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A professional summary

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## **Doctoral degree:**

Conferred on May 11th, 2009 by the Board of the Faculty of Textile and Fashion of the Strzemiński Academy of Fine Arts Łódź in the field of visual arts, artistic discipline – design. Title of the doctoral dissertation 'The Image of Man, Between the Reality of an Image and a Trace', dissertation supervisor: Assistant Professor (second degree qualifications) Małgorzata Siwek, Professor of the Strzemiński Academy of Fine Arts Łódź

## **Professional career:**

From 2004 to 2008 employed on a half-time basis as an assistant at the Faculty of Industrial Forms in the General Artistic Department of the Strzemiński Academy of Fine Arts Łódź.

From 2008 to 2010 employed on a full-time basis as an assistant at the Faculty of Textile and Fashion in the Department of Textile at the Strzemiński Academy of Fine Arts Łódź.

Since 2010 until now employed as an Assistant Professor at the Faculty of Textile and Fashion in the Department of Textile at the Strzemiński Academy of Fine Arts Łódź.

Since 2011 until now employed as a lecturer at the Postgraduate Studies, course: Stylistation, Arrangement and Interior Decoration at the Strzemiński Academy of Fine Arts Łódź.

## **Selected artistic achievements:**

In accordance with the formal specifications I chose the cycle of works 'Beyond the Horizon', presented on an individual exhibition under the same title in the Manggha Museum of Japanese Art and Technology, as aspiring to fulfill the requirements defined in Art. 16 Paragraph 2 of the Act of March 14<sup>th</sup>, 2003 on academic degrees and academic title and degrees and title in art (Journal of Laws No 65, section 595 as amended)

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*Artistic creativity – in my opinion – has its source in intrinsic human need. By using particular means of expression artists make a choice, by using a specific technique they find a possibility of bringing a work to life.*

Janina Tworek-Pierzgalska

### **I. My Path So Far.**

My artistic work has never developed in a steady and linear manner. It is rather a path branching out in numerous directions, resembling a net. Many works created at the same time differ in the approach and subject matter. In each case I search for different, adequate forms of representation, means of artistic expression including technique, although I work within the range of the same medium. Conducting a study based on chronology is difficult in the case of my artistic work, but I find common elements which are manifested also in coming back to certain subjects. These connections will mark the direction of the text to demonstrate different stages of my search, the origins of the explored issues and creative challenges. The first stage which followed my graduation includes discovery of new contexts for the elements of reality used by me, and in time – creation of new ideas for construction of planes and structures where light becomes one of the creative elements.

When I search for the answer to the question why medium of paper became my domain, I must admit that chance played an important role in my choice. I came to Łódź to study textile art at Professor Aleksandra Mańczak's studio, where Associate Professor Ewa Latkowska-Żychska was the assistant. They had both been students, and later, when Polish textile art gained its greatest fame, assistants to Professor Janina Tworek-Pierzgalska. However, reality turned out to be different. When I arrived, Professor Ewa Latkowska-Żychska was no longer connected with the Tapestry Studio. She was running open workshops of hand-made paper, and I, a first year student, could choose the textile art specialization only during my second year. This is how I first found myself in the Handmade Paper Studio. I studied under Professor Latkowska-Żychska's guidance for five years, choosing her studio as an elective course, as at that time there was no other possibility. I also studied textile art within the framework of my first specialization and printed textile as my second specialization. In time, specializations were changed and finally, in 2002 I defended my diploma work at the Faculty of Textile and Fashion of the Strzemiński Academy of Fine Arts Łódź by realizing printed textile projects. The technical skills which I had acquired at the Decorative Print Studio proved to be important in my artistic work performed after graduation. At that time I was mainly interested in the possibility of

transferring an image onto a paper surface for it to become its integral part and permeate its structure. I experimented with direct printing techniques; I used transfer and photography techniques. All my works of that time are a reflection of that pursuit. In time the form of my works changed, I went beyond the limits of the flat surface, I introduced relief and object. The subject matter of those pieces was connected with what was immediate to me – I became the starting point for ‘tales of human beings’ and their relations with the world (‘Spheres’ 2006, ‘Balloons’ 2005, appendix 8), their loneliness (‘tea-time’ 2006, appendix 8). I was particularly interested in the face, home of the basic senses, which demonstrates the first results of contacting with the rest of the world and which communicates psychological states. It is a screen which shows internal experiences. The face is a symbol – of human suffering, human joys, human life and human pursuits. When referring to internal landscapes, psychological states and emotions I used my own face as it was closest to me and always ‘at hand’. It was also an attempt at getting to know myself, not only by introspection but also through appearance, behaviour, facial expression and gestures. To my mind, this peculiar kind of narcissism was never an expression of vanity, egocentrism, complacency or self-adoration, but it reflected turning to the self. To quote Plotinus being ‘monos pros monon’ – being alone with him alone.<sup>1</sup> Being alone against oneself marks the individuals’ inner space and defines their subjectivity. If it is love of oneself, then it is the one which through self-introspection finds its reference point and attitude to reality. Psychological experience is the most important source of cognition. Jung says ‘Psychic existence is the only category of existence of which we have immediate knowledge, since nothing can be known unless it first appears as a psychic image. Only psychic existence is immediately verifiable. To the extent that the world does not assume the form of a psychic image, it is virtually non-existent.’<sup>2</sup>

As I see it, art is an attempt at communicating and transforming experiences into a symbolic, personal narration. I searched for such means of expression which would give a universal meaning to individual experience, and therefore the context in which an image was placed was also important. I was interested in the issue of linking a two-dimensional image with an object so as to create a three-dimensional work, which would have the qualities of a real thing. I imprinted traces of objects, made their imitations of paper and combined them with photography or print. The impermanence of the material enriched the works by giving them transitory quality. Paper is not a lasting material, it is inevitably doomed to slowly disappear, so it is ideal to reflect the cycle of constant metamorphoses which human beings undergo. Process, change, and consequently also time and fading away became the field for my exploration. My doctoral work ‘The Image of Man, Between the

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<sup>1</sup> Tomasz Kitliński, *Obcy jest w nas. Kochać według Julii Kristewej*, Cracow: Aureus, 2001, p. 72.

