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INTRODUCTION

MY SILESIA

The place. The matrix. Silesia. These three concepts have accompanied me all through my artistic explorations, the result of which is the intaglio printing graphics cycle, created as my doctoral dissertation. At some point, I realized the impact of my birthplace, my parents' professional lives being strictly connected with the coal-mine, all biographical aspects have shaped my perception of Silesia. I look at this region from the mining perspective and on this ground my vision is focused on industrial heritage. Say Silesia, and it tantamounts to industry, doesn't it? City panorama dotted with chimneys, lift shafts, water towers, industrial waste heaps, inevitably connected with numerous coal mines, steel-works, defines the place. Silesia has its solemn moments like miners' brass orchestra resounding on Barbórka, St.Barbara's patron day celebration, or shows its ominous character in temporal trepidation and fear when the ground quakes because somewhere deep down there was a rockfall. This is what My Silesia image is like. Mining-bound. Bringing reflection over the childhood spent in a terraced house, where looking out of the window, I could brood over Rozbark coal mine shafts overlooking the city, and still farther Bytom's symbols, "Christine" and "Eve" lift shafts, featuring a characteristic duo of former "Szombierki" coal mine. And so, this very Silesia is disappearing. It is changing. It is being transformed. Well, it is comprehensible and absolutely natural phenomenon. However, witnessing certain elements decay, disappearance of tradition, habitual actions together with customs which have been present with me since my early years, appears to be mentally hurting. It is not only a saddening process but causes inarticulated pain, in a way. It is not my essential desire to retrieve the bygone. I wish to accentuate that I would like to be able to keep it alive in my memory. Memory then, makes this linking element for the aforementioned concepts. And memory needs medium, irrespective of its matter, be it a place, an object, an individual or a community.

Memory enables me to discern mutability. It provides a reference point. Without its existence I would not realize whether Silesia, as perceived currently, bears comparison to its past condition. Is it different? Well, better one? Pretty worse? How far the changes have gone? For that reason I intended to find certain identifying mark, a symbol with which to describe the inevitable transience process and transformations. Yet, this mark, should serve intentionally as a retaining tool, in an attempt to halt these processes. A symbol I shall anchor at, I shall be relating images to, it will enable to formulate a reference, a way of appealing and reinterpreting the past images of nearly idyllic realm of the childhood. Silesia itself makes a carrier of (numerous, maybe even self-excluding or contrary) meanings. I believe, it makes an altering reality for each of us.¹ For some people Silesia denotes "godka" – "vernacular speech", whereas for others, it is associated with modern KTW towers or Katowice Culture Zone, in vicinity, next "Charlotte", towering over Rydułtowy. Yet, for some inhabitants of the region, Silesia is located somewhere far off Upper – Silesian-Zagłębie Metropoly, somewhere southward. There must be such people who perceive it as indistinct district, simply a temporary living place and a workplace, too. For the many, anyway (it must be noted) broadly understood Silesian feature and tradition ascribed to it, its history and identity constitute a foundation to their existence, the reason of pride and sense of belonging to a particular community, no matter which part of the region or a city quarter, they identify themselves (and I am the one, admittedly!).

¹ Different – both semantically and territorially. Within this dissertation I employ deliberately and consciously the description which is firmly, socially embedded (obviously, currently in operation, the district name) nominatives: Silesia, Silesian, Silesian trait. I sense it as more voluminous, all-embracing and it nearly always performs the role of metonymy, altogether. Silesia there may evoke assorted, at times conflicting images, they may often be extreme or more substantial, each time individually created ideas, including these of mine – My visionary approach. The terminology question was broadly discussed in the text by Anna Gomółka - Pejzaż śląski czyli jaki?, w: Człowiek jest w drodze. Pejzaż śląski – pamięć, tradycja, współczesność, Cieszyn 2008.

Silesia is important to me. The one from my childhood – marked by mining and the present one, being transformed and modernized. This is validation of the past, memory about the factors influencing me, shaping my being, and consequently discerning values in this stereotyped, polluted, cracked, ancrated all over terraced house. No wonder then that my choice was distinct and soberly taken – workshop graphics. It is associated, in the first place, with the picture built in black, predominantly based on contrasts, grey hues. This is my main artistic expression. However, it is my proclivity to draw perpetually, passion displayed since early childhood moulded my artistic choices, however. Undoubtedly, it is intaglio printing that makes proper visualization tool for My Silesian Imaginarium. Still the more, since hybrid state makes usual feature in graphics medium which is manifested not only in a workshop bond, but that of an idea as well – referring to culture facts which are beyond artistic

ones.² On one hand, interdisciplinary graphics potential urged me to expand the capabilities of a traditional workshop through the form of technological transgression enriched by contemporary digital and printing tools. Taken from a different angle, it allowed the creation of a methodological bridge, reaching beyond artistic-workshop framework, in considerations upon matrix, location, memory within Silesian context – its identity, perception, comprehension and an attempt to immortalize the vanishing process or forging a new context.

I admit, at the beginning, I was in doubt whether matrix and location have something in common. I hesitated if they could be approached nearly synonymously as memory medium, information record, emotions, memories or even identity (taken individually or collectively). For, which way, such different beings, distant, stemming from assorted scientific branches could display that far-reaching convergence in performed functions? During theoretical research, fairly soon did it appear that the researchers' perceptive modes similarities of these two concepts could be reckoned astonishingly many. Dorota Folga – Januszewska postulates graphics double existence as artistic graphics essence manifesting itself in consideration process through two exclusive stages, which is understood as the matrix and the print taken of it.³ Maria Lewicka, in turn, mentions location memory double meaning. It describes features of the place itself and a man concurrently.⁴ Thus presented dichotomy will become the analogy foundation included in this dissertation title. It will allow to manifest distinct and above all vital for the creation process, common features of both concepts. The analysis will comprise personal, subjective Silesia reception. I experienced it living in miner's family whose life was focused on Rozbark mine, which stood in the immediate vicinity of my dwelling place.⁵"

2 S. Dudzik, M. Maciudzińska-Kamczycka (editor), *Hybrid in graphics. Medium in quest of its time and meaning*, Toruń 2020, s.8.

3 D. Folga-Januszewska, *Double life of graphics, a scientific session paper Contemporary Graphics-between a unique copy and an electronic print, within MTG programme Cracow '97*, Cracow 1999

4 M. Lewicka, *The psychology of Place*, Warsaw 2012 2012, s.427.

5 This dissertation thus assumes subjective and autobiographical character, centred on the location perception from an individual perspective, in a broader identification, collectively understood context. Hence, anthropocentric perspective application which determines the description mode of the concepts valid for the research and basis on classical works making a platform for location, space, identity or memory investigation.

CHAPTER ONE

PLACE

It is unfeasible to mention a location without recalling a notion of space, which remains in opposition, almost antagonistically. As Yi-Fu Tuan puts it, these notions define common experience, are obvious, even ordinary, but at the same time – as we live exactly in a given space, sensing it nearly each moment – they perform the role of a basic element in the surrounding world. The opposition mentioned is crucial at the very stage of both concepts definition creation, since as the researcher emphasizes "(...) »space« and »location« are mutually indispensable.”⁶ In this instance, what deserves mentioning, it is convergence of the approach to the matrix perception and the print, in the matter of their existential interdependence, because it is barely conceivable for the print to exist without prior matrix appearance of which the very print was made (independently of its form).

6 Y. Tuan, *Space and place*,
Warsaw 1987, p. 13-16.

Antagonistic character of the notions analysed by Yi-Fu Tuan, is manifested in the way they are comprehended. Location denotes, in the first place, safety, stability. Space in turn, is identified with openness, volume, with the unknown then and perilous as a consequence. Following this line of reasoning, space is associated with movement, relocating, whereas location indicates an interval, halting. Space then, remains an abstract term till the cognition moment, assimilation and assigning a value to it, redefined by a man. A man as a highly complex being, creative, constituting an element of culture, is empowered with an extraordinary capability of ascribing symbols and categorizing.⁷

7 Ibidem, pp. 15-16.

Maria Lewicka`s thesis mentioned before, is reflected in the theorem cited by Yi-Fu Tuan, which claims: man is the measure of all things. Just by mere presence, although mostly unconsciously, we organize the space applying cognitive schema, which stem from the structure and value of our bodies. They make reference to directions, positions or distances but relationships with other people, as well. All these

elements, determinants, proclivities, enable us to humanize the space and to transform it into a location which is the focal point of established values in due progress of new significations and terms acquisition.⁸

8 Ibidem, pp. 51-75.

Location makes then a highly complex notion, a peculiar one, which splits into mental and real representation, which often becomes secondary in the face of subjective images, constructed in microworlds form, based on concrete information or experiences. A location becomes a catalyst for the images contained within us, it is charged with emotional context, this way remaining in relation with a man or a social community. In her considerations, Doreen Massey introduces a location concept which means entity composed of relations, which has no rigid limits – it is mutable, dynamic and woven into a sequence of social events, together with relations in time and space. The location then, changes in time but is also subject to redefinition by its users, induced by their relation to the place – acquired knowledge, imagination or artifacts. Consecutive contents, symbols or the location importance are overwritten incessantly, which leads to former meanings blurring, forming a peculiar palimpsest, which allows to interpret past behaviours and mindsets in a given community.⁹ A location persists, whereas time is the source of movement in the form of semantic transformation. Several aspects undergo changes, a location character, assigned cultural connotations, as well as people dwelling in certain space, replenishing it with ensuing layers of experiences, adding symbols and building on contents.¹⁰

9 J. Kotus, *Around the place and its relational entity*, Poznań 2023, pp. 9-16.

10 M. Czermińska, *Identity created in the memory of the place*, in *Ruch Literacki*, 2013, 6 issue, p. 594. <https://journals.pan.pl/publication/96224/edition/82971/ruch-literacki-2013-no-6-tozsamosc-ksztaltowana-w-pamieci-miejsca-czerminska-malgorzata> [access: 06.01.2025].

11 J. Kotus, *Around the place...*, op. cit., pp. 13-14.

Moreover, a location is being fueled, as it were, not only with ideas and social significance interchange process but also biotic, geographic or material evolution. It is a manifestation of broadly understood interaction between natural environment and geographic one, where, as Kotus puts it over: "Places are alive beyond man's presence and are autonomous engaging in effective relationships with a human being".¹¹ Such an assumption, although at first glance seems rather abstract, can be discerned in Silesia, where coal deposits excavation led to direct environmental interaction, which is to say, robbed the ground, the terrain perpetually struggling to exist:

"(...) twenty meters high coal seams torn out by the miners in a greedy hurry and then replaced with sand from the Rawa and the Przemsza rivers, in such a forceful transaction that

caused the earth to shake, collapse, in the process, disfigured the houses with cracks, left them devoid of beauty, moreover, deprived men of sleep, rendered them anxious.”¹²

12 K. Kutz, *The fifth side of the world*, Cracow 2010, p. 56.

Existence, presence and persistence in space provide a foundation for generating personal and social meanings bound with a given place. Furthermore, a relation with a man and as a consequence, acknowledging a place as our own, is manifested in cognition and interpretation of both, the existing meanings and these newly assigned. Maria Lewicka distinguishes six crucial features of the place concept connected with the location and meaning. These appropriate for a location include both, a boundary distinguished by an individual and concentric character of a place, which should be perceived as the case in which one place overlaps with the other integrally. The researcher aptly exemplifies the aforementioned qualities where both, a house and a space beyond it, may constitute distinct places that contain each other. This way, she emphasizes that precisely, a house is the most common example of a space, which independently of the individual's location, nearly always, performs the role of an archetypical place in personal awareness. Genius loci which means spirit of the place, appears to be next feature stemming from the location history, aesthetics, architecture or atmosphere – the determinants allowing to create sense of belonging. The vital aspect is that genius loci emits an effect upon an experiencing individual, whereas meaning emanates from an individual on the place. It is worth emphasizing that genius loci recognition is largely bound with personal sensitivity and additionally, with accumulated cultural capital. The fourth feature conforms history and continuity associated with it, where perennial spaces with long running or multigenerational history are far more likely to obtain location status. The two remaining features refer to rest and authenticity. The first one appeals to opportunity to stay and rest, conducive to meanings cognition. The latter, in turn, concerns both, the objective place permanence, resulting from its history together with subjective, honest relationship between the individual and the place, free from external influences, stereotypes or public opinion.¹³

13 K. Bierwiazzonek, *Social significance of municipal public spaces*, Katowice, 2016, pp.176-178.

In the case of authenticity category, non-place notion is evolved. It was introduced by Marc Auge. The idea which is the antithesis of a place, is described by the researcher as ”the space which evades a definition, either that of identity-based or set on relationships or

14 M. Augé, *Non-places. Introduction into anthropology of hypermodernity*, Warsaw 2010, by: K. Bierwiazzonek, *Social significance of municipal public spaces*, Katowice, 2016, p.178

15 D. Czaja, *Non-places. Approximations, revisions. Other spaces, other places. Maps and territories*, ed. D. Czaja, Wołowiec 2013, pp. 11-12.

