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Life redirections

PhD dissertation

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A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M. Biczak', with a stylized, flowing script.

Introduction

*Certain events happen on different levels, or in other words many events are aspects of the same event. The world is one great network, it is a whole and there is not a single thing that would be separate. Each, even the smallest part of the world is connected to another by a complex universe of correspondence.*¹

Many years ago, my mother met a man for whom collecting art had become an obsessive ritual. From a current perspective, he reached artists in an archaic way. He used to send handwritten letters to addresses found in old catalogues or telephone directories. He wrote them relentlessly until he finally received a return message. All the replies usually had a similar content: a few words of appreciation for perseverance and an invitation to visit. In this complicated way, over the last 20 years, the man in question has become owner of several thousand works, handed over personally by the artists themselves.

In February 2009, he offered me to participate in one of his expeditions, the aim of which was to expand the collection. I accepted, although I did not fully get the essence of this trip. At the start, I was handed a map with hand marked points and clear references in the form of names. My role was to lead us to the address mentioned on his list as number one and then direct us to the next destination, ranked in order of closest proximity. There were numerous, but I remember one in particular. After a few hours of driving, interrupted every now and then by new trophies, we headed towards the Maria Konopnicka Street in Kraków. We passed the Kijów cinema and stopped for a moment by the Vistula River. I posed for a few tourist photos there and then we moved on. Standing in front of the door, I had no ideas about the person on the other side, I was more puzzled about the real motives for our visit: whether the meeting was decided by the will of the artist or was the result of the pressure from the crazy collector? After a while we were invited inside. I remember a rather dark, slightly dusty space, filled to the brim with works of esteemed artists. Against one wall stood a carved bed, covered with ornate bedspreads in a manner typical for bygone times, and right next to it a table with refreshments. The middle of the apartment, on the other hand, represented a completely different sphere of life from the one

¹ O. Tokarczuk, *Drive Your Plow Over the Bones of The Dead* [audiobook], Wydawnictwo Literackie, 2017

we were hosted in. I figured out the scheme straight away: only after a cup of tea and a courteous conversation would I get the honour of entering the creative space. In that moment, I upended all my previous beliefs about the relationship between youth and the definition of beauty. Janina Kraupe-Świdorska, sitting surrounded by her freshly cut, not yet printed dies, impressed me with her energy and authenticity. I longed to enter more deeply into this strange world, resistant to the common passage of time. I think it was then that I made the decision to apply to the Faculty of Graphic Arts of the Academy of Fine Arts in Krakow.

Years later, I began to wonder what exactly had determined where I was. I was deluded into thinking that my current sense of fulfilment was largely due to the most difficult episodes of my life. If my father had not die, my mother would never have entered into a relationship with the man who somehow ‘introduced’ me to my current world. Then I would never have experienced the magic that fills the building at 3 Humbert Street, I would never have had the chance to feel the weight of its traditions, I would never have become part of it and I probably would not have defended this thesis.

The most painful experiences can become carriers of what I have ultimately considered the greatest value. The way I function is the result and intertwining of a myriad of consequences, which today, in retrospect, I can easily separate and subject to considerations with impunity.

Is it possible to have a situation, a moment, when time and place reach an agreement? Do all the decisions we make, all the small initiatives we undertake, make it more likely for us to encounter such a perfect configuration? Is it easy to miss one’s own destiny, or on the contrary, it is enough to just exist and do not strive for anything? What hides behind the meaning of our lives, are important facts generated by chance? If even a small detail can change the course of the history, how do we recognise its importance? How do we know that it happens, and when it happens?

