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Interview with Grzegorz Radecki

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Interview with Grzegorz Radecki

questions collected and prepared by **Witold Wachowski**
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***Avant:* When one looks at your works, one of the first questions that come to mind is: what techniques do you use, if you can share the secret?**

Grzegorz Radecki: I've never made my process a secret. The basic form of expression I use is the classic technique of oil painting; I use it most often and most happily. At the same time I'm experimenting with what could broadly be called computer graphics. In my workshop a computer arrived somehow accidentally, at first serving as a useful tool for seeing the corrections and edits that I wanted to implement in creating the oil painting. With time it turned out that those compositions became emancipated and acquired the status of standalone works, autonomic creations, they were separated from my painting exploration. I'll add that it was during the time when computer graphics were just starting as a way of artistic expression. Using that technique I utilize the broad possibilities provided by the modern graphic programs, though I consider this richness a trap of a sort and the basic difficulty that cripples beginner artists.

The colouring and texture of those works speak volumes, they seem to jump at the audience, overwhelming the senses and demanding attention. Active, moving works, even without the multimedia backup. Is this already an interpretation or an element of conscious design?

For a while I carried out a project that I called „Dziennik” [The Journal]. Graphic works, as that was the technique I was using for this project, were all created at the same time of the day. The composition was almost banal, a centred blurred oval, in the middle of

which I wrote down the day, month and year when the work was created. It's unbelievable how those almost identical compositions, differing really only in their colouring, would bring forth all the subtleties of the moment of their creation. You can read the mood, the aura, the influence of the day's events, and read it broader as an attempt to summarize all the impulses informing the perception and transmission of reality. The key role I assigned to the colour, as I believe that colour is the perfect carrier of emotion. And as to your question, let that be an example of what colouring means to me. In my works I use it straightforwardly (you can treat it as a conscious design), without calculations, relying on my intuition, the rest shall remain in the area of interpretation.

It seems like the risk of over-analysis in response to avant-garde art is quite significant?

That's true! Though the blame seems to lie with the art itself. The avant-garde has the ambition to function beyond esthetics. It gets tangled in various areas of social life, and since the matter of those actions tends to be hermetic, a touchy subject, or simply provocative, its reception could be 'wrong' (as said by prof. Adam Haupt), over-analyzed. I treat that as a misunderstanding, it's not always clear where the blame is. Sometimes the artists who enter those areas aren't concise in presenting their motivations, and sometimes it is the audience who is not prepared to receive a given artifact and its social entanglements.

Human visual perception is governed by a number of natural laws, both neuro-physiological and psychological. To what extent can the knowledge of those laws be useful to artists?

Artists are flesh and blood and subject to the same laws as everyone else, also when it comes to the characteristics of sight. What's significant about their work is that they try to reach others mostly through the sense of sight. Over centuries they've learned how to influence the viewer, for example using the limitations in the visual perception or the physiology of sight. Through that they achieve the effects and experiences that do not exist physically (for example the illusion of three-dimensional space). It's the typical arsenal of the artist who works in a visual medium, it would be difficult to make do without it.

What's your personal opinion on using written word in paintings? Titles, descriptions, finally the author commentaries?

I don't see any problems with that, if a given artifact needs a comment, even simply a title, I just give it.

***Szczelina* and *Destrukcja* [*The Crack* and *The Destruction*]. One seems technical, the other, apocalyptic. How did those series of paintings and those titles come into being?**

It's difficult to say today how did those cycles come into being. The Crack series is an attempt of utilizing the possibilities provided by the modern optics research and a way of trying to look at the traditional painting subject, a nude human form, up-close. The Destruction is about communication barriers. I belong to a generation that transmitted its thoughts through language, both verbal and written. Now I see an abrupt turn into communication through symbols. I consider it a regression, though not as an apocalypse. I tried to comment on that phenomena, showing dissolving structures of letters – the basic signs that are used to build up the visual messages of the natural language.

Did you discover something about yourself through your work? Did you discover something about reality through your work?

I think the most important experience is the lesson in humility. Painting, and generally my adventure in art, I treat as a tiresome process of coming to terms with oneself and with the world. It would be hard to have it any other way, after all it's a part of human life.

Improvisation, speaking in broad terms (sometimes mistaken for giving in to chance): does it have a place in your work and what is it?

Improvisation, or even chance, are constantly present in my work. I don't know an artist, in the visual arts, who would be able to completely, in one hundred percent, rule over paint, canvas, etc, especially nowadays, when the creative process is especially passionate. In my body of work there is a cycle called *Efekt Motyla* [*The Butterfly Effect*], in which by design I implemented an almost automatic and repeated process, trying to make it completely governed by a routine. All the effort was in the direction of having the starting point and the actions during painting, if not the same, then as similar as possible. The daily script of moving around my workshop became ritualized, constant and disciplined. The key was authorial, and at the same time economical covering the canvas with paint, at the same time of the day, by means of the same technology, the same preparation, the same limited paint array, solvents, tools, varnishes, etc. Despite the drastic limiting of stimuli, despite the severe means, almost mechanical gestures and painting habits, what I finally achieved is surprising even now, turning the everyday, one would think monotonous painting, into an irresistible, surprising adventure, in which the improvisation you asked about (or maybe the chance) plays the key role.

What are today's sources of education for the avant-garde art's audience? School, university? Environment and chance, or perseverance and good will?

I think that it's impossible to give one answer to your question. Somewhere up till the beginning of the 20th century, the specifics of acting in the art sphere, comprehending most of the rules of the esthetics was, in some sense, clear to everyone, no matter their education or cultural circle of the audiences. Avant-garde art, in taking over areas of life that were closed off to it before, to fully reach the audience, requires some preparation. Sometimes a specialized one. This is the trap of misunderstanding and that's why education is much needed. The problem of art education is a very individual matter. Pointing at some specific source or sources of such education, in the era of information overflow, is practically impossible. Though I must admit that specialized centers giving such education, posed to skillfully activate the viewer, can change that.

What aspect is, in your opinion, decisive in learning to perceive modern art? Exposure? Or some other, less obvious mechanisms?

I think it is in a great part a cultural process. Art became a part of the information flow. Competition is great and it is difficult to pinpoint the reasons for which someone, more consciously or less, decides to take an active part in artistic life. If we're talking about learning, then I think that the most important thing is the immediate effect. As everywhere, the human being is the most important. It's his enthusiasm, ambition and actions that have the power to move others. This mechanism can do wonders in sensitizing (teaching) and shaping the potential participant of the artistic movement in the modern art.

And how was your own artistic taste shaped, starting, let's say, from your early childhood?

Nothing special, typical life story, maybe the genes played a part.

How are your students as artists?

Artistic sense is a basis that you enter the Academy with, not something you learn. That particular ability is hard to describe, any kind of codification and programming is out of the question. As teachers we can only identify it, try to nurture it, and most importantly, try not to chase it away.