

EXILE CROSS

Tadeusz MYSLOWSKI

Each of us, faced with the mystery of our existence and experience, has to try to find a way of making sense of it. In New York people always ask about each other's origin in order to associate others with a particular culture. Since people here are more transient than people anywhere else, it's sometimes very hard to answer. I am one of the twice born: once in my homeland, Poland, where I was raised and educated, and a second time at age 27 as an exile in a new land, where I learned English, like a child learns the ABCs. This new combination of the interplay of two languages opened up a new logic and a new intellectual possibility to better understand human communication. I didn't know much about North America. I didn't expect the Anglo-Saxon predominance in American culture. I belonged by spirit, blood and flesh to the old European continent. I was its formation. At this period in my life I was struggling. I didn't know where to start and ran into a brick wall. Everything was difficult for me— difficult to live, difficult to concentrate on anything. Everything was foreign and confusing for me - it still is. I didn't belong anyplace. I was trying desperately to implant my roots and start my life over. As an artist you're always alone. You have to make your own decisions without recourse to anyone. The creative impulse, the urge to assert yourself, has to be very strong whether you are twenty or fifty, and you have to be resilient enough to take a blow. This experience provided me with a new possibility to question my own existence. It gave me a chance to reflect on my life and Poland with a vision made clear by distance and separation. As a citizen of two continents I embrace two different geographical locations. For many years I felt like an outsider to both cultures. Each time I leave either place I feel a sense of displacement. I miss what I left behind. Each place is my home and the place I'm coming back to. This dualism is the place where I belong. EACH TIME I GO TO POLAND AND EACH TIME I COME BACK TO NEW YORK, I KNOW BETTER WHO I AM. My intention in life and art at that time was to find or to invent or to borrow some kind of form or sign, which for me would be a sort of building block of art. I found such a spirit expressed in the iconic form of the cross. I chose the world of geometry, which was the continuation of my Eastern European tradition and which I could thus relate to. Geometry is an intellectual property not visible to the eye but rather to the mind. The conception of art is not to imitate something but to realize it in the process of creation, stripping away its surface to reveal its hidden structure, allowing the invisible to become visible. I chose the cross because of its controversial and often opposite meanings locked in history as a geometric, very active form. I also chose this reductive cross, which was for me position or being. By the cross I was able to express and give new dimension. I feel that by this cross I am free of geographic and cross-cultural associations with traditional boundaries. For me the OPEN CROSS refers to nothing outside or inside, but at the same time, can refer or relate to everything. When we begin to speak about the symbolic meaning of the cross we realize very quickly that to explore it completely is an impossible task.

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how much can a pole assimilate to other cultures without the loss of polish identity ?