The above questions became for me the major pretext to carry out my doctoral thesis. The

concept I adopted was to work in parallel on the artistic part and on its description. I juxtaposed sketches with casual notes, which after a while began to form a whole. Sometimes the notes were a pretext for sketches, and other times the sketches intuitively anticipated thought and provoked the formulation of specific considerations. Working on my thesis during the pandemic period, I became, no matter if I liked it or not, one of the very few users of the atelier at the Humbert Street. Spending most of that time alone, I could enjoy not only creative freedom, but also the freedom from sound usually coming from the speakers in the Studio. This unusual comfort made me interested in listening to audio version of literary works, the paper version of which, due to its size, would probably remain for a long time part of my stack of books left 'for later'. This is how the reflections of, for example, Marcel Proust or Olga Tokarczuk – with which I spent entire months during the creative process and which, with surprising precision, several times entered into a dialogue with my own observations – became a very strong foundation for the text being created parallelly to the artistic work.

The description eventually took the form of reflections balancing between questions and a record of my own experiences. I decided to divide it into four parts, each relating to a different part of my artistic work.

Part I | Memory

*It is nonsense to look for images of memory in the real world. They will always lack the charm brought by memory itself and by the fact that we do not recognise them using our senses.*²

For about one thousand five hundred years, the term used to describe the recalling of memories was *memoria*. The psychology of reminiscence considered *memoria* to be of primary importance to the mind. We cannot think without having a collection of mental images or imaginings that we recall and arrange into new sequences. Based on the tradition of psychology, what we now call memory/reminiscence is primarily an imaging, secondarily qualified, determined by time.³

One could say that we are living a kind of imagination of the old days. We remember their basic outlines, some fragments taken out of context, but what mainly stays in our minds is the mood that accompanied the given moments. We remember this mood more as an impression than a specific detail. We can tell the story better with images than with words.

Some memories are characterised by an extraordinary ephemerality, which arise after the slightest attempt to verbalise them. Any attempt to recall such memories is a loss of time.⁴ Memories are hidden from us. Sometimes they come completely unexpectedly, other times they are triggered when we come across something we have locked them in. Some may be kept in a tangible object, others contained in a scent, but when we finally come across them, we are able for a brief moment to return to the exact place where they once happened.

The laws of memory are governed by the universal laws of habit. Because habit weakens everything, the best way to remind us of a being is to use something we have forgotten, because that 'something' was so insignificant that we have left all its strength untouched.

² M. Proust, *In Search of Lost Time*, Volume 1 [audiobook], Heraclon International, 2013

³ J. Hillman, *The Force of Character: And the Lasting Life*, MT Biznes, Warsaw, 2017, p.178

⁴ M. Proust, *op. cit.*

*The best part of our memory is outside of us: in a rainy gust of wind, in the stuffiness of a room or in the smell of the first flames in the fireplace. Everywhere, where we find parts of ourselves that our mind, unable to make use of them, has despised.*⁵

However, if I were to point to the circumstances in which the past becomes most present, I would certainly mention contact with the places where the given events once took place. The most perfect images of past moments are hidden right there. Places store the memories on our behalf, they allow past moments to endure.

The person who I am today was certainly greatly influenced by the childhood. However, our brain remembers very little from the first years of life. Key events from the past return in the form of small details rather than full-format memories. However, these details are usually located in a certain setting. In my case, these were places accumulated around the family house in Częstochowa, the big yard, the field, the forest, the neighbouring farms bordering my house, and the family shop. It was there that all the events which were probably the most significant for my character being shaped at that time, took place. I was authentic and happy in those places. This was my world.

Looking today at what remains of my places, I see their gradual transformation into a completely new space, a space visually distant from the one I remember, a space in which I can only move following the traces of memory.

But despite the fact that these places are fading, the emotional content I have accumulated in them seems to be independent of this process. These places are the perfect proving ground for illusion. It is thanks to illusion that I can still be exactly where I was years ago.

