



Every sentence needs to be read. Based on the works of Jan Tutaj

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“The creative process and its mysterious paths are highly varied, depending on the source of inspiration, the sensitivity of the creator, the worldview and the artistic goals set.” (Tutaj 2015, 1)

Each sentence needs to be read, both the one that is unequivocal and the one that is ambiguous; a simple message, a command, as well as an elaborate poetic metaphor. A sentence as a meaningful sequence, as a meaning, exists only as far as it is read. What is important is that reading is only partly related to the sentence. After all, it depends to a great extent on the reader. In this sense, it is a relationship. If a sentence is expressed directly, the reader’s influence on its meaning is small.

Like a sentence, art can express its message directly (it does not always have to be based on multi-layered hermeneutics to speak about very important things), and if so, we should not look at the power of ambiguity when reading art. Perhaps the message is simple, only we do not know the words or letters. Knowing the alphabet is something different from knowing the meaning. So what can be an alphabet in art?

In papers and essays on Jan Tutaj’s work, I have repeatedly encountered praise for two, I believe, separate aspects of art that are often mutually exclusive in practice (here as well). On the one hand, commentators praise the artist for his “absolute” creative freedom; on the other hand, they notice the presence of excellent universal and philosophical themes in those works. I claim that the work of Jan Tutaj refers almost exclusively to the second aspect of art, which I am going to write about below, and its interpretation

in expressive terms is an unnecessary coquetry that is not confirmed by the facts.

One of the essays on the art of Tutaj, praising the “absolute” creative freedom, is the text by Stanisław Tabisz, in which we read:

...sculptures or spatial objects (installations) by Jan Tutaj, created in a state of absolute creative freedom, take the viewer into the world of elementary problems of the form, seeking in three-dimensional space ontological, psychological and perceptual matters. (Tabisz 2016, 3)

Regardless of how widely we might treat the notion of the “state of absolute creative freedom”, I do not see the signs of such a state in Tutaj’s works (if absolute creative freedom must be contrasted with order and truth). The formal stylistics of the works is indeed interesting, fascinating and attractive, but the significance of its experience does not come from the subjective element of the work (the individual feeling of the state of absolute creative freedom), but it is the satisfaction associated with seeing the reproduced objective world order. In other words: my eye sees beauty in a Pythagorean or Platonic understanding, Plotinus as well, and I am moved by seeing things in which their essence shines through. This secondary emotion, therefore, relates to the element that the work speaks of, not that which it is itself.

In the practice of aesthetic experience, the viewer is often not even aware of what kind of order he is looking at in a culture which has an archetypal nature. And these orders can be different in principle and vary in their type of expression (realisation): a thing can be in harmony with its concept or can beautifully express something abstract. It can be harmonious, give visibility to an idea or even directly apply the language of mathematics, although in the case of Tutaj’s works it is not in the sense of beauty staring into the spiral of Ulham. What is the difference? The spiral, although many art theorists (rightly so!) – like the Fibonacci sequence – consider it to be a manifestation of a higher kind of aesthetics, refers to relationships and not an object. In the case of mathematics, the subject is a number. Such a remark boils down directly to the breakthrough in aesthetics that Plotinus introduced by opposing the notion of relation-based beauty, thus undermining the excellent Greek tradition of relation-based beauty. Let us note, however, that both Pythagorean and Plotinus thought refers to the order of the world; it can also refer to the number as an element of a relationship or as an abstraction/idea. In the second case, beauty would be close to the works of Jan Tutaj.



A lot has been written about whether axes (vertical and horizontal) play a significant role in Jan Tutaj's works, for example, that:

There is a solid, architectural sense in Jan Tutaj's sculptural compositions and spatial objects, and even more: the strategy of the concept and the plan of its execution in specific and always contrasting materials and raw objects or organic 'quotations' entangled in them... They are embedded in vertical or horizontal rectangular constructions (with iron, openwork edges), inside of which, and in the space beyond them, the whole dramaturgy takes place [...]. (Tabisz 2016, 3)

Or

...Tutaj's ideas, in their intellectual provenance, are vertical, and if it were not for their mental visualization, they would in many cases be without a third dimension. (Bednarczyk 2016, 5)

[provided that one can speak at all about the verticality of the idea and its two or three dimensions, which I doubt].

However, regardless of this, ...their essential beauty lies in the substance, not in the relationship.

