

Jan Matejko Academy of Fine Arts in Cracow

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DOCTORAL DISSERTATION

Title of the dissertation:

**Sculpture's matter – boundaries of creative searches –
intellectualisations**

Cycle of sculptural works:

Introspection

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Table of contents

Introduction	Błąd! Nie zdefiniowano zakładki.
Chapter I	
Conceptual scheme.....	Błąd! Nie zdefiniowano zakładki.
Chapter II	
Origins	Błąd! Nie zdefiniowano zakładki.2
Chapter III	
Boundaries of creativity	Błąd! Nie zdefiniowano zakładki.
Chapter IV	
Sculpture's matter – searches and intellectualisations	Błąd! Nie zdefiniowano zakładki.
Chapter V	
Conclusions and summary.....	50
Chapter VI	
Description and authorial interpretation of the cycle of sculptural works - Introspection	53
Chapter VII	
Technological description	60
Bibliography	62

Introduction

I lead my intellectualizations with full consciousness of certain subjectivity in perceiving the reality. Place of birth in a particular space and time, country, community and historical background comprise the element forming awareness of perception and comprehension of culture. Since my attitude was formed in a specific culture, it is impossible to form objective and completely common conclusions. All questions, problems and intellectualizations relate to known and familiar form of philosophy, culture and art. This awareness enables me to note versatilities in the manner of perceiving and building culture. Values perceived as essential and appropriate in my country do not necessarily have to be alike in other (not European) cultures.

The title of my doctoral dissertation refers to creative search and its possible boundaries in respect of sculpture's matter's properties. I ask myself questions about creativity, especially in the relationship work – creator, in terms of level of the artist's creative autonomy, resulting from the mechanism of the creative process itself. I am also interested in the element of verification of my own assumptions that accompanies creative activity, and the ability to assess the quality of produced works, or evaluation of the creator's talent. The rating is often relative, however, is the procedure which is based on the criteria seeking value in work.

In the first chapter I try to familiarize the reader with the conceptual scheme, which is used throughout the whole dissertation, as I experience and write about

creativity. The manner in which all references and the concepts are used are to show the artistic experiences, which may be a highly personal matter.

The second chapter deals with genealogy of my creativity. Artistic tendencies of the twentieth century art, which are an inspiring basis for my personal actions, are described here. The source of my artistic attitude is determined by the connection to history of art, which is an essential element.

In the following part of this dissertation I consider the creativity's boundaries phenomenon – their types, influence on the creator's activity and the process of producing a work. I try to make authorial synthesis of general tendency toward understanding and defining the art's limits up against revaluation, to which it underwent in the twentieth century.

In the fourth chapter I describe my experiences in building sculptural form based on convention of established working method and attributable to it ideological assumptions. The possibility of transmuting the values is one of elements constructing my method of forming the sculptural object. Each time when I encounter sculpture's matter I become aware of richness of common objects' plastic expression.

I undertake a private attempt to making autonomous and isolating art independent in relation to the surrounding artistic reality.

My intellectualisations are only a signal of a problem, which is subject matter in various contexts for the creators. I do not myself a goal to constitute a general method for creating the work or universal way of understanding the art, since I believe that the process of creation and the approach to the art are highly

individualized matters. I only consider physical and metaphysical opportunities which are given to the artist and the recipient by the sculpture's matter in a broad sense.

I describe these questions basing on the observation of other creators, but most of all, on my very own experiences.

Conceptual scheme

I believe that every man, especially an artist, has his own references to general established meanings of words, and he uses them in variety of contexts. In order to be well understood in the discussion, it is essential to reference to the manner in which a particular word or a concept describes a thought, and to explain it properly. Establishing basic meanings and own ways of understanding the concepts and expressions, used in relation to phenomena concerning the process of creativity and art, will allow to built the conceptual scheme, which might contribute to better understanding of the viewed matter.

One of the basic concepts, which I refer to, appearing in the topic of this dissertation is *matter*. *The matter* in physics is known as “[...] totality of the physical objects cognizable by means of senses or objectively existing, i.e. notwithstanding the cognition.”¹ In philosophy it is “[...] a concept of metaphysics’ ontology meaning a type of being only existing or one of existing, which is a ration of multitude, divisibility, cognizability and limitation rule, and the world’s individualisation,”² as well as “[...] this, what is the subject of artistic, scientific or literary elaboration; material; content.”³ This concept also relates to questions from the domain of astronomy and biology. In art, *the matter* partly derives from all of the mentioned meanings depending on the discipline and the method of work taken by the creator.

¹M. Bańko (red.), *Wielki słownik wyrazów obcych*, Warszawa, PWN, 2005, s. 795.

² Ibidem.

³ Ibidem.

The sculpture's matter is identical to the material, sculptural component and material layer, symbolic of creation, context. It represents all that the work may consist of, as distinct of the precisely defined material, that components are particles and elements. It may be often defined as *prima materia*, i.e. proto-substance, the first matter. Its essence may be a creation's thought, premonition or inspiration which stands at the beginning of the creation.

Material is what sort of elements or whole objects are made of or consist of or develop. It is a compositional element of matter, determined substance having particular physical properties. As Władysław Stróżewski said:

Material of a work is something different than its *matter* understood as an unformed material, from which the work is going to be created. But already in it, in the material, the qualities are included, that the artist must reckon with from the very beginning, being aware, that to some extent they will remain in the work.⁴

Semantics is often related with the material. In its basic meaning it refers to linguistics. Semantics' role underlies the analysis of words' meanings. It also deals with studying the connections between language expressions and objects which they refer to.

The term *semantics* perfectly suits the need of conceptualizing sculpture's language. It allows to describe relation between the basic meaning of the sculpture's material (e.g. an object) and its meaning in the specific plastic statement linking two different materials. Semantics as a notion in the meaning of research or cognition

⁴W. Stróżewski, *Dialektyka twórczości*, Kraków, PWM, 1983, s. 96.

helps to define mutual relations between the formal and symbolic elements included in the work.

The element enabling integration of the work's elements is the form, one of fundamental terms of art's theory; its polysemous. It has been held since the Roman times. The word "form" was accepted by the majority of modern languages. This word is understood as a visible form, or broadly in the means of literary forms.

In visual arts, "the form" is usually perceived as an external or peripheral work's shape – i.e. a complex of variegated spots, lines, planes, blocks, textures – being a sensually accessible communicator of content; or a system of these spots, lines, blocks, etc., viz. a particular organisation of matter, which the work was created from.⁵ Properties determining the system, shape or colour are important at the time of creating and receiving the particular object, because they represent the basis for its interpretation.

