

MATERIA  
HETERO-  
GENICZNA

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Abstract

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H E T E R O G E N I C Z N A

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The PhD dissertation entitled *Heterogenic Matter* is an artistic-research project based on artistic realisations. It comprises three chapters, divided into sub-chapters, concentrated around the eponymous issue.

The term itself spreads over several planes, tackled in the dissertation. An important feature of the matter in question is its multi-faceted nature. This means that this matter overlaps with itself in many fields, correlating with itself. The result of the theoretical considerations presented in the dissertation is their final output in the form of an art work.

*Process* – this sub-chapter provides a description of a quest for the significance of fear. Along with this quest, a study was done on the matter by which fear is expressed. Intaglio matrices proved to be the best tool to illustrate the main theme. Etching techniques were thus used in the creative process in which a matrix was treated using chemicals. The process for the search of the significance of fear also gained a material form. It happened thanks to experiments with the deformations which appeared during the etching process in different materials. The search for formal means in working on graphic prints became a specific kind of experiment. A variety of media were applied during this search. That stage of work was research aimed at the establishment of a formal identity of the discussed issue.

The techniques applied during the creation – etching, caramelisation – closely collaborated with the sensual reception of the artist, bringing specific associations (caramelisation – the smell of a family home, etching – illnesses).

The next issue tackled in the dissertation is the analysis of the colour black, the colour being in harmony with existential issues. It intensified certain matters of expression, making them visible while printing from the matrix.

The creation of the ideology of space, its understanding and materialisation are a subsequent step.

A sub-chapter *The Body* provides a definition of the notion of carnality based on various relations of otherness and identity. The key to the cognition of one's body is to live within it when various issues become unified into a single experience. Here, such figures as Erika Kohut and her mother are evoked. The relationship between the two women is

based on the tie between a child and its mother becoming too strong. Their interdependence became an ill addiction. Erica, a piano teacher, has tried to fulfil the ambitions and expectations of her mother. While reading *The Piano Player* one gets the impression that all Erica is for her parent is a mere medium for the emission of music. Erica's body becomes her mother's hostage. The presentation of this problem became an important element of the PhD dissertation.

Another example is a character taken from Julia Kristeva's book *Strangers to Ourselves*. The prototype for the *L'Étranger* in this book is the main hero of Albert Camus' *The Plague* – Meursault. He suffers from moral and emotional atrophy, becoming the quintessence of an aimless existence, who is lonely despite being surrounded by people. The dissertation emphasises the fact that Meursault's strangeness should be viewed both literally as him being just a foreigner and metaphorically as one deprived of very important, natural biological ties, namely the relationship between a mother and a child. His mother had died, so he became a stranger, increasingly more and more isolated from people, lacking any feelings of belonging. The stranger bears the deep taint of being 'beyond'. Such a mode of thinking, characterised in the dissertation, presumes the opposition between the body and the soul. This thinking is manifested in the conviction that the body is a mere carrier of the soul which, in turn, is the seat for one's motives, causes and goals, as well as the source of one's assessments of behaviour, conscience and values. The author of the dissertation believes that it is solely the body which enables the soul to exercise its active and causative powers.

The *Analysis* is an attempt to understand fear hidden and/or worked-out in art. Fear can be manifested in art in various forms which serve to release it. What can be seen in the symbolism of fear is the duality of ethical and aesthetic stances. Fear is placed on the side of evil, in the area of malevolent forces threatening man, while repulsive shapes representing fear visualise its negative assessment. Beauty is identified with good, a sense of safety and harmony while evil, which causes fear – with ugliness and chaos. This dissertation shows the body struggling against pain and humiliation using the examples of the Viennese Actionist Rudolf Schwarzkogler and the Spanish artist David Nebred and his photographs; the latter artist is an example of the destruct based on a mental illness which the artist suffered from.

