

## The Crack and the Destruction

### Introduction

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**Witold Wachowski**

translation: Ewa Bodal

A painter does not have to comment on his oeuvre. According to some – he should not. He should not *talk*, and we should not expand on this mistake through *asking* him about his art. Yet, this is precisely what makes the situation so cognitively attractive. An artist has his own kitchen, into which the nosy will always peek even more eagerly than into the gallery's official rooms. The forbidden chamber out of a fairytale will always tempt.

To be precise: we are not a good example of people searching for that which is “fairytale-like” in art. We are interested in the artist's workroom, approached as a laboratory and workshop. An artist does not have to be an alchemist. For us it suffices that he is a chemist, a researcher and an inventor in order to fulfill his own needs. Someone who experiments – in several meanings of the word. Contemporary art provides this with an additional dimension, causing one to minimize or completely relinquish proven recipes and mechanisms. With the exception of those that one cannot escape from...

We believe that our conversation with an experienced artist, Grzegorz Radecki, managed to yield several unexpectedly satisfying answers to our needs. This does not change the fact that this domain of embodying and situating creativity with its technical background could only be fully revealed through more detailed and in-depth studies. Thus far, we have achieved maybe a few lines towards a sketch, a possible project of such studies. And, moreover – towards the portrait of the creator himself.

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Grzegorz Radecki – painter, graphic artist, born in 1961 in Ostróda, Poland. He graduated from the Department of Painting and Graphics of the PWSSP in Gdańsk, where he studied in the workrooms of Professor Włodzimierz Łajming and Professor Jerzy Zabłocki. He received his diploma in 1986. Awarded with the scholarship of the Ministry of Culture and Arts. He has been working as a researcher and faculty member since 1987. He received second degree qualifications in 2002. Currently, he holds the position of a professor in the Interfaculty Institute of the Art Sciences of the ASP in Gdańsk.

- 1985 - Post-competition exhibition of drawings - second award, PWSSP Gdańsk
- 1986 - Diploma, painting, City Museum - Poznański Palace, Łódź
- 1987 - VII Biennale Gdańsk Arts., painting, BWA Sopot
- 1988 - VII Seaside Encounters of Young Artists, painting, BWA Sopot
- 1989 - Exhibition of drawings CSOP, Łódź
- 1990 - International Print Exhibition "Print of Kanagawa", Japan
- 1991 - Exhibition of drawings , The Institute of Polish Culture, Stockholm
  - Arts exhibition, „Gallery’78”, Gdańsk
  - Arts exhibition, “Gulhoff Gallery”, Emden, Germany
- 1994 - The exhibition of paintings / first degree of qualification process, PWSSP Gdańsk
  - „Paper” arts exhibition, Portal Gallery, Gdańsk
- 1995 - Staff jubilee exhibition, The Academy of Fine Arts (50th anniversary), painting, The Academy of Fine Arts Gdańsk
  - Post-competition exhibition of paintings, „Perron-Kunstpreis der Stadt Frankenthal” - Germany
- 1996/97- Cooperate work on St Wojciech monument in Inowrocław
- 1998 - Gdańsk Graphic Arts of the Year, Post-competition exhibition, Punkt Gallery, Gdańsk
  - The Academy of Fine Arts staff exhibition of drawings, Nowa Oficyna Gallery, Gdańsk
  - II National Graphic Competition Triennale Tczewskie - honorable mention, Tczew, Ostrołęka
- 1999 - “Black on white” Exhibition of 10 authors, graphic arts, National Museum, Promotion Gallery, Gdańsk
  - Gdańsk Graphic Arts of the Year, honorable mention, Punkt Gallery, Gdańsk
  - “Phenomenon of time”, exhibition of drawings, Nowa Oficyna Gallery, Gdańsk
  - Exhibition of four authors, painting, Reflektarz Gallery, Kartuzy
  - 5x5 Young Polish Graphic Arts, TPSP-Lublin (may), European arts academy Gallery, Warsaw
  - “About us today” post-competition exhibition od a work of arts, painting, National Museum, Gdańsk
- 2000 - Gdańsk Graphic Arts of the Year, Post-competition exhibition, Punkt Gallery, Gdańsk
  - “Oliwa closer to Gdansk, Gdańsk closer to artists”, graphic arts, Gdańsk
  - „Gdynia -Düsseldorf” graphic arts, 78 Gallery Gdynia
  - International Graphic Arts Triennale Krakow 2000, “Bridge to the future” - competition exhibition, Bunkier Sztuki Gallery, Kraków
  - Kraków - Nuremberg (MTG 2000), Nuremberg
  - “East meets west”, international graphic arts exhibition, Contemporary Arts Gallery, Opole
  - Exhibition of graphic arts, U Aktora Club, Gdańsk
  - Exhibition of 13 artists of different disciplines, graphic arts, Na Wieży Gallery, Gdańsk
  - Graphic Constelation, International exhibition of graphic arts, North Gallery in Zamek Książąt Pomorskich, Szczecin
  - Zeitgenössische Polnische Kunst, painting, Kass Gallery, Innsbrück

