

REVIEW OF THE DOCTORAL DISSERTATION OF **MR PATRYK ROGIŃSKI**, ENTITLED: **"ANTI-AESTHETICISM OF THE HUMAN FIGURE IN CONTEMPORARY SCULPTURE"**, PREPARED IN CONNECTION WITH A DOCTORAL DEGREE CONFERMENT PROCEDURE IN THE FIELD OF ART, IN THE ARTISTIC DISCIPLINE OF FINE ART AND ART CONSERVATION INITIATED BY THE ARTISTIC DISCIPLINE COUNCIL OF THE EUGENIUSZ GEPPERT ACADEMY OF ART AND DESIGN IN WROCLAW.

Mr Patryk Rogiński is a graduate of the Academy of Art and Design in Wrocław. He completed a two-level course of study in the field of Art and Design of Ceramics. In 2015, he received his BA degree with a distinction for his diploma work whose supervisors were Professor Grażyna Płocica and Professor Gabriel Palowski. He pursued his MA degree under the guidance of the same professors and in 2017 he graduated with distinction. An integral part of the diploma work was an appendix in photography pursued under the supervision of Professor Piotr Komorowski. During his studies, the doctoral student went to foreign art universities as part of the Erasmus programme twice - to the University of Wolverhampton in the UK and the Oslo National Academy of the Arts in Norway. As an outstanding student, he received the Rector's scholarship in 2014-2015.

He continued his education at the Interdepartmental Doctoral Studies in English (2019 -2021) under the supervision of Professor dr hab. Adam Abel, specializing in ceramics. His previous artistic education took place in the Stanisław Kopystyński Secondary School of Fine Arts in Wrocław, where he specialized in visual advertising. During his secondary school education, he was awarded the Prime Minister's Scholarship for the Best Students and the Wrocław City Council Scholarship.

During his studies, he gained diverse professional experience working as a photo-illustrator for the *Contrast* magazine, a freelancer for photo and event sessions and participating in an internship in the workshop of dying crafts in the Folk Culture Museum in Węgorzewo. After winning the Scandic competition (2016) he started a collaboration with the company's hotel chain. The winning project, depicting a ceramic interpretation of the Ślęża mountain, became an element incorporated into the architecture of the building. For three years, the doctoral student has been the glass workshop manager at GLASSO Wrocław, where he is involved in management, cooperation with designers, training new employees, but also in the independent production of glass statuettes.

After completing his study programme, Mr Patryk Rogiński participated in group exhibitions - *Lacuna Festivals*, Lanzarote, Spain (2021); *Satellite Imager*, Typa Tartu Gallery (2020),

Estonia; *Zeniths*, Contemporary Museum Wrocław (2019), *Underwater Wrocław* Browar Mieszczkański, Wrocław (2018). He was in the group of artists creating the *Give me emotions* mural in Bytom (2021), took active part in the High Temperature Festival 2019 at the Academy of Art and Design in Wrocław as part of the *Ceramics XXL* workshops and shows.

During his doctoral studies he actively participated in the teaching process. He was involved in the projects, revisions and final reviews of student works in the Studio of Intermedia Activities in Ceramics, supervised by Professor Adam Abel.

Evaluation of the doctoral dissertation

A repeated reading of Mr Patryk Rogiński's dissertation and a review of the attached documentation of works, exhibitions and projects reassured me that the subject he focuses on is the result of genuine, long-term exploration. A major part of the dissertation is a multifaceted analysis of the concept of anti-aestheticism. Taking part in the discussion, the author emphasises the sources of his activity.

In the first chapter, *Definition*, consisting of numerous sub-chapters, he makes an attempt to outline the general background of the biological, psychological and social conditions of perception, judgements, valuation of phenomena, including artistic tendencies. He refers to neuro-aesthetic research, based on the disciplines of psychology, physiology and neurobiology, diagnosing the activity of brain structures responsible for perception. He focuses on the influence of mental disorders, which alter the perception of reality, and pharmacological agents, which can also modify it.

Developing the theme of human confrontation with a phenomenon that is difficult to evaluate, the doctoral student refers to Masahiro Mori's theory from "The Uncanny Valley", which defines the psychological discomfort caused by humanoid robots. The author also points to the growing importance of digital media drawing people to the virtual world and their unlimited creative possibilities. Finally, broadening the scope of inspiration, he refers to the work of turpist poets who change and undermine classical aesthetic tendencies in literature. In the same chapter, he outlines the academic foundations of anti-aestheticism referring to artistic trends and philosophical concepts of post- and transhumanism, emphasising the significance of the accelerated development of science and new technologies. The last part concerns the review of formal procedures - materials, scale, colour, structure and their influence on the reception and perception of a work of art.