Process:

I decided to select from the whole bunch of important places only those that still evoke in me rich memories and then focus on finding a visual language to talk about them. I very much cared about quotes taken straight from reality, which is why I immediately reached for the camera. After taking a series of photographs, I felt that pure photography was

⁵ M. Proust, *In Search of Lost Time*, Volume 2 [audiobook], Heraclon International, 2013

somehow too harsh for them, that it presented them too tangibly and set them solely in the present. The key elements, i.e. the layers of the 'past' that I cared most about from the beginning, were not captured on the photographs. I really wanted to capture them in a multidimensional way, which means to show both the 'nothingness' that currently fills them, but also to bring out their spirit, something that, in my opinion, lasts in them regardless of visual changes and the passage of time. For this purpose, I built a whole series of pinhole cameras with either light-sensitive paper or film inside. Recording these places repeatedly, I have long waited for the moment when the idea brought into contact with a properly chosen medium, would produce a response far beyond my deepest suppositions. Satisfying shots taken with a *camera obscura* inspired me to make a series of graphic works about lost places, living somewhere between memories and reality.

Part II | Network

*Our life is not just the sum of events, but the complex twine of meanings we attribute to those events. These meanings form a wonderful fabric of stories, concepts, ideas and can be considered as one of the elements, such as air, earth, fire and water, that physically determine our existence and shape us*⁶

As a little girl, I was convinced that every time I made a choice, the world broke into parts, and I lived in each of these parts at the same time. This sense of multiplied existence opened me the way to the creation of many versions of worlds, to the visions of alternative ways of functioning.

The past combined with all the decisions we make affect who we become. In spite of all the naivety implied by the considerations of this kind, it happened to me more than once to think about what might have happened if I had changed one single fragment in my past. Would removing, for example, some seemingly insignificant details, have given me a completely different fate?

I have always enjoyed games that involve putting together scattered fragments of a whole. In the childhood this meant arranging puzzles, later I moved to all kinds of games based on lateral thinking, developing the ability to discover seemingly non-existent connections between several events. The aim of such games is to get to the cause of an event using only information about its consequences. Details, seemingly unrelated to the course of events, turn out to be crucial in this case. Conjectures drawn from the resolution of fictional stories began to influence the sphere of real events as well, until finally I felt like analysing the course of my own life based on the basic rules of the game. I started with drawing up a map, covering the events and people accumulated around my life. I automatically went on circling all the elements which I thought were the most important, but then I realised that these should not be the final events, but all the side episodes that led to them. Based on this principle, my map began to take shape anew with several small facts, which I had never before treated as important, coming to the fore.

⁶ O. Tokarczuk, *The Tender Narrator*, Wydawnictwo Literackie, Kraków, 2020, pp. 23–24

*We can only see the significance of small facts in retrospect. Here and now, we are blind and never know what is really important.*⁷

Looking at such an elaborated map of events I see what might have influenced me, I see situations that I can call a turning point, I see connections between distant decisions and the place in life where I am now. What I miss are all those potential opportunities that were irretrievably lost when I made a completely different decision, which at the time meant so little to me.

According to Leonard Mlodinow, a physicist investigating the concept of chance, by reversing the order of events, i.e. by following the course of history from its end to its beginning, one can easily determine the meaning of the individual events. In order to be able to predict the consequences that a particular decision would entail, one would have to do the impossible, which is to determine the trajectory and interaction of all the potential possibilities that might be involved. After all, an event that is relatively easy to be explained after some time, is simply impossible to be predicted before it happens.⁸

Obviously, everything is a network of interconnections and relationships. No events happen on their own, but are always and inextricably linked to the world; they influence, transform or complement each other. The phenomenon known as the ‘butterfly effect’ is at odds with its own power and agency; it is a theory in which the human acts as subordinate element.⁹

However, all relationships between elements of reality go beyond the schemes limited to cause- and-effect relation. Synchronicity is another principle of the omni-relation of events, operating alongside causality. It is the parallel occurrence of causally unrelated phenomena with similar significance.¹⁰ Perceiving the world through the cause-and-effect relation

