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## DISPERSION OF A WORK OF ART – ADAM MARCZYŃSKI, TADEUSZ KANTOR, KAROL BRONIATOWSKI

**Abstract:** The article is an analysis of selected works of art of Polish artists of the 1970s: compositions by Adam Marczyński from the *Variable series* (the second half of the 1960s and 1970s), the *Multipart* action by Tadeusz Kantor (1970) and figures by Karol Broniatowski (from the *Threat* and *Big Man series*, 1976-1977), in which the title dispersion is understood as a consequence of the disintegration of the prototype by initiating a further journey of its already emancipated components. The *material turn* perspective was also referred to in the analysis: Bruno Latour's non-anthropocentric Actor-Network Theory (ANT), according to which it can be assumed that a work of art and its creator constitute a certain social network within which all “actors” function on equal terms in the community of “humans and non-humans”, as well as the anthropological theory of art by Alfred Gell, who proposed replacing the study of the object of art as a carrier of symbolic meanings with the study of a work of art as an object in a network of relations, trying to answer questions about the motives and contexts of action of social “makers” (artists) and their production of “indexes” (works of art). In the study, the act of the initial ordering of the system in a work of art and its subsequent disintegration – dispersion – is assessed from the perspective of the concept of entropy, derived from the field of physics, which is a measure of the degree of disorder in a given system – and its opposite, negentropy.

**Keywords:** dispersion in art, entropy, *material turn*, the Actor-Network Theory, Alfred Gell's Art and Agency, Adam Marczyński, Tadeusz Kantor, Karol Broniatowski, Polish art of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

### Introduction

With regard to the aspect proposed in the subject area of the volume, the title dispersion of a work of art is understood as a consequence of prototype

disintegration by initiating a further journey of its already emancipated elements. With reference to the non-anthropocentric Actor-Network Theory (ANT) by Bruno Latour, it can be concluded that a work of art and its creator constitute a particular social network within which all its “actors” function on equal terms in the community of “humans and non-humans” as creators of the surrounding world.<sup>1</sup> As for the concept of emphasising the essence of art as a system of human activities within which works of art-objects mediate in the process of the artist’s “extension” as a person, it was proposed by Alfred Gell, who replaced the study of an object of art as a carrier of symbolic meanings with the study of a work of art as an object in a network of relations.<sup>2</sup>

The two abovementioned perspectives (by Latour and Gell, especially the former one<sup>3</sup>) fit into the *material turn* or *turn towards things* – a trend present in the humanities since the late 1990s, and yet they seem to have significant potential when considering selected works of Polish artists created in the 1960s and 1970s, and thus before the theoretical frameworks of those research tools crystallized. In the paper, the subjects of analyses are: compositions from the *Variable* series by Adam Marczyński (the second half of the 1960s and 1970s), *Multipart* action by Tadeusz Kantor (1970) and figures by Karol Broniatowski (characters made from newspapers, from the *Threat* and *Big Man* series, 1976-1977). From the perspective of their presence in the network of changing relations, it can be assumed that individual elements of each of those works of art are setting out on a “journey”, become “makers”, “extensions” of the hand and will of the artist, who, however, no longer has any significant influence on the further course of events.

In the study, the act of initial ordering of a system in a work of art, and its disintegration and dispersion afterwards, is also assessed from the perspective of the concept of entropy, which originates in the field of physics. Here, the term is understood as a function of the state of affairs that determines the direction of the course of spontaneous processes in a certain isolated system and is a measure of the degree of disorder in that system.<sup>4</sup> The proposed research perspectives allow redefining the assessed artistic potential of the compositions

<sup>1</sup> Cf. B. Latour, *Reassembling the Social. An Introduction to Actor-Network Theory*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, NY 2005.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. A. Gell, *Art and Agency. An Anthropological Theory*, Clarendon Oxford, Oxford 1998.

<sup>3</sup> Including Alfred Gell’s theses in the “turn towards things” is considered oversimplified by A. Kawalec, *Sztuka sprawstwa. Antropologiczny wymiar działania/oddziaływania artystycznego*, “Przegląd Filozoficzny. Nowa Seria”, vol. 25, 2016, no. 2 (98), p. 109. In the article, the author analyses the theory of art as agency by A. Gell and its potential in developing the anthropology of the performing arts.

<sup>4</sup> G.F.W. Drake, *Entropy (physics)*, [in:] *Britannica* [online], <https://www.britannica.com/science/entropy-physics>, accessed: 3 February 2022.

by Marczyński, Kantor and Broniatowski, which, until now, have been analysed mainly through the prism of conceptualism.<sup>5</sup>

### *Material turn*

The *material turn*, or *turn towards things*, is an intellectual trend that emerged primarily in the Anglo-American humanities in the late 1990s, at the time of increased criticism of anthropocentrism, and it is more and more often represented in the reflections of researchers in various fields.<sup>6</sup> That type of a posthumanist approach was based on the desire to decentralise human agency and the will to investigate the process of formation of meaning in communities, also including non-human beings. The concept of the “turn towards things” was supposed to be a response to textual and narrative tendencies, and it emphasised the active role of objects as creators of social life.<sup>7</sup> Things – man-made objects<sup>8</sup> – have existed in culture and its surroundings from the very beginning and have co-created human identity. They have been passed over on to successive generations as an element of a material culture which keeps changing and becomes more and more complex – just like the objects that create it.

