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BETWEEN A WORD AND A PICTURE

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BETWEEN A WORD AND A PICTURE

Introduction

Just like formerly the invention of printing, leading to automation of writing, accelerated decidedly the increasing tendencies of moving away from oral culture and visuality, so the appearance of a film camera initiated the return to the beginning, to primary forms of human communication - to a picture. This process, described by W.J.T Mitchell (1962), American scientist and theoretician- visual culture media specialist with the term - *pictorial turn*, denotes the shift of emphasis from linguistic philosophy to the visual current¹. The background of these changes was formed by scientific achievements - including medical and social sciences. Dynamic development of digital technologies revolutionised the life of societies. Generating new forms of a picture, contemporary times opened opportunities of its use formerly unimaginable, at the same time disconnecting a picture from a field it originated from - from painting. These and many other factors result in the fact that presently a picture is perceived as one of the most absorbing discourses carried out in interdisciplinary area of science and art.

It is not the intention of this dissertation to explore the area of visual culture, the more so that its horizon goes far beyond the issues of visual arts. However, I would like to draw attention to the importance and significance of contemporary processes, the departure from the overwhelming dominance of the word.

There are also fears that tightening the relationship between science, technology, art, apotheosis of the rationality attributed to them will not trigger attitudes questioning art itself as an alternative source of cognition and will not eliminate the need to appeal to intuition, feeling, experience as an arbitrator equal to reason.

1. Motives for choosing the subject matter

The choice of the subject matter of the doctoral thesis arose from my long-lasting interests. In the centre of them, for many years has invariably been a man. A man appears in the context

¹W.J.T. Mitchell, *Zwrot piktorialny*, w „Kultura Popularna”, nr 1 (23)/2009, s.5

of relations with other men, also as an individual - the member of a particular community of people, an element in a social chain. In hundreds of little drawings - illustrations and genre scenes, I tried to tell about relationships existing between an individual and a group. Each time when visual message was not clear or difficult to grasp, words served as a support. At times I reached for a quotation from a poem, a song; often I found it helpful to glance through the headlines of a daily newspaper.

The huge influence on the course of my studies and the final shape of my Ph.D. dissertation is connected with two events, which appeared during the pursuit of the dissertation and which deepened the problem current of the evolving paper and gave me greater insight into the backstage of picture production. It was connected with experiences on the film set. Two-year contract on the position of a manager for the production of a feature film and at the same time on the position of a scene designer, was for me the source of unique knowledge. Not only drawn from own experiences and their ongoing confrontation in practice, in circumstances that occur rarely or almost never - especially this made me aware of dark sides of visual messages, mainly it sensitised me to the possibilities of manipulation. The circumstances connected with the mentioned film - emotional shock caused by surprising discovery of paintings and inscriptions on the walls of an old, condemned tenement house, located in the centre of Kielce, gave me extremely strong artistic stimuli, exerted a direct influence on the inspiration of a cycle of paintings with authorial technique, entitled *Between a Word and a Picture*, combining my past and present experiences.

The inspiration in the search for painting surface meeting my expectations, were the journeys to the Eastern Berlin. There I discovered the beauty of relics of bygone age - ruined production halls and house buildings, alternative culture centres (Tacheles) and other centres of non-formal art. Architecture of "worse" Berlin, stripped of German neatness, in the rhythm of proudly straight verticals resembled Greek temples. Apparently raw substance of the walls, with the marks of cracks, scratches, uneven surfaces, was telling its stories. It oriented my thinking about the plane of a picture.

I think that an extremely valuable experience for me was direct contact with street art authors and especially with their monumental projects, which took up thousands of square metres.

Interesting both in the context of the subject matter and the form of dissertation thesis was the phenomenon of social communication, which is *street art*, among others conveying information, marking "your own" ground by using repetitions of word and symbol, giving meaning to simple signs. This kind of independent art has many faces. I started to look at technical aspects of projects and specific messages. I studied the base surface chosen

by an anonymous artist, the method and effect of using the paint, its type. In various parts of the city I discovered the layers of sticker art, copies, stencils and other forms at the borderline with drawing, graphics and painting. Aesthetic impression that the culture of alternative Berlin made on me. I tried to graft its energy, transplant it partly onto the ground of my artistic work.

2. The path of a word, a picture of emotion

A *word* – by linguistic philosophy understood as a conventional sign and one of the elements of a linguistic system - enabled a precise description of a material world. Wrestling with ambiguity of abstract concepts, it paved the way for the realisation of scientific aspirations. Knowledge of culture codes not only influenced the quality of relations, but also was the ability without which it would be difficult to imagine interpersonal relations, both of two persons and in reference to the whole society. Throughout many centuries the possibility to use communication potential of a language wasn't a common phenomenon. The ability to read was connected with correspondingly high material status, which was an exclusive privilege of elites.

