



# Why Do We Need an Academy?

edited by Mieczysław Juda

Folia Academiarum

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Academy of Fine Arts and Design  
in Katowice

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My first inaugural lecture at the Academy in 1999 was titled: *On the Academy, Art and the Indelible Currency of Beauty*. Asked to give another one in 2006, I put up a strong resistance and argued that a good academic practice allows to present an inaugural lecture at one's alma mater only once in a professional lifetime. Still, the contemporary Rector, Marian Oslislo, left me no choice saying that yes, indeed, but the Academy was new, as it had become independent in 2001. I had no way out. An then, at the freshly launched Rondo Sztuki Art Gallery, I titled my paper: *Why Do We Need the Academy?* A decade ago, in 2012, I had an inaugural lecture at the Academy of Music in Katowice and struggled with finding a title, eventually I came up with: *The Electronic Layer of Culture: Virtual Realis?* The first paper referred to what bothered almost everybody on the verge of the new millennium. The enhanced, though apparently and convulsively declining post-modernism, the disturbing perspective of the pending world of computer machines, teasing new media, and soon the inter, post and non-media, also despite the omnipresent complaints about the disassembly of the existing categories of art and categories of evaluation of art – I advocated the relentless endurance of the category of beauty against all odds. The second one asked how, in the world of art as the actual *arte ciphra*, the Academy should behave, what it should be. In conclusion, it indicated that the Academy had the purpose of knowing and teaching under the existing circumstances of nature, here: mainly digital. The third lecture tried to find its way in the world, which could be anything but ploughed by the tsunami of digital communication, i.e. the transitions from the reality of atom to the reality of bit, actual time and space destruction as claimed by Elmer DeWitt and all the subsequent prophets of the new post- and transhumanistic faith, from Ray Kurzweil's singularity to Pierre Lévy's *deuxième déluge*, in which the flood of digital communication turned out endless, the state of constant sailing permanent, the Ark would not rest on Mount Ararat, because there was no longer one Mount Ararat and never would be.

So beautiful was the vision, new media promised the fresh happiness of hyperreality, the digital transfer more realistic than the set point and, in fact, utter excess, simulacrum, something with no past, only the present, pure, uninfected, ontic *ens recens*. Such was the perception of reality, based on co-experiencing with the fathers of associative information and communication: Vennevar Bush, Thomas O. Nelson and Douglas C. Engelbart. The network, i.e. the Internet, not only as another location for the artefacts generated out of the Net, but also as their actual *materia prima*. So there came about its, now domesticated, forms and activities, dedicated websites, poetry of ASCII code,

hypertext narrative, netactivism and webcast performance. It is Artur Porczak's shifart, which deconstructs all the existing ontic indicators of artwork: authorship, function, perception, foundation of being, status of interactor (creator/recipient/co-creator), place of being. The hypertrophy of the entertainment function was to become a fact, along with seeing culture no longer as a system of texts of culture, but as a collection of interfaces. The world of cyberculture, or simply the world, was to appear indelibly polycentric, polyvalent and dispersed, i.e. non-hierarchical, networking and fluid. The recent experience of the pandemic, in turn, is going to show two of its sides: Covid strips one bare until the radical reveal of what has so far been hidden, so its original sense turns out apocalyptic, and catalyses – rapidly accelerates events and processes already in motion, that would occur and probably show their specific effects. The dynamics thereof, however, has been unprecedented in scale, which makes the whole indigestible and beyond bearable, while the stress instead of a motivator becomes its own opposite in the form of a total destructor. This all is only a tip of what we are able to capture, because the density and intensity of change is no longer exponential in character, as we used to think in order to tame the fact, but triple-exponential, as explained by Andrzej Dragan, the expert at the quantum field theory and the prophet of the capabilities of superluminal observer.

Then, the question: Why do we need the Academy? asked here, at the Academy, sounds like a provocation, exceeding the circumstances of its expression. Regardless of its subversive gesture, however, it maintains its fundamental dimension and sense. It is a question about the permanent rationale of its existence, activity and all accompanying ailments. It is also a horizon, in which it should be recognised, and in which it must recognise itself. After all, it is not without significance whether the attempts of finding its source leave us within the confines of historic, royal academies of the 17th-century France, starting with the 1635 launch of Richelieu's Académie française – the first European national science institute with the mission of watching over the French language as a common heritage of French people and all its users, along with the oldest of the five Academies associated in the Institut de France. The year 1648 came with the launch of Académie Royale de Peinture et de Sculpture, or rather with a turn towards the one reviving from the Antiquity in the new times, to be named the Platonic Academy of Florence. There, Marsilio Ficino, inspired by lectures of Georgios Gemistos Plethon about Plato and supported by the patronage of Cosimo I de' Medici, would open in 1462 the Athenian Plato institute in the Carregi villa at Monteverchio and thereby recover the great Greek tradition from oblivion

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for over one and a half century. Thus updated, the tradition would encourage Ficino's friends to gather up and follow their patron's wishes to have Hermes Trismegistos' *Pyramander* and some of Plato's works translated. Presumably, it was this atmosphere that gave rise to Pico della Mirandola's great speech *De dignitate hominis / Oration on the Dignity of Man*, where we read the symptomatic sentence: *It is only you, human, who was attributed with progress, growth corresponding to free will. Within you, you carry the germen of the all-pervading life.* These grand words of renaissance humanism set the modern perspective of a human as a being and the creator of art, but also liable for the created world. Perhaps we are brave enough to face the even deeper, fontal Greek *residuum* of the Academy located in the specific order, contemplating the truth as a way of the soul towards finding itself, i.e. the actual being identical with the perfection of the Idea. This very centre, founded by Aristotle in the sycamore woodlet of the Attic hero Academos at the Cephissus River in 387, better known under the nickname Platonic, lasted for close to 900 years. Its middle period, called "Middle Academy" of Arcesilaus meant introducing the Academy to sceptic tracks. Since then, an academic person will equal a sceptic, the one who constantly and relentlessly asks questions, regardless of the obtained answer, and will always be ready to repose the only question worth asking, because its very structure does not include the presumed answer, and is the simplest of questions as well: *dia-ti* [why]. We are able, indeed, to follow the historic struggles of the Academy and its evolution, which identifies time – both *chronos* (as usual, the time currently measured, computed, the time of events, direct accounts of direct participants and heroes of the unrolling historical events), and *kairos* (the time of metaphysical rooting, in which we recognise not only the right moment, but mostly the perspective of appropriate setting, which legitimises the rationale of the whole).

In the end, we have the Academy of teaching practice as an artistic academy of public provenance with all the resulting obligations, annually worded to the matriculated entrants of studying within these walls, the credo which they confirm by

oath. Over the last century (including the one pending), we have functioned in at least three different educational models: first the model indicated by the triad: talent–*métier*–imitation, then the model consuming the Bauhaus experience with its teaching method as a formula of modern didactics, based on another triad: creativity–medium–innovation, and the third one, which arose when the Bauhaus model of art education declined in the 1970s. The expression of this decline was the term "postmodernism" – back in the 60s, everyone wanted to be modern, in the 70s, it was no longer that obvious, and in the 80s, the term "modern" ceased to be taken as a compliment and, against its name, started to be referred to the defenders of the old art. The change was reflected in the new model of education, based on the newest variant of the triad: attitude–practice–deconstruction. The notion of creativity, humbled so far, became suspicious as clearly metaphysical and ideological, thereby serving to support *status quo*, therefore unacceptable. Its place was taken by attitude. The goal of education shifted towards developing the appropriate attitude. The concept was adopted after the famous, yet now apparently archaeological, exhibition of Harald Szeemann *When Attitudes Become Form* organised at the Berlin Kunsthalle in 1969. Since then, art should be the critical attitude towards reality, and, to be more precise, the critical attitude towards the life-binding ideologies, the critique of biopower and its executive biopolitics.

In the end, all that sounds simply like the Academy's credo, worth recalling: The Academy is there to know, to know how, and to teach. Still, for nearly 600 years, we have repeated after the builder of Milan's cathedral, Jean Mignot: *sine scientia ars nihil est*. It is not that simple, however, to introduce into the daily *praxis* and under radically changing circumstances of nature. Today, our participation in what used to be virtual becoming real, while the former real must be considered the real real, by any means makes neither understanding nor action easier. On top of that, there is the current situation of art, which some recognise as a field of exciting ideas and concepts, and others as an apparent area of downfall, downfall and the sign of Western culture declining for at least a century. One and

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another will feed on what is, and the Academy, as a place of making art and tools to touch it, bears the inalienable duty to recognise these phenomena as they are. Thus its special role of launching discussions, also across professional affiliations and idealistic entanglements. Moreover, invariably, the Academy wants to be a space of cultivating friendship and nursery of free spirit, following from its ethical obligation to the world. All this with Derridean warning about the proximity between *hospitalité* i *hostilité*, which far too easily turn into hospitatility. Only our maintaining this horizon of cultivated awareness of such a mutual obligation will preserve the due sense of to know, to know how, and to teach.

I had the opportunity of airing the above words as an introduction to the conference, organised by the Department of History and Theory of Art, held on May 5th, 2022 in the seat of the Academy as one in the cycle of events within the 20th anniversary of launching the independent Academy of Fine Arts and Design in Katowice, also the 20th anniversary of launching the Department itself. The original date thereof, December 12th, 2021, was levelled by the pandemic. The sense of this meeting was not only the obvious jubilee, but also the will to hear how the Academy and its mission is seen by ourselves and others within the term of office of new authorities of artistic schools since 2020. This publication makes some of these voices

present, such is the case with the paper of Andrzej Bednarczyk, the Rector of the oldest artistic academy in Poland, and Grzegorz Hańderek, the Rector of the Academy of Fine Arts and Design in Katowice, the host of this place. There is also the voice of the engaged man of the University, Tadeusz Sławek, the Rector of the University of Silesia in the years 1996–2002, and the duet of Lesław Tetla and Paweł Mendrek, summing up the international project Parallax. And other important yet outside voices for the same cause: Robert Priseman of the University of Essex and Roman Nieczyrporowski of the Academy of Fine Arts in Gdańsk. Also the voice of Antoni Porczak of the Academy of Fine Arts in Kraków, relentlessly demonstrating the archaism of the Academy with its indelible modus of proscenity, and the one of Tomasz Miczko, the Professor-nestor, Rector of the Academy of Music in Katowice, formerly the president of the Conference of Rectors of Artistic Universities, and now the member of presidium of the Main Board of Science and Higher Education, counterpointing the problem and problematic aspects of the contemporary Academy from his own perspective. All in all, this publication is another edition of what has ever been of the Academy and its duty: a critical outlook at the world and the Academy itself.

Mieczysław Juda

Katowice, summer 2022

# Biograms

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Andrzej Bednarczyk

Artist and didactic. Studied in the Faculty of Graphic Arts and then Faculty of Painting of Jan Matejko Academy of Fine Arts in Kraków in the years 1981–1986. Graduate project supervised by Prof. Zbigniew Grzybowski in 1986. Currently the head of painting studio in the Faculty of Painting. Co-founder of the "Platforma Badań Artystycznych" art research team. Member of the editorial team of "Zeszyty Malarstwa ASP" periodic. Member of the International Print Triennial Society in Kraków and Union of Polish Writers. Holder of scholarships from the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage of Poland and Pollock-Krasner Foundation in New York. Trans-media artist. His works have been presented in over fifty solo and over two hundred collective exhibitions in twenty-nine countries. Author of texts on art and poetic texts.

Grzegorz Hańderek

Visual artist. Graduate of the Academy of Fine Arts and Design in Katowice (honours diploma from the Intaglio Studio in 2003) and University of Silesia. Since 2003, he works in his alma mater, where he heads the Interpretation of Literature Studio. In 2021, title of Professor of Visual Arts. Since 2020, Rector of the Academy of Fine Arts and Design in Katowice. Several tens of solo exhibitions and participant of more than 200 group exhibitions in Poland and abroad. Laureate of many awards and distinctions. In 2014 presented with the Silver Cross of Merit for his activity on behalf of development of culture and art.

Mieczysław Juda

Doctor of Humanities (philosophy and sociology). In the years 2001–2023, head of the Department of Theory and History of Art at the Academy of Fine Arts and Design in Katowice. Holder of a scholarship from the French government (1989–1990) IRESCO (Institut de Recherche sur les Sociétés Contemporaines / CNRS (Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique), Paris. Member of the Senate of the Academy, and its Medal Chapter. Member and yearslong President of the Management Board of the Friends of NOSPR (The Polish National Radio Symphony Orchestra) in Katowice. Editor of numerous publications and author of articles in the area of art theory, philosophy, and cyberculture.

Paweł Mendrek

Visual artist, image-maker, curator, art director, whose interdisciplinary artistic practice includes painting, drawing, photography, collage, stage design, experiments with motion pictures, and creative film making. Associate Professor of experimental film and visual narrative in the Interdisciplinary Studio, and head of the Department of Intermedia and Stage Design of the Art Faculty of the Academy of Fine Arts and Design in Katowice. In order to expand the curriculum of the Department of Intermedia and Stage Design and improve the quality of education, he is engaged as a curator and coordinator of international projects regarding the multi-level nature of artistic education, such as: Connect and Parallax since 2015 with the Chelsea College of Art, Royal Academy, London, HDK Valand, Göteborg, and locally Powiększenie for the special economic zone in Tychy. He also participated in developing didactic programmes for Culture Pro – area of theatre and film, and for Zeichenfabrik in Vienna – team building & creativitaitat, in parallel to the intensive research activity in his alma mater: Mobile Art Lab completed in 2023 with a publication On Care. A Journey into the Relational Nature of Artists' Residencies in partnership with Akademie Schloss Solitude, Stuttgart, CSW Ujazdowski, Duch Culture|Trans Artis and Verlag für moderne Kunst, Vienna, which handled the international distribution of the book.

Tomasz Miczka

musician, pedagogue, graduate of Karol Szymanowski Academy of Music in Katowice. In the years 2008–2016 Rector of his alma mater, and in the 2012–2016 office head of the Conference of Rectors of Artistic Academies. Currently, member of presidium of The Main Board of Science and Higher Education.

Roman Nieczyporowski

Doctor of Humanities, art historian and theoretician, Assistant Professor in the Department of History and Theory of Art at the Academy of Fine Arts in Gdańsk. Beside his alma mater, he lectures on art history also in the Department of Architecture of the Gdańsk University of Technology, and in Braheskolan Visingsö folkhögskolan, Sweden (under the patronage of the University of Stockholm). Member of the Management Board of Katarzyna Cieślak Foundation. Member "emeritus" of the "Trójmiasto" Alpine Club. His research interests focus around cultural, social, and political aspects of modern art.

**Antoni Porczak**

Professor of fine arts, head and founder of the Intermedia Studio of the Faculty of Sculpture (1993). Co-founder of the Intermedia Faculty of the Academy of Fine Arts in Kraków. Participant of 120 exhibitions (40 abroad), including the 43. Venice Biennale in 1988. Creates sculpture, drawing, actions, multimedia forms, installations. Creator of plain-air sculptures for the cities of: Rzeszów, Krosno, Tychy, Stary Sącz, and plain-air centres, such as: The Centre of Polish Sculpture in Orońsko, and similar venues in Germany and France. Author of academic articles on interactive media art and artistic education. Curator of multiple art exhibitions. <https://porczak.pl>

**Robert Priseman**

is an English artist, curator and collector. Works of art by Robert are held in museums around the world including the MdM Salzburg, Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney, Musée de Louvain la Neuve, Yale Centre for British Art, Guggenheim, New York, UMMA, Michigan, Honolulu Museum of Art, The Royal Collection, Windsor Castle, The New Art Gallery, Walsall, V&A and The National Galleries of Scotland. He also collects paintings by British artists he admires and owns the Priseman Seabrook Collections, which is an official Art UK Partner Collection. This first went on museum display at Huddersfield Art Gallery in 2014 and has subsequently toured to The National Museum of Poland, Yantai Art Museum, Jiangsu Art Museum, Nanjing, China Academy of Art and the Tianjin Academy of Fine Arts Museum in China.

As well as curating exhibitions across the USA, New Zealand, Poland, UK and China, Robert has given talks on British art at the University of Oxford, The Sainsbury Centre for Visual Arts, The University of Cambridge, The University of Leeds, Xian Academy of Fine Arts, Amherst College Massachusetts, Whitebox AC New York, The China Academy of Arts, The Nanjing University of Aeronautics and Astronautics, Katowice Academy of Art and Gdansk Academy of Arts, amongst others.

**Tadeusz Sławek**

graduate of Polish and English Philologies at the Jagiellonian University. Associated with the University of Silesia since 1971, Rector thereof in the years 1996–2002. Literature interpreter, translator, author and publicist. Co-author and performer of essays for voice and double-bass, with double-bassist, Bogdan Mizerski. Recently published: *Umysł rozstrojony. Próby o trylogii księżycowej Jerzego Żuławskiego* (2020), *A jeśli nie trzeba się uczyć* (2021), *Furia i szlachetniejszy rozum. Próby o Burzy Williama Szekspira* (2022).

**Lesław Tetla**

Associate Professor with the Academy of Fine Arts and Design in Katowice, where in 2009 he launched and now heads the Interdisciplinary Creations Studio. Works in painting, installation art, video art, site-specific pieces. In his art, he analyses urban environment, and is interested in the influence of architecture on its users' behaviours. Within artistic residencies, he conducted research on residential districts of i.a. Cairo, Cleveland, Detroit, North England, the island of Leros. In 2016 he was a holder of The Kosciuszko Foundation scholarship, and visiting professor at the Cleveland State University. He has also had lectures at i.a. Case Western Reserve University, Youngstown State University, Missouri State University. Initiator of many artistic projects and curator of exhibitions i.a.: Chiosc, Rondo Sztuki Art Gallery, Katowice, Space as a Tool for Shaping Social Attitudes, Muzeul Zemstvei, Chisinau, Last Shot, Silesian Museum, Katowice, Equinox, Brick City Gallery, Springfield, Lombard Bytom, CSW Kronika, Bytom.

He presented his works at numerous solo and group exhibitions in Europe, South Korea, Great Britain, United States, i.a. at Waterloo Arts Gallery, Cleveland, USA, Platform A Gallery, Middlesbrough, UK, Kunsthalle Hannover, Hannover, Germany, CREA Cantieri del Contemporaneo, Venice, Italy, ArtIstanbul Feshane, Istanbul, Turkey.



*What is the purpose of the Academy, indeed? After Wright Mills, we would say that it is to sensitise to the ability of combining “troubles” with “issues” and, consequently, the personal will not immerse us in egotism*

Tadeusz Sławek

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# Horseflies and Horses. On the Risky Occupation of Education

Tadeusz Sławek

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[...] *there is nothing like tempting the appetite and the interest; otherwise we shall produce only book-laden asses. With strokes of the birch we put a pocketful of learning into our pupils' keeping, But if it is to be of any use, it should not merely be kept within. It should be indissolubly wedded to the mind.*

Michel de Montaigne, *On the Education of Children*

## 1.

Even before the proper drama begins, Goethe is setting a stage, whereupon Faust's fate will play out. Manager's words leave no doubt: we are going to witness a spectacle. Indeed, "The posts are set, / the booth of boards completed", and people start to "push and cram in / To reach the seller's box." Since the theatre turns out to be a "booth", and even "contracted" booth (F, 13), we may risk a conclusion that the prestige of this theatre institution is not high; the theatre stage appears as an "actor" on the larger stage of society. Here is a "play within the play", hosting a debate on the character of art and its relationship with the recipient, but the question actually refers to human temporality, to whether and how the human occupies time. That is how such a question should be phrased, because it is not about how we "occupy our time", what occupations we seek in time, nor in the brutal version – how we "kill time", but whether and how we are able to go beyond a given moment in time. In other words, whether we are able to face time without succumbing to the lesser resistance providing a plethora of methods of effortless adaptation to the demands of the said time. On the Goethean stage, there surges the crowd of "motley masses" (F, 7), and the vocation of a thinking man is the role of "Magic" entertaining that crowd (F, 7).

In the society marooned and the constantly intensifying power play of interests and desires resulting from the pressure of the existing order of things, a thought should be not so much among "creature comforts", but rather *creature consolation*. The motley masses are surging "as for bread [...] in famine" (F, 7), whereby *consolation* they pursue actually consists in *indulgence*. Merry-Andrew advises Poet: "Then pluck up heart, and give us sterling coin! / Let Fancy be with her attendants fitted, / Sense, Reason, Sentiment,

and Passion join, / But have a care, lest Folly be omitted!" (F, 8) Manager and Merry-Andrew, the two figures of thinking utterly harnessed in the service of demands of time, the time confined solely to the present, in order to make life in this present maximally "streamlined", conflictless and well-adapted, are unable to understand Poet, for whom the crowd is "whirlpool forces" by means of its uncontrollable appetite for time, which the said crowd desires to absorb, appropriate, possess, consume, leaving nothing for the descendants. Poet says: "What dazzles, for the Moment spends its spirit: / What's genuine, shall Posterity inherit" (F, 7). Whoever blindly adapts to the demands of time, remains in the service of the "dazzle", edging away from what's "genuine", the truth residing in the mysterious reserve of time, which I do not rule, which has denied my claims, and dedicate myself to another time, the time-to-come, to "Prosperity".

This particular delay is unacceptable to the representatives of the world-ordering institutions, for whom time is always a certain strictly defined excerpt of the temporal continuum. Time is *chrono-metric*, and such "metricity" of time is especially accented, because it allows including time to the circulation of goods. It is the metricity that makes us believe that "time is money". We could say that in the society of "motley masses", time consists in certain compartments, filled with ready-made consumption material. The in-depth analyses of Merleau-Ponty allow the conclusion that Goethe condemns Faust to living in the society not so much interested in experiencing time, but rather in dividing, chopping and filling thereof: "It is of the essence of time to be in process of self-production, and not to be; never, that is, to be completely constituted. Constituted time [...] is not time itself, but the ultimate recording of time, the result of its passage, which objective thinking always presupposes yet never manages to fasten on to."<sup>2</sup>

Unable to manage this elusiveness of time, the order of things boils down to measurable units, empty boxes, instantly attempted to be filled in. As called by Poet, "Posterity" is a way to unseal those boxes, and that is exactly what the guardians of *status quo* will not allow. "What dreams are yours in high poetic places?" Manager asks Poet in response to his proposition of abandoning "the wild Moment in its greedy breast" (F, 7). Let us explain: It is not the moment itself that is "greedy", but the audience as a product of the

1 J.W. von Goethe, *Faust*, trans. by Bayard Taylor, The World Publishing Company, NY 2005, p. 6. Hereinafter signed as F and page number.

