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was started in Wrocław in 1970, initially as a gallery and then as a theoretical and practical idea uniting artists practising rationalized art.

In briefly defining the basic concepts or *Permafo*, one should draw attention to those programmatic statements which are the starting-point for a modified artistic practice:

1. The replacement of the symbolic relation: reality — artist — work of art by an operation on models of reality, i. e. by paradigmatic relations between formalized notations.

2. A heuristic study of reality as a set of sights (aspects of things) and pictures (formalized notations).

3. The treatment of visual and mental resolutions as isomorphic ones.

As coming under problem group 1 should be considered the exhibitions and theoretic statements by Natalia (*Intimate Photography* 1971) and Dlubak (*Tautologies* 1971) as well as Andr. Lachowicz's *Permart* (1971) which all determined the profile of *Permafo's* researches. At each of these exhibitions photography was used as a technique most pellucid and appropriate for presenting the idea of an art which is a study of the possibilities of art. An important programmatic event was the collective art manifestation *NS — A New Situation* (1972). It was a book in which Dlubak, Natalia, Jurkiewicz, Rosolowicz, Michalowska, Lachowicz and Pederewska presented their works. The book had been reproduced and photographic enlargements of the particular pages of the book were displayed at an exhibition in the Museum of Art in Łódź. This reversal of order (first a catalogue then an exhibit) pointed to the importance of concept and the secondariness of the exhibit. The book was a set of experiences realized in a pictorial and non-pictorial sphere and of critical and theoretical texts which constituted an attempt at formulating the grammar of art.

And Lachowicz's work *Visual and Mental Persuasion*, published in 1973, is an explication of this problem. This work is an experience which consists in summarizing a definite division of reality and reducing it to a finite number of recorded sights. This recording was done in a balanced manner according to the principle of not preferring (not favouring) any of the physical factors (such as time, shape, space) determining the reality under observation. The book contains 496 photographs which record, in an abbreviated form, 48 hours. The conclusions drawn from this experience can be reduced to the following statements:

1. Operations conducted on visual notations have in fact a mental effect.

2. The grammar of speech and the grammar of art are essentially different:

speech is a means of communicating news in a possibility exact and unequivocal way, artistic communication makes use of ambiguous formulations.

3. In comparison with manual notations, objectivized notations (film, photography) offer infinitely greater possibilities of interpreting meanings.

Thus, the search for definitions which are of importance to art should be conducted through logical and visiological studies with the empirical practice proceeding parallel to intellectual operations. *Visual and Mental Persuasion* is consistent with the theory of a regular field which was worked out by L. Kaćma and Lachowicz in 1972. This theory assumes that each sight (picture of reality) can be regarded as a material set of an infinite number of points. But each sight is bound up with meaning, it goes to the making of a complex visual and meaningful structure. A sign can be isolated from its meaning by a balanced (proportional) summarizing of the visual reality and recording it in accordance to a definite system. In this way we obtain a visual extract of a particular feature, such as shape, colour, its quality, brightness, saturation, dimension scale, and so on, which is equivalent (isomorphic) to the sight and has the form of a model notation on which evaluating mathematical operations can be carried out.

In *The Elements of the Regular Field Theory* (1973), Lachowicz suggests the use of the binary system arising from Boole's algebra which makes it possible for arithmetical operations to be conducted on visual extracts. This method enables one to make inferences about an art sign outside its meaning, to carry out decisive operations on the basis of the features of the visual structure of the picture. In this way it becomes possible to examine the syntactic relations of art signs and, furthermore, it is possible to work out concrete rules of the grammar of art comprising elements of visual physics and semantics. The most interesting is postulate no 10 of the regular field theory which states that a visual extract resulting from algebraic transformations can be subjected to a concretizing operation, to the operation of creating a concrete and objective visual reality. The sight evoked in this way emerges outside any stylistic and aesthetic classification by way of paravisual mathematical operations.

At the same time as the artistic and theoretical concepts of *Permafo* there took place a number of interesting actions which make up the picture of Polish modern art. Worth of notice is here Opalka's lonely and extraordinarily consistent work each element of which fits in with this artist's pithy, intrinsically coherent formula of life and work.

The exhibition *Aspects of Polish Modern Art* which was shown at the Con-

temporary Gallery (*Galeria Współczesna*) in Warsaw in 1975 was a review of works by artists sharing an orientation which regards art as a means of exploring the world. On display were works by Opalka, Kajetan Sosnowski, Natalia, Robakowski, Lachowicz, Bruszewski, Sosnowski, Partum, Kaćma, Berdyszak, Winiarski, Haka, Wojciechowski. In the same year, Józef Robakowski produced the film *The Live Gallery* showing almost the same group of artists and emphatically pointing to the fact that it is rational concepts that are at present the motive force of Polish avant-garde.

