

SUMMARY OF PROFESSIONAL ACCOMPLISHMENTS

WITOLD PICHURSKI

The Institute of Art
The Opole University

Opole 2015

PERSONAL INFORMATION

1. Forename and surname:

WITOLD PICHURSKI

2. Held diplomas, scholarly/artistic degrees:

2009

Doctorate in the fine arts; the artistic discipline:

Fine arts - sculpture, the Faculty of Sculpture, the Academy of Fine Arts in Kraków

Title: *Road Signs*, Academic supervisor: Prof. dr hab. Marian Molenda

2000

Diploma of magister of arts in the artistic discipline: sculpture

the Faculty of Sculpture, the Academy of Fine Arts in Kraków

Academic supervisor: Prof. dr hab. Marian Konieczny

3. History of employment in scholarly/artistic institutions:

Employed in the years 2002 – 2009 as an assistant; since 2009 until present as a lecturer at the Institute of Art at the Opole University

4. In accordance with a formal requirement, I submit the sculpture cycle entitled **Verticals** as aspiring to fulfil the requirements specified in Article 16 Paragraph 2 of the Act of 14 March 2003 concerning scholarly degrees and titles as well as degrees and titles in the field of the arts.

PART I

Introduction

My artistic space involves sensory experience of the material, learning its complex structure, properties and colour in order to understand, perceive and reveal the value of the form. Developing a composition, precise designing of the axis, processing, weaving in the author's ideas are the most important elements of my creative process.

Work on a sculpture follows **various paths**, sometimes a perceived shape itself sets thoughts in motion, and a story appears that demands to be recorded. Some other time, a composition is arduously developed, elaborated in many variants, planned in many sketches, three-dimensional models, in pursuit of an analytical solution. Sometimes ideas conceptual only by definition appear, ideas which are merely an intellectual game with formal solutions, although I realize they will never be implemented. I treat sculpture techniques with due deference, sometimes even obsessively, so as to be able to implement my intended spatial projects.

I developed my **sculpture technique** chiefly during my studies at the **Academy of Fine Arts in Kraków** in the years 1995 – 2000. I was awarded my doctoral degree in 2009 presenting the sculpture cycle entitled “Road Signs”. Since my graduation I have completed numerous sculpture cycles, outdoor projects, spatial objects and installations presented in many exhibitions in Poland and abroad. I have participated in various competitions and I sculpted monuments in public space.

In 2002 I was offered the position of assistant in the Institute of Art at the Opole University where I conduct classes in the sculpture studio. I implement an educational programme, introducing topics related to ceramics, sculpture in metal, stone and sculpture installations. These three paths: my autonomous artistic work, large-scale monuments or outdoor forms and didactic and organizational work are the chief areas of my activity.

It is important for me to reach for **new materials**, to let myself **experiment** and to face various challenges. I usually initiate cooperation individually, and if there are interesting opportunities, I also attempt to arouse my students' interest in selected topics. Some examples of that may be: an attempt to combine designing and sculpture in my cooperation with the Kler Company during the plein-air workshops in “Dobroteka”, experiments with flaming forms exhibited during the “Light Festivals”, or forming metal sculptures acquired by means of explosion methods executed in cooperation with the “Explomet” Company. Cooperation with other entities enriches my techniques and expands the range of opportunities, and offers a chance to learn about new materials and techniques which I could not come across working in my studio only.

Working with people representing different ways of thinking is inspirational and sometimes surprising, but above all, it broadens one's horizons. The meeting of the technical and artistic world, or the productive and creative world brings about many problems, both in the sphere connected with people's outlook on life and in the technical one. I frequently think of this as of "a combination of water and fire", but this symbiosis gives "pressure and steam" that can be transformed into creative energy. Getting to know new technologies, using professional appliances is important for me, arouses my interest, and sometimes fascination and gives me strength to work.

I am interested in searching for new spaces, not yet completely explored or known for a long time, but perceived in a new way. I move in the "borderland" between various media and areas.

I change topics and material on principle, and I make sure that **new stimuli** appear in my work. New ideas are always difficult and demanding; one has to become familiar with a problem, translate it into the method of developing form, and the results are not always satisfactory. Overcoming obstacles, solving technical and technological problems, developing proper solutions gives me great satisfaction.

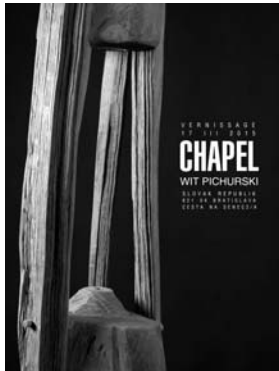
I revise my achievements, and I attempt to have a critical approach and not to be afraid to redefine my previous assumptions. An assessment of my sculptures in the studio is frequently not sufficient, and it is only during an exhibition, after a while, that a constructive reflection comes. In the context of the proposed habilitation cycle I return to important works created earlier which were, however, significant for me. I mean the previous cycle which was based on similar guiding ideas.

