

**WOJCIECH MENDZELEWSKI**

FACULTY OF ARTS

MARIA CURIE-SKŁODOWSKA UNIVERSITY IN LUBLIN

**SUMMARY OF  
PROFESSIONAL  
ACCOMPLISHMENTS**

## PERSONAL INFORMATION

1. Full name:

**Wojciech Mendzelewski**

2. Diplomas, scientific/artistic degrees held:

**Master's degree in Artistic Education – 1994**  
**UMCS Institute of Artistic Education in Lublin**  
**Supervisor: Prof. Sławomir Andrzej Mielezko, PhD**

**Doctorate in Visual Arts,**  
**Artistic discipline: Fine Art – Sculpture - 2007**  
**Faculty of Sculpture, Academy of Fine Arts in Kraków**  
**Title: "Re-Composition of Nature – Memory of Matter"**  
**Supervisor: Prof. Jerzy Kierski**  
**Reviewers: Prof. Józef Murzyn and Prof. Teresa Klaman**

3. Information on employment heretofore in scientific/artistic establishments:

**1 1997 – 2007: junior lecturer and 2007 – present: associate lecturer at the Institute of Fine Arts, Maria Curie-Skłodowska University in Lublin (UMCS).**

**2 1997 – 2016: teacher of vocational subjects at E. Kwiatkowski Vocational School of Building Construction in Lublin**

**3 2006-2007: junior lecturer at the Faculty of Art, University of Rzeszów in Rzeszów.**

4. In accordance with the formal requirement, I wish to indicate my series of sculptures under the joint title **"Memory Factors"** exhibited, in 2017, at the **Pryzmat Gallery in Kraków** and at the **Baltic Gallery of Modern Art in Ustka in 2018**, as my artistic achievement within the meaning of Art. 16.2 of the Act of 14 March 2003 on Scientific Degrees and Titles and on Degrees and Titles in Arts.

## 1. Introduction

The work on my postdoctoral dissertation provided me with a perfect opportunity to look back to my artistic endeavours to date, identify their sources, and reorganize the store of my experience accumulated in over 20 years of artistic and didactic activity.

The period of my primary and secondary school education was marked by interests in skills and areas that had little to do with artistic creativity, instead, my innate curiosity drove me towards exploration and discovery of the endless mysteries of the natural world. At the time, I treated artistic activity as more of a pastime amid other, more typical teenage preoccupations. That was about to change during my final year at the Railway Technical School, when the time came to seriously think about a choice of a career path. As I explored my natural inclination towards the arts, as well as having been encouraged to do so by my form tutor, I decided to explore the UMCS Institute of Artistic Education and get a first-hand experience of a genuine birthplace of art.

In that, I was incredibly fortunate, as my paths crossed with an outstanding painter – Zbigniew Woźniak, who noticed my potential and put me in front of an easel during his drawing classes. And so, somewhat by accident and guided by a highly competent teacher, I spent several weeks preparing for the Institute's entrance exams. I can say with confidence that this experience changed my life. I became fascinated, not only with the practical skill but also the extent of theoretical knowledge inherent in artistic activity.

In 1989, I enrolled as a student of visual arts. Painfully aware of my shortcomings, I invested a great effort in improving my technical skills. My perseverance and commitment were eventually noticed by the head of the Institute – Professor Sławomir Mielezsko. I assume that at first, his interest in me may have been due to the fact that I spent most of my time at either the painting or the sculpture studio.

The kindness and trust of my teachers allowed me to explore my abilities freely, but under constant careful guidance. My works continued to evolve as I gained new creative insights and learnt new techniques. My sculptures from that period were mainly realistic and figurative, products of my fascination with the human body and the relationship between man and nature. Over time, the depictions would evolve, mainly through deformation and synthesis, to produce bodies whose meaningful gestures were intended as vessels for strong emotions and expressiveness. At the time, I worked mostly in clay and plaster.

My continued fascination with history and curiosity of the world led me, at the fourth year of my artistic studies, to enrol for a secondary programme at the UMCS Faculty of Archaeology. And although, for economic reasons, I was ultimately unable to complete the archaeology programme, the experience had a profound impact on my later artistic development.

The period of university studies was marked by the overwhelming cooperativeness and friendliness at Professor Mielezsko's Studio of Monumental Sculpture. It was due to that unique atmosphere that I chose this studio for my final diploma project and it was there that I obtained my Master's degree in 1994.

After graduation, I was forced to take up employment unrelated to art. As I was unable to maintain my own atelier, I had to rely on the kindness of my thesis supervisor – Professor Mielezsko

who allowed me to spend every moment of my free time at one of the Institute's studios. At the time, I mainly created small forms filled with emotion and allusions to inspirations derived from the natural world.

