

**Włodzimierz Adamiak\***

## The meaning of activities in *Okolice Sztuki* – much went on at Strych

### Introduction

I admit the following: I do not possess extensive academic, linguistic and psychological competences. Therefore, I can pose more questions than I can offer categorical statements. Additionally, my anxiousness and doubts are amplified by the reflection which links the state of my mind as an author with the uneasiness of Winnie the Pooh, the widely loved character of popular literature, who the harder he tried to notice honey in his jar, the more he could not see it there. By analogy, the state of my mind changed the more I tried to investigate the problem and the closer the time of the presentation became.

### General reflections

#### The measure of meaning

“To coś nie ma większego sensu” [This doesn’t make much sense] But does it mean it has some sense? Usually, the expression “To coś nie ma większego sensu” means a complete lack of meaning, i.e. senselessness.

The expression “To ma ogromny sens” [This makes a great deal of sense] indicates acceptance of an action, approval, often in combination with a declaration of support. Not always in order to achieve a goal; sometimes to engage in its fulfilment.

So is it possible to define a unit of the measure of sense or meaning? Not likely. Mainly because there are no objective criteria for evaluating meaning.

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## The relative nature of meaning

It seems that meaning, or sense, is a quality of a phenomenon and actions which justifies the utility, usefulness, rationality, and purposefulness of something. Also in this approach, meaning is a relative notion.

“The point of view (about meaning) depends on the point (place) occupied” by the person who evaluates meaning. The evaluation and measurability of meaning is subjective and available in personal terms – not always and not in a stable manner. That is because it is possible that an evaluation of meaning may change as a result of a verification of evaluation criteria, e.g. those associated with experience: “zrozumiesz, jak dorośniesz” [you’ll understand once you grow up]. Furthermore, one cannot assume that the objective value of meaning increases with the increase of the number of individuals who accept the same meanings. That is because, basically, it is then all about the goals and the modes of fulfilling them. The tyres burnt by farmers in Paris and Warsaw had meaning from the farmers’ point of view and they completely lacked meaning in the evaluations of most people stuck in traffic jams and getting somewhere late (because of that). The cycling *Critical Mass* events which gathered tens of thousands of people infuriated other road users and sometimes caused dramatic situations when ambulances were not able to get past.

## Meaning in existential terms

Such reflections as: “Czy jest sens tak się męczyć?” [What’s the point in trying so hard?], “straciłem/straciłam sens” [I’ve lost purpose in life], “nie ma już sensu” [there is no point any more] usually lead people to stop activities aimed at achieving a goal, usually one of remaining in good condition, both physical and mental. An extreme situation of feeling there is a lack of meaning sometimes leads to suicide. And yet the realisation “odnalazłem/odnalazłam sens” [I have found meaning] becomes a factor which motivates and encourages people, and keeps their spirits high. Alas, it applies far too often to emotional and, sadly, not always durable exaltation.

## Address – the origin of meaning

Meaning from the outside: “jesteś sensem...” [you are the meaning of...], “nadajesz sens...” [you add meaning to...], and “odebrałeś sens...” [you’ve taken meaning away from...] is an act of assigning others the state of one’s own emotions, whereas meaning from the inside: “odnalazłem sens” [I have found meaning], and “utraciłem sens” [I have lost meaning] expresses personal placement of the reasons for emotions and activities.

## Pre-school awareness of meaning,

i.e. when does the sense of meaning first appear?

“Tato, co ty usiłujesz?” [Dad, what are you trying to do?] is a question I asked by my four-year-old son. He watched me for a while in silence and he struggled with understanding the meaning of my state of mind which he tried to read from by actions. By the way, since then I use the verb “usiłować” [to try, strive] to most aptly define/summarise my actions.

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In response to the question addressed at the conference, I ask myself and those reading this text the following question: When does the awareness of meaning and the ability to verify meaning, not only in ourselves but also in the behaviour of others, first appear?

Especially the latter ability seems particularly important, as it applies to the evaluation of the emotional state of others.

## Ad rem

*Okolice Sztuki* [The Circumstances of Art] is a term I devised for describing the location of the phenomena and activities that were only associated with the art emanating from Polska Łódź Strych.<sup>1</sup>

Time: the final quarter of the 20th century.

