



1. Zdzisław Jurkiewicz, *27 Metres of Blue and Red*, 1976, acrylic on canvas, 100 x 159,6 x 2,5 cm, MWW/DTZSP/431. Photo: MWW

“I wanted to win!”

Art is thinking. Jurkiewicz’s not-yet-conceptualism?

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Navigation of the mind

The life of Zdzisław Jurkiewicz¹ and his Bretonese “navigation of the mind”² continues to amaze. The Wrocław-based artist was passionate and committed to art, non-compromisingly honest in his search for the truth and unafraid to exteriorise his emotions.

Jurkiewicz as an artist was both undaunted and sensitive; a hot-headed enthusiast of the surrounding reality and life. However, I dare say that although he was unusually devoted to art, he did not consider it to be the most important thing. What mattered more was his “navigation” – the search for the truth of art and the truth of the world, but never by surrendering to the senses or emphatically losing himself in himself, as some overly thin-skinned individuals may be prone to do. Jurkiewicz was critical of such an attitude, deliberately rejecting emotional idiosyncrasies in art in favour of a self-knowing *ratio*.

First of all, he was a fully-fledged artist, literally and figuratively – physically and mentally strong, with a forceful personality, trusting and believing in himself, relying more on his own understanding than the aforementioned emotions or intuitions. This does not mean, however, that he was a stranger to emotional predilections of the mind; on the contrary, such intense or even feverish tendencies testified to the vitality, commitment, perseverance and determination of an artist who took art seriously and responsibly. He could listen intently to his interlocutor’s arguments, but he would not mince words when it came to judging what he perceived as the inertia of recessive art – mimetic, emotional or maudlin. Jurkiewicz could get angry, although it was rarely personally oriented. Rather, he suffered because of the misunderstanding of, or lack of openness to, his innovative approach,



¹ It is necessary to mention publications on Zdzisław Jurkiewicz whose authors made an attempt to organize and capture the entirety of the artist’s oeuvre: M. Szafkowska, *Zdzisław Jurkiewicz. Zdarzenia / Occurrences* [exhibition cat.], Centre for Culture and Arts in Wrocław – Contemporary Museum in Wałbrzych – “Stara Kopalnia” Science and Art Centre, Ed. M. Kuźmicz, Wrocław 2019. It is also worth recalling the fact that the Zachęta Lower Silesian Society for the Encouragement of Fine Arts already in 2005 noticed the importance of Jurkiewicz’s achievements and since then has been gradually acquiring the artist’s works and archives for its collection, which today constitutes the starting point and source for research of Jurkiewicz’s life and work.

² Quotation from Z. Jurkiewicz’s conversation/lecture, which I heard during the dinner accompanying the opening of Koji Kamoji’s exhibition in Wrocław in 2007 – “Koji Kamoji. Works From My Studio”, 4 June – 15 July 2007, Zamek Culture Centre, Wrocław. See A. Breton, *Surrealism and Painting* (1928), Transl. S. W. Taylor, New York 1972, p. 1.



³ Z. Jurkiewicz, *Painting, n = 200 – Frame, n = 61*, 1976, ink and paper, 69 × 63 cm; private property.

both in art and in the way of being. A sense of liberation from the shackles of formalistic traditionalism; openness to the new trends in post-war European and American art; the growing awareness of scientific discoveries and the broadening of cognitive horizons, especially in astronomy, which was so dear to him; an uncompromising attitude, more typically associated with youth and rebellion; belief in his own agency and the possibility of shaping the future; a peculiar combination of love of life, science and art – all these come to the fore in Jurkiewicz’s work with unprecedented power.