16 K. Bierwiazzonek, *Social significance...*, op. cit., pp.178-179.

17 Ibidem, s.119.

a historical setting (...).¹⁴ Non-places remain anonymous, spaces deprived of memory or history. They are merely subsequent transitional points enhancing personal alienation.¹⁵ According to Augé, non-places are not only limited to airports or huge shopping malls but also include means of transportation, motorways and even further, refugee camps. Lifestyle transformation dominated by consumerism as well as urban restructuring, have overall impact on non-places accumulation in contemporary agglomerations which are void of relations with an individual thus becoming exemplary amorphous places. Lenartowicz indicates here lack of authenticity which stems from superficiality but also incidental individual's involvement in physical space. Edward Ralph nominates such state of affairs – placelessness. For Tuan, in turn, these are simply the place oppositions, which is to say – spaces.¹⁶

Undoubtedly, Silesia City Center Shopping Mall may exemplify adaptive reuse, an attempt to render it a resignified location. As a consequence it has become "a non-place" in Silesia. The shopping mall was opened in November 2005, erected on the site of the former "Gottwald" coal mine which had been in operation for nearly one hundred years (since 1905 till 2004). Now, Silesia City Center has become one of the biggest centers of commerce, service and entertainment, nationwide. Its selling space covers 86 square meters. It is arguably, one of the pioneer industrial sites reclaiming. Was it successful? From the inhabitants perspective, probably yes, at least it is proved so in the questionnaire carried out by Krzysztof Bierwiazzonek. The respondents were asked to indicate the most attractive area in the city. In Katowice instance, it was just Silesia City Centre with the score of 28,4%.¹⁷ Still, I am in doubt whether the repurposing of post-mining areas allowed just partially, even in the slightest, to preserve the character of the place, its specifics and to retain the atmosphere. The way I see it, the traces connected with mining tradition, the identity or regional character attributed to the terrain have almost completely faded away on this particular matrix. An image which can be obtained, is reduced to a bland consumerism sanctuary, with a towering mine shaft which in fact serves as a carrier of the shopping mall's grand logo, lit as if it were a Christmas-tree during a religious festival. Luckily enough, the case of Silesia City Centre makes an ignominious exception among the many, and what is the most important, successful, postindustrial revitalized heritage in Silesian areas. Unquestionably, the new Sile-

sian Museum Headquarters deserves the title of one of the most spectacular examples of a harmonious blend of modern functional requirements and local identity preservation. It is situated on the former "Katowice" coal mine premises. The scheme designed by the Austrian Design Studio – Riegler Riewe Architekten, assumed placing the main part of the exhibition underground. Adopting such a solution is clearly evocative of the site's mining past. It allowed to expose the revitalized post-mining buildings or the former coal mine lift shaft refurbished into the observation tower. Polish Radio National Orchestra headquarters is included into Katowice Culture Zone, it makes a consecutive project, just besides Silesian Museum and International Congress Centre. The building was designed by Konior studio. Its façade echoes Nikiszowiec architecture – a mining, monumental settlement where the window recesses were painted red. The aforementioned accomplishments encompassing the former coal mine site, make a cohesive development. This complex has transformed the derelict brownfield site into a modern area which contributes to the city and Silesia rebranding. At the same time however, it honours the heritage and the identity of the place.¹⁸

Still, analyzing further the idea of a location and its properties, it is important to emphasize the essence of these qualities which appeal to both, significance and genius loci – bound identity, such which are missing in other, socially experienced places. Hanna Libura indicates that the essence of the place "(...) is considered through intentionality which depicts places as the most important, pivotal centers in human experience."¹⁹ The key role in this process is attributed to personal reference, be it conscious or not, to a particular space fragment, in which an individual is present. The place significance may become vital for an individual, accurately, owing to stimulants causing that a certain area is perceived as a place.²⁰

Tadeusz Slawek, in his considerations, presents genius loci as a form of personification which allows an individual to establish relationships with the space taken out of its previous locus context, thus fostering contemplation concerning not only the place itself but personal presence in it, as well. It contributes to multidimensional process of discovering vital matters. Moreover, genius loci shifts perception revealing the intrinsic place identity. The place then becomes a starting point for experiencing process, unrestricted by history. Furthermore, this makes relations` combination acting on

18 Although, I focused on Katowice Culture Zone, I would like to mention that post-industrial redevelopment projects have been successfully accomplished in numerous cities of Silesian agglomeration, for example Business Education Centre "New Gliwice" located on the site of the former "Gliwice" coal mine, next, "Wilson Shaft Gallery" in Katowice, Contemporary art Gallery "Power Plant" in Czeladź, "Maciej" Shaft in Zabrze, historical "Ignacy" coal mine in Rybnik, "KWK Poland Towers" in Świętochłowice, or former "Orzeł Biały Mining and Metallurgy Plant" headquarters in Bytom, "Guido" coal mine with "Queen Luiza" adit which is incorporated into Coal Mining Museum in Zabrze. Mining estates also undergo revitalization process, Zgorzelec Colony in Bytom or Workmen` Colony "Finicius", then "Kaufhaus" in Ruda Śląska, to mention just a few. The enumerated places are the proof of creative and responsible transformation preserving place identity with bestowing new functionality, concurrently, in order to address contemporary, social-cultural needs.

19 H. Libura, *Municipal space perception*, Warsaw 1990, p.70, by: K. Bierwiazzonek, *Social significance of urban public spaces*, Katowice, 2016, p.180.

20 K. Bierwiazzonek, *Social significance...*, op. cit., p.180.

two planes: A location and an individual, but also relations with other elements in space, which are beyond its boundaries. Owing to a place interaction, a person is able to regard them from a different perspective.²¹

21 T.Ślawek, *Genius loci as experience prolegomena in: Genius Loci. Studies on the Human Being in Space*, (ed.) Z. Z.Kadłubek, Katowice 2007, pp. 5-15.

Nearly each interpretation, a description or an attempt to define genius loci term is dominated by its elusiveness (indeed! After all we discuss genius loci!), its intentionality, its agency, together with extraordinary, even mythical power, which it can manifest. However, it should be taken into account that it is a place, thus a particular space element, which remains a source of unique ambiance, and meanings carrier. Besides, it is a driving force for a relation appearing in due time or a dialogue between a place and an individual. In the case of such a phenomenon, again an analogous thought arises, where a place takes a form of a matrix, whereas, whatever a place "emanates" both on a place and an individual, everything that can be decoded, interpreted, plays the role of a print taken from the place matrix. Then, all the components of the spirit of the place are nothing else but traces on our matrix. Later, they can be noticed on the print. Correspondingly to the case of a place, this print comes under assorted interpretations depending on sensitivity, knowledge, the skill to decipher the recipient's particular cultural code. In my estimation, Silesia which I describe, is filled with such places – potential matrix places which are the mine of information concerning its past, traits, unusual atmosphere but also the community attached to it. Moreover, an exemplary place-matrix need not be represented by commonly recognized, postindustrial city or a district symbol. Nearly each element of urban tissue may exemplify it and it will be a piece of larger, meaningful universum – in this very case – Silesian universum.

Unfortunately, only but a few mine shafts and disused industrial plants chimneys, still existing in the landscape, together with metallurgical plant infrastructure remains, next workers' houses settlements and even singular terraced houses, scattered here and there among concrete tower blocks, well, even mining waste – all these elements convey incontrovertible value, the truth and memory about the people creating this region, its past days and character. It may be infused with the longing for the bygone, still vanishing or already lost heimat. In order to compensate for this, a bit pessimistic constatation, I shall quote Tadeusz Ślawek who claims that:

”Genius loci is not only a consolidating experience (image sequence, vibes, context), but possesses preserving power, it is not limited to retrieving what was lost, but in the first place, it makes us aware that culture is dealing with loss; it does not honour specific locations or people, but highlights anonymous effort. It documents both, human resilience and vulnerability of a given community.”²²

22 Ibidem, p. 21.

The quoted words bring hope that specific Silesia image which became a starting point for my artistic activities, will be lasting on particular places-matrices, and the painting taken of them, despite certain changes, new traces, still will be evocative of the original image. Silesia complexity, its interpretational power, polyphonic character, equivocality make this region ”(...)not only a specific physical area but a meaningful field, generating various associations, too, not reality, but vision, a construct, poetry (...).²³

23 I. Copik, *Upper Silesia – Unuttered Stories, in Anthropos. Narrations for Upper Silesia, part 1. Upper Silesia- place NR 22/2014*, p.41.

All these factors are confirmed in numerous examples of fascination with Silesian traits, both in the research domain and on the artistic field, as well.

The aforementioned Tuan observation that ”man is the measure of all things” may also be interpreted in the context of individual and subjective perception of the surrounding world. Such statement seems to be specially legitimate in pondering over identity, understood as the total of perpetually constructed, personal self-perceptions, judgements and convictions. Vision of Silesia presented by me corroborates that very approach – subjective one, based on personal reminiscence, regional experiences, encounters with its landscape, observing tradition, and ultimately, related to identity which evades definition here. It is worth emphasizing, both, in collective and individual dimensions, identity rests just on subjective reality perception. During the process of identification, this view of the world, the landscape, or the image (in the case of place-based identity), are reckoned to possess deeply engrained own ”self”.²⁴

24 K. Janas, *Nowa Huta. Spatial identity*, Warsaw – Cracow, 2020, p.135.

Processuality is an intrinsic aspect of identity. It comprises of a sum of constantly transformed personal opinions, beliefs, convictions formulated by an individual. Regarding Silesia distinctive regional character, it only accentuates them.²⁵ Certain justification for this state of affairs is, observed by Zbigniew Rokita, ”several cities concentra-

25 Ibidem, pp. 130-131.

tion (...)”, in which ”(...) little space is left for emptiness (...)” and which, at the same time, ”(...) fostered in the Silesians strong bond with the whole region, and not only with their own town.” Additionally, the author propounds irrefutably that ”Indisputably, no one in Poland feels as strong a connection to their heimat as they do”.²⁶

26 Z. Rokita, *Kajś (Somewhere) A story about Upper Silesia*, Wołowiec, 2020, p. 199.

In the course of subjective territorialization of space and subsequently shared identity, social awareness of a given territory significance is fundamental. It facilitates lasting and conscious relationships creation. Additionally, it can be enriched with moral commitment, in which trust, solidarity and loyalty towards particular group members play key role.²⁷ It is eminent trait among the coal miners in Silesia. Relying on colleagues during a shift has always been the cornerstone of working underground. This was reflected in solidarity and loyalty especially in times of protests against closing the coal mines down, irrespective of the method, whether a hunger strike underground was at stake or a trip to Warsaw so as to defend the workplaces, but to protect social ties and identity cultivated over time. What is more, the discussed values or strong relationships, together with attachment to the place of employment expanded to include entire families. A coal mine was not limited to being a breadwinner but a protector as well. It organized free time, holiday trips or various attractions for children during festivities throughout the year. In this respect, outstandingly strong mining work ethos is worth mentioning in this place. It was nourished and passed down generation to generation. Then, the idea was elevated by Kazimierz Kutz in his film making. Honestly, it contributed to generating a specific myth of a Silesian man. The iconic figure, on one hand wins respect of the family (the opening scene in the film ”The Pearl in the Crown”) but on the other hand, the man fights to establish his firm position, his heimat (”Beads of one rosary”). An individual therefore, draws on the spatial knowledge amassed by previous generations.²⁸ Following the trail of graphic analogy, rightly the traces copied onto the identity matrix are reflected in oncoming generations.

27 K. Janas, *Nowa...*, op. cit., pp. 147-149.

28 Ibidem, p. 159.

Both, individual and collective identities are created relying on subjective reality judgement. It becomes inherent dimension of identity with particular place, an image, space or a landscape. Hence, a place depends on people who develop it. It should be perceived as cognitive mapping of meaning constructed by its inhabitants. This way, it constitutes a social and historical construct then, yet does not fall under

geographic category.²⁹ Thus, identity is contingent upon the existence of territorial collective that identifies itself with given space.³⁰ What will ensue if certain communal space begins to disappear? As far as it is transformed, the space can be redefined, new trace can be located on the matrix. However, when the matrix, which is viewed as a location deeply embedded in personal or collective awareness, ceases to exist, the question arises, what will become of the memory of the place? How will it influence the communal identity? How will it shape next generations identity? Is it conceivable that reminiscence will persist without its immanent carrier? If so, then how long? To which extent?

29 Ibidem, pp. 133-137.

30 Ibidem, p. 175.

Memory does not possess self – recovering capability. Its existence and persistency depend on continuous dealings, passing down, concepts acquisition, together with their validation. Memory does not remain as static condition then, it undergoes dynamic reconstruction through interactive communication processes within an individual or a social environment, owing to language application, an image exploitation or due to observed, repetitive ritual practices. Regarding these factors, it does not constitute an autonomous entity with self-reconstructing capability. Memory necessitates in mediums, void of which, it would not be empowered to transcend the span of one generation or an epoch. External memory retention forms are indispensable for development and communal memory durability in the long term.³¹

The accelerated pace of history in XX century causes social memory erosion – migrations, breaking away from traditional bonds, and as a consequence erasing memories connected with particular places, eventually – the past days annihilation.³² This process is inspirational (this dissertation makes a proof of its kind) for collecting what has remained, evidence for existence of ”something” – whatever it might be.³³ Maurice Halbwachs corroborates my statement, namely that memory does not function beyond social context, even if the individual’s memory is at stake. Jeffrey Olick emphasizes the fact that memory does not tantamount to history, because it bears no direct connection to an individual life, contrary to collective memory where the past forges identity in an active way. Therefore, memory serves the present, enabling to construct personal image or that of a community, though it is not an accurate events record.³⁴

31 A. Assmann, *Spatial memory. Forms and cultural memory transformations*, in: *Collective and cultural memory. Contemporary German perspective*, (ed.) Magdalena Saryusz- Wolska, Cracow 2009, p. 112.

32 M. Lewicka, *Psychology...* op.cit., p. 407.

33 P. Norra, *Between memory and history. Les lieux memoire. Representations*, 1989 pp. 13-14, quoted in: M. Lewicka, *Psychology of a place*, p. 407.

