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ABSTRACT DESSERTATION

Searching for forms of artistic visualisation
in the collection of paintings „Affirmatio”.

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I. THE FORM OF IMAGE

Depicting process, commonly treated as a creature of a painter's activity, forms a sort of a non-verbal communication, which in turn is a way to express interpersonal connections: the fundamental factors characterising human being. The point of an "image" is to use visual (sensory) means in the material realm, while conveying extrasensory meanings in the abstract, ubiquitous ones.

A will to create, to shape, and to form belongs solely to human nature, as an instinctive response to the need or necessity of conscious, emotional reaction to reality and the need to organize it. Formative skills distinguish human from other beings, exemplifying his intelligence and spirituality. Plastic form has two main meanings – „the shape” and „the arrangement of parts”. The beginning of the artistic form, according to Herbert Read, emerged in the process of exceeding „the maximum of functionality” from simple objects, which, in addition to their practical meaning, began to fit our non-functional needs, spiritual ones. More often, the form is interpreted in conjunction with its numerous mutual conditions and correlations, as in opposition to terms matter, content, formlessness. Form, as a material manifestation of thought, does not cease to amaze with its multitude of interpretations. Searching for different forms of imagining contributes to the diversity within the discipline of painting. As far as I am concerned, as long as painting contains the message of thoughts and information through the form of imagining, it should have cognitive values and convey meanings.

II. SEARCHING FOR FORMS OF ARTISTIC VISUALISATION IN THE COLLECTION OF PAINTINGS „AFFIRMATIO”

The complexity of artistic process, in which the form of artistic visualisation is created, makes it hard to determine the factor that is crucial for the final shape of work, as the influence of genes, experience, memory, intellect or subconsciousness, intuition, imagination, time and place of origin – all of these play a significant role. The unique compositions of these elements make up the unique shape of each work, and so the style of each artist. Shaped creative identity is defined, on the one hand - by the shared, collective fields, and on the other hand - by the unique, individual character of the creator. In such a creative process, the image form becomes not only a visual composition, a compilation of individual elements, but mostly a material product of the seeking, reflective mind. An individual imaging beco-

mes a search for the equivalents of one's own view on reality. The cognition of reality – sensual one, based on the sense of sight, as well as other sources of cognition - experience, knowledge, beliefs, emotions, intuition, provide me with the conviction of a clear „tuning” myself into forms of being. The world is not a haphazard compendium of beings, but an ordered creation that is worth admiring and affirming. I base on a duality of nature, which is the subject to come after rules, such as rhythms and proportions, in contrast to varied dynamics and expressions. I assumed that my works would emphasize this dualism, represented by the logic of geometric divisions and their internal organicity. I notice clear coherence in the forms of reality, as well as in my works.

I keep referring to the regularity of shapes of nature, also to their symmetry. Detectable structural characteristics of nature themselves, provoke one to abstract and as the result – to the geometrization of forms. I take the attempt to integrate the structure of the whole, where each component of the image is subordinate to this process. Painting becomes an attempt to achieve appropriate degree of synthesis, by which I do not mean "shallow" beauty of reality, but the coherence, relevance, logic of being with all the infinite opulence of its forms.

For this aspect of existence I am looking for forms, I select such, no other, means of artistic expression. I focus my senses on the order and balance of the world not neglecting its dynamism and energy. The purpose of the imaging process of these dynamic, but nevertheless balancing, forces is to try to master them, to control them, and to find formal designatum for them. Intense experience of numerous places has left mark on my paintings. I keep their images in myself which, recalled or self-appearing, form designata of particular feelings and visual qualities. These patterns complement each other with images from various fields of art including literature (Simon Sebag Montefiore, Andrzej Stasiuk, Jaume Cabré, Olga Tokarczuk, Orhan Pamuk) and architectural works. The image communicates using a sensual form, though not so much presents the superficial appearance of things, but tries to encompass their essence. The process of „shaping the form of being,” in a pictorial form, is as a great privilege for me according to my own conception.