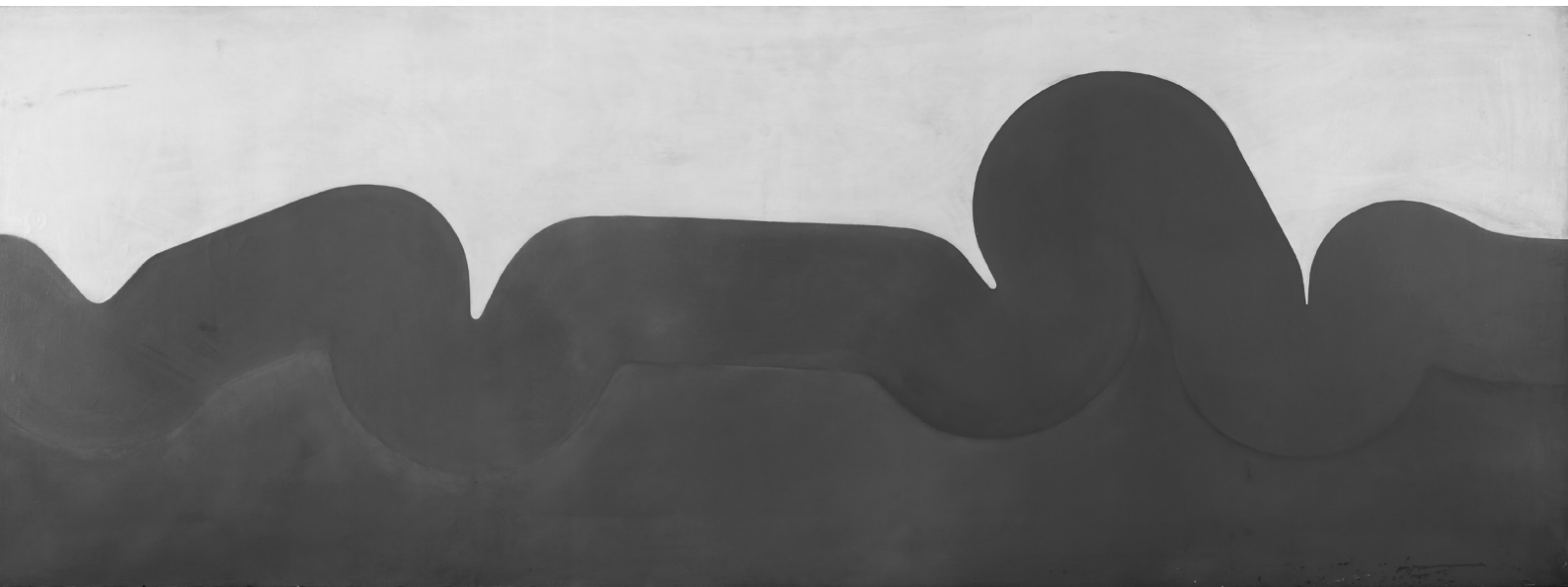
The creative process

Jurkiewicz’s visual language seems to be characterised by a peculiar terseness, a deliberate reduction of the content and form of the work, which turn it into a phoneme of reality – an elementary particle of matter with a strictly defined, almost schematic structure. From an art-historical point of view, his seminal works seem to objectively embody or visualise abstract concepts, initiated in a real and incessantly evolving universe.

The artist’s creative process, as in the case of the diptych *Painting, n = 200 – Frame, n = 61* (1976)³, is based on the repetition of the same operation – drawing a line – enough times to meet the *a priori* condition of reaching the specific length of the line, expressed in millilitres of ink needed to draw the work. Here, creation is akin to a recursive activity leading to a situation in which the painting evokes itself in order to explicate a problem defined by the artist in advance – in this case, the depiction of 200 m of line, as in the work *Painting*, or 61 m of line, as in *Frame*. To illustrate his intention, the artist uses a repetitive action, a form of iterative notation, which fills in the field of the “painting” in the upper part of the diptych and outlines the shape of the frame below. The composition actually acquires the status of an autotelic work, an end in itself: The painting evokes a painting, the frame evokes a frame. The shape becomes the colour, the colour becomes the shape, the frame frames the painting, the painting depicts what it is supposed to depict in the representational field, which is separate from, contrasted with, and “inside” the frame all at the same time – i.e. it depicts the painting itself. Consisting of metres of horizontally drawn line that fills in and makes up the entire field of the painting, the work expresses nothing but the 200 m of line identified with the painting and 61 m of line identified with the frame. The artist captions the whole with a kind of cartographic scale, indicating the unit of measurement of the repeatedly painted line, which refers to its actual length: 200 m and 61 m, squeezed into the 69 × 63 cm rectangular diptych. This, however, is not the end of the story.



2. Zdzisław Jurkiewicz, *27 Metres to Blue and Red*, 1976, acrylic on canvas, 100 x 159,6 x 2,5 cm, MWW/DTZSP/430. Photo: MWW



3. Zdzisław Jurkiewicz, *R-B Continuity*, 1971, acrylic on canvas, 93,5 x 252,2 x 2.2 cm, MWW/DTZSP/432. Photo: MWW



⁴ It is worth noting that this understanding of truth is characteristic of all Greek philosophy; an analogous approach was proposed, probably for the first time, by Parmenides of Elea, who lived in the 6th/5th c. BC. His concept was significantly developed at the turn of the 18th c. by Gottfried Wilhelm Leibnitz, a philosopher, mathematician and physicist.

⁵ I understand the transcendentals as beings that are, because they are, because they simply exist, as opposed to the universals, which we perceive through some of their qualitative features, and in painting – through formal features, e.g. colour, shape, texture, composition.

