

Anna Markowska

An art historian, a critic, and a curator.
The Professor of Humanities.

Markowska graduated from the Jagiellonian University with a degree in history of art. She acquired her PhD from The Polish Academy of Sciences in Warsaw and the Film School in Łódź. She obtained her habilitation in 2005 at IS PAN. It was based on the dissertation entitled *Defining art - explaining the world. On understanding art in the PRP*. He has held the title of the Professor of Humanities since 2016. Between 1997-2006, she worked at the University of Silesia. From 2006, she worked at the University of Wrocław. In 2016/2015, she was a visiting professor at the Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań. She lectured at many European universities: in Porto, Leon, Copenhagen, Turin, Pisa, St. Petersburg, Opava and Ostrava, and outside Europe: the Hebrew University in Jerusalem, and the Pedagogical University in Tomsk in Siberia.

The Comedy of Sublimation: The boundary of contemporaneity and the ethos of reality in American art is one of her recent books. It was completed in 2010 and published in 2012. The book was distinguished in the program Monographs FNP *Two Break-throughs. Polish art after 1955 and 1989*. She was an editor of such books as *Permafo from 2012; Trickster Strategies in the Artists' and Curatorial Practice* (2013), and the *Avant-garde did not applaud. The Gallery of Latest Art* (2014). Her contemporary art exhibitions include the history of Wrocław's Neo-Avant-garde Permafo group (Wrocław Contemporary Museum, 2012) and review of works by contemporary artists: Krzysztof Wałaszek *The Life of the artist from the second half of the 20th century* (BWA Awangarda in Wrocław, 2015) and Dorota Nieznalska. *Past, which does not want to pass* (PGS in Sopot, 2015).

Anna Markowska specialises in the art after 1945 in a global context, including the art of the Polish PRP period in relation to power and ideology.

Contextualism. Art in the political and social context of the 1970s Poland.

This story may be easily overlooked, because the protagonist neither failed nor was victorious. What he fought for – a complete reform of art in Poland and worldwide rooted in an exceptional experience of real socialism – was stopped by, first, the Marshall Law and, later, the independence victory in Poland. As a result, a process of negotiating new art was terminated. A process based on an experience of two systems – a capitalist system and a socialist one. Today we see that there is no ‘third way’ (which, i.e. Joseph Beuys believed in behind the other side of iron curtain). Świdziński’s ‘third front’, which he was working on at the time of Poland’s fascination with capitalism and free market successes of few Polish artists, was compared to quixotism. I would like the readers to see this story as lost and ridiculous. I dedicate it to those who think that people have a right to invent their life and construct it while questioning determiners diagnosed as anachronistic, and thus making the access to reality impossible. This is not a story about a failure, but about a desire to organise life in a way that its reality would be fully felt. To paraphrase Świdziński, winning is often accompanied by a feeling of failure¹.

I shall formulate three opening theses based on an assumption that Świdziński while accepting a particular socio-political situation in the Polish People’s Republic, wanted it to determine his art. We can notice that in:

1. a drive to reveal a prosaic and trivial reality rather than enchanting it;
2. a drive to a radically anti-colonial expression thanks to cooperation with ‘provincial’ centres in the West (Lund, Toronto). While accepting PPR, he distanced himself from both Moscow and New York. He did not want to enter into any comprador relations; for the price of being excluded from the elites, he was ready to pay the price, and indeed he paid it;

» 1 J. Świdziński, *Sztuka, Art, Society and Self-consciousness*, translated by Ł. Guzek, Warsaw 2009, p. 129.

3. a belief in an anti-capitalist approach to art. In New York, in particular, the artist revealed a romantic missionary feature. We shall never know what romantic attitude Świdziński would reveal in his travel to Moscow. We do not know, but we may try to work it out – I am certain that he would not be interested in befriending the art of the Russian establishment.

Those three assumptions were realised under the leadership of Świdziński in Galeria Sztuki Najnowszej [Gallery of The Newest Art] in Wrocław in 1975. The works by Anna Kutera, Romuald Kutera and Lech Mrozek will serve as case-studies.

First of all – how to show the reality of PPR without depicting the aspirations (in other words future time).

It is rather obvious that art is always created in a particular context. We may see contextualism due to the 1970s impulse an expression of disagreement for modernism art. Jan Świdziński's (1923-2014) contestation encompassed not only painting rooted in Post-Impressionism, but also later innovations in painting connected with informal, but also tautologic conceptual art. There was a moment for Świdziński to support conceptual art for example while working with Wrocław PERMAFO gallery at the very beginning. The artist wanted to realise a surprisingly extreme programme: by making people sensitive to context (or in other words, by making people sensitive to something that is rather marginal in an artwork) he wanted to cleanse the artwork of anachronistic forms and old-art procedures. He suffered from a genetic flaw of contemporary art, which he saw in an impossibility of reconstructing facts with values², real-time actions and not repeating old procedures of the art, as 'only new situations are art situations. Everything else belongs to history or archaeology'³. He wanted to achieve a situation in which there is a value created, but also we learn what it is and what real value it possesses⁴. I understand the sentence: By repeating a sacral ritual of an alien to us culture, we do not resurrect its gods⁵, in a sense that Świdziński did not demand to find art, which would adequate for the changes taking place. In such situation all attempts to reduce any backwardness in art, he would see as the wrong positioning of a problem, it would confirm a provincial point of view. It is not about repeating a form borrowed from somewhere else, or using a form found in 'the beauty of medieval cathedrals and art treasures' – the contextual art expressed itself beyond aesthetics. It is

» 2 J. Świdziński, *Contexts*, Labirynt Gallery, Lublin 2010, p. 235

» 3 Świdziński, *Contexts*, p. 30

» 4 Świdziński, *Contexts*, p. 231.

» 5 Świdziński, *Contexts*, p. 235.

not about fulfilling a referential function in a defining reality because we repeat and re-play an already existing reality. This situation of return Świdziński calls a doublet of appointed reality⁶, which forces the viewer. Świdziński was talking about art, which while not being a phenomenon disconnected from a process of reality 'is a reality, an element creating a structure of the world in which we are stuck, it is an act of social action'⁷. At the beginning of his cooperation with Permafo, he was delighted with the catalogue and exhibition entitled NS Permafo Gallery. The project noted that NS happened in Poland – New Situation; an artist, stopped being a demiurge, a visionary. The art got rid of middle-men – 'a multi-meaning signs, symbols, allegories, metaphors, ideologies, propaganda, fiction, utopia, visions, inspired depth, etc'⁸. The return of Natalia LL and Andrzej Lachowicz to clean art positions resulted with Świdziński's search for other communities and galleries. Eventually, he came up with 'art in journey'. It was all about incidental meetings with random people. When 'they leave, and we stay with a value system of our culture' the process begins in which we need to decide if nothing happened, or we stay with our culture patterns, or perhaps something did change, even more, we were changed completely.