In 1997, Prof. Mieleszko offered to me the position of junior lecturer at the UMCS Institute of Artistic Education, and I was more than willing to accept. Employment at the Institute opened a world of new opportunities to me but above all, it provided a much-needed sense of security and stability. Surrounded by people who were close to me, not only as teachers, but above all as colleagues and friends, I was able to fully devote myself to creative and educational endeavours. Artistically, this was a period of intensive experimentation, a search for my own form and style of visual expression. I engaged the relationship between form and space through compact, synthetic masses cleansed of any unnecessary detail. My formal choices were also, to an extent, dictated by the material from which I formed my sculptures – mainly chamotte clay, stucco, and concrete. In a later period, I experimented with other materials as well: resins, glass and metals. The new materials provided me with the completely new expressive opportunities. I was able to form light-weight structural objects in almost lace-like forms and intricate textures. These artistic explorations produced a series of works which I presented, in 2007, at the defence of my doctoral dissertation at the Faculty of Sculpture of the Academy of Fine Arts in Kraków.

The recurring theme in my works at the time was the "Landscape of Existence" while my physical experience of that space was manifested in the cycles entitled "Manifestation" and "Artefacts". My creative process was largely instinctive, allowing the form to be guided by chance, later to be painstakingly perfected in detail. The subsequent forms resulted from my analysis of a given problem, sometimes as an elaboration on a previous project. I did not shy away from the use of symbols, often following certain well-known archetypes, forms which allow us, to quote M. Eliade: "not to feel like hermetically isolated fragments, but a living cosmos, open to other life, other cosmoses, that surround it".

The "Manifestation" cycle included small, ceramic forms representing the inexhaustible, continually regenerating, vital forces of nature. Akin to fragments of dead flesh, they feel swollen, filled with a promise of new life, the beginning of a new cycle. They symbolise a new stage in the persistent, primordial cycle of regeneration.



"Manifestation" I, ceramic, 65x70x45 cm



"Manifestation" III, ceramic, 55x150x45 cm

Abstract, organic forms reminiscent of imaginary plants, are an expression of the potential found in shapeless matter that can literally become anything. The abundance of forms observed in nature, the shapes of seeds, seedlings, plants, animals, landscapes and human creations is, in itself, the very manifestation of transcendence.



„Manifestation“ IV, ceramic, 70x40x40 cm



„Manifestation“ V, ceramic, 160x50x45 cm

It was my artistic intention for the sculptures included in the “Artefacts” cycle to contain and convey traces of both growth and decay. Each of the objects is nearly two meters tall, formed from a steel mesh covered with epoxy. The group of phallic forms carelessly leaning against the walls, with their insides torn out, bring to mind Osirian initiations during which the body must be destroyed to allow the soul’s release and rebirth. The sculptures are akin to trunks of mystical trees, symbols of life, the absolute reality, they reflect the very universe through association to the mythical Yggdrasil and the biblical Tree of Knowledge. They lie there like discarded insect cocoons that once held life inside.



Artefacts VI, metal –epoxy, 50x75x40 cm



Artefacts VII, metal – epoxy, 50x50x100 cm

At times, they seem like coffins pushed aside into the corner of a catacomb, or old boats abandoned on the shore. They no longer seem capable to providing shelter or carrying one across the Styx. Torn apart, hollow, rigid – they remain fixed in the majesty of death while remembering the life that used to fill them – they await the return of the unknown. In a way, they are somewhat vegetative, mere imprints, remnants of former life. The internally formed active, plastic hollows, concavities and openwork patterns invite space inside the sculpture, annex it.



Artefacts I, metal, epoxy, 80x100x120 cm



Artefacts I, metal, epoxy, 80x100x120 cm



Artefacts II, metal – epoxy, 200x250x50 cm

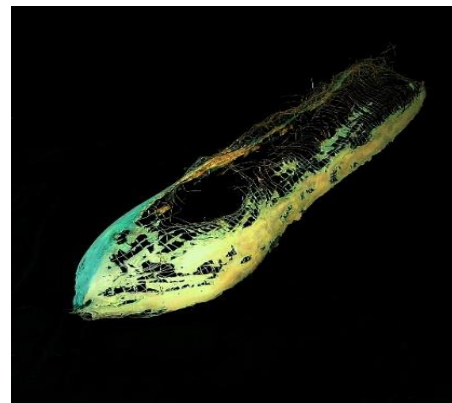


Artefacts III, metal – epoxy, 150x150x40 cm

Compositions that employ openwork, narrowing forms tend to activate their surrounding space, somehow absorbing and devouring it as they lean towards light-weight, aerial structures. Some reach out and penetrate with thin wires, as if trying to lose themselves in the surrounding space. At other times, intersecting planes affect the organisation of their surroundings, sectioning or enclosing it in their bounds. The natural, monochromatic colour pattern is largely due to the selected material. In the case of ceramics, these are the natural colours of earth: from deep browns to greys, the hues assumed by the material under the destructive influence of time and weather conditions. In the case of objects shaped from metal mesh, they are either naturally covered with rust or artificially patinated to obtain the colour of tarnished copper. As I created these sculptures, I aimed to emphasise the structure underlying the form while at the same time providing the objects with the subtle painting-like quality.



Artefacts IV, metal – epoxy, 200x250x120 cm



Artefacts V, metal-epoxy, 60x180x50cm

After obtaining my PhD, I devoted my efforts to intensive artistic work, but also to organisational and educational endeavours related to my new duties, both at and outside my home university. Between 2008 and 2010, I created compositions that constituted a continuation and complementation of the earlier cycles: "Artefacts" and "Manifestation".

