

The Academy of Fine Arts in Katowice

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**All that we *has***

summary

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A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a stylized, cursive script.

# all that we *has*

*1.1 "The occurrence of at least two distinct, sometimes contrasting, relatively integrated personalities in one's body, taking periodically and alternately control of the person's behavior; the consciousness of each personality retains distinctness, and the switch from one to the other occurs abruptly, sometimes directly or through a less distinctive, ordinary personality; the number of personalities described in one person varies, in most cases not exceeding ten".*

The issue I dealt with in my dissertation is complex and delicate in nature. The impulse to undertake research and creative activities was my interest in the problem of dissociative identity disorder<sup>1,1</sup>, DID [di:aidi:], formerly referred to as "split self", or "multiple personality". Having studied this topic for many weeks, I decided, based on the techniques that people living with DID use to function in an orderly and socially desirable way, to do a self-inventory of sorts. In addition to implementing these techniques in my practice, I also intended to use methods of deepening self-awareness, and even undertake ascetic practices. The reality of the pandemic: seclusion, tranquility, going deeper into the virtual world, but also into my inner world, accelerated my process. Understanding and getting to know the issue that was the starting point for self-reflection and working with the form, has become both a way and a goal for me. Using the audiovisual space, I wanted to draw the viewer's attention to the problem of dissociative identity disorder, mediate in showing a piece of the world of a person living in the DID System and, above all, get to know this world myself as well as possible.

<sup>1</sup>PWN Encyclopedia (n. d.). Dissociative disorders. In *PWN Encyclopedia*. Retrieved July 15, 2021, from <https://encyklopedia.pwn.pl/szukaj/ZABURZENIE%20DYSOCJACYJNE%20osobowo%C5%9Bci.html>.

1.2 System - a person who lives with DID; all of their identities.

An important element of my artistic practice are activities based on contact with other people. I met Lena, the heroine of my doctoral dissertation, on the Internet. I was looking for people diagnosed with dissociative identity disorder and willing to participate in the project in various ways, including leaving a message with information about planned activities on Facebook, in a closed DID group, thanks to the mediation of the administrator of this group. That's how we got to know each other. Lena and her System<sup>1,2</sup> are presented in more detail in the chapters: *Lena's System* and *Process : Method : Form* in the descriptive part of my dissertation.

It took months: from the first online contact between us to the conclusion of the project. The process, motivations, building form and building a relationship with the protagonist-protagonists of my project, are described in seven chapters of the theoretical part of my doctoral dissertation. The result of my creative activities, in addition to their impact on reality, which I also write about in my thesis, was the creation of an audiovisual project consisting of twenty digital images and a video documentary.

In the descriptive part, I also refer to my previous works in which I examined the subject of identity, and whose visual character corresponds with the form of my doctoral dissertation. The process of the creation of my dissertation is therefore shown in a broader research context. One of these works is a series of graphically transformed photographic portraits called *The Wax of Poland*.

I started my work on *All that we has* with collecting and creating documentary material. My relationship with the protagonist of the project was evolving, which allowed me to go deeper and deeper into the reality of the System of a person living with DID, get to know this issue from the inside and build a plan for further actions.

The project was processual in nature. We started by working with the actress, Anna Próchniak, Ania, who, with the help of characterization, using her emotions and acting skills impersonated the people from Lena's System. We were building a persona in real time, in front of my

1.3 Alter (not alter ego) - an identity, a person in the System of those living with DID.

lens and in Lena's presence. Thanks to this experience, the protagonist of my project allowed herself and us to reach deeper, and during subsequent meetings it was her-they that impersonated alters<sup>1,3</sup> with the help of similar: visual and non-verbal means. The artistic result of these activities is a series of digital paintings. Similarly to *The Wax of Poland*, graphic personification was the key way of finding the final form, however, in each case I wanted to (and in some of them I had to) prepare some elements of the person's characterization before the picture was taken. An important element of my work is the video documentary that contains behind-the-scenes material where you can see the switching of people in the System. It also contains statements by Anna Próchniak, the actress who plays alters from Lena's System during the first photo-shoot, and by Lena herself.

The system of visualization of the visions verbalized by Lena, which we first developed when directing-acting with Ania, was changing its protocol. While looking for the final figure of the created portrait, I consulted with Lena the details of the physiognomy of all the people from the System. These were expressive characters, inspiring to work with the form. After many weeks of work, the images gained their final shape.

The process of visualizing Lena's System was challenging for me, primarily because of the delicate and complicated nature of DID, the disorder the protagonist of my project lives with. It was an experience that both empowered and allowed me to grow. More than the sheer satisfaction of creating a form, my goal this time was to explore the intersections between art and life. Art's impact on reality. What appeared in front of the lens of my camera were Lena's alters – the very manifestations of her System, which – played by Ania and later impersonated by Lena herself – literally came into being. The graphic personification complemented them, gave them freedom and a name. There was enthusiasm in the System. For a while, I was – in a way – part of it.

30.09.2020

Ania Lena