## Introduction

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- 2001 - Gdańsk Graphic Arts of the Year, Post-competition exhibition, Punkt Gallery, Gdańsk  
- „Düsseldorf-Gdańsk” - graphic arts, Atelier am Eck Gallery, Düsseldorf  
- “Duration”, graphic arts, arts center, El Gallery, Elbląg  
- “Continents 2011”, International exhibition of graphic arts, Contemporary Arts Gallery, Zamek Książ, Wałbrzych  
- “Gdańsk Artists”, painting, Podlaska Gallery, Biała Podlaska  
- Triennale of 100 Cities Suwałki 2001, graphic arts, Regional Centre of Culture and Arts  
- Triennale of 100 Cities Skarzysko Kamienna 2001, graphic arts, White Eagle Museum
- 2002 - “Critics”, exhibition of paintings and graphic arts, Na Wieży Gallery, Gdańsk  
- Audience Grand Prix, exhibition of graphic arts, Contemporary Arts Gallery, Katowice  
- Second degree of qualification process, The exhibition of paintings and graphic arts, The Academy of Fine Arts Gdańsk  
- „Gallery in my house”, Nominated to the educational project which share graphic arts as a posters with mass receiver  
- Artists of The Academy of Fine Arts Tczew, paintings, The adult education center, Tczew  
- “Present sings” exhibition of graphic arts, Viena Art Center Gallery, Vienna  
- 19th Festival of Contemporary Polish Painting, Zamek Książąt Pomorskich, Szczecin
- 2003 - “Nowa Oficyna in Palma”, graphic arts, MKT Palma, Gdańsk  
- „Successors”, graphic arts, Polish Institute, Stockholm  
- "Zeitgenossische Kunst aus Polen", paintings, Kunststation Kleinsassen, Fulda - Germany  
- “Paintings from second hand”, graphic arts, Nowa Oficyna Gallery, Gdańsk  
- Directory of Print 2003- publishing house CD, SMTG Kraków
- 2004 - 20th Festival of Contemporary Polish Painting, Szczecin  
- Tczew Triennale of graphic arts, Tczew
- 2005 - Wrocław in Gdańsk, Gdańsk in Wrocław, Paintings, The Academy of Fine Arts, Wrocław  
- “Memory and participation”, paintings, National Museum, Gdańsk
- 2006 - “Department of drawing, painting and sculpture”, paintings, House of Culture, Tczew; A Gallery, Starogard Gdański  
- 10th anniversary of Oficyna, graphic arts, Nowa Oficyna Gallery, Gdańsk  
- Poznań w Gdańsku, Gdańsk w Poznaniu, paintings, Poznań  
- 21th Festival of Contemporary Polish Painting Szczecin 2006
- 2007 - “Deconstruction of the letter”, exhibition of paintings, Society of Fine Arts Palace of art, Kraków
- 2008 - “The Butterfly Effect” exhibition of paintings, Debiut Gallery, Gdynia  
- I International Biennale of digital graphic arts, Museum of Gdynia City
- 2009 - “Gallery Collection”, exhibition of paintings, Pionova Gallery, Gdańsk  
- V International Biennale of paintings and unique textile EKO BALT, Gdynia 2009  
- Mayor of Gdańsk award, Gdynia City Museum  
- “Painting is ok”, exhibition of paintings Within the framework of the Festival of three cities culture, Foyer of Baltic Opera, Gdańsk
- 2010 - II International Biennale of digital graphic arts, Museum of Gdynia City
- 2011 - “100th anniversary of ZPAP, State Art Gallery, Sopot  
- “Paintings wake up, when reason sleeps”, exhibition of paintings, Punkt Gallery GTPS, Gdańsk

