

Academy of Fine Arts in Katowice
The Art Department

Artur Masternak

Fragmentation.
Self-presence of the trace.

Ph.D. thesis written under the supervision of the promoter:
Associated Professor (dr hab.) Tomasz Chudzik
and the tributary promoter:
Marcin Białas Ph.D.

Katowice 2016

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of stylized, cursive letters, likely representing the author's name.

Introduction	3
Trace – beginning	4
Trace – difference	5
Trace – memory	5
Trace – existence	6
Trace – art	6
Ending	7

SM

Introduction

The trace constantly varied by itself is never self-presence.

J. Derrida

This thought of the French philosopher Jacques Derrida forces me to further thoughts on the logic of difference and repetition. Many questions come up to mind have no clear answer. What makes the traces different, and what makes them similar? What is the difference and what vary them? What is it that difference and where is its source?

I attempt to answer these questions classifying my graphic cycle - fragmentation, in which Derrida's philosophy became the foundation of my graphic attempts based, so far mainly on sensual sensation of the traces. As I explore this philosophy, it turned out that it is synonymous with fascinating me feature of printing techniques - namely the possibility of duplication. For me, the printing process is not editing, this is an element which produces formation of new layers, new traces, and new fragments. Fragmentation thus has character of an open cycle, in which the images are generated by the continuous movement of the traces, their mutual relation by an endless consequence of game difference and repetition. What differs is the constant repetition of the trace by itself. In self-presence of each the trace loses its original form of repetition and becomes a fragment. Since then the fragment contributes to the breakdown of the whole picture, it emphasizes its fragmentation. It is the beginning of the process of fragmentation in which self-presence becomes the trace where the most important thing is the difference.

The philosopher himself draws attention to the elusiveness of the fact of distinction, writing that: Rethinking about difference asks the question about the definition of being in the presence and existence. Such a problem could not arise or be understood, if at some point the difference between being and existence would not appear. Difficulties involve thinking about the difference which is an integral component of thought. All concepts are included in the chain of

mutual references.

The difference, in one certain condition of differences is therefore also a condition of any concept, however it is not a concept in itself. To understand the difference, we should - as the author writes- be a part of the arising difficulties during the way to know it, reliving it - is a self-presence.

Derrida's thoughts seem to be placed on two interpenetrating planes. One of them is a classic way of treating philosophy, in which we use the terms in accordance with their traditional meanings, thus avoiding contradictions and self-reference. The second thought refers forbids to subject to the rules and rigors of thinking. Both of these planes – criticism and defence – are diffusing each other.

Trace - beginning

The trace as a concept is known in philosophy from the time of Platonism, also appears very often as the trend of modern humanities, literature and art. For example, Heidegger in his contemplation about work of art, language and poetry, uses the concept of a scratch as the trace. Freud in the descriptions of the basic mechanisms of the human psyche uses a model of a trace - print, for Levinas trace leaves something absolutely different, something that was never present. The trace - tracing is also an important aspect of Derrida's philosophy of presence.

The trace reluctantly is subjected to description and classifications. In these traditions it takes different, often not easy to reconcile the meaning, performing in many different contexts. Can we therefore talk about the concept of trace in its strict sense of the conceptual framework? Is it some kind of metaphor, refers to the loosely connected threads which freely open new fields of meaning, rather than responsibly close well-defined meanings?

Considerations of Heidegger, Freud and Levinas were the starting point for the trace concept developed by Derrida. Thread of the trace concept appeared of secondary importance and promoted to the role of the basic concept. According to the philosopher trace determines the character of "our time", which comes to the end the ontology of presence, and that could be described as the era of metaphysics dusk or the end of the modern era.

Trace – difference

Derrida's trace remains substantial, but not entirely unambiguous and consistently presented relationship with the concept of difference. It is important, however, is that both the trace and difference, are not, and therefore do not have the character of a "being", which would allow to determine them, assign specific features and declare that they are or they are not this or that. What is more the trace and difference are located beyond the metaphysical oppositions of being and not being, essence and appearance, of what is rational and sensuous. If the trace difference is blurred, this track differs only in the blurring or obliterating, not only in the sense that to which it refers, but also the blurring of itself.

Derrida himself by doubling "the Trace effect" prefers to talk about the trace of the trace, which is the difference; what is present is a sign of the sign, a trace of the trace. This reduplication is to weaken the relationship that connects the trace with its object, is to indicate that the trace takes us to another trace and nothing else. Thus highlights the fact that there is no free area of the mechanism of differentiation. However, would not call what left the trace, and the same time would not be a trace, as if a first, the only trace, could arise as a result of direct contact with the original, the source, the being. For Derrida the trace is closely linked with a difference / different.

Trace – memory

The trace is strongly associated with the timing aspects of difference, precisely those that refer to the postponement, deferment, delay. The presence is marked by traces of the past.

