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OUT OF CONCERN FOR ANOTHER
Between the Materialisation of the Idea
and the Dematerialisation of the Matrix

DOCTORAL DISSERTATION

**In the field of art, in the discipline of fine arts
and art conservation**

THESIS PROMOTER – Prof. Dr. Krzysztof Kula

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INTRODUCTION

This reflection is about a creative process stretching over time, resulting from a personal encounter with the Other. This encounter became the driving force behind the conception of the process-oriented doctoral dissertation. The contemplations – both graphic and textual – on my artistic work titled *“Out of Concern for the Other. Between the Materialisation of the Idea and the Dematerialisation of the Matrix”* do not merely address the idea of concern but also play the role of a leaven of thinking about the matrix – not in a traditional manner though but by gradual discovery of its inherent potential (see chapter *“The Leaven”*). The breakthroughs in the approach to the matrix have expanded my understanding of graphics, which, following Grzegorz Banaszekiewicz, I call *graphic imaging*¹, while the *creation of non-permanent prints*, following Janusz Kaczorowski, I call *matrixing*².

Graphic imaging is the recording of an image on a **matrix** which is at the heart of creative activity in graphic art. The history of imaging dates back to the Palaeolithic. Grzegorz Banaszekiewicz cites *“paintings, drawings and engravings in the Chauvet cave”*³. The first *“matrices for image reproduction”* date back to the 4th to 1st millennium BC. They came in cylindrical seals used in the Middle East at that time. The author of *“The Concept of Graphics II”* assumes that this moment represents the beginning of the formation of a *“category of graphic imaging”*⁴.

In classical terms, the matrix works in tandem with a print on paper or other permanent medium, which – within this meaning – are the objective of the graphic process. I conceive of a graphic matrix more broadly than a mere graphic form intended for the production of classical, permanent graphic prints. The matrix makes the creation of those prints possible; however, the essence of the matrix does necessitate printing them. Dorota Folga-Januszevska writes about the dual existence of graphics, the duality of form and intention, and two-stage thinking that is the essence of this art⁵. The dual existence is about the two stages of the graphic process. The matrix has *“a kind of potential that allows it to be reproduced in a different process from the one that previously shaped it”*⁶.

This dual existence of the matrix is revealed in two stages of the processes included in my artistic work as part of my doctoral dissertation. These processes are represented by two phenomena: the materialisation of the idea and the dematerialisation of the matrix.

My definition of the **materialisation of ideas** encompasses the process of granting physicality to the invisible and even the inexpressible. This process involves not only the creation of a graphic matrix but it mainly involves the action – a performance centred

[1] G. Banaszekiewicz, *Graphic imaging. A brief history of (r)evolution*, in: *Prace Naukowe AJD. Series: Visual Education* 2010 z. V, J. Długosz Academy in Częstochowa, p. 17-25.

[2] G. Banaszekiewicz, *Concepts of graphics II: Concept of modern systematics of graphic processes* in *„Zeszyty Artystyczne”* 2010, nr 20. BGS 1999–2009, *Grafika, Uniwersytet Artystyczny w Poznaniu, Poznań 2010*, p. 9-27, p. 11 following J. Kaczorowski, S. Urbański, *Concepts of graphics*, Cracow, June 1978, exhibition catalogue, Mały Rynek Gallery, Cracow.

[3] Por. G. Banaszekiewicz, *Graphic imaging. A brief history of (r)evolution...* p. 18

[4] *Ibid.*

[5] Cf. G. Banaszekiewicz, *Concepts of graphics II:...*, p.19, following: D. Folga-Januszevska, *Dual existence of the matrix*, *Scientific Contemporary Graphics - between the unique and the electronic copy*, MTG Krakow'97

[6] G. Banaszekiewicz, *Concepts of graphics II:...*, p. 20

around creating impermanent prints and the whole conception of the work, with the use of a complex instrumentation along with the time and context of the place. I understand the **dematerialisation of the matrix** as process aimed at the gradual disappearance of the physicality of the matrix and its transformation into a different kind of matter. In this work I contemplate the relationship between the material and the non-material spheres, the processes of the materialisation and the dematerialisation, and between the permanent and the ephemeral image during a performance. The dissertation represents a record of non-material transformations – in the broadly understood spiritual sphere (see chapter “The Ineffable”) and material transformations – revealed in the processes of graphic imaging.

Following on from the above reflections, it may be said that the subject matter of my doctoral dissertation is the problem of “*temporality*”, revealed not only at the stage of the “processing” but also in the *dual existence of the matrix*. In my dissertation, I pay particular attention, on the one hand, to an crucial aspect of graphic imaging, namely the **performativity** in the context of the duality of the graphic medium – and, on the other hand, to a new experience in the printing process – the matrixing.

By revealing the documentation of the performance, I encourage the viewer to enter into a relationship with the work, where the concern for the Other is also externalised. The hand touch symbolises an “*attentive gesture*” in the contact with another person as well as an “*intentional*” gesture in the creative purpose of a performance. It may also express feelings of concern, care, attentiveness as well as the responsibility towards the Other. I find the motif of “*touching the wound*” to have a therapeutic meaning – a symbol of painful cleansing accompanied by solace and hope .

The concept of matrixing referred to above originates from the approach to the essence of graphics according to **Janusz Kaczorowski** – a Krakow-based neo-avant-garde artist of the 1970s. He illustrated his views with a demonstration of the matrix process,

imprinting "in a layer of cement dust", everyday objects and tools such as hammers or punches of everyday objects and tools such as hammers or punches. He then rubbed out the resulting prints to create 'a layer of cement dust'. The resulting prints were then obliterated to create 'further, ephemeral and equally impermanent images'. He considered these 'common objects' to be matrices, and the impermanent traces to be prints⁷. The matrix technique is connected with the "notion of an imprint, a trace", with fossils as one of its natural sources⁸.

In my doctoral dissertation, matrixing takes place at into-camera performances, during which a process of imaging occurs, and the ephemeral images created by the gesture of touch are ultimately produced. Both the gestures and the performance itself consist in ritually coating of openwork matrices with liquid or powdery substances to create their symbolism (see chapter "Symbolism of gestures, substances and materials"). I consider these rituals, in which I engage myself while experiencing time and emotions, as an "act of meditation". I often perform these activities in nature, "programmatically" without an audience. Therefore, being focused, I consciously "celebrate" being "here and now" listening to myself and the reality. The sensory experience of "touching" the matrix relief becomes the experience of entering into a state of concentration – attentiveness. The material trace of what I am trying to pin down as the idea of the research problem "between the materialisation of the idea and the dematerialisation of the matrix" is the context of the place, as well as the very creation of the "image" in the documentary record with the "remains of the remains" of the substances used.

I. THE LEAVEN

I recall one of the nights a few years ago when thoughts flitted in my head, while strong and contradictory emotions swirled around. The experience of discord is the first reaction that occurs when you hear a medical diagnosis, especially concerning the child's health and development. Misunderstanding is intertwined with pain, anger with fear, and the desire to help with fear and withdrawal. You can experience these mental and emotional states for years, experiencing stagnation but you can take a step forward to turn to the light. During that hard time, I was inspired to translate my experiences of that time into the language of the image. I executed a series of photographic self-portraits that featured gestures that are specific to persons with the autism spectrum disorder. These gestures stem from the need for self-stimulation. They are a spontaneous reaction to harness the extraordinary energy that these individuals are filled with. They also result from sensory hypersensitivity or lack of sensitivity, providing sensations or protecting against strong external stimuli. Through "**Perfopraits**" I made my first attempts to enter the reality and experience of the autistic person. There is something more underneath these gestures. Covering the eyes, ears or mouth is associated with closure or fleeing, while waving one's hand may signify nervousness and impatience with oneself and the disabled person. One might think how well this attitude communicates appearance of being there for others. When we talk about another person, we often unconsciously reveal our own condition. Meeting your own unwanted emotions or feelings is the beginning of the path to accepting them in yourself in relation

[7] *Ibid.*p. 9

[8] *Cf. Ibid*

to the situation, which makes it possible for you to overcome the crisis and move on.

A few months later I created a linocut matrix inspired by that photographic series. A figurative female nude of natural dimensions, it showed the multiplicity of gestures produced by an autistic person. Subtly cut using a tool that leaves shallow dot marks, the matrix created a relief form measuring 200x80cm. When struggling with matter, I clearly perceived the creative process as a journey into myself, resulting in successive attempts to materialise fleeting emotional states. Referring to my graphic experience from the time of my Master's degree, I made two prints out of a single matrix: the first one printed in black ink and the second one in white. A diptych emerged, consisting of prints titled "**Darkness**" and "**Brightening**", symbolising two states of mind that can be located at opposite poles. In that manner, I attempted to show the process of transformation of one state into the other. When I began creating another matrix, which – according to the then concept – was supposed to be used to create another pair of prints titled "**The Scream**" and "**The Silence**", I was tormented by doubts. The process of reproducing the content maintained in the matrix on paper seemed insufficient. I continued experimenting, searching for an intermedium that would express the ephemeral and processual state of my emotions, the unrecognised processes born in contact with a child affected by autism. The approach to the understanding of the matrix was gradual. It manifested itself in a decisive and profound "gesture" of cutting the matrix's materiality. So, by cutting through the matrix surface with a chisel, I aimed to reduce its materiality, to dispose of its physicality. In the following stages of the process focused on those "states" of imaging, the act of the dematerialisation of the matrix as defined in the introduction, was symbolically carried out.

A clear example of the experiences described above is the spatial graphic arrangement titled "**In a Different Light I**". In that work, whose main elements are four openwork matrices framed with wood, the key factor in the process of the dematerialisation of the matrix is light and its effect on the intended image. The light is a "revealing factor" – it penetrates spectacularly through the openwork matrix, obscured by a "veil" – a reflection (graphic print) made using the dry printing. The spectacular brightness plays a special role here, a role that is both symbolic and causal – shining through the "empty spaces" in the matrix, seemingly annihilating the physicality of the image itself. In this work, I attempt to metaphorically present the problem "between" light and darkness. In this multilayer of overlapping reflections or the multidimensionality of the understanding of the matrix, I discover the potentiality of my own and the viewer's perception. I dare to claim that the light-induced imagery is "made real" through the "programmatic" openwork of the matrix.

Referring to Grzegorz Banaszek's analysis of graphic concepts, that openwork matrix plays the role of a **template**⁹. When light penetrates the cut-out empty spaces, the non-material medium creates materiality in the imaging, its almost phenomenal nature. The relief reflection, marked by the imprint of the drawing narrative, appears in a barely discernible, convex trace on the matrix. The relief image reveals itself "on equal terms" through the interaction of light with its coexisting shadow. The outer layers of the paper surfaces of the work, suspended vertically and freely, represent its interactivity and the ephemeral nature of the image. By touching the paper surface, the viewer actively influences the creation of the ephemeral image. Through luminous pulsation, the "*luminosity*" of the graphic imagery

[9] *Ibid.*, p. 7

is able to become a space “*between*”.

Temporality is revealed in that space on many levels. The matrices themselves and their creation already stem from the processuality of recording and the application of the processing technique. One may claim that they contain records of a process in time, relating to the subject matter addressed above, and emotionally reveal graphic “states”. The intensity of feelings becomes a creative imperative for me. Emotions such as fear or anxiety are transformed in the performance. One may say that it is a form of self-therapy, or in my case, meditation, or contemplation. Therefore, the performance reveals a particular state of “between” the multitude of emotional states and affections..

While working on the spatial graphic arrangement titled “In a Different Light I” created in 2018, I developed a performance titled “**Meeting**” that consisted in an interaction with a child with autism spectrum disorder. During that performance, we jointly repeated the cutting gesture, the deconstruction of the image of the graphic referred to above titled “**Darkness**”. Now I remember that interaction as an experiment regarding the relationship with the autistic person and the broadening of my experience and thinking about graphic imagery. As far as meaning is concerned, it was an attempt to symbolically work through the unwanted emotional and spiritual states, such as anxiety and “darkness”. The creations mentioned above inspired experiments that shape the artistic work as part of the doctoral dissertation. They also form a basis for the thoughts contained in this dissertation, which self-comments and complements the artistic work.

II. TIME

Time inspires and forms a basis of multifaceted research and exploration. Scientific, artistic, and cultural theories are based on the category of time. Time has inspired numerous philosophical concepts, since ancient thinkers all the way to modern ones. To put it simply, time is the arrangement of phenomena and events in the order in which they occur.

