

WHAT REMAINS AFTER THE JUBILEE YEAR OF THE POLISH AVANT-GARDE?

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„Tygodnik Powszechny”

Abstract: The year 2017 – a centenary of the “1st Exhibition of Polish Expressionists” – was proclaimed the Year of the Avant-garde. To mark the occasion over 200 events were organised by nearly a hundred institutions. What is the balance-sheet of the celebrations? Have they changed the perception of the avant-garde movement and its role in Polish culture and tradition?

The unquestionable accomplishments of the jubilee year include exhibitions accompanied by catalogues as well as other publications on the avant-garde. Unfortunately, not all initiatives turned out to be successful. Some, however, will be remembered: the cycle of exhibitions prepared by the Museum of Art in Łódź, supplemented by comprehensive and meticulously edited catalogues, as well as “Urban revolt” at the National Museum in Warsaw and “Szczecin avant-gardes”

at the National Museum in Szczecin. One of the achievements was an expansion of visual and textual resources of the avant-garde accessible in Poland. Anniversary publications also contained extensive documentary material previously unavailable to the wider public. The publication of important theoretical texts: an expanded edition of Władysław Strzemiński’s *Teoria widzenia* and *The Athens Charter* by Le Corbusier was of particularly fundamental significance. Other noteworthy events included the presentation of relevant source material issued in a series of catalogues of the Museum of Art in Łódź, i.a. a large selection of articles written by Debora Vogel, featured in a book accompanying the exhibition: “Montages. Debora Vogel and the New Legend of the City”. Upon numerous occasions anniversary celebrations posed a question about the topicality of the avant-garde

Keywords: Year of the Avant-garde, avant-garde and tradition, modernisation, centenary, anniversary exhibitions and publications, Museum of Art in Łódź, national museums in Cracow, Szczecin, and Warsaw.

The “1st Exhibition of Polish Expressionists” was opened in Cracow on 4 November 1917 at the seat of the Society of the Friends of Fine Arts (from 1919 the titular Expressionists started to describe themselves as Formists). This date was recognized as the onset of the avant-garde in Poland. To mark the 100th anniversary of the event the year 2107 was proclaimed the Year of the Avant-garde upon the initiative of the Museum of Art in Łódź, the National Museum in Warsaw, and the National Museum in Cracow. The celebrations involved more than 200 events organised by almost 100 institutions.

The Year of the Avant-garde was a time of an extremely valuable co-operation of numerous public institutions: museums and galleries, but also theatres or culture centres. The remembrances were joined by private institutions.¹ The scale and range were impressive and included the establishment of a special website documenting their

course: www.rokawangardy.pl and a Facebook prolife. What traces, however, did those celebrations leave apart from on-the-spot events?

A necessary jubilee?

Izabella Adamczewska asked Jarosław Suchan, one of the initiators of the anniversary, about the balance sheet of the Year of the Avant-garde. The director of the Museum of Art in Łódź responded: *Thanks to the Year the avant-garde began to exist in milieus, which up to then were not particularly interested in it. Secondly – and this is most significant – we managed to connect it with the idea of heritage by demonstrating that the avant-garde is much more complex than some would like it to be.*²

The jubilee year involved several score exhibitions, concerts, scientific sessions³ and lectures, which transcended

the scope of the calendar year of 2017. But did these events change the perception of the avant-garde, its role in culture and place in Polish tradition? Are they the reason why avant-garde legacy became more noticed? Naturally, it is difficult to describe Polish culture in a dependable manner without taking the role of this particular legacy into consideration. The avant-garde proved decisive for the further development of the visual arts, architecture, literature, music, films, and the theatre. It also delineated artistic hierarchies and a canon of works binding up to this day.

It is just as necessary to attempt to resolve another question: were the anniversary celebrations necessary? *Had the anniversary taken place two years earlier or later it would have been still possible to create a similar programme [the Year of the Avant-garde – PK] by resorting to exhibitions planned by Polish institutions – noted art critic Karol Sienkiewicz. The avant-garde or Modernism simply constitute an important reference point both for artists and museum curators.*⁴

Jarosław Suchan argued convincingly that also today the question concerning the avant-garde remains significant. The essential factor, which should be taken into account, is a change of the official cultural policy. Its core – he declared in an interview held by Adam Mazur and published in the periodical “Szum” – is nowadays the national heritage. *This is the reason why the way in which we envisage national heritage is so essential. It is a known fact that national heritage is universally associated more with a certain, rather traditional canon embedded by means of school education. Something like the avant-garde simply does not fit this vision of national heritage despite the fact that it is already more than a hundred years old. This is why – he added – it is necessary to be concerned with the avant-garde finding itself within the national canon.*⁵

Questions about the balance sheet

Let us, therefore, ask once again: what are the traces left by the Year of the Avant-garde? A reliable and thorough assessment poses a difficult task. One of the accomplishments of the jubilee year certainly involves publications.⁶ Naturally, this is a constricting viewpoint. The “publications” bookmark on the above-mentioned website: www.rokawangardy.pl consists of not quite twenty titles. Their actual total is certainly much larger and successive titles will probably appear in 2018.