In order to be able to gain all the mentioned above content-symbolic elements in the work *the composition* is needed. This is consistent visual entirety created in the work of art due to counterposing, harmonising and emphasising plastic means of expression, such as: blocks, lines, spheres of advantages and colour. There two principal types of composition: opened and closed. The opened composition can be spatially continued in imagination. The closed composition, usually diversified and

⁵ Brückner A., Słownik etymologiczny języka polskiego, Warszawa, Wiedza Powszechna, 1970.
Tatarkiewicz W., *Dzieje sześciu pojęć*, Warszawa, PWN, 1988.

static, comprises sensually restricted, concrete entirety, which elements focus on emphasised key points of the system.⁶

In modern art. Compositions does not have o function according to strictly determined rules, developed throughout the centuries. In present-day art there exists great discretion in the choice of material and the option of using it. Composing in creativity, based on abstractive system of elements, pre-eminently entails individual artistic intuition. The composition, in this situation, becomes an open concept directly referring to the method of work and the artistic convention assumed by the creator. The choice in this field is basically unlimited.

All of the concepts are linked with the key elements of the creativity – the question of search, which bonds all creative processes in formal (compositional), semantic and axiological means. Search – to look for – from the fifteenth century it replaced Proto-Slavic *iskati*, in western Slavic region adopted from German language *suchen*, which is linked with Greek *hēgeomai* (a leader) and Latin *sāgax* (sagacious).⁷

The term *to search* in modern use refers to research jobs leaded by scientists in order to discover new facts or something not known so far. Search also means an effort of an individual towards experiencing or achieving something.⁸

⁶K. Zwolińska, Z. Malicki, *Mały słownik terminów plastycznych*, Warszawa, Wiedza Powszechna, 1993.

⁷A. Brückner, *Słownik etymologiczny języka polskiego*, Warszawa, Wiedza Powszechna, 1970.

⁸B. Dunaj (red. nauk.), *Słownik współczesnego języka polskiego*, Warszawa, Reader's Digest, 1998.

Creativity constantly involves searching – something totally new or frequently something new in old. This is a research of potentiality and multidimensional experiences.

The words “twór” (a creature), “tworzyć” (to create) and numerous utterances: “wytwór” (a creation), “przetwór” (a preparation), “tworzywo” (material), “twórczy” (creative) kept letter “o” in Slavic languages, whereas in other languages the primary verb with “e” is kept, for example *twērti*‘ (to catch) in Lithuanian.⁹

The combination of meaning of *to create* and *to catch* shows the visage of creative search present in skilful catching and processing of thought and remarks concerning both, material world and the world of construct.

Another concept essentials for the description of my artistic experiences is *elementarism*. This is a trend proclaimed in 1926 by Theo van Doesburg (on the columns of “De Stijl”), according to which the art develops from adequate elements. This trend implies implementation of squarely decussated skew lines into the painting’s composition. Apart from dynamism, acceptance of the element of surprise is characteristic for elementarism.¹⁰

This term can be easily used to determine questions concerning sculpture – with regard to the sphere dealing with a found object (basic, elementary), in which physical characteristics the plastic value is seen and which can be used in further stages of designing. An important determinant in this case is the element of surprise in contact with the found material, which through its properties somehow determines

⁹A. Brückner, op. cit.

¹⁰K. Zwolińska, Z. Malicki, op. cit.

the further way in the creative process. This material becomes an essential element of the work. The principle of the indissolubility of form and content is broken. With an elementary look at the material, the material becomes the content of the work. Materials and their mutual semantic relations, depending on the particular system, decide about the message.

Origins

Cognition of history, predecessors and establishing the moment of emergence of the revolution in technological art, which dates back to the twentieth century and accompanies constitution of avant-garde movement, is a vital issue for me. These will allow to determine previously selected accents and possible to widen in present time.

Władysław Stróżewski writes that in creative action exists the possibility of development of previously originated tendencies in art and their complementation.¹¹ This statement refers to my decision of choosing the creative life path, which in a certain point directed to subjective abstract art and abstract expressionism.

In contemporary art the iconic breakthrough occurred, which purged the concept of imagery from imitative contents. The appearance of nonimitative art brought the awareness of work of art's term's distinctiveness from differently understood non-artistic reality. The art's novel definement became a rule for the majority of artists of the twentieth century. Considering quantity of events, revaluations, new concepts, incomparable in diversity and pace of appearing with any other art period –defining art became an artistic creative act itself. In my opinion, unintentional and probably impossible is to draw final conclusion concerning the shape and essence of the twentieth century and present art. I will essay to determine my artistic attitude's genealogy though.

¹¹W. Stróżewski, op. cit.

A found, finished object – ready-made – was discovered for art by surrealists, Dadaists: Marcel Duchamp, Pablo Picasso, Kurt Schwitters, Max Ernst and others.

M. Duchamp's or P. Picasso's revolutionary decisions are examples of radical revaluation foregoing concepts. They choose a finished object, having a particular function, and put it a semantically new situation. This object, by the means of artistic law, becomes the object of art and acquires new identity as an object of culture.



Fig. 1. Marcel Duchamp, *Fountain*, 1917

Artist's intuition, penetrating the phenomenon of existence's diversity, is searching his mystery. Art is fruitage of these searches and their effectiveness designates different qualities for each case of work of art. Linkages, combinations, montages – assemblages, manipulations with found or selected objects introduced

the possibility of using all the possible devices, which entailed with destroying the traditional composition and plastic moulding's rules. Techniques, such as collage – a system of ready elements – enabled an impact of diverse realities, causing the unknown before plastic values. The art faced the opening of unlimited sources of material and devices.

The difference between the ready object and, for example, a piece of wood or a stone block is generally that the first has some specific meaning. The artist, who operates this kind of already formed matter, uses all its features, type of material from which it was developed, as well as the method of its moulding. The artist makes the decision about the further composition or considers the formal situation as an appropriate and valuable. In this type of activities of choice – decision means, the artist deprives objects of their rational function by giving them new irrational space. A kind of a tension arises between the object's existing function and its new conscious situation. Acknowledging an ordinary object as a piece of art activates an avalanche of ideological reactions. At the time of choosing the object it is evident that the most important formal decisions have already been made. The objects' lexical values are so suggestive, rich and multidimensional, that it is enough to let them speak themselves, to allow them to unleash from the foregoing domesticated entity. It becomes possible by making a look and the decision.

The art of collage appeared to be a harmless prelude, which led to acknowledging of absolutely every piece of matter as a potential element of

visual art's material. Electronics provided unexpected sources of new sounds of previously not possible to imagine tones and possibilities of analysing and synthesising. Searching for precedents for the purpose of subjugating the occurring novelty would be futile effort.