This is the continuous time referred to as **chronos**¹⁰ in Greek. In this sense, time is a measure of change, existing independently of our perceptions. Chronos, as well as **kairos**, which means “*the right moment*”¹¹, are basic terms pertaining to the category of time as understood in Greek philosophy¹². **Aion**, on the other hand, refers to continuity as the opposite of temporality¹³. Belonging to the present, temporality is associated with such categories as changeability, transience, and impermanence. The past includes memory, recollection, fading, blurring, distancing. The future, on the other hand, is associated with expectation.

A term borrowed from physics, time refers to changes occurring in defined physical quantities. It is also associated with states or processes.

Ontological dialectic of Heraclitus, author of famous sentence “*Pantha rhei*”, speaks of events resulting “from the tension arising between opposites”¹⁴. “*The act of being*

[10] Cf. *Ibid.*

[11] Cf. *Ibid.*

[12] Cf. *Ibid.*

[13] Cf. <https://encyklopedia.pwn.pl/szukaj/aion.html> access: 19.10.2023)

[14] <https://encyklopedia.pwn.pl/haslo/;3911148> (access: 19.10.2023)

does not come or go; it only changes. The acts of becoming and passing result from the uninterrupted clash of opposites derived from existence, such as darkness and lightness, cold and heat”¹⁵.

I dealt with the concept of time already during my master's studies. At that time, I was preoccupied with the problems of recording the passing of time and the trace of memory. My MA thesis titled **“I remember”** was an evocation of childhood images associated with long-term stays at a children's hospital ward. I evoked my experiences of hospital reality in the 1990s through a spatial graphic arrangement exhibited in Klatka Gallery, located at the faculty campus of the University of Silesia in Cieszyn, of which I was a supervisor during my doctoral studies. The work attempted to present reminiscence translated into the language of graphic imagery and transferred in situ into the space with objects and memorabilia evoking the personal childhood story. This spatial graphic arrangement consisted of three prints made from a single relief matrix, depicting a hospital bed in real dimensions: the first one – classic, printed in black ink, the second one – in white ink, and the third one – in the dry-print technique. A crucial part of the diploma work consisted in an installation arranged in the gallery windows, which consisted of archival photographs illuminated by natural light, coupled with the objects found in the hospital storeroom. These objects also included diary entries and audio recorded at the time of my treatment at the children's ward. In retrospect, the works of that time signal the birth of my experimental thinking about printmaking, revealed in prints that attempt to show traces of the past and to dematerialise the image by shining light on it.

Another graphic experience that explored the issue of temporality, which influenced the conception of the dissertation, was the archival graphic cycles **“By the River of Time I”** and **“By the River of Time II”** from 2007–2008. In 2017, just before I started my doctoral studies, I created two spatial arrangements from those cycles – whose leitmotif is a bridge – as an attempt to express the presence of two types of matter and the interpenetration of the permanent with the ephemeral. We can therefore speak here of time in two different categories, which the ancient Greeks referred to as *aión*, meaning “duration”, and also *chrónos* – time as the measure of change.

I presented those arrangements in various contexts of time and place, including an individual presentation titled **“Now Here”** in MM Gallery in Chorzów in 2021, emphasising my own reflection on reality with its constant movement and transformation. In those works, I also analysed the relationship between the present and the past recorded on film, one of its components being the film image of the river. It permeated and was reflected in the graphics depicting the bridge, printed on Venetian mirrors. The viewer interacted with the arrangement and, being in motion themselves, became part of it. Thanks to that, the “*here and now*”, which merged with the past, was highlighted. In that work, a fixed image coexists with an “*immaterial*” one (the video projection and the reflection created on the wall emerged as an illuminated transparent graphic) on the borderline between the material and the

[15] M. Błaszczak, *Flow. From Heraclitus to Bauman*, in *Spaces of Theory* (31). UAM, Poznań 2019, p. 109–134, p. 113, <https://bibliotekanauki.pl/articles/1039334.pdf> (access: 19.10.2023)

immaterial. That experience provided the impetus for further analyses and explorations in materiality and immateriality. In my dissertation, which is an open work and represents process art, the materiality, and the immateriality I investigated took the form of simultaneous “*happening*” processes of “*materialisation*” and “*dematerialisation*” of the matrix. Through the experiences described above, I also discovered the potential of the transparency of the material. This transparency plays an important role in the dissertation. (See chapter “*The transparency and openwork of the relief matrix*”).

These experiences inspired me to initiate a series of exhibitions exploring the subject of temporality. As the initiator and curator, together with artists from Poland, the Czech Republic and Slovakia, I created arrangements for an exhibition at Municipal Museum in Siemianowice Śląskie in 2020 and then at ZPAP Gallery in Toruń in 2021. Within the framework of that project titled “***A Question of Time***”, two significant interdisciplinary exhibitions titled “***Pulsations***” were organised. The project revealed the diversity of creative attitudes to time and served as an opportunity to express a polyphonic reflection related to reality, which is in constant motion, causing dynamic pulsation, vibration, flickering, displacement, interpenetration, appearance and disappearance.

III. BETWEEN

External and internal time

The experiences described above have shaped this doctoral dissertation in which time is an essential component and occurs in multiple dimensions and categories. I consider it herein from the perspective of external time and internal time. These two interpenetrating time planes form a whole, and the time that exists within them exists simultaneously and emerges in numerous processes. External time is imprinted in our inner being. Conversely, external time reveals the changes occurring inside. Internal, immaterial experiences – finding an outlet in the creative process – trigger subsequent processes and are visible in the formal alterations of the work. While creating a work of art, the artist reveals their inner self, and thus reaches out towards the Other. We are unable to identify many of the inner processes of the work and they remain a mystery. We only intuitively sense their presence. The context and the passage of external time sometimes brings out a fresh, previously undiscovered sense in the work.

Processuality

In the artistic part of my dissertation, time, both the internal and the external, is manifested in the matrix approach. A graphic image represents the implication of this approach, it is not fixed – it is ephemeral. It may be said that the work is marked by graphic imagery and processuality containing fundamental performative component. Processuality, movement and changeability are the ingredients which do not prevent the work from taking a definite and coherent form.

The two coexisting phenomena being the subject of my reflections run simultaneously and appear as opposites of each other. In my considerations, I stress their co-existence, but I refrain from analysing them as two separate, unconnected processes because they interpenetrate, overlap or even merge to form an organic whole. It is what occurs between those phenomena that represents the object of my inquiry as the meanings I am interested in are

hidden right there. Those phenomena are, as mentioned above, the materialisation of the idea and the dematerialisation of the physical matrix. As a result of the coexistence of these opposing processes, the internal-mental image merges with the external-physical image, and the permanent is intertwined with the changeable – with the movement.

The material constantly exchanges with the immaterial. The present, associated with activity and movement and therefore with life, interpenetrates with what has passed, and what is left is merely a trace – the dead. What is already absent, on the other hand, waits to be made present¹⁶. The work contains infinite and cyclical processes. A specific external object is transformed by our thoughts and our imagination and by this it becomes disembodied (de-materialised) only to become *re-embodied (materialised)* as a work of art. Simultaneously, the *embodied-materialised* object becomes *disembodied*¹⁷.

The processuality present in my reflections becomes an attempt to understand, to reveal the “*impossible*”. In his sketchbook notes, Jan Berdyszak writes, “*The impossible can only appear in processes and practice. The experience of the impossible leads to grasping, only unexpectedly, some kind of alternate take*”¹⁸.

The dissertation “*Out of concern for the Other...*” has the characteristics of an open work, as described by Umberto Eco in his publication by the same title, introducing this concept into art theory. In his view, an open work is a proposal of “*interpretative possibilities*”, an arrangement of “*stimuli whose essential characteristic is their indeterminacy, which forces the viewer into a whole series of constantly changing readings*”¹⁹. In my dissertation, although the autobiographical theme is the primary source, it can be read on many levels and multiple layers of meaning can be found. It also acquires new meanings by changing the context of time and place. Umberto Eco called such openness “*overt openness*”²⁰.

[16] Cf. H. Betling, *Anthropology of the Image. Sketches for the study of image*, UNIVERSITAS, Kraków 2007, p. 26-30

[17] Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 28

[18] M. Smolińska-Byczuk, W. Makowiecki, *Jan Berdyszak, Artworks 1960-2006, Arsenał Gallery, Poznań 2006*, p. 67

[19] Ł. Białkowski, *Art in process as a type of open work*, 2011 p. 2, following: U. Eco, *The Open Work....* Warszawa 2008, http://estetykaikrytyka.pl/art/11/08_sztuka_w_procesie.pdf (access: 9.10.21)

[20] *Ibid.*

Processual art is also concerned with the understanding of the open work. Its openness results not from its polysemous character and the possibility of a diverse reading by the viewer but from the relationship between the artist and the work²¹.

The essence of processual art is the work's continuous existence in the creative process. Following Łukasz Białkowski, I wish to point out that *"works in process are dynamic wholes with a clearly defined point of departure and a completely unknown point of arrival"*²². A work in process is open to an infinite number of variants that appear as states. These states are "moments of pause" in a certain stage of a permanent process of change in the work, whether or not the author is involved. In the latter case, the process can only be initiated by the artist as they intend. Subsequent stages of the transformation occur spontaneously or under the influence of natural factors. Robert Smithson's Spiral Dyke on Salt Lake is an example of such a work.

One of the most recognisable works in process is the Merzbau, a complex sculpture by Kurt Schwitters, which the artist gradually expanded between 1923 and 1933 inside his tenement house. In recent years, the structure, made from a variety of "waste" and used objects, has extended over several floors and rooms.

"Counted Images" by the Polish artist Roman Opalka are undoubtedly excellent examples of Polish art in continuous process with the author's participation. As part of the "1965/1-∞" series, the artist, who passed away in 2011, covered the entire surface of the canvas with numbers.¹ Each subsequent image continued from the previous one, with the numbers in an uninterrupted sequence. Gradually brightened and blurred, they revealed the passage of time. Only the artist's death interrupted this process.

In processual art, the creative process comes to the fore – it is the essence and purpose. It involves intentional actions. The material "image" is only a trace of the current process of change awaiting the next stages of transformation.

Performativity

In my artistic work and in my doctoral dissertation, processuality is present above all in the experience of a performance. In my actions, I want to touch the experience of temporality and my physicality when the performance occurs in a specific "here and now". Performance art is sometimes referred to as "living art", encompassing various ongoing activities at a time and place chosen by the artist. They are usually "open in nature, free from fixed forms of presentation and media"²³. A performance may often reflect the artist's mental and physical condition. This condition consists of corporeality and the sphere that includes emotions, consciousness, intellect and all the artist's experiences and internal structures. Therefore, the performer and their physicality form the basic creative matter" of which a work of art is created"²⁴. According to Łukasz Guzek, an artist is "a tool, a material, a creator and (...) a work of art"²⁵. The idea materialises in the body and gestures. And co-

[21] Cf. *Ibid.*

[22] Cf. *Ibid.*

[23] Cf. M. Jankowska, *Video, video installation, video performance in Poland 1973-1994*, Neriton, Warszawa 2004, p. 163

[24] Cf. Ł. Guzek, *Through performance to art*, in: *Classics and adepts of Polish performance art*, ed. Sławomir Brzoska, Katowice 2015, p. 8

[25] *Ibid.*

versely – the gestures performed during a performance generate a new experience inside the creator, and therefore become dematerialised.

Performance art seems to have originated in action painting, with Jackson Pollock at the forefront. This trend revolutionised thinking about art, questioning the hitherto "artistic foundations and attitudes of artists"²⁶, who tapped into the unconscious planes of the psyche and externalised them in the creative act. The origins of action painting, on the other hand, can be found in the manifestos of the representatives of Surrealism in the 1930s, as well as research into the subconscious. This inspiration gave birth to a performance and a happening in the 1970s. Some of the earliest living art artists inspired by gesture painting included Lucio Fontana, Yves Klein, and Gina Pain, all of whom made the body the matter of their actions²⁷. Kantor's theatre and happenings also stem from the tradition of gesture painting.

Ritual in performance

According to Tadeusz Kantor, 'matter' exists in constant motion, which can only be grasped through action and activity.²⁸ Kantor created gesture painting as well as matter painting. He performed a variety of ritualistic procedures around matter, such as embossing, crumpling, splashing, tearing, burning, "tearing, threading, stitching, staining (...) staining, making dirty"²⁹. In his paintings, he mixed paint with a variety of materials or substances, as well as finished objects.