A different situation is with *a picture*. Reaching out to the resources of mimetic art - the art which imitates "something", plays out, copies, is an illusion, imitation, reflection - we find in painted pictures elements imported from the material world. We don't give them new senses or meanings, at most we value, using as its measure the degree of similarity. The perception of content happens somehow automatically, based on relation - I recognise, so I know. In fact, following this track, even a person without a special knowledge and experiences, focuses on visual side.

Such understood "reading" of a picture, is not an activity requiring special knowledge and preparation. However, this statement mainly has the reference to mimetic art, but we should remember that easiness which was attached to it, in certain sense depreciated "scientific quality" of a picture and inclined to treat its authority and cognitive matter with a grain of salt. The history has turned full circle. At present the system of picture communication experiences a renaissance. Still created and improved systems of icons and pictographs are valuable means of visual communication. Specialised companies are established dealing with designing signs of possibly the simplest structure and bringing the most accurate message with their meaning. The examples can be found in an interface of a computer user, on the Internet and in the weirdest applications for electronic devices. Pictographs and icons have also other

applications apart from those electronic applications. They are used in traffic lights, as markings in public buildings (theatres, cinemas, museums, hospitals, transport, etc.). As information carrier they are used in manuals of devices, in household products design or in cockpits of cars and other machines operated by a man.

Everywhere where it is allowed, but often where it is not allowed, too - also in such aspects pervasiveness of a picture is manifested.

3. Signs, symbols, pictographs

Signs, symbols and pictographs form the system of non-verbal communication - they are used to convey information without words, replacing them with visual meanings. They present concepts, contents in the object form, they become a clear message for all people from various cultural and linguistic areas.

The field of knowledge that deals with systems of signs enabling people to communicate is semiology (gr .: sémeion - sign, and lógos - reason, treaty, science). Owing to the semiology, we can understand how and why we attribute senses and give meaning to what we see. It allows one to assess whether the chosen form has been appropriately selected for the message, and check whether the information provided with the pictograms is comprehensible and unambiguously interpreted by a wide group of recipients or a target group. *It examines why and how a letter, a set of words, an object, a photography, a mathematical symbol, a hand gesture, a colour or a series of pictograms acquire meaning in a specific environment and in a given community*²

Semiology examines all cultural phenomena as if they were systems of signs - assuming that all cultural phenomena are indeed systems of signs, and thus the phenomena of communication³.

3.1. The first testimonies

Prehistoric cave paintings, earthenware crockery covered with signs, the nets of patterns are perhaps the most broadly known, material testimonies of the attempts undertaken by

²E.Gonzales – Miranda, T.Quindos *Projektowanie ikon i piktogramów*, Kraków 2016, s.23

³U.Eco *Nieobecna struktura*, Warszawa 1996, s.36

a prehistoric man, the real reason for which was the need for communication with the other person.

All the time new archaeological discoveries are made, which reveal new facts from the prehistory of mankind and its mysteries. On the basis of huge number of visual communication systems created over the years of human existence, one can trace the entire history of development of Homo Sapiens: starting from the so-called proto-writing and ending with the development of cuneiform inscriptions in the ancient Mesopotamia or hieroglyphs and ideograms of the Egyptian culture⁴. Specialists working on unravelling meanings of drawings from that period must believe that all signs and symbols left by prehistoric artists have encoded information. They only need to find the way how to read and understand it.

Signs, symbols, pictures accompany the mankind from dawn of time, they surround us from birth to death. Creating symbolic systems of signs, man gives voice to subconscious aims to systematise elements from the world that surrounds him. He looks for logic of processes that take place in it, the processes that will enable him to explain the genesis, to reach to the sources, to predict consequences. To prepare for facing them or to decide to accept them. We want to believe that there are no accidents, that we are in control of emotions and that the material and spiritual spheres can be set in order.

3.2. Pictographs

At all stages of development of writing we can observe differentiation of the way of transcription. The systems of signs of visual communication were developing independently in the whole world. In particular countries graphic forms with national character appeared. The reason for it was the lack of effective international communication. Thousands of languages and kinds of writing underwent evolution from pictorial, schematic drawings to an abstract form of presentation of sounds in contemporary western alphabets. Presently, looking at standard pictographs, one can notice that they maintain the same way of conveying the meaning, but at the same time it is adjusted to standards of contemporary material culture. Some of thousand-year old ideograms, subject to a more complex process, display abstract concepts, the meaning of which had to be agreed and learned⁵. In the present times the principle of building signs is similar. Signs consisting of abstract and iconic

⁴ O.Aicher, *Typographie*, Berlin, 1988;

A.Frutiger, *Człowiek I jego znaki*, tłum. C.Tomaszewska, Kraków, 2015

A.Robinson, *The Story of Writing*, London, 1995

E.Gonzales – Miranda, T.Quindos, *Projektowanie ikon I piktogramów*, Kraków, 2016, s.18

⁵E.Gonzalez – Miranda, T.Quindos, *Projektowanie...*, s.19

elements are created, which are understood all over the world. In the 20th century non-verbal communication signs evolved, creating the system of universal communication with international reach. The authors of this concept were the philosopher and pedagogue Otto Naurath and the illustrator - Gerd Arntz. In 1924 they developed graphic language called Isotype (International System of Typographic Picture Education), the aim of which was to convey information in a simple, non-verbal way, not connected with traditional alphabet⁶. In this way an initial system of pictographs was created, which after slight transformations is functioning till this day.

