalism turns its homosexuals into failed normal people, just as it turns its working class into an imitation of the middle class".[15] The queer strategy remains torn between the rejection of the optimistic projects of heteronormative narrative, and their own recycling. A chance for discovering new models that would dodge the rigid logic of failure and success can be found in post-historical art.

3.

The models of exclusion typical for the discourse of success are also present in art. They function according to several criteria, with the economic ones – understood as access to the means of production – being one of the most crucial. Preparing a full-length movie which would circulate in the official realm is directly linked to the budget that would allow for hiring a team of qualified specialists in various fields. The source of financing such actions is rarely limited to private funds. The money often comes from state funds, or is given by various firms and corporations which form their own demands regarding the project, such as the condition of profitability. Another criterion for presence in the discourse is artistry and the artisanship of the author, or his proficiency. In order to be able to perform the simplest piece of classical music, one must be trained for a specific amount of time in order to attain technical ability, allowing the person to perform or create a work. The third criterion is the intellectual one. Access to the contemporary world of art is often connected with a specific discursive background, which enables one to read the meanings rooted in tradition and other disciplines of human activity. These criteria can be reduced to an economic denominator. All in all, the acquisition of artisanship and theoretical tools is a form of work, and as such it can be seen as a ratio of monetary value to the time sacrificed to attain the ability. The capitalist system owns the structures which facilitate and regulate participation in the world of art: the denominated criteria can only be fulfilled through the acquisition of the means available within this system. If the process can be completed according to the recommended model, the result should be positive.

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15 G. Hocquenghem, "Capitalism, the Family, and the Anus", in: *Homosexual Desire*, transl. Daniella Dangoor, Duke University Press, Durham 1993, p. 94.

For art it means reaching the audience, being acclaimed by the experts, and the profit of the creators. Of course, participation in the structures does not guarantee the preferred outcome; however, deviations, aberrations, or, in the worst case, failures of any kind, remind outside the rhetoric of the capitalist institutions. Hence, whatever has no place in the discourse of success becomes expressed by the art of failure.

One of the examples of the voices audible in this case is the project of Katarzyna Kozyra, bearing the title *In Art, Dreams Become Reality* (*W sztuce marzenia stają się rzeczywistością*). In the period between 2003 and 2009 this Polish artist prepared a series of works in which she acted as an opera singer and a cheerleader. It is worth mentioning that before the project she had never been trained in or had never performed classical singing or acrobatic dance. The time-consuming process of acquiring the new abilities enabled her to finally perform in these disciplines with proficiency, though without a trace of virtuosity so awaited and expected from the artists. Kozyra documented her failure in a series of videos. In one of those, *Il Castrato*, Kozyra impersonates a young boy who becomes castrated in front of half-naked men so he can effectively perform Schubert's *Ave Maria*. The artist thusly reminds us about the cost which has to be undertaken by any creator who tries to achieve the heights of artisanship and artistry. Several hundred years ago, opera singers used to sacrifice their own bodies; nowadays they sacrifice their socio-economic potential.

Another artist who is equally ready to expose the discourse of success is Dorota Masłowska. The protagonists of her literary works are struggling with the inability to fulfill the standards posed by the society. Their failure is usually expressed according to two schemata. The first model is based on ineffectual pursuit of consumerist happiness, as in the story of Farah, the protagonist of the novel *Darling, I Have Killed Our Cats* (*Kochanie zabiłam nasze koty*). A young city woman in her twenties cannot handle the painful feeling of loneliness. Any timid attempt at improving her situation ends in spectacular fiascos, discouraging her from undertaking any further attempts. As a result, she follows the flow of everyday life, ignoring her own needs. Another proposed model for social norms is their rejection. Self-destruction which characterizes Andrzej Silny (Andrew the Strong), the protagonist of *Polish-Russian War under the White-Red Flag* (*Wojna polsko-ruska pod flagą biało-czerwoną*) coincides with the tendencies expressed by Renton from Trainspotting by Irvin Welsh.

One of the objections raised most frequently by Masłowska's critics is her excessive fascination with weakness, averageness, failure. Masłowska is using literature to record reality with ruthless honesty, which however stays very far from the dispassionate form of documentary. The condensation of the qualities that Masłowska attempts to capture usually results in the grotesque.

Thus, mediocrity, colloquialism, and failure are appreciated as a form of existential experience. While mentioning the motif of failure in Masłowska's artistic activity one must also mention her musical project entitled *The Society Is Unkind* (*Społeczeństwo jest niemiłe*). After becoming unquestionably successful as a writer, Masłowska decided to become a vocalist. Her experiment resulted in an album with a dozen songs composed, produced, and performed by Masłowska herself. In the lyrics she used similar thematic range as in her novels and theatre plays; however, this time her own weaknesses (namely the vocal ones) have been exposed. The banality and failure present in the text is complemented here by the form. Thus, the work is a reliable recording of the experience of everyday life – making it possible for every member of the audience to identify him- or herself with the artist. Moreover, when constructing her scenic persona, Masłowska ironically uses the strategies typical for the language of pop culture. The overt aestheticization aiming at concealing everything which deviates from the preferable norm becomes a pastiche and thus an unmasking of the artificial reality of the mass-media.

Another example of artistic toying with the mainstream can be found in the activity of Sana el-Azzeh-Siekierska in her *LiTut Project*. The author asked children attending schools worldwide to take photographs of their closest environment. The cameras were sent to Mauritius, Sechelles, and Palestine. Most media reports from the Middle East concentrate on the conflict between the Arab states and Israel. Thus, the narrative of the Western media is full of dramatic scenes of war maneuvers which would serve as material for war movies. However, the works made for El-Azzeh-Siekierska's project concentrate on landscapes and portraits of family members. Children were focused mostly on everyday life artifacts, excluding war activities, which – to a distant observer – seem to be more attractive than pictures of a desert, or a group of laughing teenagers. Whenever we decide to preserve an image, it seems important to us, and worth memorizing. The lack of images of aggression or war can be the result of the child's suppression of the trauma. *LiTut Project* is also worth mentioning as regards the technical aspect of the photographs. They were often blurred, burnt or badly framed. Sometimes, the young artists would accidentally cover the image with their own finger. Those pictures, according to the criteria of artisanship and mastery should be excluded from any professional circulation. Here, however, they gain additional meaning, underlining the uniqueness and authenticity of presented perspective.

The rule of competence has been delimiting the borders of art for several centuries, making this domain inaccessible for certain groups. Some of these limitations were caused by genetic predispositions. The change in this matter occurred in the second half of the 20th century with the demolition of the historical narrative. The Warsaw Theatre 21 co-created by artists with autism

and the trisomy of the 21st chromosome takes up the subject of the social exclusion of people with inherited intellectual dysfunction in various aspects of everyday life. One of their shows: *Falls. Episode 2* (*Upadki. Odcinek 2*) talks about the mechanisms of oppression in the realm of finance and banking. The actors are granted money for a trip to Mongolia where they stay in an *all-inclusive* hotel. The money they possess guarantees each of them the use of all the facilities offered by the complex. However, a problem occurs when the protagonists are to perform their first financial operation. In a series of self-ironic scenes and monologues the actors show their problems with recognizing the value of the particular bills, or with performing the most basic arithmetic operations. Finally, the trip results in failure. Weakness and inability become a component of everyday experience of the excluded in their everyday struggle against their limitations. The theatrical medium offers a chance to communicate this situation while sustaining the subjectivity of the participants.

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Capitalism divides its participants into winners and losers. The narrative on art, just as any other story, is being told by the winners. However, together with the decomposition of the dominant discourse, the formerly excluded voices become audible. The 20th century "explosion" of aesthetics contributed to the extension of the notion of art itself. Thus, the representatives of the eternal peripheries become deponents of the artistic means necessary to articulate their own perspective. The queer theory seems to be especially important for this recognition, as it perceives failure as an alternative to the dominant narrative.

The rules of the free market force us to chase the ever-changing ideal of life fulfillment. Any moment of stoppage or slowing down in comparison to the overall tempo means disqualification from the global race for success. In these circumstances the art of failure can be seen as a relief valve, a reservoir of models and strategies used for taming crises. The win is usually a result of multiple attempts, which often end up far from the imagined mark. Ignoring the moments of weakness, exhaustion, or even boredom, becomes a manipulation with dangerous consequences. The art of failure gives us a chance to bring back fullness to our existential experience. It allows us to expand the image of reality and include elements which have been so far placed outside the frame.

Due to the aesthetic forms of representation, the marginalized groups have a chance to participate in the "distribution of the sensible".[16] The art of failure,

16 See: J. Rancière, *The Politics of Aesthetics. The Distribution of the Sensible*, transl. G. Rockhill, Continuum International Publishing Group, New York 2004.

realizing its subversive-emancipatory potential enters a perverse dialogue with the institutions of control. Thus, the private becomes an element of the political game; it influences its further development. Of course, such situation poses a certain danger. Those with no access to the means of production will create low-budget art, confirming and reproducing their economic status. As a result, despite undertaking a subversive action in the symbolic order, on the economic level, the *status quo* remains preserved. Thus, the art of failure can function only as one of many aspects of the real process of struggle for equal rights and emancipation.

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SZTUKA PORAŻKI – ZWYCIĘSTWO PRZEGRANYCH (streszczenie)

Przedmiotem artykułu jest opis zjawiska sztuki porażki. Tradycyjna narracja stawia w centrum doświadczenie sukcesu, marginalizując jednocześnie to, co słabe, przeciętne, przegrane. Zmiana następuje wraz z końcem sztuki rozumianym jako rozpad historycznych struktur organizujących dyskurs artystyczny (Arthur C. Danto, Gianni Vattimo, Jean-Luc Nancy). W posthistorycznym wielogłosie sztuka porażki staje się środkiem ekspresji grup zwyczajowo wykluczanych (Judith Halberstam), co prowadzi do wielopoziomowej gry między uczestnikami życia kulturalnego, a jego instytucjami. W dalszej części artykułu autor przedstawia i analizuje poszczególne przykłady sztuki porażki, akcentując ich subwersywno-emancypacyjny potencjał.

Słowa klucze: sztuka porażki, koniec sztuki, queer

Art Inquiry. Recherches sur les arts 2015, vol. XVII
ISSN 1641-9278

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THE "LINGUISTIC TURN" AND TWENTIETH-CENTURY POSSIBILITIES OF CONDUCTING RESEARCH ON OLD ARCHITECTURE. PERCEPTION AND RECEPTION OF ARCHITECTURAL PIECES IN SOUTH AMERICA

Abstract: Language plays a leading role in describing, arranging and construing the social world, which also incorporates broadly understood culture. Research on language and its associated methodology is already the subject of interest of psychologists, sociologists, historians, and anthropologists. Attempts to employ the linguistic model in other domains have also included the analyses of the works from the domain of visual arts, such as painting, sculpture, film and architecture. The research that seems the most interesting involves elements of semiotics. With reference to architecture, it has been carried out for a long time and we may be tempted to review its results. On the other hand, it is worth suggesting other possibilities of conducting research based on other linguistic methods, such as the "aesthetics of reception", which also seems to offer new interpretative possibilities. The analysis of some architectural pieces in South America will serve as an example of these explorations.

Keywords: linguistic turn, aesthetic of reception, semiotic in architecture, perception, colonial architecture

Language plays a leading role in describing, arranging and construing the social world, which also incorporates widely understood culture. Within its scope, it seems important to describe and interpret the environment in which people conduct their daily lives, including the architecture characteristic for particular areas. As pointed out by Lotar Rasiński, research on language and the methodology associated with it is already observed and implemented by psychologists (Jacques-Marie-Émile Lacan), sociologists (Pierre Bourdieu) and historians

(Hayden White) as well as anthropologists (following the model work by Clifford Geertz). Language has become a key which makes possible the understanding of contemporary reality.[1]

Attempts to employ the linguistic model in other domains have also included the analyses of the works from the domain of visual arts, such as painting, sculpture, film and architecture. The research that seems the most interesting involves elements of semiotics. With reference to architecture, it has been carried out for a long time and we may be tempted to review its results. On the other hand, it is worth suggesting other possibilities of conducting research based on other linguistic methods, such as the "aesthetics of reception", which also seems to offer new interpretative possibilities. The analysis of some architectural pieces in South America will serve as an example of these explorations.

A semiotic perspective on an architectural object

Since the creation of the discipline, art historians have been interested in the reception of the messages and meanings associated with particular architectural pieces, yet more comprehensive analyses within this scope started to appear in mid-20th century. Research on the semiotics[2] of architecture dates back to the 1950s, after it became clear that this discipline included not only linguistics, but also other fields and systems of signs, which do not make use of words. At the beginning of the 1990s, Krzysztof Lenartowicz tried to characterise the research on semiotics in the context of architecture; his "review" ends in early 1980s.[3] Apart from presenting his own brief comments, he discusses the book by Martin Krampen from 1979, *Meaning in the Urban Environment*,[4] as a "point-of-view" publication. However, later on he states that semiotic research on architecture is "in the state of rapid development. On the one hand, we have to do with a great number of works, which makes it impossible to discuss them all; on the other hand, clearer disciplinary divisions have already emerged, which makes it possible to systematize the material".[5]

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1 L. Rasiński, "'Reguły' i 'gry' świata społecznego – Wittgenstein, de Saussure i zwrot lingwistyczny w filozofii społecznej, in: *Język, dyskurs, społeczeństwo. Zwrot lingwistyczny w filozofii społecznej*, ed. L. Rasiński, Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, Warszawa 2009, p. 7.

2 Semiological (deriving from European thought) and semiotic (American) research dates back to the 1950s and is associated with the French school of structuralism.

3 The chapter titled "Semiologia architektury" in: J. K. Lenartowicz, *O psychologii architektury. Próba inwentaryzacji badań, zakres przedmiotowy i wpływ na architekturę*, Politechnika Krakowska, Kraków 1992, pp. 89-99.

4 M. Krampen, *Meaning in the Urban Environment*, Routledge Library Editions, London 1979.

5 J.K. Lenartowicz, *O psychologii*..., p. 94.

What seems worth mentioning, apart from the works discussed by Lenartowicz in more details, are the publications of Geoffrey Broadbent: the article "A Plain Man's Guide to the Theory of Signs in Architecture",[6] from the second half of the 1970s, the work *Architects and their Symbols*[7] from 1980, and the collection of articles by various authors *Sign, Symbols and Architecture*[8] edited by Broadbent, Richard Bunt, and Charles Jencks.[9] Among the older works, the ones that remain interesting are an essay by Umberto Eco[10] and a short text by Mieczysław Porębski.[11] The semiotic approach to architecture is also visible in later research on "meanings".[12] In 1993, Jorge Medina Vidal[13] edited a collection of articles on the interpretation of meanings in architecture. The book from 1997, *Semiotics around the World: Synthesis in Diversity*, proceedings of the congress organized in 1994 by the International Association for Semiotic Studies, contains a section on semiotic research within the domain of architecture and urban space.[14] Another book, *Rethinking Architecture: A Reader in Cultural Theory*, edited by Neil Leach,[15] was published in 1997: it was an

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6 G. Broadbent, 'A Plain Man's Guide to the Theory of Signs in Architecture", *Architectural Design* 1977, no 7–8, pp. 474–482.

7 G. Broadbent, "Architects and their Symbols", *Built Environment* 1980, vol. 6, no 1, *Architects, Space and People*, pp. 10–28.

8 G. Broadbent, R. Bunt, Ch. Jencks, eds., *Sign, Symbols and Architecture*, Wiley, New York 1980.

9 Both books are mentioned by Lenartowicz. The book *Sign, Symbols and Architecture* was reviewed by G. Necipoğlu:: "Sign, Symbols and Architecture by Geoffrey Broadbent, Richard Bunt, Charles Jencks", *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 1981, vol. 40, no 3, pp. 259–260. It is worth mentioning the following articles in this book: Ch. Jencks, "The Architectural Sign", pp. 71–118; X. R. de Ventós, "The Sociology of Semiology", pp. 169–202; M. Gandelsonas, D. Morton, "On Reading Architecture", pp. 243–273; J. Blau, "A Framework of Meaning in Architecture", pp. 333–366; E. Garroni, "The 'Language' of Architecture", pp. 379–410.

10 U. Eco, *Pejzaż semiotyczny*, transl. Adam Weinsberg, PIW, Warszawa 1972 [1968], pp. 271–323.

11 M. Porębski, *Ikonosfera*, PIW, Warszawa 1972, pp. 151–169.

12 Paul Crossley, among others, made use of the achievements of semiotics in his studies on meanings in medieval architecture. Cf. P. Crossley, "In Search of an Iconography of Medieval Architecture", in: *Symbolae Historiae Artium. Studia z historii sztuki Lechowi Kalinowskiemu dedykowane*, ed. J. Gadomski et al., PWN, Warszawa 1986, pp. 55–66.

13 The book sums up the work of the students who participated in the courses of *General semiotics* and *Semiotics of architecture* (in 1986–1993) in Instituto de Diseño at the Faculty of Architecture of the University of Montevideo, run by Jorge Medina Vidal; J. Medina Vidal (ed.), *Semiótica de la arquitectura. Trabajos monográficos*, Facultad de Arquitectura, Montevideo 1993.

14 The section concerning architecture and space includes 18 articles. I. Rauch, G.F. Carr, eds., *Semiotics Around the World: Synthesis in Diversity. Proceedings of the Fifth Congress of the International Association for Semiotic Studies, Berkeley 1994*, Mount de Gruyter, Berlin-New York 1997, pp. 511–581.

15 N. Leach (ed.), *Rethinking Architecture: A Reader in Cultural Theory*, Routledge, London-New York 1997.

anthology of theoretical and philosophical articles on architecture, also touching upon some issues of semiology, with texts by Roland Barthes[16] and Umberto Eco.[17] Among the Spanish language studies, it is worth mentioning the article by Claudio Gueri (2001)[18] and the book by Bruno Chuk (2005).[19] A Polish contribution to the field is a recently published book by Magdalena Borowska, *Estetyka i poszukiwanie znaczeń w przestrzeniach architektonicznych*.[20]

Although those books refer to examples of artworks from former epochs, they mainly concentrate on modern architecture: it is a subject of reflection, a search for signs and interpretations. Obviously, an analysis of both old and modern architecture can be carried out with the aid of certain elements of semiotic research, with an awareness of its limitations. Certain conclusions from the field of hermeneutics also seem important; here we can recapitulate the words of Ferdinand Fellman from his book *Symbolischer Pragmatismus*: "Whereas cognition focuses directly on objects, understanding opens perspectives in which objects appear. (...) however, objectivity is not rooted in objects, but in symbolic forms, which are the reason for possible objective objectivity"[21] (in this case objectivity of a building – a church). Paweł Dybel writes: "Hermeneutics in this form is a theory of understanding, which seeks the source of general meaning not in language (concepts and words), but in images and visions".[22]

The linguistic turn in the context of historical research

The linguistic turn in historical research was associated with the question about the possibility (or lack of possibility) of historical cognition. Post-modernist theories negate the fact that historical works recount real and objective history, events which happened exactly as they were described. Thus, Roland Barthes and Hayden White[23] claim that historical works are not actually different from

16 R. Barthes, "Semiology and the Urban", in: *Rethinking* ..., pp. 166–172; R. Barthes, 'The Eiffel Tower", in: *Rethinking* ..., pp. 172–180.

17 U. Eco, "Function and Sign: the Semiotics of Architecture", in: Rethinking ..., pp. 182–202; U. Eco, *How an Exposition Exposes Itself*, in: *Rethinking* ..., pp. 202–204.

18 C. Gueri, "Lenguaje, diseńo y arquitectura", *Cuadernos de la Facultad de Humanidades y Ciencias Sociales* 2001, vol. 17, febrero, pp. 211–250.

19 B. Chuk, *Semiótica Narrativa del Espacio Arquitectónico*, Nobuko, Buenos Aires 2005.

20 M. Borowska, *Estetyka i poszukiwanie znaczeń w przestrzeniach architektonicznych*, Semper, Warszawa 2013.

21 As cited in: P. Dybel, *Oblicza hermeneutyki*, Universitas, Kraków 2012, p. 20.

22 Ibid., p. 20.

23 The works of both authors we should mention in this context are: R. Barthes, "The Discourse of History", in *Comparativre Criticism: A Yearbook* 1981,vol. 3, pp. 3-28 and Hayden White, *Methahistory. The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Europe* (1973). I have used its Spanish translation: H. White, *Metahistoria. La imaginación histórica en la Europa del siglo XIX*, transl. S. Mastrangelo, Fondo de Cultura Económica, México 2014 [1973].

books of fiction; they describe "imaginary" stories and belong to fictional kind of writing.[24] In the introduction to his book, White asks about the meaning of the phrase "historical thinking" and the typical features characteristic solely of historical research. However, he arrives at the conclusion that although it was a subject of scholarly deliberations for the whole 19th century, there is no explicit answer to this question.[25]

This kind of considerations resulted in the development of certain type of reflections. Gaston Bachelard and Paul Feyerabend treat science as a kind of poetic activity, in which there is no consistent logic or research methodology.[26] On the other hand, Thomas Kuhn is a moderate sceptic,[27] believing that science cannot be treated as a reflection of the real world. It is also not considered to be fiction, but rather a historically and culturally conditioned discourse between those who agree with the principles governing the discourse.[28]

Hayden White also mentions that the question of the "fictional" vision of "reality" arose in the context of visual arts. The author points to *Art and Illusion* by Ernst H. Gombrich from 1960. Gombrich seeks the beginnings of the visual realism of Western art in the attempts of the Greek artists who tried to translate the techniques of narration of epic, tragic and historical writers into the language of painting.[29] Gombrich's deliberations are close to those of Erich Auerbach's, presented in his book *Mimesis. Dargestellte Wirklichkeit in der abendländischen Literatur* (1946).[30] Although the reflections of both authors derive from different sources (from the anti-Hegelian and the Hegelian position respectively), both works focus on the same problem: the nature of realistic representation. The authors ask the question about the "historical" components of a "realistic" representation. However, the most important issue in historical research is that of the "artistic" elements of "realistic" historiography.[31]

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24 G.G. Iggers, *La historiografía del siglo XX. Desde la objetividad al. desafio posmoderno*, transl. I. Jaksić, Fondo de Cultura Económica, México 2012 [1993], p. 193.

25 H. White, *Metahistoria*..., p. 13.

26 G. Bachelard, *Kształtowanie się umysłu naukowego: przyczynek do psychoanalizy wiedzy obiektywnej*, transl. D. Leszczyński, Słowo/ Obraz Terytoria, Gdańsk 2002 [1938]; P. K. Feyerabend, *Przeciw metodzie*, transl. S. Wiertlewski, Wydawnictwo Siedmiogród, Wrocław 1996.

27 T. Kuhn, *Struktura rewolucji naukowych*, Wydawnictwo Aletheia, Warszawa 2009.

28 G.G. Iggers, *La historiografía*..., pp. 195-196.

29 Ibid.

30 E. Auerbach, Mimesis. *Rzeczywistość przedstawiona w literaturze Zachodu*, transl. Z. Żabicki, Pruszyński i S-ka, Warszawa 2004.

31 H. White, *Metahistoria*..., p. 14.

The perception of architectural pieces as individual illusion

Works of art, especially architectural ones, seem to be objective and unchanging creations, yet our perceptions do not always accord with actually existing buildings. This also involves a kind of "fictionality". Tourists frequently get upset at the discovery that in direct contact with particular buildings, like the Eiffel Tower, Big Ben, or the Statue of Liberty, what they see is different from what they expected thanks to postcards, book illustrations or films. In fact they do not seek reality, but a kind of *déja-vu*.[32] This results, among other things, from the character of the modern world, in which images precede reality.[33] However, in the past the knowledge of the buildings of Rome, Seville, or other European cities was also mostly based not on experience, but on certain publications, sometimes provided with illustrations but often offering only comprehensive descriptions.[34] This sometimes led to surprising visualisations

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32 J. Fontcuberta, *El beso de Judas. Fotografía y Verdad*, Editorial Gustavo Gili, Barcelona 1997 [1996], p. 71; J.M. Català Domènech, *La forma de lo real. Introducción a los estudios visuales*, Editorial UOC, Barcelona 2008, p. 320.

33 J. Fontcuberta, *El beso*..., p. 71; probably everyone has had similar experience; I remember visiting the Louvre for the first time and my disappointment with Rubens's paintings, which were absolutely inconsistent with my former idea of mastery, while I was delighted with the tangibility of the Dutch still lifes. I cannot forget the impression made by the space of the Hagia Sophia temple, which cannot be represented or experienced through a photo. In the context of the modern reception of reality, it is worth mentioning the notions of simulacrum and hyper-reality, preceding/replacing the real world, popularized by Jean Baudrillard in his *Simulacra and Simulation* (1981).

34 The lists of the Jesuit college libraries in South America, compiled when the order was exiled, mention a lot of titles described as *antiguedades* (e.g. ANCh, Fondo Jesuitas, Sygn. 409 (1767), f. 126 v., *Antiguedades varias un tomo*, in the library of Cercado college in Lima); some of them can be identified: Ittem otro tomo Antiguedades de Roma de a folio (from the inventory of the Jesuit college library in La Paz 1769), AGNP, Temp. (Inventarios) Caja 1 Lagajo 16, f. 4v. Sometimes it is difficult to determine which book is mentioned in the inventory. Different publications (by different authors) "*antigüedades de Roma*" became popular guides both for those travelling to the Eternal City and those who wanted to see it without leaving home. These include the treatises from 1558 (on Rome) by Antonio Labacco, from 1537 (on Venice) by Sebastian Serlio or from 1575 (on Venice) by Luigi Contarini (Pedro J. Rueda Ramírez, *Negocios e intercambio cultural: El Comercio de libros con América en la Carretera de Indias (siglo XVIII)*, Universidad de Sevilla, Sevilla 2005, p. 426) or a publication by Palladio from 1554 (A. Palladio, *Antichità di Roma raccolta brevemente dagli autori antichi e moderni*, Vicenzo Luciano, Roma 1554), which had had 19 editions by 1711 (A. Magrini, *Memorie intorno la vita e le opere di Andrea Palladio*, Della Tipografia del Seminario, Padova 1845, pp. IX–X). Another often mentioned book is *Churches of Rome/ Iglesias de Roma* (ANCh, Fondo Jesuitas, Sygn. 409 (1767), f. 69r., also in the library of Cercado college in Lima). Another example is a book from the Jesuit college library in Potosi: *En folio Antiguedades y Principado de la ciudad de Sevilla por Don Rodrigo Caro* (AGNP, Temp. Fondo: Temp. Caja 172 Legajo 10: f. 58v). It is worth mentioning *Antigüedades y principado de la Ilustrísima ciudad de Sevilla y corografía de su convento jurídico o antigua Chancillería* (Sevilla, 1634) by Rodrigo Caro (1573–1647) – a book which was not provided with illustrations, yet it includes interesting descriptions of historical buildings.

of some commonly known edifices. A very interesting case is the juxtaposition of the anonymous works (a wood engraving and a drawing) depicting the Castle of the Holy Angel from 1557 and 1540 with a modern photograph, presented by Ernst Gombrich. It appears that a pen sketch quite accurately conveys the view, while a German graphic print was probably made based on an account and although the artist tried to show the characteristic features of the building, the castle definitely resembles a "German Burg".[35]

Some very interesting examples of synthetic reproductions are the "paintings" and "real descriptions" of Jerusalem, sometimes limited to the sacred measures – distances between the particular pieces, e.g. the Stations of the Cross. Determination of distance was perceived as the only measurable and constant, thus objective, value thanks to which it was possible to transfer the sacredness of the original to a different space.[36] Maps with the most important points inscribed on them were also copied to enable a spiritual pilgrimage.

In remote South America people also felt the need to travel spiritually to the sacred places. In Peru, the collection in the San Miguel parish church in Cayma[37] includes a preserved painting depicting an idealised map of Jerusalem[38]: a big canvas reproducing the layout of the famous city. This map appeared for the first time in the volume of Christian Kruik van Adrichem *Urbis Hierosolimae quemadmodum ea Christi tempore floruit suburbanorum eius brevis descriptio* published in Cologne in 1584,[39] and it was then reproduced in many other publications. Another "guide" to Jerusalem and the Holy Land,

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35 E.H. Gombrich, *Sztuka i złudzenie. O psychologii przedstawiania obrazowego*, transl. J. Zarański, PIW, Warszawa 1981 [1956], pp. 73–74.

36 Z. Bania, *Święte miary jerozolimskie. Grób Pański - Anastasis - Kalwaria*, Neriton, Warszawa 1997.

37 R. Mujica Pinilla, "Identidades alegóricas: lecturas iconográficas del barroco al neoclásico", in: *El Barroco Peruano 2*, ed. R. Mujica Pinilla, Banco de Crédito, Lima 2003, pp. 300–301; E. Kubiak, "El devote peregrino y viaje de Tierra Santa» de Antonio del Castillo y la influencia de su obra en el arte del Virreinato del Perú", *Quaderni di Thule* 2011, vol. 10, pp. 218–219; E. Kubiak, "Jerozolima na ziemiach Nowego Świata – święte Miasto w sztuce Wicekrólestwa Peru", in: *Architektura znaczeń. Studia ofiarowane prof. Zbigniewowi Bani w 65. rocznicę urodzin i w 40-lecie pracy dydaktycznej*, eds. A. S. Czyż, J. Nowiński, M. Wiraszka, Instytut Historii Sztuki UKSW, Warszawa 2011, pp. 96–98.

38 The aim of the painting was to enable a spiritual pilgrimage to the Holy City, which was inaccessible to the faithful from the San Miguel parish (E. Kubiak, "El devote peregrino...", p. 221); it could also serve as an "illustration" of sermons, R. Mujica Pinilla, *Identidades alegóricas*..., pp. 300–301.

39 This piece was then included in the more extensive publication titled *Theatrum Terrae Sanctae et bibliocarum historiarum cum tabulis geographicis aere expressis*, which appeared after author's death, also in Cologne in 1590; S. Kobielus, *Niebieska Jerozolima. Od sacrum miejsca do sacrum modelu*, Pallotinum, Warszawa 1989, p. 74; Z. Bania, *Święte miary*..., pp. 72–76.

enjoying popularity in the territory of the Crown, but also in colonial America, was the book by Antonio de Castillo *El devote peregrino y viaje de Tierra Santa*, published for the first time in Madrid in 1654. Apart from his own experience of his pilgrimage to the Holy Land, the author, a Franciscan monk, also gained his knowledge from his predecessors; this is probably why, among other numerous paintings of the Holy Land, the book also includes the map of the Holy City from Adrichem's work, titled like the painting from the church in Cayma: *Ierusalén como estava quando murio en ella Jesu Christo Nuestro Redemptor* (Fig. 1).[40]

But even direct contact with historical objects was no guarantee of their precise rendering; with time, the memory of certain elements became blurred. Sometimes comparison to famous buildings or architecture of a particular region was based only on a detail, a fragment of a remembered form or material.[41] Following this path, we can point to the methods of contextualisation of Latin American colonial architecture used by European newcomers, who, discovering new reality, tried to describe their visual impressions, recalling familiar buildings.[42] A very interesting account was provided by Juan Domingo Coleti, who, describing the main square in Quito in 1757, related the newly encountered images of the previously unknown city to his visual experience from Italy: "in the middle of the square there is a fountain made of hard stone, which resembles our stone, called *Robigno* in Istria; it is not badly construed, the container is crowned with a figure of a gilded angel, which throws water through a trumpet as if he was playing".[43]

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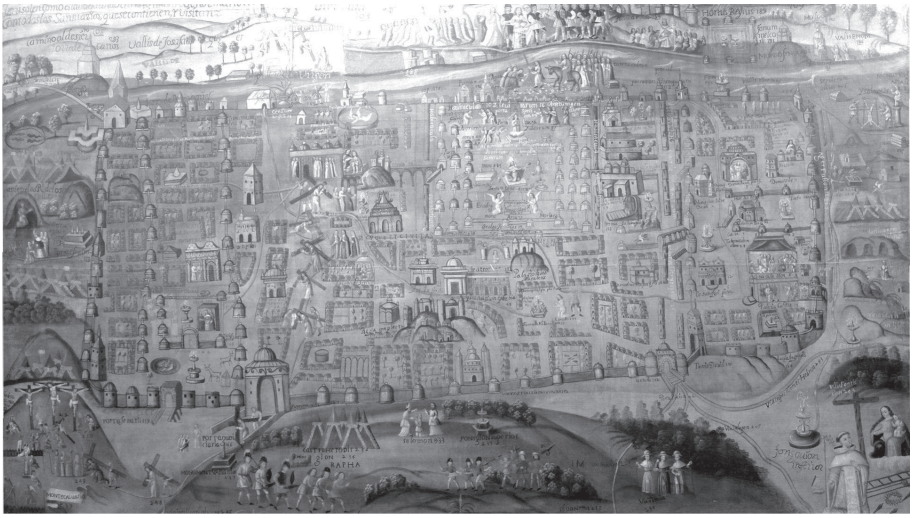
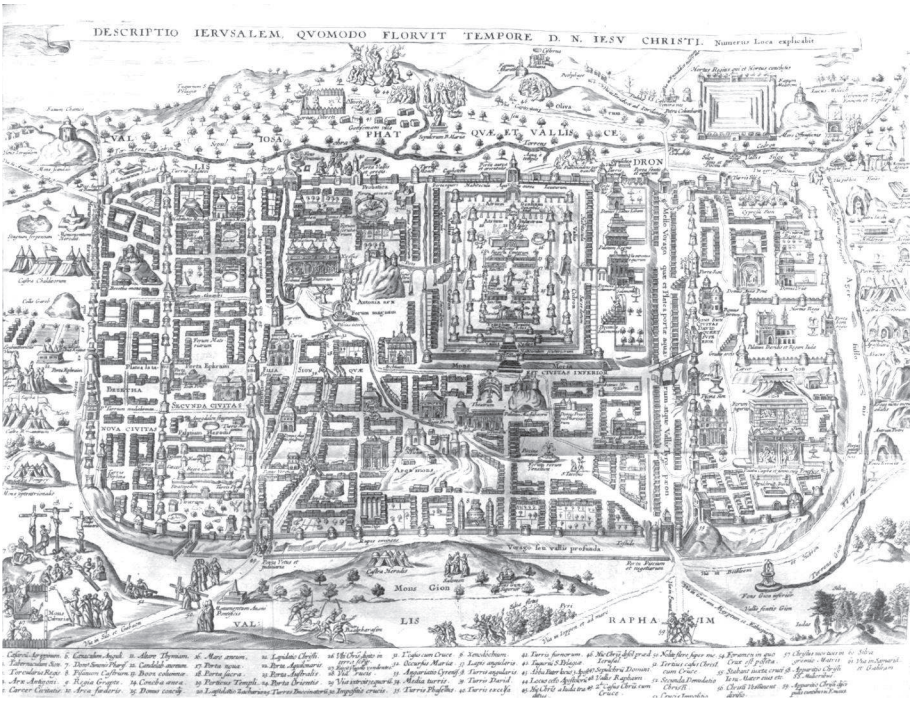
40 The map of Jerusalem in the Madrid edition from 1654 is the plate between pages 30 and 31; E. Kubiak, *Jerozolima na ziemiach*..., pp. 97–98.

41 According to Rudolf Arnheim, classification based on similarities exists both in time and in space. Aristotle considered similarity to be one of the characteristics of objects, which formed associations in the mind, making memory associate the past with the present; R. Arnheim, *Sztuka i percepcja wzrokowa. Psychologia twórczego oka*, transl. J. Mach, Officyna, Łódź 2013 [1974], p. 92.

42 Johann Wolfgang Goethe writes: "we may cite here (...) the true proverb, "One sees only what one knows." For just as a short-sighted man sees more clearly an object from which he draws back than one to which he draws near, because his intellectual vision comes to his aid, so the perfection of observation really depends on knowledge." J.W. Goethe, Introduction to the Propyläen, [1798], [in:] Prefaces and Prologues. Vol. XXXIX. The Harvard Classics. New York: P.F. Collier & Son, 1909–14; online at www.bartleby.com/39/.

43 "En la mitad de la plaza se halla una fuente de piedra dura que se asemeja a nuestra piedra llamada de Robigno en la Istria, no es de mal trabajo, y en la enci ma de la pila tiene un ángel dorado que arroja el agua por una trompeta que parece tocada"; J.D. Coleti, "Relación inédita de la Ciudad de Quito", *Museo histórico* (1963) [1757], vol. 15, no 45-46 p. 171.





1. Jerusalem – Jerusalén como estaua quando christo nuestro Señor murió, a painting from the 18th century, San Miguel church in Cayma, Arequipa, Peru (phot. E. Kubiak, 2010); Jerusalem according to Christian Kruik van Adrichem, (Castillo 1666, phot. E. Kubiak, 2010)

A Spaniard, José de la Rosa, recalling the cathedral in Lima, wrote that "its interior architecture follows the one of Seville cathedral" (Fig. 2).[44] Similarly, Antonio Sepp, describing a Jesuit college in Buenos Aires, states with some pride and admiration that "five years ago our fathers found lime and a method of forming bricks. That is why the roof of the college is not thatched, but covered with tiles, as in Germany",[45] which was his homeland. It is an illustration of Mieczysław Porębski's remark that each building is a more or less accurate copy of another building"[46] (the remark refers more to the creation, but also to the reception of architectural works by their creators and users), or the idea of Rudolf Arnheim, who said that perception cannot be limited to what is registered by the eye, looking at the external world. An act of perception is never isolated; it is only a moment in a stream of innumerable similar acts committed in the past and still alive in memory.[47]

Sometimes perception is connected with the structures beyond our awareness, which determine the process of construing certain images-depictions[48];

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44 "La fachada del oriente ocupa la Iglesia Cathedral y Palacio Arzobispal: la Iglesia imita en su arquitectura interior ala de la Cathedral de Sevilla", AGI, MP-Libros Manuscritos, 9 (1789); J. de la Rosa, *Descripción General de la América Meridional, comprehendida en los Virreynatos del Perú, Buenos Ayres y Reyno de Chile. De su Terreno, Climas, Producciones naturales, Animales, Abes, Pezes, Habitantes, Comercio, Fabricas, Agricultura, Minerales, Govierno tanto Secular como Eclesiástico y de cuantas curiosidades se hallan en aquellos Payses. & Primera parte que la da a luz, don José de la Rosa*. En Madrid, año de 1789, f. 41 v.

45 "Hace cinco años, nuestros Padres encontraron y el modo de cocer ladrillos. Por ello, el techo del Colegio no es de paja, sino de tejas, como en Alemania", A. Sepp, *Los relatos del Viaje y la Misión entre los Guaraníes*, Editorial Parroquia San Rafael, Cruz del Chaco 2003 [1696], p. 20.

46 M. Porębski, *Ikonosfera*..., p. 163.

47 R. Arnheim, *Myślenie wzrokowe*, transl. M. Chojnacki, Gdańsk: Słowo/obraz terytoria, 2011 [1969], p. 99; Herman A. Witkin and Donald Goodenough, psychologists conducting research on perception, have also reached a conclusion that what we expect is important for perceiving reality. What is also interesting is the difference in perception dependent on the society in which the observer has been brought up. The perception of an observer who enjoys greater freedom is different from the perception of someone who belongs to a society restricting the sphere of personal freedom and liberties: cf. H. A. Witkin, D. R. Goodenough, *Cognitive Styles: Essence and Origins. Field Dependence and Field Independence*, International University Press, New York 1981. Ernst Gombrich writes: "what we call seeing is conditioned by habits and ecpectations" (E. Gombrich, *Sztuka i złudzenie*..., p. 91).

48 For a number of years, researchers working within the framework of neuroarthistory have been interested in a similar problem, namely the influence of environment, in particular visual environment, on perception. This trend is an example of the "cognitivisation" of many problems formerly solved with the use of the traditional methodology of the humanities and social sciences" (cf. P. Przybysz, *Wstęp. W stronę neuroestetycznej teorii sztuki*, in: *Mózg i jego umysły. Studia z kogniwistyki i filozofii umysłu*, eds. W. Dziarnowska, A. Klawiter, Zysk i S-ka, Poznań 2006, p. 321). The research is based on the findings of neurophysiologists, with particular focus on the visual (J. Onians, *Neuroarthistory: From Aristotle and Pliny to Baxandall and Zeki*, Yale University Press, Yale 2008).

2. Cathedral interior, Lima, Peru (phot. E. Kubiak, 2012) / cathedral interior, Seville, Spain (phot. E. Kubiak, 2005).

this phenomenon can be associated with the archetypes investigated by Gustav Jung or, more iconically, with the "frame topics" and "iconographical gravity" described by Jan Białostocki.[49] In the case of architecture and space, we can additionally talk about "the memory of the place". Frequently, although cultures keep changing and fading, certain spaces – *locis* – have long tradition of sacredness, which then helps to create metaphorical images functioning even separately from their original location. I would like to recall in this context the icon of cultural metissage,[50] namely the depiction of the Virgen de Cerro Rico. After the Spanish conquest, the mountain overlooking Potosi (Bolivia), which was the ancient place of the cult of Pachamama (Mother Earth) observed by the local people,[51] assumed a new Christian face of Our Lady.[52] Nowa

49 J. M. Català Domènech, *La forma*..., p. 320; J. Białostocki, *Estilo e Iconografía: contribución a una ciencia de las artes*, Barral Editores, Barcelona 1973, p. 117.

50 The notion introduced by French anthropologists, which describes the phenomenon of cultural blending of all kinds, and especially the blending with racial and territorial connotations associated with the territory of Latin America, see: F. Laplantine, A. Nouss, *Mestizajes. De Arcimboldo a zombi*, transl. V.A. Goldstein, Fondo de Cultura Económica, Buenos Aires 2007 [2001].

51 T. Gisbert, *Iconografía y mítos indígenas en el arte*, Editorial Gisbert y Cia., La Paz 2008 [1980], pp. 19–20; "a little bit further than two miles away from the city of Potosí on the royal route, there are two hills, which have been exceptionally worshipped by the Natives from time immemorial, making offerings and consulting their doubts with demons"; "poco más de dos millas de esta Villa (Potosí), en el camino real están dos cerros a que los indios desde tiempo inmemorial han tenido extraña devoción acudiendo allí a hacer sus ofrendas y sacrificios y consultando al demonio en sus dudas"; J. de Arriaga, *El P. Pablo Joseph de Arriaga [ex commiss.], Lima 29 de Abril 1599*, in: *Monumenta Peruana*, ed. A. de Egaña, vol. VI, (1596–1599), Romae: Institutum Historicum Societatis Iesu, 1974 [1599], pp. 687–688.

52 T. Gisbert, *Iconografía y mítos*..., pp. 17–22; a synchresis of traditional beliefs of the chthonic

days, the depiction has become a symbolic image of syncretism, a new manifestation of the cultural identity of South America. This is well exemplified in two frames from Claudia Llosa's film (2006) *Madeinusa*, in which a syncretic depiction of Our Lady as a mountain appears in the decoration of the ephemeral architecture built in connection with the celebration of Easter, and of the procession (Fig. 3), which takes place at that time, in an unspecified place, a fairytale-mythical location "over the Andes and far away".[53]

Our anthropological visuality has taught us to expect certain buildings-institutions in particular places in the urban structure. We expect a cathedral or the main church in the central city square, a highlighted seat of the city council or a ruler's palace in the main streets – at least in the case of historical metropolises. Certain architectural elements can become "frame topics", such as, for example, the structure of a dome, denoting the sacrum in many cultures. In Europe this tradition originated from the ancient times, and enjoyed unusual popularity in the Renaissance. Although the continuity (constructional, but not symbolic) of that tradition was broken in the Middle Ages, the concept of "a dome" functioned in scholarly writings from the scholastics to the 18th century, as a symbol, a metaphor of link. The word *copula*, as a logical term, means "a link": according to Wiliam Ockham, a connection between the subject and the environment;[54] also between the material and the spiritual (Marsilio Ficino).[55] It is a symbol of the eternal link of spirituality and corporeality in human life (Giovanni Pico della Mirandola);[56] or, according to Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph von Schelling, of a relation between the macro- and the

kind with the cult of Our Lady is associated with other Marian depictions, e.g. of the Virgen de Urqupiña: J. Szemiński, M. Ziółkowski, *Mity, rytuały i polityka Inków*, PIW, Warszawa 2006, pp. 308–309.

53 Equating divinity with a mountain is typical not only of the Christianity in Latin America; in the liturgy of the Orthodox Church, the Virgin was described as "the Holy Mountain", and her womb as a cave. In the homily for the Day of the Annunciation, Saint German writes: "Hail full of grace, the God's mountain, the rich mountain, the mountain visible to all" (*Church Fathers* as cited in: S. Kobielus, *Blask ciemności i światło niewiedzy*, Tyniec Wydawnictwo Benedyktynów, Kraków 2005, p. 32); a comparison of the Virgin to a mountain may be also found in "The songs about Holy Virgin Mary" by Ephrem the Syrian; Ibid

54 "Copula autem vocatur verbum copulans praedicatum cum subiecto", W. of Ockham, *Summa Logicae*, ed. Ph. Boehner, part 1, St. Bonaventure, New York: Franciscan Institute, 1957 [1285–1349], p. 86.

55 According to Ficino, a human being serves the function of the horizon, *copula mundi*, a peculiar *terminus medius* between the forces of Heaven and matter, which supports them and makes the work of Nature perfect; M. Ficino, *Opera Omnia*, vol. I, Heinrich Petri, Basilea 1576, pp. 570–572.

56 G. Pico della Mirandola, *Oratio de hominis dignitate*, ed. E. Garin, Edizioni Studio Tesi, Perdenone 1994 [1486], p. 24.

3. Cerro Rico in Potosí, Bolivia (phot. E. Kubiak, 2010); a frame from "Madeinusa" directed by Claudia Llosa (2006); Virgen del Cerro, an effigy of Our Lady, a copy of a 17th-century painting from Museo Casa de Moneda in Potosí in a café located in Belén church, Potosí, Bolivia (phot. E. Kubiak, 2004)

microcosm.[57] The sacralisation of space with the use of a dome as a sign of a reconstruction of Heaven by human beings who create a model of the universe on Earth appears in many religions and cultural milieus: from ancient Rome through western and eastern Christianity to Islam and Buddhism (Fig. 4, 5).[58]

A dome is only one example; there are many more architectural structures which can be interpreted in terms of Białostocki's "frame topics". Another, very characteristic one is the stairs (ladders), which frequently serve not only practical functions, but also symbolic ones; Geoffrey Broadbent describes stairs as a "cross-cultural" structure.[59] Other similar architectural motifs include a gate[60] or a column.[61]

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57 According to Schelling, copula is an absolute link („das absolute Band, oder die Copula", F.W.J. von Schelling, *Über das Verhältnis des Realen und Idealen in der Natur oder Entwickelung der ersten Grundsätze der Naturphilosophie an den Prinzipien der Schwere und des Lichts*, Weber, Landshut 1807 [1798], p. 6) and a life-giving source of nature („Der Lebensquell der [...] Natur ist [...] die Copula", Ibid., p. 31). It is a link between the Sun and what is finite, and what is infinite (Ibid., p. 7), between load and transience (Ibid., p. 31), thus between two assumptions which make a thing real.

58 It is enough here to mention one of the most famous buildings in the Muslim world: the Dome on the Rock; about the building see: R. Ettinghausen, O. Grabar, M. Jenkins-Medina, *Sztuka i architektura islamu 650–1250*, transl. J. Kozłowska, I. Nowicka, K. Pachniak, Wydawnictwo Akademickie Dialog, Warszawa 2007 [2001], pp. 15–16; N. Rabbat, "The Meaning of the Umayyad Dome of the Rock", *Muqarnas* 1989, no 6, pp. 12–21; N. Rabbat, "The Dome of the Rock Revisited", *Muqarnas* 1993, no 10, pp. 66–75; M. Jakubczyk, "Architektura stupy buddyjskiej jako przykład 'projektu sakralnego'", in: *Przestrzeń, filozofia i architektura. Osiem rozmów o poznawaniu, produkowaniu i konsumowaniu*, ed. E. Rewers, Wydawnictwo Fundacji Humaniora, Poznań 1999, pp. 15–33.

59 G. Broadbent, "The Semiotics of the Void", in: *Semiotics around the World: Synthesis in Diversity. Proceedings of the Fifth Congress of the International Association for Semiotic Studies, Berkeley 1994*, ed. I. Rauch, G.F. Carr, Mount de Gruyter, Berlin–New York 1997, p. 511;

The aesthetics of reception and the reception of architecture

The notion of "the aesthetics of reception" comes from Germany, i.a. from the writings by Haus Robert Jauss[62] and Wolfgang Iser.[63] It originated in the research into the reception of literary works.[64] Jauss explains that it is not an autonomic discipline, but a research method, open to transformation and dependent on cooperation with other disciplines.[65] The aesthetics of reception assumes that in order to understand literature and art as a process of aesthetic communication, it is necessary to consider three components which are equally involved in the process: the author, the work, and the recipient.[66] There are two types of the aesthetics of reception. The theory of reception, or assimilation, focuses on the analysis of the ways in which certain works were received and assimilated at the moment of their creation and in the following epochs; a representative of this trend is Hans Robert Jauss.[67] The other type is described as the aesthetics of creation: a theory of creation, i.e. the analysis of a piece of art from the point of view of the artist and/or the epoch; the representatives of this trend include Konrad Fiedler, Theodor W. Adorno, Wolfgang Iser and René Passeron. The aesthetics of reception assumes that

e.g. the motif of a ladder can be also presented in the symbolic and global perspective, see: K. Cichoń, E. Kubiak, "Entra la tierra y el cielo – la escalera alegórica en la pintura peruana y polaca", Quaderni di Thule 2013, vol. 12, pp. 487–488.