Artists who used non-artistic substances in their work included Joseph Beuys, one of the most prominent figures of the 20th century. For his ritual actions he used honey, grease, felt, mud³⁰. The artist played the role of an alchemist, a shaman-healer. He spoke about the idea of "*an open process as a movement designed to flow the heat of chaotic energy and transform it into order or form*"³¹. Beuys emphasised substance and its transformation, comparing his artistic actions to therapeutic treatments aimed at transformation and development.³²

Undoubtedly, the international Fluxus movement made a major contribution to the development of performance art. The actions of the movement's artists "derive from music and sound experiment"³³ pioneered by John Cage.

The movement included such artists as Yoko Ono, Wolf Vostell, Dick Higgins, and Nam June Paik. The boundary between art and life was blurred in the artists' work. The concept of intermedia, associated with the activity of the Fluxus artists, was introduced by Dick Higgins for the definition of a cross-media area common to different media³⁴.

It is also worth mentioning Herman Nitsch, whose work refers to Viennese Actionism. In his actions, the artist refers to collective memory. The source of the actions is the

[26] *Ibid*, p. 11

[27] Cf. M. Jankowska *Video, video installation, video performance...*, p. 167

[28] Por. P. Moźdzynski, *Rytualna sztuka współczesna*, w: I. Borowik, M. Łibiszowska-Żółtkowska, J. Doktor (red.), *Oblicza religii i religijności, NOMOS, Kraków 2008. str. 4, za: Kantor Tadeusz 2005,*

[29] P. Moźdzynski, *Ritual contemporary art...* p. 6

[30] Cf. *Ibid*.

[31] *Ibid*.

[32] Cf. J. Beuys, *Texts, comments, interviews, Akademia Ruchu, Centrum Sztuki Współczesnej, Jaromir Jediński (red); Warszawa 1990, p. 20*

[33] Ł. Guzek, *Through performance to art*, in: *Classics and adepts of Polish performance art*, ed. Sławomir Brzoska, Katowice 2015, p. 11

[34] *Ibid*.

performer's strongly experienced boundary event"³⁵. The goal of the ritualistic performances is to experience catharsis.

Artists are also inspired by "individual memory", with their personal story being the content of the performance³⁶. Actions based on autobiographical themes also include my creative explorations. A performance is a form of direct artistic expression, usually created directly in front of an audience. In my experience, it is more often an action performed "in private" in front of the camera lens. During the performance, being alone with myself, I seek focus – solitude. Performance art is not theatre, nor is it acting – it is revealing the truth about a human and the substance of the object encoded in the gesture. It is an art based on experiencing and acting "in which everything undergoes visible and invisible transformations, and actions (living forms) reveal what is not discovered but present"³⁷.

During a performance, I look for an experience directed at the present as a field of "current happening". I also experience post factum memory "happening live" in documentation. The "eye of the camera" is the first observer, and sometimes the only one playing the role of the Other. The viewer becomes another witness "after the time" of these actions, only in the future, when it is revealed that the recording is transformed into a new interpretation and an act of creation.

In my artistic experience, video performance takes me metaphorically to another space and time. As I noted earlier, the camera is a "witness" to the event³⁸ it acts as a magnifying glass through which the necessary close-ups are made: situations, gestures, and signs, all in order to intensify them³⁹. The recording of the past in the video image contains a particle of its physical or even disembodied presence. One may say that the projected image offers the dematerialisation of reality and of the materialised thought. A projection constitutes both materialisation and dematerialisation as it simultaneously "notes a fleeting moment"⁴⁰.

In the 1970s, video performances had a form of into-camera actions in closed rooms. Artists recorded them in private, to make the documentation public later on. A Polish video artist Wojciech Bruszewski in "American Tapes" recorded an unedited video of natural spontaneous gestures and movements without an audience. Jozef Robakowski, on the other hand, used the camera as "a tool for observing himself, people, and the various reactions that occur in a person"⁴¹.

The performance "Hidden"

My first not-quite-conscious experiences-initiations with performance art in graphic imaging have presented evolutionarily in the numerous "Perfoportraits" made since 2016. At first, these were photographs which I interpreted and transformed into digital graphics. Then I printed them out and applied drawing techniques. They represented a trace of the "ritual activities" which consisted in wrapping various parts of the head and face, the mouth,

[35] Cf. G. Dziamski, *Performance - traditions, sources, foreign and native manifestations. Recognizing the phenomenon, in Performance. Collective work. A selection of texts*, ed. Dziamski G, Gajewski H., Wojciechowski J. St., MAW, Warsaw, 1984, p. 36

[36] *Ibid.*

[37] M. Jankowska, *Video, video installations, video performance...* p. 178

[38] M. Jankowska, *Video, Video installations...*, p. 178

[39] *Ibid.*

[40] *Ibid.* 187

[41] *Ibid.* 181

the eyes, and the ears, with bandages and strings. I wished to express my experiences and emotions in a more expressive manner than before. That time marked the beginning of my exploration of problems which, for personal reasons, were dear to me and which related to the existential experience of persons with the autism spectrum disorder. As it seemed to me at first, those explorations were only meant to be an expression of empathy and compassion for autistic persons. In addition, they were supposed to create actions and images expressed in a graphic form within the poetics of the figure evoked in the performative gestures so characteristic of autistic persons' own specific behaviour. Those images were recorded on photo-acts in the context of creative unrest. "I therefore act performatively" without initially having contact with the viewer. I do not film the performance. Only the photographer is present during the action. At the next stage, the photographic image is transferred onto a "potential" matrix.

My physicality and my inner emotional states represent a carrier of ideas, a matter which becomes a record of experiences as the time goes by. The graphic trace of my corporeality is processed and further transformed. Next, I transfer "Perfoportraits" onto matrices and think how to initiate their dematerialisation, the trace of which is the graphic arrangement "In a Different light". The context of corporeality, along with the discovered performative component, is "adopted" graphically. In the series of works "In a Different Light I", exposure, laying bare and covering are metaphorically rendered in an image, where I am balancing "on the thin line" between the explicit and the implicit. I do not expose myself fully – I use camouflage. I leave only a trace of myself, my body, my experience, my emotions. Perhaps it is only the non-presence that merges with the presence, already in a different space and time, not fully defined. In the spatial arrangement

"In a Different Light I" the created image of the body is my own body but at the same time it is not.

For some time now, I can see that performance art and its individual experience have become a visual language to communicate with the viewer and, above all, with myself and my creative limitations. Year 2018 saw a certain breakthrough in my life, which gave led to the performance "Filling". It turned out to be an "initiation" ritual in experiencing and practising performance art. The public was able to see the work at my solo exhibition at the MM Gallery in Chorzów. "Filling" is multi-layered, intentionally referring to personal experience and understanding of the problems related to the sacred and the profane.

The black drapery that I wear at the beginning of the performance and which I take off later, is symbolic. I made several repetitions of this performance with the drapery, water, and light. In the video version of the performance presented later (in the broadcast of the film with the recording of the image from the Adriatic cruise), I fill a vessel with water, initiate the image of a lit tealight candle in the vessel, and then drink water and fire – the "impossible act". This performance is linked to the moment when I first began to feel a need to express myself in performance art. I reckoned, "I am going to record a performance in which I will make gestures according to a scenario but with my back to the camera. Additionally wrapped up with fabric, I am not going to be recognized⁴². A video performance made at the university gallery Klatka in Cieszyń titled "Sowing" was another groundbreaking performance. I walk in a "spiralling loop" circle for over 24 minutes. Accelerations, decelerations and stops of the action play an important role here. The climax of the action occurs when I accelerate to the maximum until

[42] Cf. M. Jakimowicz, *On the border*, in: *Cisza dobra, cisza zła. Jadwiga Mitko-Rudź, katalog wystawy*, ed: A. Zimnowoda, Sosnowieckie Centrum Sztuki – Zamek Sielecki, Galeria Extravagance, Sosnowiec 2021, p. 32-33

I spin around. Then I slow down. At this point, natural and random body movements occur – physical fatigue creates dizziness which in turn causes imbalance. The performance reveals my physical condition and my mental state. Nothing can be hidden here. Authenticity and showing myself “as I am” are key. What inspires me to create performance art are particularly important, powerful, personally experienced, often groundbreaking events, which the existing forms of communication are not able to express⁴³.

In the performance titled “Sowing”, I refer to the individual, borderline experiences of a relationship with an autistic girl. The video performance was first presented in Michal Mine’s gallery in Ostrava, located in the bathhouse of a mine. The coldness of the room reinforced the message. The context of the place evoked associations with a hospital interior. An essential part of “Sowing” is the sound of walking barefoot on salt, mixed with sounds coming from outside the gallery. The sound was produced by composer Krzysztof Gawlas. The appropriate sound system and the bathhouse acoustics increased the drama of the video performance. During the opening, I performed a subtle live performative “appendix” that complemented the whole. Blending into the crowd, I approached “random” people, symbolically shaking their hands, I passed on a pinch of salt, which plays a key role in this video performance as it may be associated with spiritual and healing properties. During my “retake” of walking in a circle, the salt appears on the floor which I walk on, in a seemingly obvious but not immediately noticeable manner – the salt gradually spills out of the inside pocket of my red, flowing dress, leaving a trail behind me. Through this mantric walking “in circles” over the salt spilled under my feet, I am matrixing for the first time.

Performance as a meeting “here and now”

Performance art and its practice may be linked to the attentiveness and conscious experience of the present. The present is “a plane of change and current happening⁴⁴. My performances and recordings titled “Sowing” and “Under Cover”, and the actions that follow, as part of the doctoral dissertation, intentionally incorporate the idea of “out of concern for the other” and represent expressions of this “conscious presence” of the encounter with the audience.

In the dissertation, I stress the value of attentiveness directed inwards as well as outwards. The former stems from attentiveness towards oneself, the latter towards the Other. Referring to Emmanuel Levinas’ philosophy of dialogue, the former, is related to identity, the latter – to transcendence.⁴⁵ Identity is a category that describes the “inner coherence of a person” and determines the entry into relationship with the Other⁴⁶. Transcendence means existence beyond consciousness. For Levinas, it is something external and alien to the individual experiencing it⁴⁷. Outward-facing attentiveness is linked to mirror neurons, which enable empathy, i.e. co-feeling the emotions and state of another person. Empathy means inviting the Other into one’s inner self and experiencing them. An autistic person does not have mirror neurons. Consequently, the empathy of a neurotypical person is usually not reciprocated by an autistic person⁴⁸.

[43] *Ibid.*

[44] J. Hańderek, *Time and meeting, around Emmanuel Levinas's concept of time*, Collegium Columbinum, Cracow 2006, p. 5

[45] *Ibid.*, p. 180

[46] *Ibid.*, p.181

[47] *Ibid.*

[48] <https://pieknoumyslu.com/neurony-lustrzane-empatia> (accessed: 25.11.2023)

In conscious contact with the Other, we get to know ourselves, we face our own fragility, weaknesses, experiences, and sensations. We are also able to perceive what is hidden deeper within, what is unconscious. This contact initiates internal processes that take place on various levels. The process going on in a person who experiences an attentive and conscious encounter may be compared to the five states of spirituality listed in Hay's theory, which Paweł Socha analyses as one of the contemporary psychological theories of spirituality. According to Hay, the first state, associated with "feeling awareness", results from mindfulness, vividness, and special concentration⁴⁹. The second state is attunement, which involves paying all the attention to a person or object. This attunement implies union with a separate being – a person or God, or achieving communion with nature. The third state is "flow", understood as a natural and involuntary concentration beyond our control. A psychological concept, flow denotes elation resulting from total dedication to an activity. By focusing and paying attention to the task at hand, everything else seems to disappear. This state can be compared to the state of being carried away by water. Paweł Socha compares it to the state resulting from regular work on oneself, a time of spiritual struggle and many hours of meditation or contemplation described by Ignatius Loyola in the *Spiritual Exercises*⁵⁰. The fourth state is "concentration on sensations"⁵¹. To fully experience reality, we need to feel its direct effects on the senses, the body, the internal processes⁵².

Spiritual awareness also involves a sense of mystery and a sense of meaning⁵³. This mystery and the states described by Hay emerge during the creative process and in its material trace.

