

Summary

MAN - GOD – EMPTINESS

SIN AND CONFESSIOAL

summary

Homo est anima utens corpore. (Man is a soul using a body).

St. Thomas Aquinas

What is today the place of religion and belief in art? How does a contemporary artist creating today refers to the man and his most intimate property, faith, whatever it was, and where are the limits of freedom, if at all such boundaries can be designated? An intriguing figure Artur Żmijewski, above all, his performance of "Mass" has become an inspiration for me, kind of leaven to the task myself these few questions and undertake research in the field of art. The result is objects - confessional, performative action involving Żmijewski and the following text.

Since childhood, being brought up in the culture of the Christian and Catholic tradition was turned on in the world and I felt a part of it. In those days, in provincial, southern Poland perception of the immediate environment and the whole universe through the lens of Catholic interpretation was almost an axiom. But even then, in the first years of primary school, when I studied religion in the parish room, doubts arose in me. Studies at the Academy of Fine Arts were for me the gift of freedom, when I could focus on the searching and find your own world. My interest in the faith, or specifically, a man entangled in faith *Homo religiosus* has become the main theme of my work, which resulted in the idea to design and build confessionals, as well as performance in the cooperation with the leading Polish artist from critical art movement Artur Żmijewski, who directed the Mass at the Dramatic Theatre in Warsaw in 2011.

I do not want to pry a door which are already long time open by putting the idea that the spirit and body are in play equally important, but for me it is important to emphasize that all started in the field of nascent spirit and awakening of consciousness, everything belonging to man and man stands. But to reach the final solution, which are my confessionals, and the presence in it of Artur Żmijewski, I have to put alleged, since it made only on the basis of the silent image artefacts spiritual development, and thus the religious development of man, including the Neanderthal man. Certainly this is not a mistake when we put an equal sign between the spiritual man, and the religious. Of course today we understand that we can be spiritualized not believing in anything above and beyond just believing in our own human strength, imagination and creativity. But at the beginning of the human race, and then through the long millennia the spirit of man and belief in extrasensory entities accounted for unity, because only in this way could explain everything incomprehensible. Spiritual development, is the development of internal self-awareness. With the awakening of the consciousness, extracting unit, the person taking the development of aesthetics and sense of beauty. The oldest traces of that development was found at the beginning of the twenty-first century in Pigeon Grotto (Grotte des Pigeons) in Morocco. This dating back 82,000 years drilled shells of a sea snail, which was made necklace. We have more of these marks, for example burials before tens of one thousand years decorated with ochre found on the southern tip of Africa, almost all of Europe. We have items buried along with the dead, among them deer antlers discovered in a skeleton hand before about 100,000 years in a cave Qafzeh on the slopes of Mount Carmel. *Burying the dead (...) does not involve with no material benefit, but with a certain philosophy of man, beliefs, symbols: Equipment grave indicates a knowledge*

of death and realize that life is beyond human control. Without such knowledge, the grave would become incomprehensible – (words of anthropologist Fraciszek Rosiński). But the most interesting and touching discovery, which is proving the existence of something beyond the perceptible world of the senses and it also demonstrating sophisticated sense of beauty which had a man already in the Paleolithic era, this is discovery, dated to 60,000 years in a cave Shanidar 3 in Iraqi Kurdistan. This Neanderthal grave that was covered with pollen of flowering plants, which means that it had to be covered with flowers.

I noticed that it was a Neanderthal, much less developed than our own, the direct ancestor. A man living in the world wanted to understand this world. The order of the world which manifested the power of lightning, and, above all, the inevitability of death and the force still reviving life could be explained only supernatural being who was responsible for everything, something which gave a satisfactory answer. Something that a man could ask, for example the reversal of fortunes, which would not be possible if such a being not existed. The anthropologist of religion, Prof. Andrzej Wierciński analyzing the development of the religious consciousness has distinguished between the three successive stages: 1 stage magic-religious, 2 stage of philosophical, 3 stage of research.

So, all these very interesting discoveries are evidence of the gradual development inside sensitivity of our ancestors, which in turn has resulted in not only a sublime sense of beauty and aesthetics, but also the development of thought and feeling the existence of the Mystery, the world beyond sensory perception, which is the genesis of all religious systems. Of course, this situation came from our innate curiosity, tendency to explain things and situations incomprehensible for the contemporary man. The term Homo curiosus (Man curious) that this purpose I came up, it seems to be the most reasonable. There is the notion of the sacred and the profane. In examining the extant tribes of the culture of the original, such as the Mbuti Pygmies of the Congo, presumed to be that of the ancient cultures of these areas were syncretic, ideally together mixed and intermingled, just as the development of civilization followed their gradual separation until today existing denial sacrum. This is important, because it certainly applies to us and contemporary art, in which holiness is often used instrumentally, and the boundaries separating the two spheres are exceeded by artists. We are a species that since the dawn of its history, aims not only to know the surrounding reality, but also for maximum freedom and the abolition of all restrictions. In perhaps the strongest way it manifests itself in art. Freedom is a paramount for artists. But is this their freedom realizing, do not violate the same freedoms of others, active or passive recipients of facts created by the artists? The fact is Feet First by Kippenberger, the crucified figure of frogs, as well as The Script System, Milo Moiré interference in open urban space. In this project, the 2014 years Moire travelled naked the tram in Basel, and her body has been covered only the names of clothes. Does everyone have to understand the actions of artists according to their wishes and has no right to their different interpretation? Is the postmodern concept of freedom must apply to all of us? Still a large part of the population professes the Christian idea of freedom. The right of these people should also be respected. In Poland, a large percentage of the population considered to be Christians, in relation for example