34 M. Lewicka, *Psychology...* op. cit., pp. 409 - 426.

In the beginning of the chapter I alluded to dichotomy of place memory, suggested by Maria Lewicka (place memory). It is reflected in double meaning, describing features of the place and human traits, altogether. The researcher demonstrates however, that place identity reveals the same quality, and though they differ from each other with "a remembering" subject, still two kinds of places remain interwoven with each other. In the first instance, the inhabitants are the ones "to remember", relying on the acquired cognizance of the place which they inhabit. In turn, in the latter case, it is the place to perform a pivotal role and "remembers" on the grounds of an urban layout which has not been subject to transformative activity for centuries, either through its inhabitants actions or authorities' decisions, in the form of naming streets or erecting monuments. Crucially, Lewicka emphasizes that places particularly enriched with urban prompts, are far more likely to transmit their history.³⁵ Zbigniew Myczkowski describes contextual design in the process of identity formulating. He implies that "Tradition and local culture conform a set of agents linked to overall historical layers (material and immaterial ones) of a given location, which are set in current landscape. They constitute a rudimentary place – identity element viewed as an area and landscape interior perceived by a man"³⁶

35 Ibidem, p. 427.

36 Z. Myczkowski, *Landscape as identity expression in selected preserved areas in Poland*, Cracow, 2003, p.34, cit. by: M. Smolorz, *Invented Silesia*, Katowice, 2012, pp. 91-92

Similarly, Connerton presents dichotomous memory differentiation. The researcher divided them into two types: "memorial" and "locus". The first term appeals to the form of art commemorating the past, consciously created, viewed from outside. It may as well be ignored by an observer. Locus, in turn, makes an integrated, culture-bound part in a place experiencing internally. As regards collective memory it assumes a paramount role to artificially created and formalized commemorative sites. Experiencing urban artifact from an exterior viewpoint will always diverge from that of lived reality. This exclusive case means the place appropriation, as well as the space or the urban construction, typical of the dwellers who claimed the space, knowing it intimately.³⁷ This also confirms the distinction between "an outside perspective" which is synonymous with history, then "emic perspective" constituting collective memory, as suggested by Maurice Halbwachs.³⁸

37 M. Lewicka, *Psychology...*, op. cit., p. 434.

38 K. Janas, *Nowa...*, op. cit., p. 179.

Nevertheless, the process of experiencing a place in the form of psychological and cultural appropriation, yet entails the fulfillment of specific conditions congruous with phenomenological approach

of such researchers as Edward Ralph or Yi-Fu Thuan, who draw a distinction between a meaning-laden place and "a non-place". The first condition enabling locus-type memory, is of a limited scale, together with clearly defined boundaries which will provide spatial reference frames. Unstructured mass of sprawling city does not favour making memories. The way of internal experiencing the place makes another criterion. It is determined by personal life pace and navigating the city. Taking a stroll provides closer and deeper observation than a car drive. The third requirement concerns historical continuity. Destruction of cultural, material heritage, streets, squares, city quarters or simply certain buildings demolition, to be replaced with another, an action effectuating memory loss, to add to misery, city legibility deprivation. Subject to such practices, the city and its dwellers alike, lose their identity, the value gradually acquired over generations, stemming from continuity and persistence of identity experience, which inevitably leads to cultural amnesia. As a result, the location ceases to perform the role of the identity matrix (the carrier of collective memory), but alternately, it may enhance countermeasures adoption in order to protect the heritage.³⁹ To exemplify with, growing awareness of necessity to preserve historical, industrial architecture monuments, is just manifested in Silesia, refurbishment of derelict worker colonies (Zgorzelec colony in Bytom, Ficus workers' colony, Kaufhaus housing estate in Ruda Śląska). All they contribute to preservation efforts integrally with unobstructed care to sustain Silesian traits with its multifaceted cultural heritage and identity. It is manifested through tradition cultivation and respecting memory, even locally (Rozbark Enthusiasts Society). It is also accomplished through promoting and pride in vernacular speech "Silesian godka" and even struggle to obtain language recognition. Memory retention through typical, regional identity attributes, assumes various, at times trivial forms, particularly within internet environment. As Barbara Orzeł admits:

"(...) Silesia has become a manifestation, a matrix for folklore, creative activities – precisely: born-digital folklore which is a blend of the past, the present day, stereotypes, new phenomena, various cultures – visual, textual and audio, worked out by the users, »fans« community. (...) Silesian trait has become common »souvenir«, a modern item, something trendy, worth »wearing«. It has successfully targeted mass imagination (...)"⁴⁰

39 M. Lewicka, *Psychology... op.cit*, pp. 434-437.

40 B. Orzeł, *Consumed Silesia. The identity on the pop-culture playground, in Anthropos? Narrations for Upper Silesia, part 11. Upper Silesia – NR 22/2014*, p. 47.

Zofia Oslislo, in turn, in her considerations about Silesian identity current condition, introduces the term – the New Silesians, referring to people who, irrespective of their birthplace, according to their free will, chose to live in Upper Silesia and to run their professional careers there, too. The New Silesians are united by their commitment to the socio-cultural development of the region, sustaining memory, historical research, nurturing local customs, language preservation, civic responsibility for public space. Owing to such stance and engagement they boost a favourable image of the region, abroad, too. They represent different vocations and walks of life, but the most prominent aspect featuring their involvement, is beyond doubt, their responsibility for the place they live in. It is manifested in their tangible actions.⁴¹

41 Z. Oslislo, *The New Silesians. A City, design, identity*, Katowice, 2015, pp. 58-59

CHAPTER TWO

MEMORY CARRIER

Lewicka presents two, distinctly drawn agent sets determining urban identity narrative. The first one assumes socio-political context in which municipal image is influenced in the institutionalized mode, with media application, historical impact, an encyclopedia or textbooks. Memorial places selection or held festivities, and the way they are commemorated are thus formulated. Next factors pool, accounting for urban identity narrative branding, is constituted by the city itself, integrally with its architecture and urban plan. Both, architectural and municipal traces – as Lewicka labels them, are not only reminiscent of the past but are valid also for their "urban prompts" – they are stimuli for collective memory.⁴²

42 Lewicka, *Psychology...*,
op. cit., pp. 439-444.

Plenty of such memory agitating cues, their mediums, the aforementioned urban prompts, can be spotted in Silesia. Typical, brickwork buildings, side by side with such obvious symbols as the coal mine lift shaft towering over the city, water towers, mine chimneys or smokestacks, further on, whole workers' housing estates, and even detached ones, yet numerous, scattered about, workmen' terraced houses (luckily still present) – all these structures remain memory repository. Apparently, it is reflected in the locals' shared regional identity. In the miners' housing district instance, this is red-painted window recess or covered with green paintwork to variegate the space, and thus to indicate the steelworkers as major community of the dwelling place, to enumerate but a few landmark symbols. Next, pigsties add to the whole picture, though disused, have changed their utility, still can be met in workmen' settlement areas, among terraced houses, particularly. Besides, magnificent mansions left behind by noble families who inhabited Upper Silesia at the beginning of XX century also deserve to be noted. To exemplify just a few, stately Ballestrem Palace in Plawniowice, Schaffgotsch manor house in Kopice, currently under renovation, or in still another instance – revitalized

palace outbuilding of the Tiele-Winckler family Palace located in Miechowice. Then, last but not least, anchor bolts serving as construction reinforcement securing them from mining-induced damage. Notwithstanding their form, operational range or a function, if they were not, then the already commented on urban prompts would be destined to vanish. These Silesian ubiquitous metal elements which adorn the facades, fixed there to stabilize the walls of the buildings vulnerable to damage, stand a symbol to me, but they also safeguard industrial, regional legacy. Metal rings with a diameter of 30 or 50 cm prevail. They are often embellished, with a regular petal relief pattern or carved lines conveying a look of thick, wooden wheels spokes. The latter ones attracted Waldemar Jama's attention once. He created the photographic series titled "Silesian Chariots". I shall comment on broader in this text, further on. In addition to the aforementioned rings, square or rectangular washers of different sizes and dimensions are applied, too. Besides, vertical mounting rails, often dividing the lateral facades of the buildings into two equal parts. Railings also decorate corner posts as well as staircase entrances. Often shorter, mounted at regular intervals, they create a distinct, recurring motif on the terraced houses facades. They are also encountered in aesthetic tenement houses erected at the breakthrough of XIX and XX centuries, yet are found in the buildings typical of Polish People's Republic architectural period, too. Others, however, give the impression of scattered haphazardly in random places, where the structure has already begun to yield, cracking into a spiderweb pattern. An anchor plate expression is derived etymologically from an anchor or a brace, which appears significant in its factual setting but metaphorical function, as well. Tying opposing walls, they make the buildings rooted in Silesian soil resist the negative impact of trembling earth which sinks now and again, due to excavation. The earth attempts as though in vengeance, to swallow whatever exists on its surface. Structural anchoring of Silesian buildings dates back to the beginning of XXth century. In some extreme circumstances, in Wirek for example, where the ground subsided by several meters, due to mining activity, appropriate measures had to be taken unconditionally, namely huge timber – framed structures were employed to shore up the walls. Uncertain future of these houses and their dwellers is painfully visualized in desolate sites where the adjacent buildings succumbed eventually to relentless force of nature, disappearing irrevocably from the urban view. Mosaic of different paintwork schemes, wallpaper pieces remain as still tangible evidence of

their former rooms existence. Today, they are featured on the lateral walls of lasting neighbouring premises. Many urban locations within the agglomerations confront mining-induced damage, although my hometown – Bytom has become a notorious symbol of exploitation aftermath. Despite the geologists firm objection, predatory coal mining which took place since 1954, steadily led to the city`s structural failure.⁴³ In the face of growing market demand for coal, coal deposits excavation became fuelled inordinately, encompassing the area located directly beneath the city. It resulted in the major mine barrier pillar breaching. It led to well over 300 fissures and rifts on the surface.⁴⁴

Repercussions of the political decisions implemented by the then-authorities have been pestering the Silesians, up to the present. In one of Bytom`s districts, namely in Dąbrowa Górnicza, the ground subsided by 37 metres. Even though, coal winning side-effects were noticeable in the interwar period, the destructible forces increased after the war. On that account, since 70-ties the houses were dismantled one after another with grim systematicity. It culminated in a moment when Dąbrowa Górnicza practically ceased to exist. I myself keep in memory the view of St. Joseph church being demolished, located in that very district, together with residential complex, and much frequented fast food chain restaurant, located in Karb site. This city space has been particularly affected by unsustainable black diamond exploitation. Neighbouring Miechowice district with Bobrek and Szombierki alike, suffered losing many tenement houses irreparably. Former workmen` colony, situated in Szombierki or the Town Hall in Miechowice shared the ominous fate. Silesia is dotted with such spots throughout. In Lipiny, belonging to Swietochlowice site, the local church was pulled down even in thirties, on account of security precautions. Next, Kuznica Rudzka, affected by Godulla concern industrial operations, lost the hospital concurrently. Colony "Marcin" Shaft captured on camera in "The Taste of the Black Earth" – the film directed by Kazimierz Kutz, disappeared irrevocably. The fate was shared by Colony B. from Zaborze. Developed in sixties of XIXth century, it used to be the biggest mining accommodation complex, dedicated to the miners employed in "Queen Louise" coal mine. It consisted of more than 300 houses, was populated by over ten thousand people. The Museum in Zabrze named it "Atlantis of Zabrze", while holding the exhibition showcasing the colony.⁴⁵ It must be thereby emphasized that such rapid and exten-

43 K.Iwanicki, *Familoki. Silesian microcosm*, Gliwice, 2003, pp. 183-184.

44 J.Drabina, *History of Bytom from medieval ages to contemporary time 1123-2010*, Bytom 2010, pp. 342-343.

45 K.Iwanicki, *Familoki...*, op. cit., pp. 185-188.

sive urban deterioration boils to, first and the foremost, personal tragedies of the residents. A fragment of reality lost in this manner is bound to irreparable social changes, challenging long-established bonds and social spatial relations. It affects the place reminiscence, the city, and even the region. Thus, it is associated with an overwhelming sense of loss. Homeplace should always be safe, intimate and lasting. Unfortunately, plenty coal mines and steelworks used to be the breadwinners for tens of thousands people, on the other hand, they happened to take away lives mercilessly, or shatter biographies drastically, even long time after winding up the enterprise.

The referenced items constitute what Connerton alludes to, as "locus", in cited before dichotomy of architectural traces. They are featured unintentional, natural, contrary to purposefulness characteristic of the trace hallmarked by "commemoration". Locus reflects urban character, styles the erected tenant houses or churches complied with, materials they were built from. It also pertains to details, in the form of embellishments, inscriptions or coats – of-arms`. It also involves street layout, squares or district division including street corners known only to a few. Following this line of thought, it incorporates hemmed-in courtyards (quite often found in Silesia), or staircases, with all their typical details, including their smell. Hence, we remember in a sensual way, the embodied locus makes then procedural memory of its kind, as opposed to the trace, marked "commemoration". It is, in turn, classified as declarative, to put it explicitly. We retain in our memory – the location, the residents, but not the manner we experienced the place. This the reason why it is locus type trace, more difficult to remove than commemoration. It makes a motif for social explicit memory during superimposing place identity process. Time is the leading determinant therein, it is fundamental factor to attachment bond. People whose family has been inhabiting the area for generations, display definitely deeper affinity for it. This entails improved memory and knowledge, enriched with applied rules awareness, observed customs and cultivated tradition, sociocultural values passed down intergenerationally.⁴⁶ Since architecture, even on the area afflicted by massive migration of the indigenous inhabitants, which is viewed as historically-induced transformation side-effect, still remains as the most enduring and apparent regional attribute. It performs the medium role, retaining sociocultural legacy and so guards lost identity memory.⁴⁷

46 M.Lewicka, *Psychology...*
op.cit., p. 447-448.

47 M.Smolorz, *Invented Silesia*, Katowice, 2012, p. 93.

Collective memory creates sense of belonging to a given community, it makes sociocultural values accessible, thus imbuing lives with meaning. Then, it acts as sociocultural generating agent. The current reality image is based on historical normative and axiological foundations.⁴⁸ Memory retention is then, on one hand, dependent on people who remember, on the other hand, it is related to memory mediums, present beyond human cognitive potential. These agents enable identity formation within social memorizing process, deeply set in the present day. It is undergoing perpetual redefinition. This clarifies the fact that memorial places, void of underlying emotional weight, vital significance, symbols, deracinated, become historical places exclusively.⁴⁹

It should be emphasized that in collective memory context, we build on memory owing to communication processes. Reminiscence then, is strictly related to continual information sharing as much as frame of reference remains active. Therefore, disruption or vital change in the communication process, or may it be reference frame fading away, all of them result in oblivion.⁵⁰

In the selected Upper-Silesian film and literature narrations` evaluation, Ilona Copik concludes that: "(...) Silesian space is maintained almost entirely within the poetics of lack, absence, reflects decadence awareness."⁵¹ Such a defeatist outlook on the current region`s status, makes imperative discourse part concerning Silesian identity. It is manifested both in the researchers` utterances and the artists` voices alike. This is affirmed by Aleksandra Kunce claiming: "Silesia today is a gap, fractured identity."⁵² In reference to the above observations, I admit I find them congruous with my conclusions and feelings. It turned to be my artistic inspiration rendering my considerations focused on matrix and locus analogy contextually Silesia – bound in this dissertation.

48 W.Czachur, *Linguistics of memory. The assumptions, the research range and analytical methods*, in W. Czachur (ed.) *Memory at linguistic approach. Theoretical and methodological issues*, Warsaw 2019, p. 12.

49 A. Kędziora, *Memorial places in managing the memory of the artist*, pp. 2-8, in: *Managing in Culture 2012, nr 13, from 2*, pp. 101-111.

50 J. Assmann, *Cultural memory. Script, memorizing and political identity in ancient civilization*, translator: Anna Kryczyńska-Pham, Warsaw 2008, p. 53, by: W. Czachur, *Memory Linguistics. Theoretical and linguistic issues*, (ed.) Waldemar Czachur, Warsaw 2019, p. 12.