⁷ O. Tokarczuk, *E.E.*, Wydawnictwo Literackie, Kraków, 2020, p. 157

⁸ L. Mlodinow, *Do Dice Play God?: The Mathematics of Uncertainty*, Prószyński i S-ka, 2011, pp. 229–230

⁹ O. Tokarczuk, *The Tender Narrator*, op. cit., pp. 280–283

¹⁰ J. Cambray, *Synchronicity: Nature and Psyche in an Interconnected Universe*, Wydawnictwo Instytut Terapii Integralnej Sławomira Kwiatkowska, Katowice, 2014, p. 10

means entering the path of logic. Seeing synchronous relations, in turn, means opening to the link between the external and the internal. It includes the association of dreams, intuitions or mental states with significant events that are subjective to the individual.

*Synchronicity is the premise of the existence of a principle connecting the various elements of the World, the 'mechanism' of which we ignore. Synchronic phenomena create a sense of community with something powerful. It is an insight into the vastness of the unconscious knowledge of all minds living on Earth since the beginning of the World.*¹¹

Process:

The above set of graphic works is based on a previously prepared map. The aim was to create a space that was an accumulation of what I believe were the key moments and characters. This includes larger and smaller elements, single works and whole series, all connected by an invisible thread of contexts and relations which build the living tissue of my world. The installation as a whole consists of the seemingly unconnected fragments of my reality, which interact with each other and build a scheme around which I operate.

¹¹ H. Korpikiewicz, *Causality and Synchronicity*, in: *Humanistyka I Przyrodoznawstwo*, 2018 at: <https://czasopisma.uwm.edu.pl/index.php/hip/article/view/1774>, p. 46

Part III | Experience

*Life is made of events, but only when we are able to interpret them, try to understand them and determine their sense, do they turn into experiences. Events are facts, but experience is something inexpressibly different. It is the experience, not the event, that is the substance of our lives.*¹²

The Polish word for ‘monument’ (*pomnik*) comes from the Old Polish form of the verb ‘to remember’: *pomnieć* and means to commemorate someone or something. There are different purposes for erecting monuments, I treat mine more as a form of self-purification, a release from an often-recurring image.

Everyone experiences throughout life situations that can be qualified as difficult, but assessing these difficulties is subjective because we all perceive and feel differently. In order to objectify this phenomenon, professor Irena Heszen, author of scientific papers on psychology, distinguished three levels of stress experienced during difficult events. On the first level, there are the problems of everyday life, the second level is related to breakthrough events, and the last, the highest one, are extreme situations.¹³ Experiencing an extreme situation can contribute to a variety of psychological reactions, to which our body’s respond. The natural response in this case is trying to dissociate oneself from everything that evokes the memory of painful events. However, such memories, despite our attempts to repress them, never fully disappear. They constantly return to our consciousness through neurotic symptoms, dreams and fears, thus trying to somehow regain their importance.

Trauma is not something that happens, it is something that occurs in a person as a result of a particular experience. It is an internal process the etymology of which comes from the Greek word *trauma* meaning a wound. It is an autonomous correction of our internal

¹² O. Tokarczuk, *The Tender Narrator*, *op. cit.*, p. 273

¹³ I. Heszen, *Stress and coping with it – major controversies* [In:] I. Heszen, Z. Ratajczak, *Man under stress. Theoretical and methodological problems*, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Śląskiego, Katowice, 1996, pp. 12–43

system aimed at detaching from ourselves an element of our own identity; it is giving up, in order to survive, a part of ourselves the recalling of which exceeds the human endurance on stress.¹⁴

There is no such thing as adopting the correct attitude towards the death of a loved one. There is no precise time frame that would enable to fully cope with an irreparable loss. Mourning carries a huge emotional burden, with which everyone struggles in their own way.

After several years, I felt a very strong urge to return to a point that I had hitherto persistently erased from my consciousness, to the most difficult event I had ever faced in my life, which was the suicide of my beloved father. I decided to recall that moment and assign it the amount of time it deserves; to live it and finally, to deal with it within the doctoral thesis.