2 M. Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, trans. by Colin Smith, Routledge, London 2002, p. 482

society, which endlessly demands new events and objects of strongly apparent visual attractiveness. For that, Manager finds an excellent phrasing: "Chiefly, enough of incident prepare! / They come to look, and they prefer to stare. / Reel off a host of threads before their faces, / So that they gape in stupid wonder: then / By sheer diffuseness you have won their graces" (F, 8).

2.

Faust confesses: "I do not pretend I could be a teacher" (F, 21), and this particular ignorance haunts his thinking. Such "I do not pretend I could be" could be the angry rejection of the teacher's role in the society, which attaches no importance to his efforts, nor appreciates them. We could, however, hear another tone of this "I do not pretend I could be"; a much more philosophical one. It is almost an assumption, a performative act constituting the seriously taken didactics. *I do not pretend I could be*, and even – how I *should* be a teacher (pushing us further away from any certainty, and maybe supposing that it is impossible to be a *teacher* in a sense imposed by legal coordinates and pragmatics of the profession), which is the very thing inconceivable to the system responsible for the existing state of affairs. Since what happens further in the Goethe's poem is highly critical regarding this state, I assume that Faust confesses a good teacher, who can "help and convert" people, refuses to adapt *unreservedly* to the demands of techno-bureaucratic order managing education, because **it is this very reserve (not falling within any programme descriptions, job descriptions or contracts of employments) that makes it possible for him to fulfil his role well**. If at all possible to "help and convert" people, it is only by means of such *reserve*, that is when you go beyond the framework of professional obligation. *Reserve* is added value, without which being a teacher in the serious, not only bureaucratic meaning of the term, is impossible. That is what the existing order of things fails to understand, and therefore school is a source of disappointment.

3.

Still, the Goethean play within the play has another stage. The disturbances to the operative, seemingly durable and confirmed state of affairs, find a triple metaphysical interpretation. First of all, troubles with understanding the temporality of human existence and manners of dealing with the reality now constitute an inalienable element of human condition. In "Prologue in Heaven", Mephistopheles discerns the divine empathy not in solving the dilemmas of its creation, but in the inquiry about the manners of solving the said dilemmas that the creation has found by itself: "Since Thou, O Lord, deign'st to approach again / And ask us how we do, in manner kindest" (F, 14). The Lord is curiously observing how the mortals "do", how the scenic characters "do" with the situations given to them by the author. The dispute between Poet and Manager is perceived as a conflict of one, who resists, with one, who understands it his social mission to favour any manners of even the slightest resistance, who is a fragment of "how men torment themselves" on the earth, with "things, there, still bad as they can be" (F, 15).

Secondly, everything that becomes of Faust is the result of powers standing above him. *Above* in a social sense (mechanisms favouring the "free" wishes of the audience and glorifying their freedom, which actually turn out to be forms of control, providing for the audience's wishes to be met as much as rigorously contained and monitored), but also in theological one: like Job, Faust is a pawn in the game between The Lord and Mephistopheles. "Turn off this spirit from his fountain-head / [...] And him, with thee, be downward led" (F, 16) is The Lord's offer, which Mephistopheles accepts as a predictor of its success: "You'll let me triumph with a swelling breast: / Dust shall he eat, and with a zest, / As did a certain snake, my near relation" (F, 17).

Thirdly, the exchange between God and Devil, almost a paradigm of democratic debate ("It's really kind of such a noble Lord / So humanly to gossip with the Devil!" (F, 17), marvels Mephistopheles), leads to an interesting presentation of two anthropological attitudes. The Devil imputes, that The Lord's gift of reason, ill-used by humans, had complicated their already difficult fate ("Life somewhat better might content him, / But for the gleam of heavenly light which Thou hast lent him: / He calls it Reason – thence his power's increased, / To be far beastlier than any beast" (F, 14), resulted in (as recalled) cruelty of history, and caused anxious trembling to the human heart. The Mephistopheles' man is a man of

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turbulent, restless heart, a being generally incomplete, constantly undergoing the undefined and hardly predictable formative processes. *Die tiefbewegte Brust* describes man as *deeply troubled*, and its *existential depth* consists in the very disposition to be *troubled*. The Polish translator of *Faust* finds the verb “ferment” to describe the human existential condition [while the English translator uses the verb “tumult” – trans. note]; this word is absent from Goethe’s poem, but it exquisitely reflects the character of the devilish diagnosis. Its blade is as accurate, as it is critical: Mephistopheles would see the human differently, peaceful and adaptable to circumstances, but – interestingly – God approves of the negative vision of troubled man presented by Mephistopheles as his own. The Creator is offended by the homoeostatic desire of man which he treats as a certain dream, living in a dream, therefore he gives permission to the devilish intervention in Faust’s fate. And not only Faust’s: Devil is what raises anxiety and prevents the adaptation of tactic of least resistance. “Man’s active nature, flagging, seeks too soon the level; / Unqualified repose he learns to crave; / Whence, willingly, the comrade him I gave, / Who works, excites, and must create, as Devil” (F, 17).

### 4.

Devil as the awakener and the troublesome yet indispensable life-path companion, who, as an advocate of conformism himself, paradoxically becomes a teacher of resistance, here is the context, in which Faust starts experiencing his dilemmas. Inevitably, this must mean the critical reference to the society, among which he is destined to live. It is also announced by the “Prelude at the Theatre”, where the opinions presented by Manager and Merry-Andrew refer to the relationship between thinking and the manners in which thinking is used in the social exchange. Regardless of Poet’s whip-round tirade against the “motley masses”, his lines drive attention to the fundamental issue of the place science and art have in the society, which, even if constitutes more than “motley masses”, still remains unaware that giving up on cognitive impressions and experience means withdrawing from what is important in life. Paul Valéry wrote about this fact: “A townsman does not need to be the formerly so-called

philistine. It is easy to recognise a townsman [...], as such a man (or such a woman), although possibly possesses very good education, good taste, is appreciative of the pieces of art that appreciated should be, feels no particular need for poetry or art... [...]. His life is perfectly organised away from such an awkward need”<sup>3</sup>.

The questions Faust asks himself find their source in the tension between organisation and management of life on the one hand, and the significant need for learning and teaching on the other. The first of Faust’s lamentations regards the disparity between organisation of life by established institutions (such as universities), and content of life itself. The fabrication of existence consists in managing the individual’s time, so that it is allocated to certain objects at a certain moment, while the compliance with these requirements earns interest of reaching subsequent stages of legitimisation of one’s position in the social hierarchy. Faust “has studied” “Philosophy / And Jurisprudence, Medicine, / And even, alas! Theology, / From end to end, with labour keen” and is, consequently, “Magister” and “Doctor” (F, 21). While the Academy vows to equip its graduates and representatives with knowledge as a certain permanent and self-sustaining condition, Faust’s experience proves that such a promise cannot be kept. After “these ten years long” of work, the scholar Doctor exclaims that “nothing can be known”, and it is more than a classical symptom of scepticism of a thinking man. It is a much more serious matter: To what extent such “I know nothing” undermines, twofold, the social functions of a scholar. The first reason is that the progress of knowledge as a way to automatic, as it were, self-improvement of an individual and the society turns out highly dubious (Faust complains that his studies granted him no access to the “eternal, creative force”: “Alas! in living Nature’s stead, / Where God His human creature set, / In smoke and mould the fleshless dead / And bones of beasts surround me yet!” (F, 23), and secondly, such theatricalised knowledge, theatricalised – because it acts out its rituals with no access to the “eternal, creative force”, to what – as demonstrated in a moment – Faust calls the knowledge of “aught worth knowing”, continues its creation in a specific educational performance. Faust says, that he has “led my scholars by the nose” and further explains: “I do not pretend to aught worth knowing, / I do not pretend I could be a teacher / To help or convert a fellow-creature” (F, 21).

3 P. Valéry, *Pan Teste i inne pisma*, Warszawa 2019, p. 149

5. Faust combines the crisis of his own biography with the state of social orders, which are mostly responsible for this crisis in the first place. Trying to determine his place at the Academy, he localises it by rejecting one type of fear and adopting another. He is, as he says himself, "cleverer, true, than those fops of teachers, / Doctors and Magisters, Scribes and Preachers", because, he continues, "Neither scruples nor doubts come now to smite" him (F, 21). These two factors determine the manner of functioning at the Academy (as well as in other reality-ordering-and-managing institutions), and constitute a warning against disregarding their rules. Mephistopheles recommends to the advice-seeking Student to "Use well your time! [...] time through order may be won" as the easiest and least painful way to adapt not to the spirit, but the letter of the social norm which demands that his mind "to graver paces brought, / 'Twill plod along the path of thought, / Instead of shooting here and there, / A will-o'-the-wisp in murky air" (F, 78).

It is the first type of fear, enforcing compliance with the operative state of affairs. Questioning it, Faust realises the second type of fear which, unlike the former one, is no longer the fear a wasted chance of success caused by passive acceptance of orders of the prefabricated world, but the fear of a wasted life. It is a fear of a troubled heart: "wherefore my heart / Falters, oppressed with unknown needs? / Why some inexplicable smart / All movement of my life impedes?" (F, 23). While the crisis of Faust the academic is a personal breakdown, it goes far beyond an individual. Referring to the sociological imagination of C. Wright Mills, we would say that Faust finds a way to combine a "trouble" with an "issue", to merge his personal anxiety with a critical outlook at historic institutions and their work organisation and people management methods. "Troubles," writes Mills, "occur within the character of the individual and within the range of his immediate relations with others; they have to do with his self and with those limited areas of social life of which he is directly and personally aware. [...] A trouble is a private matter: Values cherished by an individual are felt by him to be threatened."<sup>4</sup> Faust's trouble is the fiasco of his life project, as he radically expresses: "No dog would endure such a curst existence!" (F, 22). "Issues," Mills continues, "have to do with matters that transcend these local environments of the individual and the range of his inner Me. They have to do with the organization of many such

milieux into the institutions of an historical society as a whole, with the ways in which various milieux overlap and interpenetrate to form the larger structure of social and historical life."<sup>5</sup>

To Faust, an issue is to recognise that what we would now call the technocratisation of professional life and bureaucratisation of participation in public life have created forms of operation which enforce adaptation to "the path of thought", and thereby rejected and marginalised those, who wish to "shoot here and there [...] in murky air." We might recognise that the Goethean sage is practising his "sociological imagination" as a quality of mind which "seems most dramatically to promise an understanding of the intimate realities of ourselves in connection with larger social realities" and, in consequence, "among the contemporary range of cultural sensibilities [...] offers the promise that all such sensibilities – and in fact, human reason itself – will come to play a greater role in human affairs."<sup>6</sup>

6. In other words, science and education as a foundation of teaching have been to a large extent subjugated by the principle of limiting the freedom of thinking not so much by means of overt censorship, but rather a more cunning way of detailing expectations and awarding meeting thereof. A symbol of such limitation to Faust is the very space of the university. Intentionally, the scene of his first meditation is set in "a lofty-arched, narrow, Gothic chamber," which Faust soon openly calls prison, let us add – the prison of (1) routinised activities and (2) slowly growing darkness. "Ah, me! this dungeon still I see. / This drear, accursed masonry, / Where even the welcome daylight strains / But dusky through the painted panes" (F, 22). Talking to Mephistopheles, Student repeats those objections: "I must avow; / I find these walls, these vaulted spaces / Are anything but pleasant places. / 'Tis all so cramped and close and mean; / One sees no tree, no glimpse of green, / And when the lecture-halls receive me, / Seeing, hearing, and thinking leave me" (F, 77). It is not only about the material indicators of open space, from which the university has secluded, although they are significant as well. What is essential, however, is the paradoxical contradiction between the academy as a place of the literal and metaphorical *light* (knowledge, cognition, wisdom), and its

4 C. Wright Mills, *The Sociological Imagination*, Oxford University Press, New York 2000, p. 8

5 Ibidem, p. 8

6 Ibidem, p. 8



overwhelming gloomy dusk *so cramped and close and mean* that the very thing the academy was constituted to cultivate – reason, leaves.

Mills describes such a situation as the rule of “academic cliques”, which not only regulate the rules of competition, but also award those particularly diligent in meeting expectations of the authorities. People adopting such an attitude “readily assume the political perspective of their bureaucratic clients and chieftains. To assume the perspective is often in due course to accept it.”<sup>7</sup> What was described by the brilliant American sociologist and philosopher of the late 1950s, a contemporary author expresses as follows: “[...] universities have transformed into abusive corporations, entangled with interests of large publishing groups and on-line enterprises, boasting with the flow of grants and profits from educational services rather than the new reveals of the truth and ideas to solve common human issues.”<sup>8</sup>

Following this line of thought, it would be justified to say that Faust desperately insists on the independent point of view, refusing obedience to the one and only acceptable perspective, which constitutes an image of the world that perpetuates the operative state of affairs. Indeed, Faust is calling for freedom (“Fly! Up, and seek the broad, free land!” *F*, 23), which should lead him far beyond the world of “drill”, the insensitive world of grades and evaluation, the world void of spirit. “no trace of mind, [...] I see but drill, alone” (*F*, 50), he tells Wagner. In the second part of the tragedy, he provides his diagnosis with a theological dimension: a mission of a scholar-teacher (who is, let us say that again, “to help or convert a fellow-creature”) is to seek redemption in the world of bureaucratic atrophy (“Am I seeking salvation among decay,” *F*, 271), re-establish the disposition of facing the reality as something unknown, and therefore unfitting in the carefully prescribed boxes: “A shudder’s the truest sign of humanity: / Though the world is such we may not feel it, / Once seized by it, we feel Immensity deeply” (*F*, 271).

What is moving is the repeated reference to spirit, or lack thereof. The spirit-less world is the creation of the educational and scientific engineering and works well enough unless there comes a deep crisis or a threat of disaster. Then, it quickly turns out that the existing procedures, efficient at regulating the course of events and moderating human behaviours according to the closely defined patterns (the Goethean “drill”), fail. Leszek Kołakowski accurately writes that “at least to part of great problems of humanity there are no purely technical or organisational solutions” and that “they require what John the Baptist called metanoia, spiritual transformation. Such a transformation cannot be evoked technically. It relies upon the acknowledgement that the roots of evil are within us.”<sup>9</sup>

Even if Faust has not gone that far in acknowledging his fault, he still clearly admits his part in damaging the world, and thus the invocation to the “spirit” is intended to reconstitute the power capable of transforming the world once a catastrophe strikes. In a while, we will see how close to the verge of disaster the world of Goethe’s archpoem has come. Again: a personal cognitive and existential catastrophe turned out to be a piece of the social-institutions puzzle. *Trouble* is inextricably interwoven with *issue*. In the scene in the Emperor’s castle throne room we learn that “They’d like to wreak a wild disorder, / Half the world has been dissolved” (*F*, 216), which, of necessity, results in the demise of institutions, still retaining their agency despite. The problem, however, is not the brittleness and instability of management agendas, on the contrary – it is their resilience to damage, ability to maintain power against advanced eroding processes within. It is worth citing a longer fragment of The Treasurer:

Wherever you go, there’s some new pup,  
Who declares his independence.  
We watch, while they carry on:  
We’ve given away our rights, and hence,  
No rights are left for us, not one.  
Our parties too, however called,  
Can’t be depended on today:  
They like to praise, and blame [...] (*F*, 217).

7 Ibidem, p. 101

8 J. Bohdziewicz, *Osiem pochwał. Szkice z antropologii myślenia*, Kraków 2021, p. 29

9 L. Kołakowski, *Jezus ośmieszony. Esej apologetyczny i sceptyczny*, Kraków 2014, p. 25

Faust has come to realise that by the power of their decisions, humans have condemned themselves to the increasingly real eventuality of living on the ruins of the former world. Invoking the "spirit" is soliciting the final means of survival accessible to human. After Wittgenstein, Faust could write that: "It is true that one should be capable of living on the ruins of houses, where one used to live. But it is hard. After all, one enjoyed the warmth and cosiness of rooms, if unaware of the fact. And now, roaming the debris, one already knows. It has become clear that only one's spirit can get warm, and one did not use to get warm by spirit."<sup>10</sup>

7.

It is such a world, where Faust experiences his anxiety a thinking human. Therefore he, possibly, is not completely honest. Expressing his criticism of the Academy, he takes not only the position of an outsider in pursuit of alternative paths of cognition ("So I've given myself to Magic art" F, 22), but also of a personally aggrieved narcissistic personality ("Then, too, I've neither lands nor gold, / Nor the world's least pomp or honour hold" F, 21). He advocates the sensitivity (to use Krzysztof Maliszewski's term) of "brittle educational acts" ("Feeling is all in all! F, 27), yet he bears a latent pretence to the unappreciative world. Knowing that, in a sense, he "failed in the world", he is also aware that the mechanisms ruling this world, in which he appeared "helpless", can be devastating and inhumane. He is also aware that he has had his share in creating these agendas of coercion (has led his "scholars by the nose"), with the underlying question about "success", "prosperity", and "social respect". Why don't we finalise this part of our considerations with summoning up Erich Fromm's warning against "pathology of normalcy", and adopt it as Faust's message. Krzysztof Maliszewski comments on pathology of normalcy as a warning "against adapting to the faulty functioning social whole. The effective tune-up to the world, which in non-human, which cripples one's complete personal development, constitutes an educational and

existential failure, not a success. This way [...] the undisturbed adaptation to the consumerist society generates individuals stricken by indifference, lack of deep interests, existential void, non-authenticity of experience, automation of activities, banality of speech etc."<sup>11</sup>

It is, therefore, necessary to have distortions, noise, obstacles on the way to the mindless adaptation to society and its managing institutions. As much as an individual should maintain the autonomy of existence and independently decide one's own fate, such distancing from institutions is absolutely indispensable. After all, "social centres of power usually do not care for independence of an individual. Governments, Churches, families, employers, teachers mostly solicit loyalty of individuals and comfort of driving them, rather than shaping subjective dispositions, which necessarily challenge the group *status quo*."<sup>12</sup> In this context, Faust's evoking "spirit" appears to be the first step towards dealing with the catastrophic condition of the world. Speaking the language of Mills: it is "spirit" that is capable of establishing a wise connection between "trouble" and "issues", critically reconcile an individual with the collective. It is clearly accentuated in the didactic mission of Socrates: "because all I do is to go about persuading you, young and old alike, not to care for your bodies or for your wealth so intensely as for the greatest possible well-being of your souls. It is not wealth, I tell you, that produces goodness; rather, it is from goodness that wealth, and all other benefits for human beings, accrue to them in their private and public life."<sup>13</sup>

Both the private and the public grow out of ethical bravery, which Socrates advocates, fully aware it does nothing to grant him followers in the circles of power. Private/personal and public/social threats must find their response not in "drill" (as Faust would have it), but in "spirit" (Plato would say it was *daimonion*, "a voice of some sort which comes, and which always – whenever it does come – restrains me from what I am about to do, yet never gives positive direction"<sup>14</sup>),

10 L. Wittgenstein, *Ruch myśli. Dzienniki 1930–1932, 1936–1937*, Warszawa 2002, p. 65

11 K. Maliszewski, *Bez-silna edukacja. O kształceniu kruchego*, Katowice 2021, p. 17

12 Ibidem, p. 61

13 Plato, *Defence of Socrates*, trans. by Benjamin Jowett, independently published, 2017, p. 44

14 Ibidem, p. 46

which is the force capable of disturbing and shaking the managing structures. Socrates sees himself as God saw Devil in Goethe's poem: He is the one, who "works, excites, and must create" (F, 17). Plato attires it in a zoological metaphor: "in case by condemning me," Socrates tells his judges, "you should mistreat the gift which God has bestowed upon you – because if you put me to death, you will not easily find another like me. The fact is, if I may put the point in a somewhat comical way [let us break the citation and note that *comical way* as a sign of not only a sense of humour, indispensable in education, but also the lack of tendency to tantrums or violent reprehension of pupils on Socrates' side – T.S.], that I have been literally attached by God to our city, as if to a horse – a large thorough – bred, which is a bit sluggish because of its size, and needs to be aroused by some sort of gadfly."<sup>15</sup>

The said "arousal" is a redirection to other train of thought and language. Thinking now refers to deliberate consideration ("you must have *given thought* to the matter,"<sup>16</sup> Socrates tells Callias), a wonder, which – as dangerous – is despised by the bureaucratic managing apparatus. *Giving thought* threatens the automatism of life choices made at the speed of their efficiency in shaping one's live career. Deliberation slows down in the environment awarding every promptitude and immediacy as sources of success. Such is the anti-Socratic lesson of Gorgias, despising deliberation of adults as a "frivolity". Thus his advice: "[...] leave to others those over-nice frivolities or nonsense or whatever else they should be called, 'which will end in your dwelling in an empty and desolate house'; and emulate not men who waste their time in such trivial debates, but those whose portion is wealth and fame and many other good things."<sup>17</sup> Marcus Steinweg returns to the Socratic idea formulating the contemporary answer to Gorgias' diatribe: "Those who think don't act – think those who act without thinking."<sup>18</sup>

15 Ibidem, p. 45

16 Ibidem, p. 30

17 Platon, *Gorgias*, [in:] *Plato's Gorgias*, E.M. Cope, Cambridge University Press 1864, p. 67

18 M. Steinweg, *The Terror of Evidence*, MIT Press, Cambridge Mass. 2017, p. 137

8.