51 J. Copik, *Upper Silesia – unuttered stories*, in: *Anthropos? Narrations for Upper Silesia, part1 Upper Silesia – location*, NR22/2014, p.40

52 A. Kunce, Z. Kadłubek, *Consider Silesia*, Katowice 2007, p.241

CHAPTER THREE

SILESIAN MATRICES

Silesia, Upper Silesia, Upper-Silesian – Zagłębiowska Metropolity? Silesian trait, The Silesians or maybe Upper-Silesians? Multitude of nominations, terms, appellations which implicate arguments as far as historical or administrative region division is concerned, then its character and identity as a consequence. For many years, these dilemmas have occupied the minds of the researchers, the publicists, the artists, but the local dwellers no less. A debate focused on the region is, and I do hope will always remain relevant. Because can we visualize such a day when Silesia, its local residents or Silesian trait have been ultimately specified and at the same time, this definition fully endorsed and adopted by the residents and the researchers, without detriment to the complexity of the most unique cultural amalgam in Poland?⁵³ Borderland character determines pronounced local community distinctiveness from foreign elements, any exogenous influences. Long-lasting process of cultural and assorted traditions permeation, originating from, at times, diverging sources, at certain point in time, confronts the residents with difficult but also conscious resolution as regards personal affiliation. It may entail a veritable struggle to work out identity. However, for people from the borderland it appears to be unquestionable necessity.⁵⁴ Multiculturalism of Silesia makes immanent and the most conspicuous regional hallmark determining its power, dissimilarity an certain advantage over other regions in the country. Hence, any unification attempts, all-encompassing approach, comprehensive standardization mode, such resulting in finite, constrained and concrete model or a definition, would be totally destructive for Silesia.⁵⁵

Language, and more precisely ”godka” – vernacular speech, makes the fundamental component of Silesian identity, Silesian legitimization a certificate, in a way), as Barbara Orzel puts it. ”Godka” makes

53 P. Bujak, P., *Identity of Silesia. A reality or XX century creation? Borderland. Polish Borderlands studies, vol.4, nr1*, 2016, p. 61 https://cejsh.icm.edu.pl/cejsh/element/bwmeta.element.desklight-3c9801a5-421a-4401-b-600-8b9cf435ef8b/c/bu-jak_t4n1.pdf [an access: 30.06.2024]

54 J.Tambor, *Cultural determinants of identity. Silesia District residents' identity*, 2010, p.4 https://www.academia.edu/78544830/Kulturowe_wyznaczniki_tozsamosci_mieszkancow_wojewodztwa_slaskiego_Tozsamosc-identyfikacja [an access: 30.06.2024]

55 Ibidem, p. 13.

the most common regional belonging justification. It is altogether, the most powerful attribute initiating particular chain of associations and symbols.⁵⁶

56 B.Orzeł, *Constructed Silesia. Identity on a pop-cultural playground (?)*, in: *Anthropos? Narrations for Upper Silesia, part II. Upper Silesia – script NR 22/2024*, p. 44.

Moreover, it is the most recognizable, as well as the best acquired element of Silesian trait. Common, captivating Silesian words or evocative phrases with their interesting sound become rudimentary constituent of the things promoting the region thus reinventing the Silesian traits. Irma Kozina labels it a semantic design (semantic "dizajn" – original script).⁵⁷

57 Z. Oslislo, *Silesia designed. How New Silesian create contemporary regional identity through the design (dizajn)*, in: *Anthropos? Narrations for Upper Silesia, part II. Upper Silesia – script NR 22/2024*, p. 68.

Matrices can be constituted by certain preconceptions on Silesia but also ideas deeply embedded in local awareness and the ones appearing beyond the region. All they exist as the oldest trace on our matrix, apparently fading away, exploited, yet still conspicuous here and there. Thus drawn matrix analogy perfectly depicts deeply ingrained in us (but in strangers, too) vision of industrial regional character, with its typical landscape, densely dotted with plenty colliery chimneys and shafts together with steelworks constructions. The landscape undergoes gradual changes, vanishes and in the process our recollections of the mythical, industrialized land, blur mercilessly. The space where the coal mine constituted axis mundi for the many. Life of a Silesian man employed in industry relied on family, was supported by religion and labour. Such axioms contributed to the myth of a perfect Silesian as opposed to exogenous influences, whatever could be distinguished as "non ours" was refuted from the integrated image. In practical terms, a coal mine was perceived as an element of an arrangement, but in the first place, remained the source of income, providing maintenance for a few generations. In social or even spiritual dimension, the mine was perceived as a focal point to organize lives of vibrant community whose members established strong bonds. These sustainable relationships were maintained owing to elements of which their world comprised, rituals, symbol, tradition passed down on next generations. Young people were growing to realize that their adult lives, just like their youth, would be presumably connected with mining, still the more if their family background fitted that pattern. The workplace strictly defined their social status, it provided financial assurance but made a source of anxiety due to real peril. The coal mine was subject to sacralisation of its kind. It was empowered to foster life on one hand, yet on the other hand, it could violate life any moment. Mining hazard awareness added

another element, contributing to a specific miner's portrayal. The formative element was standard, presenting just a symbolical figure of a Silesian, whose work ethos, deeply rooted in mind, had underlying heroism. In my judgement, the above components construct the primary, original matrix on which next items of Silesian identity are built on. Although, they are less and less visible, still resonate on the print made of this very matrix.

The coal mine as the cornerstone – axis mundi – sanctified and emanating spiritual atmosphere, emotionally charged, conveys cultural significance, mental images and Silesian trait script. Despite the blurring of elements that until recently resonated in municipal space, this axis evokes memories of the past, this way determining its multi-layered character.

The coal mine used to arrange nearly every aspect of its employee's life, imposed appropriate, sanctified pace, settled miners and families within workmen's housing estates which undoubtedly favoured social ties reaffirming, together with attachment creation, as well as dedication to vocational commitments. Socially-stratified workers' settlements designed as compact living spaces became all-duty houses. They ensured security, stability but also boosted the miners' self-esteem, granting them, in a way, privileged position over the rest of society. The coal mine rewarded toil, ordering communal lifestyle in the housing estates, it assumed paternalistic role.⁵⁸ Therefore, the sense of belonging, regional attachment to the sanctified, productive ground, were so firm, that strongly engrained in local inhabitants identity. In Silesia instance, heimat – comprehended as little homeland, expanded beyond the home, and even the settlement, reaching the workplace. All the more so, that connection to the mine was nearly always virtually "lifelong". However, contemporary association with the coal mine, though perceived as distinct, is no more so strong as in the previous generations. Mining tradition does not constitute the inviolable monolith with expressedly encoded cultural patterns pertinent to clear division into female and male roles or religious observance. The latter was particularly manifested in miners' resorting to St Barbara's protection. Traditional code of values and the lifestyle inherited side by side with miner's vocation, still vanishes, and maybe exists no more? Surely enough, it does not prevail as compared to a few generations ago. Systemic transformations, restructuring, led to particular Silesian community signature traits loss. The coal mine

58 D. Lubina – Cipińska, (ed.) *Silesia Ilike America. Discussions Portraits Reportages Essays*, Kozsęcin, 2008, p. 18.

as a trace on the matrix – a symbol of Silesian lifestyle gradually ceases to exist. What was left of it, it is a few elements of industrial architecture in urban space, successfully preserved. It was feasible to recontextualize them, to remap the matrix, adding another layer which results in the image transformation that can be obtained owing to the above actions. Something that cannot be fully embraced any more, still resonates.

Not without reason, do I commence the considerations on the matrix and its original trace, just from the coal mine and due associations, stereotypes or myths. Since, as far as my evaluation is concerned, the industrial trace is the paramount agent modelling since early days perception of a common working-class member lifestyle. It is acquired through being immersed in this environment which tantamounts to being a part of a given community and the region stakeholder. Industrial character of Silesia had been determining Silesian image and its society for the decades, regionally and beyond Silesian boundaries alike. It constitutes its indispensable part, it moulded characters, influenced attitudes, but cognitive processes led to stereotypes and myths emergence. Development of Industrial Silesia relied heavily on human resources and cultural heritage stemming from rural Silesian community which established plebeian culture, blended into the urban fabric of the nascent industry of that time. Peasant sons legacy underlies typical, regional working-class culture. Peasants inhabiting neighbouring or more distant villages migrated towards industrial facilities in search for better job opportunities. Rural background and conduct were subject to mutations clashing with industrialized environment pace of life. It required orderliness and adapting family life routine. Concurrently, both worlds of the time, in their rural and the industrial contextualities, interpenetrated continuously. Generally, it should be viewed as spatial and cultural impact. Despite engagement in industrial plants, many workmen still abode by their agricultural trade, cultivating land and keeping breeding cattle. In the mid – XXth century Ernest Knippel rendered this peculiar agro-industrial merger in his graphics. In vivid scenic graphic of Katowice, the artist immortalized low-rise steelworks` buildings looming by the Rawa water reservoir. The foreground is occupied by harvesting folk and grazing cattle, in showing such a setting, the author deftly depicted rural-industrial coexistence and evolving specific cultural synthesis of that time.⁵⁹ Stefan Suberlak too, one of the leading fine art printmaking representatives in Silesia,

59 M. Lipok-Bierwiazzonek, *The immediate world. Anthropological sketches on Upper Silesia, about tradition and culture*, Tychy 2008, pp. 43-50.

juxtaposed compellingly dual nature of the region of that time. In the artist's linocut created in 1964, entitled "The Earth 3", in the composition clearly divided into two halves in which the ground level makes the axis, the artist confronts two worlds building narration about a man and his relentless struggle with the ground in two dimensions, its surface, external aspect and simultaneously with the inner, underground structure. Presented as though a live spectacle staged at the spectator's eyes, the scene acts like a tale about the regional land inevitably intersected, life-giving, yet dangerous, degraded at the same time. The Earth which yields crops, on the other hand, is the deposit of strategic natural resource. Applying contrasting line weight additionally accentuate stark contrast between the depicted worlds, thus underscoring multilayered story about labour, transformation of an individual position in the industrial landscape.

Specific settlement quality, namely workers' districts appeared as a consequence of migration from the villages towards the industrial, urban area providing employment opportunities. Terraced houses or workers' housing estates were mushrooming in the coal mines and steelworks surroundings. Soon, they prevailed in many cities and regional districts. Now iconic, redbrick houses operated autonomously from the main municipal structure, Nikiszowiec, carefully designed area, stands an example. Their homogenous character was acquired owing to strong community ties established through ethnicity, workplace and job, maintained tradition was portent, too. Religion was vital component of Silesian working class. Everyday life revolved around the work schedule but common religious festivals celebration, as well. This sense of belonging and shared professional identity was further strengthened by saint Barbara, the miners' patron cult together with saint Florian, the steelworkers patron.⁶⁰

60 Ibidem, pp. 50-42.

Nowadays, industrial heritage dwells in the realm of curiosities, it is a fragment of, by the way, not so remote history which resonates in some parts of Silesian cities owing to already reinvented post-industrial architectural objects. This can be found in many, still crumbling buildings, very often valuable, imposing architectural pearls, unparalleled in European scale or even worldwide, (to exemplify with: Krystyna Shaft or Heat and Power Plant Szombierki in Bytom). The repurposed industrial buildings or sites still remind of their former utility, with already mentioned, original trace on the matrix, which is still discernible, its previous purpose is still legible, the information

of the historical Silesia and its inhabitants is accessible and simply tangible. Regardless of the object's functional change and its ensuing new assumed meaning, its form and initial use, they still remain a valid information medium. They serve as a reference to the heritage of the location, to people and events associated with it, currently and in the past. The veritable truth is, that persistence over time is the core to the projective role of a place and boosting memory processes by means of it – therefore, its historical consistency, which according to Felicity Morel-Edniebrown is "the cornerstone of the place".⁶¹ What is more, Krzysztof Bierwiazzonek recalls in the book *Social significance of urban public spaces*: "(...) a place consists of three components: a physical location, meanings assigned to it, activities undertaken at the location"⁶²

61 F. Morel- Edniebrown,; *Wither Genius loci?: The City Urban Fabric and Identity in Perth, Western Australia. In: The role of place identity in the perception, understanding, and design of built environments*, (Eds.) H. Casakin, F. Bernardo. Bentham Science Publishers Ltd, 2012 p. 209-227., cit. by: K. Bierwiazzonek, *Social significance of urban public spaces*, Katowice, 2016, p. 178.

62 K. Bierwiazzonek, *Social...*, Katowice, 2016, p. 176.

63 M. Lewicka, *Psychology...* op.cit., p. 509.

The principle framework in my theoretical inquiry, the same elements as core attributes, can be assigned to the matrix. To the same extent as a location, it must be generated, appear in the public space, assume a physical form. Next, it is an artist to give it a meaning, to set it contextually, to add a layer of complexity to it, irrespective of the theme or intention which stem from knowledge and experience capital, besides, which originate from emotions and depend on the author's background and identity. The last element – activities, in the matrix case, can be divided between an artist and a recipient. The author imparts a meaning, imbues the job with rich contextual associations, selects a problem or a theme he wishes to render. The recipient, in turn, according to his experiences, cultural awareness, identity or sensitivity, decodes the information applied to the matrix, by means of a print produced from it. Such a print acts as a prompt making a memory trigger. Marta Lewicka described this phenomenon, referring to the architectural and urban spatial traces which precisely performed this task.⁶³

I cannot remain indifferent in the face of particular convergences in terminology describing the notions: space, location and matrix. Because the trace is what the artist imprints on the matrix as his signature. Their form may assume various shapes – from the fine – line etching, through the spot achieved by aquatint technique, a specific pattern left by a mezzotint rocker up to wobbling, soft, though at the same time, violently dry-etched and deeply incised lines on a metal sheet, or further on, incidental scratches in the protective varnish layer. All these treatments on the matrix surface possess a common

feature – they are the evidence of the artist's creative endeavour, his intent, determination, mindset or personal experiences. Emphasizing memory matrix analogy and place memory, implicit in this dissertation's title, it is worth quoting Alexander Kopka, for whom Memory of Silesia denotes:

”A trace which is fading away, which is vulnerable, susceptible to any external interference, open to manipulation. This trace comprises not only personal reminiscence, wistful and mourning ties, the threads connecting our fate to the past, but also shared memory fruits or communal remembrance effect: these which are preserved but undergo continuous blurring, and such, which were erased from our space irrevocably, from what was »between« that left behind a different trace turning into the void.”⁶⁴

Aleksandra Kunce, in her considerations on Silesia and its identity, operates with a notion of a trace while commenting on etching cycle made by Jan Szmatoch. The works display miners' colony windows, which the researcher designates as iconic. Simultaneously, she is pondering the question, if Silesian feature in the artist's graphic works stand for a symbol or a trace which is misleading and guiding, concurrently, thus showcases the multifaceted character of the region, this way emphasizing its complexity and diversity. Following this line of reasoning, the researcher postulates that Silesia illustrated in the cycle mentioned above, has no definite shape, remains ambiguous, on the contrary – it is undergoing transformations, subject to debates and equivocal. This observation is validated by the considerations and mental images concerning Silesia and unrelenting discourse on the regional identity. Eventually, the window becomes an epitome of yearning for the past – home, the place, the family, tradition and the people who built it on, longing for their customs, habits deeply set in Silesian sense of belonging, embedded in the matrix, the original trace of which is gradually disappearing, yet, at the same time, is drawn over with something new.⁶⁵ The researcher highlights that the window denotes the edge which may turn out to be a clue to the entirety of Silesian culture, evocative of the past however, turning into nostalgia. In this context, it must be perceived as a matrix, triggering specific associations of an individual exposed to such Silesian image. Moreover, the window initiates clear division from the beholder's perspective, witnessing the known and the unknown

64 A. Kopka, *Language, identity, memory – Thinking of Silesia as Deconstruction*, in: *Anthropos? Narratives for Upper Silesia, part I. Upper Silesia- a location*, NR 22/2014, p. 53.