3.3. Art and communication

What impressions are brought about by scenes from hunts discovered in the caves of Altamira or Lascaux? Isn't it the phenomenon of art that thanks to prehistoric paintings contemporary man may experience some feelings that his distant ancestors experienced long time ago?

In art the boundaries of time or space do not exist.

Art doesn't know the boundaries created by a man - it is universal. The mystery of art's phenomenon rests in the fact that a necessary condition of its existence is the contact between artists and recipients of works. As understood by sociology art is a type of social communication, which is done through various artistic forms. The condition for this communication to exist is a peculiar mentality which enables to encode sent and received contents in such a way so that the creation of human activity was read out through prism of aesthetic values. The attitude of artists and recipients of works of art enables to find the ground of communication in the way of thinking of people on reality that surrounds them. Cultural symbols, the result of what is possible to "think about", are created when information exchange takes place on the ways of reading out artistic forms. Information transferred during social communication enable people not only to collect knowledge about meanings ascribed to works of art, but also to agree on the form of artistic expression.

Social communication is especially important for the creators of works of art. Previews, open air meetings and retrospection are the occasion for exchange of thoughts, sharing your reflections with others and agreeing on the meanings, which enable to create symbols and use them in the process of communication. Once agreed meanings begin to live with their own life and they form a base for communication which happens between an artist and a recipient.

⁶Ibidem, s.19

3.4. Signs and their meaning in the context of my artistic work

There are strong indicators that our sense of geometry is inborn. The studies carried out in this field confirm the presence of „geometry” in shapes of markings in various places and times, they point out to the similarity of forms and meanings attached to them. Most often we use basic geometric signs automatically, without special thinking about it. This intuitive use of geometric forms is encoded in a man more than we think. In this place a good example may be a child's artistic output, because its simplified character refers to, and is often compared to prehistoric presentations. In the drawings of youngest artists primal symbols are repeated: a circular sun, a crescent moon, triangular forms - mountains or a square - a house⁷.

So a sign may produce in a recipient a particular thought about an object other than the sign itself, thanks to both its certain qualities and thanks to a certain context. One of the particular cases of the mentioned semantic context is "the semantic field". M. Wallis explains that it is [...] such a spatial or time system or some other system, where a certain sign takes different meanings depending on a place, which this sign or its certain elements take in this system. In other words, the meaning of a certain sign depends not only on its shape and the surrounding signs, but also on the place, which that sign or its certain elements take in a given system.

Also in painting work of art the meaning of signs - graphical gestures - their interpretation, but also interpretation of the entire system, may sometimes change radically, depending on the position of a given graphical gesture in relation to the entire plane of a picture. An important thing here is the graphological interpretation of the position of particular gestures in a given system, as well as symbolic dimension, especially of automatic choice of place for a given graphical gesture on the plane - in this case a painting. It is important to mention here the hypothetical existence of a specific language, let us call it extra-human, as well as the message which could be conveyed in this language - especially in para-textual compositions. Looking at graphical gesture and its position in the context of existence of such a language and the message, we can see that the place of a given gesture plays a significant role"⁸.

A sign is for me not only an attempt to define certain aspects of environment and referring to certain contexts (as in the above quotations), but is also in a certain way an abstract carrier,

⁷S.Szuman, *Sztuka dziecka: psychologia twórczości rysunkowej dziecka*. Warszawa 1990, s.81

⁸M.Wallis, *Sztuki i znaki. Pisma semiotyczne*, Warszawa, 1983

becoming "an individual information carrier", equivalent with my subjective predispositions and predispositions of a recipient.

Following this track, the shapes of lace appearing on the paintings, in oval form, evoke connotations close to meekness and refer to a feminine aspect. Paintings *About Him* are more geometrical and use other kind of "sign" - shape. Both signs and forms appearing in all works, build various interrelations, referring to new visual messages.

In reference to my painting, a circle - as a line coming back to itself - is both the simplest and the most perfect geometrical figure. A circle denotes a line of endless return. It has no beginning, no end, at the same time it has a precise middle point. It symbolises time, in its infinity⁹. A circle and a spiral are a basic set of "my" signs, there are very close to me.