In time, I also proceeded with an entirely new cycle "Kratofanie" as a form of creative elaboration and fusion of my previous experiences. In the works, a specific, hard, ceramic silhouette is contrasted and connected with a delicate network of openwork spaces, thin metal wires that seem to vibrate in the light, inviting the viewer to delve deeper into the form.

In creating these pieces, I experimented with a variety of new techniques and materials, and although many of such attempts ended up in failure, I was ultimately able to develop my own, unique method of converting ideas into sculpted pieces. However, my efforts were not limited only to explorations of new materials and forms. I also sought to express new thoughts that stemmed from my continued and in-depth observation and analysis of the surrounding reality. Despite the deep and dynamic evolution observed in technological and cultural contexts, our surrounding world continues to struggle with the universal problems of the human nature and our inherent inclination towards aggression.

## **2. Description of the artistic achievement aspiring to satisfy the requirements of the habilitation procedure**

### **Memory Factors**

The extent of contemporary activity, pace of the modern world, prevalence of information noise, render us insensitive to experience and many of its aspects, to the factors of memory. As observed by J. Assmann: cultural memory focuses on such points in history that can, in time, be crystallised as "symbolic figures" on which "our memory is based."<sup>1</sup> Hence, it is no longer unreal, it becomes reality with all the associated normative and causative power in social life.

A particular aspect of my art is related to the concept of memory as a record of places, events, generations, as well as memory of matter. Therefore, for the purposes of these deliberations, it is assumed that human communities e.g. states, nations, or churches, etc. do not possess memory as such but they do shape it "with the aid of memorial signs such as symbols, texts, images, rights, ceremonies, places, and monuments. Through such media and memory exercises are particular messages instilled in individuals, ultimately rendering the same carriers of collective memory [...]. The thus formed memory is a construction, a so-called informed-choice memory"<sup>2</sup>. In my sculptures, I aim to encourage the viewer's reflection, to inspire the need to formulate questions with regard to memory/oblivion in the individual, collective, social, and cultural perspective.

Is it better to remember or to forget? Ever more often do we start asking ourselves this question. And with that, also another: what is the memory of places, events, generations, really? Is it a form of

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<sup>1</sup> J. Assmann, *Pamięć kulturowa. Pismo, zapamiętywanie i polityczna tożsamość w cywilizacjach starożytnych*, translation: Anna Kryczyńska-Pham, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego: Warszawa 2008, pp.127-143

<sup>2</sup> A. Assmann, *Cztery formy pamięci* [in:] *Między historią a pamięcią. Antologia*, Ed. M. Saryusz-Wolska, Warszawa 2013, p. 48.

endless dialogue between contemporaneity and the past? What is the actual connection between individual and collective memory? Does anything exist that could be referred to as the “culture of memory”. Or would it really be easier and more convenient for us to simply not remember?...

For centuries, the uniqueness of phenomena such as memory, forgetting, recollection, or oblivion has fascinated the scientific world. The attempts to define the culture of memory have been contributed to by entire generations of humanists whose theoretical studies tend to accentuate the importance of spirituality, individualism, or materialism. When relating to those deliberations, one cannot neglect to cite the words of Prof. Zofia Rosińska:

“Memory is not a neutral concept. [...] Its understanding is conditioned ideologically. Still, I do not claim that the concept of memory is hollow but rather that it is blurred, somewhat hazy, allowing the worldview of the discourse participant to be reflected, or, as proposed by Ricoeur and could have just as easily been said by Aristotle, “memory speaks in a multitude of voices”.<sup>3</sup>

The art of memory which the ancients referred to as mnemonics entails memorisation by imprinting easily relatable concepts in one’s memory to serve as formats, signs or images of whatever it is that we wish to remember. According to that particular tradition, memory and oblivion are treated as an inseparable dichotomy of concepts, with oblivion being the opposite of memory and as such can only be imagined. In his *Theogony*, Hesiod placed the goddess of memory – light Mnemosyne in direct opposition to Lethe – the goddess of oblivion, associated with the dark side of existence. In his book „Lethe” (Lethe: Kunst und Kritik des Vergessens) Herald Weinrich establishes a different dimension of existence where remembrance and oblivion are not immediately antonymous. In his depiction, oblivion is not contained within memory but rather precedes and conditions it, and as such is not a quality of existence.<sup>4</sup> Martin Heidegger emphasised that forgetting must not be understood colloquially – as an automatic reflex of sorts. *“In its common perception oblivion is too often depicted as akin to neglect, absence, something regrettable. We are accustomed to thinking of forgetting as an act of neglect [...]. Meanwhile, not only does oblivion encompass the very essence of being (das Wesen das Seins) as something only seemingly separate from the same, it actually contributes to being itself, governs the rulings of its essence.”*<sup>5</sup>

At the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries, in the realm of European culture one could observe a clear renaissance of interest in matters related to memory. In many countries, particularly those with turbulent transformations still looming in their recent past, the problems of memory were in fact politicised in the context of social history, indeed some nations even encouraged to embrace entirely new, official historical propaganda.