<sup>2</sup> *Collected Works of C.G. Jung, Volume 11: Psychology and Religion. West and East*, ed. Herbert Read et al., Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1975, p. 769 (Polish version qtd. in Teresa Grzybowska, *Portret. Funkcja – Forma – Symbol. Materiały Sesji Stowarzyszenia Historyków Sztuki*, Toruń, 1986, ed. Anna Marczak-Krupa, Warsaw: PWN, 1986)

Reality of an Image and a Trace', which I defended in 2009, became the crowning achievement and at the same time a closure<sup>3</sup> of a certain stage. As part of the dissertation I presented a set of works entitled 'Not Yet, No Longer' (appendix 8). Once again, my personal reflection became an incentive to discuss the subject of transience, my struggle with things impossible to express – the need to solidify presence, a trace of existence which records the image of life. For me, at that time, self-portrait served a magical function of capturing it.

What became significant was the correspondence between the person and the reflection and the extent to which I could interfere in the reality of that reflection so as not to make the message illegible. Balancing on the verge of visibility of an image placed the emphasis on all things 'in between'. Also here the context in which I placed the image of the face was important. White canvass impressed in the paper matter in a symbolic manner referred to individual fate extending between life, its meaning, suffering and evanescence. As I had done before, I applied photography. The cyanotype technique which I used entailed developing a method of transferring the image onto a particularly hygroscopic handmade paper, and this in turn required paying special attention to the process of papermaking itself. As a result of a number of experiments I devised a recipe and a technique thanks to which I was able to control the exposure process and remove chemical residues without deep immersion and rinsing in water paper which as a rule is made without the application of glue. I believe that it was then that I learned to consciously handle the paper matter and master it. This experience also convinced me that handmade paper is more durable and stronger than it might seem.

I come back to some themes, but when I do so, I give them a new form and use a different approach. Almost simultaneously with creating 'Not Yet, No Longer' I continued my work on the cycle 'Mona Lisa' and 'The Soul of the World' (appendix 8). While 'Mona Lisa' still dealt with the issue of correspondence between a person and an image, 'The Soul of the World' emphasizes all that is visible around. Examining oneself turned into contemplating the world around me. I created 30 pieces, paper tissues on which I used cyanotype to transfer images of places, frames captured and observed in puddles. In this unique diary I tried to record and convey the enchantment with the beauty of ordinary, seemingly banal landscapes – landscapes which construct my world. The beauty which surrounds me is the beauty reflected in the surface of the water. Therefore, the perceivable world still has for me something of Narcissus' reflection. Light, which is the originator of the reflection, permeates the whole universe and then encompasses it, giving its soul back to it.<sup>4</sup> This simple enchantment with the world, although in a changed shape, will return in my works 'Abyss' (2012, appendix 8) and 'Coordinates' (2013, appendix 8). It seems to me that observing myself was a transition stage and it directed my thoughts to more general reflections.

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<sup>3</sup> I use my self-portrait once again in my work 'Full Moon' prepared for the 12th International Exhibition of Textile Art in Gata de Gorgos in Spain in 2015; that subject is further discussed in the text.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Tomasz Kitliński, *Obcy jest w nas. Kochać według Julii Kristewej*, Cracow: Aureus, 2001, p.73

I would risk saying that in my case 'without a face it was impossible for me to see the world'. I had to learn about myself; the self-exploration which accompanied me during the creation of consecutive works was a tool for developing my consciousness. It determined my attitude towards the surrounding reality which was a potential source of inspiration.