On the other hand, a word is only the starting point in my activities. In the sets of paintings presented as a doctoral work, I move away from its primary meaning, despite the fact that it is a catalyst of action in the plane of a painting, it doesn't have the main role. Its verbal form changes into new meanings and stands in the relation of the cycle: *About Him* and *About Her*. The result of "appearance" of sound of a word, is the very same picture (ibidem).

4. Image. Communication or abstraction?

The sign and significance appear in the human world as its necessary attributes. There is no human world without communication, and communication without generating senses. It's in the ocean of signs, or as others want in the empire of signs, where our lives are going.¹⁰ For tens of thousands of years many ways of conveying messages through the image have been known. Prehistoric rock carvings, cave paintings, mysterious patterns on clay vessels - today we assume with a high degree of probability how meaningful they were.

Time passed, circumstances, motives, inspirations, tools have changed. One remained in its primeval form: emotions. They are the catalyst for every creative act. It is thanks to them that the artist is capable of creating a statement which is a depiction of their thoughts, and thus genuinely honest, and therefore the most valuable.

⁹H. Biedermann, *Leksykon symboli*, Warszawa 2001, s.5

¹⁰A. Machwic *Symbol, znak, interpretacja*; w: M. Juda (red.), wyd. ASP Katowice 2002; R. Firth, *Jednostkowe symbole i publiczne reakcje*, w: M. Głowiński (red.), Warszawa 1990

Making the decision to depart from representational, descriptive works of art, in favour of abstract painting, I conducted a kind of an experiment. The aim was to check whether the image in abstract form is still able to perform an informative and communicative function.

We live in a world dominated by image culture and synthetic visual messages. It seems that right now, in the 21st century, it has achieved the highest level of communication capability in its history.

An image as such begins to change its meaning and function unnoticeably. By creating the cycle of paintings *Between a Word and a Picture* I wanted to investigate whether the recipient is able to read my intentions and how far they are able to enter my narrative.

For this reason I gave up giving titles. The cool nomenclature *About Him, No I/I* and subsequent ones were intended to interest and intrigue the Recipient, forcing them to explore the world of abstract forms and to follow my path.

Placing the doctoral thesis in social-cultural field, my intention was confirmation of my own, up-to-the present interests, keeping the meaning continuity and at the same time I tried to determine the place of painting work and to emphasise the searches for new means of expression. I am still interested in a man, especially in a social dimension - as an individual, forced to function in a society, builds a network of his own relations with others. Looking at these processes from a close distance, so to say - touching their living tissue - throughout this entire period, exerted influence on my imagination, experiencing it gives me an endless source of inspiration.

5. The presentation of the artistic and theoretical problem

The need for expressing myself and artistic maturation has caused my turn to painting.

Within several years, my artistic work evolved from simple, contour, sometimes naive picturing, to picturing based more on abstraction, colour, shade intensity and structure. For a while I experimented combining different drawing and painting techniques. I was searching for the way, the fullest way to convey my thoughts and feelings connected with subjective perception of the world.

I am still interested in a man, especially in a social dimension - as an individual, forced to function in a society, building a network of relations with its other members, especially those who form a society. Looking at these processes from a close distance, so to say - touching their living tissue - throughout this entire period, exerted influence on my

imagination, experiencing it gives me an endless source of inspiration. Observation of methods, forms, codes used to convey information, fascinates me and entails artistic experiments, but also searching for new forms of expression.

In the course of several years (covering the period when I was completing my doctoral studies), my artistic work was subject to many transformations. Evolving from simple, contour drawings and graphics, it ranged from painting, to paintings based on solid base of painting technique.

For a while I experimented combining different drawing and painting techniques. I was searching for fuller way to convey my thoughts and feelings connected with subjective perception of the world. In this dimension the existence of a Word as a characteristic element and up to that time a necessary element of my work, gradually started to lose its importance. At present I treat it as an abstract concept, which is the so-called 'spiritusmovens' of each of my paintings. I focused on emotions and connotations evoked in a Recipient by compositions based on geometric divisions, containing less or more clear symbols.

I started to pay a lot of attention to structures. In part, this is the result of my fascination with the technology of producing paints and materials reserved exclusively for the world of art, but also the possibilities inherent in the construction industry (sand, concrete, plaster) and attempts to combine both. Continuous searching leads to further experiments and discovering new possibilities of artistic realizations.

6. Signs and their meaning in the context of my artistic work

It is hard to refer, compare my work to the work of other artists. It will be easier to show certain tendencies, fascinations with things that were, things that are recognised and certain. In this perspective a permanent inspiration for my work is classical Greece. Its thought presented through philosophical principles and art, being its visible shape. Vertical, horizontal, strict calculation of proportions, clear construction of a painting. And the sensation of being in control of it, which gives the square crossing of vertical and horizontal line. The fragment of ancient building in rugged, Greek landscape: isolated columns, but also mentioned earlier relics of not-so-far past, inviting to self-identification with the views of those, without whom we wouldn't be ourselves.

