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*Closer*

The *Closer* project described in this paper was prepared  
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## Introduction

The heading 'Closer' is a laboratory created while working and experimenting around an object – a pine twig found in the Beskidy mountains during a hike. It is all about a piece of nature, a remainder of a tree. It is a fragment of a limb, dead, dry and eaten by parasites. While wondering about the character of the object (for the sake of this introduction we will limit that to its structure) I try to depict it in an artistic way. Different ideas put into life between July 2014 and March 2016 formed some sort of interdisciplinary workshop. Describing the whole process focusing on differentiating undertaken productions in a certain medium, limiting it to a magnifying glass will soon prove not to be enough. What are equally important are the circumstances, work conditions and environment and introducing changes to the way the workplace functions.

### Closer {noun}

From the very beginning I understood *Closer* as a noun, an apparatus equipped with not only technical, but also mental tools. I understood the activity involved into the project under this name as time spent under certain, special filter enhancing the atmosphere of focus, closer attention or maybe even affection while observing the tissue making up the object.

I came across my finding during a short hiking expedition, which seems to me, is a manifestation of longing typical for probably everyone living in the city space. It might be inborn need for peace and quiet, for me emanating from the montane landscape that influenced my choice of the topic of my thesis.

When considering the importance of different places, home, studio, work, and town, communal places a certain lead of looking for a wider context quickly becomes visible. I am confronting the emotionally charged places (where I was growing up, where I work and live) with their lack of presence of wildlife and opportunity to experience and observe it. *Closer* is an intersection of several ideas and experiences, but its condition is logging out of different spaces. There is no doubt that places where I lived and worked must have had some influence on my work, but they have never been the reason of work or main theme. The *Archive* collection (2008 – 2012), which I spent a lot of time on, was created in a close connection to my environment. At the early stage, objects of everyday use were treated as readymade, collage or assemblage. While working on the *Archive* I was aware that the target space for it was going to be an art gallery. And now, a beautiful, ornate, preserved twig on my studio table is somehow a trophy and a vision of examining it in all the possible ways brings to my mind images of remote, exotic worlds. It gives hope for reaching places so far not known. Again, in the subject of space, *Closer* is like a mode of collision: time spent in

a studio – searching for the wildlife – computer – nature – studio – nature... In the course of time, my wandering around the parks and forests became the tool of work, but a new perception is involved. The usual routes in the parks, now involve observing things previously unnoticed, mostly the images of trees. In a way, same thing happened to the remains, now scattered on the ground. The weather factor does not matter either, as many successful trips took place in cold and rainy weather. *Closer* has allowed my working methods develop and widened the scope of activities comprising of the creative process for me. Looking for the tree remains, working on them, constructing drawings and objects, copying the internal structures made me follow the thoughts of Charles Lalo; the nature became flexible; the condition of observing it through the lens of my technique was fulfilled. At the same time, the main inspiration for each undertaken activity were its visually rich internal (not visible to the naked eye) and external structures. The backstage preparations, personal and of work process became, what in previous projects was most important, final effect. The creating process has always been important in my works, especially in the *Archive*, but also in my collages and works from *the Total* cycle. I did try to emphasize it, but now the backstage has a new dimension and is meant to be a significant part of work. De Bruyne, distinguishing different types of nature perception, does not deny that, but actually complements the theory in its primary scope: it is undeniable that nature generates experience associated with the physiological condition of relaxation. I am not contradicting the approach where the form of nature is perceived aesthetically (as it is perceived intuitively and selflessly). The starting point of each activity was the measures adopted to examine the object and its rich visual external structure as well as not visible to the naked eye interior. At the same time I was thinking about the final shape of the project, where the exploring of the structure was leading. The two processes are inextricable. What usually stays the untold story was to be brought to light, the backstage, became a scheduled part of the project.

### **Closer {nature}**

The words nature and wildlife are used a lot while describing my works and this project. Article by Maria Popczyk in *Kultura Współczesna (Modern Culture)* inspired me to perceive the multiplicity of natures. I go further quoting Macnaghten and Urry and I would like to develop the notion in my project. The terms are used quite often and sometimes interchangeably, as synonyms. They create work contexts for other, mentioned in this synopsis, artists, which is why it is important for me to develop them and decide on the hierarchy. Following the ideas from the article, I see the nature as the subject of scientific research, but also as a starting point for formulating theories (Newton's nature, pantheist nature, Darwin or Nietzsche's nature) associated with certain moral, aesthetical or practical values<sup>1</sup>. However, same as the author of the article I feel the subject is not exhausted here. Further in my paper I talk about the ease and freedom of treating the subject of nature so typical for artists, which provokes rethinking the way it is depicted, accentuated

