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SYNERGY OF FREEDOM AND CREATIVITY IN THE CONTEXT OF ARTISTIC EXPRESSION

Abstract

The article aims to analyse the interdisciplinary concepts of 'freedom' and 'creativity' concerning the person, process and community while emphasizing the synergy of 'freeing oneself from' and 'freedom towards' at the level of creative activity. The author refers to personal practical considerations and asks the question: Do and how do theoretical analyses and interpretations of the synergy of the concepts of 'freedom' and 'creativity' translate into the practice of expressive, creative activities in visual arts?

Keywords: freedom, creation, artistic expression, painting expression.

Human nature entails a continuous effort
to transcend the limits of the animalism inherent in man
and emerge beyond it with humanity
and the role of man as a creator of values.
Roman Ingarden

Introduction

By analysing the multidimensional terms 'freedom' and 'creativity', I reflect on the resulting synergism of the concepts 'freeing oneself from' and 'freedom towards' on the level of creative action. Creative 'freeing oneself from' and creative 'freedom towards' are the foundations of the project of self-improvement, self-creation and self-realisation in the name of the dialogue of a conscious society. They form the basis for the education of the modern—creative man, rejecting "the model of man—a passive witness of history, an observer, we opt for a man—the creator of themselves and the conditions of their life, capable of self-improvement and improvement of the world that surrounds them. We reject the solitary, selfish man in favour of a man blended into the social fabric living in a community. We reject a man permeated by the idea of the conqueror and the consumer, with a greed for possession. We want to raise a man aware of limitations, oriented towards existence for the sake of action rather than existence for the sake of acquiring and possessing, a man who thinks and understands globally but is rooted and acts locally, a man with a developed sense of connection with his small homeland" (Pilch 1999, 33).

The question I intend to consider is: do the concepts of 'freedom' and 'creativity' have something more in common than just a plane of multiple interpretations and difficulties of definition? How do theoretical analyses and interpretations of the synergism of 'freedom' and 'creativity' translate into the practice of expressive, creative activities in visual arts?

As the foregoing demonstrates, cognitive aims will be accompanied by practical considerations.

2. Freedom—conceptual profile

(...) Freedom is not a future state that will come
for all people at a distant and happy time
but is a reality constantly being gained (…).
Bogdan Suchodolski

The polysemantic nature of the term 'freedom' precludes its precise definition. Freedom is an extensive, far-reaching category. The more far-reaching, the more vague.

As Marek Piechowiak notes, on the one hand, it is a state, a property of the human being, and on the other, a goal of desire, an objective to be achieved (Piechowiak 1999, 93). Freedom is a pinnacle value whose conceptual profile is drawn due to its subject, foundations, networking, scope, boundaries and characteristics (Niebrzegowska-Bartmińska 2021, 413).

The subject of freedom ‘’can be the nation (freedom of a state, homeland, country), the social group, class (freedom of states, of people) and the human being as a person (freedom of a human being, an individual, personal freedom, individual freedom)" (Niebrzegowska-Bartmińska 2021, 413). According to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, every human being, including people with disabilities, also has an inalienable right to freedom.

The foundations of freedom are man's inherent dignity and their natural rights (Niebrzegowska-Bartmińska 2021, 413). Marek Piechowiak describes dignity as a fundamental anthropological category in human rights, conceived as an ideal to be pursued and a direct standard of conduct. Piechowiak indicates that recognising dignity is the basis of freedom, equality, justice and peace and that its essential characteristics are inherent, universal, non-negotiable and inalienable (Piechowiak 1999, 79-85). Intrinsic dignity is ‘’an intrinsic (inherent) property of the human being. It is not a quality that a person may or may not possess, but is inherent in being human (...). It is universal, as it belongs to every human being. It is non-transferable because its possession does not result from any action or circumstance. It is also inalienable since no one can surrender it themselves or be deprived of it" (Piechowiak 1999, 80).

