

Portrait of a Process

PhD

Department of Art

Marek Damian Undro

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Abstract

This thesis presents an answer to the the problem of capturing Process in the art of oil painting. Process is understood here as constant motion and probability, a potential rather than a result, a movement dialectically opposite to the fixed, finished form. As a practical PhD research project, the thesis combines the author's theoretical findings with a hands-on demonstration of the physical production of a work of art. In the theoretical part of the thesis the methodology of philosophical interpretation is used, allowing the use of quantum mechanics as well as philosophy and mysticism in answering complex questions regarding matter, detachment, constant change and probability. The art-specific/relevant critical context for these considerations is provided by analysing Polish matter painting, especially that of Tadeusz Kantor's *informel* period (1955-1962) and his own struggle to achieve the expression of matter, a substance synonymous with life and process in Kantor's thought, in the oil painting medium. Continuing this path, the present dissertation develops the Dimitto technique - a way of painting without attaching oneself to the outcome of the brushstroke on the canvas, as well as an ascetic exercise allowing the detachment and exclusion of the observer from the painting process. This leads to Multi-Meta-Form, i.e. an oil painting that was never witnessed by its creator, nor by an audience or anyone else. Thus, without the observer, whether the painter or any other audience, who inevitably reduces the movement to a single set of static elements presented on the canvas, the on-going motion is not stopped, but remains in a state of probability and ontological uncertainty, therefore expressing the essence of Process. The thesis therefore offers a practical and theoretical validation for the exclusion of the observer from the painting creation/reception spectrum, necessary for profound artistic expression of Process as such.

Preface

Introduction

In this preface to my thesis I would like to clarify some of the key aspects of my approach to methodology: 1) to explain the dynamic interrelationship between the theoretical and practical components; 2) to comment on the role of Kantor's work in my specific quest; and 3) to explain briefly the general socio-historical context in which Kantor's ideas were developed. First, however, I would like to answer two basic methodological questions arising from this work: 1) why I focus solely on the medium of painting on canvas, and more specifically on oil painting, rather than including other art forms, such as sound-art performance or film, when investigating Process in painting; and 2) why I have chosen an interdisciplinary mode of investigation and chosen some sources over others. Finally, I would like to explain how the apparently disparate branches of knowledge work together in the practical art research project presented here.

Choice of medium

The question I have proposed in my thesis, namely, how to express Process in oil painting without reducing the outcome to a single image seen on the surface of the canvas, is led not only by my own experience in the medium of painting on canvas, but more importantly because this question, directed specifically at the chosen medium, has not been answered until now. Process as defined in this thesis is a constant transition from one state to another

ad infinitum, a dynamic that never *is* but always *becomes*. And since painting is a static art form per se, as such, reducing the transition, motion and possibility of a Process, to a single form or image seen on the surface of the canvas by the recipient (the observer) of that painting, it does not satisfactorily express the Process in my view. To maintain the probabilistic and transitory attribute of Process in a single painting, has therefore so far been the major challenge. And it was the first question I had to ask in the studio, how do I create a canvas that will not be thusly stopped? Blindfolded painting was only one of the tools. In order to begin answering this, I had to reach for interdisciplinary work.

Despite the efforts of such artists like Tadeusz Kantor, whose work has served as theoretical *point d' appui* for my research, the contradiction between the static nature of necessary form¹ and the probabilistic and ever-moving nature of Process which constitutes physical matter has never been solved. The second reason for the choice of this particular medium of artistic expression is my own experience: as a painter I have expertise in oil painting, and the solutions I am offering are grounded in a decade of my own practice-based research, rather than being conceptualized on the basis of secondary sources.

The key to understanding my solution, which I have called Multi Meta Form,² and indeed, to understanding this piece of work is a precise definition of 'Process', formulated as the movement that constitutes physical matter itself, and its differentiation from the phrase 'artistic process', which has a different etymology, meaning activities that create an artwork. And how this definition influenced by final, practice.

¹ Full definition given in the introduction.

² Full definition given in the introduction.

Interdisciplinary mode of investigation

While it is true that many artistic fields have dealt with artistic process, as in the creation of or the act of making art, and have sought to theorise and practice in this field, it is not an area that is relevant to my own thesis, beyond of the shared interest in the dynamic nature of process. Hence, these sources are not discussed in the present work, which provides an answer to the second question, namely why I chose to reach out to the seemingly disparate disciplines of physics and mysticism, rather than basing my research on standard sources dealing with Process, form and matter in art. Thus, the subject of my research, involves reaching out beyond standard sources in art criticism, where the solution to the problem mentioned above, of expressing Process on canvas, has not been found in any case, into other fields such as physics and metaphysics which offer answers. My interdisciplinary research has provided me with evidence for the definition of Process, not only from the painting perspective as practised in my studio through MMF and dimitto, and as partly theorised by such painters as Kantor, but also from the perspective of other areas of knowledge, namely quantum mechanics and mysticism, where the problems of Process and matter are at the heart of vast, rich inquiries.

As discussed in my work, more recent ways of dealing with Process in painting, such as process painting, action painting and conceptual painting, fail to provide definitions of Process/matter/probability and use these terms without further investigation, taking them

for granted, without a detailed account of their etymology. Process painting, or Roman Opałka's famous conceptual painting, 1965 / $1-\infty$ and its theoretical validation, are fine examples of this trend. Thus, for example, Opałka uses the word 'process' but never explains it in detail. Avoiding semantic miscommunication was one of the aims of this thesis, which is to clarify the notions of Process, matter, probability and their interrelations. Rather than following common-sense definitions used by artists, critics and lay audiences alike, the terms 'Process' and 'matter' as used here are conceptualized from the perspectives of philosophy and the science of physics, those two great pillars of our culture which have deliberated on them from their inception. In my search for precise meanings of these terms I have reached into antiquity, where great thinkers such as Ionian philosophers, atomists [Democritus] and pre-Socratic philosophers [Heraclitus and his idea of the Flow and Logos] have provided answers that one can transfer on to canvas, their ideas finding their way into the practical part of my thesis.

As a result of my in-depth research I have considered, but also rejected, several philosophical approaches to the problem of Process/matter/observer/illusion vs. reality.

Those ideas I rejected are:

1. Platonism and Neo-Platonism, which deal with form in relation to idea, the observer and his/her predispositions, and in which sensual reality is seen as an imperfect emanation of that ideal.
2. The transcendental idealism of Kant and the Neo-Kantians, as they deal with the epistemological problem of the thing-in-itself (the *noumenon*) and a priori judgement.

3. The phenomenology of Roman Ingarden, which deals with that which manifests itself to the consciousness, its relationship to appearances and one's conceptualization of those appearances. It would be interesting to consider Process and the tensions between illusion and reality from this perspective, but I have rejected this approach, as quantum mechanics goes beyond that which appears to a human being (both in physical and metaphysical sense). While phenomenology insists on phenomena, quantum mechanics goes further and claims that one does not experience phenomena but its aftermath.
4. The philosophy of mind and theories of desire (both action-based and pleasure-based or hedonistic) were also considered for this thesis, as they deal with the motif of the desire to do (paint). I have chosen mysticism, as its scholars not only elaborate on desire, they also present a solution to the problem of one's attachment and self-centred view, which prevent the Process of becoming from flowing.

Thus, the choice of sources to support the theoretical part of my study was by no means chaotic and accidental: it was a result of a long search in which it appeared that it is precisely quantum mechanics within the discipline of physics and the mystical thought situated on the fringes of the discipline of philosophy that best reflected what Process, matter, chance, probability, illusion vs. reality tension, observer and observed are. By including these disciplines, I have been able to find an original solution for the theoretical problem underlying the medium of oil painting and to implement this solution in practice by developing the MMF, which constitutes a unique exploration of painting and Process.

As already noted, my choice of these disciplines was not accidental, nor are they disparate, for a direct line between the conceptualization of Process/matter/chance, can be drawn from the early Greek thinkers to quantum mechanics, as is demonstrated in the present thesis. Quantum mechanics deals with all the terms mentioned above directly and elaborating on other vital terms on my thesis, namely intelligibility, causality and locality, providing concrete evidence and explanations of Process/matter, and answering the question of how one can conceptualize not only chance, but also the observer and the observed within a physical reality. And since the terms 'Process' and 'matter' come from philosophy and the science of physics, it is important to use them according to their original definition. In this work this has been achieved by adopting an interdisciplinary approach, allowing me to find a way for the expression of Process to be manifested on a canvas without reducing it to a single image, thus answering the key question posed by this PhD.

Mysticism, viewed here as a sub-discipline of philosophy, presents the Process from a metaphysical perspective, offering the idea of detachment as the solution to the problem of Process being stopped. Moreover, at the core of its philosophical inquiry, mysticism situates the Process of becoming and reality in opposition to illusion, which is the major concern of my quest for a solution to the problem of conflict between the dynamic nature of Process and the static nature of oil painting. Thus, both quantum mechanics and mysticism deal profoundly with Process-as-it-is, not with a process of art creation without finalization (conceptual art) or a reduction of the painting to be dependent on something else, like some sort of mechanism or active substance that creates the illusion of a 'moving' painting.

I especially wanted to avoid such approach, as the problem I am trying to solve is connected with the medium of oil painting.

The work of Tadeusz Kantor

Like myself, the painters that came closest to finding a solution to this problem also played with the ideas from quantum mechanics and mysticism in their theoretical reflections.

These were the Polish *informel/matter* painters I deal with in this thesis, especially Tadeusz Kantor. In my work I draw attention to the fact that Polish matter painting evolved on a different basis than its western counterparts, developing in profoundly different socio-economic and political circumstances from those enjoyed by artists on the other side of the Iron Curtain, in countries like France, Spain or Italy, where matter painting could and did evolve without restrictions and where ideas were easily exchanged between artists.

However, the socio-historical background is not discussed at length, for such a discussion goes beyond the scope of present work, whose main focus is not the critical appreciation of Kantor's work, but the MMF and my description of my strivings as an artist moving back and forth between my chosen theory and the actual canvas.

The point I am making in my dissertation is that Kantor, like other matter painters, reduced Process/matter to a single image that is shown to the public. However, as soon as this happens, the viewer conceptualizes this single painting based on what is already there, so that no dynamic or probabilistic attributes are expressed. Once observed, the Process

ceases to be probabilistic and becomes fixed, thus no longer being truly Process. In Opałka's case, one might argue that, within his conceptual performance, one might see the Process when he is making the painting in front of the viewer, but as soon as he stops Process stops too, and again, the finished image is there to be absorbed, thus, despite being conceptual, it eventually becomes a static object.

In this PhD I am arguing that, to capture the essence of Process, we cannot show the final product, for in the act of showing and observing, we are trapping the form and closing the potentiality of Process. In this thesis I therefore present detailed reasoning for why this exposure of the painting to the viewer cannot fully capture the essence of a Process that corresponds to reality. This reasoning also provides an answer to the question of the dialectical relationship between the practical part of the PhD and the written component.

Relationship of the practical part of my PhD to the thesis

To start with, to understand Process/matter and what it means for oil painting required theoretical research, in the course of which I have encountered the writings of Meister Eckhart and seeking the answer to his questions, I looked into interpretations of physical reality from quantum mechanics, which in turn led me to developing my Multi Meta Form idea, which I have explained in detail throughout the thesis.

The origination of my research questions and methodology that I have used to answer those questions in the studio, practically, while painting and theoretically, when writing, sprung

from a one sentence. Meister Eckhart, in one of his German sermons stated that '[...] for those whose works are aimed at a particular end or who act with a particular Why in view, are servants and hirelings' (1994: 145). As a painter, I wanted to employ the essence of this statement to the medium of traditional oil painting. Therefore, I have tried to paint without the natural resolution of the colours and composition play that my painting sensitivity seeks on the canvas. I could not do it. I could not let myself "violate" the laws that underline what I call a resolved canvas, that is a finished form, a state of painting where not a single element, be it coloristic and/or compositionality, can be subtracted or added from/to the wholeness of the canvas. Influenced by Eckhart thought, I understood that the 'particular Why' of my painting, made me its subordinate. In his writings, Eckhart presented the solution to this problem: detachment. This was a purely theoretical concept which I had to implement in painting practice, I had to find a way to achieve it, so I have incorporated a means to detach, I found a tool serving to separate myself from the image I was painting; the blindfold. This way theory was connected with practice and the dimitto technique of painting begun to be formulated. The next stage was asking myself the following question: 'why would I want to detach myself from the particular painting resolution anyway?'. Again, mysticism delivered the answer: detachment is necessary so one can realise one is a Process of becoming. Process/matter, that never ending movement is what I wanted and had to paint, expressing it on single, fixed canvas was the true difficulty of my practical research. In order to express Process/matter then, I had to learn more about its nature, I had to know what Process is and how other painters tried to tackle the problem of Process expression on the canvas. Looking for answers, I have run into Tadeusz Kantor's *informel* paintings. On those canvases and in his theoretical writings, Kantor tried to express the unruly, incidental and ever-flowing nature of reality: the Process itself. Kantor tried to explain this through the

idea of matter and reality as opposed to illusion tension. Still, the processual nature of matter, it seemed to Kantor himself and me, was not 'graspable' enough with a single static image delivered on a canvas, even if the incidental played a role in forming it, the end result was always a single, static picture, the conclusion and end of the process, the reduction to a necessary form. I therefore decided to investigate the very concept of matter from a completely different perspective, that of physics and philosophy .

This was intended to help me to understand what exactly is within matter, that makes it so unpredictable. This was the beginning of my journey through classical thinkers like pre-Socratic philosophers such as atomists and Ionians, and later Plato and Aristotle, Thomas Aquinas, then Descartes and Isaac Newton. Finally, I have discovered quantum mechanics and its philosophical interpretations. After hard and long years of researching it, I have discovered that the mystery of ever-flowing transition is hidden within the probabilistic, not descriptive realm of quantum mechanics: matter is a Process. Second part of my research I have dedicated to unravelling the conundrum of Process as seen from metaphysical point of view that I already started at the beginning of my quest. I have reached towards mysticism once more, that of the East and West to ask how the Process of becoming is stopped and what can a painter do, to keep it flowing on the canvas. The synergy between mysticism and quantum mechanics' philosophical interpretations was not new, but for the expression of Process in the medium of oil painting, capturing Process on canvas in its constant and dynamic probabilistic transition, is in my view a, barely charted land to explore. Thus, my idea of MMF was born out of this research, this thesis is the theoretical explanation, and the practical solution of MMF binds the theory and practice into one.

And so, the theoretical and practical aspects of my work were tightly interconnected from the start, as the very concept of Process I have adopted is closely connected intellectually with the concepts of superposition and probability in the physical world. The theoretical approach of mysticism allowed me to develop the *dimitto*³ technique of painting, described in the introduction to this work, which, after more theoretical research borrowing from quantum mechanics, was in turn synthesised to become MMF. The significance of the *dimitto* technique and MMF for my thesis relates to my praxis in the studio, which, with all the elaborate “rituals,” is thus a direct consequence of my theoretical findings. In the thesis I clarify how and why I have come up with these practical solutions and how my research has shaped them. This is explained in detail in Chapter Three.

To conclude this section of the preface, my question regarding the expression of Process is a question specific to oil painting on canvas, which, being static per se, does not allow a Process to be captured that is understood as transition and a dynamic event.

Looking for the answer to the question ***‘How to show the Process on a single image ? I*** have used Tadeusz Kantor’s art, exploring in particular his *informel* painting period (1955-1962) as an example.

³ This term is defined in the introduction.

My use of Kantor

As mentioned above, while Kantor did ask the same question at one point, he never found his own answer and, not being happy with his own exploration of Process in painting. He eventually gave it up and used a different medium to continue his investigation. For this reason, Kantor's work is here a mere point of departure, not a case study. Therefore, rather than providing detailed context for the painter's background and art, I am discussing this single aspect of his work as it is relevant for my own quest, namely to reflect on a problematic in my own work . As Kantor's work, and particularly the unresolved nature of this problematic of Process/matter within painting, proved to be a dead end, I was forced to proceed with my own practical research and theoretical exploration, if I was ever to answer this question. Yet, Kantor's work provided an interesting precedent, as from his failure I was able to forge my own path.

The social and historical background to Kantor's work

To explain how Kantor's own struggle to express Process/matter affected my own work, I will add a few words on the socio-historical background to his work, treating its detailed discussion as the topic of a completely separate work. The socio-historical context in which Kantor worked and thought about the concepts of Process/matter is worth exploring in its own right, but it falls beyond the scope of my own, interdisciplinary research to do so in full detail. Nonetheless, I want to mention two major events that have shaped Kantor's thought

regarding the theoretical formulation of process/matter. The Nazi-German occupation of Kraków (1939-1945), where Kantor lived and worked during World War II, and the censorship of the Soviet communist regime (1944-1990) in Poland were the two major influences in the artist's life. While both of those factors likely contributed to Kantor's understanding of Process/matter, as I mention in the thesis in more detail, Kantor also owed much of his theoretical bedrock on Process/matter to Bruno Schulz, whose work he had been familiar with before the war, and he mentions this in his diaries (Kantor 2005a: 47). Surrounded by the stark realities of the German occupation, Kantor focused his thought on the materiality of used objects. He reflected on its process of systematic degradation and usage, the conceptual beginnings of the ideas of '*the reality of the lowest rank*' and '*poor object*', that I explore in the thesis, having had their genesis during the war. After the war's existential loss of orientation, Soviet communism was introduced in Poland. In January 1947 Kantor went on a scholarship to Paris, where he saw the canvases of Picasso, Matta and Miró, but more significant for his understanding of Process/matter, he visited the Palais de la Découverte, where, seeing the microscopes and other wonders of science, he realised that nature must not be transferred directly on to the canvas, but must pass through the introspective realm of a painter, where the wriggling, moving and unbound secretion of a being lies. Kantor returned to this notion fully in 1955 in his *informel* painting period, when, taking advantage of the somewhat easier political situation after Stalin's death, he visited Paris again, after which his views concerning how to paint matter and Process changed radically. This is discussed in the thesis, showing how the freedom of Western world, contrasted with the rigid rules imposed by socialist regime, might have pushed Kantor even further towards *informel*/matter painting. This could be read as a reaction to the stiff rules

imposed on Polish art galleries,⁴ which were forced to exhibit no more than 15% of all art that was shown to be abstract. I would agree here with Piotr Majewski that under these conditions Polish matter painting and matter/Process had to develop differently to how it did in the west. Because of the isolation of Soviet Bloc countries from the West, the scarcity of information and the ban on multi-national artistic enterprises, Polish *informel* painting had to develop in separation, or at least stuck between various outside forces, only provisionally connected to the mainstream artistic thought of other European countries. Also contrary to its western counterparts, Polish *informel*/matter painting was tinged with the tradition of Colourism. Preserving this part of Poland's painting heritage was used as an argument strengthening the Polish sovereignty. These two tendencies were expressed by Peter Selz, who wrote in a 1961 MoMA exhibition catalogue that '15 Polish painters' displayed tenacious Polish traditionalism in respect to matter painting and tachisme:

The abrupt and vigorous efflorescence of art in Poland since the end of the Second World War is one part of the total reorganization of a society which has managed to rise from the burial grounds of military devastation. Warsaw, the center of a new intellectual resurgence, was destroyed by the Germans during the war: more than ninety-five per cent of the city was razed after the insurrection of 1944. Although the Poles have erected an entirely new city out of the rubble, their romantic sense of the past and their desire to keep national traditions alive is so strong that, instead of

⁴ It was the Kremlin's reaction to the exhibition in Moscow, where Polish artists, to show contempt for the regime and manifest their fighting spirit, decided to show only modern paintings or indeed extreme abstract art (Piotrowski 2000: 127).

building a functional modern city, they have preferred to rebuild the center of Warsaw as it appeared in the eighteenth century.

