
Creation and image – the role of time and its impact on nature in aspect of the concept of the feminine archetype¹

Among my artistic and social interests, a key role is played by man and his life. Impermanence, the aging process, the existential condition, and in all this, the role of time and reflection on its meaning. The cyclicity and repeatability of events in an individual's life. The social processes around us – economic, technological, or cultural progress – incline me towards creative reflection. I am intrigued by extreme events, such as birth or death, as well as ambiguous states between the past and the future. I hold dear the vision of time as a spiral, in which the history of the world consists of repeating cycles, which tribal or ancient cultures revered and professed.

The passage of time is linked to its reflection in an unchanging eternity, in which ideas are

permanent and not subject to its effects. According to Zygmunt Bauman, however, who in his book *Liquid Modernity* describes contemporary culture as a liquid modernity in which the notions of permanent ideas undergo constant deconstructions, and their meanings are subjected to constant criticism and interpretation. Culture and art are determined by the individual's sense of uncertainty towards the contingency of beings, an unending utopian adventure. This utopia only helps to chase away questions about the meaning of life. It consists of episodes and fragments that drive the perpetual motion machine, giving no time for reflection. Bauman argues that 'progress' is no longer just the drive to elevate one's status,

1 More about the feminine archetype – see Paglia 2006, pp. 1–36, Bennewicz 2015, pp. 63–64.

but the prevention of failure and the effort against the exclusion of the individual from society (Bauman, 2011, pp. 35–46). Today's progress is an imperative that determines personal survival. I refer to both of these concepts in my painting.

The *Selfie* series was an attempt at retrospective illusion, referring directly to my loved ones and their relationships in the context of art and its symbolism. It showed the external death of the body and the juxtaposition of it with psychological-internal growth and development. And hence the questions that trouble me: is the juxtaposition of two women from different eras justified artistically? Will the juxtaposition of the same figure but at different ages be understandable? Can the memory of a particular character portrayal be considered the present?



Figures 1, 2, 3. Róg-Ociepka, Joanna. *Samotrzcę I, II, III*. 2008–2009, acrylic and oil, own technique on canvas, 75 × 90 cm, 85 × 100 cm, 75 × 90 cm

The painting installation '*I am only an inspiration*' also touched on similar themes, in which the observation of time (the present becomes the past and the future becomes the present) constituted a synthesis of the image of its passage and instability. This painting installation is a play on words, form, and image. The small forms of the paintings are like stills from life, capturing the moment and character of a particular child: the artist's daughter. The child, however, is an excuse to show several directions of reflection: 'here and now' (moment, stopping), 'I am' (being, existence, subject), 'inspiration' (reflection, dream, aspiration), and 'time' (image on the grid, synthesis of the image of time's passage and instability, a fading moment of inspiration). The installation is reminiscent of a children's game: a jigsaw puzzle, the pieces of which have to be moved to form a certain pattern. In the installation, any order is good: 'I am the inspiration here', 'Here I am the inspiration', 'The inspiration here is me'. Only the image *Time* cannot be arranged – it gets in the way a bit. One would like to get rid of it. This is a metaphor for the attempt to stop time, which is often unsuccessful, and memory is already another story.



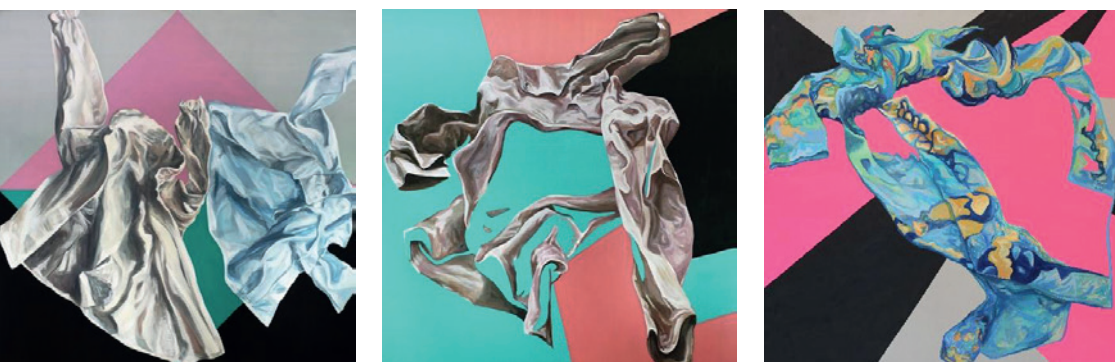
Figure 4. Róg-Ociepka, Joanna. *I am only an inspiration*. 2011, acrylic and oil, own technique on canvas, 77 × 90 cm