In 2010 I began working on 'Unbemalte Personen' (appendix 8), which in my view continues to explore the issue of belonging to a particular set and of categorization in the context of individual existence. This is a subject which I had earlier touched on in 'Spheres'. The work consists of several hundred small rectangular elements made of paper which present human figures placed in a line. When arranged together, they create a big-format relief surface, clearly divided into sequences. The modularity and mobility allows to freely decide about the size of the composition and to arrange the work according to the character and the dimensions of the exhibition space (cf. 'Magda Soboń, Iza Cieszko. Część wspólna' exhibition, ODA, Piotrków Trybunalski, 2011; 'Kontakte', Kunstmuseum Villa Zanders, Bergisch Gladbach, 2013, appendix 6). The relief which is intentionally connected to the surface of a wall in a natural way relates to and conveys its rhythm. Despite the defined rhythm of vertical and horizontal divisions, I strived for the greatest possible consistency and uniformity of structure when creating subsequent versions of the work. Viewed from a distance the piece does not reveal its contents, through the use of light it only sketches barely visible texture compositions on the surface of the wall. It creates a possibility of reading it gradually. The process takes time, first the structure of a determined order is revealed, and only after a while – the detail. The technique played no small part in building the visual effect. The paper casting is not accurate; the figures lose their realism and resemble a text. The emotional potential presented in the scenes and gestures of these small relief silhouettes is revealed similarly to individual gesture hidden in handwriting. There are many variations of the work, from the large format 'wall' variant to miniatures enriched with additional graphic elements - a shadow, or colour applied by linocut technique. I presented works from this cycle on many exhibitions in the field of textile art, paper or graphic art. 'Unbemalte Personen', qualified and awarded with a bronze medal at the International Fibre Art Biennial 'From Lausanne to Beijing' 6th International Fibre Art Biennial in China in 2010, gained a different meaning in that place – cramming in a row with the multitude of participants became an excellent opportunity to exercise the paradox of individuality in a crowd.<sup>5</sup> From that moment on, the character of the story changes: the unification emphasized previously moves on towards individual treatment of a person. I create a number of smaller works: 'Who Is Casting a Shadow, Who Is Not and Why?', 'In Water Up to the Knees', 'Toniemy, to nie my', 'In the First Place'. The miniatures are qualified for several artistic events, including the International Triennial of Small Forms of Graphic Art in Łódź in 2011 and 2014; the 7th International Biennial of Miniature Art in Częstochowa and the 2<sup>nd</sup> International Biennial of Graphic Art in Romania in 2012. The figures which earlier on covered whole planes of walls are now singled out of the relief

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<sup>5</sup> Cf. Katarzyna Sierant-Oliwa, *Magda Soboń, Iza Cieszko. Część wspólna*, Piotrków Trybunalski: ODA, 2011

crowd. Its individual representatives become main characters. I have constantly returned to these ideas and in time they have evolved and become a commentary on observed events and situations.

The relief quality of the elements composing 'Unbemalte Personen' undoubtedly brings to mind the first pictographic writing systems and other forms of recording. I continue to explore this issue in a series of works created in 2014, entitled 'Love Letters' (appendix 8). Information, the ways of encoding it and the emotional potential of handwritten record in view of tools of contemporary communication became my subject matter. The appeal of a computer as a universal machine for storing and processing information as a matter of fact depends on the existence of a universal language based on a binary system which records information and which can be processed in a mechanical way<sup>6</sup>. I chose a particular text, a love letter sent by e-mail, which was encoded to reach the addressee in a form of words carrying emotions. One touch of the keyboard – one letter – 8-bit code (byte). It is a symbol in a language comprehensible for computers, equated with a letter as an 8-bit code is often used to represent signs. The acquired numerical code was a base for cutting out a matrix. The simple system resembled the manner of preparing perforated cards where 1 stands for a perforated and 0 for unperforated spot. By applying the technique of casting paper forms which I devised, I created a relief – a composition of convex dots on the surface of a sheet of paper. The first series of works retained the order emerging from the text. The composition stressed the rhythmic quality, revealing some deeper essence of information as a specific visible reality. It also possessed artistic potential though it was detached from any emotion. Therefore, when searching for other visual means for expressing emotions I combined the fragments into a new structural, visual and semantic form. I was more interested in the composed structure itself than in staying faithful to the text. The structure in the large format works of the 'Love Letters' cycle became a field for research on other possibilities of expression by means of these simple signs. The contents of the letter lost its meaning in favour of visuality which was constructed anew, and uncertainty arose as to the source and meaning of the title of the work. Moreover, 'Love Letters' ended a one-year long research work on developing methods of casting paper forms, a project financed by the Ministry of Science and Higher Education which I carried out between July 2013 and August 2014 (title of the research work 'From A4 to 3D – Developing Methods of Casting Paper Forms'). To create the works I used machines which were constructed and improved for the purposes of the research project: a Hollander beater, paper pulp complementing device and vacuum table, which are required in paper conservation. The authorial manner of using the machines to restore paper and the results of the research enabled me to give a lecture and to share the outcomes of my work with the participants of the IAPMA Congress in Fabriano, Italy in July 2014. In 2014 and 2015 I presented the cycle on an individual exhibit of research effects at the Odnova Gallery in the Strzemiński Academy of Fine Arts Łódź and several collective

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<sup>6</sup> Cf. Kazimierz Trzęsicki, *Leibnizjańskie inspiracje informatyki* <[logika.uwb.edu.pl/KT/Leibnizjanskie%20inspiracje%20informatyki.pdf](http://logika.uwb.edu.pl/KT/Leibnizjanskie%20inspiracje%20informatyki.pdf)> (Dec 12, 2015).



exhibitions among which I will mention the competitions: 'Paper Global III' in Germany, 'Extreme Fibres - Textile Icon and the New Edge' at the Muskegon Museum of Art and the Denno Museum of Art in the United States and once again, the Biennial 'From Lausanne To Beijing' 8th International Fibre Art Biennale in China.

In various periods I simultaneously applied different strategies to enrich the language of my artistic expression to find new possibilities of the medium and ways of development. In 2007, so at the time when I was still absorbed in introspection based on my physical appearance, I created the first of the works, 'The Moon', which opens the cycle aspiring to fulfil the requirements of a habilitation work. In 2009, 2011, 2013 and 2015 I completed subsequently 'The Sun', 'Venus', 'Mars' and 'Pluto'. They were created simultaneously with other works, and were enhanced by experience gained during solving visual and technical problems encountered during my work on other realizations. This is how from a perspective I perceive the role of such pieces as 'Abyss' (2012), 'Coordinates' (2013) and those which were created as an answer to themes of particular exhibitions, e.g. 'Island' (2014) , 'Full Moon' (2015) or 'Wave of Longing' (2015) (appendix 8). In my view, especially the last of these was a beginning of a new path. I am also aware of the fact that it is impossible to be born as an artist without earlier trials and errors and therefore the choice of works I present in part III includes also pieces which seem to me less successful but, nonetheless, important for my self-development.