60 J. Białostocki, „Drzwi śmierci: Antyczny symbol grobowy i jego tradycja", in: J. Białostocki, *Symbole i obrazy w świecie sztuki*, PWN, Warszawa 1982, pp. 158–186.

61 U. Eco, "A Componental Analysis of the Architectural Sign", in: *Signs, Symbols* ..., pp. 213–232.

62 A foundation of his concept was hermeneutic philosophy of Gadamer: H.R. Jauss, *Toward an Aesthetic of Reception*, transl. T. Bahti, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis 2010 [1982]; about this see also: H.R. Jauss, *Rezeption, Rezeptionsästhetik*, in: *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie*, ed. K. Gründer, vol. 8, Schwabe Verlag, Basel-Stuttgart 1995, pp. 996–1001.

63 W. Iser, *The Act of Reading: a Theory of Aesthetic Response*, The Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore-London 1978.

64 See also: W. Kemp, *Rezeptionsästhetik*, in: *Metzler Lexikon Kunstwissenschaft. Ideen, Methoden, Begriffe*, ed. U. Pfisterer, Verlag J.B. Metzler, Stuttgart 2011, pp. 388–391; I. Herklotz, *Rezeptionsgeschichte*, in: *Metzler Lexikon* ..., pp. 391–394.

65 A. Ruíz de Samaniego, *Recepción* (*estetica de*), in: *Diccionario Akal de Estética*, ed. E. Souriau, transl. I. Grasa Adé, X. Meilán Pita, C. Mercadal, A. Ruíz de Samaniego, Ediciones Akal S.A., Madrid 1998 [1990], p. 936; the same is confirmed by Peter Uwe Hohendahl; P.U. Hohendahl, *Sobre el estado de la investigación de la recepción*, transl. J. C. Garrido Medina, in: *Estética de la recepción*, ed. J.A. Mayoral, Arco Libros, Madrid 1987 [1974], p. 31.

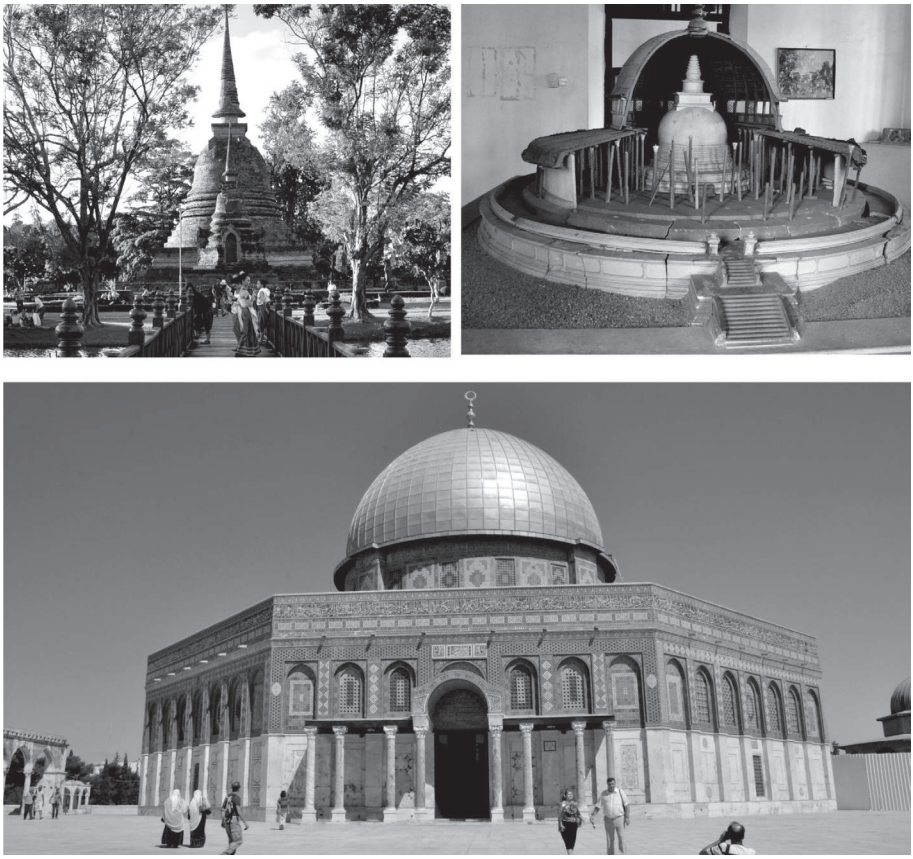
66 H.R. Jauss, *Rezeption*..., p. 996; about the role of a recipient see also: H.R. Jauss, *El lector como instancia de una nueva historia de la literatura*, transl. A. Álvarez, in: *Estética de*..., pp. 59–85.

67 R. Rochlitz, *Recepción/ Receptividad*, in: *Diccionario Akal* ..., p. 937; reception as a methodological concept appeared after 1950, first in the research into theology and philosophy, then also into history, H.R. Jauss, *Rezeption*..., p. 996.

4. A dome of Hagia Sofia church, 532-537, arch. Anthemios of Tralles and Isidore of Miletus, a reconstructed dome 558-563, Istanbul, Turkey (phot. E. Kubiak, 2011); a dome of the Jesuit church in Cusco, after 1650, Peru (phot. E. Kubiak, 2015)

no recipient's reaction which results from the contact with a piece of art can be ignored. The creative character of "assimilation" has been acknowledged for some time now; we can talk about "directed creation". Yet, it is always secondary to the one implied by the work's origins. It is important that we find elements of earlier pieces in the older ones, or original interpretations inspired by earlier objects. The aesthetics of reception opposes 19th-century historicism; it differs from it in striving to construe a critical evaluative trend. It is the criticism associated with a particular epoch that is fundamental for constituting an aesthetic object; it is the "epoch" that decides which work will survive as "literature" (or as a "work of art") and which one will not.[68] Both Jauss and Iser find the "openness" of a piece of art, what can "be added" to it, very important.[69] Iser points out that the vagueness of a piece of art allows for the creative input of the recipient. According to Jauss, the vagueness of literary works (or, for that matter, architectural works) is the reason why a piece of art is differently interpreted and semantically categorized in different epochs. He introduces the notion of "hermeneutic dissimilarity" between earlier and current perception of the same piece of art.[70] Jauss's basic concept is *Erwartungshorizont* („horizon of expectation"). The observation of the way in which the work meets the horizon of expectations of the recipients in particular times is a measure of the innovative character of the piece.[71] Certain elements of

68 A. Ruíz de Samaniego, *Recepción* (*estetica de*)..., p. 936.
69 In this place it is worth mentioning a concept of "the open work" Umberto Eco; U. Eco, *Dzieło otwarte: Forma i nieokreśloność w poetykach współczesnych*, W.A.B., Warszawa 2008 [1962].
70 A. Ruíz de Samaniego, *Recepción* (*estetica de*)..., p. 936.
71 R. Rochlitz, *Recepción/Receptividad*..., p. 937.



5. Stupa in the Wat Sa Si complex, 14th century, Sukothai, Thailand (phot. E. Kubiak, 204); a model of the Thuparama Vatadage stupa, 250-210 BC; reconstruction according to S. Paranavtan PhD, Anuradhapura Site Museum, Anaradhapura, Sri Lanka (phot. E. Kubiak, 2012); a dome on the Rock, 691; Jerusalem, Israel (phot. E. Kubiak, 2010)

"the aesthetics of reception" can be used in the analysis of architectural works, namely Robert Jauss's findings on the problems of interpretational dissimilarities in different epochs, e.g. the reception of particular pieces of art by the contemporaries of its creators, and the viewers-tourists who saw it much later, up to modern interpretations. What is also important is the location of selected objects on the cultural horizon of various epochs; it is not only based on the interpretation suggested by art historians, but also on the review of the phenomena whose "characters" are the particular works.

With reference to Latin American colonial architecture, two aspects of reception seem particularly interesting. Firstly, it is the reception of the European models in the Renaissance and Baroque buildings in South America and their local re-interpretations, adaptations to the recipients' needs, i.e. Jauss's "horizon of expectations" of the contemporary inhabitants of the metropolises, cities, towns and provinces of the extensive South American Viceroyalties. Secondly, what also seems important is the creation of new, local models and their influence on the architecture of the particular regions. In the case of the colonial churches, we will certainly find some edifices which were the source of the local architectural traditions, and those which are part of the current trends of local architecture.

The European models have influenced the architectural forms of the Latin American cathedrals situated in the most important metropolises. Both their spatial layout with a post-Gothic rib vault construction and their two-tower composition were borrowed from them. Another European form is the layout of the Il Gesů church, the most characteristic of the Jesuit churches, similar to those e.g. in Quito, Lima, or Bogota.

Local solutions are clearly visible in the architecture of the Andean regions of the former Viceroyalty of Peru, such as Cusco, Arequipa, Collao or Potosí. The architecture of those regions in characterised by an extraordinary variety of decorative forms, a mixture of European and native styles with such powerful expression that it has been even given its own name, "estilo mestizo". It is also an object of pride in the local communities and one of the elements defining their cultural identity (Fig. 6, 7).

The reception of these, rather than some other, forms resulted from "the horizon of expectations". The Europeanized society of the metropolis adopted the architectural patterns coming from the Old World, while the Natives and the Mestizos from the mountain areas of Peru, introduced such far-reaching changes that they created a new formal quality, which has powerfully influenced the whole region.

At the end of these deliberations, I would only like to add that, in my opinion, borrowing concepts from the domain of linguistic/semiotic studies may be extremely helpful in the research on architecture. Yet, it must be remembered that it is only one of the available methodological positions.

6. Mural in the neighbourhood of the bus station, advertising the city and the region, with the view of the church "in Cuscan style" from Santo Tomás de Chumbivilcas, Cusco, Peru (phot. E. Kubiak, 2015); a façade of Santo Tomás de Chumbivilcas church, (phot. E. Kubiak, 2015)

7. Decoration details, San Miguel church Cayma early 18th century and San Juan de Yanahuara church, 1750, Peru, (phot. E. Kubiak, 2010)

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ZWROT LINGWISTYCZNY" I DWUDZIESTOWIECZNE MOŻLIWOŚCI BADANIA ARCHITEKTURY DAWNEJ. PERCEPCJA I RECEPCJA DZIEŁ ARCHITEKTONICZNYCH W AMERYCE POŁUDNIOWEJ (streszczenie)

Język odgrywa ogromna rolę w opisywaniu, organizowaniu i konstruowaniu świata społecznego, w zakres którego wchodzi także szeroko rozumiana kultura. Badania nad językiem i związaną z nimi metodologię wykorzystują już z powodzeniem psychologowie, socjolodzy, jak również historycy, a także antropolodzy. Próby przełożenia metod badań lingwistycznych objęły także interpretacje dzieł z zakresu sztuk wizualnych, takich jak malarstwo, rzeźba, film czy architektura. Najbardziej interesujące wydają się badania z zakresu semiotyki. W odniesieniu do obiektów architektury trwają one już od lat i można pokusić się o pewne podsumowanie tej problematyki. Z drugiej zaś strony warto zaproponować kolejne możliwości badań w oparciu o inne metody lingwistyczne jak na przykład „estetyka recepcji", które jak się wydaje także zapewniają nowe możliwości interpretacyjne. Jako przykłady tych rozważań posłużyły obiekty architektoniczne z obszarów Ameryki Południowej.

Słowa kluczowe: zwrot lingwistyczny, estetyka recepcji, semiotyka w architekturze, percepcja, architektura kolonialna,

Art Inquiry. Recherches sur les arts 2015, vol. XVII
ISSN 1641-9278

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AFRICAN CONTEMPORARY ART AND THE CURATORIAL TURN

Abstract: During the fifty year period of the second half of the 20th century the field of African Art History, as well as the forms of art studies and art exhibitions have changed considerably. This article considers the evolution of the idea of African identity in contemporary arts. I would like to examine the different forms of art representation and interviewing of African fine arts in the last three decades. In order to illustrate the dynamic changes in the European approach to African Art, it is simply enough to recall the famous remarks of Carl Einstein and Roy Sieber on that subject or William Rubin's controversial exhibition *Primitivism in 20th Century Art* at the Museum of Modern Art in New York (1984). It seems that the visibly growing practice of engaging curators of African origin in the creation of exhibitions of modern African art, particularly as a strategy to incorporate the voices of those represented, is one of the most important aspects of the "curatorial turn" of the 21st century.

Keywords: African art, curatorial turn, museum, exhibitions, contemporary art

In his most influential book entitled *The Predicament of Culture*, James Clifford raised the problem of cross-cultural translations, challenging the notion of ethnographic authority and asking the fundamental question: "Who has the authority to speak for a group's identity or authenticity?"[1] This question has great significance for the discussions of museum exhibitions as narratives about cultural creation from Africa and to considerations by African artists on and off the continent. Since the mid-1980s there has been a shift in the strategies museums adopt to enhance participation and to ensure that museums remain

1 J. Clifford, *Predicament of Culture*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge MA 1988, p. 8.

responsive and relevant to the communities they serve. Of particular interest is the extent to which those who are the focus of an exhibition play a role in their own representation. Increasingly, museum professionals recognize the benefits of exhibition models that rethink the singular, authoritative voice of the museum and embrace the telling of complex, multi-vocal narratives resonant with the realities of lived experience.

This article considers the questions of representation and interviewing as they have been employed in the creation of exhibitions of modern African art, particularly as strategies to incorporate the voices of those represented and as they are used in ethnographic research. I examine museum exhibitions as specific contexts for the dissemination of those narratives, and I draw attention to selected museum exhibitions that can serve as useful models for presenting Africa's so-called traditional arts as well the contemporary art from the African continent.[2] With regard to contemporary African art, the examples cited are illustrative of an equally important commitment to ensure that the voices and perspectives of contemporary artists are incorporated into the exhibitions fe aturing their work. The creation of any exhibition, regardless of its subject matter, requires familiarity with a vast body of literature that is used to frame the approach a curator or a team adopts in selecting and interpreting objects and ideas. The scholarship on the arts of Africa has typically drawn upon research methodologies employed over the years in such distinct disciplines as art history, anthropology, history, folklore, philosophy, and so on. Research results have reflected the prevailing disciplinary perspectives, and their limitations, about Africa at particular points in time, and these perspectives influenced the ways in which African peoples and cultures were represented in scholarly research and in museum exhibitions. Over time, this interdisciplinary approach has resulted in the production of discursive, dynamic, and complex narratives about African creativity, which until recent decades were largely silent in the presentation and interpretation of their cultural heritage. The fundamental issue, it seems, is how various strategies of representation allow museums to bring artists, community representatives, and other individuals into their spaces in order to voice their perspectives in exhibition narratives. The inclusion of these voices is a paradigmatic shift in museum practice. It has transformed the narrative spaces of exhibitions into discursive spaces that reflect the complexities of the human experience and new engagements with the diverse publics served by the museums.

Other important questions which need to be answered are: what is "African" about the art of Africa? Why is it African art? What makes it worthy

2 To see more: *Contemporary African Art Since 1980*, O. Enwezor, Ch. Okeke-Agulu ed., Damiani, Bologna 2009, pp. 10-12.

of distinctive study? What distinguishes or highlights it from the rest of the work of humankind and codifies it as a canonical and specialized corpus of creative expression by the artists living in the continent and by its Diaspora? What is the African soul that the artists discover, invent, and celebrate in their works? Is it true that, as Ugandan writer Okot p'Bitek claims in his posthumous book, "In an African society, art is life. It is not a performance. It is not necessarily a profession. It is life."[3]

A great many volumes of books, catalogs, essays, and studies have been published on the subject of the art of Africa, devoted to African art history and art criticism, from ancient icons to recent works. In these publications, the continent is often defined within a distinctive spatial feature coinciding with a distinctive history and a distinctive expressive culture titled African art. It is usual to speak of the African mind, African literature, and African music as part of African culture.[4]

Although there have been numerous philosophical efforts to include "African art" in the fold by producing wider definitions and criteria, these tend to be paradigmatic. Such view was well expressed almost a century ago by Carl Einstein (1885-1940) in his essay entitled "Negro Sculpture": "There is probably no art that the European approaches with more suspicion than the art of Africa (...). The negro is regarded from the outset as an inferior part of humanity that must be ruthlessly developed into something better, and what he has to offer is judged in advance as wanting."[5]

It is necessary to emphasize that since Roy Sieber wrote his influential dissertation concerning art from Africa (1957),[6] in which he examined the spiritual and religious connections between African sculptors and their work, many other dissertations have been submitted on African art. Susan Preston Blier, the present-day art historian of Africa from Harvard University, accurately summarizes the current state of research on African artistic heritage:

"Over the course of the next half century the field of African art history – as well as the forms of art studies – changed considerably. Sieber's dissertation was in essence an 'armchair' thesis, one based on the careful overview of an array of earlier literature with an aim toward singling out and highlighting a range of art forms across key areas of the continent. Following Sieber's initial

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3 Okot p'Bitek, *Artist, the Ruler Essays on Art, Culture, and Values, Including Extracts from Song of Soldier and White Teeth Make People Laugh on Earth*, Heinneman Kenya, Nairobi, 1986, p. 34.

4 See: J. Bingham, *African Art and Culture*, Raintree, Hampshire 2004; P. Ben-Amos, "African Visual Arts from a Social Perspective", *African Studies Review* 1989, vol. 32, no. 2, pp. 1-54 and *Estetyka Afryki. Antologia*, ed. M. Cymorek, Universitas Kraków 2008.

5 Art in Theory 1900-2000, Ch. Harrison, P. Wood, ed., Blackwell Publishing, Oxford 2003, p. 111.

6 Roy Sieber, *African Tribal Scuplture*, unpublished PhD diss., University of Iowa, 1957. To see more: Ch.M. Kreamer, "A Tribute to Roy Sieber", *African Arts*, vol. 36 no. 1, pp. 12-23, 91.

African art research, later scholars and researchers in this field would focus their study on specific areas of Africa, generally exploring these issues through in-depth local analysis, documenting various types of art production and meaning, addressing a range of media (from masks to architecture) and different contexts of use. Alas, for the most part the continent continued to be defined in earlier colonial terms as a variety of unique cultures (discrete 'tribes'), each assumed to be identified with distinct artistic forms, rituals, political systems, and other idioms of socio-cultural identity."[7]

The curatorial turn

In her significant essay entitled "Turning", Irit Rogoff explains that a turn – such as that toward linguistics in the 1970s – occurs when an academic discipline is in urgent need of being shaken up, perhaps to the point of discomfort. Irit Rogoff carefully unpicks the etymology of "the turn," speculating that the language of turning might function as an important model for understanding the use of pedagogy in the arts: "In a turn, we turn away from something or towards or around something and it is we who are in movement, rather than it. Something in us is activated, perhaps even actualized, as we turn."[8] By emphasizing our own activity and movement, Rogoff hopes to maintain the sense of urgency that informed the inception and production of pedagogical art projects, concerned that education initiatives in curating "are in danger of being cut off from their original impetus and may be hardening into a recognizable style"[9] (a criticism that has been leveled at similar turns in artistic practice, such as "the linguistic turn" of the 1960s and more recently, "the turn to relational aesthetics" in the 1990s). As she pointed out:

> "Are we talking about reading one system, a pedagogical one, across another system of display [and] exhibition ... so that they both nudge one another in ways that might loosen and open them up to other ways of being? Or are we talking about an active movement, a generative moment in which a new horizon emerges in the process, leaving the practice that was the originating point behind? In a turn, we turn 'away' from something or 'towards' or 'around' something, and it is 'we' who are in movement, rather than 'it' (...). Something in us is activated, perhaps even actualized, as we 'turn'."[10]

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7 S. Blier, *African Art*, [in:] F. Abiola Irele, B. Jeyifo ed., *The Oxford Encyclopedia of African Thought*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2010, vol. 1, p. 30.

8 I. Rogoff, *Turning*, [in:] *Curating and the Educational Turn*, ed. Paul O'Neil and Mick Wilson, Open Editions London 2010, p. 42.

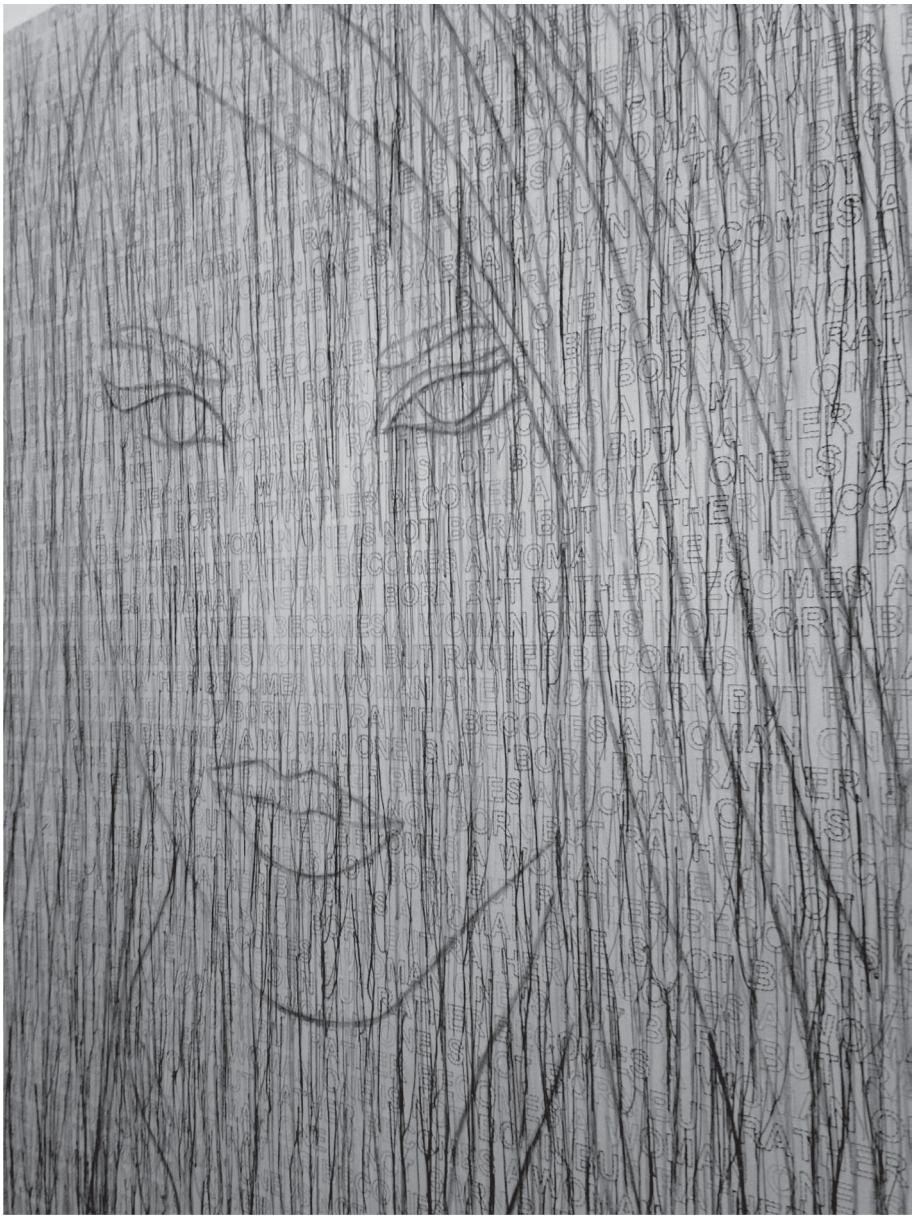
9 Ibid., p. 34.

10 Ibid., p. 33.

The above clarifications should be interpreted as a new aim for the Western world of art – to examine the ability of future curatorial practices to both reflect and instigate a dynamic turn in the study of African arts and to understand what kinds of intellectual and aesthetic energies might be produced in the process. It goes without saying that on-the-ground research has led to brilliant dissertations, exhibitions, and books on particular culture areas and regions that form the foundation of the discipline. Yet today's studies of traditional African arts extend beyond the ethnographic field research undertaken in rural areas through interviews, visual documentation, and participant-observation basic to inquiry. In recent years, scholars have brought much transparency to African art studies, revealing and analyzing the impact of colonial and neo-colonial encounters, the museumification of African arts, the role of the art market, and the effects of urban life and globalization on tradition-based expression. Furthermore, as the last European and American expositions on African art made vividly clear, new areas of tradition-based arts are rapidly emerging: Islamic expressive culture, transforming textile modes, architectural renewal, urban masquerades, and ephemeral arts; and new methodologies are inspired by theories of culture, performance, and the body. In the north of Africa, women artists, including Ghada Amer, Houri Niati, and Zineb Zedira, are producing art searching for the place of women in Islamic cultures, as they triangulate the crossroads of identities that define them as Arab, African, Muslim, and female. (Fig. 1) The works of these artists become foundational materials for exploring the intersection of feminist interventions and artistic productions in North Africa, where women are still treated as second-class citizens because of their gender, are expected to cover their heads and sometimes their entire bodies, or are regarded as objects of their husbands' desire. They have learned to use art as a form of resistance and subversion, while still maintaining ample spaces of fantasy and pleasure in their playing and manipulation of materials and forms.[11]

A number of curatorial approaches to the presentation of tradition-based arts have defined the field to date, but due to the limitations of space, I will only give a few examples among the many exhibitions focused on ethnic groups which represent one of the most important outcomes of deep scholarly research over the past fifty years, and there have been many that have familiarized the viewers with particular cultures and the brilliance of their artistic repertoires.

11 To see more: M. Okediji, "Whither Art History? African Art and Language as Semiotic Text", *The Art Bulletin*, 2015, vol. 97, no 2. pp. 123-139.



1. Ghada Amer, *The Rainbow Girl*, 2012. Embroidery and gel medium on canvas

The role of Africa-themed mega-exhibitions

It could be said that thirty years on from William Rubin's controversial exhibition *Primitivism in 20th Century Art* at the Museum of Modern Art in New York (1984), the question of the role and place of non-European art has gained new relevance through the globalizing tendencies in art history. At the heart of the debate back then were the objects that Rubin had enlisted to back up his thesis of the affinity of "tribal" and modern art. Rubin's concern was to show that European artists and those non European artists dubbed by modernism as primitive were driven by similar aesthetic premises and a similar attitude of mind.[12] It seems that further ground was broken when the Senegalese figurative sculptor Ousmane Sow and the Nigerian installation artist Mo Edoga (1952-1914) became the first Africans to be included in the prestigious exhibition *Documenta 9* (1992). Since then, African artists have participated in all subsequent *Documenta exhibitions* (*Documenta 10, 11*, and *12*), which are held in Kassel, Germany, every five years.

The other important recurrent exhibitions include the Cairo and Alexandria Biennials in Egypt, Dak'Art Biennial in Senegal, Rencontres de Bamako, Biennale Africaine de la Photographie in Bamako, Luanda Triennial in Angola, and Joburg Art Fair in South Africa.[13] There are also the defunct historical initiatives such as the Johannesburg Bienniale and CAPE Africa Platform. These events are important in their mission to make different locations on the African continent active cultural sites in which works of African artists are displayed and debated. These events are part of interrelated initiatives, such as the *Seven Stories About Modern African Art* (1995); *The Short Century: Independence and Liberation Movements in Africa*, *1945-1994* (2001); *Authentic/Ex-Centric: Conceptualism in Contemporary African Art* (2002); *A Fiction of Authenticity: Contemporary Africa Abroad* (2003); *Looking Both Ways: the Art of Contemporary African Diaspora* (2004); *Africa Remix* (2004) and *Africa, Assume Art Position!* (2011) or *Ici l'Afrique/Here Africa* (2014).[14] Such exhibitions have helped to create significant visibility for modern and contemporary African art in the international arena. They have articulated the broad contexts of

12 W. Rubin, "Modernist Primitivism: An Introduction" [in:] W. Rubin, ed., *Primitivism in 20th Century Art: Affinity of the Tribal and the Modern*, New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1984, vol. 1, p. 11 and J-L. Paudrat "From Africa" [in:] W. Rubin, ed., *Primitivism in 20th*..., pp. 75-125.

13 G.G. Montero "Biennalization? What biennalization? The documentation of biennials and other recurrent exhibitions", *Art Libraries Journal*, 2011, vol. 37, no 1, pp. 13-23.

14 To see the list: G.G., Montero, op. cit., p. 18-23 and *Contemporary African Art Since 1980*, op. cit., p. 6.

African artistic modernity in the twentieth century, employing frameworks that insisted on exhibitions as epistemological grounds for engaging the intersection of African history and art history.[15] Writing on the role of museum exhibitions in the construction of art historical narratives, Hans Belting argues that museum exhibitions in the past did not only serve as sites of display but were active agents in "narrating history in the mirror of its own history".[16] These exhibitions are a significant contribution to the blossoming of contemporary African art, circulating within the global cultural arena whose primary locations are in Western Europe and North America. These Africa-themed mega-exhibitions are commendable in their mission to make contemporary African art visible in the West. Aside from these mega-exhibitions, African art has also featured in major international exhibitions such as the *Venice Biennale* and *Documenta* organized in the West. These exhibitions enable African artists to participate in global-scale events in which their work is seen and debated alongside artists from different parts of the world. The benefit of this participation cannot be underestimated, considering the historical marginalization of African artists in major world art events, a marginalization that has rendered African artists insignificant if not appendices in the history of modern art. While it is fitting to commend their importance, it is equally appropriate to point out the disappointing fact that these Africa-themed mega-exhibitions have not circulated on the African continent, with the exception of *Africa Remix*, which only came to Johannesburg in South Africa. Adding to this disappointment is the deprivation of African audiences living and working in different parts of the African continent who cannot see, witness and engage with what Okwui Enwezor and Chika Okeke-Agulu called in their survey of the work of contemporary African artists the "important roles [these mega-exhibitions have played] in brokering the expansion of the knowledge of the field"[17] of contemporary art worldwide.

In other words, although Africa is still deprived of the opportunity to possess its own artistic and cultural productions that rather continue to enrich western institutions and consumers, during the past two decades there has been a surge of interest in the work of contemporary African artists. A major reason for this turn of events is partly due to the impact of globalization on contemporary art and culture. Like other artists who were once situated on the

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15 R. Chikukwa, "Curating contemporary African art: questions of mega-exhibitions and Western influences", *African Identities*, 2011, vol. 9, no. 2, pp. 225-229.

16 H. Belting, *Contemporary Art as Global Art: A Critical Estimate* [in:] H. Belting, A. Buddensieg ed., *The Global Art World: Audiences, Markets, and Museums*, Hatje Cantz Verlag, Ostfildern 2009, p. 12.

17 *Contemporary African Art Since 1980*, op. cit., p. 6.

margins of mainstream artistic narratives, African artists have been beneficiaries of the globalizing phenomenon that has included the rise of biennials and art fairs, and the unprecedented surge in collecting art on a worldwide scale. Consequently Africa continues to suffer from the colonial legacy instrumental in rendering Africa a space void of modernity; Africa becomes void of artistic activities, which elevate and justify the superiority of the West as the centre of modernity of contemporary times. In this regard, Africa becomes remote from, if not superfluous to, spaces where artistic activities that define cultural globalization take place. It is disturbing that for a long time ethnography, in order to emphasize the uniqueness of non-occidental cultures applied a different rule of attribution to art from such cultures, effectively denying the identities of the artists even where these were known. The figure of the individual genius, that element which more than any other defines enlightenment and modernity, was reserved for Europe, while the rest of humanity were identified with the collective, anonymous production pattern that inscribes primitivism. Until recently, works of classical African art were dutifully attributed to the "tribe" rather than to an individual artist, the latter thus effectively erased from the narrative spaces of art history. In contemporary discourses critics like to represent the continuation of this practice whereby novel strategies are employed to anonymize the work of the artist, thus deleting the authority of the latter, or constructing the artist away from the normativities of contemporary practice.

From Ulli Beier's (1922-2011)[18] work on contemporary African art, to Andre Magnin's[19] – present curator and dealer's – presentation of the neonative African artist, there is a split between the author and the work which effectively depletes individual credit to the artist. While Beier focused on the details of biographical difference, others dwell on the peculiarity of the work, often situated in a simulacral ambience of esotericism and fractious submodernity. In each case the gaze is deflected unto Utopia, unto the significance of the Other. We are directed to the references to animal sacrifice and voodoo by the Ivorian artist Ouattara Watts (b. 1957) or the background of Mustapha Dime (1952–1998), the Senegalese sculptor who won first prize at Africa's own *Dakar Biennale* in 1992, rather than to their contributions to, and discursive place in, contemporary sculpture and installation art. Readers and art viewers are confronted with the Nigerian artist Twins Seven Seven's (1944-2011) identity as a spirit child and village chief, rather than with his work as a graphic artist (Fig. 2). And rather than find Congolese Cheri Samba (b. 1956)

18 Ulli Beier - German writer and scholar, who had a pioneering role in developing research on traditional culture and visual art in Nigeria.

19 O. Coutau, "André Magnin in Conversation", *New African*, October 2013, pp. 97-98.

2. Twins Seven Seven, *Sea Ghosts 3*, 1968. Ink on plywood

articulated within the discourses of contemporary satire, he is presented to us as symptomatic of the kitsch and camp aesthetics which characterizes the disintegration of African contemporaneity. And in each case these misrepresentations are made possible by first crossing out the subject's ability to self-articulate, to not only enunciate but also expatiate, to exercise their authority.

The African public and contemporary art

The Nigerian novelist, Chinua Achebe (1930-2013) noted long ago that this is indeed the state at which the West has arrived [to Africa], at that juncture where it no longer has to erase or ignore others consciously, but as a matter of fact.[20] In the African continent, as in other developing parts of the world, the equitable distribution of public resources is a priority. The case for public support of the arts is thus difficult to make because it has been shown and borne out by many studies that arts audiences tend to represent the better educated, more prosperous minority of society, not the very poor, illiterate or inadequately educated population of African-origin.

Back in 1994, Okwui Enwezor, Nigerian curator and art critic, sadly wrote of the then debates engendered by the continuous canonical hegemony of Eurocentric discourses: "One of the problematic aspects of visiting museums, art galleries, and other sites of cultural valuation, in Europe and the United States, is the pervasive absence in these highly policed environments, of art by

20 O. Oguibe, African Curators and Contemporary Art Notes and responses to the Sao Paulo Letter, http://www.camwood.org/African_Curators_and_Contemporary_Art.html (29.07.2015).

contemporary African artists. Not only are the works of these artists (many of whom have been working for the past half century) conspicuously absent from the museum and gallery environment, they've also been accorded little attention or significance in academic art historical practices, university curriculums, the print media, or other organs of such reportage."[21]

During the last two decades, this situation has been changing. Many contemporary, worldwide, art museums have acquired numerous works by contemporary artists from the African continent that are already well established on the international art scene. These works are displayed alongside other works of contemporary art in galleries devoted to such work. The starting point is for the Africans themselves to take a greater interest in the art produced around them. For many, African art is still wrongly synonymous with "tribal" [meaning traditional] art, to which not much value is attached. The influence that traditional art had in shaping the work of Constantin Brancusi, Pablo Picasso and Georges Braque has been widely acclaimed; yet the same cannot be said of other African art.[22] Contemporary abstract African art is a natural progression in the evolution of the local artists. However, if we exclude the oligarchs, established collectors, and a small emerging market of informed and affluent art enthusiasts in West Africa, Kenya, Ethiopia, and South Africa – where the contemporary art revolution is flourishing; the outlook elsewhere across the continent is less clear.

It looks as if the naive tourists and ill-informed locals actively encouraged the trade in badly crafted, mass-produced, wooden and metal masks or sculptures. The effect is to overlook the genuine African craftsmanship and artistic expression, which exists beyond the convenience of the shopping mall galleries and gift shops, all of which purport to sell "African art" to gullible, but enthusiastic, consumers. Part of the problem lies in the nature of abstract contemporary art itself. For those used to the more traditional African art of the type described above, contemporary art can be difficult to digest. This challenge is greater in Africa than it is elsewhere, as the market for abstract art has yet to fully mature outside of the esoteric world in which most of its enthusiasts dwell. Other important issues are access, cost and education. Art exhibitions, such as 1:54 Contemporary African Art Fair at Somerset House in the late 2014, the Dakar Biennale and Art Dubai art fair – which was curated

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21 O. Enwezor, "Redrawing the boundaries: Towards a new African art discourse", *NKA: Journal of Contemporary African Art* 1994, vol. 1, Fall/Winter, p. 3.

22 A. Pawłowska, „Picasso i Afryka" in: *Artystyczne tradycje pozaeuropejskich kultur. Studia*, ed., B. Łakomska, Polskie Stowarzyszenie Sztuki Orientu Toruń 2009, pp. 163-173; Idem, „Wpływ zainteresowania kulturą afrykańską świata zachodniego na estetykę sztuki współczesnej" [in:] *Sztuka Afryki w kolekcjach i badaniach polskich*, ed. S. Szafrański, M. Kądziela, et al, Wydawnictwo Narodowe w Szczecinie, Szczecin 2014, pp. 59-70.

last year by one of Africa's leading art connoisseurs and curator Bisi Silva, the founder of the Centre of Contemporary Art Lagos (CCA)[23]– may champion rising artists, but the disposable income of many ordinary Africans will not stretch to allow them to attend these regional, let alone international events. Only very few average Africans will have an opportunity to experience Angola's triumph in winning the *Golden Lion* for the best pavilion at the Venice Biennale in 2012 or have the pleasure of seeing the work of Nigerian sculptor Sokari Douglas Camp in the permanent exhibition at the *Smithsonian Institute* in Washington, or at the British Museum.[24] The internet helpfully opens a window to the continent's art, allowing art enthusiasts to access pieces which may never make their way to local museums or galleries. However, without the guidance, editing and commentary that often accompanies these pieces when they are in the formal setting of a gallery or museum, it is difficult for African amateurs to educate themselves.

Another problem which should be emphasized is the lack of curators of African origin and museum managers as well as cultural practitioners. Although there are a number of African art historians now residing in the West including those from Nigeria (like Roland Abiodun, Babatunde Lawal, Moyosore Benjamin Okediji, Olu Oguibe), the number of curators involved in some of the most active areas of artistic creation in Africa to address the current state of curatorial practice in this region are insufficient. The exceptions in this respect are: Meskerem Assegued (Zoma Contemporary Art Center, Ethiopia); Raphael Chikukwa (National Gallery of Zimbabwe); Marilyn Douala Bell *(Doual'art,* Cameroon); N´Goné Fall (independent curator, Senegal); Abdellah Karroum (L'appartement 22, Morocco); Riason Naidoo (South African National Gallery, RSA) and Bisi Silva (CCA Lagos, Nigeria).[25]

International market for modern and contemporary African art

As one of the leading scholars in contemporary African art – Sidney Littlefield Kasfir – notes, "Blockbuster shows have greatly influenced the mainstreaming tendency."[26] Much of this trend has occurred in the last thirty years, a period that also witnessed the increased visibility of contemporary African artists on the global scene. In consequence, in recent years, Africa's profile as an

23 *Centre for Contemporary Art*, Lagos, http://www.ccalagos.org/who-we-are (30.07.2015).
24 M.Ch. Kapotwe, *Whose Art Is It Anyway?*, "New African," 2015, April, no. 549, p. 81.
25 *Curating in Africa symposium*, Tate, London, October 2010, http://www.tate.org.uk/about/projects/curating-africa-symposium (12.04.2015).
26 S.L. Kasfir, "Museums and Contemporary African Art: Some Questions for Curators". *African Arts* 2002, vol. 35, no 4, p. 15.

art market has risen considerably. With increasing support from international curators, young African artists have experienced higher profiles in the global market, including involvement in the art events mentioned above. Major interest within the African continent is focused on South Africa, especially Johannesburg, as well as the major cities in Nigeria and North Africa. For example, according to Deloitte and Art Tactic's Art & Finance Report 2014,[27] international and domestic sales of African modern and contemporary art have been fuelled by the rapid growth in the millionaires population in Nigeria and a growing interest in the rich history of the visual arts. The Nigerians are becoming Africa's most influential art collectors and the market is coming to rival its more established counterpart in South Africa, although experts point out that it is not just about money – Nigeria has a history of holding contemporary art exhibitions, and of collecting art. The Nigerian auction house, Art House Contemporary, registered a 25% increase in auction sales between 2008 and 2012, while 2013 was a record-breaking year, with 1.7 million US dollars in overall auction sales – an increase of over 20% compared to 2012.[28]

According to many African art dealers, online auctions can democratize the art market and open it to a different sort of buyer. For example the major auction house Christie's reportedly generated 20.8 million US dollars in its online sales of all art in 2013 from 49 online only sales.[29] The eminent auction house Sotheby's has also gone online, launching a partnership with the online marketplace eBay in 2014.

Georgia Spray of The Sotheby's Auction Room claims: "We have found that [online auctions] are particularly suited to the African art market. The price points are still fairly accessible, starting at just £500 up to £30,000. It also attracts a younger demographic of buyers who may be collecting art for the first time and who couldn't transact with traditional auction houses, as they are intimidating to attend and their threshold for works is very expensive."[30]

African art expert Ed Cross, who is curating the sale, says that the profile of the buyers has changed to encompass young members of the African Diaspora, alongside experienced collectors from the Middle East, Asia, Europe and North America. "I would say that the momentum for what is a new category as far as the art market is concerned, has continued to build – what we are

27 *Art and Finance Report 2013*, http://www.deloittelux-library.com/artandfinance/2013/lu_en_wp_artandfinancereport_15032013.pdf (27.07.2015).
28 A. Dalby,"Culture. African art breaks out online", *African Business* 2015, vol. 49, no 417, p. 86.
29 Ibid.
30 Ibid.

seeing overall is the early days of long-term sustainable growth."[31] The traditional British auction house Bonhams was one of the pioneers in developing the market for contemporary African art. It remains the only traditional British auction house with a dedicated African department and an annual sale of African art. According to Bonhams' director of contemporary African Art – Giles Peppiatt – Africa Now sale in May 2014 raised a record 3.2 million British pounds – an increase of 47% in comparison to May 2013. "It's still emerging. It's growing and continuing."[32]

Importantly, Bonhams holds a sale of South African art in London and features work by three top names from this country – Jacob Hendrik Pierneef (1886-1957), Irma Stern (1894-1966), and Gerard Sekoto (1913-1993)[33] and in the opinion of Peppiat, valuations of African artists have "exploded" over the past seven years. Among the record prices Bonhams has achieved for individual works are over one million pounds for South African Irma Stern's *Zanzibar Woman* in 2012 and 370 thousand pounds for Nigerian Ben Enwonu's sculptures.

Cross, like Peppiatt, sees the market growth coming from within Africa, and says that this bodes well for the long-term health of the market. A number of artists, like Ablade Glover and Ben Enwonwu, have seen significant rises in prices, but the African market is not going to be a bubble-price growth; it is likely to be more gradual and consequently sustainable. As claimed by Cross: "The real growth will come when sufficient numbers of collectors from African countries decide that they want to own their national or continental heritage – and we are seeing that already with the Angolan mega-collector Sindike Dokolo and his personal 'crusade' to re-acquire African tribal art from non-African collections. There will be many others thinking and acting along these lines."[34]

Conclusion

During the past two decades, there has been a surge of interest in the work of contemporary African artists. This turn of events is partly due to the impact of globalization on contemporary art and culture. Like other artists who were once situated on the margins of mainstream artistic narratives, African artists have been beneficiaries of the globalizing phenomenon that has included the rise of biennials and art fairs, and the unprecedented surge in collecting art on

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31 E. Cross, *African Contemporary & Modern Art - The African Art Auction. 18th October 2013 - 7:00 pm*, http://theauctionroom.com/auctions/9 (30.07.2015).

32 Ch. Beugge, *African art: a good investment?,* http://www.telegraph.co.,uk/finance/personalfinance/investing/10842809/African-art-a-good-investment.html (30.07.2015).

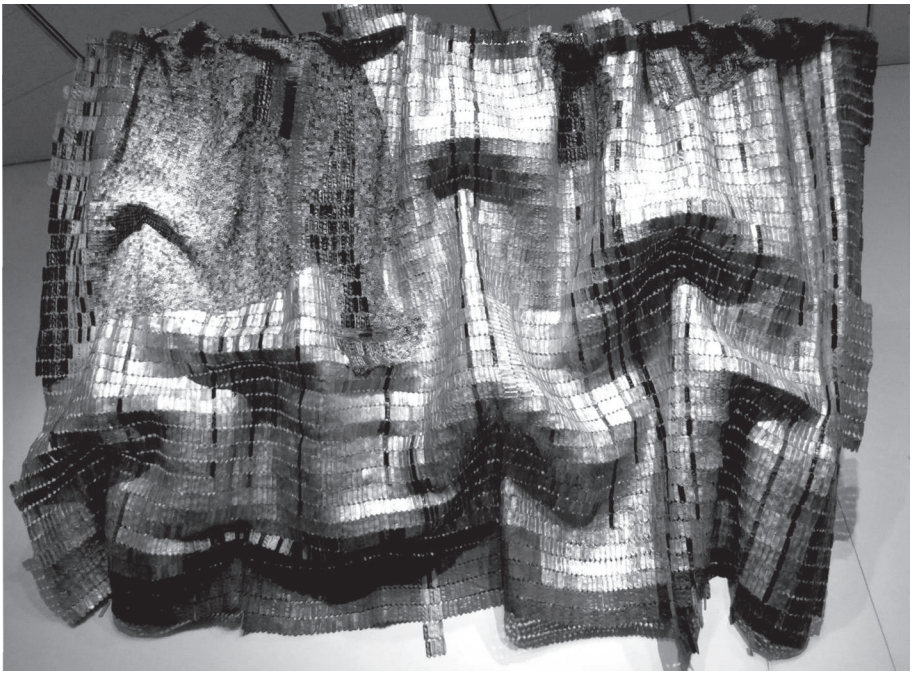
33 To see more on South African art: A. Pawłowska, *Sztuka i kultura Afryki Południowej*..., op. cit.

34 A. Dalby, op. cit, pp. 86-87.

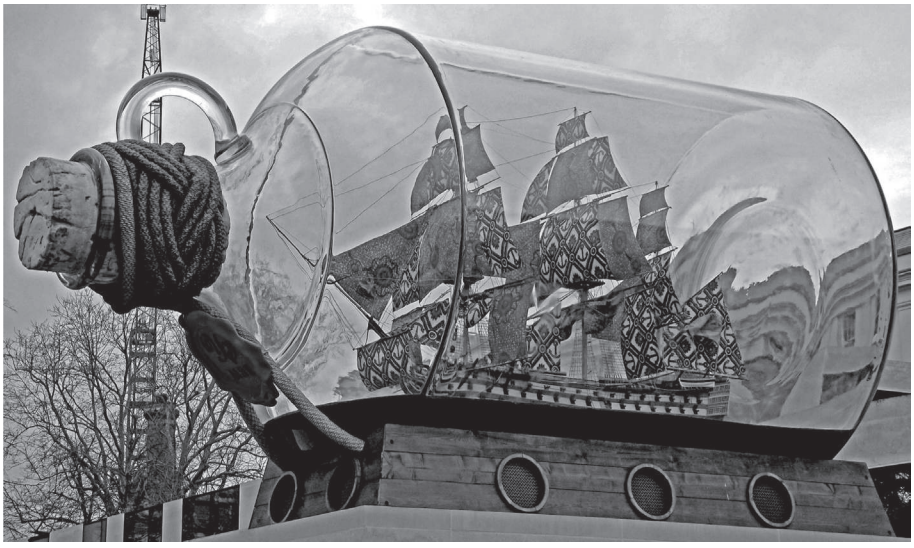
a worldwide scale. To be clear, the apparent largesse of the international artistic contexts that have so readily embraced African artists and others could be attributed less to a change of heart about the artistic competence of the marginal regions, and more to a strategic repositioning and adaptation to global winds of change that blew down ideological walls throughout the late 1980s and early 1990s.