Freedom is a category incorporated into a network of other equally important values, such as equality, solidarity, democracy, responsibility, and security (Niebrzegowska-Bartmińska 2021, 413). Considering the subject matter, I intend to emphasise the first - equality, the abandonment of which produces the exclusion of individuals, social groups, and nations, and the second—solidarity, which is the foundation of community development and dialogue. The aforementioned dignity of every human being provides the basis for treating them equally with other people since dignity "is rooted in something or is itself something entitled independently of a person's current qualities, capabilities, abilities and something independent also of the circumstances in which persons find themselves" (Piechowiak 1999, 89). Therefore, everyone, including people with disabilities, should be treated as equals and enjoy the full rights to which every person is entitled. A person with a disability has the right to be included in all spheres of life on an equal footing with others because of the dignity "belonging to all human beings, which cannot be divested or lost even when their behaviour is wrong" (Matysiuk 2006, 130). Social equality is linked to the foundation of freedom, namely solidarity. Solidarity is a concept considered multi-directionally; that is, it is a category "related to the life of a community (...). It can also be a virtue, a feeling that prompts people to help each other (...). Active solidarity means that some people can only be

happy if others are also happy and that a person can feel free, provided that all the people in the world are free. On this level, solidarity is (...) also a moral value" (Ecler-Nocoń 2006, 58-59). Solidarity has its place in the community; moreover, solidarity generates a community—a community whose overarching goal is common development and, therefore, the common good. Karol Wojtyła, inquiring into the truth about man as a person and his momentous subjectivity, wrote, "in an attitude of solidarity, the reference to the common good must be constantly alive, (...) it must dominate to such an extent that man knows when it is appropriate to take on something more than his ordinary share in action and responsibility. The special feeling for the needs of the community, which is inherent in the attitude of solidarity, makes a certain complementarity mark itself beyond any partiality or particularism: the readiness to *complement* by the act I perform, what others in the community perform" (Wojtyla 1994, 324).

A consequence of the above is the idea of inclusion—an inclusion that, although idealised in theory, is constantly evolving. Through its dynamism, inclusion tries to bring communities together and activate them to tame discrimination.

Freedom, despite its multidimensionality, has its scope, encompassing ''the sphere of thoughts, words and actions: the choice of religion and belief (freedom of conscience, freedom of religion, belief, worship), public expression in speech and writing (freedom of print, freedom of speech), demonstration of one's attitudes, beliefs and orientations (freedom of association, assembly, discussion) (Niebrzegowska-Bartmińska 2021, 413). Moreover, freedom has peculiar characteristics: the freedom of good and the freedom of evil, whose counterparts are true and false (Niebrzegowska-Bartmińska 2021, 413) and boundaries indicating internal and external freedom. Stanisława Niebrzegowska-Bartmińska wrote about them: "freedoms can be imposed and introduced from the outside or be voluntarily adopted by the subject of freedom, freedom can thus be *internal* and *external.* Both can be treated as a gradable value (*total, unlimited* freedom vs. *partial*, *limited* freedom)" (Niebrzegowska-Bartminska 2021, 413).

Given the above, freedom is a broad category—from freedom of the subject through freedom of the community to freedom of the state. It is a highly complex category representing the links between values such as equality, solidarity, democracy, responsibility, and security. It is a firmly established concept that has power in human dignity and yet is exceptionally contrasting—true and false freedom. The clasp of a paradox can encapsulate the totality of its understanding: freedom has limits. Furthermore, it is essential to point out the interdisciplinary nature of the concept of 'freedom', for it has a place not only in philosophy or theology but also in pedagogy, psychology, sociology and many other sciences—such as art. For this paper, I address the topic of freedom: 'freeing oneself from' and 'freedom towards' in the context of creativity. I will attempt to find common ground between 'freedom' and 'creativity'. I will also refer to my practice in the dimension of artistic expression—painting—as a creative activity free of all established intellectual and performance patterns and aiming towards human authenticity.

3. Freedom and creativity—an attempt to find common ground

Pictures aren't made out of doctrines.
Claude Monet

A model makes the key issue of the presented semantics of freedom in the context of creative activities—a model of freeing oneself 'from' and freedom 'towards' in the creative process. The question I intend to consider is: do the concepts of 'freedom' and 'creativity' have something more in common than just a plane of multiple interpretations and difficulties of definition?

