

IKONO THEKA

30



IKONO THEKA

30



THE JOURNAL FOUNDED BY JAN BIAŁOSTOCKI (1921–1988)

EDITED BY

Marcin Lachowski

EDITORS-IN-CHIEF

Zuzanna Sarnecka, Wojciech Szymański

EDITORIAL BOARD

Deborah Howard (University of Cambridge), *Grażyna Jurkowlaniec* (University of Warsaw),
Sergiusz Michalski (Universität Tübingen), *Andrzej Pieńkos* (University of Warsaw),
Antoni Ziemia (University of Warsaw)

COMMISSIONING EDITOR

Dorota Dziedzic

EDITING

Denys Kaidalov

Institute of Art History of University of Warsaw
00-927 Warszawa, Krakowskie Przedmieście 26/28
phone: +48 (22) 552 04 06, fax: +48 (22) 552 04 07
e-mail: ikonotheka@uw.edu.pl
www.ikonotheka.ihs.uw.edu.pl

It is the authors' responsibility to obtain appropriate permission
for the reproduction of any copyrighted material, including images

© Copyright by Wydawnictwa Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego, Warszawa 2020

Wydawnictwa Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego
00-838 Warszawa, ul. Prosta 69
<http://www.wuw.pl>; e-mail: wuw@uw.edu.pl
Dział Handlowy WUW: phone: +48 22 55 31 333
e-mail: dz.handlowy@uw.edu.pl
<http://www.wuw.pl/ksiegarnia>

ISSN 0860-5769
e-ISSN 2657-6015

LAYOUT:

Beata Stelągowska

Contents

Introduction / 5

ARTICLES

TOMÁŠ MURÁR

“A work of art is an object that necessitates contemplation”.

Latency of visual studies within the Vienna School of Art History? / 9

ALEKSANDRA FEDOROWICZ-JACKOWSKA

‘Through a Microscope from a Telescopic Distance’: Witkacy, Cameron and the Photography of Faces / 31

ŁUKASZ KIEPUSZEWSKI

Face Substances. The rhetoric of Kapists’ self-portraits: between self-reflection and confession / 51

ANNA CHEIPESH

The Impact of Historic Events on the Formation of the Creative Method of Ernest Kontratovych in the Early Period (1930s-1940s) / 69

SZYMON PIOTR KUBIAK

Gratitude. The Red Army Memorial in Szczecin: A Geographical, Topographical, and Biographical Perspective / 89

KAMILA DWORNICZAK

Defining Reality: Photography and the Surrealist Concept of the Image in Poland in the 1940s / 113

PIOTR MAJEWSKI

Constructing the canon: exhibiting contemporary Polish art abroad in the Cold War era / 135

KAROLINA KOLENDA

The Grass is Greener: Władysław Hasiór in an Ecocritical Perspective / 155

EWA KĘDZIORA

Archaeology of the present. Israeli art after the Al-Aqsa Intifada / 173

MARTA WÓDZ

Intimate listening and sonic solidarity. Radio in the works of Radio Earth Hold collective as a way towards the sonic turn / 191

REVIEWS

KAMILA DWORNICZAK

Symcha Trachter. Reconstruction / 211

Introduction

We are delighted to present you the 30th volume of “Ikonotheka”, devoted to the issues of 20th-century art and current artistic phenomena. The volume consists of articles analyzing selected important topics, which show the wealth and variety of research areas explored by art researchers of the younger generation. By presenting them in this issue we want to signalize a different approach to “canonical” topics, however, it isn’t a systematic and comprehensive revision of long-established research models.

The selection of articles includes an in-depth study of painters’ artistic declarations based on the interpretation of self-portraits of members of the Komitet Paryski (Łukasz Kiepuszewski) as well as a suggestive exploration of photographs of faces in Witkacy’s oeuvre (Aleksandra Fedorowicz-Jackowska). Another example of approaching general problems from a different angle is the detailed analysis of the process of emergence of regionalisms and national schools in the art of the interwar period based on the works of Transcarpathia artists (Anna Cheipesh).

Political and historical contexts vividly accompanied the post-war art in the official sphere, manifesting themselves as monumental sculpture (Szymon Piotr Kubiak), in the creation of the artistic canon by means of exhibitions of Polish art abroad (Piotr Majewski), and in an individual dimension of artistic searches and experiments (Kamila Dworniczak). This subject has also become a source of new, eco-critical interpretations of Władysław Hasior’s landscape projects (Karolina Kolenda).

Nowadays the political dimension is gaining the most striking and often dramatic form of expression in the works of artists from Israel and Palestine. The presentation of artistic ways of coming out of isolation and self-critical views of one’s own tradition and identity are the focus of two articles in this volume (by Ewa Kędziora and Marta Wódz).

This volume opens with an important methodological study on the historical dimension and constant influence of the Vienna School of Art History by Tomáš Murár. The article thoroughly describes the long-standing and enduring presence of interpretive models of the past in the changing reality. It seems to be an appropriate introduction to the complex subject matter presented in the volume that views the history of art as an open discipline, still subjecting artistic facts and their historical interpretations to continuous reflection and reinterpretation.

The articles presented in this volume were collected in 2018. Due to editorial changes and the coinciding development of materials published in the 29th issue, the texts are published now. I would like to apologize to the authors for this unintentional delay.

Marcin Lachowski

ARTICLES

Tomáš Murár

INSTITUTE OF ART HISTORY,
CZECH ACADEMY OF SCIENCES, CZECH REPUBLIC
ORCID: 0000-0002-3418-1941
<https://doi.org/10.31338/2657-6015ik.30.1>

“A work of art is an object that
necessitates contemplation”.
Latency of visual studies within
the Vienna School of Art History?

Abstract

This article investigates a research method of the so-called Vienna School of Art History, mainly its transformation by Max Dvořák around the First World War. The article suggests the possible influence of Georg Simmel's philosophy on Dvořák in this time, evident mainly in Dvořák's interpretation of Pieter Bruegel the Elder's art, written by Dvořák in 1920 and published posthumously in 1921. This another view on the Vienna School of Art History is then researched in writings on Pieter Bruegel the Elder by Dvořák's students Hans Sedlmayr and Charles de Tolnay when Tolnay extended Dvořák's thinking and Sedlmayr challenged its premises – both Tolnay and Sedlmayr thus in the same time interpreted Bruegel's art differently, even though they were both Dvořák's students. The article then suggests a possible interpretative relationship of the Vienna School of Art History after its transformation by Max Dvořák with today's approaches to art (history), mainly with the so-called visual studies.

Keywords: Max Dvořák, Vienna School of Art History, Georg Simmel, Visual Studies, Charles de Tolnay, Hans Sedlmayr.

Introduction

In Max Dvořák's text on the art of Pieter Bruegel the Elder, written in 1920 and published posthumously in 1921,¹ a reference to Georg Simmel's interpretation of

1 M. Dvořák, *Pieter Bruegel der Ältere*, Wien, 1921. Max Dvořák was born in 1874 in Roudnice in Central Bohemia, he started to study history at Charles-Ferdinand University in Prague, then

Michelangelo from 1910 might be found,² which can indicate Simmel's influence on Dvořák's reading of Pieter Bruegel the Elder's art. This hypothesis can lead us to a different understanding of Dvořák's art-historical method emerging in the time of World War I,³ as a starting-point of an approach to art history rooted in the so-called Vienna School of Art History,⁴ but with indications similar to today's ways of interpreting visual arts, diverted from modern art history toward visual studies.⁵ Following and, so to speak, having in the peripheral vision recent Sjoerd van Tuinen's take on Mannerism as a concept related to art history as well as to philosophy after transformation of both disciplines mostly after the 1980s,⁶ thus when also Arthur Danto's and Hans Belting's seminal concepts of the end of art and art history were published,⁷ and when theories of Bildwissenschaft and visual studies started to appear,⁸ this study opens a possibility of another – and most importantly much earlier – concept of art history aimed at other than formal or iconographical concept of visual art.

Van Tuinen, in his aspiration to “reconnect ... systematic sense of mannerism with its art historical sense,” when, “mannerism is a concept of becoming specific to art, occurring in the 16th century qua historical “style”, it is not limited to art”,⁹ overlooks Mannerism as it was formulated by Max Dvořák, who was the first one who came up with this concept in the sense used in the modern history of art of

he transferred to Vienna University to the Institut für österreichische Geschichtsforschung in 1894. There he became interested in art history and attended the lectures of Franz Wickhoff. In 1905 Dvořák took over an assistant professorship after Alois Riegl, and in 1909, after Wickhoff's death, Dvořák became a full professor and he stayed at the Vienna University until 1921 when he collapsed during one of his lectures. In the first phase of his professional career as an art historian Dvořák built on Riegl's and Wickhoff's method by searching for evolutionary principles in art; however, in the face of the approach of World War I he altered his method to focus more on the inner-spirit of artworks. See P. Betthausen, P. H. Feist, C. Fork, eds., *Metzler Kunsthistoriker Lexikon*, 2. Auflage, Stuttgart – Weimar, 2007, pp. 68–71.

2 M. Dvořák, „Pieter Bruegel der Ältere“, in: Idem, *Kunstgeschichte als Geistesgeschichte. Studien zur abendländischen Kunstentwicklung*, Leipzig, 1924, pp. 217–257, cit., p. 220.

3 This thesis of Dvořák's reading of Bruegel's art through the notion of collapse of the the known world in the World War I, aimed at Dvořák's connection to Alois Riegl's art-historical method and its relation to early phenomenology, was elaborated by the author of this study in: T. Murár, „Je-li umělecká forma vtělením duchovního vztahu ke světu. Max Dvořák a umění Pietra Bruegela staršího“, *Umění LXVI*, 2018, pp. 458–465.

4 See: M. Rampley, *The Vienna School of Art History. Empire and the Politics of Scholarship, 1847–1918*, Pennsylvania, 2013.

5 See e. g. J. Elkins, *Visual Studies: A Skeptical Introduction*, New York, 2003.

6 Sjoerd van Tuinen, „The Late and the New: Mannerism and Style in Art History and Philosophy“, in: S. van Tuinen, S. Zepke, eds., *Art History after Deleuze and Guattari*, Belgium, 2017, pp. 145–163.

7 Arthur C. Danto, „The End of Art“, in: B. Lang, ed., *The Death of Art*. New York, 1984, pp. 5–35. – H. Belting, *Das Ende der Kunstgeschichte* München, 1984.

8 H. Bredekamp, „Bildwissenschaft“, in: U. Pfisterer, ed., *Metzler Lexikon Kunstwissenschaft*, 2. Auflage, Stuttgart, 2011, pp. 72–75.

9 van Tuinen (note 6), p. 146

the 20th century.¹⁰ I will not go into detail here how Dvořák’s concept of Mannerism was formulated, but I want to show the interconnection between early modern philosophy and art history on the example of Dvořák’s interpretation of Pieter Bruegel the Elder’s art. In my opinion, the main reason for leaving Dvořák’s thinking out of van Tuinen take on Mannerism as a broader intellectual concept is because Dvořák’s connection to philosophical thinking is not in general researched by the historiography of art history.¹¹

How I will show, Dvořák’s interpretation of Bruegel may have been influenced by Georg Simmel’s thinking, also apparent in thinking of Dvořák’s student Charles de Tolnay – therefore this art-historical method does not need to be limited only to Dvořák himself. At the end of the study, I will propose the possibility of how this half-forgotten legacy of the Vienna School of Art History, philosophically rooted, may come closer to today’s takes on visual arts.

Max Dvořák and Georg Simmel

Dvořák as the first scholar saw Bruegel as a European artist who was influenced by Italian painting¹² when he based his thesis on the thought of the artist as compression of spiritual and intellectual forces of the era: “There is never a leading, groundbreaking artist outside the intellectual wholeness of his time, and if there are threads that connect him with his time, which are not visible to us, it means that we are not sufficient enough in the conception of either his art or his age”.¹³ The Mannerism of the 16th century, of which representative Bruegel according to Dvořák was, brought back restrained “inner” feelings of the human spirit that were newly expressed in the human creativity,¹⁴ which Dvořák explained through his articulation of duality between “naturalism” and “idealism”.¹⁵

10 See: W. Bařus, „Max Dvořák betrachtet Tintoretto oder über den Manierismus“, *Ars* XLIV, 2011, pp. 26–43. – H. H. Aurenhammer, „Max Dvořák. Tintoretto und die Moderne“, *Wiener Jahrbuch für Kunstgeschichte* XLIX, 1996, pp. 9–39.

11 Attempts of course can be found, see e.g. J. Vojvodík, „A World of Purely Artistic Conception and a Universal Art of the Spirit: Max Dvořák and Karel Teige between Phenomenology and Surrealism“, *Word and Sense* 24, 2015, pp. 25–41. – M. Rampley, „Max Dvořák. Art history and the crisis of Modernity“, *Art History* XXVI, 2003, pp. 214–237. – H. H. Aurenhammer, “Inventing ‘Mannerist Expressionism’: Max Dvořák and the History of Art as History of the Spirit”, in: K. A. Smith, ed., *The Expressionist Turn in Art History. A Critical Anthology*, Burlington, 2014, pp. 187–208.

12 Dvořák (note 2), pp. 219–220.

13 Ibid., p. 220: „Nie steht ein führender, bahnbrechender Künstler jenseits der geistigen Gesamtlage seiner Zeit, und wenn uns die Fäden, die ihn mit ihr verbinden, nicht sichtbar sind, so besagt dies, daß wir in der Auffassung entweder seiner Kunst oder des Zeitalters nicht tief genug gedrungen sind.“ Whether it is not stated otherwise, the translations are by the author of this study.

14 Ibid., pp. 221–223.

15 J. Bakoř, „Max Dvořák – a neglected re-visionist“, *Wiener Jahrbuch für Kunstgeschichte* 53, Wien, 2004, pp. 55–72, cit. pp. 61–63.

This concept has been developed by him since 1914¹⁶, Dvořák at first observed in work of the late 13th and late 14th century artists, how it is possible to read in his university lectures at the Institute of Art History in Vienna from 1915.¹⁷ Later Dvořák articulated this duality as traceable already since the beginning of the 13th century:

The inner development of medieval art resulted in a division, not necessarily between naturalism and antinaturalism, but rather a dissension between what is known by means of concepts and what is experienced by means of subjective observation. This discord was based upon a fundamental question of philosophic position which occupied the entire Middle Ages in every sphere of intellectual and spiritual endeavor and which was given formal expression in the “conflict of universals”.¹⁸

Dvořák thus since 1914 constituted a method of art history as a research based on an inner-formation of an artwork as a unique reality, which is created upon the two-fold relationship between the artistic reality as an inner-transformation of the experienced world (principal is the spiritual re-formulation of the world through the contact with nature) and the artistic reality as the widely common intellectual conceptualization of the world (principal is the idea through which the world is constituted).¹⁹ It is this methodological transformation of Dvořák’s art-historical thinking that Josef Vojvodík connects to Edmund Husserl’s notion of inner-subjectivity as the possibility to re-construct the (European) pre-war consciousness: “The trust in a “hidden force” of the cognitive subjectivity is inherent to Husserl’s transcendental idealism (Husserl likes to use the notion of “subjectivity of experience/experiencing” [Erlebnissubjektivität]), as well as to Dvořák’s spiritually-historical mode of art history with its subjectivization of art”.²⁰

16 Ibid., p. 63.

17 „Im Quattrocento wurde auch sehen an Stelle des gotischen Idealtypus ein weltlicher Typus geschaffen; aber damals war es nur ein einzelner Typus. Hier wurde ein allgemein menschlicher, poetischer Typus geschaffen, das auf die Phantasie eingewirkt hat. [...] Giotto eine realistische Szene ins Uebernatürliche übertragen hat, Lionardo dagegen eine übernatürliche Begebenheit in eine künstlerisch poetische Realität verwandelt hat.“ Archive of the Institute of Art History, University of Vienna, The Estate of Max Dvořák, Box 6, Notes to Lecture on *Idealismus und Realismus in der Kunst der Neuzeit*, Winter Semeste/1916.

18 M. Dvořák, *Idealism and Naturalism in Gothic Art*, trans. by Randolph J. Klawiter, Indiana, 1967, p. 105. Dvořák through this art understanding articulated an art-historical approach separated from Riegl’s method, when he emphasized the role of the man in the art (historical) creation, Ibid., p. 123: “Only on the basis of a clear knowledge of the historical particularities of the underlying principles in various times and places, individualities conditioned by these circumstances, can the way to a historical understanding of the artistic phenomena of by-gone periods be found.” The original text was published in 1918, see: M. Dvořák, „Idealismus und Naturalismus in der gotischen Skulptur und Malerei“, *Historische Zeitschrift* 119, 1918, pp. 1–62, 185–246.

19 Ibid., pp. 15–76.

20 J. Vojvodík, „Fading, Fading...‘: Ztráta, vzkříšení a dějiny umění jako palingeneze: K umělecko-historickému myšlení Maxe Dvořáka na pozadí fenomenologie jeho doby, in: K. Svatoňová, K. Krtilová, eds., *Mizení. Fenomény, mediální praktiky a techniky na prahu zjevného*, Praha, 2017,

In continuity to this methodological transformation, Dvořák in his text on Bruegel from 1920 diagnosed a collapse of the certainty in the objectively comprehended truths and he emphasized an inward force of the human as the possibility how to overcome this uncertainty and which is, from the art historical point of view, expressed in particular works of art.²¹ Dvořák showed that in Bruegel's art a turn from religious dogmas and metaphysical truths toward the human as the creator of the meaning of one's being is evident. It means that, according to Dvořák, in Bruegel's art the change of the spiritual life from the idea of the God in heaven to the God in the human is traceable – therefore, the concept of the upper truth is traded for the inner life of the individual.

This moment of overcoming God toward the human being in Bruegel's art Dvořák stated as follows:

Bruegel was the first one to whom realistic scenes of ordinary people were not only an external staging apparatus but rather the measure of the human and as a source for study and knowledge of the drives, infirmities, passions, customs, habits, thoughts and feelings that dominate man. Not as self-sufficient individuals who have taken the place of ecclesiastical and profane ideals, rather the figures who can be regarded as representatives of this plurality. [...] The depiction of the human mass belonged to the essential features of Christian art; while crowd was in it either merely an echo of higher-level events which cause was beyond the common life or a means of an increase of the external truthfulness and realism of the presentation, Bruegel introduced into art what modern writers call the folk-soul: the psychical life itself in its peculiarity and autonomy, in its anthropological conditionality and cultural-historical factuality and thus a quite new concept of the inner truth of the human description.²²

With such reading of the (historical) role of the human, Dvořák stands close to thoughts not only of early phenomenology but also of Georg Simmel. In his last

pp. 155–202, cit. p. 179: „Důvěra ve ‚skrytou moc‘ poznávající subjektivitu je vlastní stejně tak Husserlovu transcendentálnímu idealismu (Husserl užívá s oblibou pojem ‚subjektivita prožitku/prožívání‘ [Erlebnissubjektivität]), jako i Dvořákovu duchovně-dějinnému modelu dějin umění s jeho subjektivizací umění.“

21 Ibid., p. 180

22 „Bruegel war der erste, dem realistische Volksszenen nicht nur ein äußerer Inszenierungsapparat waren, sondern dem das Leben selbst als Maßstab des Menschlichen und als Quelle des Studiums und der Erkenntnis der die Menschen beherrschenden Triebe, Gebrechen, Leidenschaften, Sitten, Gewohnheiten, Gedanken und Empfindungen galt. Nicht um einzelne Individuen, die als Ganzes an Stelle der kirchlichen und profanen Idealgestalten getreten ist, oder um Gestalten, die als Vertreter dieser Vielheit angesehen werden können. [...] Die Darstellung der Menschenmasse gehörte zu den wesentlichen Zügen der christlichen Kunst; während sie jedoch bis dahin entweder nur ein Echo von Begebenheiten höheren Grades war, deren Ursache über ihr normales Leben hinausging, oder ein Mittel die äußere Wahrscheinlichkeit und Wirklichkeitswirkung der Darstellung zu erhöhen, führte Bruegel in die Kunst ein, was von neueren Schriftstellern als Volksseele bezeichnet wurde: das psychische Eigenleben einer breiten Volksschicht in seiner Eigenart und Autonomie, in seiner anthropologischen Bedingtheit und kulturgeschichtlichen Tatsächlichkeit und damit einen ganz neuen Begriff der inneren Wahrheit der Menschenschilderung.“ Dvořák (note 2), pp. 219–220.

book, *The View of Life: Four Metaphysical Essays*, published in 1918, he reflected on the dynamics and statics of life, thereby followed up on his previous texts, including the one on Friedrich Nietzsche and Arthur Schopenhauer from 1907.²³ For Simmel, life was as an “unlimited continuity” that requires (illusionary) constant “forms” to exist – forms such as social institutions, ethics, or religion. However, according to Simmel, the moment any such “forms” are created, the dynamics of their inner life tends to erode them:²⁴ Simmel discovered the need for “life more than life”, meaning life as creativity beyond the “forms” that we create, which is a sharper version of Nietzsche’s concept of “amor fati”: “Just as Schopenhauer recognizes only the negation of life as an absolute value, so Nietzsche acknowledges only one thing: Life”.²⁵

According to Simmel, the principal manifestation of this occurs in art, which, because it cannot be circumscribed by any “form”, tends to move beyond its principles using its inner-subjectivity and never-ending creative “force”. Simmel thus highlighted Nietzsche’s attempt to re-evaluate the historically given concepts (forms) that Nietzsche tried to amplify by accelerating individual self-expression through one’s personal experience of the world: “Nietzsche’s concept of life reveals such subsumption of inner processes under a single general purpose that coordinates every individual. Thus, Nietzsche regards life as an absolute value, the essentially important thing in the manifestation of existence”.²⁶

Simmel thus took up Nietzsche’s endeavor to move beyond objectively constituted reality and he believed the evolutionary explanation for aspects of life to have been forced upon the inner life of individuals²⁷; he regarded the “forms” of life, which tend to explain themselves in the terms of their systems (the economy, erotica, aesthetics, etc.) as being too narrow to grasp the complexity of life.²⁸ Based on Schopenhauer’s understanding of art as bypassing and eroding the individual “will” that determines life, Simmel also understood a work of art to be a unique experience, because every work of art creates its own (inner) space and it exists independently in (linear) time: “The momentary character of aesthetic imagination does not prohibit it from being basically beyond time, because the temporal relation, which fixes each moment between preceding and succeeding moments, is alien to pure content. Aesthetic elevation is independent of now or then, and of a here or a there”.²⁹ This aspect of spatial and momentary aesthetic contemplation of an artwork that creates its terms of existence led Simmel to believe that, “a work of art is an object that necessitates contemplation, and an artistic genius is a man

23 G. Simmel, *Schopenhauer und Nietzsche. Ein Vortragszyklus*, Leipzig, 1907.

24 G. Simmel, *Lebensanschauung. Vier metaphysische Kapitel.*, München – Leipzig, 1922, pp. 20–23.

25 G. Simmel, *Schopenhauer and Nietzsche*, trans. by H. Loiskandl, D. Weinstein, M. Weinstein, Chicago, 1991, p. 136.

26 *Ibid.*, p. 76.

27 *Ibid.*, p. 75.

28 *Ibid.*.

29 *Ibid.*, pp. 77, 78.

who is more perfectly and inclusively able to free himself from domination by the will than are others”.³⁰

To free oneself, according to Simmel, there is a need to go “beyond” oneself (to erode the given “forms”), in the meaning to comprehend the self’s inner spirit to understand its true force to create. In this concept, the “reality” does not lay in the “representation” of it, rather in the “creation” of it. Therefore, there is more to life than it might be seen by the “common” sense. Simmel was thus convinced that true artists should create art based on experience with reality, not duplicate the reality by representing it. By this notion Simmel took on Nietzsche’s task to surpass the objectively constituted reality and considered the evolutionary model for explanation of spheres of life as forced upon the inner life of an individual,³¹ and emphasized Nietzsche’s attempt to re-evaluate the historically given concepts (forms) that he tried to wide by the acceleration of the individual self-expression through his or her experience with the world:

Whereas Schopenhauer formulates a division between the singular, accidental, and individual occurrence of historical material, and the value-laden and extratemporal general idea, Nietzsche transcends this division by transposing values – which have been developed at the culmination of historic life in the evolution of our species – into the sphere of the absolute and into the regions of the ought.³²

This understanding of an inner-experience that is split as well as intertwined by the passing of the happened and awaiting of the upcoming is on one side close to the retention and protention of the internal time consciousness developed by Husserl,³³ and it can also be evident in the art-historical thinking of Hans Tietze,³⁴ whose methodological thinking was deeply influenced by Dvořák. In 1925 Tietze stated:

What is past, what is present? Each work of art is somehow forged at the moment that gave birth to it, and only in this moment of becoming is work of art fully swelled by

30 Ibid., p. 77.

31 Ibid., p. 75.

32 Ibid., p. 137.

33 M. Petříček, *Filosofie en noir*, Praha, 2018, pp. 206–233. – E. Husserl, *Phenomenology of Internal Time Consciousness*, trans. by J. Churchill, Indiana, 1964.

34 Tietze was at the Vienna University a student of Franz Wickhoff, Alois Riegl, and Julius von Schlosser and he wrote his dissertation in 1903 under Wickhoff on the topic of developmental problems of the Middle Ages painting. He thus started his art historical research under the view of Wickhoff and Riegl, in the way that in history is possible to trace an immanent progression of art without any lapses. However, then Tietze moved his articulation in another way, mostly under the influence of Dvořák’s new approach, in which the main focus started to be given to the work of art as a vehicle of its meaning. U. Wendland, *Biographisches Handbuch deutschsprachiger Kunsthistoriker im Exil. Leben und Werk der unter dem Nationalsozialismus verfolgten und vertriebenen Wissenschaftler*, Teil 2, L–Z, München, 1999, pp. 689–690. – E. Lachnit, *Die Wiener Schule der Kunstgeschichte und die Kunst ihrer Zeit: zum Verhältnis von Methode und Forschungsgegenstand am Beginn der Moderne*, Wien, 2005, p. 99.

the breath of its time, filled by the spirit of its creator; however, the work of art also in the moment of its birth begins to die. ... Old and new art are one, the fundamental difference does not lie in the matter, ... but lies in the constitutive feature demanded by different attitudes of the beholder: the one is old, the other is new.³⁵

Tietze asked after the role of the artist in the process of the creation of the artwork, which is being trans-temporally communicated from the time of its origin to the present of its research, rather than after the transformations of the art “will” in the course of history.³⁶ In this sense, Tietze comprehended “art” as a trans-temporal phenomenon which is being individualized through the work of art in the artists’ creation force, toward its perception by (timeless as well as time-determined) spectator. Tietze thus in his method researched art as the process of the human inner-feeling and as its expression on one side, on the other side as a concept of “historized” process to be able to understand the art’s trans-temporal and creative “forces”.³⁷

Tietze in this manner, between the early phenomenology and expression of the unity of life in artwork eroding the self-explaining system of (formal) art history, formulated Dvořák’s approach when he reviewed Dvořák’s papers collected by Johannes Wilde and Karl Maria Swoboda in 1924:

Dvořák has overcome this accepted conception [of Wickhoff’s and Riegl’s art-historical method, note by TM], and has derived art from its eternal determination as an ongoing, inexhaustible, never-ending guarantee of the creative force of humanity, as an irrepla-

35 „Was ist Vergangenheit, was ist Gegenwart? Jedes Kunstwerk ist irgendwie an dem Moment geschmiedet, der es gebar, nur in diesem Augenblick des Werdens ist es voll geschwellt vom Atem seiner Zeit, ganz erfüllt vom Geiste seines Schöpfers, in seiner Geburtsstunde beginnt es zu sterben. [...] Alte und neue Kunst sind eines, der fundamentale Unterschied liegt nicht in der Materie, [...] er liegt vielmehr in der konstitutiven Merkmal jeder der beiden Arten von Kunst geforderten Verschiedenheit der Einstellung des Beschauers: die eine ist alt, die andere ist neu.“ H. Tietze, *Lebendige Kunstwissenschaft*, Wien, 1925, pp. 9, 14.

36 R. Marchi, „Hans Tietze and art history as Geisteswissenschaft in early twentieth-century Vienna“, *Journal of Art Historiography* 5, 2011, <https://arthistoriography.files.wordpress.com/2011/12/marchi.pdf>, p. viii, 9. 4. 2018.

37 Tietze (note 35), pp. 14–17. The aspect of understanding to art as the self-expression of the artist, who is being temporally determined as well as is at the same time driven by the artistic “forces” (to create inner-formulation of the artistic reality), can be also obvious in Tietze’s later remarks, when he was searching for the meaning and importance of the modern art. He understood modern art as a part of certain developmental laws of art in history, as the method of the Vienna School of Art History since Riegl suggested, however, he modified this concept by the idea of the individuality of artist as the force of art-making, impinged by intellectual and felt circumstances. „Der Sinn der Kunst ist heute derselbe, den sie zu allen Zeiten hatte: durch stete Verfolgung und Weiterbildung ihrer besonderen künstlerischen Probleme die Allgemeinheit durch persönliche und sachliche Werte zu bereichern ... Der Künstler schafft aus seiner lebendigen Ganzheit heraus, seine zentrale Kraft ist für alle peripheren Äußerungen entscheidend; Erlebensfähigkeit und Erleben sind für seine schöpferische Tätigkeit die Grundlagen, die keine noch so gesteigerte und geschulte Geschicklichkeit zu ersetzen vermag.“ H. Tietze, *Die Kunst in unserer Zeit*, Wien, 1930, pp. 22–26.

ceable piece of their general spirituality. ... Therefore, art may be considered to grant particularly fruitful information while regarding an intellectual history; it blends the external and the inner that stimulates and moves people, into a unique synthesis. ... Art, before it was researched by Dvořák, was for him an experience.³⁸

According to Tietze, Dvořák was interested in the artwork beyond its representation by going inward its “spiritual” meaning, because those artworks led the art history – and in Dvořák’s late art-historical thinking that means also humanity – “upwards”. In this view we can read Dvořák’s interpretation of Bruegel in a way that Bruegel in his art overcame the idealization of art as well as the human beyond any pre-given “truths” and he connected both of these aspects in his art thanks to the comprehension of the world (nature) as the primary source, and thus, according to Dvořák, Bruegel enabled to see life as an artistic articulation.³⁹

Dvořák thus stressed a “spiritual” force of art-making, the force to create art beyond the commonality of the time through the primary experience of the artist with the reality. How Dvořák remarked: “by Bruegel ... [the] purpose consisted in the artistic and poetic processing of experiences, beyond the immediate entry of the facts, toward the truth and uplifting significance of a higher order of the image of reality, of nature and the real life”.⁴⁰

We might think thus Dvořák extended the concept of art history beyond the systematic approach and interpreted art as the spiritual conditions that were made manifest in the work of art as an integral whole and as an expression of the artist’s inner experience. Bruegel, as Dvořák suggested, was, therefore, an artist who took the human individuality from its formal representation and directed his attention not outwardly to reveal the individual’s time-space surroundings, but, on the contrary, towards the inner-formulation of the separated world; rather than copy reality, the artist created a new reality out of his own experience of the world and creative force. In other words, in Dvořák’s reading, Bruegel expressed in his art the inner spiritualization of his experience of the world in the work of art, in the same way that Simmel understood “life forms” as the manifestation of existence.

38 „Dvorak [hat] diese übernommene Auffassung überwunden und die Kunst aus ihrer ewigen Bestimmung als einer fortlaufender, unerschöpflichen, nie endenden Gewährleistung der schöpferischen Kraft der Menschheit, als ein unersetzliches Stück ihrer allgemeinen Geistigkeit. [...] Deshalb darf die Kunst beanspruchen, einer geistesgeschichtlichen Fragestellung besonders ergiebige Aufschlüsse zu gewähren; sie verschmilzt das Äußerlichste und das Innerlichste, was Menschen anregt und bewegt, zu einer einzigartigen Synthese. [...] Kunst war ihm, ehe es sie erforschen galt, ein Erlebnis.“ H. Tietze, M. Dvořák, *Der Piperbote für Kunst und Literatur*, 1924, pp. 4–8, cit. pp. 5–6.

39 Dvořák (note 2), pp. 232–233.

40 Ibid., p. 257: „bei Bruegel ... [der] Zweck bestand in einem durch künstlerische und poetische Verarbeitung der Erfahrungen, über die unmittelbare Buchung der Tatsachen hinaus zur Wahrheit und zu erhebender Bedeutung höherer Ordnung verwandelten Abbild der Wirklichkeit, der Natur, des realen Lebens.“

Charles de Tolnay and Hans Sedlmayr

Dvořák's approach to understanding Bruegel's art continued after World War I in the work of his student Charles de Tolnay (also Karl Tolnai or Karoly Edler von Tolnay).⁴¹ In his art-historical approach, Tolnay combined elements of Dvořák's late method of possibility to see in the work of art the (inner) expression of the researched epoch, with the notion of iconographical reading of the artwork. Tolnay thus in his method tried to reconstruct the intellectual surroundings of the artist, but not only through the work of art and its (self) interpretation, but rather with help of the historical documents which corresponded and supported findings that he was able to see in artworks. Tolnay's work could be therefore viewed as the connection point between the Vienna School of Dvořák's tradition with Erwin Panofsky's and other iconographical textual researches.⁴²

Tolnay was, in his book from 1925, interested in Bruegel's transformation of the Italian experience into a Netherlandish view of the world and he stressed Bruegel's ability to re-model nature into the artistic creation in the middle of the 16th-century manner. In this way, Tolnay examined the substance of Bruegel's art:

Bruegel was the only one who perceived in the formations of nature a unified life, to which the very basis of the origin, the secret of the essentiality of nature and the Alps became apparent. [...] The conditions for this world experience were still missing at the time of Dürer. They were apparent before Bruegel, but none of them had the force to shape the new reality from their original experience. [...] Bruegel is, therefore, the genius of the mid-century: his substrate is not borrowed, rather it is the given reality itself, and

41 Tolnay was born in Budapest in Hungary and he started his studies at the Vienna University under Dvořák in 1918. He wrote his dissertation under Julius von Schlosser in 1925 on the topic of the art of Hieronymus Bosch. Early in his career he was thus already examining 16th-century Flemish painting and he soon became one of the main researchers specializing in the art of Pieter Bruegel the Elder. See Wendland (note 34), p. 704.

42 Ernst Hans Gombrich, himself a disciple of the Vienna School of Art History, questioned Tolnay's method in connection to Dvořák's in the review of Tolnay's book on Hieronymus Bosch from 1966: "For his allegiance is to that type of Geistesgeschichte which regards the work of art as a symptom of the evolution of the human spirit; the artist expresses the age, a collective situation rather than a personal one. Applying the method, so persuasively championed by Max Dvorak, of interpreting style as a metaphor for a philosophy of life, a Weltanschauung, Professor de Tolnay sets about to explain Bosch's pictorial technique as a direct manifestation of the 'world view' of that period. [...] All this may make poetic reading, but is it true? Much as we owe to the pioneers of Geistesgeschichte, among whom Professor de Tolnay will always occupy an honoured place, it must be said that the last thirty years have made many of us impatient with its frequently circular argument and with its portentous tone." E. Gombrich, "Bosch of Hertogenbosch", Review of *Hieronymus Bosch* by Charles de Tolnay, *The New York Review of Books*, February 23rd, 1967, pp. 3-4. For the relationship of Tolnay and Panofsky see K. Balázs, C. Markója, "A Tolnay-Panofsky Affér", *Enigma*, no. 65, 2010, pp. 111-124.

its great will is apparent beyond of the given conditions, which grew into a meaningful unity. The world’s meaning became observable to him.⁴³

Tolnay thus adopted Dvořák’s view that in the artworks of the artists initiating the art-historical shifts are expressed the epoch tensions by artists’ inner-experience embedded into works of art and therefore they can be interpreted through art. That is also why Fritz Grossmann noted that Tolnay did not completely concentrate on the form of the artwork, unlike Hans Sedlmayr.⁴⁴ This discrepancy, indicated by Grossmann, between two different approaches to Bruegel’s art within Viennese art history of the 1930s and influenced by Dvořák’s thinking,⁴⁵ thus between the formal (structural) approach to art through the method in which art form was comprehended as the sub-meaning of the particular artwork, represented mostly by Sedlmayr,⁴⁶ and Tolnay’s continuation and application of Dvořák’s thinking in which an artwork was researched as a culmination of the period artists’ inner (art) “force”, is especially evident in 1934 issued *Jahrbuch der Kunsthistorischen Sammlungen in Wien*.

43 „Bruegel war der Einzige, der in den Bildungen der Natur ein einheitliches Leben empfand, dem der Urgrund des Entstehens, das Geheimnis der Naturzeugung und den Alpen offenbar wurde. [...] Die Bedingungen zu diesem Welterlebnis fehlten noch zur Zeit Dürers. Sie waren aber schon da, bevor Bruegel erscheinen, nur hatte keiner von ihm die Kraft, aus ursprünglichem Erlebnis heraus die neue Wirklichkeit zu gestalten. [...] Bruegel ist da Genie der Mitte des Jahrhunderts: Sein Substrat ist kein entliehenes, sondern die gegebene Wirklichkeit selbst, und seine Größe macht es aus, daß ihm aus den gegebenen Bedingungen heraus eine sinnvolle Einheit zusammenwuchs. Der Weltsinn wurde ihm sichtbar.“ K. Tolnai, *Die Zeichnungen Pieter Bruegels*, München, 1925, p. 1.

44 F. Grossmann, *Pieter Bruegel. Completed Edition of the Paintings*, London, 1973, pp. 48–49. Grossmann studied at the Vienna University from 1924 to 1927 art history and German philology, after he studied law in the years 1920–1924. He, therefore, attended the art history at the Vienna University when Julius von Schlosser and Josef Strzygowski led the two departments of art history, and Grossmann wrote his dissertation under Strzygowski; he centered on late gothic Austrian painting. In 1938, after the annexation of Austria by Nazi Germany, Grossmann had to leave and he emigrated from Vienna to London, where he started to work as an assistant to Rubens scholar Ludwig Burchard. After emigration Grossmann did not continue in the interest of his dissertation, but due to his assistantship to Burchard, he started to research Flemish painting of the 16th century, among his interests, belonged especially the art of Pieter Bruegel the Elder. See: H. Cuvelier, “Empathy and deep understanding’: Fritz Grossmann (1902–84) and his Bruegel Archive at the Rubenianum”, in: K. Bulkens et al., eds., *Picturing Ludwig Burchard, 1886–1960: A Rubens Scholar in Art-Historiographical Perspective*, New York, 2015, pp. 133–150.

45 Sedlmayr and Tolnay were both students of Max Dvořák. See Wendland (note 34), p. 704. – Betthausen – Feist – Fork (note 1), p. 401.

46 Hans Sedlmayr studied art history at the Vienna University under Dvořák, and after his death, he graduated under Julius von Schlosser’s supervision with an interpretation of the architecture of Johann Bernard Fischer von Erlach. In the 1930s he became the leading person in formulating a new approach to art history that he called “strengen Kunstwissenschaft”, later known mostly as structural analysis. This method was alongside Sedlmayr developed by his friend Otto Pächt, who parted ways with Sedlmayr after Sedlmayr collaborated with the Austrian Nazi Party in the late 1930s and early 1940. See: Betthausen – Feist – Fork (note 1), pp. 401–404.

Tolnay's interpretation of Bruegel's paintings, called *Studien zu den Gemälden P. Bruegels der Ältere*,⁴⁷ in this issue was overshadowed by the now well-known paper *Die "macchia" Bruegels* by Hans Sedlmayr.⁴⁸ Sedlmayr conducted a "structural analysis" of Bruegel's painting and tried thereby to interpret the content of the artwork on the basis of its form,⁴⁹ which, according to him, was closely connected to its meaning: "In Bruegel, as with all great artists, there is an inner correspondence of form and content; the one is created for the other".⁵⁰ Sedlmayr used the term "macchia" to refer to the fragmented representation of humanity in Bruegel's paintings, where every edge is separated from the others. In Sedlmayr's view, this was intended to show the disintegration of the unity of humankind in the middle of the 16th century.

Sedlmayr then examined individual formal elements of Bruegel's paintings and interpreted them as indicators of an intentional discontinuity that was meant to be felt by the viewer and therefore cause him to revise his comprehension of the painting and of the world as a whole (of which the painting is a re-articulation). This artistic approach, according to Sedlmayr, had the effect of disconnecting the figures from their surroundings, which Sedlmayr saw to be one of the main purposes of Bruegel's art:

Without any activity on our part, simply through steady, passive viewing and extended attention (and for some viewers immediately), the human figures of typical pictures by Bruegel begin to disintegrate, to fall into pieces and thus to lose their meaning in the usual sense. When this process has reached its peak, one sees instead of figures a multitude of flat, vivid patches with firmly enclosed contours and unified coloration that all seem to lie unconnected and unordered, beside and above each other in a plane at the front of the picture.⁵¹

Sedlmayr was drawing on Dvořák's research in linking Bruegel's art to Italian Mannerism, but his interpretation of Mannerism was much more like that of Wilhelm Pinder.⁵² In his reading of Bruegel's art, therefore, Sedlmayr partly followed Dvořák's interpretation;⁵³ however, he incorporated Dvořák's conclusions into his

47 Karl von Tolnai, „Studien zu den Gemälden Pieter Bruegels d. Ä.“, *Jahrbuch der Kunsthistorischen Sammlungen in Wien VIII*, 1934, pp. 105–135.

48 H. Sedlmayr, „Die Macchia Bruegels“, *Jahrbuch der Kunsthistorischen Sammlungen in Wien VIII*, 1934, pp. 137–159. See also C. S. Wood, *The Vienna School Reader. Politics and Art Historical Method in the 1930s*, New York, 2000, pp. 43–53. – M. Männig, *Hans Sedlmayrs Kunstgeschichte*, Wien – Köln – Weimar, 2017, pp. 97–109.

49 J. Bakoš, *Discourses and Strategies: the role of the Vienna School in shaping Central European approaches to art history and related discourses*, Frankfurt am Main, 2013, pp. 20–21. See also, W. Hofmann, „Fragen nach Strukturanalyse“, in: Idem, *Bruchlinien. Aufsätze zur Kunst des 19. Jahrhunderts*, München, 1979, pp. 70–89.

50 H. Sedlmayr, „Bruegel's Macchia (1934)“, in: Wood (note 48), pp. 323–376, cit. p. 327.

51 Ibid., p. 325.

52 See: W. Pinder, „Zur Physiognomik des Mannierismus“, in: H. Prinzhorn, ed., *Die Wissenschaft am Scheideweg von Leben und Geist. Festschrift Klages zum 60. Geburtstag*, Leipzig, 1932, pp. 148–156.

53 Sedlmayr called Dvořák „Bruegel's savior“. Sedlmayr (note 50), p. 363

conception of Bruegel’s art, rather than building directly on Dvořák’s thoughts.⁵⁴ Sedlmayr’s conclusion about Bruegel’s art is that it is about the decline of humanity in Bruegel’s time, which is a different viewpoint than the idea of the liberation of an inner-spirit that we can read in both Dvořák’s⁵⁵ and Tolnay’s texts.

In his text from 1934, published with Sedlmayr’s “macchia”, Tolnay developed the interpretation of Bruegel’s drawings he gave in 1925 further, and he described his method of interpretation as influenced by Dvořák: “Uncovering the intellectual content in Bruegel’s paintings is the prerequisite for understanding his artistic style. [...] Dvořák was the first to reveal the general intellectual conditions of Bruegel’s art and he opened the way to a deeper understanding of Bruegel’s paintings as a whole”.⁵⁶ Among other paintings discussed as examples, Tolnay highlighted *Landscape with the Fall of Icarus*, in which he identified the view on the city by the sea in the background of the painting as an Italian-influenced motif.⁵⁷ But he pointed to the sun as the central “event” in the painting, whereby it acquired a new meaning, distinct from the Italian artistic tradition, and Tolnay accordingly interpreted the painting as a creative artist expressing his inner experience of lived reality: “For a moment everything is silent, only the air, saturated with mist, fills the space with a quietly incomprehensible tension. This magic of the sun is the actual ‘event’ of the picture [...] The classical myth [...] is overshadowed in Bruegel’s Fall of Icarus by a view of the dawn of the ascendancy of a sun-centered cosmos”.⁵⁸

Tolnay thus understood Bruegel’s painting as, on the one hand, a new iconographic treatment of a widely used motif,⁵⁹ but on the other hand also as the crea-

54 Ibid., p. 354.

55 „Bruegel war der erste, dem realistische Volksszenen nicht nur ein äußerer Inszenierungsapparat waren, sondern dem das Leben selbst als Maßstab des Menschlichen und als Quelle des Studiums und der Erkenntnis der die Menschen beherrschenden Triebe, Gebrechen, Leidenschaften, Sitten, Gewohnheiten, Gedanken und Empfindungen galt. Nicht um einzelne Individuen, die als Ganzes an Stelle der kirchlichen und profanen Idealgestalten getreten ist, oder um Gestalten, die als Vertreter dieser Vielheit angesehen werden können.“ Dvořák (note 2), p. 227.

56 „Die Aufdecken des gedanklichen Gehaltes in Bruegels Bildern ist die Voraussetzung zum Verständnis seines bildnerischen Stils. [...] Erst Dvořák, der die allgemeinen-geistigen Voraussetzungen von Bruegels Kunst aufdeckte, hat den Weg zu einem tieferen Verständnis der das Ganze der Bruegelschen Bilder bestimmenden Gesinnung eröffnet.“ Tolnay (note 47), p. 105.

57 Ibid., p. 107.

58 Ibid., p. 109: „einen Augenblick liegt alles stumm da, nur die dunstschwängere Luft erfüllt den Raum mit einer leise bebenden unbegreiflichen Spannung. Diese Sonnenmagie ist das eigentliche ‚Geschehnis‘ des Bildes. [...] Der klassische Mythos [...] wird in Bruegels Ikarussturz durch die neu durchbrechende Anschauung von der Allherrschaft des sonnendurchwalteten Kosmos verdrängt.“

59 Ibid.: “die Art, wie Bruegel den ovidischen Text selbst behandelt, bereits ein positiver Beweis für seine bewußt kosmozentrische Einstellung. Zweifellos griff er auf Ovid unmittelbar zurück, hat er doch als erster Motive des pflügenden Bauern, des auf den Stab gestützten Hirten und des angelnden Fischer im Bilde festgehalten.” Tolnay stressed these lines as direct representation of the Ovid’s text in Bruegel’s painting, Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, trans. by A. D. Melville and E. J. Kenney, New York, 1987, p. 282: “An angler fishing with his quivering rod, / A lonely shepherd propped upon his crook, / A ploughman leaning on his plough, looked up / And gaze

tion of a new artistic reality expressed through the artist's inner experience of the time-and-space he lives in. Tolnay stated that:

[Bruegel] is no longer interested in Italian nature [...] nor is he interested in the world of ancient knowledge as it relates to human significance, he rather goes beyond that by realizing the insignificance of everything human in the face of nature newly understood. Finally, Bruegel reforms – and this is a consequence of the new conception – the conventional romantic pictorial form: instead of adding the space of the landscape as a backdrop, he has for the first time created an autonomous cosmos with its internal dynamics.⁶⁰

An important source of information for comparison of the above-mentioned discrepancy of elaboration of Dvořák's interpretation of Bruegel by his students in the 1930s is an appendix to Sedlmayr's study (which is not found in the English translation published by Christopher Wood in 2000), called "Criticism of Interpretations of Bruegel's Art".⁶¹ In it, Sedlmayr commented on Tolnay's and Dvořák's texts on Bruegel.⁶² We could view this critical reading of Dvořák's and Tolnay's texts by Sedlmayr as the point where the later Vienna School's approach to art history splits into two directions – *Strukturwissenschaft* and *Geistesgeschichte*, as Ernst Hans Gombrich was still referring to them in the early 1960s.⁶³

In his commentary on Tolnay's interpretation of Bruegel, Sedlmayr stated that he did not know the Tolnay's study of Bruegel's paintings published in the *Jahrbuch der Kunsthistorischen Sammlungen in Wien*.⁶⁴ He primarily interpreted Tolnay's

in awe, and thought the must be gods / That they could fly. [...] / when the boy, / Began to enjoy his thrilling flight and left, / His guide to roam the rangers of the heavens, / And soared too high. The scorching sun so close / Softened the fragrant wax that bound his wings; / The wax melted; his waving arms were bare; [...] / And calling to his father as he fell, / The boy was swallowed in the blue sea's swell, / The blue sea that for ever bears his name."

60 Ibid., p. 110–111: „Die italienische Natur interessiert ihn [Bruegel] nicht mehr, [...] Zugleich interessiert ihn die Antike Bildungswelt nicht mehr in ihrer humanen Bedeutung, sondern er überwindet sie in der Erkenntnis der Nichtigkeit alles Menschlichen angesichts der neu erschlossenen Natur. Schließlich reformiert Bruegel – und dies ist eine Folge der neuen Auffassung – die konventionelle romantische Bildform: an Stelle des aus Kulissen addierten Landschaftsraumes setzt er erstmalig einen Einheitsraum als in sich abgeschlossenen, von eigengesetzlicher Dynamik durchwirkten Kosmos."

61 "Zur Kritik der Deutungen der Kunst Bruegels." See: Sedlmayr (note 48), pp. 158–159.

62 Ibid., p. 158.

63 Even though Gombrich was skeptical about Tolnay's method originating in Dvořák's thoughts, he rejected the method advocated by Sedlmayr and his followers in general. "Riegl, in his turn, is hailed as the founder of the Strukturwissenschaft whose value is seen, in Sedlmayr's words, inter alia in the recognition that 'Reason is a variable that changes with history'. [...] If that is the case, it is unfortunately not possible by rational methods to decide from London in 1964 whether an essay written in Munich some years earlier is the product of reason or unreason." E. Gombrich, Review of *Kunstgeschichte und Kunsttheorie im 19. Jahrhundert (Probleme der Kunstwissenschaft, I)*, *The Burlington Magazine* 46, 1964, pp. 418–420, cit. p. 418.

64 Sedlmayr (note 48), p. 158.

thoughts on the basis of Tolnay’s book from 1925.⁶⁵ Sedlmayr generally criticized Tolnay’s approach as ignoring Bruegel’s actual “art” by foregrounding Bruegel’s “genius”, which according to Sedlmayr made it impossible for Tolnay to see the deeper “artistic” principles of Bruegel’s art.⁶⁶ Sedlmayr could not accept Tolnay’s interpretation because of his conviction that only in the structure of the art’s form can the meaning of the artwork be decoded. Sedlmayr thus rejected Tolnay’s interpretation as too shallow from the perspective of “strenge Kunstwissenschaft”⁶⁷ because it did not pay enough attention to the formal structure of Bruegel’s art and focused instead on Bruegel’s inner spirit as expressed in art:

Tolnay has a false notion of the nature of artistic form and artistic output. Bruegel is for him a genius with a deep conception of the world, but this conception of the world is not a vivid vision for him, but a philosophical thought expressed in painting. [...] Tolnay is blind to the actual artistic problem and the difference in artistic value. However, those who do not see these differences have also not yet seen Bruegel’s art.⁶⁸

After his criticism of Tolnay’s research, Sedlmayr likened Dvořák’s interpretation to his own and referred to Dvořák’s method as the basis from which Tolnay’s method also grew: “Without the knowledge gained by Dvořák, neither Tolnay’s interpretation nor that attempted here would be possible”.⁶⁹ However, Sedlmayr pointed out that Dvořák was the significant interpreter of Bruegel’s art opposite to Tolnay’s thinking, which Sedlmayr regarded as derived and poorer than Dvořák’s: “Dvořák’s interpretation [...] is much more faithful to the phenomenon that is Bruegel than Tolnay’s”.⁷⁰

One can sense in Sedlmayr’s rejection of Tolnay’s research findings his feeling of rivalry toward Tolnay; Sedlmayr may have seen in Tolnay a different art historian but one still strongly rooted in theory continuing along the same lines as Dvořák in his method, which Sedlmayr wanted to do away with to bring back Alois Riegl’s methodology.⁷¹ What we see, therefore, in the in the mid-1930s are two studies of

65 Sedlmayr also referred to Tolnay’s study from 1929. See: K. Tolnai, „Beiträge zu Bruegels Zeichnungen“, *Jahrbuch der Preußischen Kunstsammlungen*, 1929, pp. 195–216.

66 Sedlmayr (note 48), p. 158

67 See: H. Sedlmayr, „Zu einer strengen Kunstwissenschaft“, *Kunstwissenschaftliche Forschungen* I, Berlin, 1931, pp. 7–32. – Idem, *Toward a Rigorous Study of Art* (1931), in: Wood (note 48), pp. 133–179.

68 “Tolnai hat eine falsche Vorstellung von der Eigenart des künstlerischen Gestaltens und der künstlerischen Leistung. Bruegel ist für ihn ein Genie kraft der Tiefe seine Weltauffassung, diese Weltauffassung ist aber bei Tolnai nicht eine anschauliche Vision, sondern ein philosophischer Gedanke, der malend zum Ausdruck gebracht wird [...] Für das eigentlich künstlerische Problem und für die großen künstlerischen Wertunterschiede ist Tolnai blind. Wer aber diese Unterschiede nicht sieht, hat die Kunst Bruegels noch nicht gesehen.” Sedlmayr (note 48), p. 158.

69 *Ibid.*, p. 159: “Ohne die Erkenntnisse, die Dvořák gewonnen hat, wäre aber weder die Deutung Tolnais, noch die hier versuchte möglich geworden.”

70 *Ibid.*: “Die Deutung Dvořáks [...] kommt dem Phänomen Bruegel im ganzen viel näher als die Tolnais.”

71 Wood (note 48), pp. 43–53.

the art of Pieter Bruegel the Elder with different outcomes: Sedlmayr interpreted Bruegel's art according to its form, in the same way that Riegl understood art, while Tolnay, by contrast, tried to re-imagine the artist's cultural and intellectual context, just like Dvořák did.

Tolnay's approach also may have irritated Sedlmayr because it undermined his concept of "art as a rigorous science", based on the form as the origin of artistic creation and the object of art-historical research. In interpreting Bruegel as a "genius" Tolnay, according to Sedlmayr, may have shown another possible way of understanding art and its history – as the human condition in a specific historical experience, of which the form of the work of art is the outcome, but not its main purpose. In other words, it was not the structure of the form, but the spiritual influences embodied in the form that for Tolnay, like Dvořák, was the object of interest to art-historical research. For Sedlmayr, this notion may have been an inconsistent method of art history because it rested on the abilities and the subjectivity of the individual researcher, on how he experienced the art form to re-create the experience of the artist embodied in it. However, Tolnay, like Dvořák, based his interpretations on his deep historical knowledge of the period he was focusing on – and then he fleshed out this knowledge by interpreting the artwork as part of the "spiritual" history of art, which is the core of Dvořák's method of art history, how Johannes Wilde and Karl Maria Swoboda titled it.

The "spiritual" approach to art history, therefore, examined the position of the artist within his spiritual (intellectual) context and interpreted it as an individual experience, re-created in the form of an artwork, and thus as a unique exposition of a historical reality that could not be revealed on the basis of any other historical knowledge. What's more, in this type of interpretation the interpreter also "revealed" his position in the world, because the interpretation of the artwork reflected the art historian's inner experience, and – as a result – the work of art in between its origin and its interpretation lost its isolation from formal history and became an experience of the continual artistic-spiritual reality, hence in the moment of its interpretation the work of art became an extension of the artistic-spiritual reality of a certain period into the present.

This notion of the art-historical method may refer back to Georg Simmel's thinking about the dynamics of the inner life, contesting any given "forms", in this case, the concept of (art) history as existing only in the past. Simmel in 1918 noted that:

Time is the – perhaps abstract – form in our consciousness of that which is life itself, as experienced in inexpressible, immediate concreteness. Time is life seen apart from its contents, because life alone transcends in both directions the atemporal present-point of every other reality and only thereby realizes, all by itself, the temporal dimension (i.e., time). If we retain the concept and fact of the present at all, as we are both justified and indeed compelled to do, then this essential structure of life signifies a continual reaching out beyond itself as something in the present. This reaching out by life into that which is not its actuality, but such that this reaching out nevertheless shapes its actuality – is,

therefore, not something that has merely been tagged onto life but rather, as it takes place in growth, procreation, and the spiritual processes, is the very essence of life itself.⁷²

This notion of Tolnay’s art historical method, influenced by Dvořák and his possible take on Simmel’s philosophy, may come closer to the at the beginning mentioned contemporary thinking of speculative art history, how van Tuinen represents it. He in his text on Mannerism from 2017 notes that Mannerism art, “seeks to legitimate the past precisely through the present. By giving the model a second existence in the copy, it makes the past return in the present (now-where) as a virtual participant in the construction of the future (no-where)”.⁷³ This concept, developed by van Tuinen on thinking of Gilles Deleuze, is evident already in the art-historical method influenced by Dvořák, how we have seen in his take on the art of Pieter Bruegel the Elder as disrupting the given forms by the inner-experience of the lived reality. By this notion, the “now-where” takes on the past and re-formulates it in a new way, therefore closer to the concept of dislocating the given forms to gain “life more than life”, how Simmel suggested. And this understanding of Bruegel’s art, when the art form elaborates the life as beyond the form, might be one of the main elements of Dvořák’s concept of Mannerism, which also comes close to the contemporary comprehension of it, as suggested by van Tuinen. This concept, besides van Tuinen’s recent writings, might be close to today’s understanding of art as visibility too, how I briefly indicate in the conclusion.

Conclusion

Besides the now well-known *Strukturanalyse* of Hans Sedlmayr and his circle, it seems thus that there may have existed “other” Vienna School of Art History, influenced by the late methodological thinking of Max Dvořák. And its methodological approach, indicated here by Dvořák’s and Tolnay’s reading of Pieter Bruegel’s art, may have found a latent continuation in the early 21st century understanding of art – the accent on life and its contemplation as the core of Bruegel’s painting can be for example traceable in Lars von Trier’s *Melancholia* from 2011, probably referencing to Andrej Tarkovsky’s “Solaris” from 1972. In the opening sequence, Bruegel’s painting *Hunters in the Snow* is visually de-composed by the decay and followed by the depiction of the end of the world.

Later in the film, the same painting is displayed in an office as a reproduction in an opened book, after Justine, one of the main protagonists, in anger replaces reproductions of supremacist abstract paintings by Kazimir Malevich with Bruegel’s, John Everett Millais’ and Caravaggio’s paintings. It seems that in those artworks,

72 G. Simmel, *The View of Life. Four Metaphysical Essays with Journal Aphorisms*, trans. by John A. Y. Andrews and Donald N. Levine, Chicago, 2010, p. 8.

73 van Tuinen (note 6), p. 148

interested in the position of the human and into one's role in the (by experience, therefore nature-influenced) world of distress, can comprehend life much better than (by natural sciences, therefore ideal-influenced) constructed in-human abstract paintings.

In Bruegel's art, how Dvořák indicated, we can see life as it is – without any restrictions as well as without any redemption. Life in its eternal flow is not affected by one's individuality, similarly, Nietzsche, as well as Simmel, comprehended life: without any transcendence and with emphasis on the human life within. Von Trier in his film might have connected the notion of this re-imagination of Bruegel's art occurring since the beginning of the 20th century, influenced by the crisis of the man from the end of the 19th century, caused by the self-revelation of one's desolation and freedom, without any possibility to redeem oneself. Also, the contemporary research comprehends Bruegel's art in this manner: as the transience of time through the (historical) painting that deals with (untimely) foundations of human conditions.

For example, Keith Moxey researched in this way Bruegel's art as a part of the visual studies, when according to him the "representation" in the painting turns into the "presentation" of the painting.⁷⁴ Moxey follows contemporary theorists of the image, like Hans Belting, Gottfried Boehm, or W. J. T. Mitchell, and conceives of the image as escaping history by its presence in the observer's current time-and-space.⁷⁵ Founding his reasoning on Mitchell's theory of intermediality, Moxey is convinced that an interpretation of a work of art is a clash between the work of art and the act of interpreting it:

If description can only be accomplished in retrospect and is, therefore, dependent on memory, every account of the work of art must necessarily be filtered through an individual consciousness and bear the traits of the radical specificity of its author. All the objectifying devices of the history of art, ideas of historical distance and social context, cannot expel the presence of the contemporary observer from an account of the past. [...] Authority lies neither with images nor with words, for both function to subvert the finality of interpretation.⁷⁶

In this manner Moxey shows that Bruegel's paintings can be observed as "contemporary"; they are viewed in the contemporary time, and thus the "power" of the paintings exercises authority over our imagination: Moxey refers to Belting's *Bildanthropologie* and speaks about Bruegel's painting as a separate event from the observer's imagination.⁷⁷ With this understanding of Bruegel's art, Moxey articulates the idea of painting as referencing the human mind to articulate the image-affected imagination. Like this affected imagination the painting is then transformed from its historical position and its two-dimensional representation into the presentation of the painting, which is "around and behind us as well".⁷⁸ The visuality

74 K. Moxey, *Visual Time. The Image in History*, Durham and London, 2013, pp. 77–78.

75 Ibid., p. 78.

76 Ibid., pp. 79–80.

77 Ibid., p. 86–87, 90.

78 Ibid., p. 96

of the artwork therefore affects the rooted-in-time viewing of the artwork. Moxey demonstrates this concept in Bruegel’s painting *Hunters in the Snow*, central also for von Trier’s *Melancholia*:

The tension between human beings and the circumstances in which they find themselves becomes one of the picture’s themes. The hunters both belong and do not belong to the landscape in which they find themselves, just as we do and do not belong in the painting’s presence. In this case, the bond between picture and viewer depends on the weight of phenomenological experience. [...] The two-dimensionality of the figures echoes the flatness of the picture plane in such a way as to send the imagination spinning. In the contrast between the presence of the painted surface and the illusionary space it represents lies the painting’s intimacy, its power to fascinate and elude, to engage, and to defy interpretation. The unmistakable evidence that the painting is an object, that its capacity for illusion is limited by our desire to believe in it, suggests that if the painting has a time, it lies not in its nonexistent narrative so much as in its capacity to provoke a response in the observer. In doing so it asserts that its presence belongs as much to the present as to the past.⁷⁹

In the early 20th century Dvořák and Tolnay similarly thought of the work of art as perceived in a given moment in a way that it transcends both time and space and in this were probably influenced by Simmel’s thoughts on art and life at the beginning of the century. Today’s visual studies disengage art history internally to extend its scope by revealing the subjectivity of interpretation; it shows art history as an obsolete way in which to research art. However, as the “other” Vienna School of Art History might suggest, art history in its modern beginnings in the early 20th century advocated a wider definition of the history of art as not only the historical reconstruction of what has factually happened but more so as the pursuit of an understanding of the human (historical) condition through the work of art. Thus, rather than discrediting the “history” of art by looking at art, which is what visual studies might seem to suggest, the method of the Vienna School of Art History after Max Dvořák transformed it, examined art as an indicator of historical changes occurring in the human mind and spirit and then embodied in a work of art. Therefore, this approach to art (history) may offer a methodology that is similar to the contemporary interest in art as an anthropological inner-force that in the face of a work of art reveals more about the viewer viewing it⁸⁰ but without the need to dissolve art history as a specialized scientific field.⁸¹

79 Ibid., p. 99.

80 See e.g. G. Didi-Hubermann, *Was wir sehen blickt uns an: Metapsychologie des Bildes*, München, 2001. – J. L. Marion, *The Crossing of the Visible*, Paolo Alto, 2004. – L. Wiesing, *Phänomene im Bild*, München, 2007. – Horst Bredekamp, *Der Bildakt*, Berlin, 2015.