Furthermore in the past 20 years Western art viewers have seen many African artists and curators taking part in international platforms like Documenta in Kassel, the Venice Biennale, the Gwanju Biennale, Arco Madrid, Berlin Art Forum, Art Basel Miami, and many others. Today a number of African art curators/artists on and outside the continent are showing in high-profile international art institutions like the Centre Pompidou (France), the Guggenheim Museum (USA), the Hayward Gallery (UK), the Manchester Art Gallery (UK), MoMA (USA), the Mori Art Museum (Japan), the Museum Kunst Palast (Germany), the Victoria and Albert Museum (UK), Modern Tate Britain (UK) and many others. Some of the artists who have shown in the above venues include Berry Bickle (Zimbabwe/Mozambique), Bili Bidjoka (Cameroon/ France), Cheri Samba (Congo), Dilomprizulike (Nigeria), Samuel Fosso (Togo), Yinka Shonibare (Nigeria/UK), El Anatsui (Ghana/Nigeria), William Kentridge (South Africa), Wangechi Mutu (USA/Kenya) and Romuald Hazoume (Benin) to mention but a few (Fig. 3 & 4). All of them have come to global prominence and have been positioned at the forefront of critical debates on contemporary art. Scholars have devoted serious and focused attention to the study of these artists' diverse experiences and works. In addition, a historical rereading of modern African art has reinvigorated the assessments of the work of contemporary African artists in light of modernity – and, by extension, the links to traditional African art – and broadened each of their critical horizons. But these huge names on the international stage remain unfamiliar to many Africans. Some may have heard of them but would still be hard-pressed to name these artists' famous works. As far as I am concerned, the most important statement in the ongoing dialogue about the representation of contemporary African art today, are the words of Olu Oguibe's when he said: "Africans must narrate themselves and must not be mere stagehands in a ventriloquist show."[35]

35 O. Oguibe, "Review: Africa explores: 20th century African art", *African Arts*, 1993, vol. 26, no.1, p. 22.



3. El Anatsui, *Rain Has No Father?*, 2008. Flattened bottle tops



4. Yinka Shonibare MBE, *Nelson's Ship in a Bottle*, 2010. The 1:30 scale replica of Lord Admiral Nelson's flagship, HMS Victory, includes sails with ethnic textile textures. Fibreglass, steel, brass, resin, UV ink on printed cotton textile, linen rigging, acrylic and wood

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AFRYKAŃSKA SZTUKA WSPÓŁCZESNA A ZWROT KURATORSKI (streszczenie)

W II połowie XX wieku podejście do historii sztuki afrykańskiej jako dziedziny naukowej jak też formy studiów artystycznych oraz wystaw tejże sztuki znacznie się zmieniły. Celem artykułu jest zobrazowanie ewolucji idei tożsamości współczesnej sztuki afrykańskiej poprzez prezentację sposobów ekspozycji tej sztuki w ciągu ostatnich trzech dekad. Aby pojąć dynamikę zmian w europejskim podejściu do sztuki afrykańskiej, wystarczy przypomnieć słynne uwag Carla Einsteina i Roya Siebera z I połowy XX w. na ten temat lub kontrowersyjną wystawę Williama Rubina w Muzeum Sztuki Nowoczesnej w Nowym Jorku (1984), pt. Primitivism in 20th Century Art. Wydaje się, że obecnie proces przemian w postrzeganiu i prezentowaniu współczesnej sztuki afrykańskiej pogłębia się. Jednocześnie rośnie udział kuratorów pochodzenia afrykańskiego, co pozwala na stworzenie nowej strategii kuratorskiej – prawdziwego „zwrotu kuratorskiego" z początku XXI w., który pozwala odzyskać głos uprzednio jedynie reprezentowanym Afrykanom.

Słowa kluczowe: sztuka afrykańska, zwrot kuratorski, muzeum, wystawy, sztuka współczesna.

Art Inquiry. Recherches sur les arts 2015, vol. XVII
ISSN 1641-9278

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THE POST-COLONIAL TURN AND THE MODERNIST ARCHITECTURE IN AFRICA

Abstract: Modernism as a trend in architecture is rarely associated with the colonial policy of the European powers. Nevertheless it was one of the tools of the "Western" expansion in Africa, simultaneously a constructive and a destructive force. It was a reflection of the changes in the modern world and at the same time it led to an unavoidable break with the local identity and tradition. “The Year of Africa" (1960), when as many as 17 states proclaimed independence, paradoxically did not bring any radical changes in architectonic solutions. Public facilities were still constructed according to "Western" modernist convention. Political dependence of the new countries on their respective "mother states" has been to a significant degree reduced and sometimes even broken. At the same time their relations on the level of architecture have remained almost unchanged, thereby pushing the "periphery" to the role of a "province". Critical analysis of the effects of colonialism merges post-colonialism with neo-colonialism, understood as control exercised by the metropolis over the decolonised peripheries.

Keywords: Africa, modernism, decolonisation, post-colonialism, modernist architecture

The concept of the post-colonial turn used in literary research is inextricably linked to the interaction between the centre and the periphery of the empire. Critical analysis of the effects of colonialism merges post-colonialism with neo-colonialism, understood as control exercised by the centre over the ostensibly independent (decolonised) peripheries. As claimed by Gayatri Spivak, the domination of the Western vision led to the cultural sterilization of the conquered regions. Modern architecture became one of the tools of the "Western" expansion in the African states. Hasan-Uddin Khan has called it a constructive and a destructive force at the same time. It was a consequence of the changes

in the modern world and at the same time it led to an unavoidable break with the local identity and tradition.[1]

The post-colonial turn in culture

The main task in analysing the role of modern architecture in post-colonial Africa is to identify and define the basic concepts. In the research on colonialism and post-colonialism the starting point is almost always the empire, defined by Richard van Alstyne as "a dominion, state, or sovereignty that would expand in population and territory, and increase in strength and power".[2] Michael Doyle describes it as "a relationship, formal or informal, in which one state controls the effective political sovereignty of another political society".[3] Imperialism is then "simply the process or policy of maintaining an empire".[4] The phenomenon of colonialism cannot exist outside of the imperial universe; the term refers to settlement in the remote parts of the territory, which then become the property of the metropolis and are controlled by it.[5]

The provinces subordinate to the central government become fully dependent on it in terms of politics, economy and culture. Those relations with one centre prevent them from becoming "peripheries", which Andrzej Szczerski, referring to Ljubo Karaman's theory, defined as crossing points of influence of various centres, which consequently leads to the creation of new values.[6] A "province" is only a disfigured reflection of the idea of the metropolis, which often leads to its negative valorisation as supposedly inferior. In the times of post-modernism, researchers have paid more attention to marginal phenomena, and Gayatri Spivak has argued for seeing the relation between centre and margins as one of partnership rather than one of opposition.[7]

What then, in the light of the above-mentioned definitions, is post-colonialism? This notion is still a subject of debate, because the prefix "post-" strongly suggests that we are dealing with a consequence of the colonial era, which has passed in both chronological and ideological sense. Meanwhile,

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1 H.-U. Khan,"The impact of modern architecture on the Islamic world", in: *Back from Utopia. The Challenge of the Modern Movement*, ed. H-J. Henket, H. Heynen, 010 Publishers, Rotterdam 2002, p. 174.

2 R.v Alstyne, *The Rising American Empire*, Oxford University Press, New York 1960, p. 6.

3 Michael Doyle. 1986. *Empires*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press. p. 45.

4 Ibid.

5 In A. Loomba, *Kolonializm/Poskolonializm*, Wydawnictwo Poznańskie, Poznań 2011, pp. 22-23.

6 A. Szczerski, *Modernizm na peryferiach. Architektura Skoczowa, Śląska i Pomorza 1918-1939*, ed. A. Szczerski, Wydawnictwo 40000 Malarzy, Warszawa 2011, p. 8.

7 G. Spivak, *Strategie postkolonialne*, Wydawnictwo Krytyki Politycznej, Warszawa 2011, p. 204.

Leela Gandhi points out that talking about the consequences of colonialism does not mean that colonialism is already over.[8] This is put in a more decisive terms by Frantz Fanon, who declares on the pages of *The Wretched of the Earth* that "colonialism and imperialism have not paid their score when they withdraw their flags and their police forces from our territories."[9] Although his radical position may seem to be marked with the revolutionary buzz of the 1960s, we must not underestimate the importance of the decolonisation processes or the fact that the relations forged by the colonial governments set the grounds for the current imbalance between the "First" and the "Third" Worlds. The reaction to colonialism, understood as a period when the West tried to negate the cultural value and identity of the "non-West" was nationalism. The idea of national unity allowed for the integration of all layers of society hitherto perceived as subordinate to the colonizers. Fanon was convinced that, although a nation state does not have to be the best political solution, the very national anti-colonial mobilisation was an adequate response to the problem of the provinces becoming independent from the metropolis.[10]

The understanding of nationalism in post-colonial reality differs significantly from the European connotations of this term. Robert Young wrote about its "Janus face" – its dual character: while nationalism is positive as a model during the struggle for independence, after that it becomes something negative.[11] Similarly ambivalent is the theory of Pan-Africanism, personified by the Negritude movement, which "both simplifies the complex cultural formations and forms new exclusions."[12]

Modernist architecture as a tool of colonial policy

Colonial heritage is diverse and heterogeneous. The discourse based on the binary opposition of the occidental and oriental worlds misses not only the differences covered by those terms. The colonies which do not belong to the East-West axis are somehow automatically ascribed to it. It is thus important to draw a precise outline of the scope of the research area relating to those issues. The object of my analysis will be the modernist architecture of the colonial and post-colonial times in Sub-Saharan Africa, excluding the Republic of South Africa.

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8 L. Gandhi, *Teoria postkolonialna. Wprowadzenie krytyczne*, Poznań: Wydawnictwo Poznańskie, Poznań 2008, p. 16.

9 Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, Transl. by C. Farrington. Grove Press, New York, 1963, p.101.

10 Ibid., p. 102.

11 In E.W.Said, *Kultura i imperializm*, Kraków: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego, p. 77.

12 A. Loomba, *Kolonializm*..., pp. 222-223.

Modernism as a trend in art and architecture is often linked with the ideas of social egalitarianism. It is rarely mentioned that its development took place in the heyday of the European colonial empires.[13] Its status as an "international style" resulted mostly from the fact that it was developing and forming at the same time in various parts of the world. Its characteristic features were developed in Germany, Holland, and France – in the cultural, geographical and social contexts different from the ones the designers might have encountered in Africa. Nevertheless, modernism was treated as a boon for the underdeveloped countries.[14]

The policy of transferring the architectural patterns from the metropolis to the conquered provinces had functioned well before the crystallization of modernism as a style. The formal and technical solutions which were part of the European tradition "were codified in formulas which became the symbol of national identity [...]. Other issues than commonsensical use of local raw materials or adjusting to the climate turned out to be more important. Thousands of miles from home the colonists remembered who they were thanks to the shape of the houses they constructed. What was initially a technical and pragmatic issue became ideological and emotional."[15] After World War I the leaders of the "modern movement" carried out their projects in the far corners of the globe. Alternatively, their ideas travelled there along with the Western infrastructure and technology.[16]

The architect who had the greatest impact on the development of modern architecture on the African continent was undoubtedly Le Corbusier. The fascination with his work dates back to 1933, when the students of architecture at the University of the Witwatersrand in Johannesburg published a manifesto entitled *Zero Hour*, where they presented Corbusier and Ludwig Mies van der Rohe as the examples to follow.[17]A year later, Rex Martienssen designed Peterhaus – a multi-family residential building, whose shape, structure and functional layout are a clear reference to Corbusier's five principles of modern architecture. Martienssen himself, during his visit to Europe, not only learned about the latest trends in Western architecture, but also met Corbusier, which resulted in his invitation to CIAM (the International Congress of Modern

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13 M. Crinson, *Modern Architecture and the End of Empire*, Ashgate Publishing, Aldershot 2003, p. 1-3.

14 B. Jękot, *Afrykańskie oblicza modernizmu. Inspiracje, dominacja i tożsamość*, in: *Architektura pierwszej połowy XX wieku i jej ochrona w Gdyni i w Europie*, ed. M.J. Sołtysik, R. Hirsch, Urząd Miasta Gdyni, Gdynia 2011, p. 72.

15 Deyan Sudjic, *Kompleks gmachu. Architektura władzy*, Fundacja Centrum Architektury, Warszawa 2015, p. 179. Translation mine – B.C.

16 H.-U. Khan, *The Impact of*..., p. 177.

17 B. Jękot, *Afrykańskie oblicza modernizmu*..., p. 73.

Architecture).[18] Corbusier was also a reference point for the architect Amancio d'Alpoim "Pancho" Guedes working in Portuguese Mozambique, who valued the formal aspects of his architecture, although he never accepted his idea of the house as “a machine for living.”[19] Instead of the industrial aesthetics of the international style, Pancho preferred the designs based on traditional African ones.

It is worth showing here how Le Corbusier perceived Africa. In his letter to Martienssen dated 1939 he wrote: "Johannesburg seemed to me just about at the end of the earth, in the middle of the lions and Negroes, that is so say... inaccessible.”[20] His placement of the Republic of South Africa at the end of the earth, outside civilisation, is consistent with his reflections included in his notes from his journey to the Orient (1910-1911), which put him in the position of an observer, who visits East in search for exoticism. Such an attitude was accurately characterised by Said, who described the discourse about Africa as an organized language allowing the West to subjugate Africa to their needs. "If it wasn't for the European observer, who certifies their [native people’s – BC] existence, it would not matter"[21] – he commented ironically on the occidental sense of civilisational superiority.

The character of modernist architecture in Africa

The natural conditions in Africa enforced some limitations on the European architects, who had to adapt the buildings they designed to the climate. Sometimes they were also inspired by the traditional handicraft to introduce details and decorations of clearly local character. Ernst May, architect of the modernist housing estates in Frankfurt am Main, in 1937 opened his office in Nairobi. He was commonly believed to be one of the first Western architects who strived in a scientific, systemic way to adapt the avant garde solutions to the needs of the tropical climate.[22] His approach is visible not only in the shape of the building (with verandhs or wide eaves and "brise-soleils" shading the windows), but also in aligning it with the directions of the sun. In Frankfurt, where insolation is higher than in Kenya, May designed the rooms along the North-South axis,

18 H.-U. Khan, *The Impact of*..., p. 178.
19 B. Jękot, *Afrykańskie oblicza modernizmu*..., p. 74.
20 F. Demissie, “Controlling and ‘Civilising Natives’ through Architecture and Town Planning in South Africa”, in: *Modern Architecture in East Africa around Independence*, ArchiAfrika, Utrecht 2005, p. 173.
21 E.W. Said, *Kultura*..., , p. 218.
22 N. Ogura, “Ernst May and Modern Architecture in East Africa”, in: *Modern Architecture in East Africa around Independence*, ArchiAfrika, Utrecht 2005, p. 82.

while the majority of his African realisations were planned on the East-West axis.[23] Ernst May's approach differed both from the construction policy, typical for the colonies, of implementing traditional architectural solutions from the metropolis and from the ignorance of the local character, which can be seen even in the rationalist solutions of the Italian architects, designing new edifices in colonial Eritrea in the 1930s.

In the 1950s, successive African states began their successful struggle for independence. It peaked in 1960, called The Year of Africa, when as many as 17 states proclaimed sovereignty from their former metropolitan centres. The emerging states saw the redefining of their identity as more important than ever before. The redefinition of symbolic space also encompassed the heritage of the colonial period, including its architecture.

It needs to be emphasised here that decolonisation was often a gradual process, whose end we are not able to define precisely. Ramon Garfuel dispelled the illusion of the possibility of considering it as a closed phase. "One of the most powerful myths of the twentieth century was the notion that the elimination of colonial administration amounted to the decolonization of the world. This led to the myth of the 'postcolonial' world. The heterogeneous and multiple global structures put in place over a period of 450 years did not evaporate with the juridical-political decolonization of the periphery over the past fifty years. We continue to live under the same 'colonial power matrix'",[24] Even after gaining independence, the former metropolis remained the main trade partner of the colonies (e.g. France for Senegal and Niger) and maintained military its contingents there (France in Chad, Republic of Central Africa, Senegal, Mali and Ivory Coast) to protect the repatriates and to maintain the dominant political role in the region.[25]

In the light of the political and social changes, also the attitude towards the modernist architecture, which in Africa was a foreign, alien creation, should have changed. But it did not. We can point to only single cases of the critical verification of the assumptions of the "modern movement" undertaken by the creators educated in Europe or the Republic of South Africa. Apart from the already mentioned "Pancho" Guedes in Mozambique, this group includes Richard Hughes (Kenya), Julian Eliott (Zambia), Justus Dahinden (Uganda) or Norman Eaton, Helmut Stauch and Gawi Fagan (RPA). Their attitudes towards modernism and their attempts to include the creative elements of local

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23 Ibid., p. 84-85.

24 R. Grosfoguel, *The Epistemic Decolonial Turn: Beyond Political-Economy Paradigms*, „Cultural Studies" vol. 21 (2/3) 2007.

25 *African Modernism. The Architecture of Independence*, ed. M. Herz, I. Schroeder, H. Focketyn, J. Jamrozik, Prak Books, Zurich 2015, p. 6.

tradition in their work let us consider them as the exponents of Frampton's idea of "critical regionalism".[26]

Until the 1950s, the architects active in Sub-Saharan Africa were solely the graduates of the European or South African universities. It was only when more states began to gain their independence, that the KNUST (Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology) in Kumasi (Ghana) and the Makerere University in Kampala (Uganda) were founded. Nevertheless, we can claim that the education of African architects was and still is dominated by the European universities and the Western way of thinking about space.[27]

Modern movement in post-colonial Africa

Modernist architecture became one of the tools of constructing a new identity of the independent African states. It was part of the vision of modern, independent Africa. The luxury estates in the suburbs formerly inhabited by the white colonizers were to be replaced by new districts, bigger and more glorious. Some new architectural realizations show the great ambitions of the local governments, often of supra-regional scope.

In Accra, the capital of Ghana, the Public Works Department realised a grand complex commemorating the regaining of independence in 1957. A huge Independence Square was erected between the old town and the new developing Christianborg district. In the times of the British reign, this area was occupied by a horse racing track and a cricket field.[28] It was symbolic that the space which was used for the white colonisers' entertainment was turned into a monument of the regained independence. Completed in 1961, it consisted of tribunes for 30000 people which surrounded the Parade Square. The Independence Arch with the presidential tribune was erected on its edge. Kwame Nkrumah, governing independent Ghana, was an advocate of Pan-Africanism and he saw his country as the leader of changes in the region. Located on the coast of the Atlantic Ocean, on the verge of Africa, the Independence Arch was to be a symbolic gate to the continent, highlighting the important role of Ghana in creating its most recent history.

President Kwame Nkrumah treated modern architecture as an extremely important political instrument. He considered the creation of Ghana's own infrastructure as one of his government's priorities, along with the development of education. The result of the president's initiatives was the erection of

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26 A. Folkers, *Modern Architecture in Africa critical reflections on architectural practice in Burkina Faso, Tanzania and Ethiopia (1984-2009)*, SUN, Amsterdam 2010, p. 385.

27 Ibid., p. 384.

28 *African Modernism*..., p. 47.

the International Trade Fair complex in Accra (1964-1967) designed by the team of Polish architects Jerzy Chyrosz and Stanisław Rymaszewski, and of the KNUST University in Kumasi (1951) designed by James Cubitt. An extremely important investment in the times of Kwame Nkrumah was the National Museum in Accra designed by Maxwell Fry, Jane Drew, Linsday Drake and Danys Lasdun (1956-1957). It housed the first national arts collection in Sub-Saharan Africa, and the building became a symbol of cooperation between the new government and the remaining colonial administration during the period of transferring power.[29] Although the shape of the building is close to Lasdun's British realisations conforming to the late modernism trend, the architects tried to adjust it to the specifics of the climate in Ghana.

In a different way, the designers of FIDAK (Foire Internationale de Dakar, 1974) – Lamoureux, Marin and Bonamy took into account the character of the place. Over the area of almost 60 hectares they created 120 000 m^2 of exposition space for the fairs to take place every two years. Next to general-purpose buildings they erected a number of pavilions in characteristic triangular form, which referred to different regions of Senegal. Their façades were finished with the materials characteristic for the given regions (ceramics, stone, mosaics). Combining modernist shapes with local materials or ornaments inspired by local handicraft became relatively common among the European architects working in Sub-Saharan Africa in the 1950s and 1960s. In the building of Zambia's National Assembly in Lusaka (1966) Montgomerie, Oldfield and Kirby used the local natural stone, which they combined into a coherent whole with Corbusier's béton brut (raw concrete). Fry and Dew reached for transposed folk ornaments in the campuses they designed in Kumasi (Ghana) or Ibadan (Nigeria). Although the attempts to inscribe the "Western" modernism into African cultural context can be assessed positively, it needs to be remembered at the same time that those attempts were close to the "orientalism" criticised by Said and the perception of the world from the colonisers' perspective.[30]

The symbol of progress

The aesthetics of the international style in post-colonial Africa became a symbol of development and progress. The discourse enforced by the West was as if spontaneously adopted by the independent states searching for their identity. When in the 1970s Louis Renard and Jean Semichon were designing the

29 Ibid., p. 48-53.
30 A. Loomba, *Kolonializm*..., p. 60.

administrative district in Abidjan (1973-1978), they rejected the solutions worked out in the previous decades within the so-called "tropical modernism". Separated from the city, the skyscrapers housing government agencies and offices did not differ at all from similar objects emerging in Europe or the United States.[31] The simple "boxes" with smooth façades made up of glass and aluminium curtain walls were evidence of the progressive aspirations of the Ivory Coast, quite like the modern, "Western" hotels emerging on the so-called "African Riviera".

A couple of years earlier, when creating the "La Pyramide" shopping centre in Abidjan (1968-1973), the Italian Architect Rinaldo Olivieri openly declared that he had no intention to repeat the mistakes of the modernists designing glass towers in African cities.[32] Working with the concept of a structure in the form of a steep pyramid, he was also inspired by traditional marketplaces, which he transferred into the building as open stalls located on two levels. The large scale of the building, containing not only commercial spaces, but also office spaces and an enormous underground car park, resulted from the architect's and the investors' faith in an uninterrupted development of the Ivory Coast. Unfortunately, economic problems prevented the pyramid in Abidjan from being completed and today only a small part of it is in use.

The ambitions of the governments of independent African states translated directly into the scale of the construction plans. Commissioned by the president of Kenya, Jomo Kenyatta, the Norwegian designer Karl Henrik Nostvik started work on the new headquarters of the Kenyan African National Union (KANU) presidential party in Nairobi in 1966. Originally the building was to be of a modest size, but it was considerably expanded when it turned out that in 1973 Nairobi would host an official meeting of the World Bank representatives.[33] Finally, the edifice ended up as consisting of a congress hall with a conical top, and a 32-storey skyscraper. In time, the building, which in the meantime had become the icon of Kenyan independence, was transformed into a Kenyatta International Conference Centre, KICC.

Modernist architecture plays a dual role in Africa. In the 1930s it was part of the modernisation and Westernisation policy enforced by the European colonisers. In the period of the successive African states regaining their independence it became a symbol of their progressive aspirations. Paradoxically, even though the ideology underlying the new realisations changed, their form, except for a few cases, did not. For years Sub-Saharan Africa was waiting for its equivalent of Hasan Fathy – the Egiptian architect who combined the

31 *African modernism*..., p. 314.
32 Ibid., p. 320.
33 Ibid., pp. 432-434.

achievements of modernism with the traditional way of shaping space and the construction materials known for thousands of years.[34] Fathy claimed that "Modernity does not necessarily mean liveliness, and change is not always for the better... Tradition is not necessarily old-fashioned and is not synonymous with stagnation."[35] His sentiment is close to the designers of the young generation, who consciously and consistently try to distance themselves from the modernist semantics enforced by the colonial dominance of the West. Its consequences are still visible and the attempt to change them is inscribed in the theory of the post-colonial turn, which, as Robert Young sees it, focuses on the changing world. The practitioners of post-colonialism desire to change it further.[36]

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34 B. Jękot, *Afrykańskie oblicza modernizmu*..., p. 75.
35 W.J.R. Curtis, *Modern Architecture since 1900*, Phaidon Press, London 2005, p. 569.
36 R.J.C. Young, *Postkolonializm. Wprowadzenie*, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego, Kraków 2012, p. 19.

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ZWROT POSTKOLONIALNY A ARCHITEKTURA MODERNISTYCZNA W AFRYCE (streszczenie)

Modernizm jako nurt w architekturze rzadko bywa łączony z polityką kolonialną europejskich mocarstw. Tymczasem stał się on jednym z narzędzi ekspansji „Zachodu" w krajach afrykańskich. Była siłą budującą i niszczącą zarazem. Stanowiła odzwierciedlenie przemian współczesnego świata, a jednocześnie prowadziła do nieuchronnego zerwania z lokalną tożsamością i tradycją. „Rok Afryki" (1960) kiedy to niepodległość proklamowało aż 17 państw, paradoksalnie nie przyniósł radykalnych zmian w obszarze rozwiązań architektonicznych. Obiekty publiczne nadal wznoszone były w „zachodniej", modernistycznej konwencji. Polityczna zależność od „kraju-matki" została w znacznym stopniu zredukowana, a niekiedy całkowicie zerwana. Równocześnie związki na płaszczyźnie architektury pozostały niemal niezmienne, spychając tym samym „peryferie" do roli „prowincji". Krytyczna analiza skutków kolonializmu łączy postkolonializm z neokolonializmem rozumianym jako kontrola sprawowana przez metropolię nad zdekolonializowanymi peryferiami.

Słowa kluczowe: Afryka, modernizm, dekolonizacja, postkolonializm, architektura modernistyczna

Art Inquiry. Recherches sur les arts 2015, vol. XVII
ISSN 1641-9278

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A POST-SOCIALIST CITY: A "TURN" IN SHAPING THE ARCHITECTURAL IMAGE OF A CITY AT THE TURN OF THE 19th AND 20th CENTURIES. THE CASE OF ŁÓDŹ

Abstract: Following the political breakthrough of 1989 architects were faced with completely new challenges. After the lethargy of the 1980s Polish architecture experienced a real turn. A remarkable transformation was taking place along with the general cultural, social, political and economic changes. The opening to the trends in Western culture, the establishment of numerous private architectural studios, the appearance of development companies or foreign investors, coupled with new technological possibilities resulted in the change of Polish urban landscape. As a result, Polish municipal authorities had to review their way of thinking about their cities. The paper aims at analysing the changes stimulated by the "turn" which took place in Polish architecture in the 1990s. It presents some observations on the transformation and the emerging challenges and problems of Łódź urban space.

Keywords: post-socialist city, Łódź, urban regeneration, place promotion, city identity, polish contemporary architecture, architectural changes

Introduction

According to Cicero, architecture as art is closely linked to politics. Political transformations result, among others, in the creation of new conditions for architectural development. This results in rapid turns in shaping the architectural image of the city. A collapse of the Communist regime in 1989 was an important "turn" not only in the political context; it also initiated the processes which strongly influenced architecture and urban planning, as well as the way of thinking about the city in a wider social and cultural context. After the

collapse of the centralised Communist system, the perception and vision of Łódź underwent radical transformation, while the forces influencing its shape became much more complex. In a democratic system, a city is not a fully controllable area and cannot be completely programmed by the authorities.[1] The multi-directional changes resulting from the processes of democratization, commercialization, or globalisation added variety to the city's structure and its architecture. However, according to the principle that in each political system "the language of power is 'urbanized'",[2] the issues associated with architecture and urban planning have remained an important element of the political debate and the official strategy.

The specificity of Łódź

Łódź is a good example of a Central European city which since the end of the 19th century went through a lot of turns and transformations. A second and now the third largest Polish city, Łódź developed as a 19th-century centre of the textile industry. Its portrayals as "Polish Manchester" and "a country of its own" in the late 19th and early 20th century press reflected the unique character of Łódź very well.[3] The industrial character of the city was a key factor influencing its architectural and spatial form. After the political turn of 1989, Łódź was greatly affected by the overlapping processes characteristic for a post-industrial and at the same time a post-socialist city.[4] The political transformation, resulting in economic changes, led to the collapse of the industry which had constituted the basis of Łódź economy. The crisis affected the situation of the 19th-century architectural urban tissue. It was complicated due to the concentration of the industry in the downtown area and its interlacing with the residential quarters. After a large number of Łódź factories had been put into liquidation, the factory buildings and whole post-factory complexes, characteristic for the cityscape were threatened. The demolition or slow

1 M. Czepczyński, *Cultural Landscapes of Post-Socialist Cities. Representation of Powers and Needs*, Ashgate, Hampshire 2008, p. 1.

2 Ibid.

3 K. Kołodziej, „Między "ziemią obiecaną" a "złym miastem" – cała (?) prawda o Łodzi w publicystyce i prasie warszawskiej", cz. 2, *Acta Universitatis Lodziensis. Folia Litteraria Polonica* 2010, no. 13, p. 177.

4 The processes taking place in post-socialist cities are described i.a. by M. Czepczyński, *Cultural Landscapes...*; S.A. Hirt, *Iron Curtains. Gates, Suburbs and Privatization of Space in the Post-socialist City*, Wiley-Blackwell, Cambridge and Oxford 2012; S.A Hirt, K. Stanilov, *Twenty years of transition: the evolution of urban planning in Eastern Europe and former Soviet Union, 1989-2009*, UnHabitat, Nairobi, 2009; *The Post-Socialist City. Urban, Form and Space Transformations in Central and Eastern Europe after Socialism*, K. Stanilov ed., Springer, Netherlands 2010.

degradation of the empty buildings posed the danger of significant disturbance of the urban tissue. While in the 19th century Łódź had developed extremely fast,[5] in the 1990s, after the transfer to market economy, the city experienced a reverse tendency in an equally dynamic way – the closing of the big industrial plants may be compared to a cataclysm. The city had not experienced such a significant turn even after the second world war, when Poland became one of the socialist countries under the influence of the USSR. At that time the industry was nationalised, yet Łódź factories continued operating, and their functioning, as in the past, was based on textile production.

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The political changes and the necessity of functioning in a new, globalised environment not only brought a review of the city's economic situation, but also revealed the need for city promotion and creating its clear and positive image.[6] Showing the strong and attractive sides of Łódź aims at attracting Polish and foreign investors as well as tourists and consumers.[7] In the case of Łódź, its architecture and urban planning plays an important role. Former negative associations connected with the industrial character of the city, causing such problems as pollution and unemployment, and with the city's lack of long-standing historical or cultural roots, are being replaced by positive connotations[8]

5 Between 1820 and 1914, i.e. within less than a hundred years, the number of the citizens grew from 799 people to 478 thousand, i.e. as much as 598 times. Cf. B. Baranowski, J. Fijałek eds., *Łódź: Dzieje Miasta*, vol. 1, PWN, Warszawa-Łódź 1980; St. Liszewski, „Łódź centrum nowego regionu", [in:] *Społeczno-ekonomiczne problemy aglomeracji łódzkiej*, ed. W. Michalski, RCSS, Łódź 1999.

6 See e.g. J. Michlic, "Lodz in the Post-communist Era: In Search of a New Identity" [in:] *Post-communist Cities: New Cultural Reorientations and Identities*, eds. J. Czaplicka, R. Blair, Johns Hopkins University Press, Washington 2008, pp. 281-304; C. Young, S. Kaczmarek, "Changing the Perception of the Post - Socialist City: Place Promotion and Imagery in Łódź, Poland", *The Geographical Journal*, 1999, vol. 165, no 2, pp. 183-191; S. S. Fainstein, "The changing world economy and urban restructuring", [in:] *Leadership and urban regeneration: cities in North America and Europe*, eds D. Judd, M. Parkinson, Sage, London 1990, pp. 31-47.

7 Cf. C. Young, S. Kaczmarek, *Changing the Perception*..., p. 184.

8 This problem is raised e.g. by J. Sowińska-Heim, *Architektura Łodzi – próby reinterpretacji i tworzenia nowego wizerunku miasta po 1989* r., Wydawnictwo UMK, Toruń (in print); T.C. Currit, *Promised Land, Red Łódź, or HollyŁódź: Shifting Identities in an Industrial City. 1820-2010*, University of Washington 2010, http://www.academia.edu/544115/Promised_Land_Red_Lodz_or_HollyLodz_Shifting_Identities_in_an_Industrial_City._1820-2010 (18.06.2013); M. Fleming, "Legitimating Urban ''Revitalisation'' Strategies in Post-socialist Lodz", *East European Politics and Societies* 2012, no. 2, pp. 254-273; J. Michlic, "Lodz in the Post-communist Era...".

based mainly on the value of the unique post-industrial architecture originating in the19th century.[9] The revival of the post-industrial areas and giving them new functions, as well as reinstating the memory of the city's multicultural heritage are mentioned among the important positive effects of the political change.[10]

The functional transformation of the post-industrial buildings had also taken place before 1989,[11] but it was carried out on an incomparably smaller scale and thus it did not lead to any radical changes in the city's functioning. The greatest changes after the political transformation can be observed in the downtown areas: only in Piotrkowska Street (the urban, historical and symbolic axis of Łódź) 50% of the post-industrial areas changed their function in the 1990s.[12]

What is important for and characteristic of the currently occurring processes is their strong connection with a clear turn in thinking about the past of the city and the need for creating its new urban identity, in which an important role is played by its 19th-century architectural heritage. The attempts at changing the former stereotypes of Łódź as a "red", Communist, working-class city,[13] a "bad" and unattractive city[14] are associated with the need for clear, consistent policy of the city's development. Appropriate policy and actions concerning Łódź architecture and urban planning, the most external and the most quickly noticeable symptoms of the changes, aim at overcoming the former negative image. What is visible in the official discourse and actions is an orientation towards respecting and preserving the unique character of Łódź as an industrial city.[15]

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9 Other important areas of interest include the multiculturalism of 19th century Łódź and its European character.

10 W. Cudny, "Socio-Economic Changes in Lodz – Results of Twenty Years of System Transformation", *Geograficky Časopis* 2012, no. 15, pp. 3-27.

11 E.g. turning Geyer's factory into the Museum of Textiles.

12 M. Piech, Plansza XXVI: Przemiany przestrzenne, gałęziowe i funkcjonalne terenów przemysłowych Łodzi w latach 1938-1999, [in:] *Atlas Miasta Łodzi*, S. Liszewski ed., ŁTN, Łódź 2002.

13 As noted by Currit, it was finally possible to overcome the stereotype of "red Łódź" only thanks to the political and, consequently, economic and cultural transformation. Restoring the concept of a "Lodzermensch" and reinstating positive connotations with the capitalist past of Łódź played an important role in the process. T. C. Currit, *Promised Land*...

14 The phrase "bad city" [Pol. "złe miasto"] comes from the title of a book published for the first time in 1911: Z. Bartkiewicz, *Złe miasto*, Fundacja Anima, *Tygiel Kultury*, Łódź 2001. In our times, prof. Bohdan Jałowiecki and prof. Marek. S. Szczepański, analysing the current potential of Polish big cities, mention the "ugliness" of Łódź as a key factor diminishing the chances of the city: B. Jałowiecki, M.S. Szczepański, *Miasto i przestrzeń w perspektywie socjologicznej*, Wydawnictwo Naukowe Scholar, Warszawa 2010, p. 286.

15 See e.g. *Studium uwarunkowań i kierunków zagospodarowania przestrzennego miasta Łodzi*, Łódź 2010, http://www.mpu.lodz.pl/page/file.php?id=215 (14.04.2015); or the document *Regionalny Program Operacyjny Województwa Łódzkiego 2007-2013* connected with *Strategia*

Already in the first stage of the changes, in the 1990s, attempts were made to clearly define the urban space, bring out its characteristic features and determine their identity. The program of the urban development of Łódź emphasized the need for a review of Łódź historical heritage and gave an impulse to creating the narratives of identity and the identification of the inhabitants of Łódź with their city.[16] The greatest emphasis was then put on reviving Piotrkowska Street.[17] By and large, the characteristic four-kilometre-long artery has been perceived as a city landmark ever since Łódź came into existence.[18] Closely related to its history and development, it is a vivid reminder of 19th-century Łódź and thus has a unique character.[19] Already in the 19th century it was regarded as an exclusive area of the city. It is where the first lamp posts were installed, where horse cabs carried people to hotels or restaurants, and where the first electric tram line was built in the 1890s. The cultural, social and commercial life of the old Łódź focused around Piotrkowska. The map of Łódź from 2002[20] emphasized that "the buildings along Piotrkowska street, forming blocks within the regular layout of the streets, are the most characteristic element of Łódź urban space" and the basic element of the city's identity.[21] Interestingly, the program of the renovation of the selected downtown and post-factory areas in Łódź for the years 2004-2013, approved by the City Council

Rozwoju Województwa Łódzkiego na lata 2007-2020, Łódź 2011, http://www.rpo2007-2013.lodzkie.pl/wps/wcm/connect/rpo/rpo/strona_glowna/dokumenty _iz_rpo_wl/dokumenty_rpowl/rpo_wl (14.04.2015), as well as Strategia przestrzennego rozwoju Łodzi jako polityka sektorowa Strategii zintegrowanego rozwoju Łodzi 2020+, Łódź 2012, https://www.google.pl/search?sa=X&biw=1219&bih=877&q=define+recall&ved=0CCwQ_SowAGoVChMI3tDB3ezLyAIVQqhyCh0kjArD#q=Strategia+przestrzennego+rozwoju-+%C5%81odzi+jako+polityka+sektorowa+Strategii+zintegrowanego+rozwoju+%C5%81odzi-+2020%2B%2C+ (accessed 14 April 2015).

16 The Local Spatial Plan of the City of Łódź from 1993 assumed i.a. the restoration and modernization of the downtown architecture. Cf. K. Bald, *Plansza XLIII: Miejscowy plan zagospodarowania przestrzennego Łodzi z 1993 r.*, [in:], *Atlas Miasta Łodzi...*

17 C. Young, S. Kaczmarek, *Changing the Perception...*, p. 186, M. Flemmeing, "Legitimating Urban 'Revitalisation' Strategies in Post-socialist Lodz ", *East European Politics and Societies* 2012, no. 2, p. 263.

18 See e.g. A. Rynkowska, „Ulica Piotrkowska", *Odgłosy* 1965 no. 38, p. 8; *Atlas Miasta Łodzi...*; E. Olejniczak, *Obraz Łodzi w tekstach reportaży tygodnika "Odgłosy" (1958-1992)*, Primum Verbum, Łódź 2011, pp. 52-68.

19 Piotrkowska Street was delineated as part of the road to Piotrków, an important communication route, when Łódź was still a rural area. Yet it was named only in 1923. Initially the name covered a shorter section from Plac Kościelny in the Old Town to the market of the New Town (currently Plac Wolności). At the end of the 1820s the name was extended to the main axis of the cotton settlement Łódka. Cf. A. Rynkowska, *Ulica Piotrkowska*, Wydawnictwo Łódzkie, Łódź 1970.

20 *Atlas Miasta Łodzi...*

21 K. Bald, Plansza *XLIV: Przestrzeń dobra publicznego, obszar tożsamości miasta Łodzi, Atlas Miasta Łodzi...*

in 2004, emphasized the fact that the industrial collapse and the consequent change of the character of the downtown area as a place for services, including commerce, culture, business and banking, offers a unique chance of rearranging the centre and giving it the character of a metropolis for the first time in the two hundred years long history of the city.[22] Nevertheless, Piotrkowska Street needs deeper changes consisting primarily in the renovation of the 19th-century buildings, most of which are degraded and frequently in bad technical condition, and a well-prepared comprehensive functional program. Yet, due to its extent and necessary expenditures, the revival of the historical buildings in Piotrkowska Street is a long-term project.

In the first years after the transformation, Piotrkowska Street attracted many brand and luxury shops. The author of the documentary on *The two faces of Piotrkowska* observes that "Within quite a short time Piotrkowska underwent a radical metamorphosis, showing its Western face to the surprised passers-by. This change is marked by the compulsorily foreign names of the shops (...) and a chauffeured luxury limousine with a satellite dish arriving at the entrance to the Grand Hotel".[23] According to the research carried out in 2000, over 50% of the businesses situated in Piotrkowska Street were shops, including those of well-known international brands.[24] The main artery of Łódź also became famous for the number of its restaurants and other eating places. In 2004, 70% of all the cafes and 60% of the restaurants were located there.[25] In the 1990s Piotrkowska Street, as the most important element of the architectural structure of the city, playing the leading role in the promotional activities, was the main area of important investments of both public and private funds.[26] Yet the first years of the 21st century brought a crisis resulting mainly from the investments in the immediate vicinity of the street. Two of them influenced the situation of Piotrkowska Street the most: the shopping malls Galeria Łódzka, opened in 2002, and Manufaktura, whose opening ceremony took place in 2006. According to a report from 2009, in only seven years the number of the shops in and around Piotrkowska Street dropped by 20%. In the first place, the main artery was deprived of the trading venues of the popular international

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22 *Uproszczony lokalny program rewitalizacji wybranych terenów śródmiejskich oraz pofabrycznych Łodzi na lata 2004-2013*, Uchwała Nr XXXIV/568/04 Rady Miejskiej w Łodzi z dnia 14 lipca 2004 r., p. 5.

23 Transl. from the Polish by the author. M. Matuszak, „Dwa oblicza Pietryny", *Odgłosy* 1991, no. 3, p.1.

24 A. Wolaniuk, R. Przewłocka, *Plansza XXXVI: Ulica Piotrkowska*, [in:] *Atlas Miasta Łodzi...*

25 J. Nalewajko, „Rozwój, funkcjonowanie i miejsce usług gastronomicznych w przestrzeni Łodzi" [in:] *Łódź wybrane zagadnienia zagospodarowania przestrzennego*, ed. T. Marszał, Wydawnictwo UŁ, Łódź 2005.

26 M. Fleming, *Legitimating Urban "Revitalisation"...*, p. 10.

brands.[27] The changes were perceived as heralding "the end" of Piotrkowska Street.[28] However, researchers emphasize that this process has also brought positive changes, such as a greater functional diversification of the street with an increasing number of big-city institutions, such as political and social organizations, local government bodies, and academic, educational and financial institutions locating their venues, offices and headquarters there.[29] However, trade and gastronomy still predominate here and Piotrkowska Street retains its characteristic multifunctional character.

Despite an attempt to find some positive aspects of the occurring changes, the local public debate has been dominated by the perception of the crisis of "the heart of Łódź",[30] and the fear of the decline in the city's attractiveness and popularity.[31] This conviction also became an impulse for drawing up the official *Strategy of development of Piotrkowska Street in Łódź for 2009-2020*, approved by the City Council in 2009. Another worrying phenomenon was the spatial, economic and social chaos of the city.[32] The city's President even appointed a curatorial team for Piotrkowska, which, like a commanding unit in the armed forces, was to find a way to restore Piotrkowska's greatness (from the times of Łódź as the Promised Land[33]) and to turn it into a metropolitan artery, similar to such famous streets as Champ Elysees in Paris, La Rambla in Barcelona, or Oxford Street in London.[34]

The special team appointed for the better coordination of the activities and the implementation of the instructions formulated in the *Strategy* for

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27 Wolaniuk A. *Plansza LI: Przemiany funkcjonalne w otoczeniu ulicy Piotrkowskiej*, [in:] *Atlas miasta Łodzi: (suplement 1)*, S. Liszewski ed., Urząd Miasta Łodzi, Łódź 2009.

28 The final conclusions of the URBAMECO program, co-financed by the European Regional Development Fund in 2009, emphasized that Piotrkowska Street was losing its prestige both as cultural and a business area. URBAMECO, *Local Action Plan for Piotrkowska Street,* http://urbact.eu/sites/default/files/lap_piotrkowska.pdf (accessed 14 May 2015).

29 Wolaniuk A. *Plansza LI...*

30 *Strategia rozwoju ulicy Piotrkowskiej w Łodzi na lata 2009-2020* , p. 5.

31 A. Hac, „Jak umiera legendarna Piotrkowska, czyli wszystko po 3 zł „, *wyborcza.pl,* 2008 http://wyborcza.pl/1,91713,5452979,Jak_umiera_legendarna_Piotrkowska__czyli_wszystko.html; M. Witkowska, A. Zboińska, „Piotrkowska umiera. Uciekają nawet lumpeksy", *Dziennik Łódzki*, 2012, http://www.dzienniklodzki.pl/artykul/678553,piotrkowska-umiera-uciekaja-nawet-lumpeksy,id,t.html?cookie=1; M. Witkowska, „Ulica Piotrkowska, dawna wizytówka Łodzi pustoszeje „, *naszemiasto.pl*, 2011, http://lodz.naszemiasto.pl/artykul/ulica-piotrkowska-dawna-wizytowka-lodzi-pustoszeje,826316,art,t,id,tm.html.

32 *Strategia rozwoju ulicy Piotrkowskiej*..., p. 5.

33 *Strategia rozwoju ulicy Piotrkowskiej...*' p. 6.

34 The motives and aims of the President's decision to appoint the Piotrkowska team were summed up in the *Contract for Piotrkowska [Kontrakt dla Piotrkowskiej]*, which became an important document allowing for the formulation of the *Strategy of Development of Piotrkowska Street in Łódź for the years 2009-2020. Strategia rozwoju ulicy Piotrkowskiej w Łodzi na lata 2009-2020*, p. 3.

Piotrkowska, viewed it as a product which must be consciously managed and shaped.[35] The four-kilometre long street was divided into two sections. The first of them, between Plac Wolności (historical New Town Market) and Piłsudski Avenue, was given the role of a "promenade", while the second section of the street, from Piłsudski Avenue to Plac Niepodległości was assigned for business purposes.[36] The stated goal of the project was turning Piotrkowska Street into "a landmark of metropolitan Łódź, a European street functioning as an important place of business, culture, tourism and entertainment, a friendly space for the citizens and the visitors."[37] The postulated necessary actions included the creation of new public and semi-public areas and modernizing the existing ones in order to improve the attractiveness of the street as a meeting space,[38] as well as the revival of the quarters neighbouring Piotrkowska Street. As regards the tenement houses located in Piotrkowska Street, the only accepted directive was to conduct repairs and renovation of the elevations, gates, and side walls.[39] Superficial as these may seem, these directives were undoubtedly aimed at improving the aesthetics of the buildings and slowing down the process of degradation of the architectural tissue of the street. The renovation of Piotrkowska Street is still in progress. Its surface has been repaired and covered with granite blocks, new lamp posts and so-called small architecture have been installed.[40] Another important change was the installation of benches along the street.[41] Some friendly public spaces, such as the modernized section of 6 Sierpnia Street,[42] start to appear. The street is described as a "woonerf", the first "living courtyard" in Łódź.[43]

Such initiatives as the Foundation of Piotrkowska Street established in 1990, which organizes numerous events aiming at the restoration of "the social significance" and identity of Piotrkowska Street.[44] One of the initiatives

35 *Strategia rozwoju ulicy Piotrkowskiej*..., p. 7.
36 Ibid. p. 11.
37 Ibid. p. 12.
38 Ibid. p. 16.
39 Ibid. p. 12.
40 In 2011 the city announced the competition *Piotrkowska Obiecana [The Promised Piotrkowska]* for the development of an architectural and artistic concept of Piotrkowska Street, functioning partially as a promenade. The competition resulted from the assumptions of *A Strategy of Development of Piotrkowska Street*...
41 The improvement of the quality of the urban space resulting from the introduction of benches was noted e.g. by Jan Ghel. Cf. J. Ghel, *Miasta dla ludzi*, Wyd. RAM, Kraków 2014, pp. 16-18, 140-145, 155.
42 „woonerf – podworzec miejski", http://woonerf.dlalodzi.info/spot_6s.html (15.06.2015).
43 bec, „Woonerf – pierwszy miejski podwórzec w Łodzi", *Bryla.pl*, 2014, http://www.bryla.pl/bryla/ 1,85301,16347673,Woonerf___pierwszy_miejski_podworzec_w_Lodzi.html (accessed 12 June 2015).
44 *Fundacja Ulicy Piotrkowskiej [Foundation of Piotrkowska Street]*, http://www.piotrkowska.pl/page.php?mypage=17. (12 June 2015).

involved the creation of *the Monument of Łódź Citizens of the Turn of the Millennium* and the later *Monument of Łódź Citizens of the New Millennium* in the form of paving blocks engraved with names, inserted in the surface of Piotrkowska Street.

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After the first period of the transformations occurring in Łódź in the 1990s, the beginning of the 21st century saw a wide-scale process of conversion of the post-factory buildings to new functions. The most spectacular effect was achieved through the revival of a part of the post-industrial complex comprising the buildings of the former textile plant established by Israel Poznański. This huge complex located in the city centre, in the neighbourhood of Piotrkowska Street, occupying the space of three city blocks, had lost its original function in 1997, when the company was put into liquidation. The post-factory buildings were bought by the French consortium Apsys[45] and converted into a modern shopping mall called Manufaktura, advertising itself as the biggest commercial-entertaining centre in Poland. According to the promotional materials, the place is visited each year by millions of people from all over the world.[46] Manufaktura is an interesting example of a competent creation of an image of modern commercial space based on the selectively treated history and past of the place, dating back to the times of 19th-century prosperity. It is also based on the symbolic meaning of the architecture of former Poznański's factory, which is a permanent fixture of the cityscape.[47] According to one promotional text, "Poznański's factory complex (together with the neighbouring palace) was a European architectural icon of the 19th century, and Manufaktura has now become a model investment, frequently awarded and complimented".[48] Although created inside 19th-century walls, Manufaktura, having met the need for a modern spectacular architectural realization, became a symbol of modern Łódź.

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45 Currently Manufaktura belongs to the international investment company, Union Investment Real Estate AG. In 2012 it was sold for 1.6 billion PLN. As reported by the press, this was a record amount on the Polish real estate market. M. Wojtczuk, „Łódzka Manufaktura sprzedana za rekordową kwotę 1,6 mld zł ", *wyborcza.biz / nieruchomości*, 2012 [web portal of „Gazeta Wyborcza"]. http://wyborcza.biz/finanse/1,108340,12763387, Lodzka_Manufaktura_srzedana_za_rekordowa_kwote_1_6.html (accessed 12 June 2015).

46 *Manufaktura*, 2008 [from the official webside of Łódź City Council] http://uml.lodz.pl/miasto/o_miescie/skarby_lodzi/manufaktura/ (14.06.2015).

47 More details in: J. Sowińska-Heim, "Conversions and redefinitions – architecture and identity of a place", *Art Inquiry / Recherches sur les Arts* 2013, vol. XV (XXIV), pp. 191-205.

48 *Manufaktura*, 2008...