### Online resources:

<http://radeckig.ovh.org/>

[http://autograf.asp.gda.pl/?ot=osoba&osoba\\_cz=info&osoba\\_id=209](http://autograf.asp.gda.pl/?ot=osoba&osoba_cz=info&osoba_id=209)



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## Interview with Grzegorz Radecki

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questions collected and prepared by Witold Wachowski

translation: Joanna Kucharska

***Avant:* When one looks at your works, one of the first questions that come to mind is: what techniques do you use, if you can share the secret?**

*Grzegorz Radecki:* I've never made my process a secret. The basic form of expression I use is the classic technique of oil painting; I use it most often and most happily. At the same time I'm experimenting with what could broadly be called computer graphics. In my workshop a computer arrived somehow accidentally, at first serving as a useful tool for seeing the corrections and edits that I wanted to implement in creating the oil painting. With time it turned out that those compositions became emancipated and acquired the status of standalone works, autonomic creations, they were separated from my painting exploration. I'll add that it was during the time when computer graphics were just starting as a way of artistic expression. Using that technique I utilize the broad possibilities provided by the modern graphic programs, though I consider this richness a trap of a sort and the basic difficulty that cripples beginner artists.

**The colouring and texture of those works speak volumes, they seem to jump at the audience, overwhelming the senses and demanding attention. Active, moving works, even without the multimedia backup. Is this already an interpretation or an element of conscious design?**

For a while I carried out a project that I called „Dziennik” [The Journal]. Graphic works, as that was the technique I was using for this project, were all created at the same time of the day. The composition was almost banal, a centred blurred oval, in the middle of

which I wrote down the day, month and year when the work was created. It's unbelievable how those almost identical compositions, differing really only in their colouring, would bring forth all the subtleties of the moment of their creation. You can read the mood, the aura, the influence of the day's events, and read it broader as an attempt to summarize all the impulses informing the perception and transmission of reality. The key role I assigned to the colour, as I believe that colour is the perfect carrier of emotion. And as to your question, let that be an example of what colouring means to me. In my works I use it straightforwardly (you can treat it as a conscious design), without calculations, relying on my intuition, the rest shall remain in the area of interpretation.

**It seems like the risk of over-analysis in response to avant-garde art is quite significant?**

That's true! Though the blame seems to lie with the art itself. The avant-garde has the ambition to function beyond esthetics. It gets tangled in various areas of social life, and since the matter of those actions tends to be hermetic, a touchy subject, or simply provocative, its reception could be 'wrong' (as said by prof. Adam Haupt), over-analyzed. I treat that as a misunderstanding, it's not always clear where the blame is. Sometimes the artists who enter those areas aren't concise in presenting their motivations, and sometimes it is the audience who is not prepared to receive a given artifact and its social entanglements.

**Human visual perception is governed by a number of natural laws, both neuro-physiological and psychological. To what extent can the knowledge of those laws be useful to artists?**

Artists are flesh and blood and subject to the same laws as everyone else, also when it comes to the characteristics of sight. What's significant about their work is that they try to reach others mostly through the sense of sight. Over centuries they've learned how to influence the viewer, for example using the limitations in the visual perception or the physiology of sight. Through that they achieve the effects and experiences that do not exist physically (for example the illusion of three-dimensional space). It's the typical arsenal of the artist who works in a visual medium, it would be difficult to make do without it.