Persons, i.e.: artists (who professed different forms of art, who were mainly engaged in visual arts: plastic arts, photography, film, and the so-called new media), people and institutions who capitalise on artists' activities, i.e. arts patrons (patrons and sponsors, dealers, gallery owners, museum administrators, critics, publishers), manufacturers of tools and materials for creating art items, technical aids and critics, and, finally, art consumers – viewers and participants; and artists' muses, family, friends, and neighbours.

The meaning associated with active or passive participation in *Okolice Sztuki* seems indisputable. For many, it defines the quality and level of their lives. It often offers a mental assurance of having been present within the area of art, close to artists. The seemingly obvious meaning in being an artist is not so unequivocal, as the practice of art may also be a torment (consider, e.g. Vincent van Gogh), even more so when one considers that fame does not always entail fortune. Finally, the meaninglessness of artistic activities is noticed by neighbours, whose peace is

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1 In the following years, the activities of the creators surrounding Strych also occurred outside Łódź or even the country. Those affiliated with Łódź Kaliska were the most active.

shattered by artists, and the families of artists to whom artists devote far less time and money than to their art. This mostly applies to the attitudes of those determined artists for whom life is art and art is life.

## A few remarks on the art of the end of the 20th century in Poland and in Strych

Polish art of the 1980s developed in parallel: in official galleries and state-run culture institutions (sparingly). Some creators displayed their works in museums (the so-called regime artists) or in galleries run by Catholic churches (“the black” we used to call them)<sup>2</sup>, while others met at independent venues: in private flats, workshops, etc., while yet others ceased their artistic activities altogether. The paths of those groups did not cross. They kept an eye on each other, but not intrusively, and they rather refrained from commenting on the others’ activities. The community of “independent” artists, sometimes also referred to as “alternative” artists, basically did not care less about the attitudes of other artists.

Strych [The Attic], located in a tenement house at 149 Piotrkowska St. in Łódź, was in 1979–1987 not only a place for drying laundry (Fig. 1). Before it was turned into an attractive flat (midway down Piotrkowska St., the showcase street of Łódź), it had been a private workshop and an independent gallery, and, I believe, a major location for people and events from *Okolice Sztuki* (Fig. 2), which was confirmed in several dozen academic studies, including master’s theses, doctoral dissertations, and habilitation dissertations on Polish art of the end of the 20th century.<sup>3</sup> My personal satisfaction was that the location was reached by mail addressed to: “STRYCH Lodz Poland.”

I am reviewing the phenomenon of Strych for the following reasons: in the period under discussion I was the owner of the place (and I still am). I invited some of my students to *Strych*, along with newly acquainted artistically and intellectually original young people (Zbyszek Libera, the well-known and appreciated progressive artist, held his first exhibition in Strych). As a basic standard, I assured them a floor to sleep on and, rarely, board; I co-organised vernissages and events which gathered Polish and foreign artists; finally, I co-originated art phenomena of the final years of the 20th century, which today are considered as important (Fig. 3).

<sup>2</sup> Unofficial terms, used rarely, usually condescendingly.

<sup>3</sup> See more: E. Nowina-Sroczyńska, “Uczty nomadów. Szkic do antropologicznej opowieści o łodzi Kaliskiej”, *Łódzkie Studia Etnograficzne* 2007, vol. 46, pp. 167–179.



Fig. 1. Artists' meeting in the attic. Source: own study.



Fig. 2. Poster from the Strych chronicles. Source: kulturazrzuty.pl



Fig. 3. Tango; author's page. Source: kulturazrzuty.pl

The name *Kultura Zrzuty*<sup>4</sup> immediately caught on among the members (Fig. 4). The presentations, vernissages, and events in Strych gathered dozens and sometimes even several hundred people and artists; mainly people from *Okolice Sztuki* (Fig. 5).