*Here am I floating round my tin can  
Far above the Moon  
Planet Earth is blue  
And there's nothing I can do.*

David Bowie, 'Space Oddity'

## **II. 'Beyond the Horizon'. A Description of the Habilitation Work.**

'Beyond the Horizon' is a cycle of works including, in succession 'The Moon', 'The Sun', 'Venus', 'Mars' and 'Pluto'. They were created at two-year intervals, in the years 2007-2015. I finished 'The Moon', the first work in the series before I received my doctor's degree, but I have included it here, because it opens the cycle and is its integral part. I presented my works under the same title 'Beyond the Horizon' at a solo exhibition in the Manggha Museum of Japanese Art and Technology in Cracow from July 15 to August 23, 2015. I submitted both the cycle and the exhibition as meeting the criteria of the habilitation achievement.

People still believe in the geocentric model of the Universe, although it is not a conviction in the sense of Ptolemean times as we all know that Universe is vast and that the Earth travels around the Sun. It is a conviction that the Earth is crucial in the understanding of the Universe, which makes us usurp the control of the world on the grounds of a false belief that humans are the crowning achievement of the Creation act while they are just its product like the rest of the Universe – from elementary particles through atoms, stars, galaxies and their clusters to the most distant parts of the Cosmos. And just like them, a human is a product of the operation of natural forces, an arrangement of physical fields, a system of complex interrelations, a thickening of cosmic information and its synthesis<sup>7</sup>. The Universe is a network of mutual interlinks. Its distant parts influence the invariability of conditions which we have to handle every day, and if they disappeared the world would certainly cease to exist. Even the simple observation of sea tides clearly proves that we were, we are here and now, and will always be dependent on the changes which occur in the Universe. Our everyday experience, even that reaching to the depth of the smallest details, seems so strongly integrated with the large-scale features of the world that it is almost impossible to treat them as separate<sup>8</sup>.

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<sup>7</sup> Michał Heller, *Wszechświat jest tylko drogą*, Cracow: Znak, 2012, p. 75

<sup>8</sup> Fritjof Capra, *Tao Fizyki*, Cracow: Zakład Wydawniczy Nomos, 1994, p. 211

I like to think that the Cosmos is orderly<sup>9</sup>, and we are a part of it – ‘we are an element of the Cosmos – an element as understood in Greek philosophy: a chemical element, a force of nature, the basic component. The Cosmos begot us and is in us. The limits of the Cosmos run within ourselves’<sup>10</sup>. Basic particles of chemical elements and even the lighter elements which construct the human body came into being in the very first minutes after the Big Bang. Most probably the synthesis took place inside some gigantic star, thus continuing the process of creation of the phase of the world which we know<sup>11</sup>. This knowledge fills me with inexplicable optimism; it is a guarantee of meaning, as even death ensures participation in the cosmic structure. The meaning does not necessarily imply understanding, it may be a matter of faith, but even faith requires justification. As confirmed by science, the material which composes me links me with the Universe. I am connected with its beginning, I was born of its laws, I have evolved, and the creation of the Universe is my root cause. Without this source my life, at least in its basic dimension, lacks justification<sup>12</sup>. But I am not free from dilemmas. Perhaps it is a coincidence and I am merely a by-product of necessity resulting from hidden parameters enforcing the absolute imperative on the history of the Universe and the history of human kind?<sup>13</sup> I depend on it to no lesser extent: on the history of human kind, its culture and civilization – they determine my life as strongly as the laws of physics. The history of mankind has its source in the history of the Universe, whose fate is inscribed in the history of humanity. Yet absorbing one’s own culture is a process which shapes personality. It is accompanied by the ability to think about the world and one’s own existence, to make choices and to search for meaning. This meaning is discovered through philosophical reflection or religion, as perhaps the Universe is only an incident in the true existence. The existence of the Universe and the existence of human beings are connected, but only the latter have a possibility to choose. They are not only actors but also co-authors of their meaning. Nature realizes what has been imposed on it.<sup>14</sup>

‘The Moon’ was first. I do not remember it clearly, as many other nights sleepless due to full moon have followed that experience, but 2007 must have been particularly difficult for me in that regard. Recurring insomnia has been haunting me for as long as I can remember. This experience was the first reason for creating the work. It was accompanied by a slightly naïve faith in the possibility of conjuring reality, as if art had the power to free me from the repeating inconvenience. Along with the failure (once again the Moon turned out to be a liar<sup>15</sup>) there came the time for expanding my interest to astronomy, cosmology and

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<sup>9</sup> Assuming that even the increasing entropy, and as a result the increasing chaos in the Universe, is in a way an order leading to its end. Its fate is determined by the order of the laws of physics. My vision of the Universe at this point coincides with the Rev. Prof. Michał Heller’s views.

