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THE THEME OF THE ISSUE: PSYCHOANALYSIS AND THE BOUNDARIES OF ART

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On 12 April 2014, MOCAK hosted a conference under the auspices of the Polish Association of Psychoanalytical Psychotherapy. The conference discussed the complex relations between creation, thinking and freedom. It resulted in the publication of the book *Art and Freedom. Psychoanalytical Reflection on the Meaning of Creativity*, where Stephen Frosh’s article *The Desire for Freedom?*, reprinted in our magazine, was originally published. In his paper, the author presents the benefits of psychoanalysis for the understanding of contemporary culture: ‘What psychoanalysis demonstrates is how unfree our expected modes of freedom are. Yet it is precisely the limits (“how unbearable it would be if the fundamental horizon of life had no limit at all”) that draw our attention to how the freedom to become something, to stay in tune with one’s desire, is grounded in what we cannot will, what we might even perhaps cease to know’.

The present issue of ‘MOCAK Forum’ also reflects other activities undertaken by the Museum in order to present the contemporary psychoanalytical thought to a wider audience. MOCAK co-operated with the Polish Psychoanalytical Society to host a lecture by Professor Harai Golomb and Professor Michael Parsons, and joined its forces with the Krakow’s chapter of the Polish Association of Psychoanalytical Psychotherapy to organise a lecture by Małgorzata Sacha, Ph.D.

We discuss the issue of the existence of limits to our knowledge, understanding, commitment, freedom and creativity, with the aim of encouraging people to reflect on and reformulate these limits. The question of boundaries does not refer only to the issues of impossibility, bans or sanctions; it is also a question about our areas of freedom. Both art and psychoanalysis confront people with their limitations, at the same time offering a creative way to overcome them. Still, none of these phenomena is free from human determinants.

In her article published in this issue of ‘MOCAK Forum’, *To Think or Not to Think? A Phenomenological and Psychoanalytic Perspective on Experience, Thinking and Creativity*, Lene Auestad focuses on Hannah Arendt, the philosopher who, in her most famous book, *The Human Condition*, said that the only thing she wanted to achieve was for people to think about what they did. This simple exhortation is probably as enchanting as the definition of understanding presented in the *Origins of Totalitarianism*. For Arendt, understanding means facing reality with courage, regardless of how difficult this

What inspired the work was the artist’s desire to help her grandmother who suffered depression after the death of her husband. Šedá convinced her to create a series of drawings depicting the stock of a tool shop in which she had worked for 33 years. The installation is a record of the mental and physical rehabilitation process, which also had an autotherapeutical dimension for the artist herself. This kind of work in which idea and execution are delegated to another person, and the artist himself or herself is just the trigger in the process, expands the concept of what constitutes a work of art.

**MOCAK Collection**
Introduction

Psychoanalysis can be seen as an effort to reinstate or recreate meaning, to think about the unthinkable. But as a conceptual scheme, it is also socially determined. This means that it is guided by power structures... The claim that psychoanalysis is a culturally determined social practice, bound by its own conceptual system, does not propose that it should be once and for all liberated from these structures. Asking that psychoanalysis place itself above social practice would be a demand that is impossible to fulfill.

The boundaries of specific phenomena are not studied in order to expose, unmask or ridicule. The critical approach fundamental to this pursuit is the precondition for building relationships that allow difference. Ironically, to be able to truly accept something, we must have the space to be able to reject it. This line of thought is developed in Malgorzata Sacha’s article *Deze Psychoanalyse Anécd Feminin*? The author writes: ‘Psychoanalysis, just as any other culturally determined area of study and social practice, increases its methodological self-consciousness mainly thanks to the vigilance of its critics’.

Psychoanalysis itself may be helpful in preserving a critical eye and sensitivity towards other social practices. In her article *Sikło nad rozumem. Psykosocjal*, Juliet Mitchell notes that: ‘Western ideologies insist the family is the only source of social development’. Meanwhile, the psychoanalyst contends that ‘there is also a construction of the social group that is based not on an extension but on a repudiation of the nuclear family’. In her paper, the author of the famous *Psychoanalysis and Feminism: Freud, Reich, Laing, and Women* (1974) introduces the category of the mother as an employer, thus going beyond the traditional psychoanalytical perspective, in which the legal and the social was always associated with the role of the father. Meanwhile, the article of Iwona Wyczatska, *Melancholy - Longing for the Lost Paradise*, discusses the phenomenon of being unable to come to terms with loss. The author refers to poets that were crucial to the development of Polish identity and shows how melancholy is present in the very structure of our thinking about Polandishness.

The present issue of MOCAK Forum takes as its ambition to present the broad relations connecting psychoanalysis and contemporary art. Adela Abella, a psychoanalyst, reflects upon the applicability of the theory of art proposed by Hanna Segal to contemporary art and its specific nature. The author focuses on the reparative function of modern cultural institutions. The article is perfectly supplemented by the interview conducted by one of the lecturers of the ‘Art and Freedom’ conference, Lech Kalita, with Justyna Zalewska-Drzeżdżon, a psychoanalyst. The connections between psychoanalysis and art, which we can observe also when looking at institutional activities, are discussed by Monika Koziol, a curator, who describes the exhibitions presented in the Freud Museum in London.

The article presented by Maria Anna Potocka offers a criticism of the conceptual paradigm widely adopted by art historians. The author calls for a revaluation within the dominant narrative about art, so that it enables an understanding of art that is not confined only to artworks but also accounts for the personality of its creators. In order to achieve a more comprehensive outlook on the phenomenon of art, we need to reformulate the current limitations of methodology. This issue also includes a presentation of the creative output of patients from the oldest psychiatric hospital in Krakow, accompanied by interviews with its authors and the hospital staff. It is an attempt to provide the readers with a broader context of how artworks are created and to take a step beyond the product-centred paradigm. The presentation of works created outside the ‘world of art’ is an expression of self-reflection about the practices pursued by institutions. The narratives offered by therapists and street workers enable us to take a look at the reality from a less egocentric perspective. Thanks to their input, we can now ask not only who the homeless person really is but also ‘what it means to be home-full’.

Being aware of one’s own limitations (and not simply not having any) is a precondition of freedom, also freedom in education: ‘In acquiring a conceptual scheme one is enriched with a capacity to extend the reality through its concepts, but the process also serves to set up a barrier against that which cannot be grasped through them. Thus in teaching someone a conceptual scheme one is also teaching them where to set up barriers’.

The ability to reformulate our boundaries in a creative manner depends on our ability to tolerate a temporary feeling of insecurity and on our courage. ‘Whether a teacher is capable of taking up a perspective that comes from the sideline – in terms of culture, class, gender etc. – depends, I think, jointly on a basic security and a willingness to take a risk. Bion’s concept of the unconscious is an unconscious state of affairs and how it is unconsciously communicated. The element of courage required to put one’s concepts into play and risk one’s frameworks of support is fruitfully explored in Arendt’s political existentialism’. In my opinion, interpreting contemporary art also requires similar competence.

In our section on education, we present the reflections of educators from several institutions on the unique character of art education. This selection of perspectives allows the reader to notice the recurring themes and thus to draw conclusions about the most crucial phenomena.

The articles by Karina Jarzyńska and Maciej Jakubowiak problematise the relationship between creativity, commitment and the changes brought upon by the increasing popularity of modern technologies. Be it in education, work or entertainment. Numerous apps allow users to cross the traditional boundaries connected with the necessity to achieve a certain level of craftsmanship. In his article *Creativity at Your Service*, Maciej Jakubowiak notes a certain paradox in this situation: ‘Tempted by becoming online artists with millions of people watching our works, we lose interest in what really needs our attention, i.e. the conditions in which we live’.
A psychoanalytic reflection on contemporary culture

Stephen Frosh

The Desire for Freedom?

At the end of his interview with Françoise Wolff, released as Jacques Lacan parle (1972), Lacan is speaking about death, in the course of which he comments about ‘how unbearable it would be if the fundamental horizon of life had no limit at all.’ Returning to the question Wolff has just asked him, which is, ‘You said that death is an act of faith, which one must believe; must one also believe in analysis?’ he says, ‘Well, obviously, the fact that one embarks upon analysis means one has some hope, at least.’ This is not, he suggests, the kind of hope one has of death, a hope which is really a certainty; we know, however defended we might be, that this thing will come about, that there is, mercifully, a limit. Psychoanalysis is more uncertain. Nevertheless, whatever the ‘point of departure’, as Lacan puts it, this does not prevent analysis, ‘once it has begun, from being totally engrossing.’ For the last moment of the film Wolff asks him, ‘Doesn’t psychoanalysis contain a repression of freedom?’ Lacan looks around; then he chuckles. ‘Those words make me laugh. I never talk about freedom.’

We might have to accept that the ending of a film with these words, ‘I never talk about freedom’, is a deliberate provocation, a willed act of artistic subversion: how clever of the psychoanalyst to remain enigmatic, to refuse to answer the key question, will analysis – will anything – set us free? How smart of the film maker to leave us with Lacan’s chuckle, neither defensive (‘Of course psychoanalysis helps with freedom’, he might have said) nor offensive as he was with the rebellious students after 1968. On that occasion, he lectured the students as follows: ‘If you had a bit of patience, and if you really wanted our impromptus to continue, I would tell you that, always, the revolutionary aspiration has only a single possible outcome – of ending up as the master’s discourse. This is what experience has proved. What you aspire to as revolutionaries is a master. You will get one.’ Lacan was known as the ‘Master’, ironically perhaps but also truthfully, his living and dead hand weighed heavily on the various movements which he joined or founded. But here he is not positioning himself, nor even psychoanalysis, as the students’ master; he is warning, upbraiding, patronising, diagnosing. The ‘master’s discourse’ is the position that there is one who knows, that is to say, it represents the claim that it is possible to find a clear answer to the questions of being, whether this is through religion, or love, or politics, or psychoanalysis. This kind of expertise is always false because no-one can be in full possession of the truth, and in analysis it is a trap because it suggests that the analyst holds the secret of the ‘cure’. In relation to the question of freedom, it is also a lure, inviting us to give up the prospect of being free because of the security provided by the one who knows, by the expert, or leader, or sage who can show us how to escape uncertainty – and eventually, one might think, how to manage the certainty that we wish to deny, that of the limit placed by death.

Why does Lacan laugh? There is a large literature on the subtleties of Lacan’s supposed non-engagement with freedom, which of course is actually an active engagement. Complex terms abound, rooted especially in his 1959–1960 seminar, The Ethics of Psychoanalysis: the sketch, a subjective destitution, Das Ding and the Big Other.1 Let us not get too caught up in these terms here; I am more interested in the Master’s chuckle. What does he know that the interviewer has overlooked, and that she perhaps sheepishly allows to peek through in this Master’s discourse. What does he know that the unconscious itself is ‘structured like a language’,2 asserts his right to silence: ‘I never talk about freedom.’ Perhaps what we have here is more a refusal of speech in the face of what Lacanians would understand to

1 J. Lacan, The Ethics of Psychoanalysis: the sketch, a subjective destitution, Das Ding and the Big Other. 2 Let us not get too caught up in these terms here; I am more interested in the Master’s chuckle. What does he know that the interviewer has overlooked, and that she perhaps sheepishly allows to peek through in the film with Lacan’s resolute refusal to speak? This master of words, the one who avers that psychoanalysis is a practice of speech, that the unconscious itself is ‘structured like a language’, asserts his right to silence: ‘I never talk about freedom.’ Perhaps what we have here is more a refusal of speech in the face of what Lacanians would understand to
be a ‘hysterical’ demand from the interviewer. ‘Give me the answer to the question of freedom and psychoanalysis’, she might be saying, ‘sum it up, tell me what I need to know so that I can align myself for or against, so that I can know where I stand, so that we can see which side of the barricade we are on’. No, says Lacan – one of his favourite words, as it happens (le kami/non du père being a smart pun that plays on the Oedipal prohibition) – you have to accept, once it has begun, that psychoanalysis can be ‘totally engrossing’, and that whether or not it promotes freedom can only be experienced, not talked about. In particular, you might need to realise that this hunt for an answer to the question of freedom is precisely a way of denying freedom its voice.

The constraint on freedom in psychoanalysis has a history as long as the discipline itself. After all, this is the principal irony of the method. The patient is told, ‘free associate’, in the knowledge that it is precisely the impossibility of obeying such an injunction (‘be spontaneous – now!’) that is the basis for psychoanalysis. If free association was feasible, if the flow of one signifier after another – unedited, uncensored, pleasurable, fulfilling – could ever truly happen, then there would be no need for analysis, because analysis attends to the blocks in this particular mode of freedom. But it also does so knowing that these blocks are the heart of the matter: free association is impossible because there is no such thing as freedom from the constraints of the unconscious, and in turn (this is an extension of Freud’s thought, but not of Lacan’s) the unconscious itself is not free, because it is fixed already through the constraints of the symbolic order and breaks into it unexpectedly from time to time, causing a small or large disruption, precisely what we did not ever expect to find. That is where free association breaks down, it can also be thought as an image, the moment the creative process really operates, as the formal structures of language and culture give way to an abyssal event in which things are turned around unexpectedly. Though one can think too much – it can be the moment at which everything collapses in on itself, and freedom absolutely disappears.

Here is a recent but already very famous artistic example. For her retrospective at New York’s Museum of Modern Art in 2004, Marina Abramović created a new performance work, which she called The Artist Is Present. The work involved Abramović sitting every day for the entire duration of the exhibition whilst people came to sit opposite her. As each person approached, Abramović would be looking down, apparently ‘cleaning’ herself of the presence of the previous person; she would then look up, open her eyes, and stare silently at her partner, who would look back. That was all, yet the performance was so compelling that by the end of the exhibition huge queues had formed with people hoping to have a chance to sit within Abramović’s gaze. She herself was exhausted; ‘the hardest thing to do is something which is close to nothing’, is what is stated in the film, but it is clear this was nowhere near ‘close to nothing’: the effort of looking, of concentrating, of giving every single individual some kind of recognition so that they took away the sense of having been seen, was fully ‘something’, and profoundly draining. But it is the response of the ‘public’ – her ‘lover’ as it is named in the film – that is so remarkable. No doubt some people were unmoved or disappointed, or felt the whole thing to be a charade. But others were deeply touched by the experience; a large number shed tears, incidentally giving rise to a blog called Marina Abramović made me cry,8 as did, at some points, Abramović herself. There are many testimonies to the dynamic of this encounter: some simply reference Abramović’s ‘charisma’, which explains very little; others note how the slowing down of time that is represented by the duration of sitting and stillness can be a shattering intervention in the hectic environment of urban life. Others focus on the significance of silence: in the midst of what by the end was a huge, bustling and noisy crowd, Abramović and each of her partners became a quiet space, linked together by an intense and personalised gaze, clearly experienced as a point of communion even if on this itself, and freedom absolutely disappears.

Nevertheless, leaving aside for a moment all the obvious doubt – what is a ‘performance’, after all, but a deliberate artifice, however delicately wrought? – we might claim that the slowness, the stillness, the centredness of the experience, and most of all simply the gaze, the absolutely maintained presence of the artist, offers the most singular constraint (no speech, no movement, no touch, just a look) and yet frees something for so many who are exposed to it. There is an obvious resonance with the psychoanalytic encounter here, the analytic gaze being a key fantasy for Lacan,9 but Abramović is more radical even than that. She offers no interpretation or reassurance, just a gaze that has in it the appearance of sympathy but is, in reality, inscrutable yet completely absorbing. And for some at least the division of that gaze, this stripped down reality, this encounter full of prohibition, is more than enough to make a kind of desire break through. Can one, then, refuse to speak of freedom and yet work with it? The things that disturb us also set us free. If we try to pin them down as a mode of knowledge or judgement (‘Doesn’t psychoanalysis contain a repression of freedom?’) do we might as well ask what we hope to find. What psychoanalysis demonstrates is how untrue our offered expectations of freedom are. Yet it is precisely the limits (‘How unbearable it would be if the fundamental horizon of life it had no limit at all’) that draw out attention to how the freedom to become something, to stay in tune with one’s desire, is grounded in what we cannot will, what we might even perhaps cease to know. Writing about Lacan’s psychoanalysis, Nobus and Quinn comment, ‘What Lacan called “the sublimity of stupidity” is discernible only within the terms of a discourse which knows how, when and where breaks down: it can also be thought as control and mastery.’10 It is at that moment when we turn away from the idea of freedom as something that can be owned and allow another thing to speak through us, that we might perhaps lose our freedom and so – in relation to desire at least – become minimally free.


Footnotes:
In 2002, Karnac, a publishing house, released the book *Constructing and Deconstructing Woman’s Power* edited by Beth Seelig, Robert Paul and Carol Levy. The topics explored in this collection of essays, which is devoted to the relationship between gender and various representations of female strength and power, are hardly novel. What is much more interesting is the list of authors that includes outstanding psychoanalysts, such as Helen Meyers, the former director of the Psychoanalytic Center of the Columbia University. The book was recommended by two renowned psychoanalysts and clinicians, Otto Kernberg and Ethel Person. Kernberg is famous for his research on identity, and Person for her publications on sexuality and psychology of power. As early as 1976, Kernberg, a theoretician and clinician, with a rather lukewarm approach to postmodernist relativism in psychoanalysis, warned his readers against an unquestioning acceptance of, and in particular against overrating, the thesis that women’s adaptation to society is a conventional process. In his opinion, the women’s potential to develop new, unconventional adaptive patterns is quite often underestimated. We would be hard-pressed to find a clearer declaration of support expressed by a psychoanalyst in favour of the basic claims of feminism: the thesis that women as a group are subject to social and psychological oppression and the thesis that women show a specific creativity in the area of constructing and maintaining an intrapsychic and interpsychic autonomy. Following the train of thought presented by representatives of psychoanalytically oriented feminism, we could say that psychoanalysis has needed and still needs feminism, mainly to criticise its blindness to the cultural underpinning of many psychoanalytic theories of gender. In what follows, I will try to outline a minimum area of common interest, which was agreed upon in the debates among psychoanalysts.

*Katarzyna Górna Madonnas 1997 photograph 140 × 110 cm MOCAK Collection*

*Małgorzata Sacha Translation: Anna Wolna-Nocnía*

### Does Psychoanalysis Need Feminism?


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2 Neutrality (in a technical, psychoanalytic sense) depends, I think, upon a shared background of culturally determined assumptions on the part of the analyst and the patient; and the problem of a woman’s position in society may be one area in which the analyst has to be particularly attuned to the possibility of his identification with a traditional cultural outlook that places women in an inferior role and supports their acceptance of that role. Therefore, the analyst must be especially wary of an implicit stand that underestimates a woman’s potential to develop new, unconventional patterns of adaptation. (O.F. Kernberg, Object-Relations Theory and Clinical Psychoanalysis, New York 1976, p. 235.)
the proponents of feminism and psychoanalysis. I will not go into the discussions between Lacan-oriented postmodernist feminism with psychoanalysts, since this discourse is quite well represented in philosophical thought also in Poland. A less known implication of feminist criticism of psychoanalysis is the influence it has had on the clinical theory of psychoanalysis. I will return to this interesting question towards the end of my essay.

