

AUTOREFERAT – SELF-PRESENTATION

Tatiana Misijuk PhD
Białystok University of Technology, Faculty of Architecture,
ul. Oskara Sosnowskiego 11, 15-893 Białystok
e-mail: t.misijuk@pb.edu.pl

EDUCATION

Białystok University of Technology, Institute of Architecture,

- studies: 1981-1986,
- Master's degree in architecture - 1986: *Design of an Orthodox Church in Bielsk Podlaski*,
- Supervisor: Prof. Witold Czarnecki;

Academy of Fine Arts in Warszawa, Faculty of Interior Design,

- studies: 1987-1992 (with a break in the years 1989-1991),
- Master's degree in interior design - 1992: *Exhibition of Icons in Podlaskie Muzeum in Białystok*,
- Supervisor: Prof. Henryka Noskiewicz-Gałązka;

PhD in Fine Arts, 1st degree qualification in the field of visual arts in the artistic discipline of Interior Design – Faculty of Interior Design, Academy of Fine Arts in Warszawa,

- PhD design 2003: *The Church of Transfiguration. The Interior, Body and Surroundings of the Temple as a Function of Worship Conducted Therein*,
- Supervisor: Prof. Andrzej Bissenik,
- Reviewers: Prof. dr hab. Andrzej Basista, Prof. Lech Koliński.

EMPLOYMENT

24.02.1999 – Białystok University of Technology, Faculty of Architecture, Dept. of Interior Design

1.10.1999 – nomination to the post of assistant

1.04.2003 – nomination to the post of university lecturer (adiunkt)

29.09.2007 – 30.09.2009 – work as a lecturer at University of Ecology and Management in Warszawa, Faculty of Architecture

ACHIEVEMENT INDICATION

Achievement aspiring to meet the requirements set forth in the Article 16.2 of the Act of 14 March 2003 on the Academic Degrees and the Academic Titles, and on the Degrees and the Titles Related to Art Study: "The cemeteries and graves of the World War I as places significant in the Podlasie region landscape – design concepts for preserving the memory" project.

THE ORIGIN AND SOURCES OF CREATIVE ATTITUDE

The origin of my artistic creativity and perception of art trace back to my early years, to a community which has shaped me – culturally and religiously diverse Podlasie region. A decisive impulse concerning my education, a way of *artistic* work has been a youthful reflection on two images of Christ – His face from “Jesus of Nazareth” film (Franco Zeffirelli, 1977) and the same visage depicted on the 15th century icon of Christ's Crucifixion. I have remembered and fixed it in my mind as very important.

The first realistic photo of the face contorted with pain and covered with blood reflected explicitly experience of inexpressible pain and despair of lonely suffering. Natural reaction to the picture was deep compassion. Impingement of the icon however, even though it depicted the same situation, was different – the feeling of empathy was accompanied by an experience of something deeper, nearly metaphysical. As I would read later, “the flexion of the body to the right, the bowed head, and the closed eyes indicate the death of the Crucified. His face, however, preserves a grave expression of majesty in suffering, an expression which makes one think rather of sleep: the God-Man remained incorruptible in death. <The Life has fallen asleep and hell shudders in terror> (Laudes of Holy Saturday)”¹.

The icon depicts not only an event presented on it and its concurrent circumstances, but also its aim and its meaning. In order to interpret the content one needs a different and deeper conscience described by Władysław Strzemiński. It can be clearly seen on the icon of the Nativity of Christ. From the Gospel account we read that the Newborn Child is “wrapped in swaddling cloths and laid in a manger” (Luke 2,7). On the icon, however, the body of little Jesus (presented in adult man proportions) is wrapped in a burial shroud and placed on a stone plate or in a coffin. As prof Leonid Ouspenski described it: “Cave, manger, swaddling clothes – are indications of the *kenosis* of the Godhead, His abasement, the utter humility of Him, who, invisible in His nature, becomes visible in the flesh for man's sake, is born in a cave, is wrapped in swaddling clothes, thus foreshadowing His death and burial, the sepulchre and the burial clothes”².

I perceive the complex and powerful youthful experience today as a result of a combination of various semantic structures that occurs in the icon: visual and extravisual (connected with the knowledge of the subject) as well as abstract ones, that is the whole complexity of composition and artistic means used to depict the substance.

The incident described above was not my first encounter with the icon. Icons had been around me “since ever”. I was born in Bielsk Podlaski, in the region where an Orthodox Christian minority in Poland made a majority. Since my childhood I have actively participated in the Orthodox church worship. In 1980-ies I made use of possibilities offered by a newly established and intensely expanding Fellowship of Orthodox Youth in Poland. One of them were iconography camps/courses organized initially at Sts Mary and Martha Orthodox Convent in Grabarka and a few

1 V. Lossky, *The Cross*, in: L. Ouspensky, V. Lossky, *The Meaning of Icons*, SVS Press, Crestwood, NY 1989, p. 181.

2 L. Ouspensky, *The Nativity of Christ*, ibidem, p. 157.

years later in my home parish of St. Michael in Bielsk Podlaski. After a time the first and still the only in Poland Orthodox School of Iconography (Niepubliczne Studium Ikonograficzne) was established there. An initiator of organizing the iconography camps and courses, founder and director of the school and – as it had soon turned out – the initiator of multifaceted revival of traditional Orthodox iconography in our country - was Fr. Leoncjusz Tofiluk, the dean of my parish.

The intense aesthetic and deep spiritual experience caused by juxtaposition of the realistic picture with the traditional icon kindled a series of questions. The search for satisfactory answers was accompanied by realizing newer and newer manifestations of amazing richness of content and depth of meaning of both the icon as well as the sacred art of the Christian East in general. Gradual realizing and discovering the mystery of the icon had been accompanied by analytical deliberations, including those on a multiplanar perception issue. Some of the answers instigated further questions. Moreover, they were accompanied by attempts to apply discovered aspects of iconography in projects undertaken – in the course of studies, work on diploma designs and then in various project assignments and didactic work.

- What is the reason that a “primitive” icon turns out much more expressive and meaningful than a perfectly depicted realistic scene? How is it possible that so much can be passed on through so simple, ascetic or “primitive” means?
- What determines that a given reality presented on a picture can display more than it represents on its own by itself?
- Is it possible to display the invisible by means of the visible? How to present depth of meaning and sense on two-dimensional plane?
- Which means are to be used to make a composition being created cause feelings deeper than emotions only, to impinge both on emotional level and to prompt, to provoke or even to force a deeper reflection or drawing conclusions?
- May the means applied in sacred art of iconography be used in secular art?
- May the rules of creating the icon be related to a process of designing?
- How can experience of the icon be transferred to a design process?

Consecutive stages of exploring metaphysics of the icon followed on two parallel planes – interpreting the meaning and content of icon contained in its composition as well as through the process of its creation. Acquaintance with the icon is a long process of acquiring not only knowledge but also liturgical experience. Our interpreting of an icon was guided and supported by specialists in this field. Initially they were coming to us from Finland – Helena Nikkanen, Jorma Heikkinen – and later on from Russia.

I had already painted before, I was not strange to a painter's palette and brush but an encounter with the process of creation of an icon was a newness in matter, technology and idea. The most important was the acquaintance with the canon and theology of an icon. Everything turned out to be vital, important to render fullness of meaning. What on the first sight seemed simple or even “primitive”, appeared complex and full of meaning. New questions occurred then: how is it possible that works created with so simple means are not comprehended by contemporary people, who have much more knowledge and cognition? Is development in time directly proportional to qualitative development? Is new always better because it results from a deeper understanding of the heart of matter or phenomenon? What had allowed people in the years gone by to create works which a contemporary man in his modern mental condition is not able to interpret correctly? Isn't that a paradox that it turned out easier by using a key provided by the modern art?

Examples explaining the principles of the icon's canon may be seen in its ways of presenting

space, light and perspective used in it.

Presenting real space on a picture or a monitor screen is a serious creative problem of reflecting three-dimensional space on a flat surface. In historical research of the representation on the flat surface, from the earliest examples of cave painting to the complex imagery in great works of the Realism which used all possible structures to cause illusion of depth, the icon has for a long time been recognized/classified as primitive art due to lack of any structures suggesting three-dimensional space. This difficult task was attempted to be coped with by a linear perspective used not only by the Renaissance art. Nevertheless this kind of representation of real space is accompanied by duplication or fixing an optic illusion, where objects are subject to foreshortening and lines that are parallel in three-dimensional space are drawn as converging ones against the horizon. Moreover, as Władysław Strzemiński has observed, our seeing is a motion process and such a representation does not take into account an aspect of time. New ways of presenting space are proposed by contemporary "media icons". The newest technological solutions attempt to fill flat monitors and screens with three-dimensional images. The problem is, however, that the 3D technology allows even more to control particular symptom of human conscience which is imagination. In that way it may be effectively manipulated. Even though the virtual sphere appears today as very attractive, nevertheless it remains illusory³.

The image on the icon remains flat. It does not create any illusion of space. Earth, rocks, plants are presented in an abstract way similar to contemporary so called "short space" of Cubism. Three-dimensional space on the icon is reduced to structures of planes, sizes and directions. Time and space are domains of created reality. The icon however presents them in their supernatural dimension. Application of formal structures of this kind results from the essence of the reality presented on the icon, its spiritual, transfigured dimension. Thus a supernatural element in the icon is revealed. Presumably this is why the icon is defined also as a "window of eternity".

