

Sławomir Lipnicki

Faculty of Painting,  
Academy of Fine Arts in Gdańsk



Summary of professional  
accomplishments

Faculty of Painting  
Academy of Fine Arts in Gdańsk

The title of the artistic accomplishment assessed in the procedure\*

**Postmemory as an Experience.**

**The Process of creating an exposition exemplified by:**

***Sąsiedztwo warzyw* [Neighboring Vegetables], Alternativa 2013, Gdańsk  
and *Il y a*, Bardzo Biała Gallery, 2016, Warsaw**

**Sławomir Lipnicki, PhD**

Academy of Fine Arts in Gdańsk

Diplomas and degrees:

Master of Arts

Academy of Fine Arts in Gdańsk

Faculty of Painting and Graphic Arts, 2000

PhD in Art, specific area: Visual Arts, artistic discipline: Fine Arts

Academy of Fine Arts in Gdańsk

Faculty of Painting, 2009

Doctoral dissertation title:

The Artist's Studio, Space, Meanings, Contexts.

Promoter ad. II st. Krzysztof Gliszczyński

Reviewers in the doctoral procedure:

Prof. Stefan Ficner, ad. II st. Piotr Józefowicz

Employment information:

Academy of Fine Arts in Gdańsk

Faculty of Painting, Drawing and Painting Basics Studio

2001-2012 – assistant

since 2012 – adiunkt [lecturer]

2001-2003 assistant in the studio of Prof. Włodzimierz Łajming

2003-2008 assistant in the Drawing Basics Studio of ad. II st. Krzysztof Gliszczyński

since 2010 assistant, and since 2012 lecturer [adiunkt] in the Drawing and Painting Basics Studio of ad. II st.  
Marek Model

\* Zgodnie z artykułem 16 ustawy z dnia 14 marca 2003 roku O stopniach naukowych i tytule naukowym oraz o stopniach i tytule w zakresie sztuki (tekst jednolity, Dz.U. z 2003, Nr 65, poz. 595 z późniejszymi zmianami)



## contents

### 1. Didactics, research and activities

Introduction .....	7
Didactic work.....	7
Cinema research club.....	8
Plein-airs, workshops.....	9
Erasmus Programme.....	9

### 2. Artwork

Exhibitions.....	11
Activities in public space.....	13

### 3. Description of the piece

Justification for the choice of the piece.....	15
Expositions:	
- Sąsiedztwo warzyw [Neighboring Vegetables] , <i>Alternativa</i> International Contemporary Visual Art Festival, Gdańsk 2013	
- Il y a, Bardzo Biała Gallery, Warsaw 2016.....	17-20
Conceptions and spatial narrations of both expositions.....	21
The Process of Vision Democratization.....	22
Postmemory as an Experience.....	22

### 4. Conclusion..... 23



## 1. Didactics, research and activities.

**Introduction** After graduating from the Faculty of Painting and Graphic Arts at the Academy of Fine Arts in Gdańsk in 2000 and winning the open competition for the post of an assistant I was employed at the academy. I began my work as an assistant in the studio of Włodzimierz Łajming and continued until Professor retired in 2003. After the faculty's reorganization I was transferred to work in the Drawing Basics studio which was then led by ad. II st. [lecturer] Krzysztof Gliszczyński. In 2010, a year after obtaining my PhD degree, I was transferred to the the Drawing and Painting Basics studio led by ad. II st. Marek Model. In 2012 after winning the competition I was promoted to the post of a lecturer - adjunkt. Since 2013, asked to create a new plan for the course, I have conducted "Knowledge of Colors" classes, first for students at the 1st year of stationary first-cycle studies in Design, and since 2014 also for students at the 1st year of Interior Design.

**Didactic work** Having worked at the academy for 17 years, with students from 5 different fields of study, I am fully aware of the distinctiveness of the painting discipline. I have realized as well how absorbing and challenging it is to work as a lecturer-artist.

To me the beginning of my work meant forming professional relations with people who I had already known and fathoming their creative processes. Working as Prof. Łajming's assistant I tried to learn new things and react to challenges, experiments. Benefiting from the variety of fascinations and therefore many different directions of creation within the studio, it was important for me to persist in an open and personalized approach towards students.

For three years this studio cooperated with the Intermedia Art studio led by Prof. Witosław Czerwonka. Thus, being thoroughly experimental, exploring variety of technologies, artistic and exposition strategies, the studio 'oxygenated' the tradition of European painting by enriching the open field of color theory. Włodzimierz Łajming seemed to have appreciated this cooperation and accepted his students' attempts to follow another tradition – the one that meant constant, inevitable changes: generational, technological, political.

It was then that I realized that a helpful and intelligent 'stepping back' is in fact the 'attitude' which shows understanding, and that reflection upon some individual choices provides a greater opportunity to negotiate issues experienced by a student and therefore to stimulate his/her potential.

Despite the significant age, experience and competences gap between us, Professor took every opportunity to talk with me, not solely about the study program, but mainly about the artwork of those we worked with. He advised me, as an assistant, to make my own artistic choices and to represent a similar approach towards the creative work of our students.

After Prof. Łajming retired in 2003, I started working in the studio of Drawing and Painting Basics. It was a very different situation putting forward new challenges. The studio was led by ad. II st. Krzysztof Gliszczyński with whom I performed the course's program. It implied a wide spectrum of education – not only developing students' knowledge, skills and social

competences, but also teaching them to analyze in what way a certain medium 'expresses itself' and how to use it. The program put great emphasis on developing self-consciousness.

Since 2010, working with ad. II st. Marek Model, I have realized that teaching is a process which aims at deliberate building a multi-layered strategy of students' development where didactic work means entering a dialogue and having to listen.

