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Abstract of Ph.D. dissertation

The Tales of the Supernatural- Painting Uniqueness

The starting point for creating a series of paintings which constitutes my Ph.D. dissertation is a collection of short stories by authors from all of the world representing the genre known as *The Tales of the Supernatural*.

In the first chapter of my dissertation I focus on the substantial inspiration I have always drawn from literature including different types of dictionaries. Grimm's fairy tales or English dictionary are among many books that inspired my creativity. In my opinion, thanks to creating the string of paintings titled *The Tales of the Supernatural – Painting Uniqueness*, I managed to achieve a painting reality which was brand new for me. The resulting paintings laid a foundation for a new chapter in my artistic life.

The second chapter provides an explanation of what *The Tales of the Supernatural* are—collections of mystery stories but also moody Gothic novels derived from folk legends. In this genre supernatural creatures are presented as main protagonists. The world of dreams and mental illness overlap, with anxiety dominating the scene. Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, Charles Baudelaire or Alexander Pushkin and Stefan Grabiński in Poland are the most renowned writers who were inspired by this genre. Personally, I fell for Japanese stories charmed by their poeticism which took me to the world of fantasy and dreams.

In the third chapter entitled: *The Supernatural and Visual Arts* I point to a range of artistic activity examples inspired by the idea of “the supernatural”.

In the fourth chapter of my dissertation I analyze works of arts making *The Tales of the Supernatural* series. This chapter includes several subchapters, first of which is titled *The language of illustration vs. the language of autonomous artistic expression*.

Stories from *The Tales of the Supernatural* genre provided an artistic impulse to me and stimulated my imagination. They helped me to create a brand new visual reality.

I reckon the resulting paintings are independent works of art existing outside the context of the stories which stirred my imagination of each picture. Rather than automatic transposition of literature into the painting I was interested in finding the perfect (in my belief) artistic way to express the atmosphere, climate and poetics of the story. Instead of making an illustration, I tried to define color and dominant shapes. Together with its symbolic figure each story character was given a color. As a result, the relations among characters gained pictorial

dimension. The only straightforward borrowing from the text is the title which is the only reminder of the imaginary impulse.

The second subchapter is devoted to analysis of relationship between the work of art and the title as in my artistic activity they are both complementary. The title's role is to verbally stimulate the viewer for thinking and creative reception. Despite being direct quotations from the literature, the titles in the series *The Tales of the Supernatural–Painting Uniqueness* do not provide ready-made interpretation clues. They can sometimes be a source of viewer's confusion and embarrassment. It is particularly true for the titles inspired by the Japanese stories. Due to the lack of Polish equivalent, the Japanese titles such as Muijina or Ubazakura sound mysterious and incomprehensible to those who do not speak Japanese. Hopefully, charmed by the way they sound, the viewer will juxtapose the sound with the picture and will find their own unique explanation.

The third subchapter is titled: *Technique, form, color, controlled coincidence*. The works making *The Tales of the Supernatural – Picture Uniqueness* were painted in the ekoline on canvas technique. The paint has similar properties as watercolor, the main difference being in color saturation – the ekoline paint leaves more intensive trace.

Thanks to the paints' fluidity, the final result is more difficult to foresee than in case of other painting techniques. This unpredictable character of the ekoline paint is what I find one the most fascinating things about it. My main means of expression is the abstract language, and so I wanted to make objects barely recognized. As a result, the trace of paint on the canvas can make the viewer think of some distant landscape, plant or a part of the human body. I did not aim to imitate them in any way. Instead, my ultimate goal was to spark an intense esthetic experience through paint blotches - understood as colored accents, lines, shapes or the layered paint effect, regardless of what they exhibit. What was crucial to me too, was that the paintings' forms become independent forms of existence, emanating with their own inner lives and energy.

If we boil the art of painting down to an essence, we get color. Combinations of different colors can be the end in themselves or can be used to picture one's own vision of the world. When painting *The Tales of the Supernatural...*, I took a chance to read a few fascinating papers on the effect, meaning and symbolism of the color. I found it very useful, when creating the series. I did not really stick to it rigorously, though. Much more stress I laid on my own associations and tapped mainly into my own knowledge, experience and artistic intuition. One more issue I am looking into in my dissertation is the role of coincidence in art. I share Tadeusz Kantor's approach, consisting in a belief that new reality can only be conceived upon gaining

control of coincidence. When spilling paint on the canvas, I become a mere “incentive” from the Kantor theory, which creates motion in the picture. I try to take control of the blotch of paint by taking care of the ground preparation, by manipulating with the canvas or removing the excess of the paint etc. Although this is not an easy task, my experience with the ekoline paint and awareness of how it acts in certain circumstances are both very helpful.

The last subchapter of my dissertation provides a detailed analysis of selected paintings from the series.

Working on *The Tales of the Supernatural–Picture Uniqueness* series was a challenging task to me. It was a source of immense satisfaction, too. I painted a series of twenty eight paintings, which took me to a brand new painting areas and let me open up a new chapter in my artistic life.

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