An application of so called "reverse perspective" (known also as inverse or a Byzantine one) is very important in the icon. Our perception of the world is ruled by the aforementioned linear perspective which deforms the form. We succumb to illusion of following a point that actually does not exist. What's important, it concerns not only our visual perception, but also the inner sense of life's realism.

The icon does not succumb to limitations of the optic perspective nor to one definite point of observation⁴. Presenting the reality it uses the reverse perspective⁵. Looking at the icon we do not follow with our eyes to a nonexistent point in the illusory depth of the picture but stand in a place which is a starting point and a point of convergence of every perspective. The point is not in the depth of the composition but it is placed "in front" of the painting. In this way the composition presented in the inverse perspective opens insight into eternity⁶. The composition of the icon is by its nature an open composition. The openness is not composed by framing of a larger entity, but by embracing the viewers standing in front of the icon. It can be seen on the icon of the Holy Trinity by Andrej Rublov, Pentecost or Mystical Supper. Figures presented there are incorporated into a semicircle which is opened towards the viewer(s). Velasquez attempted to achieve a similar effect at his *Les Meninas* (The Ladies-in-waiting). The icon presents reality

3 See my deliberations on this subject in: *Ikona w mediach a ikona sakralna. Jedno pojęcie a dwie odmienne rzeczywistości*, in „Architecturae at Artibus” 3 (2011) 1(7), Politechnika Białostocka, Wydział Architektury, p. 30-37.

4 O. Popowa, E. Smirnova, P. Cortesi, *Ikony*, tłum. Tamara Łozińska, Warszawa 1998, p. 17.

5 It is described by Fr. P. Florenski, *Ikonoostas i inne szkice*, ed. and translated by Z. Podgórzec, Warszawa 1984.

6 The inverse perspective is very clearly presented in the Gospel: the last will be the first; those who mourn will rejoice; the grave humiliation of death on the Cross becomes the triumph; the death becomes a beginning. See. T. Misijuk, *Logika ikony*, „Frona” 8, Warszawa 1997, p. 160.

comprehensively, in its true and eternal image. This is another justification for defining the icon as “the window of eternity”.

On the basis of the ontology which light does or does not express in a particular style of painting, Stamatis Skliris divides all the known artistic traditions into three basic categories.

“To the first belong artistic traditions which use the apparent phenomenalism of natural light alone, such as a Roman sculpture and Western Renaissance painting. The identities which this light gives are not stable, the illumination is not stable so that we could speak of an ontology of light, the beings represented confront the content of absolute shade which is equivalent to representational non-existence, and consequently we can speak of an 'ontology of shade' or an 'ontology of nothingness'.

To the second category belong traditions which are characterized by a firm outline permanent illumination but not dialectical light or shade. Such are Chinese, Persian and Indian painting (when they have no shadow), Coptic icons, the art of aboriginal peoples, the art of children and almost all kinds of painting which have primitive elements. They all express a stable ontology because they represent beings which are not in danger of being lost in darkness. They are not free, however, to choose light or darkness: they are 'condemned to be immortal' in a natural manner because they have a permanent and stable existence which is due to stable physical characteristics (size, shape, color, etc.) since dialectical light is absent. This would be a 'necessary natural ontology' of representational light.

The third category is identical to Byzantine painting only because we do not know of another tradition in which the dialectic of light-shade (highlights-shadows) express personal beings, that is to say, free beings which are illuminated (saints) or free beings which are in shadow (demons) and indeed in which the illumination creates full existence and the shading fragmented existence. We should be able, then, to call the Byzantine light a 'free personal ontology'”⁷.

This way of representing distinguishes between categories of beings – they have also a distinct contour – border. Illuminated complete beings are always depicted with a full face *en face*, but shaded incomplete beings are shown in profile. This kind of use of light is connected with the way of depicting a face and body on the icon. The Byzantine art lays down first a dark background (red and yellow ocher or greenish hue) which symbolises created matter. Then faces and hands are illuminated by further layers of a brighter pigment. Finally they are illuminated by “stripes” of white, thus providing the body with an effect of shining and not of being lightened. Such a technique of lighting which provides a clear contour – border, has its origins in the Christian Orthodox understanding of deification (gr. *theosis*) and distinguishing of several kinds of light.

CHURCH ARCHITECTURE – A NEW FORM CHALLENGE

Study at Białystok Technical University Faculty of Architecture turned my attention to church architecture. Several factors were involved. In the majority of 18th-19th century wooden “catalog” Orthodox churches in Podlasie region prevailed eclecticism and realistic 19th century “icons” emanating with historicism. In 1980-ies church architecture in Poland went through a period of liveliness. Several new and stylistically very diverse Orthodox churches were built there. Majority was a reconstruction of old, traditional patterns of Orthodox church architecture which were made look different only by an application of contemporary building materials or technologies which earlier had not been used or had been unattainable. Some innovative forms

7 S. Skliris, *Humanity and Nature in Orthodox Icons*, [w:] *Orthodoxy and Ecology Resource Book*, Paris 1995, p. 78-79.

also appeared. Prof. A. Grygorowicz classified the new structures and indicated the following groups:

- extensions, enlargements and restoration of existing churches;
- designs based on simplified traditional patterns devoid of architectural detail, placed on a central plan with a dome and a steeple over vestibule;
- historicising (eclectic), based on traditional 19th century patterns, placed on a cross-shaped or elongated plan, with a dome and improvised detail;
- searching for new architectural solutions within the required liturgical canon and adapted to their location;
- paraphrasing patterns of folk church architecture⁸.

Amidst the diversity, the Orthodox church architecture in Poland remained for many years globally unique due to its search for a form compatible with the required liturgical canon and adapted to the local specificity but at the same time proposing some new, bold spatial solutions. The particular effect of the search is the Holy Trinity Orthodox church in Hajnówka designed by Prof. A. Grygorowicz. Iconography of the church was designed by Prof. Jerzy Nowosielski, but unfortunately the project was not implemented.

There were more innovative designs in Podlasie. Great, as for those times, courage showed abovementioned Fr. Leoncjusz Tofiluk by commissioning Prof. Grygorowicz to design a new parish house and baptistery. Prof. Nowosielski was commissioned to design and implement iconography of the baptistery. Boldness of the move was due to the fact that some earlier designs and implementations of the eminent artist had been rejected by some faithful and their clergy as obscure and too modern. So it had happened in Hajnówka (1966), Orzeszkowo near Białowieża (1967 – the rejected iconostasis is nowadays in Kraków) and later on in Klejniki (1988 – rejected icons of the Mystical Supper and Deesis prepared for an iconostasis of a new church there). After these experiences the painter returned to Hajnówka with a project of iconography designed for the new church there but his offer was rejected by the parish Dean. Any reasons of such a refusal have never been officially announced.

The construction of the parish house and baptistery proceeded in the years 1981-1984. It is difficult to describe a feeling of wonder I experienced during a baptism service celebrated in the new baptistery at a Paschal period. The experience coincided in time with my reflection caused by reading an article on Picasso's Gertrude Stein portrait. I was impressed by one of its statements that the way Picasso depicted Stein had been not only an effect of his inspiration by the primitive art of other cultures, especially African and Iberian, but it was also a reference to "powerlessness of art towards presenting the whole truth about the depicted individual"⁹. Picasso considered that by means of the primitive art one can express thoughts, meanings and ideas impossible to be expressed by the traditional Western art. Moreover, Gertrude Stein affirmed that she had been and still was contented with her portrait. In her opinion it was the only picture that showed her "as she really is, always"¹⁰. Further reflections were caused by the published recently talks of Z. Podgórzec with Prof. Nowosielski. His way to the icon led through modern art, especially surrealism¹¹. In the unusual setting of the new baptistery the rituals, church singing I had known before did sound and affect me in a completely different way. The form, the color, the light and the space – the small space of the chapel – turned out to be a gate leading into another,

8 J. Grygorowicz, *Architektura świątyń prawosławnych w Polsce*, [w:] *Prawosławie. Źródło wiary, źródło doświadczenia*, red. Krzysztof Leśniewski, Jadwiga Leśniewska, Lublin 1999, p. 327-369.

9 Compere <https://pl.khanacademy.org/humanities/art-1010/early-abstract/cubism/a/picasso-portrait-of-gertrude-stein> (available 10.11.2017)

10 G. Stein, *Picasso*, B.T. Batsford, London 1938, p. 8.

11 Z. Podgórzec, *Wokół ikony. Rozmowy z Jerzym Nowosielskim*, Warszawa 1985, p.14n.

supernatural dimension. For me it was also a discovery of the place and task of the art. It is to present the truth in its very essence, beyond time and space. It is to help to experience *Sacrum*. As Prof. Nowosielski explained in his talk with Elżbieta Dzikowska: "*Sacrum*, in my opinion, is a realm of human consciousness which does not expose itself to any rational analysis; it applies to intuition, spiritual evaluation of reality. I am aware that not everyone has intuition of this kind. There are minds, mental makeups ignorant of it: such people have a very difficult attitude to art. [...] The audience devoid of the feeling of *Sacrum* is little receptive to effect of the art, and an artist cannot exist without that specific intuition. Indeed, he will be able to produce objects of art, but they will be devoid of acting power. A picture cannot be good if it is devoid of the inexpressible action. The art influenced by completely rationalistic trends is powerless"¹².