The eponymous words “painting – frame” become symbolic equivalents of the activity of depicting – elements of the reality creating the painting, verbalised representations of concepts that simultaneously become their visualised content.

By rejecting the world of deceptive sensory perceptions, illusory and slippery emotive externalisations, “boring mimetic repetitions”, as he termed them, Jurkiewicz hereby heralds the equivalence of thought and object. He refers not to feelings, senses, semblance, but to the cognitive faculty of reason, truth and logic. For him, art is equated primarily with truth – Jurkiewicz wants to say only that which is true⁴. The painting both conceptualises and visualises the 200 m of line. The concept is tantamount to its representation, just like the aforementioned shape is identical with the concept and colour. Conceived in this way, the painting becomes for Jurkiewicz the only possible – and by this virtue, the most perfect of all – representation of what he can think into being. A work of art thus becomes a singular entity, an elementary monad of the material space of artefacts. Created by the artist, it becomes an atom of nature, an element of art belonging in the domain of the transcendentals⁵.

Peregrinatio vitae vs. noema & noesis

Regardless of the circumstances, trends and fashions, Jurkiewicz’s choices in art and life were likely shaped by two questions: What is art? What is the world? The artist leaves them unanswered. Instead,

he provokes the audience, takes us on a flight whose trajectory may bring us closer to each other or disunite, allowing us to observe the horizons of the expanding universe and art from galactic perspectives, limited only by the acuteness of our eyes, but not by our reason. Perhaps this is why in one of the interviews later in his life Jurkiewicz spoke of himself as if in disbelief, as if with a newly sensed and discovered proclamation of his creative identity – "I may have been an artist"⁶. These modest words testify to his exceptional humility towards what he had managed to achieve and what was still *in statu nascendi*. This is the continuation of his "navigation", in which he wants to call hitherto unknown and recently discovered lands the content of his life – his homeland of choice. Jurkiewicz's travels, however, have nothing to do with aimless wandering. He is not a present-day Odysseus, exhausted albeit persistent, a Homeric hero who, having trickily captured Troy – the stronghold of Conceptualism and Minimalism – faces numerous adversities in order to return to his homeland, i.e. artistic duty. Jurkiewicz's navigation has more to do with *peregrinatio vitae* – an important journey, because it is part and parcel of the creation and evolution of the Universe. In his approach, the artist is to fulfil the role of the creator of *logos*. For that to happen, he must use reason. For Jurkiewicz, the only way to participate in this endeavour is to adopt a scientific and conceptual stance in the process of creation. The artist considered himself a conceptualist. Was he?

The definitive understanding of conceptualism annihilates the work as an object. Jurkiewicz, however, left canvases, bits and pieces glued together, scale models, objects-instruments for taking care of plants or making life more pleasant for rodents...

In order to properly consider whether Jurkiewicz's works are conceptual, at least two issues must be taken into account. Firstly, their provenance – different from what art history tends to ascribe to the gesture of Seth Siegelaub, for example, who in the second half of the 1960s began to exhibit documentation and instructions for the creation of works rather than the actual objects. Jurkiewicz had nothing to do with conceptualism defined in this way. Secondly, an epistemological change occurred, possibly unnoticeably, whose origins I perceive in the semiotic and structural methodologies of the 1960s and 1970s. The new varieties of art that emerged at the time – conceptual art, zero art, the neutral, structural and analytical tendencies, concrete poetry – make it impossible to view phenomena in the field of arts with a unifying eye, because at that time they were subject to clear conceptualisation and intellectualisation⁷. Social, political and cultural factors were not insignificant either⁸, as was the media-friendly and spectacular character of the technological achievements of the era, in particular the successful exploration of space, driven on the one hand by the Cold War, and on the other – by an attempt to build a sense of stability in the first decades after the



⁶ *Zdzisław Jurkiewicz (1931–2012) – artysta totalny*, 1997, 1:26:00, TVP3 Wrocław, production A. Mazanek, K. Landsberg, camera P. Sędzikowski, editing A. Stefański, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-diKOkm2fwk&t=5021s> (access date: 28.04.2021), 1:23:41

⁷ There have been numerous attempts to distinguish varieties of conceptualism. Among the artists with a varied approach to the conceptualisation of art, practitioners such as Ian Burna, Daniel Buren, Hanne Darboven, Henry Flynt, Joseph Kosuth, Sol LeWitt, Robert Morris and Robert Smithson, and ought to be mentioned, to recall the most stylistically different ones. See T. Godfrey, *Conceptual Art*, London – New York 1998; *Conceptual Art: A Critical Anthology*, Ed. A. Alberro, B. Stimson, Cambridge-London 2000; G. Dziamski, *Sztuka u progu XXI wieku*, Poznań 2002; *Conceptual Art: Theory, Myth, and Practice*, Ed. M. Corris, New York 2004.