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<sup>1</sup><https://docs.google.com/gview?url=http%3A//kulturawspolczesna.pl/readpdf/1167/Przemys%25C5%259Ble%25C4%2587%2520przyrod%25C4%2599>

or artificially made in culture<sup>2</sup>. Many authors writing about the wildlife use term nature, accentuating its creating powers, its *physis* (from *phyein* – grow). The internal nature of plants at the same time points out the constant, as Latin word places stress on the moment of birth, (*nasci* – to be born, meaning at the moment of birth you are equipped with a no changing temperament)<sup>3</sup>. The word nature has many meanings. According to Lalande's Dictionary of Philosophy nature consists of what happens without the human action and also nature is the world seen as a contradiction to ideas or feelings, etc. Both these definitions are doubtful: isn't a human being a part of nature? Nature is not only the world perceived by senses, but also the micro world seen with the naked eye. Generally, especially now, we do understand nature as everything and anything created and happening without the interference from the human kind. That usually means wildlife, but also creations coming to life as a consequence of human actions. It is enough to point at new varieties of flowers, new breeds of animals and so on. It is impossible to radically contradict nature and culture, as culture is influencing nature, being its integral ingredient and the other way around.

For further discussion it is essential to feel the nature at its full abundance<sup>4</sup>. Phil Macnaghten and John Urry, authors of *Contested Natures. Theory, Culture and Society* do not recognize one single nature as an entirety. They say that a human being experiences nature's many own constructs, passing from its examining, exploring and monitoring to contemplation and participation.

Clarification of the definitions is very important in reference to the described cycle. I understand the word nature, appearing within the text in a simple way as what the Earth has created, given birth to. However when it comes to wildlife, there is a change in the quality of thought: wildlife is not only the natural environment, but also my *Closer*, as a created by me environment, my own space of relations, connections and links, necessary for me to do a certain work. It can be imagined as vast, flexible tissue, expandable construction changing as the time goes and work progresses. Thinking about the object, around which my artistic work evolves, wondering how to relate to the traces of woodworm left on the stick, I began spending more and more time in natural space, looking for new locations, looking for the forest. The whole process is depicted in the works described in chapter two (*Drawings, Still Collection, and the Object*). Places I started visiting were mostly chosen using the criterion of accessibility and proximity. That is why the most often visited places have been Franciszek Kachl's Park in Bytom and Żeromski's Park in Sosnowiec (also known as Dietel's Park). The examples of artistic activities where authors work with dead remains of plants presented in this paper do not represent works of typical artists working within the theme of nature. The compilation is result of my research, mostly on the internet. I was searching the web looking for similar threads connected to woodwork, wood decay, parasites etc. The collection grew without a plan, but became a very interesting point of comparison, useful at different stages of analysis and decision making. At the beginning of this web quest for artists, trees and wood I was interested in technology of woodwork. Undertaking the project of dissecting a fragment of tree I did not know many artists working in the field of tree remains. I felt closer to the artists, whom now I consider classics: Teresa Murak who identifies creative process with the process of life (represented here by the vegetation), interdisciplinary Joseph

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<sup>2</sup> Ibidem

<sup>3</sup> Ibidem

<sup>4</sup> Maria Gołaszewska, *Introduction to Aesthetics* (Warszawa: PWN, 1984) 93

Beuys, who predicated 'extended definition of art' related to abilities of everyone and anyone to be an artist or the artists I knew from art biennale such as Albert Baraya and Antti Laitinen.

At the beginning, probably, because of the focus on the object and contemplating technical details, I did not look for common grounds and similarities to my motivations and interests. I came across the works of John Grade<sup>5</sup> while looking for information on wood parasites. The artist has used woodworm to complement his own composition. His works are a fine example of authors reading into fascinating forms created by nature, without destroying interference. The really interesting thing is that the mentioned earlier reading into nature and engaging in a dialog with an object of nature happen thanks to quite simple measures such as scaling, arranging the object in space or skilled lightening. That is what a recently presented project in the Smithsonian Museum of American Art in Renwick Gallery, Washington D.C. is like. A tree receives a replica made of reclaimed wood<sup>6</sup>. The *Middle Fork* was a big project involving team work of people who share a vision. Another American artist, whose works are excellent examples of eco friendly creativity, Laura Petrovich-Cheney uses only reclaimed materials. The main idea behind her projects is changing the context of material used, giving it new function. It is not necessarily a new idea, as using reclaimed wood is a popular element in artistic declarations all over the world, but still I was going back to the artist's website many times. The way the images are created suggests consistency and patience. Works consist of arranged pieces of wood of different sizes, painted previously according to their former use. *Trifecta*, is a work of exceptional structure<sup>7</sup>, which drew my attention for longer. Small pieces of wood cut to the same shape and size imitate some sort of interlacing, playing with the depth of the image. Another, quite simple work *Just Passing Through*, consisted of fallen trees, cleaned in the artist's studio, arranged in the gallery and finally reintroduced to nature. Petrovich says that her works, due to the material used are like mirrors showing people's lives. There is fatigue and tiredness, but most of all ability to transform.