In the context of the foregoing experience and reflection I decided that the subject of my diploma work would be a design of Orthodox church. While working on it I visited Prof. Nowosielski and listened to his precious remarks. Struggling with the matter of the project and attempting to cope with the "expediency" I based not only "on traditional 19th century patterns, placed on a cross-shaped or elongated plan, with a dome and improvised detail". I searched for and proposed some new architectural solutions within the required liturgical canon. Prepared under guidance of Prof. Witold Czarnecki my diploma church design was innovative not only because in those days it turned out to be the only diploma work dealing with the Orthodox church architecture. In the designed wavelike roof I deployed structural ceiling eliminating majority of stanchions inside the building and the main nave was crowned with three different domes. Baptistry and a bell tower made separate forms of the complex connected with the church by a passage. The design was presented several times on diploma work exhibits.

THE DEEPENED STUDIES

Having graduated I moved to Warszawa and following two years of work in a design office I decided to continue my studies at the Academy of Fine Arts in Warszawa. It turned out to be a very important period in my professional and artistic life. Classes with Prof. Michał Gutt, Aleksander Kozyrski and Teresa Kruszewska were a valuable experience.

A two-year stay at St. Vladimir's Orthodox Theological Seminary in the USA did good to my deeper acquaintance with the icon and Eastern Christian sacred art. I completed a course of lectures on iconology led by an eminent specialist in the field, Fr. Prof. Nicholas Ozoline from St Sergius Orthodox Theological Institute in Paris (Institut de Théologie Orthodoxe Saint-Serge). The acquaintance would bear its fruit with later meetings in France and further exploration of consecutive layers of the mystery of the icon.

The presence of Orthodox iconography, architecture and sacred art was not reduced to the new (1983) architecturally very interesting seminary chapel of the Three Hierarchs. The body and interior of the church was designed by an alumnus of the Seminary, priest and architect, Alexis Vinogradov. Iconography was provided by Elisabeth Kalouzhnaya-Ozoline, a renowned iconpainter and the art historian. The new iconography incorporated icons from the previous chapel painted by Maria Struve. The icons of Elisabeth Ozoline had been one of rare examples of strictly canonical, traditional iconography marked concurrently by clearly individual character of their author. After the previous encounter with very "individualised" iconography of Prof. Nowosielski that was a revealing experience of a wide range of possibilities available within the scope of the canon of iconography, which earlier had seemed to me as (and to the majority of contemporaries it still does remind) "impassable limitation" as regards to the rules, precepts,

12 E. Dzikowska, *Wywiady z mistrzami malarstwa*, Rosikon Press, Warszawa 2012, see http://www.rosikonpress.com/wywiad_389/Jerzy_Nowosielski.html (dostęp 10.11.2017)

requirements concerning the process of creating and means of presenting the content of the icon.

The essence of iconography canon is presented in synthetic reflections of Fr. Paul Florenski collected in the book *Ikonostas i inne szkice*. He maintains that the canon formula in the icon is a blatant form of normativism. Any aesthetic reflection is undoubtedly very difficult here because any regulations and normativism are understood as an assault on creative freedom or even on the art itself. Florenski is aware of the problem sensitivity and the presence of canon in the sacred art he considers its actual measure – it is its liberation rather than a limitation. The true art is not a pursuit of originality but a search of objective beauty, i.e. pursuing “to artistic expression of the truth of things”¹³. A pursuit of otherness, artistic juggling tricks can immediately surprise a recipient, who may interpret it as a value, but it will not bring a single step closer to the expression of the unchanging essence of things. It is obedience to the canon that helps the author to overcome petty ambition and fear “of being the first or the hundredth man talking about that truth”¹⁴. The canon is an optimal expression of the truth of archetype, whose truth and power come from its archetypal character. “Submission to norms does not limit freedom and activity of the subject, but sets it a different dimension.[...] Paradoxically, greater freedom and effort is required to discover what exists already rather than sparing no effort to produce a questionable novelty. The identity turns out to be more difficult, and the difference easier”¹⁵.

The discovery was confirmed by an unexpected encounter with the works of Fr. Gregory Krug. An album presenting his iconography was published by the SVS Press while I was working there, preparing a layout of several other books. The icons of Fr. Gregory are stylistically unique. As Aidan Hart put it, “while remaining true to the principles of the icon tradition, he has his own unique way of expressing these principles. [...] Fr. Gregory’s icons stand above all for a marriage of freedom within and a deep respect for the Church’s iconographic tradition”¹⁶.

In the SVS Library (according to the Library of Congress analysis – the biggest and the best stocked Orthodox library in the Western hemisphere) I encountered also publications of the unknown then in Poland Photios Kontoglou (1895-1965) to whom a revival of traditional iconography in Greece is mainly attributed. By his writings and example he showed the contemporary Greeks that “there are profound reasons for the traditional style, and therefore the Orthodox need not feel that it is inferior to secular western art – to the contrary, that it is superior. [...] It must be said that he did not understand the tradition to be static, a mere copying or painting by numbers. His icons are recognizably his”¹⁷.

Another example of the contemporary artist who managed to express his own creative individualism while creating within the scope of the canon was Petros Sasaki, a Japanese iconographer working in Finland.

During my stay in the USA I had a unique opportunity to experience the icon in its natural background – during worship celebrated in Orthodox churches of various jurisdictions or various Orthodox traditions. The Christian Orthodox community in America amounts over 5 million members but they are divided into over twenty different smaller administrative units marked out by borders of specific nations, traditions or cultures. In New York and its immediate vicinity one could visit Orthodox churches of not only Greek, Arab, Russian, Belarusian, Ukrainian, Carpatho-Rusyn, Romanian, Serbian, Bulgarian or Albanian – but also Coptic, Armenian, Syrian or even Syro-

13 P. Florenski, *Ikonostas i inne szkice*, Warszawa 1984, p. 134.

14 Ibidem.

15 Ibidem, p. 228.

16 See Brother Aidan Hart, *Iconographers of the Twentieth Century*, <https://aidanharticons.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/08/20thicon-2.pdf>.

17 Ibidem.

Malabar tradition. All those churches, so much culture and tradition diverse, could be easily classified according to Prof. A. Grygorowicz's measure. Given the large number of all the churches one could point out only very few of those "searching for new architectural solutions within the required liturgical canon". Even less of those would be "adapted to their location". From among those visited I would distinguish the following: Holy Trinity church (1951) in Jordanville, NY (Roman Verhovskoy), St Nicholas church (1942) (parish church of Igor Sikorski, a famous helicopter constructor) in Stanford, CT (Alexis E. Boldakoff), Holy Spirit Cathedral (1960) in Boston (Constantine Pertzoff), Hagia Sophia church (1983) of the New Skete Monastery, Cambridge, NE, and especially a little church of Kazan Icon of the Virgin Mary in Sea Cliff, Long Island, NY.

Important turned out to be also meetings with many people who influenced the shaping of my creative stance. Those were, above all, Fr. Prof John Meyendorff, then Dean of the SVS as well as other lecturers and people related to the Seminary:

- Helen Bobritzky-Mules – Metropolitan Museum of Art's curator. We discussed inspiringly the art and the way of presenting it. It turned out that MET had got icons in its collection but the way they were exhibited was distinctly standard.
- Heather MacKean – a representative of the professional iconpainters in the USA. At her iconography workshop I was introduced to a different, widely used technique in which traditional pigments were replaced by acrylic paint. That knowledge helped me to acquire proper pigments and stuff necessary to paint icons. Belarusian Orthodox parish of South River, NJ commissioned me to prepare an icon of Synaxis of All Saints of Belarus, which was presented to the Ecumenical Patriarch Demetrios upon his visit to the USA in July 1990.

Highly inspiring were also visits to the NY museums: American Museum of Natural History, MOMA, Guggenheim Museum. I paid attention not only to the content of their expositions, but also to the ways it was exhibited. Although icons themselves had not been presented there, it was at the Guggenheim's that I came up against a statement that at the beginning of the twentieth century some artists, like Wasily Kandinsky, Marc Chagall and Kazimir Malevich had drawn inspiration from the medieval art of the icon. A direct encounter with the works of the artistic avant-garde made me pointedly aware of the relation, a kind of "feedback" between the art of the icon and the modern art. On the one hand the ancient icon inspired the modern artists, and on the other hand the modern art opened the door to understanding the icon's "mechanisms". It was the modern art that in the reality depicted on the icon helped to perceive:

- the lack of unity of time and space
- the multiple perspective
- the abstract color structure
- the symbolism of the color
- the lack of chiaroscuro indicating timelessness
- the application of inverse perspective
- the lack of illusion of space
- the blending of semantic and abstract structures
- the lack of emotionality – allowing to focus on the objective truth
- the absence of historicism
- the lack of submission to fashion.

