

DESCRIPTION OF DOCTORAL THESIS

Time for Earth. Ritual of Art Boundaries

Practical part/art work – *Time for Earth*

I was born in 1976 in Belchatow – a town located in central Poland that is famous for its huge opencast brown coal mine and the power station producing nearly 30% of our country's electricity.

In 1996, I obtained a diploma of a technician specializing in exhibitions from the *State High School of Fine Arts (Panstwowe Liceum Sztuk Plastycznych)* in Kolo, which is currently based in Koscielce.

Then, in 1998, I started a master's degree at the *Fine Arts Faculty of Nicolaus Copernicus University* in Torun. During my studies at university, while seeking my own means of expressions, I did numerous experimental projects. Meanwhile, I chose my studies major. Out of the three fields of study: sculpture, painting and graphics, I decided to study a very modern subject specialisation at the time – the intermedia fine arts in the field of graphics. At that time, our alma mater had one of the first official multimedia studios in Poland, and it was one of the first universities to offer a master's degree in this area of study. I graduated with distinction in 2002.

After graduation, I utilised my skills and education in cooperating with universities, schools, cultural institutions and private companies. I was involved in a broad range of activity covering visual arts – both fine art and design: artistic photography, documenting, film and animation, graphic and interior design for commercial purposes, art exhibitions, festivals, and teaching. At the same time, I worked on my own independent/non-commercial art projects. I have always aimed to find something new for myself – to discover my own niche and develop my own style, and I actively expanded my knowledge in this regard. In the meantime, I completed about thirty artistic presentations and several curatorial projects.

In the years 2007-11, I was employed at my alma mater, initially as a senior technician, and later as an assistant at the *Department of Intermedia Art*, teaching classes in the studios of: photography, multimedia, iconosphere, interdisciplinary and intermedia art.

In 2018, I began studies at the *Institute of Art of the University of Silesia* in Cieszyn. For the last five years, I have been working closely with my supervisor – Professor Krzysztof

Kula. In his studio, which students jokingly call *DraKula's (Dracula's) Studio*, we have carried out many performing arts projects, exhibitions and art festivals.

During my doctoral studies, I also received an artistic scholarship from the *Ministry of Culture and National Heritage* and several honourable mentions in competitions – including the *8th International Workshop of Creative Activities*, and one from Janusz Kapusta, the inventor of the *K-drone* geometric shape.

I would also like to briefly mention the concept of the practical part of my doctoral thesis titled *Time for Earth*. The excavation project – referring to the predominant activity of the local community of the Belchatow county, i.e. brown coal mining – was created on the land owned by *Polska Grupa Energetyczna*, on Gora Kamiensk, to be precise, which is three hundred and ninety-five meters above sea level. It is the highest hill in central Poland, and it was created as a result of decades-long arduous removal of *waste material/by-products* and creating a dump – a huge mound. Similar open pits, as well as other mines extracting *black gold/hard coal*, are also in Silesia – the main mining district in the country.

The site was closed off from onlookers, as intimacy was necessary for contemplation and personal reflections while the formation of the creative act was in progress. Thus, my hometown metaphorically *grounded* me for 24 hours in *Time for Earth* – the mythical escape from the passing time.

With my own hands, using an ordinary spade, I excavated a hole and built an object resembling a dugout or a mound in the shape of two intersecting, perpendicular lines. Looking at its shape, one could recognise the motif of the Greek cross – with four equal arms, or the Celtic cross – bearing an even closer resemblance in form due to its circle inscribed in the middle. The arms of the structure served as a signpost/way leading to the *inside of (the) earth*, and in its centre was a small electronic clock face.

The isosceles cross and archaic sundial included a solar panel with a battery, a metal wheel supporting the structure, and a flat plate with LEDs to indicate the hours. The chiaroscuro clock made it easier for us/humanity to perceive the passing of time – moving discreetly, silently, unnoticeably. The clock hand was intended to measure time indefinitely. This utopian idea is one of the objectives of my work.