[49] P. Socha, *Selected contemporary psychological theories of spirituality, Na tropach duchowości.*, in: *Nomos* 43/44(2003), Instytut Religioznawstwa - Uniwersytet Jagielloński, Cracow,, p. 21 (accessed 12.11.2023)

[50] <https://jezuici.pl/modlitwa/cwiczenia-duchowe/> (accessed 24.01.2024)

[51] P. Socha, *Selected contemporary psychological theories of spirituality...* p. 22

[52] *Ibid.*

[53] *Ibid.* p. 23

IV. THE INEXPRESSIBLE

*"The inexpressible in art is the content,
without which we do not speak of art"*
Jan Berdyszak ("Sketchbook 118")

The inner experience

What we observe in art today is subjectivisation, resulting from artists' individualism⁵⁴ of and "artists reaching out to their own experiences that become the starting point" to create artworks or artefacts.⁵⁵ Those experiences are not expressed directly, nor do they impose themselves on the viewer – instead they speak through metaphor and symbols. They refer to intangible areas that can be described as metaphysical space. The experiences can arise from transcendence directed towards the inner self, towards another or God; they may also be associated with one's communion with nature. The artist's inner experiences – along with consciousness and the psycho-emotional sphere – usually form an integral part of the creative process. As regards my activities in the artistic field, they appear to be a precursor of my doctoral dissertation, a pretext for setting out on a long and demanding journey. In my dissertation I touch upon experiences that are not only my own. The experiences intermingle with those "inherited" from the parents of an autistic and disabled child as a result of the parents' strong empathy. For the sake of the Other, one must not pretend or stretch the truth, embellish, or add pathos. On the other hand, in my work I enter inexpressible areas, which are a mystery and can only be perceived intuitively. The term the "equivalent", present in Jan Berdyszak's work, "serves to understand the inexpressible and proves the things and phenomena that cannot be written down, spoken, shown, or illustrated but they can be felt, comprehended, and utilised⁵⁶.

Secular spirituality undoubtedly played an important role in the 20th century art. Its origins are linked to the artistic activity of Wassily Kandinsky, whose understanding of spirituality in art was groundbreaking. In his publications "On Spirituality in Art" and "Point and Line versus Plane", he expressed his interest in alternative spirituality. Uninterested in theology and Christian spirituality, he leant towards occult knowledge⁵⁷. An artist "*in the very artistic qualities such as colours and lines, transcends the boundaries of art to express the unity of the human and the divine*"⁵⁸. The artist distinguishes between spirituality perceived superficially in the form of lines and colours, which "are given to our consciousness for a brief time⁵⁹ and deep perception, which is more valuable and represents a source of "the primordial energy of art"⁶⁰. Kandinsky also underscores the value of experiencing art "actively and

*Ryc.13 From the series
PERFOPORTRETS
mixed technique, 2016*

[54] Cf. M. Popczyk, *The Spirituality of Art after Kandinsky*, in: *Silesian Historical and Theological Studies* 51.2 (2018), University of Silesia Faculty of Philology, p. 304-314, p. 306 <https://journals.us.edu.pl/index.php/ssht/article/view/> (access: 04.08.2023)

[55] *Ibid.*

[56] *Ibid.*, p. 307

[57] *Ibid.* p. 306

[58] *Ibid.* p. 307

[59] *Ibid.* p. 308

[60] *Ibid.* p. 308

polysensorially”⁶¹.

These days, secular spirituality is increasingly being identified with consciousness and is linked to the contemporary “re-evaluation of the concept of the soul”, traditionally referring to the spiritual or the psychic. The concept of the soul is now being replaced with “neural processes analysed on the basis of physiological psychology and psychophysics”⁶². This space related to the inner structures of the nervous system of living creatures is also what I am interested in. I study neurobiological phenomena and all the processes occurring in the brain as a separate area, which comprises the inner tissue inaccessible to the senses. In my view, they do not exclude the existence of an inner transcendental space – the “soul” – which is related to another dimension. It is an element of particular depth and appears as a mystery. This mystery is revealed during a creative process and in its material traces. In my view, the artistic product itself is an incompletely discovered space. During the process and even after its completion, I discover further meanings and senses of my work, which emerge as the time goes by and in the context of place and the present moment. One could say that spirituality is a sensitivity to intuitive knowledge. One of the most important aspects of spiritual awareness is relational awareness. It is a higher state, on the borderline with the mystical – it is a contact with a “a being separate from the Self” that transcends its materiality⁶³. Relational consciousness represents a reference to the self, another person and transcendence. Mysticism is associated with different states of consciousness.

The metaphysics of light

Metaphysics and mysticism in art are linked to the intangible factor of light. “In mysticism, light is one of the central metaphors and spiritual experiences”⁶⁴. It can be said that it connects the material with the immaterial and leads to a space. It is the element that makes present what is inaccessible to the senses. In the most direct manner, mysticism is revealed in iconography. The artists' works, which follow Jerzy Nowosielski's idea of the contemporary icon, belong to this area. Nowosielski writes, “The icon should cease to be “intelligible” to people (...) When it ceases to be intelligible, it becomes felt, experienced; the relationship between the icon and the person looking at it is narrowed down to an “authentic mystery play”⁶⁵.

Another category of art, leading us into metaphysical areas, encompass the work of artists such as Anish Kapoor, Olafur Eliasson and Jams Turrell, whose works are based on the ephemeral medium of light. These artists explore the boundaries of materiality, and their installations-environments speak directly to the senses and emotions through a variety of media and materials. In the case of Kapoor's monumental sculptures and installations, spirituality is also revealed through emptiness and absence, and materials such as “pigment,

[61] *Ibid.*

[62] Cf. I. Alechnowicz-Skrzypek, *Internal experience and the study of cognitive processes. Psychology in selected philosophical programmes at the beginning of the 20th century*, in *Philosophical Review - New Series R.* 21: 2012, No. 3 (83), p. 521, https://pf.uw.edu.pl/images/NUMERY_PDF/083/3-12-36_Alechnowicz-Skrzypek.pdf accessed 12.11.2023)

[63] P. Socha, *Selected contemporary psychological theories of spirituality...* p. 21

[64] A. Panasiewicz, *Light as a medium in art*, *Annales Universitatis Paedagogicae Cracoviensis, Studia de Arte et Educatione*, (2023)VIII(2013), p. 88, <https://rep.up.krakow.pl/xmlui/bitstream/handle/11716/8643/AF147-09--Swiatlo-jako-medium-Panasiewicz.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>. (accessed: 16.01.2024)

[65] Z. Podgórzec, *Symbolism and icons*, in: *Around the icon. Conversations with Jerzy Nowosielski*, ed. K. Czerni, Cracow, 2010, s. 112

wax, granite, marble, limestone and polished stainless steel”⁶⁶.

Danish-Icelandic artist Olafur Eliasson creates sculptures, experimenting with movement, sound, light, air, fog, and rainbows, as well as water – a natural mirror that reflects light. In one of his more important works, the “Green River” series, the artist tinted the river water green to draw attention to environmental problems. Eliasson's installations represent Land-art. Another artist fascinated by light, James Turrell, explores the limits of human perception. Due to his multidisciplinary training (including perceptual psychology), he deals with what exists between science and art. He is inspired by the artistic trend ‘Light and Space’. Having made numerous buildings with holes in the ceiling, he creates light effects inside them. These buildings, called “Skyspaces”, transport us into a contemplative area. In Poland, Antoni Mikołajczyk deserves attention. His light experiments are based on his experiences with photography, as evidenced by his numerous photographic series, including “Scores of Cities”, where the dynamics of light in a night cityscape is showcased. The artist wrote, “The terrain of my penetration is the states of latency of image, movement, light and sound”⁶⁷.

Antoni Mikołajczyk is also the author of numerous spatial installations with light playing a prominent role. His installation “The Real and the Elusive” consists of overlapping projections that create an image of lumps of light floating in the air.⁶⁸

One of the Polish contemporary artists who uses light as a spiritual factor is Karolina Hałatek. She creates installation-environments focusing on exploring the relationship between the visual and metaphysical spheres⁶⁹. She uses “neon, laser, light, and mirrors in these works. The artist reveals the physical nature of these materials to tell a story about them”⁷⁰.

In my doctoral dissertation, light appears on several levels: as a physical phenomenon, as a component with a technical function, and as a metaphysical factor.⁷¹ It is a subtle spotlight or a strong Led light, shining through openwork non-transparent matrix. In the spatial graphic arrangements of the series “In a Different Light IV”, she shines through and penetrates the openwork and transparent matrices, covered by parchment. The light and the shadow reveal the figure of an autistic girl encoded in a relief, transparent and openwork matrix. Its source is a moving projection, clearly revealing its dynamics: flickering and pulsating. Due to the fact that light is an unexplored matter, the matrix enters into the “second being of the matrix”, which I have mentioned in Dorota Folga-Januszewska’s words quoted above. Light plays a key role in the second stage of the “materialisation of the idea” and the “dematerialisation of the matrix”. The installation “In a Different Light IV”, as part of the doctoral dissertation, expresses helplessness present in a relationship with an autistic person. The barely visible figure of the girl behind the “veil” gives the air of remoteness and inaccessibility. It also symbolises persistence in situations when we can feel lonely and misunderstood.

[66] <https://www.arken.dk/en/exhibitions/anish-kapoor-unseen> (accessed: 12.11.2023)

[67] M. Wasilewski, *Sztuka nieobecna, Obserwator, Poznań 1999*, s. 89

[68] Cf. *Tamże*, s. 87

[69] <https://culture.pl/pl/galeria/karolina-halatek-wybrane-prace-galeria> (accessed: 19.01.2024)

[70] *Ibid.*

[71] Cf. A. Panasiewicz. *Light as a medium in art ...p. 87*

Light also plays a significant role in the spatial graphic arrangement "Bez-silność" ("Powerlessness") included in the dissertation. The installation consists of six graphic objects, each with three layers of relief, yet transparent and openwork graphic matrices. The matrices are flexible and easily deformable. The objects are illuminated with Led spotlights. The installation also consists of matrix remnants resulting from the processing of the material. These remnants are scattered on and around the objects. The fading matrix symbolises the marred, the barren, the wounded. Light revives, renews, and dematerialises it, only to transport it into metaphysical space. Emptiness is a place that expects to be filled and healed. It is a space filled with love and care. Associated with temperature, light brings Joseph Beuys's work to mind. The warming of wounds leads to healing.

"In a Different Light III" is an object creating a spatial portrait of an autistic girl. The analogue transparent graphic matrix shows a portrait of a girl affected by autism. The matrix has been overexposed by the light of a moving image from a projector. The image is a minimalist animation, reproducing the way autistic people perceive reality. Autistic persons pick up details that healthy people do not notice. They focus their attention on single elements, singling them out in a particular manner, while completely ignoring the context. This is why autistic persons often have a fixation on intense light sources that absorb all their attention⁷². Projection of animation onto an object creates a moving spotlight, bringing out only parts of the graphic image while the unilluminated parts remain hidden.

The video image as an elusive element

In contemporary art, the metaphysical realm appears in various contexts and is expressed in a variety of ways. It is also revealed in video art. In the work of Bill Viola, a video artist with corporeal representations, figures exist on the borderline between life and the metaphysical realm. They are corporeal and immaterial at the same time. The images "with their high resolution and mesmerising slow motion of scenes"⁷³, suggestive of a dream, reverie, unreality⁷⁴— it is where their "epiphanic power lies".⁷⁵ Fire, water, and air are those elements of his video art that dematerialise the figures. "In some works, dematerialisation destruction or a change in the state of matter"⁷⁶.

In my doctoral dissertation, video art is present in several forms. In the installations described above, two types of matrices overlap and intertwine: the analogue matrix and the digital matrix, which Grzegorz Banaszekiewicz calls the virtual matrix⁷⁷. I can say that both transparent graphic forms participate in a mutual dematerialisation.

Light and video projections are factors that, following Jean Francois Lyotard, can be called immaterials. To conclude this discussion, I will refer to the philosophical exhibition "Les Immatériaux" at the Centre Pompidou in 1985, curated and initiated by Lyotard himself. The aim of this exhibition was to draw attention to the "new materials" in contemporary art.