81 I would like to dedicate this text to Lubomír Konečný, a renowned Czech art historian and a great admirer of Jan Białostocki. My gratitude goes to Friedrich Polleroß for opening the archive of the Institute of Art History at the Vienna University for me, and I am also grateful to Josef Vojvodík for his inspirational discussions on the topic of the Vienna School of Art History. I am also grateful to Robin Cassling for her proofreading of the text.

References

- Aurenhammer, H., "Inventing 'Mannerist Expressionism': Max Dvořák and the History of Art as History of the Spirit", in: K. A. Smith, ed., *The Expressionist Turn in Art History. A Critical Anthology*, Burlington, 2014, pp. 187–208.
- Aurenhammer, H., "Max Dvořák. Tintoretto und die Moderne", *Wiener Jahrbuch für Kunstgeschichte*, no. 49, 1996, pp. 9–39.
- Bakoš, J., "Max Dvořák – a neglected re-visionist", *Wiener Jahrbuch für Kunstgeschichte*, no. 53, 2004, pp. 55–72.
- Bakoš, J., *Discourses and Strategies: the role of the Vienna School in shaping Central European approaches to art history and related discourses*, Frankfurt am Main, 2013.
- Bařus, W., "Max Dvořák betrachtet Tintoretto oder über den Manierismus", *Ars*, no. 44, 2011, pp. 26–43.
- Belting, H., *Das Ende der Kunstgeschichte?* München, 1984.
- Bethhausen, P., Feist, P. H., Fork, Ch., eds., *Metzler Kunsthistoriker Lexikon*, 2. Auflage, Stuttgart – Weimar, 2007.
- Bredenkamp, H., "Bildwissenschaft", in: *Metzler Lexikon Kunstwissenschaft*, 2. Auflage, ed. U. Pfisterer, Stuttgart, 2011, pp. 72–75.
- Bredenkamp, H., *Der Bildakt*, Berlin, 2015.
- Danto, A., "The End of Art", in: B. Lang, ed., *The Death of Art*, New York, 1984, pp. 5–35.
- Didi-Hubermann, G., *Was wir sehen blickt uns an: Metapsychologie des Bildes*, München, 2001.
- Dvořák, M., "Einleitung", in: *Pieter Bruegel der Ältere. Siebenunddreißig Farbenlichtdrucke nach seinen Hauptwerken in Wien und eine Einführung in seine Kunst*, Wien, 1921, pp. 5–36.
- Dvořák, M., "Pieter Bruegel der Ältere", in: K. M. Swoboda, J. Wilde, eds., *Kunstgeschichte als Geistesgeschichte. Studien zur abendländischen Kunstentwicklung*, München, 1924, pp. 217–257.
- Dvořák, M., *Idealism and Naturalism in Gothic Art*, trans. R. J. Klawiter, Indiana, 1967.
- Elkins, J., *Visual Studies: A Skeptical Introduction*, New York, 2003.
- Gombrich, E., "Review of Charles de Tolnay on Hieronymus Bosch", *The New York Review of Books*, February 23rd, 1967, pp. 3–4.
- Gombrich, E., "Review of Kunstgeschichte und Kunsttheorie im 19. Jahrhundert (Probleme der Kunstwissenschaft, I)", *The Burlington Magazine*, no. 46, 1964, pp. 418–420.
- Grossmann, F., *Pieter Bruegel. Completed Edition of the Paintings*, London, 1973.
- Hofmann, W., "Fragen nach Strukturanalyse", in: *Bruchlinien. Aufsätze zur Kunst des 19. Jahrhunderts*, München, 1979, pp. 70–89.
- Husserl, E., *Phenomenology of Internal Time Consciousness*, trans. J. Churchill, Indiana, 1964.
- Lachnit, E., *Die Wiener Schule der Kunstgeschichte und die Kunst ihrer Zeit: zum Verhältnis von Methode und Forschungsgegenstand am Beginn der Moderne*, Wien, 2005.
- Männig, M., *Hans Sedlmayrs Kunstgeschichte. Eine kritische Studie*, Wien – Köln – Weimar, 2017.
- Marchi, R., "Hans Tietze and art history as Geisteswissenschaft in early twentieth-century Vienna", *Journal of Art Historiography*, no. 5, 2011, <https://arthistoriography.files.wordpress.com/2011/12/marchi.pdf>.
- Marion, J. L., *The Crossing of the Visible*, Paolo Alto, 2004.
- Moxey, K., *Visual Time. The Image in History*, Durham – London, 2013.
- Murár, T., "Je-li umělecká forma vtělením duchovního vztahu ke světu. Max Dvořák a umění Pietra Bruegela staršího", *Umění*, no. 66, 2018, pp. 458–465.
- Petříček, M., *Filosofie en noir*, Praha, 2018.

“A work of art is an object that necessitates contemplation”. Latency of visual...

- Pinder, W., “Zur Physiognomik des Mannerismus”, in: H. Prinzhorn, ed., *Die Wissenschaft am Scheideweg von Leben und Geist. Festschrift Klages zum 60. Geburtstag*, Leipzig, 1932, pp. 148–156.
- Rampley, M., “Max Dvořák. Art history and the crisis of Modernity”, *Art History*, no. 26, 2003, pp. 214–237.
- Rampley, M., *The Vienna School of Art History. Empire and the Politics of Scholarship, 1847–1918*, Pennsylvania, 2013.
- Sedlmayr, H., “Die Macchia Bruegels”, *Jahrbuch der Kunsthistorischen Sammlungen in Wien*, no. 8, 1934, pp. 137–159.
- Sedlmayr, H., “Zu einer strengen Kunstwissenschaft”, *Kunstwissenschaftliche Forschungen*, 1931, no. 1, pp. 7–32.
- Simmel, G., *Schopenhauer and Nietzsche*, trans. H. Loiskandl, D. Weinstein, M. Weinstein, Chicago, 1991.
- Simmel, G., *The View of Life. Four Metaphysical Essays with Journal Aphorisms*, trans. J. A. Y. Andrews, D. N. Levine, Chicago, 2010.
- Tietze, H., *Die Kunst in unserer Zeit*, Wien, 1930.
- Tietze, H., *Lebendige Kunstwissenschaft*, Wien, 1925.
- Tietze, H., Max Dvořák, *Der Piperbote für Kunst und Literatur*, 1924, no. 1, pp. 4–8.
- Tolnai, K., “Studien zu den Gemälden Pieter Bruegels d. Ä.”, *Jahrbuch der Kunsthistorischen Sammlungen in Wien*, no. 8, 1934, pp. 105–135.
- Tolnai, K., *Die Zeichnungen Pieter Bruegels*, München, 1925.
- Tuinen S., “The Late and the New: Mannerism and Style in Art History and Philosophy”, in: *Art History after Deleuze and Guattari*, eds. S. Tuinen, S. Zepke, Belgium, 2017, pp. 145–163.
- Vojvodík, J., “A World of Purely Artistic Conception and a Universal Art of the Spirit: Max Dvořák and Karel Teige between Phenomenology and Surrealism”, *Word and Sense*, no. 24, 2015, pp. 25–41.
- Vojvodík, J., “‘Fading, Fading...’: Ztráta, vzkříšení a dějiny umění jako palingeneze: K uměleckohistorickému myšlení Maxe Dvořáka na pozadí fenomenologie jeho doby”, in: *Mizení. Fenomény, mediální praktiky a techniky na prahu zjevného*, eds. K. Svatoňová, K. Krtilová, Praha, 2017, pp. 155–202.
- Wendland U., ed., *Biographisches Handbuch deutschsprachiger Kunsthistoriker im Exil. Leben und Werk der unter dem Nationalsozialismus verfolgten und vertriebenen Wissenschaftler*, München, 1999.
- Wiesing, L., *Phänomene im Bild*, München, 2007.
- Wood, Ch., *The Vienna School Reader. Politics and Art Historical Method in the 1930s*, New York, 2000.

Aleksandra Fedorowicz-Jackowska

INSTITUTE OF ART, POLISH ACADEMY OF SCIENCES, POLAND

ORCID ID 0000-0002-6685-010X

<https://doi.org/10.31338/2657-6015ik.30.2>

“Through a Microscope from a Telescopic Distance”: Witkacy, Cameron and the Photography of Faces

Abstract

Witkacy was a central figure of the Polish art scene in the first half of the twentieth century. A painter, writer, philosopher, art theorist, and playwright, he also imaginatively played with the photographic medium. This article will show that the most significant part of his photographic practice, carried on since his youth, was centered on faces. Debating the prevailing view that tends to see Witkacy as a lone visionary, I will argue that Julia Margaret Cameron’s photographic portraits inspired the artist’s style and approach to the genre of photographic portraiture.

Keywords: Stanisław Ignacy Witkiewicz (1885–1939), Witkacy (1885–1939), Julia Margaret Cameron (1815–1879), portrait photography, close-up, Polish photography, modernity

Stanisław Ignacy Witkiewicz (1885–1939), also known as Witkacy — a central figure of the Polish art scene in the 1920s and 1930s — in turns painter, writer, philosopher, art theorist, and playwright, was also an amateur photographer.¹ This aspect of Witkacy’s career attracted scholarly attention much later and has hitherto been insufficiently explored. Anna Micińska, a literary historian, published his

* This research is based on my master thesis *Witkacy and Photography. Points of Intersection*, which was completed at the Utrecht University in 2012, under the helpful supervision of Dr. Sandra Kisters.

1 To distinguish himself from his father (they bore the same first name), Stanisław Ignacy Witkiewicz invented a new identity for himself and around 1918 became “Witkacy”. The pseudonym was created by a conjunction of his last and middle names: Witkiewicz and Ignacy. For the purpose of clarity, in this article, I will use “Witkiewicz” or “Stanisław Witkiewicz” when referring to the father and “Witkacy” when discussing the son.

photographs for the first time almost thirty years after Witkacy's death. In 1962, she started using the section of the collection preserved in the Witkiewicz family house in Zakopane (now part of the Tatra Museum collection in Zakopane). In Witkiewicz's *Listy do syna* (The Letters to the Son), edited by Micińska, the photographs function solely as biographical illustrations.²

Urszula Czartoryska drew attention to the artistic value of Witkacy's photographs ten years later. In 1979, the first exhibition of Witkacy's photographs took place in the Museum of Art in Łódź; another decade later, in 1989, Ewa Franczak and Stefan Okołowicz published the most important album of Witkacy's photographs to this day.³ In the following years, Witkacy's photographs have gained interdisciplinary and international scholarly attention and recognition.⁴

The existing body of Witkacy's photographs consists of Zakopane's mountain landscapes, numerous landscapes and seascapes from Brittany, Lithuania, and the Mediterranean, photos of locomotives, as well as various snapshots. He also made photo reproductions of his drawings and paintings: oil landscapes, watercolors, charcoal compositions, and hundreds of pastel portraits. Furthermore, there is a group of the so-called "staged photographs." Taken by photographers directed by Witkacy, they feature improvised scenes with Witkacy as the main actor. These photos appear in various memoirs of the artist's friends and might be seen as images of actions staged specifically for the camera or documentation of live performances, or perhaps the combination of the two. The exact character of Witkacy's "theatre of life" is more difficult to define and remains beyond the scope of this study.⁵

Finally, the most significant part of his photographic work, which began in his youth, centered on faces (his own, his relatives', his friends'). These faces were obsessively subjected to the artist's analysis through the use of varied viewpoints and distances.

2 B. Danek-Wojnowska, A. Micińska, eds., *Stanisław Witkiewicz. Listy do syna*, Warsaw, 1969.

3 G. Musiał et al., eds., *St. I. Witkiewicz–Fotografie*, Muzeum Sztuki, Łódź, 1979; E. Franczak, S. Okołowicz, *Przeciw Nicości. Fotografie Stanisława Ignacego Witkiewicza. [Against Nothingness. Stanisław Ignacy Witkiewicz's Photographs]*, Krakow, 1986.

4 On Witkacy's photography as subject of interest for art historians see: J. Lingwood et al., eds., *S. I. Witkiewicz: Photography 1899–1939*, Third Eye Center, Glasgow, 1989; T.O. Immisch, ed., *Witkacy. Metaphysische Portraits. Photographien 1910–1939*, Fotomuseum im Münchner Stadtmuseum, Munich, 1997; S. Okołowicz et al., eds., *Face au néant: les portraits de Stanisław Ignacy Witkiewicz*, Musée des Beaux-Arts, Nantes, 2004; S. Lenartowicz, "Wpływ fotografii Stanisława Ignacego Witkiewicza na jego twórczość plastyczną", in: *Witkacy: Materiały sesji poświęconej Stanisławowi Ignacemu Witkiewiczowi w 60. Rocznicę śmierci*, ed. A. Żakiewicz, Muzeum Pomorza Środkowego, Słupsk, 2000, pp. 193–205; W. Sztaba, "Images from the Life of a Monad", in: *Witkacy i inni. Z kolekcji Stefana Okołowicza i Ewy Franczak. [Witkacy and Others. From the Collection of Stefan Okołowicz and Ewa Franczak]*, eds. B. Czubak, S. Okołowicz, Muzeum Pałac w Wilanowie, Warsaw, 2011, pp. 39–59; A. Żakiewicz, "Po trzecie–fotograf, czyli jak interpretować twórczość Stanisława Ignacego Witkiewicza", *Dagerotyp*, no. 11, 2002, pp. 11–17.

5 Franczak and Okołowicz, *Przeciw Nicości...*, p. 22. See also S. Lenartowicz, "Józef Głogowski's 'Witkacy Photographs' and his Friendship with Witkacy", *Konteksty. Polska Sztuka Ludowa*, 54, 2000, no. 1–4, pp. 198–203.

This article focuses on Witkacy’s portrait photography produced before the outbreak of World War I and his use of the photographic medium as a new tool to capture reality in a two-dimensional print. His photographic practice is important because it contributed to the artist’s repository of images (for future reference in his painting and playwriting), and because it occupies a dual position between his life and art, thereby providing us with a new perspective on a key figure in the Polish art scene of the first half of the 20th century. I will argue that the artist’s style and approach to the genre of photographic portraiture might have been informed by Julia Margaret Cameron’s (1815–79) photographic portraits, to which Witkacy was introduced by his father, Stanisław Witkiewicz (1851–1915).

The first part of the paper presents Witkacy as an artist who reached his artistic maturity in a specific cultural context, but under universally defined circumstances of his times. I will bring attention to a few facts relating to his life in the search for a more conscious approach to this oeuvre. In the second part, I will show that faces formed a particularly persistent theme already present in Witkiewicz’s writings. With this writing as my starting point and main archival reference, I will specifically investigate the possible points of intersection between Witkacy’s and Cameron’s visual vocabulary. I will focus on a tentative reconstruction and analysis of his photographic portrait “formula”.⁶

Born in Warsaw, then part of Russian-occupied Poland, in 1890, Witkacy moved with his family to Zakopane, a mountain resort town in Galicia, the region then belonging to Austria-Hungary and spent most of his life there.

Witkacy’s mother, Maria Pietrzekiewicz, was a music teacher; his father, Stanisław Witkiewicz, was a painter, art critic, and an amateur photographer. A fierce opponent of all formal schooling, he shaped the young boy’s creative development. In the first years of his life, Witkacy was educated entirely at home by his father and various private tutors. Encouraged to develop his talents in many directions, young Witkacy very early began to paint and play the piano. He wrote his first plays when he was eight years old; at eighteen he completed his first philosophical treatise.⁷ According to his father’s plan, young Witkacy was to become a part of the intellectual elite; in letter after letter (over five hundred letters exchanged between 1900 and

6 I am aware of the challenges posed by this approach as there are no remarks explicitly on photography in Witkacy’s own theoretical statements; neither in his literary works nor in his philosophical treatises. Moreover, as most of Witkacy’s pictures, stored in his flat in Warsaw, was burnt during the German bombing of the city in September 1939, I am working only with a fraction of his photographic oeuvre. Fortunately, a considerable number of his photographic portraits – my main interest – was produced in multiple copies and distributed by Witkacy himself among his friends and relatives, thus, saved from the destruction. Nowadays, the largest collection of the photographs is held at the Tatra Museum in Zakopane and in the hands of private collectors.

7 For an English translation of Witkacy’s *Komedie z życia rodzinnego* [Comedies of Family Life] and his philosophical treatise *On Dualism*, see D. Gerould, *The Witkiewicz Reader*, London, 1992.

1915), Witkiewicz encouraged his son to become the best version of himself and distinguish himself from the masses.⁸

Witkacy did not trust the “Western” move toward capitalism and industrialization and expressed his horror at the advance of mainstream modernism.⁹ Daniel Gerould, an American scholar best known for introducing English-speaking audiences to the writings of Witkacy, proclaims him to be a “total outsider” difficult to be placed in the context of his time and whose aesthetic orientation is “anomalous”.¹⁰ Witkacy might have remained outside the avant-gardes of the period as he did not represent any of its movements¹¹, but his exposure to the experiences and apprehensions of the modern period, namely revolutions in art, science, and society, naturally formed his identity and artistic persona, and in consequence his artistic practice.¹²

The intricacies of the history of photography in Poland will not be discussed in detail here since they were of little importance to Witkacy, whose photographic practice from the very beginning was developed and shaped on the fringes of the world of professional art photography. He did not engage with pictorialism, which almost entirely dominated the Polish photography scene in the interwar period, nor did he consider photography as a serious endeavor worth writing about. However, simultaneously, his photographic practice has its peculiar origins and unfolds in somehow familiar, if not entirely predictable ways, and as such, it should be reconsidered with a deeper understanding of its genealogy and shifting patterns.

Photography was introduced to Witkacy by his father as a useful tool that every artist should utilize. The highly intellectual atmosphere of the well-situated Witkiewicz house in Zakopane and the widespread amateur use of the camera (by those who could afford to own one) must have stimulated Witkacy’s interest in art in its variety.¹³ Witkacy’s father wrote about photographic aesthetics and personally

8 The significance of Witkacy’s correspondence for the understanding of the artist’s biography and work was discussed in: A. Micińska, “Une oeuvre inconnue de Witkacy: sa correspondance”, in: *Cahier Witkiewicz*, No. 4: Actes du Colloque International “Witkiewicz” à l’Université Libre de Bruxelles, Novembre 1981, Lausanne, 1982, pp. 7–17; J. Degler, “Listopisanie Witkacego”, in: idem, *Witkacego portret wielokrotny*, Warsaw, 2009, pp. 311–332. For the list of Witkacy’s published letters see idem, “Spis opublikowanych listów Stanisława Igancego Witkiewicza”, in: *ibid.*, pp. 516–526.

9 S. I. Witkiewicz, *Nowe formy w malarstwie i wynikające stąd nieporozumienia*, Warsaw, 1919. For fragments of the text in English see Gerould, *The Witkiewicz Reader*, pp. 107–116.

10 *Ibid.*, pp. 4–5.

11 Only once, for a short but intense while, Witkacy became a part of the larger artistic group, the Formists, with Leon Chwistek (1884–1944), as the founder and main theoretician of this avant-garde movement.

12 Matthew S. Witkovsky calls Witkacy’s “a fully modern artist” and shortly discusses his “abiding but mistrustful, engagement with modernity”. M. S. Witkovsky, *Foto: Modernity in Central Europe: 1918–1945*, National Gallery of Art, Washington, 2007, p. 20. Particularly helpful reading on the central European artists’ engagement with modernist ideas and the character of modernity in central Europe is Witkovsky’s chapter “Starting Points”, in *ibid.*, pp. 11–23.

13 At that time Zakopane attracted many artists and writers who formed an eccentric group indulging in mountain sports, affairs, wild debaucheries. Witkacy’s father, and later Witkacy

experienced the medium's influence on his art, as we know of a few photographic studies that served him as an aid to his painting compositions. In his *Sztuka i krytyka u nas* (Art and Criticism in Our Country), he dealt extensively with the uses of this medium, comparing it to the practice of various contemporary painters.¹⁴ He also mentioned his unrealized book project on photography and paintings where he was to present and discuss “dozens and dozens of photographs” had he ever fulfilled his ambition.¹⁵ It is logical to go one step further and assume that Witkiewicz must have gathered some part of the material for his unfinished book project. Having been exposed to his father's writings on photography, Witkacy certainly was influenced by his parent's views on the subject. In 1899, when Witkiewicz published *Sztuka i krytyka u nas*, Witkacy was still being homeschooled at 14 years old and was most likely one of the book's first readers. We can also assume that he could have easily browsed through the visual material gathered by Witkiewicz for his work on painting and photography. In particular, he probably had the chance to see and discuss with his father Julia Margaret Cameron's photographs, mentioned on page 162 in *Sztuka i krytyka u nas*:

The present-day camera and contemporary films with far greater speed than any average human brain, are qualified to catch the tiniest glimpse of the human soul, which is directly expressed by a passing facial expression. However, even with no regard for this improvement, even with the ancient camera, one could create the High Art. An English-woman, Mrs. Cameron, a great friend of Tennyson, used her camera with such skill and artistry that her photographs are not only photographically accurate but in terms of their expression and the realization of the *concept* of portrait they are equal to Velasquez's [sic!] and Hals's masterpieces. “I [Cameron] handled my lens with a tender ardor, and it has become to be as a living thing, with voice and memory and creative vigor. Many and many a week in the year [18]64 I worked fruitlessly, but not hopelessly. I longed to arrest all beauty that comes before me, and at length, the longing has been satisfied.” Are these not the same words that an artist bearing in his hand a brush, chisel, or a pen instead of a camera lens, would use? And indeed, her portraits of Tennyson, Browning, Milsand, the old man Herschel, the astronaut, are incredible.¹⁶

Witkiewicz did not mention the source of Cameron's quotation nor did other researchers ever try to trace back its provenance or to establish how her photographs might have been discovered by the Witkiewicz family.¹⁷ The text Witkiewicz quotes

himself, were both involved in the local cultural activities and both were considered authority figures in this milieu. For discussion of Zakopane's elitist character see L. Sokół, “Zakopane jako przewrotna forma życia”, *Przegląd Humanistyczny*, 2005, no. 3, pp. 99–110.

14 S. Witkiewicz, *Sztuka i krytyka u nas, 1884–1898*, Lviv and Poznań, 1899, pp. 21–22, 68, 111–113, 151–154, 161–165, 181–182, 355, 388, 429, 451–456.

15 On Witkiewicz's plans to write the book on the history of photography see *ibid.*, p. 165.

16 *Ibid.*, p. 162, author's translation.

17 Stefan Okołowicz writes that Witkiewicz senior owned an album of Cameron's photographs, and both he and his son greatly admired her art. Matthew S. Witkovsky briefly mentions “English amateur Julia Margaret Cameron, whose work the Witkiewicz family owned and admired”. Neither provided a reliable source to confirm this information. Okołowicz, “Meta-

in his book is most certainly a fragment from her short autobiographical story, *Annals of My Glass House*, which, although written in 1874, was not published until much later. According to Julian Cox, a co-author of the monumental *Julia Margaret Cameron. The Complete Photographs* (2003), *Annals* was first published in April 1889, at the time of Cameron's exhibition at the Camera Gallery in London.¹⁸ The text was then reproduced in 1890 in an American photographic journal, *The Beacon*, and, most significantly, in 1893 the text in fragments was quoted by Henry Herschel Hay Cameron (1852–1911) and Anne Thackeray Ritchie (1837–1919), in the book, *Alfred, Lord Tennyson and His Friends: A Series of 25 Portraits and Frontispiece in Photogravure From the Negatives of Mrs. J.M. Cameron and H.H.H. Cameron*.¹⁹ Among the photographs reproduced there was all but one portrait mentioned by Witkiewicz.²⁰ Interestingly, both Ritchie and Witkiewicz made a similar comparison between Cameron's photographs and famous Old Masters: Ritchie mentioned Hans Holbein, Leonardo da Vinci, and Raphael Santi, while Witkiewicz finds similarities between Cameron's images and works by Velázquez and Hals.²¹

One very likely explanation for *Alfred, Lord Tennyson and His Friends*... presence in the Witkiewicz home would be Witkiewicz's close relationship with Helena Modrzejewska (1840–1909). Modrzejewska was not only a celebrated actress and an authority figure for Witkiewicz, but most importantly a great family friend, a godmother to Witkacy, and a long-term pen-pal to his father. In one of her many letters, she mentioned her London visit with the Tennysons in 1880.²² She gave a detailed account of some famous guests who were present, like Robert Browning, the granddaughter of Lord Byron, and John Millais, and she concluded that she

physical Portraits", *Konteksty. Polska Sztuka Ludowa*, 54, 2000, no. 1–4, p. 184; Witkovsky, op. cit., p. 18.

18 The exhibition included an unknown number of Cameron photographs and was most likely organized by her youngest son, Henry Herschel Hay Cameron. I was unable to locate the exhibition catalogue and its whereabouts were not specified by Cox. See J. Cox and C. Ford with contributions by J. Lukitsh and P. Wright, *Julia Margaret Cameron. The Complete Photographs*, Los Angeles, 2003, p. 75 (footnote 52).

19 *The Beacon: A Journal Devoted to Photography in all its Phases*, 2, 1890, pp. 157–60. H. H. H. Cameron and A. Thackeray Ritchie, eds., *Alfred, Lord Tennyson and His Friends: A Series of 25 Portraits and Frontispiece in Photogravure from the Negatives of Mrs. J.M. Cameron and H.H.H. Cameron. Reminiscences by Anne Thackeray Ritchie. With Introduction by H.H.H. Cameron*, London, 1893. Considered as a posthumous tribute to Cameron's oeuvre, this edition was limited to 400 numbered copies, 150 of which were for sale in the US. The *Annals* passages quoted in the book are not given in full and do not cover the exact words quoted by Witkiewicz in his book. This makes one believe that Witkiewicz somehow gained access to the full version of Cameron's text.

20 The missing portrait is Milsand's. To my knowledge, the whereabouts of the photographic portrait of Milsand remain unknown to this date. See an engraving made from a photograph by Cameron in: A. Thackeray Ritchie, *Records of Tennyson, Ruskin, and Browning*, New York, 1892, p. 159. Ritchie mentions Milsand's photograph briefly in another book: "M. Milsand, of whom there is a photograph by Mrs. Cameron in which he is made to look like an inspired prophet out of the Old Testament", see idem, *From Friend to Friend*, London, 1919, p. 103.

21 See *Alfred, Lord Tennyson and His Friends*..., p. 11.

22 The letter was reprinted in: J. Szczublewski, *Żywot Modrzejewskiej*, Warsaw, 1977, p. 309.

read Tennyson a lot and liked him tremendously for his poem, *Poland*. It is possible then that thanks to Modrzejewska, Witkiewicz grew more interested in Tennyson and somehow found his way to Cameron's famous portraits or, perhaps, it was Modrzejewska herself who told him about Cameron and her celebrity portraiture. Nonetheless, the clear reference in Witkiewicz's book to Cameron's photographs justifies a speculative guess that at least some of Cameron's portraits may have been familiar to Witkacy.

In her *Annals* (and in H. Cameron's Introduction to *Alfred, Lord Tennyson and His Friends...*) Julia Margaret Cameron clearly defines the purpose of photographing people as “recording faithfully the greatness of the inner as well as the features of the outer man”; Witkacy's series of portraits, which will be discussed below, seems like an echo of that attitude.

In a photographic portrait of his father taken in 1913 (Fig. 1), Witkacy eliminated details such as the background, hair, shoulders and reduced the composition to a close-up of the face, which filled the entire frame. The disembodied face is pressed against the picture plane, its outline practically indiscernible. Attention is paid to the gleaming, expressive eyes; they are lit with the natural light and maintain their expressiveness despite the evident loss of focus. The tight composition, the contrast of light and shade, the blurring of the image, were intentional and resulted from Witkacy's entirely controlled photographic experiment, in which the sitter was acutely aware of the camera and acknowledged its presence through his gaze. The fact that the subject is the photographer's father undoubtedly contributed to the intimacy of the portrait.



Fig. 1. Witkacy, [Stanisław Witkiewicz], 1913, glass negative, 13 × 18 cm, The Tatra Museum, Zakopane.

If we look at this close-up portrait of his father in the context of the entire portrait series, we observe how the analytical aspect of one image clashes with the purely pictorial one of the other picture from the same series.²³ A profile portrait of Witkiewicz reveals the mix of respect and intimacy that marked the father-son relationship (Fig. 2). Witkiewicz was photographed against a dark background with an undefined display of light, presumably a sunlight reflection on the white wall, which suggests that the background was essentially irrelevant and the focus of the image rested on the photographed subject. The concentration on the head of the sitter, with almost no discernible background or period detail, makes the portrait seem timeless.



Fig. 2. Witkacy, [Stanisław Witkiewicz], 1913, glass negative, 13 × 18 cm, The Tatra Museum, Zakopane.

Another portrait depicts Witkiewicz turned in a three-quarter profile toward the camera, the head is slightly bent downwards, and the distance is diminished (Fig. 3). A similar photograph presents almost the same composition, with a change in lighting and the position of the camera, as the distance between the camera and the sitter is extended (Fig. 4). The head once again is shown in a three-quarter profile. The strong light illuminates the right side of his hair and face and comes off his right cheek with an intensity that practically bleaches out the detail from Witkiewicz's beard, in greater magnification both the skin and the beard blurs into the

²³ Witkacy created similar series with many of his subjects, for example his fiancée Jadwiga Janczewska (from the collection of Stanisław Okołowicz, see the images in Franczak and Okołowicz, *Przeciw Nicości...*, figures 151–152, 163–167).



Fig. 3. Witkacy, [Stanisław Witkiewicz], 1913, glass negative, 13 × 18 cm, The Tatra Museum, Zakopane.

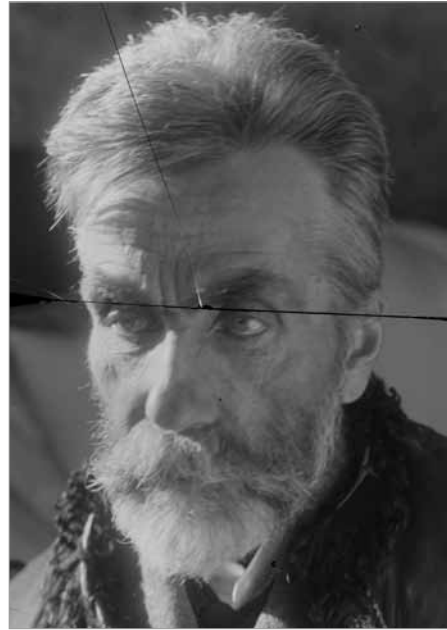


Fig. 4. Witkacy, [Stanisław Witkiewicz], 1913, glass negative, 13 × 18 cm, The Tatra Museum, Zakopane.

same hazy mass of wavering lines. The eye resting in the shadows catches a glimpse of light and gains an unexpected liquid quality.

Importantly, considering Witkiewicz’s appearance and the discernible fragments of his attire, these photographs were taken during one sitting (once Witkiewicz is portrayed without his ram-skin coat). The attentive way in which Witkacy approached his model, taking pictures from various angles, showing the face in profile, en face, from a distance, and annihilating the distance between himself and the sitter almost entirely, recalls Félix Nadar’s “revolving” self-portrait. He characterized (and “described”) the model with directness and penetration.

Despite similar truthfulness and accuracy in depicting facial features, Cameron’s portraits cannot be considered as objective or evidentiary. Her photograph of Browning portrays him against a dark background, wearing some dark garment, with anything that might divert attention from his head and face systematically removed from the picture frame (Fig. 5). Cameron’s handling of the light, the right degree of blurring, and smudges to the borders bring our attention to the features of the poet. Browning, wearing monk robes, is turned three-quarters towards the camera, with only the upper part of his body visible; resting on the abdomen, cut off by the bottom edge of the print, is his hand, fingers pointing upward.



Fig. 5. Julia Margaret Cameron, [Robert Browning], 1865, albumen print, 25,4 × 21,8 cm, The J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles.

Tennyson, Cameron's close acquaintance and intellectual hero, was portrayed in almost profile, carrying a Bible-like tome, his bust wrapped in a coarse cloak (Fig. 6). Tennyson himself titled this half-length portrait the "Dirty Monk" due to his unruly hair, worn-out face, and dark circles under his eyes. Also mentioned by Witkiewicz in his book, Cameron's well-known portraits of Herschel focus on the impressive form of the scientist's head. We know of at least three photographs that were made during that one sitting in April 1867 at Herschel's home in Hawkhurst, Kent. In one photograph, his watery eyes look straight into the lens, another records him in a three-quarter profile, pensively staring into the distance, and the third shows a dramatic vision of Herschel lifting his head and eyes toward heaven. Two out of the three images depict Herschel's dramatically wind-blown white hair escaping from the dark-colored cap he is wearing.²⁴

Interestingly, for both Cameron and Witkacy it was the lens's properties/faults that allowed them to achieve the blurry image while at the same time approaching their models in a very attentive way, taking pictures from various angles and distances. In both cases the out-of-focus aspect of their work was intentional, but their aims were different.

²⁴ These photographs signed by Herschel became a commercial product. Cameron was acutely aware of the fact and quickly registered Herschel's portraits for copyright and started selling them through Colnaghi's gallery in London. See J. Cox, *In Focus: Julia Margaret Cameron: Photographs from the J. Paul Getty Museum*, Los Angeles, 1996, p. 56.



Fig. 6. Julia Margaret Cameron, [A. Tennyson / The Dirty Monk], 1865, albumen print, 21,1 × 25,9 cm, The J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles.

The blurred effect in Cameron’s works is a very deliberate artistic decision, the result of long exposures of up to ten minutes when even the steadiest model would move. In the *Annals*, Cameron gave a retrospective account of her accomplishments in which the camera lens was her chief means of making artistic photographs: “it has become to me as a living thing, with voice and memory and creative vigor”. She also described how she focused her pictures: “My first successes in my out-of-focus pictures were a fluke. That is to say, that when focussing and coming to something which, to my eye, was very beautiful, I stopped there instead of screwing on the lens to the more definite focus which all other photographers insist upon”.

Cameron’s aesthetics resemble the high drama of the Old Masters’ paintings. She very often used one model for a series of pictures, but in her case, it was a tale-telling activity, which she aimed to pursue with her photographs “[...] your imagination conceives all that is to be done”.²⁵ Cameron considered the resulting photographs as Art, comparable to the painterly compositions they very often imitated. The suggestive titles she gave to her work furthermore suggested literary heroes and fictional characters in place of living and breathing people. By way of illustration, figure 7 presents a young woman emerging from a dark background (Fig. 7). She wears a medieval-style dress; the line of her hand touching the hem of the dress

²⁵ Quoted from Cameron’s letter to Sir John Herschel, 31 December 1864, see C. Ford, *The Herschel Album. An Album of Photographs by Julia Margaret Cameron Presented to Sir John Herschel*, Wokingham, 1975, pp. 140–141.

and her loose hair falling behind one shoulder correspond to the lines drawn by the dark stripes of the dress. A Pre-Raphaelite beauty, by way of the title, is turned into Ovid's Echo from *Metamorphoses*. Through its subtle blurriness, Cameron's picture of Echo easily falls in line with the popular depiction of the ghost-like figure of Echo, who gradually fades away because the object of her affection, Narcissus, died of thirst while staring at his reflection.



Fig. 7. Julia Margaret Cameron, *The Echo*, 1868, albumen print, 22,7 × 27,1 cm, The J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles.

Almost half a century later, Witkacy had his camera's mechanism manipulated to reach the similar effect instantly, without the long process of focusing, "screwing on the lens", or subsequent manipulation of the negative. It is unknown what sort of camera Witkacy used. We know that in 1912 he probably had a lens made by the Steinheil company.²⁶ Although technically not macrophotography, Witkacy's method is similar to close-up photography in a variety of ways. When taking photographs of landscapes, Witkacy used rather small-sized glass plates (6 × 9 and 9 × 12 cm formats), and in case of his portrait close-ups, he used the 13 × 18 cm plates – which made the photograph of the face more or less a life-size representation, just like in macrophotography.²⁷ Moreover, macrophotography's method

²⁶ Stanisław Witkiewicz. *Listy do syna*, p. 553. Witkacy also mentioned on the back of one of his photographs another lens: Rodenstock Anastigmat f:6.

²⁷ Interestingly, in 1866, Cameron bought a large-format camera for 12 × 15 glass plates and started a series of photographs, which in her letter to John Herschel she referred to as "A Series of Life sized heads". See Cox, *In Focus...*, p. 52.

is that of extending the distance between the lens and the negative by inserting an extension tube. Indeed, Witkacy strove to achieve a similar effect by attaching a water pipe to his Steinheil.²⁸ By using this piece of a plumber’s piping, Witkacy could bring the lens near the sitter’s face, which the regular camera did not allow.

In macrophotography, the following factors are important: magnification ratio, depth of field, perspective distortion, and illumination. Witkacy’s close-up portraits are nearly life-size flat images, thus the problems of a magnification factor and a potential perspective distortion are marginal. Yet, granted that Witkacy’s cameras could focus on subjects so close that they almost touched the front of the lens, it became very difficult to provide a sufficient amount of light between the camera and a subject. Thus, in figure 1, Witkacy very carefully positioned his father relative to natural light; it poured in from the side, probably through the window, and rested on the face illuminating the eyes, which became the focal point of the picture. Witkacy explored the possibilities offered by the fact that in his “macrophotographs” the depth of field was extraordinarily shallow. Elements that are even a millimeter farther from the focal plane are noticeably blurred. Following his father’s belief that photography extends one’s perception and multiplies possible points of view, Witkacy used his camera to explore the same face many times, with each picture being taken only once, and no selection of good or bad shots.

Cameron’s and Witkacy’s engagement in portrait photography is based on the same simple foundation of the long-lived assumption that there is something important to read from the face. Since its invention, with the aid of simple styling and few “props”, the photographic portrait of a person was transformed into the evidence of that person’s status, hence the growth of social and celebrity portraiture amongst the middle class in the nineteenth century (notably, a large percentage of both Cameron’s and Witkacy’s sitters were well-known men of science, letters, and the Church).²⁹ Witkacy also held this belief since, in his correspondence, he required pictures of the philosophers, he preferred to see their faces in a photo to help him understand their theories. To Hans Cornelius (1863–1947), a German philosopher and professor in Munich with whom Witkacy exchanged over one hundred letters between 1935 and 1939, he wrote: “Thank you for your extraordinary kindness which together with your picture (so very important to me!) [...]”.³⁰ Subsequently,

28 In his letter to a female friend, Helena Czerwijowska, Witkacy described his plans to alter the camera. B. Danek-Wojnowska, ed., “Listy Stanisława Ignacego Witkiewicza do Heleny Czerwijowskiej”, *Twórczość*, 1971, no. 9, p. 29. According to Okołowicz at least 12 of the photographs that survived to this day were produced by this alternated camera. Franczak and Okołowicz, *Przeciw Nicości...*, p. 16.

29 Cameron lived in Dimbola Lodge, in Freshwater on the Isle of Wight, her next-door neighbor, Tennyson, resided at Farrington House. Tennyson brought friends to see Cameron, often celebrities, artists, poets, writers, who later acted as subjects for her portraits. Similarly, the Witkiewicz family’s house in Zakopane was an intellectual and artistic centre for the region, visited by the leading writers, artists and philosophers.

30 D. Gerould and J. Kosicka, “Witkacy: An Album of Photos a Bundle of Letters”, *Performing Arts Journal*, 7, 1983, no. 3, p. 74.

in his letter to Malinowski Witkacy wrote: “[...] I asked you to send me postcards with images of Carr, Russel, Whitehead, the late James Ward, and Wittgenstein. I’m writing about them, and yet I have no idea what their mugs look like – and that’s a matter of importance to me”. The need to possess philosophers’ portraits must have appeared somehow unusual to Malinowski because he misunderstood Witkacy’s request. In the subsequent letter one reads: “[...] I [Witkacy] sent an explanation that I’m not interested in getting autographs of Whitehead, Carr, Russel, and Ward, I only want their likenesses”.³¹

In contrast to Cameron, who became known for her portraits of the celebrities of the time due to her practice of persistent exhibiting and publishing her works, the outlet for Witkacy’s investigation and experiments with facial features could be found not in the public displays of the photographs, but in his novels and screenplays where he gave meticulous attention to his characters’ surface appearances. He derived their characteristics from their physical façade, as in this description of Lord Arthur Persville, a character from Witkacy’s play *Tumor Mózgowicz*: “A youthful face of unusual beauty. Clean-shaven; black eyes. Brown hair, strong build, something between a true lord and a criminal type from the penal colonies. Distinguished gestures. His eyes never laugh but his beautifully drawn full lips, fixed in delicate, yet monstrously powerful jaws, have the smile of a three-year-old baby girl”. Or in the following literary image from Witkacy’s novel: “He had on his head a short crew cut, maintaining that this haircut makes the greatest impression on women, particularly in the southern countries. His green eyes, reptilian in their cold gaze from behind his seventeen-diopter pince-nez, made for unsettling contrast with the childlike smile of his huge, red lips of beautiful outline”.³²

Naturally, Witkacy was the artist his father had raised him to be and he never forgot his painterly preoccupations with space and light. It is evident in the way he describes the characters in his writing, and in the way, he explores and models the sitter’s form and shape with light in his portraits. However, most readings of Witkacy’s close-up photographs rather consider them within the theoretical framework of his art and philosophy theory. They speak of his research into the inner soul of his sitters, or humans in general. Scholars saw in them an attempt to reveal a psychological truth about the model: his or her innermost personality in line with the principle “when you look into someone’s eyes you reach their souls”. Okołowicz argued that Witkacy did not want to record expressions of ordinary feelings, such as happiness or anger. His goal was to produce a portrait of a person “experiencing his

31 Letters dated October 1937 and March 1938. Quoted from an English translation of some parts of the correspondence between Witkacy and Malinowski in: Gerould, *The Witkiewicz Reader*, pp. 328, and 330–331.

32 First quotation from an English translation of the play *Tumor Brainiowicz*, in *ibid.*, 69; Anna Żakiewicz compares the second literary image with one of Witkacy’s portraits of Bronisław Malinowski, captured around 1912 in Zakopane (now in the collection of the Sterling Memorial Library at Yale University in New Haven). See Żakiewicz, “Through the Eyes of the Painter”, *Konteksty. Polska Sztuka Ludowa*, 54, 2000, no. 1–4, p. 170.

identity”.³³ Czartoryska claimed Witkacy’s photographs explicitly ask the question of what sort of information can the face reveal about man’s inner being.³⁴ More factual in his discussion, Szymanowicz notices that Witkacy’s interest in portraiture coincides with the period in which he was undergoing psychoanalytic therapy.³⁵ Hence, Witkacy’s knowledge of psychological theories may have influenced his approach to portraiture. Still, explaining Witkacy’s portrait photography in terms of his philosophical theories is quite difficult to defend. In his art theoretical treatise from 1919, he spoke of naturalistic painting, soon to be replaced completely by photography, explaining that whether the image depicts a face contorted with pain or adorned with a smile it is not art and hence not capable of revealing deeper metaphysical or philosophical truths, like the enlightening act of experiencing one’s true self.³⁶ While his father believed that even with the ancient camera one can create High Art, Witkacy did not consider photography a medium through which one could experience “the metaphysical feeling” and grasp the “mystery of existence”, neither was he an artist-photographer in the strict sense of the term. His complete lack of interest in sharing his photographs with a wider public, exhibiting them, or joining any of the photographic clubs that gained popularity at the time gives evidence to the claim that he had no ambitions for his photography to build up and/or illustrate his theory, be overly artistic or technically perfect. His photographs simply documented and preserved a single moment, and aided to his sharpened awareness of human faces; at times they proved useful for his varied artistic practice.

Hence, instead of philosophizing the issue and looking for dubious points of intersection between his portrait photography and his philosophy or art theory, Witkacy’s photographic practice should be placed next to his early studies of nature, for example, his sketch-like recording of the various arrangements of the rolling waves.³⁷ These photographic seascapes, of which the most startling are the ones with no background or line of the horizon, seem to be investigations into the sea’s expressions. By exploring the same scene or element many times, Witkacy trained

33 Okołowicz, “Metaphysical Portraits”, p. 188.

34 U. Czartoryska, “Laboratorium ‘psychologii nieeuklidesowej’ czyli o fotografiach Witkacego”, in: *Fotografia – Mowa ludzka. Perspektywy historyczne*, ed. L. Brogowski, Gdańsk, 2006, p. 34. The theoretical model of Witkacy’s portraits as Czartoryska sees it is discussed in M. Szymanowicz, “In the Private Sphere: The Photographic Work of Stanisław Ignacy Witkiewicz”, MoMA, 2014 (<http://www.moma.org/interactives/objectphoto/assets/essays/Szymanowicz.pdf>)

35 Around 1912 Witkacy started attending psychoanalysis sessions conducted at that time in Zakopane by Karol de Beaurain. See *ibid.*, 7.

36 S. I. Witkiewicz, *Nowe formy w malarstwie...*, pp. 44–45. This kind of attitude towards naturalistic painting and photography was shared also by Leon Chwistek, with whom Witkacy shortly participated in the Formist group. See L. Chwistek, *Wielość w rzeczywistości w sztuce*, Krakow, 1921, pp. 68, 72.

37 Many of Witkacy’s photographic studies feature also wide shots of meadows, clouds, mountains, ponds, and valleys. The remarks on photographic studies and photographs of Witkacy’s painting studies in the father-son correspondence, e.g.: *Stanisław Witkiewicz. Listy do syna*, pp. 41, 53, 56, 131, 138, 147, 169, 174, 228, 247, 269, 272, 418, 431, 450, 478, 520, 535, 552, 555, 566–567, 571, 576, 577.

his skill in capturing the ever-changing nature of the sea; similarly, by photographing the same face from various viewpoints, he trained his hand and his eye in capturing the fleeting emotions mirrored in the face. He used his camera in place of a sketchbook.

Following what his father taught him, he used photography as a tool to explore the nature of things, which led to his better understanding of human nature and allowed him to bring these experiences and knowledge to his “real” art production, namely his writing and painting. And as such Witkacy’s photographic practice should be considered as a device that potentially allowed Witkacy to translate the experience of taking a picture and looking at photographs into the written text (a way of thinking) and painted composition (a way of seeing). Witkacy’s father wrote that “the effect of photography on art and the human mind in general, has not yet been looked at with enough scrutiny and gravity”.³⁸ Although it is beyond the scope of this study to analyze photography’s impact on Witkacy’s oeuvre in its totality, one thing seems important to mention: by the end of the 1920s, Witkacy started painting only commercial portraits as a part of one of his most successful endeavors, a one-man business “Portrait-Painting Firm”. From this point forward he further developed “his obsessive interest in human mugs”, while experimenting with spontaneous drawing and drugs.³⁹ His sitters’ faces now emerged from a colorful background with their distorted mouths, enlarged eyes, and highlighted features and, most significantly, they seem to be saturated, distorted, and close to abstraction versions of Witkacy’s black-and-white extraordinary close-up photographs.

Undoubtedly, many different elements contributed to the astonishing style of Witkacy’s portrait photography. For this article, I focused on two: Cameron’s photographic portraiture and Witkiewicz’s influence on his son’s artistic development. The key to interpreting Witkacy’s photographic practice is to acknowledge and identify the patterns of idea diffusion that transpired in a small mountain resort town in Galicia around 1900. I tried to show how nineteenth-century practices conforming to which portrait photography was produced, looked at, and disseminated, moved, and were later transformed to a new set of ideas and practices in the Witkiewicz family home. Witkacy worked with them within the specific framework of his personal experiences immersed in the social life of Zakopane and the early twentieth-century extensive spread of amateur and professional photographic practice.

I close with a photograph that features Witkacy’s face, or rather the multiplication of his face. *The Multiple Portrait* was taken around 1916 in St. Petersburg with the use of a well-known trick to multiply the model through reflections in mirrors. Thus, the picture presents an illusion—five Witkacys sitting around the table. He

38 S. Witkiewicz, *Sztuka i krytyka u nas...*, p. 161.

39 Witkacy often looked for strong stimuli for his creativity in drugs or alcohol. In his portrait studio, he offered portraits of various kinds: A, B, C, D, E, plus variations of those. Type C now seems the most controversial: it was painted under the influence of alcohol and drugs (“executed with the aid of C–H–OH and narcotics of a superior grade...”). See “Rules of the S. I. Witkiewicz Portrait-Painting Firm (1928)”, in: Gerould, *The Witkiewicz Reader*, pp. 239–242.

wears an officer's uniform, there is a look of angry intensity on his face. Starting in the late nineteenth century, numerous photographic studios offered such pictures commercially, as curiosity pieces.⁴⁰ Witkacy took a multiple portrait just as many anonymous people had done before and after him. The photograph published for the first time in 1980, very quickly became famous and regarded as an iconic image of the artist, either viewed as a curiosity or a perfect illustration of the life and work of this Polish polymath.⁴¹

It is interesting that when one discusses the work of such an original and prolific artist as Witkacy, any cohesive image of him and his oeuvre falls apart very easily. Out of those pieces of his dissolved, deconstructed identity and work, one may try to build new configurations in which to see Witkacy's oeuvre. However, in the case of his photographic practice and given the character of the preserved photographs, the method will continue to resemble the act of looking, to use Witkacy's words, “through a microscope from a telescopic distance”.⁴² In short, we look but we cannot see much. There is a desire to subject the artist to scrutiny and critique, to discover the essence of his work. However, just as in his multiple portrait, the artist remains entrapped by the surface of the photograph, text, or painting we choose to analyze; the figure is turned back to the viewer and reveals only one of his many reflections.

Witkacy's photography is challenging because it unsettles one's preconceptions about the artist. Presented with numerous close-ups of a face the viewer starts to doubt the straightforwardness of what he or she sees. Through techniques such as a close-up, a snapshot, or serial photography, Witkacy provided new perspectives on a supposedly familiar theme of portraiture photography. There is a sense of absolute freedom from a convention on his part but at the same time, one may also discern traces of a style and tradition that go back to the previous century.

References

Cameron, H. H. H., and A. Thackeray Ritchie, eds., *Alfred, Lord Tennyson and His Friends: A Series of 25 Portraits and Frontispiece in Photogravure from the Negatives of Mrs J.M. Cameron and H.H.H. Cameron. Reminiscences by Anne Thackeray Ritchie. With Introduction by H.H.H. Cameron*, London, 1893

40 The method of taking such multiple portraits was first described by Albert Hopkins in his *Magic, Stage Illusions and Scientific Diversions, Including Trick Photography*, London, 1897.

41 The photograph gained a well-deserved attention also because it is the only one we know of from the period when Witkacy served as an officer in the Russian Army (born in Warsaw, at that time under Russian domination, he was a Russian subject). M. Giżycki and S. Okołowicz, “Nowa twarz Witkacego”, *Projekt*, 1, 1980, p. 2. For a discussion of the multiple portrait of Witkacy, see e.g. Okołowicz, “Metaphysical Portraits”, pp. 190–194; idem, “Stanisława Ignacego Witkiewicza Portret wielokrotny, Fotografia wielokrotna czy Fotografia pięciokrotna?”, *Rocznik Historii Sztuki*, 31, 2006, pp. 173–186; and K. Jurecki, “Witkacy. portret wielokrotny”, *Fotografia*, 17, 2005, no. 17, pp. 76–77.

42 S. I. Witkiewicz, *Insatiability*, trans. L. Iribarne, Evanston, 1996, p. 9.

- Chwistek, L., *Wielość w rzeczywistości w sztuce*, Krakow, 1921
- Cox, J., *In Focus: Julia Margaret Cameron: Photographs from the J. Paul Getty Museum*, Los Angeles, 1996
- Cox, J., Ford, C., et al., *Julia Margaret Cameron. The Complete Photographs*, Los Angeles, 2003
- Czartoryska, U., "Laboratorium 'psychologii nieeuklidesowej' czyli o fotografiach Witkacego", in: *Fotografia – Mowa ludzka. Perspektywy historyczne*, ed. L. Brogowski, Gdańsk, 2006
- Danek-Wojnowska, B., ed., "Listy Stanisława Ignacego Witkiewicza do Heleny Czerwijskiej", *Twórczość*, 1971, no. 9, pp. 13–59
- Danek-Wojnowska, B., Micińska, A., eds., *Stanisław Witkiewicz. Listy do syna*, Warsaw, 1969
- Degler, J., *Witkacego portret wielokrotny*, Warsaw, 2009
- Ford, C., *The Herschel Album. An Album of Photographs by Julia Margaret Cameron Presented to Sir John Herschel*, Wokingham, 1975
- Franczak, E., Okołowicz, S., *Przeciw Nicości. Fotografie Stanisława Ignacego Witkiewicza. [Against Nothingness. Stanisław Ignacy Witkiewicz's Photographs]*, Kraków, 1986
- Gerould, D., J. Kosicka, "Witkacy: An Album of Photos a Bundle of Letters", *Performing Arts Journal*, 7, 1983, no. 3, pp. 59–75
- Gerould, D., *The Witkiewicz Reader*, London, 1992
- Giżycki, M., Okołowicz, S., "Nowa twarz Witkacego", *Projekt*, 1980, no. 1, pp. 2–9
- Hopkins, A., *Magic, Stage Illusions and Scientific Diversions, Including Trick Photography*, London, 1897
- Immisch, T.O., ed., *Witkacy. Metaphysische Portraits. Photographien 1910–1939*, Munich, 1997
- Jurecki, K., "Witkacy. portret wielokrotny", *Fotografia*, 2005, no. 17, pp. 76–77
- Lenartowicz, S., "Józef Głogowski's 'Witkacy Photographs' and his Friendship with Witkacy", *Konteksty. Polska Sztuka Ludowa*, 54, 2000, no. 1–4, pp. 198–203
- Lenartowicz, S., "Wpływ fotografii Stanisława Ignacego Witkiewicza na jego twórczość plastyczną", in: *Witkacy. Materiały sesji poświęconej Stanisławowi Ignacemu Witkiewiczowi w 60. rocznicę śmierci*, ed. A. Żakiewicz, Słupsk, 2000, pp. 193–205
- Lingwood, J., et al., eds., *S.I. Witkiewicz: Photography 1899–1939*, Third Eye Center, Glasgow, 1989
- Micińska, A., "Une oeuvre inconnue de Witkacy: sa correspondance", in: *Cahier Witkiewicz, No. 4: Actes du Colloque International "Witkiewicz" à l'Université Libre de Bruxelles, Novembre 1981, Lausanne, 1982*, pp. 7–17
- Musiał, G., et al., eds., *St. I. Witkiewicz–Fotografie*, Muzeum Sztuki, Łódź, 1979
- Okołowicz, S., et al., eds., *Face au néant: les portraits de Stanislaw Ignacy Witkiewicz*, Nantes, 2004
- Okołowicz, S., "Metaphysical Portraits", *Konteksty. Polska Sztuka Ludowa*, 54, 2000, no. 1–4, pp. 182–197
- Okołowicz, S., "Stanisława Ignacego Witkiewicza Portret wielokrotny, Fotografia wielokrotna czy Fotografia pięciokrotna?", *Rocznik Historii Sztuki*, 2006, no. 31, pp. 173–186
- Sokół, L., "Zakopane jako przewrotna forma życia", *Przegląd humanistyczny*, 2005, no. 3, pp. 99–110.
- Szczublewski, J., *Żywoł Modrzejewskiej*, Warsaw, 1977
- Sztaba, W., "Images from the Life of a Monad", in: *Witkacy i inni. Z kolekcji Stefana Okołowicza i Ewy Franczak. [Witkacy and Others. From the Collection of Stefan Okołowicz and Ewa Franczak]*, eds. B. Czubak, S. Okołowicz, Warsaw, 2011, pp. 39–59
- Szymanowicz, M., "In the Private Sphere: The Photographic Work of Stanisław Ignacy Witkiewicz", MoMA: 2014 (<http://www.moma.org/interactives/objectphoto/assets/essays/Szymanowicz.pdf>)

Thackeray Ritchie, A., *From Friend to Friend*, London, 1919

Thackeray Ritchie, A., *Records of Tennyson, Ruskin, and Browning*, New York, 1892

The Beacon: A Journal Devoted to Photography in all its Phases, 2, 1890

Witkiewicz, S. I., *Insatiability*, trans. L. Iribarne, Evanston, 1996

Witkiewicz, S. I., *Nowe formy w malarstwie i wynikające stąd nieporozumienia*, Warsaw, 1919

Witkiewicz, S., *Sztuka i krytyka u nas, 1884–1898*, Lviv and Poznań, 1899

Witkovsky, M. S., *Foto: Modernity in Central Europe: 1918–1945*, Washington, 2007

Żakiewicz, A., “Po trzecie–fotograf, czyli jak interpretować twórczość Stanisława Ignacego Witkiewicza”, *Dagerotyp*, 2002, no. 11, pp. 11–18

Żakiewicz, A., “Through the Eyes of the Painter”, *Konteksty. Polska Sztuka Ludowa*, 54, 2000, no. 1–4, pp. 168–181

Łukasz Kiepuszewski

INSTITUTE OF ART HISTORY, ADAM MICKIEWICZ UNIVERSITY, POLAND

ORCID: 0000-0001-5750-0928

<https://doi.org/10.31338/2657-6015ik.30.3>

Face Substances. The rhetoric of Kapists' self-portraits: between self-reflection and confession

*I'm painting, still on the self-portrait.
Maybe I'll succeed, but not right away.
Each canvas is a different story,
It cannot mix with the previous ones...¹*

JAN CYBIS

Abstract

Self-portraits are specific kinds of pictures where the subject's experience is closely combined with the act of painting. Such works constitute a mixture of internal iconic power with external reality, e.g. the artist's body, his thought, and theory, etc. This applies in particular to self-portraits painted by the members of the Paris Committee since the idiomatic nature of painting was the primary quality on which they based the language and poetics of their art.

This paper analyses selected self-portraits by Józef Czapski (1896–1993), Zygmunt Waliszewski (1897–1936), Piotr Potworowski (1898–1964), Artur Nacht-Samborski (1898–1974), and Jan Cybis (1897–1972). The focus on the strategy of incorporating physiognomy into the matter of painting stems from the fact that on this particular level the intensification of the relationship between the author's image and his painterly gesture gains the strongest self-reflective potential. This allows for a reading of self-portraits as developing the artist's reflections about art and himself, included in theoretical writings and intimate journals. Analyses presented in this paper can, therefore, be defined as an attempt to recreate rhetoric of the painterly trace on the basis of choices particular for given work. In this optic, crucial are these aspects of painting that manifest a form of the author's subjective investment in artistic activity: from emphasising the distance through which the painting presents itself as a code offered to the viewer to decipher (as in Nacht-Samborski's work) through to declarations to blur the boundary between the artist and the work, which results in an almost organic communion of the body and the matter of painting (Cybis).

¹ J. Cybis, *Notatki malarskie. Dzienniki 1954-1966*, ed. Dominik Horodyński, Warsaw, 1980, p. 258 [trans. Maria Maklakiewicz]

Keywords: Polish modern painting, self-portrait, theory of self-representation, matter of painting, Józef Czapski (1896–1993), Zygmunt Waliszewski (1897–1936), Piotr Potworowski (1898–1964), Artur Nacht-Samborski (1898–1974) Jan Cybis (1897–1972)

Place of self-portraits

Self-portrait as a portrait's subgenre occupies a separate place among the works of particular artists. Paintings of this kind are saturated with a double bodily reference to the painter: through a representation and as a direct trace of his artistic activity². Thus, they address straightforwardly the complex relationship between the work and the life of their author. The analyses of self-portrait images are often greatly indebted to biographical references. The following readings do not reject this weight, aiming rather at taking advantage of the emerging opportunities to understand the artist's images. However, it should be emphasized that paintings fully come to light when the external commentary does not contradict their visual qualities and accepts the challenge that lies in the matter of paintings.

A self-portrait *happens* where the order of a subjective experience intertwines with the painting act. It is a kind of border area in which the rhythm of life slides towards the iconic forces of the image. Capturing this potential intersection of the painting's inside and outside, different for each work, is the proper subject of self-portraits' analysis.³

The above remarks concern especially own images created by the members of the Paris Committee group, for whom the idiomaticity of the painting medium was the quality that shaped the language and poetics of their art.⁴

2 The interpretation of a self-portrait as a bodily trace of the activity of painting is based on Jacques Derrida's analyses, published in the catalogue of the exhibition devoted to artists' portraits. See: J. Derrida: *Mémoires d'aveugle - l'autoportrait et autres ruines*, Paris, 1990. For a detailed discussion of this approach see chapter "Self-portrait and the blind spot" in: Ł. Kiepuszewski, *Obrazy Cezanne'a. Między spojrzeniem a komentarzem*, Gdańsk, 2004, pp. 16-51.

3 The above research thesis is a conclusion stemming from reading the most recent literature on the subject of self-portraits in painting: O. Calabrese, *Artists' Self-portraits*, New York, 2006; F. Cazzola, *Im Akt des Malens: Aspekte von Zeitlichkeit in Selbstporträts der italienischen Frühen Neuzeit*, Paderborn, 2013; M. Fried, *Manet's modernism, or, The face of painting in the 1860s*, Chicago, 1996; J. Hall, *The Self-Portrait: A Cultural History*, London, 2014.

4 Following is literature devoted to Kapists, relevant for this article: Gry Barwne, Paris Committee 1923-1939, ed. Stefania Krzysztofowicz-Kozakowska exhibition catalogue, National Museum in Krakow, 1996; A. Hałata, M. Lachowski, D. Seweryn-Puchalska, eds., *Pankiewicz i po... Uwalnianie koloru*, exhibition catalogue, Lublin Museum, 2016; J. Chrzanowska-Pieńkos, T. Sowińska, eds., *Jan Cybis 1897-1972*, exhibition catalogue, Zachęta – National Gallery of Art in Warsaw, 1997; J. Pollakówna, *Czapski*, Warsaw, 1993; Z. Kępiński, *Piotr Potworowski*, Warsaw, 1978; *Piotr Potworowski 1898-1962*, collective work, exhibition catalogue, Zachęta – National Gallery of Art in Warsaw, 1998; M. Gołąb, ed., *Nacht-Samborski 1898-1974*, exhibition catalogue, National Museum in Poznań, 1999; H. Bartnicka-Górska, A. Prugar-Myślik, *Zygmunt Waliszewski*, exhibition catalogue, The National Museum in Warsaw, 1999; W. Włodarczyk, *Przeciwnicy*

Kapists and the matter of the portrait

In 1923 these artists, as students of the Academy of Fine Arts in Krakow, went to study in Paris. After they returned to Poland in the 1930s and took over the magazine "Głos Plastyków" ("Artists' Voice"), their extensive exhibition and educational activity began. Their undertakings achieved both artistic and institutional success, exceptional in the history of Polish art. Paintings of many group members entered the canon of Polish painting, and the painters themselves became professors at leading art academies.⁵ The impact they had on the Polish art scene extends into the 1970s and in the case of Józef Czapski, we can talk about a slightly shifted, yet discernible reception even in the 1980s and 90s.⁶

Although all of the KP (Paris Committee) members defined themselves with respect to the program developed in the 1930s by Jan Cybis, it should be emphasized that this group was formed by diverse artistic personalities. Moreover, the ways and biographies of many of them diverged, especially after the war.