There is also the question of the use that feminism could make of psychoanalysis, explored for the most part by proponents of psychoanalytic feminism. Nancy Chodorow, who describes herself as a social scholar and clinician, resorts for the most part by proponents of psychoanalytic feminism could make of psychoanalysis, explored has had on the clinical theory of psychoanalysis. Criticism of psychoanalysis is the influence it well represented in philosophical thought also psychoanalysts, since this discourse is quite Lacan-oriented postmodernist feminism with. I will not go into the discussions between partners. Chodorow believes that feminism, especially in its liberal and Marxist versions, has not appreciated the fact that being endowed with a biological sex and cultural gender is a part of social organisation. Therefore, the oppression against women cannot be prevented by mere laws, or by their conditions or the abolition of the institution of family. Chodorow reminds radical feminists that the complicated interplay between gender identity and the choice of sexual objects, or between various ideals of motherhood and their total rejection, do not allow for forming too uncompromising and unilateral theses. It would not be democratic in or in any way beneficial to the idea of feminism to promote ideas such as rejecting biological motherhood or stigmatising partners. This topic, explored for instance in Nancy Chodorow’s article. Chodorow’s aim was to demonstrate the second part of this book, is less apologetic and much better written. Referring to the work of the object relations school (Jessica Benjamin, [Jane Flax], interpersonal analysis (Jane Flax) and relational analysis (Jean Baker Miller – a Sullivanist), Chodorow strove to identify the feminist inspirations visible in various gender theories pursued in new psychoanalysis.

In my opinion, we would not be able to talk of new psychoanalysis if it were not for the emergence of amended identity theories (including sexual and gender identity), as well as theories of emotions and memory. The creation of sex and gender identity theories was inspired by the attempts to construct a new psychology of women. Searching for a model of a uniquely female track of development soon led to further questions, also about the interdependence among the development of various forms of gender. Many contemporary psychoanalysts believe that genital schematisation in children takes place at an earlier stage than Freud believed. Such an open rejection of Freud’s classic theory of the structure and time schedule of human psychosexual development had important consequences for any attempts to theorise the construction of gender identity in a child, one of which was the need to rethink the theoretical construct known as the Oedipus complex. The understanding of genitality as a social construction, and as a social construction of identity, is not his or her problem of choosing a homosexual orientation that shows up at the therapist’s disposal, it is rather diverse problems from the area of borderline or narcissistic pathologies, i.e. problems connected with personality disorders. For many currents of feminist thought, it is of crucial importance that sexual choices are no longer labelled in terms of normativity, pathosis or ethics, etc. The discussion of the problem of personality disorders has also shed some light on the issue of reproduction, which is also vital for feminists. The discussion of the problem of personality disorders has also shed some light on the issue of reproduction, which is also vital for feminists. The discussion of the problem of personality disorders has also shed some light on the issue of reproduction, which is also vital for feminists. The discussion of the problem of personality disorders has also shed some light on the issue of reproduction, which is also vital for feminists. The discussion of the problem of personality disorders has also shed some light on the issue of reproduction, which is also vital for feminists. The discussion of the problem of personality disorders has also shed some light on the issue of reproduction, which is also vital for feminists. The discussion of the problem of personality disorders has also shed some light on the issue of reproduction, which is also vital for feminists.
Chodorow’s book The Reproduction of Mothering, is closely intertwined with the issues of power and the feelings of female agency and autonomy. If Chodorow is known for her feminism-grounded idea of introducing double parenting as a remedial measure, the psychoanalytic reflection on parenting, and motherhood in particular, is more focused on identifying the roots of motherhood pathologies and analysing the consequences of this. This is where we once again stumble upon the all pervasive problem of personality disorders, including narcissism and perversion. In her book, Chodorow describes mainly the social mechanisms that determine motherhood disorders and the potential impact of such determinants on the child and the entire culture of parenting. A counterpoint to the feminist discussion of the problem of motherhood, construed either as a form of enslavement or as a uniquely female virtue, can be found in the work of psychoanalyst Estela Welldon. In her book Mother Madonna Whore, Welldon puts forward the thesis that the female psychophysiology is responsible for a model of perversion that is completely different from what is typical to men. Psychoanalysts look for the aetiology of both male and female perversions in an incorrect relationship between an infant and the mother. Therefore, the abusive, neglecting or indifferent mother is the object of attack in perversion. Welldon argues that a perturbed woman identifies with such a mother and, as a mother, finds her mother in herself or in her children. In her maternal role, she re-enacts sadomasochist models, which she then passes onto the next generation. The model of female perversion also includes self-mutilation, self-humiliation of femininity, incest or female prostitution. Welldon’s bold claims, inspired by feminist discussions of female difference, in reality deconstruct the image and self-image of femininity and motherhood that are all too often idealized by feminists.

By analysing the relationship between gender and personality, feminists have highlighted another important problem. A subject achieves a certain fluidity or flexibility in his or her psychological functioning by manipulating various representations of him or herself as a subject, as well as representations of various objects that are in relationship with the subject. The recognition and adoption of various social roles by an individual serves as a simple example of this contextuality of a human subject. When adopting a certain role, we temporarily suppress the features of character that are not necessary to this role, which could even prevent us from its performance. Feminists have hence raised the question of gender salience, i.e., whether gender identity is a continuous identity or a certain aspect of personality that becomes salient in specific contexts. We could for instance ask to what extent the gender of a surgeon is relevant and whether it constitutes a trait that is called upon and perceived, be it consciously or not, in the context of surgical procedures. Considering the specifically relational and interactive nature of the therapeutic relationship, the question of the patient’s and psychoanalyst’s gender seems even more crucial. Nancy Chodorow conducted an interesting gender experiment: she interviewed thirty active female psychoanalysts and analysed statements that had been made by women in the past and proved important for the psychoanalytic thought. She wanted to determine to what extent being a female psychoanalyst influences the nature of the therapeutic relationship and the theoretical commentaries that made their mark on psychoanalysis. Female members of their profession wrote many important papers on gender theory and psychology of womanhood, a fact that is universally acknowledged and documented. As Chodorow pointed out, the problem of the potential impact that gender may have on the therapeutic relationship is much more interesting. The statements made by survey participants usually confirmed the well-known psychoanalytic claim of the relative neutrality of the psychoanalyst, and thus the relative unimportance of his or her gender in the performance of this profession. The women surveyed by Chodorow tried to separate the issue of their gender identity from that of their role as psychoanalysts. However, when it comes to patients, the therapeutic reality has been and still is quite different. Psychoanalysis assumes the existence of transference, in which the patient ascribes some features to, or projects them onto, the figure of the psychoanalyst in their therapeutic relationship. The features ascribed to the psychoanalyst belong to the realm of mental representations of various states of the subject, object and interpersonal relationships of the patient. Their projection onto the figure of the therapist is a part of the process of unconscious communication between the patient and the psychoanalyst and thus constitutes an element of the therapeutic process itself. Initially, the transference that develops within the therapeutic process, unless one is dealing with a clearly psychotic patient, depends on a relatively realistic perception of the figure of the psychoanalyst. This is why his or her gender is relevant to the patient, both at the beginning of the therapeutic relationship and in the following stages. Most of the early psychoanalytic literature presented descriptions of specific forms of transference between a female patient and a male psychoanalyst. Gradually however, discussions of the separate nature of transference between a male patient and a female psychoanalyst have also started to appear. As Chodorow points out, the issues of the conceptualisation of transference, and also counter-transference, have been explored mostly by women. Chodorow associates this fact with women’s greater sensitivity to gender issues, despite their declared professional neutrality. However, a review of psychoanalytic literature, even when its devoted to the concept of transference and counter-transference, leaves one with the impression that both male and female psychoanalysts want to separate any gendering from their own professional role. In the same vein, therapists of both sexes, men and women, try to use their awareness of gender connotations as a conscious element in counter-transference. To what extent such psychoanalytic practices and their theoretical grounding could be possible without feminist criticism remains an open question. In my opinion, psychoanalysis, just as any other culturally determined area of study and social practice, increases its methodological self-awareness mainly thanks to the vigilance of its critics. Even if psychoanalysts consider feminism as an ideology, the feminist criticism of psychoanalytic ideology need not be construed as a purely ideological tool. Under this assumption, feminism has something to offer to psychoanalysis.
The myth of the paradise lost has been present in culture for a very long time, explored in the reflections about the condition of mankind, its fate and position. The version presented in the Bible is perhaps the best known rendition of this story. Adam and Eve were banished from paradise, a place of happiness, wholeness and completeness, where nothing was lacking, where pain and suffering did not exist. Paradise existed beyond time, so there was no such thing as transience, no cycle of births and deaths, and thus no feelings of despair, pain, of loss and uncertainty. They did not belong to the realm of human experience. Adam and Eve were banished because they had defied God. Despite His instructions, she picked a fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. She was deceived by the serpent, who told her: ‘... For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil’.  

The story of the creation and fall of the Bible’s first man and woman, Adam and Eve, describes a crucial aspect of human nature and fate. People yearned to become like God, and in a sense rejected what God had given them in order to replace him. They questioned and rejected the established order, the superior reality: God is the creator, and people are his subordinates, they are dependent on him, which makes them weak and by definition deprived of knowledge and power. Human nature is lacking, incomplete, deficient. Evil also appeared, while Eden had been free of it; it became an inevitable part of human life, it was inscribed into the fate and story of people marked with the original sin. From that moment on, people will also know the feeling of longing, of yearning to return to the lost paradise, to the land of happiness and innocence, because lack of knowledge is accompanied by the feeling of innocence (‘And the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together, and made themselves aprons’). It seems that longing for some unique space in which we would be happy, calm, satisfied and complete, without lacking anything, feeling doubt, being torn or desperate, is somehow a part of our constitution, it belongs to human nature.
This search for the paradise lost, or for perfect love, which seems to be a similar desire rooted in the same source, has started much earlier than the Bible. It is the cornerstone of human condition, the basic source of culture and civilization. Plato’s Symposium, written in the 4th century BC, is a dialogue about love. Plato asks questions about the nature of love, wonder what it really is, what its true object is, what we are looking for when we are in love with someone or when we find it. It even possible to find love, to reach the paradise once lost? In the first place, let me treat of the nature of man... for the original human nature was not like the present, but different. The sexes were not two as they are now, but originally three in number; there was man, woman, and the union of the two, having a name corresponding to this double nature. Terrible was their might and strength, and the thoughts of their hearts were great, and they made an attack upon the gods; of them is told the tale of Otys and Ephialtes who, as Homer says, dared to scale heaven, and would have laid hands upon the gods. Each of them was the representative of the celestial councils... at last, after a good deal of reflection, Zeus discovered a way. He said: "Methinks I have a plan which will humble their pride and improve their manners; men shall continue to exist, but I will cut them in two and then they will be diminished in strength and increased in numbers... they shall walk upright on two legs."... After the division the two parts of each man, desiring his other half, came together, and throwing their arms about one another, enwined in mutual embraces, longing to grow into one, they were on the point of dying from hunger and self-neglect, because they did not like to do anything apart... it may be that when separated, having one side only, like a flat fish, but is the indument of a man, and he is always looking for his other half... [And Hephaestus said] "I am ready to melt you into one and let you grow together, so that being two you shall become one, and thus while you live a common life as you were a single man, and after your death in the world below still be one departed soul instead of two."... And the reason is that human nature was originally one and we were a whole, and the desire and pursuit of the whole is called love... Plato uses a myth, a metaphor, to describe a vital, profound aspect of human nature: the desire to achieve complete wholeness, some sort of a full, perfect existence. The paradise lost is, among others, the state of primary human nature, of completeness, one that includes both elements: male and female. This primary nature was whole, it did not long for anything, was not nagged by feelings of lacking, of dependence, of love. Herôs persons is described in Plato as an exceptionally strong and liberated being, marked with arrogance and pride, expressed in the desire to take over divine powers. The punishment for pride was separation into two, which made people weak, incomplete and thus filled with feelings of deficiency, of constant longing and pursuit, of the desire to fill the hole to once again become complete. The myth recounted by Plato and the biblical story of the expulsion of Adam and Eve from Eden share a number of common elements. There is a certain ancient, primary state of wholeness, which people have lost because of the division of the two parts of man; each desiring his other half, came together, and throwing their... The gods in Plato’s myth are a symbol of external, transcendent reality, order and rules, to which we are subject, which are superior and which we need to follow lest there will be chaos and destruction. This reality is independent of people and unknowable in its essence. It is both, is longed for and unattainable. It means that people experience themselves as weak, as deprived of power and meaning, full of uncertainty and ignorance, yearning for something vague, constantly wishing to achieve some kind of fulfillment, searching for completeness or at least connecting with someone or something that would provide them with this sense of wholeness. The infant feels that it is the creator of this world, that it in a way creates the mother that cares for it, it feels it is omnipotent; in its essence, it is God (Winnicott). Yet this state needs to be sacrificed to growth so that the infant can graduate to subsequent stages. In the biblical story, paradise is linked with the state of innocence, of lack of knowledge. The price for knowledge is expulsion from Eden. Infants may feel (at least sometimes) as if they were in paradise, but they are ignorant, they know nothing about reality. The path towards maturity leads from God and are ever-expanding, a task that is hard, requires effort and quite often causes pain. It is also an experience of constant frustration due to permanent confrontation with the limited nature of the knowledge one can gain, or, in fact, with invariable uncertainty, doubt, questions about sense and meaning. The truth is to be sought, never to be uncovered once and for all. There are questions rather than answers. In the child’s inner world, parents may become god-figures. They have everything that the child lacks – strength, power and knowledge. In the eyes of the child, this knowledge may mean omniscience, a sort of omnipotence. The child wants to become like them, so it rebels and fights. In the famous myth, Oedipus kills his father and marries his own mother. This story embodies the fantasy of a victorious struggle against the Parent-God, the symbol of order and authority. The rules that exist regardless of the will and desires of the individual, and of taking over the Parent’s position. However, this fantasy may only be fulfilled at the price of unimaginable destruction, a streak of calamities and an ocean of pain. The primary rules have been attacked, resulting in the total destruction of the world. The gods in Plato’s myth are a symbol of external, transcendent reality, order and rules, to which we are subject, which are superior and which we need to follow lest there will be chaos and destruction. This reality is independent of people and unknowable in its essence. It is both, is longed for and unattainable. It means that people experience themselves as weak, as deprived of power and meaning, full of uncertainty and ignorance, yearning for something vague, constantly wishing to achieve some kind of fulfillment, searching for completeness or at least connecting with someone or something that would provide them with this sense of wholeness. ... [or] conception and generation are an immortal principle in the mortal creature... And if, ... love is of the everlasting possession of the good, all men will necessarily desire immortality. ... The moral nature is seeking as far as is possible to be everlasting and immortal: this is only to be attained by generation, because generation always leaves behind a new existence in the place of the old. ... [I]t only of the ambition of men ... how they are stirred by the love of one another, of becoming equal to gods. This fantasy may only be fulfilled at the price of unimaginable destruction, a streak of calamities and an ocean of pain. The primary rules have been attacked, resulting in the total destruction of the world. The gods in Plato’s myth are a symbol of external, transcendent reality, order and rules, to which we are subject, which are superior and which we need to follow lest there will be chaos and destruction. This reality is independent of people and unknowable in its essence. It is both, is longed for and unattainable. It means that people experience themselves as weak, as deprived of power and meaning, full of uncertainty and ignorance, yearning for something vague, constantly wishing to achieve some kind of fulfillment, searching for completeness or at least connecting with someone or something that would provide them with this sense of wholeness. This desire to be famous can express itself in various areas and on various levels, from aspiring to create a great work to starting a reality show just to become visible and recognisable and thus
achieve the sense of greatness and therefore
immortality, at least for a fleeting moment. Plato writes however that people may achieve
immortality in one way only: by replacing an old
individual with a new one. In order to do so, one
has to accept one’s own fragility and futilities,
come to terms with the fact that people are mortal
and thus incomplete. One needs to be ready to
part with one’s own self, leave for an unknown
destiny and bequeath the world to others. It is
an exceptionally difficult, frightening challenge.

It seems therefore that one of the important
features of our nature is its constitutional state
of mourning something that has been lost, something that we had first received. ‘Mourning…
the reaction to the loss of a loved person, or
to the loss of some abstraction which has taken
the place of one, such as one’s country, liberty,
an ideal, and so on’.

Perhaps it would be better to say that this
state of our nature is the state of melancholy,
not mourning. In the case of mourning, the lost
object is known. Mourners know who or what
they have lost. In melancholy, it is different: ‘in one set of cases it is evident that melancholia
too may be the reaction to the loss of a loved
object. Where the exciting causes are different
one can recognise that there is a loss of a more
immediate kind. The object has not perhaps actually
died, but has been lost as an object of love (e.g. in
the case of betrothed girl who has been jilted). In
yet other cases one feels justly in maintaining
the belief that a loss of this kind has occurred, but
one cannot see clearly what it is that has been
lost, and it is all the more reasonable to suppose
that the patient cannot consciously perceive
what he has lost either’.

In the case of the ‘paradise lost’, we do not
really know what we have lost, what this
paradise had been and if it had even existed.
‘The melancholic displays something else besides which is lacking in mourning – an
extraordinary diminution in his self-regard, an
impoverishment of his ego on a grand scale. In
mourning it is the world which has become poor
an empty, in melancholia it is the ego itself’. Plato’s Symposium also presents this process
of depletion. Gods have made people weaker, and
thus people have become incomplete, constantly
trying to find their second half, to recover unity.
They long to be in paradise again, whatever this
paradise may be. What also seems similar is
that, just as in melancholy, one cannot accept
the loss. The lost object is in a way still present
in one’s desires, its lack is experienced at all
times, and without it, people feel handicapped,
incomplete, deprived of something precious,
of fundamental value. It is extremely difficult
to accept reality. We are unable to accept that
the paradise has been lost, and thus we reject
the basic truth that says we must always stay in
motion, we must always be searching, while the
paradise that we have imagined will never be
found.

The themes of the lost paradise and its
close relative, rebellion against God, have a
strong representation in Polish Romantic
poetry and, more broadly, in Romantic thought.
That our nation could even suggest that the
individual identity has to a large extent been shaped by
the Romantic ideology based on the myth of
the lost paradise, on the feeling of depletion
and deprivation of something precious. What
was lost was of course the country’s freedom
and independence, but that is not the whole
story. It seems that the loss also touched other
areas that are difficult to be clearly delineated
and described, although their meaning is
fundamental. This loss is connected with a
state of profound humiliation, degradation,
injustice, loss of dignity. In Freud’s words, the
loss triggered a devastating impoverishment of
the ego that was supposed as the source of the
ego, as the identity of the entire nation. At
the same time, there is the idea of recovering
everything that has been taken – and finally we
will become Messiah to the Nations, ascending
to the well deserved, almost ‘divine’ position
and achieving the state of perfection.

In his 1836 poem Hymn, Janusz Slowacki,
the Polish Romantic poet, writes about the loss of
homeland, but also of something else, something
unknown and unclear that causes the
experience of longing and inexpressible sadness.

I am sad, Saviour! For me in western skies
You poured out a radiant rainbow array.
In azure waters you quench before my eyes
The fiery star of day.

Though you gild the sky and sea for me yonder,
I am sad, Saviour!...

Like an infant who cries for his mother
When left alone, so am I close to tears.
Looking at the sun that throws from the water
Its last flashing spears...

Though I know tomorrow new dawn will glitter,
I am sad, Saviour!...

Today when lost in the wide sweep of the sea,
One hundred miles away from either shore,
The flying storks above me I could see
In a stretched out skin soar.

That once I knew them on a Polish pasture,
I am sad, Saviour!...

You will behold my whitened skeleton,
No bough of a column stands guard o’er it;
Yet I’m like the lover who mourns looks
On the ashes in their pit... And that my bed will be restless forever,
I am sad, Saviour!...

They told an innocent child in my land
To say a prayer for me each day... and yet
I know my ship doesn’t sail to my home strand,
When it sails straight ahead...

And that the child’s prayer will not help ever,
I am sad, Saviour!...

The rainbow of lights which in sky’s canopy
Your angels have spread in an enormous string,
Some other hundred years after me
I will look upon - dying.

Ere to my nothingness I humbly surrender,
I am sad, Saviour!...