At the Faculty of Painting this applies to people who decided to enter a group of people who like them want to be different. It is in fact a significant need within the process of forming one's personality and animating one's imagination, intuition, emotionality as well as the ability to think and work creatively. And so, what do I find crucial for the Painting and Drawing Basics course?

It usually is the first contact students have with this vast discipline. The course, based on development, aims at improving skills and results in a person's best preparation to leave (become independent) with all obtained competences – the education outcome. In order to meet this target, the tutor needs creative methods, observation; he/she needs to invite critical perspective, to incite inspiration and support the search for new ways of thinking. All methods used must come from many directions of creative activity. Starting from studying nature (observation), acquiring traditional techniques and manners of perceiving, finishing at modern ways where it is essential to use all tools and technologies purposefully. Observation, as a research-based attitude, develops the skill of noticing links and relations which influence the formation of basic abilities needed to record those links – it is the elementary language of future painters. Contributing aspects are: composition, knowledge about materials, colors, gestures, mutual relations between theoretical and practical aspects of the creative process and its impact on the viewer. All tasks performed, group exhibitions, plein-air workshops, research trips are to inspire students. By encouraging the desire to become a 'creator' they generate the experience of leaving a trace of one's existence. However, it is worth stressing that the attempt to educate in basics means confronting patterns and opinions – remnants of students' former education.

**Cinema  
research  
club**

Lectures and presentations are a way to confront different views. Since the very beginning of my work at the academy I have had the pleasure to support such great initiative, it started with a cycle of lectures "Po godzinach" [After Working Hours]. I described it further in the publication "Znajomi znad morza" [Seaside Friends] edited by Małgorzata Kaźmierczak, Anna Witkowska, published by: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Akademii Sztuki w Szczecinie, 2016 Szczecin-Gdańsk, (ISBN AS w Szczecinie: 978-83-63072-02-5, ISBN ASP w Gdańsku: 978-83-65366-29-0). These lectures were for many years a kind of polyphony of views, an interdisciplinary agora which actively contributed to students' artistic accomplishments.

One of the activities offered by the "Po godzinach" cycle was my "Ruchome obrazy" [Moving Pictures] initiative. During these meetings I used movie classics as a starting point in discussing issues of great importance. Presenting the "End of the Art World" film from 1971 by Alexis Krasilovsky (<http://alexiskrasilovsky.com/eotaw.html>), an idea welcomed by the author herself, may serve as an example. The projection was introduced by theoreticians: Hubert Bilewicz, Dorota Grubba, Marek Rogulus Rogulski, Małgorza Taraszkiewicz-Zwolicka

(28.05.2013). Thanks to this meeting we managed to familiarize students with the context of American painting of the 70.

#### **Plein-airs and workshops**

Another form of active education practiced regularly were workshops and plein-airs, such as the one organized for the 1st year students in the Sports Centre AWS in Górkki Zachodnie, led by Hanna Grochal-Nowicka, Andrzej Karmasz and myself; and also a trip to Berlin (18 - 21.12.2015) where students could see many outstanding exhibitions.

Having mentioned many activities I would finally like to acknowledge my long-lasting cooperation with various didactic centers in Gdańsk. Within seven years we have managed to organize many workshops e.g. on the occasion of the 'Pomeranian Day of Disabled People's Dignity' (Marshal's Office, President of the City of Gdańsk, Education Office and the Academy of Fine Arts in Gdańsk) or on the occasion of the 'Polish Day of Preschoolers' in Gdańsk, OMEP (University of Gdańsk, Gdańsk City Hall), since 2013. These initiatives offer direct interaction and engage students into everyday life of marginalized social groups.

#### **Erasmus Programme**

Another substantial aspect of my didactic experience formed itself when I had the chance to visit, twice, our academy partners in the Erasmus Programme.

In 2008 I visited the Academy of Fine Arts in Milan, Italy. Then I had the chance to learn about their profound traditions, the structure and functioning of the Academy as a whole and its faculties – Painting and Graphic Art. I also had the chance to do research and deliver a lecture combined with workshops concerning the activeness of line, body and places. The lecture addressed the issue of "a line as the trace of a moving point", focusing on the example of the Polish left-wing avant-garde groups of the interwar and postwar periods. I conducted my workshops with a group of international students of art and anthropology fields. The obvious conclusion led to appreciation of interdisciplinary approach in the work of any artist, as well as acknowledging the importance of facilities provided by research and scientific institutions that support artistic education.

My second trip (16-18.05.2012 r.) involved a visit to the Academy of Fine Arts in Vilnius. During this didactic-educative stay I met numerous lecturers of the Faculty of Painting at the academy, I observed their procedure of granting Master's diplomas. I was also invited to explore the contemporary artistic scene of Vilnius.

These experiences allowed me to confront with the variety of teaching methods and with their students' level of practical skills which helped me to draw some crucial conclusions concerning the development of Painting Faculty didactics at the Gdańsk Academy.

#### **Other activities**

Another activity which I find professionally important is that since 2009 I have been taking part in Electoral Sessions of the University PhDs' Curia in Warsaw as one of electors. In 2010 I took part in electing new members to join the General Council for Higher Education in Warsaw. These meetings made me realize the "complexity" of questions concerning Universities in Poland and difficulties such institutions face.

Between 2012 and 2016 I was the Representative of the Faculty of Painting, the one who does not have a degree or the rank of doktor habilitowany [PhD with a 'habilitation'], to the Gdańsk Academy of Fine Arts Senate. During the term of office I was elected to join the Legal-Statutory Commission of the Gdańsk Academy of Fine Arts Senate.



