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THE HOMELESSNESS OF ART

References to „being settled” somewhere and being „homeless” have reappeared in various disciplines of the humanities for a long time. Those concepts were used in different contexts and in different senses. In 20th century philosophy, much attention was paid to the Heideggerian concept of man as “the neighbour of Being”, i.e. his dwelling “in the nearness of Being”. This image led to attempts at discovering what is unique to the human condition. Lukacs offered a critique of „transcendental homelessness”, which he saw as characteristic of contemporary culture. Other philosophers pointed out that the fast-changing reality and the engagement in utopian projects characteristic for the condition of the modern man, are conducive to our loss of the sense of settlement.

The second half of the 20th century introduced the discourse of unsettlement, non-belonging. Adorno negated the possibility of feeling at home in the world after Auschwitz. Other authors offered the concept of “the uncanny” (*das Unheimliche*), or being faced with strange and incomprehensible forces in one’s own home, only illusorily familiar. It has been also pointed out that the sense of settlement and the associated feeling of safety may turn out to be limiting. Freedom must mean the loss of the sense of safety, familiarity, commitment. Encountering what is different, marginal, often suffering or victimized (e.g. in feminist or postcolonial discourses) also sensitizes us to the importance of opening ourselves to new experience, which leads to the de-stabilization of our own monolithic home.

The subject area outlined here may be variously related to art. On the one hand, art may be considered as an important voice in the discussion on our sense of belonging or uprootedness, on the other the question of whether it should be rooted in tradition, or leave this “home” to gain new experiences is also pertinent. The volume of *Art Inquiry* to which we seek your contributions will be devoted to this set of issues. Your prospective papers should concern some theoretical aspects of the concepts mentioned above in relation to art, artistic activity, reception of art works, or offer a case study of some artistic endeavour in which those concepts have taken a concrete shape.

BEZDOMNOŚĆ SZTUKI

Sformułowania nawiązujące do pojęć „zadomowienia” i „bezdomności” od kilkudziesięciu lat pojawiają się w różnych obszarach humanistyki. Występują one w wielu kontekstach i nadawany jest im różny sens. W filozofii XX wieku podstawowe znaczenie ma Heideggerowski problem człowieka jako „sąsiada bycia”, czyli zamieszkiwania przez niego w „bliskości wobec bycia”. Ta wysoka ocena bliskości prowadziła do sugestii odzyskania tego, co własne i właściwe dla ludzkiego sposobu istnienia. Lukacs poddawał krytyce „transcendentalną bezdomność”, którą uważał za charakterystyczną dla współczesnej kultury. Inni filozofowie zwracali uwagę na to, że zachodzenie szybkich zmian, a także formułowanie utopijnych projektów charakterystyczne dla nowoczesnej kondycji człowieka, sprzyja utracie uczucia zadomowienia.

W drugiej połowie XX wieku, rozwijał się też dyskurs związany z kryzysem zamieszkiwania. Adorno negował możliwość uczucia zadomowienia w świecie po Auschwitz. Inni autorzy brali pod uwagę „nieswojość” (*das Unheimliche*), czyli występowanie obcych i niezrozumiałych sił we własnym domu, pozornie tylko oswojonym. Podkreślano też, że zadomowienie i związane z nim poczucie bezpieczeństwa może okazać się ograniczające. Za wolność płaci się przecież na ogół utratą poczucia bezpieczeństwa, zanikiem stanu bliskości, zażyłości. Także wzięcie pod uwagę tego, co inne, marginalne, często cierpiące lub poszkodowane (np. w dyskursach feministycznym i postkolonialnym), uwrażliwia na rolę otwarcia, które prowadzi do destabilizacji monolitycznie pojmowanego własnego domu.

Zarysowany tu krąg problematyki w różny sposób odnosi się do sztuki. Z jednej strony może ona być rozważana jako ważny głos w sporach dotyczących zadomowienia i bezdomności, z drugiej zaś w odniesieniu do niej samej można stawiać pytania o potrzebę zakorzenienia w tradycji, albo poszukiwania przez nią nowych miejsc. Wzięciu pod uwagę tego bogatego zestawu zagadnień poświęcony będzie tegoroczny tom „Art Inquiry”. Nadsyłane artykuły dotyczyć mogą albo teoretycznych aspektów zadomowienia i bezdomności w sztuce, działalności artysty, odbiorze dzieł, albo prezentować konkretne przykłady z zakresu różnych dziedzin twórczości artystycznej, w których tytułowe zjawisko przybrało konkretną postać.

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THE ART OF GREAT MASTERS ON A MOUNTAIN PASS

Abstract: The subject of the paper is the process, first of textualization, and then of the return of the importance of the physical environment of art. The general notion of context, understood as the sphere of meanings positioning works of art in relation to one another, as the physical environment of the art work and as a social-historical situation, is being displaced by the metaphors of space and place. This is facilitated by post-structuralist changes in philosophy and esthetics, which expose and challenge the philosophical linguistic assumptions of the conception of context. The article also deals with the problem of the cognitive value of metaphor, and the validity of using Heidegger's category of homelessness (*Un-zuhause* – unhomeliness) in describing the situation in present-day art. The space of language is contrasted with the physical space of creation and reception of the work of art. The beginning of the process of art's becoming physically homeless in the creative activities of the neo-avant-garde is at the same time a turning point in the treatment of spatiality, physicality and materiality in art. In order to present the changes characteristic of the postmodern context of art, I have used the interpretation of spatial-artistic realizations by the Pierre Gianadda Foundation in Étroubles in the Aosta Valley, in particular the description of the exhibition titled *Sculptures de Degas à Picasso*. The relationships between present-day art and the art of the distant past, which are established in the *Museum in the Open Space* can be treated as the culmination of the process of restoration of the importance of art's physical environment. The text utilized the metaphors of the road bend (= turning point) and of the mountain pass, simultaneously pointing to the ongoing process of demetaphorization, resembling the one faced by the metaphors of the tourist and the wanderer.

Keywords: art – context – space – physicality – exhibition.

The concepts of place and space are crucial in modern-day discourse on art. They are examined at the level of meta-theoretical analyses that start with the opposition of language and space, or they are considered within a particular empirical aesthetics and art theory, where this opposition tends to be replaced by the general notion of context, understood as the sphere of meanings that position the works in relation to one another, as the physical environment of a work, and as the socio-historical situation. The changes in cultural philosophy and aesthetics, especially those in the latter half of the twentieth century, resulted in the tendency to replace the analysis of the works of art by the

analysis of their context. In the research on art, context is a broad notion, not limited to the art based on text. Like the notions of discourse and language games, the notion of context has accompanied philosophical-linguistic theories of interpretation in the spirit of hermeneutics and post-structuralism. From the conception of weak unity and avoidance of the pressure towards definitive interpretation in Gadamer's theory, to Lyotard's recognition of the priority of speech over writing, to the challenging of linguistic and objective dualism and the concept of life as an interface, the notion of context has fundamentally changed its meaning. Nevertheless, the linguistic origin of this notion, and the specific philosophical assumptions behind it have not been overlooked. Doubts about the use of this notion were expressed by Jacques Derrida towards John Austin's theory of speech acts. Derrida asks whether the notion of context does not hide in itself, apart from certain confusion, very specific philosophical pre-suppositions¹. Derrida uses both the term "context" and "production milieu" (*milieu de production*), thereby suggesting that there is an external milieu, but remaining at the level of the text associated with this milieu. There is no need to reflect on all the intricacies of the philosophical and social problems in these conceptions. These have been dealt with exhaustively in Ewa Rewers's book *Język i przestrzeń w poststrukturalistycznej filozofii kultury* [Language and space in post-structuralist philosophy of culture]². I am interested only to a limited extent in the history of the relationship between language (and more precisely, its particular theory) and art, which is also treated as a text; I prefer to focus on the context understood as the physical milieu of a work of art. For that reason I prefer the conceptions of context which admit to the undecidability of the status of the work of art at the level of language and discourse. The restoration of the importance of the physical context of art in the interpretations of post-modern art and the accompanying sensitization to the situational factors of social space are reflected in the metaphors of space and place. Spatial metaphors are nothing new in philosophical discourse. Their cognitive nature is of special value in describing art. In my paper they will also appear in a similar role. The leading subject of the present volume, which makes a reference to Heidegger, entitles the use of metaphorical language. Such an approach permits us to avoid the earlier problems associated with the notion of context.

I am interested in the process in which the concept of place and space loses its sense established in the modernist reflection on art. The place where art is created, exhibited and where it exerts its impact has always had a concrete physical, mental and social dimension. At the meeting point of these aspects, the dimension of space important for meta-reflection arises: the space of language and theory in which other dimensions are immersed. In reductionist

¹ J. Derrida, *Pismo filozofii*, transl. by B. Banasiak, Kraków 1992, p. 227.

² E. Rewers, *Język i przestrzeń w poststrukturalistycznej filozofii kultury*, Wyd. Naukowe UAM, Poznań 1996.

approaches all spatial dimensions and all aspects of place can be reduced to their linguistic dimension. The ontological and epistemological assumptions of and grounds for reductionist linguistic theories concerning art would require a debate for which there is no room here. At the same time, the concern arises of whether it is possible to avoid deducing ontological consequences when we take into account the space of language in analyzing the physical, mental and social space of art. The conceptual change in the discourse on art – a symptom of the transition from modernism to postmodernity – does not abolish ontic problems. If we do not have enough opportunities to examine them thoroughly, we should simply be aware of a relationship between meta-theoretical studies and primary research. I also mention this issue because the concepts of space and place require special terminological care; when used metaphorically they are always part of a culturally and historically determined vocabulary. Similarly, this applies to the notions of home (dwelling place) and homelessness (unhomeness – cf. Heidegger's *Un-zuhause*: even if they are some of the oldest in culture, we associate their meanings with Heidegger's vocabulary. Before we deal with the subject of homeless art, we should consider the validity of use of this metaphor in describing the condition of modern-day art. Apart from the general sense of the words "home" and "homelessness" they carry the meanings bestowed upon them by Martin Heidegger and the twentieth-century philosophers following in his footsteps. The category of home as a concrete place to which the dweller gives sense, in opposition to home as a temporary dwelling place, has been generalized to denote the human fate in Western culture. The loss of closeness (proximity) and the inability to find the essence of dwelling should be treated as a mental figure, which assigns a situational sense to the concept of home. It points to a relationship between the experience of history and the spatially treated constant points of reference. Heidegger's metaphors attempted to describe the state of the human mind deprived of such constant points of reference, whether of man's own will in the process of striving for freedom, or as a result of global transformations that accompany technicization. Changes in civilization had a violent course, and their consequences for the *conditio humana* [human condition] suggested the need for new art, an entirely new language and new theories. Another option was the exhaustion and end of some expression forms characteristic of the mode of human existence. This attitude of becoming silent after Auschwitz was represented by Adorno followed by other thinkers who denied the possibility of restoring the feeling of closeness and being/feeling at home in the inhuman world. Nor was there any consent about naming traumatic experiences in any form whatsoever. It is no wonder that under those circumstances many scholars may have regarded the practice of art as singularly inappropriate. From today's perspective we can see clearly that this was not an opposition to art in general, but a protest against some of its forms. Adorno's

oft-cited words: "To write poetry after Auschwitz is barbaric"³ point to this most incriminated form art, or, to be more precise, to a certain form of contact with it. In the face of all possible disasters and wrongs suffered, man has no right to succumb to the charm of aesthetic contemplation because a permanent threat of disaster no longer permits anyone to watch art as an uninvolved spectator, and even less so to copy anything aesthetically⁴. The contemplative attitude that focuses on the present and excludes the spectator from historical thinking, i.e. also from the memory of suffering, seems even immoral. The breaking off of the mimetic connection with the world and the impossibility of experiencing sensorial beauty activates natural compensation processes. As a result, works responding to the loss of a particular kind of fine art are created. The function of aesthetic vision has been taken over by culture industry which seeks to create beauty surrogates that veil and alleviate the image of reality. At the time when the shameful results of instrumental rationality were disposed of, artistic creation as a commodity was also unacceptable because of its unauthenticity. It was at that time that art appeared to have been at the crossroads or the turning point (on the bend), from where it could no longer see the signs of the road behind or the new ones of the road ahead. The metaphor of the "turning point = a sharp bend" (also used by Stefan Morawski in his well-known study, which *inter alia* discussed various interpretive versions of the formula of "the decline of art"⁵), from which we can hardly see what is ahead, while driving in the reverse gear would end in disaster aptly renders the position of art at that time. This is a spatial, dynamic metaphor, but at the same time it is limited in its sense-making aspect. That is why I treat it exclusively as a vivid equivalent of a certain moment in the development of art, in which the phenomena termed (also metaphorically) "the homelessness of art" first came into existence with such great intensity.

The crisis of representation and a wide gap between artistic practice and theory confirms the breaking of the work's structural connection with its environment. None of the former categories – *mimesis*, the aesthetic, and comprehensibility derived from the shared artistic code – ensured any longer the art's sense of being/feeling at home in the world. Similarly the works which made direct reference to the legacy of the first avant-garde were able to perform the role of epistemological metaphor only to a limited extent, because the faith in progress and the independent value of novelty went bankrupt in the culture of the era. The revolutionary artistic strategies of the historical avant-garde were dominated by the perspective of linear temporality. Neo-avant-garde began to explore space in the horizontal dimension. It was interested in

³ Th. W. Adorno, *Prism*, Cambridge, Mass. 1983, p. 34.

⁴ Th. W. Adorno, "Sztuka i sztuki", in: *Wybór esejów*, PIW, Warszawa 1990, p. 179.

⁵ S. Morawski, *Na zakręcie od sztuki do po-sztuki*, Wyd. Literackie, Kraków 1985, pp. 279-307.

the relationships with other spaces and in their interpenetration. This was an important stage on the road to the postmodern strategies described by Michel Foucault in heterotopic terms.

Changes also affected the concept of place as a physical space where the work of art is created, construed and displayed. Many of these transformations have doubtlessly originated in the first avant-garde, but it was only its second formation that radically severed the art work's links with a permanent place. The place of creation and of reception may have been anywhere, but it disappeared as a distinctive feature. The work of art in motion, the work as the world, or the work in the mind commenced the process of art's becoming physically homeless. At the same time they constituted the beginning of the loss of essence by a certain form of art which, formerly established in ontic terms on a specific physical groundwork, now lost its ability to build to be replaced by the "establishing" and "raising" of the dwelling place of art.

Man does not dwell in that he merely establishes his stay on earth beneath the sky, by raising growing things and simultaneously raising buildings. Man is capable of such building only if he already builds in the sense of the poetic taking of measure. Authentic building occurs so far as there are poets, such poets as take the measure for architecture, the structure for dwelling⁶.

Remembering about the meaning which Umberto Eco assigned to the concept of epistemological metaphor, we might say that artistic creation in its structure no longer corresponded to the concept of space established in Western metaphysics; nor did it reflect by analogy, but rather signaled the new, only emerging structure of the surrounding reality. Heidegger's metaphorical expressions cited here can be used for describing the turning point in the treatment of the spatial (spatiality), the physical (physicality), and the material (materiality) in art.

The changes initiated at that time exerted an invigorating and constructive impact on the activities of artists, thereby bringing art out of an impasse, at least for some time. Why, then, did this new area not become the home of art? What caused the neo-avant-garde trends to have soon exhausted their ability to raise new, boundless, mental buildings?

When writing about modern-day art I am going to contrast the metaphor of the bend/turning point with another one. Before I do that, however, I will briefly recapitulate the previous theme. Parallel with the new, liquid character of the work of art arising in the neo-avant-garde period, a new cultural space and a new model of the subject are emerging. This model can no longer be described in terms of continuity and complete consciousness. When analyzing

⁶ M. Heidegger, *Poetry, Language, Thought*, transl. by A. Hofstadter, Harper and Row, New York 1971, p. 227.

the changes in modern man's identity, Alain Renaut blames Heidegger's concept of the metaphysics of subjectivity for being an epistemological obstacle in our relationships with reality because the concept creates an illusion of improving our relationships with the world by getting rid of the idea of the subject⁷. In contrast, during the period corresponding to the creative output of the neo-avant-garde a new type of subject emerges. The mechanisms of perception of ephemeral and aleatory works initiate the changes in perception subsequently described by Paul Virilio and Gilles Deleuze.

Is it right, therefore, to initiate the reflection on the notion of place in art using Heidegger's ideas, especially the notion of home? The argument for initiating such discussion is apparently the idea underlying contextualization that even if the fundamental meanings and the ways in which they were discovered by Heidegger turn out to be far removed from the concerns of today's creative activities, then we will give prominence to these differences by placing the activities in question in precisely that context.

In order to illustrate the changes characteristic of the postmodern context of art, I am going to use the description of the exhibition titled *Sculptures de Degas à Picasso* [Sculptures from Degas to Picasso] organized by the Pierre Gianadda foundation in the Aosta Valley. Placing the works of Picasso, Rodin, Giacometti and other great masters in a small town on a mountain pass (hence the title of my paper) opens the way for interpreting the present-day concept of the homelessness of art. Metaphorical thinking triggers a sequence of concepts associated with postmodern discourse, such as a map, a journey, and tourism.

The first traveler who used a map to understand art was Hippolyte Taine. His expeditions have a lot in common with today's highly popular journeys following the track of literary narratives. The difference between the search for the *genius loci* by a nineteenth-century traveler and a present-day tourist does not consist in the fact that unlike today the points on the map were exactly marked out at that time. Just like Balzac determined Taine's stopovers in the geographical space, so does Dan Brown today. The essential difference is the goal of the journey and the character of the place. Taine's journeys were to enhance the authority of history by means of the authority of specific geographical spaces. He compared imaginative places – the towns where great art was created – with real geographical space. Travelling to follow the tracks of alternative history and fictitious heroes has a different objective.

The postmodern tourist does not begin his journey with large urban centers, and even if s/he does, s/he is interested in the routes different from those marked out by centuries-old history. Just as frequent visitors to the museums of the past, s/he seeks out curiosities and thrills. It might seem that modern art,

⁷ A. Renaut, *Era jednostki. Przyczynek do historii podmiotowości*, transl. by D. Leszczyński, Wrocław 2002, p. 59.

in conformity with its own theory, is better suited to respond to the artistic needs of the interested tourists. This is not so. Only a very small portion of experimental artistic activities that boldly articulate the problems of the present-day fulfils this function, chiefly owing to their ability to interact with other spaces of political discourse. The overwhelming majority of artistic production has been absorbed by the urban landscape and, as its integral part, it arouses no greater interest than historical buildings. Hence the problem whether and to what extent art motivates people's choices and is present on the tourist routes should be examined in terms of all spaces in which artistic practices and the external space of art intermingle.

An unusual realization of the idea of an open exhibition space took place in the Aosta Valley in Étroubles. The initiator and president of the foundation which sponsored this artistic venture was Léonard Gianadda – an engineer, journalist, press photographer, manager of an archeological excavation in Yens in Switzerland, but first of all an art lover and connoisseur, member of the most distinguished societies and academies of science. His involvement in this field brought him the rank of the French Republic's National Knight of the Order of Merit. After the tragic death of his brother Pierre, he set up a foundation named after him. The foundation supports original artistic and urban-planning projects. One of these is the *Museum in the Open Space*, which is Étroubles. This first museum of modern-day art was established in 2003, entirely in the open air, in the town situated high in the mountains, next to the road to the Great St. Bernard Pass. The town is a natural exhibition space, which challenges the boundaries between the natural space and the space of artistic realization. There is a special interchange between the natural/architectural landscape and the sculptures made by present-day artists. The artists refer, in the form of their works, to the openness of the mountain pass and the idea of the pass linking the two neighboring regions. For example, an aerodynamic sculpture resembles a postmaster and a bird; a geometric trumpet symbolizes the noise of the postal bus, often the only means of transport for alpinists and the locals. The work cites parts of the landscape and the everyday life of the local inhabitants. And conversely, the sculpture is a quotation, even a double one: in the natural landscape of the mountain pass and a citation from modern art in the traditional structures of stone-roofed houses. The interpretation in terms of intertextuality, which treats these spaces as texts, allows us to notice the alternation of text and context. However, this does not explain all of the complicated relationships that occur in the environment between the places and objects. What is especially characteristic is the spread of the idea of the open museum onto the further, adjacent environment; the sculptures "enter" St. Bernard Pass, establishing relationships with a different landscape and receivers. In accordance with the idea of wandering, the space changes its character: there can be, but does not necessarily have to be smooth transitions

between places; non-continuous reception, described as point reception, is not unknown to the present-day tourist. A sculpture placed in the natural landscape can be in the center of the field of vision or can remain on its periphery. Art on the pass is part of the open space, both in the literal and the metaphorical sense.

In order to “give a new and important form to our town”⁸ – as was stated by mayor Massimo Tamone – next to the *Museum in the Open Space* (but literally on its premises) Étroubles organizes some exhibitions of great masters, forerunners of modern art, such as Auguste Rodin or Camille Claudel. When opening the sculpture exhibition “From Degas to Picasso”, Leonard Gianadda stated:

This year’s exhibition is without doubt of the same high quality as the previous ones. Indeed, the Aosta Valley inhabitants and many tourists discovering this charming place will have a chance each year to admire the group of artists whose genius contributed to the rise of the best class of modern art works from the latter half of the nineteenth century till now⁹.

It is interesting that both the President of the Pierre Gianadda Foundation, Leonard Gianadda and the Director of the *Museum in the Open Space* Alessandro Parrella, emphasized the role of the production milieu. L. Gianadda, fascinated with archeology, offers “a journey through the history of art and culture”¹⁰. A. Parrella points to the network of spatial relationships between the brilliant forerunners and the present-day artists who exhibit their works in Étroubles, such as an academy, the proximity of a road and the short distance to the studios. It is difficult to draw far-reaching conclusions from occasional speeches, nevertheless we should emphasize the cohesion and dynamism of the concept of the Museum. The physical space of the creation of the works and their exhibition is especially significant for the “production milieu” as understood by Derrida. While the concept of an open air museum confirms this conclusion fairly accurately, it may be far more difficult to explain the “wandering or migration” of great masters from art centers to the little-known town of Étroubles.

The question was answered in part by Leonard Gianadda, who suggested expanding the spatial openness with the temporal dimension, thereby situating the museum in Étroubles in the horizontal dimension of the mountain pass and in the vertical dimension of art history. Referring to the theme of “home-

⁸ Sculptures de Degas à Picasso. Collection Fondation Pierre Gianadda. Étroubles Vallée d’Aoste 19 juin – 12 septembre 2010 (Exhibition catalogue): 2.

⁹ Sculptures de Degas à Picasso. Collection Fondation Pierre Gianadda. Étroubles Vallée d’Aoste 19 juin – 12 septembre 2010 (Exhibition catalog): 1.

¹⁰ Sculptures de Degas à Picasso. Collection Fondation Pierre Gianadda. Étroubles Vallée d’Aoste 19 juin – 12 septembre 2010 (Exhibition catalog): 1.

lessness”, we might say that Giacometti, Picasso, Rodin and other geniuses appear here in the role of those “deprived of their home, their own dwelling place”. But we should also notice that they were assigned an entirely new role in an “alien, unfamiliar place”, where their ties with the artists who are here “at home, at their place” are emphasized. When explaining the new place of old art, we should, rather than use the axiological strategy – a historically consolidated order of values – adopt the strategy of the map, which is based on the acceptance of the co-presence of different value orders neighboring one another in the space whose center is defined by the route of wandering (migration). In *Étroubles* the open space of the museum-town, and the closed, windowless small space of the gallery of great masters *From Degas to Picasso*, resemble a polyphonic musical piece based on the technique of counterpoint. This point of view seems, however, to be accessible to few of the hundred thousand people who visit *Étroubles* every year.

The interpretation of the Pierre Gianadda Foundation’s spatial-artistic realizations in *Étroubles* should “take the measure for architecture, the structure for dwelling”¹¹ (if go back once again to Heidegger’s words). The open forms of the works and the open forms of the landscape take the function of an epistemological metaphor. Building the space of language must also take into account the open space of description, the blurred boundaries between the artistic and the natural, and between the long ago and the present. The *Étroubles* realization can be treated as a reflection of the deep changes in the postmodern understanding of the place and space of artistic activity. The concept of the “pass”, like the earlier one of the “bend” (turning point) can be understood metaphorically. The art on the pass boldly selects works out of a broad range of artistic achievements; sometimes it is inspired by them, at other times it cites them or is created independently.

The placing of interpretation within the postmodern discourse implies respect for the rules of this discourse, i.e. the ability to cross borders, the indeterminacy of sense, and undecidability. The *Museum in the Open Space* persuades us to adopt this way of responding to new spaces of art. The relationships between present-day art and the art of the past are an excellent example of the interpenetration of many levels of meaning within the discourse of art history. The discourse itself has been involved into the entangled network of relationships with other discourses and, along with them as the space of language, contrasted with the physical space. The metaphors of the tourist and the wanderer have been subjected to a characteristic process of demetaphorization, thus depriving the concept of physical context of its “textuality”. Accepting the wandering (migration) of meanings, the language of theory will

¹¹ M. Heidegger, *Odczyty i rozprawy*, transl. by J. Mizera, Wyd. Baran i Suszczyński, Kraków 2002, p. 179.

probably employ some more metaphors. The deconstruction of the opposition between speech and writing – “pure” philosophical and literary discourse – and between a closed place and open space opens new horizons, including ones for the art of great masters.

SZTUKA WIELKICH MISTRZÓW NA PRZEŁĘCZY (streszczenie)

Tematem rozważań jest proces najpierw tekstualizacji, a następnie powrotu znaczenia fizycznego otoczenia sztuki. Ogólne pojęcie kontekstu rozumianego jako sfera znaczeń sytuujących dzieła wobec siebie jako fizyczne otoczenie dzieła i jako sytuacja społeczno-historyczna wypiera metaforyka przestrzeni i miejsca. Sprzyjają temu poststrukturalistyczne przemiany w filozofii kultury i estetyce, które doprowadzają do ujawnienia i zakwestionowania filozoficznych założeń językowych koncepcji kontekstu. Podjęty jest problem poznawczej wartości metafory i zasadności użycia Heideggerowskiej kategorii bezdomności do opisu sytuacji w sztuce współczesnej. Przestrzeni języka przeciwstawiona zostaje fizyczna przestrzeń powstawania i odbioru dzieła sztuki. Początek procesu bezdomności fizycznej sztuki w twórczości neoawangardy jest jednocześnie momentem zwrotnym w traktowaniu przestrzenności, fizyczności i materialności w sztuce. Zobrazowaniu zmian, jakie charakterystyczne są dla ponowoczesnego kontekstu sztuki posłużyła interpretacja realizacji przestrzenno-artystycznych Fundacji Pierra Gianaddy w Étroubles w Dolinie Aosty, a w szczególności opis ekspozycji „Sculptures de Degas à Picasso”. Relacje pomiędzy sztuką współczesną a sztuką dawną nawiązywane w *Muzeum na otwartej przestrzeni* można traktować jako zwieńczenie procesu powrotu znaczenia fizycznego otoczenia sztuki. W tekście wykorzystywane są metafory zakrętu i przełęczy, z jednoczesnym wskazaniem na dokonujący się proces „demetaforyzacji”, podobny do tego, który objął metafory turysty i wędrowca.

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THE AESTHETICS OF HOSPITALITY: THE DECONSTRUCTIONS OF THE AT-HOME

Abstract: The paper discusses Derrida's concept of hospitality, which perfectly describes the experience of losing the sense of feeling at home and reveals the disintegrating entrance of Otherness into a coherent home space. Jacques Derrida's theory makes it possible to deconstruct the familiar home space, which, however, does not constitute its destruction. Revealing the complex and ambiguous nature of the challenge of hospitality, he perceives the sense of feeling at home as one of the necessary conditions of a stable subject. This is the subject whose greatest fear is Otherness, which could disrupt, unsettle his permanent structure and the sense of certainty. Therefore, the author examines the fear of strangeness and the nostalgic longing for the sense of feeling at home as depicted by David Lynch and Michael Haneke in their films. Then he passes on to the field of contemporary art, which not only reveals the fact that something has happened to the house we have known so far, but it also allows for the creative deconstruction of feeling at home. The art works selected by the author break the binary oppositions: one's own/someone else's, familiar/strange (Jessica Sue Layton), close/distant (Shizuka Yokomizo) and finally the most important one: interior/exterior (Marja Piriälä, Eve Dent).

Keywords: hospitality – hospitality – deconstruction – at-home – interior/exterior.

Home is no longer what it seemed to be. Its only recent stable structure has disintegrated and expanded, so that we begin to feel like guests everywhere, while the host is out of our sight. Marc Augé is among those who have noted this phenomenon, juxtaposing the disappearance of traditional sites associated with identity and history with the emergence of the so-called *non-places*¹. These are areas of airports, shopping malls, highways, subway stations which do not belong to anybody and nobody belongs to them. Homelessness as the impossibility of feeling at home becomes a standard condition of the modern man who moves at a dizzying pace.

¹ See: M. Augé, *Non-places: Introduction to an anthropology of supermodernity*, transl. by J. Howe, Verso, London–New York 1995.

Therefore, I would like to point out Derrida's concept of hospitality which perfectly describes the experience of losing the sense of feeling at home and reveals the disintegrating entrance of Otherness into a coherent home space. Jacques Derrida's theory makes it possible to deconstruct the familiar home space, which, however, does not constitute its destruction. Revealing the complex and ambiguous nature of the challenge of hospitality, he perceives the sense of feeling at home as one of the necessary conditions of a stable subject. This is the subject whose greatest fear is the Otherness which could disrupt, unsettle his permanent structure and the sense of certainty. Therefore, I will examine the fear of strangeness and the nostalgic longing for the sense of feeling at home as depicted by David Lynch and Michael Haneke in their films. Then I will pass on to the field of contemporary art, which not only reveals the fact that something has happened to the house we have known so far, but it also allows for the creative deconstruction of our feeling at home. The art works I have selected break the binary oppositions: one's own/someone else's, familiar/strange (Jessica Sue Layton), close/distant (Shizuka Yokomizo) and finally the most important one: interior/exterior (Marja Pirilä, Eve Dent).

AMBIVALENT HOSPITALITY

Hospitality as a dynamic event, a meeting of at least two completely different people, is itself a dual and ambiguous concept. Therefore, Derrida's concept always consists of two types of hospitality, two different visions of receiving a guest which actually seem to be inextricably intertwined².

The first is conditional hospitality, i.e. a clearly defined way of receiving visitors according to more or less formalized rules. In this case, the host is expected to make an invitation and the guest to accept it. This type of agreement, a kind of pact, allows both of them to coexist safely, and, above all, it prevents unannounced arrival time, or even an unwanted intrusion of a stranger into a home space. The invitation initially appears as a gesture of openness and acceptance of the otherness, however, on the other hand, it very quickly becomes a clear presentation of the conditions of the agreement which the newcomer should abide by. The visitor knows exactly how long he can stay as a guest, he knows the terms and conditions of the visit and that he must repay his host in some way.

An essential feature of conditional hospitality is its involvement of language as necessary to formulate the invitation. Therefore, it is inevitable to know

² See: J. Derrida, *Of Hospitality*, transl. by R. Bowlby, Stanford University Press, Stanford, California 2000.

the everyday code of the host. Using common, understandable vocabulary, both sides may achieve a sense of familiarity and security, so desired by family members facing a stranger's visit. Sharing a common language also allows the host to put questions to the unnamed newcomer who will temporarily stay with them under one roof. Once the stranger reveals his identity, he ceases to be dangerous and at the same time, as having his own name, he begins to be responsible for his actions before the law³. Asking questions, or even interviewing guests, is an integral ritual of conditional hospitality. On the other hand, the guest often feels obliged to tell the host about himself and his experiences, thus, at least to some extent, rewarding him for the offered refuge, asylum.

The normative and linguistic nature of conditional hospitality is emphasized by coexistence-friendly, overexploited polite forms. Using them, we remove the unfamiliar Otherness out of sight, denying it proper welcome. All of these conventional and courtesy treatments are intended to fill in the terrifying abyss of estrangement, to neutralize the separateness of the unknown, nameless stranger or foreigner. In this way, every stranger is welcomed and received as familiar, and consequently the visit of such a subordinate guest may proceed without any interruption. The Other, who often arouses the astonishment and opposition of the family members, who does not respect the rules of the house, is oedipalized⁴. Owing to familiar phrases and pernicious language, the unfamiliar, mysterious stranger becomes a member of the family, is domesticated (made their own), named, and as completely harmless, he is henceforth subject to the undivided authority of the host, the law of the landlord, the father.

TOWARDS THE UNCONDITIONAL HOSPITALITY

Meanwhile, the unconditional hospitality rejects the coats of rules, laws, conventions and courtesy, to authentically invite the Other to its house. Given the problematic nature of the language to be used by absolute hospitality, Derrida admits that when we want to talk about it, *we do not know what hospitality is*⁵. We never know exactly what it stands for and we simultaneously agree to exist in this uncomfortable state of cognitive suspension, uncertainty and tension. Ignorance as a constitutive feature of unconditional hospitality accompanies us throughout the guest's stay and results from the

³ *Ibid.*, p. 27.

⁴ Cf. G. Deleuze, F. Guattari, *Thousand Plateaus. Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis–London 2003, pp. 240-241.

⁵ See: J. Derrida, "Hostipitality", *Angelaki: Journal of Theoretical Humanities*, vol. 5, No. 3 (December 2000), pp. 3-18.

fact that taking him under our roof, we just do not know whom we give shelter to. In this way, we open ourselves totally to the unknown, not seeking at all costs to understand and domesticate the newcomer, but we wait for the unexpected, the ignorance that is to come (*à venir*).

If we want to turn to absolute hospitality, we simultaneously enter what is unstable, flickering, dynamic and only ambiguously outlined on the horizon of thought. We are moving toward the stranger as different, foreign, and above all incomparable with anything known to us. In this case the visitor comes without an invitation which, despite its cordiality, always turns out to be a gesture of power and is directly linked to the recognition of the host's law. Therefore, a visit of an unannounced, uninvited guest always becomes an intrusion, distortion, or even violation of domestic order, a kind of illegal invasion.

The absolute hospitality does not need words, what is more, it shuns them, because the unconditional hospitality uses the speech of silence. Abandoning a common language, you cannot define conventions, set conditions of receiving strangers, you can no longer place restrictions on them, sign contracts with them or ask them to recompense for your hospitality. Why does Derrida so strongly emphasize the fact that hospitality should be expressed in silence? The problem is that as soon as I start to speak, to use common vocabulary, use the institution of language, I cease to be a stranger, the idiomatic other, I am neither a separate entity, nor myself any longer⁶. If the visitor does not want to lose his autonomy, he can not reveal his identity, open his mouth to say his name. However, receiving a stranger according to unconditional hospitality should proceed without inquiring about the visitor's identity, i.e. his name, place of origin, destination and length of stay. So we should create a situation where the newcomer without an invitation and thus not authorized to impose on our hospitality, stays with us under one roof illegally, sometimes secretly, and to the very end he is just a nameless stranger on an uneasy ground. Absolute hospitality is more a project, a challenge posed to us – the possibility of the impossible.

THE SUBJECT AS A HOME BIRD

It is hard to imagine a family home without its owner, the so-called father of the family (*pater familias*). It is he who is expected to invite, welcome, receive the arriving guests, and what is more, he also defines the conditions under

⁶ As soon as one speaks, as soon as one enters the medium of language, one loses that very singularity [...] The first effect or first destination of language therefore involves depriving me of, or delivering me from, my singularity. J. Derrida, *The Gift of Death*, transl. by D. Willis, University of Chicago Press, Chicago 1995, p. 60.

which the hospitality is offered. By controlling the flow of visitors, he not only distinguishes his own visitors from strangers, but his most important task is to protect the household (the interior) against the exterior. According to the head of the family, everything that is outside the clear boundaries of the house, pushes on the walls, almost squeezes through the doors and windows to freely pour over the space of the flat⁷. The host does not want to allow his family nest limits to disperse under any circumstances, as he usually much appreciates the feeling of being the master in his own house.

Derrida defines the sense of feeling at home, so much guarded by the host, with the term *at-home* (*chez-soi*)⁸. This is simply the interior we inhabit, with which we are closely connected and stay in constant homely relations. However, linguistic tradition has preserved all of this special, often sentimental experience in the meaningful saying *home sweet home*. Of course, it refers not only to the living space of the house, but also to the broader notion of belonging to a family, nation, country, or the community of citizens.

We can therefore venture to say that there is no stable, sustainable subject without a sense of belonging to one's own home. However, all people having their own, more or less rich inner life, are in some way the hosts at their own home where they reign supreme. This phenomenon of possessing oneself⁹, typical of human condition, can be illustrated with the metaphor of the subject-home bird who virtually never leaves his/her house, since s/he carries it with them everywhere. Therefore, no one from their birth to death is able to leave and abandon oneself, and thus to part with one's own inner life¹⁰. In other words, the subject is a shelter, a house without which we can neither express, imagine, nor conceptualize ourselves (*my home is my castle*).

It becomes clear that the consistent, unshakable subject-home bird needs to constantly experience the undisturbed sense of being at home, contrary to nomads who permanently change their places of temporary residence. Meanwhile, the act of protecting the house against the outside world as performed by the sophisticated host with proper diligence and perseverance appears in

⁷ Cf. J. Derrida, *Dissemination*, transl. by B. Johnson, University of Chicago Press, Chicago 1981, p. 128.

⁸ See: J. Derrida, *Act of Religion*, transl. by G. Anidjar, Routledge, New York–London 2002, p. 364.

⁹ In his fundamental ontology, Martin Heidegger describes a similar state with a concept *Jemeinigkeit* (*always-being-my-own-being* or *mineness* or *in each case mine*.) See: M. Heidegger, *Being and Time*, transl. by J. Stambaugh, State University of New York Press, Albany 1996, pp. 41-43.

¹⁰ Derrida in a similar way deals with the phenomenon of the mother tongue: *What in fact does language name, the so-called mother tongue, the language you carry with you, the one that also carries us from birth to death? Doesn't it figure the home that never leaves us? [...] Wouldn't this mother tongue be a sort of second skin you wear on yourself, a mobile home? But also an immobile home since it moves about with us?*. J. Derrida, *Of Hospitality*, p. 89.

this context as a defence of the hard subject against fragmentation and loss of integrity. Derrida alone points out the possibility of such an interpretation, asking: *is not hospitality an interruption of the self?*¹¹

HOSPITALITY – AN INTERRUPTION OF THE SELF

The unconditional hospitality is currently perceived as a disruption of some domestic order, but primarily as a real threat to the unity of the SELF. The more we perceive the subject as a certain inviolable, harmonious whole and fullness, the greater is the threat associated with the arriving outsider. Then the person is perceived as an interloper, carrying the risk of intrusion and disruption of the subjective individuality, sovereignty. The modern xenophobic fears of the subject-home bird which are to save him/her from dispersion, are very well depicted by two directors, David Lynch and Michael Haneke.

In one of his best films *Lost Highway* (1997), Lynch perfectly demonstrates how the stratification and intermingling of personalities of the main characters (Renee/Alice and Fred/Pete) inevitably results in disrupting the cohesion of the house where nobody can feel safe and at home any longer. Fred's apartment becomes a space inhabited by Otherness symbolized by the strange and amazing figure of the Mystery Man who appears out of nowhere. One of the most terrifying scenes in film history shows a party where Fred comes face to face with a mysterious individual who tells him he is now in his house. When the main character does not believe the absurd words, the Mystery Man pulls out a phone and tells him to call his apartment. Self-confident Fred unhesitatingly dials his home number and to his horror hears in the earpiece the voice of the uninvited guest, who after a moment adds: *I told you I was here.*

In his films, Lynch shows in many ways what happens when a subject opens himself up to Otherness and begins to lose control of the SELF, and as a host – of his own home. Yet this is a nostalgic vision of subjectivity imbued with the fear of the breach of a coherent whole, of disturbance, the upsetting of what has been stable so far. The house is penetrated and ransacked by the invited unknown newcomer, which permanently affects the sense of security of its residents. In a sophisticated manner, the director adapts and refines the theme, so well-known from popular films, of the so-called haunted houses whose ambiguous status always evokes horror in the audience.

The growing feeling of anxiety evoked in *Lost Highway* is further intensified by the impression of being constantly watched and peeped at in one's own home. The main characters receives anonymous parcels with video

¹¹ J. Derrida, *Adieu to Emmanuel Levinas*, transl. by P.-A. Brault, M. Naas, Stanford University Press, Stanford 1999, p. 51.

cassettes showing his apartment: first the stranger records the outside façade of the house, then he walks inside and finally captures Renee and Fred sleeping in their bed. The structure of the house/subject has been disturbed and thus has lost its tightness. A similar motif can be found in Haneke's later film *Hidden* (*Caché*, 2005). Here again, just as in Lynch's movie, there is only an implied stranger who, watching the house of the main characters, sends them anonymous recordings. Slowly, but definitely, he enters the intimacy of the family and, penetrating it, he violates and undermines the illusory basis of their unity. In this way, Haneke stresses that a family home is never a consistent, closed, hermetically sealed structure subjected to the control of the host. In this case, the intruders who visit the household often represent the dark secrets of each of the families, unlawfully, illegally living in their clean, neat and cozy apartments.

HOSTIPITALITY – BETWEEN HOSPITALITY AND HOSTILITY

The xenophobic fears of the subject-home bird, who is terrified of the transformation, change and violation of their ordered structure that comes with the stranger, can be justified only if we understand the house/subject as a finished, ready-made whole – the inside. Emphasizing the ambivalent nature of hospitality, which is never completely open and thus is inextricably linked with the possibility of violence, Derrida creates the concept of *hostipitality* (*hostipitalité*.) At this point he refers to the ambiguous Latin word *hostis* which means both a guest and an enemy, depending on how we want to receive an arriving stranger, an alien, a foreigner¹².

The cordialities of conditional hospitality conceal violence, as the host forces the guest to praise one another and communicate in a foreign language. In turn, the attempts to implement unconditional hospitality are often lined with panic fear of the other as a Trojan horse that comes from outside only to disintegrate and destroy our household/subjectivity under the cover of night. The fears of violence visiting the family home (the other) are reflected in Haneke's works¹³, especially in his popular *Funny Games* (1997 and 2007).

¹² Cf. J. Derrida, *Of Hospitality*, p. 45.

¹³ We should examine all Haneke's films in terms of violence as in his works this always becomes a disturbing other, guest, intruder who comes from nowhere and appears in a home space. Starting from the self-destruction of a family home in *Der siebente Kontinent* (1989), a catastrophic vision of the end of a secure world in *Le temps du loup* (2003), through *Funny Games* (1997, 2007) and *Caché* (2005) I analyze here, to his most recent film *Das weiße Band* (2009) where no terrifying exterior exists any longer, yet a small German village is permeated with mysterious internal violence which is committed by children and is beyond the control of adults.

The film shows the impotence of the absolute hospitality, telling the story of a family who take two young men (Peter and Paul) under their roof. On the surface, the guests are cultured and well mannered, they use polite forms, yet in their numerous requests to the hosts they progress further and finally go beyond all bounds of decency. As guests they take complete control not only over the house, but also over the fate of the terrorized residents whom they bully physically and mentally. In Haneke's film, the powerless, defenceless hosts are held hostage by their guests (host /hostage)¹⁴. The roles are reversed and it is the host (*l'hôte*) who turns out to be the guest (*l'hôte*) in their own house which at this point no longer belongs to them.

The director of *Funny Games* shows the gradual destruction of home and family, carried out deliberately by two ferocious, strange outsiders who have been warmly invited inside. We can look at Lynch's and Haneke's films through the prism of nostalgia for the lost homestead, the sense of feeling at home, or the fear of the other (violence). Nevertheless, the most striking and consistent observation of the two directors is that something irreversible has happened to the house/subject. Does this mean they have been destroyed?

As long as the house and the inseparable subject are seen as an inviolable whole, a hermetic unity, then any change, alienation will be considered as a threat of annihilation. Dismissing even the most sophisticated, nostalgic and xenophobic images, Derrida presents hospitality as deconstruction of the home/subject rather than their destruction¹⁵. Therefore, the disruption of the at-home, stratification of the coherent space, the coziness of the apartment, as well as the undermining of its ownership are used here primarily to open up to creative and liberating multiplicity. However, deconstruction itself as an interpretative practice is an example of absolute hospitality which affects the text not to destroy it, but to provoke an unlimited range of interpretations – to make room for the Other.

LOOK WHAT I SNITCHED FROM YOUR HOME

Let us for a moment forget about the dark and frightening visions of the destruction of our homes/subjects carried out by unknown newcomers, strangers. Let us turn toward the unconditional hospitality, the creative and optimistic deconstruction of being at home. Enthusiastic expansion, stratification of the already closed apartment spaces, opening houses to the unpredictable is successfully implemented in contemporary art.

¹⁴ See: J. Derrida, *Act of Religion*, p. 365.

¹⁵ *Hospitality – this is a name or an example of deconstruction*, [...] *Hospitality is the deconstruction of the at-home*, *Ibid.*, p. 364.

One of the more interesting works in this respect was a nine-month, multi-phase project by Jessica Sue Layton *Look what I snitched* (2007)¹⁶. The artist resided at that time in temporarily abandoned houses the owners had left in her keeping and she stayed in each of them for three weeks. The hosts gave their homes to the outsider who interpreted this as an invitation to contribute to the already intimate, private life spaces¹⁷. Some feared the squatter left on her own would seek out their secrets. Others, simply being hospitable, lent their apartments for a few weeks just as they usually did when they were going away.

Interpretatively, the most important point of this project turns out to be the absence of the host, the state when the landlord disappears from view. We do not know exactly what has happened to them, but they have certainly not been captured by hostile forces, and their life is not in danger; they have just temporarily voluntarily gone away. Thus, their power over the apartment has been weakened, the masters of the house no longer totally control the domestic agenda and they are no longer its guarantor. The new poor condition¹⁸ of the flat and its host allows the multiple temporary tenants, the fundamentally different, unfamiliar others to enter the space.

In the absence of the subject-home bird, the artist carried out a series of creative violations, interventions in the house structure in order to deconstruct the sense of being at home. She introduced colors to some of the apartments or altered the existing ones. For example, she changed the colors inside cabinets or of intimate bedclothes. She made alien elements slowly penetrate the home spaces, changing their atmosphere. Sue Layton organized objects in a completely different way, she arranged book collections according to their colours rather than themes and she put some books in the freezers so that they would not lose the freshness of thought contained in them too quickly.

Nevertheless, it turned out that on their return, the owners were very slow to discover during their daily routines the changes the artist had made. Not till one of them was eating, did he notice the cutlery had been replaced with new one, which in some way also affected the taste of the consumed food¹⁹. The fact that the household members did not know exactly how much the artist had intervened in their interiors made the already homely houses become uncanny and mysterious. Even long after Sue Layton's visit, the hosts encountered the signs of her stay by chance and unexpectedly, which always shook their sense

¹⁶ <http://www.jessicasuelayton.com/subletting.html> (2 July 2011).

¹⁷ We can see a similar situation in the film by Kim Ki-Duk where the main character leading a nomadic life moves into the houses temporarily abandoned by their hosts. See: *Bin-jip* (3-Iron, 2004).

¹⁸ The concept of weakness is analyzed by Gianni Vattimo, among others, in his book: *The End of Modernity: Nihilism and Hermeneutics in Postmodern Culture*, transl. by J. R. Snyder, Polity Press, Cambridge 1991.

¹⁹ <http://www.jessicasuelayton.com/subletting6.html> (2 July 2011).

of feeling at home. Some, in turn, were looking for all these changes, becoming sensitive to the otherness and strangeness that could inhabit their houses, changing them, but not destroying.

The artist overturned and modified the physical environment of the apartments, but it was not a solely one-sided relationship. The houses she lived in, she even flirted with, impersonating the host, also changed her. She tried to enter into an intimate relationship with each lent space, she would put on the hosts' clothes and ask to take pictures of her in the interiors left without supervision. Owing to that, she would become for a moment as if a lady of the house, but putting on the residents' clothes, she could not know that they had left them just because they simply did not like to wear them. When one of the hosts returned, he saw a picture of Sue Layton instead of his own in a similar pose and in his everyday clothes he had never put on, which only amplified the effect of strangeness. What is more, the artist took some things from each house and the surprised hosts could see them in a gallery space, after the project was completed. In this way, they watched their belongings which no longer belonged to them. Similarly, their violated apartments, full of evidence of someone else's presence, were no longer completely their own. The artist deliberately distorted and upset the opposition: one's own/someone else's, contributing in this way to the deconstruction of the sense of feeling at home (*at-home*.)

DEAR STRANGER...

Strangers (1998-2000) by Shizuka Yokomizo is another project that refers to Derrida's challenge of unconditional hospitality. This is a series of photographs of unknown people standing in the windows of their homes. The artist sent anonymous letters that began with the words *Dear Stranger*. She asked the addressees to switch on the light at a fixed time at night and stand in the open windows of their apartments. Then the artist, who was outside, invisible in the prevailing darkness, could take pictures of them. The observed people were asked to wear their everyday indoor clothes and stand motionless for 10 minutes in their lit rooms. Those who did not want to be photographed, were told to just cover their windows, thereby manifesting their refusal. The photographed residents received after a time a small print of the pictures with the artist's name, her address and phone number. They could call her if they did not want their photographs to be made public.

Yokomizo's works primarily provide a tense confrontation of two completely alien people. Everything that prevents it, is removed, the pictures show window curtains, bars in the windows, which in everyday situations make such meet-

ings difficult or protect against them. The residents, however, open up themselves, accept the unknown and draw back the curtains, they expose themselves to the gaze from outside. This hospitality speaks the language of silence, no one utters a word here. There is only a silent presence of the other whom they want neither to domesticate nor subordinate, entering the known, familiar space of language.

It is vital that the artist did not want to meet the residents, make them her own, but as she said: 'I wanted to come closer to a stranger, as close as possible, but as a stranger'²⁰. She aimed at a silent meeting without recognition, which in no case would strive to abolish the status of unfamiliarity. The received Otherness, if it is to remain as it is, cannot be expressed, reduced to language, and thus rejected in it and lost. Therefore, the project took place under the cover of night, in the darkness of ignorance which was to constantly accompany the confrontation, and which was never to be overcome.

The hospitality we deal with here assumes that from the beginning until the end of the meeting, both participants remain strangers. Here ignorance is not a pathological condition which calls for the earliest possible intervention in the form of familiarization. Therefore, there is no space for curiosity that demands fulfillment and often accompanies the confrontation with the unknown. Emotions come primarily from the close presence of the chilling unknown, rather than from the unfulfilled and useless desire for knowledge. The encounter would never be so exciting if we could not see the intimate details of the flats, the promise of familiarity which we can indeed enter, yet the state of the close estrangement is too emotional to lose it. Therefore, the heroes of Yokomizo's works stand in stillness, a kind of impasse, they are stuck in a certain awkwardness, as if on the border of cognition, yet crossing it is not their purpose.

This unusual combination of intimacy and alienation the artist has achieved in her photographs is intensified by the invisible barrier between the strangers – the window pane. Its transparency makes the meeting possible, while on the other hand, it prevents coming any closer, ensures some distance and separation that intensifies the sense of alienation. So Yokomizo does not offer an easy solution to the problem of unlimited hospitality, but rather shows its aporetic nature, where the visitor is both close to and far from us, familiar and utterly alien.

INTERIOR/EXTERIOR

Arranging the meeting with a stranger, Yokomizo stops us at the border, the exciting edge of cognition. Granted, she brings the familiar and alien together,

²⁰ See: *Shizuka Yokomizo: Distance*, Spacex 2004 – exhibition catalogue.

but maintains the distance between them; despite the meeting, each of them functions separately. The Finnish artist Marja Pirilä goes a step further, trying to overcome the binary opposition of interior/exterior. In her art projects, using the phenomenon of *camera obscura* (darkened chamber), she makes the external landscape we usually watch from the window cover the walls like wallpaper²¹. Owing to this method, it is not only light but also the images from the outside world that penetrate the usually closed and tightly protected home spaces. The things that have previously existed outside, everything we wanted to be separated from by the walls, we can experience now in our apartment, on the walls of our own room.

I would like to mention here two projects by Pirilä. One of them is *Speaking House* (2006), where external images were displayed in an abandoned mental hospital. This turns out to be an excellent model of a sealed house where the division between the interior and exterior is almost impassable. The hospital was built so that its interior would never meet with the outside world. This normally unavailable, inhospitable facility first had to be destroyed, decomposed so that it could be opened to the external otherness. Therefore, the walls bear the visible work of time which has impaired their power to defend against a free pass of visitors.

A series of photographs *Interior/Exterior* (1996-2002) is another project of the artist where she also applies the *camera obscura* method. This time Pirilä takes pictures of people in their private homes whose interiors are permeated, due to her work, with the external landscape. The outside world penetrates, pours into the flats as a result of which we can no longer treat them as isolated, enclosed spaces. The division into interior/exterior, private/public is abolished. The house is open and we are surprised with the lack of borders and walls that change into the available spaces of the sky, parks and forests.

Through her works, the artist points out that even if we want to build houses isolated from the exterior, we never really live alone²². We always share our home space with others, and its boundaries are never clearly defined. The landscape that pours inside distorts the perception of household items as separate; all of them blend together and overlap in an interesting way. Pirilä has managed to create a reality devoid of the exterior which in some way could be excluded or ignored. We have nothing to fear, because in an open house, we get into relationships with everything. This is an incredible space, giving a sense of security, without isolation and without the fear of something

²¹ http://www.marjapirila.com/interior_text.html (2 July 2011).

²² Writing about the infinite hospitality, Derrida notes: *One never eats entirely on one's own*. J. Derrida, "Eating Well or the Calculation of the Subject: An Interview with Jacques Derrida" in: *Who Comes After the Subject?*, Cadava, Connor, & Nancy (eds.), Routledge, New York 1991, p. 115.

that has come from beyond the boundaries, because they simply no longer exist.

Therefore, people depicted in the photographs are most often lost in a dream that would be impossible in the time of danger. Easy sleep also indicates the lack of willingness to take control of the apartment; the master of the house has fallen asleep, is absent. Watching the series *Interior/Exterior*, we will easily notice that the subjects have been blurred and it is difficult to separate them from the background in which they are located, besides, we have the impression that they are not the most important here. Intoxicated with the scenery, even unconscious residents without anxiety open up to what is made present around them. Entranced, they seem to be as unreal as what they dream about – their homes that no longer constitute the exterior as it actually lives in us.

ANCHOR(ESS)

In Pirilä's work the subject is blurred, loses its limits, gets rid of the managerial role and ceases to be the guarantor of domestic order. In the project *Interior/Exterior* the bodies of the household members merged with the landscape which penetrated into their homes. Meanwhile, in her artistic projects, Eve Dent seems to want to be absorbed by the space and to lose herself in it. By means of a series of bizarre performances, the *Anchor Series* (2003-2007), the artist tries to inscribe her body into the structure of various rooms. Dent enters previously unknown objects and tries to settle in the space, using only her body for this purpose. She squeezes into cracks, corners, niches, she finds cavities, recesses, holes and nooks. This, in a way, resembles exciting hide-and-seek because of the theoretical possibility of hiding completely and losing one's own subjectivity, which eventually does not occur.

The visible fragments of the artist's body form a strange and ambiguous unity with a number of places, while the performer loses her individuality and becomes a heterogeneous bodily-architectural hybrid. She fuses with space, penetrates it, but she is never completely absorbed by the structure. She wants to interact with the room in order to co-create it, rather than to disappear in its abyss. Therefore, her body always sticks out (as in Robert Gober's works), we can often see only her legs, when she is hidden in a fireplace, or her hands sticking out of a closet or a waste bin. The view of the fragmented, partially absorbed Dent certainly evokes anxiety in the audience who see themselves as integral subjects with clear boundaries.

Meanwhile, the artist's activity raises important questions about what it means to inhabit, settle in and belong to a place. Her performances try to look

at the boundaries between the body and space, to explore to what extent we can interact with it and whether we do so to obtain shelter, or for other reasons. Here, Dent was inspired by the phenomenon of mimicry, explored by Roger Caillois²³. He believed that animals do not become similar to the surrounding environment in order to survive, they do not want to hide from danger. Imitation is related to the fact that an insect gets seduced and drawn by a space; this is the source of similarity, not to say sympathy. Therefore, Dent blends into the background, and her subjectivity is no longer hamstrung by her own limits – it dissolves just as it does in Pirilä's work.

The name *Anchor Series* evokes a clear association with the sense of anchoring, belonging to a certain place. On the other hand, the artist is personally influenced by the anchoress who often spent her whole life in a tiny room, cell, or was simply bricked up²⁴. Dent's works, in reference to the notion of mimicry, try to clearly show that we do not build our houses in order to survive or because we feel threatened. We do not enter into proximity with a space to find shelter in it, as we are engaged in a more complex relationship with it, that of attraction and seduction. If we were to read her artistic output in terms of the deconstruction of the sense of establishment, her actions would not encourage us to settle in a space, but to enter some completely different, non-domestic relations.

WE ARE NO LONGER AT-HOME

Home will never be what we have wanted to perceive it so far. It is even more likely that the vision of home created by home birds as a hermetically sealed, warm, rustic space, with us as its only owners and guardians, has never really come true, has not come into existence at all. The works of Sue Layton, Yokomizo, Pirilä and Dent that I have presented, encourage us to creatively intervene in the stuffy and cramped interiors of our homes – to deconstruct our at-home. Derrida's challenge of unconditional hospitality prepares the subject to accept what is yet to come, the still nameless, silent, unknowable otherness. And with the attitude of openness, the house we have tried to inhabit so far, may become a hospitable space and finally cease to exclude and create the illusion of the exterior.

²³ See: R. Caillois, *Mimicry and Legendary Psychasthenia*, transl. by J. Shepley, October 32 (Spring 1985), pp. 17-32.

²⁴ <http://evedent.blogspot.com/2010/12/anchor-series.html> (2 July 2011).

**ESTETYKA GOŚCINNOŚCI – DEKONSTRUKCJE ZADOMOWIENIA
(streszczenie)**

Autor czyni koncepcję gościnności Jacquesa Derridy punktem wyjścia dla refleksji o sztuce współczesnej. Ta doskonale pozwala na opisanie doświadczenia wyrwania z poczucia zadomowienia i ujawnia dezintegrującą inwazję Inności w przestrzeń domostwa. Teoria Jacquesa Derridy umożliwia zdekonstruowanie znanej przestrzeni domu, która jednak nie stanowi w żadnym wypadku jej destrukcji. Ukazując skomplikowany i niejednoznaczny charakter wyzwania gościnności, autor wiąże poczucie zadomowienia (bycia w swoim domu) jako jeden z niezbędnych warunków fundujących stabilny podmiot. To właśnie on najbardziej obawia się Inności, która mogłaby zakłócić, zachwiać jego trwałą strukturę i poczucie pewności. Toteż autor wnikliwie śledzi lęk przed obcością oraz nostalgiczne tęsknoty za poczuciem bycia w domu, skoncentrowane w filmowej twórczości Davida Lyncha oraz Michaela Hanekego. Następnie przechodzi na grunt sztuki współczesnej, która nie tylko ujawnia fakt, że z domem, jaki do tej pory znaliśmy coś się stało, lecz również pozwala na twórczą dekonstrukcję zadomowienia. Wybrane przez autora prace artystek doprowadzają do zwichnięcia opozycji binarnych: własne/cudze, swoje/obce (Jessica Sue Layton), bliskie/dalekie (Shizuka Yokomizo) i wreszcie najważniejszej wewnątrz/zewnątrz (Marja Pirilä, Eve Dent).

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THE CONSTRUCTION OF SUBJECTIVITY IN THEODOR W. ADORNO'S AESTHETIC THEORY: CRITICALITY, REFLECTION, MIMESIS

Abstract: In my article I try to highlight the relation between Theodor W. Adorno's discussion of subjectivity and his conception of art and aesthetic experience. By recalling G. Lukács notion of "transcendental homelessness" I focus on the modernist understanding of the autonomous work of art, as the figure of individual's solitude and a special locus of criticism. The question of subjectivity in Adorno's philosophy is especially interesting because on the one hand he opposed the traditional notion of the subject, regarded as autonomous, self-sufficient and self-identical. On the other hand, however, he felt obliged to defend the individual subject against what he saw as an overpowering force of social "totality". This dialectic was reflected in his conception of art: a work of art was to play a part equally as the means of critique of the individual subjective ego, and a point of resistance for individual consciousness that would shelter it from the threatening dissolution.

Keywords: Modernism – subjectivity – (theory of a) work of art – criticism – Theodor W. Adorno.

One of the most influential ideas of Theodor W. Adorno's aesthetic theory is to be found in his definition of art as a place of critical resistance. Art's relationship with the concept of criticality seems to attain its fulfillment in the rich area of contemporary (post)conceptual art practices and their accompanying discourses¹. However, what keeps contemporary art world from choosing

¹ In contemporary discourse the "critical" value of art often replaces its more traditional aesthetic values to become one of the main criteria of artistic importance. In contemporary practice it is also competed with the idea of "participation", its close rival-relative. See: I. Rogoff, "From Criticism to Critique to Criticality", *Transversal* No. 8, 2006 [*Irit Rogoff: From Criticism to Critique to Criticality*, <http://eipcp.net/transversal/0806/rogoff1/en>, date of entry: 30.07.2011], J.J. Charlesworth, "Criticism after Critique", *Art Monthly*, May 20011, pp. 346-347. See also my article: "Puste miejsce po kulturowych mandarynach. Krytyka sztuki i język teorii" [The empty space after culture mandarins: art criticism and the language of theory], *Kultura Współczesna*, nr 4(66), 2010, pp. 30-44.

Adorno as its patron, or its ally, is his high-modernist aloofness, together with his relentless belief in the special laws of art. While critical art practices are expected today to intervene in ready-made contexts, Adorno's theory was far more concerned with defending the specificity of artistic language. In the case of critical art, its main value is usually located in the artists' sensitivity to the unmentioned and occluded aspects of social or historical reality, their ability to provoke discussion and elicit public response, whereas for Adorno – as Fredric Jameson has put it succinctly – “the work of art ‘reflects’ society and is historical to the degree that it *refuses the social*, and represents the last refuge of individual subjectivity from the historical forces that threaten to crush it”². In other words, if contemporary artists are expected to engage the public, Adorno's “mistake” lay in his absolutist conception of a work that would simultaneously reflect and resist the social reality as a whole.

In this article I would like to address the specific understanding of the critical function of art in Theodor Adorno's aesthetic theory, by questioning its relation with his concept of self. In my analysis I would like to bring to the fore some aspects in which Adorno's philosophical conception of subjectivity was decisive for his theory of art and also determined his particular artistic judgments. This undertaking is far from attempting an easy rejection: I believe that the anthropological and philosophical foundations of Adorno's aesthetics, in its unequalled complexity, still make it provocative and conceptually attractive. His reflection on human subjectivity emphasizes its inner antinomies, and it is highly polemical in relation to the earlier philosophical tradition. However, when translated into aesthetic definitions, his views become narrow and dogmatic. Adorno's thought was close in many respects to avant-garde practices, but he remained at a distance both from avant-garde's engagement and its anarchic spirit. In contrast to the romantic aesthetics of “organic unity”, Adorno opted for the model of “inorganic” work, but nevertheless he wanted it to remain an autonomous entity in order that it could secure its critical meaning³. Although his theory could suggest different possibilities, the reason why he defended the totality of a work of art was closely related to his concept of self – the work of art had to remain a distinct entity, since it served

² F. Jameson, “T. W. Adorno, or, Historical Tropes”, in: *idem, Marxism and Form. Twentieth-Century Dialectical Theories of Literature*, Princeton University Press, 1971, p. 34 (emphasis mine – A. R-M.).

³ Peter Bürger's *Theory of the Avant-Garde* (1974), which argues for a concept of “the avant-garde work of art” as an “inorganic”, fractured unity, is the most representative continuation of this thought. However, what makes his interpretation of the historical avant-garde in part questionable, is the fact that it generally overlooks the ideological and performative side of the artistic movements it tries to describe. In my opinion it proves that choosing Adorno's theory of art as a frame of reference was not the best way of interpreting avant-garde's legacy.

as a “semblance of subjectivity”, an analogue of individual critical consciousness⁴.

MODERNITY, EMANCIPATION, “HOMELESSNESS”

As György Lukács claimed in his famous *Theory of the Novel*, one of the main characteristics of the modern self is its inevitable homelessness in the world in which any objectively assured systems of meaning have been lost. Lukács’s metaphor of “transcendental homelessness” pointed to the unique position of the modern subject, who paid the ultimate price for his individuation in the lack of a metaphysical guarantee and his constant estrangement from the safe, self-sustaining order of being. This was a familiar theme in German intellectual tradition, a secularized theological theorem, continued from Schiller to Hegel, and further to Marx, Simmel and Weber. The proud idea of the Enlightenment – Kant’s definition of *Aufklärung* as “mankind’s exit from his self-incurred immaturity”, which expressed the philosopher’s belief in the possible moral autonomy of man, has been pessimistically translated into the vision of the fall and exile. What was new and special about Lukács’s interpretation was the connection he established between this global historical process and the history of literary genres. Released from its external obligations, he argued, art (literature) became equally “homeless” and socially “useless”, dependent on private interests and expelled to the sphere of privacy. But literary works were not only the passive objects of social processes; according to Lukács they had to play an active part as an objective reflection of those processes and historically changing mentalities. In their narrative forms they could present the drama of individuation and the broken structures of the world. In this way, he said, they could “carry the fragmentary nature of the world’s structure into the world of forms”⁵. Adorno followed this intuition with regard to the social meaning of forms, but without his metaphysical nostalgia for some earlier, purported state of harmony. The emancipation of the individual was inevitable and irreversible, and being faithful to his “homeless” condition remained in his view constitutive of the modern ethos. Adorno’s famous critique of the

⁴ “Introduction”, in: *The Semblance of Subjectivity. Essays in Adorno’s Aesthetic Theory*, by T. Huhn, L. Zuidervaart (eds), Cambridge, Mass., London, 1997, p. 9. The studies collected in this volume offer a wide reconsideration of Adorno’s aesthetics, especially concerning his notion of art as aesthetic semblance, the concept of beauty, the question of language and language-like quality of art, and the notion of “mimetic capacity” he borrowed from Walter Benjamin. Although they point to the questions I will undertake in my article, the problem of the relation between individual self and a work of art was not yet fully developed.

⁵ G. Lukács, *Theory of the Novel. A historico-philosophical essay on the forms of great epic literature*, transl. by A. Bostock, MIT Press, 1971, p. 39.

Enlightenment did not aim at its wholesale rejection; it rather offered internal self-criticism of the Enlightenment project. Art, as well as critical theory, was to point towards its blind spots, to revise its foundations, but without losing its emancipatory impulse.

The “homelessness” of art pointed out by Lukacs, together with his thesis about the “transcendental homelessness” of man, was another name for its modern autonomy. Released from its former heteronomous functions, art has been raised to higher nobility, but this also meant that it risked alienation and falling into insignificance. According to Paul Valéry’s ironical remark, the most visible sign of art’s “homelessness”, were art museums. As “natural” places for works of art – their institutional destination – museums reveal the fact that all works are orphaned, inherently uprooted, deprived of their original function and place. As a collection of various unrelated objects subsumed under the abstract category of *art*, the modern museum testified to their historical, spatial and conceptual displacement. Instead of being a “home” for art, it offered typically heterotopic spaces – a tangle of real and imaginary worlds represented by its exhibits. And with regard to their architectural spaces, museums also seem hardly familiar – arranged as splendid palaces for the public, they may also appear – according to Valéry’s remark – as great “family graves” of masterpieces. Paul Valéry, in his pamphlet, left the museum, this overwhelming “house of incoherence”⁶, with disgust, condemning it for its deathlike and stuffy atmosphere. Adorno was more forgiving, and even if he fully agreed with Valéry’s association of the museum with a cemetery or a mausoleum, his attitude towards this strange accumulation of objects was more favorable⁷. Despite the deathlike effect of an exhibition as a whole – together with Marcel Proust, whom he took as an ally – Adorno chose to look for a spark of life among the crowd of commodified artifacts. As a pure exhibit, a work of art is doomed to reification and indifference – he argued – but in his naïve admiration, a watchful beholder may still enliven it again. By taking a work of art as a fragment of his self, he may produce a new kind of immediacy; by turning it into an element of his consciousness, he may “take it home”.

A remarkable feature of Adorno’s reply to Valéry was his insistence on the thing-like character of a work of art. As Tom Huhn points out, Adorno’s aesthetics steadily favored the object at the expense of the subject, not only for its closeness to Marxist, materialist positions, but also because it was possible

⁶ P. Valéry, “The Problem of Museums”, in: *Degas, Manet, Morisot*, ed. by D. Cooper, transl. by D. Paul, Routledge, London, 1972.

⁷ T. W. Adorno, “Valéry-Proust Museum”, in his *Prisms*, transl. by S. and Sh. Weber, Cambridge Mass., 1981, p. 177.

“to look past the object in order to discern the subject”⁸. By stressing the objectivity of a work of art, and its deathly appearance, Adorno still addressed it as a sign of the alienation of the spirit. The deserted artifact – he assumed – could point to the condition of alienation as a constitutive feature of the modern world; the mute voice of the object may disclose our secret affinity with the world of things. In his view art was bound to participate in the modern condition of alienation, but at the same time it offered the way of transcending it: “In denouncing it, transposing it into the image, this situation becomes its other and as free as the situation denies the living to be”⁹.

On the other hand, Adorno’s emphasis on the objectivity of a work of art was part of his struggle against the inflated concepts of creativity, individual expression and artistic genius¹⁰. He opposed not only the residues of the Romantic rhetoric, but also the extreme subjectivism which he found in contemporary avant-garde movements. In his opinion, in Dada and Expressionism equally, “art is thrown back on the dimensionless point of pure subjectivity, strictly on its particular and thus abstract subjectivity”¹¹. Even if the Dadaists noisily ridiculed all “spiritual depths” and Romantic sentiments, behind their anarchic gestures Adorno saw fervent individualism and purely subjective moods. Many avant-garde movements at the beginning of the twentieth century offered an aesthetic glorification and hyperbolic images of modern instability, all-encompassing confusion and mechanization. In their mimetic assimilation to these specific qualities of modern life, they aimed at a kind of “magical” quickening of the revolutionary times; in their adventurous affirmation of fluidity and unrest, they sought for ever more intense and authentic experience. Adorno did not share this enthusiasm – he saw it as an expression of unrestrained subjectivism which wanted to dispense with all subjectivity to gain the authority and power of something objective. He preferred to defend the concept of a work of art as a relatively autonomous whole – one that could save the sense of the particular. Against the world of complete substitutability and reification, a work of art bore the promise of “truth” and

⁸ T. Huhn, “Kant, Adorno, and the Social Opacity of the Aesthetic”, in: *The Semblance of Subjectivity...*, *op.cit.*, p. 238.

⁹ T. W. Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, ed. and transl. by Robert Hullot-Kentor, University of Minnesota Press, 1997, p. 260. A similar dialectal reversal may be found in Adorno’s discussion concerning the autonomy of art. Art’s autonomous status in a society, “its quality of being a law unto itself” – he argues – is not a sign of freedom, but a part of the general socioeconomic process of reification, which is based on “transforming all goods into consumer goods”. Thus, autonomous work of art is the product of the same process of reification, but what distinguishes it from other seemingly “practical” goods, remains its ultimate and manifest uselessness, by means of which it can critically uncover the true state of affairs. See: T. W. Adorno, “Why Is the New Art So Hard to Understand?”, transl. by Richard Leppert, in: *idem, Essays on Music*, ed. and introduced by R. Leppert, University of California Press, London, Berkeley, 2002, p. 128.

¹⁰ T. W. Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, *op.cit.*, pp. 170-171.

¹¹ *Ibidem*, p. 29.

ontological stability. Paradoxically, therefore, it was to become a privileged harbor for the disinherited and “homeless” subjectivity.

The increased reliance on the category of the work of art was not only typical of Adorno’s aesthetic theory. It became a characteristic feature of modernist criticism, one that distinguished it from the avant-garde movements which renounced the concept of “work”, or accepted it only as their contingent side-effect. Especially after World War II, in the shadow of war and totalitarianism, both in Europe and in America the common modernist schema developed to approach a work of art as an assertion of subjective freedom, a sign of authentic existence, purportedly unrelated to politics. Moreover, against the evils of the capitalist system, a work of art was viewed as the only authentic, individualized “entity” in the ocean of hollow commodities. This mode of thinking offered a discursive ground to support American Abstract Expressionism in the 1940s and 1950s, and parallel movements in Europe¹². A work of art – which remained symbolically and culturally “homeless”, turned out to be a symbolic “home” for all that was humanely vulnerable, endangered by the threatening external forces – whether it was the society, technology, or the irrational forces of the unconscious. In Giacometti’s sculptures or Barnett Newman’s paintings, the central theme was the drama of the human self, whose tragic loneliness was to be communicated solely through their form, in the work’s intimate relation with the viewer. The contemplation of such a work could not be a source of peaceful relief – as Barnett Newman explained, in place of sensual satisfaction, a painting should challenge the viewer, impel his immediate consciousness of his self. It should give him a sense of his own presence, at once transcendent and physical – to address him personally and directly, like the title of Newman’s painting: *Be*¹³.

¹² Cf. S. Gulibaut, *How New York Stole the Idea of Modern Art. Abstract Expressionism, Freedom, and Cold War*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, London, 1983. For a discussion concerning the situation in Polish art: *Odwilż. Sztuka ok. 1956 r.* [*The Thaw. Art around 1956*], ed. by P. Piotrowski, Poznań, 1996; P. Piotrowski, *Znaczenia modernizmu. W stronę historii sztuki polskiej po 1945 r.* [*The meanings of modernism. Towards a history of Polish art after 1945*], Poznań 1999.

¹³ *Be* is the title of a series of paintings by B. Newman (1949), one that is also recalled by J.-F. Lyotard. For a broader analysis of Newman’s work and Lyotard, see my article “Obraz jako sytuacja. Tragizm, podmiotowość i malarstwo według Barnetta Newmana” [Image as a Situation: Tragedy, Subjectivity and Painting according to Barnett Newman], *Teksty Drugie*, nr 5, 2009, pp. 163-184. An expanded critique of Newman’s conception of subjectivity is given by M. Leja, “Barnett Newman’s Solo Tango”, *Critical Inquiry*, vol. 21, 1995.

THE DIALECTICS OF SUBJECTIVITY

As it is widely acknowledged, Adorno's philosophy of art was grounded in his general notion of social and cultural development – modern art was to resist both “instrumental reason” and the growing “culture industry”. In Adorno's aesthetic theory, faithful as it was to the Marxist and Hegelian heritage, a work of art was regarded as a social product, involved in the dialectics of individual subjectivity and social whole. This dialectical view prevented him from embracing both reductionist and determinist social conceptions of art, and art's romantic identification with free subjective expression, or some distant poetic realm. The ultimate role art was to play, if it aspired to be more than simple aesthetic décor, was to reflect the social and historical processes, to objectify them in its forms.

Adorno was fond of repeating his seemingly paradoxical thesis about the dual character of art as being both autonomous and *fait social*¹⁴. This definition suited his philosophical ambition “to reveal the antinomical and self-contradictory character of positive concepts like ‘autonomy’”¹⁵. Adorno's critique of the concept of the aesthetic autonomy of art, especially with regard to its most radical formalist version, was parallel to his critique of the autonomous “bourgeois” subject, as it was conceived in idealist philosophy. As a Marxist critic, following his early lessons of Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, and Freud, Adorno questioned the traditional notion of the subject, regarded as an autonomous, self-sufficient and self-identical being. On the other hand, however, he felt obliged to defend this subject against what he saw as an overpowering force of social “totality”. This ambivalence produced a curious discrepancy between Adorno's “proto-deconstructive” critique of the subject and his highly apodictic and exclusive aesthetic judgments.

On the one hand, therefore, Adorno's dismantling of the substantial unity of the subject brings him close to the French poststructuralists' (Barthes, Foucault, Lyotard) renouncement of the self-identical subject. In this respect, Adorno's theory is now welcomed as a harbinger for more contemporary critical thought¹⁶. On the other hand, however, his aesthetic judgments often appear strikingly limited and dogmatic. In his condemnations of Stravinsky, jazz and all “popular” music, one may find a good quantity of arbitrary pre-

¹⁴ T.W. Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory, op.cit.*, p. 5.

¹⁵ T. W. Adorno, *History and Freedom. Lectures, 1964-65*, ed. by R. Tiedemann, transl. by R. Livingston, Polity Press, 2006, p. 44.

¹⁶ See especially: P. Dews, “Adorno, Poststructuralism, and the Critique of Identity”, in: *Theodor W. Adorno, Critical Evaluations in Cultural Theory*, ed. by S. Jarvis, vol. IV, Routledge, 2007.

sumptions, ethnic prejudice and elitist ignorance¹⁷. It would be too easy in this case to separate the refined theory from private prejudice – between the two levels of Adorno's thought there is a deeper relation. The main theoretical reason for his rejection of such musical forms as jazz or the experiments of John Cage was the supposed elimination of subjectivity which according to him they reflected. In the structural organization of those works Adorno perceived the symptoms of the same process of the weakening of the individual which in his view was specific to "culture industry". His aesthetic choices at this point were determined to a substantial degree by his more general philosophical assumptions.

Surely, however, Adorno's conception of subjectivity was not a foundationalist one; he was far from regarding the individual self as something substantial and given. Like Nietzsche and Freud, Adorno assumed that the notion of self-identical subject is an illusion¹⁸, a secret instrument of self-preservation. The notion of the subject – he claimed – is a "metaphysical hypostasis of the principle of identity"¹⁹. In his argument against the transcendental philosophy of consciousness, Adorno claimed that the ideal of self-legislating reason was in its essence the ideal of domination, mimicking the oppressive and violent relations that reign in the natural world. Drawing on the Freudian concept of the *ego*, he argued that our sense of individuality rests predominantly upon the control of affect and the suppression of instincts – it is based on "the denial of the nature within and without us". This repression lies at the core of the genealogy of the modern bourgeois individual, as Adorno demonstrated in *The Dialectic of Enlightenment*, in his famous interpretation of Odysseus's journey. Odysseus knows that the beauty of the Sirens' song is too tempting for anyone to stand its charm and so it poses a mortal peril for any man who would hear it. Nevertheless, he devises an intelligent trick to listen to this music, by telling his men to bind him to the mast of the ship. In this way Odysseus may indulge in listening to the Sirens' voice, without risking his life. However, what he must sacrifice to save himself is his freedom – the spontaneous urge to follow the music. Adorno's allegorical interpretation of the myth points to the fact that the constitution of the subject involves internalized sacrifice. It proves that the human search for self-identity is violent *per se* – the aspect that was ignored in transcendental and intellectualist definitions of self. Freedom and self-preservation remain therefore in

¹⁷ Cf. M. Paddison, *Adorno, Modernism and Mass Culture: Essays in Critical Theory and Music*, London, 1996; T. Majewski, "Adorno i jazz: źródła idei przemysłu kulturowego", in his *Dialektyczne Feerie. Szkoła frankfurcka i kultura popularna*, [Adorno and Jazz: the sources of the idea of „culture industry”, in: *Dialectical Feeries. The Frankfurt School and Popular Culture*] Łódź 2011.

¹⁸ T.W. Adorno, *History and Freedom*, *op.cit.*, p. 222.

¹⁹ *Ibidem*.

dialectical contradiction, in a way that makes questionable the transcendent, autonomous status of individual consciousness. Thus, Adorno explicitly disavows Kant's moral philosophy, where human freedom was proudly announced to be immediately undermined by its identification with the law. According to Kant – he claimed – “subjects are free in so far as they are conscious and identical with themselves; but then again, they are unfree in this identity in so far as it acts as a form of coercion to which they submit”²⁰.

The dialectical process of Enlightenment, as it was defined by Adorno and Horkheimer in their joint study, meant precisely that the growing mastery of the world, as well as one's increasing control upon oneself, leads finally to its own self-effacement – to the point when subjective domination turns against itself. “As soon as man discards his awareness that he himself is nature, all the aims for which he keeps himself alive – social progress, the intensification of all his material and spiritual powers, even consciousness itself – are nullified (...). Man's domination over himself, which grounds his selfhood, is almost always the destruction of the subject in whose service it is undertaken”²¹. In other words, the very structure that gives rise to the bourgeois individual, brings about its abolition. Adorno's whole theory of aesthetic experience was intended to counter this process, by its logical reversal, as though to save humanity from itself. Either as the experience of art, or of natural beauty, aesthetic experience was assumed to counter the dominance of instrumental reason by pointing to the deficiencies of the discursive mind; against the subsuming operations of conceptual thought (“identity thinking” as he called them) it was to retain the import of sensuous particularity. The concept of natural beauty played a privileged role in this context, because it figured as the reverse of the human domination of nature. For Adorno, natural beauty appears to us as something beyond our intentional projects and intelligible meanings; in this way it reminds us that not everything has exchange value, and not everything fits the grid of our categories. We confront it as completely Other, but not without a feeling of nostalgia or inner affinity. In its specific indeterminacy, natural beauty recalls the repressed “nature” within ourselves²². For this reason Adorno said that its experience is an “anamnesis of freedom”, a recollection of a “world without domination”. However, he immediately added that it is the world “that probably never existed”²³. As a promise of freedom, natural beauty is only an image, a semblance, which would never

²⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 266.