Slowacki’s poem clearly refers to something
that has been lost, that makes the
poet experience deep, excruciating sadness,
inexpressible longing, and desire to die.

But what is it that has been lost, that causes
all that sadness and longing? Without a doubt,
it is the homeland. The poet mourns his lost
homeland and turns it into an ideal object, the
paradise lost, the land of happiness, a place
that is whole, unharmed and lacks in nothing.
And thus, the homeland turns into a mythical
place.

There is however something else that has
been lost, something less obvious, less clear,
and it is also a source of sadness and longing.
Slowacki writes about the beauty of the world,
the beauty that he has lost and that is a gift
from God, but ironically, this beautiful
world makes him feel deep sadness. The poet
cannot accept reality and enjoy the beauty
that surrounds him, because he is somewhere else,
in a different place, one that has just been lost,
and he still longs for it and would like to return.
And this is probably the source of his desire to
die, because dying is the only way in which one
can return to the lost paradise.

The third stanza of the Hymn seems to be
of particular importance. It seems to point to
the deep, internal source of the poet’s emotional
state (‘Like an infant who cries for his mother /
When left alone, so am I close to tears.’). The
poet lost this feeling because his mother left. The
process of separation started, the mother and the
child became two entities, with the mother no longer a part of
the child. Where the process of separation ceased to exist.
The child lost its divine power of creating the world,
and the mother became an independent being.
Reality is at the door, but the poet cannot accept
it. He rejects it, still feeling sadness and longing.
The longing will never stop, so he will never be
able to accept the world as it is.

Slowacki writes about the universality and
timelessness of the state that he is experiencing.
He knows that in a hundred years, people will still
feel the same sadness. The last two verses of the
Hymn, where he writes about his nothingness,
and the need to surrender to it humbly, are especially
shocking. He knows the truth of the human
condition and human fate, but it is so

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6 Ibid, p. 245.
7 Idem, p. 246.
8 Idem, p. 246.
10 Iwona Wyczańska

A PSYCHOANALYTIC REFLECTION ON CONTEMPORARY CULTURE

Melnicko – longing for the lost paradise

Iwona Wyczańska

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The poet confronts fragility, passing time, riddle and mystery, the impermanence of everything and, in this sense, his own nothingness. The paradise cannot be found, and the longing and the constant search are a curse, a source of tragedies and calamities, but also salvation.

The theme of loss is also represented in the poetry of Cyprian Kamil Norwid. Norwid was a poet active in the same period as other Romantics, although his poetry is different from that of the main Romantic current and holds a separate place in the history of literature. Norwid was a poet with exceptional insight into the nooks and crannies of the human soul. He noticed and understood a lot. His poem My Song (II) refers to similar inner states as Słowacki’s Hymn.

For that land where a scrap of bread is picked up From the ground out of reverence For Heaven’s gifts... I am homesick, Lord... ...

For the land where we greet each other In the ancient Christian custom: “May Christ’s name be praised!” I am homesick, Lord... Long still for yet another thing, likewise innocent, For I no longer know where to find My abode... I am homesick, Lord... I long for that distant place, where someone cares for me! It must be thus, though my friendship Will never come to pass!...

Norwid writes about the lost homeland, he yearns for it, he is mourning. Just as in Słowacki’s poem, the lost homeland becomes a mythical, ideal place, the paradise lost. One could say that the poet refers to a certain inner state, to an imagined homeland as an ideal, lost object that he carries in his own heart. It is a place of loving and caring. The homeland resembles a loving mother that is devoted to and cares for her child. Norwid describes a place of beauty and safety, where love and respect reign, where one can be sure that nothing that is important or valuable will be ignored and thus destroyed. The poet describes a state desired and lost, a kind of reunion with the ideal object, which gave him certain wholeness, completeness. However, this state is now impossible to reclaim, since the poet is filled with great sorrow and inability to free oneself from such sorrow is described in the poem My song (I):

Oh, sorrow, sorrow from end to beginning, The black thread is spinning. It’s behind, it’s ahead, and it’s with me. I breathe, and it’s there, I smile, and it’s here, In my prayer, my hymn, and my tear.

I can’t rip it – it’s strong, Perhaps holy, though wrong, Perhaps I’ve no wish to tear this ribbon; Yet, from end to beginning – Where I am, I shall be.

Open a book – here it’s self-bidden, There – binds posy of flowers, Elsewhere it narrows, Like autumn’s threads of gossamer, Swooning slowly apart, To unite again, And become a link in a chain...

Oh, sorrow, sorrow from end to beginning. The black thread is spinning. It’s behind, it’s ahead, and it’s with me, I breathe, and it’s there, I smile, and it’s here.

In my prayer, my hymn, and my tear.

But, enough of child’s wail, I shall unsnatch someday. Last’s cold string, leave me not, I implore! I want the Czarnolas matter To heal my heart’s flutter! So I played... ...I’ve grieved even more.

The poet presents a desperate, grief-striken soul. This state accompanies him all the time, never leaving his side. It seems quite typical that Norwid describes a certain relationship, something that fills his soul, something he cannot part with and that causes pain, despair, longing. As if he were permanently tied with the object that is the source of this state, attached to it with the black thread that is so strong that one cannot ever free oneself from it.

Norwid raises an issue of crucial importance: perhaps he does not really want to part with the state or object that makes him feel the eternal despair, the overwhelming sorrow. That he does not wish to experience this state means that he is sure of his inability to free himself from the certainty of staying in a kind of an unbreakable relationship, one that will last forever. He knows he will never have to go through separation. He seems to be forever bonded with a thing that he experiences as lost – and hence the despair, the excruciating longing and sorrow – but which is simultaneously not lost, kept safe in his soul, as an unachievable state that is at the same time constantly present, as an object of desire. The paradise lost found its place in the poet’s soul. It is lost, so it causes despair, but at the same time it is not lost, because the poet is forever tied to it with the ‘black thread’. Liberation, or, in other words, healing, is impossible, because it has been rejected. In order to free himself, the poet would have to admit that the paradise has indeed been lost or that it cannot be found. The loss would have to be acknowledged and accepted. The poet would have to experience separation with a thing without which, it seems, he cannot, and does not want to, live. Despite the attempts to endow the thing that has been lost with a concrete form, it still remains an abstract, unclear, impossible to be named, a thing that is both desired and unreachable.

Liberation is not an option because the poet cannot part with his ways that with which is fundamental: if he chose to free himself of his existence. Perhaps today we would say that he does not want to accept reality, which would require recognising the loss and parting with the ideal object preserved within his soul. Although this thinking is probably right to some extent, it does simplify things and cannot fully describe what Norwid is trying to tell us. Both Norwid and Słowacki, and Plato before them, refer to deeply existential issues connected with the human
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condition, with a sort of a crack, a fundamental lack, a drama that stems from what it means to be a human being.

Loss, sorrow, longing, but also extremely difficult, overwhelming love towards a city and its inhabitants are the themes of Istanbul, an outstanding book written by the Turkish Nobel laureate, Orhan Pamuk.

‘Hüzün, the Turkish word for melancholy, has an Arabic root. ... The word is meant to convey a feeling of deep spiritual loss. ... W ith time we see the emergence of two very different hüzüns, each evoking a distinct philosophical tradition.

According to the first tradition, we experience the thing called hüzün when we have invested too much in worldly pleasures and material gain: the implication is that “if you hadn’t involved yourself so deeply in this transitory world, if you were a good and true Muslim, you wouldn’t care so much about your worldly losses”. The second tradition, which rises out of Sufi mysticism, offers a more positive and compassionate understanding. ... To the Sufis, hüzün is the spiritual anguish we feel because we cannot be close enough to Allah, because we cannot do enough for Allah in this world. A true Sufi follower would pay no attention to worldly concerns like death, let alone goods or worldly concerns like death, let alone goods or possessions: he suffers from grief, emptiness and inadequacy because he can never be close enough to Allah, because his apprehension of Allah is not deep enough. Moreover, it is the absence, not the presence, of hüzün that causes him distress. It is the failure to experience hüzün that leads him to feel it; he suffers because he has not suffered enough ... If I am to convey the intensity of the hüzün that Istanbul caused me to feel as a child, I must describe the history of the city following in abject defeat: I speak of them all.

It is by seeing hüzün, by paying our respects to its manifestations in the city’s streets and views that we at last come to sense it everywhere: on cold winter mornings, when the sun suddenly falls on the Bosphorus and that faint vapour begins to rise from the surface ... [I]n Istanbul the remains of a glorious past and civilisation are everywhere visible. No matter how ill-kept they are, no matter how neglected or hemmed in they are by concrete monstrosities ... [they] inflict heartache on all who live amongst them. ... But for the city’s more sensitive and attuned residents, these ruins are reminders that the present city is so poor and confused that it can never again dream of rising to the same heights of wealth, power and culture. It is no more possible to take pride in these neglected dwellings, in
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which dirt, dust and mud have blended into their surroundings, than it is to rejoice in the beautiful old wooden houses that as a child I watched burn down one by one. ... Istanbul does not carry its hüzün as “an illness for which there is a cure” or “an unbidden pain from which we need to be delivered”: it carries its hüzün by choice. ... [Just as hüzün, melancholy] expresses the same grief that no one can or would wish to escape, an ache that finally occurs. ... [Just as hüzün, melancholy] expresses the same grief that no one can or would wish to escape, an ache that finally occurs. ... [Just as hüzün, melancholy] expresses the same grief that no one can or would wish to escape, an ache that finally occurs. ...

Pamuk describes a certain state of mind that is characteristic to the entire community of the inhabitants of Istanbul, a great city that once was magnificent. This greatness and power are a thing of the past though, they were irrevocably lost. The city resembles a paradise collapsing. The traces of greatness are still present, but they disappear every day, right before the eyes of the locals, who watch this process with a certain indifference. Accepting the loss, they do not try to fight. They are deeply sad, they suffer, but these feelings are what define their identity. The suffering caused by the loss is a source of pride and dignity. The magnificent monuments, the beautiful buildings and the entire neighbourhoods that deteriorate right before their eyes are like a thorn that digs deeply into their hearts, and yet they do nothing to stop this process. To them, the loss is inevitable. It seems that in a way they contribute to this deterioration themselves, as if they cemented their individual fate and the fate of the entire city that once was wonderful.

The way in which Pamuk describes Istanbul creates an aura of nostalgia, of deep sadness, longing for something that has been lost for good, and has left traces that are now disappearing before our very eyes. The author presents the painful process connected with the slow death of the old world and emergence of the new world. This passage is inevitable, no one can stop it. And yet this new world seems somewhat fearsome, symbolised by dirty, drab housing estates, thousands of identical places that rob you of your individuality and that threaten both the identity of individual people and of the entire city.

In his short description, Pamuk presents the problem of the so-called idea of progress that drives modern philosophy and culture. This idea claims that progress exists, which means that people, and the world as their creation, are under constant improvement. In other words, the world is getting better and better. Paradise no longer exists as lost; it has become real, to be constructed in the future. The myth of the paradise lost is based on the constitutive feelings of loss, of unfulfilment, and as such it precludes the possibility of progress, of building an actual paradise in real life. The paradise lost must exist as lost, it is a place, or a state, that we will always long for and never find in the reality that is available to us. Any attempts to create a paradise on earth end up as, for instance, thousands of identical housing estates or desperate projects of actualising utopian ideas of a new social order and a new, better human being. Communism was one of the most terrifying executions of utopian theories in the 20th century. The contemporary world is characterised by an alarming, and yet seemingly universal, certainty that it is actually possible and attainable to be prosperous, to flourish, and to live in harmony with nature. This is a paradise lost in its ontological sense. The paradise lost is a paradise regained, a paradise that people, and the world as their creation, are deeply sad, they suffer, but these feelings are what define their identity. The suffering caused by the loss is a source of pride and dignity. The magnificent monuments, the beautiful buildings and the entire neighbourhoods that deteriorate right before their eyes are like a thorn that digs deeply into their hearts, and yet they do nothing to stop this process. To them, the loss is inevitable. It seems that in a way they contribute to this deterioration themselves, as if they cemented their individual fate and the fate of the entire city that once was wonderful.

It is touching how lovingly Pamuk writes about his beloved city, how he subtly and yet profoundly explores its nature, how he penetrates the soul of the city and its people. It is this love possible thanks to the feeling of melancholy, and of a paradise lost, that engulfs him?

It is crucial that Pamuk refers to Islamic mysticism, which construes hüzün as spiritual suffering caused by our isolation from God. The feelings of loss, depletion and emptiness cause suffering, because we will never become as close to God as we would wish to be. Once more, this idea confronts us with something that has been lost, something that we always long for and to which we would love to return.

1. Above the state there is the state of states, A river over flat homes
2. Shooting up, into the clouds...
3. And yet I endure up on the bottom of the sky
4. When it seizes my soul
5. As if a pyramid!
6. And yet I also have as much land
7. As my feet covers
8. Wherever I go!...12

Norwed writes about a thing that surpasses the inner, everyday reality of experiencing. There is a certain state of states. One could say that the poet once again refers to the ideal experience, to a kind of seeing and sensing that is separate from reality, that predominates it.

It seems however that The Pilgrim speaks of something else, brilliantly and in concise terms describing the nature of the human condition. At the same time, it offers liberation from the state of melancholy and constant longing for the paradise lost. Norwed no longer despair, nor does he seek the lost paradise. He describes the truth of the human condition, which consists in pilgrimage. We are only passersby on earth, alive for a brief moment. This brief moment is our life. This is why we cannot have anything forever, we are changing and the world is constantly changing. What is given to us is just that: brief, ever-changing, only for a short while. In reality, we do not possess anything, this is all just an illusion whose sole purpose is to comfort us. All that we possess, all that we have experienced and will experience, will have to be abandoned. Separation is inevitable. It will be a total separation: with the world, with our loved ones, with everything that we know and seem to understand and grasp. We will be separated with the self that we seem to know, that is our core and our identity, one that we have been constructing our entire lives. We must leave, go to a place that we know nothing about. This unknown place may seem terrifying exactly because it is unknowable. It is completely different from anything that we can access and that we, it might seem, understand and thus accept as familiar and safe. When confronted with the most profound nature of the human fate, the myth of the paradise lost, the longing to return, to reunite with the ideal object, seem to be the building blocks of our psyche.


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It is touching how lovingly Pamuk writes about his beloved city, how he subtly and yet profoundly explores its nature, how he penetrates the soul of the city and its people. It is this love
LECH KALITA: Why is it worth talking to psychoanalysts about art? In what way are psychoanalysis and art similar?

JUSTYNA ZALEWSKA-DRZEŻDŻON: I think art and psychoanalysis have many similar goals. Both are tools for expressing our inner states, including pre-verbal ones, which we have never reflected on but which we feel. They are simply inscribed in us. Hanna Segal and Melanie Klein believed that what art and psychoanalysis have in common are the strife to uncover and deal with our destructive inner impulses as well as the desire to reconstruct relationships that have been lost. In light of all this, I would say that psychoanalysis and art are two ways of reaching the same goal: expressing and finding oneself.

Hanna Segal’s original contribution to the psychoanalytic view of art was her theory of aesthetics. Is aesthetics relevant also to the clinical practice of psychoanalytic psychotherapy? We can say that aesthetics is a common dimension of perceiving reality. Neville Symington describes a situation where a patient comes for the initial consultation, sees the painting hung in the office and decides that his world and that of the psychoanalyst are so different that they will never find a common language. Consequently, he decides to choose another therapist. According to Symington, the patient is probably right. Aesthetics connects people at a very basic, primitive level. It is a kind of common perception, common sensitivity to particular stimuli. Without such joint experience it is very difficult for two people to understand each other. Let me give you an example. Recently I had the opportunity to listen to Nikki Yanofsky singing live at the Ladies Jazz Festival. Yanofsky is a recognized artist with a very beautiful voice and yet her music did not send a shiver down my spine. For me, the experience lacked emotional depth which would give aesthetic value to Yanofsky’s singing, connect people and really move me.

In other words, only that which evokes deeper feelings is aesthetically beautiful? Art has always appealed to the innermost human experience, to the core which is conflicted. This is what differentiates art from ornamentation or kitsch. Like Segal, I also believe that true art always involves aggression, clashing inner drives and suffering. The absence of pain and suffering means that we are dealing with simple embellishments or even kitsch. Something that is fake and just pretty does not express anything and cannot be called art. In my view, art must contain a psychological truth about our inner world – and this is what makes it similar to psychoanalysis, which also strives for self-knowledge.

If psychoanalysis and art have common goals, can we have kitschy psychoanalyses or therapies? Some psychotherapies turn our attention away from deeper truths and in this respect they can be compared to kitsch. If we define kitsch as packaging a given content into visually attractive forms and ignoring suffering inherent to human life, then we can say that a therapy is kitschy when it is superficial, when it does not touch the depth of our experience. We all go through various traumas and art helps us deal with them. There is, however, a certain kind of art, which, whilst not being kitschy, does not enable us to transform our experience – it only dazzles us with violence and inflicts raw, unprocessed trauma on the audience. Does it mean that such art can bring emotional distress?

I can quote my own reception of Paweł Pawlikowski’s Ida as an example here. The movie has enjoyed huge popularity and won many awards but, in my opinion, it evokes painful traumas without dealing with them. It offers no hope for healing. I think such art does reflect a psychological truth but in a way which is difficult to accept. I call it re-traumatizing art because it leaves the viewer with trauma. Perhaps the artist wants me to look for my own ways of dealing with Holocaust trauma or mutual hatred between Poles and Jews. Still, to my mind art which does not give any hope is very difficult for the audience. I am in favour of art which helps to transform experience, to deal with it and does not leave me with trauma. But maybe some artists do not want me to be rid of it?
This brings to mind a comparison with interpretation unsuited to the patient’s capacities, unearthing painful experiences but not helping the person to understand them. Art is also a form of dialogue between a particular piece and a particular viewer. For one person a work of art can be just traumatic whereas someone else may find it helpful in transforming their own experience. Here, I am also thinking about the dialogue between art and society. Perhaps what you have just described are artworks which a given society cannot deal with?

I definitely think that there are certain experiences beyond social comprehension, such as the Holocaust, which due to its extreme cruelty needs to be worked on by subsequent generations, our children and grandchildren. But there is also art which tries not only to express such pain but also to transform them. I remember how impressed I was with Michał Glowinski’s *Kręgi obcości* [Circles of Strangeness]. The author writes about his own Holocaust experiences which he – partly through long psychoanalysis – has already processed. He has given them particular meaning and has gone through the stage of grief. Reading his book was very emotional for me. It has enhanced my own process of dealing with unimaginable suffering.

Whether or not a given work of art is moving is an individual but also societal matter – art always carries a social message.

Hence perhaps the importance of social responsibility among art curators?

In my opinion, art, both in its individual and social dimensions, fulfils a similar function as psychoanalysis. Psychoanalysis allows the patient to encounter a person who will help them transform their unspeakable, unprocessed pain, mourn their traumatic experiences and integrate them into their psyche. I think that this constitutes the great value of psychoanalysis and of these works of art that do not just evoke particular experiences but also help to deal with them. In some cases, art can function as an analyst – in an artwork we find our own experience expressed as a painting or a piece of music. The experience has been inside us before but we have never expressed it. The work of art prompts us to look for our individual forms of self-expression. In this way, therapeutic function of art resembles psychoanalysis.

Could we say therefore that, from the point of view of psychoanalysis, the aesthetic value of art lies in its transformative potential?

Yes, definitely. According to Klein, creative impulse emerges when there is a will to repair. When our inner world gets destroyed or we experience a loss, art expresses our desire to mend what is broken, to recreate what got lost. Thus the work of art, although original, is also a recreation. Reflecting on our personal history during psychoanalysis, we change it. We do not have one definite version of our past, because merely by thinking about it, we are already transforming it. A work of art which seeks to recreate itself involves an element of recreation: this is why we get something new, a new symbol.