Later on, he adds:

Abstract art was labeled defeatist, decadent and irresponsible, and artists were told to produce paintings of political propaganda value, favorable to socialism and opposed to its enemies. It was demanded, of course, that all art be understood by the masses. Most of the painting shown in large national exhibitions held from 1950 to 1954 was illustrative and imitative and not unlike the work produced in other socialist countries. Nevertheless, certain undertones of expressionism and abstraction can be discerned in the work of some of the painters who attempted to comply with the official dictum. Others preferred not to exhibit during these years (Selz 1961).

Historical and social context is undeniably interesting when one contextualises Kantor's matter/Process understanding, especially as he was an apostle of the new, but in my research, I have focused more on a personal, philosophical and spiritual angle and this I contextualise further in the thesis.

Within the limits of the present dissertation, I can only remark that eventually Kantor abandoned his quest to express Process in the medium of painting on the canvas itself and

instead approached it from a conceptual standpoint, including happenings, conceptual art and actionism, through which, as he himself claimed, he wanted to transcend the hell of the *informel* (Stangret 2004: 47-48). There, he showed not a final object, displayed on the sanctioned pedestal of the art institution, as would be the case with painting, but instead, presented scraps of information (sketches, notes, brochures, recipes), which served as recordings of his meticulous dredging of the substance and structures of what, after their assembly, would fix itself in the object of art, the final step that Kantor avoided on this occasion.⁵ He managed to do so because he realised that the Process can only be expressed within its dynamic character and without the reduction of its main attribute (constant transition) to a single necessity. At this point, Kantor's own observation was in line with my own research, but it is important to stress again that he himself was unable to achieve his theoretical goal through the medium of painting. There was thus a shift in Kantor's approach to matter/Process that emanated from his manifesto (Anti-exhibition manifesto). Kantor now presented the formula, the system, that focused itself and the viewer on *the process of art creation*, which, as Borowski and Turowski claim, is '[...] the actualization of the ideas without a material trace. One transmits them in the form of data, which is either a document or a project. The piece of work is subjected to nothing that may serve as a pretext for information, because it identifies itself with information about itself' (as quoted by Dziamski [1984: 154]). Kantor's theoretical shift from matter=Process=life into conceptual arrangements that do not express the finished materialized object ends the search for the expression of Process/matter on the canvas. This shift became a point of departure after which Kantor's work ceased to be valid as a way of answering my own question.

⁵ As opposed to *informel* painting exhibitions.

Finally, I must clarify one important point here, not only about Kantor's methodological switch, but also by returning to a key concept I began with in this preface, namely how to distinguish process from Process in my thesis. When I use the term 'Process', I mean constant transition, motion and flux, the movement which constitutes matter itself. It is the **portrait of this movement** that I paint through MMF, creating an actual oil painting, a product, an object, and yet escaping the limitations imposed by the final form. I do it in the medium of oil painting which is rather distinct from conceptual art and from Kantor's later explorations. The word 'process', by contrast, is used here in accordance with its commonsense meaning with reference to the way in which I arrived at my conclusion, both practical, through a number of oil paintings done in dimitto, to videos and sketches, and my theoretical research together with my methodology. These two meanings are, of course, related, but in no way interchangeable. It is imperative not to confuse the Portrait of a Process (Process/matter) with a process of art creation without the finalization in the object as seen in conceptual art and later in Kantor's process translation as it functioned in his thought after 1963.

In *informel*, Kantor saw Process as itself, as a constant motion of matter, transition, chance and probability to be. Process itself was his subject. Conceptual art, which asks the question about process [Roman Opałka's 1965 / $1-\infty$ piece or Ewa Partum's (2006: 223-241) *poems by ewa* (1971-74)] asks it not only from the perspective of a different medium, that of oil painting, it also deals with it differently, as it has different means of expressing it. Painting on canvas is a purely visual art: it is lamentably conservative in its use of oil paints, canvas, forms, colour relation to colour, and in being about composition and play between all these

components. Nothing else matters here, as it belongs to a different medium of expression, a different language and a different question altogether. The crux of my PhD is to find a solution to the conflict between the static nature of oil painting and the dynamic nature of matter – hence the necessity to limit considerations to the components of classical oil painting, as the answers given previously were far from complete.

Declaration: I confirm that this is my own work and the use of all material from other sources has been properly and fully acknowledged.

Marek Damian Undro

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This thesis has been copy-edited by Dr. Robert J. Parkin, a native English speaker, acting as such in a professional capacity. The copy-editor has had no influence on the contents of the thesis or their academic interpretation.

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Introduction

Working with the definition of Process as a successive motion,⁶ the expression of the said Process on the canvas cannot be presented in a static form, i.e. as a finished painted product that one can see. This is because the observer, whether the painter or any other audience, inevitably reduces the movement/motion of Process to a single set of static elements that is presented on the canvas. Through such immobile picture, it is argued in this thesis, one cannot satisfactorily express the profoundness of the fluid dynamics of Process. The impossibility of locking constant transition within a finished form demands a radically different approach in oil painting. Therefore, I postulate that Process be conceptualized and any visual stimuli that may taint this endeavor be removed. This thesis presents a practical and theoretical validation of my claim by introducing the notion of the Multi-Meta-Form and confronting it with Tadeusz Kantor's *informel* painting, where he too attempts to present Process on the canvas.

Whilst researching concepts such as constant change, motion, matter, detachment and the illusion of stillness, all of which are associated with the problem of expressing the Process, it was particularly the idea of the *form negation* as developed by the Polish painter, art theoretician and theatre practitioner, Tadeusz Kantor (1915-1990), that led me to explore his work more closely. Form in Kantor's theoretical thought presents itself as a convention antithetical to life because of its still and closed demeanour. Life, full of the movement, motion, action and chance that art could manifest (Kantor 2005a: 483), had to be, for Kantor, antagonistic towards form that could only present the sum of actions that have locked the shape in its finality, without moving within it. The idea of form, which only

⁶ This definition will be further explored throughout the thesis.

describes certain phenomena, without being their organic extension, was for Kantor a motif that shaped his art. It is the beginning of Kantor's journey into *Informel* and matter painting, through which he tried to express the motion of life unrestricted by the shape of a form. It is one of the goals of this thesis to show how Kantor tried to grasp Process, matter and chance in his paintings from 1955 to 1962 and to critically assess the practical decisions he implemented in oil painting.

When formulating the theory behind his *Informel* painting period (1955-1962),⁷ Kantor came across similar problems to those that have driven this doctoral research. Of the ontological concerns discussed by Kantor in his extensive writings,⁸ the two most significant ones for this thesis are the inability of form to express Process accordingly, and the uncertainties one might have regarding the tensions between reality and illusion. Both considerations represent my own and Kantor's shared engagements in a contemplative attempt to find a solution for such dilemmas practically, on the canvas.

Vitality, the cultural framework of Kantor's art also resonates with my own, given our shared country of origin, and as a Polish artist, investigating Kantor as a Polish matter painter has been especially significant for my own practice. Notably, Polish matter painting developed very differently from its western counterpart, due to the prolonged period of intense social and political crisis in Poland spanning World War II and its aftermath. During this time, Polish artists were unable to access freely the new ideas that were developing in the so-called western art world. Importantly, the challenges experienced by those who

⁷ As suggested and dated by Krzysztof Pleśniarowicz (Kantor 2005a: 579). Although Kantor still painted paintings after 1962 that can be considered 'matter paintings', they are described more correctly as *emballages* (a different idea than the *informel*, focused on wrapping objects to protect what is important and accent the mystery of their being). Through *emballages*, from 1963 Kantor tried to 'conquer the monotony of *informel* [...]' (Stangret 2006: 54).

⁸ I am referring here especially to a three-volume collection of texts, selected and edited by Krzysztof Pleśniarowicz (2004-2005).

practiced art during the hardships of World War II, especially if they tried to rebel against Nazi German restrictions on artistic expression, were extreme and potentially life-threatening. In this respect, artists like Kantor had to fight not only for their own creative development, but also face very real and physical persecution and constantly present threats. In addition, if they survived the war, as he did, they had to come to terms with its countless atrocities.

Kantor lived and worked in Kraków, which was occupied by Nazi Germany between 1939 and 1945. There, artistic and cultural life, looked at more broadly, was very much controlled and sanctioned by the invaders. In 1939 the NSDAP Office of Racial Policy (*Rassenpolitisches Amt der NSDAP*) issued a secret report, which stated that Polish people were unable to feel and experience higher culture, and that all the 'imitative attempts' by the Poles to camouflage their own artistic indolence were to be prevented by any means necessary (Grochowina 2014: 95). Joseph Goebbels, the German Minister of Propaganda, claimed that Polish people were not worthy of higher culture (Madajczyk 1970: 127-129) and therefore in the new Europe there was no place for them (Głębocki 1985: 33). Consequently, Goebbels tried officially to eliminate any activity from all social structures that could pass for artistic, patriotic or intellectual. In 1940, the Department of Propaganda (*Hauptabteilung Propaganda*) forbade any such enterprises. The last legal Polish theatre performance in Kraków's Juliusz Słowacki Theatre under the German occupation took place in November 1939 (Czocher 2005: 232). Any unsanctioned artistic endeavours from 1940 onwards were subject to the death penalty (Kłossowicz 1991: 10). Drawing on my research into these specific circumstances, in this thesis the work of Polish matter painters, such as Bronisław Kierzkowski, Jerzy Tchorzewski and Rajmund Ziemiński, is considered in order to broaden even further the idea of matter understanding, to enrich the research and to

demonstrate the distinct cultural context shared between my own work and that of the selected painters.

Reaching beyond the accepted, static interpretation of matter, Kantor's thought associated matter with a Process (Kantor 2005a: 15-16), understood as a movement within the material substance of the universe itself. This allowed him to overcome the limitations of form, particularly when expressing Process through the collaborative medium of theatre and performance. However, much to his disappointment, he was unable to do this in oil painting.⁹ As Kantor's ideas resonate strongly with my own quest for artistic expression, in this thesis I chart an intellectual journey in which I resume Kantor's search for the expression of Process and ways of overcoming the limitations of form in oil painting. I investigate further possibilities for generating a holistic approach to matter in oil painting, understood as constant movement and as a Process rather than a given, static structure. These possibilities arise by extending the horizon of thought beyond the field of art criticism and by placing matter in the context of both the physical properties of the universe and metaphysical exposition. Based on philosophical interpretations of quantum mechanics, as typified by the work of Fritjof Capra, David Bohm, Bernard d'Espagnat and Michał Heller, and in juxtaposition to metaphysical thought that seeks to explain the tensions between reality and illusion, as discussed by Meister Eckhart and D.T. Suzuki, this thesis offers a distinctive approach to the art of oil painting in general. It also offers a new critical analysis of Kantor's *Informel* and matter painting, and of his dialectical thought regarding matter, Process, reality and illusion. Kantor's artistic practice incorporated a variety of media, and

⁹ Polish art historian Lech Stangret (2006: 45) claims that Kantor himself noticed that the operation of form negation in his *Informel* paintings, despite his attempts, became some sort of form on a canvas, thus missing the primary axiom of not locking matter (Process) within a form.

although I reference this diverse approach where relevant, my thesis focuses primarily on painting. Aware that every art form has its own, distinctive paradigms and tools for addressing Process, I deliberately chose oil painting, which is not only the form I am using myself as an artist, but also an area where Process itself has not yet, in my view, been successfully expressed.¹⁰ It is the limitations and possibilities of Process in painting that are the source of the many paradoxes and hurdles I seek to address through my theory of Multi-Meta-Form.

The key research question underpinning this thesis is how to express the Process itself on canvas, without inevitably arriving at the stage of a final form, the static eventual product that presents only a single composition of elements, without capturing a myriad of alternatives, possibilities and probabilities. In order to address this question, and following the lines of Kantor's thinking, I have investigated both the concept of matter in relation to Process and the notion of the human perception of material reality. Indeed, it appears that Process, understood as a continuous movement between probability and necessity, a flux of reality that always *is* but never *becomes*, remains the subject of theoretical and practical considerations and has over the years continued to create similar dilemmas for physicists and mystics to those that once troubled Kantor.¹¹ The very idea of capturing Process in a fixed form is a paradox, which has hitherto remained unresolved in oil painting. As argued in the present thesis, as well as by Bernard d'Espagnat (2006: 218), D.T. Suzuki (2000, 2002, 2010), Fritjof Capra (1992), David Bohm (2002, 2004, 2010) and others, the sources of this

¹⁰ Although, as I will show, Kantor did attempt to further his investigation by applying a cross-media approach, in doing so, he moved away towards *emballage* in painting, and thus, never did achieve his goal of expressing moving process on canvas, though he did continue his work in the theatre.

¹¹ This is the very reason why I have chosen the philosophers and scholars mentioned above. I will argue later in this thesis how, using the knowledge acquired from different curriculums about Process, matter and the illusion–reality tension, that by studying and implementing some of the conclusions of the aforementioned thinkers, I was able to apply them to MMF, escaping the paradox of Necessary Form.

paradox are the cognitive limitations of the human mind. These limitations prompt the observer to define the total perceived reality and to conceptualize it as a form, locked in one's own rigid programming, which itself is inherent in culture, ideology, religion, social background or individual development. For heuristic purposes, the form observed on the canvas through these inevitable cognitive features of the human mind, I call the 'Necessary Form'. Thus, as soon as an observer is involved,¹² be it the painter themselves or the spectator, the Process as such is stopped, captured, finalised and thus stripped of the very attributes that constitute it, speaking metaphysically. Speaking physically, the observer, while not creating the reality, derives and modifies (d'Espagnat 2006: 153) it out of the probable to the single outcome one sees on the canvas, thus reducing the Process to this single picture.

Therefore, the solution to the dilemma of 'Necessary Form' proposed in this thesis is the elimination of the observer not only from the perception of art, but also from the stages of its very creation. I argue that earlier attempts to express the unrestricted brushstroke in painting through the use of techniques such as self-blindfolding, as in the work of John Tsoi (Gargan 2011), have failed to solve the problem, in spite of the artist's assertions. His approach has served only to eliminate observation partially from the act of creation and has still led to the production of an observable object of art. Conversely, the artistic program of Multi-Meta-Form, proposed in this thesis, represents a radical move towards a new epistemology of oil painting. The program outlined here, which constitutes my original contribution to knowledge, proposes that any physical ontology of oil painting that fails to

¹² Here I refer to the consciousness of the mind's relation to the observed, grasped through the prism of its own programming, and effected in 'calculations and deliberations' (Suzuki 2010: 110) that stop the flow of thoughts, making them subordinate to those considerations. I will return to this point in Chapter 3.

express Process as a movement between probabilities and tendencies must be abandoned. Furthermore, mental or spiritual attachment to the discriminatory judgment one makes about the painting must also be nullified for the Process to be grasped not *a priori* or *a posteriori*, but *in situ*. It is through implementing the Multi-Meta-Form program that, freed from the limitations imposed by the observer who 'consumes', to use Kantor's phrasing, the exhibited painting by folding its probabilities into a single and fragmentary still form, the painting becomes an event, or rather an approach to the multiple possibilities of form. It becomes the ungraspable Meta form, reflecting the intricacies of the physical and mental realities. This epistemological uncertainty that the painting has become, the always-successive movement, serves as an insight into the most objective of events – an open proposition, which I have called Multi-Meta-Form (MMF).

The main question of this thesis is therefore how, if at all, is it possible to truly present Process on canvas? Kantor and his journey to explore matter and Process are part of this question and the starting point for this thesis. Kantor's own admission of failure in answering this question is the point of departure for my concept of MMF (page 54 of this thesis). In order to continue the journey that ended for Kantor, at least on canvas – for he was conscious that at the very moment he exposed his work to the viewer, the fluidity of Process ended – my research has led me to explore philosophy, physics and mysticism. These theoretical views, perhaps not very obvious for art criticism, and apparently disparate fields of knowledge, delivered a possible solution and the answer. Thus, while Kantor's quest is one aspect of my working hypothesis, these other fields, namely mysticism and physics, are instrumental in leading the conceptual way to the solution of the problem, to its conclusion, formulated by myself as MMF. In light of the conceptual connection between these seemingly unrelated fields of knowledge described above, Chapter one expands on

my thesis question and explores the commonalities and difficulties faced by both myself and Kantor. Chapters two and three guide the reader through the research process and findings that have led to the conclusion – the practical part culminating in the MMF. The questions presented in this thesis, which have created a conceptual basis for my research, derive from my interest in and practice of painting and from my personal quest to mark the limits of the painter's ability to express Process itself. This has led me to believe that, in order to truly conceptualize what Process can be on a canvas, whereby Process is understood as a successive motion as defined¹³ by the physicist Henry P. Stapp (2011: 91-92) and similarly by Kantor himself (Kantor 2005a: 545),¹⁴ its continuity has to be maintained rather than stopped in the act of finalizing the painting. Consequently, since my research begins where Kantor ended his journey, with *informel* and matter painting, the question I have posed for my own practice concerns the critical insights offered into the expression of metaphysical Process on the canvas. This question arises when examining Kantor's ideas on the negation of illusion and the accentuation of reality as seen in his art¹⁵ and then juxtaposing his ideas to the metaphysical thought developed by Meister Eckhart and D.T. Suzuki.¹⁶ They, like Kantor, understood the shattering of illusion as detachment from a fragmentary world view, whereby the metaphysical Process is ended by the conditioned mind of the observer. This has led me to a consideration of the next research question, which concerns the birth of Multi-Meta-Form.¹⁷ I ask whether a painting that is not seen as an object, but rather is

¹³ Stapp has explained process as a continuum of possibilities.