<sup>10</sup> Michał Heller, *Podróże z filozofią w tle*, Cracow: Znak, 2014, p. 319

<sup>11</sup> Cf. Michał Heller, *Wszechświat jest tylko drogą*, Cracow: Znak, 2012, p. 74

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 75

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 74

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 71

<sup>15</sup> The Moon is a liar - from Latin ‘Luna mendax’ – the classic way of remembering the phases of the Moon was based on its similarity to the letters C and D. In Latin the word ‘crescit’ means ‘it grows, increases’ while ‘decescit’ – ‘it decreases’. The shape of the former letter is opposite to the observed shape of the Moon.

physics. I remain an amateur, because I am less interested in the final explanation as to how I came to Earth than in the question about the meaning, about 'what for' and 'why'. I look for the answer in myself.

Creating is a mystery, but it also contains a surrogate of the answer about the meaning of existence. When it changes into a compulsion, it gives the feeling of unity in return; a unity which is not substantial but at least intentional. This feeling of unity has much in common with the very act of creation which for me begins with choosing appropriate fibres, exploring their possibilities and limits, looking for a way to use the material to the full; experimenting up to the point when the material becomes obedient and yields to my intentions. At this stage practical skills are useful, yet creating handmade paper is not my goal but only means by which an end is achieved. The long-lasting process of constructing subsequent objects resembles meditation – the concentrated, subdued movement of the hands contributes to that. The process is long-lasting, but necessary. Along with it I create an order within myself, so as to incorporate some of that order in the work.

'Creating any orderly structure requires limitations; the more limitations the more perfect the structure. The quantity of information it includes is the indicator of perfection'<sup>16</sup>, and so it is most important for me to define and abstract the most significant qualities of created objects, such as the texture, structure, shape and colour, from the knowledge I possess. I begin to construct the form from its middle and I am in its centre. Adding new fragments, I move in spirals towards its edges. I arrange or place fragments prepared beforehand one over the other, and thus I create a whole – a structure enclosed in the shape of a circle. A circle is an exceptional form; in every case by dividing the length of circumference by the length of diameter, even when these are given figures, we always arrive at the number  $\pi$  - 'three point one four one...'. What is more, we do not know the value of the number; its decimal representation never ends:

'(...) All the following digits are also initial,  
five nine two because it never ends.  
It can't be comprehended six five three five at a glance  
eight nine by calculation,  
seven nine or imagination (...)'<sup>17</sup>

The circle is an archetypal symbol. I use it as a synonym of a primordial form, perfection, unity and harmony. I also agree with Richard Long, for whom 'circles have belonged in some way or other to all people at all times. They are universal and timeless (...)'<sup>18</sup>. For me as well it is a part of their emotional appeal.

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<sup>16</sup> Michał Heller, *Wszechświat jest tylko drogą*, Cracow: Znak, 2012, p. 98

<sup>17</sup> Wisława Szymborska, 'Liczba Pi', *Wielka liczba*, Warsaw: Czytelnik, 1976. (translation quoted after Clare Cavanagh and Stanisław Barańczak)

<sup>18</sup> Richard R. Brettell, Dana Friis-Hansen, *Richard Long: Circles Cycles Mud Stones*, Houston: Contemporary Arts Museum, 1996, p.30

The attempt at familiarizing with the world probably began with the Paleolithic cave paintings. The names of celestial objects in Antiquity performed a similar function. Depending on the geographical location, different mythological gods of local cultures reside on the firmament. The mysterious reality takes place just beyond the horizon of our senses; what we manage to understand and translate into our own language becomes tamed and subjugated. In modern times science has taken over this role<sup>19</sup>. I am of the opinion that art is born of these elements of reality which continuously penetrate human senses, feelings and mind. Stimuli come from the outside, they are often unpredictable and random, as was the case with a documentary about NASA mission called 'New Horizon' which I found on a shop shelf with souvenirs<sup>20</sup>.

The works are the outcome of associations formed on the border of science, knowledge and culture which for years have been a central part of the series. By using a symbol and searching for references in ancient mythology I created correlated systems – the Moon and the Sun, Venus and Mars, followed by Pluto<sup>21</sup>. I built links by means of contrast (white - black, blue - red). The whiteness of 'The Moon' refers to light as the beginning. The black structure of 'The Sun' is its corollary. It best illustrates the density of matter - something that has gone out, has burnt out, something left lifeless. Blue openwork 'Venus' reminds one of the story of the Roman goddess. The red of 'Mars', further enriched by light, represents power, vitality, energy and masculinity. The colour of 'Pluto' is a product of iron dust rusting in paper. Rust becomes a reduced sign of annihilation.

By giving up durable materials I expose the ephemerality of my work and its susceptibility to inevitable destruction. However, it is not the kind of art which determines the rhythm of changes, and the changes themselves become a part of the artistic strategy. I have chosen paper as my medium because working with something material is a cognitive process based on the sense of touch. Achieving the final form requires a careful study of means of expression offered by a chosen material, varying it gradually and giving it a different meaning. I devoted a lot of time to obtain the desired effect forming cotton or plant pulp structures ('The Moon', 'The Sun'), using heat ('Venus'), sewing ('Mars') or polishing the surface to a high gloss ('Pluto'). Coming into contact with a material has a real and symbolic dimension, it brings the gift of comprehending it, and an individual gesture preserved in it becomes a medium of communication.

