

Academy of Fine Arts in Katowice
The Art Department

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"Plant as a medium in shaping interdisciplinary activities at the borderline of installation, painting and
video"

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In carrying out the project, a leading theme was experience of a novice gardener acquired either during childhood and today. A series of works has been created showing the landscape of the closest surroundings, understood as a space of the family garden. From a broader perspective one can see a theme of a relation between a man and artificially generated nature, where a gardener controls all the processes of nature. I am the author of several projects dealing with the topic in question and the presented works are my attempt to express myself in another medium that is painting. I have focused primarily on searching for common themes in such areas as: art, nature, technology. Extension of the areas of interest has enabled me to create new ideas and artistic strategies. The concept of work has evolved in the direction of painting and installation. Video and photography served as a tool to record changes in nature. On the basis of these compositions of the individual images have been prepared. Videos are subordinated to painting, it is them that produce other activities. Some of my works refer to experience and information gathered from my fellow gardeners and hobbyists from my immediate surrounding. In this case this is one of the works that document my own experience gained during my work with plants. In my dissertation video "Remember about gardens" I observe how residents of city suburbs arrange their home gardens, create landscape, systematise, domesticate and reproduce a fraction of their favourite landscape. Newly created residential areas, surrounded by green spaces, are laboratories and endless experiment. In a theatrical scenery limited by a concrete fence three garden plot holders spend their free time. A receiver accompanied the main characters in their everyday activities such as: planting plants, watering or cleaning. An important part of the installation was the common sound space. It was sound that connected isolated, mysterious worlds. This installation was to popularise various forms of active leisure time. Appropriate management of moments devoted to relaxation is a huge problem of contemporary overworked society. A video for which the scenery was an allotment garden broke the stereotype of looking at the Silesian landscape as an agglomeration of strong forms of industrial architecture. Equally important project devoted to space is the installation "Botanist", put into effect in the Gallery of Contemporary Art BWA in Katowice. The project involved placing pots filled with soil together with watering system in the gallery. Seeds put into soil in an incidental order started to sprout. This system referred to illegal backyard plant breeding. The "Nettles" project put into effect as a part of "Green Jazdów" at

CSW Zamek Ujazdowski involved harvesting nettles growing at the park hill, obtaining fibres and plaiting a hammock. Monotonous operations were a pretext for integration of the participants and a conversation about crises, not only financial ones.

References to the world of botany stem from my childhood interests. When I was a child, I was fascinated by setting up a garden. It was manifested in starting seed-beds, growing basic vegetables and caring for their development. In subsequent years the concept grew, and I annexed new spaces for my beds of flowers. In my garden I would grow plants brought with me from my childhood expeditions around my neighbourhood. Most often these were common perennial plants such as sedum, fern or creeping Charlie. Further samples I was getting from my family members. Collecting plants transformed into a passion for gardening. While taking care of new plants I would get experienced in planting, cropping and propagation of subsequent specimens. My studio is in this very garden. It naturally evokes in me a connection between painting and horticulture. Quite often when I go to my studio I end up doing gardening stuff. These two areas require a full commitment of a person practising them. This selfless action is not always successful.

Plants produce incredible aura and evoke a lot of positive emotions and associations, affecting most of the human senses. Polysensority of plants brings us closer to the world of flora. Landscape and individual plant species have been a topic in the art history for ages. In painting they have been a form of a scenery for the main topic of a work of art and they became a stand-alone topic.

Why painting? Paintings as well as development of plants, is a process in which time is one of the most important factors. During this process we experience increased concentration and relaxation, which fosters reflection and meditation. This is the moment a quasi-scientific observation and analysis of a painted object. In contrast to photography painting is meticulous and time consuming registration of nature, which gives the technique its nobleness. Painting is a return to the acquired skills to communicate with a recipient. The desire to exchange multidisciplinary activities designed to interact with a recipient, for intimate form of transferring a message. It is worth adding, that this is an attempt to detach from other complex forms of communication. Return to painting is turning to a tangible form of a certain object, an analogue record of reality. Digital image or workshop actions function legitimately only at a given moment of time. Painting, on the other hand, is permanent. A painting is an

analysis of a problem of not only a theme which is a garden, but also of a purely formal issue such as composition, colour and space.

In painting, as this is the case with nature, the most important issue is an endless process. Less important is the effect of building and creating a new reality is less important. At the very beginning it is difficult to determine the result of work which is the sum of various parameters. There is a continuous ability to make changes. In nature one can note cyclicity related with a biodynamic calendar, where there is time for development and dying of a plant. While in artistic developments there is idea and its implementation, which shows periodicity similar to the one observed in nature. What is intriguing is the ability to change and improve a concept, both in work with plants, and in artistic measures we can approach a single theme in different ways. All the time it is about work in the process requiring direct intervention in a given reality, working with an open, organic structure.