Thus the abandonment of illusive and aesthetic manual techniques, the use of anonymous means of notation such as photography and film, the reliance on logic and philosophy are conducive to exploring art through art and are at present an activity parallel to scientific research. □

Poland: Photo Art

di Zdzisław Sosnowski

Art as an artificial structure builds a characteristic model of reality, thus reflecting complicated visual and mental relations. In building this model an artist who uses media of probable presentation of the reality (photo, film, video), is able somehow to enrich this reality by adding complications within their structures. A sign which is a visual aspect of the relation and particularly informative, can be further « structuralized » so that the information that we receive from it will be not only a result of the reflection but, first of all, the result of a conscious application of a visual grammar. This way we obtain definitions impossible to reach through imagination and verbalization and at the same time unusually probable (as a reproduction of reality).

Many films and photographic works made by artists rely on the characteristic values of the film and photography structures. The unquestioned and already conventional adequacy of these media to reality is such that at the end we are sure to be looking at the reality and do not even doubt it. This is not due to technical tricks but to the conscious application of appropriate structures of reality and their reproductions; that is,

to the identification of relation rules. Through the above conventions the viewer becomes convinced of the observed phenomenon.

Sense and significance of these art works are revealed when that conviction is confronted with reality or, rather, when is related to linguistic rules. Characteristic and possibilities of film and photography rely on the situation selected by the camera, then they form all together a new value — the artistic sign. The function and structure of this sign differ basically from our present understanding of it.

The works by Natalia L.L. are a good example of this kind of artistic creation. In her photos and films she uses an attractive and conventional objectivism in order to refer in the first layer of perception to meanings that the viewer knows from his direct experience. By introducing minimal changes in the structure of the sign she directs perception towards linguistic rules which are used in art. Thus she gives way to the artistic considerations concerning visual grammar or, in a broader sense, art.

These works can be described as relations within a recording. Their structure is based on two levels that interact to build a third one. The first level consists in the choice of a part of reality and its recording by means of film or photography. The second higher level is the one of the relation of several recordings within the whole sign. The third level resulting from the two previous ones is the main one where new meanings are produced: namely the confrontation between the relations contained in a sign with the linguistic rules used by the viewer during the perception of reality.

Many artists also apply such rules of film or photo presentation and manipulate the visual structure in such a way that they obtain a reproduction of reality with features which were missing at the moment when they were recorded. Their creative activity is important because is mainly concerned with the linguistic rules applied by art, which they question and modify according to the changes taking place in reality. It is a two-ways response because this language results from reality as much as it « creates » it (broadening our perception and understanding).

In Poland the first works in this sense, anticipating often later achievements of the international art scene, were made in between 1971 and 1972. In that period the Permafo Gallery and the Gallery of Actual Art in Wroclaw were born. At the first large exhibition « Actual Art » (October 1972) young Polish artists presented their own films and photographic notations proposing new concepts and discussing over the present forms of art. Further investigations and works enabled some of them to get in

touch with people abroad and to introduce a new original artistic value into the circulation of information giving shape to modern art.

Trasforming Activity.

This was also possible because of mechanical reproduction and mass information. By eliminating the original work of art as such and by confining its presentation to a mere « communiqué » which can be multiplied, it was possible to establish a world structure of exchanges and informations. This has led to a situation where a « communiqué » separates us from the conditions determining it and functions on his own, thus creating new ways of relation that directly result from the context and its confrontation with reality.

In March 1975, at the Wspolczesna Gallery in Warsaw a « Reconstruction » was carried out, through the recognizable traces of a process of reproduction of a work by Douglas Huebler (« Variable Piece — 116 ») and a work by Richard Long (« Rolls of Stones »). Without ever seeing the originals and lacking any information about the place and circumstances in which they were built, an attempt was made to reconstruct their visual shape on the simple basis of the reproductions available through the mass media. In fact, it was the idea of the original which was reconstructed. It was a reconstruction of the deformations of the reproduction process. Thus the information read by the viewer referred to the process of manipulation and to the reproduction structures.

The traditional gallery or museum system dealing with the distribution of art appears to be entirely useless as to the present cultural situation. The structure needed now is one that can gather wider information, transform it and distribute it. What is clear is that we are operating with situations and their complications rather than, as previously, with static values or judgements. Warhol's « Factory » has been one progressive institution of this kind that transformed and diffused on a mass scale common ideas as well as relations. The result has been a reevaluation of the motivations, working methods and perceptions of the artist's activity. Now the whole complex of magazines, centres, bureaux, cooperation groups, is concerned with this transforming activity.

The artificial territory of art is now, as it has never been before, a reflection and a model of true relations. The essential difference which distinguishes art (and put it in a creative relation with reality) is thus derived by the continuous doubts raised by linguistic rules. The mechanical means of reproduction are in this case an equivalent of reality, and by allowing the artist to operate within their structures they help to determine the territory in which reality itself is investigated. □

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