The Sérénité Serenity series touches on the problem of loss and death of a loved one and is an attempt to reflect on the meaning of an individual's existence and confront the fear of death. The title is a conscious reference to a short story by Jarosław Iwaszkiewicz (Iwaszkiewicz, 2009), in which the writer addresses the eternal theme of the meaning of life and the inevitability of death. Although one can find in it admiration for the shape of the world and existence, the short story is lined with a pessimistic vision derived from existential philosophy. In contrast, through my works, I wanted to give hope that 'serenity', that is, a state of tranquillity, is possible, as well as the belief that love can overcome death.

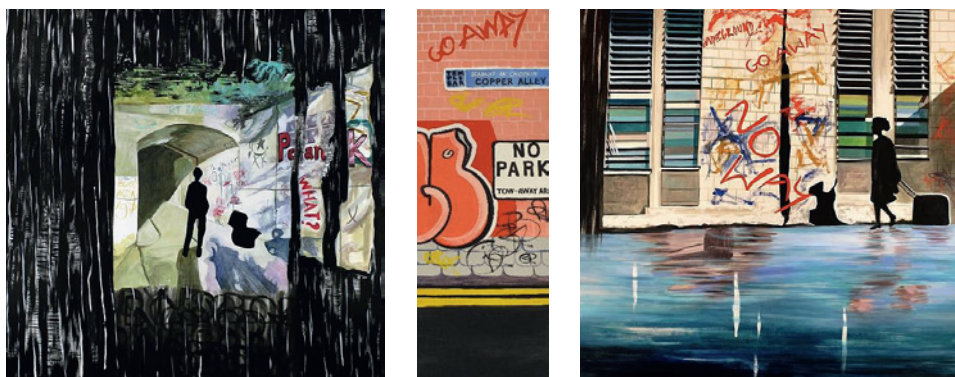


Figures 5, 6, 7. Róg-Ociepka, Joanna. *Touch II, III, IV*. 2014–2015, oil on canvas, 120 × 120 cm, 120 × 120 cm, 120 × 120 cm

The *Artifacts* series, on the other hand, was concerned with the deconstruction of objects and clothes, which serve a metaphor for memory. Physical artifacts are all cultural creations in the form of objects, such as shirts, T-shirts, undershirts, nightgowns, as well as signs seen on walls – traces of someone's presence in the form of tags on walls or clothing used for work in a particular place. They still exist, even though their owners have gone, forgotten them, or left them behind. They remain, however, nameless, without history, defenceless. They are simply stored in boxes, made available and sold to others in second-hand stores, appearing on walls in public spaces, until they deteriorate. They will not get repurposed into something else or discarded or repainted. Artifacts become our culture, which we pass by indifferently. We become accustomed to the aesthetics of destruction that affect them. The *Artifacts* series is a personal attempt to find answers to the questions of whether physical artifacts have a soul and whether it bears the stamp of the owner's history. Or maybe objects devoid of the context of identity become a separate entity, an aesthetic image pleasing to the eye?



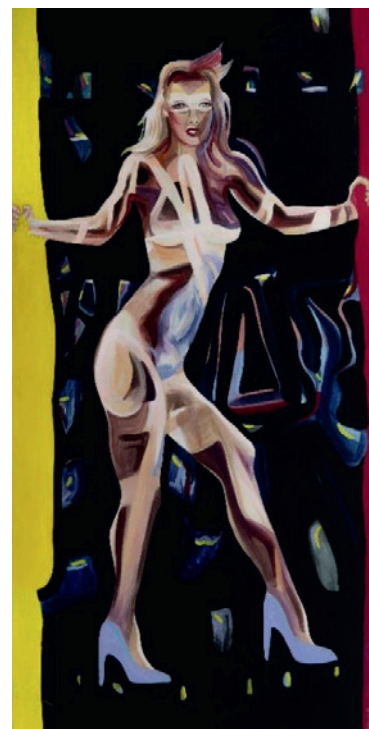
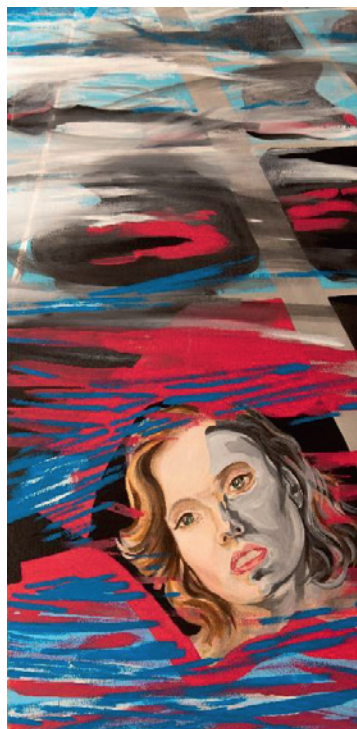
Figures 8, 9, 10. Róg-Ociepka, Joanna. *Artifacts, Artifact II, Siren*. 2016, acrylic, oil on canvas, 95 × 95 cm, 120 × 120 cm, 125 × 125 cm



