

PhD Thesis Summary

Refugium - an antidote to the co-called Casino Culture

The topic of my PhD thesis *Refugium - an antidote to the co-called Casino Culture*¹ resulted from the need to come to terms with the negative phenomena associated with the functioning of the contemporary world such as the control mechanisms we are all subjected to every day as individuals and a society which I try to analyse and understand at least to the minimal extent.

The first chapter discusses the issues of technology whose direction of development may rightly be a source of anxiety and fear. In the dissertation I often refer to Jonathan Crary's observations - the thinker describes the manipulation a contemporary man is subjected to through technology that instead of facilitating the development of individuals becomes instrumental in the growth of corporations and whose science-fiction-like inventions strengthen "panoptical practices" and introduce constant control over people. Further on, I quote a theory by Guy Debord who investigates the problem of *society of the spectacle* with the show as a model of living and culture intercepted by the media publicising what has so far remained private. In this society, banality and absurd have achieved the status of attraction, a momentary event and "the spectacle taken in its whole is at the same time the result and the project of the existing mode of production. It is not a supplement to the real world an added, decorative element. It is the heart of the unreality of real society. In all its specific forms, as information or propaganda, as advertisement or direct entertainment consumption, the spectacle is the present model of socially dominant life. It is the omnipresent affirmation of the choice already made in production and its corollary consumption"². The era that has come is a period of temporality and the lack of attention, memory and concentration. Sliding on the surface of sense, the so-called scanning has become common, which becomes reflected in the world of art.

The second chapter constitutes an opposition to the first one, as it contains examples of works acting as "safety valves" and demonstrating how one can distance themselves from the overwhelming cacophony of everyday life. I refer to artists whom I consider able to "stand aside" (their creations are objections to the increasingly oppressive reality) and propose works that favour reflection, meditation and coming to a halt.

¹ The Casino Culture is a term used by George Steiner, a critic of contemporary customs, to describe the constant game of appearances, consisting in renouncing one's own convictions and skills and succumb to changing, seasonal fashions; this regards an increased consumption of both disposable goods and products of culture.

² G. Debord, *The Society of the Spectacle*, Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, Warsaw 2016, p. 34.

I then explain how my works constitute the antidote to the casino culture and what I understand by the escape - *refugium*. The process of creating my artistic graphic works was a form of looking for a meditative place, *refugium, shelter, escape*; however, the notion was transformed and realised in a metaphorical and subjective manner. I treat my realisations as an oneiric construction, dominated by primary forms that are a type of time capsule. The *Refugia* are safe places that act as shelters and the work on them became a process that facilitated self-reflection, a certain mental suspension in time and space. For me, they are like portals of metaphorical escape.

The third chapter contains an attempt to analyse the motifs present in my art and a technical note concerning lenticular technology I decided to use while creating the Refugium cycle.

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