<sup>5</sup> E.g., G. Dziamski, *Dokumentowanie sztuki jako nowa praktyka artystyczna*, “Sztuka i Dokumentacja”, 2012, no. 6, pp. 21-27; M. Howorus-Czajka, *Adam Marczyński – artysta “poszerzający pole”*, “Quart. Kwartalnik Instytutu Historii Sztuki Uniwersytetu Wrocławskiego” 2016, no. 4 (42), pp. 16-23; E. Mikina, [sine titulo in:] *Karol Broniatowski. Prace z lat 1970-79*, [ex. cat.], Museum of Art in Łódź, 30 October – 2 December 1979, Łódź 1979; I. Szmelter, *Fenomeny społecznej roli sztuki a demokratyzacja. Od zarania kultury do sztuki Kantora i Abakanowicz. Percepcja, ochrona i zachowanie*, “Sztuka i Dokumentacja” 2017, no. 16, pp. 54-56.

<sup>6</sup> Vide i.e. C. Gosden, Y. Marshall, *The cultural biography of objects*, “World Archaeology” 1999, vol. 31, no. 2, pp. 169-178; B. Brown, ed., *Things*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago 2004; J.L. Roberts, *Things: Material Turn, Transnational Turn*, “American Art” 2017, vol. 31, no. 2, pp. 64-69. One of the current trends in the development of interest in the subject is focusing on ecology and the transition from understanding objects as man-made products towards environmental and artistic issues, e.g., the issue of *community resilience*, and the study of the ability of various forms of existence (human and non-human, organic and non-organic) to build a habitat that adapts to changing conditions (Cf. L. Donkers, *Deploying collaborative artistic co-creative methods to strategically promote eco-social regeneration for small island communities*, vol. 2, submitted to the University of Dundee for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, March 2020, <https://discovery.dundee.ac.uk/en/studentTheses/deploying-collaborative-artistic-co-creative-methods-to-strategic>, accessed: 11 May 2022), or arts of noticing (A.L. Tsing, *Unruly Edges: Mushrooms as Companion Species. For Donna Haraway*, “Environmental Humanities”, vol. 1, 2012, pp. 141-154).

<sup>7</sup> Cf. E. Domańska, *O zwrocie ku rzeczom we współczesnej humanistyce (Ku historii nieantropocentrycznej)*, “Roczniki Dziejów Społecznych i Gospodarczych”, 2005, vol. 65, p. 10.

<sup>8</sup> In her work *O zwrocie ku rzeczom...*, p. 10, E. Domańska writes about problems with the definition. Following the researcher from Poznań, with regard to the context under study, I assume a simple qualification of things as inanimate material objects created by man. Ibid.

Their active participation in shaping modern and postmodern societies has revealed something that can be called the “life” of objects. That kind of “life” is noticeable – in a social sense – when things can influence, support or prevent certain phenomena and actions; when they become equal partners in daily activities.<sup>9</sup> People have become accustomed to treating objects “objectively”, primarily because they are man-made, which automatically indicates their total subordination to man. Researchers who support the idea of the *material turn* have emphasised the importance of objects. Some reasons for the change in the attitude of man towards objects are listed by the archaeologists Chris Gosden and Yvonne Marshall in the article *The cultural biography of objects*.<sup>10</sup> The authors have noticed that objects are inseparable elements of human actions and are much more than just a “background”, a set design of minor importance, and have added: “The central idea is that, as people and objects gather time, movement and change, they are constantly transformed, and these transformations of person and object are tied up with each other”.<sup>11</sup>

Igor Kopytoff, in his work entitled *The cultural biography of things: commoditisation as process*, uses the concept of biography in relation to objects and asks the question – how does the use of objects change as they age and what happens when they become useless? The author argues that biographies of objects can help bring to light what would otherwise remain hidden. Objects – like human beings – may have many partial biographies: economic, technical or social ones, and those may or may not be culturally influenced. A biography acquires its cultural dimension due to “not what it deals with but how and from what perspective”.<sup>12</sup>

With regard to a work of art, the situation seems a bit different as it is not an ordinary object but it has been marked by the actions of its creator – an artist. Actions were slightly different in each of the cases under study. The common reference here, however, is the multi-element structure of the work of art and the conscious idea of dispersing its individual elements, free to create their unique biographies in new places. It also provides grounds for reflection on the issue of entropy and the opposite phenomenon of negentropy, which take place in those systems literally or metaphorically.

<sup>9</sup> M. Krajewski, *Style życia przedmiotów. Zarys koncepcji*, [in:] *Style życia, wartości, obyczaje. Stare tematy, nowe spojrzenia*, A. Jawłowska, W. Pawlik, B. Fatyga, eds, Wydawnictwa Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego, Warszawa 2012, p. 49.

<sup>10</sup> C. Gosden, Y. Marshall, *The cultural biography...*, pp. 169-178.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 169.

<sup>12</sup> I. Kopytoff, *The cultural biography of things*, [in:] *The social life of things. Commodities in cultural perspective*, A. Appadurai, ed., Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1986, p. 68.

### Entropy versus negentropy

To be able to consider the issue of dispersion in art more thoroughly, it is necessary to briefly analyse the phenomenon of entropy. The irreversible transition between order and disorder is one of the key concepts in entropy. There are many works of art that deal with transitions between ordered and disordered structures. Robert Smithson got fascinated with the idea of entropy already in the 1960s and, initially, he understood the concept in a rather scientific way. He recognised its presence as a force causing the modern universe to disperse. He tried to find entropy in contemporary works of minimalism, which he expressed in the essay entitled *The new Monuments and Entropy*.<sup>13</sup> He considered entropy unconditionally “irreversible” but, at the same time, he claimed that it naturally achieves gradual equilibrium. In his view on entropy, time, which is not an illusory abstraction but a material reality, is of key importance.<sup>14</sup> The development of entropy as a feature of the universe is natural, and its opposite – in the form of negative entropy (negentropy), i.e., the tendency to put things in order – occurs in a unique way on Earth, where life processes are animated by solar energy.<sup>15</sup> In the context of avant-garde art and in an attempt to penetrate the seemingly contradictory evolutionary and devolutionary nature of posthumanism, Jacob Wamberg reflects on the concept of entropy and dynamically evolving negentropy. “The interweaving of negentropy and entropy can be understood as a peak situation in an expanded posthumanist context, in which negentropic creation is performed in collective systems with more diffused levels of complexity and less organised spaces, including the entropic decay of prior negentropy”.<sup>16</sup>