Let us repeat again, neither direct source of the sounds (electronic device), nor any sort of their external conditioning are not the same as what they are.¹²

I find the elements attributable to the mentioned trends and tendencies in works of artists such as Pablo Picasso, Tadeusz Kantor, Marcel Duchamp, Władysław Hasior, Robert Rauschenberg, Marian Kruczek, Magdalena Abakanowicz.

In the works of previously mentioned artists I find autonomously existing formal expression, which is the result of their individual artistic decisions. What I mean is the right choice of materials and their combination into compositional systems in space and on plane. Human interest, his existential condition as well as individual approach do mental states, feelings and experiences is clearly seen.

My activity in the range of subjective abstraction and expressionism combines with making decisions about carving's points of order. The issue is of both, found objects relating to ready-made, as well as elements being a result of work within the classical atelier of a building sculpture's form, which I am also practicing myself. The found objects are an excuse to go into compound compositions joining all the points mentioned. By this, my works become assemblages joining different materials and conventions. At the same time, in abstractive manner, they relate to human being

¹²Ibidem, s. 70, 71.

and his delicate emotional structure, often undergoing various tests from the environment.

In poetry, the appropriate juxtaposition of words builds the value. Carving does also have this potential. The combination of materials and composition in its ambiguity are the basis, on which every recipient can build his own world of references through the interpretation.

Boundaries of creativity

The vital element of creativity's analysis are its boundaries, i.e. psychological, sociological, physical and formal limitations. As a matter of fact they are crucial, for the creative act itself sprouts from human's struggles concerning all that surrounds and limits him. The awareness of boundaries' existence forms questions: where are they? how to define them? is it possible to cross them? Following on from that, what is beyond that, and whether after crossing some boundaries do new ones emerge?

The human being, at the moment of making a creation, overcomes his inabilities or limitations. This process is visible from the beginning of art's existence, and it links with the present-day state of human knowledge and mental condition. The art's development is mainly based on overstepping experiences, beginning with conceptual, and consequently formal and technological ones. The majority of contemporary artistic phenomena are associated with technology, which presence enables to improve methods of working, as well as building new, previously imperceptible conceptions. History shows artists' existing need of constant searching on many planes. This results in more and more new discoveries, both from conceptual and technological side.

The physical limitations are easy to define since they are, to some extent, determined. Death limits the creator ultimately and disease often restricts field of vision, concentrating on suffering and discouraging from taking creative actions. It is often that after eradicating this type of obstacles the human, being under the

influence of strong feelings connected with the obstacles, rises to the enormous challenge of creating, resulting from the need of definitive liberation or objection to affecting him physical adversity.

Metaphysical limitations concerning the place of origin, historical or cultural situation, to which we have no influence, are more interesting. It is unarguably the truth that to some extent we can move beyond these limitations. However, it concerns only those who early on the way realise the limitations and accept this state of affairs.

The work of art never arises “from nothing.” The past and orientation in the topic of other artistic attitudes to a great extent affect on building other ones. Cultural baggage has a significant influence on the development of creative activity.

Depiction of creativity's boundaries from the point of view of my own artistic experiences is very important, by virtue of the process of creating the artistic attitude, through choosing the artistic path. In some cases the choice may be conscious and sensible, may be guided by sense of security. Sometimes he is consciously opened to what is unknown, though. It is connected with gradual spectrum's selection of actions in the range of building the form and problem conception. The artist independently makes a kind of restricting, in which new possibilities open. It can be referred to as the opening restriction. The limitations, that the artist superposes on himself, allow him to act in a specific area. Nonetheless, after some time this area becomes insufficient, and previously imposed restrictions allow to overstep them, with the feeling of progress (although sometimes the progress does not occur – it can be achievable through further trials). If it was not for the individual restrictions, the

feeling of “all-possibility” within the scope of every topic would overpower the artist, making a difficult to overcome barrier. The choice of some kind of subject of matter narrows down its scope of activity. This causes development of formal-ideological conception associated with it.

The form

One way of defining the creativity’s boundaries may be discussing perceptual aspects of work, i.e. its form. The creative activity develops across some conflict between spontaneous, imagery vision of artist and restrictions set by material world. The form constitutes boundaries and structure of sculptural actions. The form itself, is a fundamental element of the work of art. Basically, it refers to all the domains within the scope of classical atelier, as well as any actions moving beyond the restrictions.

Insightful observation, for example, of a selected object leads to the discovery of new, profound content, which “was not present” before. The existing form serves as an aid in finding new, hidden meanings. Imagination and interpretation work together in combination with the form.

Artists are people who generated in themselves specific abilities of detecting new phenomena. They usually have great imagination and, at the same time, their sense of form protects them from being thrown into catastrophic situation, in whichever encountered element would become a piece of art. The sense of form allows to intuitive detecting of what is plastically valuable. Human imagination reacts meteorically occupying whole space, so there were no vacancies. This can be seen

in so called *horror vacui* effect, i.e. fear of empty space. This property, to some extent, is a natural state for in the world of nature every newly created free space is immediately filled. The artist, as an especially sensitive individual, guided by his need to create, tries to fill the space with something that, in his mind, is lacking. It is expressed in longing for our world to suit human needs, desires and perceptions of ideal states. Particular importance of unfettered imagination and fantasy in the process of creation was emphasized by Władysław Hasiór, who situated these properties in fundamentals of existence of every creative action.

Because a pillar of illuminated water, wind and voice, glass and hair, stone and time, smoke and electricity, and finally every matter which gives shade and fire, may be a material of art, provided that they are chosen, combined or torn or burnt by free and bold fantasy. To materialize the fantasy into a wonderful phenomenon [...] one must fan the fire in imagination with the spark that exists in the word art.¹³

The need of form is the way of finding language, which in an active manner allows searching and depicting the sense in every experience, both aesthetic and cognitive grounds. Building new compilations, qualities, and thus also the values, allows for continuous crossing of previous experiences, not only on the basis of their own actions, but also the experiences of previous generations. The evolution of art, like that in the natural world, allows the formation of new species, their development and adaptation to current conditions and needs. Through the demonstration of

¹³ W. Hasiór, *Moje marzenia*, „Polska” 1973, nr 8, s. 5–6, za: J. Chrobak (red.), *Władysław Hasiór – europejski Rauschenberg?*, Kraków, MOCAK, 2014.

imagination through the form there occurs a possibility of a new view on seemingly already resolved issues. Making reassessments and new choices trigger a thought process actively participating in the development of a human.