**Fig. 4.** Poster of *Kultura Zrzuty*. Source: kulturazrzuty.pl

4 As defined by Zocha, i.e. Grażyna Łuczko: "In 1984, Jacek Józwiak came up with the name *Kultura Zrzuty* for a group of artists gathered around the Strych workshop in Łódź. The point was to put into one basket all ideas, concepts, and notions, but also to organise exhibitions, en plein air sessions and events together. Strych gathered a group of extremely interesting people, e.g. Łódź Kaliska (Marek Janiak, Andrzej Kwietniewski, Adam Rzepecki, Andrzej Świetlik, and Andrzej Wielogórski), Zbigniew Libera, Jerzy Truszkowski, Zbigniew Bińczyk, Grzegorz Zygiel, Zygmunt Rytko, Jacek Kryszkowski, Zbyszko Trzeciakowski; there were also young art historians, e.g. Jola Ciesielska and Krzysztof Jurecki, cinematographers from the Film School, e.g. Tomek Snopkiewicz and Jacek Józwiak, as well as older masters, e.g. Józek Robakowski and Andrzej Różycki." ("Łatwiej było działać w grupie. Rozmowa z Zofią Łuczko", *Dwutygodnik.com*, <https://www.dwutygodnik.com/arttykul/6135-latwiej-bylo-dzialac-w-grupie.html> [accessed on: 21.05.2019]).



**Fig. 5.** Debates in Strych. Source: kulturazrzuty.pl

The peak of Strych gallery activity occurred during the period of Martial Law, and a few years after it was lifted (1981, 1987). That was preceded (from 1979) by meetings in my workshop of the students of architecture at Lodz University of Technology. Apart from design work, those meetings were focussed around debates on current civilisational problems. We opposed the aggressive modernisation of Łódź's urban space or of culture in general.<sup>5</sup>

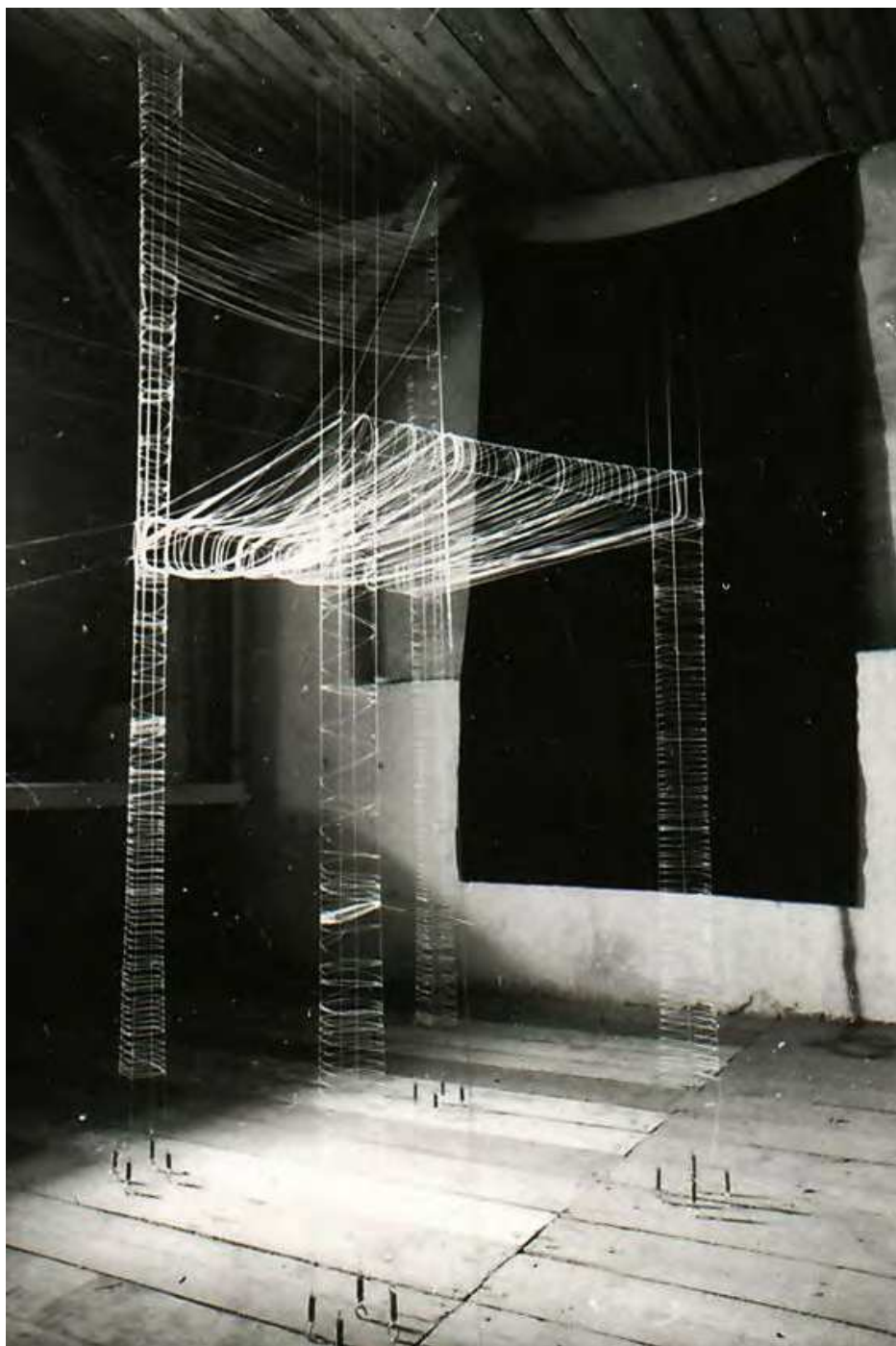
Allow to me stress that the Łódź artistic community of *Okolice Sztuki* was, at that time, the most active and creative artistic community in Poland. In the first half of the 1980s, artists themselves organised in Strych a dozen or so original vernissages, presentations, performance-type shows, installations and concerts, and a dozen or so issues of the Tango journal was edited and published<sup>6</sup> (Fig. 6–8).

