

History of Grass just Grass

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Grass just Grass – Krzysztof M. Bednarski

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1. INSPIRATIONS AND CREATION PROCESS

“Looking at the work by Krzysztof M. Bednarski, one is faced with an extremely simple form, affecting the viewer immediately, outside his intellect, so to speak. One cannot describe the content of this message.”

The work *Grass just grass* was created in a small village called San Silvestro, Pascara, in Italy, in 1996. During the creation process the inspiration was connected with the view of field full of red dots - poppy flowers in a sunny day. But as many other works of K. M. Bednarski it was essentially autobiographical work, drawing on a personal history and symbolic representations. Depression was the emotional state that caused artist to start cutting the green coated barbed wire into small pieces. Schizophrenic hallmark of the work appeared to be the result of emotional state, obsessive fears and depressive mood. As he said he didn't know what for and why he had done it, but the fact that he had made it by himself was extremely significant to him.



Two important documents (purchase accounts) and some photos were left from this period. At the very beginning he had just started cutting one coil of barbed wire and made one box. The size of the box was particular – as he said in one of interviews conducted in 2005-2006 (see Data Registration) - it was not the size of a coffin or a window box, it didn't fit to anything. The first version consisted of one wooden box

with sand and green coated barbed wire had included neither small red balls nor peat and was treated by the artist as a kind of test version. He associated sand with barren, infertile soil, the synonym of the soil that would have not yield anything any more.

Bednarski didn't hesitate to use the material with strong, obvious meaning connections. The

production of barbed wire has been forbidden in West Europe for several years while Russia is still the tycoon in production of this material. Anyway plastic coated barbed wire hasn't been used there.

The construction and the way of fixing the pieces of wire into a smaller plank was repeated in the next, final version of the work. He constructed the new version on the basis of the first work thorough preliminary investigation.

The next issues has included twelve wooden boxes filled up with peat, conifer needles, pieces of bark, sticks, the same kind of barbed wire and small red cotton balls. He was working for more than two months without paying any attention to many cuts on his hands. In the middle of the process his friend, an architect Bruno Marrini (who played host to Bednarski in his home in the Italian village) joined him. That act of assistance and help meant a lot for the artist as a kind of special relationship and communication with other human being during the creation process. Each box made of pine wood had got it's own, a little bit smaller wooden plank put on the bottom with approximately 190 holes in it, established precisely with graduated ruler at the beginning, but random afterwards (he said - as in nature). The pieces of wire were fixed there by driving as screws. There were about 1800 m of wire cut by scissors by the artist himself. The drops of blood from the cuts on the hands during the process seemed to be, apart from the poppy field and dew drops, the inspiration of the idea of small red balls on the green barbed wire that appeared in the successive stage of development the concept of the work. The boxes were filled by "dirty" peat full of accidental natural elements like sticks, bark, conifer needles, even particles of straw, hemp string and cobwebs. The lighting effect was added later on as the replacement of the context of nature in the exhibitions displayed indoors. The sound effect was added. It was the sound of the word *missenti* (that means: can you hear me?) recorded on the tape and played back from a different room. The scent of fresh peat was achieved by pouring it by water (except for the last exhibition: CSW Warsaw) and the warmth from light bulbs intensified it.

2. INTERPRETATIONS

The artist avoids auto-commentary to the work (that 's why he entitled it *Grass just grass*) although he mentions about the associations with hollow space, barren soil, parasitical grass,

concentration camps or empty space overgrown with grass. The suggestion of traces of existence overgrown with grass were mentioned as the part of artist's intention in the interviews conducted with Bednarski, with geometry crashed with the nature and experience of human memory as well. It was interpreted in the strictly political context and on the other hand as an artist's joke with the traditional thinking. Sometimes it was discerned with straight political subtext. In the exhibition in Vilnius, Lithuania barbed wire was associated with Stalinism and the enclosure of the Soviet captivity – "The turning of the barbed wire into grass is a painful process for everybody and K. Bednarski symbolically repeats this pain. The grave or field, which witnesses the torturing and killing of thousand of people, have overgrown with weeds. The wire grass does not render any lightness of oblivion, it rather reinforces the scars of brutality" (fragment from the catalogue of *Multilingual Landscapes* exhibition in Wilno).

However, for each nation, each group of people, or each man it can be a mark of some other historical or everyday coercion. The grass in these plains associates not only with life, but also with an image of oblivion: the path leading home or to a beloved person has overgrown with weeds.

Anyway, Bednarski doesn't intend to suggest anything brimming it with emotions and treated as a potential to be interpreted in many different ways. What can be put into words is revealed in the course of the 'second reading'. He puts the particular emphasis on the closed sensual and physical contact with green grass that turned out the barbed wire. It comes with distant associations awakened by the form, mood, and topic of the work of art. Even familiarity with the author's comments is not a limitation in this respect. These work is a sort of fields of energy, open forms, *the spaces* outlined by the artist to liberate thoughts, associations and interpretation options, quite likely differing from the ones meant by the artist.

Creator: Monika Jadzinska & Iwona Szmelter

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