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Koncert wizualny Adama Garnka, Kielce 2013

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Mystery, Ritual and Performative Action – Krzysztof Jung’s Visual Theatre

In the 20th century, artists moved beyond the frame of traditional visual arts such as architecture, painting or sculpture and embraced a medium that had not been previously used in a similar way, i.e. the human body. It ceased to be solely a source of inspiration; increasingly, the artists themselves, in their physical, almost tangible form, could become works of art which were ephemeral, impermanent, one-off, elusive, and accessible solely through participation in the unique experience whose character and aura cannot be captured even by photography or film. The study of the body corresponded to the search for performative art and was also an integral part of Krzysztof Jung’s practice. The vast majority of the work of this painter, performer and educator is on deposit in the museum of his Alma Mater, the Warsaw Academy of Fine Arts. His oeuvre deposited there consists of over six hundred works¹, most of which are not widely

» 1 According to the list drawn up by Maryla Sitkowska, the Museum of the Warsaw Academy of Fine Arts (MASP) received on 21 September 2012 646 objects as deposits. The author of this article verified the inventory and on 8 April 2013 supplemented it with one omitted drawn sketch and indicated that Documentation No. III was not ultimately deposited with MASP.

known, as Jung's art has not yet been subject to a comprehensive study. In cultural texts, this artist appears occasionally and above all as a "precursor of Polish gay art"².

The works and documents left after Krzysztof Jung's death have been deposited at the Museum of the Warsaw Academy of Fine Arts (MASP) as a deposit of his heiress, Dorota Krawczyk-Janisch. Working as a conservator at this institution, I was entrusted with the care of Krzysztof Jung's legacy. I applied the necessary conservation and restoration treatments to the artist's works and this helped me learn more about his technique and broaden my research perspective. I was given a unique opportunity to see almost all of the artist's works, not only those collected in the museum's storehouse, but also those scattered in private collections, because, quite independently of my work at MASP, I met Dorota Krawczyk-Janisch, in my opinion Krzysztof Jung's most faithful friend, and also established contacts with other people that were close to him. I conducted a series of interviews with people whom fate had brought into contact with the artist: people from the culture sector, friends and students; I exchanged letters with some of them.

Some researchers call Krzysztof Jung a precursor of Polish performance art³, although I prefer to refer to him as a creator of original visual

- » 2 This topic is not the subject of this article and for this reason the cultural texts mentioned are not discussed. I believe, however, that it should be emphasised that the critic who stressed the homoerotic side of Jung's work and pointed to its pioneering position in the history of Polish queer art is Prof. Paweł Leszkowicz, associated with the Poznań school of art history. This scholar's most important texts on Krzysztof Jung are listed in the bibliography. Jung was recognized as a pioneer of Polish gay art after the exhibition *Ars Homo Erotica*, held in the summer of 2010 at the National Museum in Warsaw. Curated by Leszkowicz, the exhibition showcased and documented for the first time in a former Eastern Bloc country the numerous homoerotic themes present in the work of domestic artists. Krzysztof Jung was represented at the exhibition; his drawings were on display, as well as sculptures depicting him by Barbara Falender (*Narcissus and Ganymede*) and photographs by Grzegorz Kowalski, featuring Jung posing nude for the above sculptures. Paweł Leszkowicz prepared two albums for the exhibition: *Ars Homo Erotica* and *Art Pride. Gay Art from Poland (Polska sztuka gejowska)*. Karol Sienkiewicz is a critic who continues to see Krzysztof Jung as a precursor of gay art in Poland.
- » 3 In Poland the term *performance* was first used on 29 March 1978 at the international festival of performance art *I am – International Artists Meeting*, held by Henryk Gajewski at Galeria Remont (Riviera halls of residence of the Warsaw University of Technology). See Katarzyna Urbańska, *Henryk Gajewski. Od konceptualizmu do sztuki interpersonalnej* (Warszawa: Instytut Sztuki Polskiej Akademii Nauk, 2022). Another event was an International Encounter of Artists *Performance and Body* at Galeria Labyrinth in Lublin (12-14.10.1978). The artist laying the foundations of performance art in Poland include e.g., Jerzy Beres, Włodzimierz Borowski, Janusz Bafdyga, art duo KwieKulik (Zofia Kulik and Przemysław Kwiek), Teresa Murak, Ewa Partum, Andrzej Partum, Maria Pinińska-Beres, Krzysztof Zarębski, and Zbigniew Warpechowski. The first artistic experiments of performance art in the Warsaw community were presented mainly by galleries: Foksal, Repassage, Dziekanka, Remont, Stodoła, Pokaz, and Galeria Działań. See Grzegorz Dziamski, "Performance – tradycja, źródła, obce i rodzime przejawy. Rozpoznanie zjawiska," in: *Performance*, ed. Grzegorz Dziamski, Henryk Gajewski and Jan Stanisław Wojciechowski (Warszawa: MAW, 1984), 84; Grzegorz Dziamski, "Performance, czyli otwartość na codzienność życia," in: *Awangarda po awangardzie* (Poznań: Wydawnictwo Fundacji Humaniora, 1995), 103-129; Grzegorz Dziamski, "Żywa sztuka," *Arteon* 10 (2005): 37-39.

