

# JAN de WERYHA-WYSOCZAŃSKI

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Łukasz Kałębasiak, *Jan de Weryha-Wysoczański's sculptures at an exhibition in Katowice – A Cathedral Full of Wood*, GAZETA WYBORCZA, KATOWICE, 22th March 2005.

Translation from Polish to English by Maria Apanowicz.

“My sculptures are a monument erected to trees”, says Jan de Weryha-Wysoczanski who has just turned the old mine workshop, i.e. the Wilson Shaft Gallery, from a temple of coal into a temple of wood. It seemed that filling the huge space of the Wilson Shaft Gallery in Katowice by one artist (in an interesting way) would be impossible. But then Jan de Weryha-Wysoczański got invited and within two weeks he created at the Wilson a wonderful exhibition. Although there is nothing but raw wood.

“My sculptures are a monument erected to trees”, says the artist and there is no better key to his works than this sentence. Because the artist concentrates on the material, not on symbolism. “Art does not have to have practical objectives. It must affect the viewer”, that is his motto. And it obviously works at the Wilson. First, due to its scale, when the artist fills the entire niche of the old workshop with cut down poplar trunks. Then, due to his idea of forming bits of bark into a fanciful sculpture.

The whole artist's work can be reduced to giving wood a certain order. My exhibition in Łódź was titled “Wood-Archive”. I realised that I really archive wood, says the artist. What “works” in Wysoczanski's sculptures and sculpture installations is rhythm. The artist assembles bits of raw wood in simple combinations on the floor or frames them like pictures. The genius of his art consists in this absolute simplicity. He also interacts with the Wilson's space, using its all rooms. “This gallery reminds me of a cathedral. The middle is the main nave, and the small rooms are side aisles” the sculptor compares. So Wysoczański transformed them into a cathedral of wood.

Ecological dimension of this art is only too obvious. Wysoczański uses only wood from trees marked out for cutting down or fallen by wind. He does not approve of dyeing either. If anything he scorches some of his works, which is a most natural process.

Wysoczański's art evokes extraordinarily good emotions. There is something primitive in our way of looking at wood and the artist makes good use of it. He also follows the best patterns- those created by nature. “When I started, I was afraid that after a few works I would have exhausted all possibilities. Now I can see that my whole life will not suffice, because I am trying to reach the heart of nature secrets”, smiles the artist.

Jan de Weryha Wysoczański's sculpture will remain at the Wilson Shaft Gallery until August. The Wilson Shaft exhibition is the third individual presentation of the artist in Poland. His “tournee” started last year in Orońsko. Jan de Weryha-Wysoczański was born in Gdańsk, where he completed his artistic education. In 1981 he left for Germany and settled down in Hamburg. Together with a German artist he redecorated an industrial shop on the outskirts of the city, which became his studio for many years to come. He is the author of the monument commemorating the Poles deported after the Warsaw Uprising, which stands near Hamburg. In 2003 he opened in that city his permanent gallery.