Apart from working with plants attributed some sort of magical powers (good examples are easy to find in the shops lucky bamboo or dandelion clock, daisy and four leaf clover) Zina Swanson paints watercolours. Most of the works use dead tree branches, wood or some other remains. I decode these as an element of construction, essential lumber of surreal machines or other impossible situations<sup>8</sup>. Most of the elements are developed around this motif. Flora related collections and watercolours were included in exhibition *For Luck*, dedicated to the human plant relationship. Robert Kinmont, the eldest of the artists included in my paper, divided an enormous poplar branch into segments. A while ago I would not expect to be mentioning this artist. I know his series of photographs dating from 1969 to 2005 depicting Kinmont standing on his hands and head or hanging upside down in some extreme circumstances of nature: precipice, canyon or over the water. Later works are made of wood. *Cottonwood*, mentioned earlier segmented poplar branch, is one of two works related to my present interests. Wooden wedges joining the segments are clearly visible. *Cottonwood Log filled with Fear*, another quite a new piece, is also a fragment of a huge branch, which apart from strangely even edges surprises with a delicate hand drawing on the surface. The description of the work reads: cottonwood, pencil and fear.

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<sup>5</sup> <http://www.johngrade.com/#/>

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.johngrade.com/#/viewvideo/MIDDLE%20FORK>

<sup>7</sup> <http://lauracheneyartblog.blogspot.com/p/available-works.html>

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j2qDPtk-4eM>

Mexican artist Abraham Cruzvillegas employs vegetation process for his art. *Empty Lot*, on display in Tate Modern Turbine Hall is an installation described by the artist as an experiment. He is aware of the pointlessness of organising cultivation in the very centre of London business district. Abraham Cruzvillegas totally changed the space of the hall. The platforms with triangular boxes filled with soil are supported by scaffolding taking up practically the whole floor space of the ground level. That is how additional surface, levelled with the balcony is created. The impression is that the boxes are within reach of the person on the balcony. The soil has been collected in parks and commons all over London. The character of the installation makes us think of Mexico, which I understand as a manifestation of identity. The tool is not only the plant itself, but undertaking the experiment of cultivation in the context of its location.

Larry Millar owns a beautiful estate remembering his great grandparents. In McMurry Amy Graves Ryan Fine Arts, a cosy university gallery, among other works he is showing, there are intersections of a cedar tree, which also remember those times. The exhibition is a manifestation of love for the place, which can be read as a way of trying to talk about own roots.

Yuken Teruya is a classic of recycling. His Saatchi exhibition *Paper*<sup>9</sup> included a collection of objects perfectly imitating wood, while made of compressed layers of waste paper. I see these works as a proof of strong real need for protecting natural resources.

Tim Knowles, in his series *Oak on Easel#1* prepares a work station for the trees. He attaches pencils to the ends of the branches and places pieces of paper under them, so that the branches mowing in the wind can draw.

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<sup>9</sup> <https://eilishscreativespace.wordpress.com/2013/08/19/paper/>

### **Branching. Memory of the plants.**

The remains of the trees and other plants are main material used in most of the projects (*Total, Drawings, Still life*). I collect and use them in my works and I think of them as natural memory discs. I see them as objects equipped with their own memory. They are documentation of events taking place inside them. This is what shaped them into their present form. The plant remains in the context of my experience have a certain significant characteristic: they are finished. They live in a certain cycle breaking it and closing it down when they die. They still hold some information about the past although as a form they are irreversibly closed, frozen in time, finite. This potential, information ready to be decoded, caught my attention when I found earlier mentioned pine stick. My awoken curiosity is very important in this series of works. A publication discussing sensory system of plants by Daniel Chamovitz, a biologist and Dean of the Faculty of Life Sciences at Tel Aviv University, is helping me develop my own mind map, make sure that the choice of object as a theme was a good idea, justify the decision on choice of materials and associating them with particular work methods. Human memory is dependent on sensory input: a familiar smell or a favourite song can trigger a wave of detailed memory that transports us back to a particular time and place. As we've seen plants benefit from rich and varied sensory inputs as well. But plants obviously don't have memories the way we do: they don't cower at the thought of a drought or dream about the sunbeams of summer. They don't miss being encased inside a seedpod, nor do they feel anxious about premature pollen release. But plants clearly have the ability to retain past events and to recall this information at a later period for integration into their developmental framework: Tobacco plants know the colour of the last light they saw. Willow trees know if their neighbours have been attacked by caterpillars. These examples and many more, illustrate a delayed response to a previous occurrence, which is a key component to memory<sup>10</sup>.