What is the purpose of the Academy, indeed? After Wright Mills, we would say that it is to sensitise to the ability of combining "troubles" with "issues" and, consequently, the personal will not immerse us in egotism, but rather will make us seek dependencies between the state of an individual and the state of the society and its institutions. Such a skill is an antidote to the increasing individualism of public life. In the second part of *Faust*, The Treasurer expresses that in a pronounced question: "Now, who'll help his neighbour? / Each man just helps himself" (F, 217). The said sensitising aims at blurring the borders between "the other's" and "own", which will obviously impose inquiries about what such *own* is in a sense of what is "personal" as well as "national". Goethe's Citizens only care about what is closest to them: "Yes, Neighbour! That's my notion, too: / Why, let them break their heads, let loose their passions, And mix things madly through and through, / So, here, we keep our good old fashions" (F, 40). A thinking person, or better – a person giving thought, in whose education the Academy takes interest, now becomes stateless, a being roaming the world to ask questions and raise doubt (such is a role Socrates indicates for himself in Athens; he is the one roaming the city and provoking conversation). Here, Faust's "I do not pretend to aught worth knowing" grows in particular meaning, explained by Plato, who makes Socrates confess in *Meno*: "for I perplex others, not because I am clear, but because I am utterly perplexed myself."<sup>19</sup>

This implies the necessity of careful study of words. After all, as argued by Mephistopheles, "With words whole Systems can be created" (F, 81), and if so, the more significant becomes Socrates' educational postulate, briefly expressed in *Euthyphro*: "prove the truth of your words."<sup>20</sup> A word accepted mindlessly, left on its own, will easily fall victim to manipulation, ending in bloodshed or, in broader terms – more or less violent injustice. Studying words, this philological though-boosting impulse, allows to notice not only their hidden meanings, but also guards against traps set by managing institutions. All that sums up to the necessity of the Academy's standing in opposition to what Pierre Legendre calls "scientific propaganda, which carries new barbarity"

19 Plato: *Meno*, trans. by Benjamin Jowett, independently published, 2017, p. 13

20 Idem, *Euthyphro*, trans. by Benjamin Jowett, independently published, 2017, n.p.



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and the times to come will be the times in which “thinking will require bravely again.”<sup>21</sup>

The Academy should, therefore, draw far-reaching consequences from the Faustian-Socratic lesson. The philosopher attempts to collect those in a postulated teaching method, which will “stand in vivid opposition to all traditionally known forms of ‘social conformity,’” and thanks to such an attitude of the Academy, “young people can become citizens.” We must reckon, as the philosopher cautions, with the Academy’s representatives facing “the anger of right-minded citizens”, because they cause “their own children depart from them.”<sup>22</sup> Let us hope their departure is towards the better, more *humane* world.

21 P. Legendre, *Fabrykacja człowieka Zachodu*, Warszawa 2016, p. 31

22 M. Lewis Jr, *Eutyfron. Interpretacja*, [in:] *Platon: Eutyfron*, Warszawa 2015, p.119

*Beautiful things must be real,  
even if the truth is painful,  
and must be aesthetically  
significant, even if they reveal  
the evil within us.*

Andrzej Bednarczyk

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# When I go to sleep thinking of the Academy, I wake up at midnight screaming

Andrzej Bednarczyk

19

*I had a dream.*

*In my dream, I am sitting in the Rector's office with the portraits of my predecessors on the walls. Like any other day, there are piles of documents and instant cases, but I cannot focus on work, because I feel haunted by a bunch of critical looks. Holding one of the documents in my hand and considering my decision, I can hear theatrically whispered comments, advice, expectations and litanies of imponderabilia, ephemeral yet indisputable according to the esteemed progenitors. Once I have made a final decision concerning what and how should be done, there come angry glares from the walls and sound the brouhaha of criticism, dissatisfied murmurs, cries to heaven, and my name dragged through mud and mire. Then all of them, having left the frames of paintings and good manners, sit on my back, wrestling me to the floor, hang on my arms and hands, trying to steer them at will, so that despite my holding a pen ready to sign decisions and decree departments and persons responsible, I am unable to execute my intent. Meanwhile, the racket and farrago have grown even louder than what I remember from my Faculty Board meetings in reality. It feels like they will strangle me in the end, but instead they start fighting, tossing insults and mutual accusations of incompetence around. On my last legs, I break away from the swirl and jump out of the office window onto the ledge, running around the Academy building.*

*I woke up drenched in cold sweat.*

The issue of indelible relationship of the artistic present with the past, and the fact that there isn't (or is yet to be discovered) any civilisation, where new, current artistic phenomena would arise out of nothing, seems to be patency, unworthy of attention. What appears to be equally important is the necessity of temporal mental continuity in every learning process, art included. Above all, however, there is the undeniable fact that the individual and collective cross-generational memory constitutes the foundation of human sense of identity. At that point, however, the lane of obviousness forks out into mutually antagonistic paths of understanding. On one of those, that what was determines this what is. On the other, this what is – is, and that what was remains the necessarily removable liability. On the former, the greatness and nobility of ancestors ennoble contemporaries, on the latter the greatness and nobility, at the cost of removing the past from the impact zone, remains the achievable trait that shapes contemporaries.

Still, there seems to exist the third path, on which the progenitors do not function as a prosthetics to refine the contemporary losers, nor must be amputated from the contemporary sense of identity. It is the idea of retrospective ennoblement of the ancestors. The nobler my acts, the longer line of ancestors I refine. I do not scavenge on their accomplishments, but I am offered an opportunity, as Isaac Newton wrote to Robert Hooke in the letter dated February 5th, 1676: *If I have seen further than others, it is by standing upon the shoulders of giants.*<sup>1</sup>

The presented three paths of understanding of the relationship of the artistic present with the past are compliant with three types of attitudes and didactic programmes in the artistic education procedures. The first one, in its extreme form, treats the collective memory (let us call it vertical) as the only and non-negotiable attitude and artist-shaping source, giving it primacy over the adepts' individual creative activities. This builds the hierarchised geometry of supremacy, where, to reverse Newton's paraphrase, giants of the past stand on the shoulders of contemporary dwarfs. In such a case the adepts, overwhelmed with the greatness of their predecessors and blinded by their unmatched nobility, lose the ability of independent perception. Never, therefore, will they face the reality and so are going to drown in the formalistic limping on the huge artistic prosthetics. It is a method of didactic eye-gouging and production of slaves to the artistic industry.

1 Paraphrase of a sentence Newton derived from Lucanus, *Marcus Annaeus Lucanus, Pharsalia*, vol. II, p. 10

The other path, if pure in form, is an intellectual superstition. In order to keep it in force, you must contradict all knowledge on the nature of developmental transformations of science, culture, art, and especially the language. It is formerly because the language naturally exhibits certain inertia as a result of "liminess" maintaining the stability of the system necessary to safeguard its executions from babble in the constant process of changes, and the permanent prolificity of new forms protecting them from banality. There is no perfectly synthetic language that would sprout from ancient forms and orders. Any claims, therefore, about a private, individual language, created by the artist from scratch, with no reference to the past, I must discredit as a pure intellectual superstition or, at most, an overdrawn brachylogy. Relationships with the past may take the form of cultivating, contradicting or ignoring it, but even this final situation remains a significant, indelible, immensely energetic connection. It is not possible to ignore something you have "no foggiest idea" about. Then, you are simply an ignorant. Academy must be a place, where an adept learns to challenge the past.

The third path seems to provide the most fertile field for the development of young creative personalities and as such, it should shape academic structures and methods. In this field, neither progenitors nor the teacher choke the sprouting creative attitudes with their greatness, but rather constitute reference points, language "beddings" and/or catalysts of foundation processes of the arising artistic demeanour and strategies. The prolificity of such a field requires breaching the didactic paradigm (in which I myself was educated) that a student is artist material to undergo didactic processing. This paradigm had produced, at best, incapacitated and ever-guided slaves of the artistic industry. In order to become an artist, you needed to stand up against the system. Little wonder, therefore, that those who managed to succeed, frequently disregarded their *alma mater* and described their study time as utter struggle, like was the case with Wilhelm Sasnal.<sup>2</sup> The crowning example of the oppressiveness of educational processes and self-liberation of adepts is a story behind the Self-educational Group of the Polish Youth Academic Association, launched in 1948 by students of the Academy of Fine Arts in Kraków: i.a. Andrzej Wróblewski, Andrzej Wajda, Witold Damasiewicz, Andrzej Strumiłło, Konrad Nałęcki, Franciszek Bunsch, Przemysław Brykalski, whose actions came as an expression of disagreement to the contemporary methods and contents

2 W. Sasnal, *Lata walki / Years of Struggle*, Zachęta Narodowa Galeria Sztuki, Warszawa 2007

of education. In my proposition of charting the third path, it is the teacher's duty to lead the student towards articulatory independence and pursuit of their own artistic attitude to art, the world and the past.

*I had a dream.*

*In my dream, I am standing at the mountain brook. Its crystal clear waters are chuckling and gurgling along the bed. The currents are constantly changing their shapes, splitting and then flowing back together only to unpredictably, inimitably, whimsically disperse again. At the very centre of the brook, there stands a huge, still, concrete block with letters hewn on all sides: ACADEMIA. It stands there immobile, adamant, unimpressed to whatever around, as if focussed on itself, while the currents are sloshing about this obstacle in feeria of explosions and cascades glistening in the sun. I am standing there to see how the brook comes crashing down on block with a waterstorm conceit, twirling around as if in a dervish, entranced dance. It is striking furiously, yet amicably and playfully, as if it had nothing against the block. Trifling with the obstacle, it increasingly bewilders the immobile, inanimate concrete with its vitality. And the block is stuck there. Forever and ever. Unchanged. After a while, however, the current-sloshed letters are starting to fade and fade, until they are all gone. Despite the centuries of relentless glory, the block has become anonymous and nobody remembers why it is standing there. I am overwhelmed with sorrow and compassion. I am sorry for the block, on which I used to climb with my friends as a child, sunbathing and cooling our feet in the water. I am walking in the currents trying to be a Good Samaritan and support the block, cover it if only a little from the onrushing swirls. After a while of my struggles, the swirls grab me and sunk me in the depth, water in my mouth.*

*I sprang out of my bed screaming, furiously kicking the rumpled sheet.*

The matter of inadequacy of structures, methods and content of the Academy to the current artistic directions, trends and ideas has accompanied me throughout the over-forty-year relationship with school. The founding sin of such gripes is misconception and the odd tendency to personalise institutions, which leads to treating the Academy as a creator; whereas the founding sin of the Academy is often the conviction about its duty to maintain the "real art" against the fateful tendencies to "go astray" and inclinations to misalliance with

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what is undeserving, in the Academicians' eyes, of this honourable name. The long-term persistence of such puristic attitudes of the academic artistic circles eventually results in the development of siege mentality and losing focus of whatever is non-academic. The odium has been trailing around since 1863, when the Paris Academicians allowed at the Salon only works submitted by their colleagues, even though the remaining artistic scene found those mentally fusty.

The case is not, and probably never will be unambiguous, nor will be one side of such a dispute clearly right or wrong. It is true that art created by Academicians, who are familiar with teaching, and so with procedures of verbalisation and rationalisation of students' creative intuitions and operations, will be different from non-academic art (although my attempts at defining immanent qualities that would shape this or that art and help me categorise a given piece with one of these groups have been futile; it is methodologies and formalisms leading to them that differ). From my long-term experience I know that a complete separation of didactic endeavours and what I do in my own workshop (all happening, indeed, in a single head I have) is impossible. What seems the most important, however, is the fact that teaching can occur solely in the sphere of precepts, if only partially codified superpersonal orders, and possible to be articulated in non-artistic manner. For a novelty in art to become didactic material, it must set first. There are no schools of revolution. As the heavens of history and culture, it is born in lieu of existing paradigms and, at least at the initial stage, requires them be ruined completely. Indeed, in the academic process of education students could and should be equipped not only with composition and execution skills, but also in the will of exceeding orders; still, as I said above, the schools of destruction simply do not exist. It is true that after 1968 universities, academies and art galleries of Europe experienced a wave of revolution, and that, in a while, the former destroyers of orders took academic chairs and stated building the new hypostases of artistic paradigms, driving them to the state of dogmatic fossilisation at times, but these facts by no means contradict my theses. What they do

is demonstrate the forms of their realisation under various historic conditions. If this is the case, the claim for the **Academy to set** new trends or, at least, place at the forefront of avant-garde, is a misinformed idea derived from misconstrued notions.

The final sentence of the previous paragraph has been formulated so that it serves as an example of the above-mentioned sin of personalising institutions. Whoever is aware, if only a little, of how Academies function knows that they have no top-down management of artistic and didactic attitudes nor methods of their artistic articulations. On the contrary, by virtue of the principle of freedom of conducting artistic research and formulating master-class programmes, we constitute more like a constellation of mutually orbiting individualities, who laboriously and constantly negotiate the common paths. The claim that one Academy is this, and another is that, wreaks of obtuse stereotype. In my observation, the intramural differences, dichotomies, bifurcations and other stratification – at least on the Polish ground – are larger than in between academies. It is not this or that Academy that creates anything, it is the artists it employs. The shape of what is the figure of the collective imagination known as Academy is the dynamically-changing total of components of artistic attitudes, demonstrated by all members of the academic community, from freshmen to deans. In this case, *non plus ultra*. By no means do I claim that it is impossible or inadvisable to *a posteriori* build legible generalisations, reveal trends and changes thereof pending in the artistic-and-academic circles. We must, however, avoid heuristic fictions and the sin of labelling and personalising the institutional products of collective imagination.

The other side of this coin is the inclination of certain teachers and academic communities to adopt defensive attitude towards dynamically-changing shapes of artistic directions and strategies from beyond academic walls. The siege mentality, similarly to any social alienation processes, will gradually saturate the debate with patency while rejecting its criticism, which leads to hypertrophic dogmatisation of intellectual life, and development of a hermetic slang, increasingly confusing to the external world. Ghettoisation of artistic academic circles causes these inside to breathe the intellectual atmosphere much different from the one on the outside. Educated in the siege mentality, adepts can only survive within the academic walls. Outdoors, thrown in at the deep end of artistic life, they will sink or suffocate with a few gulps of intellectual atmosphere. And this is not the only problem. Rigid and change-resistant structures and academic programmes, even

the best on implementation, when faced with constant and dynamic civilisational, cultural and linguistic transformations, gradually become irrelevant, and their adequacy diminishes. Moreover, the master-student relationship, underlying the didactic tradition at the art academies, requires redefinition, as the teacher is no longer the sole source of knowledge and competency, but more like the operator and accoucheur, or curator (in the dictionary meaning of the term) of students' individual development. Quite long ago it became apparent that the process of education is not finalised with the end of studies, but it must be perceived as one of the stages of lifelong learning instead. Therefore, graduates of academic studies in the field of art must be equipped with the ability of continuing independent self-education. It is my impression that under the current condition of artistic education in Poland – as we provide graduates with heaps of competencies that are useless on the labour market as well as in artistic life, and over the years-long didactic processes which require far-fetched passive responsiveness to studio assignments framed by teachers which excessively consume study time – we deprive students of the opportunity of gradually becoming autonomous in formulating their own projects and setting cornerstones of individual artistic attitudes. In my opinion, the idea behind didactic practice at art academy should be founded on the principle that before a student leaves the academic walls, they must contradict their teacher by posing an original, if only rudimentary, approach to art. Otherwise, in all probability, they will participate in artistic life as either a supine epigone of somebody else's ideas, strategies, trends and expectations, or a fossilised diploma-work "concrete block" which, in the image and likeness of the Academy, will resist the changeable currents of art.

*I had a dream.*

*In my dream, I am in a sleeping compartment on my way from a three-day session of the Conference of Rectors of Academic Schools in Poland, where we were belabouring the most important issues and hopes related to the academic level of education. It is dawning when I disembark the train at the*

*Kraków Central station. Wrapped in my scarf and cuddling my half-awake body under my coat, I am slogging along the underground passage towards the taxi rank at Worcella Street. At the walls, on card boxes and blankets, muffled with clothes, worn jackets and hoods over woollen hats, there are the homeless sitting or lying, some of them napping, some on the scrounge. One of them raises his hand in a pleading gesture and I recognise my former student, whose brilliant talent and ability of setting long-term goals we, the senior academic staff, took as a guarantee of his future success. He recognises me as well and there is void in his eyes, readily replaced by beef and disdain. It only lasts a second. He retracts his outstretched arm and balls up into a sort of cocoon. And here I am running away, tail between my legs, trying to escape this underground passage, but finding myself in another one at every turn. All the escalators (out of order at this hour) are going down, and not up to the street, as they should. Eventually, I stumble and go plummeting down.*

*I woke up screaming, drenched in cold sweat.*

Managing the academy and teaching art, the biggest trauma I have is the suspicion that for a long time we have been the unemployment factory. Although the graduate career tracking conducted over the recent years by my *alma mater* Academic Bureau of Career has shown that my negative presumptions have been exaggerated and groundless – based on commonplace opinions with no statistically demonstrated reference – still, the preparation we offer our students for what is awaiting them after graduation is far from perfect. In fact, the successes our graduates enjoy in the artistic field and on the labour market are the effect of their persistence in finding space for their artistic, design and conservatory activities as well as their determination to self-educate, rather than the result of skills, competency and knowledge obtained at the Academy. My opinion regarding the insufficiency of didactic operations towards preparing graduates for functioning in institutional artistic life, on the labour market, and their professional participation in the art market, is based solely on good familiarity with didactic programmes of the Academy of Fine Arts in Kraków. Nonetheless, multiple conversations I have had on the occasions such as conferences, fairs, academic and business assemblies with owners of art galleries, CEOs, managers of institutions and organisations which collaborate with artists, designers and conservators, have revealed that the problem of poor graduate preparation in the field applies across Poland. Essentially, I blame this state of affairs on four facts.



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First of all, at the time when the current professors graduated and started their artistic life, it was regulated and rationed by the ruling party (which hopefully never happens again!), so nobody was interested in equipping graduates with any free-market skills. Consequently, art teachers dispose of very poor understanding of such notions.

Secondly, teachers' role is to provide students with knowledge, skills, competency and artistic power, rather than the ability of marketing their work. We do not teach for art to sell, but to carry the universals of good, truth and beauty. I perceive the mutual relationships of these universals as three dimensions of one solid, and so inseparable and complementary. Such a perspective demonstrates the difference between what is pretty, and what is beautiful. Pretty things, unrelated with good and truth, serve at best to tickle the senses and so are shaped in compliance with the tastes and expectations of clients. Beautiful things must be real, even if the truth is painful, and must be aesthetically significant, even if they reveal the evil within us. I believe this compact explanation proves that an art teacher, like a maths teacher, mustn't teach their students to make their work ingratiating, attractive or saleable. Still, as academies, we are obliged to equip graduates not only with artistic strategy-building skill, but also in career-building skill, with the provision that for an artist, it is a means of achieving their objectives, and not an objective in itself.

Thirdly, the art market in Poland is shallow and rickety. This, in turn, results from the precipice that has opened between artists and the society over decades of deficient educational system on all levels. In the course of school pedagogical and didactic procedures, the universal human need for art is effectively disregarded, muffled, and sometimes terminally amputated. Although in a scientific dissertation a derivation of the basis of such a thesis would be necessary, these free deliberations pose no similar requirement, so I am going to leave it for another occasion. Contradictory theses, referring the poor interest in art in Poland, and the resulting rickety of the art market, to us not being wealthy enough to afford purchasing art, I find substantially faulty. I tend to respond to such *dictum* with a question: How much must an illiterate earn to start buying books? All of the above considered, it is hard to

provide graduates with competencies of functioning on the lame art market. Since the problem lies on both sides of the artist-art market relationship, also operations towards solving the problem must be taken bilaterally – ergo – the process of preparing graduates for professional functioning after studies requires the real collaboration of academies with the *sensu lato* social surroundings.

Fourthly, the will of collaboration of artistic academies and their business and social environment is mutually insufficient. So far, both sides have articulated their expectations and expressed dissatisfaction, but mostly stopped at that. Meanwhile, in the face of another acceleration of civilisational transformations, where the temporal unit has long ago become shorter than the traditional 3–5 years period of studies, the collaboration is necessary as early as on the level of building didactic programmes and executing the course thereof. In my opinion, it is the *cine qua non* condition of artistic education at this point. For now, beside the universally fundamental and generally applicable, we have been providing our students with heaps of useless competencies, which hinder rather than facilitate operating in the actual field of art, design and conservation. This deliberation, based on three conference-presented oneiric stories about the Academy, makes no pretence to a scientific thesis, nor even a credible dilatation. Instead, it is a casual voice in a discussion about weak and strong points of artistic academic education in Poland, raised – as we say – “over the easel”, from the very heart of the daily didactic work. I will therefore take the liberty of passing over the sources from which I have derived my statements, as all they constitute is an attempt of teasing potential interlocutors into conversation, and therefore utterly fulfil their role.

I believe that the presented outlook at the Academy regarding its past, fluid topicality, and surrounding reality – although clearly far from exhausting the spectrum of possible paths of consideration – does open a mental working space adequate to the title problem formulated by the organizers of the conference. I am deeply convinced that in the face of another cognitive revolution, unrolling before our own eyes, the discussion over the Academy must be continued.

[...] *academic community fights its corner not to expose ours to the other, be it even recognised elsewhere.*

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*As a place of making art and tools to experience art, the Academy bears an inalienable obligation to recognise these phenomena as they really are.*

Mieczysław Juda

This one question: *Why do we need the Academy?* evokes another: *What Academy?* The Academy is still understood as the artist-gathering institution, in which education (by assumption) is supervised by brilliant authorities at art. The master and the student. Indeed, in such a relationship model, nothing new will occur: there will be a new master and a new student, while the structure and function of this institution remain the same.

Constantly staying among your fellow kin confirms our conviction that the world of the other does not match ours, and so is not interesting to our community. In our Academies, such a belief is not individual, but rather a sense of collective dislike of the other. The other is not only an outlander, but a host of opinions, theories and practices different from what we know. Foreign ideas and unfamiliar skills hardly transmit to our communities, which blow their local bubbles of customs, programmes and organisation of academic life. Others are perceived as the carriers of problems, therefore we have been practicing the mutual reproduction of ours, Academies', structures and customs, including the resistance against foreign environments. It is, however, not about any others; let us stay with the academic, didactic and technical faculty, as well as organisational structures and ways in which we recognise the world of art. Why don't we take the example of new media art<sup>1</sup>, based on new media technologies, which poses new questions about the sense and status of the artistic existence. It is not only about new tools, but mostly about the new paradigm and philosophy of art. The reflex of alienation towards new media was still visible even when there had already been studios called media studios in operation in the Academies' environment. While the more developed circles of Western culture included art in progressing digital technologies, our lack of access and professional faculty that would practice such art made it impossible or delayed the progress of this genre. These two

aspects, generally considered to be objective, were actually also affected by the fear of the other.