Memory manipulations in the context of historical policies are clearly apparent e.g. in Germany which was forced to reconstruct its entire national identity after World War II, the Holocaust, and the Cold War period.

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<sup>3</sup> Z. Rosińska, *Pamięć w filozofii XX wieku*, Warszawa 2006, p.7

<sup>4</sup> M. Hirsch, *Żaloba i postpamięć* [in:] *Teorie wiedzy o przeszłości na tle współczesnej humanistyki*, Ed. E. Domańska, translation: K. Bojarska, Poznań 2010, p. 254

<sup>5</sup> J. Derrida, *Ostrogi, style Nietzschego*, translation: B. Banasiak, Gdańsk 1997, p. 89



Other examples of experiments in this regard can be observed in the processes of memory management employed in Putin's Russia or the frantic search for new historical ideologies on the basis of remembrance/non-remembrance in the Balkans, in the aftermath of the terrible war of the 1990s. Distinct activity and efforts aimed at managing and juggling social mythologies can also be observed in Poland.

Memory shapes identity, both individual and collective, determines its bounds, becomes a viable tool to be used in the civilizational debate, both in Europe and worldwide. Contrary to the "artefactual" culture of memory, which would have us believe that a community must not forget anything and that very fact delimits the "social horizons of meaning and time" (history), cultural memory is characterised by a most "sacral, symbolic, even abstract" quality, which means that it does not necessarily have to be created by individuals, indeed the role is and often has to be performed by organised institutions. They are the ones that establish the system which later constructs collective identity.

As I commonly relate to the concept of memory in my artistic endeavours, I seek to contribute to the discussion concerning the clash between the culture of memory and cultural memory.

As observed by J. Assmann "Thinking relies on abstraction while remembering – on concreta. In order to become objects of memory, ideas must first acquire a material symbol of their own. In that, the concept is imperceptibly fused with the image. (...) And vice versa: in order to survive in collective memory, an event must be enhanced with the sense of an important truth"<sup>6</sup>. The author used the term *memory figures* to refer to the interpermeation of concepts and experiences.

Individual memory functions either consciously or subconsciously in relation to collective memory by evoking and interpreting past events and experiences, and therefore shaping our identity and contemporaneity as well as influencing the future. Oblivion, much like remembrance, is a social activity rooted in identity, i.e. the social structures that unify our thinking through which past events are reconstructed, or not.

Naturally, not all dramatic events are automatically included in the pool of memory. Some may be too traumatic and are therefore rejected and denied, others may prove inconsistent with a certain prevalent, positive perception of the event's participants or the community as a whole. In this sense, memory is not attributed exclusively to the direct participants of events but, as observed by Marian Hirsch: by being educated in environments dominated by a particular narration, people born after the commemorated events also become associated with the same. This is sometimes referred to as "postmemory". As defined by Hirsch, "postmemory is a powerful and exceptional form of memory because its relationship with the object or source is derived not through recollection, but through imagination and creativity"<sup>7</sup>

Such an understanding of memory is also applicable to my personal relationship with the word and my perception of the surrounding reality. As a sculptor, I navigate the realm of the memory of

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<sup>6</sup> J. Assmann, *Pamięć kulturowa. Pismo, zapamiętywanie i polityczna tożsamość w cywilizacjach starożytnych*, Warszawa 2015, pp. 53, 54.

<sup>7</sup> M. Hirsch, *Żałoba i postpamięć* [in:] *Teoria wiedzy o przeszłości na tle współczesnej humanistyki*, Ed. E. Domańska, translation: K. Bojarska, Poznań 2010, p. 254.

flesh, substance. I believe that art with the use of “symbolic figures” serves the role of a medium of memory – a signal, manifestation, reminder of the existing – often difficult or uncomfortable facts.

A specific illustration of this figure is my spatial, vertical composition entitled “Generators” (2017/2018, sisal, 250x60x600cm). It comprises 6 monumental, structural objects of abstract, compact character, in the form of gigantic, synthetic cigars narrowing towards the top. The sculptures suspended several millimetres above ground, maintaining a soft near-contact with the surface, are formed from a polymer mass and sisal. Their openwork surface opens up to space in a way reminiscent of a living tissue registering the presence of form as well as the memory thereof, in that emphasising the temporal aspect of the objects. One could see them as time capsules, containers, sarcophagi whose contents relate past events to us through experiences, memories, maybe photographs? Formed from materials which absorb and enhance sensual experience: adding the qualities of roughness, smoothness, cold or heat. They are lined with numerous cracks, saturated by the metamorphosis of life and death, growth, becoming, permanence confronted with atrophy, decay. They embody the endless, unbridled, periodic regeneration of life.



„Generatory”, sisal, 250x60x450cm,

The “Generators” are an installation of forms presented in their excited state of creation and growth but also conflict and struggle. It becomes a medium of transience. Its individual elements represent impermanence, expiry, extinction, they are a materialisation of absence. The para-organic objects evoke associations with shapes observed in nature: majestic cocoons of inhuman size, containers or corroded time capsules whose bellies conceal the secret to all existence, or maybe a prophecy of the apocalypse.