So we can probably imagine something that seems ugly but from the point of view of “psychoanalytic aesthetics” could be very worthwhile because the ugliness transforms some painful experience.

It depends on how we define ugliness. Hanna Segal, quoting Rodin, wrote that we call ugly whatever is deformed, unhealthy and associated with destruction but also that which is immoral, for example murder or envy. In my view, such ugliness even enhances the value of an artwork. However, we can also adopt a different definition and postulate that in art the ugliness that is difficult to accept is aimed at concealing the truth. Then what we call ugly would simply mean false and out of touch with the true self. This type of ugliness does not move the viewer. Ugliness as defined by Rodin – i.e. the ugly, fragmented, deformed and aggressive content which is inside us – makes art deeper because we all have such elements in us.

As is the case with Zdzisław Beksiński’s paintings: his depictions of deformation, and ugliness are for many truthful and moving. This is exactly what I mean – ugliness which includes some psychological pain. Beksiński’s paintings express something that I have inside me, some universal human experience. This ugliness soothes me. Beksiński shows not only ugliness but also susceptibility to harm.
Contemporary Art in the Freud Museum in London

The Freud Museum is located at 20 Maresfield Gardens in North London. It was the home of Sigmund Freud and his family after they escaped Austria following its annexation to the Third Reich in 1938. According to the wishes of Freud’s youngest daughter, Anna, after her death in 1982 the house became a museum.

The centrepiece of the Museum is Freud’s study, preserved in its original shape. In the middle of the room stands the famous couch on which Freud’s patients would lie during their sessions. Covered with richly coloured Persian rug and cushions, it matches the rest of the décor as the study is filled with about 2,000 pieces from Freud’s collection of antiquities. Both the couch and the remarkable art collection were brought, wartime difficulties notwithstanding, from Vienna. They form the cornerstone of the Museum’s exhibition programme. The art collection, amassed since the 1890s, contains mainly pieces from Ancient Egypt, Greece and Rome. Apart from antiquities, Freud also collected photographic prints, mementoes of his holidays in Italy as well as some Renaissance pieces. The collection is displayed in the study and in the library, i.e. exactly where it was placed by the Freud family after they moved to London. The father of psychoanalysis created his own art gallery in which his sessions were held. Covered with richly coloured Persian rug and cushions, it matches the rest of the décor as the study is filled with about 2,000 pieces from Freud’s collection of antiquities. Both the couch and the remarkable art collection were brought, wartime difficulties notwithstanding, from Vienna. They form the cornerstone of the Museum’s exhibition programme. The art collection, amassed since the 1890s, contains mainly pieces from Ancient Egypt, Greece and Rome. Apart from antiquities, Freud also collected photographic prints, mementoes of his holidays in Italy as well as some Renaissance pieces. The collection is displayed in the study and in the library, i.e. exactly where it was placed by the Freud family after they moved to London. The father of psychoanalysis created his own art gallery in which his sessions were held.

The main mission of the Museum is to organize exhibitions that would inspire discussions about the legacy of Sigmund and Anna Freud in culture and science. Contemporary art is used as a tool for uncovering the ideas and importance of psychoanalysis. The exhibitions are partly based on Freud’s collection and archives (e.g. Freud’s Wanderlust, which included objects collected by Freud on his travels) but their main focus are works of contemporary artists created specifically for particular projects. About six exhibitions are organized every year, most of them featuring contemporary art and somehow related to the house itself as well as to Sigmund’s and Anna’s lives and work.

The exhibition which centred on the building and its furnishings was Werner Reiterer’s Trouser for the Brain (1999). The artist introduced his “soft interventions” to the historic interior largely unchanged since the Freud family lived there, thus making the visitor interact with the space. The interior of Freud’s house was also creatively transformed by Sophie Calle (1999 Appointment exhibition). She scattered various objects, such as a wedding dress, a pair of red shoes, photos and stolen love letters, all around the house. By mingling fact with fiction she created a new story which the visitor was able to read and interpret freely. The exhibition dealt with the notion of desire as well as with rules we play in our lives, which linked it to Freudian inquiry into the unconscious.

A separate group of projects are those associated with the most famous piece of furniture in the world - the couch – and the meanings associated with it. Claudia Gudernau’s 2014 Magic of the Couch exhibition featured her photographs of almost a hundred consulting rooms of psychoanalysts from England, New Zealand, Switzerland, Austria, and Germany. Through them, the artist confronted Freud’s “invention” with its contemporary equivalents.

In his videos and a series of collages, also associated with the famous couch, Marcel Odenbach (2011 Prohlégen exhibition) explored European history, focusing on the continent’s dark past. In his site-specific Drama: Free-Floting Attention Piece project (2012), Santiago Borja replaced the Iranian rug covering the couch with textiles created in collaboration with a Wixarika community (the Huichol Indians of Mexico). Through this intervention the artists interpreted Freud’s scientific legacy in the light of a non-European culture. Thus the father of psychoanalysis, often accused of Euro-centrism, was presented from a different angle: Oriental fabrics were also used by Anne Doguëlle in her 2012 Sigmund’s rug – To sleep to dream no more exhibition. She used some of the carpets that are normally kept in the museum storage. For Doguëlle weaving is a tribal ritual and hand-woven textiles represent collective memory and a sense of belonging to a given territory. The exhibition On the Couch: Psychoanalysis in Cartoons, Art from The New Yorker (2006) had a completely different character. It presented cartoons from the archives of The New Yorker ridiculing psychoanalysis, psychoanalysts and the fashion for therapy.

The Museum has also housed projects inspired by Freud’s life. One of them was Paul Coldwell’s Freud’s Coat (1998). In its central motif, the eponymous garment in which Freud came to London, evoked the theme of his emigration. The Museum puts on exhibitions about other members of the Freud family as well: Jane McAdam’s Lucian Freud My Father opened in 2012. In it, McAdam presented Trousers for the Brain (1999). The artist introduced his “soft interventions” to the historic interior largely unchanged since the Freud family lived there, thus making the visitor interact with the space. The interior of Freud’s house was also creatively transformed by Sophie Calle (1999 Appointment exhibition). She scattered various objects, such as a wedding dress, a pair of red shoes, photos and stolen love letters, all around the house. By mingling fact with fiction she created a new story which the visitor was able to read and interpret freely. The exhibition dealt with the notion of desire as well as with rules we play in our lives, which linked it to Freudian inquiry into the unconscious.

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Contemporary Art in the Freud Museum in London

A psychoanalytic reflection on contemporary culture

by Monika Kozioł

In 2012 the Museum launched an exhibition entitled The Russian Patient (2012), which was also illustrated a graphic novel about the Wolf-Man. The first, The Return of the Repressed exhibition (2010) centred on what was once considered a typically female malady. The title referred to the print that hangs above Freud’s psychoanalytical couch depicting the French neurologist Jean Martin Charcot showing his students a woman in a hysterical fit. Charcot used hypnosis to treat hysteria and other mental conditions and he had a profound influence on the young Freud. Collishaw’s works were based on Charcot’s original photographic case studies. For example in the room of Anna Freud, the pioneer of child psychology, Collishaw installed an animation which depicted boys smashing eggs and throwing rocks at butterflies. Both Anna and her father investigated the development of cruelty in childhood and its links to sexuality. Another collective exhibition entitled Paranoia (2007) explored issues of distain, suspicion and fear in contemporary society. It featured works by, amongst others, Rachel Wilberforce, Doug Fishbone, Mireille Astore, Mircea Cantor, Jeremy Deller and Emilia Télèse i.e. artists with diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds, often from areas of conflict. Their works depicted the paranoia of terror in a post-9/11 world. Freud not only wrote about paranoia, but also fell victim to it himself since Nazi propaganda presented Jews as the threat to society. As a result he had to flee Austria.

Among the exhibitions organized by the Museum two were devoted to arguably Freud’s most famous patient: Sergei Pankejeff known as the Wolfman. The first, The Russian Patient, took place in 2002 and presented works by six Russian artists: Ilya Kabakov, Oleg Kulik, Dimitry Prigov, Tatiana Liberman, Gosha Ostrezov and Timur Novikov. The second featured works by Polish artist Slawa Harasymowicz (Wolf Man, 2012), who also illustrated a graphic novel about the Wolf Man.

The projects described above are only a part of the Museum’s full and varied exhibition programme. The mission of Freud Museum is to explore Sigmund and Anna’s psychoanalytic legacy in contemporary ideas, art, and culture. Visitors can use the library and the rich archives. Plenty of information can also be found on the Museum website. Education constitutes a significant part of the Museum’s activity, with educational programmes aimed mostly at school and university students. In March 2014 the Museum launched a workshop based on the work of Anna Freud, one of the precursors of the psychoanalytic treatment of children. Artists and curators interested in collaborating with Freud Museum are invited to propose an exhibition it has strong links to Sigmund or Anna Freud.
From a certain moment, it has become clear that the choices made by the history of art are not governed by artistic talent, the appeal of the topic, beauty or perfection, but rather by intensity and untamed personality. The history of art may feed on artworks, but its choices follow the person, because artworks, despite all their magnificence, require a ‘human’ justification; they need to be rooted in existence. People that are artists, instead of pacing about silently around their own worlds, start a dialogue with themselves through the objects and texts created. It helps the artist to deal with the excess of sensitivity that they were blessed or punished with. First of all, the artist may take a peek at the animal of their soul, which torments them with hatred towards the cage that at one time is the body and another time is the world. Secondly, the artist may enhance the image of the world, introducing their own orders or hierarchies to obtain a more ‘negotiated’ representation. Thirdly, they may devise a new world, created for people like the artist or filled with people that they are able to co-exist with. Fourthly, the artist may distort the cognitive telescope and actually see only those elements of the world that they find acceptable. This enumeration includes only some of the frauds for which art was created.

Art is a world created by the artist, a sophisticated, radically private critique of existential determinants. This strangest of people’s ideas is expressed through individual artworks, to a large extent taken out of context, and sometimes even ‘pulled out’ from the artist by their patron or a curator. These incidental witnesses of an existential veto usually have nothing in common with the cry of freedom or the triumph of the victor. Artworks seem bound by their form and embarrassed by being exhibited. They seem to be unhappy with the phrasing, they look inadequate when compared to the great cause that they serve. They are more reminiscent of waste than fruit. Despite this handicap, however, they sometimes achieve quality that inspires adoration and religious-like rituals. Works of art are loved, adored, purchased; they become objects of pilgrimage, are described in literature and endowed with biographies.

A work recognised by the history of art and treated like a relic quite often no longer fits its weak or neurotic artist. History has dealt with this problem in two ways. In the case of charismatic, volcanic, versatile and prolific creators, it has corrected biographies, scratching elements such as homosexuality, hysteria, greed, overlooking the fact that some was
The boundaries of art

The difference between creators of works and creators of personality, which consists in the significance of their works, may be compared to the difference between texts and words. Works-texts are reflections on a topic, summaries, attempts to arrive at conclusions, a battleground, an operation on a problem. Artworks are intuitive, medium-driven events that encompass and at the same time create a broader area. Their breadth and the diverse factors that determine their shape justify the admiration that they often inspire. Manifestations of personality, or works-words, are limited in their meanings, spontaneous, irresponsible, unexamined, understated. The author of artworks seems to be a reserved interlocutor, almost taciturn, who only occasionally expresses momentous conclusions. The author of ‘trifles’ is an unbearable chatterbox, with a ready word to react to any aspect of life, and completely unable to refrain from offering their comments.

The distinction between creators of works and creators of personality is a relatively new theoretical necessity. In the past, art, operating on personalities concealed in the nooks of creative process, consistently favoured expansive artworks, overloaded with more or less useful content, chiselled with formal affirmation, with a considerable ‘input of meanings that were easy to be deciphered by the public. The history of art was able to find the hidden significance of their works, may be compared to textual records. The permanent production of works, which, acting as screens, criticism, denomination or a partner, accompany their entire life, constructs a tightly-knit structure of disclosures, a structure that enables outside viewers to get a taste of the humanity of the artist. This creative strategy inevitably weakens the weight of the works produced, because they are treated as immediate commentaries to fragmented, often random issues, offering no synthesis.

There are, however, artists that do not surrender to this metaphorical reduction. If the history of art wants them, it has to take them with the whole wealth of their personality. It cannot accept the personality secretly and openly present only some selected works of art, as it does with other artists. They require a broad, or even a comprehensive outlook. It would seem that in these unique cases we are dealing with some kind of heroes, of stout-hearted artists, who reject representations based on someone else’s choices, but who demand to be acknowledged as a whole. It is of course not so. No artist, even the most exceptional, has ever received the honour of negotiating the terms of how they will be represented with the history of art. The history of art makes its own, arbitrary decisions. At most, it can yield to the belated persuasive skills of artists inspired by some renowned predecessor (see the case of El Greco). Despite the ‘policy to foreground the work of art’, which governs the history of art, some artists managed to find their way into its annals ‘as people, not as works of art’.

The group of creators of personality, to which I have devoted this essay, is not as big as it is diverse. It encompasses amateurs and professionals, although amateurs prevail. Both types are manically addicted to producing art objects, or, even better, to producing visual or textual commentaries to the course of life, thought and imagination. The creators of personality manifest an enormous overproduction of objects, a constant presence of an artistic commentary, of thinking and perceiving through visual or textual records. The permanent production of works, which, acting as screens, criticism, denomination or a partner, accompany their entire life, constructs a tightly-knit structure of disclosures, a structure that enables outside viewers to get a taste of the humanity of the artist. This creative strategy inevitably weakens the weight of the works produced, because they are treated as immediate commentaries to fragmented, often random issues, offering no synthesis.

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The difference between creators of works and creators of personality, which consists in the significance of their works, may be compared to the difference between texts and words. Works-texts are reflections on a topic, summaries, attempts to arrive at conclusions, a battleground, an operation on a problem. Artworks are intuitive, medium-driven events that encompass and at the same time create a broader area. Their breadth and the diverse factors that determine their shape justify the admiration that they often inspire. Manifestations of personality, or works-words, are limited in their meanings, spontaneous, irresponsible, unexamined, understated. The author of artworks seems to be a reserved interlocutor, almost taciturn, who only occasionally expresses momentous conclusions. The author of ‘trifles’ is an unbearable chatterbox, with a ready word to react to any aspect of life, and completely unable to refrain from offering their comments.

The distinction between creators of works and creators of personality is a relatively new theoretical necessity. In the past, art, operating on personalities concealed in the nooks of creative process, consistently favoured expansive artworks, overloaded with more or less useful content, chiselled with formal affirmation, with a considerable ‘input of meanings that were easy to be deciphered by the public. The history of art was able to find the hidden personality of the artist behind the curtain of the artwork and use it to conduct its organisational procedures. For the rest of the audience, the fact that the artist’s personality was inaccessible was not a problem, probably because viewers did not even think that it existed. The consumers of art, not unlike the faithful at churches, were kept in the position of a ‘limited availability of the phenomenon’, which was supposed to provide them with a carefree access to art ceremonies, free of any doubts or dilemmas. The form and content duality of old art enabled such manipulations.
The situation changed radically in the 20th century, when art finally had to relinquish artistically-neutral topics and in this way was deprived of its method of safe communication with the public. This seemingly unimportant shift laid bare a whole abyss of theoretical and philosophical negligence, which went back to the very genesis and definition of art and everything that took place ‘between art and its consumer’. Searching for such places, penetrating the gloomy, private nooks of art, elevating the creative process above the work of art, succumbing to the suspicion that the work created to be the goal and became just an inevitable product of creativity, a ‘creation waste’, required finding access to the artist, or rather getting hold of an artist that disclosed the most and in this way secured as many interpretational treats as possible. For philosophical peeping toms, the creator of personality turned out to be the most interesting phenomenon, being a ‘talkative producer of unimportant artistic objects’. With such an attitude, the private drive to create art resembles a manic necessity. Artists who create masterpieces do not reveal their creative addiction. It seems that their goal is to create an outstanding object, to achieve perfection, to offer a priceless work of art to the world. Confronted with such an effort and such achievements, any ideas of a private justification of artistic activity or self-centred creative aims seem irrelevant. Moreover, creators of works often fall victim to the trap that Lacan named ‘double movement’ in relation to the symbolic function: ‘I create works, therefore I am an artist, and since I am an artist, I should think and behave as an artist’. This process stems from the manipulative features of belief. It is either accepted or imposed, and shapes the ideological and stylistic growth of the person. In the case of an artist, it often boils down to eccentric poses and fear of experiment. Sometimes it may lead them to falsify their past. All their creative efforts are the result of being an artist.

Acknowledging one’s status as an artist may have further consequences. Living up to the role may sublimate the creative passion. In this case, artists fall victim to the social, ‘superficial’ definition of an artist. Suppressing the attitude based on tuning into one’s own activities, artists adopt the definition which says that they are producers of cultural artefacts that serve the broadly conceived humanist satisfaction. Trivially, by accepting their status as artists, they stop being artists. They become show-offs (if only towards themselves), artists for the public. This is why the private fulfilment of art is most often questioned by those artists that were left by ‘their own artist’. However, these artists, despite the tragedy of losing art, are still addicted to the ritual of its creation. Lonely in the face of art, they look for an audience. In this way, their loneliness often consists in the lack of self-presence, not in the lack of the presence of the ‘other’. Sometimes, the artists that were left by art (or left art themselves) try to find a justification for themselves by embarking upon a social mission, by offering others’ ‘artistic satisfaction’. They bend their emotions so much that they defend the social mission of an artist with the fervour of defenders of faith. Trying to escape from themselves, they pretend to be acting in the name of others.

Creators of personality do not fall into such traps, if only because in their case, the private sense of creating art rarely burns out. And if such a tragedy does take place, it is usually taken to the extreme and crowned with suicide, because in this variant, the only thing that counts is the quality of the contract concluded with oneself. Artworks, social standing – those things do not matter. Such artists have a characteristically cavalier attitude towards their works. They gladly hand out their drawings and rarely engage in any social courting. This approach is due in part to a precise hierarchy of values: what counts is the principle of internal contract, and not the by-products of this operation.

The attention paid to personality creators may stem from an intuitive attempt to challenge the domination of the work of art, the product that has been elevated above art itself: Prehistoric art, be it Egyptian, ancient, Asian or Roman, is associated almost exclusively with an object in separation from its creator, an object that completely obscures the human being behind it. We may look for the causes of this situation in the modesty of ancient people, in their subordination to the social principles of functioning. They may perhaps also lie in the principles of introducing artistic objects into history, ancient culture did not ‘collect’ souvenirs of outsiders or neurotic egotists, it focused on socially justified artefacts. This cultural inclination led to the identification of art with the artwork. Art turned into a collection of works. The recognised works were able to fulfill cultural goals; they had an aim, a function and a justification within social structures. They were understandable and useful in some way. For the community in which they functioned, such art objects turned into metaphysical, philosophical, teleological and psychological guides. They also testified to one’s position and importance. No wonder then that the creator of ‘such useful objects’ became an object of the strong pressure of social preferences, which required the pursuance of the aesthetical and achievement of formal excellence. Such endeavours were accompanied by numerous discoveries, some technical (like oil painting) and some theoretical (like the rules of perspective). The world was looking for skillful magicians of the brush and the chisel, for illustrators of ideas tailored to the ‘programme’ of their times. In response to this challenge, artists honed their skills. Carried by this complicated arrangement, art seemingly achieved purpose, meaning and perfection.