Figures 11, 12, 13. Róg-Ociepka, Joanna. *Street I, Anybody, Nobody*. 2016, acrylic, oil on canvas, 120 × 40 cm, 125 × 125 cm, 125 × 125 cm

The *Retrospectives* series from 2016–2017 and *Closeness* from 2018–2021 deal with the widely understood stereotype and archetype of women, which is firmly embedded in contemporary culture and customs. They are an attempt to find answers to the questions of whether it is at all possible to fight against such deeply ingrained patterns. Can they be permanently changed in any way? Both series were exhibited at Elektra Gallery in Warsaw in 2023 under the common title *Lot's Wife* referring to the poem by Rhet Kelly (Murdock, 2020, pp. 21–22).

The first group of works depicts the woman as a demonic being, often juxtaposing her body with those of animals, for centuries associated with unclean powers. This also emphasises the close connection between the heroine and the primordial, untamed force of nature. However, the grotesqueness of the approach easily turns the expression of the works from demonic to satirical, exposing the absurdity of the fears that stem from such a one-dimensional perception of femininity. The inadequate fear of unknown and untamed female power is expressed in intense abstract patches, at which the heroines of the paintings seem devoid of identity and almost lifeless. In this way, fears and the stereotypes born of them detach from their cause and begin to live their own lives.



Figures 14, 15, 16. Róg-Ociepka, Joanna. *Corvus Corax*, *About I Love You More*, *About What I Will Never Tell You*. 2017–2018, acrylic, oil on canvas, 150 × 95 cm, 120 × 60 cm, 120 × 60 cm



Figures 17, 18, 19. Róg-Ociepka, Joanna. *Purple is the color of my true love's hair, Strzygi, Retrospection*. 2017–2018, acrylic, oil on canvas, 120 × 120 cm, 120 × 120 cm, 120 × 120 cm

The second part of the series has a more personal character. The women portrayed are no longer silent and impersonal, although they are still quiet, seemingly alone. However, they find themselves very close to the source from which they grew and from which they draw their energy – surrounded by the forces of nature, which here seems much more harmonious, governed by their own internal logic, and majestic. The heroines turn towards nature, seeking their own place in the world.

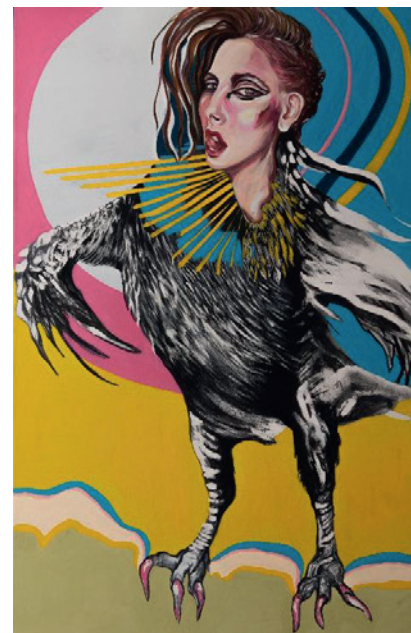
The starting point for my considerations and painting and intermedia solutions is always the human being and his or her relationship to the object, attribute, symbol, and nature. The concept of the cryptoportrait,² which is primarily an attempt to capture the emotions of the portrayed, seems related to me. When painting a picture, building an installation, or creating a video, I try to capture a particular emotional state in memory and contemplate it. Out of respect to the emotions of the people portrayed, the history of objects, and nature, I try to be a mirror, but remain in readiness and engagement. Because only engagement can bring a profound message. To quote Pablo Picasso:

One should speak of a human as if one were painting them. The more you engage in this, the more you will remain yourself, the closer you will be to the truth. By trying to remain anonymous, out of reluctance or respect, you will do the worst thing, you can disappear. You have to be in it, have courage. Only then will the work become interesting and bring something. (Stassinopoulos-Huffington, 1996).