A visually and functionally consistent fragment of urban space disassociated from the surrounding city space has thus been created in the city centre. The former factory complex was only partially modernised and converted, which has resulted in the new divisions of the historical layout, modifying its composition.[49] As a privately owned space, Manufaktura, advertised and perceived as a modern "driving force" of Łódź and "the beating heart of the city",[50] has not contributed to the development of Piotrkowska Street, simply becoming its dangerous competitor.[51] Although the *Strategy for Piotrkowska Street* clearly emphasizes that, as an essential element of "the heritage and identity (...) of the city, its priceless treasure and landmark"[52] it plays a superior role in relation to other complexes in the urban space serving similar cultural, entertainment and business functions,[53] in practice keeping the balance has turned out to be very difficult. According to the program of the revival of selected downtown and post-factory areas in Łódź,[54] adopted by the local Council in 2003, the creation of links between the city landmarks is an important task accompanying the revival process, which would facilitate the restoration of much-needed consistence within the central area of the city.[55] The zone between Manufaktura and Piotrkowska Street was indicated as an important fragment of public space and an important element of the city's identity, though still requiring renovation and reorganization It was emphasized that the changes must contribute to a harmonious coexistence of the commercial-entertainment centre with the city facing a crisis.[56]

A challenge to the preservation of the urban space and at the same time an attempt to build a new identity of the city is a big-scale urban undertaking, namely the creation of the New Centre of Łódź.[57] It is a priority investment financed

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49 Originally, the main axis of the layout was Ogrodowa Street; now the axis has been moved to the area of the Manufaktura "market"; Cf. J. Sowińska-Heim, "Margins and marginalizations in a post-socialist urban area. The case of Łódź", *Art Inquiry / Recherches sur les Arts*, vol. XVI (XXV), 2014, pp. 303-318.

50 Cf. *Manufaktura napędza Łódź*, [official webside of *Manufaktura*] http://www.manufaktura.com/26/o_nas; (05 June 2013).

51 M. Danielewski, Al. Przybylska, „Od dziś miasto jest tam", *Kultura*, supplement to *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 2007 no. 260, 21; „Łódzki Disneyland. Debata o Manufakturze", *Gazeta Wyborcza – Łódź*, 2004, no. 261, p. 4; A. Hac, „Łączmy to, co kochamy, z tym, co w Łodzi najlepsze", Gazeta Wyborcza – Łódź, 2009, no. 294, p. 5.

52 Transl. by the author. *Strategia rozwoju ulicy Piotrkowskiej*..., p. 6.

53 *Strategia rozwoju ulicy Piotrkowskiej*..., p. 5.

54 *Uproszczony Lokalny Program Rewitalizacji wybranych terenów śródmiejskich oraz pofabrycznych Łodzi na lata 2004-2013*, p. 5.

55 Ibid. p. 13.

56 Ibid. p. 15. A competition announced in 2009 *U źródeł Piotrkowskiej [At the roots of Piotrkowska]* aimed at finding methods of integrating this part of the city.

57 The program for the New Centre of Łódź was approved by the resolution of the City Council of 2007 and then amended with the resolutions in 2012 and 2015. Cf. *Program Nowe*

by the City of Łódź and the European Fund.[58] The design of the New Centre of Łódź was effect-oriented; it was intended to be as spectacular as the new museum quarter in Bilbao. The prestigious character of the project was to be ensured by the famous figures associated with it, such as Rob Krier (who developed the spatial schema for the works within the area of the Łódź Fabryczna station), Frank Ghery, Daniel Liebeskind or David Lynch. The New Centre was expected to attract both investors and tourists and initiate the economic resuscitation of Łódź. A huge quarter adjacent to Piotrkowska Street, covering 100 ha, was subject to a functional change and architectural reconstruction. The plan foresees the creation of an aesthetically consistent space with well-planned layout of communication routes and internal squares.[59] The priority of the planners is the construction of the new Łódź Fabryczna station and the revival of the former EC1 power plant[60] and its adaptation to cultural and artistic functions. In this way a new central space is being construed and another Łódź "icon" is being created.[61] Although the power plant in Targowa street is an interesting building from the beginning of the 20th century (1906), it has never been a significant spot within the city and it has never served public functions. Still, the main goal of the New Centre of Łódź project "is creating a new functional city centre with multiple public spaces".[62] As early as at the concept stage it was also assumed that the new market square created near the new station would become "the city centre", while a "monument which would become a new symbol of Łódź" would be situated at the Kobro Square, the so-called Small Market.[63] Originally the square was to become part of a system of public spaces linking the New Centre of Łódź and Piotrkowska Street,[64]

Centrum Łodzi, Uchwała nr XVII/279/07 Rady Miejskiej w Łodzi z dnia 28 sierpnia 2007 r. ; *Program Nowe Centrum Łodzi*, Uchwała nr XLV/840/12 Rady Miejskiej w Łodzi z dnia 4 lipca 2012 r.; *Program Nowe Centrum Łodzi*, Uchwała nr XII/241/15 Rady Miejskiej w Łodzi z dnia 20 maja 2015 r. (accessed 20 May 2015).

58 Within the scope of *the Regional Operational Programme of Łódź Voivodeship for the years 2007–2013*; Cf. EC1, http://www.ec1lodz.pl/EC1,12 (22 June 2015).

59 *Nowe Centrum Łodzi. Rewitalizacja EC1* [official webside of the City Council] http://www.uml.lodz.pl/miasto/rewitalizacja_i_zabytki_/nowe_centrum_lodzi_rewitalizacja_ec1/ (10.06.2015).

60 The designers were the Home of Houses studio from Poznań for EC1 Wschód, and the consortium based on the cooperation of Łódź Investment Implementation Bureau "Fronton" and the Company Mirosław Wiśniewski Urbanistyka i Architektura projekt for EC1 Zachód.

61 Long before the new building was opened, the revitalised EC1 power station won the contest for the Design of the 2013. bec, "Stara elektrownia zmieniona w ikonę miasta", Bryła.pl, 2014 http://www.bryla.pl/bryla/56,85301,15635143,EC1_w_Lodzi__Od_starej_elektrowni_do_BRYLY_ROKU_2013.html (08.06.2015).

62 *Nowe Centrum Łodzi Program*, annex to the resolution no XVII/279/07 of the City Council, 2007, p. 2.

63 Ibid. p. 13.

64 *Nowe Centrum Łodzi*, Resolution no XLV/840/12 of the City Council in Łódź, 2012, p. 3.

yet, despite the assurances about the importance of Piotrkowska – "a priceless treasure" and the city landmark, contradictory decisions have been taken and inconsistent signals have been sent. Even the language and the marketing strategy used in promoting the place, emphasizing the need for creating the New Centre of the city (the capital letters are not accidentally used) devalue other city spaces, including, primarily, Piotrkowska Street.

2011 saw the appearance of a new grass-roots initiative, called *Sewing up the city*, whose aim is to prepare the project of integrating the New Centre of Łódź with its historical and actual centre, namely Piotrkowska Street.[65] An important element of the undertaking were the consultations and debates with the local inhabitants. Their results were summed up in *The Strategy for the Spatial Development of Lodz 2020+*[66] approved in 2012. The document answers the need for a comprehensive outlook on the architectural and urban transformations of Łódź urban tissue and the integration of the interesting areas scattered in the urban space. It distinguishes the Metropolitan Urban Core, with a concentration of historical architectural edifices crucial for the city's character and identity.[67] The dominant feature of this zone are characteristic buildings within a regular network of streets and quarters. It is where the greatest number of buildings from the industrial period, both palaces, tenement houses and factories, have been preserved.[68] An important assumption of the adopted *Strategy* is the inward development of the city and thus the concentration of investment in the city centre, whose architecture, including ca. 11000 buildings from the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries determines the identity, value and uniqueness of Łódź.[69] According to the assumptions, capital engagement should be based on the use of the city resources.[70] New landmarks, complying with modern requirements, have to cohere with the historical city structure. The clear orientation towards creating a consistent Metropolitan Urban Core arouses hopes for restoring the integrity of Łódź city centre. In this concept, even the

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65 The initiative has the patronage of the President of Łódź, and the co-organizer is Miejska Pracownia Urbanistyczna.

66 *Strategia przestrzennego rozwoju Łodzi 2020+* considered various different documents, including the results of the competitions, such as: *Koncepcja zagospodarowania terenu położonego w Łodzi w rejonie ulic Piotrkowskiej198-216 i Wigury 3 i 5/7* z 2008 r., *U źródeł Piotrkowskiej* z 2009 r., *Wielkomiejska Piotrkowska* z 2010 r. and *Koncepcja zagospodarowania Pasażu im. Leona Schillera w Łodzi* also from 2010.

67 *Strategia przestrzennego rozwoju Łodzi 2020+*, eds. M. Janiak, M. Wiśniewska, B. Poniatowski, Urząd Miasta Łodzi Departament Architektury i Rozwoju Biuro Architekta Miasta, Łódź [n.d.], p. 11.

68 Ibid. p. 16.

69 Ibid. p. 11; Strategia *przestrzennego rozwoju Łodzi 2020+*, Uchwała nr LV/1146/13 Rady Miejskiej w Łodzi, 2013, p. 8.

70 Ibid.

New Centre of Lodz seems to find its proper place. It functions inside it, not as "a heart of Łódź", but as an important and attractive investment project allowing for the reorganization of a significant part of the city and its unification with the neighbouring "historical city centre".[71] Thanks to the acquisition of the EU funds, an integrated revival of the Metropolitan Urban Core is being planned. This time it will include complex activities solving the problems of the whole area as well as those considering a wide social context.[72]

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At the turn of the 20th and 21st centuries (1994–2009), 13122 buildings were erected in Łódź.[73] The office buildings and hotels are situated in the city centre or in the neighbourhood of Piotrkowska Street, some of them located in modernised post-factory buildings. However, most of the new buildings are residential ones, scattered around the city. No residential areas have been recently created in the very centre of Łódź, while urban sprawl could be observed due to the location of residential buildings in the poorly urbanised suburbs.[74] One of the important aims set in the *Strategy* is preventing the process of the city sprawl by limiting investments outside the centre of Łódź.[75] Such programs as *Strych* [The Attic] or *Remontuj i miej* [Renovate and move in] aim at encouraging people to live in the centre. They are also accompanied by social programs motivating people to live in the city centre.[76] Significantly, in the period of 1960–2000 Śródmieście [Downtown] was the only district where the number of inhabitants did not grow but systematically dropped.[77] According to statistics, the process of citizen outflow was also observed in the 1990s, in the period

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71 *Stragedia przestrzennego rozwoju Łodzi 2020+*, eds. M. Janiak, M. Wiśniewska, B. Poniatowski..., p. 32, 38.

72 The Strategy determines the directives for the *Local Regeneration Programme for the years 2014–2020*); S. Brajter, *Kontekst: rewitalizcja obszarowa centrum Łodzi*, Urząd Miasta Łodzi, http://uml.lodz.pl/rewitalizacja/kontekst/ (accessed 12 May 2015).

73 S. Kaniewicz, W. Michalski, *Plansza LXV: Zmiany w przestrzeni Miasta Łodzi w latach 1994 - 2009* [in:] *Atlas miasta Łodzi: (suplement 2)*, ed. S. Liszewski, Urząd Miasta Łodzi - Łódzki Ośrodek Geodezyjny, Łódź 2012.

74 Ibid.

75 Contrary to the *Spatial Plan of the City of Łódź* from 1993, when it was assumed that the new city programs would cover the areas which had not been urbanised so far. K. Bald, *Plansza XLIII...*

76 *Strategia przestrzennego rozwoju Łodzi 2020+*, eds. M. Janiak, M. Wiśniewska, B. Poniatowski..., p. 37.

77 S. Kaniewicz, B. Nowakowska, A. Wosiak, *Plansza XIV: Rozwój i rozmieszczenie ludności, Atlas Miasta Łodzi...*

of the transformation, when the inhabitants moved from the downtown area not to the huge socialist settlements in the suburbs, such as Widzew, Retkinia or Teofilów, but to the new apartment complexes and to low-rise multi-family houses.[78]

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Although twenty six years have passed since the political transformation, Łódź has not managed to achieve one of its strategic goals, namely "creating a positive image of the city in the eyes of its inhabitants and its potential external users".[79] According to the research carried out in 2010, as much as 67% respondents, mainly Łódź citizens, did not see any characteristics distinguishing Łódź from other cities. Even such events as the Festival of the Four Cultures, the photo contest *Potęga Łodzi* [The Mighty Łódź], *Urodziny Tuwima* [Tuwim's Birthday] or *Gwiazdka z Piotrkowską* [Christmas Eve with Piotrkowska] organised by the Foundation of Piotrkowska Street did not help. In 2005 the Foundation, together with the City Council and the University of Natural Sciences and Humanities in Łódź organized a conference with the significant title "Łódź – identity and challenge". Its participants prepared an appeal to the city authorities, conservators and media, in which they protested against the destruction and consequent shrinkage of historical architectural tissue from the period before the first world war.[80] Attempts were made to define the identy of Łódź, based mainly on the 19th century industrial architectural heritage. The participants also called for the creation of a clear symbol of the city, the creation of "new mythology" and new narration about Łódź, development of the plans for the festivals and events promoting Łódź.[81]

Summary

The changes taking place in Łódź are reflected in its functional transformation and development,[82] but also in the aesthetics of the main city artery – Piotrkowska Street, "our own 5th Avenue on the Łódka and Jasień rivers",[83]

78 Ibid.

79 Transl. by the author. *Uproszczony Lokalny Program Rewitalizacji wybranych terenów śródmiejskich oraz pofabrycznych Łodzi na lata 2004-2013*, p. 5.

80 M. Janiak, *Zbudź w sobie Łódź. „Tożsamość miasta - łódzkie wyzwanie" cz.1*, http://www.piotrkowska.pl/dokumenty/201207041455350.TozsamoscMiasta.pdf (accessed 12 May 2015).

81 Ibid. „Definicje tożsamości", *Kronika miasta Łodzi*, 2006, no 1, p. 8.

82 A. Wolaniuk, *Plansza LI...*

83 Transl. by the author. Fundacja Ulicy Piotrkowskiej, „Czym jest Piotrkowska?", http://www.piotrkowska.pl/page.php?mypage=53&myitm=1&selecteditm=73 (12.06.2015).

and other areas in the centre. After the chaotic activity of the initial period of de-industrialisation, the declarations included in the *Strategy 2020+* and the regeneration programme for 2014–2020 have brought some hope for integrated and consistent actions reviving the whole metropolitan urban core. The slightly pompous motto of the *Strategy 2020+*, "The work and achievements of previous generations which created great Łódź are the foundations of our city's identity" clearly outline the direction of those efforts and emphasize the role of revival as their key element.

Today, in consequence of the collapse of traditional industries, many European cities face the necessity of going through the processes of revival. Restoring cultural values and highlighting the unique character of the architectural tissue of a city is an important tool of creating an attractive image of that city and enhancing its competitiveness.[84] However, the deeper benefits of such a strategy include a change of attitude towards the artefacts from the past and the restoration/creation of the city's identity,[85] resulting in the inhabitants' identification with their city. These changes lead in turn to the activation of the citizens and their involvement in the revival programs.

Łódź is a city whose history does not reach back beyond the industrial 19th century. In recent times it was particularly hard-hit by the process of de-industrialisation and transfer to free-market, global economy. We can observe the phenomena which have also occurred in many other European cities, such as the urban sprawl, the degradation of the central part of the city, creating islands of poverty in that area, or the problems of gentrification.[86] The need to attract domestic and foreign investors, resulting from the transfer to free-market economy, has also brought the danger of chaotic and frequently unfavourable changes geared towards the interests of the particular players on the economic market. This phenomenon is also connected with the annexation of the public spaces important for the city by private investors.[87]

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84 A. Wojnarowska, „Rewitalizacja zdegradowanych obszarów miejskich. Przykłady praktyczne", Wydawnictwo UŁ, Łódź 2011, p 18; St. V. Ward, *Marketing re-invented cities*, [in:] A. Tallon ed., *Urban regeneration and renewal. Critical Concepts in Urban Studies*, vol. III, Routledge, London and New York, pp. 48-81; R. Paddison, "City marketing, image reconstruction and urban regeneration", [in:] A. Tallon ed., *Urban regeneration and renewal. Critical Concepts in Urban Studies*, vol. III, Routledge, London and New York, pp. 34-47.

85 J. Sowińska-Heim, *Architektura Łodzi – próby reinterpretacji...*; M. Fleming, *Legitimating Urban "Revitalisation"...*; J. Michlic, *Lodz in the Post-communist Era....*, Marek Janiak, *Zbudź w sobie Łódź...; Strategia przestrzennego rozwoju Łodzi 2020+*, eds. M. Janiak, M. Wiśniewska, B. Poniatowski.

86 J. Sowińska-Heim, "Margins and marginalizations..."; S.A. Hirt, *Iron Curtains...*, pp. 49-52.

87 The most spectacular action of this kind in Łódź is the sale of the former textile factory, Poltex, to the Absys company and its revitalization as Manufaktura, a shopping and entertainment centre. Cf. S.A. Hirt, *Iron Curtains* ..., pp. 49-52.

In the case of Łódź, those problems are made worse by the upsetting of the continuity of the narration about the city by undermining its roots in the socialist period and the criticism of the manufacturers ("bloodsuckers" and "exploiters") and thus their heritage.[88] Another important factor hindering the citizen's identification with the city and its heritage was the breaking of its social continuity, which occurred after World War II.[89] Pre-war Łódź was a multicultural city with ca. 44.5 % of German and Polish inhabitants, while 21.1% – of the inhabitants were Jewish.[90] After the war we may speak about a monocultural social structure.

The processes resulting from the political transformation of 1989 are still ongoing. Experiencing the urban space of contemporary Łódź, we become conscious or uninterested "readers" of the complex story of contemporary cultural and social changes provoked by the great political turn of 1989. As Ewa Rewers points out, architecture reflects "the world of human desires" and values, thus becoming "a clear culture text".[91] The transformations which architecture and urban planning are going through reflect the social, cultural and economic turns of the city.

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88 T. Daniszewski, „W Łodzi przed pół wiekiem", *Głos Robotniczy*, 1946, no. 118, p. 4; J. Sowińska-Heim, *Architektura Łodzi - próby reinterpretacji...*

89 J. Sowińska-Heim, *Architektura Łodzi - próby reinterpretacji...*

90 Figures for 1865. W. Puś Wiesław, „Początki Łodzi przemysłowej", [in:] K.A. Kuczyński ed., *Wizerunek Łodzi w literaturze, kulturze i historii Niemiec i Austrii*, Urząd Miasta Łodzi, Łódź, p. 20.

91 E. Rewers, *Język i przestrzeń w poststrukturalistycznej filozofii kultury*, Wydawnictwo Naukowe UAM, Poznań 1998, p. 38.

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MIASTO POST-SOCJALISTYCZNE - "ZWROT" W KSZTAŁTOWANIU ARCHITEKTONICZNEGO OBLICZA MIASTA PRZEŁOMU XX I XXI WIEKU. PRZYKŁAD ŁODZI. (streszczenie)

Przełom polityczny i systemowy, który nastąpił w 1989 r., otworzył przed architektami całkowicie nowe możliwości działalności twórczej. Po marazmie lat 80. w architekturze polskiej nastąpił prawdziwy zwrot. Swoista rewolucja dokonała się w korelacji ze zmianami ogólnokulturowymi,

społecznymi, a także politycznymi i gospodarczymi. Otwarcie na nurty obecne w architekturze "Zachodu", powstawanie licznych prywatnych pracowni architektonicznych, pojawienie się firm developerskich, czy też zagranicznych inwestorów, wraz z nowymi możliwościami technologicznymi wpłynęło na przeobrażenia zachodzące w krajobrazie polskich miast. Jednocześnie zmusiło władze miast do zrewidowania sposobu myślenia o mieście. Artykuł stanowi analizę zmian stymulowanych "zwrotem", który miał miejsce w polskiej architekturze lat 90. Prezentuje on spostrzeżenia dotyczące przeobrażeń, jak również pojawiających się nowych wyzwań i problemów zachodzących w łódzkiej przestrzeni miejskiej.

Słowa kluczowe: miasto postsocjalistyczne, Łódź, rewitalizacja, strategia promocji miasta, polska architektura współczesna, tożsamość miasta.

Art Inquiry. Recherches sur les arts 2015, vol. XVII
ISSN 1641-9278

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TELLING IMAGES? THE SELF-REFLEXIVE TURN IN CONTEMPORARY AMERICAN GRAPHIC NOVELS

Abstract: This article proposes to see graphic novel as the epitome of a twofold turn. First, as *the* genre of the pictorial turn, a form that demonstrates the transition from the verbal to the visual. Indeed, the graphic novel can be described as a verbal-visual compound whose power of expression arises from the tension between text and image. The burden of advancing the plot is primarily placed on the visual sequence: images in graphic novels serve to "tell" of the events. With its roots in the popular medium of the comics, the graphic novel embraces unequivocalness of the image as its main principle. This rule, however, is being increasingly violated. This development signals the second turn: the so-called "self-reflexive" turn, where the image is emancipated from the referent. This article examines instances of a play with the image and its representational status. I will analyze selected sequences from contemporary American graphic novels, including David Mazzucchelli and Paul Karasik's *City of Glass* (1994), Chris Ware's *Jimmy Corrigan* (2000), and Craig Thompson's *Blankets* (2003), describing the strategies employed to render the narrative less straightforward. Such strategies as the use of color fields, non-standard page layout, or emphasis on the abstract character of the portrayed shapes and forms constitute significant additions to graphic tales. I will demonstrate how this subversive visual language enriches the medium of the graphic novel – a primarily self-reflexive form.

Keywords: pictorial turn, comics, graphic novel, visual narrative, self-reflexive turn.

"A picture (…) is a very peculiar and paradoxical creature, both concrete and abstract, both a specific individual thing and a symbolic form that embraces a totality,"[1] W.J.T. Mitchell aptly observes in his discussion of not only the poetics of images, but also of an entity that came to define the present era.

1 W.J.T. Mitchell, *What Do Pictures Want? The Lives and Loves of Images*, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago, London 2005, p. XVII.

Indeed, the "pictorial turn," as Mitchell declares, "is happening."[2] The shift is described essentially in terms of a phenomenon-in-the-making, one that is gaining momentum in the present and thus poses specific problems for art history, literary studies and cultural studies – it is "a postlinguistic, post-semiotic, rediscovery of the picture as a complex interplay between visuality, apparatus, institutions, discourse, bodies, and figurality."[3] Thus, it is only natural that considerable changes should take place not only in the "theory" of pictures, the way they are studied, analyzed, and read, but also some reflection should be offered as regards the role of the image in contemporary culture. I would like to discuss this question in the context of one of the most interesting genres to emerge at the interface between literature and visual arts, namely the graphic novel.

I propose to see the graphic novel as the epitome of a twofold turn. First, the graphic novel should be considered as *the* genre of the pictorial turn, one that demonstrates the transition from the verbal (the novel) to the visual. Indeed, graphic novels are unique narrative forms: suspended somewhere between word and image, they derive their narrative power from the coexistence of the two, constantly negotiating the relation established between the sayable and the seeable. Naturally, the history of graphic storytelling, or the history of word and image relations in general, extends beyond the existence of the contemporary graphic novel. The form in question is said to be born in the late 1970s,[4] with such important precedents as the Bayeux Tapestry, the tradition of ekphrasis and the "sisterly arts", and the works of William Hogarth or William Blake established before, but it is the rise of the graphic novel witnessed especially during the past forty years that calls into question the "linguistic," heralding the era of the "pictorial." This is not to say that we are dissociated from language. On the contrary, I believe that the pictorial turn builds up on the linguistic turn the way the Renaissance built up on Antiquity. It is the era of pictures, alas pictures which are "aware" of language and its system, and as such function in the presence of and in reference to their linguistic "other."

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2 W.J.T. Mitchell, *Picture Theory*, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago, London 1994, p. 11.

3 Ibid., p. 16.

4 "In 1978, veteran cartoonist Will Eisner produced *A Contract with God and Other Tenement Stories*, a collection of four interrelated stories about tenement life in the Bronx during the Great Depression. (...) Eisner believed the potential for comics readership was widely untapped. He used the term graphic novel while pitching his manuscript-length comic book to a mainstream publisher (...)." S. Weiner, "How the Graphic Novel Changed American Comics", in: *The Rise of the American Comics Artists: Creators and Contexts*, ed. P. Williams, J. Lyons, University Press Of Mississippi, Jackson 2010, p. 6.

It should be pointed out that the visual layer of graphic novels and comics is generally thought to play a more important narrative function than words, the latter being merely a companion to what is essentially a sequential visual work. Indeed, to quote Scott McCloud's classic definition, comics as a genre is "juxtaposed pictorial and other images in deliberate sequence intended to convey information and/or produce an aesthetic response in the viewer."[5] This explanation establishes unique focal points for the study of the genre. First, sequentiality is highlighted as the general framework of the graphic novel. It is through the successive presentation of images that the story is conveyed, images alone it should be added, because McCloud does not emphasize the intrinsic character of the word. Thus, in his view, comics thrive to a greater degree on pictures and not on the combination of the verbal and the pictorial per se. In his insistence on the central role of the pictorial sequence, however, McCloud points out that the artist does not want "you to browse the thing, he wants you to *read* it [emphasis original – M.O.]."[6] Thus, the pictorial, as conceptualized by McCloud, is the pictorial influenced by the linguistic turn, where images are read and not merely seen.[7]

The second turn that is taking place within the realm of the graphic novel is a still more complex phenomenon. It has to do with the role and form of the image in the graphic novel. As it is only through a carefully conceptualized succession of images that a story, a narrative, can be developed, images in graphic novels serve to illustrate, show, represent, "tell" of the events, inevitably adopting a realistic, albeit simplified, style in order, as Roger Sabin observes, "to carry the story."[8] As such, images enable the reader to decode the presented world and to progress through it without confusion. This rule, however, is being increasingly violated as graphic novelists purposefully engage in a play with the representational character of the drawing. Thus, to paraphrase Mitchell, it can be said that we are now experiencing the "self-reflexive" turn in contemporary American graphic novels, where the image is emancipated from the referent. Although the image still functions in a sequence, it very often disrupts the flow of the narrative and instead draws attention to its own artificial status as a vessel of meaning. Thus, it also highlights the unique character of the graphic novel, focusing more on the "graphic" than on the "novel."

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5 S. McCloud, *Understanding Comics: The Invisible Art*, William Morrow Paperbacks, New York 1993, p. 9.

6 Ibid., p. 19.

7 Further on in his study McCloud in fact talks about "the vocabulary of comics" (i.e. elements conveying meaning in the comic book or graphic novel). Ibid., p. 20.

8 R. Sabin, Comics, *Comix & Graphic Novels: A History of Comic Art*, Phaidon Press, London 2010, p. 44.

This article critically examines instances of the self-reflexive turn in three contemporary American graphic novels. I will analyze selected sequences from David Mazzucchelli and Paul Karasik's *City of Glass: The Graphic Novel*,[9] Chris Ware's *Jimmy Corrigan*,[10] and Craig Thompson's *Blankets*[11] and discuss the adopted subversive strategies of visual narration. Such strategies as the use of color fields, non-standard page layout, enlargement of respective details, or emphasis on the abstract character of shapes and forms portrayed constitute significant additions to graphic tales. All of these devices appear to perform the same function of disrupting the narrative. They do not render it completely unreadable, however, but significantly undermine its structure. As I will try to demonstrate, these strategies cannot be merely disregarded as "producing an aesthetic response in the viewer." On the contrary, they are to be seen as elements expanding and enriching the graphic narrative and as signs of the self-reflexive turn that takes place in the genre.

First, let me briefly comment on the theoretical approaches behind the poetics of graphic novels. The notion of a "realistic" style should also be explained as to avoid any confusion concerning this wide-encompassing term. I adopt the understanding of "realistic" in relation to a meaningful sign. To draw on Will Eisner's definition, "an image is the memory or idea of an object or experience recorded by a narrator (…). In comics, images are generally (…) rendered with economy in order to facilitate their usefulness as language."[12] Thus, connection to the real world is maintained; figurative art prevails. Such images, as Rudolf Arnheim observes, "portray things at a lower level of abstraction than themselves."[13] In other words, they are mimetic but also allow a certain level of simplification and abstraction which contribute to the universality of imagery. In fact, the very idiom of comics is "the stripped-down intensity of a (…) visual style."[14] Similarly to comics, graphic novels embrace unequivocalness and familiarity of the image as their main principle.

A single image, however, cannot narrate and it is through the postulated sequence of visuals that the narrative potential can be unveiled. It is always in the context of a succession of images that the authors of contemporary graphic novels introduce their subversive strategies. Indeed, as Thierry Groensteen

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9 D. Mazzucchelli, P. Karasik, *City of Glass: The Graphic Novel*, Avon Books, New York 1994.

10 C. Ware, Jimmy Corrigan: *The Smartest Kid on Earth*, Jonathan Cape, London 2000.

11 C. Thompson, *Blankets*, Top Shelf Productions, Marietta, Georgia 2003.

12 W. Eisner, *Graphic Storytelling and Visual Narrative*, W.W. Norton & Company, New York, London 1996, p. 9.

13 R. Arnheim, *Visual Thinking*, University of California Press, Berkeley, Los Angeles 1969, p. 137.

14 S. McCloud, *Understanding*…, p. 31.

points out, "[c]lassic comics, forced to submit to the imperialism of narration, were confined to explicit images and transitions (even if they did on occasion overuse captions that redundantly reaffirmed the meaning already obvious from the image), and most panels were self-sufficient. In contemporary comics, in contrast, there is an innovative current characterized by a poetics of reticence, ambiguity, and indeterminacy. Some authors prefer to stray off the narrow path of 'narrative and nothing but.' They are attracted to gray areas (…)."[15] A linear and logical progression of images is no longer a predestinate model of narration. In fact, a model determined by the notions of clarity, readability and straightforward storytelling has become but one among many different paradigms exploring the potential of the image and relations between images. While tapping into the established notions of visual narration, contemporary graphic novels deliberately challenge the expectations and habits of the readers of traditional comics.

The first example of such play with conventions is David Mazzucchelli and Paul Karasik's *City of Glass: The Graphic Novel*.[16] Published in 1994, this adaptation of Paul Auster's classic, the first novel in his *New York Trilogy*, raises many questions at the very level of its conceptualization. It is after all an adaptation, not an "original" work, and an adaptation, it should be added, of a work that is only superficially a hard-boiled detective story. Paul Auster's *City of Glass* goes beyond the established conventions of the genre, touching upon such phenomena as metafiction, authorship, intertextuality, interrogation of language, and ironic postmodern pastiche.[17] Adapting such a work is thus understandably difficult and, as Paul Karasik points out, *City of Glass* "appears initially impossible to do because it is so non-visual, because it is largely about the nature of language, because its subject matter is text itself, and the writing supporting that theme is so present and precise."[18] Thus, the adaptation poses a twofold challenge of how to convey a wealth of meaning contained in the novel and of how to devise a visual language that would be as nuanced and sophisticated as Auster's prose.

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15 T. Groensteen, *Comics and Narration*, University Press of Mississippi, Jackson 2013, p. 30.

16 Script adaptation by David Mazzucchelli and Paul Karasik. Art by David Mazzucchelli. The graphic novel was published as a part of Neon Lit series, which features graphic novel adaptations of modern and post-modern crime fiction. The books and artists in the series were selected by Bob Callahan and Art Spiegelman who conceived the series as a curious mix of noir and hard-boiled crime novels.

17 "*City of Glass* is a surprisingly non-visual work at its core, a complex web of words and abstract ideas in playfully shifting narrative styles." A. Spiegelman, "Picturing a Glassy-Eyed Private I" in: *City of Glass: The Graphic Novel*, D. Mazzucchelli and P. Karasik, Picador, New York 2004, p. II.

18 D. Coughlan, "Paul Auster's City of Glass: The Graphic Novel", *Modern Fiction Studies* 2006, vol. 52, no 4, p. 837.

The postulated intricacy of meaning is rendered through the changes in the drawing style, which vary in their intensity. Generally, the visual layer of *City of Glass: The Graphic Novel* is set in a minimalistic black and white heavy-lined style. The pictures are presented in a classic grid layout, with one to nine panels per page. This rigid structure, a framework which anchors the entire narrative, is undermined only towards the end when the protagonist, detective Daniel Quinn, loses himself in the streets of New York, at which point another narrator takes his place to finish the story. Rigid divisions and hard edges then give way to gentler and blurrier images, thus signaling the different narrative voice taking over the graphic novel. Yet, it is only when the reader immerses him- or herself deeper into the graphic narrative, analyzing sequences on a micro level, that he or she fully experiences the complexity of the visual tale.

Although, as Paul Karasik facetiously remarks, Auster gives his characters "things to do,"[19] the graphic novel does not simply depict the characters of Daniel Quinn or Peter Stillman as involved in certain actions or situations. On the contrary, Karasik and Mazzucchelli continuously disrupt straightforward action sequences with abstract imagery, thus pointing to the artificial status of the narrative: the pictorial is emphasized in favor of the linguistic. In Auster's book, the reader may never relax and comfortably slip into an entertaining detective tale. Similarly here: the reader may never rely on the visual sequence to seamlessly guide him through the story.

The first instance of such a subversive intervention can in fact be found at the very beginning of the graphic novel, when the telephone rings in the middle of the night, pulling Quinn into what would become an inescapable game of identities and interpretations. Indeed, the first page heralds the struggles that await the reader: an ambiguity of the visuals and a sense of suspension between figuration and abstraction, representation and self-reflexivity. The first page consists of only one large panel, a vertical rectangle, which echoes the format of the page. The opening panel is completely black with white letters in the center reading "It was a wrong number that started it…"[20] Apart from the initial bafflement – after all one would expect the tale to settle into the fictional (and figurative) world immediately – the first panel offers a variety of readings. To begin with, it is possible to decode the panel relying on the knowledge of Auster's text. The reader then is aware that the protagonist receives a call in the night and interprets the black field as "night," instantly imposing an explanatory vision onto what otherwise would be disturbing, abstract, and at odds with their expectations of how a graphic narrative should function. Interestingly enough, in such case the narrative, understood as interrelated

19 Ibid., p. 837.
20 D. Mazzucchelli, P. Karasik, *City*…, p. 1.

events, *sine qua non* rendered figuratively, seems to prevail over the sovereignty of the visual.

Thus, it would be of great interest to consider a number of autonomous readings. The black page at the beginning may function almost as a "declaration of independence" of the graphic tale, which asserts itself as an entity unsubordinated to the narrative, or an entity weaving its own visual narrative competitive towards the events that should be depicted. In such terms, the black abstract rectangular at the beginning of the graphic novel does not have to "mean" anything. On the contrary, its power lies in its abstract character. It defies the accompanying words with its ambiguity. As David Coughlan observes, such a strategy "is at odds with an understanding of images as communicators of a universal truth, but Karasik and Mazzucchelli provoke these various interpretations, aware that (visual) language does not have to tell the truth to be meaningful."[21] It is interesting to see how this concept develops as the story unfolds on the next page.

Page two is divided into nine panels (also vertical rectangles), arranged in threes in three rows. Three panels arranged in a horizontal sequence at the very top of the page depict respectively: a field of black with rounded white edges around the corners; a white circle on a black background; and white letters, the white circle mentioned, and an unidentified white shape, all against a black background. On the one hand, the reader experiences a sense of continuation of the black abstract panel from page one and, on the other, s/he may observe a gradual concretization of forms. It is only after the reader moves on to the following panels (in the second and third row) that s/he discovers that what initially appeared to be non-representational is in fact an extreme close-up of a black telephone with a white dial plate, slowly emerging from the abstractness of the color fields into the concreteness of identifiable objects.

The first impression, however, is of confusion and bewilderment. The reader is confronted with images s/he is unable to "read." Indeed, the reader faces images that defy reading and only submit to their role as "vessels of meaning" after an initial struggle. Captions inserted in the boxes above the panels do not aid one in unravelling the mystery either, as the information about "the telephone ringing"[22] or "the voice on the other end"[23] do not correspond to the visuals. Only the last caption, "asking for someone he was not,"[24] sheds some light on the nature of the narrative, gently mocking the

21 D. Coughlan, *Paul Auster's*…, p. 847.
22 D. Mazzucchelli, P. Karasik, *City*…, p. 2.
23 Ibid., p. 2.
24 Ibid., p. 2.

reader who at this point, at the very beginning of the novel, might be asking for something this story is not. This short abstract introductory sequence in fact manages to achieve three things: warn the reader about the nature of the story, play with the conventions of the detective genre where every detail is of crucial importance, and establish itself as a self-reflexive meta-visual text.

Another instance of the postulated self-reflexive character of the graphic novel can be further observed on page four. Here, a sequence of six panels horizontally arranged in threes in two rows depicts a progression from a realistic referential image of a city skyline into an abstract combination of black lines against a white background. The process of abstracting images is reversed as the reader moves from a concrete representation of New York to a confusing tangle of lines. On the visual level, this sequence perversely combines a logical continuation of rectangular shapes with discontinuity of referents, thus misleading the reader. It is only thanks to word captions that the reader is able to proceed through this sequence. Verbally, this fragment reads as one comprehensive whole, lending the reader some insight into Quinn's mind: the captions accompanying the six panels in question inform the reader that the protagonist loves New York, loves walking in the city and sometimes allows himself to get lost in it – he gives "himself up to the streets,"[25] overwhelmed by the city's vastness. Thus, *City of Glass: The Graphic Novel* both guides and distracts, gives an impression of making progress and reaching a dead end, and, most importantly, it asserts itself as a visual text independent of its verbal sphere.

Karasik and Mazzucchelli's graphic novel certainly contributed to the growing innovation and self-confidence of the genre. Initially regarded as an inferior competitor to the traditional novel, in the era of the pictorial turn the graphic novel is now establishing itself as a form independent of the novel and indeed a form that brings with itself its own modes of reading and visual literacy. Such works as *City of Glass: The Graphic Novel* do not perpetuate the clichés of cartoon storytelling,[26] but challenge the visual narrative and in doing so also challenge the reader or the reader/viewer. In fact, it was only a matter of time before critics acknowledged this unique status of the graphic novel, claiming that "to talk about adult comics does not only mean

25 Ibid., p. 4.

26 Eisner humorously observes that it actually takes time to separate word and image in graphic storytelling, making the most of the visual sequence: "Let's assume (...) a guy is running down the street and he jumps on a parapet. And the man says – as sometimes happens in much of the comic stuff I see – 'I am jumping on the parapet.' And then he hits the villain and says, 'I am punching you in the nose.' You look at this and you feel, 'Well, I can show this visually. I don't need the dialogue.'" W. Eisner, *Shop Talk*, Dark Horse Comics, Milwaukee 2001, p. 33.

to talk about the evolution of language, topics, genres. It means to talk about a proliferation of tendencies and levels on which comics can be spoken of as written literature is spoken of."[27]

Indeed, numerous "adult comics" followed, exploring new ways in which visual storytelling can be conceptualized. Chris Ware is one of the authors who greatly influenced the American graphic novel as a genre. His work is avant-garde and experimental as regards the visual sphere, but also nostalgic and deeply emotional in his treatment of the subject matter: urban life, loneliness, and social maladjustment. Ware's most important and influential work is *Jimmy Corrigan: The Smartest Kid on Earth*.[28] It is only ostensibly a contemporary story of a middle-aged office worker struggling with extreme shyness. It is also a story dealing with abusive and hurtful parent and child relations, the failure of the American dream, and the dark side of American society.

Upon its release in 2000, *Jimmy Corrigan* won great critical acclaim, with one of the critics calling it a "Great American Novel," "a canonical book condensing the tensions, experiences, hopes, tragedies, and triumphs of the American republic and its peoples."[29] Indeed, the story can be read as a postmodern deconstruction of the American superhero, as well as an innovative work of graphic fiction, "creating", as Gene Kannenberg Jr. observes, "complimentary, co-existing narratives."[30] The reader is confronted with three storylines – that of young Jimmy, middle-aged Jimmy, and Jimmy's grandfather as a young boy – and faces the challenge of organizing them as they interweave throughout nearly four hundred unmarked pages. The narrative was designed as a complex maze of interdependent storylines and its graphic realization adds still more depth to the novel, utilizing unique visual experiments and establishing itself as a self-reflexive text.

The most direct and disruptive interventions in the narrative are the so-called "cut-out pages." They come with instructions on the side and, as the name suggests, can be cut out to build, for example, the farm on which Jimmy's grandfather lived as a child or a cylinder with a series of images on the inside (visible from the outside through vertical slits) that create a moving picture

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27 U. Eco, Quattro Modi di Parlare di Fumetti, *Fucine Mute* 1999. (www.fucine.com/archivio/fm09/eco.htm; accessed 30 June 2015).

28 *Jimmy Corrigan* was published in 2000 as a single volume. The story had been previously serialized in a Chicago newspaper.

29 P. Williams, "A Purely American Tale: The Tragedy of Racism and 'Jimmy Corrigan: The Smartest Kid on Earth' as Great American Novel" in: *The Rise of the American Comics Artists: Creators and Contexts*, ed. P. Williams, J. Lyons, University Press Of Mississippi, Jackson 2010, p. 196-197.

30 G. Kannenberg Jr., "The Comics of Chris Ware" in: *A Comics Studies Reader*, ed. J. Heer, K. Worcester, University Press Of Mississippi, Jackson 2009, p. 313.

when the cylinder spins. It should be emphasized that such pages do not separate individual storylines but are always inserted as an element distracting the reader from the plot he or she is currently following. Of course, these pages can be disregarded as merely a joke or a childish play on behalf of the author, yet such a reading would ignore what in my view constitutes the essence of Ware's work: the acknowledgment of the reader as a co-author and a co-builder of the story.[31]

In her discussion of the modes of visual reading, Mieke Bal emphasizes the role of continuity in the reader's understanding of the plot. The reader, Bal writes, "makes [images] into a whole that is comprehensible because it is continuous. Having a certain continuity in one's thought depends, at a level that is more subliminal than conscious, on having a certain continuity in one's images."[32] By consciously playing with this most basic rule of visual narration, Ware both challenges the reader in the quest for making sense and simultaneously strengthens the reader's role as an active agent. Indeed, while the cut-out pages break the continuity of the narrative, at the same time they signal to the reader that it is he or she who must carefully put all the pieces together. The physical act of building a cut-out model becomes a metaphor for constructing a comprehensible story. These graphic elements are a sign that the graphic novel is aware of its status as a story-in-the-making, but they also actively oppose this status, inasmuch as they disrupt the narrative.

The three diagrams inserted in *Jimmy Corrigan* are elements that play a similar role: they reinforce the reader's active role in building the story and intersect the storyline. Formally speaking, they include panels, but their organization differs greatly from a rigorous geometric grid adopted on other pages. Particular scenes, episodes, or meaningful objects are depicted in individual panels which are not positioned next to each other, i.e. in a sequence. They are distributed on the page in various configurations, requiring different directions of reading: horizontal, vertical, diagonal, right-to-left, and left-to-right. In some cases, small arrows help the readers in establishing connections between the images, but in general interpretative choices are left entirely to them. Although such a conceptualization of the page may, in theory, seem like a game the author plays with the readers, teasing them to think outside the "panel," the actual informational value of such a diagram is not to be under estimated.

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31 Chris Ware writes in one of the instructions accompanying a cut-out page that "[i]t is, needless to say, not entirely necessary to complete these tasks to fully appreciate the story in question, though those who do attempt the feat will find themselves more acquainted with the rivulets and tributaries of its grander scope." C. Ware, *Jimmy*…, n. p.

32 M. Bal, *The Mottled Screen: Reading Proust Visually*, Stanford University Press, Stanford, California 1997, p. 5.

It would be impossible to briefly summarize *Jimmy Corrigan*, as the complexity of the story extends beyond the mere "first this happened and then that," but in order to fully comprehend the role played by the diagrams, some context is required. The two most elaborate structures appear towards the very end of the novel. The middle-aged Jimmy Corrigan left Chicago to meet his father for the first time (the father left when Jimmy was a baby) only to learn that his dad re-married and adopted a child, an African American girl. At the time she and Jimmy meet, Amy is a grown woman with a strong and loving bond to her father. Jimmy is taken aback for two reasons. First, he never expected his father to be a loving parent and never expected a member of his family to have a different skin color. Ware skillfully but also mercilessly exposes the racism underlying American society, at the same time presenting the reader with a purely personal side of Jimmy's discovery that he does, in fact, have a family.

The diagrams in question inserted into the sequential graphic narrative serve to acquaint the reader with Amy's ancestry. The first diagram presents the history behind the girl's birth and adoption. A sequence of five square panels arranged horizontally at the bottom of the page depicts respectively: a young African American couple walking and holding hands in a high school corridor; the same couple in the same place, but in changed circumstances, with the girl pregnant and the boy walking away with a different love interest; the pregnant girl giving birth in a hospital; the girl, still in a hospital bed, signing some documents; and, finally, a close-up view of the adoption papers. The panels do not use any words and yet it is clear that Amy was born out of wedlock to a teenage and immature mother who had no choice but to give her up for adoption.

The story of Amy's birth composed of five panels is a foundation for other stories. A short sequence arranged vertically on the right hand side of the page originates from the panel depicting the adoption papers. The close-up view of the documents gives way to a more distanced one in the next panel. The third and final panel is another close-up, but this time the papers are in the pocket of a yellow jacket. This vertical sequence then changes direction one more time as a small arrow guides the reader to a bigger panel, a horizontal rectangle located at the top of the page, which depicts the building of Oswaga County adoption services and a woman in the yellow jacket leaving the building with an African American girl. Then, another arrow advises the reader to move from right to left and see another "panel" or in fact a photograph of Jimmy's father with his new wife and daughter. The ingenuity of such a visual solution lies in the balance between complexity and clarity. While the reader's eye wanders across the page trying to find the ways to correctly read the diagram, struggling between the totality of the page and the individual sequences and

possible directions of reading, all of the respective stories eventually fall into place, deriving meaning from other elements of the diagram. The direction proposed above is only one of many different possibilities. The readers may start with the photograph and work their way down or begin with the adoption papers and choose whether they wish to proceed up or down the page. Regardless of the direction, the final understanding of Amy's origin is bound to be similar.

If the cut out pages can be described as interventions in the narrative, the diagrams should be classified as re-conceptualizations of sequential art. In fact, as Ware himself points out, "You can look at a comic as you would look at a structure that you could turn around in your mind and see all sides of at once."[33] Such an approach understandably influences the manner in which Ware treats images and their functions. Here, instead of devoting a separate section to Amy, Ware provides the reader with her background on one page (the diagram on the opposite page presents the story of Amy's mother and grandparents). The diagram's form evidences Amy's role in the graphic novel (she is a surprising addition to what is essentially Jimmy's story), but it also visually presents the complexity of Amy's family situation. Finally, the diagram redefines the page. Indeed, as observed by Isaac Cates, the diagrams in Ware's comics are a testament to the comics' complicated visual language. They both highlight the language aspect of the comics (by presenting "the grammar of the image") but they are also essentially non-literary.[34] As can be seen, Ware takes the visual language of the graphic novel a step further. Not only does he experiment with visual narration on the level of a single panel or sequence, but he also goes beyond these two basic units which define the genre in order to explore the possibilities offered by an entire page. Karasik and Mazzucchelli challenged the reader with abstract imagery. In Ware's case, abstraction functions on a different conceptual level. It is not confined to a single image, or a series of images, but controls the very idea of how a graphic novel should function in contact with the reader. In a sense, "[t]he art becomes the story."[35]

Craig Thompson's illustrated novel *Blankets* (2003) is closer in its premise to *City of Glass*, inasmuch as it experiments more with abstraction confined to panels and sequences. In what is essentially a graphic *Künst-*

33 D. Raeburn, *Chris Ware*, Yale University Press, New Haven 2004, p. 25.
34 I. Cates, "Comics and the Grammar of Diagrams" in: *Comics of Chris Ware: Drawing is a Way of Thinking*, ed. D. Ball, M. Kuhlman, University Press of Mississippi, Jackson 2010, p. 92-94.
35 W. Eisner, *Graphic*…, p. 22.

lerroman, Thompson depicts his childhood in Wisconsin, influenced by strict religious upbringing, and his transition to adulthood through the story of his first love. The graphic novel adopts a more or less unified realistic style, which changes to more surrealist and grotesque one in Craig's dreams and religious visions. The panels also differ depending on the situation portrayed. They range from standard rectangles with clearly defined frames arranged in a rigid grid layout, through sketchy frameless visions, to images extending over an entire page. Thompson uses only black and white on a page, yet manages to convey every nuance of not so much the plot, that is the events that constitute his life, but the emotions he experiences. Indeed, *Blankets* achieves its expressive potential from skillfully balancing between the quiet down-to-earthiness of its storyline and the unconventional visual means. Among Thompson's numerous innovative graphic solutions, two are of special interest to me: an excessive use of white, sometimes filling an entire panel or page, and frequent use of abstract ornamentation.

The mechanics of inserting white panels into a narrative (and figurative) sequence present in *Blankets* resembles the strategy encountered in *City of Glass*. Such interventions in the narrative disrupt it, breaking the reader's rhythm of following the story. Thompson in fact ironically starts the third chapter entitled *Blank Sheet* with a single white panel, which is gently outlined in a thin black line on an otherwise completely white page.[36] From the semantic point of view, the reader almost automatically reads white as "empty." The panel is classified as blank and devoid of meaning, thus constituting an obstacle in the narrative. The author, however, aids the reader in understanding this fragment with verbal clues. The title of the chapter, *Blank Sheet*, introduces an element of postmodern irony to the story, while the words in the left top corner of the white panel re-anchor the reader in its reality and materiality. The caption reads: "There was a certain challenge Phil [Craig's younger brother – M.O.] and I would undertake each winter".[37] and it is through these words that one begins to interpret the otherwise semantically empty white panel.