Mark Jaffe published one of the first reports on plant memory in 1977 by Mark Jaffe whose experiments were conducted on pea plant. Jaffe wanted to find out why the pea tendrils curl when they touch an object suitable to wrap themselves around. He demonstrated that if he cut a cut piece of a tendril off of a pea plant but kept the excised tendril in a well-lit, moist environment, he could get it to coil simply by rubbing the bottom side of the tendril with his finger. But when he conducted the same experiment in the dark, the excised tendrils didn't coil when he touched them, which indicated that the tendrils needed light to perform their magic twirling. But here was the interesting catch: if a tendril touched in the dark was placed in the light an hour or two later, it spontaneously coiled without Jaffe having to rub it again. Somehow, he realized, the tendril that had been touched in the dark had stored this

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<sup>10</sup> Daniel Chamovitz, *What a plant knows* (Warszawa: Grupa Wyd. Foksal, 2012) 131



information and recalled it once he placed it in the light. Should this storage and later recollection of information be considered ‘memory’?<sup>11</sup>

In fact, research on human memory conducted by the renowned psychologist Endel Tulving provides us with an initial foundation from which to explore plants and their unique ‘recollections’. Tulving proposed that human memory exists on three levels. The lowest level, procedural memory, ‘refers to nonverbal remembering of *how* to do things and is dependent on the ability to sense external stimulation’ (like remembering to swim when you jump in a pool). On the second level is semantic memory, the memory of concepts (like most of the subjects we learned in school). And the third level is episodic memory, which refers to remembering autobiographical events (...). Episodic memory is dependent on the ‘self-awareness of the individual. Plants clearly do not make the cut for semantic and episodic memory: these are the memories that define us as human beings. But plants are capable of sensing and reacting to external stimulation, so by Tulving’s definition plants should be capable of procedural memory. And indeed, Jaffe’s pea plants illustrate this. They sensed Jaffe’s touch, remembered it, and coiled in response<sup>12</sup>. We need to be aware, of course, that what we refer to as ‘memory’ for people is actually a term that encompasses many distinct forms of memory, beyond the ones described by Tulving. We have sensory memory, which receives and filters rapid input from the senses (in a blink of an eye); short-term memory, which can hold up to about seven object in our consciousness for several seconds; and long-term memory, which refers to our ability to store memories for as long as a lifetime. We also have muscle-motor memory, a type of procedural memory that is an unconscious process of learning movements such as moving fingers to tie a shoelace; and immune memory, which is when our immune systems remember past infections in order to avoid future ones. All but the last are dependent on brain functions. Immune memory is dependent on the workings of our white blood cells and antibodies. What’s common to all forms of memory is that they include the processes of forming the memory (encoding information), retaining the memory (information storage), and recalling the memory (retrieval of the information). Even computer memory employs exactly these three processes. If we are going to look for existence of even the simplest memories in plants, these are the processes we need to see happening<sup>13</sup>. Another example of plant memory phenomenon is Venus flytrap. (...) The Venus flytrap needs to know when an ideal meal is crawling across its leaves. Closing its trap requires a huge expense of energy, and reopening the trap can take several hours, so *Dionaea* only wants to spring closed when it’s sure that the dawdling insect visiting its surface is large enough to be worth its time. (...) We can look at this system as analogous to short term memory. First, the flytrap encodes the information (forms the memory) that something (it doesn’t know what) has touched one of its hairs, then it stores this information for a number of seconds (retains the memory) and finally retrieves this information (recalls the memory) once a second hair is touched. If a small ant takes a while to get from one hair to the next, the trap will have forgotten the first touch by the time the ant brushes up against the next hair. In other words, it loses the storage of the information, doesn’t close, and the ant happily meanders on.

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<sup>11</sup> Ibidem

<sup>12</sup> ibidem

<sup>13</sup> Daniel Chamovitz, What a plant knows (Warszawa: Grupa Wyd. Foksal, 2012) 145

How does the plant encode and store the information from the unassuming bug's encounter with the first hair? How does it remember the first touch in order to react upon the second? Scientist Hodicki and Sievers discovered that touching a trigger hair on the Venus flytrap causes an electric action potential that induces calcium channels to open in the trap. They proposed that the trap requires a relatively high concentration of calcium in order to close and that a single action potential from just one trigger hair being touched does not reach this level. Therefore, a second hair needs to be stimulated to push the calcium concentration over this threshold and spring the trap. The encoding of the information is the initial rise in the calcium levels. The retention of the information requires maintaining a high enough level of calcium so that a second increase (triggered by touching the second hair) pushes the total concentration of calcium over the threshold. As the calcium ion concentrations dissipate over time, if the second touch and potential don't happen quickly, the final concentration after the second trigger won't be high enough to close the trap, and the memory is lost. Subsequent research by Alexander Volkov supports this model<sup>14</sup>.

