

BECOME A CONSCIOUS ORGAN-DONOR: A SOCIO-ARTISTIC ACTION ON BEHALF OF THE NEW POST-HUMANIST WORLD

In response to developments in legislation in Poland regarding organ-transplantation, in the year 2000 the artist Jacek Kornacki and the surgeon Maciej Śmietański initiated the socio-artistic action Become a Conscious Organ-Donor. The symbol of the action was the familiar 'infinity' sign, the right-hand branch of which assumed the form of a heart in the manner of a ribbon. The authors of the action proposed that those wishing to donate their organs posthumously should have a tattoo of this symbol made upon their own body, as a gesture conveying their conscious decision regarding the utilisation of their organs after their death. The use of tattoos makes reference to the culture of body-decoration, which goes back thousands of years in human history. The action had two expressive aspects. The first of these was as an artistic debate on the meaning of sharing the body after death, in the face of Post-Humanistic values, as an offering or a gift of life. The second was to publicise the ideals of organ-transplantation and to increase awareness of organ-donation within society. The response to the action was considerable and wide-ranging, both in the media and in society. It is estimated that up to twenty-thousand individuals had the symbol of the action tattooed upon their bodies. In the media and in academic circles the action initiated debate on the subject of awareness of the human processes of healing and death, leading to discussion of the biological equilibrium of the works, and of how life and humanity should be defined. The symbol and the significance of the action have survived the twentieth anniversary of their birth, and both are still alive in the awareness of various social movements concerned with organ-donation. This article presents the thinking that formed the basis of this action, and photographic documentation of its commencement. It is also an attempt at summarising the meaning of the action in the context of transformations in social philosophy in the last few decades, thereby redefining the significance of the action in the context of current social awareness.

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