The lecture of Marcel Proust's *In Search of Lost Time* provides the obvious diagnosis that what compels an artist to create is above all the need to recover a lost past. This, however, does not mean restoring only a purely intellectual or mechanical memory of passed moments but recreating the full emotional plasticity associated with the past.

*I had to bring out of the shadows what I felt at that time, transform it back into a mental equivalent. What was the only way I found to achieve it, if not the creation?*¹⁵

Proust emphasises that if a past is lost, there is an impulse and a need to recreate it. He also stresses that the only way to reconstruct it, is to find symbolic expression for the lost elements, and that art is essentially a search for such a symbolic expression. He states explicitly that the inner world is unconsciously built on the basis of the lost world.¹⁶

¹⁴ G. Maté, *Trauma as disconnection from the self*, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tef5_HK5Zlc, [access: 07.07.2019]

¹⁵ J. M. Quinodoz, *Conversations with Hanna Segal. Her Influence on Psychoanalysis*, Gdańskie Wydawnictwo Psychologiczne, Sopot, 2012, p. 50

¹⁶ Hanna Segal *Dreams, Imagination and Art*, Towarzystwo Autorów iWydawców Prac Naukowych UNIVERSITAS, Kraków, 2003, p. 123

Sigmund Freud, explains this concept by saying that what we lose automatically becomes part of our psychic reality, which we, as artists, then give expression to in our art.¹⁷

Having visited Madrid, the nineteen-year-old Pablo Picasso fell into a deep depression that lasted about a year. This was probably the result of the contact with great works of art, and in particular the paintings of Velasquez, with which Picasso was not able to cope at the time. In old age, the artists decided to paint *Las Meninas*, which represents the painting of Velasquez disassembled and then reconstructed in Picasso's own way. It took him almost a lifetime to rebuilt something he had tried to destroy in his mind during the period of depression.¹⁸

According to the psychoanalyst Hanna Segal, works of art result from the artists' ability to confront the destructive impulses within themselves,¹⁹ the source of which lies in their damaged inner world. The sense of loss stimulates the artist to restore the old structure, to rebuild what is already irretrievably gone. Such a restoration, however, can only occur when we truly acknowledge our loss and experience full-scale grief.²⁰

Process:

Silence. Months of silence. They allowed me to listen to what I had been drowning out for years.

Dealing day by day with the irrational format of sheet metal, I was actually facing something much bigger. It was an image that refuses to disappear, that is active, that constantly comes to the surface and, in a way, reveals itself in all my creative initiatives. I cannot free myself from its influence, I cannot escape its energy. The untreated topic that refuses to leave me becomes, for the first time so consciously and officially, the main reason for my work.

¹⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 126

¹⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 129

¹⁹ J. M. Quinodoz, *op. cit.*, p. 61

²⁰ H. Segal, *Psychoanalytic Approaches to Aesthetics* [In:] H. Segal, *Melanie Klein's Theory in Clinical Practice*, Gdańskie Wydawnictwo Psychologiczne, Sopot, 2006, p. 252

I decided to use the mezzotint method deliberately. The preparation of the matrix for this technique involves a lengthy process of rocking the sheet metal. Repetitive movements of the rocker roughening the matrix guarantee obtaining the finest blacks in the domain of graphics. However, it takes a lot of determination to bring the sheet metal to the point where light can start to emerge from the black. In the case of a small format, this process can take from a few to over a dozen of hours. The discomfort resulting from the monotonous movement of the rocker make us usually need to spread the process over time. The situation changes dramatically when, instead of the small format typical for mezzotint, we decide for a copper sheet of 100x200 centimetres... Work on such a matrix, without taking into account the time spent on the creation of the image itself, is not a few hours but a few months of intensive work. In my case it was exactly 1,398,600 seconds reflecting 380 hours of work. However, in this case the time and energy put into preparing the matrix did not just result from to selected technology. On the contrary, this process was an integral part of the project from the very beginning. I wanted it to be a conscious ritual, a daily act of dealing with the impossible. Climbing my own peak.