The vertical installation symbolises the archetype of sacral space or a fragment thereof, the place of contact between heaven and earth, a sanctuary of sorts. It is reminiscent of an ancient temple in ruins, the last of its columns still standing. It annexes space, delimits a certain enclave, provides the uninitiated with security – and a place where contact with the sacrum is possible. It signifies a metaphysical fear of forgetting, or maybe non-remembering?... It forces one to confront the question as to why we seem to prefer to interpret history rather than cope with the guilt and indifference of the actual past? The examples here are plentiful: the forgotten Armenian Genocide, the Holocaust, the Kurds expelled from their own land, Chechnya, and the most recent: Syria, Afghanistan, Somalia...

An inherent part of our world is the tendency to constantly rekindle, bring to life, but also to confront and struggle. As observed by Heraclitus, in nature “all things emerge and die through struggle” which is the source of all creation while war, as he would argue, is the “father and king of

all things”.<sup>8</sup> Hence, we should accept, after A. Storr, that the human inclination towards cruelty is part of our biological conditioning, just as the ability of speculative thought, the use of language, and creativity.<sup>9</sup>

Military conflicts, explosions, ambushes, air raids, chemical warfare – our ability to follow such events from the safety of our own homes, during our family meals, crammed into endless “live feeds” and news coverages, leads to our desensitisation, a sense of overwhelming indifference to the constant broadcasting noise.

The military context is evoked in my works from the “Fields of Non-Remembrance” cycle. “Fields of Non-Remembrance I” is a composition comprising ceramic copies of 40 70 cm artillery shells arranged in a military fashion reminiscent of army troops. The multiplied form of shells – scorched and patinated with fire, emphasise the spatial arrangement and become instruments of political ideology. Lined up as they are, the objects are reminiscent of military parades keenly organised by past and present dictatorships. Or maybe they are just echoes of military operations, conflicts and millions of bombs still buried in the earth – unexploded shells in Asia – Laos or Cambodia, as well as relatively close – in the Balkans or Ukraine?...



“Fields of Non-Remembrance II”, ceramika, 70x120x120cm

“Fields of Non-Remembrance III” (2014) are composed of 4 150cm objects of blackened sisal, leaning against each other. They support one another, persist in space like half burnt hay stacks saved from a fire or frozen dark-matter comets piercing through the atmosphere, harbingers of doom and destruction.

The composition is surprising in its structural use of the material, the subtle contours of sisal lines. But in fact, they are 4 aerial bombs – made surreal and nigh unrecognizable by the particular use of material. Their appearance reminiscent of fluffy toys seems to invite touch, even cuddling, rendering those artefacts of war somewhat grotesque, absurd.

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<sup>8</sup> A. Žuk, *Filozofia walki*, Lublin 1996, p. 29.

<sup>9</sup> A. Storr, *Human Agression*, Harmonds worth, Penguin 1976



"Fields of Non-Remembrance III", sisal, 150x80x80cm.

"Fields of Non-Remembrance II" (200x70x50) is a sculpture depicting yet another problematic facet of memory. Its appearance brings to mind a gigantic pod of beans formed in brown paper mache, it holds within several dozen shiny/twinkling metal balls. Like a dried fruit filled with overripe seeds, it bursts open to release the germs of new life, subjects itself to the periodic demands of creation, the most primal of forces. The composition aims to symbolise life-giving energy and death simultaneously – through the use of metal balls which are more readily associated with instruments of death than seeds of life.



"Fields of Non-Remembrance II", paper mache, stil, 55x150x70cm,

The genesis of this form can be traced to the structure of cluster bombs, each of which is filled with smaller charges known as "bombies". The destructive consequences of war do not cease with the end of active hostilities. During the war in Vietnam, the US forces dropped over 2 million tons of bombs over the neutral state of Laos, including over 270 million cluster bombs, more than one per every man, woman, and child living there. Laotians may forgive but, as long as Laos remains literally

littered with unexploded ordinance, they cannot, must not forget because that could mean death. No matter how many times you may have warned your children, never let your guard down and never allow them to pick up small toy-like capsules. They can maim or even kill.

It is estimated that during the one-month conflict between Hezbollah and Israel in 2006, 4 million cluster bombs were dropped over Lebanon, killing military personnel and civilians alike. And the threat is still present as many of those bombs did not explode and still wait in the earth to harm or kill those unfortunate enough to come across them. Every year, several hundred people become bomb victims. 60 percent are killed immediately, 40 percent of the victims are children. Most countries banned the use of cluster ammunition but Poland, alongside e.g. the United States, China, and Russia, is among the few whose armies still have it at their disposal. It is one of the states that refused to sign the Convention on Cluster Munitions of 1 August 2010 and are therefore not bound by its provisions.

By drawing on the symbolism of memory present in the works of artists from sometimes diametrically different experiential backgrounds, e.g. Tadeusz Kantor and Joseph Beuys, I employed somewhat controversial, Pop-Art simplification when creating the pieces included in my “WarMarket” cycle.