Unquenchable Desires are three forms made in oak wood: *Uncontrollable Emotions* 2011, *Timid Desires* 2012, *Proton of the Absolute* 2012. The compositions are soaring, they have an abstract form and a corresponding height, approximately 2 – 2.5 m. I decided to use patina in these works, strong in colour, yet also transparent, so that the natural wood structure could remain visible. Observing the works in a gallery I realized that I would like my next cycle to be of the same height but of larger cross-section, I would like to optically increase the objects' bulk. I decided to reduce the colours highlighting the diversified materials. I felt a need to use a different material, one that would be easily recognized as my own material. I considered the aspects connected with exhibiting the works; let me refer to them as the "power of effect", by which I understand the way the objects function in the exhibition space. I planned to give those works a coherent character maintaining their diversity. I wanted to have a chance to present them in various variants and in various interiors. I selected these issues for an analysis and I attempted to solve the problems. The conclusions were included in my subsequent sculptures which constitute the discussed cycle.

PART II

An analysis of a work of art submitted as aspiring to fulfil the requirements of the habilitation procedure.

THE SCULPTURE CYCLE - VERTICALS



The works have been presented in several individual exhibitions in Poland and abroad, in various configurations in several galleries. Despite the diversified inspirations, the sculptures are linked by a common idea and formal assumptions. Preparing my habilitation cycle, by definition very personal and important, I decided to consistently define the guidelines and to impose certain limitations upon myself.

My central thought was an attempt to seize the internal energy determining the birth and development stage. My objective was to focus on the natural power in nature determining the direction of growth. The biological strength causing plants to grow, directing them upwards, towards light and free space, was of key importance for me. I speak metaphorically, of course; considering the assumptions one might also refer to the erection of Gothic cathedrals which rose above the low buildings of medieval towns. I am interested in the cumulated energy which generated the creation of these soaring buildings. I made an attempt to reflect and feel the strength which moves matter upwards. Designing and composing the set of works I assumed that it would consist of large vertical forms. Thinking of the objects' size I wanted them to be oversized, bigger than a human figure, i.e. higher than two metres. It was important for me to give them exhibition value, to make them "dominate" in the gallery space.

I decided to build them from modules of the average length of one meter; I wanted the works to be easily transported so that they could be used in numerous exhibitions. I planned exhibitions abroad, which is connected with long distance transport, therefore I prepared for solving logistic problems. I wanted to create a cycle not only for the purpose of my habilitation procedure, but I also attempted to create a good system solution that would make it possible for me to implement these assumptions and would be useful in the future as well.

I decided to apply my own new technology: acrylic resin-based modelling paste combined with elements of various wood types. This technique makes it possible to form relatively light forms of larger size. It helps to obtain diversified surfaces and textures. This method allows the use of various mineral and synthetic aggregates as well as colour solutions. I used a monochromatic colour scale, mainly warm colours.

Many technical aspects remained to be solved, though; it was necessary to design the methods of combining the modules and to shape the sculpture surface in such a way that the horizontal divisions would not be an obstacle in the perception of the whole work. It was also necessary to find a proper way to introduce wood elements into the sculpture, and to combine them together both in the technical and the formal aspect. In the years 2014 – 2015 eleven sculptures were made.

In order to discuss the sculpture cycle properly it has to be divided into three parts. In part one, mainly references to nature can be found, part two refers to building, constructing and delimiting space, and part three is a kind of an antithesis of the previous part, touching on deconstruction; works about metamorphosis appear.

PART 1

1.	TISSUE	201 x 55 x 28 cm	oak, acrylic resin
2.	ELATION	254 x 43 x 32 cm	acrylic resin, wood
3.	CONSTANS	253 x 42 x 40 cm	acrylic resin

PART 2

4.	THE VERTICAL AND THE HORIZONTAL	215 x 45 x 45 cm	acrylic resin, acacia
5.	THE TOWER OF TIME	230 x 40 x 53 cm	acrylic resin, wood
6.	LITTLE CHAPEL	251 x 40 x 43 cm	acrylic resin, wood

PART 3

7.	TERRITORY	215 x 34 x 57 cm	acrylic resin, wood
8.	ANOTHER DIMENSION	263 x 99 x 50 cm	acrylic resin
9.	RESEARCH SYSTEM	222 x 34 x 34 cm	patinated spruce, metal
10.	DECOMPRESSION	220 x 115 x 52 cm	patinated spruce, metal
11.	SOUL CASE	87 x 30 x 34 cm	patinated alder

PART 1



Tissue is a sculpture referring to the biological world to the utmost degree; my inspiration was a fragment of live structure. It is admiration of live organic substance shown in magnification. I noticed that contemporary perception is often fragmentary; it sees a detail which it analyses, compares and describes thoroughly. A broader view of the whole seems to be slipping, the process of life which is the most important – disappears.

Looking at the composition we can see a kind of a rectangular frame in the centre of which gentle lines set the rhythm floating upwards, and disturbing only the upper edge. In this form I wanted to present the differences between the perception of a small preparation and the live structure of a tissue. Working on the sculpture I focused mainly on expressing the contrast between the biological energy, the animated “movement of blood cells” and a laboratory perception of a prepared biological sample.

The composition of **Elation** is inscribed within a prism, but it is composed of triangular surfaces the system of which is extended by means of elements made of various types of wood. Even verticals contrast with oblique rhythms referring to the shape of a wing. Already at the very beginning of my work, at the stage of designing it, I realized the importance of focusing on the moment when a flying object lifts off. I wanted to highlight the moment when the ascending strength overcomes gravitation. For me, it is a significant idea to lift and move the matter.