But something just did not work in this otherwise satisfactory picture. Already in the Renaissance there was no doubt that historical selection, contrary to social selection, favours experimenting, searching personalities, eying the self-confident technicians of the stroke or the shape with condescension. The history of art ‘likes’ revolutionary leaps from one historic period to another. After the cynical perfection of Ancient Greece, it took a plunge into the Roman ‘childlessness’ of form, and after the classic aligridity of the Renaissance, it gave in to the lasciviousness of the Mannerism. Each of these shifts required a new type of revolutinaries. One cannot help the impression that the very development of art demands personalities to emerge.

For ages, art functioned under the pressure of contradictory programmes of evolution. The social selection insisted on perfecting the artwork, while the historical selection was partial to the ‘strangeness of the gaze’. This contradiction was possible because the social perception was satisfied with the pursuit of the topic and the surface of the shape, while the historical selection, somewhere on the sidelines of these processes, searched for mutations of the personality as disclosed by the form. Nietzsche captured this duality with outstanding precision in The Will to Power, stating that one is an artist at the expense of perceiving what non-artists call ‘the form’ as content, as ‘the gist of the matter’. In this way, artists belong to a world amiss, because content, and with it our life, becomes for them something purely formal.

This contradiction became a problem only in the 20th century, when art started engaging content in the formal interplay. Content ceased to be a proposal made by the patron or the addressee and ‘degenerated’ into the privacy of the artist, which abolished the bridge of superficial understanding between the artist and society. From this moment, art could be grasped only from the perspective of its usefulness to historical selection. This value, concealed behind artworks, proved to be the existentially and culturally mutated personality, disclosed in objects created exclusively for the purposes of this personality. This radical transfer of the burden of justification of art onto the artist still enables some artists (including outstanding artists) to adapt to certain requirements of the social selection and to bring the artwork to the state of a ‘certain imperfection’, while still inspiring the traditional awe among the audience.

Although the 20th century clearly proved that the message of art consisted not in its...
These artists are also exceptionally interesting for all lack of identification with their group, they as Nikifor, for instance, refer to their 'bigger world'. Such creators quite often do not even identify in this article. 'Creators of personality' are artistic self-consciousness.

But we are not interested in such artists in this article. 'Creators of personality' are usually not aware of their personality. In many cases, they are even familiar with the term. Such creators quite often do not even identify with the term 'artist', although some of them, in this article. The artwork reconciles its author with ordinary life and makes the strangest of paradoxes and absurdities a part of it. This balance is conditional upon not letting any foreign, outside element penetrate, which is most often achieved by a complete lack of interest in outside reality, sometimes accompanied by fear. After all, there is full of foreign rules and possessive stories. Letting such sick health penetrate healthy sickness could destroy an outstanding internal balance. This is why it is the fate of personality artists to be peed, and concluded manifestly the. Everything, which themselves has to be of no importance to them, and this is not even a decision or a choice, just an irrepressible inclination. This absence from the world, sometimes reminiscent of mental illness, is the price they pay for achieving and experiencing an internal universe accessed through the imperative to create art.

Personality creators, those natural born outsiders, are a very interesting group when it comes to theoretical considerations concerning the genesis of artistic attitudes, as their whole life is a proof of an existential addiction to creating art. With every step they take, their attitude and conduct manifest the. Everything, which is in stark contrast with the cultural contract between an artist and the audience, while its meaning (in every detail of form and content) is fulfilled through internal confrontation between the artist and the work, or fullness of its creation. This intimate arrangement between man and art is seemingly contradicted by the attitude represented by artists that we refer to here as 'creators of works'. Such artists give off the impression that they strive to understand and acceptance among their audience. This impression lays the foundation to the institutional construction that for centuries has described art, offering it to viewers and history. As a way of functioning, it is so deeply ingrained and so widely accepted, it seems so justified and true, that the vast majority of theories state that art is rooted in social motivations. The private interest of artists 'keeping their writing in the sock drawer' is sometimes treated as romantic nonsense.

It can hardly be denied that art seems to be directed upwards rather than inwards. However, any philosophical justification of art (which is currently treated as the indicator of truth) is possible only in reference to the private function, i.e. in reference to the situation in which the very sense of art is fulfilled between the artist and the process of creating a work of art. This theoretical apparatus has to be applied to all artists, even those that 'send different signals'. Undoubtedly, it is useful to analyse extreme cases, the output of artists to whom the temptations of social conformity are foreign and who pursue art like they pursue life. By presenting such artists in galleries, curators undertake a theoretical task, showing that the sense of creating art has its primary grounding at the very heart of privacy. In this way, the successes, ambitions, prices, awards, catalogues, galleries, museums and all the paraphernalia created around art are of secondary meaning only. Speaking about secondary meanings, we need to account for the importance of the primary sense, and in order to grasp it, we need to look underneath the secondary thickets that have engulfed art. And hence the spectacular value held by personality creators, who display this sense in its full asetic nakedness and justify it with their own lives. Creators of personality proved to be the perfect counter argument to the public argumentation that treats the secondary meanings as primary. This is probably the reason why Artworld is now so interested in finding such artists and introducing them to the salons, even though until recently it was the streets or secret privacy that constituted their natural environment. Creators of personality, people who find fulfilment in the art of creating art, are first of all amateurs, quite often unaware of the fact that they create art. Outstanding 'professionals', at least at the beginning, are also tilted with this resolution to create, but in their case it is most often numbed and adjusted by the tensions of ambition and desire to succeed, or, speaking in more general terms, the awareness of participating in a contest to enter the history of art. An extreme personality creator is free of such destructive forces.

The aim of this text is to identify the problem and its theoretical implications, not to engage in a critical and psychological analysis of specific cases. However, if we are to account for the range and diversity of this insular phenomenon, we need to take a closer look at several selected artists to find how solely interesting and strategies worked out in this creative attitude may vary. A characteristic feature of many of such artists is their quite often surprising formal innovativeness. The lack of formal training is compensated by a ‘gorge of form’, by inventing a form that one masters and that enables to explore the chosen themes in a satisfactory manner. Such artists usually select quite narrowly defined media and stick with them for the rest of their life. Personality creators are ‘formal émigrés’, they do not chisel the form or inflate it with anything that is not necessary under their preferred strategy. They use images in various ways: some use them methodological outside, and some even hide it in the world through their creations, while others actually create the world by creating art.

The most famous creator of personality in Poland is, of course, Nikifor. Tragic and fulfilled illegal life were not disturbed his persistent, actual need to draw, the same time, he knew one could sell paintings and he tried to make a living in this way. But this general knowledge about the social functioning of art did not disturb his persistent, actual need to draw, the same time, he knew one could sell paintings and he tried to make a living in this way. But this general knowledge about the social functioning of art did not disturb his persistent, actual need to draw, the same time, he knew one could sell paintings and he tried to make a living in this way. But this general knowledge about the social functioning of art did not disturb his persistent, actual need to draw, the same time, he knew one could sell paintings and he tried to make a living in this way. But this general knowledge about the social functioning of art did not disturb his persistent, actual need to draw, the same time, he knew one could sell paintings and he tried to make a living in this way. But this general knowledge about the social functioning of art did not...
The boundaries of art

system, which accounted for his limitations in manual dexterity and perspective, and chiselled it to such perfection that any deformations or departures from realism became part of the deliberate message. This is the brilliant formal deal achieved by an artist. Everything that seems to stem from ineptitude or error is elevated to the level of the carrier of meanings. The magical transformation of error into efficiency is achieved by changing the world, the error of the world of banal habits becomes the perfect substrate for meanings in the ‘privatised’ universe.

Edward Dwurnik himself may be considered a personality creator, even though he graduated from the Academy of Fine Arts and is a conscious participant in the institutional game of the world of art. However, his creative path meets most of the criteria characteristic to creators of personality. Practising art is for him a way to organise the world, which he looks upon in its every aspect, be it national flaws or pregnant women, through the lens of his paintings. He has to create a painting to give the world a comprehensible, tangible shape that can be explored. A few years ago, Edward Dwurnik fell in love with Elżbieta Łebkowska. He immediately surrounded her, and life with her, with a host of paintings and drawings, as if he was getting closer to her by talking to images. Such practices, together with Dwurnik’s intense manner of experiencing, lead to an immense overproduction of paintings. The artist treats them ‘with warmth’, but without ‘too much respect’, just as one would treat important gazes.

Yet another method of looking through the lens of image is represented by Alina Davidowicz, the daughter of a famous philosopher and artist. She is a mathematician by her father’s suggestion, who has painted miniatures her entire life. She portrays famous places, images of saints, landscapes and people. Many pieces are copied from art albums, quite often reproducing several times. They serve various ‘appropriations’, which remind viewers of photographs taken from different angles. Her art is not about being able to see the world as she accepts it, but about taking over the world in a casual manner. It is more of a ritual than representation. The artist may act with greater nonchalance and visual naivety, as the object does not need to achieve formal perfection. In the case of Alina Davidowicz, the paintings are signed gestures of ownership directed towards the ‘desired’ reality. ‘This is mine’ and ‘this is also mine’, says the artist. Such a painting does not need to reach the size of the Hollywood-like Prussian Homage; a Polaroid picture is enough.

The drawing activity of Semilia Berksoy is best described by the term ‘creative therapy’. The Turkish opera diva used drawings to talk about herself and her childhood. Her schematic compositions, at first glance quite inept in their naive deformity, are exceptionally consistent in avoiding any complacency and fulfilment. In this way, everything that appears in the drawing becomes uniquely vital, because it was torn away from ‘something’ due to its importance. The compositions have no foreground or background, starfages or secondary groups. There is only the central core of importance. Within it, the artist presents ancient, perhaps imaginary gestures of care, family relationships, the ambivalent help, powerful interference and a perceptual sensation of self and others. The world is subject to subtle processing, which makes it more real and affects its truth. The drawings manipulate the past. They serve first of all the person that remembers this past (or tries to escape it), touching others through their pertinence and the brevity that seems so obvious that it invites psychoanalytic interpretations.

Henry Darger knew (or rather felt) that his existence required creating the world from scratch. He constructed a bizarre universe of childhood joy, in which good could actually win. He lived in this world more fully that in ‘ours’, all while refusing to become a ‘starfage’ as expressed in the title In the Realms of the Unreal. The non-oppressive dose of unreality did not destroy the world that, for its creator, was ‘present’ enough. He was building such a world, a world of enormous amorphism, an atmosphere of confusion, but rather strategies of artificial, therapeutic decluttering, fragments of which we may find in our own environment, and which are sometimes elevated to the level of the ‘healthy steering wheel’ of perception. The artist that succumbs to an austere and yet precious fiction gains the triumphant feeling of control over chaos. The artist can do that, because it is the only attitude in which he is permitted.

Personality creators ‘see and hear’ through the painting, and sometimes exist within it. Such images require a psychologically adequate form. In this case, the form is a tool used by ‘burrad’ that needs to break free from the constraints of which their strangeness locked them. Some get out of such saves through reality, through life, destroying and hurting others. Creators of personality do this by using form. This observation applies to most cases, but it is exceptionally suited to Darger, because his universe smells of a strange, and from the contemporary point of view definitely unhealthy, solidarity with the world of children, one that is imbued with unclear sexuality and innocent brutality. In direct confrontation with reality, such an approach could oscillate between tenderness and murder.

The cases studied above had an artistic, image-based nature. In each of them, the image was the superior construct (in Darger’s case it was a relationship of equality). Meanwhile, Janina Turek is a purely ‘textual’, literary case. Among all the artists described in this text, it is her activity that is the most difficult to subject to any creative criteria. Her output lacks everything that, with our cultural shaping, we like to find in creative work: formal invention, appealing phrase, symbolic proposals, private construction. Instead, we find a dull, precise inventory of life, divided into several thematic categories: what I watched on TV, who came by or called, what I ate, what I received, what I found, etc. However, this ‘non-human’ literature has its strategic equivalents in contemporary art, although we need to take a step back deep into the 20th century, making up for literature’s time lag. And thus we receive a minimalist literature that geometrises life, presenting abstract structures on which the elusive imagination may hang. Such creative actions do not reveal the artist (although they seemingly tell every last detail about them!), but present the structural entanglements and patterns within which the artist functions. Minimalism, amorphism are not strategies of confession, but rather strategies of artificial, therapeutic decluttering, fragments of which we may find in our own environment, and which are sometimes elevated to the level of the ‘healthy steering wheel’ of perception. The artist that succumbs to an austere and yet precious fiction gains the triumphant feeling of control over chaos. The artist can do that, because it is the only attitude in which he is permitted.

What is it that fascinates us so much about art created by such bizarre individuals, where stubbornness is mixed with creative gesture, inspiration with obsession, and everything seems to be a sublimation of a certain precious madness? Their works, despite the great formal cunning, despite the larger than life passion, seem much more carefree, as it ‘too quick’, quite often inept or derivative when compared with the output of ‘quality’ or ‘professional’ productions. Their works, despite being incomprehensible to many, are quite often amateur formal tools and pay no heed to formal or derivative when compared with the output of ‘quality’ or ‘professional’ productions. Their works, despite being incomprehensible to many, are quite often amateur formal tools and pay no heed to.

When considering such attitudes, one needs to make certain comparisons. Are attitudes characteristic to personality creators, for whom life and creation are one and the same, a condensed form of other creative approaches that are more diluted in the common world? Or are they something completely different? This text has been quite straightforward in suggesting the answer. Both types of artists create the same art. Creators of personality are distinguished by their mono-existentiality and the resulting greater determination of their actions. They do not yield to the pressures of the social function of art, they do not have much respect towards works of art and they do not realise what kind of expectations some may attach to ‘ours’, all while refusing to become a ‘starfage’ as expressed in the title In the Realms of the Unreal. The non-oppressive dose of unreality did not destroy the world that, for its creator, was ‘present’ enough. He was building such a world, a world of enormous amorphism, an atmosphere of confusion, but rather strategies of artificial, therapeutic decluttering, fragments of which we may find in our own environment, and which are sometimes elevated to the level of the ‘healthy steering wheel’ of perception. The artist that succumbs to an austere and yet precious fiction gains the triumphant feeling of control over chaos. The artist can do that, because it is the only attitude in which he is permitted.
The Boundaries of Art

Robert Kuimgtowski’s The Collector’s Massif exhibition, which took place in Bunkier Sztuki (Kraków) in 2009, featured the oldest unopened letter from the Sosenko family archive. On it, the artist placed a small figurine of a trumpet-playing devil and covered it with a glass dome. The letter is valuable to collectors because it has never been opened. Its artistic value may stem from its being simultaneously a symbol of death (the addressee will never get a chance to read it) and of surpassing it (the letter was handed down from generation to generation).

The notion of art’s boundaries covers both the limits of art and the area of artistic freedom, which are inextricably linked. Sticking with the map metaphor, one can hazard a claim that art happens where the two meet. If we go beyond the world of immovable objects and see art not in terms of particular artefacts but as a function, then perhaps we will be able to conceive of it as a transformation within the field of human freedom. Such understanding, however, seems counter-intuitive. When we think about old masters, the first category that springs to mind is not freedom but sensual beauty. This, however, is incidental, not essential – this conception of art developed at the end of the 17th century. According to Stefan Morawski associating art with that kind of beauty was supposed to liberate it from the previous dominance of intellect and the contempt for the bodily. To me, this shift seems crucial.

Nowadays beauty is associated with pleasure – we appreciate things that fit in with our world, not those that disturb us or create chaos. This is at odds with the functions of art as defined by Hanna Segal. She argued that, when contemplating such “pleasing” beauty, we regress to the past, emotionally re-live the symbiosis with our mother and this should be avoided if we are to gain psychological autonomy. There are, however, some theories of beauty based on a sense of independence (freedom) of the viewer and the object. Rilke, whom Segal likes to quote, wrote that beauty is nothing but the beginning of terror, which we are just barely able to endure.

This definition seems much broader and suitable for both old and contemporary art. Perhaps “the beginning of terror” was what medieval cathedrals, built for decades and envisaged to last for eternity, were supposed to inspire. Maybe this was the effect of a two dimensional, enduring object in which the craftsman, thanks to his mastery, managed to depict the three dimensional, rich and ephemeral world. Mimetic painting was transgressive in the age when it was the only way of conveying visual memories.

Art brings us closer to life by exposing us to a processed, sublimated message about death. It shows us the limits of our possibilities, makes us aware of our fragility. Even the notion of perennial art testifies to this – art can be eternal only in the world inhabited by its mortal recipients. Helping us to emerge from our narcissism has always been art’s mission.

Whilst making us painfully aware of the limitations to our freedom, at the same time art promises us help in overcoming them. A certain analogy with psychotherapy can be drawn here: the therapist introduces fixed boundaries, the so called setting, in order for the change to occur. But what is crucial is not the rigidity of the setting but an element of stability it introduces. It has to endure the cycle of life and death i.e. beginnings and endings of subsequent sessions. In the light of the above, it is perhaps more understandable why some people do not appreciate contemporary art, saying “I could easily do something like that myself”. In this complaint, we can detect a hidden desire for art to soothe, transgress and promise that although you, an individual, will die, mankind, just like art, is immortal. But contemporary art does not bring such comfort. Its apparent ephemeraliness and carelessnes can stem from the recognition of a different distribution of powers. Artists had to change their values and forms of expression in order to preserve art as a function that liberates people from their limitation.

Considering art as a function helps us to find it also away from galleries, museums or art schools. In this context, I would like to look at an event which took place in February 2014. The media reported that a 58 year old woman made illegal drawings on the walls of the Cloth Hall in Kraków. She drew “stars, the moon with eyes and an unidentified creature”. According to the Kraków City Guard spokesperson: “The drawings depicted horses, goats, dolls and a misspelt sentence: I am a guinea pig”. The woman, Hanna G., also wrote: I would like to be a bird, preferably a stering, I could travel around the world and settle where it is peaceful and orderly.

Her actions were described as an act of vandalism. The headlines read: “A 60 year old destroys the Cloth Hall” or “She wanted to be a bird. She will be a jailbird”, “Amateur painter and poet vandalizes one of Kraków’s monuments”. The accounts of the “incident” were accompanied by comments on Hanna G.’s possible motives: “She is probably homeless. We have seen her around the Main Square many times at different times of the day. She explained to the guards that she was looking for her own place. She said that this niche seemed to be a suitable home. And since she was at home, she felt she could do whatever she wanted”. When charged with vandalism, Hanna G. pleaded guilty but she added that the Cloth Hall was “private property”. According to the public prosecutor, the woman does not realize that the building is a historic monument. “During the hearing she said she considered the Cloth Hall as her home and she simply wanted to paint the walls. “I just wanted it to be pretty. I have not damaged anything”, she explained. She also said that young people drew on walls as well. She offered to remove her drawings with salicylic spirit.

For MOCAK Hanna G.’s performance was one of the impulses to examine and exhibit art created by the homeless. The topic of homelessness, understood very broadly, is currently very popular with “professional” artists. This is perhaps due to the fact that financial crises and the rapidly changing world inspire reflection on the idea of home and make us increasingly anxious about losing it. Very often, however, artists involve homeless people in pre-arranged actions or focus on objects that

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Ellbieta Sala
Translation: Dorota Malina
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bring to mind homelessness. The form in which Hanna G. told her story of not having a home and looking for one makes us feel “terror, which we are just barely able to endure”. In her drawings, the author tackles problems faced by contemporary society in a way which does not fossilize her ideas and which could be repeated by various people. Do we live in the same reality? Do we speak the same language? Do we see the same? The way in which the “incident” on the Kraków Main Square was reported by the media reveals the lack of idiom necessary to talk about basic human needs. It this case, the press resorted to legalese.