## 2. Artwork

Spaces (Deleuze, Guattari) are/ is one of the crucial issues I address in my artwork. Adding to that the experience of time (Bergson) they form, in my view, a stage where there comes to a sort of shift - "repetition".

However, these spaces do not refer directly to the evident observation of "nature", but they are a consequence of studying the viewer's - one who sees - relation towards photographed moments. Images taken with light - "with the use of the mechanical eye placed outside his body".

The awareness of the user's intention, as well as the process of locating the camera against bodies, is to me not only the case of power, but also a question of the Deleuze-Guattari Mechanosphere.

### Exhibitions:

In 2003, as a result of strong personal experiences, I began a project entitled ***Olimpiada-Lustro Narcyza*** [Olympics - The Mirror of Narcissus] where I studied the meaning of space brought to the level of an "abstract plane". This sort of "removing details" - not observing directly the sport events, but using photographs taken by Leni Riefenstahl during the XI Olympic Games in Berlin, 1936 - resulted in my creating images which were in fact interpretations of an interpretation.

On the one hand, they referred to capturing and being restricted by the focus of the photographer, on the other, while referring to abuse (total power, the super-human ideology) they would show the image of a body within the area marked by limits of human capacities.

During the exhibition I wanted the viewer to find himself in the situation of an observer watching a show where "the image of a sportive man" that conquers human limitations - fulfilling the paradox of transgression and marking - remains utterly still. So that the basic element of a group's identity - the record result - was disturbed in its status of the "human condition" benchmark.

By suspending the sportsmen's bodies and sharpening their sensational experiences in my works I tried to grasp the deformation of space which occurs as a consequence of changing the reference point (the lack of stimulus or over-stimulation). This deformation brought me to reflect upon the relativity of one's body and its physicality, as well as its role in subjectivity shaping itself in the process of creating certain places.

In the next project from 2008 entitled ***Rekonstrukcje – odzyskanie pamięci zadomowienia*** [*Reconstructions – reclaiming the memory of settling-in*], the space formulated the background of all activities, the area of everyday experiences. By trying to specify people, time and location in family photographs left in envelopes I tried to bring myself closer to those who were depicted – the "absent close ones".

In the process photography allowed me only to transfer experiences from the collective area (history) into the area of the individual ones, recognizable to me. As if the absence of the narrator, which distorted the ritual of recognizing, caused obtrusive repetitions, multiplying recurrences.

The means used to create paintings in the "Reconstructions..." project, stemming from the last periods of "classical art", were a form of "re-calling".

As a result of this creative concept in my paintings there were places, but these were non-existent places – “lost ones” - where all re-called events without reference remained only a “collective experience of a certain period”.

This kind of bringing back memories made every moment captured in my paintings happen within “nobody’s space”, within this poignant distance between the universal, modern-trained perspective and the re-called loss – closeness.

The next project I presented in 2012 at the Baltic Sea Cultural Centre, Gdańsk was entitled **[nie/miejsca]** [non/places]. There I pictured the reversion of a place – turning into a non-place, as a consequence of utopian ideologies pursued in the XX century.

Though, as Andrzej Turowski wrote, “I have always associated ideology with groups of people who held power and aimed at keeping it. Ideology was what justified their power. Whereas utopias were visions made by people who did not have any power<sup>1</sup>”, in both cases it still means “creating visions” for Others – for them as Themselves.

By encouraging the creation of a “false familiarity”, a sort of too-closeness in relation to a particular experience reserved only for intimate relationships, utopias come across as a result of abreacting violence, though, through reversion they become violence as well.

Thus, to me [non/places] became a way to show violence manifesting itself as utopia - stemming from the notion of the Latin *ou + topos*, meaning a non-existent place (no/towards existing), as well as eutopia – a good place – as if this place had the power to exclude evil (or the evil ones).

I know it also from my own experience. All my life I have lived in a “reconstructed city” where the need for rebuilding became associated with “oblivion covering places the rebuilders were dragging with them” and inhabited by people who many times manifested openly their reluctance towards government abusing power.

Their micro-stories and controversies against the great official narration were the framework of my personal experiences with modern tactics of the “touristic industry” – “simulations” meeting the needs of people influenced by the trauma they were left with.

Before making the exhibition I went to Vilnius on holiday, together with my seven-years-old daughter. While sightseeing that included taking pictures of one another, we also searched for the places where our close ones used to live (us being at the same time creators, actors and the audience). “Repressing their presence” became to me the reference point for this visible excess (of collective memory as well as its ideologised version). The photographs we made with my daughter revealed fears, fascinations, obsessions – importunities. Though, it is this very material – pictures from holiday – which inspired me to create those pieces and to reflect upon the meaning of ‘heterotopia’ (Foucault), as well as upon “bad memories” calling for atonement.

---

<sup>1</sup> *Utopia to nie ideologia. 125. rocznica urodzin Kazimierza Malewicza. Z prof. Andrzejem Turowskim rozmawia Agnieszka Tabor. [Utopia is not an ideology. 125. birthday of Prof. Kazimierz Malewicz. Agnieszka Tabor talking with Prof. Andrzej Turowski]*, [in:] „Tygodnik Powszechny”, [http:// tygodnik.onet.pl/1548,1153046,dzial.html](http://tygodnik.onet.pl/1548,1153046,dzial.html).

## Activities in public space

It happens quite often that while carrying out interdisciplinary projects I work through something I then confront while creating. It refers to relations – spaces where expressing emotions builds up meanings, where the inner activity of a certain group reveals all complex processes of human development. At times, as the activity was in fact a public project, it became a form of critical education.