theatre, as this seems closer to his terminology. All the more so as these were not classical performances, but rather “crypto-political actions in the public space”⁴, e.g. *Działanie na bramie Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego (Action at the Gate of the University of Warsaw, 16.10.1978)* and *Calopalenie IV. Epitafium uliczne pamięci Jana Palacha (Holocaust IV. Street epitaph in memory of Jan Palach, 5.05.1979)*, or else typically theatrical events one attended as regular theatre performances.

Krzysztof Jung created his visual theatre in the harsh communist reality in Poland, when a woman’s body solely was esthetic and a man’s body was deformed and obscured. He was one of the few to discern its beauty and was moreover able to bring it to light. His theatre employed both actresses and actors, by and large young people united by the aesthetics of the body. The artist bound them with threads⁵, thanks to which they forged various physical and sensual relations with one another. Using these threads, he created complicated structures in which he hid or from which he extracted the (usually naked) bodies of the participants in these unusual “performances”. This artist was fully aware of the potential of the human body, including his own, and was extremely comfortable in front of the lens. This is evident in the photographs and diapositives stored at MASP and in private archives. As Grzegorz Kowalski recalls, “He had the body of a young faun, a faun’s carnality”⁶.

The male body in Jung’s work was an object to be looked at and by its very physical attractiveness it was supposed to please the onlooker. The motif of illness, suffering or death, a state in which the body becomes disgusting and gets disintegrated, was never a feature of his work. Invariably, Jung regarded the human body as a source of aesthetic, sensual satisfaction. His actions expressed a quest for and expectation of love, emotional closeness, erotic exaltation, and overcoming loneliness. They were, moreover, records of rapture and tenderness, desires, fears, passions, yearnings, disappointments, incomprehension, and rejection, but above all a quest for meaning in an overwhelming reality. His works told the story of a genuine feeling between two people who cannot resist it and expressed a sense of absolute intimacy with the other person. They conveyed the timeless truth that the other person makes us beautiful, enlightens and elevates us. I think that by creating in this way he was also escaping from the reality of life in dull, communist Warsaw.

» 4 The term was used by Grzegorz Kowalski in the film *Imago Krzysia (The Imago of Krzys)*, a documentary portrait of Krzysztof Jung, dir. Barbara Janisch, Adam Janisch, Germany 2016. “Crypto-political” as the codes used were obscure to many.

» 5 Hence the common name used in Polish for his actions: *nitkowania* (threading). Even in the artist’s drawings the ginger lines are arranged on paper in the shape of taut threads or a spider’s web.

» 6 On the basis of an interview with Prof. Grzegorz Kowalski on 18 September 2021.

He carried out his experiments with threads at the Repassage 2 Gallery⁷ between 1978 and 1980. He visited the Repassage while still a student, made his debut there in 1976, and after Elżbieta and Emil Cieślars left for France, he managed the gallery himself for a short time. The space was a valuable centre of student culture⁸.

Krzysztof Jung's first work using threads was his graduation project from 1976 entitled *Visual and non-Visual Aspects of Space*⁹. This show was born out of the idea of creating a visual theatre for the blind. Jung entwined the space with thread so that blind people could feel depth in different dimensions and perceive shapes through touch. The artistic action unfolded for one viewer in the realm of sound and tactile interaction. While remaining a viewer, he simultaneously became an actor for that part of the audience for whom the artistic action developed exclusively in the visual realm. As the author himself explained, "This is an attempt to incorporate seemingly non-visual means (touch, sound) into a purely visual action. Except that the range of influence of these means is limited to one person. This is because the content of the performance reaches to the innermost truths of human existence. It is a question and answer about the relationship between us and the surrounding world. Man created the reality of objects, concepts and terms in order to be able to rule over it. But mastery has become slavery, resulting from an inability to love what we create"¹⁰. The graduation project, despite the high social value of the issue it addressed, was not received favourably and even sparked a scandal. This was caused by a naked man appearing in the project¹¹, which shocked the graduation committee and the professors of the Academy of Fine Arts in Warsaw¹². The artist himself explained his idea as follows: "For me, the event was a kind of symbolic bat-