Broadly speaking, entropy can be seen as a metaphor for chaos, disorder. Rudolf Arnheim, in *Entropy and Art*, notices the key role that order plays in

<sup>13</sup> R. Smithson, *Entropy and the new Monuments*, “Art Forum” 1966 (June), vol. 4, no. 10, pp. 26-31. Entropy is one of the important concepts in Smithson’s notes on minimalism from 1968, *Minus Twelve*: “2. Entropy A. Equal units approaching divisibility. B. Something inconsistent with common experience or having contradictory qualities. C. Hollow blocks in a windowless room. D. Militant laziness.”; *Robert Smithson: the collected writings*, J. Flam, ed., University of California Press, Berkeley-Los Angeles-London 1996, p. 114.

<sup>14</sup> Cf.: J. Flam, *Introduction: Reading Robert Smithson*, [in:] *Robert Smithson...*, p. XIX.

<sup>15</sup> As pointed out in a somewhat ironic way by Stuart Kauffman, *At Home in the Universe. The Search for the Laws of Self-Organization and Complexity*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 1995, p. 10.

<sup>16</sup> J. Wamberg, *Jak sztuka stała się posthumanistyczna. Rozszerzenie koncepcji historiografii*, “Szum”, 10.07.2020, <https://magazynszum.pl/jak-sztuka-stala-sie-posthumanistyczna-rozszerzenie-koncepcji-historiografii/>, (accessed: 7 May 2022); the article originally published in: *Living in the present future*, [ex. cat.], Bornholms Kunstmuseum, 6 October 2019 – 5 January 2020, the National Museum in Szczecin, 23 January 2020 - 3 May 2020, [Gudhjem] – Szczecin 2019.

human perception of the surrounding world. Regarding the issue under assessment, i.e., the perception of the “network of relations” of individual elements of the work of art to a certain original whole, the observation of the above-mentioned author seems interesting: “Since outer order so often represents inner or functional order, orderly form must not be evaluated by itself, that is, apart from its relation to the organisation it signifies. The form may be quite orderly and yet misleading, because its structure does not correspond to the order it stands for”.<sup>17</sup> The complexity of his considerations reveals the conclusion that the correlation between “orderliness and complexity” is a necessary but “not a sufficient condition of aesthetic measure”, as it had already been mentioned by George D. Birkhoff.<sup>18</sup>

The entropic aspect of randomness and uncertainty can also be found in the works of Polish artists referred to in the article. Here, entropy is introduced through a conscious loss of control over the entire work of art which, initially, along with its creator, constitutes a sort of an “isolated system”. The initial ordering of the system by the artist can be seen as an action emphasising resistance towards entropy – negentropy, studied by Erwin Schrödinger in the field of biology.<sup>19</sup> So, is the idea of dispersion, which is inseparable from the process of creating a work of art, an action that promotes entropy?

The selected works of the three Polish artists, in a different and unique way, bring up the idea of the work's independence from the artist – according to the concept of *material turn*, and in the face of the achieved independence, they disperse according to the principle of entropy.

### Adam Marczyński – dispersion through participation

In the early 1960s, Adam Marczyński (1908-1985) introduced movable elements, such as geometric coffers with movable flaps,<sup>20</sup> to his abstract *Compositions of the variable elements*. The idea was to introduce “participation” into his art.<sup>21</sup> Initially, a visitor to the exhibition could open or close the flaps and

<sup>17</sup> R. Arnheim, *Entropy and Art. An Essay on Disorder and Order*, University of California Press, Berkeley-Los Angeles-London 1971, p. 2.

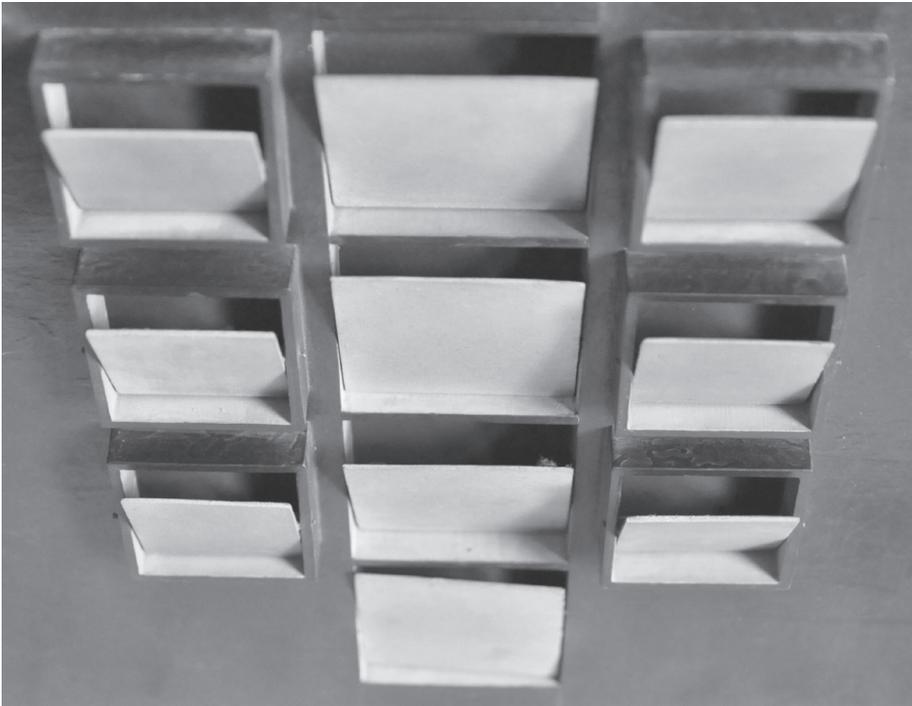
<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 51. Cf.: G.D. Birkhoff, *Aesthetic measure*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge 1933.