¹⁴ Kantor used the word 'process' corresponding to Stapp's definition, when he noted that in process 'It's about such p r o c e e d i n g s and such s t r u c t u r e, that n e v e r e n d s and could never end [...]' (Kantor 2005a: 546).

¹⁵ Here, I refer particularly to the following elements in Kantor's work in his own terms: poor object idea, reality of the lowest rank, underground theatre (1944) and *Informel* period (painting and theatre).

¹⁶ 'Particular Why' in Eckhartian thought and 'mind stoppage' in Suzuki's philosophy, which I will return to in Chapter 3.

¹⁷ See the definition below.

conceptualised as a metaphysical exercise in detachment from 'Necessary Form', can be considered a Process, a never-closed form existing in all its probabilities at once, and even as an introspective event or approach? On the pragmatic side of the problem, then, I ask *how* such a painting can be created. How can this detachment be enabled, how can the Process be expressed on the canvas without particular directives regarding artistic vision? Can a painting thus created exist not only as an expression of Process but also as a by-product of overcoming the self? This has led me to develop the *Dimitto* painting technique. *Dimitto*, which in Latin translates as 'letting go', is a method of painting designed to detach the painter from the 'Necessary Form' and from the stopping of the Process, be it physical (observation) or metaphysical (illusion of still reality). Finally, I have posed the following question: can such a painting – which as mentioned I call Multi-Meta Form, since it represents the multiplicity of possibilities of form, the metaphysical level of interpretation *and* the essence of the on-going process of life – stand in opposition to the intellectualisation, defragmentation and discrimination of form? As such, can it offer the answer to Kantor's unresolved problem?

Since this is a practice-based PhD, the questions must be addressed on the canvas, and the solution must also work on it. Practice as research became the natural response to the theoretical investigation, in which I have focused on concepts such as process, matter, probability, illusion of stillness and form. Thus, the conceptual and theoretical considerations were combined with the practice-based research, and the two became a dialogical process. The answer this thesis provides to the problem of Process expression in oil painting is the idea of Multi-Meta-Form and its practical rendering on the canvas. In order not to compromise the many forms that exist on the painting simultaneously in

superposition,¹⁸ I have had to develop a technique and praxis that will allow such a state to be maintained.

Thus, as already indicated, I have invented the Dimitto technique. Dimitto, which will be discussed further in Chapter 3, is a way of painting, or rather a means to paint without attaching oneself to the outcome of the brushstroke on the canvas. While blindfolded, one detaches oneself from the notion of what should be on a canvas and learns to accept what is. Introspectively conceptualized, Dimitto is a way to be at peace with reality that one does not have control over. It manifests itself in one's denial of what one wants to be on the canvas from what simply is, without the corrections. One can achieve this by blindfolding oneself while painting. This method functions as an introspective exercise in not stopping (or troubling) the mind with a particular shape and form, but allowing the brushstroke, colour and form to *be* as they come. Dimitto does not focus on anything but flows from thought to thought without adhering to a fixed notion that tries to find its expression on the canvas. When the painting is completed in Dimitto, the canvas is painted over or taken out of its frame and thrown away, so a new canvas may replace it, without it being acknowledged at all. No finished form, existing as a marketable object or an 'art item', is a product of painting using this technique.

Working through the demands of Dimitto, I have reached the conclusion that, as the final doctoral practice 'presentation', I can only show photographs and videos of previous paintings, because in line with the demands of Dimitto, the paintings have been destroyed

¹⁸ The French physicist and philosopher Bernard d'Espagnat explains superposition (2006: 104) without mathematical rigour as a mixture of different developing possibilities for a physical system. In this thesis I will use the word 'superposition' to describe a state that a painting is in (several form possibilities co-existing simultaneously on the canvas) before the measurement. When measurement or observation is performed on physical reality, wave function collapses, meaning that from the probable, one 'answer' is derived out of the observer-nature interaction (Stapp: 2014).

or painted over. I started to paint using Dimitto seven years ago, in fact prior to my PhD research. This practice has involved me blindfolding myself in a room without natural light, and with the windows boarded up with fibreboard. My intention has been to paint a *portrait of a Process* that will maintain the successiveness of multi-form. Nevertheless, the psychological, physical and logistic difficulties arose at once, momentarily, and have persisted. However, gradually, after years of hardship, both physical and psychological,¹⁹ my brushstroke has become more fluent, more aimless and less self-willing, finally beginning to be no different than the one who is delivering it.²⁰ Step by step, in my practice I have introduced ideas and solutions to the problem of Process expression and observer elimination from the creation of a painting. These ideas can be listed as follows: always paint in the dark, without light to illuminate the work; always paint wearing an eye-mask, even when mixing colors; always use random oil paints so that there is no 'design' by simple choice; always buy oils through someone else (preferably someone without knowledge of painting), so your palette stays even more random; always use personal storage for your paints and brushes, such as a modified worker's vest, to hold the paints on your body, so while blindfolded in the dark room you can still paint without the need to move away from the canvas; and always have the brushes, a jar of turpentine and linseed oil in your hand, so you do not need to look for them in the dark. Paint through the pain of not seeing the form. Paint through the pain of not being able to 'fix' forms and color relations, according to the principle 'Paint always when the time has come to paint, never when you yearn it; if those

¹⁹ The pain of not been able to see what I have painted and to 'fix' what is on the canvas in accordance with my awareness of painting was excruciating in the first two years of this practice, later unhinging me in the middle of this research.

²⁰ 'Becoming the brushstroke' I understand as the primordial instinct of a painter that acts through the brushwork, without computing or estimating anything at all on the canvas. A gesture freed from the notion of a 'good brushstroke' is the result.

two collide, good; if they do not, also good'. The discussion of concepts explored in the written thesis, like process, matter, illusion and attachment, that eventually allowed me to paint the final painting – the true objective of this PhD – serves as a cogitation towards the above mentioned decisions and practices. Importantly, the distinction has been made between the Process and a process, two terms I am using in this thesis. The Process, as captured on my final painting, is the essence of the present thesis. When I refer to 'the Process', I mean the successive motion that never stops in its perpetual becoming, but also its expression, called *portrait of a Process* through MMF. The word 'process', by contrast, is used here with reference to the way in which I arrived at my conclusion, both practical through a number of oil paintings done in Dimitto to videos and sketches, and the theoretical research together with the methodology. These two meanings are, of course related, but in no way interchangeable.

It took me years of practice in order to arrive intellectually at the idea of painting without binding thoughts and to be able, spiritually, to do so. The very idea of not being bound by my own painterly conditioning was the initial springboard for the investigation presented below. As will be shown in Chapter 3, I have decided that I will present the videos of my progress, which have captured the initial stages of the blindfolded painting, to demonstrate successively the complete spectrum of my technique, the psychological and spiritual methods I undertook to develop it further, and finally, to show the brushstroke I have used on the last painting, *The portrait of a Process*. Given the integrity of the research question, I could not show a video of myself painting it, as I have done with my previous paintings that were painted as an exercise in detachment, as the video and the viewer would disrupt the multi-form of the final painting.

Thus, the practical aspect of the thesis is explained not by showing the physical oil paintings I have painted, for these were taken out of their frames and destroyed or painted over in order to maximize detachment from the final form, but the videos and pictures that have become the documentation of my own journey and that feature my brushstroke freed from the self-imposed prison of the single form. All the practical decisions made over the course of this PhD have derived from my research and reflections concerning the concepts of process, matter, illusion and detachment, as explored in the following chapters. Thus, in order to appreciate the final stage fully, it is imperative to understand the theory underpinning the practical manifestation. Therefore, the written part of this thesis explains why I have invented Dimitto, what exactly constitutes MMF, and how these concepts help to bring Process expression into oil painting without referring to the Necessary Form.

Original contribution to knowledge

My primary contribution to knowledge relates particularly to the practical component of my thesis, which is the invention of the Multi-Meta-Form (MMF). Through it, the expression of the Process on the canvas is always in the act of transformation and change, without naive depictions of movement or outcomes predicated on the manipulation of physical matter that are presented to the onlooker *a posteriori*, that is, *after* but not *in statu* of the process of change that is happening on the canvas. I thus propose a solution to the practical problem of how to express Process on the canvas, without reducing the painting to 'Necessary Form'. This can be achieved through the elimination of the observer from the whole process of expression, that is, not only from the receiving spectrum of the oil painting

in which the viewer is contemplating the painting through the prism of their own predispositions, but also from the creative activity, understood as the artist's intention to recreate on the canvas their *aprioristic* visions and assumptions.

The written part of this thesis charts and analyses my artistic journey of exploration, through which I have arrived at a solution. It also shows why this proposed solution, called MMF, can be applied to solve the problem troubling Kantor's *Informel* paintings, namely his attempt to capture the movement, energy and life of matter on the canvas, without stumbling upon a 'formed matter paradox'.²¹ Fundamentally, the problem consisted of a contradiction between the static nature of form and Kantor's dynamic ideas. In the present thesis, I propose to conceive of MMF not as oil painting in its strict sense,²² but as an approach, or a proposition, that one takes towards the ever-moving possibility of expressing form on the canvas that was never observed.

The final canvas, *the portrait of a Process*, was wrapped in a heavy-duty thick foil,

²¹ This term is explained in more detail later on. For now, it sufficient to say that Kantor was aware that what should not be formed (matter) on canvas forms itself on it through the observation of the finished painting, presented in the galleries for consumption, as Kantor himself noted (Kantor 2005a: 544).

²² 'Normal' observation would reduce the multi-form on the canvas from all the forms that have existed before the observation to a single one, stopping thus the physical and metaphysical Process. This idea is strongly related to philosophical interpretations of quantum mechanics that I will explore through this thesis.



Fig. 1. *Portrait of a Process* 2017, oil on canvas 180 x 160 cm.

in order to prevent the painting from becoming a final form in the act of observation and thus preserving it in the state of an ever-flowing Process, motion and transition. Without the act of observation there is no certainty of form, so in the MMF the process of art moves without being interrupted by the restrictions resulting from the limitations of the human being's cognitive apparatus.

Thus, in using the notions of MMF and Dimittonism, I argue that in order to express the probabilistic and ever-flowing nature of the Process satisfactorily, the observability of Necessary Form on canvas must be denied. From this theoretical perspective, I establish that what is observed on a canvas is formalized, intellectualized, compared, divided, separated, discriminated, defragmented and judged. In my practice, I posit MMF as a possible solution to the problem of imposing judgements on the forms, shapes and colours that are rooted in one's predispositions to enjoy, or alternatively dislike, a painting. I am trying to liberate the observer from the necessity of so-called still reality, through an event filled with the possibility of form and unhampered by Necessary Form. Although the full

impact or resolution of the thesis question can ultimately be only considered on canvas, the written thesis aims to outline its roots in research.

My methodological approach of practice-as-research is grounded in my contextual research into Tadeusz Kantor's *Informel* painting and theatre. I engage with the scholarship of Lech Stangret, who writes on Kantor's paintings; Martin Paul Leach, who situates Kantor's work in its philosophical and metaphysical contexts; and Krzysztof Miklaszewski, the 'bearer' of Kantor's theories, actor of Cricot2 and his long-time friend. More broadly, I also investigate the *Informel* art of the 1950s and 1960s in Poland, as described by Piotr Majewski, in order to situate Kantor's *Informel* work within the context of Polish matter painting, which took the form of the presentation of matter on the canvas that referred to nothing except the 'materiality' of the used substance, or the depiction of matter-microscopic structures.

Importantly, my original contribution to this aspect of the field (the MMF idea conceptualized through matter and illusion/reality research) arises through my own investigations into matter as seen from the philosophical and quantum mechanical perspective.²³ This allows the 'formed matter paradox' to be answered and the very concept of matter, as used in art, to be structured anew, thus allowing the physical side of the Process to be expressed on the canvas. This approach is in accord with the views of modern physics, which will be considered as part of my argument. To clarify the meaning of Process from a metaphysical point of view, which, together with the explanation of physical Process, merges into my MMF idea, I have collided Kantor's concept of illusion negation, as expressed in his 'poor object' and 'reality of the lowest rank' theories, with the mystical

²³ Since, as I will argue later on, investigation of the term 'matter' can explain the Process that dwells in the structures of what we call informally material reality.

thought concerning attachment and illusion awareness. Here, I concentrated my research on the work of Meister Eckhart and D.T. Suzuki, who have investigated the same themes as Kantor, namely the illusion–reality ratio. Although agreeing in general about the human being’s struggle within the dichotomy between real and illusionary, the two scholars have reached a different set of practical conclusions to that of Kantor. Thus, I offer both a new reading of Kantor’s ‘project’ and a new set of practices that engage critically with, but also depart from, his original thought.

Through the *Informel*, Kantor tried to communicate the essence of life, which, for him, was a formless change. What was formed on the canvas from formless matter became the shape that Kantor fought against. However, as he himself admitted in numerous writings, which will be discussed subsequently, the contradiction finally defeated him. To solve the problem presented by Kantor, I propose to move beyond the dualism of mind and matter. I postulate that matter, presented as such on the canvas, is subject to judgement and discrimination by intellectual cognitive processes, through which it loses its primary attribute, namely its potentiality, and is thus transformed into necessity, its dynamic nature destroyed by the act of observation. Through the practical part of this PhD, I continue the search for Process and the resolution of problems that Kantor himself left unresolved. I propose an MMF that climaxes in a *portrait of a Process* finally to express the Process on the canvas physically and metaphysically without being bound by the restrictions of the Necessary Form.

Definitions of key terms

Process Expression

Process expression in painting has been a matter of theory and practice, examined meticulously by Tadeusz Kantor throughout his *Informel* and matter painting period (1955-1962), but arguably it has remained unresolved.²⁴ Capturing the Process in any form becomes self-contradictory: as soon as the Process is captured, whether by the painter or the audience (the observer), it becomes conceptualised, it becomes a Necessary Form. Through this conceptualisation, the flow of reality is no longer in motion, but instead is trapped by the observer and their predisposed way of interacting with what is observed. The judgement passed on the observed binds and attaches the person judging to self-creating concepts through which the real is then understood. For the expression of Process to remain free of fixed concepts, it needs to retain its state of probability – it cannot be captured, nor can it be recorded in traditional ways.

Through my research, I have identified three main principles that need to be met in order to achieve this:

1. The observer (with his or her set of predispositions) must be eliminated from the formulation of the painting (the painter) and its reception (the audience).

²⁴ Kantor is my main example of a painter who tried to resolve the problem of Process, understood as a constant movement, through the medium of oil painting. Kantor recognized that a painting 'locked within the perfect ending' (Kantor 2005a: 16) does not express the movement satisfactorily and sought to resolve this problem by going into the realm of matter itself. He succeeded in theatre, but as I will argue in Chapter 2, in the realm of painting he failed to fully achieve his goals.

2. The probabilistic character of matter, which exists on the canvas in superposition of all forms, has to be maintained.
3. Detachment from *a priori*, illusionary axioms of the Necessary Form must be implemented in the technique of painting.

Multi-Meta-Form

Multi-Meta-Form (MMF) is a form in constant probability and possibility of all the forms which matter (oil paint in this case) might assume. It is an event of perpetual development between unknown and known form, a form in superposition, in which every form is a succession of 'F'; $F_1, F_2, F_3, F_4, F_5...F_n$ (where 'n' stands for a natural limit to that form) and is happening simultaneously.

I use the concept of MMF as an indication of potentiality, opposed to the *status quo* of a Necessary Form. As such, rather than presenting some final and set form to the viewer, I propose a work-in-forming, one that has not yet been observed, not even by the painter themselves. Therefore, such work is not yet shaped into some final form, created by comparing the observed form with one's own conditioning and programming. In other words, MMF is not a form that is plucked from space, invented by one's mind and treated as an autonomous entity. It is not separate from everything else one is experiencing at that moment, for in itself, it is a negation of the current concept that stops the movement and freezes the physical²⁵ Process on the canvas.

²⁵ Importantly, physical in the context of MMF means *physical potentiality*. When I state that forms on the canvas are *being* or existing simultaneously, this do not mean that I am arguing for an actual *physical* plenitude of different paintings. What I am referring to is the known fact that in quantum mechanics (d'Espagnat 2006: 178) such a 'state' (superposition) refers to a symbolic portrayal of information about a given physical system

MMF can never become a Necessary Form; therefore, the Process in MMF serves the human being as a work of art that cannot be judged with the predispositions one might have towards the form one encounters by the very act of observation. In this sense, MMF combats intellectual discrimination (or intellectualized preconceptions), as well as (the) potential rejection or acceptance, that might follow the act of observation. It tries to emancipate the mind from the bondage of comparison. In eliminating this subjective act from the process of art creation, it is the only proposition, and an objective one.

One's predisposed intellect may ask questions, but it cannot answer them outside its own limitations. Eliminating this stage, MMF is thus free from the pre-conceptualized forms one is so accustomed to in the process of art production and consumption, during which adherence to these pre-conceptions is a means to please one's own ego by satisfying one's own aesthetic need. The intellectualization and defragmentation of MMF are thus impossible. Therefore, the participant is completely filled with form that dwells within them, without exercising favouritism towards some specific, 'precise' form that is fixed and pre-conceived by the intellect. MMF is an event of the total possibility of form; one cannot possess or desire this art as an object, but only *immerse oneself* within the Process of its becoming. It is a dynamically exercised interior event, not an art object, as it would be if one had the possibility to observe it, to look at the canvas beyond its material container.

(before the observation, the system 'state' is in $a + b$ simultaneously, for example). MMF therefore refers to a painting that *conceptually* is in all physical states simultaneously. MMF belongs to the physical manifestation of the probable, but only symbolically. This is why I often call MMF an approach or internal event, not 'physically a different bunch of paintings on one canvas'.