2 Crypto-portrait – the practice of consciously giving a particular historical or legendary figure the features of the author. More about crypto-portrait – see Juszczak 1979, 60.

In the later stage of portraiture, I deliberately move away from realism, as such. What interests me is the aforementioned state of the object, stopped in time, and giving it new meaning, a new place in accordance with the principle of the golden ratio, specifically on the canvas. I create a painterly collage combining many originally unrelated elements. I juxtapose it with pure planes, which are often not just a background for objects, but also permeate them, isolate them or bring them to the foreground. The inspiration for their creation comes from the art of Andy Warhol,³ the king of pop art.⁴ While the visual references are obvious, also noteworthy for me is his stance as a critical artist who ridicules and sanctifies the object at the same time. An example of this is the painting of a can of Campbell's soup, which on the one hand is a pure advertisement for the product, while on the other a denial of it.

- 3 Andy Warhol is an American artist of Lemko origin, one of the main representatives of pop art (born on August 6, 1928, in Pittsburgh, died on February 22, 1987, in New York). He is known primarily for his simple and serial compositions with high colour contrast, which he created using the silkscreen printing technique. The resulting screen prints present consumer products from an average American refrigerator, i.e.: cans of Coca-Cola or Campbell's tomato soup, as well as objects from everyday life, e.g., poppies, bananas, boxes of Brillo pads. Silkscreen printing enabled Warhol to reproduce stylised portraits of the entertainment world's biggest stars, which included Brigitte Bardot, Marilyn Monroe, Elvis Presley, Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis, Marlon Brando, and Elizabeth Taylor. He also created images of other widely known figures, such as Mao Zedong, Vladimir Lenin, and Joseph Beuys. Andy Warhol treated everything he painted objectively and without unnecessary emotion. Brillo pads and dollar bills were just as valuable to him as portraits of his contemporaries – all of these were consumer articles of American society and pop objects. See Artimento 2022.
- 4 Pop art is an artistic movement in the art world after the Second World War, originating from abstract expressionism. The term *pop art* was first used by English art critic Lawrence 'Allway in the *Architectural Review* ('*Architectural Digest*') in 1952 to describe those images that illustrated postwar consumerism and drew from the goods of materialism.



Figures 20, 21. Warhol, Andy. *Campbell's Soup Can*. 1962, serigraph, paper, 90 × 60 cm; Róg-Ociepka, Joanna. *Domestic Hen*. 2017–2018, acrylic, oil on canvas, 150 × 95 cm

In more recent paintings, I have replaced the abstract planes of the second and third plan with more realistic landscape elements that interact with, influence, and permeate the figure, becoming a full-fledged character in the painting.



Figures 22, 23. Róg-Ociepka, Joanna. *I invite you there, At sunset*. 2018–2020, oil on canvas, 120 × 150 cm, 50 × 70 cm



Figures 24, 25. Róg-Ociepka, Joanna. *From afar I, From afar II*. 2019–2020, oil on canvas, 60 × 80 cm, 60 × 80 cm



Figure 26. Róg-Ociepka, Joanna. *Witch*. 2019, oil on canvas, 60 × 120 cm



Figure 27. Róg-Ociepka, Joanna. *Laguna*. 2020, 50 × 1150 cm



Figures 28, 29. Róg-Ociepka, Joanna. *Dream I, Black Pond*. 2021, oil on canvas, 80 × 60 cm, 50 × 60 cm