THE FIRST SUMMARY OF EXPERIENCE – THE ICON EXPOSITION DESIGN IN PODLASKIE MUSEUM

All the aforementioned experience, discoveries and meetings contributed to the decision concerning the subject of my final diploma project crowning the course of studies at Warsaw Academy of Fine Arts. It was a design of icon exhibition. The location of the project was Podlaskie Museum in Białystok with its substantial collection of icons which had never been exposed. One of the reasons was the lack of space for a permanent icon exhibition. Even though the awareness of the icon distinctness would suggest that the way it was presented in a museum interiors should differ somehow from the standard one, in the permanent icon exhibitions in other museums – Faras Frescoes at National Gallery in Warszawa or Orthodox Sacred Art in Historical Museum in Sanok – the frescoes and icons had been exposed similarly to any other pieces of art – upon the uniform museum walls or in glass display cabinets .

The key assumption of the design was that the icons of the museum collection should be exhibited in reference to their natural framework, i.e. the environment of the Orthodox church worship. It should be a kind of compromise between an attempt of arranging a sacred interior in the museum and a transfer of the icons to their “natural environment” of actual church. The assumption was confirmed by a review of the Podlaskie Museum icon collection and the decision which rooms would be dedicated to the potential exhibition space. The background of the exhibit were to be large format photographs – a scene with a procession with icons, a part of the Orthodox church interior and its décor.

Searching for the most adequate way of presenting the icon I was guided by words and comparisons which had underlined distinctness of the icon from any other paintings. An iconostasis, a screen filled with icons, was compared by Fr. Paul Florenski to a window. Thus, he underlined purposefulness aspect of the icon. “The window as such, he said, does not exist, because the notion of window, as of any other tool of culture, contains purposefulness constructively. What is not purposeful, is not a phenomenon of the culture. Thus the window is either light or wood and glass, but it is never simply a window”¹⁸. Dionisios the Areopagite called the icon “a visual image of mysterious and supernatural phenomena”. In the consciousness of a man standing in front of it, the icon reveals an extrasensory world. If it does not do so, it remains simply a piece of painted wood, a manifestation of the past painting. According to Prof. Nicholas Zernov, if the icon does not at least partly cause an impression of the unreal, all one can say about it would be a statement that it has entered the domain of culture and “its value is merely material, at best archeological”. If it reveals the heavenly world, it must be something more than it really is on its own.

In order to present the multiplanar significance of the icon, facilitate visitors to “read out” the depth of its meaning while remaining outside of its “natural environment” of the Orthodox church worship or prayer at home, I proposed to place the icons in cylindrical exposition forms. They were to refer to traditional “icon corner” – room's corner where icons are placed to gain better household concentration during prayer. The cylindrical form was to imitate a trapeze form present in the icon corner and help the visitor to read out better and experience the icon as independent forms. The diploma project was supervised by Prof. Henryka Gałązka.

18 P. Florenski, *Ikonoostas*, [in:] *Ikonoostas i inne szkice*, ibidem, p. 122 .

TRIPS AND DISCOVERIES OF THE ICON'S DIVERSE CONTEXTS

A significant impact on my artistic development, deepening knowledge of the Christian Orthodox sacred art, deeper acquaintance with its richness and diversity was due numerous trips. They allowed to discover the Orthodox sacred art in its local cultural variety.

While in Paris I visited not only the "classic set" of museums (the Louvre, Musée d'Orsay, Centre Pompidou, Rodin and Camille Claudel) but called also on several local Orthodox churches, starting with the church of St Sergius Orthodox Theological Institute. The most important turned out a visit to a Skete du Saint-Esprit near Le Mesnil-Saint-Denis – a hermitage of the Holy Spirit built and furnished by Fr. Gregory Krug. The church of the hermitage was built of the local pumice stone. On its raw and rough walls without plaster Fr. Gregory composed the frescoes I had seen earlier in the SVS Press album. I was absorbed by the fact that the body of the church and its interior formed a homogenous make-up. The iconostasis, for instance, did not make a separate form, but appeared on the church wall and the icons of the iconostasis were actually the frescoes painted on it. In this way, the iconography and symbolism were tightly joined with the architectural make-up – the two main icons of the iconostas were simultaneously the pillars of the construction.

Important proved also visits to Cyprus, Finland, Greece, Russian Karelia and Romania. I was very much impressed by the wooden chapels of the Finnish Karelia and the unique structures of the wooden churches of the Russian part of Karelia, those on the Kizhi Island. The material they were made of, their forms and shapes, silver patina of the wood harmonized with all the surroundings – the color and light of the far North. A similar impression create little churches of Cyprus and the Greek islands, incorporated into bright landscapes of the South, cuddled against mountain slopes or crowning their tops. Both these and others, similar examples of the Orthodox church architecture in Russia, Romania, Georgia or Armenia seem to indicate the need of natural unity of the church with its immediate surroundings. Churches should be not only incorporated into the landscape, but since they are built of its component, they should become its inseparable element. Subsequent research confirmed that it had been the case from the early Christianity. Christian temples were an integral part of the material culture encountered by the early Christians, and later on by the monks in Egypt, Palestine or Syria. They were made of material accessible on site – stone, sand or clay – and they were inherently bound with their ground. They were growing up of it.

In the Romanian Moldavia and Bukovina I visited monasteries in Humor, Moldovita, Sucava, Sucevita and Voronet. There I noticed three characteristic features of their sacred art and architecture. The architecture, although modeled after the Byzantine one, had its distinct local features. The churches – like those in Finland or in Greece – were inscribed in the landscape, but their immediate surrounding was much more emphasized. They were placed within a square of monastic buildings surrounded by ramparts with towers and a characteristic gate. As opposed to the Western architecture, where the church usually adjoined to the monastic buildings complex, here the churches did stand independently in the centre of monastic compound and they were exposed from every side. Therefore the unique 16th century paintings on external walls could be seen. Equally characteristic seemed to me the decoration on the outside walls of Three Hierarchs church in Jassy. The typical Romanian motives harmoniously interlaced with the Byzantine, Rusin, Caucasus (Georgian, Armenian) and even the Oriental (Persian, Turkish, Arab) and geometric with ornamental ones. The richness of the external paintings made me realize a possibility of the witness "outside" – a peculiar gesture of invitation, a deeper "consonance".

The Orthodox church architecture in the Eastern Finland is rather a wooden one and very similar to the 19th century "catalog" architecture in the Podlasie region in Poland. The most illustrious examples are the churches in Joensuu and Ilomantsi. The greatest impression make

numerous little chapels – *tsasouna*, naturally incorporated into their environment. As opposed to the urban monumental anonymity these are cozy and personalized. Finland became independent in 1917. Church architecture tradition was Karelian then. After the Soviet-Finnish war of 1939-1940, when nearly entire Karelia got annexed by the Soviet Union, the Karelian people left their homeland and settled in the central and southern Finland. In the postwar conditions, in the new settlements it was difficult to build new traditional churches. Existing protestant church buildings were adapted to the needs of the Orthodox liturgical life and the new Orthodox churches were built in a local Finnish style.

In this particular context the Orthodox church of St. Herman of Alaska in Tapiola, Espoo – one of Helsinki districts – needs to be mentioned. It was designed by Fr. Paul Hesse, an architect and an Orthodox priest. Although he was inspired by the famous rock hewn Ethiopian churches in Lalibela and the body of the church is a combination of the classic Byzantine and the modern architecture, it is perfectly inscribed in the immediate surroundings. It is built on the top of a rock, in the midst of pine wood, it does not offend with a form of traditional “otherness” nor does it give in to a pressure on “anonymity”. The architectural body and the church interior is a good example of designs “searching for new architectural solutions within the required liturgical canon and adapted to their location”. It serves also as an example of how the church body and its interior should be subjugated to serve the function of the liturgical worship conducted there and to take into account the needs of the local parish community. It can be clearly seen in a well thought-out all-rounded useful combination of the church's nave with its elongated narthex which, if needed, may serve both as an enlarged nave or a separate parish hall with necessary facilities (parish office, archives, kitchenette, storage room, toilets). The frescoes in the nave have been painted by Alexander Wikström and the icons in parish hall by Ulla Vaajakallio. A design of the iconography has been modeled after iconography programs of the Byzantine era. In its simplicity also the iconostas refers to the original form of that period. The construction was completed in 1998.

THE CHURCH OF TRANSFIGURATION

Another step on the way of my artistic development, my Ph.D. program at the Academy of Fine Arts in Warszawa, concerned both the body and the interior of the Orthodox church as a place of liturgical worship, allowing for its surroundings – a gate, road leading to the church, pavement around it, bell tower, cemetery adjacent to it. The location of the church is a village upon the Bug river in Southern Podlasie. The main project assumption for the body of the church was its link to the surrounding nature, traditional forms of the local and the Orthodox architecture as well as a connection with elements of everyday life, work and culture of the local community.

The result of some research was the form which seemed to assume all those intentions. The proximity of the river and waving fields imposed an association with a ship and Noah's Ark – the archetypes of the Christian temple. Nearby gardens set forth a thought on amazing similarity of the onion or red beetroot to the shape of traditional Orthodox church domes in the Russian church architecture¹⁹. Years ago a group of preschool children had made me aware of the potency of this association – passing by the Orthodox cathedral in Helsinki they shouted – *sipuli kirkko*, “the onion church”.