Świdziński wanted to create a new and different art. This progressive otherness emerged from new exhibitions and discussions. The difference in an approach to innovation and difference in comparison to modernism and conceptualism was linked with taking into account local issues, however, not in a sense of defining socio-political problems. This type of art would serve a defined idea, it would fight for a particular future. Świdziński was interested in present time. If art is to realise its potential in an act of rebellion and contestation, if it wants to influence anything, than – according to Świdziński's thinking – 'it does not exist for itself, it is something incidental, one can live without it, if the aim was fulfilled'⁹. To consider what it truly meant took Świdziński a bit of time. He knew that modernism formula was exhausted, whereas to arrive at an idea of new art he wanted to follow the path of theory and discussion. Świdziński believed that the worst thing to happen was a shallow reception of some style, because it would stand a witness to some dubious self-colonial predisposition. It seems that one of the most interesting postulates of Świdziński, which appeared after the first exhibition entitled Contextual Art (St, Petri Gallery, Lund, 5th February 1976) was a prescription not to

» 6 *Ibid.*, p. 32.

» 7 *Ibid.*, p. 32.

» 8 *Ibid.*, p. 228.

» 9 J. Świdziński, *Contexts*, p. 12.

'reveal art practice'¹⁰. Świdziński showed in Lund his artworks (did he show a photography entitled *Korek* from 1975 – which he took to Toronto!¹¹ – this remains unsettled, for sure he took three photographs entitled *Actions with Van Gogh's photo*. They documented turning a photo, which was considered to be the only known photograph of van Gogh¹² – he is sitting with his back to the camera with Emil Bernard, they are sitting on the bank of Seine river in Asnieres, close to Paris around 1886). But his theoretical work – a text about contextual art – was treated in an identical way to his 'image' works – the text was printed and hang on the wall. So from the very beginning written text, commentary, a theoretical basis was an equal part of the show, and making references to the sight and 'clean' image was substituted with a cooperation of a letter and an image¹³. Speaking however of images, their relational character – demonstrating freedom from an idea of essential and transcendental seeing means understanding as well as anti-metaphysical, assembling attitude of a curator-collector, who prefers gathering up theses for discussions rather than artworks for contemplation – he created contexts within his presentation in Lund and within presentations of all Polish artists. What distinguished Świdziński was his strategy of appropriating, repetition and iteration as a way of revealing a context. Świdziński treated in the same way the late work of Duchamp (*Sink Stopper*) from 1964 and a non-artistic, semi-documenting photography from the same period. Both appropriated works were rather ethnographic and anthropological in nature – the first one as a ready-made, showed unwritten boundaries of the art world and it represented a non-ironic remedy (as an image of a device blocking or enabling a flow). The second work represented a 'failed' reportage from an art field work. It talked about limits of recording done with the use of photography. The status of the appropriated works

- » 10 I base my information on Świdziński's activities on the research carried out, and published in the book, *Latest Art Gallery. The avant-garde did not applaud*, ed. A. Markowska, V.1, Wrocław Contemporary Museum, Wrocław 2014. I base it also on an interview with Anna Kutera, a participant of the contextual movement. The interview was conducted in Wrocław, in March 2015. I also interviewed Jean Sellem, a year earlier, in Anna Kutera's home in Wrocław.
- » 11 As Lech Mrozek wrote: "In my opinion *Korek* made him *Dłubak* before leaving for Toronto, there he wanted to drain the Conceptualists!" - a mail to the author dated April 15, 2016.
- » 12 The photograph used by Świdziński is published on the website of the Van Gogh Museum in Amsterdam, <http://www.vangoghmuseum.nl/en/vincent-life-and-work/van-goghs-life-18531890/from-dark-to-light> (date of access: August 2, 2016). Another, equally controversial image by Victor Morin (c. 1886), was discovered only in the 1990s, *Expert Say Photo is of Van Gogh*, http://usatoday30.usatoday.com/life/people/2004-02-23-van-gogh_x.htm (date of access: 2.04.2016); see also: <http://www.smithsonianmag.com/smart-news/why-vincent-van-gogh-photograph-1887-180955677/>(data Access: 2.04 2016)
- » 13 It can be said that the revolution, which Marat was once martyr of - shown by Jacques-Louis David when while dying he stopped writing – it was picked up one hundred and fifty years later by returning to writing and simultaneous imaging, compare T.J. Clark, *Farewell to an Idea. Episodes to the History of Modernism*, New Haven and London 1999.

was various. Duchamp's work was shown in galleries. Van Gogh's photo was shown in Museum in Amsterdam as an appendix, a commentary to real works. It was carefully separated from artworks section. Let me add here that the blocking home sewage system Bouche-evier changed into a form of female Fig Leaf (1950). Those erotic sewage parallels and female body were far from moderation of Polish artist. However, while referring to classic works of Duchamp, Świdziński positioned himself as an artist wanting a new art to be invented. He saw in it a way of overcoming an obstruction of contemporary art world. Świdziński posed himself for an artist-loner, who was ready to start up some ephemeral collectives to realise his ideas. When he used a non-art object he questioned not only the boundaries between the art and non-art (Duchamp did pretty much the same thing), but also he revealed the object's real, material character instead of following the mythology of a genius-artist. In Lund, Świdziński showed his extreme materialistic and pragmatic side. It is stripped of metaphysics. The artist referred both to a tradition of anti-art (Duchamp) and non-art (Amsterdam's photo), while doing it he showed ambitious art horizons of art revolution which emerged from that scope. We need to highlight here that works showed in Lund and the ones showed earlier in De Appel in Amsterdam played the role of Derridian parerga, not ergon. Their meaning was in creating a different framework for art, not in the act of artwork making. In this sense, the criticisms of Świdziński as an artist without artworks is in fact a complement for him. Świdziński wanted to show the framework.

When in 1976, Anna Kutera took with her a case with her and her friends works to Contextual Art Conference in Toronto, Świdziński reacted with reluctance. If not for the approval of Amerigo Marras, who put the works on the table and hang them on the walls, Świdziński most certainly would prefer not to show the works by Polish artists¹⁴. Contextual art in its early stage was not meant to create finished facts in the form of 'artworks', but it was meant to open for various possibilities resulting from brain storming. Świdziński had never resigned from being on a journey and from art in a journey. What is more he never really inclined towards performance art. Exposition in Lund invited to travel between a word and image, between art tradition, anti-art and non-art. It invited most of all to conversations, nailing down arguments, shaking up already settled facts.