to the body which in this view is the Temple. Even if we assume that in Poland is progressing secularization, it seems reasonable to pluralist approach to the concept of freedom. Moving in the same sphere, we see that the unrestricted freedom of the artist not only leads to controversy philosophical or ethical, but also in the perception and reception of art. Accidents "order", that is cleaning and washing (literally) of some works (2011 washing by a cleaner at the Museum am Ostwald in Dortmund installation of Kippenberger), or even thrown into the dustbin (2004 year removed from exhibition at Tate Britain "bag of garbage" of Gustav Metzger) provide primarily for the expansion of creative freedom that it faces with total incomprehension. First and foremost in my work are important questions that, however, I do not feel qualified to answer. Respecting the autonomy of the recipient, I propose that the answer he found himself: Why artists began to use in his art themes and religious symbolism in a provocative or even blasphemous? Sparking at the junction of the sacred and the profane. What does it mean that the action is iconoclastic artist? In what context? Transcendent, social, institutional, political?

The Church in Poland, in the post-war years, was an asylum institution for contesting unwanted power, also persecuted by which has gained a unique respect and trust. Our history has made us distinctive European country (skipping institutionally involved in the religion of the Papal States), where faith and religion still exert such a significant impact on the life of the nation and the existence of the state. It seems that in our constantly irritate the action of artists moving critical issues related to the distribution and reception of religion.

At overwhelming in Europe sphere of Sacrum went down to second place. But taking Western European way of life, and we just do not happen to the same process secularization, which for years we are witnessing in the West? Does art is so strong and important that he can speak to the public? Some echo, perhaps not too loud as to deserve it, bounced off a few years ago, the play "Mass" directed by Artur Żmijewski at the Dramatic Theatre in Warsaw on October 29, 2011. After several articles in the press, the whole thing died down without causing a deeper and wider debate, or critical reflection in the broad social acceptance. Perhaps social change in our country happens so quickly that, although still important and relevant interest in faith and religion, every year weakens. What exactly did the artist Artur Żmijewski? Showing the "Mass" devoid of Sacrum not made any breakthrough. I think that his action, though not to read his intention pointed to several important issues, without destroying the existing order or refusing to holiness. Żmijewski pointed to theatricality and ritual perfection, and thus, can boldly say, its beauty. The form in which this ritual was closed many years ago. Stripped of Sacrum - showed, it becomes pure theatre. But dealing with the symbol and using the symbol, perhaps Żmijewski raised his hand to what this symbol represents and presents? Did Żmijewski taking this symbol for the artistic workshop commit a sin? It seems to me that the attitude of the Artist had nothing to do with iconoclasm and calculated the effect of provocation. However, from the point of view of the institutional Church in Poland, the Church is the sole depository of the truth. That's why I built confessionals, to which I invited Artur Żmijewski.

The architecture of my confessionals is different from the traditional, which since the Council of Trent found in Catholic churches. Confessionals are three. I chose this number both for the sake of its symbolism and symmetry of form which consists of two side buildings with one main centre. In the Christian religion the number three represents the Holy Trinity.

We also have three stages of penance: repentance, provision improvement, satisfaction. One of the confessionals is painted in yellow. Yellow colour in the European painting often replaced with gold, which is a very religious connotation. It is a symbol of divinity, glory, purity, majesty the king. But what is the place of religion and belief in art today? I insist on the claim, that the discourse of critical art in relation to religion is offensive-oppressive. In the throes of creation, desire to express themselves, the artist does not seem to notice the man for whom Christian ritual is still an important part of life. Perhaps for most it is just a ritual, and the meaning was lost beneath a thick layer of celebrations and traditions, and so all these external forms, the whole "theatre". But it is. Somewhere out there, often behind the veil of hypocrisy and lies smouldering spark of faith. Even if it is a faith full of wizardry and pagan superstition, as it happens in the Church of provincial, rural, this is, after all. Where is the freedom and for whom? Freedom only for the authors of artistic provocation, and not for their opponents? In the traditional confessional inside is sitting confessor and penitent is kneeling on the outside. My confessionals are constructed contrary. There is no room for the priest. They lack an important factor, - Mystery. Public confession of sins, or other hidden thoughts and deeds denies the idea of the confessional and all its architecture. Inside each of my objects become penitent and says out by special tubes. His confession is for anyone heard who will beat an appropriate distance. In the traditional confessional inside sitting confessor and penitent kneeling on the outside. My confessionals are constructed contrary. There is no room for the priest. They lack an important factor, Mystery. Public confession of sins, or other hidden thoughts and deeds denies the idea of the confessional and all its architecture. Inside each of my objects become penitent and says out by special tubes. Confession is heard by everyone who will be at an appropriate distance.

I built my confessionals specifically for Artur Żmijewski. However, I did not require anything to Żmijewski confessed in words, entering the inside of my objects. His presence alone was enough. It was essential, integral part of my work. Seventh-September 2015 year in CSW Zamek Ujazdowski, Warsaw Artur Żmijewski entered the confessional and in silence completed my work.

Artistic work:

Confessional 1. Built in 2014. Linden wood, alkyd enamel yellow, 260x130x130cm

Confessional 2. Built in 2015. spruce wood, 270x110x110cm

Confessional 3. Built in 2015. spruce wood, 250x125x125cm

For the construction were used: screws, hinges and iron anchors.

Photos: 3 photos confessionals inside the disused Catholic church in Herľany Slovakia.

Date taken 15 July 2015, 100x70cm each.

Film with Artur Żmijewski was shot Sept. 7, 2015 in the CSW Zamek Ujazdowski Warsaw.

Duration 5 min. The author Piotr Bies.