Creativity, like freedom, can be understood and defined in various ways. However, both are regarded as values whose conceptual profile can be attempted to be drawn in identical terms—on common ground. I draw attention to the synergism of the concepts of 'freedom' and 'creativity' on three planes. The first is the reference to the subject. Freedom and creativity belong to the person—they are their attributes, to some extent. According to Karol Tarnowski: "(...) freedom belongs to the very essence of humanity; one cannot escape from it; it sculpts the shape of who we are as individuals and as communities" (Tarnowski 2018, 103). In Tischner's understanding, freedom belongs to the person, like a space in which one thinks, questions and reveals things in truth (Tarnowski 2018, 113). Creativity also concerns a person, demonstrated in their creative thinking, abilities, or, more broadly, creative attitudes. I refer to the construct of creative attitude developed by Stanisław Popek for two reasons: firstly, this construct is widely described in Polish literature, and secondly, the author is not only an eminent psychologist but also a painter with strong ties to visual arts creativity. Thus, the creative attitude defined by Popek is "a shaped (genetically and through individual experience) cognitive and characterological property, showing a tendency, attitude or readiness to transform the world of things, phenomena, as well as one's personality. It is, therefore, man's active attitude to the world and life, expressed in the need to know, experience and consciously (as to the purpose, not the process) process reality found and one's *self*" (Popek 1988, 27). The creative subject is cognitively curious (asks questions), determined to work (seeks solutions), and simultaneously independent and free—thus, capable of self-creation and self-realisation.

The second common ground is the reference to process. On the one hand, freedom and creativity are states of affairs to be pursued; on the other hand, they are processes, activities through which the values desired by man are realised and in which change occurs—change induced and achieved by work on oneself as a person. In being free and creative, men constitute themselves and perform self-creation and self-realisation, thereby experiencing humanity. The aforementioned enables us to distinguish two levels of freedom "horizontal and vertical. Specific human choices belong to the horizontal level. On the other hand, the vertical level consists of an understanding of

inner freedom based on moral values that have their ultimate foundation in God. The verticality of freedom (...) is like a rope that must be laboriously climbed (...). It is hard work on oneself, but the result provides ultimate victory (...). It is inner freedom as a constant struggle with oneself that is the testimony of true humanity" (Kowalska 2015, 92). The creation process is a dynamic human activity that activates human curiosity, imagination, intellectual operations, sensitivity, and experience. This is a particular course of development, necessary for "mindless submissiveness to be replaced in each person by the creative activity of the imagination, the imagination that will become the (free) unrestricted expression of their personality." (Wojnar 1983, 147-148). K. Szmidt, referring to the creative process as reflected in humanistic theories, wrote: "Maslow, Rogers and Fromm treat creativity as a value that gives human life meaning and, at the same time, as a pathway leading to full mental health, identified with self-realisation (...). What matters above all is the human experience in the process of creation and the personality-forming effects of this process, i.e. the development of the unique human person" (Szmidt 2013, 223). Furthermore, the author highlights: "the value of the creative process itself and its expressive and existential quality" (Szmidt 2013, 223).

A third level of synergism between the concepts of 'freedom' and 'creativity' must be called the community aspect. The free and creative subject in the process of self-creation and self-realisation satisfies their development needs. Thereby, the subject strives for the fullness of humanity, which is guaranteed to do good for the benefit of others and the community. Without reference to the subjective aspect, speaking of a community plane is difficult since shaping one's humanity is possible through creative encounters and social interactions. K. Tarnowski emphasises that "the subject in Tischner's work (...) is not so much an existing entity, but above all the value of the possibility of building one's humanity through relations with the other (...). Freedom is essential—beyond the output data, nothing is necessary; everything is possible*: you can if you want it*. However, what is possible is not solely played out within the individual, but between free subjects" (Tarnowski 2018, 108-109). The common ground of freedom and creativity is built on the value of meeting and social relationships and the resulting authentic experiences. Wojnar emphasises that: "The creativity that ensures human self-awareness and self-realisation cannot, therefore, be detached from the idea of altruism and community. *Feeling the other person* composes a great educational issue of modernity, multiplied by the universalist nature of contemporary culture. We increasingly recognise the fundamental importance of understanding between people at the micro and macro scale (...). Understanding must begin with an intimate experience of the other's experiences, not only by co-perceiving their emotions but as a result of identifying with their human experience" (Wojnar 1983, 150).