²¹ T.W. Adorno, M. Horkheimer, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, transl. by J. Cumming, New York, 1972, p. 54.

²² For this reason Adorno opposed Hegel's dismissive opinion on natural beauty – against Hegel he claimed that its indeterminacy does not prove its inferiority to artistic beauty, but relates it to the unintentional and spontaneous, which is the mark of freedom.

²³ T.W. Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, *op.cit.*, p. 66.

appear if the autonomous subject was not to bear it. Natural beauty is deceptive in a way, for “it seeks freedom in the old unfreedom”²⁴ – i.e. in the world of nature which, taken literally, proves to be ruled solely by biological determinations and needs.

SUBLIMITY, DISTANCE, AND MONADIC WORK

As human products, works of art rise above nature’s immanence, but nevertheless they retain some of the feeling of indeterminacy and the promise of freedom that is related to natural beauty. They offer it, however, in a more negative way, through the inscription of violence and suffering that Adorno regarded as a feature of any completed artistic form. In its complex structure, the work of art conveys “the historical voice of repressed nature”, one that is “ultimately critical of the principle of the I”²⁵. Its “objective truth” does not consist in some intelligible meaning that one could grasp, but in “subjective experience” [*Erfahrung*] directed against the I”²⁶.

For Adorno, therefore, a work of art is not a “comfortable chair for a tired businessman”, a safe refuge, or compensatory device, but a field of a struggle, where the rational *ego*-principle is subverted and attacked. Like natural beauty, the subjective relation with a work of art involves the moment of surrender, one’s losing oneself, but it is also a state of confrontation, in which individual consciousness is brought to a halt. In *Aesthetic Theory* Adorno often makes use of the words that expressively describe the beholder’s position as one of “surrender”, of being “shaken”, or even “annihilated” in the face of a work. While listening to the music, or reading a poem, one “loses oneself”, “disappears”, or “extinguishes oneself in a work of art”²⁷. It is nevertheless important to stress at this point that this “disappearance” and “forgetting oneself” does not mean for Adorno simple passivity, but only the loosening of rational control. “Freeing from one’s self” means rather “being free towards the object”²⁸, abandoning oneself, in active receptivity to that for which the construction of the work and its material are striving on their own²⁹. The briefest description of this relationship may be found in Adorno’s claim that “under patient contemplation artworks begin to move”³⁰. Thanks to the observer’s attention the works of art may transcend their object-like quality

²⁴ *Ibidem*.

²⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 246.

²⁶ *Ibidem*.

²⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 17.

²⁸ *Ibidem*, pp. 13-14.

²⁹ T.W. Adorno, *Music, Language, and Composition*, in: *Essays on Music*, *op.cit.*, p. 125.

³⁰ T.W. Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, *op.cit.*, p. 79.

and appear as a mode of speech: "Through contemplative immersion the immanent processual quality of the work is set free. By speaking, it becomes something that moves in itself"³¹. Adorno emphasized that this relation of the "object" and "subject" should not be reduced to mere psychological projection – it is not a matter of investing one's individual subjective emotions in the object viewed. Only "reified artworks", products of "culture industry" may function in this way as psychological vehicles of their spectators, but the proper aesthetic experience "becomes living experience only by way of its object, in that instant in which artworks themselves become animate under [the viewer's] gaze"³². Thus, "forgetting oneself", or "loosening the confines of the experiencing ego" is possible only on the condition that the subject remains in a state of utmost concentration: "To catch even the slightest glimpse beyond the prison that it itself is, the I requires not distraction but rather the utmost tension"³³.

This observation resembles another, apparently paradoxical claim from Adorno's *Negative Dialectics*, which stated that one needs "to use the strength of the subject to break through the fraud of constitutive subjectivity"³⁴. As a critic who disclosed the illusion of the self-identical subject, Adorno did not yet invite a complete dissolution of individual self. He actually warned against such dissolution as a "primitive" regression – falling back to the state of undifferentiation, to the raw condition of nature. In his critical narrative about the genesis of the individual self Adorno presented how it is constituted within the dialectic of domination, but he did not assume that it would be possible or worthwhile to escape this dialectic. The only chance to counter it – the one that became the core of his aesthetic theory – was to absorb this dialectic and enclose it within the work of art. Thus, the element of violence, inherent in the mechanism of subjectification, also entered the internal space of a work of art, to gain its autonomy as a principle of formal constraint. This did not mean the final reconciliation of the universal and the particular, but rather the production of a dialectical image which would be critically disruptive for its receivers. Adorno assumed that "aesthetic experience shatters the self-contained individual", it is "the irruption of objectivity into subjective consciousness", but all that happens under the condition of aesthetic distance³⁵. This immediate feeling of shock, as Adorno asserts, is actually a result of mediation – it is a "penetrating and encompassing experience which takes

³¹ *Ibidem*, p. 176.

³² *Ibidem*, p. 175.

³³ *Ibidem*, p. 245.

³⁴ T.W. Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, transl. by D. B. Ashton, New York 1973, p. XX.

³⁵ T.W. Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, *op.cit.*, p. 245.

shape in the fraction of an instant”, for which “the whole of consciousness is required”³⁶.

Adorno’s characteristic of aesthetic experience comes close at this point to the traditional definitions of the sublime. According to its modern theories, offered by Edmund Burke and Kant, the experience of the sublime involves a subjective feeling of being threatened – it makes one painfully conscious of one’s vulnerability and nothingness against the nature’s magnitude and its overwhelming powers. It presents the subject with the image of his own destruction, but finally leaves him safe in his place. In Adorno’s description, the annihilation of the I in the face of art is also not to be taken literally. As he explained, “the disappearance of the I in the moment of the shudder is not real; but aesthetic experiences as such are psychologically authentic and real. For a few moments the I becomes aware, in real terms, of the possibility of letting self-preservation fall away, though it does not actually succeed in realizing this possibility”³⁷. For Adorno the psychological reality of aesthetic experience is not reducible to mere illusoriness of art – contrary to artistic representations, he explains – experiences are not “as if.” Adorno agreed that in modern times it was rather the sublime, not beauty that became the main constituent of art – this distinguished it from artistic craft. His description of the aesthetic experience of art implied a polarity which was characteristic for the sublime: i.e. the polarity and tension between an inherently threatened *ego* and the *ego* that affirms itself as a self-conscious, reflective subject. However, Adorno’s discussion of the sublime diverted from the Kantian interpretation, which relied on the concept of the noumenal, transcendental self. For Kant, in “the fragility of the empirical individual, the eternity of his universal destiny – his spirit – was to unfold”³⁸. In contrast to that, the way Adorno stressed the “reality” of experience complied with his shift of emphasis from the subject’s recognition of his “intelligible essence”, towards his sense of suffering. In Adorno’s commentary on the Kantian definition of the sublime, there is an ironic feeling of someone who knows well that “the sublime is only a step removed from the ridiculous”³⁹. The proud belief in man’s sublime vocation eventually turns into ridicule: “Through the triumph of the intelligible essence in the individual who stands firm spiritually against death, man puffs himself up as if in spite of everything, as the bearer of spirit, he were absolute. He thus becomes comical. Advanced art writes the comedy of the tragic: here the sublime and play converge”⁴⁰. In Kafka’s and Beckett’s plays, tragedy turns into somber comedy, and this is the only way in which it can save itself from

³⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 244.

³⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 245.

³⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 198.

³⁹ *Ibidem*.

⁴⁰ *Ibidem*.

dull pathos. Adorno follows their example to undo the Kantian polarity of the empirical and the noumenal subject and to “reduce the spirit to its natural dimensions”⁴¹, to bring it down to the level of meaninglessness, where it appears hopelessly “mute”⁴².

The sublime dignity of the subject is thus finally undermined, but it is immediately replaced in Adorno’s theory by the power of art. A work of art is posited here as completely other from empirical reality, “polemical” in relation to it – imbued with “negative power”⁴³. Through their closed, self-contained forms works of art “extend the realm of human domination to the extreme, not literally, though, but rather by the strength of the establishment of a sphere existing for itself, which just through its posited immanence divides itself from real domination and thus negates the heteronomy of domination”⁴⁴. This “self-containment” is emphasized in Adorno’s definition of works of art as “windowless monads” – the term he adapted from Leibniz’s *Monadology*. The monads “represent the world they themselves are not” – in their inner dynamic they resemble the dialectic that is external to them⁴⁵. Following Lukacs, Adorno claimed that “the unsolved antagonisms of reality return in artworks as immanent problems of form”⁴⁶. In other words, works of art perform as a kind of convex mirrors in which all dialectical contradictions are sharpened and brought into focus. For this reason they need a coherent form: “it is only as finished, molded objects that they [works of art] become force fields of their antagonisms; otherwise the encapsulated forces would simply run parallel to each other or dissipate”⁴⁷. The work of art should not be received as a bunch of isolated stimuli – the moment of shock, when “the truth, embodied in the aesthetic image, becomes tangible”⁴⁸ is precisely the instant in which those forces converge.

INWARDNESS AND REFLECTIVITY

This moment of shock, or “shudder” in Adorno’s description does not resemble the traditional philosophical notion of *Anschauung*. In several passages

⁴¹ *Ibidem*.

⁴² Albrecht Wellmer concludes that Adorno “rehabilitates of the category of the sublime in the spirit of Beckett”. A. Wellmer, “Adorno, Modernity, and the Sublime”, in his *Endgames. The Irreconcilable Nature of Modernity*, trans. by David Midgley, MIT Press, London 1998, p. 160.

⁴³ *Ibidem*, p. 172.

⁴⁴ T.W. Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, *op.cit.*, p. 77.

⁴⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 5.

⁴⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 6.

⁴⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 176.

⁴⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 244.

of his *Aesthetic Theory* Adorno openly suggests the affinity between aesthetic experience and sexual experience, and precisely its culmination in orgasm⁴⁹. This choice of metaphors emphasizes both the sense of reciprocity in the relation of object and subject, and the involuntary character of aesthetic reaction, as more related with libidinal functions than intellectual apprehension. It also suggests that the sense of immediateness in artistic reception is the effect of one's contemplative involvement with a work of art. But with regard to the question of individual subjectivity, which is my topic, the most important thing is that aesthetic experience is presented here as the moment of highest stimulation and excitement which is at once "shattering" and empowering for the subject⁵⁰. It is quite evident that despite such daring sexual metaphors, and his critique of transcendental philosophy, Adorno was far from promoting the aesthetic reaffirmation of the body. His theory remained traditionally distrustful, or even reluctant, towards the physical aspects of man. Unless it underwent a process of sublimation, all that was related to the body remained for him a limbo of repetition, a synonym of passive subordination.

This philosophical prejudice towards bodily matters is clearly apparent in Adorno's ironic disdain for sensuous pleasure ("tasteful savoring") as one of the possible effects of art. Despite his polemics with Hegel, he held strongly to the Hegelian notion of art as the bearer of "truth" – without such spiritual content everything that aspired to be art would remain trivial and superficial. In opposition to Hegel, Adorno emphasized that this "truth" is not translatable into the language of concepts – it is given only in the inner dialectics of a work of art, in the dynamic of aesthetic experience. The truth of art is not easily absorbed into one's consciousness, but it "touches" us in a moment of shudder. As in the old discourse of the sublime, aesthetic experience remained for Adorno the field of a spiritual battle, where almost all references to the body were to point out its affinity with suffering. Still, in Adorno's dialectic, this suffering remained the measure of the subject's strength.

At the very beginning of his *Aesthetic Theory* Adorno explained how to understand the contradictory status of art as "the social antithesis of society": "The constitution of the sphere of art corresponds to the constitution of the inward space of men as the space of their representation: *A priori* the

⁴⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 176, where he writes: "the way rigidification is unified with what is most intensely alive, effectively makes this experience the incarnate prototype of aesthetic experience."

⁵⁰ In their feminist interpretation of Adorno's writings, Sabine Wilke and Heidi Schlipphacke ("Construction of a Gendered Subject: A Feminist Reading of Aesthetic Theory", in *The Semblance of Subjectivity, op.cit.*) argue that this description of aesthetic experience is specifically "modeled after male orgasm in terms of a dynamic between tension and resolution" (p. 302). In their view, in his theoretical constructions and aesthetic judgments Adorno often unwittingly followed typically patriarchal stereotypes. The model of the modern subject he grappled with was invariably male.

constitution of this space participates in sublimation”⁵¹. This “inward space” of representation is provided by the structure of the work, which means that “authentic” art should turn inward, condense and transform, instead of proceeding in horizontal structures and decentered series of aesthetic events. This structural principle of a work of art was clearly implied in Adorno’s conception of the monad – one that is closed from the outside and dialectically open to the inside. In musical terms, the principle of “inwardness” translated into the classical view that the task of music is “the overcoming of the temporal dimension through articulation”⁵². Musical time, according to Adorno, corresponds with our inward sense of events, and music – like for example Beethoven’s symphonies – may give the experience of external life returning inwardly. It does not happen, however, when music remains a “somatic stimulant”, when it operates on the level of the literal and the contingent, without impelling us to recreate its structure and find its inner continuity.

According to Adorno, this “regressive” tendency to concentrate mainly on isolated “effects” was not accidental, but historically grounded – it was the feature popular music inherited from the earlier Romantic and post-Romantic tradition. Many of the nineteenth-century composers, in his view, already gave priority to the categories extrinsic to the musical structure, such as the colors of the instruments or their immediate psychological effects. In his interpretation this need for intense stimuli was the symptom of the lowered capacity for concentration and the weakening of the subjective self. Although this process was to reach its height in popular music and “culture industry”, it was not only popular forms that he accused of “annihilating” the subject and promoting “regressive listening”. He also had serious reservations about Stockhausen’s serialism and John Cage’s musical experiments, for in both cases subjective time was replaced by cool, objective musical facts. The principle of indeterminacy which became the basis of Cage’s compositions may evoke the feeling of freedom – Adorno remarked – for it “breaks solid, inescapable necessity”, but this kind of freedom means only getting free from oneself, and so it also “belongs to the category of relief for the weakened ego”⁵³.

But the most scandalous work – in Adorno’s view – one that openly invited the annihilation of individual self – was probably Igor Stravinsky’s music for the *Rite of Spring*. In his *Philosophy of Modern Music*, a study that was crucial for his discussion of the state of modern subjectivity, Adorno opposed Stravinsky and Schoenberg as two ideal types, representing the opposite possibilities of modern creation. In Schoenberg’s works, based on his rigid

⁵¹ T.W. Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, *op.cit.*, p. 8.

⁵² T.W. Adorno, “Toward an Understanding of Schoenberg”, in: *Essays on music*, *op.cit.*, p. 639.

⁵³ T.W. Adorno, “Difficulties”, in: *Essays on music*, *op.cit.*, p. 658.

twelve-tone system, Adorno saw the reproduction of the structure of the alienated society and individual's loneliness. In his view, those compositions offered the "mimesis of the hardened and alienated", but this mimetic assimilation to the "dark" reality did not mean a submission – in his view it gave this work a special "eloquence" and the power of subjective resistance. Against this model, Stravinsky's work exemplified for Adorno a deliberate recourse to primitivism, joined with a vicious fascination with pre-individualistic form of society. In the *Rite of Spring*, in the ritualistic structure of beats and repetitions, Adorno noticed the real fulfillment of the libretto's narrative, i.e. the sacrifice of individual subjectivity to an inhuman collectivity. This ecstatic dissolution of self, in Adorno's view, corresponded with the total "dissociation" of musical time and the way the music appealed to the listener's bodily reactions. Adorno did not miss the occasion to point out that Stravinsky's work was music for ballet – a kind of "applied music", and to accuse it of a "pseudomorphosis of painting"⁵⁴ All that to stress the externality of effects, the raw physicality of this music that condemned it to blind repetition.

At many points here in Adorno's arguments one may note a specific inclination for structural homologies and the language of analogy⁵⁵. Music and literary works duplicate on a smaller scale the structures of the social and economic macrocosm – they present the "symptoms" or "reflections" of global situations and processes. This mimetic relation is also emphasized as the basic mechanism of the constitution of the individual self, since – as Adorno asserted, "the solidity and persistence of the subject is the mimesis of the very things that are not intrinsic to the subject"⁵⁶. The strong *ego* in his view is derived "from the hardness and impenetrability of things over which we have no control" – which means it is not constitutive, but "modeled on something external"⁵⁷. But according to Adorno's dialectic, this mimetic process is also the possibility of freedom – probably the only one he accepts as not philosophically naïve. As he puts it: "In its solidity and its determinate nature the *ego* imitates the coercion that is imposed on it from without, so as to be able to

⁵⁴ T.W. Adorno, *Philosophy of Modern Music*, transl. by A. Mitchel, Wesley Blomster, New York, 2004, pp. 191-196.

⁵⁵ Fredric Jameson points this fact in his saying that in Adorno's writings "the language of causality gives way to that of analogy or homology, of parallelism". Jameson, *Marxism and Form*, op.cit., p. 10. However, Jameson quite closely follows this mode of thought in his cultural analysis of the modern and postmodern subjectivity, when he adapts much of Adorno's categories and a similar point of view. Cf. *Postmodernism or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*, Duke University Press, 1991.

⁵⁶ T.W. Adorno, *History and Freedom*, op.cit., p. 193.

⁵⁷ *Ibidem*.

combat it”⁵⁸. As I have tried to show, the means to combat it, for Adorno, are predominantly located in art. While absorbing the force of coercion in its very form, a work of art offers a kind of “inward” space of reflection – it becomes a “semblance of subjectivity”, or a semblance of freedom. This highly “speculative” view of a work of art goes back to the old concept of “microcosm”, or Leibniz’s monad, and may be also the echo of the early German Romantic tradition of such authors as Friedrich Schlegel and Novalis, who regarded a work of art as a place of “infinite reflection”, not a copy of some external reality. This makes Adorno a heir to the romantic philosophy of pure consciousness, despite his many references to Nietzsche and Freud, that supported the naturalistic critique of consciousness⁵⁹. Adorno formulated an acute critique of subjectivity, which in some respects was ahead of Michel Foucault’s concept of subjectification and Gilles Deleuze’s reflection on the “fold”. At the same time, however, he still sought for a positive model of the autonomous ego in pure reflexivity, in his dialectical model of thought which belonged equally to art and critical theory. As Seyla Banhabib remarked, this model of reflection had sometimes a narcissistic quality, resembling the figure of the “monad thinking itself”⁶⁰.

Adorno’s dialectical mode of thought was intended to save “the concrete particular” without losing the view of the whole, but sometimes this dialectic turned into a vicious circle, where “the particular” was lost, and what remained was a fixed pessimistic vision of the world. The total, fatalistic character of this vision prevented him from appreciating the positive possibilities of action and the role of individual subjects in constructing their social and cultural worlds⁶¹. In this case, seeking a proper “home” for criticality in a unified work of art, risked that the dialectic will be frozen, confined to repeating the same misanthropic claims.

⁵⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 230. For an interesting use of Adorno’s concept of mimesis as a means to oppose external determination and destiny, see: A. Huyssen, “On Mice and Mimesis: Reading Spiegelman with Adorno”, *New German Critique* vol. 81, Autumn 1981. Huyssen deliberately evades here Adorno’s general frame of thought, to make his idea more flexible instrument of cultural analysis.

⁵⁹ P. Dews, *Adorno, Poststructuralism, and the Critique of Identity*, *op.cit.*, p. 409.

⁶⁰ S. Banhabib, “Autonomy as Mimetic Reconciliation”, in: *Theodor W. Adorno, Critical Evaluations in Cultural Theory*, vol. II, *op.cit.*, p. 44.

⁶¹ Cf. A. Bowie, *Aesthetics and Subjectivity: from Kant to Nietzsche*, Manchester University Press, 2003, p. 328; A. Wellmer, “The Significance of the Frankfurt school Today”, in: *Endgames*, *op.cit.*, p. 259.

**WYMIARY PODMIOTOWOŚCI W ESTETYCE THEODORA W. ADORNO:
KRYTYCZNOŚĆ, REFLEKSYJNOŚĆ, MIMESIS
(streszczenie)**

Artykuł skupia się na zależnościach między Adornowską teorią dzieła sztuki i doświadczenia estetycznego a jego koncepcją podmiotowości. Biorąc za punkt wyjścia sformułowania Georga Lukácsa o „transcendentalnej bezdomności” jako specyficznej kondycji nowoczesnego podmiotu, zwracam uwagę na charakterystyczne dla tzw. „wysokiego modernizmu” rozumienie dzieła sztuki jako tworu autonomicznego, będącego odpowiednikiem tak pojętej, „samotniczej” i wzniosłej zarazem pozycji podmiotu. Ujęcie takie nie było wyjątkowym pomysłem Adorna, tym natomiast, co czyni jego refleksję szczególnie ciekawą, jest równoczesne wpisanie jego koncepcji sztuki w projekt krytyki podmiotu i polemikę z filozofią świadomości. Doświadczenie dzieła sztuki rozbija, zdaniem Adorna, obronną skorupę jednostkowej świadomości, przywraca moment wolności i spontaniczności. Jako zorganizowana, autoteliczna całość dzieło przyswaja sobie podmiotową „zasadę panowania”, i w rezultacie od wewnątrz ją rozbija. Z drugiej strony jednak, Adorno szuka w dziele sztuki oparcia, punktu kondensacji dla krytycznej świadomości, opierającej się przed społeczną rzeczywistością – to właśnie w obawie przed „rozpuszczeniem się”, zatarciem tej świadomości, broni on modernistycznej koncepcji dzieła jako wyodrębnionej, zamkniętej w sobie całości.

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ON THE TWILIGHT OF ARTWORKS IN THE WORLD OF ART

At art exhibitions art becomes most interesting when a crowd of guests tightly obscures the paintings.¹

Abstract: The motto of the article is an ironic statement made by Jerzy Ludwiński, a prominent Polish art critic and theorist. I start with the premise that so far art has successfully protected otherness from the mortal sin of banality. Because until recently, works of art always tried to say the same thing in some different ways; they invited us to join them on aesthetic journeys which entranced us with their fullness and independence. Today, however, works of art probably differ differently. Their homelessness is different as well. Here I distinguish two types of non-homelessness (and thus homelessness): extant and set as a task. The latter is part of the experience of the so-called autonomous art. Owing to its so-called homeless condition, postmodern art is a good and adequate companion of our contemporary spirituality. This time the threat to freedom is not the lack of a home, but its omnipotence and omnipresence ensured by popular consumer culture. After all, the principle is: No matter where I am, I am supposedly at home. Therefore, art focuses on homelessness, as it is there that it courageously recognizes the situation as optimal for every free existence. The patron is, of course, Nietzsche, who advised us to look for the greatness of man where we feel least at home. If Nietzsche is right, choosing an authentic life means giving up the idea of home as something static, stable and ambient. Only the homes which are ambitious portents of further mutations of uncertainty and ambiguity are safe for our human dignity. Homeless art is a revolution we still do not have the courage to be afraid of.

Keywords: a masterpiece of art – homelessness of (a work of) art – non-homelessness of (a work of) art – destruction of a work of art.

¹ J. Ludwiński, "Góra" [The Mountain]. The outline of a lecture delivered in Poznań, 1982, in: *Sztuka w epoce postartystycznej i inne teksty (Art in the Post-artistic Epoch and Other Texts)*, ed. J. Kozłowski, Academy of Fine Arts in Poznan and the Bureau of Art Exhibitions in Wrocław 2009, p. 158.

1. THE INTRODUCTION, OR ART WITHIN THE BOUNDARIES OF NECESSARY OTHERNESS

The problem of life is the necessity to experience otherness. However, is it not that we always imagine otherness in our own image and likeness? Therefore, although otherness may be strange, it is not necessarily so; we sometimes find strangeness not in another person, but also in ourselves. We should remember about that, when we try to convince ourselves that travel broadens the mind, as it shows we can also live differently. Other people's different ways of life are the most convincing proof of that. The more of them there are, the more modest the view of our own life. We do not want to just teach and instruct others, but we also hope to learn something from them. Should we not have the right to teach only those others from whose otherness we can learn a lot? If we cannot recognize any beauty and significance in what is different, we should come better prepared for our next encounter with otherness, that is to say more sincerely open and more penetratingly self-critical. Perhaps then we will finally succeed in seeing, reflecting on and experiencing these important attributes of otherness. It is not so easy to accept otherness if it imposes itself on us from morning to evening. There is no greater threat to otherness than its banalization – because then it is either good or evil. And this is exactly when art appears; art that has effectively protected otherness from the mortal sin of banality. Until recently, works of art always tried to say the same thing in a somehow different manner; they invited us to join them on the aesthetic journeys which entranced us with their fullness and independence. Today, however, works of art probably differ differently.

2. ON DIFFERENT TYPES OF THE NON-HOMELESSNESS OF ART

On 18 January 1977, the outstanding Polish critic and art theorist Jerzy Ludwiński (1930-2000) gave a speech at the Arcus Gallery in Lublin entitled *The field of art [Pole sztuki]*. It is worth quoting a few excerpts of this speech due to their remarkable topicality. One gets the impression that it was said a month ago, rather than over thirty years ago. At the outset, Jerzy Ludwiński notes that for some time all statements about contemporary art 'have been similar, although they have always appeared with new names'². The thought is perversely perverse. One can, after all, retort that it would be difficult to act otherwise. When people write about the same things, we should not expect

² J. Ludwiński, "Pole sztuki" [The Field of Art], in: *Sztuka w epoce postartystycznej i inne teksty [Art in the Post-artistic Epoch and Other Texts]*, ed. J. Kozłowski, Academy of Fine Arts in Poznan and the BWA Wrocław-Galleries of Contemporary Art, 2009, p. 119.

their diagnoses to differ. Therefore, if opinions on contemporary art have been very similar for decades, it means that either little has been happening in contemporary art, or something has been happening, but we have failed to see that.

Jerzy Ludwiński argued that ‘Until now, art was a fairly closed and clearly bounded enclave of reality. Art had its boundaries. They were flexible, constantly re-drawn. At the same time the content of the concept of ‘art’ was undergoing continuous enrichment with the things that previously had not belonged to it. However, those boundaries still existed.’³ Ludwiński then examined the concept of ‘the field of art’ which ‘was popularized by [...] Marcel Duchamp. According to him, “the field of art” includes everything that occurs, so artists could include in it some (new?) content in relation to other people. [...] “The field of art” was subject to continuous expansion.’ Ludwiński also reminds us of what could be found in ‘the field of art’ in Duchamp’s times. He pointed out that ‘These were museums, galleries, all art institutions where an artistic message could occur. Simply places where art could be made available to people.’”

These places, as we know, emerged in the second half of the 18th century. Previously, temples and religious festivals had been the ‘natural’ public space of the presentation of works of art. As in the medieval world, only religious values and concepts were existentially and ontologically relevant and lawful, any artwork that was supposed to be of any significance had to be associated with them. As long as art fed only on religious values and concepts, there was no threat of its becoming homeless. It is widely known that those who give security, frequently limit freedom. Christianity did not deprive people of freedom, but rather condemned all its manifestations which either did not serve the idea of eternal life or even rejected or ignored it. In the landscape of Christian life, free will is a gift only when supported by the grace of faith; otherwise it turns out to be a curse of every human fate. The modern dream of freedom knows many heroes. They include the artists who created their works (mostly paintings and sculptures), hoping they would never become – here, I am alluding, of course, to what Andre Malraux said in *The Museum of Imagination* – ‘part of any altar’. No work is homeless if it is part of an altar. Modern culture is formed of concepts and values, needs and desires, as well as objects and situations owing to which even a work of art that is not ‘part of any altar’ is not necessarily homeless.

‘The non-homelessness’ (the house?) of religious art, however, has little in common with ‘the non-homelessness’ (the house?) of modern non-religious art. To show the differences between them, it is worth recalling the meaning of the term *house* as defined by Mircea Eliade: ‘The house is not an object,

³ *Ibid.*, p. 121.

a “machine to live in”; *it is the universe that man constructs for himself by imitating the paradigmatic creation of the gods – the cosmogony*. Every construction and every inauguration of a new building are in some measure equivalent to a new beginning, a new life. And every beginning repeats the primordial beginning, when the universe first saw the light of day.⁴ It is important that people build houses to be able to start a new life. Thus understood, the house assumes the maturity (to which Kant refers in his famous essay *What is Enlightenment?*) of those who have built it and who live in it. The house is not extant, but set as a task. What waits for man is not the house, but the need to build it. The children who are not homeless are not so because they have built their own houses, but because when they were born, their houses were already waiting for them. Although the homes they live in, thanks to which they are not homeless, owe much to them, because the children very actively contribute to their climate, e.g. by bringing into them the human dimension of the acceptance of disorder and spots on a white tablecloth; these are not their own homes, but only the homes of their childhood. They are not homeless, yet none of them has their own house.

While religious art was not homeless, yet no house was only and exclusively the house of art. A work of art that is part of an altar must serve a whole made up of values and concepts older than the work itself: even though the work did not exist yet, *they* already did. Only museums and galleries, and any other art institutions that house modern art, are the houses of an ‘adult’, a sign of the maturity of art fulfilled in satisfying its need to decide its own fate. The fate of art is the values it creates. Only art that builds its houses has got its house and therefore it is not homeless.

Art was successfully building its numerous ‘houses’ and therefore could no longer complain of homelessness. Everything about art was associated with art and belonged only to art. As early as in 1977, Jerzy Ludwiński was convinced that this situation was changing drastically. ‘In the times of Duchamp, “the field of art” was a matter of pure convention, was a result of an agreement entered into by those concerned: artists, theorists, critics and the audience interested in art.’⁵ Conventions were changing, the boundaries of art were moving, enriching it with more options. Ludwiński described the process as follows: ‘All of a sudden the convention has ceased to exist. [...] “The field of art” has covered all the conceivable space of reality. Art can appear anywhere and where this happens is a matter of coincidence. Artistic phenomena are a bit like earthquakes. Actually, you can just intuitively feel where they will happen, but you can not accurately predict that. Therefore, a question arises about the meaning of “the limits of the field of art”. When they existed, there

⁴ M. Eliade, “The World, the City, the House”, in: *Occultism, Witchcraft, and Cultural Fashions: Essays in Comparative Religion*, University of Chicago Press, 1978, p. 27.

⁵ J. Ludwiński, “Pole sztuki” [The field of art], ..., *Ibid.*, p. 121.

was also a movement leading to change and transformation in art, the expansion of “the field of art”.⁶ Art knows what belongs to it. Artists know as well what else can belong to it: ‘Artists draw upon science, bringing into “the field of art” areas such as logic or linguistics. Art takes on the form of political activity. Political agitation is art and vice versa, art is occasionally political campaigning. Art finally impersonates life itself, sometimes in its most obvious forms like eating, sleeping or an erotic intercourse. A paradoxical situation arises as the whole total global art system develops as if it was a single work of art.’⁷ When Ludwiński wrote his text, there was yet no concept of globalization whose semantic gluttony today celebrates its triumph. Thus, not using the concept of art globalization, Ludwiński refers to it in the following manner: ‘While in the past it was possible to control the artistic distribution, its institutions, journals and publications, as well as the artistic movement as such, now this movement cannot be controlled, rejected, nor channeled. It is simply not possible, because the activity is on the scale not known to the history of art.’⁸ Do we, therefore, participate in a unique artistic phenomenon? Not necessarily. Ludwiński points out that ‘while all this activity is extremely important and very interesting, its individual elements are probably quite insignificant, after all anonymous and difficult to extract from all this mass of phenomena.’⁹

The situation is truly Hegelian. Only a whole is a carrier of meaning. What we find within its boundaries is most often deprived of any meaning. There are, of course, exceptions, but they only confirm the rule. Art is still great, but its particular components are devoid of greatness. In contrast to the individual works of art that contemporary consumer culture has condemned to silence, art still has a lot of arguments for its existence, because it still has the courage to arouse emotions, hopes and disappointments. It is worth noting that, among other things, this is the source of the drama of contemporary aesthetics which is still in a state of mourning after the death of its subject. Traditional aesthetics (in fact other kinds of aesthetics do not exist) has always been the aesthetics of an artwork, or more precisely – the aesthetics of the so-called masterpiece. On the basis of the aesthetic autopsy – called the aesthetic experience of an artwork, aesthetic cognition of an artwork, aesthetic interpretation of an artwork, etc. – carried out on the body of the masterpieces, formed of divine mysteries, eternal values and omnipotent capabilities, it either concluded that it belonged to the realm of art, or it formulated – often not without arrogance – some specific expectations addressed at them. A paradigmatic example of this attitude is, of course, the aesthetics of

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 121.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 122.

⁸ J. Ludwiński, “Pole sztuki”..., *Ibid.*, p. 122.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 122.

Schelling, where only the contact with the most concrete work of art makes it possible to reach – both sensually and mentally (theoretically) – the absolutely absolute truth. If in the course of its theoretical explorations and explanations, the aesthetics of an art (master)piece encountered, found or constructed such entities as values, audience and creator, these were always the values of the artwork and they were also its audience and creators. An artwork was aesthetically and artistically strong enough to present itself as a whole capable of independently conveying the meaning important for people who were experiencing it. This does not mean, of course, that a work of art was ever such a whole. Even if an artwork was merely a pretense of a whole, it must be admitted that there was no shortage of social institutions that effectively guarded the pretense against being unmasked.

3. THE POSITIVE CONTEXTS OF THE DESTRUCTION OF ARTWORKS

Not only is a contemporary artwork not an autonomous whole, but in addition it has no sufficient aesthetic and artistic power to present itself as a whole. A single artwork is more often silent and invisible. If it is not homeless, it is just because it does not exist; and if it does exist, its problem is not its homelessness, but its increasingly disabling solitude. Among the tasks of each house is to protect its residents against the aggression and inquisitiveness of the world. This task is reasonable as long as the house is threatened by any inquisitiveness of the world. Today, we enter the traditional houses of art less and less often, showing less and less desire to see another artwork stripping. Neither cathedrals, museums nor galleries are temples of the modern world any longer. A single work of art cannot resist the greed of the modern consumer culture. No one celebrates its birth, no one intends to participate in its funeral procession. Today, an artwork neither appears, nor disappears. There are, of course, exceptions which are an excellent proof of this rule. All of a sudden, a work of art appears, because someone has bought it for tens of millions of pounds. Since the time of the theft of the Mona Lisa from the Louvre (when the blank space attracted more interest than the painting itself), we know that nothing serves an artwork better than its destruction or accusation. Condemned by a kangaroo court to anonymous and lonely courage, it represents at best the dignity of non-existence and not being. This began with the artwork's decreasing presence in symbolic culture, and therefore its increasing non-existence in it, as the culture more often represented it in its dealings with its prospective audience in the form of reproductions. A work of art has lost its aura of the wedding-night previously experienced with it only by the selected members of the audience, and only fairground memories lag

behind most of the casual encounters with its many reproductions. Walter Benjamin was the first to describe the process accurately in his already classic essay *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*. Although invaluable works, especially those that belong to art history textbooks, still remain the subjects of numerous scientific studies and critical comments and digressions, it is their worthless reproductions that take upon themselves the obligation to incite all those feelings and experiences that involve sensual contact with their source. Even the greatest masterpieces can count at most on sluggish, cold and forced, rather than sensual adoration of their artistic and aesthetic carnality. The potential members of the audience go to see all they already know – a work of art no longer has such intimate areas with which they have not communed owing to the infinite benevolence and mercilessly cheap kindness of its numerous reproductions. According to the Copernicus-Gresham Law, ‘bad’ – i.e. cheap and egalitarian – reproductions displace ‘good’ – i.e. expensive and elitist – works of art from the market of impressions and experiences. In the world of paper money, where no one remembers the touch of gold bars, sensual contact with an art (master)piece, more and more difficult and rare, is often treated as anachronistic and perhaps even aesthetically distasteful. Especially masterpieces are not homeless. The problem is that, at the same time, they are not sensuously experienced and interpretatively pestered and visited, because their potential aesthetic lovers and theoretical experts have managed to get aesthetically or mentally satisfied in the arms of their subsequent reproduction.

In particular, today's work is devoid of intimate areas. Instead, everything is intimate and therefore nothing is so. Not only do we know that every other intimacy exists, but we also see, hear, comment on, analyze, criticize or praise it. Contemporary non-intimacy of an artwork is a victim of the deconstruction spawned by the spirit of disagreement to shame and guilt. The creations of contemporary art now frequently feel at their best in the role of the works of loose morals. The well-being of artworks cannot, however, deceive us. Art (master)pieces were present in the history of art, because, after all, they – the sacred places of the world of art – were always recognized as ‘the lungs’ and, at the same time, the source of ‘oxygen’ of each art. In the culture of the almighty and omnipresent reproduction, a master copy now frequently forms a world in which, just like God, it is invisible to the senses and mercilessly absent. The world of art switches to ‘anaerobic respiration’, which dispenses with the traditional notions of support and aesthetic values. The only works of art are non-existent ones. In the social experience, the non-existence of an artwork appears as more present than its existence. First, we have stopped responding to works of art, now we do not mind their absence. It has turned out that the world of art gets along well without the aura whose only source are works of art – therefore the social reasons for their further development have

ceased to exist. The fate of the extra-sensual work of art becomes increasingly similar to the fate of the extra-sensual God. The less of God in the world, the less it misses religion and churches. Not only do the aesthetic members of the audience not need works of art any longer (though they are still needed by those who hope for some financial benefits), but even art itself does not need them any more.

A contemporary work of art (called an object, installation, situation, document, trace, record, remembrance, and sometimes even a painting, graphic work or sculpture, but surely never a work of art) builds its ontological identity on what ensures its evanescence, contingency and randomness. No artworks are created any longer just to once again show the always trivial meaning of our always original life. There are only works that here and now always run to meet their death – if the work is lucky – already identified and properly documented. If it is not lucky, the work does not even have a funeral. Such a life, such a death! The more emotions and thoughts the spectacular events from the world of art evoke, the more monstrous are the festivals, biennials, meetings and fairs, the fewer emotions and reflections we can associate with participating in those events. Although they are supposedly still their foreground actors, they very rarely manage to play their roles on the main stages of the artistic events, as those are occupied by managers, curators and the catchphrases they have come up with to be the patrons of the mass meetings of artworks. Their number makes the meetings increasingly superficial. Artworks are no longer bricks which once built the temples of art, but rather sand pebbles on the desert of art – as such they disclose the fragility of our human claims to the omnipotence of reflecting and multiplying the world. Artworks do not give anything and do not want anything; they do not even have the strength to show off their homelessness. They do not meet any decent conditions of existence, and yet, though they still exist, in fact they do not exist anywhere. They remind us that we are strong as long as we can accept our own weakness.

4. THE CONCLUSION OR ON ART WITHIN THE BOUNDARIES OF NON-EXISTENCE

The language of art is neither hot nor cold; nor is it a tepid language. Today, artworks seduce us with their absence – their silence, which is an artistic form of both humility and courage to speak about what neither can, nor wants to find itself in the horizon of speaking. It is only inside art that all of us can in fact keep silent in many ways, each in one's own language – to just find ourselves in it and, not without passion, look at some other projects of life.

Nothing proves better than art that there is no obviousness we cannot express differently – look at differently, touch differently, think of differently and remember differently. Though since time immemorial art has had the courage to be difficult, hopefully, we still cannot unravel the mystery which is the source of that courage. ‘Perhaps today we are not dealing with art any more – said Jerzy Ludwiński in 1970 at the 8th Meeting of Artists, Scientists and Art Theorists in Osieki – we missed the moment when it transformed into something completely different we cannot name. But it is certain that what we are dealing with today is of greater potential.’¹⁰ One of the greatest potentials of a contemporary artwork is that it can often exist only within the confines of its non-existence. It is an artwork not only without the qualities of Robert Musil’s protagonist, but also an artwork without the capabilities the understanding of which has been treated so far as the source of each mature freedom. The condition of postmodern art is well and adequately accompanied by contemporary spirituality. What endangers freedom is not a lack of a home, but its omnipresence and ubiquity. Therefore art focuses on homelessness understood as the optimal condition of every existence. The patron is, of course, Nietzsche who advised to look for the greatness of man where we feel least at home. If we believe Nietzsche, choosing an authentic life means giving up the idea of home as something static, stable and extant. Only the homes which are ambitious portents of further mutations of uncertainty and ambiguity are safe for our human dignity. The homeless art is a sign of a revolution we still do not have the courage to be afraid of.

Translation: Barbara Komorowska

O ZMIERZCHU DZIEŁ SZTUKI W ŚWIECIE SZTUKI (streszczenie)

Mottem artykułu jest ironiczna wypowiedź Jerzego Ludwińskiego, wybitnego polskiego krytyka i teoretyka sztuki: „Na wernisażach największe zainteresowanie sztuką jest wtedy, kiedy tłum gości szczerze zasłoni obrazy.” Wychodzę od założenia, że sztuka dotąd zawsze skutecznie chroniła inność przed śmiertelnym grzechem banalności. Albowiem do niedawna dzieła sztuki starały się powiedzieć zawsze to samo jakoś inaczej; zapraszały do estetycznych podróży, które urzekały swą pełnią i samodzielnością. Dziś jednak dzieła są chyba inne inaczej. Inna jest także ich bezdomność. W artykule wyodrębniam dwa typy niebezdomności (a zatem i bezdomności): zastaną i zadaną. Ta druga jest częścią doświadczenia tzw. sztuki autonomicznej. Dzięki swej bezdomnej kondycji tzw. sztuka ponowoczesna dobrze i adekwatnie towarzyszy naszej współczesnej duchowości. Tym razem zagrożeniem dla wolności jest bowiem nie brak domu, lecz je-

¹⁰ J. Ludwiński, “Sztuka w epoce postartystycznej” [Art in the Post-artistic Epoch], in: *Sztuka w epoce...* [Art in the Post-artistic Epoch...], *ibid.*, p. 66.

go omnipotencja i wszechobecność gwarantowane przez konsumpcyjną popkulturę. Wszak obowiązuje zasada: Bez względu, gdzie jestem, jestem jakoby u siebie. Dlatego sztuka stawia na bezdomność, gdyż to właśnie w niej odważnie rozpoznaje sytuację optymalną dla każdej wolnej egzystencji. Patronem jest, rzecz jasna, Nietzsche, który radził, aby wielkości człowieka szukać tam, gdzie najmniej swojsko się czujemy. Jeśli wierzyć Nietzsche, wybór życia autentycznego oznacza rezygnację z idei domu jako czegoś statycznego, stabilnego i zastanego. Tylko w tym domu możemy bezpiecznie dla swej ludzkiej godności mieszkać, który w sposób niezwykle szczerzy i ambitny zapowiada w naszym życiu pojawienie się kolejnych mutacji niepewności i niejasności. Bezdomna sztuka jest znakiem rewolucji, której wciąż nie mamy odwagi się bać.

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IDENTITY IN DIALOGUE OR HOMELESS DESPAIR? CRITICAL SENSITIVITY IN POLISH ART AT THE TURN OF THE 21ST CENTURY

Abstract: The text presents examples of Polish contemporary art critical towards the traditional expression of patriotism and religion. It stresses, however, that not only Mirosław Bałka, whose art follows private, historic and cultural leads, but also Wilhelm Sasnal, Rafał Bujnowski and Marta Deskur, controversial in the context of the national attitude to the Catholic religion, perhaps do not reject such a heritage to form the fluid identity in transverse *becoming oneself*. They rather react sensitively and carry on their artistic and critical dialogue with it to build their own identity in dialogue with *Oneself As Another*. On the other hand, such art is still perceived mostly as an expression of an ostentatious refusal of one's heritage and the feeling of homelessness representing a kind of existential despair.

Keywords: Polish contemporary art – critical art – identity

The historic and Romantic currents in both the 19th and the 20th centuries made sensitivity to the local heritage an elementary condition of personal identity. An emotional attitude towards history and its faithful remembrance have been required and appreciated in local and national circles, highly represented in Hegelian and post-Hegelian philosophy and in emotional literature of Romantic origin, and visible in other arts until today. The myth of Germania was not only propounded by Guido Schmidt in 1866 or in the *Nazi Kunst*, but it was still discussed by Hans Haake in his allegorical installation *Germania* at the Venice Biennale in 1993 or by Anselm Kiefer in his personal, German and universal works at the end of the 20th century. The particularly dramatic history of Poland was apprehended by every Pole through the academic paintings of Jan Matejko from the 19th century, but it was still prominently present in the symbolic art of the *Wprost* group in the Solidarity period or in the *Polish Golgotha* painted by Jerzy Duda-Gracz in 2001.

This entrenched hypersensitivity to heritage has caused a reaction; the aversion or the disrespectful attitude popular among many radical artists critical of social institutions since at least the 1960s (e.g. the international Fluxus group or Polish critical art in the 1990s) may serve as an example of allergy – a form of hypersensitivity¹. Not only cultural, but also biological heritage was just rejected. On the other hand, because of the recognition of the experienced, remembered and learned heritage as the basic element of the human sense of the Self, it started to be discussed in the context of personal identity². As a result, art has come to express both rejection and negative riposte, most impressive critical sensitivity, and finally homelessness and longing for metaphysics. All of those views could be understood in various philosophical contexts.

For example, the phenomenologist Barbara Skarga regards memory (of both splendid and traumatic events, charged with cultural and metaphysical meanings) as the foundation of identity, but also an area of dialogue with the Other (part of the Self, but also an external observer)³. Another phenomenologist, Jean-Luc Marion, says in a theological context that one can “receive the Self especially from What gives itself”; a positive response to the “call” that may involve heritage (what is given) is essential⁴. The response could, however, be delayed (perhaps also “critical”), or even be a negative refusal. Nevertheless, “the call shows itself in the response”, and the Self is experienced in this way. Paul Ricoeur suggested concentration on the critical analysis and assessment of the memory connected with the interpretive turn to the Self. The dialogue among the cultural variety of different heritages, memories, languages is creative and revealing, even as it leads to metaphysics for Gadamer and Levinas. On the other hand, postmodern philosophers regarded heritage as a text dependent on the way of presentation, ready to be manipulated, quoted to form a new *bricolage*: a conscious and social “construct”, influenced by culture (but not necessarily given in place, history, language), easy to be replaced by the transverse identity, “becoming oneself”⁵. Finally, the “New

¹ “Allergy is one of four forms of hypersensitivity” – surprising, difficult, usually undesirable reaction of an organism, see: *Allergy*, <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Allergy> (15.05.2010).

² For details see: R. Solewski, “Heritage and Identity in the Art at the Turn of the 21st Century. An Introduction”, *Art Inquiry*, vol. XI (XX) 2009: *Spaces of Freedom in Modern Art*, p. 143-158.

³ See: B. Skarga, *Tożsamość i różnica [Identity and Difference]*, Znak: Cracow 1997, p. 172-273; P. Ricoeur, *Memory, History, Forgetting*, University of Chicago Press 2006; *idem, Oneself as Another*, transl. K. Blamey, University of Chicago Press 1992. See also <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/ricoeur/#3.5> (28.12.2010).

⁴ See: J.-L. Marion, *Being Given: Toward a Phenomenology of Givenness*, Stanford University Press, 2002.

⁵ See: Z. Bauman, *Identity: Conversations with Benedetto Vecchi*, Polity Press 2004; W. Welsch, *Subject – Author – Experience: The Subject in the Expanse of Art*, Bratislava: Soros Center for Contemporary Arts, 1999, 11-33; *idem, Becoming oneself*, <http://www2.uni-jena>.

Heritage” is nowadays a post-biological creation constructed by “telematic”, homeless nomads or an artistic analysis of the human presence in the world of images⁶.

The above-mentioned current in Polish contemporary art is often explicitly called ”critical”. Therefore its expression of the allergy, its unwillingness to identify with particular heritage (replaced by flexible identity) on the one hand, and its vision of a rationally controlled dialogue among different personal memories combined with sensitive attitudes to various cultural heritages on the other, seems intriguing.

DIFFICULT SENSITIVITY

Creative remembrance and the use of past experience combined with attempts to construct a new private mythology are essential for Mirosław Bałka⁷. His *Souvenir of the First Communion* (1985) was a concrete life-sized sculpture of a boy in the First Communion suit standing by a table with an embedded photograph of a child. The red heart attached to the boy’s suit is a pincushion. During Bałka’s “defence” of this graduation project, held in a provincial, hardly accessible, abandoned house, Bałka invited the professors to stick pins into the heart. The allegorical suggestion of a ritual rite of passage was extended by the metaphorical juxtapositions of painful remembering, abjection and long-lasting, humble subjugation of a difficult and stubborn child. The child who has been formed by minders to toil and to try to be mature, which requires responsibility and sensibility.

In his subsequent installations: *Around 21°15'00''E 52°06'17''N + GO-GO* (1985-2001), *Ruhe* (2002), and *Lebensraum* (2003), the artist presented, respectively: the geographical coordinates and a model of his family’s house in

de/welsch/Papers/becomingOneself.html (28.12.2010); J. Derrida, *Structure, Sign, and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences* (after http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jacques_Derrida) (28.12.2010).

⁶ See: R. W. Kluszczyński, *Kultura, tożsamość i globalna komunikacja. Zarys problematyki*, in: *Wiedza o kulturze polskiej u progu XXI wieku*, ed. S. Bednarek, K. Łukasiewicz, Uniwersytet Wrocławski, Wrocław 2000, s. 341-346. On visual turn see: A. Zeidler-Janiszewska, *O tzw. zwrocie ikonicznym we współczesnej humanistyce. Kilka uwag wstępnych* [About the So-called Iconic Turn in Contemporary Humanities. Some Initial Remarks] www.asp.wroc.pl/dyskurs/Dyskurs4/AnnaZeidlerJaniszewska.pdf (16.04.10).

⁷ See: E. Gorządek, *Mirosław Bałka*, http://www.culture.pl/en/culture/artykuly/os_balka_miroslaw (15.05.2010); K. Majewska, “Skala. Mirosław Bałka w Tate Modern” [Scale. Mirosław Bałka in Tate Modern], *Arteon*, 2009, No. 11 (115), p. 6-9; S. Czajkowska, “Mirosław Bałka: teraz instalacja” [Mirosław Bałka: Installation Now], *Arteon*, 2008, No. 11 (103), p. 6-8; *Każdy chłopiec boi się inaczej* [Every Boy is Afraid Differently], “Mirosław Bałka talks to Bożena Czubak”, *Magazyn Sztuki*, 1998, No. 3 (19), p. 16-31.

Otwock; tombstones with the titles of Bałka's exhibition's sculpted in *terazzo* by the artist's father; a reconstruction of a child's thoughts provoked by a Negro-shaped ashtray; an inverted, illuminated cross and a transparent, perspex tombstone with a green, plastic toy frog, juxtaposed with a springboard protruding out of a window. The remembrance was inspired by the act of dwelling and resulted in the combination of the symbolic meanings of shapes and materials ("heavy duty" but brittle concrete; bright, "revelative", cross-shaped but artificial perspex; *terazzo* – despised in spite of its gentle origin) with Bałka's *miscellanea* – emotional objects connected with his personal experiences, symbols, and imagination.

Such an individual and emotionally determined heritage was made even more complex when complemented by the artist's difficult knowledge about the place and history which he was born to live in. In *Winterreise* (2003), the filmed deer calmly graze on the ruins of the Auschwitz concentration camp, while the *Solitude* from Franz Schubert's *Winterreise* is sung. Such natural peace is totally independent of the tragic experiences of human history and cultural reflection. The appearance of humans disrupts the peaceful atmosphere. People, however, can feel the terrible threat and the atrocious solitude, as well as the lack of solidarity behind the natural peace. The place is an arid and horrible desert because of the memory of human beings.

The huge, dark and soundproof container entitled *How It Is* (2008), inspired by Samuel Beckett's novel and its existential reflection on solitude, trap, and purgatory, fully isolated its visitors from the world and created an impression of horrifying, hopeless insecurity, "eradication", empty homelessness, typical for prisons, camps or emigration.

Such minimal works moved the individual personal remembrances, as well as the common memory and local history, onto the level of universal reflection about experience and recognition, thinking and remembering, Self and the Other, solitude, fear, community, diversity and, last but not least, the longing for a metaphysical solution.

In his frequent references to Holocaust and its difficult presence in Polish memory, Bałka also criticizes us for forgetting about the extermination of the Others – neighbours and co-creators of our rich, diverse heritage. The artist scolds the nation for indifference, selective memory, contemporary cultural and spiritual superficiality.

IN PLACE OF ALLERGY

Wilhelm Sasnal, connected today with the Foksal Gallery in Warsaw, has been living in the town of Tarnów in southern Poland. He studied architecture at the

Cracow University of Technology and painting at the Academy of Fine Arts in Cracow, where he was a member of the *Ladnie* [Pretty] group⁸. His painted snapshots of everyday reality and quotations from mass culture were initially executed in a cartoon-drawing style typical of Polish “pop-banalism” of the 1990s and especially of the *Ladnie* group, though more linear and monochromatic. At the beginning of the present century, wider cultural and historic references have appeared in his works as inevitable, “imperative” elements of the artist’s world. Reality, re-creation of emotions accompanying perception, imagination and heritage blend on the canvases whose message seems to be painting itself in the “deepest recesses of consciousness, between the visible and the visual memory”⁹. *Luter* was painted in 2003 after the portrait of Luther by Lucas Cranach. The reformer, naturalistically ugly, fat, with smallpox marks on his face, as he was represented by Cranach (in the iconic portrait of the iconoclastic Protestant, paradoxically enough), is shown by Sasnal as smooth and sublime. Sasnal’s contemporary “banal” recreation presents how this influential reformer, perhaps similar to the artist himself in his religious criticism, became finally an icon of mass culture. The true and ironic message about the condition of the religious heritage and style in the era of postmodern iconic turn is revealed almost unconsciously in this visual utterance.

In *Narutowicz* (2003), the semi-figure monochromatic portrait inspired by an archival photography is vague, fuzzy, as if it has been taken from an old newspaper losing its legibility. The president of Poland, killed in 1922 by a painter with nationalist views, was also a member of the group of Polish scientists working in Zurich at the turn of the 20th century. Another Polish president, Ignacy Mościcki was also connected with the same milieu. Later he became the founder of the State Works of Nitrogen Compounds, the factory near Tarnów established in 1927, one of the biggest and most modern industrial plants in Poland. Sasnal also re-painted the portrait of Tadeusz Zwislocki, one of the first managers of the company (*Dyrektor*, 2005). The young man with the craggy, sharp face, in dark, monochromatic colours, “trivially” painted in quick and decisive brushstrokes and deep shadows may resemble a ruthless politician or officer. He was, however, well-known as a socially sensitive manager. Sasnal’s contemporary view of the works

⁸ See: W. Sasnal, http://www.culture.pl/en/culture/artykuly/os_sasnal_wilhelm (15.05.2010); W. Sasnal-bio, “Raster”, <http://www.raster.art.pl/gallery/artists/sasnal/sasnal.htm> (15.05.2010); Adam Szymczyk, *Schlamm/Sludge*, “Parkett”, Zurich/New York NY, No. 70, May 2004, p. 76-81; D. Babińska, „Lata walki Wilhelma Sasnala” [Years of Wilhelm Sasnal’s Struggle], *Exit*, 2008, No. 1 (73), p. 4688-4691; A. Szymczyk, “Prezentacje” [Presentations], <http://www.artnewmedia.pl/pl/author/info/xaemp9OLaneVZpVtm2RucZU> (23.12.2009) i *Obieg*, 2004, nr 2; B. Deptuła, “Obrazki z wystawy” [Pictures from the Exhibition], *Tygodnik Powszechny*, <http://www.tygodnik.com.pl/numer/275618/deptula.html> (23.12.2009).

⁹ W. Sasnal-bio, “Raster”, <http://www.raster.art.pl/gallery/artists/sasnal/sasnal.htm> (15.05.2010).

Mościce I (2005) is just the landscape with simple geometric shapes of buildings in basic black, white and violet colors. These simple, banal snapshots or fuzzy photorealistic quotations reveal our complicated heritage. Sasnal is a painter, as was Narutowicz's killer. He is an inhabitant of Tarnów, conversant with its history, too. He has also never hidden his leftist social sensitivity. On the other hand he is a very well-paid artist selling his works to wealthy people. Thus, his identity may be regarded as ambiguous. There is a touch of self-criticism in the context of his complicated heritage in Sasnal's works.

Sasnal's oeuvre also includes the representations of his school, his acquaintances, Polish landscapes *Bug, Odra, Wisła* (2004), *Kraków-Warszawa* (2006), *Kraków* (2007) painted or filmed. On the one hand, in this synthetically simplistic realism stereotypes are presented and "advertised" (e.g. the farmer in the field in the Polish landscape, the churches and monuments in Cracow). On the other, there is everything that sentimentally affects the artist¹⁰. Finally Luther, Narutowicz, Cardinal Wyszyński (a national hero representing the otherwise criticized church), are of the same rank as pop heroes: the ski-jumper Adam Małysz or Sasnal's beloved jazz musicians.

The local heritage, national history, his own worldview (not necessarily coherent with his personal experience), mass culture – are brought together, as in a typical postmodern *bricolage*. The mixture may be seen, however, as a difficult dialogue with the Other whose heritage is frequently obscured, understood superficially or forgotten. It is a critical memory rather than a chaotic melange. *Narutowicz* may be Sasnal's presentation of the painter's guilt and masochistic expiation. Corresponding with the fuzzy portraits, are *Thumaczka* [Translator], 2003, quoting a shot from Claude Lanzman's film about the Holocaust, and especially the quotation from Art Spiegelman comic book *Maus* (2001), where the Poles are pigs among the mice (Jews) murdered by cats (Germans). Sasnal preserved in his works the texts in the "balloons", inscribed however in the reality of contemporary Tarnów (his birthplace, Catholic now, but half-Jewish before World War II), or Bielsko-Biała, where his comic frames appeared on the walls of the gallery built in place of the synagogue demolished during the war. Indifference and lack of solidarity are here not only the misprision of the diversity open to the Other, but also the participation in Evil. There is perhaps a question about the true unity with Good, Beauty, Love and Memory in the gloomy visions of empty, reverted, transformed modern churches.

Sasnal does not have a fluid identity originating in the allergy to his cultural, historic, national heritage, in spite of his critical verbal comments or

¹⁰ See: the fragment about the conversation with M. Brewińska, in: B. Deptuła, M. Krasny, K. Wielebska, "Niejeden Sasnal" [There is not only one Sasnal], *Obieg*, <http://www.obieg.pl/wydarzenie/2295> (23.12.2009).

controversial issues presented visually in surprising mixtures or shapes difficult to interpret. One can see perhaps the fear of the Polish attitude to religion in ugly, dark sacral church spaces. On the other hand, all of Sasnal's syntheses are just the portraits of his heritage, emotionally determined, but also rationally observed. Although it has been somehow imposed on the artist, Sasnal does not react to it with allergy. His paintings seem sometimes sarcastic or at least equivocal in the context of local heritage, history or contemporary situation represented in simple, minimal, "indigent" realistic pictures, surprisingly fuzzed and blurred. These artistic obstacles, hesitations, subversions or ironic "litotes" (Sasnal's visions often seem to be pretty instead of ugly, bad) nevertheless evoke the reflection on the personal identity of each spectator. Is the given heritage just impressionably received? Or is it to be reflected in its revealing of good and bad elements, advantages and disadvantages? When one faces the Other, just as in the critical memory. Does it mean that heritage, history, tradition, where the artist is ensconced, are to be rewritten? Or do such attempts require special sensitivity and reactions? Such lessons evoked by artistic form will lead to metaphysical experience of true identity instead of hypersensitivity ending in allergy?

PAINFUL THERAPY

Critical attitude to the fetishistic forms of religious behavior is presented by another member of the *Ładnie* group – Rafał Bujnowski¹¹. *Schemat malowania papieża* [How to Paint the Pope] (2002) shows how to paint a portrait of John Paul II in the style prevailing in Poland with only a few brushstrokes. The image of the Pope recurs in his numerous works. In the *Last saved* (2004) a shelf from pope John Paul II's family home, now presented in the museum in Wadowice, is repeated eight times, which challenges its unique cultic value. As the artist was raised near Wadowice, where the future Pope had been born, and where his personal cult is especially strong, the works were the more perverse. Are such controversial religious attitudes and forms of cult examples of the Polish mass culture? Are they just "gewgaw", trinkets, kitschy, parochial, superficial and disingenuous? Or are they also perhaps as essentially strange, sad and "desolated" as the "eradicated" houses from the artist's familial Graboszyce near Wadowice shown on the empty, flat, clean panels. Bujnowski may be constructing here a metonymy of Polish spirituality. Common as an easy and visible reaction but without the essential community value.

¹¹ See: http://www.culture.pl/pl/culture/artykuly/os_bujnowski_rafal (28.12.2009); *Rafał Bujnowski, Malowanie* [Rafał Bujnowski, Painting], ed. A. Smolak, Bunkier Sztuki: Cracow 2005.

Perhaps, however, this local, provincial culture is original and just true. Bujnowski, like Sasnal, presents the Poles as we are, involved in both parochial and mass culture, provincial landscape and TV superficial style, history, reality, policy, tradition, and controversial forms of religion. Receiving and appreciating high and low values, as well as products of different qualities – still reproduced, repeated, overused. All the elements in a flippant mixture without a clear paradigm.

Is the paradigm really neglected in this vision, however? The manifestation of spirituality in the Polish local culture is perhaps strange, but its long lasting presence reveals that a paradigm is missing and required. Perhaps the critical irony or even satiric acidity artistically bares the disadvantages but also therapeutically cleans the essential heritage and both personal and universal identity.

Bujnowski's interest in the truth and the real value (or lack of it) hidden under the relativity of repetition, multiplication, copying, typical for mass culture is represented in the fifty copies of Whistler's famous *Artist's Mother* of 1871 (finally intended to hang in every apartment, as well as the *Framed Pictures* (2000-2002) painted from photographs. It is also evident in the painted *passee-partout* and a black frame, imitating the commercial, supermarket mass offer. The problem of an original and its value has also frequently re-appeared in Bujnowski's fuzzy painted negatives; the exposition of the *Backs of Paintings* (2000) – showing exactly what it says in the title; *Traces of Paintings* (2005) – the painted illusions of the traces left by the pictures on the wall or in the exhibitionistic action *Pressed Canvases* (2006) where the remains of his botched works were pressed into a big block. The artist, educated and working in Cracow, the historical "capital of Polish culture" has inherited the Romantic cult of art. He (self-)ironically asks, however, what really deserves respect, what is worth passing to others, what is worth adopting as the foundation of personal identity. Such questions asked by Bujnowski may be seen as a critical memory of a heritage "haunted" by the structure of an artistic project, as in Ricoeur's vision. Nevertheless, for many recipients it is still controversial provocation to question the "settlement" in one's own, national and spiritual culture.

The Romantic concepts of spirituality and art simplified and "shallowed" by both provincial limitations and mass culture refer back to the national heritage in Poland. Treated commonly with hypersensitivity, but without deep reflection, they may cause allergy. Therefore their presence in art comes across as masochism. On the other hand, the "adduction" of such a heritage transformed in an artistic project is perhaps a kind of painful therapy and the road to leaving behind the responsible, critical memory.

TRANSFER OR CAMOUFLAGE

Marta Deskur has been working on her cycle of photographic installations *Rodzina* [*Family*]¹² since 1996. This family consists of the people emotionally close to the artist, as well as those associated with Cracow and its bohemia. Deskur says: “I assemble, select, cut and sever from «the context». A new genetics is created at the same time – it is based on the principles of selection based on the similarity of features, and sometimes on the acceptable incident. Acceptance, on the other hand, is based on complete independence: «everyone does whatever he likes»...”¹³ Such a newly created heritage, a sociological and psychological community, is apparently still important and sacred for Deskur. The acquaintances and friends fill the iconographic patterns known from Christian art. Such manipulation of photographs usually reveals both archetypal and social determination of close interpersonal relations. These *Routine Scenes*, however, reveal some subversive modifications: the central person of the *Last Supper* (or rather a social gathering) is a woman (Deskur herself), in another photograph the husband holding a gun is more dangerous than protective of his wife. The virginity of the pregnant Deskur (*Dziewice* [Virgins], 2002) is a paradoxical oxymoron instead of a miracle. *Nowe Jeruzalem* [New Jerusalem] (2007) is a review of Cracow’s contemporary bohemia – in quotidian, present-day dresses, but with Jewish attributes and apostolic accessories. The allusion to the Jewish origin of Christianity (intended as sarcastic towards Catholics, blamed for anti-semitism) contains self-irony, too, namely the question which metonymically concerns every elite: what really distinguishes its members? Who has selected them and why? In *New Jerusalem*, Marta Deskur graces and lavishes the “chosen” ones with the right to co-inherit the tradition of artistic Cracow, the self-centered, snobby city and its milieu which has always loved to show off in self-portraits. Cracow, the sacred, family, artists, convention, haughtiness – these are the elements of the (self?)ironic metaphor about the comical vanity of provincial eminence and quasi-religious bohemianism.

Deskur bares the weakness of consciously constructed conventions and stereotypes deprived of mandatory cultural crust. Therefore the photographic installations may be seen as critical satire on the overambitious and two-faced

¹² See: A. Grajewska, “Marta Deskur. Authority, Family, Religion”, *Exit*, 2008, No. 1 (73), p. 4676-4687; K. Jagodzińska, “Towarzyskie Jeruzalem Marty Deskur” [Social Circuit Jerusalem of Marta Deskur], *Arteon* 2008, No. 1 (93), p. 34; *Marta Deskur*: http://www.krakow.pl/kultura/krakow_miasto_artystow/?id=022.html (22.12.2009).

¹³ M. Morzuch’s interview with M. Deskur from: *The Negotiators of Art. Facing Reality, Lazzia*, Gdansk 2000 <http://www.evolutionaere-zellen.org/html/finger/finger812/finger8/deskur/deskur.htm>.

provincials, as well as on conceited bohemians. True plurality and diversity connected with acceptance and self-distance are to be appreciated in all the artistic, religious, social domains.

On the other hand, these works show again the easiness with which art can manipulate and falsify reality. The apparent photorealism of Deskur's works is always montage-prone, which results in the transgressive *bricollage* and the fluid transformations of identities and heritages. Such an approach shows how in this vision the extemporaneous relations without special responsibilities as well as free games replace former shrines – perhaps artificial for the post-modern-oriented artist.

It is significant, however, that the texts selected by the *bricoleur* are still connected with place, time, history, and culture, which had been given for Deskur to inherit. Especially the traces of Cracow's religious attitude, its cult of art, and the unique self-orientation of the city are definitely not indifferent. Therefore, Deskur's art it is not only critical satire nor an expression of allergy to such a heritage. Even the superficial provinciality of the cultivation of the chosen traditions is ridiculous rather than revolting. The iconic content of the quoted and modified heritage is what is remembered and finally loved as a family. Loved by the sensitive or still hypersensitive artist and citizen of Cracow. Worth being cultivated and conveyed to others, maybe in an original, creative, refined way.

One should note, however, that many Cracovians and Poles perceive Deskur as derisive, and in such derision, mockery, snicker and ironic feeling of superiority showing a “chip on her shoulder”, resented because of the ineffectual searching for herself in various places, searching for a “new heritage” which is finally not fluid identity but homeless emptiness. Or is perhaps her choice of her subject an indication of her longing for a metaphysical solution?

CRITICAL SENSITIVITY?

It is perhaps not fully just to diagnose an allergy to romantically and emotionally determined heritage and identity founded on memory among the Polish artists at the turn of the 21st century, in spite of their youthful energy and easy criticism and their contestation of both their biological and cultural heritage, as well as their readiness to accept Welsch's or Bauman's concept of “easily changeable”, flexible, fluid identities. Because of the changed historical and political situation, those artists are already not hypersensitive to specific relics. However, they still have a sensitive memory. It is still important and cultivated, perhaps as the critical memory “haunting” artistic projects, which might be seen as a New Heritage. New in spite of its old

essence. Most importantly, however, thanks to art, in such projects the former hypersensitivity is therapeutically treated so as to be further transformed. The critical analysis of memory may be complemented by metaphysical reflection which often results from the aesthetic reception of metaphors, metonymies or even subversive irony. Finally, it is perhaps not so much critical memory, but rather critical sensitivity that proves to be the basic determinant of the turn to the Self and the dialogue with *Oneself as Another*. Such critical sensitivity and a dialogue can form mature personal identity instead of either a hypersensitive, allergic rejection of one's inheritance, or its complete eradication.

On the other hand, such a positive interpretation stands in opposition to the more common opinion ready to see the "critical" works as "postwelshian" ruins camouflaged by ostentatious refusal. It is difficult to answer the question concerning the addressees of such an ostentation. Only the ruins remain... This seems to be only a desperate cry showing the uncertainty and ignorance of one's own self.

Or perhaps, when everything is questioned, criticized, fluid and ruined, art is the evidence of the still existing longing for metaphysics? Always important for identity. But what kind of metaphysics?

**TOŻSAMOŚĆ W DIALOGU CZY BEZDOMNA ROZPACZ?
WRAŻLIWOŚĆ KRYTYCZNA W SZTUCE POLSKIEJ PRZEŁOMU XXI WIEKU
(streszczenie)**

Artykuł prezentuje przykłady współczesnej polskiej sztuki krytycznej wobec tradycyjnych przejawów patriotyzmu i religijności wskazując, że śledzący prywatne i historyczno-kulturowe ślady Mirosław Bałka, ale i Wilhelm Sasnal, Rafał Bujnowski i Marta Deskur, kontrowersyjni, szczególnie w podejściu do religijności i jej masowego-narodowego wymiaru, być może nie tyle odrzucają dziedzictwo, aby formować nowe, płynne, przejściowe tożsamości, ile są wobec niego na swój sposób wrażliwi, prowadząc z nim artystyczny i krytyczny dialog, w którym budują własną tożsamość w dialogu z Innym. Z drugiej strony sztuka taka postrzegana jest najczęściej jako wyraz ostentacyjnej odmowy dziedzictwa i poczucia bezdomności owocujących ostatecznie egzystencjalną rozpacz.

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HOMELESSNESS OF ART WORK/HOMELESSNESS OF MEMORY: MOSHE KUPFERMAN'S "THE RIFT IN TIME"

*The Old Testament prohibition of graven images can be said
to have an aesthetic aspect besides the overt theological one.
The interdiction against forming an image – of something – in effect
implies the proposition that such an image is impossible to form.*

Theodor W. Adorno¹

Abstract: The series of paintings from 1999 entitled *The Rift in Time*, where he directly relates to the extermination of his nation, is unique in Kupferman's artistic output. This series of ostensibly abstract canvases was created as a coordinated group of pictures. Unfortunately, currently it is dispersed – we can see individual canvases in different places of the world. This dispersion can be understood as a metaphorical *homelessness*, a search for their place in our comprehension.

Moshe Kupferman was born in 1926 in Jaroslaw in an orthodox Jewish family. In 1948 he immigrated to Israel. Kupferman's cultural identity rested on both Polish and Hebrew traditions. His art exemplifies the memory of seeing, making memory itself visible. It resounds with an echo of the Holocaust in Europe and the dramatic history of Israel. The guiding principle of his work was that "an existential solution to the problem of how to live on in the face of the past is offered by the moral caliber of the painting".

Kupferman was a friend of the Polish artist Marek Chlanda (1954). After Kupferman's death in 2003, Chlanda returned to his series of eight pictures *The Rift in Time* from 1999, after his more recent visit to Israel. Divided by age, experiences and then the death of the older artist, Chlanda continues his effort to understand and to rework the meaning of Kupferman's work. Moshe Kupferman's *The Rift in Time* and Marek Chlanda's *After the Rift in Time* – two series of pictures by the artists of two different generations, which we should see as important representations of the Holocaust managed to confront this paradox directly. They are memorial images that incorporated their audiences into the problem of the memory and representation of the Holocaust, relating these questions to the experience of the *homelessness of art* and the *homelessness of thought* in the postwar world.

Key words: Kupferman – memory – homelessness of art – representation

¹ Th. W. Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, transl. C. Lehnardt, Routledge and Kegan Paul, London–Boston, 1984, p. 100.

The historically motivated statement above speaks of the present, the time “after Auschwitz”, its aesthetic ethics remaining deeply rooted in the past and in memory. In his essay “After Auschwitz, to write a poem is barbaric”², Theodor W. Adorno questions the propriety and possibility of aesthetic representation, responding to the metaphysics of negative dialectics. Richard Wolin argues in his *Utopia, Mimesis, and Reconciliation* that in discussing the utopian function of art, Adorno’s *Aesthetic Theory* comes close to violating the Judeo-Marxist *Bilderverbot*, the taboo against graven images, to the extent that the utopia is practically concretely depicted³. According to Wolin, for Adorno art is a form of remembrance, a correlation of the past and the present, but also a kind of quest for its place in the world, for integration after the Holocaust; it is a concrete utopian projection. Lisa Saltzman, in her book *Making Memory Matter: Strategies of Remembrance in Contemporary Art*, wrote:

Adorno paradoxically posits a visual fulfillment of the aesthetic prohibition. Just as «Celan’s poems (*Fugue of Death*, 1944 – E.J.) articulate unspeakable horror by being silent»⁴, because their themes are the very silence and impossibility their existence would seem to disrupt, so Adorno claims that visual abstraction satisfies «the old prohibition of graven images», by offering a mode of aesthetic representation that avoids what Auschwitz and the Hebrew Bible expressly forbid, because it is both nonreferential and nonfigurative⁵.

* * *

Moshe Kupferman (1926-2003), an Israeli artist, who was born in Poland before World War II, declared his strong connection with the Polish and Hebrew tradition. He stressed the importance of memory and his awareness of the “homelessness” or alienation of his memory and his art after the Holocaust. He understood that his art is not a projection of a mental or ideological state. Kupferman’s artistic thought, entailed by his world view, erects metaphorical stories for the dialectic concepts of Destruction and Building, as necessary “neighbors” in the common ground of his work⁶. In one of his most “evo-

² Th. W. Adorno, “After Auschwitz, to write a poem is barbaric”, *Kulturkritik und Gesellschaft*, 1949, published singly in 1951, collected in Adorno, *Prismen* in 1955.

³ See: R. Wolin, “*Utopia, Mimesis, and Reconciliation: A Redemptive Critique of Adorno’s «Aesthetic Theory»*”, *Representations* 1990, No. 32, p. 41.

⁴ Th. W. Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, transl. C. Lehnhardt, Routledge and Kegan Paul, London–Boston 1984, p. 444.

⁵ L. Saltzman, “To Figure, or Not to Figure. The Iconoclastic Proscription and Its Theoretical Legacy”, in: *Jewish Identity in Modern Art History*, C. M. Soussloff (ed.), University of California Press, Berkeley–Los Angeles–London, 1999, p. 69.

⁶ See: N. Neuman, *Kupferman 1970-1979*, [in Hebrew] “Siman Kriya” 1980, 10 January; transl. B. Harsav, in: *Moshe Kupferman: Life and Art*, catalogue exp. *The Rift in Time*, Givon Art Gallery, Tel Aviv 2000, p. 113.

cative” declarations concerning the particular commission he received for the institution commemorating the Holocaust, he explains that he wished

To avoid any constructive thinking (which, in my view, is confining and limiting) and thus encumber the open process characteristic of the way of painting which contains surprises, confronts them, repeatedly attempts to make constructive use of them, and finally results in a personal and qualitative painting.⁷

Kupferman did not “discover” the Holocaust or its meaning and importance in collective memory, but he succeeded in building a unique artistic world. The problem of remembrance and oblivion induced by the Holocaust, is reflected in his characteristic colors (violet, purple, grey, lavender and... light), his gestures, his unique, intimate idiomatic vocabulary of his painting. Harsav suggests that only on this basis, using various verbal expressions, does he confront us with an interpretative challenge.

In his last monumental series of paintings *The Rift in Time*, Kupferman contradicts the old opposition between political and non-committed art. Harsav points out that he is intensely conscious “of the autonomy and celebration of painterly qualities and thick texture in their full differentiation and heterogeneity; he is a master with a labor-intensive attitude toward his medium. Yet, simultaneously, he strives toward an expression of his/our TIME – a key word in his verbal vocabulary”⁸.

In this series, Kupferman attempted to resolve the eternal problem – the representation of time in art, where the concept of *time* and space has a special sense and signification. The painting – as he says himself – is never-ending rather than finished, a direct disruption to a harmonious synthesis; every painting is part of the artist’s own unfolding in time. Another sense of *time* here is metaphorical. It is, claims Kupferman, the *time* of our life – not only “our individual time”, but also the *historical time* that we live in. This historical time is not a chronological process, not time moving and changing, but, on the contrary, a static and total essence⁹ and comprehension of time. Kupferman’s *time* is a timeless idea, it has its mythological roots in human history, but he focuses on the twentieth century. It is a generalized, cruel and horrifying face of humanity, and implicitly, the Holocaust of the Jewish people.

The Rift in Time series of paintings from 1999, in which he directly relates to the extermination of his nation, is unique in Kupferman’s artistic output.

⁷ See Kupferman’s letter to Benjamin Harsav (Moshe Kupferman – *On Di Kriye/The Rift in Time*), in: *ibidem*, p. 82.

⁸ B. Harsav, *Moshe Kupferman: Life and Art*, catalogue exp. *The Rift in Time*, Givon Art Gallery, Tel Aviv 2000, p. 104.

⁹ See: B. Harsav, *op.cit.*, p.103.

This series of ostensibly abstract canvases was created as a coordinated group of pictures. Unfortunately, currently it is dispersed – we can see particular canvases in different places of the world. This dispersion can be understood as metaphorical *homelessness*, a search for their place in our comprehension. Therefore, an important part of this paper is an attempt at the reconstruction of the integrity of this cycle. The canvases commemorate the historical time and juxtapose its understanding by the artist and by the particular audiences. These “shifts” in understanding are especially important due to the disappearance of the generation of Moshe Kupferman’s contemporaries.

Let us now consider the importance of memory in Kupferman’s life and his art; the *homelessness* of his memories. I should stress the difficulty of recounting the experiences from the time of the Holocaust and World War II. This *homelessness* is both symbolic and explicit. It is connected with the overlap of the “internal” and “externalized” images of time – externalized, therefore always fragmentary and never perfect. This imperfection of the externalized images of past is evident in Kupferman’s art in his tackling the memory of the Holocaust, but not directly the Holocaust. The Holocaust is a hidden image and experience of his works; they may be simply read as a song to creativity and to life.

The central problem with representing the Holocaust which Kupferman had to face was an intensification of the fundamental predicament inherent in Holocaust memory. Holocaust memory is what Primo Levi called “the memory of offense”, a wound that can never heal. “Anchored by this wound, and frozen in time, the victim and the perpetrator retain their original relationship in memory until both die”, wrote Matthew Biro¹⁰.

Though Kupferman avoided the Holocaust itself, he did see the Nazis, the humiliation and terror they inflicted, and for seven years he experienced an uprooting from his home, his people, city, and language. He personally lived through the loss of his entire close family. He lost his first language, his second language, and his third, along with the cultures they represented and the intimate familiar memories encoded in them. This, too, was a holocaust, the holocaust of those who lived in the shadow of the more famous, huge Holocaust, even if they survived¹¹.

Moshe Kupferman was born on August 12, 1926 in the small town Yaroslav to an Orthodox Jewish family. Located in the south-east of Poland, in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries Yaroslav was an important market town, and from then on its Jewish community flourished. There were approximately eight thousand Jews in Yaroslav, which was a center of “significant

¹⁰ See: M. Biro, “Representation and Event: Anselm Kiefer, Joseph Beuys, and the Memory of the Holocaust”, *The Yale Journal of Criticism* 2003, vol. 16, (pp.113-146), pp. 113-114.

¹¹ B. Harsav, *op.cit.*, p. 100.

Jewish activity, including both Zionist and Hassidic movements”¹². Before World War Two, Yaroslav was a town in Poland where Polish, Jewish and Ukrainian inhabitants lived together. Kupferman grew up in an Orthodox Jewish family and went to a Jewish school. Both his parents spoke “mainly Yiddish and Polish but knew German as well”. Young Moshe studied the Torah and basic Hebrew at a *heder* and with a tutor, and later at a Jewish elementary school. Kupferman’s cultural identity rested on both Polish and Hebrew traditions. This explains why he signed his works sometimes in both Latin and Hebrew alphabets.