65 A. Kunce, Z. Kadłubek, *Consider...*, op. cit., p. 63

realities, respectively. Again, it boils to inquiries about the region and the observers qualities (irrespective at which side of the window the onlookers are found). The Silesians? The Polish? The Germans, and maybe the Europeans?⁶⁶

Unquestionably, the matrix constitutes a common denominator for all printmaking processes. It performs the role of an image medium, captures culture code, but also (possibly, above all) serves as an artistic creation record. In my performance, the aforementioned properties are so crucial that with subsequent matrices forming, I aim at preserving particular fragment of my Silesian imaginarium. In creation process, I reminisce about my childhood at teenage period, when my parents' lives, and obviously mine and my brother's daily routine, revolved around "Rozbark" coal mine, established in 1870. It became the main source of livelihood for a large part of the city, but chiefly, for the residents of the housing estate bearing the same name. I have spent there all my life. I fondly recall the image of my father who, after returning from the shift, with coal-rimmed eyes, was placing his leather bag in the closet. He always put there sandwiches and tea, prepared by my mother. I treasure in my memory my visits to the Chain locker room at "Rozbark" mine, where my mother had been employed until it was liquidated in 2004. Being a child, I felt privileged to enter through the main entrance, just to appear after a short while, in the huge (as it seemed to me then), empty miners' meeting house (cechownia). My every step echoed there. While I stayed there, Saint Barbara kept an eye on me from her canvas. Her holy image was set up on the magnificent, wooden altar, always graced with fresh flowers. The altar was situated on the wall opposite the entrance. Many a time do I recall the view from the white oil-painted timber window, at my grandparents' high floor flat of the brick workers' house. I often lounged on the inner windowsill, resting on a cushion, being propped by my grandpa, I watched admiringly "Rozbark" mine yellow wheels of blue lift shafts, spinning at awesome speed. I used to wonder then, if my father was not going in the mine cage (szola) down to (fabled then for me) "660". My grandpa and my parents alike, had their entire working time dedicated to mining. I used to play with medals my relatives had been awarded. They were invaluable to me. Red, oblong boxes with silver eagle embossing, hid more or less impressive decorations which highlighted the strenuous underground toil. My grandparents lived in close neighbourhood to my place, which was

the reason why I spent great deal of time there, including most of weekends or holidays. They used Silesian dialect – "godali". Besides, Radio Piekary accompanied them all days. The old, worn-out Grundig did the job. Thanks to that broadcasting I became accustomed to "godka" vernacular speech). Back then, I knew most of the radio hits by heart. The song telling the story of "Karlik" – Charles. Traditionally, this song was performed by a male-female duo. One day I, and my class companion, a real class beauty, sung it during "Barbórka" celebration. My free time passed on a large, spatial, inner courtyard cluttered with a few rows of pigsties (chlywiki) which often served us as a playground. With other children (bajtle) company I ran about the yard (plac) on end, my grandparents kept an eye on me from the window. Coal was redeemed on a voucher. My grandpa was throwing coal into a pigsty or a coal bunker using a huge shovel, popularly known as "hercowa". Next, during winter, that coal was carried upstairs in the buckets (called kibliki), in order to stoke the kitchen stove, as well as that stove (kaflok) which stood in the corner of the sitting-room (pierszyj izby). He stuck to his rituals and followed his habits, one of which was his beer run to the shop nearby – an absolute must. Upper-Silesian make – as a rule. Mining is associated with numerous performed rites, arranged miners' beer taverns, local beer pubs. Bringing back my grandma's story, I know my grandpa would sit there after the shift, much to her dismay. Being engaged in mining also guaranteed many privileges, such as food vouchers redeemable in selected shops. Up till now, I have been able to recall the view of the cashier removing the coupon stub or still the more, how I rejoiced at being able to pick out something at the cash-desk, because the total amount due for the shopping, turned out to be a few zloties too low. Further privileges, delightful for children from miners' families, were occasional, connected with religious festivals, packets stuffed to the brim with sweets. Frequent trips, children's campuses, festivities made the housing estate teeming with life. Many amenities were brought by the mine – magnificent sports venue, including a basketball court, a tennis court, a football pitch with partially covered seating, next to enumerate, an outdoor swimming pool, where we cooled down on scorching days. Thus described prosperity came to an abrupt end with the mine's final closure and inevitably coincided with partial demolition of the above structures.⁶⁷ My Silesia is also the swelling sound of an approaching miners' brass band, resounding through the housing estate on the morning of Saint Barbara's Day. At the same time, it is the uncertainty regarding

67 Through a competition organized by the City of Bytom as part of the Bytom Participatory Budget (Bytomskie Budzet Obywatelski), a project was selected in 2020 involving the renovation of the stands and the former training pitch, which was implemented in subsequent years. At the time of writing, another phase of revitalization of part of the extensive sports complex has been announced, this time encompassing the modernization of the main pitch of GKS Rozbark, within the framework of the Bytom Recreation and Sports Zone.

the future of my parents, my brother, and myself, as I watched my mother during the blockade of the city's main artery – Chorzowska Street – in the course of protests against the liquidation of her workplace. I vividly recall the televised images from Warsaw, where the police used water cannons against the demonstrators, and where my mother, together with a whole group of underground workers and administrative staff, had also "set out for Warsaw" to quite literally fight (ultimately without success) for her future. These memories are also deeply intertwined with a longing for the sight of the large inscription KOPALNIA ROZBARK, situated on the mine's retaining wall, built in 1886 and topped with a wrought-iron balustrade. For decades, this inscription greeted those entering the city as well as those getting off at the tram stop located on the opposite side of the street, which until recently still bore the name "Rozbark-kopalnia". Everyday life in a mining family is, unfortunately, also marked by fear, which intensifies every time news spreads that there has been a "collapse" or a "fatal accident" at the mine. I distinctly remember the sadness inscribed on the face of the neighbors' child – when only a little younger than I was – on the day he lost his father underground. All these memories are inextricably bound up with the rhythm of the mine's life and the industrial past of the region. I deliberately speak of it in the past tense because, as I have mentioned, the mine was closed in July 2004 and, with it, most of the structures that had towered over the city, including the headframes. The city's skyline was then adorned only by the (at that time) preserved 75-meter chimney, which I could always see when walking or riding along the road "through the mine", as the residents called it. It was a long straight road, culminating in the chimney, which seemed to rise from among the many trees surrounding the complex from the side of the housing estate, forming a kind of small park (called the Director's Park) with a few benches. As a child, I collected chestnuts there, and later, as a teenager, I spent time with friends, sitting on those same benches in the shade of the chestnut trees. Majestic, yet bereft of the company of the "Bończyk" and "Stalmach" shafts, the solitary chimney – abandoned to its fate and in no way secured – gradually tilted away from the vertical, only to finally collapse in 2019 during preparatory works for the revitalization of the "Bończyk" shaft engine house and the boiler house of the former mine. All these elements and recollections constitute Silesia for me. They coalesce into my subjective image of the region – my lived experience of place – which I seek to evoke, arrest, and, in a sense,

rescue from oblivion by means of graphic art. In my work, this is precisely the role played by anchors (ankry): architectural elements typical of a region subjected to long-term coal extraction, which for me symbolize the persistence of what exists on the surface and which, at the same time, in a certain way protect against what takes place at the level of the underground workings, deep beneath the surface of Silesian cities. Anchors protect and quite literally envelop with care residential buildings, institutions, and the remnants of industrial might. They pierce the facades of familoki (traditional Silesian workers' houses), tenement buildings, and even relatively recently constructed apartment blocks. At times they embellish, and at times they disfigure, accentuating the clearly visible deviations from the vertical in walls, windows, or stairway entrances, accompanied by striking and unsettling cracks or attempts to fill in the gaps with new bricks or concrete, visibly contrasting in color. Yet they enable Silesian architecture, identity, and the memories embedded in the "anchored" and complex space of Upper Silesia to endure. The anchor thus becomes a symbol of the persistence of Silesianness, and of place as a carrier of meanings, significations, collective identity, and, finally, of the genius loci that directs us back to the spatial reality of the region. It is, however, the viewer who must take an impression from the matrix: by reading, interpreting, and ultimately filling the space between the anchors with their own experience and imagination.

CHAPTER FOUR

MATRIX

Matrix appears to be indispensable for the artistic graphics creation. No matter what form the author provides for his piece of art, matrix is fundamental to its coming to existence. Owing to it, artistic graphics peculiarity and uniqueness is emphasized, compared to other visual arts. The matrix value is complemented by the retention capability with subsequent reproduction and simultaneous materialization of the visual information (but not exclusively) contained therein. As far as making a print is not necessary, the original matrix function awareness is unconditional. It promotes two-track approach executed through status modification of constituent elements in graphic medium. Consequently, it enables thorough exploit of the symbolic capacity engrained within. The illustrated attitude favours then, seemingly foreign elements inclusion – understood in whichever dimension, workshop one, ideational or mental. Graphics are characterized by an, almost, exceptional capacity for forging hybrid relationships. Such art is interspersed with artistic activities and non-artistic routines, which perceived superficially, diverge from academic art or its classical understanding model.⁶⁸ That is why, the interdisciplinary graphics` potential, as I regard it, makes the way to step out beyond traditional artistic and workshop constraints, thereby establishing a methodological framework for artistic considerations over the matrix, its character, significance in artistic graphics, and respectively – its standing standard, its memory in identity context, Silesia perception and comprehension. In my activities within graphics, I partake in unrelenting seeking the ways of workshop expanding capabilities in matrix intaglio prepress. Thus presented project exemplifies contemporary techniques combination, digital printmaking with 3D modeling application in the very image production. The next stage involves transferring thus created design direct-to-substrate UV printing on zinc sheet. The matrices, being

68 S. Dudziak, M. Maciudzińska-Kamczycka (eds.), *Hybrid...*, op. cit., pp. 8-14.

treated with such techniques employment were the starting point for me, to subsequent intaglio workshop study focused on traditional operational modes – from etching, through aquatint to drypoint.

Due to medium characteristics, artistic graphics process is conditioned by the factual matrix pattern disappearance. Moreover, prior nature interpretation and synthesising into an idea or information underpins the entire process so as to drive the following stage of symbolical retrieving of physical picture aspects. Thereby, the matrix initiates the process, plays crucial role in the creative endeavour. It serves as the artist's experience and creative activity medium, it allows for concepts registering. Although, in the complete piece of art it is removed from the sight (as a rule), still remains as the basis for the accomplished picture.⁶⁹ In the instance of the present doctoral dissertation, the matrix, though inconspicuous, ultimately hidden from the viewer's sight, made the basis, it was prerequisite item for the off-site reflections, strictly, beyond the workshop deliberations, centered on its importance, feature, projection mapping in reference to site-specific memory in socially produced space. Anchor plates inherently also possess many physical properties of a matrix, they might as well become matrices of their own accord. They actually do, since if for some reason, the anchor plate was removed from the façade, still it leaves a clear mark, an indent, an impression on the surface. Repeatability of the anchor plates on the facades conveys the idea of the identity matrix with its multiplication capacity. The anchor plates' surface as such, exposed to various weather conditions, corrosion-induced reactions, undergoes changes in time. These may be compared to the artistic matrix exploitation..

69 Ibidem, p. 15.

Multiplication, repetitiveness, ability to create collages and quotations incorporation, aptitude for appropriating artistic expressions – all these enumerated factors constitute an immanent quality of the graphic medium. In the final effect, it renders the retained information-code factual, in the form of an image, thereby commenting on the civilization-cultural tapestry of reality.⁷⁰

In numerous artistic implementations a matrix becomes an authorized element in the creation process, at times, acquiring nearly autonomous status of an object reaching far beyond traditional approach to the relation a matrix – a print. Quoted already, Janusz Kaczorowski, by means of his actions infuses the graphics with a performative

70 S. Dudzik, *What Is Printmaking Needed for Today? 1. The Process of Subjectivizing the Matrix and Its Consequences*, in: S. Dudzik, M. Maciudzińska-Kamczycka (eds.), *Hybridity in Printmaking. The Medium in Search of Its Time and Meaning*, Toruń 2020, p. 30.

character. The matrix becomes a tool with almost ritual significance, assuming a descriptive role altogether, it defines the artist as a graphic artist. Antoni Tàpies in the series "Suita Catalana" (1972) highlighting regional identity, conferred upon the human body the matrix status employing naked footprints in order to achieve visual record of sardana – Catalanian, national dance. Anna Leśniak was the one to explore the motif of a human body as a matrix, too.⁷¹ The artist recalls: "In my design, I myself, made the stuff for my own work of art, I went through an experience and got others involved, as well"⁷² In terms of the reference: the spectator/ the participant, the artist/ the matrix, the body of Leśniak acted as the matrix, whereas the spectator engaged in the performance, dealt with the print taken from a part of the artist's body, painted beforehand. Urszula Janowska adopted a comparable strategy in her diptych "The marked" where she resorted to taking prints of her partner's body and hers, too. Thus gained traces were sent to particular people with asserting their human subjectivity. Experimental dealing with the matrix as an object is revealed in Louise Nevelson creation. Her collage compositions from the 70-ties, shaped as lead plates, they were produced by means of relief moulds, impressed with the intaglio technique. Utilizing such crafted forms wins them the status of a print, however these pieces of art can be treated as sculptural objects, on one hand, and from another angle, they are potential multiplier-type matrices. Dual status of the artwork is apparent in gypsography printmaking by Andrzej Kalina. Just like in Nevelson case, the final pieces of art function as traditional prints, but the material employed here reveals clearly their matrix-like character. Maria Bonomi, a Brazilian artist harnesses the full graphic potential of the woodcut's constituent parts. She weaves a visual discourse through varying pigment hues and textural intensity in unique, one-of-its kind prints with modular printing application as well as the sculpture matrices themselves in the form imposing wooden blocks. They collaboratively conform an installation-based in its form, visual composition. A Mexican artist, in turn, Jose Enrique Porras-Gomes, takes into account socio-cultural context while selecting the stuff to serve as a matrix. Aiming at accurate idea transmission, he uses wooden shipping pallets in his series of artistic works, "Essport products", where he immortalized young people silhouettes in suspended animation. In his designs "Viento de Mexico" and "Colnema circular" (2007) the artist used engraved bowling balls so as to obtain a matrix-object, the picture of which, elaborated in a performative undertaking, became one of

71 Ibidem, pp. 18-20.

72 A. Leśniak, *The Artistic -Research Method. Aims, Means and Examples of Application*, in: *Art and Documentation*, no. 20 (2019), p. 128, https://www.journal.doc.art.pl/pdf20/art_and_documentation_20_biomedial_le-sniak.pdf [an access: 17.08.2025]

the many variations dependent on the application mode. In doing so, the artist breaks the traditional relationship between the trace embedded in the matrix and its representation manifested while printing. Andrzej Nowicki fleshed out a similar idea. His "Printing balls" draw attention to sculptural properties of the matrix. In the art work "Cohélet's Ball" (2014) explicit surface roughness and imperfections expose intricate link between the material and the image. The matrix, first captures reality on its surface, then subsequently reproduces and processes the accumulated information unveiling performative graphic construct.⁷³

73 S. Dudzik, *What is... op.cit.*, pp. 22-27.

The exemplary works cited here, confirm graphic medium hybrid nature, determined by artists' solutions as regards the form and the matrix meaning, within the process itself and in the completed piece of art. A wide options variety with the fusion of digital and traditional art, together with those extending beyond the traditional printmaking, along with the matrix inherent potential, account for this medium singularity.