My aim is the harmony of geometry. But not only that. Also rough texture of sand, sensual link with earth, with things that are eternal, specific and physical, that are sure as constant

quality, that you can base on in physical and mental sense, which gives a sense of duration. And certainty.

One of the areas of contemporary art that I find very affecting and inspiring is street art, (street art in its broad sense), which is, by definition, anonymous. This allows for uninhibited actions that are not restricted by censorship. Its concept refers to cave painting: the wall is still the medium of information. Absolutely any available surface can become a place for the transfer of ideas. The artist has no restrictions. The only thing that limits him is his own imagination. As it used to be, drawings and writings on various intellectual, emotional and aesthetic merit are created now.

Street art is a very broad field of art, constantly developing. I value street art for unrestricted freedom of speech. I mean the thoughtful actions of artists based on some intellectual game with the viewer and the aesthetics of the performance.

Looking critically at my actions, sometimes there appears a notion that everything has already been there. On the one hand, it frustrates me, forcing me to think of other original in my opinionsolutions. On the other hand, the fact that I may achieve similar effects and conclusions as artists and philosophers living in a different place, time, reality gives me a little satisfaction.

A concrete example of this type of situation is the work by Elżbieta Dymna, known in Poland and abroad as NeSpoon. The artist, based on the idea of spider webs, creates spatial fabrics and artistic installations based on a lace motif. She has experimented with ceramics, pressing the fabric into clay, and burning the shaped form. She interferes with the public space, complementing the defects of the façade with ceramic "fillings" featuring a lace motif. For several years, she has been concentrating on a graffiti style expression by making huge paintings and murals depicting the lace.

I have been dealing with handicrafts, especially creation of webs combined with lace intricate fabrics for years. My activities related to the exploitation of the lace motif are not so spectacular, but the conclusions that came to me after learning about the works of NeSpoon were disturbing to me. Once upon a time, quite by accident, I got to an exhibition where NeSpoon was also present. I took the opportunity and asked for a conversation. We talked long about our fascinations. At the end of the meeting, NeSpoon said that the only thing that connects our activities is a mutual technique, but what arises in each of us is completely different works. They may have common features, but they will always be done individually by two different people, and they will never be the same. We create independently of each other, there is no question of plagiarism or imitation.

The fascination of lace handicraft is also visible in the works of Izabela Kita. The artist creates intricate works using various types of paper and pieces of raw or processed wood as a material and painting surface. On prepared, sized blocks of wood, chiselling braids are created with chisels and other sharp tools, acrylic paints blend on canvas to form fabric patterns. The way the lace motif is used and put on the canvas theoretically brings our actions close. In practice, however, it can be seen that despite fascination with handicrafts, our projects constitute quite different worlds.

7. Description of the thesis

The presented cycle of paintings consists of images of various formats. Each of them is a letter, a record of thoughts, reflections on a specific topic. The message contained in them is based on a purely visual language.

These are laces and their fragments, rhythmic grooves made with a sharp tool in the substrate, ascetic drawings, as well as impasto creating geometrically linear compositions. Each of them consists of geometric divisions of the surface, which are a pretext to tell stories on which each of the paintings grows.

I like to choose fibreboard for painting surface. I try to prepare them so that they start to resemble a fragment of a poorly plastered wall, covered with me old or seriously damaged. While preparing a painting surface and creating an image I can brutally treat them with all kinds of paints and tools in order to obtain a specific visual effect.

The weight of paints applied to the canvas is likely to damage the structure. While composing my paintings, I fully control the creative process, although it is difficult to predict the result when using several technical procedures.

Just like in a conversation between two people, the discussion can lead to a compromise or deepening of conflicts and differences. I conduct this creative dialogue by facing technical problems and my own expression, the emotions from which the ready works result.

The squares in my paintings usually appear as a background for other activities. I create compositions from squares and rectangles, hiding their true meaning. Often, their form is just an excuse to build the composition itself using the structure.

I only discover a part, as much as I want. The rest is a matter of interpretation. I try to play a game of intellectual subtleties with the viewer. Closing the structural compositions with a real or imaginary line, offering the possibility of reflection.

I do not want to give a ready recipe for reception. I give the audience veiled messages obtained by reading purely visual symbols or reduced to a form reminiscent of signs or arrangement of signs, which I place on a specially prepared ground, surrounded by monochrome color. Once it is a shabby wall with a prison calendar, at other times a kind of a map or a printer's case, the image of which is formed by rhythmically arranged rectangles.