» 7 Elżbieta and Emil Cieślars ran the Repassage Gallery until February 1978. After they left the country, the Gallery was managed successively by three artists. The first of these (from October 1978) was Krzysztof Jung. He called the gallery under his management Repassage 2, to distinguish it from its earlier period, associated with the Cieślars, but also to emphasise the continuity of the tradition of the place, functioning under the name Repassage for five years already. The artists who succeeded Jung's management were: Roman Woźniak (who renamed it Re'Repassage) and Jerzy „Słoma” Słomiński. The gallery was closed down on 13 December 1981.

» 8 Officially, the gallery operated under the auspices of the Socialist Union of Polish Students at the University of Warsaw.

» 9 The degree show in the Department of Exhibition Design at the Faculty of Visual Design of the Academy of Fine Arts in Warsaw took place on 9 June 1976.

» 10 Krzysztof Jung, "Wizualne i niewizualne aspekty przestrzeni," <https://artsetmontagnes.com/2018/01/11/galeria-repassage-e-e-cieslarow-1973-1978/> (22.08.2022).

» 11 The man was Sławomir Gajus, Jung's classmate from the Ludwik Krzywicki Technical School of Economics at 36/42 Chłodna St. in Warsaw.

» 12 The graduation work was completed under the supervision of Prof. Henryk Wiśniewski, the supervisor of the annex (i.e. the performance by S. Gajus) was Bohdan T. Urbanowicz, who was absent during the exam (he was replaced by Emil Cieślars) – from: *Kronika studentów in: Rocznik Akademii Sztuk Pięknych w Warszawie*, vol. 5: 1975-1976, 252.

tle between man and nature, where nature, expressed symbolically by the structure of the thread, revealed its richness and difficult-to-read code of construction. Man, on the other hand, by mutilating a spatial construction incomprehensible to him, introduced his 'god' there. I want so much for the human 'god' to become a link between man and a world incomprehensible to man, but it must not be the 'god' of war, but the 'god' of silence, in which the weakest can be heard on a par with the strong"¹³.

From his graduation project onwards, these highly sensual actions marked an intimate space. The artist dedicated subsequent projects to people close to him: *Transformation* was dedicated to Wojciech Karpiński and (interchangeably) Grzegorz Kowalski. His friends, such as Dorota Krawczyk-Janisch, Maria Olejniczak and Jerzy Słomiński, often participated in the thread-actions themselves.

The activities, by their very nature, were impermanent. What remained were photographs and (usually scanty) written accounts of the participants, and therefore fragmentary traces, not commensurate with the phenomenon and the attendant emotions. In the visual theatre, whatever was not possible in real life became, if only briefly, real. These were the author's peculiar rituals in the linearity of days.

Krzysztof Jung was like a demiurge, a director and often also an actor. He was able to masterfully involve people in his actions. As a rule, they were not professionals or artists (except for Krasimira Dimchevskaya, a Bulgarian, his partner from his student days, with whom he had one joint action, *Cocooning*, on 17 January 1979). For the *Metamorphosis* project he invited a milk-distributing student he met on a staircase. "He was able to get close to various people, some of whom at some point entered this circle"¹⁴. Jung's actions went beyond performance art and conventional theatre¹⁵ and were a completely unique phenomenon, experimental and marginal at the same time.

Although communist Poland had relegated male nudity and attractiveness to the sidelines, it must be acknowledged that in the 1960s a handsome, muscular man appeared on stage as an aesthetic and sexual subject and object, which radically challenged the traditional male role. The theatre of Henryk Tomaszewski, founder of the Wrocław Pantomime

» 13 Krzysztof Jung, *Publiczne motanie przestrzeni, wrzesień 1977* <https://artsetmontagnes.com/2018/01/11/galeria-repassage-e-e-cieslarow-1973-1978/> (28.08.2022).

» 14 A reminiscence of Dorota Krawczyk-Janisch during a conversation on 25 June 2021.

» 15 Nowadays, drawing a precise line between theatre and the visual arts is extremely difficult, if not downright impossible. As Richard Schechner observed: "Performances are actions. [...] In fact, there is no boundary [...] that can be delineated historically or culturally of what performance is", quoted after: Richard Schechner, *Performatyka: wstęp*, transl. Tomasz Kubikowski (Wrocław: Ośrodek Badań Twórczości Jerzego Grotowskiego i Poszukiwań Teatralno-Kulturowych, 2006), 16. Krzysztof Jung's action can be placed at the intersection of body art, performance art, ritual, and theatre performance.