The majority of books issued in connection with the Year of the Avant-garde are exhibition catalogues. Can an initial balance sheet be made upon their basis? In what way can this rather differentiated material be put in order? A certain suggestion could be discovered in a presentation of anniversary remembrance plans mentioning “three steps”.⁷ The first is the “Revision of avant-garde histories”. This current contains, i.a. “The Formists” exhibition opening the celebrations and held at the Presidential Palace in Warsaw, followed by “The power of the avant-garde” at the National Museum in Cracow and a whole series of expositions at the Museum of Art in Łódź. The second step is “Avant-garde continuations” dedicated to avant-garde tradition in the oeuvre of Polish artists of the post-war period, i.e. retrospectives of works by Jonasz Stern at the Museum of Contemporary Art MOCAK in Cracow, and exhibitions

dedicated to Oskar Hansen at the Warsaw Museum of Modern Art or to Waclaw Szpakowski, initiator of the “Golden Grapes”, featured at the BWA Contemporary Art Gallery in Zielona Góra. The third step – “The avant-garde today” – concerned the significance of the avant-garde legacy for contemporary artists.

A collision of those premises with actual exhibitions and publications demonstrates just how difficult it is in museum praxis to exceed opinions requisite for long; the same holds true for exposition habits. The first and, at the same time, the most controversial proved to be the first step – the “Revision of avant-garde histories”. Much has been accomplished during the last decades in studies conducted by historians of art and in exhibitions – not only in Europe – to undermine the avant-garde canon obligatory for many decades by indicating phenomena, centres or artists (in particular women) long-ignored or situated solely on the margin of prime creative quests. A transference of those ascertainments to the “medium”, i.e. the museum exhibition, however, proved to be very difficult.

Grand summaries

“The power of the avant-garde” exhibition at the National Museum in Cracow (10 March–28 May 2017) was to be one of the most important events of the Year of the Avant-garde. Organised in co-operation with Bozar – Centre for Fine Arts, the highly regarded exhibition institution in Brussels, it was also one of the occasions inaugurating the anniversary celebrations. Magdalena Czubińska and Andrzej Szczerski supplemented the exposition, earlier presented in the Belgian capital, with works by Polish artists from assorted decades. The co-curator stressed that they intended to *demonstrate the assorted limits of the avant-garde. This could be an escalation of orthodoxy, and thus an openly utopian, para-religious oeuvre with faith in a prescription for a better tomorrow, a new world, and universal order. It could entail borderlines with bourgeois art or even pure commercialism.*⁸ Despite such ambitious premises the Cracow exhibition was rather harshly criticised, attention being drawn predominantly to unsuccessful staging solutions.⁹ The greatest problem for the Cracow event, however, did not involve conceptions of the setting.

Ulrich Bischoff, curator of the version shown at Bozar, sought links between contemporary art and the avant-garde, and with this purpose in mind he invited contemporary artists, i.a. Gerhard Richter, Sean Scully, and Luc Tuymans to select a work of one of the avant-garde artists and via their composition to embark upon a dialogue. Not much of those “conversations” lingered in Cracow. Meanwhile, a juxtaposition of Marlene Dumas’: *The Blonde, the Brunette and the Black Woman* from 1992 and a portrait of Käte Perls executed by Edvard Munch in 1913 made it possible to notice the rather unobvious connections and to take a different look at already historical works.

Magdalena Czubińska and Andrzej Szczerski proposed their own narration, in which the oeuvre of Polish artists was inscribed into the history of the Polish avant-garde. Unfortunately, it was not always possible – with the exception of certain formal or thematic similarities – to perceive the reasons for displaying only certain works



1. and 2. „The Power of the Avant-garde”, view at the exhibition, the National Museum in Kraków

next to each other. Just as regrettably the Polish-English catalogue accompanying the exhibition did not prove helpful in deciphering the intentions of the curators. It would be difficult to reconstruct upon its basis – apart from the fundamental premises – the conception of the Cracow curators. Not only does it fail to explain what was concealed behind the applied divisions (e.g. *Utopia. Town of the Future or Spirituality. Word. Communication*). It also remains unclear which works “illustrated” the proposed theses or what were the relations between them – they were arranged in the catalogue in the alphabetical order of authors’ surnames. The only accomplished feat was to reproduce works shown only in Cracow separately. In its final reception “The power of the avant-garde” proved to

be a display of acclaimed names – and this was the way in which it was promoted in the media. Instead of a revision of the history of the avant-garde, the presentation, prepared by an institution of special significance for Polish museology, confirmed a rather universal vision.