Opposite strong sharp simple male elements there is gentleness and hope in the guise of complex circular lace forms arranged in the wall structure. Looking at compositions, structures and details gives the opportunity of any interpretation, while drawing attention to the titles of the cycle informs that the keynote of my paintings is a person. Of course, everyone sees differently, and feels different, depending on experience and emotional sensitivity. Referring to the purpose of my dissertation, that is to examine the author's expressive capacity

Actually doctoral studies were for me a return to painting, which I postponed for some time, studying expressive potential of drawing and graphics. Shifting the accent from "pencil" monoliths and black and white contrasts impressed on absorbent sheets of specialised paper into painting output - I'm convinced that it is a good choice, which came true in the course of experiments carried out during doctoral studies and which finalises as an artistic work closing this stage. It combines experiences and thoughts of the author on visual ways and codes used in interpersonal communication.

Placing the doctoral thesis in social-cultural field, my intention was confirmation of my own, up-to-the present interests, keeping the meaning continuity and at the same time I tried to determine the place of painting work and to emphasise the searches for new means of expression. I am still interested in a man, especially in a social dimension - as an individual, forced to function in a society, builds a network of his own relations with others. Looking at these processes from a close distance, so to say - touching their living tissue - throughout this entire period, exerted influence on my imagination, experiencing it gives me an endless source of inspiration.

The common feature of all my projects is a line. On a plane and in space. The fabrics which I create consist of large number of spiral forms, based on a circle. We could say that it is 3D graphics. A lively line, so far reserved for a drawing. While in a drawing or in a painting

a line is formed by the mark of a tool on a surface, which is paper or a painting support, in the case of a fabric this line is thread. Similarly as in the case of a drawing or a painting, working with thread gives practically unlimited possibilities. I can transform it into endless, new forms. In the structure of thread rests in the mystery of impression of endless continuity. The yarns intertwine into one, strong cord. Winding causes movement and forming a spiral (a ball), which symbolises progress, development.

Processing thread into fabric produces various kinds of weaves and knots. Working on it gives me a very strong power, causes a sort of meditation. This sensation to a great extent is caused by the awareness of creating a spiral that develops into infinity. The fabric which is created stimulates thoughts, forces me to thousands of little movements, thanks to it a mysterious ornament begins to be formed. This is how crochet needle lace is created. Many of them I use for purposes other than artistic installation. I use them as a template for printing on a cardboard or on other material and recently I put the lace, in its entirety or in parts, into painting works. I use its structure and shape. My paintings combine all of my fascinations: line, painting structure and fabric.

At the initial stage of creation lace is associated with handicraft stereotypically reserved for women. Women's hands are agile, they tie and twine hair, deal with artistic twining of bread, we see the return of the tradition of weaving on looms, manual production of selvages, embroideries, knit work, e.g. in historical reconstructions.

Intertwining and interspersing take up a significant place in symbolic works. Many simple geometric signs can be mutually intertwined. Then a very strong accent of connection is created, which is a carrier of symbolic content. Out of one ribbon of thread you can create the entire stories closed in the forms of geometric patterns. This way of fictionalised story is present in all cultural circles of the world in the form of graphic embroideries. One can notice common features in Ukrainian, Romanian, Bulgarian embroideries, but also in embroideries coming from so distant parts of the world as South America or Africa.

I have decided to use laces in the presented cycle of painting works because of symbolism associated with a Woman, which reflects my reflections and associations connected with the subject, and because of complicated structure, being in total opposition to simple graphic signs, which I describe as a masculine element.

I use acrylic matte and gloss paints. Thus, I differentiate surfaces, obtain geometric divisions, highlight important elements emphasizing my statement. I use varnishes, solvents, resins, liquid gold and various types of adhesives, sand and concrete.

I prepare mixtures of various organic and synthetic substances, which I apply layered on the painting surface. Experiencing mixing of various materials on the surface of the image, their penetration, blurring, blending gives original and unique effects, often difficult to repeat, and therefore fleeting and delicate.

The way the lace is presented is not accidental. The fact that they are visible in fragments, worn out, torn, drawn, underlined, builds narratives based on associations. Openwork, delicate, round, smoothly expanding in a spiral, ragged, broken up, destroyed - this is my Woman.

The situation is similar with the man. In his depiction I referred to a more technical presentation in the form of repeating miniaturized geometric forms, visually referring to a computer keyboard or a projection of the city (architectural divisions, multiplied windows, elevations of settlements from a large slab). When talking about a man, technical associations stripped of lyricism appear most often.

I decided that the delicacy and expression of lace would be best opposed by mathematical cold compositions consisting of rectangles, rhythmically repeated traces emphasized by the use of structural paint or a technically worked out background.

The cycle of paintings *Between a Word and a Picture* is an attempt to look at the Woman and the Man as two individual worlds coexisting side by side, interpenetrating and sometimes complementary. Each picture is a separate story. A type of a letter, a monologue.