III. Authorial painting technique and pictorial form in series "AFFIRMATIO"

My interpretation of the reality requires a decision on what plastic form to choose. To some extent, decision regarding which painting technique to choose determines the resulting expression forms. I experiment with the selection of the appropriate workshop for my imaginations so that its sublimity complements the created artistic devices. The conjunction of acrylic and oil techniques with deep linear reliefs, implementation of traditional silver gilding techniques, and modification of the painting support, are the core imagining methods I developed. The geometrical aspect of my images is to search for simplicity and rightness of being. It also stems from the conviction that allowing for a certain degree of simplification gives a sense of calmness. Moreover, it serves to develop an „equilibrium” to which human nature seems to aspire. Supporting the painting on deeper artistic synthesis leads to inevitable geometry of forms. I simplify the structure of the works with clear internal structures. Modifying the painting support shape suggests the possibility of expanding the image structure beyond the basic rectangular shape. The reasoning, objective, constructivistic factor is softened by more intuitive design using colour and texture of individual shapes. The images are created in a form of a single work (Affirmatio VI), a diptych (Affirmatio II, III, V, VII, IX, X), a triptych (affirmatio IV, IX), and a quadriptych (Affirmatio I).

Line, colour, and texture aspects

In the „Affirmatio” image collection, a straight line can be found at the border of clear divisions (in the outline of the image and in the form of internal rhythms), and serves the clarity of perception. The colour is more sensual, emotional, less formal. It is the most sensual element of the composition. It belongs to both lines and the plane in „Affirmatio” collection. The areas covered with concave lines create a touchable texture and a delicate effect of shading. Application of the „polychrome relief” effect alongside the painting techniques creates specific expression devices that are different from traditional painting techniques. Densified painting matter creates a kind of a rhythmic game of interoperating elements on the surface of the image. I explore the abstract properties of a colour, a line, and a shape. Colour modifications in „Affirmatio” collections within subdued, of varying temperature and grayscale, tones (further combined with the tone of the precious metal and its oxidation) serve the search for attributes of the reality. I seek the governing rules of every image, with the most relevant law: the one of the clear equilibrium. The differentiation of the means of expression enabled the enhance-

ment of a traditional painting workshop with sculptural reliefs and water gilding on bole with silver technique. Substantial colours, enriched with shades of pure silver and oxidized silver, bring new expression opportunities. The colour tones of the collection mostly contain subdued blues and greys with varying degrees of brightness and grayscale temperature. The ethereal glow of silver in combination with other means fosters the impression of the dematerialisation of the representation and enhances its power of expression. Additionally, it gives a unique artistic expression in combination with acrylic, oil and linear reliefs techniques.

Silver in a pure form or as an uniform dash can be found in accents only. In other places, the silver is modified. The possibility of these modifications and the combination of their results with acrylic, oil and relief techniques presents the appeal of these techniques. As a consequence, it leads to the creation of specific forms of artistic imaging: new types of colour collections. The technique of water gilding with silver, which had been chosen by me, is not the easiest one: on one hand it requires the necessary knowledge and experience, and on the other it requires discipline, great amount of work, and patience. In my humble opinion it brings great creative possibilities to the contemporary painting. I tried; by the means of emancipation, and processing of this old and forgotten technique; to break through its conventional expression means. I had used this technique in the painting “the Dome of the Rock” (Kubbat as Sahra on Al-Haram asz-Sharif), which gave me an impulse for further exploration of visual opportunities in painting series „Tribute” (water gilding technique) and „Celebrare” (water gilding on bole with silver). Silver creates an impression of belonging to the material realm on one hand, and to the non-material one on the other. In the pure or processed form, it enriches the colour structure of images.