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<sup>5</sup> One resounding outcome of those discussions was the project "Odślonięcie Pomnika Kamienicy" [Revealing of the Monument of the Tenement House] (7 May 1981).

<sup>6</sup> An art journal with a circulation of 200 copies (censorship limitations) of original pages.





**Fig. 6.** Maja Gordon's chair. Source: kulturazrzuty.pl

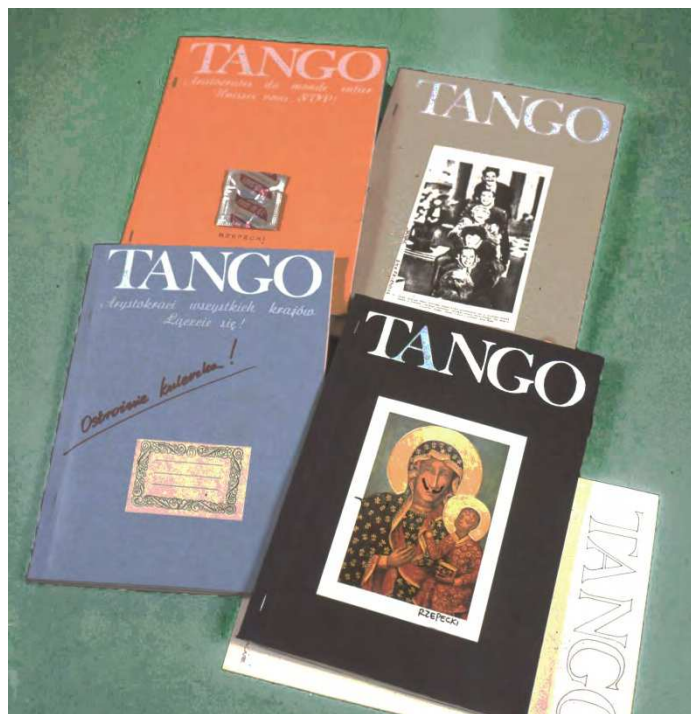


Fig. 7. Tango. Source: kulturazrzuty.pl



Fig. 8. Editing Tango. Source: kulturazrzuty.pl

Several national festivals of Nieme Kino [Silent Movies] gathered independent cinema artists from Poland and the students and lecturers of the Łódź Film School (Fig. 9).



Fig. 9. Poster of Nieme Kino. Source: kulturazrzuty.pl

I attribute the greatest merit for the development and the course of later events in Strych to Marek Janiak<sup>7</sup>, the co-founder of the Łódź Kaliska group, which celebrated its 40th anniversary in 2019. Marek Janiak and Andrzej Kwietniewski tried to define the meaning of their activities by editing art manifestos, which became the hallmarks of their attitudes and existential meaning in the area of art<sup>8</sup> (Fig. 10–12).

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7 It was foolish of me to hand over for six months (in the autumn of 2001) the keys to my workshop in the attic to Marek Janiak.