Chapter two, entitled *Tumours*, provides the record of pain, suffering, injustice and fight which is painful for both the artist and the viewer. Here, the work of Krzysztof Tchórzewski is analysed, the work being a unique documentation of the atelier of Alina Szapocznikow at Malakoff near Paris. Szapocznikow was a true artist, who searched for her own self in the expression of the sensitivity of her own time. She was the creator who deliberately withdrew from life around her in favour of being able to study her own self.

Tumours are the artist's peculiar *danse macabre*. Szapocznikow used various newspapers, gauze, photographs, and polyesters to create autonomous, knobby forms, changing the sizes of the lumps on their surfaces. They became bodies mutated by sculptural metamorphoses, which rendered them strange and disquieting. Illness translated into objects, became a manifestation against itself, as well as a visualisation of the invisible source of pain and suffering burning inside.

The sub-chapter *A Word about Body* also tackles the issue of an ill body on the example of Natalia Lach-Lachowicz's works from the 1980s. Here, one can see how the physical transformation of the body is integrally linked with the questions about the nature of evil (Satan) and good (God). The artist was interested in parapsychological phenomena. According to her, the key to one's understanding and acceptance of oneself is the body in which our inner transcendence is manifested. Natalia Lach-Lachowicz de-constructs her physicalness. The body becomes a carrier, it serves to represent inner fears and experience; it loses its velvety-like traits. This attempt at the deconstruction of her physicalness is visible in her works. Her study of her own self becomes a conscious creation.

The dissertation also presents another type of freedom, noticeable in the sculptural objects of Lynda Benglis. This sculptor uses a wide range of materials to create the dynamic impressions of mass and surface. Benglis' objects are free from any form, they can be called 'anti-forms'. The artist documents her own gestures and emotions using various materials. She embeds her feelings in them, which fossilise into 'frozen gestures' and start living in the space where they are placed. In Benglis' works, the act of creation is based on the presentation of a process and the flow of materials, thus it becomes the act of transformation.

The last chapter, *The White Cube*, envisages the notion of space. It interprets the relationship between the surface of an art work and the surface of the wall behind it. Brian O'Doherty in his book *Inside*

the White Cube, analyses the ideology of a gallery space. A viewer is exposed to the situation where it is not the arrangement of art pieces which permits him to grasp the sense but the wall which becomes the context of art, its superior value.

The author believes that the viewer and his eye play a key role in the analysis of space. It is the eye and the mind which are „the most important“ in a gallery space; the viewer’s body becomes an unnecessary „hull“.

Kurt Schwitters in his *Merzbau* constructed a unification of architecture, sculpture, painting and all sorts of refuse which he systematically placed in various corners of his construction. *Merzbau* was a kind of collage, an assemblage which blurred the border between life and art. Schwitters’ work visualised a different understanding of a gallery space. Schwitters was an artist inhabiting the inside of his work, living in symbiosis with it.

Two other figures appear in this chapter: Segal, the author of white plasters made in the convention of removal, and Joseph Kosuth, who unmasked the hermeticism of the idea of such a place which a gallery is by imposing the context of the identity of the artist’s body onto the viewer.

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When speaking about the issue of space in art, one cannot omit the work of Marcel Duchamp. He created a masterpiece. His work appeared in a place which had never been arranged before but now became decisive. His *Ceiling* is a mile-stone. It excellently shows how decrepit banal solutions and one’s encrusted resistance to re-define the significance of a gallery space are.

Similarly, Piet Mondrian’s *Salon* demonstrates that a painting is a very important issue. It asks the question of the usefulness of art, taking art out of the hermetic context of the cube. His work manifests the destructive impact of art which remains isolated.

Space presented in this dissertation has many aspects. What seems fundamental is the author’s disapproval of stylistic patterns, pre-determined goals, and quasi-moves in the context of her own work.

At the end of the dissertation conclusions are drawn on the cognitive process of the eponymous *Heterogenic Matter*. Subsequent stages of creation have been shown. They will have their finale on the day when the work is made visible, its visibility intensified by the space of the exhibition.