“Unidentified creature”, “guinea pig” – apart from being Hanna G.’s self-portrait, in some sense this is also a portrait of contemporary people who do not know who they are but suspect that they have fallen victim to some kind of scam. They engage in increasingly complex activities but underneath it all there is this very basic, primeval search for a shelter, for a den. When defending her action, Hanna G. made reference to a trend in contemporary art called street art. At the same time her drawings bring to mind Lascaux cave paintings, which makes for an incredibly powerful parallel.

Visual essay

Łukasz Surowiec
Translation: Dorota Malina

Deeds

This visual essay is an attempt to capture societal failure: the bankruptcy of great social ideas and the victory of libertarianism. It shows emotions of the “losers”, such as fear, powerlessness or despair, whilst also reflecting on the values in contemporary society.

The first image is that of crying Marta, a homeless heroine of Surowiec’s Happy New Year project. Her tears, together with those of unemployed miners (symbolized by coal sculptures) engaged in Black Diamonds project provide the background for the whole essay. In it, the seeds from trees which grow at the cemetery in Birkenau, the excavator destroying the shelter of a sleeping person and the frozen cadaver are tragic examples of “knockouts” suffered by men in both historic and contemporary social structures. In this context, the destruction of gold can be read a sign of contempt.
Looking at the art created by the homeless is an attempt to give them a voice.

The notion of homelessness covers several realities, each of which shows deep internal diversity. There is the one constructed by ‘normal people’, those whose lives did not get derailed. By visualising homelessness, speaking about it or describing it, this phenomenon becomes socially constructed. This process is paradoxical inasmuch as we try to make something completely unknown and foreign closer to us by forcing it into familiar categories. And thus images-labels are created: of something completely unknown and foreign, derailing the ‘normal world’.

The idea also includes the causes and consequences: addiction, violence, mental illnesses, helplessness, unemployment, lack of education, being a permanent client of all kinds of aid institutions, lack of any perspectives of rejoicing the main current of social growth. ‘Not having a home’ means living in isolation, being disabled, passive, clumsy. But homelessness is also ambivalent. It is both intimate and paradoxical inasmuch as we try to make something completely unknown and foreign closer to us by forcing it into familiar categories. And thus images-labels are created: of a romantic vagrant, a parasite, a victim, spied with exaltation over the universal experience of humanity, sometimes with added concern about the ‘weaker units’. Such narratives help as cope with the world of homelessness that is too hard to understand and accept, but on the other hand they construct a relationship of opposites, of ‘us’ and ‘them’. Perceived in this way, homelessness becomes the starkest possible contrast to what can be described as the ‘healthy tissue’ of society, it becomes its shortage, its lack, its reverse.

‘Not having a home’ is not just a fact. The idea also includes the causes and consequences: addiction, violence, mental illnesses, helplessness, unemployment, lack of education, being a permanent client of all kinds of aid institutions, lack of any perspectives of rejoicing the main current of social growth. ‘Not having a home’ means living in isolation, being disabled, passive, clumsy. But homelessness is also ambivalent. It is both intimate and paradoxical inasmuch as we try to make something completely unknown and foreign closer to us by forcing it into familiar categories. And thus images-labels are created: of a romantic vagrant, a parasite, a victim, spied with exaltation over the universal experience of humanity, sometimes with added concern about the ‘weaker units’. Such narratives help as cope with the world of homelessness that is too hard to understand and accept, but on the other hand they construct a relationship of opposites, of ‘us’ and ‘them’. Perceived in this way, homelessness becomes the starkest possible contrast to what can be described as the ‘healthy tissue’ of society, it becomes its shortage, its lack, its reverse.

The photographs presented on pages 85 and 89 were made by homeless people. The project under which they were made was based on the artistic effect of the very act of taking the pictures, an act that was to enable the authors to take a meaningful look at their own reality. The viewers are offered a glimpse into loneliness, a space in which they can think about homelessness. In the workshop group (young people from a Youth Educational Centre), the project helped reduce aggression towards the homeless and challenged stereotypes.

Marcin Kogut, author of the photographic projects involving homeless people.
no positive and personal experience of the home as a place of safety, protection and special value. The seeds of homelessness are sometimes sown in childhood, when the child witnesses and participates in various traumatic events within the family (especially violence) or is completely deprived of any personal experience of home and family, being a permanent resident of educational care facilities as a social orphan. A young person who grows up in such an environment does not associate the home with a friendly, safe and important place, and hence cannot develop a personal relationship with the home as a space or a way of living. The process of becoming homeless often follows a familiar pattern: being a long-term (sometimes even lifelong) resident of educational care facilities, crisis intervention centres, reintegration and penal institutions. In Poland, such institutions still concentrate on its residents only during their stay at their facility. The tools of support in becoming independent upon leaving the institutions are scarce and do not function too well. People who take home for granted have a hard time understanding that a person leaving an orphanage or prison has to learn or relearn the habit of protecting one’s own private space at a special course. Poland has an increasing number of so-called training flats where, with good results, people embarking upon an independent life, with the help of a social assistant, not only work on the habit of paying the bills but also learn how to manage their own space and become responsible for it, how to co-exist with neighbours and how to form an attachment to their place of residence. However, according to data published by the Ministry of Welfare, Social Policy, only 1.3 thousand people in Poland tried their hand at independent living in such flats.

Homelessness is often due to addictions. Addiction is like a perpetual motion machine of homeostasis, which is both to its roots, when it consumes increasing amounts of time, means and health, and to its course – when a homeless person falls even deeper into the trap of addiction in order to escape from the overwhelming circumstances. Addictions can also cause people who managed to free themselves from homelessness to find themselves back on the street. What is more, homelessness itself may become an addiction, a lifestyle, a seemingly real replica of ‘free choice’ exercised by the homeless person, who sometimes even extols its virtues. Among homeless people, various kinds of addictions are often combined, which complicates treatment even further and has a negative effect on the prognosis.

Illness is yet another painful aspect of homelessness. Many homeless people have suffered or still suffer from mental diseases. Such non-physical illness grows up in such an psychological crisis is full of obstacles. Quite often, they find no acceptance or help among their family, friends, colleagues and employers. Meanwhile, people with history of mental diseases are unable to regain their balance without the commitment and support of their environment. Diseases and accidents that cause permanent disability may yield similar consequences. These two types of problems share a common characteristic: it is very difficult for the survivors to find a permanent job that will allow them to support themselves (and they do not always qualify for state pension). Prejudice against people with disabilities is still an important barrier that prevents them from finding a job, especially if the disability was caused by mental disease or is associated with a significant, permanent physical impairment.

Loneliness is also a risk factor. Quite often, lonely people have no one to count on for support when trying to manage and keep their household in times of disease, disability, or single parenthood. Even a temporary loss of employment may result in debt, bailiff seizure and eviction. Lack of a natural social environment formed by friends and family is a characteristic feature of contemporary homelessness. Loneliness against the background of hidden homelessness it concerns mostly women, children, village dwellers, the elderly and sick. The term applies to all forms of ‘crashing on someone’s couch’, migrating from one friend to another, moving into and adapting non-residential buildings (such as outbuildings in the countryside), using overcrowded residential premises (in Poland, a flat is considered overcrowded when there is less than 3 square metres available per one member of household). All these situations make normal functioning impossible and are especially detrimental to growing children. Sick or elderly people may also be ‘sheltered’ in various health care and centres, hospices and hospitals. Such people are considered homeless if they stay at the health care centre even though their state of health allows them to continue treatment at home or at an outpatient clinic, but they are not released from the facility in order to protect them from ending up on the street. This type of homelessness defies official statistics and definitions. According to non-governmental sources, if we counted hidden homelessness in the official statistics, we would end up with double or triple the current figures.

The problem is vital, so one should expect a strong remedy. Among various support tools, there are, for instance, individual contracts of transitioning out of homelessness, which describe the consecutive stages up to full independence. New organisations are created, providing professional, standardised assistance tailored to different stages of homelessness. It becomes more and more common for institutions to adopt a broader outlook on the issue, as well as to include prevention and social rehabilitation in the spectrum of their activities. Many centres provide assistance both to the homeless and their families. It is a major step forward. One does not become homeless overnight, in complete isolation. Both becoming homeless and finding one’s way out are a process. Many homeless people nowadays have families who just do not want them. Very often, this creates overwhelming pain on both sides of the equation. Helping the homeless to come back to their most natural environment, their parents, children, wife or husband, is often what is needed the most. The greatest motivation for the homeless is the hope that they will be able to reconcile with their family, and working towards achieving this goal offers the greatest chance of permanently getting out of the difficult situation. The way in which the benefits of such assistance are perceived is also changing. More and more often, it is acknowledged that they should not only be actors in the stage production about putting their lives back together, but that they should also become directors of their own fate. It is a complicated and controversial process, one that requires the clients themselves to change their outlook, while public organisations need institutional and structural recalibration.

Most of all, however, the very social mentality needs to change in order to approve this new approach. This means renouncing labels such as the vagrant, the parasite or the victim, and taking the social discourse to a whole new level, while also giving a voice to those that are concerned the most. This shift consists in moving from ‘speaking in the name of the homeless’ towards ‘the homeless speaking’. Their journey back to normal life begins with regaining the sense of agency, of control over one’s own life, of finding inner motivation to fight for values that are in danger or out of reach. In order to achieve the anticipated results, the process needs to be planned out as ‘wise help’, oriented not only towards immediate, symptom-relieving effects, but towards long-term, positive evolution. There should be a balance between the rights awarded and the obligations enforced. Professionals should use the axiological underpinning of the given society as the cornerstone of the sense of responsibility, which is by its very nature connected with others, and not a reward for good behaviour or for fulfilling one’s social roles. Reaching for artistic means of expression, making symbolic articulation available to the homeless constitutes an important step towards approval that creates an opportunity for supplementing the existing tools of support catered to one of the most severely excluded social groups. It also enables creating a new context, in which is less the old prejudices just do the work. Most probably, we will not be able to abolish the divide between ‘us’ and ‘them’, but we are in the position to better understand the reality that we shape together.
Every day, we go out on the street, we peep into places where people often hide away, we want to find them and offer help. They may hide in bin shelters, uninhabited buildings, squats, forts, bunkers, staircases, allotment houses, railway stations, galleries and many other places. We need to be patient to do this kind of work, because it takes time before a homeless person comes to trust us. Sometimes it may take several years. We provide information about forms of help, we invite them to our office, we try to help people or just listen to their story.

Most homeless people say they have no home. However, quite often their attitudes and behaviours contradict their words. The places in which they stay are arranged in such a way as to resemble a home. For instance, such people sweep the bin shelters in which they sleep, decorate walls and windows, and treat people who enter ‘their property’ as intruders. What is more, they know all the neighbours, and live in peace with most of them. Those who live in uninhabited buildings or allotment houses are similar. Such places allow them to preserve greater privacy and they are more likely to refer to them as ‘homes’. Those who stay on the street, wandering from one bench to another, use different terminology. They do not have too many possessions, so they are mobile.

When we visit allotments, uninhabited buildings or cellars, we are offered coffee and tea. If we had made an appointment, the rooms are clean. ‘Home-full’ people behave in the exact same way. It is quite different when we visit our clients on a staircase or in a bin shelter, because of our ingrained perception of such venues as public spaces. On the other hand... When you meet a man sweeping the floor in a rubbish chute and complaining that the residents do not segregate rubbish, your perspective changes. People who see homeless men or women ‘in their courtyard’ try to help them – by offering a kind word, food, clothes, recreational substances or money. However, they often only do so to soothe their remorse and to feel better about themselves, and at the same time demand that some institution remove such people from their view by force.

There are also those that become overprotective and take over the responsibility for the homeless that live in their neighbourhood. Sometimes they discourage them from profiting from professional help, invite them to their homes, only to suddenly break off all contact and reject their ‘wards’. Their attitude is to some extent reminiscent of feeding pigeons or thoughtless behaviours towards animals along the lines of ‘you can be useful to me, so I will give you shelter, and then kick you out when I want to go on holidays’.

We have met with yet another way of abusing the less fortunate: drinking alcohol with the homeless. Sometimes, highly-placed people with money, titles and fame profit from the ‘invisibility’ of the homeless in order to visit them with a bottle and just have a drink in peace. And also have a chat and feel better about themselves. In our opinion, all of these behaviours are a way of depriving homeless people of their dignity.

Together with other streetworkers, we noticed that local community lacks knowledge as to how an institution such as the Community Social Welfare Centre may help the homeless. People use sensation-seeking media as their main source of information and therefore stereotype the homeless (‘Can they actually be helped?’, ‘Why should we help them?’). In our opinion, it is necessary to counteract the stereotypes associated with homelessness and provide homeless people with help. In October of 2013, together with photographer Mirosław Mrozik, we organised an exhibition of photographs of homeless people who pursued their interests and passions. The Terra Incognita project was a manifestation of our struggle to end prejudice. Homeless people create: they decorate their shelters, they paint, embroider; we know two people who construct houses and buildings out of matches.
The Open Prison

Krzysztof Marchlak talks to Second Lieutenant Anna Czajczyk, a psychologist from Kraków Detention Centre.

THE BOUNDARIES OF ART

Krzysztof Marchlak
Translation: Dorota Malma

In my opinion this is going to be a very interesting and emotional experience for them. They will have an opportunity to interact with contemporary art, which is often demanding and requires deeper concentration. The Crime in Art exhibition deals with the topic that is very familiar to the workshop participants. For many of them, this is going to be their first encounter with contemporary art, with, additionally, a strong personal dimension. Looking at violence from the point of view of the external observer can encourage them to confront the motives and consequences of their own actions and rethink them in the context of both victims and perpetrators. Attempts at making inmates more sensitive to suffering and loss brought on by crime play an important role in prison rehabilitation. They prepare the ground for further psychological work inside the centre. At the exhibition, a large number of exhibits and various approaches to the topic of crime inspire reflection on the nature of wrongdoing, its causes and consequences. Human nature is presented in many guises. There is brutality, ruthlessness but also longing, regret and a sense of injustice. Cooperation with MOCAK involves not only a visit to the exhibition but also a workshop. The latter will last a few days and it will give the inmates an opportunity to express their feelings and opinions about what they have seen in the museum.

A project developed by the Kraków Academy of Fine Arts and authored by Professor Zbigniew Bajek came to an end a few weeks ago. What was the idea behind it? How has it influenced the prison community?

The project was comprised of a few modules. There was a display of large-scale prints in the prison courtyard. They were created with our needs in mind by artists and students from the Academy of Fine Arts as well as by other Polish, Czech and German artists invited to take part in the project. Also, in the courtyard and in the common room, we had murals, some of which were painted by our inmates. The next stage involved the screenings of movies related to the subject of freedom. However, the most important part of the project were workshops with the active participation of our inmates. Thirteen such workshops were conducted in one week. This was the first artistic project on such a large scale carried out in our detention centre. It has brought about some changes in the functioning of the prison. In response to the inmates’ request, an art group was set up so that they can develop their artistic interests. The success of the project has convinced us even more about the need to establish cooperation with cultural institutions.

Can art projects and contact with contemporary and older art influence prisoners’ rehabilitation? Analyzing works of art and learning about their history can inspire reflection, stir emotions and encourage critical approach to our own views. Art, both old and new, often requires intellectual effort and because of this it helps inmates snap out of apathy. Moreover, artistic activities, which realize inmates’ creative potential and allow them to express themselves, have huge influence on their mental state. The chief aim of rehabilitation is to stimulate certain psychological processes – cognitive, emotional, motivational – to encourage changes in some spheres of prisoners’ personality. I would even hazard a claim that creative activities fulfill if not all then at least a large part of this agenda.

In your centre, are there any inmates who are particularly interested in art? What benefits does artistic activity bring to prisoners and how do you support it?

Among our inmates we have both people who are interested in looking at art and in creating it. We support our inmates’ initiatives by providing them with materials, organizing workshops, competitions and retrospectives. Some of the works are then sold at auction and the profit goes to charity. Our inmates’ works can be seen in some of the rooms of the detention centre. For example, we have a chapel which is used by the prisoners on a daily basis. It was designed and built entirely by one of our former inmates.

Creative activity can bring prisoners many benefits. It can reduce the negative effects of isolation, provide much needed intellectual stimulation and relieve tensions which result from an unfilled need for security, acceptance and appreciation.

What is prison art like?

Inmates are engaged in workshops with other people in the prison and these workshops play a socializing role. We try to engage as many inmates as possible, and this is why we offer many different workshops. In the past we have had workshops with students from the Academy of Fine Arts and with inmates from the prison in Othery in Lower Silesia. We have had workshops with different materials, such as pastels, paints or crayons, but also seemingly useless things like foil wrappers, plastic, matches and even stale bread. They produce small caskets, paper laws, flowers and figurines made of bread and quite big ships made out of wooden fruit crates. The inmates can find use for almost anything. Prison poetry is also quite common with the dominant themes being that of love, longing and freedom.

How do you select the inmates who are to take part in workshops inside and outside of the prison?

The basic criterion is the willingness to participate. I cannot imagine forcing anyone to engage in workshops. We also want to make
The boundaries of art

sure that the objectives of a given project correspond to the needs of our inmates and that it gives them a lot of satisfaction. Each time we have to take into account the provisions of the Executive Penal Code and existing legislation. For instance, juveniles cannot take part in any activities together with hardened criminals, people sentenced to closed imprisonment cannot participate in activities outside the centre, etc.

What kind of art initiatives would you welcome in the future? It might be an interesting idea to organize excursions to cultural institutions and engage prisoners with art by letting them visit various exhibitions. I appreciate all kinds of workshops and initiatives aimed at expanding our prison culture and creativity. What are the goals of artistic activities carried out inside the prison and who do they benefit?

ROMAN HELOWICZ: True, words such as "isolation" and "confined" best describe the time served in prison. Detention centres have to focus on ensuring safe and proper conduct of criminal procedures carried out first by the public prosecutor’s office and then the court. If we limited ourselves to this task, our inmates’ lives would be extremely impoverished. To make sure this does not happen, we try as much as possible to cooperate with institutions offering educational programmes to prisoners. Such programmes pertain to various spheres of social life, they are aimed at breaking stereotypes, reducing deficits, gaining new, positive experience. They also teach prisoners how to spend time productively and allow them to express themselves. All our educational projects, including those realized with the help of external partners, are to help the inmates develop their social skills in the course of rehabilitation. It is worth adding at this point that according to the law only those who have already been sentenced can be subject to rehabilitation. Those in temporary custody can take part in artistic projects but only within the scope of their free time activities.

What made you, the head of the Penal Division, interested in popularizing art among the inmates? Prisoners have always engaged in creative pursuits like making various things out of rubbish, drawing or writing poems. Now we hear that this is becoming less and less popular. It is difficult to say if this is really the case, especially since prison art competitions are very popular among our inmates. A few years ago one of our prisoners won the second prize in the Satire Beyond the Edge competition. Our centre, in cooperation with the Academy of Fine Arts, has carried out a project aimed at popularizing art. Entitled the Drama of Freedom it was the brainchild of Professor Zbigniew Bajek and it was mostly addressed to the inmates.

In which aspects of prison life could contemporary art have the greatest influence? How could it improve the daily life of those detained or imprisoned? Whether or not contemporary art can influence life in prison depends to a large extent on the prisoners themselves. It can undoubtedly create new values and change attitudes but there has to be a will to change. During the Drama of Freedom project, I used to watch how the inmates, sometimes unwittingly, yielded to the artistic atmosphere of the classes. Afterwards, they themselves were surprised at how positive their results turned out to be. They would lose themselves in the flow of creative activity and to me this is the best proof that there should be space for art inside prison. I am convinced that art can facilitate rehabilitation and be a worthwhile pastime for prisoners. I would like present our inmates’ works to the general public. People who hold various opinions about prison should know that rehabilitation is not only about words - first and foremost it is hard work of rebuilding social relations. I want the public to see our amateur prison art.