19 See my deliberation on the subject in: T. Misijuk, *Cerkiew Przemienienia*, IV Międzynarodowa Konferencja Naukowo-Techniczna „Budownictwo sakralne i monumentalne”, Białystok 9-10 maja 2002 r., Politechnika Białostocka, 2002, v. I; and *Cerkiew Przemienienia. Wnętrze, bryła i otoczenie świątyni jako funkcja sprawowanego w niej nabożeństwa*, Białystok 2007, p. 18-19.

The conviction of correctness of such a form was confirmed by remarks of Eugene Trubetzkoy: "The Byzantine dome over the temple represents the canopy of heaven hanging over the earth. The spire of a gothic tower represents a drive lifting all the stone body towards heaven. The Russian onion cupola indicates an idea of uncontrollable prayerful gust towards heaven, a flush through which our earthly world becomes a participant of the other world's happiness. The cupola of the Russian church is in a way [...] a flame of fire"²⁰. Answering the question why out of all possible means the Russian architecture has chosen the onion shape top he states that "such a solution made a certain aesthetic impression corresponding with a specific religious mood. The essence of the religious-aesthetic experience is folk byword used in reference to the Orthodox church cupola – *ognyem gorit* , <blazes in fire>, <glows>"²¹.

The onion shape body of the church and a narrowing mast crowned with a cross set on it, may be taken as an attempt to connect the Byzantine dome and the Gothic spire – a reference both to the firmament descending to the earth and the uncontrollable ascent to heaven.

The proposed body of the church is like a golden onion or a drop of water steadily settled on the earth but at the same time raised over it like a flame of fire. Its construction rests on twenty narrow pillars and the space between them is glassed-in. In reference to the icon which is "a window to eternity" and presents the world transfigured, the cupola-church of the Transfiguration, being raised over the earth, is both a place of concentrated prayer (centripetal composition of the whole) and an indication of its aim – inclination upwards (vertical axis). In reference to the Moldavia and Bukovina churches with frescoes on their exterior walls, in the proposed iconography program the figures of saints are placed on the pillars which are visible from the outside. Their location on the border between the other world and the one symbolized by the interior of the church is important for the entire idea of openness of the interior towards the surroundings.

In this way, in reference to the multitude of perspectives characteristic to the icon, the designed body of the church, its interior and the iconography program keep both the traditional space axes and introduce some new ones. The traditional "canonical" longitudinal one leads from the narthex throughout the nave and the Royal door of the iconostasis to the sanctuary. The icon of Christ the Pantocrator is placed above crowning the vertical axis and introducing to the transcendental sphere. The glass walls of the church open up the additional perspectives because into the sphere of prayer they introduce all the surroundings – the cemetery, fields, meadows, and the rural buildings.

A different from traditional treatment of natural light access takes place here. Due to the utmost importance of the icon, the natural light in the Orthodox churches is usually limited and dispensed through small windows. The upper part of the church is devoid of the natural light thus allowing the proper reception of the light and the color of icons placed there. Since the Orthodox churches are traditionally oriented, the altar part of the church and the iconostasis is illuminated by the natural light of descending sun.

Spreading on the Northern side of the temple a view on the local community cemetery is to help those gathered inside to embrace in prayer also the departed ones. Such is the immediate surroundings of the churches in Moldavian and Bukovina monasteries. As Paul Evdokimov noticed, "it indicates the unity of those living and the deceased, assembled in the same divine space".

20 Eugeniusz Trubieckoj, *Kolorowa kontemplacja. Trzy szkice o ikonie ruskiej*, tłum. H. Paprocki, Białystok 1998, p. 8.

21 Ibidem, 8-9.

INTERIOR DESIGNS

THE BAPTISTERY

In 2006 I designed a baptistery at the Holy Spirit church in Bialystok. The project included interior, iconostasis, iconography program and “furnishings” (baptismal font, altar table, lectern). Vertical plan of the space was an elongated irregular quadrangle of 77 square meters and the room was 3,8 m high. The baptistery is located in the northern part of the church. Its entrance through a small vestibule is in the north facade of the church. The interior is illuminated by two high and narrow windows.

The Deisis icon as the composition ordering the interior

The iconostasis is a very important element of the Orthodox church interior as it closes the longitudinal axis of the temple space. Its original form was a low barrier between the nave and the sanctuary. With the passing of time some icons began to be placed on it. Historical research revealed that initially it was the icon of the Savior. Later on the icons of the Virgin Mary and St. John the Baptist were added creating a triptych named Deisis (gr. *deisis* – prayer). The three figures might have been represented either on separate icons or on one wooden panel. According to Prof. Leonid Ouspensky, after its transfer from Byzantium to Kiev Rus', the triptych initiated further impressive evolution of the iconostasis in the Slavic lands. New figures of other saints were added to the triptych. Eventually, new rows of the icons were added to the iconostasis.

In the baptistery I have designed the Deisis triptych is inscribed into a spatial form arranging the interior. Fundamental to the concept of the interior is the location of the Deisis composition on the arches of a cross-shaped form introduced on the ceiling and opposite walls of the room. Thus the intersection of the cross' arms and the baptismal font placed underneath have formed a vertical axis of the baptistery.

The composition is continued and completed by a row of the figures of saints on the walls of the interior. The figures of the saints do not meet the faithful as it is the case in traditional iconostasis, but surround all those gathered around the baptismal font. Transfer of the figures of the saints from the extended Deisis triptych of the iconostasis to the walls is a continuation of a gesture of invitation to a meeting present in the iconography of the entrance wall in the vestibule. Over the entrance door there appears the Mandylion, an icon of Christ. The wall on both sides of the door is filled with an icon composition of the Meeting of the Lord in the Temple (also called the Presentation). There is the Virgin Mary on the left side and St. Simeon with Jesus in his arms on the right one. The separation of the figures by the entrance door makes it a part of the icon space. The entrance door “introduces” to the Meeting all those gathered in the baptistery and thus the range of the meeting represented on the icon is significantly broadened. In a similar manner the subject of the Deisis composition embraces all the baptistery space and all the assembled therein.

This kind of the Deisis composition placement facilitated introduction of the central and centripetal arrangement in the existing elongated room space. The preference for the central order results from the character of Sacrament of Baptism performed here. It helps to focus on the baptismal font.

The solution proposed refers also to the “gesture of invitation” brought about by the arrangement of figures on the aforementioned icons of the Holy Trinity, Mystical Supper and the Pentecost. The three winged figures and Jesus Christ with the Apostles are represented as seated at the three opposite sides of the table, while the fourth remains free and open to those standing in front of it. On the Pentecost icon the Apostles are seated or stand in a semicircle open

towards the viewers. That is a meaningful iconic invitation to participation – be it in the movement of love initiated by the Persons of the Trinity, *perichoresis*, the "interpenetration" of the Three Persons of the Trinity or in Eucharistic Mystical Supper and reception of the Holy Spirit.

The central arrangement of the baptistery is to introduce the assembled there into a created collectively circle of concentration – upon the baptismal font and the Eucharist, the sacraments of Christian initiation. The longitudinal axis refers to drive towards the ultimate aim of Christian life, the spiritual pilgrimage. The Saints represented on the walls had already travelled the way and they are its witnesses. The longitudinal axis is continued and crowned by the icon of the Theophany (Christ's baptism by John the Forerunner in the Jordan River). The complement of the circle of the Saints are the groups of Angels represented in the sanctuary space behind the iconostasis. The icons of the four Evangelists are placed on the ceiling between the arms of the Deesis composition.

The Iconostasis

The iconostasis displays the two main icons – the Mother of God with Child and Christ. It is expanded by the form of elongated candlestick. The candle flames and the "mist of the saints" of matt glass introduce to the sanctuary space. The candle – the living candle flame is indispensable element of every Christian Orthodox worship. They are usually placed on candlesticks, a special table for prayers for the deceased or held in hands. I deemed the candle flames to be a permanent element of the iconostasis – they should meaningfully indicate the border between the two dimensions – the transcendent and the mundane represented by the sanctuary and the nave. Thus, the traditional candlestick has given way to a new form which has become integral part of the iconostasis and "inscribes" itself in its symbolism and its meaning.

THE MUSEUM OF ICONS IN SUPRASL

The diploma project of the temporary icon exhibition in Podlaskie Museum in Białystok bears fruit of an invitation to cooperate in creating a permanent exhibition of icons in a new branch of the Podlaskie Museum in Supraśl. In 2006 I prepared a scenario of the exhibition and participated in the process of its design and implementation in the Museum of Icons, Division of the Podlaskie Museum in Białystok. The Museum was established thanks to persistent efforts of Mr. Andrzej Lechowski, Director of the Podlaskie Museum, to take over the icons intercepted by customs officers on the Polish Eastern border and then kept in the customhouse storehouses in inappropriate conditions. The new Museum was established in several rooms of the newly restored Archimandrite Palace – an eastern wing of the Supraśl Monastery of the Annunciation. Icons for the permanent exhibition were selected by Ms. Krystyna Mazuruk.

The design aimed to adapt the selected rooms suitably for the exhibition space of the frescoes, icons, wooden and metal crosses, cast metal "travel icons". Having taken cognizance of the museum icon collection and the space dedicated for the exhibition I have formulated the main project premise – the icons were to be presented in their natural context i.e. in the Christian Orthodox environment of icon veneration. The new possibilities, gained knowledge and experience influenced the decision to emphasize more the liturgical context and the function of icon in the Orthodox worship.