» 14 An interview with Anna Kutera, a participant of the contextual movement, carried out by the author in Wrocław in March 2015.

Secondly – everything, but not compradoring!

The name of the movement with international aspirations was created as result of many conversations between Świdziński and Jean Sellem – a Frenchman linked with SI movements. He ran in Sweden a university gallery St. Petri. Sellem met Świdziński in Gdańsk at International Festival of Art Schools' Students. The very idea of equal cooperation between people from different political blocks was revolutionary. Sellem did not care for an exotic European from the East, who by showing the knowledge of a particular art and decorum could count on being 'accepted' into a Western community on the basis of pre-established rules. Sellem was a searching person. He was a stranger in a Swedish community. Although, he was rather close to the Situationist International movement and its political undertakings in France, he chose to live in provincial Lund, which did not have any great traditions regarding contemporary art. Once there, he realised that he had to modify particular procedures and methods of operation while being there. The diagnosis of Guy Debord, who associated himself with Situationists, claimed that the culture of spectacle – 'a place of vision abuse and false consciousness'¹⁵ became a tool for unifying the society – was rather obvious for entire western world and, as we can predict, Sellem did not question its foundations. Świdziński, even though he came from a different political system, did not question them either. The intention to harm the spectacle society, which involved the culture of museum artworks, can be seen as a common on both sides of the political divide. Debord wrote: 'The spectacle inherits all the weaknesses of the Western philosophical project which undertook to comprehend activity concerning the categories of seeing'¹⁶. We may therefore say that a silent understanding between Sellem and Świdziński was brought down to a claim that a spectacle, which is an affirmation of illusion, 'an ever-present confirmation of a choice already made' and 'a social relation among people, mediated by images.', and as it is 'the image refers to itself'. It 'leads to a generalised sliding of having into appearing, from which all actual "having" must draw its immediate prestige and its ultimate function'¹⁷. The first choice of conceptualism language is a guarantee of the above approach to the spectacle, speaking for others, for the whole, where 'this is why the spectator feels at home nowhere because the spectacle is everywhere'¹⁸. It

» 15 G. Debord, *The Society of the Spectacle*, translated by A. Ptaszkowska with help of L. Brogowski, Gdańsk 1998, p. 11

» 16 *Ibid.*, p. 15.

» 17 *Ibid.*, p. 12-14.

» 18 *Ibid.*, p. 19.

seems that Polish authorities opening to the West during Gierek's reign needed art which would be 'the common language of this separation'¹⁹, while at the same time they wanted to seduce people to support them and thus the idea of doing it through the art of change. This crack between an ideology of change and its promise with an anachronistic re-enacting of what already happened was used by Świdziński to suggest his real time. In 1958, in Stockholm Moderna Museet was established. For the first 15 years, it was developing in a spectacular way. At that time, it was Pontus Hultén who was in charge of the institution. Thanks to him, as Hans Ulrich Obricht wrote, the Swedish capital became the capital of art of the 1960s²⁰. Catherine Millet adds that it became a focus of interest for every critic and artist²¹. The Moderna Museet mainly showed great names of modernism and hot names of contemporary American art. When Contextual Art was opened in Lund, Hultén was already in Paris, where for three years he was working on the shape of Pompidou Centre. When it comes to the politics of supporting local artists, or scrutinising the undertakings in a nearby Poland, there was not much change. We need to view Sellem's proposition to open up for Central Europe, South America or Canada in a complicated network of relations. Hultén's actions on one hand made the society more sensitive to new art (and thus it inspired a positive atmosphere around such local actions as Sellem's gallery in Lund), on the other hand his actions bound contemporary art *nolens volens* with the art world, a culture developing without a local community. Art was seen as a product, which potentially could fuel economic development. The contesting attitude of Sellem, his openness and his dislike for a determining concept of historicity resulted with his coming to Gdańsk. It was a logical choice in search of ill-fitted in presiding art practice because of geographical and historical context for the city he lived in. In Gdańsk, he saw a profusion of ideas and a volcanic energy. Perhaps, he even saw what Świdziński described as 'a discovery of total embarrassment of reality'²² in which the language diverged completely from what it was to describe (We are living in the world of signs, which lose a relation with what they

» 19 *Ibid.*, p. 98.

» 20 H.U.Obricht, *A Short History of Curating*, p. 41. It must be admitted that Hultén organised an exhibition of Swedish art and exhibitions of Swedish artists at the Moderna Museet in the Denise René gallery in Paris. He emphasised the interest in the east-west axis (not north-south) during the Paris-Moscow exhibition, 1900-1930 in the Pompidou Center, *Ibid.*, p. 51. The exhibitions of Swedish artists were organised by Hultén in the Musée des Arts Décoratifs in Paris (Pentacle, 1968), at the Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris, (*Alternatives Suédoises*, 1971) and as accompanying the *Sleeping Beauty* - Öyvind Fahlström at the Guggenheim Museum in 1982.

» 21 C. Millet, *Contemporary Art in France*, Paris 2006, p. 14.

» 22 J. Świdziński, *Contexts*, p. 227.

are meant to signify²³). The first Swedish contextual exhibition gathered both the artists, who wanted to create a new movement and those who saw that they liked Świdziński's ideas. This very exhibition was an incarnation of a horizontal art history a long time before its theoretical postulates were formulated in academic texts. The situation of an art alliance was described in an ironic way Anna Kutera. She explained why so many people of art came to Toronto for Contextual Art Conference. She wrote: a mouse jumps out from under a broom and shouts 'wow' to a lion²⁴. This 'wow' was a real contempt for commercial conditioning of art (in Poland, it was explained by a particular situation) and the use of art to imagine the future. Świdziński could not agree with Kosuth, who under cover of the avant-garde functioned rather well on the art market (I shall return to that point later). He could not agree with a simple politicisation of art. It was clearly stated in the 7th point of 12 points of contextual art, which he formulated a few months after the February exhibition in Lund:

'Contextual art opposes the stabilisation of the objects of art, since the lasting nature of an object extends into its meaning.