<sup>19</sup> E. Schrödinger, *What is life?*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1944.

<sup>20</sup> On the morphology of post-war works by Marczyński, see. e.g. B. Kowalska, [sine titulo in:] *Adam Marczyński 1908-1985*, [ex. cat.], March – April 1985 Kraków, September – October 1985 Łódź, BWA Kraków, Kraków 1985.

<sup>21</sup> In the literature on the subject, there are a lot of publications on the topic of participation in art. Apart from the canonical monograph by C. Bishop, *Artificial Hells. Participatory Art and the Politics of Spectatorship*, Verso, London-New York 2012, taking into account recent publications, it is worth pointing out the volume of “Art Inquiry. Recherches sur les arts”, vol. 20 (29), *Participation in Art*, 2018.

reveal their painted interior. In the subsequent *Variable reflections*, it was not possible to see the whole interior of the coffers in the form of wooden boxes, as their elements had limited mobility: placement of the flaps on the central axis allowed one to open them only in two opposite directions (Fig. 1).



1. Adam Marczyński, *Refleksy zmienne (Variable Reflections)*, 1967, 50 x 41 cm, private collection, phot. by E. Błotnicka-Mazur, courtesy of the owner

The introduction of movable flaps by the artist and the conscious involvement of the visitor in the process of creating a piece of art<sup>22</sup> is an encouragement to analyse the work of art in the context of entropy and negentropy. The initial ordering of the entire layout by arranging the coffers in geometric rows is disrupted by uncontrolled interference of the visitor/recipient. The mobility of the flaps enables free – not to say chaotic – non-algorithmic creation of new arrangements, conditioned only by the accessibility of the composition to the

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<sup>22</sup> I take up the topic of participatory aspects of Marczyński's works of art in the monograph on the artist that I am currently working on.

visitor. The “variable” factor that plays an equal role here is light, the presence or absence of which influences the perception of the painted interiors or sides of the coffers, and thus the changing appearance of the work of art.<sup>23</sup>

In a work of art by Marczyński, the artist himself, the piece of art and the visitor create a dynamic network of relations described as a “nexus”<sup>24</sup> by Alfred Gell in his posthumously published work. Other terms used in that work for the first time were, e.g.: “agent”, “index” (an artefact or action) and “patient/index recipient”. As Anna Kawalec points out, in the structure of a nexus, there is always a relationship between two parties: one of them is the creator (artist) along with an index (work of art), and the other one is the “recipient”. It is a one-way relationship.<sup>25</sup> In the case of the analysed compositions by Marczyński, who assumes active participation of the visitor, it is a two-way movement.

A special relationship in that complex network of the social world takes place between individual “agents” in *Interventions*, which Marczyński presented at the 8<sup>th</sup> Meeting of Artists and Theoreticians in Osieki, in 1970. At that time, he presented his *Variable reflections* in the form of single, square, red and silver coffers placed on tree trunks and branches in the natural scenery of a forest (Fig. 2, 3).<sup>26</sup> The works of art created by the artist were alien to nature. The author was aware of that fact, so he called the action *Intervention*. However, placing the boxes freely, in a way that they imitated natural plant growths or hollows, allowed them to blend into the natural surroundings and become almost an integral part of it. Therefore, that action can be considered as an attempt to overcome the culture-nature opposition, analysed on various levels of thought.

The next stage of their existence was handing out individual coffers to the participants of the open-air exhibition after the end of the action. “Those fifteen elements - as Marczyński wrote - exist as a functioning whole and change its relations in space, while the structure undergoes natural changes over time”.<sup>27</sup> To the undoubtedly conceptual effects of the above-mentioned action, I would add the importance of dispersion in the context of the creation of a new network of relations of “agents” in new individual spaces, as a sign of progressing uninhibited entropy of the original system.

<sup>23</sup> The fact of the use of the term „variable” in the title of the series is pointed out by M. Howorus-Czajka, *Adam Marczyński - artysta „poszerzający pole”*, pp. 12-13.

<sup>24</sup> A. Gell, *Art and Agency...*

<sup>25</sup> A. Kawalec, *Sztuka sprawstwa...*, pp. 108-109.

<sup>26</sup> Preserved photographic documentation, e.g. at Bunkier Sztuki - Gallery of Contemporary Art in Kraków, is mostly black and white. Colour reproductions can be found in the article by B. Kowalska, *Adam Marczyński 1908-1985*, “Projekt” 1985, no. 3, p. 6.

<sup>27</sup> Quote from: *ibid.*, p. 4.



2. Adam Marczyński, *Interwencje (Interventions)*, 1970, phot. courtesy of Muzeum w Koszalinie



3. Adam Marczyński, *Interwencje (Interventions)*, 1970, phot. courtesy of Muzeum w Koszalinie

### Tadeusz Kantor – dispersal and (un)successful come back to the gallery

In the works of Tadeusz Kantor (1915-1990) – a “total” artist, painter and man of theatre<sup>28</sup> – objects played a key role.<sup>29</sup> Latour's *agency* of both parties – humans (actors) and non-humans (objects “of the lowest rank” – as the artist called them, taking care of their ennoblement<sup>30</sup>) – is implemented in the specific network of Kantor's performance. The life of an object saved from total destruction is prolonged and acquires a new biography through a change in its function and mechanisms of action, which takes place thanks to an artist.