*I try to get a point where I am turning a material in a way so that something else is seen, an unfolding of the material to see what's there. It's about discovery<sup>15</sup>.  
Jim Hodges*

Subsection *Long-Term Memory of Trauma* is dedicated to describing the mechanism determining the shape of the plant, which is related to often mentioned in the papers *hardening line of external description*, the shape. This is the wording used at the time of deciding on the concept of the thesis; now I can see it in all productions. I refer to the visible lines that determine our perception of the object and their relation with the surface of the object. In *Drawings* and *Still Life Collection* (especially in the project consisting of a shelf with cut to the size pieces of branches) and *Total* the line determines the quality of the drawing and the quality of the solid. A plant can experience a stimulus at some point, like a rip in its leaf or a fracture of a branch, and be unaffected by it at first, but when environmental conditions change, the plant may remember the past experience and respond by changing its growth. Plants clearly have the ability to store and recall biological information. Intuitively we know that this is quite different from the detailed and emotion-filled memories we recall every day. The behaviours of different plants mentioned earlier are remedial type of memory. The tendril's coiling, the Venus flytrap's closing, and the arabidopsis's remembering environmental stress, all include the processes of forming the memory of the event, retaining the memory for distinct time periods, and recalling the memory at a later point in order to get a specific developmental response.

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<sup>14</sup> Ibidem

<sup>15</sup> Uta Grosenick, *Art. Now* (Koln: TASCHEN, 2008) 122

Daniel Chamovitz proposes that many of the mechanisms involved in plant memory are also involved in human memory, including epigenetics and electrochemical gradients. These gradients are the bread and butter of neural connections in our brains, the seat of memory as most of us understand it<sup>16</sup>. Objects collected by me, diverse in terms of species remains of the plants and dead tree elements (twigs, pieces of bark, rotten branches, dry berries) have rational to me value: picking them up I assume that they contain information about the place they come from. And here, we come across the motif of space, adapting it and rediscovering it. While browsing through popular *Art Now* album, *A view from in here* by author quoted above always catches my eye. Even though there is no connection in terms of form or used materials his attitude feels somehow close. Possibly, because all my works more or less directly relate to inseparable from each other phenomena of memory and time. The work I am talking about is a sculpture rendered fully in glass depicting a tree branch with a fragile bird's nest protruding from the wall in three dimensions. For Hodges it symbolises a whole stream of elusive moments life comprises of, for me it is more of a single moment<sup>17</sup>. From my whole collection of works the first one to be described will be *Total* installation (discussed in Chapter Two). The work is an experiment related to the memory concept. I make a connection between this motif and ability to remember in great detail (eidetic memory). This motif is inseparable from the tree remains, which act out as a medium for information. Next project, *Dead plant remains. Drawings*. Is a set of signs made of collected branches, arranged in a bigger composition. The signs themselves are inspired by configurations observed on the surface of the *Object. Mikrosensor* is a series of drawings based literally on images of tomograms of the *Object* (Chapter Two, part *Mikrosensor*). *Dead Collection (Martwa kolekcja)*, is a collection of remains of house plants, small objects picked up during my walks, remains of the plants brought into the studio during a year long period. Memory theoretician, Pierre Nora, proposes that 'the quicker we forget, the more compulsively we hoard the relics of our memory'<sup>18</sup>. Taking it literally, but at the same time seriously, can explain and be one of the factors, that influenced the decision of bringing all the materials and their meaning into the studio, that I have been trying to explain in this chapter. Without a doubt there is a connection between this theory and my attachment to the object. Today's culture is focused on the archive mode – documenting and preserving all aspects of surrounding reality. At the same time we live in the network culture, among participating media; we give advantage to availability and transparency, soon forgetting how much we are shaped by the past<sup>19</sup>. The *Closer* laboratory is a place where the past and its media is not only collected, but also organised and processed. *Closer* serves the purpose of rediscovering relations between past and present, not only in connection to what it possesses but also what it lacks and misses. This understanding of the *Closer* theory can be developed in a broad frame, at the crossroads of technology, pleasure derived from being close to nature and habits of collecting its remains.