Theatre, can be located on the borderline between pantomime, ballet and speech. The performance *Garden of Love* from 1966 consists of panoramas of naked, attractive, mainly male bodies. The affirmation of life, movement, love, both fulfilled or unrequited, pleasurable or painful, was achieved through language and body expression. The 1968 production of *Gilgamesh* featured handsome young men on stage, portrayed in a highly sensual, aesthetic manner. The finely built young men were touching and caressing one another. Tomaszewski explored the concept of beauty and the incredible possibilities of the human body. He was able to translate literature into movement and used synthesis and mental shortcuts. He staged his theatre all over the world. He was appreciated, making Wrocław's culture famous at home and across Europe.

Worship of beautiful nude male bodies was moreover the basis of dance performances of Wojciech Misiuro's Expression Theatre, active on the Baltic Sea coast (Sopot, Gdańsk) and in Silesia (Katowice) in the 1980s and the 1990s. examples of such projects include *Idols of Perversion* (1991) and *The City of Men* (1994). As a student of Tomaszewski, Misiuro decided to continue his work. He created a theatre of movement and dance of the nude, male, muscular body, which instead of actors involved athletes found by Misiuro in body-building clubs and additionally trained to achieve body flexibility close to that of gymnasts. It was probably because of this physical attractiveness of male unleashed nudity that the Theatre of Expression was such a success.

Krzysztof Jung's activities took place in the Repassage, a space with no traditional division between the stage and the auditorium. A small number of spectators, selected and invited by the artist, gathered around the central part of the room. This brings to mind the theatre of Jerzy Grotowski, who in the 1960s and 1970s likewise explored the relationship between the stage and the audience, i.e. as in the case of Jung's visual theatre, a small group of genuinely interested spectators. Jerzy Gurawski, a long-time collaborator of Grotowski's, created a stage space in his architectural and scenography productions that engulfed the audience, making them active participants in the performance. The spectator was no longer a voyeur but was genuinely admitted. Grotowski and Jung shared a conviction that working with the human body was extremely important. Their activities can hardly be called spectacles or performances. Rather, they were works-processes with a unique form, born out of human improvisation.

Some of the photographs taken during Krzysztof Jung's activities bring to mind the photographs from the cross-dressing and erotic photo shoots of Ryszard Kisiel, but, while in the case of the latter, the sessions were dominated by a relaxed atmosphere and a joyful mood of playfulness, in the case of the former, focus was always present. He required absolute tranquillity.

Activities were, on the one hand, planned in a specific space and, on the other, evolved on their own. Krzysztof Jung was an excellent psychologist. He realised relatively early how dependent we are on our upbringing, our family, the pressures of our environment, and how much effort it takes to pursue our own path. It took him a long time to free himself from his own limitations, but ultimately he succeeded completely in this respect. “He was the most inwardly free person I knew,”¹⁶ recalls Dorota Krawczyk-Janisch. Jung’s visual theatre was about breaking ties. Threads replaced the artist’s pencil or paintbrush; they connected people and conveyed emotions, but also painfully restrained them, encircled, enslaved, and invited to break them. They had the function of connectors and transmitters. The inherently delicate threads also served as shackles. They entwined bodies like spiders. Those entwined needed to free themselves. Their nudity was essential, necessary, even indispensable. Nudity is a primal state, which is why it can be embarrassing or disturbing for some. Removing one’s clothes seems to violate a certain boundary, to step out of one’s comfort and safety zone and to expose oneself. Jung, too, sacrificed his own body in a ceremonial fashion. “Each of us was in pursuit of something,” confirmed Grzegorz Kowalski. “First of all, we were young and therefore our carnality manifested itself more freely and sought ways of expressing itself through the body. In my opinion, it was just the manifestation of one’s own independence and freedom through nudity. It was affirmative nudity.”¹⁷ It is only with our clothes off that we sense the minutest movement of the other person. In such a situation, interaction is essential. The bodies were real. So was the pain. Like in a chivalric or Japanese ritual. These were not just physical experiences; Jung’s actions had their depth and revealed the truth about the human being.