The link between these multidirectional considerations is the human being. The author, in accordance with the title of the dissertation, focuses on figurative sculpture. He notes the current increased interest in the human body in visual arts, and provides objective and subjective reasons for this. In his description, he uses examples of representational, often

naturalistic works and presents their authors, such as Hans Bellmer, the controversial creator of a series of sculptures defined by transgressive sexuality, The Doll, whom the doctoral student considers to be a precursor of the vision of anti-aesthetic sculpture closest to his heart. He emphasises the role of the material, including contemporary synthetic materials, used by the presented artists in their works. Silicones and resins, which perfectly simulate the structure of tissues, skin and biological forms, make it possible to create poignantly realistic imitations of the body. Such is the nature of Ron Mueck's hyper-realistic, overscale works, or Patrizia Piccini's hybrid creatures redefining the meaning of otherness and abnormality, or the works of the Italian duo Santissimi, who show modified figures as real as possible or turn them into prepared laboratory specimens.

I get the impression that the works of the above mentioned artists are stylistically closer to the doctoral student than the artists of ceramic sculptures whom he also mentions. This is only my opinion, the author does not declare any inspiration by particular examples, nor does he value them. It seems that he emphasises the importance of a conscious use of the material's features, reinforcing the message. In the ceramic works mentioned above, the choice of material gives the impression of an intentional dialogue with its meaningful, sometimes historical connotations. Jason Briggs, a ceramist who builds swollen, "quilted" objects, which take on biomorphic shapes including frames of the human body, partly covered with implanted hair, does not cut himself off from decorativeness. Also Jessica Harrison's porcelain figurines made in the elegant Victorian style, refer to this function combined with decorative art. Juxtaposed with the macabre theme of slashed throats, flowing entrails, ripped skin, they are made in the traditional convention of a trinket.

Most of the examples of sculptures presented by the author contain accentuated elements of precise literalism. This means frequent depiction of medical conditions in near-natural colours, details presenting blood vessels, inflammations and effusions, contrasting matt and glossy surfaces suggesting dampness or secretions. The elements enhancing visual discomfort include also changes of scale of selected fragments or the entire object, which disturbs standard proportions, unnatural shifts of body parts, their addition or subtraction. Additional tension may also be caused by the multiplication of elements. The author enumerates these procedures and applies them also in his works.

Although the titles of the sub-chapters may suggest an academic, formal approach to the dissertation, Mr Rogiński conducts his argument in a free, fluid manner, with genuine commitment. He refers to the theses and points to those that he considers relevant to his work. He skilfully frames the subject, which becomes apparent only after a careful reading of the entire dissertation - although he does not precisely analyse all the criteria of his work, between the lines it is possible to find a clear path that led him to this type of presentation and to the development of his own artistic language.

Although the works from the study years are not subject to review, they should be mentioned

here to show the development and consistency of the doctoral student. His MA thesis dealt with the issue of mental imbalance and attempts to visualise these states. *I AM HUMAN*, a series of ten heads that are, according to the author, *a response to the theme of mental health degradation in case of severe mental illnesses* is an interesting multiplicative representation of form deconstruction. Geometric deformations are reinforced by colour differences, shifts, growths. Some fragments are emphasised by make-up.

It is evident that in his formal explorations the author does not limit himself to classical, "noble" ceramic methods and techniques. He is open to other, non-traditional ways of achieving the expected effect, which he expresses in his doctoral thesis. Already in the BA diploma work (I used only a few photographs placed on the doctoral student's website), one can see the ideological and formal nucleus of the theme to be continued in the future.

Presenting the genesis and development of anti-aesthetic tendencies, Mr Patryk Rogiński distances himself from one-dimensional perception thereof as the art of ugliness, illness and death, as of exclusively activities involving the processes of destruction, transience and decay, which aim to evoke disgust, shock or unhealthy fascination.

The author emphasises the subjective character of his work, determined by his experience of illness. Possessing great knowledge of the rudiments and principles of formulating an anti-aesthetic message, he ultimately finds in himself the source of choices and final decisions concerning the idea, message, as well as formal issues. The description of attempts at analytical reading of his own poetry, created in more difficult or "darker" states, sounds evocative. Fragments concerning the body, distorted self-perception, almost physically described inability to move, seem at times to be an accurate sketch, ready to be transferred onto ceramic objects. The correlation between these self-analytical observations and the final effect in the form of sculptures is convincing.