For one, in allusion to the self-reflexive character of the story introduced by the title of the chapter, the panel can be interpreted as a work-in-progress, the first stages of drawing a story which starts with tracing a panel frame on an empty page. For a brief moment, the reader may assume the role of the author, facing a blank sheet that is to become a fragment of the visual story. This first reading, however, is skillfully challenged by another one as the reader turns the page only to see a panel depicting Craig and his brother in

36 C. Thompson, *Blankets*, p. 131.
37 Ibid., p. 131.

a winter landscape, trying to walk "ATOP the snow, rather than THROUGH it."[38] The white of this panel and the white of the previous panel reinforce one another in acquiring a concrete meaning, that of snow, and challenge one another, inasmuch as they can be simultaneously read as abstract (empty) and concrete. To some extent, these two conflicting readings echo the test Craig and Phil were facing: how far can one go without concretizing the meaning in a visual form, verging on abstraction, as if one were walking atop the snow, before the story eventually collapses in on itself.

Empty white panels, which acquire concrete meaning only in the context of subsequent images, are in a fact a recurring theme in the story. They represent the isolation and loneliness of the main character, but also his struggles in creating a visual narrative, balancing between the visual self-consciousness and sovereignty of abstraction, realized as a field of white, and the requirements and restrictions of graphic storytelling that must advance the story. The French semiotician Pierre Fresnault-Deruelle claimed that the graphic narrative is a medium that exposes its artificiality in the process of its unfolding and as such is essentially self-reflexive.[39] Thompson's white panels, simultaneously abstract and concrete, seem to confirm this argument.

Snow also takes on another meaning and visual form as the story develops. From the moment Craig falls in love with Raina, his first ever love interest, snow begins to be represented in a more abstract form, as dots and dashes, which eventually turn into completely abstract ornamental signs, signaling a romantic relationship between the young lovers. Such a striking visual transformation of the way snow is depicted takes place at the end of Chapter Four. Craig, who lives with his family on a remote farm in Wisconsin, travels to Michigan to spend two weeks at Raina's home. One afternoon the couple decides to take a long walk in the woods. Overwhelmed by the beauty of nature and their romantic feelings for one another, they lie down in the snow and watch snowflakes fall. The story is beautifully rendered in black and white, with realistic portrayal of the protagonists and winter landscape, only to take a more abstract turn on the two final pages of the chapter.[40] The reader is then confronted with four panels filled with a mesmerizing pattern of black and white dots and dashes. The penultimate page consists of three panels. One dominant square panel at the top and two smaller rectangular ones arranged next to each other at the bottom of the page. Although they are grouped in a sequence, all of the panels are non-representational. It is only the density of the abstract pattern that successively changes from white dots on a black

38 Ibid., p. 132.
39 P. Fresnault-Deruelle, *La Bande Dessinée*, Armand Colin, Paris 2009, p. 25-27.
40 C. Thompson, *Blankets*, p. 260-261.

background in the first panel to a condensed field of black dashes on a white background in the third panel. The overall effect is of deepening and intensifying blackness which, nevertheless, does not consume the entire third panel but allows some glimpses of white to show through. The penultimate page, filled with panels, is then confronted with the final page that is almost entirely white with only one centrally located panel which echoes in its shape, size, and form the last panel on the previous page.

What surprises the reader about these two final pages of Chapter Four is the abrupt transition from figuration to abstraction. On a purely visual level, some continuity is maintained because of the consistent page layout (panel arrangement) and a high contrast of black and white. As far as the story is concerned, however, the inclusion of the abstract sequence conveys a sense of disruption as if a breakdown in communication has just taken place. The story refuses to take the reader forward; time is suspended. In his analysis of Mike Mignola's *Hellboy*, an American comic book about a red demon who becomes a superhero, Scott Bukatman comes up with the definition of the so-called "pillow panels," that is panels which "contribute nothing to the action or forward movement of the narrative. (…) The stasis they present within the narrative, then is literally a moment of suspense."[41] One may thus consider Thompson's sequence in this framework: as an interval in the narrative that offers the reader an opportunity to reflect on the events.

And in fact, as much as Thompson delights in wandering off the straightforward path of the narrative, he always leaves clues for the reader to follow. The first panel on the penultimate page of Chapter Four is accompanied by a caption which reads: "And then the sense of space, of depth, is lost as the snowflakes fall into a pattern."[42] The words establish a link between the abstract panels, the characters' state of mind (who realize the significance of their love), and the reader's experience who is able to see a connection between the figurative narrative and panels filled with dots and dashes. Most importantly, however, the self-reflexivity of these abstract panels is a testament to the sovereignty of graphic storytelling: a development fostered by the pictorial turn.

It can be seen that all of the above graphic novels challenge the reader's deeply held belief that semantic and narrative coherence are to be taken for granted. They possess, to quote Groensteen, "the particular virtue of proving that the play of abstract forms should not be taken automatically to imply

41 S. Bukatman, "Sculpture, Stasis, the Comics, and Hellboy". Critical Inquiry, vol. 40, no 3, p. 111.

42 C. Thompson, *Blankets*, p. 260.

an absence of meaning."[43] Abstract is understood here as an anti-thesis of realistic, as an image that does not represent the outside world, but points to itself instead, demanding of the reader to acknowledge its self-reflexive status. The ultimate result, however, is not the collapse of the narrative, but its enrichment. A play with the image that is both productive and exciting. Examined in the framework of a twofold change, the pictorial and the self-reflexive turn, the graphic novel is a form that develops on a continuum of the verbal – the referential visual – the self-reflexive visual. The graphic novel reinvents not only the form of the novel, but also visual storytelling. It is, to paraphrase Mitchell, concrete and abstract, specific and symbolic, postlinguistic and post-semiotic.

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43 T. Groensteen, *Comics*…, p. 10.

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WYMOWNE OBRAZY? ZWROT AUTOTEMATYCZNY WE WSPÓŁCZESNYCH AMERYKAŃSKICH POWIEŚCIACH GRAFICZNYCH (streszczenie)

Artykuł rozpatruje powieść graficzną w kontekście dwojakiego zwrotu. Po pierwsze, powieść graficzna to gatunek, którego narodziny i rozwój są ściśle związane ze zwrotem obrazowym, demonstrując przejście od opowiadania do obrazowania. Powieść graficzną można zdefiniować jako zespolenie słowa i obrazu: jej siła wyrazu leży w napięciu pomiędzy sferą werbalną a wizualną. Akcję „prowadzi" jednak głownie sekwencja wizualna; obrazy w powieści graficznej mają „opowiedzieć" o wydarzeniach. Czerpiąc z tradycji obrazowania komiksowego, powieść graficzna opiera się na obrazach figuralnych i jednoznacznych w odczytaniu. Jednak coraz więcej autorów powieści graficznych świadomie porzuca jednoznaczność i czytelność narracji wizualnej na rzecz eksperymentów w tej sferze. Jest to sygnał dokonującego się drugiego zwrotu

– tzw. zwrotu „autotematycznego" – w ramach którego obraz oddziela się od referenta. Artykuł opisuje gry z obrazem i jego reprezentacyjnym charakterem we współczesnych amerykańskich powieściach graficznych: *City of Glass* (1994) D. Mazzucchelli'ego i P. Karasika, *Jimmy Corrigan* (2000) C. Ware'a, oraz *Blankets* (2003) C. Thompsona. Analizie zostają poddane wybrane sekwencje poszczególnych powieści, ukazując jakie strategie graficzne czynią narrację wizualną formą opierającą się jednoznacznemu odczytaniu. Płaszczyzny koloru, niestandardowy układ strony oraz abstrakcyjne obrazowanie wzbogacają język powieści graficznych – medium w swojej istocie autotematyczne.

Słowa kluczowe: zwrot obrazowy, komiks, powieść graficzna, narracja wizualna, zwrot autotematyczny.

Art Inquiry. Recherches sur les arts 2015, vol. XVII
ISSN 1641-9278

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FROM PAINTED DECORATION TO THE SCREEN. THE TURN IN STAGE ILLUSION IN THE LATE 20th AND EARLY 21st CENTURY

Abstract: The painted decoration discovered in the Renaissance dominated the European stage for almost 300 years. In the second half of the nineteenth century, the so-called Great Reforms theater challenged this tradition, but it has survived in various guises until the present day. Today we perceive this form as anachronistic, as a quote from the past or an awkwardness of the set designer.

Changing the perception of reality on the screen has also led to a change in the treatment of illusion and stage space. The screen has become not only an element of decoration, but it also shows or in extreme cases replaces reality. The impact of the new media on theatre today results not only from the introduction of technology, but also from the entrance into theater of artists from the world of the media. The new relationship leads in extreme situations to the denial of the basic definition of theater as an interaction between the creator and the recipient.

The purpose of the paper is to show the interrelationships between the actor and the spectator, illusion and disillusionment. It seems that the described change will determine the direction of further development of theater. It remains an open question how the relationships between all of the participants in the interaction will be impacted by the use of screens and other electronic media. Describing and naming the attempts at qualitative change in the structure of the stage is important for the formation of new methodology for analyzing theatrical reality.

Keywords: disillusion, illusion, projection, screen, space in the theatre, stage design, theater, turn

The introduction of new media to the stage in the twentieth and twenty-first century caused many problems associated with the traditional understanding of illusion. The appearance of screens, computers, and video cameras on stage has been treated as a technological turn by researchers.[1] Analyzing the changes that have occurred in stage decoration in the context of the history of theater, we note a series of events that initiated a breakthrough in thinking about the iconographic aspect of the reception of theatrical works. Thus, one can ask some questions about the essence of the contemporary turn. What kind of aesthetic change has the turn brought to theater? Has it altered its basic purpose, which has always been the meeting between the actor and the spectator, the director, the author, and the recipient? Are the technologies that create the images displayed on screens situated within theatrical illusion or disillusion?[2]

The last question seems essential in this regard, because the main function of theatrical stage design has always been to create the presented, fictional world, imaginary in relation to the reality of the spectators of the performance. The system of painted decoration that predominated for over two hundred years clearly marked the boundaries of the stage world and the auditorium – even if the viewers were occasionally brought onto the stage (as was the case, for example, in the Baroque era in France). The aesthetics of wings and painted flats informed the viewers about the setting of the onstage action. It entailed a certain type of iconic code, as its principles were derived from Renaissance treaties giving the rules for adapting decoration to the dramatic genre. The audiences had it easy – they did not have to struggle to recognize the play, as it was enough to take a peek at the contents of the painted canvases. When the curtain was lifted to reveal a palace, it meant that they would be viewing a tragedy, while a street signaled a comedy.[3]

Another type of entertainment emerged in the late nineteenth century. In 1895, Teatr Rozmaitości in Warsaw presented the so-called "Parisian innovation": in *Madame Sans-Gêne* by Victorien Sardou, a "pavilion" was placed on stage as decoration. It was a realistically reproduced room with three walls and a ceiling, with all architectural details replicated, fully furnished. It was an onstage fixture for over a hundred years, used both in the Senator's Ball scenes

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1 Cf. Zbigniew Majchrowski, „Świat mediów jako wyzwanie rzucone historii teatru" [in:] *Nowe historie 1. Ustanowienie historii*, Warsaw 2010, pp. 95–103, and Katarzyna Fazan, „Czego chce film na scenie? Analiza trzech przypadków", *Kwartalnik Filmowy* no. 87-88/2014, pp. 114-126.

2 The term "new media" is used according to the definition introduced by Ryszard W. Kluszczyński in „Paradygmat sztuk nowych mediów", Kwartalnik filmowy, no. 85/2014, pp. 194–205.

3 Cf. Dominika Łarionow *Scenography studies - on the margin of art history and theater studies*, [in:] "Art Inquiry". Vol XVI (XXV), Łódź 2014, pp. 115–126.

in Mickiewicz's *Forefathers' Eve* and Mrs. Dulska's living room in the play by Gabriela Zapolska. It consisted of painted canvases, accompanied by furniture and numerous props, and each change of decoration required the curtain to be brought down.[4] Over the course of its long popularity, it lost several elements, such as the technically troublesome ceiling. It should be noted that in the period of 1949-1956, in the era of the doctrine of socialist realism, it was the only approved model of decoration, with all its windows, door handles and palm trees in pots. In fact, the idea of arranging the stage space using movable walls and painted architectural practicables that created the illusion of space is still alive today, although it is now regarded as anachronistic. One example would be Allan Starski's design for the play *Wytwórnia piosenek* [Song factory] by Maciej Wojtyszko and Maciej Karpiński, directed by Maciej and Adam Wojtyszko (2015) at Teatr Powszechny in Łódź. The play, set in Łódź soon after the war, presents the vicissitudes of the production of the first feature film after 1945. The Academy Award-winning designer built a living room, a film studio, and a street. It was a realistic space, semantically related to the content of the play, which, although it was staged in the convention of a musical, was the story of real figures known from the history of the cinema of that period. Starski's design was a paradox, as the realistic sets he employed certainly work well in films (which he discussed in his book[5]), but in contemporary theater setting artificial walls seems out of place, as they have been replaced by screens. To use the terminology derived from ethnology, one could say that a barter exchange took place here between theater and film. Theater gave film a system of constructed decorations, perfectly fitting such films as Roman Polanski's *Pianist* (2002) and *Oliver Twist* (2005), (to name some of Starski's work). In return, the "tenth Muse" gave Melpomene the screen along with its magic. Thus, one might see it as a full circle, because cinema in its earliest stages, i.e. before it developed its own style, drew upon the experiences of theater. Some examples include films by Max Linder, early Charlie Chaplin, or the illusionary style of Georges Méliès – that Susan Sontag wrote about in her canonical essay *Film and Theatre*.[6] Therefore, we are faced with a paradox: for theater historians, a screen on stage is anti-scenery, while for the researchers of the visual aspects of theatre

4 Such type of decoration is called "closed change", as opposed the previous "open change", done "magically" in front of the spectators in order to impress the latter. Technicians entering the stage and openly interfering with onstage reality was unthinkable for the audience of that era.

5 Allan Starski, Irena A. Stanisławska, *Scenografia*, Wydawnictwo Wojciech Marzec, Warsaw 2013.

6 "Susan Sontag, "Film and Theater", *The Tulane Drama Review* 1966, vol. 11, issue 1, pp. 24–37, cf. also Dialog 1967, no. 3.

it is an integral element of scenery. Artists have shown how to combine these two different media. Already in the 1960s, in plays set in contemporary times, a TV set was a frequent element of a furnished house. For technical reasons it rarely worked and was rather a sign of a character's financial status or an indication that the story was set in modern times. The next step was a working TV set that was part of the plot. One such instance was Krzysztof Kieślowski's television adaptation of the play *The Card Index* by Tadeusz Różewicz (1979). The TV set stood in a corner, but it was not passive. In the early scenes, Stefan Treugutt, theater critic, appeared on its screen, announcing a broadcast of TV Theater. The featured performance was the previous staging of Różewicz's play, directed in 1967 by Konrad Swinarski. It seemed that the function of the medium would be limited to referencing that famous performance. However, Kieślowski went a little further: the TV took over the role of the Choir of Uncles from the literary original. In the late twentieth century, comedy performances often featured dialogues with the TV.

In the old times, for example in the Baroque or the Romantic era, decorations consisted of a background painted on canvas, usually featuring a landscape or a building; there were several of them lined up, and to change the view they were either rapidly slid sideways or pulled up. As new technology developed, the transformation of canvas background into a screen became inevitable. It was originally a projection screen with an overhead projector and still photographs, later replaced by film projection, and finally by a large video screen and computer technology. In *Amazonia* by Michał Walczak, directed by Agnieszka Glińska and designed by Agnieszka Zawadowska (Teatr Na Woli in Warsaw, 2011), besides two TVs and a monitor (in the scene of an audition for a TV series), the decoration consisted of a rear projection screen, featuring the Amazonian forest that the characters are dreaming about. However, it was not only the matter of replacing the painted canvas with a screen – in the final scene we see our heroes wandering through the wilderness, which required the use of computer technology – so-called post-production. The screen replaced not only the painted canvas, but also wings, flats, and drops – all the traditional elements of painted decoration, which would have been used in such case even in the late twentieth century.

It would seem that such an employment of a screen on stage should completely eliminate painted canvases. However, theater practice shows that it is possible to combine both techniques: In *Opowiadanie brazylijskie* [A Brazilian Story] by Jarosław Iwaszkiewicz, directed by Marcin Hycnar and designed by Zawadowska (Teatr Narodowy, 2015), the setting consists of two massive flats (walls of houses with doors and windows), while a screen in the background shows a Brazilian forest, exotic birds, and sometimes a seashore; the setting is fitted with furniture and numerous props. In this reality we see a compatible

coexistence of the oldest and the newest stage technology, surprisingly uniform in its expression. They are not dissonant – on the contrary, their mutual contexts lend them additional meanings and values.

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In order to analyze the artistic barter mentioned above, it is necessary to digress for a moment. The twentieth century introduced the concept of disillusion into the history of theater. It was important, for example, for the theory put forward by Bertolt Brecht, and later Peter Brook and Jerzy Grotowski.[7] Divesting stage space of large-format painted canvases, thus laying the theater machinery bare, was aimed at making the stage images real to the audience. The main purpose was to focus the attention of the viewers on the problem signaled by the literary text and amplified in theater setting through acting. Other elements of the spatial function of a theatrical work became less important or even reduced to the necessary prop.

The possibility of introducing film or photography into the domain of theater, both as an element shaping the stage image and used to change the function of the illusion of theater, was discovered by artists quite early. One example is Stanisław Wyspiański's 1899 drama *Protesilas and Laodamia*, now almost forgotten. The story is quite simple – it concerns a woman despairing after the sudden loss of her lover. The playwright saw the need for innovative decorations, which were to show some scenes from the life of Protesilas. Wyspiański never really articulated how he wanted the scenery to look. During the world premiere in 1903, the sequences showing the lover while he was still alive were performed as a pantomime in the back of the stage, while the title character was played by Helena Modrzejewska. It seems that the author's intention was to use rear projection. Wyspiański certainly was not present in Paris in December 1895, when the Lumière brothers showed their invention at Le *Salon* Indien du *Grand Café* on Boulevard des Capucines. We know, however, that the Polish artist exchanged numerous letters with his friends from France, so he was well versed in all the technical novelties. He expressed his comments on the design of the sets in question in a terse statement, saying that there should be shadows on the canvas featuring Prostesilas during his life. It can be assumed that he saw the power of the illusion of rear projection.[8] This technique expands the stage space, creating things that do not actually appear

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7 Cf. Krzysztof Pleśniarowicz, *Przestrzenie deziluzji*, Universitas, Kraków 1996.

8 Such interpretation of the layout of the decoration in Wyspiański's play was also suggested by Zenobiusz Strzelecki in his monograph of the history of Polish stage design, cf. idem *Polska Plastyka Teatralna*, PIW, Warsaw 1963.

in the viewers' field of vision. Thus, it generated the first important distortion of perception regarding the relationship between the actor, the spectator, and the present. The stage reality can be also set at some earlier time and be shown to the viewers. Laszlo Maholy-Nagy, a Hungarian artist working in the 1920s in the German Bauhaus school, even saw the need to downplay the literary aspect of theatre in favor of the images on stage created by photography, film, and photodynamic events.[9] Frederick Kiesler, an Austrian architect, stage designer and initially also a director, approached the medium of film quite differently. In 1923 in Berlin he staged *R.U.R* by Karel Čapek, a very modern play about a rebellion of robots. He used neon lights and large screens. For reasons of safety, there was a water tank under each of them, because local police were concerned about fire breaking out. The production marked the first use of moving pictures as a crucial part of the scenery. However, the artist who employed screens most often was Erwin Piscator, the German theater producer, who used large-format screens in the shows *Reuve Roter Rummel* (1924) and *Trotz Alledem* (1925). The shows were prepared for more than 5,000 spectators as part of political rallies, although impressive projections also appeared in his famous dramatic performances. Analysing the achievements of the avant-garde in terms of its ability to introduce technical innovations into the space of the stage, Piscator points to a different historical starting point. According to him, the trend dates back not to 1895 but to the beginning of the nineteenth century, when gas lighting was introduced on stage, later followed by electric light.[10] It was the first substantial change, which initiated a series of transformations in the aesthetics of theater. It seems that the technological turn that began in the nineteenth century continues to this day. It is a slow but constant process.

Before we discuss the subsequent stages in the history of screens on stage, we need to go back for a moment to the prop that had somewhat magical qualities in theater, namely a real mirror, not a substitute. It showed the reality beyond the frame of the stage. In the Romantic drama by Juliusz Słowacki titled *Horsztyński*, the protagonist Hetman Kossakowski, staying in the titular character's house, sees a servant in the mirror, waiting for him behind the door with a gun. There were also numerous farcical comedies, in which the husband saw a mirror reflection of his wife with her lover (for example *The Kiss Before the Mirror* by Laszlo Fodor). The mirror becomes an active character involved in various vicissitudes, showing the details that the audience cannot see. It also adds depth, multiplies, and, when skillfully illuminated, provokes anxiety with its shimmering and ambiguity. It becomes a favorite element of decoration,

9 Cf. *The Theater of the Bauhaus*, The Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore and London 1996.

10 Cf. Simon Hagemann, "La recherche des avant-gardes théâtales historique autour du progress technique", *Ligeia. Dossiers sur l'Art* 2015, no. 137–140, 2015, Paris, pp. 88–95.

even a hallmark of some directors, such as Maja Kleczewska. In her *Winter Journey* based on the prose of Elfride Jelinek, co-produced by Teatr Polski in Bydgoszcz and Teatr Powszechny in Łódź (2013), the director constructed a trapezoidal space that was the background for the plot, just like the wings of a pavilion once had been. At some points in the performance, the big mirrors were veiled, thus limiting the space and amplifying the tension on stage. This was extremely important, as part of the plot referenced the case of Josef Fritzl, an Austrian man who imprisoned and sexually abused his daughter for many years. Kleczewska intentionally used the mirror to impair the actor's sense of identity, to confuse the directions in the performance, and to fake the depth of the stage.

In today's theater, the evidently treacherous role of mirrors has been taken over by screens in their new functions: not as an element of the decoration, but as an active protagonist in the spectacle. Film has been used within theater space since the beginning of the twentieth century, but only contemporary artists (in the late twentieth and early twenty-first century) are beginning to discover the advantages and disadvantages of the introduction of new media into the stage space. If we make some generalizations, we can confidently say that in most situations large multimedia screens are used in the stage space in four ways. The first one involves enlarging the face or some other body part of an actor, affecting his or her performance. One example would be Krystian Lupa's spectacle *Factory 2*, produced at Narodowy Stary Teatr in Kraków (2008). It is a story of the so-called Andy Warhol's factory. During the monologue of one of the characters, his genitals were filmed live and displayed on a big screen over the couch where the naked actor was sitting. The second way of introducing a screen has to do with dual reality. It usually appears as an element of scenery suspended above the stage. Such projection shows a detail of the stage action that the spectators cannot see (though it is happening on stage). It can be an actor at the back of the stage, seated sideways or behind someone, who is being shown to the audience *en face*, thus a "situation" which is obscured to the audiences by decoration elements.[11] The screen used in this way completes the image seen by the spectators, and the camera image is transmitted in real time, hence the impression of dual reality. One example may be

[11] In traditional theater, the situation of the actors blocking one another was referred to as a „drawer" and regarded as an inability to arrange stage situations. When elements of decoration blocked the view of the actors, unless justified by the plot, it was thought to be the result of the stage designer's failure to arrange a layout with proper visibility. Both cases were judged as professional mistakes. Nowadays, especially in the performances staged in non-theatrical spaces (factory halls, film studios), in which the entire spatial layout needs to be constructed, poor visibility (at least for part of the audience) is becoming the norm.

the spectacles directed by Krzysztof Warlikowski and designed by Małgorzata Szczęśniak at Teatr Nowy in Warsaw (such as Koniec [The End], 2010, and (A)polonia, 2009). The third way in which screens are used is the opposite situation, related to the need to show what is happening in a different place than the onstage world that exists in the audience's real time. In Poland, this method was employed quite early by Anna Augustynowicz in the spectacle based on Grzegorz Nawrocki's play *Młoda śmierć* [Young death] at Teatr Współczesny in Szczecin (1996). The play is based on a true story of three murders committed by a teenage killer. The entire spectacle was played on an empty stage, while the murder scenes (which had been filmed earlier) were shown at appropriate moments on a big screen, which became an essential prop.

In the case of the three functions of film projection on stage that have been listed so far we can talk about its active role in creating the spectacle, serving mostly to enhance the significance of the individual scenes. The fourth way of using a screen on stage assumes its passivity, limiting its presence only to the role of a decorative object. In this spatial arrangement, the screen is placed above the stage, continuously showing the action that takes place on stage, thus giving the audience an opportunity to choose what to watch: either the stage, or the screen. Such use of video material has caused lot of controversy among the critics. Michał Zadara, a director representing the young generation, offered an interesting take on the issue, justifying the choice of such form of film projection in his adaptation of *Great Gatsby* based on the novel by Francis Scott Fitzgerald at Teatr Polski in Bydgoszcz (2011). Before the premiere, the director announced that "The scenes at the Buchanans' house will be played in the foyer of the theater and transmitted live on two screens, hanging on either side of the stage. Those scenes will look like a film – but it will not be a film, because they images will not be prerecorded, but broadcast live from another room."[12] Zadara emphasized that the projected images were recorded live, thus touching on an interesting issue of a turn in the concept of stage illusion, which is inseparably linked with technological innovations introduced within the stage space. The artist immediately asked himself the question: "Is live broadcast part of the order of film or the order of theater?" He answered that "The question is only seemingly academic – theater and film function completely differently in relation to the viewer – even if they communicate the same content, their actual, physical presence is so different that the message is not

12 M. Zadara, *"Adaptując 'Gatsby'ego"*; www.e-teatr.pl, accessed 20 June 2015. The interior of a luxury living room was arranged in the theater foyer, while the hotel corridors were in fact located backstage.

the same. Simply put: film is a mummification, while theater is a spiritualist séance."[13] In this interpretation, the screen splits the stage space into areas that the audience cannot see. To see them would in fact mean leaving the performance space, while it is only the actor that makes such an exit. A film may show the viewers some events taking place in a different space. Stage illusion is achieved through simultaneous recording, because its existence is closely linked to the concept of the true reality of the viewer.

All four examples of the use of screens on stage discussed above show that the process of their introduction to the stage space has not been completed, and it is constantly being modified. The use of video cameras has certainly brought an extraordinary change in stage acting, because the actors must remember not only about the audience, but also about the cameraman. Thus, the media in theater generate a change in the way the stage characters are created.

Director Krzysztof Garbaczewski has begun to seek new ways of using media within the stage space, giving them a creative role in the resulting spectacle. In 2012, he directed Witold Gombrowicz's play *Yvonne, Princess of Burgundy* at the Jan Kochanowski Theater in Opole. The literary original was first published in the *Skamander* magazine in 1938, but its world premiere did not take place until 1957, at Teatr Dramatyczny in Warsaw, where it was directed by Halina Mikołajska. The play is one of the most popular works of Gombrowicz, staged worldwide. The author lived to see his play adapted by most important European directors, including Ingmar Bergman. Its plot seems deceptively simple. It is set at the royal court in an unspecified country, where Philip, a young prince, needs to find a wife. Instead of one of the noble ladies of the court, he chooses the nearly mute Yvonne. Her silence, the fear in her eyes, and her passive submission to her fiancé become extremely provocative. This induces a cascade of events, exposing the dark side of life of the so-called upper classes. The whole royal court begins looking for some way of getting rid of the troublesome bride. They organize a feast, during which a crucian carp is served – a type of fish famous for its tiny bones. Yvonne chokes on one and dies.

There are eleven characters in Gombrowicz's play. In Garbaczewski's version, the additional members of the cast are four cameras, a mixer table, and a screen. The structure of the spectacle brings it closer to a multimedia installation, as video cameras become a catalyst for the plot. At the beginning of the spectacle, translucent paper walls separate the audience from the performance space. The spectators can only see a large screen hanging above the proscenium. The play begins with the dialogue between Prince Philip and Cyril, following which the former gestures to the cameraman, inviting him (and

13 Ibidem.

thus also us, the audience) into the interior of the palace located behind the paper walls. Philip's action starts the projection, just as in the first scenes of the film *Birdman* by Alejendro González Iñárritu (2014). The director of photography, Emmanuel Lubezki, uses the camera as the eye of a *flâneur* entering the secret interior of a theater backstage.

In his adaptation, Garbaczewski applied an important distinction: as long as all the courtiers and royal family accept Philip's intention to marry the controversial, inappropriate Yvonne, the audience follows the plot only on the screen. However, when first conflicts arise at the court, the paper walling off the stage window slowly begins to tear, exposing the real space of the performance and the characters themselves. This leads to a gradual exposure of the structure of the stage space that will only become fully visible to the audience in the finale. Importantly, as a consequence, the audience has an opportunity to meet the characters, most of whom they had previously encountered only as figures projected on the screen. Garbaczewski's projection breaks with the earlier theatrical tradition, where it was the viewer that decided whom to watch and what to see. In this case, the audience has no choice but to see only the image displayed on the screen. With the destruction of the paper walls, the situation somehow returns to the traditional convention. Reclaiming the sacred division of theater space into the stage and the auditorium is also important for the actors. Moving from a film set to theater, they adapt their means of expression accordingly. After the paper walls are down, the viewers begin to watch the reality of the stage space, starting to see the actors. At the same time, the latter establish an almost metaphysical contact with the audience, which is a constitutive component of a theater spectacle. The performance attains clarity, the actors regain their physicality, trying to construct their characters. Only at this point can we employ the traditional instruments of describing the performance and analyzing its elements.

In the "screen" portion of the spectacle, the actors are clearly aware of their limitations. For example, in the dialogic scenes, they perform **against** their partners, not **with them** (as in the classic theatrical convention) because they perform for the camera as their proper / present partner. It should be noted that the camera is an inanimate object, it does not respond to anybody, it does not feed back any emotions – it is only a passive recorder. One can even go a step further and say that in Garbaczewski's spectacle, the camera takes on the same provocative, silent presence that is a distinctive characteristic of the title character of the play. In total, there are four cameras on stage, two of them mobile. All of them are constantly filming the actors. They know that one camera can show them at the back of the stage, another – partially shadowed, the third one from a distance, and the fourth one in close-up. In consequence, their performance is much more intimate, economical, static: a modest gesture,

little external expression, no sign of what we call a "physical performance." The actors are aware that in this spectacle, they have become part of the scenery. Their bodies on screen have two functions: on the one hand, they create a variable landscape, while on the other, they are an essential narrative tool.

The main author of the spectacle in Garbaczewski's version is the visual director. He stands at the mixer table and chooses which frame the viewers will watch on the large screen. Obviously, the same footage can be edited in a completely different way. One day, the visual director likes Yvonne, so he makes the spectacle about her; another time, Iza is his favorite, so the spectacle is about Iza, and Yvonne is the negative character. In place of the traditional triad of the actor – the director – the audience, we have an arrangement with an additional element: the actor – the director – the visual director – the audience. Marek Kozakiewicz, the visual director, discussed the technical part of the spectacle in an interview, saying that "the viewer does not realize that in addition to the actors, there are four cameramen on stage, along with their assistants, people whose task it is to make sure that 500 meters of cables do not get tangled, and the operator of the film screen. In total, there are up to thirty persons there."[14] Such a situation, professionally difficult for the actors, would never arise in a traditional spectacle. We can ask the question about the essence of the world presented in Garbaczewski's version. The actor is not only subjected to constant manipulation of his or her image in the eyes of the audience, which he or she can do nothing about, but also the oppressive nature of the stage action leads to the scenes that are extremely risky to play.

The quintessence of the difficulty of the staging may be the erotic scene between Philip and Yvonne, called "finger – pear – knife" after the content depicted in the stage image (in this case – on the screen). The visual director emphasizes the technological difficulty, because the material is edited live using three cameras. The viewers see it as one shot, one frame. It is more poetic and filmic than theatrical. From the technical viewpoint, a certain boundary of the intimacy of the actors' body has been crossed, which would be impossible in the classical forms of theater. The camera "enters" the physicality of the sexual act, revealing it for the audience. The situation, invented by the director and implemented by the mixer, was undoubtedly extremely oppressive for the actors. The audience were made to watch the intimacy presented in the form they were perhaps uncomfortable with. It seems that performing in this spectacle required tremendous courage and great trust in the director from the actors. They offered him their bodies, agreeing to act as objects and becoming the subject of manipulation. They agreed to a situation in which it was not them as individuals that created their characters on stage.

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14 I. Kłopocka-Marcjasz, „Tego nie widać z widowni", *Nowa Trybuna Opolska*, 2014, no. 6.

Garbaczewski's spectacle was a turning point in the use of new media on stage. The director has tried to explore the problem of the future of theater in the world of images, omnipresent screens, computers, and new forms of communication. He seems to be going farther than the otherwise fascinating spectacles, including Genet's *Maids* directed by Staffan Valdemar Holm with stage design by Bente Lykke Møller at the Royal Theater in Copenhagen (2011), with its dual reality. The "true" reality consisted of three actresses aged 60–70, dressed in black, with empty "white cube" as their space, one wall of which was a projection screen for the same story played by three young, beautiful actresses, naked and boasting typically Scandinavian looks. The "screen" reality was set in a living room with sumptuous furnishings, filled with antiques, mirrors, and flowers. Viewers could not choose the world: they looked at the screen precisely **through** the theater; all that was left for them to decide was the interpretation of the formal solution used by the director. The suggestion of the simultaneous existence of the two worlds was reinforced when the "Barbie" actresses (as they were described by the director) came out to take a bow. In the assessment of the viewers (who had come to a theater, not a cinema, after all) the "real" spectacle was much more interesting than the world featured on the screen, although this was against the intention expressed by the director in the program. Undoubtedly, the coexistence of the two realities extended the illusion of theater onto the imaginary world of wishful thinking, captured on multimedia screens.

In his adaptation of Elias Canetti's prose *Eraritjaritjaka* (2004), Heiner Goebbels approached the use of projection in a different way. It was not displayed on a rectangular screen, but on one in the shape of a house. In the first scene, the audience is deliberately misled, because the actor exits the stage and a sequence of film images suggests that he is leaving the theater building to go to an apartment. It is not until the end of the spectacle that it turns out that the whole interior of the house which the actor entered is right in front of the audience, behind the screen. Goebbels introduced two types of projection. The first one was pre-recorded and showed the actor leaving, taking a cab through the city, and entering the apartment. The second one was recorded and shown to the audience in real time.

Another method was used by the Dutch director Ivo van Hove in the spectacle *Roman Tragedy* staged by the Taneelgroep in Amsterdam (2008). The stage space and the auditorium were seemingly treated traditionally, but after the first thirty minutes of the spectacle the audience was given a chance to come onto the stage, where they served a somewhat similar function to that of the French marquis of the Baroque era, who were sitting on the stage, actively commenting on the ongoing spectacle. In the twenty-first century, the audience could move freely between backstage bars that served sandwiches, coffee, or wine, with couches all over the place. The actors stayed in the proscenium.

They could be watched there or on conveniently placed monitors. An additional attraction for all those who chose to remain in the auditorium was a large screen placed in the proscenium. The video cameras were passive and static, recording the action like a TV news segment. An additional element was a ticker displayed on the screen that informed the audience how many minutes were left until the murder of Julius Caesar or Cleopatra's death. Such a solution fit the convention of the spectacle, which lent contemporary character to William Shakespeare's classic plays by setting them in the modern context of power struggle.

In the spectacles mentioned above, the video camera filming the actors in real time, although present, never became the main character creating the image. However, Garbaczewski did use it in such a function, which would suggest a different purpose of introducing a video camera into a theater spectacle. Sasha Waltz, the German choreographer and dancer, made an interesting observation. When asked why she used a screen in one of her performances, she said that she wanted to connect the archaic with the modern. Of course, this provokes another question: what is modern? We can quite easily show that the screens on stage, showing the spaces complementing the interpretation of the spectacle have taken over the function of the large painted canvases of the past. They also constitute a backdrop for the essential action on stage. The situation is somewhat different when the image displayed on the screen becomes a major component of the spectacle. The multimedia turn in contemporary theater aesthetics is not about the introduction of new media into the stage space, but about assigning to them a creative function in the spectacle. Garbaczewski defined the cameras and the mixer table as active characters in the spectacle. The lens watched the action like a *flâneur* and revealed it to the audience. At the same time, the viewer was deprived of the right to choose. The technique forced the actors to work in a different way and to develop new means of expression.

Currently, we are witnessing a fairly significant change in the history of theater. That change affects the essence of what has always been a true meeting between the actor and the audience. In June 2015, a conference important in this context was held at La Sorbonne Nouvelle in Paris, entitled: *L'acteur face aux ecrans* (*Acting Confronted By Technologies*). Researchers and practitioners of contemporary theater discussed the boundaries of this domain.

Artists are happy to experiment with virtual reality. Young researchers conduct experiments using multimedia headsets, which in the future will allow the viewer to play a dramatic part and to perform / participate in a virtual spectacle. Today, holograms are already appearing on stage. The Belgian artist Kris Verdonck from the Two Dogs Company approached the problem from an interesting perspective: in his 2012 work *M, a reflection*, he put an actor and

his hologram on stage. The spectacle was a monodrama and the viewers had to guess which figure was a living man. It was a kind of game with the audience. Popular culture performers took this a step further: during the Billboard Music Awards in 2014 at the MGM Arena in Las Vegas, Michael Jackson entered the stage. The King of Pop, who had died in 2009, sang and danced. The hologram figure was extremely realistic, and it was accompanied by nearly sixty real dancers, who made the show authentic.[15]

Electronic media cannot be removed from theater, and we have to acknowledge their existence and accept the fact that they have caused perhaps the most important turn in the history of theater. They destroy the traditional understanding of stage illusion, but they also link it with the present. The stage action can show the events recorded earlier by a video camera, it can also show spaces outside the field of vision of the viewer sitting in the audience. Garbaczewski initiated the turn, showing that a unique spectacle can be created not just by the actors, but also by the visual director at the mixer table. His film-theater takes place in real time, as for most artists this factor is still an essential element of a theater spectacle.

Hans Belting, writing from the point of view of an art historian and a cultural anthropologist, observes that the relationship between the image and the medium is not destructive, but rather creative. "Inherent in every medium is its capacity either to catch our attention for its own sake, or just the opposite, to conceal its presence within the picture. The more attention we pay to the medium and its navigating force, the less we concentrate on the image it carries. Conversely, the less we take notice of a medium's presence, the more we are captured by the image, until it seems to us that the latter exists by itself. There is, then, an ambiguity in the relationship between the image and the medium, arising from the fact that their relationship is ever-changing. Today, for example, it is not unusual for an image to acquire appeal because it is presented to us via a seductive carrier medium, perhaps one that presents technological novelty."[16] Thus, perhaps, passing the larger responsibility for the interpretation of the spectacles over to the creators of new media will contribute not only to the revival of theater, but also to the consolidation of its important social and cultural functions.

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15 Boris Kudlička, the stage designer cooperating with Mariusz Treliński at Teatr Wielki – Opera Narodowa (National Opera), also used new technologies in the spectacle *Jolanta / Zamek Sinobrodego* (2013), introducing hologram decorations that greatly impressed the spectators and the critics alike.

16 Hans Belting, *An Anthropology of Images: Picture, Medium, Body*, transl. Thomas Dunlap, Princeton University Press 2011, p. 16.

Jon Mc Kenzie, American researcher and theoretician of performance studies, had an interesting idea on why it was necessary for the arts to introduce and disseminate technical innovations in society. It should be noted that he was familiar with the practical applications of stage design art because in his youth he was a designer himself. His text "Global Feeling. (Almost) all you need is love"[17] explains the new function of decoration. He writes that in the modern world dominated by gadgets, "performance design may help bridge aesthetics and functionality by providing a common language for designers, engineers, and others involved in creative process, including those others called consumers, audiences, and users."[18] Therefore, he broadens the definition of "stage design", adding new goals and tasks. Thus interpreted gadgets and technological innovations created originally for shows and films (including the aforementioned holograms) are gaining new ground. By assigning to them a function within theatre, stage designers gave them new life. They are used to help people/spectators accustom themselves to new elements in the technological development of civilization. According to McKenzie, it would be interesting to analyze, for example, the accessories used by the famous Agent 007 in the successive parts of the James Bond series. We will then discover that this has always been the function of art. Only now, however, do we begin to notice it consciously.

Not all questions regarding the nature of the technological turn will have definitive answers. The twenty-first century has brought a change in the meaning of theatrical spectacles. Theater arts, known for centuries as an excellent form of entertainment, part of religious rites, or a tool of political demonstration, are constantly looking for new forms of existence. One can somewhat perversely ask whether the new media will absorb theater as a result of the technological turn, or rather the opposite?

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17 Jon McKenzie, "Global Feeling. (Almost) all you need is love", [in:] *Performance Design*, ed. Dorita Hannah and Olav Harsløf, Musuem Tusculanum Press, University of Copenhagen 2008.

18 Ibidem, p. 128. "The emerging field of performance design may be another crucial factor. By providing designers with new concepts, models, and practices for approaching design in performative terms, performance design may help bridge aesthetics and functionality by providing a common language for designers, engineers, and others involved in creative process, including those others called consumers, audiences, and users."

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Our intention has been to show the change / turn taking place in the relationship between the actor/the spectator and illusion/disillusion. It seems that this change will set the tone for the further development of the theater. It is still an open question what kind of interpersonal relationship between all participants of the spectacle will be generated by screens and other electronic media. Describing and attempting to name the qualitative changes in the structure of stage work seems to be crucial for the development of new methodologies for the analysis of theatrical reality.

Translated by Katarzyna Gucio

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OD MALOWANEJ DEKORACJI DO EKRANU. ZWROT W ILUZJI SCENICZNEJ NA PRZEŁOMIE XX I XXI WIEKU. (streszczenie)

System malowanych dekoracji, wynaleziony w późnym renesansie, zdominował sceny europejskie na 300 lat. Co prawda w II połowie XIX wieku zjawisko tzw. Wielkiej Reformy Teatru zanegowało tę tradycję, jednak przetrwała ona w różnych odsłonach aż po dzień dzisiejszy. Współcześnie mamy zdecydowane poczucie anachronizmu tej formy, wręcz odczuwamy ją jako cytat z przeszłości lub nieporadność scenografa.
Zmiana sposobu postrzegania świata z realnego na oglądany za pośrednictwem ekranu spowodowała również zwrot w traktowaniu iluzji i przestrzeni scenicznej. Ekran stał się nie tylko nośnikiem dekoracji, ale również realnym elementem świata przedstawiającego lub w skrajnych przypadkach go zastępuje.
Zwrot multimedialny dokonuje się dziś nie tylko dzięki obecności techniki, ale również poprzez wejście do teatru twórców ze świata mediów. Nowa zależność w skrajnej sytuacji doprowadza do zanegowania podstawowych definicji spektaklu teatralnego rozumianego jako współobecność twórcy i odbiorcy.
Celem naszego tekstu będzie pokazanie zwrotu, jaki zachodzi w relacji aktor/widz, iluzja/deziluzja. Wydaje się, że ta zmiana wyznaczy kierunek dalszego rozwoju teatru. Otwarta pozostanie kwestia, jaką relację interpersonalną pomiędzy wszystkimi uczestnikami widowiska wytworzą ekrany czy inne media elektroniczne. Opisanie i próba nazwania przemiany jakościowej w strukturze dzieła scenicznego jest istotna dla kształtowania się nowych metodologii analizy rzeczywistości teatralnej.

Słowa kluczowe: deziluzja, ekran, iluzja, projekcja, przestrzeń teatralna, scenografia, teatr, zwrot

Art Inquiry. Recherches sur les arts 2015, vol. XVII
ISSN 1641-9278

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INTOLERABLE UGLINESS. A TURN IN EUROPEAN FASHION AS A RESULT OF CONFRONTATION WITH JAPANESE AESTHETICS

Abstract: The article is devoted to the impact of Japanese aesthetics on European fashion. In the first part, I will present an outline of Japonism, a trend in 19th century fashion. It brought no significant changes then. The designers just used decorative ornaments originating in Japan or fabrics imported from Asia. At the turn of the century, influenced by reforms in clothing and inspired by the Japanese kimono, the feminine silhouette was radically modified. In the 1920s, these innovations were abandoned. The main part of the paper concerns Japanese designers who appeared on the Paris fashion scene in the second half of the 20th century. Kenzo Takada and Hanae Mori adapted to the European canons, introducing an aura of exoticism. It was only the emergence of such avant-garde designers as Issey Miyake, Rei Kawakubo, and Yohji Yamamoto, that was a turning point in fashion. It involved a confrontation between the Western aesthetics and the Japanese concept of beauty. The Japanese designers proposed a style completely different from what Europe was accustomed to. It featured asymmetrical, loose, often monochromatic clothing, sometimes without traditional trimmings, frayed. In time, the initial shock they provoked turned into a shift in the understanding of what clothing can be.

Keywords: Japanese fashion, Issey Miyake, Yohij Yamamoto, Rei Kawakubo, fashion deconstruction, wabi-sabi, japonism

The title of the paper makes a reference to the well-known quote by Oscar Wilde: "Fashion is a form of ugliness so intolerable that we have to alter it every six months."[1] While not contesting the motivation for the changes in fashion

[1] Quoted from the essay "The Philosophy of Dress" published in *The New-York Tribune* in 1885. The essay was discovered in 2012 and first published in book form in 2013 by John Cooper.

suggested by the famous dandy, we must admit that they are its essence. Changeability is the crux of fashion, its nature and its very substance. It is virtually impossible to present all the sartorial revolutions that took place over the past centuries in such a short text. Undoubtedly, one of the most influential figures in the history of fashion was Charles Frederick Worth. The legendary tailor of Empress Eugénie and the royal courts dominated the second half of the 19th century. He transformed the craft of dressmaking, turning it into an art of creating individual items of clothing signed with the author's name.[2] This would not have been possible if not for the emergence of the Parisian *haute couture* – luxury tailoring, creating hand-finished clothes sewn of expensive fabrics. The designs conceived by the *haute couture* tailors were imitated throughout the world. Thus, fashion became synonymous with the French.

The dominance of the French capital in the world of fashion dates back to the 17th century, when the court of Louis XIV became the arbiter of style, and the French finance minister Jean-Baptiste Colbert supported fashion as an important sector of the economy. The creation of *haute couture* in 1858 sealed the position of Paris as the capital of fashion. That is why the Japanese designers who pursued international careers in the 20th century had to confront the French fashion scene. Kenzo Takada and Issey Miyake showed their collections there for the first time in the 1970s. Yohij Yamamoto and Rei Kawakubo debuted in Paris in 1981. Miyake, Kawakubo, and Yamamoto were hailed as the Japanese avant-garde, and their designs were considered "a revolution in the Western understanding of body and clothing."[3] In this paper, I will present the history of the Japanese influences on the European fashion, from the often superficial borrowings from the Orient in the 19th century, through the revolutionary change of the female figure in the early 20th century, until the breakthrough confrontation between the Western aesthetics and the Japanese concept of beauty in the 1980s. At that time, both cultures had a chance to look at each other as if in a mirror, and the effects of that scrutiny generated an impetus for fashion for the next decade.

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European history knows several cases of the fascination with the Orient and the exotic. In the 18th century, Chinese themes were popular at the royal courts. In the 1880s, a new trend emerged, known as Japonism. In 1854, after more than

2 Charles Frederick Worth was the first designer to attach labels with his name to the clothes he made.

3 G. Lehnert, *A History of Fashion in the 20th Century*, Konemann, Köln 2000, p. 88.

two centuries of isolation, Japan was forced under the pressure from the military to establish diplomatic relations with America and Europe, and the establishment of commercial and cultural relations soon followed. The Europeans had the opportunity to admire the artworks and the achievements of Japanese craftsmen at the international exhibitions in London in 1862 and in Paris in 1867. China, woodcuts, textiles, and lacquerware became goods sought-after by collectors and a source of inspiration for the European artists and designers of the period. The influence of that distant Asian country also became apparent in the field of fashion. Miki Iwagami, a lecturer at the Sugino Fashion College, points out that "The Japanese kimono itself was worn as an exotic at-home gown, and the kimono fabric was used in the making of western dresses. (...) Japanese motifs were also adapted and applied to European textiles."[4] These motifs included flowers, particularly chrysanthemums, as well as birds, fish, and even Japanese family crests. Charles Frederick Worth introduced asymmetric arrangement of patterns on dresses, unprecedented in our culture.

Thus, Japonism in 19th century fashion was limited to the use of decorative motifs, but the form of official clothing remained unchanged. This resulted from the centuries-old tradition of European women's clothing, favouring a close fit of the upper part of the garment to the body. The waist had to be pinched tight by a corset contrasting with the voluminous skirt. It was only the clothing reform initiated in the early 20th century and the rejection of corsets that allowed for the introduction of forms somewhat reminiscent of the Japanese kimono.