Contextual art opposes the stabilisation of meanings since the lasting nature of meanings leads to the production of outdated objects. It, therefore, rejects fixed definitions of art.' Świdziński suffered from two art traumas. They both originated during his study at Warsaw Fine Art Academy. He witnessed an ideological abuse of art in socialism. As a student of Jan Cybis, who was a post-impressionist, he was taught a persistent repetition of petrified procedures, which were developed in a completely different reality. The process and lack of stabilisation, which he associated with petrification, were sine qua non-conditions for art. For that reason, he touched social issues, Świdziński would say 'it does not come from previously accepted assumptions, but from the fact that I live in a specific context'. (25)

The first group of Polish artists in Lund consisted of Wrocław team from Galeria Najnowsza (Anna Kutera, Romuald Kutera, Lech Mrożek). Warsaw's group of artists who regularly worked with Remont Gallery (Zbigniew Dłubak, Henryk Gajewski, Andrzej Jórczak) and Łódź's Film Form Workshop (Józef Robakowski, Ryszard Waśko). They all united with Świdziński seeing in it a chance for them all.

Łukasz Guzek believes that 'contextualism is a form of mature conceptualism (post-conceptualism), which led to a modernist/postmodernist breakthrough.' Świdziński managed to 'capture in Poland a change which was caused by conceptual art. It was an ontological change, a move

» 23 J. Świdziński, *Contexts*, p. 224.

» 24 J. Świdziński, *Contexts*, p. 224.

from art as a language entity to art as a social entity (a critical one), or pro-social conceptualism within Kosuth's categories (between Art after Philosophy and Artist as Anthropologist). This is the significance of Świdziński for Polish Art – he connected above iron curtain Polish art with world's art in the most important moment for contemporary art. I am referring here to an introduction to conceptual art and following that an experience of modernist/post-modernist breakthrough²⁵.

Guzek's summary is a good introduction, which positions the meaning of Świdziński. What I need to comment on, however, is the different dynamics of postmodernist breakthrough in Poland and in the West; as well as paradoxically larger ambitions of Świdziński for whom life in Easter Block created far more interesting and more inspiring situation. Kosuth entered an already set market of production and art distribution. He more or less reconstructed what Świdziński called a reality doublet. The American artist entered the World of Art and institution – Pole described it as a typical for the period of capital concentration –and by doing so, he linked himself up with what was anachronistic; 'what characterised the previous epoch'²⁶. By setting some norms, he tried to make them universal²⁷. I highlight here the communist aspect of Świdziński's art. He moved rather well amongst various private galleries at the time. Young researchers tend to describe that time in terms of the obvious – the fall of USSR and generally speaking how the history went. Świdziński did not know that. He wanted to live and work in real time, and so he could not turn his back on communist country. He believed that general statements of Western artists, who see their situation as paradigmatic, were wrong. Seeing the situation from peripheries may be beneficial and multidimensional provided that it shall not be used for self-colonisation, but for performing comparisons and engaging in a dialogue. Various contexts enrich the knowledge and enable comparisons. Łukasz Ronduda captured the above in the following way: '(...) [Świdziński] promoted contextualism as a local situation, born in the context of socialist system (...) [he] postulated the rejection of seemingly objective and universal conceptual art (...) [which] was imposed by 'empire' on vassal provinces according to the logic of globalisation, unifying and cultural colonisation. He wanted to replace a dominating 'art language in general' with 'an eruption of thousands of yet unknown art voices and dialects' coming from various specific geographical, cul-

» 25 An Interview with Anna Kutera, as above.

» 26 J. Świdziński, *Contexts*, p. 225.

» 27 Ł. Guzek, *Gallery movement in Poland. A Historical overview. From the sixties through conceptual galleries of the seventies to their consequences in the eighties and nineties, "Art and Documentation"*, autumn 2012, No. 7, pp. 14 and 15.

tural economic contexts. He dreamt of de-centralisation and equality. Contextual art was meant to be a subversive proposition for the existing relations between the centre and peripheries of an existing art world²⁸. Coming back to Guzek's thesis. I would like to expand it a bit and bring in some details. When we are talking about the post-modern breakthrough in relation to American art, it is commonly accepted that it took place in the 1950s thanks to i.e. Robert Rauschenberg. In Poland, I am sure, that breakthrough happened 10 years later, because the modernism lasted longer. Critical mass started around 1975, so at the time when Świdziński wrote *Art as Contextual Art* (it was published in February 1976 in Lund – it is often called 'the yellow book' due to its cover colour). Wiesław Borowski published in *Kultura* on 23rd March a text: *Pseudo-avant-grade*, in which he diagnosed the following: 'we have been witnessing for several years now a mass distribution of art trash, plagiarism, proposals and documents', it was supposed to be done by Lublin's Labirynt Gallery, which Świdziński worked with, and by Współczesna Gallery in which Permafo Gallery was presented (Świdziński also supported that project)²⁹. In 1974, Labirynt Gallery showed during an exhibition *Document, Film, Contact* by Herve Fischer, whom Świdziński liked and exchanged views with. Local dynamics of development, different social and political experience mean that I would be very cautious in introducing parallels of connecting 'above iron curtain', in particular when the situation was so different in Easter block and the USA. Świdziński developed the model of criticism and contextualisation in the context of not only Kosuth and his pro-social attitude, which was questioned by i.e. Benjamin Buhloch, but also a bit wider network of geographical and political dependencies since it is far more interesting than noticing a post-modern breakthrough. Many authors noted that although Kosuth wanted a decisive break away with modernism, still his conceptual rigour was a Greenberg's optical purity³⁰. Buhloch sees Kosuth as an artist who did not exhibit a cut in language explorations with socio-political criticisms and a separation from contemporary social experience. What is more his anthropological contextualisation is not very convincing³¹. To paraphrase Buchloh, it seems that in the minds of artists similar to Kosuth, art practice is a question of image control and product protection. There is also a protection of territorial strategies which depend on joining in networks or – if necessary – exerting vari-

» 28 J. Świdziński, *Sztuka, Art, Society and Self-consciousness*, translated by Ł. Guzek, Warsaw 2009

» 29 Ł. Ronduda, *Flexibility allows us to exist. The Contextual Art of Jan Świdziński*, "Piktogram" 2006, No. 3, p. 24.

» 30 W. Borowski, *Pseudoawangarda*, „Kultura”, 23rd March 1975, p. 11.