„WarMarkt“ I, polymer, 70x200x60 cm

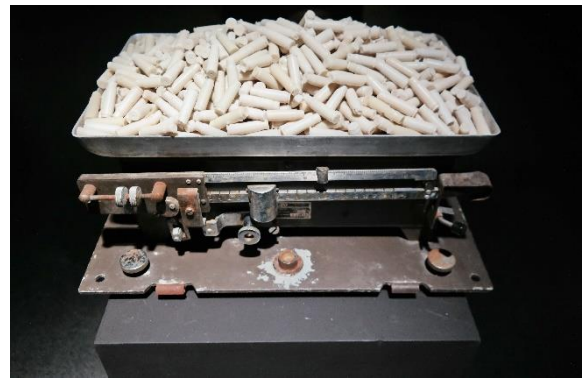
“WarMarkt I” is a group of polymer objects (200cm) shaped in the form of hand grenades and cluster bombs, presented as products intended for the mass market. Like colourful sweets, exotic fruit or Christmas toys, grouped by colour and type and laid out in small supermarket crates to lure in willing consumers. Should one analyse the respective principles of product distribution, it becomes apparent that in general, individuals and groups are provided with what they long for or desire. And in the age of mass-consumption, everything can become a product including, regrettably, weapons and munitions so willingly advertised as guarantors of world peace and security. It is a common misconception that the ongoing development of military technologies, the ceaseless arms race, can guarantee any form of stabilisation.

The internet is full of ads offering deco (decorative) army surplus weapons, e.g. “A Kalashnikov to hang on the wall”. Just like any other products, these can also be bought at a discount and mail-ordered. The market is very potent, more and more people are willing to pay for this kind of weaponry. The most devoted collectors can even take advantage of special offers and buy themselves a canon or relatively modern tank.

The works entitled WarMarkt II and III used as one of their elements ammunition for AK-47, otherwise known as the Kalashnikov automatic rifle. It is difficult to even estimate how many of those rifles have been produced as the simplicity of their construction allows any roughly qualified gunsmith to manufacture the necessary parts – even in a garage. Since the Cold War, there has not been a military conflict in which at least one of the sides would not use some version of this rifle. Each rifle’s magazine holds 30 rounds, each round can decide someone’s life or death. Every year, several hundred thousand people are killed worldwide in various street shootouts and terrorist attacks. Yet, despite these dramatic statistics and the overwhelming number of victims, there are no real attempts to limit the production and availability of firearms, and in the USA the gun law debate is consistently torpedoed by pressure groups representing the multi-billion-dollar firearms industry.<sup>10</sup>



„WarMarkt” III-21g, metal, polymer, 50x60x40 cm



„WarMarkt” III-21g, metal, polymrt, 50x60x40 cm

The piece entitled “WarMarkt II – the Seed” was intended as my own contribution to the debate on the human fascination with weaponry. It is composed of shiny casts of spent rifle rounds in a rusty steel bowl. They are arranged in a pile not unlike candy that is handed out to adults and children alike during various marketing events, always close within reach, inviting everyone to help themselves.

The work entitled “WarMarkt III-21g” consists of genuine military scale and a pile of AK 47 cartridge case replicas. The piece was inspired by an experiment conducted by Duncan MacDoughall, who placed a dying man on a special scale to discover that at the moment of death, he lost exactly 21g in body weight. In doing so, MacDoughall believed to have weighed the human soul.

The objects I create are intended to revive memory of the past, to foster awareness of the wide availability of means of mass extermination, the fact that each of those bullets can in fact equal a human life, the irreversibility of human tragedies that the use of firearms must inevitably cause.

I also relate to the possibility of misinterpretation of facts as often generated by contemporary corporate media whose awareness of the past tends to be dictated by the current policies and corporate interests. Moreover, global news outlets are prone to deploy “information smog” across the board, overwhelming the receptive capacity of the human brain and memory.

<sup>10</sup> <http://www.gb.pl/wystrzalowy-handel-bronia-pnews-782.html>

Therefore, cultivating our memory of past events and their consequences may be our only way of actually shaping our own individual identity and consequently the ability to contribute the global development in an informed way.

When creating the described pieces, as well as while writing this text, I sought to provide a synthetic commentary with regard to the notion of memory which I find fascinating and which has been an inexhaustible source of inspiration in my artistic endeavours. The aim was to signal the problem and present it in the spatial form of a cycle of sculptures. I am aware of the extent of this particular subject matter and its multi-layered interpretation in contemporary art and literature. Therefore, the message I was trying to convey in my *Memory Factors* can be read and understood in a multitude of ways. It is my hope that every impulse to engage in a discussion – even if it is with oneself, can be an enriching experience that may potentially broaden our interpretative horizons, albeit only within the limits of my intention. Those limits are imposed by truth which stems from the subjective, non-empirical, deep, personal, intellectual experience of the object of reflection.

### **Scientific and Educational Activity, Activity Aimed at Popularisation of the Arts**

One of the most important and at the same time most inspiring elements of my professional activity is teaching, to which I try to apply all of my professional experience and artistic fascinations. In my work with students I try to encourage them to read and feel the surrounding world more deeply. As a teacher, I aim to discretely but systematically influence the development of students' creative capacity, their creative awareness, while at the same time enhancing their technical skills. By choosing the subjects and forms of activity, I continuously strive to stimulate their imagination, sensitivity, and ability to perceive the world multidimensionally.