The Kapists willingly wrote about themselves and their art. These publications include: Czapski's extensive writings and a large volume of Cybis's diaries; slightly more modest in quantity, however qualitatively excellent, are the notes in Piotr Potworowski's sketchbooks; Zygmunt Waliszewski and Artur Nacht-Samborski left the smallest number of comments.⁷ This need for self-reflection also penetrated their paintings; in particular into self-portraits. Individual paintings can be interpreted as a thinking process about art and oneself. This does not mean, however, that self-portraits merely illustrate linguistic discourse; their analysis is intended to bring out the dialogue between the word and the image. The artists raised an important issue of transposing a motif into an independent painting structure. Their artistic strate-

kolorystów, in: A. Gogut, ed., *Sztuka lat trzydziestych*, session materials of the Art Historians Association, Niedzica, April 1988, Warsaw, 1991, pp. 79-98.

5 This process took place right after the war: J. Cybis became a professor at the Academy of Fine Arts in Warsaw (with a break during the first half of the 1950s); Nacht-Samborski: first at the College of Fine Arts in Sopot, later at the Academy of Fine Arts in Warsaw, Piotr Potworowski between 1958 and 1962 at art schools in Poznań and Sopot; as well as Hanna Rudzka-Cybisowa (whose works are not discussed in this article) at the Academy of Fine Arts in Krakow. The detailed course of artists' careers in the monographs above.

6 It is demonstrated by a large number of exhibitions in Poland, publications and a monograph: J. Pollakówna, op. cit.

7 Below are the most important collections of writings and comments by selected group members: J. Czapski, *Patrząc*, selection and afterword by J. Pollakówna, Krakow, 1986; B. Toruńczyk, ed., *Wyrwane strony*, annotations and comments by M. Nowak-Rogoziński, Warsaw, 2010; J. Cybis, *Notatki malarskie*. op. cit.; D. Jarecka, *Z notatników i szkicowników Piotra Potworowskiego*, in: J. Słodowska, ed., *Piotr Potworowski 1898–1962*, exhibition catalogue, Zachęta – National Gallery of Art, Warsaw, 1998, pp. 90-102; W. Waliszewska, *O Zygmuncie Waliszewskim. Wspomnienia i listy*, Krakow, 1972; J. Stajuda, "Artur Nacht-Samborski" (I) i (II), *Miesięcznik Literacki*, nos. 9 and 10, 1977. References to other publications and statements by these artists are provided in the footnotes to the analyses of their paintings below.

gies regarding the subject of study differed significantly; still, everyone faced the challenge posed by the portrait and self-portrait for the modern painting language.

In this classic painting genre, the composition's critical place is the model's face. Among various aspects with which this distinctive portrait's feature is associated, it is worth paying special attention to the issues of complexion. A twentieth-century colourist undertaking this type of painting confronted, to a greater or lesser extent, the classic *topos* of painting face shades⁸, which recognized this activity as a special challenge for the painter. It is well illustrated by Denis Diderot's statement, among many modern texts:

It is the complexion that is difficult to convey, that full, even whiteness, not pale and not matte, this mixing of red and blue tones, barely perceptible; it is blood, life, and they drive the colourist to despair. He who has gained the sense of complexion has made a great step forward; in comparison, the rest is nothing. Thousands of painters died without understanding what the body is; a thousand others will die without understanding it.⁹

The Kapists, emphasizing both the faithfulness to the pictorial tradition and the need for its post-Cézanne "modernization"¹⁰, did not directly accept such mimetic beliefs. Even if in practice they struck a chord with their painting instinct, revealed in certain images. In their optics of quality, the subtle matter of body had to be integrated with the superior and comprehensive image order. For this reason, some poetics adopted by the Kapists sought to weaken facial features and expressions by overly focusing and breaking the organic structure of the painting.

Nevertheless, the significance of what was being painted was not completely indifferent to them. It is demonstrated, among other things, by their view on abstract art and the discussion with its assumptions. The motif of the painting was not only a pretext and, especially in the mature works of these artists, it became a considerable element. The subject of study became even more crucial for the painter if it was his head.

Mask and rhetoric of trace

Problems that appear in the painting practice of the Kapists should also be seen in a broader perspective since the painting study leads to a special recreation of the model's face. The human face, as Hans Belting has recently emphasized, is already

8 Cf. M. Rzepińska, *Historia koloru w dziejach malarstwa europejskiego*, Krakow, 1983, pp. 182-183.

9 D. Diderot, "Essai sur la peinture. (Mes petites idées sur la couleur)", in: *Salons*, vol.1, Paris, 1821, p. 423. Cit. after M. Rzepińska, op. cit., pp. 393-394 [trans. Maria Maklakiewicz]

10 This specification of the Kapists' place in history stems above all from Czapski's writings. See: J. Czapski, *O Cézannie i świadomości malarzkiej*, Warsaw, 1937. Reprinted in: idem, *Patrząc*, op. cit., pp. 66-74.

a certain image created for one's and others' needs.¹¹ In this sense, the portrait he shaped according to the European imagery tradition, is an interpretation of this image that is a result of physiognomy. This opens space for describing such works in relation to the concept of mask, in which natural and artificial, individual and social aspects exist inseparably.¹²

The portrait mask can also be considered as a visual message, in which the content that goes beyond merely recalling the presence of the model, is deposited. In this respect, the staging of the image situation in which the face appears is certainly important. Then, spatial conditions of the face come into play, including the body pose and relation to other motives. The plane features of this motif gain a key role in the Kapists' paintings. In the Kapist imaging strategy, there is a strong link between the face's projection and the properties of the image's surface treatment. In modern painting, this relationship can be observed in artistic practice and traced back to Manet's times.¹³ In this image register, the face presents itself as a kind of mask made of pigments.¹⁴ This means that the face of the portrayed person is created primarily due to colour modulations, which are articulated with (often numerous) layers of paint. The face then gains its meanings not as much through facial expressions or similarity as through the way it is created. It gains its voice by being shaped by particular artistic language operations and being made of variously characterised painting traces.¹⁵ In other words, the image that the painting illustrates is determined by the nature of the gestures of the hand with a tool, made by the painter over the canvas.

The focus of subsequent analyses on the strategy of incorporating physiognomy into the image's matter is due to the fact that it is at this level that the density of the relationship between the author's image and his painting gesture gains the greatest self-reflective potential. In this sense, the following considerations can be described as an attempt to recreate a kind of rhetoric of the painting trace. The layering of coloured pigments on Kapists' canvases is not only a technological aspect of their art but a crucial register that determines the depiction and constitutes the true dimension of the artistic message.¹⁶

11 H. Belting, *Faces. Historia twarzy*, trans. Tadeusz Zatorski, Gdańsk, 2015.

12 Hans Belting presents literature on the subject and suggestive analysis of the relationship between mask and portrait. See: *Ibid.*.

13 Cf. M. Fried, *Manet's modernism...*, op. cit.

14 Cf. Cezanne's self-portrait analysis, Ł. Kiepuszewski, op. cit., pp. 16-51.

15 For more details on the issue of trace in self-portrait practice see: *Ibid.*.

16 Attempts to decipher the articulation of the painting matter affecting the presentation appeared primarily in connection with Titian's art. See: D. Rosand, "Titian and the Eloquence of the Brush", *Artibus et Historiae* 1981, no. 3, pp. 85-96; D. Bohde, *Haut, Fleisch und Farbe. Körperlichkeit und Materialität in den Gemälden Tizians*, Berlin, 2002; J. Cranston, *The Muddied Mirror: Materiality and Figuration in Titian's Later Paintings*, The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2010.

Czapski – taking the “power” from the master

Let us first take a look at Józef Czapski’s early self-portrait from 1933 (Fig.1).¹⁷ This image was created almost in parallel with articles on Paul Cézanne published between 1934 and 1937, the cycle of which was crowned with a separate brochure containing a program text entitled “On Cézanne and Plastic Awareness”.¹⁸



Fig. 1. Józef Czapski, Self-portrait, 1933 (black and white photography of a missing painting).

In this article, Cézanne’s art is deeply saturated with personal meanings. An important part of the article refers to Polish artistic youth from 1924-1930, who was “infected” by the French master’s attitude.¹⁹ Czapski, recalling his experience, encourages other painters to also “plunge into the world of Cézanne” and peculiarly absorb his art.²⁰

17 This painting has not survived, we only know it from black and white photography. Elements of the analysis presented in this section were earlier included in the article: Ł. Kiepuszewski, “Czapski wobec Cézanne’a. Znaczenia autorytetu”, *Quart* 2013, no. 2 (28), pp.71-79.

18 J. Czapski, *O Cézannie i świadomości malarskiej*, Warsaw, 1937. Reprinted in: idem, *Patrząc*, op. cit., pp. 66-74.

19 Ibid., p. 68.

20 Ibid.

The “recap” of the loner’s from Aix-en-Provence art – apart from the fact that here this vision’s features are of an almost mythical recreation of the painting principles – assumes the need to practice one’s perception of the world through the prism of that painting language. A broader project is included in these texts, formulating a special relationship with the indicated pattern. It also means a constant confrontation of one’s artistic practice with the light of the master’s paintings – filtering one’s view in the optics of the admired artist’s self-portraits.

Not only does Czapski not show a “fear of influence”, but on the contrary: he recognizes that this “influence” should be accepted with open arms.²¹ There is no question of an agonist confrontation with the predecessor, and submission to the protagonist’s art is expected. This closeness to the source has a lot in common with a love cycle, in which the path to a true, own artistic subjectivity leads through the creative subjectivity of the precursor.

It seems that the 1933’s painting can be read in the context of the above threads of Czapski’s writings. It is also worth contrasting with Cézanne’s *Self-portrait with Palette* from 1888-1890 (Fig. 2) because it will bring us to the realisation that self-portrait presentations may, in a special way, problematize inter-picture relationships. The general self-portrait convention is not the only frame for the image of



Fig. 2. Paul Cézanne, *Self-portrait with Palette*, 1888-90, Foundation E.G. Buhle, Zurich (Wikimedia Commons).

21 I refer here to the title of a famous book by Harold Bloom devoted to a rivalry between masters and their followers. See: H. Bloom, *The Anxiety of Influence: A Theory of Poetry*, New York, 1973; 2nd edn, 1997.

one's own identity, but so are also more specific references. The path to one's image, apart from a mirror reflection, includes also other intermediary patterns that allow organizing or constructing a self-portrait.

Besides a general typological community of Cézanne's and Czapski's self-portraits – a waist up a presentation with a palette and brushes, a “studio” character of the light background – there is a similarity in the approach to the main motifs defining the images as the artist's own. Particularly noteworthy is the way of holding painting accessories, as well as the, indirectly related, type of character's reference to the situation in the image area: Cézanne's perpendicular easel was in Czapski's self-portrait replaced by a vertical shadow falling on the wall, placed in the same location. The fundamental and particular analogy is, however, revealed in the glance – the main element of the model's self-definition. In both works, the eyes of the presented figure have close artistic characteristics, consisting of a similar depiction of the eye and eyebrow shape with the contour line. Such reminiscences can also be found in many other self-images of the French painter (Fig. 3).



Fig. 3. Paul Cézanne, Self-portrait, c.1882, Pushkin Museum, Moscow, (Wikimedia Commons).

The artist's glance in the painting is not only a reflection of the mirror but also a reflection of Cézanne's self-portraits. In general, it could be concluded that Czapski's self-portrait reveals in this inter-picture dialogue, the pressure of a suggestive and imposing model, that his image undergoes. In this case, the power of artistic and personal authority is imprinted on the body image of the painter, the disciple.

This analogy, however, indicates not only the entanglement of shaping one's pictorial self-description but also a more detailed ambivalence. Eyes, the organ of the painter's vision, are at the same time a motif which contains a symptom of conflict defining the subject's individualisation mechanism of the artist. This detail tackles an issue dear to Czapski: achieving own creativity by identifying with Another. It is a path that also implies violating identity boundaries, taking on external optics, leading to its almost literal incorporation.

This mechanism undoubtedly contains a narcissistic moment, because identification implies the possibility of seizing the power from the Master. As a consequence, the authority's attributes and its achievements are passed to the one who follows his footsteps.

Waliszewski – the pressure of things

Zygmunt Waliszewski's art was even more entangled in inter-picture dialogue with canonical works of the past than Czapski's.²² Nevertheless, the self-portrait of our interest, represented by this painter, who – let us add – created most own images out of all Kapists, does not directly refer to known patterns but rather emphasizes the presence of the mirror in the painting process. Waliszewski's self-portrait "Display Cabinet" from 1931 (National Museum in Poznań) (Fig. 4) was analysed by Joanna Sosnowska²³ in the context of the artist's biography and Buerger's disease, which the artist fell ill with at the age of 28. As a result, the artist lost both legs after amputations (in 1927 and 1930) and died in 1936. Sosnowska stresses that these dramatic facts did not leave too many traces in his art, emanating "the joy of life".²⁴ This self-portrait is one of the exceptions.

The painting shows three stacked shelves of a glazed piece of furniture. In their background, one can see the figure of the painter. The order of the shelves and the movements of mirror doors breach the integrity of the "fragmented" figure that appears there.

While other painter's self-portraits can be called narcissistic: he often shows himself as a dandy, it is through this painting – believes Sosnowska – that the artist has expressed his physical incompleteness. "Between the reflection in the mirror and the viewer's gaze there are various trinkets, cups and glasses, it can be said that the artist's physical body was placed between what is fragile and needs protection".²⁵

The above perspective on the painting can, however, be stretched further and by moving slightly the optics, it is possible to capture other issues regarding Waliszewski's work inscribed in it. First of all, let us pay attention to the fact that on

22 See interesting publication about it: J. Suchan, „Dwa modele intertekstualności: Waliszewski i Janisch”, *Artium Quaestiones*, vol. XII, 2002, pp. 75-109

23 J. Sosnowska, „Choroba”, in: idem, *Ukryte w obrazach*, Warsaw, 2012, pp.135-143.

24 Ibid., p. 138

25 Ibid., p.142 [trans. Maria Maklakiewicz]

each of the three shelves, the items are carefully arranged. As a result, we obtain a multiplied order of three still lives located one above the other. In this context, it is also important that the artist's face is squeezed between the objects, and its features are elaborated like the ornament on the neighboring vessels.



Fig. 4. Zygmunt Waliszewski, *Display Cabinet*, 1931, National Museum in Poznań.

The painter not only offers us a view of himself through a still life filter but also, taking into account wider analogies, e.g. the relation between an enlarged rounded shoulder and a bulky vessel, the relation between the spacious vases constituting the composition's base for the arrangement's stability and the lower parts of the painter's body, he also suggests self-projection on things. Thus, it is not only a confession regarding body defects but also a demonstration of striving for self-restoration through still life. This creates a suggestive existential metaphor: art (that is still life) becomes a body prosthesis; it replaces a body deficiency and provides support.

Waliszewski's "Display Cabinet" can also be viewed in the context of the special role that still life played in the artist's *oeuvre*. One should remember that a still life had a key position in the Kapist genre hierarchy as a form of independent painting.

According to Cybis's thesis: a still life unmasks. It cannot be national, religious, folkloric, nor of the working class. To a poor painter, it shows his weakness bluntly.²⁶ Waliszewski accepted this assumption, which was also a sort of an ethical principle, to some extent under the group's pressure. In practice, he often "broke" this rule: narrative images, mythological and grotesque scenes are a significant part of his work. In them, he returned to the habits of his early youth and from the period before joining the group, when he indulged in the pleasure of dialogue with the canon of European figurative art. This conflict is visible in some of Waliszewski's letters and sounds particularly interesting in the sentences directed to a stage designer, Tadeusz Cybulski, a practising painter to whom the "Display Cabinet", as the inscription on the canvas states, was given.

In 1931, in the painter's letter to a friend, we read: "Please, tell me what you are doing and if you are not worrying too much about the models, from my own experience I warmly recommend you to focus completely on 'natures mortes', where the results are easier, calmer to obtain and more fruitful".²⁷ And also in another letter: "There is a lot of truth in what you write, that you have to approach painting step by step, and not jumping, unfortunately, because of my nerves, I often make this mistake, it is so difficult these days to find in our work this calmness that the old craftsmen knew so well, and that led them to get such great results".²⁸

Waliszewski confesses like sin, succumbing to temptations that move him away from studying subjects. This tension between the adopted program and the artist's inclinations took a visual form in the self-portrait. In the highest, third area of the painting, the artist's face emerges from the background directly beside the dominating figures of a man and a woman, probably made of porcelain. The figural scene located on the axis of the arrangement, pressing against the face of the painter studying still life, represents a constant presence in his imagination of matters that go beyond the order of the table and furniture. The set in a wheelchair painter, trying to focus his effort on pure painting, reveals the complex reality of his desires.

Potworowski – surroundings

Piotr Potworowski's self-portrait from the 1950s (Fig. 5), created after the war in England (owned by the artist's family in London), also seems to touch upon the issue of artistic choices and the genre characteristics of its author's works. Potworowski's image, created using the gouache technique, contrasted with the pieces discussed earlier is sketchy and shows a much more casual type of expression. Portrait

26 Statement from 1934; cit. after P. Piotrowski, „Wielkie kwestie i martwa natura”, in: idem., *Sztuka lat trzydziestych*, op. cit., p. 5.

27 From letters to Tadeusz and Róża Cybulski (7.10. 1931, Krzeszowice) in: W. Waliszewska, op. cit., Krakow, p. 203. [trans. Maria Maklakiewicz]

28 From letters to Tadeusz and Róża Cybulski (11.10.1931, Krzeszowice) in: W. Waliszewska, op. cit., Krakow, p. 205. [trans. Maria Maklakiewicz]

paintings are rare among his landscape-dominated works. Despite its modest form, this study problematizes the general issue of the relationship between the painter and the surrounding space, which is important for the artist's stand.

Although the face is designed in a way that does not exclude that the piece was elaborated based on a mirror reflection, there are no elements there that would let determine the circumstances and the place of the study's creation. However, the absence of any identifiable elements does not mean that the surrounding space is neutral. It is not a background, but an intense yellow surround for the character.



Fig. 5. Piotr Potworowski, Self-portrait, the 1950s, in: Family collection in London.

The key relationship of the painting takes place between the painter's face and the painter's illuminated naked body. The face and the eyes are one of the darkest spots in the image, which suggests that the glance, as a place of eye contact with the closest reality, remains hidden in the shadows. This central zone is here dominated by the light of the surroundings, which rules over the piece's surface. The way of applying water-based paint to the surface of the paper causes that the separation between the painter's figure and the surrounding space is weakened, and his silhouette, which is a modulation of the surrounding colour, is overexposed. We can understand it as follows: the artist is making a careful observation while studying his image, but at the same time he absorbs the environment with his undressed body.

In a self-reflexive reading, this image of the artist at work can be read as a testimony of sensual and synesthetic contact with space, which is also made below

the threshold of vision. This aspect is present in the notes in Potworowski's sketch-books:

The next stage is limiting the visual aspect of the picture to such an extent that it stops concretising before the eyes as a whole, but penetrates with its elements into the deeper layers of the subconscious and begins to concretize just there. [...] ²⁹

I have to depict my waterfall with paints, so that it is heard and smelled, without using any means of imitation. [...] ³⁰

Everything that my whole body absorbed from a given emotion of the visual world (piece). I need to create with my hands a machine that works on people just as I want. ³¹

Potworowski's goal is to capture the synesthetic continuity between the experienced place and the temperature of the colour tone on the painting's plane. In the light of these statements, the analysed self-portrait presents a specific model of the relationship between the subject and the landscape, which is both optical and physical; for the gouache presents this moment of painting when the artist is being absorbed in the surrounding reality. The artist "sinks" into the luminous matter of the landscape and his body becomes a sensor that receives data from the environment.

Nacht-Samborski – from the face to the face of a painting

Artur Nacht-Samborski, unlike Potworowski, portrayed himself in an identifiable environment. Let us take a look at a painting from around 1955, from the National Museum in Poznań (Fig. 6), showing the painter in front of an easel, turning our way as if to welcome a guest visiting the studio.

What strikes in this painting is an exceptionally detailed portrait shot, which, oddly for Nacht's art, conveys the model's features. Compared to other, simultaneously created portraits of women with various attributes, or men characterized by certain exaggerated physiognomic features, this painting is distinguished by a fairly "thorough" relation, as a sort of a neutral report on his image.

Moving from one side of the picture to the other, we can track the appearance of new qualities: on the left, subdued value and tonal relationships, smoothly modulating the image, play an important role; on the right, behind a border marked by easels, what becomes evident are spontaneous brush strokes, which gain freedom, colourful voicing and brightness. It is also important that the constellation

29 Cit. after D. Jarecka, *Z notatników i szkicowników Piotra Potworowskiego*, op. cit., p. 94. I presented a broader analysis of the artist's relationship with the surrounding landscape in the article: Ł. Kiepuszewski, "Szyfry miejsca. Proces twórczy Piotra Potworowskiego i Nowa Fenomenologia", *Quart* 2018, no. 1 (47), pp. 47-57 [trans. Maria Maklakiewicz]

30 Cit. after D. Jarecka, op. cit., p. 98 [trans. Maria Maklakiewicz]

31 Ibid., p. 101 [trans. Maria Maklakiewicz]

of patches formed there, representing a canvas placed on an easel, allows one to recognize the presence of characters on it. A bright oblique streak crossing the canvas on the easel is of special quality, as it is a visual accent with its autonomy and mysterious identity.



Fig. 6. Artur Nacht Samborski, Self-portrait, 1955, National Museum in Poznań.

By emphasizing the contrasts between its parts, the painting introduces the viewer to a complex play between different levels of the represented reality. The reproduction of the artist's image in this painting, places it on the threshold of art, in confrontation with the area in which the transposition of colours into a new quality is yet to take place. Nacht's gaze invites us to enter the picture, moving our eyes from the face of the painter to the face of the painting plane, whose specific properties come to the fore in the right part of the composition.

In this depiction, Nacht indicates the differences and the moment of the distance between the artist and his art. This way he emphasised the distinctness of the world created for instance by the artist himself, on numerous canvases portraying characters in different expressive masks. In these terms, in the Nacht's self-portrait, we would see a show of transitioning from the "ordinary" of the face to reality, which becomes available only through the mask of art. The painter's work in this context is a process of obscuring the obvious on the way to revealing what is unusual in the very appearance of the human face.

In the portrait from 1955, the bridge between its parts, contrasting in terms of painting study, is the arm – a faded stain which thus becomes an intermediate being

between the painter's body and the easel, and the painting inside the painting. If we were to situationally capture the entirety of the action enclosed in this painting, one could say that the artist presents himself as an illusionist who invites the viewer to closely follow the performance of a *trick*.

This trick is indeed visual because it takes place on the painting plane and concerns the transformation from one state of painting matter into another. This process of incubating visibility from a chaotic configuration of condensed traces seems to be an enigmatic phenomenon. Nacht - Samborski supposedly said: You can't say too much in a painting because you will kill it; you have to leave something to the viewer.³²

Cybis – immersion

The last self-portrait of Cybis was created between 1964 and 1972 (Fig. 7), which is when numerous and systematic entries in his "Dziennik – notatki malarskie" ("Diary – the painting notes") come from.³³ The long process of the painting's



Fig. 7. Jan Cybis, Head (Self-portrait), 1964-1972, Muzeum Śląska Opolskiego in Opole.

³² J. Stajuda, „Artur Nacht-Samborski (1898-1974)”, *Projekt* 1975, no. 2, p. 8.

³³ Some of the following considerations appeared in my article: Ł. Kiepuszewski, „Od Notatek malarskich do autoportretu Jana Cybisa”, *Zeszyty Malarstwa* 2015, no. 11, Kraków, pp. 55-63.

creation is noticeable in the complex qualities of the painting surface. The tonally and textually diverse field was created as a result of layering many versions of the image. Individual phases of painting activities performed at different rates and characterized by different dynamics of traces intertwine here, creating a complex cluster of colourful substance.

The activity of the surface qualities of the canvas means that it is not only the colour range or a sophisticated colour tone but its material structure that individualizes the painting. It is mainly due to various hand operations, whose trace is visible on the painting plane, that a separate tone of space of light is created, in which the painter's face is presented. The skin tone is a result of a suitable colour modulation not only in the face area, but it also results from the coexistence with other areas of the painting. First of all, the portrayed image is associated with the tone of the vertical object on the left, which can be both a painting or a window. In its light, the face appears merely as a reflection of the field, because the optical intensity of this element imposes the way of perceiving physiognomy. In the viewing experience of this dialogue between the body and the rectangular painting (window), the basic subject of the representation is defined. In this Cybis's self-portrait, as in no other of his portraits, the facial physiognomy is ruled by the quality of the colour tone of the whole and blended into the painting matter of the paint. The spatial qualities of the represented reality cause that the frame of the painting becomes a sort of container in which the person's image is immersed. This lets us understand, interpreting the work literally and using the rhetoric suggested by the Diary's terminology: here is a painter "immersed" in painting, or even more literally – in paint, the basic medium of his art.

The painting, which strikes with its organic connection between the artist's body and the painting matter, is a manifestation of a desire to eliminate the difference between them. In this sense, Cybis's self-portrait is a declaration about the nature of trace, which allows achieving one's image solely based on the internal and idiomatic logic of the painting process.

The attempt to bring equality between the painter and his material, the body, and the matter of his efforts, saturates the image with a pompous tone. This kind of pathos was frequent for Cybis, which numerous passages from his diaries indicate: "Truth through paint and in paint. Act through paint and in paint",³⁴ „In painting, as I understand it, there is man as a whole with everything that is inside him”.³⁵ If the „Diaries” text suggests the artist's way of thinking about his painting, then the self-portrait gives us his image.

Conclusions

The attempts to reconstruct the painting logic individual for each self-portrait allowed to treat the image matter as a special medium of expression. It seems that sig-

34 J. Cybis, *Notatki malarskie. Dzienniki 1954-1966*, op. cit., p. 266 [trans. Maria Maklakiewicz]

35 *Ibid.*, p. 351 [trans. Maria Maklakiewicz]

nificant are those of its aspects that manifest the various forms of the author's subjective involvement in his artistic activity: from emphasizing the distance through which the image retains features of a code presented to the viewer, to declarations of striving to blur the difference between the creator and the work, resulting in an almost organic melting of the body and the painting matter.

Finally, it should be emphasized that the attempt to read the painting traces in the light of painters' statements cannot aspire to reconstruct the theory of Kapist art; the aim was rather to point out the intriguing moments of a clash between the text and the image and to draw attention to some rhetorical mechanisms that bind them. It cannot be forgotten that, although these painters were eager to express their views, in principle they were all convinced of the superiority of practice over the discourse of ideas.

References

- Belting, H., *Faces. Historia twarzy*, trans. T. Zatorski, Gdańsk, 2015.
- Calabrese, O., *Artists' Self-portraits*, New York, 2006.
- Cazzola, F., *Im Akt des Malens: Aspekte von Zeitlichkeit in Selbstporträts der italienischen Frühen Neuzeit*, Paderborn, 2013.
- Cybis, J., *Notatki malarskie. Dzienniki 1954-1966*, ed. D. Horodyński, Warsaw, 1980.
- Czapski, J., *Patrząc*, selection and afterword J. Pollakówna, Krakow, 1986.
- Derrida, J., *Mémoires d'aveugle - l'autportrait et autres ruines*, Paris, 1990.
- Fried, M., *Manet's modernism, or, The face of painting in the 1860s*, Chicago, 1996.
- Hall, J., *The Self-Portrait: A Cultural History*, London, 2014.
- Krzysztofowicz-Kozakowska, S., ed., *Gry Barwne*, Komitet Paryski 1923-1939, exhibition catalogue, The National Museum in Krakow, Krakow, 1996.
- Kiepuszewski, Ł., *Obrazy Cezanne'a. Między spojrzeniem a komentarzem*, Gdańsk, 2004.
- Kiepuszewski, Ł., „Szyfry miejsca. Proces twórczy Piotra Potworowskiego i Nowa Fenomenologia”, *Quart* 2018, no. 1 (47), pp. 47–57.
- Gołąb, M., ed., *Nacht-Samborski 1898-1974*, exhibition catalogue, the National Museum in Poznań, Poznań, 1999.
- Sosnowska, J., „Choroba”, in: *Ukryte w obrazach*, Warsaw, 2012, pp.135–143.
- Włodarczyk, W., *Przeciwnicy kolorystów*, in: *Sztuka lat trzydziestych*, ed. A. Gogut, Warsaw, 1991, pp. 79-98.
- Bartnicka-Górska, H., Prugar-Myśliki A., eds., *Zygmunt Waliszewski*, exhibition catalogue, The National Museum in Warsaw, Warsaw, 1999.

Anna Cheipesh

NATIONAL ACADEMY OF FINE ARTS AND ARCHITECTURE, UKRAINE

ID ORCID 0000-0002-9540-700

<https://doi.org/10.31338/2657-6015ik.30.4>

The Impact of Historic Events on the Formation of the Creative Method of Ernest Kontratovych in the Early Period (1930s-1940s)

Abstract

The article focuses on the early works of Ernest Kontratovych (1912-2009), one of the founders of the cultural and artistic centre in Subcarpathian Ruthenia. His period of creative formation occurred between the 1930s and the 1940s. At that time, Subcarpathian Ruthenia, as part of the Czechoslovak Republic, suffered from the effects of irregular agrarian reform and the Global economic crisis that has affected all of Europe. The mountainous areas of Verkhovyna, where government action and the crisis have led to poverty and famine, have suffered the most. After graduating from the Uzhhorod Singing and Teaching Seminary (1932), Kontratovych was sent to remote villages in mountainous areas for pedagogical work. There he witnessed the events that led to the choice of themes for his early works. Tragedies, such as the depopulation of villages, famine, and impoverishment of the people of Verkhovyna, and resulted in a picturesque series with images of the disadvantaged people, the cripples, the beggars. These experiences made a lasting effect on Kontratovych's work. He peculiarly interpreted the theme of war. The lack of images of military activity is compensated by images of war victims – the orphaned children, crippled people, beggars.

The study examines Kontratovych's expressionist style in the context of the tasks perceived by the artist as his responsibilities to recreate and convey to the audience the tragedy of the contemporary situation. Exaggeration and deformation of form, as well as displacement of objects, emphasized the emotional intensity of the works. At the same time, he frequently turned to the daily life of the people of Verkhovyna, which created a counterbalance to these dramatic works. Traditional events such as wedding processions, preparations of the bride, and dances are shown in an optimistic, joyful palette in a similarly expressionist style.

Keywords: Ernest Kontratovych, Transcarpathian school of painting, Subcarpathian Ruthenia, expressionism, genre painting of Transcarpathia, an image of women.

In 1919, under the Treaty of Saint-Germain-en-Laye, the territory of Transcarpathia under the official name of Subcarpathian Ruthenia became a part of Czechoslovakia. The process of transition was complex, controversial on many issues, including the granting of autonomy to the new part, the political self-government and the establishment of borders, and so on. The important fact was that after the Austro-Hungarian rule, Transcarpathian land was at an extremely low economic level, the region was experiencing impoverishment and lack of cultural component. All this allowed the Prague government to manipulate the governor and officials of Subcarpathian Ruthenia and postpone the moment of secession of Transcarpathia, because according to President Tomas Masaryk: “Czechoslovakia supports the territorial organization of its state based on the federal principle, but until all the lands of the republic reach an almost equal level of economic and cultural development, the federalization will be premature”.¹ Therefore, it was important to raise the level of economy, culture, education to the national level. “The strategy of the policy of the president of the Czechoslovak republic towards Transcarpathia provided for the modernization of all spheres of life in the region, which in Masaryk’s view meant democratization of public life, integration with Czechs, economic development, education, and health care”.² To raise the economic, social, and cultural level of Subcarpathian Ruthenia, the Prague government carried out several reforms, which had both positive and negative results.

Among the positive aspects of the development of the economic condition of Transcarpathia is the banking sector (the opening of the first bank in the region, the receiving of subsidies from the government for the development of institutions, cooperative lending, etc.),³ tourism industry (the issuing of tourist guides, the opening of new hotels, the paving of mountain routes for walking tours, the popularization of visiting the historical places of Transcarpathia).⁴ The negative effects of the reforms were in the industrial and agricultural sectors. Local enterprises could not compete with the Czechs, which led to their closure and job losses. The agrarian reform has to correct the issue of the distribution of the landholdings. It was carried out in two stages (1919–1925; 1925–1929). At the first stage, the surplus land was sold to landless or land-poor peasants. Only 24% of the total land was sold. Other lands either remained with the old landowners (mostly Czech landowners) or passed to the state in the colonization fund for Czech colonists in the lands of Subcarpathian Ruthenia. At the second stage, the land was not confiscated but bought from the landlords for further division. However, at the same time, there was speculation to circumvent the law. In particular, in 1928 the Count of Schon-

1 A. Panov, *Masaryk i Zakarpattia* [Masaryk and Transcarpathia], Uzhhorod, 2010, p. 137.

2 O. Kravchuk, “Natsionalna polityka Chekhoslovachchyny na Zakarpatti v otsinkakh Tomasha Masaryka” [National policy of Czechoslovakia in Transcarpathia in the assessments of Tomas Masaryk], *Ethnic history of the peoples of Europe* 2009, no. 28, pp. 65-71.

3 M. Tokar, “Bankivska sprava ta kredyтуvannia” [Banking and crediting], in: M. Vehesha, F. Chedynets, eds., *Zakarpattia 1919 – 2009 rokiv: istoriia, polityka, kultura* [Transcarpathia 1919–2009: history, politics, culture], Uzhhorod, 2010, pp. 67-69.

4 F. Shandor, “Turyzm” [Tourism], in: M. Vehesha, F. Chedynets, eds., op. cit., pp. 69-72.

born sold his lands at a reduced price to the Bignon conglomerate, which formed the Latorytsia company for their operation. One of the main shareholders of the company was the count himself.⁵ Due to the incomplete implementation of the reform, it proved ineffective and caused the suffering of the population.

In the late 1920s, Czechoslovakia was hit by the Global economic crisis, which began in the United States. The crisis affected most industries, reducing production and jobs, due to the closure of some factories. "The number of unemployed people in Czechoslovakia reached 1 million, 100 000 of which were Transcarpathians".⁶ Unemployment, impoverishment, and famine began in the villages. The population of Verkhovyna, the most backward region of Subcarpathian Ruthenia, was particularly affected. Reforms in the fields of tourism, finance, and administrative and territorial reorganization of the system were aimed to bring the structure and way of life of Subcarpathian Ruthenia closer to the standards of Czechoslovakia, but most of them were colonial. According to Marian Tokar, "Colonial features of the economic policy of Czechoslovakia in the region were manifested in all spheres of economy. Speculation, embezzlement of natural resources (especially in the forest industry), the introduction of uneven tariff systems, deliberate underestimation of raw material prices, etc. have become commonplace".⁷

It is important to note the qualitative changes in the development of the culture of Subcarpathian Ruthenia after the integration into the Czechoslovak Republic. The educational reform carried out at the turn of the 1920s and 1930s contributed to the opening of new schools (from 475 primary schools, 321 were with the Ruthenian language of teaching), and the introduction of new subjects and books, and the provision of primary education. The development of the educational sector led to the quantitative growth of the intellectuals. "The statistics of that time show that the number of people in the intellectual work of Transcarpathia has doubled. In the late 1930s, 2 200 specialists were employed in the sphere of public education alone. A complete brilliant assemblage of prominent teachers, scientists, writers, artists, and public figures successfully worked among them".⁸ The raising of the level of literacy and education in the Transcarpathian lands affected the increase in the number of intellectuals. The institutions for the training of the teachers of urban schools played a significant role. In particular, the Uzhhorod singing and teaching seminary annually graduated 40-50 clergymen, who were also teachers.

5 S. Fedaka, "Sto rokiv Pershii Chekhoslovatskii respublitsi" [One hundred years of the First Czechoslovak Republic], *Ekzyl*, vol. 11-12, Oct-Dec 2018, <http://1939.in.ua/general/serhiy-fedaka-100-rokiv-pershiy-chekhoslovats-kiy-respublitsi/> [accessed 20 December 2020]

6 M. Tokar "Hospodarska polityka chekhoslovatskoi vlady ta problemy sotsialnoho rozvytku" [Economic policy of the Czechoslovak authorities and problems of social development], in: M. Vehesha, F. Chedynets, eds., *Zakarpattia 1919 – 2009 rokiv...* [Transcarpathia 1919 – 2009...], pp. 63-67.

7 Ibid.

8 V. Zadorozhnyk, "Osvita i shkilnytstvo" [Education and schooling], in: M. Vehesha, F. Chedynets, eds., op. cit., pp. 69-72.

Given the formation of the cultural and artistic environment of Subcarpathian Ruthenia in the 1920s and the 1930s, the seminary is notable for the activities of two teachers of art – Adalbert Erdeli and Yosyp Bokshai. They were graduates of the Hungarian Royal Art Institute, so they sought to create a local cultural centre that would have a clear national identity in the art world. In the 1920s and 1930s, they made several attempts to organize a centre of Subcarpathian art. The first task set by Adalbert Erdeli and Yosyp Bokshai was to provide quality art education. To achieve this, they founded the first educational institution for talented young people – “Public Art School” (1927). The school operated on weekends in the seminary. Seminarians with a knack for drawing were invited to classes. The program of the three-year course of study was based on the academic training of those art academies: students attended the lectures on art history, worked with plaster, nude, studied composition, drawing, and painting.⁹ A feature of the training was *en plein air* painting - hiking in the mountains to master the technique of creating a landscape in the open air. Today, the landscape with a mountain panorama of the majestic Carpathians is a kind of regional feature of the representatives of the Transcarpathian school of painting.

The first graduates of the school became famous artists - Adalbert Boretskyi, Andrej Dobosh, Ernest Kontratovych, Andriy Kotska, Zoltan Sholtes. Their creative development took place in the 1930s when living conditions in the Transcarpathian lands were difficult for the population and the political and historical situation had an undeniable influence on the formation of their worldview and artistic principles. They were a cohort of young teachers who, in addition to their main work in the pedagogical sphere, found time to develop their artistic talent and the traditions of the local painting school.

In 1931 the first organization of local artists “Society of Fine Artists in Subcarpathian Ruthenia” was founded. It included Subcarpathian artists (Yosyp Bokshai, Vasyl Dvan-Sharpotoki, Adalbert Erdeli, Ivan Erdeli, the graduates of the Public Art School), as well as those who actively collaborated with them on the territory of Transcarpathia - Milada Beneshova-Spalova, Yulii Iyas, Ladislav Kaigl, Bedrich Ozdijan, Inna and Boris Romberg, Josef Tomaszek, Jaromir Tsupal, and others. “They became the nucleus, not on a national – Ruthenian - basis, but purely artistic and ideological arguments: they accepted with all their might the idea - to find the soul and style of their people and land”.¹⁰ The first exhibition of works of the members of the organization took place on December 13-20, 1931 at the Uzhhorod Jubilee Czech Folk School named after Tomas Masaryk. In 1936, with the support of “Society of Friends of Subcarpathian Ruthenia”, an exhibition of works of the artists of

9 I. Nebesnyk, *Khudozhnia osvita na Zakarpatti u XX stolitti: istoryko-pedahohichnyi aspekt* [Art education in Transcarpathia in the XX century: historical and pedagogical aspects], Uzhhorod, 2000, p. 28.

10 A. Izvorin, “Suchasni ruski khudozhnyky” [Contemporary Ruthenian artists], *Zoria-Hajnal* 1942, 2 (3-4), p. 399.

the Society was held in Bratislava, presenting 95 works by nineteen artists.¹¹ In the following year, the exhibition “Slovakia and Subcarpathian Ruthenia - their people and the land in fine arts” took place in Prague. The local Subcarpathian school was represented by Yosyp Bokshai, Vasyl Dvan-Sharpotoki, Adalbert Erdeli, Ivan Erdeli, Andriy Kotska, Zoltan Sholtes.¹² Ernest Kontratovych also took part in the exhibition activities of the Society. “Becoming a member of “Society of Fine Artists”, Kontratovych performs at art exhibitions in the second half of the 30’s-first half of the ’40s with works of such a social and exposing orientation that he is called one of the sharpest exponents of rebellious sentiments among Transcarpathian artists”.¹³

In the 1930s, the graduates of “Public Art School” began their exhibition activities. Andriy Kotska wrote about himself: “In 1931 I started working as a teacher at a public school in the village of Verkhovyna. Here I painted some paintings from the life of the people and landscapes from which in 1933 and 1935 the exhibitions were organized in Uzhhorod”.¹⁴ Adalbert Boretskyi exhibited his works at the exhibition in 1933 together with the works of Andriy Kotska. Zoltan Sholtes organized his first personal exhibitions in 1932 and 1933 in Uzhhorod. Since 1935, Ernest Kontratovych began his exhibition career. “In 1935 he became a full member of the Union of Artists of Transcarpathia. Within the framework of this Union, he took part in all exhibitions”.¹⁵

The works of Ernest Kontratovych were certainly commented on already at the time. His original painting style, the use of expressionist mode, and the social themes gained him the reputation of an “exponent of the life of the people from Verkhovyna”.¹⁶ A Hungarian critic, Aba Josef, wrote the following lines about Ernest Kontratovych: “Kontratovych, leaving the natural observation of reality, rather turns to convey reality, passing it through himself, through his world and is expressed expressively; has a future, because this expression is evolving”.¹⁷ This definition describes the young artist as an expressionist in the best way. The first Ruthenian critic, A. Izvorin (Nedzelskii), also noted the truthfulness in the works of Ernest Kontratovych and noted that he was the first to try to show “the social poverty of the common people, which was hidden behind the external colour of ‘our picturesque Motherland’”.¹⁸ Also, Izvorin noted the influence of Adalbert Erdeli on the creative manner of his student, which he saw manifested in a special interpretation of the pointed top houses of Verkhovyna and the limited attention to

11 I. Nebesnyk, *Adalbert Erdeli*, Lviv, 2007 [in Ukrainian].

12 Ibid.

13 V. Myshanych, “Pamiati patriarkha kraiovoi shkoly maliarstva” [In memory of the patriarch of the regional school of painting], *Cultural sources* 2010, nos. 1- 2, p. 64.

14 Kotska’s Autobiography. The personal file of Andriy Kotska is kept in the Central State Archive-Museum of Literature and Arts of Ukraine, stock 581, anagraph 2, case 723, p. 6.

15 A personal sheet on personnel accounting of Ernest Kontratovych, Current archive of A. Erdeli College of Arts of the Transcarpathian Academy of Arts, p. 4.

16 V. Martynenko, *Ernest Kontratovych*, Kyiv, 1973 [in Ukrainian].

17 Ibid.

18 A. Izvorin, op. cit., p. 275.

the greenery in the paintings.¹⁹ Ernest Kontratovych was a representative of the Transcarpathian school of painting and began his career in such contradictory political and historical conditions. The coming from a teacher's family, after receiving the primary education at school in Velykyi-Bereznyi village, entered the Uzhhorod singing and teaching seminary (1928). After graduation, he became a teacher at public schools and, under the terms of his studies, was granted a scholarship of 1 500 CZK and a commitment "to act as a teacher in public people's schools in the Czechoslovak Republic for at least six years".²⁰

The teacher and artist he taught in remote villages of Verkhovyna - Luh (1932–1934), Uzhok (1934–1938), and Sukhyi (1938–1944). The chronological framework from 1930 to 1945 limited an early period of the artist's work. Periods are defined by Kontratovych himself, who used historical events in the Transcarpathian land as the markers for dividing his creative path into stages. The thematic and genre diversity of the works of the artist, which had certain differences in different stages of creativity, was also taken into account. His stay in the villages of Verkhovyna, which suffered because of the crisis, made a strong impression on the artist's worldview. He painfully perceived the events that surrounded him, sincerely experienced with the local population their grief and suffering. The influence of what he saw and felt was manifested, first, in early creative attempts and artistic means of expression. These early series had an impact on all of his creative work – the explored theme of the peasants' labouring in the field, series of images of a woman with a child ("Transcarpathian Madonnas"), images of the daily routine of mountaineers. These themes always excited his imagination and he created versions of existing works.

According to Kontratovych, the main purpose of the artist was to document the world around him. His works are stories about the poor on the roads, beggars near the church, lonely orphans, destroyed houses and burned villages, gloomy landscapes with rural nooks in the mountains, and more. The main genres to which the artist turned in the early period were landscape and genre painting. It is also possible to distinguish clearly the topics addressed by Kontratovych in the 1930s and 1940s, where the influence of the surrounding life is certainly noticeable. The theme of begging, death, and famine combines works that illustrate the tragic consequences of the Global economic crisis. It is the leading in the works of this period. The images of the beggars were taken from life and the young artist could not ignore them. Therefore, following the selected themes, the genre for their coverage was determined - genre picture.

To express his inner emotions, his attitude to events, the artist chose expressionism, which best met the objectives. The expressionist artist first intends to express himself, his attitude to social injustice, his emotions, and reactions in response to real events. A similar goal is achieved by the method of exaggeration, primitivism

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Certificate of maturity of Ernest Kontratovych, issued on July 1, 1932. Personal file of Ernest Kontratovych from the Current Archive of the Transcarpathian regional organization of the Union of Artists of Ukraine, p. 4.

or fantasy, deformation of the form of objects, through bright colouring and expressive strokes. The works of Konratovych are his “cry from the heart”, the desire to convey to the world the tragedy of the situation and its outrage. Artistic and expressive means of expressionism are suitable for this. As for colouring, the artist chose the colour as an aid to increase the emotional tension. The colour system is based on contrasts of opposite shades (e.g. purple and yellow) or the harmonious contraposition of convergent dark black or blue-violet tones, creating an almost monochrome range. This choice of colouring significantly distinguishes the method of Ernest Konratovych from the European expressionists. However, it should be noted that the colour difference is inherent in the works only of this social and exposing series, as the works dedicated to the ritual life of the mountaineers are solved in a bright, pure colour.

Konratovych was close to the ideas of German Expressionism, which developed in parallel with French Fauvism and had many similar features. In particular, the position of active opposition to the realities of contemporary art, the expression of the artist’s feelings through the prism of experience, emotional tension. The similarity of expressionism of Ernest Konratovych with the German one is manifested in the ideas of style, in particular, in the expression of personal emotions, reactions as the responses to the surrounding situation and events. The colour constituted the difference. Bright and sonorous colour contrast to enhance the emotional effect of tension, which is presented in the European expressionist artists, in the works of Konratovych became almost monochromatic, built on the harmony of dark colours. This flair emphasized the depressing feelings, helplessness, by enhancing the overall impression.

The artist was impressed by ideology, genre orientation, and some formative means of expressionism. The main ideas of German expressionism are clearly stated in the work of Lionel Richard “Encyclopaedia of Expressionism”, which quotes the words of Wassily Kandinsky: “Expression involves the implementation of the background experienced in the depths of the soul, with the help of selected colours. The object, the reason acts as a pretext for emotion, which, being the main component of reality, should enter the picture ‘in its true colours’. Thus, the purpose of creativity is to interpenetrate the external reality, which is perceived as sensitive, and internal reality of the artist’s experiences, i.e. to achieve “artistic synthesis”.²¹ The main genres were the domestic picture – the plots were taken from life, modern events, etc., the landscape, which reflects the cruelty, ruthlessness of life. At the origins of the style were Paula Modersohn-Becker, Christian Rohlf, and Emil Nolde. At the heart of their creative work was a kind of perception of the surrounding landscape. Their achievements, in particular, the use of a strict, rude form, the creation of a rhythm with a broken line, the expressive pattern that conveys the emotional impulse, the spiritualization of natural forms - had a great influence on the group “The Bridge”

21 L. Rishard, *Enciklopediya ekspressionizma* [Encyclopaedia of Expressionism], Moscow, 2003, p. 26. [in Russian, my trans.]

(1905). The group included well-known representatives of the style - Ernst Ludwig Kirchner, Erich Heckel, Karl Schmidt-Rottluff, Max Pechstein, and others.²²

His teacher Adalbert Erdeli, who was known to feel attracted to the avant-garde trends of Europe in the early XX century - post-impressionism, Fauvism, and Expressionism, could introduce the young artist to the ideas of German Expressionism. From 1922 to 1926, Adalbert Erdeli travelled to Germany, worked in the creative studio of the artist Francke in Munich, and took an active part in the creative life of the association of Bavarian artists "Chiemsee".²³

For the young Ernest Kontratovych, the teacher's painting style was indicative. In the early works, the influence of Adalbert Erdeli is noticeable, in particular in the technique of drawing, the interpretation of the forms of objects. Expressionist methods such as generalization, schematic lines, construction of space with coloured spots allowed to convey the emotional mood of the work as best as possible. However, it should be noted that for Ernest Kontratovych were important, first of all, the ideas of German expressionism, which allowed to convey the emotional state of the soul and embody them through deformations, substitutions, hyperbole et cetera. The colours of the early works differ from the German Expressionists - the use of dark, gloomy tones allows us to talk about the possible influence of the Hungarian school of painting. It is known that during his studies at the seminary, Ernest Kontratovych visited Budapest, where he was acquainted with the masterpieces of European art.²⁴

The images of the poor and unemployed people are embodied in paintings with different plots. They reveal the difficult situations and the efforts of the population to cope with them. In particular, how the old woman does not lose hope and brings a skinny goat to the pasture, where the burned area is instead of it ("Old woman with a goat", the 1930s); a mother with a child who understands that there is no more hope, so they gathered their things and maybe go in search of a better life ("Poor Verkhovyna", 1936 (Fig. 1)); some people have come to terms with unemployment and this way of life ("Unemployed tramp", the 1940s). The works of Ernest Kontratovych should be interpreted precisely in the context of the above-described historical events, and then they acquire deep meaning.

The crisis has led to such horrible consequences as famine and the extinction of entire villages. The work "Famine in Verkhovyna" (1939) creates an appropriate atmosphere, known to the people of Verkhovyna, and especially to every Ukrainian.

The man with a swollen stomach from hunger and a glassy gaze stand in the middle of the house, in the light of a lamp. Unhealthy thinness and earthy green complexion catch the eye. Near the stove, there are large empty pots for food, and on the stove - the thin legs of another person.

The arrangement of objects and people is somewhat theatrical - the main character seemed to be deflected from the search for the last drop of food and he looked

22 Ibid., p. 39.

23 I. Nebesnyk, op. cit., p. 27.

24 V. Martynenko, op. cit., p. 7.



Fig. 1. Ernest Konratovych, *Poor Verkhovyna*, 1939. Cardboard, oil. 63–71. From the collection of the Transcarpathia region art museum named after Yosyp Bokshai.

up at the viewer. Directed light pulls an exhausted person out of the darkness of the room, thus focusing attention on it. The man's white shirt is a remarkable sign of the beggars of Ernest Konratovych. He always dresses them in white clothes to separate them from the total mass of the composition. The lack of individual facial features of a man symbolizes the collective image of starving people from Verkhovyna of those years.

According to art critic Valentyna Martynenko, the author of the only significant monograph on the creative work of Ernest Konratovych, this ascetic composition is the result of many years of work. "The first sketch (1931) conveys the extreme tension in the exhausted figure of a man and the terrible misunderstanding of the situation by a child. Then there are a few pencil sketches of a multi-figure composition, where the interior of the house is presented: a woman sits above the dying child with another child in her arms, and then there is a sullen figure of the father".²⁵ The final version differs with compactness and lack of extra details to convey the main essence of the artist's idea.

²⁵ V. Martynenko, op. cit., p.11.



Fig. 2. Ernest Kontratovych, *Famine in Verkhovyna*, 1939. Cardboard, oil. 69,4-58. From the collection of the Transcarpathia region art museum named after Yosyp Bokshai.

The theme of begging is closely intertwined with the theme of the consequences of military actions because in the war the problems remained the same - famine, unemployment, death. Numerous works are devoted to the fate of orphaned children: a girl standing over a coffin ("Orphan", 1943), a couple of children begging by singing ("Orphans", the 1940s), a blind musician with a sighted girl who are begging in the village ("Sad melodies", 1940 (Fig.3)).

The most famous painting of the early period of the development of Ernest Kontratovych is "Funeral of the poor" (1939), (Fig. 4). A tragic event - a farewell to another dead resident of Verkhovyna appears before the audience through beaten pots hung on a sloping fence. A funeral procession unfolded against the background of an old, pointed house. A crowd of sullen peasants stands over the coffin, there is a woman in the middle, in whose sloping position the utter grief can be guessed. "The atmosphere of depression and silent despair is intensified by black



Fig. 3. Ernest Kontratovych, *Sad melodies*, 1940. Cardboard, tempera. 73–59. From the collection of the Mykolaiv region art museum named after V. Vereshchahin.

banners, spread over people, and the heavy roof of an old house, bulky, endless and indifferent mountains behind them”.²⁶

The close colouring scheme in dark tones enhances the emotional sound of the work. The lack of bright accents creates a sense of mundaneness of the event. However, the skill of technical execution, well-chosen colour scheme, and depth of nested feelings give the work a monumental design and emphasized the tragedy of the worldview.²⁷ Ernest Kontratovych remembered that with this work he passed a kind of exam in the teacher Adalbert Erdeli, who wrote him a letter where he welcomed the appearance of works on social issues at the exhibition and advised him to work hard in the future.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Ibid.

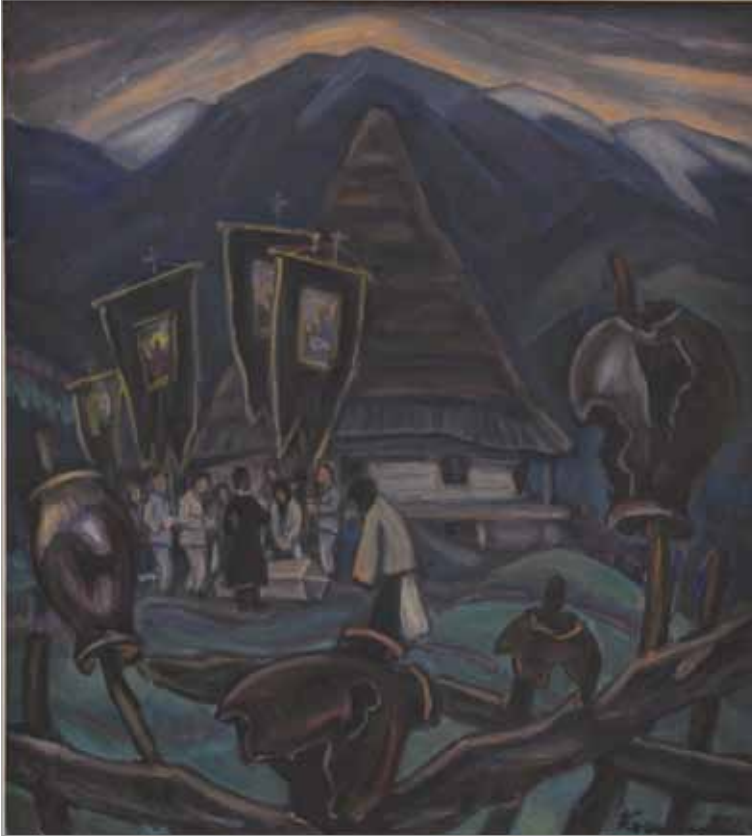


Fig. 4. Ernest Kontratovych, *Funeral of the poor*, 1939. Canvas, oil. 71–64. From the collection of the Transcarpathia region art museum named after Yosyp Bokshai.

Another topic related to begging is the military. In 1942, Ernest Kontratovych was called into the Hungarian army and served at the front until 1944. During his years of service, he created many sketches in his diaries. The war is depicted symbolically, without a hint of specific military action. The artist is interested in the fate of injured people and orphaned children. Images of huge crosses and crucifixes outside the village, symbolizing human suffering (*“Crucifixion outside the village”*, 1938), uprooted trees against the background of bunkers, which will remind of the tragic events for a long time, *“Old tree with a bunker”* (1943) (Fig.5), show the terrible consequences of the war in the Transcarpathian lands.

Given this range of interests may get the impression of pessimism and hopeless worldview of Ernest Kontratovych, but in such a situation he could not create cheerful landscapes. However, it was in the 1930s and the 1940s that the artist found the only optimistic and comforting theme – the ritual life of the inhabitants of Transcarpathia Joyful events, traditional holidays, of which they have quite



Fig. 5. Ernest Konratovych, *Old tree with a bunker*. 1943. Canvas, oil. 64x82. From the collection of the Transcarpathia region art museum named after Yosyp Bokshai.

a few, required the appropriate artistic and expressive means. In particular, the colour scheme of works noticeably changes and becomes bright and warm. There are dynamics inherent in moving processions; the shape of objects is solved with emphasized decorativeness, which will continue to be one of the typical characteristics of domestic works. In the early period, Ernest Konratovych created sketches and the first versions of works, which he will improve in the next stage of his work. These are the works “Dances in Verkhovyna” and “Procession”, which will be modified in the compositional solution with the same ideological idea.

The theme of work and workers of Transcarpathia developed similarly. The artist will develop the plots of the works “Drying of linen” (Fig. 6) and “Picking of potato” in further years. In particular, the plot of the picking of potato will gain popularity during the prosperity (1946-1990), when the main artistic doctrine will be socialist realism.

The series “Reapers” is dedicated to the work of women in the field started in 1940 with the canvas “Knitting of sheaves” (Fig.7). Before creating the final composition and conceptual work in 1970, the artist created many sketches and author’s versions of the work.



Fig. 6. Ernest Konratovych, *Drying of linen*, 1940. Cardboard, oil. 81x101. Private collection.



Fig. 7. Ernest Konratovych, *Knitting of sheaves*, 1940. Private collection.

The series “Transcarpathian Madonnas” is connected with this topic. This is an ode to motherhood, a celebration of the collective image of the mother from Verkhovyna. The series began with the work “Mother with a child” (1939) (Fig.8), which emotionally agrees with the mood of the works of the early period. On the face of the mother who holds the child, is a frozen expression of misunderstanding and alienation. The woman is wearing a white long shirt, with outerwear thrown over it, which is too big for her. A stick with a package placed next to it hints at wandering and need. The reproduction is preserved in black and white, so it is difficult to determine the colour of the work, however, taking into account the time of creation, we can assume that dark colours predominate. The pose of a woman and a child in her arms resembles icons of a similar type.



Fig. 8. Ernest Kontratovych, *Mother with child*, 1939. Cardboard, oil. 65x61.

The artist rested in the world of mystical legends and myths from an early age. Enthusiasm resulted in several works, in particular, the enigmatic portrait of “Fortune teller” (1942-1943), the response of children’s fascination with the Gypsy theme – “Witch” (1939-1940) (Fig.9) - a pale and snarling woman who steals from the village at night with a jug in his hands and an allegory of the arrival of spring – a childish naive watercolour “Vesnyanka” (the 1940s).



Fig. 9. Ernest Konratovych, *Witch*, 1930-1940 Cardboard, oil. 68x96. Private collection.

During his formation, the artist tried himself in the genre of landscape, which will remain dominant throughout the artistic path. He began with small landscapes, painted in oil, unpretentious in the plot. He depicted village streets with Verkhovyna's pointed houses against the background of mountains ("Winter in Sukhyi", "Uzhok", "Winter landscape" (the early 1930s), "Old peak" (1931) (Fig. 10), "Volosyanka" (1932)). In the early landscapes, the artist's typical way of depicting snow appears - the verges, softly drawn between the snow and the ground, give the effect of light, melted snow. In the winter landscapes of the next period, the snow will be early or last, always with thaws. It is difficult to find images of landscapes of the 1930s because they are either in private collections or have not survived. Therefore, the only analysis is given in the monograph of Valentyna Martynenko, who saw them live. The author writes that the works were drawn sketchily, in one session, with a soft stroke, always very "watercolour".²⁸

"Autumn in Uzhhorod" (1949) is a typical work for the landscape genre of Ernest Konratovych (Fig.11). Working in the open air, the artist invents a quick method of creating landscapes. He wrote the main central part of the composition, and later in the studio, he finished the foreground and the sky. Small, small strokes, with which are painted the outskirts of the village and unevenly falling light, which snatches parts of the roof, fence, and long shadows prove that the artist wrote from nature in the morning. Attention to detail - clearly drawn fence, roofs of houses, crowns

²⁸ Ibid, p. 8.



Fig. 10. Ernest Konratovych, *Old peak*, 1931. Canvas, oil. Private collection.

of autumn trees contrast with soft strokes of different colours in the foreground. The blurred edges between the wide strokes in the foreground formed an autumn grass cover without undue details. The artist also decided to do the same with the slope of the mountain behind the village, which smoothly turns into blue mountains, merging with the sky. This method of *plein air* painting was dominant in all creativity. The convenience of it was that the artist could draw a considerable number of works on one trip out of doors. The artist worked differently with genre compositions. The future work was crystallized in small sketches by the pencil. Then, mostly in watercolour, he worked on the compositional construction and finding a colour solution.

In 1946, the territory of modern Transcarpathia was annexed to Soviet Ukraine. From this time, a new stage in the work of Ernest Konratovych began. It was a period of prosperity. This is the longest and most productive creative time in the artist's career, where the influence of historical events on the choice of themes and plots also clearly traces. The main artistic doctrine of the Soviet Union was socialist realism, where the main thing was to cover the lives of happy working people, glorify the policies of the party and its leaders. Artists were required to work in



Fig. 11. Ernest Konratovych, *Autumn in Uzhhorod*, the 1940s. Canvas, oil. 64x85. From the collection of the National Museum in Lviv named after A. Sheptytskyi.

the domestic and portrait genres of a specific thematic direction. Due to oppression and restrictions on the choice of themes, plots, etc., Transcarpathian artists chose a “neutral” genre - landscape. Ernest Konratovych created numerous landscapes of mountain ranges and valleys during the period of prosperity, trying to avoid devastating criticism from the ruling elite. Besides, he responded thematically to the requirements of socialist realism - the scenes of labour, as the most neutral, became typical for his genre works of this period. “During the reign of the totalitarian era, the artist used the scenes depicting washing, picking (potatoes, apples, raspberries, blueberries, and sunflowers), and harvest time. Most of the works that cover the work of peasants were created in the 1960s and 1970s”.²⁹ The late period of creativity lasted from the time of the independence of Ukraine - from 1991 to 2009. At this time, the artist turned to ritual themes, repeating early works, drawing flowers in the field, mountain landscapes, and the outskirts of Uzhhorod city.

²⁹ A. Cheipesh, “Zhanrovi ta tematychnyi diapazon tvorchoi spadshchyny E. Konratovycha” [The genre and thematic range of the artistic legacy of E. Konratovych], *Newsletter of the Transcarpathian Academy of Arts* 2019, no. 12, p. 149.

Historical events that took place in Transcarpathia in the early XX century were reflected in the works of the early period of Ernest Kontratovych. The works are devoted to the consequences of the policy of the Czechoslovak government and the Global economic crisis, and later to the war. Ernest Kontratovych, who taught in the remote villages of Verkhovyna in the 1930s, set a goal to show the poverty, unemployment, and suffering of the people. This determines the choice of genre – the genre picture. These are compositions with images of beggars, orphans, funeral ceremonies, which have a sharp social and revealing character and impress with their artistic features. To reproduce the tragic emotions, the artist chose an expressionist style, which is characterized by exaggeration, deformation of objects, displacement of forms, and more. The colour scheme is built on close gloomy and dark tones, designed to emphasize the emotional colour.