Etched on Kupferman’s memory is the entry of the German army into Yaroslav, on 10 October 1939¹³. As a child, Kupferman experienced the atrocity of the Holocaust and World War II. His entire family perished, and he was deported and wandered through the Soviet Union. In 1946 he returned to Poland, and subsequently stayed at the Displaced Persons (DP) camps in Germany. In 1948, with the establishment of the State of Israel, he immigrated to Israel with the group that founded the Kibbutz *Lohamei Hagheta’Ot* (The [Warsaw] Ghetto Fighters Kibbutz). All of them were the Holocaust survivors, including Antek Cukerman and Cywia Lubetkin, the leaders of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising (1943).

He spent all his life in Israel in the kibbutz, located north-west of the Galilee hills, near the road leading from Haifa to the Lebanese border. Together with the others who survived the Holocaust in Central and Eastern Europe, he became a part of the wave of young pioneers who joined the kibbutz movement in the early days of the State of Israel. Kupferman learned the profession of a molder; later he worked as a builder during the first, hard years of the Kibbutz. Gradually, “with the increase of public awareness of the commutation of slogans «Socialist Realism» among the Israeli left, did he get more and more time for his creative work. Since then, his career of major artist is well known”¹⁴.

His huge atelier still exists – after his death in 2003 – on the hill in Lohamei Hageta’Ot with orange groves and silhouettes of Arab villages in the distance, and the mountains of the Western Galilee, and in the west, a few miles away, the Mediterranean Sea. Close to his atelier one can see a monumental classical building of Icchak Katzenelson House¹⁵ – “the temple of memory” – whose

¹² *A Biographical Outline: Recollections*, in: *Moshe Kupferman. Works from 1962-2000*, The Israel Museum, Jerusalem, 2002, p. 326.

¹³ The German armed forces crossed the Polish border on 1st September 1939 and on 16th September reached the Narew–Vistula–San line. The following day the Russians invaded northern-eastern Poland.

¹⁴ B. Harsav, *op.cit.*, p. 100.

¹⁵ I. Kaczenelson, 1886, *Karelizze near Nowogrodek – 1944* (Auschwitz). Bilingual poet (Hebrew and Yiddish), ran private Hebrew Gymnasium in Lodz, before the war under the Nazi occupation, he fled to the Warsaw Ghetto, where he taught at the underground Gymnasium of

purpose is to collect and preserve Holocaust documents. It is an archive and a museum of the Holocaust and the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising.

Kupferman created his art in these circumstances and living close to the people who carried their memories of the Holocaust. One of the titles he proposed for his series of canvases was *To be with memory*. Finally he decided to entitle it *The Rift in Time*. “The memory is the resonance chamber where the artist lives”, wrote his friend, the art critic from New York Benjamin Harsav. And in another place: “Yet it would be wrong to confine Kupferman’s to an expression of the Holocaust. There is no identity between the art and the artist’s verbalized experience, only an interpretative tension between them.”¹⁶

His art represents the memory of visual experience, making memory itself visible. He painted on paper and canvas, ostensibly non-figurative pictures, yet not quite pure abstraction. His art resounds with an echo of the Holocaust in Europe, and the dramatic history of Israel. These references were often made clear through the titles given to his paintings, and in conversations with the artist.

An insight into Kupferman’s work reveals its guiding principle: that “an existential solution to the problem of how to live on in the face of the past is offered by the moral caliber of the painting”.

* * *

In this paper I would like to present the moral, artistic, and humanitarian richness of Kupferman’s work. Neither easy to classify nor to name, the world of his art challenges our experiences in the historical reality of the twentieth century. It was important for him to reflect in his paintings the special vibrating light of the land of Israel and the splendid view upon the Mediterranean sea from the kibbutz where he lived. Changing with the seasons and the time of day, these colours can be articulated only in the immanent language of painting. His work, remaining under the influence of this meaningful context, exemplifies the memory of seeing, making memory itself visible.

In his work, one can also hear an echo of the history of Israel. His use of paint, graphite, ruler, knife, paper, canvas and sandpaper reminds one of the cultivation of barren land, which turns deserts into olive and orange groves.

Yona Fischer, the co-curator of Moshe Kupferman’s exhibition in Poland in 1993, wrote:

“Dror”, organized by I. Zukerman. During the Holocaust, he wrote a narrative chronicle in Yiddish, *Poem of the Slaughtered Jewish People*; he cooperated with Emmanuel Ringelblum.

¹⁶ B. Harsav, *op.cit.*, p. 98.

The vibrating light in which the exhibited works have been produced, and by which they are so thoroughly suffused, is transferred by means of this exhibitions to a world saturated with a different light, and is a visual manifestation of both the unity and complexity of experience and reality, raising questions about mutual understanding.¹⁷

In the early 1960s Kupferman developed his special abstract language. His 'seemingly' abstract art proves that he was one of the most profound painters of his time. At first glance, his oeuvre appears to be purely abstract, grounded solely in the visions of his inner world. Within this abstraction – whether it be the minimalist works of the 1970s or the more expressive painting of his later years – one of Kupferman's central themes is the act of concealing, erasing, and revealing elements within the work. The process of building up layers of soft violet or purple color enables the perception of form and the particular richness of Mediterranean light. His painterly 'signature' is the combination of two fundamental elements: the compulsive superimposition of layer upon layer of paint in subdued shades ranging from soft violet to grayish mauve, and the repetition of parallel lines. The lines are initially freely brushed but subsequently put in order on the canvas with almost drawing-like exactness. This work process is reflected in the complex structure, with intersecting diagonals showing signs of erasure, and the alternately transparent and opaque layers of diffuse color. Many of his compositions are full of tension between the revealed and the concealed, between the transparent and the opaque planes.

He learned some fundamental lessons from the abstract artists of the 20th century, but the language of his art is exceptionally personal and unique. It belongs only to himself. He created a world of tensions and paradoxes, and yet achieved an impossible unity that raises his compositions to the level of mystical and at the same time intellectual expression.

In his essay in the catalogue of Kupferman's exhibition in Tel Aviv, Benjamin Harshav writes: "Neither thematic nor verbalizable, his world challenges our experiences in the historical reality of the 20th century. It is authentic art in a post-modern condition, because it relativizes different modernist styles; it appropriates their principles for private, individual language, developed in Kupferman's own work; and foregrounds the impossible conjunction of the abstract and historical"¹⁸. And the vertical layers, overlaid on top of one another (going into the depth of the oil painting) were now

¹⁷ See the catalogue Moshe Kupferman's exposition in Łódź: *Moshe Kupferman*, Muzeum Sztuki, Łódź 12 January – 28 February 1993, Centrum Sztuki Współczesnej, Warszawa 13 January – 28 February 1993 in cooperation with Tel Aviv Museum of Art (Yona Fischer, Chief Curator, Tel Aviv Museum of Art; Jaromir Jedliński, Director, Muzeum Sztuki, Lodz; Wojciech Krukowski, Director, Center of Contemporary Art, Warsaw, p. 7.

¹⁸ B. Harshav, *Moshe Kupferman – abstraction and time*, catalogue exp. *Where is Abel, thy brother?*, The Zachęta Gallery of Contemporary Art, Warszawa 1995.

placed also next to each other, in tense balance, horizontal and asymmetrical, as heterogeneous centers of gravity, competing with each other for dominance in a painting¹⁹.

This was based on the recognition of another reality, an individual, introspective authenticity, and on the belief that the act of painting, as a hard daily work, is the refuge of the one who lost everything. The one who seeks, as a kibbutz member and an artist-painter, the only way to justify his survival, not by erasing the past, but rather by perpetuating its memory: the covert private memory to which the painting attests, although not addressing it explicitly²⁰. Kupferman's work – oils on canvas or various media on paper – seems at first glance to be abstract, and indeed it is. It can be seen within the wider context of the sensual abstraction which evolved in Western art after World War II, in the language whose grammar runs the whole gamut from minimalist monochrome to plentiful significance. Quoting Yona Fischer:

Israeli abstract painting, which developed under unique circumstances, belongs entirely to the post-World War Two period. Its pioneers, veteran artists who had been landscape painters in the 30s, banded together in 1948²¹ to form a group they called New Horizons.²²

Two of the members of the New Horizons group, Joseph Zaritsky (1891-1985) and Avigdor Stematsky (1908-1989) were the teachers of the largely self-taught Kupferman during two summer painting courses held at the kibbutz in 1953 and 1955.

* * *

Marek Chlanda is a distinguished Polish artist born in 1954 in Cracow. He is a generation younger than Moshe Kupferman, but Yaroslav and Cracow are only about 200 kilometers apart, both being part of a complex geo-historical region called Galicia. In March 2009, Marek Chlanda sent me a letter including ten graphic works, drafts and explanatory notes. This set of graphic works, all measuring about 32 x 29 cm, was created over fifteen years, starting in 1993. They focus on the topics important for the artist from the very beginning of his creative path. These works suggest a certain line, a trajectory.

¹⁹ See also: B. Harshav, *Moshe Kupferman: Life and Art*, catalogue exp. *The Rift in Time*, Givon Art Gallery, Tel Aviv 2000, p. 122.

²⁰ Y. Fischer, "Moshe Kupferman (1926-2003): The Rift in Time", *Di Kriye*, No. 7, 1999.

²¹ 1948 – the year in which the modern State of Israel was born.

²² Before the War, these artists had been influenced by the Paris School; by the painters such as Chaim Soutine, or Frenchmen Pierre Bonnard. After the War revealed two facts: the disappearance of both schools from the artistic field. In the same time emergence of a new generation of artists, most of them were abstract painters. The New Horizons group now respect painters such as Serge Poliakoff, Pierre Soulages, Alfred Manessier and Jean Fautrier

One may recall Chlanda's statement: "this line is a metaphor of my biography". These graphic works include an imaginary depiction of the workshop of the exquisite Polish painter Andrzej Wróblewski (1927-1957), some drawings visualizing *Our Life After Brzezinka* (1976), as well as the drawings reflecting *Dreams of Prayers* (1994). It also includes the drawings entitled *Cosmos – Aphorism of Blake*, a copy of Blake's *Laokoon*, the drawings *Cosmos – Tango of Death* (2004). Importantly, it also includes two pages of notes entitled *After the Rift in Time* (2008). These notes, Chlanda wrote, were his response to the eight paintings of the series *The Rift in Time*, the paintings in which Kupferman most directly confronts the Holocaust.

Moshe Kupferman was a friend of Marek Chlanda. In the early 1990s, Kupferman met the then director of the Muzeum Sztuki in Lodz, Jaromir Jedlinski, in Israel. In consequence of this meeting, he visited Poland. He met Chlanda, whose works he appreciated very much; he understood this art's hermetic nature. Subsequently Chlanda spent three months in Israel, they met several times. Soon after Kupferman's death in 2003, Chlanda returned to his series of eight pictures *The Rift in Time* from 1999 during his study visit to Israel (where he stayed at the Lohamei Hagheta'Ot Kibbutz). He responded to Kupferman's work about ten years later, with a group of paintings and drawings he titled *After The Rift in Time*. In this series of works he returns with full empathy to the art of his friend, and in a sense continues and answers many questions posed by it. Divided by age, experiences and finally the death of the older artist, Chlanda continues the effort to understand and to rework the meaning of Kupferman's work.

Marek Chlanda wrote to me: "Paintings are first of all a challenge of visibility, an effort to reach the deeper meaning. It does not condition, does not determine comprehension, but tries to recover the true meaning. There are times when comprehension overshadows and blocks what in paintings is direct and clear. It obscures the visible and changes it into the invisible".

There are obvious differences between these two artists. A distance of a generation and Kupferman's working conditions in the vibrating light of Israel. Chlanda works in Cracow – an old town full of monuments of Polish history (also the Jewish presence in Poland's history), but often covered by clouds and prone to rain. Yet Chlanda's work is a tender effort to penetrate the diverse phases, levels, u-turns and returns presented in *The Rift in Time*, possibly the most important paintings of his friend as regards his views on history. Chlanda writes: "A careful perceiver may retrace the whole creative act and reconstruct the route of the painter, the trajectory of his art up to the final 'full stop', the belief that the task was accomplished, the final stop-work 'signature'. But some paintings of Kupferman have many signatures. And then reconstruction becomes difficult".

* * *

Moshe Kupferman's work *The Rift in Time* is a series of eight large oil paintings, 2 x 2 meters each; they were exhibited at the Givon Art Gallery in Tel Aviv in March 2000. Three of them were created for permanent display at the Yad Layeled "Children's Memorial Museum", the Holocaust educational institute for children and youth. This institute was established next to the Ghetto Fighters' House Museum in the Kibbutz Lohamei Haghetta'Ot in order to provide, and perpetuate in the children's memory, the knowledge about the Holocaust through documentation and education. The group of eight works entitled *The Rift in Time* was the only one where Kupferman directly referred to his memory of the Holocaust. "It was not a direct response to a direct invitation, but years of dragging out an answer and even more years of carrying the theme in his head – until the dam broke"²³.

Chlanda remembers²⁴ that Moshe Kupferman was asked many times to create a painting addressing the Holocaust. The artist always avoided such conversations. In his personal notes concerning *The Rift in Time*, Kupferman wrote about the «final solution» but did not recognize this series of paintings as an effort to find an artistic expression of the Holocaust. But according to Chlanda²⁵, he confronted the challenge. In this work, Kupferman concentrated all the emotions of the bygone decades, unverballed desperation, gestures of protest and efforts to defend himself and those close to him. This is a cluster of ritual gestures of mourning, an abstract concept of an irreparable, unbridgeable rift. He created a para-architectural space, a suggestion of a pipeline which leads to nowhere and everywhere. We can perceive fragments of destroyed houses, basement windows, broken chimneys, scaffoldings and fragments of inner-city greenery. Are there any forms, mental non-illustrative structures, which can express the desperation, the pain, all of the hidden, maybe even determinedly suppressed feelings connected with the Holocaust? Can the traces left by a brush be the image of doubts, emotions, initiations and returns? Can they express thoughts? Can they be an equivalent of the complex process of thinking in the nervous system?

At first Kupferman called the series *Di Kriye*. In Yiddish, the language of his childhood, this means "the rip". Jewish people traditionally tear their clothes when mourning for a loved one. This is meant both as a concrete gesture of defiance, a ritual of mourning, as well as an abstract concept, an irreparable, unbridgeable rift.

²³ B. Harshav, *Moshe Kupferman: Life and Art*, in catalogue exp: *Moshe Kupferman. The Rift in Time*, Givon Art Gallery, Tel Aviv 2000, p. 121.

²⁴ In my phone conversation with Marek Chlanda on May 11, 2010 (Lodz–Cracow).

²⁵ M. Chlanda, *Notatki/Notes* (VII).

“The result of a geological catastrophe” was the metaphor for the rift in the consciousness of many Diaspora-born Israelis introduced by the Hebrew poet Avot Yeshurun. *The Rift in Time* can be seen as a political and historical obligation and commitment, as an attempt at “explaining” the Holocaust to children. To accomplish this goal, Kupferman decided for the paintings in full color, rich in shapes and light. His paintings in this series are dramatic and infused with an air of gravity, struggle and silent oppression. “More than ever before, they speak of the past; a discourse loud and clear, albeit one of silence, of signs and symbols whose interpretation the artist entrusts to us, the viewers”²⁶.

“I always thought” – wrote Moshe Kupferman to Benjamin Harshav in 1999 – “that it was impossible to paint the Holocaust. This is not a topic I choose. I cannot imagine that one day, one moment I’ll decide: now, I shall just finish the canvas I’m working on and paint a concentration camp on the next canvas... But I live a great deal with the memory of the past and especially of that period, with the sense of loss and the ever-present longing for the victims of that Destruction”²⁷.

Thus vision and memory are deeply rooted in the artist’s mind, in his everyday life. The consciousness of existing to “imagine despite everything”²⁸, accompanies the acceptance of the fact that the images of the past, even partial, incomplete and distorted, are present in our memory forever. According to Didi-Huberman,²⁹ “the impossibility of imagining the Holocaust” must be overcome, i.e. the Holocaust must be expressed. The destruction of the world of the European Jews becomes a “historical phenomenon”, and must be represented /imagined /”visualized”.

For example, the archives of the Yad Vashem in Jerusalem contain documents, photographs, albums, and memories, and by this “completeness” facilitate the *imagining* of the Holocaust. The existence of this multi-form evidence contradicts the dogma of the *unimaginable* nature of the Holocaust³⁰. Because the Nazis wanted their crimes to be unimaginable, art about the Holocaust must be created. This un-expressed history, these figures of memory have been presented to us by Kupferman in *The Rift in Time*. “Thinking – writes Jan Assmann – is enabled by the abstraction, memory by the concrete. Ideas have to be embodied in material symbols to become the subject of memory. Then a notion merges suddenly with an image. [...] To express the

²⁶ Y. Fischer, *op.cit.*

²⁷ M. Kupferman, *On ‘Di Kriye’ (The Rift in Time)*. (A fax to Benjamin Harshav in the USA, December 3, 1999). Harshav: “This was a personal letter, jotted down in longhand and not intended for publication, it response to some questions I asked over the telephone from the USA to Israel”. See: catalogue exposition Moshe Kupferman, *The Rift in Time*, Givon Gallery, Tel Aviv 2000, 82.

²⁸ G. Didi-Huberman, *Images malgré tout*, Paris 2004, p. 51.

²⁹ *Ibidem*.

³⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 79.

thoughts and memories of the Holocaust through a picture, to use their pictorial power there where words fail”³¹.

Memory was an important part of Kupferman’s life, but his paintings are not “about” the Holocaust in the directly emblematic sense. They are rather “after the Holocaust” (as Boltanski says, that his work is “after the camps”). In the catalogue of his exhibition, held in two major Polish Museums in Warsaw and in Lodz, Kupferman wrote:

How can art express the murder of millions, tell about the industry of death?
Who can know what my Jewish people went through when they were murdered?
We shall never be able to grasp that this could have happened.
I paint. I miss them. Always will.

The past is strongly present in the thoughts and the work of Moshe Kupferman, but it is changed, transformed by contemporary events, by the frequently disturbing news about the local problems, by the permanence of political and military conflicts ever present in the life in the young State of Israel. Italo Svevo (1861-1928) wrote:

Today directs the past as members of orchestra. Creates the need for this or other sound. Makes them sound loud or makes sounds disappear. In contemporary appears only these elements of the past, which make today either clear or opaque.³²

Today is created by the past, by the memory of the bygone, because the past enables the perception and interpretation of the world we live in. The paintings of Kupferman should be interpreted as a figure of memory and an image of remembrance. His work concentrates /presents the feelings of the past identity, memory of history as well as the consciousness of the contemporary. This art may be read as an affirmation of human life and creativity, as a great joy in complexity, as a confrontation with overcoming.

In his late years, creating his new series, the artist reached a special level of abstraction *à rebours*: his colors, first (in the 1980s or 1990s) seemingly decorative, now become autonomous and deliberately contrasted with other colors – glaring green, purple, red, black, white. In 1996-1998 his works are more poetic, more “figurative”, metaphorical and harmonious.

The series *The Rift in Time* presents a stronger “architectural” construction, an increase in the depth of perspective. It embodies the emotions and imagination ruled by the “vision” of memory. The eight square canvases are compacted into the symmetry of a white precisely painted diamond (painting

³¹ J. Assmann, *Das kulturelle Gedächtnis. Schrift, Erinnerung und politische Identität in frühen Hochkulturen*, C. H. Beck, München 1992, p. 71.

³² I. Svevo, *Zeno Cosini*, Rowohlt, Hamburg 1959, p. 467.

number 3), or green triangle (painting number 4). These surprisingly precise symmetries, put in order the chaos of destruction by means of perfectly drawn geometric figures. This brings about, in opposition to what harmony and symmetry meant in the history of art, the feeling of anxiety and uncertainty. The effect is provocative and as if “unjustified”. The harmony and symmetry of the frames of the 2m x 2m paintings, contrast with the strong, expressive texture of the paint, the traces of the brush. This contrast is a metaphor of the route of the artist, who in the final years of his life found the sense of life. Image and representation materialize the memory, fights the need to forget because it discovers the forms enabling the compensation of the loss of meaning.

Kupferman views painting as a moral activity. Nili Noymann, the author of the article in *Siman Kri'a* (January 10th, 1980), writing about Kupferman's mature art, stated: “Kupferman's plastic conception, resulting from this philosophy, constructs metaphoric layers for the concepts of destruction and construction as inevitable neighbors on the picture ground”³³. The daily work discipline to which he submitted himself represents the moral standard within the social framework of the kibbutz; the urgency is evidenced in the work, in the very process of its creation and in its concrete, physical existence. The experience of life – the past, the present, memory – was always manifested in every aspect of his art, in the particular style of his work: the accumulation of signs, additions and overlapping, disappearance and return to particular forms, the stubborn persistence of figures and signs. The analysis of the past and its continuation. The unique poetics inherent in the creative activity of Moshe Kupferman is a result of the patient repetition of the questions: how to live remembering the past, in the face of the current events of contemporary life in Israel and in the face of the beauty of the natural environment? The answer is to be found in his paintings, a concentrate of the ethical dimension and the beliefs of the artist, for whom a work of art should carry the imprint and weight of the past.

Yet, the paintings of Kupferman are not dismal, the important element of his work is the intensity of colors. In 1961 he traveled to Europe, and became acquainted in Paris with postwar abstract painting; he studied the art of the Paris School (Vieira da Silva, Bram van Velde, Giacometti) and the group of Nouveaux Realists (Tinguely, Spoerri, Arman, Fautrier, Soulages, Tàpies). Their art influenced and changed Kupferman's paintings. Their monochromaticity was replaced by the antagonism of the light and dark. This concept was reflected in the use of black and white, accompanied by violet. Violet, in its various tonalities, ranging from pure violet to purple and lavender-grey, was eventually to become the dominant color in his painting.

³³ N. Noymann, *Moshe Kupferman – 1970-1979*, *op.cit.*, p. 446.

However, violet and all its hues also represents something else, beyond the ‘technical’ circumstances of its accretion. It displays a characteristic which is not peculiar to Kupferman’s paintings. Violet and purple have appeared in the works of numerous artists working on both sides of the Mediterranean, as an ‘instinctive’ solution to the problem of perceiving the colors in nature in the strong light.³⁴

“Every artist” – wrote Kupferman in 1968 – “carries with him a store of descriptions, memories, images [...]” All these belong to “the burden of the past [...] There is no element of chance in this combination, but neither is it the consequence of a choice. The insignificant is forgotten [...] What is worthy of being expressed sometimes attains a worthy shape, and that is the picture with a right to exist”³⁵.

* * *

Having pointed out the influence of his stay in Paris on the painting of Moshe Kupferman. I would like to suggest the possible influence of another town. Perhaps it was Krakow. According to Kupferman’s memoirs, his first contacts with Gothic architecture and sculpture took place in Krakow. After a few dozen years he returned to Poland and visited Krakow in the winter of 1993.

I would like to return here to the notes of Marek Chlanda, who recalls being a guide and companion of Moshe Kupferman during his walking tour of Krakow in winter 1993³⁶. A cold, gloomy day in one of most beautiful towns in Poland, stimulated Kupferman’s memories of his first visit in Krakow as a young man. He vividly remembered his first visit in its churches, more specifically the contrast of the gray, winter day and the vibrating lights of the interior of the Franciscan church. The lights created by the stained-glass windows – the work designed by Stanisław Wyspiański (1869-1907), one of the excellent Polish artists and playwrights of the end of the 19th century. Creating these designs, Wyspiański tried to capture the light of the Mediterranean engraved in his memory after his travels to the south of Europe in 1890. Moshe Kupferman recognized the connection of the grey, winter colors of Krakow and the light of his everyday life in Israel.

A few years later, gazing at the painting number 7 of the series *The Rift in Time*, Marek Chlanda thought about the attempts and the efforts of Wyspiański, who believed in the contact with the departed, to move the elements of

³⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 16-17.

³⁵ M. Kupferman, *Instead of a Catalogue*, 1968.

³⁶ M. Chlanda, *Notes* (VII).

the past from the cradle of the European culture in the Mediterranean, to Krakow – the domicile of the Polish kings – the Polish Pantheon³⁷.

Painting number 7 of *The Rift in Time* seems to reflect the memory which exists today but it is the memory of something very distant, something not well articulated but made real by the stories, photos, and documents. Made real by the efforts of Moshe Kupferman and others who returned to the country of their childhood, returned to the past through memory. In painting 7, we perceive a few visual agglomerations, two well separated and consisting of black strips which cover nearly all of the painting. The condensate of today, or maybe also of the past, in which the painting is created leads to a strong impingement or re-remembering of other memories and facts of life.

Looking at the painting number 7, Marek Chlanda asked himself: “Where, in which part of the painting, does the paint transmute from the material substance to the substance of memory. Is this really taking place here?”

Marek Chlanda studied painting 7 in the place of the work’s origin, in the kibbutz Lohamei Hagheta’Ot situated on the hill from which one can see the sea – the kingdom of the violet. This violet seems infinite, like a never-ending mental conversation with the younger artist from Poland. Perhaps this special purple-violet also led to creation of *The Rift in Time*? After three days in October of 2008 at the Foundation Moshe Kupferman, in the Warsaw Ghetto Fighters Kibbutz in Israel, Marek Chlanda initiated his series *After the Rift in Time*. For some images of *After the Rift in Time* he used the materials from his work titled *Holy Chambers* (1990) and the eight pictures were stimulated by *Acropolis* – a play by Stanisław Wyspiański. The *Acropolis* was the basis for the spectacle directed by Jerzy Grotowski (1933-1999) and Józef Szajna (1922-2008) in 1965. Grotowski moved the action of *Acropolis* to the grounds of the former concentration camp in Auschwitz. The spectacle ends with the actors’ disappearance in the coffer located in the middle of the stage space. The stage is left empty, with a jumble of pipelines.

* * *

Gazing at *The Rift in Time* provoked the process of associations which can be ordered in time, and extracted from the past surviving/saved memories. It allows the artist and the receiver to overcome despair, the awful void between the need to understand this painting *malgré tout* and the natural disagreement with what had happened. Benjamin Harshav wrote:

For Kupferman the Holocaust itself is such enormity that it can not be figuratively or thematically described in art. What we can express is our in-

³⁷ See: Stanisław Wyspiański’s drama *Acropolis* (1904-1907).

ability to express it, the incomprehensible nature of it all. And, perhaps, also the swings of our emotions confronting «Time», the age of the Holocaust, looms above the horizon of his work.³⁸

The Greek term *mártys* originated from the verb meaning „memorize”. It denotes a martyr, but its genitive *márturos* also means “witness”. The survivor is both a martyr and a witness; to remember is his obligation. The survivor should not forget the others. This obligation was fulfilled by Moshe Kupferman in *The Rift in Time*. Chlanda was born in Krakow, in the country where the Jewish community had been present for ages, which for many centuries was the home of the largest fraction of the Jews in the world. Today it is home to merely twelve thousand Jews. Marek Chlanda attempts to carry this memory, he believes that this is his moral obligation to be a witness and to remember.

* * *

Theodor W. Adorno³⁹ claims that art, particularly modern art at its best, offers a utopian moment, the possibility of social change, a state of non-identity. He opposes the heritage of the Romantic idealism, which Adorno sees as a philosophy of identity in which the subject always assumes dominance over the object, stressing the difference between the subject and the object. The paradox of Holocaust representation revealed itself in the conflict between the ethic imperative to remember and the impossibility of representing that past, evading clear representation because of its exceptionality, incomprehensibility, and cruelty. Moshe Kupferman’s *The Rift in Time* and Marek Chlanda’s *After the Rift in Time* – the two series of pictures by the artists of two different generations, which we should see as unique and very important representations of the Holocaust, managed to confront this paradox directly. They are memorial images that incorporate their audiences into the problem of the memory and representation of the Holocaust, relating these questions to the experience of the *homelessness of art* and the *homelessness of thought* in the postwar world.

³⁸ B. Harshay, *Moshe Kupferman: Life and Art*, *op.cit.*, p. 96.

³⁹ See: Th. W. Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, *op.cit.*

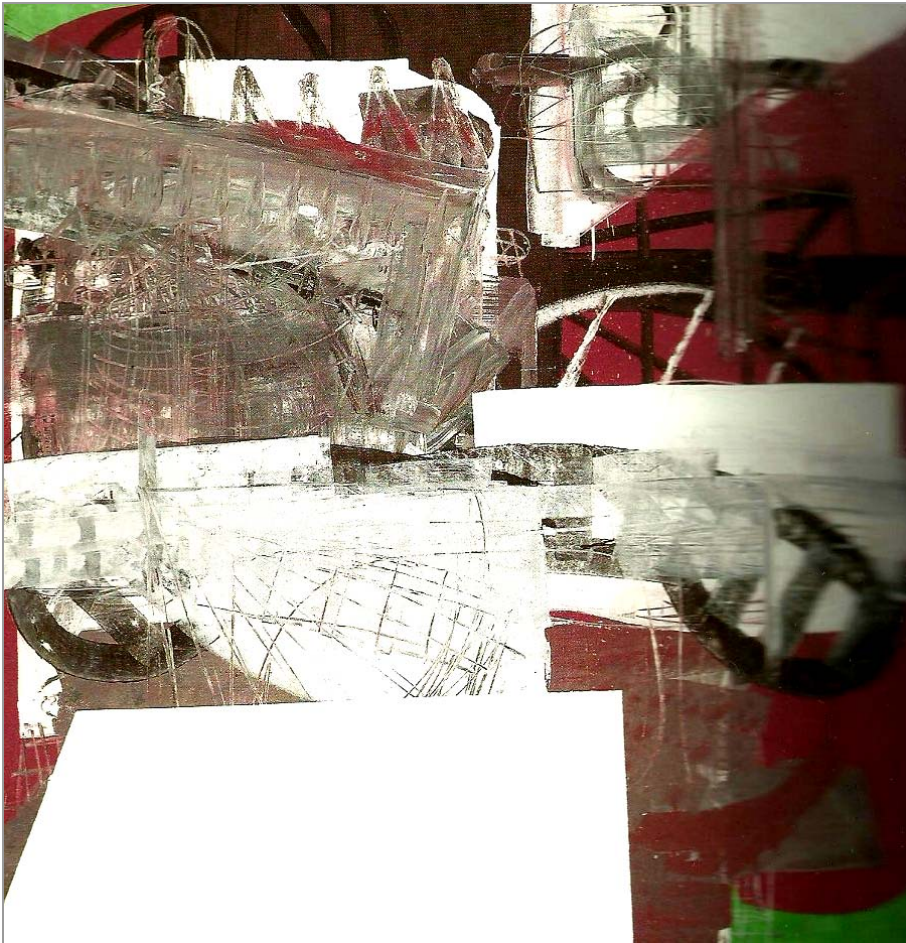


Photo 1. Moshe Kupferman, *The Rift in Time no. 3*, 1999,
oil on canvas, 200 x 200 cm

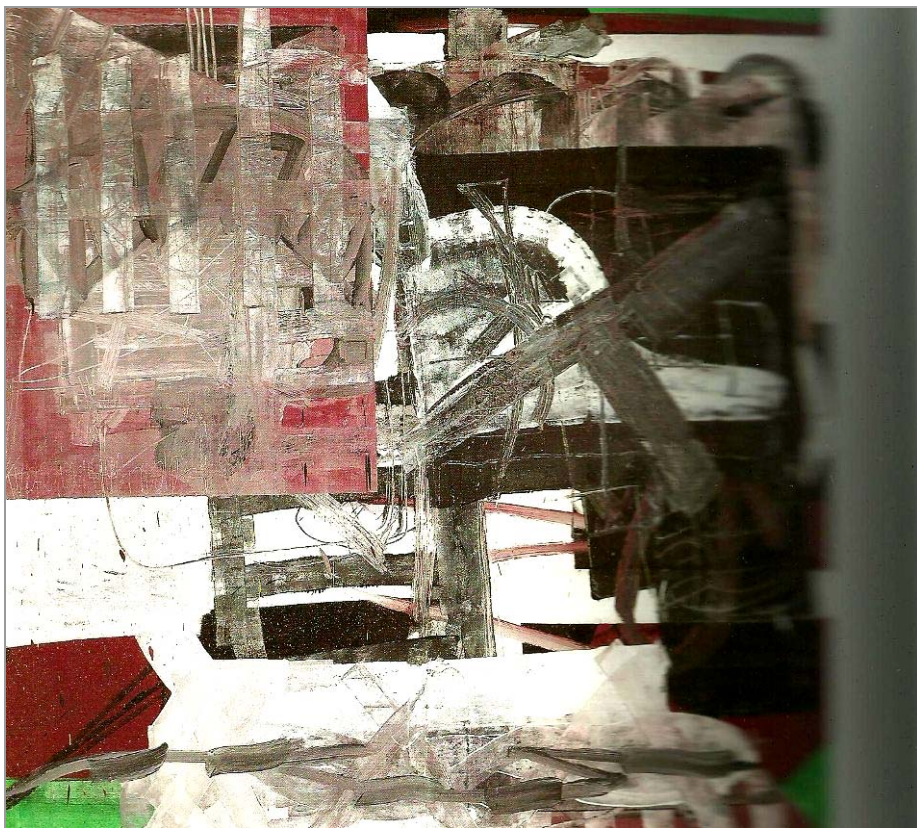


Photo 2. Moshe Kupferman, *The Rift in Time no. 4*, 1999,
oil on canvas, 200 x 200 cm

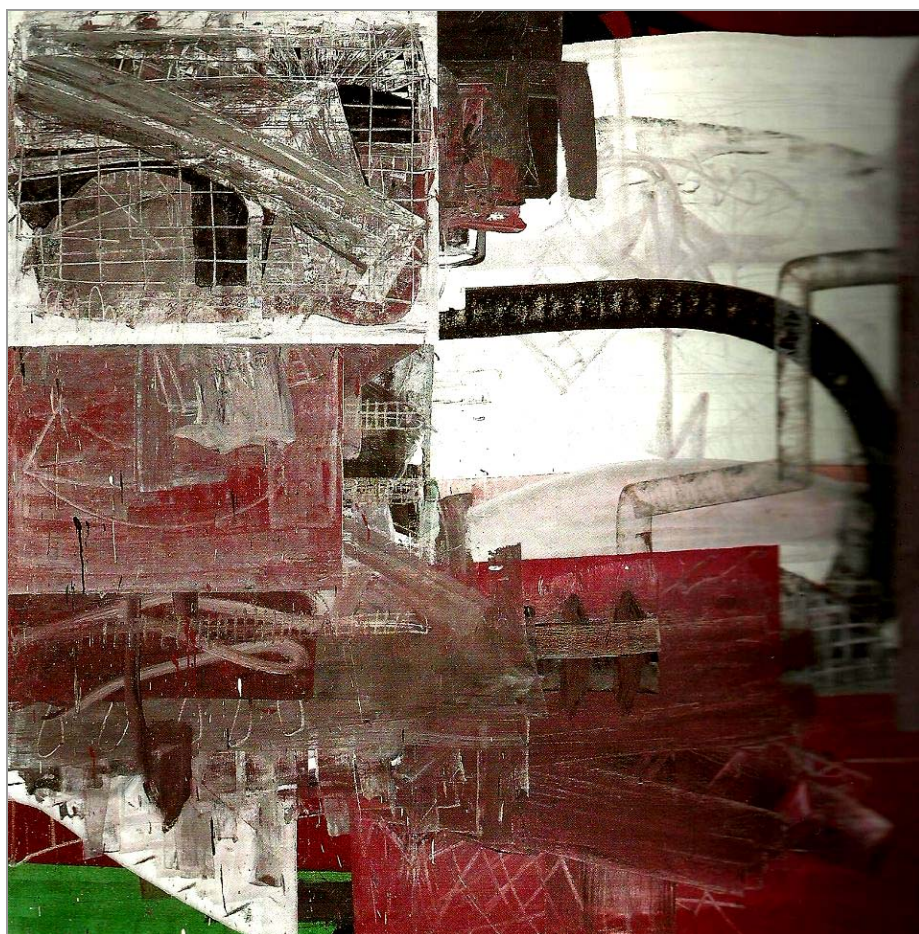


Photo 3. Moshe Kupferman, *The Rift in Time no. 7*, 1999, oil on canvas, 200 x 200 cm, collection of the Katzenelson House – Child Memorial

**BEZDOMNOŚĆ DZIEŁA / BEZDOMNOŚĆ PAMIĘCI:
"THE RIFT IN TIME" MOSHE KUPFERMANA
(streszczenie)**

Seria ostatnich – powstałych cztery lata przed śmiercią Moshe Kupfermana (1926-2003) – ośmiu obrazów pt. *The Rift in Time* (1999) jest jedyną w dorobku tego artysty, w której odnosi się on w sposób bezpośredni do problemu eksterminacji swego narodu. Grupa tych pozornie abstrakcyjnych obrazów, obecnie została rozproszona, poszczególne płótna znajdują się w różnych miejscach – owo rozproszenie stanowi symboliczną bezdomność, która poszukuje swego

zadomowienia w pamięci artysty i odbiorcy. Urodzony w 1926 r. w Jarosławiu w ortodoksyjnej rodzinie żydowskiej, podkreślał mocno swój silny związek z tradycją polską i hebrajską, z pamięcią i świadomością „bezdorności” swej pamięci. Jego sztuka zawiera w sobie echo katastrofy Holocaustu i dramatycznej historii państwa Izrael (artysta mieszkał w Izraelu od 1948 r. w Kibucu Lohamei Hageta’Ot/Kibuc Bojowników Getta Warszawskiego). Świat jego twórczości wywołuje doświadczenie historycznej rzeczywistości XX w. Powtarzającym się pytaniem, jakie stawia w swej sztuce artysta jest pytanie natury etycznej – „jak żyć w obliczu traumatycznej pamięci przeszłości?” Moshe Kupferman przyjaźnił się z polskim artystą Markiem Chlandą (1954), twórcą o pokolenie młodszym. Chlanda, po śmierci Kupfermana w 2003 r., po swej ostatniej wizycie w Izraelu, powrócił do serii ośmiu obrazów z 1999 r. (*The Rift in Time*) namalowanych przez żydowskiego przyjaciela. Przekraczając granice dzielące pokolenia, doświadczenia i śmierć starszego artysty, Chlanda podjął się w 2008 r. kontynuacji dzieła i utrwalania pamięci Kupfermana. *The Rift in Time Moshe Kupferman* i *After the Rift in Time* Marka Chlandy – tworzą wspólnie dwie serie będące dziełem artystów dwóch różnych generacji. Obie serie obrazów powinniśmy widzieć jako szczególnie i bardzo ważny przykład twórczości artystycznej podejmującej problem Holocaustu. Obrazy te należy postrzegać jako istotny przekaz artystyczny związany z tematem pamięci i reprezentacji Holocaustu, odnoszący się do zagadnienia doznawania *bezdorności sztuki* i *bezdorności myśli*, które stały się udziałem człowieka w świecie po Auschwitz (T.W. Adorno). Przedmiotem mojego artykułu jest rozważenie roli pamięci w życiu Kupferman – jej bezdorności rozumianej jako niemożliwości przekazania światu swych przeżyć z czasu Holocaustu i II wojny światowej oraz symbolicznej i dosłownej bezdorności obrazu „wewnętrznego” znajdującego swój wyraz w obrazie „zewnątrznym” – niedoskonałym i zawsze fragmentarycznym.

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HOMELESSNESS AS THE DETERMINER OF THE ARTISTIC WORK OF THE JEWISH DIASPORA IN CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPE BEFORE 1939

Abstract: In the Hebrew language, there exists the notion of “galut”, meaning exile, which expresses the physical and emotional condition of those deprived of their home country. It is associated with the feeling of alienation and unending wandering. A precondition of “galut” is the loss of a religious and ethnic centre – a “home”, which is connected with the longing for a mythologized past. In this context, homelessness, deriving from an inability to fulfil the desire to resettle the land promised by God, has become one of the crucial notions describing the condition of the Jewish people as well as an important factor moulding the character of the diasporal culture and art. Furthermore, homelessness may be treated as an immanent component shaping Jewish national identity.

In its political and social dimension, the problem of homelessness lay at the heart of the Zionist movement and anti-assimilative movements. Leon Pinsker perceived the Jewish homelessness as one of the reasons for anti-Semitism, claiming that other nations consider themselves to be equal, since they possess a territory, which is necessary for existence, and a language. Unlike Pinsker, the supporters of Jewish culture development in diaspora saw homelessness as a value that contributed to the building of spiritual autonomy, leading unavoidably to differently manifested nationalism.

The following text concerns the significance of the feeling of homelessness as one of the elements determining the character of Jewish art “in exile”. The awareness of that homelessness is variously reflected in works of art. Sometimes directly, as in the paintings whose subject is related to exile, wandering, escape. The protagonists in these representations are the people with the mark of otherness, wrestling with the lack of acceptance, like plants without roots, carried by the changeable wind of history from one place to another. Being homeless and unwanted, they shatter the ostensible homogeneity of the world around them. Dressed in traditional garments, leaning on sticks – the pilgrims’ attributes, they become the symbols of Jewish “ahasverism”.

Another interesting aspect in my discussion on the homelessness of Jewish art is the issue of the importance and treatment of a (usually ritual) object. Mythical Bezalel was the first Jewish craftsman, who, according to God’s instructions conveyed by Moses, created and decorated a tabernacle and ritual vessels. These objects were easy to move, which was important in the then situation of the Jews, crossing from Egypt to the Promised Land. The Biblical story influenced modern art works. Before the 19th century, diasporal art was dominated by the creation of objects of cultic character. Those masterful items, easy to pack, of fixed symbolism, could easily find their place in the new surroundings, which, as long as it was not artificially created, like e.g. a museum space, assimilated them into the iconosphere of everyday life. In

a diaspora, that feeling of temporariness and homelessness was expressed even in architecture. It is enough to have a look at the buildings in Jewish towns or at synagogues, which were not temples, but served sacral functions in place of the only (now non-existent) Temple of Jerusalem. Before the outbreak of World War II, they were called houses of prayer, and today, abandoned, ruined or deprived of their original use, they disturb the harmony of provincial townscapes.

The final important issue is the tendency to abandon the figuration and symbolism associated with Jewish nationality in favor of the universal system of signs. Was that tendency to abstraction only a reflection of contemporary artistic trends, or did it equally express the awareness of the necessary homelessness of art, which in order to be widely understood (in an emotional and esthetical sense, but of course not in a narrative one) had to dispose of local and national references, which, in the case of Jewish art, *de facto* brought them closer to meeting the idolatry limiting prohibition of depicting human figures in the fine arts.

Keywords: Jewish, art – homelessness – diaspora – Bible – tradition

When Rabbi Shlomo from Karolin made his journeys across Rus, he would enumerate them and repeat: “These are the journeys of the children of Israel after their had left Egypt”. When asked what he meant, he would say: “The Holy Bible teaches the words of God: *Let us make a man and God took one particle from each world, from the highest one to the lowest one, and created the man from them [...] and this is the meaning of the journeys that every man makes in his life: he must journey from one stage to another until everything has been united through him in the highest of the worlds [...] The man should journey to the place where he had come from*”¹.

The Hebrew term *galut* means “exile, slavery” and is used to convey the physical and emotional state of the people deprived of their homeland. This is associated with a sense of alienation and a permanent wandering in search of the possibility of coming back to the homeland. The condition of *galut* is the loss of the religious and ethnic center – a “home“, which is associated with the longing for the lost, frequently mythologized, past. In this context, the homelessness resulting from the inability to fulfill the desire to resettle the land promised by God has become one of the main concepts determining the condition of the Jewish nation and an important determiner of the culture and art of the Diaspora. Moreover, homelessness may be treated as an inherent component defining the Jewish identity. God’s choice to stigmatize the Nation would be senseless without that trial, where the fulfillment of the promise of returning home was the award. The merging themes of homelessness and wandering determine the nature of the Bible and Jewish history. In the first

¹ M. Buber, “Szlomo z Karolina”, in: *Opowieści chasydów*, Poznań–Warsaw 2005, pp. 174, 175.

chapters of Genesis Adam and Eve, banished from paradise, imperfect and deprived of immortality, set off to the unknown land. The call: *Leave your country, your father's house and your relatives. Go to the Land I will show you*² marks the beginning of the relationships between God and Abraham. Jacob and his descendants became the exiles in Egypt, which the tribe of Israel left only under the leadership of Moses and condemned themselves to forty-year long wandering. The destruction of the second Temple in A.D. 70 marked the beginning of the two millennia of homelessness finished only in 1948 by the re-establishment of the state of Israel.

The first part of The Pentateuch contains several narratives describing the exile – the state of deprivation, isolation and separation. In his cabbalistic interpretation of the story of Adam and Eve, Icchak Luria assumed that the act of the creation of the world was made real through *צמצום* (*cimcum*) [Heb. *withdrawal, shrinkage*]. On the successive days God, perfect completeness, “retreated”, giving room to the created matter. The divine continuum prevented the development of free space for separate creation. God’s self-restraint, necessary to form the complete real world, conditioned the preservation of identity and even autonomy of the things created³. *Cimcum* activated the fifth sephire *הרובג* (*gewura*)⁴, whose power of severe judgment restricted the unlimited energy potential. *Cimcum*, indispensable in creating the world, is perceived as the metaphorical exile (self-exile) of God and is associated with the term *Shechina* *הניכש* [Heb. *inhabitation*], meaning its inherence. In Luria’s conception, *Shechina* is the center of creation perceived as inner-directed divine emanation. The Book of Zohar personifies her female features and calls her God’s Bride and the daughter of God. In the diagram of the Tree of Life she is situated opposite the *Keter* *רתג* [Heb. *crown*], the last of the *sephires* before infinity, identified with *Malchut* *תוכלג* [Heb. *realm*] – the sphere associated with matter and the earth. In the structure of the universe, *Shechina* is both an antithetical and complementary element. It is matter against the spirit, the female element against the male element, earth against heaven. It is associated with number 2 and the second letter of the Hebrew alphabet – “ב” *be(j)t*. As it is associated with *Malchut*, it is the point of departure for the

² Gen. [12; 1].

³ According to the cabbalists opposing the pantheistic concept, the *cimcum* theory proved the absence of God in the world created and revealed the contradiction between the divine perfection and its absence in the real world. Paradoxically, according to different interpretations the God exists in the work of creation but He is hidden. His isolation is, however, only ostensible, as He fills everything with his being. Thus the world created after the God’s self-restraint is re-filled by him (He exists “inside” his being).

⁴ The Tree of Life was the cabbalistic diagram portraying the creation and construction of the universe. It is determined by ten *sefirot*s connected by 22 roads enabling to comprehend the past, the present and the future. *Gewura* (severity also called the law) is the fifth *sephire*, which joins responsibility for awareness of changes and differences with *Chesed* (mercy).

journey through the successive levels of the divine emanation towards transcendency. *Shechina* is associated with the word “תיב” *be(j)t* meaning “home”. According to the legend she was banished from paradise together with Adam and Eve and wandered in exile across heavens until she reunited with God. Moses made her descend to earth and accompany the Israelites on their journey across the wilderness as a cloud. It was believed that *Shechina* stayed in the Place in the desert (The Tent of Meeting) and in the First Temple⁵. As a perceptible but elusive phenomenon, she shared the lot of the Chosen Nation, who went on their centuries-old wandering after Nabuchodonozor had destroyed Salomon’s place. The exile of *Shechina* is the logical consequence of *cimcum* and she is the element necessary to implement God’s plan and fulfill his promises. He accompanies the exiles everywhere, *supporting the world with the stream of the divine energy*⁶. This special and discreet protection of the High Priest accompanied the Old-Testament pilgrims, whose history follows the same archetypical scenario: history, adolescence, seeking identity, seeking excellence. Exile and return, joy and suffering, guilt and redemption – these are the experiences necessary to understand the antinomy governing the world and the human nature, the antinomy whose mutual balance makes up the equilibrium of divine creation. The journey, understood as the period between the point of departure and the destination, a transitory state or a trial is a symbolic reflection of the earthly life and the inner life. On the other hand, the homelessness affecting every wanderer provides a necessary sphere of revelation, individual and group reflection, the last opportunity to manifest one’s will and hold one’s fate in one’s hands.

The forty-year long, coerced “trekking” of the Israelites across the desert was not the consequence of the real distance between Egypt and the Promised Land; it should have taken definitely less time to cover this distance, even in the extremely adverse conditions. Moving around the patch of rocky wilderness for over four decades was necessary to unite the emigrants involved in long-standing quarrels and develop a sense of identity based on faith. During the journey, God acting through Moses, the appointed leader and guide, gave the Jews the Ten Commandments. They were the laws regulating their moral obligations. Moreover, the Lord also gave them a series of laws on every aspect of daily life and religion. The implementation of the reforms required time and was not smooth. Thus the reforms were implemented by stages. It seems symbolic that Moses, a naturalized Egyptian, died before the end of the journey. *When Moses died he was 120 years old, and his eyes were not dim*

⁵ The word *Shechina* is not mentioned in the Bible. Its definition includes *stay, live, have the makeshift bed, be safe, lay, pitch the tent* and in this sense the root: *szin-chaf-nun* appears many times.

⁶ A. Unterman, *Encyklopedia tradycji i legend żydowskich*, Warsaw 1994, p. 267.

*nor his natural forces abated*⁷ Joshue, his successor, was born as a slave, but he did not bear the mark of assimilation as large as his predecessor. While ordering him to cross the Jordan River and take in possession the Promised Land, God said to him: *Don't be afraid and don't panic, for I, the Lord your God am with you in all you do*⁸.

The road and the leader became one of the main themes in the Jewish literature and art at the turn of the 20th century and predominated in the performances staged by anonymous exiles and the victims of pogroms as well as in the images of Moses and the portraits of Zionist activists with the soaring cypresses of the Land Regained at the background. I will return to this discussed later.

The story of Jacob, the son of Isaac, who deceitfully deprived his brother Esau of the first-born right, provides one of the most fabulous biblical stories full of unexpected turns of action, passions, intrigues and overcoming personal weaknesses. He deceitfully received a blessing from his blind father and consequently his brother's heritage. Consequently, Jacob had to leave his family home. The prophetic dream about the ladder with ascending and descending angels and the divine being floating above marked the start of wandering⁹.

The interpretation of this story is ambiguous. The ladder with the angels brings to mind the schematic presentation of the Tree of Life, which, like the mystic scaffolding, makes it possible to climb step by step towards the intangible reality. In this context the angels may symbolize *sephiroths*. However, if the ladder is the road, these winged creatures may be perceived as those who left Jacob and those who stayed with him. According to David Curzon, the poet and philosopher, the ladder is a projection of human emotions, aspirations and longings and the angels represent the ambivalent feelings affecting the behavior of every human being, the behavior he must struggle to keep in balance¹⁰. In the dream, the Creator floating over the ladder said to Jacob: *I am the Lord, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac*¹¹.

This intriguing statement shows Jacob's dilemma, as he identified more with his grandfather and despised his passive and submissive father. In the struggle with God, Jacob said that he would lose faith unless God fulfills his conditions. Such an uncompromising attitude reveals some traits of strong personality, earlier invisible in his devious and hidden actions in obedience to his mother's will. The ladder is something like a biblical telegraph – a means to communicate with the Creator and also a symbol of transition to intangible

⁷ Dt. [34; 7].

⁸ Josh. [1; 9].

⁹ Gen. [28, 12-13].

¹⁰ D. Curzon, *The View from Jacob's ladder – One Hundred Midrashim*, Philadelphia 1966, pp. 44-52.

¹¹ Gen. [28, 13].

reality. The dream about the ladder marked the beginning of the new life for Jacob; he abandoned his father's home and started his adult life after making a covenant with God at the price of support during the journey. 20-year long exile allowed Jacob to experience love and betrayal. His complicated relations with his wives and his father in law were the lessons of patience and humbleness for Jacob. Thanks to his smartness and diligence he amassed a fortune and resolved to return home. When he neared his family house, he hid his family and possessions in fear of Esau's just revenge and stayed on the riverbank waiting for events to develop. Jacob's story made a circle when he was visited by an angel at night and Jacob wrestled with him for a couple of hours. Actually nobody was overpowered; Jacob had a wrenched hip and Angel was forced to promise the blessing in exchange for being freed from the grip. The fight took place after dark, which is symbolic, as Jacob received the blessing from his blind father, condemned to darkness, by deceit. According to a *Midrash*, the Angel may be perceived as Esau's incarnation. Symbolically, the brothers' conflict could be solved only at night. The only price could be Esau's blessing and forgiveness, but received in an honest way. In a way Jacob managed to defeat his brother although they represented similar strength. Yet, he had to make a sacrifice; he had a wrenched hip and, like his father, was a cripple. Ironically, he had always despised him.

The other interpretation suggests that Jacob struggled with himself and determined the limits of his ultimate metamorphosis during this struggle. Its symbolic dimension was emphasized by the change of his name from Jacob (*God protects*) to Israel (*the one who struggled with God and survived*). Despite God's support, his obedience to his mother and father in law resulted in his longstanding submissiveness to the course of events. His wrestling with the Angel seems to be the struggle for his own personality and the final proof that justified tricking his father into blessing him. The return home was not the end of the complicated history of Jacob's family. His youngest son, Joseph was sold by his brothers to Egypt. After his years of service for Phutiphar and the pharaoh, during the famine, he met his brothers. He resolved to punish and humiliate them but forgave them eventually. Then he brought his father and the rest of the family and this is the end of the story.

The memory of biblical stories is kept alive in the modern rituals, exemplified by the pilgrimage festivals: *Szawuot*, *Pesach* and *Sukkot*. The latter two commemorate the exodus from Egypt. The *Pesach* festival is associated with an old agricultural feast held to determine the beginning of barley crops. The highlight of the ceremony is *Seder* – a solemn supper eaten on the first day. Three *matzahs* are put on the table. They are covered with an ornamented napkin, which is a metaphorical representation of the past social division into priests, the *Levites* and the people. A roasted lamb leg is an equivalent of the paschal offerings made in the Temple of Jerusalem. Sour

herbs /horseradish and parsley/ dipped in the salty water symbolize the Jewish misery in Egypt. An egg sprinkled with ash means survival and revival. *Charošet* is the dessert made from grated apples, almonds, wine and nuts are to be associated with the clay and straw used to make bricks to build Egyptian towns. One of the supper highlights are the four toasts raised to commemorate the promises made by Moses: bringing the Jews out of Egypt, salvation, liberation and reception. The red wine stands for the lamb's blood used by the Jews to mark the doors of their houses to protect them against the angel of death. A large glass intended for Eliash, the wanderer and the prophet looking after the Chosen Nation, always stands in the middle of the table. After blessing the *matzah*, the head of the family reads the Passover *Haggad*, the book containing the stories about the exodus from Egypt, psalms, allegorical stories and riddles. The highlight of the *seder* is the toast raised to express the hope for the return to the Holy Land. The youngest participant asks four questions and the answers to these questions explain the meaning of the ritual stages of the supper¹².

*Sukkot*¹³ – the fall harvest festival, completes the cycle of agricultural works and at the same time commemorates the desert exodus. In the *Book of Priests*, God commands Moses: *For seven days you will live in shelters; all the citizens of Israel will live in shelters, so that your descendants may know that I made the Israelites live in shelters when I brought them out of Egypt*¹⁴.

In modern times, the habit of building shelters became a visible memento of God's commands. The shelters were put up on balconies, in backyards and attics in the cities and small towns in Central and Eastern Europe¹⁵. According to the instructions, the shelter should consist of three walls and the roof covered with branches, so that the sky could be watched. The wooden shelter of Szydłowiec in the tanners' house next to the synagogue provides an interesting example of such a construction. Its inner walls are decorated with the remains of polychromy, with the theme of fruits, trees, wine and the Star of David¹⁶. The shelter found in Tyczyn, in south-east Poland, represents a more fully developed iconographic program. The shelter is in the attic of the house, which the Wachs family used before World War II. The shelter's roof is partly movable. The painting decorations were preserved inside on the western and

¹² *Polski słownik judaistyczny*, study by Z. Borzymińska, R. Żebrowski, Warsaw 2003, vol. 2, pp. 500-501.

¹³ *Sukkot* is called the Festival of Shelters in Poland.

¹⁴ Lv. [23; 42, 43].

¹⁵ The shelters put up at *Sukkot* were only temporary. Sometimes, however, permanent shelters were built, especially in the big towns. They were built in verandas, galleries and special extensions. Most of them were destroyed or changed their original function. A number of shelters are now under conservation in the Museum of Diaspora in Tel-Aviv.

¹⁶ Norbert and Monika Bekiel donated this shelter to the Museum of Polish Jews but it is currently on display in the Open Air Village Museum in Radom.

northern walls¹⁷. Apart from the themes of fruits, plants and animals (a lion), typical of the Jewish worship buildings, there appears the theme of the crown bearing the inscription *הַרְוֵת רַתֵּךְ* (*Keter Tora*) [Heb: *crown of Torah*] and (rare in the Jewish art) a figurative presentation of man against the landscape. The scene was interpreted as the moment when Moses and Joshua were shown the land which Israelites were to take into possession¹⁸.

The shelters in poor condition can be found in a great number of Polish towns. They usually have no decorative elements and their technical condition is far from perfect. It is sad that this great testimony of the centuries-old coexistence is vanishing from collective memory. Abandoned, devastated or adapted to different needs, they are used in the urban iconosphere as the banal bay windows, galleries and extensions and their poor condition is dangerous to casual passer-bys.

The ritual of the Festival of Shelters and such related symbols as *etrog*¹⁹ and *lulaw*²⁰ inspired a great number of the Jewish painters, including Moritz Daniel Oppenheim (1800-1882) Izydor Kaufman (1852-1921) Maurycy Trębacz (1861-1941), Henoch Barczyński (1896-1941), Zygmunt Menkes (1896-1986). One of the most famous pictures showing *Sukkot* is by Leopold Pilichowski (1869-1933)²¹. The brown and gold color, characteristic of the Munich school, provides a little mysterious mood. The action develops in the small space in the foreground. On the left there is an old Jew wrapped in a prayer shawl with an embroidered *atará*. He is keeping a *Sukkot* bouquet. So are the others who have assembled in the synagogue. A characteristic dish for keeping *etrog* is on the wooden bench.

According to the Jewish tradition, it is a manifestation of love and religious obligation to provide the poor and homeless with food and clothes. In the *Book*

¹⁷ The detailed description of the shelter of Tyczyn is provided in the articles including: A. Trzeciński, "Polichromia kuczki w Tyczynie", *Plaj. Zeszyt Krajoznawczy Towarzystwa Karpackiego* 1993, booklet 5, pp. 93-99; A. Trzeciński, "Będziecie mieszkać w szałasach przez siedem dni" (III Moses. 23, 24), *Polska Sztuka Ludowa – Konteksty* 1989, vol. 43, Booklet 1-2, pp. 89-90.

¹⁸ *Then Moses climbed Mount Nebo from the plains of Moab to the top of Mount Pisgah opposite Jerycho. There the Lord showed him the whole land. He could see from Gilead to Dan.... Dt. [34; 1]; cf. A. Trzeciński, "For seven days you will live in shelters" (III Moses 23, 24) *ibid.*, p. 90.*

¹⁹ *Etrog* [Heb. *citrus fruit*] is one the four plant species of the *Sukkot* festival bouquet symbolizing a devout Jew and the heart – the most important part of the human body. cf. *Polski słownik judaistyczny*, study by Z. Borzymińska, R. Żebrowski, Warsaw 2003, vol. 1, p. 405.

²⁰ *Lulaw* [Heb. *palm branch*] is part of the *Sukkot* bouquet together with *etrog*, myrtle and willow. cf. *Polski słownik judaistyczny*, study by Z. Borzymińska, R. Żebrowski, Warsaw 2003, vol. 2, pp. 67-68.

²¹ L. Pilichowski: *Sukkot* (1894-1895), oil/canvas: 109.2 x 138.4 cm; Jewish Museum New York.

of Isaiah, the prophet calls [...] to divide your bread with the hungry, And bring the homeless into the house²².

In the folk parables and legends, Eliash, the other old-testament prophet, appears as a stooping beggar carrying a sack on his back and holding a wanderer's walking stick. He visits Jewish houses hoping to get a snack and preach the word of God, which he personifies. The figure of a pilgrim floating in the air, a mysterious *luftmentsch*, frequently appears in the paintings by Marc Chagall and the literature by Max Nordau, where he may symbolize the nation deprived of its land and tossed by the gusty wind between the real world and divine miracles. The ornamented glass awaiting the prophet on Pesach night heralds the fulfillment of the promise that Messiah will come and Eliash is his harbinger.

As regards the political and social dimension, the problem of homelessness became critical at the end of the 19th century and lay at the heart of the Zionist movement and anti-assimilative movements, which doctor Leon Reich verbalized forcibly in his article published in the "Jewish Almanach", where he said: "The self-preservation drive turned out to be stronger than the dreams of assimilation, as they understood that even if these dreams came true, even if the Jews ate better food and were wealthier, the Jewry will be dead"²³.

Leon Pinsker, the founder of the movement *ציוני יבונה / Zion Lovers!*, perceived the Jewish homelessness as one of the reasons for anti-Semitism and claimed that other nations find each other equal as they possess their own language and territory indispensable for existence. He compared the Diaspora Jews to the soul deprived of the body. In his brochure *Autoemancipation! Mahnruf an seine Stammesgenossen von einem russischen Juden*, Pinsker showed that a Jew is dead for the living, a foreigner for the locals, a wanderer for the settled, a beggar for the owners, an exploiter for the poor, a man without a country for the patriots and a hated rival for everybody.

On the other hand, the supporters of the development of the Jewish culture in Diaspora found homelessness to be a value favoring the creation of the specific spiritual autonomy leading inevitably to nationalism manifesting itself in a variety of ways. Martin Buber's view was the product of the opinions offered by ultra-Zionists and the supporters of the Diaspora culture. He argued that the development of Jewish art and culture would be possible only in the Jewish state²⁴, but unlike other Zionist activists, he did not reject the output of the Diaspora and emphasized the significance of Jewish folk as an element shaping the national style. He reviled assimilation and *golus* as something that hindered the liberation of the national spirit, but at the same time he pointed

²² Is. [58; 7].

²³ L. Reich, "Wobec aktualnych problemów w syonizmie", in: *Almanach Żydowski*, Lviv 1910, p. 14.

²⁴ M. Buber, "Judische Kunst", in: *Stenographisches Protokoll*, p.168.

out the value of tradition in helping to preserve identity. Buber compared the Jewish nation to the seeds vegetating over ages in *dark royal tombs*, but still capable of yielding crops. He observed the cultural revival, which he called the Jewish Renaissance²⁵. Buber's opinions, as well as the Zionist ideas, had a considerable impact on the work of the Jewish artists at the turn of the 20th century. Still, their interpretations were different, depending on their points of view and their life experience.

The painting by Samuel Hirszenberg *The Wandering Jew*, which M. Rajner and R.I. Cohen called an icon of contemporary Zionism, is one of the most important works concerning the problem of homelessness²⁶. The work, if considered in the context of national art, appeals to the popular theme of the exile condemned to homelessness and rejection of Jesus Christ. Maurycy Gottlieb²⁷ was the first Jewish artist to use this motif. In his work the exile expressed the conflict between the identification with the Judaic tradition and the attachment to Polish culture. Hirszenberg's art lacks individual references, which may be found in Gottlieb's works. According to many authors, the source of inspiration for the Łódź painter could be the famous drawing by Gustave Dore, although they also mention other art works, such as *Wernyhora* (1883-1884) by Jan Matejko and *Mattathias the Maccabee* (1894)²⁸. As regards the latter two, it is rather the composition and not the subject that could inspire Hirszenberg. The Jewish interpretation of the motif of the Wandering Jew is not the same as the Christian one. *Ahasver* appears as a symbol of the nation for whom martyrdom and exile are justified by the acceptance of God's choice. The Wandering Jew by Hirszenberg *rushes driven by a whirlwind*²⁹ towards the future illuminating his face, tormented by the crosses piling alongside. By placing his hero among the crosses, Hirszenberg (like Leon Pinski) points to religion as the main source of the conflict, which will come to an end when the Jews regain their land.

The awareness of homelessness reveals itself in the works in different ways but most directly in the paintings and sculptures whose subject is associated

²⁵ M. Buber, "Judische Renaissance", *Ost und West* 1901, No. 1, pp. 7-10.

²⁶ R.I. Cohen, M. Rajner, "The Return of the Wandering Jew(s) in Samuel Hirszenberg's Art", *Ars Judaica* 2011, p. 33.

²⁷ This is *Ahasver* (1876), the painting by Maurycy Gottlieb, oil, canvas 63 x 53 cm; National Museum in Cracow. *Ahasver* (*Aswerus*) was the biblical king of Pers who liberated Jews from slavery through the marriage with Esther, the Jew. *Ahasver* is also the Wandering Jew, famous from the medieval legends, condemned to eternal wandering for rejection of Christ. The interpretation of *Ahasver*, the work by Gottlieb, his self-portrait, considers semantic duality of *Aswerus*, especially in the context of the artist's dilemmas.

²⁸ Jan Matejko, *Wernyhora* 1883-1884, oil/canvas; 290 x 204 cm, National Museum in Cracow; Boris Schatz, *Mattathias the Maccabee*, 1894, lost.

²⁹ S.R. Lewandowski, "Samuel Hirszenberg", *Tygodnik Ilustrowany* [1st half year] 1902, p. 44.

with exile, journey and flight. These are the scenes painted predominantly under the influence of pogroms, showing the groups or individual wanderers wrapped in the prayer shawls, carrying ritual items or just ordinary items grabbed the moment before leaving home. The protagonists of these scenes are the people carrying the stigma of otherness, facing lack of acceptance, like the plants without roots driven by changing whirlwinds from one place to another. Homeless and rejected, they disturb the awareness of the ostensibly homogeneous space. Thus they become negative heroes causing anxiety and a sense of impermanence, the intruders who always come into conflict with their neighbors. Wearing traditional clothes, carrying the walking sticks (pilgrims' attributes) – they become the symbols of Jewish *Ahasverism*.

The motif of wanderers predominates in the works of the Jewish artists such as Leopold Pilichowski, Samuel Hirszenberg, Jakub Weinles, Maurycy Minkowski, Stanisław Bender, Wilhelm Wachtel, Josef Israels, Leonid Pasternak, Marc Chagall and Jacob Steinhardt. *Galuth, (Exile)* the painting by Samuel Hirszenberg, is an outstanding work of art depicting this motif. Hirszenberg was inspired by the 1903 pogrom in Kishinev, the capital of Bessarabian Province, Russia. Yet, the artist intended not to just give an account of the journey of exiles but incite deeper reflection concerning the deteriorating situation of the Jewish Diaspora. The painting shows the different-aged people manifesting different attitudes. Religious, wearing traditional clothes Jews are marching side by side the assimilated ones. They all suffer a tragic fate of exiles.

Hirszenberg's work was created at a very special moment as along with the growing anti-Semitic riots the Zionism ideas flourished. The painting exhibited in Paris (1905), London (1906) and Berlin (1907) initiated a series of works of the same theme. *Galuth (Exile)* was recognized as a real "apotheosis" of different states of mind in face of tragedy and the author as the one who managed to explore the essence of Diaspora suffering and comprehend the meaning of wandering³⁰. Hirszenberg defined the composition outline, which became the pattern for subsequent artists³¹. The Artist referred to *Galuth (Exile)* in his two other works: *Black Banner* (1905)³² and the unsigned oil sketch displayed in The Israel Museum in Jerusalem and showing a procession against the blue sky with tumbling clouds. *Refugees* (1906) by Abel Pann

³⁰ R. I. Cohen, *Jewish Icons. Art and Society in Modern Europe*, Berkley 1998, p. 231.

³¹ The works clearly inspired by the painting by Hirszenberg include *Refugees* by Abel Pann, 1906; *Exile* by Adolf Behrman (ca. 1918); *Rescue of the Torah* by Stanisław Bender; *Jews Leaving the Town* (ca. 1910) by Maurycy Minkowski; *After the Pogrom* by Józef Mitler; *Jews Fleeing a Pogrom* (ca. 1914) by Jacob Weinles.

³² S. Hirszenberg, *Black Banner*, 1905, oil, canvas, 76.2 x 205.7 cm, The Jewish Museum, New York

reveal a number of similarities to *Galuth (Exile)*. They include a horizontal composition and similar motives. A hunched bearded old man, is marching at the head of a procession. He is bringing his people out of the slavery like Moses. Hirszenberg did not introduce a walking stick, a pilgrim's attribute, albeit his "Moses" resembles *Moses on the Mount Nebo*, the sculpture by Boris Schatz (1890). Interestingly, there is a connection between this sculpture and the portrait of Teodor Herzl (1908) by Leopold Pilichowski. In both works the hero is the leader standing on the rock. This is a biblical patriarch wearing the blown antic robes and looking into the distance covering eyes with a hand, while another hand is resting on the high stick. Herzl by Pilichowski is a smart distinguished European keeping a hat and a stick in the hand dressed in a dark glove. The stick is no longer only a symbol and becomes a Western gentleman's attribute. In spite of the differences, the analogy is noticeable at first glance. Teodor Herzl, a co-founder of the Zionist movement, hands over to the Jews the land promised by God like Moses. Other similarities between *Galuth (Exile)* and *Refugees* include the man with a small bundle, a little girl, a woman with a shawl on the shoulders, an elderly woman wearing a scarf on the head and a smart man wearing glasses. Apart from a universal meaning, *Galuth (Exile)* by Hirszenberg has also a more personal dimension, as the Artist placed his wife Dina among the refugees. Thus, he defined his attitude to the then situation of Jews, e.g. the assimilation crisis and growing anti-riots, and manifested his attachment to tradition. In 1907 he decided to leave Cracow and go to Jerusalem, where he was appointed the headmaster of the School of Crafts set up by Boris Schatz. Its syllabus was aimed to create and promote national art. Actually, during his stay in *Eretz Israel* Hirszenberg abandoned the diaspora themes and focused on landscapes and scenes observed in the streets of Jerusalem. The exception was his *On the Way to the Western Wall* (1908)³³, where he returned to the road theme and showed the people wearing characteristic East-European fox hats, heading among the stony gray masses for the illuminated wall. According to the Old Testament road is inseparably associated with the history of the Chosen Nation and apart from wanderings meant the Lord's protection. Albeit hard and long, the wanderers could take some rest and did not abandon hope. The wandering meant the journey, flight and emigration and the Jews, for whom religion is the only home, remember the Lord's promise. In a way, every religious Jew is a homeland seeking wanderer – pilgrim (*peregrinus* – L. *foreign*).

Leopold Pilichowski, „*the painter of the Jewish people impressed by the misery of the wanderers' nation*”³⁴, frequently exploited the motif of wandering in his works. *At the Railway Station (Emigrants)* (ca. 1901), *The Tired*

³³ S. Hirszenberg, *On the Way to the Western Wall*, 1908, oil, canvas, 27.5 x 17.5 cm, Tel Aviv Museum of Art.

³⁴ “Leopold Pilichowski”, *Tygodnik Ilustrowany* 1909, No. 46, p. 944.

Ones (The Tired Wanderers) (ca. 1900), *Awaiting, Where Peace Is* and *Rest* (ca. 1900) represent similar characteristics. The wanderers rest on the stony steps, benches and at the railway stations; the homeless wear worn-out clothes and keep beggar's sticks and their sole baggage are the small bundles with the items they managed to grab while leaving their homes in a rush. A specific mood is characteristic of a large number of Maurycy Minkowski's works, including *After the Pogrom* (1905), (*After the Pogrom* ca. 1910) and *At the Railway Station* (ca. 1906-1914)³⁵. Like his other works they were created under the impact of pogroms and reflect a sense of alienation. Desperate and sad people lack emotional ties. Refugees and wanderers also appear in the paintings by many other artists including Marc Chagall and Jacob Weinless. *Farewell to Golus* (ca. 1935), a portfolio of 14 lithographic charts by Wilhelm Wachtel, is an interesting work. The artist had collected them just before he left for Palestine and provided with an extensive commentary finished with the following statement: *In the autumn of my life I wish to pitch my tent in the Country of Our Fathers [...] I wish to eulogize [...] new people. Let this portfolio be a document of the time: when we were still in Golus.*

The collection contains thematically arranged works illustrating the Diaspora life. They include Friday night performances, the image of the woman lighting *Sabbath* candles watched with curiosity by an assimilated Jew, *seder* supper, homeless who lost their possessions during pogroms and Christ – the Jew crossing the street of the destroyed *shtetl*. The last chart presents young Jews leaving their homes on their way to Palestine. Analysis of the homelessness iconography in the Jewish paintings at the turn of the 20th century should also encompass a motif of the July festival *Tisza be-Aw*, commemorating destruction of the First Temple by Babilonians in 586 B.C. and the Second Temple by Romans in 70 A.D.

The primary cause of mourning in *Tisza be-Aw* was the destruction of the main place of worship. The themes of exile and prosecution returned in the synagogue prayers and lamentations. The date of the festival was also associated with other events contributing to its mystic meaning, which included the fall of the stronghold *Betar* during *Bar Kochba* insurgence (135 A.D.) and the Jews' exile from England in 1290. On the 31st of March 1492, a special edict, signed in Granada ordered Jews to leave Spain unless they decided to accept Christianity. The deadline was 9 Av 5252 (11 August 1492). Actually these events brought an end to the Jewish culture in the Iberian Peninsula and initiated the large exodus of Jews in Europe and that day became a symbol of the Jewish fate and the Diaspora prosecutions and sufferings. No wonder, celebration of this festival has become a popular motif

³⁵ M. Minkowski, *After the Pogrom* (1905), oil, canvas 147 x 113 cm, Tel Aviv Museum of Art; *After the Pogrom*: oil, canvas 103.9 x 152.4 cm, The Jewish Museum, New York.

of the paintings of Jewish artists connected with the realism and national stream, which is represented by the work of such artists as Leopold Horowitz (1837-1917) and Maurycy Trębacz (1861-1941).

The destruction of the Temple was of particular importance as regards a sense of identity, development of community as well as religious attitudes. After the Place had been destroyed, the religion of old Israelites lost its spiritual center. Yet, the event was actually responsible for the birth of Judaism in the Diaspora form. When the Temple no longer existed and the old structures of the religious life were transformed, a new quality developed in the Babilon and Palestine rabbinic schools. It was still associated with the past but considered new living conditions. According to the tradition, the destruction of the Temple was the punishment for Israel's sins, which was explained clearly by Jeremiah. Homeless *Shechina* became the exiles' faithful companion in misery. The rituals changed, sacrifices were no longer offered and no pilgrimages were held in the Diaspora. The sacral sphere, which made it possible to meet God was substituted by the community gathering for prayers. *Shechina* appeared in the community, where 10 adult Jews constituted quorum. In exile the spiritual homeland of Jews was Torah, perceived as the revealed wisdom, history and liturgy. It was a primary element joining Judaism deprived of the main institution. The divinity worship in the Temple was replaced by the synagogal worship but the synagogue could not replace the Temple of Jerusalem. A synagogue was defined as תּסנכ תיב (Bejt Kneset) [Heb. *house of assembly*]; הליפת תיב (*Bejt t'fila*) [Heb. *house of prayer*] or לוש (*Szul*) [Yid. *school*]. The definition developed on the basis of the names mentioned suggests the function of that place and its significance for the community. A synagogue is primarily a center integrating the Jewish society and the place intended for the prayer and teaching. The building of the synagogue could be representative but modest facilities provided with windows were also suitable for ritual and prayer functions. The design of the synagogue's interior follows the outline referring to the Tent of Meeting and subsequent Temple. *Aron ha kodesz* and *almemor* are the crucial elements shaping the space. The wardrobe or the recess (*Aron ha kodesz*) designed for storing Torah scrolls, placed on the eastern wall, was the substitute of the Saints' Holy Place. *Almemor* was used as a platform to read Torah, teach sciences and pray. Its location had to provide the proper acoustics. *Almemor* was the equivalent of the Holy Place in the Temple of Jerusalem and the rest of the space corresponded to the courtyard for the praying. Actually, the masses of the synagogues in Central and Eastern Europe followed formally the patterns of the local architecture. The exception were wooden synagogues, whose specific, characteristic style resulted from the combination of the folk and Jewish elements such as the Star of David on the wall of the synagogue in Przedbórz.

Judaism is a historical religion, which means that it is based on the facts recorded and unchanging. Thus the Jewish liturgy lacks symbolic rituals; God is not abstract and the faith is not dogmatic but results from the historic context. God created men, made a covenant with them, liberated them from slavery and made a promise that is a signal of the continuation of history. The decorations and motives used in the synagogue' design (repeated in the ritual items, books and ornaments on the tombstones) convey no complicated and metaphoric message. Instead they are only the signs reminding of the history or referring to the history, symbolize the items mentioned in the Bible and quote specific stories and figures. Lions, gryphons, eagles, deer and birds "borrowed" from the iconosphere of other cultures, as the animals taken Noah' ark, "came" with the Jews to Europe and abandoned after World War II lost significance and were nothing but exotic relicts of the destroyed culture.

Pogroms, wars and holocaust made busy Jewish towns abandoned and only few buildings remind us of the large society, which is gone. Only few survived synagogues preserved their historic design, transformed into libraries, offices, swimming pools, museums and exhibition rooms. The abandoned prayer houses (this is how they were called before WW II) are a dissonance in the small-town landscape. Disused or ruined, they are actually homeless and deprived of identity. In a sense, the same may be said about the Jewish graveyards, which, however, are also called the house of graves תיב תורבק */bet kwarot/*, the house of life תיב חיייה */bet chaim/* and the house of eternity תיב בלוע */bet olam/*³⁶. The Jewish graveyard is the place where a number of prohibitions and orders are effective, which results from the belief in the reunion of the soul and the spirit on the day of the Final Judgement. A tombstone shows the eternity place or the place kept until the prophecy of resurrection has been fulfilled. The inscription on the tombstone contains the dead man' s name by which Moses will call him on the day of his coming. The Jewish grave is untouchable and must remain so as long as the memory of this place is kept alive.

It is forbidden to dig out the grave even if it is destroyed. There is no custom to tidy up the graves so the graveyards look neglected. The exhumation is permitted only to transfer the body to the Holy Land, the family tomb or from the non-Jewish graveyard to the Jewish graveyard. After the WW II a great number of the Jewish graveyards were destroyed and their tombstones (Heb. *macewa*) were used as the building material. The survived ones decay even when they are protected by restorers; tourists rarely visit them as they are unable to make out the meaning of inscriptions and symbols. Effaced

³⁶ O. Goldberg-Mulkiewicz, "Cmentarze żydowskie", in: "*Lebn wil ich*" – "*Ja chcę żyć*". *To co pozostało: cmentarze żydowskie w Polsce*, P. Blachetta-Madajczyk (ed.), Białystok 2000, p. 9.

inscriptions and torn off epitaph plates make the identification of the dead impossible.

An interesting aspect of the Jewish art's homelessness is the meaning and attitude to the ritual items. Mythical Bezalel, the first Jewish craftsman, made and decorated tabernacle and ritual dishes according to the God's commandments given through Moses. They were relatively easy to take, which resulted from the then situations of the Jews journeying from Egypt to the Promised Land although the biblical description suggests that the ark's transport was rather difficult due to the material which it was made of. The Book of Exodus provides the detailed account from Bezalel's work:

And Bezalel made the ark of acacia wood: two cubits 37 and a half was the length of it, and a cubit and a half the breadth of it and a cubit and a half the height of it: and he overlaid it with pure gold within and without [...] And he cast for it four rings of gold [...] And he made two staves of acacia wood and overlaid them with gold³⁷.

Next the book provides the ark's details including golden cherubins with spread out wings high, ornamented golden wreath and ritual dishes such as bowls, cups and jugs designed for offering sacrifices. Bezalel's other works of art include a golden candlestick with the cups resembling almond flowers, seven lamps, flash hooks, firepans and the alter³⁸. Oholiab, the son of Achizamak, of the tribe of Dan, helped Bezalel as an engraver and an embroider *in blue, and in purple, and in scarlet, and fine linen³⁹*, as well as tunics and ephods.