» 31 *A Companion to Contemporary Art Since 1945*, ed. A. Jones, Blackwell Publishinh 2006, p. 152.

ous institutional and commercial places, which enable an artwork to circulate in order to guarantee a mythical status³². Let us notice that Kosuth's contextual update from Artist as Anthropologist was not taken into account in Buhloch's historical study from 1990. He described in it conceptual art as a departure from aesthetics of administration to institution criticisms; the author expressed his criticism of Kosuth's art not in the context of Artist as Anthropologists publication, which he did not even mention, but in the context of a violent renewal of traditional art forms and procedures of their production. Even though, an earlier text focused on rigorous elimination of visuality and traditional definitions of representation³³. Buhloch did not like the anti-dating of the works and the act of creating an innovator. Indeed, Kosuth's works saw the works of Duchamp in a very narrow way and they, in fact, updated modernism. Art practices of Kosuth were, according to Buhloch, an enterprise of culture industry and its products, which international distribution should be protected (as it is in case of all corporate products) from any form of questioning³⁴. Buhloch's diagnoses were formulated before by Świdziński, who wrote that the profit acquired from selling art may be substituted with using art in a different way. It seems that while writing about 'bi-lingual' artists, he wrote about Kosuth. He saw their role in the following way: while using their own language and the language of the world, which they depend on, they are less vulnerable at the moment of changes than those who, as monolingual, remain in the world of art hopeless in the face of the unknown facts, which used to be appraised as useless³⁵. Świdziński possessed, however, a precise mission of salvation of the World of Art. The bilingual artists as Kosuth were determined and constraint by the conditions of the Art World. Stepping outside meant destruction. The only good solution was the act of strengthening the outer system, which Świdziński was building to turn into a battle front. 'Dragging art into the outer orbit, subjects the art to the ruling of the presiding rigours. Here is why not-engaging with the system is so important'³⁶. Rosalind Krauss was also making fun of Kosuth as a prophet of new art. He noted that the artist saw himself as 'an apocalyptic his-

» 32 Ch. Green, *The Third Hand: Collaboration in Art from Conceptualism to Postmodernism*, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis 2001, p. 19.

» 33 B. Buchloh, Benjamin Buchloh Replies to Joseph Kosuth and Seth Siegelaub, „October”, Summer, 1991, Vol. 57, p. 158.

» 34 Ch. Green, *The Third Hand: Collaboration in Art from Conceptualism to Postmodernism*, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis 2001, p. 19.

» 35 Benjamin Buchloh Replies to Joseph Kosuth and Seth Siegelaub, „October” 1991 (Summer), Vol. 57, p. 158.

» 36 J. Świdziński, *Sztuka, Art, Society and Self-consciousness*, translated by Ł. Guzek, Warsaw 2009, p. 125.

torian – the Oswald Spengler of aesthetics³⁷. I am sure that Świdziński may have tackled very well this sarcastic criticism. His criticisms would have led – as I already said – to a radical ‘non-disclosure of art practices’. Kosuth remained a bilingual artist, his hope existed in strengthening the front which Świdziński was building. Świdziński however did not engage himself in an ‘out-dated and impossible action to reform’³⁸ art system. By organising numerous conferences, he could become an example of being monolingual (certainly not a universal and only one, here he differed from the People’s Republic’s Marxist doctrine), but a specific one; a contextual one. He lived in a country dominated by the USSR. There was no art market. So, he not only accepted this local feature, but he saw in it a great introduction to change in the art organisation. If we agreed with Guzek that Świdziński proposes unison of Polish and World art above the iron curtain, then we would need to add that this unison was a dialogue of left-wing artists. Here the voice of the Pole, who experienced different social and political insights. It was a voice which gave hope to the closed-off Western Art system. In my opinion, Świdziński suggested an interesting idea of constructing a horizontal geography outside big centres. He encouraged to consider the question of visibility, commodification and art distribution. Those issues were linked with the already mentioned reluctance to reveal art practice. By turning to a long process, averting from the efficiency imposed by capitalism and accepting a possibility of a failure seen as a positive experience, Świdziński introduced possibly the most surprising elements of his activity. Świdziński was definitely anti-colonial. A contemporary researcher is left with two options: to laugh at Świdziński’s naivety, who in the 1970s did not predict the fall of the USSR, and what is more a possible fall was not in his interest.; or while accepting the political incongruity of Świdziński’s concepts from our contemporary point of view, we should consider the impetus of his actions and the interesting if not mad aspects of his desire to change the world. The boldness and impetus of Świdziński is not different from for example the surrealist revolution postulated by Breton. Let me highlight here the fact that certain Breton’s choices were a bit suspicious. This could act as an encouragement to depict contextualism without the hypocritical ‘overlay’, which was added in good faith in order not to compromise the artist. This overlay, however, shadows the radicalism and boldness of Świdziński’s ideas.

» 37 *Ibid.*, p. 126.

» 38 R. Krauss, “Specific” Objects, „RES: Anthropology and Aesthetics, 2004 (Autumn) No. 46, „Polemical Objects”, p.221.

Thirdly – the surprising romantic feature

Świdziński attacked Kosuth (born 1945) and the representatives of Art& Language at the November conference The Contextual Art Conference (10-12 November 1976) in CEAC in Toronto. He reviewed Kosuth's theses about the autonomy of art, which – as it is was highlighted by Piotr Piotrowski – Kosuth had already reviewed himself in *The Fox* magazine. When the two artists met in Toronto, it was 11 long years after Kosuth did his iconic work entitled 'One and three chairs' (1965). It was bought in 1970 by MoMA. It was seven years after the famous essay *Art after Philosophy* where he declared that art after Duchamp had value only if it questioned the nature of art. Meanwhile, Kosuth became the professor in The School of Visual Arts, New School for Social Research and as it was already mentioned, he presented his works in Leo Castelli gallery. From the time of tautological work *One and three chairs* (1965), a lot has changed. The *Fox*, which was edited by Kosuth, published in 1975 an article entitled *The Declaration of Dependence* by Sarah Charlesworth. Kosuth published *The Artist as Anthropologist*. The following two editions of the magazine represented a modernist crackdown of the art-world. *Art&Language* dealt with the issues in similar way. It suffices to mention that the magazine from 1975 had on its cover a photo from the Vietnam war with a comment *Collapse in Vietnam*. According to Piotrowski the attack of Świdziński on Kosuth in Toronto did not deserve any polemics: 'The Manifest of contextual art, or the concept of building the meaning of creation through context, or the declaration of building the meanings of the art work in relation to context, therefore an opening of an artist for the environment was supposed to attack the conceptual art. According to Świdziński and his followers, (Conceptual art) was autonomic and pre-occupied with researching its formal structures. (...) If we assume that Świdziński attacked those circles, he also welcomed the criticisms of his ideas. It was, therefore, a polemics with an attitude, which simultaneously gained the power to review itself'³⁹. Łukasz Guzek saw that issue in a similar manner: 'The discussion with Kosuth became a discussion with the tradition of modernist avant-garde. Świdziński, by entering into a discussion with conceptualism in 1976, questioned the tautological model of art (a tautological definition of art) and 'the first Kosuth' (from *Art after Philosophy*). It is important to note here that Kosuth had already done the change of his position. He became focused on anthropology. He was rather critical of his earlier theories. For that reason, we may see a cer-

» 39 J. Świdziński, *Sztuka, Art, Society and Self-consciousness*, translated by Ł. Guzek, Warsaw 2009, p. 125.

tain similarity between those two positions⁴⁰. It is rather difficult not to agree with Piotrowski and Guzek. However, we need to notice that they both assume the Polish point of view. It links with a belief that in 1976 there was a chance of a lively revision of a modernist attitude. After the Situationists, Feminist interventions, and action of such artists as Haacke, Asher or Acconci, such action would have been a breakthrough. Moreover, It seems to be suggested by the text by Buchloh.