The subjective, communal and process aspects of the intertwining notions of freedom and creativity lead to a synthesis of creative 'freeing oneself from' and creative 'freedom towards'. I understand creative 'freeing oneself from' as a rebellion against

fixed patterns of human thinking and action, against attitudes of rigour and calculation, and simplistic, repetitive products. Furthermore, 'freeing oneself from' is resisting social stereotypes of understanding, perceiving and expressing human diversity (cognitive, physical, emotional). It attempts to make an intellectual and functional effort to show and overcome the stereotypes that generate the impairment process at the community level. Creative 'freeing oneself from' means creatively directing human freedom towards reflection leading to disagreement with the clichés of thinking and acting. I understand it as the freedom to develop a creative attitude and an active relationship with reality by carrying out its creative transformation. It is freedom towards ingenuity and expressive creation, that which is original and communally valuable, elevating human sensations and experiences to the highest level and abolishing calculation and simulation. Thus, I emphasise the importance of a person's inner freedom to reveal a personal creative attitude—producing creative ideas and realising them in original artistic interpretations. Furthermore, to be free towards means turning towards an understanding of the diversity of human capabilities and needs and their acceptance relevant to building the good of the community—an inclusive community. For in the community—without exception—"the development of each person occurs. In the community, it is not necessary to define additional coexistence rights for people with intellectual, mental or physical disabilities. Community, by definition—through shared values, emotions and actions—is a space for human development (...). The consequence is the integration of all community members, at the same time, a sense of bonding—and therefore integration—brings one closer to the realisation of the good" (Ecler-Nocoń 2006, 56-58).

The synergistic sense of freedom and creativity is shaped or triggered on different levels. The enumeration of the three planes refers to the subject, the process and the community—a space of semantic connectivity and a kind of interdependence of the methods of creative 'freeing oneself from' and creative 'freedom towards' that will occur in interaction with a sense of security, solidarity and equality in social diversity.

4. Creative 'freeing oneself from' and creative 'freedom towards' in the practice of expressive painting activities

Expression is all about revealing oneself,
becoming transparent to others.
Robert Gloton, Claude Clero

Human freedom includes various areas of human activity. I am interested in the creative activity of visual arts and, in a particular way, in the expression of painting. This part of the paper examines whether and how theoretical analyses and interpretations

of the synergism of the notions of 'freedom' and 'creativity' translate into the practice of artistic expressive, creative activities.

Artistic expression offers the opportunity to experience 'freeing oneself from' and 'freedom towards'. Namely, it is a free, spontaneous way of expressing one's concepts, thoughts, feelings and impressions, an action free of intellectual and performance patterns, and—in this freedom—directed towards the imagination. It is an activity that offers the possibility of showing oneself as one is —with one's thinking and experiencing, an activity characterised by freedom directed towards the truth—the truth about oneself and others. Therefore, artistic expression is needed but also leads to a community aspect. Robert Gloton and Claude Clero clearly emphasise: "Expression is first and foremost about revealing oneself, becoming transparent to others, which is not possible in all situations, but which, after all, remains the basic condition for all self-creation in contact with others" (Gloton, Clero 1976, 73). It is a spontaneous, free process; the artistic result is often unpredictable, surprising, and distant from cliché illustration—aimed at the creative good of the individual and the community, namely: "All that belongs to the inner world (of a child) must have the potential for externalisation, transfer for creativity from imagination to be brought into existence (...). Creative expression is an achievement; one must even say it is necessary to function with a creative attitude" (Gloton, Clero 1976, 73).

The above theoretical considerations translate into the practice of expressive, creative activities. I will present the experience of being creatively free—being in the process of 'freeing oneself from' and 'freedom towards' through the example of a workshop activity. In 2022, I hosted a painting workshop entitled *Visual Arts in an Expressive Tone* [*Plastyka w ekspresyjnym tonie*], which aimed to experience expressive painting by secondary school students, including young people with intellectual disabilities, gifted young pupils learning in art classes and by students studying pedagogical subjects; to create an opportunity to stimulate cognitive curiosity related to painting with different tools on the surface of the water; activating imagination by seeing concrete content in non-figurative paintings and giving them titles; experiencing painting on the surface of the water as a process which naturally reveals authentic experiences and emotions; experiencing a sense of community in which each subject is accepted and the product of their creative expression makes it clear that all participants are equal in the social diversity of needs and abilities. During the workshop, I employed a technique of painting on water that was unfamiliar to the participants. Everyone was surprised and wondered if painting and creating images on the water's surface was possible, which is an element.

