

**Evaluation of the doctoral dissertation,
artistic and didactic achievements of Mr Iker Bengoetxea Arruti drawn up in connection
with a doctoral degree conferment procedure in the discipline of fine arts and art
conservation, initiated by the Artistic Discipline Council of
the Eugeniusz Geppert Academy of Art and Design in Wrocław, Poland.**

**The Ogrocadaver ~ in the name of a pseudonym
Academic supervisor – Prof. Christopher Nowicki, Wrocław - 2021**

Part I – Evaluation of artistic and academic achievements and pedagogical activity

Karl-Heinz Jürgenwolf, Benedykt Ząbkowski, The Ogrocadaver, or Iker Bengoetxea Arruti, a Basque artist, born in 1979 in Donostia-San Sebastian, Spain. In 2008 he graduated from the Faculty of Fine Arts of the University of the Basque Country UPV/EHU, Spain, specialising in painting. In 2011, he completed a two-year postgraduate study programme in the discipline of visual arts in architecture at the Eugeniusz Geppert Academy of Art and Design in Wrocław, specialization: printmaking techniques, which he pursued thanks to a grant for specialist studies abroad obtained from the Basque Government's Department of Education, University and Investigation, in the years 2009-2010, as well as 2010-2011. After these two years of education in Poland, Wrocław had become an important stop on the road of artistic experience for the artist. He returned to the Academy of Art and Design in Wrocław in 2014 to complete his postgraduate Interdisciplinary Studies in Printmaking, co-financed by the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage in Poland and the European Union. Before returning to Poland, in 2012 he obtained his Master's degree in Creation in Art in the University of the Basque-Country UPV / EHU, Spain, specialization: linocut. He also completed his assistant internship in the Serigraph and Metal Techniques Studio in BiboArte Foundation, in the Basque Country, Spain. In the years 2018 - 2020 - a doctoral student at Eugeniusz Geppert Academy of Art and Design in Wrocław, in the Faculty of Graphics and Media Art, thanks to the EU programme of the Academy, the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage in Poland and the European Union. Another project in which the doctoral student participated is Culture Online, co-financed by the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage, in 2020. Here he was a screenwriter and soundtrack producer working under the pseudonym Karl-Heinz Jürgenwolf and as Klemens Benedykt Ząbkowicz, creator of the animation entitled "Paradise Demons". He is the author of 3 individual exhibitions:

1. 'The Ogrocadaver: Over the Oder' in Non Gallery in San Sebastian, the Basque Country, Spain; February 2016.
2. 'The Ogrocadaver' in Arztezu Gallery in San Sebastian, the Basque Country, Spain; November 2014.
3. 'The Ogrocadaver: Operation Pogrom' in Gallery U in Wrocław; June, 2011.

He participated in 18 international group exhibitions in Poland, Serbia, Spain, France, Estonia, Germany, Russia and Romania. He participated in printmaking workshops in Falun, Sweden, conducted by the outstanding artist, Ahmed Mohdir in June 2014 as part of the Interdisciplinary Printmaking programme. He conducted the linocut workshop entitled: "Gouges and rollers. Introduction to linocutting" at the Tabakalera International Centre of Contemporary Culture in Donostia-San Sebastian, Basque Country, Spain; March 2018. In relation to his artistic visual and musical activities, a 5-page paper was written about the PhD student and published in the urban culture and art magazine Arteuparte (no. 25, April 2015) and a short (7 minutes) interview/documentary was made for the EITB Basque Public Television. At the same time, he was successful in his active pursuit of commercial projects. He was a teacher at the Amassorrain Public School in San Sebastian-Donostia (Spain) in the academic year 2016/17. He transferred the copyright of his professional pseudonym "The Ogrocadaver" to the craft brewery "Brew and Roll" in Paternain, Navarra, Spain, in 2017, 2018, and 2019. He was the art and design director responsible for illustrations and packaging materials. In March 2021 he designed a logo for the 75th anniversary of Teatr Polski in Wrocław.

Part II Evaluation of the doctoral dissertation

The evaluation comprises the analysis of the theoretical and practical work:

II.1. The Ogrocadaver. In the name of a pseudonym - a description of the dissertation

II.2. The artistic work: The Ogrocadaver, a set of prints made in mixed technique, a soundtrack under the pseudonym Karl-Heinz Jürgenwolf

The theoretical part of the doctoral dissertation of Mr Iker Bengoetxea Arruti is an attempt to answer the first and most important question that undoubtedly needs to be asked: what is the Ogrocadaver? The next step is to bring us closer to the essence of the creation of his works, in classical linocut, silkscreen, drawing, painting, or musical and visual projects.