The critics here support the idea of the undoubted harmony of the work, but I think they apply it too superficially. The critics' conviction stems from the belief that the harmony of a work of art must condition its value as art: ...balance, proportionality – e.g. of vertical and horizontal elements – is “the essence of the value of a work of art” (Taranczewski 2019, 10). Also “balance, the proportionality of colored elements”. Meanwhile, the proportionality of parts is not enough to speak of excellent work, the mere proportionality of elements does not even create art. So we have to look deeper...

While putting aside the above considerations, one should go back to the source and ask how the artist poses the fundamental questions present in his works. In other words: what is the method of working with an art object? First of all, this method of work is, in my opinion, based on something concrete, i.e. it does not refer to generalities, if we stick to the language of mathematics (which in the case of Tutaj's works I treat as a draft), the subject of this reflection is defined as a specific number, but not clocked as a numbered element, a component of harmony (like 1:1), but as a concept of a number, e.g. a one. Such an understanding of a number does not force a work of



art to have simple harmony, e.g. a vertical or horizontal axis, other countable relations.

But these works are also about other concepts, for example in the work *Ratio* (2016) – the reason, the source, sometimes the cause, the rationale for something, but mostly the reason (*Plus ratio quam vis!*). Tied sheets of paper, supported by a hard concrete-steel structure. Contrast, between the exalted, delicate, fragile and light, and that which is gravitational but necessary to protect that which sustains and elevates above itself while releasing and sharing. A composition based on a vertical column is not necessary, although the meaning of the ratio lies primarily in the symbol of the book. The idea of ratio does not require architectural harmony for artistic realisation.

In the work *Ratio*, the concept is seen as a universal thing. In this sense the concept is, on the one hand, objectively existing and established (although it is not subject to full expressions, like a symbol); on the other hand, it is a collective property of culture and part of a system of meanings. It is for these reasons that the condition of “creative freedom” is superfluous here, it would even contradict the idea of an order by introducing a subjective, free element. The condition of “absolute freedom” loses its point, just like in a religious ritual: “absolute freedom” has no meaning here because it does not apply in a ritual.

The issue of freedom can be put in another way. Concepts and their philosophy are an area of freedom, but freedom of reason, not of man in his particular decisions. In this sense, the individual human being (on the contrary!) is a weave of many elements and it is difficult to infer or require that he act only on the basis of reason. There are objective aspects in the human being, such as rights, but also questionable issues, such as the way in which values are realised, and adventurous issues, which are emotions, experiences, and feelings. Entitling the works with higher-order notions and then reading these works from the perspective of “absolute creative freedom” can be compared to the situation of a jazz concert, followed in the morning by a note in the newspaper, in which we read that the singer enchanted the audience with her beauty and charm. Of course, the vocalist has to look like a work of art and there are, of course, concerts based on the vocalist’s appearance (to the music that brings very little) and many works of art based on impression (to the art that brings a lot) – impressionism.

After all, if in contact with a work of art we experience overwhelming determinism related to the principle of thinking, how can we benefit from creative freedom?



Risky structures?

About Tutaj's art, we read that it has many "...risky structures of compositional connections..." (Tabisz 2016, 3). Yes, there are many works combining means of artistic expression in new, puzzling contexts – such as *Nie_pamięć* (2017), *Sekwencja* (2017) or *Obelisk* (2016). I do not know to what extent these works are representative of the artist – I prefer to recall *Furt II* (2017), *Kartoteka* (2017), *Tabularia* (2017) from more recent works, as well as from earlier works, such as the aforementioned *Ratio*, *Verticus* (2016) or *Azyl* (2016). Almost all published drawings, as well as sculptures functioning in public space, such as the monument to Jan Matejko (2009), or the *Sons of the Sanok land killed while fighting for Poland* (1999) ...are all works that prove classic and homogeneous (and not risky!) compositional structures. I would even say: Jan Tutaj's works are characterised not only by a very classical composition, classic and noble materials, organised and often minimalistic formal side, but also by a natural, uniform colour composition, oscillating in the area of cold shades, silver, white, black, and warm hues: gold and light wood. This selection of material, based on the classical principle of decorum, makes the criticism of the matter of works of art pointless, both in relation to specific creations and to the more difficult issue concerning the very essence of sculptural art:

For is not work in love with matter the essence of the sculptural creative path? To tell the sculptor that the materiality of his works is beautiful, but that it fails their perfect form of existence, a sneak peek. (Bednarczyk 2016, 5)

Certainly, being "in love" with matter is the essence of the sculptural path, and the choice of material indicates the nobility of heart and purity of intentions, but what can we say about the perfect form of existence of the works? Works of sculptural art do not have an ideal (in the philosophical sense: permanent, unchangeable, perfect with their notion) existence, they are by nature realisations and are adventurous; apart from the aspects that bring them closer to their source (beauty!), they have a whole range of accidental features. It is impossible to consider the existence of a perfect work of art in a meaningful way because it is pointless.