Here, new media art was initiated by works created by the other, foreign also to our academic communities, for which the line of progress is set mainly by tradition, resulting in difficult assimilation of the new media paradigm. Even today there are no quality effects of new media operations on the programmes of our Academies. The resistance against the new media paradigm<sup>2</sup> is sometimes broken by *technohedony*<sup>3</sup>, accelerated by technological development, which is a prerequisite to the growth of technical culture. The more futuristic plan of certain reflexive techno-hedonists involves the hope that technologies are able to replace ideologies, also those which had been threatening with the others for centuries. Academism persuades that the necessities are: continuity, tradition and patriotism, although these qualities do not enjoy much esteem in the contemporary art world. We place an obsessive emphasis on "ours" as opposed to "not ours", us vs. them, wise us and suspect them. Still, (be it on a small scale) there happens to arise some fascination with this new art, and even some criticism of the slow pace (as compared to technology) of taming, mastering and applying the practices of the new paradigm at the Academy. It is accompanied by the conviction that art backward in relation to progressing media communication technologies may turn out helpless in the face of social changes caused by their development.

Our Academies demonstrate two clear paradigms of unequal status: the foregoing (analogue) and the new media (digital); the former is based on the belief that what has been is proven, and therefore more important than the uncertain new. In this traditional analogue paradigm, the future is taken as the past, laboriously and carefully perfected. The new media paradigm tries to gain a broader range in the academic environment, but its arguments are incomprehensible to our communities, because it is not considered the prime mover of progress. So shaped reality of the Academy leaves little room for a reflection that this unrecognised new/other could dominate our future. New technologies no longer ask the high culture what is important. What is important is technological development that generates its own culture. Despite the global village

1 Here, new media art will be understood not as (new) in the historic sequence (as a next new novelty), but as art of technical (actually electronic) media, the real new quality of which is the active interactive participation of the user in making a piece of art.

2 Paradigm – common interpretation

3 Technohedony is a new human pleasure, the pleasure of using and being surrounded by electro-technical devices, their applications and gadgets.

slogan, academic community fights its corner not to expose *ours* to *the other*, be it even recognised elsewhere. Faculty employment at the academies favours our graduates – it is believed that the other ruins our world, developed over decades, ignores our accomplishments, deprecates the myth of our uniqueness, while *the skills of the other are inferior to ours*, as proclaimed by our professors *who visit other countries*. Apparently, ours is more important than the other, because ours gives a sense of security. It also leads to faculty inbreeding.

Although the growth of faculty seems to be the main driving force of our academies, it is not necessarily true of their development as institutions. The mechanisms of inbreeding and non-strategic employment are usually simple, for instance: one new full-time position is divided into three part-time positions, which are soon going to generate three studios with three professors and three home-grown assistants, each of whom is soon going to be promoted, and so need another personal assistant, studio, equipment, while the next talents are already waiting for employment. As no existing units of little use, i.e. studios, are eliminated, faculty is on a graduate increase, unrelated to strategic development. There is a constant fight over positions, rather than programmes, strategies and didactic philosophy – over positions, and this territory is becoming very tight, rendering any employment of the other impossible. In practice, ours are employed all the way to retirement, while the reluctance to employ on (time-limited) contract also results from the fear of the other. The otherness, however, wears down, and once tamed, it should be replaced with the new otherness, because the taming of otherness could also serve as a means of Academy's transformation. Nonetheless, the meaning of the otherness remains latent in academic awareness. Discussion overheard (fragment): [...] we have our own academic galleries [...] Who should we exhibit in these galleries? *If we don't present ourselves, who is going to present us?* [...] How about the opposite, let ours become familiar with what the others are doing? *What others? Who should indicate them, who knows them? Are we going to do some strangers a favour?* Indeed, does the other, gradually tamed by our circles, decrease our "quality"?

If the Academy should be a local community of our own artists, how do we collaborate with the outside world more than merely careering over our balcony? The old structures are expanded by new organisational cells, which still work in same

old ways. In this context, any new strategy of operation seems redundant, suffice to hold onto the one and only generational *status quo*. Nor is this all about a single revolution, but a constant transformation of the entire institution, regular rational "makeovers", because the lack of institutional transformation may proliferate pompous jubilees at best. New information technologies, however, change the traditional paradigm of creation and art.

The paradigm of traditional fine arts is characterised by a permanent, formally complete original artefact, untouched by the viewer, proscenic perceptive dispositif, and one-way communication (artist-viewer). The characteristics of new media paradigm, in turn, include incompleteness (non-finality of form) of the original artefact, each time derived from the matrix and technically assembled by the user with the possibility of transformation of its original form. The artwork usually has a non-proscenic perceptive dispositif such as e.g. installation, where the perceiving subject is situated within the work and can not only navigate its structure, but also transform it in the course of operational perception. Prepared by the artist, the work is not complete or untouchable, as the creator prescribes: spaces, content, tools and procedures for the user's interaction. It is, therefore, the activity of the user (interactor) that is final. To us, academy-bred artists, this is the most alien, because we are not prepared for the untouchable interpretation of the user in contact with our art to be replaced by interaction and new type of perception, operational perception, other than the existing (conceptual and contemplative) one.

Considering all of the above, the paradigms are so different that the standardisation thereof seems impossible, though academies attempt to unify them so steadfastly as futilely. Certain media theoreticians also claim that new media art should be subjected to the same evaluation criteria as analogue arts. "There is only one Art," they say, and art historians echo them and add that you mustn't write two histories of art. The advocates of standardisation endlessly attempt to define new media in order to make common evaluation for all art, and ask: Why does new media art fail to respect the universal functional principles and mechanisms? The majority of these procedures are undertaken with the conviction that the artwork is a finite object created by the artist and it is only the artist (as a communicatively privileged subject) who creates the artwork, which also leads to the conclusion that any otherwise created and perceived work is no art at all.

When we replace atoms with bits, the change results also in differences between the art of analogue and the art of digital. The world turns into a hybrid, and a person switches between two realities: physical and virtual. Art becomes hybrid, too, while digital technologies change the ways of communication as well as the space and time of this process. The strategy of traditional values pushes the others to the sidelines of our communities not only territorially, but also materially and mentally (by dismissing or ridiculing alien phenomena of art). Nonetheless, new media change the functioning of art, the user's interaction replaces the proscenic division into these, who speak from the stage, and those, who receive it under the stage. In interactive communication, the proscenic layout is replaced by technological sensitive interactive environments in dialogue with the user, while the hegemony of the stage disappears. Another difference is in the share that the perceiving subject has in culture as they become the full member of the dialogical process of communication. What we need, therefore, is another system of education instead the master-student model. Maybe a model of the cognitively attractive environment organised by a pedagogue and provided by the educational institution. This does not mean the disappearance of proscenic communication, but it will not be the only principle managing communication, also beyond art. The proscenic-communicated world is no longer the only way, new technologies change the system of interpersonal communication with little use for a stage and thereby do away with the audience, as media technologies are able to communicate all with all. We know, however, that between theory and practice, between declaration and execution, there are considerable gaps, and many of "media units" launched at our academies under the pretence of new media, actually conduct traditional operations, e.g. film or music ones, which do not fall under the new media paradigm: a digital film, for instance, is not a new media work, if it maintains the proscenic *perceptive dispositif*.<sup>4</sup> The situation is a little different in the case of design as development of ideas (needs) commissioned to the artist by the outside agent and therefore evaluated by the commissioner. On the contrary, fine arts are the artist's original ideas without any external mandate. Speaking of new media art, we do not mean design, we mean artists autonomously and originally directing their talents.

- 4 Perceptive dispositif – the body of conditions for creating the artwork, contact with it, interpretation and now the interactor's participation in the transformation thereof.

Since kindergarten, we are subjected to the processing by somebody in power to speak to us, hush us and execute the way we understand their ideas. It is therefore important to the media epoch to develop a new, less hierarchical structure of institutions (here: Academy), as the general matrix conditioning human attitudes and behaviours. Our Academies are characterised by organisational fragmentation into many little faculties and departments, which remain isolated and impenetrable in the whole structure. Every Academy of Fine Arts in Poland actually has only two strategic directions: design, i.e. industrial, graphic, stage, conservatory, interior and digital design, and traditional fine arts: painting, sculpture, drawing, artistic printing, and now additionally: media arts. Perhaps it would suffice to have two state-university-average departments with creative potential and education of student integrating the community in shared faculty strategy, regularly negotiated as regards its programme, ideas and tools? Such enhancement by reduction would be not only of economic importance. The excess of didactic faculty (in relation to student numbers) causes overprotectiveness and dependence of students, and gradually, also frustration of the faculty members.

The current structure is purely customary, as much as the doctrine, which states that *the quality of the Academy depends on the artists employed*, and underestimates the organisation of this institution as a development-determining factor. Organisation of strategic education would benefit more from an academic campus than multiple rental premisses and buildings or yards, which results in bundling studios, departments and even entire faculties in the historic corners of urban architecture. This yields not only negative economic consequences (multiplication of staff, rooms, adaptation of premisses, student commuting, use of equipment etc.), but also development of a mental format shaped in "pigeon holes", barely communicating with other units. A campus would be more economical in service, equipment etc., as well as provide more opportunities of meeting the other (from beyond our pigeon hole), and thereby become more familiar with the outside world. It would also facilitate the daily access to a number of organisational units in the structure, sharing the equipment, and chances of exchange and collaboration.

In the above-mentioned context, the otherness of untamed behaviours (other than ours) becomes also a global problem for nation states. Raising defensive walls to protect ours from the others does not guarantee the former protection of ours from the others. It seems that Academies could become

places to recognise new conditions of taming the otherness, not necessarily writing into the model of a nation state defending ours from the others. It is not only about art, but also the academic community, which generates its paradigms of behaviours. Could the others employed by the Academy change its structure? Indirectly, but their experience, different from ours, could gradually lead to changes in thinking among the academic community, which determines the educational structure by choosing certain goals and activities of institutions, including those exceeding the historic model of the Academy.

As a state institution, the Academy will have its consistency supported by the bureaucratic state management, as well as by students dominated by the overgrown didactic faculty. The faculty multiplies subjects to an absurd, with no control over the extent to which their programmes are mastered, but introducing mandatory attendance (participation) in classes instead. Years ago, one of the students put it in simple terms: *We have no time to study, because we must attend classes.* The two forces mentioned above serve as conservators of the academic model and guarantee its integrity, which is a smoke-screen for the faculty's interest in the comfort of employment until pension – once you have become an assistant, you will end up a professor, and we call that faculty development. In theory, employment is based on competition, but in practice, ours always wins. The European Union policy based on the knowledge that it is impossible to transform Academies fast has introduced student exchange programmes among the associated countries, which turned out apparently effective after several years and is still appreciated by students. This system is not only about studying itself, but also the contact with another academic environment and organisation of studies.

As a proof of how strong the anchor of our system is, let me tell you that one of our students returned after several years abroad, because there had been no studios similar to ours on offer. Otherness is alien to ours as they come across what is

not ours, what is ours is better, as it does not pose risks related to facing different conditions. There may be realisation coming from statistics and comparisons I am not going to quote, and leave them to those capable of a reflection broader than our academic one. It is not my intention to denigrate the inbreeding Academies, but to visualise the frail vector of changes<sup>5</sup>, as such a traditional model of artistic academy suits not only the main managing forces of Academies, but also academic communities, students included. It is a paradigm enhancing inbreeding as a specific interpretation of art and the world. By programme, it inclines the student to inbreeding thinking, reproducing traditional patterns of behaviours, which the Academy calls education. The majority of fresh graduates are convinced that they demonstrate the ultra-modern thinking and creation regardless of the Academy, while in fact it takes years for them to develop a real perspective on their situation in art – and they claim that is the way it should be. The question "Why do we need the Academy?" could also serve as a suggestion that if we want to be the academy responding to contemporary challenges in the face of social, cultural and technological changes, why the Academy?

- 5 Every vector indicates the direction as well as the force of impact.

# *What role could we play in formulating new, good conditions, building our awareness, and consequently, our individual and social responsibility?*

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The title notion serves as a background of several reflections, which seem especially visible today, and therefore it is only a modest selection of our – people of the Academy community's – activities and various forms of involvement. Surely, it is not a merely rhetorical figure. It is, however, a radical inquiry into the sense of institution, and thereby a question about a sense of relationships we establish and within which we function. It obviously carries a load of doubt and equally demands the rejection of status quo – which, in turn, constitutes the negation of creativity and as such requires constant reinstitution. By no means is it the newest chapter of the Academy's archive, nor a report, but mainly a demonstrative evidence that despite restrictions we are able – as an academic community – to do a lot both on a micro and macro scale. By "together" I do not mean only the members of academic community, but also our friends from very many circles who constitute the invaluable support and the actual milieu of our operations. This proves that undertaking seemingly scattered activities, we sum up to a certain ecosystem, based on exchange, mutuality and – I want to believe – trust. The unstable situation quite painfully reveals how little we are able to do individually, and therefore forces us to find new forms of collaboration. It also makes us aware that the surrounding reality is constructed socially – we do it ourselves – do ourselves right and do ourselves wrong.

We commenced the previous 2021/2022 academic year with an inaugural lecture of Sebastian Cichocki, *Exit Route*, which once again addressed the key notion of the role art plays in our "today" and focused on environmental issues, considering the possibilities of impacting the reality by means of art/creation. Although reflections regarding ecology have been overshadowed by geopolitical matters, one thing remains certain: we have been forced to take a solid step towards exiting the world without qualities. The more contrastive our reality, the more it becomes the essence of fears, especially intense with highly sensitive persons, who are in the majority at the Academy. It also makes us live in the agenda of urgent, instant-response subjects. As the crisis goes, it offers no time to pull ourselves together. And it is not a pre-crisis or post-crisis that we are living, it is mid-crisis, despite the sense that we had left it behind, we managed it, rolling with the punches during the pandemic tsunami, being there for each other via the screens of mobile and immobile devices, in different formats, situations and circumstances. This event (pandemic) revealed, both directly and symbolically, what our community is today: less site-specific, but much more multidimensional – limited and augmented all the same, with a dispersed border

between private and public. We were rejoicing the return from the pandemic chasm, looking for the new normal, new ways to rebuild our mental fitness, relationships etc., going out of the woods, breathing again. February 24th, 2022, however, demonstrated that the struggle is far from over – daily lives of our Ukrainian neighbours became the aim of vicious Russian attack. The war had turned their regular life into a heroic fight for survival in which all civilisational superstructures fade into the background. Nonetheless, we must remember that the battle our Ukrainian friends are fighting is for normality, of which we have all been deprived. Our Ukrainian friends are saving us and also bringing us peace. We have a crisis – they have missiles and bombs. The war trauma intertwines with the sense of community and care for others. It has released energy that had been inaccessible in the so-called normal time, along with incredible engagement.

On a broader scale, we have recently been faced with the necessity of redefining our temporal and spatial relationships, even though many activities have already settled in the technosphere, making use of the achievements and possibilities of various disciplines, while the merger of reality and virtuality has long determined contemporary visual culture. Until recently, however, such activities were a research phenomenon, artistic or design experiment – today, they are implemented as daily communication. Whether we find it delightful or, on the contrary, scary and disappointing, it simply is. It was technology, after all, that provided us all with mutual access during the pandemic collapse. Then, the context of forced move, or more like evacuation, from the campus to the network, was a good reason to reconsider our presence and related challenges. It must be added that it was the testing time for the existing management systems and regular social processes – also the acid test for the mutual trust.

On the corporal level, we remain the essence of reality, for their fragility, susceptibility to illness and suffering. No-one is unbreakable, and now we seem to realise that a little more. It is worth remembering as we try to resist the temptation of trusting in the screen-framed world. The persistently impassable and undefeatable physicality, materiality of the world, exposes the unchangeable sense of our existence. Thereby, the situation has provided especially us, artists, with the opportunity to come back down to earth and again – to quote Nicholas Mirzoeff – inspire and upgrade our perception of the world<sup>1</sup>, adaptation skills and the assumptions previously

1 N. Mirzoeff, *Jak zobaczyć świat*, Kraków 2016.



taken for granted. Once such a moment occurs, it demands a radical change, which is coupled with creation, the salt of life. It is worth taking this uncomfortable time to reexamine our existing scenarios, ask ourselves (and each other) a question about new strategies of functioning (which may soon turn out as strategies of survival), about lifestyle and all the systems organising our social life, and – first and foremost – invest in the quality of our relationships. Relationships based on balance. Relationships, unreduceable to interaction. Our values, such as freedom and responsibility, should also be considered as relational and so translated into particular action. After all, we dispose of a capital of knowledge based on practice and activity.

One could risk a thesis that a crisis is a common human thing (and usually stems from human delusion of grandeur), and a resultant of certain unpredictable and unrelatable events. Nonetheless, a crisis is very specific, and so requires undertaking specific work and action. Speaking of actions, we know they are never out of context. The context in which we live is the material of these actions. Using a great metaphor of Jerzy Ludwiński, art (and actually the entire creation) is like a snowball scooping up reality, and gradually becoming the whole world.<sup>2</sup> As utopian as this vision is, it does define the sense of our operations. The world needs creativity, a new, bold outlook, especially over the areas we prefer not to see, or which we displace for our comfort. Our role at the Academy is to think aloud and establish a dialogue with reality. Today, according to the snowball theory, creativity appears in places he would not have expected before and everywhere it comes across what is different, remote, hassled, humiliated and weaker. It was accurately described by Artur Żmijewski: The artist reinstalls axioms with ambiguity, and so brings them back to existence. The artist equips dead matter with feelings and emotions.

Creativity arises from the sense of discomfort, and is sometimes connected with the need for breaking a taboo, referring to the entire areas marginalised in our lives, and therefore is an appropriate tool and platform to work on difficult subjects. The current circumstances seem to “facilitate” more acquiescence to the outside world, thus leaving the incubator. The reality anchors us in here and now (and as we know, it is here and now that the timeless things happen). It makes all our activities more “acquiesced”. These areas of life exist stronger, more intensely than any lifestyle spectacle. I am a firm believer that the Academy is a place to meet people void of conformist temptations. Let us not stay neutral. Creativity gives us an image of what we are like. When we are touched or even shaken by something, it means we are not that bad, we are able to feel and respond. I want to believe that the current reality has been shaping a new model of sensitivity and responsible engagement in the future, and more generally, inquiries about the future and the ethical dimension of our actions. Although today we are living with fear, we must remember that psychologically, fear makes sense. It is an important warning sign. Fear keeps us alive, as much as pain does, signalling that our organism is in danger. Crises and restrictions are written into everyone’s work experience, and help us focus on our own abilities – they constitute a natural circumstance to keep trying and re-establish the aforementioned relationships by means of imagination and engagement, and mostly with the sense of accountability for the consequences of our actions.

The reality in which we function is based on human ideas, and constantly reformed, reshaped and redesigned. We all have inclinations to change, indeed. Moreover, we celebrate change. We all want to have an effect, influence the reality, satisfy our need for agency. Today, however, we must revise our existing disposure to manifest our dominion over reality. Our disposure to organise reality. We must – especially here, in Silesia – take a close look at what is actually hidden behind the romantic beauty of post-industrial ruins, which are de facto the image of human conflict with nature. It seems that what we have accepted so far is not acceptable in the long run. It is, therefore, necessary to reconsider the consequences of agency: thinking of changes, we should also ask about their reversibility.

2 J. Ludwiński, *Sztuka w epoce postartystycznej i inne teksty*, Poznań-Wrocław 2009.

Organising our relationships also requires becoming aware of the fact that we are not going to be here forever. To quote Professor Tadeusz Sławek: change ego into eco – invest in the plural. It is not only I, but what surrounds me, and in reference to a context larger than human. To everything alive. The relationship we should be after is not based on dominance, but collaboration and co-existence. Therefore, no matter the circumstances, we could/should try and shape this future somehow. And in order to shape the future, we need to imagine it. To this purpose, it would be good to have a positive relationship with the future to allow our creative activity be located in a larger, meaningful context. Thinking about the future is, therefore, a sort of imagination exercise, constant pursuit of forms for thoughts, plans, designs of the new perspective, and our place within.

How can creativity be helpful in this respect? On the other hand, do our actions have any real agency, can they be effective in any way? What role could we play in formulating new, good conditions, building our awareness, and consequently, our individual and social responsibility? Such questions sum up to a general and direct one: What help does creativity provide? It could be more important as an attitude, also visible outside the convention and ritual of openings and exhibitions, outside the “goods and services” reality. Activities going beyond this area direct change as well.

Moving from the first step to the systemic change is a very demanding process. These little (bottom-up) steps allow us to enjoy little successes/victories. On a macroscale we feel weak, but in the local perspective, in our own neighbourhood, we can efficiently build the strategies of the future. At the Academy, therefore, we want to engage with the issues of our microcosm, test new solutions, which could become models and be applicable elsewhere. Our engagement results from the sense of belonging to this place. Creativity is / can be a special tool (or more like: generate tools) to reveal or disassemble the so-called common sense, the one that has led us to the verge of our own existence over the years. We should not be threatened with apocalyptic visions of the future, but rather find a sense in synergy, mutual support, care for ourselves and each other. Our capital is the ability to reach people – anyone, who daily ignores the thought about their responsibility – without raising the sense of anxiety/fear, which demotivates and blocks any response to the problem. We must remember that creativity is neither restricted not closed up, on the contrary, it is a very capacious thing and may be a powerful tool, if it breaks through its own limitations. It is

also important not only how we achieve that, but why and with whom. The area of culture is a space for conversation about values, and art has a quality of translating abstract subjects into a certain individual experience, and uses it as an invitation to discussion, recognising diverse groups of beneficiaries. It is an amazing potential, given that art finds a credible partner for conversation. We seem to be living in the times of imagination loss, and thereby the loss of the future. Without new metaphors, without new terminology finding a permanent place in our language and feeding our imagination, no vision of the new positive future will ever be possible.