8 After Marek Janiak:

“I am an avant-garde artist because I naturally jump into extremes [...] most importantly, I am fully aware of the fact that my activities are very important though unappreciated I constantly need to be brave, and that is very tiring I am sometimes afraid that the community might not accept me—that thought terrifies me I used to be a constructive artist, but I was not successful, now I create embarrassing art Either way, I will win the competition for the God of artists” (17/06/1982).

After A. Kwietniewski and M. Janiak: *FOR NEEDFUL ART*:

“to profess needful art one must sit comfortably, or even lounge, at lunch would be best [...] you need to eat bananas and many delicacies and pomegranates, meat cutlets, fish, frogs and snails, if that’s your thing, but not hearts.  
satisfying sexual needs to excess  
sense of social success, best in writing, devoted friends  
it’s better to be a healthy and talented artist than sickly and inept  
money is important only to be able to afford different whims [...] you need to praise everyone, mainly those who either way receive infinite trust, so you do not need to pretend anything  
all that makes art truly needful and commonly understandable  
female artists must be beautiful (Abramowicz)  
no trouble with communication, everyone must have warmth  
some more bananas, unless someone prefers watermelons, for every artist to have big portfolios, be included in encyclopaedias and anthologies  
every art should be needful, so that no one has to bow or make an effort  
also, for not to necessarily write or read manifestos, only glance over, oh, and mainly not to make too much effort” (excerpts from manifestos, saved in my private collection).





Fig. 11. One of the slogans. Source: kulturazrzuty.pl



Fig. 12. Slogan – provocation. Source: kulturazrzuty.pl

In the following years, the Strych community engaged in activities outside of Łódź organising, with the immeasurable kindness of Zbyszek Bińczyk and his mother, national private en plein air sessions in Teofilów near Spała<sup>9</sup> (Fig. 13–14).



**Fig. 13.** En plein air session in Teofilów + illustration. Source: kulturazrzuty.pl

<sup>9</sup> The first of such activities was the weekly joint artistic activity of the artists from the *urząd@miasta* and Łódź Kaliska groups in Krakow. It was realized in the Krakow Market Square (“upadek zupełny” [complete downfall]) and in the yard of the small tenement house in Kanoniczna St.



**Fig. 14.** Meeting of artists in Teofilów. Source: kulturazrzuty.pl

The associations of the artistic activities in Strych, during the en plein air sessions in Teofilów, and in Świetlica at Zofia's with Dada seem obvious. Allow me to quote some of my favourite bon mots created at that time, which gave us encouragement and a sense of freedom.<sup>10</sup>

You should take an artist's word.

Whoever has God in their heart, they are not afraid of death. /folk/

True art requires sacrifice. /Makary's cousin after the loss of accordion, a keepsake after a deceased father, during the shooting of the performance /film "Maszyny drżące, kominy dymiące"/

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<sup>10</sup> "The community of *Kultura Zrzuty* was a team of intelligent and witty people who kept exchanging bon mots, many of which became cornerstone expressions of *Kultura Zrzuty*. Tomasz Snopkiewicz recorded a large collection of those, and he published them in 4 collections *Nowa Sztuka-Zawołania*, others lodged in the still working, thank God, gracious memory, and others still were lost." (<http://www.kulturazrzuty.pl/hasla.php> [accessed on: 21.05.2019]).



God is envious of our mistakes! /Janiak, Sulima-Suryń, Bińczyk/  
 Art cannot be too arduous. /Janiak/  
 Fleeting forms in art fascinate me, so I go in and fart. /Janiak/  
 We demand big boobs for little money! /Łódź Kaliska/  
 Truth be told, there is one truth that there is one truth. /collective/  
 Strych is the final refuge for pure art. /Rytka/  
 It's not true that Łódź Kaliska is an eternal destroyer /Marcel Duchamp/  
 Oye, Randy, how much's the candy? /folk, used by Makary/  
 Thinking limits art. /Kwietniewski/  
 Every woman is a fag because they love men. /E.K.?  
 Laziness is the duty of every citizen of the PRL [Polish People's Republic].  
 /Kryszkowski/  
 Only you truly know your art. /Janiak, Snopkiewicz/  
 Art, just like snot, comes from the brain. /Snopkiewicz/  
 Art couldn't care less about you. /Łódź Kaliska/  
 Art pollutes the environment. /Łódź Kaliska/

An artist should sit comfortable in an armchair and eat bananas. /Janiak/

The intentional careless form of the manifestos and most of the quoted maxims suggests the nonchalance of their authors and the entire community of *Kultura Zrzuty*, though, in my opinion, that is a simplification. Their obvious clear meaning was conveyed in the provocation towards the general standards of behaviour and rules. Between the participants of events and discussions there sometimes arose disputes thick with arguments about the foundations in art, especially about the honesty and authenticity of the presented attitudes, works, and opinions (Fig. 15–16).