[72] *Good Silence, Bad Silence. Jadwiga Mitko-Rudź, katalog wystawy, (red.) A. Zimnowoda, Sosnowieckie Centrum Sztuki – Zamek Sielecki, Galeria Extravagance, Sosnowiec 2021, p.20*

[73] M. Popczyk, *The Spirituality of Art after Kandinsky...* p. 311

[74] *Tamże*

[75] *Tamże*

[76] K. Chmielecki, *Medium, image, body. Processes of dematerialization in Bill Viola's video works, w: Materia Sztuki, Michał Ostrowicki, UNIVERTAS, 200, p. 94*

[77] G. Banaszekiewicz, *Concepts of graphics II...* p. 18

Lyotard's immaterials refer to what is generated by computers, electronics, or technology⁷⁸. In its intrinsically contradictory structure, an immaterial is a material that is no longer matter.⁷⁹ It can therefore be considered to be a semi-material and is located between matter and the spiritual realm.⁸⁰

Attentiveness

Internal experiences are also linked to processes at the neurobiological level, emerging as a result of continuously experienced sensory sensations, information flow and the processing of signals coming from outside. External stimuli acting on the nervous system tissues make them oscillate in a continuous manner.

I dealt with this theme in the series "*Signals*", created as part of my doctoral dissertation. Its point of reference was the form and function of the synaptic connections in the brain that link the nerve cells. The pulsating spotlight that plays a central role in the "*Signals*" series visualise an elusive tissue that expose enigmatic and sensorily inaccessible structures relating to emotions, feelings, sensations. and senses. The spot "flare-ups" imitate electrical impulses.

Neuroscience helps understand an autistic person. Synaptic connections in the brain of an autistic person develop in a different way than in a neurotypical person⁸¹. In today's autism discourse, we often speak of neurodiversity and a different way of reality perception. This neurodiversity causes many of the symptoms of the autism spectrum disorder. In autistic persons, neurodiversity means an excess of synaptic connections between nerve cells in the brain. As a result, they find it hard to calm down. Prone to rapid overstimulation, they fall into internal chaos.

The subject matter of "*Signals*" can be extended to reflect on the necessity of slowing down in life, and even stopping for a moment - all to experience the authenticity of the encounter. The installation expresses the need for attentiveness and conscious perception to experience the present moment. "*Signals*" were presented in four solo exhibitions, dedicated to conscious experience of reality. The first exhibition titled *Signals* took place at the Wherenowhere gallery in Brussels in 2020. On the day of the opening, the premiere of the animation was broadcast, which is also available on youtube⁸².

The premiere presentation, and the three following ones, oscillate around the key problem I addressed in my doctoral dissertation. By selecting the works and choosing the title, in each of the exhibitions I emphasise a different component of the conscious encounter and the "Concern for the Other". The first exhibition is titled *Now Here* (at the MM Gallery in Chorzów), the second one – *Good Silence, Bad Silence* (at the Extravagance Gallery at the Sielecki Castle in Sosnowiec) and the third one – *Vigilance* (at the Gallery in the old Cistercian Abbey in Rudy Raciborskie). Although not part of the doctoral dissertation, the installation "*Signals*" includes elements that give its final "shape". Those elements include two on which the concept of the dissertation is based: the materialisation of the subject matter and the dematerialisation of the graphic image. As a component of the installation, light brings out the graphic matter, annihilating it at the same time.

[78] *Ibid.*

[79] *Ibid.*

[80] A. Panasiewicz, *Light as a medium in art ..p.* 87

[81] Neurotypicality is a term to refer to people outside the autism spectrum.

[82] <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U0oYqyILuc>

Silence

Both in verbal communication and in visual arts, quietude and silence hold a special place in my work. The work "Out of Concern for the Other..." is not pushy or attacking in its verbosity. It is subtle. It is a manner of both speaking and remaining silent about what lies deeper, about what is fragile and inexpressible. It also embraces what is weak and unwanted. My means of artistic expression are sometimes ascetic. Sometimes I let the image speak but more often I let the subject matter speak or through the reduction of matter, its absence, its emptiness. While encountering suffering, an excess of words seems out of place. "So all that remains is to transcend the word with the image, to show and not to speak, to open the path towards the inexpressible"⁸³.

Silence appears in all the processes used in my dissertation. It is hidden "inside", revealing itself in the outer layer of the matrix. It speaks not only through matter but also through its absence – through its transparency and openwork. Silence is also revealed in the second stage of dematerialisation – in performative actions. It emerges in the matrixing process as a concern for the Other transferred onto the graphic matrix and expressed in the second stage of the graphic process through gestures and tactile movements.

In an interview in the catalogue for the exhibition "Good Silence, Bad Silence", when asked by editor Marcin Jakimowicz what good silence was, I mentioned an inner silence, whose source is light or its search. The silence gives birth to attentiveness, allowing us to hear and see more clearly and consciously. Such silence is creative. A different kind of silence may also arise from a deficit, nostalgia, loneliness, or rejection⁸⁴. This type of silence is difficult and represents the world of a person with the autism spectrum disorder. It is an inability to express one's needs and thoughts, to form social bonds. Coming from the Greek word *autos*, which means "alone", the word "autism" is associated with isolation. Meeting a deeply autistic person reveals this most difficult silence, which can sometimes be destructive for both sides. For the carer, silence symbolises helplessness as it is not possible to form an emotional bond with the autistic person.

Considered in the context of the autism spectrum disorder, silence, both the internal and the external type, can also be perceived as a desirable state, contrasted with the internal chaos resulting from sensory hypersensitivity. Noise, chatter, and other noisy sounds cause suffering to autistic persons.

The Other

The Other is the one I meet on my path - the one I do not comprehend. For Them to be is to accept that They are unique and not fully knowable. They are beyond me and not identical to me. The Other is an existential and existential separateness which, despite a certain commonality of species, we are unable to reach, and which will always elude our cognitive

[83] M. Smolińska, *A-representation of the (un)visible*, in: *The Butterfly Effect. Humanists vis-à-vis chaos theory*, <https://czaskultury.pl/czytanka/szanse-dla-ronorodnoci-niewyraalne-jana-berdyszaka/> (accessed 12.11.2023)

[84] M. Jakimowicz, *On the Border*, in: *Good Silence, Bad Silence...* p. 32

capacities⁸⁵. The Other “Exists beyond this horizon in which the I live and create”⁸⁶ The “I” only becomes itself when it is committed to the Other. When I meet another person in a borderline situation, I experience their suffering, being unable to take it away from them. I can only be with them in their pain and hardship. The suffering is theirs, and I stay by their side. The Other is alone, and I am unable to reach their depths. I experience powerlessness. Empathetic listening requires concentration, attentiveness. Being there for the Other modifies our optics. It leads to an inner transformation, a transcendence of the Other. We are divided by our physicality and the inaccessibility of “our insides”. When I give myself to a person, they start to exist in my consciousness. One may say that the person a primordial matrix that imprints itself in me. When I am together with another person, I do not find it hard to leave myself to be with that person with all my might, but it usually lasts short. After a while, I return to myself. If I abandoned myself for a longer time, I would lose my attentiveness, my touch with the present, I am not present here and now. Returning to myself allows me to fully experience the moment, the encounter with the Other, without losing myself. On the other hand, being within oneself cannot close off to what is outside. Keeping a balance between being inside and outside offers the full opportunity to experience the present and the encounter more fully. The Other manifests itself not only in another person but also in the “I”. Another person and their spiritual element permanently imprint in me. That person exists in me and in my relations. That person is the matrix.

Concern as a process

Being in contact with a disabled person creates concern – an emotion that gradually transforms into an attitude and, consequently, active “being there” for the Other. The elusive, initially passive emotional state becomes a creative impulse and gets transformed during the extended artistic process. Therefore, I can say that the subject of my reflections is the transformation taking place in the consciousness and in the nervous system of a person who stays with an autistic and intellectually disabled on a daily basis. As an inner journey, concern is initially predominantly connected with the rejection of the diagnosis of the condition of a loved one. From that perspective, the further course of this journey and its final stage – if any – are a mystery. Among the various reactions to the suffering of a loved one, defence mechanisms such as withdrawal or dissociation from emotions can be observed. This is because the suffering of the other person reveals areas that we push out of conscious awareness. Another reaction is fear, which does not allow us to take a step forward.

I refer to this state in the performance titled “Sowing”, which thrives on walking in a circle. Whirling motion fascinates persons with the autism spectrum disorder, who often obsessively spin round for hours on end or walk in circles. The reference to this kind of fixation created a several-layered artistic message. Circular movement and axial movement represent a state of confusion, turmoil and a sense of hopelessness that afflicts a person. One may say that such experiences deplete and deprive them of the will to live. They make it difficult to see the light and the good that exists around us. The title of the performance, “Sowing”, may seem inadequate or perverse, therefore it needs to be explained. Sowing

[85] J. Hańderek, *Time and meeting, around Emmanuel Levinas's concept of time...* p.181

[86] E. Levinas, *The Whole and the Infinite, Essays on Intrinsicity*, Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, Warszawa, 1998, Introduction XX

symbolises the beginning of a stage of slow cleansing and healing of the many areas of human life. It is a subtle and fragile process, transforming difficult areas that people are usually unaware of. It penetrates the armour of previous "fixations" and begins a stage of metamorphosis. Although this process looks like an impasse, a road without end, it often turns out to be a liminal phase and the beginning of something new. Salt is the material that forms the message of the performance. In "Sowing", I specifically refer to the biblical meaning of salt⁸⁷.

One may say that the time of inner struggle and crisis is also a time of purification and an opportunity for inner transformation, resulting from work on yourself that is necessary in such situations. The Delphic maxim GNOTI SEAUTO (Know thyself) and the Socratic maxim EPIMELEIA HEAUTU (Take care of thyself)⁸⁸ highlight the need to take care of oneself. Plato's philosophy offers such concepts as: "melete", that is "care" or "caring" that mean a soul's journey that brings about transformation. "What is more, this journey itself represents a transformation" that thrives on conversion. The Latin "Conversio" means "reversal". This conversion is the turning of the soul "away from night" and into the light. It involves an effort made towards obtaining the right perspective.¹ In this reversal, "metanoia" emerges and brings about a change of heart.

Relational time in performative terms

Considering inner time in the ontological sphere, Emmanuel Levinas identifies it "with change, the processes occurring in human perception, a change of consciousness under the influence of an encounter with another person"⁸⁹. In her analysis of Levinas's texts, Joanna Hańderek uses the term relational time⁹⁰ to refer to inner time. In Emmanuel Levinas's collection of lectures "Time and the Other", one can read that "time is not a matter of a separate and solitary subject but the subject's relationship with another person"⁹¹. Therefore, one may say that in his view, a solitary person who is outside time does not exist. However, this raises the question of the existence of an autistic person who is unable to communicate with the world. Such a person gives the impression of being outside of relationships. In the light of Levinas's thought, does such a person exist outside of time? One may say that an autistic person, being enclosed in a bubble, exists in another space and time inaccessible to us. A wall that is between us gives the impression of mutual inaccessibility. An autistic person's perception of the world is different from ours. And yet, during the encounter, I see that person in a specific "here and now", I notice their movements and reactions. Through touch, gestures, and presence, I help the person to return to the "here and now".

During my art therapeutic work with children with social phobia and the Asperger's Syndrome, a milder form of autism, I introduced methods in which I used experiences from ephemeral art. Inspired by Karina Szafrńska's experiences described in the publication "Art

[87] *Sowing - author text, in: Good Silence, Bad Silence... p. 26*

[88] Por. K. A. Kolebacz, *The concept of 'concern' in the philosophy of Socrates and Plato. Epimeleia and melete, in Ethics 57, 2018, University of Warsaw, Warsaw 2018, p. 19, <https://etyka.uw.edu.pl/index.php/etyka/article/view/24> (accessed: 13.07.2023)*

[89] J. Hańderek, *Time and meeting, around Emmanuel Levinas's concept of time,.. p. 17*

[90] *Ibid.*, p. 181

[91] E. Levinas, *Time and the Other, KR, Warszawa 1999, p. 19*

therapy and the development of language and communication competences of children with the autism spectrum disorder (ASD)^[92], I performed exercises with the children that teach them to interact with another person and to be attentive to the “here and now”. These exercises took the form of performative activities, with a “dialogue” through a gesture between me and the child. This interaction consisted in creating a painting together by taking turns at pouring and splashing paints on cardboard lying on the grass.

The second “dialogue” involved smearing paint with the hands and creating “graphic prints” on paper using the hand as the natural matrix. The activity recalls Jackson Pollock’s “action painting/ gesture painting”. The performative actions represented training for the child to come out of their inner self towards the outer world and to get in touch with reality by building a common field of attention with the other person. This joint action served as a link between two persons, facilitating being in one space and time. Performance art may be seen as a ritual. Henryk Gajewski viewed performance art as a special kind of ritual “during which a sense of shared presence is established”^[93].