The whole may give the impression of calm and oneiric quietness, but it is a seeming calm. Gradation of grey, divisions into geometrical forms filled with varied texture, circles and spirals placed in their entirety, fragmented or marked by default - all elements make up the individual story, the record of emotions.

Sometimes it is a specific request, sometimes a momentary elation related to the exceptional moment of happiness, longing or complete withdrawal into oneself, escape.

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Their stylistic coherence is present thanks to many factors, such as: technique, colour, the choice of means of expression. In the list presented above we will find certain suggestions

regarding the presentation of art works, the form in which they should be exposed has also been provided for.

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7.1. Description of selected works

1. A Letter to Stranger, cycle one

About Him, No I / 1

Own technique, 80 x 200cm, 2017, page 9

There is a large empty space in the centre of the horizontal composition accompanied by the top and bottom margins. They are divided into small rectangles with mysterious characters engraved on them. Each of them is a calendar page.

This is a record of a range of feelings and emotional states such as accompanying a person while waiting for meeting someone, planning mutual activities, as well as a sense of rejection at times.

At every moment of disappointment and disillusionment there is a sense of deep loneliness and impression of an endless train of sadness. Hence, the central part of the image is occupied by a broad empty space consisting of rectangles of different structure and shades.

We are dealing here with a kind of axis that has neither the beginning nor end. This can be interpreted as a sequence of successive events, until the culmination, which is not the end, but only another emotional experience.

2. A Letter to Stranger, cycle one

About Him, No I / 5

Own technique, 70 x 100 (triptych 100 x 210cm), 2017, page 17 (13, 15)

Three images conceived as a triptych. The composition visually and symbolically refers to a printer's case. The object is a pretext to show a set of human thoughts.

Just like in a printer's drawer all fonts are placed, which after being formed create words and sentences, so our consciousness allows us to put thoughts into sequences of dreams, fantasies, ask questions, solve problems.

Which way our thoughts will flow depends on the typesetter, which the subconsciousness is. We see the beginning of the thought process. This man is on the verge of waking and sleeping. He wakes up. No thought came yet, no word was born yet.

This apparent calm will disappear in a moment. There are the first symptoms, something is starting to wake up. Thanks to multiplications and the intensity of graphic traces left by painting tools, one can see the transition from positive brightness to darker tones. They bring to mind a series of associations and projections, and as a result make one plunge into an imaginary world of obsession.

3. A Letter to Stranger, second cycle

About Her, No II / 1

Own technique, 80 x 200cm, 2017, page 21

A table and a bed are the two most important pieces of furniture in the house. The table connects people during a meal together. At the table, the family meets for important celebrations. You can feast at the table. Table, tableware, food. Here, all of these was missing. This table is empty.

These few vessels mean nothing. It's only a slight hint that some meal is or has been prepared. The structural construction of the used laces is only partially visible. Their shape is not obvious. They disappear absorbed by the table.

The impression of emotional cold is emphasized by the large area of structural white. Complemented by vertical margins in cold gray-blue shades with a well-defined lace imitating a kind of a small curtain in the window. Curtains are usually white or slightly pastel in shades. Here you can clearly see that these elements are dark, even giving the impression of being damaged, dirty. This makes an additional depressive sense of emptiness and loneliness.

4. A Letter to Stranger, second cycle

About Her, No II / 2

Own technique, 70 x 100 cm, 2017, page 23

Bright pastel colours in golden shades give the impression of calmness and positivity. Golden, luminous colours, delicate lace floating in space, swirling in a dance are a seemingly optimistic accent in the whole cycle.

This is the hope that accompanies newly-weds during the wedding ceremony. Here is a woman marrying a man. They are surrounded by an aura of happiness, innocence and subtlety of feelings. And yet, in spite of this unique moment, there is the intrusive idea that sooner or later something inevitable will come, which will destroy the peace of marriage. A scar on the vast sky, a scratch.

Summary

The cycle *Between a Word and a Picture* is the effect of many months of searches and reflections in the centre of which always is a man and his interactions with the world. On this assumption was based the entire concept of painting work. The final output is the result of discoveries, discussions and exchange of experiences during seminars, travels and meetings with artists in the country and abroad. I was processing the collected material gradually into the language of art, which delivers a narration from milder to more complicated and multi-layered constructions. Each of the works bears with them the record of my experiences and feelings. The idea guiding the creation of each painting was creating a stylistically coherent work, having the nature of ciphered letter, message, whose sender describes abstract subject with the use of colour, geometric division, varied textures, tools and materials. Though visually it is an abstraction, from the emotional side it brings forth personal messages and invites a viewer to follow the path of associations and aesthetic impressions, based on structure of each painting, making room for individual interpretation. Deliberately moving away from presentation painting, I wanted to check whether a painting in an abstract form is still able to have an informative and communicative function. Viewing the reactions of artists and students taking part in seminar meetings under professor Małgorzata Bielecka, but also

reactions of outside viewers watching my other paintings in this technique, I think that the goal has been reached.