Water gilding (water gilding with silver on bole in the “Affirmatio” collection) is the most valued technique. Working with this technique, I use the colour of the pulment under a layer of silver. Silver leaves are applied in a way causing partial cracks. Moreover, silver also has another property - it undergoes darkening process. In the process of silver oxidation, considered as its disadvantages, I found a unique expression possibilities impossible to obtain with substantial colours. I accelerate the oxidation process with chemicals. One can actually say that I paint with oxidation.

The technique of „oxidation painting on bole” is my individual technological method giving specific, new colour values. I manipulate tones of the oxidized metal. The tone of the images results from the decision to use silver and the shades of its oxidation. Manipulation of silver, substantial colours, and relief shading create

a specific lightening atmosphere. I seek equilibrium, in formal terms, in mutual relationships of tones, luminosity, temperature, rhythms and proportions. The „Affirmatio” series demonstrates that the type of painting support and technique significantly influence the shaping of the overall colour impression. My goal was to create my own means of expression, and thus to create colour organization under my own rules. I appreciate the process of discovery. Painting, as one of the ways of confronting the world, is an attempt to express affirmation of its existence in my case. I treat the creation process as a search for the form of a pictorial-designate referring to a celebration of a meaningful, logical existence. My paintings are an adoration for the world. I hope they serve intensification of the reality we receive. They strengthen the conviction of the extraordinary logic of the existence. I hope that, in spite of belonging to the material world, they will open the spiritual sphere to the public.

IV. GILDING TECHNIQUES, TRADITIONAL AND CONTEMPORARY - SELECTED EXAMPLES

Each of us had the opportunity to see gilding techniques. We know them first and foremost from the monuments of medieval art when they were at the apogee of the interest of artists and craftsmen. These techniques implement a variety of materials, are diverse technologically. Actually forgotten, they deserve to be reactivated and incorporated into the contemporary field of art. They carry uncovered expression opportunities. Gilding with silver is based on the same principle as gold gilding, but came into use much later and was used relatively rarely. The history with its examples of preserved artifacts relate mostly to techniques implementing gold. Jerzy Werner in „Fundamentals of technology of painting and graphic arts” classifies them as a technique of decorative painting. They were used on various substrates - primarily on wood, but also on parchment, canvas, glass, metal. The development of gilding techniques, that is, covering with a thin layer of gold (later also with silver and imitations of metals) of common materials, resulted from the desire to reduce material costs, i.e., the desire to get larger gold (silver) surfaces at cheaper cost. Gold, however, is used in gilding techniques on the largest scale, both formerly and now.

According to the current state of archaeological discoveries, the oldest artifacts come from ancient Egypt from around 2600 BC. (ebony armchair of Hetepheres, mother of Pharaoh Cheops of IV dynasty covered with gold leaves). Initially, leaves of precious metal were used along with white mixture and green bole. The oldest

traces of matte gilt come from Egypt and Greece from around 1000 BC. Gilding in the Byzantine mosaic was appearing from the sixth century, (in icon painting as well), and from the X century in the miniature of this art area. The appearance of gilt in the western illuminations, first in the Roman miniature, then gothic one was due to the Byzantine influence. The Middle Ages have created its own colour theory based on symbolism and mysticism. Gold, silver, and also white were treated as colour. They appear abundantly in mosaics, illuminated codices, icons, retables as the colour and equivalent of the divine light. This technique was used to cover the backdrops, halos, angels' wings, elements of robes, architectural details. Due to the need of reduction of costs associated with the use of large quantities of gold since the 12th century, the use of silver leaves has been gaining popularity. However, the autonomous shade of this metal is not used, but varnish is used for it to imitate gold. Gold-gilded backdrops have been disappearing with the end of Gothic for landscape motifs, but gold powder is still used in easel painting. They still were appearing sporadically, however. The use of gold returned in some way in the paintings of the Pre-Raphaelites brotherhood. In the course of art history, the most famous and characteristic example of the use of gilding techniques is the work of Gustav Klimt (1862-1918). Precious metals were sporadically returning in paintings, sculptures, or architecture in the 20th century. Yves Klein (1928-1962) was the most spectacular creator of the last century, in whose works a collection of works created using gilding techniques appeared. Anna Eva Bergman (1907-1987), Kenny Yoshida (1924-2009), Richard Wright (born 1960), and Masakazu Miyanaga (born 1970) are among the creators of the 20th century gilding art. It can be said, however, that the use of gold has dominated (at least quantitatively) the use of silver. The use of silver also brought technological hindrances due to silver oxidation and the need for additional protective measures. The examples given indicate that, formally, the artists of the past and the present were oriented towards highlighting the pure tone of precious metals.