Fig. 15. Art discourse. Source: kulturazrzuty.pl



Fig. 16. Fundamental questions. Source: kulturazrzuty.pl

## Anioł w piekle (rzecz o Strychu)<sup>11</sup>

Professor Ewa Nowina-Sroczyńska, an anthropologist of culture, aptly defined the activities of the artists in Strych as “Karnawalizowanie sztuki i życia” [Carnivalisation of art and life].<sup>12</sup> I am envious of the accuracy of the term. I myself see meaning in my own escape and in the escape of the artists of *Kultura Zrzuty* into alternate worlds when faced with the common emotional, ideological and artistic standards applicable at that time; I also view it as an expression of hidden helplessness, on the one hand, and of attitudes filled with determination combined with artistic nonchalance, on the other.<sup>13</sup> Having stripped the meaning forced onto culture by norms and limitations, the artists found themselves at a crossroads. An extreme version of their helplessness was the public burning of copies of TANGO by Jacek Józwiak, their co-founder, and the total ban of Jacek Kryszkowski on propagating and commenting upon his works. Yet it must be said that JK should be considered as one of the major figures in establishing the intellectual foundation for the artistic

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11 Title of a study by Jolanta Ciesielska *Anioł w piekle (rzecz o Strychu)* [Angel in hell (about Strych)] (Ciesielska Jolanta, “Anioł w piekle (rzecz o Strychu)”, [in:] *Co słycać: sztuka najnowsza*, ed. M. Sitkowska, Warszawa 1989, pp. 203–208.).

12 E. Nowina-Sroczyńska, *Mistrzowie ostentacyjnych transgresji: Łódź Kaliska z antropologiem w tle*, Łódź 2018.

13 “Strych became a place of various organised meetings as well as completely spontaneous ones, while Martial Law was a trigger which turned it into a 24/7 flophouse with a canteen supported with membership premiums. From the end of 1981 until the beginning of 1985 (or, in my opinion, 1987), it was the meeting place of people of various professions: professors and students, actors, biologists, musicians, film-makers, ethnographers, and art historians; professional plastic artists were the smallest group. They were the “discovered curiosities of human fauna,” as Jacek Kryszkowski, the most radical member of *Kultura Zrzuty* called them. [...] A major role in it was played by the artists of the new media originating from Warsztat Formy Filmowej (Józef Robakowski, Andrzej Różycki), as well as the Muses of Łódź Kaliska, women who were both beautiful and smart. The main task of the members of *Kultura Zrzuty* [...] was to create a sense of community and to eradicate any borderlines between professional and non-professional art leaving that taxonomy, as the members used to say, to museologists. Efforts were made to ensure that the borderline between the audience and artists presenting their works was not established. The community of play and spontaneity did not preclude disputes over art.

The main problem which emerged in the discussions and activities was the lack of acceptance of the norms applicable in culture. The problem of an artist's acceptance by society was being challenged. Members expressed their disbelief in items of art as the elements for multiplying cultural riches. They broke off from cultural habits. [...] Instead, they proposed a turn of colloquial reality. [...] They challenged all definitions, they continued to move around “marginalia”, “releasing themselves from the category of meaning.”. Vide: E. Nowina-Sroczyńska: “Ucztę nomadów. Szkic do antropologicznej opowieści o Łodzi Kaliskiej”, *Łódzkie Studia Etnograficzne* 2007, vol. 46, pp. 167–179.

community of *Kultura Zrzuty*. Those artists made attempts to find meaning in their own activities by, at the same time, negating the meaning in creating works of art. Maybe that is what holds the mystery/conundrum of those *Okolice Sztuki*? The canon of joint creative play became common and superior, which contested and provoked reality, but it also treated its own activity without inflating its significance. By negating the meaning of accepted and commonly applicable cultural standards, it offered the comfort of independence, virtually from everything (Fig. 17–18).