Through creative activity, its contexts, ways of experiencing and decoding meanings I stumble upon mechanisms of bio-power – inherited “habits” which form one’s body and its expression. **Dialogi Miejskie** [City Dialogues] project from 20.11.2013 can serve as an example. It was chosen by the local community and realized during the ‘Narrations 5’ festival in Gdańsk<sup>2</sup>. Within a few hours children managed to depict their imagined worlds on blown-up handprints of incidental people, who after shopping in the nearby supermarket were asked to leave their prints the day earlier. These pressed palms and their stories were the children’s inspiration. However, apart from many details, there were also symbolic forms such as the ‘Poland Fighting’ sign painted by a ten-years-old child. The touch merged subconsciously with narration – emotion. Another project called **Re:paper** was realized between 13.01 – 24.01.2014 in the IKM [City Culture Institute] in Gdańsk<sup>3</sup>. This one showed relations between the “memory of one’s body” and political strategies concerning the concept of “city’s memory” and its identity. The background for this complex attempt of self-identification was formed by some of the spaces represented in photographs from Donald Tusk’s albums “Był sobie Gdańsk” [Once Upon a Time There Was Gdańsk]. The pictures’ cut and grasping people’s gestures revealed strategies of adjustment within a space undergoing political transformations.

Similarly, the project from 29.11.2014, entitled **Pamięć wody** [Water’s Memory] in the city’s public space, where the Orunia district community theatre reconstructed events from the war and post-war period in this part of Gdańsk.

Constructing in this manner their identity (in fact, introjection), inhabitants, as viewers and partakers playing their roles, internalized trauma in order to “understand the dramatic history of the city” more. Within this process I tried to find disturbances and moments of destabilization in such “mimetic concept of re-enacting history”.

Another project which held great importance to me was a set of workshops for preschoolers (around 68 kindergartens) in Gdańsk. There I was particularly interested in the process of “acquiring the basic content” in human life. One of many workshops was entitled **Halo, jestem**<sup>4</sup> [Hello, Here I Am], its outcome was presented in the European Solidarity Centre, 30.09.2015. Each child, together with “someone important” (relatives, tutors), painted on plastic bags everything that is important between us. These bags, then blown with human breath, became a part of a sound installation involving recorded performative activities where the space of their kindergarten was to be an instrument explored by children.

Because of the technical obstacles we faced at the Solidarity museum the installation was eventually flattened and deprived of the motion-giving sound. After just one day the work of teachers and children (who hung approximately 6000 plastic bags) had to be removed – as it did not fit into the program of the institution which commemorates the phenomenon of solidarity.

---

<sup>2</sup> The festival’s organizer, respecting the social participation concept, and supported in this by the IKM Gdańsk, let some of the realizations planned for his event be discussed with the city’s inhabitants.

<sup>3</sup><http://www.gdansk.pl/wydarzenia/Re-paper-wystawa-Slawomira-Lipnickiego,w,16414>

<sup>4</sup>[http://www.ecs.gda.pl/title,HALLO,\\_JESTEM\\_\\_\\_\\_JESTEM\\_Z\\_GDANSKA,pid,9,oid,61,cid,194,type,timeline.html](http://www.ecs.gda.pl/title,HALLO,_JESTEM____JESTEM_Z_GDANSKA,pid,9,oid,61,cid,194,type,timeline.html)



### 3. Description of the piece

#### Justification for the choice of the piece

**For the purpose of the ‘habilitation’ dissertation I have chosen two expositions along with the whole process of creating each of them.** First of which is “*Sąsiedztwo warzyw*” [Neighboring Vegetables] made for the *Alternativa* International Contemporary Visual Art Festival in Gdańsk, 2013, and the second “*Il y a*” in Bardzo Biała Gallery, Warsaw, 2016. **Describing both with the use of the term ‘exposition’, through comparison, I make a reference to postmemory as an experience.**

‘Exposition’ remains a crucial term. As it is associated with arranging displays, being a synonym for ‘exhibition’, it is also closely related with ‘exposure’ – a term used in philosophy, anthropology and photography to describe a state of being uncovered, exposed to different factors, it also means revealing (lat. ex + pōnō) something which remained not showed.

“Exposing to light, to view” - this is a correlation with the apparent person of an expositor (exhibitor), the creator of: space, contexts and situation of contact.

However, only the comparison of both expositions presented in the course of this dissertation allows me to describe the process of negotiating – “exposing to light” – experiences which relate to postmemory. I truly hope that what I have managed to create does not fit solely within the framework of “anti-museum events”, but provokes reflection upon a certain method of ruling – “democratization of vision”. To use a metaphor – I want my work to reach gnosis, where along with the practice of “touching spaces”, materiality of seeing them is reclaimed.

#### Expositions:

#### **“*Sąsiedztwo warzyw*” [Neighboring Vegetables], *Alternativa* International Contemporary Visual Art Festival 2013, Gdańsk**

A city, though existent in reality, remains a mental image.

Starting the “*Sąsiedztwo warzyw*” [Neighboring Vegetables] project I found myself in a situation of “conflicting images”. The space of the former Lenin Shipyard was first transformed into the area for artists and art (e.g. Roads to Freedom Festival) to finally become the *Jungstadt* (Young City) and offer visions of a space for living, services and retail. All the publicized computer simulations, pictures of architectural mock-ups, by clarifying the image of the City’s policy concerning the use of this location, became a tool of domination in the fight against the visible contestation of the genuine inhabitants who felt offended by this plan. My role as the artist invited to take part in the Festival was to conduct workshops with senior people whose dwellings were situated in the “direct neighborhood of the former Shipyard walls”, next to the *Wyspa* Art Institute and the Synergia 99 company building. I was to work with those who, by living so close to the center of events, were exposed to the impact of fighting that took place during workmen’s strikes against the non-democratic government who used force.