It is vividly reimagined by the artists. Visual information mapping makes an example of complex interdependence between an idea and its visual manifestation. Regardless of the matrix format, the artist imprints it with a mimetic action to objectify the image in the printmaking. The print then, taken off the matrix loses its primary connection with reality because it is not its faithful copy but a projection mapping, intrinsically bound with the matrix properties and its visual capacity. Hence, there is a deviation from reality in graphics. It is empowered with reality-processing capabilities. It manifests the dialogue between the conceptual and the medium material form.⁷⁴

74 *Ibidem*, p.15

Referred to several times, visual memory encoding and retention constitute shared element in a matrix and a place analogy. In matrix instance, it is uncompromisingly implicit because it retains the dry-point needle burr, almost each and every gesture of an artist (be it incidental or be it by mistake) which violates its physical integrity interfering with its structure. This trace is long – lasting and permanently retained so as to be rendered as a graphic print:

75 W. Przyłuski, *Memory in Matter – Its Role in Shaping Printmaking Executed in Intaglio Techniques*, in: M. Juda (ed.), *Academy 2007+*, Katowice 2007, p. 126.

"(...) reflecting past experience (...). It is a memory-retaining system, a temporal score of varying dynamics and range, allowing for the recovery of the initial information"⁷⁵

The same properties are consistent across the location, irrespective of its form, extent or a place. A place bearing signs of human presence interacts with a man, thereby this imprinted presence holds a tangible record of an individual or collective existence. These traces are subject to tearing away in time, may be altered, accumulate and overlay, as well. They constitute certain reference point on the timeline of personal experience. They are evocative of particular events, memories, emotions or persons. They make a lynchpin of our past, our identity-forming experiences and sense of place. Apart from changes in physical appearance over time, they may undergo simplification in relation to a human being, or become a subject of mythologization, to a certain degree. Metamorphoses, will therefore arise, not only on a physical, but also on a mental level. The staged axis of the layering process and interpreting the lasting trace that resonates with us, makes the common element for the matrix and the place. It structures our identity until its physical manifestation occurs. And so, what will ensue at the point of utter disappearance of the medium itself? Will our reminiscence of the past (alike the trace) succumb to erosion without the existing memory trigger? It is the naked truth, that until the medium persists, the memory is retained. It may be subject to transformations during successive traces-meanings layering, it is persistence anyway to safeguard matrix process continuity.

In my pursuit of exploring the matrix fundamentals, I find many similarities to the described layering of meanings in urban space. Nevertheless, the artist deals with the matter, intervenes in medium`s surface, imbuing the idea with meaning and sensitivity through numerous technical actions during the printmaking procedures. Irreversibility is recognized as the normative in the artistic manipulations on the matrix surface. The artist`s inability to reverse the state from a moment ago. However, owing to his consecutive actions, he is capable of influencing the physicality and character to attain the desired effect, which will be revealed only in the final print. Leaving any trace in the surrounding space though, immaterial, "only" marked with our presence in a given place), we are able to shape mental print achieved from the matrix of the past creation also at the point of inner historical recollection, with pertinent events, people or associated emotions, relevant to this mental operation. However, by no means "the interim" stage can be omitted. Changes taking place in our lives, all we have lived through, in consistency with the

history of the place will have direct impact on the final image to be evoked. The ultimate action in printmaking is, literally, reflecting the mirror image encoded within. Although, maybe it is a print, as the result of manipulations over the matrix that constitutes its mirror representation. Hence, the location assumes a synonymous role of a matrix carrier which in the palimpsest traces layering, activates the projection of thus encoded self-defining memories. In the course of time, this image may evolve, as the case is with the matrix till its completion. This way, it is feasible to make a print representing current but halted process, a state print which in the location will represent memory states. Time marked by a physical struggle with the matrix matter is crucial in the creative process, searchings and in traces accumulation. Comparably, this is the case with the location instance. Mutations over time shape our perception and lead to cognitive reframing. According to Stanislaw Urbański arguing in his commentary on Janusz Kaczorowski artistic quest:

”(...) you encounter graphic actions when whatever the object is applied as a matrix, which is to say, in compliance with the laws of correspondence, such that an isometric mapping exists between the matrix object and the image.”⁷⁶

76 J. Kaczorowski, S. Urbański, *The Notions of Printmaking*, Kraków, June 1978, exhibition catalogue, Galeria Mały Rynek, Kraków, cited in: G. Banaszekiewicz, *The Notions of Printmaking II, The Matrix. A Concept of a Contemporary Systematics of Graphic Processes*, in: "Zeszyty Artystyczne" 2010, no. 20, p. 11.

If the place is approached as a matrix category, a relation in the form of a place – an individual, can be treated as one of the matrix creation steps. Following this line of reasoning, a relation of a human to a place may exemplify matrix-base imaging – analogous to graphics instance. The difference lies in the fact that this image is "solely" a subjective construct. Considering our being as this process result, then, in the relation, a man – a place, a human being becomes the final print of a place's matrix, crafted over the years. On the other hand, this relationship may turn out mutually symmetrical. A place "designs" an individual (or a community), and an individual or a community influences a place, storing an information developing it on a creative substrate, simultaneously). Inasmuch as, graphic medium, besides an obvious information and sign synthesis capacity, can underscore received patterns surrounding us. Using printmaking which is the counterpart of the amassed information categorization, medium may perform cognitive function for cultural matrices, socio-matrices or mental, observed in real world.⁷⁷

77 S. Dudzik, M. Glikowski, *Printmaking as a Research Tool. A Dialogue on the Matrix*, in: *Journal: Art and Documentation*, no. 14, 2016, p. 96.

Anyone who explores the subject of printmaking or the matrix encounters the seminal discourse of Dorota Folga – Januszewska, indicating two-phase approach in graphic conceptualisation. Principally, my idea coincides with that of the researcher, who postulates that:

”(...) graphics specifics lies in its double existence, duality of form and intention. This art is featured by dual-viewpoint, hence, it is not a matter of the rules abiding while handling a plate nor a print run that counts. This underlying artistic graphics precept is essential to create so compelling, art-enchanted world where the vestige of energy in the physical work realization is recognized only in its trace.”⁷⁸

As regards the design submitted by me, I would extend the matrix creation process onto the location context thereby advocating a multi-staged layering of acts and significations in image construction. As I stated previously, a place and its projective properties may be approached in matrix category which constitutes the first stage, the result of which is complimentary projection mental model. In my particular case, the formative years of my family life, strongly mining-bound environment contributed to my identity. Thus transformed image makes a starting point to the next stage, namely graphic design thinking. It is a form of activity, substrate experiencing, where an idea and a trace coalesce, positioning the matrix as the focal point. This thinking mode reveals specific status bridging conceptualization and materialization, at the intersection of a vision and its incarnation in which matrix encodes information, only to, incorporate it into an accomplished print in the final creation act. A matrix and a place alike, constitute a carrier for human presence reminiscence, it conveys emotions, relates a gesture and transmits experiences. The aforementioned, first matrix formation stage, in a process of which, it is a place to mark an artist. In the due course, original information, shaped as an idea, is subject to a change while being transcoded owing to graphic thinking encompassing various, often intuitive activities, with unquestionable need of graphic skills proficiency and perseverance, no less. Graphics is ranked as the exclusive visual conceptualizing, ”equivocal” in a way. An artwork is attained via manipulations over a matrix and through a potential image, though not always embodied. It is the synthesis of cognitive

78 D. Folga-Januszewska,
*Double life of graphics, a
scientific session paper
Contemporary Graphics-
between a unique copy
and an electronic print,
within MTG programme
Cracow `97, Cracow 1999.*

79 D. Folga-Januszewska, Graphics Art Game, in: Exhibition catalogue Graphics Art Game Warsaw 2014, pp. 14–17.

process and visual reflection culminating in the deliberate workshop techniques selection, stemming from profound comprehension of graphics essence as an autonomous cognitive function.⁷⁹

Graphics may seem to exist within rigid design guidelines superimposing a particular creative path. However in my estimation, graphics offers unrestricted liberty in available tools and actions, independently of the applied technique and the selected printmaking matrix character. Hybrid model provides significant flexibility, both in applied tools assortment choice but also within a pool of ideas, and to emphasize one more time, creative visual thinking. Traditional printmaking "(...)" is steeped in tradition and craft technique on one hand, but viewed in another respect, it is still intact in quest for innovative forms of expression (...), it is a field of exploration for the most contemporary issues: a matrix, a print, a trace, print series, design execution (...). It is a subjective journey, a process, often meditative, trance-like, artistic endeavour.⁸⁰ It is also the case with the presented doctoral dissertation. In the manufacturing process of the intaglio printing cycle, I employed tools which served, in the first place, to create a digital matrix that was transferred onto the zinc plate with the aid of UV printing technology. Owing to that solution, the printmaking procedure was deliberately extended to incorporate a further stage. The idea involved there, was converted into digital format, to be finally evolved into a tangible entity of the intaglio printing plate.

80 A. Cholewińska, *Artistic Printmaking as a Field of Exploration*, in: "Zeszyty Artystyczne" 2010, no. 20, p. 189.

In the span of nearly four years, bent on the cycle, I managed to accomplish a large-scale photo portfolio, documenting ancrated Silesia space. This repository has not only become the evidence of forms variety, picturesque compositions, the anchorage layout creating a distinct visual rhythm, but also served as a cornerstone for subsequent digital undertakings. The photography therefore functioned in dual capacity. On one hand, it served as a digital art pad – a tool cataloging the manifold forms, shapes and façade arrays, of, more or less prototypical regional structure. On the other hand, it was the source of textures, which I proceeded to map onto three-dimensional models surface, created relying on Blender programme. I rendered the objects spotted in urban space with high fidelity. The selected tools afforded me virtually boundless artistic license, in terms of the composition, framing and lighting parameters. Comprehensive control over light direction, intensity, type and even its hue, allowed

to make the photo-based model, come alive and spatially augmented (id est: spatially converted into 3D). The textures mapped properly onto the surface interacted with light, further enhancing the three-dimensional effect. In addition, the objects processed in this manner could be manifoldly transformed, copied, scaled or configured in assorted arrays. This, in turn, facilitated optimizing the final design to be the most appropriate.

While conducting my doctoral research, developing the final form of the graphic series proved to be one of the most significant obstacles and crucial challenges. The pivotal issue was to decide on the way of the anchor plates presentation, and even more, how to bring them out most conspicuously in order to let the recipient understand their function and significance. Right from the very beginning, I presumed a specific type of synthesis in which the architecture, apparently serving as a natural contextual background for the anchor plates, is becoming a major absentee. The matrix parallel is striking enough at this point. Despite its primary function in original image, it eventually remains hidden from the recipient's inspection. My goal did not rest on accurate mapping or prototype Silesian architecture documentation. Numerous artists have been dealing with this task, whose artistic accomplishment I shall refer to further on. However, intending to maintain coherent approach to the form presentation mode, I was faced with a resolution on framing method and consistent implementation of these assumptions with the four years stretch of time dedicated to over thirty printing plates preparation. At the onset, I adopted the principle of full scale forms replications, but as the work progressed, I opted to rescale a portion of matrices against their real representation. Chosen anchor plate models were thus diminished which was supposed to reflect the way we get a detached view of the city. It is often implicit, patchy cityscape perception. The details, in the form of the anchor plates on the buildings facades are evasive many a time. Only in direct contact, their physicality is revealed – their weight, massiveness or specific anchor bolts size. Hours of photographic walks solidified my conviction that the formal solution I suggested, will align best with my experience. The anchor plates, though omnipresent, as time passes, often blend into the façade's texture. Thus, they become an integral, though indistinguishable urban fabric element. At times, however, the local residents deliberately highlight their presence, covering them in a colour that stands in a stark contrast from the

building's main colour scheme, bestowing an ornamental feature on them. Despite the fact that, diversity of forms, layouts, arrays and sometimes their makeshift assembling has never ceased to stun me, the crucial aspect was fixed in figurative and explicit roles they perform. They stand the emblem of the Silesian trait deeply rooted within regional space. Waldemar Jama's assumptions were consistent with these observations. As one of the plenty photographers, Silesia documentarians, he delved into the anchor plates symbolism, their lure, in the documentary series titled "Silesian Chariots". While visiting Waldemar Jama's exhibition, held in Katowice History Museum, at the turn of 2024 and 2025, I attended to the walkthrough curator's presentation. In his story, the author himself, the location resident, admitted veritably taking photos of the same urban fabric as other renowned Silesian photographers did. Ultimately, probably acting on a sudden impulse, he resorted quite bravely to all the photographic negatives utter obliteration. Waldemar Jama spun a yarn while reminiscing searching for a symbol of Silesia, on taking a tram ride, he took a notice of the anchor plates, binding the buildings. It sparked the creation of the typology. The artist mentioned also that out of the many anchor plates forms, these shaped into wheels attracted his attention most. He focused on them with deep intent, extracted from them a symbol of transcendental beauty.⁸¹ Silesian landscape was an incredibly rewarding subject for many photo artists, just to mention, Tychy-based Photography Club "KRON", co-created by, among others: Michał Cała, Tadeusz Kluba, Henryk Rączkowski, but also such figures as Zofia Rydet, Anna Chojnacka or Wojciech Wilczyk. Majority of the mentioned artists' artwork, apart from their genuine documentary value, are united by a certain graphic quality which is due effect of the region specifics. The landscape harshness brutally scarred by heavy industry, textural variety of redbrick constructions and numerous, imposing colliery and, steelworks structures, look surreal, yet they compose, a unique and visually appealing space, altogether. Stark contrasts and deep blacks, in the photographs by the mentioned artists, are poignant in their pensive mood over the local workmen's strenuous effort, bringing out melancholy, no less.