A special example of multi-element art, in which the leitmotif is one of Kantor's favourite objects – an umbrella, is the *Multipart* action (1970-1971). The artist commissioned the painting of pictures which he called *Parapluie – emballages*: forty identical numbered canvases, with the dimensions of 110x120 cm, painted white, to which damaged umbrellas – also white ones – were attached (Fig. 4). The *Multipart* project (the name comes from a combination of two words: multiplication and participation) consisted of two main exhibitions. During the first one, presented in the Foksal Gallery on 21 February 1970, visitors were able to buy one of the above-mentioned pieces of art for not a very high price. In accordance with the author's intention and conditions set out in a written contract, the buyer was allowed to do whatever he/she wanted with the purchased piece of art: “write insults on it, words of appreciation, expressions of sympathy, the worst possible words (...) erase, cross out, draw (...) perforate, burn (...) sell, buy back, speculate, steal”.<sup>31</sup> The only obligation of the new owner was to agree for the work to be presented during the second exhibition, one year later. In fact, the second exhibition was opened on 20 February 1971 and it was entitled *The Last Stage of Tadeusz Kantor's Multipart*, and only 25 pieces of art were presented (Fig. 5). The other works had been destroyed or sold, and some buyers simply did not respond to the request of the organisers.

<sup>28</sup> In the literature on the subject, there are a lot of publications on the issue of changing concepts implemented by Kantor in his theatre (e.g. M. Kobińska, *Further on, Nothing. Tadeusz Kantor's Theatre*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis-London 2009; K. Fazan, A. Burzyńska, M. Bryś, eds, *Tadeusz Kantor Today. Metamorphoses of Death, Memory and Presence*, Peter Lang Edition, Frankfurt am Main 2014, while the Centre for Documentation of Tadeusz Kantor's Art CRICOTEKA, established in 1980, deals with the legacy of the artist and the popularisation of his work.

<sup>29</sup> I take up the subject of the theatre and Kantor's assemblages, from the perspective of the “turn towards things”, in *Rethinking Polish Assemblages of the 1960s: the (Re)turn to Things*, “Roczniki Humanistyczne” 2018, vol. 66, issue 4, pp. 131-150.

<sup>30</sup> The concept of “poor objects” in Kantor's art, from the perspective of non-anthropocentric humanities, was analysed by, among others: E. Domańska, *Humanistyka nie-anthropocentryczna a studia nad rzeczami*, “Kultura Współczesna” 2008, no. 3, pp. 19-20.

<sup>31</sup> T. Kantor, *Metamorfozy. Teksty o latach 1938-1974*, ed. K. Pleśniarowicz, Księgarnia Akademicka, Kraków 2000, pp. 508-509.



4. *Multipart*, the action of Tadeusz Kantor in Foksal Gallery, 21 February 1970, phot. by Jacek Maria Stokłosa, courtesy of the Author



5. *Ostatni etap Multipartu Tadeusza Kantora* (eng. *The last stage of Tadeusz Kantor's Multipart*), opening of an exhibition in Foksal Gallery, 20 February 1971, phot. by Jacek Maria Stokłosa, courtesy of the Author

In the *Multipart* action, images – objects played the main “roles” which were not fully “directed” by the artist. *Parapluie – emballages* were created according to Kantor's instructions but were not the work of his hands. A departure from the personal creation of works is usually seen as an act of questioning the concept of a work of art, traditionally associated with the value of uniqueness resulting from a personal creative action of an artist. By multiplying his works of art, the artist denied their uniqueness twice: through the gesture of sale, and thus the unexpected dispersion of individual paintings outside the walls of the gallery where they had been displayed. Eventually, the action led to an unexpected ending: each of the forty works of art – almost identical at the outset – became unique. The destructive effect of time, foreseen and expected by the author, as well as encouraging the new owners to give the paintings an individual look, gave rise to forty individual biographies closely related to the identity of the buyer. Forty new stories were created about the fate of the umbrella emballages, still continuing.<sup>32</sup>

### Karol Broniatowski – the decay of a figure

From the very beginning, the starting point of the original sculptural activities of Karol Broniatowski (born in 1945) was a human figure in its changeable relation to space. While writing about multiplied figures made from newspapers by Broniatowski, Magdalena Howorus-Czajka focuses her attention on their arrangement into sets, anxiety-causing rows of walking or circles of running anonymous figures, described by the author as “enslaved figures”, e.g. from the *Threat* series, 1969-1972.<sup>33</sup> In the case of the composition presented under that title at the Venice Biennale in 1972, in the arrangement of which Wojciech Skrodzki sees a reference to the concept of the *Vicious circle* by Jacek Malczewski<sup>34</sup>, arranging into groups is not the same as organising. Figures spin-

<sup>32</sup> One of the remarkable biographies was obtained through a work purchased by the then students of the Faculty of Architecture of Warsaw University of Technology. The purchased work of art was initially used as a banner during the May Day parade in 1970 and then, after its presentation during the *Last Stage of Multipart* in 1971, it was ceremoniously buried near the Foksal Gallery. The piece of art was “exhumed” twice after more than 40 years: in 2012 and 2015. An evidence of the continuity of changes in the biography of this *Multipart* element is the action *Multipart w procesie* (Multipart in process) and an ongoing discussion about its conceptual and participatory aspects as well as about archaeological and conservation issues; cf. I. Szmelter, *Elementy nowej teorii konserwacji dziedzictwa sztuki wizualnej. Ratunek dla ochrony dawnej sztuki nietypowej i sztuki współczesnej*, “Sztuka i Dokumentacja” 2017, no. 17, pp. 155-181; D. Łarionow, *Tadeusz Kantor – Engagement – Multiplication – Participation*, “Art Inquiry. Recherches sur les arts”, vol. 20 (29), 2018, pp. 235-244.