The symbolism of the cross as well as the circle, and the cross with a circle inscribed in its centre, was and still is closely related to the solar cult, giving rise to many religious systems. It contains an element of eternal divinity, also present in Christian mysticism, which is culturally close to us.

The created installation-art object in the form of a totem is a gift of man to the *Earth*, of culture to the divine nature – *it enables the Earth to see the passing seconds of our shared existence*.

The sundial in the traditional form of a gnomon was built on the surface of the earth. The underground LED *clock hand* was activated thanks to a battery, which obtained energy from sunlight during the day by means of a solar panel placed at the top of the pole. The clock displayed the *external time* during the day, and the *internal time* at night – unnoticeably in the ground. The design is minimalist, ascetic, very raw in form, and constructed of renewable, natural and nature-friendly elements.

A unique object-staging was created on the day beginning the *Midsummer Night*, during the solar solstice from June 21 to June 22, 2023, and depended on the sunrise and sunset, and thus on the movement of the Earth around the Sun and its own axis.

Apropos of that, I would just like to add that, I have quite recently found out that the solstice day/night I chose is also the birthday of my supervisor – Professor Krzysztof Kula.

The video and photographic evidence of both the construction process of an intentional artistic act and the direct monitoring of my psycho-physical state – the necessities of everyday life – in conditions of isolation became equally important forms of presenting the effects of my doctoral thesis.

The title *ritual of art boundaries* can be understood in many ways. The word *ritual* indicates the structure of time, repetition, movement. However, the word *boundaries* suggests the possibility of transformation, changing those boundaries, as well as artistic creativity at the intersection of trends, styles and techniques. Paradoxically, it becomes a synonym for creative freedom in the broad field of *art*.

The wide range of postmodern art allows an increasingly wider adoption of innovations. At the same time, it makes returns to the past possible. The creative awareness of artists is increasing. This affects individual ways of shaping the content and form of expression.

I also took advantage of such a privilege by creating the artistic event *Time for Earth*. It contains elements of new technology, such as an electronic compass, battery, solar panel, lamp, wiring, and an LED clock designed for this occasion, which, nevertheless, refer to old iconography and earliest impressions resulting from place *characterization* – demarcating a fragment of a uniform space in relation to the sun observed in the sky.

Building a place's identity is a special procedure. In the distant past, important events or mythological descriptions helped in finding and determining it. Choosing a central point, visible from a distance, demonstrated its distinctiveness and relation to the cult or leadership of a given community. In this way, the urban planning of human settlements was created, expanding over time concentrically or crosswise in relation to the central place, where the cornerstone was laid. A custom that has survived to this day still helps us mentally establish a point of return from our journeys, calculate the distance and time required to covered it. Each of us feels more confident in an unfamiliar city when we see characteristic, vertical buildings, because they help us orientate ourselves among the rows of architecturally very similar streets. Finally, it is worth mentioning the centre that is special to all of us – the home that guarantees a sense of security. Originally, a circular fireplace was placed in the centre of the house. Perhaps this is where the phrase *family warmth* originates from.

Gora Kamiensk in Belchatow County was chosen to stage the artistic event. It is a special place for several reasons:

- close to my birthplace – the city of Belchatow,
- one of the few large-span hills in the Lodz Voivodeship, which is situated on a plain,
- the only man-made mountain of this size in the country, built as a dump from the quarry of the opencast *Brown Coal Mine* in Belchatow – one of the largest holes in Europe,
- providing the necessary isolation – ascetic, raw and uninhabited like a desert, located next to the border of Radomsko County.

To obtain the consent for the project, a request had to be sent to the owner of the property, *Polska Grupa Energetyczna*, based in Warsaw. The risk of acting on my own was not worth it, as the area is monitored and guarded by an armed patrol, who would have probably appeared very quickly and interrupted the work I had planned. Thanks to the permit, no one interfered, and it was finalized successfully.

The journey to find a piece of land began at the top of the mountain. Once found, a spade was stuck in the soil. I transformed the shapeless plane into a visible space that opened up the *Earth*. This movement established my temporary *centre of the world*.