The artist turned to other topics, creating a contrast to the dramatic works with images of beggars. These are scenes from the everyday life of the people from Verkhovyna, the embodiment of mystical images from the myths of the Carpathians, the celebration of motherhood - a series of “Transcarpathian Madonnas”, and stories with working peasants. He wrote works without nature, based on pencil sketches and watercolour sketches. Themes, which he started in the early period, became the leading one for all creativity. Developing one plot, he created variants, repetitions, changing the composition and colouring, and finally came to a holistic, complete embodiment of the artistic idea. In the early period, he also began to work in the genre of landscape. While working *en plein air*, he invented a method of quick creation of landscapes, when in the open air, he wrote the central part - the main idea, and in the workshop, he finished the sky and the foreground without excessive detail.

The first works do not give grounds to speak of Ernest Kontratovych as an independent master, in technical terms, the influence of Adalbert Erdeli is visible. Soon the artist begins to experiment with colour, the technique of applying paint, which has achieved a characteristic feature of its landscapes - blurred edges of snow, which create a clear image of the first or last snow. Genre works are also characterized by some typical characteristics, in particular, the contour extraction of the outline of a beggar among another mass of forms, white, similar to traditional Transcarpathian clothing, deliberately approaching the foreground, which allows the audience to feel a direct participant in the event. The choice of theme and genre in the early period was due to the direct impact of historical events on the life of Ernest Kontratovych and his environment.

References

- Cheipesh, A., “Zhanrovyi ta tematychnyi diapazon tvorchoi spadshchyny E. Kontratovycha” [The genre and thematic range of the artistic legacy of E. Kontratovych], *Newsletter of the Transcarpathian Academy of Arts* 2019, no. 12, pp.146-152.
- Fedaka, S., “Sto rokiv Pershii Chekhoslovatskii respubliksi” [One hundred years of the First Czechoslovak Republic], *Ekzyl*, vol. 11-12, Oct-Dec 2018, <http://1939.in.ua/general/>

- serhiy-fedaka-100-rokiv-pershiy-chechoslovats-kiy-respublitsi/ [accessed 20 December 2020].
- Izvorin, O., “Suchasni ruski khudozhnyky” [Contemporary Ruthenian artists], *Zoria-Hajnal* 1942, 2 (3-4), pp. 387-418; *Zoria-Hajnal*, 1943, 3 (№.1–4), pp. 258-287.
- Kotska, A., *Autobiography*, personal file, Central State Archive-Museum of Literature and Arts of Ukraine, stock 581, anagraph 2, case 723, p. 6.
- Kravchuk, O., “Natsionalna polityka Chechoslovachchyny na Zakarpatti v otsinkakh Tomasha Masaryka” [The national policy of Czechoslovakia in Transcarpathian region in the assessments of Tomas Masaryk], *Ethnic history of the peoples of Europe* 2009, no. 28, pp. 65-71.
- Martynenko, V., *Ernest Konratovych*, Kyiv, 1973 [in Ukrainian].
- Myshanych, V., “Pamiaty patriarkha kraiovoi shkoly maliarstva” [In memory of the patriarch of the regional school of painting], *Cultural sources* 2010, nos. 1-, 2, pp. 64-65.
- Nebesnyk, I., *Adalbert Erdeli*, Lviv, 2007 [in Ukrainian].
- Nebesnyk, I., *Khudozhnia osvita na Zakarpatti u XX stolitti: istoriko-pedahohichnyi aspekt* [Art education in Transcarpathia in the XX century: historical and pedagogical aspects], Uzhhorod, 2000.
- Panov, A., *Masaryk i Zakarpattia* [Masaryk and Transcarpathia], Uzhhorod, 2010.
- Rishard, L., *Encyklopediya ekspresionizma* [Encyclopaedia of Expressionism], Moscow, 2003.
- Vehesha, M., Chedynets, F., eds., *Zakarpattia 1919–2009 rokiv: istoriia, polityka, kultura* [Transcarpathia 1919–2009: history, politics, culture], Uzhhorod, 2010.

Szymon Piotr Kubiak

THE ACADEMY OF ART IN SZCZECIN, POLAND

ORCID:

<https://doi.org/10.31338/2657-6015ik.30.5>

Gratitude. The Red Army Memorial in Szczecin: A Geographical, Topographical, and Biographical Perspective

*The sentiment which most immediately and directly
prompts us to reward, is gratitude.*

Adam Smith, 1790¹

*[Dankbarkeit] ist gleichsam das moralische Gedäch-
tnis der Menschheit [...].*

Georg Simmel, 1907²

Abstract

In March 1945, the combined Polish-Soviet forces captured the German city of Stettin. On 26 April, the 65th Army of the 2nd Belorussian Front entered the city, in which the rule of the Soviet military command was soon established. Due to its unresolved status and territorial disputes, Polish politicians, self-government officials, and first settlers were forced to leave Szczecin twice. In the period of the Polish-German “race for Szczecin”, which ended with the Potsdam Conference, the only stable element having control over the lower Oder was the USSR, whose emissaries treated the conquered territories as if they already belonged to their communist state.

As early as in 1945, the Polish civil authorities came up with an idea to erect a memorial dedicated to the “democratic armies”. The competition for the Red Army Gratitude Memorial was officially launched in Spring 1949, once the USSR-born doctrine of socialist realism was

1 A. Smith, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments; Or, An Essay Towards an Analysis of the Principles by which Men Naturally Judge Concerning the Conduct and Character, First of Their Neighbours, and Afterwards of Themselves. To which is Added a Dissertation on the Origin of Languages*, London, 1790, p. 73.

2 G. Simmel, „Dankbarkeit. Ein soziologischer Versuch”, *Der Morgen. Wochenschrift für deutsche Kultur*, 1907, No. 19, October, p. 593.

introduced to Poland. Out of twenty-two submission, the first award was given to Józef Starzyński from Zakopane, a former citizen of Lvov. The commemorative complex located at the Polish Soldier's Square was completed in April 1950.

The aim of the present paper is to analyse the very memorial which remained in Szczecin until 2017. Of special importance to my investigation are: the geographical context of Western Pomerania considered one of the Reclaimed Territories and in a feudal relationship with the historical regions of the Republic of Poland, as well as with the Russian "Seigneur"/"Lord"; the topographical context, namely the act of re-building the former German city destroyed in warfare; as well as the biographical context, i.e. the life of the monument's designer. The paper takes special interest in the formal and ideological links between the Szczecin memorial and one of Starzyński's earlier projects, namely the Sacred Heart of Jesus Gratitude Memorial in Poznań (1927; a competition submission; never erected). A careful reconstruction of the memorials' history will offer a valuable case study which showcases the 20th-century sculptor in a politically-charged environment.

Keywords: the Red Army Gratitude Memorial in Szczecin, the Sacred Heart of Jesus Gratitude Memorial in Poznań, socialist realism, the State Art and Industrial School in Lvov, Józef Starzyński, Józef Różycki, Sławomir Lewiński

Throughout the 20th century, various institutions of power – both the ones that hailed the idea of progress and, alternatively, were the guards of so-called tradition– manifested some very special interest in two art "disciplines", namely architecture and film. In its manifestoes, the avant-garde considered architecture to be the perfect medium as far as designing the future was concerned. Film, on the other hand, the popular and modern medium *par excellence*, allowed modern artists to explore futuristic visions on a previously unprecedented scale. Soon, both media – both quite costly since they required the engagement and involvement of groups of people, as well as substantial amounts of money – started to be incorporated into governmental programmes carried out by authoritarian and totalitarian regimes. And despite being more or less conservative in their art taste, the above-mentioned regimes also invited the third professional group to join the already privileged circle of architects and filmmakers, i.e. sculptors, who seemed to be largely dismissed by the majority of avant-garde art movements.

This approach should not be particularly surprising to anybody. Among traditional media, monumental sculpture, memorials, in particular, remains unique. On the one hand, it is capable of attracting wide audiences and, consequently, shaping (required) social attitudes. From the point of view of semiotics, monumental sculpture is characterised by considerable simplicity when it comes to the form-content relationship, the relationship between the *signifiant* and *signifié*. As stated by the sociologist Aleksander Wallis, "the stereotypical language of commemorative art forms is to be acknowledged as the most common and comprehensible of all the languages available (and spoken by) art".³ On the other hand, however, similarly to

3 A. Wallis, *Socjologia i kształtowanie przestrzeni*, Warsaw, 1971, p. 113.

both architecture and film, sculpture in public space demands lavish sums of money, as well as the support of governing bodies.

Thus, the sculptor, as the architect or filmmaker before him/her, especially the one that is skilled in realist depiction of extra-artistic reality, as well as in treatment and processing of stones and other hard rocks – both being the stereotypical attributes of sculpture⁴ – finds employment in the spheres tightly controlled by the institutions of power. This, in turn, gives them fame, prestige, and money, as well as a debt of gratitude for extending the state's patronage over their work. Yet, the price that needs to be paid for this alliance may be quite exorbitant. Political shift may result in disfavour and the sculptor being relegated to the very peripheries of the new hegemon's interests. In totalitarian regimes, the dissident-artist is threatened with condemnation, censorship, and impasse in professional development, as well as infringement of civil rights. In some extreme cases (cultural policies of Soviet Russia and Nazi Germany provide one with many an example), artist's very life may be under threat. Under specific circumstances, the only available survival strategy may be the one that goes under the name "opportunism".

A perfect illustration of the multi-level economic and ethical relations between the commissioner and the contractor are the Red Army gratitude memorials erected in all "feudal" states of the Soviet Union (including the states that were annexed by Soviet Russia) after the end of World War II. In Poland alone, several hundred of such memorials were erected on the territory of so-called Reclaimed Lands, namely the area covering Masuria and Warmia, Further Pomerania (known after 1945 as Western and Middle Pomerania), the Brandenburgian lands east of the Oder (i.e. Lubusz Land), as well as Silesia.⁵ The aim of the present paper is to discuss the

4 Ibid., pp. 107-108, 111-112.

5 The main and comprehensive reference text on the very subject is: D. Czarnecka, *"Pomniki wdzięczności" Armii Czerwonej w Polsce Ludowej i w III Rzeczypospolitej*, Warsaw, 2015 (chapter on Szczecin: pp. 245–269). Having extensively used the lists of monuments published by the Council for the Protection of Struggle and Martyrdom Sites in 1988 and 2010, she has identified 476 Red Army gratitude memorials in Poland. However, the main focus of her study is the political and social perception of the monuments in the times of the Polish People's Republic and after the collapse of communism in the region. As a result, she largely ignores some important art-related issues. Her Szczecin chapter is based on the source materials collected by the pupils of one of Szczecin's high schools (no. 6; the pupils involved were: Sandra Kość, Anna Maciejewska, Paulina Paszkowska, Katarzyna Trzyciecka, Marek Wierzbiński) within the framework of the project *Burząc pomniki, oszczędzając cokoły. Zawsze mogą się przydać... Pomnik Wdzięczności Armii Radzieckiej w Szczecinie*, Szczecin, 2003 (the report's typescript submitted to the history competition *Spory o upamiętnienie przeszłości – pomniki, cmentarze, patroni* by the Stefan Batory Foundation and the KARTA Centre). On 20 May 2010, as part of the conference *Ideologia i propaganda wobec architektonicznego wizerunku miast Polski Ludowej*, Paweł Knap (Regional Bureau of Public Education, Institute of National Remembrance) gave a paper entitled "Czerwona gwiazda nad miastem. Pomnik Wdzięczności dla Armii Radzieckiej w Szczecinie". However, the conference proceedings edited by Knap himself (*Pod dyktando ideologii. Studia z dziejów architektury i urbanistyki w Polsce Ludowej*, Warsaw, 2013) did not feature his paper on the Szczecin memorial. His unpublished piece was used in a general-interest article by Ewa Podgajna entitled "Niewdzięczne świadectwo

Red Army memorial that was erected in Szczecin in 1950 and remained there until 2017. Of special importance to my analysis are: the geographical context of Western Pomerania considered one of the “Reclaimed Territories” and in a feudal relationship with the historical regions of the Republic of Poland, as well as with the Russian “Seigneur”/“Lord”; the topographical context, namely the act of re-building the former German city destroyed in warfare; as well as the biographical context, i.e. the life of the monument’s designer which testifies to the challenges that the 20th-century sculptor had to face in a politically-charged environment. Having in mind all the reservations expressed by Piotr Piotrowski with regard to postcolonial studies in Eastern Europe⁶, the impulse provided by their methods will make it possible to shed some new light on the subject of my inquiry. Gratitude, this basic theological and philosophical category, will be perceived as closely and solidly related to some specific iconographic models (as part of the *signifiant*), as well as characterised by instability towards its historically contingent addressee (connotated by the *signifié*). Their relationship was regulated by the imperial ambitions of world powers.

Even if they unambiguously refer to historical figures and historical events, monuments are essentially the emanations of power and its specific ideology. They might be seen as the visual form of politics, which shapes the collective social memory, as well as physical and imaginative space in which the latter/former operates. One propaganda objective attributed to monuments, namely delineating the actual sphere of power and influence, was uniquely realised in the aftermath of World War II, when monuments assumed the function of border markers, especially on the frontier.⁷ Szczecin and the whole area of the Reclaimed Territories, which were given to Poland to compensate for the loss of the eastern part of the Second Polish Republic (which, in turn, became parts of Lithuanian, Belorussian, and Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republics), were the places where this policy could be observed.

The united Polish and Soviet forces approached Szczecin, then a German port city called Stettin, in March 1945. Firstly, they captured the city’s east part (on the right bank of the Oder), and, subsequently, the historic districts on the river’s left bank. On 26 April, the 65th Army of the 2nd Belorussian Front led by the Russian General Pavel Ivanovich Batov entered the city. The rule of the Soviet military

wdzięczności. Historia pomnika z gwiazdą”, *Gazeta Wyborcza (Magazyn Szczecin)*, 10.03.2016, <http://szczecin.wyborcza.pl/szczecin/1,150424,19749880,niewdzieczne-swiadectwo-wdziecznosci-historia-monumentu-ktory.html> [accessed 1 May 2019]. See: P. Knap, “«Braterstwo krwi i pracy» – to już 59 lat”, *Gazeta Wyborcza (Wiadomości Szczecin)*, 25.07.2008, http://szczecin.wyborcza.pl/szczecin/1,34939,5493104,_Braterstwo_krwi_i_pracy___to_juz_59_lat.html [accessed 1 May 2019]. The present essay, though indebted to Czarnecka’s book, as well as pieces by Knap and Podgajna, is based on a number of sources in the collections of the National Archives in Szczecin (including technical and art-related documentation) and secondary sources (history, art history).

6 P. Piotrowski, *Globalne ujęcie sztuki Europy Wschodniej*, Poznań, 2018, pp. 31-56.

7 L. M. Nijakowski, *Domeny symboliczne. Konflikty narodowościowe i etniczne w wymiarze symbolicznym*, Warszawa, 2006, p. 109.

command was established – in the city’s central districts under the supervision of Lieutenant Aleksandr Fedotov.⁸ Only two days later the Polish delegates led by Piotr Zaremba, an engineer and urban planner, arrived in Stettin/Szczecin from its patron city Poznań.⁹ Although the Poles took control over civil power and public administration, Stettin’s/Szczecin’s fate, which, was beyond the new Polish border that had been set during the Yalta Conference, remained unclear.

In mid-May Polish politicians, self-government officials, and first settlers were forced to leave Szczecin which, in turn, was re-populated by thousands of Germans. Zaremba’s return on 9 June was a brief episode as he was soon called to abandon the city once again. However, on 5 July, the civil power was finally and conclusively handed over to the Poles – the decision was subsequently upheld by the allied forces during the Potsdam Conference. Throughout the entire period of the Polish-German “race for Szczecin” – as the 1945 events were labelled by the city’s first Polish mayor Piotr Zaremba¹⁰ – the only stable element having control over the lower Oder was the USSR. The Soviet Union’s emissaries treated the conquered territories as if they already belonged to their communist state. Moreover, it was the Soviet Union that appeared to guarantee (and rightly so) the Polish future of the city since in various geopolitical schemes it was not only Poland and Germany but also Czechoslovakia (which argued that Szczecin should become an exclave controlled by Prague¹¹) that showed interest in the city.

A long-term strategy of domesticating the new living space by the settlers was based on some consistent deprecation of the German “high culture”, which was juxtaposed with the apotheosis of natural conditions and folk culture (which in the very area had, in fact, no relation whatsoever with the Polish element). It was the latter that was supposed to testify to the Slavonic (i.e. pre-Germanic) presence in Pomerania. A sense of sublimation of both the landscape and the common man can be identified in selected Polish and Soviet narratives from the time, e.g. in Batov’s recollection of his army’s attack on Szczecin:

8 W. Banaszak, „Komendant Wojenny Szczecina (1945)”, in: *Encyklopedia Pomorza Zachodniego pomeranica.pl*, [http://encyklopedia.szczecin.pl/wiki/Komendant_Wojenny_Szczecina_\(1945\)](http://encyklopedia.szczecin.pl/wiki/Komendant_Wojenny_Szczecina_(1945)) [accessed 1 May 2019].

9 Patron cities were first conceived and identified by the Polish Western Union, a patriotic organisation which started its activities in the inter-war period. Since 1945, the Poznań Division of the Polish Western Union was responsible for re-claiming local governments in northern and western parts of Poland (the so-called Reclaimed Territories), as well as re-populating them. In this way, in the first post-WWII phase, the polonization of Pomerania was carried out by settlers from Poznań (Stettin/Szczecin), Września and Koło (Stargard), Gniezno (Köslin/Koszalin), Mogilno (Greifenberg/Gryfice), etc. See C. Osękowski, “Polski Związek Zachodni w latach 1945–1950”, *Studia Zachodnie*, 1996, Vol. 2, pp. 107–125, p. 111.

10 P. Zaremba, *Wspomnienia prezydenta Szczecina. 1945–1950*, Poznań, 1977, p. 173.

11 J. Musekamp, *Między Stettinem a Szczecinem. Metamorfozy miasta od 1945 do 2005*, trans. Jacek Dąbrowski, Poznań, 2015, pp. 51–63.

We jumped onto the roof a fisherman's hut which was near to the seashore, and we looked in the Oder valley. The wind from the sea was strong and soon dispersed the morning fog. Down below the river was winding its way. A true puzzle.¹²

The most ostensible gestures were to be seen in both the *logo*-sphere (removal of German inscriptions, placards, signboards, names) and the *icono*-sphere (removal or re-interpretation of images associated with the German past of the region). Monuments, which combined both means of communication, were soon to be demolished, as long as, by any chance, they happened to survive the warfare. City plinths, in themselves a fundamental component of any urban planning scheme, were now emptied and thus deprived of their ideological and artistic root. Consequently, they demanded a quick response from the new city hosts. Quite naturally, it was expected that new heroes were to be commemorated, particularly the ones that were associated with the war that had just ended. Abounding in centrally-located cemeteries and parks, Szczecin was an ideal place for new graves to be dug up for the burial of the killed soldiers. Temporary graves, which often used the elements of German tombstones, were even erected in the city's most prestigious locations: popular streets and squares.¹³

A major propaganda challenge was posed by the fact that any direct reference to the martyrdom of Polish civilians was quite impossible since prior to 1945 the Poles were only a marginal minority group in Lower Pomerania. Individuals who certainly required commemoration were the victims of the Pomeranian labour camps (Police, Myślęcín), brought there from other territories conquered by the Nazis, or the settlers' family members that were murdered on the territories of the Second Polish Republic – however, those crimes had little or no relevance to the regional experience of World War II. This situation is accurately described by the responses given by the province's governors and administrators to the circular issued by the Ministry of Culture and the Arts which was concerned with the issue of cataloguing the Nazi execution sites where the Polish citizens were tortured and killed, as well as with their fitting visual commemoration.¹⁴ Due to the lack (or very few) of such sites in the very city and its vicinity, the officials eagerly emphasised various commemorative activities aimed at honouring the Soviet World War II victims. An estimate made by the head of the Nowograd district is particularly illustrative in

12 P. I. Batov, *W marszu i w boju*, trans. Jadwiga Laskowska, Czesław Czarnogórski, Warsaw, 1978, p. 532. To learn more about the mutual relations between Polish and German culture in post-war Szczecin, and the problem of the so-called autochthons, kindly consult S. P. Kubiak, "«Malujcie jak Dürer». Georg Johann Tribowski i kulturowa tożsamość Szczecina w latach 1947–1964", in: *Plak bez przestrzeni. Georg Johann Tribowski – wczesne obrazy*, ed. S. P. Kubiak, Szczecin, 2018, pp. 6–29.

13 A. Kraśnicki jr, "Wartownicy z pepeszami przy grobach na pl. Szarych Szeregów", *Gazeta Wyborcza (Magazyn Szczecin)*, 27.10.2016, <http://szczecin.wyborcza.pl/szczecin/7,150424,20903159,wartownicy-z-pepeshami-przy-grobach-na-pl-szarych-szeregow.html> [accessed 1 May 2019].

14 The National Archives in Szczecin (later referred to as the NAS), the Szczecin Voivodeship Office, no. 5069: Pomniki martyrologii polskiej i walk o wyzwolenie, pp. 3–22.

this context: in the document, one Polish memorial erected in the district (*powiat*) is being juxtaposed with seven others, all memorialising the Red Army heroes.¹⁵ The numbers themselves quite often reflected the number of casualties for both countries. In the case of Szczecin, the recent figures attest to 3,032 buried Soviet soldiers and 367 Polish fighters.¹⁶ This resulted in both militarisation and sovietisation of the collective memory in the entire region.

Initially, the Red Army memorials, all looking very much alike, were erected by the citizens of the USSR – in most cases by the soldiers who had a necessary technical background, and who happened to remain on the Reclaimed Territories. In their efforts, they were assisted by specialist catalogues released by Soviet publishing houses in the years immediately after the end of World War II. Easily copied architectural forms, i.e. rectangular stela, with an inscription or, rarely, figurative relief, as well as antique-like stocky or soaring obelisks, were particularly favoured.¹⁷ In Stargard, a tall obelisk was unveiled by the Soviet citizens as early as on 13 November 1945, as part of a much larger mausoleum complex.¹⁸ In smaller Pomeranian towns, small-scale monuments commemorating Polish (or Polish and Russian) casualties were erected by the newly re-settled (also from patron cities) stonemasons. The Polish memorial for a municipal cemetery in Choszczno, with a Latin Cross and the Crown of Thorns, can be seen as one of the examples where the ministerial regulations were carefully observed. However, in the very same town, the Red Army Square welcomed the Soviet obelisk, with secular military iconography.¹⁹ In Choszczno, just like in Stargard, it was the 65th Army of the 2nd Belorussian Front

15 Ibid., p. 143.

16 The data with regard to the Soviet troops are based on the *Catalogue of burials of Soviet soldiers, prisoners of war and civilians killed during World War II and buried on Polish territory* published by the government of the Russian Federation and with the support of the Council for the Protection of Struggle and Martyrdom Sites in 2003. The Polish data have not been officially acknowledged and have only been collected by the Pomorze 1945 research-exploration group. See: <http://pomorze1945.com/?co=141> [accessed 1 May 2019].

17 See: *Al'bom eskiznyh proektov namogil'nyh pamyatnikov voenam Krasnoj Armii, partizanam i mirnomu naseleniyu, pogibshim v Velikuyu Otechestvennuyu vojnu 1941–1945 gg., i memorial'nyh dosok* [Sketches of gravestones and memorial plaques to Red Army soldiers, partisans and civilians who died in the Great Patriotic War of 1941–1945], Minsk, 1946; *Tipovye proekty pamyatnikov bratskikh i individual'nyh mogil voinov Sovetskoy armii, voenno-morskogo flota i partizan, pogibshih v boyah s nemecko-fashistskimi zahvatnikami v gody Velikoy Otechestvennoy vojny* [Standard monument models for mass graves and individual graves of soldiers of the Soviet army, navy and partisans who died in the battles against the Nazi invaders during World War II], Moscow, 1947. The author would like to express his gratitude to Mischa Gabowitsch, the Einstein-Forum in Potsdam, for making the above sources available to him. Also, kindly consult: M. Gabowitsch, “Sieci patronalno-klientalne a proces wznoszenia radzieckich pomników wojennych”, in: *Pomnik. Europa Środkowo-Wschodnia 1918–2018*, ed. A. Tarasiuk and A. Miczko, Warsaw, 2018, pp. 14–17.

18 D. Czarnecka, op. cit., pp. 233–245.

19 The NAS, the Szczecin Voivodeship Office, no. 5069: *Pomniki martyrologii polskiej i walk o wyzwolenie*, pp. 23–27, 35, 55–57, 67–69.

that was responsible for the erection of the latter monument.²⁰ As Batov remarked, “the Polish folk joined the Red Army in their cries over the death and loss of so many Soviet soldiers”.²¹

Fine-arts trained professionals were sent to the Reclaimed Territories by the national military and civil government. Among the earliest arrivals were the painter Łukasz Niewisiewicz (a stage designer for the front theatre of the 4th Pomeranian Infantry Division (Fig. 1) and Marian Tomaszewski (an interior designer for the headquarters of the Provisional Government in Warsaw, appointed a fine arts officer at the Department of Arts and Culture, the Szczecin Voivodeship Office) – both were co-creators and contributors to the artistic milieu of the Lublin Committee in 1944, as well as the Young Artists and Scientists Society, at the House of the Polish Armed Forces in Warsaw, in 1947. Poznań, Szczecin’s patron city, sent the sculptor Lech Krzekotowski, the Plenipotentiary of the Minister of Arts and Culture for Monument Preservation, who became the Director of the Szczecin City Museum, as well as the President of the local branch of the Association of Polish Artists and Designers (ZPAP).²² Both Tomaszewski and Krzekotowski were also mentioned in connection with the Victory Memorial (or the Democratic Armies monument), which was to be erected in the western part of the Polish Soldier’s Square (former Paradeplatz) in Szczecin. Since 1984, it had been the site where the equestrian statue of Wilhelm I stood. Finally, in 1945, an open competition for the new memorial was launched.²³

On 30 December, a competition jury gathered. It was chaired by Bronisław Welczer, an engineer and member of the Lvov-based Society for the Protection of Graves of Polish Heroes, as well as head of the Restoration Directorate in Szczecin – the position to which he had been appointed only four months before. Rumour had it that Marshall Konstanty Rokossowski himself extended his patronage over the competition. Altogether, sixteen proposals by Polish and Soviet artists were considered. The first prize was given to Krzekotowski, a former student of the State School of Decorative Arts in Poznań and Academy of Fine Arts in Warsaw, who adopted the “Oder” as his emblem.²⁴ His project comprised a multi-figure composition boasting a complicated iconographic programme and, probably (as only its description has survived), a rather flamboyant form. On its plinth, consisting of three cubic blocks

20 E. Krasucki, “Historia i współczesność (nie)chcianego monumentu. O drawskim pomniku wdzięczności Armii Czerwonej”, in: *Drawsko Pomorskie i okolice poprzez wieki. Studia i szkice. Odłona druga*, ed. E. Krasucki, Drawsko Pomorskie, 2017, pp. 213-243, here: p. 218.

21 P. I. Batov, *Operacja “Odra”. Działania bojowe 65 armii w operacji berlińskiej, kwiecień–maj 1945*, trans. Jan Ćwierdziński, Warsaw, 1966, p. 70.

22 J. Najdowa, *Szczecińska plastyka w latach 1945–1960*, Poznań, 1962, pp. 13-19; A. Jabłonowska, “Działalność ZPAP w Szczecinie od lat pionierskich do przełomu 1980 r.”, in: *Obecność. Almanach. ZPAP Okręg Szczeciński 1945–2011*, ed. R. Kiełtyka, Szczecin, 2011, pp. 12-26, here: pp. 12-19.

23 “Zebranie komitetu Budowy Pomnika Zwycięstwa”, *Kurier Szczeciński*, 14.11.1945, no. 34, p. 4; see: R. Czejarek, *Sekrety Szczecina*, Łódź, 2014, pp. 6-9.

24 J. Mulczyński, *Poznańska zdobnicza. Historia Państwowej Szkoły Sztuk Zdobniczych i Przemysłu Artystycznego w Poznaniu w latach 1919–1939*, Poznań, 2009, p. 638.



Fig. 1. Łukasz Niewisiewicz, *Portrait of Nina Andrycz*, from the series *Front Theater of the 4th Infantry Division of the Polish People's Army*, 1944, The National Museum in Szczecin, phot. Arkadiusz Piętaś, Grzegorz Solecki.

and elevated over a three-step platform, a column was to rest, with a globe on its very top. What is more, a heroic male nude was to be placed on the top of the globe, with a torch in his hand and with a sheaf of grain at his feet – the symbol of “the victory of the democratic ideals over the violence and barbarity of Fascism”. The base was to be adorned with bas-reliefs: Polish and Soviet soldiers liberating their Motherland with swords and thus “throwing off the shackles of Fascism”; working-class men paying tribute to their mother country; as well as the allegories of Justice and Peace. A sarcophagus with the ashes of the unnamed Polish and Soviet soldiers was to be put on the platform. The images were to be fleshed out with two dates: 1939 (the outbreak of World War II), 1941 (the beginning of the German-Soviet war), and 1945 (the end of World War II), as well as, in the eastern part of the plinth, “the names of all the World War II battlefields, from Stalingrad to Berlin”.²⁵

Krzekotowski's vision, so very 19th-century in its very essence, must have stood in striking contrast to the project submitted by Tomaszewski – a graduate of the Academy of Fine Arts in Warsaw, the man fascinated by surrealism and inspired by Fernand Léger and his style who explored in his then works the archaic multiplications of unified human figures (Fig. 2). His submission, with the „Pioneer” as its emblem, was awarded the second prize and comprised a piece of rock growing out of the earth. It was supposed to be the base for the figure of a Red Army officer raising a sword with the White Eagle “ready to fly to the battlefield”. Next to it, the

25 “Rozstrzygnięcie konkursu na projekt pomnika zwycięstwa”, *Kurier Szczeciński*, 3.01.1946, no. 2, p. 4.



Fig. 2. Marian Tomaszewski, *The Mausoleum of Polish Soldiers*, 1944, The National Museum in Lublin, phot. Piotr Maciuk.

artist placed a three-dimensional group of figures which was to depict a parade of the victorious allied forces. The bas-reliefs on the plinth featured Polish and Soviet guards, as well as inscriptions in the niches.

The third prize went to the architect and engineer Jan Bochenek (the “Nike” emblem), who from 1946 to 1947 was the head of the Technical Department of the Szczecin Municipal Office.²⁶ His submission appeared to be most strongly influenced by the Soviet monuments’ catalogues. Bochenek’s monument consisted of a five-star shaped *plateau* which was to reside on several pillars. From the star’s wings five eagles, which were to “symbolise various nations”, were taking flight. At the heart of the monument stood an obelisk, ending in a sharp point.²⁷

The award money was never given to the winners, whose complaints were dismissed by Zaremba and the local branch of the Polish-Soviet Friendship Society.²⁸ However, only three months later, the memorial site hosted the celebrations of “Let’s guard the Oder” congress. On the very occasion, a triumphal arch was erected – one of many temporary and incidental architectural construction – and, next to it, a plaque with the following inscription: “To the heroes who died fighting

26 P. Zaremba, op. cit., pp. 373, 584.

27 “Rozstrzygnięcie konkursu...”, op. cit., p. 4.

28 The Association of Polish Artists and Designers, no. 163: Pierwsze wystawy i konkursy, n. p. The awards were the following: 150,000 (1st prize), 100,000 (2nd prize), and 50,000 PLN (3rd prize).

on the Bolesław Trail of the Baltic Sea and the Oder, 13.04.1946".²⁹ In a ceremonial roll-call of the fallen, reported on by the Polish Film Chronicle, several different military forces were listed: from the Home Army, through People's Guard and Farmers' Battalions, to the Internal Security Corps. The event was then patriotic, while the act of commemorating Soviet soldiers was pushed into the background. The press reported on the setting up of a different and temporary type of decoration, i.e. a figure of a "Slav who holds the white eagle in his outstretched hands" and on whose breast the Western Pomeranian coats of arms was imprinted.³⁰ No record which would testify to the authorship of individual elements of the congress's design has survived. What one knows, however, is that the works integrated some local visual artists and one could further speculate that the supervising position was held by Tomaszewski.³¹

Although a ceremony organised to commemorate the first anniversary of Szczecin's conquest resulted in anti-communist riots (subsequently quelled by the Security Service), the radicalisation of the authorities and their position and, consequently, a decision to implement the memorial-related plans were to materialise only three years later, once the Polish United Workers' Party had been proclaimed. The headquarters of the former City Savings Bank at the Polish Soldier's Square was selected for the seat of the Party's regional representative body. The building's Nazi façade was not in conflict with the rules and regulations of socialist realism that was being introduced in Poland. The new "creative method" was officially announced during the Polish Writers Association's 4th Congress, held in Szczecin from 20 to 22 January 1949.³² The congress's companion exhibition organised by the local branch of the Association of Polish Artists and Designers in the Museum of Western Pomerania (a successor to the City Museum) emphasised the role of the exchange of ideas between artists and working-class people. In the very same venue, from 29 May to 19 June, another show entitled *Człowiek i praca* (Man and work) was put on display.³³ Tomaszewski's monumental painting entitled *Zjednoczenie* (The union) – unambiguously socialist when it comes to its content, but "folksy", Léger-like in its form – as well as a series of "poster-like" portraits of tractor drivers by Niewisiewicz had little in common with the epitome of Soviet art.³⁴ The Polish case was

29 R. Ptaszyński, *Trzymamy straż nad Odrą. Propaganda – Fakty – Dokumenty*, Szczecin, 2007, pp. 33, 121-123. See: The Polish Film, Chronicle 1946, no. 12.

30 *Trzymamy straż nad Odrą*, "Rzeczpospolita", 13.04.1946, no. 103, p. 1.

31 J. Najdowa, "Pionierskie lata szczecińskiej plastyki", in: *Pionierskie lata kultury szczecińskiej*, ed. Kazimierz Kozłowski, Szczecin, 1986, p. 94. The propaganda postcards were designed by Marian Tomaszewski and Kazimierz Podsadecki; see: S. P. Kubiak, "Organizmy pionierskie. Kultura wizualna Szczecina w pierwszych latach po II wojnie światowej", in: *Pamiętnik Sztuk Pięknych*, 2016 [2018], no. 11: *Sztuka polska na Ziemiach Zachodnich i Północnych w latach 1945–1981. W 70-lecie powrotu do Polski*, pp. 31-38, here: pp. 33-34.

32 S. P. Kubiak, *Daleko od Moskwy. Gérard Singer i sztuka zaangażowana*, Szczecin, 2016, pp. 48-50.

33 *Ibid.*, p. 121.

34 "Człowiek pracy w malarstwie i rzeźbie. Z wystawy prac członków Związku Polskich Artystów Plastyków w Szczecinie", *Głos Szczeciński*, 4.06.1949, no. 64, p. 5.

still considered different from the USSR experiences – even though Niewisiewicz himself must have been familiar with the Soviet art rules as he once participated in the Lvov-based art competition *Lenin, Stalin i Ukraina* (Lenin, Stalin, and Ukraine) and he also executed a public commission amounting to 70,000 roubles.³⁵

In the period between the two exhibitions, the Committee for the Erection of the Gratitude Memorial was set up. Its president was Zdzisław Muszyński, the head of the City National Council, while its members included Zaremba, as well as the writer Jerzy Andrzejewski, who at the time lived in Szczecin.³⁶ On 21 April, the foundation stone was laid (a marble plate placed in the square's pavement), and the specialist press announced the national competition for the memorial which was expected to be

“a visual act of gratitude to the Soviet Army and a testament to the brotherhood of blood in the times of the war; and nowadays, to the brotherhood of work with the Soviet Union”.³⁷

The jury comprised the following members: Stanisław Horno-Popławski, Borys Michałowski, Bazyli Wojtowicz (all sculptors), Jerzy Hryniewiecki, Franciszek Kocimski, Zygmunt Skibniewski, Jerzy Sobiepan, Kazimierz Trzaskowski (architects), as well as Zygmunt Knoth, the Regional Conservator of Monuments, and Helena Kurcysz, an urban planner who assumed the function of the jury's secretary. The honorary president was Włodzimierz Migoń, the Province Governor, while the military forces were represented by Rossakowski's fellow officer, Colonel Vasily Goncharov.³⁸

The jury received twenty-two submissions from Poznań, Szczecin, Warsaw, and Zakopane. The first prize was awarded to Józef Starzyński from Zakopane, who adopted a “Clinker brick” as his emblem, and who, indeed, proposed a clinker brick memorial – this kind of material has been highly popular since the 1930s. His memorial (Fig. 3, 4) consisted of two joined pieces which reminded one of fasces, mounting over a two-step base and crowned with a five-pointed star. To be seen one-third of the way up were the sculptures of two men clasping arms in a brotherly embrace.³⁹ The other side featured a rectangular panel with a bas-relief composition of panoplies – which remained in line with the monument's bi-frontal character.

35 The Pomeranian Library in Szczecin, the Łukasz Niewisiewicz archives, no. 806, n. p.

36 The NAS, the Szczecin Voivodeship Office, no. 1428: Komitet Budowy Pomnika Wdzięczności, pp. 3-4.

37 “Budujemy Pomnik Wdzięczności”, *Głos Szczeciński*, 20.04.1949, no. 19, p. 5; “Konkurs powszechny na projekt pomnika Wdzięczności w Szczecinie”, *Architektura*, 1949 no. 5, p. 148. The awards were the following: 250,000 (1st prize), 150,000 (2nd prize), and 100,000 PLN (3rd prize).

38 The NAS, Dyrekcja Budowy Osiedli Robotniczych w Szczecinie, no. 227: Projekt Pomnika Wolności dla Armii Radzieckiej w Szczecinie, n. p.

39 “Nagrodzone projekty Pomnika Wdzięczności dla Armii Radzieckiej”, *Kurier Szczeciński*, 31.07.1949, no. 208, p. 1. The piece claims that the sculpture consisted of two figures: a Polish soldier and a Soviet soldier. Because the submission's technical file has not survived, it remains impossible to determine the claim's accuracy. However, an existing image of the memorial's

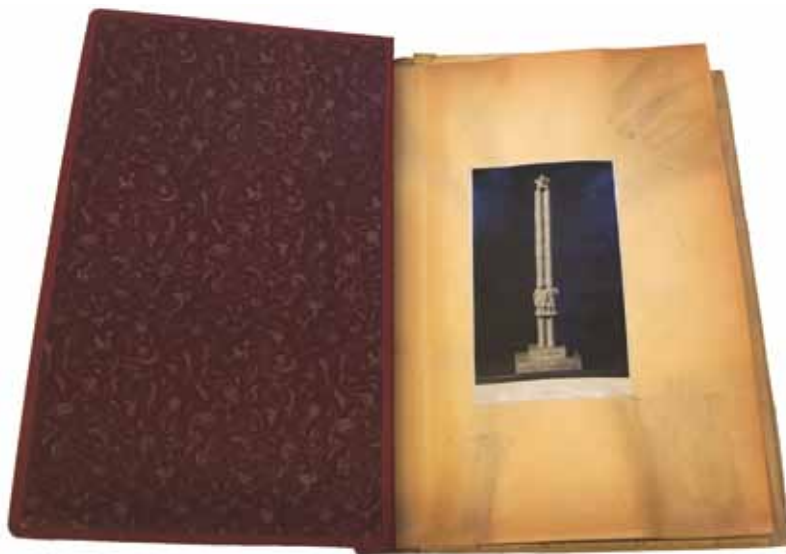


Fig. 3. Józef Starzyński, *Design of the Monument of Gratitude to the Soviet Army in Szczecin*, 1949, mock-up photo, Archiwum Państwowe w Szczecinie

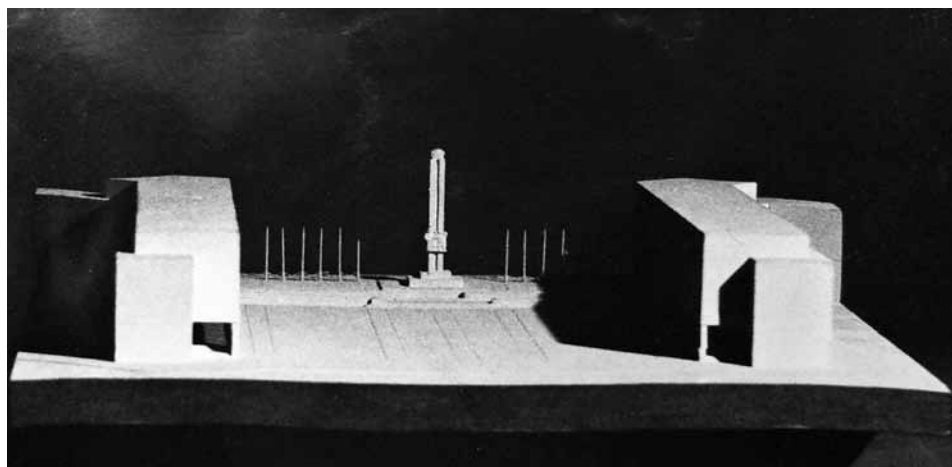


Fig. 4. Józef Starzyński, *Design of the Monument of Gratitude to the Soviet Army in Szczecin*, 1949, mock-up photo, Archiwum Państwowe w Szczecinie

model invites one to believe that from the very beginning Starzyński intended to showcase a Soviet soldier and a Polish worker.

The jury praised its “general take, quite monumental”, “ideological qualities”, as well as “possibilities of acquiring a sculptural motif in the widest possible sense”. Having considered the brick lining inappropriate, the jury members demanded that “instead, strong stone textures should be sought”.⁴⁰

The second award was given to Sławomir Lewiński (no emblem) who was the only local artist recognised by the jury. He was an underground student of the Academy of Fine Arts in Warsaw and a son of the member of the Polish Socialist Party who left Bydgoszcz to work in the Regional Headquarters of the Polish Rail in Szczecin⁴¹. A hieratic figure of a soldier (Fig. 5) was believed to be the best sculpture out of all that had been submitted. For example, this view was expressed by Emanuel Messer, a local painter, satirist, and art critic, who commented on Lewiński’s work in the following way:

Lewiński’s sculpture is quite monumental, indeed. He does not dismiss nature, or deforms it, but offers a visual synthesis. This simplifying tendency – which characterises all types of monumental art, due to its affinities with architecture – has nothing to do with simplification, which one often sees in bourgeois art and so-called “modernists”.⁴²

However, the jury was not satisfied with the memorial’s lack of a clear link between this figurative representation and the (very welcome) abstract form – the jury’s recommendation was taken into account in a post-competition version of the memorial.⁴³ (Fig. 6)

All competition participants were asked to make some amends, in the hope that an optimal project to be carried out may emerge out of this debate. A memorial by Józef Różyski who was awarded the third prize and who adopted the “Fight and work” emblem, originally explored an obelisk as its visual and formal dominant.

40 Ibid., n. p.

41 S. P. Kubiak, “Sławomir Lewiński”, in: *Encyklopedia Pomorza Zachodniego pomeranica.pl*, http://encyklopedia.szczecin.pl/wiki/Sławomir_Lewiński [accessed 1 May 2019].

42 E[manuel] M[esser], “Niełatwa droga”, *Głos Szczeciński*, 30.07.1949, no. 119, p. 5

43 The iconographic model featuring a static helmeted soldier wearing a long, roughly carved greatcoat (which both standardised and aggrandized his silhouette) became particularly prominent in World War II memorials. Oftentimes, it showed a man leaning on his rifle or a knight’s sword (as in the case of Lewiński’s revised version); more rarely, the gun was held horizontally (original submission) or slantwise. The last type was favoured by Lewiński in the Soviet Sailors Memorial in Międzyzdroje (1957), which was developed in the aftermath of the Szczecin memorial competition. Xawery Dunikowski’s figure of a hero which features in his Soldiers of the 1st First Polish Army Memorial in Warsaw (1962–1963), was given a similar form, and it was classified by Lewiński as belonging to the same group of effigies (testified to by him putting in his diary a newspaper clipping about the Warsaw monument right next to another, older clipping, which reported on the Szczecin competition and which included an image of his own memorial model). More about World War II memorials can be found here: S. P. Kubiak, “Vanitas et gloria. Ernst Barlach a europejskie pomniki ofiar Wielkiej Wojny / *Vanitas et gloria*. Ernst Barlach und die europäischen Ehrenmale des Großen Krieges”, in: S. P. Kubiak ed., *Ernst Barlach. Obrazy śmierci w twórczości niemieckiego ekspresjonisty / Ernst Barlach. Bilder vom Tode im Werk eines deutschen Expressionisten*, Szczecin, 2011, pp. 53–69.



Fig. 5. Sławomir Lewiński, *Design of the Monument of Gratitude to the Soviet Army in Szczecin, 1949*, mock-up photo, family collection



Fig. 6. Sławomir Lewiński, *Design of the Monument of Gratitude to the Soviet Army in Szczecin, 1949*, mock-up photo, family collection

After requested changes, it evolved into a three-dimensional figure of a Soviet soldier who stands on a tall granite plinth and cuddles a Polish child. Due to the support this project received from the Szczecin National Council, Różyski's memorial was handed over to Koszalin to be carried out there (as the latter city's original proposal delivered to Knoth for approval had not been endorsed).⁴⁴ Różyski's sculpture, further developed by Starzyński and modified by the graduate of the Fine Arts College in Sopot Franciszek Duszeńko to fit Koszalin's public space, was officially unveiled on 19 September 1954.⁴⁵ (Fig. 7)

⁴⁴ The NAS, the Szczecin Voivodship Office, no. 5069: *Pomniki martyrologii polskiej i walk o wyzwolenie*, p. 93.

⁴⁵ The NAS, Dyrekcja Budowy Osiedli Robotniczych w Szczecinie, no. 227: *Projekt Pomnika Wolności dla Armii Radzieckiej w Szczecinie*, n. p.; D. Czarnecka, op. cit., pp. 300-305; A. Zelmańska-Lipnicka, "Kalendarium", in: *Franciszek Duszeńko 1925–2008*, eds. R. Kaja, M. Schmidt-Góra, A. Zelmańska-Lipnicka, M. Targoński, Gdańsk, 2014, pp. 16-59, here: p. 33.



Fig. 7. Józef Różyski, Franciszek Duszeńko, *Monument of Gratitude to the Soviet Army in Koszalin*, 1954, Archiwum Akademii Sztuk Pięknych w Gdańsku

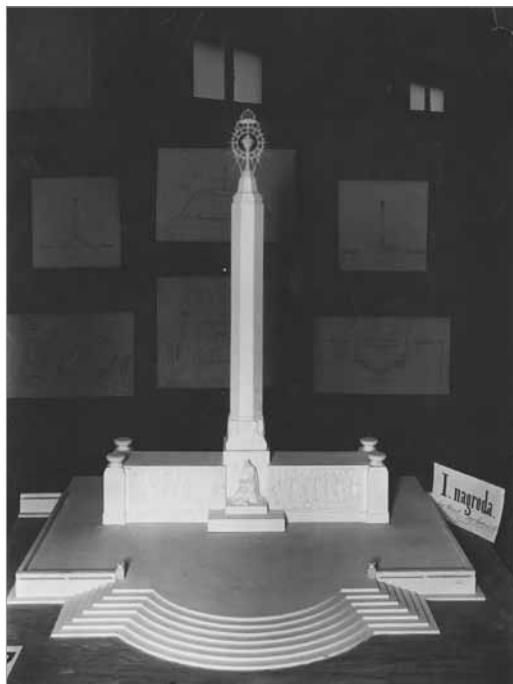


Fig. 8. Józef Starzyński, Józef Różyski, *Design of the monument of Gratitude to the Sacred Heart of Jesus for Poznań*, 1927, mock-up photo, Koncern Ilustrowany Kurier Codzienny, Narodowe Archiwum Cyfrowe

Co-operation between Starzyński, Różyski, and Duszeńko was not a pure coincidence. It was the effect of their shared experiences and mutual encounters before the competition – the kinds that played a major role in bringing about the Szczecin and Koszalin memorials. After 1945, the sculptor Starzyński and the architect and sculptor Różyski (Rosenbaum) settled in the same city. Both graduated from the Academy of Fine Arts in Krakow and shared the same supervisor (Jan Nalborczyk); both served in the Polish Legions during World War I; both actively participated in the fights in Lvov, where they lived and worked in the inter-war period. Starzyński also took part in the Polish-Soviet War, during which he was taken captive. Once the war was over, they began teaching at the Lvov Polytechnic and the State Art and Industrial School (as well as the latter's successors).⁴⁶ The two veterans' major accomplishment was their contribution to the Cemetery of the Defenders of Lvov, for which they designed a number of monuments and architectural

46 W. Milewska, M. Zientara, *Sztuka Legionów Polskich i jej twórcy 1914–1918*, Krakow, 1999, pp. 513, 518.

decorations.⁴⁷ In 1927, they won the competition for the Gratitude Memorial dedicated to the Sacred Heart of Jesus in Poznań. (Fig. 8) Similarly to the Szczecin Red Army memorial, it was an anti-German votive offering to thank God for a newly regained freedom; the area where the monument was to be located was, just like in case of Szczecin, the Polish-German borderlands.

A memorial is dedicated to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. Because Jesus's heart is a symbol of God's love which showed mercy to our nation heavily oppressed by our powerful enemies. We do not intend to claim that it was God's deed only [...]. Oftentimes, human efforts are incommensurate with the aim that has been reached, and thus all good-willed men must cry out "Digitus Dei est hic". We believe that such was the case with the resurrection of our homeland and that is why we have decided to erect a gratitude memorial to God's heart, here in the Western borderlands [...].⁴⁸

Where Otto von Bismarck's monument used to stand – the very symbol of enslaving the Poznań province – Starzyński and Różyski intended to build a monumental altar-sarcophagus. In its very centre, a tall obelisk was to rise with a chalice and the Host on top of it. Against an antependium, a three-dimensional figure of Christ hugging a weak and weary man, "his child", was to be placed on the axis of the obelisk. Although the project was awarded the first prize, it was never realised.⁴⁹ An idea to put a statue against a vertical element – one-third way up – was also explored in Starzyński's subsequent project which, this time, was successfully implemented. The project in question was the Monument of the Przemyśl Eagles, unveiled on 11 November 1938, whose message was both anti-Russian and anti-Ukrainian. The fact that it was highly confrontational and located near the new border resulted in the monument being demolished in 1940, upon the demands of the Ukrainian nationalists.⁵⁰

Initially, after the outbreak of World War II, Lvov was occupied by the Soviet forces. The Soviets surrendered control over fine arts education to the Ukrainians. Nevertheless, both Starzyński and Różyski kept their positions in the Lvov State Institute of Applied and Decorative Art (former State Art and Industrial School) and, being conformists, subjected themselves to Soviet indoctrination. As testified to by

47 A. Melbechowska-Luty, *Posągi i ludzie. Rzeźba polska dwudziestolecia międzywojennego (1918–1939)*, Warsaw, 2005, pp. 209, 275.

48 F. Kwiatkowski SJ, *Na uroczystość poświęcenia pomnika Najśw. Serca Jezusowego*, Poznań, 1932, qtd. in: H. Hałas, "Pomnik Najświętszego Serca Pana Jezusa", *Kronika Miasta Poznania*, 2001, no. 2, pp. 120-151, here: pp. 120-121.

49 The implementation committee decided to favour a non-competition design by a Poznań-based architect closely related to the Catholic Church. See: S. P. Kubiak, *Modernizm zapoznany. Architektura Poznania 1919–1939*, Warsaw, 2014, pp. 23-27.

50 A. Szeliga, *Pomnik Orłąt Przemyskich symbol skomplikowanej historii mieszkańców pogranicza*, Przemyśl, 2004, pp. 28-36 (a history competition entitled *Spory o upamiętnienie przeszłości – pomniki, cmentarze, patroni* by the Stefan Batory Foundation and the KARTA Centre), http://uczyc-sie-z-historii.pl/user/Dokumenty_konkursu_HB/PDFpraceHB/konkurs_8/131-i.pdf (accessed 1 May 2019).

historical documents, Professor Starzyński was named the head of the Polish unit of the school.⁵¹ Tadeusz Łodziany, a student of the school, recalled a trip to Kyiv, Moscow, and Leningrad, which was also attended by Różyński, in the following way:

A perevodchik took us to an all-republic exhibition which featured the highest achievements of the USSR economy [...]. Its décor was opulent – gilded, colourful, full of goods’ mock-up. Nothing to purchase. A dynamic and 240-metre tall sculpture by Vera Mukhina greeted the exhibition visitors: “Worker and Kolkhoz Woman”, with a sickle and a hammer raised over their heads, was made from riveted stainless steel, and was truly imposing.⁵²

At the time some major practitioners of socialist realism, such as Aleksandr Gerasimov, visited the school, while the streets of the city were adorned with monuments and portraits of Soviet leaders designed in the very mode.⁵³

Once Lvov was taken over by the Nazis in June 1941, Różyński, who was Jewish, had to resign; Starzyński, who spoke German, kept his position. A couple of months later, he carved a series of bas-reliefs for the Lesya Ukrainka Drama Theatre which at the time was being rebuilt by the Nazis.⁵⁴ In the effort, he was joined by Professor Marian Wnuk. It was Wnuk, a co-founder of the Fine Arts College in Sopot, who helped in executing Duszeńko’s Koszalin memorial. The return of the Ukrainian authorities in September 1944 did not result in Polish professors being removed from office – however, the news of the Polish Committee of National Liberation being established in Lublin encouraged most of them to leave the city. Many moved to the Reclaimed Territories. Soon, the narrative about Szczecin’s colonisation by the peoples re-settled from the East, for example, folk female weavers from the Vilnius Region and Volhynia – stoked up with press articles and pieces by the Polish Film Chronicle⁵⁵ – replaced the story about “professional” patronage over the port city of Szczecin extended by the city of Poznań.

Both narratives interlaced with each other in the Red Army Memorial officially unveiled on 23 April 1950 at the gate to the future Downtown Housing District. The event was attended by both Soviet and Czechoslovak diplomats. Fasces were cast in sandstone-like concrete on the spot. Human figures and a decorative panel with the Polish Pomeranian cities’ coats of arms (in the northern and southern parts of the core) were made from artificial stone, while the plinth was covered with

51 P. Grankin, “Lwowska Szkoła Przemysłowa. Dzieje gmachów na tle historii zakładu”, in: *Schola Architecturae. Budynki szkół architektury*, Wrocław, 2005, pp. 31-46; also kindly consult: J. Sosnowska, “Życie artystyczne we Lwowie w czasie pierwszej okupacji sowieckiej 22.IX.1939–22.VI.1941”, in: M. Morek, P. Paszkiewicz, eds., *Między Polską a światem. Od średniowiecza po lata II wojny światowej*, Warsaw, 1993, pp. 415-426.

52 T. Łodziana, *Wspomnienia. Państwowy Instytut Sztuk Plastycznych 1937–1944 we Lwowie*, Wrocław, 2003, p. 51.

53 Ibid., p. 57; S. P. Kubiak, *Daleko...*, op. cit., p. 91.

54 Ibid., p. 65.

55 See: C. Piskorski, “Będziemy się ubierać w szczecińskie materiały”, *Szczecin. Tygodnik Miasta Morskiego*, 20.08.1946, nos. 9-10, p. 74; *The Polish Film Chronicle*, 1948, no. 48.

granite slabs.⁵⁶ During the ceremony, a scale model for the surrounding area which had been gradually emerging from the rubble of war was presented to the public (Fig. 9). In 1950, the urban planners imagined, alongside the Lenin Avenue leading towards the Szczecin National Council, two symmetrical blocks of flats with pillared arcades on the ground level which were to flank the memorial. Those plans certainly bore the trace of the style developed and propagated by Marek Leykam in the Higher School of Technology and Engineering in Szczecin. The 1955 urban planning schemes already took the form of neo-Baroque palaces to be built at the rear of the memorial, at the Pilots' Square.⁵⁷



Fig. 9. *Unveiling ceremony of the Monument of Gratitude in Szczecin, 1950, photographer unknown, Archiwum Państwowe w Szczecinie*

Two issues seem to be of paramount importance to the understanding of the Szczecin memorial. Firstly, the use of the form or methods of Christian worship

⁵⁶ Renovation works carried out in the 1970s resulted in their replacement with bronze casts made by Sławomir and Jakub Lewiński. Source: Jakub Lewiński, Szczecin.

⁵⁷ P. Zaremba, "Jutro naszego miasta", *Głos Szczeciński*, 31.12.1953, no. 312, p. 7; M. Łopuch, "Śródmiejska Dzielnica Mieszkaniowa w Szczecinie", *Przegląd Zachodniopomorski*, 2011, vol. 1, pp. 89-107; S. P. Kubiak, *Daleko...*, op. cit., pp. 83-84.

in the act of building a secular religion of Communism, so characteristic for both the Russian avant-garde and socialist realism. The Slavophil Vladimir Solovyov described it as a “conscious incarnation of religious ideas”.⁵⁸ This para-religious Soviet ritual fed on old beliefs and notions, including that of gratitude, and might be seen as responsible for some similarities between the monuments in Szczecin and Koszalin, as well as the one designed for Poznań. Secondly, a specific erotization of images which allowed for the creation of a domination/submission relation. Unlike the majority of brotherhood memorials erected after World War I and World War II, Starzyński’s male couple are not soldiers and are not equipped either with uniforms that would make it possible to identify their nationality or with guns that would suggest a balance of powers. The Szczecin memorial comprises a Soviet soldier in full armour and a half-nude Polish worker who bares his breast (Fig. 10). The theme of a “brotherhood of blood and work”, stipulated as a formal requirement in the competition’s rules and regulations, took the shape of a love affair between the unequal – like in many old images featuring clothed men and disrobed women.⁵⁹ Batov thus remarked: “A preemptive operation by the 65th Army on the Szczecin line was the last victorious action in the Great National War fought by the Soviet Union”.⁶⁰

Iconographic analysis of the Red Army Gratitude Memorial in Szczecin proves that a paraphrasis of the motif promulgated as early as in 1939 (annexation of Ukraine) was built into the visual symbol of the Soviet military operation. When Starzyński, a former Soviet captive, was at the beginning of his socialist realist education under the tutelage of his Soviet comrades, the Russian broadsheet *Pravda* published for the first time a poster by the Kyiv-born Viktor Borisovich Koretsky with the slogan “Our army is the army of liberation of workers”.⁶¹ It featured a Ukrainian peasant in a Tolstoy shirt who is passionately embraced and kissed

58 B. Groys, *Stalin jako totalne dzieło sztuki*, Warsaw, 2010, p. 44.

59 The allegories of the 18th- and 19th-century French revolutions made ostensible references to the Roman models of Romulus and Remus – clothed or nude infants or young boys, twin brothers put under the protection of the Mother-Republic (see: Louis-Simon Boizot, *Liberté, Égalité, Fraternité (ou la Mort)*, porcelain, Manufacture nationale de Sèvres, 1793; Léopold Morice, *La Fraternité*, fragment of Le Monument à la République, 1883). Subversive iconography of two adult males and their brotherhood can be traced back to the religious representations of Christ and his disciples (especially St. John). The high point of its sexualisation was most probably a bas-relief by Julesa Dalou in the Wedding Room of Paris’s 10th arrondissement Town Hall. Completed in 1883, it shows two athletic male nudes who share a passionate kiss. Military depictions of brotherhood encountered in various war memorials harmonised with the revolutionary triad, which also embraced liberty and equality. Both bodies and costumes of soldiers from brotherly units – always standing side by side or shaking hands – were unified (see: P. Landowski, *The Monument to Victory and Peace or to Franco-Moroccan Friendship in Casablanca*, 1921; Ch. S. Jagger, *The Anglo-Belgian War Memorial in Brussels*, 1923). In all the cases mentioned here, both heroes and their significance were considered identical.

60 P. I. Batov, *Operacja “Odra”. Działania bojowe 65 armii w operacji berlińskiej, kwiecień–maj 1945*, trans. J. Ćwierdziński, Warsaw, 1966, p. 7.

61 J. Piekalkiewicz, *Polski wrzesień. Hitler i Stalin rozdzierają Rzeczpospolitą*, trans. M. Misiorny, Warsaw, 2004, p. 186.



Fig. 10. *Unveiling ceremony of the Monument of Gratitude in Szczecin, 1950, photographer unknown, Archiwum Państwowe w Szczecinie*

by an armed Red Army soldier. The act of giving oneself over to a powerful fighter which characterises the peasant's behaviour hinted not only at the liberation from serfdom imposed by the Polish bourgeoisie but also at the self-imposed embrace of people's power authorised by Moscow. Although the case of post-war Szczecin and Pomerania differed from the classic power relations between the coloniser and the colonised, it symbolically reminded one of such. This newly regained territory was presented as deprived of high culture and inhabited by simple working-class people whose social advancement had been made possible by an alliance between two Socialist states.

References

- “Budujemy Pomnik Wdzięczności”, *Głos Szczeciński*, 20.04.1949, no. 19, p. 5.
“Człowiek pracy w malarstwie i rzeźbie. Z wystawy prac członków Związku Polskich Artystów Plastyków w Szczecinie”, *Głos Szczeciński*, 4.06.1949, no. 64, p. 5.