The biblical story had an impact on the modern artistic work. Manufacturing of the cult items predominated the Diaspora art until the 19th century. Sophisticated, easy-to-pack items of the specific symbolism could be easily transferred from one place to another and assimilate to the every-day iconosphere. The craftworks were intended not only for the houses of prayer. Every-day ritual items such as Sabbath candles, Mezuzas, Chanuk lamps, Sedar bowls, Tefillin embroidered bags, glasses and cups designed for Saturdays and festivals, matzah bags, censers, pendants and talits were characterized by excellent quality and sophisticated form. Cabbala believers claimed that items, like living creatures, have a gift but it is closed in the separate "shell". It is only man who is able to free it through its use in the divine manner⁴⁰. Moreover, this refers also to the trivial, every-day items. The paintings considering the subject pogrom and discussed in this paper show the refugees carrying different attributes. They include Torah wrapped in the dress or the prayer shawl, a light kettle against the dark clothes of wanderers (*Galuth* by Samuel Hirszenberg, 1904), *Menorah* placed at Christ's feet and the Nazis destroying

³⁷ Ex. [37; 1-4].

³⁸ Ex. [37; 7-24].

³⁹ Ex. [39;1-31].

⁴⁰ M. Buber, *Droga człowieka według nauczania chasydów. Przedmowa*, Warsaw 1994.

the synagogue's furnishings (*White Crucifixion* by Marc Chagall). As regards Chagall, different items are frequently arranged in the unexpected manner and hung in the indefinite magic space. *Fall of the Angel* (1947) shows a light burning candle, a yellow cow, a violin and a clock. The dramatic meaning of this presentation and its symbolism of time and death may result from Chagall's personal experience. Jankel Adler's work is suffused with mysticism. The artist shows Chasids and their world full of the items such as mirrors, musical instruments, Chanuk lamps, Mezuzas, candlesticks, Torah scrolls and books. The animals are exceptionally important. Fish, doves and cocks may be associated with *gilgul* and the belief in successive incarnations during the journey to the reunion with God⁴¹.

In the mid-19th century, first private collections of the Jewish art were set up in Europe. They contained primarily ritual items and paintings. Presumably, their goal was to collect and display the items reflecting the national culture and art. Yet, taken out of the natural context, the items lost their original meaning and sacral significance and were nothing but trivial curiosities for non-Jewish visitors. The Jewish craftwork, like the art of Africa and Oceania, was incomprehensible for the majority of audience.

At the end of 1970s, Jewish craft was presented during the Universal Exhibition in Paris (1878) and in London (1879). Those events, described in newspapers and reports, increased interest in Jewish art and provided a strong impulse not only for collectors, but also for researchers and ethnographers, which resulted in taking up actions for an inventory and protection of artistic objects⁴².

In 1894, during the Universal National Exhibition in Lviv, the works of Judaic art were displayed for the first time in Poland. Some eminent collectors, such as Marek Reichenstein, Maksymilian Goldstein and Karol Dresdner, also came from the Lviv milieu. In 1909, Marek Reichenstein put forward a project of founding the Jewish Museum, but the idea was never accomplished. In the 1920s, the Curatory for the Protection of Jewish Arts Monuments started an inventory of Jewish art monuments in the area of eastern Małopolska. In 1933, an exhibition of artistic objects coming from Reichenstein's collection was organized in the Museum of Industry of Arts in Lviv. Two years later, a book by Maksymilian Goldstein and Karol Dresdner, titled *Kultura i sztuka ludu*

⁴¹ See more: E. Jedlińska, "Jankel Adler – Chasidism and New Jewish Art", in: *Jewish Artists and Central-Eastern Europe. Art Center – Identity – Heritage from the 19th century to the Second World War*, J. Malinowski, R. Piątkowska, T. Sztyma-Knasiecka (ed.), Warsaw 2010, pp. 283-290.

⁴² Among the collectors of Jewish art, one should mention Lesser Gieldziński (Gdańsk), Mathias Bersohn (Warsaw), Gustaw and Artur Krontal (Poznań). After World War I a few private Judaica collections were established, among others the collections of Benjamin Mintz's, Noach Pryłucki's, Mieczysław Zagajski's. However, they were not open to general public.

żydowskiego na ziemiach polskich [Culture and art of Jews of Poland], was published. In the introduction, a historian and Jewish art researcher, Majer Bałaban, noticed: *We, Polish Jews, got down to this work very late. We hadn't started to rescue pieces of art until the vast majority of them were carried abroad or wasted in the country*⁴³.

The uneasy question about reasons for such a situation must cross one's mind. In the work by Goldstein and Dresdner, quoted above, Stanisław Machniewicz emphasized a connection between Jewish art and religion as well as everyday life, which resulted in some indifference towards artistic work. This indifference originated not only from biblical prohibitions, but also from ancillary function that art was due to serve, remaining only *the part of a time-honoured tradition, a dear memento from fathers, which must be conveyed to successors – undiminished and unchanged*⁴⁴.

A remaining issue is the fact that rising interest in their own cultural heritage coincided with the peak of assimilative tendencies on the one hand and national ones on the other. Zionism adherents and national art advocates in Palestine concentrated on actions that aimed at founding museums and art schools. *Only those nations that have had great culture shall be remembered, and they wield influence on culture to this day*⁴⁵, wrote Leopold Pilichowski. In 1906, the Bezalel Academy of Art and Design was opened on Borys Schatz's initiative. The school's objective was to create a national style, which was to combine Jewish art with the latest trends. However, the majority of artists employed by Schatz came from a diaspora, which, contrary to common expectations, limited artistic development of students for quite a long time.

In Europe, assimilation meant reconciliation with a diaspora, it created favourable conditions for institutionalized social and cultural life. Closing Jewish "antiquity" inside museum space or a collector's room tied gathered pieces of art with a particular time or area, bore testimony to their place in history. Seemingly "domesticated" objects lost their original context and ritual meaning, turning into hollow artefacts, thereby becoming even more homeless.

The last issue concerns the fact that artists gave up figuration and symbolism connected with nationality towards a universal system of signs. Jewish painters and sculptors, for ages limited with a prohibition of depicting human figures, preferred floral and animalistic motifs, creating forms that were original compilation of eastern and western elements borrowed from their neighbours in diaspora. This specific and recognizable style characterizing synagogue paintings, book illustrations and craft products survived until

⁴³ M. Bałaban, "Wstęp", in: *Kultura i sztuka ludu żydowskiego na ziemiach polskich*, M. Goldstein, K. Dresdner (ed.), Lviv 1935, p. III.

⁴⁴ S. Machniewicz, "Wśród kart książki pamiątkowej", in: *op.cit.*, M. Goldstein, K. Dresdner (ed.), pp. 164-165.

⁴⁵ L. Pilichowski, "Sztuka i artyści żydowscy", *Almanach Żydowski* 1910, p. 72.

the outbreak of World War II, being in its prime in the first decades of the 20th century, when it was perceived as original and typically Jewish. Progressive slogans of Haskala and assimilation led to breaking traditional limits for the sake of art, remaining under the influence of European academies' teaching. It resulted in secularization as well as development of artistic fields marginalized before, such as painting or sculpture. It is true that artists used Jewish subject matter, yet painting ghetto motifs, exotic (for an average, non-Jewish viewer) garments, ceremonies, they closed themselves within the boundaries of conventions of a particular trend, such as academism, impressionism or realism. Their art was imitative, repeating the patterns of existing works, intriguing only with an unusual motif. Since artistic creativity, as Josef Czajkow wrote, *is not revealed in ethnographic content of a piece of art. [...] A Jew does not have their own tradition, because they are artistic novices [...] Art should be alive, that is innovative, it must assimilate with tomorrow*⁴⁶. A Jewish artist, whose bonds with the art of other nations are dubious, *will create their own synthesis using their specific material*⁴⁷. Therefore, it seems that a tendency to abstraction in the art of, say, Julian Lewin's, Samuel Szczekacz's, Henryk Berlewi's, revealed in the 1920s, was not only a reflection of current intellectual trends, but it equally expressed the awareness of necessity of homelessness of art, which in order to be widely understood (in an emotional and esthetical sense, but of course not in a narrative one) had to dispose of local and national references, which, in case of Jewish art, *de facto* brought them closer to meeting an idolatry limiting prohibition of depicting human figures in the fine arts. Empty or filled with abstract symbols canvases metaphorically visualise reversibility of God's self-limiting – achieving the state from before the creation, a new unity of shechina and the absolute.

⁴⁶ J. Czajkow, "Rzeźba", in: *Warszawska awangarda jidysz. Antologia tekstów*, Gdańsk 2005, p. 241.

⁴⁷ *Op.cit.*, p. 239.



Photo 1. Jewish shelter called „kuczka” in Plock, Poland



Photo 2. Samuel Hirszenberg, *Galuth (Exile)* 1904, whereabouts unknown.
Photo taken from „Ost und West” 1907, nr 12



Photo 3.
Leopold Pilichowski;
The Tired Ones
(*The Tired Wanderers*)
c. 1900; whereabouts
unknown.
Photo taken from „Ost
und West” 1908, nr 3

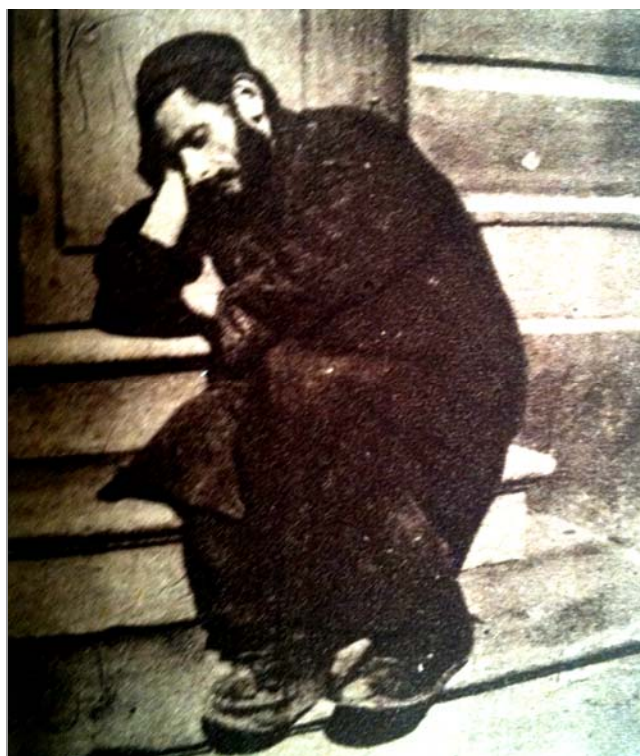


Photo 4.
Photo of beggar on
10 Nawrot Street in Lodz,
taken from
„Panorama” 1929



Photo 5.
Synagogue in Przysucha
(interior, view on Aron ha Kodesh)



Photo 6.
Dekorative tombstone
on jewish cemetery in Pabianice



Photo 7. Ritual and decorative elements of the interior of wooden synagogue in Przedborz.
Photo taken from private collection of Janusz Malanowicz, courtesy of Małgorzata Malanowicz

**BEZDOMNOŚĆ JAKO POJĘCIE KSZTAŁTUJĄCE CHARAKTER
TWÓRCZOŚCI ARTYSTYCZNEJ ŻYDOWSKIEJ DIASPORY
W EUROPIE ŚRODKOWO- WSCHODNIEJ PRZED 1939 ROKIEM
(streszczenie)**

W języku hebrajskim istnieje pojęcie „galut” oznaczające wygnanie, wyrażające fizyczny i emocjonalny stan ludzi pozbawionych ojczyzny. Wiąże się ono z poczuciem obcości i nieustannej wędrówki. Warunkiem „galut” jest utrata religijnego i etnicznego ośrodka – „domu” z czym wiąże się tęsknota za mitologizowaną przeszłością. W tym kontekście, bezdomność, wynikająca z niemocy zaspokojenia pragnienia ponownego zasiedlenia obiecanego przez Boga terytorium, stała się jednym z najważniejszych pojęć określających kondycję żydowskiego narodu, a zarazem istotnym czynnikiem kształtującym charakter kultury i sztuki diaspory. Co więcej, bezdomność można traktować jako immanentny komponent definiujący żydowską narodową tożsamość.

W wymiarze politycznym i społecznym, problem bezdomności legł u podstaw narodzin ruchu syjonistycznego i nurtów antyasymilacyjnych. Leon Pinsker, żydowską bezdomność postrzegał jako jedną z przyczyn antysemityzmu, twierdząc iż inne narody uważają siebie za równe, gdyż posiadają konieczne dla bytu własne terytorium i język. Inaczej niż dla Pinskera, dla zwolenników rozwoju kultury żydowskiej w diasporze, bezdomność pozostawała wartością

sprzyjającą konstruowaniu swoistej duchowej autonomii, nieuchronnie prowadzącej do objawiającego się rozmaicie nacjonalizmu.

Niniejszy tekst dotyczyć będzie znaczenia poczucia bezdomności jako jednego z elementów determinującego charakter żydowskiej sztuki "na wygnaniu". Świadomość tej bezdomności ujawnia się w wytworach artystycznych w różny sposób. Niekiedy bezpośrednio, jak w obrazach, których tematyka wiąże się z wygnaniem, wędrówką, ucieczką. Bohaterami tych przedstawień są ludzie naznaczeni piętnem inności, zmagający się z brakiem akceptacji, jak rośliny pozbawione korzeni przenoszeni przez zmienny wiatr historii z miejsca na miejsce. Bezdomni i niechciani zakłócają świadomość pozornej homogeniczności otaczającej ich przestrzeni. Ubrani w tradycyjne stroje, wsparci na laskach – atrybutach pielgrzymów stają się symbolami żydowskiego „ahasweryzmu”.

Innym interesującym aspektem rozważań o bezdomności sztuki żydowskiej jest kwestia znaczenia i traktowania przedmiotu (najczęściej rytualnego). Mityczny Bezalel – pierwszy żydowski rzemieślnik, według przekazanych za pośrednictwem Mojżesza boskich wskazówek wykonał i ozdobił tabernakulum i rytualne naczynia. Były to obiekty przystosowane do łatwego przenoszenia co poniekąd wymuszała ówczesna sytuacja Żydów wędrujących z Egiptu do Ziemi Obiecanej. Biblijna opowieść zaważyła na nowożytnej twórczości artystycznej. W diasporze aż do XIX wieku, wytwarzanie obiektów o charakterze kultowym zdominowało sztukę. Kunsztowne przedmioty łatwe do spakowania, o ustalonej symbolice mogły bez trudu znaleźć swoje miejsce w nowym otoczeniu które, o ile nie było sztucznie wykreowane, jak np. muzealna przestrzeń, asymilowało je do ikonosfery codzienności. W diasporze nawet architektura wyrażała owo poczucie tymczasowości i bezdomności. Wystarczy spojrzeć na zabudowę żydowskich miasteczek i na synagogi, które przecież nie były świątyniami, a jedynie pełniły funkcje sakralne w zastępstwie jedynej (nieistniejącej już) Świątyni Jerozolimskiej. Nazywane przed wybuchem II wojny światowej domami modlitw, dziś stanowią dysonans w pejzażu małomiasteczkowych uliczek, opuszczone, zrujnowane lub pozbawione pierwotnego zastosowania.

Ostanim ważnym zagadnieniem jest kwestia rezygnacji artystów z figuracji i symboliki związanej z narodowością, na rzecz uniwersalnego systemu znaków. Czy owa skłonność do abstrakcji była li tylko odbiciem aktualnych nurtów artystycznych, czy może w równym stopniu wyrażała świadomość konieczności bezdomności sztuki, która, aby móc stać się powszechnie zrozumiała (w sensie emocjonalnym i estetycznym, a nie narracyjnym rzecz jasna), musiała wyzbyć się lokalnych i narodowych odniesień, co w przypadku sztuki artystów żydowskich *de facto* zbliżyło ich ku realizacji ograniczającego idolatrię zakazu przedstawiania postaci ludzkich w sztukach plastycznych.

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NOMADIC IMAGES. TRANSMEDIAILITY AND HYBRIDITY IN CONTEMPORARY MEDIA ART

Abstract: Modern world has a complex and multidimensional character. This is largely due to such factors as globalization processes that lead to cultural hybridization. The artists who work in this context, in response to its challenges, provide their audience with equally hybrid transmedia forms. They cross the borders of art disciplines as well as the borders between art and existence. Taking the art of Douglas Davis, Sanja Iveković, Antoni Mikołajczyk, Józef Robakowski, Zygmunt Rytka, Anna Konik, and Yumi Machiguchi as examples, the paper presents the artistic tendencies which develop in between various environments, the tendencies within which art takes on nomadic character, resigning from permanent location so as to seemingly become aesthetically homeless. It is in this that art finds its power of character, its clarity of artistic gesture, its energy, values and sense, and – paradoxically – its own place: always in between.

Keywords: energy – globalization – hybridization – in-between – nomadic art – performance – telematic – transgression – transmedia – video art.

GLOBALIZATION AS HYBRIDIZATION

Contemporary transformations of social structures that first affected some of the most advanced societies, led to the forming of a structure usually referred to as information society or network society. A direct and rather inevitable consequence of such transformations is the new global world order, whose elements begin to merge in a dynamic system of mutual relations. The shape and the character of this system is the subject of discussion and many controversies (see e.g. Hirst, Thompson, 1996). Of the many postulated scenarios of the global future, some at least deserve to be mentioned here.

The global world may take the form imposed by the needs of the global corporations, where the market and consumption are trying to replace the discredited claims of ideologies with their visions of a pleasant life. If the global world as seen from this perspective should embrace these aspirations

stimulated by marketing and not be stopped, it would head for total uniformization, unification and standardization. This is scenario number one.

The global world may also take the form laid out by the numerous parallelly developing individual needs of various individuals, groups and institutions that employ new communication technologies – the Internet to start with – so as to express their unique individuality. Perceived from this perspective, global order would turn out to be rather an entropic system, ultimately developing into a multilingual Babel Tower. This is scenario number two.

The globally organized world may also take the form of a multidimensional hybrid construction – and that seems most possible – where forms of individual expression would inevitably carry the signs of socio-cultural borrowings and where corporation interests would find their counterpart in other, often hostile ambitions. This scenario combines the two previous ones, as individual determiners dictate the development characteristic for the other approach, which provides stabilizing frames in the form of references that bind them and standardization stimulated as a corporation is broken into individual interpretations and expressions (Pieterse, 1995). This is scenario number three.

Each of these general forms would remain a dynamic system in its real, historically changeable manifestations, subordinated to the unmeasurable or even unpredictable influences of an infinite number of factors. Art may play and attempts to play a significant role among these factors, especially art that tries to picture the new dynamic shapes and the conceptions of the world, the one that tries to understand the logic of its transformation and – should this be necessary – tries to influence its course. The works created as a result of such attitudes attempt to begin a dialogue with their times, undertake a discourse concerning the phenomena and tendencies characteristic for the current state of things and accept the risk of presenting or promoting possible future forms of the world.

HYBRID DISCOURSES

Even though historically television is not the first technical medium of communication (it appeared almost one hundred years after photography), it was its development that came to be seen by artists as a potential instrument of global standardization. At the same time the artists saw the numerous discrepancies that appeared between the technologically conditioned possibilities of television and its actually realized institutionalized form. It was particularly one current in video art that developed in the USA in the 1960s and 1970s that was a response to the call coming from the mass, standardized commercial television.

Douglas Davis, one of the most important representatives of this current, had been realizing a number of his artistic projects since the beginning of the 1970s; they were to transform, in the viewers' experience of his works the mass medium of television into an instrument of interpersonal communication (Kuspit 1988). In order to achieve his goal, Davis consequently aimed at presenting his videotapes not in galleries (which he thought would be an artistic compromise!) but on television, usually the cable TV. He wished to transform the aesthetic experience of an art piece into an experience of a communication act, thus transforming an artefact into a processual event. He also stressed that he was turning to an individual viewer within his or her own private space. Davis' video works would hide their ready-made, closed and finally determined character of a tape, trying to take on the form of live communication. The artist would invite his viewers to come closer to the television screen so as to feel the mutual presence (*The Cologne Tapes*, 1974), to touch (the screen images of) his hands (*The Austrian Tapes*, 1974) or feet (*The Florence Tapes*, 1974), to draw together on the screen (*The Caracas Tapes*, 1975). He would arrange television performances that aimed at crossing the barrier of the screen to enter the viewer's world (*Knocking: The Santa Clara Tapes*, 1973). As part of VI Documenta in Kassel, on June 24, 1977, Davis presented a live performance entitled *The Last Nine Minutes*, broadcast via satellite television in Europe, the USA, USSR and Venezuela, in which he was trying to establish a close, individual contact with the viewers. All of these works – through their attempts to arrange the telematic forms of contact – attempted to establish a new form of contact in the world of indirect media experiences – encounters in virtual space. And even though the institutional organization of the television medium within which Davis organized his artistic actions deprived him of the possibility of receiving real feedback, by providing these encounters of symbolic and imaginary character, the artist directed the viewer's attention towards the subjective aspects of television communication, at the same time undertaking the critique of television as an institution.

Douglas Davis' works were an artistic employment of the television medium that would accentuate its communication aspect. They disclosed the standardizing character of television as an institution, the dominance of broadcasters over recipients, the impersonal character of communication as such, by proposing an individualized manner of interpersonal communication instead, by establishing the possibility of telematic encounter in the virtual space of television.

An interesting example of a video work created with similar intentions, but this time placed in the gallery space, is an installation of Sanja Iveković, *Inter Nos* from 1978. By taking up the form of video installation using feedback, the artist was able to offer her recipients – her communication partners – not just symbolic, as in the case of Davis, but real (though obviously still techno-

logically indirect) possibility of interpersonal communication. By joining together cameras and monitors originally placed in separated spaces (a camera located in the artist's space was coupled with a monitor in the viewer's space, and vice versa), Iveković changed the monitor screens into interpersonal communication interfaces, technological instruments of indirect contact. In both cases – of Davis and Iveković – we are faced with the treatment of art not as an activity leading towards the creation of works of art understood as objects – artefacts, but as communication practice. A work of art becomes a communication process – a communication performance. The main feature of this process is its individualized character, aiming at creating the possibility of contacts between individuals. In this way, a medium usually used as a mass medium (and it is not so much the medium as an institution within which this medium is used) becomes an instrument of interpersonal communication. Such an employment of the medium deprives it of any standardizing, uniformed powers, emphasizing its uniting potential and contact energies instead. And because it is individuals who become united, specific persons whose particularity is enhanced instead of being minimized or endured, the works of Douglas or Iveković jointly create a kind of cultural hybrid discourses generator.

ART'S BORDERS AND ENERGIES

The compositions of Antoni Mikołajczyk, Józef Robakowski and Zygmunt Rytka may be combined and compared using various criteria. However, most often the common context of constructive, analytical and rational art is brought up on such occasions. I have frequently done this myself when I wrote about their art. This time, however, I would like to draw attention to another aspect of their creations, not less important in understanding their complex character. Their works are also characterized by the tendency to cross borders, transgression that does not allow their works to congeal within any frames, genres or conventions. Dynamics, by taking on various forms, inner tensions, movement, and change – all these aspects significantly mark the structure of their individual works, but also their creations seen more holistically.

I pointed to this character of Robakowski's work before, when I discussed transgression as one of many factors determining its course. I wrote about the transgressive character of his photographs, film, video, installation art or performance. I drew attention to that aspect manifesting itself both through his playing with the boundaries of individual artistic genres, through their inner restructuring or deconstruction, and – which seems even more important – through placing these various genres in mutual relations, transforming one

another, creating hybrid constructions, ironic structures or releasing various forms of energy (Kluszczyński, 1996).

The works of Zygmunt Rytka constitute a similar case. In relation to his art I have also pointed out the transgressive character of many of his works (Kluszczyński, 2004). I wrote about his works on the borderline of the media, operating in the intermedial space, conveying transmedial impulses. These actions took various forms (multiperspective vision in photography, photographic aspects in video, film and video in relations with performances, photography revealing the structure of an installation). The series *Dynamic object* is one of the most interesting examples of transmedia art in Rytka's output. In the works from this series, the artist himself points to the mutual relations of three-dimensional space and time: registered as a photograph (which – it is worth noting – in itself is a combination of the object's material aspect and its non-material presentation), the real space and time of the gallery and the imaginative and intellectual neuron space and time. In this context, it is also worth mentioning the NOE installation, in which Rytka combines the psychophysiology of an artist, the devices and the photographed object in one whole characterized by specific and dynamic system of mutual relations. A photograph as a trace of such events discloses its complex dimension that remains beyond any kind of presentation.

The transgressive stand was also taken in a different way by Antoni Mikołajczyk. In his work we can also come across some transmedia attempts combining photography, film, video, installation art and performance in a dynamic way. Yet it is his ability to play with light that determines the specific character of his art works. It is light that gives the works of Mikołajczyk their unique character. On the one hand, we are faced with numerous photographic works that focus on the dynamic and developing process, as if against the character of the employed medium, thus engaging the space and time of the memory activated by the imaginative perception of the viewer for its purposes. Occasionally, however, as was the case with the 'cities', this process takes on a particularly multidimensional shape. On the other hand, we have performance activities that reach out for the energy of light (laser beams, burner, headlights) to trigger off the communication between the variety of spaces and times or the various physical states of energy. Finally, and that seems to me most important, his output includes installations, which – very characteristically for this artist – define the relations between light and hard, solid matter. In these works light undergoes many shaping treatments; it is enclosed in material forms, hidden, or released from its enclosure. On occasions it releases itself, revealing the energetic dimension of art at the core of its experience.

The transgression whose presence we have been tracking in the works of Mikołajczyk, Robakowski and Rytka so far, does not have autonomous

character. It is related to another significant factor – energy. Transgression turns out to be a source of energy eruption that co-defines the character of the art experience created by these three artists. Their works seem to create a certain link between the states that would seem mutually exclusive at first glance, they appear to search for some uncertain, transitory and constantly transformed balance between the rational analytical perspective and the irrational perspective of an energetic experience. In each case we are faced with the energy of transgression transforming art, reducing its limitations and creating dynamic metamorphoses. Each of them uses the energy of light projections. Yet each explores and presents the energy fields of art in a slightly different way.

The work of Mikołajczyk, as can be clearly seen from the above description, includes energy in its transgressive character and does so in an almost organic form. In a way, this art can be even described as energy forming, shaping the structures of energy. In contrast, Rytka creates the energy of tension, multidirectional relations, dynamic relationships enclosed in the form of an installation. It is also mental energy, through its references to the content of perception and of imagination. On the other hand, Robakowski, apart from his geometric forms of energy released through the dynamics of the structure, through the energy of his mental projects, suggests the vital energy of man, and the energy of machines, transformed through human actions and also shaping human vitality in return.

This energy becomes a particularly important quality of modern art. After abstractionism, minimalism, conceptual art, in the times of dynamically developing digital and interactive media, even with the proclaimed distrust of the potential of linguistic, communicative or analytical art, it is close to impossible to return to the ideology of representation. The prematurely finished artistic activity of Antoni Mikołajczyk and the quest still carried on by Józef Robakowski and Zygmunt Rytka show the directions of further exploration.

TRANSMEDIAILITY

The publications that have been recently appearing as a result of the research on the developmental tendencies of modern art draw our attention to the essential transformations in the domain of visual art at the end of the 20th century. The most important consequences of those transformations are considered to be the foundations and a horizon for the most recent artistic attitudes, which also means that the state that is being diagnosed is perceived as permanent and having a great influence on forming the future.

The characteristic picture of the above-mentioned processes, otherwise symptomatic for the currently developing and increasingly important research

perspective on culture, is presented by the volume entitled *Themes of Contemporary Art: Visual Art after 1980*, published by Oxford University Press in 2005. Its authors, Jean Robertson and Craig McDaniel, represent the belief that the strategies of action of modern art have undergone a fundamental and precisely directed transformation in the last two decades of the previous century. According to this conception, today's art (and I would also add that the beginning of this process can be traced back as far as the late 1950s and 1960s, when intermedia and multimedia actions were initiated), finally abandons the need to aim at structural and material unity that had until recently been the case, as it no longer fits into its present form within the traditionally laid limits marked by the parameters of the chosen type and medium. In the frame drawn in this way, with which it would be hard to disagree – for it is very well documented and the number of arguments supporting this concept could be listed endlessly – neither the purity of the genre, nor the features nourished and explored in the artistic activities that are characteristic for the used media, defines the works created nowadays. On the contrary, the various transgressive features and hybridity shaped by it are among the dominant attributes of modernity that reach the rank of representative ones. Inter-, multi- and hypermediality create the image of modern art and its transcultural aspect outlines the format of the environment for its actions. The experience suggested by modern art becomes more and more frequently and importantly a conversation with heterogenic structures, varied inside and on the level of structure or material. Transmediality defines the latest character of artistic practices, thus giving individual works and even whole artistic programmes a new expression.

For Robertson and McDaniel, the processes that influenced the shaping of the forms of art to the greatest degree since 1980 included the development of the new media; deepening the discrepancy between artistic attitudes (artistic pluralism) connected – which is crucial – with the growing awareness and acceptance of the fact that variety becomes the basic attribute of reality in all its forms; imposing theory onto artistic practices (metadiscursiveness); and the interactions between art and everyday visual culture. I would also add that in different environments and at different times, these processes take the form of different orders and hierarchies. On the other hand, the most important key motifs and subjects of modern art, the ones that gave the title to the above-mentioned book, are – according to its authors – time, space, language, identity and – surprisingly and even slightly old-fashioned in this context – spirituality (though if we could detach this concept from the ones usually associated with it, also this idea will present its usefulness for the analysis of contemporary art).

THE CASE OF VIDEO ART

The above concept splendidly explains both the genesis and the processes dominating the discussed period of video art. One could even say (as it cuts both ways) that the video creations and their history are an excellent example of the processes discussed here. At the beginning of their development, in the 1960s and 1970s, video art – despite the obvious technological and artistic complexity that characterised the media, in this way linked itself – seemingly inevitably, with the numerous other fields of art, which gave it a certain parasitic character, whereas in reality it grew in constrained and elementary isolation from the majority of artistic phenomena, most of all from the basic and at that time still considered most important, currents of contemporary art, focused on an artefact. Video art, because of its medium, was perceived as an autonomous field, a separate one, even distanced from the traditional types of modern artistic practices. Even the artists who created it would banish themselves to an equally alternative and underground status. As it was the selection of the video as a medium that would almost automatically make such an artist unique, identify him or her with the role of a video artist and not just with their position as an artist. Another question, influencing neither the description nor the evaluation of the discussed phenomena, is that the artists practising video would often and willingly take on such avant-garde and distancing identification. Whether it was a choice or necessity, still within the frames of the institutional art system of those times, video as medium imposed certain identification onto the artists and their works, made them alternative, individual phenomena of some sort.

The situation of video art would quickly change in this respect, particularly in the 1980s when more numerous video works would appear, deliberately directed by their creators against the traditional forms of art. Videopainting began to develop, apart from video installations, also video sculpture would gain some recognition (a significant evolution is undergone by e.g. the works of Nam June Paik), video music and video dance would be widely talked about too.

While weakening the position of the conceptual currents in art, favouring the isolation and aesthetic individuality of video art, the role of the tendencies enhancing the connections between video and traditional art disciplines grew significantly. However, the final integration of video and visual art could take place only as a result of the transformation of the institutional art system, a transformation that included the video in the general instrumentation of art. This eventually happened in the last decade of the 20th century. A symbolic and at the same time spectacular proclamation of this fact was an exhibition of Bill Viola in the American pavilion during the 46th Biennale in Venice in 1995. It is worth remembering, though, that the transformation of the status of

video art was part of the much broader transformation process, described above and characterizing modern artistic creation.

In Polish video art we can obviously notice the occurrence of analogical processes. The analytical, conceptual, metadiscursive video focused on the features of its medium, characteristic for the 1970s, formatted in this shape by the artists gathered in the Film Form Workshop group (and around it), in the following decade began to give place to expressionistic video performances, critical social video, hybrid videopainting (emerging from the combination of painting, film and video). In the 1990s, Polish video scene took on a fully verified character, broadening further and developing this feature in its further progress.

ALWAYS BETWEEN. ON THE IMAGES AND SPACES (IN MOTION)

The work of Anna Konik reveals its characteristic features only when we look at them in the context of the deliberations described above. Konik began her career at the end of the 1990s, i.e. at the moment when the transformations described above had actually been completed. She found herself on the generalized, pluralistically oriented art scene where video had already found its place and played the role of one of the many available and equiponderant instruments of creation (however, it is worth noting that in the current order of Western art, the role played by video, quite unexpectedly but clearly, has gained in importance, particularly disproportionately when it comes to its position on the art market). This is precisely why the artistic choices of Anna Konik, in which video played the most important function so far, did not place her, together with the works she creates, in a separate video art enclave, but inscribed them in the multimedia, multimaterial field of contemporary art. At the same time, as she employed video as a medium, these choices also influenced her works, giving them special character, resulting from her chosen tools that helped her to shape the poetry characterizing her earlier creations.

We must also not overlook the fact that Anna Konik, using a wide spectrum of video possibilities, does not create videotapes, but video installations. The video images she creates are assembled and worked upon so as to eventually become part of a multidimensional, complex artistic structure in time and space. The experience of her works is not limited to watching a video (regardless of how important are the meanings and values connected with it), but each time it is an experience of a place organized with video images.

The choice of video installation as a form of expression in the works of Anna Konik introduced a hiatus between the world into which we are sent by the electronic images, and the gallery space in which they are placed. The

images she creates arrange themselves in linear sequences, building a structure of narration that presents (absent) people, (erstwhile) events, (distant) places. The form of those narrations, on the other hand, refers to the poetics of film and allows one to talk about Konik's works also in terms of a documentary, an essay or an audio-visual impression. These narrations are also part of the installations' space, thus becoming a fragment of a simultaneous system and taking on the form of the arrangement in which the relationships between individual spatially placed linear video sequences are as important as the relationships between the images that build them. Anna Konik's installations confront in this way the mode of the permanent present time characteristic for the space system, with the past time mode characteristic for image video discourses. Their confrontation within the artwork each time leads to interesting transformations and movements within the construction as a whole and its time and space relationships. The development of video streams (audiovisual discourses) placed in parallel, organized diachronically inside, but synchronically in terms of each other and remaining in a synchronic relation, makes the space of the art work more dynamic, providing it with the feature of temporariness, while the permanent placement of these streams with the above-mentioned synchronization within the order of space provides them with the feature of constancy.

The recipients also fit into this transformation dialectic, by moving between the images and thus supporting the process of making the space more dynamic and stabilizing imagic discourses, placing them in the story in permanent, though personalized locations. The activity of these recipients, which builds the relationships between each of them individually and between the individual elements of the installation's environment, each time creates a variable in their experiences, a variable that is an individually shaped and experienced form of creation.

The dynamics of the changing relations between the succession of video images-that-follow and the synchronism of the elements of installation space that appear-next-to-each-other, also brings other specific effects when it comes to the works of Konik: it moves the protagonists of the stories told by the images, it takes them from their narrative past to the special present, personified in the installation's environment and – finally – it makes them doubly co-present alongside the recipients of the art work. The public may come into closer contact with them in their individual experiences, build their own intimate space – a place for reflection and deepened experience, they can even cross the border of alienation in the act of empathy provoked by the work.

The notion of empathy that appears in the context of Anna Konik's works has a very specific character and structure. It brings us closer to the Others, allows us to experience their emotions or pain, at the same time bringing a peculiar feeling of loneliness, makes us more distant to ourselves. Despite

the feelings either provoked or brought upon us, empathy provides us with parallel, border-like experience of inability to identify with another being. It places us in the sphere between forgetting about ourselves and imagining/experiencing us as someone else – in the sphere of impossibility. Always in motion.

This is not the only form of experience of being-in-between that is brought upon or initiated by the works of Anna Konik. Her installations, in various ways, bring precisely this experience to the audience. This property is presented on many levels of the works' structures and in various dimensions of their experience. Anna Konik's art happens between the sphere of art and reality that is not artistically processed, between media and artistic disciplines, between film, video, photography and installation, literature and theatre. So it also happens between an image, a word and a sound, an object and emptiness, light and darkness, presence and passing, remaining, movement and change. I write that it happens, as it is always of a processual character and because of its recipients, every time it is also an event built in a hybrid environment from which the installation emerges. The aesthetics of these works has a nomadic character. It is the aesthetics of the moving images in dynamic space, the pictures of various format and character (video projection images, CCTV, photographic images), experienced from a changing and moving perspective, always in motion. These images, with their presence, organize a structure of spatial experiences and this, in return, defines the frames and the mode of the experience and images of the presented worlds.

The presence of these worlds reminds us of yet another aspect – the existential one, so characteristic for the artworks of Anna Konik. The multi-dimensional hybrid, and most of all the nomadic structure of her installations, reproduces the equally complex, nomadic mode of her own life that is mainly led in the form of a journey, which develops in motion. The experience of changeability, of being in between that is conveyed by Konik's installations to the recipient, the experience of being submerged in dispersed yet connected currents of time, the presence in distant places which are however connected by the installation, all these elements are rooted in the experience of the world that is also her experience. And in this way, experiencing her works also leads to the reflection concerning identity, both of an individual and of a member of a group. It leads to the questions about ourselves, our life in time, but also about the relationships that we build with others, our sense of belonging and our empathetic experience of solidarity, confronted with our simultaneous experience of the borders.

Inscribing the artist's perspective, her existence into the structure of her installations also gives those works – despite their expansive architecture – the character of a diary (a video-diary), a notebook of her journeys, even her confidences, though never uttered directly, but by arranging the voices of

others, found pictures and places into which we are introduced. The privacy and intimacy of this form of communication, as it is inscribed into the hybrid construction of the stage on which it is taking place, requires of each recipient finding their own place, creating their own perspective. Only this will allow them to find their way inside the structure of the work, in its physical and mental space, among the images.

BETWEEN TRANSMEDIAILITY AND HYBRIDITY

Looking at the photographs by Yumi Machiguchi from the perspective of Robertson and McDaniel, we can immediately notice their specific, intriguing and very individual way of partaking in the context of contemporary artistic practice. Machiguchi's artistic approach is far removed from the fascination with new technologies, especially those that change the photographic image into a digital simulacrum (although we should remember that her photographs from the *Four Seasons* series came into being with considerable help of the computer). Machiguchi does not give in too much to the temptation of theorization which leads artistic practice to cognitive, subversive and liberating procedures, or – which is an especially attractive case today – to some specific form of anthropological activity (and this approach seems closest to her artistic outlook). Furthermore, in Machiguchi's case the links with the visual culture of everyday life do not take on the form of interaction; they rather characterize the methods of acquiring the material for the photographic worlds she constructs. Only the awareness of diversity that can be seen both in the artistic choices she is making and in the structure of their results – i.e. the photographs – plays a truly important role in her creative work. Therefore, among the basic processes that Robertson and McDaniel name as influencing art after 1980, only one – the understanding of diversity – possesses meaningful form-creating power for the work of Yumi Machiguchi. But this power is enormous and it encompasses the many dimensions of her art.

Before we try to analyze Machiguchi's art itself, I suggest that we attempt to pin down the themes selected by the authors of the *Themes of Contemporary Art* as the dominating motifs in the art of today. The result of this confrontation is different than before and extremely interesting. That is because it turns out that in this case – which differs from the attitude of the Japanese artist as set against the array of fundamental processes influencing art after 1980 – we can find a meaningful compatibility. The interest in the problems of time, space and identity as well as the spiritual dimension of her artistic approach (and that makes four out of the six themes pointed out by Robertson and McDaniel) is deeply rooted in her works; moreover, those problems become their

characteristic features. Together they establish – in the context of the paradigm of diversity – the character of Yumi Machiguchi's photographic works. Therefore, we must have a look at them and the role they play before analyzing her art.

Time and space in Machiguchi's photographs are perceived in a specific way. The series of photomontages carried out within the camera – portraits and landscapes – take on the form of spatial/temporal palimpsests. The construction of those photographs reminds us that the artist in the early phase of her career was also interested in film, which still occupies an important, though different place in her life. Thus Machiguchi's imagination in effect progressed in a specifically cinematographic direction. However, images do not follow one another here and are not arranged in syntagmatic order, but they are connected in an extra-linear dimension. The times which those images represent, as well as the times that are constructed by them, evolve, overlap and mix, creating fragmentary, hybrid and multi-dimensional forms. Scraps of events and fragments of scenes which themselves are unable to tell any story, become narratives from time to time thanks to the viewers and their readiness and willingness to tell stories. The stories we carry inside us tell themselves in the photographs of the Japanese artist discreetly, quietly and almost unnoticeably.

Her construction of space is quite similar. In her works space is also arranged in fragmentary and heterogenic orders creating a basically multi-spatial system, in which repetition and transformation conditions syntax. Space becomes temporalized to the same degree as time becomes spatialized, which only goes to show that time and space cannot be analyzed separately, but only as elements of one spatial/temporal system.

The fact that many of the works are photomontages produced within the camera, tells us that it is precisely this problem – the problem of space and time, in very different articulations – that moves to the foreground. The third aspect of her works – movement – emphasizes the transmedial character of the presented works. Movement in photography opens the perspective on the cinema, whose form, as many theoreticians believed, could be simply described as photography plus movement. Thus it seems we can say that the basic features of the works presented at the exhibition are spatial/temporal hybridity and their transmedial character.

But not only time and space are hybridized in those works. The identity of people and spaces, as well as the identity of photography itself, as a medium and as an artistic genre, becomes equally rich and varied here. All those ingredients and aspects of Yumi Machiguchi's works combine into a transgressive, transmedial form: they are transsubstantiated, forming a collage of times, places and people. Hence we can now risk making a more general statement, namely that those two aspects – hybridity and transmediality – define Yumi Machiguchi's work best.

This hypothesis is not weakened – on the contrary, it is strengthened – by the reflection on other series of her photographic works. The photographs from the *Four Seasons* series intensify the hybridity and the transmedial character of Machiguchi's works, since they bring new ingredients into the game. The photographic medium is related to performance art here, a very personal and intimate genre, which in this case also introduces the social dimension, as it immerses us in an unfamiliar cultural context. The Tea Way, a ritual that originated in the 15th century, is also a way of life; it determines both the existential tension and the ethical imperatives. In an elaborate and refined way it combines a personal and a social perspective. The transmedial nature and hybridity of the material and structure, observed in the works of the previous series and preserved in the series we are currently analyzing, has been thus complemented by a transcultural perspective. Though Machiguchi herself has lived in Europe for many years now, she constructs a similar perspective in her life, although in this case the vectors probably point in different directions.

Moreover, this transcultural generic and media connection – of photography and performance – takes place in the space defined by yet another kind of art: architecture. And it is by no means nameless, being the work of the American architect Richard Meier. A hot tea ritual meets the cold, abstract, modernist architecture, intensifying the hybrid and transmedial character of Machiguchi's works and introducing an element of drama.

Those who have already seen the works from this series need not be reminded of how elaborately the sphere of time is connected with the level of performance here. The idea of montage is evoked yet again in this case, though this time it is conducted with the help of computer technology and it leads to the construction of simultaneous structures from heterogenic elements. In this case the layers belonging to the different phases of a single event – the tea ritual – have been combined within a single frame to form its timeless image. This image also possesses its own narrative dimension, as it becomes the story of the place and the role of the idea of perfection in an imperfect world.

The ritualistic character of the photographs from the *Four Seasons* series also introduces the problem of identity. I have already mentioned the presence of this element in the photographs of the Japanese artist when discussing her photomontage portraits. The tea ceremony is a challenge for any individual who undertakes this ritual and in this way determines his or her social relations. It suggests the combination of two identities – the individual and the collective – within one image. The nonviolent meeting of the two could be described as the quintessence of the aforementioned ethical imperative, hidden in the Tea Way.

All those works present a coherent, although complex and multi-dimensional image of a hybrid world. The questions central to Machiguchi's art, as she herself admits, are: "Who am I? Where am I? How did I get here?"

These are the questions of a confused individual, a woman uncertain about the fundamentals of her existence, looking for the knowledge of herself and the world in which she is living.

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OBRAZY NOMADYCZNE. TRANSMEDIALNOŚĆ I HYBRYDYCZNOŚĆ W SZTUCE WSPÓŁCZESNEJ (streszczenie)

Współczesny świat posiada złożony, wielowymiarowy charakter. Przyczyniają się do tego w znacznym stopniu procesy globalizacji, prowadzące do kulturowej hybrydyzacji. Artyści tworzący w tym kontekście, odpowiadając na jego wyzwania, proponują również hybrydyczne formy transmiedialne. Przekraczają granice dyscyplin artystycznych, granice między sztuką a egzystencją. Na przykładzie twórczości Douglasa Davisa, Sanji Iveković, Antoniego Mikołajczyka, Józefa Robakowskiego, Zygmunta Rytki, Anny Konik, Yumi Machiguchi, zostały tu przedstawione tendencje artystyczne rozwijające się w różnego rodzaju środowiskach – pomiędzy – tendencje, w ramach których sztuka nabiera charakteru nomadycznego, rezygnując z trwałego usytuowania na rzecz swoistej estetycznej bezdomności. W niej też odnajduje siłę swego wyrazu, wyrazistość artystycznego gestu, energię, wartości i sensy oraz – paradoksalnie – swoje własne miejsce: zawsze pomiędzy.

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ARTWORLD VERSUS ARTHOME

Abstract: The paper provides a critical analysis of the artworld, which holds a monopoly. The artworld holds a monopoly on the redistribution of art's ideas and hierarchies. Today we are observing the unification and centralization of the artworld – by the logic of the market, mass media and ideology (e.g. feminism and post-Marxism). It reduces art just to its public and social functioning – art is seen as a commodity, a mass media event or a means of political re/education. This brings art to the level of the street and a crowd of passersby.

The artworld generates its own (sham) “alternativeness” by putting the rest of the society into consternation (with the works' obscenity or banality). It equates professional competence with the auctioning of openness. It seems that art is becoming an instrument in the domination game for currency. It transforms art into post-art, which is useful mainly to the artworld officers and activists.

What do all of those topical events, tendencies, rankings and celebrities produced by the artworld have to do with us? To do with art?

We need art to be free, not barely of “the ignorance of the masses”, but also of the usurpations of the “omniscient” experts and furious activists. The author proposes the concept of the ARTHOME opposed to the concept of the artworld. The arthome should be rooted in individual experience and the existential game for values and meanings. It could be characterized by the prevalence of the interior human reality, contemplative (self)reflection, subjectivity, critical anti/fragmentariness and anti/topicality, the search for the wider dimensions of individual existence, personalization instead of globalization. Its singularity is constantly re/constructed in the dialogue with the general.

The paper should not be interpreted as total criticism of the newest art. The author appeals here just for a discussion of its meanings and functions. The call is addressed to all mature people, not only to the artworld activists and officers.

Keywords: art – artworld – terror of currentness – art schematisation and art unification – arthome – particularity – subjectivity – dynamic multi dimensional complexity.

In the past, art was part of a concrete reality, even as it rebelled against it. However, modernity has spun around it a cocoon of self-sufficiency, a micro-environment of the artworld. It was to guarantee that art would be constituted in a free interplay of the diverse opinions of various artists, art critics, curators,

dealers, etc. The artworld offered the hope of reconciling all the contradictions and paradoxes of art by its conceptualization as a constant debate. Today, it appears to be a wrong conceptualization, because that internal variety of the artworld (attitudes, ideas, values etc.) paradoxically does not immunize art, but just makes it defenseless. This happens because this diversity neutralizes itself and produces its own kind of mediocrity, which is primarily to support the current artworld hierarchy. This conformist mimicry is then presented outside as “a valuable revolt” and “a creative alternative”.

The situation was aptly analyzed by Robert C. Morgan: “Ironically, critics had very little to do with the changing art landscape. It was more about how an artist was promoted and by which gallery. If a mediocre show was bought by a wealthy collector, chances were that the artist would get promoted and have another show. The art system worked like a corporate hierarchy. If a good show was not purchased and not reviewed (in the “right” magazines) the artist's chances of getting promoted were meager unless the artist's dealer believed strongly in the work and had the necessary backing – both politically and economically – to keep the gallery in business”¹.

Today's absolutization of openness or endless (self)negation, deconstruction and demystification, transforms everything into elements possessing equal rights and mutually substitutable; into insignificant ideas and gestures, forming a clear and empty aesthetics. **The artworld holds a monopoly on the redistribution of art's ideas, its hierarchies, its functioning, and even its production.** The artworld slowly ceases to be a friendly environment to art. Let us take a brief look at the threats facing art today.

We are currently observing the unification and centralization of the artworld, the appearance of global standards and canons of thinking about art. According to Paul Virilio, both political correctness and optical correctness predominate in the sphere of art². Big art centers, art festivals and art trade fairs enforce the current global language of metaphors, clichés, “important” problems and themes of art. Obviously, nobody is obliged to use it, but those who do not could be recognized as anachronistic and provincial ignoramuses.

Promoting absolute freedom, the artworld had rejected the identification of art works as aesthetic, conventional, expressionist, symbolic etc. However, it did not turn art into a declared area of free creation, but left it totally vulnerable to the prevailing narrations of Postmodernism. One of them is the logic of marketing. It imposes the perception of art as a commodity (Baudrillard's *ideal purchase*), but also as a novelty – any novelty, even worthless, negative or banal. Consequently, at some point impertinence becomes the only accessible form of “new sensibility” and dullness becomes the “new imagination”.

¹ R. C. Morgan, *Between Modernism and Conceptual Art*, McFarland @ Company, Inc., Publishers Jefferson, North Carolina 1997, p. 1.

² P. Virilio interview with E. Bai in the „Corriera della Sera” 20.03.2001.

Another postmodern metanarration (sic!) is the logic of the mass media, which reduces art to **an event**, an attractive anomaly. It also transforms the artists into idols, and the experience of art into an empty ritual of celebration.

Thus today's artworld is practically interested only in the reduction of the idiomaticity of individual art works to the status of mass media events and commodities, and in constructing and consolidating the mainstream.

Contrary to the official declarations of the artworld, its ideological subordination (mainly to post/Marxism and feminism) is increasing. Without engaging in the dispute on whether those ideologies are good or bad, one has to observe that we are first formatted by some ideology and then we produce art according to its rules. I do not find this attractive, as I prefer the myth of disinterested art. I cannot understand why, for example, an expert on gender or an anti-racism activist is to decide what is "good art"? We can never forget about our natural disposition to absolutization. If we agree that art can **also** be engaged in the social emancipation of minorities etc., then soon after someone will identify art with that emancipation. And later it will turn out that only the emancipation **is** art [...] This will result in creating new reality through successive radicalizations.

Nowadays, the artworld reduces art to its public and social functioning – as a commodity, an event or a means of political reeducation. Consequently, the art work begins to function as a substitute; for example, a painting may be thought of as a price, as a place in a museum and a catalogue, as a representative of a given tendency or generation, as an object of interpretation and debate. All these "paintings as..." create a painting without a painting; and all together annihilate the painting's existence. The public impact of art changes galleries and museums into street space and viewers into an impersonal and anonymous crowd of passersby, not only in the metaphorical sense: look at the huge scale of many artworks and events nowadays, their hum, visual aggressiveness, ephemerality, mass, banality and so on. This is why the logistics, the organizational skills, the mass media communicativeness and so on become much more respected than the act or the concept of creation. The artist is slowly transformed into an expert in institutional games.

The artworld generates its own (sham) "alternativeness" by putting the rest of the society into **consternation**, sometimes embarrassing it with the works' obscenity, sometimes with their banality or immaturity. Unfortunately, some people begin to treat vulgarity as the synonym of authenticity and even of democracy! Moreover, wallowing in physiology becomes the substitute of truth, while provocation (even most stupid and most vain) or one-sided doggedness is identified with manifesting social concern. Only the experts of the artworld seem to be thriving in such confusion. But they are in fact its perpetrators.

One can even suspect that the principal aim of the artworld is to endeavor to intimidate the art viewers. This is evident in the identification of an art work with its interpretation, price, fame, and place in the new type of institution, the so-called "Museum of Current Art". All this information is given almost simultaneously, to make people unable to participate in constituting art, in Jacques Ranciere's "identification order". We should also mention the dominance of sociologism over aesthetics, symbolism, and expressiveness – the reduction of art to a symptom. Artists are reduced here to representatives of universal social processes or examples of psychological models. If their social identification is simpler, more banal, then it is better because it can be more "readable". If they are less easy to categorize, this is good too, because they are more "distinct", and so on.

In Poland we frequently encounter peculiar situations, when the same person performs many different functions and positions in the artworld – e.g. being a curator, a critic, a dealer, etc. So she/he promotes the given artwork in newspapers and television, awards it (sitting on a relevant jury), buys it for a state collections (as a member of a relevant committee), then sends it to an international biennial, etc. Of course such practices are far from democratic and reasonable. It is as if a policeman, a prosecutor, a solicitor, a judge, and a prison guard were one and the same person. Such procedures are aimed, as is put by the recently popular maxim, at "socializing the costs and privatizing the profits". We should probably believe that privatization could be good, not exactly for the art institution, but mainly for... the interpretation of art.

The (self)degeneration of the artworld brings about the reversal of the traditional perspectives: in the past, art works and artists were appreciated on their own merits, but today, the artists are forced to become celebrities first for their works to be deemed valuable. Thus the point of view becomes transferred from the act of creation to the artist's place in the hierarchy, i.e. to his/her effective participation in the artworld games. We also ought to note that recently many officers of the artworld aspire to show their professional competence at auctions, where evaluation of the art works is more "open". So it seems that the artworld is ruled by a game without any rules, which leads to total relativism, where everything is effectively reduced to an element... of this game. And nothing more. This means that it does not matter if a given artwork is good or bad, but mainly if it is useful in the artworld games.

Many years ago the Polish philosopher Marcin Czerwinski stated that "the avant-garde broke down under the weight of its own emptiness"³. We should add: today's art is breaking down under the weight of its own banality. Well, this is a really good time to put out the question: what do all of the current

³ M. Czerwiński, *Sztuka w pejzażu kultury*, Warszawa 1997, p. 83.

events, tendencies, rankings and celebrities produced by the artworld have to do with us? To do with art?

The post-art liberated of aestheticalness, symbolism, expressiveness etc., which is just only *current* and just only *other*, compulsorily takes this form on the demand of the artworld officers. The post-art produced according to their requirements is usually very expensive and “already” famous. It is usually politically correct, socially didactic and attends to the problems of teenagers. Unfortunately, this situation only increases the already widespread suspicion that recent art only legitimizes banality, foolishness and impertinence. We slowly come to the paradox: **it turns out that there are some arguments and reasons for which our artworks have to be... worthless.** Well, so it looks that we need to free art, not merely from “the ignorance of the masses”, but also from the usurpations of the “omniscient” experts and furious activists. If the dispute about the newest art is feeble today, this is not because it has been resolved, and is therefore unnecessary. Anyway, the disputes about art cannot be concluded, so we can only take more care of its quality.

This situation worries many people. For example, the outstanding Polish art critic Kazimierz Piotrowski notes the general political dimension of “the expansion process of the corporate culture [...]. The new corporate democracy Leviathan has been growing ever stronger, taking over public expression places which are indispensable for true democracy to function. This process has just started in Poland. We have not managed to get fully liberated from religious/political censorship, and it is already in the course of being replaced by the corporate censorship or self-censorship imposed by sponsoring requirements. The breakdown of democratic order or public authority has been expressed by means of an ever present discourse in favour of openness.”⁴

* * *

The ARTHOME can be a good alternative to the artworld, which identifies art only with its public functioning. It is fighting for the singularity of art originating in our existential experience. I do not want to go back here to the Romantic cult of individuality; my point of reference is the dynamic complex multidimensionality of our late modernity. Our subjectiveness is an inalienable moment in it, though only just a moment. Because of that, the singularity is rather polemical, constantly re/constructed in the dialogue with the general. The arthome could be characterized by:

- the accentuation of our internal reality (as Heidegger’s *mood*, or *care*);
- the primacy of experience and contemplative self reflection over interpretation;

⁴ K. Piotrowski, “Critical Art, Inc.”, *Exit*, No. 1/2005, pp. 3674-3677.

- privacy, most broadly understood as the ability to take responsibility, as well as independent valuing;
- subjectiveness (individual and group), which should result in increasing our awareness;
- individualism, as dialogic dis/automation of systematic thinking;
- the open perspective on the question of the (impossible, illogical, but... necessary) whole, as for example biography against both contextual and universal views;
- deliberation, cognition as unconclusionable participation, the search for correlations and configurations in different orders, which encourages us to remain in vigilant non fulfillment;
- the critical anti/fragmentariness and anti/topicality – the search for the broader dimensions of individual existence;
- self/narration (self/building) against the terror of current events and universal inevitability;
- prudent loneliness and provincialism;
- the separation and, thanks to it, the dialogue between the public and private sphere; between the individual and the community.
- personalization against globalization – the human beings not reducible to cultural constructs (codes, contexts, technology) or “laws of nature”
- incessant specifying of ambiguities, instead of their final crystallization;
- the correlation of different aspects of being human (the mind, body, sensuality, emotions), not their successive totalisations.
- the correlation implies complexity, so an art piece initiates a movement through various discourses or sensibilities, rather than exemplifies any given attitude
- the focus is not on oppositions (“either – or”) but on the poles, and the search of the optimal in-between.

Art could be the domain of idioms, similar to the *Racinian world* investigated by Mikel Dufrenne, not only the collection of general and abstract classes, types and tendencies. Art is not only a social phenomenon, but also proclaims individual existential necessity. The necessity of the creative specification of the world and the ambiguity of life. A creative one, because of the lack of the full data required for understanding. This is why the understanding is not sufficient – the information is usually too raw or too complex for our mind. And this is the reason why we are condemned to undertaking the risk of constant re/constructing or rather creation. Our subjectivity is necessary to fulfill, to complement the objective aspects of being. Thus individual subjectiveness is the proper matter of art instantiation. We are the only authority in our existential questioning. Without this existential dimension art is usually substituted by marketing or the thoughtless game of trends.

It could be useful to take inspiration from Odo Marquard's philosophy, especially his concept of art as anti/fiction, where art becomes a kind of shelter to our experience of reality, in the face of the surrounding general fictions. Art appears there as a compensation, when we go from the expectation to the experience, not conversely. As the great German philosopher observes: we are free not so much because of the lack of determinations, but because of their plurality and variety. Thanks to this plurality, we can set the determinations against each other, or put them into contradiction, to find/create the cracks of indeterminations. Freedom is a challenge, a task, rather than the state of non-action, or wantonness. Freedom requires the courage and the discernment of thought⁵.

We are not obliged to practise the prevailing aesthetics of consternation, but we can rather test the aesthetics of consciousness. According to it, art is the struggle for singular subjectiveness, against uniformization, suspension, dissemination, and so on. Nevertheless, it cannot be a pretext to impose or extort a definite form of subjectiveness. It should remain just a call for the quality of thinking, not provide opinions, emotions, or ideas. Everyone needs art on his own scale. So promoting or enforcing given art as 'the only proper', 'current', 'universal', etc., is always manipulation. Even if it is conducted under the heroic slogans of social emancipation, or re/education.

The aesthetics of consciousness should rely primarily on creating and guarding differences and distinctions. Even if they are illusory or fictitious, their complexity will extort the perception of every mature and developed human being as an exception, or even as an idiom. The preliminary condition today is to preserve the cardinal difference between culture (as practicing the values) and civilization (as functional adaptation). We should resist the temptation to "civilize the culture", which means transforming everything into an element of the global game of functionalization and adaptation, where everything has to be a useful "here and now". That means giving up the chance of over/determination – losing the power of creating aims beyond our common practice and raw usefulness. In parallel, probably one "current" form of art should be the criticism of the art critic, of the functioning of the artworld and its principles of hierarchizing, understanding and presenting art.

Obviously, the aspiration to a total dismissal of the artworld would be just a harmful utopia. Instead of this, we should functionalize... its functionality. We should treat its successive "ultimate currencies" as opportunities, not the sources of permanent values and significance. The "eternal monthly rankings" are only a kind of *collusion*, as Pierre Bourdieu had shown in his studies. We ought to take into consideration the essential distinction between the public

⁵ O. Marquard, *Szczęście w nieszczęściu*, transl. K. Krzemieniowa, Oficyna Naukowa, Warszawa 2001; O. Marquardt, *Aesthetica i anaesthetica*, transl. K. Krzemieniowa, Oficyna Naukowa, Warszawa 2007.

and the private today, post-art and art, artworld and ARTHOME. This will not be easy or simple, and will sometimes seem quite impossible, but let us try.

Going beyond the circle of the official art of biennials, rankings and markets (“careers and symptoms”) we should more often and more carefully attend to the art beyond the mainstream. Often devoid of the ambition to participate in the artworld’s “glamour”, it is condemned to practise the virtues of pure art (though one perhaps should not idealize it too much: there is also plenty of oddity, incapability and naivety).

“Holderlin’s Tower” should not be the basic model of arthome activity. Though there are plenty of artists searching for a chance to recover their own subjectiveness, adulthood, to get rid off the artworld schematizations, I would like to mention here only one idea, Gerard Blum-Kwiatkowski’s Art Station, put forward already in the 1970s. This successful studio, gallery, meeting place, and the place of exchange and of art education for the neighboring inhabitants, was established by Bloom first in Kleinasassen (Germany), and later in Hunfeld.

I am deeply convinced that art is what is best in us, most subtle, noble, sensitive and precious. However, every attempt at its specification and reification condemns us to inevitable doubts, and infinite dispute. That means it condemns us to ... a creative existence. It is a paradox, but it seems that in the face of the growing unification and dehumanization of the artworld, we need a kind of anarchy to gain the right to practise art as something most noble and beautiful. We also need to be liberated of the tyranny of banal topicality. This will be only achieved if we embrace a certain anachronism, and abandon the desire for novelty, which unfortunately seems to be inscribed into the logic of the market and fashion.

Being an artist, I tend to distrust theory. I prefer practice, or rather the mutually complementary dialogue between the two. So in the end I would like to recall two examples, two artistic attitudes, which – I believe – create the main opposition in the ARTHOME spectrum. The first one is that of the Polish artist Andrzej Partum (d. 2002). He was a master of rhetoric and socio-technical games, which he used in his artistic struggle with all non-individual systems of thinking. Since the early 1960s he was associated with the so-called non-discursive poetry, resistant to any interpretations and any meanings. Partum negotiated with language the creation of a new sphere of inter/subjectivity. In the 1980s he was to tour Western Europe with his performances/lectures. The only problem was that he did not know well any foreign language (using a translator would be rather senseless in this case). He solved this problem (as he did most others) brilliantly – he spoke ... in all languages at the same time. The audiences in Germany, Italy, France could grasp some familiar-sounding words or sentences in the flood of sounds pouring out of

Partum's mouth. They could only hope that someone (the author?) is able to understand "the whole". Together with Partum, they balanced on the edge of understanding, rationality (of a different kind).

In Partum's view, the essence of reality penetrates all aspects of our being – all our indispositions, accidentalities, our mistakes etc., and you need just to pierce the normality, the common sense to reveal it. I remember some of his performances/lectures, especially one of them. It was a dark winter evening during the martial law in Poland in the early 1980s (he was probably the only Polish conceptual artist oppressed by the Communist censorship!). Partum started his performance with the discussion (yes, he was able to discuss things in his monologue) of some aspect of ordinary life, then complicated it sky-highly, put it into most sophisticated terms and ended talking about "human interiority". The public – as usual with him – was completely staggered and baffled. Then he announced the presentation of his *pure* interiority, so the tension increased in the dim light. After a few minutes of majestic silence, Partum took scissors in his hand and cut a hole in his extremely elegant sweater, near his navel. People groaned at the devastation of such an exquisite element of Partum's exteriority, some of them wanted him to stop it – they didn't want to see the "pure interiority" of the artist. Partum triumphed!

The second example, the other pole of the ARTHOME, could be represented by the installation of Andrzej Dłużniewski, entitled *Venus from Kozienice*. Located in the park of the Center of Polish Sculpture in Orońsko, it is a white/gray slab of marble, about 1,7 meters high and several centimeters wide, on the basis of a square. It is broken in two places and filled by two organic forms, though illegible at first glance. The installation gains significance in the following context: about 40 years ago, Dłużniewski – as a student – walked through the streets of the small town Kozienice. Crossing near a road works site, he noticed two vertebrae of a human spine and he hid his find jauntily in his pocket. Recently, as a blind man (he lost his sight in a car crash), he found it in one of his drawers. Feeling guilty for taking the bones, he decided to find out their "story". A pathologist friend recognized these bones as fragments of the skeleton of a female of about 22 years of age; he also indicated their approximate position in the spine. Another friend, familiar with the town of Kozienice, informed Dłużniewski that a Jewish cemetery was in the region of those road works, which was destroyed by the Nazis in the beginning of World War II. The artist slowly reconstructed the unknown woman in his imagination. He decided to create a kind of monument dedicated to her, or rather a compensation for his youthful whim of appropriating her bones. He made a bronze cast of the bones and mounted it into the white/gray marble. On the day of the opening, which took place in Orońsko, Dłużniewski visited Kozienice again and buried these bones where he had found them.

I believe that those examples express the opposite, but at the same time complementary poles of the arthome, balancing between an idiom and human solidarity.

The above remarks should not be interpreted as total criticism of recent art. In fact I meant to defend it and discuss its meanings and functions. I am addressing this to all mature people, not only the artworld activists and officers. It should be also noted that the necessity to defend subjectivity and autonomy cannot obscure another need – for the constant optimization of the relationship between the public, the global and the individual. Also, extreme individualism is not a solution to today's situation – the dynamic complexity of multi-dimensionality. Zbigniew Warpechowski, a prominent Polish performance artists, argues that “We should look for wise dependences, we should increase our discipline in the face of the arbitrariness and passivity prevailing today”, that is, we should “fight for our own greatness.”⁶ Art becomes alive through our life, our sensibility, intelligence and passion. Kierkegaard can be probably regarded here as the precursor. He considered art as a kind of individualized approach to our own existence⁷. Anyway I am sure that Jacques Derrida was deeply wrong in his view of human life and as a set of social games having no inherent design or natural purpose⁸.

Likewise, we should experience and practice art, not only on the scale suitable for the street and the crowd, but also the individual one. Instead of recent usually monumental dimensions of the new museum halls, we ought to imagine a kind of labyrinth of small rooms, backstreets designed for individual artwork and singular spectator. The group exhibitions of art often neutralize and reduce it to banal aestheticalness.

Art should and has to be varied. Everyone is at a different stage of his/her own development and should have a chance to find their proper art and proper currency. Due to her/his imagination, experiences, sensibility and existential intuitions, due to her/his dreams. This is an argument for real, authentic pluralism art, its reliable individualization and personalization. It condemns art to eternal homelessness, because its essence is to make us aware that we are still on our way.

⁶ Z. Warpechowski, *Podnośnik*, Jerozolima, Rzym, Sandomierz 2001, p. 287.

⁷ *Estetyki filozoficzne XX wieku*, ed. K. Wilkoszewska, Universitas, Kraków 2000, p. 40.

⁸ *Estetyczne przestrzenie współczesności*, ed. J. S. Wojciechowski, IK, Warszawa 1996, p. 47.

ARTWORLD VERSUS ARTHOME
(streszczenie)

Tekst *Artworld versus Arthome* jest krytyczną analizą artworld, który objął monopol na redystrybucję idei sztuki i jej hierarchizowania. Dziś podlega on narastającej unifikacji i schematyzacji – przez logikę rynku, mass mediów, ideologizacji (postmarksizm i feminizm). W ich efekcie redukuje to sztukę do jej publicznego i społecznego funkcjonowania – sztuka jako towar, wydarzenie lub polityczna re/edukacja. Promowana jest sztuka na miarę ulicy i na miarę tłumu.

Artworld wytwarza swoją bezalternatywność głównie poprzez utrzymywanie reszty społeczeństwa w konsternacji (przez obscenę lub banał). Utożsamia też kompetencję artystyczną z licytowaniem otwartości. Sztuka okazuje się właściwie narzędziem gry o dominację kolejnych aktualności; przekształca się tym samym w postsztukę – realizowaną właściwie na wewnętrzny użytek funkcjonariuszy i aktywistów artworld. Dla reszty społeczeństwa te produkty są właściwie bezwartościowe.

Zdaniem autora najwyższa pora na pytanie: co wytwarzane przez artworld aktualności, te wszystkie tendencje, rankingi i gwiazdy, mają z nami wspólnego? I ze sztuką?

Potrzebujemy sztuki nie tylko wolnej od „ignorancji mas”, ale i od uzurpacji „wszechwiedzących” specjalistów i zacieklej aktywistów. Autor proponuje, aby artworld przeciwstawić ARTHOME – zakorzenione w jednostkowym doświadczeniu i egzystencjalnej grze o sens i wartości.

Arthome cechuje także akcentowanie realności wewnętrznej człowieka, prymat doświadczenia i kontemplatywnej autorefleksji nad socjologiczno / psychologiczną interpretacją, zdolność podejmowania odpowiedzialności i samodzielnego wartościowania, krytyczna anty/fragmentaryczność i anty/aktualność. A ostatecznie: **personalizacja przeciw globalizacji**. Jakkolwiek proponowana tu jednostkowość jest raczej polemiczna, nieustannie re/konstruowana w dialogu z tym, co ogólne.

Tekst ten, co podkreśla autor, nie jest próbą totalnej krytyki sztuki najnowszej, lecz właśnie wezwaniem do jej obrony i do sporu o jej rozumienie. Wezwaniem kierowanym do wszystkich dojrzałych ludzi, a nie tylko aktywistów artworld.

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THE PLACE OF ART. WHERE? IN A SUPERMARKET

Abstract: The metaphor of a hypermarket or a supermarket is not particularly revealing, in fact it seems rather trivial and worn out, but it seems to be the best depiction of the present artistic situation in Eastern Europe. A supermarket connotes multiplicity and variety: the higher abundance of products, the better; something for everyone. But a supermarket is not a bazaar to which people come to sell their own products. A supermarket is managed by someone, someone decides about the selection of goods in the supermarket and where – in what section and on what shelf – they will be displayed. A supermarket is like a structured bazaar, subject to the regime of modern management. And finally all the products displayed in a supermarket become commodities because the overriding rule of the supermarket observed by all the supermarket employees is sale; the products which sell well if those we want to sell well are given most attractive places. Supermarkets, hypermarkets, shopping centers are the most visible exponents of the consumer culture, genuine shrines of consumption where everyone becomes a real or potential consumer, who has to be bewitched, charmed and seduced. The supermarket is to seduce the consumers. Seemingly, it gives the freedom of choice to consumers, but in fact, by using all sorts of tricks aimed at making places and goods magical, it guides their choices and decisions. Finally, which is not irrelevant in Eastern Europe, shopping center are perceived as Western implants, as symbols of Western lifestyle, commonly accepted evidence of the superiority of capitalist economy, the economy of abundance over the former ineffective economy of socialism, the economy of shortage from the times of real socialism. Today's supermarket relates to the idea of art industry presented at the beginning of the 1990s by Jeffrey Deitch. Deitch wanted to show how the functioning of art changed in the 1980s. The metaphor of a supermarket shows how East European art has adjusted to West European art world, its rules, norms and concept of art.

Keywords: art industry – supermarket – art market – postmodern art – paradox objects – tyranny of freedom – multiculturalism.

1.

The renowned Russian art critic Viktor Misiano, presenting the art scene in his country to the West European readers noted that it resembled a hypermarket, a conflict-free hypermarket where we can find an increasing number of

products but the most appreciated ones are those which sell best¹. Does this assessment also apply to other countries of the former Eastern Bloc? To the entire post-communist Europe?² Can we also compare the current Polish art scene to a supermarket?

The metaphor of a hypermarket or supermarket is not particularly revealing, in fact it seems rather trivial and worn out³; what matters, however, is its relevance. The metaphor of the supermarket seems to be the best depiction of the current situation of art in Eastern Europe. A supermarket connotes multiplicity and variety; the higher abundance of products the better; something for everyone. But a supermarket is not a bazaar where people sell their own products. A supermarket is managed by someone, someone decides about the selection of goods and where – in what section and on what shelf – they will be displayed. A supermarket is like a structured bazaar, subject to the regime of modern management. And finally all products displayed in a supermarket become goods, because the overriding rule of the supermarket observed by all supermarket employees is sale; the products which sell well or those we want to sell well are given the most attractive places.

Supermarkets, hypermarkets, shopping centers are the most visible exponents of consumer culture, genuine shrines of consumption where everyone becomes a real or potential consumer, who has to be bewitched, charmed and seduced. A supermarket has to seduce consumers. Seemingly, it gives the freedom of choice to the consumers, but in fact, by using all sorts of tricks aimed at making its places and goods magical, it guides their choices and decisions. And finally, which is not irrelevant in Eastern Europe, shopping centers are perceived as Western implants, as symbols of Western consumption lifestyle, commonly accepted evidence of the superiority of capitalist economy, the economy of abundance, over the former ineffective economy of socialism, the economy of shortage from the times of real socialism.

After these introductory comments on a supermarket, we can move to the main question: has the Polish art scene turned into a supermarket in the early 21st century?

2.

In 2007, the Center for Contemporary Art in Warsaw published the book “Nowe zjawiska w sztuce polskiej po 2000 roku” [New Phenomena in Polish

¹ V. Misiano, “Art Institutions in Russia. A Conflict-free Hypermarket”, *Metropolis M*, 2010, No. 6 (December-January).

² The term “Post-Communist Europe” is commonly used after the exhibition *After the Wall. Art and Culture in Post-Communist Europe*, Moderna Museet, Stockholm 1999.

³ See G. Dziamski, “Supermarket sztuki”, in: *Sztuka po końcu sztuki*, Poznań 2009.

Art after 2000]⁴. The book, modeled after the popular publications *Art Now* by Taschen Books, presents the biographies of selected artists and a chronology of the most important events in Polish art over the recent decade: the events we have discussed, argued about, the ones which attracted the interest of critics, curators, art theoreticians and sometimes also the interest of a broader audience.

The year 2000 witnessed the spectacular action by Paweł Althamer – “Bródno 2000” performed in cooperation with the residents of his apartment block in Warsaw’s Bródno district. The artist asked his neighbours to illuminate the windows of their apartments on New Year’s eve in 1999 in such a way that a vast luminous inscription “2000” would be formed. It is one of the best examples of communal work in Polish art. Subsequently, Althamer implemented similar projects. The best known of them are “Wspólna sprawa” [Common Task] (2009) and “Pan Guma” [Mr Rubber] (2009). The “common task” was a trip of some inhabitants of the Praga district, wearing gold lamé jumpsuits (resembling space suits) to Brussels, where they would tell the residents of the EU capital about the birth of democracy in Poland in 1989. “Mr Rubber”, in turn, is a statue of a Praga bum made together with a group of ‘difficult youths’ and placed in Brzeska street, one of the ‘no-go’ areas of the Praga district. Both those actions, however, lacked the power and simplicity of “Bródno 2000”. They were overly politically correct, and good intentions prevailed over the artistic concept, which does not change the fact that Paweł Althamer is one of the most outstanding representatives of communal art in Poland. 2000 also saw the exhibition of Piotr Uklański entitled “Naziści” [Nazis] at the Zachęta National Gallery in Warsaw, which ended with a spectacular scandal – the destruction of the photographs presenting popular actors in Nazi uniforms by one of those actors, Daniel Olbrychski. Today, when we know of Uklański cinematographic interest (his film “Summer Love”, 2006), we cannot be so sure whether the entire action was not astutely arranged and directed by the artist. The year 2000 also saw the exhibition in Zachęta curated by Harald Szeemann. The Swiss curator showed the work by Maurizio Cattelan “La nona ora” (1999). Szeemann’s exhibition prompted the question about the place of art in the public sphere and inspired chaotic and disconnected disputes about the boundaries of art and its freedom⁵. Szeemann showed that the Polish public sphere is ruled by authorities rather than arguments, that it is not an area of debate or dispute but of exclusion, that it is

⁴ New phenomena in the Polish art after 2000 (ed. by G. Borkowski, A. Mazur, M. Brannicka), CSW Zamek Ujazdowski, Warszawa 2007. The book was a wrap-up of a series of exhibitions “W samy centrum uwagi” organized by CSW Zamek Ujazdowski in the period from November 2005 to August 2007.

⁵ See. G. Dziamski, “Granice sztuki”, in: *Sztuka po końcu sztuki*, *op.cit.*

not a modern public sphere. This initiated the discussion on whether art can contribute to its democratization.

The year 2001 brought another scandal, this time provoked by the exhibition “Irreligia. Morfologia nie-świętego” [Irreligion. Morphology of the non-sacred] curated by Kazimierz Piotrowski in Brussels, in some opposition to the official presentation of Polish art in Belgium as part of the so-called Polish Year. There was also the discussion on the Polish participation in the Venice Biennale. In 2001, Poland was represented in Venice by Leon Tarasewicz. Łukasz Guzek in his review of the biennale wrote something that should go down in history of Polish art criticism: “If Tarasewicz really had to go to that biennale (a different work won the “contest” than was later presented), then it would have been better to send there his hens which while walking in Giardini would have had more to do with art than his paintings. And this is not a charge against the artist who simply does his own thing, but against those who sent him there”⁶.

The year 2002 saw not yet a scandal but a charge of defamation brought against the artist Dorota Nieznalska and the question: how is it possible to take an artist to court in a free and democratic country? The discussion provoked by Nieznalska’s case brought back the issue of art’s autonomy. Should not art be a legally protected sphere of freedom? The case brought against Nieznalska was a culmination of the so-called “cultural war” in Poland⁷, a dispute on the role of religion in the Polish public sphere.

In 2003, the attention focused on the project Znaki Czasu [Signs of the times], initiated by Waldemar Dąbrowski, the Minister of Culture and Arts – the regional associations supporting contemporary art, and on the Prize of the Deutsche Bank Foundation “Spojrzenia” [Views], which was to be a Polish equivalent of the British Turner Prize. The candidates for the Prize participating in the exhibition held in Zachęta included the then leaders of Polish young art, i.e. Paweł Althamer, Cezary Bodzianowski, Monika Sosnowska, Paulina Ołowska and Julita Wójcik. The winner of the first edition of “Spojrzenia” was Elżbieta Jabłońska. A year later, another award was funded, this time for the youngest artists, just graduating from the Academy – the Samsung Art Master.

The year 2004 witnessed the Art Biennale in Łódź and the return of Zbigniew Libera, after several years of absence, with an excellent exhibition “Mistrzowie i Pozytywy” [Masters and Positives] at the Atlas Gallery in Łódź. The part entitled “Pozytywy” was especially spectacular, as it included the fictional cover of the “Przekrój” magazine with a photo of a Muslim female joyfully welcoming an American soldier bringing freedom and democracy to

⁶ Ł. Guzek, “Obrazy prowadzą (niektórych) w przyszłość”, *Magazyn Sztuki + Obieg*, 2001, No. 3 (28), p. 55.

⁷ “Czy w Polsce toczy się wojna kulturowa? Dyskusja o cenzurze i wolności sztuki” (ASP, Poznań 21.01.2004), *Zeszyty Artystyczne*, ASP Poznań, 2004, No.12.

Iraq (“Sen Busha” [Bush’s Dream]). However, the part entitled “Mistrzowie” was more important. It referred to the artists whom Libera considers to be his masters – Jan Świdziński, Andrzej Partum, Zofia Kulik. Stanisław Ruksza wrote that this work by Libera “questioned the leading role of the Foksal Gallery, Tadeusz Kantor and the Krakowska Group, Ryszard Stanisławski and the Art Museum in Łódź in Polish art...”⁸. 2004 also saw Art Poznań, the art fair launched in Stary Browar – the new shopping center in Poznań.

In 2005, a thematic TV channel – TVP Kultura – began to be broadcast, which in practice meant the removal of all programs devoted to art from public television. Earlier, they had been removed from commercial stations. Moreover, two important books on art appeared in 2005: “Awangarda w cieniu Jałty” by Piotr Piotrowski, and “Sztuka w Polsce 1945-2005” by Anda Rottenberg. The Center of Contemporary Art initiated a series of exhibitions called “W samym centrum uwagi” [In the very center of attention], with Paweł Althamer’s and Artur Żmijewski’s shows. The cornerstone was laid for the new museum of contemporary art in Warsaw; its director, Tadeusz Zielnicz, and its program board headed by Anda Rottenberg were appointed.

The exhibition “Bad News” held in Bytom-based Kronika in 2006 was an attempt to revive the old disputes on art. This time the work that ignited a scandal was not one by a Polish artist, but by the Czech group Guma Guar – a photo presenting Pope Benedict XVI with the bloody severed head of Elton John, entitled “You are All Faggots”. The events developed in line with a well-known scenario: an aggressive article in the local press accusing the exhibition organizers of offending religious feelings and propagating leftist ideologies, which according to the author should be prohibited in Poland, denunciations to the Prosecutor’s office, offensive comments on Internet forums, visits of reporters hungry for sensational news⁹. But the times of scandals would come slowly to an end. The prosecutors were not so eager to bring charges against the artists, they sought other interpretations of the regulation on offending religious feelings. The year 2006 saw a retrospective of Ewa Partum in Instytut Sztuki Wyspa in Gdańsk and Królikarnia in Warsaw (the catalogue for this exhibition has not been published yet) and an exhibition of Krzysztof Wodiczko “Pomnikoterapia” [Statuotherapy] in Zachęta. A few years later, Wodiczko will represent Poland at the Venice Biennale with a very politically correct installation “Goście” [Guests] (2009), and Ewa Partum will take part in the exhibition “Trzy kobiety” [Three Women] (2011), reminding the viewers of the pioneers of feminist art in Poland: – Natalia LL, Maria Pinińska-Bereś, and Ewa Partum.