⁸ For example, the political division into capitalist and socialist countries, the countries of the Eastern and Western blocs, or the myth of a free America.



4. Zdzisław Jurkiewicz, *Painting, 1m² of Black*, 1991, acrylic on oilcloth, 100 x 200 cm, MWW/DTZSP/273/a. Photo: MWW

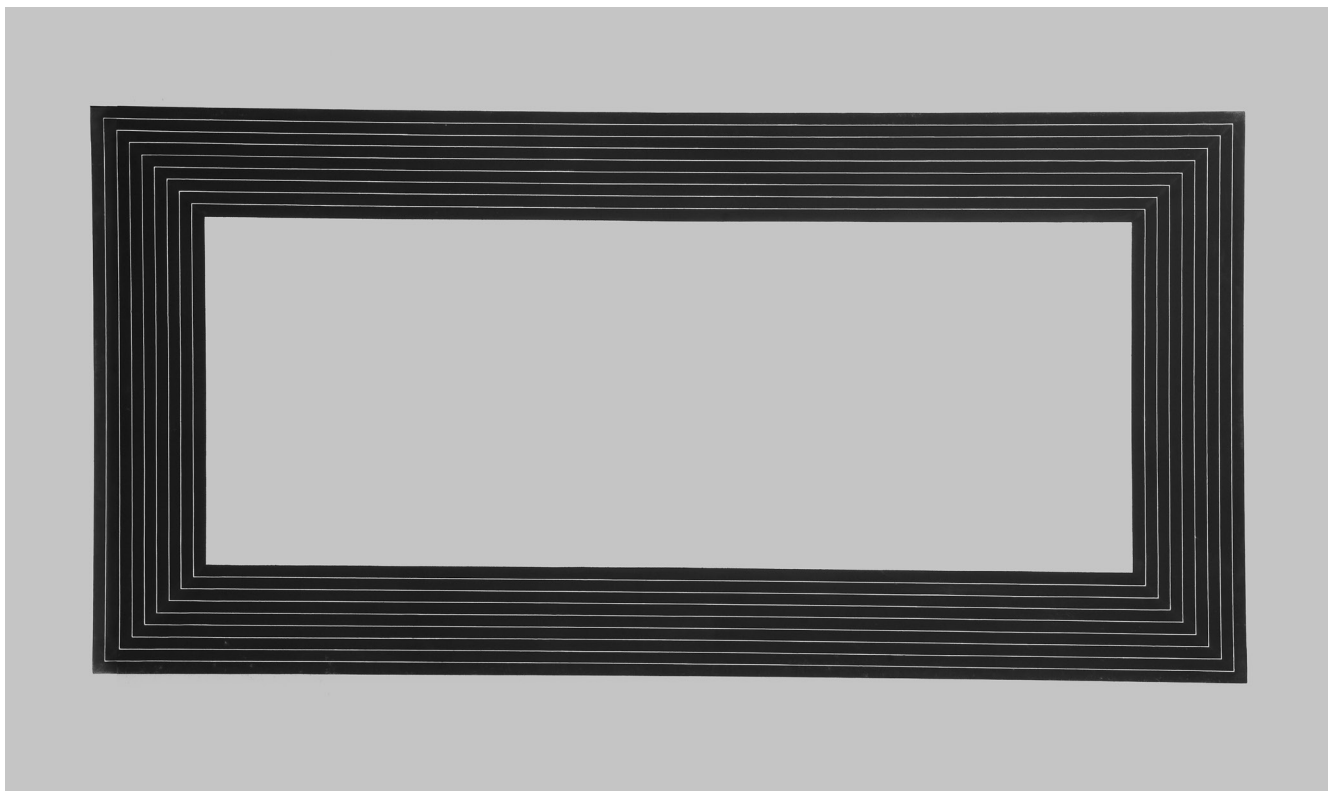


⁹ E. Husserl (*Cartesian Meditations: An Introduction to Phenomenology*, Transl. D. Cairns, 7th Ed., The Hague 1982, p. 57) applies the term “evidence” to describe the experience of the truth.