Constans, the reference seems almost self-evident: to the moral backbone, to the aspiration to have a stable, firmly set and yet flexible backbone. The backbone line diverges to various sides, but remains invariably in a static axis. The forms of spinous processes symbolize the build-up of experiences which gradually yet incessantly grow and change the structure of the system.

I dealt with the issue broadly – developing one's attitude, determining flexibility and defining one's borders in compromising. References to various motifs are made here, but for me, the very process of asking questions and considering them is important. We ask questions to which it is difficult to find satisfactory answers, but the very process of formulating them makes us concentrate on the niggling issue. And while in the aesthetic sphere the whole cycle is homogeneous - similar size, the vertical character of the composition, coherent material - for me each form is an autonomous narration. I treat them as different chapters of just one book.

For me, every sculpture is a story of experiences, thoughts and feelings. We can find similar thoughts in Katarzyna Kobro's statements. *A spatial composition creates emotions based on the victory of the active powers of the human intellect over the current state of irrationality and chaos.*¹

At first, we may be surprised, as we identify the author's works with a precisely constructed "cold" abstraction; we perceive them as a logical spatial composition, while the artist herself clearly stresses the importance of the emotional perception of her works.

Based on the thoughts and actions, a three-dimensional system is created, despite attempts of theoretical considerations, the most important issues are the most difficult to define. Approaching the centre of the niggling issue, we enter areas difficult to name and describe. The following statements offer some meaningful observations. *I like to see the intellectual side of things, but I do not like the word "intellect". For me, it is too dry, not expressive enough. I like the word "faith". Usually, when people say "I know", they do not know, they believe. I believe that art is the only form of activity in which man shows himself to be a true individual, capable of going beyond the animal state. Art is an outlet toward regions which are not ruled by space and time. I believe that to live means to believe.*²

We attempt to describe and analyse issues related to creation and to space in a logical manner, yet as we approach the core of the issue, it falls outside any more precise definition. We enter areas where faith and mysticism are more appropriate terms. Yet, an attempt of analysing it focuses our perception on the most important issues.

¹ **Kobro K.** *Teoria i krytyka Antologia tekstów o rzeźbie polskiej Theory and Criticism. An Anthology of Texts on Polish Sculpture 1915 – 1939.* Wydawnictwo Neriton, Warszawa 2007

² **Tomkins C.** *Duchamp. Biografia [Duchamp. A Biography],* Wydawnictwo Zysk i S-ka, Poznań 2001

PART 2

In this part we can find spatial projects referring to construction, precise designing and perceiving of time.



The Vertical and the Horizontal - I treated this work in a typically constructive way; my intention to determine the vertical and horizontal line, as well as to geometrically determine the axis and directions seems clear. These aspects are fundamental for most of the artists working in space. Of course, these terms are also ambiguous; it seemed interesting for me to start a “game” with them. I make references to popular meanings, such as “keeping level” or “putting someone to the vertical position”. It is important for me to draw the spectator into the process of interpreting meanings; I appreciate the ambiguity that can offer an opportunity to present various interpretations and that is some kind of space reserved for the spectator. I can find similar efforts in other artists’ works:

*Generally overlooked in the ongoing analysis and microanalysis of Duchamp’s wordplay is that it is play. He played with words, juggling a variety of senses and non-senses and taking pleasure in their “indecisive reunion.”*³

My approach to the issue is slightly different, I do not really move in the area but I do attempt to tangle meanings and provoke the spectator to think. Looking at the sculpture we can see that the central element of the composition is a pendulum, in its shape referring to a plumb line used in order to determine the vertical line. The spectator can move it and observe its gradual coming to a standstill. A frame, a symbol of the surrounding world, is a complement of the construction. However, the frame is deformed, broken, from one perspective, it is almost even and complete, but once you take a look from the other side, you realize the illusiveness of the first impression.

It is a symbolic presentation of the surrounding world of changing values, “a world, to which we do not agree”. A system which is seemingly stable, permanent and constant, but this impression falls into pieces once you take a closer look at the form.

³ Tomkins C. *Duchamp. Biografia [Duchamp. A Biography]*, Wydawnictwo Zysk i S-ka, Poznań 2001

The pendulum indicates a shape of an equilateral triangle. Working on this element, on the surface of this area, I avoided direct religious references - the symbol of God, and I was looking for another more universal motif. I decided to make a reference to a prism dispersing white light and showing multi-coloured light. Looking at the work with more reserve, I can find in it a profound internal desire to determine some reference points for myself in the unstable and chaotic reality.

The Tower of Time is one of more simplified forms built on the basis of a slightly twisted prism. It deals with time, focusing on its constant flow. I placed ticking clock mechanisms inside the form so that resonating they could create a subtle and changing sound background. An additional effect for me is focusing attention on the inside of the sculptures, on whatever is hidden from our sight, and yet exists and inexorably influences us. Time which determines the cycles of life, its beginning and end.

Little Chapel is a form made from sharp triangles of a dynamic character with ornamental openwork between the two blocks. In the space between the forms, there is a red laser light which depending on the external lighting, either forms a red point or a bright line. The light can be perceived as a central point or a line of life.

I was inspired by a little chapel, a form of landscape architecture being a part of our environment which we do not even notice on a daily basis. Sometimes, however, we stop, find some time to start thinking and meditate. In a way, we enter a different space, allowing ourselves to calm down, talk to ourselves, or rather to utter an interior monologue.