⁸ S. Ruksza, “Kilka pozytywnych uwag”, in: *Bad News*, Bytom 2006, p. 81.

⁹ S. Cichocki, “Sztuka w służbie lewaków, czyli no news is good news”, in: *Bad News*, *op.cit.*, p. 176.

2007 was marked by Artur Żmijewski's manifesto "Stosowane sztuki społeczne" [Applied social sciences], where the author defends the thesis that what matters most in art is not objects but knowledge. Art gives rise to some kind of knowledge that can be socially useful. What is this knowledge? It is based on conversations, talks, discussions, meetings with other people, collectively created critical reflection over things we do not understand. The fact that there are things we do not understand but want to discuss is not bad – on the contrary, they can set us free from the existing ways of thinking and perception of the world¹⁰. Artur Żmijewski thinks in a similar way. In his interview with Natalia Kaliś he observed: "Potentially, art offers more freedoms than other domains because it does not disown stupidity, mistakes, the absurd, fear, contradiction, dominance of emotions." Art brings knowledge and one has to be aware of this so as not to miss the experience and ideas offered by the artists¹¹. 2007 saw the conclusion of the contest for the design of the new art museum in Warsaw (it was won by Christian Kerez), the change of the museum's director – Tadeusz Zielniewicz was replaced by Joanna Mytkowska – and the program board, as well as a presentation of Grażyna Kulczyk's collection in Stary Browar, Poznań, that had been postponed several times.

Towards the end of 2007, the Zachęta Gallery in Warsaw hosted an exhibition of Wilhelm Sasnal. Sasnal, promoted by the British collector Charles Saatchi, became the first Polish artist taking part in speculative games on the global art market. Piotr Bazyłko, who followed Sasnal's career in the world's auctions informed that in February 2007 a small picture by Sasnal was sold in New York for \$26400 (78 000 PLN). Six months later, in London, another picture by that artist, "Grupa małp" [A group of monkeys] reached the price of £48000 (270 000 PLN), and in June 2008, the triptych "Pałace dziewczyny" [Smoking girls] from Saatchi's collection was sold for \$456 000 (ca. 970 000 PLN)¹². Sasnal's market success reinforced by the exhibition in Zachęta and the book *Sasnal. Przewodnik Krytyki Politycznej* (2008), attracted the attention of Polish collectors to young art and its market potential. 2008 saw the inauguration of the Center for Contemporary Art Znaki Czasu in Toruń and at the end of the year a new location of the Art Museum in Łódź, ms² at the shopping mall Manufaktura. The new building accommodates the collection of 20th and 21st century art in a new arrangement – art has been set free here from the confines of history, and in the spirit of Arthur Danto, it is presented in post-historical, problem-oriented perspective focused around the

¹⁰ See D. Ruyten, "Art in the Information Economy", *Metropolis M* 2010, No.1 (February-March).

¹¹ "Sztuka jest wiedzą. Z Arturem Żmijewskim rozmawia Natalia Kaliś", *Arteon*, 2007, No. 4 (84), p. 27. See also A. Żmijewski, *Drżące ciała. Rozmowy z artystami*, Warszawa 2007.

¹² P. Bazyłko, artbazaar.blogspot.com.

four themes: construction/utopia/the political; eye/image/reality; body/injury/prosthesis; object/fetish/phanthasm.

3.

Saying that today's Russia has successfully copied the Western supermarket of art, Misiano has in mind not only the development of artistic infrastructure, but also the radical change in thinking about art. Within the recent few years Moscow has become an important artistic center with its own art fairs (Art Moscow since 1997), its own art biennale (since 2005), with an increasingly growing number of private galleries, foundations and museums established by big art collectors (probably the best known new art center is The Garage launched in 2008 by Dasha Zhukova, the partner of Roman Abramowich), auction houses organizing the auctions of Russian art, artistic awards, dynamic development of the publishing business that allows the Western readers to get acquainted with contemporary Russian art from the classics of the 20th century avant-garde to Monastyrski, Osmołowski, Zacharow¹³.

Art has adjusted itself to those institutional changes and to new sponsors. Yet, to make this possible, it was necessary to change the way of thinking about art. It was necessary to accept that everything can be art. The idea itself is not new, but its implications are new. If everything can be art, then the discussion on whether something is or is not art makes no sense. It is placing what we want to consider art in an appropriate context, i.e. the context of art, which defines something as art. So far, the artists themselves have decided on placing art in the context of art. Now, this role has been taken over by professional curators and the discussion focused on another issue: how to show that what is being presented is art? The artists from Eastern Europe have had to adjust themselves to the rules of the Western art world, they have had to accept what was considered obvious in the Western art world for a long time, namely that the Western art scene was ruled by economy rather than ideology and that art is primarily a commodity.

Art is a commodity, but a special one that reveals its status of commodity to critical self-reflection, says another Russian theoretician and critic, Boris Groys. In the Western world "the concept of art has become a synonym of the art market", writes Groys¹⁴. When thinking of art, we think of the art market and therefore "the prevailing artistic discourse identifies art with the market and remains blind to those manifestations of art which are produced and propagated outside the market mechanism"¹⁵. Groys repeats here the observations of many other authors, e.g. Jean Baudrillard, but he arrives at much more

¹³ See Moscow Art Guide presented at Venice Biennale in 2005.

¹⁴ B. Groys, *Art Power*, Cambridge Mass. – London 2008, p. 5.

¹⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 6.

interesting conclusions. The Western contemporary art scene is a successor of the Enlightenment iconoclasm, fighting against the power of pictures and in favour of rational discourse. Art has adopted those iconoclastic gestures, initiated by Marcel Duchamp, by creating paradox-objects. Paradox-objects are pictures which are simultaneously criticism of pictures and goods which are simultaneously criticism of goods. For years, the artists from Eastern Europe had functioned in the area of ideology, i.e. in the area of language, because language is the medium of politics just like money is the medium of economy. Now they had to change their thinking. If they did not want to remain anachronistic artists from Eastern Europe, they had to start positioning themselves against the market rather than ideology. To make this possible, it was necessary to turn down the voice of old Russian intelligentsia which accompanied the Russian art in the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s and replace it with the voice of market-oriented critics and curators.

The metaphor of a supermarket is not revealing but it clearly shows that today art in Russia and in the entire Eastern Europe has become something completely different than it used to be. Moreover, this supermarketization of art is perceived positively in Eastern Europe; it is better to build another museum than not to build it, better to organize another art biennale than not to organize it, better to establish another foundation, another art fair, another auction house than not to do it. Those who criticize the emerging artistic initiatives are perceived as envious people who act against the interests of artists and therefore should withhold their criticism for the common good. Everyone can find a place for himself in the supermarket of art and if he does not find it, he can use the Internet – YouTube and cyberspace that can accommodate everything.

4.

In the early 1990s, Jeffrey Deitch published the article entitled “Art Industry”. He claimed in it that the 1980s would go down in history as a radical change in the functioning of art. The 1980s will not be associated with Julian Schnabel’s and Anselm Kiefer’s paintings, with the sculptures of Jeff Koons and Haim Steinbach, but with the record prices for contemporary art achieved at auctions. They will leave their mark on art history with the Sotheby’s auction at which van Gogh’s painting “Irises” was sold for \$53.9m (1987) and with the even more famous auction at Christie’s at which another picture by van Gogh, “Portrait of Doctor Gachet” was sold for \$82.5m (1989). At another famous Sotheby’s action in Moscow (1988), a picture by a relatively unknown Russian artist Grisha Bruskin was sold for \$426k, and his two other paintings reached more than \$200k. The 1980s will not be remembered as the time of Neo-expression or Neo-conceptualism, but rather the time of a radical change in the

place and role of art in culture. The time when art transformed itself into an art industry¹⁶.

In the 1980s, art began to be treated as an investment. The news of the record prices of art works was published on the front pages, appeared in the news services. Investment in art began to be compared with investment in stock, bonds, gold, diamonds and other financial assets. Art has become part of contemporary post-industrial economy, a cultural capital that can bring profits. Art was to attract investors and tourists, create new jobs, increase the profits of cities, contribute to the economic development of towns and regions. Museums of contemporary art and entire artistic districts in old, devastated urban areas abandoned by industry began to grow in the cities aspiring to the name of global cities. Art started to play an increasingly bigger role in creating the image of cities and large corporations which leveraged art for the promotion and advertisement of their own brands. Art has become the highest, post-material consumer good, a dynamic sector of post-industrial economy, a so-called creative industry, with the blurred borders between artistic and para-artistic activity, design, advertising and fashion. As observed by Jeffrey Deitch, "Consumer culture absorbed the art world to such an extent that the artist has no choice, whether he likes it or not, he has become part of that phenomenon"¹⁷.

The fact that the 1980s witnessed a change in the functioning of art was obvious to all – the concept of postmodernism even reinforced that feeling. However, nobody knew what this change in the functioning of art would involve. At first, we noted the freedom that paralyzed artists. At this point, an important book by Suzi Gablik "Has Modernism Failed?" (1984)¹⁸ explored this issue. In particular, the chapter "The Tyranny of Freedom" (which was translated into Polish and published in the first Polish anthology of postmodernism – "Postmodernizm – kultura wyczerpania?", 1988) seemed very relevant. If everything is permitted, if all manners of artistic expression are allowed, then how can we distinguish the important in art from the non-important? Where are we to find the criteria for the assessment of art? The post-modern rule of "anything goes" was to prevent judgment and evaluation of art while the fear of falling into modernist criteria of art assessment made us avoid value judgments – instead of saying that something is better or worse, we began to say that it is "just different". Otherness has become a key concept and postmodernism has come to be viewed as opening to the inevitable presence of the other in our life – other people, other cultures, other languages, other ways of experiencing the world that must not be dominated or subordinated but must be accepted as they are. Postmodernism, understood in

¹⁶ J. Deitch, "Art Industry", *Flash Art* (Polish Edition) 1992, No. 3.

¹⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 78.

¹⁸ S. Gablik, *Has Modernism Failed?*, New York 1984.

this way, turned out to be an introduction to multiculturalism, an opening to other, non-Western cultures and lifestyles. Later, we spoke of the subordination of art to business thinking and here the term “art industry” coined by Jeffrey Deitch seemed very much to the point. In fact, the 1990s seemed to fully confirm Deitch’s observations. The so-called Bilbao effect, i.e. the impact of the Guggenheim museum designed by Frank Gehry on the revival of the city devastated by industry has become the object of common interest.

But what does it mean that art has become an industry? First of all, it means a change in the thinking of art, the origination of a new discourse on art to replace the old modernist reflection on art. When Jeffrey Deitch was writing his text on the art industry, he acted as an artistic advisor to Citibank; hence he was in a very convenient position to analyze the tightening links between art and business and watch the birth of the new discourse on art. What was this new discourse to be all about? Its essence is best expressed by Philippe de Montebello, director of the Metropolitan Art Museum, quoted by Andrea Fraser: “A museum is not a business. It is run in a businesslike fashion”.¹⁹ In other words, art institutions are not businesses, but they should operate like businesses. This refers primarily to all art institutions which should be able to operate in the market. Thus, the transformation of art into art industry stemmed from the rise of a market; a market not so much for art, but for art institutions.

Translated by Maria Śpik-Dziamska

MIEJSCE SZTUKI. GDZIE? W SUPERMARKECIE (streszczenie)

Tekst opisuje przemiany świata sztuki w Europie Wschodniej w supermarket. Metafora supermarketu nie jest specjalnie odkrywcza, ale najlepiej opisuje dzisiejszą sytuację artystyczną w Europie Wschodniej. Supermarket odwołuje się do idei wielości i różnorodności; im większa obfitość produktów w supermarkecie tym lepiej. W supermarkecie każdy powinien znaleźć coś dla siebie. Ale supermarket to nie bazar, na który każdy przychodzi z własnym towarem. Supermarket jest przez kogoś zarządzany, ktoś decyduje o tym, co się znajdzie w supermarkecie i gdzie – w jakiej jego części i na której półce – zostanie wystawione. Supermarket to bazar uporządkowany, poddany rygorom nowoczesnego zarządzania. W supermarkecie wszystkie wystawione produkty stają się towarami, a zasadą rządzącą supermarketem, główną zasadą, którą kierują się wszyscy pracownicy supermarketu jest sprzedaż; najlepsze miejsce zajmują te produkty, które się dobrze sprzedają albo które chcemy dobrze sprzedać. Supermarkety, hipermarkety, centra handlowe są najbardziej widocznymi znakami kultury konsumpcyjnej, prawdziwymi świątyniami konsumpcji, w których każdy staje rzeczywistym lub potencjalnym konsu-

¹⁹ A. Fraser, “A museum is not a business. It is run in businesslike fashion”, in: *Art and its Institutions*, N. Montman (ed.), London 2006, p. 87.

mentem, którego trzeba oszołomić, oczarować, uwieść. Supermarket ma uwodzić. Pozornie oddaje władzę konsumentom, choć w rzeczywistości, poprzez rozmaite zabiegi umagiczniania miejsc i towarów, steruje ich wyborami i decyzjami. Wreszcie, co w Europie Wschodniej nie jest bez znaczenia, centra handlowe postrzegane są jako zachodnie implanty, jako symbole zachodniego konsumpcjonizmu, powszechnie zrozumiały dowód wyższości gospodarki kapitalistycznej, gospodarki obfitości nad nieefektywną gospodarką socjalizmu, gospodarką niedoboru czasów realnego socjalizmu. Dzisiejszy supermarket nawiązuje do idei przemysłu artystycznego Jeffrey'a Deitcha. Deitch chciał pokazać, jak w latach 80. ubiegłego wieku zmieniło się funkcjonowanie sztuki. Idea supermarketu pokazuje, jak artyści z Europy Wschodniej przystosowali się do zachodniego rozumienia sztuki, w którym sztuka utożsamiana jest z rynkiem sztuki i tzw. paradoksalnymi przedmiotami, które są obrazami, a jednocześnie są krytyką obrazów, są towarami, a jednocześnie są krytyką towarów.

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THE “HOMELESSNESS” OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH AND THE SACRAL BUILDINGS IN ANDEAN PERU: JULI, RONDOCÁN, ARANHUAY AND CHACA

Abstract: Despite the common belief that Spanish-speaking South America has been dominated by Catholicism for centuries, the current situation of that faith in the countries of the region is increasingly difficult. The position of the Catholic Church in the area of Andean Peru, famous for marvellous monuments of sacral art and colourful processions, is currently undergoing distinct changes. The problem of the declining number of Catholic priests is particularly evident in the mountain villages, situated far from big administration centres and inhabited by communities of Indian origin. In the face of an insufficient number of priests in the provinces, those villages are the first to be left without ministry. The same happens to the local churches, often built as early as in the 17th and 18th centuries, many of which are currently closed. The reasons for the “abandoning” of these provincial churches by priests and, in many cases, by local communities are different depending on the region. We will consider here the cases of Juli, Rondocán, Aranhuyay and Chaca.

Our analysis includes a detailed description of both the former greatness of the discussed buildings (which aims at familiarizing the reader with the period when the churches were built and functioned as sacral buildings) and the reasons for their “collapse” as well as their current state. As the examples show, the present situation of the Catholic churches in the Peruvian provinces is the outcome of many factors – e.g. the chronic shortage of the clergy in the rural areas, the conversion of a significant number of local people to the Protestant faith, the lack of state care over monuments, and, in certain regions, also the plundering and devastation during the war. In each of the described cases, the current state of the church illustrates a drastic change in its status – from its colonial splendour, when its presence and richness guaranteed respect and devotion to the Catholic Church by evangelized natives and colonizers coming to Latin America from the Old Continent, to the state of abandonment, destruction and closure. This change reflects not only the current situation of sacral art, but, first of all, the situation of the Roman Catholic Church. The example of each church building illustrates the same problem: after the “disappearance” of faith, they have little chance of surviving, even in the form of monuments, and they turn into the symbols of homelessness – of the buildings, the artefacts, of the faithful and of religion.

Keywords: Andean churches – the catholic church of Peru – colonial art – armed conflict in Peru – provincial architecture.

Despite the common belief that Spanish-speaking South America has been dominated by Catholicism for centuries, the current situation of that faith in the countries of the region is increasingly difficult. The position of the Catholic Church in the area of Andean Peru, famous for its marvellous monuments of sacral art and colourful processions, is currently undergoing distinct changes. Many of them result from a decline in the number of priests, linked both to the decreasing number of vocations among the Peruvians and the reduced missionary ranks sent to Peru in order to evangelize. As a result, more and more people get under the pastoral care of the Protestant churches, which, since the early 19th century, have been expanding over successive regions of the country, actively supporting their development¹.

The problem of the declining number of Catholic priests is particularly evident in the mountain villages situated far from big administration centres and inhabited by communities of Indian origin. In the face of the insufficient number of priests in the provinces, those villages are the first to be left without ministry. The same is happening to the local churches, often built as early as in the 17th and 18th centuries, many of which are now closed. The reasons for the “abandoning” of the provincial churches by priests and, in many cases, by local communities, are different depending on the region.

One of such reasons is a radical change in the centre’s function, as was the case of the town of Juli, in the Puno Region, located on Lake Titicaca. In the colonial period, it used to be an important Jesuit mission, which sent priests to Paraguay and Bolivia. However, after the Jesuit Order had been expelled from America in 1767, it failed to regain its bygone splendour. At present, only one in four monumental churches used by the Jesuits in the colonial period serves its sacral functions.

Another town – Rondocán – located in the Department of Cuzco, famous for its Inca traditions, was abandoned by its priest in the 1990s due to the technical state of the church; thus the local community was left to itself. The polychromes on the walls of the local church have been damaged by rain, which poured over the constructions made of *adobe*, leaving damp patches. Stubs of formerly impressive statues lie scattered inside the building.

In the villages of Aranhuary and Chaca, located in the central Department of Ayacucho, the decisive factor that influenced the fate of the humble local

¹ More on the subject of the current condition of the Catholic Church in Peru as well as the expansion of Protestant Churches: J. Kleiber, *Iglesia, dictaduras y democracia en América Latina*, Lima 1997, pp. 235-278; “La Iglesia Católica y las iglesias evangélicas”, in: *Informe Final de la Comisión de la Verdad y Reconciliación (CVR)*, Lima 2003, tomo III, cap. 3.3., pp. 385-490; C. Tovar (coord.), *Ser iglesia en tiempos de violencia*, Lima 2006; “Iglesia, Sociedad y Política de 1950 a Nuestros Días: Un Esquema de Interpretación Histórica”, in: *La construcción de la iglesia en los Andes (siglos XVI–XX)*, F. Armas (coord.), Lima 1999; M. Marzal, “Religión y sociedad peruana del siglo XXI”, in: *El Perú frente al siglo XXI*, G. Portocarrero, M. Valcarcel (coord.), Lima 1995.

churches was the armed conflict in Peru in 1980–2000. It was started by the Maoist group named the Communist Party of Peru – The Shining Path. It undertook military actions against the government in order to seize power through a revolution. A wave of violence directed against civilians by both the Maoists and the Government affected the clergy of the Catholic Church and other churches, badly influencing the scope of the ministry and the deterioration of the condition of the churches in many regions of the provinces. Since the war broke out in Ayacucho and took place in its area as well as in neighbouring departments, the effect of nearly two decades of terror on the situation of the Catholic Church is particularly evident in the area of the central and southern *sierra* – which is illustrated by the “silent” village churches, left by priests and often destroyed in the course of military actions or during holdups².

The provincial churches deprived of their sacral functions are under the care of the local communities. Their attempts to improve the condition of these churches are frequently hindered by their inability to identify them as sacral places, local heritage, or works of art in a broad sense. The care of the local communities is sometimes limited to locking up the churches in prevention of further devastation (Aranhuay, Chaca). In some other villages, the inhabitants strive to renovate the churches, but the confrontation with the bureaucracy of the Peruvian authorities as well as meeting the formal requirements are beyond their capabilities (Rondocán). The most favourable situation currently prevails in Juli, where the attitude toward local monuments has been changing for several years. Three churches were closed for some time, yet two of them have undergone conservation to prevent further destruction. Presently, both churches function quite awkwardly as local museums. Unfortunately, the third church is on the decline, and every time we visit the place, we can only see more and more scaffolding, which prevents the existing façade and the fragments of side walls from collapsing.

JULI

In the former Viceroyalty of Peru, the Jesuit Order left its material and spiritual traces in a lot of centres, including the town of Juli, on Lake Titicaca.³

² More on the subject of internal conflict in Peru and the situation of the Catholic Church in times of violence: J. Kleiber, *op. cit.*, *Informe Final CVR...*; P. del Pino, “Tiempos de Guerra y de dioses: Ronderos, evangélicos y senderistas en el valle del río Apurímac”, in: *Las rondas campesinas y derrota del Sendero Luminoso*, C.I. Degregori (coord.), Lima 1996; pp. 117-188, N. Manrique, *El tiempo del miedo. La violencia política en el Perú 1980–1996*, Lima 2002.

³ A lot of studies and monographs describe Jesuit art in America; however, in Poland the subject is almost completely unknown. Basic monographs include: L.E. Alcalá, *Fundaciones*

The Jesuit mission was founded in the town in 1578, after the Dominicans had left it in the outcome of a conflict between the monks and the vice king – Francisco de Toledo.⁴ In July 1557, the first Jesuits: Diego Martines (a superior), Alonso Barzana, Diego de Bracamonte and Pedro de Añasco came to Juli⁵.

There were four churches in the town – San Pedro, Asunción, San Juan Bautista and Santa Cruz. The first three were built in the Dominican times⁶, and later, of course, they were rebuilt and converted. The most significant alteration which changed their interior design and decorations took place in the 18th century.

It is necessary to emphasize the special role and position of Juli in the colonial period. The town became a very important cultural centre, often called *Seminario de lenguas* – here, the monks acquainted themselves with the local languages to be able to communicate with the people whom they would evangelize; here, in Juli, a dictionary of the *aymara* language, devised by a monk, Ludovico Bertonio, was published in 1612. Jesuits treated the centre as a model mission and drew on its experience in introducing urban architectonic, organizational and cultural solutions when later establishing the communes called “reductions” in Paraguay and Bolivia⁷.

The Jesuit monks organized the whole life of the local community of Juli. They worked in four parishes, into which the town was divided. According to Alfonso Echanove, their duties included ministry in Juli, teaching in a reduction,

jesuíticas en Iberoamerica, Madrid 2002; G. A. Bailey, *Art on the Jesuit Missions in Asia and Latin America 1542–1773*, Toronto 1999; B. D. Sustersic, *Templos Jesuítico-Guaraníes. La historia secreta de sus fábricas y ensayos de interpretación de sus ruinas*, Buenos Aires 1999; P. Querejazu, *Las misiones jesuíticas de Chiquitos*, La Paz 1995; M. Díaz, *La arquitectura de los jesuitas en Nueva España*, México 1982; J. Plá, *El barroco hispano guaraní*, Asunción 1975; among Polish publications, a popular science book: J. Gać, *Raj utracony śladami chrześcijaństwa. Pierwsze misje jezuitów w Ameryce Łacińskiej*, Kraków 2006.

⁴ A.N. Vélez, “Jesuitas en el mundo andino: las reducciones de Juli”, *Revista peruana de historia eclesiástica*, Cuzco 1994, nr 3, p. 134; R.V. Ugarte, *Los jesuitas del Peru (1568–1767)*, Lima 1941, p. 10.

⁵ R.V. Ugarte, *op.cit.*, p. 10.

⁶ R.V. Ugarte, *Historia de la Compañía de Jesús en el Peru, 1568–1620*, vol. I, Burgos 1963, p. 114.

⁷ According to Cristina Esteras and Ramon Gutiérrez, mission organization in Juli influenced the structure of later missions in Paraguay: C. E. Martín, R. Gutiérrez, “La misión de Juli y su influencia en las misiones de Paraguay”, *Documentos de arquitectura nacional americana*, 1984, No. 17, pp. 54, 58; „no podemos extender cabalmente El mundo previo de experiencias misioneras sino valoramos adecuadamente la relación entre la praxis misional efectuada en Juli (Perú) por los jesuitas y el modelo de mundo nuevo que quisieron y lograron crear en las reducciones del Paraguay”, R. Gutiérrez, “La evangelización a través de la arquitectura y el arte en las misiones jesuíticas de los guaraníes”, in: *La evangelización en el Paraguay. Cuatro siglos de historia*, L. Cano, Asunción 1979, p. 50; R. Gutiérrez, “Propuesta urbanística de los sistemas misionales de los jesuitas”, in: *Un reino en la frontera: las misiones jesuita en America colonial*, San Miguel 1999, pp. 257-258.

missionary work in the region, establishing new schools, supporting economic development of the town and the adjoining region as well as battling against alcoholism and idolatry⁸.

According to some researchers, the social structure remained the same as the former social organization of the Incas' country. We know that before the Spanish conquest, the society was divided, in accordance with the Inca order, into four parts (then during the colonial period – into four parishes). That organization has been described, among others, by Inca Garcilaso de la Vega: "Inca kings divided their empire into four parts, called *Tahuantin suyú*, which meant four parts of the world, matching four main directions in the sky: east, west, north and south [...] The eastern part was named *Anti suyú*, from the province of *Anti* located in the east, [...] *Cunti suyú* was the name of the western part, from some very small province, named *Cunti*. The northern part was named *Chincha suyú*, from the grand province located to the north of the city [Cuzco], named *Chincha*, and the southern part was named *Colla suyú*, from the province of *Colla*, located in the south"⁹.

According to Ramon Gutierrez, this division of the Inca Empire was a decisive factor for the division of Juli into four parishes. The Jesuits submitted to the local tradition in order to do missionary work more easily in the social structure that was familiar to the Indians. In the times of the Jesuit missions, parts of Juli were traditionally called *los ayllus*, and each sector had its own name: *Huancollo*, *Chambilla*, *Amancka*, *Muchcho*¹⁰, coming from the native languages¹¹.

Because of the missionary work, conducted in Latin America by different orders, an extremely important place in sacral architecture was an atrium – a limited space at the church entrance. In Juli, all the churches had such "squares", formerly surrounded by walls. They still exist in three complexes – Asunción, Santa Cruz and San Pedro. José de Acosta, describing Jesuits' missionary work, gave the following account: "*por la mañana venían los indios a una plazuela grande que hay delante de la Iglesia [San Pedro] y allí*

⁸ A. Echanove, "Origen y evolución de la idea jesuítica de reducciones en las misiones del virreinato del Perú", *Misionalia Hispánica*, Año XII, No. 34, Madrid 1955, p. 36.

⁹ I.G. de la Vega, *O Inkach uwagi prawdziwe*, tłum. Jan Szemiński, Warszawa 2000, p. 101.

¹⁰ "los [jesuítas] mandan venir por barrios a confesar que acá llaman ayllus"; C.E. Martín, R. Gutierrez, *op.cit.*, p. 56.

¹¹ R. Gutiérrez's view is undoubtedly correct, yet like majority of solutions in America, it has European connotations. To my mind, it is necessary to remember about the Old World traditions. In the early Middle Ages, after the foundation of a city, the first buildings to be erected were four churches (usually together with monasteries), conceived as matching four directions of the world. One of them was the main, superior church. The best example of such urban thought is Cologne, which had four churches inside city walls: the cathedral and the churches of St. Andrew, St. Cecilia and St. Mary in the Capitol; the local community was divided into four parishes; W. Braunfels, *Abendländische Klosterbaukunst*, Cologne 1985, p. 203, Schematic view of the city, fig. 75.

repartidos por coros de 12 en 12 ó de 15 en 15, los hombres aparte y las mujeres aparte decían las oraciones y doctrinas teniendo uno como Maestro que enseña y ellos van pasando unos equipos o registros que tienen hecho de cordeles con nudos por donde se acuerdan de lo que prenden como nosotros por escrito. Después se juntaron todos y el Padre Barzana les predicó allí porque no hay Iglesia tan capaz donde puedan caber”¹².

This account seems extremely important. The information about “writing down” religious knowledge in the form of *kipu* seems doubtful, yet we may be absolutely sure that the “preaching” took place in front of the church, in the open atrium. Moreover, the fact of preaching in the open air – in the case of San Pedro church in Juli – may be confirmed by the documented existence of an open chapel next to the church entrance¹³.

An atrium itself had been a well-known form in European sacral art since the early Christian times, yet in the architectonic constructions of the Old World it was no longer treated as an element of a church layout, and thus it was not used in later epochs. The popularity of the atrium in America may result from the specific social situation, which was different than in the 16th- and 17th-century Europe. Particularly, the situation during the first years of the conquest resembled the realities of the first centuries of Christianity rather than the mechanisms ruling the Renaissance society. From the religious point of view, the main objective was to evangelize the vast number of Indians, spreading the new faith. In this context, an atrium appeared to be a tool that supported evangelization and enjoyed great popularity for functional reasons.

The major and immediate reason for creating atria in the colonial architecture of Latin America was the need for cult exteriorization, that is to say bringing the Liturgy outside the churches and placing it in the open space. This conscious action was taken on account of the lack of space in the church buildings in the face of preaching to hundreds of Indians and due to the preferences and traditions of Indian cults. Local people were used to religious rituals being carried out in the open air, in huge squares surrounded by religious buildings¹⁴. According to some researchers, the atrium, together with the chapels located in its corners, is a typical Mexican solution; nevertheless, layouts of that kind may be found in the whole Latin America. José de Mesa and Teresa Gisbert mention sixteen examples of churches with atria and *posas*¹⁵ in the area of the Viceroyalty of Peru. In turn, in the account of the Third Synod of Lima, which was summoned by Archbishop Santo Torbo Mogrovejo in 1583, we can read that since it is certain that the Indians are

¹² Cited after: C.E. Martín, R. Gutiérrez, *op.cit.*, p. 56.

¹³ Today, the remains of the construction may be found only in archival photos; R. Gutiérrez (coord.), *Arquitectura y urbanismo en Iberoamérica*, Madrid 2002, pp. 332, 334.

¹⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 29.

¹⁵ J. de Mesa, T. Gisbert, *Iglesias con Atrio y Posas en Bolivia*, La Paz 1962.

most endeared and attracted to learning about and worshipping God by ceremonies in the open air as well as the splendour and lavishness of the religious cult, it is necessary to put great effort into ensuring that these elements support the evangelization effort – „por la forma y modo que juzgaren ser a mayor gloria de Dios y ayuda spiritual de las almas”¹⁶.

However, the spatial form of the discussed churches is very simple, and their uniqueness is due to rich ornamentation. All of the churches were built on the plan of a Latin cross, with one nave and a transept. The crossing in San Pedro church is topped with a dome, in San Juan Bautista and Santa Cruz (probably), it used to be emphasized by quadrilateral towers.

The façades and portals of the churches in Juli are quite humble in terms of architecture. 16th-and early 17th-century constructions were converted in the 18th century. New portal structures were “stuck” to the austere, undecorated walls, or the old walls were altered according to the Baroque spirit. Their structure is based on the system of abutments (columns, engaged columns, pilasters), entablature and aediculae. The iconographic programme is humble, yet the rich ornamentation is absolutely impressive.

In the church of San Juan Bautista, the 18th-century sculptural decorations are concentrated in the side portal added in this period. It has classical form, with a structure of arcades, niches, protruding plinths and equally protruding, strongly curved entablature. The niches are empty, and they look as if they never contained any statues; even though the portal lacks figural representations, it seems quite rich due to the variety of exotic flora and fauna representations. The portal has a two-level triaxial construction topped with a triangular gable. On both levels there are six arcades (three on each level); the middle arcade on the lower level is the entrance one; its extraordinary character is emphasized by its size – it is wider and higher than the others. The design is similar to the composition of the façade in the Santissima Annunziata church in Rome, which was designed at the end of the 16th century by Giovanni Tristano. That façade was familiar to the Jesuits, since the design was duplicated in a graphic form¹⁷ and it must have served as a sort of a pattern, followed in the subsequent foundations.

In the church of Santa Cruz, the entrance portal is also classically organized and designed; its distinguishing element is rich ornamentation. Its particularly interesting detail are the figures of angels on the upper level of the façade; according to the church’s dedication they are holding *Arma Christi* in their hands. The figures are unusually flat, which is characteristic of numerous representations in the region, and of the art of *mestizo* in general, which is often the product of local craftsmen.

¹⁶ R.V. Ugarte, *Concilios Limenses. I*, Lima 1951, p. 374.

¹⁷ G. Sale, *Pauperismo architettonico e architettura gesuitica*, Milano 2002, p. 39; fig. 3.

Juli's architecture may be described as provincial and remaining under the influence of such centres as Cuzco or Ayacucho. However, in the high period of the missions, the churches of Juli must have been admirable and overwhelming with their rich decorations, polychrome, and gilding.

Unfortunately, the missions flourished only until 1768, when the Jesuits were expelled from the territories under the Spanish crown. After that time, the city, together with its sacral buildings, began to decline. Juli got divided into four separate parishes with four separate vicars, who were appointed to take care of the community and the church buildings. However, since each priest was subordinated directly to the bishop in La Paz (who often changed the vicars), and due to the lack of communication between the parishes, which pursued their own policies, their stable existence got unsettled.

The accounts from the 19th and early 20th century point out the deteriorating condition of the church buildings. There were some attempts to rescue them¹⁸. The church of San Pedro, the main church, apparently sufficient for the small community of Juli after the Jesuits' departure, has remained in the best condition. Around the middle of the 20th century, the condition of the local churches improved together with the arrival of the Catholic missionaries from the North American Maryknoll Society, who were brought to the Puno Department by the Peruvian church authorities in 1943 due to the shortage of local priests. The strong position of the Protestant churches in the region¹⁹, and the numerous local problems forced the Maryknoll missionaries to focus mainly on their ministry, yet they brought back some of Juli's traditions by developing education and preaching in the local languages. A decade later, in 1957, a prelature was established in Juli, with a view to strengthening the Catholic Church structure in the region. This time, the clergymen's efforts focused on the new administrative function of the centre, not on monument restoration, which seemed too costly. What is more, during the armed conflict, the important position of Juli within the Church structures attracted terror attacks of the Shining Path, whose forces attacked the nearby Rural Institute, managed by the Maryknoll brothers, as well as the office of the prelature in 1981. Nevertheless, due to the strong resistance of the local communities which supported the missionaries against the actions of the Senderistas²⁰, both the local clergy and the churches of Juli survived those attacks, unlike in many

¹⁸ R. Gutiérrez, *Arquitectura del altiplano peruano*, Buenos Aires 1986, pp. 362-366.

¹⁹ In the 1940s, Puno, with the population of 645 000 people, had 55 Catholic parishes, 28 of which had their own vicar. In the 1920s, in the same region, Adventist church had 80 schools for Indian children and a lot of health centres. It was still developing dynamically, differing distinctly from conservatives structures of Peruvian Catholic church; Cecilia Tovar, *op.cit.*, p. 405.

²⁰ The appellation referring to the members of the Shining Path. The original Spanish name is *Sendero Luminoso*.

other regions of the *sierra*. Despite that, the prelature of Juli was liquidated, which squandered the chances of the prompt renovation of the local churches²¹.

However, the current situation of the church buildings in Juli seems to be the most favourable of all the three cities mentioned in this article. The church of San Pedro is in a very good condition; it has been renovated, and masses are celebrated inside each morning and evening. The other churches have suffered a much worse fate. The churches of Asunción and San Juan Bautista – still in a very bad condition – are being gradually renovated. Their roofs have been replaced, which seems the most important for preserving the buildings, yet their interiors – with destroyed walls, statues and paintings resting against the walls – remain unrenovated. In the recent few years the situation of the churches has slightly improved. In 2004, the churches still remained closed; it was possible to visit the interiors of both buildings only after long searching and numerous requests. In 2010, they were functioning as local “museums”; although their interiors have undergone small alterations, they are still empty. Their only furnishings are the remains of the formerly magnificent, now much damaged polychromes and a few oil paintings. The church of Santa Cruz is in the worst condition. In 2004, damaged by an earthquake, it was in complete ruin. Six years later, it was not even possible to visit its interior – the façade was covered in scaffolding, preventing the building from collapse; the atrium was used by local people as a grazing land²². Therefore, both the church of Santa Cruz and the two aforementioned ones have been completely desacralized.

RONDOCÁN

The church in Rondocán – though it probably comes from the 18th century – has not been mentioned in the literature on the subject. This may result from the fact that the church is located far from the main tourist routes of the Department of Cuzco – the region rich in monuments. Although the city of Rondocán is the capital of one of districts in the Acomayo Province, it is relatively inaccessible by public means of transport, and its provincial charm may not compete with the splendour of the Cuzcan Baroque art. Admittedly, the direction of research in this area has been changing, and new monographs, not only on the “typical” monuments of the colonial period have been

²¹ More about a course of the armed conflict in the region of Puno: José Luis Rénique, *La batalla por Puno. Conflicto agrario en los Andes peruanos 1866-1995* Lima 2004; J. Kleiber, *op.cit.*, pp. 261-267, *Informe Final CVR...*, pp. 386, 430-434; C. Tovar (coord.), *op.cit.*, pp. 399-409.

²² An observation made by the article authors during the subsequent visits in 2004 and 2010.

published. The interests of the researchers increasingly concentrates on the buildings from the remote provinces²³. It is possible that the church in Rondocán will be described before it has turned into ruins.

The church was built in a traditional style. It was made of *adobe* (hand-made bricks produced of clay and dried in the sun), formerly hatched, now roofed with ceramic tiles. Its outline resembles an extended rectangular, whose irregularity is linked to local craftsmanship. The external architecture looks rather humble; irregularly placed buttresses adjoin the side walls. The façade is located in a deep niche, created by moving the side walls forward and topping them with a gabled roof. Under the roof is a wooden balcony with a balustrade, which may be entered from the inside of the church. The nave is adjoined by a rectangular chancel with three steps leading to it; two rooms were added next to the side wall – a sacristy, next to the chancel, and a baptistery, which is entered through the door near the main entrance. Nowadays, the church furniture consists of the high altar and a pulpit as well as the remains of some other altars, which cannot be described in details. An important element of the interior is also the polychromes decorating the walls.

A two-level wooden high altar, built on a high plinth, is triaxial on the lower level and uniaxial on the upper one. The division was introduced with spirally curved columns in the so called “Solomon order”; some fragments of the entablature have been preserved. The major part of the woodcarving was gilded, the other fragments were covered with colourful polychrome. The altar stone was covered with linen antepedium with a flower ornament painted in oil. Above the altar stone is a tabernacle having a convex, semi-circular outline with gilded images of a monstrance with the Blessed Sacrament, grapevine, and vases of flowers. It is accompanied by the oil paintings of Blessed Virgin Mary with Jesus among the angels adoring her, and Our Lady of the Rosary offering a rosary to St. Dominic. On the upper level, the middle axis frame surrounds the niche with a statue of some saint with an image of a dove symbolizing the Holy Spirit on the wall above his head. At the apex, on the pentagonal surface, is the image of God the Father – here the polychrome covers the plank. In the altar, there are statues of saints – some of them seem to belong to the original composition of the *retabulum*, the others were placed there in later years.

²³ One of the first such monographs is the book by R. Gutierrez, *Arquitectura virreynal en Cuzco y su región*, Cuzco 1987, in which the author concentrates on unknown and very provincial in their architectonic form pieces of art. Unfortunately, this trend was abandoned, and only in the 1990s researchers slowly became interested in the provinces. Examples illustrating this tendency are the following monographs: J.A. Flores Ochoa, E. Kuon Arce, R.S. Argumedo, *Pintura mural en el sur Andino*, Lima 1993; P. Mecera, *La pintura mural Andina siglos XVI-XIX*, Lima 1993; (both books present not only famous monuments, but also examples of provincial art); C. R. de Pardo, *Joya del Arte Colonial Cuzqueño, Catálogo Iconográfico de la Iglesias de Huanquite*, Lima 2004.

Another element of the church's interior design remaining in a relatively good condition is the pulpit, located in the chancel, just at the steps leading to the nave. Almost all of the wooden elements are gilded, yet the pulpit was additionally decorated (according to the tradition of modern art) with four painted effigies of saints. Although each effigy was placed in a separate space, it is possible to distinguish two pairs of effigies with identical figural placement. The physiognomies of the saints are also the same – only the attributes differ. And so they may be recognized as St. Francis of Assisi, St. Anthony of Padua, St. Thomas Aquinas and St. Augustine of Hippo.

The last notable element of the interior design is the polychrome. Figural representations have survived in the choir area, in other areas the decorations have the ornamental form of geometrical shapes and stylized plants, or they are remotely linked to modern grotesque. Among the representations are the effigies of St. Peter and Paul with their typical attributes (keys and a sword) at both sides of the church entrance door and four Evangelists at the side walls of the nave: Mark and Matthew next to St. Paul; and Luke and John next to St. Peter. The polychromes are in a very poor condition, the effigy of one Evangelist (St. John) is completely indecipherable; it can be determined only by reading the iconographic programme of the whole complex of representations; while next to the effigy of St. Matthew, blurred by damp patches, one can see only a figure of an angel, traditionally accompanying the Saint.

This method of polychrome arrangement is characteristic for the whole region. In the church in Colquepata, in the Paucartambo Region, the representations of St. Christopher and St. Sebastian on both sides of the entrance door were placed in the same position as in the church in Rondocán²⁴; and at the church at Checacupe, in the Quispicanchi Region – the same position are occupied by the figures of St. Anthony the Great and St. Paul²⁵. St. Peter's and St. Paul's representations are relatively most common on the church façades, e.g. in Huasac²⁶ or in Cay Cay – both in the Paucartambo Province²⁷, but their effigies can be also found inside the churches in the Cuzco Region, e.g. in the church in Chinchero, the Canchis Province²⁸ or in the church in Sangarara, in the Acomayo Province²⁹. The Evangelists were usually depicted together; among the wall paintings are the polychromes with their effigies from the 17th and 18th centuries. Among these representations, we can mention the four

²⁴ J.A. Flores Ochoa, E. Kuon Arce, R.S. Argumedo, *op.cit.*, p. 47; P. Mecera, *op.cit.*, pp. 123-124.

²⁵ J.A. Flores Ochoa, E. Kuon Arce, R.S. Argumedo, *op.cit.*, p. 133; P. Mecera, *op.cit.*, p.136.

²⁶ P. Mecera, *op.cit.*, p.122.

²⁷ *Ibidem*, p.118.

²⁸ *Ibidem*, p.113.

²⁹ J.A. Flores Ochoa, E. Kuon Arce, R.S. Argumedo, *op.cit.*, p. 86.

Evangelists from the aforementioned church in Chinchero, where busts of Matthew, Mark, John and Luke decorate the chancel screen of the church.

Around Cuzco one can find numerous analogies to ornamental-flower decorations. The *mudejar*-style ceiling is similarly designed (more or less masterfully) in most of the churches in the region, yet the Rondocán church decorations are among the simplest ones. The walls have stripe arrangement – of the type of textile decorations found e.g. in Cay Cay³⁰; the niches enclosed within polychrome frames are also typical – a simple, local form of an altar.

Due to the poor technical condition of the church, the vicar left Rondocán in the late 1990s. For some time, the city was visited by a priest who served his ministry in the local church; yet because of torrential rains the church was turning into ruins, so the priest abandoned even those visits. The community was left to itself, and the church lost its sacral significance. Deprived of spiritual meaning, it was turned into a storehouse. Nowadays, the interior features many deteriorating elements of the former design. Fragments of statues, *rocailles*, dusty figures with tangled hair and torn clothing lie around the floor. The sacristy serves as a kind of shed for liturgical books and objects, and dismantled – frequently damaged – sculptures.

Although the church does not serve its sacral functions, and the Rondocán citizens' respect towards the former House of God is moderate (a pigsty and a pigpen were build next to one of the church's walls), the local community is beginning to appreciate the value of the building as the heritage of colonial art. The church is changing from a temple to a monument and it is perceived as the chance of city promotion.

It seems that the vision of an inflow of tourists motivates the citizens of Rondocán, who – for a couple of years – have been trying to obtain some financial aid for church renovation from the National Institute of Culture. However, this is difficult, since communicating with the authorities in Lima and meeting the formal requirements is beyond the capabilities of the local community – both in terms of the documentation necessary for starting the renovation efforts and in financial terms. Applications are investigated only after the presentation of extensive documentation and experts' opinions; their collection is hindered by many objective obstacles, such as the lack of the title deed since the colonial period. Other fundamental, yet difficult to obtain, documents include a complete inventory book, a confirmation of the urban parameters, opinions on the state of the building and its interior, an archaeological evaluation report, and a geo-referencing plan of the building's location³¹.

³⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 180.

³¹ Information comes from the source materials from private collections of the authors, available for inspection.

As the result of the aforementioned factors, there is less and less space in Rondocán for the Catholic faith. This can be seen both in the spiritual sense (the local people are not under the pastoral care of priests and abandon regular religious practice) and the material one (the church – a sacred place – is treated as a potential tourist landmark).

ARANHUAY AND CHACA

Aranhuay and Chaca are quite small mountain villages in the Department of Ayacucho, located in the area of the central *sierra*. It is one of the poorest regions in the country, yet at the same time, its capital, the city of Ayacucho – among deteriorating for years and partly devastated urban houses – treasures some gems of colonial architecture: over thirty churches, mostly from 16th and 17th century. The number, the richness of the interiors, as well as the popularity of these monuments among the Catholics and the tourists visiting the city clearly contrast with the condition of the sacral architecture in the neighbouring provinces – the small village churches with “austere” interior design, usually forgotten by the parishioners and priests.

The church in Aranhuay was probably built in the early 19th century. Its architectonic forms are, however, deeply rooted in the colonial period. The church is located at the southern frontage of the main square, constituting the central point of the village layout.

The church was built on a rectangular plan; it is made of traditional *adobe* brick, topped with a gable roof covered with ceramic tiles. From the architectonic point of view, its most representative element is the façade adjoined by a three-level, austere, unplastered tower. The façade itself has been plastered and covered in white and light blue paint. It is topped with a quite irregular arch – such a composition with a façade niche was characteristic for colonial architecture, yet in the 18th century that solution was usually accompanied by rich sculptural decorations³². The layout of the façade is simple – the only decorative elements are two cornices dividing the composition in the stripe arrangement. The entrance door and a window placed above it are enclosed within prominent arches. Above the door is the inscription: La Iglesia Católica San Pedro – Aranhuay.

³² A façade topped with a prominent arch can be found in the church of San Pedro in Zepita or the church of Santiago de Pomata on lake Titicaca as well as in the areas of Upper Peru (contemporary Bolivia) – the church in Lampa, the church of Santo Domingo in Cochabamba, of Belén in Potosí and of Santo Domingo in La Paz; R.S. Argumedo, “Orígenes y difusión del barroco cusqueño”, in: *Barranco peruano*, R. Mujica Pinilla (ed), Lima 2002, pp. 65, 71, 147, 170-171, 187-191 or J. de Mesa, T. Gisbert, *Monumentos de Bolivia*, La Paz 2002, p. 222.

The church in Chaca is very similar to the one in Aranhuary. It has the same body and façade composition, but the building differs in colours (its façade is pale ochre) as well as its condition (the church in Chaca is better-preserved). It is located at the main square of the village – opposite the buildings of the former hacienda, which originated the whole village.

The churches in Aranhuary and Chaca are two examples of provincial Roman Catholic churches which have lost their sacral functions. They were both built during the 19th-century decentralization of Church administration, which aimed at creating small parishes in the rural areas to strengthen the effect of evangelization and build close relationship between the clergy and the Metis and Indian people living in the provinces. Nowadays, the example of these churches shows that the post-war tendencies in the Catholic Church ministry are quite different. Both villages have not had their own priest for a long time, and the priests from urban centres visit these areas very rarely – only during certain holidays. Since the beginning of the conflict, both communities have been dominated by Evangelicals; and the people declaring themselves as Roman Catholic do not practice their faith. During the main religious holidays or in need for ministry, they go to the nearby towns – Santillana and Huanta respectively, or to Ayacucho, a few hours away. As a result, both the local Catholic communities and the village churches experience “homelessness”. In the first case, it is the result of the lack of permanent pastoral care; in the second – the result of neglect of the clergy and the faithful, who – used to the view of a closed and silent church – lose the awareness of it being a sacral object, and thus the sense of responsibility for its condition and maintenance.

The current state of the churches in the provinces illustrates the very complex phenomenon of the “homelessness” of the Catholic faith in Ayacucho, resulting from the pre-war position of the Roman Catholic Church in the Andes. Although in the middle of the 20th century the highest authorities of the Peruvian Church initiated a progressive transformation of its own structures, in the 1970s it still functioned in many regions of the *sierra* according to the rules from the colonial period. In the Ayacucho Region, for instance, the position of the Catholic Church in the pre-war period reflected the close relationship between the Church as an institution and the clergymen and terrestrial oligarchies dominating over the *sierra* for ages. Although before the conflict, both sides had contended with difficult economic situation (resulting mainly from the changes in the structure of land ownership introduced both by the peasants and by the state), they remained local elites. According to the colonial traditions, the local Church was still strongly conservative and unhurriedly developed its ministry in the remote provinces. The priests worked mainly among the Creole and Metis communities in towns, still having little contact with the Indian people dominating in the rural areas. The limited

presence of the Church in the remote provinces resulted not only from the slow changes in social policy, but also from an insufficient number of vocations. Both problems led to the complicated situation in the 1970s, when more than half of the parishes in the archdiocese of Ayacucho did not have their own priest³³.

The distance between the clergy and the faithful in the rural areas, lasting for centuries, allowed the natives to retain folk elements in their faith, characteristic for the culturally traditional Andes. Folk religion was formed in the colonial period within the long and complex process of evangelization of the local people, who – politically and culturally dominated by the white colonizers – adopted their religion, still not giving up polytheism. Since the Indians considered the sacred to be strongly linked to everyday activities, it was not possible for them to accept the Catholic God at the expense of tutelary gods, who, in many cases, remained hidden under the cover of the imposed Catholic tradition. In this way, as intercultural relations developed, the two belief systems got syncretized. Although the Catholic faith has gained a dominant position, it has remained under the strong influence of Andean beliefs – it is closely related with the natural environment, preserving, among others, magical elements and a well-developed cult of saints³⁴.

The example of Ayacucho in the course of the conflict (1980–2000) has shown that the frequently superficial attachment of rural communities to the Catholic tradition and irregular ministry in the provinces quickly led to the deteriorating condition of the Catholic Church, which in many villages did not overcome the tragic wartime experience of both the clergy and the faithful. What is important is that the crisis of Catholicism, visible in the region of the central *sierra*, has resulted mostly from the fact that the terror used by both sides of the conflict hurt not so much the institution of the Church as its few individual representatives, visiting remote villages. Both the Maoists and the army perceived the village priests as an important obstacle to the process of establishing new military power, since in most cases they enjoyed great moral and social authority.

It is worth noticing that within the first years of the war, the central Church authorities in Peru made an attempt to save the situation of the clergy and the civilians from the conflict-affected regions, initiating some actions that promoted the respect of human rights both among the senderistas and the

³³ J. Kleiber, *op.cit.*, pp. 250-253, *Informe Final CVR...*, p. 422, C. Tovar, *op.cit.*, P. del Pino, *op.cit.*, pp.128-132.

³⁴ A. Posern-Zieliński, *Ruchy społeczne i religijne Indian hiszpańskiej Ameryki Południowej (XVI–XX w.)*, Warszawa 1974, pp. 7, 47; M. Curatola, "Mito y milenarismo en los Andes: del Taki Onqoy a Inkari", *Allpanchis*, No. X, Lima 1986, pp.71-74; J. Pietraszczyk-Sękowska, "Tradycje indiańskiego oporu wobec Hiszpanów w Wicekrólestwie Peru, XVI–XVIII w.", in: *Dzieje kultury latynoamerykańskiej*, M.F. Gawrycki (coord.), Warszawa 2009, pp. 109-114.

Government forces. In February 1985, Ayacucho was visited by John Paul II on his pilgrimage route across Peru, who appealed for a stop to the wave of violence. In the same year, under the influence of the Pope's words, the Committee for Supporting Emergency Region was established; it aimed at organizing missions of the Catholic clergy among the communities affected by the conflict. In the late 1980s, due to the escalation of terror in the rural areas, the missionary staff was withdrawn from the region; and in 1990 the Church limited its aid for the conflict victims organized in the city of Ayacucho. Unlike in the aforementioned Puno, the clergy from Ayacucho did not manage – partly because of the contradictory policy of the Church authorities from Lima – to join forces with the civilians in order to stop political violence³⁵.

Paradoxically, this task was accomplished by the Protestants, particularly by the Evangelical Church. It is worth emphasizing that the Evangelical clergy, as well as the faithful, were even more exposed to the terror of the senderistas and the army than the Catholics. This resulted from the fact that in the pre-conflict period, some Evangelical priests worked mainly in the rural areas of Ayacucho and were strongly integrated with the local communities³⁶. During the war, they did not yield to any of the conflicted parties, but remained in the villages together with the peasants, sympathized with them and even encouraged them to organize self-defence forces. As a result, in many regions of the central *sierra*, Evangelicals established local fronts to fight with the Shining Path, whose actions had the character of a religious war – God's Word got "armed" and juxtaposed with the Maoist indoctrination used by the senderistas to dominate over the provinces. That is how the Evangelical Church established its strong position in the region of Ayacucho and gathered a multitude of the new faithful; in the Province of Huanta (where Aranhua and Chaca are located) – badly affected by the war – the number of the faithful rose from the four per cent of the population in 1981 to fifteen per cent in 1993³⁷. In the 1990s – as the conflict quieted – the situation allowed the Evangelicals to participate in organizing the return of the internal refugees to their homes and the rebuilding of the destroyed villages³⁸.

The example of Aranhua and Chaca shows that in many villages "saved" by the Evangelicals, the Roman Catholic churches remain empty. Their

³⁵ J. Kleiber, *op.cit.*, pp. 253-258, *Informe Final CVR...*, pp. 422-429, C. Tovar, *op.cit.*

³⁶ As a result, the number of conflict victims among the Evangelical clergy was incomparably higher than among the Catholic clergy, yet the sources give quite general estimation; more: *Informe Final CVR...*, J. Kleiber, *op.cit.*

³⁷ Presently, the evangelical faithful constitute 12% of Peruvian society. In Ayacucho Department population scale, evangelical population rose from less than 4% to more than 10% during the period of the conflict. It is estimated that in some regions of the provinces, e.g. some villages of Huanta, evangelicals have constituted even up to 50% of the society since the war; *Informe Final CVR...*, p. 464, P. del Pino, *op. cit.*, pp.156-157.

³⁸ P. del Pino, *op. cit.*, pp.156-164, *Informe Final CVR...*, p. 464-488.

"homelessness" seems to be the symbol of the religious conversion of the peasant communities that took place during the war with the senderistas.

Translated by Małgorzata Leśniak

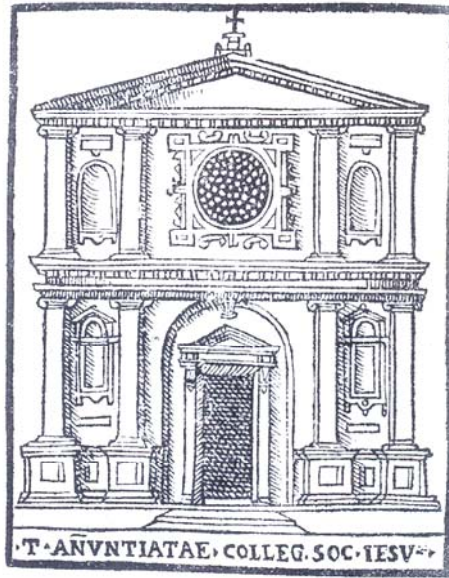


Photo 1. Façade of San Juan Bautista church, Juli, 18th century;
print with the façade of SS. Annunziata, Rome
(phot. by E. Kubiak, 2010, 2005)

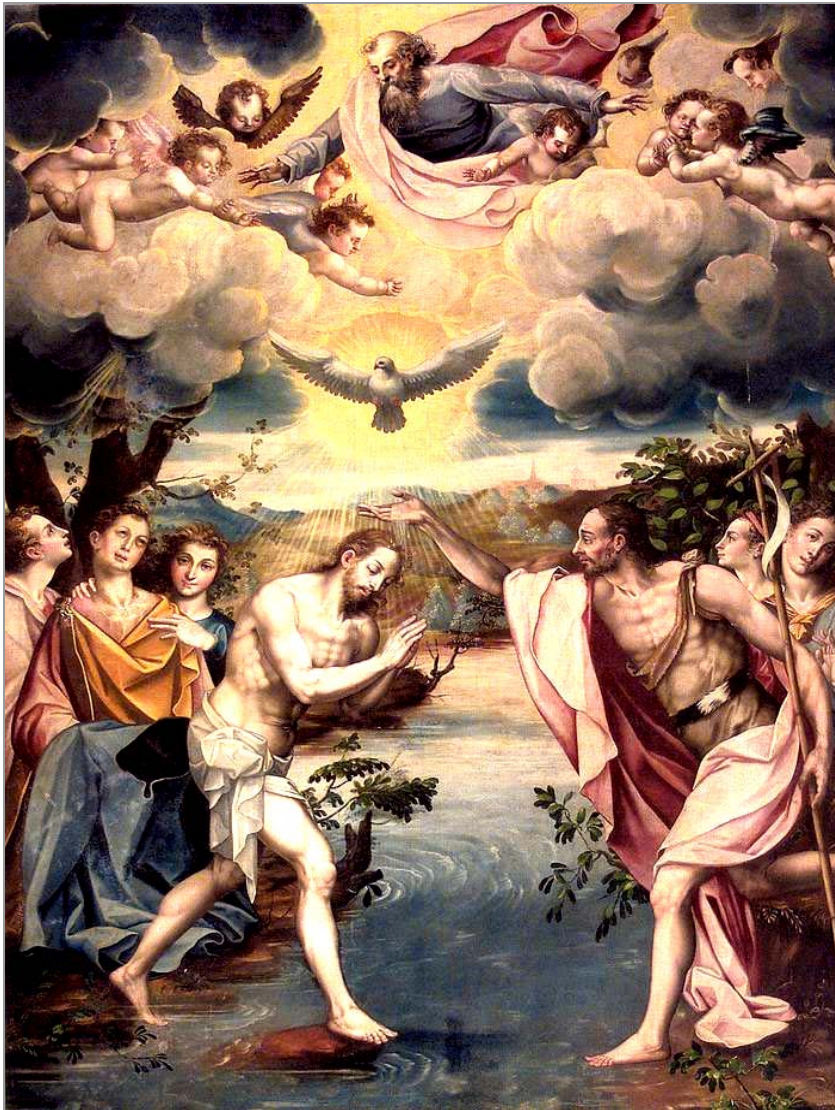


Photo 2. Baptism of Jesus in Jordan, Bernardo Bitti, San Juan Bautista church,
Juli, late 16th century
(phot. by E. Kubiak, 2004)



Photo 3. Façade and interior of the parish church, Rondocán
(phot. by E. Kubiak, 2010)



Photo 4. Our Lady of the Rosary (oil on canvas) in the high altar;
St. Mark (polychrome under the organ gallery), Rondocán, 18th century
(phot. by E. Kubiak, 2010)



Photo 5. St. Francis of Assisi, St. Anthony of Padua, a pulpit, 18th century (?), Rondocán
(phot. by E. Kubiak, 2010)



Photo 6. Sacristy, the church in Rondocán
(phot. by E. Kubiak, 2010)



Photo 7. The church of San Pedro, Arnahuay, 19th century
(phot. by J. Pietraszczyk, 2007)

**„BEZDOMNOŚĆ” RELIGII KATOLICKIEJ I OBIEKTÓW SAKRALNYCH
W ANDYJSKIM PERU: JULI, RONDOCÁN, ARANHUAY I CHACA
(streszczenie)**

Mimo powszechnie panującego przekonania, że hiszpańskojęzyczna Ameryka Południowa od wieków stanowi obszar zdominowany przez katolicyzm, aktualna sytuacja tego wyznania w krajach regionu jest coraz trudniejsza, ulega współcześnie wyraźnym zmianom. Problem zmniejszenia liczby kleru katolickiego jest szczególnie widoczny na przykładzie wysokogórskich wiosek oddalonych od dużych centrów administracyjnych i zamieszkałych najczęściej przez społeczność pochodzenia indiańskiego, które w sytuacji niewystarczającej liczby duchownych na terenach prowincji, jako pierwsze pozostają bez posługi z ich strony. Podobny los spotyka wówczas pochodzące niekiedy jeszcze z XVII i XVIII w. lokalne świątynie, z których dziś wiele stoi zamkniętych. Powody „porzucenia” prowincjonalnych kościołów przez duchownych, a w wielu przypadkach także przez miejscowe wspólnoty, są najczęściej różne w zależności od regionu, jako szersze rozpatrzenie tego problemu posłużyły cztery przykłady: Juli, Rondocan, Aranhuy, Chaca.

W zaprezentowanej analizie znalazły się zarówno szczegółowe opisy obrazujące dawną świetność omawianych obiektów (których zadaniem było przybliżenie okresu powstania i funkcjonowania świątyń jako ważnych miejsc kultu), jak również przyczyny ich „upadku” oraz stan obecny. Jak pokazują przywołane przykłady, współczesna sytuacja katolickich świątyń na peruwiańskiej prowincji to wypadkowa wielu czynników – m.in. chronicznego braku kleru na terenach wiejskich, znacznej zmiany wyznania miejscowej ludności na rzecz Kościołów protestanckich, braku opieki nad zabytkami ze strony państwa, a w wybranych regionach również grabieży i dewastacji w okresie wojny. W każdym z opisanych przykładów obecna kondycja świątyń ilustruje drastyczną zmianę ich statusu – od kolonialnego splendoru, gdy ich obecność na prowincji i bogactwo zapewnić miało Kościołowi katolickiemu szacunek i oddanie ze strony ewangelizowanych tubylców oraz przybywających do Ameryki Łacińskiej z krajów Starego Kontynentu kolonizatorów – do stanu porzucenia, zniszczenia i zamknięcia, który w wielu regionach *sierry* oddaje obecną sytuację nie tylko samej sztuki sakralnej, ale przede wszystkim wyznania rzymskokatolickiego. Przykład każdej z opisanych świątyń ilustruje ten sam problem – po „odejściu” wiary obiekty sakralne mają niewielkie szanse na przetrwanie, chociażby w formie zabytków, i stają się jedynie symbolami bezdomności – budynków, artefaktów, wiernych i religii.

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TRANSITIONAL ART IN SOUTH AFRICA

Abstract: The term *transitional art* was first introduced by the anthropologist Nelson Graburn in the mid 1970s. Graburn stated that it refers to the cultural production of this group of the Third World population which he regarded as completely assimilated with the Western culture and which forms a new kind of community, defined by him as the “Fourth World”. The scholar was careful to emphasize that his proposed term is particularly adequate in reference to this part of the “conquered minority” of the population which is susceptible and prone to such behavioral patterns as joining the new society while being submissive to the ways and patterns of the European civilization, and which resists easy placement in their own cultural context.

The principal object of this text is the art of the Republic of South Africa. The problems concerning *transitional art* are ever present and quite visible in many exhibitions and critical texts relating to the art and artists originating from this area of the world (e.g. A. Nettleton, M. Martin, M. Manaka). The term *transitional art* seems to be especially applicable to the black art of South Africa and is most often employed with reference to the works of such black artists as e.g. N. Mabasy, P. Seoka, J. Maswanganyi, B. Makhubele or J. Hlungwane.

Nevertheless it is interesting to observe that as a result of the political changes that occurred 17 years ago in South Africa – the abolition of apartheid in 1994 – today an increasing number of white artists, such as e.g. A. Botha, N. Catherine, B. Blignaut, C. Schreuders – create art works which can be defined as *transitional art* and which are well assimilated with the dominant black culture.

Keywords: “transitional art” – South Africa – postcolonialism – acculturation – artefacts – craft.

The term “transitional art” was first introduced by the anthropologist Nelson Graburn in the mid 1970s. The earlier division of art distinguished between the genuine, fine and high art of the Western civilization, and the primitive art produced by such primordial people as native Africans, Aborigines, Eskimos, Indians, etc. The various phenomena which Graburn included in this new class of artistic actions were often described as “tourist art”, “souvenir art” or even “airport art”, all having somewhat pejorative meaning and a kind of negative and lower-quality connotation. Strictly speaking this term refers to the artistic production of a certain group of the native population which found itself in

direct contact with the Western civilization. In his later publications Graburn widened the meaning of the term *transitional art* by the inclusion of certain non-commercial artistic forms to this non-cultural current. He clearly stated that the term refers to the cultural production of this group of the Third World population which he regards as completely and well assimilated with the Western culture and which forms a new kind of community, defined by him as the “Fourth World”¹.

The scholar was careful to stress that his proposed division of art is particularly adequate in respect to this part of the “conquered minority” of the population which is quite susceptible and prone to such behavioral patterns as joining the new society and at the same time submissive to the ways and patterns of the European civilization. Incidentally it is interesting to note that a decade before Graburn first mentioned the term *transitional art*, some black intellectuals from Uganda started to publish (1961) a magazine entitled „The Transition Magazine”². According to *The Village Voice*, for more than a decade it was widely recognized as the “only decent forum for black intellectuals”. This publication presented the literature, culture and politics of the “Fourth World” community.

At the present time, in the wide context of the studies concerning the art of the whole African continent, the problems of the acculturation trend have been tackled in various publications, such as Sidney Littlefield Kasfir’s *Contemporary African Art* (1999), and also in the collective catalogue (*African Art Now*, 2005) of Jean Pigozzi’s Collection. Acculturation was also the essential theme of the traveling exhibition named *African Remix* from 2005. Moreover, the recently opened Museum of Africa, Oceania, Asia and the Americas – *Musée du quai Branly* in Paris is the place of important discussions about post-colonialism and acculturation. Although the phenomenon of acculturation art or transitional art is present everywhere and its traces are visible in many texts throughout the whole area of the African continent, we will undertake to focus mostly on the art of the Republic of South Africa as the principal object of the present article. “Transitional art” is an important phenomenon in South African contemporary visual culture. Many South African scholars and critics, such as Colin Richards, Anitra Nettleton, Sabine

¹ See: R. Kerkham, *Third World perspectives on contemporary art and culture*, „Third text”, London, winter 1998-1999, pp. 104-106; N. H. Graburn, “Arts of the Fourth World”, in: *The Anthropology of Art: A Reader*, H. Morphy, M. Perkins (eds), Boston 2006, pp. 412-430; P. Oliver, “Books”, *Rain*, 1977, No. 22, pp. 10-11.

² “The Transition Magazine” was founded by Rajat Neogy in Uganda in 1961. “Transition” quickly became Africa’s leading intellectual magazine, publishing such diverse figures as Tanzanian president Julius Nyerere, South African novelist Nadine Gordimer (Nobel laureate), Nigerian novelist Chinua Achebe as well as the Americans James Baldwin and Paul Theroux. In 1971 “Transition” was revived in Ghana by Nobel laureate Wole Soyinka who took over as editor in 1973.

Marschall and Marilyn Martin have conducted an extensive discussion on the genealogy of the term and the controversies surrounding it. While controversy clouds the very notion of transitional art, we can agree on at least some of its features and manifestations. “Transitional art” is often associated with sculpture, though the term has been also applied to pictures. It is usually produced in rural or semi rural context; its materials include indigenous wood, wire, tin, plastics, beads, urban debris, reflectors, animal skins, feathers... The surfaces may be left “raw” or coloured with enamel paint. The subjects range from prominent political figures, news events, media celebrities, mythic beings of other kinds, sundry spirits – sublime and ridiculous, planes, cats, toys, telephones...

Noria Mabasa (b.1938), Doctor Phutuma Seoka (1922-1997), Johannes Maswanganyi (b. 1948), the late Nelson Mukhuba (1925-1987), Mzwakhe Mbatha (b. 1935), Billy Makhubele (b. 1947), Jackson Hlungwane (b. 1923) are the artists most often associated with the phenomenon. Some of them also produce traditional work for use in their own communities. Artists from urban areas (black and white) have been referred to as “transitional” as well. The critics write of a “transitional aesthetic”. Some see it as a sort of ethno-pop with serious moments. Others think of it as serious art laced with sly fun. There are, doubtless, many views concerning this style. But is it even a style? That is a critical question! I am interested here in examining what the term “transitional” means and how it is used within the dominant visual art world in South Africa. The appropriation of culture has its own dynamic – one which has become particularly apparent during the past decades in South Africa, which have been characterized by the States of Emergency and various political crises³, as well as the demise of the apartheid, the first democratic election⁴ in 1994 and the attempt at creating “the rainbow nation”⁵ and democracy.

³ The first State of Emergency was declared in South Africa in 1960 right after the Sharpeville Massacre. In the wake of the 1976 student uprising, the government widened police powers of detention even without a State of Emergency. A State of Emergency was declared in July 1985 in 36 magisterial districts. Organizations as well as meetings could be banned, and thousands of people were detained. On June 12, 1986, just before the 10th anniversary of the Student Uprising that started in Soweto, a State of Emergency was declared throughout the country. The provisions of this State of Emergency were broader than any previous ones, but anti-apartheid mobilization continued. L. Thompson, *A History of South Africa*, New Haven–London 2001, pp. 235-240.

⁴ See: <http://www.southafrica.info/about/history/521109.htm#ixzz1TJCMlAgw>.

⁵ The “rainbow nation” is a description coined by Nobel Peace Prize winner Archbishop Desmond Tutu in the euphoric aftermath of the transition from (white) minority to majority rule. The term captures the extraordinary diversity of races, tribes, creeds, languages and landscape that characterizes modern South Africa. It is redolent of hope and promise. Yet the after-effects of the country’s divisive past are still with us and the goal of racial harmony remains elusive. Nevertheless, South Africa’s tribes and peoples have learned to live with one another and even to celebrate their differences. See: G. Baines, *The rainbow nation. Identity and nation building*

As I have already mentioned, the contact and exchange between cultures is an ubiquitous phenomenon. In South Africa, the colonial heritage and the current politics of domination make “contact and exchange” a traumatic experience. The cultural struggle takes many forms and occurs on many levels of discourse. It affects the register throughout social life⁶. To speak of “contact and exchange” is in a sense to misrepresent history. “Conflict and dispossession” are perhaps rather more accurate terms. Censorship, the destruction of cultural material, poverty, the mutilation of cultural traditions, the imprisonment, banishment and murder of cultural workers and artists are not the only forms of oppression. While all of these stain South African cultural history, they have become less acceptable than they used to be. In the “reformed”, multicultural South Africa subtler persuasions are called for; these employ the mechanics of “co-option” and “appropriation”.

Appropriation has many guises. The South African art historian Anitra Nettleton notes, for example, that while Art History studies “the arts of the Third World peoples”, this involves the arts being “arbitrarily classified as such by virtue of their appropriation into Western art categories”⁷. Critical writers have recognized the part that art history itself plays in structuring a cultural field. This may involve a good deal of cultural violence. Hence “appropriation” extends beyond a simple (re)presentation of cultural artefacts and practices. The sites of “appropriation” are as numerous as the sites of exchange: the African art catalogues, the gallery space, the popular newspapers, the museums... While all “appropriation” might not be inappropriate, such sites are never neutral. In order to be able to use cultural or social phenomena, we construct their suitable “representations”. Calling something “craft”, for instance, presumes the cultural destiny of both the object and their makers. Hence naming becomes labeling. A representation might best be seen as the way we label, speak for, or about, cultural and social phenomena. The field of “representation” is a strongly contested territory. Here I intend to consider the “transitional” phenomena as a form of representation. It appears to have played an important role in “liberating” some aspects of black visual cultural production for use by the cultural and economic institutions of the dominant art world. This has happened at the historical moment of a most profound crisis of confidence in that art world.

in post-apartheid South-Africa, Rhodes University, Grahamstown 1998 and K. Utrata, “From the Divided Society to the Rainbow Nation”, in: *South Africa – Poland. Commemoration 10th Freedom Anniversary of South Africa*, A. Kwapiszewski (ed.), Kraków 2004.

⁶ See: A. Pawłowska, “Intelektualni przywódcy ruchów artystycznych w Republice Południowej Afryki w latach 1952-1994”, in: *Przywódczość i przywódcy we współczesnej. Forum politologiczne*, A. Żukowski (ed.), vol. 7, Olsztyn 2008, pp. 401-414.

⁷ A. Nettleton, A. *The Not-so-new: Transitional Art in Historical Perspective. Proceedings of the 5th Annual Conference of the South African Association of Art Historians*, University of Natal, Durban 1983, pp. 52-57.

As mentioned above, it was already four decades ago that the anthropologist Nelson Graburn seems to have resuscitated the category of “transitional” or “acculturation art”. The artefacts he was referring to (Eskimo “tourist art”) involved the “artistic production of those many peoples who have come into contact with civilization”⁸ [sic]. In a later publication, Graburn refers again to “the arts of acculturation”: “Those forms that have elsewhere been labeled transitional, commercial, souvenir, or airport arts ... it also includes certain novel non-commercial art forms”⁹. He explicitly refers to the cultural producers in the so-called Fourth World, excluding those politically mobile producers of the increasingly powerful Third World. He clearly distinguishes this group from what he calls the “assimilated group”. Graburn’s account raises particular political questions, especially for art historians interested in South African art. In this case it is not possible to find any “conquered minority” which is anxious to assimilate. In South Africa we do not have to do with a “conquered minority”, but rather with an ascendant and increasingly powerful majority, which some white South African citizens might well wish to see as a collection of “conquered minorities”¹⁰.

The term “transitional” seems to have been around for a long time. Perhaps its historical guises – “ethnic”, “folk”, “curio” – have made it difficult to filter through the fine mesh of cultural preconceptions upheld by the dominant art world. The book innocently entitled *The Savage Hits Back or The White Man Through Native Eyes*¹¹, published over seventy years ago, includes the material which is in some ways redolent of the “transitional” imagery. A few items it mentions allegedly hail from South Africa: a “Boer farmer” by the “Bechuanaland modeler”, a clay tricycle, and a “Bushman” painting [Cape Province, c. 1913] of none other than Queen Victoria! In the manner of his time, the author suggests that as “kindly sovereign, mighty ruler and crowned womanhood the Queen was eminently congenial to the primitive imaginations of her African subjects”. Her “crowned womanhood” seemed a dire attraction indeed: “the fullness of the Queen’s bust made a deep impression upon the negro mind”¹².

Recent scholarship cites evidence that black carvers offered their wares for sale to whites in South Africa around the turn of the nineteenth century. In South Africa the term “transitional” first appeared in 1979 in the catalogue of the first exhibition of the African Tribal Art holdings of the Standard Bank

⁸ N. H. Graburn, “The Eskimos and ‘airport art’”, *Society*, vol. 4, No. 10, pp. 28-34.

⁹ *Idem*, *Arts of the Fourth World*, *op.cit.*, p. 415.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ J. E. Lips, *The Savage Hits Back, or the White Man Through Native Eyes*, introduction by B. Malinowski, London 1937.

¹² *Ibid.*, pp. 34-37.

Foundation of African Tribal Art¹³. One of the purposes of this exhibition was, according to its curator, to “include forms of art transitional between traditional or tribal art and the modern art forms found in current African societies”¹⁴. The term was used again in another catalogue dating back to 1986 of a similar, but more extensive exhibition¹⁵. The author of the relevant entry, Anitra Nettleton, relates the phenomenon to the changing socio-economic factors and the shifting patronage and client relations. Some artists have relied for years on their “tourist” patrons and the church or other charity organizations for the sale of their work, and it is only recently that the Western-style commercial galleries have become involved in this area. Nettleton might also have mentioned the white – dominated art as the primary ideological interest of the world¹⁶.

By the late 1970s, the high art scene in South Africa was beginning to look severely unrepresentative. The questions of relevance and of a national cultural identity had pre-occupied the artists and critics for some time. Frustration, disaffection, and fragmentation in the art world seemed to come to a head towards the end of the decade. This owed much to the traumatic events of 1976¹⁷.

The search for that chimaera – “The Authentic African Image” – amongst many white artists was often as intense as it was frustrating. So was the pursuit of a politically cogent way of addressing the socio-cultural calamity wrought in the name of the apartheid. The dual need for an “African identity” and political relevance found public expressions in the *State of Art in South Africa Conference*, held in Cape Town in July 1979. The conference was itself subject to the effects of cultural struggle, being boycotted or ignored by many black cultural workers. At this historical moment the products of black artists and cultural workers were effectively absent from the international art scene. According to the curator Colin Richards, who is also one of South Africa’s foremost artists, and arguably, one of the most intriguing – the art produced in

¹³ *Ten Years of Collecting (1979-1989). Standard Bank Collection of African Art, University Art Galleries Collection of African Art University Ethnological Museum Collection*, Standard Bank, Johannesburg 1989.

¹⁴ *Ten Years of Collecting (1979-1989)...*, *op.cit.*, p. 3.

¹⁵ *Catalogue of the Standard Bank Foundation and University Art Galleries Collections of African Art*, A. Nettleton (ed.), Johannesburg: University of the Witwatersrand 1986.

¹⁶ See: A. Nettleton, “Myth of the transitional: black art and white markets in South Africa”, *South African Journal of Culture and Art History*, No. 2 (4), October 1988, pp. 301-310.

¹⁷ 1976 is the year of the Soweto Uprising, also known as June 16 or the Soweto Riots. It was a series of student-led protests in South Africa that began on the morning of June 16, 1976. Students from numerous Sowetan schools began to protest in the streets of Soweto, in response to the introduction of Afrikaans as the medium of instruction in local schools. An estimated 20 000 students took part in the protests, and roughly 176 people were killed. The 16th of June is now a public holiday, Youth Day, in South Africa, in remembrance of the events in 1976. See: L. Thompson, *op.cit.*, pp 211-213 and <http://countrystudies.us/south-africa/30.htm> (2011.07.02).

the name of *Amadlozi*¹⁸ and the Polly Street Art Centre¹⁹ “had constructed an *africanesque* aura which felt inauthentic”²⁰. Township art had already been trivialized, not least by the curators of the fine art culture. Other usable visual traditions – including what came to be called “transitional” – remained unnoticed in the rural areas or secreted away in ethnographic lockers.

The needs and visions of the white-dominated world of fine art seemed to find clear expression in the statements of Pablo Picasso (1881-1973), Henri Matisse (1869–1954) and the German expressionist artists from the Groupe Die Brücke – who were all well-recognized figures in the art world of the beginning of the 20th century. According to this account, the pre-sixties slavish belief in the ideal of an “African Identity”, mixed with a servitude to European styles, resulted in superficiality. While “African motifs” had been used by major artists with some success, African symbols were mainly employed as visual devices, functioning primarily as surface decoration for pictorial composition. Noteworthy here is the not uncommon reduction of African culture to a simple resource of motifs and symbols. A fallow period of almost two decades followed with local artists striving tirelessly to absorb and emulate international art trends. The absence of meaningful education in the arts, and the international cultural boycott against this country had led to alienation and a crisis of credibility. Then around the mid 1970s, the art in South Africa began to change in a highly encouraging way. There was less reliance on European and American art styles. What in fact occurred was focusing on the local sources. The view that local art was insular and inferior could not be tolerated any longer. A greater sense of freedom, of confidence allowed the artists to draw from the mythologies, icons and movements from

¹⁸ The Amadlozi Group was formed in 1961 and the members comprised Cecil Skotnes, Guiseppe Cattaneo, Cecily Sash, Sydney Kumalo and Edoardo Villa – the name chosen by Skotnes means “Spirit of our Ancestors”. Works by members of this group manifested an essentially African influence. E. Berman, *Art & Artists of South Africa. An Illustrated Biographical Dictionary and Historical Survey of Painters, Sculptors & Graphic Artists Since 1875*, Cape Town–Rotterdam 1983, pp. 31-33.

¹⁹ The Polly Street group of artists was one of the earliest group for the black urban practitioners and the first public art school open to blacks in South Africa. The Polly Street Art Centre, originally was organized in 1949 by the Johannesburg City Council as a community center offering adult education classes. In 1952 it had been transformed into an art center and Cecil Skotnes, one of the most prominent artists in South Africa, became its new director. It educated over 40 students by the end of 1954. The Polly Street Art Centre provided art training as well as organized exhibitions and secured employment for its students. Several important contemporary artists studied at The Polly Street Art Centre, notably the sculptors Sydney Kumalo and Lucas Sithole, painters Ephraim Ngatane and Louis Maqhubela. The Centre was closed in 1960 and was relocated in 1962 to the Jubilee Street Social Centre and later moved to Soweto. See: A. Pawłowska, “The Roots of Black Post-Apartheid Art in South Africa”, *Art Inquiry*, Łódź 2004, pp. 81-104.

