VARIA
doi:10.32020/ArtandDoc/32/2025/15

SUMMARY

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GRZEGORZ SZTABIŃSKI: THREE CONCEPTS AND A FRAME

In his book *Other Avant-Garde Ideas* (Warsaw: Neriton, 2011), Grzegorz Sztabiński (1946-2020) pointed to three categories that unite the avant-garde: Community, Freedom, and Authority. These constitute yet another proposal for defining the phenomenon of the avant-garde. Since the author is a philosopher and aesthetician, his approach to this issue is of the meta type, and therefore the categories listed are the most general possible and include all the other features of the avant-garde indicated thus far. Each of them is presented by him in a historical perspective, and the history of each concept dating back to Antiquity is discussed, which means from the perspective of the entire Western history of thought on art. The avant-garde is their last incarnation in artistic practice.

The primary category linking the three listed above is the concept of the artist. We can therefore call his attitude Duchampian. The definition of the artist is crucial to the changes in the definition of art made by Duchamp. And thus, later to conceptual art, as well. According to his manifesto *Creative Act*, it is this 'creative act' that provides the 'art factor' to works, even if they were ready-made objects.

Another Polish avant-garde researcher, Mieczysław Porębski, distinguished the following categories of avant-garde:

1 - belligerence (style of action)
2 - uncompromisingness (missionary)
3 - elitism
4 - distance towards modernity
5 - reevaluation of tradition (distance = idealism)
6 - polycentrism
7 - interdisciplinarism
8 - programmatic
9 - spirit of revolt (socio-political)
10 – utopia

(Mieczysław Porębski, *Art and Information*, Kraków: WL, 1986, chapter "Traditions and Avant-Gardes," XII, XIII).

Porębski's features fit into Sztabiński's categories, although they have varying degrees of influence on the formation of a given category. This results from differences in methodological approaches. Porębski took artworks as a starting point, while Sztabiński took the manifestos or the theoretical meta-assumptions of the avant-garde as a starting point. As a result, the conclusions of these two analyses of the avant-garde complement each other: within each of Sztabiński's meta-features, analyses of works can be conducted based on a set of features distinguished by Porębski. Moreover, such a methodological construction is universal and allows for the study of phenomena in the history of the art of different eras, not only of avant-garde or post-/neo-avant-garde art. The conclusion is that we have too hastily rejected the avant-garde as a functional model of art. In order to describe contemporary postmodernist narratives, we need to use categories such as the turn towards socio-political relations, radicalism in artistic stances, and innovative formal solutions.

Sztabiński is also an art practitioner. Formal and stylistic analysis of Sztabiński's works allows us to distinguish the motif of the frame, which recurs in his work, through various approaches. An example is the artist's works shown at the solo exhibition *From a Different Perspective* (2024) in Słubice. The starting point for the analyses are these "other avant-garde ideas" which I connect with the artistic features of his works. The use of the form of the frame – in the absence of image-representation – is extensive in Sztabiński's works. In extreme realizations, the frame plays the role of an independent work, it is even painted white, like a canvas support. Most often, the frame motif is presented as sections, pieces or strips, attached to the image, or placed in front of it, and together they create a picture-object. A variant of the frame is the edge, the edge of the image in the case of an open composition, performs similar functions to the frame – it isolates the image in the surrounding space, and at the same time, suggests the continuity of space as a real space, of which the image is a part.

The issue of the frame (*passe-partout*) leads us to move us away from considering the image as a representation, and directs us towards relations in real space, which identify art with social practices, directly related to life, which was also the avant-garde's most extreme stance (represented by Peter Bürger and his *Theory of the Avant-Garde*).