- “Konkurs powszechny na projekt pomnika Wdzięczności w Szczecinie”, *Architektura*, 1949, no. 5, p. 148.
- “Nagrodzone projekty Pomnika Wdzięczności dla Armii Radzieckiej”, *Kurier Szczeciński*, 31.07.1949, no. 208, p. 1.
- “Rozstrzygnięcie konkursu na projekt pomnika zwycięstwa”, *Kurier Szczeciński*, 3.01.1946, no. 2, p. 4.
- Typowe projekty pamiątek brackich i indywidualnych mogił wojnow Sowieckiej Armii, Wojskowo-Morskowo Flota i partyzan, poległych w bojach z niemiecko-faszystckimi zbrojnymi*, Moskwa, 1947.
- “Trzymamy straż nad Odrą”, *Rzeczpospolita*, 13.04.1946, no. 103, p. 1.
- “Zebranie komitetu Budowy Pomnika Zwycięstwa”, *Kurier Szczeciński*, 14.11.1945, no. 34, p. 4.
- Banaszak, W., “Komendant Wojenny Szczecina (1945)”, in: *Encyklopedia Pomorza Zachodniego pomeranica.pl*, [http://encyklopedia.szczecin.pl/wiki/Komendant_Wojenny_Szczecina_\(1945\)](http://encyklopedia.szczecin.pl/wiki/Komendant_Wojenny_Szczecina_(1945)) [accessed 1 May 2019].
- Batow, P. I., *Operacja „Odra”. Działania bojowe 65 armii w operacji berlińskiej, kwiecień–maj 1945*, trans. J. Cwierdziński, Warsaw, 1966.
- Batow, P. I., *Operacja „Odra”. Działania bojowe 65 armii w operacji berlińskiej, kwiecień–maj 1945*, trans. J. Cwierdziński, Warsaw, 1966.
- Batow, P. I., *W marszu i w boju*, trans. J. Laskowska and C. Czarnogórski, Warsaw, 1978.
- Czarnecka, D., *„Pomniki wdzięczności” Armii Czerwonej w Polsce Ludowej i w III Rzeczpospolitej*, Warsaw, 2015.
- Czejarek, R., *Sekrety Szczecina*, Łódź, 2014.
- E[manuel] M[esser], “Niełatwa droga”, *Głos Szczeciński*, 30.07.1949, no. 119, p. 5.
- Gabowitsch, M., “Sieci patronalno-klientalne a proces wznoszenia radzieckich pomników wojennych”, in: *Pomnik. Europa Środkowo-Wschodnia 1918–2018*, ed. A. Tarasiuk and A. Miczko, Warsaw, 2018, pp. 14–17.
- Grankin, P., “Lwowska Szkoła Przemysłowa. Dzieje gmachów na tle historii zakładu”, in: *Schola Architecturae. Budynek sztuki architektury*, Wrocław, 2005, pp. 31–46.
- Groys, B., *Stalin jako totalne dzieło sztuki*, Warsaw, 2010.
- Hałas, H., “Pomnik Najświętszego Serca Pana Jezusa”, *Kronika Miasta Poznania*, 2001, no. 2, pp. 120–151.
- Jabłonowska, A., “Działalność ZPAP w Szczecinie od lat pionierskich do przełomu 1980 r.”, in: *Obecność. Almanach. ZPAP Okręg Szczeciński 1945–2011*, ed. R. Kiełtyka, Szczecin, 2011, s. 12–26.
- Knap, P., “«Braterstwo krwi i pracy» – to już 59 lat”, *Gazeta Wyborcza (Wiadomości Szczecin)*, 25.07.2008, http://szczecin.wyborcza.pl/szczecin/1,34939,5493104,_Braterstwo_krwii_pracy_to_juz_59_lat.html [accessed 1 May 2019].
- Kraśnicki, Jr. A., “Wartownicy z pepeszami przy grobach na pl. Szarych Szeregów”, *Gazeta Wyborcza (Magazyn Szczecin)*, 27.10.2016, <http://szczecin.wyborcza.pl/szczecin/7,150424,20903159,wartownicy-z-pepeszami-przy-grobach-na-pl-szarych-szeregow.html> [accessed 1 May 2019].
- Krasucki, E., “Historia i współczesność (nie)chcianego monumentu. O drawskim pomniku wdzięczności Armii Czerwonej”, in: *Drawsko Pomorskie i okolice poprzez wieki. Studia i szkice. Odsłona druga*, ed. E. Krasucki, Drawsko Pomorskie, 2017, pp. 213–243.
- Kubiak, S. P., “«Malujcie jak Dürer». Georg Johann Tribowski i kulturowa tożsamość Szczecina w latach 1947–1964”, in: *Ptak bez przestrzeni. Georg Johann Tribowski – wczesne obrazy*, ed. S. P. Kubiak, Szczecin, 2018, pp. 6–29.

- Kubiak, S. P., "Organizmy pionierskie. Kultura wizualna Szczecina w pierwszych latach po II wojnie światowej", *Pamiętnik Sztuk Pięknych* 2016 [2018], no. 11: *Sztuka polska na Ziemiach Zachodnich i Północnych w latach 1945–1981. W 70-lecie powrotu do Polski*, pp. 31–38.
- Kubiak, S. P., "Sławomir Lewiński", in: *Encyklopedia Pomorza Zachodniego pomeranica.pl*, http://encyklopedia.szczecin.pl/wiki/Sławomir_Lewiński [accessed 1 May 2019].
- Kubiak, S. P., "Vanitas et gloria. Ernst Barlach a europejskie pomniki ofiar Wielkiej Wojny" / "Vanitas et gloria. Ernst Barlach und die europäischen Ehrenmale des Großen Krieges", in: *Ernst Barlach. Obrazy śmierci w twórczości niemieckiego ekspresjonisty / Ernst Barlach. Bilder vom Tode im Werk eines deutschen Expressionisten*, ed. S. P. Kubiak and V. Probst, Szczecin, 2011, pp. 53–69.
- Kubiak, S. P., *Daleko od Moskwy. Gérard Singer i sztuka zaangażowana*, Szczecin, 2016.
- Kubiak, S. P., *Modernizm zapoznany. Architektura Poznania 1919–1939*, Warsaw, 2014.
- Kwiatkowski, T. J. E., *Na uroczystość poświęcenia pomnika Najśw. Serca Jezusowego*, Poznań, 1932.
- Łodziana, T., *Wspomnienia. Państwowy Instytut Sztuk Plastycznych 1937–1944 we Lwowie*, Wrocław, 2003.
- Łopuch, M., "Śródmiejska Dzielnica Mieszaniowa w Szczecinie", *Przegląd Zachodniopomorski*, 2011, no. 1, pp. 89–107.
- Melbechowska-Luty, A., *Posągi i ludzie. Rzeźba polska dwudziestolecia międzywojennego (1918–1939)*, Warsaw, 2005.
- Milewska, W. and Zientara M., *Sztuka Legionów Polskich i jej twórcy 1914–1918*, Krakow, 1999.
- Mulczyński, J., *Poznańska zdobnicza. Historia Państwowej Szkoły Sztuk Zdobniczych i Przemysłu Artystycznego w Poznaniu w latach 1919–1939*, Poznań, 2009.
- Musekamp, J., *Między Stettinem a Szczecinem. Metamorfozy miasta od 1945 do 2005*, trans. J. Dąbrowski, Poznań, 2015.
- Najdowa, J., "Pionierskie lata szczecińskiej plastyki", in: *Pionierskie lata kultury szczecińskiej*, ed. K. Kozłowski, Szczecin, 1986, pp. 91–102.
- Najdowa, J., *Szczecińska plastyka w latach 1945–1960*, Poznań, 1962.
- Nijakowski, L. M., *Domeny symboliczne. Konflikty narodowościowe i etniczne w wymiarze symbolicznym*, Warsaw, 2006.
- Osełkowski, C., "Polski Związek Zachodni w latach 1945–1950", *Studia Zachodnie*, 1996, Vol. 2, pp. 107–125.
- Piekałkiewicz, J., *Polski wrzesień. Hitler i Stalin rozdierają Rzeczpospolitą*, trans. M. Misiorny, Warsaw, 2004.
- Piotrowski, P., *Globalne ujęcie sztuki Europy Wschodniej*, Poznań, 2018.
- Piskorski, C., "Będziemy się ubierać w szczecińskie materiały", *Szczecin. Tygodnik Miasta Morskiego*, 20.08.1946, no. 9–10, p. 74.
- Podgajna, E., "Niewdzięczne świadectwo wdzięczności. Historia pomnika z gwiazdą", *Gazeta Wyborcza (Magazyn Szczecin)*, 10.03.2016, <http://szczecin.wyborcza.pl/szczecin/1,150424,19749880,niewdzieczne-swiaadectwo-wdzieczności-historia-monumentu-ktory.html> [accessed 1 May 2019].
- Ptaszyński, R., *Trzymamy straż nad Odrą. Propaganda – Fakty – Dokumenty*, Szczecin, 2007.
- Simmel, G., "Dankbarkeit. Ein soziologischer Versuch", *Der Morgen. Wochenschrift für deutsche Kultur*, 1907, 18. No. 19, Oktober, pp. 593–598.
- Smith, A., *The Theory of Moral Sentiments; Or, An Essay Towards an Analysis of the Principles by which Men Naturally Judge Concerning the Conduct and Character, First of Their Neighbours, and Afterwards of Themselves. To which is Added a Dissertation on the Origin of Languages*, London, 1790.

- Sosnowska, J., "Życie artystyczne we Lwowie w czasie pierwszej okupacji sowieckiej 22.IX.1939–22.VI.1941", in: *Między Polską a światem. Od średniowiecza po lata II wojny światowej*, ed. M. Morka and P. Paszkiewicz, Warsaw, 1993, pp. 415–426.
- Szeliga, A., *Pomnik Orłąt Przemyskich symbol skomplikowanej historii mieszkańców pogranicza*, Przemysł, 2004, http://uczyc-sie-z-historii.pl/user/Dokumenty_konkursu_HB/PDFpraceHB/konkurs_8/131-i.pdf [accessed 1 May 2019].
- Wallis, A., *Socjologia i kształtowanie przestrzeni*, Warsaw, 1971.
- Zaremba, P., "Jutro naszego miasta", *Głos Szczeciński*, 31.12.1953, no. 312, p. 7.
- Zaremba, P., *Wspomnienia prezydenta Szczecina. 1945–1950*, Poznań, 1977.
- Zelmańska-Lipnicka, A., "Kalendarium", in: *Franciszek Duszeńko 1925–2008*, ed. R. Kaja, M. Schmidt-Góra, A. Zelmańska-Lipnicka, and M. Targoński, Gdańsk, 2014, pp. 16–59.

Kamila Dworniczak

INSTITUTE OF ART HISTORY, UNIVERSITY OF WARSAW, POLAND

ORCID 0000-0002-7022-0784

<https://doi.org/10.31338/2657-6015ik.30.6>

Defining Reality: Photography and the Surrealist Concept of the Image in Poland in the 1940s

Abstract

The text discusses definitions of photography formulated in Poland in the 1940s. The author analyses Zbigniew Dłubak's series of photographs inspired by the poetry of Pablo Neruda in reference to surrealism, Marxism, and, primarily, to Władysław Strzemiński's theory of vision. Particular emphasis is placed on the concept of the image shared by Dłubak and Strzemiński, a concept that links the issue of realism with individual expression, allowing for a formal differentiation of representation (abstraction). In consequence, the analysed series by Dłubak is presented as sharing similarities with seemingly formally remote series of collages *To My Friends the Jews* by Strzemiński. Both demonstrate an ambition to express in the modern form both collective realism as well as individual memory, primarily of the war events. Proposed interpretation suggests that the use and understanding of photography as a medium closely tied to reality had a decisive meaning for the new formula of the image constructed right after 1945 – formula open to experimenting, yet also ideologically radical, addressing the existential problems of the individual involved with the new political order.

Keywords: realism, surrealism, Marxism, aesthetics, avant-garde photography, Polish modernity after 1945

In Polish art history, the immediate aftermath of World War II is considered a transitory period – a time when the pre-war avant-garde ideas were redefined by individual experiences of liminal situations and by new political impulses. Formulating his reflections on the “surrealist interregnum” of the 1940s, Piotr Piotrowski defined the spectrum of this reconfiguration by noting that surrealism was a phenomenon primarily concerned with ideology and only secondarily with painting.¹ Dorota

¹ Piotrowski wrote about the “ideological understanding of surrealism” in the first years after World War II in Central Europe, one that was absent in the interwar period; e.g. in Hungary

Jarecka addressed this issue in her discussion of Polish art history writing and questioned the notion that surrealism never existed in Poland.² She suggested that surrealism – as a specific worldview – was present in post-war Poland in the form of “gestures and attitudes”.³ The scholar made a crucial observation in this respect: “the most attractive aspect of surrealism was its concept of the image,” which showed the potential of becoming the fundamental element to define modern art.⁴ Thus understood surrealism is a mode of thinking about representing reality, also in political categories. At the time, the choice of surrealist poetics was “not only [...] a gesture of neutrality, a purely formal gesture, but [...] a political one” – the awareness of the leftist sympathies of French surrealists was significant for artistic choices made by Polish artists.⁵ This way, the “surrealist orientation” would be closely linked with the problem of realism, a crucial issue for the theoretical and critical debates of the 1940s. Realism was understood as an engagement in social reality in its socialist guise with formal experiments that guaranteed the freedom of individual expression. I suggest that the issue of effectively operating “on” and “towards” reality, which concerned many artists and intellectuals, involves one more important aspect: the interest of the “moderns” in photography. This problem has not been thoroughly investigated as yet. Much more often, the focus was placed on the autonomous discourses of histories of photography or painting. This is not very surprising since visual artists rarely admitted to their interest in photography and especially to their use of it, as exemplified by Jadwiga Maziarska.⁶ Meanwhile, if photography as a point of reference is considered, the consequences of debates about realism can be shown in a new light; moreover, these perspectives broaden our understanding of the modern conception of the image formulated back then that crossed the boundaries of individual media and was driven by surrealism.

The poetic image – reaching to the depth of things

In 1947 photography was symbolically included into the field of art – an Office for Photography was founded at the Ministry of Culture and Art. In his exposé

surrealism was understood “not only as liberation of imagination, but as manifestation of intellectual condition of post-war Europe” and, as such, it defined political and aesthetic attitudes. See: P. Piotrowski, „Surrealistyczne interregnum”, in: T. Gryglewicz et al., eds., *Mistrzowi Mieczysławowi Porębskiemu – uczniowie*, Kraków, 2001, p. 300.

2 See: P. Krakowski, „Problem surrealizmu w sztuce polskiej”, in: *Wystawa malarstwa metaforycznego* [ex. cat.], Galeria Krzysztofora, Kraków, 1961, as cited in: J. Chrobak, ed., *Grupa Krakowska. Dokumenty i materiały*, Kraków, 1991, p. 148.

3 D. Jarecka, „Surrealizm i polityka”, in: D. Jarecka, B. Piwowarska, *Erna Rosenstein. Mogę powtarzać tylko nieświadomie*, Warsaw, 2014, p. 27.

4 Idem, „Artysta na ruinach. Sztuka polska lat 40. i surrealistyczne konotacje”, *Miejsce. Studia nad sztuką i architekturą polską XX i XXI wieku*, 2016, no. 2, p. 5.

5 Ibid., p. 6.

6 B. Piwowarska, „Inżynier i majsterkowicz. O fotoszkicach Jadwigi Maziarskiej”, in: *Kolekcjonowanie świata: Jadwiga Maziarska – listy i szkice*, ed. B. Piwowarska, Warsaw, 2005, pp. 7–35.

published in “Świat Fotografii” magazine, Bohdan Urbanowicz, the director of the Department of Visual Arts, expressed shared artistic as well as ideological expectations of the “new” medium:

Perhaps we haven't yet created a form for contemporary culture, distanced by the rapid course of still revolutionary civilisation. Photography, born in the final stage of our civilisation, might with its technical nature, its ability to record motion, be able to capture the forms of our thoughts and our needs, to define the paradoxes and confront the contrasts of the new life.⁷

This way, Urbanowicz implied the need to intensify the debates on the shape of modern photography, with its reliance on the language of realism yet independence from models derived from painting.⁸ In keeping with these postulates were artistic investigations of Zbigniew Dłubak, who realised a series of photographs commonly associated with surrealism in 1947–1948 (Fig. 1, 2).⁹ It was inspired by the work of the Chilean poet Pablo Neruda, particularly his *Magellan Heart*¹⁰. A brief reading of the poem suggests that Dłubak titled works in his series with “subtitles” and phrases from Neruda’s poem that defined subsequent stages of Magellan’s journey. In Neruda’s work, this journey takes the form of a recording of the subject’s consciousness when it is confronted with a new alien world; it is a particular kind of confrontation, effected in the process of exploration and recognition, but also of appropriation of a new territory. The sailor drifts through a hallucinated landscape that he cannot recognise since he is stranded outside culture. An alienated lyrical subject, who stands for the historic traveller, but can also represent a poet or photographer, becomes an agent, participant, and chronicler of violence. It is very unexpected – the conqueror and discoverer do not so much confront the fascinating new phenomenon, but reaches the limits of humanity, the dark corners of reality and his own “self.”

“The art of the Polish modern 1940s did not show war directly, but it employed geographical metaphors to address the issue of wartime violence” – wrote Jarecka in her interpretation of these photographs.¹¹ She understood Dłubak’s choice of Neruda’s poetry as an ideological declaration. Indeed, the photographer’s reference

7 B. Urbanowicz, „O nowy program fotografii”, *Świat Fotografii* 1947, nos. 1–2, p. 2.

8 More on this topic in: K. Ziębińska-Lewandowska, *Między dokumentalnością a eksperymentem. Krytyka fotograficzna w Polsce w latach 1946-1989*, Warsaw, 2014.

9 Apart from Dorota Jarecka’s, see also a comprehensive interpretation of these photographs by Marcin Lachowski. Focusing on the impact of the photographic form, he refers to the surrealist category of “convulsive beauty” (in Hal Foster’s reinterpretation) and applies a perspective oriented at reading the wartime trauma: M. Lachowski, “Piękno konwulsyjne: Zbigniew Dłubak”, in: idem, *Nowocześni po katastrofie*, Lublin, 2013, pp. 180–195.

10 It was published in 1948 in issue 18 (179) of “Odrodzenie” – translated by Czesław Miłosz; other works by Neruda were published by the magazine the same year, also translated by Miłosz. Among them were *Alberto Rojas Jimenez Come Flying*, *Almeria*, *Arrival to Madrid of the International Brigade*, *Offended Lands*.

11 D. Jarecka, op. cit., p. 27.



Fig. 1. Zbigniew Dłubak, *Przypominam samotność cieśniny* (Pablo Neruda, *The Magellan Heart*), 1948 © Armelle Dłubak, Fundacja Archeologia Fotografii.



Fig. 2. Zbigniew Dłubak, *Odkrywczy zjawiają się i nic z nich nie zostaje* (Pablo Neruda, *The Magellan Heart*), 1948 © Armelle Dłubak, Fundacja Archeologia Fotografii.

opens up a space for tracing very complex political and aesthetic links, some of which were revealed by Jarecka's postcolonial reading. I suggest that Dłubak's photographic cycle seeks to communicate both the traumatic experience of war, as well as the equally absurd and bitter experience of its "aftermath." Marcin Lachowski took note of this fact without referring to the literary context: "Dłubak's images did not evoke macabre memories; their inherent idea of death referred to the here and now – it described the fracture of subjectivity tangled by memory, incessantly searching for lost unity".¹² Dłubak's choice of Neruda – a renowned poet and active communist – as a literary reference should be seen as a political gesture. Coming with a subtle interplay of forms, this reference has been commonly seen as a simple act of equipping the images with a "subtext." Meanwhile, the photographer's decision to combine his images with these particular texts – texts in plural because before his translation of *The Magellan Heart* Czesław Miłosz had published also other pieces by Neruda¹³ – seems to have resulted from a very thorough considera-

¹² M. Lachowski, op. cit., p. 193.

¹³ Those were: "Battle of the Jarama River, Hymn and Return, Young Angela, Ocean, Three Material Songs: I. Entrance into Wood, II. Apogee of, Celery III. Statute of Wine" published in

tion. As a result, Dłubak produced a work that, I think, formulates his programme as well as positions itself at the centre of the current debates on art.

Miłosz compared Neruda's poetry to the painting of Pablo Picasso, which, in the words of Carrera Andrade: "does not invent reality, but merely tears down its mask, revealing its hidden name and secret vocation".¹⁴ These elements, which in Neruda's text are orientated towards the object and its appearance in consciousness, can be directly referred to the forms evoked in Dłubak's photographs. Lachowski argued that: "objects become the function of memory, filling with their growing structures the microcosm of the image".¹⁵ However, much more relevant in this context seems not so much *The Magellan Heart* but the poem *Three Material Songs*. Its imagery is much more disturbing and very dark. Much like the photographs, it evokes the act of dissecting and "dismembering" reality observed by the subject: "I fall in shadow, in the midst / of destroyed things, / and watch spiders, and graze in forests / of secret inconclusive wood, / and walk among damp fibers extirpated / from the living being of substance and silence".¹⁶ The studies of trees, bark, understory, with which Dłubak launched his photographic practice, manifest his analytic approach and emphasise the entangled, organic forms.¹⁷ Yet, much more important is that *Three Material Songs* is also a kind of poetic *credo*, a realist's manifesto: "I speak of things that exist, God forbid / my inventing things when I am singing! / I speak of the saliva spilt upon the walls, / I speak of the slow stockings of the whore / I speak

Odrodzenie 1947, no. 23 (132). Around 1948, Latin American poetry became popular in Poland; Czesław Miłosz became "a guide [...] for new values" that arrived in Poland with the poetry of Latin America. See: Jap, "Pisarze chilijscy o Polsce", *Odrodzenie* 1948, no. 2, p. 4. Poems by Miłosz also display inspiration with the syntax of the Chilean poet (e.g. *We wnętrzu róży*). The above-referenced text on Chilean poetry quotes Neruda's words: "I would like to greet Poland, its intellectuals and its masses. We greedily read all that comes from its soil [...]. All peoples have been very joyful about Poland's transformation after its earlier martyrdom. [...] New waves move across the world, Poland's old windows tremble and open up." Translations of Neruda's poetry came with a text, *W obronie poety Pablo Nerudy* (an open letter "In defence of poet Pablo Neruda"), which addressed the poet's senator's immunity being revoked and an arrest warrant issued against him for his critique of the Chilean government abroad (particularly the letter he sent to intellectuals of both Americas). The author of the Polish text admitted that the letter was distributed in Poland. Jmn, "W obronie poety Pablo Nerudy", *Odrodzenie* 1948, no. 18, p. 4.

14 C. Miłosz, [Słowo od tłumacza], *Odrodzenie* 1947, no. 23 (132), p. 5.

15 M. Lachowski, op. cit., p. 193.

16 Pablo Neruda, "Three Material Songs", in: idem, *Residence on Earth, and Other Poems*, trans. Angel Flores, New York, 1946, p. 81.

17 Dłubak began his photographic career in 1946–1947. In 1946 he was treating his tuberculosis at a resort in Otwock where he possibly made his first works. Notably, Dłubak fought in the Warsaw Uprising (as a member of the People's Army (Gwardia Ludowa/Armia Ludowa)) and was a war prisoner. He stayed initially at the Auschwitz camp and later in Mauthausen; he was often ill and he worked there at a photography lab. After his return, he volunteered for the Polish Army, in May 1946 he was promoted to lieutenant colonel at a political-educational corps. In 1946–1948 he was the Chief of Staff of the minister of national defence, Marian Spychalski.

of the chorus of the men of wine / striking the coffin with a bird's bone".¹⁸ This infernal world of hallucinations is a reality of the subject who is an observer and a participant in a dark spectacle: "I am in the midst of that song, in the midst / of the winter which rolls through the streets, / I am in the midst of the drinkers, / with eyes opened toward forgotten places, [...] Remembering nights, ships, orchards, / deceased friends, circumstances, / bitter hospitals and half-open girls: remembering a pounding of wave on some rock [...]".¹⁹ Observation of reality and the state of one's consciousness produces a quasi-surrealist vision where the world is revealed almost in a flash, on the junction of perception and recollection, in fragments – it is painfully tangible, yet defies conventional representation. Interestingly, Neruda's text carries a subtle overlay of the translator's syntax, whereby the process of realist expression in this work is played out through a heroic, even affected rhetoric of struggle for a just cause, oppression and its overcoming, observed from a nostalgic perspective: "Guard your light, O fatherland, hold aloft / your hard grain-ear of hope in the midst / of blind, trembling air".²⁰ Some linguistic clichés suggest Polish poetry with its romantic notes ("Regions buried / in endless martyrdom, by the interminable / silence, pulse, / of bee and exterminated rock, / land which rather than wheat and clover / shows signs of dry blood and crime"²¹). The choice of *The Magellan Heart* was, then, a non-radical declaration, masking other potential references. Recurrent organic motifs in Neruda's poetry, such as "tree," "pine," "root," feature in Dłubak's photographs as well, resembling those taken by Alexandr Rodchenko in the 1920s. Photographs of this type can also be found as illustrations in a poetic volume by Stanisław Marczak-Oborski, published by the Club of Young Artists and Scientists (Klub Młodych Artystów i Naukowców) in 1949,²² which I will discuss further on.

18 P. Neruda, op. cit., p. 89.

19 Ibid.

20 Idem, "Hymn and Return", in: idem, op. cit., p. 169.

21 Idem, "Offended Lands", in: idem, op. cit., p. 139.

22 The Club of Young Artists and Scientists published in their series another volume of Marczak-Oborski's poetry around the same time. Titled "Poszukiwania i anegdota" ("Investigations and anecdotes"), it was dedicated to the "memory of deceased poets" and illustrated with drawings by Marian Bogusz. According to the editorial information, both volumes were printed in January 1950. Graphic design was by Bogusz (covers with shapes of urban ruins and ships). Marczak-Oborski (1921–1987) debuted – as Juliusz Oborski – during the war, publishing his underground *Arkusz poetycki* as the 3rd issue of "Droga" magazine, which he edited. He took part in the September campaign and in the Warsaw Uprising, as a result of which he was a war prisoner in Mühlberg (he worked there as a forest worker, among others). He studied Polish and Philosophy at the University of Warsaw. In 1945 he was employed as an assistant at the Jagiellonian University which was interrupted due to an illness – he was treated for 18 months for tuberculosis in Zakopane. As an editor and critic, he worked with numerous magazines, such as "Kuźnica," "Nurt," "Po prostu," he also published his work during Stalinism, when he worked for the Central Theatre Board. Since 1956 he worked at the Art Institute of the Polish Academy of Sciences (PAN) where he was the head Contemporary Theatre Studio (Pracownia Teatr Współczesny); in 1982 he was awarded habilitation in the humanities. He published numerous works on the history of the theatre, particularly of the interwar period.

With his introduction of a poetic text, Dłubak performed a kind of political gesture: he formulated an intimate statement and expressed an artistic programme that was then also introduced through critical texts. He created images that were a lot like riddles – they had to be deciphered by an active viewer. This kind of thinking is intensely linked with the surrealist concept of the image as a poetic image, fully emerging only in the subject's mind; it is also linked with the role of photography as defined by surrealists. David Bate, drawing on Rosalind Krauss's semiotic interpretation of photography, argued that there is no such thing as surrealist photography, but rather there are sur-real meanings that such photographs generate. These meanings are produced through effected contradiction between the signified – the object of reference, and the signifier – the image. Surrealist photography *sensu stricto* generates "enigmatic" meanings, that is, it provokes cognitive confusion.²³ What we can see is uncertain, indefinite, entangled in unconscious processes of reception/reading. The author of an enigmatic content is not fully aware of the meaning he produces, while the viewer uses the contradiction between the signifier and the signified so that the work of imagination and memory can complete given image. The enigmatic effect stemming from the fracture of conventional representation of reality can also be generated by supplementing the image with text – either in the form of a title, or – as it was done in surrealist magazines – a more complex text. This produced both the effect of complementing the message as well as that of its dismantling, i.e. incoherence.²⁴ The disruption of the relationship between the signifier and the signified occurred both within the visual order, as well as on the grounds of linguistic logic. The latter was the source of the fundamental surrealist category of the "miraculous" (*le merveilleux*). Originally, it referred to the 16th- and 17th-century reflections of the purpose of poetry. At the time, this function was defined as the creation of an ephemeral, extraordinary image in the reader's mind. This mechanism resembled the workings of the emblem, where the pivotal relationship between image and text was meant to reveal a poetic image. This way, an elitist "esoteric language" was formed, a code, but also an egalitarian means of communication with uneducated masses, where ethical and religious content could be articulated.²⁵ Very often, both variants, the "low" and the "high," intermingled, producing, as a result, a dream-image that made a mark on the viewer's mind – an obsessive image that fixed itself within his body.²⁶ Within the surrealist universe, a photograph could become a matrix of reality upon which enigmatic meanings

23 D. Bate, *Photography and Surrealism. Sexuality, Colonialism and Social Dissent*, London, 2003, p. 22. The author writes about three types of the signifier that define the way photography was used to produce a "surrealist" meaning: a) mimetic (illustration, imitation), b) protophotographic (the photographed object is surrealist in its own right and then arranged or staged), c) enigmatic (both the photographed object – "the signified" – as well as the "signifier" – the print, the photographic means – are modified).

24 *Ibid.*, p. 32ff.

25 *Ibid.*, pp. 35–36.

26 M. Praz, *Studies in Seventeenth-Century Imagery*, London, 1963, p. 170. See also: K. Janicka, „Teoria poezji”, in: idem, *Światopogląd surrealizmu. Jego założenia i konsekwencje dla twórczości i teorii sztuki*, Warsaw, 1969, pp. 221–240.

could be imprinted. Reality and the subject's consciousness, together with its dreams, memories, desires, and para-psychic experiences, could meet and unite.

Contrary to what is commonly claimed, photography, as an element of the intertextual concept of the image, offers not so many new configurations of forms, but the ability to capture the relationship between reality and the work of eye and imagination. Only in space of encounter thus defined is there a room for experiencing "progression" in another dimension – political dimension that connects the trauma of war "from a while ago" with the actuality of emergent new reality. The latter, if Neruda's text is carefully followed, will be as tempting as bitter or even brutal: "At the last, your paradise is lost, / at the last, your garrison accursed, [...] at the last, the small sun of the paramo, / the dead day, / trembling, in its hospital of waves and stones, / reaches your ringless fingers".²⁷

Dłubak's photographs inspired with the poetry of Neruda were displayed as part of the 1st Exhibition of Modern Art (I Wystawa Sztuki Nowoczesnej). Their programmatic potential fitted well with the idea for this exhibition, which oscillated around the ideal of political engagement understood as shaping the viewers' aesthetic sensibilities. However, there were also other works by Dłubak on display, presented in the room dedicated to photomontages. Dłubak showed pages with enlarged images of parts of everyday objects (Fig. 3). Shown without a textual component, they worked with their scale, encouraging the viewers to immerse in the matter/object, the texture of the new universe of form. What was crucial here was the act of seeing – innovative forms were to provoke the viewers to reconstruct their visual consciousness and, this way, open up to the new reality of ideas. The object was formally de-actualised, structured, yet retained a distinct reference to the original. The realism of thus construed form was direct and unobvious at once, while the spatial dimension of works suggested a possibility of transforming art into the frames for everyday existence. Not unlike constructivist exhibition designs, including those made for propaganda purposes, where photo-murals played the main role (El Lissitzky et al.), or didactic boards made by Bauhaus, photography was here used as a medium outlining the new way of thinking about reality and of its artistic expression. In other words – photography was to explain painting that was incomprehensible to a common viewer. What was important here was the relationship between the viewer and his surroundings. The medium of photography was able to adequately capture and "reframe" reality for given didactic content. Andrzej Wróblewski's painting, *Treść uczuciowa rewolucji* (Emotional content of revolution), hanging nearby, did not offer equally clear conclusions about how to express social reality. Dłubak's proposal to approximate the object, a kind of journey of discovery, was, therefore, also a process of familiarising the eye with the new way of seeing.²⁸ This journey was to support the aesthetic revolution where the language of

27 P. Neruda, "The Magellan Heart", trans. Anthony Kerrigan, in: idem, *Selected Poems*, ed. Nathaniel Tarn, Boston, 1990, p. 209.

28 "New way of seeing" is also meant in a literal sense, since a "new vision" in photography meant a modern set of stylistic effects, shots in close-up, foreshortenings, and geometrical rendering,

“New Objectivity,” developed by Albert Renger-Patzsch among others, encountered a more radical and avant-garde programme – known for instance from the 1929 exhibition *Film und Foto* co-created by László Moholy-Nagy. This new filter of photography made possible a transformed seeing and representation of reality, as well as an adequate recognition of the role of various artworks in this process.



Fig. 3. Zbigniew Dłubak, *Plansza dydaktyczna I* [*The Didactic Plate no. 1*] – one of four black and white photographs, 90 x 60 x 16 cm, 1948/1999, ZACHĘTA – NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART.

Document – a matter of memory

As is well known, Władysław Strzemiński did not show his works at the 1st Exhibition of Modern Art. Two years earlier he had made a series of collages titled “To My Friends the Jews” (“Moim przyjaciółom Żydom”), where photography played an important role. The cycle was recently comprehensively analysed by Luiza Nader.²⁹ The scholar pointed to the artist’s use of photography, noticing its role in the complex mechanism of how the works affect the viewer. Collages employ repeti-

typical for the 1920s and 1930s, also within new objectivity (in Poland these two notions in photography were used interchangeably).

²⁹ Nader proposed an alternative version of the series title, *In Memory of Friends – Jews*, which she found in one of W. Strzemiński’s letters; L. Nader, “Teoria widzenia”, *rysunki wojenne*, “Pamięci przyjaciół – Żydów”, Warsaw, 2019, pp. 251–255.

tion and palimpsestic overlay of fragments of drawings made during the war with documentary images that functioned in the iconosphere of 1945–1946. Strzemiński used his original poetic titles. A method of working similar to that of Dłubak's is not surprising taking into consideration the period's propensity for allusiveness. Nevertheless, it is intriguing to trace the similarities in these works, since they both reveal the problem of confronting memory, as evoked by photography and its realism. Admittedly, Dłubak's photographs contain testimonies of a speaking subject rather than material "facts," such as print or reproduction. However, the metaphor of a journey, of entering and penetrating reality, defines the work of memory, which is required to approximate an experience of self/other, to express and overcome it.

Recovery after the experience of the camps – as an (un)conscious subtext – is additionally revealed through another text. I mean here the already mentioned poetic work of Marczak-Oborski, Dłubak's peer, at the time a debuting critic. The artist illustrated a poetic volume titled "The Romantic Gesture" ("Gest romantyczny") with three photographs showing "woodland" organic forms (Fig. 4, 5, 6) and one photomontage (Fig. 7). The poems, although interesting for historical reasons, are rather mediocre in artistic categories; in their poetic imagery and subject matter, some passages resemble Neruda's poetry that had already been known in Poland.



Fig. 4. Zbigniew Dłubak, *Untitled* [in:] Stanisław Marczak-Oborski, *The Romantic Gesture*, Warsaw, 1949.



Fig. 5. Zbigniew Dłubak, *Untitled* [in:] Stanisław Marczak-Oborski, *The Romantic Gesture*, Warsaw, 1949.



Fig. 6. Zbigniew Dłubak, *Untitled* [in:] Stanisław Marczak-Oborski, *The Romantic Gesture*, Warsaw, 1949.



Fig. 7. Zbigniew Dłubak, *Untitled* [in:] Stanisław Marczak-Oborski, *The Romantic Gesture*, Warsaw 1949.

In Marczak-Oborski's work, the subject confronts reality at the moment of transition. Perspectives "before" and "after" the war were clearly marked, when the new political order and new perception emerged: "[P]ożegnaj młodość śmieszoną górną / wczorajszym romantycznym gestem / abyś mógł światu dłonie podać / i jak towarzysz mówić: jestem" (say goodbye to pathetic youth / with a romantic gesture of yore / so you can greet the world / and tell it: here I am – as a comrade).³⁰ The caesura, however, is not very distinct because the poems written during the occupation are mixed with the post-war works, but also due to the accentuated temporal perspective of "now" – of the one who speaks, allowing him to observe the dynamics of changes that are mixed with memories and imagination. Memory seems to take precedence here, coming as a source of melancholia, doubt, and bitterness, a peculiar "homelessness": "Robotnicy mają twarde ręce, / Robotnicy mają siłę i partię, / A ty jesteś zmęczony – nic więcej; / Kibic, nie partner [...] Tobie zostały tylko oczy, / Patrzące z boku, / w zadumie" (Workers have hard hands, / Workers have party and power, / And you are tired – nothing more; / A fan, not a partner [...] You have only your eyes left, / Looking from aside, / in wonder).³¹ The existential note in these poems verges on escapism: "W cichutkim pochodzie

30 S. Marczak-Oborski, [untitled; an opening poem], in: idem, *Gest romantyczny*, Warsaw, 1949, n.p.

31 Idem, [untitled: "Robotnicy mają twarde ręce...", a closing poem], in: idem, *Gest romantyczny*, n.p.

robaczki i mrówki zgubione lasem, / milczeniem rozkwitną gałęzie i pnie wyrzeźbi spokój. / W tym świecie zapragnij pozostać, przytulić mchy do oczu, / las w ziemię wrośnięty dębami przytaknie ci bezruchem” (Marching quietly, worms and ants lost in woods, / branches will bloom with silence and trunks will be carved by calm. / Stay in this world, put your eyes to the moss, / the wood anchored with oaks will concur motionless)³². The poetry of Marczak-Oborski is more of a record of a crisis ingrained in the subject than an expression of excitement with “the new.” The photomontage that closes the volume, a portrait of the author overlaying a rising urban structure (perhaps of rebuilt Warsaw?) illustrates a specific kind of belief in what tomorrow shall bring – what shall be seen is important to the lyrical subject, yet it is alien (“Tunel i węgiel, stal i gmach, / Kombinat fabryk, portowy dźwig, / W trudzie, bez łez, budują świat, / Który będzie naprawdę ich” (Tunnel and carbon, steel and edifice, / Factory complex, a port crane, / With toil but no tears, building their world, / One that is truly theirs)³³) and it will not be able to conceal what had already been seen („Tramwaje kołem okrążają miasto, / Wplątując czerwień w płaską dal. / Wiozą niepokój – i nie uciekną, / nawinięty na taśmę szyn” (Trams circle the city, / Mixing red into flat horizon. / Carrying fear – it will never cease, / wrapped on the tape of rails)³⁴). The political aspect of the artistic programme revealed in the configuration of text and image consists not so much in the communication of ideas, but in the deepening of reflection on reality. This happens with full awareness of what happened with art during a wartime crisis, but also what surrealism was at the time – a return to the analysis of the “self”: “Skończył się irrealizm jako postawa i forma. / Stropieni artyści również poczuli stawiać na – czyn. / I uwierzyli w przemoc, w zbrojnie dźwięczące: imperium, / aby okłamać serce, drżące od trwogi i krwi” (The end of surrealism as attitude and form. / Troubled artists now want to act. / They believe in violence, in crimes chiming: empire, / to lie to their hearts trembling with fear and blood).³⁵

Photography presents itself both as a medium that reflects the new reality directly, a medium supported by the proponents of strict realism,³⁶ as well as a medium that allows one to approach the sphere of consciousness, and through this approach initiate a platform for communication between the subjects. This exact purpose was served by compositions modelled on painting, but primarily by “associations that lent an emotional tone to the work as a whole,” which were “dependent on the relationship of our consciousness with the objective side of the image.”³⁷ The documentary aspect of photography allows for showing the matter of the

32 Idem, “Fragment poematu”, in: idem, *Gest romantyczny*, op. cit., n. p.

33 S. Marczak-Oborski, *** [untitled: “Robotnicy mają twarde ręce...”], in: idem, *Gest romantyczny*, n.p.

34 Idem, „Wiersz z pytaniami”, in: idem, *Gest romantyczny*, n.p.

35 Idem, „Z poszukiwań”, in: idem, *Gest romantyczny*, n.p.

36 He wrote: “[...] the essence of photographic interpretation, its attribute, is its faithfulness and directness towards the object.” Z. Dłubak, „Z rozmyślań o fotografice. Seria pierwsza”, *Świat Fotografii* 1948, no. 10, p. 2.

37 Ibid.

world creatively, in fact, in the way that makes it unreal, while the introduction of the text – for maintaining the space for dialogue: “One should not [...] be afraid to use a poetic metaphor” that defines the direction in which the image works.³⁸ The world of forms was to open up to social space, to include in its scope the consciousness of an individual who could participate in an ephemeral spectacle from which the subject emerged as aesthetically and morally improved. A gaze that dissected reality, an eye that touched upon the surface of objects was an eye of that who becomes himself – not so much learns to see anew, because he believes in a new political reality and his participation in it, but hopes for the emergence of its component that reveals a humanist, communal aspect of socialism. Understandably, the notion of utopia should be mentioned here as a side note. However, on the other hand, aesthetic programme thus constructed could be seen as perilous in ideological categories – on the one hand, it offered the author the ability to initially control his message, to use the text in a persuasive function, on the other hand, with its inclination to activate the interpreter, it allowed for an uncontrolled generation of images that became entangled in a range of different subtexts.

In Strzemiński's collages, the act of collecting fragments of reality through photography takes on a different aspect. Photographs clipped from newspapers are cropped and formed through analogy with drawings, but – much like in Dłubak's work – their referential function is “distorted” in an individual perspective which engages both memory (palimpsests, drawings, copies) and text (poetic titles). The image is “montaged,” while its dynamic is poetic, which can be defined in the context of the theory of vision formulated back then, where the major role is attributed to the relationship between seeing and knowing. “In the process of seeing, it is not so much what is captured by the eye that is important, but what an individual is aware of seeing”³⁹; more important than representing the observed world is the “human cognitive activity”.⁴⁰ In this respect, Dłubak's reflection is analogous – the reality is important since it is seen (“vision” in Strzemiński's theory), and then this experience can be expressed in an art form (this act of expressing involves knowledge – “conscious seeing”). At the same time, this expression was conceived as deeply realist: “There is one criterion. What is identical to visual consciousness – is a realist. The means that express the truth of visual consciousness – are realist means, yet they might not be subjectively considered as such by everyone. E.g. to a visual consciousness developed to a lower degree its higher kinds might seem non-realist.”⁴¹ Therefore, what seemed enigmatic in Dłubak's photographs was to become – through the education of the viewer's eye – realist and direct: “This way, reality can become artistic material in the fullest sense, which rather than reduce realism to directly represented images of nature, opens up perspectives for new means of

38 Ibid.

39 W. Strzemiński, *Teoria widzenia*, Krakow, 1969, p. 15.

40 Ibid., p. 16.

41 Ibid., p. 21.

artistic expression [...]”.⁴² The role of the text would be to offer a further elucidation of the nature of the process of transition, that is, a poetic metaphor that appeals to emotions so that formalism (“idealistic subjective response”) could be avoided and the conditions of the observation of the object are expressed with utmost precision. What helped avoid formalism in photography and allowed for creating a realist image (broadly understood) was the medium itself, treated as mechanical, “pure” and therefore directly representing reality. Fundamental here was, therefore, the modernist concept of the specificity of photographic means, which was a starting point for the reconfiguration of forms through seeing. In a sense, the process of perception had to entail a deconstruction of this mechanism, each time dealing with “conscious seeing” that could work both as a barrier as well as a facilitator of communication. “Conscious seeing” was then both an element of artistic strategy, as well as its goal, since the novelty of forms worked to shape the visual consciousness of a common viewer, and ultimately: “Each historical period meets society with new challenges, forces it to observe new topics, produced by the life of each era. In order to see this new content of a new topic, one needs to change the mode of observation. In order to find in old objects their new historical context, one needs to find in them new, real components of seeing”.⁴³ New challenges – let us refer to them as the task of overcoming the crisis within the new political reality – did indeed produce new topics. Therefore, the mode of observation had to be changed: deconstruction of seeing was necessary. A capacious concept of the image as a conglomerate of what and how is seen was the essence of realism thus construed. The camera could work as an ancillary tool that helped observe seeing, as Strzemiński once noted.⁴⁴ So this kind of redaction of realism could be seen both in terms of a surrealist/poetic image, as well as a more conceptual, abstract image; the difference could be determined, for instance, by a text – poetry or propaganda, etc. – important in the context of the process of “observing” visual consciousness. Undoubtedly, equally important in this case is that both artists displayed a strong and long-term interest in the synthesis of work and image and its artistic consequences.

42 Z. Dłubak, op. cit., p. 3.

43 W. Strzemiński, op. cit., p. 21.

44 For instance, when he analyses accommodational seeing, which allows him to argue with George Berkeley’s theory, Strzemiński emphasises the similarities between the structure of the eye and that of the camera, which is compatible with the conclusions of 19th-century photographers and theoreticians inspired by Helmholtz’s theory (Henry Peter Emerson), and based on the comparisons of the structure of the eye and that of camera obscura made since the times of Kepler. I. Luba, „Wprowadzenie do nowej edycji ‘Teorii widzenia’ Władysława Strzemińskiego”, in: W. Strzemiński, *Teoria widzenia*, Łódź, 2016, pp. 15–16. Notably, Lenin, among others, examined Helmholtz’s theory and found it inconsistent in terms of philosophical reflections on imagining objects as symbols; he recognised that his approach was occasionally consistent with materialism (“inconsistent Kantian”); Wł. Lenin, *Materializm a empiriokrytycyzm. Krytyczne uwagi o pewnej reakcyjnej filozofii*, in: idem, *Dzieła*, vol. 14, Warsaw, 1949, p. 267.

Representation – Marxism and lyricism

Dłubak's and Strzemiński's approaches show affinities also in terms of an innovative approach to Marxist aesthetics. Up till now, there have been few attempts to provide an answer to the question (posed by Piotrowski among others) how modern visuality, including its discussed "surrealist" component, was linked with a Marxist discourse.⁴⁵

According to Strzemiński, the artist makes an impact on reality presented through the reason-engaging process of seeing rather than represents it directly. A historical and social framing of seeing, as well as becoming actively aware of one's own "visual consciousness" and possibilities of its shaping, are guaranteed by the creational and intellectual factor, which – as Nader argues – was desired in Marxist theory but, in practice, it was criticised. In this discussion of the problem of realism and a related issue of photography, I would like to refer to "reflection theory." An important part of the Marxist theory of cognition, it refers to the relationship between consciousness and reality (matter).⁴⁶ In most general terms, it posits that humans are not creative by nature and are only capable of making reflections of objective reality (matter). In such understanding, the subject is cast in the role of a photographic camera, that is, a mechanical tool. It is the metaphor of photography that Marxist thinkers would propose when they explained the term of "reflection" in non-philosophical terms – as a physical-optical reflection, a copy of the original: "[...] in [Lenin's] 'Materialism and Empirio-Criticism', the words reflection, photography, image, print, copy, etc. are used as synonyms or interchangeably [...]."⁴⁷

45 A lot has been written on the links between Strzemiński's theory of vision and Marxist aesthetics; e.g. Stefan Morawski examined its polemical attitude to Marxist aesthetics (particularly in reference to aspects of 20th-century art): S. Morawski, "Teoria Strzemińskiego – pro i contra", *Przegląd Humanistyczny* 1958, no. 4, pp. 145–151. After 1989 this issue was investigated by Grzegorz Sztabiński (G. Sztabiński, „Od 'obiektywnej rzeczy' do wyrazu świadomości wzrokowej. Koncepcja sztuki Władysława Strzemińskiego”, in: W. Strzemiński, *Wybór pism estetycznych*, Kraków, 2006, pp. VII-LXVI), Jerzy Lepieszkiewicz (J. Lepieszkiewicz, „Władysław Strzemiński jako filozof”, *Stupskie Studia Filozoficzne* 2008, No. 7, pp. 139–160), Agnieszka Rejniak-Majewska (A. Rejniak-Majewska, „Historia oka według Strzemińskiego”, in: J. Lubiak, ed., *Powidoki życia. Władysław Strzemiński i prawa dla sztuki*, Łódź, 2012, pp. 249–272), and Tomasz Załuski (T. Załuski, „Władysław Strzemiński po wojnie: modernizacja, marksizm, socrealizm”, in: A. Sumorok, T. Załuski, eds., *Socrealizmy i modernizacje*, Łódź, 2017, pp. 229–268).

46 Reflection theory has been often interpreted, as well as criticised; its foundations were formulated by Lenin in *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism* (1908). An attempt to organise this issue from a Marxist perspective comes from Peter Katona who argues that "reflection theory" is often mistaken with the theory of "man as a maker" and examines the problem of "activity of conscious reflection" that could help connect those two together. Peter Katona, "O treści teorii odbicia", *Acta Universitatis Lodziensis. Folia Philosophica* 1981, no. 1, p. 113.

47 *Ibid.*, p. 116. The term comes from the writings of F. Engels – "Spiegelbild" (mirror reflection); Engels wrote: "Is our mind able to cognate the real world, are we able to create in our imagination and our notions a truthful reflection of reality?"; he also used a semantically identical term of "Abbild" – an image of reality existing outside us, when he wrote about "sense-perception";

One can suppose that thus construed reflection theory was an important problem for artists with declared Marxist sympathies but wished to retain the freedom of formal pursuits. However, according to some scholars, it could entail some kind of activity on the part of the subject, since reception and reflection of reality were considered a conscious process, based on reason, expressed in practical activity, and ensuring the individual's contact with society (a social-historical aspect). This way, consciousness did not have to be responsible for the construction of reality, but for its creative representation, since the qualities of objects are reflected in the subject's impressions when his or her cognitive process sustains and reproduces the laws of matter:

Human consciousness reflects reality and thus constructs scientific abstractions, creates them, brings them to life in the process of cognition and this is how its creative, constructive potential is being realised. Meanwhile, scientific abstractions are reflections, copies, imprints. In this sense, art is making representations of reality, while the latter (representation) is a creative process.⁴⁸

In Dłubak's and Strzemiński's understanding, the subject, the artist as well as the viewer, is, understandably, a creative observer engaged with reality. Their approach corresponds with the tenets of dialectical materialism and constitutes, in a sense, an attempt to resolve the contradiction between reflection theory (defined by Lenin among others) and another Marxist idea – the theory of human as a maker (as formulated by Marx). By no means was this approach an orthodox one at the time.⁴⁹ Both Dłubak as well as Strzemiński relied on an expanded conception of realism, which, on the formal level, could be realised in a non-figurative image. They both put the focus on active consciousness, its function and its dynamic in the cognitive process.⁵⁰

W. Lenin, op. cit., p. 111, 128; "Engels says nothing of symbols or hieroglyphs, but of copies, imprints, images, mirror reflections of things," Ibid., p. 266.

48 P. Katona, op. cit., p. 121.

49 Dłubak offers a critique of commonly shared opinions about socialist realism when he writes: "Yet if because of our present tasks we lose our perspective – we are not mature enough for these tasks, and worse still if the mistake is not acknowledged but hidden behind a false interpretation of a sound theory. Socialist realism understood in this manner does not grow from a great, revolutionary process and is hardly a stage in art's further developed with new experiences and forward-thinking. The idea of socialist art is vulgarised." Z. Dłubak, „O niektórych aspektach marksistowskiej teorii sztuki (Na marginesie I Ogólnopolskiej Wystawy Plastyki)”, in: idem, *Wybrane teksty o sztuce 1948–1977*, Art. Text, Galeria Remont, Warsaw, 1977, p. 26.

50 "[...] new art, the art of socialist realism does not put forward any preconditions regarding technical skill, yet its practice forces us to take a scientific stance on history and to organise our notions of contemporaneity, in short, it requires from us a consistent materialist worldview, which is Marxism with its unity of theory and action [...]"

Z. Dłubak, op.cit., p. 35. Sometime later he made the following comment: "I would like to recall at least two meanings that were then attached [at the time of the Nieborów conference debates – K.D.] to socialist realism. They reflected rather precisely the variety of ideological approaches. In 1949-1950 we understood that new art would be connected with new condi-

Equally relevant is it to take a closer look at the notion of “matter” that Strzemiński employs in this theory. It is tempting to suggest that Dłubak used this term playfully and indirectly through his use of a poetic intertext – Neruda’s poem *The Three Material Songs*. The title is significant in this context, while the issue of the artistic language discussed in this poem should be regarded in ideological and aesthetic terms – as a problem of both Marxist and modern form.

In Marxism, matter is a primary being, a foundation of eternally changing world.⁵¹ Strzemiński wrote:

We are the same matter as the matter that lies beyond us, and there is no artificial, isolating partition that can be erected. Matter is continuous and each of its parts works on another part. [...] Negating the material changes that we undergo in the cognitive process would entail, in fact, that we experience not with our bodies (eyes etc.), but with our spirits, which are not transformed when they encounter matter. Only then would it be justified to present the objective world of external objects as a true one and eliminate the internal world as spiritual, subjective, and false. But if we recognise that we are bodies, then we should base our visual consciousness on all observed facts of the material process of seeing.⁵²

Nader interpreted Strzemiński’s definition of matter also in scientific categories, i.a. in the context of natural science, emphasising the physiological and “corporeal” aspect of this concept, which helped cross the boundary between the subject and the object. This way, she shows the artist as one who – perhaps unintentionally – moves beyond dialectical materialism.⁵³ However, Strzemiński could also be expressing specifically defined materialism, one that expands the definition of matter in such a way that a significant role is ascribed to consciousness and its activity

tions that formed in Poland. The most important change was the social control of means of production, which was to lead directly to a socialist system. Art was to be socialist as well. The fundamental theoretical premise of this system was dialectical materialism. Art understood as a part of culture, which is determined by society, is connected with reality, therefore it is realist. It shows not only the existence of extra-subjective world but accepts its impact and introduces this influence into its ideology. This way, socialist realism meant new art for new times, which was shaped by the natural rules of dialectical development.” Z. Dłubak, „Przyczynek do sporu o społeczną rolę sztuki (1946-1950)”, in: idem, *Wybrane teksty o sztuce 1948-1977*, p. 10.

51 There are numerous Marxist definitions of matter, yet the most general – and at the same time the most controversial within the movement itself – is Lenin’s (gnoseological) definition of matter, according to which matter is an objective reality (not so much a substrate but a collection of material objects), independent of consciousness and perceived by the senses. According to Lenin, there is an infinite number of material objects (“inexhaustibility of matter”). Curiously, this definition comes with a metaphor of photography – “matter is a philosophical category that describes objective reality given to individuals through impressions copied, photographed, reflected by our senses, yet which exists independently from these senses.” W. Lenin, op. cit., p. 145. Of course, such a limited definition stood in contradiction with scientific theories (physics, natural sciences), since it did not consider elements of reality that were invisible to the “naked eye.”

52 W. Strzemiński, *Teoria widzenia*, Krakow, 1969, pp. 161-162.

53 L. Nader, op. cit., p. 109.

(reflection theory) without any damage to the creative potential of an individual or even broader – to society. Moreover, we cannot forget that at the time it was not only the philosophical academic magazines that were involved in the discussion on key notions of Marxism, including the notion of matter and the very definition of this intellectual trend.⁵⁴ After all: “A materialist approach is a scientific approach”.⁵⁵

Reality, understood through the lens of a broad definition of matter, is closely tied to the condition of the subject and his or her inherent visual consciousness.⁵⁶ To interrogate reality means to interrogate the subject as well – which is particularly significant in the moment of crisis of both these categories when confronted with the experience of the world after the catastrophe. This is why it seems crucial to highlight the position of the one who looks – a witness/observer, like the one in the series *To My Friends – Jews*; this condition is also relevant in the context of Magellan’s metaphorical journey, yet it would be even more directly related to the “programme” of a photo camera. The photographer is always a witness, he or she creates “upon” the matter of the experience of observation. The modernist postulate of the specificity of photographic means, so passionately defended by Dłubak, could also find a Marxist justification – the vital distinction between a direct “image” and a rejected “symbol” that requires interpretation: “An image must unavoidably presuppose an objective reality of that whose image is being recreated”.⁵⁷ Photography defended the “surrealist,” poetic conception of the image from the claim that it was cast off from matter.

Miłosz first published his translation of Neruda’s poems in “Odrodzenie” in 1947, while two issues later a fragment of Strzemiński’s theory of vision was pub-

54 Published for instance in “Odrodzenie”: P. Konrad, „Marksizm bez przyłbicy”, *Odrodzenie* 1947, nos. 14-15, p. 10. Particularly relevant is the following fragment: “Now and then we hear calls to move beyond the dogmatic repetition and talmudic commenting of texts to develop and modernise Marxist theory. Yet, most often, those who encourage others to sail on deeper waters cowardly stick to the shore, feeling safe only with the ground of classic formulations under their feet and hysterically avoiding the depths awaiting those who venture onto the dangerous vortices of revisionism.” Another writer who wrote about Marxism and debates around it for “Odrodzenie” and “Kuznica”, particularly in the context of socialist humanism, was Adam Schaff, who argued with the above-cited text by Konrad.

55 Ibid. “A scholar who [...] accepts the authority of experience but does not recognise the authority of a priori judgements, who, finally, reviews critically his own notions and methods – fulfils all the postulates of dialectical materialism.” Another text by this author, *Marksizm nieprzedawniony*, was published in No. 23 of “Odrodzenie” from that year – notably, the same issue featured translations of poems by Pablo Neruda.

56 Strzemiński wrote: “the alleged objectivism of seeing objects as they are ‘in themselves’, independent of the human visual apparatus, reduces the verifiable, measurable and definable act of seeing – to an isolated notion, to abstraction that we construe as an independent entity. Processes at work in matter are thus deprived of material content, defined not as process of material change, but as an immobile and unchangeable idea. This illusory objectivism is, in fact, a scholastic return to idealist logic. The highest achievement of the middle class – empirical materialism – cannot be opposed with logical idealism (reactionary to it), but with dialectical materialism,” W. Strzemiński, *Teoria widzenia*, Krakow, 1969, pp. 232–233.

57 Polemics with Helmholtz’s theory of symbols in: W. Lenin, op. cit., p. 269.

lished, corresponding with a programme formulated by Dłubak, who owned a typescript of Strzemiński's work and must have also known it from his conversations with the artist.⁵⁸ Dłubak's photographs and his aesthetic programme published in "Świat Fotografii" display a distinct resemblance with the theory of vision. Notably, in the published fragment, Strzemiński wrote about two kinds of realism, the first based on three-dimensional/renaissance perspective and immobile vision, and another, based on a physiological human vision that included the temporal aspect. Strzemiński considered the latter kind of realism a revolutionary event after which humans were no longer reduced to "suppliers of objects" within the reality of capitalist system: "In this case we receive not the realism of things and commodity that is in front of us, but the realism of the visual process – a complex, intricate, and deeply human phenomenon".⁵⁹ This way Strzemiński defined the process of a shift away from figurative art that relied on three-dimensional perspective towards modernity – since seeing is no longer "dehumanised," but based on "real seeing and a will to form." And then – quite surprisingly – this process would produce "lyricism":

And at least at this point there are no limits to this complex and lyrical realism that communicates what we feel and responds to what we see. And the subsequent development of painting moves along the line of increasingly greater enrichment of the visual content, increasingly greater contradiction between the produced relationships and a growing significance of the act of conscious selection as a response to the chaos and contradictions of observed world. The human unity of the process of seeing and the human unity of lyricism as responses to the vision of the world.⁶⁰

It is hard to imagine words that could offer a stronger inspiration for Dłubak's programme, as aware as he was of the surrealist conception of the poetic image, and capable of emphasising the "lyrical," emotional space of dialogue between the artist's consciousness and reality, also the reality of the viewer.

The concept of the image rooted in surrealism, closely linked with the Marxist theory of cognition, shed some light on the words of Porębski: "We reject surrealism in the name of socialist reality [...], but we also propose modern art powerfully drawn from the tradition of surrealism".⁶¹ The opposition between surrealism and socialist realism, seemingly obvious, can be upheld, but modernity also has a realist and socialist tone. Not only was surrealism – as Jarecka wrote in the context of Andrzej Wróblewski's *Surrealist Execution* ("Rozstrzelanie surrealistyczne") – a way to return to the experience of "surrealist" cruelty at the moment of cultural crisis, to confront an uncertain status of subject/artist located between the perspective of the oppressor, victim, and witness,⁶² but – primarily – a frame for a systematic,

58 See: P. Słodkowski, „Kalendarium”, in: Z. Dłubak, *Teoria sztuki Zbigniewa Dłubaka*, ed. M. Ziółkowska, Warsaw, 2013, p. 247.

59 W. Strzemiński, „Widzenie impresjonistów (Rozdział książki o malarstwie mającej się nibawem ukazać w druku)”, *Odrodzenie* 1947, no. 25, p. 4-5.

60 *Ibid.*, p. 303.

61 P. Piotrowski, *op. cit.*, p. 310.

62 D. Jarecka, *op. cit.*, p. 11.

theoretical reworking of these problems through a conscious interplay of relations between reality and individual and collective consciousness. Formal choices had a deeply existential meaning, but they were also related to ideological stances. A surrealist gesture could, certainly, be a political or even a romantic gesture: it showed the direction of the revolutionary transformation of the consciousness of individual and society.⁶³

Consequently, if the specific surrealist concept of the image is considered, one that emerged in the avant-garde of Polish art in the first years after the war, it seems it would not be fully understood without a reference to the Marxist understanding of the relationship between the subject and reality. Focused on the medium of photography, Dłubak's aesthetic programme connects with Strzemiński's theory of vision, and even seems to be partly derived from it or polemical towards it. Postulates published by Dłubak in "Świat Fotografii" gain their justification not only as derived from formal similarities defined with a general term of "poetics." Confrontation with the "achievements of French surrealism" takes place within the frameworks of the concept of the image as a dynamic space, a space open to reality and linked with individual and collective consciousness, a space able to shape such consciousness.⁶⁴

References

- Bate, D., *Photography and Surrealism. Sexuality, Colonialism and Social Dissent*, London, 2003.
- Dłubak, Z., "Z rozmyślań o fotografice. Seria pierwsza", *Świat Fotografii* 1948, no. 10, p. 2.
- Dłubak, Z., "Z rozmyślań o fotografice (II)", *Świat Fotografii* 1948, no. 11, p. 6.
- Dłubak, Z., *Wybrane teksty o sztuce 1948-1977*, Art Text, Galeria Remont, Warsaw, 1977, p. 24-35.
- Janicka, K., *Światopogląd surrealizmu. Jego założenia i konsekwencje dla twórczości i teorii sztuki*, Warsaw, 1969, pp. 221-240.
- Jap, "Pisarze chilijscy o Polsce", *Odrodzenie*, 1948, no. 2, p. 4.
- Jarecka, D., "Surrealizm i polityka", in: D. Jarecka, B. Piwowarska, *Erna Rosenstein. Mogę powtarzać tylko nieświadomie*, Warsaw, 2014, p. 27-47.
- Jarecka, D., "Artysta na ruinach. Sztuka polska lat 40. i surrealistyczne konotacje", *Miejsce. Studia nad sztuką i architekturą polską XX i XXI wieku*, 2016, no. 2, p. 5-27.
- Jmn, "W obronie poety Pablo Nerudy", *Odrodzenie* 1948, no. 18, p. 4.

⁶³ According to Michael Löwy, surrealism and romanticism – as specific worldviews – linked a "revolt of spirit" with "social revolution." See: M. Löwy, *Morning Star: Surrealism, Marxism, Anarchism, Situationism, Utopia*, Austin, 2009, p. 29. This aspect is also relevant in the context of Dłubak's programme, because he both declares the need to refer to a local – "national" – avant-garde tradition (formism), but at the same time, featured poetic texts often confront romantic tradition, Polish and other. In the immediate aftermath of the war – "Odrodzenie" and other forums – sought to reinterpret 19th-century (realist) poetry and prose, primarily Mickiewicz, but also French writers such as Flaubert and Hugo. See for instance: J. Przyboś, „Ręce za lud walczące” [on the poem by Adam Mickiewicz], *Odrodzenie* 1947, no. 8, p. 4.

⁶⁴ Z. Dłubak, „Z rozmyślań o fotografice (II)", *Świat Fotografii* 1948, no. 11, p. 6.