Rollo May writes of the cognitive abilities and needs to create new forms:

By lust of the form I understand a certain supreme principle governing the human experience, analogous to several other important ideas in the history of Western thought. According to Kant, knowledge is not only to obtain an image of the surrounding objective world, it also co-creates this world. It is not that objects just speak to us; they adapt to our way of knowing. In this way thinking is an active process of creating, transforming the world.¹⁴

Crossing borders is the eternal element that unifies all areas of human life. In art, science, philosophy, constantly appear the "new" - or "other" matters requiring the courage to undertake the way forward. The boundaries are still carried over. As a result, every domain of life, among them art, has its limits where currently is a man.

¹⁴R. May, *Odwaga tworzenia*, Poznań, Rebis, 1994, s. 134.

Sculpture's matter – searches and intellectualisations

I undertake analytical and self-reflective considerations on the issue of matter sculptures and exploration undertaken within it. I am trying to determine the semantic relationships that occur in chosen sculptural matter and their impact on the process of work. I want to try to answer the question, what is the matter of sculpture for the creator, or has it an effect on the boundaries of artistic search, and if so, how. I am interested in problems determining the formation of a work of art and the process of developing to a particular object. I consider it important to analyze these issues in order to determine my own attitude towards history and current events from the world of art.

After the observations of the ways and methods of creation, I found that it is impossible to examine all creative processes and learn from them the basic properties, in order to put them next in the existing scheme of creation of the work. You can in a general way determine the next steps, which in most cases look similar, balancing around inspiration, design, trials, and the final effect in the form of work. Each of these components can occur with an infinite number of forms.

Artistic activities do not relate exclusively to the production of painting, sculptural or other objects. The essential component of creative activity is self-reflection. It is important to retain it by the creator himself, because it allows for subsequent analyses or the possible returns to set aside thoughts.

Recording of the process may take all kinds of forms, such as sound and film recordings, or - more classic - texts or often private sketchbooks. Documented reflection enables unique record of thoughts, references, obstacles –the path. With this layer, built by the artists themselves, you can attempt to analyze authentic phenomena accompanying the unique process of creation of the work.

Own research is partly based on what was started in the art before. This does not mean that I want to duplicate something. I think that building own attitude to previously explored ground is possible. There is always the possibility to deepen and develop the artistic problems by extending them by new points of view, experiences and observations, previously often impossible to found for various reasons, even technological.

Creativity, as a phenomenon of a highly dialectical nature requires disclosure and overcoming contradictions in the search for own truth expressed in the work, which is the language and method of controversy in the discussion on the field of art and related values and transcendence.

Contemporary art in the majority refers to problems or social, cultural or political contexts treated broadly. Though my realizations follow in a different direction. Creative activities that I undertook, are based on a kind of artistic intuition, conditioned by factors of personal life and childhood, sensational experiences of the past and present. I made a choice of creative path in which I refer to the subjective abstract art and to elementarism. I am interested in plastic issues relating to system, shape, colour - forms of functioning as a plastic system, but also as a pictorial record

of mental states, feelings and emotions in relation to man as an autonomous unit. I also see the need to point out the activity directly related to the formation of a work of art, such as inspiration, exploration, creative process. All these elements by combining and mutually penetrating, constitute the matter from which the work is formed.

Inspirations

Inspiration is defined as afflatus for creative action, stimulating factor, undergoing thought, idea or concept.¹⁵ Everyday life, rich in all kinds of experiences, not necessarily related to art, influences the development of the imagination, which in consequence allows the emergence of inspiration. A careful observation of the surrounding world and subjective reality lets to find beauty and value in the phenomena seemingly ordinary. The point at which inspiration arises, is very difficult to determine what notes and aptly describes Władysław Stróżewski:

The question is, what is inspiration? It is of course difficult to answer. One can only describe this state. It is a state in which a person acquires, for unknown reasons, greater efficiency than is his average. In his imagination are formed creations, which were not there before. The simplest way to describe this moment is that it suddenly acquires the awareness of the existence of something that was not there a moment ago.¹⁶

¹⁵ M. Bańko (red.), op. cit.

¹⁶ *Uwagi o rzeźbie*, w: *Artyści o sztuce. Od van Gogha do Picassa*, wyb. i oprac. E. Grabska i H. Morawska, Warszawa, PWN, 1963, s. 510, za: W. Stróżewski, op. cit., s. 38.

Artists as persons with special skills of observation, successfully exploit this particular kind of sensitivity. Observing skill and the ability to evoke a situation in which an idea may arise, is formed over time. During long-term creative work an exclusive and independent type of reflection can be produced, which creates the possibility for inspiration to arise.

The subject of inspiration can be accurately analyzed, basing on own experience, that due to the subjectivity seems to be the most real. Talking about personal feelings, I will focus on the visual sensations, or more broadly - optical. I will skip the description of experiences from the perception of the world through other senses, like smell, taste, touch and hearing, which are also an important way of perceiving the reality.

My aesthetic experiences revolve around places and events that apparently seem uninspiring, common, ordinary. These places are characterized by a certain degree of devastation, apparent passing, chance and surprise. Abandoned spaces, like halls, factories, warehouses, where time freezes, reveal through slow destroying and dilapidating more and more new compilations of forms in abstract shapes. The game of breaking through light creates unique images, only occasionally immortalized in photographs (Fig. 2.3).



Fig. 2. Hall (Złomex company)



Fig. 3. Abandoned hall

The same applies to old pavements, where due to the presence of man, a lot is going on every day. When they are empty, I see in them the enormity of interesting abstract-tectonic combinations of shapes, interesting textures and a variety of colours (Fig. 4).



Fig. 4. Pavement

All these places are in some way related to human activity. They pass away or become the beginning of something new. This applies to the changing material and physical structure, and man's relation to them. The constant movement is the basis of all existence, and thus also of art, shaping by continuous variability.

In such places the path starts. The space of special nature for me is a junkyard. Objects which are contained there are commonly seen as recyclables, which are a base for further industrial production (Fig. 5.6).



Fig. 5. Metal parts in the junkyard



Fig. 6. Metal parts in the junkyard

Elementary approach allows to look at objects in a creative and creational way, interpreting them as forms, taints, colours. What they are for most people and for every day becomes invisible and of little importance. The passion for this peculiar kind of shapes and structures in a special way works on my imagination. Objects

become the basis for further action, thanks to which I see the opportunity to give them new cultural meanings through creative interpretation.

I pay attention to chemical and biological processes that occur over time. Corrosion of metal, wood decay or other types of its slow devastation, like under the influence of the sun or water, through interesting physical properties such as colour and shape, are often inspiration to creative activity using this natural multitude of aesthetic effects. Often naturally shaped forms become a hint or an element of the sculptural composition (Fig. 7-14).