Entering other spaces, relatively new for me, I wanted to add certain additional components to my sculpture forms. I decided to use the following elements: a kinetic one - a moving pendulum, a sound one - ticking clock mechanisms, and an optic one - a laser light.

I spent a long time thinking before I introduced these solutions, as it was important for me to weigh the emphasis carefully so that my solutions were not merely an effect but also a subtle complement of a spatial form. I assess these attempts to expand the perception positively. I observed spectators looking at the exhibits, listening to the "ticking" sculpture or putting the hanging pendulum into motion. In the future I would like to develop the already initiated aspect of my objects' interactivity. I have a feeling, supported by numerous observations, that it forms a larger space, both in the visual and the semantic sphere, makes the spectators concentrate and provokes them to re-interpret things.

PART 3

The works constituting part three are a kind of an antithesis of the previously discussed works; they present the illusion of the systems and the process of deconstruction.



Territory We instinctively perceive certain constructions as being permanent and unchanging, although when asked, we answer “Everything is changing”. I designed this sculpture inspired by these thoughts and a contradiction involved in them. A chair is a personification of a place that we constantly search for and on which we try to sit down wanting to gain “little stabilization”. The outlined stairs are a symbolic representation of a tedious process of looking for one's space and place. I focus on instability both in the real sense and, above all, in the metaphorical sense.

Another dimension Designing the “Verticals” cycle I assumed that it would be abstract, and yet a figure trace appeared. I spent a long time thinking whether to implement my assumptions; it was a dilemma for me. I reached a conclusion that I could afford this inconsistency as it ensues from my internal need and belief - and thus a figure trace entered an abstract work. The work focuses on a radical change, discovery of another space and crossing the established borders. It is a transition between dimensions, from one area to a completely different one.

Research System is an interpretation of the problem of social consolidation at the cost of individual autonomy. Uncompromising integration of individuals into a community, joining individual efforts in pursuit of a common goal, limitation of independence for the benefit of a larger common idea. Since everyone functions within a larger structure, this problem refers to everyone and is very universal. In particular, it refers to artists, “independent creators”.

Decompression is a system referring to the form of a square which becomes gradually transformed into a rhombus, and a moment of loss of the established order occurs. The relation between construction and deconstruction is of key importance here. It is the presentation of a conflict between the community and the individual, a violent tension between building and destroying, between the system and anarchy. A desire of liberation and simultaneously the impossibility of starting this revolt is highlighted.

Soul Case is an important work for me, which shows my aspirations to create something immaterial. I realize that such words always sound strange when spoken by a sculptor perceived as a person constantly transforming the matter. The objective of my work was to achieve a form with the characteristics of an object for meditation.

My intention was to use the simplest formal means: a straight, slightly tilted block, the structure of wood, a natural colour contrasting with the austere whiteness of patina. A more elaborate narration appears only in the element of the handle; its aim is to present my inspiration and context to the spectator. The most important thing for me was to stress what cannot be seen, what we cannot perceive by means of our senses – the “energy” inside.

The longer I work and consider sculpture-related problems, the more material I use, the more I become convinced that what really matters is what cannot be seen. Just like in the saying: “the most important meaning is usually between the lines”, for me, **the mystery included in the form** is very significant.

Designing this set of works I wanted it to become a **coherent cycle**, although in the course of work, its shape underwent numerous evolutions. I have never presented the entire set; I have most often exhibited just several works in different configurations. In spite of some slight diversification due to the form and material, we can easily find the common denominator. I was surprised by the positive reactions of spectators. I feared that these types of forms, largely abstract, are too difficult to interpret, and they would remain “deaf”. In spite of my doubts, the spectators intuitively sensed the sculptures; the size of the objects played a considerable role and they became a part of the exhibition spaces. I would like to be constantly guided on my artistic way by a thought expressed by Henry Moore who defined the most important values: *The sculpture which moves me is full-blooded and self-supporting, fully in the round, that is, its component forms are completely realised and work as masses in opposition, not being merely indicated by surface cutting in relief; (...) It has a life of its own, independent of the object it represents.*⁴ The problems of “form animation” and creating an object by “masses in opposition”, so close to me, are mentioned here. Precision and consistency necessary in the activities are also stressed. When I attempt to analyse my creative process, this internal need to look for simple values keeps returning. An attempt to determine the symbolical vertical and horizontal for myself, in my micro-world. Perhaps the things that I think and write about constitute my attempt to find the vertical “energy” that leads to growth and development.

⁴ Dyer A. *Henry Moore*, Wydawnictwo Galeria BWA in Kraków and CSWZU, Warszawa 1995

Technology - acrylic resin

Although I work with various materials, such as wood, stone, bronze or ceramics, I felt the need to find my “own” material, to develop my own method of forming spatial objects. Formerly, I used various “artificial stone” mixtures based on concrete mixtures. I made large-scale sculptures and architectural elements (e.g. columns). This type of material, however, was good for outdoor works, but due to its heavy weight it did not meet the requirements of a portable exhibition specified by me. My aim was to achieve a thin and strong coating that is relatively light.

I wanted to obtain large but light forms that could be divided into elements. I was mainly focused on solving the problem how to make large sculptures and be able to transport them to exhibitions. It is not only a logistic problem, I am chiefly interested in artistic freedom and the freedom of creation. I used to work with polyester and epidian resins, but everyone who has ever worked with this material for a longer time knows what a disagreeable and toxic material it is.