The *City* series is a return to the earlier *Artifacts* series, but from a new perspective. It depicts the city as empty, uninhabited, untamed – a city as walls of postmodern residential buildings from different parts of Europe: Bosnia and Herzegovina, Greece, Ireland, and Poland. It is also a city of concrete but anonymous buildings – sometimes dirty and littered, sometimes damaged by the passage of time, covered with graffiti. The signs and slogans on the buildings, traces of someone's presence, still exist, even though their owners have left and someone else has partially painted over them. They remain, however, nameless, without history, defenceless. They simply coexist on the walls in public space, giving it a different context from the original, until they are destroyed, transformed into something else or repainted. They become part of the culture we pass by indifferently. Zygmunt Bauman argues that:

the city walls: open and constantly updated registers/inventories of the most modern of the arts, the truly postmodern art; the art of living in a modern fashion. It is on the city walls that one can search for, uncover, and record the overt or surreptitious but in both cases unyielding effort of modern life, in order to then transfer it to the interior of gallery walls and reincarnate it as a work of art. (Bauman, 2010, p. 7).



Figures 30, 31. Róg-Ociepka, Joanna. *Gdansk, Heads*. 2023, acrylic, oil on canvas, 50 × 50 cm, 50 × 50 cm



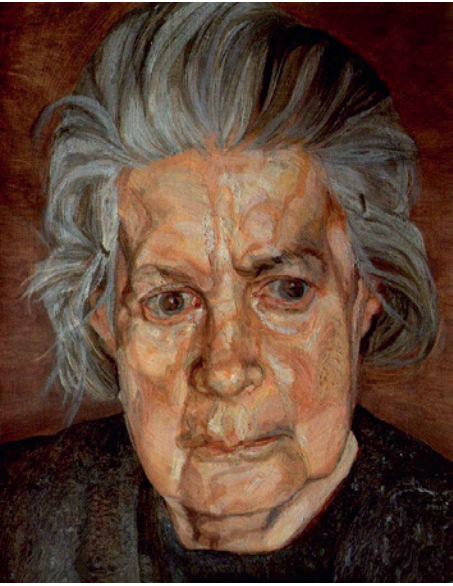
Figures 32, 33. Róg-Ociepka, Joanna. *Untitled I, Happy small version*. 2023, acrylic, oil on canvas, 50 × 50 cm, 50 × 50 cm

In the figurative paintings I create, one can find the influence of the work of Lucian Freud⁵ and Andrew Wyeth.⁶ Autobiographical motifs, attempts to record and represent people and spaces that Freud painted throughout his life, are for me an important feature in his work.



Figures. 34, 35. Freud, Lucian. *Painter's Room*, 1934–44, 62.2 × 76.2 cm; Róg-Ociepka, Joanna. *My Room*. 2016, mural on Traffo building inspired by L. Freud's painting *Painter's Room*, approx. 5 × 9.5 m, Park in Borek Fałęcki, Krakow

- 5 Lucian Freud was a British painter (born December 8, 1922, in Berlin, died July 20, 2011, in London) of Jewish descent and the grandson of Sigmund Freud (Soliński 2019).
- 6 Andrew Wyeth was an American painter and printmaker (born July 12, 1917 in Chadds Ford Township, Pennsylvania, United States, died January 16, 2009 in the same place) and a representative of the American scene painting and social realism movements. He is best known for the painting *Christina's World*, which is one of the most important American



Figures 36, 37. Freud, Lucian. *Painter's Mother II*. 1974, oil on canvas, 17.8 × 14 cm; Róg-Ociepka, Joanna. *How Pearl Is My Life (Artist's Mom)*. 2010, oil on canvas, 90 × 75 cm



An important aspect in Wyeth's paintings is the observation of an individual's existence in the context of raw nature and their symbiosis. The art of silence, which his work falls into, in my opinion, must ask questions about meaning and direction. It should encourage reflection not only on an aesthetic level, but also on a social level. It must be sincere yet universal at the same time.

paintings of the 20th century. He was a member of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, American Institute of Arts and Letters, American Philosophical Society, American Watercolor Society, Académie des Beaux-Arts, National Academy of Design, Royal Watercolour Society, and the Academy of Fine Arts in St. Petersburg (AndrewWyeth.com, n.d.).