Fig. 7. Corrosion of metal - rust



Fig. 8. Corrosion of metal - rust



Fig. 9. Wood under long-lasting temperature exposure



Fig.10. Wood decaying under the influence of water, clay, plaster



Fig. 11. Fungi and lichens living on the surface of wood



Fig. 12. Wood discoloured by the action of ultraviolet rays in sunlight.



Fig. 13. Wood exposed to fire



Fig. 14. Decayed wood

Observing artists working on a similar formal plane, I can see the great variety of themes and activities, virtually impossible for detailed analysis. While building one's own path it is important to know the perceptions and actions of other artists. Of course, there is no possibility of examining all the possibilities, but one can focus on the closest, inspiring attitudes. Cognition of reflection and thoughts associated with creativity gives a sense of a kind of security. There is the opportunity to observe similarities in approaching the problems of creation, which often facilitates the journey of their own path. Often I meet with a kind of loneliness building the sense of insecurity, threat or fear of disclosure of their understanding of the object world and the general values related to its way of understanding. It is good to know that someone is or was similar in this respect.

The work of Marian Kruczek is a good example illustrating the experiences of searching for similarities and precursors in relation to my own actions. The artist created using the matter of the surrounding reality, finding in it his own world of form.

He used objects from everyday activities of people, already rejected as useless. Thanks to his sensitivity, they returned to the man newly brought into existence through re-evaluation (Fig. 15).



Fig. 15. Marian Kruczek, *Canon*, 1977, mixed technique, 85 x 50 x 17 cm, Museum Ziemi Lubuskiej in Zielona Góra

The current experience shows us the world as an infinite set of objects which have all sorts of shapes, proportions, weights, structures that behave differently in space and in time, against one another and among themselves, creating multiple systems of rhythms and tensions; collections of the living and the dead objects, mobile and static.¹⁷

In the works of M. Kruczek I find similarities in the mechanism of action, yet it is a contractual relationship on the convention of the work, the idea, but not the form. The artist also selected ready objects, but they represented for him sculptural material

¹⁷S. Papp, *Marian Kruczek*, Kraków, Wydawnictwo Literackie, 1978, s. 25.

often undergoing a complete transformation, serving through the transformation to create new, original objects.

Similar actions exist in contemporary sculpture. They can be referred to as *upcycling*, where metal waste elements constitute the material. The works of artists: John Chamberlain and Frank Stella may serve as an example (Fig. 16,17).



Fig. 16. John Chamberlain – sculpture



Fig. 17. Frank Stella, *Laokon's Group*

Artistic creativity of Tadeusz Kantor shows a rich path by exploring the elements of the current reality. His vast activity reveals a broad understanding and treatment of space, which alone has an energy constructing all of the objects and relations among them (Fig. 18, 19). T. Kantor deals with elements relating to the sphere of work, sometimes even undermining its generally accepted existing framework.

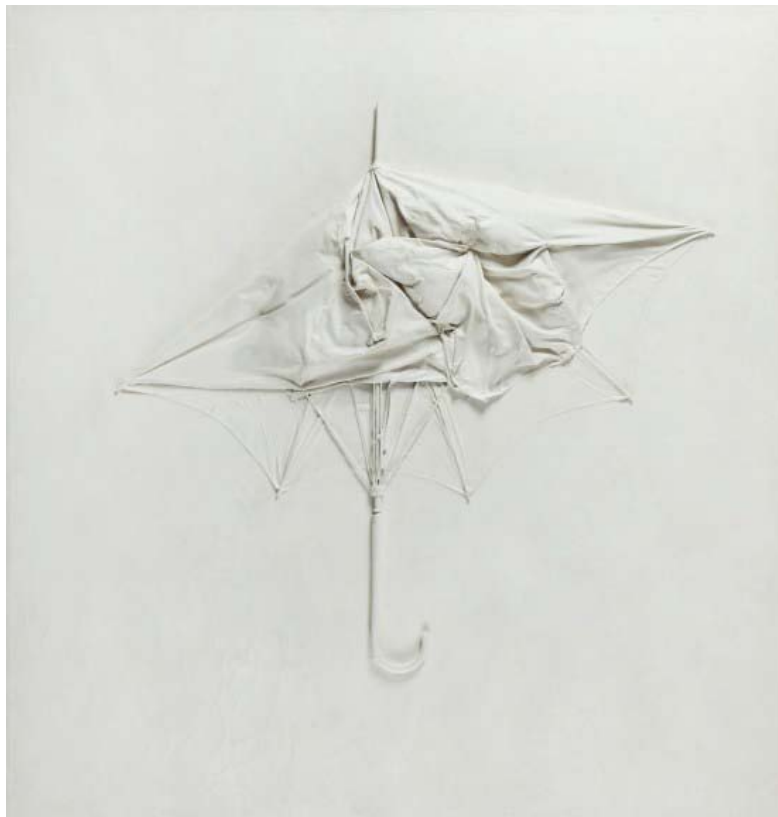


Fig. 18. Tadeusz Kantor, From the cycle *Multipart*, 1970, oil / canvas assemblage, 120 × 110 cm



Fig. 19. Tadeusz Kantor, Trumpet of the Last Judgement, 1979, Cricoteka - Cracow

The artist is not ashamed of his atelier, his matter, on the contrary - he shows it at the exhibition, underlining its key role.

[...] Kantor decided to refer to the anatomy of his work. All this "inventory" emerging on the margins of the work, then condemned to oblivion or expulsion, turned out to be an extraordinary record of the creative process. The artist decided that the very abandoned wrecks: of ideas, images, decorations, costumes - best reflect the fever of creation and all the metaphysical element of artistic creation. [...] Kantor therefore suggested to acknowledge as an

appropriate creativity not only the finished work, but also the mechanism of its creation¹⁸ (Fig. 20).



Fig. 20. Tadeusz Kantor, Popular Exhibition – Anti-exhibition, Krzysztofory Gallery, Cracow 1963
photo. Eustachy Kossakowski

When undertaking the topic of incorporating elements of everyday life to the process of building the work of art and attitudes towards reality, works of Władysław Hasior deserve also the attention. The artist used many "common" objects seemingly unrelated to each other, to get an inimitable, unique artistic utterance, interesting in terms of the form itself, and relating to the current existential condition of a man. W. Hasior inspires me especially by his activity in the field of building forms and additional work's dynamic, obtained through the use of the element of passing time.

¹⁸L. Stangret, *Tadeusz Kantor. Malarski asamblaż totalnego dzieła*, Kraków, ART+Edition, 2006, s. 48.

Apart from objects, the artist exploited the power inherent in fire and air element, creating works taking place in a specific time, so that they released a strong formal expression (Fig. 21, 22, 23).