²⁰ *Art from South Africa. Exhibition Catalog Museum of Modern Art*, D. Eliot (ed.), Oxford 1990, pp. 36-37.

past civilizations and from the present. African art, once seen as a mere curio by many artists is now of major importance, particularly for the student of art. The art of different and diverse cultures should be reprocessed and selectively used. Using the knowledge of the past can rekindle and regenerate the ideas which, when filtered and distilled, are highly appropriate within the contemporary context. From this account we can gather that it was now quite legitimate for artists to root about in museums for their source material, much as the museums themselves rooted about in “other” cultures not long ago.

An interesting example is the collection of African art assembled by the University of Witwatersrand Johannesburg. “This University over the past years has steadily built up a teaching collection of both African art and contemporary South African works”²¹. This collection was then to become a resource. And it was here that the term “transitional” first appeared. The stage was now set for the entrance of “transitional art”. Thus stimulated, the fine art world duly announced a re-awakening. The advent of the *National Art Competition* and other major exhibitions became occasions for the ritual celebration of this rebirth. One commentary proclaiming the “re-awakening” actually compared a VhaVenda exhibition²² (including sculpture by “transitional” Venda sculptors Noria Mabasa and Nelson Mukhuba) to another exhibition of high art wood sculpture. The writer observed that “the latter would have been enriched by the inspired Venda Sculptures, for it is inspiration of form and expression that these sculptures lack.”²³

The single most dramatic coming out of “transitional art” was the 1985 BMW *Tributaries* exhibition²⁴. Prepared by the white curator Ricky Burnett, the show featured many works by the country’s contemporary artists, alongside the artists who had previously sold their work only through the galleries specializing in craft. The new cross-pollination of art and craft could be perhaps attributed in part to the worldwide trend of loosening up the boundaries which define precisely and limit people’s expectations of what should be considered as art and what should not. The installations of the American artist Mike Kelley, for instance, include yarn animals, fabricated with everyday knitting and crochet techniques. Burnett noted that “In compiling this exhibition we have not felt bound by the demands of anthropology. Our brief was to allow for images and items to come our way through a living traffic.”²⁵

²¹ *Ten Years of Collecting (1979-1989)*. ..., *op.cit.*, p. 1.

²² *VhaVenda Art Exhibition, Group exhibition*, Venda Sun Hotel, Thohoyandou 1984 (unpaginated).

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ R. Burnett, *Tributaries: a View of Contemporary South African Art*. BMW South Africa, Africana Museum in Progress, Johannesburg 1985.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 5.

That “living traffic” brought Noria Mabasa, Doctor Phutuma Seoka, the late Nelson Mukhuba, Jackson Hlungwane, Johannes Maswanganyi and many others – named and anonymous, assorted dolls, a windmill, Satan... into the gallery and the public eye. Completely different was also the attitude of the African sculptors towards their artefacts, especially in comparison with the approach of the Western artists. Nelson Mukhuba, who worked mainly in marula and jacaranda woods²⁶, stated: “I am the artist that can see inside the wood... I can see the picture while the wood is still on the tree. I am the doctor of wood because I can see inside the wood.”²⁷ Similar attitudes were also characteristic of Noria Mabasa, the only Venda woman making use of wood, which she carves into monumental sculptures. Her work deals with traditional issues, especially those pertaining to women; she also draws inspiration from her surroundings and the indigenous Southern African cultural traditions. Mabasa started woodcarving in 1976, because she had a certain dream: “I dreamt of a wooden log floating on the water and after waking up, went to find the log and started carving it”²⁸, and that is how her woodcarving career came about. The fine art world noticed. The prominent artist and critic Andrew Verster stated (on Tributaries) that “After the BMW exhibition opens nothing in our art world will ever be the same again. I can be so certain for this show does what no other collection of South African art has ever done.”²⁹

The concept of “transitional art” is now part of the cultural lexicon, though not without dissent. A number of directors of important cultural institutions have commented on the problem and it has been the focus of some critical attention. The author of the *Echoes of African Art* (1987), Matsemela Manaka, argues that “The use of this term is problematic in the sense that all artists are transitional because of the eclectic nature of art. We would not be in a position to talk about the stylistic development of artists if artists were not involved in some form of transition. If the term is applied to these sculptors, then it should be applied to all artists simply because art is always in motion. It is always in a state of transition”³⁰.

In the seminal book *Art of the South African Townships*, Gavin Younge observes: “When a few artists who lived in the rural areas first exhibited in Johannesburg in 1985, many believed that a new art form had been discovered.

²⁶ Marula and jacaranda are indigenous trees of South Africa. Marula trees are dioecious, which means they have a specific gender. This fact contributes to the belief among the Venda that bark infusions can be used to determine the gender of an unborn child. If a woman wants a son the male tree is used, and for a daughter, the female tree. If the child of the opposite gender is born, the child is said to be very special as it was able to defy the spirits.

²⁷ <http://www.mukondeni.com/taxonomy/term/75> (28.07.2011).

²⁸ C. Ewart-Smith, “Mopane Trees”, *Geataway*, 19 July 2010, pp. 85-88.

²⁹ A. Verster, “Nothing will ever be the same”, *The Daily News* (Durban), February 15, 1985, p. 12.

³⁰ M. Manaka, *Echoes of African Art*, Johannesburg 1987, p. 7.

Quickly labeled “transitional”, this work looked not only modern, but suitably African as well. In fact it was not new at all. It only appeared new in the context of an art market which insisted on its metropolitan primacy³¹.

In another pioneer album entitled *Images of Wood – Aspects of the History of Sculpture in 20th Century South Africa*³², Elizabeth Rankin implicitly contextualizes the “transitional” material under the rubric “Efflorescence of contemporary African sculpture”. She does not refer directly to the phenomenon, but coins the interesting phrase “the Venda Renaissance”. Marilyn Martin, the current director of the Iziko Museum of Cape Town, attempted to form this kind of definition: “Transitional art may be defined as one which results from new techniques and different economic and social conditions, the acknowledgement of the gap between the artist and the original spirit and/or function of the object, the adaptation answering to contemporary needs and aspirations.”³³

However, when one asks “whose needs and whose aspirations?”, the real political problems begin. Can we really say that transitional art is not a construction fashioned to serve the economic and cultural interests of a constellation of high art institutions – the galleries, the public and private collectors, corporate patrons, the custodians of taste, the salon keepers? If so, to be useful, the image of transitional art and its attendant rhetoric had to be distinguished from competing identities or “representations”. Such phenomena might have been tagged differently in different places and times. Nettleton in her catalogue³⁴ entry mentioned above refers to the tourist patronage. Graburn speaks of tourist art, airport art and souvenir culture in the same breath as transitional art or “art of acculturation”. Patronizing labels, such as *folk*, *curio*, *old-fashioned*, *charming*, *picturesque*, *vernacular*, *naïve* – speak of an art usually neither expensive nor serious enough for use in high culture. Under different circumstances, the fine art culture might have identified transitional art with ethnokitsch aesthetic. But such an aesthetic would not be useful in enforcing relevance and identity within the dominant art world. Thus one point of view on the objects of transitional art argues that the work of Noria Mabasa, Nelson Mukhuba and Doctor Phutuma Seoka cannot be equated with the producers of tin windmills and wire cars and bicycles.

One may ask what makes the transitional art so appealing to ordinary people? Certainly its vagueness is a value in itself. It calls forth “old” and “new” Africa, its natural changes. It authenticates by pointing both backwards

³¹ G. Younge, *Art of the South African Townships*, New York 1988, p. 97.

³² E. Rankin, *Images of Wood – Aspects of the history of sculpture in 20th century South Africa*, Johannesburg 1989.

³³ M. Martin, *Picturing Our World: Contemporary Images of the Western Cape* (Foreword), Cape Town 1993.

³⁴ *Catalogue of the Standard Bank Foundation...op.cit.*, p. 3.

and forwards (historical present) simultaneously. The timeless *theirs* becomes the historical *ours*. It signals development: from the margins (rural) to the centre (cosmopolitan), from low (craft) to high art, from the simple (natural) to the complex and sophisticated. It provides a form of invisible mending: rends in the cultural fabric wrought by any number of cultural catastrophes are magically made good. It inoculates art against the charges of political indifference and cultural elitism, the loss of identity, the states of emergency. It provides fertile ground for growing synthetic cultures; of identity, of community, of cultural wholeness. It provides an occasion for equal exchanges, easy give and take, acculturation, cross-pollination, cross-fertilization. It could be an arm's length identification with the "oppressed". Consider these passages then with this rhetoric in mind.

While owing allegiance to art historical references, this art is a synthesis of influences both European and African, making up a blend which could be considered a metaphor for South African art and its origins, as well as for this exhibition. Such artists as white Andries Botha (b. 1952) or black and deaf Soweto-born Tommy Motswai (b. 1963) project the time and place of South African art in distinguishing the influences which surround them. The fluidity created by the continual reassessment of the stimuli and motivation of artists within South Africa have created an art which is challenging and in transition. It is therefore stimulating and identifiable as having the potential to present itself as contemporary art from Africa and the product of a multi-cultural society rather than merely an experiment with international models. The drawings of various artists radiate universality and maturity which on the surface seem far removed from political or social tensions, or from their immediate context. Yet the allusions to the history of South African art, particularly in the paintings created by Alexis Preller (1911-1975) and Irma Stern (1894-1966) and the inclusion of patterned clay guinea fowl, indigenous beadwork, and dolls in the most cerebral and mystical conceptions, point to a constant dialogue between tribal ritual and space-age technology, between the primitive and the civilised. A ceramic vessel becomes a symbol of the society in transition, of the dissipation of tradition, of the falling darkness. The two principal notions in the transitional art rhetoric seem to be the most important: "acculturation" and "cultural pluralism". These notions take on a particular political force in the South African context.

Certain writers use the term "acculturated products" in relation to the works of Norman Catherine (b. 1949), one of South Africa's leading contemporary artists, who has earned a solid reputation as a critic of the apartheid regime, and the educator and promoter of black artists. As Raymund van Niekerk (former director of the South African National Gallery) remarked about Catherine's work, "This painter has deliberately taken into his work the

acculturated art products of his black fellow countrymen – they temper his own western virtuosity.”³⁵

Various other curators talking about the “white art” from South Africa inspired by the black culture, often use the neologism “acculturation”. These terms are used interchangeably with a host of similarly passive names describing “contact and exchange”, “cross-cultural interaction”, “cross-fertilization”, dialogue, assimilation. A sculpture by Andries Botha can be easily described as having “the potential of ‘transitional’ materials, fully and magically revealed.”³⁶ Botha’s career as a sculptor has been marked by his truly innovative use of traditional African materials and methods to make large-scale pieces, at once looking very modern yet striking a deep cultural cord. In 1984, Botha spent six months travelling regularly up to Drakensberg, to learn the old rhythmical skills of rope-making, weaving and knotting. The result was a breakthrough exhibition *Human Structures*. In his work, Botha, just like Norman Catherine, makes the assimilation seem unforced, unselfconscious, almost inevitable.

It is quite interesting to note that a similar attitude towards “acculturation” was presented by a major commission of inquiry into the arts, assembled still during the apartheid era. This commission was called the Schutte Commission (1981-1985)³⁷ and it stated emphatically in its report that “the spontaneous and natural cross-pollination between cultures and their art must remain unrestricted”. And much has happened in this regard both in the so-called mainstream and alternative art forms. The meaning and applicability of such words as *enculturation*, *acculturation*, *transitional* and *symbiotic* are being reconsidered and debated – mutual acceptance, appreciation and exploration of diverse cultural manifestations and democratizations are evident everywhere. And from the breaking down of barriers a distinctively South African vocabulary is emerging³⁸.

Finally those who attended the Volkskas Atelier Awards Exhibition, South African Association of Arts in Pretoria in 1987 heard these words: “To borrow from another culture is naturally universal and is a process which takes place all the time. European and American influences are readily absorbed and patterns of artistic direction followed by artists worldwide. In our own country the absorption of influences and experiences of Africa are far from new and

³⁵ R. van Niekerk, *Norman Catherine 1986/1987: Recent Paintings, Sculptures and Assemblages*, Catalog Hyde Park: The Goodman Gallery, Johannesburg 1987 (unpaginated).

³⁶ M. Chapman, “The sculptor and the citizen. Complimenting/ complementing Andries Botha”, *Theoria* 1992, October, pp. 77-86.

³⁷ Schutte Commission, *Report of Commission of Inquiry into the Promotion of the Creative Arts*, Government Printer, Pretoria 1984.

³⁸ A. J. Werth, “The Report of the Commission of Inquiry into the Promotion of the Creative Arts”, *South African Arts Calendar*, 1985, vol. 18, No. 1 (June), p. 7.

neither is the exportation of this influence. The exhibition “Primitivism in 20th Century Art: Affinity of the Tribal and the Modern” held at the Museum of Modern Art [New York] in 1984, well illustrated the absorption of other influences into the mainstream of 20th century art and the lasting effect this had.”³⁹

All this underlines the problem of the relations between the West and “other cultures”. There is very little critique concerning “transitional art” – concerning either its rhetoric or the works which use it. To raise the questions about rights, to query cultural exchanges is not to institute a new taboo. Yet if “use” is not to be mere appropriation – of the discourse and the images – it should also in some way register the critical rupture. Notably, one writer insists that in Andries Botha’s work the concept of style no longer applies: “one cannot label the sculpture as Post- or Late-Modern or Transavant-garde anything.”⁴⁰ This seems to be an attempt to distance the work from the strategies of appropriation endemic to post-modernism.

The notion of acculturation does not sufficiently register the tension characteristic of the cultural “contact and exchange” in South Africa. The black curator Matsemela Manaka, like the famous political activist Steve Biko before him, suggests that the term “acculturation” is misleading. It misrepresents people’s experience of the cultural contact under colonization. The notion fails to register the force involved in that contact. It minimizes, or even ignores, the communities’ resistance to genocide, racism and oppression. It emphasizes the subjected communities’ “adjustment” to the dominant white culture – which in South Africa is a minority culture. In the light of the above, it is difficult simply to accept such statements as “transitional art [is] contemporary artworks bridging a cultural gap.”⁴¹

The South African scholar Anitra Nettleton tackles the problem of pluralism by arguing similarly as Graburn that ethnic arts can be used by dominant cultures in their exploitation of subject groups. Paradoxically, instead of appropriating such ethnic arts to enhance the image of a united cultural heritage, in South Africa the ethnic images have been used to maintain separate ethnicities. Pluralism has a peculiar manifestation in South Africa. The image of pluralism is often dragged into what in reality is a non-plural present, thereby obscuring that reality. Pluralism is also part of the vocabulary of the state’s authority. A telling example of this is the controversial Republic Art Festival of 1981, with the main events in Durban and Pietermaritzburg⁴².

³⁹ *Volkskas Atelier Awards Exhibition*, unpublished UNISA Art Lecturers, Pretoria Art Museum 1987.

⁴⁰ A.V., “Sculptor Andries Botha”, *Daily News* (Durban), 1994, June 19, p. 8.

⁴¹ A. Nettleton, *The Not-so-new:...*, *op.cit.*, p. 55.

⁴² A. Verster, 1981, “Art and Society Conference Organised by the NSA”, *South African Arts Calendar* 1981, vol. 6, No. 10 (October / November), p. 10.

The festival's motto was "Unity in Diversity". A report from the State's Department of National Education notes: "The presentation of countrywide Republic Festivals during May... was the most important cultural event in which the Department was involved this year. The Festival Director and other officers of the Department who undertook the organisational work in this regard played a leading role in making the festival a resounding success and in making all the country's inhabitants thoroughly aware of the theme "Unity in Diversity."⁴³

The gentler image of "contact and exchange" is meant for local and international consumption. While state-sponsored internationalism has been cut back by the Selective Cultural Boycott⁴⁴, the state has, with the help of important art world figures, been instrumental in sending a number of South African art exhibitions to the Valparaiso Biennial in Chile. Notably the "transitional art" was a conspicuous presence in the 1987 contribution.⁴⁵

In this context, the *BMW Tributaries* exhibition, which travelled to Europe, also raised difficult questions. It was in some respects a courageous affair. However, maybe as a result of the structural and institutional factors and the needs of the fine art culture – the pluralist cultural melange was, as "autonomous art", effectively detached from pragmatic history. Perhaps it is in the nature of such exhibitions that they become displays of simplified culture, according to the views, tastes, and political preferences of the curator in charge.

Since the release of Nelson Mandela from prison in 1990 and the unbanning of the black African National Congress (ANC) party, the world has shown increased interest in understanding the internal goings-on in this once seemingly isolated country and the so-called "miracle" that resulted in the wake of the apartheid's defeat. The political situation in South Africa after the abolition of apartheid in 1994 has produced new problems and questions concerning "transitional art". Suddenly at the beginning of the 1990s, a new group of white artists, including Belinda Blignaut (b. 1968), Conrad Botes (b. 1969) Claudette Schreuders (b. 1973), Doreen Southwood (b. 1974), Michael

⁴³ DNE [Department of National Education] *Annual Report*, Government Printer, Pretoria 1981, RP28/1982, pp. 41-42.

⁴⁴ In the 1960s, the Anti-Apartheid Movements began to campaign for cultural boycotts of apartheid South Africa. Artists were requested not to present or let their works be hosted in South Africa. In 1963, 45 British writers put their signatures to an affirmation approving of the boycott, and, in 1964, American actor Marlon Brando called for a similar affirmation for films. In 1965, the Writers' Guild of Great Britain called for a proscription on the sending of films to South Africa. Sporting and cultural boycotts did not have the same impact as economic sanctions, but they did much to lift consciousness amongst normal South Africans of the global condemnation of apartheid.

⁴⁵ "Invitation to International Biennial", *South African Arts Calendar* 1987, vol. 12, No. 2 (Autumn), pp. 1-3.

MacGarry (b.1978) appeared in the mainstream of South African art. They started to make direct references and to relate closely in their works to the traditional black art and culture. Invariably this was often work of the “ethno-chic” variety; an easy Africanization borrowed from the clichés of the curio market, a job-lot selling off of politically correct ideas to clean up a bad conscience. For white South African artists, this broadening of the methods and materials used for their work meant drawing on traditional craft techniques. In doing so, these artists laid claim to the shared African heritage; this was an assertion of white African identity and an acknowledgment of the black traditions behind the finely crafted objects that had surrounded them since birth. For in almost all white suburban homes in South Africa, one can find handmade basket ware, woven rugs on the floors, tables adorned with beaded wire bowls, placemats, hand-carved wooden platters, and “objets d’art” – bought directly from the makers of these objects, often from roadside vendors or from craft shops.

Another fundamental problem with the sculptures and pictures made by young South African artists is related to the sense of the loss of power and identity experienced by the white Afrikaners under the new African National Congress (ANC) government. At the same time the new South African Government of National Unity initiated the political and socio-economic transformation of the country, according all the races or ethnic groups an equal status. Art and culture were seen to play a vital role in the process of the transformation, correcting the injustices and biases of the past and achieving cultural equity or “redress”⁴⁶. This was codified in the government’s White Paper on Arts and Culture, published in 1996, which was meant to guide all public institutions and eventually filter down into every level of the society. Marilyn Martin writes in the “Foreword” to *Contemporary South African Art* from the South African National Gallery Permanent Collection:

There are many divergent opinions and positions regarding the meaning, role and future of our art, a situation which has been brought into sharp focus by the end of the academic and cultural boycott, and years of isolation. The discussions and debates are local and specific, but they are also situated in the global context of post-colonialism and neo-colonialism, as well as post- and late-modernism, multiculturalism and pluralism. There is no consensus on the exact meaning and application of such nomenclature in South Africa: no word, concept or construct can be taken at face value, or be dissected or

⁴⁶ S. Marschall, “Positioning the ‘Other’ Reception and Interpretation of Contemporary Black South African Artists”, in: *African cultures, visual arts, and the museum: Sights /Sites of Creativity and Conflict*, T. Döring (ed.), Editions Rodopi, Amsterdam & New York 2002, pp. 55-71.

theorised upon any objective, academic or distant manner – our history is too painful, our challenges are too great⁴⁷.

History has made an unexpected turn, and suddenly to everyone's dismay it is now the white artists of South Africa who have become the subordinate group in this society. Today it is the white artists who have to adjust in order to find the ways to communicate with the black decision-makers and to indulge the tastes of the black majority of the country. On the other hand, the black majority is now perceived as not only the producers of simple and primitive art and crafts, but also as the consumers of high art and culture. Since today the black people in South Africa are no longer oppressed and regarded as second rate citizens and the black society has full political rights and complete political power in the country – the ANC party is the governing party since 1994 and it has an overpowering majority in the parliament, we can easily speak of a new quality arising in regard to the “transitional art” in South Africa.

⁴⁷ M. Marilyn, *Foreword in Contemporary South African Art 1985-1995: from the South African National Gallery Permanent Collection*, South African National Gallery, Cape Town 1997, p. 19.

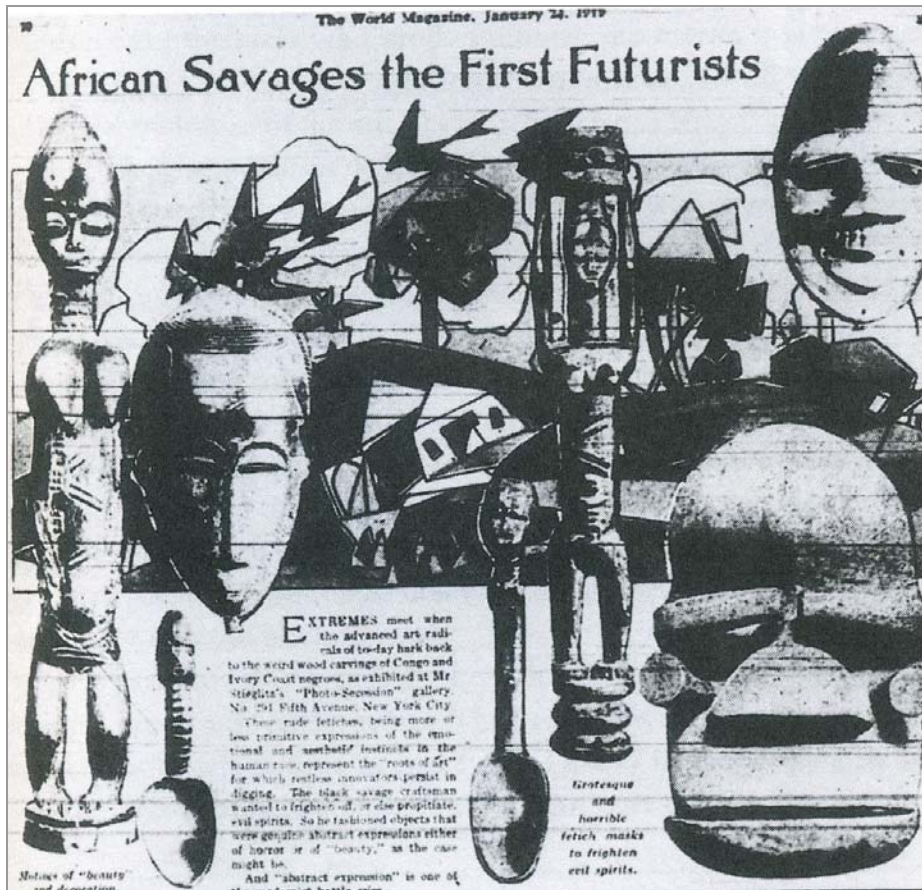


Photo 1. Magazine notice for an exhibition of African sculpture at the 291 Gallery in New York (1915) (phot. A. Pawłowska)



Photo 2. Jackson Hlungwani, *Altar of God*, date unknown (installed at JAG in 1993). Wood and stone, variable dimensions, Collection Johannesburg Art Gallery, image courtesy of JAG

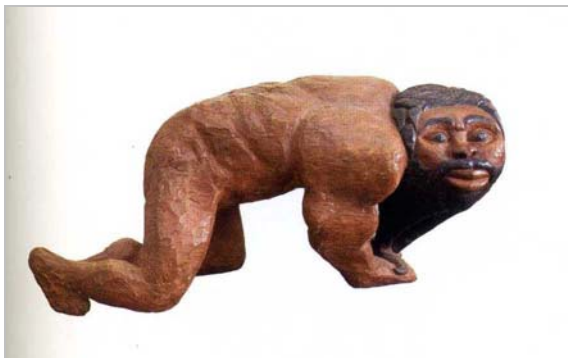


Photo 3. Nelson Mukhuba, *Nebuchadnezzar*, c. 1979. Wood, enamel paint, 64 x 148.5 x 43. Collection Johannesburg Art Gallery, image courtesy of JAG



Photo 4. Johannes Segogela, *Devil roasting apartheid boy*, 1999.
Painted wood and fabric, h. 36. Image courtesy of the Goodman Gallery, Johannesburg



Photo 5. Claudette Schreuders, *Public Figure*, 2007.
Jacaranda and jelutong wood, enamel and oil paint,
102 x 30 x 22. Image courtesy of STEVENSON
Cape Town and Johannesburg



Photo 6. Noria Mabasa, Clay Figurines, Limpopo 2002
(phot. A. Pawłowska)

POŁUDNIOWOAFRYKAŃSKA „SZTUKA PRZEJŚCIOWA” (streszczenie)

Pojęcie „sztuka przejściowa” (*transitional art*) wprowadził antropolog Nelson Graburn w połowie lat 70. XX w. Graburn wyraźnie zaznaczył, iż zdefiniowane zjawisko odnosi się do produkcji kulturalnej tej grupy ludności Trzeciego Świata, którą ocenia jako zasymilowaną z kulturą zachodnią i tworzącą wspólnotę określoną przez niego mianem „Czwartego Świata”. Rozważania swe badacz uważał za szczególnie adekwatne w stosunku do „podbitej mniejszości”, skłonnej do zachowań włączających i podporządkowujących się schematom cywilizacji europejskiej, a rezygnujących z osadzenia we własnym kontekście kulturowym. Zasadniczym przedmiotem tekstu jest sztuka Republiki Południowej Afryki, problematyka ta przewija się w wielu wystawach i tekstach krytycznych dotyczących sztuki z tego obszaru świata (m.in.: A. Nettleton, M. Martin, M. Manaka). Termin „sztuka przejściowa” najczęściej jest wiązany z twórczością czarnych artystów: N. Mabasy, P. Seoka, J. Maswanganyi, B. Makhubele czy J. Hlungwane. Jednak na obszarze Afryki Południowej w związku ze zmianami politycznymi coraz więcej białych artystów (A. Botha, N. Catherine, B. Blignaut, C. Schreuders) tworzy dzieła akulturacyjne czyli „tranzycyjne” – zasymilowane z kulturą czarną.

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THE SOCIALIST CITY – A HOMELESS CITY? A CONTRIBUTION TO THE RESEARCH ON MODEL IMPLEMENTATIONS

Abstract: The article deals with the homelessness of the socialist city. The model industrial cities of the so-called Eastern Bloc countries: Dymitrovgrad in Bulgaria, Eisenhuttenstadt in Germany, Dunaujvaros in Hungary and Nowa Huta in Poland were established around factories, power plants or foundries as a key element of the economic plans. They became single-purpose production centres, isolated and historically alienated.

The system and economic changes of the 1990s unlocked many market mechanisms and social processes that enforced far-reaching transformations of their social-spatial structure. This revealed the weakness of those artificially created urban complexes and exposed the false image of a wonderful “home.” The “abandoned” city, negated in the post-transformation world, as well as its space are going to become the starting point of the analyses.

The problem of homelessness of the socialist city will be considered especially in the context of the genesis of its creation, when the problems of the social and spatial structure of such complexes are discussed.

Keywords: socialist city – industrial towns – socialist urban planning – architecture

1. INTRODUCTION

The city and homelessness. From the sociological, geographical, anthropological, political, economic and architectural perspective, these two notions intertwine in many ways¹. However, I am interested in the problem of homelessness in the socialist city, or even homelessness *of* the socialist city which, so far, has practically not been reflected upon in Poland with reference to the architecture of the 20th and 21st century. The “abandoned” city, negated in the

¹ It must be remembered that the city itself, as it can be added, is a complex structure which can be analysed as regards at least a few of its fundamental dimensions, compare: D. Szymańska, *Urbanizacja na świecie*, Warszawa 2008, pp. 10-11.

post-transformation world, as well as its space are going to become the starting point of the analyses. In this case, it is worth concentrating not only on the discourse connected with the “built” space, but also with the cultural, social, relational and open space.

Socialist cities emerged around factories, power plants or foundries, and their creation was obviously connected not only with an economic plan, but also the postulate to transform the environment (geographical and cultural space) and create new social networks. It is worth emphasizing that “In the post-war decades more than 1,200 new industrial towns were established in the Soviet Union and Eastern and Central Europe as a result of socialist industrialization”². I would like to focus my attention on the first, model, demonstration industrial centres of Central Europe, that is Dymitrovgrad in Bulgaria, Eisenhüttenstadt in Germany, Dunaujvaros in Hungary, or Nowa Huta in Poland. Often founded “in cruda radice” (that is, on previously undeveloped sites), they constituted a specific social-spatial experiment, having a unique urbanistic plan. The architecture of these centres became a frame for a lifestyle, and, indirectly, also a tool of manipulation serving to create new human bonds, whereas *in fact* it contributed to a sense of alienation.

The above-mentioned cities differ with regard to the time when they were built, their location, demography and urbanistic composition, but they are all of the same origin – they were created as single-purpose production centres, isolated and historically alienated – cities which were to be given a new identity. All of them have also had to face system transformation (it has been more difficult for them as regards its cultural, social, political and economic dimension), deindustrialization and (post)socialist heritage.

The problem of the homelessness of the socialist city will be recalled here many times, especially in the context of the genesis of its creation, or when the problems of the social and spatial structure of such complexes are discussed. However, the difficulties in assessing these cities and the relativism with which they were perceived at the beginning of the 21st century will become apparent.

2. THE SOCIALIST CITY – A HOMELESS CITY?

The socialist city was a creation of its times, a result of total-system planning. Therefore, after the fall of the system which called it into being it became homeless, unwanted, erased from memory and history. Lost in transition?

² P. Germuska, “Between Theory and Practice: Planning socialist cities in Hungary”, in: *Urban Machinery: inside Modern European Cities*, M. Hard, T. Misa (eds), MIT, 2008, p. 233.

It can be assumed, on the basis of the rich literature on the subject, that the socialist city is a newly built or developed centre, whose main reason for development was the postulate of quick industrialization³. Top-down planned and centrally controlled, the socialist city was created on the basis of a uniform urbanistic plan. It was characterized by orderliness and spatial order, as socialist ideology had a decisive influence on both its spatial and its social shape⁴.

This simplified definition will not protect us from a confrontation with numerous paradoxes pertaining to the socialist city and its many different dimensions, for example those most obvious ones related to the clash between the imposed, political space and the real, existing space, individualized in some way and then interpreted differently by the decision-makers and its inhabitants. On the one hand, there will appear a wish (inspired by propaganda, but not only) to build a new city, “a new home” for thousands of residents (who were often literally deprived of a home before), traditionally defined in the spatial sense and referring to historical solutions (in the case of socialist realism, these were: national form and more or less camouflaged references to the tradition of pre-war urban planning). On the other hand, there will be a wish to build an artificial city in the spatial, social and cultural sense – a city created on the basis of the imposed ideology that surpassed reality and which, as a result, could not develop a natural, healthy creation. In such a city, deprived of history and values, a human being uprooted from his or her environment could have problems with identification and settling in. We are going to deal with the space that is deprived of logic and continuity, top-down planned and not created in a social, natural and evolutionary process. This kind of space makes it more difficult for people to create stronger social bonds and to really take root – it is a space for the community supervised by the state. Is it really? In order to examine this, it is worth analysing the chosen aspects of the socialist city and certain assumptions behind its creation.

³ Research on the problems of the socialist city has a long tradition. There is also a rich literature on the subject. Among others, the following authors have written about the socialist city: A. Stenning, “Placing (post)Socialism”, *European Urban and Regional Studies*, No. 7 (2), pp. 99-118; *City after socialism: urban and regional change and conflict in post-socialist societies*, G. Andrusz, M. Harloe, I. Szelenyi (eds), Cambridge 1996; M. Czepczyński, *Przestrzenie miast postsocjalistycznych: studia społecznych przemian przestrzeni zurbanizowanej*, Gdańsk 2006; B. Jałowiecki, S. Szczepański, *Miasto i przestrzeń w perspektywie socjologicznej*, Warszawa 2002.

⁴ The city itself, obviously, was modelled on other cities of this type and strongly connected with pre-war history of urban development. Its genesis was connected with the assumptions of 19th century industrial cities, the concept of a garden city, functionalism characteristic for the International Congresses of Modern Architecture (CIAM) and the American neighbourhood unit.

The social structure. Between feeling at home and feeling alienated

The theoretical basis of the socialist city was the concept of ideal cities, utopian creations which were to serve the purpose of building a happy and, in this case, classless socialist society, and a wonderful new home. It also referred to a utopian non-place, imaginary creations⁵. The aim was to create a single model of life based on an integrated, homogenous, young (potential-holding, not encumbered by memories or the heritage of cultural tradition) working-class community. The community consisted of literally uprooted people (in the case of Eisenhüttenstadt, they were refugees from Poland, whereas in Nowa Huta – displaced people from the East; in all the cases the new residents came from rural areas), in accordance with the Marxist dialectics of levelling the differences between the city and the countryside.

The aim was to create, with the help of “social engineering,” a new human being in a new home – one that was collective and controlled by the state. The new city with its space, but also its education and culture was to help build a new identity based on new human bonds, a new type of communal living organized around a factory – i.e. the workplace, and not the dwelling place, which made it more difficult for people to form strong local communities⁶. Czuba writes: “Work bonds that are more easily controlled by the community are to replace social bonds [...]”⁷. Such a group community could be administered top-down and managed through the complex organization of the sphere of work, dwelling and relaxation. That would mean compulsory social or “program” work and group entertainment that would make people “socialize.” It should probably be added that living, working and going to work, drinking vodka and going on holiday together were to bring people closer and really did so to a large extent. However, when after 1989 the idea of a working community died, the sense of a social bond, home and stability also gradually faded, exposing the weakness of that artificial construction, which led to the “homelessness” of the socialist city mentioned in the title of this paper⁸.

The aspect of compulsoriness and artificiality made the socialist city different from its modernist prototype which was based on the assumptions accepted for the so-called social housing estate. Barbara Brukalska wrote that

⁵ M. Mendel, *Spoleczeństwo i rytuał. Heterotopie bezdomności*, Toruń 2007, p. 70.

⁶ P. Zieliński, *Powstanie i rozwój systemu społecznego i instytucjonalnego Nowej Huty (1949-1966)*, Toruń 2009, p. 37.

⁷ M. Czubaj, *W stronę miejskiej utopii*, Warszawa 2007, 148.

⁸ Compare: R. Siemińska, *Nowe życie w Nowym Mieście*, Warszawa 1969. The problem of utopian thinking with reference to Nowa Huta is analysed by A. Matykiewicz; compare: A. Matykiewicz, „Nowa Huta – socrealistyczna utopia”, in: *Socrealizm. Fabuły – komunikaty – ikony*, K. Stępnik, M. Piechota (red.), Lublin 2006, pp. 405-413.

“the directive of the totalitarian systems contains a postulate according to which both the public and the private life of the residents is to be managed and supervised by the special educational apparatus within the ideological framework of the accepted doctrine”⁹.

However, owing to the difficult conditions of “real socialism”, it was not possible to create an ideal workers’ community. Researchers have often emphasized that “At the time, a number of people certainly did feel they were being granted new opportunities; but the large majority simply made the best of a bad job, grumbling and complaining and hoping somehow simply to be able to survive, with little thought for either past or future. Not utopian hopes, then, but rather everyday fears and struggles for physical and psychological survival predominated”¹⁰.

It was also similar in the case of Nowa Huta. Zieliński writes that “The residents themselves treated Nowa Huta very pragmatically, paying almost no attention to the ideology; neither did anyone mention the privilege of his participation in building a model creation of socialism. Flats, work, closeness of the family were important, not the leadership of the proletariat, propagation of socialist values, or a classless society”¹¹.

It was difficult to create a good housing environment in the “ideal” new home created “in cruda radice,” initially resembling a settlement of barracks, tents and hostels – a construction site rather than the dreamt-of Eldorado. Especially in the initial period it was hard to live there – so many acts of violence and social pathologies occurred in the “ideal home.” The crime statistics speak for themselves: the crime rates were highest in the new town areas in East Germany, in Nowa Huta or Dunaujvaros¹². Hostels for workers in Nowa Huta can be given as an example here. Mieziań writes: “The stories about what was happening in those hostels have become legendary – all the more so that there were few militiamen and they were afraid to intervene even in the extreme cases.”¹³ The picture of such depraved, new, “ideal” city of uprooted people was drawn in the mid-1950s by Adam Ważyk in his “Poem for Adults:”

⁹ B. Brukalska, *Zasady społecznego projektowania osiedli mieszkaniowych*, Warszawa 1948, p. 22.

¹⁰ M. Fulbrook, *The People’s State. East German Society from Hitler to Honecker*, New Haven and London 2005, p. 29.

¹¹ P. Zieliński, *op.cit.*, pp. 34-35.

¹² S. Horvath, “Urban socialism and everyday life in Sztalinvaros”, in: *Altag und Ideologie im Realsozialismus*, BOI, 23/2005, 46. http://www.oei.fu-berlin.de/media/publikationen/boi/boi_23/06_horvath.pdf [29.07.2011].

¹³ M. Mieziań, *Nowa Huta, socjalistyczna w formie, fascynująca w treści*, Kraków 2004, p. 63.

From villages and little towns, they come in carts
 to build a foundry and dream out a city,
 dig out of the earth a new Eldorado.
 With an army of pioneers, a gathered crowd,
 they jam in barns, barracks, and hostels,
 walk heavily and whistle loudly in the muddy streets:
 the great migration, the twisted ambition [...]
 In garbage baskets and on hanging ropes,
 boys fly like cats on night walls,
 girls' hostels, the secular nunneries,
 burst with rutting – And then the “Duchesses”
 ditch the foetus – the Vistula flows here [...] ¹⁴.

In the subsequent decades, this negative image improved to a large extent (both in reality and in propaganda). The cities developed and expanded; new generations of people who had settled there grew up in them. As Juchnowicz notes, the newcomers from the countryside also quickly adapted to urban conditions¹⁵.

The socialist city was obviously intended for a “group user,” or a collective, not a single human being; for everyone and no one, which is clearly visible on the example of a housing estate and a common dwelling place – a block of flats. It was a place where the individual and the collective were to become ideally balanced, which, as a result, led to many social dysfunctions. A block of flats, inhabited by extremely diverse social groups – in Nowa Huta, they included not only the people who came from the countryside, but also Gypsies and Greek political immigrants – did not facilitate the creation of deep social bonds. It seems that it enhanced the sense of anonymity or in fact, homelessness, despite the fact that its residents had a roof over their head. It must be remembered that the flats were not privately owned, but were mostly communal, or later cooperative. The lack of private ownership could strengthen the impression of temporariness and complete dependence on the state. On the other hand, by exerting influence on the collective memory through the catchy slogans referring to cultural “clichés” and stereotypes, the state tried hard to create a picture of the fulfilled dream of a home, smiling children and wonderful space to dwell in. Such a picture would appear e.g. in films or literature. Those ready-made, simplistic schemas of being settled were designed to release positive emotions and to conceal deficiencies and shortages. As Fulbrook points out, “Perhaps one of the greatest sources of frustration with

¹⁴ A. Ważyk, *Poem for Adults*, a translation taken from <http://www.ucis.pitt.edu/eehistory/H200Readings/Topic3-R3.html>.

¹⁵ S. Juchnowicz, “Nowa Huta, przeszłość i wizja – z doświadczeń warsztatu projektowego”, in: *Nowa Huta. Przeszłość i wizja. Studium muzeum rozproszonego*, J. Salwiński, L. Sibla (red.), Kraków 2008, p. 184.

respect to housing was the widespread dependence on the state, and the significant lack of personal control over the quality and state of repair of one's living conditions or chance of moving"¹⁶.

The thesis can be supported by the fact that people took certain actions resulting from the need to individualize their own space. They took pains to decorate the identical (most frequently one-bedroom) flats equipped with identical furniture and wall units¹⁷. They invented alternative everyday spaces, creating an illusion of normality, opposing uniformization and the sense of uprootedness. These private struggles of the residents with homogenization took place alongside the production of propaganda vision of a new home. However, it must be emphasised once again that also in this case it is difficult to formulate unequivocal conclusions¹⁸. A socialist flat, though not privately-owned and possibly only temporary, did provide people with a real chance to have a roof over their head and quite a large living area, and "people from undeveloped rural areas got a chance to gain education and change their life-style, by literally moving from a wooden hut to a brick block of flats [...]"¹⁹.

The vision of a new home was created and maintained by the system, so when the system fell, the relationships it had been building also had to fall. On the other hand, such creations would always have "a margin of freedom", independent of the system.

Spatial structure

When we analyse the spatial structure and the architecture of the socialist city, a number of research fields connected with broadly understood homelessness (mostly conceived as emptiness, alienation or uprootedness) emerge.

The socialist city was created on the basis of top-down directives concerning its location, plan, form, and a restrictively determined number of residents. Many researchers emphasise that "the new industrial cities lacked a traditionally formed environment and thus the urban fabric had to be created artificially"²⁰. This was because, as a rule, these were isolated complexes created "in cruda radice," often in separation from any settlement structures, located at inconvenient places chosen for political, and not practical or functional reasons (Nowa Huta). Sometimes they were literally closed and "homeless" cities which, as strategic establishments, were erased from maps (as it was in the case of nuclear cities, for example Silamae in Estonia).

¹⁶ M. Fulbrook, *op.cit.*, p. 54.

¹⁷ Further reading: S. Boym, *op. cit.*

¹⁸ It is often emphasised also by B. Jałowicki, *op. cit.*

¹⁹ P. Zieliński, *op.cit.*, p. 234.

²⁰ P. Germuska, *op.cit.*, p. 245.

The monofunctionality of the socialist city resulted in its peculiar artificiality and alienation. Everything from spatial arrangement to employment and social life was subjected to the factory, which led to the underdevelopment of other city-forming functions. Consequently, this developmental dissymmetry resulted in greater problems during the transformation period. It was frequently noted that “all the cities coupled with big industrial plants are to a large extent characterized by monofunctionality that, in further perspective, will not protect them from economic stagnation and the degradation of the housing substance”²¹.

The most characteristic feature of the spatial arrangement of the new socialist city is closeness and concentricity, traditionally associated with constraint and limitation rather than with the problems of homelessness. However, it is worth noticing that the cities, although theoretically offering everything, were appropriately licensed and, as a result, created an illusion of stabilisation, of a home and its value, and therefore increased isolation. This was because an industrial city was actually a self-sufficient creation in which one’s flat, one’s workplace, the education and health care facilities were located in one area and subjected to one central employer. Owing to that, there was no need to establish relationships with other complexes or people and communities²².

A closed, finite, static urban arrangement was created, not taking into account the changeability or the natural developmental dynamics of cities. Housing estates were located around the main axis (having a semantic meaning and most frequently visually connected to a foundry or an industrial plant), creating separated, self-sufficient quarters (more or less compact, with their own yards, centres and commercial areas), but functionally and aesthetically connected with the whole arrangement and the central zone. All of the complexes were created on the basis of standards and norms, and not because of social expectations or market demand, leading to further defects in the functioning of the city. Space was irrationally managed; the rights resulting from land rent were not taken into account, leaving significant areas undeveloped.

The basis of the original urban arrangement consisted of broad arterial roads along the sides of which were built high-rise residential-commercial buildings. Long streets and monumental squares were designed to create an impression of the “greatness” of the State and evoke the feeling of sublimity. At the same time, they could make an individual feel lost, lonely, or anonymous in an empty, overscaled, a bit theatrical urban space. Moreover, the homogeneity of block quarters consisting of a few repetitive types could

²¹ S. Juchnowicz, *op.cit.*, p. 184.

²² Compare: B. Domański, *Industrial control over the socialist city. Benevolence or exploitation*, London 1997.

create an impression of monotony, and, as a result, cause problems with identification and determining where one's own home is and what it means.²³ From a holistic perspective, the space that we are going to deal with is quite unequivocal and single-valued²⁴, but at the same time, as it must be admitted, expressive, clear, legible, having important elements which crystallize it. It is space which made references to proven historical models – especially in the initial period of the construction of the complexes, which coincided with the era of socialist realism. However, as Nawratek rightly notes, it was not random action, as “socialist architecture was to resemble traditional architecture. It was to make new, socialist people take root, make them feel that now they were living like the “bourgeoisie” used to live”²⁵. In this case, making references to cultural clichés and traditional stylistic codes which were to serve to build a new identity *in fact* contributed to destroying native traditions. Simplifying forms which evoked the “appropriate” emotions and served to manipulate, and alleviate certain contradictions, were to create a *clichegenic society* and people who were only illusorily “settled”²⁶.

Amorphisation, the blurring of the urban space took place in the period of “programmatically” modernity created by the “belated Athenians.” The problem of spatial alienation was very strongly present especially in the 1970s. Owing to the industrial development, the expansion of cities and their demographic growth took place at that time (reaching a peak in the 1980s), resulting in the development of housing areas which started to form complexes of settlements that were loosely connected with one another. At the beginning, the arrangement and structure designed in the 1950s was filled, although in a different architectural form. With time, there were designed enormous, separate structural

²³ The concept of housing quarters itself, comprising estates designed for 4-5 thousand of residents, equipped with necessary social infrastructure: schools, crèches and kindergartens, referred to pre-war layouts, characteristic for, for example, the American neighbourhood unit. Its aim was to create urban microorganisms, intimate flat interiors that were to counteract lostness and the sense of urban anonymity. In fact, a lot of the housing estate quarters maintain a “human” scale and seem to comply with these assumptions. Only the bigger, monumentalised ones could create this kind of sterile space devoid of life. A total loss of a human scale which led to problems with identification with a place appeared in a later decade alongside with the emergence of block-of-flats estates.

²⁴ It is difficult, of course, to subject impressions to research and scientific generalizations. In practice and from the perspective of time, the space (especially the living space) of socialist cities is very positively assessed. We notice significant differences in arrangements, elements that solidify space and introduce semantic signs. Komorowski has often emphasised that the settlements of Nowa Huta differ significantly from one another, have a different character – they are either compact or scattered, blocks of flats are of different height and have different details, compare W. Komorowski, “Wartości kulturowe Nowe Huty. Urbanistyka i architektura”, in: *Nowa Huta. Przeszłość i wizja...*, *op.cit.*, p. 112.

²⁵ K. Nawratek, *Ideologie w przestrzeni. Próby demistyfikacji*, Kraków 2005, p. 100.

²⁶ Compare: S. Boym, *Common Spaces: Mythologies of everyday life in Russia*, Harvard 1994.

units not connected with one another and with the centre. Housing districts with monotonous, uniformizing block buildings started to dominate in the spatial structure of cities²⁷. It was then when the logic, continuity and rationality of the urban fabric filled with identical blocks in the form of ribbon development, devoid of dominants or elements that would make the structure more “readable,” were totally given up. The lack of semantic spaces and identification points (which existed in the central, socialist realist zone) had a bad influence on the mental comfort of residents, strengthening the sense of lostness and alienation. Newer arrangements of block buildings were more and more badly, and later and later equipped with technical and social infrastructure.

Are we really dealing with a city that is evil, alienated and sterile? The opinions on the subject are ambivalent. The inhabitants, especially the elderly ones, of Eisenhüttenstadt, Dunaujvaros or Nowa Huta talk about their cities with fondness, which to a large extent results from pragmatic premises. Note was taken of good architecture, especially of the socialist realist period (at least of the “pre-panelák” period), to well-developed social infrastructure and green areas. The cities also offered jobs and quite a decent social welfare system – especially in the later decades; this changed dramatically in the 1990s.

3. MODEL LAYOUTS OF THE FIRST SOCIALIST CITIES. LOST IN TRANSITION?

In each country of the so-called Eastern Bloc there was created a new socialist city, which was the main element of either a five-year, or a six-year economic plan, connected with the directives of fast industrialization. The city was located by a river, next to an industrial plant (a “combine”), theoretically on the basis of Soviet models developed for, among others, the “model” city of Magnitogorsk²⁸. In practice, however, in many aspects references were made to pre-war concepts, to the industrial city, a neighbourhood unit, modernist functional zones, isolating green space. It was often emphasised that “Although the Eastern European leaders tried to adopt the Soviet model, it proved impossible to do so exactly: what appeared to be a ‘transfer’ of Soviet ideology, models and practices was in reality a complex process of circulation and appropriation. Moreover, a socialist city as a type was rooted in prevailing

²⁷ Obviously, the process of “blurring” the city through creating independent settlement structures not connected with the centre pertained to all cities, not only the industrial ones.

²⁸ Compare: S. Kotkin, *Magnetic Mountain. Stalinism as a Civilization*, California 1995.

European theories of construction and city planning, even though these were significantly reshaped by Stalinist ideology”²⁹.

The first and biggest socialist cities that constituted models for different countries were: Nowa Huta in Poland, Eisenhüttenstadt in Germany, Dunaujvaros in Hungary and Dymitrovgrad in Bulgaria. The fundamental spatial structure of cities founded around the year 1950 was based on the directives of principles of socialist realism, but the cities developed throughout the whole period of socialism in the period of “post-thaw” modernism. All of them were developed in spartan conditions, “in cruda radice,” where no objects had existed previously, with the help of rural population with a high percentage of young people (it was emphasised especially in the case of Nowa Huta and Dymitrovgrad). The cities were created in the atmosphere of “shortages,” because there was a lack of everything – beds for workers, a network of roads or qualified workforce.

After the year 1989, a new, post-transformation era began, when the cities were transformed into post-socialist complexes. The system and economic transformation of the 1990s unlocked many market mechanisms and social processes that influenced far-reaching transformations of their social-spatial structure. Many of the cities, in whole or in part, “died away”; their space, which was perceived as strange, evil and imposed (more by the society or external observers than by its consumers – the residents), degraded.

Case 1 – Nowa Huta

The largest of all socialist cities erected at the beginning of the 1950s and designed for 100,000 of residents was located (differently than other cities) near Cracow, near the newly developed Lenin metallurgical conglomerate plant. The realization of this spatial and social experiment began in the year 1949. At the beginning, small and “intimate” housing estates (Wandy, Willowe) were built, designed for those who built the plant, but, with time, a monumental urban plan started to be implemented. The author of the whole precise and coherent urban development concept of Nowa Huta was T. Ptaszycki and his team.

The urban development base of Nowa Huta is a square, from which radiate five broad alleys. Spaces between these streets were filled with quarters of block buildings, the so-called A, B, C and D centres. Three alleys are most important for the whole layout: a cosy Róż Alley (Alley of Roses) which is

²⁹ P. Germuska, *op.cit.*, p. 233. Magnitogorsk itself was modeled on American prototypes (among others, the city of Gary in Indiana) and was partly designed by a team of modernists under the supervision of E. May.

located on an axis and constitutes a promenade in its upper part (a rose garden used to be located there), Solidarności Alley (Solidarity Alley; formerly – Lenin Alley) which runs towards the metallurgical conglomerate plant that, in accordance with the socialist content, constitutes the most important artistic dominant of the city; and Ptaszycki Alley (formerly: Planu 6-letniego Alley – 6-year Plan Alley) which comprises a horizontal base for the whole layout, connecting Nowa Huta with Cracow. On the Central Square (Plac Centralny) there were built impressive, four-storey terraced houses of the same height, having carefully designed elevations, with a three-part scheme of composition. Housing estates located further away from the Central Square are characterized by “cosier” architecture. There were developed quarters with inner courtyards, filled with greenery, often also complemented with developed infrastructure: schools, crèches and shops.

In the subsequent decades there were developed new-style housing estates. They were still based on the main arterial roads and also referred to the first, historical estates by maintaining the nomenclature – the subsequently built complexes continued the tradition of numbering with letters. However, these housing units are more and more loosely connected with the centre, contradict its logic and have worse social infrastructure. A city designed for 100,000 inhabitants has become a home (?) for over 250,000 Cracovians today, as Nowa Huta very quickly became a district of Cracow.

Nowa Huta is the largest of all model socialist complexes that were created at that time. It is also differently located, most fully implemented, most “urban” and simply nice; and today – green³⁰. One of the city designers, Stanisław Juchnowicz, emphasised many times that Nowa Huta is an exceptional city when compared to other complexes developed at that time and that it has its own identity and character: “Independently of the doctrine in force, Nowa Huta is different from all similar projects in Central-Eastern Europe created in the same period. In this case, it is not difficult to find connections with the Polish School of Architecture and with the skills of those who created it”³¹.

³⁰ “It was supposed to be red and it is green,” as the designer of Nowa Huta – S. Juchnowicz said during the conference *Urbanistyka socrealizmu jako przedmiot ochrony konserwatorskiej* (*Socialist urban developments as a subject of conservators’ protection*), Cracow–Warsaw 16-17.06.2011.

³¹ S. Juchnowicz, *op.cit.*, p. 185.

Case 2 – Eisenhüttenstadt³²

The largest centre of heavy industry in the German Democratic Republic, the first of German socialist cities considered as a priority of the economic 5-year Plan, was founded in May 1950³³. It was located between the old city of Furstenberg and the village of Schonflies near the (new) border with Poland, by the Oder, but on a poorly urbanized and populated area. Such a location (near an existing settlement) guaranteed, among others, social and technical resources in the first phase of the investment, and was to provide work for refugees from across the Oder, from the western-southern parts of Poland³⁴. In the year 1953, after Stalin's death, an urban housing estate was detached from the city and given the name of Stalinstadt. The two centres were integrated again in the year 1961 under the name of Eisenhüttenstadt.

The new city consisting of housing estates equipped with social infrastructure was designed for 50,000 residents and spatially integrated with the metallurgical conglomerate plant ("combine") – Eisenhüttenkombinat Ost (EKO). The general designer of the city was first Walter Leucht (the author of the rebuilding of Dresden) and since the year 1955 – Josef Kaiser³⁵.

In the first period of construction, the housing complexes I – IV were built, and between 1970 and 1990 – housing estates V – VII. The element which crystallized the spatial arrangement – the fundamental urbanistic dominant was the Combine, to which led the main axes in the form of broad arterial roads. The central one, Lenin Allee (Lenin Alley – today: Linden Allee – Linden Alley), which connected the plant with a monumental town hall, was systematically being filled with urban fabric through the whole period of the existence of the German Democratic Republic³⁶. There were located the most important objects – like the Theatre, for example, but most of them were completed in the modernist period.

Most of the residents of the new city were refugees from Poland. They were people devoid of their own roots and identity, tempted with the vision of

³² About the city and urban planning: R. May, „StalinStadt: a milestone in twentieth century urban design in Europe”, *Journal of Architecture* 2000, vol. 5, issue 3; about architecture and conservatorial problems: D. Karg, „Nachkriegserbe – Denkmalpflege in Eisenhüttenstadt”, in: *Zabytki drugiej połowy XX wieku – waloryzacja, ochrona, konserwacja*, B. Szmygin, J. Haspel (eds), Warszawa–Berlin 2010, pp. 133-148.

³³ The 5-year Plan was accepted by the 3rd Congress of the Socialist Unity Party of Germany in July 1950. It assumed doubling the production from the year 1936 and accelerating the transformation of economy, according to socialist-communist rules, compare K. Śliwińska, *Socrealizm w PRL i NRD*, Poznań 2006, p. 122.

³⁴ L. Lotscher, F. Howest, L. Basten, *Eisenhüttenstadt: monitoring shrinking German city*, Dela 21, 2004, p. 362.

³⁵ *Współczesne Niemcy. Zarys encyklopedyczny*, Poznań 1999, pp. 303, 255.

³⁶ E. Goldzamt, O. Szwidkowski, *Kultura urbanistyczna krajów socjalistycznych*, Warszawa 1987, p. 136.

their own home. They would come to create a city of their dreams in extremely difficult conditions (similarly as in the case of Nowa Huta, most of these people had been displaced from the eastern parts of Poland). The population grew quickly from 15,000 in 1953 to 45,000 in 1969 and 53,000 in 1988. The weakness of the city resulting from, among other things, its short history and genesis of creation (a single-purpose production centre) was exposed when it entered the period of free-market processes which took place after the unification, after the year 1990. For Eisenhüttenstadt, the period of transformation was especially difficult. It became a phantom, an abandoned ghost city, which was not able to provide for its residents who experienced a specific kind of homelessness. The combine was privatised and within a year the new owner reduced employment from 13,000 to 2,700 people³⁷. An increase in the unemployment rate (to 28%) and a lack of perspectives for a better life resulted in economic migration. Paradoxically, the place which had attracted so many people looking for a better life became a place of mass economic exodus. Because of bad living and material conditions, almost 15,000 residents left the city and the population decreased to 38,700, which, considering the scale of such a small city, makes a significant difference³⁸.

For many years, people have been looking for ways to achieve socio-economic revival of the city through, among others, restructuring the industry and improving social infrastructure, or housing (it is expected that, to achieve this aim, a significant part of the housing resources, especially panelák blocks from the 1970s, will be pulled down).

In recent years, a significant part of the quarters of socialist realist residential development has been subjected to thorough modernization and revitalization, and then went under protection. Owing to that, the city is an important monument of socialist heritage, a beautiful complex with blocks of flats that are immersed in greenness today, but, unfortunately, still dead and devoid of life.

Case 3 – Dymitrovgrad.

The first socialist city in Bulgaria, the Georgi Dimitrov city

The decision to build a socialist, representative industrial city of the People's Republic of Bulgaria was made in the year 1947. It was connected with, similarly as in other countries of the Eastern Bloc, plans of fast (intensive) industrialization. There were plans to increase industrial production (by 30% in comparison with the year 1939) and to develop heavy industry, which had

³⁷ J. Birringer, *Performance on the edge: transformations of culture*, London 2000, p. 90.

³⁸ L. Lotscher, F. Howest, L. Basten, *op.cit.*, pp. 363-364.

previously not existed in this agricultural country³⁹. In the same year, the building of the industrial city of Dymitrovgrad located in southern-central Bulgaria by the river Marica started⁴⁰. The new centre was to be located near a chemical combine, the Factory of Chemical Fertilizers and an enormous cement plant “Wulkan” (Volcano). Additionally, a number of other agricultural-industrial plants connected with, among others, the production of canned food started operating. In order to supply the city with energy, a heat and power station was built. There was also created a system of road and rail connections.

The fundamental spatial arrangement of the city designed under the supervision of P. Tarchow in the year 1950 conforms to the rules of socialist realism⁴¹. However, the city surprises with its picturesqueness, greater softness, cosiness, not so rigorously implemented rules of symmetry and axial symmetry, and a smaller (at least in the first period) scale. There was created a distinctive and at the same time picturesque spatial structure, compositionally connected with the river and green areas.

The main axis of the city is a boulevard (Bulgaria Boulevard) with a green belt and a promenade in its central part, leading from the railway station to a large park that has a river meander at its end. The boulevard has been divided into two parts by quite a broad street. The part of the boulevard across the street broadens and becomes a square, on which there was located (during the later modernist decade) an office tower block of the City Council. On both sides of the main axis there were located housing estates – quite compact, with their own additional streets outlining the composition and low-rise blocks of flats situated on the borders, but also with smaller and lower semi-detached houses. Independently of the main axis, below it (on the other side of the railroad), there were located other housing complexes. With time, the complexes were filled, in conformity with political and stylistic changes, not with low-rise blocks of flats situated next to the street, but with higher ones, without commercial ground floors, located in a modern way – linearly. Panelák housing estates were also created outside the main central zone, creating separate, detached and a little bit amorphous structures. The number of parks with numerous artificial lakes, recreational facilities and also squares, greens, architectural features and fountains which add variety to this urban space is impressive.

Together with the whole complex, social infrastructure was designed, although it was developed later, up to the 1970s. There were created kindergartens, schools, (technical) high schools, a museum, a cinema, a theatre and workers' community centres.

³⁹ T. Czekalski, *Bulgaria*, Warszawa 2010, p. 211.

⁴⁰ D. Michajłow, P. Smolenow, *Bulgaria. Przewodnik turystyczny*, Warszawa 1988, p. 194.

⁴¹ E. Goldzamt, O. Szwidkowski, *op.cit.*; S. Manew, „Architektura Ludowej Republiki Bułgarii”, *Architektura* 1952, nr 4, p. 94.

Similarly as in the case of other complexes of this type, the city populated by people with agricultural roots who had been migrating in search for work and better living conditions (that were, however, very hard to create), developed very quickly. In the 1950s, the population was 34,000 and in the 1980s it exceeded 50,000. However, system changes and the post-transformation crisis resulted in the decay of industry and urban plants, as well as gradual depopulation of the complex. In the year 2009, the number of residents of Dymitrovgrad decreased by almost 10,000 and equalled 41,800.

Case 4 – Dunaujvaros

The model, propaganda development of a Hungarian industrial city, an element of the investment map of a 5-year Plan, began in spring 1950. It was then when fast industrialization of the country was to take place, with special emphasis on the development of heavy industry⁴². The development of the new complex took place at the time when the Association of Hungarian Architects accepted the rules of socialist realism which were, however, as badly explained as in Poland, which resulted in a number of design, formal and spatial problems. In November 1951, the city of Dunajvaros was renamed to Sztalinvaros (Stalin City). Only in the year 1961, as a result of destalinization, the name Dunaujvaros was restored⁴³.

The representative socialist city was located 70 kilometres from Budapest, on the right, high bank of the Danube. Its main designer was Tibor Weiner⁴⁴.

Initially, the city was created without an agreed-upon complex urban plan. Housing estates for workers who were working on the development of the investment were created first⁴⁵. The fundamental plan of the city was developed in the year 1952, but it was subjected to modifications and transformations owing to pragmatic (a correction of economic plans) and ideological reasons (problems with defining socialist realism and implementing its inconsistent directives)⁴⁶. However, the Polish press wrote that "The city has been designed according to a uniform, model plan, with a service-cultural network of schools, cinemas and clubs, with urban green spaces in the form of already planted protective green belts, separating the industry from flats"⁴⁷.

⁴² Compare J. Kochanowski, *Węgry*, Warszawa 1997.

⁴³ At the same time, the name of the German city of Eisenhüttenstadt was also changed.

⁴⁴ The architect was a graduate of Bauhaus, but he spent quite a lot of time in Moscow in the 1930s, where he designed with Hans Meyer. Therefore, he knew very well both the western and the Soviet pre-war architecture, compare: P. Germuska, *op.cit.*, p. 240.

⁴⁵ That did not change the image of a "barracks village," but such a view was characteristic for the development of all new socialist cities.

⁴⁶ P. Germuska, *op.cit.*, p. 235.

⁴⁷ J. Minorski, "Pierwszy kongres architektów węgierskich", *Architektura* 1952, nr 2, p. 55.

Quite a loose spatial arrangement of the complex which took a lot from the modernist tradition, stiffened with time. As a result of constant changes and corrections, as well as a lack of a general plan, the layout which was finally created has a surprisingly unclear arrangement, with suddenly ending axes. This fact was noticed also in the Polish press but, for propaganda reasons, it was explained in the following way:

“Sztalinvaros – the youngest city of Hungary – will soon have a population of 30 thousand residents. On the streets there can be seen shops, patisseries and department stores. Here one can see an ornamental frontage of a cinema, there – a building of a public school and a crèche. A long and beautiful street leads to a high water tower and there it suddenly ends. At its exit there are empty meadows by the Danube. It is where the present meets the past. On the meadows on which field flowers grew not so long ago, work is in full swing”⁴⁸.

Emphasis was put mostly on creating the central zone, the main square (People’s Square), which was initially to be located where two axes crossed – one leading to a representative entrance to a foundry and the other – to a railway station. Finally, the most important part of the city – the political-cultural-administration centre was located to the south of the crossroads, near the main arterial road. The square, characterized by non-overscaled architecture, devoid of the hallmarks of monumentalism, was completed in the year 1953. Next to the square, political and cultural institutions, an L-shaped Town Hall and the Palace of Culture were located, as well as a cinema on the axis, characterized by very modernist stylistics.

On one of the sides of the main street, the broad Stalin Alley (today: Vasmu ut, which can be translated as Ironworks Road), there were constructed perimeter blocks and on the other side a green belt was located. Behind it, at a certain distance, more public utility facilities (a hospital, among others) and a frontage consisting of monumental housing-commercial buildings were placed. This overscaled main axis clearly lacks a spatial or an artistic dominant, as the square which is located a bit “at the back” does not serve the function. More streets, along which there were located quarters of block buildings, diverged from the main axis⁴⁹.

At the same time, a metallurgical combine was being constructed, which was commissioned in 1954. It was located south of the centre and separated from it with a protective green belt.

“In complete contradiction to the expectations of its planners, Sztalinvaros never truly became the model socialist city, neither in the eyes of its residents, nor in the eyes of those who lived in other parts of the country – nor did it

⁴⁸ J. Moszczeński, *Wędrówka po nowych Węgrzech*, Warszawa 1954, pp. 36-37.

⁴⁹ P. Merlin, *New towns: regional planning and development*, London 1973, p. 225.

become the 'best' of the cities in the country, either in the way socialist ideology or society defined the 'best'"⁵⁰.

Despite this, Dunaujvaros became one of the largest and more important industrial centres of the region, and even the whole country. Whereas in the 1960s there were 30,000 residents in the city, the number grew to over 60,000 in the 1980s. The demographic growth made it necessary to develop the existing housing areas. As a result, new, independent spatial housing structures loosely connected with the centre appeared in the city, which contributed to further divisions in the urban arrangement, as well as a lack of coherence.

It seems that the city went quite smoothly and gradually through the process of transformation from a socialist into a post-socialist complex subordinated to market requirements. Today, it is high on the list of developing Hungarian industrial cities. The metallurgical combine, privatized only in 2005, still remained the largest employer of the region. Owing to the development of a road network and motorway connections with the capital city, as well as the construction of a bridge over the Danube, the economic development of the complex and its closer cooperation with the region are stimulated⁵¹.

Despite quite favourable social and economic conditions, and a positive perception of the complex, the population of the city has constantly been decreasing (in 2008 there were 49,183 residents) and ageing.

4. THE POST-SOCIALIST CITY, HOMELESSNESS AFTER TRANSFORMATION

The era of transformation shook each of the socialist cities described above, although to a different extent. Progressive degradation had influence on selected or even all spheres connected with economy, as well as social, spatial, cultural, or natural (environmental pollution) structures. It revealed the weakness of artificially created urban complexes and exposed the false image of a wonderful "home". However, the magnitude of devaluation of each city, owing to different political, economic and sociological factors, was different in each country.

The genesis of origin of these cities, their mono-functionality, connection with one omnipotent investor and central planning under the conditions of system changes revealed a number of drawbacks. Lack of developmental naturalness resulting in little social, spatial and functional diversity, as well as

⁵⁰ S. Horvath, *op.cit.*, p. 46.

⁵¹ O. Havellanty, *Economical and social processes of Dunaujvaros after 1990*, theses of PhD dissertation, University of Miskolc, 2007.

the irrationality of planning led to the disintegration of urban identity, or of the cohesion of urban fabric.

Fast (although not everywhere, as it can be observed on the example of Dunaujvaros) privatization led to a reduction in production, or to almost a total fall of industrial combines. A reduction in employment generated a number of social problems connected with, among others, unemployment. The collapse of the world from which the state had retreated, in which it was now necessary to pay for services, resulted in uncertainty, a loss of stability, a sense of temporariness, discouragement, stagnation, loneliness and, as a consequence, maybe even led to an impression of a “lack of home” or a “bad home”⁵². Social bonds that had been largely connected with work, which was discussed earlier, eroded and, as a result, social and common spaces disintegrated⁵³.

As a result of these negative changes, the city started to depopulate, because of economic migration of its residents and their search for a new “home.” Whole blocks of flats and sometimes even whole block quarters (Eisenhuttenstadt) “died away” and depopulated. Life came to a standstill on the streets, squares and in cafés (in Stylowa Café in Nowa Huta, for example), whereas service establishments turned into second-hand clothes shops (Nowa Huta).

Another problem which contributed both to a negative perception of the socialist city and to its bad living conditions (especially in the case of Nowa Huta) is an ecological disaster, the degradation of areas around the metallurgical combine and heavy environmental pollution⁵⁴.

After the year 1990, the discourse of a loss and fall emphasising a lack of space for action dominated with reference to socialist cities. Their “bad” political past was particularly stressed (especially in Poland). After the fall of communism and censorship in free, democratic countries there were born new myths and representations⁵⁵. After the period of the propaganda image of a wonderful city – a home for a new human being – a worker and an atheist, there came the time for its criticism which, however, brought new images with it. A negative image of a “bad” communist city started to dominate – one that was alienated, devoid of its identity, reduced to a few simplified notions. Overnight, urban space started to function in collective awareness, mostly of opinion-forming groups and, to a smaller extent, of residents themselves, as non-humanitarian, inhumane, empty, sterile, unspecific and unwanted. It is worth paying attention here to the more and more apparent problem of tension between residents who want a good environment to live in and exist, and “newcomers” who contribute to creating new representations of the city.

⁵² B. Domański, *op.cit.*, p. 204.

⁵³ A. Stenning, *op.cit.*, *passim*.

⁵⁴ S. Juchnowicz, *op.cit.*, p. 215.

⁵⁵ Ł. Stanek, “Symulacje w Nowej Hucie: drogi wyjścia z kryzysu reprezentacji pewnego miasta”, *Obieg* 2006, No. 1.

However, many of these complexes have been positively verified, among others on the international arena. While modernist cities, for example Niemeyer's super form – the city of Brasilia – have proven to be places (considering their spatial-functional aspect) where it was difficult to live, Nowa Huta, for instance, is seen as a positive place of the future, with good fabric kept on a human scale and having significant potential⁵⁶.

The socialist city is, however, a city of paradoxes, contradictions and tensions which contribute to its diversity and authenticity, and today reflect well on it.

5. INSTEAD OF CONCLUSIONS. SELECTED STRATEGIES OF FIGHTING "HOMELESSNESS" OF THE SOCIALIST CITY

After the post-transformation period of erasing the socialist city from memory, in the 21st century there came the time of its rehabilitation and discovery, the time of learning about its heritage. However, it can be added that these actions also present a lot of threats for the city, its fabric and residents.

Stimulating economy, attracting investors, introducing new branches of industry, developing the service sector or undertaking actions that aim to give the degraded spaces new functions and a new meaning (broadly understood revitalization) certainly constitute a chance for the complexes described. To a large extent, the future of these areas also depends on the future of forgeries or the former combines, which are probably going to remain the largest employers for the regions for a long time. However, it must be emphasised that the "success" of a city, also from the economic perspective, is to a large extent conditioned by emotions, as a city must evoke positive feelings to stimulate development and make people want to be in it. As Juchnowicz writes, a considerable chance for new sew socialist cities may be "actions aimed at sustainable development, which is connected with rehabilitation and restoration, as well as with exposing natural and cultural values"⁵⁷.

I want to concentrate on a few strategies connected with struggling to retain identity, creating social space and a better, positively stimulating environment to live in, transforming a closed structure of the socialist city into an open, live and socially created structure⁵⁸. However, it must be noted that there does not exist a single model of the city, or a single model of its homelessness, so the

⁵⁶ J. Cienski, "The future of cities, Nowa Huta: a socialist shortpiece forged in hard times", *Financial Times*, Sept 2010, No. 21. <http://www.ft.com/intl/cms/s/0/e6d5d634-c50f-11df-b785-00144feab49a.html> [31.07.2011].

⁵⁷ S. Juchnowicz, *op.cit.*, p. 215.

⁵⁸ Ch. Landry, *The art of city making*, London 2006.

strategies and actions should be adjusted to the needs and abilities of a given community⁵⁹.

All the complexes mentioned in the article have an enormous, so far not taken advantage of, cultural and human capital. The available space, the existing developed social structure, green areas, the heritage of good and already historical (especially socialist realist) fabric may prove helpful in broadly understood extraction and revival of this capital and, as a consequence, in making residents become settled again.

Good physical space that is built, but empty and sterile, can be transformed into social, living and positive space. However, in order for this to happen, it is necessary to change its perception through multi-stage and multi-level educational actions aimed at its users: investors and residents – that is, people who have direct contact with this heritage. “Taming” a city through social initiatives or urban games may make people think better of their city-home, help them develop a closer (and better) relationship with it⁶⁰.

The level of emotional identification becomes important here⁶¹.

One of the ideas that aim at social activation through making people aware of the values of the cultural heritage is the idea of a “dispersed museum.” The term itself appeared for the first time in the year 1999 in connection with plans to create a museum in Nowa Huta. It was decided that it should not be a conventional institution, but an interdisciplinary initiative serving as the most important catalyst for the development of the city and its residents. The actions should concern not only the space of the socialist city itself, its architecture and urban plan, but also the facilities of the metallurgical combine, historical resources from the period before the combine was built and natural values⁶².

At present, more and more institutions of this type are being created. Since 2005, the Museum of Nowa Huta has been functioning as a department of the Historical Museum of the City of Cracow and presenting the history of the city. There is also to be created the Museum of the People’s Republic of Poland in a monumental socialist realist facility – the „Światowid” cinema. In Hungary, in Dunajvaros, a permanent exhibition presenting the history of the development of the industrial city is located in Intercisa Museum. The first place of this type was created in Eisenhutenstadt. It was not planned as a typical museum, but an interdisciplinary cultural and documentation centre

⁵⁹ Compare: E. Rewers, „Wstęp. Miasto-twórczość”, w: *Sztuka – kapitał kulturowy polskich miast*, E. Rewers, E. Skórzyńska (red.), Poznań 2010.

⁶⁰ Compare: *Europa Środkowa. Nowy wymiar dziedzictwa 1991-2001*, J. Purchla (ed.), Kraków 2002, pp. 163-211.

⁶¹ Cz. Robotycki, “Studia porównawcze i świadomość lokalna jako czynnik edukacji regionalnej”, in: *Europa...*, *op.cit.*, p. 208.

⁶² J. Salwiński, “Muzeum rozproszone Nowej Huty. Idea”, in: *Nowa Huta przeszłość i wizje...*, *op.cit.*, pp. 11-18.

for the history of the German Democratic Republic, Dokumentationszentrum Alltagskultur der DDR.

A very important action connected with changing the perception of “bad” cities is teaching about the values of the urban fabric itself and actively involving residents in the struggle to maintain it. It is crucial to make people aware that today these are important, historical, good and unique facilities and complexes (especially the ones from the period of socialist realism) of high artistic quality, and that they should be under conservators’ protection. It is worth adding that both whole urban arrangements and individual complexes have been listed in registers of historical monuments. In Eisenhüttenstadt, the largest housing quarters in the whole Germany is protected, whereas in Nowa Huta the whole urban arrangement is under legal protection.

However, it should be mentioned that there appears a threat of “musealization,” certain mummification of the fabric and making it turn into not a living space to live in, but a heritage museum devoid of this specific natural energy. The aspect connected with tourism seems to be especially dangerous. Although tourism may bring hope to improve the budget of a city, to pull it out of stagnation, it is also connected with the problem of “globalised,” glittering culture (for example, making use only of “amusing,” grotesque elements of socialist culture – rubber boots, vodka, potato beetle), adjusted to the level of an average recipient⁶³.

Artistic and cultural actions which engage residents as creators of culture, and not consumers, have a positive influence on changing the way people perceive themselves and their place in a socialist city, on overcoming stagnation that was described above, as well as the sense of isolation and homelessness. They contribute to releasing emotions which are so necessary for healthy urban structures to function, to getting rid of the “bad” emotions and triggering off positive thinking.

At the end, we can quote the words of a resident of Eisenhüttenstadt who declared: “This town, for example, is growing more and more desolate. It’s really ode, completely ode. Sometimes I feel I live in a ghost town, like those towns where they shoot those American westerns. But I am writing songs against the feeling of isolation”⁶⁴.

Translated by Ewa Hornicka

⁶³ Among the authors who have written about the threats connected with cultural tourism, there can be mentioned G. Piccinato, “Planowanie dziedzictwa na świecie: szanse, zagrożenia, sprzeczności”, in: *Europa Środkowa...*, *op.cit.*, pp.126-129.

⁶⁴ J. Birringer, *op.cit.*, p. 91.



Photo 1. Nowa Huta. Central Square, socialist realist architecture
phot. W. Kamiński



Photo 2. Nowa Huta. View from the Central Square
phot. W. Kamiński



Photo 3. Eisenhuttenstadt, revitalised housing estates
phot. W. Kamiński



Photo 4. Eisenhuttenstadt, the City Hall
phot. W. Kamiński



Photo 5. Dunaujvaros, main street, Vasmu ut
phot. W. Kamiński



Photo 6. Dunaujvaros, Vasmu ut
phot. W. Kamiński

**MIASTO SOCJALISTYCZNE – MIASTO BEZDOMNE?
PRZYCZYNEK DO BADAŃ NAD MODELOWYMI REALIZACJAMI
(streszczenie)**

Artykuł koncentruje się wokół zagadnienia bezdomności miasta socjalistycznego. Wzorcowe, przemysłowe ośrodki krajów tzw. byłego bloku wschodniego, tj. Dymitrovgrad w Bułgarii, Eisenhuttenstadt w Niemczech, Dunaujvaros na Węgrzech czy polska Nowa Huta, powstawały wokół fabryk, elektrowni i hut jako kluczowy element planów gospodarczych. Stanowiły wyalienowane, historycznie wyobcowane, monoprodukcyjne ośrodki, którym starano się nadać nową tożsamość. Transformacja ustrojowo-gospodarcza lat 90. XX w. odblokowała wiele mechanizmów rynkowych, które wpłynęły na daleko idące przeobrażenia struktury społeczno-przestrzennej tych miast. Ujawniła słabość sztucznie tworzonych ośrodków miejskich, obnażyła nieprawdziwy wizerunek wspianiałego „domu”.

Punktem wyjścia analiz stanie się „opuszczone”, zanegowane w potransformacyjnym świecie miasto i jego przestrzeń. Zagadnienie bezdomności miasta socjalistycznego przywołane zostanie wielokrotnie, zwłaszcza w kontekście genezy jego powstania czy przy omawianiu problematyki struktury społecznej i przestrzennej tych ośrodków.

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GEOMETRIC ART AND THE IDEA OF BELONGING

Abstract: The starting point of the article is a short discussion of the problems connected with the understanding of the notions of “space,” “place,” “belonging” and “rootedness.” I mostly refer to the findings of humanistic geography and phenomenological philosophy. Next, I ask whether it is possible to apply those notions in the currents of modern art using geometric forms. The artists who created such works in the first half of the 20th century, usually assumed the idea of abstract space. They rejected the features associated with the “attachment to a place,” treating them as limiting, not allowing for the opening of art to infinite space and universal problems. As regards the works of art, their connection with specific places, with the objects from their immediate surroundings, neighbourhood or homeland was regarded as limiting. One of the reasons why representational art was rejected at that time was its interest in that kind of “trivial” content. However, the creators of geometric art did not give up the idea of settlement. They only assumed that it should take place in infinite space that was to become a specific kind of a “home” without walls and borders.

In the last decades of the 20th century, universalistically conceived space was subjected to criticism, also by the representatives of geometric art. They felt the increasing need to refer to concrete things from their nearest surroundings. However, they referred to them in a specific way – not by accepting the “old” possibilities of taking root, but by looking for new ones. The article discusses three types of such actions. On the basis of Jan Berdyszak’s works, it considers the possibility of settling in concrete emptiness. On the basis of Antoni Mikołajczyk’s installations, it discusses the notion of settling in through light. Finally, by considering specific examples of memorials in which geometric elements serve the preservation of the memory of certain events from the past, I discuss the new possibilities offered by such art to the public, which can get immersed in the experiences relating to such situations as the Vietnam War (the memorial by May Lin), the Warsaw Uprising (Maciej Szańkowski’s project) or the Holocaust (Peter Eisenman’s memorial in Berlin).