He involved the audience in an action entitled *Metamorphosis*; the naked male figure was connected by an intricate network to the people invited to the event. In the middle of the darkened room was a lone, huddled man, linked by threads to the others sitting around him on chairs. This cocoon, a combination of the shape of an insect and a man lying in an embryonic position, is a clear reference to Jung’s fascination with nature (he treated the tiniest creatures with respect and admiration and did not relate everything solely to humans and their problems) and to Franz Kafka’s *The Metamorphosis*. As the audience moved, tense threads cut into the man’s body, inflicting pain.

This was the first performance Dorota Krawczyk took part in¹⁸. “Everyone was experiencing it for the first time. I had a moment of near

» 16 On the basis of a conversation with Dorota Krawczyk-Janisch on 25.06.2021.

» 17 A reminiscence of Grzegorz Kowalski of 18.09.2021.

» 18 She was not Janisch yet, then, as she married Volker Janisch on 19 August 1980.

terror, because I felt, physically almost, even though I was dressed and sitting in a chair, that if I wanted to free myself, to move in any way, I could inflict pain on him. The thread was being pressed into his body and he was struggling to get out. You were automatically part of it, even as a spectator,”¹⁹ recalls Dorota Krawczyk-Janisch. Of course, it was possible to tear off the thread and get out, but no one did; everyone waited for the events to unfold. The audience did not know if and when the entangled man would disentangle himself and how the other participants would react. After all, their reactions could get out of hand and unleash unexpected emotions. Sometimes it only takes one instigator to change the behaviour of the others. The lying man had nothing to protect him; he was almost stripped of his skin. There was certainly an erotic charge in this as well. However, the audience felt above all the tension, the genuine pain of the man, so unpleasant emotions prevailed. There was a nagging uncertainty. It was an exhausting experience. After a while, although entangled in the threads, the man managed to free himself and this concluded the performance. “The aim of the performance was neither to prove anything, to shock the audience, or to provoke, but to emotionally move and compel reflection.”²⁰ The traditional distance between the actor and the audience shrunk considerably. Jung also demonstrated the great role that touch, which had been marginalised by sight and hearing in theatre, could play. Naturally, both of these senses were also present. It was not uncommon for him to build a “scene” by means of a narrow trickle of light struggling to penetrate a dark room²¹. He engaged all the senses. For their author, these actions constituted a mystery, a kind of bodily, haptic ritual. When he would unravel the threads, he moved confidently and nimbly at the same time, entangling his chosen subjects as if in an ecstatic, ritualistic dance, almost in a trance. Yet I suspect he did this deliberately and was in control of the actions he was performing.

Visual theatre would not have been possible without the involvement of people closer or farther away from the artist, his friends and relatives. He had to think carefully about whom to approach. He entered into a deep dialogue that he could not have with everyone. He carefully selected the actors and the audience. In this sense, these were contained acts, intended for people in whom he had great trust, and they also had to trust him. “He was very protective of this sphere, so that only selected people were there, he didn’t want to document it because he thought it would spoil

» 19 A reminiscence of Dorota Krawczyk-Janisch of 25.06.2021. The statement refers to the performance of 10 March 1978, in which Jerzy Słomiński performed. The performance was repeated twice more (6.12.1981 and 1.12.1987).

» 20 A reminiscence of Dorota Krawczyk-Janisch of 25.06.2021.

» 21 Archival photographs show the windows of the Repassage Gallery with the curtains drawn.

everything. It was a mystery; the atmosphere was thickening, growing²². People were interacting with each other. You could feel the other person's movement and you had to interact. Concentration and silence were important. You could hear hearts beating. It didn't allow you to be a passive spectator; it drew you in and mobilised. The spectators became actors.

Through his visual theatre he created a community, transferred energy and fostered interpersonal relations. It was a form of conversation rather than a show. He wanted to express himself without words and expected answers from others. It was necessary to raise certain issues and pose questions, to establish, literally and figuratively, a thread of understanding. To some extent, this was interaction too. Of course, the involvement in these "performances" of people who were close to him generated a variety of tensions. I suspect that the real substance of the visual theatre was the relationships and emotions between people. Certainly, in the beginning they were accompanied by a natural fear of the unknown. It was only later that a sense of intimacy with another human being emerged, perhaps unattainable under normal circumstances, but only after the barrier of intimacy had been crossed and a personal truth had been reached; it was not explicitly revealed but was framed in an aesthetic structure. "He had the concept of consciously leaving an unsatisfactory feeling after what happened during the performance. And this dissatisfaction was to nurture, to remain. [...] I think that this dissatisfaction was his intention and that it would cause the continuation of these relationships,"²³ observed Grzegorz Kowalski.