Fig. 21. Władysław Hasior, Flaming birds - those who fought for the freedom of these lands, 1982, Koszalin



Fig. 22. Władysław Hasior, *To Fallen in the Struggle to Consolidate the People's Power in Podhale*, "Organs" on the Snozka pass near Czorsztyn, 1966.



Fig. 23. Władysław Hasior, *Black Landscape I - To Zamojszczyzna Children*. 1974.

The work of Magdalena Abakanowicz is also in the circle of my formal and ideological interests. The artist undertakes realizations related to the abstract system of elements, simultaneously referring to the man in the context of his attitudes towards the reality. Multiplication of forms showing loneliness in a crowd or *Runa* from the cycle *War Games* depicting human imperfection in the physical and mental sphere, are especially important to me (Fig. 24).



Fig. 24. Magdalena Abakanowicz, *Runa* from the cycle *War Games*, from 1987 to 1989, 91-93.

Material

The sculptural matter, covering all possible spheres present in the work of art, also applies to the material. The search within the sculptural material I consider to be particularly important. The material is a vital component of the work and constitutes of its physical existence, which becomes a communication tool. As Janusz Krupiński writes:

Matter, form and content coexist in the work, they mutually conceptualize themselves. Material, co-creates the work, on the one hand in its creation, processing, manufacturing. On the other hand, when it is already finished, and that is when the material with the manner in which it has been transformed,

shaped, processed, as well as especially perceived, experienced by a man entering into one or other relation with the object, this work, made in it.¹⁹

Over the centuries, ways of using a variety of sculptural materials and work with them developed. Artists created in accordance with current opportunities available at a given period, depending on the level of advancement of contemporary technology. The present time allows the usage of a variety of materials, both in the classical way (known and reproduced for many centuries), as well as associated with the overvaluation to which the concept of art and creativity underwent in the twentieth century.

Of the entire range of today's available materials and technology, I choose the ones that seem to me in some vague way close. After several attempts to use technology and materials outside the world of biology, I intuitively sense the value of the materials derived from nature, but associated with human activities.

Used up elements that are recyclable material may be different than projected in the recycling process of renewing their physical properties. They can undergo a different kind of reframing instead of becoming only the raw material for production of something else. The combination of these types of materials and classical sculpture methods allows the extraction of a new value, bonding an element of passing and the emergence of "the new" at the same time. An object consisting of such elements may be interesting in terms of pure plastic, associated with the shape it has, the proportions of the internal logic of the system, resulting from the construction of its

¹⁹J. Krupiński, *Filozofia kultury designu*, część 2.5, *Materia przedmiotu*, Kraków, Wydawnictwo Akademii Sztuk Pięknych, 2014, s. 203–210.

weight. This is the value. Subsequent elements of the work, such as the message arising from the interpretation of the means used, combinations of shapes and colours, are multi-dimensional semantic values which feeling and reading is related to the current need and capabilities the recipient. The positive fact is that it elicits emotional tension when contacting the recipient of the work. This allows the work to freely affect the recipient, so that it creates "opening" and allows to be "seen" and felt in a unique way.

The material never remains free of associations and symbolism, which is stacked by culture and tradition. Each colour or physical condition of a given material has its own resource of references.

Materials and their symbolism:

1. Stone – the emblem of eternity, perfect beauty, sophisticated luxury, refinement, impassive attitude, strength, emotional coldness and resistance.

2. Wood

Tree – the continuity of existence, duration, order, peace, stability, excellence, the passion.

Fresh wood – health, vitality.

Developed wood, being in use – warmth, security, tranquillity, hospitality and abundance.

Rotten wood, destroyed – a symbol of passing away destruction.

3. Glass – fragility, tenderness, transparency, invisible barrier, misery, mystery.

4. Mirror – sky, sun, world, destiny, prediction, prophecy, femininity, flirtatiousness, vanity, love, friendship, pride, care, sight, revelation, vision, visions, reflection, reflections, echo, self-knowledge, contemplation, self-control, knowledge, truth, self-realization.
5. Clay – the beginning, birth, rebirth, honesty, sensitivity.
6. Fire – Light – eternity, the basic element, cause, warmth, love, spiritual enlightenment, martyrdom, sacrifice, persecution, speech, enthusiasm, heart and home, security, hospitality.

Although in the initial phase of the creation of the material (a selected object) functions only as a clean layout of elements, which in subsequent stages of work returns as a stand-alone sign or set of symbols, that after the compilation form another resulting message. In this way systems of symbols that may be related to the current human condition, mental states, emotional feelings are developed. After selecting the object (including its layout, colour - composition arose in space) becomes the material, which returns with its "baggage of existence" in the form of old features, if any, can be determined, taking into consideration its physical condition. If you can read the old designation, the subject may be confronted with it and enriched with additional references related to the former functions and other elements contained in the new whole. If the determination of origin is not possible, the current physical condition of a given material becomes a plastic sign (without the baggage of

previous function) and can be interpreted as a form of existing autonomously, identified as an inseparable piece of the whole.

Objects - materials involved in my creative process:

I. Found objects

1. natural:

- shaped by natural factors such as climate, time, weather conditions, etc.,
- requiring or not requiring further processing;

2. from natural material:

- man-made, requiring or not requiring further processing due to interesting perceptual features:
 - ready whole objects,
 - fragments of objects,
 - devastated remnants of objects, destroyed and destined for recycling or processing into new because of the usefulness of materials (for example strap to be recycled).

II. Naturally derived materials – unformed being a material or raw material for further work (clay, stone, wood).

Process

Observations conducted among artists and reading of texts concerning the process of creating works show how multi-level and diverse is the matter. Basically, I

have not met at least two similar working methods. Each is different, as different are the artists and their decisions. Even the people working within a similar convention present high individuality when it comes to the methods used to achieve the objective, which is to create a work.

Observation of own experience from work allowed me to realize my personal approach to design-work and realization. It allowed me to define own place in relation to subjective abstraction.

While working on a sculpture I do not use a project conceived as a sculptural sketch or drawing, which is subsequently enlarged. Design work is more about the formulation of the general concept expressed in the many sketches and various objects, not necessarily formally associated with the subsequent implementation. I have a premonition of what is to be built. It is a kind of idea based on past experience, gradually enriched with new private discovery. During work, the form often surprises with unexpected phenomena that appear almost like a revelation. The reality of the sculptural process often goes beyond most previously planned activities and formal procedures. Elementary case is often elevating, it appears by surprise and becomes part of the creative process - you only need to subjugate it properly. Further attempts to capture random events result in surprising ways of using ensuing effect. An observed random arrangement of the elements becomes a pretext to continue working or is stopped as a "hit" without the need for further interference. Raising awareness this type of phenomenon allows for the isolation of seemingly invisible activity out of sculptural matter.