<sup>33</sup> M. Howorus-Czajka, *Tropami wielokrotności. Strategie powtórzenia w sztuce polskiej lat 60. i 70. XX wieku*, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Gdańskiego, Gdańsk 2019, pp. 192, 195.

<sup>34</sup> W. Skrodzki, *Dzieła i poszukiwania*, [in:] A. Oseka, W. Skrodzki, *Współczesna rzeźba polska*, Arkady, Warszawa 1977, p. 38.

ning above the heads of visitors, the force of their disorderly movement going in different directions, and seemingly tied hands behind male figures or above the heads of female figures enhance the sense of threat and chaos.

Ewa Mikina points out that the model of a human figure made from newspapers, instead of providing a basis for making a solid figure, e.g. cast in bronze, is dispersed and blurred by being multiplied in an equally impermanent newspaper-like matter.<sup>35</sup> In the *Big Man* series, initiated in 1976, a replica of the walking figure loses its autonomy to an even greater extent: it is enlarged and divided. The idea and the process of creating the series was described by Broniatowski in the following way: "... I enlarged the running man's profile up to the point when its figurative contour ceased to be legible in the components obtained from the division of the figure (a square with a 1 m side was the module)."<sup>36</sup> The drawing divided by the artist consisted of 93 numbered parts (Fig. 6), cut out from boxes with newspapers placed on the floor and reproduced in a granite slab afterwards (Fig. 7).<sup>37</sup> Numbers assigned to each part were intended to orient a certain element in the space of *Big Man*, dismembered, with its parts in various places around the world. The artist's final declaration is significant, as he states: "I am not going to put the parts of *Big Man* together. This possibility potentially exists in each of them".<sup>38</sup> Thus, the image of the walking figure, constantly *in statu nascendi*, was not to be integrated at that stage of creation, as per the idea of the creator. Each component actually functioned as a separate work of art with its individual artistic biography, united only by the idea of the artist. An important ideological connecting element of *Big Man* was the *2nd Exposure of Big Man* at Gallery 72 in Chełm in 1977, when Broniatowski displayed 93 elements of the work in the form of eggs made from bronze placed on a wooden plate (Fig. 8). That conceptual action towards newspaper and granite elements can be seen as reintegration of the idea of a defragmented and dispersed *Big Man*. The form of an egg refers to the permanence of a biological cell and the protection it provides to its essence through successive reproductions and metamorphoses.<sup>39</sup> However, the material essence of the new *Big Man* has completely changed.

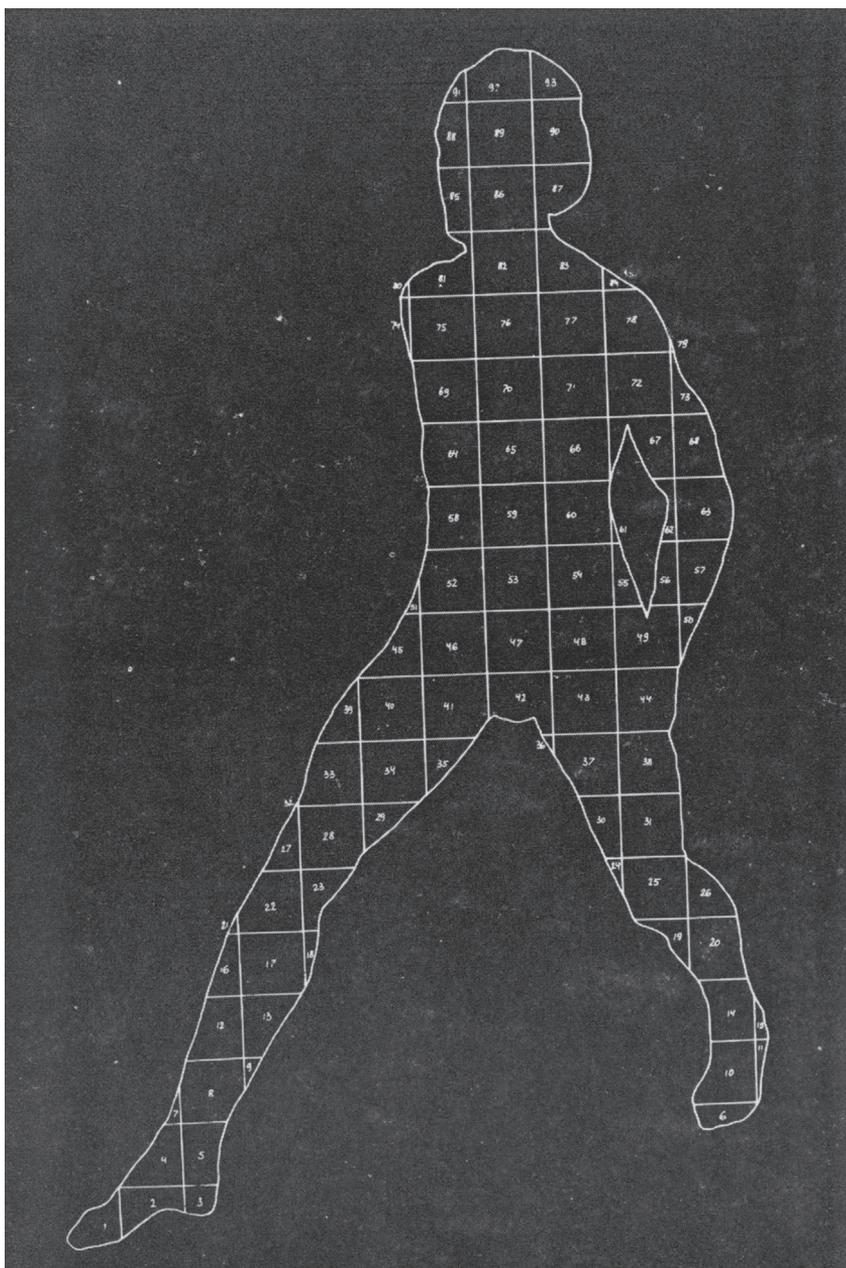
<sup>35</sup> E. Mikina, [sine titulo], pp. 6-7.