The same can be said of several other expositions, such as “A-geometry. Hans Arp and Poland” at the National Museum in Poznań (23 April–9 July 2017) or “From Malevich to Strzemiński” at the Mazovian Centre for Contemporary Art “Elektrownia” in Radom. The curators of the first event (Maïke Steinkamp and Marta Smolińska) confronted more than 60 works by Hans Arp – sculptures, drawings, collages, graphic works, and paintings – with those of his Polish contemporaries or successive generations of Polish

artists. Unfortunately, the exhibition itself did not add much to knowledge about Arp's contacts with the Poles: Jan Brzękowski, Katarzyna Kobro, Władysław Strzemiński or Henryk Stażewski. A reminder of the term "a-geometry", conceived by Brzękowski to describe the Arp *oeuvre*, proved to be much more interesting. On the other hand, connecting this formula with the works of numerous Polish artists is highly dubious since it is restricted to purely formal and often rather superficial similarities.

The Radom exhibition was arranged by Janusz Zagrodzki, an acclaimed researcher dealing with the avant-garde. Regrettably, both the exposition and the catalogue issued upon this occasion and containing two capacious texts by the curator, to a great extent replicated the image of the Polish avant-garde created for years by the Museum of Art in Łódź by limiting its pre-war dimension predominantly to the Kobro and Strzemiński circle. Other centres were mentioned extremely sparsely. Meanwhile, in recent years research on the interwar period in Poland has made great progress and new, conspicuously different interpretations of the works of Kobro and Strzemiński have appeared. Both exhibitions also cherished the ambition of showing "The Avant-garde today", i.e. the significance of the avant-garde for contemporary artists. These turned out to be the weakest parts of the expositions because they identified the legacy in question with banal, formal emulation exemplified by the works of Martyna Pająk, Beata Szczepaniak or Urszula Kluz-Knopek on show in Poznań.

View from Łódź

A serious attempt at revision was made by a series of carefully devised exhibitions prepared by the Museum of Art in Łódź and accompanied by extremely meticulous and sizeable catalogues¹⁰. Without doubt these expositions were also the most important events of the Year of the Avantgarde. Daniel Muzyczuk, head of the Department of Modern Art at the Łódź institution, said: *Particular parts: "Superorganism", "Museum of rhythm", "Moved bodies", "Enrico Prampolini and the theatre of mechanical constructions", "Montages" and "Organisers of life" are the effect of work performed by a team of curators tackling problems that, treated individually, could appear to be marginal for a domain recognized as the prime current of the Polish avant-garde. Nonetheless, the fields of exploration are the outcome of an attempt at viewing avant-garde artists from the perspective of the most vital currents of science and the humanities of the current epoch. From natural sciences and ecology, rhythmology and labour management, choreography and dance, the theatre and stage design, art criticism and philosophy all the way to design, each exhibition observed the Polish avant-garde from a contemporary vantage point. (...) Instead of seeking refrains for the purpose of constant ritual repetition, the series of exhibitions began with the outskirts of the Polish avant-garde and aimed at delineating a new map and marking heretofore unknown constellations.*¹¹