Encountering the sculptural matter begins each day anew. Every time the same object becomes new – different. Further associations emerge, references to reality and possibilities of interpretation. No specific project and opening for a chance extends the process of building the form. Long-term observations often produce discouragement caused by the inability to make any decision. But finally the awaited moment comes when there is a plain, clear vision of the sculpture as a whole. This is largely related to the pictorial record of feelings, naming and defining their quality in relation to the object. Often when composing the plastic system there is a subjective association with some sort of emotion, with which the system identifies itself. When the certain sensation finally appears, a form is created as if in harmony with what belongs to it.

The physical process, including the use of technology and encounter of material's resistance also provides unexpected sensations related with the sphere of chance. Physical struggle with stone, metal, wood or clay often in a "non-technological" manner provides larger problems that contribute to changes in the original idea, and the material's chance to "express itself."

In order to achieve the desired effect, I cogitate and use new methods "to do something" and as a result it sometimes brings the desired effect, and often triggers further possibilities that are suitable to be associated with something completely different.

Technology causes the most problems when it is necessary to cooperate with the making of an element in a service undertaking or a factory. These places often have the equipment and materials that are required to achieve a particular effect, and are not widely available. People dealing only with the technology, with strictly set production rules, usually cannot get carried away. The difficulty arises from being accustomed to the operative rules, and often fear of something new and unknown. An additional barrier is the inability of insightful explanation and telling about what you want to achieve. It is difficult to describe and accurately dimension the imagination, when the accident-chance at work can prove to be valuable. Lack of understanding from colleagues deepens when it is proposed to go beyond the "classical framework for action" in the technology. More than once I found out that in this case problems arise. The beginning is always difficult, but one should not give up too easily.

Due to the variety of experiences related to cooperation I worked out a method of flexible adaptation to the technological principles and rules prevailing in a given place. At the beginning I try to get to know them well, so that I know what is categorically impossible. Then I review my earlier ideas in the space of the existing possibilities, accordingly to what is said: what is not prohibited is allowed. I make technological experiments in the context of the available options and in line with my principle of "fishing" interesting cases. Sometimes I manage to take advantage of technological possibilities in a completely unexpected way. Most often the technology

surprises me, showing more prospects than initially expected. Attempts of crossing or bending technological possibilities have become a part of my creative process.

Surroundings, inspiration, feeling, idea, selection, process - all these elements make up sculptural matter in which I lead my exploration of form and space, possibilities of expression and response from the work. I find more than my assumption included – my personal limit. I go farther, following what is given to me from every component of my sculptural matter.

Conclusions and summary

From my observation, the matter of creativity consists of many areas of human life – from all kinds of inspiration, through literature, imagination and art. The matter create even elements from which result unplanned activities outside of conscious perception. Each element relating to experience, living and observations can become a cause of inspiration and action in the field of creation. Experiences described by artists connected with creativity show the richness of opportunities in this scope. The manner in which a work arises, its path, successive stages and the final effect is very individual or even unique. The diversity of attitudes, choices of artistic path stems from sensitivity shaping in time, which can be deepened and formed, by choosing means of multidimensional creative matter, interesting or inspiring material. This choice is associated with making the decision of further path.

In the whole matter of creativity there is a place for sculpture's matter. The sculpture is a method of interpreting the world with the fully spatial form. The possibilities of creative interpretations remain endless until the selection of the direction in which it will follow. In the case of sculpture, the decision is inextricably linked with the form and material. The artist, choosing the method of work, can determine the nature of language, in which he will communicate with the recipient. Some restrictions, that he imposes on himself, build further openings to infinitive possibilities of interpretation of the medium in the field of plastic system and a layer of

material associated with it. This creates a paradox, in which by limiting all-possibility arises the possibility of unlimited opening to what is chosen.

The choice of material has a significant impact on the further development of the creative path. The material becomes the basis for building an autonomous artistic language. Sensitive openness to what "tells" the material through its form, may result in additional, previously unexpected elements of expression. Skilful noticing and using this type of phenomena can be helpful in developing artistic sensitivity. The ability of finding value in the events in the field of chance, allows crossing of further boundaries posed by the material.

To summarize, I can say that, as a general concept, the sculpture's matter has an unlimited essence, allowing us to make any choices. The decisions taken in its range make it possible to circumscribe it, but not to close it. The limitation allows us to see values, that during the sensitive observations are revealed, making our consciousness richer and more sensitive.

Cycles of sculptural and collage works, which I have realized, represent a summary of my experiences connected with discovering the world of abstract shape, expressing emotional states through appropriate matching of materials, and thus also symbolic ones.

The issues, that I brought up in his work, absorb many artists. The artists lead autonomous dialogue with the matter in search of form, which will become signs and symbols of the content. Previously mentioned artists, Tadeusz Kantor, Władysław

Hasior or Marian Kruczek, tried to create harmony inextricably linking together the worlds – forms, matter and message.

Both, in the theoretical part and the artistic part, I tried to analyze the relationship between the sculptural matter and the searches undertaken within it. The symbolic significance of the material used in sculpture carries the possibility of interpretation and a very own sense of form.

Theoretical work, but above all the practical one, let me look at the significance of matter and sculptural material with the use of deepened knowledge and new artistic experiences.

Description and authorial interpretation of the cycle of sculptural works – Introspection

Making the choice of sculptural material is not a simple matter. Considering the rich diversity in this field I focused on a specific group of materials. The "technological" and ideological assumption concerns the use of natural materials, in which I noticed the value associated with the essence of existence, understood as a process that has the beginning, the middle, and the end.

My works are in a line with natural processes undergoing over time. Any material derived from nature passes in its own way, undergoes a process of transition of matter. Metal covers with rust, the wood dries and turns into rotten wood, glass changes its shape with time. Nothing is left unused or unchanged. The change is only in the form, it does not destabilize the natural rhythm of nature.

The realisation of works, in accordance with this assumption, is designed to express the natural biological processes associated with human existence, both in the physical and spiritual sphere. Title of the cycle *Introspection* literally means "looking inside, observing and analyzing own mental states, thoughts, feelings, and motives." Illustrating states, premonitions and feelings through abstract sculptural form connects the sphere of spiritual perception with the area of visual perception of reality. The combination of these builds plastic value capable of operating in the sphere of individual interpretation.

During the implementation of sculptural objects I used materials such as wood, metal, glass, ceramics, textiles, stone, etc. Depending on the condition, in which they

were, as the existing or reshaped elements by applying to them appropriate characteristics, are carriers of various symbolic content for me.