¹⁰ Z. Jurkiewicz, *27 Metres of Blue and Red*, 1976, acrylic on canvas, 100 × 159.6 × 2.5 cm; property of the Zachęta Lower Silesian Society for the Encouragement of Fine Arts, deposited at Wrocław Contemporary Museum, Inv. No. DTZSP/753.

end of World War II. Therefore, the approach to conceptualism as Jurkiewicz saw it must not be homogenous for us, researchers. Jurkiewicz’s attitude and work do not match the definition of conceptualism in which the object disappears in favour of a subjectivised idea. The structure of Jurkiewicz’s artistic reality seems much more complex. In it, there is room both for a real, tangible work of art and for an idea, neither of which can be made special or privileged. They are like the obverse and the reverse of one work of art, a unification of both these qualities, two sides of the proverbial coin. Jurkiewicz’s art appears as a two-component mixture of **ultra-realism** and **conceptualism**.

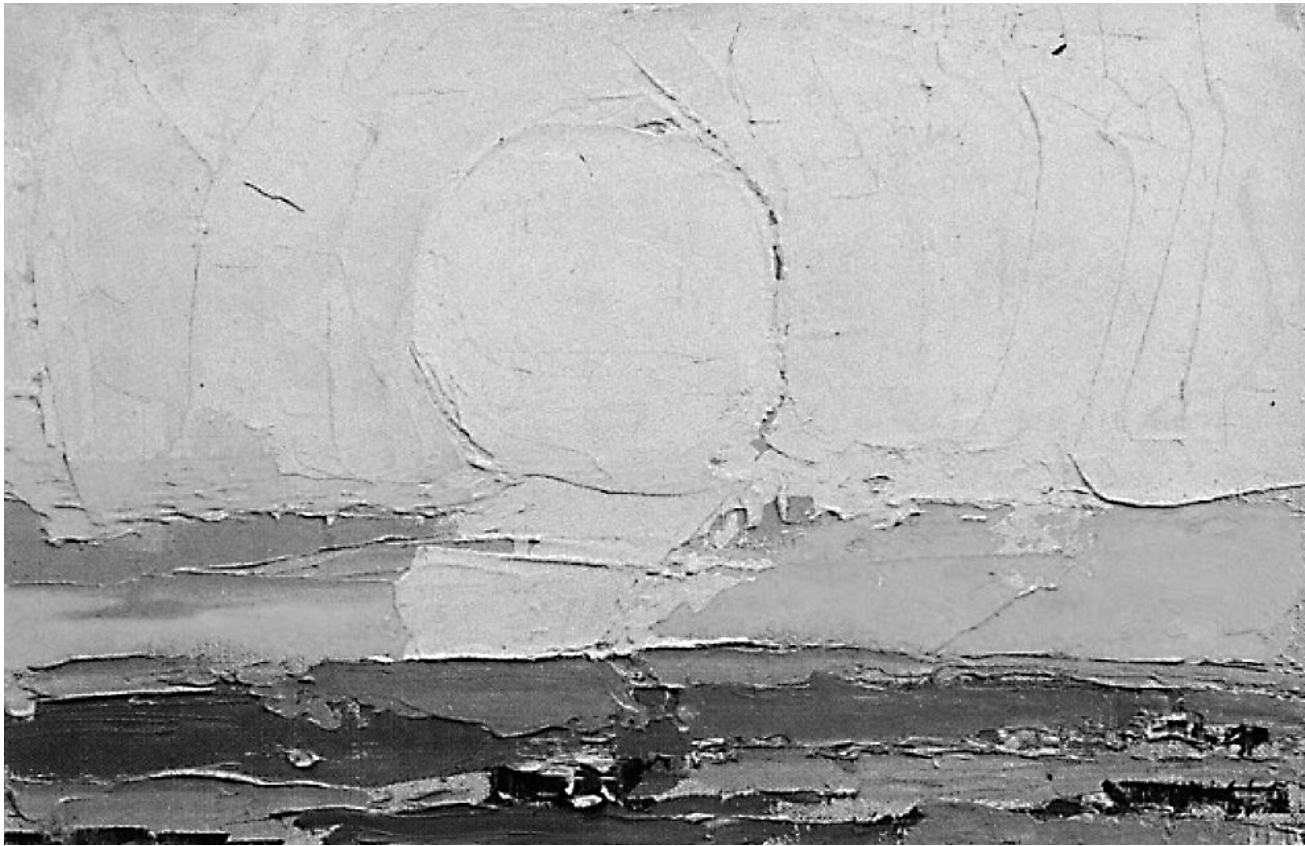
What is it about? We ought to distinguish between **noematic conceptualism** – which refers to the **content of thought**, and its processual counterbalance – **noetic conceptualism**, which pertains to the **act of thinking itself**. I am intentionally borrowing Edmund Husserl’s concepts of *noema* and *noesis*, for it is in his philosophy that I find what in Jurkiewicz’s work becomes the quintessential understanding art. Both men tend to identify the concept of true knowledge with the concept of evidence⁹. Jurkiewicz’s *27 Metres of Blue and Red* (1976)¹⁰ is in fact 27 m of a blue and red line. His *Painting, 1 m² of Black – Frame, 1 m² of Black* (1991) is exactly the same amount