As a result of my Ph.D. dissertation a cycle of paintings was painted supplemented by three installations. This cycle is about horticultural failures - these are mostly popular plants in the phase of infection. The process of painting is an attempt to answer the question why these plants are dying. What was the reason of this horticultural disaster. The works are also a form of empirical learning about the world of botany, especially the specific species I have in my collection. The series of works refers to my garden. It is an attempt to record activities of an amateur gardener, who makes a lot of mistakes in his gardening. We may emphasize that this is the attempt not only to collect plants, but also experience. Huge interest in social interest in gardening culture results in publishing effects of innovative concepts of plant breeding on the Internet. Authors present photographs of successful experiments and omit their failures. Attempting to find reasons of gardening disasters is, in my opinion, a very interesting theme for a painter. A painting is an attempt to analyse and contemplate biological processes that take place in nature.



Cocos nucifera

Nowadays sale of plant has been commercialised. Shopping centres offer various types of flower all year long. In the autumn we can purchase chrysanthemums and heathers in different colours, varieties and compositions. In the winter we can find Christmas poinsettias on store shelves, and bulbs of hyacinths, crocuses and daffodils that announce spring. While the summer we can find coconut palms that remind us holidays in warm countries. Also producers encourage us by colourful photographs on packagings. Subconsciously we want to have a substitute of exoticism on our window sill. Unfortunately this is not beneficial for a plant, since its needs high concentration of salt. Failure to provide basic conditions for development contributes to a slow drying of roots. As the result we fail.



Lactuca sativa

Usually seedlings of lettuce can be bought in garden shops. WE are able to say precisely how many seedlings w need to but to plant them in our planned vegetable garden. More ecological solution seems to be planting seeds of lettuce by ourselves. Preparation of seedlings by ourselves gives us more satisfaction. We nurture them systematically and observe their development. However when we plant seeds, we do not know how many seeds is going to sprout. The painting shows a process of image shows the process of planting too densely sown salads. High density is not beneficial for individual plants and lack of light makes a plant to grow dynamically. Plants are frail and not able to develop properly, a stable stem is not developed. In such the situation a solution of the problem is planting the seedlings away from one another. I tried to do so, however, after two-hour work it became clear that there was no space for further planting. In the course of my work most of the frail plants would break and

got ruined. Planting the seeds too close from each other, on the other hand, would be a mistake . Many of them would not be able to grow properly.



Meadow

A primary responsibility of each gardener should be collecting seeds. You can find them in fellow gardens, but most of them can be found in a natural environment. An artificial meadow was created in a shortcut style. The seeds were bought by accident in a shopping centre. Commercial sale does not offer us plants characteristic for our landscape. Currently it is very popular to set up seed banks, where curators gather particularly endangered seeds. However in the next season I myself collected sets of seeds of local perennial plants. The process of painting took too long. Only in the late spring the seeds were planted in my meadow. Unfortunately, not every plant sprouted. I did not manage to achieve my concept of a flowery meadow.



Collection

A moment of dying among plants is often imperceptible. We transfer dying plants to a new location in order to regenerate them and give them a stimulus to recover. Each amateur gardener has such a place for less representative plants. We use it for less representative plants. Remains of plants function for some time before we throw them away. For the purpose of my painting I created an extra space for dried plants in my studio.



Dry August

The painting shows trimmed bonsai tree. The first trimming and shaping of my spruce was successful. The next step of shaping was to be wiring and bending. In the meantime I went for a short vacation. When I arrived my plant was still green, but all the needles fell off, which made me a bit anxious. Exceptionally hot August was the cause of drying a shallow and narrow root zone and therefore dying of the plant.



Solaris

For an early stage vine grower Solaris is a perfect variety. This variety is easy to grow, since it is resistant to low temperatures and all kinds of disease. The first attempts to grow this variety were carried out in the seventies in Germany. Seedlings documented on the page were sent in a box, secured by a yellow plastic bag and wrapped by a damp cloth. My fellow gardener sent me also a meticulously drawn and described instruction of starting a backyard vineyard. All the seedlings have taken roots well and produce a lot of fruit every year.



Spruce

On the edge of the garden there is a patch with low spruce trees. These trees are brought home during Christmas season to become a Christmas decoration. Each year I try to move them home gently together with roots, since i want them back in my garden after Christmas. In December the tree is being transferred in various rooms of the house, from the coolest one to the living room. Last year I did not manage to keep the exceptional tree alive. Currently there are still four trees on the patch.



Series of installations: observation, sprouting and transportation device

In the studio I spontaneously create installations related and subordinated to plants and painting. A sudden need provokes creation of constructions made of parts of other works. Wooden elements are modules used in various ways. Their first purpose was to transport a tomato seedling with fruits. I created a capsule surrounded by a food-quality film. A bush located in the middle of the capsule was fastened by a jute twine. Another time these parts were used to build a rough-and-ready hydroponic vegetable cultivation. A plastic bag and other plastics were used to build a water container. The last installation is a plant observation device. A grid that divides a painted object into quarters was created for still life.