Dystopian thinking is intellectual laziness. We all know what dystopias look like – Joanna Erbel's<sup>3</sup> statement emerges like a motto to describe the “here and now”. In fact, the constatation that nothing is possible, all what is good is history, decreases the IQ of us all. All we need to learn is to share the world with other intelligent forms of life, instead of trying to control or categorise them – as we have done for so long and to so disastrous consequences. Mindfulness, sensitivity, creativity, autonomy, originality, along with the ability or more like readiness to react, and the bold inimitable expression give us the foundation to confront crises. Art, nonetheless, is not and cannot be (solely) an exclusive hobby, marketer of goods or time-filler. It is mostly about specific tools that can be useful under crisis circumstances. We could figure out these symptoms that do not function as one ecosystem, but – imagination applied – might be combined to form a larger whole. As art has the ability of making us feel “different than expected”, it may come in helpful. Thus, there is a need to return to several fundamental questions: Why does our presence matter? Does it matter what sort of activity we filter through the sense of responsibility? That is what we actually do, also at the Academy, rather than decorating the world, making it look better or worse. Our voice matters, our own point of view as well.

Art is so interesting because it proves that it is possible to create a space sensitive to the individual and the community at the same time. It is about causality and consequences, how we combine thinking and action. What is between these activities? Experience is. Not the one understood as a form of entertainment. Experiencing, we become part of the world. Participating, we share responsibility. Perceived this way, creativity also holds irrevocable significance in today's world, especially now. And today, when it is so difficult to predict or

3 J. Erbel, *Wychylone w przyszłość. Jak zmienić świat na lepsze*, Kraków 2022.



forecast the future within our individual and universal capabilities, and at our own pace, we can still try and use what we have to build this future. What we must constantly foster is maintaining sensitivity and joy of action. First, share our experience – also of melancholy – in order to maintain, or restore the lost basic elements of togetherness, elements underlying our relationships, sense of trust and care. As creators, we can deploy more than only intellectual communication channels. They may help us understand the basic premise of deep ecology, that everything is connected.

Making images deepens the experience of reality. Materiality is mainly about the experience of the body rather than “producing” physical objects. The so-recognised reality cannot be rendered. We are used to the anthropological definition of intelligence. Instead, we should treat it as something formed as a result of our interactions and relationships with other beings. Humans must share the world with other intelligent forms of life rather than control or categorise them – as we have done for so long and to so disastrous consequences. Such an attitude is also an objection against the direct and implied authoritarian tendencies, and pursuit of common strategies of resistance against aggression, as well as demonstration of various forms of engagement. It is much more important to have a body which feels like part of space than a body which receives the en face image. Image is not that important.

Art is a process, not a moment. Awareness of this elementary fact is also necessary in the dimension of motivating ourselves to action. Curiosity and acceptance of the Other along with innovativeness, and finally experiment, are actually different/new, and frequently alternative forms of togetherness. Our impact is finding a way to minimise impact. History demonstrates very clearly how many times our impact has turned out toxic. We are convinced that we can solve our most urgent problems only in collaboration with nature. The recent and present time has confirmed my belief that this very meeting – in reality – is the only possible foundation of true relationships (thus far). The meeting, which releases an invaluable portion of energy needed/necessary/indispensable to speak in our own voice, comes as a test of our openness and readiness to listen as well. I truly hope that unsealing, if only a little, our hermetic institutions, areas and disciplines, creating ecosystems of collaboration, we will join forces to build, restore and foster this idea of meeting.

The Academy is (and surely can and should be) such a meeting place – a laboratory of new forms of relationships between humans, humans and non-humans, working in the logics of prototyping solutions, testing behaviours, or a regular spontaneous conversation. The Academy is a work in progress..., an open project composed of subsequent generations and eternally changing context. This makes us humble looking into the future and drafting the perspective of development. The Academy is, therefore, a place for everyone, regardless of religious denomination, worldview, origin, skin colour and life choices. Its materia prima is art, as the only one able to touch the invisible, the unnamed, and thereby reside in the space of freedom, which is every artist's *sine qua non*.

[...] *the love involved in creativity, is not a love of lovers but a love of humanity, of the desire to connect to a universal sensitivity which lies within us all*

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My father left school at the age of 15 and went to work on the railways. When he was 18, he was conscripted into the Army, and although he didn't enjoy it, said this was where he received a formal education in Maths and English. He re-joined the railways two years later, became a train driver and started a family.

As his eldest son, I realised growing up that we were very similar in many ways, we enjoyed humour, travel and talking politics, yet unlike him I was not interested in driving trains or the long hours of shift work that went with it. I was a day-dreamer, with my mind detached from the realities of life. Instead of an environment surrounded by metal and diesel, I enjoyed painting and looking at the work of the great artists of the past. I was very fortunate amongst my peers as my father encouraged my artistic interests and helped pay for me to go to university, so that I could deepen my knowledge further by studying the theory and practice of art.

When I eventually graduated, there was high unemployment in our region and my work prospects looked bleak. I remember complaining to my parents about how hard-up I was and that the future seemed depressing. It was then that my father said something I have never forgotten; "you may be poor in money, but you are rich in culture". These words have stayed with me ever since, because this statement cuts to the heart of what an art education is really all about. An art education may not necessarily provide us with financial wealth, but it will always offer enrichment in the way we see the world. Those of us who are fortunate enough to have studied the liberal arts at an academy are especially blessed, as we carry that around with us for the rest of our lives. We have gained an enhanced understanding of ourselves and our societies through the art and literature previous generations have left behind.

Art has an ancient history which we can still find preserved in many remote and hidden landscapes. We can visit the "Cave of Swimmers" of the Gilf Kebir plateau in the Libyan Desert, which dates back 10,000 years, the Wandjina figure paintings of Kimberley in Western Australia which are 17,000 years old, or the Lascaux cave paintings which were painted some 20,000 years ago. They display images of people, animals and cultures we will never know, yet they speak to us today and are united in carrying one universal message: "Like you, we also lived". This tells us something else, that like us, they had a desire to leave a mark which lives on past the inevitability of their death.

Just as these early examples of art are hidden away from view in enigmatic locations, there is one core truth to being a creative person, which at first glance also appears to be held as an elusive, well-kept secret. It is a secret that only slowly begins to reveal itself if you look carefully at the possessions you own and the things you value; it is that all creative acts are essentially an expression of love. Because when any of us chooses to truly engage with making something, then we choose to make it with tenderness, in the hope that others will emotionally connect with what we offer of ourselves.

Our wish to express the nature of our lived experience to other people we do, and do not know, stretches beyond written history through the enduring traditions of music, dance, painting and the spoken word. Through these acts it becomes possible to transmit aspects of our lives to others we will never meet. This love, the love involved in creativity, is not a love of lovers but a love of humanity, of the desire to connect to a universal sensitivity which lies within us all. In his 1978 book, *The Road Less Travelled*, M. Scott Peck describes a belief that "true" love is an act we undertake to consciously expand the boundaries of our ego. In doing so we begin to include others into our sphere, and this can be directed towards oneself, as well as towards one's beloved, which frames love as an expansive act of spiritual nurturing and inclusion.

Peck's idea appears to align closely with the Greek concept of "arete", which is located around the notion of how we find ways to live life to its fullest potential, and become the best versions of ourselves that we can be. It is a concept Robert M. Pirsig began to explore in his 1974 fictionalised autobiography, *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance: An Inquiry into Values*. In this book, Pirsig writes about a 17-day motorcycle ride from Minnesota to California. The primary character is an unnamed narrator who we identify as Pirsig, who takes the trip with his son Chris. For the first 9 days of their journey, they are accompanied by their close family friends, John and Sylvia Sutherland. The interrelationship of these four people, the maintenance of the motorbikes, and the trip itself, are used by Pirsig as a metaphor. The narrator discusses John and Sylvia's aversion to technology, which he aligns with a "romantic" approach to life which values surface impressions over rational analysis. The narrator by contrast is viewed as more analytical, being described as "classic". In this way, the different facets of subjective and objective philosophical approaches to living are explored by Pirsig.

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He seeks to develop his own ideas around how people might live an expansive life through the adoption of what he termed, a "Metaphysics of Quality".

Early in his career, Pirsig had worked as an English teacher at Montana State College. While he was there, he began to notice that he and his fellow tutors were under a legal contract to teach "quality" to their students, yet "quality" itself had not been clearly defined by the college. This led Pirsig to trace back the history of the term "quality" so that he might find a concise definition of it. Ultimately, this led him to the ancient Greek philosophers and more specifically, to Plato.

What Pirsig came to see was that quality, beauty, truth and virtue had originally been intertwined concepts which were located in the term "arete". For the ancient Greeks "arete" could simultaneously mean "goodness", "excellence" and "virtue" in any given field. But this was not just a term confined to people, it could also be applied to ideas as diverse as the excellence of a chimney, or the superior quality of a bull for breeding. Typically "excellence" here appears to be aligned to a belief in supreme effectiveness in the actions of people and things. For example, a warrior who has been brave in battle, an athlete who is strong in competition or a scholar who is clever in argument, might all be considered to possess "arete". By extension, the Greeks believed those who were triumphant in their actions and possessed "arete" held virtue or "moral superiority". Plato himself believed "arete" was something hard to define, saying, "Nor is there even an agreement about what constitutes arete, something that leads logically to a disagreement about the appropriate training for arete."

Pirsig used *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance*, to explore these ideas in depth and concluded that the modern western concept of "quality", originated in Plato's division of the human soul into differing aspects of "reason" and "emotion", with reason, for Plato, having a primary place over emotion. Reason, Pirsig believed, occupies the same sphere in the West as objectivity and logic, being backed by scientific rationality and located specifically outside of the realm of the individual. Whilst emotion on the other hand is viewed as creative, imaginative and located unambiguously in the self, being ultimately non-rational. This, Pirsig argues, is an artificial separation initiated by Plato which has led to much

unhappiness and disharmony in the world. In proposing his concept of a "Metaphysics of Quality", Pirsig sought to establish a new way of thinking which would unify both the objective and the subjective within the self, where both of these stand for truth.

With Pirsig's help we can see today that notions of truth are divided into subjective and objective factions. Subjective truth is widely presented as good and aligned with liberal politics, whilst objective truth is largely viewed as being associated with right wing political thinking, and the suppression of the individual. We have witnessed this most acutely in the rise of intersectional politics, and the growing dominance of identity hierarchies within the cultural arena. This belief system has seen artists drawn to identify themselves as a member of a discriminated group first, and speaking to that (and only that) second as a way to see their work programmed. This ideology is located in liberalism, which is formed on the identification of the suffering of the individual at the hands of the state. In art we see this expressed in historical works such as; *The Execution of Emperor Maximilian* by Édouard Manet, *The Third of May 1808* by Francisco Goya, Robert Capa's *The Falling Soldier* and in Nick Ut's 1972 Vietnam war photograph, *Trang Bang after a South Vietnamese Air Force Napalm Attack*. What we notice when looking at these pictures is that we tend to identify personally with the distress of the subject. Their pain metaphorically becomes our pain. This is in part because of the way the images are composed, with the main character being the focus of the core narrative around which all the other components revolve. In their suffering, the subjects gain a voice of moral authority, which echoes through the rest of society.

I believe that in focusing on ideas around the suffering of individuals (which has strangely been promoted by the establishment) we are currently seeing art go through a reductive phase. In 21st century Western democracies, we are witnessing the promotion of art where the artist has to identify themselves as a part of a cultural sub-group, and then make art only about being part of that sub-group. This is reductive, and we have had to pay an artistic price for this, and that price is the removal of beauty, hope and wonder. As a practice, it focuses entirely on the subjective and in doing so belittles both the artist and the audience, as it removes the opportunity to imagine yourself in someone else's place.

Like Pirsig, maybe we can see that both subjective and objective truth can co-exist in harmony, where subjective truth is located in our own experiences of the world while objective truth lies outside the experiences of any one individual, yet is fundamentally a part of it. This would involve an acknowledgment on our part that life is fundamentally a duality which we can choose to accept. And perhaps if we do, we acquire a sense of “being” in the world where life is experienced as balance and perhaps sometimes even harmony.

Our experience of “being” alive in the world naturally creates a conflict between our “lived experience” and what we might consider to be the hard facts of reality which exist outside of ourselves. For example, like everyone else, I experience myself only in the moment of now, and know that as I get older my body will slow down, deteriorate and eventually die. Death is an inevitable objective truth which exists outside of ourselves, it is something which we cannot stop. Exploring the intersection of these two concepts, the way our inner reality navigates its meeting with external reality is, I would argue, expansive, and the realm of the true artist. It is a series of meditations on our emotional responses to the inevitable, unstoppable objective realities as they apply pressure on our subjective realities.

Arete offers us an intersection where the terms “truth”, quality”, and ‘beauty” meet. As we know, concepts around quality, truth and beauty are experienced at both the subjective and objective level. Scientists are primarily focused on exploring the world from an objective position, seeking to deepen our understanding of the world from a rational and impartial perspective. Creative people are the opposite, they are students of the liberal arts and therefore primarily focused on exploring life as it is experienced from the personal, subjective viewpoint. Where I think art becomes really interesting is when that experience is applied to a meditation on universal and rational concepts, examples of which might include Mark Rothko’s Seagram paintings, which contemplate the unknowingness of the eternal void, Vija Celmins’s “Night Sky” series which study of the vastness of the cosmos, or Frida Kahlo’s self-portraits, which express the enduring condition of pain and suffering as a universal part of the human experience. I believe this is where arete lives today.

When we encounter something bigger than ourselves it encourages us to be our best, to strive to be better in the world, to offer up the best version of ourselves to others. This does not mean we necessarily make financial wealth

for ourselves. No one ever meets a poet and thinks: Here is someone out to make a fortune, live in a mansion and drive a Porsche. There is something else at play, something much bigger. Artists seek to create cultural wealth. It is an exploration of our humanity, as we experience it across countries, cultures and millennia. The role of the art academy is to help nurture the next generation of artists and historians, to help them learn to make connections to previous generations and different cultures, as well as each other today. This makes art at its best an expansive practice, one which reaches out to all people in a holistic way, a way which embraces our common humanity.

In the tale of the journey to California in *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance*, Pirsig identifies himself as logical, while John and Sylvia Sutherland are cast as the romantic characters. While they occupy different sides of the objective and subjective divide, what they all shared together was a motorcycle road trip across America.

My father is 83 years old now, he retired from working on the railways 20 years ago. Today, one of the things I enjoy most in life is when we take a train journey together.

Robert Priseman, 20<sup>th</sup> October, 2021



*Modernity has brought about such a unification [...] that it is very difficult to determine which band is playing, by ear.*

Tomasz Miczka

Mieczysław Juda

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Do we need the Academy? Asked such a question, a Rector-senior, who I have an honour to be, cannot answer in any other way than: Yes, we do!, and I give this response with my deepest conviction. It is, however, only partially true, because the grounds for such an answer are sublime, and should not be only cursory. To make my task easier, I will restrict myself to artistic academies, and leave different schools aside, as they reside a space other than the creative one, and still await their promotion to the university status. Meanwhile, with three exceptions, artistic centres are permanently Academies by name.

Our deliberations can and should be multiway, while the first glance will be a formal review, situating academies within the scope of higher education, which provide them with university status by law, as opposite to the higher vocational schools. It is an unanimous, I believe, opinion of our artistic environment that studying art is something much more valuable than simply learning a trade, even though this aspect is obviously important as well. In any case, the title a school holds does not prove everything, as evident by one of the best theatre-and-film schools in the world (sic!). I mean the Film School in Łódź.

All the artistic schools, 19 of them, belong to the Conference of Rectors of Academic Polish Schools, and this fact cannot be ignored. It demonstrates that beside the mastery of skills, we want to have a broader access: to anchor art in a wider scientific context and support artistry with deeper knowledge. There is also another argument, which I find quite strong. As we know, all higher schools, be them universities or technical schools, affect science, economy and broadly taken society. It is no different with artistic schools, even though the area of our influence leans towards culture, and our field is plotted by the social need for experiencing art.

Also considering the international context may bring many arguments for the existence of the Academy. I believe there is no developed and relatively wealthy country, where we could not study art. This proves the need for deepening knowledge, studying and expressing oneself, describing the reality... through art. Sometimes, we can find several disciplines of art in one school, where visual arts, music and theatre are stitched close together into more or less purposeful networks. In this context, it is worth mentioning our exceptionally intensive artistic mobility in pursuit of inspiration, and a certain alterity, capable of bringing something new into our art. By no means is this a revolution, as travels have accompanied artists for ages, the only difference being their effortlessness nowadays.

Where do we travel to? Usually to schools, academies or to exhibitions they organise. This need seems to be the imminent part of studying and creative development. Such a process poses certain risks of art becoming increasingly similar, losing individuality of particular schools. Analogically, we may quote a late Polish conductor, Stanisław Skrowaczewski who, in the interview for the Polish Radio, complained about the gradually increasing similarity of sound of symphonic orchestras. As recently as the 1970s, the expert ear could easily recognise the best of orchestras by their individual sound or manner of playing. Modernity has brought about such a unification – caused by exchanges of musicians, instruments and playing styles – that it is very difficult to determine which band is playing, by ear. Still, among the consequences of our voyages, there are mostly the positive ones.

If all the artistic schools in the world were instantly closed down, what would become of art? Most probably, nothing at first. In the longer term: Art would surely continue, but could it be deprived of something deeper, maybe wiser? Individuality of the artist is not at odds with the pursuit of the possibly broadest acquisition of skills and in-depth understanding of what is being created. I am a firm believer, therefore, that in the even longer run, academies would re-emerge as places of study and dialogue.

It is a fact that over centuries art had been nested in studios, workshops, schools of particular brilliant artists, and masterpieces were still made. Nonetheless, it is necessary to consider the context of those epochs, when the very idea of universities as academic communities, searching for answers to the most important questions, was only being born. In a sense, even back then art, music to be particular, existed in *quadrivium* and the figures of *artes liberales*, beside arithmetic, geometry and astronomy. It is worth remembering that these "liberated arts" did not mean any of the arts as we know them, but rather sciences as a symptom of intellectual activity, while music as such was not a space of shaping skills and executive practices, but it was intended to transfer knowledge about music, more like musicology today.

Let me make a little digression here. In Johann Sebastian Bach's biography, written by Christian Wolf, we find an interesting fragment of the great composer's life, his university times. Bach himself wrote that he was not interested in an uneducated listener, who failed to understand the depth and sense of music. The composer wished to have become a lecturer of the University in Leipzig, which eventually came true.

It was the epoch, when music or arts were not studied, but still the pursuit of “wise” art was noticeable. Similar was the case with medieval or renaissance painting, for example. Today, it takes considerable intellectual effort, study, exploration to understand, if only partially, the hidden messages of artists. Although we can be delighted by beauty itself as contained in paintings, its combination with understanding allows us to experience the entirety of the artwork. This truism refers to the majority of creative forms, whether it is a music score, film, image or print.

All in all, we are in a much better position now, with art situated in the academic space. The problem, however, is to use it well. Here, we are moving towards the second outlook at our sense-of-the-Academy dilemma. Let us consider the essence of artistic academies' functioning. At our schools, we form colourful communities, largely composed of exceptional personalities, we are building a certain tradition, generational continuity. This is the power of the Academy, but such favourable circumstances can be very sensitive, susceptible to good and bad changes. Under right circumstances – great artists-didactics, talented students, external situation – something amazing, special happens. Certain synergy is generated of talents and skills, wise teaching and wise studying. There emerges, momentarily, the Academy, where you want to study. Such examples could be multiplied, and graduates of these schools become world-renown figures.

Could this happen without the Academy? Yes, it could, but unlikely. It might refer to exceptional persons, whose self-education goes hand in hand with intellect, skills and colossal determination. To those few, higher education is the imminent part of their personal development. What comes to mind is the *casus* of impressionists, who went outside the academic mainstream and were able to clearly plot and follow a completely different, original aesthetic direction. Was the Academy unnecessary in this case, could it even have hindered those innovative needs?

Let us repeat the question: Could there be an artist, who does not need to study? Yes, indeed, but in such cases the contact with the academic world could simply become added

value, provided that you find yourself in the faculty of inspiring teachers, who help you find your own creative path, your own language. There is one more very important aspect, the broader academic context. What I mean is the construction of the study programmes, armed with “mind-opening” subjects, facilitating perspectives wider than these of studios or classes, programmes, where the main objective is not scoring ECTS points or meeting the qualification framework. It is significant that Academies constitute meeting places of various, frequently brilliant personalities, which create certain creative ferment, so necessary to students. It could so happen that by means of coincidence the Academy would come to a standstill at times as regards persons and ideas of good, wise education. I could also happen that it might be better for the most talented ones to stay out of such a structure.

One figure to recall might be Krystian Zimerman, but it would not be a totally credible example, because he had undergone his specific “studies” in the music primary and secondary schools, and the reason behind these premature study times was a phenomenal pedagogue, Prof. Andrzej Jasiński. We must also consider different factors between particular artistic disciplines. It is one case with a pianist, who needs to start education very early, unlike a singer, for example, who is actually expected to come across the appropriate set of skills as late as higher school level. Obviously, such examples could be multiplied.