Detachment

This concept expresses disunion from every form of seeking and wanting anything, a state of emptiness of desirable will, of notions, judgements, ideas and yearnings. Drawing, to some degree, on psychoanalytical formulations (Fromm 2013) relating to theories of the mind and to discourses rooted in mysticism, detachment might be explained as a state one 'dissolves' oneself in, after the perpetually desire-driven 'false consciousness' and the 'conscious unconsciousness'²⁶ oppose each other. My art practice reaches metaphysically towards an articulation of the Process in this context by means of an asceticism achieved by being blindfolded while painting and painting in total darkness so as not to guide my desires towards the figments of my imagination. It might thus be argued that addictive self-preoccupation is nullified, enabling an unobstructed mind, freed from the veil of illusions that tend to stop the Process of reality flow by clinging to shapes and forms abstracted from the flux one calls real. One's identity, through detachment, is dissolved. Detachment, as I envisage and enact it in my art practice, is a process of enabling the ego-less, progressive abandonment of those desires that are fixed on *aprioristic* painting vision, in contrast to those desires that are fixed on being content with whatever is on the canvas. Thus, detachment can be defined as an on-going act of introspection, where self-congratulations are nullified and self-emptying affirmed. In oil painting, I associate detachment with the exercise of painting without a 'way', where the repetitive movement of the hand and the

²⁶ Erich Fromm, in his book written together with D.T. Suzuki, explains that 'false consciousness' is a state of being half-asleep, i.e. in which one is only aware of reality as his or her goals of survival and possessing things are concerns. No deeper wisdom or self-reflection is present in 'false consciousness'. The opposite is the case with 'conscious unconsciousness', a state of being in touch with reality, i.e. being free from the illusions that one's mind has created (Fromm, Suzuki 1993: 108-109).

mark of the brushstroke 'are' for no reason at all, but must nevertheless be understood through contradiction.

Detachment in relation to my PhD practice

My chosen practice-as-research methodology enables an inter-webbing of relevant critical and theoretical approaches with my working processes and activities as a painter, alongside my contextual and academic research. These strands of scholarship resonate in relation to each other, thus allowing me to address the research questions posed in the thesis, partly by engaging with oil painting framed as a practice of metaphysical and physical hardship. I undertake Dimittonism, understood as painting without destination, through repetition used as a technique allowing me to cut myself off from the dichotomy of my own judgement, which always imposes itself on my intellect, especially *if* I look at the painting in a 'having' rather than 'being' mode.²⁷ In this sense, the finished product – the oil painting – is just a by-product of my self-capitulation²⁸ as framed by the mystical thought of Meister Eckhart and D.T. Suzuki, and it also serves as the expression of a spiritual process happening between whatever is presented on the canvas and the observer's relation to it. A syncretic theory of MMF is the only viable way of achieving detachment in the practice of oil painting or any other form of art: deprived of practice, art holds no validity whatsoever, and the expression of Process in painting is stopped. I further extend these ideas into my practice by engaging with related research into the writings of David Bohm, Fritjof Capra, Bernard

²⁷ As theorized by Erich Fromm (2013).

²⁸ Implied as detachment from my desires to have (in this case the outcome on the canvas that suits my needs of expression) rather than to be (content with whatever).

d'Espagnat, Michał Heller, Søren Kierkegaard, Ladislaus Boros, Paul Tillich, Erich Fromm, Werner Heisenberg and Erwin Schrödinger, among others. Indeed, exploring the relationship between the work of this group of scholars and the thought of Kantor, forms the key conceptual framework for my PhD. I have chosen these scholars and practitioners because I believe that, no matter what their cultural, religious or historical context, much of their work shares a common theme, namely the investigation of those illusions that constrain the human being from fully becoming and the Process, be it physical or metaphysical, from flowing.

Necessary Form

Necessary Form is a shape born in the human mind through the process of cognition which is fixed on separating, intellectualizing, measuring, comparing and judging the encountered form, whether this form, as abstracted from reality by the mind, is enjoyed or not.

Necessary Form does not exist in things themselves, but instead is evoked by the observer, who experiences the form only through his or her predispositions and is bound to follow his or her own guidance regarding the form (unhappy when form does not please the predispositions and happy when it does). Therefore, Necessary Form does not 'dwell' in the shape or form and by no means is it also the particular object. It exists as a necessity convened in one's mind, through which the creative act of observation consisting in the dynamic relationship of the knower and the known, is limited. One has no chance to discover the open possibilities, but is instead focused and recognises only what the predispositions impose on one's being. Necessary Form is here a concept similar to that of 'relative knowledge' in Buddhism (Capra 1992: 34, William F. Powell 1986: 9-11), referring

to holding on to the illusions of a still and defragmented reality. However, I am using it in relation to oil painting and shapes or forms that are already present on the canvas or on another surface. I developed this term through my research because it best describes the cognitive limitations of the observer's predispositions, the inner urge and necessity to see nature as a succession of forms. It allows me to define the attachment and judgement one might have towards the observed and conceptualized work of painting,

In the very act of cognition, the observer critiques the perceived form on the canvas proportionately and symmetrically to his or her aesthetic reach and intellectual dexterity, essential for one's enjoyment of art. Necessary Form is thus a form that already *is* present, it is fixed on the canvas and therefore it has become an object of comparison ruled by the pre-set standards one is disposed to have. If one desires to achieve some standard and thus one is in a 'having' mode, a Necessary Form is a final shape ready to be determined in proportion to one's programming, without any possibility, probability or tendency for any other outcome than the one conditioned by the ultimate approval or disapproval of that form. Therefore, all forms captured on a canvas become a Necessary Form *if* and when they are filtered through the observer's *predisposed* mind. The forms undergo conditioning and programming, through which one makes that particular form one's own and clings to new-born notions about it, irrespective of whether this comparison is affirmative or negative. The antithetical term to Necessary Form would be a Process.

Reality

It would go far beyond the scope of the present thesis to discuss in depth the ontological and epistemological aspects of reality. Thus, without engaging in the philosophical debate, in this thesis I will be using terminology such as ‘reality’, ‘ultimate reality’ and ‘insight into the structures of reality’. When I use ‘reality’, I mean the empirical reality *for us* in a broad physical sense. I am not postulating for or against either ‘radical realism’ (the expression means that thing-in-itself exists independently of the human mind, as in Einstein’s view, for example), transcendental idealism (a theory stating that one has no access to the thing-in-itself, as proclaimed by Kant) nor solipsism (a view in which *cogito* creates reality and the thing-in-itself does not exist, what does exist, however, is just a sensation of empirical data, as Hume writes). In this thesis, I subscribe to arguments from quantum mechanics as well as from philosophy, for objective idealism or open realism, but providing a detailed discussion of such philosophical ideas goes beyond the scope of this work. I will only mention here that the latter idea is similar to Platonism, but with the difference that Platonism holds that ideals can be accessed through the mind and be known to it, whereas open realism postulates that the real (thing-in-itself independent of human mind) is hidden and incomprehensible, but nonetheless ‘there’ – i.e. something in nature says ‘no’ even when faced with seemingly sound theoretical presumptions (d’Espagnat 2006: 240). Through painting, science and mysticism one can experience this real (d’Espagnat 2006: 455), but only through the lenses of limited human cognitive abilities (d’Espagnat 2006: 302). The final term I will use is: ‘ultimate reality’. I will use this expression, which is derived from Buddhist teachings, but also modified by myself, to describe a view which suggests that, in ‘reality’, phenomena exist only in relation to our own experience (as humans in general and

individuals in particular), *but those phenomena are based on something real, which does not depend on human mind alone*. Painting, science and mysticism glimpse this 'real', which in itself is unintelligible. The amalgamation of the self with this 'real' through the glimpses is referred to in this thesis as 'ultimate reality' or 'ultimate knowledge'. The 'ultimate reality' idea²⁹ demands no dichotomy between the self and phenomena. Reality is therefore a result of self-consciousness experiencing the absolute without redundant mediations and accretions, which is not directly communicable to others. It is important to note that one cannot take this mind-dependent reality and reality-dependent mind for solipsism (radical idealism) of any kind. In this sense, *reality is experienced* when the predispositions of a conditioned mind are dropped.

I use the word 'reality' in those contexts, both physical (empirical reality for us) and metaphysical (ultimate reality), as they are easily distinguishable in the writings. However, both these contexts are unified by the idea of the Process. In both of them, the reality is understood as a flux, as an *active relation* of human beings to this fluctuation.

²⁹ In this sense, phenomena can exist only through the mind, and the mind can exist only through phenomena. It is meaningless to speak of any separation between the self and phenomena, because, according to Mahayana Buddhist belief (as well as certain physicists like Bohr, Capra, Bohm and the Copenhagen School in general [d'Espagnat 1989: 58] who argue exactly the same point, but with the help of quantum mechanics), they are co-dependent in the absolute unity.

Thesis Structure

This thesis consists of two interlinked components: one practical, the other theoretical. The practical submission is a combination of documentation material and an 'event', demonstrating the artist's journey to free himself from the limitations imposed by his own mind, and leading to the ultimate negation of the Necessary Form to culminate in the Multi-Meta-Form, thus allowing the Process to be finally expressed on the canvas. The documentation will include photographs of a number of my oil paintings, some of which have been removed from their frames and/or painted over, as well as videos showing my struggle to achieve detachment from the Necessary Form through the practice of Dimitto. Moreover, a video of the 'brushwork' recorded from the tip of the paintbrush as a document of MMF painting methodology will be available at the viva. The written component of the thesis represents an outline of my conceptual and theoretical frameworks and my methodology, and it is where I engage critically with my research questions and contexts, exploring the inter-relationships between the crucial terms I am using, the theories on which I am drawing and the dialectics embedded in my practical work. The text consists of logically connected parts, reflecting the aforementioned research questions. Thus, the introduction presents the overview of my theory, the Multi-Meta-Form, which, as I argue in this thesis, is an answer to the Process expression in oil painting. In addition, the key terms are defined and the thesis structure, methodology and dialectics are also stated.

Chapter One deals with the problem of transition. In this chapter, I analyse two art objects from Tadeusz Kantor's *Informel* period. I try to show the most evocative and important issues raised by Kantor during that period through my consideration of these

objects, and to explore whether the emergent concepts can help in my own formulation of MMF. In this chapter, I divide the idea of Process into two components in order to enable me to focus on its physical and metaphysical aspects respectively, as well as to explain my understanding of Process on physical and metaphysical grounds.

Chapter Two continues building on the ideas introduced previously, but zooms in and explores one key aspect through which the physical Process can be understood: the idea of matter. As this is also a dominant theme in Kantor's *Informel* period, this chapter deals with Kantor's, and also other Polish matter painters', comprehension of what matter is. It examines how, by confronting the artist's understanding with theories of matter drawn from the fields of philosophy and quantum mechanics, one can find new ways of seeing matter in oil painting. Extrapolating from this, I consider the impact of these new ways of seeing on my own practice-led research.

In Chapter Three, I return to the metaphysical dimensions of the explanation and exploration of the Process. Here, Tadeusz Kantor's second principal concept, namely that of the illusion–reality ratio, is juxtaposed with the works of two scholars and mystics, Meister Eckhart and D.T. Suzuki. These works are concerned with the same dilemma faced by Kantor when investigating this division. The aim of this chapter is to develop a new reading of metaphysical expressions of the Process, which is relevant specifically in relation to oil painting. Moreover, Chapter Three offers an explanation and non-theoretical solution to the problem of the Process expression on canvas. The technique (*Dimitto*) and practical decisions regarding its implementations in MMF are explained and defended. The position of the observer, so important in philosophical interpretations of quantum mechanics and the metaphysics of D.T. Suzuki, are also included.

In my conclusion to the thesis, I reflect on the various aspects of my practice-led methodology in order to present a comprehensive definition of the Process in oil painting that is in accord with my research into Kantor's practice, and that also concerns the concepts of matter, the illusion–reality ratio and the observer. I also reflect on ways forward for the practice I have been developing and offer thoughts concerning its possible evolution.

CHAPTER ONE

Tadeusz Kantor's *Informel*, and the theoretical beginnings of MMF.

Tadeusz Kantor's *Informel* period, dated 1955 to 1962,³⁰ was characterized by his ongoing investigation into the concept of matter in art, which he pursued not only in his painting, but also in his theatrical practice. The key, for me, to examining Kantor's *Informel* is an understanding of his idea of 'the poor object', as this particular idea incorporates such notions as: matter, probability, chance, reality, illusion and life.

In 1944, Kantor wrote that a 'poor object' is abstracted from all traces of emotional or aesthetical value (Kantor 2004: 415), therefore, its meaning is to have no meaning. It is what it is, not even a symbol, that directs the recipient of that object onto some other signification beyond itself, making an object analogous to the essence it is pointing to (Tillich 2009: 47). The 'bare bones' nature of the materiality of an object and its 'nakedness' is where the *informel* substratum of Kantor's theoretical thought lies. The alive and honest matter of the 'poor object' can be seen as a starting point for all Kantor's later concepts of matter cogitation. The old cartwheel from the performance '*The return of Odysseus*' (1944) is but one example of the object's materiality.

³⁰ As suggested and dated by Krzysztof Pleśniarowicz (Kantor 2005a: 579).



Fig. 2. Scenography replica as used by Kantor in 'The return of Odysseus', shown in Kraków's National Museum in 2011.

Photo: <https://culturenook.wordpress.com/2011/07/19/galeria-zywa-tadeusz-kantor-pokoj-odysa/#more-2711>

The 'poor object' was for Kantor the radical end of functionality: it is through this end that the object evolved closer to becoming a work of art. The end of the utility of the 'poor object', as seen in its decomposing material state, shows the rawness of its creation on the one hand, and its ultimate fate on the other: to end itself through the very reason that created its meaning. The essence of its being is therefore to consume itself by its own purpose. The core of the 'poor object's' existence is thus the consumption of itself through the activity of usefulness.

Through the idea of the 'poor object', Kantor deflated art from its pompous decorative role, emphasizing the 'real' that loomed out of the illusionary structure (Czerni 2015: 77) of painting and theatrical performance (Kantor 2005a: 128). The 'poor object' was used by Kantor in the performance *'Return of Odysseus' (Powrót Odysa)* based on the play by the *fin-de-siècle* Polish painter and playwright, Stanisław Wyspiański. It was performed under the banner of the Experimental Underground Theatre (Eksperymentalny Teatr Podziemny) in June 1944, in Kraków. The objects on the stage were not just mock-ups of real

things or props, nor an illusion of the original matter, but, as Kantor himself claimed (Kantor 2004: 416), *the reality* itself. The objects in question (a cannon, a megaphone, a dirty old cartwheel), with all their functionality and the burden of real artefacts, such as the same weight, same colour, same traces of daily utilization, employed in *'Return of Odysseus'*, were simply anti-aesthetic, meaning incompatible with the mimetic form of representational theatre dogmas, and thus more 'real'. The concept of the 'poor object', as explained by Kantor (Kantor 2005a: 129), anticipated the idea of the 'Reality of the Lowest Rank' (Realność Najniższej Rangi), as manifested in 1961 in the Krzysztofory Gallery in Kraków, where Kantor staged the play *'Country House'* (*W małym dworku*) by Stanisław Ignacy Witkiewicz, a painter, philosopher and playwright whose notion of 'pure form' was of particular interest to him (Leach 2012a: 25-26). Based upon the 'poor object' theory and findings of *Informel* painting, and enriched by the concept of matter consideration, in the 1960s Kantor created Cricot 2, the 'INFORMEL theatre', setting the philosophical and artistic foundations for performances of *'Dead class'* of 1975 (*Umarła klasa*) and *'Wielopole, Wielopole'* of 1980. INFORMEL theatre was the first attempt to translate the ideas of matter, motion, form antagonism and chance to the theatre (Stangret 2006: 39). The notion of INFORMEL theatre used by Kantor³¹ was for him the essence of coincidence. Through the formless transitions, actors and costumes became '[...]"object-less matter"'. The spectacle turns into an independent process (without engineering and execution) [...]' (Jan Kłossowicz 1991: 38)

The amalgamation of Kantor's painting ideas with theatrical practice that occurred during his *Informel* period will be investigated here using two objects of art, one an *Informel*

³¹ Encapsulated in the thought that the performance, actors' bodies, costumes and their expressions had to be mashed, squeezed, blended and combined with each other, as the results of the probable events occurrences.

painting from 1961, *Peinture*, the other the wardrobe from the performance of 'Country House' (*Informel* Theatre). This will serve as a framework to explain how Kantor's understandings of 'object' and 'matter' function in his *Informel* art.



Fig. 3. Tadeusz Kantor (1915-1990)

Peinture

signed, dated and inscribed 'Kantor XI 61 ' (lower right)

oil, enamel and mixed-media collage on canvas

76 7/8 x 51 1/8 in. (194.7 x 129.8 cm.)

Painted in November 1961

The colour range of *Peinture* (1961) is restricted. Kantor confined himself to a very small range of primary colour power, reducing its intensity to just a few spots of cadmium red, lemon yellow and cobalt blue. 'Dirty' variations of these colours accompany them and adhere to the decisive marks, elevating the strength of these points further. Kantor calmly goes from tone to tone: cobalt blue turns into cerulean, which in turn slips easily into sèvres blue at the top of the painting. Balancing this effusion of blues at the bottom of the canvas, Kantor proposes, very intimately, light pastel grey with a touch of cobalt blue. An aggressive, singular brushstroke of light turquoise blending into reddish-grey further strengthens the colour composition effortlessly (resonating with the dot of bright red on the right side of the canvas). The composition is accompanied by the light cadmium yellow that takes on the role of bedrock holding the patches of yellow in check, but also giving them their place and apparent independence in the wholeness of the canvas. Finally, the black island, or rather a whole continent of black substance that tries to impose itself on the entire structure, dividing and conquering its subjects with its proportion and determination, taking its rightful place at the centre of the colouristic composition. An almost complementary light turquoise forms the background to the inflated and ruling characteristic of black masses. Black colour appoints its territory explicitly, while the white-like turquoise tries to calm the spreading black with an ocean of tranquillity, piercing its heart with the roughly laid yellow and blue/grey lake at the centre of the mainland. The genesis of *Peinture's* 1961 colouristic composition, as with all Kantor's *Informel* paintings, can be traced back to the Kapist or K.P.

movement³² (*Kapiści*) and their understanding of colour. This is characterised by a usage of nature, only as an excuse for colour composition. Here the shade and the colour itself finish dramatically with a mimetic and scrupulous documentation of nature, which is built upon the tensions and relationships of one tone to another.

The Polish *Informel* painting scene sprang out of the Kapists' post-impressionist palette, but in Poland, the *Informel's* brutal and vigorous brushstrokes were soothed by a controlled and light painting gesture (Kępińska 1981: 46). The colouristic contrast in *Peinture* of 1961 is strong but not intrusive, where black – the colour of Polish culture, as Kantor once remarked (Pleśniarowicz 1990: 98) – holds the painting together, adding an almost gravitational power to all other tones. The painting gesture, the brushstroke, dripping and accidental, almost sculpts itself on the foundations of its predecessor, uniting with it and creating even more evident structures of paint. Kantor chiselled himself in the texture of the painting matter – it is he who sculpts with each stroke, where the randomness of the gesture does not imitate anything, but is everything. In moulding, shaping, engraving and squeezing the paint in the process of auto-creational repetition, Kantor becomes a personification of the Greek god of creative craftsmanship Hephaestus, who, by giving materiality its proper shape, defined himself by his work.