Kosuth invited Świdziński and Kutera to his flat in New York in mid-November 1976. It was at the time of the election of Jimmy Carter in November (he was sworn in January 1977), where he won over Gerald Ford. The loss of the latter was most probably caused by the statement that there was not anything like a Soviet domination in Eastern Europe (in Poland): 'I don't believe that the Poles consider themselves dominated by the Soviet Union.' - Ford said during the election campaign⁴¹. It seems that whatever we think today about that remark, the statement could concern both Świdziński and Kutera. It is not clear why Kosuth came up with an idea of meeting with Weber at the time. Weber was a famous art-dealer, who was the boss of Dwan Gallery in Los Angeles (from 1968 in Manhattan), and in autumn 1971 Weber opened his gallery. The building at 420 West Broadway in SoHo was known as SoHo Art Building. It was often described as the Pentagon of the art-world. In the same building, there were 4 other galleries, amongst them Castelli Gallery and Sonnabend Gallery. Weber gallery's exhibitions were compared with those presented in the Metropolitan and MoMA⁴². Everybody knew that Weber did not pay the artist, because as he claimed he was not interested in artists, who did not wish to cover their expenses. He believed that a dealer had to know that artists always followed their way before they become famous⁴³. He specialised in minimal art and European earthworks (Hamish Fulton, Victor Burgin and Richard Long). Weber ran a network with Europe: with Wide-White Space Gallery (established by Ann De Decker and Bernd Lohaus) in Antwerpen, with Nicholas Logsdail (Lisson Gallery) in London, and in Italy with Franco Toselli, in Mediolan and Gian Enzo Sperone in Turine, and later in Rome, he also worked with the gallery of Conrad Fischer in Dusseldorf. He was

» 40 P. Piotrowski, *Art and Democracy in Post-Communist Europe*, Reaktion Books 2012, p. 137-138

» 41 Ł. Guzek, *Co stanowi kontekst sztuki*, <http://www.obieg.pl/teksty/17671> (accessed on: 3.04.2016).

» 42 „I don't believe that the Poles consider themselves dominated by the Soviet Union.” A. Davidson, *How to Create a Gerald Ford Moment: Five Steps*, „The New Yorker” 22 October, 2012,

» 43 <http://www.newyorker.com/news/amy-davidson/how-to-create-a-gerald-ford-moment-five-steps> (accessed on: 3.04.2015).

also interested in the Academy with Joseph Beuys⁴⁴. People in charge of those galleries were roughly the same age as Weber, who (born in 1932) was 44 when he met Świdziński. Świdziński was 9 years older, he was 53. Anna Kutera was 24; Świdziński was a year older than her father. Both Świdziński, who did not talk about his art, and a young art student from Wrocław did not represent for Weber any attraction. Weber did not want to see Kutera's works⁴⁵. When we view Weber's visit from a Polish perspective – we came from a country in which art could finally abandon the old-fashioned distribution channels and there was a chance to do the job better than Weber – the appraisal of the situation changes dramatically. Świdziński gave Weber his 'yellow book' (Art as Contextual Art booklet published in 1976 in Sweden). I do not believe that the aim of the meeting was for the iron curtain guests to see how lively the art-world was in SoHo. The place, which after Fluxus artists, and Paula Cooper and John Gibson's gallery became a magnet for artists and dealers. Weber was intrigued with arte povera. He said himself many years later that although it was difficult to tell the difference between Judd and Morris; Boetti, Pino Passali, Mario Merz were original and they differed from each other⁴⁶. That statement shows the dealer's broad perspective. He was open for experiment and he was open for everything that was happening beyond the 'naval of the world'. Perhaps Kosuth came up with a meeting with Weber because the dealer showed the works of Opalka (even before the artist decided to leave Poland). It is difficult to say. Weber in his gallery also showed such political radicals as Hans Haacke, who showed a sad context of dark deals between museums and business world. Haacke was born in Western Germany. He was looking in America for an alternative between Western German capitalism and Eastern German communism. A year before Świdziński and Kutera's coming to New York, Weber showed an important work entitled 'On Social Grease', which used extracts from speeches by well-known entrepreneurs. The work depicted an infusion of commercial corporation and art in the meaning of the title - art was a grease for business. There was a quotation from David Rockefeller, a vice-director of Museum of Modern Art and a chairman of Chase Manhattan Bank, who claimed that from an economic point of view an engagement in art may signify a direct and concrete profits. It may make a company famous and enhance advertisement. The public reputation would grow and the image of corporation

» 44 A. Shkuda, *The Lofts of SoHo: Gentrification, Art, and Industry in New York, 1950–1980*, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago 2016, p. 115.

» 45 R. E. Caves, *Creative Industries: Contracts Between Art and Commerce*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts and London 2000, p. 28.

» 46 Por. Oral history interview with John Weber, 2006 March 21-April 4, <http://www.aaa.si.edu/collections/interviews/oral-history-interview-john-weber-13562> (accessed on: 3.04.2015)

may be improved. There could be better relations with clients, an easier product acceptance and a better quality estimation. Art promotion could increase the morale of employees and it could attract qualified people⁴⁷. Earlier in 1972 and 1973, Haacke researched methodically who came to Weber's gallery (social class, occupation, education, salary, a relation between support for Richard Nixon and art, as well as his Watergate inclusion). He showed the results at the exhibition entitled Weber Gallery Visitor's Profile. His results took a form of graphs and tables. Visitors' Polls by Haacke were seen by Benjamin Buchloh as a transfer from 'aesthetic of administration' to a 'critique of institutions'. Perhaps, Kosuth while recognising Świdziński research, decided to show him certain projects; perhaps, as a result, Świdziński concluded that Weber is at a beginning of some path, which because of his socio-political context, he would not be able to cross without inspiration from the outside. This inspiration, except for the arte povera, could have been contextualism. Weber's gallery laid clear the benefits of establishing international contacts, mobility and openness. In Western capitalism, the most interesting avant-garde art developed within an institutional criticism. It showed, among other topics, the relations between the capitalist corporation and museum art, where business used art to enhance its credibility. In real socialism, this issue did not exist. Polish art institutions were rather weak even before the war. From transformation in Świdziński's view, Weber's gallery was only in a defined, but not very interesting point, in which it had to deal with what was obvious and not very inspiring (due to historical conditions) from a person coming from the East. Far more interesting issues in Poland waited in the topics of relations between cities and villages. Edward Gierek promoted the idea of the second industrialisation phase in Poland. This resulted in great changes at the meeting point between villages and cities. Weber was a dealer, who invested in the site-specific works, narration and political message⁴⁸. In Świdziński's logic, Weber's gallery deserved as much attention as sympathy. Let us note here that the criticisms of modern art – which Świdziński was linked to – was all about criticism of culture dividing ethnographic museums from art museums, and sustaining the status quo in a dubious hierarchy, which seemed completely discredited as a result of German Nazi prosecutions. The Nazi, to divide the highest culture (their culture) from the culture of other nations and groups brought forward a postulate of elimination of others while recognising them as the worse ones. Undoubtedly, this post-colonial thinking and surrealistic revolution resulted in the West with the acts of revisiting various classifications. There was no such re-