5. Zdzisław Jurkiewicz, *Frame, 1m² of Black*, 1991, acrylic on oilcloth, 100 x 200 cm, MWW/DTZSP/273/b. Photo: MWW

of black paint used to outline a “painting” or “frame” that would fill in the flat surface of a $1 \times 1 \text{ m}^2$ on the same canvas¹¹. The noema is that square metre of black, the noesis – its mental transformation into a specific number of lines, creating an illusory representation of a frame or its interior – a picture. The thought about one square metre of black is identical to the $1 \times 1 \text{ m}$ black square physically existing on the canvas. The picture is what it represents, as I have tried to show above. The work has no “multiple meanings”, as Roland Barthes would put it. On the contrary, the picture is both reality and evidence at the same time. The latter is derived from the Latin *video*, which connotes the activity of seeing things / making things visible. It would be hard to imagine a relation more basic than one in which reality becomes evident, a thought becomes an idea and a material object at the same time. This is what Jurkiewicz managed to do. There was no room for randomness in his work, even his famous action at the Mona Lisa Gallery in 1967 was an evocation of a spontaneous – but intentional – flow of paint from a hole in a hollow block constructed by the artist. The result of the gesture was unpredictable, or predictable to a certain extent, but the gesture itself was intentional and carefully thought out. This action could be seen as

¹¹ Z. Jurkiewicz, *Painting, 1 m² of Black – Frame, 1 m² of Black*, 1991, acrylic on oilcloth, 100 x 200 cm (x 2); property of the Zachęta Lower Silesian Society for the Encouragement of Fine Arts, deposited at Wrocław Contemporary Museum, Inv. No. DTZSP/242/1-2.



6. Nicolas de Staël, *Le Soleil*, 1953, oil, canvas, 16 x 24 cm. Photo: J.-L. Losi



¹² I am quoting a fragment of Z. Jurkiewicz's letter to W. Borowski from 8 March 1999 (manuscript, property of the Zachęta Lower Silesian Society for the Encouragement of Fine Arts, deposited at Wrocław Contemporary Museum, Inv. No. DTZSP/A4), in which the sender, recalling André Breton's photograph, writes "I love him", thus confirming an extremely emotional attitude towards artists recognised by him as outstanding figures.

¹³ Nicolas de Staël (1914–1955) emigrated with his family to Poland as a 5-year-old boy. After the death of his father and stepmother in 1922, he was cared for by his family in Brussels, where he studied painting at the Académie Royale des Beaux-Arts. During 15 years of creative work, he painted over a 1000 paintings. He suffered from depression. He committed suicide in 1955, after receiving a negative review of an exhibition of his works.

¹⁴ The painter's father was General Vladimir Ivanovich, baron Staël von Holstein, who was nicknamed the White Baron, unlike the Reds who supported the Russian

a random event with an underestimated probability. We will understand it better if we refer to the category of cognitive bias rather than ignorance, intuition, or even some supernatural phenomena. Coincidences, which is what I am getting at, is a good word to describe both the aforementioned artefact-phenomenon and Jurkiewicz's entire life and oeuvre.

"De Staël. I love him!"¹²

Some discoveries are strange and extraordinary **non-coincidences**, such as the fact that Jurkiewicz's beloved painter Nicolas de Staël¹³ spent two years in Ostrów Wielkopolski as a 7–8-year-old boy – the same town where the Jurkiewicz family with the 5-year-old Zdzisław settled down 15 years after the father of the Russian-born suicide painter was buried there¹⁴. The painter whose work Jurkiewicz would come to love for the rest of his life arrived in his childhood town in 1920. Jurkiewicz would have undoubtedly found this quasi-mystical discovery important if only he had known about it during his



7. View of the exhibition “Nicolas de Staël en Provence”, Hôtel de Caumont, Aix en Provence, 2018. Photo: J.-L. Linetzky

lifetime... Today there is no trace of the tomb of General Vladimir Ivanovich Staël von Holstein at the Evangelical cemetery in Ostrów Wielkopolski, but the fact that 15 years after his funeral Jurkiewicz and his family ended up in the same place must appear astonishing in the context of Jurkiewicz’s reflections known from his notes.