Does it mean a search for identity, self-awareness in relation to one's own nature? Does it indicate a conviction that creativity and its outcomes are the effect of pathological processes causing the falsification of image? They determine both the subject matter and the manner of representation. Is the intention to evoke aesthetic emotions in the viewer, achieved by deformation procedures, clear? The lack of direct contact with the sculptures makes an opinion on this issue difficult. It seems, however, that the author skilfully balances between a clearly personal, intimate theme and a general and supra-individual interpretation of it. Certainly, the use of the human body as a carrier of expressed content universalizes the message.

As part of his doctoral dissertation, Mr Patryk Rogiński presents a series of sculptures entitled *Delusions*. The author describes in detail the constructional, technical and technological attempts involved in their implementation. The whole, very important workshop of an artist working in a specific and demanding ceramic material. He illustrates the tests of various types of clay - porcelain, plastic mass devoid of chamotte and the finally selected one, with the

addition of 0.5 - 3 mm grain. He observes how a given surface behaves during the successive stages of the technological process, how temperature and the associated sintering of the mass affect the absorption of colouring layers applied one by one. He presents the technology of low-temperature glass paints which allowed him to be precise in the successive stages of their application - by spraying and by hand. He explains the reasons for his actions and decisions to resign from traditional, standard methods of coating surfaces, emphasising, among numerous motives, the possibility of control and immediate verification of the effects achieved. The way of achieving the final results (the principles of constructing and building a body, numerous technological tests - testing porosity, differences in types of clay, grain size of chamotte) is described in detail by the author. It seems that the element of chance, often desired in high-temperature techniques, has been reduced to a minimum here.

Under the common name of *Delusions*, the author presents three groups of sculptures - *Parasites*, *Impossibilities*, *Falls*. The first group and its constituents *Nest*, *Parasite* and *Imago* are perhaps the least obvious and unambiguous of all. The applied formal solutions, types of deformation, dynamics, and internal movement distinguish them from the static bodies of humanoid forms from the *Impossibility* cycle, in which specific deformations occur within the boundaries and contours of a real human silhouette. The author describes them as a response to the *problems of performing*. Only in this group some of the sculptures have a head - that part of the body which we commonly identify with the source of thoughts, experiences and emotions. The heads have no individual features, they lack facial features, they do not convey feelings, they are a stylistically coherent continuation, a coherent end of the body. *Falls*, the last group, which is a certain compilation of the previous ones, has the most narrative message-defining character. The outstretched arms, the direction of movement, somehow impose or suggest an interpretation - a story of impossibility, helplessness, lethargy? Some of the photographic documentation shows different variations of arrangements in which the sculptures meet in a common space. It is possible to see how different relations emerge between them, how an undefined "presence" or inner identity of the objects is outlined and how it evokes new narrative paths of interpretation.

The dissertation is accompanied by a series of photographs entitled *Disintegration*. The author applies this technique, well known to him and used in his artistic and professional activities, as a form of commentary and a complement to his doctoral dissertation. Consistently and coherently with the main theme, he places a human being in the centre of his interest, using deformation procedures and applying a two-dimensional medium. The photographs are taken with the use of analogue and digital techniques and their colours are homogeneous, close to the ceramic objects. On the basis of a single photograph of a joint exhibition of spatial and photographic works it is difficult to evaluate the validity of their combination and mutual influence. However, I get the impression (without evaluating the artistic value of individual

shots) that the expansion of the composition limited and flattened its interpretative scope. Maybe it is worth applying a subtractive technique, the art of moderation? Certainly it is a consistent action, the author has combined both means of expression before. Undoubtedly, he is very experienced in both and can use them freely.

Mr Patryk Rogiński's dissertation is constructed according to a sequence of associations, consequences and connections within the scope of the addressed issues. The argument is a logical message whose conclusions have led to sculptural, final projects. The author presents himself as a sensitive and creative person, open to artistic experience. He has extensive knowledge and theoretical background, and describing reality from his own perspective he is sincere and authentic.

CONCLUSION

Having analysed the materials and documentation submitted for reviewing the doctoral dissertation of Mr Patryk Rogiński, entitled *Anti-aestheticism of the human figure in contemporary sculpture*, I conclude that, together with his artistic, organisational and didactic achievements, it meets the requirements set out in Article 13(1) of the Act of 14 March 2003 (as amended) on degrees and academic title and on degrees and title in art. **In view of the above, I propose to the Artistic Discipline Council of the Eugeniusz Geppert Academy of Art and Design in Wrocław to adopt a resolution to award Mr Patryk Rogiński the degree of doctor in the field of art, in the discipline of fine art and art conservation.**

dr hab. Alicja Kupiec

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