During my work at the conservation of monuments of history I came across acrylic resins which are not so harmful, and they are practically odourless. I was mainly using “Remmers” and “Sto” resins, but their cost was a problem. Therefore, I had to find substitute binders with similar properties. They had to be flexible, with a good consistence for modelling, and after binding, resistant and with a flexible coating. That is how I focused on developing a mass that could become an alternative for polyester resin. I experimented with many binders using various initial proportions; my efforts were not satisfactory, and in fact they were quite depressing.

After some time, I found a binder that met the previously mentioned requirements. I selected proper mineral aggregates, fillers and plasticizers. Following many trials, I managed to achieve the right proportions of the mass. I developed the methods of spreading and forming. This was just the beginning, however; durability tests had to be carried out, flexibility had to be improved, surface hardness had to be increased and colours had to be adjusted. I had to make dozens of tests, and since I worked on my own, the process was rather long-lasting. Most of the technical problems were already solved, but a few still remain to be dealt with. The use of aggregates opens a vast field for experiments, which has a significant influence on the structure and colour. Impregnation methods have to be yet developed and tests have to be carried out to check how these coatings behave in winter weather conditions. I intend to focus on that in the nearest future. I decided to use mainly this material in my habilitation cycle, *Verticals*. Like any other technology, it has certain limitations, but also many advantages; I have spent many years trying to develop it, solve the technical problems, and eventually it has met my expectations.

PART III

I treat artistic objects **in a multidimensional way**; I would like the spectators to be able to interpret the particular levels following my thoughts determining the work. Of course, I realize that this is a largely unrealistic assumption. I frequently ask myself what the level of interpretation of a particular work may be, and how many people are willing to meet this challenge and carry out an analysis. These aspects seem to be quite well examined; there are many theoretical works concerning them, but I am interested in my own sculpture and in a real spectator in a specific context. I make my object in such a way as to offer numerous starting points for interpretation; I try to divide my work into layers.

Starting with the visual aspect: creating an interesting composition, giving it a proper form, highlighting the beauty of the material, diversifying the texture and enhancing the patina with colour. The “micro-scale of the object” is important for me, when the spectators want to touch the structure of the sculpture, breaking the symbolic barrier that they sense in a gallery.

The **Idea** that can intrigue the spectators and trigger the need to interpret the meanings hidden in the form is of key importance for me. The occurrence of a need to stop and focus on a particular object among many others is important. I often decide to play a “game” of meanings using the name given to my sculpture.

The aspect of a **title** appears here. During my studies and right after graduation, with youthful idealism, or even arrogance, I thought that “good art” will defend itself, and I usually used such titles as, for instance, “form 100”. Now, I pay much more attention to the broadly understood context. For my own use, I think of the title as of “**a wicket offering access to meaning**”, which can lead the spectator to the path of interpretation of the object. I deliberately use the words “path” instead of “road”, and “wicket” instead of “gate”. This is consistent with the statement that knowledge is achieved gradually, perhaps not even after many years, but after numerous projects and exhibitions.

This is an old truth, but it is worth remembering. *What is also extremely important, is the conviction that a work of art is not merely a reflection of already existing art, but it expresses the feelings of the artist.*⁵ What we have here is a process of transmission of emotions, thoughts through a work of art which can be treated as a specific “carrier”. I attentively observe people’s reactions during exhibitions, and I become more and more convinced that the layer of meaning is much more important for them than the nuances of form that the artist mainly focuses on. I get the impression that artists preoccupied with the search for forms sometime forget about it. I think that it is necessary to treat the problem with more attention and see it as an important component of the work of art.

⁵ Dyer A. *Henry Moore*, Wydawnictwo Galeria BWA in Kraków and CSWZU, Warszawa 1995

NEW - FIRST

As I have already stated, searching is important for me. By definition, **an experiment** is an attempt to go into the unknown; it may be successful, or not; frequently, numerous attempts end with a failure, which is a part of the process. I recollect Marcel Duchamp's statement sometimes, which is a kind of a warning: *The dead should not be permitted to be so much stronger than the the living. We must learn to forget the past, to live our own lives in our own time.*⁶

Finding my own space, my means of expression, are the most important values that I search for. How can one find "something new" in the modern dynamically developing world in which thousands of works of art appear daily? We tend to accept the statement that "everything has already been said and done". How then should one search for innovative solutions? Is it still possible? If we take into consideration the problem of novelty, in what scale should it be done? Maybe in our case, the local artistic community, or maybe the region or the country?

Of course, it is not a simple task, but the discovery of innovative methods is very valuable for me. In the course of my artistic career I managed to develop solutions that may aspire to be referred to that way:

- 1) In my work on the use of an explosion to plate metal surface, a spatial form was made: *SHE/ HE - an Explosive Relation* 2015 which is the first sculpture in Poland formed by an explosion (to be precise, let me add that it was not made from waste remaining after the explosion but from the start it was dedicated to this technology).
- 2) Working on the "Papa Musiol" monument I added a case in the form of "a mailbox" in which one can put in a note. Let me observe that it is the first interactive portrait monument sculpture in Poland.
- 3) I have carried out numerous tests working on the development of sculpting material based on acrylic, which is an alternative material to the harmful synthetic resins. This material offers many possibilities to build light spatial forms and use various aggregates.