Keywords: geometric art – belonging – rootedness – space – light – memorial

The concept of belonging has taken on a new, broader meaning in modern research, in connection with the change in our understanding of the notions of place and space. In his book entitled *Space and Place*, taking into account the human perceptual experience, Yi-Fu Tuan differentiated between the two notions. “Place” is of diverse quality, provides the sense of safety, and evokes

the sense of attachment owing to its connection with a set of values accepted by the given person. On the other hand, according to the American researcher, “space” is qualitatively homogeneous and is associated with the sense of freedom, openness, and unlimited possibilities. It can be assumed, Yi-Fu Tuan claims, that “‘space’ is more abstract than ‘place’”. What begins as undifferentiated space becomes a place as we get to know it better and endow it with values. [...] From the security and stability of place we are aware of the openness, freedom and threat of space – and vice versa.”¹ Yi-Fu Tuan identifies space with what is vast, undefined, stretching into infinity. On the other hand, a place is always definite and limited. The author notes that “A place can be defined in various ways. Among the definitions there is also this one: ‘place’ is any constant object”². This remark is particularly important, because it is connected with the problem of creating “places.” A place can be characterized or marked by means of objects. Introducing objects into certain environments may give a place a special character, contribute to its being called a private, public, or a sacred place, or a place for entertainment. Objects arranged by a human being in a certain way can also mark a particular point – make a division into the centre and peripheries. However, in Yi-Fu Tuan’s view, it is “home” that is the most special; “There is no place like home”³. It is where we live, keep various necessary items, collect memorabilia. “Home” is associated with rootedness and psychological attachment. Our hometown, the old homestead, our motherland are especially close to us⁴. Although the author sparingly uses the term “rootedness”, this concept is an important element of his reflection.

In her book entitled *Miejsca, strony, okolice. Przyczynek do fenomenologii przestrzeni* [*Places, Regions, Neighbourhoods. A Contribution to the Phenomenology of Space*], Hanna Buczyńska-Garewicz also discusses the different ways in which we understand the notions of place and space, at the same time taking into account the concepts of belonging and rootedness. The author is interested in the changes in our way of thinking about “place” and “space” from the perspective of phenomenological philosophy. She points out that space has been taking on certain features specific for place. Space is no longer treated as purely abstract, as something absolute, unlimited, providing the sense of total freedom. The author notes its relations with the surroundings in which we live and function. Space is thus becoming a sphere of experiences and feelings. As Buczyńska-Garewicz puts it, “We do not live among points, triangles or straight lines, nor do we live in an infinite sequence of homogeneous spaces.

¹ Yi -Fu Tuan, *Space and Place*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis 2001 (1977), p. 6.

² *Ibid.*, p. 13.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

⁴ *Ibid.*

We live in houses, in familiar and assimilated places, in neighbourhoods that surround us, we set out on journeys to new places, we become settled or alienated there, we look for new places or we are afraid of them, we dream of change or of stability, we look for perfect places.”⁵ The space that the author writes about is diversified, relativized, connected with individual concerns and feelings; an important role is played by subjective emotions. In phenomenology, the relationality of the notion of space is described by referring to subjective experiences. Place is treated as specific spiritual content, “implying a different understanding of being in space than being in it physically, as in an external room”⁶. Conceived in this way, the relationship between a person and his or her place is connected with a special kind of harmonized co-existence, in which mutual characterization and completion take place. Buczyńska-Garewicz notes that “man is characterized by a special mode of being in space, which is often called dwelling”⁷. This special mode of occupying space consists in a spiritual relationship which is created between an individual and some specific place. Therefore, it is not Sartre’s “being thrown into space” that we neither choose nor define. Dwelling is an “act of self-determination”⁸. A place is not given to a human being, but must be “actively sensed and constituted”⁹. As a result, we can define dwelling as “a mode of conscious occupation of a place by a human being”¹⁰. On the other hand, “belonging” can be understood as the harmonization of the spiritual content of a place with the soul of the dweller. That is why, as Buczyńska-Garewicz puts it, “neither the place, nor the dweller is *first* in this relationship. What is first is the relationship itself. It defines some formal space as a place and a human being as a dweller of that place. An inhabited place is ‘home’. Without this relationship we have empty, abstract Space and homeless people”¹¹.

In contrast to Yi-Fu Tuan, who combined the ideas of belonging and rootedness, Buczyńska-Garewicz clearly emphasizes that it is necessary to differentiate between these two notions. She relates the former to human behaviour and the latter to the existence of a plant, noting that “rootedness is strengthening one’s position in the ground with the use of roots”¹². It is connected with enslavement, because “having roots at some place always means not having them anywhere else, so each instance of rootedness is at the

⁵ H. Buczyńska-Garewicz, *Miejsca, strony, okolice. Przyczynek do fenomenologii przestrzeni*, Universitas, Kraków 2006, p. 13.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 36.

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 37.

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 42.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 36-37.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 42.

same time some kind of uprootedness and not an absolute state”¹³. In order to support her claim, the author quotes the definition from the Larousse dictionary which states that *being rooted* means “becoming finally settled at some place, becoming permanently and deeply involved with a place”¹⁴. The noticeable dislike of the Polish author for the state of “rootedness” is connected with the conviction that it constantly limits human freedom in confrontation with space and the possibility of broadening one’s spiritual life through reification. Buczyńska-Garewicz writes: “Rootedness is a state that cuts us off from multiple diversity of space and its only effect may be claustro-phobia”¹⁵. On the other hand, she thinks that dwelling and being settled do not cause this effect. They give us a sense of freedom, as well as the freedom of movement and of the choice of places to stay.

As for the other notion discussed by Buczyńska-Garewicz, she uses the Polish term *zadomowienie*, derived from the verb *zadomowić się*, “to settle in, to feel at home”, or “to get used to being at some place or in some environment”¹⁶. I believe that this is roughly equivalent to the English word *belonging*, in the sense of “feeling at home”. The online Free Dictionary attempts to pinpoint its meaning by means of the phrase “As much at home... as a fish in water”, and illustrates its use with a quote from the *New York Times*: “We belong... like fish in water. We’re in our environment.”¹⁷.

The sense of belonging usually has an emotional or a spiritual character, originating in the feeling of a strong connection with a certain place because of its sentimental value, but it can also imply physical contact with the given surroundings. Unlike rootedness, however, it does not make one a slave of a given place. In contrast to the views of Buczyńska-Garewicz, it is suggested here that there may exist a connection with one’s surroundings that is mature, fully conscious and consistent, based on both of those complex relationships. Being rooted in one place, although it limits freedom, does not have to lead to the feeling of being excluded from another place situated somewhere else. We can, while feeling a strong connection with our birthplace or place of settlement, simultaneously look for other places in which we will gradually become

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 43. The problems of “rootedness” and “uprootedness” were discussed by Simone Weil who analysed them as categories useful for describing the human condition. For Weil, uprootedness constitutes the essence of the evil of the world and is the fundamental source of human suffering, whereas the need to take root is the most important desire of a human soul. She does not see this need as restrictive or rectifying. On the other hand, in her opinion, being uprooted constitutes the essence of harm and suffering. S. Weil, *Wybór pism*, Wydawnictwo Znak, Kraków 1991.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 42.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 43.

¹⁶ <<http://sjp.pwn.pl/szukaj/zadomowic%20sie>>.

¹⁷ <http://www.thefreedictionary.com/belonging>; quoting from *Similes Dictionary*, 1988, The Gale Group.

settled, to which we will get accustomed. Our attachment to some clearly defined and specified values does not have to mean being cut off from what is different, initially unfamiliar, but what with time becomes equal and equally close. This is so, because rootedness is also connected with accepting certain conditions that result from a given situation. It is a specific way of adjusting to what we find at a given place and of accepting it (which may lead to our sense of belonging) or rejecting it (the emergence of the feeling of estrangement, isolation, homelessness). Therefore, when belonging relates to space, it may occur without being rooted, but taking root with reference to a place does not occur without the sense of belonging.

LIBERATION FROM BELONGING IN THE POLISH GEOMETRIC ABSTRACTION OF THE FIRST HALF OF THE 20TH CENTURY

As regards visual arts, one can notice different approaches of artists to the notions of place and space, and, consequently, to the problem of rootedness and belonging. This is noticeable in old and modern art, both representational and non-representational. I would like to concentrate on modern art, and especially on the current of geometric abstraction. I am interested in whether this type of art makes recourse to the sense of rootedness or belonging. Traditionally, geometric abstraction is regarded as a current within which artists aspire to look for what is universal, timeless and, above all, super-individual. The artists representing this current and the critics who write about their works have often emphasized the unique character of geometric art. It has been treated as detached from what is concrete – political issues, the criticism of social life, and the problems of everyday existence. In connection with that, one may ask whether it is possible for anything that could be perceived as involving an emotional relation – such as the sense of belonging or rootedness – to penetrate the works of geometric abstraction.

The representatives of geometric art in the first half of the 20th century regarded universality as one of the basic values. In their opinion, art was to liberate a human being from what is individual and freedom-limiting. Therefore, they rejected the traditional forms of belonging and rootedness connected with the notion of place, in favour of space understood in an absolute way – as something open and infinite. In their book entitled *Kompozycja przestrzeni. Obliczenia rytmu czasoprzestrzennego* [*The composition of space. Calculations of time-space rhythm*], Katarzyna Kobro and Władysław Strzemiński assumed that “space is homogenous and inseparable everywhere”¹⁸. They

¹⁸ K. Kobro, W. Strzemiński, “Kompozycja przestrzeni. Obliczenia rytmu czasoprzestrzennego” (1931), in: W. Strzemiński, *Wybór pism estetycznych*, Universitas, Kraków 2006, p. 53

claimed that traditional sculpture disturbed the homogeneity of space – it was characteristic for it to divide space into outer and inner parts, delimitate it by the surfaces of solids. Kobro and Strzemiński noticed certain symptoms of overcoming this opposition in the history of art. Essentially, however, it was given up only by the avant-garde artists in the first half of the 20th century. “We do not have a proper basis” – they wrote about the new sculpture – “to isolate part of space from the rest of it, to separate it and say that everything outside its borders is non-existent. The fundamental law of three-dimensional art is a lack of natural borders. Sculpture develops in unlimited space [...] and therefore its natural right should be not to get enclosed within the borders that it does not have, nor to get enclosed within the borders that would isolate it from the rest of space, not to get enclosed in a solid, but to be connected with the whole space, the infinity of space. The connection between a sculpture and space, the saturation of space with a sculpture, the fusion of a sculpture with space and its link with space constitute the organic law of sculpture”¹⁹.

The turn to infinite space in avant-garde art was connected with the rejection of problems typical for concrete environments and material objects. Kobro’s sculptures were open to the infinity of space – they did not hold it inside constructed walls and did not create limitations for it. The works of Piet Mondrian also manifest a clear aspiration to liberate oneself from a concrete place. The artist started with realistic presentations of trees, a pier, the ocean and a façade of a church in Damburg, but in his subsequent depictions of these motifs he aimed at gradually eliminating their individual features. By abstracting, eliminating what is specific, he ended up with basic construction elements which he believed to constitute the hidden structure of reality. It can be seen in the subsequent versions of his works how he moved from a complex image of reality subjected to expressive stylization to purely abstract arrangements – vertical and horizontal lines crossing at right angles. Writing about Mondrian’s cycle *Pier and Ocean*, Rosalind Krauss noted the “limitless space, beyond even the waves and the stars, the total stillness of the space, and its stunning transparency”²⁰. Here, objects did not interrupt the continuum of space with their impenetrable presence, but melted in infinite, limitless unity. However, this does not mean that they disappeared, totally ceased to exist. Krauss writes about Mondrian’s “passion to remake the object, shaping everything about it in the lens of the optical continuum, all of experience condensed into a single, luminous ray”²¹. One can ask then if Mondrian’s actions should be treated as an attempt to look for alternative forms of belonging, or rather an aspiration to

(and *Władysław Strzemiński – Pisma*, ed. Z. Baranowicz, Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich, Wrocław 1975, p. 75).

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 53.

²⁰ R. E. Krauss, *The Optical Unconscious*, Cambridge Mass., London 1994, p. 11.

²¹ *Ibid.*

cut himself off from concrete objects that constituted the basis for the paintings and made the gaze of the artist “take root” in them.

The works of Kasimir Malevich present a similar case. His *Black Square on White Background*, as the artist emphasized, constituted “the first expressive form of the feeling of objectlessness,” where “the square = the feeling, the white field = ‘nothing’ apart from the feeling”²². Subsequently, the artist derived further shapes from the square understood as the basic form. Malevich wrote: “the first form of *suprematism* is the plane of a square [...] its decomposition resulted in obtaining different surfaces which started, in turn, to become organized, that is to take on a construction of different relations [...] and different degrees”²³. This shows that the derived Suprematist shapes were not independent or freely chosen, but originated from the transformations of a square or were related to its division. However, taking into account that they functioned against a white, compositionally open background that constituted both infinity and nothingness for the artist, they could not become settled in it in the traditional sense. They were independent, able to exist in that infinite, secret space while being cut off from what is known from everyday experience and limited.

The universality of geometry transferred to art was to liberate the viewer from a concrete place, from the determination of the place where he was born or lived. Neither was it important where the artist creates, lives and exhibits his or her works. Geometry opened limitless possibilities for the artist and the viewers. Space was treated in an absolute way, which made it impossible to become settled in it. The avant-garde artists of the first half of the 20th century did not see this, however, as a negative consequence. They believed that one should change and liberate oneself from the anxiety caused by the sense of homelessness and isolation. Another advantage was the liberation from provincialism. Space without places where people would take roots was to be equally “available” for everyone. The avant-garde artists believed in sharing space. They thought it was something that connected them, and gave them the sense of closeness and of community. Therefore, the whole infinite space was to acquire special features that would make it become “a meeting place” for the artists’ concepts, common deliberations and considerations, which was characteristic for the state of belonging. In this sense, space was a kind of home. However, it did not produce the sense of rootedness leading to enslavement. Empty space was, to some extent, “a gift of freedom.”

The universalist space in which the avant-garde artists wanted to make us settle was subjected to criticism in the second half of the 20th century. It was pointed out that in its essence it leads to homelessness. It was emphasised that

²² K. Malewicz, “Suprematyzm”, in: *Artyści o sztuce od van Gogha do Picassa*, E. Grabska, H. Morawska (red.), Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, Warszawa, 1963, p. 392.

²³ K. Malevich, *Écrits*, A. B. Nakov (ed.), Paris 1975, p. 434.

while one can live in different countries, one should know one's real homeland. That is why artists often gave up geometry and the utopian desires to settle in infinite space. To a greater and greater extent, they felt the need to refer to concrete reality that surrounded them, to look for a concrete place to take root. That, in turn, frequently led to their total abandonment of geometry, to the criticism of geometric art. Later on, the works representative of geometric art started to be differentiated. Note was taken of the fact that whereas the avant-garde artists in the first half of the 20th century tried to domesticate infinite space, in the geometric art of the later period the artists started to explore the possibilities of becoming settled in a different way. Being settled no longer consisted in assembling objects, or surrounding oneself with what was close, connected with a specific time and social milieu.

SETTLING IN CONCRETE EMPTINESS

Emptiness was one of the features of infinite space mentioned by Strzemiński and Kobro in their book. They understood it as devoid of objects that would create borders. In their opinion, no object should disturb the infinity of space. No divisions should be created within it, nor should one differentiate between its important and unimportant areas. All parts of space were to be equal. Therefore, empty space conceived in this way did not contain any "stop points" or points where one would focus his or her attention. Polish contemporary artist Jan Berdyszak is also interested in emptiness, but in his works it has a concrete character. It is not connected with an unlimited area, but constitutes an element on which the artist wants to focus the attention of the viewers. However, understood in this way, emptiness does not lose its connection with infinity, but only expresses it in a different way. The works created by the artist are to reflect this situation. Since 1965, when he created *Obraz strukturalny III – z otworem* [*Structural Painting III – with an Opening*], Berdyszak has been constructing his works in such a way that what is painted reveals the empty, unoccupied space. A few years later he wrote about his works: "it has not only been a replacement of an isolated picture by a non-isolated picture. Something important has been also happening with attention and the process of waiting. Notice has been taken of the provocation and the provoked, and they started to be differentiated. The open form of the painting which contained another image in itself now – the wall – constituted the provocation. Since then, my provocations have not been designed to be hung on the wall, but AGAINST it"²⁴.

²⁴ J. Berdyszak, *O obrazie*, Muzeum Warmii i Mazur, Olsztyn 1999, p. 39.

In this case, the suggestion of emptiness was created by the wall of the gallery. Treating it in this way was justified by the fact that in the tradition of modern and contemporary art, a white surface serving the presentation of paintings constituted a neutral background for a work of art. It was “nothing” forming the background for “something” – a picture showing some kind of reality. Berdyszak questioned this traditional way of thinking and the thinking patterns assumed by the spectators in connection with it. However, he maintained his associations relating to the wall. At the same time, he did not limit its role to being only a background for the painting that was placed on it. He questioned the whole traditional understanding of a work of art, which was conceived as a compact, homogeneous, indivisible and whole form that did not enter into relations with the space that surrounded it and could exist unchanged, independently of its surroundings²⁵. The Polish artist wrote: “Empty space has advantage over everything, since it cannot be destroyed in the same way as a form, an object, or a life can be destroyed”²⁶.

The artist paid more attention to this problem in the cycle entitled *Obrazy potencjalne* [*Potential Paintings*]. In these works, the most important role is played by an opening made in the picture plane, showing an empty area which constitutes a place that could potentially be filled. This element is usually situated in the centre of his works. The composition of the picture is subordinated to this “absent” part. The painterly act of the artist concentrates on creating an appropriate setting that could reveal the empty space. According to the artist, the painting should not be more important than the empty space (contrary to what the tradition of the fine arts has been making us accustomed to), nor provide a competition for the space that it is supposed to present. He only aims to direct the attention of the audience to what is empty, situated “within the picture,” but at the same time outside the picture. The gaze of the spectator should wander around the canvas, so that the whole attention is concentrated on the space which appears in the opening – the space that is seemingly absent, but exists anyway. Comprehending such a work is difficult for the viewers, inasmuch as it disturbs the conventional way of perceiving

²⁵ Some art historians differentiate between a closed composition (characteristic for Classicism) and an open composition (characteristic for the Baroque). However, this openness is relative and pertains to the way the elements are organized on a plane. H. Wölfflin took note of that when he wrote: “Every work of art must constitute a whole closed within itself and in case there is a lack of clear borders, it is regarded as a defect. However, the interpretation of this demand was so different in the 16th and 17th century that, in contrast to the loose form of the Baroque art, classical compactness may be associated with the art of a closed form,” *Podstawowe pojęcia historii sztuki. Problemy rozwoju stylu w sztuce nowożytnej*, Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich, Wrocław 1962, p. 47. Berdyszak did not limit himself to the openness of a work of art defined in this way. He would open the plane of the picture itself, and not only the arrangement of the elements situated on it.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 45.

a work of art. The painting, which has always been the centre of attention of the artist and the viewers, has been most important, in the works of Berdyszak started to play the role of an envelope, a framing, or even a mat for what is really important – the opening and the emptiness which appears in it²⁷.

The works of the Polish artist also tackle the problem of the “in-between”. On the one hand, Berdyszak emphasizes the role of what is absent. However, he also stresses that it is an area in which something can potentially appear, start to exist. It is not anything concrete, any object, but just emptiness. It is obvious, however, that when such a picture is placed on the wall of a gallery, a fragment of a white wall will appear in the opening. If the picture is placed in an open area (in the centre of an exhibition hall, for example), it will be possible to see what is behind the work through the opening. Therefore, a painting is never totally isolated from its surroundings, it is not independent. The surroundings exist and “enter” the work of art. At the same time, the painting undergoes modifications because of the way it is lit, hung (directly on the wall, or at some small distance from it), etc. These states are taken into account in Berdyszak’s works. However, the artist treats all these factors as accidental and secondary in the presence of the emptiness he reveals.

The work entitled *Adoracja miejsca nowego* [*The Admiration of a New Place*] created in 1971-72 is an example of a unique apotheosis of an empty space. The attention of the audience concentrates on an oval opening cut in the picture. The artist wrote: “I do not want to play games with space – but only make space speak, express itself”²⁸. While analysing the works of the artist, Elżbieta Olinkiewicz emphasized that “the empty place evolves towards potential – it also constitutes divided space – it is, at the same time, a part and a whole. [...] Empty and potential spaces are not created by the artist, but discovered, or rather revealed by him”²⁹. They can assume different types of relationships and potentiality, for example: clean, disturbed, imagined, made impossible³⁰. The space that the artist is interested in is therefore not absolute, but experienced space. Buczyńska-Garewicz wrote: “in contrast to abstract space, experienced space has the character of the relation of dwelling (it is

²⁷ Berdyszak does not want to fuse the picture with the wall. He wants to open the picture to space. In a text entitled *Unizm w malarstwie* (*Unism in painting*), Władysław Strzemiński wrote: “Natural features of a picture (quadrilateral borders and the flatness of the surface) are not the only area on which it is possible to place a form that originated independently of them. These natural features (quadrilateral borders and the flatness of the surface) are a component of the structure of a picture – perhaps the most important one, because other shapes of the picture can only be created depending on them”, in: E. Grabska, H. Morawska (ed.), p. 460.

²⁸ J. Berdyszak, *Szkicownik*, No. 40, 1969-73, quoted from B. Kowalska, *Jan Berdyszak*, Wydawnictwo Literackie, Kraków 1979, p. 67.

²⁹ J. Berdyszak, *Puste. Pustka jako sens kreacji indywidualnych*, in: J. Berdyszak, E. Olinkiewicz (red.), *?Teatr, Teatr ?*, Wrocławska Oficyna Nauczycielska, Wrocław 1996, p. 87.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 87.

familiar, or unfamiliar; close, or far), so it is relative, not absolute. There is no emptiness there³¹. However, it can be said that it exists and does not exist at the same time. It does not exist, because we can never fully liberate ourselves from what surrounds us. When we look at a clear sky, we also do not see total emptiness. At the same time, the potential to fill the empty spaces in Berdyszak's paintings and the fact that anything may appear in them suggests that the lack of such filling – emptiness – is primary.

However, one could ask whether it would be possible to settle in the empty space in Berdyszak's paintings. In order to answer this question, it is necessary to consider the attitude of the artist towards the problem of place. As pointed out by Olinkiewicz, it is already when the concept of a potential picture is created, the problem of place becomes important for Berdyszak. "The artist points to a place, but also raises the status of **all places**, including especially **an empty place**"³². While analysing the *Sketchbooks* and the views of the artist, one can notice that he differentiates between many types of places, among others those defined as "places without a place," "the very places," "places for places," "empty places"³³. The artist said: "I love getting addicted to a place. It is a way of generating found images. As a result, reality draws our attention to the values that are not directly apparent"³⁴. The artist especially values the "places for places." They are where he creates installations – that is, realizations inspired by a given place, created for them, such as e.g. *Poddasze nieba* [*The attic of heaven*; Wigry, 1986], *W holdzie stopom i kamieniom* [*Homage to feet and stones*; Pieve, 1985], or *Obecność i nieobecność w naturze* [*Presence and absence in Nature*; Wojnowice, 1993]. In the case of the last of these installations, its starting point and inspiration was a cut tree trunk. The artist placed two triangular glass panes on it. During the day they were almost invisible, "dematerialised." Only in the evening did they start to act like mirrors, reflecting the rays of the setting sun and the plants growing nearby, whereas at dawn they became very concrete planes covered with dew and fog. Therefore, the panes complemented the missing tree trunk and branches, as if taking root at their place. Moreover, they perfectly adjusted to the natural changes that took place in the surroundings during the different times of the day.

In the subsequent years, the actions of the artist concentrated on creating "frames," on the choice of suitable places that could emphasize empty space. The aim that he set for himself was to create a realization that would harmonize best with it. In his *Sketchbook* from 1972, the artist wrote: "I am

³¹ H. Buczyńska-Garewicz, *op.cit.*, p. 20.

³² J. Berdyszak, "Miejsce – miejsce to właśnie", in: J. Berdyszak, E. Olinkiewicz (red.), *op.cit.*, p. 88.

³³ *Ibid.*

³⁴ *Ibid.*

thinking of constructions in which the prime value would be space itself. It would bring new values which have so far been only attributed to objects, surroundings, events, actions and notions³⁵. A little later, he wrote: “Marking out empty places is not only **an important chance to make one aware of emptiness**, but it also puts one in the role of **an exclusive user of his or her own imagination**. This means the chance of finding one’s individual values³⁶. As a result, the way we approach space undergoes constant changes. The empty places pointed out by the artist are subject to contemplation, or become an area of interpretation, of competing discourses and values. Empty space can “materialize” or disappear. As Berdyszak wrote, “an empty place is a potential area in which different values can appear³⁷. It depends on the user how he or she will read and interpret them. For some people they will be “empty places,” the existence of which should be accepted, whereas for someone else, who discovers their value, they may signal closeness and the possibility of taking root in emptiness.

SETTLING IN THROUGH LIGHT

For a long time, infinity has been associated with light. Already in the Middle Ages, radiance was associated with the instantaneity, limitlessness and non-materiality of God’s influence. In connection with that, it was believed that light cannot be located. It affects everything, but does not stop anywhere. Therefore, can it become a source of rootedness? In the Polish geometric art of the second half of the 20th century, this problem was explored by Antoni Mikołajczyk. Especially his works from the 1980s and 1990s evoke a strange sense of both infinity and closeness. In these works, the artist tried to convert space into a place by means of light.

The installations in which Mikołajczyk uses military tents lit up from the inside by many types of lighting are especially interesting. They include *Antynomie* [*Antinomies*; Galeria ON, Poznań 1989], *The Limited Area* [Galerie Neue Kunst, Hagenbucer 1993], or the installation which I find the most interesting – *Cień symultaniczny* [*A Simultaneous Shadow*; Hotel Sztuki, Łódź 1990]. In these works, the idea of settling in or homelessness can be considered literally – through the use of tents that are, on the one hand, empty inside, but at the same time full of light, which might suggest that they are not abandoned or uninhabited. They represent a state “between” – they evoke the thought that someone had been in them but has left for a moment. The tents can be also

³⁵ J. Berdyszak, *Szpicownik*, 1972, No. 56, quoted from B. Kowalska, *Jan Berdyszak*, p. 68.

³⁶ J. Berdyszak, E. Olinkiewicz (red.), *op.cit.*, p. 86.

³⁷ J. Berdyszak, *O obrazie*, *op.cit.*, p. 45.

interpreted in a metaphorical way, as a unique home of light, a place for that secret phenomenon of light radiation. The already mentioned installation entitled *Cień symultaniczny* is especially interesting. It consisted of a row of military tents put by the windows, filled with natural light, as well as a few other tents arranged in space, filled with electric light. The idea of the installation was to create a coexistence of the spheres of natural and artificial light. Talking about this work, Mikołajczyk emphasized that “the geometry of tarpaulin cones arranged in the same way, covering the windows, and the light gushing from under them, create a continuous performance inside the room, pulsating with warm or cold light, depending on the time of the day and the intensity of the sun rays coming from the outside. In this case, the creative idea was not only limited to a static, geometric form. It was complemented with the energy of light”³⁸.

Re-Konstrukcja from 1990, carried out on Plac Wolności (Freedom Square) in Łódź, was also a very interesting project. The artist described it in the following way: “I fill the empty space left by a pulled-down building on Freedom Square with a special architectural drawing of a building which no longer exists, which used to live its own life here, had its important place in the townscape. It is some kind of an architectural reconstruction which, at the same time, constitutes a new artistic construction – an installation in which I use laser beams to build new spatial reality. The image that is created appears to be a phantom of a residential block that used to be located here”³⁹. Further on in the text, the author refers to the views of Yi-Fu Tuan quoted above concerning the notions of place and space, and the feelings that they evoke. The question that Mikołajczyk asked himself in the case of this project concerned the factors that give a place its identity – accounting for the fact that something is close, domesticated, and something else seems unfamiliar, uninhabited. The artist wrote: “we cannot say much about the already non-existent building No. 3 on Freedom Square. There are only some traces left of the inhabitants’ life; the ‘photographic’ details of the flats, the attic, fragments of the ground floor, ‘clichés’ of space, fragments of painted walls from the residential flats, traces of furniture, remains of electrical installations. These signs of human dwelling emanate with the past. *Re-Konstrukcja* refers to the problem that I have been interested in for several years now. I have called it *Transmisja Rzeczywistości* [*Transmission of Reality*] – that is, the place of contact between reality and its transmission into the sphere of our consciousness, and the idea of *Hibernacja Rzeczywistości* [*Hibernation of Reality*] – the area between the

³⁸ A. Mikołajczyk, *Przestrzeń światła*, the catalogue of an exhibition in the Museum of Xawery Dunikowski – a department of the National Museum in Warsaw, Warszawa 1998, p. 139.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 140.

analysed reality and our consciousness”⁴⁰. The “construction,” “transmission” and “hibernation” of non-existing reality have been possible thanks to light. In this case, while not losing its freedom of movement, it was bound with a concrete place and object (the non-existent building). In this way, it created a basis for a visual – emotional sense of belonging.

SETTLING IN THE SURROUNDINGS – GEOMETRIC MONUMENTS

The problem of rootedness is also visible in the case of geometric monuments. The work that caused a lot of controversy, not only among art critics, but also in the public reception, was Maya Lin’s *The Vietnam Veterans Memorial* created in Washington in 1980-82. The monument is an arrangement of 140 slabs made of black, polished granite, comprising two walls joined at the angle of 125 degrees. The monument is the highest where the angle of the construction bends (it is ten feet high there) and then it descends on both sides along a sloping line towards the ground⁴¹. On the slabs, in a chronological order (according to the date of death), are placed the names of all 57 939 American soldiers who died during the Vietnam War, without any additional information, e.g. about their military rank, merits, or even their age⁴². Only the dates of the soldiers’ death are given on the top of the slabs. After Lin’s design was chosen in a competition, it raised objections, mostly because of its horizontally stretched arrangement, the lack of symbolic motifs and the black colour of the granite. There were reservations about the form resembling “a furrow in the ground”⁴³, merging into the ground instead of dominating the place. It was also alleged that the monument lacked any symbolic references to patriotic feelings, or the heroism of the soldiers. It had been expected that it would be made of traditional white marble used for such type of works. That is why the monument was sometimes referred to as a “black gash of shame”⁴⁴ and it is believed to constitute a critical comment on the Vietnam War, an attempt to question its sense, or rather lack of it. Tom Carhart, a member of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund (VVMF), who was first to attack the colour of the chosen stone, demanding a monument carved in white marble, said that black is “the universal color of shame, sorrow and degradation in all races, all

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 140.

⁴¹ T. Borucki, “Ameryka – Ameryka (Pomnik Weteranów Wojny Wietnamskiej w Waszyngtonie)”, *Architektura* 1987, nr 4, p. 27-28.

⁴² “An interview with Maya Lin”, in: E. Hess, *A Tale of Two Memorials, Art in America* April 1983, p. 122.

⁴³ E. Hess, *A Tale of...*, *op.cit.*, p. 126.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

societies worldwide”⁴⁵ and therefore threatens the honour of the fallen. Lin’s monument was treated as a political objection of the artist. However, she herself rejected all such suggestions, emphasizing that “The piece itself is apolitical in the sense that it doesn’t comment directly on the war – only on the men that died”⁴⁶. According to Lin’s intentions, the monument was to reflect the melancholy of a loss and evoke a reflective attitude to the past”⁴⁷. Personal and psychological engagement of the audience was important here. As far as the accusation that the monument merged into the surroundings, instead of dominating over them is concerned, Lin explained it in terms of working with landscape, saying: “*The Vietnam Veterans Memorial* is not an object placed on the ground, but a work created by cutting the ground”⁴⁸. It was an attempt to create a plane of contact between the world of light and the silent world hiding behind the names. Elizabeth Hess wrote: “The spectator, walking downward along the length of either wall, could thus hale the dramatic sensation of descending into the earth”⁴⁹, and Lin added: “I work with the landscape, and I hope that the object and the land are equal players”⁵⁰. She justified the choice of colour by saying that it “is a lot more peaceful and gentile than white”⁵¹. She wanted to use “something that could be soft on the eyes, and turn into a mirror if you polished it”⁵². She said: “The point is to see yourself reflected in the names. Also the mirror images double and triple the space”⁵³. As for adopting the specific key in placing the names of the fallen, she explained she wished to create “a time-frame of the war”⁵⁴.

However, the monument was criticized as “abstract and elitist”⁵⁵, different from the traditional forms of commemorating the fallen heroes. It did not contain any objects that would make it possible to instill the memory of the dead in the tradition of patriotism, sacrifice, courage, etc. As a consequence, it was decided that an opinion poll would be carried out. It was to determine what kind of monument the Americans expected. It turned out that 67 per cent of the respondents did not like Lin’s original idea. Most of them objected to the colour, pointing to white as the preferred one (70 per cent of the respondents); as many as 96 per cent pointed out the lack of the American flag which was not taken into account by the artist in her project. Until 1982 the

⁴⁵ T. Carhart, after: E. Hess, *A Tale of...*, *op.cit.*, p. 122.

⁴⁶ “An interview with Maya Lin”, *op.cit.*, p. 123.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 123.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴⁹ E. Hess, *A Tale of...*, *op.cit.*, p. 122.

⁵⁰ “An interview with Maya Lin”, *op.cit.*, p. 123.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

⁵² *Ibid.*

⁵³ *Ibid.*

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵⁵ E. Hess, *A Tale of...*, *op.cit.*, p. 126.

discussion had been public, but then it moved behind the closed doors of the authorities in Washington. In the second half of that year it was made public again, with the participation of VVMF. The organization agreed to sponsor an additional monument chosen in a new competition, as well as a pedestal with a flag⁵⁶. Finally, in February 1983, in the vicinity of Lin's monument another, realistic monument was erected, presenting three young American soldiers, and a pole with American flags⁵⁷.

Differently than in traditional monumental sculpture, *The Vietnam Veterans Memorial* created by Lin lacked an image-symbol as a point of collective identification. The artist's aim was to attempt to redefine the relationship between public history and individual human tragedy. In this work, geometry acquired a new, personal dimension. Lin's monument is inseparably connected with the place where it functions. The use of the geometric forms serves the transmission of information in a way which is neither authoritarian, nor excessively emotional. The work remains neutral and at the same time evokes immediate reactions.

The monumental sculptures of the Polish artist Maciej Szańkowski are also unusual. Bożena Kowalska wrote that none of them is intended to be a monument. Each memorial "is a more or less extensive area, a place to walk, to be, which belongs to the realm of the sacred"⁵⁸. The project of *Pomnik Powstania Warszawskiego* [*The Memorial of the Warsaw Uprising*] was submitted for the competition in 1988. The artist emphasised in his comment: "The idea of this memorial is derived directly from the archetype of a 'literary rampart' [...] Therefore, the square itself together with all the surroundings becomes the memorial. In the square, enormous glacial erratics create a yellow ochre ring made of reinforced concrete"⁵⁹. This project has not been implemented. However, two other memorials by Szańkowski, based on a similar idea, have been erected: *Pomnik Ofiar Ziemi Sandomierskiej w drugiej wojnie światowej* [*Memorial to the victims of World War II from the Sandomierz area*; Sandomierz 1987] and *Pomnik Ofiar Terroru Władzy 1944-1956* [*Memorial to the victims of the Communist rule of 1944-56*; Warszawa-Służew 1991-1993). In these works, the artist consciously contradicts traditional assumptions. The memorials do not resemble typical monuments commemorating an event. They do not represent the people being commemorated. They do not feature any symbols. They are places containing elements ideally composed into the surroundings. It is difficult to clearly define the borderlines of these works. Anna Maria Leśniewska wrote that "the work of Maciej Szańkowski can be most concisely described as the art of creating space: Szańkowski tries to

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 125.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

⁵⁸ B. Kowalska, *Maciej Szańkowski*, Warszawa 1996, p. 65.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 65-66.

superimpose and enhance the interrelations of forms in space. He creates shapes developing from the inside, almost floating, changing their form before our eyes [...] The public, who in the beginning are only observers, become participants in the author's concept, take part in solving a spatial problem"⁶⁰.

Szańkowski's memorials are representative of a new attitude to space, characteristic for public art. Space is no longer something changeable, accidental, something with which the creator interferes to a greater or smaller extent, transforming it to commemorate events or to express ideas. It becomes a given, definite area that has certain values. His artistic activity does not consist in exploring different possibilities of composing space, but rather in contemplating, "listening" intently to its features. The intentions of the artist have often been misunderstood both by the public and the jurors of the competitions. In the case of *Pomnik Powstania Warszawskiego*, the jurors claimed that the monument did not comply with the criteria of the competition, since "the idea was good, but it lacked a sculpture"⁶¹. The artist commented on the decision, saying: "but what does it mean that the idea lacked a sculpture? The spatial solution was the sculpture, there was an epitome and a metaphor, there was simply no pedestal and no figures"⁶².

In the last twenty years, artists have used geometric forms in many memorials or projects commemorating events connected with political terrorism or mass extermination of people in the 20th century. Those include e.g. *The Judenplatz Holocaust Memorial* in Vienna designed by Rachel Whiteread, Peter Eisenman's *The Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe* in Berlin (1998-2003), Piotr Lewicki's and Kazimierz Łatak's *Pomnik Ofiar Getta* [*The Memorial to the Ghetto Victims*] in Cracow (2002-2005). When it comes to their effect on the public, the simplicity of the used forms in connection with their large scale and an accumulation of almost identical elements is much more moving and engaging than in the case of realistic monuments. One of the most interesting examples of the use of geometry in a public project which complies with the requirements set for this type of monuments and at the same time has a very strong effect is *The Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe* in Berlin. The work is constructed from hundreds of concrete cuboid blocks placed in rows on one of the squares in the centre of Berlin. When one comes closer, one can see that the blocks are of a different height and that some of them are slightly slanted. The whole arrangement constitutes a "network" of narrow paths crossing at right angles, paved with pavement stones. The

⁶⁰ A. M. Leśniewska, in: *Maciej Szańkowski. Kilka pomników...*, the catalogue of an exhibition in Centrum Rzeźby Polskiej (the Centre for Polish Sculpture) in Orońsko, Orońsko 2005, p. 30.

⁶¹ "O pomnikach z Maciejem Szańkowskim rozmawia Wiesława Wierzchowska", in: *Maciej Szańkowski...*, *op.cit.*, p. 9.

⁶² *Ibid.*

cuboids situated “outside,” near the street, are low and have quite large bases, whereas those located in the centre are narrower and higher. Seen from a certain distance, the memorial makes the impression of a strange, mysterious construction. It evokes associations with the ruins or an old, forgotten necropolis. The surprise effect is intensified by the fact that the memorial is located in the city centre, in a very representative area on Ebertstrasse between Potsdamer Platz and the Branderburg Gate. Eisenman has also perfectly taken into account the surroundings of this specific monument, which contributes to the amazing effect. Especially the façade of the DZ Bank building designed by Frank O. Gehry (1996-99), with characteristic bay windows resembling glass boxes, sticking out to a greater or smaller extent from the elevation of a wavy wall, corresponds with the shape of the ground on which the memorial is situated. Only entering the area of the memorial makes one perceive it in a different way than one did in the beginning. Piotr Winskowski described it as “the effect of the sky becoming narrower over one’s head, of entering the space whose depth and degree of absorption changes unnoticeably with every step. Other passers-by appear in front of us for a short moment – they are noticed between the blocks always too late to be identified. They remain in our memory as people who have just disappeared and not people who appear. The large number of blocks encircles us in the orthogonal net taken to the third dimension, in miniaturized streets, in a schematic city, among the acoustic isolation from the real city and the echo of one’s footsteps, the ominous cold and warmth of the concrete. It is some kind of a physical reconstruction of the gradual isolation, stigmatization and segregation of Jews in Nazi Germany”⁶³.

The impact of the memorials discussed above derives from their simplicity combined with their large scale. All of them as if force us to enter their world. It is not enough to look at them only once – they are too vast. Entering their space takes us to a different time and dimension, immerses us in the reality to which they refer. Naturally, as in the case of the memorial in Berlin, sometimes their spectators may experience additional sensations. On entering the passages of the memorial, many people get the feeling of weakness, fragility or smallness when faced with the scale of the geometrical forms. As a result, they feel lost and scared, which makes them consider the tragedy of the Holocaust. Such an impact of the memorial makes it possible for one to “feel” the terror of the situation of the Jews during WW II. However, for some people the memorial has simply become a place to play. Children play “war” games which consist in running in the thick of the enormous cuboid blocks and “shooting” at one another with plastic balls. For others, the memorial is a good place to play “hide and seek” or other similar games. However, these “side

⁶³ P. Winskowski, “Architektoniczne i rzeźbiarskie parametry środowiska”, *Rzeźba Polska*, 2005, vol. 11: *Rzeźba – Architektura. Wzajemne relacje i strategie*, p. 102.

effects,” as the irresponsible and tactless behaviour of people interacting with the work commemorating one of the greatest tragedies of humankind can be called, do not make the memorials function less effectively. Quite the contrary, these works constitute a specific testimony of their time and of different attitudes and reactions of people towards the most serious problems. They make us aware that every tragedy, even the greatest one, cannot be experienced equally deeply by everyone and that new life is born where great tragedies took place.

The special character of public art makes it possible for us to see certain problems in a different way, to discuss and reveal new aspects of the works. It does not leave people indifferent, even if it provokes behaviours and emotions very different from what has been expected. It seems that in the case of earlier monumental art, the ignorance of the facts and issues presented was concealed by habit and indifference. It often happens that people who live in cities where traditional monuments are located cannot even tell to whom or to what they are dedicated, what they commemorate, who they present. The memorials discussed above are spatial arrangements exerting their impact through abstract, geometric forms; they make an idea settle in the given space. They also take touch, smell and disturbance of balance into account. As it was put by Winskowski, “through all these endeavours they engage the public in the current situation, experience or event that they are to reconstruct in their minds and make them face an aspect of the situation, experience, or event from the past that they are devoted to”⁶⁴. Therefore, the reception of such a specifically formulated message requires intellectual effort, the knowledge of history, the engagement of the public; it also makes it necessary to experience a work of art with all one’s senses. Such reception is very complex and subjective, as it does not impose an interpretation, but rather provokes questions, makes one create one’s own story, specific individual discourse. Geometric shapes are characterized by much greater openness than any realistic forms, but in combination with a given area of space they make it possible for us to become deeply immersed in the expressed content. In contrast to realistic monuments based on the associations hammered into people’s heads, they create places where ideas become settled.

Translated by Ewa Hornicka

SZTUKA GEOMETRYCZNA A PROBLEM ZADOMOWIENIA (streszczenie)

Punktem wyjścia artykułu jest krótkie omówienie zagadnień związanych z rozumieniem pojęć „przestrzeń”, „miejsce”, „zadomowienie” i „zakorzenienie”. Odwołuję się przede wszystkim do

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 104.

ustaleń geografii humanistycznej i filozofii fenomenologicznej. Następnie zadają pytanie o możliwość ich odniesienia do działań podejmowanych w odmianach sztuki nowoczesnej, gdzie operuje się formami geometrycznymi. Artyści uprawiający ten rodzaj twórczości w pierwszej połowie XX wieku zakładali zwykle ideę przestrzeni abstrakcyjnej. Cechy kojarzone z „przwiązaniem do miejsca” odrzucali, traktując je jako ograniczające, niepozwalające człowiekowi otworzyć się na nieskończony obszar i uniwersalne problemy. Związek tematyczny dzieł z rejonem zamieszkiwania, przedmiotami z najbliższego otoczenia, rodzinną okolicą, ojczyzną, uważano za ograniczający. Jednym z powodów ówczesnej negacji sztuki przedstawiającej było zainteresowanie tymi, jak sądzono, banalnymi treściami. Twórcy sztuki geometrycznej nie rezygnowali jednak z idei zadomowienia. Zakładali tylko, że powinno ono nastąpić w przestrzeni nieskończonej, która stać się ma swoistym rodzajem „domu” bez ścian i granic.

W końcowych dekadach XX wieku uniwersalistycznie pojęta przestrzeń poddana została krytyce także przez przedstawicieli sztuki geometrycznej. Jej reprezentanci w coraz większym stopniu odczuwali potrzebę odniesienia do konkretów występujących w ich najbliższym otoczeniu. Odnosili się do nich jednak w swoisty sposób, nie tyle akceptując dawne, ile poszukując nowych możliwości zakorzenienia. W artykule omówione zostały trzy odmiany takich działań. Na podstawie prac Jana Berdyszaka rozważony został problem zadomowienia w konkretnej pustce. W oparciu o instalacje Antoniego Mikołajczyka omówiłam zadomowienie poprzez światło. Natomiast odwołując się do przykładów pomników, w których elementy geometryczne służyły wydobyciu z określonego fragmentu przestrzeni cech związanych z pamięcią o wydarzeniach, omówiłam nowe możliwości zagłębiania się przez odbiorcę w odczucia związane z takimi sytuacjami, jak wojna wietnamska (realizacje Mayi Lin), Powstanie Warszawskie (projekt Macieja Szańkowskiego) czy Holocaust (berlińskie dzieło Petera Eisenmana).

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SETTLEMENT AS A PERFORMATIVE ASPECT OF ART AND AESTHETICS (ZBIEGNIEW WARPECHOWSKI'S CREATIVE ATTITUDE)

Abstract: The article deals the problem of settlement in the output of the Polish performer Zbigniew Warpechowski. The term 'home' is so broad and common that it could be applied, in some context, to every artist and every kind of art. In Warpechowski's case, I am not looking for the hidden contexts of homelessness/settlement, rather I ponder over something he expressed openly and on numerous occasions, i.e. the settlement of his art. Warpechowski does not refer to negative meanings of settlement explicitly, but while noticing ambiguous aspects of the settlement in his perspective, I present them as consequences of the creative attitude (aggression and ugliness).

Key words: performance art – performance studies – performativity – ugliness – aggression.

Homelessness is a legal condition¹, but it is also a complex social and psychological problem². Generally speaking, homelessness means: to lack place of residence, coupled with a critical condition of an individual who lacks

¹ *USTAWA z dnia 12 marca 2004 r. o pomocy społecznej* (Dz. U., 2010 r. Nr 217, poz. 1427, art. 6, pkt 8.) [ACT of 12th March 2004 on the social welfare (Journal of Laws 2010, No. 217, point 1427, art. 6, p. 8)] <http://isap.sejm.gov.pl/DetailsServlet?id=WDU20040640593>; standardized text of the act: D20040593Lj.pdf.

² On the subject of definitions and classifications of homelessness, and categorization of the homeless see: *Oblicza bezdomności*, M. Dębski, K. Stadura (eds), Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Gdańskiego, Gdańsk 2008; *Bezdomność. Szkice z socjologii, polityki społecznej i katolickiej nauki społecznej*, J. Mazur (ed.), Wydawnictwo Katolickiego Uniwersytetu Lubelskiego, Lublin 2006; A. Lech, *Świat społeczny bezdomnych i jego legitymizacje*, 'Śląsk' Wydawnictwo Naukowe, Katowice 2007; L. Stankiewicz, *Zrozumieć bezdomność (aspekty polityki społecznej)*, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Warmińsko-Mazurskiego, Olsztyn 2002; A. Przymeński, *Bezdomność jako kwestia społeczna w Polsce współczesnej*, Wydawnictwo Akademii Ekonomicznej w Poznaniu, Poznań 2001; D. M. Piekut-Brodzka, *O bezdomnych i bezdomności. Aspekty fenomenologiczne, etiologiczne, terapeutyczne*, Wydawnictwo Chrześcijańskiej Akademii Teologicznej, Warszawa 2000.

financial means, psychological predispositions, physical health or the support of others, all of which could prevent the above mentioned homelessness³. As far as law, psychology, social policy, and sociology strive to specify the definition of homelessness (despite the difficulties of those efforts), and classify in details its manifestations, in the reflections over culture, the term of 'homelessness' appears in a different, specific way⁴. It does not serve the purpose of building the definition or theory, suggesting inability or groundlessness of their construction in reference to the certain phenomena; rather, it indicates the gravity of something that eludes clear definitions and classifications. For homelessness is significantly ambivalent: it is connected with a certain experience, as well as the lack of it (inhabitation), it is connected with a certain place and attributes, as well as the lack of certain place and objects (a house). Thus, this term becomes very practical when other exploited categories, such as: intimacy, homeliness, and affiliation⁵, fail and when they no longer describe the world we live in. As Zuzanna Dziuban concludes, the term of homelessness becomes a competitive tool for diagnosis and criticism of a contemporary culture experience, which is (against our requirements or wishes) indefinite, inconclusive, open, eventful, partial, and incomprehensible – atopic⁶. As Maria Mendel indicates, homelessness allows a different perspective on a cultural role of space and places, on their heterotopic character⁷.

The publications of the above mentioned authors suggestively introduce us to those contexts of homelessness, which could be (or are) experienced by contemporary people, regardless of their fair socioeconomic status. It is hard not to get the impression that the certainty of experience and the deceptiveness of unity have long gone, and *summa summarum* there is not much to regret. Thus, I paid special attention to Zbigniew Warpechowski, who expressed the

³ It is often said 'homeless by choice'. However, this category has been seriously questioned. Generally, it is emphasized that there is a difference, in this case, between choosing a certain lifestyle, and between choosing (allegedly?) not to have a house. A. Lech, *ibid.*, pp. 42-46.

⁴ I leave out the issue of the artists in exile, where 'homelessness' is the key subject of their works, as well as a specific element of the so called 'exile culture', and the real experience of exile and political activity etc. See e.g.: S. Kalemka, *Wielka Emigracja 1831-1863*, Wydawnictwo Adam Marszałek, Toruń 2003; M. Burzka-Janik, *W poszukiwaniu centrum: dom i bezdomność w życiu i twórczości Adama Mickiewicza*, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Opolskiego, Opole 2009.

⁵ Z. Dziuban, *Obcość, bezdomność, utrata. Wymiary atopii współczesnego doświadczenia kulturowego*, Wydawnictwo Naukowe Wydziału Nauk Społecznych Uniwersytetu im. Adama Mickiewicza w Poznaniu, Poznań 2009, p. 10.

⁶ The author interprets homelessness as a broader category – an atopic experience (in reference to Hans G. Gadamer, John Caputo, and Gianni Vattimo's ideas). She also analyzes the experiences of detachment and loss within the framework of homelessness. *Ibid.*, pp. 10-11.

⁷ Here the term 'heterotopia' was taken from Michael Foucault, M. Mendel, *Spoleczeństwo i rytuał. Heterotopia bezdomności*, Wydawnictwo Adam Marszałek, Toruń 2007.

following wish: 'I would like my work to be settled in somewhere'⁸. At the same time, the phrase, its justification and the artistic strategy of the Polish performer evoke numerous questions about the possibility and the shape of the settlement of the art, as ephemeral as performance. However, I believe that apart from doubts, the issue of homelessness/settlement of art allows to create intriguing interpreting contexts for the theory of performance itself.

1. TO SETTLE IN PERFORMANCE?

Not only is Warpechowski the main performance practitioner in Poland, he is also the main theoretician of it. It is difficult to find a reasonable counter-balance for his opinions. Grzegorz Dziamski, in his text from 1981 (which remains an important point of reference), points out that Warpechowski's concept of performance, with its intuitions, embraces all that has become disputable by other artists⁹. It is broader and more universal; though abundant with metaphoric expressions, it hits the nail on the head.

However, Anda Rottenberg explains the authoritative character of the reflection of the Polish performer in this way: '[...] in the 70s art was sufficient unto itself, as in most cases it limited itself to self commentary. The most intriguing artists of those times did not need others writing about them, as they were writers themselves'¹⁰. Still, the contemporary, extended notion of performance, the one that is the subject of performance studies, sanctions its ambiguity and individuality¹¹. These features are clearly seen in the reflection of the Polish artist: '[...] the performers do not have distinguishing marks, it is difficult even for me to explain what I am doing, yet, I do know what I live on'¹².

Certainly, it is impossible to take numerous and extensive texts by Warpechowski (He has been writing since the beginning of the 70s¹³) as a consistent theoretical proposal, particularly, because the artist is aware of its

⁸ Z. Warpechowski, *Wolność*, Mazowieckie Centrum Sztuki Współczesnej 'Elektrownia', Radom 2009, p. 56.

⁹ G. Dziamski, "Performance – tradycje, źródła, obce i rodzime przejawy. Rozpoznanie zjawiska", in: *Performance*, B. Stokłosa (ed.), Młodzieżowa Agencja Wydawnicza, Warszawa 1984, p. 54.

¹⁰ A. Rottenberg, *Prze-ciąg. Teksty o sztuce polskiej lat 80.*, Fundacja Open Art Project, Warszawa 2009, p. 24.

¹¹ See, e.g., R. Schechner, *Performance Studies: An Introduction*, Routledge, New York 2002; M. Carlson, *Performance: A Critical Introduction*, Routledge, New York 1996. Cf. Z. Warpechowski, *Podnośnik*, self-publishing, Jerozolima – Rzym – Sandomierz 2001, p. 179.

¹² Z. Warpechowski, *Podręcznik bis*, Otwarta Pracownia, Kraków 2006, p. 374.

¹³ Z. Warpechowski, *Statecznik*, Galeria Labirynt, 2004, p. 247.

imperfections ('[...] working on the text, the care of its elegance distances it [the text] from the idea'¹⁴). Thus, the keynote like settlement, pulled out not from the canon of theoretical notions but almost straight from reality, increases the opportunity of approaching the works of this author. This goal, humble as it may seem, remains a huge challenge for the artist, who perceives any art discourses as false, for they confirm invalid theories and are developed at art's expense¹⁵.

To begin with, it is useful to clarify two doubts that the notion of home imposes. The term 'home' is so broad and common that it could be applied, in some context, to every artist and every kind of art. In Warpechowski's case, I am not looking for the hidden contexts of homelessness/settlement, rather I ponder over something he expressed openly and on numerous occasions, i.e. the settlement of his art. Moreover, the term 'home' can be a restriction, a prison, anti-house, its own contradiction, etc.¹⁶ Warpechowski does not refer to those negative meanings while considering the settlement of his art, but while noticing ambiguous aspects of the settlement in his perspective, I present them as consequences of the creative attitude. As a point of departure for my text, I accepted the meaning of home as the one that the central figure of my text 'looks at with envy'¹⁷.

So how can we settle in performance, the essence of which remains beyond the mainstream of actions and expectations?¹⁸ After all, home is a universal etymon, a desired place that satisfies basic needs¹⁹. This is the beginning of the discrepancies' list. Performance is an extreme experience²⁰, whereas settlement is a common, non-secluded, and indispensable one: 'To be a human being means to be on the earth as a mortal. It means to dwell'²¹.

A house consists of inmates, family, and frequent visitors; while artistic commitment, which Warpechowski writes about, remains a form of isolation: 'Passion evokes [...] the need for loneliness in a people. They choose loneliness because they find pleasure in passion'²². On a different occasion he adds: 'I behave rather like a terrorist, who is aware of the hopelessness of his cause, but his faith and determination demonstrate a different option of being

¹⁴ Z. Warpechowski, *Podnośnik*, *ibid.*, p. 398.

¹⁵ Z. Warpechowski, *Wolność*, *ibid.*, pp. 108-109.

¹⁶ J. Lotman, 'Dom w *Mistrzu i Małgorzacie* Michaiła Bułhakowa', transl. R. Mazurkiewicz, *Pamiętnik Literacki* 1987, vol. 4, pp. 311-315.

¹⁷ Z. Warpechowski, *Podręcznik bis*, *ibid.*, p. 240.

¹⁸ Z. Warpechowski, *Statecznik*, *ibid.*, p. 35.

¹⁹ A. Brückner, *Słownik etymologiczny języka polskiego*, Wiedza Powszechna, Warszawa 1989, pp. 93-94.

²⁰ Z. Warpechowski, *Statecznik*, *ibid.*, p. 35.

²¹ M. Heidegger, 'Building, Dwelling, Thinking', in: M. Heidegger, *Poetry, Language, Thought*, transl. A. Hofstadter, Harper Perennial, New York 2001, p. 154.

²² Z. Warpechowski, *Statecznik*, *ibid.*, p. 81.

in the world. That is why I do not seek for company, nor do I expect acceptance [...]. The place of a thinking artist is secluded'²³.

Similarly, artistic autonomy (here understood as a release from the commissioners' will), this significant achievement of art that gave way to 'new art', according to Warpechowski, establishes the fundamental right of artists to 'art that by all means desires to be their own art, the one connected to their times, and thinking in terms of their values'²⁴. Home, on the other hand, offers community of values. That is why Warpechowski autocritically asks in the end: 'Isn't it by chance that we toss all the awkward situations into void?'²⁵ He is conscious that he 'sets out on the shaman paths, into the ghost world, as you can freely frolic there'²⁶. He knows that he happens to be intentionally uncommunicative, arrogant, and bold. 'I overdo, as my goal is to over-do. I am protected by my status of an artist that binds me into both directions: not to lose myself in irresponsibility, but also penetrate the area of the unknown'²⁷ – he admits in *Podręcznik*.

On numerous occasions Warpechowski has to struggle with the questions like who needs his actions, to whom they are addressed, and what their aim is.

Apart from the nature of performance itself – in the settlement context – two overlapping and reinforcing ethos are significant in Warpechowski's works as well: romanticism²⁸ and (neo) avant-garde²⁹. They construct a special figure of a lonely artist of the end of 20th century, which is basic time frame of his works. As Anna Legeżyńska emphasizes (after Czesław Miłosz) '[...] homelessness became [...] almost a common condition at the end of this century, a condition that releases, at the same time, longing for the country of childhood, the past of tradition'³⁰. According to Legeżyńska, those flashbacks

²³ Z. Warpechowski, *Podnośnik*, *ibid.*, p. 71-72.

²⁴ Z. Warpechowski, *Statecznik*, *ibid.*, p. 63.

²⁵ Z. Warpechowski, *Podręcznik bis*, *ibid.*, p. 277.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ 'The artist [Warpechowski], who was emotionally related to the heritage of Polish romanticism, paid special attention to the performances of 'Promieniści' group in Vilnius (1820), led by Tomasz Zan. The theory of the magnetic influence of artistic activities, created at the time, appealed to a large group of young artists, among whom Adam Mickiewicz played an important role'. J. Zagrodzki, 'An Artist – a Performer', in: Z. Warpechowski, *W służbie sztuce. Przegląd twórczości z lat 1963-2008 [In Service of Art. Review of artistic Output In the Years 1963-2008]*, transl. B. Michalec, A. Mizińska, J. Menderowicz, Galeria BWA w Lublinie, Lublin, p. 196. Cf. Z. Warpechowski, 'Performare', in: Z. Warpechowski, *Podręcznik*, *ibid.*, p. 140; Z. Warpechowski, *Statecznik*, *ibid.*, pp. 5, 12.

²⁹ S. Morawski, 'Filozoficzna kantata Zbigniewa Warpechowskiego', in: Z. Warpechowski, *Podręcznik bis*, *ibid.*, pp. 431-435. Cf. Z. Warpechowski, 'Ogólny przegląd zagadnień sztuki XX wieku (dla konserwatystów)', in: Z. Warpechowski, *Podręcznik bis*, *ibid.*, p. 518.

³⁰ A. Legeżyńska, *Dom i poetycka bezdomność w liryce współczesnej*, Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, Warszawa 1996, p. 41.

should be associated with 'sailing'³¹, and though it may seem overwhelming, it is not the same as painful migration.

The opposite of the 'sailing' homelessness is not exactly home itself; rather it is a sedentary lifestyle. Well-ordered, safe life and friendly, defined art would disagree with a 'romantic nonconformism that rejects explicit antitheses of right and wrong, reason and madness, peace and chaos of human existence'³², or with the principles of anti-art, non-art, and artistic anarchism³³.

Thus, Warpechowski clearly expresses the wish for settlement in his late comments, starting in *Podnośnik* (2001). He emphasizes the gravity of that need in the subsequent books and reinforces it by the consecutive arguments. Inspired by Martin Heidegger's *The Origin of the Work of Art*, he states in an authoritarian manner: 'The artist and his work anticipate settlement'³⁴. However, home, as a main subject, already appeared in one of his first performances, titled 'Home'. The performance took place in Club77 in Łódź, in December 1968 (No. 4 in the contents of *Zasobnik*³⁵).

In a later developed discourse on the settlement of art, Warpechowski does not refer to that event, probably for two reasons. Firstly, probably because he assumed it to be a failure: 'I entirely assumed the whole evening to be a total disappointment. I failed to meet young people's expectations'³⁶. Secondly, in the artist's reflection, the problem of settlement falls apart into two separate categories: the settlement of artist and art settlement. Seemingly, they are the same. A home for a person could also be a home for their art, and certainly this is the case. Especially that art, for Warpechowski, is a separate, subjectified entity, repeatedly identical with the artist.

However, this 'home owned by art' is only a temporary house. The last stage of the work realization, its fulfillment, and the one that should be sought for, is the settlement of art³⁷. Even though, on a different occasion, the artist writes: 'the settlement of my thoughts I leave to fate and the stars' constellation that will help somebody to read them as their own'³⁸. What he has on his mind, in this case, is that he is entirely independent, disinterested in readers needs, and that he will never pander 'popular tastes'³⁹.

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² *Ibid.*

³³ See e.g. S. Morawski, 'Nurt główny aktualnych postaw anarchoartystycznych', in: *Rocznik Historii Sztuki* 1981, vol. XII. Cf. Z. Warpechowski, *Podnośnik*, *ibid.*, pp. 53-54.

³⁴ Z. Warpechowski, *Podnośnik*, *ibid.*, p. 441. Cf. M. Heidegger, 'The Origin of the Work of Art', in: M. Heidegger, *Poetry, Language, Thought*, *ibid.*, pp. 15-86.

³⁵ Z. Warpechowski, *Zasobnik. Autorski opis trzydziestu lat drogi życia poprzez sztukę performance*, Słowo/Obraz Terytoria, Gdańsk 1998.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 21.

³⁷ Z. Warpechowski, *Podnośnik*, *ibid.*, p. 442.

³⁸ Z. Warpechowski, *Statecznik*, *ibid.*, p. 148.

³⁹ Z. Warpechowski, *Podręcznik bis*, *ibid.*, p. 509.

2. 'AND HERE I FOUND MY OWN SETTLEMENT IN ART'⁴⁰

Being asked a basic question; 'How to find my own place [...] what shall I do to avoid being a microbe, pushed by the waves and gusts of history, space dust?'⁴¹ Warpechowski gives a short and firm answer: 'Art should be such area of realization'⁴². His certainty stems from his experience. Its reconstruction is difficult because the artist does not pity himself, even the circumstances threatening his life are described by him as lapidary. Still, there are three, classic in fact, aspects of homelessness, against which he builds his 'home-as-art'.

First of all, it is a sort of 'exile homelessness'⁴³. Warpechowski is a refugee from Borderlands, born in Płoska, near Równe, which is Ukraine today, but he likes using the historic name of this area, Wolyn. Even this reflects the feeling of being uprooted, which he describes: 'I belong to Poland that does not exist. I belong to the nation that dies out. I belong to the culture that has been slaughtered in cold blood. I belong to the past. I am alone as an artist. I do not have friends of the 'common cause'⁴⁴.

Exposing the home-fatherland symbolism, the meaning of the tradition, and an idyllic, longing image of home is characteristic of the exile homelessness⁴⁵. Both texts and performances; utilizing religious⁴⁶, patriotic⁴⁷, and freedom⁴⁸ rhetoric, document this mood. All of those issues deserve a separate comment, as they are understood in a specific way. It is worth mentioning here that their exposure is closely related to another kind of homelessness – the existential one⁴⁹.

It is a feeling of losing home as a center that creates the affinity to the community of values⁵⁰. Grieving over the traditional axiology being destroyed and the simultaneous feeling of absurdity, mixed with the bitterness over the lack of understanding; are dominant in the majority of Warpechowski's

⁴⁰ Z. Warpechowski, *Podnośnik, ibid.*, p. 443.

⁴¹ Z. Warpechowski, *Statecznik, ibid.*, p. 29.

⁴² *Ibid.*

⁴³ A. Legeżyńska, *ibid.*, p. 37.

⁴⁴ Z. Warpechowski, *Podnośnik, ibid.*, p. 350. Cf. Z. Warpechowski, *Statecznik, ibid.*, pp. 40, 318.

⁴⁵ Z. Warpechowski, 'Z domu i dla domu, czyli o sztuce polskiej', in: Z. Warpechowski, *Podręcznik bis, ibid.*, pp. 240-246.

⁴⁶ See e.g. Z. Warpechowski, *Podnośnik, ibid.*, p. 248; Z. Warpechowski, *Statecznik, ibid.*, p. 27.

⁴⁷ Z. Warpechowski, *Statecznik, ibid.*, p. 12.

⁴⁸ Z. Warpechowski 'Wolność i wolność', in: Z. Warpechowski, *Wolność, ibid.*, pp. 7-30.

⁴⁹ A. Legeżyńska, *ibid.*, p. 37.

⁵⁰ See e.g. S. Weil, *The Need for Roots: prelude towards a declaration of duties towards mankind*, Routledge, New York 2002.

comments⁵¹. The disagreement for *status quo* establishes another kind of homelessness – sociopolitical⁵².

It lies in the rejection of any foreign political system. In Warpechowski it is almost a total alienation, as even the spheres and institutions of social life, which he would be willing to accept, do not meet his expectations. It mainly refers to the Catholic Church and the democratic system.

Therefore, only art can become a home for artist. Warpechowski admits that while being in dire straits only art offered a safe refuge for him: 'I did not have anyone I could call my master, somebody that could warn me against danger'⁵³.

An early performance *Dom*, though not highly regarded by the author himself, is a significant introduction to this subject. The symbolic object prepared for this occasion had the proportions of 3x3x3 meters and was a provisional construction made of old boards, pasted over with paper, which was suggesting a compact room. It was a 'sham home' that first of all had to be (1) 'cleaned', i.e. stripped off the paper, (2) decorated, i.e. painted with color paints that were prepared, and in the end (3) 'toured'⁵⁴. The participants were also given a kind of a manifesto⁵⁵, in which the artist outlined, in a poetic, abbreviated, and metaphoric way; issues that worried him. We could probably capture them as homelessness, which Anna Markowska believes to be one of the strategies of defining art in the Communist Poland⁵⁶.

It is about the state of limbo, disappointment, impotence, illusive freedom and a clear feeling of not being at home. Warpechowski in his manifesto elucidates this state by enumerating different ambivalences: the kitchen left-overs and hunger; a flavor that cannot be specified; a dumped object that could still be used; a dream we can still live without etc.⁵⁷ In this pathological situation, when everything was not the way it should be normally, art remained the only shelter. Art became home for those 'painfully awoken and on exile'⁵⁸, however, a home radically isolated, in both institutional and mental sense. The artist has experienced it intensely: 'It is not easy or pleasant to be off the mainstream of art ceremonies, to remain off the beaten track, without media's

⁵¹ Z. Warpechowski, *Statecznik*, *ibid.*, pp. 130-131.

⁵² A. Legeżyńska, *ibid.*, pp. 37-38.

⁵³ Z. Warpechowski, *Statecznik*, *ibid.*, p. 64. Cf. Z. Warpechowski, *Wolność*, *ibid.*, p. 79.

⁵⁴ Z. Warpechowski, *Zasobnik. Autorski opis trzydziestu lat drogi życia poprzez sztukę performance*, *ibid.*, p. 21.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

⁵⁶ A. Markowska, 'Bezdomność', in: A. Markowska, *Definiowanie sztuki – objaśnianie świata. O pojmowaniu sztuki w PRL-u*, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Śląskiego, Katowice 2003, pp. 98-140.

⁵⁷ Z. Warpechowski, *Zasobnik. Autorski opis trzydziestu lat drogi życia poprzez sztukę performance*, *ibid.*, pp. 21-22.

⁵⁸ A. Markowska, *ibid.*, p. 140.

and connoisseurs' attention, to condemn oneself to poverty, look for places and occasions to perform, present and confront the audience; but this provides an artist with the comfort of being independent, free, and responsible in the same way⁵⁹.

Warpechowski frequently and in details writes about his disillusionment with the artists (even those who he owes a lot to) and about the lack of understanding of his works. Confidence of himself and his home, which returns in real projects, would be a counterbalance here. The best example is the *Chopin* performance (10.22.2000).

It took place in the cloister of the Sisters of Visitation nunnery building complex that dates back to 18th century, turned, after World War II, into Lublin Community Center with 'Labyrinth' Art Gallery (since 1991 Lublin Cultural Center). This place is extremely significant and indeed ambiguous for the artist. It is a seat of the befriended art gallery, but also a symbol of the uprooted tradition.

In the very same place, 22 years before, on the day when Karol Wojtyła was appointed as the Pope (10.16.1978), a different performance, *Champion of Golgotha*⁶⁰ by Warpechowski, took place. The whole series of *Champions* by Warpechowski was dedicated to idolatry. It was not just its one-dimensional criticism; rather, it was a reflection on ambiguity: the fear of the power of idols and the fear of the idolization. As far as the self-appointed master from Golgotha was looking for his own place, the future Chopin '[...] was himself without a piano [...] he was producing poetry out of nothing, from the scraps found in the dumpster, while whistling pathetically, mocking himself tragically'⁶¹. Warpechowski turned from the questioning and accusing artist into a tribune of his own art. He is preaching ideas from the unaffected edifice of his own tradition, founded on the years of his experience. Tradition that links a romantic and iconographic conservatism with avant-garde anti-aesthetics: 'I was Chopin in this trashy cloister'⁶². Here, all the props of performance, the space (appropriated symbolically in the past) 'were somewhat "at home"', and I was – writes the artist – at home, not only because of the place, but in my natural role, in my artistic settlement'⁶³.

A home that the performer seeks for now is not a home for him. It is a home for art.

⁵⁹ Z. Warpechowski, *Statecznik*, *ibid.*, p. 35.

⁶⁰ On the performance *Champion of Golgotha* see: Z. Warpechowski, *Zasobnik*, *ibid.*, pp. 45-49.

⁶¹ Z. Warpechowski, *Podnośnik*, *ibid.*, p. 405.

⁶² *Ibid.*, p. 407.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, p. 405.

3. A HOME FOR ART NEEDED

Even though the essence of performance is mainly constructed, according to Warpechowski, by the elusive, irrational, metaphysical, and mystic elements (subconscious, inspiration, unintentional and indefinite flow of thoughts⁶⁴), still, art remains a form of communication. Communication implies the settlement of art: '[...] as every artist counts on attention, curiosity, and goodwill; as every work of art thinks about its settlement'⁶⁵. For art, to really come to life, it has to find its viewer. Warpechowski derives this thought from Heidegger's concept (of course putting accents in a slightly different way): 'However, if a work does not find preservers, does not at once find them such as respond to the truth happening in the work, this does not at all mean that the work may also be a work without preservers. Being a work, it always remains tied to preservers, even and particularly when it is still only waiting for preservers and only pleads and waits for them to enter into its truth. Even the oblivion into which the work can sink is nothing; it is still a preservation'⁶⁶.

Nevertheless, not everyone needs art. A need for art settlement means an effort to seek a home for it. For the most part, it is perfecting yourself: "a person" and "artistic business", individuality, creative process, and uniqueness, place the artist and his work in history. They prepare and specify its settlement'⁶⁷. 'Settlement has a temporal and spacial aspect'⁶⁸. It is a contribution of tradition and a group of values, accompanied by environment or community, where people mutually inspire themselves and reinforce their opportunities. 'An artist-performer has to know more about people and himself. Human energies, temperatures of feelings, the intensity of the waves of light, sight, and experience are significant elements co-creating the phenomenon of performance. Here, a mutual exchange of experience is extremely vital and unavoidable'⁶⁹. The artist experiences authentic bonding and community of values with the artists of the past, as well as with the younger generation. Kazimierz Malewicz, Yves Klein, John Cage (and many other artists) – '[...] they are like a family that you think about on different occasions, especially, when you bump into troubles, or when in doubt'⁷⁰. Being with unity with them, means an independent realization of the similar goals, e.g. an

⁶⁴ Z. Warpechowski, *Zasobnik*, *ibid.*, pp. 254-257.

⁶⁵ Z. Warpechowski, *Podnośnik*, *ibid.*, p. 440. Cf. *ibid.*, p. 321.

⁶⁶ M. Heidegger, 'The Origin of the Work of Art', *ibid.*, pp. 64-65.

⁶⁷ Z. Warpechowski, *Podnośnik*, *ibid.*, p. 443.

⁶⁸ Z. Warpechowski, *Wolność*, *ibid.*, p. 56.

⁶⁹ Z. Warpechowski, *Podnośnik*, *ibid.*, p. 276.

⁷⁰ See e.g. Z. Warpechowski, *Statecznik*, *ibid.*, p. 65; Z. Warpechowski, *Podnośnik*, *ibid.*, pp. 231, 317.

attempt to reach arts limits (Malewicz's paintings 'white on white', 'International Klein Blue', Cage's silence and 'Nothingness' by Warpechowski⁷¹).

Warpechowski is famous for being hospitable to young artists. He knows that they need support: artists are '[...] like children abandoned in a jungle. Some of them will find a way out, most of them, however, will die'⁷². We need to emphasize here, however, strong, symbiotic relations. Two exhibitions, taking place this year at Museum of Art in Łódź, could be their great example: *Bodzianowski/Konieczny/Ukłański/Warpechowski* and *Warpechowski/Dawicki* (02.22.2011-05.03.2011). During the exhibition Warpechowski stated that it is intimidating for him to appear as a master. He made a reservation that he did not create 'this school', and that the young artists express this context (and this situation is very satisfying). He also confirmed, on that occasion, the presence of a special continuity, which conditions a feeling of art settlement: '[...] I do not see this the temporal distance between what I have proposed and what they have proposed. After all, it is 30 or even 40 years'⁷³.

By underlying this continuity, Warpechowski remains –invoking frequently and openly – a debtor of historiosophical concepts by Oswald Spengler and Arnold Toynbee. Though, general, catastrophic conclusions reveal that he is rather a mindful reader of Spengler. In spite of this, he does not admit to pessimism and skepticism, he regards the entire critical impetus of his own reflection as a warning and a guideline, as "a lift" when doubting the sense of art, the sense of pursuing good, the sense of reaching for something that does not provide short-term benefits'⁷⁴. A struggle with pessimism and skepticism is, at the same time, a creative strategy, as Warpechowski's goal is the most ambitious of all: '[...] undoubtedly I look for the key to eternity, not for myself, or at least, not only for myself, but for those things that were made with the wish of immortality'⁷⁵.

Warpechowski likes to recall the atmosphere the meetings held at his home in Sandomierz. He moved there with his wife in 1985. He also likes to emphasize, how efficiently this place verifies the hustle and bustle of big cities, how it values loneliness.⁷⁶ The choice of settlement and its evaluation, particularly of this kind, can be described as 'the tradition of withdrawal'⁷⁷. 'In

⁷¹ On performances *Nic + nic + nic + nic* (1973), *Nieinterwencja – Nic* (1974), *Modlitwa o nic* (1974) see: Z. Warpechowski, *Zasobnik. Autorski opis trzydziestu lat drogi życia poprzez sztukę performance*, *ibid.*, pp. 27, 33-34.

⁷² Z. Warpechowski, *Wolność*, *ibid.*, pp. 79, 109.

⁷³ <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Tk8y64OB9JQ> [interview with Warpechowski, February 22, 2011]. Cf. Z. Warpechowski, *Statecznik*, *ibid.*, pp. 332-334.

⁷⁴ Z. Warpechowski, *Podnośnik*, *ibid.*, p. 459. Cf. Z. Warpechowski, *Statecznik*, *ibid.*, p. 76.

⁷⁵ Z. Warpechowski, *Podnośnik*, *ibid.*, p. 284.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 50, 112, 217.

⁷⁷ E. Rewers, 'Więcej tradycji: nostalgia i przemoc', in: E. Rewers, *POST – 'POLIS'. Wstęp do filozofii ponowoczesnego miasta*, Universitas, Kraków 2005, pp. 215-254.

this tradition – according to Ewa Rewers – home becomes an isolated microcosm, the center of the world, a mythical place of departure for us, to tame the wild nature and a place we withdraw ourselves to, under the pressure of the modern civilization⁷⁸. Warpechowski sets off to tame (rather identify) not wild nature, but rather the barbarians of culture: ‘younger, more primitive, aggressive, and ruthless civilizations’⁷⁹. If we notice the cultural (next to the existential) character of settlement, typical for the withdrawal strategies, we will find how much it is associated with place, memory, tradition and a concept of a strong, paternalistic subject⁸⁰. This is the home that Warpechowski creates by his art: supported by the pillars of tradition, erected by the builder – the aristocrat of the spirit, an apologist of the hierarchical society. This nostalgic vision can have a tone of yearning and anticipation for the fulfillment of his vision, yet, it can also have a tone of aggression⁸¹.

4. SETTLEMENT AND AGGRESSION

The relation between settlement and aggression originates from the clash of a seemingly innocent illusion of our own authentic life with the rest of the world. The strategy of withdrawal only seemingly takes the risk of confrontation away. Warpechowski often states he has nothing to say to a certain group and people. In fact, he accumulates those risky behaviors and turns them into aggression⁸². He does it in his art, as well as, in his writing about art.

Without doubt Warpechowski applies the rhetoric of aggression. He is aware of it: ‘[...] I am an art freak. I shall remain its apologist, a believer, a chauvinist, a fundamentalist, a fanatic, and all of the worst. I will scratch and bite everyone that will try to reach it with their dirty paws’⁸³. He also consciously pursues – which is by no means a justification – highly risky sorts of art. For in the art of performance the artist pushes his own body to the limits: physical, ethical (shame), mental. He pushes himself to ‘a pure artistic initiation’, meditation – ‘[...] it is obvious that further only chasm or madness’⁸⁴.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 220.

⁷⁹ See e.g. Z. Warpechowski, *Wolność*, *ibid.*, p. 14; Z. Warpechowski, *Statecznik*, *ibid.*, p. 68.

⁸⁰ E. Rewers, *ibid.*, p. 226.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, p. 217.

⁸² Cf. E. Rewers, *ibid.*, p. 224-225.

⁸³ Z. Warpechowski, *Podnośnik*, *ibid.*, p. 267.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 317. Cf. Z. Warpechowski, *Podnośnik*, *ibid.*, p. 317. Cf. A. Szoska, ‘Zaczepek’, *Dekada Literacka*, 2000, vol. 2/3 (160/161), online: <http://www.dekadaliteracka.pl/?id=3350>.

And when Warpechowski talks about searching for a place, it is an attempt of ‘gnawing out my place in space’⁸⁵.

Kazimierz Piotrowski dared to describe Warpechowski, avoiding oblique statements about him: ‘[...] we are dealing here with an extremely strong personality – like a second Moses, who still wants to lead Polish art across the Red Sea. Those, who got to know this anti-communism personage and his anti-atheist writings well, are in a quandary. On the one hand, they had to take their hats off to the magnificent achievements of the leading performer of world renown. On the other hand, they cannot handle the right-wing, overbearing Bierdiayew from Sandomierz. If he did not hesitate to sacrifice a lot, playing with animals’ lives and jeopardizing the integrity of his body (e.g. by starting his lush hair on fire) for something as trivial as art, the more he will not hesitate for the truth he perceives through conservative values of catholic confession. You have to know how to discuss with him and recognize the right moment to give in, as not only does he know how to preach as an angry or derisive *Champion of Golgotha*, but also how to instantly and cynically bite like a dog’⁸⁶.

It is not possible to accept this form of communication with the audience, unless you treat the audience as a part of artistic strategy, as a tool serving a vital purpose. That is why Piotrowski writes: ‘in his thought a challenging provocation makes sense, as far as in serves the purpose of calling provocation’⁸⁷. Only a close relation between form and content reveals a peculiar dilemma of the artist’s ideals and his means. We could say a classic drama of an avant-garde artist defending his ethos authoritatively. Motivation of such an aggressive and exploitative strategy is linked to the construction of the eternal, indestructible home for art: ‘I couldn’t care less [...] if my ideas are popular’, rather, I want ‘the word once uttered last forever’⁸⁸.

Warpechowski aptly evaluates himself: ‘My perception of the world is rather ominous, yet [...] it is not pessimistic’⁸⁹. A good example of his optics is the remedy, he offered, for the art crisis – ‘rape of culture’. He refers to this metaphor, on numerous occasions⁹⁰, justifying it in anthropologic, historic, and culture-gender contexts. However, each times he justifies it erroneously when referring it to the sources he is inspired by (Konrad Lorenz, Arnold Toynbee,

⁸⁵ Z. Warpechowski, *Podnośnik*, *ibid.*, p. 349.

⁸⁶ K. Piotrowski, ‘WARPECHOWSKI – od prowokacji wyzywającej do prowokacji wzywającej’, *Teraz (Świętokrzyski Miesięcznik Kulturalny)*, vol. 9 (57), 2008, p. 9. Online: <http://www.otwartapracownia.com/wystawy/2007/12-warpechowski/warpechowski-piotrowski.html>.

