

INTERVIEW WITH KRZYSZTOF M. BEDNARSKI CONDUCTED BY PROF.
IWONA SZMELTER AND M.A. MONIKA JADZINSKA IN THE CENTRE OF
CONTEMPORARY ART IN UJAZDOWSKI CASTLE, WARSAW, 20.10.2005

K.M. Bednarski: - All the things and objects should be preserved. But how to do it?
Who is able to keep their oeuvre as a whole? Even artists who are
mature and economically independent can't afford to do it.

ARTIST'S INTENT

M. Jadzinska: - We are discussing the artwork *Grass just Grass*. Could you express the
message of that work?

K.B.: - First of all, I try to avoid auto-commentary. The commentary imposes
interpretation, which I consider is the wrong way. The relationship
between the artwork and the viewer can create the spheres or
associations that the artist wouldn't predict. If we try to construct the
work basing on pure intellect, the object might appear to be dead.
If the work surpasses the artist – that is fantastic situation! The work
should be “an open form” that tells the audience its own
interpretation through the contact with it. The work includes the
potential that could change in time, circumstances, places, contexts,
depending on the viewer. Each of us has got their own sensibility,
scale of perception, culture, and memory. Additionally, the starting
artist's intention needn't agree with the final effect. Sometimes the
artist used to try to create the work by making several versions of it
in order to choose the first one at the end of the process. He tested it
on himself. I have made the work for myself; it is bursting with my
energy and emotions. This is the potential of the artwork. I treat my

works in a very personal way, there is still such a personal history connected with each of them.

WORKMANSHIP

M.J.: - Did you make it yourself?

K.B.: - Yes I did and this is really important for me. Cutting of hundreds meters of the barbed wire...

M.J.: - Did you buy 1800 meters of barbed wire at once?

K.B.: - Firstly I bought one coil that I started to cut. I made one box, testing the dimension (it was the smaller one) – the dimension was not friendly, not similar to the coffin or to the window box for flowers – it doesn't fit, it is special! It got something to do with the map of Auschwitz, "rational architecture"...

I. Szmelter: - The Holocaust context is a frequently occurring association...

K.B.: - The traces of the buildings overgrown with grass, geometry confronted with the nature. It is just grass, fields of flowers, on the other hand...the material is not the only case that is visible. It is difficult to describe – the proper closeness, the sensual contact with the barbed wire constitutes the special kind of emotion, experience, provocation with the aim to invite the viewer to his/her own subconscious. It doesn't matter what the viewer think or understand – the case is how he feel it. It is the sphere of gloomy, somber emotions, something intangible that can't be described – this is the power of the artwork. Everyone has got their own memories, experiences which filter the work – if someone survived the concentration camp his associations could be unambiguous. But if I say – it is grass, just grass, and a young man or woman comes here and takes it as a joke, it is

possible that he/she considers it deeper later on or – even better – doesn't think but feel it sensually.

M.J.: - ... Well, the artist's intent was to create the open form, multilevel work...

K.B.: - It had happened by itself.

CREATION PROCESS

M.J.: - The work was finished in 1996. Could you describe its ups and downs, its later fade?

K.B.: - It happened in the small Italian village, San Silvestro, Pascara, in the house of my friend Bruno Marrini. It was that period of my life that I felt the need of isolation. I started to cut the wire didn't know why and what for I had been doing that. The wire is resistant, bending all the time, it simply hurt my hands. It didn't matter you have got the gloves – the material demands my blood. Every work demands your blood, there is the link with your body and the thing that you create.

I.Sz.: - Was there something else in that village?

K.B.: - Nothing. I woke up in the morning and started cutting wire.

M.J.: - How long did it last?

K.B.: - Approximately two months. During the process my friend Bruno joined me and that act seemed to be very important to me because of a special relationship with the other human being.

M.J.: - Was he an artist?

K.B.: - No, an architect. And not the process of helping was the most important but communication.

TECHNIQUE

M.J.: - Prosaic question – what kind of tools did you use during the creation process? It

is not just a case of cutting the wire?

K.B.: - Scissors, the rest is simple – boards taken from the storehouse, cut by myself.

There is another, smaller plank inside the each box with 190 holes in it. The barbed wire is rolled up in the way of the screw. You must screw it up.

I.Sz.: - Well, you made the whole, technical work – using drilling machine, hammer...

K.B.: - Firstly using linear scale and than more spontaneously.

M.J.: - What was the original version?

K.B.: - The first, testing version of the work included smaller box, with barbed wire and send. I was thinking about the soil that is not able to bear.

I.Sz.: - Where is the village?

K.B.: - Pascara. Near Rimini. The seaside village. Not interesting place, after the allied blanket bombing during the Second World War. Nothing has survived. Later on I added the red dew drops.

M.J.: - When?

K.B.: - It was the last moment. There are extensive fields full of red poppy flowers. When I exposed the boxes in the middle of the field they blended with flowers. It was a landscape in the very early morning, with the drops of dew on the real grass and the red dots on the green ground expressing the average painting effect of colour contrast (the effect was used by other artists – for example Stefan Gierowski, a Polish painter). The dots started to pulsing and dazzling my eyes as needles, becoming the emotional effect introduced in different associations (dots of blood, bloody dew, fresh dew, even red poppy flowers from Monte Casino (the symbol of extremely bloody battle during the World War II, where Poland lost many brave soldiers in the name of international freedom – note I.Sz., M.J.). So – purely

formal effect started to be emotional effect – the form and the meaning fits to each other, one follows the other.

EXHIBITIONS

M.J.: - Was it the first exposition?

K.B.: - No, it was not. The first one was in the middle of the Italian forest, near San Silvestro, in the empty fire basin made of concrete, that was sunk into the ground. There were twelve boxes in it and the level of my grass was slightly below the level of the natural forest grass and the difference of those levels created interesting, emotional effect.

M.J.: - And subsequent exhibitions?

K.B.: - It was very important period for Europe. Republics separated from Russia, Yugoslavia transformed into new countries – I was invited by the Soros Center for Contemporary Arts to Vilnius, Lithuania. I showed there Grass just Grass and Marks Column, as a trace of the previous epoch. Earlier, in Lattina, the curator Bonito Oliva organized a kind of *aperto* of Biennale in Venice which didn't exist there for young artists – it called Premio Boccioni. It took place in a post-war abandoned hangar, split into small areas – I got a small, very low, sterile, white space that provoked to focus on the artwork constituting special mood of contemplation. The stronger impression was in the other space, in the abandoned, ruined house of my friend Wojciech Bruszewski, where the object was presented in the occasion of his 55th anniversary.

M.J.: - Where did you add the light?

K.B.: - When I exposed the object in the “artificial”, gallery or house's spaces I always added the light of working bulbs. But the scheme of them depended on the shape of the place. You know – context of the place and

space changes the work – forces or blunts it. It can supplement the artwork.