

Tomasz Swoboda

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Abstract of the doctoral thesis:

***ANIMAL SPACE***

***Issues of living spaces of wild animals based on zoos***

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PhD thesis consists of 9 chapters, which mainly contain my personal analysis of living spaces created by man for wild animals. The work - texts and photographic documentation, come from my long-term project devoted to the issue of space for animals, which was carried out in Upper and Lower Silesia, as well as in Łódź. The theme of my dissertation is an open question about the sense of the existence of zoos in the past and today, their educational function and the role as a "time capsule" in saving and breeding endangered species. However, mainly in the dissertation I describe the living spaces of wild animals that are excluded from the natural environment and exhibited in a zoo. I focus on the cultural provenances of this phenomenon, I try to see their background in the context of philosophy, religion and cultural anthropology. This is not an easy and unambiguous issue to categorize. The narratives appearing in the work refer to the design of the space of cages, runs, aviaries, which are far from the natural living conditions of animals. On the basis of historical texts concerning the creation of the menagerie, as well as philosophical and literary interpretations relating to the status of zoos, I try to point out the still dominant role of man and the lack of intuition and often empathy in the process of designing and building housing for animals. At the same time, I try to mark and signal the departure from anthropocentrism and man's obsession with building barricades and obstacles in favor of understanding the nature of wild animals, which has taken place in recent years. In the introduction, I briefly describe my approach as an artist to these issues, as well as explain why the conversation formula adopted for part of the work is, in my opinion, the best solution in the process of problematizing and trying to understand this complex topic. I briefly present how the spaces where the project was implemented imposed their visual character on my projects and how their specificity was finally adopted in my written and artistic work. Another and at the same time the main part of the dissertation is my conversation with the curator and researcher dr. Agata Ciastoń. The conversation touched on the key aspects for me

regarding the origins of the project itself, by referring to memories from the past and the issue of my family biography, which smoothly turns into the issues of feeling and interpreting the architecture of zoos. The text is rich in important references to literature describing this issue, film, visual arts and photography. Reading through this in-depth dialogue, you can see my attempts to tackle this vast topic from the point of view of artistic sensitivity, using the tools offered by art. My perspective appears there - a human subject staying as a guest in the zoo, the fragment also contains descriptions of the everyday living conditions of animals and reflection on the possibilities of improving them through the use of modern solutions. The most important thing in this part of the dissertation is to emphasize the role of emotions and empathy in all attempts to change the infrastructure and ways of perceiving the role of zoos.

In the text of the conversation, the issue of perception and the ethics of watching is also strongly discussed (mainly in the context of John Berger's text "Why look at animals"). The final part of the conversation concerns the architecture for animals that exists outside zoos, both the one built by man and the one whose authors are animals. In this fragment, I emphasize the advantages of co-creating new projects, which in an inclusive way, already at the design stage, include broad thinking about the end use, taking into account territories and animal habitats during construction works.

The dissertation also includes poetic descriptions of selected photos from photographic documentation, which makes both its visual and written parts complement each other. These are transcripts of two frame images that played the most important role in the entire long-term documentation process (chapter "\_MG\_2102.CR2. The first frame", chapter "\_P2Q1386.X3F. Inverted aquamarine").

The fourth part of the dissertation ("Objection with an image? A few examples of how contemporary artists talk about animals") consists of descriptions of selected artistic works from various periods, relating to issues related to animals. In this fragment, I try to focus on artistic realizations in which the photographic medium was used.

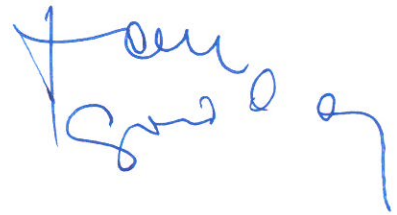
The next chapter "\_P2Q1481.X3F Mangaba's Shitty Sun" is a very important, personal text that describes my meeting with the monkey drawing the sun on the glass separating us from each other. The text presents a part of the daily practice of project implementation, an indispensable part of which was close and emotional contact with the encountered people animals. It was also associated with the bodily experience of the architectural spaces inhabited by them.

Dreams are an equally important aspect in my artistic practice. In the chapter "Dream. War



of race shifters" described an imaginary scenery of war between humans and animals. It is a symbolic text showing the changing conditions of life on our planet, supplemented by a series of drawings.

The last chapter closes the thoughts and statements of the earlier parts of the dissertation. However, this is not a typical summary, but a reference to one of my video works "Invasions" and biblical texts, which in my opinion are a good closure of thoughts on human-animal relations in the context of zoo architecture.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Tommy' followed by a stylized flourish.