At the beginning of March 2020, just before the announcement of lockdown in Poland, my solo exhibition titled “Under Cover” took place. During the opening, I created a performance in the presence of the audience, extended by participatory actions. The performance refers to the world of autistic persons and their perception of reality. The viewer was able to experience it with different senses and to interfere in the visual realm. Alongside light, salt was the basic material bringing out the graphic image and the message of the installation. The centre of the installation was a transparent, openwork graphic matrix showing the figure of a girl affected by autism. The matrix, which was the top of a wooden table, served as a “sieve” through which I sieved the salt, creating an impermanent graphic print. The viewer had the opportunity to make the same gesture. Small objects, hanging above the “*salt prints*” and above the matrix, such as scented oils and bells, spotlight and subtle “*little lights*”, were also elements that introduced the world of autistic persons. The installation thus acted not only on the sense of sight but also on the senses of smell, hearing, and touch. Salt served as a protective layer and a symbol of a spiritual and healing element. The area covered by salt represents an uncontaminated and clean sphere. However, it can also represent a barren and dead zone.

The two performances described above, “*Sowing*” and “*Under Cover*”, represented a further stage in the development of the doctoral dissertation. The symbolism of salt and its use as a medium for printing impermanent prints, opens up a stage in my work to comprehend the second stage of the dematerialisation of the matrix as a graphic performance, which I see as a mystery play.

[92] Por. K. Szafrńska, *Art therapy and the development of language and communication skills in children with autism spectrum disorder (ASD)*, WIR, Cracow 2016

[93] H. Gajewski, *I am, in Performance. Collective work. Selection of texts*, ed. Dziamski G, Gajewski H., Wojciechowski J. St., MAW, Warsaw 1984, p. 12-13

The gift of self

*“He emptied himself, taking the form of a servant,
being made in the likeness of men.
And in outward manifestation,
recognised as a man, he humbled himself,
and became obedient unto death”⁹⁴*

Concern for the Other may, for some, be a duty and a burden, while for others it may be the joy of being there and serving another person. It can take the form of a one-off spurt or it can develop into a conscious decision to support and be with the Other in their difficult moments on a long-term basis, with full acceptance and understanding. It can be said that concern is a process of maturing in love. Experiencing concern depends on the relationship with oneself. Without self-acceptance, we are unable to give selfless love to another person. The most perfect and radical form of concern is the expression of selfless self-giving towards a stranger met on our path. As such, it is a choice, a decision that brings joy but also involves sacrifice and even suffering. Among the radical gestures of love was the act of Maximilian Kolbe, who gave away his life for a stranger at Auschwitz. Another example of radical concern was the attitude of Adam Chmielowski (St Albert), who served the homeless, dwelling with them in a shelter. The acts of both the figures must be looked at profoundly, from the perspective of the Gospel, in the light of the most perfect Love, resulting from the experience of the Love of God.

A different aspect of *“Out of Concern for the Other”* is present in the case of those caring for a loved one, who are confronted with their own and the other person's suffering. The more they love, the closer they want to be to the suffering person. A natural love is the love of a mother for her child. The parents of an unwell or disabled child are not choosers. This suffering rains down on them. The only choice they have is how to experience the suffering – they can accept it or not. A person who provides care for someone close to them on a daily basis (e.g. parents of a child with a disability) also need support. Concern for another person is usually unpredictable because we are dealing with the other person and with what is most fragile, weak, and not fully understood. Accompanying the Other teaches humility towards areas of reality beyond our control. Being attentive and open to what is happening here and now is more important than our plans and desire to be a perfect “carer”. Concern is an intangible state that undergoes transformation. This process of change, however, is not a uniform rectilinear motion. Numerous crises are part and parcel of it, and those concerned about the Other sometimes experience conflicting emotions and feelings. Accompanying a suffering person is a constant struggle with one's weaknesses. Personally, I experience concern as an ephemeral state, a continual rise and fall, powerlessness, and the manifestation of the “Power in weakness”⁹⁵.

[94] 2 Flp 2, 5-12 in: *Jerusalem Bible...*, Pallotinum, Poznań 2006

[95] *Ibid.*

V. THE MATRIX IN THE PROCESS

The graphic matter

Matter is a capacious and ambiguous concept inspired by philosophy and physics. In philosophy, it is used to describe the world. In physics, it refers to objects that exist objectively⁹⁶. In the Latin language, "matrix" means "material", "substance". Matter and form represent the outer layer of an artwork, indicating the status of its physicality. The subject matter of the work is also what constitutes its essence and internal structure.

As a graphic artist, I am interested in graphic matter and the matrix⁹⁷, which, along with the processes of materialisation (in it) of an idea and its dematerialisation, comes to the fore in my doctoral dissertation,

The etymology of the word matrix points to the leading role it plays in the graphic process. Latin "mater" means "mother", "matrix". In the Sanskrit dictionary, "matrix" means the mother of a god, human, or animal. The matrix is the source, the beginning. It is a being with the potential to produce further beings. It has the capacity to reproduce an image multiple times⁹⁸ through reflection or imprint. The matrix can be the idea itself, the thought. Mariusz Pałka writes, *"From a printmaker's point of view, this broadening of the meaning of the matrix may effect a change of awareness and responsibility as far as the printmaking technique is concerned, in both the creative and the didactic context. This is a new area of appreciation of the idea, which, after all, cannot mean less than aesthetic values. By approaching the printmaking technique as a kind of mystery play, we reach into the depths of consciousness and broaden the understanding of art based on a stable point of reference"*⁹⁹. I consider the printmaking process as a time of trial and error, of discoveries and breakthroughs in both the formal and mental realms. It is a time of struggle with matter because by "digging deeper and deeper", I encounter myself, the Other and the matrix, learning the truth and touching the depths of existence. It is a time of meditation and contemplation.

In my artistic work as part of my doctoral dissertation, already at the first stage of the graphic process (the first existence of the matrix), it reveals itself as a process far beyond the classical processing of the matrix. Paradoxically, the idea materialises in the process of dematerialisation of the matrix. This dematerialisation thrives on a decisive cutting of the material, a stabbing with a chisel, sometimes repeatedly, in the same place, so as to "pierce through".

In my doctoral dissertation, the second form of the existence of the matrix is present in the second stage of the dematerialisation process, contained in the matrixing process, which is also a graphic performance. In contemporary graphic imaging, subjecting the matrix to graphic processes during a performative action is linked to the belief in the primary function of the matrix. This approach to the matrix determines a change in its status and widens the scope for exploiting its "symbolic potential"¹⁰⁰. It also favours the introduction of "foreign" elements into its domain (both in technological, ideational, and mental aspects).

My graphic performances, which form a part of my doctoral dissertation, involve loose sub-

[96] Cf. G. Bugajak, *Matter*, KUL, str. 1-3, https://www.kul.pl/files/57/encyklopedia/bugajak_materia.pdf, (access: 14.01.2024)

[97] Cf. Mariusz Pałka, *Matrix - reactivation of the matrix*, in: *Zeszyty artystyczne*, No. 20. BGS 1999-2009, *Graphics*, University of Arts in Poznań, Poznań 2010, p. 147-156

[98] Cf. *Ibid.*

[99] *Ibid.* p. 156

[100] M. Maciudzińska-Kamczycka, S. Dudzik, *Graphics in a hybrid world. Introduction*, in: *Hybridity in graphics. Medium in search of its time and meaning*, ed: S. Dudzik, Wyd. Naukowe, UMK, Toruń 2020, p. 8

stances (salt), liquids, (water, wine, oil) or immaterials¹⁰¹, such as light. Using the procedures described above, I transfer it into the spiritual dimension. The boundary between the matrix and the print is also blurred. The projection of a static or moving image¹⁰². and many other forms of matrix existence in the second stage of its process are all among the phenomena representing the "second existence of the matrix" in contemporary graphic imaging. The matrix may work as a spatial graphic object, a component of an installation or another intermedial project. "Referring to the specificity and history of the graphic medium, it is hard not to notice that graphics enters exceptionally easily into hybrid relationships both with other forms of artistic expression (...) and with non-artistic aspects of culture"¹⁰³. My work is hybrid in nature, with blurred boundaries between disciplines and media.

The idea - the mental matrix

The girl with autism and intellectual disabilities, who is the inspiration for the doctoral dissertation, represents the primary matrix. Following Jasiński, this original matrix can also be referred to as an ideal moment¹⁰⁴. This child imprinted itself in my consciousness, becoming the source of specific emotional states. Transferred onto the graphic medium, she materialises in the image recorded in the physical, object-like matrix. I subject this matrix to a long-term, gradual process of dematerialisation. The encounter I evoked not only effected feelings of concern and all the inexpressible processes of perception and consciousness but also activated the external processes emerging in the creative process, in the visual layer of the work, and the internal processes hidden in its meaning. Emotions drove an active attitude of concern, becoming the leaven of creative acts.

Comparing the creative process to work in Karl Marx's terms, Bogusław Jasiński calls this starting point the state of pre-creation and distinguishes the conscious and material element of the "subject's material touch with objective reality", and the "conscious reflection of this reality,¹⁰⁵as the driving force of the creative process, based on the structure of the theory of reflection. In its initial stage, it distinguishes the ideal moment, arising in the artist's consciousness, of reflection of reality of "what is most important for a given creative process and what represents the rudiment of the object of this process"¹⁰⁶.

This moment of creation also includes the goal formulated by the artist's previous knowledge and their psycho-physical predispositions. According to Jasiński, the choice of the form of creative activity, the material, and the systemic instrumentarium¹⁰⁷. In processual work, these choices are being continuously updated, as what matters during the creation is the eternal "here and now". The choice of instruments can evolve during the process, the artist experiments, continuously searching for the right means to achieve the desired goal. The ideal moment is an immaterialised thought. One may argue that this immaterialised thought is the "mental matrix".

[101] Jean-Francois Lyotard, *Les Immatériaux manifestation(s) of immateriality...* p. 221-233

[102] Cf. S. Dudzik, *What is graphic design needed for today? The process of matrix commodification and its consequences, Hybridity in graphics. The medium in search of its time and meaning...* in: *Hybridity in graphics* p. 13-20

[103] M. Maciudzińska-Kamczycka, S. Dudzik, *Graphics in a hybrid world. Introduction*, in: *Hybridity in graphics...* p. 8

[104] Jasiński B., *Aesthetics after aesthetics. Prolegomena to the ontology of the creative process Ethos*, 2008, p. 93

[105] *Ibid.*

[106] *Ibid.*, p. 94

[107] *Ibid.*

Jasinski conceives of the material moment in two ways, "once as the beginning of all creativity, for it is (...) the focus of the creative subject's interest in the initial phase, and once as the material basis of an already ongoing and developing creative process. The material moment can be understood as something outside creativity, which both precedes and initiates the creative process"¹⁰⁸. In the course of the process, matter is transformed into the matter of creation, and in the matter the process of materialisation occurs. The materiality of the matrix is the beginning of the process of processing. Matter is the means that transforms into activity and action. The creative act is no longer merely a means to an end, but it comes to the fore. The creative process, the work, the materiality of the work – "a being consisting of its physicality, a life practice. The matter the artist uses exists in consciousness too – the artist's personality is the matter - a way of being within the process"¹⁰⁹.

The natural matrix

The natural matrix and the trace left by it represent the beginning of graphics and matrixing. In his reflections on the concepts of graphics, Grzegorz Banaszekiewicz goes back to the time of cave paintings. He refers to the handprints discovered in the Chauvet Cave. He notices an analogy "between this prehistoric graphic image and other works still made today using a simple graphic technique – the stencil"¹¹⁰. This natural stencil forms an openwork matrix (the French graphic dictionary term: *élément d'impression ajouré*)¹¹¹. According to Banaszekiewicz, an openwork matrix is a stencil or mould for pressing out a shape used in industry, "it appears in mould-making, wall painting and tailoring; in bookbinding, decoration, graffiti, folk cut-outs. It is worth bringing terms such as die-cut and dressmaking pattern, which are equivalent to the concept of the stencil and specific variants of the openwork matrix"¹¹².