Fig. 17. Poster of *Sztuka bez sensu* [Meaningless art]. Source: [kulturazrzuty.pl](http://kulturazrzuty.pl)



**Fig. 18.** Upadek Zupełny in the Market Square in Krakow. Source: kulturazrzuty.pl

## Conclusion

In confirming the lack of any noticeable goals of the discussed activities, I stress the obvious meaning of that persistence. I share the view of Jarek Guc, among others, that: “goals are pointless!” **I support the End of the culture of goals!**<sup>14</sup>

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**14** After Jarek Guc: “I have no life’s goals, year goals, month goals, or daily goals, and I’m fine with that. *Hello?* [...]. I make sure that my day, month, year, my entire life have meaning. That, of course, implies certain actions, steps, issues to be resolved, yet those are the outcomes of searching, defining and discovering meaning—they may seem like goals, but they are not. What will I do with this minute, hour, or day so they are meaningful? What is important, crucial, significant to me? What does my meaning filter indicate as that? What do I wish for, what do I dream of? Of fulfilling a goal? Of things? Of achievements? I dream of doing meaningful things. It is meaning that creates value and enables us to exist among values. Work in compliance with values is the search and fulfilment of meaning. Management through values is management compliant with meaning, doing things which are important and significant. A goal can be a trap—meaning releases you. [...] Meaning brings freedom, including to change a goal or a plan. Goals are secondary in relation to meaning. Plans are secondary in relation to goals. It is far too often that a plan becomes the golden calf of action obscuring the goal, while the goal is in the long run meaningless. **It is the optics of meaning that indicate the proper place of a goal and a plan.** People

I find meaning in having a full life and, if God's willing, decent life, contrasting it with the meaning of comfort measured based on the number of people Facebook-liking my things.

Contrary to Marek Janiak's views I stress the need to emphasise the community nature of the actions of *Kultura Zrzuty*, which occurred in Strych and in Teofilów (Fig. 19–20).



**Fig. 19.** Artist community. Source: kulturazrzuty.pl

will follow you if they can see meaning in that. [...] We use far too often the rejecting expressions of “this is pointless” or “this is nonsense”. Why would anyone do anything which is meaningless or maintain meaningless relationships?

Let's be blunt about this: Mother Teresa, Gandhi, Dalai Lama – what do you see in the foreground of their actions? The fulfilment of a goal or meaning and actions filled with deep meaning? Which business people do we remember best and assign them to “the light side”? [...] **It is the sense of meaning of that which you have to do that gets you out of the bed in the morning full of energy** or the lack of that sense every now and again presses the snooze button on your alarm clock. Success, that real, deep, long-lasting success which does not trigger envy is a function of meaning, an outcome of its fulfilment, the added effect of nourishing meaning. [...] It is a good idea to push back in time **the short or medium-term goals to be able to fulfil meaning. Goals are secondary in relation to meaning. Goals not embedded in meaning are meaningless.**” (J. Guc, “Cele są bez sensu! Koniec kultury celów!”, *Facetpo40.pl*, <https://facetpo40.pl/wolne-mysli/cele-sa-bez-sensu-koniec-kultury-celow/> [accessed on: 21.05.2019]).



**Fig. 20.** Joint fulfilment of a piece of meat [play on words in Polish as “sztuka” denotes both “art” and “a piece”]. Source: kulturazrzuty.pl

Starting with a whip-round for food and vodka during meetings, through joint work, sleepless nights while editing *Tango*, to often collective designing of new art events. Apart from active creators, we gathered a considerable number of people, mainly the students of the University of Lodz, the Institute of Architecture, the Film School, the Plastic Arts School, and all other kinds of “friends-and-relations”. And simply to be near intellectual free artists, around free art. Neither can the years of *Kultura Zrzuty* be described as a minor event in my life’s experience. Those years which we experienced together continue to influence my favourable disposition towards people associated with the arts and my understanding approach to their activities in art. I must admit that never before (that is, before the Łódź period of *Kultura Zrzuty* and Strych) had I ever experienced so many stimuli moulding my awareness of art.

In my personal evaluation of the meaning of the actions in *Okolice Sztuki* in Strych, I assign the highest value to: the intellectual mingling, the uncompromising courage in contrast to doctrines, and most of all the **community** of action, not of goals! There was no common goal! If there even were some private ones, no one cared about them. What remains is satisfaction and good memories; for me, what

is important is the involuntary share in the successes of Z. Libera, Łódź Kaliska, and the ability to co-create *Kultura Zrzuty* and Tango.