V. TECHNOLOGY OF GILDING

Gilding (general term used for use of gold, silver, platinum, bismuth, and other metals and their imitations) refers to the techniques of covering different surfaces (wood, parchment, canvas, plaster, glass, and others) with a thin layer of precious metals (or their imitations). The use of appropriate techniques depends on the type of substrate on which works are to be made (wood, glass, metal, gypsum), and on conditions in which items gilded with gold or silver are to be exposed

(i.e., inside or outside the buildings), and on the expected final effect (i.e., matt or glossy techniques). The basic division of gilding techniques divides them into two types: glossy technique on pulment and matte one (glue and oil). Gilding with gold or silver on bole is the most difficult technique, but at the same time the most noblest and appreciated. It is a capricious and, timeconsuming technique which requires a lot of work. Due to the moisture-sensitive primer paint, it is not suitable for outdoor use. It is appreciated primarily for the glossy effect obtained by polishing the surface covered with precious metal. This process is only possible in this technique.

Matt oil-gilding (on oil mikstion) is a much younger technique compared to the bole technique. However, it has one advantage - it is much simpler and faster and also suitable for outdoor use. It is also resistant to unfavorable atmospheric conditions.

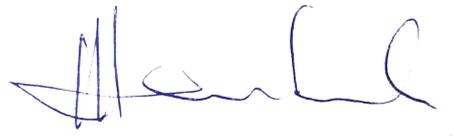
VI. INTERPRETATION OF WATER GILDING WITH SILVER TECHNIQUE IN THE COLLECTION OF PAINTINGS “AFFIRMATIO”

Silver brings positive associations with concepts such as spirituality, purity, or nobility. As precious metal, it maintains its power of influence through its distinctive characteristics. Silver used in leaves carries defined formal implications. It creates a uniformly bright and uniformly glossy surface when laid. These features suggest a basic way of application of the silver gilding technique in painting.

Personally, silver gilding has become interesting to me not only because of the glossy effect obtained, but also the resulting colour of the bole and the potential for a variety of interactions among the possibilities of the metal colour. Surfaces uncovered with silver vary in degree of revelation of a lighter or darker shades of bole. Pulment then appears in irregular shapes. Apart from that, I further modify the colour of some surfaces by oxidizing them. The shades obtained by the oxidation process are unique in their own way because they retain their metallic character which is difficult or even impossible to obtain with substantial paints. Taking the above into consideration, silver painting using oxidation by means of accelerating agents has become an interesting discovery for me. I have not come across such a method of interfering with the silver-coated surface yet, thus it is a technological novelty.

Moreover, different interpretation methods of silver gilding demonstrate that one can gain a different visual expressions beyond the traditional ones. The methods

of technique interpretation which I obtained include: giving up regular leaf shapes for their deformations; accidental misalignment, tearing, cracks uncovering different shapes and areas of boles; use of relief; painting silver surface with transparent colours; and above all oxidation painting. The „Affirmatio” collection also illustrates the interdependence of expression means of water gilding with silver (created by me) with expression means of other painting techniques. It also demonstrates that my actions go beyond the scope of painting techniques, as understood in traditional way. I hope that the „Affirmatio” series also proves that the old techniques are creatively inspiring and stimulating in the search of new artistic solutions.

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