In 1909, guest performances of the Ballets Russes electrified Paris, causing an Oriental fever. The term “Orient” was used in different eras as a reference to the countries of the Middle and Far East, North Africa, or the Caucasus. The fascination with the Orient did not always involve any profound knowledge of the distant countries. Rather, it had to do with the European fantasies triggered by the foreign, the distant, and the mysterious. The fad for all things Oriental in the early 20th century inspired the eclectic style of Paul Poiret, who introduced harem trousers, tunics, kimono, and turbans into European dress. They were costumes from different geographical areas. The designer combined various inspirations to create "his own Orient," at the same time revolutionizing fashion. His innovation lies in the fact that he created a completely new line of clothing – he did not accentuate the waist and he definitively rejected the corset. The new line alluded to either the Empire style (the dress cut under the bust line) or the Japanese kimono. Allusions to the kimono form had been present in his

4 Ed. A. Fukai, *Fashion: The Collection of the Kyoto Costume Institute: a History from the 18th to the 20th Century*, Taschen, Köln 2002, p. 155.

designs since 1903. It was thanks to him that loose coats and capes with wide sleeves became the typical attire on Parisian streets. The designer himself did not quite understand the construction of the kimono, as the fashion historian, director of the Fashion Institute in Kyoto, Akiko Fukai observes: "when Poiret used the word 'kimono' in his autobiography, he did not necessarily grasp the distinction between Japanese and Chinese culture and clothes. In any case he seems to have used the word in its most general sense, to indicate something influenced by East Asia or Japan. The most important point was the rectangular cut that followed the warp and weft of the fabric and the unconfined garment that resulted form it."[5]

Poiret's designs are characterized by splendid embroidery, vivid colours, and rich patterns. Madeleine Vionnet, who also alluded to the traditional Japanese costume, chose minimalism. It was in that minimalism that fashion historians see the influence of Japanese kimonos. Vionnet shunned patterned fabrics and embroidery. The only decorative elements on her geometrical designs were folds of soft, naturally draped, bias-cut fabric. The bias cut, a trademark of the designer, may be regarded as "inspired as much by the principle of minimizing fabric waste as with the kimono. Vionnet's bias-cut dresses valued the materiality and the form of the two-dimensional fabric."[6]

It is evident that at the beginning of the 20th century, the feminine silhouette changed fundamentally. The designers turned toward naturalness and comfort. Stripped of the corset, the body was wrapped in fabrics. The clothes were no longer suspended on the waist, but on the shoulders. The relationship between the body and the garment began to resemble that which we find in the Japanese kimono. However, in the 1920s, Japan lost its novelty. The western designers returned to emphasizing the waist and the curves of the female body. The next meeting of the two cultures did not occur until the 1970s.

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Kenzo Takada was the first Asian fashion designer in Paris. He organized his debut fashion show in his small boutique *Jungle Jap* in 1970. The designer stood out because he was from outside the continent, the European tradition, and the fashion system. As it turned out, this was his strength, which – combined with his diligence – made him successful. From the very beginning, his style was characterized by a bold merger of prints, colours, and folklore motifs. The

5 A. Fukai, Japonism in Fashion, http://www.kci.or.jp/research/dresstudy/pdf/e_Fukai_Japonism_in_Fashion.pdf (29 July 2015).

6 T.S. Milhaupt, Kimono: *A Modern History*, Reaktion Books, London 2014, p. 168.

designer effortlessly combined elements from Africa, the Orient, Scandinavia, or South America. This was not revolutionary, but it fit within the oriental-folk trend of that era. Yuniya Kawamura, Professor of Sociology at the Fashion Institute of Technology at the State University of New York, writes somewhat caustically: "I locate Kenzo's unprecedented success as a Japanese designer and as an enterprise in his attempt to assimilate completely into the French fashion community. He is often described as the least Japanese and most Parisian of all Japanese designers who live and become successful in Paris as if to compensate the loss of his Japanese identity."[7]

A similar strategy of adapting to the current conventions of fashion can be noticed in Hanae Mori, who in 1977 was the first Asian woman admitted to the federation of *haute couture* designers. Her designs introduced a little orientality into Paris fashion. However, as professor of literature Barbara Vinken wrote about her, "to be more Parisian than the Parisians was her secret ideal."[8]

Kenzo and Mori taught Paris that there are designers outside of Europe. Their success paved the way for other Japanese who did not conform to the Western standards and canons of beauty. Issey Miyake, Yohji Yamamoto, and Rei Kawakubo "deconstructed existing rules of clothing and reconstructed their own interpretation of what fashion is and what fashion can be."[9] Before they arrived in Paris, they had set up their own businesses and achieved success in their home country.

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Issey Miyake presented his work in Paris in 1973. He was the first Japanese designer who promoted the silhouette completely divergent from the tastes and conventions to which Europe was accustomed. Throughout his career, the recurring theme is the idea referred to as "a piece of cloth". It is one piece of fabric which could cover or wrap up the whole figure. This concept stems from the construction of the kimono. This traditional Japanese attire is wrapped around the body. It is made with simple geometric forms, without cuts fitting it to the body. "In Western fashion," Barbara Vinken explains, "fabric is cut and pinned on the body size. A perfect dress fits like a glove."[10]

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7 Y. Kawamura, *The Japanese Revolution in Paris Fashion*, Bloomsburg Academic, New York 2003, p. 118.

8 B. Vinken, "The Empire Designs Back" [in:] A. Fukai (ed.), *Future Beauty. 30 Years of Japanese Fashion*, London 2010, p. 34.

9 Y. Kawamura, op. cit., p. 92.

10 B. Vinken, "The Empire Designs" [in:] A. Fukai (ed.), *Future Beauty*..., op. cit., p. 27.

Unlike Western clothes, the kimono allows some loose fit, some extra space for the body. Fashion critics point out the difference in the Japanese designers' approach to the relationship between the body and the clothes. The space between them, called *ma*, is not a meaningless void. For Miyake, the design was associated not only with the awareness of what is visible on the outside, but what is felt inside the clothes. For him, designing started already at the stage of manufacturing the fabric, which is why he collaborated with technologists and fabric designers, and experimented with unconventional materials that had never been used in the world of fashion, such as paper, rattan, plastic, or bamboo.

In the late 1980s, the main subjects of the designer's experiments were synthetic fibre and pleating. Historically, the technique of pleating dates back to ancient Egypt. It was revived in the late 19th and early 20th century in the work of the Italian designer Mariano Fortuna, who created silk dresses inspired by the Greek *chiton*. Miyake, on the other hand, developed a technique for producing garments with finely pleated polyester. Instead of the conventional method of shaping the texture of the fabric and then cutting it, he reversed the sequence of actions. It is the finished garment that is pleated. The forms are first cut in a size two and a half to three times larger than usual, as the form is reduced during the process of pleating.

Bonnie English, the historian of art and design, justifies the experiments with the fabrics characteristic of Japanese designers with philosophical considerations. She observes that "In Japan, fashion designers are closely aligned to the textiles that inspire their work, collaborating closely with textile designers to create new fabrics which develop from technological processes that subtly imitate the essence of individualized handcrafted surface. The Japanese have heightened respect for materials, whether natural or synthetic, partly based on Japan's indigenous Shinto religion, which centres on worship of, and communion with, the spirits of nature."[11]

The permanently creased polyester has become a trademark of the designer. This lightweight material created many aesthetic opportunities. Along the stitching, it forms an edge or a bulge, lending to the garment geometric and sculptural shapes that provoked some to compare Miyake's designs to analytical Cubism and African sculpture.[12]

In 1996-1999, Miyake collaborated with many visual artists, developing the prints on the pleated clothes. The images of the human body from their works

11 B. English, *Japanese Fashion Designers: The Work and Influence of Issey Miyake, Yohji Yamamoto and Rei Kawakubo*, Bloomsbury Academic, London 2011, p. 3.

12 Based on H. Koda, *Extreme Body: The Body Transformed*, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York 2001, p. 92

were printed in different ways. Nobuyoshi Araki's photographic self-portrait was printed on a creased dress. Once the dress is put on, the material stretches, creating cracks and distortions in the image. The image of a woman on another dress by the same author was printed before pleating the flat knitwear. Therefore, the printed image appears only when the dress is worn. The images of the magnified dolls' eyes in Tim Hawkinson's sculpture printed on a pleated jumpsuit seem alive, "shrinking" and "expanding" with the wearer's movements.

Experiments with synthetic fabric yielded more than just interesting visual effects. In 1993, the designer launched the line "Pleats Please". These are simple pleated forms which can be machine washed, which do not crease in suitcases, and which adapt to the user's body. This is universal fashion that transcends age, gender, and the characteristics of the user's figure.

The idea of "a piece of cloth" appeared in the work of Miyake in the late 1970s. An extension of this idea is A-POC – an innovative technology and a clothing line, which he developed together with the textile engineer Dai Fujiwara in 1999. This is a new method for constructing clothing without using thread and needle. Susannah Frankel describes this technology as follows: "A-POC, in its first incarnation, consisted of long tubes of double-knit fabric with yarns linked in fine mesh of chain stitches, all produced on computer-controlled loom. The shape of a dress or skirt, for example, was embedded into fabric, leaving the wearer to remove their clothes from the tube by cutting along the marked lines (...) When the garments were cut free, the bottom, stretchier layer of mesh would shrink and stop the fabric from unravelling."[13] In this way, the designer gives the buyer an opportunity to participate in the creative process.

Miyake combined contradictory elements: the versatility and functionality of the clothes and artistic aspirations. Western culture believes in the superiority of fine art over decorative or functional art. For the Japanese, such hierarchy does not exist; as art historian Patricia Mears points out, "seemingly insignificant objects can be imbued with high levels of intellectual and spiritual importance."[14] For this reason, the practical fashion created by Miyake also works as contemporary art. For example, the A-POC clothing line was presented in museums as an installation. The clothes emerged from tubes of fabric hanging from the ceiling, partly cut out of knitted forms, enveloping mannequins. Pleated colourful clothes laid flat on the floor or hung on walls resembled abstract geometric paintings.

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13 S. Frankel "Flatness" [in:] A. Fukai (ed.), *Future Beauty*..., op. cit., p. 81.

14 P. Mears, "Formalism and Revolution" [in:] V. Steele (ed.), *Japan Fashion Now*, Yale University Press, New York 2010, p. 152.

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Yohji Yamamoto and Rei Kawakubo had an established position in Japan when they decided to debut in Paris in 1981. The fashion they proposed was different from European standards. Their clothes were monochromatic, asymmetrical, spacious, giving the impression of being worn and faded. Today, ripped jeans or faded t-shits are available in shops, but in the early 1980s such style caused shock. "Most designers of that time proposed only stilettos, lacquered leather, and stuffed shoulders,"[15] wrote Yann Kerlau, a long-time employee of Yves Saint Laurent and Gucci. The clothes presented on the catwalks were carefully finished, colourful and sexy, emphasizing the feminine figure. The models in the fashion shows by Kawakubo and Yamamoto, with no make-up, or with deathly pale faces and shaved heads, wearing "mourning" dresses, seemed to be an insult to the western canons of fashion. The reviewers did not have the vocabulary to describe the new phenomenon. Japan was associated with the explosion of the atomic bomb, therefore, such phrases as "Hiroshima chic," "post-atomic ragged look," or "somehow apocalyptic" were used.[16] Some sensed the possibility of a refreshing change. Patricia Mears wrote: "Kawakubo and Yamamoto were presenting a new kind of fashion that, while not conventional, was nonetheless worth of commentary."[17] However, the interpretation of the otherness of the aesthetics proposed by the Japanese designers required the knowledge of the traditions from which they hailed.

Yamamoto and Kawakubo initiated the "beggar look" in fashion. Their frayed, ripped clothes "were seen as shaking the very foundations of European fashion." Similar visual effects had already appeared in the 1970s, worn by the London punks. The style of that youth movement was associated with the rebellion against the establishment. In contrast to punk rockers, however, Yamamoto and Kawakubo's clothes "were as carefully made and beautifully executed as any high-end ready-to-wear object in the West."[18] Besides, the apparent wear-and-tear of the clothes promoted by the Japanese designers has a different provenance than the costumes of the British rebellious youth. It does not result from the rejection of the consumer culture, but rather from the eastern philosophical tradition. In Japan, the concept of beauty is combined with the awareness of transience and ephemerality. Describing this attitude, Krystyna Wilkoszewska points out that "The basis of Japanese beauty is not finished perfection, but instability manifested in the phases of growth and

15 Y. Kerlau, *Sekrety mody*, Bukowy Las, Wrocław 2014, p. 271.
16 I. Loschek, *When Clothes Become Fashion: Design and Innovation Systems*, Bloomsbury Academic, New York 2009, p. 104.
17 P. Mears, *Formalism and Revolution*, [in:] V. Steele (ed.), *Japan Fashion*..., op. cit., p. 159.
18 Ibid. p. 188.

phases of disappearance, each of which is incomplete in nature. The condition of beauty is not immortalising it, but rather suggesting its fragility and transience."[19] Interpreting the sophisticated beauty of the designs by Yamamoto and Kawakubo, the fashion critics refer to the concept of *wabi-sabi* from Zen philosophy. It is beauty tinged with sadness and melancholy, stemming from the awareness of transience. *Wabi-sabi* ideas can be seen in the paraphernalia used in the tea ceremony, and in the rooms designed for this purpose. They are expected to be modest, devoid of any ostentation, coated with a patina, old and imperfect. This is the essence of refined beauty.

The designer most radical in challenging the idea of beauty recognized in the West seems to be Rei Kawakubo. The often-quoted statement by the designer, "what is beautiful does not have to be pretty,"[20] may be considered the credo of her work. Ever since her legendary 1982 black sweater, which seemed to have been eaten by moths, each of her collections has been a challenge to the canons of beauty and the principles of garment construction. The designer does not have any education in tailoring, which is important, as her creative freedom is not hampered by any learned rules. In 1997, her collection "Body Meets Dress, Dress Meets Body", alluding to padded garments well known from the history of European fashion, consisted of clothes surprisingly deforming the body. In past centuries, padding and wires mounted inside the clothes served to emphasize sexual attributes. Thus, in women's garments, hips or buttocks were accentuated by padding and sophisticated structures. Exaggerating the sartorial oddities from previous centuries, Kawakubo put padding in unusual places. In her designs, grotesque bumps and growths appear on the backs, bellies and necks of the models.

Explaining her concept, the designer talked about her anger with the boring clothes available on the market. “This led me to design bodies this time, instead of clothes.”[21] This is the characteristic approach of the three avant-garde Japanese designers to the body/costume relationship. Their designs create a volume around the body, sometimes taking surprising forms. They create cocoon shapes, optically enlarging the person’s bulk. This is due to the previously described approach to the construction of clothes. “Western dressmaking took the natural shape of the human body as a given, and its objective was to produce a solution to the challenge of contouring a three-dimensional form using two-dimensional fabric. By contrast, Japanese designers’ creations shrouded the body: they used huge swathes of fabric to wrap and envelop the human form (...) Their garments concealed the curvaceous bosom, narrow waist and natural

19 K. Wilkoszewska, *Estetyka japońska*, Universitas, Kraków 2003, p. 10.
20 G. France, *Comme Des Garçons*, Universe/Vendome, New York 1998, p. 3.
21 V. Steele, “Is Japan still the Future?” op. cit., [in:] V. Steele (ed.), *Japan Fashion*, p. 163.

proportions of the female shape."[22] These clothes do not accentuate the sexual attributes of the body. The kimono referenced by the Japanese designers does not emphasize the bust, the waist is hidden by the *obi* belt, and the feminine figure has a tapered form. The men's kimono is structurally similar to that of the women; they differ in colour and ornaments. It is, therefore, in tradition that we should seek the Japanese penchant for androgenic ideals that challenge the European canons. Yuniya Kawamura observes that in Europe, "clothing is a major symbol of gender that allows other people to immediately discover the individual's biological sex. The three Japanese designers challenged the normative gender specificity characteristic of the western clothes,"[23] Designing for women, Yamamoto and Kawakubo often incorporate elements of men's clothing. Yamamoto often invites female models to present his collection of men's fashion. The name of the brand of Rei Kawakubo – *Comme des Garçons* [like boys] – is sometimes interpreted as a kind of feminist manifesto. It can be concluded that Japanese fashion reflects the turn in social life, the change in the position of women, who have become independent, freed from the need to be sexy for men.

Japanese aesthetics inspired artists and designers in Europe in the 19th century, without interfering with the conventions developed over the centuries in our culture. In the second half of the 20th century, there was a much more important turn in contemporary fashion. Referring to their own cultural tradition and technological innovation, Issey Miyake, Yohji Yamamoto and Rei Kawakubo presented a different way of thinking about the dress, the body, and sexuality. This shook the fashion system whose centre was Paris. The new emerging important fashion centres included Tokyo.

In the late 1980s, the aesthetics developed by Rei Kawakubo and Yohji Yamamoto found followers in Antwerp. Young Belgian designers, such as Ann Demeulemeester, Dries Van Noten, or Martin Margiela, showed unfinished, crude edges of the fabrics and unconventional design solutions, revealing the usually hidden structure of the clothes. These elements had been known from the works of the Japanese designers, but in the 1990s people began to link them with the concept of deconstruction, attributing the introduction of this strategy in fashion to Margiela. Deconstruction has become a widely used method of dressmaking, both in the case of *pręt-à-porter* clothes and *haute couture*. Currently, it is an indispensable element of the language of fashion of the twenty first century. We do not always remember that we owe it to the Japanese avant-garde.

Translated by Katarzyna Gucio

22 S. Frankel "Flatness" [in:] A. Fukai (ed.), *Future Beauty*..., op. cit., p. 63.
23 Y. Kawamura, op. cit., p. 132.

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ZWROT W MODZIE EUROPEJSKIEJ JAKO REZULTAT KONFRONTACJI Z ESTETYKĄ JAPOŃSKĄ

Tekst dotyczy wpływu estetyki japońskiej na modę europejską. W pierwszej części przedstawiam szkicowo trend japonizmu w modzie XIX wieku. Nie nastąpiły wówczas znaczące zmiany. Projektanci ograniczyli się do wprowadzania elementów dekoracyjnych zaczerpniętych z Japonii lub wykorzystania tkanin sprowadzanych z Azji. Na przełomie wieków pod wpływem reform ubioru oraz inspiracji japońskim kimonem sylwetka kobieca uległa radykalnej modyfikacji. W latach 20. XX wieku zarzucono te innowacje. Zasadnicza część tekstu dotyczy japońskich projektantów, którzy pojawili się na paryskiej scenie mody w drugiej połowie XX wieku. Kenzo Takada i Hanae Mori dostosowali się do obowiązujących w Europie kanonów wprowadzając aurę egzotyzmu. Dopiero pojawienie się awangardowych projektantów Isseya Miyake, Rei Kawakubo i Yohji Yamamoto stało się punktem zwrotnym w modzie. Nastąpiła wówczas konfrontacja este-

tyki Zachodu z japońską koncepcją piękna. Japończycy zaproponowali styl całkowicie odmienny od tego, do jakiego przyzwyczajona była Europa. Były to ubiory asymetryczne, luźne, często monochromatyczne, czasem pozbawione tradycyjnych wykończeń, strzępiące się. Początkowy szok jaki wywołały z czasem przerodził się w zwrot w rozumieniu tego, czym może być ubiór.

Słowa kluczowe: moda japońska, Issey Miyake, Yohij Yamamoto, Rei Kawakubo, dekonstrukcja mody, wabi-sabi, japonizm

Art Inquiry. Recherches sur les arts 2015, vol. XVII
ISSN 1641-9278

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EMIGRATION AS AN ARTISTIC TURNING POINT – IGNACY SZCZEDROWSKI, KONSTANTY KUKIEWICZ AND TADEUSZ GORECKI AT THE IMPERIAL ACADEMY OF ARTS IN SAINT PETERSBURG

Abstract: The article describes a turning point in an individual artistic development as a result of emigration and study abroad. The discussion centers on three artists from Vilnius, who after receiving initial training, left to study at the Imperial Academy of Arts in Saint Petersburg. The decision to leave their home city was forced by the changes in the political situation. In 1832, as a result of the repressions in the aftermath of the November Uprising, the Vilnius University was closed, and so was its school of painting. For each of the artists examined in this article, the years of study at the Saint Petersburg Academy became a turning point in the development of their personal style, though each of them chose a different artistic path: Ignacy Szczedrowski was inspired by the so-called "Venetsianov school of painting", Konstanty Kukiewicz learned from the old Dutch genre and battle paintings, and Tadeusz Gorecki was influenced by the approved academic doctrine. The purpose of this article is to demonstrate how a stay in Saint Petersburg completely changed the approach of the three painters to art, and left its imprint not only on their artistic achievements, but also on the course of their painting careers and personal lives.

Keywords: Imperial Academy of Arts in Saint Petersburg, Ignacy Szczedrowski (1815–1870), Konstanty Kukiewicz (1817/18–1840), Tadeusz Gorecki (1825–1868), academic education, artistic emigration

The closing of the Vilnius University as part of the retributions following the November Uprising (1830) brought a long-term stagnation to the artistic life of the city. Private painting lessons given by such painters as Kanuty Rusiecki and Wincenty Dmochowski at the homes of the clients or in the artists' studios,

for obvious reasons could not replace academic education. For a long time the authorities would not permit the establishment of any kind of art college at all: in 1843 a former university lecturer Kazimierz Jelski was refused to open a school of sculpture.[1] Plans to set up schools of drawing, painting and sculpture re-emerged in the 1850s, as mentioned in the private correspondence between Adam Szemesz and Kanuty Rusiecki. There was even a fundraiser held for this purpose, but ultimately this initiative was not put into effect.[2] An attempt to compensate for the lack of a public university was the so-called Römer Academy, operating since the 1850s. These were private lessons of painting organized in the home of the community activist, art lover and amateur artist Edward Jan Römer, and conducted by Kanuty Rusiecki, Jan Zienkiewicz, Antoni Zaleski, Konstanty Brochocki and Franciszek Jurjewicz.[3] Although the lecturers attempted to use modern methods of teaching (such as figure drawing from live models), and even though the place was a breeding ground of patriotic ideas of national art, in terms of the level of art education it could not replace an official academy. Therefore, during the period between the Polish uprisings of 1830 and 1863 many young artists from Vilnius decided to emigrate and study abroad. An especially large group left for Saint Petersburg.[4]

This choice was probably influenced by the earlier positive contacts of the Vilnius community with the Imperial Academy of Arts in Saint Petersburg. In the early 1820s two most talented students of the Vilnius University, Wincenty Smokowski and Walenty Wańkowicz, had been sent there as visiting scholars,[5] Besides, this was a period of a significant development for the Saint Petersburg Academy, and Russian art and culture of that time were perceived as progressive

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1 R. Janoniene, *Okres międzypowstaniowy 1831-1863*, in: *Kształcenie artystyczne w Wilnie i jego tradycje*, ed. J. Malinowski, M. Woźniak, R. Janonienė, Muzeum Okręgowe w Toruniu, Uniwersytet Mikołaja Kopernika w Toruniu, Akademia Sztuk Pięknych w Wilnie, Toruń 1996, p. 53.

2 Ibid., pp. 55-56.

3 J. Širkaitė, *Dailininkai Römeriai. The Artists of the Römer family*, Kultüros, Filosofijos ir Meno Institutas, Vilnius 2006, p. 12.

4 Summing up all contacts with the Saint Petersburg Academy of Arts in the 19th century, Lija Skalska-Miecik estimates the number of painters, illustrators, graphic designers, sculptors, and architects of Polish origin who enrolled in the school at over one hundred. Cf. L. Skalska-Miecik, „Polscy uczniowie petersburskiej Akademii Sztuk Pięknych w XIX i na początku XX wieku" in: *Polscy uczniowie Akademii Sztuk Pięknych w Petersburgu w XIX i na początku XX wieku. Katalog wystawy*, Muzeum Narodowe w Warszawie, Warszawa 1989, pp. 14-23.

5 The relations between Smokowski and Wańkowicz and the Russian academy have been discussed in detail by Kira Mytariewa. Cf. K. Mytariewa, „O wzajemnych kontaktach wileńskiej Szkoły Malarstwa i Akademii Sztuk Pięknych w Petersburgu", *Rocznik Muzeum Narodowego w Warszawie* 1972, vol. 16, pp. 251-287 and „Związki Wańkowicza i Smokowskiego z Petersburską Akademią Sztuk Pięknych po ich wyjeździe", *Rocznik Muzeum Narodowego w Warszawie* 1973, vol. 17, pp. 337-343.

and modern. It was also the time when a small, but quite significant Polish community was starting to form in the capital of the Russian empire, attracting the scientists, writers and artists who had emigrated to Russia – either voluntarily or forced by the circumstances. Aleksander Orłowski, surrounded by fame and admiration in his native land, still lived and worked there. Józef Oleszkiewicz got affiliated with the local academy. Young Aleksander Oleszczyński, held in high esteem by his professor Nikolai Utkin, was achieving successes in college. And the exiled Adam Mickiewicz regularly visited fashionable salons. Summing up this period of activity of the Polish community in Saint Petersburg, Ludwik Bazylow wrote that it was the time when "the close ties of the Polish-Russian friendship were forged, a friendship in the world of intellect and progress".[6] These warm feelings weakened significantly as a consequence of the uprising and, as pointed out by Lija Skalska-Miecik, in the 1830s the Imperial Academy of Arts in Saint Petersburg did not enrol any new Polish students, with the exception of Konstanty Kukiewicz.[7] However, this situation did not last long, and already in the subsequent decade more young aspiring artists came to study in the Russian capital. The largest group, which hailed from Vilnius, included Tadeusz Gorecki, Bolesław Rusiecki, and Wojciech Żamett; Aleksander Kamiński and Aleksander Stankiewicz came from Warsaw; and Gustaw Budkowski and Wiktor Brodzki from other cities of the Russian Partition. All were outstanding students; after graduation most of them won foreign scholarships and ultimately also academic titles. The Saint Petersburg Academy of Arts left its mark on their art, giving them both a high level of mastery in painting techniques and a taste of cosmopolitan academicism.

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Ignacy Szczedrowski (1815–1870) studied at the Vilnius University for a brief period of time after the November Uprising and was probably taught by Jan Rustem.[8] The collection of the Lithuanian Art Museum in Vilnius includes an oil painting entitled *The Origin of Painting*[9] (Fig. 1), dating probably from the initial period of Szczedrowski's artistic activity. It is a display of some good

6 L. Bazylow, *Polacy w Petersburgu*, Zakład Narodowy imienia Ossolińskich, Warszawa 1964, p. 154.

7 L. Skalska-Miecik, *Polscy uczniowie*..., p. 16.

8 J. Malinowski, M. Woźniak, R. Janonienė, ed., *Kształcenie artystyczne w Wilnie i jego tradycje*, Muzeum Okręgowe w Toruniu, Uniwersytet Mikołaja Kopernika w Toruniu, Akademia Sztuk Pięknych w Wilnie, Toruń, p. 48.

9 A. Aleksandravičiūtė et al., *Lietuvos dailės istorija*, Vilniaus dailės akademijos leidykla, Vilnius 2002, p. 217.

1. Ignacy Szczedrowski, *The Origin of Painting*, Lithuanian Art Museum in Vilnius, phot. Antanas Lukšėnas

painting techniques mastered by the very young aspiring artist, but it also indicates the direction in which he initially developed. In terms of its form and content, the painting embodies the program of neo-classical art, with its clear desire to capture perfect beauty and harmony. The chosen theme comes from the 35th book of *Natural History* by Pliny the Elder. It is the story of a daughter of the potter Butades, who drew an outline of her beloved's shadow upon a wall – in order to remember his looks as he went away on a long journey. In this way she invented the art of painting. Since the eighteenth century, this theme was among the most popular iconographic motifs of painting aiming to imitate the classical style.[10] Thus it is clear that at the beginning of his artistic career Szczedrowski received a typical and basic neo-classical education.

10 R. Rosenblum, "The Origin of Painting: a Problem in the Iconography of Romantic Classicism". *The Art Bulletin* 1957, vol. 39, no. 4, pp. 279-290.

However, his style quickly changed, as a result of a turning point that occurred in his life.

In 1832, after the closing of the Vilnius University, Szczedrowski left for Russia to continue his studies of painting. He unsuccessfully tried to get a scholarship at the Saint Petersburg Academy, and ultimately for several years he attended the lectures there as an auditor. During this time, he specialized in landscape art, and in this field he earned the title of a non-class artist in 1834.[11] The few preserved works of this genre (*Road in a forest*, 1836 in the Tretyakov Gallery; *Landscape with hunters*, the State Russian Museum in Saint Petersburg) are typical examples of Biedermeier landscape painting: depicting fields or forests animated with staffage figures, all very idyllic and with the treetops captured in the mannerist style. However, Szczedrowski quickly abandoned this mode of creative expression. In the mid-1830s he developed his own style that brought him the greatest fame and recognition.

At that time Szczedrowski got interested in genre themes, clearly under the influence of the so-called "Venetsianov school of painting", which was then popular with contemporary audiences, but was not necessarily recognized by the representatives of the Saint Petersburg Academy. Although Alexey Venetsianov (1780–1847) was not the first Russian artist who painted peasants, he was considered to be the father of Russian genre painting. Venetsianov's first success in this field came in 1822 when tsar Alexander I bought his painting *Cleaning Beetroots* for his collection in the Winter Palace. In connection with this work, Venetsianov's student Apollon Mokritsky wrote that his master's "peasants carry the very stink of the hut".[12] His position was later consolidated by a very good reception of his subsequent painting, *The Threshing Floor*, presented in 1824 at an exhibition in Saint Petersburg. This work was also purchased by the authorities for the Hermitage collection for a then-considerable sum of 3000 roubles. The strength of Venetsianov's genre painting was his ability to combine national, everyday themes with some influences of old European art, a hybrid juxtaposition of realistic style and traditional values of neo-classical art. Although his contemporaries admired him for abandoning the standards of academic painting and returning to nature, Venetsianov never moved entirely away from the form of official art and – as noted by Rosalind Gray – efficiently combined "the romanticized peasant motifs with the heroic art of the past".[13] However, the favour of the tsar and the acclaim of the critics

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11 *Gosudarstvennyy Russkiy muzey. Zhivopis'. Pervaya polovina XIX veka*. Catalogue, Palace Editions, Sankt-Peterburg 2007, p. 231.

12 A.N. Mokritsky, "Vospominaniya ob. A. G. Venetsianove i uchenikakh ego" [in:] A.M. Efros and A.P. Myuller, ed., *Venetsianov v pis'makh khudozhnika i vospominaniyakh sovremennikov*, Academia, Moskov 1931, p. 60.

13 R.P. Gray, *Russian Genre Painting in the Nineteenth Century*, Clarendon Press, Oxford 2000, p. 86.

did not bring the artist any success in his contacts with the representatives of the academy, who did not approve of his chosen type of painting. Since 1825 the artist was in conflict with the academy, as he was refused the position of a professor.

In this situation, emulating Venetsianov's style was quite dangerous for the artists who sought to obtain further academic degrees. In the 1830s and 1840s the Saint Petersburg Academy not only tried to avoid any connections with his art, but also forbade the students who had previously taken private lessons from him to even mention his name.[14] In spite of these difficulties, Szczedrowski – who, as it seems, never actually met Venetsianov – became one of the most important followers of his pursuits. However, in contrast to the master and most of his students, Szczedrowski did not depict scenes from Russian villages, but chose as the themes of his works the daily events taking place in the streets of a big city. He illustrated the life of the lower social classes, craftsmen and street vendors, capturing them at work and at typical pastimes. Following the example of Venetsianov, the faces of Szczedrowski's characters are also idealized, and their figures monumentalized. At the same time, however, his paintings have a huge load of realism. Apparently, he looked for inspiration while wandering through the streets, courtyards, and pubs of Saint Petersburg, searching for single characteristic types and entire narrative scenes. As noted by one of the critics, who knew him: "Instead of thoughtfully creating his compositions at a desk with a pencil in his hand, he used to come out into the streets and markets, to visit shops, railway stations, and basements. He sat there and with the greatest precision recorded not only the typical customs, clothes, but also portraits of individual people. Thanks to this, Szczedrowski's works have something that those of other painters lack – character".[15] Obviously, at that time making sketches from nature was no longer an isolated practice in Russia; however, the scenes captured by Szczedrowski were characterized not only by natural perspective and attention to detail, but also by respect and sincere sympathy for the presented characters, and often also a hint of warm humour.

At about the same time the artist got interested in graphic arts, initially only as a side activity to his painting, but later also as an increasingly dominant part of his artistic endeavours. The reasons for his turning to lithography were purely pragmatic. Szczedrowski was in a difficult financial situation and during his studies he started a co-operation with the Society for the Encouragement of Artists in Saint Petersburg and was commissioned by it to create lithographic reproductions of paintings – old masterpieces from the collection of

14 T. Alexeyeva, *Venetsianov and His School*, transl. C. Justice, Y. Kleiner, Aurora Art Publishers, Leningrad 1984, p. 25.

15 B. Suris, *Ignatij Stiepanowicz Szczedrowskij*, Moskva 1957, p. 7.

the Hermitage (including paintings by Murillo and Teniers), as well as famous works of his contemporaries (for example some fragments from Brullov's monumental *The Last Day of Pompeii*, which won him the greatest recognition). Szczedrowski quickly decided to also publish his original works in graphic form.

In 1839 in appreciation of Szczedrowski's genre scenes for their "subtlety of nuance, humour, and his careful observation of the faces of the urban dwellers", the Society for the Encouragement of Artists published a portfolio of his lithographs.[16] Thirty-six prints based on the artist's ink drawings were made by A.A. Umnov and L.A. Belousov. The album was titled *Scenes from Russian Folk Life* and it was well received by the Russian critics and audiences. However, it seems that the artist himself was not quite satisfied with the publication, because a few years later he started working on its new version and a reprint. The second set of works contained autolitographs by Szczedrowski and was published in 1845 under the title *Our Own!* (Fig. 2). The artist used his old ideas, often changing only the composition of the individual scenes (especially as the vertical format of the sheets was changed to horizontal). The total number of drawings was reduced to twenty. Szczedrowski also employed a different graphic technique – the original two-tone lithographs were replaced by colour ones, created with the use of three matrices to produce each colour: black, blue and red. This innovative method, employed for the first time in Russian graphic arts, drew even more attention to Szczedrowski's work. The magazine "Illustratsija" ["Illustration"] published an extensive article, whose author praised the new method and admired the achieved results – subtle tonal gradations, delicate shades in the parts of air, as well as deep saturated colours in the shades.[17] In addition to the high artistic quality, also the topic of the album brought about a lot of positive reactions. The straightforward and honest way of present the life of the lowest social strata of the city was appreciated by Vissarion Belinsky (1811–1848), a philosopher, literary critic, and representative of the revolutionary democracy, who was famous for judging literary and artistic works by social and political criteria. A positive review of the publication was posted by the writer in 1846 in the magazine "Otechestvennye Zapiski" ("Notes from the Fatherland")[18], which he himself edited. The huge success of the album made Szczedrowski reprint it in 1846, 1852 and 1855, which was an event without precedent in the Russian art of that time.

Little is known about Szczedrowski's later life and artistic activity. His works created after the mid-1850s are unknown. He later moved to Moscow,

16 Ibid., p. 8.
17 *Illustratsija* 1847, no. 15, p. 3.
18 B. Suris, *Ignatij Stiepanowicz*..., p. 8.

2. Ignacy Szczedrowski, *The Kvass Seller*, lithography from the album Our Own!, 1845, source: „Niva" 1903, no. 19

where he eventually died in obscurity. His success was a result of the choice of his individual creative path, the courage to break with the doctrine promoted by the academy, and his daring to turn towards the topics which truly fascinated and inspired him. But the peak of his career lasted only for a short time, and for unknown reasons, Szczedrowski never developed it any further. Still, his album *Our Own!* is considered by the Russian researchers as one of the most important stages in the development of Russian realistic painting. At the same time Szczedrowski's activity remained almost completely unknown in Poland. Only Franciszek Maksymilian Sobieszczański in 1843 wrote that "in 1833, he left for the Imperial Academy of Arts in Saint Petersburg, where he devoted himself to painting, especially works presenting Russian history or national customs, in which he managed to greatly distinguish himself".[19]

19 F.M. Sobieszczański, *Rzut oka na historyą malarstwa w Polsce*, Dziennik krajowy 1843, no. 134, p. 4.

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Konstanty Kukiewicz (1817/18–1840) was too young to start his education at the Academy of Fine Arts in Vilnius before it was closed after the November Uprising. Still, he took his initial painting classes from Jan Rustem. As early as in 1835 he moved to Saint Petersburg, where he attended lectures at the Academy of Fine Arts. He was a student of the battle-painter Aleksander Sauerweid (1783–1844), however, did not follow his master in painting historical topics, but instead he pursued his own artistic vision. For him the main source of inspiration was individual study, when – as mentioned by his contemporary authors – he loved to copy paintings by David Teniers the Younger (1610–1690) and Philips Wouwerman (1619–1668) in the Hermitage. Particularly the works of the latter artist had a dominant influence on Kukiewicz's works. The 17th-century Dutch master Wouwerman specialized in painting horses and was a precursor of a characteristic iconographic type of a genre scene, depicting riders (travellers, hunters and – above all – military men) against a backdrop of a vast landscape.[20] Kukiewicz adapted some elements of this style of painting in his own compositions, basing on the observation of characters and scenes from the surrounding reality. Year after year this type of oil paintings brought him recognition among the faculty of the school and won him a series of higher and higher distinctions. In 1836 he received a small silver medal for the painting *Soldiers making a bonfire in the woods*; in 1837 he got a big silver medal for the work *Hussar on horseback in front of an inn*; and in 1838 – a small gold medal for the piece *Uhlans waiting to cross a river*.[21] He graduated in 1839 with the title "class artist of the 14th degree" and returned to Lithuania. He was then hired by Prince Ludwig Wittgenstein, the new owner of the palace and estate in Verkiai near Vilnius, to paint the views of the mansion. At the same time, however, he fell ill and soon died.[22]

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20 For features and motifs of the art of Phillips Wouwerman, cf.: F.J. Duparc, "Philips Wouwerman, 1619-1668", *Oud Holland* 1993, vol. 107, no. 3, pp. 257-286; B. Schumacher, *Philips Wouwerman. The Horse Painter of the Golden Age*, Davaco Publishers, Doornspijk 2006; *Philips Wouwerman (1619-1668)*, ex. cat. Museumslandschaft Hessen Kassel / Royal Picture Gallery Mauritshuis, Haga 2009.

21 S.N. Kondakov, *Spisok russkich chudožnikov k jubilejnomu spravočniku Imperatorskoj Akademii Chudozestv*, Tovariščestvo R. Golike, A. Vil'borg, [Petersburg 1914], p. 106.

22 In some publications the date of death – 1842 – is incorrect, probably repeated after Edward Rastawiecki [E. Rastawiecki, *Słownik malarzów polskich, tudzież obcych w Polsce osiadłych lub czasowo w niej przebywających*, vol. I, Drukarnia S. Orgelbranda, Warszawa 1850, p. 249]. The real date of death is provided on the artist's tombstone at the Bernardine cemetery in Vilnius (March 15th, 1840), as well as in the obituary published in *Kurier Wileński* 1840, No. 22.

Out of Kukiewicz's early paintings, created during his studies, two have been preserved at the State Russian Museum in Saint Petersburg: *Uhlans waiting to cross a river* and *Russian soldiers in a village*.[23] The first work won its author a distinction from the Academy in 1838. Both juvenile works by Kukiewicz fully implement the scheme introduced to the European art by Wouwerman: several figures of military men on horseback and villagers captured against the background of a familiar, but not very specific landscape. In the first case, the presented scene is a conversation of three uhlans with other wanderers, waiting at the river crossing for the arrival of a ferry, which is visible in the background, near the opposite shore. The second painting depicts two infantry soldiers rest-ing in front of a rural building, probably a tavern, and a villager showing them the way with a hand. Both the uniforms of the soldiers, and the clothes of the other figures are typically Russian. The paintings show the talent of the young artist and demonstrate high artistic standard in the accuracy of composition, a certain ease in anecdote building, as well as drawing and colour skills. In formal terms, they are very correct, especially given the limited experience and still unfinished education of the painter, but they lack any deeper reflection on the chosen themes. Stylistically they are too close to the Dutch prototypes, so in spite of the fact that the artist changed the 17th-century setting to his contemporary times and the country of his stay, these scenes are devoid of authenticity.

Another work by Kukiewicz from the Saint Petersburg period is a private property painting from 1837 *Asking for directions*,[24] which belongs to roughly the same iconographic type. It depicts three Polish uhlans, who have stopped at a crossroads of a country road at the outskirts of a village to water the horses and ask a man they encountered for directions. This theme was a pretext to show a landscape of a small village, the modesty and simplicity of its buildings, the colours of the uniformed soldiers and the poor clothing of the passing wanderer. The documentary manner of illustrating the physical aspects of reality and the great care to render the truth of the presented details evidences Kukiewicz's predilection for realistic painting. However, this realism featuring in the paintings applies only to the physical layer of the observed reality. The artist paid far less attention to the characters' emotions, the atmosphere of the scene, or any transcendent issues.

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23 *Gosudarstvennyy Russkiy muzey. Zhivopis'. Pervaya polovina XIX veka. Katalog*, Palace Editions, Sankt-Peterburg 2007, p. 38.

24 This painting, originally in the US collections, was sold at the Auction House Desa Unicum on December 17th, 2009: http://www.artinfo.pl/?lng=1&lngcode=pl&pid=catalogs&sp=auction&id=1101&sobj=1 [accessed December 29th, 2009].

According to B. Suris, the aforementioned paintings, like all genre scenes created by Kukiewicz during his studies (supposedly over 30 of them[25]) were quite popular and valued in Russia.[26] At the same time the painter's artistic activity was virtually unknown in his homeland. The work which significantly contributed to building his fame in his native city and brought him recognition – unfortunately, mainly posthumous – was the painting *Jews smuggling goods in the Vilnius area*. It was one of the four paintings he submitted to the local academy exhibition in 1839, near the end of his stay in Saint Petersburg, and the one that won the highest prize. Returning to Poland, the painter probably took the winning work with him. It is known that for some time the painting was part of Edward Rastawiecki's collection, although in his listings of Kukiewicz's works from 1850, Rastawiecki failed to record it as his property.[27] Along with a large part of this collection it was bought by Seweryn Mielżyński, and then donated to the Poznań Society of the Friends of Learning, from where it was handed on to the Mielżyński Family Museum under the title *Jewish smugglers resting in front of an inn in the forest near Vilnius*.[28] In 1939 the painting was confiscated by German occupation authorities, who sent it to the collection of the Kaiser Friedrich Museum zu Posen. It was never retrieved after the war.[29]

In nineteenth-century Vilnius, this work was popularized by a graphic reproduction, made in France by L.P. Bichbois and I.L. Deroy for the second series of *Album Wileńskie*, published by Jan Kazimierz Wilczyński in 1845–1856.[30] This publication was jeopardized because of the problems with the Vilnius censorship. The reproduction of Kukiewicz's work was to be withdrawn and – as reported by Wilczyński in one of his letters from 1849 – there were concerns that along with the image by Wańkowicz it would be confiscated, because it was posted together with some prohibited medals.[31] In the end,

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25 V. Drema, J. Polanowska, „Kukiewicz Konstanty Benedyk Antoni", biogram, in: *Słownik artystów polskich i obcych w Polsce działających*, vol. IV, ed. J. Maurin-Białostocka i J. Derwojed, Instytut Sztuki Polskiej Akademii Nauk, Warszawa 1986, p. 348.

26 B. Suris, *Iz istorii svyazey pol'skogo izobrazitel'nogo iskusstva s russkoy khudozhestvennoy kul'turoy, Iskusstvo* 1954 nr 1, s. 58-59.

27 E. Rastawiecki, *Słownik malarzów polskich*..., vol. I, p. 249.

28 *Katalog Galeryi Obrazów w Muzeum im. Mielżyńskich*, Towarzystwo Przyjaciół Nauk w Poznaniu, Poznań 1912, p. 63.

29 Ed. D. Suchocka, *Katalog dzieł malarstwa, rysunku lawowanego i rzeźby ze zbiorów Poznańskiego Towarzystwa Przyjaciół Nauk*, Muzeum Narodowe w Poznaniu, Poznań 2008, p. 77.

30 The publication *Album Wileńskie* was described by Jadwiga Jaworska, cf.: J. Jaworska, „Album Wileńskie i jego wydawca Jan Kazimierz Wilczyński w świetle korespondencji z Konstantym Świdzińskim", Rocznik Muzeum Narodowego w Warszawie 1972, vol. XVI, pp. 289-386; *eadem, Album Wileńskie w zbiorach Muzeum Narodowego w Warszawie, Rocznik Muzeum Narodowego w Warszawie* 1976, vol. XX, pp. 213-380.

31 Letter by Jan Kazimierz Wilczyński to Konstanty Świdziński from August 12th, 1849. As cited in: J. Jaworska, *Album Wileńskie i jego wydawca*..., p. 304.

however, it was retrieved, and the scene with the Jewish smugglers was noticed and positively received by the critics. Edward Rastawiecki, commenting on a print based on Kukiewicz's composition, noted in the *Pamiętnik sztuk pięknych* [Fine Arts Diary] journal "that any paintings left by this artist are worthy of preservation".[32] Józef Ignacy Kraszewski wrote about him more broadly and definitely favourably: "Who knew of K. Kukiewicz before P. Wilczyński published *The little inn on a side road*, based on the painting honoured with a medal at an exhibition in the capital, depicting a group of goods-smuggling Jews who stopped there to rest and to chat? There were several lithographs by Kukiewicz showcasing his obvious talent, but the *Little inn* is a complete composition, while the others were merely sketched ideas. Everything in this picture is familiar: the surroundings, the building, and those Jews, so deftly captured, and yet not mocked".[33]

In terms of composition, the painting *Jews smuggling goods* is very close to the earlier works by Kukiewicz, because it exploits the same pattern: there are five figures, either standing or sitting in a familiar landscape in front of a crumbling rural shack. Only the "costumes" changed: from military uniforms to Jewish clothes. The greatest modification, however, is in the subject itself. In the last of his famous paintings Kukiewicz took upon himself to illustrate the topic of Jewish traders. At that time this matter was not necessarily considered a priority, but still was a significant social problem, and as such was vividly debated. It is important that the painter did not argue in favour or against his protagonists, nor did he try to assess their actions, but confined himself to a fair and impartial description of reality. In contrast to other preserved paintings by Kukiewicz, this particular work can be seen as an evidence of a breakthrough that occurred in his artistic activity at the end of his academic studies. At this point the realism of form, already observed in his early paintings, started to be accompanied with the realism of content.

The interest in social aspects and keen attention to reality were even more prominent in the final period of Kukiewicz's artistic activity, after his return to his native country. However, they showed less in his paintings, and more in his other interests at that time. Alongside the work *Jews smuggling goods* in the *Dictionaries of Polish painters*, Rastawiecki mentions "yet another beautiful painting" by Kukiewicz: a view of a Jewish inn in Verkiai with large figures,[34] which reportedly belonged to the family of the artist living in Vilnius and which

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32 E. Rastawiecki, „Album Wileńskie, wydawane przez pana J.K. Wilczyńskiego", *Pamiętnik Sztuk Pięknych* 1850-54, p. 63.

33 J.I. Kraszewski, *Album wileńskie J. K. Wilczyńskiego, obywatela powiatu wiłkomierskiego [recenzja]*, Wilno 1850, p. 17.

34 E. Rastawiecki, *Słownik malarzów polskich*..., vol. I, p. 249.

– as suggested by the title – was created already in Lithuania. However, it seems that after graduating from the academy Kukiewicz's activities in the field of painting decreased significantly in favour of his interest in graphic techniques. In the last years of his life it was lithography, a new means of expression in the Vilnius artistic community, that became the substance of his work, and in effect lithographs take a significant position in his oeuvre. The graphic works created by Kukiewicz in Poland eclipsed even his painting achievements, so that in an article providing a brief summary of the most important names in the history of national art, Edward Pawłowicz includes him among the Vilnius artists "famous for drawing on stone".[35] Kukiewicz's autolitographs created in Józef Oziębłowski's studio were characterized by a much stronger focus on the individual characteristics of the models, mostly street vendors of Jewish nationality (*Street bookseller*, 1839, Fig. 3; *Junk seller; Hat seller; Woodcutters waiting for hire*, 1839).[36] His lithographs and drawings sometimes include some narrative elements and humorous anecdotes, as in the case of the drawing and lithograph titled *Festivities outside the city of Vilnius*, depicting men drinking in front of a country inn, or the sketch *Fight in a tavern*. In time Kukiewicz's realistic pursuits manifested in his "small forms" could have also ended up in his paintings, but further development of his career was interrupted by the artist's death.

The works by Konstanty Kukiewicz, especially his paintings, remained almost entirely unknown to 19th-century Polish art lovers and connoisseurs, except for a single image, popularized by a reproduction in the famous album. Also later researchers, rarely, and then only vaguely mentioning this artist, contributed to sending him into oblivion. Meanwhile, he is an important example of a breakthrough in the approach to genre subjects, which were increasingly gaining recognition in the 1840s as an autonomous type of works and which could constitute the main artistic specialization and not just a side activity. In the Vilnius artistic milieu of that time Kukiewicz was the only painter fully devoting himself to depicting the scenes of everyday life. He could have initiated a new way of painting, which on the one hand derived from his thorough knowledge of the Dutch genre art of the seventeenth century, and on the other from the innovative trend of realism. At the same time he began to introduce socially involved motifs, which presented his worldview through the direct recording of the observed figures or events, but without an intrusive imposition of his own ideology. Kukiewicz, as noted with approval by Kraszewski, did not

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35 E. Pawłowicz, „Rzut oka na stanowisko malarstwa polskiego wobec sztuki u obcych", *Przegląd Biblijograficzno-Archeologiczny* 1881, vol. II, p. 494.

