

Epiphanies of nature in the late-modern world.

Jan de Weryha-Wysoczański's wooden cube has been exhibited in the Centre of Polish Sculpture in Orońsko, in the old manor chapel. This fact has its artistic energy emanating straight from the interesting juxtaposition of a geometric solid of substantial size and the fascinating surface, created by the 'live' arrangement of wood and the interior of sacral character, belonging to the manorial complex situated in Orońsko park. It has got a very special visual and material values. Let's add to it an autumn aura, colours and Orońsko light and we have got a reason for sensual impression. This event has also other contexts which allow us to notice its deeper qualities I would like to focus on.

For some years now, Jan de Weryha-Wysoczański has been creating wooden objects and presenting them to the German audiences. What is of special meaning here for the character of these works and their development is the monumental studio in Hamburg - a part of railway cars repair and maintenance shop, which was closed some years ago and then adapted for artistic purposes. The shop, 3000m², has become a place of cultural revitalisation.

His new works started to appear several years ago - according to the conditions dictated by the place - from making use of the gigantic old storeroom for railway spare parts. It was accompanied by a clear material-wise decision - wood was chosen, a material so much different in its 'climate' and inner structure from the steel construction of machines which used to fill that place before. This material, so willingly used by sculptors, possesses inherent polemic potential against metal - a symbol of industrialisation, and also possesses great capacities for reaching a monumental scale, possibilities of using various processing techniques and a wonderful richness of species, colours and textures. These initial, starting decisions translate into certain artistic results; in the first phase of Jan's work we saw very large wooden objects of noticeable gravity, strongly attached to the surface we walk on. They could evoke certain associations with the works of R. Long, characteristic for *land art*, whose primary rule was wandering on the earth and the encountered natural objects were the 'witnesses' of the way. With Jan de Weryha we see similar, at the first sight, gravitational principle of building the form. However, they are not, as at Long, a 'document' of the wandering but they are rather evidence of a certain process of examining the wood itself, a consequence of 'entering' this material. First of all they are the first stage of the artist's odyssey which will be followed by other forms, slightly different in their statics and tectonics. Thus, they are not a final result of the journey but actually its beginning. Wysoczański also differs from Long in the landscape; these are not the open spaces of natural landscape - on the contrary, it is a closed interior, unnatural landscape, world created by intensive, modern economy, by the railway - a canonical means of communication for the 'primary modernity'. The route leads us not through a natural landscape but through 'a landscape of industrial culture' - an inner space of a factory. After the floor, there came the time for the walls. This new 'vertical' 'environment' forced a slightly different form of works. Wood must resign from free gravity, which was sufficient for the floor, and must be made vertical, and it most naturally is connected with a kind of construction, a kind of foundation to which you must fix and a kind of frame which will hold. From 2001 - 2003 there appeared many numbered "Wooden Tables".

On this route there appeared 'The Cube' whose full materialisation we saw in Orońsko.

The works that appeared at the stage of 'taming' the walls, and especially The Cube - the first object from the whole collection to be shown in Poland - bring to mind associations with minimal art. This impulse probably results from the fact that they are abstract and geometrical, i.e. arranged in the form of squares, rectangles or cubes. There are also a number of features which do not agree with minimalist associations. Geometric wooden objects of Jan de Weryha are extremely lively and clear in showing the infinite richness of wood forms. It appears geometrically arranged, but raw within, 'natural' in its botanical, not rational and geometric shape. It is the rather infinite and spontaneous nature of wood that is geometrically 'framed' - to enable its perception. The sense of Jan de Weryha's objects is to be found in philosophical foundations contrary to minimal art.

Minimal art in alliance with conceptualism constitutes an attractive phase of dematerialisation and de-naturalisation of art. After all the objects of Andre, Judd, Morris or Serra are a spatial visualisation of linguistic and mental figures. The stress here is put on tautologies, i.e. an escape from all metaphors, symbols and 'insights', in pursuit of the bases of abstract language and establishing its semantic zero points. The art of the seventies, and especially the decade of the eighties, came into conflict with these tendencies, stressing the power of individual expression, materiality and carnality of artistic acts. And isn't Jan ostentatiously 'carnal'? Carnal in a special sense, because the object of his artistic exploration is wood in its raw form. Minimalist tautologies are the reverse of artistic epiphanies, and de Weryha's art is epiphanic and not tautological; it is a way of revealing something that is 'deeper'; it is creating conditions for clearances and insights.

Weryha's art in agreement with his biography, after all he made his debut in the seventies, is a continuation of the expressivist turning that happened after minimalism and conceptualism. His objects are material, concrete, deeply anchored in the 'nature' of wood; geometry is subordinated, it is a kind of grammar thanks to which 'nature' can speak clearer. Realisations from wood appear in the conditions of late modernity - in the world of globalisation, accelerated consumption, advertising, in the world of algorithms which trap us whenever we visit computer cyberspace. In this world the artist reverses our perception, proposes a renewed look at Nature in its raw form. Clearances, illuminations, insights into nature - epiphanies of nature in the conditions of late modernity.

Works created in a deserted industrial shop in Hamburg appear in Orońsko, in an old manorial chapel, where a completely Polish cultural climate gives the epiphanies of nature an additional spiritual frame.