Krzysztof Marchlak talks to major Roman Helowicz, the head of Kraków Detention Centre Penal Division.

KRZYSZTOF MARCHLAK: We are now inside one of the buildings which belongs to Kraków Detention Centre. It is, broadly speaking, a confined space whose “inhabitants” are forced to live in isolation. And yet by establishing cooperation with artists and museums, the prison presents itself in a completely new light - it becomes an open institution promoting culture and creativity. What are the goals of artistic activities carried out inside the prison and who do they benefit?

ROMAN HELOWICZ: The work was created during the project “Will read my letter?” carried out by the MOCAK in Detention Center in Krakow.
The library is a space where mutually contradictory ideas, different points of view and distinct sensitivities can live alongside one another. It is in the library that knowledge becomes historicized and the co-existence of many legitimate interpretations is accepted. The idea of library opens up new vistas and encourages discussion.

The Inner Space exhibition in the MOCAK Library and Archive, curated by Elżbieta Sala and myself, Magdalena Mazik included almost 40 paintings and drawings from the collection of the Józef Babiński Specialist Hospital, the oldest psychiatric hospital in Krakow.

Since the Library, i.e. the exhibition venue, is my place of work, I had a unique opportunity to observe the viewers and to interact with them. During the Inner Space exhibition, the Library was visited by thousands of people. The works on display stirred up emotions but also inspired some questions. The visitors, intrigued by the persona of the artist and the history behind a given work, were forced to reflect on the motivations behind particular pieces, the conditioning of their own expectations and the language we use to talk about art. The possible questions were many.

In order to show this multiplicity of issues, we decided to juxtapose the narratives about the works written in and by the Museum with the artists’ own comments and the background information about the hospital. The exhibition comprised paintings and drawings created in art workshops conducted by Halina Bonarowska, Małgorzata Bury and Sylwia Rutkowska. In August 2014, i.e. after the closing of the Inner Space, I met them to ask some of the questions that had emerged during the exhibition. I would like to thank them for agreeing to be interviewed.

Blossoming hearts. An interview with Małgorzata Bury and Halina Broniszewska.

In the art studio on ward 4A I talk to Małgorzata Bury, the art therapist in charge of the studio, and Halina Broniszewska, who is working on her new painting. Halina Broniszewska’s Winter Retreat was included in the Inner Space exhibition.

MAGDALENA MAZIK: Blossoming hearts!

HALINA BRONISZEWSKA: I don’t know why but I have this thing for hearts. I always start with some hearts and then the canvas fills up. If I don’t have a heart at the beginning, then… I am stuck. I suppose I have different moods, sometimes I am down in the dumps, other times I am euphoric.

And so are my paintings… This one I painted for three or four days. I work without any breaks. I am stuck to the easel. I just paint. All the time.

MAŁGORZATA BURY: Nothing distracts you. There is really nothing that could take you away from your work. After you’ve painted for many hours, I have to remind you that you need to go to lunch, drink something when the weather is hot, do other useful activities.

Why do you like painting so much?

HB: Because it allows me to concentrate. I don’t care that there is someone watching me. Painting makes me more self-confident. I paint whatever is at hand or whatever comes to my mind. I also get some ideas from colours interactions with Paní Malgosia.

MB: Perhaps I could say a few words about the method of colours interaction? [She starts taking various drawings form folders]. I am keen to show it to you. Anything to avoid the interview!

1 Pani: Polish courteous mode of address of a woman.
O, they are so nice!
MB: I wanted to show you Pania Halina’s artistic development. When she first came here, she was completely uninterested in art.

So your talent was lying dormant?
HB: Yes it was. But before I stated painting, I wrote poems. Good ones. One of them, Oranges, got printed.

MB: Pani Halina started feeling more at ease here, in the studio. I encouraged her to colour in some mandalas because this helps to concentrate. The round shape makes the job easier. And so Pani Halina started colouring in mandalas and playing with colours.

HB: Pani Malgosia always gave me some shapes to xerox, if I wanted. [She looks at some drawings]. They are quite interesting, this one is nice, pink, O, already then I was using some gold. Yes, light gold is like yellow and dark gold can replace brown to make it all less gloomy.

MB: This was the point of departure: first, Pani Halina would colour in some mandalas, then she started cutting them out and sticking them to a colorful background. Gradually she became interested in something more than simple colourings – she wanted to create pictures. So the next stage was to make a composition and transfer it onto the canvas. You have just seen her first painting. Pani Halina’s case shows that no activity is trivial, not even colouring. Your artistic journey can start anywhere. I was just watching how much joy and satisfaction Halina got from this. I saw that she put enormous amounts of time, energy and dedication into making her own art. It was beginning to be important to her and she was bravely moving forward.

Do you like your old works?
HB: I always think: Who painted this nice picture? I seem to me I was quite good, given my limitations. My eyesight is quite weak… I could really do with a better one… And this! I painted this myself, right?

MB: Of course!

And what do you like most here, in the studio?
HB: Pani Malgosia. She is friendly to everyone, she remembers every picture so that we don’t have to sign anything. She also treats us, not only doctors, she is our therapist. She is as important as the doctors. Pani Malgosia is really very helpful. I also enjoy this artistic chaos. Everything is scattered around, there are paintings everywhere. Never a dull moment. You can concentrate here. People who come here like painting. And not everyone does.

Pani Malgorzata, when did you start working on this ward? How is it structured? What activities are on offer?
MB: Rehabilitation and Prevention Ward 4A for patients with chronic schizophrenia opened in 1997. I was lucky to be able to work here from the very beginning, when the concept of rehabilitation was still developing. Art therapy is one of the therapeutic activities we offer here. Before, we only had an art studio, now we also have occupational therapy facilities. Patients have access to all painting and drawing materials. There is also clay if someone wanted to make a sculpture but this happens very rarely. Our art studio is an open atelier - I give patients all materials they need, I support and encourage them. I try to intervene as little as possible, to make myself dispensable so that everyone can feel at ease here. I believe that patients should work independently, carry out their own projects, which they can pursue after they have been discharged. I don’t impose any topics or techniques. I never say: “Today we are doing still lifes” or “Today we are going to paint outside”. Everyone realizes their own ideas and fulfils their own needs, which are gradually revealed.

You wanted to explain the colours interaction.
MB: These are my favourite sessions and I know that many patients and therapists share my sentiments. The technique was developed in Germany and it is described in detail in the book Mac sztuki [The Power of Art] published by our hospital in the 1990s. Our ward had barely been open a few months when we learnt that there was a new form of therapy for patients with chronic schizophrenia, who have difficulties in verbal communication and cannot express their emotions. The colours interaction allows them to overcome these problems. It is also a form of communication because it relies on cooperation. Each person chooses one colour and paints something abstract. I heard a German therapist call it “a conversation of colours”. But this technique is mostly about expressing yourself and your own feelings through colours, in the process of painting. It all happens unconsciously and so self-expression is unchecked, uninhibited. This is a simple technique, available to everyone. It is often nice and relaxing, though not necessarily as sometimes negative emotions need to be released expressed. A piece of paper is a safe space to do so.

Are these sessions obligatory for all patients? Which ones are most popular?
MB: No, they are not obligatory, but patients are encouraged to take part. At the beginning of their stay, each patient establishes an activity schedule that suits him or her. Patients can choose those activities from our offer that they feel they need most. The majority do take part in colour interactions or other kinds of art therapy. But if someone says that they don’t feel like doing art, we respect that.

Who uses the studio?
MB: Not many people. It is difficult to give exact numbers. Thirty per cent of patients at the most. But if someone feels good here, they do come back. Some patients come because our artists create a nice, safe atmosphere. They come to leaf through some albums, read artist biographies, the elderly can practise their manual skills by, for example, colouring in mandalas. We have people here who do not feel any need to create - they simply want to have a good time, to feel the artistic ambiance.

I also wanted to ask you about this clay. Why isn’t clay modelling popular?
MB: One of our patients asked me for it but then she got scared of working in clay. It wasn’t
always like this but now I can buy the materials someone asks for.

To what extent do you need to know someone’s medical history to be able to help them?

MB: Such knowledge is indispensable when it comes to group activities such as psycho-drawing or collage, which are more therapeutic. Art therapy is on the fuzzy boundary between art and therapy. In the studio, unlike during therapeutic activities, I try to withdraw to the background and intervene as little as possible. I have the opportunity of gradually getting to know the patient because I focus not on the person but on their work. In the process, many problems emerge, which can be worked on and solved. This brings tangible benefits, patients come out from here stronger, more self-confident, with a new purpose in life and a plan for the future. They gain new self-esteem.

Does it mean that there is a one-to-one relationship between an art therapist and someone who comes to the studio?

MB: Yes, it is possible to establish a personal relationship through work because someone’s painting or drawing serves as a link. There are also important interactions at the group level. Often, the members support each other and become real friends.

Do you believe that art can help everyone?

MB: Rehabilitation does not bring immediate effects – it is difficult to notice any changes form session to session. For that you need months. What we offer here is a multifaceted rehabilitation program, which includes not only art but also occupational therapy. Patients can train various skills such as cooking, maintaining personal hygiene, or developing social interactions. We also offer psychoeducation, psychotherapy, ergotherapy and others. We observe a patient, the way he or she behaves and interacts with others and we see progress. It works. I think that art can change lives, not only that of people in therapy. Art is also an area that you fail, you are sometimes hurt. This is what makes it work. I think that art can change lives, not only that of people in therapy. Art is also an area that you fail, you are sometimes hurt. This is what makes it work.

Are there any patients whose stories you particularly remember?

MB: Yes, I have to say that Pani Halina and her journey are quite extraordinary. In 2010 she started with colouring in ready-made shapes and now her painting is exhibited in MOCAK.

MB: I just want to say that what I paint brings this honesty in me. I am not saying that my paintings are beautiful because they are not. But at least they are pretty true.

Do you think that creativity can be taught?

MB: It can be released!

MB: Exactly! [laughing].

I have one last question, something very important to our Museum: what is art for?

MB: Art is a feature of character. It makes our life better and more interesting. People who engage in art cannot be evil, their emotions get channelled into their work. Before I couldn’t do it but Malgorzata taught me how to get rid of negative feelings without doing any harm. And Malgorzata can do it because she graduated from...

MB: I have a postgraduate diploma in art therapy. I am an art teacher by profession.

Our primal need for self-expression. An interview with Sylwia Rutkowska.

MAGDALENA MAZIK: How long have you worked in the Józef Babiński Specialist Hospital? What do you do here?

SYLWIA RUTKOWSKA: I have been here for four years. I work in the art studio and I am also in charge of motor skill activities, which typically take place outside. But all this can be combined: the fact that a patient leaves the hospital building, integrates with the group, that I establish some kind of contact with them can improve my relationship with this person in the studio. Here we have both individual and group activities, the latter with a limited number of participants. I run classes in psycho-drawing, colour interaction, drawing to music and drawing from imagination. They are mostly aimed at diagnosing the patient as they provide an opportunity to observe them closely. Group activities are for everyone, irrespective of their skills because we adjust the tasks to the needs of a given patient. Sessions in groups are to help us, therapists, build relationships with patients. Individual sessions are for patients who come to us of their own free will wanting to paint. Often these are talented people with some training in art. My role as a therapist is completely different during individual and group sessions.

How can art be therapeutic? Can it heal?

On its own it cannot but it aids healing. It can definitely help by making the whole process less difficult. The main function of art therapy is to improve the patient’s mood. It is a meeting of two people, the patient and the therapist. They reach an understanding which can but does not have to result in an artwork. For the therapist what is most important is to make the patient feel safe and valued. We want our patients to regain their dignity, to know that they can be creative. It is all about boosting their self-esteem.

Do patients assume that their works would be exhibited somewhere?

Quite often a patient starts to work very intensely knowing that their work will be put on display, for instance that he or she is going to have a solo exhibition. This is what drives them, encourages to cooperate with the therapist and other patients. Such a patient is so engrossed in work that they forget about their illness and focus on the task at hand. This is also an indirect therapeutic benefit of these activities. Are the patients keen to see one another’s exhibition?

Yes, very much so. Of course, during art therapy the therapist does not judge the quality of the work but amongst themselves patients do give their opinions. The judgments are not always favourable but they encourage interaction, an exchange of views. Some patients take it well, others, unfortunately, do not. This can mean that the person withholds, steps back a little and to carry on he or she would need some extra attention and help from the therapist. There are people who like creating with the knowledge that their art will be exhibited but there are also those who find it difficult to express or expose themselves. As a therapist I have to put more effort into convincing such patients that they also are important and interesting to others, that they have every right to show their work. There is no greater success for a therapist than to create such conditions that a patient who has struggled with some insecurities, overcomes them.
has particular stages, well researched and described in literature. There are norms as to what children should be able to do at a particular age. If they can’t, this might mean that they have some intellectually disability. It is different with adults. Their works can give us additional information about their condition. By drawing and especially by later talking about their work, about what they wanted to say and what they could not say, patients can reveal to us completely new aspects of their personality. So drawing is, let’s hope, a spontaneous activity, where patients abandon self-control and express themselves freely so that we can get to know them better. Creative process itself – drawing, interacting with others, choosing a pencil or crayons, self-confidence or shyness – all this is important. But the finished painting in the museum stops being just a diagnostic tool. It should at least fit the overall idea of the exhibition and should say something different. It seems to me that visitors who come to see the exhibition do not have to know about the condition of the artist. Usually, they are not therapists. They come to see art. Now the question is: is this work interesting in and of itself or is it just a record of a particular emotional state?

You are very close to other people’s creative process. Are you an artist yourself? Occasionally I do paint on my own. But I also paint in the studio, with our patients. They see that sometimes I also have to struggle, that I have to try hard. As a practising artist, I can understand them better, I empathise with their dilemmas, we can learn from one another.

What are the key traits of a good art therapist? In my opinion, what is essential is the ability to create good atmosphere, so that a patient feels safe, cared for and understood. It is also worth giving him or her a lot of attention but this depends on the patient’s individual needs. The one size fits all approach does not work. When it comes to character traits, I think the most important are good communication skills, empathy and sometimes a sense of humor, so as not to take everything too seriously. Otherwise patients may feel that you judge them, that you are a policeman whereas we want it to be a friendly space.

What do you like about your job?

I like working with people, getting to know them better because they have a lot to say. Often, our patients have had very interesting lives and various experiences, which they want to share or not. But if they feel the need to talk to someone, I like listening to them, giving them my attention. Thanks to my patients, I need to grow professionally – I have to keep learning, updating my knowledge, I cannot stand still. I do this to satisfy them as well as myself. I take pleasure in little things. For example, when I came back from my holiday, a few people came to say that they had missed me.

And is there something that you find difficult? I have to confess that sometimes I simply do not have enough patience. I am working on it but it happens that I cannot help someone as much as I would like to. I think that art therapy is a very slow, long-term process.

Is it rather predictable or does it happen that someone surprises you? Do you have patients whose artistic development took an unexpected turn? It is a difficult question. I can tell you about one case. There was a woman who claimed that before falling in she had never had anything to do with art. It was only her schizophrenia that pushed her towards art. She chose watercolours and painted mostly horses. I would like to understand what made her start painting, just like that, overnight, and at a really good level.

You have mentioned you have quite a few people with some artistic training. Yes, we do. Unfortunately, these patients are often hypersensitive, they are more easily upset than average people. This probably makes them more prone to stress, which in turn causes their diseases.

Is it easier to work with trained artists? It varies from person to person. I have good rapport with painters. After I have provided them with all necessary materials, some do not want any interference and work on their own, others expect some feedback from me throughout the process. But if I happen to work with, let’s say, a writer, the situation is completely different – I first have to prove I know something about literature in order to establish contact and be able to encourage them to create.

Which diseases your patients suffer from? This ward is for patients with schizophrenia. And we work mostly with them as they are the ones who often feel the need to paint. By the way, I also had a patient who came from a different ward, the acute one, and she felt a great urge to paint. Nothing much came out of it artistically, her work definitely could not be hung in a gallery but this was a kind of record of her disease. She painted until she tired of it, she felt better and said she was ready to leave. This is yet another role of our studio – we are here to let patients blow off steam, to experience catharsis, emotional cleansing. Whether or not the author later wants to exhibit the record of his or her painful experiences is another matter. When people are struggling with something, sometimes they need to get rid of it. I also had a patient who used to wake me up at 3 a.m. to say that he needed to paint otherwise he would suffocate. Probably at times like this people do not confront their visions and projects with what is currently fashionable. This is a primal need for self-expression.

When someone comes here, what do they start with? If I have patients with personality disorders, I would typically start with a lot of materials they may need. I check with them what they want to do and they say, for example, that they cannot paint and would like to learn. Usually this is where it all ends – I tell them that of course they can learn, that we have all the materials and if not, that am going to buy what is missing. And later I don’t see them anymore. Occasionally someone comes once or twice. We had a woman once who decided to paint a picture as a gift for one of her therapists. And she did come and paint this picture. This was a very strong commitment but generally patients with personality disorders come, demand materials and then do not paint. Patients with schizophrenia can vary but typically they are happy with simple things, they do not have any special requirements, at least at the beginning, when they don’t feel safe. Later, once they have

started working and learnt what I can offer, they engage in different things. They are not afraid anymore because they know that it is safe here and they can enjoy themselves.

Diary page. An interview with Halina Bonarowska. In the common room on Rehabilitation and Prevention Ward 1, I talk to Halina Bonarowska, leaping through a huge archive containing works and projects written by patients, albums, exhibition catalogues, chronicles, MA theses, academic papers about the history of the ward and the Amateur Artists’ Club Hostia, which existed for 25 years.

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The boundaries of art

And what was the principle of realism?
This principle meant that patients whose view of the world was distorted by illness would be confronted with reality and made to face their problems. The aim was to create a safe space where everyone was able to speak openly about what bothered them. Our club was therefore not an organised psychiatric institution where you administer treatment, give pills and follow instructions, but rather a place where patients could feel certain freedom. The club was destined for psychiatric patients but the community grew, as people started inviting their friends and family. It became a large support group divided into smaller sections according to interests, something like a big family. The name, Hestia, was chosen through a competition. We had many ideas but this one won because Hestia is the goddess of hearth and home. At the time it seemed to me that this name was rather too ambitious. I didn’t suspect that the club would become so popular and so important to the patients. Even though after 25 years in Limanowskiego Street the club was moved to the hospital premises and then suspended, it still exists in our hearts and common initiatives [leaving through some photos]. O, here we have the club logo designed by Władysław Wałęga and the lyrics of Hestia Blues.

Now let’s talk about outdoor painting camps...
There is a lot to say and so many people to credit. Everything started with the therapy camps organized in the 1960s. During such stays, patients were painting outdoors, which was a wonderful experience. They knew they were going first and foremost to paint, to create. They were so dedicated and determined...
that one hardly saw them – they would find their spot by a river or in a forest, and disappear to paint beautiful landscapes. Such camps, with or without outdoor painting, had an additional benefit of giving us, therapists, a unique opportunity to observe our patients in a different environment, outside of the studio. I think that thanks to this we were able to develop better therapy plans for them. And this, where was it? O, yes. This is Władysław Hasior. I met him as a young girl and then I followed his artistic development with great interest. Recently, I have seen his exhibition in MOCAK. I am telling you this to show that well-known artists were helping us enormously [pointing to more photos]. This is something you definitely need to know! In 1985 we took our patients to Bialka Tatrzanska. Earlier, when doctor Andrzej Kowal and myself were in Zakopane, we asked Władysław Hasior whether he would invite us to his studio. We came there extremely nervous, especially the patients, because at that time Hasior was already well-known. This was a most extraordinary visit. First, everyone was surprised to discover that in the room where he slept and worked, there was plenty of old things. The patients commented on it. At a certain point he offered to make us some tea and asked the patients to find some containers to drink out of. And so we ended up washing various paint jars and other vessels which normally serve completely different purposes. But we managed to make do. Later he showed us some slides documenting his work on Chariot of the Sun and Nightingale Afire. It was very inspirational.