Since 1997 and the beginning of my professional career, I have been conducting classes in sculpture for students majoring in: Artistic Education and Visual Arts. Initially, I conducted classes for 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> year students and extramural students at the chairs of Artistic Education and Painting and Graphic Arts. Since 2007, I have been independently responsible for the organisation of specialisation courses in sculpture for students preparing their bachelor-level graduation projects in Artistic Education, I have also co-supervised master-level graduation projects, together with Prof. Sławomir Mielezko and Prof. Ireneusz Wydrzyński. Apart from classes in sculpture, I also prepare and conduct classes in sculpture reconstruction and renovation of sculpture and architectonic details. These courses are addressed to sculpture and spatial design majors and aim to familiarise students with the specificity and technology involved in the repair, renovation and restoration of historical objects. Since 2013, I have been authorised by the Faculty Council to supervise master's dissertations. Due not only to the scarcity of available teaching hours (60 hours per semester, i.e. 4 hours once weekly) but also the artistic experience of my students, my work as a sculpture teacher in an academic format requires my preparation of dedicated curricula.

I am often faced with students for whom my classes are their first ever encounter with sculpture in any practical sense. Hence, it becomes my task to inspire their interest in perceiving space creatively and transposing it into sculpted forms. My approach to each of the students is, by necessity, individual and dictated by his or her ability. I try to understand their

individual technical, formal, design, and conceptual needs. I seek to enhance their imagination, sensitivity and spatial perception, to help them understand that sculpture is a visual art whose expressive capacity is derived from the relationship between shapes and their surroundings.

In my classes, I do not focus solely on the students' basic technical skills but also try to acquaint them with the problems of spatial analysis and interpretation, proportion and artistic composition. I always strive to approach students with openness and understanding, to offer my support in their search for and formulation of ideas, to share my experience with respect to the techniques and forms of artistic expression. The choice of subjects discussed during the classes is to establish conditions conducive of deriving genuine pleasure from the creative process and encouraging the students to search for their own language of artistic expression. Their diversity allows the students to experiment with a variety of sculpting techniques and materials.

Simultaneously with my work at Maria Curie-Skłodowska University, between 1997 and 2016, I was employed as a teacher of vocational subjects in the class of architectonic restoration of the Vocational School of Building Construction in Lublin, where I progressed through the subsequent tiers of the professional hierarchy, ultimately reaching the level of chartered teacher. The work with high school students allowed me to become closely acquainted with the problems and particulars of didactic work, which also contributed to my ability as an academic lecturer.

My work as a high school teacher also allowed me to become involved in the implementation of an EU programme commissioned by the Ministry of National Education with regard to developing the curriculum basis and syllabus for the professions: Architectonic detail renovation technician and Stoneworker. In 2012, the Minister of Culture and National Heritage appointed me as a member of the Committee for Artistic Vocational Education.

I was able to use this extended knowledge and organizational experience in my work at my home university when I prepared the syllabus for the course on: sculpture restoration and sculpting reconstruction, which since 2014 have been included in the curriculum for students majoring in sculpture at the chair of Artistic Education, Faculty of Arts, UMCS.

Due to the considerable interest in my course among students, as well as the growing shortage of specialists duly qualified to cooperate with conservators and restorers, in 2017, in cooperation with the UMCS Faculty of Chemistry, I developed an innovative programme addressed to bachelor-level students – *Chemistry in Sculpture and Architectonic Restoration*. In April 2018, the Certification Committee awarded it with the Certificate and Quality Marking "Programme with Future Potential", as well as the Extraordinary Certificate of "Leader in Educational Quality" for the year 2018.

The programme is a part of the University's innovative educational offer. Apart from standard "chemical" modules it also covers a comprehensive range of artistic areas that must be mastered by specialists in sculpture and architectonic restoration. Through this programme and in close cooperation with the Lublin Museum, Open Air Village Museum, and Nadwiślańskie Museum in Kaziemierz Dolny, students gain the opportunity to become acquainted with the problems of broadly understood protection of cultural artefacts and specificity of restoration works conducted in historical buildings, which provides them with a considerable advantage on the job market.



Between 2008 and 2017, I conducted classes in sculpting techniques for postgraduate students of Artistic Education, which were intended as supplementary courses for teachers of various specialties. During a short course in sculpting techniques (40 hours of practical workshops), I tried to provide interesting and unusual tasks that the students-teachers could later use with children, while at the same time improving their sculpting technique to a point where they could confidently and comfortably navigate the topics of space and form. The participants of this postgraduate course still often get in touch with me to share their insights on the conduct of art classes. They also bring their own students to my studio to try their hand at sculpting assignments which, for technical reasons, could not be accomplished in a school environment. Such visits are also an important experience for artistically inclined young people, one that encourages them to take up further creative endeavours. It is my considered belief that the currently observed decline of artistic education is not only due to the curriculum itself but also to the rapid development of IT and mass communication technologies. The latter aspect can be effectively countered through direct, hands-on contact with the creative technique, which facilitates and stimulates the development of imagination and creativity in young people.