The design of the exhibition scenario and its setting was to a large extent influenced by the holistic dimension in the manner of conducting the Orthodox Church worship, its content and rich stenography involving all the human senses. The iconography (often defined as polychromy), rich color of the Orthodox church interior and liturgical vestments – operate on the sense of sight; the sung and melorecited liturgical texts – the sense of hearing; the characteristic fragrance of the wax candles and incense – the smell; setting and burning candles,

making prostrations, venerating the icons – the touch; the Eucharistic “food and medicine of immortality”, blessed bread, kolivo and fruit – the sense of taste.

Thus, in the museum presentation of icons the vital part should be played by the color and value of the exposition background, suitable illumination of individual icons and the seeing should be subtly accompanied by the Orthodox church singing.

The main assumption of the scenario design was the exposition arrangement according to a key based on the content of the icons. Moreover, particular rooms were assigned to specific liturgical contexts in which given icons or their sets appear usually. The respective contexts are illustrated by various wall paintings – replicas of adequately selected old frescoes, large format photographs and appropriate stylization of the rooms.

Scenario

Room 1 – an introduction to the theology and meaning of icons in Orthodox Christianity. The exhibition refers to the early Christian times, selected icons are placed in stylized catacomb niches. There are characteristic examples of the early Christian sacred art, selected catacomb paintings presented on the walls there.

Room 2 – a presentation of the most characteristic forms of the sacred space where the icon appears usually. The exhibition contains a model of an iconostasis and stylized *panikandilion* – a church chandelier – with the icons of the twelve major feasts of the Orthodox liturgical calendar placed on it. The chandelier's circle, the icons of other feasts, groups of saints of respective months (gr. *menaion*) which are exposed here reflect characteristic cycles of the Orthodox Church calendar. Photos on the walls present the Orthodox church interior and worship conducted therein. The recurring factor of cycles is reflected also on a photo with a procession with a reliquary and icons outside the church.

Corridor – the place of transfer to the next exhibition rooms. Its elongated architecture helps to suggest a possibility of the icon's translocation. An exposition on its long wall presents a group of Podlasie pilgrims carrying icons and crosses. The opposite wall is occupied by an exposition of small crosses and cast metal “travel icons” as well as small “travel iconostases”. The end of the perspective is the Mandylion, the Image of Edessa, associated with the icons placed over the city gates. The accent placed on the move, transfer, going through the gate indicates the theological aspect of the icon as “the window of eternity”.

A small niche in the stairway hall, on the way to the exhibition rooms upstairs, is used to display the icon of the Nativity of Christ which occurred in a cave stable near Bethlehem. In accordance with the general principle of the scenario the point here is that the place of the icon exposition should correspond as much as possible with its content. The niche in the wall indicates a place hidden off the beaten track and it may call up associations to the Bethlehem field of shepherds. The hall and the stairway emphasize movement, translocation and may bring to mind the visit of the three Wise Men, the coming of shepherds and the presence of Angels.

The stairway provoked an association with the “whirls of space” in surrealist works of M.C. Escher, his *Relativity* lithograph of 1953 in particular. The world without the law of universal gravitation and the sequence of time presented therein calls up associations with the icon. Depicting the heart of the matter the icon shows several vantage points at the same time. It may present both an exterior view of a building and scenes in its interior. Events taking place in different places and times are shown next to each other.

An effect of the multiplied space perspective is invoked by the mirrors placed on the stairway. They show both the space we are in and the space we head for. The visitors can also see their own

reflections. They are to remind that a man bears the image of God, a man is God's icon and a prospective saint.

Room 3 – an exhibition of the icons of the Mother of God. One of the main principles of the design is to arrange all the collection according to the criterion of the icon content. It is reflected in the Room II and the corridor where the icons of liturgical cycle, the “travel icons” and crosses are exhibited.

It should be mentioned here that all the museum icon exhibition I have known so far have been devoid of any “key of arrangement”. The meaningful example was 2006 Helsingin Kaupungin Museo – Helsinki City Museum exceptional exhibition of the icons donated over the centuries to several major monasteries of the Holy Mount Athos by the Russian tsars. Seeing the “classic” exhibit of the unique old icons placed on the white walls or in glass showcases one could not determine any order of the presentation – it was neither the time or the place of creation of the icon nor its content, neither the monastery which it was donated to nor the person of the donor.

The icons of the Mother of God gathered in the room are exposed in the background of its blue walls. The color is characteristic to the garment of the Theotokos. Important is the symbolism of the color but the main point here is the spatial effect caused by the contrasting juxtaposition of the cold blue background with the warm color of the icon and the impression of the icon's “suspension”. The icons are exposed according to characteristic types of depictions of the Virgin Mary and the Child on the icon – i.e. the Hodegetria, (literally: *She who shows the Way*), the Eleusa (or Eleousa) (*tenderness or showing mercy*), the Sign, etc.

In this Room there is also a fragment of an old Podlasie region peasant cabin with an icon placed traditionally (in order to focus attention) in a prismatic angle. It is a very characteristic and traditional place for the icon veneration in house interiors.

Room 4 – an iconographer's studio – a stylized place of work and prayer of a monk iconographer. Icons in various stages of creation are presented there.

Room 5 – the saturated red color of the walls unites the icons of saints different in style, time and content – Prophets, Apostles, Hierarchs, Martyrs, Monks, Healers – and refers to characteristic symbolism of the color of these particular icons.

The corridor on the first floor – one of its walls is occupied by “icon-like” sacred paintings from the United (Greek-Catholic or Eastern Rite) churches. They are influenced overwhelmingly by the Western realistic art.

At the end of the corridor, next to the exit to the stairway there is a scene of procession on the Feast of the Epiphany and a ceremony of water blessing in a river. This is another reference to the icon's pilgrimages – the photograph represents characteristic church banners with icons. There are some icons of St John the Baptist are exhibited in that context.

The stairway and the corridor downstairs lead to the last hall with an exposition of the Suprasl frescoes. The visitors pass by a model of the Byzantine- Gothic style church of the Annunciation of the Suprasl monastery. The model originates from the frescoes exhibition in the times before the reconstruction of the church. It presents the unique body and the interior with its original iconography reconstructed.

Room 6 – the exhibition of the famous Suprasl frescoes that survived the destruction of the sixteenth century church by withdrawing Nazi army troops in 1944. The frescoes are placed on the walls in a way reconstructing their original location in the church of Annunciation. The photographs on the walls represent the original interior and its Rococo alteration introduced

while the monastery was occupied by monks of the Greek-Catholic and the Roman Catholic Church.

In the process of designing the exhibition of icons in the Icon Museum in Supraśl I was accompanied by the comparison of the icon to the window which does not exist on its own and does not hold any gaze or attention on itself due to its specific function – its aim is to reveal what is behind it.

THE CEMETERIES IN THE REVERSE PERSPECTIVE

In my diploma projects I have dealt with the architecture body of the church, the museum interiors with an icon exhibition as well as the body, the interior and the immediate surroundings of the church. In the projects described above and in several other implementations I have focused on the interior or particular elements of its decor. A significant accent on the immediate surroundings in the church of Transfiguration design caused my previous artistic reflection and work to continue in a natural manner with a “deepened” going outside and focusing on the sacred space in a wider urban and landscape context.

The sacred space outside the churches is a graveyard. The local parish community cemetery so clearly visible through the glass walls of the church of Transfiguration refers to the holistic, all-embracing aspect of the Orthodox church services. Prayer in commemoration of the deceased is their inseparable part. It is also a reference to the ancient (the catacombs) and the contemporary (monasteries, graves of clergy in majority of countryside churchyards) examples of locating the places of burial in the immediate surroundings of the church.

The graveyards are a special sacred space in which architecture form lives in the landscape, its variable color and light, in different urban contexts.

The multitude and the diversity

Although the burial grounds have a lot in common, in different religions or denominations, cultures or traditions, urban or rural contexts they look different. The rural community graveyards of Podlasie region differ from metropolitan necropoleis not only due to distinctness of the surroundings – open landscape, location upon a hill, next to or in a forest. Even though terrazzo tombstone standard appears everywhere, the old traditional wooden crosses are still present there and some new ones with the traditional metal cross on their top keep appearing. In 2003 Podlaskie Museum published a *Krzyż kowalski na Podlasiu* album where Wojciech Kowalczyk presented 290 different crosses of the Podlasie region cemeteries.

In Podlasie region it is worthwhile to visit *mizar* – the Muslim graveyard in Kruszyniany. The cemetery in Drohiczyn is exceptionally beautifully located. In Warszawa I have often visited the Orthodox Cemetery in Wola, the Jewish and Protestant graveyards and the Powązki one of course. In Paris I have visited not only the Pere-Lachaise, but also the Russian Orthodox Cemetery in Sainte-Geneviève-des-Bois with the grave of Andrei Tarkovsky (“Andrei Rublov”, 1966) and over fifteen thousand post-revolutionary Russian emigrants. At Pere-Lachaise the enormous wealth of the tombstones coexists in a patchwork system – each form exists in the context of another one and it seems it was not necessarily taken into account by their designers. The abundance of the forms and content is being smoothened by the surrounding greenery. At the monastery graveyards, the war cemeteries or cemetery sections like the one in Monte Cassino, all the crosses and tombstones are the same. It is the landscape, the greenery that provides the “variety”, diversity and background to the sequence of crosses.