Many years ago, I was inspired by the ancient Japanese art of painting on water, otherwise known as the 'floating ink' technique, because the ink was spread on the surface of the water to create unconventional images. The technique's second name comes from its effect and is called 'paper marbling'. The ink painting was collected

from the water's surface onto rice paper, and the painting resembled marble (Piyasena, Philp 2015, 20).

I divided the workshop work into three parts: I. *Expressive painting on the surface of water*; II. *Collecting an image from the surface of water*; III. *Naming the picture.* I. *Expressive painting on the water's surface was* part of the workshop in which participants painted with oil paints diluted with turpentine. They created personalised paintings devoid of any illustrative qualities, mainly because the painting surface was the water in the vessel—an element that provided direction to the paint and, through its natural movement, introduced a greater degree of unpredictability. They painted by applying paint to the surface of the water, spreading it with various art tools such as brushes and non-art tools such as sticks, toothpicks, straws and pipettes. It was an exhilarating experience for all participants. They joyfully and enthusiastically approached the expressive activity. Creating different patterns; some were focused and thoughtful, and others became melancholy.

The process of painting on water



Source: own archive

II. *Collecting an image from the surface of water*—This was the second part of the workshop. Participants decided on a finished painting abstraction and collected the image

from the surface of the water onto watercolour paper. Thus, they used the technique of image reproduction.

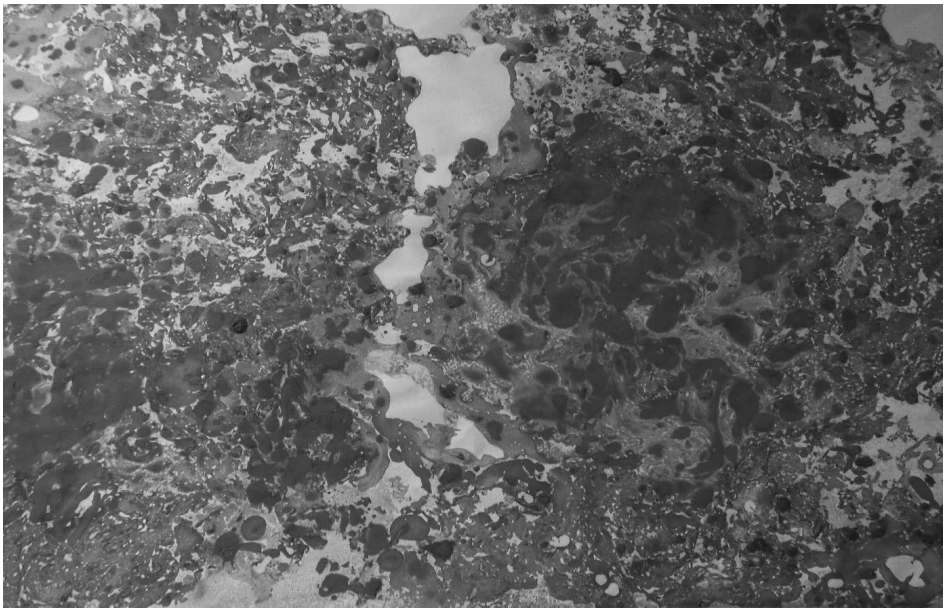
Collecting an image from the surface of the water



Source: own archive

III. *Naming the picture*—this was the last part of the workshop, in which participants reflected on the content of the painting after printing. They activated their imagination, 'colour vision' and creative thinking by writing down their associations, which encapsulated non-obvious content carried by the elements. Painting expression—its process and final product—has been saturated with various emotional sensations and moods, visual impressions and distant associations, in which the consciousness of the identity of the creator's subject, its authentic *self*, becomes apparent. In some abstractions, colour built tension, drama, playfulness providing vent to emotions, for example: "Red Land" [Czerwona kraina], "Blue Abyss" [Błękitna głębia] or "Faded Green" [Wybrakowana zieleń], in others the accent of space - free, unlimited space, such as "New World" [Nowy świat] or "Breath of Space" [Oddech kosmosu]—was significant. Others were dominated by the human self, blending into the community or existing outside of it—'exiled', unwanted, left to fend for themselves, e.g. "Agitation of Loneliness" [Wzburzenie samotności] or "Necrosis of Society" [Martwica społeczeństwa].

