

INTERVIEW WITH KRZYSZTOF M. BEDNARSKI CONDUCTED BY M.A.
MONIKA JADZINSKA IN THE ARTIST'S WORKSHOP, WARSAW, 22.10.2005

M.Jadzinska: - We are at the Krzysztof M. Bednarski's workshop, which is also his Warsaw's archive – in order to gather documentation, photos, notes, catalogues etc., connected with the artwork *Grass just Grass*.

SPACE OF THE EXHIBITIONS

K. Bednarski: - Here we have got the scheme of setting the object in the A.R. Gallery in Warsaw, in a very narrow corridor (the entrance for the cinema, called Ceremony Hall, with one fully glass wall and the black one in front of it. You can noticed the small detail that has never existed as an element of that installation (and never will) – a picture, red on red with the painted word *Green*. There was a kind of performance during the vernissage when people observed the gardener (me), who took care of his small garden by watering it. (...). The importance is connected with the strict contact between the viewer and the work (excellent space), the light, dampness, smell and warmth produced by the watering peat. (...) We need the closed, restricted space to feel it and special kind of greenhouses lamps hanging above the grass. If the exposition takes place in the huge passages, halls, with the impression of the draught (it had happened several times) we loose the mood of contemplation, disturbs the "aura" of the work. (...) The same had happened in Vilnius where the place was big, with aggressive (in colour and structure) floor. The only possible place to situate it was the entrance with the impression of draught that made contemplation of the work impossible. (...) And later on, in the Centre for Contemporary Art in Ujazdowski Castle in Warsaw, where the work was

installed in the middle of the big hall, surrounded by other artist's works (strong and aggressive in their colour and meaning). The viewer seemed to feel lost and confused what was not the intent of mine. (...) The wrong context (bad selection of surroundings or other works) abuses the power and emotional value of the work.

DOCUMENTATION

K.M.: - I found the purchase accounts informing us how many planks and meters of the barbed wire I bought (approximately 1800 m of wire by 140 kg for each pail, 0.5 m³ of planks).

M.J.: - Did you ever weigh the object? Did you order the planks at the carpenter?

K.B.: - I must say for both – no. Typical warehouse. Here we have the drawing of the first, testing version of the work – with the idea of scent but without peat, red balls, scent, lamps, sound, smell. And the drawing with the scheme of setting the object for A.R. Gallery. You have got several photos from the very beginning – describing creation process in San Silvestro in Italy. (...) And it is the document connected with the transport procedures when, as a poor artist those days – I defined the work as an object but not as the work of art, in order not to pay the insurance.

VARIANTS OF INSTALLING THE ARTWORK

K.M.: - (...) The “classical” variant is to put the twelve boxes into two rows, six per each. But in A.R. Gallery the scheme was different because of the space – one row of twelve, setting not parallel to the wall to provoke people to rub against the object.

POSSIBLE RECONSTRUCTION

M.J.: - Do you consider the possibility of reconstructing the work in case of decay of the original one?

K.B.: - You can do it hypothetically. It is the common way of recreating the installations that have not survived because of many circumstances. It would be easy.

M.J.: - Do you permit someone to do it after your death?

K.B.: - As I said – it would be just the reproduction of my idea but without my personal emotional participation. The act of creation was very important for me because of the personal history, the participation of my friend and many other elements. So, the reproduction would be just the play of meaning, without my personal mythology.

EXCHANGING SOME ELEMENTS

M.J.: - Do you and to what degree permit to change some elements of *Grass just Grass*?

K.B.: - The red balls were usually taken by children during expositions or lost in the transport. I bought more of them. You should glue them in an random places on the wire (like in the case of nature). The peat was spilled in the transport – then it is necessary to add the new one - a peat is always just a peat. The problem is with the barbed wire – I know that in Western Europe there is no production of it and who knows – they may stop produce coated barbered wire in Poland. It would be better to buy and store some part of it (if it is still possible). It would be wise to buy the same kind of bulbs, but as a matter of fact – I didn't purchased them in Italy and they stopped producing them (it was specially produced for hatcheries of chickens) – so the additional, new one are different, but with the same colour and effect as the old ones.

SENSUAL ELEMENTS

K.M.: - In spite of dampness, warmth, scent, the additional sensual element of the work was created in the abandoned house of my friend where I added the whispering sound of the word *missenti*. It means “can you hear me?” and was recorded with the participation of my friends (from the child to the old man). It is a kind of outflow and inflow of the sound from a distance. We are still talking about the absence, about the lack, about a place to be filled; pain bothers like the empty space after cutting off a leg. The lack is more acute than the presence.

THE FUTURE OF THE WORK

M.J.: - Tell me the instruction for the installation of the work when you will be absent.

K.B.: - After so many hours of discussion I think we documented every single detail.

This could be the base for the future.

M.J.: - How do you see the future of that artwork?

K.B.: - I would like it to age notably. The work has changed – firstly the fresh wood smelled and got bright colour. After many inappropriate transports the plank was warped, the wire was mechanically curved (they put one box on the other). It is my child who is living his life his own way. But the meaning of the work hasn't changed – it is like a good wine.