The cycle *Between a Word and a Picture* will probably continue. I intend to improve painting technique and the way of transmission of thoughts. I hope that my discoveries and fascinations of borderline with world history and art will evolve in my artistic work. This is close to me, as a socially concerned person. This is also close to me as a woman, who is interested in life, eager for contacts with other people, interested in the world. Interpersonal interactions will be taking new forms, which I think I will still comment, certainly with the use of painting of matter. And with the use of drawing, from which my adventure with art actually started.

Summary of the PhD dissertation

Dynamic development of digital technologies revolutionised the life of societies. Generating new forms of a picture, contemporary times opened opportunities of its use formerly unimaginable, at the same time disconnecting a picture from a field it originated from - from painting.

A *word* – by linguistic philosophy understood as a conventional sign and one of the elements of a linguistic system - enabled a precise description of a material world. Wrestling with ambiguity of abstract concepts, it paved the way for the realisation of scientific aspirations. Knowledge of culture codes not only influenced the quality of relations, but also was the ability without which it would be difficult to imagine interpersonal relations, both of two persons and in reference to the whole society. Throughout many centuries the possibility to use communication potential of a language wasn't a common phenomenon. The ability to read was connected with correspondingly high material status, which was an exclusive privilege of elites.

A different situation is with *a picture*. Reaching out to the resources of mimetic art - the art which imitates "something", plays out, copies, is an illusion, imitation, reflection - we find in painted pictures elements imported from the material world. We don't give them new senses or meanings, at most we value, using as its measure the degree of similarity. The perception of content happens somehow automatically, based on relation - I recognise, so I know. In fact, following this track, even a person without a special knowledge and experiences, focuses on visual side.

For tens of thousands of years many ways of conveying messages through the image have been known. Prehistoric rock carvings, cave paintings, mysterious patterns on clay vessels - today we assume with a high degree of probability how meaningful they were.

Time passed, circumstances, motives, inspirations, tools have changed. One remained in its primeval form: emotions. They are the catalyst for every creative act. It is thanks to them that the artist is capable of creating a statement which is a depiction of their thoughts, and thus genuinely honest, and therefore the most valuable.

Making the decision to depart from representational, descriptive works of art, in favour of abstract painting, I conducted a kind of an experiment. The aim was to check whether the image in abstract form is still able to perform an informative and communicative function.

We live in a world dominated by image culture and synthetic visual messages. It seems that right now, in the 21st century, it has achieved the highest level of communication capability in its history.

An image as such begins to change its meaning and function unnoticeably. By creating the cycle of paintings *Between a Word and a Picture* I wanted to investigate whether the recipient is able to read my intentions and how far they are able to enter my narrative.

Placing the doctoral thesis in social-cultural field, my intention was confirmation of my own, up-to-the present interests, keeping the meaning continuity and at the same time I tried to determine the place of painting work and to emphasise the searches for new means of expression. I am still interested in a man, especially in a social dimension - as an individual, forced to function in a society, builds a network of his own relations with others.

In the course of several years (covering the period when I was completing my doctoral studies), my artistic work was subject to many transformations. Evolving from simple, contour drawings and graphics, it ranged from painting, to paintings based on solid base of painting technique. I was searching for fuller way to convey my thoughts and feelings connected with subjective perception of the world. In this dimension the existence of a Word as a characteristic element and up to that time a necessary element of my work, gradually started to lose its importance. At present I treat it as an abstract concept, which is the so-called 'spiritus movens' of each of my paintings. I focused on emotions and connotations evoked in a Recipient by compositions based on geometric divisions, containing less or more clear symbols.

I started to pay a lot of attention to structures. In part, this is the result of my fascination with the technology of producing paints and materials reserved exclusively for the world of art, but also the possibilities inherent in the construction industry (sand, concrete, plaster) and attempts to combine both. Continuous searching leads to further experiments and discovering new possibilities of artistic realizations.

The presented cycle of paintings consists of images of various formats. Each of them is a letter, a record of thoughts, reflections on a specific topic. The message contained in them is based on a purely visual language.

These are laces and their fragments, rhythmic grooves made with a sharp tool in the substrate, ascetic drawings, as well as impasto creating geometrically linear compositions. Each of them consists of geometric divisions of the surface, which are a pretext to tell stories on which each of the paintings grows.

Looking at compositions, structures and details gives the opportunity of any interpretation, while drawing attention to the titles of the cycle informs that the keynote of my paintings is a person. Of course, everyone sees differently, and feels different, depending on experience and emotional sensitivity.

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