The only time Jung's visual theatre became a little more public was at a student festival in Łódź²⁴. His *Joint Performance* shown there was performed again a month later, on 22 December 1980, at the Repassage Gallery in an altered form and under a different title: *Conversation*. Appearing at a festival may be evidence that the author wanted people to see these activities. However, we are still only talking about a festival audience, i.e. interested and focused spectators rather than a very wide audience; he did not try to show himself to the masses. The Warsaw action involved three people: Krzysztof Jung, Wojciech Piotrowski and Dorota Krawczyk-Janisch. The surviving photographs show that everything took place in a dark room. Dressed in black, Krzysztof and Wojciech sat on chairs facing each other and were sewing their shirts and trousers together, as if they wanted to unite in this way or show their mutual bonds and dependencies. Then they both removed their clothes and left the room naked. By taking off their clothes, they freed themselves from the constraints of civilization like insects emerging from a cocoon. The photographs do not show an

» 22 A reminiscence of Dorota Krawczyk-Janisch z 25.06.2021.

» 23 On the basis of an interview with Prof. Grzegorz Kowalski on 18 September 2021.

» 24 National Confrontations "Young Art Łódź '80", Ośrodek Propagandy Sztuki, Łódź 1980.

audience, but witness accounts indicate that there were no more than a dozen people in the room²⁵. “He liked to expose himself, he was quite bold about it... As a result, his performances, public shows, or relatively public, because they were intended for the initiated circles, were so erotic,”²⁶ recalls Grzegorz Kowalski.

The artist may have felt bound by a web of injunctions, prohibitions, restrictions and relationships and used his own body to demonstrate this. As Raimund Wolfert explains, “The liberation triggered by these actions can be seen as equivalent to the development of the human ‘embryonic larva’ into a unique individual and its assumption of an upright position. It is moreover symbolic of the individual’s struggle with and opposition to the outdated image of masculinity, imposed by the patriarchal society and the political system”²⁷.

Only photographs and scant accounts of the ever-diminishing group of participants have remained of Jung’s visual theatre. Memories blur and fade with the passing of time; images, dates and names get confused. Time has already dimmed many faces, reshuffled facts and circumstances. Memory often enhances past events. “Grzegorz Kowalski insisted on taking pictures of these activities; otherwise, nothing would be left. These were fascinating things. Some of the activities were repeated specifically for the purposes of photographic documentation, some involved different people than originally and were certainly no longer the same,” recalls Dorota Krawczyk-Janisch²⁸. Even the best photography cannot capture the entire experience of a performance²⁹, let alone photographs showing not so much the original performances, but their replays, done specifically for the purpose of documentation. And these were very private statements and situations, addressed to specific people, so that their full meaning can

» 25 This was unanimously confirmed by Dorota Krawczyk-Janisch and Grzegorz Kowalski when I asked about it.

» 26 On the basis of an interview with Prof. Grzegorz Kowalski on 18 September 2021.

» 27 Raimund Wolfert, “Płomień. Krzysztof Jung, prekursor polskiej sztuki gejowskiej,” transl. Dorota Krawczyk-Janisch, *Zeszyty Literackie* 113, no. 1 (2011): 104-110.

» 28 A reminiscence of Dorota Krawczyk-Janisch written down during a conversation we held on 25.06.2021.

» 29 This was indicated e.g. by Peggy Phelan: “Performance lives only in the present. It cannot be preserved, recorded, documented, or participate in any other way in the circulation of images. When entering this circle, it becomes something other than performance. In attempting to become part of the economy of reproduction, performance betrays and detracts from the promise of its own ontology. The essence of performance, like the ontology of subjectivity proposed here, is disappearance” in: Peggy Phelan, “Ontologia performansu. Reprezentacja bez reprodukcji”, transl. Agnieszka Kowalczyk, in: *Przyjdźcie, pokażemy Wam, co robimy. O improwizacji tańca*, ed. Sonia Nieśpiałowska-Owczarek, Katarzyna Słoboda (Łódź: Muzeum Sztuki w Łodzi, 2013), 267. A different perspective is provided by Rebecca Schneider’s research, according to which performance is not ephemeral but repetitive. See Rebecca Schneider, “Performans pozostaje,” transl. Dorota Sosnowska, in: *Re//mix: Performans i dokumentacja*, ed. Dorota Sajewska, Tomasz Plata (Warszawa: Instytut Teatralny im. Zbigniewa Raszeńskiego, Komuna// Warszawa, Wydawnictwo Krytyki Politycznej, 2014), 23-33.

no longer be understood today. It was for this reason, Dorota recalls, that their author shied away from taking photographs for a long time. He wanted it all to remain ephemeral. “He said that these were one-off statements, highly concentrated, emotionally dense, and that the presence of a photographer would make it all disappear. But he eventually gave it a go”³⁰. Some issues linger in the memory, others split into disparate scenarios. Grzegorz Kowalski remembers Jung’s approach to photographing activities somewhat differently; in his opinion, deep down the artist himself wanted to document them³¹.