The transparency and openwork of the relief matrix

According to the "systematics of graphic concepts and processes' proposed by Grzegorz Banaszekiewicz, my (analogue) matrices include three types: openwork, relief, and transparent. The analogue quality is related to the manner the image is encoded. In its "being", a relief matrix reveals the properties of both intaglio and letterpress printing. The openwork quality results from the method of using the tool (the chisel). Transparency results from both the choice of material and the decision not to utilise chemical inks. Techniques of the visualisation of graphic images using the types of matrices mentioned above are: matrixing (according to Janusz Kaczorowski), embossing (the so-called "blind printing")¹¹³. To express the inexpressible, I sought a medium characterised by lightness and colour-

[108] *Ibid.*

[109] A. Kowalik, *Processuality and the matter of art. Different ways of creation and functioning of a visual art work*, *Academy of Fine Arts in Warsaw, Faculty of Conservation and Restoration of Works of Art, in: Gardens of Science and Arts, no. (7) 2017, Warsaw 2017... p.419*

[110] G. Banaszekiewicz, *Concepts of graphics II... s. 17*

[111] *Ibid.*

[112] *Ibid.*, p. 28

[113] *Cf. Ibid.* p. 21-22

lessness. I searched for what is openwork, transparent and indefinable. What expresses quietude, silence, and emptiness. To this end, I began the process of cutting the matrices out of transparent material. I cut them deep. In this fashion, matter begins to mix with non-matter. The matrix appears as a creation on the borderline between being and non-being. It is a semi-presence.

The matter, "worn out" and "battered" by emotions, experiences, and traumas, expresses rejection, loneliness, and powerlessness. Empty spaces reveal longing and deficits, and a waiting room to be filled with light. Powerlessness making way for Power. Powerlessness is a wound waiting to be healed. It is a trusting cry for mercy. The transparent and openwork matrix expresses a state of being stuck between being and non-being; between the materialised and the dematerialised; between the material and the immaterial. Between the present and the past or between the present and the future. It reveals the trace of what has been, or the anticipation of what is to come in a while. It fluctuates between lasting and passing. Devoid of shape, decaying matter appears to be a trace of a long-lasting struggle. Like an area destroyed at war, with ruins and remnants left behind. It is an experience of Force in weakness. Matter speaks, while absence screams.

The fading matrix blends into the space. The deficits, however, do not remain a void. In the first stage of the process of matrix formation and the disposal of matter, these empty fragments of the matrix are fused with immaterial particles of air or other incompletely identifiable matter. At the second stage, they are filled by impermanent substances and materials. Consequently, matter transforms into non-matter or matter of a different kind. The empty spaces represent an (un)deficit or a wound. Merging with space, deficits go beyond "occurring". One may ask a question: does this half-matter exist in time or outside of time? What comes to mind is the work of Jan Berdyszak, who introduces real space into the artwork by cutting holes in the material. He also introduces transparent materials such as glass or plexiglass. In this way, he highlights the opening up to infinity. In the series titled "Double Circles", the cut-out circles make the image become a "potential image". Next, Berdyszak creates further series of works containing empty spaces and openings. In the series titled "Passe Par Toux", by removing the inside of the image and leaving the frame, he draws attention to the empty space. The form is opened up, and the space in which the form is located is incorporated into it. "[...] the spatial emptiness in the artist's works not only boasts the most divine and broadest mental subject matter and offers the viewer unlimited freedom to play with imagination, intellect and sensations but it also represents a specific form of sacralization and adoration of space"¹¹⁴. Jan Berdyszak was interested in what exists on the borderline of visibility: transparent and permeable materials. He writes about glass: "With its material existence, it demonstrates its absence, revealing the world using itself as the most unusual and paradoxical opening without a cover. It acts indirectly, it is like silence contained in a word or a sound (...) In its basic forms, glass has its shape to the same extent that it is able to silence it"¹¹⁵.

Transparency, a natural property of glass, is also a property of air, water, and light. It is also a property of transparent plastic, more durable than the glass from which the matrices as part

[114] B. Kowalska, *Jan Berdyszak, Literary publishing, Cracow 1979*, in: M. Smolińska-Byczuk, W. Makowiecki, M. Pawłowski (eds.), *Jan Berdyszak. Artworks 1960-2006...* p. 293

[115] *Artistic text from the exhibition catalogue: Jan Berdyszak, Belki, BWA, Wrocław, 1993*, in: M. Smolińska-Byczuk, W. Makowiecki, M. Pawłowski, *Jan Berdyszak...* p. 299

of my doctoral dissertation are made. Transparent plastic is flexible and easily deformable. The delicacy of the matrices results from the absence of continuity. In addition, the quality of openwork makes the matrix disintegrate in certain areas and become liable to damage. The transparent plastic exists on the borderline of visibility but unlike air, it is tactile.¹¹⁶

The Remains

The long-term process of the disappearance of the physical form of the matrix makes it no longer even exist on the borderline of matter. In the process of matter reduction (working on the matrix), the “remains” are left. I decided to keep these remains, which are usually only waste. For me, they symbolise what has been rejected, what we want to be gone, a torment, what we would rather not meet face to face. In my work, weakness and frailty become a value. What we reject often becomes the foundation of our growth. Weakness and frailty become the foundation. The remains are marginal – what is fragile, painful, what we do not wish to confront.

The title of these considerations refers to Jan Berdyszak's series titled “The Remains of the Remains”, on which the artist worked until the end of his life. The title itself indicates that incompleteness and fragmentary nature come to the fore. Remains, waste, “scraps”, marginals are all the elements that represent the subject matter of his works. In “The Remains of the Remains”, empty space as a component of the graphic image is revealed in the most radical way. Marta Smolińska writes, “[...] These are not even the remains anymore, but these are the remains of the remains, i.e. this process of focusing on the remains of a fragment of something is taken one step further – something further degraded, customarily removed from scope of interest”¹¹⁷.

In Berdyszak's last series, which deals with the condition of the image, “the focus shifts to remains of a different provenance – it is both about what remains in the creative process, physically cut out or cut off from the work “proper”, as well as about the intentional creation of fragmentary forms characteristic of remains or remnants. The play of meaning is joined by elements „obtained” as by-products of creation, and those specially brought into existence to testify with their structure to the importance of fragments, „which – transferred to the margins of reality – are able to shatter false structures of sense and meaning”¹¹⁸.

[116] Cf. *Ibid.* p. 299

[117] M. Smolińska, *A-representation of the (un)visible*, in *Marta Smolińska, A-representation of the (un)visible*, in *The Butterfly Effect. Humanists vis-à-vis chaos theory*, eds K. Bakuła, D. Heck, t. 2, Kraków 2012, p. 89-90.

https://www.academia.edu/8171503/Marta_Smoli%C5%84ska_Jan_Berdyszak_Reszty_reszt (accessed 12.01.2024)

[118] *Ibid.*

VI. GRAPHIC VIDEO PERFORMANCE

Encounter? Dialogue with emptiness or with presence?

Where is the Other I interact with?

There is no audience. There is no Other...

There is only the lens of the camera and myself.

I remain with my feelings, my emotions.

With my withdrawal and with my activity.

With light and with darkness.

I am present. I experience myself in truth.

In tune with nature – I listen.

I listen to myself and at the same time

I search for the Other.

I try to hear the voice of God.

It has been a long time since I stayed in touch with the autistic girl, the primary inspiration of my doctoral dissertation. I only talk to her parents and experience powerlessness in my relationship with them. This situation is symbolised by a into-camera performance performed alone. Being alone with the physical and mental matrix, I empathise with the autistic person. By acting alone, I empathise with the state of isolation and incomprehension.

In solitude, face to face with the matrix and at the same time meeting with myself, I have the opportunity to “celebrate” the presence of the “here and now: more consciously, to listen to myself and my body, and even to enter a space of meditation.

An integral component of the dissertation, the graphic video performance consists of three recordings of actions in which the idea of the “concern for the Other” materialises while the matrix undergoes the second stage of dematerialisation. This stage is also the intimate process of printing a non-permanent print – matrixing. The “second being of the matrix” is revealed here, which carries the idea of the “here and now” experience.

In my performative work, it is important to be open to circumstances, to accept what comes from the outside me at a given time and escapes my plans. It is also crucial to interact with “chance” and what is happening inside me. Authenticity is crucial too. Autistic person does not pretend, they are not able to lie – they are authentic to the bone. In solitude, a neurotypical person (this is how autistic people describe us, the persons who function in a standard way) drops all masks to become authentic.

As part of my doctoral dissertation, I created three actions-performances that took place in nature. In the first action titled “Presence I”, I perform a series of consecutive gestures. I rub salt into the matrix, which I then soak in red wine. I perform the “ritual treatment”, moving my hands in circles over the surface of the matrix in a mantra-like manner. The next gesture is to wash the matrix with water by pouring a stream of water onto my hand and “cleansing” the entire surface of the matrix. In the next part of the action, I scatter the fine and soft scraps – remains, left over after the “treatment” of the transparent matrix. I spread the oil and the fine fragments of the matrix over the surface. The transparent and openwork matrix lies on a canvas laid on the grass. The liquid and powdery substances which I cover

the matrix with spill or flow onto the canvas through the “gaps” in the matrix. In this manner, a tangible trace of the actions is created. The residues of the action are preserved not only on the canvas but also on the matrix in the form of residual substances and ephemeral materials, fusing with it into a single being. The fusion of the substance with the matrix creates their new meaning. The openwork printed form created in the first stage of the dematerialisation of my matrices plays the role of a “matrix-stencil” in the matrixing process. Traces remain in the places where the gaps are found. In the second performance titled “Presence II”, I rub mud into the matrix and then wash it with water in a similar manner.

In the next action within the performance titled “Presence III”, I use gestures using the same substances, but this action and its recording are significantly different from the previous two. In the previous two actions, the frame of the video image included the matrices lying on the grass and on a white canvas, and the hand gestures. Here, the video performance reveals my figure and the entire action along with the environment in which it is situated. It shows the place where all the three recordings occur – the garden next to my family home in the village of Dębie (located about 30 km away from Częstochowa). During the action, I walk around and perform “ritual procedures on a matrix” lying on a wooden structure that serves as a table. By doing so, I clearly refer here to the performance “Sowing”. The red dress, the second element of the performance referred to above, is relevant here.

In the introduction to the dissertation, I write about the etymology of the term “matrixing”, describing shows in which Janusz Kaczorowski used everyday objects as printing stencils, imprinting them in impermanent, loose materials. (Introduction) In this way the artist blurs the boundary between art and life. His printmaking performances are defined by “impermanence and change: destruction, the settling of the resulting traces”¹¹⁹. The artist did not secure the traces of the action, he did not fix them. Krzysztof Siatka writes, “The imprints of the roller, hammer or hands piled up one on top of the other and, in the avalanche of successive imprints, they became illegible. They were impermanent and disappeared under the pressure of others, unable to persist”¹²⁰. The performance revealed “the process of shaping a form that is impermanent and gives way to process and action”¹²¹. According to the graphic artist, we are dealing with a graphic process (action) when any object leaves a trace. However, it is not the trace that matters most here but the process of matrixing itself¹²².

My graphic performances belonging to my doctoral dissertation can be described as personal “rituals”, during which my hands drive the “constant happening movement” of loose and impermanent sub-stances. The resulting traces result from a variety of activities such as imprinting, spilling, pouring, rubbing, sifting, pouring, soaking, collecting, pulling, mixing, washing, or stroking. An ephemeral image is created. The hands in the matrix act as a natural matrix that merges with the openwork relief matrix. The boundaries between these matrices are blurred. Semi-transparent or transparent substances such as water, air (wind), oil, wine, salt, involved in the performance intermingle with the transparent matrix. Meanings and senses become materialised in between these components. Permeating and even bonding, they dematerialise each other, moving into a spiritual dimension. All these

[119] K. Siatka, *Towards hidden art. The story of Janusz Kaczorowski*, Scientific Publishing House of the University of Pedagogy, Cracow 2019, p. 95

[120] *Ibid.*, p.108

[121] *Ibid.*

[122] Cf. *Ibid.*

factors create enigmatic and indefinable rituals. Impermanent substances utilised in everyday life are transferred into the realm of graphic imagery. These liquids and slime, with their own universal symbolism, take on new meanings in my work. Through those various intimate gestures, my experiences and emotions are poured out along with the substances. I locate these enigmatic rituals between therapeutic processes and mystical healing experiences. These ineffable mysteries "represent an 'unspeakable' experience"¹²³.

