

Biography of Tadeusz Myslowski

Tadeusz Myslowski was born in 1943 in the rural village of Piotrkow near Lublin into the family of a local blacksmith. He was named after a relative who as an officer was murdered by the Stalinist Secret Police (NKVD) during the slaughter of Polish officers at Katyn in 1941. His childhood and teenage years were spent in a natural environment and his early need to deal with life struggles toughened his personality. He is characterized by persistence, strength, stubbornness, a sense of belonging to traditional values and a stunning curiosity.

All that he has experienced in his "lifespan", to use the terminology of visionary Polish poet Juliusz Slowacki, began in his boyhood at the source of awareness and at the gateway to Artes. He spent his adolescence far from big city life in the slow, sleepy rhythm of the Lublin countryside. Stored in his memory, these years formed sequential associations which became a steady point of reference for his creativity.

His physical strength, skillful hands and visual precision were inherited from his father. It is to his mother that he owes his sensitivity and artistic drive which led him to a visual perception of the world. His life path was determined by vocation rather than reason or practical calculation.

From his early steps taken at the Railway Cultural Center in his native Lublin, through Art Liceum and studies at the Academy of Fine Arts in Krakow (under professors Taranczewski, Srzednicki, Kunz, and Kraupe-Swidorska) completed with a diploma in painting in 1969, he gained the status of an artist in Poland's cultural capital. In Krakow, he broadened his creative knowledge and was exposed to the works of Kantor, Cricot Theatre, the activities of Grupa Krakowska, revelational epos by Pawlowski (Kineformy, Powierzchnie Naturalnie Ukształtowane, Genesis), atonal music by Schaeffer, and the cabaret Under the Rams. Through his acquaintance with the leading intellectuals of the time he fills in the blank pages in his education.

Myslowski composed his own profile of a contemporary artist: erudition, versatile education, readings, and wide interests ranging from science through sociology and history to metaphysics. He developed a network of connections with the outside world. In order to widen his horizons he visits Kiev (1966), Paris (1968, 1969, 1970), and Dresden (1968). Travels in time and geographical location stimulated him toward an analytical approach to landmark architecture by Guimard and Le Corbusier, and the modernist thought of Ozenfant. He became familiar with the environment of Polish political opposition of the 1960's in Paris through affiliation with the editorial board of *Kultura* (a publishing house & famous periodical) and Hotel Lambert, both dedicated to the preservation of a Polish free spirit abroad.

By good fortune he met Irena Hochman, the artist's muse and future wife and decides to stay in Paris. A support fellowship awarded by Kultura financed an exhibition in the remarkable Gallery Lambert run by Kasimir Romanowicz. At that time he met the artists Jan Lebenstein, Jozef Czapski, and the enigmatic poet Joanna Białozorska, a caretaker of Polish "pilgrims" from behind the iron curtain.

Myslowski arrives in New York in 1970, at a time when the city is beginning to be regarded as the arts capital of the world. Inspired by the structural logic of Manhattan's architecture and its "anti-aesthetic" beauty he strives to transform the architectural and urban phenomenon into the contemporary visual language. He studies the geology of the island which inspires the set of visual documentation of Manhattan in a form of a Portfolio (manipulation of photographic techniques).

Dr Folga-Januszevska, an art scholar and critic, comments on his works from 1972-1994 as follows: "He was initially fascinated by the conceptual power of linear geometry until he discovered organic geometry through the theories of contemporary scientists and mathematicians (such as "Fractal Geometry" by Benoit Mandelbrot). He's deeply involved in two particular forms and symbols: a square as an expression of conventional, conceptual geometry of lines and surfaces, and a cross as a symbolic combination of squares and meanings stemming from a several-thousand-year-old tradition. The artist comes across these forms wherever human thought strives to grasp the world synthetically."

To sum up her reflection on Myslowski's characteristic achievement of this period and the two cycles Avenue of the Americas and Towards Organic Geometry in particular, Folga-Januszevska concludes: "These works are supposed to reveal how the abstract mathematical thought becomes an aesthetic convention and is physically present in life, shaping what is natural."

I myself can add that the transition from geometry to organic form parallels the natural order of thinking. Homo sapiens first develops intellectual foundations of the worldview and later on turns to nature (Myslowski calls it "coming home"). Here I notice a convergence of his works with the experience of the Russian avant-garde from the circle of the Malevich and Matiushin circle with his theory of "organica" (see Matiushin and his circle – exhibition at Galerie Gmurzynska, Köln, 2000).

From 1999 to the present, as we crossed the Apocalyptic border, our computers announced the 000 digital code, and the decoders pointed to a Zero Point in art (see Black Square, 1915). Suddenly mathematical matrices, fractal geometry, and organic perspective seem insufficient.

Intuitively, the world turned back to spirituality, as Andre Malraux had foreseen, and there is a growing anxiety about the fate of humankind. Such context forms the background for three of the most recent works by Myslowski penetrating the spiritual dimension of art: Shrine for an Anonymous Victim at the Majdanek (concentration camp), 1999, Light Cross as a votive art object in the sanctuary of Saint Mary of Kębło, Wawolnica near Kazimierz Dolny on the Vistula River, 2000, and a project entering the World Trade Center Memorial Competition, New York, 2003.

Might the articulation of spirituality in his last works be a response to this world anxiety?

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