Certainly, Krzysztof Jung was driven by a desire for freedom and for the liberation of his own creative powers. The visual expression of these aspirations was the action *Creation Through Others* and the *Horizon of Freedom* (1980), in which the naked artist was laboriously climbing a structure of threads and four vertical supports. More important to Jung than reaching his destination was the path itself, the process of reaching it, the unfettered act of creation.

Visual theatre was part of the atmosphere of the Repassage Gallery, which became a creative home for Krzysztof Jung. “Repassage was an essential, domesticated place of great freedom. It offered great encounters between different people”³². It was a unique assemblage of the strangest if fascinating people, some incongruous but some who matched the spirit of the place. “You came there for tea³³, you could theoretically look through the window³⁴, come in from the street and be taken seriously if you had something to say, you were drawn into the orbit of conversation. [...] There was a lot of freedom to experiment while respecting boundaries, no one was forced to do anything”³⁵.

Frequent were actions created in response to another artist’s project. Whole cycles were created, and a kind of often non-verbal communication was established. Jung attracted a very diverse company, not just artists. The circle associated with the gallery included: Grzegorz Kowalski, Barbara Falender, Jerzy Jarnuszkiewicz, Zofia Kulik, Paweł Kwiek, and Roman Woźniak. It was a very democratic space, based on the principle of respect for everyone. Wojciech Karpiński, who shared a deep friendship and intellectual bond with Jung, initially criticised the activities. He felt

» 30 A reminiscence of Dorota Krawczyk-Janisch, 25.06.2021.

» 31 On the basis of an interview with Prof. Grzegorz Kowalski on 18 September 2021.

» 32 Jakub Zgierski, “Stwarzanie poprzez innych. Rozmowa z Dorotą Krawczyk-Janisch o Krzysztofie Jungu”, *Zeszyty Literackie*, 9 October 2019, <https://zeszytyliterackie.pl/zgierski-krawczyk-janisch-stwarzanie-poprzez-innych-rozmowa/> (18.08.2022).

» 33 When the Cieślars were in charge, the gallery patrons would meet, and drink tea bought for money everyone chipped in.

» 34 The gallery had three windows. All overlooked Krakowskie Przedmieście Street.

» 35 A reminiscence of Dorota Krawczyk-Janisch, 25.06.2021.

that they took up valuable time in which his friend should be drawing and painting. Later, however, he came to appreciate the breadth of thought and the creative and aesthetic weight of performance acts.

The study of the visual theatre revealed to me the astonishing multi-dimensional quality of its author's nature. In his quasi-theatrical activities, Krzysztof Jung has left testimonies, which help one assemble his portrait. He was an extremely open person (to other people and to the world), full of zest, a social activist and at the same time a strong personality, an individualist, often in need of solitude. He wanted to share, both intellectually and emotionally. He would fervently tell stories and did not keep to himself; he wanted to leave a trace. His liveliness, cheerfulness and energy were contagious. He was above (political and social) divisions. He did not care about others' opinions and practised art on his own terms, defying fashion, breaking its boundaries and broadening its field. I see in this a genuine need to create. He did not impose the only correct interpretation on us, hinting at certain clues, but also dropping ambiguities and unanswered questions.

Independent as a person and an artist, full of unimaginable grace, he was a friend to many. People flocked around him; he brought them together, uniting whole communities and pulling them into being close. He had charisma, enticing others with a boyish and sincere smile; there was a certain charm about him. "He integrated people, gathered them around himself. He attracted people and created an aura where people felt comfortable with one another. He sustained bonds that would probably have fallen apart without him. It was his court... He was the king, while the others were the satellites that orbited around [...] He stood out for his complexion and his black hair," reminisced Grzegorz Kowalski in the film *The Imago of Krzysio*³⁶. Jung was also attentive. He was sensitive to the other person. Today, being attentive has disappeared. "Now there are divisions, people are locked in enclaves. They don't hear one another, even if they listen, they don't try to hear.... Christopher knew how to listen; he was open to others and their diversity. He made people feel that he was listening and hearing. People would open up; they felt important, there was never any disrespect from him³⁷. I suspect they had the impression that he was speaking directly to them about the things that were important to them. Wojciech Karpiński summed him up as follows: "There was something of van Gogh in him in that passion for throwing himself wholeheartedly into the world, into art, into love, into friendships. [...] Goethe's words about the truly alive man, who like a butterfly strives for ever higher

» 36 *Imago Krzysia*, a documentary film portrait of Krzysztof Jung, dir. Barbara Janisch, Adam Janisch, Germany 2016.