Let us, then, summarise these short deliberations. Beside a few exceptions, all the other arguments above support, in my opinion, the inalienable necessity for academies to exist as higher schools – places bringing artists, didactics and students together



*Maybe an artist is closer  
to the profession of  
a doctor, who must be a good  
practitioner, but also  
well-grounded in theory*

Roman Nieczyporowski

Mieczysław Juda

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The pages of *Discourse on the Method*, first published in 1637, feature the famous statement of Cartesius: *I think, therefore I am*<sup>1</sup>. This sentence seems to have been one of the most important mottoes accompanying the development of science. Interestingly, however, history of art demonstrates that many artists living both before and after Cartesius, have been driven by a thought similar to that formulated by the great French philosopher. Examples could be multiplied, although the most obvious one would be the art of Leonardo da Vinci. We admire his *Mona Lisa* or the portrait of Cecilia Gallerani, we are impressed by his anatomic studies, designs of military machines, planes and submarines, but due to the question posed in the title, I would like to focus the attention on Leonardo's drawing, representing the proportions of a human body [Fig. 1]. This subject must have been of special importance to the artist, as Martin Kemp writes: "the search for the proportions of a human body kept him [Leonardo – RN] occupied throughout his creative life."<sup>2</sup> With all due admiration for the genius of the great Anichiano artist, it should be pointed out that the drawing in question was made on the basis of two sets of human body proportions described by Vitruvius in his treatise<sup>3</sup>. Known in Antiquity and Early Middle Ages, and later forgotten, the treatise was rediscovered in 1414, and first

published in print in 1486<sup>4</sup>. It was probably this edition that Leonardo referred to ca. 1490, as he was making the illustration of the human figure proportions<sup>5</sup>. Here, it should be noticed that according to the captions followed by Leonardo for his drawing, Vitruvius had not been original in his considerations, either. He derived lushly from the Greek thought, and made no secret of it as well. Moreover, as Anna Sadurska writes: "Vitruvius carefully lists the authors, whose works he referred to, in order to avoid any accusations of plagiarism. He hated plagiarism beyond measure. Writing about plagiarism, he hits very sharp tones, and with satisfaction enumerates punishments that have befallen unreliable authors."<sup>6</sup> Following from his attitude, we can easily arrive at the conclusion that the source of the sets of proportions described in

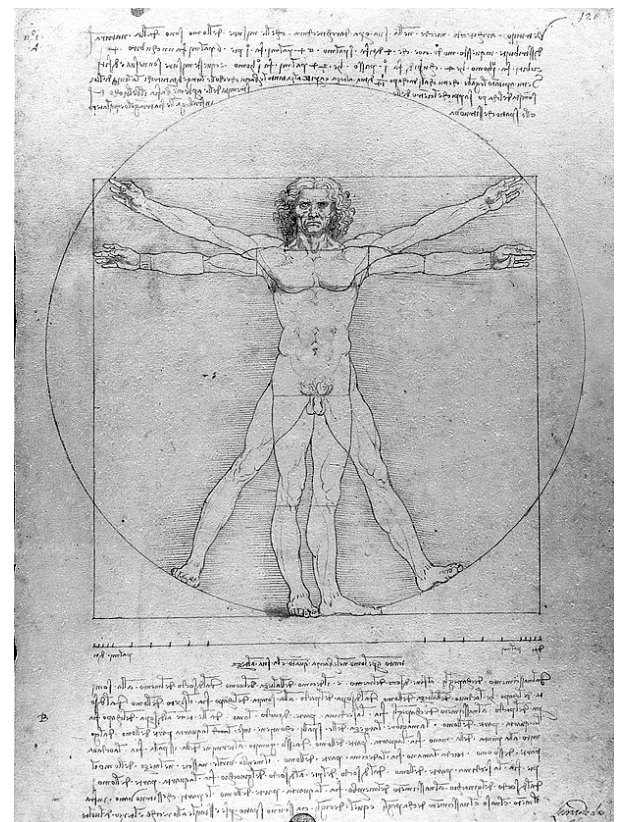


fig. 1

- 1 Initially written in the French version: *Je pense, donc je suis*. It is common knowledge that the Latin version of this statement: *cogito ergo sum*, first appeared several years later, in 1644, in the Latin edition of *Principles of Philosophy*, see: René Descartes, *Principles of Philosophy*, (eds) Valentine Rodger Miller, Reese P. Miller, Springer Dordrecht 1983
- 2 M. Kemp, *Leonardo da Vinci. Experience, Experiment and Design*, [Exhibition Catalogue], V&A Publications [Victoria and Albert Museum], London 2008, p. 104
- 3 Marcus Vitruvius Pollio, the antique architect living in Rome at the times of Julius Caesar and Octavius Augustus, see: Witruwiusz, *O architekturze ksiąg dziesięć*, Warszawa 1999, Book 3.1, pp.71–75. It should be taken into account, however, that the original Vitruvius drawings had not been preserved.

- 4 A. Sadurska, *Introduction*, [in:] *Witruwiusz*, op. cit., p. 6
- 5 The so-called Vitruvian Man
- 6 A. Sadurska, op. cit., p. 9

Vitruvius' treatise was the canon of Polykleitos: a system of theoretical assumptions, based on certain fixed proportions and values to serve artists working on the representation of human body. Yet, as noticed by Maria Ludwika Bernhard "to Polykleitos, a canon was not only a formal problem, but a result of many calculations. By the manner of his composition one can sense that the artist follows the Pythagorean doctrine regarding the mystic power of figures. [...] we are able to reproduce the artistic theory of Polykleitos. There is a co-dependency of particular parts of the body that compose the harmonious whole. And so, the head fits the height of the statue seven times, and the length of the leg two times from the foot to the knees, two times in the height of the torso and breadth of the shoulders; beside these relationships, there are other, much more difficult to put in numbers, and even unquantifiable as geometric relationships."<sup>7</sup> The best example here is the most famous of Polykleitos' sculptures, *Doryphoros*, known from its Roman copy [Fig. 2].

According to Anna Sadurska "The work [of Vitruvius – RN] is controversial. It was perceived as a poor compilation, criticised for its style, layout, and a strange jumble of the matter. Following from our definitions, it is not the architect's job to construct clocks nor war machines, nor supply water to the cities, not to mention long deliberations about astronomy, meteorology, medicine or nature. Not everyone would agree about the architect's competency in the area of interior design either."<sup>8</sup> It is surprising that we have a completely different perception of the life and art of Leonardo da Vinci, who took the road plotted by Vitruvius and, unlike him, is considered a genius ahead of his time. Recognising the artistic mastery of Leonardo, it should be noticed that other than a few preserved paintings<sup>9</sup>, the legacy of this renown painter is dominated by treatises, including those in the area of anatomy/medicine and military science, and these seem to affect the general acknowledgement of the famous artist as one of the most brilliant minds in art history.

7 M. L. Bernhard, *Sztuka grecka V wieku p.n.e.*, Warszawa 1975, p. 253

8 A. Sadurska, op. cit., p. 5

9 He is known mainly by such painting as: *The Last Supper*; *Mona Lisa* also known as *Gioconda*, *The Virgin and Child with Saint Anne*, *Virgin of the Rocks* (two versions), *Madonna in the Cave* (two versions).

The case of Leonardo da Vinci seems to be special in a way. Nonetheless, leafing through the pages of art history, it is easy to notice that the majority of works include more than the strictly artistic content. We suppose that looking at the paintings of Bosch, Caravaggio, Rembrandt; it is apparent in the art of Picasso, Beuys, Kiefer... One of the most prominent examples could be one of the frescos of Michelangelo: *The Creation of Adam* [Fig. 3]. In this painting, featured on the Sistine Chapel's ceiling, we can see a half-sitting, half-lying man being approached by the Creator. Looking at this scene we have the impression that the outstretched hands of both protagonist are going to touch with the tips of their fingers

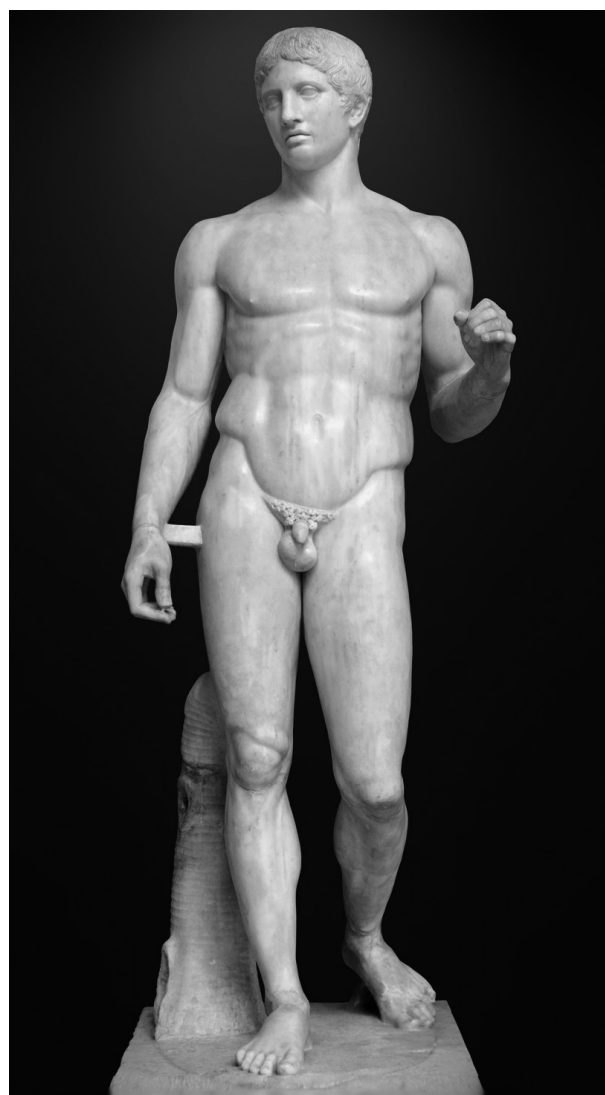


fig. 2

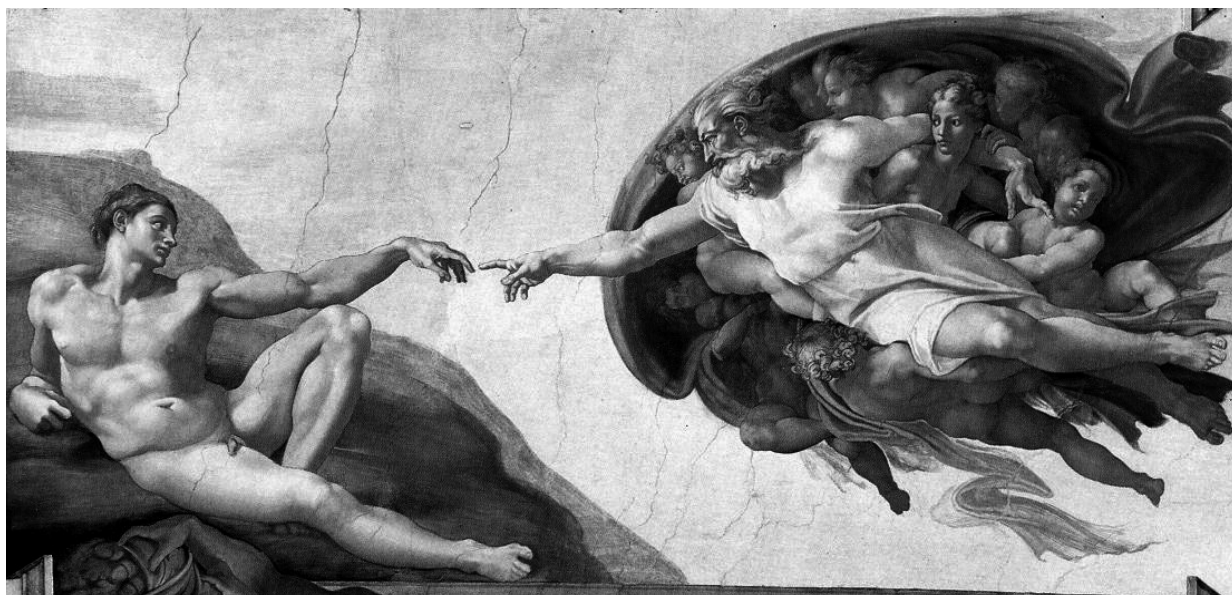


fig. 3

in the act of creation. Observing the perfect body of Adam, who is gazing at the approaching God the Father, we realise that the artist demonstrating how the act of creation refers not so much to the physicality/matter, but to the spirit. Such examples could be multiplied. Here arises a question: Visiting various museums and art galleries, what makes us stop at some works for longer, and pass by other, bored, even though they are made with equal skill? What really constitutes a work of art?

For centuries, artists and craftsmen were treated equal. It started to change slowly in the times of Giotto, who demonstrated that artistic activity may go beyond the pure *imitatio*. His *Isaac Rejecting Esau* in Assisi dazzled with its clearly presented psychological tension [Fig. 4], the intimate *Nativity* in Padua appeals with its delicate relationship of Mother and Son, read in the category *Sacra Conversazione*, the incredibly deliberate, broken into two parts, scene of *Annunciation* in Cappella degli Scrovegni evidenced the artist's intelligence. The route plotted by Giotto was continued by a multitude of artists such as: Pisanello, Domenico Ghirlandaio, Fra Angelico, Filippo Lippi, Paolo Uccello, Masaccio, Donatello, Filippo Brunelleschi, Sandro Botticelli, Andrea Verrocchio, Piero della Francesca, Andrea Mantegna, Michelangelo, Leonardo da Vinci, Raphael, Giorgione, Titian, Paolo Veronese and many more. It is fair to say that between the end of the 13th and the beginning of the 16th centuries,

there had been a certain artistic revolution in Italy. Art had achieved the previously unknown level, and some of its creators enjoyed the social status formerly unobtainable to this profession. Moreover, as pointed out by Ernst Gombrich, "ca. 1520, all art enthusiasts in Italian cities seemed to agree that painting had achieved the peak of perfection. Artists such as Michelangelo and Raphael, Titian and Leonardo accomplished everything which had been pursued by the former generations. No drawing problem was too hard for them, no subject too complicated. They demonstrated the appropriate combination of beauty and harmony, and outdid even – it was said – the most famous legacies of ancient Greece and Rome. For a boy inspiring to become a great painter one day, such opinions sounded discouraging. Regardless of the respect he might have had for the works of the living great masters, he must have wondered whether there was nothing left to do, as whatever was possible had been achieved in art."<sup>10</sup> As history goes, art never stopped, never froze with the passing of Leonardo, Michelangelo and Raphael. It lasted, developed and changed, still dazzling, raising awe, and often

10 E.H. Gombrich, *O sztuce*, Warszawa 1997, p. 361





fig. 4

indignation. There is, however, the symptomatic fact that the first artistic academies were launched in the times of Michelangelo and Leonardo, and beside the mastery of skills, they emphasised intellectual development. What is more, since Proto-Renaissance, the times of Cimabue<sup>11</sup> and Giotto<sup>12</sup>, there has been the apparent divorce of art and craft (meaning: skills).<sup>13</sup> Little wonder that the Italian example is soon followed by other countries. In 1648, there is the launch of Paris Académie Royale de Peinture et de Sculpture, a similar school is founded in 1692 in Vienna, in 1756 in Madrid, in 1757 in Saint Petersburg, in 1760 in Munich, and in 1768 in London.<sup>14</sup>

11 Cenzo di Pepe (ca. 1240–1302)

12 Giotto di Bondone (ca. 1267–1337)

13 It is apparent in the Italian language, which differentiates between a sculpture made by the artist and the one made by a sculptor-craftsman based on delivered designs.

14 entry: akademie sztuk pięknych [academies of fine arts], [in:] Wielka Encyklopedia PWN, v. 1, Warszawa 2001

As we know, the first Academy of Fine Arts in Poland was launched in Kraków.<sup>15</sup> In 1932, it was joined by the Academy in Warsaw.<sup>16</sup> Beside those two academies, in pre-war Poland art could be studied in the Faculty of Fine Arts of the Stefan Batory University in Vilnius<sup>17</sup>, State Institute of Arts in Lviv<sup>18</sup>, and State School of Decorative Arts and the Art Industry in Poznań.<sup>19</sup> It must be stipulated, however, that both at the Lviv and Poznań academies classes were directed more towards professional than academic mode. This fact is important for complete understanding of the concept of rebuilding the higher art education in Poland after World War II. In the late summer of 1945, there was the Convention of the Polish Artists Trade Union held in Kraków. During its proceedings, the matter of organisation of the higher art education in Poland was discussed, among other things. It was decided that in the new post-war reality artistic education on the higher schools level should be double-tracked: professional and academic. Therefore, according to the pre-war experience, it was postulated to launch Institutes of Arts in Warsaw, Kraków, Poznań,

15 <https://www.asp.krakow.pl/akademia/historia-akademii/>, [accessed: 27 May 2023]

16 Still, the Academy of Fine Arts in Warsaw claims the priority based on the project of the Academy developed in 1766 by Marcello Bacciarelli upon request of king Stanisław August Poniatowski, and allowing the studio of this Italian artist as meeting the role of art school. Warsaw would also be supported by the fact that in 1816 the University of Warsaw launched the Department of Fine Arts, while a similar unit at the Jagiellonian University in Kraków was not founded until 1818. Nevertheless, the first to be granted the status of the academy was the school in Kraków (1900), while the Warsaw school had to wait until 1932, see: <https://asp.waw.pl/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/kalendarium-2022.pdf>, [accessed: 27 May 2023]

17 <https://art.umk.pl/wydzial/o-nas/historia-wydzialu/>, [accessed 27 May 2023]

18 Launched in 1938 by means of transformation of the artistic faculty of the School of Industry (founded in 1876).

19 <https://uap.edu.pl/uczelnia/historia/>, [accessed: 27 May 2023]

Łódź, Wrocław, Gdańsk and Katowice.<sup>20</sup> The professional character of these schools could be evidenced, i.e., by the fact that they were focussed on such specialities as: ceramics and glass, applied graphic and lettering, artistic bookbinding, interior decoration, furniture making and woodcarving, advertising art and provisional decoration, metalwork, artistic galantry and fashion<sup>21</sup>, and that they were to launch "one-year courses preparing the Academy of Fine Arts graduates to the applied speciality of their choice."<sup>22</sup> In contrast with Institutes, the objective of the Academy of Fine Arts was to "educate the fully-fledged artists, framers and executives of the graduated specialities."<sup>23</sup> What came as a surprise in this case was the postulate of forming the third Academy of Fine Arts in Poznań<sup>24</sup>, probably due to the same location of the State School of Decorative Arts and the Art Industry before the war.

Analysing the *Framework Programme of Artistic Education*, prepared at the Convention of the Polish Artists Trade Union (and published in the September issue of "Przegląd Artystyczny"), we read: "It is our position that graduates of the existing Institutes of Fine Arts were mostly artistically and mentally unprepared to meet their assignments."<sup>25</sup> [Figs. 5–7] Moreover, the authors of this document postulate that "in order to raise the level of these schools [Institutes of Fine Arts], it is necessary" to have the maturity exam certificate as an admission requirement.<sup>26</sup> It is therefore evident that the writers of the *Framework Programme* truly cared for the quality of education, not only in reference to the strictly artistic skills.

For several political as well as organisational reasons, the contemporary authorities of the Republic of Poland<sup>27</sup> replaced Institutes of Fine Arts with State Higher Schools of Fine Arts.<sup>28</sup> It was a way to adapt the artistic education system in Poland to the territorial changes after World War II on the one hand<sup>29</sup>, and make a break from the pre-war tradition of Institutes of Fine Arts, thus raising the rank of the launched academies to the level of higher education on the other. Nonetheless, it must be noticed that at the beginning these changes were

20 See: [Kazimierz Tomorowicz], *Ramowy program szkolnictwa artystycznego plastyki w Polsce. Projekt Związku Polskich Artystów Plastyków*, "Przegląd Artystyczny. Biuletyn informacyjny Związku Zawodowego Polskich Artystów Plastyków", no. 1 (September 1945), p. 4, cit. after: <https://kpbpc.umk.pl/Content/215903/Publikacja-WiMBP-070727.pdf>, [accessed: 3 June 2021]; Cf.: R. Nieczyporowski, *Szkoła z widokiem na morze. U źródeł Akademii Sztuk Pięknych w Gdańsku*, "Sztuka i Dokumentacja", no. 24 (spring/summer 2021), p. 5

21 See: [Kazimierz Tomorowicz], *Ramowy program szkolnictwa artystycznego plastyki w Polsce. Projekt Związku Polskich Artystów Plastyków*, "Przegląd Artystyczny. Biuletyn informacyjny Związku Zawodowego Polskich Artystów Plastyków", no. 1 (September 1945), p. 4, cit. after: <https://kpbpc.umk.pl/Content/215903/Publikacja-WiMBP-070727.pdf>, [accessed: 3 June 2021]

22 Ibidem, p. 5

23 Ibidem

24 Ibidem

25 Ibidem, p. 4

26 Ibidem

27 The name People's Republic of Poland was introduced later by the Constitution of People's Republic of Poland of July 22nd, 1952, see: <https://maopd.files.wordpress.com/2013/11/konstytucja-prl-1952.pdf>, [accessed: 3 April 2023]

28 These included, all launched in 1945: State Higher School of Fine Arts in Gdańsk, with the seat in Sopot (in 1950, it was renamed as State Higher School of Visual Arts), State Higher School of Visual Arts in Łódź, State Higher School of Visual Arts in Poznań. In 1946, State Higher School of Fine Arts was launched in Wrocław (in 1949 it was renamed as State Higher School of Visual Arts). The only centre listed in the Framework Programme where the artistic academy was not formed at the time was Katowice.

29 One disadvantage of that system under the existing conditions was leaving out Szczecin as a seat of State Higher School of Visual Arts.





il. 5

strictly nominal in character.<sup>30</sup> In the majority of cases, at the newly-formed State Higher Schools of Fine Arts theory was taught occasionally in artistic studios, as if on the margin of studio classes. The reasons were surely multiple. One of them could have been the practice of teaching that new professors

- 30 Initially, in contrast with other higher schools, candidates wishing to start artistic studies at State Higher School of Visual Arts were not required to present any certificate of secondary school graduation nor maturity exam. Academic degrees and titles of members of artistic academies faculty were levelled with those generally applied in Poland as late as the Act of March 14th, 2003 on academic degrees and academic titles and academic title and degrees in the scope of arts, see: J. of L. 2003 no. 65 pt. 595, see: <https://isap.sejm.gov.pl/isap.nsf/download.xsp/WDU20030650595/U/D20030595Lj.pdf>, [accessed: 3 April 2023]

derived from their studies or work in the pre-war Institutes of Fine Arts. Another cause might have been the lack of appropriate faculty, which was the issue with most of the Polish academies at the time. Nevertheless, it would seem that the necessity of including theoretical classes in the structure of artistic education had been noticed from the very beginning. At the State Higher School of Fine Arts in Sopot this procedure took place as early as 1948, when Janina Ebenberger-Orzechowska<sup>31</sup> was employed to conduct the classes in history of art. For some, probably political, reasons she was not approved by the new authorities, as already before 1950 her education was called into question.<sup>32</sup> Regardless of the reasons, she was successfully defended, and worked at the Gdańsk Academy for several more years.<sup>33</sup>

In the early 1950s Prof. Stanisław Teisseyre moved from Poznań to Sopot, and in 1951 became the Rector of the Tri-City State Higher School of Visual Arts. Following his personal ambitions and the former postulate of launching the third Academy in Poland, Teisseyre attempted to raise the rank of this school. As much as there were not reservations

- 31 Certificate of employment of Janina Ebenberger at State Higher School of Visual Arts in Gdańsk of November 8th, 1976, see: Archive of Academy of Fine Arts in Gdańsk, collection: Teczki Osobowe Pracowników: "Janina Ebenberger-Orzechowska", sign. E1

- 32 In Janina Ebenberger-Orzechowska employee records we find credentials written by former students of Jan Kazimierz University in Lviv confirming information about her papers dedicated to Italian art she would give at the Lviv alma mater in the years 1935–1939, see: Archive of Academy of Fine Arts in Gdańsk, collection: Teczki Osobowe Pracowników: "Janina Ebenberger-Orzechowska", sign. E1: Deklaracja Zofii Łepkowskiej, and Poświadczenie Marii Sobolewskiej. It should also be noted that although Ebenberger-Orzechowska studied history of art at the University, her education in Lviv was terminated by the outbreak of World War II and, as a result, she only completed the first year of studies, while her knowledge of Italian art followed from frequent travels to Italy in the inter-war period.