When socio-realistic tendencies loosened their grip on the Polish art scene after the death of Joseph Stalin in 1953, Kantor went for a second time to Paris, in May 1955 (his first trip took place in 1946). There, he visited various galleries and museums and was mostly drawn to the abstract paintings of Georges Mathieu, Jean Fautrier, Hans Hartung and

³² Polish art critic Andrzej Osęka wrote in 1974, on the fiftieth anniversary of the inception of the Kapists movement, that all Polish matter and Tachist painters had been saturated by the Kapists' range of colours (*Kultura* [weekly newspaper], 1974, nr 51/52).

Jackson Pollock (Stangret 2006: 27). In Paris, Kantor concluded that his own ideas about painting came close to the spirit of the *Informel* (Kłossowicz 1991: 13). Kantor's previous metaphorical painting style came to its natural end when it was confronted with the *Informel* ideas growing inside him. The recording of internal space and its expression on the canvas, the rawness of the un-deterministic movement and action of painting itself, fascinated Kantor deeply, as did, most of all, the concept of matter. In *Peinture* (1961) one can experience Kantor's almost physical presence in the painting by witnessing the moulding of layers of paint, the malleable and live tissue of matter, the tumultuously emerging secretions of life that spew out of the wound of Kantor's inner spirit, a testament to his internal struggle. As an irrepressible element of reality; matter was for Kantor a definitive break away from constructivism, since, in his understanding, matter was in constant flux (Kantor 2005a: 189) and did not surrender to the ideas of planning, intentionality or the rigorous development of forms. The dripping technique that Kantor used in his *Informel* painting and the spontaneous gesture captured by the paint hitting the surface of the canvas can be observed especially clearly in *Peinture* of 1961 on account of the main, black, island-shaped form and its 'coastline'. Tectonic forces of matter create graben, horsts and canyons of geological magnitude squeezed within the dimensions of the painting frame. The randomness of the action confirms unconstrained motion as the method of communication through which Kantor tries to express the continual movement of matter, but, as Alicja Kępińska (Kępińska 1981: 54) and Lech Stangret (Stangret 2006: 30) both suggest, he also attempts to tame its disarrayed formlessness. Kantor took inspiration for this impulsive action of the coincidental gesture from Pollock's idea of a painting not restricted by the paintbrush or the 'beforehand' artistic vision. Instead, the painting was formed through immanent matter activity, initiated by the gesture, in which, as Kantor

believed, in contradiction to Pollock, coincidence and chance largely play the part of the creative force.

Following this trope in Kantor's philosophy of art, we can explore the meaning of the coincidental by calling here on the work of the philosopher and scientist Michał Heller, who argued³³ that one can speak of 'chance' or 'coincidence' when the beforehand probability of the occurrence of an event is < 1 (since for it to be $= 1$ means that the event is certain to happen), which coincides with a similar definition suggested by the physicist Roger Penrose (Penrose 1989: 237). Chance therefore refers to a random happening, in which the identical cause can produce different outcomes. The American physicist William G. Pollard illustrates this point:

The case which is really typical of science is one in which the laws of nature first define several possible states which a system under consideration may occupy in full conformance to them, and, secondly, in which they determine the probabilities that in individual instances the system will choose each of those several possible states in response to a given set of forces or causes acting upon it. Thus, the typical situation is an indeterminate one involving alternatives and latitude. (Pollard 1958: 60)

Pollard later adds:

For if it is answerable in terms of natural causes, even in principle, then there would not be a probability for the event in question but instead certainty. Probability applies to indeterminate events. (Pollard 1958: 93)

³³ Michał Heller addressed the listeners in Tarnów, Poland, at a conference recorded by pomniksmolensk (YouTube channel) (2013) *Ks. prof. M. Heller: Czy można przewidzieć przyszłość?*, Tarnów, 5.03.2013.

But how do these statements relate to painting? In painting, chance and the accidental came to be consciously and fully explored in the twentieth century by such artists as Max Ernst, with his *frottage* technique and later with *raclage* (Ruhrberg 2000: 140), as well as in the aforementioned action painting of Jackson Pollock, although admittedly Pollock claimed that he was in control of the drippings and with it the whole act of action painting (Bertasio 2008: 53). In Poland, Ryszard Winiarski, 'who made his paintings almost completely subordinate to his authorial method of generating a random painting' (Jernajczyk 2013: 12), explored the idea of chance on the canvas. Although such artists as Kantor, Ernst, Pollock and Winiarski were touching upon the unpredictable element of the accidental, most of the time the conclusion³⁴ was presented as the 'after effect',³⁴ rather than as a small chance of occurrence in *the now*, as described by Heller.³⁵ As such, this chance became intelligible and certain to the observer who is confronted with these 'happened' paintings. The idea of chance, therefore, at least in these cases, can only be contemplated and understood intellectually, as a *priori* assumptions made by the artist with a visible effect on the canvas. However, the fact that these paintings already exist, that they have happened, is no longer a chance but a fact, even though the accidental played a role in forming them. The philosopher John Lucas, similarly to Heller, proclaims (Lucas: 1970: 3-4) that within the probability spectrum a clear 'yes'/'no' is impossible to determine: a valid judgement is thus only partially possible when one talks about probability. It appears, therefore, that probability must be uncertain. *What* is less important than *how* one is presenting the

³⁴ Gesture in Pollock's action painting is accidental, even though he claimed he denied the accidental as such, the paintings themselves having happened with visible and concrete marks of paint on the canvas.

³⁵ Michał Heller, *ibid.*

potentialities. I would agree with Kantor that, through the accidental, life itself barges into the world of art, showing reality to be a statistical concept rather than a deterministic one [Pollard 2015: 50]). Arguably, however, following Heller and Penrose's definition of chance (understood as *probability* to occur), paintings shown in galleries as representative of the effect the accidental has on art creation are missing the point of the accidental and probable. The onlooker experiences *the exposure* or Hume's *sensation* that the accidental had on the painting, and, monumental though it can be, in this thesis I argue that probability can be expressed 'in the act' through Multi-Meta-Form more adequately. I claim that MMF remains in the act of probability because it is a form in all its probabilities at once, because the observation has never 'derived' any one form from its many possible forms that coexist on the canvas, as it is covered in heavy-duty foil and thrown out of the observer's reach. Kantor investigated the accidental because he saw it as one of the core elements of reality³⁶ and tried to probe this idea through the demonstration of random paint splatters. But the basic element of chance (a *probability* to be) is, in most cases, not preserved by painters,³⁷ perhaps excepting the effect of random paint splatters in painting, since the objective of presentation as a finished form, which guides the creation of these paintings, must make them inevitable in the end, thus nullifying their *probability to be*. Nevertheless, in the accidental, Kantor saw the intrusion of life into deterministic and imitative art creation (Stangret 2006: 30) finalized in the fracture of the illusionary nature of a performance or painting.

³⁶ Heller also points to a similar assumption to Kantor's about the probabilistic nature of reality (<http://www.gazetakrakowska.pl/artykul/694751,michal-heller-przypadek-to-czysta-matematyka,id,t.html>).

³⁷ Ideas of chance, probability or possibility have been explored individually, of course, but not in the sense of the successive constant indeterministic motions of forms not derived by *any* observer (creator and receiver) as I am using it.

In 1957 Kantor wrote the script for and performed in the film *Watch out, painting!* (*Uwaga – malarstwo*), in which he explored the effect of randomness, created by dipping the shaft of a whip in paint and marking glass with the strokes of that whip, or painting on a spinning drum (Stangret 2006: 34). The Polish painter and mathematician Jakub Jernajczyk suggested two interpretations of the accidental (Jernajczyk 2013: 17), the first being a subjective one, where the events appear to us to be random because we do not have enough data, brainpower and/or a potent enough apparatus to be able to calculate the outcome. The second such interpretation is an objective one, where the accidental is an immanent part of nature and cannot be reduced to purely deterministic values, as is seen in quantum mechanics, where one cannot talk about the precise speed *and* precise location of the electron at the same time, but can only determine the probability (i.e. the relative likelihood or chance) of the occurrence of that electron. For Kantor, the ideas of movement, matter and reality can be linked to the second interpretation, since it is through it that the invasion of the actual and real into the illusionary fiction of the drama or painting is possible. Kantor's aforementioned painting experiment, with the whip soaked in paint and then used to produce a randomised brushstroke, might serve as an example of the probable, which is a random event. In its later presentation, however (as a finished painting with visible marks), the painting loses its in-deterministic character because it is already a concrete reality on the canvas without the space to move into a different configuration. And as I claim in this thesis, chance, movement, probability and Process have to be captured in the act of 'jumping' into the next state, never after the transition (the marks of the whip on the canvas in Kantor's case).

Both mysticism, as represented by the thought of Meister Eckhart and D.T. Suzuki, and quantum mechanics, as described by Fritjof Capra, David Bohm, Henry Stapp and

Werner Heisenberg, agree in their view that dynamism and constant flux are at the very core of reality. In fact, they ARE the foundation of matter, to be further discussed in Chapter 2.³⁸ In line with this interpretation of reality, Kantor understood matter as an internal, unshaped substance, the congealed and moving magma of the amorphous, which he tried to present in *Peinture* of 1961. Here, the painting invokes connotations of the living, active organism, where the bodily functions and actions are more substantial than its inevitable future: the death of the organism in the case of the body, or the death of the painting, on the wall of the gallery, since, due to the influence of American action painting (Cockcroft 2000: 153), Kantor was more interested in the process of art creation than in the finished art object.

Through movement, bodily presence and coincidence, Kantor tried to express life on the canvas, a reality in flux.³⁹ At the turn of the 1950s and 1960s, Kantor was using not only oil paint,⁴⁰ but also – in order to boost the malleability of the painting mass – rotting wood, roots, cloth and polyvinyl chloride (Stangret 2006: 33). In doing so, he draws closer to matter painting, especially to its second⁴¹ tendencies as described by Kępińska, which are characterized by combining paint with real material substances such as sand, dust, cinder, rags, cloth, metal plates, plaster and so on, to specify the structural qualities of these

³⁸ By investigating Kantor's matter idea, therefore, as expressed in his work, one can show how and why Kantor is correct in theory, but failed in practice on the canvas. My analysis of Kantor's *Informel* paintings through the prism of the two theoretical approaches to matter (philosophy/mysticism and quantum mechanics) enables me to shed more light on his contribution to presenting and interpreting matter in painting (Chapters 2 and 3).

³⁹ The creative artistic process, like painting, was for Kantor reduced in the act of 'art consumption' by the masses. But Process itself, 'the great mystery of creation', as Kantor calls it, was for him the main assertion of the human (Kantor 1984: 16).

⁴⁰ Jan Cybis, one of the main representatives of the Kapist movement, humorously said that Kantor was sticking pine tree bark to the canvas because oil paint was hard to come by in communist Poland in the 1960s (Cybis 1980: 176).

⁴¹ The first tendency in matter painting, according to Alicja Kępińska, is to give the observer the sensation of a tissue (Kępińska 1981: 51).

mergers, and as such, to show how matter painting is anti-aesthetic in its conception (Kępińska 1981: 51-52).

Explorations of the possibilities of matter, understood as a separate quality in painting, go back as far as seventy years, to Jean Dubuffet and his idea of *l'art brut*. In 1945 Dubuffet started to include glass, dust, mud and grit in his paintings, consciously revealing matter itself as the Real, which annexes the illusionary painting space. Besides Dubuffet, other artists such as Jean Fautrier, Alberto Burri, Bram Bogart, Antoni Tàpies and Beert de Leew, to name but a few, also sought to clarify their own formulas for matter painting. Matter painting was a very individual manner of expression because the style itself was not encumbered by any aesthetic doctrines (Majewski 2006). In Polish painting, matter, initially treated as the equivalent of paint itself in Tachisme, was later replaced by non-painting substances to give unrestrained access to physical fashioning and to broaden the reach of the new techniques that shaped the plasticity of the material. In 1957 the program of Lublin's The Castle Group (Grupa Zamek) was fixated on finding the 'painting equivalent of matter' (Majewski 2006: 72), while Bronisław Kierzkowski introduced texture compositions using plaster and metal interpenetrating each other, creating a painting not far from being a relief (Kisielewska and Markowski 2013: 442) without the use of paints.

Polish matter painting developed differently from its western European counterpart, with divergent ethics at its core, because, on the one hand, it was seeking emancipation from the restrictive status quo, while on the other hand its ethics belligerently challenged socialist imperatives.⁴² Reality, shaped in the aftermath of World War II, and the existential

⁴² The philosopher Józef Tischner describes the socialism that the USSR forced on Poland by stripping human beings from their primary, communal function: 'The evil (of the socialist regime in Poland) relied on the system of interpersonal dealings, in which the human had to become the enemy of the human to survive' (Tischner 2015: 20).

crisis of the nation that could no longer be expressed through mimetic treatment, especially in painting, demanded a fresh examination. The consideration of matter in painting in general, and in Polish matter painting in particular, is the endeavour not only to express movement and flux without the unnecessary mediation of the illusionary effect, it is also, in its essence, an attempt to raise questions regarding the unfragmented nature of reality.

Matter and *Informel* painters, including Kantor, did not have a collective programme, but instead tried to decipher the mysteries of the material in a more personal way. It is therefore problematic to pinpoint the exact boundaries within which 'matter painting' functions as an artistic technique (Majewski 2006: 45). One can, however, indicate what is common in matter painting as the central formation of a phenomenon in the art world. Majewski thus writes: 'The most explicit and conspicuous feature of this art movement is the exposition of painting matter or non-painting matter in the very work' (Majewski 2006: 45). The surface thus created portrays not just the substance but also the responsiveness and character of the artist. This exposition of the particular matter presents the painter as an individual who is so earnestly intense that the moulded material artists choose to work with becomes a testimony to their internal mucus, dredged from the abyss of the self onto the canvas. Kantor's thought operated on similar principles, thus he writes:

All the time I am talking about the PAINTING. The painting that was becoming some sort of 'secretion' of my 'INTERIORITY'.

The painting, not the 'e x p o s i t i o n', but almost the biological matter of my own organism. (Kantor 2005a: 15)

Kantor's *Peinture* from 1961 incorporates some of the Kapists' 'carnival motley' into its arsenal, in which external manifestations of Kantor's internality are sculpted in matter. They are expressed with a colourist's tonal spectacle and embed the shivering tissue of substance to accent an almost organic structure of the painting. Through colour, Kantor gives rhythm to the excretion of himself. Through indeterministic painting gestures and the accidental nature of *Informel*, he discovers the possibility and probability of being through an almost physical presence in the shaped matter and tries to conquer the illusion of stillness. *Peinture* from 1961 is a landscape of the living person, an old, degraded, poor person, the poor object. Through the 'poor object', matter and coincidence, Kantor tries to penetrate the crux of reality, which is where awareness lies.

The concept of *Informel* was introduced in 1929 by the French philosopher Georges Bataille as an idea contradictory to the term 'form' and thus created as an antithesis to the aesthetic canon of the 1920s (Bataille 1985: 31). This concept was to open up new ways of exploring the organic stuff of reality's matter (Majewski 2006). Formless substance resembles nothing in particular and is therefore incompatible with any concept (Bois and Krauss 1997: 51). It can therefore be moulded, shaped, squeezed and mashed up into a totally new being without the previous ontological imports. The old wardrobe pictured below (Fig. 4) was used as the performance space in a theatrical production directed by Kantor in 1961.



Fig. 4. Tadeusz Kantor (1915-1990), Photo taken from 'Wirtualne Muzeum Małopolski';

<http://muzea.malopolska.pl/obiekty/-/a/26999/1116314>

Szafa, Interior Imaginacji ('The Wardrobe, Interior of Imagination'), reconstruction (the original work was lost),

1981. Theatre artefact from the play 'Country House' (*W małym dworku*) 1961, 11th January. The picture also

shows a mannequin in a black uniform and black hat. In the play itself, Kantor used real actors.

Wood, metal, fabrics, latex

Height: 219 cm. / length: 137 cm. / width: 200 cm.

This production was based on a play written by Stanisław Ignacy Witkiewicz entitled 'Country House' (*W Małym Dworku*), and the wardrobe can be understood as an example of formless substance in the terms that have been outlined above.

In *Informel* theatre, Kantor used 'forms not constructed artificially, but ones that emerge from the natural processes [...]' (Kantor 2004: 430). The processes Kantor is referring to are ontological concepts that make matter its subject, transforming, degrading and corroding the once-new materiality. Time that decomposes matter is but one example of such an idea. Forms that have been squeezed out of relationship with natural processes are old, dirty, unusable, stale, weathered and musty. For Kantor the wardrobe was not only a form masticated by time, but also an embodiment of imagination that could be activated while the wardrobe is closed. Old wooden planks that are dirty, used, decomposed, on the verge of being *just* the material they were shaped out of, virtually without their expected functionality, are now assembled together and bound in the collective purpose of *being* the wardrobe. The material naturalism that reduces the object to its material structures with its dirty colour invite the observer to be the occupant of the same plane of reality, because the wardrobe is not intended to be read as a symbol, but only as a wardrobe. Krystyna Czerni regarded the wardrobe in '*Country House*' to be the 'most important requisite and simultaneously the main space of the drama' (Czerni 2015: 83), because of how the wardrobe squeezed the wholeness of the act out of materiality.