⁸⁷ K. Piotrowski, *ibid.*, p. 10.

⁸⁸ Z. Warpechowski, *Podnośnik*, *ibid.*, p. 237.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 244.

⁹⁰ See: Z. Warpechowski, *Podręcznik*, Centrum Sztuki Współczesnej, Warszawa 1990, pp. 211-214; Z. Warpechowski, *Podręcznik*, 2006, pp. 387-392; Z. Warpechowski, *Podnośnik*, *ibid.*, p. 98; Z. Warpechowski, *Wolność*, *ibid.*, pp. 13-15.

and the sexuality of the ancient Greeks). In fact, this metaphor is a catachresis, i.e. its variation that lacks strong justification, with the ostentatious expressiveness as a dominant⁹¹.

As the artist struggles with the censorship and lack of understanding among the audience, he thinks sometimes: 'Should I give people "a lesson" through art? Should I moralize, philosophize, intervene, or do everything for them?'⁹² Art is indeed, according to him, a challenge and vocation. The compulsion is inextricably linked with the creative process. 'Art is mean, vicious, vain, arrogant, picky, and elusive. You can easily get discouraged by it. After yielding to discouragement you immediately receive a kiss of death.'⁹³ You need stamina, immunity, endurance and to remain in good shape, physically and mentally, not only to create art, but also to defend it. 'I turned into a stone. A Stone of Love? A Stone of Art? A Pebble'⁹⁴.

What does a home of somebody, who turned into a pebble, look like?

5. SETTLEMENT AND UGLINESS

'Settlement – as the artist writes – is, at the same time, **a domestication** [Warpechowski's emphasis] of your own presence in art and in what surrounds us'⁹⁵. As Konrad Lorenz (an author close to Warpechowski) said, beauty and domestication do not go together. Lorenz was investigating the world of animals in order to explain some of the mechanisms of human behavior. He noticed that domesticated animals, when compared to their original, wild forms, appear to be uglier, shorter, and their striated muscle tone is lower. He also observed that artists from different cultures put a special emphasis on those parts of the human body which are endangered by the domestication (slim hips, thin waists, long legs)⁹⁶. As the evolution of aesthetic features can put the survival of the species into hazard, thus in the animal world it is about maintaining the balance between what is beautiful and what is useful. When one of these

⁹¹ W. Kazimierska-Jerzyk, 'Gwałt na kulturze według Zbigniewa Warpechowskiego', in: *The Senses in Polish Culture*, head of the project: Włodzimierz Bolecki and The Historical Poetics Research Team PAN, <http://sensualnosc.ibl.waw.pl>. The web will be opened to the public in 2013.

⁹² Z. Warpechowski, *Podnośnik*, *ibid.*, p. 250.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, pp. 297-298.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 351.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 444.

⁹⁶ K. Lorenz, 'Odczucie piękna i udomowienie', in: K. Lorenz, *Regres człowieczeństwa*, transl. A. D. Tauszyńska, Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, Warszawa 1996, pp. 82-83.

features prevails, you can expect a telenomic reaction, i.e. the one that will reestablish the balance⁹⁷.

This anthropology lesson is vital for two reasons.

Firstly, according to Warpechowski, what we deal with here is a hypertrophy of aesthetics; it has to be counterbalanced, as far as it is possible⁹⁸. Secondly, his wish for settlement and the feel of domestication, which is linked to the consolidation of the higher values (just as the usefulness of certain features of domesticated animals), takes place at the cost of vulgarization the aesthetic expression⁹⁹. The spontaneous feeling is as follows: the world that Warpechowski describes and creates is most of the time extremely off-putting, if not repulsive. This effect is not always and intentional one, however, it is typical for performers who question aesthetics as an artistic device.¹⁰⁰ What is aesthetics after all? 'Aesthetics is a separate branch of philosophy that explores the relations of art and social realities. Selected examples of works of art are used to illustrate complicated theories'¹⁰¹. Thus, aesthetics is arrogant, invalid, and redundant: 'Artistry is not in the sphere of aesthetics [...] none of the works of art could be described as aesthetic, however, it could consist of, or express certain aesthetic preferences'¹⁰². Warpechowski is an ideological heir of the concept of anesthesia by Marcel Duchamp. He believes that it is possible to isolate the aesthetic experience and that it is not constitutive for art. In theory, he shifts beauty into the sphere of ethics and classically binds it with good and truth¹⁰³; in practice, he valorizes ugliness: 'Ugliness is a matter of convention, superstitions, habits, also the tradition of culture. Artist is able to break those habits, to direct our emotions to something that, in first reaction, we would reject. This is a behavior inspired by love to the world of the disadvantaged by weakness, old age, destruction, consumption, oblivion, and death'¹⁰⁴. This is how the artist, through art, transforms ugliness into beauty – into something artistically valid. This is – he claims – how the relation between a man and nature, its cruel, but purposeful conditions, is expressed. However,

⁹⁷ K. Lorenz, 'Telenomiczne normy wartościowania'; 'Nadmiar i brak', in: K. Lorenz, *Regres człowieczeństwa*, *ibid.*, pp. 79-82.

⁹⁸ See e.g. Z. Warpechowski, *Podnośnik*, *ibid.*, p. 121.

⁹⁹ Cf. K. Lorenz, 'Ocena zjawisk udomowienia w zachowaniu', in: K. Lorenz, *Regres człowieczeństwa*, *ibid.*, pp. 79-82.

¹⁰⁰ Compare Jerzy Bereś's creative attitude. See W. Kazimierska-Jerzyk, 'Z tymi przedmiotami trzeba jakoś żyć – rzeźba w refleksji i praktyce artystycznej Jerzego Beresia', *Rzeźba Polska*, vol. XIII, 2009, pp. 209-213.

¹⁰⁰ Z. Warpechowski, *Wolność*, *ibid.*, p. 109.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, p. 109.

¹⁰² Z. Warpechowski, *Podnośnik*, *ibid.*, p. 121.

¹⁰³ W. Tatariewicz, *History of aesthetics*, vol. 1. *Ancient Aesthetics*, transl. Adam and Ann Czerniawski, Continuum International Publishing Group, London–New York 2005, p. 114.

¹⁰⁴ Z. Warpechowski, *Podnośnik*, *ibid.*, p. 305.

the examples of this harmony, offered by him, are curious sometimes: 'the pain of labor in silence'¹⁰⁵.

Let us remember, the artist builds a home for himself and his art. It is hard to imagine a home without objects. 'Dwelling itself is always a staying with things'¹⁰⁶. Yet, performance is supposed to be art 'without object'. You cannot plan performance starting from object; you cannot present the content, the subject, or even the problem. All of this can create a danger of fetishism, manipulation of reaction, fixation with what others did before. Art aristocratism is not about sanctioning achievements; rather it is about everyday effort and waiting for a miracle¹⁰⁷. If not ugliness then at least, ordinariness or mediocrity, are allowed as aesthetic expression, deliberately chosen for consideration. A performer is an artist who left the stage 'as somebody, NO ONE, in humility'¹⁰⁸. Though Warpechowski does not accept utilizing art (as art is 'a spiritual mystery, of spirit and for the spirit'¹⁰⁹), the rudiments of everyday life and their ugliness are enough to bind art with the current life. The artist is fully aware of it; he adheres, as a matter of fact, to the *l'art pour l'art* slogan (understood more in Theophile Gautier spirit)¹¹⁰.

The relation towards object illustrates well the vision of the connection between art and life. This is Warpechowski writing about a pitcher: 'Within the vessel, two things, correspond to each other in a very subtle way: the natural bond [...] between the content that the vessel carries and preserves, and a drawing. The drawing, the form of a vessel, is not only the equivalent of function, but also is an expression of care about its future content'¹¹¹. As we read further: 'The mental vessel cannot be blocked by categories of happiness or misfortune, by no liquid, especially by pigswill. The vessel needs to be empty, resonating like amphora in the Greek theatre'¹¹². Here the 'human vessel' represents an ideal, though, empty container. The pitcher, on the other hand, 'takes care' of its content. Anna Zeidler-Janiszewska, when reconstructing the polemics in George Simmel, Theodor Adorno and Ernst Bloch's texts on the subject of *l'art pour l'art* formula, chose exactly the vessel-vase-pitcher theme. She makes the point that Bloch's originality lies in his success to capture the multidimensional character of the connection between art and life.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 306.

¹⁰⁶ M. Heidegger, 'Building, Dwelling, Thinking', *ibid.*, p. 149.

¹⁰⁷ Z. Warpechowski, *Podnośnik*, *ibid.*, pp. 265-268.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 56.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 314.

¹¹⁰ See e.g. Z. Warpechowski, 'Pomiędzy młotem a kowadłem', in: Z. Warpechowski, *Statecznik*, *ibid.*, pp. 317-323. Cf. T. Gautier, 'Ze "Wstępu" do "Panny de Maupin"', in: *Teoretycy, artyści i krytycy o sztuce 1700-1870*, E. Grabska, M. Poprzęcka (eds), PWN, Warszawa 1974, pp. 404; G. Simmel, 'L'art pour l'art', in: *Sztuka i Filozofia* 1994, vol. 9, p. 146.

¹¹¹ Z. Warpechowski, *Podręcznik bis*, *ibid.*, p. 138.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, p. 140.

Objects are not only things (useful or not, admired or not). Each object captures its own history, and the things that have accumulated in objects tries to win our attention¹¹³.

Warpechowski's pitcher takes care only of his own content, but this happens only in case of performance. He is also a painter, a sculptor, an old art connoisseur. He is a maker and a lover of objects and as such, he is the builder of home-as-art, even though it is hard for him to admit it. When he describes the pulpit in Sandomierz Cathedral¹¹⁴, the chapel at Staromiejska Street¹¹⁵, and most of all... the notebooks he receives from his wife or from his friends, you can tell that 'he loves the world of senses and passions'¹¹⁶. But that's not all, you can see how those objects 'talk' to him, how they 'make an effort'¹¹⁷, and he listens to them, though he is a bit embarrassed by that: 'I have unmanly weakness, I like good-looking notebooks. Thick ones, hard cover, with clean pages [...] you don't scribble in a notebook like that, you respect it. And everything you write there, is being more controlled'¹¹⁸.

* * *

'This is how I build home for my art, an open home, radiant with my warmth. It does not need an addition at all cost, as this way the warmth could escape into nothingness'¹¹⁹.

Translated by Kamila Berry and Nick Berry

**ZADOMOWIENIE JAKO PERFORMATYWNY ASPEKT SZTUKI I ESTETYKI
(NA PRZYKŁADZIE POSTAWY ARTYSTYCZNEJ ZBIGNIEWA
WARPECHOWSKIEGO)
(streszczenie)**

W artykule podejmuję problem zadomowienia w twórczości Zbigniewa Warpechowskiego. Pojęcie domu jest tak szerokie i powszechne, że z całą pewnością można je zastosować w jakimś kontekście do każdego artysty i każdego typu twórczości. W przypadku Warpechowskiego

¹¹³ A. Zeidler-Janiszewska, 'Piękna waza i zwykły dzban', in: *Antropologia filozoficzna i aksjologiczne problemy współczesności*, T. Szkołut (red.), Wydawnictwo UMCS, Lublin 1997, pp. 163-168.

¹¹⁴ Z. Warpechowski, *Podnośnik*, *ibid.*, p. 176.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 446.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 99.

¹¹⁷ Cf. A. Zeidler-Janiszewska, *ibid.*, p. 166.

¹¹⁸ Z. Warpechowski, *Podnośnik*, *ibid.*, p. 207.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 444.

nie poszukuję ukrytych kontekstów bezdomności/zadomowienia, a rozważam otwarcie i wielokrotnie sformułowane pragnienie zadomowienia własnej sztuki. Warpechowski nie odwołuje się *explicite* do negatywnych znaczeń zadomowienia. Dostrzegając jednak dwuznaczne aspekty zadomowienia w jego ujęciu, pokazuję je jako konsekwencje postawy twórczej (agresja i brzydota).

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GREECE – THE IRRETRIEVABLY LOST HOME OF ART

Abstract: The word ‘home’ means not only the place where you live, but also a place where something begins, and a place you belong to. European culture, notably art and philosophy, was born in ancient Greece, and we still affirm that fact. However, within our modern culture, art no longer has a place of residence. When modernism broke with the classical tradition, this was perceived by some theorists not as a sign of maturity, but as uprooting, leading inevitably to the end of art. In their eyes, art has lost a home: religion, beauty and humanity.

This problem was strongly emphasized in the 19th century, when art started to gain its independence, which was connected with its parting and separation from classicism (regarded as the only heir to the legacy of classical Greek antiquity). Symptoms of this devaluation of art had been diagnosed earlier, by Johann Winckelmann and Friedrich Schiller, in the second half of the 18th century. The homesickness and nostalgia of art had a strong influence on the Arcadian vision of Greece as a golden land. Undoubtedly it contributed to the 19th century philhellenism. Ancient Greece inspired artists and attracted theorists until the mid 20th century. The enthusiastic reception of Isadora Duncan’s dance is only one example attesting to this fact.

The present paper invokes those concepts of art which locate ideal art in Ancient Greece. It enquires which features qualified ancient culture to be the perfect one, and which were lost over time. Consequently, it poses the question about the future of art; whether the revival of art, compared to homecoming, is possible. The experience of contemporary art shows that the return to ancient tradition is impossible and that art must find another place for itself. It appears that the most current conception now is the one which proclaims the end of art.

Keywords: classical tradition – modern culture – 19th century aesthetics.

THE IDEAL HOME

Indisputably, we owe the ideal vision of ancient Greece to Johann Joachim Winckelmann, who not only embraced the ancient tradition (however present in the history of European culture) and affirmed it as a paradigm, but also tried to validate it. He had begun an investigation and reflection on the ancient Greeks, which continued for the next 150 years. What is most symptomatic (and arguable), is that he treated works of art as historical documents, and he

built his concept of the 'Greek soul' on the basis of Greek material culture. In his writings he reversed the order of things, starting from climate, geography, and social conditions to justify the perfection of art, nevertheless, his assumptions about the initial conditions were impossible to prove in those days¹. Even if he wrote that art was perfect because man was perfect, the starting point for his thinking were visual arts², and his conclusions resulted from his belief in *mimesis*. It is important to emphasize that the author of *Thoughts on the Imitation of Greek Works in Painting and Sculpture* created an aesthetic interpretation of ancient Greece. The successors of this *Thoughts*, realizing the superficiality of his knowledge about Greece captured by that work, deepened the reflection on it and created a vision much more extensive and highly impossible to follow. In the writings of such philosophers as Friedrich Schiller, Friedrich Schelling, or Georg Hegel, ancient Greece, in the 5th century BC, appears to be the happiest period of humanity, when 'a mode of life, in which the highest in man, his aspiration to form and expression and clarity was at one with his nature and all of nature. It was an era of unity and harmony within man, in which thought and feeling, morality and sensibility were one, in which the form which man stamped on his life whether moral, political, or spiritual flowed from his own natural being, and was not imposed on it by the force of raw will'³. This harmony that characterized the ancient man, was not only an external harmony like Winckelmann's proportionality, but also an inner harmony; the union of mind, body, and feelings. An ancient Greek, living in harmony with himself, with nature, his gods and society, created art which had to integrate nature, religion, and people, because art was the ultimate means of expression of the integral man⁴.

That image of 'unalienated and unfragmented life', when 'sensuality and reason had not yet been divided from each other' had been created especially by Friedrich Schiller⁵. Sensuality and emotions were subjected to the law of nature: 'This lively susceptibility on the score of suffering, this warm,

¹ An example of such thinking can be a sentence: 'How quick, how refined must be the organs have been, which were the depositors of such a tongue!', J.J. Winckelmann, *Thoughts on the Imitation of Greek Works in Painting and Sculpture*, trans. by C. Bowman, in: *Idem, Essays on the Philosophy and History of Art*, vol. 1, London-N.Y., p. 156.

² Already Gotthold Ephraim Lessing has demonstrated in his *Laocoön* that Winckelmann had no knowledge of the ancient literature; G.E. Lessing, *Laocoön: An Essay on the Limits of Painting and Poetry*, in: *Idem, Essays on The Philosophy And History of Art*, vol. 1, London 2005, p. 156.

³ Taylor, C., *Hegel*, Cambridge 1975, p. 26.

⁴ Richard Wagner stated: "The free Greek, who set himself upon the pinnacle of nature, could procreate art from very joy in manhood. Art is the highest expression of activity of a race that has developed its physical beauty in unison with itself and nature". R. Wagner, *The Art-Work of the Future*, in: *Idem, The Art-Work of the Future and Other Works*, transl. W. A. Ellis, Bison Book, 1993, p. 38.

⁵ See: K. Hammermeister, *German Aesthetic Tradition*. New York, 2002, p. 49.

ingenuous nature, showing itself uncovered and in all truth in the monuments of Greek art [...]; it is a law which Greek genius has laid down for the fine arts. It is always and eternally nature which has the first rights over man; she ought never to be fettered, because man, before being anything else, is a sensuous creature⁶ – as Schiller wrote in his essay *The Pathetic*, where he insisted that ‘nothing that only interests sensuous nature is worthy of being represented by art. Thus not only the affections that do nothing but enervate and soften man, but in general all affections, even those that are exalted, ecstatic, whatever may be their nature, are beneath the dignity of tragic art.’⁷

As we can see, Schiller thinks about the inner nature of man and it is symptomatic that he notes how in their art the Greeks take no more interest in the details of nature than in the details of any production of artefacts. Schiller came to the conclusion that ‘In their love for the object it seems that they make no difference between what exists in itself and what owes its existence to art, to the human will. It seems that nature interests their minds and their curiosity more than moral feeling. They do not attach themselves to it with that depth of feeling, with that gentle melancholy, that characterizes the moderns. Nay, more, by personifying nature in its particular phenomena, by deifying it, by representing its effects as the acts of free being, they take from it that character of calm necessity’⁸. There are some relevant observations in that passage. Indeed, in Greek art, nature was appealing only in the form of gods (was presented as gods) and Schiller, as well as the classics, understood such presentation as an allegorical one, which shows that he regarded mythology as a product of artistic creation.

Secondly, it is noteworthy that the Greeks did not care about details. In his other essays Schiller wrote that the sculptors rejected drapery as an accidental thing and generally the artists rejected ordinary subjects⁹. All of this stems from the principle that ‘The Greeks always went to the ideal’¹⁰.

Interestingly, Schiller draws inspiration from the fact that the ancients did not differentiate between natural and artificial objects, and he includes in the ‘law of nature’ all objects and human feelings, excluding moral feelings. The latter were subjected to a second law – the law of reason: ‘After the rights of nature come those of reason, because man is a rational, sensuous being, a moral person, and because it is a duty for this person not to let himself be ruled by nature, but to rule her. It is only after satisfaction has been given in the first

⁶ F. Schiller, *Aesthetical and Philosophical Essays, The Pathetic*, The Project Gutenberg EBook of The Aesthetical Essays, by Frederich Schiller, http://www.gutenberg.org/files/6798/6798-h/6798-h.htm#2H_4_0005.

⁷ *Idem, The Pathetic, ibid.*

⁸ *Idem, On Simple and Sentimental Poetry, ibid.*

⁹ *Idem, The Pathetic, ibid.*

¹⁰ *Idem, Reflections on the use of the vulgar and low elements in works of art, ibid.*

place to nature, and after reason in the second place has made its rights acknowledged, that it is permitted for decorum in the third place to make good its claims, to impose on man, in the expression of his moral feelings and of his sensations, considerations towards society, and to show in it the social being, the civilized man'¹¹. That third law – *decorum*, an unnatural law established by the community, was not interesting for the author of the *Letters of the Aesthetical Education of Man*, for it was a basic principle of art in his times.

For Schiller ancient art was the ultimate means of expression, based on the unity of human nature and reason, but he did not mention religion. It was, however, noticed as the most important cause of the highest level of Greek art in the aesthetic writings of Hegel and Schelling. For Hegel classical art, whose paragon was the art of ancient Greece, was truly the art placing itself 'in the same sphere as religion and philosophy' and it was 'simply one way of bringing to our minds and expressing the *Divine*, the deepest interests of mankind, and the most comprehensive truths of the spirit.'¹² Art was the perfect, sensuous expression of the spirit, like no other. It did not represent gods, but truly created them. Trying to explain the Greeks' state of mind and their religiousness, Hegel wrote that 'the artists gave the nation a definite idea of the behavior, life, and effectiveness of the Divine, or, in other words, the definite content of religion. And it was as if these ideas and doctrines were already there, *in advance* of poetry, in an abstract mode of consciousness as general religious propositions and categories of thought'¹³. Thus, religion and art fell into one category. Art was the embodiment of the 'idea'; 'the perfect content has been perfectly revealed in artistic shapes'¹⁴, and this harmony established beauty.

The gods of the Greeks, in Hegel's thought, were the objects of naïve intuition and sensuous imagination¹⁵. A deeper reflection on the gods, also belonging to idealism, can be found in the *Philosophy of Art* by Friedrich Schelling. For him, the Greek gods are a 'syntheses of the universal and particular', 'images of the divine' and 'they are ideas only to the extent that they are gods in a specific form. Every idea, therefore, equals god, but a particular god'¹⁶. What is emphasized most by Schelling is the reality of the gods¹⁷, understood not as physical entities but as real, specific ideas. 'In the

¹¹ *Idem*, *The Pathetic*, *ibidem*.

¹² Hegel, *Aesthetics. Lectures on Fine Art*, trans. T.M. Knox, vol. 1, Oxford 1975, p. 7.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p.102.

¹⁴ *Ibid*, p. 103.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 79.

¹⁶ F.W Schelling, *Philosophy of Art*, trans. by W. Douglas, University of Minnesota Press, 1989, p. 92.

¹⁷ See: W.Juszczak, *Pani na żurawiach. I: Realność bogów*, Kraków 2002.

higher sense – they were more real for the Greeks than every other reality'¹⁸. This reality also applies to art, as Schelling put it, for the world of the gods can be comprehended only by fantasy. Art is, therefore, the only way to express gods, and mythology is the basis for art¹⁹. Art and religion form a unity because of the total 'impossibility on the one hand of giving the former any other poetic world than within and through religion and the impossibility on the other hand of bringing the latter to any true objective manifestation other than through art'²⁰. Beauty is a binder that combines both²¹.

Philosophers and theorists (especially German) created a compelling image of the ancient Greece that influenced the European artists in the 19th century and aroused popular interest in modern Greece. It gave a spark first to classicism, romantic philhellenism, and later to the decadent aesthetics and all types of Greek-mania (even in the USA). All of those phenomena stemmed from the longing for the land of happiness, where people were thinkers, athletes, and artists all at the same time; where people were emotional, creative, religious in a natural way, and integral.²² It was the time of childhood, innocence and naivety²³.

That image had been clouded only by Frederick Nietzsche, who, in his *Birth of Tragedy*, argued: 'The Greek knew and felt the terror and horrors of existence: in order to be able to live at all, he must have placed in front of him the gleaming dream birth of the Olympians'²⁴. Nietzsche made it clear that the

¹⁸ F.W.J. Schelling, *op.cit.*, p 92. In other words he wrote: "The absolute reality of the gods follows directly from their absolute ideality, for they are absolute, and within the absolute, ideality and reality are one, absolute possibility = absolute actuality. The highest identity is at once the highest objectivity", *ibidem*.

¹⁹ "The world of the gods is the object neither of mere understanding nor of reason, but rather can be comprehended only by fantasy. 1 It is not an object of understanding, since understanding remains bound to limitation; nor is it one of reason, since even in scientific or systematic thinking reason can portray or present the synthesis of the absolute with limitation only ideally (archetypally). Hence, it is the object only of fantasy, which presents this synthesis in images", *ibidem*, p. 95.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 65.

²¹ The basic law of all portrayals of the gods is the law of beauty, for beauty is the absolute intuited in reality. Now, since the gods are the absolute itself intuited actually (or synthesized with limitation) within the particular, their basic law of portrayal is that of beauty. *Ibid.*, p. 97.

²² Even in 1869 Mathew Arnold wrote : "The best art and poetry of the Greeks, in which religion and poetry are one in which the idea of beauty and of a human nature perfect on all sides adds to itself a religious and devout energy, and works in the strength of that, is on this account of such surpassing interest and instructiveness for us", M.Arnold, *Culture and Anarchy: an Essay in Political and Social Criticism* , 1869, The Project Gutenberg Etext of Culture and Anarchy, by Matthew Arnold, <http://www.gutenberg.org/cache/epub/4212/pg4212.html>.

²³ The idea of classical Greece as the youth of humanity was propagated inter alia by J. G. von Herder in: *This Too a Philosophy of History for the Formation of Humanity* [1774], Idem, *Philosophical Writings*, trans. M. N. Forster, Cambridge (2002).

²⁴ Nietzsche F., *The Birth of Tragedy Out of the Spirit of Music*, trans. By: I. Johnston, http://records.viu.ca/~johnstoi/Nietzsche/tragedy_all.htm, &3.

naïve art of the Greeks was not innocent, but it was ‘the result of the highest conscious effort directed against the horror of being’²⁵. Since then, every interpretation of ancient Greece had to take into account the Dionysian, and all of the optimistic images seemed to be only a curtain, an Apollonian dream.

HOMESICKNESS

Homesickness usually springs from the feeling of insecurity, instability, and deficiency. Homelessness is not only the loss of a place to live, but it is also the loss of many other values. There would be no homesickness in the modern culture, if it was not for the sense of loss. What has man lost and what does he long for? Such questions must be asked to diagnose the modern chronic nostalgia.

‘Individuals, lost in an isolation from nature, strangers to the place of their birth, without contact with the past, living only in the rapid present, and thrown down like atoms on an immense and leveled plain, are detached from a fatherland that they see nowhere’ – were the concern, in 1814, of Benjamin Constant, the French writer and politician²⁶. It was an accurate observation about the social changes at the beginning of the 19th century, and it was shared by many thinkers. The more attached they were to the ideal image of the ancient Greece, the stronger was their criticism. In the cited passage we can find many characteristics of a human life in modernism, such as the alienation from nature and community, living without the past and the future.²⁷ Describing homelessness as the condition of modern man seems very reasonable; this can be confirmed by the observation of Dirk Held: ‘Dissonance and conflict moved to the center of modern experience, and humans would no longer be metaphysically at home in the world’²⁸

It was Friedrich Schiller who was the first to point out the degeneration of the modern society and of its culture. He set out to show that the modern man,

²⁵ K. Hammermeister, *op.cit.*, p. 139.

²⁶ Constant B., *Rapports avec la civilisation européenne*. in French: <http://www.gutenberg.org/cache/epub/28078/pg28078.html>, quoted: A. Vidler, *The Architectural Uncanny. Essays in the Modern Unhomely*, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 1992, p. 4.

²⁷ F.J.W. Schelling in *Philosophy of Art* writes: “The modern world begins when man tears himself away from nature, but as he has no other home he feels himself alone”, *op.cit.*, p. 427.

²⁸ D. Held, *op.cit.*, p. 166. Author of this article refers here to the sentence of Suzan Neiman, but her words concern Kant’s dualism: “Integrity inquires affirming the dissonance and conflict at the heart of experience. It means recognizing that we are never, metaphysically, at home in the world”. S. Neiman, *Evil in Modern Thought: An Alternative History of Philosophy*, New Jersey, 2002, p. 87.

as opposed to an ancient Greek, was an individual who was unable to live in unity and to be complete. The ‘inner man’ is divided because ‘intuitive and speculative understanding took up a hostile attitude in opposite fields’: imagination, intelligence, and feelings compete²⁹. The modern man, who is unable to live in harmony with its own nature, cannot see himself as a whole, as a microcosm reflecting the macrocosm. ‘Why could the individual Greek be qualified as the type of his time’, Schiller asks, ‘and why can no modern dare to offer himself as such?’ His answer is: ‘because all-uniting nature imparted its forms to the Greek, and an all-dividing understanding gives our forms to us’³⁰. It is the reasoning that stands behind the invention of the modern organization of our society, where specialized individuals live side by side in conglomerations³¹. Such a society is deeply divided and all its institutions are separated: ‘there was a rupture between the state and the church, between laws and customs; enjoyment was separated from labor, the means from the end, the effort from the reward’³², observed the author of the *Letters*. He perceived the clear division into classes as the cause of the downfall of culture. He characterized the lower class as barbaric in its behavior, the upper one as laid back, depraved, and lacking the sense of purpose³³. The spirit of materialism permeated the whole society.

Less than one-hundred years later Friedrich Nietzsche accused reason, even more strongly, of leading to the downfall of modernity, however, he believed the source of the problem to lie in ancient Greece. ‘Our entire modern world is trapped in the net of Alexandrian culture and recognizes as its ideal the *theoretical man*, equipped with the highest intellectual powers and working in the service of science, a man for whom Socrates is the prototype and progenitor’ he wrote in his *Birth of Tragedy*³⁴. Socratism, as Nietzsche emphasized, resulted in the destruction of a myth.

On the basis of the *Birth of Tragedy*, Meville Morley drew the image of the modern man: ‘Now mythless man stands there, eternally hungry, amidst all the pasts, and, digging and scrabbling, seeks for roots, even if he has to dig for them in the most distant antiquities’. He defined the myth as being that of

²⁹ F. Schiller, *Letters on the Aesthetical Education of Man, Letter VI, op.cit.*

³⁰ F. Schiller, *ibidem*.

³¹ Gerardus van der Leeuw, whose views will be discussed further, also sees that man have lost the unity of life because he concerns on separated activities and skills: ‘The great difficulty, indeed the tragedy of our modern life, lies in the fact that we differentiate between the things which concern us and things which do not concern us. We are musical or we are not; we are religious or we are not; we are concerned with economic affairs or we are not. We have our >job< or our >free time<’ *Idem, Sacred and Profane Beauty. The Holy in Art*, transl. by D.E. Green, New York, 1963, p. 33.

³² F. Schiller, *Letter VI., op.cit.*

³³ F. Schiller, *Letter V, op. cit.*

³⁴ F. Nietzsche, *op.cit.*

a home and the maternal womb³⁵. As Nietzsche claims in his examination of tragedy, the myth reveals the horror of existence, which has been hidden behind the veil of the optimistic Apollonian spirit. Man, confronted with the myth 'felt himself raised up to some sort of omniscience, ... and he could now see in front of him the turbulent feelings of the will, the war of motives, the growing storm of passions as something which is, as it were, sensuously present, like an abundance of living lines and figures in motion, and thus as if he could plunge into the most delicate secrets of unknown emotions'³⁶. The loss of myth, which Nietzsche regarded as a prerequisite of every religion, is actually the loss of religion and the creative natural energy. This also contributes to the downfall of art³⁷. It should be noted that the tragic myth reveals itself fully in music, and music is the most valuable of all arts.

Answering the question posed at the beginning of this section, we can say that according to some philosophers, the modern man, compared to the ancient one, has lost his integrity, intuition, his sense of community, and his religiosity. These deficiencies have adversely affected art, and it is now possible to see how they triggered the tremendous changes in human creativity. It should be also remembered that those changes were interpreted by the authors cited here as the signs of a profound crisis. It is difficult to say which came first – whether the recognition of the decay of culture brought about the quest for the Greek ideal, or whether the fascination with Greece contributed to the sense of crisis. Certainly, the cultural collapse of modernity was reported in reference to the ancient ideal. The image of modernity which appears in those references could be described as a vision of a tremendous loss, of homelessness.

The biggest complaint was that modern art ceased to flow from life. This was clearly expressed by Wagner: 'Our modern art is a mere product of culture and has not sprung from life itself; therefore, being nothing but a hothouse plant, it cannot strike root in the natural soil or flourish in the natural climate of the present. Art has become the private property of an artist-caste'³⁸. One of the first artists to juxtapose nature and culture was Wolfgang Goethe. Similarly, Wagner, following in Goethe's footsteps, emphasized the artificial origins of culture. Ancient Greek art emerged not from the private feelings and experiences of the artist, but from the universal laws of life and was understood by the majority of the society. In modern times, art has become a private activity directed at a private customer. Virginia Woolf presented, in a vivid way, 'non-private literature' in her essay *On not Knowing Greek*: 'The poet, therefore, had to bethink him, not of some theme which could be read for

³⁵ N. Morley, *Antiquity and Modernity*, New York 2009, p. 96.

³⁶ Nietzsche, *op.cit.*, p. 22.

³⁷ Certainly, we must remember that Nietzsche blames Christianity in particular, for the collapse of the modern culture.

³⁸ R. Wagner, *Art-Work of*, p. 182.

hours by people in privacy, but of something emphatic, familiar, brief, that would carry, instantly and directly, to an audience of seventeen thousand people perhaps, with ears and eyes eager and attentive, with bodies whose muscles would grow stiff if they sat too long without diversion. Music and dancing he would need, and naturally would choose one of those legends, like our Tristram and Iseult, which are known to everyone in outline, so that a great fund of emotion is ready prepared, but can be stressed in a new place by each new poet³⁹. One of her observations that was particularly interesting was that in a southern climate, life is conducted outside and all affairs are publicly debated in the streets⁴⁰. This should not be associated with gossiping and chatting (a characteristic of 19th century romances), but rather with the idea of life without the division into private and public⁴¹.

In the era of divisions, the artist is incapable of creating art that would be universal, as there is no common life or common goals within the society. Instead of one cultural community there are different temporary groups of interests. Gerard van der Leeuw points out that the artist is a product of modern culture, and thus he does not fit into the social order. He is a gypsy, a weirdo, an individual. He despises 'occasional poetry', paints portraits only to earn money⁴²; he is not a craftsman. This Dutch philosopher of religion, examining the relationship of art and religion in ancient communities, observed that art, separated from religion and social needs, was losing its identity⁴³. When he quoted Franz Werfel's novel *Verdi*: 'Art like everything holy, is only art when it does not know that it is', he indicated how the self-awareness of art is dangerous for art itself⁴⁴. It is characteristic for the works of modern art to express the views, the feelings, and the experiences of their authors. Again, let us return to Virginia Woolf, who regretted the loss of chorus – something that 'was general and poetic, comment, not action, could be freed without interrupting the movement of the whole. It is this that the choruses supply; the old men or women who take no active part in the drama, the undifferentiated voices who sing like birds in the pauses of the wind; who can comment, or sum up, or allow the poet to speak himself or supply, by contrast, another side to his conception'⁴⁵. It was a place for sudden admiration, ardent acts of

³⁹ Woolf V., *On not Knowing Greek*, <http://ebooks.adelaide.edu.au/w/woolf/virginia/w91c/chapter3.html>.

⁴⁰ She, of course, was writing from the perspective of England, where people are 'accustomed to live more than half the year indoors', *ibidem*.

⁴¹ Schelling also compared Athenian "public freedom" with modern "slavery of private life", *op.cit.*, p. 573.

⁴² G. van der Leeuw, *op.cit.*, p. 271.

⁴³ "When art frees itself from its sacred ties, it breaks through the identity of image and object", *ibidem*, p. 169.

⁴⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 272.

⁴⁵ V. Woolf, *op.cit.*

worship; for a song of love or of praise. The modern artist has lost his ability to express the collective experience, he has ceased to be a representative of the people and, moreover, he has also lost his collective recipient – a community of involved people, who evaluate art work using the same criteria.⁴⁶

Reflection on ancient art led to the longing for the unity of the object and the subject. Starting from Schelling, philosophers of culture saw in the ancient thinking an inability to separate images from other, abstract ways of expressing and describing reality⁴⁷. This allowed for the recognition of art as inseparable, identical with religion, so it served a vital role in the community. In a mythless culture, such as the modern one, art is empty and dead and remains on the margins of life. Modern art, according to Schelling, has lost the unity of form and content: 'The inclination of the artists of antiquity proceeded from the center out toward the periphery. Later artists take the externally extracted form and seek to imitate it, retaining the shadow without the body. ... Those who notice the emptiness of form without content preach the return to substantiality by means of imitation of nature. Those who cannot elevate themselves above that empty and vacant external extraction of form preach the ideal, the imitation of what has already been formed. None, however, return to the true primal sources of art from which form and substance issue together as one'⁴⁸. Modern art is only an imitation or representation, separated from what it refers to. Art has ceased to be symbolic, that is to say, according to the author of the *Philosophy of Art*, it has lost its total unity, where universal and particular are the same (just as in Greek poetry or sculpture)⁴⁹. Only symbolic art could express and evoke religious experience, and this is not possible in the modern culture.

Hegel draws similar conclusions regarding modern art: 'works of art no longer fill our highest need. We have got beyond venerating works of art as divine and worshipping them'⁵⁰. Nevertheless, it must be emphasized that according to his historiosophical conception of the development of the 'spirit', it is not so much the result of the emancipation of art (its 'leaving home'), as rather the maturation of man, who 'outgrows' art. In fact, it should be said that the 'spirit' has ceased to express itself via man's artistic activity. Art has served

⁴⁶ It is Schelling, who notes that: 'As multifarious as art is within itself, so also are the various viewpoints of artistic evaluation multifarious and full of nuances. None of the disputants understands the others. The one judges according to the standard of truth, the other according to that of beauty; yet neither knows what truth or beauty is'. F.W.J. Schelling, *op.cit.*, p. 68.

⁴⁷ The same way of understanding those cultures goes later Walter Benjamin, Lukacs, Heidegger.

⁴⁸ F.W.J.Schelling, *op.cit.*, pp. 67-68.

⁴⁹ Schelling distinguished: schematism – when the universal means the particular, allegorical – when the particular means the universal and symbolic – the synthesis of these two, *op.cit.*, p. 46.

⁵⁰ G.W.F. Hegel, *op.cit.*, p. 10.

its historic mission and belongs to the past, which is why Hegel does not lament the condition of contemporary art. Instead, he analyzes art from a distance, as a peculiar historical object, from which, as he writes, ‘belief had gone’ and as he explains: ‘The tables of the gods provide no spiritual food and drink, and in his games and festivals, man no longer recovers the joyful consciousness of his unity with the divine. The works of the Muse now lack the power of the Spirit, for the Spirit has gained its certainty of itself from the crushing of gods and men’⁵¹.

From the reflection of philosophers and theoreticians emerges the image of modern art; art that is inadequate to life, deprived of power and the means to express life. However, modern life is no longer a rejuvenating source for art: a steam engine or the stock exchange are rather unrewarding subjects for poetry⁵². Moreover, human emotions and experiences have become too difficult to be embraced by art. Schiller, in his 1799 essay *The Pathetic*, demanded that art should elevate sorrow, and condemned the softening emotions and fits of passion⁵³. In 1925, Virginia Woolf pointed out that ‘In the vast catastrophe of the European war our emotions had to be broken up for us, and put at an angle from us, before we could allow ourselves to feel them in poetry or fiction. ... It was not possible for them [poets] to be direct without being clumsy; or to speak simply of emotion without being sentimental’. She remained, however, fixated on the ideal Greek model, where heroes ‘could march straight up, with their eyes open; and thus fearlessly approached, emotions stand still and suffer themselves to be looked at’⁵⁴. Likely, she was evoking this in the hope for the revival of art. Unfortunately, World War II and the horror of totalitarianisms brought with them the kind of experiences that art could no longer face up to, and no one even expected it to do so.

THE HOMECOMING

The aim of comparing modernity and the Greek ideal was not only to complain about the culture that went astray, it was also to help art find the right way.

⁵¹ G.W.F. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. by A.V. Miller, Delhi 1998, p. 455.

⁵² N. Morley, *op.cit.*, p.102.

⁵³ ‘The soft emotions, only producing tenderness, are of the nature of the agreeable, with which the fine arts are not concerned. They only caress the senses, while relaxing and creating languidness, and only relate to external nature, not at all to the inner nature of man. [...] the senses swim in delight, but that the mind or the principle of freedom in man has become a prey to the violence of the sensuous impression. Real taste that of noble and manly minds, rejects all these emotions as unworthy of art, because they only please the senses, with which art has nothing in common’. F. Schiller, *The Pathetic*, *op.cit.*

⁵⁴ V. Woolf, *op.cit.*

Some of the authors saw it as the way back to an ideal home, others as the way to a 'new land', where a new home would need to be constructed. However, even the latter proposal contained a hidden reference to the past, assuming the home would be built according to the ideal model⁵⁵. That was the difference between the above-mentioned thinkers and those who were fascinated by modernity, and were making plans about a new reality. According to them, it was the reality built from scratch, free from the dead tradition.

'There is but one way for the moderns to become great, and perhaps unequalled; I mean, by imitating the ancients'⁵⁶ claimed Winckelmann, probably the last of the theoreticians who were such strong believers in this idea⁵⁷. While it is true that his passion was infectious among the artists and researchers, it also opened a heated discussion – about whether and how the ancients should be followed. Even though Schiller believed that 'truth continues to live in illusion, and the copy will serve to re-establish the model'⁵⁸, he realized the distance between the ancient and modernity: 'If the modern poet thinks he feels enough of the Greek's mind to vie with them, notwithstanding all the indocility of his matter, on their own ground, namely that of simple poetry, let him do it exclusively [...] It is very doubtful he come up to his models; between the original and the happiest imitation there will always remain a notable distance; but, by taking this road, he is at all events secure in producing a really poetic work'⁵⁹. Let us emphasize that Schiller is talking about choosing the way – about deliberate choice and intention, which makes a difference between a modern and an ancient poet. For Schiller, future culture had to be a synthesis of the modern and ancient values, with modernity contributing to it by self-knowledge: reason, freedom, and the moral greatness⁶⁰.

Unfortunately, classicism, contrary to Schiller's presumptions, usually came down to copying ancient works of art, hence such a serious objection to

⁵⁵ Wagner, who was talking about new, revolutionary art, also stated: 'In any serious investigation of the essence of our art today, we cannot make one step forward without being brought face to face with its intimate connection with the art of ancient Greece', R. Wagner, *Art and Revolution*, in: Idem. *op.cit.* p. 32.

⁵⁶ J.J. Winckelmann, *op.cit.*, p. 2.

⁵⁷ We should not forget that even he puts emphasis on creating a collection of allegories: 'collected from All mythology, the best poets of all ages, the mysterious philosophy of different nations...' *ibidem*, p. 60. Before him, the classicists: Poussin, Roland Fréart de Chambray, Nicolas Boileau-Despréaux in the 17th century France and Alexander Pope in the 18th century England advocated a close imitation of the Ancients: 'Hear how learned Greece her useful rules indites/ when to repress and when indulge our flights.' A. Pope, *An Essay on Criticism* in: A. Pope, *Essay on Man and other Poems*, Dover Publications, 1994, p. 6.

⁵⁸ F. Schiller, *Letter IX*, *op.cit.*

⁵⁹ Idem, *Idyl*, *op.cit.*

⁶⁰ J. Prokopiuk, *Wstęp*, in: F. Schiller, *Listy o estetycznym wychowaniu człowieka i inne rozprawy*, Warszawa 1972, pp. 11-12.

classicism in the romantic generation. Particularly French romanticists were very critical about the imitation: Stendhal, Eugène Delacroix, Théophile Thoré, and Charles Baudelaire, who resented the monopoly of David's school in painting. Stendhal was ironical about the classic paintings: 'it is absurd to set out for battle when not wearing clothes. "But such is the custom in ancient bas-reliefs!" – cry the classicists... what do I care for ancient bas-reliefs?'⁶¹ Thoré stated: 'Why did Michelangelo and Raphael not despair coming as they did after Phidias and Apelles? And how did they raise themselves as high in poetry as the inimitable Greeks? By not imitating'⁶². Nevertheless, none of them depreciated the value of ancient art, although for them, it belonged to the closed past. '...for any "modernity" to be worthy of one day taking its place as "antiquity", it is necessary for the mysterious beauty which human life accidentally puts into it to be distilled from it'⁶³ – wrote Baudelaire, who knew well that there is no way back from modernity. Obviously, at end of the 19th century, and in the 20th century, neoclassical influences were still present, though they were not based on imitation, but rather on the concept of the ideal of universal and timeless beauty⁶⁴.

Imitating antiquity could not save art from its homelessness. Longing for Greece was very often accompanied by the realization that we do not fully know what ancient Greece was like. Even Friedrich Schlegel wrote: 'The fault lies not with Greek poetry but with the *manner and method* of the imitation, which as long national subjectivity rules, and as long one strives only for the interesting – must necessarily end up one-sided. Only he who thoroughly knows Greek poetry *can* imitate it'⁶⁵, though he believed that imitation is still possible, it should be preceded by learning about the old culture.

Who could gain the knowledge about ancient Greece and how could this be done? Certainly, for Nietzsche it was not possible for philologists. 'Our philologists stand in the same relation to real educators as the medicine-men of the savages do to real doctors. How a distant time will marvel at us!'⁶⁶, 'They lack the real desire for the strong and powerful traits of antiquity. They become eulogists and thereby become ridiculous'⁶⁷. Moreover, artists and philosophers

⁶¹ Stendhal, *Salon 1824*, in: Ch. Harrison, P. Wood, J. Gaiger, *Art in Theory 1815-1900. An Anthology of Changing Ideas*, Oxford 1998, p. 30.

⁶² T. Thoré, *Salons*, *ibidem*, p. 387.

⁶³ Ch. Baudelaire, *The Painter of Modern Life and other Essays*, *ibidem*, p. 498.

⁶⁴ The review of neoclassical trends in the 19th and 20th century can be found in: A. Kaliszewski, *Nostalgia stylu. Neoklasycyzm liryki polskiej XX wieku w krytyce, badaniach i poetykach immanentnych (w kontekście tradycji poetologicznej klasycyzmu)*. Chapter I, *Czym jest neoklasycyzm*, Kraków 2007, pp.19-93.

⁶⁵ F. Schlegel, *On the Study of Greek Poetry*, New York 2001, p. 77.

⁶⁶ F. Nietzsche, *Wir Philologen* [unpublished notes 1875] in *Werke*, IV.1, Berlin 1967, p. 160-161, cyt: N. Morley, *op.cit.*, p. 106.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

wrongly assumed that they would be able to study the Greeks and improve on their ideas. They also erected false bridges over the chasm between antiquity and modernity⁶⁸. Yet, according to Nietzsche, Greece should remain mysterious and not fully disclosed⁶⁹.

At the turn of the 19th and the 20th century the delusion that imitating Greece is a way of re-establishing harmony and beauty was no longer valid. Something so incomprehensible and untranslatable into a modern language cannot be imitated. From those philological dilemmas stemmed Virginia Woolf's reflections in *On not Knowing Greek*: '... are we not reading wrongly? Losing our sharp sight in the haze of associations? Reading into Greek poetry not what they have but what we lack? Does not the whole of Greece heap itself behind every line of its literature?'⁷⁰ How can we translate a language the melody of which we have never heard? How can we talk about the paintings we have never seen? How can we stage a tragedy, which is preserved only in its written form? Still, it is a mystery how the unrecognizable could be so powerfully attractive⁷¹. Even though Greece ceased to be a model for imitation, it has become a challenge. The modern artist is expected to create original works, but ones as magnificent and universal as those of the Greeks.

'But only *Revolution*, not slavish *Restoration*, can give us back that highest Art-work' – wrote Wagner – 'The task we have before us is immeasurably greater than that already accomplished in "the days of old"'⁷². The art work of the future was supposed to 'embrace the spirit of a free mankind'⁷³ and unite within itself the achievements of all arts. Such were the assumptions realized by the composer creating his monumental musical dramas. It was also a symptom of a great change, caused by the already mentioned 'longing' for Greece, which could be called a new paragon of art. The imitation of the art of classic Greece infected all the fine arts – sculpture, painting (which was modeled on sculpture), and architecture. Even poetry was problematic, as it

⁶⁸ In *Birth of Tragedy* he argues with A.W. Schlegel's concept that choir in tragedy is the 'ideal audience', see: &7.

⁶⁹ D. Wilkerson makes a point that: 'Rather than trying to evoke a return to the past, Nietzsche's attention to the Greeks resembles more the interests of the cultural anthropologist who wishes to uncover formal differences in manners indicating the development of the human being's instincts for personal identity and social unity.' Idem, *Nietzsche and the Greeks*, London 2006, p.30; <http://site.ebrary.com/lib/unilodz/Doc?id=10224906&ppg=30>.

⁷⁰ V. Woolf, *op.cit.*

⁷¹ 'Nevertheless, it is the language that has us most in bondage; the desire for that which perpetually lures us back', 'Entirely aware of their own standing in the shadow, and yet alive to every tremor and gleam of existence, there they endure, and it is to the Greeks that we turn when we are sick of the vagueness, of the confusion, of the Christianity and its consolations, of our own age', *ibid.*

⁷² R. Wagner, *Art and...*, p. 53.

⁷³ *Ibid.*

was created in many national languages in contrast to Greek⁷⁴. The imitation of other arts seemed completely impossible – dance totally lost its meaning in Christianity and was reduced to a courtly pastime, and there were no preserved records of Greek music⁷⁵. Meanwhile, there was an increasing interest in reading Greek literature, particularly poetry, in the original version (earlier the command of Latin was more prevalent). Nevertheless, the biggest beneficiary of the new Hellenism was theatre. The romantic fascination with antiquity elevated the Greek tragedy to the top of all arts. Moreover, it stirred the ambitions to create a total work of art. ‘The highest conjoint work of art is the Drama: it can only be at hand in all its possible fullness, when in it each separate branch of art is at hand in its own utmost fullness’⁷⁶ – stated Wagner, adding: ‘Who then, will be The Artists of The Future? Without doubt, the poet. Who will be the Poet? Indisputably, the Performer. Yet who, again, will be the Performer? Necessarily, the Fellowship of all the Artists’⁷⁷. Hence, drama was supposed to naturally link poetry, action, movement, painting, and even architecture. Still, apart from the dream about a total work of art – ‘gesamt-kunstwerk’ – there was more of an interest in dance. In the first part of the 20th century, people like Francis Delsartre, Emil Jaques-Dalcroze, or Rudolf Laban initiated not just theoretical interests, but mostly motor practices, largely modeled after Greek ones⁷⁸.

However, the biggest problem was the inextricable link between ancient arts and religion, which became more and more apparent. Mythology, interpreted through the ages in a literary and allegorical way, reappears in the reflections of the modern thinkers as an outlook on life. The actual philosophy of myth, which was incorporated into the philosophy of history and anthropology, starts with the Italian historiosophist Giambattista Vico (*Scienza Nuova* 1725). Since it was noticed that art had been the only expression of Greek religiousness, then projecting the new art could not have taken place without reflection on myth.

⁷⁴ Greek, with a shifting stress, belongs to the inflectional languages. Greek poetry was based on the rhythm of long and short syllables and the quantity of vowels. To model on this poetry required knowledge of meter and prosody.

⁷⁵ Certainly, we can talk about a few dozens of the recent music antiques discoveries. Comparative studies are also being conducted, thus we know about ancient music much more. See: J.G. Landels, *Music in Ancient Greece and Rome*, London 1999.

⁷⁶ R. Wagner, *Art-Work of...*, p. 184.

⁷⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 196.

⁷⁸ It is characteristic, while writing about arts, G. van der Leeuw lists arts in the following order: ‘The dance reflects the movement of God, which also moves us upon the earth. The drama presupposes the holy play between God and man. Verbal art is the hymn of praise in which the Eternal and his works are represented. Architecture reveals to us the lines of the well-built city of God’s creation. Music is the echo of the eternal Gloria. In the pictorial arts, we found images...’, *idem, op.cit.*, p. 265.

Particularly German romanticists were calling for a new mythology that would bond the divided society and destroyed culture⁷⁹. We could risk saying here that most of the thinkers of the 19th century had to face that dilemma: let us just evoke the names of Herder, the Schlegel brothers, Schelling, Novalis, Wilhelm Wackenroder, Ludwig Tieck, and last but not least, Wagner and Nietzsche. Let us not forget about the new mythology – secular and political – which the French Enlightenment had earlier attempted to create. The German proposal was religious and aesthetic in character; however, there was no agreement on its source. It was supposed to rival, even surpass, Greek Mythology, yet, it was not allowed to repeat its myths. Some people, like Wackenroder, Tieck and Novalis tried to overcome their reluctance towards Catholicism and emphasized the cultural value of liturgy. Others took inspiration from the Old Testament⁸⁰. Wagner and Nietzsche, distrustful of Catholicism, could not see the possibility of strengthening German culture ‘without his house gods, without his mythic homeland, without a “bringing back” of all things German!’⁸¹ The most universal, yet utopian, concept of new mythology was presented by Schelling in his *System of Transcendental Idealism* (1800). In the future, the philosophy that would emerge from poetry, as well as all sciences and humanities, would blend into one, general poetry, just like rivers flow into the ocean⁸². That poetry would be ‘the creation not of some individual author, but of a new race, personifying, as it were, one single poet’⁸³. The unity of art and aesthetic intuition with mythology, which was about to happen, would reintroduce private art to the people, and the society would again be a poetic community. We could, however, pose the question about whether such a project was a modern one, if it aimed at restoring the ‘pre-philosophical’ stage of the society? The answer to this accusation could be found in the short text from Hegel’s manuscripts (probably written by Hegel, Schelling, and Hölderlin), where we read: ‘We must have a New Mythology, but this Mythology must be in the service of reason, it must become a Mythology of reason. Before we haven’t rendered the ideas aesthetic, i.e. mythological, they hold no interest for the populace, and before the Mythology hasn’t become reasonable the philosopher must be ashamed of it’⁸⁴. Thus, reason is that element due to

⁷⁹ S.G. Williamson explains the new romantic mythology: ‘a system of natural symbols and narratives that would provide the basis for unified aesthetic, religious and public life’ Idem, *The Longing for Myth in Germany religion and aesthetic culture form romanticism to Nietzsche*, Chicago 2004, p. 23.

⁸⁰ Similarly, in the Victorian England, Mathiew Arnold suggested keeping balance between Greek and Hebrew tradition, see: Idem, *Culture and Anarchy*, *op.cit.*

⁸¹ Nietzsche, *op.cit.*, p. 23.

⁸² F.W.J. Schelling, *System of Transcendental Idealism*, University of Virginia 1997, 4-th ed., p. 232.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, p. 233.

⁸⁴ Quote after K. Hammermeister, *op.cit.*, p.76.

which the modern man can accept the new mythology. However, we should not confuse this mythology of reason with the cult of reason, as it was mentioned before; mythology must have a religious character. This links mythology with art again. Schelling, in his *Lectures on the Method of Academic Studies* argues that a poetic world cannot exist outside religion and no objective representation of religion is possible without art⁸⁵. The project of a new mythology is probably the last attempt at joining religion and art in a systematic way. The element of mysticism and spirituality was essential in the symbolism of the turn of the century, yet there was no reference to any religion, except ‘the religion of art’. The universal and democratic description of the world, offered by mythology, was replaced by the uniqueness and subjectivity of the individual, a mysterious symbol or a mood impossible to describe⁸⁶.

Even though the longing for art that emerges from religion did not leave some of the theoreticians and artists of the 20th century, there is an irresistible feeling that it refers only to a distant past. When Gerard van der Leeuw describes universal and timeless ‘sacred beauty’, what he has in mind is mainly Greece and modern ‘cases’, and Isadora Duncan is the only reference he makes to modernity⁸⁷. If it were assumed that art is the expression of religiousness or sanctity, just as van der Leeuw intended, then, what are modern works of art? As a matter of fact, in the 19th century, when this matter was given serious consideration, only Hegel proposed the audacious thesis: ‘art, considered in its highest vocation, is and remains for us a thing of the past. Thereby it has lost for us genuine truth and life, and has rather been transferred into our *ideas* instead of maintaining its earlier necessity in reality and occupying its higher place’⁸⁸. Later, in his *Aesthetics*, he kindly looks at Romantic art (i.e. modern art), stating that it does not have formal limitations or those of content, as what is really significant about it is its internal subjectivity, and that it can reveal ‘everything in which the human being as such is capable of being *at home*’⁸⁹. This art transcends itself, i.e. it transcends its previous limitations and ‘in this self-transcendence art is nevertheless a withdrawal of Man into his own breast’⁹⁰.

Finally, in keeping with the metaphor of home, we could say that as man attempts to settle in the modern world, he uses art to express his intention. Art

⁸⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 81.

⁸⁶ With the exception of Wagner’s musical drama, which should probably be linked more with a romantic vision of the new mythology than with symbolism.

⁸⁷ If there is, in any arts, longing for Greece as home, it certainly takes place in performative arts such as dance and experimental theatre. Let us evoke here the experiments by Richard Schechner, Jerzy Grotowski, and Gardzienice Theater and Chorea Theater companies.

⁸⁸ G.W.F. Hegel, *Aesthetics...*, vol. 1, p. 11.

⁸⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 607.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

itself remains homeless, as the Ideal used to be her home. What Hegel had in mind when stating that thought and reflection surpassed art was our reflection and our knowledge about art. What he did not expect, however, was that art would attempt to settle itself in our thoughts – ruminating over itself. Perhaps it is not its real home, but only a temporary shelter, still, this is how art has survived to this day, capable of individual, sentimental journeys to the past, without claiming rights to anything.

Translated by Kamila Berry

GRECJA – BEZPOWROTNI STRACONY DOM SZTUKI (streszczenie)

Słowo „*home*” oznacza nie tylko dom – miejsce zamieszkania, ale także kolebkę – miejsce przynależności i początku. Dla kultury europejskiej takim domem jest starożytna Grecja. Oddzielenie się sztuki nowoczesnej od tradycji antycznej (klasycznej) przez wielu jest więc uważane za oznakę zagubienia i wykorzenia. Szczególnie w wieku XIX podkreślano ten problem ogłaszając jednocześnie kryzys kultury. Powyższy tekst przybliży poglądy filozofów i teoretyków, którzy stworzyli wizję idealnej, antycznej Grecji po to, by skonstrastować ją ze współczesnością. Artykuł przedstawia najpierw wizję antycznej Grecji będącej domem dla integralnego człowieka i jego doskonałej sztuki. W części drugiej omawia z perspektywy owej wizji stan nowoczesnej kultury, tworzonej przez wewnętrznie rozdartego człowieka. Na koniec zaś przywołuje różne propozycje wyjścia z kryzysu. XIX-wieczne rozpoznanie nowoczesności wydaje się z dzisiejszej perspektywy całkiem słuszne, jednakże doświadczenie sztuki wskazuje, że wszelkie próby powrotu do tradycji się nie powiodły a najbardziej aktualna pozostaje Hegłowska koncepcja końca sztuki.

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BLUE MORPH: REFLECTIONS ON PERFORMANCE OF SELF ORGANIZED CRITICALITY 2011

Of the four stages of the complete metamorphosis of a butterfly, the transformation of a caterpillar through the covered and relatively still transformation inside the chrysalis is a most spectacular sight to experience. The chrysalis comes from the Greek word for gold χρυσός due to their often metallic-like coloration. Pupation takes several weeks and the butterfly emerges mainly in the morning time. Butterflies are a popular source of stories and myths in many cultures. The monarch butterfly, *Danaus Plexippus*, is associated with Halloween being black and orange. Japanese view a butterfly as the personification the soul. In 17th century Ireland to kill a white butterfly was illegal since it was thought to be a dead child's soul. Both Aztec and Maya civilizations used the butterfly to symbolize Xiutecutli the god of cosmic fire by a turquoise butterfly on his chest. In Christianity, Jesus life on earth is often associated with the caterpillar, the chrysalis represents death and the emergence of the butterfly represents the resurrection. The Ancient Greek word for "butterfly" is ψυχή (*psychē*), primarily means "soul" and/or "mind" and this is our starting point for the Blue Morph installation.

The Peleides Blue Morpho (*Morpho peleides*) is an iridescent tropical butterfly found mostly in Central and South America. The brilliant blue color in the butterfly's wings is caused by the diffraction of the light from millions of tiny scales on its wings. The Blue Morpho butterflies flash their wings rapidly and stick together in groups a form of mobbing behavior, to deter their predators. It is considered an endangered species due to the cutting of the forests that is their habitat and even more because of their use in jewelry and other ornaments. When this butterfly is spotted flying, it is one of the most beautiful sights one can imagine.

The extremely fine lamellate scales covering the Morpho's wings reflect incident light repeatedly at successive layers, leading to interference effects that depend on both the wavelength and angle of observance. Thus the colors produced vary with viewing angle. The interference of light due to multiple reflections within the highly uniform structural arrangement of the scales gives the butterfly its fantastic color (the periodicity of the resulting unit cells can be considered a two-dimensional photonic crystal). The nanoscale patterns inherent to the butterfly wing are revealed by "feeling" the surface structure with an Atomic Force Microscope (AFM), and Scanning Electron Microscopy (SEM).

Although we tend to imagine butterflies as silent, colorful creatures, they in fact generate intense inaudible noise while in process of change. The microscopic encasing becomes the interface of sound intensity and scattered light mimicking the simultaneous beauty and turmoil inherent to the metamorphosis of the butterfly that is an endangered species. We discover that change does not happen gradually as we might like it to be, but is a sudden, intense surge of energy that is destructive and creative simultaneously. The visualization of the surges of metamorphosis very much resembles the ups and downs of the current financial markets in crisis. This, in addition to the recent close succession of environmental disasters, wars, riots and social upheavals of our current global state points to a collective metamorphosis to a new paradigm. The Blue Morph enables a space where one can tune in to the personal and collective experience of change.

The Blue Morph project emerged as an experiential installation that changes form as it moves sites and increasingly gets shaped by the audiences that interact with it as a ritualistic experience. It addresses the human need to engage in a ritual that allows the participants to embrace change and become a part of the transformation. The project enacts the human need for "right of passage" which Joseph Campbell wrote about in the *Power of the Myth*.

PERFORMING THE VIBRATION OF CHANGE

"Because sound is necessarily related to a biological sensorium and assumes a tuned in body, it has a semiotic component that is parsed historically and socially specific contexts."

Humans can hear any vibration that has a periodicity in the range of twenty to twenty thousand vibrations per second (Hz). The vibrations of butterfly cells are not within frequency of human hearing. By amplifying the vibrations of cells of butterflies we turned up the volume on metamorphosis and bring to the attention the importance of the invisible, the inaudible in our daily life. The science of sonocytology that Gimzewski and his team explore was amplified, expanded and brought to the human dimension by Victoria Vesna. The audience

then transformed the piece and each space vibration demanded a morph of the physical manifestations. What came as quite a surprise is the power of the artwork to propel itself and almost demand from the artist and scientist energy to sustain itself.

The sound of the piece are vibrations recorded during metamorphosis by shining a laser beam on a small micro-mirror attached to the chrysalis and the beam deflection was recorded using a position sensitive detector and stored as a digital signal of deflection versus time. This system was designed after many difficulties and we interpreted the mirror reflection as an appropriate metaphor for those who would experience the sounds of metamorphosis. It is radical and intense as a thunderbolt would be and this is in fact how change happens in our human experience as well whether individually or collectively. In Vajrayana and Tibetan Buddhism, thunderbolt and lightening are central as symbols of urgency and instant transformation by a natural power that is diamond like and represents at once mutability and eternal durability.

Quite generally the process of massive rapid change is often termed metamorphosis in personal transformations. We measured cellular changes through recoding the tiny microscopic motions inside the chrysalis and then used them to form the sound component of the piece as metamorphosis results in the emergent butterfly. In the Blue Morph installation we use morph as a metaphor of the power of individuals to undergo personal transformation.

SCREAM OF THE BUTTERFLY

“Before I sink
Into the big sleep
I want to hear
I want to hear
The scream of the butterfly”
(Doors, 1967)

In 1967, Jim Morrison discussed his creative process in a way that echoes the work we do in art and science transmutation: “Our work, our performing, is a striving for metamorphosis. It’s like a purification ritual in the alchemical sense. First you have to have the period of disorder, chaos, returning to a primeval disaster region. Out of that you purify the elements and find a new seed of life, which transforms all life and all matter and the personality until finally, hopefully, you emerge and marry all those dualisms and opposites. Then you’re not talking about evil and good anymore but something unified and pure”¹.

¹ T. Magistrale, *Wild Child, Jim Morrison’s Poetic Journeys*, 1992.

A scream is an inarticulate sound made by humans to express extreme pleasure or pain that does not need translation – it is understood by everyone no matter what their race, language or gender is, around the planet. Non-human creatures are rarely referred to as screaming and sounds of cells amplified in labs are called signals. The bursts of change that are accompanied by loud transforming noise or intense inaudible vibration could be called screams of the individual or the collective.

Blue Morph is about creating an environment in which the public can experience the soundscape of change on a cellular level allowing experiential access to biological processes of bodies and cells. No different from the usual experience of an artwork where one brings their own interpretation to the piece, we have seen a general tendency for many to perform their spiritual expression in public view. Experiencing the sounds of cells as music rather than signals shifts our understanding of composition that organisms create and the artist and scientist become co-authors of nature's symphony. We tune ourselves into the workings of our bodies connected to the micro, macro worlds and understand the vibrations at the base of materiality, connecting the molecules into existence.

Quite a few scientists on the fringe, frequently maligned by the established research community have alluded to the importance of vibrations in relation to our body/mind. For instance, the late controversial scientist Jacques Benveniste claimed that biomolecules communicate with their receptor molecules by sending out low-frequency electromagnetic signals, which the receptors pick up like radios tuned to a specific wavelength. Kerry Bloom, a mycologist noticed a chemical change inside cells of plants depending on the kind of music that was played and Masaru Emoto has a large new age following believing his claim to see change of cellular structure of water depending on the thoughts/words applied. The idea of memory and thoughts as vibrations effecting change of our materiality on a cellular level is far fetched for our current paradigm of thinking and scientists are afraid to touch that realm as it is a dangerous territory filled with explosives and enemies ready to destroy careers at the very mention of this being even a possibility. But, many people are attracted to this idea and the Blue Morph provides a space to imagine this and work in the metaphorical / experiential realm by connecting the mind to the biological vibrations.

Sound vibrations travel through air or water and refract off other objects and reflect the environment. The auditory space of the Blue Morph is inherently biological and participants become transducers mediating the vibrations of metamorphosis. By registering the vibrations into an electrical signal that is amplified, it is manipulated by the audience who performs the transformation related to natural phenomena.

WINGS OF DESIRE

It seems appropriate that a meteorologist Edward Lorenz famous question, “Does the flap of a butterfly’s wings in Brazil set off a tornado in Texas?”, postulating the “butterfly effect,” the idea that the flapping of fragile wings could start a chain reaction in the atmosphere. Similar effects can be seen with the Internet where one could say one email could cause a torrent and spread like wild fire around the world, translated into many languages. We are witnessing not only social and financial upheavals but many atmospheric changes in tandem and yet do not see this as connected. The idea of self-organized criticality bringing bursts of change has become central to the thinking about the art/science work we have been involved in. Whether we generated or amplified the inevitable change in our environment, it is clear that the large-scale disasters are working in tandem with our collective shifts in our relationship to the planet we inhabit.

The flapping wing represents a small change in the initial condition of the system, which causes a chain of events leading to large-scale alterations of events. Had the butterfly not flapped its wings, the trajectory of the system might have been vastly different. While the butterfly does not “cause” the tornado in the sense of providing the energy for the tornado, it does “cause” it in the sense that the flap of its wings is an essential part of the initial conditions resulting in a tornado, and without that flap that particular tornado would not have existed.

THE COLOR BLUE

The piece not only activates the space with the vibrations but also floods the space with the color blue inspired by the blue iridescent color of the *Peleides Blue Morpho* (*Morpho Peleides*), a South American butterfly whose micro and nanostructures are used as images in the piece. The blue color also has some other significance. Blue light is cleansing, it is disinfecting and surrounds the participant in an energetic and protected space. Blue is the color of the sky and the ocean representing freedom. In the hindu chakra system, blue is the color of the throat energy center which governs speech and hearing.

Interestingly, amongst the various good and bad myths of the enchantress of the forest, Blue Morpho, is one that is a trickster and certain Amazonians believe Blue Morpho is associated with black magic and evil sorcerers. In fact the wing is indeed made of black protein and its manipulation of light is a form of wonderful physics illusion. “The movie *Blue Butterfly*” on the other hand, is an example of this creature reappearing in popular culture. The movie is based on a true story of a young boy with brain cancer who manages to realize

his wish to catch a blue morpho butterfly in Costa Rica but with a cost for as warned by the shamans, the butterfly is at one time associated with good and evil and challenges the faith of the human soul.

Gimzewski worked in IBM research lab for two decades and is very familiar with the Deep Blue computer that won a chess tournament against a reigning world champion chess master. Deep Blue had 32 processors and processed about 200 million chess moves per second in its historic six-game match against Garry Kasparov. Today, Blue Gene is the fastest supercomputer in the world and the descendent of Deep Blue. It uses 131,000 processors to routinely handle 280 trillion operations every second.

The cultural inspirations that informed Victoria Vesna are that of Yves Klein's blue paintings and the *Blue*, the final film by British artist Derek Jarman, completed just before his death in 1994 from AIDS-related complications. The film explores the process of dying, and possibly most importantly for a visual artist, the loss of his sight – ultimately seeing only blue. Jarman made the film as a way to explore, as he termed it, “the world of the painter Yves Klein, inventor of the void, *International Blue*, the symphony monotone.” The single image on screen is a rectangle of light matched to Klein's blue.

On a scientific ground the blue of the wing is the result of a complex nanophotonic manipulation of photons not a pigmentation that scientists are trying to mimic in many laboratories in the world. In the piece we use blue lights that are an example of nanotechnology studies on the reflection and scattering of light by the scales on wings of swallowtail butterflies that led to the innovation of more efficient light-emitting diodes (LED). Recently we have seen a surge in blue lights for street decorations and Christmas trees as a result of advanced technological development of highly efficient lighting also suitable for water purification and antimicrobial applications. For instance, there are crude results such as the fabric called *MorphTex* and the anti-counterfeit holograms used in anti-counterfeit technologies. Researches on the wing structure of Palawan Birdwing butterflies led to new wide wingspan kite and aircraft designs. The structural coloration of butterflies is inspiring nanotechnology research to produce paints that do not use toxic pigments and in the development of new display technologies.

ARCHITECTURE OF CHANGE

Blue Morph possibly resonates with so many people due to the self organized criticality through biological transduction – translating information from one medium to another, or in this case, from a butterfly to a human being. Being that this creature is so deeply imbedded in our collective psyche, it allows the audience to perform their individual experience of change and enact the

spiritual impulse without the weight of religious ritual. Architecture of the space is critical to enable to resonance of the vibrations to reflect and bounce off the person experiencing the inaudible made audible, the invisible made visible.

The Integratron was an ideal space to develop the piece and it has since moved to a number of acoustically resonant spaces including the St John the Divine church in Gdansk. Our concern initially was that the work would be either overwhelmed by Christian connotations or considered blasphemous. But, we were pleasantly surprised to find that this was not the case and believe that it is due to the fact that churches are built for spiritual practice with a particular focus on geometry, space and sound in particular and easily allow for the sound to triangulate between space, time and body as medium.

The verticality of the space allows for the head piece to physically connect to the acoustic space of the vibrations to connect to the person standing at the center of a lit hexagon that is laser engraved with an image of a microstructure of a single scale of a blue morph butterfly wing. One cell, one individual – at the center – with vibration mediating public performance of their being in space and time, witnessed by others who take part of the event by observation.

The revival of drama in medieval Europe occurred in churches where theatre was “reborn” as it had to acknowledge the popularity of pagan rites. This response to the primitive desire of people to “act out” the story of their lives is quite fascinating and survives in today’s rock concerts, sports events and so on. In this sense Blue Morph has a certain connection to using the Church as a space for new forms of interaction and introspection but in the form of an act by individuals surrounded by audience, yet where both are participants in the process.

*Quem quaeritis in sepulchro, [o] Christicolae?
Iesum Nazarenum crucifixum, o caelicolae.
non est hic, surrexit sicut praedixerat.
ite, nuntiate quia surrexit de sepulchro.
Resurrexi!*

*(Who are you looking for in the sepulchre, o Christians?
The crucified Jesus of Nazareth, o celestials.
He is not here; he has arisen as he said he would.
Go and announce that he has arisen from the sepulchre.
I have risen!)*

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REVIEW

FEELING AT HOME IN ART

Bożena Kowalska, *Fragmenty życia. Pamiętnik artystyczny 1967-1973. Moja kolekcja – dary od przyjaciół* [*Fragments of a life. Artistic diary 1967-1973. My collection – Gifts from my friends*] Mazowieckie Centrum Sztuki Współczesnej „Elektrownia”, Radom 2010

The art critic Bożena Kowalska has been participating in the Polish and European art scene for many years now. She has organized many important exhibitions, among which *Język geometrii I* [*The language of geometry I*] and *Język geometrii II* [*The language of geometry II*] have been of special importance. These two exhibitions were accompanied by publications presenting the views of the most important Polish representatives of this type of creative activity. Since 1983, she has organized plein-air painting events (first on the national and then on the international scale), whose participants included top representatives of geometric art. For 29 years, from 1972 to 2001, she ran the art gallery “Galeria 72” at Muzeum Okręgowe (the Regional Museum) in Chełm, where she presented the works of the most prominent Polish and foreign artists. In “Galeria 72” she initiated and created a collection of Polish and foreign art consisting of about 1500 paintings, works on paper and spatial forms.

Her publications include many introductions to Polish and foreign artists’ exhibition catalogues, providing a detailed analysis of their oeuvre, as well as articles in magazines, in which she shared her critical views of the most important presentations of art. For many years now, she has been regularly reviewing the successive editions of the Biennale in Venice, the Documenta in Kassel and other such events, competently assessing the new trends and phenomena. As an art critic, she is favorably disposed, but strict. She formulates firm opinions and is

full of praise for the artist who, from her point of view, deserves it, but she does not avoid giving negative opinions either.

However, it is Bożena Kowalska's books that deserve special attention, particularly the monographs devoted to the artistic output of such artists as Roman Opałka, Jan Berdyszak, Henryk Stażewski, Maciej Szańkowski, Kajetan Sosnowski, Józef Szajna, Wojciech Fangor, Adam Myjak, Jerzy Kałucki and Marian Bogusz (the order in which these names have been mentioned reflects the chronology of their publication). The monograph published in Berlin in 2004 discussed the oeuvre of the distinguished German representative of geometric abstraction – Karl-Heinz Adler. Apart from that, Bożena Kowalska has authored a very important, first-hand work entitled *Polska awangarda malarska 1945-1970. Szanse i mity* [*Polish painterly avant-garde 1945-1970. Chances and myths*]. She expanded its second edition by analyzing the art scene of the 1970s. She has also devoted books to the artists she highly values: *Twórcy-postawy. Artyści z mojej galerii* [*Creators-attitudes. The artists from my gallery*], *W poszukiwaniu ład. Artyści o sztuce i 20 plenerów spod znaku geometrii* [*In search for order. Artists on art and 20 geometrically-oriented plein-air painting events*]. Her theoretical views have been most fully presented in the volume entitled *Sztuka w poszukiwaniu mediów* [*Art in search of the media*].

The above outline of Bożena Kowalska's basic range of activity reflects the main characteristic of her professional life. It can be described as 'feeling at home' in art. Her daily contact with art, the feeling of responsibility for its fate, the concern for its course of development and for its future resembles the emotional engagement characteristic for the relationships between the members of a family who live together. Reading the latest book by Bożena Kowalska, we learn about the life intimately close to art. The text part of the book is an artistic diary written between 1967 and 1973. The author did not change anything while preparing it for publication; nor did she modify it for public presentation. She only left out a few fragments and the omissions are marked with an ellipsis in brackets.

Fragments of the original diary have been reproduced on the fly-leaf pages both in the front and the back of the book. The text is carefully and legibly written; almost nothing has been crossed out. This may show that the notes were taken directly and that they have not been subjected to changes, even though some opinions might now seem misguided or too bold. This feature, characterizing the whole book, raises the value of this publication. The book is enriched by photographs taken during many of the commented events. In comparison with their objective character, we feel all the more that the author is sharing her personal, private observations with us. The text presents a different account of the

same events, which, for me, is more interesting and complete than the photographs, and more (though maybe only differently) authentic.

In contrast to her earlier publications, focusing mainly on artists and their works, in the present book the author also reveals a lot about herself – in two ways. First of all, she directly presents her feelings and immediate opinions. It is interesting that she still holds many of these opinions today. One example may be her distanced attitude towards radical conceptualism. On 25 August 1970 in Osieki she wrote ironically about the tendency to dematerialize the work of art: “It is best to look at the sky, wait for the moment of flash, revelation. There is a concept! Why realize it?!” In 2010, during the conference on Conceptual Art organized at the Museum of Art in Łódź, she took a similar stance, emphasizing that the period when some Polish artists she respects were fascinated with this trend was not the period of their greatest artistic achievements.

Another ingredient of that special personal tone is making the connections between the observations from the Polish art scene and her own emotions: her joy, but also her irritation, anxiety, tiredness, or sometimes even discouragement. From this perspective, her lasting enthusiasm towards art is very interesting. What evokes her negative emotions are most frequently the situations involving the unfair appraisal and misguided promotion of art. For her, criticism is not a profession, but a fascinating vocation. The author can really enjoy good art. It is her personal source of satisfaction, something she perceives as a success. However, if her assessment is negative, she can also tell the artist about it directly, which in some cases ends in breaking off a relationship. Such situations are described in the book.

A very interesting motif in the book is the formation of Bożena Kowalska’s stance as an art critic. The initial records reflect her varied artistic interests. These are complemented by her extensive social contacts with artists. Kowalska engages herself in different activities connected with defending and propagating contemporary art in its diverse forms. Later on one can see that her field of interest becomes clearly restricted. Given a broad range of observation, she makes a definite choice of what she is opting for. A clear declaration appears in a note from 1970. Recalling her conversation with artists conducted at breakfast at a plein-air painting event in Osieki, Bożena Kowalska reveals her anxiety about the fact that critics are seen as “affirming every type of art.” Shortly after that she writes: “I support, and I have expressed it, mostly the art of post-constructivism, searching for space, for the light of color, for the acoustics of the visual elements...” Taking into account Bożena Kowalska’s further activities, it is a very important declaration. She would remain faithful to the interest she followed throughout her life in art. Naturally, she would supplement and correct it. The ‘concrete-material’ attitude characteristic for postconstructivism will be

later transformed into her conviction that the most important value of geometric art is the universality of its message. This evolution was, on the one hand, a result of personal belief. On the other hand, it was a result of observation – she watched the artistic output of the artists whom she most highly valued and focused her attention on evolved during the successive decades of the second half of the 20th century. This was so, because for Bożena Kowalska dwelling in art has always meant cohabitation – a dialogue with works of art, a dialogue with artists.

It is worth noting one more important motif present in this book. The records collected in the book come from the period of 1967-1973. It was an important, but also difficult period in the development of contemporary Polish art. On the one hand, it resulted in a lot of important artistic achievements and a number of significant theoretical concepts. On the other hand, however, that time was characterized by various political limitations. Polish art was making contact with current phenomena in global art and at the same time there were many barriers and limitations concerning its presentation and promotion. The records of Bożena Kowalska also concern these issues. They allow us to see, day after day, how the organizers of an exhibition presenting Polish art abroad managed to give it a modern shape, or win a passport for an artist or a critic who represented such a stance. The author assigns great importance to these parts of the book. In the *Introduction*, she writes: “It will bring me a lot of satisfaction if my diary renders the extraordinary intensity and density of important artistic events in the period described, if at the same time it draws the readers’ attention to the importance, seriousness and quality of the issues tackled by the artists and art critics in those years, if it allows them to notice the complete disinterestedness of the ambitious endeavors and pursuits of most of the artists it tells about, and if it shows that when one really wants to achieve an aim, then regardless of the most unfavorable conditions – it becomes possible.”

The second part of the publication is entitled *Moja kolekcja – dary od przyjaciół* [*My collection – gifts from my friends*]. It constitutes an impressive set of reproductions of the works of Polish and foreign artists, who gave them throughout the years to Bożena Kowalska. Normally, they can be found at the author’s apartment. In connection with the publication of the book, exhibitions of these works were organized at Mazowieckie Centrum Sztuki Współczesnej [The Mazovian Centre of Modern Art] in Radom, and then in Bielsko Biała and Katowice. The author writes: “All the works collected here are gifts from my artist friends, often chosen by me at their studios on his or her request. Each of the works is connected with some event, meeting or conversation. They are tokens of friendship. They are more and more often memories of irretrievably lost friends. Therefore, they are parts of my life, just like the events described on the pages of my *Artistic diary*. For me, that constitutes their most important,

immeasurable value.” Judging from a more objective point of view, the reproduced works are very interesting, since they are often unknown even to critics and art historians. They allow us to enrich the knowledge of the output of many distinguished Polish and foreign artists, and sometimes to discover the unknown aspects of their work.

I heartily recommend the book to modern art lovers and also to people who want to feel or to recall the atmosphere of the Polish artistic life of forty years ago.

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