Despite the actions undertaken to eliminate the material's unambiguity, the works retain flexibility typical for the initially used fibres. When combining fragments I kept an open composition inscribed in the shape of a circle. The objects can exist in a space vertically or horizontally and they resemble various landforms observed from above. The entire cycle is

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<sup>19</sup> Cf. Michał Heller, *Podróże z filozofią w tle*, Cracow: Znak, 2014, p. 282

<sup>20</sup> Space probe called New Horizon was sent towards Pluto in 2005. It travelled for 10 years and successfully ended on July 14th 2015.

<sup>21</sup> 'Pluto' is still waiting for its counterpart, but i do not know whether it will be created.

textural and is meant to appear as a homogeneous, structural surface. This concept places my works somewhere between a textile, a painting and a sculpture.

The cycle was created at unintended but regular intervals<sup>22</sup>. The works have been presented on many group exhibitions. 'Venus' received an honourable mention at the 6th International Biennial of Contemporary Textile Art in Mexico in 2011 and at the 7<sup>th</sup> International Fibre Art Biennale 'From Lausanne to Beijing' in China in 2012. I was awarded the Grand Prix at the 14<sup>th</sup> International Triennial of Tapestry in Łódź for 'Mars'. However, the whole series 'Beyond the Horizon' was presented in one place for the first time during my solo exhibition in the Manggha Museum of Japanese Art and Technology in Cracow. Before the event, I had used an empty theatre to prepare the suitable arrangement of the works. This moment was a starting point for the concept of the exhibition. The photographs taken on the occasion were later used in a catalogue accompanying the final exposition and served to prepare its visual identification. (appendix 2 and 3).

The display was largely determined by the character of the work 'Mars' which requires darkness or at least semidarkness. Only then may the colour of its red surface, lit from beneath, be fully brought out. Such presentation was not possible during one of the former exhibitions in the Central Museum of Textiles as the work was arranged with other pieces which required additional lighting (appendix 6).

In Cracow, where the whole space was at my disposal, I could experiment with light and its intensity. All other objects were lit by spotlights. Thus, they evoked the ambience of a theatre stage. The dark room calls to mind that darkness is the essence of the Universe. When arranging the space, I established the relationship between the works in such a way that a new, different quality was to be perceived from every corner of the room. 'The Sun' took the central part of the room, so the spectators were confronted with the vastness of the black matter first. By wandering among the objects one could notice further links. 'The Moon' found its place in the shadow of 'The Sun'. 'Venus' was hung diagonally and became the point of reference for the horizontally arranged 'Mars' from above of which the view on 'Pluto' spread out.

The arrangement of space made light the key element of creating the mood thus arousing the need of getting away from all external and superficial aspects of reality. It was meant to extract and intensify the effects of texture and colour and make viewers feel the energy of the matter, through which I try to capture, understand and present the nature of the Universe.

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<sup>22</sup> I only fixed the day of the opening of „Beyond the Horizon” exhibition for the moment when we finally know the appearance of Pluto

### **III. Teaching Experience.**

The Paper Studio at the Strzemiński Academy of Fine Arts Łódź where I work as an assistant was created as a consequence of a year long research programme undertaken by Karen Stahlecker, an American artist and Fulbright scholar. At first the studio functioned as open workshops of handmade paper and was available as an elective course. In time, as the Paper Studio, it became a compulsory component of the study programme at the Faculty of Industrial Forms. In 2008 the subject Medium Paper was introduced at the Department of Textile at the Faculty of Textile and Fashion. Since 2009 the studio has had a status of a degree granting unit.

I was a student of the studio almost from the very beginning of its existence and I know it was established mainly due to Professor Ewa Latkowska-Żychska's determination and dedication. She had to start from scratch. Every single thing had to be handled, including a teaching programme, technology, and above all, indispensable equipment and tools for papermaking. Professor Ewa Latkowska-Żychska's unique gift for attracting students and ease with which she builds new relationships have affected the atmosphere in the studio right from the start. In its first years, the studio gathered students who sought their own creative path and who struggled patiently to overcome difficulties with mastering the technique. The process of personality moulding resembled an apprenticeship system and students were progressively initiated into subsequent degrees of the art of papermaking. Tasks realized in the studio were constructed in such a way as to imperceptibly develop students' technical skills. I am convinced that it is the only way of working with the medium of paper and the education should be founded on the understanding of its potential. I know artists who having worked for over ten years with only one type of cellulose fibres claim that they still have not learnt enough about all possibilities which they offer because they may react differently to external factors such as temperature, drying methods, humidity or water quality. My own experience shows that such statements are true.

My path from the student to the assistant of the Paper Studio was smooth. Professor Ewa Latkowska-Żychska offered me an internship at the studio while I was still her student. After graduation, in 2002, I was employed as an assistant at the studio. I have been working there as assistant professor since 2010. Among other things, my work involves providing students with technical assistance. The tasks are related to gathering and preparing materials for use, extraction of cellulose from plant fibres through leaching and giving basic training in technology and work conditions. I develop methods of executing works at the studio and supervise the students whose projects require more advanced knowledge. It is important to mention that the students receive all the necessary materials in the studio. Over the years of the studio's existence we have managed to work out our own ways of acquiring essential materials which are not always generally available. For many years we have been supported by the Polish Security Printing Works which delivers, free of charge, wood cellulose for students' works. We also cooperate with John Gerard, an artist who sells cellulose materials including materials for making Japanese kozo paper. This enabled us to develop and teach two different methods of papermaking: the European method, also known as Western, and the Eastern method.