Kantor's production of '*Country House*' took place in 1961 in the Krzysztofory gallery, Kraków. Kantor 'compressed' his ensemble of actors, requiring them to exchange the familiar and conventional end-on staging configuration characteristic of purpose-built

theatres in the city, for the constrained space of a small wardrobe⁴³ (height: 219 cm, length: 137 cm, width: 200 cm), where they hung from the coat hangers, in a state of turbulent intertwining with each other expressed through the tangled relationships between their bodies and their costumes, creating one vibrating mass of motion in its deteriorating discharge. Theoretically, as I based my knowledge of this performance on Kantor's own writings and other scholars' descriptions of it (Stangret 2006; 40), the wardrobe has to trans-mutate itself into the art object, as the idea of 'poor objects' demands. The little country house referred to in the play's title and text now takes the form of a wardrobe, becoming the actor's whole universe. Through its claustrophobic nature, the wardrobe excretes the liquid-like matter of its content. The space in which the play unfolded was, for Kantor, a metaphorical limbo between reality *on* the stage (drama, art, memory) and *around* the stage, antithetical to 'place-sanctuary', where the viewer could just observe the event, without direct involvement. The wardrobe was the extension of '*Return of Odysseus*' from 1944 and the idea of the 'poor room', in which the agreed upon scenographic conventions were expelled from the stage, making the 'story of a space creating random events' more relevant than the fiction of the drama, because the space transformed matter naturally, while the drama might find this difficult (the drama Kantor fought against, sanctioned space, scripted to be just that). The wardrobe, an object and at the same time the whole universe of '*In the Little Village House*' – the universe in which Kantor placed actors, dressed in easily deteriorated costumes and hung like garments beside bags – became a medium for probability, a continuation of *Informel* painting experiments, now functioning in a theatrical environment. The wriggling matter of the bags, the actor's bodies, their costumes, created

⁴³ One has to remember that the image shown above is a photo of a reconstructed wardrobe. The one used by Kantor had similar dimensions.

an entanglement of substances that challenged the construction of established theatrical practice (Stangret 2006: 40). In mixing matter into what he referred to as BIO-OBJECTS, Kantor expressed his vision of life, seen as an ever-flowing process, which he promulgated through *Informel* after the post-Stalin October thaw (Kantor 2005a: 579). The wardrobe in which the BIO-OBJECTS were herded replaced the country house as the whole scene, which for Kantor was 'the saintly mysterium of illusion [...]' (Kantor 2004: 421), and it demanded that the actors be shaped brutally by the narrow space in which they were now placed.

Kantor expropriated the real and annexed it. This annexation of reality, harnessed to penetrate the illusion of mere schematics and assigned theatrical space, functions, according to Krzysztof Pleśniarowicz, in three spheres of Kantor's theatre, the first being the theatrical scene chosen to be performed outside of the scene or even the actual theatre building itself. The private rooms where *'Balladyna'* (1943) and *'Return of Odysseus'* (1944) were performed in Kraków under the banner of underground theatre,⁴⁴ or the wardrobe, which, as already mentioned, was used by Kantor in several of his plays, are spaces that belong to this category (Pleśniarowicz 1990: 28). The second sphere was the equational relationship between the actor and the 'poor object', in which the object became an actor and the actor an object. As Aldona Skibianka-Lickel has pointed out (Skibianka-Lickel 1995: 117), the actor-being is in ultimate relation to the object-being, where the one defines the other and vice versa. Kantor himself has claimed that in his theatre an object has its own living organs: the actors themselves (Kantor 2004: 397). The story was pushed to the background, where, on the main podium, objects melded with actors, creating new 'life' from their combined existence. Finally, the third sphere, according to Pleśniarowicz, is the

⁴⁴ These were all private rooms, not theatrical spaces. Szewska Street 21/5 (*Balladyna*) and Grabowskiego 3 Street (*Return of Odysseus*) in Kraków served as stages.

autonomy of the theatre, reached by Kantor by separating the drama (the text the play was based on) from the scenic action (what was actually happening on the stage). This tension between what was happening on the stage and the text itself, strained yet further by the actuality of the place Kantor chose to 'display' the drama, further intensified the separation of text and action. The 'poor room' from *'Return of Odysseus'* or the wardrobe was where the real space, detached from the usual theatrical surroundings, was sustained by the annexation of reality to explore meticulously the idea of concrete place. The space gave birth to forms and occurrences because it was the entity capable of hatching those forms and occurrences, not because a play text said so. The wardrobe from the 1961 performance *'Country House'* built up, generated and produced events which were only freed by Kantor. The anti-illusionary character of the wardrobe evolved into surroundings capable of emanating and exhaling random events, accidental occurrences and probable disturbances. And, as Pleśniarowicz writes, 'The essential thing was not what was supposed to be depicted, but the manner of depiction, not the *dead* portrayal of events someone once wrote about, but the living vision of the ever-present artist' (Pleśniarowicz 1990: 33). The wardrobe – used, dirty, wobbly, on the verge of becoming trash – is presented as a real object, but not any 'found' object, similar to Duchamp's ready-mades. Kantor did not want to step over the boundaries of art (Kłossowicz 1991:37) but to select an object which, through its functionality and usage, almost negated its being. Such an object, in Kantor's dialectics, comes into the sphere of art and takes its rightful place as an object of art coequal with other such objects. The costumes that the Cricot 2 actors wore in *'Country House'* have a similar function. To exhibit the *'Informel'* concept, the materiality of the actor's bodies and their costumes merged together into one BIO-OBJECT. As defined by Kantor, BIO-Object was a merger between actor '[...] in a way, g e n e t i c a l l y joined'

(Kantor 2004: 397) with the object, which extracted the amorphous ('informelle') or mechanical tissue. Actors were incapacitated by the object, and OBJECT was nothing without the 'BIO' of the actor, being a testimony to the integrated mutualistic relationship in symbiosis. Body-matter and costume-matter interpenetrate each other, melt, amalgamate and finally coagulate into a new, indescribable mass, as Kantor's INFORMEL theatre principle required. Kantor used hangers, prosthetics, bags, suitcases and paper, among other materials, implanted or placed on the actor's bodies to express the process that the costume undergoes through being used, leading to its eventual degradation to worthlessness. The example of Kantor's ideas about *Informel* painting expanded on the materiality of the actor/costume amalgamation that modulate each other's matter, as can be seen in the concept art created to 'Country House'. Drawn in 1960 in ink and tempera on paper, and measuring 38.3 x 21 cm., the sketch shows what for Kantor was important in the formless moulding ability of the BIO-OBJECTS, namely the co-creative and interdependent relationship between the actor and the costume that ends decisively with the traditional costume position as a historical representation (Kantor 2004: 429).



Fig. 5. Tadeusz Kantor 1960, *Człowiek zawieszony*, ink, tempera,

38,3 x 21 cm. Exhibition from the collection of Łódź Museum.

For Kantor, the fate of the costume was to shape and mould the actor, where object-actor and object-costume complement each other and exist as one form: '[...] deprived of subjectivity, their metaphorical names and characteristics do not determine their real scenic function (according to the unchangeable principle of *probability*), where the action is rooted outside of acting, although it is (the BIO-OBJECT) animated by the actor's bodies...'

(Pleśniarowicz 1990: 34).

Thus, the actor's own body matter was coequal with that of the costume, not through the actor's deterioration, but the object's exaltation. Kantor's *Informel* theatre costumes deformed the actor and presented matter as a substance in ongoing movement to

'repeat the actor's forms', as Kantor wrote in *'Meeting with Dürer's Rhino'* (*'Spotkanie z Nosorożcem Dürera'*) (Kantor 2005a: 296). The rags, tatters, junk and dishcloths that the actors wore were on the verge of becoming formless matter, just as, in a parallel and symbiotic process, the human body will soon enough become an amorphous substance in the grave. Both are on the brink of transition into pure formless being. Through the alteration of form into pure matter, Kantor was able to express what, for him, had the ultimate meaning: the reality (Flader-Rzeszowska 2015: 110). An example of this matter-morphing BIO-OBJECT can be understood when looking at *'ANEATYZACYJNA MACHINE'*, constructed from real parts (chairs): it is only through chairs that the machine can function as anti-illusionary. The utilitarian element of the machine that makes the parts of its being real (chairs) was dismissed through the connection the chairs now share. Moved by the loud engine, the machine is real only in its parts, which make the whole.

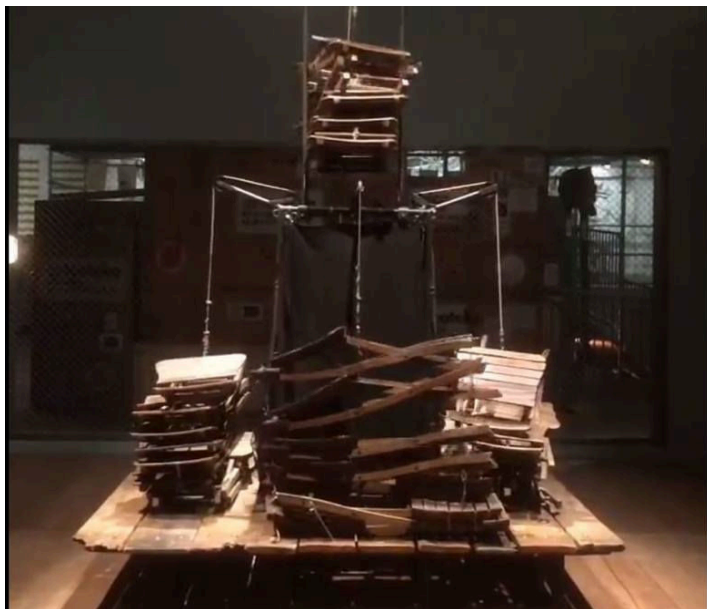


Fig. 6. Tadeusz Kantor, MASZYNA ANEATYZACYJNA, re-construction from 1963, metal, wooden chairs. Photo: www.dzienniklodzki.pl, 2015.

The wardrobe thus remodels human and non-human matter according to no particular scheme, nothing deterministic or arranged. Everything within the wardrobe spectrum – the actors, costumes, space and script – were treated and presented by Kantor as matter in motion (Miklaszewski 1992: 9), all subject to change, shaping, moulding, pressing, mashing and squeezing. The script in Kantor's *Informel* theatre was designed to evoke the entropic miasma of the spectacle: disarrayed coincidences, absurdities and spontaneities were to end the constructivism of traditional script. From Kantor's perspective, in traditional or naturalistic theatre, the text was conventionally used as a basis from which action could be elicited on the stage (2005a: 240). The staged action was pre-determined by the textual narrative, an approach that Kantor firmly rejected, as outlined in his ZERO theatre manifesto (Kantor 2005a: 233). For Kantor the emancipation of a play's script from the live action itself was equated with the negation of formulaic structures underpinning deterministic play scripts that burdened the theatre. In *informel* theatre, therefore, even when it comes to text, Kantor tried to communicate movement, Process and probability through the 'poor object' idea, the modulation of matter and the doctrine of 'reality of the lowest rank', derived from the postulate of form negation. That is how the artist tried to 'discover the unknown side of the REALITY, its elementary state: MATTER' (Kantor 2005a: 189).

Two aspects of Kantor's *Informel* period (1955-1962) are particularly relevant for the present thesis: that of matter, explained as an ever-moving life-synonymous substance; and that of the negation of illusion, articulated through ideas of the 'poor object' and 'reality of the lowest rank'. Both relate to Process itself. Kantor borrowed and modified Bruno

Schulz's⁴⁵ interpretation of 'degraded reality' and developed it into 'reality of the lowest rank'. Schulz's definition of degraded reality treats substance as a vehicle of constant fermentation, change and germination. In Schulz's thought, degraded reality was never restricted by the shape of an object, but was always diffusing out of its borders, creating a network of interconnections (Miklaszewski 1992: 35). Kantor's consideration of matter, understood as a discharge of the inner being that is synonymous with life itself and that changes constantly through physical interaction, owes its core to Schulz's discoveries. In the notion of the 'poor object', we find the culmination of a tension between reality and illusion. The quintessence of Kantor's philosophy lies within the used, degraded matter of the real object. The Process of becoming is eminent in the doctrine of the 'poor object'. Thus, in Kantor's *Informel* dialectic, form was equal to illusion, and, as he claimed in his notes to the 'Zero Theatre' idea (Kantor 2005a: 247), the shaping, squeezing, moulding and mashing of matter, which Kantor saw as formless in his *informel* period, became no different than forming it because the end state solidifies. Thus, Kantor has finally noticed that such physical matter-modelling activities must themselves become merely an illusion. In agreement with this statement, I pick this idea up where Kantor left it on the canvas and develop it further into MMF, thus solving the quandary that he himself was unable to solve through the medium of oil painting.

Kantor gave up *Informel* because he felt it was too mass-produced and its postulates no longer valid. He felt that its time was up. Moreover, he gave up the idea of the expression of Process in *Informel* painting, since, as a result of the formed matter paradox, he could see no escape from it on the canvas (Kantor 2005a: 19, 225). Having explored

⁴⁵ Bruno Schulz, (July 12, 1892–November 19, 1942), a Polish-Jewish writer and artist, who was one of Kantor's main inspirations.

Kantor's *Informel* ideas as incorporated in the oil painting *Peinture*, alongside their manifestation in the wardrobe ('poor object') from the play *'Country House'*, both from 1961, I am able to conclude that the central problematic of Kantor's *Informel*⁴⁶ regarding the connections between illusion and reality bears a striking resemblance to the deliberations of certain philosophers, mystics and scholars, namely Meister Eckhart and D.T. Suzuki, which will be investigated in Chapter Three. Moreover, since concepts of matter, process, probability and the illusion of fragmented reality have also been extensively explored by physicists and philosophers such as David Bohm, Fritjof Capra and Michał Heller, I have included an investigation of their works as part of my research into MMF. This multidisciplinary approach, rather than restricting research to the single field of art criticism, allows me to broaden my understanding of the aforementioned conceptualizations, supporting my argument with findings from philosophy and physics, two disciplines which provide insights into the problems of matter, observer, reality and the Process.

In the coming chapters, I will focus on the two main elements of Kantor's *Informel* period,⁴⁷ namely the idea of matter and illusion versus reality antagonism, to explore possible answers to the fundamental question of this thesis: can 'the Process' be manifested in painting without resorting to Necessary Form. The concepts of chance, observer, motion and the conflict of reality with illusion and matter are key to understanding Process in oil painting and its expression on the canvas. Kantor, through his studies of the 'poor object', 'reality of the lowest rank', matter and coincidence, tried to get to the bottom of reality and

⁴⁶ Such as matter, probability, process, continuity and unmasking of the illusionary predispositions we tend to have through awareness of reality and human contact with this reality, without the mediation of the programming and conditioning of the human mind.

⁴⁷ As the 'Theatre of Love and Death' has already been researched extensively in, both Polish and English, and with very profound effects, I will focus on Kantor's *Informel* period, since it is more relevant to my personal practice.

to unmask it from the illusionary veil our perception tends to create. In his 'ANTI-EXHIBITION MANIFESTO' from 1963 (Kantor 2005a: 228), Kantor suggested that Process, which in his understanding is the crux of art, cannot be stopped, but he then proceeded to assert that it is stopped by the very act of exhibiting paintings on the walls of galleries. It was in reaction⁴⁸ to his own *Informel* period⁴⁹ that he later tried to transcend this conundrum by developing new forms of theatre. From the viewpoint of my own artistic explorations, in which I seek to pick up where Kantor left off, specifically in relation to painting, it is absolutely necessary to evaluate his *Informel* period. This is particularly the case because I argue that, through my practice-as-research methodology, I have discovered a possible solution to the problem, or have indeed surmounted the obstacle, faced by Kantor. The practice-as-research process in which I have been engaging has enabled me to discover the possibility of non-forming, ever-moving matter, which functions on the canvas in Multi-Meta-Form, without in fact stopping the Process. Thus, I have found myself able to productively address the problem that, as outlined above, motivated Kantor's move away from *Informel*. Through my MMF, I have formulated one way to express the Process not only metaphorically, as Kantor did in his *Informel* paintings, but also *physically*, on the canvas.

⁴⁸ In agreement with his idea of the avant-garde artist that Kantor thought of himself to be (Miklaszewski 2007: 18).

⁴⁹ Through something I have called 'Kantor's formed matter paradox'.

CHAPTER TWO

Physical Process explained by researching the idea of 'Matter'

The art objects made by Tadeusz Kantor, discussed in the previous chapter, namely *Peinture* and *The wardrobe*, represent the most important aspects of Kantor's *Informel* period that are relevant for the present dissertation, namely the ideas of 'matter' and of 'illusion negation', which are also the key concepts of MMF. The term 'matter', for me, as it was for Kantor, is the bearer of unformed possibilities of forms, the plasticity of the substance and its constant potentiality to be shaped into forms, without actually being 'petrified' by the form's final shape. This potentiality to be, or possibility to be, is tied directly to what the Process is in my definition of the term, namely the *successive and sustained generation of new entities that themselves generate yet newer possibilities 'ad infinitum'*. In this sense, the Process is nothing else than the *possibility to be* that cannot be grasped through the static oil painting shown to the public. It must be conceptualized in a perpetual state of transition. 'Matter' is a concept linked to process directly through the physical substance characteristics of probability and indeterminacy, which are explained here with the aid of the philosophical interpretations of quantum mechanics.

In the present work, I have elucidated the term Process by studying the two affiliated ideas, namely that of matter (through which the physical process is explained) and that of illusion negation (through which the metaphysical process is explained). I am arguing that by investigating the concept of matter in philosophy and quantum mechanics' philosophical interpretations, Process expression in painting can attain a new, previously unexplored standpoint. Therefore, it is necessary to focus on explaining Process based on the term

‘matter’. The philosophical and physical approach to the subject,⁵⁰ along with the interpretation of the term ‘matter’, is thus a convenient point of departure. As explained earlier, through the word ‘matter’ one can understand the physical process in MMF and better grasp why Kantor’s practical process and matter treatment on the canvas did not work in light of Kantor’s own axioms (form must be negated because it can only describe, not express). Kantor’s interpretation of the term ‘matter’ is greatly enriched and widened when confronted with the fields of philosophy and quantum mechanics.

To further contextualize Kantor’s work as an artist, I will discuss other prominent Polish matter painters’ insights into the term ‘matter’, reaching a more integrated concept extending beyond painting alone, and able to exist without referring to Necessary Form. In effect, and as a conclusion, the new approach to the *physical* ‘process expression’ on the canvas is established, one that is in accord with the development of knowledge in the above-named areas and is crystallized in MMF.

Kantor’s approach to ‘matter’

The term ‘matter’ intrigued Kantor greatly from the earliest stage of his artistic career. In December 1947 he wrote in his journal; ‘It fascinates me – the perhaps mystical or utopian – idea and assumption that in every piece of art, regardless of the artist, some UR-MATERIE,⁵¹ shapes itself, in which all possible, never-ending life variations exist’ (Kantor 2005a: 109).

⁵⁰ According to Michał Heller, the term ‘matter’ functions (2014a: 86-87) predominantly in philosophy and to a degree in physics, and, as he argues, matter in physics becomes ‘dematerialized’ by the modern scientific approach. ‘Structures’ exist rather than Aristotelian ‘substratum’ that fill the structure (Heller 2014b: 74). The word ‘matter’ has been exchanged with energy in modern physics, and physicists (Fritjof Capra 1992: 224; Werner Heisenberg 2000: 107) claim that change also suggests a new approach to one’s day-to-day understanding of substances.

⁵¹ German ‘proto-matter’.