An inconspicuous electronic clock was installed on the axis of a pole and placed *inside the Earth*. Although it was designed by man, it was inaccessible to people. Yet it informed them, quite absurdly, about the passing of time. The pole was made of oak and pine wood, which at first glance are identical. The longer oak one protruded above the Earth's surface and served as a sundial. The shorter one was installed underground. To prevent the entire

structure from collapsing under the weight of the main pole, the ditches facing the cardinal directions were reinforced with four boards. Their cross-shaped arrangement resembles the construction of an *izbica* – a defensive embankment or roads in settlements and strongholds – in the Proto-Slavic regions called *opole*. (With the difference that in the past the timbers – split logs – were tied crosswise at the corners.)

The use of a round grille (the cover of a large industrial fan), found in a scrapyard, resulted from the need to distribute the weight of the object evenly over the four corners of the excavation. There was also another important reason, namely a reference to the wheel of a horse-drawn cart used in *Sobotka* rituals – smeared with tar, burning, rolled to a nearby river or lake, and then, once extinguished, rolled back again. Initially, I was going to buy an old wheel with a metal rim for the implementation of my project. However, after assessing its weight, I decided against it, as such wheels are made of oak, ash or beech wood, and therefore usually sturdy, durable, and very heavy. The choice of an industrial element was suitable, and it benefited the installation. It highlights more aptly the time it originates from, and does not suggest a literal, naive staging. Its previous purpose (artificially inducing the wind element in a factory hall), external features (gaps and *clearances*) and origin (salvaging it from a scrapyard and giving it a second life) fit perfectly into the concept of *Time for Earth* as a time vehicle:

- a pendulum,
- the rhythmic-mythical/ritual journey to *The Island of the Day Before*,
- *construction in progress*,
- an art laboratory.

The work referring to the *ritual of the centre* is thought-provoking, encourages the desire for deeper knowledge and stimulates interpretations, but does not attempt to forcefully explain anything, impose how it should be understood, or limit its message. I realised and decided quite early that I wanted to concern myself with non-commercial ephemeral art, limit my actions to one exposure and keep the documentary records. Referring to earlier times, we can mention graphics whose matrices, having completed a numbered series, were destroyed by scratching, making the resumption of print impossible.

I created a kind of monument. It can be called a *self-monument*, a concretization of architecture by time and its lasting existence. Its form is reminiscent of simple ancient burials, excavation of catacombs. During the opening of the doctoral thesis, Professor Krzysztof Kula

had similar associations about my work. He commented on this performance: *You are preparing a grave for yourself.* (...) Indeed, there is something to this statement. The concept of the project brings to mind various human histories: distant and close, some tragic. It looks like a free-standing wordless epitaph or a panegyric *in memory of...* The gradual modelling of the excavation towards its centre resembles somewhat concrete blocks.

The presence of witnesses to history, specific points of reference, in the form of various artifacts triggers memory, and thus a sense of social identity. It extracts information from the tangible remains of a culture that preceded us. It brings order to abstract ideas about the world.

When looking for related artistic activities in my own memories, I recall a story by Wojciech Bruszewski that I heard when I was a student. He mentioned his 1988 production of *Radio Ruiny Sztuki* (*Radio Ruine der Kunste – Radio Ruin of Arts*) in Berlin. The radio broadcast a conglomeration of words from newspapers – unconsciously, monotonously, randomly, and without interruption. They were read automatically by a computer using software that was specially designed for this project. His idea was transmitting/sending incomprehensible messages into the infinity of the ether by means of sound waves.

The utopian aspect of my project is conveyed by the idea of an object in the form of a clock displaying hours for an *inanimate* matter such as earth. A charged battery is required for the clock to work properly, and this depends on the ritual rotation of Earth around its axis, obtaining energy, and appropriate exposure of the solar panel to sunlight during the day. There is a visual difference, referring to other traditions, but similar reasoning is noticeable.

