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Living Sculpture and Anti-Monuments of Adam Kalinowski

Adam Kalinowski is an author of a number of monumental movable spatial realizations which he built with his own hands applying the technology of steel constructions. In the public sphere he puts installations in which the spectator, being in the movable part of the work, can take the position dependent on the power and direction of the wind in the given moment. Kalinowski's constructions are anti-monuments¹ – in contrast with monuments organising people around motionless myths. Recently he has been designing living sculptures from the earth covered with grass, changing in time, requiring concern and care.

The artist refers to the Constructivist and Dadaist tradition of work of Kasimir Malewicz, Vladimir Tatlin, Marcel Duchamp and Alexander Calder as well as to the more recent tradition of Land Art. Consciously alluding to artists of the international Fluxus movement, mainly Georg Brecht and John Cage who proposed that the artist should create the space for revealing sounds, Kalinowski has been creating installations revealing the dialectic of nature and culture forces.

Parents of Adam Kalinowski (born in 1959 in Poznań), Tadeusz and Anna continued in their painting the best traditions of the Polish Constructivism. In their studio in the 1960s and 1970s long night discussions of the Poznań artistic circle were held. For Adam the dearest was an ironic nonchalance, annexation of the everyday life through progressive works of art, connected with the Fluxus movement gestures which seemed absurd from the viewpoint of ordinary people. In 1977 he cooperated in the

Akumulatory 2 Gallery in Poznań in the Fluxus Festival, in 1986 he defended his master's thesis at Adam-Mickiewicz-University analysing semantics of works of Fluxus artists, and in 2000 he appeared in a film about Fluxus (*Fluxus Meeting*, TVP 2000). In the creative manner Kalinowski refers to the twentieth-century artistic dialectic of the movement and fixing (literal and mental), dialectic of the object and the construction. In 1998 Adam Kalinowski established the Tadeusz Kalinowski Art Foundation which deals with the promotion of the Anna Cyronek and Tadeusz Kalinowski work as well as other representatives of the Polish artistic scene.

Other dimension of the hammock

In 1932 Duchamp used the name "mobile" for the Calder objects which henceforth had the structure based on the balance of many suspended elements. Movable elements – like movable physical and mental points of view. Changing quickly in the 20th century artistic and political paradigms 'produced' a mentally mobile subject undermining stable conventions. Since the mid-1990s Kalinowski created objects powered by geared motors whose elements were changing their position in long time intervals, and then, starting from *The Earth Ship* (1997), he has been constructing dynamic transparent objects designed for open space. In 1998 Kalinowski built and hung a spatial object between three poles crowned with propellers of windmills. *The Cloud Room* – a cuboid with metal edges and walls partly from the net, and partly from the fabric with concentric holes – the whole object is light and open-work. In 2000 between three poles he hung *Sky-Reaching Hammock* – a metal open-work seat whose form resembled supersonic planes. For this work he received a bronze medal a year later on 10. International Design Competition in Osaka (2001). These two spatial

constructions with the side length 6 m are projects for the realization whose dimensions are much bigger. In these installations the spectator can take the place in a 'room' or a 'hammock' and thanks to ropes and transmission gears can lift in the object above the earth. Then only a crucial part of the artistic process takes place. According to the side from which the wind blows and with what power, ropes on which objects (the hammock and the room) are hung tighten or loosen thanks to windmills. At times transmission ratio of the move of only one windmill makes only one rope tight, sometimes the system of winds is such that two windmills are spinning in different directions, sometimes even three. The person is in the object of their own free will, nevertheless, they experience that they take such a position according to the forces of nature. The free rational subject is subjected to the game of external powers. To what extent is it possible to be only an observer in the quickly changing world, and to what extent is it just necessary to be merely a relaxed observer peacefully participating in nature? Participating thanks to the technically advanced installation of the artist! Such is exactly the artistic dialectic of technology and nature in the works of Kalinowski.

Ear in space

Jerzy Truszkowski thoroughly analyses the sculpture *The Big Ear*, the largest realization of the CRP Orońsko collection: *entering the Park of Sculpture of Centre of Polish Sculpture in Orońsko from the side of the busy road one can notice the work of Kalinowski carried out in the spring and summer 2005. Against the background of trees above the meadow – an enormous ear in the space. Actually, 'drawing' of the ear made by means of bent pipes slung under the grid which in turn floats in the air*

thanks to four ropes and four pillars. Constructions of cubes of the different size hung in different depths and different heights. Loudspeakers placed on the edges of cubes. Four stays support the construction which seems to be a gigantic scene intended for emission of sounds and for the presentation of the gigantic visual symbol of the sense of hearing.

Classical monuments and large buildings were put centrally on and around squares in order to organize around them the physical as well as the mental space. The thought of the citizen was supposed to focus on symbols of the power or the ideology, coming across immovable figures and impenetrable walls. The square was a stage, and gates of buildings were entries to another stages on which social dramas were performed².

Open balloon systems

Since 2002 Kalinowski has been building elastic openwork constructions from slats or from bamboo which packed with latex balloons are filled with helium or hydrogen. Such a character had *Sky-Reaching Cube* or a more complex project *The Core* (both carried out in 2002), where in the object floating in the air in the shape of the large openwork cube 4 cameras were installed from which the projection was transmitted live to the gallery to the cube built from screens. Similar constructions were *Sky-Reaching Cylinder* and *Twig*. In both projects bamboo poles of a different diameter and big tri-alloyed transparent balloons were applied. *Sky-Reaching Cylinder* is a realization of a quite considerable size, about 16 m high and with the diameter of 10 m with the not-strengthened structure, consisting of three bamboo circles connected only with cords to which at the entire height 200 tri-alloyed transparent balloons filled up

with technical hydrogen were attached. This installation was performing its sky-high dance inaugurating the Night of Museums in May 2004 in Poznań. As to 15 m high *Twig* carried out in 2009 in I-Park, CT in the USA, promoting ecological attitudes, it is a humorous game with the scale and the virgin environment in which the park is settled. These ‘one-day sculptures’ of Kalinowski (because the last phase of the presentation usually lasts one day) are an example of ‘opened systems’ being the antithesis of ‘closed systems’, of forms made resemble and dependent to a large extent on natural factors like the sun and the wind, about which the artist writes in the text *Transparent Symbols*³.