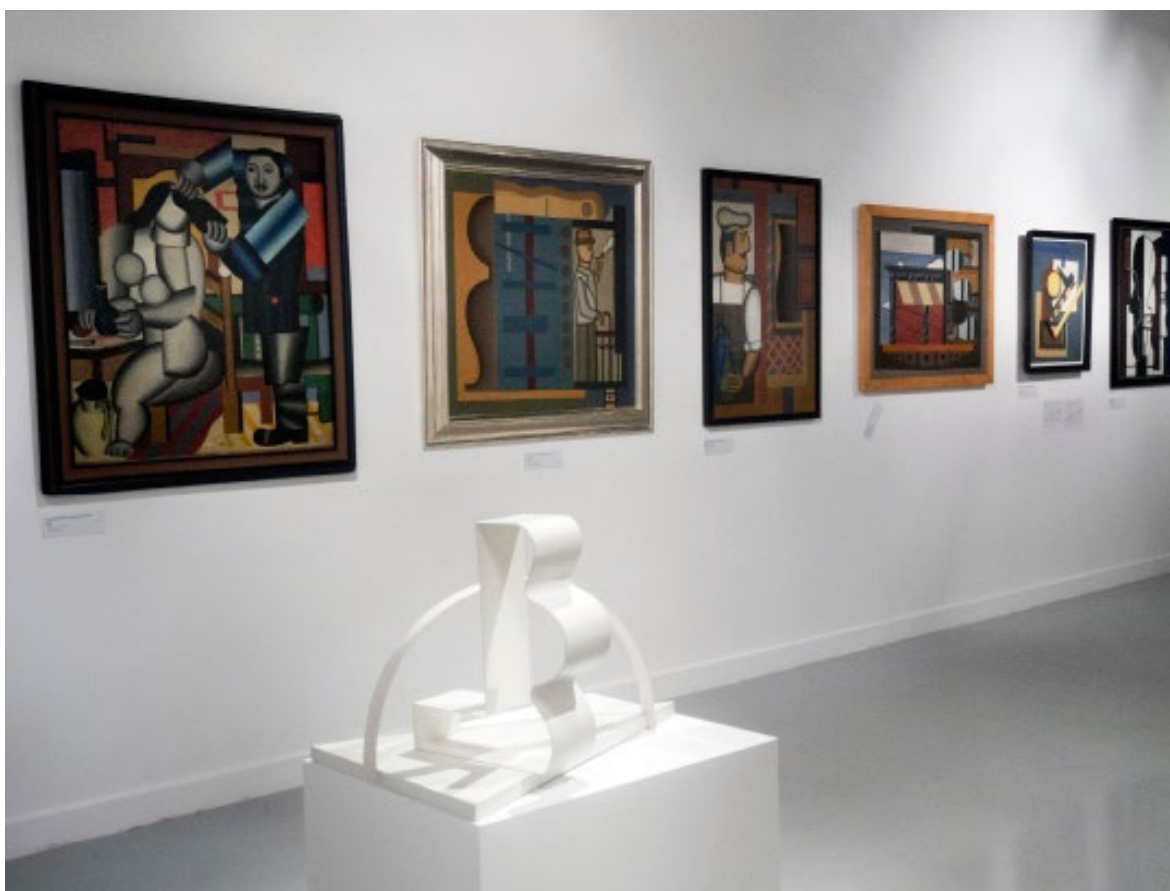
Exhibitions displayed at the Łódź Museum of Art introduced several fundamental corrections into the avant-garde canon but, first and foremost, they promoted a perception of this legacy from a contemporary vantage

point and posed questions about its topicality. At the same time, the Museum of Art tried to inscribe Polish avant-garde experience into a wider, predominantly European perspective without seeking solely ideological or formal similarities but recalling also assorted links and contacts maintained by our artists with important milieus in other countries. Finally, authors of the expositions went far beyond the domain of the visual arts by showing bonds not solely with literature, the theatre, music or the cinema but also with politics, the history of ideas, and social and exact sciences.

An attempt was made to include all those perspectives into exhibition narration. While writing about "Superorganism. The avant-garde and the experience of Nature" Joanna Kobyłt noticed: *It is not exclusively the presence of names taken straight out of history of art textbooks that guarantees the success of an exhibition. Aficionados of original curator strategies will also find something to their liking. Despite the bland museum interior there was no lack of powerful monuments and interesting solutions. Divided into six parts: Postnatural landscape, Biophilia, Embodied vision, Fourth dimension, Microcosm and macrocosm, and Evolution the exhibition features each time a different fragment of narration, which is not a linear, chronological sequence. The distinguished chapters permeate each other and do not comprise isolated entities – on the contrary, they force to seek connections between the works and their attitude towards the holistic context. This operation exposes the Modernist myth of the avant-garde built on dichotomous divisions between the rational and the intuitive (e.g. science versus theosophy, as in the case of Mondrian). A highly successful move was to introduce into the space of exhibits also other artefacts devoid of the status of a work of art – black-and-white documentary films and fragments of feature film super-productions, reprints of books and engravings, textbooks, philosophical texts and further fascinating objects.*¹² It must be added that although particular exhibitions were arranged by different curators the author's remarks can be referred also to other expositions from this cycle.