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<sup>16</sup> Daniel Chamovitz, *What a plant knows* (Warszawa: Grupa Wyd. Foksal, 2012) 164

<sup>17</sup> Uta Grosenick, *Art Now* (Köln: TASCHEN, 2008) 122

<sup>18</sup> Archiwum#2, Muzeum Sztuki, Łódź 2009. Artykuł dostępny pod adresem:

[http://msl.org.pl/pl/program/publikacje/tytul\\_roboty-archiwum.html](http://msl.org.pl/pl/program/publikacje/tytul_roboty-archiwum.html)

<sup>19</sup> [http://msl.org.pl/pl/program/publikacje/tytul\\_roboty-archiwum.html](http://msl.org.pl/pl/program/publikacje/tytul_roboty-archiwum.html)

## Photographic memory

Memory processes I am interested in, are analysed in psychology handbooks in great detail. They mention memory mechanisms, transportation of the stored material from the short-term memory and placing it within long-term memory and also relation between these areas. The chapter *Memory Processes (Procesy pamięci)* (Ida Kurcz, *Psychologia*, PWN) includes a subsection devoted to iconic memory, used for recognizing visual stimulus presented for a very short time such as 50 milliseconds. Finally, methods of examining memory, possibilities of analysing the phases of the process of memorising. From this vast compilation of issues, I am most fascinated with the specific type of memory, difficult to classify. Superbly exact in recalling an image, but not at all useful mechanism, as the image is still and cannot be used. The context cannot be changed. Eidetic memory or in other words photographic memory. It is about an ability of replaying complex images, sounds and other objects with high fidelity, that according to some research only few of us were given. Eidetic memory has been examined by such psychologists as Erich Jaensch and Aleksandr Łurija. The second one has described one of his case studies – Salomon Szereszewski, who was able to memorise very long sequences of numbers, letters and/or words and recite them without a mistake even after fifteen years. He could repeat mathematical formulas, but without understanding them. Having seen a wall chart for a several seconds, he was able to repeat the columns and rows in any direction including diagonally or skipping pattern. He was an example of a person using eidetic memory as well as synaesthesia. Eidetic projection is a perfectly accurate reflection of a given image, and when eyeballs move the location changes in the imagination as well. Eidetic projections are much more common with children (around 8% between ages 7 to 12 and only 0,1% with adults). A connection between ability to produce eidetic projections and any other cognitive abilities or neurological disorders hasn't been established. Eidetic projection is very difficult to alter, it is almost impossible to create new sequences with them. Because of that eidetic projections actually make thinking more difficult. The existence of this form of memory was challenged by some psychologists, because of subjective character of opinions of people studied, possessing this type of memory. Today's research prove its existence. Some cases of eidetic memory with adults is based on using mnemotechniques and is of acquired character<sup>20</sup>.

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<sup>20</sup> [https://pl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pami%C4%99%C4%87\\_ejdetyczna](https://pl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pami%C4%99%C4%87_ejdetyczna)

Chapter Two:

## Total

*I try to transform reality with his own rules*<sup>21</sup>.

*Gabriel Orozco*

Materials used in the *Total* project come from natural environment. Each of the objects contributing to the installation is some sort of a trophy, brought to the studio from a walk or a hike in the park or forest. The whole installation comprises of over forty objects taped around with sequences of small paper elements creating a specific structure. Primary reason, impulse for creating this installation was to copy graphic image of damages visible on the piece of twig (starting point of the entire doctorate projects mentioned in the introduction). Copying, naturally in an upscale, happened by assembling elements in space or on the surface in a way imitating the pattern. The *Total* installation grew with time, slowly freeing itself from the above mentioned composition. It became a collection of plant remains covered in authorial tissue. Due to the linearity that started to emerge and varied scale of elements I started thinking differently about the developing material and displaying it in different ways. We could say that, it is possible to 'draw' almost anything with lines observed on these elements; the objects can be accentuated on their own or contrasted with raw, not taped elements.

My working on *Total* is some sort of experiment regarding an image. I bear it in my mind even while taping branches, when the potential format is more of a line than a surface. In the context of *Closer* the word image refers to an experience not only in painter's sense, but also generally visual, optical, free from formats, frames and external shapes.

First works from the *Total* cycle use photographs depicting different kinds of space. Later I started arranging sort of visual pulp with little elements. In three dimensional works on the same subject I began with using my own photographs printed multiple times depicting a specific space. Looking for the ways of constructing an image that will provide both the thread of time and space I started using varied graphic materials, that accumulate at home and have different types of space written all over them. This is where the two worlds meet: wood and material cut out of newspapers, art catalogues, store directories, leaflets and postcards. The aesthetics of glossy magazine practically doesn't exist in *Total*, as the method of constructing the structure shows only fractions of compositions. Sequences of small, round elements stuck one after another become something else, organic, camouflaging its own tacky, commercial character. On the surface of the objects from the *Total* installation, the importance is placed equally on the fragments covered with the paper texture and the raw ones. A certain thought, derived from Japanese aesthetics, in my opinion, can really well explain the role of the bare fragments.