The descriptive part is divided into 3 chapters, the Epilogue and Bibliography. The 142-page dissertation consists of the text proper of 115 pages and a description of the illustrations incorporated in the text. The substantive part opens with an Introduction explaining the genesis of the artistic idea. The author moves smoothly to Chapter 1, which is a detailed analysis of the essence of the topic, i.e. the pseudonym used in the title of the dissertation. Chapter 2 is an insightful attempt to answer the question asked earlier: Who is The Ogrocadaver, who is Karl-Heinz Jürgenwolf and Klemens Benedykt Ząbkowicz.

Chapter 3 is a presentation of the artistic works evaluated in the doctoral procedure. The final part is the Epilogue which sums up the entire project. The text has a legible and logical structure. The order and proportions of particular chapters do not raise any objections. Appropriate sources and references as well as the bibliography complete the work.

The work is written in a very insightful and philosophical language, showing the extensive knowledge and awareness of the author concerning the issues included in the title of the dissertation.

Analysing the doctoral candidate, one needs to take into account the entire work, rather than diversified attitudes. We have here a musician - performer, a graphic artist, an illustrator, a painter, a teacher (analysis based on the presented website). The doctoral student, as I will call this artistic hybrid in the review, is no one else but a contemporary

artist, and whether he wants it or not, he fits perfectly into this trend. He creates artefacts in the form of prints strongly imbued with symbolism, using various tools of artistic expression, i.e. painting, drawing, screen printing or multimedia. He perfectly penetrates the structure of Internet spaces, demonstrating lightness in the manipulation of content and image, and freely assumes any role he chooses.

The assumptions and ideas of his dissertation, as well as the in-depth, multithreaded analysis, are the unquestionable strengths of the whole work. Reading it, one forgets that this dissertation is only a complement to the entire PhD work, not its foundation. What is discussed in this work is the elusive profile and willingness to mislead, as Mr Iker Bengoetxea Arruti's means of expression, particularly through the use of pseudonyms. The author focuses on art as such and introduces a misleading or unexpected attitude, hiding his identity. Seeking connotations with his own attitude, he tries to manipulate and confuse the viewer. As the author himself says: [...]the public does not need to know why, but can consume art as such, whoever the artist is. The doctoral commission, on the other hand, demands compliance with established conditions to accept my proposal [...] and this is where the confrontation with reality occurs. The stance he represents gives him only apparent freedom, because eventually he has to reveal his identity and take responsibility for his projects. This creation presented by the author introduces a certain intriguing dissonance, makes me curious and intrigued as a reviewer, but also as a viewer. What frustrates me, however, is the lack of possibility to interpret the presented work according to the author's assumptions. Having thoroughly learned their meaning, symbolism and assumptions shown with almost psychedelic precision, I no longer have the space for personal interpretation. This makes me reflect on the entirety of the doctoral student's attitude, rather than on his individual works. Therefore, with full awareness, I include an evaluation of the doctoral thesis in one chapter, combining the content and the form of the written dissertation into a monolith.

The submitted material and the Commission's portfolio present the artist as a person who is very conscious of his artistic path. In his art he tries to balance the horizontal and vertical plane in technical, formal and conceptual terms, juxtaposing it with a symbolic and narrative dominion. This project is a private and subjective revision of the author's identity. The absence referred to in the text, for me, is revealed in the foreground, and disorientation accompanies it insistently, constantly changing its sense and meaning. The whole is completed by an inspiration with Derrida's deconstruction that deals with logocentrism and phonocentrism, decreeing the primacy of presence and the spoken word, proving that everything is a text because it is structured by the play of differentiated signs. This probably becomes the leaven for Lacan's ideas; he declared that symbol manifests itself first of all as the murder of the thing it represents (J. Lacan, *Écrits* book. A selection. Transl. A. Sheridan, London 1989.) However, what is ultimately significant here is Derrida's punchline – "the absence of eyewitnessing - and therefore the subject of eyewitnessing [...] is definitely required; the total absence of the subject and object of a statement - the death of the writer or the disappearance of the objects he might have described - do not prevent the text's <meaning>. On the contrary, this possibility gives rise to meaning". The PhD student, however, plays with words and letters visually, testing our attention and perceptiveness. The common denominator for all presentations is rhythm, geometry and colour, which is revealed in both musical and manual space. The author controls the message from beginning to end and requires from the viewer quite a mental flexibility to unravel the riddle of symbolic representations. Oscar Wilde wrote in *The Portrait of Dorian Gray* that "The way of paradoxes is the way of truth. To test reality we must see it on the tight rope. When the verities become acrobats we can judge them". (O. Wilde, *The Portrait of Dorian Gray*, transl. M. Feldmanowa, Kraków 1995, pp. 46–47). When confronted with Mr. Iker Bengoetxea Arruti, I feel like this acrobat; once I grasp the intentions, a sudden misinformation moves the rope on which I try to keep my balance and understand the message. The world brought to



life, a sheer creatio ex nihilo, the Ogrocadaver ceases to be just a pseudonym and appears as a space for ambiguous conceptual activities, also in collective relations. The Metawer established by a controversial artist, Piotr Szmítke. "Metawerism not only fulfils the eternal need to transcend one's own 'I', making Rimbaud's 'I is another' real". It is also a desperate attempt to overcome the impermanence of existence and loneliness to which we are condemned by choice and by problems of artistic life. One of its most important risks seems to be the loss of identity in the midst of mirrors, a countless number of reflections, copies and forgeries, gradually falsifying the image of the world" (Cf. R. Dawkins, *The Selfish Gene*, transl. M. Skoneczny, Warsaw 2007).