36 L. Uziębło, „Z dawnych sylwetek wileńskich. Kazimierz Bachmatowicz i Konstanty Kukiewicz", *Dziennik Wileński* 1937, no. 74, p. 4.

3. Konstanty Kukiewicz, *The Street Bookseller*, lithography, 1839, source: „Biesiada Literacka" 1903, no. 43, p. 337

resort to caricature, mockery, or pompous moralizing to convey the truths of life. The artist's premature death not only interrupted his personal development and possibly deprived Polish art of a great talent, but also closed this potential direction of evolution of the artistic centre in Vilnius. In his 1954 article on the history of the relations between Polish and Russian art, B. Suris puts forward the thesis that "modest and marked with democratic motifs, the works [by Kukiewicz] were an initial step in the development of Polish everyday-life realistic painting and prepared its heyday in the second half of the century".[37] But in fact this very important manifestation of genre painting went almost unnoticed in Polish art. Konstanty Kukiewicz had no followers.

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The last artist who left Vilnius for Saint Petersburg in the 1830s was **Tadeusz Gorecki** (1825–1868), son of the then famous poet and fabulist Antoni. Following his active participation in the November Uprising of 1830, Antoni was forced to leave his wife and children in Poland and go into exile in Paris. Even as a child, Tadeusz Gorecki was said to reveal artistic talent. Walenty Wańkowicz, who was related to the family, was "struck by the child's ability and willingness to draw" and gave him his first art lessons. However, due to Gorecki's young age, this never took any form of an educational program.[38] In 1839, as part of the recruitment of the Polish youth to the Russian cadet corps, Antoni's two oldest sons, Tadeusz and his brother Ludwik, received a call to military service in Saint Petersburg. Ludwik joined the army (and a few years later died in the Caucasus), but Tadeusz, due to his poor health, was allowed to study.[39] Thus the fifteen-year-old became a student of the Academy of Fine Arts in Saint Petersburg and quickly began to make progress. Just two years later, the periodical *Tygodnik Petersburski* [Saint Petersburg Weekly] reported on the development of the young student of painting. He was then characterized by "vivid imagination and ability to capture similarities in the features". Thanks to this, the portraits created by Gorecki were very popular among the Polish community in Saint Petersburg.[40]

At the academy Gorecki became a student and protégé of Karl Bryullov (1799–1852), who distinguished him among other students and employed him as an assistant during his interior decoration of Saint Isaac's Cathedral. The

37 B. Suris, *Iz istorii*..., p. 59.
38 „Tadeusz Gorecki" (Notatka biograficzna), *Tygodnik Illustrowany* 1868, no. 17, p. 195.
39 „Tadeusz Gorecki", *Rocznik Towarzystwa Historyczno-Literackiego w Paryżu* 1868, p. 378.
40 „O artystach", *Tygodnik Petersburski* 1842, no. 69, p. 477.

teacher significantly influenced the formation of his pupil's painting style. After the international success of his work *The last day of Pompeii*, Bryullov was widely respected, called "The Great Karl", and described by Ivan Turgenev as "the glory of Russia and Italy".[41] He represented the style of cold neoclassical academicism, inspired by the works of the Renaissance and Baroque masters (especially Raphael, Guido Reni, Domenichino, Titian and Perugino). In this direction he also guided his students, and his idealized historical and religious paintings were the embodiment of the highest aspirations of the Academy at that time.[42] Bryullov also painted genre scenes: these were mostly fairly conventional depictions of Italian villagers, young women harvesting grapes, or idyllic family scenes, all kept in sentimental style.[43] These elements were naturally picked up by Tadeusz Gorecki.

The first known work by Gorecki was a copy of the painting Bankrupt by Michiel Sweerts, presented at the academy exhibition in 1842. He then quickly moved on to pursue his own ideas and a year later presented the painting Blind man with a guide in the church, for which he was awarded a small silver medal.[44] Currently this work belongs to the Lithuanian Art Museum in Vilnius (Fig. 4).[45] The painting shows a surprising – considering the young age of its creator – level of mastery of drawing and painting techniques. It is a low-key composition, characterized by simplicity and minimalism in terms of artistic means, kept in almost monochromatic tones of browns. As the subject of the work Gorecki chose a religious motif and at the same time he touched upon an important social problem: the position of old and disabled people. In contrast to his teacher, who preferred thoughtless glorification of the charms of life, the artist displayed sensitivity to human misery already at such a young age. Although the elements of realism in his painting are still quite tentative, it conveys more truth of life than the works by Bryullov. A tired hand of an old man in the foreground, detailed depiction of the poor clothing of the two protagonists, and the emphasis on their warm relations presented by capturing

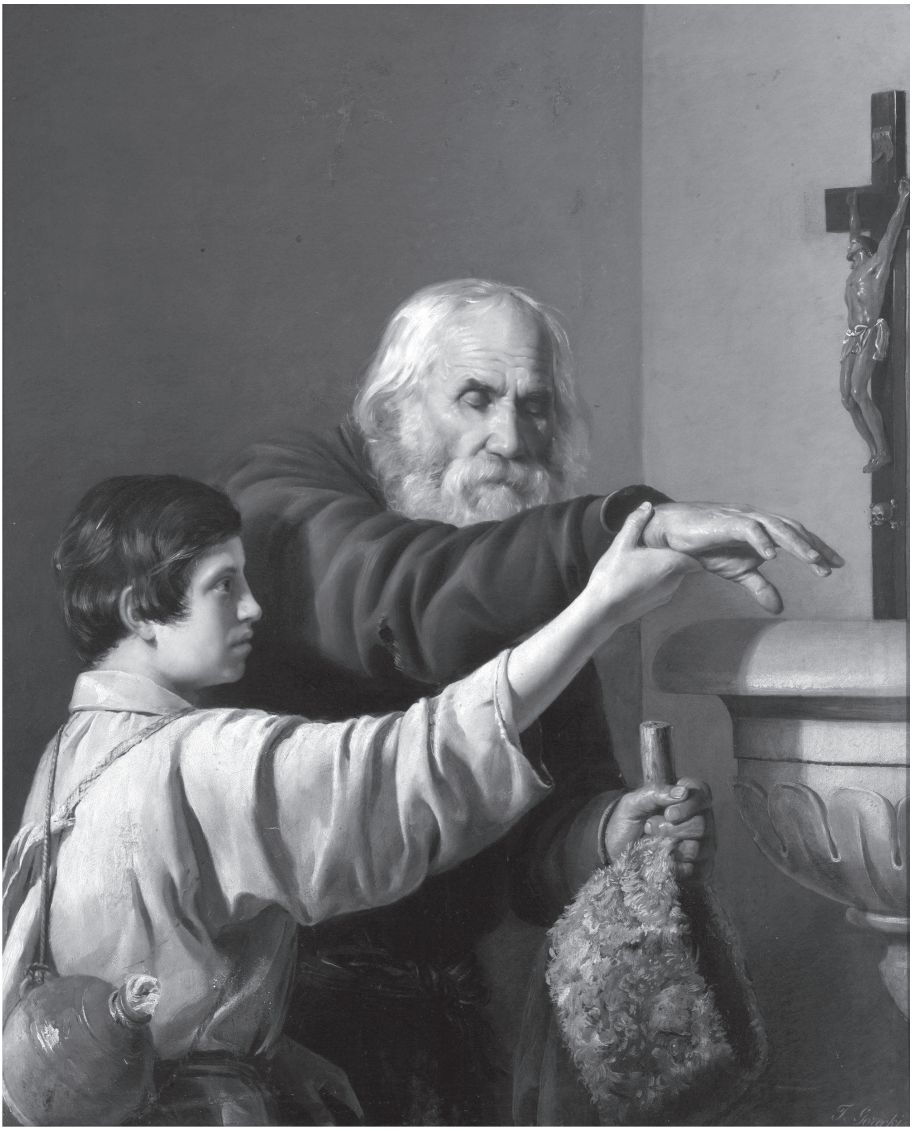
41 G.K. Leonteva, *Karl Pavlovich Bryullov*, Khudozhnik RSFSR, Leningrad 1986, p. 61.

42 After Bryullov's death his art was depreciated and his authority undermined by V.V. Stasov, who accused his work of coldness, lack of expression and truth of life, absence of nature and rococo distorted taste. More about the criticism of Bryullov: V. N. Petrov, *K. Bryullov*, Gos. izd-vo Izobrazitel'nogo Iskusstva, Moskwa 1949, p. 5.

43 On the genre art of Bryullov and its impact in the milieu of the Saint Petersburg Academy see Rosalind P. Gray, *Russian Genre Painting in the Nineteenth Century*, Clarendon Press, Oxford 2000, pp. 101-107.

44 *Polscy uczniowie...*, p. 90.

45 P. Juodelis, *Lietuvos Daile XVI-XIX a. Tapyba. Skulplura. Katalogas*, Lieluvos TSR Dailes Muziejus, Vilnius 1969, item 61.



4. Tadeusz Gorecki, *Blind man with a guide in the church*, 1843, Lithuanian Art Museum in Vilnius, phot. Antanas Lukšėnas

the gesture of guiding the hand of the blind man to the holy water – all this indicates that Gorecki wanted to strongly influence the viewers' emotions and touch their hearts. This painting by Gorecki opened a series of similar contemplative and religious works.

As early as 1845 the artist returned to the motifs of religious life by creating the painting *Confession of a young Lithuanian woman*, which was awarded a gold medal "for expression". The work, known today only from reproductions,[46] depicts a young woman kneeling next to an old Catholic priest, who is listening intently. The journal *Kurjer Warszawski* reported, admittedly with several years of delay, but very enthusiastically, on the positive reception of the painting at the Academy: "yet again a work by this poet's son, depicting a Capuchin friar listening to a confession of a young Lithuanian woman, was among the best paintings of the great exhibition. The work has been noted and has brought fame and recognition to the young student of the Academy".[47] In 1849, when the journals in the capital of the Polish Kingdom only reported on Gorecki's earlier achievements, the young painter won the title of the "class artist of the 14th degree". Following in the footsteps of his teacher, Gorecki took up religious subjects (*Christ blessing the children*) and conventional, academic historical motifs (*Sixtus V in his youth with a herd of pigs and a fortune-teller, foretelling his great future*). Since he wanted to become an academician portrait painter, Gorecki also started to develop in this field. In 1850 he created an image of the sculptor P.K. Klodt (Tretyakov Gallery in Moscow), which was later praised by the Academy. During his stay in Saint Petersburg he painted portraits of the Russian intelligentsia, military men, and high-ranking members of the Polish clergy.

While staying in Russia, the painter was also interested in the local folk traditions, as exemplified by the painting from 1850 titled *Exchange of Easter kisses or Easter rite* (The State Russian Museum in Saint Petersburg). Its theme is the Russian custom of exchanging Easter wishes and hand-made Easter eggs. The details of the clothes and the physiognomies of the girl and the young man display the features characteristic of that country. Supposedly as a reward for this painting Gorecki received a scholarship for a two-year trip abroad. He travelled to Madrid and on the way also visited Vilnius and Warsaw.

Even though the earlier works by Tadeusz Gorecki won him the favour of the artistic community in Saint Petersburg, as well as Polish critics, it was a painting created during his studies in Spain that secured him widespread fame and a position in Polish art. The painting *The last communion of a dying woman* (National Museum in Warsaw, Fig. 5) was created in Madrid and presented at a local exhibition in 1852. It obtained some very favourable reviews in the local press.[48] Once again the painter turned to the repertoire of the topics related to religious ceremonies. It depicts the last rites given to

46 *Opiekun Domowy* 1869, no. 35, p. 273.
47 *Kurjer Warszawski* 1849, no. 285, p. 1508.
48 „Tadeusz Gorecki", *Rocznik Towarzystwa Historyczno-Literackiego w Paryżu* 1868, p. 378.

5. Tadeusz Gorecki, *Last communion of a dying woman*, 1852, National Museum in Warsaw, phot. Krzysztof Wilczyński

a young woman in the presence of her mother by a Catholic priest, accompanied by an altar boy with a candle and a bell. This time, however, Gorecki drew away from his first works characterized by realistic elements. In their place he introduced sentimental idealization and the atmosphere filled with mysticism, which in a way was a return to the style instilled in him by Bryullov. Especially the figure of the dying woman – ethereally beautiful, with her eyes raised upwards and a hand on her heart – seems too perfect to be real.

Today the style of the painting strikes us as overly affective, but at the time of its creation, it fit in perfectly with the tastes of the public. That is why it brought the author an almost immediate popularity. Atanazy Raczyński, who was then the Prussian envoy in Spain, had the opportunity to see the work during its first public presentation and was so impressed that he commissioned the artist to make a copy. At the collector's request Gorecki created the painting *Mother at the bedside of a dying daughter*, which is a simplified version of the original composition. The group with the dying girl and the woman standing next to her bed is left almost unchanged, but the figures of the priest and the

altar boy are omitted. Raczyński included the work in his collection in Berlin, from where it was passed on to the Mielżynski Family Museum in Poznań. It is currently owned by the National Museum in Poznań.[49]

In 1853, Gorecki returned to Saint Petersburg and took part in the academy exhibition presenting several canvases, including the *Last communion* and the painting *Pilgrims in front of St. Peter's basilica in Rome*, which is known only from its title. The viewers had the opportunity to see the already famous work, and several articles about it appeared in the Polish press published in Russia. The first publication was a short note in the periodical *Tygodnik Petersburski* by an anonymous author, who "having in great esteem Mr Gorecki's talent," evaluated the work very disapprovingly, primarily in terms of its form. The painting was criticised for its inept composition, cold colour scheme, and the light which "wanders in all corners, and the eye of a viewer involuntarily follows it there".[50] In response, the priest Jerzy Iwaszkiewicz published his opinion on the pages of the same magazine. Iwaszkiewicz considered the criticism to be unclear, praised the formal merits of the work, and above all appreciated the chosen subject. In his opinion the artist "perfectly understood it, empathized with it and captured it superbly".[51] The temperature of this exchange demonstrates the strong emotions aroused by Gorecki's painting. The works brought from his travels earned Gorecki the title of an academician.

Two years later the artist left Russia again, having received from the government a task to complete a copy of Saint Cecilia of Bologna by Raphael, which was already started by Bryullov. Apparently, the dying master himself expressed the wish that Gorecki should be the one to complete the commission.[52] However, the painter did not break off his contacts with the Saint Petersburg community and was still executing orders for the copies of works by old masters or, more rarely, church paintings. He spent a few years in Italy, but at the end of 1857, after his marriage to the daughter of Adam Mickiewicz, Maria, he settled in Paris. At that time he regularly participated in local art exhibitions, presenting mainly paintings of religious scenes (unfortunately not preserved). He also devoted himself to portraiture, creating images of the representatives of the local Polish community, and above all, the members of his family (including his wife and her brothers Aleksander and Władysław) and friends. His relations with the Parisian exile community brought a significant

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49 Ed. D. Suchocka, *Malarstwo polskie 1766-1945*, Muzeum Narodowe w Poznaniu, Poznań 2005, p. 67.

50 „Wystawa w Akademii Kunsztów w Petersburgu, roku 1854", *Tygodnik Petersburski* 1854, no. 88, p. 658.

51 J. Iwaszkiewicz, „Kilka słów z powodu wzmianki o obrazie P. Goreckiego", *Tygodnik Petersburski* 1854, no. 92, p. 687.

52 „Tadeusz Gorecki" (Notatka biograficzna), *Tygodnik Illustrowany* 1868, no. 17, p. 195.

shift in his artistic activities. It didn't concern the matters of form, as it seems that in this respect Gorecki remained a representative of cold academicism and an ardent advocate of the principles mastered during his education at the Saint Petersburg Academy. However, the patriotic atmosphere encouraged him to try and break the iconographic conventions, which he previously followed, influenced by the work of his former teacher Bryullov.

Gorecki's early paintings, beside the portraits, were mainly genre scenes, of a rather unusual type, i.e. illustrating religious rites and ceremonies. This choice of a creative path, as indicated by his contemporaries, stemmed also from the artist's temperament and worldview. Gorecki was remembered as a devout and gentle man. Kraszewski described him as "quiet, loving peace and the countryside".[53] During his time in Paris he was criticized for keeping his soulful works completely apolitical. According to one of the obituaries, his thoughts were occupied by the matters of patriotic art – "he left [...] some ideas for paintings of national subjects, that he regretted he could not create, among them The Polish Mother, The Wedding of Jadwiga and Jagiełło, as well as illustrations for Pan Tadeusz".[54] However, it remains unknown what stood in his way to execute any of these plans; was it just simple lack of time or experience in such a field, or rather fear of possible political consequences of such activities and a loss of good relations with the Saint Petersburg Academy?[55]

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The generation of artists born around the year 1810 was the last to have the opportunity to study painting at the Vilnius University, before its closure by the Russian government in the aftermath of the November Uprising of 1830. Such artists as Henryk Dmochowski (1810–1863), Napoleon Iłłakowicz (1811–1861) and Adam Szemesz (1808–1864) received their artistic education in their home city and at the university, which – next to the Department of Arts at the Warsaw University – was the most important artistic centre in the former Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. The dissolution of the Vilnius academy in 1832 ended the era of the city's cultural splendour, contributing to a significant decrease in the quality of its art. The lack of possibilities to receive formal artistic education at a higher level caused the decline in painting activity. Any efforts undertaken by the painters of the older generation to revive it were

53 B. Bolesławita [J.I. Kraszewski], *Z roku 1868. Rachunki*, Księgarnia Jana Żupańskiego, Poznań 1869, p. 936.

54 „Tadeusz Gorecki", *Rocznik Towarzystwa Historyczno-Literackiego w Paryżu* 1868, p. 378.

55 J. Mycielski, S*to lat dziejów malarstwa w Polsce 1760-1860*, Księgarnia Spółki Wydawniczej Polskiej, Kraków 1896, pp. 545-547.

firmly opposed by the authorities. In the 1830s the young people who wished to advance in the painting profession had a choice to either stay in their homeland and take private lessons (which, however, did not yield any great talent) or go abroad. Due to the political situation, as well as the contacts established in previous years between Vilnius and Saint Petersburg, the most obvious direction of emigration was the capital of the Russian empire. And naturally Saint Petersburg was the destination of the three aspiring artists, who left Vilnius in the 1830s: Ignacy Szczedrowski, Konstanty Kukiewicz and Tadeusz Gorecki. Not all of them took this decision as a result of a conscious and independent choice. For example, for Gorecki the studies at the Academy were an alternative to compulsory military service. But certainly leaving the country and receiving education in one of the largest academic centres of Europe at the time was a chance to completely change their lives and artistic careers. At that time the Saint Petersburg Academy was known to be one of the best art colleges on the continent, promising a high level of education, but also following very strict standards of neo-classical art and placing strong emphasis on the implementation of the program of academic painting. All three artists from Vilnius started from a similar point: as strangers from a strange city of a subordinate country, who were striving to obtain education and to find their own creative paths. Eventually, each of them in a different way took advantage of the opportunities given by the studies in Saint Petersburg and chose a different direction of development. Szczedrowski was influenced by the so-called "Venetsianov school of painting", officially not approved by the representatives of the academy, but quite popular among the viewing public of the time. In effect he achieved a great, though temporary, success in Russia, where he remained till the end of his life. Kukiewicz used the years of study to improve his artistic skills and learn from the old masterpieces in the public and private collections in Saint Petersburg, which allowed him to define his own artistic style. After graduation, he returned to Lithuania, where – as it seems – he wanted to continue his life as a professional artist. The nature and inhabitants of this country were the source of his creative inspiration. The youngest of the three artists, Gorecki, influenced by his academic and social contacts with Karl Bryullov, adopted the neo-classical, sentimental style of his master. Although he spent most of his mature life in Western Europe, till the very end he maintained a close relationship with the Saint Petersburg Academy. The example of these three artists shows that although sometimes a turning point in a painter's life results from the circumstances beyond his control or from an external situation, ultimately the direction of artistic development is always a matter of an individual choice.

Translated by Anna Julia Mamińska-Dziomdziora

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EMIGRACJA JAKO ARTYSTYCZNY PUNKT ZWROTNY - IGNACY SZCZEDROWSKI, KONSTANTY KUKIEWICZ I TADEUSZ GORECKI W AKADEMII SZTUK PIĘKNYCH W PETERSBURGU. (streszczenie)

Artykuł podejmuje problematykę zwrotu w indywidualnym rozwoju artystycznym, który jest efektem emigracji i studiów zagranicznych. Podstawą rozważań są sylwetki trzech artystów pochodzących z Wilna, którzy po początkowej nauce w rodzimym środowisku wyjechali na studia do Akademii Sztuk Pięknych w Petersburgu. Decyzja o opuszczeniu rodzinnego miasta wymuszona została zmianą sytuacji politycznej. W 1832 roku, w wyniku represji po Powstaniu Listopadowym, zamknięto Uniwersytet Wileński wraz ze szkołą malarstwa. Dla każdego z omawianych w artykule artystów lata nauki w Akademii stały się punktem przełomowym w wykrystalizowaniu się indywidualnego stylu malarskiego, choć każdy z nich poszedł inną drogą twórczą: Ignacy Szczedrowski wszedł w krąg tak zwanej „szkoły Wenecjanowa", Konstanty Kukiewicz odkrył dla siebie dawne holenderskie malarstwo rodzajowo-batalistyczne, zaś Tadeusz Gorecki uległ wpływom powszechnie cenionej doktryny akademickiej. Celem artykułu jest wykazanie w jaki sposób pobyt w Petersburgu całkowicie przekształcił podejście tych trzech malarzy do sztuki, odciskając piętno nie tylko na ich dorobku artystycznym, lecz również przebiegu kariery malarskiej i życiu osobistym.

Słowa kluczowe: Akademia Sztuk Pięknych w Petersburgu, Ignacy Szczedrowski (1815–1870), Konstanty Kukiewicz (1817/18–1840), Tadeusz Gorecki (1825–1868), edukacja akademicka, emigracja artystyczna

Art Inquiry. Recherches sur les arts 2015, vol. XVII
ISSN 1641-9278

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IN SEARCH OF SPIRITUALITY. RELIGIOUS REORIENTATION OR RADICAL ASSIMILATION? THE CASE OF MAREK SZWARC

Abstract: For most of the assimilated Jews, religious reorientation was an alternative to Judaism – increasingly alien to them – and total secularization, and was frequently the only ticket to a career and an improvement of their social status. Only a few of them saw it as a profound religious experience which made them God-fearing, pious Catholics. The biography of Marek Szwarc, a Jewish sculptor, is an interesting material for research regarding his religious conversion. Szwarc, brought up in the spirit of Zionism, initially co-founded the secular culture based on non-religious identity. However, war, civilizational changes, and the crisis of traditional values changed his attitude to religion. This change was reflected in his works created for the expressionist group "Yung-yidish". For Szwarc the introduction of Christian iconography was motivated by the desire to emphasize the universal values associated with the spiritual rebirth of humanity. Even then, he acknowledged the visual "attractiveness" of Christianity, which, combined with expressionist or modernist influences, legitimized artistic progressivism as a manifestation of modern European culture. The turning point in the artist's career was his baptism on May 1, 1920 in Poznań. This paper is an attempt to examine the circumstances of his conversion, taking into account his biography, its social context, as well as the impact of this decision on his art.

Keywords: Jewish art, identity, conversion, Judaism, Jesus

The biography of Marek Szwarc – a Jewish sculptor coming from Zgierz – is an interesting material for research because of his religious conversion, which interested many representatives of Jewish intelligentsia, mostly the figures of science, culture and art. Szwarc's personality and views were formed primarily by his family home, as well as the artistic milieu of Paris, Łódź, and Poznań. In the early 1920s, after settling permanently in the French capital, the artist

met Jacques Maritain, whose philosophy ultimately determined the direction of the evolution of Szwarc's work. The turning point in Szwarc's career was his baptism on May 1, 1920 in Poznań.[1] This act proved to be fateful because of family and social relationships, and influenced the selection of specific themes that appear in the artist's works. This text is an attempt to examine the circumstances of Szwarc's conversion, taking into account his biography, its social context, as well as the impact of this decision on his art.

Family home

Marek Szwarc (1892-1958) was born in Zgierz in the religious family of Isucher Szwarc and his wife Sara née Gliksman. The atmosphere of his family home, and above all, his father's personality and beliefs took a huge toll on the future sculptor. Isucher Moshe Szwarc was a famous Zionist activist who maintained contacts with outstanding representatives of Jewish culture: writers, publicists, political and social activists, such as Sholem Aleichem,[2] David Hirsh Nomberg,[3] Sholem Asch,[4] David Fryszman,[5] Nachum Sokolov.[6] Isucher published in important Jewish journals of Zionist orientation, available in both Hebrew and Polish: *Ha-Cefira, Ha-Szachar, Ha-Magid, Magid-Mishneh*, and others. He was also the author of several historical studies, e.g. a study on Tiberias, published in the Łódź weekly *Ha-Menorah* edited by Moshe Helman, or a series of historical texts titled "Barimte Kinder" [Famous Children] describing the history of Spanish and Portuguese Marranos.[7] The future artist's father was involved in spreading Zionist ideology; for many years he chaired the Agudat Ha-Cijonim (Zionist Organization), and he was also involved in the activities of various institutions working to help the Jewish community in Zgierz. Marek Szwarc, mentioning his father, stressed the importance of his worldview, whose

1 E. Markowa, *Les annes de mariage*, TS in the private archive of Dominique Torrès, Paris, p. 11. The godparents of Mark and his wife Guina were artists associated with the Poznań "Bunt" [Rebellion]: Wladyslaw Skotarek (1894-1969) and the poet Janina Przybylska. The circumstances of their baptism were described by Guina Szwarc (Markowa) in her autobiographical novel Le Choix. See. E. Markowa, *Le Choix*, Paris 1961 pp. 30-37.

2 Sholem Aleichem (Sholem Rabinovich) (1859-1916), writer, considered one of the classics of Jewish literature.

3 David Hirsh Nomberg (1876-1927), writer, journalist, political and social activist.

4 Sholem Asch (1880-1957), a Jewish writer who wrote in Hebrew and Yiddish.

5 David Fryszman (Frischmann) (1859-1922), writer and translator.

6 Nachum Sokolow (1859-1836), writer, journalist and Zionist activist.

7 Marrano – a term functioning since the 16th century referring to Jews who were forced to abandon their religion and convert to Christianity or Islam. This subject was also tackled by Marek's brother – Samuel, the author of the book *Neochrześcijanie w Portugalii w XII wieku* [Neo-Christians in Portugal in the 12th Century], Lisbon 1925.

essential element was the fight for the liberation of the Jews from the material and mental ghetto, the struggle for emancipation, and widespread opposition to the Hasidic[8] movements of Eastern Europe.

In Szwarc's memoirs, he describes his father as primarily interested in the intellectual aspect of Jewish religiosity, and as paying importance to tradition. Szwarc's mother represented a different model of religiosity: it was much more orthodox, and almost superstitious. The artist described his childhood fear of sin and his simultaneous rebellion against the superstitions, obscurantism, and backwardness of religious fanaticism. He wrote: "My youth was connected with the tradition of my father's and the faith of my mother (...) my doubts popped up when I was seven years old and committed a serious offence (...) Misfortune! I accidentally used a butter knife, the knife that was lying beside the plate with the sausage ... My conscience told me that I committed a sin, so I burst into tears. My childish heart sought help, which would stop the wrath of God." To remove the offense his mother took Szwarc to a *dayan*, who, having considered all the circumstances, recommended: "You have to stick a knife into the ground, leave it there for six hours, exactly six hours. Then put it into the fire, clean with sandpaper, and then all will be fine."[9]

Szwarc's later religious commitment and his fascination with Christian charity may have been the result of his resistance to this "wrath of God" and the guilt that was caused by the "folkish" piety of his mother. On the other hand, years later this yearning for spirituality directed him to Christianity, understood as a development and fulfillment of Judaism. Yet, in his youth, the dilemmas of faith were not that important to him. Under the influence of his father he leaned toward Zionism. The Szwarcs' house was open to all those seeking knowledge; it welcomed and lodged various scholars, writers and artists, as well as ordinary Jewish students of Zgierz Trade School. Szwarc recalled: "We were brought up in reverence for the Jewish people and the love of knowledge as well as European culture. Zionism has found a fertile ground in our family and we dreamed about the Promised Land."[10] In 1914, Szwarc went to Odessa,[11] where he sculpted several busts of important personages of Jewish cultural life: the poet Shmuel Frug Simeon (1860-1916), Chaim Nachman Bialik (1873-1934), and the writer Mendele Sforim Moshe (1836-1917).[12] In the text describing

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8 M. Szwarc, *Mémoires entre deux Mondes*, Ressouvenance,Villers-Cotterêts 2010, p. 89.

9 Ibid.

10 M. Szwarc *Ku uczczeniu pamięci ojca mego Isuchera Schwarza* [In commemoration of the memory of my father Isucher Schwarz], TS in the library collection Musée d'art et d'histoire du Judaism in Paris, p. 3.

11 Otto Schneid Papers. Correspondence before and after 1939. Marek Szwarc in: https://archive.org/details/ottoschneid10_15 [30.05.2015].

12 He may have owed these commissions to the contacts his father or Szmuel Barabash, the father in law of his brother.

the war years and dedicated to the memory of Jankel Adler (1895-1949), he spoke of his youthful dreams of founding a Jewish Legion in order to liberate Palestine.[13]

In independent Poland: "Art and the Jews"

In 1919 in Łódź, Marek Szwarc, Moshe Broderson (1890-1956) and Yankel Adler (1895-1949) founded the group Yung-yidish [Jung Idysz] – the first Jewish artistic avant-garde group in Poland with the program in the form of a manifesto. The artists and writers connected with the group represented different views; however, the common reference point for all of them was the search for the "national style". Moshe Broderson, Jankel Adler, Icchok Brauner (Wincenty, Vincent) (1887-1944), Enoch Barczyński (1896-1941), turned to the Jewish tradition and folklore, where they tried to find the roots of "Jewishness".

Szwarc, initially in favour of this concept, eventually took a critical stance against it. Jerzy Malinowski rightly pointed out a discordant note ringing in the declarations of the artists of Yung-yidish, torn between the sense of obligation to promote indigenous Jewish motifs, and the alluring universalism of international art.[14]

In 1910-1914, during his first stay in Paris, Szwarc actively contributed to the animated discussion on Jewish art among the Jewish artists-emigrants within the Ecole de Paris milieu. As a co-founder of the magazine *Machmadim*, he was looking for the sources of Jewish art, trying to determine its iconography, and by doing so confirm its existence as a distinct phenomenon. A few years later in 1919, in his article "Art and the Jews" which appeared in the comments section of the Łódź magazine *Tel Awiw*, he assessed the achievements of *Machmadim* as "too dilettantish to even bother to evaluate them." *Machmadim*, just like many groups with a similar program, was aimed at populariz-

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13 M. Szwarc, "Hołd pośmiertny Jankelowi Adlerowi" [A posthumous tribute to Jankel Adler], in: *Jankel Adler 1895-1949*, exh. cat. (Düsseldorf / Tel Aviv / Łódź 1985), ed. U. Krempel, K. Thomas, DuMont Buchverlag, Köln 1985, p. 61.

14 J. Malinowski, *Malarstwo i rzeźba Żydów Polskich w XIX i XX wieku*, Volume I, PWN, Warszawa 2000, p. 216. The problem of national style was important for many Jewish artists of the late 1910s. Debates on this issue took place in the previous century, under the influence of archaeological and historical research. They were closely related to modern development of Jewish art, not limited only to crafts and decorations of holy places, as well as attempts to define a new identity in the apparent crisis of the idea of assimilation. In 1910, in Almanach Żydowski another Lodz artist – Leopold Pilichowski (1869-1934), known to Szwarc, a friend of his father, engaged in promoting Zionism, published the article on "Sztuka żydowska" [Jewish Art], in which he tried to show the contribution of Jewish artists to contemporary visual culture.

ing the ornaments of the Beth Midrash Synagogues;[15] but true art, according to Szwarc, "does not know blissful nationalisms". On the other hand, also the work of the artists seeking inspiration in the Orient or Oriental styling, created in, among others, Jerusalem Bezalel School of Crafts cannot be regarded as national. "Inappropriate understanding of national art – the term borrowed from the vocabulary of a political thriller – sparked the desire of some artists to nationalize art. However, it did not go anywhere beyond folk stylization."[16]

In his text Szwarc stressed the role of the Bible as the basis for the creation of artistic images. He wrote of The Song of Songs, of Jewish sculpture and the Jewish prophets-painters with their awe-inspiring landscapes. He mentioned Moses retelling to Bezalel the divine recommendations for the construction of the tabernacle. "The Bible created Jews, the Jews created Talmud. The Talmudists created Christianity and I really do not know what is further from the Bible: its Talmudic understanding or the Catholic interpretation."[17] The artist cited examples of the works of Western European religious art with biblical themes, where the content is just a pretext for the representations formally rooted in the tradition of Greek and Roman antiquity (such as Christ resembling Apollo, John the Baptist as Bacchus (da Vinci), Christ as a Titan (Michelangelo)). Therefore, such treatment of the Bible as a catalogue of characters and a collection of motifs led Szwarc to gradually separate art from religion. The article "Art and the Jews", is on the one hand an attempt to capture the specificity of Jewish art, which according to the author was the effect of the nature of religion or religiosity, and on the other, it determines the place of Jewish artists in the history of Western art. Szwarc cites artistic traditions of different cultures and points to their understanding of the relationship with the deity and the world. He notes that "Art and religion were formed in the same womb: the need to idolize, to express feelings and depict artistic visions",[18] but art as a need to recreate visions, from the point of view of Judaism was – as

15 M. Szwarc, „Sztuka a Żydzi", *Tel Awiw* 1919, R. 1, z. 4, p. 189.

16 Ibid. p.188.

17 Ibid, p.187; The quotation reveals a crucial thought, important for defining Jewish art, but also because of the work of Szwarc himself. For the artist, the primary and only source of Jewish art was the word – understood as a graphic sign, symbolic designation of a concept, but also as a metaphysical principle in charge of the world and men. Basing on the Judaic Old Testament tradition, an important role is played by the concept of God's Word, which creates (Genesis 1: 1-31; Psalm 33: 6) and reveals (Ps 147, 15.18). Both functions of God's Word will reappear later – in modified form – in Christianity. In Christian thought, Logos is God, one of the three divine persons, in Christ unified with the human nature. In the Pauline tradition Christ, the Son of God, is identified with the Word-Logos coming from God, identical with His essence (Hebrews 1: 1-3). Logos precedes the creative act and is the principle of all creation (Col. 1: 15-17).

18 M. Szwarc, *Sztuka a* ... p.185.

he wrote – an expression of paganism and contrary to the prohibitions in the Pentateuch.[19]

The magazine *Tel Awiw*, edited by Zygmunt Bromberg Bytkowski,[20] in which Szwarc's article appeared, was published in Łódź between 1919 and 1921. Its distinctive feature was its modest layout. The grey cover of the successive issues of *Tel Awiw* was decorated with the same drawing: the image of a young Jewish man in a turban – a Palestinian settler, by Arthur Szyk (1894-1951).[21] The inside was devoid of illustration, although several issues contained miniature likenesses of the people whose activities or work was commented upon on its pages.[22] The editor-in-chief, Zygmunt Bromberg Bytkowski (from Tarnów) was a headmaster of the Girls' Gymnasium [middle school] of the Women's Association of Jewish Secondary Schools in Łódź. He was also a member of the board and president of the Łódź Jewish Music and Literary Society "Hazomir" – an organization promoting Jewish culture and strongly oriented towards Zionism. Although Bytkowski was a Zionist activist himself, he did not detach himself (unlike many others) from the achievements of the Diaspora. In contrast to Theodor Herzl,[23] postulating the creation of new Jewish art and culture in Palestine, he acknowledged (like Martin Buber[24]) the necessity to cultivate national traditions contained in the "ideology of yiddishness".[25] The strong impact of Buber's ideas on the artistic milieu of Łódź, visible also in the ideas of the Yung-yidish group, can be explained by the familial relations of the philosopher and activist with the city.[26] In accord with Buber, Bytkowski paid particular attention to the native, i.e. Jewish diasporic artistic creation. In

19 Ibid.

20 Zygmunt Bromberg-Bytkowski (1866-1923) – Jewish playwright, poet, art critic, Zionist activist.

21 The issues differed only slightly in the presence or lack of information on the publishing house HAIBRI Hatzair (Łódź - Warsaw) or the printing house (of Emanuel Hamburg or M. Szeniak).

22 About *Tel Awiw* see L. Głuchowska, "Poznan and Lodz. National Modernism and the International Avant-Garde. *Zdrój* (1917-1922), *Yung Idysz* (1919) and *Tel Awiw* (1919-1921)" in: *The Oxford Critical and Cultural History of Modernist Magazines. Volume III* , Europe 1880-1940, ed. P. Brooker, S. Bru, A. Thacker, Ch. Weikop, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2013, pp. 1208-1233, 1228-1232.

23 Theodor Herzl (1860-1904) – journalist, writer, political activist, founder of World Zionist Organization.

24 Martin Buber (1878-1965) – Jewish philosopher, Zionist, religious scholar and researcher of Hasidism and Judaism.

25 Such an attitude was characteristic of many intellectuals and artistic circles of the period and it resulted from the criticism of artificially created eastern styling, aesthetically foreign to the diaspora (at least at that time).

26 Martin Buber's sister Natalia, married to Markus Braude (1869-1949), rabbi and social activist since 1920, was a teacher at the Girls Middle School of the Jewish Secondary Schools Association (the same school where Bytkowski was the headmaster).

the essay "Die Vergessen Kunst" the author described gravestones and their decorations, and the crafts related to religious life (e.g. candlesticks, lamps). As described after his death: "He found beauty where it radiated a rainbow of glitters, while others took the same beauty for granted."[27] Bytkowski emphasized the role of culture, he also reacted to the events essential for promoting Zionist ideas. So the themes of the articles appearing in the journal varied. Tel Awiw regularly acquainted its readers with the works of the poet Chaim Nachman Bialik (1873-1934), the writers An-ski, Saul Czernichowski (1875-1943), Isaac Lejb Peretz (1852-1915) and Yosef Chaim Brenner (1881-1921). In the first years of Polish independence, *Tel Awiw* tried to present the perspective of the development of Jewish culture in the context of the new territorial-political situation.

One of the consequences of Poland's regaining its independence after more than a hundred and twenty years of occupation was an increase in nationalist tendencies. The reconstruction of Polish identity in the face of the conflict with Lithuania, the Silesian uprisings, the war against Bolshevik Russia (1920) and the constant internal conflicts of the young state resulted in the rise of aversion toward strangers, including those already living in Polish territory. The post-war anti-Semitism which the antagonized political parties were eager to exploit, was additionally fueled by the Catholic Church which, with growing potency, made the willing-to-assimilate Jewish communities aware of the impossibility to peacefully coexist with the Christians in the long run. Michał Jarblum put it emphatically in his text from 1918, "A Pole of Jewish faith": "It would be a mistake to suppose that even a determined and consistent attempt to come closer to the culture of your environment is sufficient to be really part of it."[28]

At the same time, various other (Polish) authors tackled the so-called "Jewish question" in their publications. The well-known anti-Semitic journalist Jan Gnatowski wrote even before World War I: "The solution to the Jewish question in our country resides in the awareness of the Christians and Catholics as well as the national support that can help to solve it (...) The society can celebrate and employ [the Jew] properly (...) Yet, at the same time, we should construct a wider perspective, and in a more solid manner (...) the only significant and reliable assimilation (...), which involves the unity of spirit, conscience and faith, is assimilation by baptism."[29] The opinion, recommending conversion as the only possibility of complete assimilation, made it more

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27 W. Fallek, „Zygmunt Bromberg-Bytkowski", *Nowe Życie. Miesięcznik poświęcony nauce, literaturze i sztuce żydowskiej* 1924, R. I, T. 1, z. 1-3, p. 55.

28 M. Jarblum, *Polak wyznania mojżeszowego* [A Pole of Jewish faith], Hechawer, Wydawnictwo akademickiej młodzieży syjonistycznej Jardenja, Warszawa 1918, p. 19.

29 J. Gnatowski, *W kwestii żydowskiej* [On the Jewish Question], Warszawa 1909, pp. 85-86.

attractive for the groups seeking full assimilation and breaking the invisible walls of the social ghetto.

Jarblum believed that the Jews rejecting their culture and calling themselves "Poles of Jewish faith", were in fact already deprived of the connection with the achievements of the Jewish culture, therefore the declaration of religion was for them "an unpleasant tribute paid to the reverence/piety for the past", which "is not sufficient for the Jews to survive their struggle for existence, as evidenced by the massive numbers of those baptizing."[30]

Like many Jewish magazines devoted to culture and art, emerging before and after World War I, Tel Awiw opposed "the rejection of culture" as a form of voluntary denationalization, stressing the importance of the earlier demands by I. L. Peretz to modernize Jewish culture and thus ultimately opting for maintaining a certain ethnic distance. Perhaps that is why the article by Szwarc, negating "nationalism in art" bore the disclaimer: "The editors disagree both with the above comments, and with [the above] view of the history of art in general".[31] But in the new reality which enforced competition with Polish artistic circles, this lack of consent for seeking the ways to preserve identity within the universal culture, might doom the nation to marginalization.

Modern vision of Poland was built in opposition to the former multicultural Republic, and it was argued that Polish national (and religious) homogeneity was a factor guaranteeing the security of the young state. In this context, the representatives of the ethnic minorities rejecting "radical assimilation"[32] and naturally marginalized were forced to put up an unequal battle for survival and for maintaining their relative autonomy.

The Yung-yidish group, constituted at the difficult time of the birth of independence, existed on the Polish nationalist modern art scene partly as its antinomy. The artists drew their inspiration and motifs from Jewish tradition and folklore, confronting their own visions of national art (i.e. art in the Jewish Diaspora) with the current concepts of Polish art. Interestingly, the strategy of seeking national legitimacy in tradition, adopted by the leftist artists of Yung-yidish, coincided with the activities of the right-wing circles affecting the official direction of development of Polish art. However, the right-wingers rejected cosmopolitanism, believing in the power of what was native and indigenous, original and free of foreign accretions, while the work of Szwarc and his friends complies with the tendencies of Western art. Nevertheless, for the irrational

30 M. Jarblum, *Polak*....p. 20.

31 M. Szwarc, *Sztuka*... p. 185.

32 This concept appears in the work by Todd Endelman in relation to the Jews who chose to convert. The aim of radical assimilation was to hide their origin or erase it completely; See: T. Endelman, *Leaving the Jewish fold. Radical Conversion and Assimilation in Modern History*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, NJ 2015.

world of Hasidic legends and abstract ornamentation, mysticism and spirituality, which make up the elusive "Jewish expressionism" to be able to exist in the minds of non-Jewish audience, it was necessary, besides using modern forms, to introduce elements of new iconography. Piotr Piotrowski wrote: "Christian themes began to function here as an exposition of universal values associated with the ideology of 'the new man', the spiritual rebirth of humanity (...) Christianity was probably intellectually appealing to progressive Jewish artists, as especially on the visual level it could be combined with Expressionist, or more broadly modernist influences, which legitimized artistic 'progressivism' as a manifestation of modern European culture."[33] In the iconography of the Yung-yidish group, Christian themes functioned in addition to the motifs taken from other religions. The artists painted Buddha or Lao Tze alongside Christ and the Baal Shem Tov, turning toward religious syncretism characteristic of modernity. One cannot forget, however, that the choice of a particular theme (this concerns mainly the figure of Christ) might have been a reaction to the news of pogroms and anti-Semitic outbreaks. The artists of Yung-yidish, like other artists associated with the modernist movement, perceived Christ, leaving aside his nationality, as a "universal man" – a bond between two different religions.

In search of identity – reclaiming Jesus

Since the second half of the 19th century, under the influence of the Haskalah, part of the European Jews, especially those associated with metropolitan environments that veered toward assimilation, redefined their social position, and had to answer the question of how to define Jewishness, how to be both a Jew and a European: "One of the significant ways in which modernizing Jews attempted to describe a place for Jews and Judaism in the modern world was reclaiming Jesus as a Jew. Their new approach to Jesus transformed him from a figure who had been associated with Jewish marginalization and oppression in European Christian society into a vehicle for their self-transformation and integration into that very society".[34]

Among the researchers (Jewish and Christian alike), increased interest in the life and work of Jesus was observed since the end of the Age of Enlightenment. Since the 19th century, thanks to the new methods of historical research

33 P. Piotrowski, *Od nacjonalizacji do socjalizacji polskiego modernizmu* [From nationalization to socialization of Polish Modernism], 1913-1950, „Artium questiones" XV, ed. P. Piotrowski, W. Suchocki, Wydawnictwo UAM, Poznań 2004, p. 117-118.

34 M. Hoffman, *From Rebel to Rabbi. Reclaiming Jesus and Making of Modern Jewish Culture*, Stanford University Press, Stanford 2007, p. 14.

and above all, achievements of archeology, Christ ceased to be seen only in the transcendent dimension, but was rather perceived as embedded in a concrete historical and geographical context, so he became a real hero living in ancient Palestine.

Even Moses Mendelssohn[35] recognized Jesus as an authentic figure. As an ardent advocate of the idea of assimilation, he did not discredit Christianity, treating it as a religion close to Judaism. Although Mendelssohn's views were based on his thorough knowledge of the Jewish tradition, they did not differ from the theses contained in the book by the Christian writer Herman Reimarus.[36] In the work published by Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, *Von dem Zwecke Jesu und seiner Junger* (1778), Reimarus attempted to provide an accurate representation of Christ's life. Explaining his actions rationally, he denied they were unusual or miraculous. Thus he deprived Jesus of his divinity, and presented him in his historical context as an ordinary man, a God-fearing Jew faithful to the religion of his fathers. Another Christian scholar David Friedrich Strauss[37] radically rejected the New Testament in his book entitled *Das Leben Jesu. Kritisch bearbeitet* (1835), as a source of myths, stressing the need for the identification of Christ with the people and the Judaic tradition.

A significant revaluation of Jesus was made by two researchers: Heinrich Graetz[38] and Abraham Geiger[39] in their fundamental books: *Das Judenthum Geschichte und Seine* (1864) (Geiger) and *Geschichte der Juden von den Zeiten ältesten bis auf die Gegenwart* (1853-1875) (Graetz). Both authors depreciated the New Testament as a reliable source of knowledge about the time of Christ. Jesus himself was for them a real character, the successor of the prophets. Graetz considered him to be an Essene and Geiger called him a Pharisee.[40] Geiger and Graetz never questioned his identity but only his participation in the creation of a new religion – Christianity, thus situating him more in the context of Jewish tradition than Christianity.[41]

35 Moses Mendelssohn (1729-1786), Jewish German philosopher, writer, precursor of the Jewish Enlightenment (Haskalah) movement in Europe.

36 Herman Reimarus (1694-1768), German writer and philosopher.

37 David Friedrich Strauss (1808 - 1874), German theologian, writer and philosopher.

38 Heinrich Graetz (b. Tzvi Hirsh Graetz) (1817-1891), German historian of Jewish origin.

39 Abraham Geiger (1810-1874) – a rabbi in Wiesbaden, Wroclaw, Frankfurt am Main, co-founder of Reformed Judaism.

40 D.A. Hagner, *The Jewish reclamation of Jesus. An analysis & critique of the modern Jewish study of Jesus*, Wipf and Stock Publishers, Eugene, Oregon 1997, pp. 62,63.

41 See. M. Hoffman, "The Quest for the Jewish Jesus" in: *From Rebel to Rabbi. Reclaiming Jesus and Making of Modern Jewish Culture*, Stanford University Press, Stanford 2007, pp.13-60; Z. Amishai Maisels, "Origins of the Jewish Jesus" in: *Complex Identities. Jewish Consciousness and Modern Art*, ed. M. Baigell, M. Heyd, Rutgers State University, NJ, 2001, pp. 51-79.

The books by Graetz and Geiger had a significant and profound influence on the subsequent generations of Jews, especially those from Central and Eastern Europe.[42] There, the process of modernization and assimilation proceeded with some delay, hampered by internal and external factors (orthodox communities and pogroms).

In the early 20th century, the adherents of the reformed liberal Judaism tended to see Christ as "someone who understood the spirit of Judaism, putting at the center of his attention the prophetic and moral aspects of the faith, while the law and rituals, in his view, were something of secondary importance".[43] This image of Christ met with sharp criticism in both Orthodox and Zionist circles, though in the case of the latter group, it was not so obvious. It is worth recalling the famous dispute sparked by Yosef Chaim Brenner in the beginning of the 1910s[44] and his article written in reaction to an article by Ahad ha-Am.[45] Brenner's text, published in 1910, initiated several years of controversy, whose subject was not only the positive perception of Christianity, but also the freedom of choice and freedom of speech.[46] The echoes of the debate fought in the Jewish press reached the farthest corners of Europe, raising the temperature of the disputes concerning assimilation, apostasy and Christianity.