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<sup>21</sup> Uta Grosenick, *Art Now* (Köln: TASCHEN, 2008)

The quotation below could also broaden the description of the whole installation and how it is displayed using the surrounding space. Works, employing understatement and austerity (Japanese *Shibui*) require from the viewer completing the image using own imagination. I think the situation is similar in the case of my installation.

*'Shibui is not strong, straightforward; it associates the power of calm, understatement and integrity of craft, material and pattern. It contains the asset in Chinese called chi, understood as a state of total tranquillity; Shibui takes us to the heart of nature'<sup>22</sup>.*

The title of the series and installation I described is a loanword used with premeditation relating to the meanings such as complete, whole, entire or absolute.

## Mikrosensor

Magnificent exhibition of works by Leonardo da Vinci that took place a year ago and an accompanying article inspired me to write in more detail about the series of drawings from assembled branches. The title of the exhibition is multidimensional. It looks at drawing in its literal meaning, but also at the vision of reality and attempts to explore by the means of drawing. *Il disegno del mondo*, the title of the exhibition and at least in Polish challenging word play depicting prominence of drawing in renaissance theory of art in Italy. *Disegno* means drawing, but also a project. It can be a solid project such as technical drawings, but also a vision appearing in artist's mind<sup>23</sup>. The title of the exhibition accentuates multidimensional of the term *disegno*. *Il disegno del mondo* should be understood both as The drawings of the world and also The design of the world. The first translation can relate to a vast number of sketches, in which da Vinci preserved the surrounding world (studies of plants, animals, draperies etc). The works that need to be classified under the second translation *Il disegno del mondo* (The design of the world), accentuate Leonardo's engineering and constructing fascinations. We can see drawings of the famous flying machines, designs of weapons, diving kits and sketches of water with visible whirls and reflections. In these works Leonardo appears to be a thinker, who while observing the world and analyzing known at that time laws of physics, was able to draw amazing conclusions. Designs, now seen as curiosities from the past, for Leonardo were part of his broad studies about the laws governing the world of nature. Self-discipline while analysing things from three perspectives, was very important for Leonardo, both in terms of accurate depiction of the surrounding world and controlling the inner world. Dalai Lama, who is a live example of spiritual trait *dimostrazione* (experiencing and learning from own mistakes) explains, why it is happening: Ability to perceive events from different perspectives can be very helpful<sup>24</sup>.

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<sup>22</sup> Krystyna Wilkoszewska, *Japanese Aesthetics. Anthology* (Kraków: Universitas, 2008) 152

<sup>23</sup> Paweł Ignaczak, *Genius of drawing* (Poznań: Artoon 7/2015) 8

<sup>24</sup> Howard C. Cutler, *Art of happiness* (Poznań: Rebis, 2003) 34

One needs to realise that each phenomena, each event have different dimensions. Associated with Leonardo set of seven traits, not without a reason is considered a recipe for creativity. This long introduction about Leonardo's drawings and his multidimensional role in discovering and understanding the world and even in envisioning is related to drawings and its types encountered in my collection.

Drawing, this time understood as a tool, helped me to see (taking into consideration that they are drawings of sequences) the inside of the object, and gave the illusion of going through it. Tomograms present comprehensive image of the inside, dividing the five-centimetre-long piece of the branch into 1800 graphic slices. The first 168 drawing compositions I prepared are a fragment of a sequence that literally illustrates what is happening inside the twig. The drawings also approach the topic of the external description of the object being the inspiration of other works.

Drawing of the intersection facilitates some sort of study of the line, we see differently than when looking at the original. I have used carbon copy sheets for the drawings. Thanks to that another branching appeared – an image painted as a negative drawing appearing on the used carbon copy sheet. That is another turning of the material and a new discovery. The second series of the drawings consists of three dimensional drawings, created with the materials brought from the forest. At the beginning all the compositions were directly related to the traces on the object and that is how some of them were created. Overcoming a technical difficulty of joining different types of tree elements with different shapes, thickness and structure, I use very thin, fine branches and twigs. I look for the thinnest possible twigs, such as of larch, which are flexible and lightweight thus easier to work with. I can join them discreetly to form almost any shape. Often the graphic character of the branch, connections between its elements is a hint about the shape, the system of the lines. The first drawing from the second series of spacial drawings was created by joining the ends of the closest branches. That caused a certain tension in the main branch from which the smaller ones were growing. The whole drawing changed and visually gained contrast thanks to this procedure. At the same time inspirations found on the surface of the *Object* (motif of undercrossing lines, open eclipses, traces that themselves look like miniatures of branching). Second method employs using existing, but covered up branching compositions (covered by other lines). Some drawings were created just by taking elements away. The hint often comes from clashing what at first looks like similar systems. Sensor is using another word a detector. In the compilation of the drawings made on the basis of tomograms I use technical opportunity of looking at the structure in such a small scale (the circumference of the object changes, but average circumference measures around two centimetres). Preparing the second series of drawings assembled with twigs and branches I observe the really small traces of destruction on the surface of the twig. The works are created in relation to the material, which is barely visible with naked eye or is hidden – thus the title of the subsection.