Kantor believed that in matter the wholeness of the creation is present beneath the façade of the form, and through painting, which demands from the painter its innermost expression on the canvas, this form exteriority had to be exposed. Matter becomes for Kantor the reality that holds the painting in its state of being independently from the illusion of mimetic imitation. Matter, as a substance constantly shaped by pure chance, as Kantor suggested (Kantor 2005a: 15), was an extension of a human being- its discharge, formless and unbound to the finality of the defined contour. Matter, as Kantor proclaimed, is in its core a 'constant creation' (Kantor 2005a: 16) through which his *Informel* ideas came to be and defined his art as the process of becoming and, as suggested by Jan Kłossowicz, headed into a similar philosophical direction as the explorations of Jackson Pollock, Jean Fautrier or Georges Mathieu (Kłossowicz 1991: 13). In defining *Informel* postulates, Kantor wrote:

MATTER

Matter un-ruled by the laws of construction, always changeable and fluid, infinite, negating the idea of a form, that is restricted and finished, governed by no change, finalized,
the term that determines those states is:

SHAPELESSNESS

Matter captivated and defined by speed and rapidity
of the action, that is the

SPONTANIETY of the action

Matter being is in constant motion. Therefore, the only equivalence and means to capture it is through

ACTION, ACTIVITY

Matter, that reveal itself through processes

such as:

BREAKUP

DECOMPOSITION

DECAY

DISSOLUTION

DESTRUCTION

Matter, that most effective ally

Is till now, eliminated from art:

CHANCE

(Kantor 2005a: 184)

In these words, Kantor defined his understanding of matter as a substance opposite to form, stillness, cessation, inaction and stagnation, but also an element that can be expressed or captured by the action itself. Its intelligibility is related to the movement that constantly shapes it, without finalization. Therefore, in Kantor's reasoning, form describes and matter expresses. The expression of matter was achieved by the processes that act upon the

physical substances, and as such, matter comprehension in Kantor's theory was very much bound to physicality that can be changed and is changing. Through this change, in his view, the painter not only discovers to be a time-bound, finite being, but the painting itself is emancipated from the strictness and firmness of the form. Hostility to form, which was so prominent for the avant-garde⁵² in general (Dziamski 1982: 156), in Kantor's thought goes even further, to the point of almost nullifying the form completely. Through the *Informel* form negation idea, Kantor's awareness of the flowing reality was manifested. Echoing this, Martin Paul Leach writes:

Clearly, in the particular character that he found in the 'formlessness' of informel, Kantor saw an insight into the flux of reality akin to the insight he had received in his time spent in the galleries of the Palais de la Découverte, the concentration of nature imagined in a nightmare. Madness.... the hectic mobility of life'. (Leach 2012a: 164)

Matter, as opposed to form, understood by Kantor, was the substance through which the flow of reality emerged. Leach seems to indicate that for Kantor 'matter' was also a vehicle towards a more complete view into the nature of things. Assumed by Kantor, the changeable disposition of matter, which could be expressed only by processes like rotting, destruction, shaping and squeezing, was palpable in 'the tissue' of the paint and later in other non-painting substances, like bark, glue, tar, mud, polyvinyl chloride and clay among others, making Kantor's exploration of matter painting fit comfortably into the *Informel* mainstream (Majewski 2006: 17). The notion of formless matter seems to confirm the ever-

⁵² Dziamski is following Stefan Morawski's avant-garde definition, which claims that the abolition of a well-known form, proposed by conceptualism and happening, is the crux of the avant-garde movement.

changing and defiant nature of art that was the core thought for the European avant-garde of modern times,⁵³ and Kantor himself refers to avant-garde artists on several occasions, precisely because of their constant fight with rigid arrangements.⁵⁴ In fact, as Pleśniarowicz argues (1990: 10), Kantor's escape from fixed form was the very essence of his avant-gardeness. Form, which is antithetical to matter, can only isolate that which is alive, hidden under the shell of one's presumptions. This is why Kantor attacked form. In Kantor's thought, this exteriority of 'form' loses its *raison d'être* by contact with motion, destruction, reality and chance. Chance, through which, for Kantor, real life bursts into the painting (Kantor 2005a: 181), operates in his *Informel* as a gateway towards an entity devoid of structure. Coincidental motion, which can be controlled by the artist, according to Kantor (Stangret 2006: 30), can dismantle the superficial strictness of arrangements, of which Piotr Piotrowski (2000: 134) wrote:

Matter, he [Kantor] argued, is an element which has its consistence, but no construction.

Thanks to 'chance' (as an artistic method), the latter undergoes structuration, much more appropriate as a factor of form than geometry used by the classics of the avant-garde.

Tachisme or informel (which is, according to Kantor, a better term) ridicules the ambition to apprehend matter by the intellect. (Translated by Marek Wilczyński)

⁵³ A theorist of modernity, Zygmunt Bauman, following Stefan Morawski, who describes a few points and attributes that all avant-garde art had in common, claimed that '[...] every [avant-garde art] movement aimed to have a pioneer spirit, that looked from a distance, reluctantly and critically at the existing art, and the role intended for it in totality of social life, contempt and mocking towards art canons[...]' (Bauman 1994: 173).

⁵⁴ Peter Bürger also seems to point out that European avant-garde movements were an incursion, aimed at the very function of art in bourgeois society. Negation, Bürger claims, is not directed at previous art styles or thought, but rather at the institutionalization of art abstracted from life itself (Bürger 2007: 49). Kantor's personal non-contentment towards the order implemented by art institutions seems to tie his artistic endeavours to Bürger's concepts of the avant-garde.

In Kantor's understanding, then, matter functions on the canvas practically as a physical substance that one can act upon, in which the outcome can then be seen in the matter-pliant substance congealed on the canvas.⁵⁵ That malleability, bendability, shapelessness and plasticine-like feature of matter in his philosophy is similar to the way in which it was comprehended by Georges Bataille, who, as Rosalind Krauss argues (1996: 105), approached matter as materialism. Kantor's influences in terms of matter painting can be traced to other roots as well. Critics such as Leach note that Kantor's perception of the formless, conceptualised as the mouldable stuff opposing the ruling of the form, did not necessarily start with his contact with Georges Bataille's writings. The more likely influence that captures the similar resonance to Bataille's *Informel* consideration (Leach 2012a: 155-156) was his exposure to Stanisław Ignacy Witkiewicz, Witold Gombrowicz and Bruno Schulz⁵⁶ and their own conceptions of the formless. Schulz, for example, considered matter to be a substance that is alive and vital in its core, transcending the formal rigour and its boundaries (Schulz 2000: 20). In discussing the conceptual roots of Kantor's matter apprehension, one cannot neglect Polish symbolism, especially as represented in the works of a popular painter in Poland, Jacek Malczewski, who shaped Kantor's early artistic ideas (Pleśniarowicz 1990: 8). The symbolists have seen the creative act as working *in* matter and through it. Form was known through painting matter, 'kneading'. Ideas were expressed in matter's amorphous shapes, formed into a defined painting or drawing (Turowski 1990: 164).

⁵⁵ As noted by Kantor in his famous article, 'The abstract art is dead. Long live the abstract art. About art informel' (*Abstrakcja umarła, niech żyje abstrakcja: o sztuce informel*), 1955 (Kantor 2005a: 168).

⁵⁶ Schultz, along with Witkiewicz and Gombrowicz, was Kantor's great inspiration (Leach 2013: 14). Kantor told Krzysztof Miklaszewski that Schulz's 'degraded reality' was a key concept in his art from *informel* to *emballages* (Miklaszewski 1992: 34).

Thus, matter in Kantor's dialectics serves also as the *prima* element, vitalistic and unbound to the rationality of the structures, countering constructivism, which Kantor opposed later on. Through matter manipulation, Kantor tried to express life in its probabilistic nature. In matter, Kantor saw the chaos of unformed mucus that a gesture can tame and express on the canvas. In matter, Kantor also recognised the crux of the reality. Reflecting on his art during an interview⁵⁷ with the weekly magazine *Perspectives* (*Perspektywy*) in 1978, Kantor remarked to Jerzy Lessmann that *informel* and its matter conception was very important for his further development as an artist, because he could come back to the core of reality, that matter embodied in its muddy structure-lessness. Kantor compared this experience to visiting his childhood.

Polish symbolists and Kapists influenced Kantor at the early stages of artistic creativity (Stangret 2006: 9-10). Polish matter painters and their understanding of matter were relative to Kantor's later thought, and it is through closer analysis of their views that I can better allocate my own MMF artistic beginnings.

The political thaw that is also known as the 'Polish October' of 1956 brought about changes to the country's political system in a more liberal direction. With Władysław Gomułka appointed in 1957 as the first secretary (leader of the ruling party, KC PZPR), the Stalinist model came to an end, and many Polish professors were reinstated at universities. Socialist realism slowly retreated, and the freed gesture of *informel* and matter painting became synonymous with liberating ideas of the Polish nation that fought the Soviet occupation (Turowski 2009: 8). In the expression of amorphous matter, Western artists abreacted to the existential crisis of World War II (Majewski 2006: 18), but Polish matter

⁵⁷ 'Gazeta perspektywy' ('Newspaper Perspectives'), 'Najgorsza jest obojętność' ('Indifference is the worst') 12/05/1978. Jerzy Lessmann interviewed Tadeusz Kantor.

painting was perceived in the West as a symbol of freedom that had withstood the dogmas of social realism (Majewski 2006: 20). An example of how matter was understood and how matter painting served to detach the idea from the mimetic nature of representation can be observed especially well on the canvases of Jerzy Tchórzewski (1928-1999), a painter associated with *Grupa Krakowska II*⁵⁸ (Krakow Group II).

The imagination of the observer who meets the painting in the gallery was, for Tchórzewski, the main battlefield that modern painting has to conquer. The open invitation of the reality to which the viewer was drawn through classical painting was no longer enough. An intelligible reality that *might* happen was too narrow. New painting had to cut, in Tchórzewski's reasoning (Tchórzewski 1974), the well-accustomed special awareness, away from the painting's cognition, so that the imagination itself could be lost in the maze of the unknown. Space, now understood without illusionistic accents, could actuate human awareness more directly through painting. Therefore, material substances evoked by the painter on the canvas must not depict the form's familiarity, but must become changeable and mouldable to attack the perception that is constantly searching for form. What occupied the attention of *Informel* painters was the insights into the very structures of matter (Ludwiński 1959). Some of them expressed this idea more directly, like Tchórzewski, or more indirectly, like Kantor. In essence, however, the structure of matter is probabilistic in its character, and is conceptualized in contemporary physics more like interconnections between possibilities (as argued in the subchapters below and Chapter 3), rather than the

⁵⁸ In 1930 Grupa Krakowska was formed by the students of an art academy in Kraków, influenced by abstractionism, cubism and expressionism. Later on, in the midst of the German occupation, it was attached to Tadeusz Kantor and his Independent Underground Theatre. After the war, Grupa Krakowska II (named as such in 1957) referred to Grupa Krakowska. Several prominent matter painters were members of this group, namely Jadwiga Maziarska, Janusz Tarabuła, Jerzy Wroński, Danuta Urbanowicz and Witold Urbanowicz, among others.

mouldable goeey 'stuff' that Kantor tried to express, or the microscopic tissue painted on the canvas seen in Tchórzewski's work.

In his painting efforts to enrich the texture on the canvas after 1957, Tchórzewski's matter becomes 'wriggling and bodiless' (Bogucki 1968) substance, making the tensions between the lines and colour throbbing, so that the space, time and materiality of his bizarre sceneries grew relative to the viewer's imagination. This can be seen in his painting entitled 'Composition' (*Kompozycja*) from 1964.



Fig. 7. Jerzy Tchórzewski, *Kompozycja*, 1964, watercolour and ink on paper, 68.5 x 99 cm. Photo: Agra Art auction house, <http://www.agraart.pl/nowe/nowe/objectn.php?curr=PLN&idd=21202&aid=321>

With a surrealist background, he painted 'creepy landscapes, populated by thorny flora and wildlife',⁵⁹ to express the materiality that 'illuminates' the canvas. This can be observed on the canvas *Grotolaz* from 1969. Tchórzewski's painting technique is sharp, to the point and

⁵⁹ Here I am paraphrasing Kępińska (1981: 46).

patiently applied. The thick and uncompromising texture of the painting pierces the space intensively, where the cool colours of the grotto's walls relax the observer at the same time. This duality and interconnectivity of texture and colour holds the attention, stretched between aggressive texture, dangerous line and sub-zero coloristic atmosphere. The surface of the cave scintillates with reflections from the coolness of the wet wall. The movement of the line guides one towards a solitary silhouette. This human shape is inserted into an uncomfortable and lonely position inside the grotto. Time itself, it seems, holds the human form hostage, the cave's ceiling, grown too low and too sharp, preventing the movement. Drained by circumstances, the silhouette buttresses itself by holding the knees not to fall. The head, already traumatized by the brutality of its surroundings, dangles depleted. The environment controls the physical being of the human shape, gnawing its materiality with its stalagmite and stalactite fangs. Materiality withers the material. Both substances, the grotto and the human shape, reduce themselves to a bulk of patterns. The heaviness of ultramarine and dark cobalt violet deepens the loneliness of the figure. There is a brightness painted in titanium white and Naples yellow, giving it almost a hope to wish for. The person, however, nearly became the grotto. Uniformity of materiality unites both, in shaping which the body is physically weaker. It is a naturalistic portrait of inexorable nature, where matter is an element that conquers and is conquered. Similarly to Kantor, Tchórzewski saw in matter a substance to mould, but in Tchórzewski's reasoning, matter was itself lifeless, passive and inactive. Only the painter could breathe new life into it through shaping it, and it was, he claimed, the duty of the painter to do so (Exhibition Catalogue, Warszawa, 'Zacheta Gallery', 1962). Tchórzewski saw matter as a stuff that has to be conquered on the canvas because on its own it is subordinate, still not in a kinetic, but a metaphysical sense. It was the painter, he argued, who animated this lifeless entity. The modern painting was, for

Tchórzewski, a situation in which the observer's imagination was forced to look deeper within the structures of reality (Tchórzewski 1974: 180) in order to evolve the human being's perception to help him or her overcome the new problems raised in today's world. The painter, by shaping matter accordingly, becomes a lawgiver, a guide to the observer and the newly animated matter: a vehicle of transportation. This is reflected by Stanisław Ledóchowski in his article (1957) 'Dialogue around the life' (*Dialog wokół życia*) in the journal descriptively called *Common word* (*Słowo Powszechne*), where he wrote that Tchórzewski 'thinks with a paintbrush' and through it brings to life matter, which, by virtue of Tchórzewski's demiurgic gesture, is then transformed into light reflected from the roughness of the grotto's walls (Ledóchowski 1957).



Fig. 8. Jerzy Tchórzewski (1928-1999) *Grotolaz*, 1969, oil on canvas 195 x 114 cm. Warsaw National Museum. Photo: Cyfrowe Muzeum Narodowe w Warszawie

Tchórzewski combines and amalgamates all the substances on the canvas, the human form, the grotto's walls, stalagmites, stalactites and light, treating them as a formula that has to be broken down and moulded yet again to achieve new and anthropomorphic results. Matter becomes organic light, reflected from all the materials inside the canvas. The walls of the cave are almost realistically depicted in Tchórzewski's later work. Stalagmites and stalactites resonate with sand-like material from within, and the bodily structure of the human shape is consolidated with that of the grotto through porosity of both textures. As the matter idea is treated here as a substance that the painter can show raw in its un-metaphorical presentation, Tchórzewski's interpretation of matter brings him closer to the 'biological materialism' side of matter painting. Alicja Kępińska distinguishes two main approaches to matter, the first of which is derived from structures observed in natural substances, often under the microscope, which the painter later transfers on to the painting (mimicking it, as in realism⁶⁰). The second side of matter painting, according to Kępińska (1981: 53-54), is the integration of actual non-painting-substances into the painting (such as mud, sand, glass, cloth and so on) that express the degradable character of these natural substances. Examples can be seen in the works of Aleksander Kobzdej (1920-1972), who integrated cloth into his paintings (Fig. 9).

⁶⁰ In 1959 art theoretician Jerzy Ludwiński wrote that artists who paint microscopic matter are perceived by the naïve as abstractionists: because the structures such painters present are so detached from the habitual perception of the masses, they wrongly qualify their paintings as an abstract art. In my view, as it is a precise representation of nature, one might call it micro-realism, if anything. *Informel* was in Ludwiński's eyes not in opposition to representational painting, but 'a protest against literate world vision'. Also in the same article (1959), Ludwiński claimed that the human figure from De Kooning and Dubuffet's paintings was made out of a *different matter*, but as I argue in this chapter, there are no different kinds of substances at microscopic scale (an electron is the same in a tree and a lego brick), and Kantor, like Ludwiński seemed not to know or to neglect this fact.



Fig. 9. Aleksander Kobzdej, *WHITE TONIC*, 1963, mixed-media and oil on canvas, 96x63.5 cm. Photo: Agra Art auction house

Or in the works of Jerzy Rosołowicz (1928-1982), who, after 1959, included plaster and papier-mâché (Majewski 2006: 153) in his canvases.



Fig. 10. Jerzy Rosołowicz, *Łódź Charona*, 1958, mixed-media and oil on canvas, 42x42. Wrocław National Museum, Photo:

Wojtek Rogowicz

Kantor used both methods of matter painting in his *Informel*. Biological, or perhaps rather microscopic naturalism, which aims to show the structure of matter on a micro-scale (the walls of the grotto as seen on the picture above or the materiality of the skin painted on the same painting) make it, in my view, a faithful interpretation of nature, focused on the sensation of matter joined with the emancipation of the imagination. Tchórzewski himself expressed this when he said that, through matter painting, the imagination touches the mechanism of the life process (Jaxa-Chamiec, Karpińska 2015: 123). It appears that, through *Informel*, Tchórzewski not only gives life to matter, but also fires up human awareness of life seen as a process. I would agree with the last part.