Both Ahad ha-Am and Brenner were supporters of the Zionist ideology; the former represented the older, conservative generation, and the latter the radical, decidedly secular one. In 1910 Ahad ha-Am published an article commenting on the book by Claude Goldsmid Montefiore *Some Elements in the Religious Teaching of Jesus According to the Synoptic Gospels* (1910). Montefiore, an opponent of Zionism and co-founder of the so-called anglo-liberal Judaism saw himself as a liberal Jew positioned between Orthodoxy and Christianity.[47] This attitude was unacceptable to Ahad ha-Am, who perceived the views propagated by Montefiore as a "poor excuse for a farreaching assimilation and a way to win the favor of non-Jews".[48] Ahad ha-Am

42 M. Hoffman, *The Quest for*... p. 60.

43 G. Kouts „Jezus i chrześcijaństwo w prasie hebrajskiej i żydowskiej na początku XX wieku. Casus Brennera" [Jesus and Christianity in Hebrew and Jewish press at the beginning of the 20th century. The case of Brenner] in: *Jezus i chrześcijanie w źródłach rabinicznych: perspektywa historyczna, społeczna, religijna i dialogowa* [Jesus and Christians in rabbinical sources: historical, social, religious and dialogic perspective], ed. K. Pilarczyk, A. Mrozek, Publishing Roman, Kraków 2012, p. 323.

44 Yosef Chaim Brenner (1881-1921) – Russian-born Jewish writer, one of the creators of modern Hebrew literature.

45 Ahad ha-Am (Asher Ginzberg) (1856-1927) – Jewish writer coming from Russia, and Zionist activist.

46 It relates to the article published by Brenner under the pseudonym Haver in *Ha-Poel Ha Cair* dated 24 Nov. 1910.

47 D.A. Hagner, *The Jewish reclamation*... p. 29.

48 G. Kouts, *Jezus i chrześcijaństwo*... p. 328.

saw the unexpected “flirt” with Christianity as getting out of control, a threat to Jewish identity, increasingly blurring it and leaning dangerously toward apostasy and conversion. In response to the article of Ahad ha-Am, Brenner criticized the "obsession of apostasy,"[49] rejecting religion as an essential factor in determining identity. According to Brenner, Jews may or may not need to seek spiritual support in religion (any religion). Brenner’s opponents accused him of promoting Christianity, but it is worth noting that Brenner, an advocate of the concept of secular state, definitely distanced himself from all religions and presented Jesus with moderate enthusiasm.[50]

The discussions sparked by the so-called Brenner case revealed problems with self-identification and a deep sense of spiritual void that the Jewish community had to face in confrontation with modernity. The dilemmas of identity were also reflected in literature, poetry and the iconography of the visual arts.

At the end of the 19th century Jesus and Christological themes became an attractive subject used by such Jewish artists as Mark Antokolski (1843-1902), Maurycy Gottlieb (1856-1879), Samuel Hirszenberg (1865-1908), William Wachtel (1875-1952) and Ephraim Moses Lilien (1874-1925).[51] In the sculptures and paintings created in response to the pogroms, "Jewish Christ" – through his own experience of pain – symbolizes the suffering of his people and becomes the archetype of the persecuted Jew.[52] In 1912 Mark Chagall (1887-1985) painted the first of his numerous crucifixions (*Golgotha*, Museum of Modern Art, NY). The motif of crucified Christ returns several times in the artist's later works. In Chagall’s paintings, Jesus is a Jewish martyr giving thought to the Jewish issues, surrounded by Jewish mothers with children, fleeing with terror from the pogrom,[53] which in time becomes more universal.

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49 Ibid p. 329.

50 Issucher Szwarc maintained close contacts with the Zionist leaders. The concept of Achad ha-Am, whom he knew well, must have been close to him. Agata Barabash was from Odessa, the center of moderately secular Zionism; she was Isucher’s daughter-in-law, the daughter of the banker Shmuel Barabash, an activist of Hovevei Zion. The marriage was arranged by Nachum Sokolow and M. Spektor of Warsaw, and the young people met for the first time during the eleventh Zionist Congress in Vienna. See: *Księga Pamięci Zgierza* [Book of Remembrance of Zgierz], ed. J. Jacobs, Society for the Protection of the Culture of Zgierz, Zgierz, 2009, p. 328.

51 On the presence of the Christological themes in the works of Jewish artists from Poland, see A. Tanikowski, “Jezus i artyści żydowscy” [Jesus and Jewish artists], in: *Czerpiąc z korzenia szlachetnej oliwki. Dzień Judaizmu w Poznaniu 2004-2007* [Drawing from the root of the noble. Day of Judaism in Poznan 2004-2007] Theological series No. 7, ed. J. Stranz, Wydawnictwo Naukowe UAM, Poznan, 2007.

52 Z. Amishai Maisels, “Origins of the Jewish Jesus” in: *Complex Identities. Jewish Consciousness and Modern Art*, ed. M. Baigell, M. Heyd, Rutgers State University, NJ, 2001, pp. 51-79.

53 Z. Amishai-Meisels, “Chagall’s White Crucifiction”, *The Art Institute of Chicago Museum Studies* 1991, vol. 17 no. 2, p. 143.

Christ nailed to the cross was also a common theme in the work of Marek Szwarc. The first known version of his Crucifixion from 1917 probably did not yet have a spiritual connection with the artist's conversion. His work on this subject could have been inspired by Chagall's painting mentioned above, or by the works of the German Expressionists. The researchers studying the works of the Yung-yidish group also point to Szwarc's artistic connections with the Poznań group "Bunt", whose members willingly committed themselves to religious themes, inspired by the symbolism of Young Poland, folk art, and their fascination with medieval mysticism.[54]

In the Crucifixions by Szwarc (1917 and 1919),[55] Christ is close to the fantasies of Dürer (1471-1528), Jacob Binck (1485-1568/9), and Wolf Huber (1485-1553). The model for the artist might have also been the lithographs of Gustave Doré (1832-1883), which Szwarc probably saw during his stay in France. Vivid contrasts of black and white highlight the schematicism and simplification of forms – flat, sometimes bordering on abstraction. He achieved dynamic composition by using oblique, strongly accented lines, enhancing the impression of movement, which associates the work of the artist from Zgierz with the German Expressionists.

In later years, Szwarc repeatedly made Christ the protagonist of his works (*Stroke of the Lance* 1928, *Entombment* 1935, *Descent from the Cross* 1939, *Crucifixion* 1950, etc.) but never attained such level of drama and expression.

In 1920, shortly after his marriage to Guina Pinkus, Szwarc converted to Catholicism. In her autobiographical novel *Le Choix*, Guina described this as a pragmatic move, which was eventually perceived as a sign by both of them. Living at the time in Puszczykowo near Poznań, and not wanting to arouse sensation among the local residents, Szwarc declared himself in the register of residents as being of Roman Catholic faith; they later got the acts of baptism by conversion. The godparents [witnesses] at the conversion were the painter and graphic artist Władysław Skotarek and his wife Janina Przybylska, both associated with the Poznań "Bunt". It seems that this act was not yet of great importance, though it may have resulted from Szwarc's subconscious inclination to mysticism, which is revealed in his memoirs.[56] After he moved to Paris in 1920, this inclination developed into a lasting fascination with

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54 Szwarc's *Crucifixion* can be contrasted with the linocut titled *Cross* (1918) by George Hulewicz, but it should be remembered that Szwarc created the first version of the work probably earlier than the work of the artist from Poznań.

55 It is worth noting that in the spring of 1919, when the journal *Jung Idish* published the second version of the *Crucifixion*, and in November of the same year when Tel Awiw published the article "Art and the Jews", Szwarc had not been baptized yet.

56 M. Szwarc, *Memoire entre deux mondes*, Ressouvenance, Villers-Cotterêts 2010.

Christianity. His cousin recalled years later: "Marek had a revelation and became an ardent Catholic (...) He had gone mad, I thought (...) here, in Montparnasse, 'that wonderful legend' captured him completely. He walked every day at five in the morning to a Mass at the Norte Dame cathedral. (...) How is this possible? The son of Schwartz, believing in and praying to Jehovah, (...) has a revelation in Lourdes in 1924? And with the dedication of the first Christians wants to follow in the footsteps of the Lord?"[57]

Szwarc's private notes are extremely interesting and we can treat them as a personal statement or rather as a statement of faith or a message. They can be found on the pages of a little book from the artist's library, titled *Zwolf Blatt aus Dürers Kleiner Passion* with the text by Rudolf Schulze and the illustrations showing the so-called Small Passion by Albrecht Dürer. The empty pages separating the individual figures bear Szwarc's notes in pencil, repeatedly crossed out and corrected. Their content is primarily his pondering on Christ and the Jews. The notes end with the word "Amen" and the signatures of the artist and his wife with the dates 1923-1924-1934.

For Szwarc, Christianity was a folly, the consequence of the incarnation and kenosis of Christ – the first madman who instilled in people an element of divinity, commanding them (against their animal nature) to long for divine perfection. He wrote: "The only task of Humanity – created in the likeness of the Creator – is to return to where it came from. From God we came and to God we must return."[58] The madness of Christ, as a burden for humanity, has come down to those who succumbed to him and believed in him, therefore Szwarc – being a convert – considered himself mad. It is worth noting those thoughts of the artist who compared himself with Jesus, declaring in his prayer: "Give me strength to prevail in this one and only Truth, and God, take this ordeal in the name of my people and make the moment approach when they get to know you."[59]

In contrast to other Jewish writers and thinkers, Marek Szwarc saw Jesus not only as a Jewish prophet or a symbol of persecution. The artist, recalling his history and emphasizing that he was born in the small land of Judea, recognizes Christ as the Savior – the Messiah.

Despite his conversion and his deep religious commitment, Szwarc accepts his Jewish identity (which, in his opinion, connects him with Jesus), saying: "All the yearnings of the Jewish people had been preparing his coming but we

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57 I. Czajka Stachowicz, *Dubo...Dubon...Dubonnet*, AB Publishing, Warszawa 2012. p. 69.

58 Marek Szwarc's Manuscript in: *Zwolf Blatt aus Durers Kleiner Passion*, Leipzig, Private Archive of Dominique Torrès, Paris.

59 Ibid.

did not recognize him" [...] twenty centuries after the violation brought upon the unblemished Son of God, our nation is still awaiting him."[60]

Szwarc wrote his "statement of faith" as a handwritten comment on Dürer's graphic cycle. His choice could not have been accidental. It was in the Gothic and Renaissance art – especially in the graphic works, that the artists associated with Expressionism discovered numerous inspirations, treating it as a source of pure aesthetic experience.

On the occasion of Szwarc's exhibition at the Polonia Hotel in Warsaw, the critic Mieczysław Wallis wrote: "Today's artist tries to create art that would not be <the art of the individual> but <the art of the community> (...) such was the art of the Middle Ages – the art of the general public, expressing what was felt and thought by everyone."[61]

In his *Small Passion*, Dürer portrayed sin and redemption in the form of a theological treatise, but he focused mainly on the sufferings of the Savior, applying a new idea of space and skillfully using perspective. The scenes shown by the artist influenced the psyche of the viewers much more strongly than text. It becomes clear that for Dürer the presentation of Christ became the key task of art, and his religious feelings developed to the fullest artistic expression.

It seems that Szwarc pursued a similar goal when he created his works depicting Christological themes. Like medieval artists, he favoured the scenes of the Passion as those which present the essence of humanity most comprehensively. The fervent religiosity, anthropocentrism and humanism characteristic of his art reflect the views of Jacques Maritain, a French philosopher whom Marek Szwarc met in the early 1920s.

Marek Szwarc and "The Prophet of Meudon"

In the second decade of the twentieth century, the *salon* of Jacques and Raissa Maritain in Meudon near Paris became an important meeting place for artists, writers and intellectuals. This group included many Jews from Eastern Europe, baptized or tending toward conversion. The Maritains played an important role in their religious reorientation, highlighting the bond between Judaism and Christianity. An important aspect of Jacques Maritain's concept was the conviction that every person seeking God is a Christian, which includes the followers of another religion. The philosopher believed that the truth which is the essence of Catholicism permeates equally into all religions and even atheist worldviews. Such ideas opened the way to Christian civilization for the Jews,

60 Ibid.

61 *Sztuki plastyczne. Wystawa Marka Szwarca (Polski Klub Artystyczny (Hotel Polonia) 12-21 listopada 1923 r.*, „Robotnik" 1923 (dated 18.11.1923).

offering both them and the Catholics an "alibi" allowing them to forget their religious differences. Maritain's anthropocentric philosophy placed man in the center of intellectual and artistic reflection, as an individual endowed with free will, whose task is to change the world for the better. What drew Szwarc to Maritain's concept was its universality and the importance the philosopher paid to love, human dignity and personal choices, i.e. the values standing in opposition to the emerging totalitarian ideology. At the same time, according to Maritain, Szwarc would be able to change his faith without abandoning his Jewish identity – realizing his desire "to be a Jew of the Catholic Faith because I loved Christ the Lord."[62] This duality of religion and identity was reflected in Szwarc's works, in which Jewish and Christian themes are intertwined.

In the 1930s, Szwarc's conversion ceased to be a secret. Its disclosure led to the break of the relations with his family in Zgierz and the ostracism of the Jewish part of the artistic community. Therefore, his works on the religious themes created in the 1930s – devoid of Hasidic austerity and exaltation – seem less spiritual, and more balanced and thoughtful. They lack the expression and emotions characteristic of his earlier works.

Conclusion

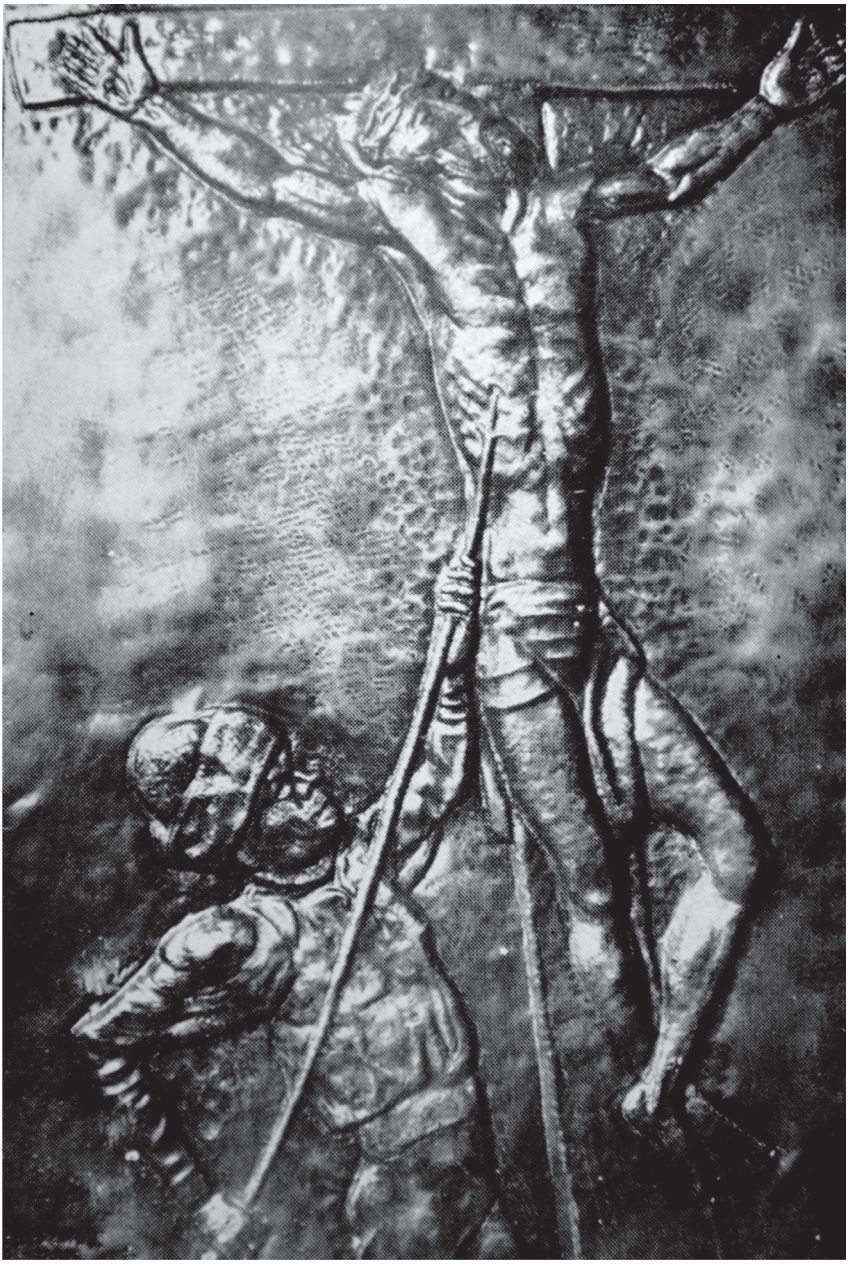
Marek Szwarc, brought up in the spirit of Zionism, initially co-founded the secular culture based on non-religious identity, without abandoning his Jewishness. However, war, civilizational changes and the crisis of traditional values changed his attitude to religion. This change was reflected in the works created for the expressionist group Yung-yidish. Both Szwarc and the other artists in the group enriched Jewish iconography with Christian motifs. Such manifestations of religious syncretism were part of the artistic strategy aiming to place Jewish art in the wider context of the international artistic community. The fascination with Christ as a symbol of the "universal man" led Szwarc to religious reorientation, which deepened under the influence of Jacques and Raissa Maritain. His acquaintance with the Maritains opened up new prospects for his art, at the same time subjecting him to marginalization in his own environment. Jacques Maritain's integral humanism, which envisaged reconciliation and coexistence of individuals representing different religious and intellectual traditions, clashed with the totalitarianisms growing in strength at the time, and was as utopian as the belief in the power of assimilation held by the enlightened Jewish communities in the 19th century.

62 Cit. in the diary of his wife: Guina Szwarc, Manuscript of *Memoirs*, in the private archive of Dominique Torrès, Paris.

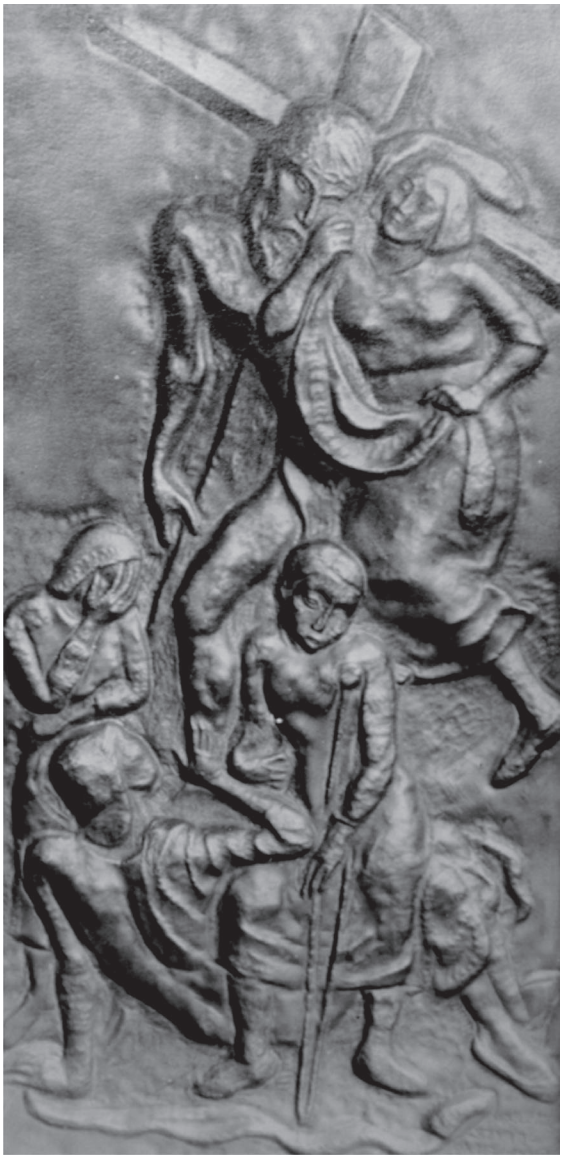
For most of the assimilated Jews a conversion was an alternative to Judaism – increasingly alien to them – or total secularization, and frequently was the only ticket to a career and an improvement of their social status. In this context, the case of Marek Szwarc seems to be exceptional. The artist did not see his religious u-turn as a means of radical assimilation, considering it only as an interim step in his religious development and self-improvement.

1. Marek Szwarc 1917/1918, Archive of Dominique Torrès, Paris. Courtesy of Dominique Torrès

2. M. Szwarc, *Crucifixion* 1917, Collection of Dominique Torrès, Courtesy of Dominique Torrès



3. M. Szwarc, *Stroke of the Lance*, 1928 Illustration from: L. Vauxelles, Marek Szwarc, La Triangle, Paris 1932



4. M. Szwarc, *Sainte Veronique*, 1929, Illustration from: L. Vauxelles, Marek Szwarc, La Triangle, Paris 1932

5. M. Szwarc, *Descent from the Cross* b. 1924, Illustration from Nowa Panorama, 1924

6. M. Szwarc, *Entombment*, c.1935, Archive of Dominique Torrès, Paris. Courtesy of Dominique Torrès

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W POSZUKIWANIU DUCHOWOŚCI. RELIGIJNY ZWROT CZY RADYKALNA ASYMILACJA? PRZYPADEK MARKA SZWARCA. (streszczenie)

Zwrot religijny stanowił dla większości asymilujących się Żydów alternatywę wobec coraz bardziej obcego im judaizmu i całkowitej laicyzacji. Był przepustką do kariery i polepszenia społecznego statusu. Tylko dla nielicznych stanowił głęboko religijne doświadczenie, które uczyniło ich pobożnymi praktykującymi katolikami. Biografia żydowskiego rzeźbiarza Marka Szwarca stanowi interesujący materiał do badań nad przyczynami religijnej reorientacji. Wychowany w duchu syjonizmu artysta, początkowo współtworzył świecką kulturę w oparciu o niereligijną tożsamość. Wojna i kryzys tradycyjnych wartości wpłynęły na zmianę jego stosunku do religii, co ujawniło się w grafikach tworzonych dla grupy Jung Idysz. Obok tematów związanych z żydowską tradycją, pojawiły się wówczas wątki chrześcijańskie. Wprowadzenie chrześcijańskiej ikonografii podyktowane było pragnieniem zaakcentowania uniwersalnych wartości związanych z duchowym odrodzeniem ludzkości. Już wtedy dostrzegał wizualną „atrakcyjność" chrześcijaństwa, która w połączeniu z wpływami ekspresjonistycznymi czy modernistycznymi legitymowała artystyczny progresywizm jako przejaw nowoczesnej kultury europejskiej. Punktem zwrotnym w karierze Szwarca był chrzest, 1 maja 1920r. w Poznaniu. Akt ten okazał się brzemienny w skutki ze względu na stosunki rodzinne, towarzyskie, wpłynął też na tematykę dzieł artysty. W początkach lat 20., po osiedleniu się w Paryżu, Szwarc poznał Jacquesa Maritaina, którego filozofia ukierunkowała jego dalszą twórczość. Niniejszy tekst stanowi próbę analizy okoliczności zwrotu religijnego Szwarca z uwzględnieniem jego biografii, historycznego i społecznego kontekstu, a także wpływu, jaki konwersja wywarła na jego sztukę.

Słowa kluczowe: sztuka żydowska, tożsamość, konwersja, Judaizm, Jezus

Art Inquiry. Recherches sur les arts 2015, vol. XVII
ISSN 1641-9278

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THE ARTISTIC TURN IN GRAFFITI PRACTICE: SZWEDZKI VS MONA TUSZ

Abstract: Graffiti and street art are related in many aspects. However, in spite of their common origins, and similar techniques and strategies, modern graffiti is usually presented as a genre lacking an artistic factor. The aim of this essay is to show that the separation between graffiti and street art is less warranted than it would appear.

Keywords: graffiti, street art, murals, aesthetics, performativity, pragmatism

1. Introduction

"Graffiti is passe and obsolete"
PHASE 2

Graffiti is passe and obsolete. This is nothing new, since it was proclaimed by one of the most influential New York aerosol artists, PHASE 2, already in 1984. His famous "bubble letters" style drawing that states this fact has survived till now and is displayed at one of the American galleries of contemporary art.[1] At the first glance, as PHASE 2 was believed to be one of the most important and progressive artists on the early New York's graffiti scene, the message mentioned above appears to be highly provocative. However, it is

1 "Bubble letters", or "softies" is a graffiti style originating in the 1970s in Bronx, New York. PHASE 2 is credited as one of its creators. The "Graffiti is passe and obsolete" drawing depicts the mentioned phrase in an aggressive bubble letters style.

also possible that like many other artistic dreamers, PHASE 2 has accurately recognized the problems that would affect his discipline in the future. Indeed, those problems seem to be clearly represented in the paradox that is a clue to the mentioned work, and what is more, to be an indelible part of the strategy of the genre of graffiti. The tension represented by the "Graffiti is passe and obsolete" drawing comes from a strong discord between the pessimistic message that denies the innovative, radical form of the picture. For some reason, in PHASE 2's mind, graffiti as an art form seemed to be "dead" already at the moment of its creation.

Summing up some popular modern definitions, graffiti could be perceived as a kind of performative urban discipline that only exceptionally, depending on the level of craftsmanship represented by the individual practitioners, can be considered as an art form.[2] "Tags", "characters", and "throw ups" are well known, cataloged forms of graffiti, and are usually not interpreted in artistic terms, but rather as manifestations of individual expression, an aggressive appropriation of the public space, a territorial war conducted by informal city groups etc. This opens the field for expert psychological and sociological interpretations of the graffiti movement. As a result, in spite of being a kind of creative activity conducted on the streets, graffiti is not considered to be a proper street art. From this point of view, there is not much difference between the first graffiti writings, discovered in the ancient Pompeian ruins, and those placed on the walls of modern cities. For many researchers they are only information on the social status or mental state of the citizens from a particular century. Perhaps in the initial period of its existence and development there was something "fresh" and truly artful about graffiti, but now the movement seems to be a hostage to stereotypes and its particular manifestations are examined by professional curators and art historians only if they fall under their traditional systems of classification and fit their own understanding of modern art. However, it is worth mentioning that this process of the exclusion of graffiti from the domain of art is also motivated by the logic of the graffiti practice itself.

Graffiti, hip-hop and breakdance movements originated and developed in symbiosis and are considered to be the foundation of the so-called "street culture". It is important to remember that those practices were established in constant opposition to the cultural mainstream, thus b-boying, bombing, and rhyming primarily meant remaining in a deep cultural underground.[3] This process obviously found its expression in the subsequent development of a specific

2 Graffiti writer = graffiti artist.
3 B-boying = breakdancing, bombing = graffiti writing.

logic of rejection and stigmatization, as the more "the system" was rejected, the more the underground movements were criticized and marginalized by the representatives of the official cultural trends.

The American pragmatist aesthetician Richard Shusterman gives an interesting definition of hip-hop culture that could be also, *per analogia*, applied to the graffiti movement. In his reflections on rap published in "Critical Inquiry", Shusterman stresses the connection between the so-called philosophy of rap and philosophical pragmatism in the field of aesthetics. In this respect, rap culture can be considered as a source of a certain type of embodied experience and also as a kind of multidimensional community.[4] In another essay, entitled "Rap aesthetics: violence and the art of keeping it real", Shusterman gives a precise description of those concepts: "Pragmatism and rap understand art not as ethereal product of supernatural imagination, but as embodied activity emerging from natural needs and desires, from organic needs and satisfactions, and also from the social functions that naturally emerge from and reciprocally influence the biological".[5] In this respect, practicing rap or hip-hop (Shusterman uses those terms interchangeably) could be understood in terms of maintaining and improving self-control in quest to achieve a better life. It is extremely interesting that for Shusterman, rap or hip-hop is a way of self-improvement, and the means of such self-improvement can be obtained by practicing hip-hop itself.[6] In this approach, hip-hop culture constitutes a complete micro universe of rituals, practices, meanings, and symbols. This micro system can be understood as a kind of cultural bubble, a cultural vehicle, that properly driven can be a source of self-improvement and establishes harmonic relations with the external world through its codified interfaces. In this approach, hip-hop appears as a highly inclusive phenomenon, closed to innovation and experiments. In his essay, Shusterman recalls the verses of "Hip-Hop as a Way of Life", a famous track by Guru, one of the most prominent representatives of "knowledge rap": "Hip-hop has a history, an origin and regulations that a lot of kids overlook nowadays..."[7] Following those hip-hop rules is essential in practicing hip-hop

4 R. Shusterman, "Rap remix: pragmatism, postmodernism and other issues in the house", in: *Critical Inquiry*, vol. 22, no.1 Autumn 1995, pp. 150-158.

5 R. Shusterman, "Rap aesthetics: violence and the art of keeping it real", in: *Popular Culture & Philosophy: Rhyme 2 Reason*, vol 16, ed. D. Darby, T. Shelby, Carus Open Publishing, Illionois 2005, p. 56.

6 R. Shusterman, "Art in action, art in fraction. Goodman, Rap, pragmatism (New reality mix)" in: *Practicing Philosophy: Pragmatism and the Philosophical Life*, Routledge, New York 1997, p. 148.

7 Shusterman understands rap as a philosophy of life, thus he consequently uses the term "knowledge rap" with respect to those rap producers who present a philosophical perspective concerning self-development and relations with others. Cf. R. Shusterman, "Art in action, art in fraction..." p. 149.

as a way of life. The certain codex made hip-hop culture strong and built its identity, but at the same time, it has locked it in a cage of stereotypical themes, rituals and poses.

Going back to the world of graffiti, it can be also understood in a similar way, and as in the case of hip-hop, its strong points can be regarded as weak ones, depending on the adopted perspective. In some respects, practicing graffiti seems to be similar to painting the enso theme in Zen calligraphy. *Enso* means a circle, and depicting it is a kind of meditation practice. Each *enso* is different, as it reflects the individual style, technique, and physical condition of the painter. However, each enso is always nothing more than a simple circle. Though individual in style, its graphic form remains the same. The same is true of graffiti: copying a character or simply tagging is individual, as each attempt takes place in different time and circumstances, and the potential of each writer is also different. However, the tag or character will remain in some way always the same. The sense of its depiction, as in the case of *enso*, consists in the process of depiction itself. "Stop kidding yourselves, there is no rebellion in graffiti, there is no message in it. It's just about copying Your nick. That's cool! Graffiti is a kind of an urban, extreme sport. There is adrenaline in it, it's a craze when your nick runs through a city on a tramcar!" – those words of MEAT, one of the famous Polish graffiti writers, seem to be a great confirmation of such understanding.[8]

However, does graffiti really remain in the frames outlined above? Judging from the walls, something strange is going on, as we can easily find interesting cases of graffiti going beyond simple tagging and bombing, but at the same time not showing connections with the official street art scene. This sphere of transition between the two genres, graffiti and street art, seems to be extremely fruitful and interesting.

2. Graffiti / street art

How do we define the difference between graffiti and street art? On a basic, popular level, a specific tendency can be observed: if a particular work appeals as interesting to the audience and arouses the emotions of the masses, it is usually quickly promoted to the status of street art. Popular Silesian graffiti characters, Franek Mysza and Szwedzki, have drawn a lot of attention and are widely regarded as an example of local street art. However, some years ago they were perceived as an act of graffiti vandalism rather than something artful and important for the identity of the region.

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8 T. Sikorski, ed, *Graffiti w Polsce. 1940–2010*, qtd after http://kultura.newsweek.pl/graffiti-i-street-art–pisanie-po-scianach,84689,1,1.html, accessed 25 Aug. 2015, translation mine.

On the formal level, a wide variety of graffiti interpretations are being proposed. However, professional aestheticians researching the phenomenon usually point to the set of core aspects of graffiti that distinguishes it from similar forms of street activities that could be named as proper street art. Recapitulating this standpoint, we could say that graffiti is mainly connected with the process of "bombing" the urban space. The term "bombing" is on point here as the word reveals the specific attitude presented by the prototypical graffiti writers. The bombing involves subjecting the urban space, i.e. in most cases the public, common space, to dynamic, often illegal, well-organized actions of applying graphic forms typical for graffiti, such as the tags, characters, or throw ups mentioned above. As already pointed out, many writers regard their practice as a kind of extreme sport, a kind of terrain game taking place in an urban context, which stresses the performative aspect of the phenomenon. In addition, it has to be said that in many cases the aesthetic aspects of the painting process are truly not important to graffiti authors, which is often accompanied by a lack of any artistic motivation. This however, usually occurs in the case of the writers coming from the milieu of football hooligans or simply city vandals. Many of those aspects of graffiti have been analyzed by the Polish aesthetician Agnieszka Gralińska-Toborek, and her essay entitled „All my city in graffiti" is a great guide to understanding the core graffiti writers' actions and motivations.[9]

In the approach recapitulated above, there is a significant difference in the understanding of graffiti and street art practice. To see it, think about an illegal football fans' throw up on a huge, expensive, commissioned city mural, painted by a famous street artist. Such a situation occurred in Łódź, Poland, where the hooligans from the football club ŁKS superimposed their own tag on the mural painted by TONE. This provoked a heated discussion on whether the mural was damaged, and whether it should be repainted. Is intervention in the already finished art work possible and necessary? The most interesting opinion was presented by Michał Bieżyński, the art director of the Urban Forms Foundation, which leads and coordinates the city murals project in Łódź. He called the football fans' intervention a "seal of approval" from the "graffiti professors" at the ŁKS. The whole discussion shows on the one hand, that the worlds of graffiti and street art are divided by a huge gap, and on the other, that each one affects the other. To complicate things further, it must be stressed that even the milieu of graffiti writers acting illegally includes some interesting cases of self-confident urban artists, understanding all aspects of the process they are part of, and demonstrating a high level of artistry.

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9 A. Gralińska-Toborek, „‚All my city in graffiti' – czyli bombardowanie przestrzeni miejskiej" in: *Czas przestrzeni*, ed. K. Wilkoszewska, Universitas, Kraków 2008, pp. 37-46.

The close relation between graffiti and street art seems to be more evident from the level of performativity as both the graffiti writer and street artist are performers. According to the definition proposed by Richard Schechner, performativity is not only an element of an artistic practice, but also part of our daily life.[10] Thus, on this level the difference between the two modes of using a spray can is not so important. What is more, if we follow other theoreticians of performance, such as Erika Fischer-Lichte, it appears that graffiti can also meet a more complicated criterion of performativity. The German aesthetician builds the category of performativity around the phenomenon of staging, which according to her, can be described as a process that „circumscribes a strategy of creation, which performatively engenders presence in a certain temporal sequence and spatial constellation".[11] These conditions however, can be fulfilled both in graffiti and street art practice.

Panos Leventis, an aesthetician specializing in Greek graffiti and street art, has written an interesting text covering the street art scene in Athens just before and during the economic crisis. His essay entitled "Walls of crisis: street art and urban fabric in central Athens 2000-2012" shows how thin or even invisible can be the line dividing core graffiti and street art. Leventis emphasizes the fact that "Athenian street art which emerged from the world of graffiti and urban underground, has in fact a longstanding connection with the world of migrants and <others> ".[12] Indeed, in the case of graffiti / street art movement in Athens, both the multicultural context and the unfavorable attitude of the criticized authorities pushed them back into the cultural underground and helped them to identify with the social problems. It is interesting that the authorities of the city of Athens were keenly interested in flirting with street artists in the period of the city's prosperity just before the Olympics, and even commissioned some interesting projects from them on that occasion. However, after the commencement of the crisis the front has changed and the critical artists turned out to be a problem for the city authorities. This led to a situation in which the actions of the street artists acquired a *guerilla* character, just like graffiti writing. Creating a critical mural began to be perceived in a similar way as bombing a public space. The Greek and Polish artist Dimitris Taxis, who was born in Szczecin and is an active street artist in Athens today, appears as an extremely interesting figure here. Taxis is fond of murals, however not those big, fancy,

10 R. Schechner, *Performance Studies*, Routledge, New York 2013, p. 17.

11 E. Fischer-Lichte, *The Transformative Power of Performance. A New Aesthetics*, Routledge, New York 2008, p. 187.

12 P. Leventis, *Walls of Crisis: Street Art and Urban Fabric in Central Athens 2000-2012,* https://www.academia.edu/5041399/Walls_of_Crisis_Street_Art_and_Urban_Fabric_in_Central_Athens_2000-2012_Architecture_and_Urbanism_2013 , accessed: 28 Aug. 2015.

commercial works of art, associated with the promotional strategy of big cities, but small, human-sized ones, often hidden, and destroyed by municipal services. Taxis' typical work is the famous mural with a boy chained around his neck to the heavy weight of Greek debt. Not everyone knows that Taxis, parallelly to his mural painting is still an active member of the graffiti crew "GPO", which specializes in the bombing of trains and city buildings. Taxis is thus a living proof that graffiti and street art have more in common than it first appears.

Graffiti and street art, in the context of the Greek crisis, also have an additional common denominator, as both of them reveal strong social and political attitudes. Vaggelis Horsoglou, another Athenian artist, signing his works as "Woozy", admits that "Graffiti itself is a political message. If there is no political message, this form of art misses some of its essence, which is not only creating a fancy, eye-catching image, but mostly pointing out modern social problems and envisioning a possible change".[13] Perhaps it is a Greek specialty and in different milieus those common grounds can vary, however those common contexts definitely appear and are a proof of the lively symbiosis of graffiti and street art practice.

3. Szwedzki vs Mona Tusz

As has been already noted, Polish artists are not anonymous on the global graffiti and street art scene today and we are also witnessing some extremely interesting processes within those genres in Poland itself. It is now in good taste to research and comment on the great names of international renown, such as the Polish M-City, the Chilean Inti or ROA from Belgium painting large-scale, commercial murals as part of street art projects and festivals in Łódź or Katowice. However, sometimes it is more fruitful to bring the discussion down to the local level, where even if the artistic standards are not set as high as in the above cases, we still have a unique opportunity to follow the spontaneous actions of the artists. Such a situation occurred in Siemianowice Śląskie, a small industrial city near Katowice, which witnessed an original graffiti beef between two local artists, Szwedzki and Mona Tusz, in 2013.[14]

The history of graffiti beefs is long, however only one of them has reached the status of a legendary turning point in the development of graffiti and street

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13 Vaggelis Horsoglou in: http://greece.greekreporter.com/2012/09/02/greek-graffiti-artists-transform-athens-with-political-bite/ date of acces: 28.08.2015.

14 Beef – battle on walls between graffiti artists. A full documentation on Szwedzki vs Mona Tusz battle can be found on a one of local city portals: http://siemianowiceslaskie.naszemiasto.pl/artykul/zdjecia/wojna-na-murale-w-siemianowicach-slaskich,2057864,galop,7245614,t,id,tm,zid.html date of acces: 28.08.2015.

art. It is the famous King Robbo vs Banksy beef from 2009-2011 that took place in London, under the canal bridge in Camden. Its history is well-covered by researchers and was even the subject of the TV documentary "Graffiti Wars" from 2011, so it does not need to be presented here in details.[15] It is important however to recapitulate its crucial points, as King Robbo vs Banksy battle appears as a kind of proto-beef, which finds its reflection on a smaller scale in what happened in 2013 in Siemianowice Śląskie in the Hugo district.

The site

It is significant that the famous Robbo vs Banksy beef took place on a hidden wall in an underground canal in Camden, a place that cannot be easily accessed. The starting point for the battle was a historical piece of graffiti placed there by King Robbo in 1985. Robbo had chosen this site deliberately as it was directly under the London Transport Police headquarters, however it was only accessible by water, so the audience of his artwork could be considered as minimal. In 2009, the year when the beef started, King Robbo was not an anonymous artist, and the same was of course true of the world-acclaimed Banksy. However, the artistic battle between these two giants had to take place underground, with drastically limited audience contribution. King Robbo's 1985 throw up was then partially destroyed and covered up by smaller tags of anonymous origin. Banksy contributed a small mural presenting a city worker painting over the old graffiti left by Robbo, which provoked the retired artist's reaction.

Four years ago in Siemianowice Śląskie, local street artist Mona Tusz, well known from her mural designs and many official, commercial works, decided to execute the mural "Lelki from Hugo" on an abandoned wall near a tunnel in the Hugo district, a place with long-standing bad reputation, avoided by pedestrians. The idea of "Lelki", part of a larger project called SilesiaTopia, was to put a colorful mural on a dilapidated wall tagged by football hooligans, and check their reaction to the intervention. At the starting point of the project, Mona Tusz was almost sure that her work would be completely covered by the tags of the Ruch Chorzów hooligans and she intended to document the process of devastation to add an additional dimension to her work.[16] That in fact happened in almost no time, but additionally something else happened too. Just before Halloween in 2013, the famous local graffiti writer, Szwedzki, took over the wall and repainted it with individual „character", depicting a loose-style guy with curly hair. This was the starting point for the beef, as Mona Tusz

15 Graffiti Wars, directed by J. Preston, 2011.

16 Mona Tusz, *Lelki z Hugo*, http://www.monatusz.art.pl/index.php?/ongoing/lelki-z-hugo/, accessed 28 Aug. 2015.

obviously had to react to the act of painting over her work. It is interesting that the work by Szwedzki was painted with a special type of spray, glowing in the dark, so that the figure saying "Afraid to be afraid" could make an impression on the potential spectators. The only problem was, that as in the Robbo vs Banksy case, the number of the potential viewers was limited to those who dared to see it personally or the ones who followed it in social media and Internet portals. It is significant that both beefs were observed and commented upon mainly in social media, which, according to Marshall McLuhan's "the medium is the message" dogma was a highly determining factor for the viewers' opinions. In fact, what happened in both cases did not have much to do with the actual message coming from two physical walls affected by the four artists.

The artists

In both cases, the controversy began to arise on the ground of the graffiti versus street art antagonism, as it could potentially appear that the persons involved were truly representing only one of those two milieus. There was of course a huge difference in the evaluation of each artist's steps during the battle, which was determined by the origin and background of the respective web pages, social media profiles, public groups etc. moderating the discussion. Overall, it may be said that many legally acting artists took the role of the rigorous judges of the graffiti hooligans and on the other side, the writers tended to perceive Banksy and Mona Tusz as enemies of genuine, underground graffiti. Yet reality has been far more complicated. King Robbo was by no means a pure, core graffiti artist, with all its consequences. And as for Banksy, wasn't he also a graffiti writer? He started with graffiti and still occasionally uses this technique in his projects.

In the case of Szwedzki vs Mona Tusz beef, the story is even more complicated. Szwedzki started his career in both graffiti and street art. He became famous thanks to his "character", painted on the walls of the cities in the Silesia region, and bombing trains with other local graffiti writers, such as KET124. However, at the same time he was making stickers, which qualifies him as a street artist. What is more, his "character" has evolved and he has recently started to comment on the surrounding reality and also to interact with other graffiti "characters" and street art works. It can be observed that in time, Szwedzki's works are becoming more and more contextual and begin to correspond with the motto placed on his official fanpage profile: "observe and comment".[17] Szwedzki is not by any means a typical graffiti writer, as he openly flirts with

[17] Szwedzki: https://www.facebook.com/szwedzkifanpage, accessed 28 Aug. 2015.

the mainstream, gives interviews to newspapers, and also owns an internet shop selling gadgets with his character (!). It can be also observed that personally, Szwedzki tends not to distinguish between graffiti and street art, as he interchangeably calls himself as a street artist or a writer. Formally however, Szwedzki still follows the graffiti ethos, as his "character" is not used by him commercially to advertise products, and remains truly independent as it is not a subject of campaigns and commercial activity.

In contrast, Mona Tusz is a full-scale professional street artist.[18] She paints on interior and exterior walls, as part of commercial or public projects in Europe. She is known for her murals made for the Industriada festival and public institutions, such as the museum Park Tradycji in Siemianowice Śląskie. During the beef, Mona Tusz was criticized for not understanding the rules of graffiti and her lack of any graffiti background, which made her different from Banksy, whose achievements as a writer were known and appreciated. However, her concept for „Lelki from Hugo" proves something different. As a street artist, Mona Tusz is well known for a special type of dwarf-like characters she puts on her murals, that resemble in some respects the "characters" known from graffiti practice. In this case of course, we are not witnessing a process of copying, but rather creating whole families of related types that populate the oneiric landscapes painted by the Silesian artist. There is also a difference in the scale and technique of applying them on walls, in relation to genuine graffiti style represented by Szwedzki. Somehow, the idea of confronting some of her typical characters, called "Lelki", with the harsh reality of the walls occupied by football hooligans, shows that Mona Tusz is highly aware of graffiti logic. It can be also a sign that modern, professional and specialized street art still needs graffiti-like experience to make it alive: the experience that can be found only in such spontaneous and open actions as „Lelki".

The final

The famous King Robbo vs Banksy battle ended unexpectedly with Robbo's accident that was followed by a coma and finally the artist's death in July 2014. After the accident, Banksy once more entered the canal under Camden and painted a minimalistic mural in tribute to his opponent, that was intended to finish the duel. It was a black-and-white depiction of the original mural made by King Robbo with a small addition of a flame as a symbol of support for Robbo.

It is significant that Szwedzki vs Mona Tusz beef, which like its London prototype appeared at some level as an unsolvable conflict, also ended

18 Mona Tusz: http://www.monatusz.art.pl/, accessed 28 Aug. 2015.

rapidly and resulted in a collective mural of both artists, depicting „Lelki" and „Szwedzki" characters, cheering each other on the famous wall in the Hugo district. This, but also the logic of the earlier decisions taken by the artists during the battle, make it different from common graffiti painting-over actions. It seems that they were following the same order of battle as their British colleagues, and more importantly, they were intentionally playing with the stereotypes of street art and graffiti.

Both battles described above evidence the fact that no matter how we call it, modern graffiti or street art are in need of that source of creative energy that can be obtained only in spontaneous, unpredictable actions. The energy of the underground graffiti from the past. It is a sign of the times that the researchers and artists are so widely discussing performativity, as it is so important for the authenticity that is so much missing in modern street art. The best words to sum up the situation come from MIESTO, graffiti writer and street artist from Warsaw: "Why are we against the Street Art festival? All that is now happening in Warsaw, a series of events in cooperation with the city authorities – this in some sense is a negation of graffiti and street art idea in general. It's an odd situation when old throw-ups are being removed to make place for some new "colorful murals". Such paintings are only decoration and don't have anything in common with art in a proper sense. They lack authenticity, because their creation is not spontaneous, but is preceded by long arrangements. We are entering here the commercial, business-like kind of relations and at the same time we depart from what is really important in art. [...] It should all be about the dialogue between the city and the people. Graffiti wants to be the dialogue."[19]

[19] MIESTO: http://warszawa.wyborcza.pl/warszawa/1,95158,6857641, Za_i_przeciw_festiwalowi_street_artu.html date of accessed 28 Aug. 2015; translation mine.

1. „Hugo Wall", Mona Tusz & Szwedzki, current state, September 2015

2. „Hugo Wall", Mona Tusz & Szwedzki, current state, September 2015

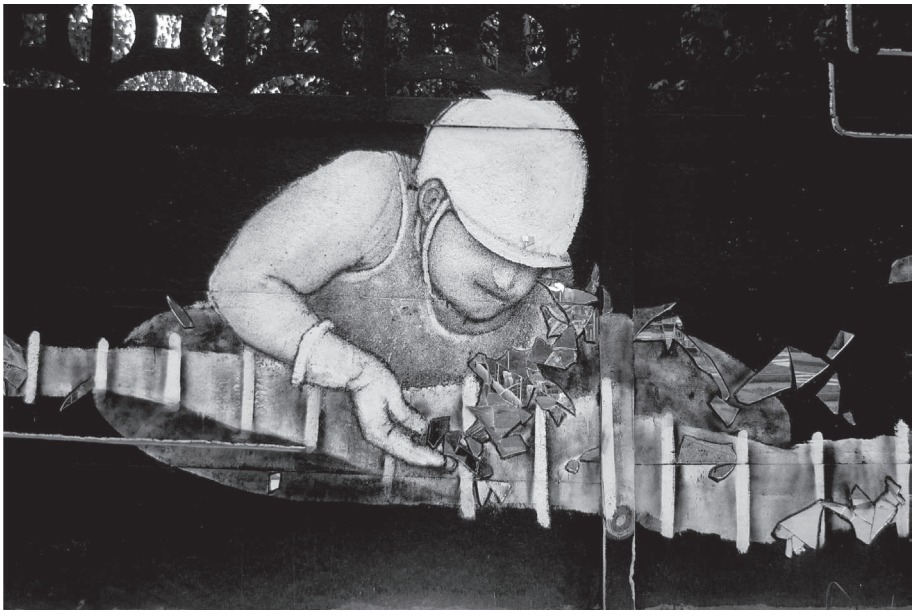
3. „Szwedzki" character, FABUD district, Siemianowice Śląskie

4. Szwedzki & Marcin Malicki, Eco mural, FABUD district, Siemianowice Śląskie

5. Szwedzki & Marcin Malicki, Eco mural, FABUD district, Siemianowice Śląskie

6. Mona Tusz, mural with elements of mosaic, Park Tradycji, Siemianowice Śląskie

7. Mona Tusz, mural with elements of mosaic, Park Tradycji, Siemianowice Śląskie



8. Mona Tusz, mural with elements of mosaic, Park Tradycji, Siemianowice Śląskie

9. Mona Tusz, mural with elements of mosaic, Park Tradycji, Siemianowice Śląskie

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ARTYSTYCZNY ZWROT W GRAFFITI: SZWEDZKI VS MONA TUSZ (streszczenie)

Ruch street artu wyewoluował w dużej mierze z graffiti. Jednakże, w przeciwieństwie do street artu, współczesne graffiti dość powszechnie uznawane jest za dyscyplinę o znikomym potencjale artystycznym. Celem niniejszego artykułu jest zaprezentowanie związków pomiędzy tymi dyscyplinami ze szczególnym naciskiem położonym na zaprezentowanie artystycznych wymiarów graffiti.

Słowa kluczowe: graffiti, street art, murale, estetyka, performatywność, pragmatyzm

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