» 37 A reminiscence of Dorota Krawczyk-Janisch, 25.06.2021.

fulfilments and finally burns in a flame, apply to him with extraordinary force. [...] He was a radiant guest on this earth, a fiery person and one could burn one's wings in that fire"³⁸.

Krzysztof Jung thought a lot about life and death. On the one hand, he displayed an extraordinary affirmation of life, an eternal fascination with youth, and on the other, a familiarisation with death. Illness³⁹ curtailed his life just when he was beginning to live with full awareness of what he wanted to do and what he could do. He never grew old. That is how he was remembered. To use Grzegorz Kowalski's formula, he "passed away at a faun's age".

I see very many levels of perception of this extraordinary man. I was captivated, moved even, by his independence and his obsession with life, with the beauty of existence. He was intoxicated by nature, he really was. I appreciated the breadth of his creative thought, his intellectual and moral problems, and his consistently serious attitude towards his interlocutors. He fascinated with the extent of his interests. He looked at culture, people, problems, the world beyond the patterns and labels of ideology, politics and prevailing fashions. He sought a deeper meaning and had the ability to steer towards things that were truly important.

He lived a short but beautiful life. Not only in the sense that an aesthete would give to this word. Beautiful also in the sense of courage, awareness and intensity of experience. Then he melted into the universe, reunited with his beloved nature... Or perhaps a man exists as long as he is remembered? If so, Krzysztof Jung is still present. I imagine him walking, a smile on his face, among the red trees⁴⁰ just now, waves of black hair descending on his shoulders....

The aesthetic, which was an incredibly important element of his performative acts, seems to perfectly define the artist himself. I believe that his quasi-theatrical actions were part of his personality. The limitations of the human body are created primarily by the psyche, mind, fears, phobias, or anxieties. In order to free himself from them, the artist used his visual theatre whose essence was the creative process itself. For this author, the visual theatre became a safe haven and a secluded niche of freedom⁴¹. ●

» 38 Wojciech Karpiński, "Krzyś," in: *Krzysztof Jung (1951–1998)*, exhibition catalog, ed. Maryla Sitkowska (Warszawa: Muzeum im. Xawerego Dunikowskiego w Królikarni – Oddział Muzeum Narodowego w Warszawie, 2001), 16.

» 39 In 1997, Krzysztof Jung developed serious health problems. He died suddenly in Warsaw on 5 October 1998 due to a severe asthma attack. He was only 47 years of age.

» 40 Red trees were a very common motif in Krzysztof Jung's paintings.

» 41 The selection of Krzysztof Jung's actions under scrutiny here, their interpretations, as well as the literature cited do not exhaust the topic, leaving Jung's visual theatre a phenomenon open to further analysis and different research perspectives.

Abstract

A study of Krzysztof Jung's achievements, and especially his performative actions, shows the amazing complexity of this artist's personality. The artistic theatre which he created in the Repassage Gallery was a phenomenon – unique, experimental and intimate. It was a mystery, a kind of haptic ritual, in which the human body played an extremely important role. Jung introduced touch and sound into the realm of visual arts. The actors in his theatre were mostly young people who were united by the aesthetics of their bodies. The artist entwined them with threads through which they entered into various physical and sensual relationships. These inherently delicate threads fettered, looped, ensnared and required severance. They had the function of connectors and relays. With the help of art theatre, Krzysztof Jung built a community, transferred energy, stimulated reflection and created interpersonal ties. He also definitively shortened the traditional distance between actor and audience and created a niche of freedom for himself.

Keywords:

Krzysztof Jung, artistic theatre, performative actions, paratheatrical, actions, body, threading, Repassage Gallery

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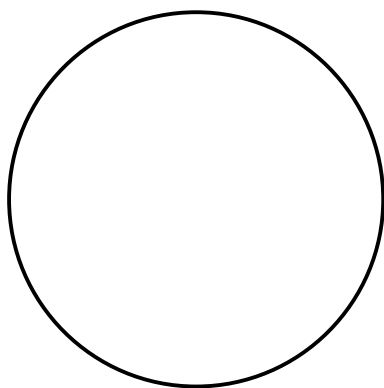
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