<sup>36</sup> Pol.: "... profil «biegnącego człowieka» powiększyłem do momentu, kiedy jego figuratywny zarys przestał być czytelny w częściach, które uzyskałem z jednoczesnego podziału figury (modułem był kwadrat o boku 1 m)"; [K. Broniatowski], *Does the antropocentric vision deserve mockery?* [Czy wizja antropocentryczna zasługuje na kpinę? information for the exhibition Big Man 1976]; quotation from: *Karol Broniatowski. Prace z lat 1970-79*, p. 21.

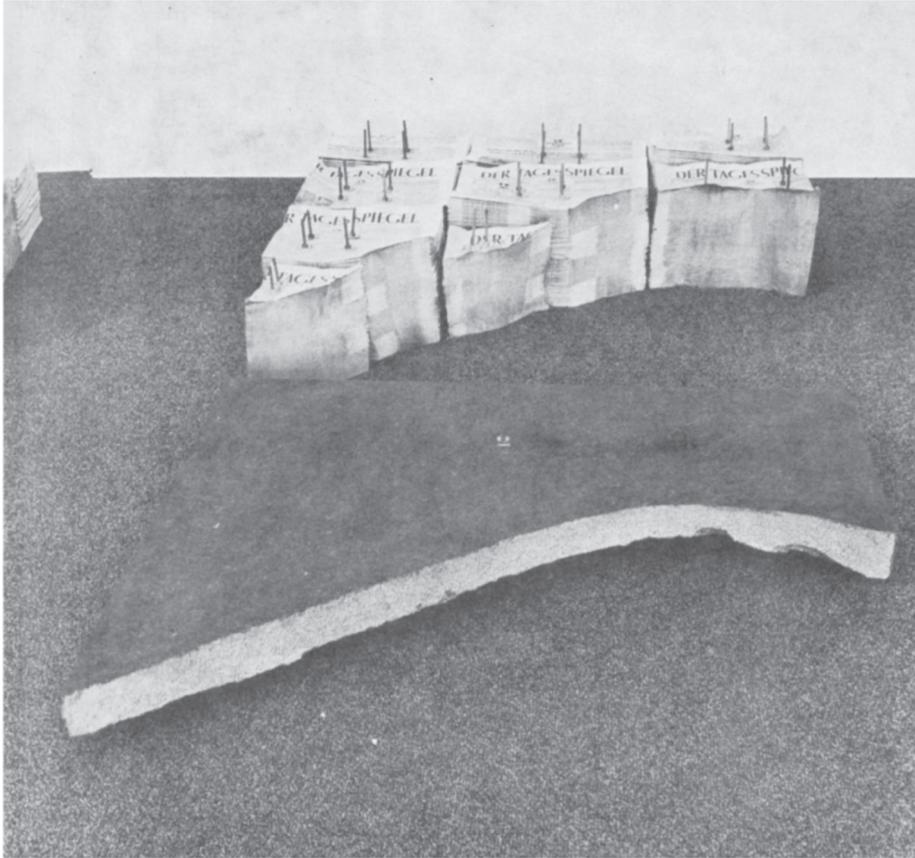
<sup>37</sup> The figure was 19 meters tall, and its individual parts got dispersed around the world; *Karol Broniatowski. Prace z lat 1970-79*, p. 26.

<sup>38</sup> Pol.: "Nie przewiduję złożenia różnych części Big Mana. Ta możliwość egzystuje w sposób potencjalny w każdej z nich"; *Ibid.*, p. 22.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*