**What's your personal opinion on using written word in paintings? Titles, descriptions, finally the author commentaries?**

I don't see any problems with that, if a given artifact needs a comment, even simply a title, I just give it.

***Szczelina* and *Destrukcja* [*The Crack* and *The Destruction*]. One seems technical, the other, apocalyptic. How did those series of paintings and those titles come into being?**

It's difficult to say today how did those cycles come into being. The Crack series is an attempt of utilizing the possibilities provided by the modern optics research and a way of trying to look at the traditional painting subject, a nude human form, up-close. The Destruction is about communication barriers. I belong to a generation that transmitted its thoughts through language, both verbal and written. Now I see an abrupt turn into communication through symbols. I consider it a regression, though not as an apocalypse. I tried to comment on that phenomena, showing dissolving structures of letters – the basic signs that are used to build up the visual messages of the natural language.

**Did you discover something about yourself through your work? Did you discover something about reality through your work?**

I think the most important experience is the lesson in humility. Painting, and generally my adventure in art, I treat as a tiresome process of coming to terms with oneself and with the world. It would be hard to have it any other way, after all it's a part of human life.

**Improvisation, speaking in broad terms (sometimes mistaken for giving in to chance): does it have a place in your work and what is it?**

Improvisation, or even chance, are constantly present in my work. I don't know an artist, in the visual arts, who would be able to completely, in one hundred percent, rule over paint, canvas, etc, especially nowadays, when the creative process is especially passionate. In my body of work there is a cycle called *Efekt Motyla* [*The Butterfly Effect*], in which by design I implemented an almost automatic and repeated process, trying to make it completely governed by a routine. All the effort was in the direction of having the starting point and the actions during painting, if not the same, then as similar as possible. The daily script of moving around my workshop became ritualized, constant and disciplined. The key was authorial, and at the same time economical covering the canvas with paint, at the same time of the day, by means of the same technology, the same preparation, the same limited paint array, solvents, tools, varnishes, etc. Despite the drastic limiting of stimuli, despite the severe means, almost mechanical gestures and painting habits, what I finally achieved is surprising even now, turning the everyday, one would think monotonous painting, into an irresistible, surprising adventure, in which the improvisation you asked about (or maybe the chance) plays the key role.

**What are today's sources of education for the avant-garde art's audience? School, university? Environment and chance, or perseverance and good will?**

I think that it's impossible to give one answer to your question. Somewhere up till the beginning of the 20th century, the specifics of acting in the art sphere, comprehending most of the rules of the esthetics was, in some sense, clear to everyone, no matter their education or cultural circle of the audiences. Avant-garde art, in taking over areas of life that were closed off to it before, to fully reach the audience, requires some preparation. Sometimes a specialized one. This is the trap of misunderstanding and that's why education is much needed. The problem of art education is a very individual matter. Pointing at some specific source or sources of such education, in the era of information overflow, is practically impossible. Though I must admit that specialized centers giving such education, posed to skillfully activate the viewer, can change that.

**What aspect is, in your opinion, decisive in learning to perceive modern art? Exposure? Or some other, less obvious mechanisms?**

I think it is in a great part a cultural process. Art became a part of the information flow. Competition is great and it is difficult to pinpoint the reasons for which someone, more consciously or less, decides to take an active part in artistic life. If we're talking about learning, then I think that the most important thing is the immediate effect. As everywhere, the human being is the most important. It's his enthusiasm, ambition and actions that have the power to move others. This mechanism can do wonders in sensitizing (teaching) and shaping the potential participant of the artistic movement in the modern art.

**And how was your own artistic taste shaped, starting, let's say, from your early childhood?**

Nothing special, typical life story, maybe the genes played a part.

**How are your students as artists?**

Artistic sense is a basis that you enter the Academy with, not something you learn. That particular ability is hard to describe, any kind of codification and programming is out of the question. As teachers we can only identify it, try to nurture it, and most importantly, try not to chase it away.