## Dead Collection

Gathering and processing seem to be some of the basic behaviours typical for humans. Manfred Summer Divides gathering into economical and aesthetical types, assigning utilitarian values to the first one and visual pleasure to the second. Both types of gathering and subsequently processing are related to work, necessity of searching for the things, estimating their value and use, placing them in a certain order<sup>25</sup>. Alongside preparation of works, after some time I started a collection of small plant remains. Gathering these details and remains is another layer of the backstage, mentioned while writing about the mode of work. *Dead Collection* is a homemade project, cosy magazine, which in the last few months before going on display at the gallery joined the collection of the furniture in the studio. It is a catalogue where all the failures of growing plants at home were put down.

The collection contains some details brought from the walks, leftovers of projects employing the findings. These include: leaves of Diphenbahia (February – March 2016), leaves of Ficus (January 2016), leaves and flowers of Poinsettia (*Euphorbia pulcherrima*; December 2015 – February 2016), Rhododendron (died back August/September 2016), leaves of Dracaena (leaves collected between November 2015 and March 2016), cymes of Sycamore hanging from long stems (collected in parks in March 2016), needles and branches of Spruce (December 2015), Bamboo (January 2016), pods of *Gleditsia triacanthos*, Moss, Carnations (*Dianthus*; flowers), Orchid (*Orchis*; flowers), Oleander (*Nerium*; leaves), Bark (Cortex; fragments of different species).

**Format** is the latest work. The idea of making the installation came to my mind while finishing the works from the collection. There were lots of branches brought from the walks and hikes at the studio. The idea of cutting them to one size is a simple procedure which makes a material taking up a lot of space becomes a coherent object with calm, static form, from a dynamic, difficult and awkward to store matter in an easy way I managed to form an object with certain parameters. Inspiration for the size of the platform they were placed on is also simple and corresponds to the decor of the studio. For the last two months, along the longest wall I have placed worktops, on top of which I kept gathering brought material in such a way that I could observe it and have an easy access to it. Before I started working on the installation, the worktops were taking the whole length of the wall. That is where the the elongated shape of the platform comes from. *Format* is created in a way to end the cycle; it is a conclusion, a summary, a metaphor of the order in the studio and represents a good reference to mentioned in the introduction Backstage, where the program fits in well.

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<sup>25</sup> Karolina Sikorska, *Genealogies of work* (Poznań: Arsenal, 2013) 128



**The Object** is an exposure of a fragment of the branch around which the action was revolving. Found in the Beskidy Mountains pine twig was 60 centimetres long at the beginning. Because to the scope of the wood tomography, a piece 5 cm long was chosen and displayed under a magnifying glass.

**Yucca** is an installation complementing the *Dead Collection*. Seemingly easy to take care of, but for me rather difficult, domestic symbol of exotica, I have been growing since 2006.

Conclusion

### **Closer {noun}**

The title of the series *Closer*, in Polish means nearer. Other meanings are for example adjectives mysterious, but also intimate. The juxtaposition ‘close weather’ means muggy weather and stuffiness. I liked the wide spectrum of meanings and uses of this word. I associate it with different aspects of closeness, from being close to nature or other person to the activity of looking at something with the use of microscope. Without analysing the meaning (if it is at all possible), closer sounds like a noun in Polish, because of typical noun ending. In this form it makes me think of the studio, workshop, the place where we get close to the subject of analysis and examination.

I would like the artistic procedures undertaken by me to result in some sort of margin, broadened scope of interpretation for the viewer. It is about a new way of getting through to, what are a motif and the primary story. The story capsulizing a story which is a beginning of more stories... Some threads I work on suit better the procedure of drawing stories from them, others less. As the artist Magdalena Franczak says ‘some of them will remain as buds and some will explode’.

In relation to the part Memory of the plants, *Closer* is a place where the media of the motifs interesting to me are not only gathered, but also processed. *Closer* as a type of a studio is used for rediscovering relations between them, relation of past and present, not only in connection to what it has, but also asks about the missing and omitted ones. The theory understood this way can be created only in a wide scope, at the crossroads of technology, pleasure driven from spending time close to nature and habits of collecting it remains. Because of how much can happen to it, in above description *Closer* is described as noun, nature and verb. Using them, I would like to provoke thinking about that formula as about an open concept of procedures in different ways connected to nature and imagining *Closer* as sensitivity that require looking at everything closely, from the inside.

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