Copious publications accompanying the sequence of exhibitions taking place at the Museum of Art in Łódź include, alongside the traditional list of works on show, texts not only by curators but also by other authors, including foreign ones, supplementing the exposition by means of additional contexts. In this manner they became separate publications capable of functioning independently. Another interesting solution involved placing in certain tomes material documenting the very conception of the presented works. The *Muzeum rytmu* volume included a plan of the exhibition while mentioning its architecture, and *Poruszone ciała* contains *Esej wizualny*, i.e. a series of photographs of the exposition. This operation makes it possible to find out – if only approximately – what both presentations looked like.

Speaking of expositions dealing with the historical avant-garde and accompanying publications mention is due to at least two events: "Urban revolt" at the National Museum in Warsaw (27 October 2017–21 January 2018, curators: Ewa Skolimowska, Anna Turowicz) and "Szczecin avant-gardes" at the National Museum in Szczecin (24 November 2017–14 January 2018, curator: Szymon Piotr Kubiak). The authors of the first, rather modest exposition limited to works on paper



3. "Montages. Debora Vogel and the New Legend of the City", view at the exhibition, the Art Museum in Łódź



4. *Superorganism. The Avant-garde and the Experience of Nature*, catalogue, photo on the cover



5. *Moved Bodies. Choreographies of Modernity*, catalogue, photo of the inside

– drawings, graphic art, photograms and photomontage from the collections of the Warsaw museum – managed to outline an interesting image of the Polish avant-garde in the first decades of the twentieth century by transcending all universally held opinions. In doing so they presented

the titular current by examining the most important centres of the period: Kraków, Lwów, Łódź, Poznań, and Warsaw, while indicating differences, bonds, and relations between particular milieus and the migrations of artists and ideas between towns. The exhibition also offered an



6.and 7. "Lwów, 24 June 1937. City, Architecture, Modernism", view of the exhibition, International Cultural Centre in Cracow

opportunity to see works, which for reasons of conservation are displayed extremely rarely (some were never shown). The Szczecin exposition was an interesting confrontation of currently emerging art – works by artists connected with the Faculty of Painting and New Media at the local Art Academy – with the pre-war avant-garde tradition of Szczecin, i.a. Ludwig Gies, Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, Kazimierz Podsadecki, and Kurt Schwerdtfeger: an exciting attempt at dealing with the tradition of this particular town, including its long-ignored fragment.

The exposition was accompanied by a noteworthy Polish-German volume of studies on Szczecin, predominantly during the first decades of the twentieth century, recalling works of artists little-known in Poland – Adolf Hölzel or Bernhard Heiliger. The publication – the first of its sort to appear in Poland – also contains a text by Dariusz Kacprzak about the “Entartete Kunst” campaign conducted at the Museum of the City of Szczecin, with the author following the fate of artworks confiscated by Nazi authorities.

Avant-garde continuations

The “Szczecin avant-gardes” exhibition belonged to those events of the Year of the Avant-garde, which posed questions about the place of the avant-garde in the second half of the twentieth century and the current century. Examples of already cited displays show that this task is by no means easy but, nonetheless, feasible. One of the most interesting expositions of the anniversary year was “Kino-eye. Around Vertov and Constructivism” at the Arsenal Gallery in Białystok (20 October–3 November 2017, curator: Przemysław Strożek) featuring works by several generations of artists and filmmakers, i.a. Wojciech Bruszewski, Zbigniew Gostomski, Krzysztof Kieślowski, Norman Leto, Anna Molska, Joanna Rajkowska, and Józef Robakowski. The display, accompanied by a rather modest-sized publication, evoked a local accent – Dziga Vertov lived in Białystok until he was 19 years old. A question about the topicality of the avant-garde was also posed by NOMUS – New Art Museum, a branch of the National Museum in Gdańsk, whose publication: *Hipotezy awangardowe* is an attempt made by artists, curators, and publicists writing about culture, i.a. Edwin Bendyk, Sebastian Cichocki, Zuzanna Janin, Dorota Monkiewicz, Paulina Ołowska, Anda Rottenberg, and Stanisław Ruksza, to resolve a question concerning the present-day relevance of avant-garde tradition, and in particular two of its aspects: experiment and involvement.

Connecting the exhibitions with a concrete location was one of the most interesting motifs of the Year of the Avant-garde. This perspective offered an opportunity to take a more wide-ranging look at phenomena essential for Polish art and often marginalised by main narrations. The motif in question was approached by “Zwrotnica. Early days of the neo-avant-garde in Upper Silesia”, an exhibition featured at the Silesian Museum (4 November 2017–1 April 2018, curators: Ada Grzelewska, Agnieszka Kołodziej-Adamczuk, Joanna Szeligowska-Farquhar). The display showed local artistic life from the turn of the 1940s, including painters from the ST-53 group, artists gathered in the Gliwice Photographic Society (i.a. Jerzy Lewczyński and Zofia Rydet), and Oneiron – a circle of artists connected with Urszula Broll and Andrzej Urbanowicz.