» 47 Info from the artist.

» 48 Oral history interview with John Weber, op.cit.

vision in the Polish People's Republic. Because of that Świdziński developed the criticisms of the tautologic nature of conceptualism and universal feature of modern art.

The artists of Wrocław GSN as a case study

Świdziński used to come to Wrocław, as Józef Robakowski said: '[because] (...) he impressed people with his intellect. For that, he was not liked in Warsaw. He was hated there. He outgrew intellectually many theorists and artists. The situation was an intellectual conflict between Świdziński and Turowski and the Foksal gallery group⁴⁹. Although Świdziński enjoyed joining the Wrocław GSN group (while with them, he would take an opportunity to speak about contextualism), nevertheless it was a strange arrangement. 'I have never heard any comment about our works, not even that something was nice' – Anna Kutera told me⁵⁰. Even though she considered herself as a representative of contextual art, she was never told to be one. Świdziński never wrote about GSN artists, which was a bit surprising because earlier when he came to PEMAFO GALLERY, he enjoyed the role of an art critic.

I asked the ex-members of Wrocław GSN a question about their most contextual works. Their analysis must contain a decision of Świdziński, undertaken later in Toronto not to 'reveal the contextual practice'. We may assume therefore that Świdziński was not happy with the contextual works at hand. Or, at least we may assume, he was not happy with the ones called that and presented in Lund. He was not only unhappy with the works of other artists, but also with his works. I believe, he could have seen them too close to the conceptual aesthetics (so sterilised). For him, they did not reveal the context enough. Anna Kutera presented at Contextual Art exhibition in Lund her work entitled *Monolog* [The Monologue] from 1976 (a close-up of her face; the artist made some facial gestures, which expressed various emotional states) and *The shortest film in the world* – a close-up of the artist's face and her hand holding tweezers with a film frame. Earlier, the artist showed in Lund a film with her nephew, Witki (the artist while speaking about this series called it *Witki*, even though the official name was *The Morphology of New Reality*). She started creating the series in 1975. *Witki* from 1976 took the form of serigraphs on canvass. They bore a title: *Contextual Art* (they were created after

» 49 T. English, Hans Haacke, or the Museum as Degenerate Utopia, „Kritikos“ [International and interdisciplinary journal of postmodern cultural sound, text and image], March 2007, Vol. 4.

» 50 G.E. Marcus, *The Power of Contemporary Work in an American Art Tradition to Illuminate Its Own Power Relations*, in: *The Traffic in Culture: Refiguring Art and Anthropology*, eds. G.E. Marcus, F.R. Myers, University of California Press, Berkeley-Los Angeles-London 1995, p. 219.

Lund exhibition). Romuald Kuterka considered as an important contextual work his work entitled *Spojrzenia* (Perceptions), 1972 (4 images of his wife Anna, her head is positioned in various ways – bent down and covered with hair, lifted up and fully uncovered) and *Sciana* (The Wall), 1973 (the last one was a recording of a process of taking a photograph of the wall in the title. The artist developed the picture of the wall and made prints; next he hang them on the same wall and photographed them again). In case of *Perceptions* and *The wall*, the idea of contextual art was not formulated yet. Therefore, it seems that Kuterka while mentioning those works wanted to highlight that the idea of contextual art was born out of mutual conversations and was not the sole idea of Świdziński. Anna Kuterka shared that point of view⁵¹. In her opinion, her work with letters O, Y showed in *Nowa Ruda* in 1972, and *Śpiewam dla ciebie* [I sing for you] (a multiplication of a self-portrait with a microphone held in hand) were all contextual. At the Contextual Art exhibition in Lund Romuald Kuterka showed *Szafka relatywistyczna* [A relativist closet] (1975) – drawings of a closet's projects created on 'a stretcher's figure showing real closets. In 1975, the artist created sets, series and a film and photo sequences, in which Kuterka used a finger to point to 'here'. After Lund's exhibition, Kuterka created posters with the finger signed Contextual Art. In 1975, Anna Kuterka took a piece of paper with 'HERE' written on it to Sweden (to her monographic exhibition entitled *The Morphology of New Reality*) and she executed the first series. 'Here' has been continued by the artist. Lech Mrozek selected 3 x 10 film, an interesting one in formal aspects, because as he explained: 'In all three sequences, we are watching a film, each sequence is a text, and if we assume that "art is what we recognise as art" then each sequence is a text, film and an art object'⁵². What is more, he also pointed to his series of poster-collage *Czy jeszcze istnieje sztuka?* [Does art exist?] and *Mój kontekst* [My context]; a series of photos *Bez* [Without] where the faces of people were erased – so that only context was present in the photo. The artist commented on the work entitled *Size* in the following way: 'We used photography as a form of documenting. Świdziński turned the photo with van Gogh to show the three dimensions of the paper space (photographic paper), but not the three-dimensions of photography. I showed the photographs on which I overexpose my figure, which earlier in the process was processed on paper. I am also on black photographs, but underneath, it was later that I covered the figure with light, which, after developing gave an effect of the black uniform background. It is not curtains, but physics and chemistry and an illusion of the

» 51 Adam Mazur, *Rozmowa z Józefem Robakowskim*, <http://www.robakowski.net/tx30.html> (accessed on: 3.04.2016).