A multitude of materials used stems from a collage-approach convention to the construction method of the sculptural form. This is also connected with the established analysis of the properties of sculptural matter, existing in interconnections found in the work, and study of the impact of material on the process of creating the work.

Form I: *Open*

Porcelain, sheet steel, mirror – arranged in a kind of prism. The system of elements used in the sculpture indicates the imaging and sensing of openness. Fragile, delicate structure, which porcelain is, blooms as elusive interior of hard structure, which is disclosed and discovered. The mirror allows us to see the world of interior anew. The reflected image is at the same time the multiplication of form allowing to see what already exists anew, showing the multidimensionality of the opening in formal and interpretative area.

Form II: *Hidden*

The clash of sheet metal once shaped for technical purposes, and then degraded by other actions and biologically formed glass, evokes a feeling of mystery and closure. The raw sheet metal, not attained and hard, inside of which lies cool, but delicate glass structure, as if frightened. It pierces with timid light, symbolizing hope

and goodness. The glass is protected from damage. It is hidden in the inside, does not want anything bad happen to it. It has its own world, which corresponds to the space existing in sharp mirrored reflection similar to itself. It is afraid of the new, prefers to remain where it is - in a familiar, domesticated place. Such system is easy to find in a human life, in a situation when you do not want to externalize. The will of staying in the shade and a well-known – domesticated interior, allows you to compose oneself and devote to contemplation.

Form III: *Weak Point*

The composition tells about the need of protection of the interior. The ceramic husk is a kind of a barrier shielding something valuable and delicate, which is inside. Like an animal protecting its life by the armour. However, each armour has the weak points and not every part of it is equally strong. Delicate forms of silk represent this state through being like a tissue that is not fully protected and can become the cause of the loss of steadfastness. Every man has his protective layer, which sometimes becomes distorted, revealing what is for him valuable, and should remain hidden so that the inside suffers no harm.

Form IV: *Gained*

Wood – black oak – heavy, hard, unique, strong structure, which is the image of a strong and uncrushable attitude towards reality. It is cracked, but it did not happen by itself. The wood structure was torn by a form of delicate and subtle

essence, that seems deceptive, being capable of finding a way to defeat even the toughest attitude. Sometimes it is the only way you can achieve the goal.

Form V: *Transient*

On the one side – the rotten wood, decayed, being at the end of its existence, no longer needed to anyone. Opposite it there is almost perfect in its structure, smooth, elegant wood, which lives as an aesthetically and operationally valuable object. Between them runs a metal-mirror border. So close and yet so far away from each other, the two states of the same biologically shaped structure. The line between life and death is thin. Transience is a natural element of the existence of every living being. The mirror reflects and refracts the environment and object's space, mixing them and moving into a zone in between.

Form VI: *Encounter*

An abstract system telling about the encounter in a symbolic manner. Means of expression used in the sculptural work refer to multidimensional structures existing at the level of human relationships triggering emotions. The encounter of two different structures made within the same material refers to the diversity of attitudes. The light refers to the symbolism of the colour that is used in pictorial description of emotions. It is changeable and gives the possibility of various interpretations of the meeting. Moving through the glass, amorphous structure it is reflexed into symbolic maze of

unpredictable life. Like emotions – touches, penetrates, lasts and escapes into space.

The cycle of collages: *Nocturne*

Composition made on the plane with a technique combining a variety of materials. The works represent a kind of search in the field of abstract combinations of shapes, which are a type of inspirational sketches at the beginning of sculpture activities. The title of the series refers to the time of their creation – usually in the silence of night, in peace and seclusion.

The cycle of spatial collages

The cycle of spatial compositions is an extension of the composition (on a plane) from the cycle *Nocturne*. It is a phase of transition and tests of the action on the sculptural materials used in the works of sculpture, from the cycle of *Introspection*.

Dealing with the sculptural matter and searching within it allowed me to create sculptures of abstract form, that touch the human soul in a symbolic manner. The works are the result of personal contemplation on the uniqueness, the shape and the peculiar beauty of the material.

Table of works included in the dissertational collection titled *Introspection*

Form I: *Open*..... dimensions: 150 x 95 x 65 cm

Form II: *Hidden* dimensions: 175 x 100 x 60 cm

Form III: *Weak Point*..... dimensions: 160 x 155 x 105 cm

Form IV: *Gained*..... dimensions: 210 x 165 x 90 cm

Form V: *Transient*..... dimensions: 285 x 85 x 52 cm

Form VI: *Encounter*..... dimensions: 140 x 110 x 80cm– added to the collection as an annex, being a part of the cycle, published earlier at the exhibition connected with the OPWA project in Centre of Polish Sculpture In Orońsko.

The cycle of collages: *Nocturne*– 18 works in the format 30 × 30 cm

The cycle of spatial collages – 3 works with dimensions 30 x 30 x 20 cm

Technological description

1. Ceramic elements of sculptural compositions were made by hand moulding and print method from refractory (chamotte) masses firing white. These masses are collated from raw materials of Polish origin: Jarosław clays (GM1, GM3), and quartz and metallurgical chamotte of various granulations - from 0.01 mm to 0.3 mm.

After 12 hours of bisqueting elements to the temperature of 900 ° C, they have been glazed with alkaline enamel with tinted pigments and oxides, depending on the desired colour. Copper salt was put to some part of glazes.

Sharp firing (target) closed at a temperature from 1060 ° C to 1100 ° C in 9 hours with an increasing homogeneous curve.

The final result are the glazed sculptures' elements without any technical losses. Mounted astatically and still to the metal elements.

2. Porcelain elements of sculptural compositions were made by hand moulding method, print method from plastic porcelain clays and cast method from liquid porcelain clay.

The final result are unglazed sculptures' elements without any technical losses. Joined by cold method – using an adhesive on the metal structure.

3. Elements of sculptural compositions made of natural fabrics – silk, cotton. Formed by delineator, and then sewn with cotton threads with the use of electric sewing machine.
4. Metal elements of sculptural compositions are made of untempered steel. Converted using electrical devices: a grindstone, a welder, a drill. Covered with natural rust deriving from moisture and conducive weather conditions, locally reinforced with a solution of water and salt.
5. Glass elements of sculptural compositions made of transparent uncoloured glass mass used as drawn glass. Elements full of solid mass and hollow drawn elements.
6. Wooden elements of sculptural compositions made of walnut, oak and birch. Processed using manual and electrical devices. Treatment methods: cutting, grinding, polishing. Protection of rotten wood elements with a synthetic resin: Paraloid B-72.

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