- Katona, P., "O treści teorii odbicia", *Acta Universitatis Lodziensis. Folia Philosophica*, 1981, no. 1, pp. 113-124.
- Konrad, P., "Marksizm bez przyłbicy", *Odrodzenie*, 1947, nos. 14-15, p. 10.
- Lachowski, M., *Nowocześni po katastrofie*, Lublin, 2013, p. 180-195.
- Lenin, Wł., *Materializm a empiriokrytycyzm. Krytyczne uwagi o pewnej reakcyjnej filozofii*, Warsaw, 1949.
- Lepieszkiwicz, J., "Władysław Strzemiński jako filozof", *Słupskie Studia Filozoficzne*, 2008, no. 7, p. 139-160.
- Löwy, M., *Morning Star: Surrealism, Marxism, Anarchism, Situationism, Utopia*, Austin, 2009.
- Luba, I., „Wprowadzenie do nowej edycji «Teorii widzenia» Władysława Strzemińskiego”, in: W. Strzemiński, *Teoria widzenia*, Łódź, 2016, p. 7-42.
- Marczak-Oborski, S., *Gest romantyczny*, Warsaw, 1949.
- Marczak-Oborski, S., *Poszukiwania i anegdota*, Warsaw, 1950.
- Miłosz, Cz., [Słowo od tłumacza], *Odrodzenie*, 1947, no. 23 (132), p. 5.
- Morawski, S., "Teoria Strzemińskiego – pro i contra", *Przegląd Humanistyczny*, 1958, no. 4, pp. 145-151.
- Nader, L., «Teoria widzenia», rysunki wojenne, «Pamięci przyjaciół – Żydów», Warsaw, 2019.
- Neruda, P., *Residence on Earth, and Other Poems*, trans. Angel Flores, New York, 1946.
- Neruda, P., *Selected Poems*, ed. N. Tarn, Boston, 1990.
- Piotrowski, P., "Surrealistyczne interregnum", in: *Mistrzowi Mieczysławowi Porębskiemu – uczniowie*, eds. T. Gryglewicz, M. Hussakowska-Szysko, L. Kalinowski, W. Bałus, A. Małkiewicz, Krakow, 2001, pp. 297-313.
- Piwowarska, B., "Inżynier i majsterkowicz. O fotoszkiecach Jadwigi Maziarskiej", in: *Kolekcjonowanie świata: Jadwiga Maziarska – listy i szkice*, ed. B. Piwowska, Warsaw, 2005, pp. 7-35.
- Praz, M., *Studies in Seventeenth-Century Imagery*, London, 1963.
- Przyboś, J., "Ręce za lud walczące [o wierszu Mickiewicza]", *Odrodzenie* 1947, no. 8, p. 4.
- Rejniak-Majewska, A., *Historia oka według Strzemińskiego*, in: *Powidoki życia. Władysław Strzemiński i prawa dla sztuki*, Łódź, 2012, pp. 249-272.
- Strzemiński, W., "Widzenie impresjonistów (Rozdział książki o malarstwie mającej się nibawem ukazać w druku)", *Odrodzenie*, 1947, no. 25, pp. 4-5.
- Strzemiński, W., *Teoria widzenia*, Kraków, 1969.
- Sztabiński, G., "Od 'obiektywnej rzeczy' do wyrazu świadomości wzrokowej. Koncepcja sztuki Władysława Strzemińskiego", in: W. Strzemiński, *Wybór pism estetycznych*, Kraków, 2006.
- Ziółkowska, M., ed., *Teoria sztuki Zbigniewa Dłubaka*, Warsaw, 2013.
- Urbanowicz, B., "O nowy program fotografii", *Świat Fotografii* 1947, nos. 1-2, p. 2.
- Załoski, T., *Władysław Strzemiński po wojnie: modernizacja, marksizm, socrealizm*, in: *Socrealizm i modernizacja*, eds. A. Sumorok, T. Załoski, Łódź, 2017, pp. 229-268.
- Ziębińska-Lewandowska, K., *Między dokumentalnością a eksperymentem. Krytyka fotograficzna w Polsce w latach 1946-1989*, Warsaw, 2014.

Piotr Majewski

INSTITUTE OF CULTURE STUDIES,
MARIA CURIE-SKŁODOWSKA UNIVERSITY, POLAND
ORCID: 0000-0001-9341-3848
<https://doi.org/10.31338/2657-6015ik.30.7>

Constructing the canon: exhibiting contemporary Polish art abroad in the Cold War era

Abstract

The article focuses on the attempts of constructing and presenting the canon of Polish modern and contemporary art in the West after World War II. Initially, the leading role was played by Colourists – painters representing the tradition of Post-Impressionism. After 1956 the focus shifted towards artists who drew in their practice on *tachisme* and *informel*. However, the most enduring effects brought the consistent promotion of the interwar Polish Constructivism and its postwar followers. The article discusses the subsequent stages of this process, from the famous exhibition at the Paris Galerie Denise René in 1957, through exhibitions such as *Peinture moderne polonaise. Sources et recherches (Modern Polish Painting. Sources and Experiments)* from the late 1960s, up to the monumental *Présences polonaises (Polish Presences)* from 1983 (both in Paris), showing that these efforts contributed to securing a permanent position of Polish Constructivism within the global heritage of 20th-century art.

Keywords: art in Poland after 1945, Polish art abroad, exhibition's history, constructivism, canon

Introduction

Any discussion of the way the canon of Polish art was constructed and presented in the West during communism must be preceded by identification of a relevant timeline. When the conceptual underpinnings of this practice are considered parallel to the employed strategies and tactics, in other words, when both the process of formulating the objectives and the means used to achieve them are given sufficient attention, it transpires that the basic structure of the canon was constructed in

the 1950s and '60s. This text concentrates on this particular period, which does not mean that artworks from other decades are not considered. On the contrary, numerous such examples are mentioned, yet their discussion is less of a systematic presentation and more of a list of examples that illustrate the existence of permanent features of exhibiting practices during communism and their consequences for the present.

At the start, it has to be noted that this analysis does not concern the issue of the actual success of the canon-forming practices, since this would require in-depth research of the international reception of Polish art that reaches beyond the scope of this text. However, the need for undertaking such inquiry needs to be emphasised. A fundamental issue is at stake here: the effectiveness of inserting Polish art, or even East-Central European art, into the Western and later global art historical narrative. Hopefully, an account of events presented in this text is another step towards such research. Meanwhile, the main objective of this text is to offer an answer to the question why at that point in time Polish authorities chose their specific *modus operandi* to construct the canonical image of modern Polish art for international viewers.

As far as exhibiting modern art outside Poland during the political division into Eastern and Western Europe is concerned, the notion of the "canon" would need to be understood as a list of representative artists whose work was most often featured at official exhibitions of Polish art. However, this kind of understanding of the term is merely a preliminary diagnosis of the problem, for it is far more important to identify the ideological message behind the promotion of Polish art abroad. Therefore, the way it was presented requires, on the one hand, a reconstructive perspective that would use distinct examples to retrace the logic of the process that shaped it. On the other hand, it welcomes reflections on the stability and nature of this process.

Two dominating types of exhibitions are among the shows that need to be considered. One involves those organised for Biennale events. Apart from the Venice Biennale also two other international art exhibitions were significant during the discussed period: the São Paulo Biennial in Brazil, with its first edition in 1951, and the Biennale de Paris, initiated with great energy in 1959. Another is prestigious exhibitions of Polish art presented on the occasion of important events such as national anniversaries. While the nature of the first type of exhibitions (overviews of recent trends in art) favoured the selection of artists currently active, those organised to accompany particular celebrations tended to highlight the genealogy and transformations of Polish modern art over a longer period.

The canon was constructed around three main movements in art: Colourism, "modern" art (mainly non-geometrical abstraction and figuration promoted as metaphorical art), as well as constructivism and its contemporary variations. Examination of each subsequent exhibition suggests that the Polish authorities focused on the latter of the listed movements quite early on. It is hardly surprising, then, that exhibitions of constructivism constitute the central interest of this text. Other listed events, although given much attention and effort, ultimately stand as a "prelude" to making constructivism the central reference for the canon of Polish

modernity. For this reason, the text omits several exhibitions of contemporary art, particularly those organised in the 1970s and '80s, because they did not bring any significant revisions of the canon. Meanwhile, analyses of contemporary exhibitions that placed Polish constructivism as a central element (organised after the political transition of 1989), discussed in the following part of this text, serve to emphasise their consistency but also to highlight their difference from the preceding shows.

The fact that at the time Poland had a canon of modern artists who were consistent, albeit not very coherently featured at discussed shows is particularly surprising when we realise that it developed fully when the doctrine of socialist realism was dismissed in Poland and artists keenly observed stylistic developments of Western art. Artists, and later art critics and historians who served as curators, confronted their prior experience in art and exhibition-making with categories developed by Western art, engaged in their reception and adaptation to more or less autonomous local contexts. When these circumstances are taken into consideration yet another question has to be put forth: can the effort of constructing the modern canon be seen as a process whereby Polish art was adjusted to fit the Western model, or rather as an attempt to manifest certain independence or at least specificity of Polish art?

Generally speaking, the issue discussed here can be explained in terms of what Piotr Piotrowski described as the reluctance of the so-called art of the margins to succumb to the complete domination of the Western stylistic “purity”. Piotrowski insisted on the existence of “local artistic canons” related to the multiplicity of the margins and remaining in a certain relationship with the centre; he also identified their specificity through stylistic categories. He found illustrations of his thesis in the art of Russian cubo-futurism, Polish formism, local variants of surrealism and various global manifestations of conceptualism.¹ For instance, in the case of the latter, Piotrowski was convinced that although no one questions the Anglo-Saxon paradigm of conceptual art, it proves insufficient to describe and explain conceptualism in non-Western countries. Such research perspective – he claimed – “allows for recovery of the historic, political and contextual specificity of the work produced in each area by addressing particular local resonance of its meaning, its diachronic character and function within given societies”.² In other words, what is at stake in Piotrowski’s view is to preserve this specificity so that it is not completely lost when a Western-centric analytical perspective is applied. These remarks find their confirmation in the examples discussed below. What was consistent in these exhibitions was that despite the changing sets of featured artists they always made distinct efforts to demonstrate that Polish art was part of the Western European canon, while its uniqueness, that is, its originality and specificity was emphasised at the same time. How successful were these efforts?

1 Cf. P. Piotrowski, *Art and Democracy in Post-Communist Europe*, transl. A. Brzyski, London, 2012, p. 32.

2 *Ibid.*, p. 34.

First the colourists

Colourists featured at the first official post-war presentation of modern Polish art abroad that took place at the Musée d'art moderne in Paris in 1946, as part of an international exhibition of contemporary art organised under the auspices of UNESCO.³ According to Natalie Adamson, the French organisers of this large exhibition sought to emphasise the role of the École de Paris in global art. This purpose was served by additional exhibition spaces works by foreign artists based in Paris were on display: the Spanish artists of the École de Paris, as well as Hungarian and Polish artists.⁴ The exhibition of Polish art included also artists based in Great Britain, so ultimately three geographical locations where Polish artists were active were singled out: France, Britain, and Poland.

The shape of this exhibition can partly be reconstructed on the basis of an account by Wanda Ładniewska, at the time a permanent correspondent of the Paris edition of "Gazeta Polska".⁵ The part that presented artists based in Poland was quite unified. Each of the thirty artists showed one work. Among them were works by five artists who were active before the war but passed away before it was ended: Olga Boznańska, Tytus Czyżewski, Roman Kramsztyk, Józef Pankiewicz, and Waław Wąsowicz. The exhibition also featured works by a younger generation of Polish artists, mostly colourists. Ładniewska emphasised the impact of the French school on this group, particularly distinct among the students of Pankiewicz – in the painting of Jan Cybis and Hanna Rudzka-Cybisowa. Other artists included in the national group were Eugeniusz Eibisch, Jerzy Fedkowicz, Konstancy Mackiewicz, Artur Nacht-Samborski, Zbigniew Pronaszko, Zygmunt Radnicki, Stanisław Szczepański, Waław Taranczewski, Czesław Rzepiński and Jerzy Wolff.⁶

3 See: *Exposition internationale d'art moderne, peinture, art graphique et décoratif, architecture*, ex. cat., Musée d'art moderne, Paris, 18 novembre – 28 décembre 1946.

4 N. Adamson, *Painting, Politics and the Struggle for the École de Paris, 1944-1964*, Ashgate, 2009, pp. 95-96.

5 W. Ładniewska, *UNESCO – Międzynarodowa wystawa sztuki współczesnej*, press cutting from the Paris edition of "Gazeta Polska" from 2 December 1946, in: *Archiwum Wandy Ładniewskiej-Blankenheim, Towarzystwo Historyczno-Literackie / Biblioteka Polska w Paryżu*, BPP 1838. See also: P. Majewski, „Artyści polscy w Paryżu w publicystyce Wandy Ładniewskiej”, in: D. Kudelska, E. Kuryłek, eds., *Wyjazdy "za sztuką". Nadzieje, zyski i straty artystów XIX i XX wieku*, Lublin, 2015, pp. 325-337.

6 At the UNESCO exhibition Polish artists based in Britain were represented by eight names, among them: Jankiel Adler, Janina Konarska, Piotr Tadeusz Potworowski, Franciszka Themerson, Feliks Topolski and Marek Żuławski (each artist showed two works). Meanwhile, at the exhibition, there were eleven Polish artists based in Paris (each showed one work). In her account of this part of the show, Ładniewska divided the artists into two groups. One included Zygmunt Dobrzycki, Stanisław Grabowski, Władysław Łopuszniak (the only Polish artist who showed non-figurative compositions, as the author emphasised), Zygmunt Olesiewicz (Jean Olin), Zofia Piramowicz and Kazimierz Zielenkiewicz (Caziel). Another group, in her opinion, was formed by individualists who "walked their own path". This one included Alfred Aberdam, Władysław Jahl and Ludwik Lille. Additionally, two printmakers presented their work:

The exhibition, which Ładniewska described as “an event of utmost significance for global painting”⁷, offered the first post-war opportunity for a presentation of Polish art for an international public. For many years to come, the colourists were to play the key role at international exhibitions, while the period of domination of this movement in exhibitions of Polish art abroad came to a close also in Paris, in 1961, with *12 Modern Polish Painters* show at the Musée national d’art moderne.⁸

In trying to answer the question why in this period colourist painting was chosen to represent Polish art abroad one needs to consider a seemingly insignificant detail from the Paris exhibition of 1946. The Polish delegation was headed by representatives of the Ministry of Culture and Art led by the vice minister Leon Kruczkowski, while the group of delegated artists included Eugeniusz Eibisch – recently appointed the rector of the Academy of Fine Arts in Krakow. This fact demonstrates the strong position of colourists for the new Polish authorities. After the war, colourists were employed at many art academies in Poland. As artists who were directly involved in the shaping of the new post-war order, they used their privileged position to participate in official exhibitions of Polish art abroad.

However, from 1956 onwards, Colourism has gradually marginalised abroad due to a growing expansion of modern art. A strong wave of modern art in Poland emerged as a result of certain liberalisation of the political system in the entire Eastern Bloc, bringing diverse attempts to approximate Western culture after the period of Stalinist isolation. This important process, which introduced a new group of Polish artists into global exhibitions of contemporary art, occurred on two levels. On the one hand, right after the Iron Curtain became less impervious, the West made attempts to demonstrate the significance of the achievements of the Polish constructivist avant-garde. On the other hand, Polish abstract painting was exhibited with greater confidence. A good example of that was the exhibition of Tadeusz Kantor at the Le Gendre gallery in Paris in 1959, which showed the Polish artist’s fascination with Paris-born *tachisme* and *informel* painting.

Discovering Polish Constructivism

It was Julian Przyboś who was responsible for the organisation of the exhibition of Polish constructivist artists in Paris in 1957, titled *The Precursors of Abstract Art in*

Konstanty Brandel and Stefan Mrozewski. All artists based in Paris represented the pre-war immigrant community.

⁷ Ładniewska, op. cit.

⁸ See: *Douze peintres polonais modernes*, ex. cat., Musée national d’art moderne, février – mars 1961. Artists: Jan Cybis, Tytus Czyżewski, Eugeniusz Eibisch, Tadeusz Makowski, Piotr Potworowski, Wacław Taranczewski, Zygmunt Waliszewski as well as – representing the post-war generation – Tadeusz Brzozowski, Stefan Gierowski, Aleksander Kobzdej, Jan Lebenstein and Andrzej Wróblewski. Curators: Jean Cassou from the French side, and Stanisław Lorentz from the Polish side.

Poland.⁹ The poet and critic skilfully used the liberalisation of Polish cultural policy and the loosened grip of the Iron Curtain to realise his objectives – rehabilitate Władysław Strzemiński and Katarzyna Kobro after a long period of rejection by the state whose policies followed the programme of socialist realism. Przyboś first successfully pushed for the organisation of a retrospective show of Kobro and Strzemiński in Łódź and Warsaw, and then he made efforts to ensure the success of the exhibition of Polish constructivists in Paris. The weight of this show was further enhanced by the presence of Kasimir Malevich among the “Polish precursors” of this movement, whose work featured next to those by Strzemiński, Kobro, as well as Henryk Stażewski and Henryk Berlewi. Even if the inclusion of Malevich at an exhibition of Polish art might not have seemed fully adequate, it certainly contributed to its greater prestige. The same concerned the venue – Galerie Denise René, which specialised in broadly understood geometrical abstract art of avant-garde provenance and successfully promoted the newest achievements of the contemporary followers of this movement. For the first time after the war, the exhibition made the elite of artistic Paris aware of Strzemiński’s idea of Unism, Kobro’s idea of spatial forms, and Berlewi’s theory of mechanofaktura. The achievements of the Polish interwar avant-garde were received with appreciation, becoming a part of the process of the artistic continuum that marked the transformation of the historical avant-garde.

Iwona Luba was right to emphasise the paradox of the situation when the first post-war exhibition of the Polish avant-garde art in Paris, in fact, of abstract art, was an official event.¹⁰ This testified to a revolutionary transformation at work in Poland after the years of socialist realism. At the same time, the exhibition highlighted the originality of Polish artists in creating new concepts of visuality and art of the future. In the exhibition catalogue, Cassou wrote:

For the observers who seek to bring some order to the most recent experiments and manifestations of contemporary art it is interesting to note the existence of some original artistic practices that they had missed until now. [...] justice must be [...] done to the Polish art milieu, completely original and spontaneous, which right after World War I showed the world its passion, enthusiasm [...] and its appetite for innovations and renewal.¹¹

However, Przyboś’s undeniable success coincided with a debate about the direction of development of modern art in Poland, which intensified after the Second Exhibition of Modern Art was opened in Warsaw in autumn 1957. Przyboś’s famous polemic with Kantor and Mieczysław Porębski saw two concepts of abstract art clashing.¹² Taking the stance developed by Strzemiński in his *Teoria widzenia*

9 See: *Précurseurs de l’art abstrait en Pologne*, ex. cat., Galerie Denise Réne, Paris, novembre – décembre 1957.

10 I. Luba, “Kobro and Strzemiński: Łódź – Warsaw – Paris”, *Ikonotheka* 2016, No. 26, p. 160.

11 J. Cassou, [untitled], in: *Précurseurs*, op. cit., p. 10.

12 See: J. Przyboś, „Sztuka abstrakcyjna – jak z niej wyjść”, *Przegląd Kulturalny* 1957, No. 45, p. 5; M. Porębski, „Jak nie wychodzić? (Uwagi polemiczne)”, *Przegląd Kulturalny* 1957,

(Theory of Vision) Przyboś identified new possibilities for the “language of geometry” in global art, at the same time voicing sharp criticism of what he considered the dead-end of *tachisme* favoured by his adversaries. He tirelessly urged artists to walk the path paved by Strzemiński, recognising the opportunities for Polish art in embracing the postulate of “artistic perception of things”. Nevertheless, his voice was solitary. In the years to come it was his adversaries that were to define the shape of the Polish canon.

However, contrary to what Piotr Piotrowski suggested, it does not seem that *Precursors* exhibition was a “result of the local controversy around informal”.¹³ This polemic coincided with the exhibition planned by Przyboś and emerged as a result of his efforts to bring back the memory of the Polish pioneers of the constructivist avant-garde. Undoubtedly, Przyboś wished to give deserved credit to the art theory proposed by the *Precursors*. The choice of Paris for this purpose was hardly coincidental. Piotrowski writes (rightfully so) that “Paris was still a major reference point for Eastern European artists”.¹⁴ However, this was not decisive for this choice of location. There were several direct reasons, such as the pre-war connections of Polish constructivists with the international group of Cercle et Carré located in Paris, the fact that Henryk Berlewski, one of the protagonists and co-organisers of the exhibition, was based in the French capital, as well as other Parisian connections of Przyboś, particularly with Jan Brzękowski. Finally, equally significant was a favourable political climate that made it possible to organise the exhibition with powerful official patronage that helped achieve the objective set forth by Przyboś. This objective was to permanently instate the group of Polish constructivists inside the circuits of international art. On the other hand, it was beneficial for Denise René to host a show of the Polish pioneers of abstraction because it fit in with the gallery’s strategy to present ground-breaking historical exhibitions.¹⁵

In the period before the political transition of 1989, the initiative to promote Polish constructivist tradition through exhibitions organised abroad was taken up and developed by Ryszard Stanisławski. Since 1966, as a director of the Muzeum Sztuki (Museum of Art) in Łódź, he treated this task as strategically important for his institution, for Polish art of the 20th century, as well as for the heritage of 20th-century visual culture at large. The process of realising this task analysed in the following parts of this text on the example of the 1969 Paris exhibition *Nowoczesne malarstwo polskie. Źródła i poszukiwania (Modern Polish Painting. Sources and Experiments)*, curated by Stanisławski, involved several stages. However, before this

No. 46, p. 6; T. Kantor, „Abstrakcja umarła – niech żyje abstrakcja”, *Życie Literackie* 1957, No. 50 (“Plastyka” supplement, No. 16), p. 6.

13 P. Piotrowski, *Globalne ujęcie sztuki Europy Wschodniej*, Poznań, 2018, p. 116.

14 Ibid.

15 In March 1957, the gallery opened the first French retrospective show of Piet Mondrian, while right before the *precursors* show it hosted a Josef Albers exhibition, *Hommage au carré*, which was the first solo show of this artist in Paris. See: D. René, *Mes années cinquante*, Paris, 1988, p. 65; *Denise René l'intrépide. Une galerie dans l'aventure de l'art abstrait 1944-1978*, ex. cat., Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris, 2011, p. 41.

complex effort was undertaken, Polish modern art was promoted through diverse versions of non-geometrical abstraction, while the culmination of this “expansion” of abstraction from Poland ensued around 1960.

“The Polish wave” – contemporary artists at international exhibitions

The term “Polish wave” was coined by Michel Ragon in a short article that took note of an increased presence of Polish contemporary artists at exhibitions in Western (mainly Paris-based) centres and galleries of art around 1960.¹⁶ After 1956, the so-called “moderns” (“nowocześni”), favoured by the state, could count on its support in organising exhibitions outside Poland. These names were to form the new canon of artists who represented Polish art abroad.

The changing paradigm can be partly observed at work at the Venice Biennale. Two years earlier, in 1954, following the official doctrine, Juliusz Starzyński, the curator of the Polish pavilion in Venice, promoted realism, which was treated synthetically yet was remote from any attempts that declined from “life-affirming” representation. Starzyński, exhibiting sculptures by Xawery Dunikowski as well as prints and drawings by Tadeusz Kulisiewicz and Aleksander Kobzdej, expressed this way his criticism of surrealism that was ubiquitous in Venice at the time.¹⁷ Two years later, the Polish pavilion, although eclectic, did to some degree reflect the changes in the country’s cultural policy.¹⁸ As Joanna Sosnowska argues, this eclecticism stemmed from the choice of participants, among them modernists active since the interwar period, Zbigniew Pronaszko and Marek Włodarski, as well as artists who debuted after the war: Jerzy Nowosielski and Tadeusz Dominik, the latter a painter and printmaker, the youngest artist in this group, supported by Jan Cybis. Exceptional in this set dominated by figurative work was Adam Marczyński, who with his abstract compositions came the closest to the non-figurative trends that dominated in Venice in 1956. Even though those responsible for the Polish pavilion, i.e. Starzyński and assisting young curators and art historians (Mieczysław Porębski, Ryszard Stanisławski and Aleksander Wojciechowski), recognised the need to draw Polish art from isolation and to connect it with the trends in universal art, that is non-figurative art, due to the remnants of the Stalinist system of culture management in Poland that rejected abstraction they were unable to make this type of postulate fully operational. When in 1958 Porębski accompanied Starzyński at the Venice Biennale again, the triumph of abstraction among the generation of young European artists was already certain. According to Porębski, young followers of Wols “practiced *tachisme*” and all kinds of “different art”, while the greatest suc-

16 M. Ragon, “Les vagues polonaises et espagnoles”, *Arts* 1961, No. 810, p. 8.

17 See: J. Sosnowska, *Polacy na Biennale Sztuki w Wenecji 1895-1999*, Warsaw, 1999, pp. 96-97.

18 “Eclectic” was the term used by Joanna Sosnowska to define the Polish exhibition in Venice in 1956, see: *ibid.*, p. 102.

cess among them was enjoyed by Spanish artists: Manuel Rivera, Eduardo Chillida, Manolo Millares and Antonio Tàpies.¹⁹ Nevertheless, the Polish exhibition – developed along the idea proposed by Starzyński and his assistant Zdzisław Kępiński – found itself again in the shadow of the mainstream, effecting the tactic of compromises and adjustments, already tested two years earlier, that involved the combined presentation of Polish Colourism (Artur Nacht-Samborski, Waclaw Taranczewski) with lyrical abstraction by Maria Jarema.

Preparing the Polish participation for the São Paulo Biennial in 1959 Porębski faced the necessity of yet another such compromise and had to include the state-approved and supported the art of Colourism. The strategy of compromise tested at the Venice Biennale, whereby Polish Colourism was shown next to abstraction, determined the choice of participants for the exhibition in São Paulo.²⁰ It comprised a large solo show (with 40 paintings) of Jan Cybis whose art – as justified by the curator – “was shaped by the complex climate of the interwar years, having now reached its mature and powerful completeness of intention and expression”.²¹ Yet the curator of the Polish exhibition in São Paulo put the focus on the most recent experiments in Polish art, informed by the reception of international, or more specifically Western art that verged on figuration and abstraction. This was a radical and unprecedented step in the history of official exhibitions of Polish art abroad. This way Porębski determined a new direction for such shows and revised the list of “export artists” to be included in international exhibitions henceforth. Among the representatives of most recent painting were Tadeusz Brzozowski, Aleksander Kobzdej, Jerzy Nowosielski, Stefan Gierowski, Jerzy Tchórzewski and Jan Lebenstein. Thereby the exhibition curator contrasted two approaches: the naturalist variant of colourist expressionism, developed in the interwar years on the roots of postimpressionism, to which he emotionally referred in his *Notatnik 1959*, as well as the contemporary movement represented by the members of the young generation.²² He wrote about the originality and specificity of the latter group as follows: “The work of Brzozowski, Kobzdej, Nowosielski, Gierowski, Tchórzewski and Lebenstein began to shape in the climate of regeneration and renewal of the avant-garde, which took place in Poland during the war and in its aftermath thanks to artists such as Maria Jarema and Tadeusz Kantor. What distinguished this art was the rejection of a one-sided outlook on painting controlled by «nature», a dogma of the colourists, in favour of an artistic process based on the mechanism of automatism and «surprise» that was discovered by surrealism on the one hand, yet, on the other, was founded upon the strict discipline of abstract thinking that had strong independent traditions in Poland”.²³

19 See: M. Porębski, *Pożegnanie z krytyką*, Krakow–Wrocław, 1983, pp. 19–28.

20 See: *5 Bienal de S. Paulo*, ex. cat., Museo de Art Moderna, São Paulo, Setembro – Dezembro 1959.

21 Typescript of the introduction to the Polish exhibition at the 5th São Paulo Biennial. Archiwum Mieczysława Porębskiego [Mieczysław Porębski Archive], MOCAM, Krakow.

22 See: Porębski, *Pożegnanie z krytyką...*, pp. 46–54.

23 Ibid., p. 52.

However, in this configuration of events and relationships, it was neither Venice with its strong political involvements, nor São Paulo with its geographical distance from Europe, but artistic Paris that became the stage where Polish modern art tested its strength in confrontation with European and global art.²⁴ The Polish section during the first edition of the Biennale de Paris in 1959 was dominated by artists who represented abstract art. In the introduction to the catalogue, Stanisław Teisseyre, general curator of the Polish section and then the rector of the State Higher School of Fine Arts in Gdańsk, emphasised that due to the limitations of the number of artists representing each country, the Polish exhibition presented a fragmentary picture of young painting and sculpture in Poland.²⁵ The age limit for competition participants, set at thirty-five years of age and below, resulted in the first international exhibition for many years where the Polish section did not include the colourists. However, among the paintings on display were many works of former students of colourist artists: two works by Stefan Gierowski, Bronisław Kierzkowski, Teresa Pałowska, Jan Tarasin and Rajmund Ziemiński, and five works by Jan Lebenstein, all of them abstract or situated on the verge of abstraction and figuration. Sculpture had two female representatives: Alina Szapocznikow, well known in Paris, who showed her *Mary Magdalen* made in bronze in 1957, and Magdalena Więcek, who sent her *Duo (Les deux)* from 1959. The contents of the Polish section were completed by prints by Halina Chrostowska-Piotrowicz and Józef Gielniak, in keeping with the modern style, which further emphasised the coherent nature of the Polish section. Noteworthy, the work of two participants of the Biennale – Gierowski and Lebenstein – were shown at the same time at the São Paulo Biennial. Furthermore, at two exhibitions of Polish painting organised in Venice (in September) and Geneva (in October and November) the same year Ryszard Stanisławski showed works by five Polish artists featured at the Paris Biennale: Gierowski, Lebenstein and Tarasin, as well as Szapocznikow and Więcek. It is clear, then, that at the time these artists formed a small group of Polish artists most intensively promoted abroad.

Polska – 50 lat malarstwa (Poland – 50 years of Painting), a now relatively forgotten exhibition in Venice and Geneva, is worth discussing because while preparing it Stanisławski took up an unprecedented effort to construct a representative canon of Polish art of the last fifty years.²⁶ Its goal was to demonstrate the continuity of Polish modern art, starting with the “classics” and leading up to contemporary artists. Consequently, it offered an impressive panorama that involved (1) the pioneers of metaphorical painting (Stanisławski used that term at the time), artists such as Witold Wojtkiewicz, Tadeusz Makowski and Stanisław Ignacy Witkiewicz, as well as Kamil Witkowski and Jan Spychalski, (2) postimpressionist Colourism

24 For a detailed analysis of the exhibitions of Polish art in Paris in that period see: P. Majewski, *La Vague polonaise. Migracje artystów i wędrówki dzieł sztuki and Sekwanę w czasach żelaznej kurtyny (lata 1955-1969)*, Lublin, 2020.

25 S. Teisseyre, „Pologne“, in: *Première Biennale de Paris, Manifestation Biennale et Internationale des Jeunes Artistes*, ex. cat., Musée d’art moderne de la ville de Paris, 2 – 25 octobre 1959, p. 91.

26 See: *Pologne 50 ans de peinture*, ex. cat., Musée d’art et d’histoire, Geneve, 24 octobre – 29 novembre 1959.

(represented by Cybis, Nacht-Samborski and Potworowski), and (3) the radical avant-garde, embodied by both the constructivists (Strzemiński and Stażewski), as well as the intriguing experimentalist Karol Hiller and Marek Włodarski, representing the pre-war Lviv-based “Artes” group whose ambition was to disseminate constructivist and surrealist avant-garde art. From among the artists who linked the pre and post-war Polish art Stanisławski distinguished Jonasz Stern and Maria Jarema. Apart from the listed artists of the young generation, there were also many others. Notably, Stanisławski avoided any special focus on abstraction and included abstract painters among the group of metaphorical artists, identifying also several parallel trends. Figurative painting was represented by Jerzy Nowosielski, Gabriela Obremba, Kazimierz Mikulski and Arika Madeyska, while realism by the work of Andrzej Wróblewski who died tragically two years earlier. Moreover, the exhibition featured sculpture and prints as well. This way the curator avoided demonstrating stylistic links between abstract art in Poland and the West, and instead highlighted autonomous processes of transformation of Polish art on the basis of the country’s tradition. As further examples will demonstrate, from then on Stanisławski consistently developed this line of “interpretation” of Polish art.

The Grand Prix for Jan Lebenstein at the Paris Biennale drew the attention of international critics to young art from Poland and, in fact, marked the beginning of the “Polish wave” that was soon so enthusiastically welcomed by Ragon. It brought a short-lived yet intense presence of Polish art in international art circuits, which witnessed numerous solo shows at commercial art galleries in Paris and other Western European art centres, as well as subsequent exhibitions in the most prestigious institutions such as the Museum of Modern Art in New York.

In 1961, with certain difficulties mounted by the state officials and without their participation, the curator of the New York museum Peter Selz opened the exhibition *15 Polish Painters* that covered the work of the artists of the “new canon”.²⁷ To some extent, the model of presentation of Polish painting resembled the concepts realised by Polish curators on other occasions.²⁸ The exhibition started with the paintings by the pioneers of constructivist avant-garde and Colourism – Henryk Stażewski and Piotr Potworowski. It continued with works by two Polish painters best known in the West – compositions by Tadeusz Kantor, which resembled the American action painting, as well as “axis figures” by Jan Lebenstein, the laureate of the Biennale de Paris. Further on, abstract and textural compositions by Stefan Gierowski, Aleksander Kobzdej, and Bronisław Kierzkowski, as well as *quasi*-figurative works by Tadeusz Brzozowski and Tadeusz Dominik. The exhibition featured also the work of Teresa Pałowska, Wojciech Fangor, Jerzy Nowosielski, and Jerzy Tchórzewski as well as — added at the last minute — collages by Teresa Rudowicz and Marian Warzecha.

27 See: K. Niemira, “Political Contexts of ‘15 Polish Painters’ Exhibition (MoMA, 1961)”, *Ikono-
teka* 2017, no. 26, pp. 167-191; K. Niemira and M. Słomska, “15 Polish Painters”. 4 obrazy
z najważniejszej powojennej wystawy sztuki polskiej, Warsaw, 2015.

28 Nb. Ryszard Stanisławski was an unofficial Polish consultant for Peter Selz.

The entire venture was distinctly political. As Selz noted, dominant in the United States was a conviction that abstract art was an expression of the freedom of the West, whereas inside the Iron Curtain art followed the Soviet socialist realism.²⁹ The exhibition proved that the situation had radically changed, while a new painting from Poland realised the Western model of art. The lack of participation of Polish authorities in organising the New York exhibition resulted from the same factor that inspired American enthusiasm, yet the values attached to this situation were entirely reverse. In the East, abstraction in Poland was perceived with complete disdain, which found its confirmation in the Polish participation at the exhibition of socialist countries in Moscow in 1958.³⁰ At the exhibition, abstract compositions by Marczyński were read as a threatening attack of the Western imperialism on the Soviet socialist realism. The Moscow directive of limiting abstraction at exhibitions organised in Poland must have brought a correction of the canon of art presented abroad, which was manifested in group shows from the late 1960s. To a great degree, those resulted from the search for a new formula of exhibitions in Poland that would include more examples of figurative painting. The new model of the exhibition, first employed at 1962 *Metafory* (Metaphors) exhibition in Poland curated by Ryszard Stanisławski, displayed a vague understanding of the titular metaphorical art that was subsequently used at international exhibitions, while Stanisławski was to become the chief architect of the change of the canon.

In search of synthesis

“The Sunday Times” from February 1968 introduced the exhibition *Six Polish Artists* at the Royal College of Arts in London as a presentation of art from Eastern Europe that had not yielded under the Stalinist pressure.³¹ The paradox was that its curator, Ryszard Stanisławski, enjoyed good relations with the communist authorities and for a long time, back then, had been representing Poland internationally as a curator of official exhibitions at consecutive editions of the São Paulo Biennial, and had for two years been developing his practice as the director of Muzeum Sztuki in Łódź.³² In his introduction to the exhibition, Stanisławski explained that

29 See: Peter Selz on *15 Polish Painters* exhibition in an interview by Sharon Zane from 14 February 1994, MOMA Oral History Program, https://www.moma.org/momaorg/shared/pdfs/docs/learn/archives/transcript_selz.pdf [accessed 10 July 2018].

30 See: P. Kucharska, „Kłopotliwy gość. Polska ekspozycja na międzynarodowej wystawie w Moskwie (1958/1959)”, <https://culture.pl/pl/artykul/klopotliwy-gosc-polska-ekspozycja-na-miedzynarodowej-wystawie-w-moskwie-19581959> [accessed 19 December 2018].

31 [author unknown], “Art”, *The Sunday Times* 1968, No. 7551 (from 18 February 1968). Archiwum Ryszarda Stanisławskiego [Ryszard Stanisławski Archive], Instytut Sztuki PAN.

32 The work of Ryszard Stanisławski as a curator of Polish exhibitions at the São Paulo Biennial in Brazil in 1961-1969 is discussed by A. Szczerski in his article “Polska nowoczesność na eksport – Ryszard Stanisławski, São Paulo, Paryż i Łódź”. See: idem, *Cztery nowoczesności. Teksty o sztuce i architekturze polskiej XX wieku*, Kraków, 2015, pp. 169-188.

it presented merely a small selection of a broad panorama of Polish art but that it represented “certain lyrical and romantic passion” inherent in the painting brought together at this show.³³ According to the curator, this “mood”, “common quality” were present in all the works, even though they were produced by artists of diverse generations, milieus, and conventions. The show opened with the works by Tadeusz Makowski, presented as a singular figure from the École de Paris, as well as “uniquely transformed” landscapes by Piotr Potworowski, which owed much – as the curator emphasised – to the landscape of Cornwall. The same lyrical and emotional power was to be present in the work of a younger generation: Eugeniusz Markowski, Tadeusz Brzozowski, Jerzy Tchórzewski and Aleksander Kobzdej. On the basis of this configuration of artists, Stanisławski attempted to create a picture of the “Polish national school”. Even though in his opinion, it was difficult to defend such an approach in the face of the general developments of contemporary art, he insisted that some unchanging and dominating values remained vivid on individual national art scenes. Therefore, in the work of Polish artists, he identified both universal elements, common for the art of this period, as well as individual traits resulting in singular investigations made by “numerous peripheral artists” who ceaselessly sought to break the routine and the basic rules of various trends. Moreover, the exhibition spoke against “contemporary iconoclasm and anti-painting” by featuring, on the one hand, two traditional modern painters, and on the other hand, four active painters who developed their unique and original style. This time, Stanisławski purposefully excluded constructivism and its opposite – Colourism. In fact, his goal was to produce a larger show of selected six Polish painters who were seen to share the “Polish lyrical mood” and a belief in painting as a means of expression of – he insisted – “the most contemporary values”.³⁴ This exhibition preceded a much larger display of Polish art that Stanisławski organised a year later at the Musée Galliera in Paris. This show was to celebrate the 1000th anniversary of the Polish state as a parallel event to the monumental exhibition of old masters of Polish art on show at the Petit Palais.

At the planned exhibition of *Polish Modern Painting – Sources and Experiments* Stanisławski used as a reference point the models of presentation of Polish art employed in Paris over the preceding ten years.³⁵ He counted among them two official exhibitions: of figurative painting at the Galerie Charpentier as well as the already mentioned show of colourists and their followers at the National Museum of Modern Art (both in 1961). Moreover, he listed exhibitions of various trends of contemporary Polish art at consecutive editions of the Biennale de Paris. Finally, Stanisławski mentioned solo exhibitions of Polish artists at several different Paris

33 R. Stanisławski, “Introduction”, in: *Six painters from Poland*, ex. cat., Royal College Art Galleries, London, 22 February – 23 March 1968, n.p.

34 See: Typescript of the introduction to the exhibition. Archiwum Ryszarda Stanisławskiego [Archive of Ryszard Stanisławski], Instytut Sztuki PAN.

35 See: *Peinture moderne polonaise. Sources et recherches*, ex. cat., Musée Galliera, Paris, 1969. Script for exhibition at the Musée Galliera, Archiwum Ryszarda Stanisławskiego [Ryszard Stanisławski Archive], Instytut Sztuki PAN.

galleries. All those initiatives, although valuable and positively received by the critics and the public, did not adequately contribute – in his view — to increased knowledge of the actual development of the tradition of Polish painting of the 20th century, and instead created a situation where recent works of Polish artists were seen as a “passive echo of relevant trends in European art”. In the face of this perception of Polish art as imitative and in order to improve what was seen as unsatisfactory, incoherent, and rather chaotic presence of Polish art abroad Stanisławski proposed an exhibition of 20th-century Polish painting that would intentionally emphasise its originality as well as highlight the input of Polish art to the development of European art. He planned to develop the exhibition on the basis of the collections of three National Museums (in Warsaw, Krakow, and Poznań) as well as the Muzeum Sztuki in Łódź, which was the official organiser of the show.

The idea of the exhibition relied on the model developed by Stanisławski’s curatorial practice and involved a general division of the display into a historical, retrospective part that showed the titular “sources” as well as a contemporary part that drew on these sources, but also emphasised the character of *living art* (*l’art vivant*), expressed through the notion of “experiment”. Notably, however, Stanisławski did not treat this set as a strict division into “history” and “contemporaneity” but, instead, sought to highlight the continuity of historic trends in the present. The exhibition script suggests that Stanisławski planned to expand the concept of the presentation of Polish art, develop its details and clarify its message, which he had been working on – in its historical part – since 1959, i.e. since the already discussed shows of Polish painting in Venice and Geneva. The contemporary part, on the other hand, was updated to include the most recent phenomena, representative of Polish art of the 1960s. This concept, he insisted, was also interesting for French art critics and historians, as confirmed by the conversations he had with the French organisers.

Consequently, the exhibition offered the most powerful attempt to set up the canon of Polish 20th-century art as yet, developed for a display outside Poland. Given at his disposal a relatively small exhibition space at the Galliera museum (with the space of 500 square metres) Stanisławski decided to reduce the number of participating artists to sixteen, instead offering a larger selection of their work (he planned to show a total of 150 artworks). The curator sought also to emphasise the Parisian provenance of the collection of contemporary art at the Łódź museum, which had been formed since the turn of the 1920s and ‘30s by Strzebiński thanks to his Paris “emissaries”. Stanisławski was right to think that by drawing the attention to this context of the origins of “the world’s second collection of modern art” he could attract more interest in the planned exhibition.

By the chronological order, the exhibition started with the work of Stanisław Ignacy Witkiewicz, whose theatrical writing, as Stanisławski indicated, had been enjoying a growing recognition in France, while his work in the exhibition was to promote the formist group. Another patron of the historical avant-garde, Karol Hiller, with his painting and heliography, represented the Łódź art milieu of the interwar period, as were Polish constructivists included in the “sources” part of

the show: Władysław Strzemiński, Katarzyna Kobro and Henryk Stażewski. Their work, as well as this by “Blok”, “Praesens” and “a.r.” groups, was to illustrate “innovative works of Polish and global art, part of the so-called «geometrical» painting, which made an impact on the evolution of contemporary architecture”. This way, Stanisławski highlighted the position of Łódź on the map of the European avant-garde international in the interwar years. He planned to show the post-war continuations and experiments through four different trends. The first, most directly linked with Witkacy’s legacy, was represented by Grupa Krakowska with the work of Tadeusz Kantor (with the focus on his costume design for “Cricot” theatre), Maria Jarema, and Jerzy Nowosielski. The second was realist and socially engaged painting represented by Bronisław Linke, on the one hand, whose style had developed before the war, and by Andrzej Wróblewski, on the other hand, a painter of the post-war generation whose work had already gained some attention in 1959. The third trend referred to the constructivist tradition and included the work of artists on show in Paris for the first time, Edward Krasiński, Zbigniew Gostomski, and Ryszard Winiarski. Finally, the “metaphorical” trend was represented by spatial compositions by Władysław Hasior and figurative painting by the youngest participant, Jan Dobkowski.

The exhibition from 1969, prepared, as already noted, to celebrate the 1000th anniversary of the Polish state, can be seen as a laboratory study of the presentation of Polish modern art abroad and as a stage that led to Stanisławski’s subsequent initiatives. Constructivist artists (e.g. *Constructivism in Poland* exhibition in Essen and Otterlo in 1973)³⁶ became the centre of attention, on the one hand, on the other, this direction led to a spectacular attempt at a synthesis, that is, *Présences polonaises*, a famous exhibition from the period of Solidarity, shown in 1983 at the Centre Georges Pompidou.³⁷ Without going into the details of this monumental exhibition, it is worth highlighting several facts, significant from the point of view of the described attempt at constructing the canon. With more than three times the exhibition space at the Galliera museum at his disposal, Stanisławski significantly enlarged the display, yet remained in keeping with his original concept. It involved three main themes: among the “sources” section was the work of Witkacy and constructivism, while in the “experiments” section — a wide array of contemporary artists presented on a large background of Polish culture. Constructivist works were presented in great numbers at the exhibition, while the movement was discussed in detail in scholarly texts included in a large catalogue that accompanied the show.³⁸ Andrzej Turowski wrote a historical text on the work of groups such as Blok, Praesens, and a.r., placing the focus on theoretical and experimental work of

36 See: *Constructivism in Poland 1923-1936, Blok, Praesens, a.r.*, ex. cat., Museum Folkwang Essen, 12 May – 24 April 1973, Rijksmuseum Kröller-Müller Otterlo, 14 July – 2 September 1973. The show travelled later to the United States and across numerous European countries.

37 The exhibition *Présences polonaises* is discussed in detail by A. Szczerski in his already mentioned text. See: idem, *Cztery nowoczesności...*, pp. 188-204.

38 See: *Présences polonaises: l’art vivant autour du musée de Łódź: Witkiewicz, constructivisme, les contemporains*, Centre Georges Pompidou, 23 juin – 26 septembre 1983, pp. 138-259.

Strzeмиński, Kopro, and Berlewi. Stanislas Zadora discussed constructivism with reference to a wide spectrum of other avant-garde movements in Poland (formism, Bunt group) and the context of the struggle for new forms of artistic expression in the interwar period. Serge Fouchereau focused in turn on the relationship between art and literature and new designs in typography promoted in Polish avant-garde magazines (such as “Zwrotnica”, “Blok”, “Preasens”, “Forma”). Janusz Zagrodzki addressed experiments of Polish constructivists in photography, photomontage, and film. He also dedicated a separate part of his text to Strzeмиński’s concept of Unism and Kopro’s “spatial compositions”. Jana Claverie discussed the problems of constructivist architecture, analysing a wide selection of architectural designs and structures by Barbara and Stanisław Brukalski, Bohdan Lachert, Helena and Szymon Syrkus, and Karol Kryński. Finally, Xavier Deryng analysed the concept and the circumstances of founding the collection of modern art in Łódź, considering the connections between a.r. and other groups of the international avant-garde, such as Cercle et Carré and Abstraction-Création, which made it possible for many artworks to find their way into the museum’s collection. In total, the part of the exhibition dedicated to constructivism comprised the work of nearly forty artists and around 450 exhibits. This way, the show offered an unprecedented panoramic picture of the Polish constructivism that highlighted its accomplishments in a variety of fields (visual arts, literature, architecture) and the context of the international avant-garde of the 1920s and ‘30s.

This comprehensive presentation of Polish 20th-century art, organised in the context of the political tension during the period of Solidarity, provoked powerful criticism by the Polish political opposition (e.g. Anka Ptaszkowska criticised the mechanism of the state patronage and the monopolist position of Stanisławski), which was discussed in detail by Andrzej Szczerski. At the same time, it was positively received by international art critics and attracted a large number of viewers. However, the question remains, to what extent it contributed to an important correction of the perception of the canon of Polish art in the eyes of the Western viewers since the programme of the exhibition – as noted by Szczerski – proposed this canon.

One more exhibition curated by Stanisławski should be considered here; although it does not concern directly the issues discussed in this paper, yet, in a sense, it marks the closing of his exhibition narratives of Polish art, and at the same time it sets a new perspective on the art of the entire region of East-Central Europe. In 1994, then already retired director of the Łódź museum organised, together with Christoph Brockhaus, a show in Bonn titled *Europa Europa. Das Jahrhundert der Avantgarde in Mittel- und Osteuropa*. The author intended to offer a comprehensive presentation of the one-hundred-year-long history of avant-garde art and literature of East-Central Europe to uncover its “neglected aspects and fill in the gaps” that had been growing over the fifty-year-long period of Europe’s political and ideological division.³⁹ This was the first, yet not the last attempt to show a model of function-

³⁹ Ch. Brockhaus, R. Stanisławski, eds., *Europa Europa. Das Jahrhundert der Avantgarde in Mittel- und Osteuropa*, vol. 1 (of 4), Bonn, 1994, p. 21.

ing of the modernist and avant-garde culture of this part of Europe that would present an alternative to the West-centric model. Moreover, the show sought to offer a perspective on Polish art in a wider context of the reconstruction of artistic geography, which became a reality after the fall of the Iron Curtain.

Conclusion

In the period after World War II attempts to present and consolidate the image of Polish modern and contemporary art abroad were most successful when they coincided with important events in Polish political history. This was the case during the thaw, as well as during Solidarity.⁴⁰ The analysis conducted here suggests that it was constructivism that had the highest position among the three main movements of Polish art that formed the canon of art constructed during communism for international audiences. To some degree, this high esteem enjoyed by Polish constructivism within the global art history has to be seen as a result of consistent policy of promoting the work of constructivist artists outside Poland before as well as after 1989.⁴¹ Efforts in this regard continued from Julian Przyboś's initiative in 1957, through Ryszard Stanisławski's curatorial practice, to the most recent attempt to secure the place for Polish constructivists in global art history. During communism, Stanisławski played a particularly significant role in this process. Since 1966, when he was appointed the director of Muzeum Sztuki in Łódź, Stanisławski sought to promote the history of Polish constructivism internationally. To this end, he made use of his good relations with the communist authorities and his steadily earned authority as an author and curator of exhibitions of Polish art abroad. As the head of the Łódź museum, whose roots were linked with the tradition of the Polish avant-garde, Stanisławski was able to utilise the potential of the history of this institution and translate it into a strategy employed in his curating, as well as to maintain favourable response from the authorities. As an experienced curator with broad international connections within the art world, on multiple occasions Stanisławski offered the Western audiences his authorial idea of the canon, divided into sources (history) and contemporary works, placing special focus on the work of

40 After 1989 the eyes of the global public opinion turned towards Eastern Europe in 2004 when the European Union was admitting new member states. As it was before, when the interest in this region was growing, new details emerged that defined and specified the shape of the whole.

41 Notably, the exhibition of the work of Kobra and Strzemiński, on show at the Centre Pompidou, and later at the Gemeentemuseum Den Haag in The Hague in 2018 and 2019. This event can be considered the most recent attempt to situate the work of Kobra and Strzemiński in the context of universal art history. See: J. Suchan, K. Ziębińska-Lewandowska, eds., *Katarzyna Kobra Władysław Strzemiński. Une avant-garde polonaise / A Polish Avant-garde*, Centre Pompidou, Muzeum Sztuki, Éditions Skira, Paris, 2018. On this occasion, the exhibition was part of the national programme *Niepodległa* (Independent), organised by the Adam Mickiewicz Institute to celebrate the centenary of Polish independence through a series of events promoting Polish culture abroad.

Polish constructivism. Moreover, Stanisławski never ceased in his efforts to promote Polish avant-garde after 1989, situating it in the context of new interpretations of artistic geography of East-Central Europe. Undoubtedly, the above-listed reasons: the authority of the curator, his personal involvement, and the strategy of building the prestige of the Łódź museum supported by the communist authorities all had their part in the future success.

The same cannot be said about the remaining elements of the pre-1989 canon. Although the analysis above suggests that Colourism and modern art enjoyed a positive reception at the time of their presentation outside Poland, at present, they remain almost entirely forgotten. With its roots in postimpressionism, Colourism proved too anachronistic when confronted with contemporary art. However, it was intensively promoted outside Poland due to the internal conditions of artistic life in the country. Colourists played an important role in the formation of the structures of higher artistic education in Poland. A young generation of their students chose a different path of experiment verging on abstraction and figuration, this way fulfilling a generational need to connect with the Western culture. However, identified with modernity, abstract painting was ambivalently received by the authorities who could not dismiss the ideological premises of socialist realism, albeit slightly less strict after the death of Stalin, and were still critical of the “Western” model of abstraction. For this reason, after a short period of apparent openness and support for Polish contemporary art abroad, it found itself in retreat, or at least it was no longer systematically promoted. Ultimately, to paraphrase the words of Piotr Piotrowski from the introduction, there was no one to make real efforts to explain to the global viewer the specificity of Polish Colourism or the originality of Polish abstract art in relation to the Western models after 1956. This way, Jean Cassou’s postulate to “give justice” to Polish artists was only partly fulfilled, with respect to constructivists, while with regard to other areas of Polish modern and contemporary art this is still a task that requires attention.

References

Archives:

- Archiwum Mieczysława Porębskiego [Mieczysław Porębski Archive], MOCAK, Krakow.
 Archiwum Ryszarda Stanisławskiego [Ryszard Stanisławski Archive], Instytut Sztuki PAN.
 Archiwum Wandy Ładniewskiej-Blankenheim [Wanda Ładniewska-Blankenheim Archive],
 Towarzystwo Historyczno-Literackie / Biblioteka Polska w Paryżu, BPP 1838.
 The Museum of Modern Art Oral History Program (Peter Selz, 1994) https://www.moma.org/momaorg/shared/pdfs/docs/learn/archives/transcript_selz.pdf

Exhibition catalogues:

- 5 Bienal de S. Paulo*, Museo de Art Moderna, Sao Paulo, Setembro – Dezembro 1959.

- Constructivism in Poland 1923-1936, Blok, Praesens, a.r.*, Museum Folkwang Essen, 12 May – 24 April 1973, Rijksmuseum Kröller-Müller Otterlo, 14 July – 2 September 1973.
- Douze peintres polonais modernes*, Musée national d'art moderne, février – mars 1961.
- Exposition internationale d'art moderne, peinture, art graphique et décoratif, architecture*, [introduction J. Cassou], Musée d'art moderne, Paris, 18 novembre – 28 décembre 1946.
- Katarzyna Kobro Władysław Strzemiński. Une avant-garde polonaise / A Polish Avant-garde*, eds. Jarosław Suchan, Karolina Ziębińska-Lewandowska, Centre Pompidou, Muzeum Sztuki, Skira, Paris, 2018.
- Peinture moderne polonaise. Sources et recherches*, Musée Galliera, Paris, 1969.
- Pologne 50 ans de peinture*, Musée d'art et d'histoire, Geneve, 24 octobre – 29 novembre 1959.
- Précurseurs de l'art abstrait en Pologne*, Galerie Denise Réne, Paris, novembre – décembre 1957.
- Première Biennale de Paris, Manifestation Biennale et Internationale des Jeunes Artistes*, Musée d'art moderne de la ville de Paris, 2 – 25 octobre 1959.
- Présences polonaises: l'art vivant autour du musée de Łódź: Witkiewicz, constructivisme, les contemporains*, Centre Georges Pompidou, 23 juin – 26 septembre 1983.
- Six painters from Poland*, Royal College Art Galleries, London, 22 February – 23 March 1968.

Secondary sources:

- Adamson, N., *Painting, Politics and the Struggle for the École de Paris, 1944-1964*, Ashgate, 2009.
- Kucharska, P., *Kłopotliwy gość. Polska ekspozycja na międzynarodowej wystawie w Moskwie (1958/1959)*, <https://culture.pl/pl/artykul/kłopotliwy-gosc-polska-ekspozycja-na-miedzynarodowej-wystawie-w-moskwie-19581959> [accessed: 19 December 2018].
- Luba, I., „Kobro and Strzemiński: Łódź – Warsaw – Paris”, *Ikonotheka* 2016, No. 26, pp. 137-166.
- Niemira, K., Słomska M., *“15 Polish Painters”. 4 obrazy z najważniejszej powojennej wystawy sztuki polskiej*, Warsaw, 2015.
- Niemira, K., “Political Contexts of „15 Polish Painters” Exhibition (MoMA, 1961)”, *Ikonotheka* 2017, no. 26, pp. 167-191.
- Majewski, P., *La Vague polonaise. Migracje artystów i wędrówki dzieł sztuki and Sekwanę w czasach żelaznej kurtyny (lata 1955-1969)*, Lublin, 2020.
- Piotrowski, P., *Art and Democracy in Post-Communist Europe*, London, 2012.
- Piotrowski, P., *Globalne ujęcie sztuki Europy Wschodniej*, Poznań, 2018.
- Porębski, M., *Pożegnanie z krytyką*, Kraków – Wrocław, 1983.
- Sosnowska, J., *Polacy na Biennale Sztuki w Wenecji 1895-1999*, Warsaw, 1999.
- Szczerki, A., *Cztery nowoczesności. Teksty o sztuce i architekturze polskiej XX wieku*, Krakow, 2015.
- Kudelska, D., Kuryłek, E. eds. *Wyjazdy “za sztuką”. Nadzieje, zyski i straty artystów XIX i XX wieku*, , Lublin, 2015.

Karolina Kolenda

PEDAGOGICAL UNIVERSITY OF KRAKOW, POLAND

ORCID: 0000-0001-6749-0399

<https://doi.org/10.31338/2657-6015ik.30.8>

The Grass is Greener: Władysław Hasiór in an Ecocritical Perspective

Abstract

The text offers an analysis of selected works by Władysław Hasiór from an ecocritical perspective. The focus is placed on Hasiór's best-known work, *The Organ*, as well as on several parts of his *Photo Notebook*. The analysis seeks to demonstrate that an application of an ecocritical perspective to the reading of Hasiór's work may help fill in the blanks in the environmental history of art in Poland. Several recent publications and exhibitions that concern the relationship between art and nature focus on uncovering the "prehistory" of ecological art in Poland or the local tradition of Land Art. The text is meant as a preliminary study of possible research perspectives that the proposed reading may open up, as well as a consideration of whether ecocriticism could serve as an opportunity to bring the tenets of horizontal art history into the practice of rereading the work of Polish artists and their relationship with the landscape.

Keywords: ecocriticism, Hasiór, horizontal art history, Polish neo-avant-garde, environmental art history

In recent years we have observed a significant development of ecologically-oriented art in Poland. Understandably, this process has its source in the rise of the awareness of urgent global ecological problems, such as climate change and accelerated pace of extinction of numerous species, and their immediate impact on Europe and Poland. However, this growing interest of artists in the relationship between humans and nature can also be attributed to the general turn within the humanities towards the study of the natural environment, which has been embraced by Polish scholars as well, who make significant contributions in areas such as environmental history,

ecocriticism, animal studies, and posthumanism.¹ However, Polish environmentally-oriented art², featured in numerous exhibitions over the last decade, inspires critical debates that reach further than our immediate artistic and ecological reality, stimulating art critics and historians to consider the “prehistory” of ecological art in Poland, in other words, to revisit existing art histories in search of works and artists that can change the way we perceive the relationship between art and nature.³

The growing presence of art production and scholarship focused on nature and environment provides a favourable climate for looking back at the classics of the Polish avant-garde and neo-avant-garde through the lens of categories afforded by ecocriticism. One of such artists, whose work has recently enjoyed a renewed critical interest, is Władysław Hasior. Several exhibitions, conferences, publications, and research projects that addressed his output highlighted numerous gaps in the study of his work and identified potential research perspectives that had not been previously pursued. In this paper, I will argue that numerous aspects of Hasior’s engagement with and relationship towards nature and environment have not been sufficiently examined; neither had there been made an effort to provide a comprehensive analysis of his work from an ecocritical perspective.⁴ In what follows I will attempt to partly fill this gap. I will start by providing an outline of recent scholarship on ecologically-oriented art in Poland in the 1960s and ‘70s to identify how our present perspective on and knowledge of the political conditions during communism can help explain the context in which artists undertook art projects that either

1 Among numerous recent publications there are also several notable texts that concern visual arts, see for example: M. Bakke, *Bio-transfiguracje: sztuka i estetyka posthumanizmu*, Poznań, 2010; G. Klaman, ed., *Biowładza i bioaktywizm: sztuka w dobie posthumanizmu / Biopower and Bioactivism: Art in the Age of Posthumanism*, Gdańsk, 2015; J. Małczyński, *Krajobrazy Zagłady: Perspektywa historii środowiskowej*, Warsaw, 2018; A. Ubertowska, D. Korczyńska-Partyka, E. Kuliś, eds., *Poetyki ekocydu: Historia, natura, konflikt*, Warsaw, 2019; *Teksty Drugie*, 2018, no. 2.

2 I refer to works and artists who display a diverse degree of engagement with ecology and articulate their standpoints through a variety of media; within this group are ecological activists such as Cecylia Malik, artists who envision possible future ecosystems, such as Diana Lelonek and Magdalena Lazar, ecofeminist works by Małgorzata Markiewicz and Żubrzyce collective, but also a large group of artists who occasionally touch upon the subject matter related to the natural environment.

3 Among significant recent publications that display such ambitions are: M. Worłowska, “Ecologically Oriented Land Art in Poland in the 1960s and 1970s”, in: A. Markowska, ed., *Sustainable Art: Facing the Need for Regeneration, Responsibility and Relations*, Warsaw–Toruń, 2015, pp. 35–41; A. M. Leńniewska, *Nowe miejsce rzeźby w sztuce polskiej lat 60. XX wieku jako wyraz przemian w sztuce przestrzeni*, Warsaw, 2015.

4 Although ecocriticism is a complex trend in the humanities, with its many definitions highlighting multiple aspects of this practice of reading cultural texts, for arguments presented here I focus on the definition by Greg Garrard, who suggests that “the widest definition of the subject of ecocriticism is the study of the relationship of the human and the non-human, throughout human cultural history and entailing critical analysis of the term ‘human’ itself.” See: G. Garrard, *Ecocriticism*, London and New York, 2012, p. 5. For other definitions of the term and the discussion of the development of ecocriticism as a field see: J. Tabaszewska, “Ekokrytyczna (samo)świadomość”, *Teksty Drugie*, 2018, no. 2, pp. 7–16.

addressed or were located in the natural environment. I will then examine selected works by Hasior to investigate whether his own engagement with nature displays a shared vision or rather testifies to his singular position within the Polish art world. In other words, my goal will not be to suggest that Hasior's art displays ecological awareness or ambitions, akin in any sense to many neo-avant-garde works in Poland that have recently been scrutinised in this context,⁵ but instead to investigate his *oeuvre* as a part of environmental history of Polish art and through the lens of ecocriticism, the goal of which is to "articulate nature" in cultural texts in order to, as Aleksandra Ubertowska aptly summarised it, "semantically explore the area that seems to us a raw, irreducible outside of culture".⁶

In post-war Poland, much like in other countries of the Eastern Bloc, the access to information about the state of the natural environment was very limited.⁷ In *The Green Bloc: Neo-avant-garde Art and Ecology under Socialism* (2015), Maja Fowkes refers to historical analyses that identify the popular social dissatisfaction with the living conditions offered by the degraded environment as one of the main causes of the decline and ultimate fall of communism.⁸ At the same time, she emphasises that, in East-Central Europe, art that expressed a concern with the natural environment remained outside the scope of interest of art criticism throughout the 1960s and '70s.⁹ Moreover, in her view, there have not been many changes in this respect in the recent scholarship of neo-avant-garde art, which remains focused on other issues and problems.¹⁰ Consequently, Fowkes's book seeks to make up for this significant omission. However, as much as it provides a general overview of the political conditions in which artists made art that focused on the natural environment, none of its several chapters is dedicated to art made in Poland.¹¹ Meanwhile, in Poland,

5 See: M. Worłowska, "Land art – poszukiwanie nowych przestrzeni dla sztuki", in: S. Jasionowicz, ed., *Obrazy świata, przestrzenie dzieła: Literatura–sztuki plastyczne*, Krakow, 2016, pp. 15–30; and a recent exhibition *Kłęska urodzaju: Początki sztuki ekologicznie zaangażowanej w Polsce*, Galeria Sztuki Współczesnej w Opolu, 18.05–23.06.2019. See also: Sue Spaid, *Ecovention Europe, Art to Transform Ecologies, 1957–2017*, ex. cat., Museum De Domijnen – Hedendaagse Kunst, Sittard, 2017, where Polish ecologically-oriented art of the last sixty years is located within a larger European context.