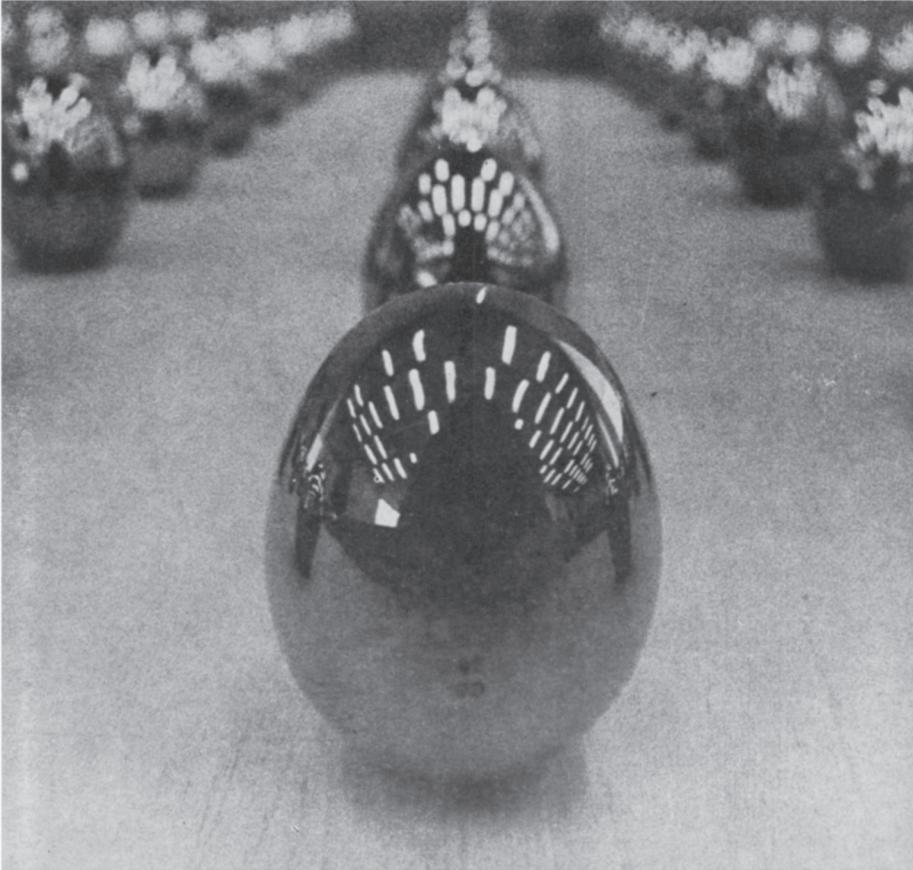
6. Karol Broniatowski, *Big Man*, design drawing, 1976, photo after: Karol Broniatowski. *Prace z lat 1970-79*, [ex. cat.], Muzeum Sztuki w Łodzi, 30 października - 2 grudnia 1979, Łódź: Muzeum Sztuki.



7. Karol Broniatowski, *Big Man*, part no 2, 1976, newspapers, granite, height: 4,5-9 cm, photo after: *Karol Broniatowski. Prace z lat 1970-79*, [ex. cat.], Muzeum Sztuki w Łodzi, 30 października - 2 grudnia 1979, Łódź: Muzeum Sztuki

## Conclusions

Adam Marczyński's compositions with opening and, later on, slightly opening flaps in wooden coffers introduced the idea of a painterly image transformed into an image-object, but not only. They allowed the artist to include the visitor in a changeable network of relations in which - to some extent - he/she had the opportunity to co-create a work of art organised through the arrangement of coffers. In 1970, in Osieki, Marczyński's objects underwent further entropy by separating individual coffers from the painting support and dispersing them in natural space, and then in new spatial and social systems.



8. Karol Broniatowski, *The Second Exposure of Big Man*, fragm., 1977, bronze, board, 103 x 103 x 10 cm, photo after: *Karol Broniatowski. Prace z lat 1970-79*, [ex. cat.], Muzeum Sztuki w Łodzi, 30 października - 2 grudnia 1979, Łódź: Muzeum Sztuki

In the *Multipart* action by Kantor, the initial arrangement of individual paintings, collected in the Foksal Gallery in 1970, was dispersed. The entropic “disorder” reached individual climaxes in different places and moments in time to create, in the subsequent stage of the action, a year later, a one-off system, completely different from the prototype. Each of the original and almost identical white works of art gained its individual biography, underwent various types of changes and even destruction.

From the very beginning, Broniatowski's *Big Man*, created in 1976, functioned in the form of autonomous fragments scattered around the world, merged only by the idea of a walking nameless figure preserved in a drawing. Thus,

not only the imaginary figure as a whole gets destroyed – as it was never fully graspable – but also the figure as an image of a human being deprived of identity. It seems that the artistic idea of dispersing a work of art inherently promotes entropy. It is, however, countered by the human tendency to seek order by giving meaning to seemingly chaotic and inert effects of such an action.

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## ROZPROSZENIE DZIEŁA – ADAM MARCZYŃSKI, TADEUSZ KANTOR, KAROL BRONIATOWSKI (streszczenie)

W artykule zostały przeanalizowane wybrane prace polskich artystów z lat 70. XX wieku: kompozycje z serii *Zmiennych* Adama Marczyńskiego (druga połowa lat 60. i 1970), akcja *Multi-part* Tadeusza Kantora (1970) oraz figury Karola Broniatowskiego (z cyklu *Zagrożenie* oraz *Big Man* 1976-1977), w których tytułowe rozproszenie jest rozumiane jako następstwo dezintegracji pierwowzoru poprzez zainicjowanie dalszej wędrówki jego wyemancypowanych już części. Do rozważań została wykorzystana perspektywa *material turn*: nieantropocentryczna Teoria Aktora-Sieci (ANT) Brunona Latoura, zgodnie z którą można uznać, że dzieło wraz ze swoim twórcą budują szczególną społeczną sieć, w której wszyscy jej "aktanci" funkcjonują na równych prawach w zbiorowości "ludzi i nie-ludzi", jak również antropologiczna teoria sztuki Alfreda Gella, który zaproponował zastąpienie badania przedmiotu sztuki jako nośnika symbolicznych znaczeń, badaniem dzieła jako przedmiotu w sieci relacji, starając się odpowiadać na pytania dotyczące motywów i kontekstów działania społecznych "sprawców" (artystów) i wytwarzania przez nich "indeksów" (dzieł sztuki). Akt początkowego porządkowania układu w dziele, a następnie jego dezintegracji – rozproszenia, został w tekście rozpatrzony także z perspektywy wywodzącego się z dziedziny fizyki pojęcia entropii będącej miarą stopnia nieuporządkowania danego układu – i przeciwnej do niej negentropii.

**Słowa kluczowe:** rozproszenie w sztuce, entropia, *material turn*, Teoria Aktora-Sieci, sztuka sprawstwa Alfreda Gella, Adam Marczyński, Tadeusz Kantor, Karol Broniatowski, sztuka polska XX wieku

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