The realisation of *Time for Earth* can also be seen as an answer/hint or a practical illustration of postmodern/postmodernist art. It coherently addresses the issues raised in my theoretical work, as the *Ritual of Art Boundaries* is included in it. *Time for Earth* is fluid, open to new interpretations, eclectic, difficult to classify, and thus my own authorial concept. Due to its characteristic hybridity, intermediality and contextuality, it contains compiled elements and themes of various epochs, fields, trends, styles, artistic activities, techniques and technologies, such as realism, naturalism (the selected material is raw and does not pretend or imitate anything), symbolism, futurism, constructivism, dadaism, kineticism, surrealism, spatialism, conceptualism, minimalism, open art, poor art, earth art, ecological art, primitive art, and at the same time modern, performative, interdisciplinary, multimedia art...

Looking retrospectively at my own works, I can list their common elements. The solar theme, as well as the symbolism and technique associated with it, takes a special place. The technology used supports the study of space-time relations and issues related to processuality (movement, time, and objects) in:

- project involvement – *viewer-actor-creator*,
- culture-forming involvement – *recipient-co-participant* (open to new experiences and interpretations).

According to Friedrich Nietzsche, the two opposite concepts of the *Apollonian* and *Dionysian* are united in the classical, ancient tragedy originating from the choir – music. Just as it was possible to merge various character types, lyrical and prosaic, in the form of early Greek theatre, we can currently observe an extended concept of the *triune choreia* (dance, word, music) by Tadeusz Zielinski in the form of subsequent neologisms introduced for the needs of modernity. Certain updating of terms occurs in connection with the development of thought, technique and technology: intermedia, mixmedia, interdisciplinarity, postmodernism, postmodernity, poststructuralism, transavant-garde, open, performative, textual art...

Today's performance could easily have the ancient Greek name *proagon* – meaning the premiere of the event, or *iogus* – its content. I mean the very beginnings of so-called stage plays creation, when the premiere meant an open attempt to prove oneself in front of the audience regardless of the conditions – processions/parades, fun and games in both the open air and closed spaces.

The transformations of art over the centuries resemble the life of a perceptive human, who is experiencing and learning progressively, until the state of satiety, time of reflection, re-evaluation and return to the initial thinking – a detailed observation classifying and separating trends and styles.

Even in contemporary art, for example in the work of artists-designers of the neoplasticism movement, theosophical, *eternal truths* are hidden under the guise of science and the synthesis of arts. *The New Worldview*, a book by Mathieu Schoenmaekers, containing the philosophical and artistic principles of *De Stijl*, could easily be titled *The Eternal Worldview*.

Lasting over the centuries, the unification of life with the creative process is to this day proof of an inexplicable need, and at the same time the faith of man as an *animal symbolicum* (the concept of the neo-Kantian Ernst Cassirer seeing the human as an *animal creating symbols/symbolizing animal*) in the meaningfulness of individual interpretation of the world and leaving a legacy of signs enriching the semiotic landscape of humanity. Thus, operating in

a network of symbolic forms contributes to the development of culture. Dealing with matters that go beyond the ordinary life activities provides an opportunity to develop new – spiritual ones. It stimulates and allows for a constant struggle of our sensitivity and reason in the desire to understand or articulate the still *incomprehensible... being and time*. This is achieved through all conscious creativity, focused on the message of the *mystery* concerning the human, which we still know little about. The belief in the power and necessity of the *incomprehensible* has been our driving force through the ages.

A growing number of new artifacts create a retrospective structure composed of the signs of time. A structure representative of, and readable only by humans. A unique *ritual of art boundaries: a clock-meter-diary* of thoughts and investigations, discoveries and returns, differences and similarities. When we create, in order to get closer to the big *I don't know*, we paradoxically imply further questions. Perhaps the eternal learning and signalling are precisely *our path*.

Culture, as an a priori creation of man, helps him wander in time while imagining things based on historical remnants or utopian visions of the future. The dynamic concept of the human is related to his awareness of the existence of artificial reality. The anti-naturalistic, rationalistic understanding of culture is a fundamental characteristic of the human spirit.