In his paper *The Moses of Michelangelo*, Freud concludes that the experience conveyed by art reflects the overcoming of anger, contempt and despair.²¹ And I think it was precisely this gigantic desire to overcome my anger and grief over the loss of my father, that led me to undertake this work. In my opinion, the greatest value of this two-year creative process was not the final result in the form of a monumental ‘work’, but the time I gained for communing with the subject. The time which I did not dare or did not want to devote to my father for 16 years. The time I spent on the purification process, the real record of the struggle with pain and the creative record of emotions.

Kazimir Malevich said that *Black Square* is a naked icon, deprived of the framework of its context, affecting the viewer through an emotional impression rather than an aesthetic one. My own ‘black squares’ are filled with emotions that I have never been able to share before. The successive, laborious extraction of the regular structure, the process of making a black

²¹ *Ibidem*, pp. 130–131

print, is the return to an event that I have never been able to come to terms with. The velvety black of the print, impermeable to the outside world, created from millions of dots, is also a symbol of the attitude I adopted after losing my father, a symbol of my silence and denial in this area. I was wondering for a long time whether bringing the sheet metal to full black after several months of work and then making a print from this process should not mark the end of the project. However, I felt that by ending at this particular stage, I would have left my subject at the level of trauma, which would have meant remaining exactly where I was 16 years ago. In order to overcome this heavy matter, I decided to expand my project. I wanted to bring out a fair amount of light from the great plane of blackness, thereby allowing this tragic, last, dominant memory of my father to finally fall away in favour of a million of earlier, wonderful memories.

Ultimately, my work consists of prints that reflect the changes taking place on the matrix, symbolically alluding to the transformations taking place in my psychological sphere:

1. Black print – the process of evocation
2. Print with the image – the process of struggle
3. Print with the blurred image – the process of release

The series of works are complemented by videos recorded by a GoPro camera installed above the centre of the plate. The videos were not intended to document the technological process, their purpose was to record time along with its contemplative, ritual value.

From the very beginning I treated the project as an act of erecting a kind of monument. The big sheet of copper I faced every day became to me something much more important than just a matrix. I perceived it as a complete object, accumulating my emotions in some methodical way. To visualise at least a little the time that I have spent working on it, I should add that until the very end of work on the image, when the second stage looked almost finished, I managed to listen to seven volumes of Marcel Proust's *In Search of Lost Time*. The books reflect in total 3,880 pages which is equivalent to 149 hours and 49 minutes of listening.

Part IV | Subconscious

Jung pointed out that we all function in a kind of two worlds at the same time: on the one hand, we live in the world of external perception, where our senses are the guides, and on the other, we constantly refer to the unconscious, the inner, the vague, the irrational, the chaotic. Both of these spaces have an area in common: firstly, it is the external world that is agreed upon and created by all external human activity on a daily basis, and secondly, it is the internal world that is created by reservoirs of shared memory, experiences, myths, stories that go back to the beginning of our existence as a species.²²

The Wyandot, indigenous peoples of North America, living in the 17th century around the Great Lakes, believed in the existence of the *odinnonk* or fragment of the soul, where all unfulfilled dreams accumulate.

The mysterious particle known several centuries ago, which accumulates in its reserves all unfulfilled contents, is the historical equivalent of the concept known today as the unconscious.

Unconscious is one of the areas of the psychic apparatus storing unacceptable images which, due to the strong energetic charge they contain, constantly try to enter the conscious in the form of dreams, fears and obsessions.

The topic of dreams has accompanied me for many years. It was on the basis of dreams that I created a few years ago my MA graduation series of graphics entitled *Twilight*. I felt that a world in which the same motifs, which seemingly consisted of abstract content, kept coming back to me over and over again actually had a very precise message to convey. However, not being able to understand it, I treated this great, mysterious energy more as a source of inexhaustible inspiration than a path to the content hidden somewhere in this unconscious.