Figures 38, 39. Wyeth, Andrew. *In the Orchard*. 1974, watercolour on paper, ca. 50 × 73 cm;
Róg-Ociepka, Joanna. *Marina*. 2020–2021, oil on canvas, 80 × 120 cm



Figures 40, 41. Wyeth, Andrew. *River Cove*. 1958, tempera on board, ca. 120 × 72 cm;
Róg-Ociepka, Joanna. *Odnoga Wisły*. 2023, watercolour on paper, 56 × 42 cm

I have been interested in the concepts of idol, role model, icon, and authority for some time. While working with junior high school students as part of the project *I am a cultured person* (editions 3 and 4) of the ZNACZY SIĘ⁷ New Art Foundation, with which I have been working for eight years, I created a series of educational and art workshops *Authority, icon, role model, idol*. Together, we explored these concepts and their cultural symbolism, we embedded them in an iceberg model according to the inverted levels of logic by Bateson-Dilts (Dilts, 1990) (which distinguishes six levels of thinking or situations: environment, behaviour, ability or skills, beliefs, identity, and spirituality), and on this model placed the protagonists of the story about the migration of the Asian white tiger.

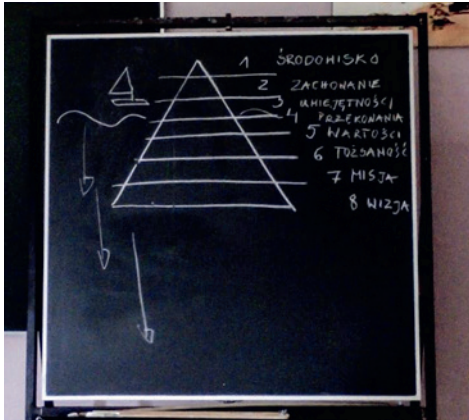


Figure 42. Logical level, Bateson-Dilts mural workshop, as part of the *I am cultural, I am cultural* project, 3rd edition of the ZNACZY SIĘ New Art Foundation at Middle School in Mszana Górna, 2016

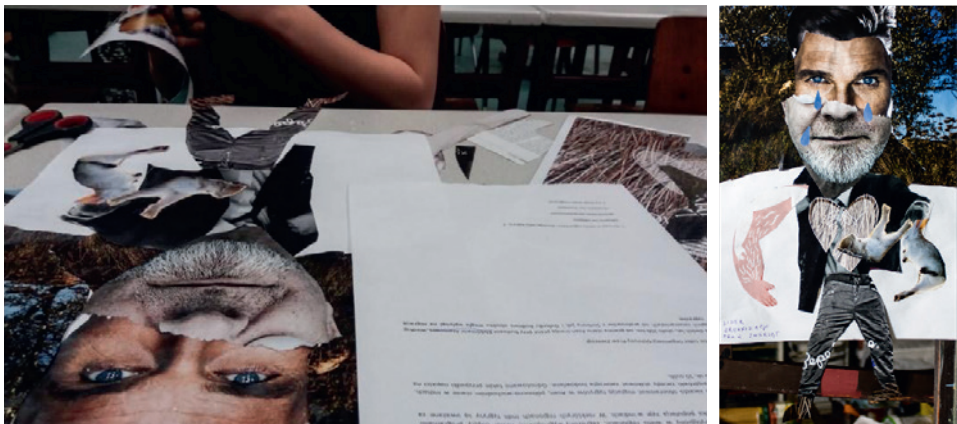


Figure 43. Mural workshop, as part of the *I am cultural, I am cultural* project, 3rd edition of the ZNACZY SIĘ New Art Foundation at the Middle School in Mszana Górna, 2016

7 'Znaczy się' Foundation, operating since 2007 in Krakow, is a contemporary art foundation dedicated to promoting culture and art through workshops and education among children and youth at risk of social exclusion.



Figure 44. Mural workshop, as part of the *I am cultural, I am cultural* project, 3rd edition of the ZNACZY SIĘ New Art Foundation at the Middle School in Mszana Górna, 2016



Figures 45, 46. Mural workshop, as part of the project *I am cultural, I am cultural*, 3rd edition of the ZNACZY SIĘ New Art Foundation at Mszana Górna Middle School, 2016

This allowed us to work together, through the technique of collage, to create a design for a mural under the same title, which we realised on school grounds. I have been working with wall techniques and murals for many years. These techniques, by their very nature, are always a challenge for me. The size of the wall and its architectural division (doors, windows, pipes, cables, etc.) are often elements that dictate the form of the painting in advance. This has influenced my way of seeing painting in general.



Figures 47, 48, 49. Mural workshop, as part of the project *I am cultural, I am cultural*, 3rd edition of the ZNACZY SIĘ New Art Foundation at Mszana Górna Middle School, 2016.

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