Nicolas de Staël, often included among the so-called cursed painters due to his death by suicide, is known for his synthetic landscapes, full of passion and colour, as well as depictions of football players. Jurkiewicz found these landscapes painted with a thick layer of paint irresistible. He was fascinated by the uncomplicated compositions, their intensely vivid colours and “tectonic” impasto. The sea and the sun painted by the Russian painter, for example as seen from Antibes on the Cote d’Azur, seem to be so firmly and properly “sculpted” with paint as a substance that the painting is almost transformed into an object shimmering with a riot of colours. De Staël often contrasts expressive, bright hues with seemingly dirty, smeared patches of pure colours. The sophisticated combinations of intense colour coupled with tactilely and haptically perceived texture make these paintings emanate both light and some kind of tension, sewn



Revolution of 1917. He was a descendant of an important and influential family from Westphalia, living in the Baltic provinces of Russia. After the Bolsheviks came to power, he emigrated to Poland with his wife and four young children, including little Nicolas. In 1920–1921, the family lived in Ostrów Wielkopolski, where the future painter’s father was buried at the Evangelical cemetery. This information was established on the basis of research in the state archives of Poznań and Kalisz conducted by Maciej Kowalczyk, President of the Ostrów Genealogical Society. See P. Bojarski, *Biały Baron. Tajemnica kwatery numer 117*, „Gazeta Wyborcza Poznań”, 28 March 2011, <https://poznan-wyborcza.pl/poznan/7,36001,9330445,bialy-baron-tajemnica-kwatery-numer-117.html> (access date: 17.04.2023).



¹⁵ See B. Majewska, *Sztuka inna – sztuka ta sama. Dubuffet, de Staël, Wols, Pollock*, Warsaw 1974.

¹⁶ Z. Jurkiewicz devoted many statements to this painter, e.g. *De Staël, or on the Love of Painting*, lecture on 20 February 2002, “Na Odwachu” Gallery in Wrocław, typescript, property of the Zachęta Lower Silesian Society for the Encouragement of Fine Arts, deposited at Wrocław Contemporary Museum, Inv. No. DTZSP/A4.

¹⁷ *Zdzisław Jurkiewicz (1931–2012) – artysta...*, <https://youtu.be/-diKOkm2fwk?t=2519> (access date: 28.04.2021), 0:41:59.

¹⁸ *Object 19 XI 67. 21 × 48 h*, 1967, mixed media, 40 × 72 × 30 cm; property of the National Museum in Poznań.

¹⁹ *Zdzisław Jurkiewicz (1931–2012) – artysta...*, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-diKOkm2fwk&t=1240s> (access date: 28.04.2021), 0:20:40.

together very tightly and almost seamlessly¹⁵. Jurkiewicz was well aware of these features. The same is true of a series of paintings in which de Staël manages to capture the dynamically vibrating spots of colour and arrange them to depict figures chasing the ball. Jurkiewicz loved these paintings. He loved de Staël!¹⁶

He loved the colourfulness and “substantiality” of these painting, looking as though they were trying to burst the confines of the frame.

The artist and wisdom

“What awaits us at the end of knowledge?”, Jurkiewicz asked. “There are such horizons in mathematics that our intuition lacks”, he said¹⁷.

Jurkiewicz loved colour, knowledge and truth. He favoured blue and red, with which he experimented back in the 1960s. His tendency to juxtapose these two colours can be traced back to 1967¹⁸. In 1970, it evolved into the concept of *The Shape of Continuity*, although in his action at the Mona Lisa Gallery he still used the Mondrian colours – red, yellow, white and blue. Then Jurkiewicz begins to do paintings without a background! The whiteness of the canvas serves only to enliven the colour, it is not treated as a background in the traditional sense. The painting is meant as an object. It is a change not only in thinking about painting, but also in the approach to the increasing autonomy of art. Jurkiewicz borrows the orderly composition from Paul Klee, rejects Auguste Herbin’s “damned geometric figures”. carefully observes the landscapes by modernist Jan Stanisławski, respects Alfons Mazurkiewicz, the synthetic duoplasticist and a colleague of his, holds tradition in high esteem, but every now and then feels the spontaneous urge to splash paint with a large brush, like Pierre Soulage or Willem de Kooning. His great masters of fury, shooting black birds-missiles onto the canvas from left to right, people his beloved cosmos – a spinning world without a known and recognised source of the spin. On the other hand, Jurkiewicz feels the acute need for reduction, synthesis; he wants to know how to limit the endless array of colour, despite its splendour. Ultimately, he goes for hot, signal red – symbolising love, blood, lust, fight, energy, activity, alarm, and blue – a symbol of peace, ambience, the lapping of the waves, relief, silence. He considers other colours to be “random twittering”. He wants **concreteness** in painting. He pays little heed to the hysteria of adversaries or the munching of “the refined ones”¹⁹. Intellect and cognitive inquiries are far more important, this is what he strives after, fuelled by scientific discoveries.