Abstract oil on paper



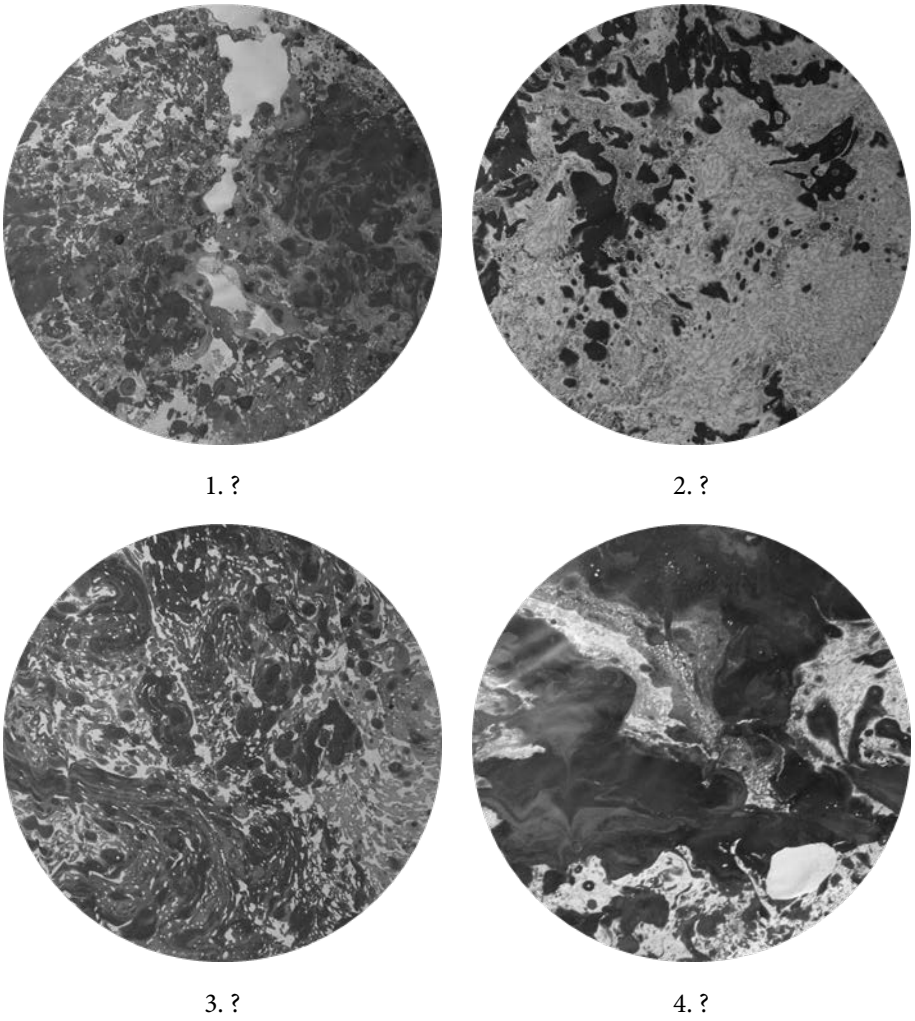
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The water painting workshop was an opportunity to experience different dimensions of expression understood as movement: the movement of the tool leaving its mark on the surface of the water, the natural movement of the painting surface (water) multilaterally carrying the colour patches, the movement of emotions and feelings (experiencing) and the movement of thoughts (building up imaginations and naming them). The basis of the workshop work was not so much the phenomenon of expression that provides pleasure (although it does). Still, the experience of expression gives freedom from stagnant emotions, tensions and thoughts from their excessive control and, at the same time, provides freedom to communicate contents that, for some reason, are not appropriate to talk about or are difficult to verbalise. This experience provided an opportunity to express the truth about oneself and to show one's individuality, which constitutes the strength of subjectivity.

Moreover, attention should be paid to the effect of the painted artwork. The product of each author—whether a student with exceptional artistic talent, a student with an intellectual disability or a student of pedagogical studies—was characterised by originality, distinctiveness, and uniqueness. The final painting abstraction became a testimony to the subjective status of each of them without indicating the author's talents or limitations. Consequently, looking at the works produced by the technique of painting on the surface of the water, one can ask the question: Who is the author of the first, second, third and fourth painting abstractions: a person with extraordinary

artistic talents, a person with intellectual disabilities or a person pursuing pedagogical studies?

Who is the author of the creative painting expressions?



