

V MIĘDZYNARODOWE SPOTKANIA SZTUKI
5th INTERNATIONAL ART MEETING
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Instead of the editorial

The matters of the 5th International Art Meeting in Katowice are edited in the shape of a two-volume publication, where the first volume includes the symposium proceedings, and the other, i.e. this catalogue, completes the record, grouping all the documentation of particular artists. The theme of this year's Meeting is the "collaboration between art and cognitive sciences" such as formulated in the editorial of the symposium proceedings. In the introduction below I will make an attempt of reminding the general assumptions of the project, and determining the structural and programme concept of the Meeting as formulated in the years 1996-1997.

The idea of the Katowice Meeting appeared in the period of negotiations aiming at the integration of Poland to the European Union. In the countries of Central and Eastern Europe this period is the synonym of deep changes within the consciousness of particular societies, including intellectual and artistic environments. These deep political and systemic changes (the beginning of negotiations in favour of the accession to the European Union, the new constitution in 1997, as well as NATO accession in 1999) included the process of redefining the role of state institutions in the area of culture. This implied the multilevel restructuring of artistic education and of the country network of state art galleries and national cultural institutions, including Polish cultural institutes abroad. The period is also characterised by a particular polarisation of general cultural concepts. On the one hand we have the development and globalisation of a private art market that applies economic and marketing principles, and on the other the attempts of politicisation and instrumentalization of culture for the propagandist purposes of particular parties and political configurations.

Wishing to save their relative independence with the hope created by new perspectives arising with the confrontation with the European Union – on the intellectual, artistic and economic level – Polish artistic environments reacted with an enhanced organisational activity at home and abroad.

Katowice Meeting has not been an exception. The project (exactly defined in the editorial of the first Meeting) aimed at "creating an international multidisciplinary manifestation in collaboration with other associations and centres of contemporary art, out of official exchanges and confrontations". The programme and polyglot catalogues of the Meeting fulfilled the need of international confrontation, and the multidisciplinary character differed from disciplinary initiatives under the guise of "performance festivals", "theatre and film meetings", or more traditional exhibitions, salons and biennials.

More distinct differences are seen in the programme of "experimental confrontation that can be justified only after an experience" including "the theoretical risk of this kind of undertaking, where the question of thematic, disciplinary or territorial justifications in art – usually asked by the normal critical instrument – remains unanswered". These assumptions determined the specific character of this kind of art meeting, where "the impossibility of argumentative demonstration (disciplinary, occasional, thematic, territorial, generation or chronological) leaves the place for the *problematic* and *transdisciplinary* experimental confrontation".

Such a definition of an "art meeting" account for an experimental margin, a place for the appearance of authentic knowledge or proposition resulting from the confrontation of hypotheses and experiences from various domains and areas. The postulate of the *problematic* and *transdisciplinary* confrontation had been present at the origin of the idea of symposium that has accompanied Katowice Art Meeting since the second edition in 1998.

The idea of an "art meeting" where experiences of artists are confronted on the same level with competences of philosophers or scientists, is therefore closer to the idea of *workshop*. The latter usually consists in the collaboration of experts in different areas (art, architecture, design, urban planning, communication, but also economy, philosophy, medicine, exact sciences...) and aims at reaching unconventional solutions for particular political, social, economic, ecological, and scientific issues...

Thus the "art meeting" concept of that kind implies giving up the traditional "curator" way of *presenting* works of art, setting an artist in the situation of thematic, disciplinary, territorial or generation *competition*... in favour of the *representation of competence* of the artist in various domains of knowledge and life.

To realise this apparently small difference we might imagine for example a "Silesian region medicine congress" (the territorial argument), the topic of which would be the very congress of doctors on the occasion of a jubilee of the doctor's association (the occasional argument). This would be possibly divided into subgroups of surgeons, psychiatrists and gynaecologists... (the

disciplinary argument), in which senior and junior doctors would meet separately (the generation argument). The advantages of such a meeting would have mainly a social, statistical and propagandist character, and could be at best a political argument for the organisers.

This example sounds exceedingly caricatural, though the strategies of new institutional/market situation are based just on such criteria of selection of art instances for political and commercial purposes. The situation in the area of the so-called "visual arts" has already been sometimes equally caricatured, as it is the case with the "medicine congress". On the horizon of the inevitable agreement between the institutional/curator tendency and the private/market violence hovers the spectre of an "Infantilised Artists Reservation" constrained by a "sweet promise" and sincerely fascinated by the world in which their works evolve, injected into the "circulation" by means of market channels. This includes the artists *bound* with a commercial contract who cannot "sell anything beyond the gallery" and *obliged* to obey the rules of promotion within particular political circles, who cannot "say anything" in absence of their critic/advocate, since "everything they would say might be used against them (and their promoters)". Thus, it is not the political censorship that is the biggest enemy of art, but a new institutional/market academism, as well as the self-discipline of artists that are fascinated with such this new "Academy".

We also realise the absurdity of the idea of "art meeting" aiming at public and spectacular confrontation of the artist as an *independent* researcher in the domain of sensual sensitivity with the *organised* (in universities, colleges and institutes) world of science and philosophy. Therefore today it is more necessary than ever to make transdisciplinary a deal between the worlds of culture, art, philosophy, science, economy, etc., based on mutual recognition and competence assent. Katowice Meeting is an attempt of modelling this kind of collaboration, where art is understood as a *research* on equal terms as scientific investigations and philosophical inquiries. This, however, doesn't exclude any personal and unconventional *methodology* of artistic investigations.

Art as *research*, involved in cognition and co-creation of the world, differs also from the so called "sociological" art, understood as interpretation and commentary on principles, rules, models, attitudes and social behaviours that appeared beyond the reach of art or without it. Such understanding of the sociological involvement of art is the symptom of its helplessness towards reality on which it has no influence nor takes part in its creating. Therefore it plays, at best, the role of a social gland that can produce a gastric enzyme so to digest the often uninteresting, however dominating socio-politico-cultural reality.

Only nostalgic naivety would allow us to believe that today's programme of art may still consist of social commentary, disciplinary confrontation, or in celebrating occasional manifestations. Contemporary reality, dominated by the dynamic development of genetic engineering, nanotechnology, informatics, biotechnology, robotics and communication, presents new political and economic, but also ethical, aesthetic and ecological challenges. The purpose of an art that doesn't content with *interpretation* is at the proper recognition of the changing world and at undertaking the toil of its co-creation.

Józef Bury

The Contemporary Art Gallery of the Bureau of Artistic Exhibitions in Katowice consistently realises its editorial policy within the area of art and aesthetics. This activity includes publishing catalogues of the exhibitions proposed at the gallery, catalogues/monographs of the leading Polish and foreign artists, as well as textual and iconographical matters concerning contemporary art history and theory.

Among the most important items edited by the gallery in recent years one should mention the monograph of the activity of the Contemporary Art Gallery of the Bureau of Artistic Exhibitions in Katowice from 1949 to 1999 (2001), the catalogue/monograph of Andrzej Pawłowski (2002), and *The Underground* – a monograph of the activity of the Silesian avant-garde (2004).

Publishing the catalogue of the 5th International Art Meeting is the next stage of the editorial activity of the gallery that aims at enabling domestic and foreign viewers to acquire systematic knowledge on current issues of contemporary art.

BWA Contemporary Art Gallery Katowice is a non-profit cultural institution of the City of Katowice. The mailing of the free catalogue is reserved for the cultural libraries and institutions, schools of art, etc., on a written and justified request addressed to the BWA Contemporary Art Gallery Katowice.