"The emergence in art of the category of the non-existent artist is an indicator of the reaction of its survival instinct" (Piotr Szmítke. *Metawerism. Category of non-existence in art*, catalogue of a retrospective exhibition, collective work, ed. A. Zimnowody, Katowice 2011, p. 7).

Why am I mentioning Metawerism here? Because there was quite an "uproar" over the presentation of works by non-existing artists at Art Bunker in Kraków (1995). Jolanta Ciesielska, the curator of the exhibition, decided to conceal, at least initially, the fact that the audience gathered in the gallery was participating in a game of appearances, in an intelligent mystification. As a result of this procedure, "reviewers were fooled and discussed each artist individually. The scandal that broke after the truth was revealed resulted in vindictive silence" (The quote comes from an untitled text by Niestrój, included in the catalogue of the retrospective exhibition: *History of a Katowice Artist...*, op. cit., pp. 80–81)

The genesis of the new trend created by Piotr Szmítke can undoubtedly be found in the environment in which he matured artistically, and his mentor was Henryk Waniek, a sophisticated painter and essayist, co-founder of the Oneiron group of Silesian esoteric artists active in the years 1967-1978. In this context, it is worth mentioning that the hard core of the countercultural Oneiron was formed - apart from the already mentioned Waniek - by Andrzej Urbanowicz (1938-2011), Urszula Broll (1930), Antoni Halor (1937-2011) and Zygmunt Stuchlik (1937) - artists with mystical inclinations, exploring the sphere of extra-sensuality, drawing inspiration from Jung and the philosophy of the Orient, eagerly immersing themselves in the domains of dream, magic, occultism, alchemy and psychedelia. Are these not analogous activities to those presented by the PhD student? At this point, I recommend the author should read the text "The monarchy of infinite creation, or Piotr Szmítke's metawerism" by Ms Małgorzata Stępnik, which may inspire further unconventional artistic activities.

Concluding the review, however, I must refer to the words included in the written part of the dissertation that are haunting me. Quote: "Alternatively, I could also be considered a contemporary artist, a term that has connotative weight but still evokes the fairly common idea of someone who creates strange artefacts and justifies them with a well thought out concept, inflated with a fanciful vocabulary. Again, it would not be confusing to most people because it fits the now well-established stereotype of a contemporary artist." I cannot agree to such a trivial treatment of artists currently working in the space of contemporary art; this broad term can undermine the strong creative attitudes of contemporary art: conceptual and abstract, modernist, and postmodern. If we evaluate attitudes, we have to take responsibility for it and consider the consequences of subsequent polemics; therefore, the artist's specification of the negative and positive examples of contemporary art would allow us to learn more about his artistic preferences, and thus, lead to an interesting dialogue. Mr Karl-Heinz Jürgenwolf, Benedykt Ząbkowski, the Orcocadaver or Iker Bengoetxea Arruti is a remarkable, intriguing and distinctive figure. The album entitled *Leftovers & Covers* by Lord Vituperator & Karl-Heinz Jürgenwolf meet Hexed Sons of Cosmogony deserves special attention. It is a brilliant audiophile electronic album, dark, melancholic and innovative. The author creates a mysterious world of sounds which especially appeals to me in tracks such as: *Cryogenic Nightmare III: Return To Fatherland* (A White Note Tribute to J.L. and K.E. Wherever They May Roam), 04:24,

The Hexed Sounds of Cosmogony (a) Chants Through An Odd Channel,(b)
A Haunted Sing-along. Cryogenic Nightmare: Reaching the Knee of Ophiochus from
the Songs of Siamese Limits Vol. 1 Cursed & Disabled, by Lord Vituperator & Karl-
Heinz Jürgenwolf meet the Hexed Sons of Cosmogony.

Conclusion

The submitted documentation proves that as a result of the process of education and improvement of knowledge and skills in art and music we get an artist fully prepared to teach and popularize culture as well as develop aesthetic artistic attitudes. On the basis of the analysis of the concept and its implementation, and taking into account his artistic achievements, I recommend that Mr Iker Bengoetxea Arruti be awarded the degree of doctor in the field of art, in the discipline of fine arts and conservation of art.

/-/ [an illegible signature] dr hab. Sybilla Skaluba