6 A. Ubertowska, "Mówić w imieniu biotycznej wspólnoty". Anatomie i teorie tekstu środowiskowego / ekologicznego", *Teksty Drugie*, 2018, no. 2, pp. 17–40.

7 M. Fowkes, *The Green Bloc: Neo-avant-garde Art and Ecology under Socialism*, Budapest–New York, 2015, p. 4. Fowkes suggests that it was not until the 1980s when information about the state of the natural environment has become accessible to the public. However, this access was also provided involuntarily, as manifested by the events in Czechoslovakia, where data was "leaked" to the public in 1983. See: Fowkes, *The Green Bloc*, pp. 10–12.

8 *Ibid.*, p. 4.

9 *Ibid.*, p. 9.

10 *Ibid.*, p. 17.

11 Fowkes partly filled this gap with her and Reuben Fowkes's publication on Natalia LL, published a year later. See: M. and R. Fowkes, "I Live on Earth: Cosmic Realms and the Place of Nature in the Work of Natalia LL", in: A. Jakubowska, ed., *Natalia LL: Beyond Consumer Art*, Warsaw, 2017, pp. 105–127.

art that focused on nature and critically addressed its earlier treatment in terms of a source of aesthetic pleasure and/or a resource emerged in the 1960s, displaying either formal affinities to Land Art or aspiring to merge ecological activism with artistic practice.

Among the works that expressed ambitions of raising ecological awareness is Liliana Lewicka's *Place for Reflection* (Miejsce do rozmyślań, 1966), made on the occasion of the 1st Symposium of Artists and Scientists in Puławy. As a part of her work, Lewicka outlined a fragment of a clearing in the forest where she installed a structure made of two intersecting platforms, on which she placed decaying heads of animals she acquired from a local butcher's. Men dressed in white laboratory overalls rode on motorcycles following the paths that surrounded the clearing. As Anna Maria Leśniewska suggests, in this way, those "riders of chemical services" demarcated "a zone of contamination, whose limits were set by the sound, as well as by smell".¹² Similarly concerned about nature were also the works by Bronisław Kierzkowski and Joe Oda. As Leśniewska argues, despite the openly "technocratic" standpoint of the Symposium, at least several of the artists featured in the event marked their presence as advocates of nature rather than technology and practised through their work what she refers to as the "ecology of art".¹³

Artists of the Polish neo-avant-garde, who addressed environmental issues, did not pay much attention to leaving permanent traces of their interventions, while most of their works were produced for open-air events and art festivals that defined the rhythm and direction of the development of art in communist Poland. Besides the Symposium, among other events that were significant from the point of view of environmental art history in Poland are Wrocław '70 Symposium (where Jerzy Beres presented his concept for the *Living Arena Monument* (Żywy pomnik Arena, 1971)), the Ziemia Zgorzelecka Open Air Festival in Opolno-Zdrój, which took place in July 1971 under the slogan: "science and art in the process of protection of the natural environment", as well as the 7th Złote Grono Symposium in Zielona Góra in 1975, where Stefan Papp engaged in ecological activism by producing and distributing posters that informed the citizens about *Trees Dying in Public Space* (Drzewa umierają publicznie, 1975).¹⁴ His obituary-imitating posters were quickly removed by the *milicja*, highlighting the deeply political dimension of ecologically involved art in communist Poland.¹⁵

12 A. M. Leśniewska, *Nowe miejsce rzeźby w sztuce polskiej lat 60. XX wieku jako wyraz przemian w sztuce przestrzeni*, Warsaw, 2015, p. 184.

13 *Ibid.*, p. 212.

14 More on Polish ecologically oriented Land Art made during symposia and open-air festivals in the 1960s and '70s in: M. Worłowska, "Ecologically Oriented Land Art in Poland in the 1960s and 1970s", in: A. Markowska, ed., *Sustainable Art: Facing the Need for Regeneration, Responsibility and Relations*, Warsaw-Toruń, 2015, pp. 35–41.

15 The decision made by some artists working during the communism to locate their work outside the urban context was often interpreted as a way to avoid censorship, that is, as a search for space of greater artistic freedom, rather than an interest in nature, its condition or its status. According to Joanna Filipczyk, one of the few Polish artists for whom the natural environ-

Due to the more focused attention that the state apparatus paid to artistic practice during large art festivals, particularly those taking place in urban space, the artists' choice to locate their work outside the city was often dictated by the need for greater artistic freedom. However, paradoxically perhaps, it was the urban context that often offered the conditions in which the ecological tone of the work could resound most distinctly.¹⁶ Meanwhile, in Poland, art events whose singular goal was to offer conditions where artists could engage with nature were organised in keeping with the traditional formula of the *plein-air* festival, informed by the modernist conception of nature as a source of inspiration rather than a political issue.¹⁷

The same year that Lewicka and other artists made their statements advocating art's involvement in the issues of ecology and nature protection, Władysław Hasior was commissioned by the communist authorities to create a design for a monument celebrating those who have fallen in the Podhale region during the civil war of 1945–1947 when striving to secure the communist rule over this area. The monument, currently known as *The Organ* (Organy), was unveiled in 1966 at the Snozka Pass near Czorsztyn, where it was installed 653 meters over sea level. Understandably, in the context of the above-discussed works by Lewicka and Papp, Hasior's design has to be regarded as neither driven by the artist's concern for the degrading condition of the natural environment nor as a wish to move outside the confines of the gallery space to avoid the controlling eyes of the censors. In this respect, *The Organ* does not

ment constituted an inherent part of most of his projects was Marian Bogusz, whom she terms one of the pioneers of "sustainable art" in Poland. See: J. Filipczyk, "Searching for Social Equilibrium: Marian Bogusz's Activity as 'Prolegomena' of Sustainable Art in Poland", in: A. Markowska, ed., *Sustainable Art: Facing the Need for Regeneration, Responsibility and Relations*, Warsaw–Toruń, 2015, pp. 135–141.

16 This is apparent in the works by Bereś and Papp, but also in the classic pieces of ecological art, such as Joseph Beuys's *7000 Oaks* (1982), Alan Sonfist's *Time Landscape* (1965–1978–present), and Agnes Denes's *Wheat Field: A Confrontation* (1982). I discussed this issue in reference to American art in: K. Kolenda, "The Political (in) Landscape and Post-Occupy Art Practices", *Annales Universitatis Paedagogicae Cracoviensis. Studia de Arte et Educatione*, 2017, no. 12, pp. 79–91.

17 An interesting example of how deep ran the attachment to this formula is the *plein-air* painting event organised annually in Białowieża from 1965 onwards. Although orchestrated in the vicinity of Europe's last "primeval forest", the event did not seek to address its status as a cultural landmark or ecosystem of special significance but merely treated the forest as a source of artistic inspiration. One of its later editions, organised in 1983 by Bożena Kowalska, brought together 33 Polish geometrical abstractionists. See: B. Kowalska, "Światło", *Exit*, 2003, no. 53–56, pp. 3200–3202. Although from the present perspective, when it is difficult to think about art and its relationship with its surroundings without considering the tradition of site-specific art, the choice of Białowieża as a site for making geometrical abstraction may seem odd, during communism rural locations were favoured as conditions for making modern (also abstract) art, which turned to nature in search of basic forms, compositions, and colours, as well as more or less well defined "primeval" features. This perspective was deeply rooted in the modernist paradigm, while its model example was the artistic colony in St. Ives in Cornwall, where "wild", "prehistoric" landscape inspired landscape and marine artists, but also the abstract modernism of Barbara Hepworth and Ben Nicholson, who worked there since the late 1920s, while the heyday of the colony's international significance came in the 1950s and '60s.

seem to fit into the history of Polish environmentally-aware neo-avant-garde art. Instead, it has become an important reference point in the post-1989 debate on the legacy of monumental public sculpture made under communism.

Although Hasiór intended it as a piece commemorating all the victims of the fratricidal conflict, a granite plate, added to the monument, put a clear emphasis on the losses incurred by the communist side and read: "To the faithful sons of Poland who died in Podhale in the fight for securing the people's rule".¹⁸ In its original version, the monument consisted of a metal structure as well as a plate and figures of the fallen soldiers installed on a horizontally protruding concrete plank. Despite the undoubtedly successful formal aspect of Hasiór's work, which critics interpreted as indebted to constructivism¹⁹, the work did not succeed in becoming the world's first sound sculpture: due to either cost-cutting or faulty construction, the organs did not play.²⁰ More importantly, however, due to its status as a monument erected to praise communism and those involved in its introduction in the 1940s, after 1989, *The Organ* has come to epitomise the problems surrounding the contentious heritage of monumental public sculpture made in Poland in the postwar period.²¹ Although the debate on how to approach such works (whether to protect them or dismantle them, as some would wish) is far from over²², and the political aspect of the perception of Hasiór's work is undoubtedly of paramount importance to the critical revision of his *oeuvre*, I will be interested in how this piece can be analysed as a work that reflects the artist's ambition to produce sculptural interpretations of forms he observed in the landscape.

These forms, created either by natural forces (erosion, tectonic activity, vegetation, etc.), but also by human and non-human agents, were photographed and catalogued by Hasiór with great consistency and dedication throughout his career. A selection of this large set of photographs, which Hasiór arranged into labelled sets and used during slide show presentations he organised for the visitors to his *atelier*,

18 In 1993, Hasiór approached the authorities of Czorsztyn to remove the plate from the monument. See: K. Sienkiewicz, "Władysław Hasiór, 'Organy'", culture.pl, <https://culture.pl/pl/dzielo/wladyslaw-hasior-organy> [accessed 23 May 2019].

19 For an analysis of *The Organ* in reference to constructivism and neo-constructivism see for example: K. Chrudzimska-Uhera, "Obiekt w przestrzeni: Pomniki i rzeźbiarskie realizacje plenerowe Władysława Hasióra", in: M. Raińska, *Hasiór. Powrót: Granice sztuki współczesnej – wokół twórczości Władysława Hasióra*, Nowy Sącz, 2011, p. 31.

20 According to Hanna Kirchner, Hasiór's long-term friend and critic of his work, Hasiór explained that the pipes installed on the monument were of poor quality and gave only barely audible sounds; his later efforts to improve their performance failed. See: H. Kirchner, *Hasiór: Opowieść na dwa głosy*, Warsaw, 2005, pp. 51–52.

21 See a summary of the post-1989 debate surrounding *The Organ* in: K. S. Ożóg, "Zapomniane Organy, Ptaki i takie tam... Recepcja dzieł pomnikowych Hasióra po 1989 roku", in: *Hasiór. Powrót*, op. cit., pp. 34–39.

22 In 2017, the Institute of National Memory (IPN) suggested that the monument should be dismantled. See: Ł. Bobek, "Pieniny. IPN uważa, że pomnik 'Organy' Hasióra trzeba zdemontować", *Gazeta Krakowska*, 20 October 2017, <https://gazetakrakowska.pl/pieniny-ipn-uwaza-ze-pomnik-organy-hasiora-trzeba-zdemontowac/ar/12598950> [accessed 26 May 2019].

was published in *Nowa Wieś* journal, accompanied by the artist's commentary, as his *Photo Notebook*. As I will try to demonstrate, when read through the ecocritical lens, Hasiór's interest in formal arrangements found in nature is informed by the perspective that questions the division of the environment into nature and culture, and, instead, proposes to see human and non-human agents as parallel rather than opposing forces.

The collections *Rhythms* (Rytmy) and *Water Rock* (Woda Kamień) contain photographs of groups of identical or similar objects, put together either by nature (groups of trees, accumulation of rocks, flocks of sheep and birds, groups of clouds and crystals) or by humans (piled logs and wooden boards, haystacks in the field, fences, multiple elements of abstract sculptures in a gallery space, menhirs). The sets of photographs were accompanied by Hasiór's commentaries that sought to explain the reason such commonplace objects were photographed and the rationale behind putting them together (Fig. 1).²³

Notably, in his commentary to the set titled *Rhythms*, Hasiór emphasises the differences between natural and human-made rhythmical patterns: "It is very important to recognise a biological rhythm that exists in nature and distinguish it from a rhythm produced by human actions".²⁴ According to the artist, examples of biological rhythm, for instance, branches of a tree, with their irregularity, stand in contrast to "a rhythm of the built structure of a shed" in that "biological rhythm is not as insistent, not as persistently symmetrical".²⁵ However, after this distinction is highlighted, Hasiór goes on to marvel at the regularity of some natural phenomena: "A stone plate resting over a stream breaks under the pressure of temperature and the movement of the earth. It breaks in an astounding way, dividing along straight lines. Fragments that fall into the water are regular cubes".²⁶ In this text, despite the explicitly articulated conviction that biological rhythms are unlike human-made structures, the examples that Hasiór provides, the juxtapositions of photographs and their effects that he seeks to emphasise, all work to subvert rather than confirm his statement. And, indeed, the selection of his sources and their subsequent encounter on a single page of the magazine, orchestrated by the artist, speaks powerfully that the very logic behind this process is grounded in the need to highlight similarity rather than difference.

In *Photo Notebook: Rhythmic Structures* (Struktury rytmiczne), Hasiór confronts seven photographs of neatly arranged piles of wooden boards and sharpened poles

23 Significantly, Hasiór's commentaries were recorded on audio cassettes and later edited by Paweł Kwiatkowski. The edited texts retain the quality of Hasiór's spoken language, his "characteristic tempo and a dramatic flair". See: E. Tatar, "Lessons in Imagination and Sensitivity", *Not Fot / Władysław Hasiór's Photo Notebook*, Vol. 3: *Ziemia. Materia. Rytm / Earth. Matter. Rhythm*, Zakopane, 2017, p. 73.

24 "Notatnik Fotograficzny Władysława Hasióra (6): Rytmy", photo: Władysław Hasiór, ed. Paweł Kwiatkowski, *Nowa Wieś*, 1983, no. 41, p. 12, reprinted in: *Not Fot / Władysław Hasiór's Photo Notebook*, Vol. 3: *Ziemia. Materia. Rytm / Earth. Matter. Rhythm*, Zakopane, 2017, p. 42.

25 *Ibid.*, p. 43.

26 *Ibid.*



Fig. 1. “Notatnik Fotograficzny Władysława Hasiora (6): Rytm”, commentary by Władysław Hasiór, photo: Władysław Hasiór, ed. Paweł Kwiatkowski, *Nowa Wieś*, 1983, no. 41, p. 12, reprinted in: *Not Fot / Władysław Hasiór’s Photo Notebook*, Vol. 3: *Ziemia. Materia. Rytm / Earth. Matter. Rhythm*, Muzeum Tatrzańskie im. Dra Tytusa Chałubińskiego w Zakopanem, Zakopane 2017, p. 42. © Muzeum Tatrzańskie im. Dra Tytusa Chałubińskiego w Zakopanem, 2017

with a picture of *The Organ*, which serves to demonstrate that, much like his assemblages made from found objects, the forms of even his most “abstract” works are derived rather than “invented” (Fig. 2). In the attendant commentary he explains:

“Rough-hewn studs, formed into a kind of horizontal stockade, are arranged so that we look at them from the front. The spikes are aimed at the viewer, demonstrating extreme aggression. I’m sorry that I can’t create a full expression of an aggressive sculpture composed of such simple means. But observing all the types of rhythms in the reality surrounding me, I decided once for a monument atypical for my artistic practice [...] deriving [...] from this arrangement of hewn stakes”.²⁷

This open declaration of fascination with the forms of what Hasiór called “plebeian art”, that is, the simple, yet “genuine”, as he saw them, products of amateur provincial artists²⁸, could be read as the artist’s reliance, in terms of the source of inspiration, on human-made structures. What is distinct in the above-cited commentary is fascination mixed with a certain humility that comes with the admission that the artist is unable to achieve the same kind of expressive power through such simple means. However, both Hasiór’s observations included in the *Photo Notebook*, as well as many of his works (from childhood experiments with roots to “sculptures torn from the ground”) suggest that he was equally eager to translate observed natural phenomena into his artistic language and that both sources were treated as forms displaying the same underlying logic, the same rationality and order.

In this process, the crucial aspect was how to convey the subtlety of observed rhythms and structures. In the eighth chapter of his *Photo Notebook*, titled “The Order of Rhythms” (“Porządek rytmów”) Hasiór included, yet again, photographs of piles of logs and pipes, bricks and stones, and one of a wooden box covered with a simple net made of string: a “nursery” for chicks (Fig. 3). At first sight, it seems that in the latter picture the net is the key element of the image, filling almost the entire composition. However, Hasiór, in his commentary, focuses on the grass amid which the box is placed: “The grass, which gives an impression of a uniform mass, has a structure and rhythm as well. This rhythm, made up of minute parts, is less distinct, less obvious than the clear rhythm of the net. But it also introduces order into the microcosm of delicate green plants”.²⁹

27 “Notatnik Fotograficzny Władysława Hasióra (7): Struktury rytmiczne”, photo: Władysław Hasiór, ed. Paweł Kwiatkowski, *Nowa Wieś*, 1983, no. 43, p. 13, reprinted in: J. Dembowska et al., eds., *Not Fot / Władysław Hasiór’s Photo Notebook*, Vol. 3: *Ziemia. Materia. Rytm / Earth. Matter. Rhythm*, Zakopane, 2017, p. 45 [cited after the English translation by Christopher Smith in E. Tatar, op. cit., p. 74].

28 More on Hasiór’s use of vernacular art and found objects, as well as the critical and popular reception of this aspect of his art in: H. Kirchner, “O Hasiórze – po latach / About Hasiór – After Many Years”, in: J. Chrobak, ed., *Władysław Hasiór: Europejski Rauschenberg / The European Rauschenberg*, MOCAP, Kraków, 2014, pp. 26–30.

29 “Notatnik Fotograficzny Władysława Hasióra (8): Porządek rytmu”, photo: Władysław Hasiór, ed. Paweł Kwiatkowski, *Nowa Wieś*, 1983, no. 46, p. 13, reprinted in: J. Dembowska et al., eds., *Not Fot / Władysław Hasiór’s Photo Notebook*, Vol. 3: *Ziemia. Materia. Rytm / Earth. Matter. Rhythm*, Zakopane, 2017, p. 47.

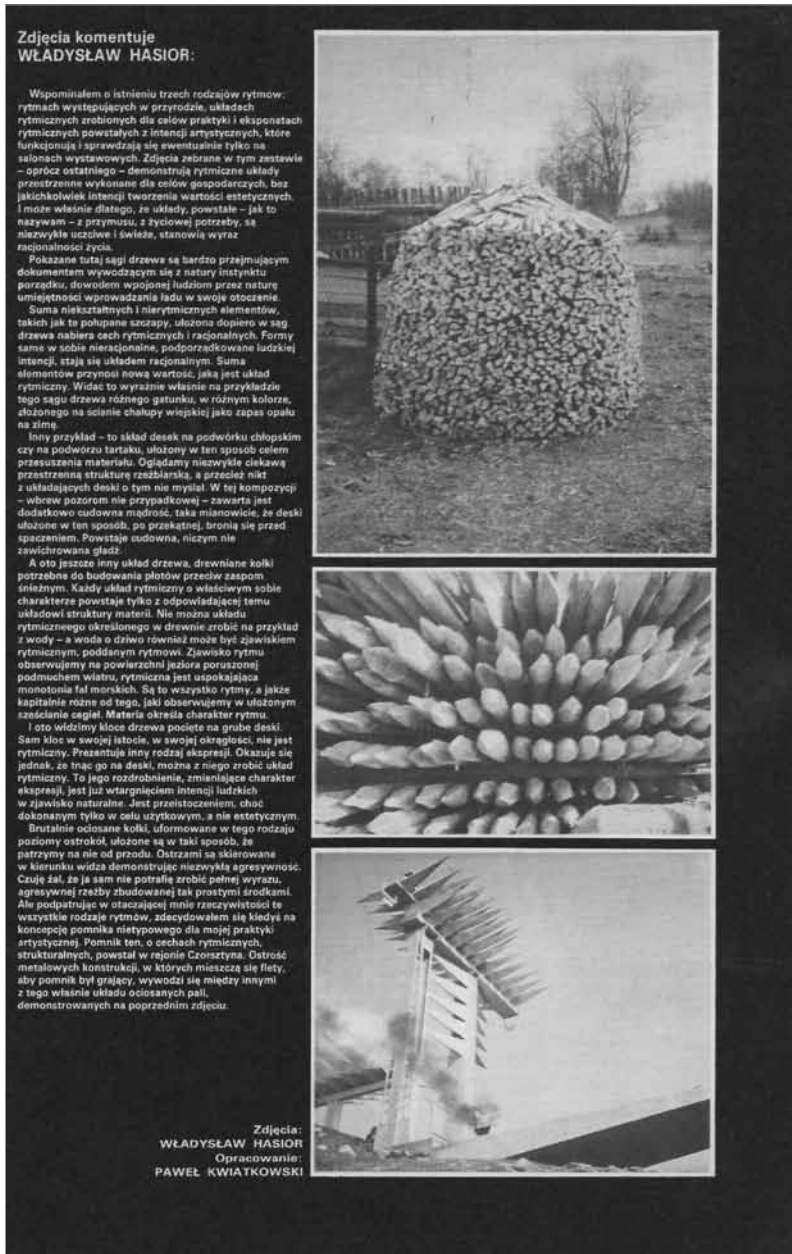


Fig. 2. “Notatnik Fotograficzny Władysława Hasiora (7): Struktury rytmiczne”, commentary by Władysław Hasiór, photo: Władysław Hasiór, ed. Paweł Kwiatkowski, *Nowa Wieś*, 1983, no. 43, p. 13, reprinted in: *Not Fot / Władysław Hasiór’s Photo Notebook*, Vol. 3: *Ziemia. Materia. Rytm / Earth. Matter. Rhythm*, Muzeum Tatrzańskie im. Dra Tytusa Chałubińskiego w Zakopanem, Zakopane 2017, p. 45. © Muzeum Tatrzańskie im. Dra Tytusa Chałubińskiego w Zakopanem, 2017



Fig. 3. “Notatnik Fotograficzny Władysława Hasióra (8): Porządek rytmu”, commentary by Władysław Hasiór, photo: Władysław Hasiór, ed. Paweł Kwiatkowski, *Nowa Wieś*, 1983, no. 46, p. 13, reprinted in: *Not Fot / Władysław Hasiór’s Photo Notebook*, Vol. 3: *Ziemia. Materia. Rytm / Earth. Matter. Rhythm*, Muzeum Tatrzańskie im. Dra Tytusa Chałubińskiego w Zakopanem, Zakopane 2017, p. 47. © Muzeum Tatrzańskie im. Dra Tytusa Chałubińskiego w Zakopanem, 2017

In this observation, Hasior reveals himself as an acute observer of the tiny details of the surrounding world. Ewa Tatar aptly summarised the nature of his looking at the landscape: “He cuts single elements off from reality. He grasps for detail. He gazes under the magnifying glass. [...] Individual studies are juxtaposed to display various aspects of the same phenomenon, less often to display them in a broader context”.³⁰ In this way, Hasior’s *Photo Notebook* reveals itself as a set of collected and catalogued symptoms of something larger; at close inspection, forms, structures, and rhythms are isolated from their context, while their original provenance becomes almost irrelevant. Could, then, Hasior’s way of seeing landscape be interpreted as a repeated act of separating elements from their immediate environment and, instead, locating them within the artificial (or artist-made) reality, in other words, of appropriating them for his purpose of explaining his art and its sources to the readers of *Nowa Wieś* and the audience gathered at his “artist talks”? This is not to say that Hasior’s wish to explain how his artistic imagination worked dominated over his true fascination with the simple yet marvellous forms found in nature. The question is rather whether the act of isolation of such elements and their transference into the realm of “visual motifs” can be regarded as a sign of “romantic materialism”, an act of imagination whereby objects are rendered “paradoxically transcendent” in that they exist “in two places at once”.³¹ As much as such a reading is tempting, below, I will argue against it, referring in doing so to Tatar’s comparison of Hasior’s *oeuvre* to the work of Robert Smithson.

Notably, a photograph of one of Smithson’s *Non-Site* pieces from 1968 features twice in Hasior’s collection of slides: in sets titled “Water Rock” and “Menhirs”.³² In the former, the picture of rocks in wooden boxes (signature AFDMT WH 0733 76) appears preceded by a slide combing two photographs, both of megalithic circles (74), and another combined image of two pictures, each showing a rock wall (75). It is followed by a slide featuring views of two works of Land Art (77), ruins of an ancient city (78), colourful rocks on the beach in close-up (79), and a close-up of white round rocks with red markings, resembling human faces (80). The fact that Hasior included a picture of Smithson’s work as merely one of the examples of how humans have utilised rocks throughout history is in itself quite telling. However, what I would like to focus on is how both artists approached their subject matter. Tatar identifies similarities between the two artists: both transfer the object (physically or visually) from one reality to another (to a gallery space, to a catalogued set), whereby it becomes something else. Both made photographic records of their walks, which they later published with added commentaries (Hasior his “Photo Notebook” column in *Nowa Wieś* and Smithson “A Tour of the Monuments of Passaic, New Jersey” in *Artforum* in 1967). However, this comparison seems to suggest more differences than affinities, first of them consisting in an obvious dissimilarity of ambitions that their respective works demonstrated: while Smithson pondered on the

30 Tatar, *op. cit.*, p. 74.

31 *Ibid.*, p. 75.

32 *Ibid.*, p. 74.

nature of erosion and entropy, in short, on the forces of destruction, Hasiór focused on growth, accumulation, forces of creation. Another, much more important difference, revealed when their work is analysed through an ecocritical lens, concerns the artists' respective attitudes towards their subject matter. In his *Non-Site* pieces, Smithson sought to create a three-dimensional depiction of a site by combining its maps, photographs, and objects, such as rocks, placed in wooden boxes.³³ All these actions display a need to translate reality (and the experience thereof) into the language of traditional and experimental geography. Smithson proposes a new way of mapping but, more importantly, even though his *Non-Sites* contribute to a more extensive understanding of what a place is and how it can be represented, they embrace the very logic of mapping: the viewing subject is sufficiently distanced from the observed object to produce an abstracted version of its appearance and capture its size and its relationship with its immediate environment. In so doing, Smithson emphasises the unbridgeable gap between culture (human knowledge, science, aesthetic convention) and nature.

In contrast, Hasiór's *Photo Notebook*, although it is a product of an artistic imagination prone to succumb to the seductive power of cataloguing and labelling, and therefore of making mind maps, displays proximity of the viewer to the photographed object that undermines the possibility of responsible, that is, "objective" mapping. It is particularly distinct in the series of slides titled "Trees". Trees have been, historically speaking, subject to scrutiny as compositional elements, particularly by late 18th-century theorists of the Picturesque. In Hasiór's photographs, trees were pictured from close-up, from the bottom up, and from the distance, in a variety of forms (single, branchless trunks and in groups forming dense corridors along the road), yet, even those slides that conform the most to the rules of composition still powerfully exude the artist's intention to get closer to the photographed object, as if he had to struggle between conflicting intentions of capturing the image in its entirety and pointing to the viewers the details of their structure that so fascinated him. This conflict between the passion of an admirer and the documentary drive of an observer results in numerous images displaying some compositional "faults" stemming from the artist's inability, as it seems, to keep the right distance: several images show trees with their branches "cut off" by the frame, in others, they are hardly recognisable as trees due to a lack of context. Others still, of which there are around two dozen, do not show trees but structures made of wood: fences, sculptures, piles of boards and logs.

Therefore, I would suggest that, unlike Smithson, whose *Non-Site* series works to highlight the opposition between culture and nature, Hasiór ultimately strives to efface the boundaries between that which is human-made and that which is non-human-made. And not only for the sole reason that culture would, in his eyes, probably lose in this competition, but because the accumulation of photographed and catalogued forms and structures manifests the futility of such distinctions. And

33 R. Smithson, "A Provisional Theory of Non-Sites", <https://www.robertsmithson.com/essays/provisional.htm> [accessed 26 May 2019].

although Hasior's collection, with slides neatly organised and labelled, can suggest a mind prone to cataloguing, i.e. organising the world into a new, artistic pattern, his ambitions in this respect were not focused on finding the right category for an individual image. On the contrary, the slides are often repeated in a single set, suggesting that the order in which he showed them to the audience was irrelevant; furthermore, a single image (for instance the picture of Smithson's *Non-Site*, but many others as well) could feature in multiple sets, demonstrating that equally irrelevant was it to find the "right" set or category for every slide.

While Smithson, as well as Land Art in general, tended to treat the landscape as a "blank space" ready to be filled with meanings afforded by the artist's creative practice, works by Hasior – both his monumental sculpture as well as his photographs – highlight the reverse: it is the artist's practice that can, however imperfectly and incompletely, offer viewers a glimpse into the richness of forms, shapes, and processes that take place in their environment. With his works, Hasior seems to be emphasising that the forms he makes are merely weak and partial reflections of the world he observes. *The Organ*, through the context in which it was featured in the *Photo Notebook*, is no-longer only a raw, hard-edged neo-constructivist piece that fits so well with the mountain landscape, nor merely an epitome of political conflict around monumental public sculpture and its symbols, but also a manifestation of Hasior's desire to effect through his work certain unity between human and non-human-made forms, to erase the differences between them, but also the hierarchies that such distinctions imply. In his eyes, natural forms are not valued only inasmuch as they offer picturesque or spectacular views. On the contrary: the most commonplace stone and the least impressive bunch of grass is valued as much, if not more, as a great rock formation or stormy clouds.

The differences I discussed here, between Hasior and Smithson, but also more broadly, between Polish environmentally-conscious art and its Western equivalents, certainly outnumber the similarities, clearly highlighting that while comparisons like this one, regardless of how much they let us recognise the particularity of artworks made in our geopolitical context, ultimately fail to achieve more than a potential inclusion of art from East-Central Europe into the Western canon. Although certainly valuable as a way to oppose the tendency of art history to focus on vernacular elements in landscape-related art in East-Central Europe (Maja Fowkes suggested that most discussions of such works seek to highlight "how avant-garde elements are combined with the tradition of folklore of East European art"³⁴), attempts to present Polish neo-avant-garde art located in a landscape as local Land Art or in reference to the classic representatives of this trend in order to prove their "legitimate" status and therefore to inscribe them into the global art history, this act repeats, in its essence, the very nature of the distinctions that inform the perception of East-Central European art as peripheral. It is, indeed, what Piotr Piotrowski

34 Fowkes, *Green Bloc*, p. 17.

identified as “vertical” art history.³⁵ In its stead, the scholar proposed “the paradigm of horizontal art history”, whose role would be, among other things, to recover the “historic, political and contextual specificity of the work produced in each area by addressing particular local resonance of its meanings, its diachronic character and function within given societies”³⁶ in order to write world art histories (more than one unitary history) that are “polyphonic, multi-dimensional, devoid of geographical hierarchies”.³⁷ This polyphonic art history would, and should, in his view, prioritise the previously marginalised Other: the East as the geopolitical Other of the West, certainly, but also ethnic, sexual, and geographical Others.

It is my argument here that while a revision of the Polish neo-avant-garde in search of traces of movements and intellectual trends that we know from elsewhere (usually from the West) might open up potentially productive research perspectives, it also runs the risk of reinstalling the work or artist back into the “vertical” paradigm whereby it is revised through a different theoretical or historical lens, but the very nature of the apparatus used for this purpose remains insufficiently challenged. Ecocriticism may, in this context, be applied as a tool that may help “horizontalize” art-historical perspective by focusing the analysis on and giving the voice to one of the marginalised Others of the communist state: nature.³⁸ It is not my intention here to provide a summary of how communism discredited the aesthetic appreciation of nature as a bourgeois entertainment, of how the countryside was reconceptualised as a locus of vernacular culture, whose products were redesigned for the pleasure and consumption of now urban-dwelling, relocated rural population (effected by the Cepelia), or of how communist policies and propaganda transformed farming into industrialised and collectivised agriculture focused on productivity. Suffice it to say that during communism nature was treated as a “clean slate” on which the state could play out its fantasy of progress and social change.

On this backdrop, Hasior’s art presents itself as genuinely unfitting. His appreciation for all forms he observed in his environment, but particularly in nature, clearly brought out in him a desire not so much to represent and therefore to control it, but to gather as much visual information about it as possible in the hope that it would let him understand the way it worked.

35 P. Piotrowski, *Art and Democracy in Post-Communist Europe*, trans. A. Brzyski, London, 2012, p. 27.

36 *Ibid.*, p. 34.

37 *Ibid.*, p. 39.

38 For recent discussions of what would be the possible objective of an ecocritical art history see: A. Patrizio, *The Ecological Eye: Assembling an Ecocritical Art History*, Manchester, 2019; S. Boettger, “Within and Beyond the Art World: Environmentalist Criticism of Visual Art”, in: H. Zapf, ed., *Handbook of Ecocriticism and Cultural Ecology*, Berlin, 2016, np. [e-book]; A. C. Braddock, “From Nature to Ecology: The Emergence of Ecocritical Art History”, in: J. Davis, J. A. Greenhill, J. D. LaFountain, eds., *A Companion to American Art*, Hoboken, 2015, pp. 447–468; A. C. Braddock, Ch. Irmischer, eds., *A Keener Perception: Ecocritical Studies in American Art History*, Tuscaloosa, 2009.

References

- Bakke, M., *Bio-transfiguracje: sztuka i estetyka posthumanizmu*, Poznań, 2010.
- Bobek, Ł., "Pieniny. IPN uważa, że pomnik 'Organy' Hasióra trzeba zdemontować", *Gazeta Krakowska*, 20 October 2017, <https://gazetakrakowska.pl/pieniny-ipn-uwaza-ze-pomnik-organy-hasiora-trzeba-zdemontowac/ar/12598950> [accessed 26 May 2019].
- Boettger, S., "Within and Beyond the Art World: Environmentalist Criticism of Visual Art", in: H. Zapf, ed., *Handbook of Ecocriticism and Cultural Ecology*, Berlin, 2016, np. [e-book].
- Braddock, A. C., "From Nature to Ecology: The Emergence of Ecocritical Art History", in: J. Davis, J. A. Greenhill, J. D. LaFountain, eds., *A Companion to American Art*, Hoboken, 2015, pp. 447–468.
- Braddock, A. C., Irmscher, Ch., eds., *A Keener Perception: Ecocritical Studies in American Art History*, Tuscaloosa, 2009.
- Dembowska, J., Górczyca, Ł., Pindor, B., Serafinowicz, S., Śliwińska, K., Trznadel, J., eds., *Not Fot / Władysław Hasiór's Photo Notebook*, Vol. 3: „Ziemia. Materia. Rytm / Earth. Matter. Rhythm”, Zakopane, 2017.
- Filipczyk, J., "Searching for Social Equilibrium: Marian Bogusz's Activity as 'Prolegomena' of Sustainable Art in Poland", in: A. Markowska, ed., *Sustainable Art: Facing the Need for Regeneration, Responsibility and Relations*, Warsaw–Toruń, 2015, pp. 135–141.
- Fowkes, M. and R., "I Live on Earth: Cosmic Realms and the Place of Nature in the Work of Natalia LL", in: A. Jakubowska, ed., *Natalia LL: Beyond Consumer Art*, Warsaw, 2017, pp. 105–127.
- Fowkes, M., *The Green Bloc: Neo-avant-garde Art and Ecology under Socialism*, Budapest–New York, 2015.
- Garrard, G., *Ecocriticism*, London and New York, 2012.
- Kirchner, H., "O Hasiórze – po latach / About Hasiór – After Many Years", in: J. Chrobak, ed., *Władysław Hasiór: Europejski Rauschenberg? / The European Rauschenberg?*, MOCAK, Kraków, 2014, pp. 26–30.
- Kirchner, H., *Hasiór: Opowieść na dwa głosy*, Warsaw, 2005.
- Klaman, G., ed., *Biowładza i bioaktywizm: sztuka w dobie posthumanizmu / Biopower and Bioactivism: Art in the Age of Posthumanism*, Gdańsk, 2015.
- Kolenda, K., "The Political (in) Landscape and Post-Occupy Art Practices", *Annales Universitatis Paedagogicae Cracoviensis. Studia de Arte et Educatione*, 2017, no. 12, pp. 79–91.
- Kowalska, B., "Światło", *Exit*, 2003, no. 53–56, pp. 3200–3202.
- Leśniewska, A. M., *Nowe miejsce rzeźby w sztuce polskiej lat 60. XX wieku jako wyraz przemian w sztuce przestrzeni*, Warsaw, 2015.
- Małczyński, J., *Krajobrazy Zagłady: Perspektywa historii środowiskowej*, Warsaw, 2018.
- Patrizio, A., *The Ecological Eye: Assembling an Ecocritical Art History*, Manchester, 2019.
- Piotrowski, P., *Art and Democracy in Post-Communist Europe*, trans. A. Brzyski, London, 2012.
- Raińska, M., ed., *Hasiór. Powrót: Granice sztuki współczesnej – wokół twórczości Władysława Hasióra*, Nowy Sącz, 2011.
- Smithson, R., "A Provisional Theory of Non-Sites", <https://www.robertsmithson.com/essays/provisional.htm> [accessed 26 May 2019].
- Spaid, S., *Ecovention Europe, Art to Transform Ecologies, 1957–2017*, ex. cat., Museum De Domijnen – Hedendaagse Kunst, Sittard, 2017.
- Tabaszewska, J., "Ekokrytyczna (samo)świadomość", *Teksty Drugie*, 2018, no. 2, pp. 7–16.
- Ubertowska, A., "Mówić w imieniu biotycznej wspólnoty". Anatomie i teorie tekstu środowiskowego / ekologicznego", *Teksty Drugie*, 2018, no. 2, pp. 17–40.

- Ubertowska, A., Korczyńska-Partyka, D., Kuliś, E., eds., *Poetyki ekocydu: Historia, natura, konflikt*, Warsaw, 2019.
- Worłowska, M., "Ecologically Oriented Land Art in Poland in the 1960s and 1970s", in: A. Markowska, ed., *Sustainable Art: Facing the Need for Regeneration, Responsibility and Relations*, , Warsaw–Toruń, 2015, pp. 35–41.
- Worłowska, M., "Land art – poszukiwanie nowych przestrzeni dla sztuki", in: S. Jasionowicz, ed., *Obrazy świata, przestrzenie dzieła: Literatura–sztuki plastyczne*, Kraków, 2016, pp. 15–30.

Ewa Kędziora

INSTITUTE OF ART HISTORY, UNIVERSITY OF WARSAW, POLAND

ORCID: 0000-0002-1902-7217

<https://doi.org/10.31338/2657-6015ik.30.9>

Archaeology of the present: Israeli art after the Al-Aqsa Intifada

Abstract

The Al-Aqsa Intifada was the second Palestinian uprising that took place in 2000–2005. The dramatic record of the Intifada expressing itself in waves of recurring terror attacks and the construction of the separation wall on the border between Israel and Palestine overturned the Israeli-Palestinian relationship and triggered international public opinion. The article aims to determine how those events influenced the art scene. The study performs an overview of activities and artistic phenomena which occurred from 2000 through 2015 and problematized the events of the Second Intifada in various ways. The author focuses on individual works of art by both Israeli and international artists as well as art events and exhibitions of the leading kind. The analysis shows the extensive impacts of the Intifada on the artistic environment of that time and leads the author to the conclusion of the Intifada's prevailing role in shaping politically engaged Israeli art at the beginning of 21 century. The dramatic events came up in creating a new aesthetic of the conflict, resulted in expanding a cultural boycott of Israel as well as challenged the position of politically engaged artists of Israel.

Keywords: Israeli contemporary Art, Israeli-Palestinian conflict, cultural boycott, Tsibi Geva.

The subject matter of this article is the impact of the events of the Al-Aqsa Intifada, the second Palestinian uprising, on the artistic environment in the years 2005–2015. The rebellion, which took place in 2000–2005, was the aftermath of the long-standing Israeli-Palestinian conflict – the annexation of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, deteriorating living conditions of Palestinians under the Israeli occupation, and disappointment with the ineffective peace process in the 1990s. In this article, I review art trends and artistic phenomena that emerged after the Second Intifada, an event that I consider to be a major impulse in the formation of political art in Israel at the beginning of the 21st century. I examine how factors such as increased oppression against the Palestinian population during the Al-Aqsa Intifada, a growing awareness

of the conflict among the international public opinion, and the formation of attitudes condemning Israel's policies, triggered the artistic environment. The analysis concentrates on activities and artistic phenomena that problematized the impact of the Second Intifada in relation to shaping the aesthetics of the conflict, a cultural boycott of Israel and Palestinian artists as well as the use of photography as a medium in new narratives on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

An outline of the political situation in 2000–2015

The official visit of the Israeli politician Ariel Sharon to the Temple Mount in September 2000 is widely considered to have been the direct cause of the second Palestinian uprising.¹ The visit, which was treated as a provocation, triggered a wave of violence against Israeli troops and civilians in the form of large-scale terrorist attacks.² The construction of the so-called security barrier was Israel's response to the Palestinian aggression.³ The wall was to be built along the Green Line, but it departed from it in many places, which resulted in seizing large parts of Palestinian territories and restricting or blocking Palestinians' freedom of movement within the divided areas.⁴ Also, the systemic aggravation of the conditions of crossing the border by the Israeli authorities – numerous checkpoints, an extremely small and inadequate number of permits issued, lack of administrative regulations and numerous abuses by Israeli soldiers – contributed to the development of mechanisms of oppression against Palestinians consisting in isolation and restriction of the movement of the population.⁵ The events of the Second Intifada were recorded as a period of indifference and apathy of Israeli society.⁶ The reality of everyday life was shaped by terrorist attacks, a permanent state of emergency and a failure of the peace process, which created a sense of recurring events, increased the distrust of Palestinians and deepened divisions within the society, leading to an era without dreams and aspirations.⁷

The Al-Aqsa Intifada ended with the death of Yasser Arafat in 2004.⁸ The balance of losses suffered by both sides was overwhelming. The post-intifada negotiations

1 A. Shapira, *Israel. A History*, Brandeis University Press, 2012, p. 446.

2 Ibid.

3 See: I. Braverman, "Checkpoint Watch: Bureaucracy and Resistance at the Israeli/Palestinian Border", *Social & Legal Studies* 21(3), 2012, pp. 297–320.

4 Ibid.

5 See: A. Handel, "Exclusionary Surveillance and Spatial Uncertainty in the Occupied Palestinian Territories", in: E. Zureik, D. Lyon, Y. Abu-Laban, eds., *Surveillance and Control in Israel/Palestine: Population, Territory and Power*, London, 2011.

6 V. Vinitzky-Seroussi, "The Decade of Indifference: 1998–2007", in: A. Mendelson, ed., *Real Time...*, op. cit., p. 15.

7 R. Marton, "The Psychological Impact of the Second Intifada on Israeli Society", *Palestine-Israel Journal of Politics, Economics and Culture*, vol. 11, no. 4, 2004.

8 See: G.G. Tabarani, *Israeli-Palestinian Conflict: From Balfour Promise to Bush Declaration: the Complications and the Road for a Lasting Peace*, Bloomington, 2008, pp. 222–244.

resulted in the decision to withdraw all Jewish settlers from the Gaza Strip.⁹ Mahmud Abbas, president of the Palestinian Authority, described this action as “the first step” in a steady normalization of the Israeli-Palestinian relations.¹⁰ However, after a short-lived stabilization, this relationship worsened again after the victory of Hamas, the Islamic Resistance Movement party, in the 2006 parliamentary elections in the Palestinian Authority.¹¹ This event caused a split in Palestinian politics and drastic deterioration of the living conditions of the civilian population in the Gaza Strip.¹² In 2008, Israel carried out Operation Cast Lead to destroy Hamas’ armed infrastructure in the Gaza Strip and its underground tunnel network. As a consequence of the operation, also known as the Gaza Massacre, both sides of the conflict were accused of war crimes by the UN Human Rights Council.¹³ In 2014, in response to relentless missile attacks fired at Israel, the intensity of military operations increased again with the launch of Operation Protective Edge, the bloodiest military campaign in the Gaza Strip since 2008.¹⁴ A year later, the frustration and powerlessness of teenage Palestinians in the face of the Israeli occupation and the unchanging political situation lead to the outbreak of the so-called Knife Intifada.¹⁵ The third rebellion differed from the others because it was largely carried out by “lone wolves”.

The aftermath of the Intifada in the international art world

The construction of the separation barrier and the bloody record of the Second Intifada made the Israeli-Palestinian conflict the subject of an international public debate, which also echoed in the art world. One of the first foreign voices of disapproval of the building of the wall was an act of the British street artist Banksy in 2005, who painted his artistic pacifist manifesto on the Palestinian side of the separation barrier.¹⁶ Among the nine graffiti murals he created, there were images of a ladder reaching the top of the wall, and a girl digging a hole in the wall. In 2007, on

9 Ibid.

10 Ibid.

11 Ibid.

12 M. Godziński, „Konflikt izraelsko-palestyński w latach 2006–2014 – analiza i bilans”, *Zbliżenia Cywilizacyjne* XII (2), 2016, pp. 40–54.

13 Amnesty International Report, *Israel and Occupied Palestinian Territories*, www.amnesty.org/pl/wpcontent/uploads/2011/05/AIR2011_Izrael_i_OTP.pdf [accessed: 23.09.2020]

14 Operation Protective Edge had been the most brutal military operation in the Gaza Strip since Operation Cast Lead in 2008. In 2014, 2,000 Palestinians were killed and over 10,000 were injured. See: M. Godziński, *Konflikt izraelsko-palestyński...*, op. cit., p. 51.

15 H. Moodrick-Even Khen, “From Knives to Kites: Developments and Dilemmas around the Use of Force in the Israeli–Palestinian Conflict since ‘Protective Edge’”, *Journal of International Humanitarian Legal Studies*, vol. 10, 2/2019, pp. 303–336.

16 Z. Krohn, J. Lagerweij, *Concrete messages. Street Art on the Israeli – Palestinian Separation Barrier*, Arsta, 2010, p. 7.

Banksy's initiative, an exhibition was organized in Bethlehem to draw attention to the difficult financial situation of Palestinians, and the proceeds collected during the event were donated to charity.¹⁷ Marlene Dumas is another artist who criticized the Israeli border control policies. At the exhibition entitled *Against the Wall* (2010) at David Zwirner Gallery in New York, Dumas presented a series of paintings inspired by photographs documenting the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.¹⁸ In one of her works, *The Wall* (2009), she referred to a photo showing Orthodox Jews on a pilgrimage to Rachel's Tomb in Bethlehem, where the image of men leaning against the separation wall was associated with the prayer scene at the Wailing Wall in Jerusalem. In *Wall Weeping* (2009), the starting point for Dumas was a photograph of Palestinian men leaning against the wall and being searched by Israeli soldiers. As in *The Wall*, the wall depicted in this painting evoked ambivalent associations oscillating between the image of the Wailing Wall in Jerusalem and the image of the separation barrier.

The above-mentioned Banksy's street art and Dumas's "afterimages" referring to the topic of the separation wall emphasized the process of shaping visual symbols of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict which began during the First Intifada (1987–1992).¹⁹ As the mass media grew more powerful and widely accessible, the international public opinion was confronted with images documenting the Palestinian struggle, scenes of violence and pictures showing tires burning in the streets and Palestinian flags.²⁰ This process was accelerated during the Second Intifada, when, due to the development of mass media and the Internet, photos showing dramatic scenes of bomb attacks and the construction of the separation wall on the border between Israel and Palestine were circulated en masse.²¹ The intensity of these images and their oppressive overtones contributed to the emergence of the new symbols of the conflict that have since permeated the language of foreign artists.

Increased activity of organizations calling for a boycott of Israeli academic and artistic circles was another effect of moving the discussion on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict onto an international level. One of them was the Palestinian Campaign for the Academic and Cultural Boycott of Israel (PACBI), which was established in Ramallah in 2004.²² PACBI is an extension of the activities of Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions and calls for a boycott of cultural institutions and events supported by official Israeli institutions.²³ Their programme was highly controversial as it

17 Ibid.

18 M. Dumas, *Against the Wall*, New York, 2010.

19 A. Azoulay, "Introduction. A Photographed History of the Occupation", in: B. Mondadori, ed., *Act of State 1967–2007. Photographed History of the Occupation*, (exib. cat.), Minshar Art Gallery, Tel Aviv, 2009.

20 Ibid.

21 Ibid.

22 Official website of Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions, <https://bdsmovement.net/pacbi> [accessed: 21.09.2020]

23 See: H. Jamjoum, "The Global Campaign for Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions against Israel", in: M. Carter Hallward, J. M. Norman, eds., *Nonviolent Resistance in the Second Intifada*, New York, 2011, pp. 133–153.

raised questions of who and what factors should be the focus of the boycott and whether boycotting Israeli academic and artistic circles was based on valid grounds. The report on this matter was presented by Chen Tamir in the online magazine "Hyperallergic".²⁴ Tamir in her article referred to the incidents in the years 2012–2014, such as the cancellation of the exhibition *Sites of Passage: Borders, Walls & Citizenship* at the Mattress Factory in Pittsburgh (2014), or the protest at the Sao Paulo Biennale in Brazil (2014).

The *Borders, Walls & Citizenship* exhibition was part of the *Sites of Passage* project carried out by American curator Tavia La Follette.²⁵ The concepts named in the title - borders, walls and citizenship – were meant to be a starting point for the presentation. La Follette invited five Israeli and three Palestinian artists to join the project. Unfortunately, the event was cancelled two days before the opening due to the withdrawal of the Palestinians from the exhibition, who decided to resign after facing a wave of criticism from groups opposing the Israeli occupation. The controversy was sparked by the phrases in the description of the exhibition about "cooperation" and "dialogue", which in the face of very tense Israeli-Palestinian relations could have been seen as acceptance of the current political situation, namely the occupation of Palestine.²⁶ Moreover, the project was co-financed by Israel.

Artists taking part in the 2014 Brazil Biennale in Sao Paulo organised a protest, which was another example of the boycott. It was a response to the military actions undertaken by Israel as part of Operation Protective Edge.²⁷ The Palestinian artist Ruanne Abou-Rahme initiated a letter in which she demanded that the organizers of the Biennale return the funds provided by Israel.²⁸ She believed that accepting donations from the Israeli government in the face of recent events was tantamount to supporting its policy. The letter was signed by over sixty artists participating in the event, including the Israeli ones.²⁹ As a result of the protest, the information that the event had been financed by the Israeli authorities was removed from all promotional materials. The organizers also issued a statement saying that these funds were used solely to support presentations of artists from Israel.³⁰

Another effect of the revival of the debate on the Middle East conflict was a heightened interest in the work of Palestinian artists, which had been marginalized so far. The exhibition entitled *Made in Palestine* was an event that widely ech-

24 Ch. Tamir, "A Report on the Cultural Boycott of Israel", *Hyperallergic*, 03.02.2015, www.hyperallergic.com/179655/a-report-on-the-cultural-boycott-of-israel/ [accessed: 05.09.2020]

25 Ibid.

26 <http://www.sitesofpassage.org/borders-walls--citizenship.html> [accessed: 05.09.2020]

27 Ch. Tamir, A Report..., op., cit.

28 B. Davis, "Artists Call on Bienal de São Paulo to Reject Israeli Funds", *Artnet News*, 29.08.2014, www.news.artnet.com/exhibitions/artists-call-on-bienal-de-sao-paulo-to-reject-israeli-funds-updated-88974 [accessed: 14.07.2018]

29 Ibid.

30 Ibid.

oed in the art world.³¹ Being the first presentation of Palestinian art in the USA, the exhibition was shown at The Station Museum of Contemporary Art in Houston in 2003, then in San Francisco (2005) and New York (2006).³² It featured works of twenty-three artists living in Israel, in the occupied Palestine Territories, or exile.³³ The presentation of the Palestinian artists' political works in the United States stirred controversy over the accusations of promoting violence and terrorism made by right-wing groups.³⁴ These allegations mainly related to the exhibition in San Francisco. The recently ended Al-Aqsa Intifada, as well as the pro-Israel policy of the United States, intensified the feeling of aversion to Palestinians, who were associated with suicide attacks and terrorism.³⁵ Another exhibition elaborating on the problem of Palestinian identity was *The Subject of Palestine* (2005), organized at the DePaul Art Museum in Chicago by the Palestinian artist Samia Halaby. It presented the works of sixteen Palestinian artists exploring the concept of national identity, but the curator of the exhibition was accused of anti-Semitism by the Jewish community in the United States.³⁶

Photography – a new medium in the presence of the occupation

The events of the Second Intifada, the experience of terror and the development of political oppression against the Palestinian population left a mark on the works of Israeli artists created after 2005. Most of them gave up on the monumental narrative form widely used in the previous decade and looked for media more suited to their contemporary realities.³⁷ A growing interest in photography and its inclusion

31 J. Persekian, "17 Lost Arts Exhibitions", in: L. Kim, H. Nassar, Ch. Wong, eds., *Field Notes 4: Publics, Histories, Value: The Changing Stakes of Exhibitions*, 2015, p. 73.

32 Ibid.

33 The following installations were presented among the works at the exhibition: Emily Jacir *Memorial to 418 Palestinian Villages Which Were Destroyed* (2001), Rajie Cooka *Ammo Box* (2003) and photographs by Noel Jabbour *Al-Azzami Family* (2000) and Rula Halawani *Negative Incur-sion* (2002). See: Ibid.

34 "Palestine US exhibition stirs controversy", *Al Jazeera*, 20.04.2005, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2005/04/20/palestine-us-exhibit-stirs-controversy/> [accessed: 15.07.2020]

35 Ibid.

36 A. B. Cohen, "DePaul faces criticism over Palestinian art exhibit", *Free Republic*, 27.04.2005, www.freerepublic.com/focus/f-news/1395591/posts [accessed: 15.07.2020]

37 Shaped by the atmosphere of anxiety of war and terrorism, the Israeli art at the turn of the century frequently expressed a fear of a global catastrophe. So it found common points of interest with international art trends, as noted by the art historian Amitaj Mendelson. He referred to the exhibition *Apocalypse: Beauty and Horror in Contemporary Art* (2000), which analyzed the visual potential of tragic events. Similar rhetoric, based on creating a catastrophic atmosphere, using sophisticated theatrical means and operating on a large scale, appeared in the works of local artists. However, in Israeli art, the apocalyptic themes were illustrated with motifs related to the destruction of nature and images of natural disasters. See: A. Mendelson, "The End of

in artistic activities became one of the main trends in Israeli art dealing with armed conflicts and the occupation policy.

Among the artists exploring the issue of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in the context of the Second Intifada, David Tartakover and David Reeb deserve special attention. One of the most famous works by Tartakover is the series of posters *I'm Here* (2003–2005).³⁸ The artist used Ziv Koren's reportage photos depicting suicide bombings in Israeli cities.³⁹ Tartakover superimposed a photo of himself dressed in an orange vest with the word "artist" on its back onto photographs showing real dramatic events. The bright colour of the clothes resembled a paramedic's uniform. The posters had the sentence "I'm Here" and the date and place of the attack. The text was printed on a distinctive green stripe resembling the logo of the Benetton clothing brand and the colours of the Palestinian flag.⁴⁰

David Reeb, like Tartakover, used themes depicting scenes strongly rooted in the collective consciousness as he painted pictures based on photographs documenting everyday life in the Occupied Territories. The first series of this type, *Let's Have Another War* (1997), was based on Miki Kratsman's reports published in the Haaretz daily newspaper in 1997.⁴¹ More than ten years later, Reeb created a cycle of hyper-realistic images illustrating the protests in the Arab village of Bil'in.⁴² In 2005, the inhabitants of this village, situated near Ramallah, opposed the construction of the wall that was designed to run through their land. Bil'in was one of the first cases of Palestinians arguing their rights before Israel's Supreme Court, which, incidentally, ruled that the construction of the wall had been illegal.⁴³ In Reeb's pictures the viewer was placed on the Palestinian side of the wall, and "through the eyes" of Bil'in's inhabitants looked at the town fenced with barbed wire and armed Israeli soldiers. Referring to Israeli works of art using press photography, Dana Arieli-Horowitz in the article *Art in the Age of Terror. The Israeli Case* evoked the notion of cultural trauma caused by the events of the Second Intifada.⁴⁴ According to the author, photography was meant to have a therapeutic effect. Returning to shocking events through journalistic shots, reliving the experiences and getting accustomed to the memories associated with them was an attempt to work through the collec-

Days and New Beginnings. Reflections on Art in Israel in 1998–2007", in: A. Mendelson, ed., *Real time: Art in Israel 1998–2008*, The Israel Museum, Jerusalem 2008.

38 See: Ch. Jansen, D. Tartakover, "Peace now and peace then", *Dazed Digital*, 19.09.2014, www.dazeddigital.com/artsandculture/article/21806/1/david-tartakover-peace-now-and-peace-then [accessed: 04.07.2020]

39 M. Hyvarinen, L. Muszynski, eds., *Terror and the Arts. Artistic, Literary, and Political Interpretations of Violence from Dostoyevsky to Abu Ghraib*, New York, 2008, p. 54.

40 *Ibid.*, p. 53

41 *Ibid.*, p. 44.

42 See: P. Smoleński, *Oczy zasypane piaskiem*, Warsaw, 2014, pp. 197–211.

43 The long term struggle of Bil'in's inhabitants became the subject of the documentary "5 Broken Cameras" directed by E. Burnat and G. Davidi (2012).

44 *Terror and the Arts...*, op. cit., p. 53.

tive trauma, and “repainting” the photos was to give them a new dimension.⁴⁵ On the other hand, photos published in newspapers or on the Internet, which testified to the life beyond the wall, involuntarily penetrated the Israeli consciousness, gradually constructing a real picture of the occupation.

Act of State 1967–2007. Photographed History of the Occupation was an exhibition that attempted to include photography documenting the lives of Palestinians in the discourse of Israeli visual culture.⁴⁶ The curator and philosopher Ariella Azoulay was the author of the exhibition. The event was organized on the anniversary of Israel’s victory in the Six-Day War, thus “commemorating” the fortieth anniversary of the occupation of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. More than seven hundred photos by eighty Israeli photographers were presented at the Minshar Art Gallery in Tel Aviv.⁴⁷ Black and white and colour photographs arranged chronologically and with a short text describing their origins were designed to form a kind of an open archive documenting forty years of life of the Palestinian population under the occupation.⁴⁸ It was the first exhibition of this type presenting the history of the occupation of the West Bank on such a large scale.⁴⁹ Among the presented photographs, there were many shocking and disturbing images. One of them was a photo taken by Alex Levac in 1991 showing masked Palestinians holding hands who were escorted by a soldier. It seemed as if they were walking in a dance procession led by a smiling Israeli soldier.⁵⁰

The series by Roi Kuper entitled *Gaza Dream* (2014) was an example of Israeli artistic activities which abandoned the monumental, theatrical form in the narrative about the Israeli conflict, characteristic of the Israeli art at the beginning of the 21st century, in favour of euphemistic, panoramic photographs.⁵¹ This project was developed from May to September 2014 with the work being repeatedly interrupted because of the intensification of the armed conflict and Operation Cast Lead.⁵² The artist intended to photograph the Gaza Strip from the north, south, east and west to create a series of panoramas. The photos were taken from the only accessible and safe perspective – a fenced border line guarded by the military. The project resulted in a series of distant images of Gaza, showing fields, a bright blue sky, and a calm and hazy horizon. Situated beyond the horizon, Gaza appeared to be a mirage. The author of the photos wrote: “We are used to seeing Gaza from a bird’s eye view or photos taken among dilapidated houses, but not from this distance. Not from the

45 Ibid.

46 A. Azoulay, “Introduction. A Photographed History of the Occupation”, in: B. Mondadori, ed., *Act of State 1967–2007. Photographed History of the Occupation*, (exib. cat.), Minshar Art Gallery, Tel Aviv, 2009.

47 Ibid.

48 Ibid.

49 Ibid.

50 Ibid.

51 Y. Zalmona, *A Century of Israeli Art*, The Israel Museum, Jerusalem 2013, p. 426.

52 N. Gal, “Gaza Dream”, *Roi Kuper* 2014, www.roikuper.com/gaza-dream/ [accessed: 21.06.2020]

perspective of the fields that are so close to those who live here. While working on the project, I asked myself: what will grow on these fields?"⁵³

Archaeology of the present

In the analysis of the impact of the events of the Second Intifada on Israeli art special attention should be paid to the case of Tsibi Geva's exhibition during the 56th Venice Art Biennale in 2015.⁵⁴ Tsibi Geva, whose work is representative of Israeli conceptual art, in his installation *Archeology of the Present* attempted to examine the political and social reality of Israel. Nevertheless, the exhibition, which engaged in polemics with the official discourse of Israeli politics, became the object of pressure from pro-Palestinian circles. The reception of Tsibi Geva's installation at the Biennale showed the complexity of the relationship between politics and art, which Israeli artists of that period often had to face.

Geva's exhibition, *Archeology of the Present*, during the Venice Biennale in 2015 was the artist's individual presentation in the Israeli pavilion. The first interaction of the viewer with the exhibition took place before entering the building.⁵⁵ The outer walls of the pavilion were tightly wrapped in black tires. Fixed closely one next to another and tied with plastic ropes, the tires seemed to form a monumental net camouflaging the pavilion. Besides, the distinct smell of rubber and the "prickly" surface created by protruding plastic wires were intended to arouse a feeling of discomfort and anxiety in visitors crossing the threshold of the building.⁵⁶

The motif of black tires first appeared in Geva's work in the early 1990s.⁵⁷ Many Israeli researchers perceived the monumental structure covered with tires as a transposition of the geometric pattern of the *keffiyeh* the rhomboidal ornament from traditional Arabic scarves.⁵⁸ The *keffiyeh* appeared in Geva's painting in the 1980s and was a reference to the symbol of Palestinian resistance during the First Intifada, the so-called Arafat scarf. It was in Venice that the monumental tire structure was fixed on the outer walls of the building for the first time. Hadas Maor, the curator of the exhibition, compared it to a monolithic bunker reinforced by a thick layer of used tires.⁵⁹ The pavilion, fortified with walls of black tires, seemed to be both an example of a monumental sculpture transposing a two-dimensional *keffiyeh* pattern, and a paraphrase of a ghost bunker reminding viewers of history, conflicts and wars.⁶⁰

53 Ibid.

54 N. Barel, ed., *Tsibi Geva. Archeology of the Present*, (exib. cat.), The Israeli Pavilion at the 56th International Art Exhibition – la Biennale di Venezia, Israel 2015.