My sense of touch is also important in this moving performance, which allows me to experience the present moment even more consciously. In the seclusion in which the performance takes place, I can experience a return to myself. This is because the process of transformation is also happening within me, as well as on the surface of the skin of my hands. I can feel the "painful" cleansing of the rough, relief-like surface of the matrix when acting with salt and then soaking the salt in wine. I also experience the soothing touch of the remnants of the made matrix mixed with oil. During this part of the action, the physical pain and burning sensation of the skin ceases.

In addition, I experience the warmth of the sun ray heated oil. An association with the work of Beuys comes to mind here, who used substances that are associated with heat in his works. These included fat, wax, and honey. In reference to the work *Fat Chair*, the artist writes, "I was particularly attracted to the elasticity of this material in terms of its response to changes in temperature. This elasticity is effective in the psychological realm – people instinctively feel that it relates to internal processes or feelings"¹²⁴. He also speaks of a "chemical process that occurs between people", and refers to the Tatars' "ritual belief" in the "healing properties of substances"¹²⁵, referring to a personal experience during World War II, when he was found in the wreckage of a crashed plane "[...] by a clan of wandering Tatars." The artist recalls: I was completely buried in snow. [They covered my body with fat to help me regain heat and wrapped it in felt as an insulator to keep it [...]].¹²⁶

The symbolism of gestures, substances and materials

A common property of the liquids, powders, and slime I used in the performance is formlessness. By filling a vessel, they take on its shape. Outside it, they become ephemeral. These materials not only take part in the graphic imagery within my doctoral dissertation, they also create subject matter. The materials and the gestures present in the graphic performances, have their own symbolism. According to Beuys, materials have their own energy and spiritual nature.¹²⁷ In these reflections, I will develop that idea in a brief analysis of individual substances.

The first of these is salt. In the performance "Presence 1", the gesture of rubbing salt into the matrix symbolises the concern that brings solace and healing. The printing of impermanent prints through the process of matrixing with salt occurred in two actions I developed in 2020: "Sowing" and "Under Cover".

These two actions formed the basis for the creation of the performance series "Presence",

[123] Cf.: A. Zimnowoda, *The logic of another dimension. The unrecognised landscape of a different mind*, in: *Good Silence, Bad Silence, Graphic installation, video art, performance*, p. 2-3

[124] J. Beuys, *Texts...* p.44

[125] *Ibid.*, p. 27,

[126] *Ibid.*

[127] Cf. Joseph Beuys. *Texts...* p. 36

as part of my doctoral dissertation. Salt is a material full of paradoxes. I refer to its meanings, which appear in many contexts and levels in both the Old and New Testaments. Salt can signify both the life-giving power and death. It is a spiritual factor bringing peace among people, and symbolises friendship and the covenant between God and man. In the work titled "Under the Cover", salt represents a protective layer. It shields and soothes. It is a symbol of the spiritual, healing element. The area covered with salt is an uncontaminated and clean sphere. However, it can also be a barren and dead zone. Salt is also contained in human tears, which contain people's stories with their emotions and experiences. I find the biblical connotations particularly significant.

This ambiguity of the material is exploited by many artists, including Mirosław Bałka. The installation "7+1", consisting of massive salt cylinders, conceals contradictory meanings. Andrzej Szewczyk set 21 oak tablets on the salt, "in three rows of seven, one behind the other. In this manner, he created the installation "Library – Basilica". "The earth is replaced by salt: a corrosive agent that sterilises the ground. Nothing can grow on salty soil, all vegetation and life becomes impossible"¹²⁸.

Another gesture in the actions titled "Presence" is the spontaneous infiltration of salt with wine. The combination of these two substances may be associated with the experience of suffering, the opening of wounds. Red wine itself has a complex and ambiguous symbolism. Among its many meanings, the symbolism of suffering and healing is the most significant in my work. Its ruby red colour also symbolises love, concern, and generosity. It evokes symbolism associated with liturgy and transubstantiation. Wine poured along the hand may suggest affection and the desire for love.

Washing the relief of the matrix with water intentionally refers to self-reflection around issues connected with faith, source of life, purification, healing. Pouring water on the hand is supposed to soothe by "pouring out of springs of Grace".

Water with salt refers to the Book of Kings: "*Then he went up to the fountain of water, and cast salt into it, and said, Thus saith the Lord, I heal these waters; henceforth neither death nor infertility shall go out from henceforth. So the waters were healed until this day*"¹²⁹.

Another performative gesture is the permeation of the matrices – with the remains created post factum during the creation and "dematerialisation" of the matrices (Chapter "Remains" includes more about their meaning). I pour oil on this matter spread over the surface of the matrix – the oil symbolises cleansing and the soothing of the wound

Oil signifies love, attachment and friendship. What I find particularly moving is the passage in the Gospel when Mary anoints the feet of Jesus as a gesture of love, "an alabaster flask of oil, and standing back at His feet, weeping, she began to pour tears on His (Jesus's) feet and to wipe them with the hair of her head. Then she kissed His feet and anointed them with oil"¹³⁰

The oil used in the action also has its source in the Bible, "many ill people were anointed with oil and healed"¹³¹. I am particularly inspired by this passage.

In ancient times oil protected those in combat. It was rubbed into the skin to prevent damage. Oil cleanses and protects. It warms. Exposed to the sun, it generates heat. Sharing heat. In the last action titled "Presence-3", I combine two substances – wine and oil. This gesture is reminiscent of the parable of the Merciful Samaritan, "The Samaritan pours oil and

[128] <https://zasoby.msl.org.pl/arts/view/344> (accessed 08.12.2023)

[129] 2 Krl 2,21-22, *Jerusalem Bible*..

[130] Łk 7,37-38, *Jerusalem Bible*..

[131] Mk 6,13, *Jerusalem Bible*..

wine into the man's wounds". It symbolises the dressing of wounds and care. Oil was used to relieve the pain and anoint the wounds of ill people. This is what the merciful Samaritan did, bringing help to a man attacked by robbers, "he went up to him and dressed his wounds, pouring oil and wine over them"¹³².

The last substance is the matter of moist earth - mud, the symbolism of which is not clear. It is a combination of earth and water, the life-giving ingredients. The primary ingredients of reality. Earth and water are two of the four elements. Contact with earth means a return to nature. Contact with them can mean a return to the source, fusion with nature. When mixed, mud forms an unpleasant smear. It is therefore associated with dirt, impurity, something marginal. On the other hand, it is a healing factor. The peat is a smear with healing, curative properties. It has a therapeutic effect. In the context of concern for the Other, rubbing mud into a matrix and then washing it with water may evoke the biblical scene of the healing of the blind man, "he spit on the ground, made some mud with saliva, and put it on the blind man's eyes. 'Go', he told him, 'wash in the pool of Siloam'"¹³³.

VII. DESCRIPTION OF THE ARTISTIC WORK AS PART OF THE DOCTORAL DISSERTATION

The doctoral dissertation consists of a spatial graphic arrangement made of openwork graphic matrices, as well as the recording of a into-camera performance, which I will present during the defence of the dissertation at the University Gallery. The matrices that make up the spatial graphic arrangement reveal the various stages of dematerialisation, up to a far-reaching process of the disappearance of the matrix matter in the form of its formless remains. Most of the matrices in the process of dematerialisation, which are included in the doctoral dissertation, are created from transparent material out of which some of the bent, deformed ones are combined in layers. A fundamental component of the artistic work is the effect of light (Led radiation and light from a projector) which, by shining through the matrices, reveals the image recorded in them. Some of the matrices are obscured by parchment, while a film image is projected onto others. The second essential component of the artistic work are three performative actions in the form of into-camera recordings. When the film image (documenting the performance) is projected onto the matrix screens – the document becomes a creation. It intentionally gives the viewer a chance to materialise and interpret the idea of concern for the Other in matrix process referred to.

The doctoral dissertation titled "Out of Concern for the Other. Between the Materialisation of Ideas and the Dematerialisation of the Matrix" consists of the following work:

In a Different Light II

A spatial graphic arrangement consisting of two openwork matrix-objects measuring

[132] <https://opoka.org.pl/biblioteka/T/TA/TAL/symbolika>, based on: Łk 10,34, BT (accessed: 25.11.2023)

[133] Jn 9:6n, Jerusalem Bible..

100 x 140 cm, which are "continuum" of the spatial graphic arrangement "In Another Light 1", created before I started my doctoral studies.

The basic component of this work is two non-transparent matrices, disintegrating in some places, with a figurative depiction of an encounter with an autistic child and her relatives. The deformed matter of the matrices overexposed by the filmed reflection of light rays, creating an ephemeral, fragmented graphic print (you have to check it out!). The third component of the installation are the remains, the waste created during the creation of the matrix.

In a Different Light III

Spatial graphic arrangement measuring 50 x 50 x 7 cm, consisting of three layers of transparent matrix and animation. It depicts a portrait of a girl affected by autism. The matrix is overexposed by the light of a moving image from a projector. The image is a minimalist in form animation, referring to the way autistic people perceive reality (See p.30)

In a Different Light IV

Spatial graphic arrangement consisting of three openwork and transparent matrices, 120 x 70 cm in size, exposed to light and obscured by a plane of parchment, 50 cm longer than the matrix, on which lie the rest of the matrix.

The spatial graphic arrangement from the series "In Another Light IV" refers to reminiscences of emotions and memories in the face of powerlessness in the relationship with an autistic person. Revealed through subtle light, the barely visible figure of the girl, located behind a "veil" formed of parchment, gives the impression of remoteness, inaccessibility. The light - an ephemeral tender narrator - operates with brightness instead of words. It reveals a supposedly different everyday life, "in which words are superfluous, and only persistence counts. He also refers to a reality, in which, despite the constant struggle against adversity, there is a note of hope"¹³⁴.

Powerlessness

Spatial graphic arrangement consisting of six graphic objects measuring 30 x 30 x 7-10 cm, each of which has three layers of relief, yet transparent and openwork graphic matrices, whose component creating the transience of the image is light.

In a Different Light V

Three matrices measuring 150 x 90 cm using which I perform "ritualistic procedures" during a video performance. They are one of the key components of the video installation, the most significant part of the doctoral dissertation.

Presence – video performance.

During the defense of the dissertation, the registrations will be represented on

[134] *In a Different Light 4 - author's text, in: Good Silence, Bad Silence, Graphic installation, video art, performance... p. 22*

“screens” i.e. the surfaces of fabrics, previously acting as substrates, on which the matrices rested. The fabrics are marked with traces: smell, color, moisture, after the performed and recorded in the form of film documentation of the performance. These traces are in the form of “residues of substances” used during the performance.

VII. CONCLUSION

Concluding this dissertation, I have the feeling that the subject is bottomless, both in terms of ideas and from the formal perspective. The work, in which the processes are inscribed, has only come to a standstill, and awaits the next stages of transformation. Thinking about how to arrange a doctoral exhibition, I am aware that in some time, my works will not appear as they appear right now. They will be placed in a new unfamiliar context of time and space. They will demand to be updated in the new environment of the exhibition space. I am fully aware of this and ready for this challenge, ready for another, final experiment. In my final reflections, I have the idea to highlight the word “between” in the title of the work. This word most accurately defines the nature of the work, and its changeability and transience come to the fore. The intermediacy of the work and its multidimensionality tempted me to develop individual threads, to create broader arguments concerning not only artistic areas but also those related to the idea which relates to philosophy, theology, psychology, and art therapy. The work also touches upon autobiographical topic in a conscious manner. When creating the artwork and writing, I tried to balance natural emotionality with an ever-acquired distance from myself and my environment. In the encounter with the suffering of the Other, superfluous words are not spoken. Cliches, empty words of consolation are inappropriate and confirm the Other’s feeling of misunderstanding and loneliness.

In my written reflections, I often referred to works that were created earlier and simultaneously with the creation of my doctoral dissertation. This is because it is difficult to set a clear boundary at the beginning of its realisation, to put it in a framework, separating it from other creations whose subject matter overlaps with that contained in the doctoral dissertation.

The subject not chosen from the start, “Out of Concern for the Other. Between the Materialisation of the Idea and the Dematerialisation of the Matrix” became my peregrination along the wild paths of art or the unmarked trails of life, lost or found only for a moment.

The subject, not chosen from the very start, “Out of Concern for the Other. “Between the Materialisation of the Idea and the Dematerialisation of the Matrix” became my wander along “lost or found only for a moment” wild paths of art or unmarked paths of life.

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