I believe that new areas of activity make one change one's way of thinking and enrich one's artistic techniques. It is the right direction in order to avoid patterns, mannerism and ossified forms. Yet, it is important not to get lost in the pursuit of novelty; an anti-thesis may be the words classifying artists: *The almost classical division into nervously topical activity focused on short-lasting fashions and market requirements and art preceding its own time with its **timelessness**, will always exist*⁷.

⁶ Tomkins C. *Duchamp. Biografia [Duchamp. A Biography]*, Wydawnictwo Zysk i S-ka, Poznań 2001

⁷ Fober J. *Dydaktyka przestrzeni [The Didactics of Space]*, Wydawnictwo Instytut Sztuki w Cieszynie, Cieszyn 2014

I try to search for harmony in my artistic work; I make every effort to constantly develop my awareness and - what follows - my artistic attitude.

COMMENTS

The time dedicated to the preparation of the habilitation sculpture cycle and the summary is a good opportunity to take a closer look at one's own artistic achievements. It is also an opportunity to analyse with a certain detachment one's accomplishments and to ask important questions. To revise one's established views, to try to redefine some of them, and perhaps to lay different emphasis and determine the dominants. Considering many important issues, we face a complicated combination of various elements determining our artistic activity. I would like to quote the words of one artist about another artist as a kind of summary: *Giovanni Pisano was a great sculptor in every sense, particularly in the sense of understanding and using three-dimensional forms to affect people, to portray human feelings and character, to express great truths.*⁸

The gift of creating a three-dimensional form which affects people is highlighted here. It is a unique thought expressed in a synthetic and simultaneously free manner. It is also an attempt to define the factors conditioning the artist's "format". *I feel terribly strongly that he was a great man because he understood human beings. If you asked me how I would judge great artists it would be on this basis. It would not be because they were clever in drawing or in carving or in painting or as designers, something of these qualities they must naturally have, but their real greatness, to me, lies in their humanity.*⁹

Understanding people, their needs, modes of feeling, seems to be of key importance. Yet, in order to achieve it, it is necessary to develop one's own mode of creation which would offer the freedom of artistic expression.

⁸ Dyer A. Henry Moore, Wydawnictwo, Warszawa 1995

⁹ Dyer A. Henry Moore, Wydawnictwo, Warszawa 1995

PART IV

Didactic and organisational work.

Apart from my artistic activity, my work at the university, as well as organizational and popularizing activity is an important part of my professional life. Early in **2002** I was offered a position of an assistant at the Institute of Art of the Opole University in the **Sculpture Studio** managed then by dr hab. Marian Molenda. Starting my didactic work, I found it to be a huge challenge in my professional life even though I had not considered becoming an academic teacher before.

The years of my studies (1995 – 2000) was a unique time; I had a chance to cooperate with sculptors and teachers who observed my activities with sensitivity and understanding. They taught me the techniques, and above all, the way of thinking, perceiving and developing the sculpture form. I remember the times, when after a conversation with my teacher in the studio, I knew more and I had the sense of my own development. I sometimes think back and I try not to forget this experience in my contacts with students now. In **2009** I became a lecturer.

I manage my Sculpture Studio continuing the implementation of the existing curricular guidelines, but also developing ceramics, sculpting in wood, stone and metal. Developing my own curricular guidelines I introduced new elements. I teach mainly first- and second-year students and I am the academic supervisor of diploma sculptures, usually licencjat and sometimes also magister works. In my didactic work I pay special attention to the students' individual development, I focus on their sensitivity showing them the possibilities of artistic creativity. It is important for me to develop their analytical thinking of spatial forms so that they could independently evaluate their achievements and draw conclusions for the future.

Individual corrections - it is the time for personal contacts with students, analysing their abilities, sensitivity and suggesting potential solutions to them. In my method of work I start with focusing on the good aspects of a composition, and later I indicate the "unconvincing" elements on which students should still work. I encourage students to look at their sculptures with some detachment and to attempt to analyse them thoroughly. They start from designing the entire composition, selecting the most important element and the complementary parts. Next, they "adjust" the details and diversify the textures.

Another important stage in education is the **open reviews** after completing work on a particular topic, when we clean the studio, arrange the sculptures and take a look at the effects of the students' work together. This is an opportunity to look at the entire group; collective communication makes it possible to notice both the advantages and the shortcomings of the works. Frequently, these talks are very inspiring, and the group's appraisal motivates the author of a sculpture to continue his/her work.

The licencjat study programme is divided into two parts, **the first two years** are dedicated to study nature and to get to know the rudiments of the classical techniques. The subsequent year is the time for larger forms and more ambitious projects; I encourage students to work with various materials and to observe the current artistic activities.

During the first stage of studies, I put emphasis on the composition development and insightful **observation of nature**; we focus on traditional topics, such as a study of a hand, a portrait, an analysis of a character. Studio topics are interspersed with problems concerning reduced space in low-relief or medal. I introduce abstract topics, for instance, the blocks and planes composition. Even in classical topics I put emphasis on conceptual work, skilful designing, development of interesting concepts, so that the author could consciously select proper formal solutions.