A survey of anniversary accomplishments should be supplemented by adding publications issued upon the occasion, some of which significantly supplement the state of knowledge about the Polish avant-garde. The most fundamental included: *Władysław Strzemiński. Zawsze w awangardzie. Rekonstrukcja Nieznanej Biografii 1893–1917*, written by Iwona Luba and Paulina Wawer and recreating unknown facts from the artist’s childhood and youth (issued by the Museum of Art in Łódź), and *Awangarda w CBWA. Wystawy Katarzyny Kobro i Władysława Strzemińskiego, Henryka Stażewskiego, Marii Ewy Łunkiewicz-Rogoyskiej w latach 1956–1969* by Iwona Luba, reconstructing the history of three exhibitions organised at the Zachęta Gallery and an exposition of works by Kobro and Strzemiński shown in Paris (published by the Zachęta National Gallery of Art). The second work is also an important contribution to research on Polish exhibitions and art institutions at the time of the People’s Republic of Poland. Mention is due also to a collective publication issued by the Museum of Cinematography in Łódź: *W kręgu neoawangardy – Warsztat Formy Filmowej* (edited by Marzena Bomanowska and Alicja Cichowicz), significantly expanding the state of knowledge about Polish art of the 1970s. This volume, with an enclosed DVD containing ten experimental films of key importance for the Workshop of the Film Form, is also part of the at present important current of research on Polish neo-avant-garde.¹³

It has become possible to finally try to answer the question: was it conceivable to expand the reserves of visual and textual sources pertaining to the avant-garde and available in Poland? The answer is: certainly – the collection of accessible paintings, works on paper or photographs has grown thanks to, i.a. a series of Museum of Art catalogues or the “Urban revolt” catalogue. Anniversary publications also included numerous documents up to now inaccessible to the wider public.

Mention is due also to significant theoretical texts. A new expanded edition of Władysław Strzemiński’s *Teoria widzenia*, supplemented by another of his texts – *Widzenia impresjonistów*, appeared due to the efforts of the Museum of Art. Importantly, this is the first critical edition (scientific editor: Iwona Luba) of one of the most prominent Polish works on the theory of art. The second major publication is: *Karta ateńska* (The Athens Charter) by Le Corbusier, a text of key rank for twentieth-century architecture and art, based on the 1942 edition (*Charte d’Athènes /Athens Charter/*) issued by the Architecture Centre Foundation.¹⁴ It is just as important to mention source texts presented in a series of Museum of Art catalogues, i.a. on architecture by Theo van Doesburg in: *Organizatorzy życia* or a large selection of articles by Debora Vogel in *Montages*.

The avant-garde as part of Polish tradition

The Year of the Avant-garde took place under the patronage of Andrzej Duda, President of the Republic of Poland. Its opening was equally significant. The National Museum in Cracow prepared an exhibition dedicated to the religious art of the Formists, displayed at the Presidential Palace in Warsaw. The authors of the exposition stressed that the pioneering Formists attempted to combine elements of



8. "Montages. Debora Vogel and the New Legend of the City", view at the exhibition, the Art Museum in Łódź

(Photo. 1, 2 – M. Szczypiński, by courtesy of the National Museum in Cracow; 3-5, 8 – J. Kostarska-Talaga, by the courtesy of the Museum of Art in Łódź; 6. and 7 – A. Fiejka, by courtesy of the International Cultural Centre in Cracow)

national tradition, including Catholic religiosity, with avant-garde form. In his speech inaugurating the anniversary celebrations President Duda also accentuated that Polish avant-garde artists *tried to create something new, to grant art a new shape, to achieve a radical change (...), without, however, severing ties with Polish tradition.*¹⁵

Presidential patronage, the site of the launch of the Year, the state rank granted to the celebrations – all indicated the special ambiance of the anniversary. In the earlier mentioned conversation with Adam Mazur, Jarosław Suchan went on to say: *Various narrations appeared during the conference held at the Presidential Palace, but unfortunately only a single one came to the fore in the media accounts, the one accentuating the moment of continuum and the dependence of the avant-garde upon national tradition. Obviously, in the case of the avant-garde movement it is possible to point out numerous connections with culture of the past, but they do not determine the essence of this phenomenon. It is thus even more difficult to speak about the avant-garde as a natural continuation of national traditions. After all, this was a movement representing predominantly a compliant and universalistic orientation, and it remained critical towards the idea of national culture or art.*¹⁶

It would be difficult to disagree with the observations made by the director of the Museum of Art. Nonetheless, they do not annul the question about connections between the avant-garde and tradition. Consequently, it is worth quoting a comment made by Andrzej Szczerski in an introduction to the catalogue of "The power of the avant-garde" exhibition: *There is no contradiction between contemporary art and national tradition; more, in order to last and inspire successive generations tradition should not so much turn towards historical styles as express itself in modern form.*¹⁷ Unfortunately, the exposition in question did not even embark upon this question.