Nowadays, the landscape which has been a long-standing cornerstone of the regional identity, is disappearing progressively. Many modern artists, graphic as well, attempt at capturing the remaining traces of the intense industrialization epoch. Their pieces of art encapsulate

81 See Waldemar Jama – Silesian Artistic Photography, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LZJjzUQ5-Z8> [dostęp: 02.06.2025].

not only documentary value, but act as a testimony to grief and desolation. The feeling is nonetheless accompanied by the inner need to preserve the memory of the past.

I am anxious myself about the time of being able to appeal in my creation, to nothing but past memories, inevitably leaving behind material substance in the regional space. Professor Jan Szmatloch – my doctoral dissertation supervisor at Academy of Fine Arts in Katowice, was guided by corresponding assumptions. He, in his prints:

”(...) vividly depicts (...)the process of the physical dissolution of materiality, even so, this evanescence or transience, strengthens our memories projection, underlines the urgent need to remember. Professor Szmatloch perseveres in consistent restoring memory of our closest surroundings as there is drastic deficiency of material testimonies of the past.”⁸²

Apparently, despite generation gap, I subscribe to the professor's tenet on Silesia future. These apprehensions align with Weronika Siupka observations, she, too, collaborates with Academy of Fine Arts in Katowice. Since 2007, she has been consistently pursuing the project inspired by post-industrial heritage, in the form of ”The fragments of the World” series. As Irma Kozina puts it: The etchings by Siupka are: ”(...) a record of emotion, in which the distribution of light and shadow and the manipulation of detail are subordinated to the will to create a particular mood. The way of looking at a given object constitutes a kind of self-portrait of the artist, recording in the artwork her subjective sensations and feelings.”⁸³ The artistic stances cited testify to a profound reflection on the identity of the region, a concern for the preservation of memory and an anxiety about the inevitable disappearance of its material carriers. This is confirmed by Szmatloch's words in a conversation with Maria Jaworska, where he recalls Ruda Śląska and ”the most authentic familok of red brick” in which he lived, stating with sadness at the very outset that: ”The Ruda of my childhood is ‘crumbling’, it is literally vanishing before my eyes.”⁸⁴

The works of contemporary artists connected with Silesia, regardless of the medium they employ, draw on the region's unquestionable uniqueness, which is reflected in the artists' ideological and themat-

82 J. Świerszcz, *Etched Time, "Silesia" 1998, no. 4, p. 80, https://sbc.org.pl/Content/17272/PDF/iii351674-1998-04_0001.pdf [an access: 06.06.2025].*

83 I. Kozina, *The Artistic Commemoration of Industrial-Era Objects in the Joint Exhibition Project of Weronika Siupka, Nathalie Hannecart and Mathilde Lacroix*, in: W. Siupka (ed.), *Destination: Mine*, Katowice 2020, p. 13.

84 M. Jaworska, *Portrait with Landscape in the Background. A Conversation with Jan Szmatloch, "Silesia" 1996, no. 12, p. 52, <https://sbc.org.pl/Content/17174/PDF/iii351674-1996-12-0001.pdf> [an access: 06.06.2025].*

tic decisions as well as in their formal and technical choices. Silesia leaves its mark; it leaves a durable trace that compels reflection and, consequently, artistic exploration of a space saturated with meanings.

The work of Silesian artists, especially in the 1960s, is clearly marked by the theme of industria in the form of interpretations of the urbanized landscape, but also of the relationship between human and machine. Proof of an undiminished fascination with industrial heritage can be found in later, including contemporary and – importantly – numerous works, as well as in survey group exhibitions and retrospective shows of artists associated with Silesia.⁸⁵ These threads resonate in works such as "Opowieść o Ziemi Rybnickiej" (Tale of the Rybnik Land), "360 ton na km²" (360 tonnes per km²), "Pejzaż śląski" (Silesian Landscape) by Krystyna Filipowska, "Huta" (Steelworks), "Człowiek i automaty" (Man and Automata) by Kazimierz Kandefer, "Kominy" (Chimneys), "Pejzaż śląski" (Silesian Landscape) by Lidia Kwiatkowska or in the almost documentary, yet equally lyrical, urban depictions by Jan Nowak.⁸⁶

85 Examples of such events from just the last two years include the exhibition "Undergrounds, Subterra Incognita" at BWA Katowice and retrospective exhibitions of Waldemar Jama and Stefan Suberlak at the Museum of the History of Katowice.

86 M. Meschnik, A. Romaniuk, J. Szmatloch (eds.), *Printmaking in Silesia in the Second Half of the 20th Century*, Katowice 2001, pp. 27–30.

87 Ibidem, p. 17.

88 R. Solik, *The Silesian Landscape – Forms of Memory*, in: A. Kowalczyk-Klus, R. Solik (eds.), *Man Is on the Way. The Silesian Landscape – Memory, Tradition, Modernity*, Cieszyn 2008, p. 106.

89 A. Pietsch, *My Silesian Fascinations*, in: M. Meschnik, A. Romaniuk, J. Szmatloch (eds.), *Printmaking in Silesia in the Second Half of the 20th Century*, Katowice 2001, p. 5.

Paweł Steller, a student of Władysław Skoczylas and one of the leading representatives of Silesian artistic printmaking, consistently probed the themes of Silesian regionalism in his oeuvre. He explored motifs focused around landscape, culture and also (perhaps above all) people. The latter, treated as a typological series of portraits of inhabitants of the region (and beyond), brought the artist his greatest renown. Realist portraits marked by extraordinary attention to detail, rendered in the technique of end-grain wood engraving, faithfully – almost veristically – conveyed the characteristics of the sitters. Steller also tackled the subject of labour in mines and smelters, and produced scenes on religious themes, as well as landscapes – both of industrial Silesia and of Cieszyn Silesia.⁸⁷ Using wood engraving, Steller created an iconography of Silesia, evidenced by works such as "Na haldzie" (On the Spoil Tip), "Kopalnia Wujek" (Wujek Mine) and "Ładowarka do kamienia" (Stone Loader).⁸⁸

Stefan Suberlak, in turn, focuses in his work on rural motifs and, as Andrzej Pietsch recalls, "(...) he created apt metaphors, humorous – albeit never direct – characterizations of the coarse peasantry of the Silesian–Beskid region, hardy yet well-disposed.⁸⁹ His narrative prints bring to mind surreal, theatre-like spectacles. Suberlak harmoniously combines form and content, deploying both subtle

linear arrangements and dynamic compositions of small, vibrating patches, which evocatively visualize the richness of everyday life in the Polish countryside.⁹⁰ He contrasts agricultural labour with work underground, thereby invoking industrial themes. This spatially oppositional mode of exploiting the earth appears, among others, in the previously mentioned linocut "Ziemia III" (Earth III), and in the linocut "Ziemia I" (Earth I). In the latter, two monumental, conjoined figures, in which we can readily discern both mining and agricultural attributes, are set against the characteristic landscapes of their work that loom above their heads.

Roman Starak, in his work, developed a unique way of representing the Silesian landscape. He captured not only the external forms of buildings, mine shafts or chimneys as characteristic, dominant elements of the Silesian landscape, but also the ordering principle resulting from the existence of two parallel worlds – the one above ground and that concealed beneath the earth's surface. Early works, including sketches and lithographs as well as some intaglios, still reveal an attachment to realism, which, in later pieces, gives way to a geometric synthesis of the region's architecture. Transformed into an arrangement of signs and planes, it becomes a synthetic map of the Silesian landscape, in which a fascination with the space observed and later transformed in a vertical–horizontal arrangement is revealed.⁹¹

Both Roman Starak and Stefan Suberlak, as well as the aforementioned Jan Nowak and Tadeusz Siara – the latter known for his metaphorical etchings – were students of Aleksander Rak who, alongside Józef Mroszczak, shaped the profile of the Graphic Department of the then Branch of the Academy of Fine Arts in Kraków in Katowice. Drawing on a multitude of techniques, from lithography, through woodcut, to etching and engraving, he explored scenes that were firmly rooted in reality and at the same time charged with emotion – genre scenes, religious motifs, as well as landscapes and portraits.⁹²

Another artist to engage with the theme of the Silesian landscape was a member of the Arkat group – painter and printmaker Ludwik Poniewiera. The first phase of his work was characterized by figurative depictions of the landscape, which, through a gradual reduction of form, ultimately became almost completely abstract. His canvases, rendered in subdued, dark, almost monochromatic

90 J. Bednarska, *Contemporary Printmaking of Upper Silesia*, Katowice 1986, p. 6.

91 M. A. Raczek-Karcz, *I See My Silesia as Geometric. On the Specificity of Landscape in the Work of Roman Starak*, in: M. Wawrzyczek-Klasik, G. Hańderek (eds.), *Roman Starak. Beyond Time*, Katowice 2018, pp. 14–19.

92 B. Szczyńska-Gwiazda, *Painting, Printmaking, Sculpture*, in: E. Chojecka (ed.), *The Art of Upper Silesia from the Middle Ages to the End of the 20th Century*, Katowice 2009, p. 499.

tones, are punctuated by white, yellow or orange accents. This enhancement of contrast underscored the synthetic composition built by means of the interplay of verticals and horizontals. At the same time, Rafał Pomorski, recognized in the 1960s as a creator of the industrial landscape, produced static, layered and rhythmic forms. The linearly constructed, geometrical structures were filled with painting matter in a restrained palette of browns, greys, cool blues and muted greens. Maciej Bieniasz, by contrast, portrayed Silesia from the perspective of courtyards, back alleys and basements. A raw form, strongly articulated contour and subdued colours create an atmosphere of pervasive greyness, decay and disorientation, thereby becoming a powerful commentary on the state of both place and its inhabitants at the time. Likewise, in his work, Jacek Rykała reduced the Silesian landscape to intimate microcosms – courtyards in which realistic detail and a specific mood evoke the memory of the everyday life of Silesian communities. Motifs of dilapidated benches, gates or peeling walls function as a form of documentation of a fragment of reality doomed to oblivion.⁹³

93 Ibidem, pp. 487-490.

Against the backdrop of local forms of artistic expression of the interwar period, it is worth mentioning Rafał Malczewski and Bronisław Linke, who were invited to Silesia in order to produce a series of works reflecting the specificity of the region. Malczewski's cycle "Czarny Śląsk" (Black Silesia) comprises evocative and at the same time sombre landscapes that convey the industrial character of the region with all its almost archetypal elements of an industrial scenery, such as shafts, chimneys, spoil tips and blast furnaces.⁹⁴ The works created during his Silesian episode fitted with the economic propaganda of the time, which emphasized the ethos of labour, the strength of Silesian inhabitants, as well as their loyalty to Polishness.⁹⁵ Bronisław Linke, in turn, in his 1937 watercolour cycle, presented a different and clearly critical image of the region as a dehumanized space, where industry appears as an autonomous force, not subject to moral control and of an almost demonic character.⁹⁶

94 B. Szczyпка-Gwiazda, *The Representational Arts of the Interwar Period – Painting, Printmaking, Poster, Sculpture. Homely Regionalism and Echoes of High Art*, in: E. Chojecka (ed.), *The Art of Upper Silesia from the Middle Ages to the End of the 20th Century*, Katowice 2009, pp. 425–426.

95 I. Luba, *Industria in the Culture and Art of the Second Polish Republic*, in: M. Skrzypek, L. Krzyżanowski (eds.), *Industria. Unobvious Contexts. Conference Proceedings*, Katowice 2019, p. 69.

96 B. Szczyпка-Gwiazda, *The Representational Arts ... op. cit.*, pp. 425–426.

97 I. Copik, "Genius Loci" *as...*, p. 102.

Place is not a static or definitively defined entity. Its immanent feature is processuality, and thus its meaning undergoes change, reaching beyond current knowledge or topography. Like the matrix, place refers to something other, something that lies beyond its physicality.⁹⁷ The meaning and experience of place, as well as its aura, are therefore not reducible to a set of concrete objects or single events,

but result from the accumulation of cultural strata – a palimpsest in which collective memory and identity crystallize. It is this historical depth, as an effect of superimposed representations and activated acts of remembrance, that lends space its multi-layered and polyphonic character. Imagination, meanwhile, enables the individual to reconstruct, connect and interpret scattered traces of the past in the form of a coherent experience. Space thus becomes the sum of physical presence and meaning. Beyond what is visible, material and durable, carved in stone or metal, it also contains elusive, spiritual elements. The aura of a place therefore encompasses both what is visible and what is hidden "in between," which frequently carries greater significance for the decoding of the place's character.⁹⁸ At this point, once again, a clear analogy becomes perceptible between the properties of the matrix and the relation between idea, matrix and final representation. Place becomes a cultural phenomenon, a carrier of meanings rooted in the past and frequently imbued with nostalgia, which are relocated and transmitted across generations through communicative processes. It has the ability to accumulate and communicate collectively shared meanings, which makes it a carrier of cultural continuity and of emotional rootedness in space.⁹⁹ The aforementioned nostalgia resonates powerfully within the communities inhabiting Silesia, which "(...) today is to a large extent a longing for that which once was: the former home, the former space, the former people, the former sacred, the former refuge."¹⁰⁰ Understanding place and its identity thus involves seeking out and reading various, at times deeply concealed layers – perceiving what is immaterial in the interstices of the material elements marked by the presence of individuals.