Each side of the argument felt entitled to have power over this area which technically was held by the City. However, its inhabitants, who took part in my workshops, were in possession

of some symbolic capital which no one could take away from them – the “dignity of remembering”. It means living with the past images which, though seemingly looking similar as those in museums (founding trauma), are a private, negotiable value – in itself. Instrumental treatment of these people’s memories, the hostility of neighboring institutions to “co-being”, had a significant impact on the agreement between “the social dialogue signatories”<sup>5</sup>. Rejecting any difference in opinion the dominating narrations did not allow the inhabitants to “express themselves” on the issue of changes planned for their district. Nevertheless, recommended by one of the locals who was asked by the Festival organizers to help me in making the workshop work in the area, I was invited to the house of her neighbors where I could see a part of their family photographs. In these pictures the background for family life was formed by historical events. This mixture of ordinary life with politics, commonness with transgression was crucial for the photographs. Moreover, by “telling about each photo” its owner created time – where all that passed was associated with an image of what could have come along with the political changes and the freedom they fought for. In his words one could hear the distinct note of melancholy<sup>6</sup>.

After hearing the stories and collecting a set of photographs an exposition was created in a space “separated” from all institutions. It was made in the attic, normally used by people living at Jaracza 13 street. Two pieces were exposed: “Sąsiedztwo Warzyw” [Neighboring Vegetables] and “Fotografia rodzinna, Stocznia 1971” [A Family Photo, Shipyard 1971] as a reaction to the people’s presence and their need to be seen. Their photographs, related to their memories through empathy, for this one short while became art – and the element of life in many different ways.

After their exposition in the attic these pieces did not occur on display in any of the surrounding state institutions. Still, people who visited the attic noticed what one experiences in dislocation and they “agreed to that impracticability”.

---

<sup>5</sup>One could even argue that the provision of modes of symbolizing difference and conflict - not full consensus or community - is basic to democracy and that the dialogic itself in a democratic context must have an agonistic component,

Dominick LaCapra, *Trauma, Absence, Loss*, [in:] *Critical Inquiry*, Vol. 25, No. 4, The University of Chicago Press, 1999, p.709

<sup>6</sup> When absence is converted into loss, one increases the likelihood of misplaced nostalgia or utopian politics in quest of a new totality or fully unified community. When loss is converted into (or encrypted in an indiscriminately generalized rhetoric of) absence, one faces the impasse of endless melancholy, impossible mourning, and interminable aporia in which any process of working through the past and its historical losses is foreclosed or prematurely aborted.

Dominick LaCapra, *Trauma, Absence, Loss*, [in:] *Critical Inquiry*, Vol. 25, No. 4, The University of Chicago Press, 1999, p. 698

(the text accompanying the exhibition)

**“Sąsiedztwo warzyw” [Neighboring Vegetables], *Alternativa* International Contemporary Visual Art Festival 2013**

**place of the exposition:** the attic in Stefana Jaracza street, adhering to the walls of Gdańsk Shipyard, now also in close vicinity to European Solidarity Centre building.

Concerned about the sustainable development of society modern architects and urbanists seem to introduce allelopathy formula as sort of neighboring policy.

In the process of revitalizing certain areas, making identity and memory of its inhabitants marketable has become an important element of the game to win capital. Along with such idea for creating a community participation in different cultural goods also becomes marketable and the anti-democratic character of the collective memory appropriation causes exclusion. In modern “communities without characteristics” – neighborhood means not only a privilege that can be bought, but also the accessibility of “being from somewhere particular”.

The project, as a part of the *Alternativa* International Contemporary Visual Art Festival 2013 educative program, involves workshops for people of age 50+ living in Stefana Jaracza and Robotnicza streets and it aims at picturing the notion of neighborhood.

It follows the notion that memories, family photographs, imagination become an impulse to reflect upon one’s neighborhood - leading everyday life next to “historical places” and near institutions responsible for research and archiving materials concerning “the living conditions of people in non-democratic times”.

*Stawomir Lipnicki*

**Curator:** Hubert Bilewicz

<http://alternativa-gdansk.pl/sasiedztwo-warzyw-warsztaty-edukacyjne-dla-50-2/>

**allelopathy** (gr. – allelon (another), pathos (harm) a negative effect on the growth or development of an organism of one species, caused by a chemical released by an organism of another species, usually used of plants.

## *Il y a*, Bardzo Biata Gallery in Warsaw, 2016

The exposition involved many references to the optics of power, its essence – along with the “compulsive” repetition, as well as “negativity” (being sensitive to light) of a plane.

The title “*Il y a*” was to me a difficult immersion into insomnia. It had its beginning while I was in Vilnius with my daughter - [non/places]. There, in a museum, I came across a photograph of the Lévinas family. Earlier I lost myself in reading Emmanuel Lévinas’s writings, though, that particular moment made me realize the mechanism – the violence which families of great people are facing. This situation – putting the photo on display - was, I gather, an attempt to “reveal and bring closer to viewers the life and reality of victims”, as well as an element of educational, socio-psychological, legal... processes. Still, I was unable to accept neither that, nor the tour guide’s explanation defending preservation of national emblems.

This experience filled me with a kind of disgust towards the appropriating representation where seeing is a sadomasochistic relation, and the viewer is not a subject (rejection of the body, pornography).

Thus *Il y a* exposition was a demonstration of the Oedipus complex in order to disrupt the power of people who create the public narration – a narration fulfilling subconscious desires of the audience by displaying exhibits. By animating reception (fantasies) these exhibits relate to historical events which hold a salient function.