Yet it is not true that all members retained in their consciousness the conviction that those events had meaning. There was some meaninglessness, too, i.e. broken families, impeded relations with wives or children, and sometimes a lack of commercial results of actions, including those outside art. And, then, there were the minor stresses, e.g. squabbles with the communist police or waiters, and the internment of Z.L., a participant of the events.

The combination of the world of art and life, though formally attractive, was not obvious.

Individual choices assigned personal meanings.

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Włodzimierz Adamiak

## Sens aktywności w *Okolicach Sztuki* – działo się na Strychu

### *Streszczenie*

Tekst jest komentarzem do zjawisk w polskiej sztuce współczesnej końca dwudziestego wieku. Stanowi relację „z pierwszej ręki” współuczestnika wydarzeń i gospodarza miejsca. Miejszem tym była prywatna pracownia autora, na strychu łódzkiej kamienicy w centrum miasta, w kręgu artystów tworzących sytuacje, spotkania, wydarzenia i obiekty, które ustanowiły *Kulturę Zrzuty* – zjawiska opisującego działalność artystów niezależnych od struktur państwa i oficjalnych mecenatów w latach osiemdziesiątych dwudziestego wieku. Analiza zdarzeń z obszaru „Okolic Sztuki” niezależnej stała się inspiracją do przemyśleń autora na temat kondycji artystów tworzących na Strychu w niezmiennym konflikcie między fizyczną i społeczną egzystencją, a wolnością w sztuce.

**Słowa kluczowe:** *Okolice Sztuki*, *Kultura Zrzuty*, Strych

## The meaning of activities in *Okolice Sztuki* – much went on at Strych

### *Summary*

The text is a commentary to the phenomena in Polish modern art in the final years of the 20th century. It constitutes a “first-hand” account by a participant of the events and the host of the location. The location was the author’s private workshop in the attic of a Łódź tenement house in the very centre of the city, in the circles of artists creating situations, meetings, events and objects, which established *Kultura Zrzuty* [the Whip-round Culture], a phenomenon which described the activities of artists independent of state institutions and officials patrons in the 1980s. The analysis of the events within the area of independent *Okolice Sztuki* inspired the author to discuss the form of other artists and his own, who created art in Strych

[literally: attic] in an unchanging conflict between physical and social existence and freedom in art.

**Keywords:** *Okolice Sztuki, Kultura Zrzuty, Strych.*

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At the end of the 1970s, he made his own workshop available for cultural events (which later, during the Martial Law period, became the Strych gallery). He is the co-originator of Fundacja Ulicy Piotrkowskiej (1989). For many years, he was the Foundation's board member, deputy president, and president in 2011–2015. Currently, he is the president of the Foundation's Council. He is the co-originator, member of the Chapter and a juror of the Najlepsze Wnętrzne Roku [Best Interior of the Year] competition, which has been held for the last 25 years, and since 2007 he has been the juror of all editions of the Potęga Łodzi – Power of Łódź photo competition. He received awards (together with the urząd\*miasta group) at national and international competitions. The most important ones include: 2nd International Architecture Biennale in Krakow in 1987 – 1st prize in the Exhibition and Grand Prix of the Biennale; Competition for a project for the modernisation of the Rubinstein alleyway in Łódź – 2nd award; Competition for a project for the modernisation of Piotrkowska St. – a joint 1st prize; National Competition for a Design for Adapting ECI, a CHP plant in Łódź, into the Energopolis Science and Education Centre – 1st award. Co-originator and co-author of the rules and regulations, and the juror of competitions: Ogólnopolski Konkurs Urbanistyczno-Architektoniczny Wielkomiejska Piotrkowska, Ogólnopolski Konkurs Architektoniczno-Plastyczny Piotrkowska Obiecana (for a design for the modernisation and equipping the street), Ogólnopolski Konkurs Architektoniczno-Plastyczny Łazienka dla Piotrkowskiej, Ogólnopolski Konkurs Architektoniczno-Plastyczny Kiosk dla Łodzi.

He is the author several dozen articles, papers and presentations devoted to Łódź, mostly concerning the quality of the city's public space, and selected problems of modern art.