In touch with infinity

Another category of projects are *The Sky Reaching Railway Track* in which the artist proposes to use real sleepers with tracks which would be suspended in the air by means of ropes and girders or vertically settled in the ground. One of the projects from this cycle was a finalist of the LICC competition in London in 2008 in the category of sculpture. A British curator, Karen Ingham, described the installation in a following way: *Pure vivacity and amusement of “The Sky Reaching Railway Track” marks an artistic ability of seeing the extraordinary in the ordinary, being the source of the ceaseless reinvention and revitalization which has interdisciplinary and more and more global character. Kalinowski's installation developed from a childhood love of the miniature electric train and the myriad possibilities of track arrangements, which he considers as a kind of abstract drawing. The relationship of the model to reality and questions of scale and real and imagined worlds are played out in this exuberant artwork which seems to rise skyward, free from the constraints of gravity and logic.*

The normally mundane and hidden railway track, part of an unseen and unsung landscape, is transformed and becomes, in Kalinowski's words, 'a dramatic point of contact with infinity'.⁴

The rainbow on the earth

A completely different field of the artist's interests is expressed in projects *The Barefoot Park*, the prize-winning work at the 12th International Design Competition Osaka 2004 (Japan), whose essence is a mixture of simple iconology with the purely sensual experience of touch, and *Park with Coloured Sand* which was set up in Warsaw in 2009 on the bank of the Vistula as a part of the *Transform* festival, where 60 tons of coloured and natural sand and plywood board were used. Coloured sand is a distinctive and simultaneously interactive element; spectators walking all over the park, preferably barefoot, mix the colours especially on the edges of sand spots, in such a way that new colours appear, e.g. on the verge of red and blue violet came into being, yellow sand mixed with red one produces orange etc. In course of time some mixing and losing of intensity of spots of coloured sand took place, but on the other hand a new composition quality of the colour emerged which smoothly turning into another colour resembles the light spectrum and in the surprising way beautifully united itself with the Vistula river landscape – the spectator literally paddled in sand in rainbow colours on the earth. It would be according to the author, in a way, the reference to the psychedelic hippie Utopia of flower children. This project also partly refers to the Beuys's concept of social sculpture.

Taking care of sculpture

Observing almost two decades of the works of Adam Kalinowski we can see the distinct leitmotif of the concept of living sculpture as the structural and mental phenomenon. In the text from 2009 the artist wrote: *I have always been interested in the conception of living sculpture; at first, they were objects powered by mini electric motors with geared motors which changed the position of elements of the object in very slow cycles; later, they were projects for the open space using wind turbines or the wind as the driving force, creating the type of the 'one-day sculpture'. Now, the living sculpture is an idea of the form consisting in using structural elements which can include also intervention into the surface of the earth by using vegetating plants e.g. grass or flowers which joined into one object placed in the public sphere require the simple care that can include participation of spectators-volunteers in watering plants with which elements of the sculpture are set or in trimming them. It can produce the type of the public ritual and thereby the feeling of empathy and a sense of responsibility for a symbol which is simultaneously like a living organism; it requires care and a little attention so that it does not perish and will not become the symbol of desolation and fall.*

In the concluding fragment the author comments on the latest realizations, among others *The Grave* which was done in Slovakia as the part of the 15th *Socha a Objekt* Festival in Bratislava and the planned project *Home-Tree* being a fusion of the form of a tree, a building and a kind of tube-telescope, where through layers covered with grass the spectator will be able to observe the sky. The work of art according to the author becomes the symbolic 'instrument' (not a tool)... on which one can play as

well as with which one can play (for the meaning of our humanity) – and creating of art is non-perfect creating of life. *The Grave*, the latest work of the artist, came into existence not without the opposition of the conservative Slovak organiser, scared (?) of the funeral title, who tried to limit the scale as well as the act of naming the realization according to the will of the author. While the realization in Slovakia looks like a development of the project of the same name which was made in I-Park in the USA in 2009, nevertheless, the use of grass made a big difference. A dichotomy is funny and important at this work, i.e. it is a form of which it is necessary to take care like of a living organism; it is necessary to water it every day and to trim grass from time to time so that it does not look neglected. Especially, one needs to take care of that above the surface of the ground; layers of plywood covered with the layer of the earth with planted grass, they are elements complementing the imprint of the human figure lying on the right-hand side (this way it looks from above). The hollow in the ground covered with grass is not much exposed to drying because it draws water directly from the earth (symbolically that which is below the surface of the earth already belongs to her, as a body committed to the earth becomes a part of the landscape). It is necessary to care for elements placed above the ground so that they do not wither and do not become a literal example of desolation and death.

www.adamkalinowski.com

Footnotes:

1. The term used by Jerzy Truskowski in the context of works of Adam Kalinowski.

2. More widely on this subject - the text of Jerzy Truskowski *Anti-Monument and the Public Art*, Quarterly *Orońsko*, 4 / 2005.

3. Quarterly *Orońsko*, 3 / 2002.

4. *Memory, Inscription, Place: Landscape as a Transformational Process*, UK, 2008; see also the text of Jerzy Truskowski about the artist's art *Anti-monuments*, *Arteon* 12 / 2005.