It contains in itself also the traces from the future, toward which it is "deviated". Derrida underlines the role of the memory traces and their "text" character. Awareness remains in place of the memory trace. Saved in unconsciousness "scripture traces" refer to the meaning that is possible to find and read. The meaning is a secondary effect produced by the traces and their infinite movement, which it is still delayed. The meaning is always drawn into a "movement" trace.

Trace – existence

Order of the common sense assumes priority order of what exists towards the trace which this presence leaves after itself. The presence conceived in the system of trace is called existence that is generated by the trace and it is appointed by this trace to existence, which is the result of the trace, not what it leaves. Two incompatible ways of thinking about the track. Is it cause or effect? Produces existence or it is produced by it? It is from before or after it? This leads to the confrontation of two systems, or orders - the track system and system of existence.

If we assume that the trace is what is always left behind by something other than it is, and it is not the trace. Then we sentenced it to the status of being a secondary being, or even a copy, referred only to the thing that it squeezed it. We can also break away the trace from the existence, the thing that left it, weakening the function of the print. As a result, the trace will gain independent value and will not only indicate the beginning, but it will erase it move away. The beginning, which still disappears, is the beginning signed in the traces.

Finally, the trace takes place of the beginning, becoming the "beginning of the beginning."

According to Derrida traces are existence of trace, the existence is an effect of the trace, product of its actions. It is not the presence that leaves its trace, but the trace leaves the existence, both in the sense of leaving the trace, creation of the existence, production, as well as the fact of being abandoned, bleared.

Derrida's attitude to the traces resembles ecstatic attitude. The view of another, new trace or traces makes him the greatest joy. For such ecstatic treading in the tracks is kind of a walking-away, drifting- away with the hope that each successive track will not be the last.

Trace – art

Trace-ability is a valuable apparatus used to determine the condition of the art, especially contemporary. In comparison with its classical tradition, its size, thinking of art through the prism of the trace seems to be the last thing today, functioning as a *disappearing trace and almost elusive fragment*¹ of itself. Its radical historicity is highlighted this way, it is free from the end and the utopia of progress, and close to categories such as collision and repetition.

¹J.-L. Nancy, *Les Muses*, Paris 2001, s. 156



On the one hand, a work of art, as the left trace, is what it is, is anything beyond everything, it does not refer to any historicity, does not have a hidden essence. On the other hand, if it is a trace which leads to the other traces than it enables the creation of other works of art, which are an infinite consequence of the game of differences. In this game art is always "*another art*", *having always "another being" which lives forever in the "other world"*²

The art today has own traces - this is what opens us, opens us for this work of art.

The End

*Everywhere, imprints precede us, or even stay after us. Many of them eludes us, many disappeared before our eyes. Some beacon while other beats the eyes. Still others have disappeared a long time ago, but something tells us that remain but hidden, possible to mark thanks to some archaeological desire or method. Some seem to haunt us. Many of them survive us.*³

The similarity and difference, original and copy, uniqueness and merge – these are a grid of oppositional concepts, in which the artistic practice involves a trace. The involvement in the game of difference and repetition is repeatedly mentioned by Derrida

The repetition could ever exist, should be associated with the collision of what could be opposite to it, its difference or otherness. The difference, as the temporal and spatial distance is involved in the process of creation of similar almost identical forms by direct contact "crash" with the matrix of what we get from it.

The difference is "the thing" that resists the universal whole, remaining like a trace - a leftover of representational and merge power of the image contrasts broken picture – which is fragmentary.

Trace is a fragment, being is fragmentation.

Quoted philosophy of trace creates conceptual dimension of my actions in the field of graphic arts. Capabilities of duplication result from printing, this is the main motive of my creation process. It is not, however, to obtain a pure series of identical prints. I am duplicating through

² Tamže, s.143

³ G. Didi-Huberman, *La ressemblance par contact. Archéologie, anachronisme et modernité de l'empreinte*, Paris 2008, s. 52, 60

diversification, it means that into the printing process of "repetition" is involved difference that determines self-presence of the new tracks – fragments that are a prelude to creation of new visual objects - fragmentation. This difference is the cause of the transience of what appears to be mark on the graphic matrix. In addition to consciously plotted traces, there are a number of others that self-visualize and bear themselves during preparation for the printing process.

Print in itself, being a print of the matrix, bears the mark of difference. An important factor in my creation process is also the time. Older graphics are the traces that generate the formation of other traces, and these "new" contain a presence of the past, at the same time contribute to their correction and the new view of them.

The climax is a confrontation of the original, sketch, outline (often mental) with obtained printing form. The thing which is between the trace of the image and the trace of self-presence (experience) is what is the most significant.

The problem of the difference trace in itself and its self-presence is part of process of my artwork cultivation - the process of fragmentation.

Artur NASTERNIA