During sleep, the relationship with reality is temporarily suspended, all action and

²² O. Tokarczuk, *The Tender Narrator*, *op. cit.*, pp. 257–258

movement ceases, which is a perfect opportunity for all wishes, relegated into the unconscious, to finally find a way to reveal themselves.²³ According to Freud, sleep is an infantile element of psychic life that has been repressed.²⁴ It is easy to succumb to the impression that the conscious controls our every move, that it gives us full control over the decisions we make, that we know what and at what point leads us in a particular direction. As stated by the physicist Leonard Mlodinow, we only know the factors that we perceive consciously, which means the information we can gather is incomplete. As a result, the way in which we perceive ourselves, our own views and the society resembles a jigsaw puzzle with key pieces missing. We try to fill this void with guessing, but the truth about ourselves is too complex to be seized by conscious and rational minds.²⁵

As someone who has been struggling for several years with trichotillomania, i.e. the compulsive eyelashes pulling, which is classified as an obsessive-compulsive disorder, I know very well how powerful the unconscious can be. In my case, the incomprehensible, irrational urge to reach for the eye proved much stronger than the conscious desire to resist it, and while it was relatively easy to point out a situation that might have triggered it, I found it impossible, despite the passage of several years, to fully understand the pattern of its occurrence.

My behaviour is the result of an endless stream of feelings born consciously and unconsciously. Everything I undertake, the way I act and react, is always only partly born in the conscious mind. Somewhere in the background there are processes going on independent of me, which, although hidden, have a powerful effect on what I do.²⁶

It is possible that something I have so far interpreted as a logical sequence of consequences actually happens every day for a completely different reason. Perhaps the patterns I cannot get rid of are hiding a different truth than the one I have been attributing to them so far. Perhaps the subconscious, through specific signs, reflexes, reactions, dreams and obsessions, has long been trying to direct me to the overlooked areas from which I have

²³ H. Segal, *Dreams, Imagination and Art*, op. cit., pp. 7–8

²⁴ S. Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams*, Wydawnictwo KR, Warszawa, 1996, p. 467

²⁵ L. Mlodinow, *Do Dice Play God?: The Mathematics of Uncertainty*, op.cit., pp. 45–46

²⁶ *Ibidem*, pp. 45–46

been trying to run away, losing a certain potential and the sense of full integrity with myself.

Process:

In a series of works relating to the unconscious, I have tried to capture a motif that has haunted me for a long time in my creative initiatives. A strong beam of light, bringing out a space engulfed in darkness, is an image I have been obsessively seeking and at the same time avoiding, an image to which I subconsciously return again and again in my artistic cycles. It is something that comes out in my works almost automatically. It is an image with which I probably still refer to the shocking scene I had to face a dozen years ago.

Summary

*I become what I am participating in; I am what I am looking at.*²⁷

(O. Tokarczuk)

I am composed of all previous levels, of memories, of emotions, of experiences. I consist of places and people. I consists of environment and character, past and present, I am the space that connects all these fragments.

*‘Self’ is a stream of sensations that accumulate on the chaotic scaffolding of our temperament and basic psychic qualities like rubbish on a branch submerged in the current of a river. Instead of the illusion of singularity and integrity, we keep in ourselves a shimmering multiplicity, an infinite potentiality that we cannot exhaust or realise until the end of our lives. This natural multiplicity and multiformity of the psyche and its tendency to fantasise or dream about various imaginary characters should not worry us. It is rather an evidence of our inseparable and virtually infinite links with the rest of the world.*²⁸

²⁷ O. Tokarczuk, *Flights*, [audiobook], Wydawnictwo Literackie, 2020

²⁸ O. Tokarczuk, *The Tender Narrator*, *op. cit.*, pp. 163–164

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