A very practical attitude to cemeteries can be seen in the USA – the tombstones there do not raise above the ground level allowing unimpeded grass mowing. Traditionally “unpractical” remain the Orthodox cemetery in Nanuet, Rockland County, New York or the monastic graveyards in Jordanville, NY and South Canaan, PA.

Completely different in character are the cemeteries of the Finish Karelia, especially those in Uusi Valamo and Ilomantsi. Time came to a standstill there. Ways leading to the graveyards are strips of mowed grass. The wooden crosses with traditional roofs are nearly identical and the tombs are marked merely by a stone or wood frame. The space around is organized by the nature and nobody hinders the natural processes. To the necropolis of monks of the Uusi Valamo monastery leads a lane of few dozen meters high spruce trees. Traditional *grobu* – wooden tomb forms in shape of a small cabins are overgrown with moss and lichen - they blend into the surrounding. The wood under the thick layers of the moss and lichen is nearly invisible. An insignificant interference with the nature, the simple traditional wooden crosses with roofs and Karelian ornaments, the greenery creeping to the tombs from everywhere – all that is amazing. The tombs blend into the nature, the landscape, they become its integral part and, similarly to the human bodies, they disappear in the earth and become its particles.

The observations from the cemeteries I had visited in the past helped me in designing the tombstone of Tamara Soloniewicz, renowned and awarded film director and screenwriter, whose committed creative activity was closely related to Podlasie. The tombstone of Ms. Tamara and her parents is in the centre of parish graveyard in Michalowo. In order to avoid confrontation with the contiguous tombs, I have designed stepwise panels with inscriptions and two traditional metal crosses in the background of planted wall of jumpers. Designing other tombstones of people important to me I referred to the local tradition of the stone form with a metal cross.

The war cemeteries

The cemeteries of the WWII are usually the national war memorial sites and exemplify extended space layouts. There are also WWI cemeteries present in the Podlasie region landscape. These sites are rather simple, significantly different from the magnificent cemeteries of the same period of time preserved in the Beskid Niski region, the ones which lived to have a solid album study. At some of the Podlasie cemeteries some relics of their past forms survived – some remnants of the German arrangements from the time of the Nazi occupation. In the majority of them some new forms of commemoration and protection were installed by the locals.

In February and in July 1915 bloody battles of the Russian and German army, unusual in history of Podlasie, took place in this part of Poland. The scorched-land tactic implemented by the Russian army efficiently deprived the German forces of resources, made the civilian population suffer vast destruction of their villages and caused tragic displacements termed *byezhenstvo* – *the escape*. The very recent (2015) commemoration of the centennial of the battles contributed to a large extent to popularize knowledge on the painful and so little known chapter in the history of Poland. The centenary events and various centennial publications made many aware of the enormity of the tragedy, pain and despair of over three million people escaping the warfare to the vast territory of the Russian Empire. The harm caused by the *escape* and its consequences is assessed at up to 40% of the prewar Podlasie population.

The WWI was the first total war involving multitude of both soldiers and civilians. Out of 65 millions of soldiers, about 8,5 million died and 21 million was injured. It is impossible to estimate the number of civilians who suffered the warfare. The demographic, economic and social consequences of the war Podlasie region suffers until today. The graves of the fallen soldiers serve as a reminder.

The study concerns nine selected places in the vicinities of Bielsk Podlaski. These are cemeteries and mass graves of the soldiers fallen in the battles of the summer of 1915. Many of them were sons of this country since the soldiers of the fighting sides were not only the Russians or Germans but also the local Poles, Belarusians, Lithuanians and Ukrainians enlisted for the army. The Podlasie region has always been and still remains nationally, ethnically, culturally and religiously diverse. What is important, in its difficult history it is difficult to trace shameful chapters proving intolerance and xenophobia.

It is very characteristic that nearly all the graveyards are taken care of by the locals. All human graves are respected regardless of the nationality, religion, confession or political affiliation of the buried therein. The death reduces all of them to a simple "common denominator". What is important and characteristic, in all the cemeteries the soldiers of both fighting armies lie buried there side by side.

The context of the centennial celebrations and reflection turned out to be one of the reasons to take up the subject. I was born and grown up in Bielsk Podlaski but for the long years I was not aware that so much had happened in the immediate neighborhood and the surrounding meadows and fields hide so many painful testimonies and reminiscences of the war. In the landscapes I had known from my childhood I discovered a new, "deeper content" unknown earlier. I decided to take appropriate action to enable others to see the hidden truth of the past through the familiar "windows" of the suburban landscapes.

All the graveyards got somehow "inscribed" in the surrounding landscape and remain more or less visible. The main design premise of mine results from a desire to show respect for both the existing forms and the simple action taken so far by the locals. The design work was preceded by a series of research concerning:

- an inventory of the existing space and forms,
- an analysis of the spatial premises of the cemeteries,
- a form analysis of the existing tombstones, crosses and fences,
- an analysis of the greenery,
- an analysis of the space in the context of the immediate surrounding

The result of the research was the inventory documentation which became foundation of design work.

THE CEMETERIES AND GRAVES OF THE WORLD WAR I
AS PLACES SIGNIFICANT IN THE PODLASIE REGION LANDSCAPE
– DESIGN CONCEPTS FOR PRESERVING THE MEMORY

The multifaceted design concerns the graveyards which have just turned one century old. Although they appeared at the same time and are relatively close to each other, each one is different. Some of them remain in the urban space, some other in the rural one, some in the forest, some other in the fields. Some of them are out of the way, for many years they have remained untouched, suffered natural degradation processes. Some others, remaining in sight of the locals, carry various symptoms of care and proper maintenance. Human interference into the cemeteries original forms and counteraction against the proceeding natural processes can be seen in varying degrees.

Actions and measures undertaken can be defined in general as protection, putting in order, cleaning up, supplementation rather than addition. It results from the intention to both retain the existing condition of the cemeteries resulting from and efforts of the local population. With reference to all, but in each case individually, taking into account various conditions and contexts, I considered possibilities to introduce some unifying elements. These amount to the memorial plate and information system. Both for the locals and for the outsiders the cemeteries should remain the same “windows” in the local landscape. The action and supplementation described in documentation is to allow deeper insight into the rich content they represent and to save the places of burial from oblivion.

Each project has its inventory documentation, technical documentation of the forms designed, description of the proposed greenery, ground views and sections.

The crowning of the multifaceted action was a public presentation of “The cemeteries and graves of the World War I as places significant in the Podlasie region landscape – design concepts for preserving the memory” project. It took place on November 18, 2017, at the Little Homeland Museum in Studziwody (once a village in vicinity of Bielsk, nowadays the city quarter), nearby one of the WWI cemeteries. The Studziwody inhabitants who pass by it daily, residents of Bielsk Podlaski and its vicinities, familiar with some of the other graves of the WWI soldiers, learnt about the proposed solutions and possibilities of emphasizing the presence of those sites in the local landscape and about concepts of preserving and cultivating memory thereof.

The multimedia presentation of the project in the Little Homeland Museum was accompanied by a performance of the “Zhemerva” Folk Study group. Participants of the presentation heard once popular and forgotten nowadays Podlasie region military songs.

After the project presentation one of its main premises was implemented. All the present went to the nearby war cemetery at the crossing of Studziwodzka and Wiejska street. The lighting of candles was accompanied by a moving traditional ceremony of girding the commentary cross with a traditional Podlasie region towel. The towel was a replica of one of the local folk towels preserved in the collection of Bielsk Podlaski Museum, Division of the Podlaskie Museum in Białystok. Over the past decade the Bielsk Museum got specialized in the projects aiming to restoration and popularization of traditions connected with the folk towel.

What in the project overall context is equally important, participates of the event assembled for a short prayer for the several hundred fallen Russian and German soldiers led by an Orthodox priest.

“Ruchnik – Towel” Project

In 1960. traditions and rituals connected with the folk towel were still alive at Podlasie region and in Bielsk Podlaski area. As in the past centuries it was often used during baptism, wedding and funeral ceremonies. It played various roles – practical, aesthetic, cultic, symbolic, protective and even magic ones. Being part of important family rituals and religious feasts it was a popular gift item. It was commonly used in everyday life and at work. Many ritual functions of the towel are still kept in secret.

The towel has for ages been ascribed a metaphysical meaning. It has been a symbol of human contact with God, with the deceased, a sign of respect for the sacred, the holy icons and the cross²². The phenomenon of the ritual towel is of interest for museology and ethnography as it concerns both the broad field of the folk culture as well as the folk beliefs and rituals. Nowadays one can clearly perceive a process of decay of some culture manifestations. It concerns also the knowledge of the towel and the process of its creation and meaning. The folk towel has nearly lost its traditional spiritual meaning. Depreciation of the *ruchnik* has been a slow and long-lasting process related to emigration of the rural population to the cities where the traditions connected with it have ceased to be cultivated.