I attempt to pass **practical knowledge** to my students, starting from the fundamental issues: preparation of a good design, making a solid scaffold, skilful modelling in clay, and ending with stucco work. I try to show them the importance of controlling the creative process, dividing it into stages and consistent executing of the project.

When I think of the teaching concepts, in particular in the initial stage, Katarzyna Handzlik's words seem very special to me: *At the beginning, when the harmony of the work of hands and mind is upset, I try to listen and to meet [students] halfway. In particular, when the inability to direct one's own hand so that it could render our image of the form and content in a chosen medium generates discouragement and frustration. I urge [students] to do something very important without which any activity is merely pretending - to get to know the rudiments of the craft.*¹⁰

Two important aspects are mentioned here: the control of the "eye-mind-hand" process and the meaning of technique in the educational process in a sculpture studio. The sensitive pedagogical approach is also significant - "to listen and to meet [students] halfway". These are well known values but as teachers we should always remember about them, trying to empathize with students, in particular when they encounter difficulties and do not feel secure.

I was entrusted with work with first- and second-year licencjat students which is connected with larger groups and lesser independence of the students as well as a considerable diversification of the students' levels, starting from students who are about to make their very first sculpture in life, and ending with graduates of secondary schools

¹⁰ **Fober J.** *Dydaktyka przestrzeni [The Didactics of Space]*, Wydawnictwo Instytut Sztuki w Cieszynie, Cieszyn 2014

of fine arts who have already completed several years of artistic education and have recently presented their artistic diploma work. This situation forces a teacher to conduct classes in a very considerate manner, so as not to discourage the beginners and so as to increase the level of the more advanced students.

The differences between the Academy and the University system should also be mentioned here. In the field of artistic education in the area of fine arts students work in four main studios: painting and drawing, graphic art, multimedia and sculpture, and after two years they choose a specialization in which they pursue their licencjat diploma work. This system offers the possibility to get to know various fields, but what follows is considerably less time to be spent on the selected specialization.

As a result of fewer hours of studio activity, there are different methods of conducting the classes; one cannot directly refer to the tested methods one remembers from one's own studies. For me, it is a significant challenge; I try to select the **topics and organize my classes** in such a way as to give my students an opportunity to get to know the difficult sculpting techniques despite the relatively short amount of time.

The advantage of the university system is the students' interdisciplinary quality, as they have proper knowledge to combine, for instance, sculpture with multimedia, introducing elements of projection into spatial forms. Being well acquainted with various media, getting familiar with proper tools and methods of work makes it easier to find one's place in the modern intermedia artistic world.

Considering various aspects, I would like to come back to some rudimentary questions: What should a teacher be like? How should a teacher pass his/her knowledge and experiences to students? Let me quote the words of an experienced sculptor and teacher, Jerzy Fober, which I find important: *The answer to the question: who should teach whom and how? seems to be obvious: an enthusiast should teach future enthusiasts based on his own enthusiasm.*¹¹

I try to remember this value, and I think that it is the fundamental aspect of an academic teacher's attitude. To sum up, I would like to mention one more value, which is theoretically self-evident, but in practice we tend to forget about it. It occurs particularly frequently in a situation when the roles of an artist and a lecturer are combined; I assume that we all aspire to be meaningful artists and strong personalities. Let me quote Grzegorz Majchrowski's statement here: *I believe that on the way of experiencing art – there is a moment when the teacher's role should become of less importance for the student to grow.*

Humbleness is stressed here; it should be a permanent part of a teacher's activity. Let me add that patience is also necessary in didactic work, in particular when we deal with large groups and when we have to repeat basic information again and again. I keep on repeating that I need to develop my patience incessantly.

¹¹ **Fober J.** *Dydaktyka przestrzeni [The Didactics of Space]*, Wydawnictwo Instytut Sztuki w Cieszynie, Cieszyn 2014

PLEIN – AIR WORKSHOPS

An important educational element for me is going with students for **plein-air** or artistic workshops, and I particularly value **international meetings**.

At the beginning of my didactic work, as a young academic teacher I had a chance to go to such workshops to Hvide Sande / Denmark (2002). It was organized by the University in Bielefeld / Germany. I had an opportunity to cooperate with an international group and to compare various models of artistic teaching.

Together with a group of students from the Institute of Art I participated in the International Sculpture Plein-Air Workshop in Jesennik / the Czech Republic (2004). Prof. Marius Kotyrba was the mentor at the workshop; for me it was a splendid opportunity to observe the work of this experienced sculptor and teacher. I watched attentively how he prepared the stone, tools, the work site, but above all, I observed his methods of working with students. I learned how to show students various methods of stone processing in an accessible way. I am involved in the organization of various artistic events.

I would like to mention an unusual plein-air workshop in Dobrodzień (2014) entitled “The Finest Form of Wood Processing”. It was a unique event, consisting in a symbiosis of designing and sculpture. We had a chance to cooperate with furniture manufacturers and to use their specialist workshops. Sculptures of a practical nature were the result of this. The final element of the event was the publication of a catalogue and an exhibition in the “Dobroteka” pavilion during the Silesian Design June 2014.

I was the originator of the Sculpture and Ceramics Plein-Air Workshop in Szklarska Poręba (2005). Since **2009** I have run it on my own; in **2014** I expanded the formula of the workshop and thus the “**Keramos**” **International Artistic Workshop** began (Keramos I – 2014, Keramos II – 2015). Representatives of Spain and the Ukraine participated in it. In spite of numerous organizational and financial problems, these activities are important for me, both with respect to the opportunity to improve my sculpting techniques, learn the technology of ceramics, and with respect to integration and exchange of experiences.