» 52 An Interview with Anna Kuterka conducted by the author in Wrocław in March 2016.

process. This irrational being of something, of what we cannot see. SIZE is not an XL size, but a dimension and something more⁵³. The artist also considers as contextual the Commentaries appearing in Wrocław public space and local personal actions in various places – from workers' clubs to villages (for example Barwałd Górny near Kraków). The local actions of the artist developed into conversations – a combination of a discussion with a hastily prepared decoration in the form of a wall magazine, which was to stimulate the exchange of thoughts. At Lund exhibition, Mrozek showed *Dialog (The Dialogue)* with self-portraits, frontal (camera centred) photos of his face and the face of Romuald Kutera. He also showed some self-portraits (each of them was different, in different clothes), they all had captions: 'Contextual art', 'Exposition in Sweden', 'This place describes another situation', 'This time describes another situation'. The captions showed a constructive and labile character of the artist's identity, which depended on the context. The Mrozek's series was shown on separate posters 50 x 60 cm. Its title was *Contextual Art*. Mrozek also includes in contextual practices works printed in newspapers, and configurations developed especially for the publishing. He did not give them any titles, because the aim was to play with text, to create a framework instead of exposing the work itself. We may say that the acts of publishing the reproductions of particular works (in Wrocław monthly magazine *Odra* and a Technical university's *Sigma*) had no relation to a any text published on the same page. Those actions owe a lot to a contextual practice of Świdziński and GSN. The joint activities include the ones carried out with Świdziński (*Local Actions in Kurpie* in 1977) and the ones organised in Mrozek's group (without his mentor) for example *Join our protest against the production of neutron bomb* (1977) – both may be easily discredited as the ones written into a politics of a communist country (worker-peasant alliance and a discrediting of the USA's imperial politics). During the second one, a speech was given by a real officer of the Polish People's Army. The act of discrediting had to assume similar measures to T.J. Clark's *Farewell to an Idea* (an analysis of a propaganda board at Witebska's street) made by El Lissitzky where we can find: 'The Factories' workshops and workplaces/ We are waiting for you/ We shall start the production'. It is evidently an element of agitation propaganda. Faith in art at the service of the state in accordance with Malevich's principle and Clark's diagnosis 'god was not defeated'⁵⁴. Those works were very close to the new

» 53 "It was a sequence of photos - a bust shot, as I hold the microphone and move my head, in fact I was singing something. I exhibited photographs in vertical stripes like frames from a film tape. For the first time, I was showing this work at the Nowa Ruda festival in 1973 and in the Remont Gallery in Warsaw, 1974 "- the author wrote to me in the e-mail on April 15th, 2016. The photos are waiting for the process of digitisation - the negatives are preserved (small picture).

» 54 Mail from the author 9th April 2016.

red art by KwieKulik: they were politically engaged, while at the same time they were not truly accepted by the state, the works engaged with. We may say, while traversing El Lissitzky's saying (Russian village recognised itself in the Suprematism⁵⁵) – that Polish village recognised itself in the Contextualism. To traverse Clark, we may assume that a juxtaposition of images and letters is 'an eternal war between the discursive and direct, the total image and fragile jigsaw (...) between named signs (...), and those which float in the expanses of nonsense. U-el-el'ul-el-te-ka'⁵⁶. GSN artists and Świdziński were aware that they took part in socialistic revolution. One of the tasks of art then was, as Clark said, a precise 'transformation of conditions and possibilities of reading' to regain for a reader a possibility of 'acting in a constructing manner (and a deforming one) without serving a ready-made text'⁵⁷. Świdziński believed that there must be created a different form of knowledge, because the lack of trust to signs resulted in a necessity of re-establishing relations with reality. It is interesting to pose a question of if Clark's thesis concerning Lissitzky was true for Świdziński⁵⁸. The more Bolshevik the artist was the better his/her art was. I brought up this statement not to measure the left-wing affinities (Bolshevism?) of Świdziński. I recalled it here to show the paradoxes of the artwork appraisal, which while revealing the reality, it also entwines within it like a cocoon.

The summary: Świdziński as a shandy

If we agree with Buhloch, that Kosuth understood the heritage of Duchamp in a rather narrow way (Świdziński did a similar thing while writing about Duchamp's trap), we should not summarise the achievements of Świdziński basing on a simple objectivity of a ready-mades creator, but perhaps we should take into account the continuous travelling (between Europe and America) and the forming in-between the ephemeral collectives and situations. As we know, Duchamp had an amazingly suspicious approach to the art market. His artistic strategy was strongly confirmed by rejecting an offer from an American dealer in return for producing Cubistic paintings. Duchamp did it right at the beginning of his career, after the Armory Show. According to Enrique Vila-Matasa, Duchamp, but also Gombrowicz, was an author of a secret plot – an as-

» 55 Mail from the author 8th April 2016.

» 56 T. J. Clark, *God has not been precipitated*, in: *Perspectives of contemporary art history. Anthology of translations "Artium Questiones"*, edited by M. Bryl, P. Juskiewicz, P. Piotrowski, W. Suchocki, Poznań 2009, pp. 475-583. It is a fragment of the book entitled *Farewell to an Idea. Episodes to the History of Modernism* (New Haven and London 1999).

» 57 *Ibid.*, p. 515.

» 58 *Ibid.*, p. 520.

sociation of relocating art (the symbol of which is *A Box in a Suitcase*). Duchamp looked with reluctance at the unbearable weight of pretentious and anachronistic ‘masterpieces’. Vila-Matas called the members of the plot: shandy. The name comes from the hero of a book by Lawrence Stern – *Tristram Shandy*. Shandy ‘always wandered, they were always on the road, they were always exiled from the world of art’ (...) they needed to permanently trespass established borders, and they functioned like a ‘loneliness machine’ so that their life is not burdened with too many responsibilities. Their typical features were: ‘the innovative spirit, extreme sexualism, the absence of great aims, indefatigable nomadism, a liking for the blackness of the skin, nurturing the art of cheekiness’ and a rejection of ‘all out-dated romantic faces’⁵⁹. ‘Many of the shandy (...) realised that sooner or later the conspiracy of the relocated would have to disappear because that is the law of life. In fact, this was something to wish for; in this way, the conspiracy could have become a spectacular praise for everything that appears and disappears with an arrogant speed of a cheekiness thunder’⁶⁰. Everything points to the fact that the shandies feed themselves at the conferences and railway stations. *Port Actif* (from *portatif* – portable) is one of the most favourite places of the vagabond. I am under impression that Poznań railway station, where I told this story, changed into a *Port Actif*. It demands to drop the extravagance, independence and lightness to concentrate on working. ●

» 59 E. Vila-Matas, *A Brief History of Portable Literature*, trans. J. Karasek, Warsaw 2007, p. 9, 8, 10, 11.

» 60 E. Vila-Matas, *A Brief History of Portable Literature*, trans. J. Karasek, Warsaw 2007, p. 77.