He perceives his *Ultimate Paintings* as “the end” treating them as one continuous flow that triggers reflection on life, painting and the universe. This reflection turns out to be more important than painting. Jurkiewicz has more love for deliberations and paints than for

painting itself. He loves mathematics and the cosmos, but he treats them as sources of inspiration, just like painting. They are a means of creation, not an end in themselves! Jurkiewicz explores various fields of science, but he has no ambition to make art more scientific – all he wants is to broaden its limits. He keeps insisting that his ultimate goal lies in the domain of art! He looks for inspiration in exact sciences, but he maintains no pretence to be an expert in any field. Until the end of his life, he repeats that he “may have been” an artist.

Zdzisław Jurkiewicz was not necessarily a total artist. He was a wise artist! Humble yet confident, he clearly loved himself, in the positive sense of the word. Very self-aware and always ready to take full responsibility for his actions and words, Jurkiewicz loved himself and other people. And he happened to go through life with something special – sensitivity and passion!

When I say Jurkiewicz, I think: Jorge Luis Borges' labyrinths and mirrors, André Breton's navigation of the mind, passion, enthusiasm, colour, life, explosion, clarity, precision, power, poetry, focus, wit, astronomy, entropy, anthropophallus, I love him!, perfect square, art!, the sweet life of mice in Borghesian labyrinths, spontaneity measured in centimetres, Maria, Alina, the blue bird and Koji Kamoji, Biennale in Venice and Documenta in Kassel, Fujitsu Siemens, a little piece of paper in his back pocket...

To commune with Jurkiewicz's art is to keep discovering his ardent thought, even if the visual effect of the works seems to exude the coolness of minimalism. Looking is the first step against indifference – towards the universe, but above all towards ourselves.

The work of Zdzisław Jurkiewicz undoubtedly brings us closer.

To each other.

To walk this path.

This is wisdom.

Słowa kluczowe

polska sztuka współczesna, konceptualizm, minimalizm, sztuka konkretna, Zdzisław Jurkiewicz, galeria Pod Moną Lisą, Nicolas de Staël, kształt ciągłości, obraz, rama, intuicja, intelekt

Keywords

Polish contemporary art, conceptualism, minimalism, concrete art, Zdzisław Jurkiewicz, Mona Lisa Gallery, Nicolas de Staël, the shape of continuity, painting, frame, intuition, intellect

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Summary

SYLWIA SWISŁOCKA-KARWOT (University of Wrocław) / "I wanted to win!". Art is thinking. Jurkiewicz's not-yet-conceptualism?

The article is devoted to the process of intellectualization and conceptualization of art of the 1960s and 1970s in Poland from the perspective of cognitive science. The subject of the study is the case of one of the most colourful figures of the Polish neo-avant-garde – Zdzisław Jurkiewicz, associated with Wrocław; an extraordinary artist combining features of a strongly emotional personality with a distanced and, in effect, almost speculative art. In the text, I reflect on the definitional heteronomies of the term "conceptualism", relating them to the first gestures attributed to it in the history of art by Seth Siegelaub in his New York gallery, and juxtapose this understanding with the way of thinking of an uncompromising conceptualist, the creator of his own idea of continuity in art. Breaking the paradigmatic understanding of mimeticism in favour of an extremely rational postulate that was an American variant of European concrete art: "What you see is what you see", became the overriding guideline of Jurkiewicz's "calculated" artistic pursuits – painting and drawing. In the article I put forward the thesis that they resulted in a binary mixture of ultra-realism and conceptualism, in which the orthodox understanding of the primacy of the idea did not depreciate the work – the object. The article also reveals the results of research into the genesis of the inspiration immortalized in Jurkiewicz's archive by artists such as Nicolas de Staël, Paul Klee, Auguste Herbin, Pierre Soulages, Willem de Kooning, Alphonse Mazurkiewicz and Jan Stanisławski, but also by writers and poets like Jorge Luis Borges and André Breton. The fascination with environmental art and American land art, the transgression of the topography of the so-called place of art, the expansion of the territory to include thought, but also the cosmos – observed through telescopes constructed by Jurkiewicz himself – became a milestone of the most radical, and at the same time most significantly developing perspective, processes taking place in the area of art in the second half of the 20th century. Well-known in Europe and the U.S., Zdzisław Jurkiewicz's unique work, attitude and concepts undoubtedly had a significant impact on the area.