I try to organize my schedule in such a way as to be able to travel several times a year. Cooperation with Polish and foreign artists offers a possibility of taking a broader look at my own artistic work. I try to introduce some of the solutions into the events organized by the Institute of Art.

I encourage my students to actively participate in such artistic activities, as it is a time when everyday problems can be forgotten and one can focus on intense artistic work only. A different place, the mountain scenery fosters the development of new ideas; often during the “Keramos” ceramic workshops concepts of completely new projects are developed; sometimes it is the beginning of an artistic diploma work.

DIPLOMA WORKS

I am the academic supervisor of licencjat **diploma works**. For the young people it is often the first serious challenge crowned with a public presentation of their achievements. I make every effort to maintain the top level of the diploma works; an example may be the artistic ceramic work of Malwina Rozmarynowska, *Depth* (2012), which was distinguished as the best diploma work at the Institute of Art.

In my diploma seminars I try to start work as soon as possible, so that there is time for crystallizing the concept, selecting the material, and mastering or expanding the techniques. I start with selecting an inspiring idea, then developing the idea, planning the process of work, and finally finding individual solutions.

Sometimes, this results in **innovative projects**, e.g. this year one of my students works on a combination of 3D prints with stone elements. The very idea is promising: a combination of a new technology with a classical material, a contrast between modern 3D printing and traditional precious material seems to be an intriguing idea.

It is necessary to promptly master several techniques; to create virtual 3D models (Zbrush, 3D Max software), to design the particular modules (the maximum object in the Zortax M200 printer is 40 cm) and to work on the connections (Z – Suite - 3D printing software dedicated to Zortrax 3D printers). It is also necessary to prepare marble and to master the complicated technique of sculpting in stone.

This example illustrates the course of activities on a licencjat diploma work; in this particular case, it is necessary to learn two techniques in a relatively short time. The 3D printing methods are also a novelty for me; perhaps this work will allow me to explore this yet undiscovered fascinating area. An exhibition is the crowning of all activities related to the licencjat and magister diploma works.

“Diploma Works 2015”. This is an annual exhibition presented in the Gallery of Modern Art in Opole, in the Opole Province Marshal’s Office, the Student Culture Centre, sometimes also in the Diocesan Museum, and it is accompanied by a catalogue designed by a chosen student under the supervision of the employees of the Institute of Art. I am one of the curators of the exhibition; my chief task is to construct the spatial objects exhibition, to compose the exhibition spaces and to place the particular works in them. I also coordinate transportation, provide the pedestals and help students in unexpected situations. It is an important event for all of us, and we make every effort to ensure a high level of the exhibited works, the entire exhibition, as well as the catalogue and promotion activities. The exhibition of diploma works of students of the Institute of Art has become a permanent artistic event, which is widely commented and awaited.

During the academic year there are several organizational and popularising events, among which the most important is the **Opole Science Festival**.

I have been the coordinator of this event for many years (2006 – 2007, 2009 – 2015).

During the 3 days of the Science Festival we follow the schedule:

Presentation of the University – artistic exhibitions in the IS building

Science Picnic – artistic workshops in the UO or the PO

An open day – lectures, presentations, artistic workshops

My tasks comprise the development of the concept, arrangements and schedules, acquisition of financial means and their allocation. An important part of my tasks is the collection of information to be included in the advertising folder, compiling photographic documentation, and promotion of the event.

Finally, I am responsible for accounting for all expenditures and preparing the final report.

Apart from coordinating the event, I also prepare the sculpture students' exhibitions, e.g. the exhibition of light installations – **Form Commotion**, the exhibition of sculptures – **New Territories**. During the Science Picnic I conducted the artistic workshop entitled **Banners**, in which together with my students I made banners and encouraged the visitors to actively participate in the process of making the artistic objects. During the Open Day I coordinate the lectures; for the latest festival I prepared a multimedia lecture entitled **The Birth of Monuments** (the 13th OSF – 2015).

EXHIBITIONS I am the organizer or co-organizer of numerous student exhibitions. It is an important moment in every student's life when they can present the effects of their work to their own peer community or families. Although the organization of such events requires a vast amount of time, it has very positive effects and motivates students to continue their education. In the years 2009 – 2015 I organized or co-organized over 50 exhibitions. Let me mention some of them: **Instal – actions** - a cyclical exhibition presenting installations and sculptures in the Student Culture Centre.

Night of Culture - an event organized by the Opole City Office and the GSW, **Shelter of the Arts** – an exhibition with an “off” character, its seven editions have made it a symbol of independent artistic initiatives. A complete description of my achievements in the areas of didactic and popularising activities is included in the enclosures.

Since 2009 I have been a member of **an examination board** for candidates applying for first and second-degree full-time study programmes. In 2012 I was chosen to be a member of the Faculty Board of the Faculty of History and Pedagogy at the Opole University (for the years 2012 – 2016). For my academic, artistic and organizational activity in the years 2008/2009 I received the **Award of the Rector of the Opole University**. I actively participate in the organizational and popularising works and I consider this activity to be an important part of my professional life.

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