According to the study programme of the studio students should master the technique to a degree that allows them to control consciously the process of papermaking. Nevertheless, mastering the technique is just the basis for further exploration. 'Paper favours the analysis of nature on many levels - from the structure of its particular element to its most spectacular features. Nature, in its complexity, is an infinite source of inspiration. It serves the analysis of construction, function, the formation of structures and whole objects with all the existing relations and links. It is important to develop visual perception with the aim of being able to discern these phenomena, analyse and transform them into the language of art. Being able to make students realize that is an attempt to teach them to respect nature; and consequently, an attempt to make them reflect on the complexity of the world and our place in it as its part and shaping factor.'<sup>23</sup> The subject matter of students' tasks changes in each semester, but it is always based on the above mentioned ideas. Students from each faculty can participate in the course at the studio. Sometimes they come only out of curiosity, just to see how paper is made. Others choose paper as a means of artistic expression and then they interpret a given subject adjusting the form to their interests. They create works that can be placed somewhere in-between textile, sculpture, graphic art and product design (the photographic documentation of the students' works enclosed). From the beginning of my cooperation with Professor Ewa Latkowska-Żychska I have been involved in defining the students' tasks and taken an active part in the assessment process. I have participated in all the activities related to diploma annexes prepared in the studio. I supervised on my own two bachelor's degree diplomas. I reviewed several bachelor's and master's degree diplomas. My permanent assignments include also collecting and cataloguing artistic output of the studio. Acting on my own initiative, I prepare lectures for students, which introduce them to the history and technology of paper, and I deliver presentations on artists and their works in this field.

Gaining experience and experimenting with paper in my own artistic work leads to attempts at including them in the form of a monograph. The studio was therefore engaged from its beginning in research conducted within the framework of programmes of the State Committee for Scientific Research. The effects of the research included development of methods for making paper pulp from plants atypical for paper industry, such as banana peels, straw, hay, maize, grass etc. Almost every available vegetable material whose structure contains phloem has been tested. Methods of dyeing and ways of using the natural colour of cellulose from recycled paper have been studied in another research. In 2006 I took part in team research managed by Professor Jolanta Wagner related to the possibilities offered by blue print technique. My experiments involved the use of cyanotype on hand made paper and resulted in a series of works, including my doctoral thesis, which has already been mentioned. In 2013 and 2014 I conducted on my own a research entitled 'From A4 to 3D – an Elaboration of Paper Casting Methods' financed by the Ministry of Science and Higher Education. The project required preparation of tools indispensable for performing the task. A 17<sup>th</sup> century paper mill called the Hollander beater, now powered by an electric motor, was reconstructed in cooperation with the Museum of Literature and Printing in Grębocin. Machines typical for reconstruction and conservation of paper such as paper pulp complementing device and a vacuum table were adjusted to the requirements of the artistic activities. They became a part of equipment of the Paper Studio's Science Circle '(W) Koło Papieru' which I established in 2014. Each of the studies resulted in publishing

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<sup>23</sup> after Prof. Ewa Latkowska – Żychska, text for the BWA exhibition, Sandomierz, 2011



a booklet for students, containing a series of course lectures. Such activities are all the more satisfying as they inspire others. 'The Second life of a T-Shirt', a presentation of making paper pulp from cotton, prepared with the members of the Science Circle was included in the programme of the Festival of Science, Technology and Art in Łódź in 2015. The presentation showed a process of pulping old t-shirts using the Hollander beater, the Western method of papermaking, and a demonstration of sewing paper pouches for storing small objects. In 2015, the Science Circle also started cooperation with a group of artists from Peace Paper Project, an American organisation which uses papermaking for therapeutic purposes. Workshops are addressed to veterans, post-mastectomy patients and victims of violence to help them recover from the trauma by transforming pieces of their personal garments into works of art. The invited artists spent a week at the Strzemiński Academy of Fine Arts Łódź and offered open workshops to acquaint students with 'pulp printing' - a technique of printing on a surface of wet paper with the use of cotton pulp.

Thanks to personal contacts of its teachers, the Paper Studio cooperates with other paper related centers such as the Museum of Papermaking in Duszniki Zdrój where students were able to exhibit their works. We are currently working on a presentation to become a part of the museum's multimedia exposition of contemporary 'Paper Art' for which the preparations are underway. We also cooperate with the Kunstmuseum in Bergisch Gladbach in Germany which has a rich collection of contemporary paper art. In 2013 the students of the Paper Studio together with students of the University of Arts in Poznań took part in the Ost-West Forum (a project for dissemination of Polish culture addressed to the local community<sup>24</sup>). During a one-week stay the students prepared an exhibition of their works (I curated it with Dorota Tarnowska-Urbanik, PhD, the assistant to Professor Anna Goebel), took part in several cultural events including a meeting with Mary Bauermeister, an artist once connected with Fluxus movement, and visited museums in Cologne, Bonn and Düsseldorf. This successful undertaking resulted in another cooperation proposal. Plans are being made for next joint activity within the Ost-West Forum in 2017. Students' participation in cultural events and exhibition of their works are an element of the teaching process which allows them to better confront their artistic activity with the phenomena of contemporary art. The studio's artistic achievements include over 50 group and solo exhibitions of students' works. I know how important those first expositions are, especially the ones outside the Academy, as I also took part in such events when I was a student. In 2009 Professor Latkowska-Żychska put me in charge of organising student exhibitions. The documentation provided in the annex covers activities from the period between 2009 and 2015. The students of the studio have received many awards for their works and they are encouraged by their teachers' activities to participate in competitions and exhibitions. I attach the list of the students' achievements from the period of the last six years (appendix 7).