Where are the emotions?!

Generally and initially it should be stated that the emotional plane in Jan Tutaj's works is reduced to a minimum (i.e. if someone is looking for excite-



ment, they will certainly find it somewhere there). There are no rhetorical procedures, no evoking of emotions; the works are devoid of superficial emotionality, because, being frozen in place, they are associated with universal issues (the movement cannot the other way round because it shows convergence with emotions through dynamics, transformation, and temporality).

But universal themes can evoke emotions. But in what sense? The universal themes are obviously touching (hence the attractiveness of kitsch – an emotional self-image), but they are unequal: first of all – as the title of this text indicates – the deep understanding of universal themes is based on the understanding of language. Knowledge, discovery, and observation of ordered structures is an aesthetic delight, but the emotion is a given and accidental element – it does not have to be the aim of art, neither at the stage of its creation nor at the stage of its reception. Let us take a look at the work *Verticus* – a horse skull, metal, mirror. But it is not about emotion and fear, nor is it about excitement.

For some, the object of attention may be somebody's emotionality (experiencing different states of mind), and there were periods in art that wore romantic emotionality on banners; for others – to put it bluntly – these are phenomena so repetitive that they are boring and reproducible (contrary to appearances, people have similar emotional experiences).

Plato rightly said that ideas also evoke emotions in us because they correspond to the order in our soul and seeing them brings us joy, but we do not climb to the top of the cave to rejoice and be happy. I believe that this is not the case with Jan Tutaj's works: if we analyse his art as a source of pleasure, we would fall into the perspective of purposefulness. I do not think that the works are created for a purpose, rather we should look for a reason: what precedes, not what follows.

From where can the passion for extremely simple things come (in truth and in order exist the obviousness?), for a precise message, a simple pure form, as for example in *Asylum*. The message is unambiguous, although it needs to be deciphered – just like letters: even an unambiguous sentence needs to be read. However, it is not a verbal sentence (composed of words). An attempt to express it in words may be more or less accurate, but it is always a translation. These two languages meet at the intersection of art and word, in man, in his aesthetic experience – this is what the language of art and verbal language independently pronounces, which, although different, can inspire and enrich each other:



The language of art derives from the power of the word, it is inspired by it, coexists with it, uses it, but at the same time exceeds its limitations, adding layers that are much more complex, evoking non-verbal feelings, states of mind that are so difficult to grasp and define with WORDS. (Tutaj 2015, 1)

This justifies the avoidance of expressive, emotional forms, full of excitement, crazy, ambiguous, blurry. It is not to turn a viewer into a violent compassionate sensation of the whims of the moment. This art is free and shows Freedom, but the artist does not speak in it about his own freedom. This is all the more true in the words of Stanisław Tabisz, who emphasises insight, care, and reliability in the details of Tutaj's work, indicating that the artist clearly distanced himself from the contemporary tendencies of superficial treatment of the sculptural craft. Tabisz continues to characterise the works:

...essential in the formal layer, rationally constructed, in all the varied richness of the matter of their components, in the context of fundamental considerations and meaningful extremes. [...] The artist rather deepens the philosophical, psychological or perceptual problem that intrigues him and tries to find adequate means of expression, as well as to give direction to the interpretation of the situational event undertaken in the language of the sculpture, which – apart from its sophisticated and surprising aesthetic and artistic qualities – is to stimulate thinking... (Tabisz 2016, 3)

Thinking:

Does art derive from thinking? Is it ahead of thinking? I pose this question because the text is dominated by matters of philosophy and concepts. In one of his excellent books, Erich Fromm points out that our inner, perhaps intuitive conviction that thought precedes action can be wrong. So then what comes first?

It's usually said that in order to act, you have to be able to think. The thought is first, and only then does meaningful action appear. I'm sure that's true, but something else is also true, namely something completely opposite.¹ (Fromm 2016, 65)

The creative process is actually thinking, because thinking and creating happen simultaneously. Thanks to this, art immerses itself in life; it gains a

¹ Own translation.



real reference to the real world, real problems. It refers to the contemporary world as much as to past and distant issues (Wielgut-Walczak 2017, n.n.). Good art protects words and thoughts from emptiness, helps us share not only words but the whole reality, without feeling embarrassed or lost, and then we realise that something important has become part of ourselves.



Photo 1





Photo 2





Photo 3





Photo 4



Photo 5



Photo 6



Photo 7



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