Though, despite the fact that we should crave for more critical methods of dealing with our heritage and with such problems as absence and loss, I myself know, that we are often not ready to know. Such event as my father being beaten by the SB [security forces unit] to make my mother “silent” was to me, as a child, unconceivable.

Learning the Readiness to speak.

Lacan claimed that at the beginning our existence is a “fractioned body”. Mother is our first mirror. Father – the great Other, coming between the child and Mother, makes their separation and the formation of child’s “I” possible.

However, I also find Legendre’s theory interesting – subjectivity is constructed within a structure. Its assembly – which aims at settling a subject within a body – inevitably involves violence. The Father is thus a legal fiction. Whereas, each item of the Law has its Founding Father – a metaphysical Absent-Father. The image of Father has therefore a special consistency: He can be a Mirror – one can find oneself in Him – though He can become dense and unclear.

There is only the Image of the Father, and He himself moves away – making room for the subject: the Son who eventually becomes a Father as well.

The Son must separate himself from the Father. Myths and rituals are indispensable elements of the game to obtain subjectivity.

One, in order to gain subjectivity, must acquire a statement that founds, that defines oneself and accompanies one, which is though inaccessible to one.

The main promise of Modernity was gaining absolute power over Fate (Fatum) – resigning from the condition of a son. According to Legendre this would inevitably lead to madness (immaturity, absurd). To Legendre dreaming is the basic level of our social existence. “Society

- that system of organization – is dreaming, and more than that – it produces symptoms, a whole confectionery of symptoms, a neurotic myth”<sup>7</sup>.

(the text accompanying the exhibition)

## **Il y a, Bardzo Biała Gallery in Warsaw, 2016**

“[...] symptomatic revenants who have not been laid to rest because of the disturbance in the symbolic order, a deficit in the ritual process, or a death so extreme in its unjustifiability or transgressiveness that in certain ways it exceeds existing modes (perhaps any possible mode) of mourning – roam the post-traumatic world and are not entirely ‘owned’ as ‘one’s own’ by any individual or group. If they haunt a house (a nation, a group), they come to disturb all who live in – and perhaps even pass through – that house.”<sup>8</sup>

The presented exhibition somehow physically approaches the boundaries of reality and what lies behind the term *Il y a* created by the 20th century philosopher Emmanuel Lévinas.

**As a mental experiment, *Il y a* is also an experiment of forgetting** [repressing], drawn by a sort of excess, a personal drama – reaction to the absurd of power and violence.

Given its immeasurability and an-archic notion the term is explained with the use of the phenomena of night and insomnia. Lévinas is one of the very few who with his thought bring us closer to the core of un/reality, to a concept of imaginary deletion of objects and persons. If we do this, he wrote, it is not “nichts” that remains, but “*l'exister*” – anonymous being. One cannot escape the “*il y a*”, even the sleepless one cannot break free from one’s existence.

### **Awakenings.**

There are pieces in this exhibition which have been created within last few years. Some of them demonstrate a dissent towards all the violence that took place during the political transformation of countries in Western Europe.

Other pieces are to unveil people who deserve recognition, who passed away, though, what remained as a trace had been marked by excess.

For instance, the piece *Narrenschiff* which was made to oppose against forgetting Andrzej Bugajski, Bolesław Hutyra, Marian Moćko who died on September 15, 2000 in a car accident while travelling to an appointed meeting with the Minister of the Treasury in order to discuss the 15% shares that the Gdańsk Shipyard workers were supposed to be given.

Whilst a piece - a specific meeting-welcoming act made in 2001 - was a step outside all the conventional limitations set by the government. By reacting to a drawing of “a ship to perform euthanasia” floating on water in their common - public space people of Gdańsk became “co-authors” in the sphere of agitation – an awakening.

---

<sup>7</sup> P. Legendre, *L'Empire de la vérité. Introduction aux espaces dogmatiques industrielles*, Nouvelle édition. Paris 2001, p. 41

<sup>8</sup> Dominick LaCapra, *Writing About Trauma*, [in:] *Writing History. Writing Trauma.*, Baltimore 2014, p. 215

## **Non/places.**

Other presented pieces show the inversion of particular places into non-places – as a consequence of utopias having been put into practice.

Stemming from the modernist conception of outopos (a non-existent place) as well as the eutopia (a good place) non/places are to me one of the most characteristic kinds of cruelty to the body. As a way to abreact violence, utopias lead to its iteration. In such spaces the Other, as Lévinas wrote, becomes one of things-objects and his face that reveals absolute defenselessness urges even more its own destruction.

Observing what remains of ideologies one can pose a question if the new “placement” is possible in the image of the “evaporating world” – and how to remember at the same time avoiding the sadistic substitute memory, the memory which is appropriated (dislocated) – not allowing one to die one’s own death.

Two pieces made in 2012 may serve as an example: “Non/places. The Museum” and “Sports Field”. They are both negative images of travel photography, taken in a museum in Vilnius (Tolerancijos Centras) and a sports field from the ‘70 which had been built on a Jewish cemetery in Wizajny. The inversion used leads towards the transposition of “experiencing light” as well as “the point of view” – the perspective of institutions which prevent us from reconstructing the (touch of) history of an individual fate.

## **Postmemory**

Since the end of the 80., as a reaction to the previous heroic “culture of silence”, the post-traumatic culture has been developing. “The commonness of postmemory with its polyphony seems to have a shifting character: it takes place in an alternative, symbolic space and time – and with a significant latency regarding the event that is actually concerned – “in some other place”.

Those “other places” are also heterotopias – archives, museums filled with a variety of materials on human subject research.