As part of my work as an educator, since the defence of my doctoral dissertation until the present (2007 – 2018), I have supervised 27 graduation projects in sculpture (17 at the bachelor's and 10 at the master's level, 6 of the same independently). A vast majority of the candidates under my supervision were graded very highly and two were awarded distinctions by the diploma examination committee.

Since the beginning of my work at UMCS, I have also conducted extracurricular classes for high-school and university students with the aim of expanding their artistic knowledge and interest and allowing them to discover some of the many secrets of form and space. Since 2008, I have been the tutor for the "Young Sculptors' Forum" – a student interest group I initiated.

Since 2007, I have organised and managed 13 plain-air sculpting workshops for students, during which several dozen monumental (150-300 cm), outdoor stone sculptures were created. I consider this form of teaching as a very effective method of reaching out to the students, particularly in the academic context where, due to the number of allotted hours, such activities are not feasible.

Between 1998 and 2016, I participated in the meetings of the Institute Board and the Faculty Board. During my employment at the Faculty of Arts, I served and continue to serve as a year tutor. I have also been contributing to the work of the Recruitment Board in the capacity of a member, secretary, or examiner.

Between 2011 and 2012, and again in 2017-2018, I was a member of the Artistic Diploma Committee. In 2012, I participated, as a coordinator, in the meetings of the KRK Curriculum Committee at the Faculty of Arts, UMCS. I developed the teaching goals in the fields of: sculpture for 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> degree full time courses, as well as for the programmes in Artistic Education, Painting and Graphic Arts.

Every year, I become involved in the preparation and organisation of end-of-year exhibitions of student works as a way of recapitulating the year-long didactic efforts in the context of visual structures and sculpture.

Since 1998, I have been a member of the Association of Polish Artists and Designers (ZPAP) and have been actively involved in the life of Lublin's artistic circles. In 2010, I was appointed as the President of ZPAP in Lublin. Since 2011, I have curated and organised 20 international and national ZPAP exhibitions, as well as 7 art conferences, including two with an international outreach.

I also partook in the Polish national sculpture symposium "Mrągowo the Sculpted City" financed by the European Regional Development Fund. I actively participated in the implementation of the Faculty's research project financed by the EU under the European Social Fund. I was a member of the jury during 11 art competitions, including three times as the chairperson.

My artistic accomplishments also include 19 individual exhibitions (13 since I obtained my PhD) as well as 70 multiple-contributor exhibitions in Poland and abroad. Since my dissertation,

I have created nearly 50 sculptures in the public space. I took part in numerous sculpture competitions and my works received many distinctions, e.g.:

- "Autograf 2008" Painting and Sculpture Competition, Lublin 2008— distinction;
- 9<sup>th</sup> International Salon of Art "Homoquadratus Ostroviensis", Ostrowiec Świętokrzyski 2008 – distinction;
- "Salon Wielkopolski 2010", Czarnków 2010 – distinction;
- National competition for the design and preparation of the "Puck Privateer" statue, Puck 2014 r – grand prix;
- Award for the Best Public Space in 2015 in Silesia, Śląskie Voivodeship Authorities in cooperation with the Katowice branches of Polish Architects' Association and Polish Urbanists' Association;
- "Salon Wielkopolski 2015", Czarnków 2015 – Award from the Czarnkowsko-Trzcianeckie Starost Office;
- 13<sup>th</sup> Autumn International Salon of Art "Homoquadratus Ostroviensis", Ostrowiec Świętokrzyski— distinction;
- Architectural and sculpting competition for the statue of Dr A. Majkowski in Kościerzyna, Kościerzyna 2018 – 2<sup>nd</sup> place.

I cooperate, on a permanent basis, with the municipal cultural institutions in: Lublin and Jaworzno.

I am a member of:

- Public Benefit Activity Council for the City of Lublin,
- Council for Culture in the City of Lublin,
- Monument Committee in the City of Lublin,
- Programme Council at the "Geosfera" Centre for Ecological and Geological Education in Jaworzno.

I treat all of the mentioned educational, organisational and promotional efforts as important parts of my overall professional activity.

## Summary

The field of my professional activity consists of three areas: artistic creation, didactics and education as well as organizational activity and popularization of art. While writing this summary and preparing the documentation, I realized how closely these areas are related to each other; how they inspire each other, they complement each other.

The starting point for my artistic creativity is the deep experience of the surrounding world. Creative processing of problems within my interest on the one hand makes them more straightforward and attractive to recipients, on the other hand gives a chance for a new, non-standard view of their source. In both cases art benefits; in the first one - it contributes to popularization, while in the second - it extends its scope.

Artistic activity, through the visual cognitive role of art, as the main factor of perception of the world, naturally translates into education and didactics. For this reason, it also significantly contributes to its dissemination as knowledge, skills, sensitivity, etc.

I trust that these many years of my academic, organizational and artistic experience allow me to conduct independent didactic and scientific work, make the right decisions and verify the applied solutions.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Peca', with a horizontal line extending to the left.