Both statements – made by Jarosław Suchan and Andrzej Szczerski – indicate an essential problem: which fragments of avant-garde tradition were important for the Poles in the second decade of the twenty first century? A discussion on this theme would have been very important – regrettably, it never took place in the course of the Year of the Avant-garde. It is, however, possible to point out exhibitions, well-arranged and showing two different attitudes towards the legacy in question: the earlier-mentioned expositions: "Montages. Debora Vogel and the New Legend of the City" at the Łódź Museum of Art (27 October 2017–4 February 2018,

curators: Andriy Boyarov, Paweł Polit, Karolina Szymaniak) and "Lwów, 24 June 1937. City, Architecture, Modernism" at the International Culture Centre in Cracow (1 December 2017–8 April 2018, curators: Anna Komar, Andrzej Szczerski) – a presentation of two different views of Lwów.¹⁸ The Cracow exposition showed the town predominantly via Modernist architecture although it displayed also paintings, drawings, and photographs. More, by depicting a single day – the titular 24 June 1937 – an attempt was made to capture the day-to-day life of Lwów. All tension, conflicts, and sensitive questions were relegated to the margin although on 14 April 1936 a street demonstration held in Lwów by the unemployed changed into bloody riots.

The authors of the Łódź exhibition opted for a different choice. They described Lwów through the person of Debora Vogel, avant-garde writer, critic, and theoretician of art. This is a story about the local artistic milieu but also about inter-war Poland together with its economic and social problems. Finally, the exhibition portrayed the avant-garde as an emancipation-oriented and pro-equality project.

In turn, authors of the Cracow exposition regarded the first modernisation effort, i.e. the introduction of the town into modernity, as the most essential.¹⁹ *Terrains recognized until then as the provinces of European empires – and*

often perceived as symbols of backwardness, exemplified by Austrian Galicia together with Lwów – rapidly became the site of a realisation of bold modernisation projects while new states consistently spoke in favour of modernity – stressed Andrzej Szczerski in a text from a publication accompanying the exhibition at the International Culture Centre. *The introduction of Lwów onto precisely such a map of modernisation makes it possible to appreciate this town's accomplishments during the period of its affiliation with the Second Republic, but primarily to see Modernist Lwów as a fragment of a larger process of the civilisational advancement of East-Central Europe between two world wars.*²⁰

Both exhibitions featured a fundamentally different arrangement of accents, the extraction of certain aspects, and the omission of others. Both also indicated tension or fissures in reflections about the avant-garde. More, they disclosed the existence of an elementary controversy about Polish modernities (in the plural) concerning the most desirable model of the modernisation of Poland. This key question was posed by the founders of the Second Republic and addressed to subsequent generations; it is also asked today. Hopefully, it will be articulated in the course of exhibitions and other undertakings dedicated to the next anniversary – the centenary of Poland regaining its independence.

Przypisy

¹ Mention is due to, i.a.: "We're building a new home! Polish avant-garde from the Zderzak collection", Zderzak Gallery, Cracow 1 May–22 July 2017, curator Jan Michalski; "Faces of the avant-garde. Artists of the 1st Cracow Group", Piekary Gallery, Poznań 15 November–29 December 2017, curator Anna Budzałek.

² *Rok Awangardy za nami. Teraz czas, by polską awangardę poznał świat. Kobro i Strzeмиńskiego pokaże Centre Pompidou* [interview with Jarosław Suchan conducted by Izabella Adamczewska], "Gazeta Wyborcza" 17 January 2018.

³ The events included, i.a. the conference: "Art criticism in the inter-war period. Between philosophical aesthetics and modern art" organised by Museum of Art in Łódź, 22–23 February 2018.

⁴ K. Sienkiewicz, *Rok Awangardy w erze „dobrej zmiany”*. „Kosmopolici” kontra „narodowcy”, czyli nieunikniony spór o polską sztukę XX w., "Gazeta Wyborcza", 8 March 2017.

⁵ *Awangarda i „prawdziwa polskość”*. Z Jarosławem Suchanem rozmawia Adam Mazur, "Magazyn Szum" spring-summer 2017, no. 16, p. 128.