The city, like the place and matrix already discussed, also exhibits a dual nature. Drawing upon Krzysztof Gedroyc's metaphor, Tadeusz Sławek introduces a division of space into the "lower" and the "upper" city. The former functions as an ordered, planned communication-administrative system which, despite its rationality, can be equated with a state of slumber. The latter is a dynamic, multi-layered space that awakens and reveals itself only in attentive, reflective and authentic experience. Crucially, these two forms of the city do not mutually exclude one another. On the contrary, they co-exist and the city appears rather as a dynamic system of passages between one and the other form, through metaphorical arcades and gates. The greater the number of such passages, the more authentic the expe-

98 I. Kabakow, I. Kabakov, *A Public Project or the Spirit of Place*, in: E. Rewers (ed.), *The City in Art – The Art of the City*, Kraków 2010, pp. 348–349.

99 I. Copik, „Genius loci” as... op.cit., p. 93.

100 A. Kunce, Z. Kadłubek, *Consider...*, p. 240.

101 T. Sławek, *The City. An Attempt at Understanding*, in: E. Rewers (ed.), *The City in Art – The Art of the City*, Kraków 2010, pp. 23–39.

102 I. Copik, *Upper...op. cit.*, p. 36.

rience of the city. It is these sites that become spaces of an intense sense of personal belonging, deeply rooted in a concrete space.¹⁰¹ This "upper" city may be what, in the context of Silesia, Bieniasz describes as the "smallest world," Lech Majewski calls the "inner landscape," and Kazimierz Kutz refers to as the "fifth side of the world."¹⁰² Viewed in this way, the image of the city likewise strongly evokes the manner in which we perceive the matrix and the process of reading the meanings and contents encoded within it. The "lower" city is, as it were, the carrier for the "upper" one, just as the matrix is the carrier of both image and idea, which resound and become perceptible to the viewer at the moment of their unveiling. Following this trajectory further, the aforementioned gates and arcades – the passages between one world and the other – are the equivalent of the process of matrixing, of the artist's actions which actualize the idea and ultimately disclose that which had appeared concealed.

The delimited and familiar fragment of urban space that an individual identifies as their own, Andrzej Majer terms the personal city – Mikropolis. It is a subjective mode of perceiving and experiencing the city in micro-scale, corresponding to the way in which it is experienced by the individual. The personal city describes a particular way of looking at the urban environment that assumes its reduction to a spatial–social structure corresponding to the range of an individual's cognitive reach, whose boundaries are defined both by direct experience and the scope of personal social relations. It is also the sum of the individual's convictions, opinions and values, shaped by their own experiences as well as by the broader cultural context. Meanings accumulated in this way produce a specific attitude towards the city, thereby determining the individual's existence in urban space. The personal city is thus characterized by a more or less conscious capacity to accumulate coherent and contradictory contents alike, as well as by subjectivism, which manifests itself in its belonging to a specific subject – it is always "someone's." A personal, profound relationship with place, built on the grounds of long-term inhabitation, finds expression in marked declarations of belonging, such as "my city," "my street." As a result of this symbolic appropriation, concrete fragments of the city are gradually subject to mythologization or sacralization, frequently arising from nostalgia for the idyllic land of childhood or youth. They become a source of pride and satisfaction. They leave a durable trace, becoming an essential factor in the construction of both individual and collective identity.¹⁰³

103 A. Majer, *Mikropolis. The Sociology of the Personal City*, Łódź 2015, pp. 14–15.

This is precisely why, already at the stage of defining the premises of this doctoral project, I repeatedly and deliberately emphasized that the Silesia I wished to describe in the cycle of intaglio prints is My Silesia, My Mikropolis, My Microcosm.

The personal city is therefore a subjective construct related to the individual's past, in which the city itself serves as a designator encompassing both the spatial aspect – limited by an individual's direct experience – and the social aspect, referring to selected groups that share a given area with the individual. It constitutes the centre of an emotionally charged space of any fragment of the city. The individual creates its image on the basis of their own experiences and relations, attributing new meanings to it and thus redefining its identity, which allows us to capture many cognitively diverse images of the same space or its fragments. The personal city becomes a mirror (or a matrix!) in which its creator is reflected.¹⁰⁴

104 Ibidem, pp. 14-25.

Mikropolis is thus yet another, alongside place, sociological category that exhibits properties analogous to those of the matrix. The process of storing information, meanings, senses and experiences, and their final mental projection manifested in the way the personal city is perceived by the individual, finds its counterpart in the graphic matrix and in the transcoding of the information, idea and trace inscribed within it, which are revealed in the form of a graphic image.

The aforementioned density of cities in close proximity to one another in Silesia may encourage an extension of the boundaries of Mikropolis beyond a specific fragment of one city. Until recently, the huge industrial plants that operated in the region and often employed several thousand people fostered the construction of both social and spatial bonds. The properties of the personal city overlap with Lewicka's characteristics of place, and therefore, in the case of Majer's concept, we can likewise speak of definite boundaries and of a situation in which one Mikropolis forms part of another – a phenomenon particularly facilitated by the administrative structure of the Silesian agglomeration.

The affinities as well as the complexity of the concepts that describe the multi-level process of human experience of space are among the reasons why I consciously abandoned architectural representations in my prints. The perception of place is an individualized and subjective

process, yet one that is embedded in a shared collective and spatial context, rooted in the historical and cultural framework which, as it becomes yet another layer of meanings and senses attributed by the individual, simultaneously shapes the ultimate image of place. In the case of the prints presented here, I wished to avoid pointing to specific elements of the urban tissue that would primarily reflect my own subjective (and perhaps idealized?) vision of Silesia. As a symbol of the endurance of My Silesian Imaginary, the anchor appears to me to be an ideal choice for representing the process of disappearance and, at the same time, a concern for preserving the traces of the region's (not only) industrial identity. The many hours of walking that revealed to me the multitude of anchor compositions on façades and walls strengthened my conviction about the appropriateness of reducing the image to these inconspicuous metal elements that bind buildings marked by mining damage. The anchor underscores the tragic nature of the consequences arising from the exploitation of Silesian soil. For this very reason, I decided to create a plate in the format 100 × 70 cm, which was etched across almost its entire surface so as to yield a uniform black area in the print. This is a symbolic allusion to the exploited underground that, time and again, reminds us of its presence in the form of tremors that make Silesian buildings shake and sway as they struggle to survive on uncertain ground. Such a form of presentation makes it possible to reveal anchors in the context of the aforementioned relationship and of a kind of struggle between underground and surface, whose visible consequence is the ubiquitous tension rods.

Two horizontal large-format prints comprising the cycle also reflect the decision to renounce architectural representations. Architecture is present here in the form of a synthesis of the dominating, almost overwhelming blackness. This device offers a certain sense of the scale of the anchors in relation to the building which, however, is concealed, hidden, or perhaps – in an anticipatory gesture – ultimately swallowed by the blackness of the underground? The anchor plays the leading role; it is upon it that the viewer focuses attention, in stark contrast with the situation in reality. The plate, this time etched over its entire surface, in order to be able to print a full black area in the 100 × 70 cm format, acts as a graphic emballage that hides the architecture protected by the anchors. Though stripped of detail and characteristic features, that architecture continues to refer to something beyond itself. It is, after all, a carrier of information,

a record of emotions, memories and experiences of individuals and entire collectives. It is proof of ties and identities constructed over generations and it testifies to their endurance. Even though, as with the matrix, architecture is hidden from the viewer's gaze, its afterimage encourages the reading of meanings, channelling, via the anchors, the projection into the complex architectural space of Silesia. Or perhaps even beyond it?

The extension of the matrixing process into the realm of a digital exploration of My place made it possible to develop a methodology whose final expression is the presented graphic cycle. Although at first glance the observation and extensive photographic collection created over the years were of a documentary character, from today's perspective they formed an extension and a first stage of the matrixing process that led to the creation (surprisingly) of a digital matrix. Archiving made it possible to analyse, organize and hierarchize the collected material with a view to extracting those anchors with the most intriguing structures and forms, with the potential to serve as prototypical representations. The image selected in this way could then be processed with digital tools whose (seemingly) facile operation and the ability to return to previous (saved) stages made it possible to accentuate the characteristic features of the documented forms and to detach them from their spatial context, thereby revealing their meaning and function. The spatialization of photographs with the aid of 3D modelling software enabled the creation of a digital, three-dimensional matrix with a rich texture responsive to the light introduced into the scene. The realization of a digital matrix, which in the next stage is renamed and, more importantly, transformed in the etching process into the physical form of an intaglio plate, is thus evidence of the multi-stage nature of the matrixing process. Węclawski, in his conversation with Folga-Januszewska, remarks that "in the digital process we do not place the matrix as a problem in the first rank. The idea, the concept of the work, the elaboration of the image have become more important. The matrix, however, exists and it is significant."¹⁰⁵

In the case of my work, the extension of the matrixing process compelled me, however, to think about the intaglio plate already at the stage of creating the digital matrix. Technology became a tool within a multi-stage process of matrixing, in the sense of processing and enhancing the graphic nature of the source material. Appropriate

105 *What Is a Matrix. A Conversation with Professor Andrzej Węclawski, recorded on 10 March 2014*, in: Exhibition catalogue *Graohics Art Game* Warsaw 2014, p. 51.

preparation of the negative image was of key importance for the transfer of the image by means of UV printing onto the metal surface, as well as for the subsequent etching process. The UV-print dot functions as a kind of screen or grain comparable to that achieved in aquatint, thereby making it possible to obtain a near-photographic quality of image. Nonetheless, although the transfer process does not appear particularly complex and its effects are more than satisfactory, over the course of several years I produced several dozen test plates, transfers and etchings in order to achieve optimal results. The greatest challenge proved to be the tonal range that I was able to attain in the final print. High-contrast images were markedly easier to realize and the process itself, as well as the resultant print, were far more predictable. In the case of halftones, however, it was considerably more difficult to anticipate the final effect (as often happens in printmaking!), and a slight difference in the percentage value of the halftone black in the source file determined the success of the entire process. Due to the nature of the printing process, akin to the planar effect of aquatint, I enriched each plate with a multi-layered etched line. Wishing to animate and thereby break the photographic quality of the obtained image, and to emphasize or spatialize the black area, I employed classic etched line – repeatedly and often deeply etched – as well as drypoint.

Graphic thinking is wholly concentrated on and oriented around the matrix as an embodied carrier of the idea. It is the physical (or digital) outcome of previously formulated assumptions, reflections, designs or concepts. Its immanent feature is the potentiality of the matrix's presence, both in the process and in the final work, regardless of the materiality of its form. Among the terms synonymous with matrix, alongside the aforementioned "idea" or "concept," we may also distinguish "potential," understood as a delimited and imagined point of departure which, following Aristotle, can be conceived in terms of a virtual potential state. As a mother, the matrix fulfils a formative function which, together with the potentiality it exhibits, renders it a physical point of departure for artistic acts and transformations that will take place in the future, actualizing the initial thought. It calls the idea into being, yet it does not constitute a definitive form, but an open and not fully determined one. This form is fulfilled only at the moment of producing the impression.¹⁰⁶

106 D. Folga-Januszewska, *Two Notions and Two More*, in: *Exhibition catalogue Graphics Art Game*, Warsaw 2014, p. 31.

The impressions produced from the matrix and, indeed, already the very process of preparing the plates in the form of transformed material representations of anchors, became a sort of ritual that sacralized the past – idyllic, partly idealized, yet extremely important to me. The plates became both a field of work and a source of experience that were actualized in the printing process.¹⁰⁷

107 S. Dudzik, *What is...*,
op.cit., p. 15

CONCLUSION

SUMMARY

The present doctoral thesis is on the one hand a deliberation on synonymous qualities of place and matrix, on the other hand, in the context of Silesia, a distinct voice laced with autobiographical details, which takes part in discussion about memory of industrial heritage of the region. The voice of what (for me) Silesia is about. Not without a reason, by the agency of determiner ‚My‘ I clearly put the accent on symbolic appropriation, emphasizing both individual, and mythologized perspective. As I mentioned in the beginning, Silesia can be different for everyone. This My is precisely how I portrayed it. Related to a coal mine and adolescence spent on the internal courtyard, densely scattered with rows of pigsties. As for the anchor – the center of this work – to me, it became the symbol of its lasting. Barely noticeable on a daily basis, was brought to the fore in my artistic activities. Devoid of architecture, in almost majestic way revealing its form, scale and agency. Despite unusually simple design, fulfills immensely crucial role in the struggle for existence and continuity of urban buildings. It is a guarantor of survival for a medium of identity, experience, recollections, personal stories and finally – memory.

Over the course of theoretical consideration, correlating the data from, what might seem, different scientific fields, I have proved a remarkable convergence in the way of perceiving concepts of place and matrix, which both take part in multi-layered discussion about the region. The enhanced synonymity of both ideas became the foundation for thesis about multi-stage process of stenciling. That process has its origin in projective potential of the place, which in the next step, evolving into particular idea, ultimately materialize in the shape of the matrix, to find its reflection in graphic representation at the very end of the process. This in turn become the element, which places the projection of recipient in the industrial area of Silesia.

Although the presented set of graphics is undeniably closely linked with the region, the relational potential between place, individual (or more broadly – community), matrix and final reception of the work by the audience, has the universal nature indeed.

Meanings of certain place, accumulated over generations, find its reflection in the individuals and communities, which, on the other hand, form next layers of contexts and senses, thereby building its self-identity. Nonetheless, the duration of medium is crucial, since lurking at the other end loss – results in oblivion.

Many stages of stenciling process have clearly resonated also in the workshop aspect of actions that come ahead of the preparing of the intaglio printing matrices. Digital query, carried out over the years, was a result of a search for projective potential of the place. Contemporary imaging tools used in further steps not only elevated the visual graphic quality of the image, but more importantly, allowed to create digital matrix based on gathered material, including ideological assumptions of the final work. Hybrid nature of the graphics, emerging as a marriage of traditional techniques and contemporary digital tools, is therefore a confirmation of multi-step capabilities which enabled the potential to create meanings and implement ideas in the graphic process.

My activities do not attempt to imitate the existing reality, but rather to seize and capture its reminiscence in a form of particular identity, representation and recollection, which, through graphic projection, gain independent nature, re-establishing My Silesia.¹⁰⁸ The anchor, transformed into graphic medium, becomes – as much as the place – the medium of memory. The externalized, material form of it is an example of process dedicated to coding and sharing memory. The matrix, and consequently the image created as the outcome of the stenciling process, act as a medium testifying the lasting, which in the result, make its mark in the process of remembering.¹⁰⁹

108 S. Dudzik, *What is...*
op.cit., pp. 14-15.

109 W.Czachur, *Linguistics
of memory...*, op. cit., pp.
16-17.

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