You also used to organize collective exhibitions of your patients work.

Yes, we did. In 1980, doctor Andrzej Kowal initiated the first of such exhibitions. We were allowed to use a room in the Korona sports club. I don’t remember exactly how many works were on display but it must have been a few dozen, in different techniques, painting and sculptures. The exhibition made a big impact, the number of visitors exceeded our expectations. I think this was because we had told people what to expect – we advertised it as “an exhibition of works by patients form the psychiatric hospital in Kobierzyn”. It must have intrigued the public. At that time, 30 years ago, the attitudes towards mental illness were different – people were wary, they kept their distance. What is more, Kobierzyn, which is now pretty central, was then on the periphery. This perception of distance and strangeness was strengthened when someone visited the hospital overcrowded wards, thousands of crows, loud cawing. I still remember when I first came here as a prospective psychiatric nurse. In every ward there were three suffering Christ and or Napoléons i.e. patients with psychotic delusions. Now such things do not happen. And so it all started: dozens of exhibitions, unforgettable vernissages, painting camps in Poland and abroad.

For many years you have been very close to other people’s creative process. Do you paint yourself?

[sigh] Well... When it comes to visual arts, once, “forced” by my patients, I painted a Buddha [laughter]. At that time I was fascinated with oriental philosophies, hence the subject. Unfortunately, the painting went missing. Coming back to our artists. From the very beginning I was in charge of organising the practical side of their work. In the early years, what encouraged me and kept me going were the words of doctor Noemi Madejska, which I wanted to test in practice. She said that for her paintings were like letters written in paint and schizophrenia was the most beautiful flower in God’s garden. Today, when I look at even seemingly worthless miniatures or drawings, for me they are like pages torn out of a diary. Those works, created in my presence, are a memory of a particular patient with a particular problem. This patient, often in an indirect, obscure way presented a part of himself or herself, a picture of the world filtered through their own dreams and illusions. Often we can also detect some artistic vision there: Struggling with their delusions and hallucinations, patients transferred some of them onto the canvas. They were unable to express themselves in words because what they felt was too overwhelming and ubiquitous. So they channeled their experience into their paintings. This is why each of these works is so important to me. It is a memory of the patient’s emotional state and the time. I keep saying that, as a psychiatric nurse, I take part in all aspects of rehabilitation, and art therapy is one of them.
The Unique Nature of art Education

INTERVIEWS WITH EDUCATORS FROM THE INTERNATIONAL CULTURAL CENTRE MCK, BWA TARNOW, THE NATIONAL MUSEUM IN KRAKOW

KATARZYNA GOBIOWSKA (b. 1978) – a graduate of history of art, Jagiellonian University, educationalist, art history teacher. The Education Department manager at BWA Tarnow.

What is, in your opinion, the most important building block of a successful teaching process? It is difficult to answer this question with just one crucial element. I think that what should be highlighted are the substantive and communicative components. In my teaching work, I follow one important principle: I construct my classes in such a way as to make them interesting to myself, in other words, I teach classes that I would like to attend as a participant.

Why is art education unique? Well, it is just difficult, because you first need to convince others that it is actually needed. Unfortunately, art education has been neglected for years now. I am thinking about educational institutions – beginning with kindergartens and ending with secondary schools. There is this unjustified fear, not among the children, who are curious about everything, but among the teachers. It is both the fear of organisation and of content. To me, teaching about contemporary art is an even bigger challenge. The works are difficult to grasp for an average viewer. Quite often, they presuppose the knowledge of a broader social and historic context. I know from experience that younger viewers have no problems with confronting delicate issues, works such as Maurizio Cattelan’s film. Adults have much harder time dealing with such pieces. This is a challenge. Therefore, art education relies on the building blocks of form, openness and creativity.

Have any emotional, memorable situations happened during any of your educational projects? I have had a lot of such experiences. I have been teaching since I was a university student. Each stage came with something unique. When it comes to my recent projects, I had the pleasure of teaching a class called There Was a City, which accompanied the exhibition Once We Were (curators: Dorota Krakowska, Anna Bujnowska) organised by BWA Tarnow and the Regional Museum in Tarnow. The exhibition referred to the nostalgia after the world, the town that no longer existed, it talked about the Jewish community. I taught a class for children aged 6-10. It was the first time that they had participated in such a project. I admit it was very emotional – to be able to show them the exhibition, to talk about what they see, what they feel, and then to let them create their own vision of the town that no longer existed. Their openness and tolerance was incredible. And these features are scarce in our times. I would also like to mention one more project connected with this exhibition that I am working on. The Forgotten Archive project will, I hope, surprise our audience and help them discover and experience the history of Tarnow under occupation, as well as understand why this place is so filled with emptiness and nostalgia. The work is difficult because it is full of emotions. After all, in a way I am ‘touching’ the stories of individual people that are no longer with us.

Why do you work in art education? Because it is fascinating. It lays the foundations of sensitivity, creativity, it opens people up and stirs their imagination. As I have said before, I have been an educator ever since I was a student of history of art at Jagiellonian University. I started as a tour guide at the National Museum in Krakow. It was a wonderful experience. To be able to talk with the audience, to help them make discoveries, to show them things they did not notice at first glance. And thus I became an art history teacher at a fine arts high school in Krakow. Afterwards, I was looking for art workshops for my young children in Tarnow, and when it turned out there were not any, I invented them. This is how the Art Workshop (BWA Tarnow), was born. The classes combine history of art with creative, artistic tasks.

MARTA GAJ (b. 1986) – m.A. In history of art, for the last four years she has co-ordinated the educational programme of the gallery of the international cultural centre in krakow.

What is, in your opinion, the most important building block of a successful teaching process? I think there are two crucial elements that decide whether an educational process is successful or not. First of all, there is interdisciplinarity, i.e. the broadest possible presentation of a given topic in the context of other, sometimes seemingly very distant domains. In my work I always encourage others not to be afraid of combining visual arts with the humanities or even mathematical and life sciences. Only by adopting this approach can we guarantee a broader understanding of the work of art itself, as well as its entire background of meanings, stories and references.

Openness towards the interpretations of the viewer is the second crucial element of the process of educating about art and culture. I try to follow the principle that there are no wrong, funny or dumb answers. Everyone has a right to read art subjectively, in reference to one’s own experiences, so any kind of generalising or presenting the one and only right interpretation trivialises the very meaning of the artistic message.

Why is art education unique? First of all, art education requires undertaking a vast array of very different activities in order to convey a piece of knowledge in the best possible way. Educators meet with a broad spectrum of viewers of different ages, knowledge, professions, interests, etc. This dynamics means that the educator must be very flexible, versatile and creative. Art education cannot be very predictable, which requires the educator to be able to react quickly and to be fluent both in teaching and in terms of actual knowledge.

Have any emotional, memorable situations happened during any of your educational projects? The effects of educational projects quite often surprise me, usually in a positive way. I do think that encounters with unusual groups are the most memorable, for instance when you work with children with psychological disorders, people from nursing homes or prisoners visiting the gallery. Meeting viewers for whom this contact with a cultural institution is a huge, one-off, and quite often the very first such event in their life, provokes reflection. Usually these people are very interested in the class, they are committed to their creative work, they are open and grateful. But if I were to mention just one experience of this type, it would be a street art workshop for seniors. It was attended by elderly participants, quite often with serious physical and social disabilities, residents of a nursing home. For them, to be able to paint something on the wall of the New Theatre was a great honour, which they expressed through their sincere gratitude and emotions.
Why do you work in art education?
To me, there is nothing better than being able to shape someone’s perception of reality. Educating, transmitting knowledge, opening other people’s horizons are all two-way, positive processes. The energy and commitment that you contribute to the education process come back to you with double the force, giving you motivation to pursue further projects and actions. And when you can combine this sort of work with being surrounded by art, your job becomes a fascinating adventure.

Monika Dylewiska (b. 1980) – a graduate of the Faculty of Painting, Academy of Fine Arts, the Publishing School in Krakow and the Management Programme of the University of Warsaw. She is the author of educational programmes accompanying temporary exhibitions, family workshops, art re-interpretation projects of fine arts students and numerous educational initiatives at the National Museum in Krakow. A co-author of the Report on the State of Museum Education in Poland [NIMOZ 2012].

What is, in your opinion, the most important building block of a successful teaching process? I am not sure if I am able to choose just one, specific element. The idea itself is definitely crucial. When an idea is formed in your mind, you need to think about whether it will be difficult or easy to put into action (a lot depends on it) and start planning. A lot also depends on whether you are working on your own or on someone else’s idea, and how much you actually believe in it. In my experience, nothing is impossible. Everything depends on how much you want to put a given idea into action. If I were to enumerate the most important elements of an educator’s work, it would definitely be planning and evaluation (you learn best from the mistakes made by yourself and other people). Why is art education unique? I strongly believe that teaching at a museum is an art, a creative pursuit. Our top priority is to present the context of art set within other domains, to help visitors better understand and interpret the artworks. Educating at a museum consists first of all in helping viewers achieve a profound, individual experience of a given work of art.

Education ‘about art’ or ‘through art’ is a process first (just as any other element of teaching). Its unique character may apply more to the place in which this education takes place, although we use the same methods regardless of whether we teach about the latest art or ancient excavations.

Have any emotional, memorable situations happened during any of your educational projects? In my eight years of working as an educator at a museum I have had many emotional encounters, when people rediscovered works of art or the museum as such or when we exchanged our rich experiences. I especially remember one workshop, during which we painted on glass after learning about Zofia Stryjeńska’s art. An older lady that came to the museum with her granddaughter for a long while could not be convinced that she could paint an image. When she finally gave in and sat down to the glass sheet, a brush in her hand, the effect she achieved surprised her so much that she started crying. Up to that moment, she had believed that manual or creative workshops were not good for her because she lacked so-called talent. This unofficial form of teaching about art creates an environment in which people, young and old alike, open up, start speaking about their experiences and memories that enrich the context of the educator’s work.

Why do you work in art education? It also started by pure coincidence. The museum accepted my internship application when I already graduated from the Academy of Fine Arts and I was sent to the education department. I later started to explore this area more deeply and to reflect upon the idea of education at art museums. I think that educational work connected with art requires a lot of creativity and courage and lets you be your own self, and its effects are very rewarding. I also treat it as a sort of mission. I would like people in Poland to take part in cultural activities, especially at museums, more often, and understand the message of both old and contemporary art.
Explore your creativity! – encourages the Mac App Store, an online distribution platform with applications for Apple computers. The slogan advertises a long list of apps for “artistic” activities: editing photos, composing and mixing music, making animations, writing movie scripts or novels. The prices vary but they are generally quite affordable. Scrivener, software for writers, costs 20.99 euros. If you wanted to buy Final Draft, a programme favoured by Hollywood screenwriters, you would have to fork out 104.99 euros. But apps such as djay or Mixed In Key Mashup used by professional DJs cost only 8.99 euros.

In recent years the app market has been developing rapidly. This is due to the fact that computers are getting cheaper, smartphones and tablets are becoming increasingly popular and, last but not least, the biggest market players have consolidated their distribution channels: Apple launched its App Store and Google – Google Play. All this means that more and more apps are being created and their prices are getting proportionately lower. A decade ago you had to pay almost 3,000 dollars for professional photo editing software whereas now you can use it for 80 dollars a month (i.e. less than 1,000 a year). And if you limit yourself to the most basic functions, you can enjoy it for free. Sophisticated tools, the mastery of which used to be a token of professionalism, have now been reduced to simple, user-friendly applications that can run on mobile phones. The popular Instagram is a case in point – apart from being a photo-sharing and social networking service, it also serves as an app offering its users a number of artistic filters that can be applied to photos. Lower prices and the simplicity of use mean that tools that were once available only to professionals are now enjoyed by millions of users. As a result, in their free time and without any prior training, amateurs can achieve results that in the past seemed limited to professional designers, graphic artists, photographers, composers, music producers, movie and animation makers. The oft repeated dictum of ignorant viewers who, facing works of contemporary art, say: “I could have done it myself” has become the cornerstone of the global market with an estimated value of between 20 and 50 billion dollars (including games). Besides, the promise to join the ranks of professionals is now a heavily overused advertising strategy. Become part of a friendly and helpful community of professional and aspiring photographers – tempts Rookie (photo editing software).
The character of all these actions! Why do millions of people all around the world upload movies on YouTube, post edited photos on Instagram or send each other anonymous GIFs made from converted movie frames? As Jay David Bolter, one of the most eminent Internet theorists rightly points out, the mere availability of a medium does not yet explain why people use it. According to Bolter, it is more important to explain why a particular medium gets chosen over others. Undoubtedly, the key word for understanding the global proliferation of Internet art is "creativity". Explore your creativity! - calls Apple. Shoot, edit, and get creative with your photography using unique filters and effects - encourages EyeEm (yet another app for editing photos). Make creative videos thanks to Vine - recommends a reviewer from komorkomania.pl. Indeed, "creativity" is nowadays ubiquitous and the word features especially strongly in job advertisements. It seems that creativity is indispensable for finding any kind of work, not only in the so-called creative industries, such as culture, media, education, advertising, and tourism. You have to be creative also in customer service, accounting, transport and commerce. Now no one has the luxury of not being creative. But what is creativity? According to Wikipedia, creativity (from the Latin term *creatio* meaning "to create, to make") is the process of producing something that is both original and worthwhile. Creativity has become a new religion in developed societies, a Holy Grail for corporation workers. It has to be said that the creativity offered by popular Internet activities is extremely easy. How do software producers, as opposed to Wikipedia, define it? In their understanding, creativity is limited to choosing an appropriate filter from among those prepared by programmers or to putting together a 7-minute movie based on the ready-made format. Huge simplification of professional tools, which enabled amateurs to use them without laborious training, has in fact restricted their freedom. This is why, looking at the huge amounts of materials published online, we get an impression of unexpected - since it has been repressed - repetitiveness. Colonising human creativity, which happens both at work and at home, does not leave space for any creative pursuits not serving the needs of the market. Tempted by becoming online artists with millions of people watching our works, we lose interest in what really needs our attention, i.e. the conditions in which we live. For creativity is not only a job requirement, it is also a reward pushing us to willingly sacrifice our own interest on the altar of the market, provided we are later able to turn our experience into an animated GIF.
This reminiscence from Jerusalem served as the motto for the cooperation established by Marek Chlanda and Elizabeth Brödin. Together, they prepared Dzień dobry / Buenos Días, a performance whose bilingual title testifies to the collaboration and mutual influences between the artists. The initial idea for the project was based on the naïve assumption that since sculpture lacks vitality, since it is deprived of the energy that emerges from a meeting of two bodies, artists should simultaneously animate sculpture and “sculpturize” movement. The first of the intended series of performances called the Alphabet was to be staged in daylight only. Its choreography was aimed at bringing out commonalities but also showing the differences between movement that is present in dance and sculptural immobility. Initially, the artists just observed each other. Elizabeth prepared her choreography watching Marek’s sculptures, which he made inspired by the dynamics of her body. Everything stated from the analysis of simple movements, from a real life observation and freed it from the initial inertia, has causative power. By putting a mask on the dancer’s head he initiates a conscious creative process.

The embryonic phase changes into the exploratory one. The mass is flexible. It begins to experience space. Using its limbs, it explores that which restricts its movements. The body, whose materiality has become much more pronounced thanks to the tight costume, explores the space around it. The shape of the mask and movements of the head direct its dynamics. The body immediately takes up a stance in relation to the wall, becoming perpendicular to the surface. Through this, the energy becomes dynamic, it appropriates space. Force and energy accumulated in the previous phase to define the space, acquire a material form. The audience sees the emergence of a sculpture which is still crude and unfinished but thanks to this - dynamic and full of potential. Both the sculpture and the dancer are entangled in movement. They move and dance. They are a pair and yet they compete with each other. In the end, the balance of power shifts towards the dancer who takes over the mask and again unites with the form. Finally, she freezes.

The artist intervenes in the space of performance. He delimits it with vertical and horizontal forms, thus subjugating the primordial force. Taking off the dancer’s mask, the artist initiates movement. Not without resistance, she stands up, as if finding her inner tune for this particular moment. Her movements are no longer free - she is now fettered by the form, which, paradoxically, proves both her strength and her weakness. The work is done, it is standing ready on a plinth. It commands respect but also signals the end. Expression has been explicated through the final shape. From this time on the dance is no longer creative, on the contrary: the force does no longer exert any influence. The huge effort is about to reveal the cruel truth because all creative efforts have ended. Only the artist’s heavy breathing indicates how tiring this has been.

Dzień dobry/Buenos días depicts creation, the birth of a sculpture and the emergence of its essence. It is a hymn to the primordial energy which shapes life. The first stage consists of the struggle with shapeless mass. The second involves modelling, determining shapes also in space. Energy becomes dynamic, it appropriates space. The last stage is the presentation of the final product. The work is done. This performance is a phenomenal ode to beauty hidden in mass as well as the praise of life symbolized by constant movement.
The premiere of Dzień dobry/Buenos días took place on 20 April 1995 in the winter garden of Rezydencja „Księży Młyn”, Museum of Art in Łódź.


In 1995 in Łódź Museum of Art together with Elizabeth Brodin you staged Dzień dobry/Buenos días. The performance was photographed by Mikołaj Smoczyński. This was probably the only time Smoczyński documented work by other artists. How did it come about?

In the summer of 1994 I was on a sculpture camp in Orońsko with Elizabeth. We were rehearsing our performance developed in Baitz, Germany. Mikołaj was among the participants. After hours, we spend a lot of time together – we had a lot in common. Our work (Elizabeth’s and mine) was done in secret, behind closed doors. No one knew what we were up to and I did not envisage any open rehearsals. Mikołaj, however, somehow managed to get a sneak preview. One day the three of us started talking and he asked whether he could come to our rehearsal with his camera. He promised to be invisible…

And so he came, sat and completely forgot about talking photos. Afterwards, he gave Elizabeth some feedback about the beginning of the performance. And although normally he does not document someone else’s work, he offered us a short photo-shoot of precisely the first three minutes of Dzień dobry/Buenos días. This was simply because Mikołaj assumed a different point of view, he focused more on registering the exact position of the body.

How much artistic freedom do you think he had taking these photos?

It seems to me that during the first session, the one in Orońsko, he gave himself full freedom. He was intrigued. During the second one, in Łódź, he decided to be neutral and diligent. Once, after many years, he told me that out of all our adventures together, that one was the most romantic.

Dzień dobry/Buenos días is not the only example of your ephemeral actions. This type of art can often survive only thanks to cooperation with photographers. Did you want such a record also of your other projects?

Cooperation with Mikołaj was unique. Moreover, working with someone, you have to take into account their expectations (e.g. they might want some document of ephemeral activities they engage in).

Our performance, like many other of my ventures, followed a strict plan that did not allow for any improvisation (we worked on it for 2.5 years) and it was addressed to a perceptive, focused audience. It could easily be repeated in an almost unchanged form. This is why, if I envisaged any documentation, it had all been prepared with the camera in mind. Always without the audience. During my plays and performances filming or photographing was always prohibited. This was because of concentration. Anyway, this is a separate issue which we have no time to discuss. And my approach is rather outdated and would probably not be understood by many.
W każdym z siedmiu rzędów jest jeden wzór, który różni się od pozostałych trzech. Poszukaj go i skreśl czerwoną kredką.

projekt: Katarzyna Wojdyła

ODPOWIEDZI
to educational materials by Katarzyna Wojdyła

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