- 33 Until 1960, see: Archive of Academy of Fine Arts in Gdańsk, collection: Teczki Osobowe Pracowników: "Janina Ebenberger-Orzechowska", sign. E1

about the programme of artistic subjects at State Higher School of Visual Arts, the relatively fresh case of Ebenberger-Orzechowska emphasised the differences in teaching theory which could be observed by comparing the teaching practice and programmes of Academies of Fine Arts and State Higher Schools of Visual Arts. Little wonder that in such a situation Teisseyre started the transition from employing an art historian, whose candidature would raise no objections. Consequently, on recommendation of Jan Chranicki<sup>34</sup>, the contemporary director of the Pomeranian Museum in Gdańsk<sup>35</sup>, in 1956 State Higher School of Visual Arts in Gdańsk employed Teresa Sierant<sup>36</sup>. Three years later, in 1959, Teisseyre managed to obtain permission of the Ministry of Culture and Art to launch the Interdepartmental Ensemble Chair of Art History and Theoretical Subjects at the Gdańsk school, and employ Prof. Zdzisław Kępiński as the head this newly-formed unit.<sup>37</sup> Despite all the efforts and engagement of the Rector, Stanisław Teisseyre, his actions were to no avail and the dream about raising the school to the rank of

the academy came true as late as 1996, when State Higher School of Visual Arts in Gdańsk was transformed into Academy of Fine Arts. It must be recognised, nonetheless, that a certain side effect of Teisseyre's activity was a change in attitude towards teaching theory, which could be observed in the early 1950s. Although in this respect the Gdańsk State Higher School of Visual Arts had its better and worse moments, its Rector authorities always emphasised theory. It is well-documented by the correspondence exchanged between the Rector of State Higher School of Visual Arts, Prof. Jerzy Zabłocki and its lecturer, Nawojka Cieślińska, MA. In the document addressed to the Rector explaining her decision to resign from conducting classes in art history at the State Higher School of Visual Arts in Gdańsk, Nawojka Cieślińska writes: "[...] In the general apathy and faced with very frequent students' attitudes of boredom, unbelief in the sense of any effort, while common cunning, rudeness, chutzpah and really pathetic »consumerism à la polonaise«, the possibility of proving to them the existence of other attitudes which make sense in this sea (or swamp?) of futility and waste constituted for me a great spiritual luxury, and evidenced the justness of my effort against all odds, starting from the preposterously low wages, through high cost of commuting and uncomfortable accommodation, to the lack of the basic set of slides [...], and my singularity, as a matter of fact, in trying to make art history a subject so-so respected by students (and hopefully by the faculty) as important to education of an intelligent person, who, rather than only the so-called artist, a graduate of State Higher School of Visual Arts should be."<sup>38</sup> The Rector's response to this fully-grounded bitterness is symptomatic; instead of taking offence or standing on his dignity, he

34 Jan Chranicki had known Stanisław Teisseyre since before the war in Lviv. Teisseyre was a Lvivian by birth, Chranicki by choice, see: H. Hohensee-Ciszewska, *Jan Chranicki. 1906–1976*, Biuletyn Historii Sztuki, R. XXXIX (1977), no. 1, p. 110; A. Gosieniecka, *Jan Chranicki 3.II.1906–11.V.1976*, Gdańskie Studia Muzealne, v. 1, Gdańsk 1976, p. 224

35 Since 1972, The National Museum in Gdańsk

36 Teresa Sierant was born on December 5th, 1931, and in the years 1949–1952 studied art history (on the level of vocational studies, the equivalent to the current 1st degree studies – BA) in the Faculty of Philosophy at Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń, and continued to MA studies in the years 1952–1954 at Adam Mickiewicz University, in one year with such aces of Polish art history as: Teresa Jakimowicz, Zofia Ostrowska-Kębowska, Janusz Kękowski and Piotr Skubiszewski. She defended her MA thesis supervised by Prof. Zdzisław Kępiński in 1954, see: Archive of Academy of Fine Arts in Gdańsk, collection: Teczki Osobowe Pracowników: "Teresa Sierant", sign. S

37 See: Archive of Academy of Fine Arts in Gdańsk, collection: Teczki Osobowe Pracowników: "Zdzisław Kępiński", sign. K14

38 Nawojka Cieślińska's letter addressed to the Rector of State Higher School of Visual Arts in Gdańsk, Prof. Jerzy Zabłocki, see: Archive of Academy of Fine Arts in Gdańsk, collection: Teczki Osobowe Pracowników: "Aleksandra Nawojka Cieślińska", sign. C52, p. 37

seems to understand the situation at hand. Therefore, in his reply to the art history lecturer, Prof. Jerzy Zabłocki writes: "In response to your letter regarding dissolution of the contract of employment and having recognised its arguments, I hereby consent to dissolve the said contract. Having regard to the fruitful collaboration so far, I offer you to consider re-employment next year. Thank you for your efforts and I wish you academic success."<sup>39</sup>

What resonates in Nawojka Cieślińska's letter are the issues of the contemporary artistic education. As pointed out by Grzegorz Dziamski: "artistic education is based on two paradoxes. One, the canon of modern art has been shaped in opposition, and even hostility to the Academy. The second paradox comprises in the modernity-threshold conviction of Immanuel Kant that fine arts are the product of an exceptional gift of genius, and brilliance, as the German philosopher says, is a total opposite of the spirit of imitation."<sup>40</sup> Additionally, Aleksandra Giełdoń-Paszek remarks that one of the pillars of academic art was its "arbitrary aesthetics founded on the belief about the intellectual basis of art. This aspect seems to be the most authentic and vivid legacy of the Academy. [...] Thinking has become a co-creative act regarding work of art. This refers also to the area of reception. Here appears one more area of the academic heritage. Contemporary art exists in a close relationship with theoretical reflection."<sup>41</sup> It is, therefore, safe to say that the main message of Nawojka Cieślińska's letter is the emphasis on the significance of intellectual sphere in the academic artistic education. Which, obviously, by no means negates nor belittles the necessity of acquiring certain technical/workshop skills because, as noticed by Giełdoń-Paszek: "so long as art requires mastering a certain skill, whether it is the use of a digital camera, pencil or paint

brush, on the didactic level it will involve teaching how to use them. Routine and fossilisation accompanying academic education have mainly caused the annihilation of individual sensitivity."<sup>42</sup> Little wonder that in the early 20th century an attempt of educational escape from academicism was made. Fine examples would be both the reformed artistic academies in the post-revolution Russia<sup>43</sup> and Bauhaus<sup>44</sup>, founded by Walter Gropius on the basis of the Art School in Weimar. Still, according to Manfredo Tafuri, already "around 1930, the revolutionary utopia of modernism had come to its end, to the border past which it could only be a self-deceit, and therefore in the 1930s the advocates of modernity ceased to reject tradition, but rather pursued such a reformulation of traditional values that could effectively serve social development."<sup>45</sup> For many reasons, not only political in nature, after World War II there occurred, as noticed by Grzegorz Dziamski, the increasing "professionalisation of the status of an artist measured by graduating from a higher artistic academy, [...] due to which it is more difficult to be considered an artist without completing artistic studies."<sup>46</sup>

From our perspective, it is apparent that "no model of artistic education eliminates the previous models completely, and it is hard to imagine an artistic school, which would not teach students artistic mastery and techniques."<sup>47</sup> Moreover, as claimed by Dziamski, teaching at artistic school is mainly "about a certain vision of art education, which is effective or non-effective at preparing students to function in the contemporary world of art."<sup>48</sup> There are strong indications that one of the most important elements of such education is

39 The letter of the Rector of State Higher School of Visual Arts in Gdańsk, Prof. Jerzy Zabłocki, addressed to Aleksandra Nawojka Cieślińska, MA, dated September 9th, 1988, I-10/126/88, see: Archive of Academy of Fine Arts in Gdańsk, collection: Teczki Osobowe Pracowników: "Aleksandra Nawojka Cieślińska", sign. C52, p. 41

40 G. Dziamski, *Akademia przeciw akademizmowi. Uwagi o szkolnictwie artystycznym*, [in:] M. Juda [ed.], *Akademia 2007+*, Katowice 2009, p. 163

41 A. Giełdoń-Paszek, *Pochwała myślenia*, [in:] M. Juda, op.cit., pp.138–139

42 Ibidem, p. 137

43 Mainly Institute of Artistic Culture (INChUK), Higher Art and Technical Studios (WChUTEMAS), see: A. Turowski, *W kręgu konstruktywizmu*, Warszawa 1979, pp. 12–13

44 Inspired by the Russian experience, see: G. Naylor, *Bauhaus*, Warszawa 1977

45 G. Dziamski, op. cit., p. 170

46 Ibidem, p. 164

47 Ibidem, p. 169

48 Ibidem

## 50

the area of broadly taken humanities with art theory and history at the head. Maybe an artist is closer to the profession of a doctor, who must be a good practitioner, but also well-grounded in theory.

In 2021, the Academy of Fine Arts and Design in Katowice celebrated its 20th anniversary. Its struggle towards independence had taken over half a century. Today, as one of the youngest Academies, it validates the postulate formulated in the summer of 1945 proclaiming the necessity of launching the artistic academy in the capital of Upper Silesia.<sup>49</sup> The short history of independent existence by no means releases it from the obligation to face modern challenges. If, as pointed out by Ernst Gombrich, it is common opinion that art had reached its prime in Renaissance<sup>50</sup>, if technical development has made it possible to create any work of art or its copy without artist's participation whatsoever, then we must pose a fundamental question: Why do we need the Academy? History teaches us that at any competition, we have always lost to the machine. The only advantage a human could have is in the area of non-standard thinking. To paraphrase Cartesius: Think, therefore you are.

49 See: [Kazimierz Tomorowicz], Ramowy program szkolnictwa artystycznego plastyki w Polsce. Projekt Związku Polskich Artystów Plastyków, "Przegląd Artystyczny. Biuletyn informacyjny Związku Zawodowego Polskich Artystów Plastyków", no. 1 (September 1945), p. 4, cit. after: <https://kpbpc.umk.pl/Content/215903/Publikacja-WiMBP-070727.pdf>, [accessed: 3 June 2021]

50 E.H. Gombrich, op. cit, p. 361

# *Academy is a space of debate, dialogue, dispute, but also a place to discuss difficult, touchy subjects...*

Lesław Tetla, Paweł Mendrek

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## Introduction

The Parallax Forum consists of the following academies: Academy of Fine Arts and Design in Katowice, Chelsea College of Art in London, Valand Academy of Art and Design in Gothenburg, Art University of Plymouth, who have collaborated with one another and multiple art galleries and cultural institutions in Poland and abroad. The name of the project, which comes from a phenomenon known as parallax, characterised by a displacement or difference in the apparent position of an object viewed along two different lines of sight and is measured by the angle or half-angle of inclination between those two lines, is intended to emphasise this polyphony. The Parallax project involves discussing issues regarding the role of an artistic academy and its educational processes, organising artistic events and workshops, in which every partner shares their experience and perspective in order to provide a broad context for the debated notions. This conversation is between Lesław Tetla and Paweł Mendrek.

Leszek Tetla:

Presenting this project, we decided to write into the character of the discourse conducted therein and talk about it in the form of a polemic... When Prof. Juda invited me to participate the "Why Do We Need the Academy" conference with this subject, I decided it would be a good moment to look at the project from a distance, carry out a small summary, and consider its further development.

It might be said that the story is not long, only 7 years after all, but over this time both within the project and around it so much has happened, that it is worth seeing it under these new circumstances. Brexit, pandemic, eventually the war in Ukraine, have totally changed the context of previous activities and explicitly emphasised its value. Personally, I find the essence of Parallax to be the meetings with people. The meetings of didactics/artists and students, and dialogue through doing. Beside the discussion panels as such, what is very important are the endeavours realised in art galleries and cultural institutions in the form of exhibitions, presentations and workshops. As the title of this paper states: Balance Sheet, we have decided to start with what has already been. Paweł, could I ask you to present the activities to date?

Paweł Mendrek:

We launched the project in 2015, which coincided with the move to the new building. This fact opened the discussion about the role of the academy in the new situation, and a series of changes followed. Our partners participate in the debate and attend regular meetings (forum, international studio, common participation in exhibitions and external conferences). Here is some facts:

- over 7 years, the project has been participated by the total of: 140 artists, authors and curators, 4 fora have been held, 9 institutions have been involved
- 2017 / SPACE BEYOND: 27 speakers
- 2018 / ART, SOCIETY AND POLITICAL CORRECTNESS 27 speakers, 16 visiting film shows, coordination – 2 students (voluntaries)
- 2019 / STEREOTYPES & STORYTELLING. RESEARCH STRATEGIES FOR ART EDUCATION: 50 presentations and shows, 10 visiting film shows, coordination – 9 students
- 2020 / (pandemic; online with Adam Mickiewicz Institute and Ujazdowski Castle Centre for Contemporary Art) COMMUNITY/CARE/LABORATORY. MAPPING RESIDENCIES: 12 speakers, 10 visiting film shows, coordination – 10 organisers, including 3 persons of the Academy of Fine Arts / within the symposium, a film was made: COMMUNITY/CARE/LABORATORY shot in co-production with Ujazdowski Castle and Kyoto Art Centre
- 6 exhibitions and shows have been organised (2 in Katowice, Bytom, Tychy, Wrocław, London, Gothenburg)
- Participation in international conferences and symposia regarding artistic education in Riga and London
- Didactic support in the form of 4 visiting workshops in parallax-network institutions
- 2 publications – one pending, which has been offered international distribution by Verlag für moderne Kunst, Vienna (VFMK)
- 3 films have been realised
- The parallax-network.org website was launched

Leszek, you participated in the launch and supported these activities from the onset as a Dean, and now the Deputy Rector. Can you see some quantifiable effects over the past 7 years? What particular benefits has the project had to our academic community? What processes did it initiate?



Leszek Tetla

Discussing the Parallax project we must remember, that it was preceded by a process of changes at the Academy itself, initiated with its becoming independent in 2001. This resulted in dynamic development (structural and organisational changes, changes in infrastructure) and provided an opportunity for such a project to happen. I have a feeling that it was the time that forced us to this activity. We were facing many questions about the future of the Academy, directions of its development. It was necessary to build a broader context, exceeding our national yard. A great occasion to extend this field was the opening of the so-called New Academy – a building at 50 Raciborska Street, where we reside today. I think, therefore, that it was the former changes that indirectly initiated Parallax, and the project came as an expedient response. The Faculty of Art was forced to redefine itself...

There was new potential, and we wanted to put it to good use. Also the external circumstances worked to our favour – in 2015, the city of Katowice was in the final round to get the title of European Capital of Culture. These were good bargaining chips, arguments to obtain a serious partner. You can probably remember how we decided to celebrate the opening of the new school by a project dedicated to pure and virgin space. This idea was supported by the then Rector, Antoni Cygan. The exhibition on the occasion of opening the new seat co-created by the brilliant Chelsea College of Arts, University of the Arts London we invited, was the beginning of a fruitful collaboration that we are discussing today. Over the subsequent years, the project was joined by Fine Art University of Plymouth and Valand Academy of Art to form the Parallax network, further expanded by cultural institutions.

The project has become a very pragmatic platform to exchange thoughts and concepts, even more valuable as it gathers so diverse strategies of action. In their ideological assumptions, strategies of operation and the scale of the academy, Chelsea and Valand are polar opposites, I think. This spread is so precious... The experience of partners cannot and should not be implemented directly, but they constitute excellent reference points. The basic characteristic of these partner academies is the awareness and precision of defining priorities, brave creation and execution of missions, programme profiling, which was emphasised during subsequent meetings, and could be an inspiration to instance our profile as well, to extract our specifics and make it the added value both on the national scale and in the context

of our partners. In the Parallax project, we have posed and discussed the issues regarding the role of artistic academies and its educational processes, methods and philosophy of working with students, forms of support to the transformation processes, matters of work organisation and creating a student-friendly space... Could you briefly present the programmes of the subsequent fora?

Paweł Mendrek:

The annual fora allowed us to redefine our position in the social structure and emphasise the role of the mission of the artistic academy, by the following subjects:

- SPACE BEYOND – art therapy,
- ART, SOCIETY AND POLITICAL CORRECTNESS – Academy's engagement in social debate,
- STEREOTYPES & STORYTELLING, RESEARCH STRATEGIES FOR ART EDUCATION – innovative didactic strategies.

The most recent forum, organised during the pandemic, COMMUNITY/CARE/LABORATORY. MAPPING RESIDENCIES allowed us to open the project to the broader interinstitutional collaboration towards releasing another publication: *On Care. A Journey into the Relational Nature of Artists' Residencies*, with the Parallax partners and in co-operation with Academy of Art in Szczecin, Ujazdowski Castle Centre for Contemporary Art, Kyoto Art Centre and Adam Mickiewicz Institute, and to organise the forum which is going to discuss the subjects of emphatic teaching and the potential of artistic residency as a didactic tool. As a person responsible for the programme content, do you see the value of such operations as a tool to support the didactic process?

Leszek Tetla:

Obviously. Absolutely, I do. The possibility to meet up, collaborate with the lecturers and peers from other excellent centres is very empowering and inspiring to students both regarding their artistic development, general knowledge, and acquiring the soft competencies. This experience forces them to go out of their comfort zone, drop the safe and routine activity...

The immense value of these meetings is the so-called voluntary and selfless sharing of resources. Participating in the open debate on their common topics, the faculty members and students become aware that we are dealing with a living tissue, which requires combined care. Such an open discussion lets us believe that the academic community is going to identify with the developed solutions, also those in reference to didactic programmes. Additionally, there is the crucial issue of taking our activity outside of the Academy. It is, therefore, worth expanding our operations and inviting cultural institutions, also international ones, to collaboration. Linking, networking, clashing, confronting, familiarising students with the conditions and rules of functioning beyond the Academy are very important. What is also valuable in the project is that these activities leave their mark. It is accompanied by publications which, beside collecting the material developed during the subsequent event, constitute a parallel space of discourse.

Leszek Tetla:

Let us recall our publications, then. *Dialogue through doing* is a phrase we use to describe the important aspect of ideas, which give rise to the Parallax project. The first publication, summing up the three initial years of activities (until 2017) had a form of a dialogue, in which each of its 10 essays was a response to a former text. Since then, dialogue and doing have been parallel. This is demonstrated by a range of symposia, exhibitions, residencies and other activities gathering the increasing number of interested persons and partner institutions, including WRO Art Center, Ujazdowski Castle Centre for Contemporary Art. The latest, 2022 publication results from the exhibition held at the turn of 2019 and 2020: SEX, SUICIDE, SOCIALISM, SPIRITS AND STEREOTYPES, organised at the Kronika Centre for Contemporary Art in Bytom as a reflection over other Parallax project operations...

Why do we need the Academy? As apparent from the balance presented above, the Parallax project has been facing Prof. Juda's question from the very beginning. I hope that this balance has answered it, if only partially. As we have mentioned before, one characteristic of this collaboration is the voluntary and selfless sharing of resources, so I will take the liberty of recalling the work of Chelsea College of Art students who, in the video titled: *Conditions 2018*, take several minutes of (British) humour to shout out their postulates regarding the academy, thereby prompting the functions it should fulfil:

*Do badly*

Academy should be a safe place, a space for making mistakes, taking risks, pursuing...

*Use workshops/studios*

Academy is a place of work, provides workshop, studios, tools, experts who use the tools.

*Talk to Matthew in the shop*

Academy should teach empathy, shed light on ambiguous things and behaviours.

*Use masking tape*

sometimes not everything is perfect nor has to be... We can solve it in a creative way.

*Walk forty minutes in half an hour*

Academy should be a place, where challenges are presented, the impossible done, the difficult challenged, a place of overcoming your weaknesses...

*Imagine what you want*

Academy should be a place to find yourself, define yourself, name your goals.

*Take risks*

Academy should be a place to take risks, it should teach courage in risk-taking, and promote such an attitude...

*Look and see*

Academy should teach the skill of observation, sensitivity, critical look.

*Meet in groups in the canteen on Thursdays*

It is a place to meet up, build relationships...

*Find people, who make a difference every day*

It is a place to meet personalities, authorities, unusual people, friends.

*Make friends on the grass*

It is a place to meet up, make friends...

*Discover together what works individually, so that we can forget about individual work*

It is a place to work in teams, collectively, with the quality of co-creating, co-working, co-sharing.

*Lecture, wearing a cloak*

Academy should also be a place open to eccentric and unconventional behaviours, expressive and extraordinary persons, a place of tolerance...

*Experience freedom*

It is a space of freedom and should guard freedom.

*Walk on the table*

Academy is also a place of unconventional behaviours, place of provocation.

*Join your Self*

Academy is a place providing and allowing concentration and focus on the core...

*Miss a seminar*

Academy is a place, where you can afford laziness at times.

*Learn*

Academy is a place, where you use time to gain knowledge.

*Float in the air*

Academy is a space to divorce from reality, exceed the limits...

*Discuss intrusive thoughts in public space*

Academy is a space of debate, dialogue, dispute, but also a place to discuss difficult, touchy subjects...