In the “Geometry of Nature” project - by applying a pornographic video onto a piece by a New Zealand artist Len Lye from 1958, by introducing repetitions, cropping cadres, looping, re-cutting the film, re-editing – I am trying to reclaim space as well as individualism – it is also a reflection upon time of reproducing several experiments on body endurance.

*Stawomir Lipnicki*

## Conceptions and spatial narrations of both expositions.

Both presented expositions: “Sąsiedztwo warzyw” [Neighboring Vegetables] in the attic of a residential building in Gdańsk and “Il y a” in the Bardzo Biała Gallery in Warsaw, concerning postmemory, formed my experience of creating certain messages and relations.

It did not only apply to pieces displayed and raising the viewers’ awareness, but also to the person who ‘exposed’, the one who by negating meanings and by referring to places where expositions were made (the context) marks him/herself in the “way of exposing to light” – the reception of pieces. By influencing the sense of each piece, he/she builds a relation with the viewer and the area where the one who looks identifies with the one who exposed and with the content on display.

This experience results from people’s ability to feel empathy (emotional and cognitive). When it refers to postmemory then the anxiety caused by empathy and built up by exposure, unsettles the fetish-oriented and totalitarian narrations which negate any trauma focusing on the return of the “enjoyment rule”. It is important since for the considerate lack of efficacious passage rituals modern societies are willing to eliminate even the slightest possibility of working through trauma. **There appears a question of composing narrations which should not assume the position of a victim, nor should they be in search of a simple ending.**

As being a victim is not so much a psychological category as a social, political and most importantly ethical one. Indeed, it is not about “how it actually was” but about what came of it. Broken traces of tragic events remain also in the one who follows them. Though he does not really see, his memory moves him – we all learn fear. Narration in films works this way. (The presence of this medium along with the tragic heritage of the XX century makes one ponder). However, turning to expositions in concern, I consider “Sąsiedztwo warzyw” [Neighboring Vegetables] as the positive image. It was a projection onto the actual common world (the attic), and it meant staying with as well as for the project’s participants.

The case was different in the Bardzo Biała Gallery – “Il y a” was the negative image, or an inversion of the negative along with its traces. The space was white and modern, situated next to public institutions, official committees, and many people ‘outsiders’ were invited to participate in the opening. My pieces hung on the walls were not immersed in commonness, but became a kind of festive display, a celebration, maybe a little disturbing.

Both expositions are to me ways of replacing violence with certain relations and possible experiences – through the imagined, the immaterial, the hybrid vision. They had their weak and strong contexts, still distinct and reducing the ‘excess’.

Comparing both these experiences a conclusion comes to one’s mind, that staying with those who suffered, those hurt is not in fact any artistic strategy, but an ethical statement. Narration in such understanding invites no repetition. It does not restrain itself to craft (to ‘techne’) or any false needs of social activities and democratization, but it stems from and refers to something one can never fully and precisely describe, let alone heal. The most one can do is diminish it, make it weaker<sup>9</sup>.

---

<sup>9</sup>One may suggest that narratives in other cultures that differ from the conventional narrative may show more striking resemblances to experimental, open- ended novels than to the stereotypical conventional novel. In a some- what comparable fashion, one may point to a dialectic that does not reach closure but instead enacts an unfinished, unfinalizable interplay of forces involving a series of substitutions without origin or ultimate

## The Process of Vision Democratization

Democratization of vision remains a profoundly complex case. It is a consequence not only of the cognitive and interpretative processes, but also of ontological changes. Jonathan Carry notes that modernism was the result of civilization changes as well as being a reaction to light – and he did not mean solely the introduction of gas lamps, electric light, etc.

As a result of releasing vision, sharpening one's perception, hypnosis, experiments in painting all the way to the emergence of film; the observer was shifted from the usual viewer's role to having the capacity of participating in the show. Along with that there occurs the issue of disintegrated subjectivity<sup>10</sup>. The initial longing for the incorporeality of vision, which was to become a part of the "new" reality dawning, seems to have remained a question of importance – nowadays reoccurring in line with the memory of traumatic experiences of the XX century.

Expositions: „*Sqsziedztwo warzyw*” and „*Il y a*” created as “co-participation in what is perceivable” tackled with the “excess” concerning the space and the postmemory (memory passed down to the second generation) left in people along with the trauma. In both pieces the photographic process, like mechanistic reality, is based on two bipolar, invertible values. The light becomes shadow and shadow turns to light; the outside reality is recorded as a negative image which after reverting becomes this reality's representation.

In some cases only a projection of a video appears – a positive, developed image, e.g. *Fotografia rodzinna. Stocznia 1971* [A Family Photo. Shipyard 1971], or a negative one, e.g. *Boisko* [The Pitch]. It resulted from the need to fully-expose images as well as the digital photography's hybridity. It is this hybridity that has changed one's approach towards materiality of the photo-medium and has undermined its documental status of the “reality recorder”, also in case of genuine photographs.

## Postmemory as an Experience.

Postmemory is in some way “false” memory. It refers to events which were not directly experienced, though being utterly intense, they have rooted in the consciousness of succeeding generations and thus are still felt as their own (inherited trauma). At the same time, it is important that now the world of “images-as-things” is transforming into the world of “images-as-events”. It changes our approach towards time as well as space – and thus towards images. One can conclude that the hybridity of cyber-space and its growing “hyper-

---

referent-an interplay that may enable more desirable configurations that cannot be equated with salvation or redemption.