With reference to the two main issues discussed in my practical doctoral thesis, i.e. time and light, I believe that most recipients consider them important and worthy of attention. Without them we would not be able see the space of the world, neither real nor spiritual. The world without us, without our temporal awareness, does not exist either. Does it have such an awareness itself? This question will remain... unanswered.

In the rhythm of the eternal, interpenetrating *ritual of art boundaries* – concerning the creative aspect of our lives – we have walked, we are walking, and we will walk on, marking or illustrating our time with symbolic forms. Each of us becomes an heir, a conglomerate, an increasingly tangled web of human experiences, but we still find a unique way learning about the world through an artificial means such as culture. Similarly, reflection, deduction, knowledge, speech, and this written work can be considered as a performative aggregation of individual thoughts and choices. Complemented by the *boundaries* I have added: footnotes, references to many authors, it will be marked with a certain number by the anti-plagiarism software to distinguish a specific way of thinking, but also assist others in finding the sources.

In the *Ritual of Art Boundaries*, the meaning of human life is presented as openness and curiosity about the world that stimulate creative activity. It opens the possibility of viewing, learning, experimenting and understanding.

When creating the practical part of my doctoral thesis, *Time for Earth*, I was guided by the sense of mysticism of the *natural* clock, manifested in both: its eternal rhythmicity and sequentiality, as well as the possibility of non-linear, magical movement in time.

The human attempt to *harness time* does not help us find the historical *point zero*, but, similarly to mythology, it seeks to imagine and deduce its *fluid initial state* in the deep subconscious.

The birth of the *Sun* attracts the attention of man in spiritual and scientific matters. In both cases, this *star closest to us* is an essential element for all life.

Perhaps it was the sun that awoke the primitive man from contemplation and put him in the *state of the blink of an eye*, as defined by Martin Heidegger. Perhaps his surprise at the sight of ritual sunrises and sunsets triggered *concern* and curiosity, as well as faith in the cyclical nature of life – birth and death. As a result, various forms of reliable solar clocks were created all over the world. If certain circumstances arose and if it were impossible to update data globally via satellites, modern clocks, despite their precision, would have to return to the old calculations and methods to *measure time*. Clock faces were and are frequently fashioned as solar discs. Evidently, the iconography still reveals their origin.

Both scientific and mythical concepts mention a certain conventionality, dependence, probability, and the relativity of time. Some philosophical theories even reduce the states of past, present and future to imperceptible states in between.

The human awoke and came to life when he noticed the cyclical nature of phenomena in the world, and based on that, he realized that there is a chance, a possibility of rebirth. This occurred during observations of celestial bodies, by noticing and deducing Earth's movement around its axis. The meaning of the once set-in-motion activity has continued to this day. In case of artists, it manifests itself in the creation of new, internal, individual worlds of art. A creation that I call *philosophy in practice*.

Theoretical part/dissertation – ***Ritual of Art Boundaries***

The introduction leads the reader into my area of interest. It tells when and where I started to systematically explore the idea of timelessness and multiculturalism in selected archetypical

symbols-rituals of humanity. It describes the kind of art I practise, its complexity and inspirations. It mentions my previous experiences as well as the aims of my doctoral thesis, both theoretical and practical.

Chapter One

Point 1 describes in more detail the issues raised and briefly outlines primal spiritual human needs:

- an intrinsic desire to understand the ontology of being, resulting from observations of cosmic cycles (rhythmical, recurring, telling ritual signs on the firmament – the *Sky*, and their influence on the Earth – our *World*),
- omnipresent solar cults – their memoires and reminiscences (especially the customs from our culture circle, excluding the related, twin, proximate ones, due to insignificant cultural differences between them),
- the elements of old rituals and their comparison with the contemporary (artistic) ones.