⁶ Just as important is the description of the Year of the Avant-garde in art critique. The website: www.rokawangardy.pl includes references to some of the texts, but this is a highly incomplete selection – it omits not only, e.g. the monthly "Arteon" but also regional press and opinion weeklies.

⁷ *Rok 2017: stulecie awangardy w Polsce* – text on: www.culture.pl, <https://culture.pl/pl/artykul/rok-2017-stulecie-awangardy-w-polsce>

⁸ M. Zubińska, *Granice awangardy*, in: *Potęga awangardy* [catalogue of an exhibition at the National Museum in Cracow], Cracow 2017, p. 31.

⁹ See: i.a. K. Sienkiewicz, *Zapodrziana Awangarda*, "Dwutygodnik" 2017, no. 4, <http://www.dwutygodnik.com/artykul/7162-zapodrziana-awangarda.html>

¹⁰ "Moved bodies. Choreographies of modernity", 18 November 2016–5 March 2017, curator: Katarzyna Słoboda; "Superorganizm. The avant-garde and the experience of Nature", 10 February–21 May 2017, curators: Aleksandra Jach, Paulina Kurc-Maj; "Enrico Prampolini. Futurism, stage design and the Polish avant-garde theatre", 9 June–8 November 2017, exhibition curator: Przemysław Strożek; "Montages. Debora Vogel and the New Legend of the City", 27 November 2017–4 February 2018, curators: Andriy Boyarov, Paweł Polit, Karolina Szymaniak; "Organisers of life. De Stijl, the Polish avant-garde and design", 24 November 2017–25 February 2018, curators: Paulina Kurc-Maj, Anna Saciuk-Gąsowska.

¹¹ D. Muzyczuk, *Między aktualnością a anachronizmem*, "Magazyn Szum" 26 January 2018 [Internet edition], <https://magazynszum.pl/awangarda/>

¹² J. Kobyłt, *Superorganizm. Awangarda i doświadczenie przyrody*, "Magazyn Szum", summer-autumn 2017, no. 17, p. 128.

¹³ I.a. *KwieKulik, Zofia Kulik & Przemysław Kwiek*, Ł. Ronduda, G. Schollhammer (ed.), Warszawa-Wrocław-Wienna 2012; *Józef Robakowski. Moje własne kino*, B. Czubak (ed.), Warszawa 2012; *Krzysztof Wodiczko. Przejście 1969-1979*, B. Czubak (ed.), Warszawa 2015.

¹⁴ This is a successive publication of texts by Le Corbusier. Previously, the Architecture Centre issued his manifestos: *W stronę architektury (Vers une architecture, from 1923)* and *Urbanistyka (L'Urbanisme, from 1925)*, as well as Le Corbusier's account of his first voyage: *Kiedy katedry były białe (Quand Les Cathedrales Etaient Blanches, from 1937)*.

¹⁵ Speech given by President Duda at a scientific session: "100 years of avant-garde in Poland", <http://www.prezydent.pl/aktualnosci/wypowiedzi-prezydenta-rp/wysta-pienia/art,99,wystapienie-prezydenta-podczas-sesji-naukowej-sto-lat-awangardy-w-polsce.html>

¹⁶ *Awangarda i „prawdziwa polskość”*..., p. 128.

¹⁷ Andrzej Szczerski, [introd.], in: *Potęga awangardy*..., p. 21.

¹⁸ More about both exhibitions in: Piotr Kosiewski, *Lwowska awangarda i Debora Vogel*, "Odra" 2018, no. 5, pp. 52–55.

¹⁹ Andrzej Szczerski makes more frequent use of the terms: "modernisation" or "modernity" – see: A. Szczerski, *Cztery nowoczesności. Teksty o sztuce i architekturze polskiej XX wieku*, Kraków 2015.

²⁰ A. Szczerski, *Lwów i mapa modernistycznej Europy Środkowo-Wschodniej*, in: *Lwów nowoczesny*, Kraków 2017, pp. 21–22.

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Word count: 5 604; **Tables:** –; **Figures:** 8; **References:** 20

Received: 05.2018; **Reviewed:** –; **Accepted:** 06.2018; **Published:** 07.2018

DOI: 01.3001.0012.1964

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Competing interests: Authors have declared that no competing interest exists.

Cite this article as: Kosiewski P; WHAT REMAINS AFTER THE JUBILEE YEAR OF THE POLISH AVANT-GARDE? Muz., 2018(59): 113–122

Table of contents 2018: <https://muzealnictworocznik.com/issue/10809>