1. ? 2. ?

3. ? 4. ?

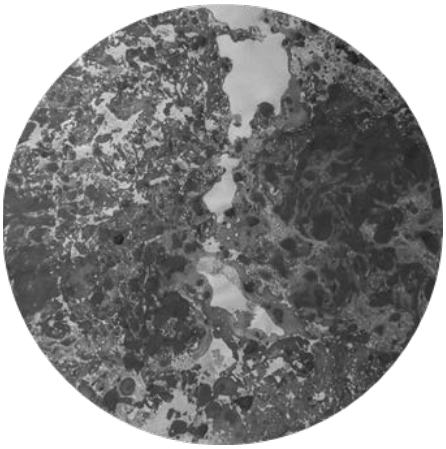
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Probably, no one will point to the correct answer. For example, painting on water is an expressive technique that does not allow for the evaluation of talents and abilities. The works presenting oil abstractions are unique in their content and formal and aesthetic layers, irrespective of the subject of creation and their skills or limitations. Moreover, they are original and unique—no one can produce two identical abstractions. Therefore, what is relevant in the process of artistic expression? The answer is the truth

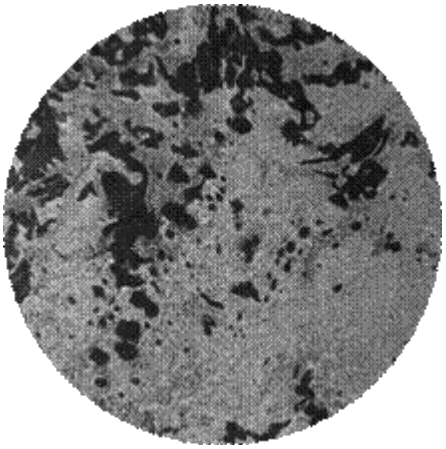
about men and the recognition of their inherent dignity, which is the basis of freedom, equality and solidarity. It offers the chance to be treated on an equal footing with other people and, therefore, includes them in a community. This community is a guarantor for the pursuit of self-creation and self-realisation. This is a practical depiction of the idea of inclusion. Expressive activities and their artistic results unite communities, thus taming discrimination, which is one form of enslavement.

Below, I present the same painting abstractions indicating their authors.

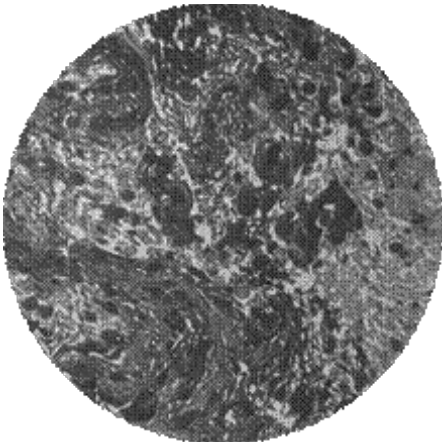
Authors of creative painting expressions



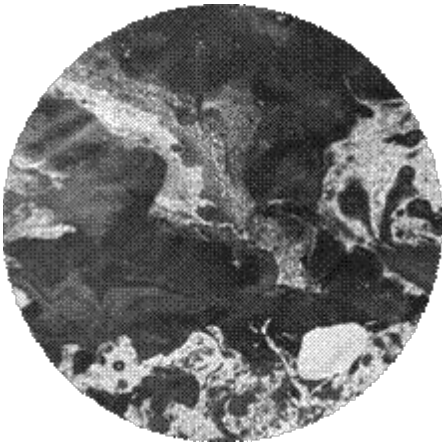
1. Logan, secondary school student



2. Nikodem, a secondary school student – art



3. Martyna, secondary school student



4. Student of pedagogical studies, intellectual disability and autism

Source: own archive

5. Final thought—instead of conclusion

Freedom and creativity are seemingly separate concepts that appear to be linked only by definitional broadness. However, the reference to subject, process and community provides their common foundation. Freedom and creativity belong to the person—free and creative in their actions—these actions build a community of encounters and interactions—these, in turn, guarantee the formation of the fullness of humanity. This is translated into the practice of expressive, creative activities, through which human thought, feeling, and the power of activity are released, and the creative experience gains meaning. This is the truth pointing to a creative 'freeing oneself from' what is found and a creative 'freedom towards' what is new.

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