Point 2 concerns the mythical truths and their non-linear, on-going communication method. It makes one realize how they resemble contemporary art by:

- the unifying way of archaic thinking (the essence of ritual repetition),
- the sense of the sacred as phenomenal transcendence (in relation to feelings of the presence of the *Incomprehensible* in a religious cult or in the creation of an outstanding work of art, which due to its unique properties, can evoke the impressions experienced by mystics),
- the belief in the meaning of the life of an authentic creator (living-open art).

It explores the historical background of returns to the primeval sources, broadly understood art, both in the sense of individual feeling as well as collective integration of all artistic abilities to build the structure of maximum affect.

It gives examples of modern and current art regarding the internal relationships of longstanding artistic and scientific problems, such as

- persistence in relativity, processuality of light and vision, movement and space-time,
- the importance of the topics discussed for the global culture-forming superstructure.

Chapter Two

Point one touches on semiotics – sign systems that help the human, as a symbolically thinking animal, to do things such as

- sending messages, encoding and decoding them,
- considering the importance of thought speculations and their commemoration in culture (marking one's own *point-navel-centre-horizon of reference* in art and science for further calculations about time and space),
- presenting life as a concern that stimulates, excites, and drives the contemplative being to action (combining the meaning of life with a creative attitude), and the affects resulting from sensory or extra-sensory perception as a *speaking image* – an effect generating impressions,
- conducting a silent but elated dialogue with the *Infinite* (reading the symbol as a clearance, a substitute spirit, helping to illuminate the practitioner's path and temporarily forgetting about the unknown),
- proposing the vitality and universality of the past (the passing of knowledge and documentation) in creating new future artifacts,
- awakening people's faith in the purposefulness of life (being fascinated by it akin to the truth and beauty of sometimes unpredictable natural phenomena).

Point 2 concerns inspirations, aims and formal values of my own creative works based on aforementioned selected projects and outlines the practical part of the thesis *Time for Earth*, its planning and the performance itself:

- a journey to mark out a place in a *non-place*,
- the establishment of a utopian object measuring *time for the Earth* (the installed electronic clock face is invisible to the potential audience as it is directed towards the depths of the Earth),
- the listing of the components of the work.

Chapter Three

Point 1 contains information about the ideological background and formal shape of selected artistic trends, groups, and creators in relation to their own activities. It mentions the following:

- the title *ritual of art boundaries*,
- common boundaries, features, my own interests and those of others mentioned,
- current creative freedom, versatility and unlimited freedom of creation,
- human adaptation to current technical and technological conditions,
- cyclical returns to the past, the supposed historical *point zero* (in moments of weariness), and then the re-evaluation of culture,

- the constant daily experience of time pressure (ethical choices, temporality as a measure of movement – also in contemporary performative activities),
- vanity, transience (*being-towards-death* – life as practical work or a path that loses its potential at the moment of realization).

Point 2 is a praise of the diversity of the art world and its undisturbed existence in the ritual of constant cultural modification:

- the individual coding of the message, (among others biography as an integral part of the artwork),
- the expansion and the changing priorities of aesthetic values,
- noticing the undeniable similarities between the creators of contemporary art activities, so-called open, live or performative art, to the expressive magical rituals of our ancestors (shamans seeking contact with the *Supernatural Powers*) and treating active life as energy resulting from the *concern* for understanding personal destiny and marking it to reconcile with the *Universe*).

Conclusion

The thesis ends with the summary of the presented observations and the conclusions drawn from the analysed material. It demonstrates:

- the validity of basic, eternally troubling human problems related to the perception of sensory and extra-sensory phenomena,
- ongoing affective attempts at dialogue with the *Ineffable* through the ritual loop of *spiritual/mythical* conversation (*action/prayer*),
- ontological investigations (searching for information about our personal identity and our surroundings in the universe),
- the meaningfulness of creative activities (the realization of the value of the necessary and inevitable *life-towards-death* ritual as a processual sign of the loop – the faith in the future reconstruction of matter),
- it presents in detail the execution of *Time for Earth* (goals, inspirations, references/comparisons, technique and technology, features, description and information regarding the necessary documentation/creation) and its exemplification, belonging to the *Ritual of Art Boundaries*.