55 H. Maor, "Vernacular Art", in: N. Barel, ed., *Tsibi Geva. Archeology of the Present*, op. cit., p. 37.

56 Ibid.

57 Interview with Tsibi Geva (by E. Kędziora), Tel Aviv, January 2016.

58 Ibid.

59 H. Maor, op. cit., p. 38–39.

60 Ibid.

The interior of the bright, modernist building was filled with numerous items of old furniture and household appliances. They were placed in a niche opposite the main entrance and rows of metal lattices on the first floor. Geva's use of these arrangements created two associations with a typical Israeli house. The first one was the so-called *boidem*, a narrow niche above the entrance which is a specific storage place for Israeli households.⁶¹ The second one was a row of windows lattices where the space between the bars and the windows often serves as a temporary improvised storage room for unnecessary things.⁶² The emphasis on the need for gathering things in the Israeli context brought to mind the Holocaust survivor syndrome – a post-traumatic stress disorder manifesting itself in a continuous accumulation of material things long after the trauma.⁶³ The overloaded space of the installation, filled with a large number of objects, was a reference to the collective memory of the Holocaust and was meant to express the mental state of the Israeli society – a constant feeling of anxiety and fear of unexpected threats.⁶⁴

Among the paintings presented at the exhibition, there was a picture with the inscription *GAZZA*, accompanied by a *keffiyeh* motif, and a panel with the word “*WONDERLAND*” encased in a metal grating which was a bitter reference to the unfulfilled visions of Erec Israel as a place of unconditional happiness created by the Zionist ideology. The exhibition in the pavilion also featured a series of abstract paintings imitating the floor pattern of the *balata*. The word *balata* in Arabic



Fig. 1. View of the Israeli Pavilion at the Venice Biennale, 2015. Credits to: Yael Engelhart/Elad Sarig.

61 Ibid., p. 39.

62 Ibid., pp. 47–48.

63 W. G. Niederland, “Psychiatric Status of Holocaust Survivors”, *American Journal of Psychiatry*, no. 139(12), 1982.

64 H. Maor, op. cit., p. 41.



Fig. 2. *Boidem*, 2015, found objects, installation view. Credits to: Yael Engelhart/Elad Sarig.



Fig. 3. *Lattice*, 2015, iron, found objects, installation view. Credits to: Yael Engelhart/Elad Sarig.

means tiles, and in Hebrew, it is used as a term for terrazzo tiles, which are commonly used in the Israeli construction industry.⁶⁵ Balata is also the name of a Palestinian refugee camp whose inhabitants played an important role in the First and Second Intifadas.⁶⁶ On the one hand, the abstract images imitating colourful terrazzo tiles referred to the popular cheap element of the decor of Israeli houses. On the other hand, the series of paintings alluded to the debate about the difficult economic situation of the Palestinian community in Israel, where simple construction work, such as tiling, was associated with low-paid jobs performed by Arab workers migrating from the West Bank in the search of employment.⁶⁷

65 *Ibid.*, p. 52.

66 *Ibid.*

67 *Ibid.*



Fig. 4. *Gazza*, 2014, acrylic on paper mounted on wood. Credits to: Yael Engelhart/Elad Sarig.

The *Archeology of the Present* installation was complemented by a video entitled *Lattice*.⁶⁸ Directed by Tsibi Geva in collaboration with Boaz Arad and Miki Kratsman, the film was made in 2002, in the heat of the Al-Aqsa Intifada. It was shown on television sets placed in a row of lattices.⁶⁹ The subject of the recording was one day in the life of Ajami the predominantly Arab neighbourhood in Jaffa, viewed through the bars placed in the windows of Hagar Art Gallery, the patterns of which changed in successive sequences. The bars used by the artist, whose shapes resembled, among others, The Star of David, the rhomboidal pattern of the *keffiyeh*, or Piet Mondrian's *Tableau I*, symbolically blocked observers in the gallery from accessing the outside world of Jaffa's inhabitants. Geva's film raised questions about creating a sense of safety and security through self-isolation.⁷⁰

The presentation of *Archeology of the Present* during the Venice Art Biennale summarized Tsibi Geva's artistic achievements. The majority of objects used in his work were found on the street or in the vicinity of his studio in southern Tel Aviv.⁷¹ Based

68 Ibid., p. 49.

69 Ibid.

70 Interview with Tsibi Geva (by E. Kędziora), Tel Aviv, January 2016.

71 Ibid.



Fig. 5. *Altneuland*, 2000, industrial paint on tin. Credits to: Yael Engelhart/Elad Sarig.



Fig. 6. *Lattice*, 2015, iron, found objects, detail. Credits to: Yael Engelhart/Elad Sarig.

on miscellaneous objects and motifs strongly rooted in the identity of contemporary Israel, which he had collected, the artist attempted to recreate the country's political and social reality. The recurring theme of the exhibition was the issue of an obstacle or a barrier. The monumental camouflage walls made of black tires, or the bars appearing in the video *Lattice*, whose patterns respectively referred to the Zionist ideology, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and the *cliché* of modernism and European culture that shaped the contemporary state of Israel, drew attention to the omnipresent need to create a sense of security by oppressive means. The motifs

adopted by Geva, such as floor tiles, window bars, or *boidem* storage places were associated with the concept of home.⁷² Hadas Maor described Geva's work as "vernacular art".⁷³ Although connected with architectural terminology, this phrase can describe art closely related to the native tradition or containing a context typical for a given country.⁷⁴ Geva's vernacular art presented at the Venice Biennale seemed to be the artist's commentary on contemporary Israel, whose reality had been shaped by the pressure of living in a place of unstable feeling.⁷⁵

"Occupation" of Israel

In August 2015, the building of the Israeli pavilion was the site of a protest organised by members of the Global Ultra Luxury Faction (G.U.L.F.), a faction of the international Gulf Labour Coalition. The organization is an association of artists and activists working to improve the employment conditions of workers hired for the construction of contemporary art museums in the United Arab Emirates.⁷⁶

On 2 August 2015, as part of the protest, members of the G.U.L.F. hung a poster with the Hanzala motif in the Arsenale building.⁷⁷ The combination of two symbols – the Gulf Labour Coalition banner with Hanzala signified the organization's solidarity with the Palestinian people. The activists made an official statement saying that the question of Palestine had not been addressed during this year's Biennale and that there had been no evidence of support from the BDS movement.⁷⁸ The speech was followed by the "occupation" of the official Israeli pavilion. The gathered audience was invited to participate. The activists occupied the first floor of the building, where the exhibition space became the site of an open discussion on the further activities of BDS and PACBI and the need to implement a cultural boycott of institutions supported by official Israeli authorities.⁷⁹

On 4 August 2015, in the internet magazine "Hyperallergic", the artist and the curator of *Archeology of the Present* published an official statement declaring that they

72 H. Maor, op. cit., p. 48.

73 Ibid., p. 38.

74 G. Rytel, „Wernakularna, czyli jaka? Uwagi semantyczne na marginesie tematu konferencji”, *Budownictwo i Architektura*, vol. 14, no. 3, 2015, p. 143.

75 N. Bodick, "A Broken Home: Inside Tsibi Geva's Pavilion at the Venice Biennale", *BlouinArtinfo*, 04.09.2015.

76 See The Gulf Labour Coalition official website, www.gulflabor.org [accessed: 22.11.2017]

77 The depiction of a ten-year-old boy standing with his hands clasped behind his back was created by the Palestinian cartoonist Nadji Salim al-Ali. The image of a barefoot child standing with his back turned and observing political events has been regarded as the symbol of Palestinian identity and resistance since the 1970s. See: H. Vartanian, "G.U.L.F. Occupies Israeli Pavilion in Venice, Calls for Cultural Boycott", *Hyperallergic*, 03.08.2015, www.hyperallergic.com/226941/g-u-l-f-occupies-israeli-pavilion-in-venice-calls-for-cultural-boycott/ [accessed: 22.11.2017]

78 Ibid.

79 Ibid.

were against the occupation and strongly believed in dialogue and open discussion. Geva stated that he was pleased that G.U.L.F. had chosen “the heart of his project as a meeting place” and that the protest had taken place among works such as *GAZZA*, the only item at this year’s Biennale addressing the Palestinian problem, and the ironically caged image of “*WONDERLAND*”.⁸⁰

On 11 August 2015, the response of the G.U.L.F. organization to the artist’s statement was published on the website of the same magazine. The G.U.L.F. activists declared that they had “occupied” the pavilion to talk about the daily injustice towards the Palestinian people and to discuss the cultural boycott of Israel, not to engage in a dialogue with the symbols featured in the artist’s paintings. They wrote: “The Israeli pavilion normalizes Israeli occupation and violence. [...] With this letter, we want to respectfully challenge your artistic position along these lines: are you taking responsibility for the actual political effects of your participation?”⁸¹

The emblematic bunker the Israeli pavilion was turned into at the 56th Venice Art Biennale was supposed to be Tsibi Geva’s bitter commentary on the subject of the Israeli “home”, the country where security relied on the policy of occupation, isolation and exclusion. Nevertheless, the exhibition, which was supposed to be a critical voice of Israel’s status quo, became the subject of political pressure. On the one hand, the “occupation” of the Israeli pavilion seemed to be a sad paradox and an additional example of an impasse of the existing political situation. On the other hand, it was justified criticism of the attitude consciously adopted by the artist – a representative of the state that repressed a national minority. However, a predominant feeling of anxiety triggered by the exhibition as well as attitudes of the artist himself as the person who admired that the act of resistance had taken place at his presentation tends to a reconsideration of the validity of the protest. Referring to those issues Noelle Bodick pointed out that this exhibition definitely weakly worked on the positive image for Israel and on the whitewashing of its policy, hence the action carried out by the G.U.L.F. might have been misplaced.⁸²

Apart from the discussion on the matter of reasonableness of the action performed by the G.U.L.F., the most interesting of the mentioned occurrence seemed to be a position of the artist himself. Geva appeared to challenge his position as a politically involved artist and as an Israeli who openly admits his affection for his homeland. Playing such a double role became a common experience of many Israeli artists who live and work in Israel, as well as Israeli politically engaged art in general, as a consequence of ongoing conflict. The exhibition of Geva at the Venice Biennale is a specific case because it illustrates the complexity of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, which, as assumed in this article, was exacerbated by the outbreak of the Al-Aqsa Intifada. Tendencies based on calls for boycotts slowed down after

80 Ibid.

81 Ibid.

82 N. Bodick, “A Broken Home: Inside Tsibi Geva’s Pavilion at the Venice Biennale”, *BlouinArtinfo*, 04.09.2015.

2015. It was a result of increasing debates on the need to create a space for open discussion.

The Al-Aqsa Intifada in its consequences intensified the oppression against the Palestinian people, increased public awareness of the conflict on the international level, and created attitudes condemning Israel's policy towards the Palestinians. The reality of the Second Intifada, shaped by terrorist attacks and the growing mass media coverage, penetrated the collective consciousness, producing visual symbols and a new aesthetic of the conflict. These factors provided a strong stimulus for the artists and developed the trends presented in this article. Examples of the receptions of Israeli and Palestinian art abroad referred to forming new attitudes of the international public opinion to the Israeli-Palestinian relations which put a strong impact on the artistic environment.

References

- Annual Report 2011: "Israel and Occupied Palestine Territories", *Amnesty International*, www.amnesty.org.pl/wpcontent/uploads/2011/05/AIR2011_Izrael_i_OTP.pdf [accessed: 23.09.2020]
- "Palestine US exhibition stirs controversy", *Al Jazeera*, 20.04.2005, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2005/4/20/palestine-us-exhibit-stirs-controversy> [accessed: 15.07.2020]
- Mondadori, B., ed., *Act of State 1967–2007. Photographed History of the Occupation* (ex. cat.), Minshar Art Gallery, Tel Aviv, 2009.
- Braverman, I., "Checkpoint Watch: Bureaucracy and Resistance at the Israeli/ Palestinian Border", *Social & Legal Studies* 21(3), 2012, pp. 297–320.
- Bodick, N., "A Broken Home: Inside Tsibi Geva's Pavilion at the Venice Biennale", *BlouinArtinfo*, 04.09.2015.
- Cohen, A. B., "DePaul faces criticism over Palestinian art exhibit", *Free Republic*, 27.04.2005, www.freerepublic.com/focus/f-news/1395591/posts [accessed: 15.07.2020]
- Greenspahn, F. E., ed., *Contemporary Israel: New Insights and Scholarship*, New York, 2016.
- Corganti, M., *Tsibi Geva: past and presence*, in: *Tsibi Geva: Recent and Early Works*, ed. M. Testaccio, Roma, 2014.
- Davis, B., "Artists Call on Bienal de São Paulo to Reject Israeli Funds", *Artnet News*, 29.08.2014, www.news.artnet.com/exhibitions/artists-call-on-bienal-de-sao-paulo-to-reject-israeli-funds-updated-88974 [accessed: 14.07.2018]
- Gal, N., "Gaza Dream", *Roi Kuper*, 2014, www.roikuper.com/gaza-dream/ [accessed: 21.06.2020]
- Gelvin, J. L., *Konflikty izraelsko-palestyński (The Israel-Palestine Conflict)*, trans. T. Teszner, Kraków, 2009.
- Godziński, M., „Konflikt izraelsko-palestyński w latach 2006–2014 – analiza i bilans”, *Zbliżenia Cywilizacyjne*, XII, No. 2, 2016, pp. 40–54.
- Handel, A., "Exclusionary Surveillance and Spatial Uncertainty in the Occupied Palestinian Territories", in: E. Zureik, D. Lyon, Y. Abu-Laban, eds., *Surveillance and Control in Israel/ Palestine: Population, Territory and Power*, London, 2011.
- Hatuka, T., *Violent Acts and Urban Space in Contemporary Tel Aviv*, Austin, 2010.

- Jamjoum, H., "The Global Campaign for Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions against Israel", in: M. Carter Hallward, J. M. Norman, eds. *Nonviolent Resistance in the Second Intifada*, New York, 2011, pp. 133–153.
- Jansen, Ch., "David Tartakover: Peace now and peace then", *Dazed Digital*, 19.09.2014, www.dazeddigital.com/artsandculture/article/21806/1/david-tartakover-peace-now-and-peace-then [accessed: 04.07.2020]
- Jones, R., *Border Walls: Security and the War in Terror in the United States, India and Israel*, London, 2012.
- Krohn, Z., Lagerweij J., *Concrete Message. Street Art on the Israeli-Palestinian Separation Wall*, Arsta, 2010.
- Marton, R., "The Psychological Impact of the Second Intifada on Israeli Society", *Palestine – Israel Journal of Politics, Economics and Culture*, vol. 11 no. 4, 2004.
- Moodrick-Even Khen, H., "From Knives to Kites: Developments and Dilemmas around the Use of Force in the Israeli–Palestinian Conflict since 'Protective Edge'", *Journal of International Humanitarian Legal Studies*, vol. 10, 2/2019, pp. 303–336.
- Rytel, G., „Wernakularna, czyli jaka? Uwagi semantyczne na marginesie tematu konferencji”, *Budownictwo i Architektura*, vol. 14, no. 3, 2015, pp. 143–149.
- Krauze J., Zieliński K., eds., *Medinat Israel. Państwowość i tożsamość*, Lublin, 2013.
- Niederland, W. G., "The Survivor syndrome: Further observations and dimensions", *Journal of the American Psychoanalytic Association*, vol. 29, no. 2, 1981, pp. 413–425.
- Shapira, A., *Israel. A History*, Brandeis University Press, 2012.
- Shindler, C., *Historia współczesnego Izraela (A History of Modern Israel)*, trans. M. Mścichowski, Warsaw, 2011.
- Smoleński, P., *Oczy zasypane piaskiem*, Warsaw, 2014.
- Tabarani, G.G., *Israeli-Palestinian Conflict: From Balfour Promise to Bush Declaration: the Complications and the Road for a Lasting Peace*, Bloomington, 2008, pp. 222–244.
- Tamir, Ch., "A Report on the Cultural Boycott of Israel", *Hyperallergic*, 03.02.2015, www.hyperallergic.com/179655/a-report-on-the-cultural-boycott-of-israel [accessed: 05.09.2020]
- Vartanian, H., "G.U.L.F. Occupies Israeli Pavilion in Venice. Calls for Cultural Boycott", *Hyperallergic*, 03.08.2015, www.hyperallergic.com/226941/g-u-l-f-occupies-israelipavilion-in-venice-calls-for-cultural-boycott/ [accessed: 22.11.2017]
- Virilio, P., *Bunker Archaeology*, New York, 1994.
- Zalmona, Y., *A Century of Israeli Art*, trans. A. Schultz et al., The Israel Museum, Jerusalem, 2013.
- The Borders*, (ex. cat.) The Israel Museum, Jerusalem, 1980.
- Tsibi Geva. Archeology of the Present*, ed. N. Barel, (ex. cat.) The Israeli Pavilion at the 56th International Art Exhibition – la Biennale di Venezia, Israel, 2015.
- Tsibi Geva. Mound of Things. Works and Projects, 1982>2008*, ed. Hadas Maor, (ex. cat.) Tel Aviv Museum, Tel Aviv, 2008.
- Tsibi Geva. Paintings 2011–2013*, (ex. cat.) The American University Museum at the Katzen Art Center in Washington, Washington, 2013.
- Tsibi Geva: Transition, Object*, red. Y. Fisher, (exib. cat.) Ashdod Art Museum, July - November 2012, Ashdod, 2012.

Marta Wódz

INSTITUTE OF POLISH CULTURE, UNIVERSITY OF WARSAW, POLAND
LIEVEN GEVAERT CENTRE, FACULTY OF ARTS, KU LEUVEN, BELGIUM
ORCID: 0000-0003-4178-1061
<https://doi.org/10.31338/2657-6015ik.30.10>

Intimate listening and sonic solidarity. Radio in the works of Radio Earth Hold collective as a way towards the sonic turn

Abstract

At first glance, radio may seem to be an example of dated technology, overturned by other, more contemporary media. However, the beginning of the 21st century brought an upsurge of radio-related artworks alongside an increased theoretical interest around the broader topic of sound in culture – in response to W. J. T Mitchell's 'pictorial turn,' the 'sonic turn' was introduced in 2004 by Jim Drobnick. In this article, I specifically focus on radio as a tool used in visual arts on the example of works by artistic/curatorial collective Radio Earth Hold, observed through the lens of 'transmission arts' – a term coined at the end of the 1990s, which recognizes the issue of transmission as political at its core. REH's works render apparent the potential of the radio voice to become authoritarian as well as to create an intimate experience of listening. By building upon the idea of 'sonic solidarity' REH touches upon political topics in a way that can profoundly challenge our thinking and encourage us to reexamine not only the role of radio but also the transmission and communication in or via art – which perhaps could be understood as a way towards the possible sonic turn.

Keywords: radio; Radio Earth Hold; transmission art; sonic turn; sonic solidarity; natural radio.

In 1992, in the introduction to his book *Wireless Imagination. Sound, Radio, and the Avant-garde*, Douglas Kahn diagnosed the area of sound in arts as being still an art-historical blind spot.¹ However, the beginning of the 21st century brought an increased interest around the topic of sound in culture, which could be observed in the

1 D. Kahn, "Introduction. History of Sound Once Removed", in: D. Kahn and G. Whitehead, eds., *Wireless Imagination. Sound, Radio, and the Avant-garde*, MIT Press, Cambridge, 1992, p. 1.

proliferation of both: the literature and the exhibitions presenting sound works and offering a critical reflection on that phenomenon.² These tendencies were noticed by Jim Drobnick, author of the book *Aural Cultures: Sound Art* who already in 2004 introduced a ‘sonic turn’ in response to W.J.T. Mitchell’s ‘pictorial turn’ proclaimed over a decade earlier.³ Drobnick has pointed out how the sound “resonates in cross-disciplinary analyses” and has become a common ground for researchers originating from various fields including philosophy, anthropology, culture studies, literary studies, or art history.⁴ In parallel to Mitchell’s reflections on the relationship between text and image, Drobnick has argued that sound – ungraspable neither by the methodologies created for text analysis nor image-based theories – requires creating new approaches. Even if from today’s perspective we could question whether the sonic turn has already happened (perhaps it is still about to come?), there is another important point related to Drobnick’s thought, which I would like to emphasize. Drobnick has argued against placing sound as a distinct realm, to be studied in isolation – in his view, it needs to be observed in relation to surrounding elements received with other senses.

Although my focus is much more narrow than the sound in art, the dynamics of changes within that field provide an important context for my discussion. In this article, I am specifically interested in radio as a tool used in visual arts on the example of works by artistic/curatorial collective Radio Earth Hold (henceforth REH). While radio may seem to be a dated technology, overturned by other, newer media, multiple artistic projects created during the last decade seem to indicate the opposite: the upsurge of radio-related artworks or initiatives in both: grassroots artistic practices and projects carried out under the auspices of the biggest institutions (the examples from the Polish art-scene include Radio Kapitał (Capital) hosted by the Museum of Modern Art in Warsaw or the series of audio programs *Out Of Office* as a part of *Plac Małachowskięgo 3* by Zachęta National Gallery of Art – both projects launched in summer 2019).

I am going to look at radio in arts through the lens of ‘transmission arts’ – a term coined at the end of the 1990s by Wave Farm – a collective originating from New York, which later developed into a bigger organization.⁵ As explained by curator and executive director of Wave Farm Galen Joseph-Hunter:

Transmission artists embrace technology as a tool for the realization of the idea. Transmission art encompasses works in which the act of transmitting or receiving is not only significant, but the fulcrum for the artist’s attention.⁶

2 C. Kelly, “Sound and Art”, *Grove Art Online* 1996, <https://doi.org/10.1093/gao/9781884446054.article.T079882> [accessed July 28, 2020].

3 J. Drobnick, “Listening Awry”, in: *Aural Cultures: Sound Art*, ed. J. Drobnick, YYY Books, Banff, 2004, p. 10.

4 Ibid.

5 A. Friz, “Art on Autonomous Airwaves: Radio Art in Canada”, *Glissando* 35, no. 3, 2018, p. 88. See: <https://wavefarm.org/wf/about/mission-history>.

6 G. Joseph-Hunter, P. Duff, M. Papadomanolaki, *Transmission Arts: Artists and Airwaves (Art + Performance)*, PAJ Publications, New York, 2011, p. xi.

By placing the wireless transmission in the center of interest, it can broaden the notion of radio art and embrace a much wider spectrum of artistic practices not necessarily (or maybe even not at all?) happening inside a broadcasting studio, but including installations, live performances, etc. More importantly, by recognizing the issue of transmission as political at its core, this approach allows for observing various projects (both, the ones aimed at producing new broadcasts and the ones using pre-existing, archival sources) as parts of one bigger phenomenon, often related to activism and the issues of spectrum regulation, practices of surveillance or limitations in the access to a discursive public sphere for different social groups.

Radio voice has the potential to become authoritarian as well as to create an intimate experience of listening. Both of these aspects are rendered apparent in the works of the REH collective founded by Rachel Dedman, Lorde Selys, and Arjuna Neuman. Their broadcast *REH#1: The Colonial Voice* balances between curatorial and artistic practices; it presents the outcomes of their research but also offers a conceptualization of the link between the Palestinian and the Native American political struggles combined through the concept of sonic solidarity. Their approach hinges on the phenomenon of natural radio and the idea of acousmatic sound – a sound without a recognizable source, the disembodied voice of authority, often compared to the omnipotent voice of God. This voice appears in REH's research on the history of radio in Palestine, both as a tool used by the colonizer and as incorporated in resistance practices. Most importantly, rather than presenting finished products, REH's projects introduce the solutions which are opening up a wide mesh of further possibilities. They touch upon political topics in a way that can profoundly challenge our thinking and encourage us to reexamine not only the role of radio but also the transmission and communication in or via art – which perhaps could be understood as a way towards the possible sonic turn.

Political nature of natural technology

In fact, nature was broadcasting globally before there was a globe. Radio was heard before it was invented, and radio, before it was heard, was.⁷

What I find fascinating is the self-contradictory tension between radio as a fundamentally state-controlled medium with broadcasts aimed at particular countries separately and its intrinsic impossibility to fit into dimensions demarcated by the national borders. Potentially emancipating capacity of radio to transgress borders and physical, architectonic barriers contrasted with its history as a powerful propaganda tool. This political potential can be observed in the example from the early history of radio (presented in an unacceptably brief version). Before radio technology became used for entertainment, it was mostly a tool for secret military com-

⁷ D. Kahn, *Earth Sound Earth Signal: Energies and Earth Magnitude in the Arts*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 2013, p. 2.

munication – still during the First World War the idea of broadcasting records and reading newspapers to keep the spirits of soldiers at the frontline was refused by the superior command of the German army as “the ‘abuse of army equipment.’”⁸ However, in 1918, this valuable equipment, not so long before protected from any leisure use, was left in the hands of 190,000 demobilized radio operators.⁹ The question of how they would decide to use it caused a legitimate concern for the state of the Weimar Republic (e.g. The Independent Socialist Party (USPD) very quickly registered their Central Broadcasting Bureau and obtained a broadcasting license). As argued by Friedrich Kittler, radio entertainment was introduced to counter that potential force accumulated in the tool that suddenly fell into the hands of common people:

For the simple purpose of avoiding the anarchistic abuse of military radio equipment, Germany received its entertainment radio network [...] Otherwise people themselves, rather than the government and the media industry, could have made politics.¹⁰

In this way, to maintain the state control over the radio transmissions, the military technology previously used for sending enciphered, classified messages between precisely defined points, was transformed into a global AM radio introducing the new logic of widely accessible broadcast for entertainment. The question, that remains valid today, is how this subversive potential recognized in radio in the early 20th century translates into contemporary reality? Perhaps the way, in which radio is used by contemporary artists can help us better understand more general characteristics of that medium.

Typically understood as a technology discovered and fully developed by humans, who subdued the earth, radio can be also approached from an entirely different perspective by focusing on the phenomenon of natural radio. It was heard for the first time by the assistant of Graham Bell, Thomas Watson, and other early telephone users years before the radio was invented. Similarly, the radio operators during the First World War were listening to it not knowing yet what the source of the sounds could be, which eventually led to further research conducted in the 1920s. Speaking of energies in arts, Kahn described one of the types of natural radio called a “whistler”:

Whistlers are generated primarily by the powerful, full-spectrum electromagnetic bursts of lightning. Lightning strikes globally between 100 and 200 times a second, releasing enormous amounts of energy that are teased out into signals traveling at the speed of light over great distances. They bounce between the earth and ionosphere and at times catch a ride into outer space on magneto-ionic flux lines before descending back to earth in the opposite hemisphere. Arching over the equator, whistlers are globetrotting signals, earth signals in the truest sense.¹¹

8 F. A. Kittler, *Gramophone, Film, Typewriter*, Stanford University Press, Stanford, 2003, p. 96.

9 Ibid, p. 97.

10 Ibid.

11 D. Kahn, *Earth Sound Earth Signal*, p. 14.

In short, except for radio as we know it in popular culture, there are also naturally produced radio signals traveling huge distances, which can be heard by the human ear with an aid of the right equipment. Thus, the receiving of signal suggests that someone else can be listening too but not necessarily that somebody is intentionally transmitting. According to Kahn, beyond the aesthetic qualities of these abstruse sounds, it was this almost metaphysical aspect that captivated Watson during his early studies on whistlers – he would even eventually call it “earth’s divinity”.¹²

This natural phenomenon was also used by artists. In the 1960s, American composer Alvin Lucier started incorporating the whistlers into his music. In visual arts, some remarkable examples can be found among the works of an Australian artist Joyce Hinterding. Trained as a gold- and silversmith, she understood the material and sonic properties of copper, brass, or nickel. Subsequently, she expanded her vocational training and studied electronics. Hinterding’s work *Aeriology* from 1995 was constructed of 20-30 km of wire (depending on a location) tightly wrapped around four columns pre-existing in the exhibition space. What may at a first glance visually resemble a minimalist sculpture turns out to function as a large-scale antenna receiving radio signals, which could be heard from the attached loudspeakers – hence, not connected to any external source of energy. The mechanism behind it is similar to the process which allowed the 19th-century telegraph to be powered by the ambient energy of the magnetic storm.¹³ This is how it is explained on the artist’s website:

Like a classic transformer, *Aeriology* also transforms electrical and electromagnetic activity in the room and the surrounding atmosphere into electrical activity in the wire. This activity can be translated into sound or image or can be thought about as an alternative power source, gathering energy out of the air.¹⁴

Therefore, the installation is “literally plugged into the atmosphere,” which blurs the boundaries between the natural and man-made, material and the ephemeral, the stillness, additionally enhanced by the concrete, architectural skeleton, and the constant movement of bustling, vibrating energy.¹⁵ *Aeriology* seems to shimmer with multistable meanings and although it is built of paradoxes, it grounds them or even renders them reasonable. Kahn highlighted another aspect of the installation, namely the embodied labor accumulated in the gesture of almost obsessively precise wrapping of the architectural structure.¹⁶ As result, the installation challenges our perception of the surrounding environment and allows the viewer to position him- or herself differently in a world in which all elements, both animated and still, are

12 Ibid., p. 32.

13 Ibid., p. 249.

14 J. Hinterding. *Aeriology*, <http://www.haineshinterding.net/1995/05/06/aeriology/> [accessed January 31, 2020].

15 Ibidem.

16 D. Kahn, *Earth Sound Earth Signal*, p. 249.

constantly resonating with each other. This perspective will be crucial for the Radio Earth Hold's projects.

Radio Earth Hold

Both of the above-mentioned approaches, one situating radio transmission as inherently political and the second one presenting radio as a pre-historical, all-encompassing force, provide the context for the projects by REH. The founding members of the collective: Rachel Dedman, Lorde Selys, and Arjuna Neuman met in Beirut in 2013-2014. Their activities can be described as multidisciplinary and transnational in their very nature: Neuman, born on the plane, owner of two passports, describes himself as an artist, filmmaker, and writer. Selys, an artist born in Switzerland who studied in Berlin, Beirut, and Brussels also works with both text and images. Dedman, curator, writer, and art historian who spent several years working in Lebanon and Palestine currently holding the position of Jameel Curator of Contemporary Art from the Middle East at the Victoria & Albert Museum in London. Around 2016-2017, they decided to form an interdisciplinary artistic/curatorial collective, which combined research with artistic practices such as performative lectures, curated events or workshops, and radio broadcasts. Dedman has located their common interests, which triggered the first REH's activities within the "overlaps between North American and Palestinian practices as a way of thinking about solidarity and how these two struggles might have connections".¹⁷ Referring to the Black Lives Matter as well as Native American movements and the Palestinian anti-occupation front, they kept a close focus on the idea of sonic solidarity, which already at an early stage has become the core concept for Radio Earth Hold.

As Rachel Dedman recalls, the inspirations which made her dive into the topic of radio were archival photos of the transmission towers built in Ramallah in the 1930s paired with an intriguing, coincidentally found object.¹⁸ During the preparation for the show *Labour of Love: New Approaches to Palestinian Embroidery* (March 18 – December 31, 2018) at the Palestinian Museum, Dedman came across a pouch in a very peculiar shape, with cuts suggesting that it was designed with a very specific way of use in mind. It turned out to be a tool used by Palestinian farmers to carry small transistor radios while working in the fields. This discovery has sparked off extensive research on radio, which eventually took shape of *REH#1: The Colonial Voice*, the broadcast on and through radio commissioned for Palestinian Biennale Qualandiya International, which in 2018 was organized under the topic of Solidarity.

The Colonial Voice was released online on October 3, 2018, followed by Dedman's lecture at Khalil Sakakini Cultural Centre in Ramallah (October 6) and culminating with a whole-day event on October 28 at Serpentine Galleries in London, entirely

¹⁷ R. Dedman, video call with the author, May 29, 2020.

¹⁸ Ibid.



Fig. 1. *Radio masts*, Ramallah, between 1934 and 1939. Negative 5 x 7 in. Repository: Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division Washington, D.C. 20540.

broadcasted by the Comet Radio (London).¹⁹ Organized around the topic of different sonic practices, among the invited contributors the event brought together artists as well as theoreticians and activists coming from various fields: Ultra-red, Daisy Hildyard, Sulaiman Majali, Sophie Dyer, Louis Moreno, and Dhanveer Singh. The day started with a workshop run by an activist group Ultra-red – it included, for example, the ear training during the militant listening sessions; the second, more theoretical part consisted of presentations and discussions and was concluded with a DJ-set in the evening. Initially, apart from their realizations, Radio Earth Hold was also planning to invite other artists and commission new works understood, broadly speaking, as anything that can be put on the radio. With the support of Serpentine Galleries, *REH#2: Sedentarized Sonics* was commissioned from Inas Halabi – an artist who was already working on the topic of radio and the political use of popular music in the Arab world, but focusing on the events of Black September 1970 (*The Authentic Bedouin*, project still ongoing). Yet, some recent REH's activities such as an ongoing reading group project *Weather or Not* with Sophie Dyer and Sasha

¹⁹ Qalandiya International, *Qi2018 Program*, <https://www.qalandiyainternational.org/program2018> [accessed July 28, 2020].

Engelman, which started as a commissioned work, have developed into something different from the initially planned and led REH to shift their interest towards collaborations rather than curated commissions.

Thinking about REH's formal approach, Dedman situates *The Colonial Voice* both as an artwork and a piece of collective research that took shape of a radio broadcast. Although it functioned both as a broadcast transmitted via radio waves and a digital podcast, the distinction between these two forms of circulation remains important for the authors. As described by Dedman, the online podcast has a "timeless quality" which in this case does not necessarily work in favor of that solution. According to the author, "We like playing it on 'real' radio because it evades somehow the slipperiness of digital circulation".²⁰

The live transmission is based on a quite different temporality which could be shortly characterized as "you tune in or you miss it" – it is embedded, precisely situated in time.²¹ REH also favored the idea of broadcasting on pirate or grassroots stations as a way of distribution bypassing the official communication channels – so far, in addition to the first publication in Comet Radio in spring 2020, *The Colonial Voice* has appeared on-air in Radio Alhara. At the same time, if we think about the history of clandestine radio stations, in the context of Palestine, which I will discuss in the following section, radio has been very directly involved in politics and strongly associated with resistance movements.

Jerusalem Calling

The long-awaited public radio (widely announced by the press already in 1934) was introduced to Palestine in 1936 in a form of the Palestine Broadcasting Service popularly known as 'Jerusalem Calling,' established by the British Mandate government. To paint the socio-political picture of the time, it is important to take into account the demographical statistics: especially the 1930s were the time of massive immigration with the population growth in Palestine from 750,000 in the early 1920s to nearly 1.9 million by the end of the mandate. A remarkable shift has also taken place in the ethnic ratio – from 83,000-90,000 at the beginning of the 1920s (about 10% of all inhabitants), the Jewish population increased to 530,000-550,000 by 1944 and was representing roughly 30% of the overall population.²² The number of radio listeners can be only estimated on the basis of the issued radio licenses. Nevertheless, according to the calculations by historian Andrea L. Stanton included in her book *"This is Jerusalem calling": state radio in mandate Palestine*, even if we assume that one license stands for a household of three listeners (often it was many

20 R. Dedman, video call with the author, May 29, 2020.

21 Ibid.

22 A. L. Stanton, *"This is Jerusalem calling": state radio in mandate Palestine*, University of Texas Press, Austin, 2014, p. 2.



Fig. 2. *Radio artists*, Palestine Broadcasting Service, between 1936-1946, Jerusalem. Negative: 5 x 7 in. Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division Washington, D.C. 20540.

more), in comparison to the press circulation, in 1946, PBS could reach more people than all the Palestinian newspapers counted together.²³

Already at the moment of inauguration, the social division based on the ethnic origin was marked: in the PBS's opening speech, Mandate High Commissioner Arthur Wauchope assured the listeners that the broadcasts will maintain the cultural standards sophisticated enough for the European Jewish immigrants and at the same time will aim to educate the rural population of Palestine.²⁴ The goal was to "stimulate new interests and make all forms of knowledge more widespread".²⁵ Therefore, the core ideas for PBS programming implicated this oversimplifying division between the urban Jewish elite for whom radio should serve as entertainment and the rural working-class of Arabs who needs the radio's pedagogical function. As described by Stanton, the British policy in Palestine was echoing the colonial endeavors in India: in both cases "peasants" were perceived as a threat, a force which

23 Ibidem, p. 12.

24 R. Dedman, L. Selys, A. Neuman, "Radio Earth Hold 001: The Colonial Voice", *The Contemporary Journal*, 2020, 3, p. 2.

25 A. L. Stanton, „*This is Jerusalem calling*": state radio in mandate Palestine, p. 4.

could carry a destabilizing potential if left “without modernization.” The colonial radio voice was therefore used to modernize them. According to Stanton, another impactful practice of PBS was the use of language which instead of presenting the idea of mutual interdependency, strengthened the vision of two completely separate communities.²⁶

Speaking historically, as professor of New Media at the University of Bergen, who specializes in Sound Studies, Brandon LaBelle has put forward, the awareness of the potential existing in the ether has arisen the anxiousness to transform it into just another subject of colonial take-over.²⁷ Along the same line, the Palestinian radio with its broadcasts in English, Hebrew, and Arabic served as an additional element of colonial infrastructure: although both Jews and Arabs could program their transmissions, their actual contribution was limited to the choice of music and politically-neutral topics for the invited speakers – any polemical discussions about politics were strictly forbidden. However, according to Stanton, the idea of establishing a broadcasting station was widely supported by the “Palestinians of various backgrounds and political commitments”.²⁸ Analogically to the figure of a radio tower understood as a ‘monument to the nation,’ radio stations were perceived as one of the signs of the early 20th-century statehood. In this light, Stanton describes the position of PBS as paradoxical, serving at the same time for the mandatory goals of the British and securing the international recognition, which from the Palestinian perspective in a long run could have been used as an argument allowing for the negotiation of greater autonomy or independence.²⁹

The first pirate stations, both the Zionist and the Arab, appeared already under British rule. Unsurprisingly, both were used for political ends. However, from that period there are more preserved records of the transmissions aired by Zionist organizations. In 1946, one of the most famous speakers for Irgun (a Zionist extremist organization) Geula Cohen was arrested live on-air and sentenced by the British to five years of imprisonment for illegal broadcasting.³⁰ The clandestine Palestinian radio gained power and its crucial role as the means of communication during the first Intifada, described by Israeli Police Minister Haim Bar-Lev as a “radio-led and -inspired” rebellion.³¹ With the slogan “For the liberation of land and man” opening and closing most of the broadcasts, Al-Quds Palestinian Arab radio station started transmitting on January 1, 1988 (less than a month after the Intifada’s outbreak), and was called by its founder Ahmed Jibril “the political and spiritual guide of the uprising”.³² The second important station: the Voice of the PLO-Baghdad (The Pal-

26 Ibidem, p. 20.

27 B. LaBelle, *Acoustic Territories: Sound Culture and Everyday Life*, Continuum, New York 2011, p. 147.

28 A. L. Stanton, „*This is Jerusalem calling*”: state radio in mandate Palestine, p. 16.

29 Ibidem, p. 17.

30 R. Dedman, L. Selys, A. Neuman, “Radio Earth Hold 001: The Colonial Voice”, p. 2.

31 K. Nakjavani Bookmiller, R. J. Bookmiller, “Palestinian Radio and the Intifada”, *Journal of Palestine Studies* 1990, 19, no. 4, p. 98, doi:10.2307/2537391, [accessed July 28, 2020].

32 Ibid., p. 97.

estine Liberation Organization) was broadcasting already in the early 1980s from various locations outside the Palestinian territory but Baghdad's station turned out to be equipped with the strongest transmitters allowing for the best possible reception of the signal on the West Bank. Radio became a medium with the power to validate information (which seems crucial for the organization of an uprising strongly relying on the tactics of common civil disobedience) – the political leaflets were read on air to enable the distinction between the genuine ones and the ones distributed by the Israeli forces to spread disinformation. At the same time, on a smaller, private scale, it was a tool for the families to pass the messages to the prisoners.³³

After signing the Oslo Accords (1993) which allowed Palestinians to establish their TV, radio, or telephone networks, The Palestine Broadcasting Corporation was created and in 1994 it aired its first transmission from Jericho. However, the Accords granted control over the infrastructure and spectrum allocation to Israel, which made the whole Palestinian telecommunication system far from independent – the mechanism described by REH as a “part of an architecture of occupation”.³⁴



Fig. 3. *Inauguration of the Palestine Broadcasting Service*, engineer Moshe Rubin controlling broadcasting, March 30, 1936, Ramallah. Negative 4 x 5in. Repository: Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division Washington, D.C. 20540.

33 R. Dedman, *Radio Earth Hold: The Colonial Voice*, presentation, East European – North African – Middle East Forum, Biennale Warsaw, Warsaw, June 9, 2019.

34 R. Dedman, L. Selys, A. Neuman, “Radio Earth Hold 001: The Colonial Voice”, p. 1.

Intimate listening

Radio as a broadcast technology was designed with the intent to conquer distance wirelessly, but is perhaps best suited to transmitting both distance and intimacy.³⁵

The pouch found by Dedman became a significant object standing for the duality described in the quote above by Anna Friz: carrying the radio receiver into the fields was a way to maintain the wireless connection between remote places, but at the same time it could allow for a very intimate practice of listening. As sociologist Anne Karpf argued in the article published in 1979, in opposition to the TV sets mostly shared by whole families, owning an individual, often portable radio receiver was relatively popular.³⁶ This ability of radio to broadcast the voice which seems to speak to the particular listener – often in the cozy, homely surroundings – but at the same time, almost regardless of the broadcasted content, to transmit the feeling of contribution, of being a part of a larger group of listeners tuned in a particular moment, became an important focus point for Radio Earth Hold.

Perhaps this is one of the reasons why radio turned out to be a tool largely practiced during the time of COVID-19 lockdown. To name just a few examples close to the REH context, in the Middle East, several artist-run online radio projects have sprung up during the pandemics: Radio Alhara from Ramallah and Bethlehem or Radio Karantina, and Radio il Hai from Beirut.³⁷ It is also interesting to observe how these projects were spreading, reinforcing the next ones and maintaining the connection between each other – as we can read on Radio Alhara’s website: “The project is inspired by Radio il Hai Beirut and Radio Alhuma Tunis, which were in turn inspired by Radio Quartiere Milano”.³⁸

The lockdown conditions have helped to reveal an interesting quality of radio, directly related to its use in art. Dedman has pointed out the major difference in the circulation of the works which due to the circumstances were forced to adjust to the online forms of presentation – for many projects, (including works created with digital tools) none of the possible virtual expositions allows for showing the full potential but radio provides an entirely different alternative. While from the perspective of the viewer the online forms often do not allow for a real engagement with an artwork, radio transmitted digitally remains alive, making it remarkably easier to engage with. According to Dedman, radio offers a form that remains “intentional” no matter how distributed or how far from the source of the transmission the listener could be. Speaking over a video call, she said:

35 A. Friz, “Art on Autonomous Airwaves”, p. 84.

36 A. Karpf, “Women and Radio,” *Women’s Studies International Quarterly*, 1980, 3, no. 1, p. 42.

37 For more information in English see: <https://www.facebook.com/radioalhara>, <https://www.facebook.com/radiokarantina> [accessed July 7, 2020], or listen directly at: <https://soundcloud.com/radiokarantina?fbclid=IwAR3q2mTo6zNC3TGX3Eoscg5HZ-VuTSDQJj4CcS2wWSDO-rYFhw7Vr-neVmaU>.

38 Radio Alhara, <https://yamakan.place/palestine/?fbclid=IwAR249eTPZqalYePlcUrtQB6lDkd7DSavp09xrn-jTqHZiBTOZIT3jnyFBIA> [accessed July 7, 2020]

It's the medium that changes the least, or the work is least affected, when you listen online. Because that's entirely the point, you're intended to listen to it absolutely anywhere.³⁹

In this sense, the technological transformations of how radio is broadcasted do not significantly affect how the connection established by the transmission is experienced.

Following Dedman's thought, the fact that the audience can engage with the artist from various places in the world produces this feeling of domesticity and global coalescence – it answers the desire to tune in globally and hear voices that are coming directly from other people. At the same time, some connection to the geopolitical context from which it emerges is maintained, expressed by the language of the broadcast.⁴⁰ Considering all these arguments, perhaps over the long haul, the COVID-19 pandemics can provide a completely new perspective on the radio used in art, transmission arts in general, or even more broadly speaking, how the connection between people is maintained.

Sonic solidarity

Let's now return to *The Colonial Voice*. The broadcast starts with the spoken narration preparing the listener, or in this case – the patient, to enter an MRI machine. "Using radio waves, your body will be turned into a transmitter".⁴¹ It already serves as a hint that rather than the traditionally understood medium, the radio will be approached in a much broader perspective embracing various mechanisms based on electromagnetic waves. As the narration develops with the historical overview of radio in Palestine, it leads to the description of the current situation: the whole communication system being under Israeli control, regularly used to remind the Palestinians that they can be surveilled anywhere, anytime.⁴² Later it transitions to North America, describing the Native Americans' struggle of reclaiming their reproductive rights as a form of political resistance. As described by the authors: "We turn our attention to the acoustics, acousmatics and frequencies of both struggles".⁴³ This perhaps unexpected or at least unintuitive link is bridged by the idea of acousmatic voice which on the one hand can be applied to describe fetus' experiences in a womb, but on the other, can also be used as the commanding voice of the occupying power which hijacks the reminiscence of these prenatal sensations to build up its strength.

In the description published on Qualandiya International's website, there appear several questions fundamental to the whole project – they allow to understand

39 R. Dedman, video call with the author, May 29, 2020.

40 Ibid.

41 R. Dedman, L. Selys, A. Neuman, "Radio Earth Hold 001: The Colonial Voice", p. 1.

42 Ibid., p. 4.

43 Ibid., p. 2.

how REH positions sound as an inherently political issue and see their approach to sound in the wider perspective:

How might natural radio and acousmatic sound—reverb without a cause, or echo without a source—offer a model for reorganizing relationships between the individuals and the world? What solidarity emerges from the recognition of our participation in the transmission of planetary sound?⁴⁴

To tackle these questions, REH's research builds upon the scientific study which claims that hearing is the first sense that human develops – it allows for the first self-recognition at the stage when one is still completely interdependent, sharing the body with the mother. As Dedman, Selys, and Neuman explained it:

What we learn first about ourselves is precisely that we are not isolated selves, but co-extensive, inseparable, enmeshed and multiple. We can understand this formative sense-of-self – of being more than one and less than two – through the strange acoustic experience of the unborn child.⁴⁵

These prenatal sensations of hearing both internally and externally, being a source of the sound and at the same time receiving sounds from an unknown source, can help to challenge our perception of one's position in the world. Likewise, referring to the phenomenon of natural radio, REH situates radio waves as an all-encompassing force facilitating the connection on the planetary scale, leading to a "Different way of thinking about an individual agency in the world".⁴⁶ This is where the concept of sonic solidarity comes from – perhaps this is how the sonic turn could look like in practice.

What I find additionally important, Radio Earth Hold's reflection is not only purely theoretical but can be perceived as a practical solution as well. Dedman has recognized the radio pouch as a particularly interesting object because it could bring the historical or theoretical knowledge on the radio "into life" – it could help to better paint the picture of how radio was experienced on an everyday basis. It brings together radio's ephemeral nature and its casual side related to the common experiences and memories. The description of the REH event on the Serpentine's website also aptly marks these two important qualities emerging from REH activities, however, adding the aspect of the space, in which it can be experienced: "The event offered an opportunity for Radio Earth Hold to share their research with the public, to reflect on its content and take ideas of dispersed, intangible, radio solidarity into physical, communal space".⁴⁷

44 Qalandiya International, *Radio Earth Hold*, <https://www.qalandiyainternational.org/radio-earth-hold> [accessed July 28, 2020]

45 R. Dedman, L. Selys, A. Neuman, "Radio Earth Hold 001: The Colonial Voice", p. 5.

46 R. Dedman, video call with the author, May 29, 2020.

47 Serpentine Galleries, *Radio Earth Hold*, <https://www.serpentinegalleries.org/whats-on/radio-earth-hold/> [accessed July 28, 2020]

According to REH, one of their aims is to offer alternative perspectives allowing for rethinking the organization and our perception of geography and space – radio, as it is framed by REH, not only leaks through the nation-state borders but also blows up the scale of our thinking from the local, almost site-specific, into the planetary dimension.

Although in Palestine the gesture of transmitting a radio signal which flies across the border in an unrestricted way (especially in comparison to the regulations applied for people) is already charged politically, for the REH members themselves living in different places and their listeners spread around the world, tuning in via digital devices mostly, the place of origin of a particular transmission becomes less important. Rather than the local transgression of borders, the spatial and transnational aspect which REH puts forward is the connective potential even on the global scale. As Dedman said, “Rather than trespassing over local borders to render them arbitrary, the expansive nature of radio is where the feeling of transgressive solidarity comes out”.⁴⁸

REH’s approach offers a perspective of borders thought differently – instead of the geographical territories demarcated on the land, it rather shifts the attention to the limits of the bodies as the transmitters as we move through the landscape. In this sense, REH’s projects can be seen as exemplary cases of transmission art, situating transmission as political both on micro and macro level. Perhaps in this way, borrowing vocabulary from Kittler, the subversive potential to “make politics” recognized in radio in the early 20th century can reemerge nowadays.

However, REH’s area of interest also stretches beyond radio itself. The forthcoming episode *REH #3: Pitch Blue* commissioned for the Sonic Continuum series curated by Sofia Lemos at Nottingham Contemporary was planned to premiere with the live performance in June 2020. Since it was eventually released, can we add a footnote here: Radio Earth Hold. ‘Radio Earth Hold 003: Pitch Blue’. The Contemporary Journal 3 (December 21, 2020), <https://thecontemporaryjournal.org/strands/sonic-continuum/radio-earth-hold-003-pitch-blue> [accessed March 26, 2021]; setting off from *REH #1*’s the concluding point: radio understood as a pre-historical, planetary phenomenon, REH’s newest project shifts the focus point towards weather and meteorological processes in relation to sound and music-making. Sonic solidarity, however, as Dedman assures, remains REH’s consistent interest and the core concept that establishes a link between various areas of research explored in their broadcasts.

I asked Rachel Dedman very directly about her thoughts on why radio re-emerges as a popular medium in arts. In response, Dedman stressed the multiplicity of possible reasons, starting from a very simple one connected to the historical recycling of ideas – it happens relatively often in the art that at a certain moment in time old solutions or strategies need retesting and reformulating. However, reflecting on radio more specifically, Dedman suggested that for REH, the sonic realm

48 R. Dedman, video call with the author, May 29, 2020.

seems less controlled and still evading the logic governing the visual regimes. She described it as the potential to exist as “a medium with a little bit of space.”

In our conversation, the comparison between the sonic and the visual reappeared also in another form. In the article published in 2013, Karpf suggested a link between the power of radio voice and the overbearingly present images: “It might even be that bombarded as we are today by images, the disembodied, invisible voice has become more, and not less, potent”.⁴⁹

Likewise, as a characteristic allowing for establishing a different relation of intimacy, Dedman has also pointed out the fact that radio in a traditional sense functions without any visual, countering the proliferation and ubiquity of the images constantly competing for our attention. As she stated: “It seems appealing at the moment when everything seems overwhelmingly attention-grabbing”.⁵⁰

Along the same line, Dedman has put forward a quality which was rendered ostensibly visible during the COVID-19 lockdown: the fact that radio can provide an alternative in response to the endless online activities eventually causing a “push-back reaction” or an answer for “a need for something more physically constructed”.⁵¹ Paradoxically, even if transmitted digitally, radio can create the feeling of presence that is more real or unmediated than other media. To describe this phenomenon, the choice of vocabulary becomes difficult – almost all the adjectives could be used between quotation marks since we know that digital radio is not *really* real, unmediated, or materially present but it sells an illusion *as if* it was. According to Dedman, radio “evades a sleek proliferation of the digital as a format of form.” In this case, I also understand ‘the digital’ as a category encompassing everything that gives an impression of being digital, rather than a strictly technical term.⁵² With its innate intimacy *as if* the voice was addressing the listener directly, radio can hide perfectly well the fact that it also functions in the digital space. Perhaps in this sense, the need for a more direct connection (in art, but not only) woken up by the pandemic circumstances, can in the long run prepare the ground for the sonic turn to fully emerge.

In this part of our conversation with Rachel Dedman, two words were constantly reappearing: to evade and to escape. I would argue that it aptly sums up many attempts to theorize radio which leaks through various existing classifications and, as several scholars have already stated, requires an individual methodology. Transferred to the art-historical field, this inability to fit a phenomenon into the pre-conceived categories and the awareness of dealing with the case which opens more questions than it provides answers, work perhaps as a good concluding description

49 A. Karpf, “The Sound of Home? Some Thoughts on How the Radio Voice Anchors, Contains and Sometimes Pierces”, *Radio Journal: International Studies in Broadcast & Audio Media* 2013, 11, no. 1, p. 65.

50 R. Dedman, video call with the author, May 29, 2020.

51 Ibid.

52 Ibidem.

of the whole Radio Earth Hold project that floats in between fields or genres, evading any fixed labels.

References

- Bookmiller, K., Bookmiller, R., "Palestinian Radio and the Intifada", *Journal of Palestine Studies*, 1990, 19, no. 4, pp. 96-105.
- Dedman, R., Selys, L., Neuman, A., "Radio Earth Hold 001: The Colonial Voice", *The Contemporary Journal* 3, April 14, 2020, <https://thecontemporaryjournal.org/strands/sonic-continuum/radio-earth-hold-the-colonial-voice> [accessed 31 January 2021].
- Drobnick, J., "Listening Awry", in: *Aural Cultures: Sound Art*, ed. J. Drobnick, YYZ Books, 2004, pp. 9-18.
- Friz, A., "Art on Autonomous Airwaves: Radio Art in Canada", *Glissando*, 2018, 35, no. 3, pp. 84-89.
- Hinterding, J., *Aeriology*, <http://www.haineshinterding.net/1995/05/06/aeriology/> [accessed 31 January 2021].
- Joseph-Hunter G., Duff P., Papadomanolaki M., *Transmission Arts: Artists and Airwaves (Art + Performance)*, New York, 2011, p. xi.
- Kahn D., "Introduction. History of Sound Once Removed", in: D. Kahn and G. Whitehead, eds., *Wireless Imagination. Sound, Radio, and the Avant-garde*, MIT Press, Cambridge, 1992, p. 1.
- Kahn, D., *Earth Sound Earth Signal: Energies and Earth Magnitude in the Arts*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 2013.
- Karpf, A., "The Sound of Home? Some Thoughts on How the Radio Voice Anchors, Contains and Sometimes Pierces", *Radio Journal: International Studies in Broadcast & Audio Media*, 2013, 11, no. 1, pp. 59-73.
- Karpf, A., "Women and Radio", *Women's Studies International Quarterly*, 1980, 3, no. 1, pp. 41-54.
- Kelly, C., "Sound and Art", *Grove Art Online* 1996, <https://doi.org/10.1093/gao/9781884446054.article.T079882> [accessed 31 January 2021].
- Kittler, F. A., *Gramophone, Film, Typewriter*, Stanford, 2003.
- LaBelle, B., *Acoustic Territories: Sound Culture and Everyday Life*, New York, 2011.
- Stanton, A. L., *"This is Jerusalem calling": state radio in mandate Palestine*, Austin: University of Texas Press, 2014.

REVIEWS

Kamila Dworniczak

UNIVERSITY OF WARSAW

Symcha Trachter. Reconstruction

Review: *Symcha Trachter 1894-1942.*

Światło i barwa [Light and Colour],

28.08-25.10.2020,

Żydowski Instytut Historyczny,

curator: Jakub Bendkowski.

In the era of the “biographical turn” and developing microhistorical research, exhibitions are more and more often a tool for re-constructing an artist’s biography and intervening in the canon of art history. Exhibitions address distinct research problems by bringing forgotten artists back into the artistic circulation or exposing non-obvious aspects of the art of those already well-recognized. Therefore, it is worth looking at them not only because of the cognitive values, re-evaluations, or general revisions of artistic phenomena but also because they reveal strategies for constructing a historical narrative. They can therefore serve as a particularly sensitive barometer of the self-awareness of not only a curator, but also an art historian, and, at the same time, of the methods of their discipline. One of such exhibitions was the exhibition on Symcha Trachter, prepared by Jakub Bendkowski, presented at the Jewish Historical Institute.

On the surface, it was a conventional exhibition. Trachter’s works were shown here in chronological order, with particular emphasis on the topographic paths of his painting career. The starting point was Lublin, a provincial city under the Russian partition, where the artist was born into a wealthy assimilated Jewish family, then Warsaw and Krakow, as well as Vienna, where he studied painting, Paris, which for Trachter - as for many others - was an artistic Mecca and a laboratory of experiments. Finally, again, his native Lublin, now a peripheral city of central Poland, then Kazimierz Dolny - a beloved place of rest and unhindered creation, at the end Warsaw, the capital where Trachter would seem to have a stable future of a recognized artist. However, the story ended differently, as was recalled by the multimedia project of the young intermedia artist Agnieszka Mastalerz, closing the exhibition, recalling Trachter’s last and now lost work - a wall painting depicting Job, the result of cooperation with Feliks Frydman and Samuel Puterman. It was

completed in May 1942 in the building of the Warsaw Judenrat. Two months later, the artist, still in the ghetto, was dragged onto the Umschlagplatz, from where he probably was transported to the Treblinka extermination camp.

However, for two reasons, the exhibition is not a typical example of a retrospective of a lesser-known or forgotten artist, or perhaps I should put it differently: it could be a model example of such an exhibition. First of all, it has been prepared with great care in terms of facts, which makes the artist's personality truly palpable for the viewer. The exhibition includes not only drawings and paintings with appropriate descriptions, but also photographs, documents, and letters, meticulously collected by the curator thanks to the cooperation with researchers from Lublin. Secondly, it is worth appreciating the skilful connection of Trachter's work with general artistic trends in Poland and Europe, thanks to which the exhibition's subtitle, "light and color", is not just an empty phrase. Having mastered the academic workshop, influenced by the experience in the studio of Stanisław Lenz at the School of Fine Arts in Warsaw, Trachter used perfect drawing and realistic style, and then, probably under the influence of Stanisław Kamocki at the Academy of Fine Arts in Krakow, he delved into the problem of landscape, and work out the Impressionist impulses. Parisian experiences, including contact with the painting of



Fig. 1. *Landscape, 1927*, The National Museum in Lublin

Chaim Soutine, gave his painting an expressive, slightly primitive character, making Trachter an outstanding colourist, aware of the problems of painting texture and structure of a composition. The exhibition, therefore, presents the full range of his technical versatility, apparent not only in painting but also in pencil, pastel, and ink drawings.

An extension of the exhibition is its *catalogue raisonné*, developed by Bendkowski, which organizes the biographical information and - like the exhibition - shows the individuality of the painter's style, at the same time encouraging further interpretations. The other catalogue texts, prepared by the invited authors, deal with the community of Lublin artists (Lechosław Lameński, Elżbieta Błotnicka-Mazur), as well as the artistic colony in Kazimierz Dolny (Dorota Seweryn-Puchalska). These essays reconstruct the context that could not be commented on in the exhibition, such as Trachter's place in the artistic environment, also among Jewish artists. The colour of the artist's biography is added by the reprint of letters addressed primarily to Wiktor Ziółkowski, an artist's friend, Lublin critic, and animator of artistic life, preserved at the Provincial Public Library of Hieronim Łopaciński in Lublin. It seems that Bendkowski, the curator and editor of the catalogue, the author of the introductory text, which indicates how the artist's work might be perceived, avoided formulating overly categorical judgments about Trachter's output and his possible place in the history of art in Poland. This can be viewed both as an added value and a challenge because it has satisfied the research reliability and precision of the historical reconstruction, but on the other hand, it raises the question of whether the artist's persona has lost some of its clarity. As a result, both thanks to the exhibition itself and the catalogue, we get interesting, unknown visual and written material, as well as several references to the artistic trends of the era, but we have to form our opinion on the artistic quality of Trachter's work. In the era of getting used to the quick consumption of successive "hot" names and equally quick reviews, this may turn against the recognition of the painter from Lublin, although it is difficult to say whether it should be regretted. It is perhaps more regrettable that the questions about Trachter's place within the Jewish artists' milieu and the relationship of his painting with Jewish culture were not fully exposed; such traces were mentioned in the catalogue, while these are probably more important issues due to the history of the place where the exhibition was shown and the moment in the historical discourse about the place of Jews in Polish culture. However, these are doubts that are understandable at this stage of the historical recognition of the artist's oeuvre.

The leading theme of the exhibition, self-imposed on the viewer, is certainly the characteristic "Trachterian" way of depicting the city. Probably inspired by Soutine, Cézanne, Utrillo, but also very aware of his means of expression, Trachter departed from mimetic art in favour of constructing a painting space that would symbolically refer to his closeness to the place he depicted. Trachter's vision of the city seems to be at the same time oneiric and specific. The rich painting texture and the perfect use of light make it possible to expose the materiality of the landscape. This mechanism of creation - filtering a specific space through the empathetic rebuilding of it with the help of the imagination and individual painting solutions seems to

be characteristic of provincial artists, representatives of artistic colonies most often concerned with the problem of mythization of reality. Apart from the artists mentioned in the exhibition catalogue, it would be worth recalling one more character, Bruno Schulz, in whose writing, but also sometimes in drawing and graphic art, the hometown, *shtetl*, becomes a universal place, suspended in timelessness, strictly related to the artist's "I", his relationship to himself, the world and his work. In this sense, Trachter's work also contributes to the ever-developing mythology of places important to him - Lublin and Kazimierz Dolny, which so far has hardly taken into account the artist's oeuvre. The places of the apparitions of the Seer, a *tzaddik*, who reads the future, as well as the paths of the poet Józef Czechowicz, a leading representative of the interwar second avant-garde, would undoubtedly allow the individual trait of Trachter's painting to echo even more vividly. Thus, oddly enough, the artist was noticed not there, in the provinces, but Warsaw, in the centre that he knew, but probably did not feel at home. However, it seems normal considering that he was one of those who drew from the province, chose the province, but went beyond it in terms of their talent. It remains to regret that he was not allowed to develop this talent fully.



Fig. 2. *Winter Landscape*, 1936, The National Museum in Lublin

The conventionality of the exhibition is also questioned by the multimedia production that ends it, which, I believe, largely corresponds to the curator's assumptions and, what's more, shows that the exhibition also has an auto-thematic potential. The production of Agnieszka Mastalerz, titled *Uz*, is a composition of a dozen or so echograms - images based on GPR readings of selected hotel walls at Grzybowska Street, standing near the non-existent Judenrat seat, where Trachter made his last work - a painting depicting Job. Mastalerz performed an archaeological operation on a matter that can only symbolically refer to an actual commission that once existed, and yet this gesture brought her closer to the past, both in space and in the existential dimension. The vehicle for this rapprochement was her gesture, working with history and imagination through a technical, seemingly objective, tool of analysis. The title "Uz" is the land from which Job came. Could this biblical character be Trachter's alter ego? The question is probably rhetorical because Job is a metaphor for every suffering, homeless person, which for an artist can also be the essence of humanity, art itself. Yet Job still trusts. This very well thought-out and essentially poetic work summarizes the artist's biography and at the same time makes us reflect on who he is for us, visitors, and what the exhibition is for us. The work by Mastalerz draws attention to the core problem of constructing a historical narrative about art, and above all, about the man who created it. As art historians, we deal with the desire to show the truth about the past, to faithfully and objectively present artistic facts, which in this case has certainly been achieved to a high degree, with the humility of the researcher deserving recognition. However, something was lost forever. It is probably not only a painting by Trachter, Frydman, and Puterman but also the dynamics of existence, the dialectic of artistic choices, the prose of life, and unyielding history, which we can only try to restore imperfectly, regardless of the tools used to analyze. What we can see at the exhibition or what has survived is not all. The abstract visual structure of Mastalerz's production resembles a landscape, perhaps it is a view of the desert, the mythical land of Uz, or a distant afterimage of Trachter's town.