The studio has been accepting foreign students since Erasmus program was first introduced in the Academy in the year 2007/2008. Thus far, over 70 students from different EU countries have studied at the studio. The studio's popularity is largely an effect of the special atmosphere created by the teaching methods applied, regular work and assessments, and results from sharing the working space, exchanging ideas and learning from one another. Discovering new things, physical contact with the material and manual labour performed in

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<sup>24</sup> More at <http://www.dw.com/pl/x-forum-ost-west-niemiecko-polski-festiwal-kultur/a-16914789>

the process of creating an art object are a counterbalance to the excess of virtual reality in everyday life, and are indisputably attractive to students. One case of cooperation with a student of the University of Arts and Design Cluj-Napoca deserves special attention. After one semester at the studio in 2009, Ms Alexandra Gavrilă decided to prolong her stay at the Academy to prepare her diploma here. Bearing in mind the high quality of her works, several years later I offered her a possibility to join the Ost-West Forum Project. Her works were also presented at 'Kontakte' exhibition in Germany to which I have already referred (appendix 7). Maintaining contact with the studio's graduates is a natural process; the teacher-student relationships change their character and in some cases turn into friendships.

My tasks at the academy include organisational work. I have been a faculty internship supervisor since 2011. I have participated in the work of the enrolment office, twice as a chairperson at the Faculty of Industrial Forms. This year I have been appointed the coordinator of the 2<sup>nd</sup> international exhibition and competition Young Textile Art Triennial 2016. The first edition which accompanied the 14<sup>th</sup> International Triennial of Tapestry in Łódź in 2013 was initiated by the Head of the Department of Textile, Professor Lidia Choczaj. I was engaged in the realization of the event in 2013 and am convinced that the second edition will be equally interesting. So far we have received applications from twenty-one art academies from all over the world. This time the programme of the Triennial will additionally include a symposium on education, prognoses and possibilities of development of study courses related to the broadly understood fibre art and textile design. Both the exhibition and symposium have been already confirmed as accompanying events of 15<sup>th</sup> International Triennial of Tapestry in Łódź in May 2016.

In 2015 my alma mater celebrated the 70th anniversary of its establishment. On this occasion, together with Artur Chrzanowski, PhD, I prepared an exhibition commemorating the deceased teachers of the academy. It was inspired by a brick wall engraved with a list of names of the teachers who made the history of the place. The 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary provoked a personal reflection: how many times a day do I pass by this significant wall? Do I notice it, do I recognize the names and do I remember them? We worked on the project for a year. The exhibition consisted of archival materials acquired from museums and culture institutions in Łódź, the Polish Radio and Television and private collections. We concentrated mainly on the sources which emphasized the most personal aspects of the teachers' activity: manuscripts and published texts, films, audio and video recordings and photographs (appendix 7). The exhibition in the Kopro Gallery at the Strzemiński Academy of Fine Arts Łódź was accompanied by a display of publications, exhibition catalogues and albums including the teachers' works, which was held in the institution's library.<sup>25</sup> The exposition was a part of a bigger research project on the role of 'a multimedia archive as a method of popularising knowledge about the tradition and history of the Strzemiński Academy of Fine Arts Łódź', financed by the Ministry of Science and Higher Education. We are still in the process of finalising the research. Currently we are making efforts to obtain the materials from the exhibition for the purposes of a multimedia publication.

Apart from participating in art related meetings and exhibitions, my independent undertakings not connected with my work at the Academy include giving lectures and running workshops. In 2013 I joined the International Association of Hand Papermakers and

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<sup>25</sup> <http://e-kalejdoskop.pl/duch-sztuki.aspx>

Paper Artists (IAPMA), an organisation which has about 400 members from all over the world. Last year I became a Member-at-Large of the Association and as such, I assist the committee in carrying out their duties. The association's statutory objectives include encouraging active participation in and popularisation of paper-oriented events such as cyclic group exhibitions, meetings and congresses. Preparatory works for one of such congresses, to be held in Brazil in 2016, are being conducted in cooperation with the University of Brasília. I am actively involved in the preparations of its programme and I hope I will have a possibility to participate in the event. My plans for the future involve broadening my knowledge and interests. I am convinced that the more I know and experience, the better teacher I become for my students. I would like to reach places like Japan and India where traditional techniques of papermaking are still in use. I would like to see the old techniques applied and to learn them firsthand in order to use the acquired knowledge in my artistic and teaching work. I also intend to continue my attempts at transforming paper structures into a language of another medium. Recently I have taken an interest in ceramics. I have already done first tests using paper casts for porcelain forms, but they are still far from my expectations.

I feel fulfilled and appreciated in my work. Professor Ewa Latkowska – Żychska shows me a lot of support, at the same time leaving me freedom in choosing my artistic and didactic path. I have been presented with the Award of the Rector of the Strzemiński Academy of Fine Arts Łódź three times for my artistic achievements and activity. In 2012 I received an award of the Presidium of the Branch of the Polish Academy of Sciences in Łódź and the Confederation of the Rectors of the Public Universities in Łódź for my artistic output in the field of paper art. Twice, in 2011 and in 2014 (together with Professor Włodzimierz Cygan) I received the statuette of 'Łódzkie Eureka' granted by the Council for Higher Education and Science at the Office of the Mayor of Łódź (appendix 4).

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