In the last years one can observe significantly growing interest in the folk towel. It concerns not only the rural environment where the towel is rather of sentimental value but also people to whom the tradition is exotic or even alien. Since 2010 the Bielsk Museum builds up its collection of the folk towels. As of today it comprises a total of over 350 items of the “Mysterious Towel” permanent exhibition. The collection, numerous publications, education programs are the outcome of several years of endeavors carried on in the area of Bielsk Podlaski. Further research in this direction is supported by cooperation with Ethnology and Anthropology Institute of Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznan (Prof. Ina Szwed).

The introduction of the Podlasie folk towel to “The cemeteries and graves of the World War I as places significant in the Podlasie region landscape – design concepts for preserving the memory” project is a part of the multifaceted approach to the issue. The towel is to support the “design concepts for preserving the memory” of the cemeteries. The towel's presence on the cemetery crosses is to support museologist endeavors to raise awareness and disseminate information on their traditional meaning and to reconstruct their original role. It is not insignificant that the Little Homeland Museum in Studziwody has been so actively involved in the initial implementation of the project. The Museum takes care of the local WWI cemetery, it plans and takes concrete action in connection with several others. Although the complete implementation of the project has not been yet achieved, the interest of both institutions in reference to the memorial sites, the enthusiasm and zeal of Ms. Alina Dębowska, the Bielsk Museum Director as well as the consistent actions of Mr. Dariusz Fionik, Director of the Little Homeland Museum in Studziwody, hold promise for the future.

22 A. Dębowska, K. Sołub, *Wzornik tradycyjnych haftów i koronek ręcznika ludowego, Haft krzyżykowy*, Muzeum Podlaskie w Białymstoku, wyd. II, Białystok 2015, s. 1.

THE DIDACTICS

Interior Design Department of Białystok Technical University was established in 1999. I began my work there as an assistant to Prof. Andrzej Bissenik of the Academy of Fine Arts in Warszawa who was in charge of creating the new department and supervised it for several consecutive years. The work with Prof. Bissenik – the master and grand authority – has been of pivotal importance to my further didactic work. His professionalism, creativity, expert didactic attitude remain an unparalleled paragon.

The Basics of Composition and the Color Theory

I tutor in the Basics of Composition and the Color Theory individually since 2003. In my didactic attitude I attempt to point out the need to reach to the essence, to search for the cause of phenomena, to understand the structure, the principle of the work construction. It allows to enrich the range of artistic means and their application according to the consciously accepted project assumption. I underline also the significance of the holistic approach to the subjects undertaken – examining the phenomena from different perspectives and in the widest possible context (painting, sculpture, music, architecture, physics, biology etc.). In reference to P. Cezanne's statement: "I aspire to a logic development of what I can see in the nature", I encourage students to perceive the nature as an inexhaustible source of inspiration. I pay always attention to providing a possibility of individual interpretation of the observed phenomena and their creative usage.

The course of the Basics of Composition and the Color Theory lasts for first two semesters of the undergraduate studies program. The students are getting acquainted with the issue of composition through learning the objective determinants of the design basics, i.e.: point, line, plane, color. They learn the principles, methods and means of modern composition in the art and architecture. They interpret the natural visual phenomena and turn to selected works accomplished in various fields of the art in order to ensure the widest possible cognitive context. The knowledge acquired in this manner is to be applied in project assignments, which are to enable them to achieve the assumed project goals, i.e. to express feelings, moods, emotional associations, to emphasize values. The selection of assignments and the theoretical knowledge passed on in the Composition course is to develop ability to read the inner content in the exterior form and to shape works by following the inner logic. Comparing individual student abilities with the surrounding plastic phenomena is to develop the spatial imagination, to sensitize the students to the form and the consequences of its effect in space.

The course is based on the following literature:

Vassily Kandinsky – his color theory and the relation between music and color are presented in his books: *Concerning the Spiritual in Art* and *Point and Line to Plane*. The issue is also dealt with in the following works: Johannes Itten, *The Art of Color*; James T. Long, *The New Munsell Student Color Set*. (Large excerpts presented in Maria Rzepińska, *The History of Color*).

W. Strzemiński, *The Theory of Seeing*. His theory defining the conscious seeing shaped by the culture, civilization and social factors allows to perceive the potential of shaping the awareness in the process of education.

M. Stanowski, *The Abstract Structures (Struktury abstrakcyjne)*. The book contains analyses of visual structures in the arts. It makes one to realize the essence of relation between the form, the splash of color and the means leading to implementation of specific project assumptions. The author distinguishes between the phenomena of contrast and difference, provides a key to understand and to design the form relations i.e. tensions, the work content and the composition. *The Abstract Structures* are a kind of introduction to his further deliberations going beyond the field of aesthetics and heading towards philosophy of mind, theory of complexity and physics.

The Bachelor's and Master's diploma works

I supervise diploma projects on very diverse subject matter according to the student's preferences. It can often require a time-consuming research regarding the given subject. The cooperation on the diploma work I perceive as crowning of the education process. I do my best to make it a continuation of the previous dialogue and collaboration with the student, the process of development of the ability of independent, critical, logic and creative thinking. Quite often it brings a great deal of satisfaction as the process does enrich both sides involved.

THE SUMMARY

Presenting the successive stages of my career path I have stated several times that I have been accompanied by the comparison of the icon to the window which does not exist independently, does not keep attention on itself. The comparison has appeared at my work on particular projects in many different places and circumstances. In what way such a perception of the icon has influenced my life and work?

It can be explained by an example of a composition. If a form is a “window” then connections that have come into being within it make it become a window on a deeper content – thus it becomes the composition and ceases to be merely a set of things. The golden ratio (on which I spend one of the first semester seven lectures) is not merely a mathematic proportion, but a reason. The plant turns successive growth of its leaves to such an angle so as to gain the best possible exposure to the light and precipitation.

If the given applied form does not perform its applied function it remains a “useless” decoration. The lamp is to affirm the effect of light. Seemingly simple and prosaic theme – a “Photo Frame” – has provoked heated discussion and attempts to reach the photo's deeper content and efforts to make the “frame” form be the “window” and not just an aestheticising supplement.

The cemeteries and graves are “windows” as well – windows to the truth about the life and death, history and war. In my design concepts I have treated “the war cemeteries and graves of the World War I” as the “window” through which one could perceive the truth of the tragedy of war, young life brutally interrupted on its own or foreign land, respect and care of the departed place of rest, the landscape in which they remained forever, changing four times a year and twice a day. This is my explanation why my actions do not include any large design forms which would make the window function as a subject. Had our actions been furnished with a deeper reflection, there would be no graveyard artificial flowers which make the broken green of the moss and lichen invisible.

In the presented implementations, the didactic work which resulted with the attached student designs, in my perception of the art as well as in all my artistic activity I have been accompanied by a desire to discover and reveal the “deeper content” that in the contemporary world have fallen into oblivion or got prevailed by materialism and commercialism. In the projects undertaken and in the didactic work I have attempted to perceive the addressed tasks in the “reverse perspective”. I have always encouraged and still do encourage my students to do so. With reference to the prolonged perspective lines that meet in the person of the viewer, each work I attempt to begin with reaching to the source, the reason and the root of the matter. I do encourage students to perceive and accept assignments from their own, personal perspective. Reaching to one's own depth opens a broad perspective of perception and creative activity.

Both didactics and project assignments I perceive as a process that begins and lasts, but does not end with the implementation of the given undertaking – it should continue to “bear fruit”. Such is the assumption of the initiated implementation of “The cemeteries and graves of the World War I as places significant in the Podlasie region landscape – design concepts for preserving the memory” project. The point is not only in the creative process of “protection, putting in order, cleaning up, supplementation” of the indicated cemeteries and its final implementation – single symbolic ribbon cutting ceremony of renewed opening of each of them. The design concepts “for preserving the memory” suggest rather gradual, multifaceted actions distributed in time. The point is not to merely remind about the WWI graves and cemeteries on the occasion of a successive “opening” ceremony, but rather to preserve the memory both

constantly and efficiently. This is why the representatives of the local community, the Little Homeland Museum and Podlaskie Museum, the radio and TV as well as the candles, the traditional Podlasie "*ruchnik*" have been involved in the beginning of the project implementation. The broad involvement of this kind is to accompany the processes of "protection, putting in order, cleaning up, supplementation" and preserving the memory of every single cemetery and grave.

The explanation of the concept may be also an early Christian, definitely "not today's" greeting. Instead of saying "good morning" or "good afternoon" the Christians used to greet each other with the words "memento mori" – "remember death". The point was not to discourage living by such an incessant reminding of the inevitable death. On the contrary – preserving the memory of the death helped, paradoxically, to deepen the value of life as in face of the death both words and deeds gain their real value and meaning. Being aware of the fact that the words spoken might be the last uttered ones leads to equip them with their full content and deep, real meaning. Thus the "good morning" begins the real wish of a good day and "excuse me" becomes truly a plea for forgiveness...

This is this context in which the idea of an open and lengthy project is set in – the design concepts "for preserving the memory" are needed so as not to allow any other war graves and cemeteries. The project is needed for a deeper understanding of the dignity of life as the privilege which should not be taken from any human being by anyone. Therefore I suppose that my project is needed and may be presented not only as a part of the scholarly procedure, but also as a creative contribution into the culture of my region.

TATIANA WISIGUS