Dominick LaCapra, *Trauma, Absence, Loss*, [in:] *Critical Inquiry*, Vol. 25, No. 4, The University of Chicago Press, 1999, p. 705

<sup>10</sup> “Deleuze points out a significant difference between cinema and painting: painted pictures themselves are still, therefore it is the mind that [...] put them in motion”. The emergence of cinema as an body-machine apparatus constitutes a totally new paradigm of psycho-mechanics. According to Deleuze, the industrial art appears together with the new “subjective and collective automaton” – the cinema.”

Jonathan Crary, *Suspensions of Perception. Attention, Spectacle, and Modern Culture*, [in:] *The Art Bulletin* Vol. 83, No. 1, College Art Association, New York, 2001, pp. 157-161

memory” has revised our way of accumulating images, and the way we “remember” them (contexts, capacity).

As a consequence of these changes and of globalization the non-material digital photos move much faster – changing contexts and meanings..., and what is important, they move across territories of different countries (and languages), value systems of individual viewers – confronting them with the difference. This capacity allows images to be taken outside the traditional model of a state museum – institutions which protect “matter” preserving it from any interference (deformation) that would alter its assigned meaning.

Thus pictures being digital (viral) create an area for acquiring and emitting feelings, grudges, opinions, which occur along with their reception - deprived of the great power held by their caretaker, but dispersed and “diminished” in clarity (not explicit).

#### 4. Summary.

Finally, I am aware that a ‘summary of professional accomplishments’ should not present research results or theses, nor should it provide reflections and intuitions concerning each piece. However I must stress that in 2016 both presented projects appeared in publications: “DO JUTRA! ALTERNATIVA ANTOLOGIA CZ 4”, edited by Krzysztof Gutfrański, published by Wyspa Institute of Art in Gdańsk, as well as in the article about the “*Il y a*” exposition, entitled “*„Wielkie rozmowy”* [Great Conversations], by Dorota Grubba-Thiede in the magazine “*ARTLUK*”<sup>1</sup> (34) 2016.

I would also like to mention that thoughts, as well as conclusions drawn from each piece, helped me to present them (19.05.2016) during the International Conference “Interpenetrating Cultures, Poland-Lithuania” at the Faculty of History, University of Gdańsk where I presented my paper: ‘*Przemieszczenia. Artystyczne eksperymenty zapomnienia - il y a*’ [Translocations. Artistic Experiments with Oblivion - *il y a*].

Although the conference was focused more on the issue of identity, cultural diffusion and assimilation, it gave me the opportunity to find myself among academics from Gdańsk, Vilnius, Grodno, Cracow and Lublin and highlight the need for conducting research on visual material and on the “gesture” of experimenting.

Also my earlier (03 -13.05.2015) partaking in the International Artistic Symposium as part of the Polish-German project “Horizonte-Horizonty” [Horizons]<sup>11</sup> in Poland and later in Germany, allowed me to discuss the role of art and body – ‘performativity’ in the process of forgetting.

While teaching students, doing artwork, carrying out research, planning and referring to events of my own life – I am convinced that both phenomena, difference and freedom, share the same space. In order to keep this space, the way we remember and the way we dream,

---

<sup>11</sup> documentation from the symposium available at:

[http://kunst-sasch.de/wp-content/uploads/2013/09/2015\\_1\\_8horizonte\\_final.pdf](http://kunst-sasch.de/wp-content/uploads/2013/09/2015_1_8horizonte_final.pdf)

we should not treat it as something given to us once and for all, but as something assigned and unsteady – even confronted. Seeing and practicing our capacities, our gifts in this way helps us “dance”<sup>12</sup> with one another.



Sławomir Lipnicki

## Bibliography

LaCapra D., Trauma, nieobecność, utrata, Antologia studiów nad traumą, Universitas, Kraków 2015.

Legendre P., L'Émpire de la vérité. Introduction aux espaces dogmatiques industrielles, Nouvelle édition. Paris 2001.

LaCapra D., Writing About Trauma, [in:] Writing History. Writing Trauma., Baltimore 2014<sup>7</sup>

Utopia to nie ideologia. 125 rocznica urodzin Kazimierza Malewicza. Z prof. Andrzejem Turowskim rozmawia Agnieszka Tabor, [w:] „Tygodnik Powszechny”, <http://tygodnik.onet.pl/1548,1153046,dzial.html>. (dostęp 28.03.2017)

<http://www.gdansk.pl/wydarzenia/Re-paper-wystawa-Slawomira-Lipnickiego,w,16414> (dostęp 28.03.2017)

[http://www.ecs.gda.pl/title,HALLO,\\_JESTEM\\_\\_\\_\\_JESTEM\\_Z\\_GDANSKA,pid,9,oid,61,cid,194,type,timeline.html](http://www.ecs.gda.pl/title,HALLO,_JESTEM____JESTEM_Z_GDANSKA,pid,9,oid,61,cid,194,type,timeline.html) (dostęp 28.03.2017)

Sławomir Lipnicki, [in:] *Horizonte/Horyzonty* Documentation of the Symposium in Smołdziński Las 03. – 13.05.2015, Poland,

[http://kunst-sasch.de/wp-content/uploads/2013/09/2015\\_1\\_8horizonte\\_final.pdf](http://kunst-sasch.de/wp-content/uploads/2013/09/2015_1_8horizonte_final.pdf) (dostęp 28.03.2017)

---

<sup>12</sup> Sławomir Lipnicki, [in:] *Horizonte/Horyzonty* Documentation of the Symposium in Smołdziński Las 03. – 13.05.2015, Poland, p. 21  
[http://kunst-sasch.de/wp-content/uploads/2013/09/2015\\_1\\_8horizonte\\_final.pdf](http://kunst-sasch.de/wp-content/uploads/2013/09/2015_1_8horizonte_final.pdf)