*Improve the sewage system*

Academy is also infrastructure and tools, it is there to be improved, maintain and repair, reform, but also create innovative solutions...

## Conclusion

The recent months have demonstrated how fragile the long-term structures are. Climate and political crises, the pandemic and related time of forcible inventory, in which we participate want it or not, pull us out of the routine and make us verify the priorities. In the compressed, digital version of reality, it is easier to miss a detail, which appears to be the things considered crucial so far. Paradoxically, they are the things that can help us develop a collaboration model based on common goals. The redefinition of locality opens a new chapter in the Parallax project to enrich the potential of artistic school and forces us to explore the reality with its new tools and means of expression. The time has come to work on and develop a model of education based on partnership and combined potentials. In the context of past and pending events, the word "sharing" gains a completely new meaning. Although the comfort of settling in the predictable pattern is tempting, in order to develop we must constantly redefine the existing assumptions and broaden the perspectives (also in relation to the Parallax project). Whether we want it or not, the world in which we live is interconnected with a dense network of co-dependencies, while any changes and local problems are global in character. After difficult and unexpected experience, we need to reset the reference points, shaping common space, possible to maintain only in the process of exchange, which accounts for the diversity of our problems – such a process is purely empirical. It is worth, therefore, restating the motto of our project – *Dialogue through doing*.

# Now, the unity of the Academy can only be seen as the unity in diversity.

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# Evaluation Questionnaire: Students and Teachers about the Academy 2008–2020

Mieczysław Juda

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Surveys among students of the Polish academic centres have yearslong tradition and have been undertaken for various reasons. Their underlying considerations have been both cognitive and pragmatic in nature. Questionnaires are a permanent element of building knowledge about the specific social environment of students – the young adults. They have been held in all kinds and types of higher education centres – classical university units, technical universities, and art academies as well. Google Scholar indexes over 30,000 publications on the subject in the form of investigative reports, scientific articles, and analyses of diverse sections for the recent decade only.<sup>1</sup> The subject range of these studies is almost incomprehensible – there are studies on the application of NPS and CIS methods in student satisfaction and loyalty surveys<sup>2</sup>, studies of pro-ecological behaviours of the Polish academic centres' students<sup>3</sup>, studies on students as subjects of marketing research<sup>4</sup>, studies of students' expectations towards higher education centres<sup>5</sup>, studies regarding the use of social media by academic centres and students<sup>6</sup>, all the way to studies on solving identity issues by students of the Polish academies

vs. the problem alcohol use<sup>7</sup>, studies on students' sexuality<sup>8</sup>, studies on integration of the Ukrainian students in Poland<sup>9</sup>, also studies of students' educational paths<sup>10</sup> and studies on emergency issues connected with the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic<sup>11</sup>. One credit-deserving study was the in-depth and multi-dimensional research commissioned by the Katarzyna Kozyra Foundation in 2015 regarding women's presence at the art academies in Poland, their promotion paths, social and professional situation of the women-lecturers, conducted on an extensive 768-person sample of women employed in nearly all art (visual arts) educational centres in Poland<sup>12</sup>. There is a separate issue of institutional studies, often in multi-structural perspective, where the horizon in question is only one of the analysed aspects. This refers e.g. to studies and analyses of the governmental agency NAWA, launched in 2017, oriented towards building strategies of enhancing the position of Polish science and

1 [https://scholar.google.com/scholar?hl=pl&lr=lang\\_pl&as\\_sdt=0%2C5&q=badania+studentów+polskich+uczelni&btnG=](https://scholar.google.com/scholar?hl=pl&lr=lang_pl&as_sdt=0%2C5&q=badania+studentów+polskich+uczelni&btnG=)

2 H. Hall, "Zastosowanie metod NPS i CSI w badaniach poziomu satysfakcji i lojalności studentów", "Modern Management Review", MMR, vol. XVIII, 20 (1/2013)

3 A. Ciążela, "Zachowania proekologiczne studentów polskich uczelni", "Prakseologia" no. 161/2019

4 H. Hall, "Absolwenci jako podmiot badań marketingowych uczelni polskich", "Ekonomiczne Problemy Usług" no. 72/2011

5 A. Wroczyńska, "Oczekiwania współczesnych studentów wobec uczelni wyższych – prezentacja wyników prowadzonych badań", "Studia BAS" no. 3(35) 2013

6 D. Buchowska, "Wykorzystanie mediów społecznościowych przez uczelnie wyższe i studentów w świetle badań własnych", "Nauki o Zarządzaniu" 2(15) 2013

7 A. Cybał-Michalska, "Rozwiązywanie problemów natury tożsamościowej przez studentów polskich uczelni a zjawisko problemowego picia alkoholu", "Resocjalizacja Polska" no. 19/2020

8 Z. Zdrojewicz, K. Belowska-Bień et.al., "Badanie seksualności studentów wrocławskich uczelni", "Seksuologia Polska" 2005, pp. 3, 2.

9 P. Długosz, "Integracja ukraińskich studentów podejmujących naukę w Polsce", "Studia Migracyjne – Przegląd Polonijny" no. 2 (168)/2018

10 T. Zając, M. Jasiński et.al., "Dokładniej, rzetelniej, taniej. Badania oparte na rejestrach publicznych jako szansa dla badań społecznych w Polsce", "Studia Socjologiczne", 1/2015 (216)

11 M. Klimowicz, *Polskie uczelnie w czasie pandemii*, Warszawa 2020; J. Hauke, E. Bogacka, et.al., "Studenci wielkopolskich uczelni publicznych i niepublicznych wobec wyzwań kształcenia zdalnego podczas pandemii COVID-19", *Prace Komisji Geografii Przemysłu Polskiego Towarzystwa Geograficznego* no. 4 35/2021

12 A. Gromada, D. Budacz, J. Kawalerowicz, A. Walewska, *Marne szanse na awanse? Raport z badania na temat obecności kobiet na uczelniach artystycznych w Polsce*, Warszawa 2015

higher education in the world, initiating and stimulating the international research collaboration as one of the state's public policies, also in the area of internationalising research institutions, transfer of knowledge to economics and international student exchange<sup>13</sup>, or analysing the DEA model for performance evaluation of functioning of public universities in Poland<sup>14</sup>. In this perspective, there have been regular reports (or parts thereof within a broader subject matter) of classical surveys by renowned Polish research centres in the form of individual publications or survey reports, such as those by CBOS, IBRIS, TNS OBOB, IPSOS, Kantar etc. The noteworthy studies of a smaller range include those in the area of substantial and methodological in-depth analysis, but oriented towards the academic environment and its surroundings<sup>15</sup>.

This compilation summarises the research project "Evaluation Questionnaire: Students and Teachers about the Academy" conducted constantly in the years 2008–2020, initially executed within the Academy statutory research, and since 2013 as an independent project financed from separate external sources (usually as a purposeful grant). The project was initiated and conducted by the Department of Theory and History of Art of the Academy of Fine Arts and Design in Katowice. The initially stated substantial objective of the research had not been changed over the entire period of project execution. It involved the gradual gathering of students' opinions about their functioning in the peer environment of such a specific character as the social space of the art academy, and in the years 2011 and 2012 it also included

teachers' opinions about matters essential to the functioning of the Academy. In substantial terms, the project falls within the area of the study of social and cultural capitals. Its pragmatic objective was providing the authorities of the Academy with operative expert knowledge, serving the rational decision making as regards current management.

The results were successively consumed by the Academy's authorities and entitled entities, they served to build the strategy of the school's development as well as to monitor the obtained effects and quality of education. Over the entire period of the project, the research results were presented in the introductory meetings of the Polish Academic Accreditation Committee (PAKA) and Polish Accreditation Committee (PAK) during accreditation proceedings of the Academy's faculties. It must be emphasised that twice this research project was the basis of the grant application to the former State Committee for Scientific Research (KBN)<sup>16</sup> with the intention of launching similar evaluation studies, national in character. Unfortunately, the attempts of obtaining funding for a project to such a scale were unsuccessful.

The presented summary provides substantial assumptions and conclusions of the research without discussing detailed results from the entire study period – these are included in the Polish version of the text.

13 NAWA [Narodowa Agencja Wymiany Akademickiej], *Strategia Rozwoju Narodowej Agencji Wymiany Akademickiej na lata 2024–2030*, Warszawa 2023

14 A. Szwarzynski, "Model DEA do oceny efektywności funkcjonowania publicznych uniwersytetów w Polsce", [in:] J. Sokołowski, A. Żabiński [eds.], "Polityka ekonomiczna. Prace Naukowe Uniwersytetu Ekonomicznego we Wrocławiu" no. 348, Wrocław 2014

15 Cf. A. Sikora, "E-learning oczami studentów", nawa.gov.pl; eadem, "Nauka on-line w oczach studentów", nawa.gov.pl; M. Klimowicz, *Polskie uczelnie w czasie pandemii*, SPOŁ TECH, Warszawa 2020; D. Leżajski et.al., *Kształcenie zdalne. Historia prawdziwa oczami studentów*, PSRP Warszawa 2020

16 KBN – State Committee for Scientific Research, in the years 1991–2005 the supreme organ of the governmental administration for science and science and technology policies, channelling the state funds for research, development and maintenance of education in Poland.



## Substantial assumptions

From the substantial point of view, the project falls within the area of sociological research of social and cultural capital, in the system of classical theoretical analysis.<sup>17</sup> The basic assumption was to recognise the opinion of students of the Academy of Fine Arts and Design about important aspects of its functioning. This refers to the survey (questionnaire) studies in the years 2008–2020, and to the FGIs conducted in 2009. In 2011, the scope of research was extended to the teaching faculty. Such a condition was upheld in 2012. It could be stated that then, in the years 2011 and 2012, the research provided a complete picture of the Academy's issues, both on students' and teachers' side. In 2013 it was planned to extend the research to the sister art academy – the Karol Szymanowski Academy of Music in Katowice. To this end, preparatory works were initiated, but due to the insufficient funding of the research, far too unsubstantial to subjectively expand it, the objective had to be postponed, and eventually abandoned.

The research problem area includes notions developed and established in the first edition of the project in 2008, reflected in accurate questions in the questionnaires (both the one addressed to students, and after appropriate adaptation, to teachers), regardless of the necessary corrections due to the research practice:

- Aspects of education, evaluation of the programme content, and attitude towards studies,
- Motives for starting studies and choosing the Academy as *alma mater*,
- Stereotypes and associations with the Academy,
- Expectations towards the Academy and sources of information about it,
- Faculty members – students relationship,

17 Cf., i.a.: P. Bourdieu, "The Forms of Capital", [in:] J.G. Richardson [ed.], *Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education*, New York, 1986; P. Bourdieu, *Distinction. A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*, London 1984; J.-C. Passeron, P. Bourdieu, *Warszawa Reprodukacja. Elementy teorii systemu nauczania*, Warszawa 1990; J. Coleman, "Social Capital in the Creation of Human Capital", *American Journal of Sociology*, 1988, Supplement 94; R. Putnam, *Samotna gra w kręgle*, Warszawa 2009; P. Sztompka, *Zaufanie. Fundament społeczeństwa*, Kraków 2007; F. Fukuyama, *Kapitał społeczny a droga do dobrobytu*, Warszawa–Wrocław 1997

- Evaluation of administration work,
- Role of the Academy in the activity on behalf of students,
- Vision of professional future,
- Role and meaning of the Academy's website,
- Social and demographic variables: classical demographic data.

## Methodological note

The research was initially intended as a comprehensive quantitative study with complementary studies in the form of qualitative analyses according to the Focus Group Interview procedures. The quantitative study was meant as a single-measurement procedure over one year (2008, 2010), since 2011 a two-time measurement was planned, first at the turn of January and February, and then at the beginning of October. Due to organisational reasons, as well as the nature of the Academy's functioning, and the requirement of obtaining research material on the accurate quantitative level, this assumption was abandoned. Despite the intensive explanatory and informative action carried out directly among students, and the attempts of including the Student Council in the process, generally there was the apparent scepticism if not reluctance to participate the study. Eventually, the tendency was successfully contained, and the results obtained in the years 2019 and 2020 (number of executed questionnaires) demonstrated the return to the condition from before the decrease.<sup>18</sup> The qualitative studies were initially planned as a two- or three-year cycle. However, due to the considerable cost of such procedures (organisation of research, necessary transcript, technologically advanced and time-consuming methods of data analysis, requirement of material standardisation etc.), and the impossibility of obtaining funding for this task both from the Academy's and external resources, the execution of this objective was postponed, and eventually abandoned.

The quantitative study was all along meant as a structured-interview questionnaire. This was a reconstructed tool from the first study in 2008. Every time, the tool was updated according to the conclusions of the previous studies. Eventually, the interview questionnaire used in the research consisted of 35

18 There were also works regarding measurement by means of tools within the USOS system, gradually implemented at the Academy, which would guarantee total confidentiality of the output data after the migration process was completed.

problem questions and 10 demographic questions.<sup>19</sup> In order to maintain the possibility of comparing the obtained results, the tool comparability regime as introduced.

Regarding the numerical amount of the obtained material, it must be stated that despite intensive efforts, the assumed parameter of comprehensive research was not met in any of the years. It must be emphasised, however, that in the category of sample studies, the material is well-grounded, especially that individual parameters of the studied population content (social and demographic data) indicate its adequacy in reference to the general population. The study was participated by 142 to 228 respondents among students ( $N_s = 142, 228$ ), which constitutes from 28 to 45% of all the Academy's students, and correspondingly on the teachers' side, 31 and 45 respondents ( $N_p = 31, 45$ ), which constitutes 28 and 41% of their sample.

The multivariate analyses (two-variable) were carried out wherever possible due to maintaining statistical rigour and substantial reasons. To this end, standard measurements were applied to the entire material (significance level  $X^2$ , interval estimation tool) with the use of descriptive statistics of dispersion and R–Pearson measures. Due to the character of the material it was resigned from the broader use of central-tendency measurement, e.g. median and other (only in justified cases arithmetic averages were presented with weighted averages).

Calculations of the gathered primary quantitative research material were all along carried out by means of the SPSS application. The author of the total research statistics is Dr. Ł. Trembaczowski.<sup>20</sup> From the beginning, the substantial and organisational management of the project was conducted by Dr. M. Juda.

19 Such was the state of things in the students' variant of the questionnaire (Survey [S]), and 9 such questions for teachers (Survey [P]) in the years 2011–2012, when the measurement was taken also among the faculty members.

20 Calculations for the 2008 measurement were carried out by K. Stadler, MA, who is also the author of the concept and transcript of the focus studies in 2009.

## CONCLUSIONS

Based on the gathered material and conducted detailed analyses, the following conclusions can be formulated:

1. Although in the course of the entire research period 2008–2020, the character and quantity of the gathered material did not allow to treat the studies in the categories of comprehensive research, it does provide strong basis for formulating generalisations and extending conclusions to the general student population of the Academy of Fine Arts and Design in Katowice. The study was intended as comprehensive research, nonetheless, due to the reasons beyond the organisers' control, this objective could not be met. If treated as a classical sample study, the sample would meet the required criteria.
2. In general terms, research results demonstrate significant monotonicity, which indicates the stabilisation of the Academy's students in the subjective issues, outline of more permanent tendencies and trends; all the recognised changes, regarding the change in accents distribution rather than characteristic new qualities, were signalised in the analysis.
3. Comparing the obtained teachers' opinions with students' opinions, it can be concluded that they are basically concurrent – opinions stated by teachers are similar, but differ in accents distribution; they are usually less radical and less polarised, do not demonstrate new or different qualities, unnoted in students' opinions. They are characterised by more restraint and pragmatic attitude, also regarding financial issues.
4. In the scope of identifiable aspects of education in the respondents' opinions, infallibly there was emphasis on independent thinking, creativity, and workshop skills. Characteristic changes in the course of subsequent measurements (years of research) referred to the position of the leader, but usually in the triumvirate of stabilised indications. Teachers, in contrast to students, placed the most emphasis on creativity, and only later on workshop skills.
5. In the scope of educational content and related postulates, there was little to none opinion that there was too much of any elements, excluding teachers' opinions regarding classes in art and design theory.

6. The attitude to finish studies promptly was constant in value, which testifies to studies being treated as important, but not under the rigour of completing them at any cost.
7. The three most declared motives for studying both "before" and "now" are: interest in the subject of studies itself, perceiving studies at the Academy as a way towards creative work in the future (almost half of indications), and as a space of realising cultural and artistic interests (also almost half of indications). Among teachers, very similar opinions dominated. The Academy's students maintain stability of opinions about declared motives for undertaking studies at this school, with the persistent tendency to crystallisation of the main motives of substantial orientation (studies as a way to creative work, subject of studies itself, intellectual values of studying). Students accentuate autotelic motives for studying, teachers pragmatic values of competitive order.
8. The first association with the Academy of Fine Arts and Design in Katowice: elitism, prestige, art, and development. It can be stated that there has been a relatively permanent stereotype, of which the Academy has no reason to be ashamed nor afraid. It seems to be locating the Academy in the face of current challenges, connoting it as modern and attractive to the surroundings, but according to customary configurations.
9. Declarations demonstrate the confirmation of elitism of the school among students of both art and design faculties. For Art Faculty students, it is self-affirmation, while Design Faculty students are more diversified in their answers – respondents related to graphic design are more decisive in this respect than students of industrial design, who are more sceptical towards the analysed matters.
10. The most stable sources of the first information are unchangeably the peer circles, school, family, and in the recent years also the Internet, including the Academy's website. To the totality of respondents, also Facebook and Instagram, mainly to students of artistic print, have become the daily channels of mutual communication. This confirms the growing importance of digital communication; at the same time, Pinterest, Twitter (X) and YouTube were indicated only scantily.
11. Regarding current students, the school meets their pre-study expectations in the stable majority – more or less  $\frac{2}{3}$  to  $\frac{3}{4}$ ; the number of those unsatisfied stabilised on the level rarely exceeding 10%. The most disappointed in this respect are students of industrial design, almost  $\frac{1}{5}$  of them think that the school fails to meet their expectations. Regarding programme postulates, respondents' dispositions were as follows: more workshop skills and knowledge about making modern art and design ( $\frac{4}{5}$  of indications), knowledge about making modern art and modern design ( $\frac{2}{3}$  of indications), and knowledge about making new media art (almost  $\frac{2}{3}$  of indications).
12. The assessment of collaboration between students and teacher is stabilised as good and very good, but with downward tendency (from  $\frac{4}{5}$  to  $\frac{2}{3}$  of indications), with the level of  $\frac{1}{4}$  of assessment indicating the quality of this collaboration as having equal number of advantages and disadvantages. The most critical respondents expressing such opinions were among industrial design students (even  $\frac{2}{5}$  of indications). At the same time, reasons indicated as disrupting the collaboration, beside attendance issues (of both teachers and students), are mutual expectations, which are perceived as inadequate, resulting from insufficient or disturbed communication. The matter, therefore, arises from the level and character of interpersonal relationships.
13. The respondents' assessment of administration work is, as before, average (with slight general downward tendency) – the best assessment still regards the student-friendly atmosphere and readiness to solve their problems, worse refers to purely organisational issues, except the Dean's offices working hours. The worst assessed aspects of administration work are the flow of information important to students, and mobilisation to obtain credits on time. Teachers are generally more moderate in their assessment than students.
14. The Academy's engagement on behalf of students and solving their issues has been invariably assessed as rather good since 2008. As regards the assessment of the Academy's engagement in organising contacts for their students, the opinions are more critical, barely over the adequate level, and respondents do not perceive the school as particularly involved in promoting their activity, helping in organisation of their exhibitions,

or promoting outstanding students. The assessment of the Rondo Sztuki Art Gallery in facilitating students' exhibitions is rather good in general terms, while art students are more critical than design students – the most appreciative are students of industrial design.

15. The vision of professional future is perceived rather permanently mainly as working in one's own company, or working in a small studio; what decreased is the willingness to work in corporation, self-employment, or small business. Students accept the possibility of full time employment even for average wages. For 80% of state average (or less), almost  $\frac{1}{4}$  of respondents are willing to abandon their artistic liberty of work in exchange for social security. It would seem that a salary not exceeding  $\frac{4}{5}$  of the state average could tempt students to resign from the liberal artist status for the member of salariat.
16. By the same token, in the entire course of the study, a considerable number of students would be willing to leave the country for economic reasons, and as many as  $\frac{2}{3}$  of respondents declare so – mainly students of painting, and among design majors, industrial design students, but with a smaller upward tendency of such declarations.
17. The consistency of the Academy is still apparent on the faculty level, but as much as in the answers of its students the Art Faculty seems more homogeneous with random deviations, the Design Faculty, on the contrary, is characterised by persistent heterogeneity; industrial design students usually respond differently, and in many important issues – totally opposite, they are also more critical, even entitled.

This image of the Academy in the students' and teachers' eyes, however, is a historic one. Firstly because the measurements were completed in 2020, and until today, i.e. four years later, the Academy has got an entirely new generation of students. Four years mean a nearly complete exchange of students' content. Secondly because there has been an event of the Black Swan type in the meantime – Covid-19 pandemic. As anywhere else, it blew up the existing academic world in all dimensions of its functioning. Covid-19 bared, i.e. revealed in the dramatic course, whatever had not been visible at all, or hidden under the layer of routine; it caused the necessity to confront things as they turned out to be, and the process was often really dramatic. Moreover, Covid-19 catalysed whatever maybe would happen anyway, but later and under different circumstances, consumable in a safer and non-invasive manner, and now required instant intervention, such as the previously unknown ways/standards of education and the Academy's functioning under sanitary regime, implementation of remote work, radical modification of the use of technology etc. Not always and not all could equally meet such challenges. Due to the scale of the Academy (quite small among Polish academic centres, also artistic ones), and its nature, if only the readiness to change written in its DNA, the school managed this extremely difficult period safely, which is apparent especially from today's perspective. The image emerging from the research shows the Academy in the eyes of its students and teachers practically from the moment it started functioning in the two-faculty structure (Art Faculty and Design Faculty), from the beginning of the 2008/9 academic year, until the outburst of the pandemic. As it turned out, it meant a rapid process of building the individual identity of design and art majors. Now, the unity of the Academy can only be seen as the unity in diversity.

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