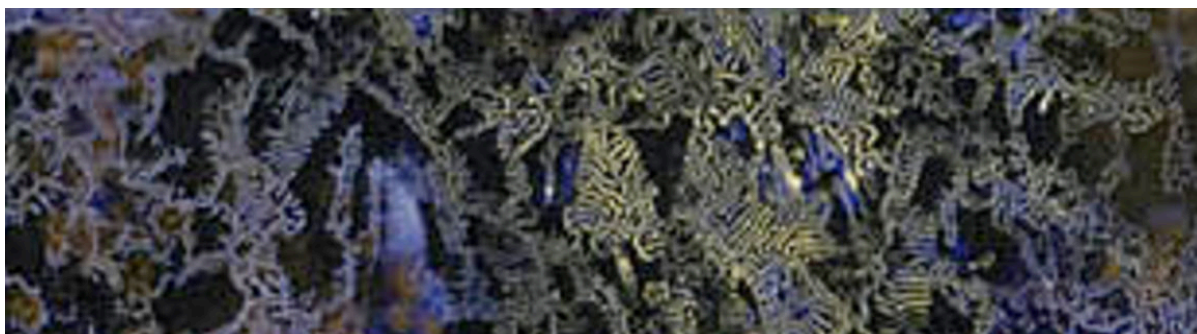


Fig. 11. Tchórzewski, detail from *Grotolaz* 1969 showing the mirco-realism of matter depiction.

Rajmund Ziemiński (1930-2005) was another painter for whom, similarly to Kantor, the border between matter painting and *Informel* was ambiguous. With the Kapist's understanding of colour, known to Ziemiński from the Warsaw Art Academy, where he was a pupil of the Polish Colourist painter, Artur Nacht-Samborski, Ziemiński's approach to painting matter was that of an experimenter. He sculptured matter meticulously, using not only a paint brush but also a knife, or paint straight out of the tube, for various effects. Majewski

thus writes: 'It was almost like a painting was a pretext for a diverse panoply of experiments [...] (Majewski 2006: 93). Through these operations made on matter, the forms so created were piled up to give birth to the bas-relief, 'making his abstraction expressive and meaningful, without naturalistic connotations' (Kępińska 1981: 57). Colour composition or linear arrangement were not, however, as in Kantor's *Informel* case, spontaneous or unpredictable. Ziemiński's thought worked on the basis of calculative composition rather than impulse. He enriched the texture of painting with cotton or blotting paper, giving the paintings a spider's web-like structure. Painting matter was for him more like using clay that can be moulded on the canvas to create dynamic forms, similarly to Kantor.



Fig. 12. Rajmund Ziemiński, 1964, *PEJZAŻ 6/64*, oil on canvas, 81x65 cm. Photo: Agra Art auction house

Another Polish painter associated with the Warsaw Art Academy, worth noting in this context, was Bronisław Kierzkowski (1924-1993), who treated matter very radically. At the end of the 1950s he stopped using paint altogether, replacing it with exclusively non-

painting materials, such as plaster, metal strips, sheet metal, wires and plastics. Kierzkowski squeezed metal and plastic parts into the plaster, which interacted responsively with the force and objects implemented on to it. These painting⁶¹ experiments he called 'Texture Compositions' (*Kompozycje fakturowe*). Objects created with this *frottage-like* technique characterised strong painting composition and balance (Kisielewska and Markowski 2013: 444), where the tension between the plaster matter and metal (or plastic) matter complement each other, and in which bas-relief and painting effects intermingle with proper painting composition.

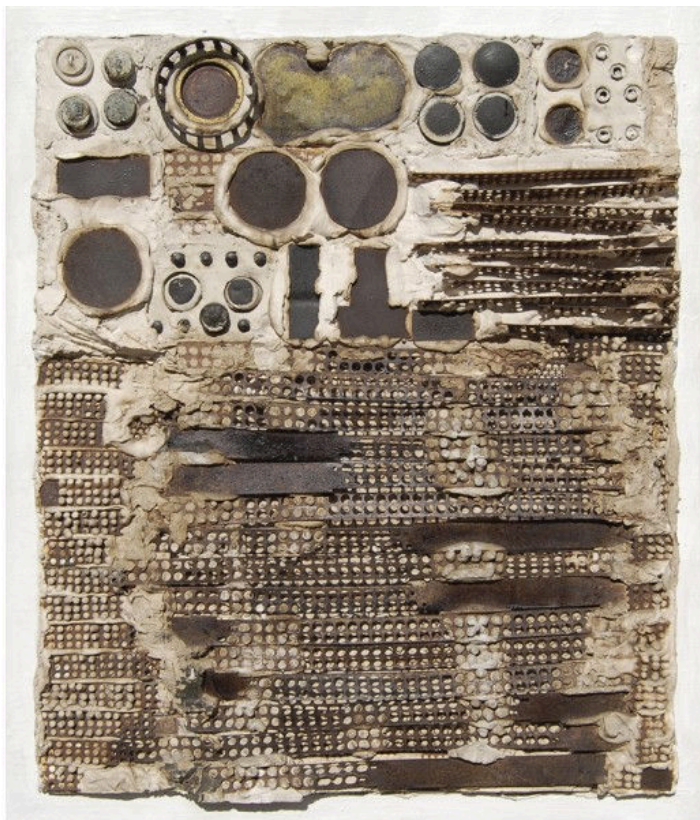


Fig. 13. Bronisław Kierzkowski, *KF434*, 1960, plaster, wood, metal, 81x70 cm. Photo: Beta 16 Gallery.

http://beta16.pl/pl/_6-o-nas

⁶¹ Can one still call a painting the object created by the artist without any paints? Majewski gives this answer: 'I suppose one can, but only in a metaphorical sense, as painting *with materials*, in a sense of composition in which non-painting materials are used' (Majewski 2006: 121); thus only in compositional sense.

Kierzkowski's style of matter painting can be associated with the second of Kępińska's categories of matter painting, in which matter is treated only as itself (and is used *as itself*), depicting and referring only to itself without needless remarks to anything other than its own shape, colour, texture or even smell. Although different from Kantor's matter painting, Kierzkowski's version treated the term 'matter' similarly, making it a substance ready to be shaped and moulded by force, where the effects can then be seen in the substance presented on the canvas. Matter was the subject *and* the object of presentation and creation (Kisiełewska, Markowski 2013: 444). The corrosion that covers the metal parts of the Kierzkowski paintings, especially the segment where the plaster is touching the metal and physically destroys the paintings, while also expressing the natural processes for which matter is a vehicle, as such not being as finite as other matter expressions on the canvas presented in this chapter. Matter shaping in Kierzkowski's paintings has a valuating factor, through which the painter is looking for a 'visual happy ending' (Majewski 2006: 157). The difference between Kantor's *Informel* matter painting and Kierzkowski's ideas is the latter's elimination of spontaneity. Thus, on Kierzkowski's canvas, matter is a subject of almost mechanical procedures that comes to life in laborious pains, as Majewski also noted: as such, his works mark the border between *Tashisme* and matter painting (2006). But like Kantor, matter was for Kierzkowski a substance to shape (Kisiełewska and Markowski 2013: 442). As presented by the artists mentioned above, matter can be understood in different ways. Therefore, to fully comprehend MMF and Kantor's approach to matter, at least a brief history of the term 'matter' must be presented. The section below clarifies how the term 'matter' has been used and in what contexts through the ages in both philosophy and physics and why Kantor's idea of matter, although associated by him with movement and change, was still expressed on his canvas through Necessary Form.

The philosophical roots of term 'matter'

For early Greeks, the term 'matter' (*hyle*) meant 'wood mass', and as such they associated it with constant growth (Heller 2014a: 82). Aristotle undertook the attempt to explain what this 'substance that objects are made out of' is, and used 'constant growth' or 'movement' as the basis for his reasoning. Movement, understood as a change, was for Aristotle a transition from possibility to actuality. Therefore he broke down matter into two categories: prime matter, which allows substance to have a possibility, and substantial form, which allows substance to become actuality. Prime matter is pure possibility contained in all beings; substantial form, on the other hand, shapes a being into what it is. Aristotle's idea that beings are composed of prime matter and substantial form is calledhylomorphism (Heller 2014a: 83). Aristotle understood matter as a relation to already fixed forms that one perceives in the world of phenomena. Matter was for him a possibility, a 'potentia' (Heisenberg 2000: 97), which is similar to Kantor's conception of matter, assumed as synonym of life and movement. In Kantor's words:

Matter, white-hot, exploding, fluoridating, swelled with light, defunct and calmed. Solidified in which we discovered all life traces. The absence of all construction, only consistency and structure. Different space – different movement conceptualization. How to express and conquer matter, which is life itself. (Kantor 2005a: 168)

Working on material and shaping it was the basis of the Greek notion of matter as potentiality or possibility to being shaped, similar to Ionian philosophers, who saw matter as potentiality (Luyten 1963: 123). Kantor's ideas of forming the matter and working it are thus

close to Aristotelian ideas, in which matter was an underlying, ground material that undergoes changes, but to know it one has to learn it through forms. In itself, without form, matter was unintelligible. In Aristotelian physics, therefore, matter cannot be definitively described, or negatively described for that matter, and as a philosopher, Joseph Owens (1963: 107) noted that matter as possibility of being cannot be directly observable. Thomas Aquinas systematized Aristotle's thought of matter and form relation. For Aquinas, forms make things actual from their potential (Aquinas 2008: 68) and are called actualizations. Substantial form is responsible for something's existence as a substance, while non-essential forms make substance variable in appearance. Aquinas thus writes: '[...] before form arrives the same thing is both bronze and shapeless but bronze for one reason and shapeless for another. [...] the material must lack the form to start with; as existing under one form it lacks another and vice versa, as fire lacks that of air and air that of fire' (Aquinas 2008: 69). This is where Aristotelian and Aquinian thought can appear analogous to the discoveries of modern physics, where 'All the elementary particles are made of the same substance, which we may call energy or universal matter; they are just different forms in which matter can appear' (Heisenberg 2000: 107). Aristotle's 'potentia' and physics' 'energy' can be thus seen as a process. Matter is neither form nor formless, but possibility, potentiality for Aquinas, as it was for Aristotle. Matter, in their reasoning, was what enables things to be moulded and shaped or acted upon (Aquinas 2008: 272). Heller states (2014a: 23), following Aristotle's definition of movement, namely that movement is a transitioning from possibility to actuality, that to have a possibility is to be in motion through actualization. And since matter, in Aristotle's understanding, is a moving process, Kantor's interpretation of matter can be linked to this concept. On the one hand, Kantor's comprehension of matter was in accord with that of Aristotle, grasped as a potentiality, but on the other hand, his expression

on the canvas was closer to the Cartesian idea of matter that is the norm today, namely as the material 'stuff' that things are made out of (Heisenberg 2000: 98)⁶² and that one can act upon. Isaac Newton in turn apprehended matter as equivalent to mass (Heller 2014a: 87), and as in all mechanistic philosophy,⁶³ matter was for him a passive substance through which the future of the whole universe could be deduced from matter collision and its movements,⁶⁴ thus making the natural world and its course predictable. Therefore, in the mechanistic view, if one had enough data, that is, about all particles' exact positions and their speed, as well as sufficient power to calculate matter's movements, one would be able to predict the future and recreate the past. All these mechanistic interpretations of the term 'matter' culminated in the modern idea of materialism, making matter a predictable substance, devoid of accidental or indeterministic character. Until the beginning of the twentieth century, matter was conceptualised as being built of small blocks which at a certain stage were indivisible and devoid of internal structure. Kantor's matter expression on the canvas, as will be argued below, can be directly related to this materialistic approach to matter.

It was only in twentieth century that the major breakthrough in physics demolished the Newtonian concept of matter as composed of small indivisible, material building blocks (Hanson 1963, Heller 2014, Heisenberg 2000: 26, Capra 1992: 78, Bohm 2004: 90). It was discovered that the electron, the particle matter is made out of, is impossible to depict,

⁶² Descartes divided the universe into 'res extensa' and 'res cogitans', matter and mind respectably (Heisenberg 2000: 98), confirming in a sense what matter was considered to be in his period: a deterministic mechanism of interactions, a geometry as Omnès points out (1999: 65).

⁶³ Determinism in classical (Newtonian) mechanics is a belief in '[...] mathematical expressions which were asserted as universally and rigorously true and from which the precise behavior of every system from the simplest to the most complex could be derived' (Pollard 2015: 44)

⁶⁴ Motion (mechanical) in seventeenth-century physics was the very cause of the properties of matter (Boas Hall 1963: 366).

because it has the properties of a wave as well as a particle (Mast 1963: 587). Thus, matter itself is not predictable, as was assumed previously by Aristotle, Newton, Descartes, Laplace and many others. It is this misinterpretation of matter that arguably leads any attempts to truly capture it astray, and this could be the source of Kantor's own dilemma in dealing with matter.

As understood after Aquinas, and also in the light of more recent works that considered 'properties of matter as statistically revealed potentialities' (Bohm 2000: 163), to be grasped in its fundamental characteristics, matter must thus be expressed on the canvas as a *potentiality for* existence. Form will cut other possibilities to one painting fact. How 'passive' or 'active' that fact is will be determined by the viewer who encounters the form on the painting through his or her conditioning, for all of us are programmed by culture, religion, upbringing and a complex mixture of different factors of a social and psychological nature (de Mello 1997: 131). Thus matter will be trapped in Necessary Form.

The philosophical interpretations of quantum mechanics'⁶⁵ in MMF

According to modern physics, this solid table we sit at is primarily an emptiness. A set of physical fields, electron clouds, waves of probabilities, not a hard matter, a substance that one can touch. Physics teaches that one ought to have limited trust in common sense and our senses in general, because they are a clunky tool of reality cognition. (Interview fragment with Michal Heller, conducted by Piotr Cieśliński, 2015)

⁶⁵ The second mainstay being the metaphysical notion of 'illusion negation', which I present in the next chapter.

This quote, at least generally, gives a very different perspective on 'matter' from our day-to-day materialistic perception of substances that we see and feel. It also sheds a different light on Kantor's apprehension of matter, which for him was a formless stuff that can be affected by actions such as squeezing, flattening or crumpling. Matter, in the understanding of contemporary physics, expressed here by Heller (2014a, b), Capra (1992), d'Espagnat (2006: 272) and Bohm (2002, 2004, 2010), is but an illusion of the commonsensical comprehension of reality. Thus, our commonsensical thinking fails when it comes to penetrating what is going on inside material structures. In modern physics, matter is seen as a process, while shapes (forms) are perceived as illusions of the senses (Bohm 2002). Lyenne McTaggart's argument points in a similar direction:

What this was basically saying is that the corporeal stuff we call matter and to which all physicists since Newton have attributed an innate mass was an illusion. All that was happening was that this background sea of energy was opposing acceleration by gripping on to the subatomic particles whenever you pushed on an object. (McTaggart 2003: 32)

Fritjof Capra also came to a similar conclusion, but he went even further. Within his interpretation of quantum theory there is no place for objective reality *description*.⁶⁶ Thus, Capra says:

Quantum theory has thus demolished the classical concepts of solid objects and of strictly deterministic laws of nature. At the subatomic level, the solid material objects of classical

⁶⁶ Heller holds a similar view. This does not mean that one is creating reality by the sheer will or that objective reality does not exist (or 'veiled reality', as conceptualized by d'Espagnat 1989, 2006). All it means is that what is observed and the observer when interacting affect each other. In quantum mechanics, the measuring apparatus influences the measured phenomena (Heller 2014a: 110).

physics dissolve into wave-like patterns of probabilities, and these patterns, ultimately, do not represent probabilities of things, but rather probabilities of interconnections. A careful analysis of the process of observation in atomic physics has shown that the subatomic particles have no meaning as isolated entities, but can only be understood as interconnections between the preparation of an experiment and the subsequent measurement. Quantum theory thus reveals a basic oneness of the universe. It shows that we cannot decompose the world into independently existing smallest units. As we penetrate into matter, nature does not show us any isolated 'basic building blocks', but rather appears as a complicated web of relations between the various parts of the whole. These relations always include the observer in an essential way. The human observer constitutes the final link in the chain of observational processes, and the properties of any atomic object can only be understood in terms of the object's interaction with the observer. This means that the classical ideal of an objective description of nature is no longer valid. (Capra 1992: 78)

In light of these findings, matter is thus a process of fluidity, just as Kantor had noticed when he compared it to life itself. In Kantor's conception, matter negated the form and form negated matter. Modern physics shows that a form (the shape we perceive) and matter itself (here matter is understood as Kantor saw it, namely a substance that is responsive to the stimuli of touch or any other mouldable activity that alters its silhouette) is an illusion of the senses (Meissner 2017), and as such, it is but a sensation filtered through the human cognitive condition. Therefore, shaping materiality on the canvas is a confirmation of the human's own form of limited cognitive abilities, not an actual way of expressing matter as it is (energy in movement, probability and possibility). The matter that Kantor shaped on the canvas is a mirage.

Thus, relativity theory and quantum mechanics have radically changed our views on the nature of matter, which requires a new philosophical approach (Heller 2014a: 81). And since Matter is a Process, (Capra 1992: 315, Bohm 2002: 17) it follows that its expression on the canvas must also undergo fundamental changes. This means departing from Kantor's interpretation of matter, conceptualized as a stuff one could act physically unto, because one will get into similar semantic and practical problems to those Kantor encountered, that is to say, one will try to express matter as a substance to act upon. Such an approach would culminate in the presentation of a painting to our limited senses, that cannot perceive the wriggling and dynamic matter on their own. This endeavor would ultimately fail again, because matter was not expressed as it is: an energy inconstant potentiality. It will be too materialistic, too deterministic and too trivial to hope to explore all that matter hides from us. To assert reality, an amorphous mass must be depicted in its movement of constant probability and successive motion. And by definition, successive motions cannot be fixed or still. Through visual examination, and as confirmed by quantum mechanics (d'Espagnat 2006: 348), it appears that the observer (in tandem with nature⁶⁷) 'spawns' what he or she sees, giving it (matter) a definitive form that before the observation (from the perspective of quantum mechanics) was 'smeared' or 'clouded', or within a possibility, within *the Process of bringing itself about*. That is why the person's visual cognition has to be eliminated from the experience of the Process on a canvas, aside from the curiosity of his or her imagination, which acts upon the MMF proposition of many forms.

Another difference in the way Kantor's and modern physics treat matter is in the multiplicity of forms versus its unity. Thus, as mentioned previously, Kantor separates

⁶⁷ I will return to this point in Chapter 3.

matter into 'DIFFERENT KINDS OF MATTER' (Kantor 2005a: 184), like mud, water, fire, smoke, clay and soil, and describes how one can interact with it through squashing, squeezing, pressing, forming, moulding and flattening. But, as seen in the interview with Michał Heller, any interaction with matter, like touching substances, is just an illusion of our senses. Kantor's practical interpretation of matter on the canvas therefore, was also an illusion of his senses and in extension, also the viewers senses, which is precisely opposite to what he really wanted to achieve in his *Informel*, namely: showing the new, illusion-less side of reality through the physical manipulation of matter on the canvas via chance. Exteriority of matter that we interact with on a daily basis, as it presents itself to our senses, is an illusion and as such, must be expressed differently in oil painting than mere materiality squeezed onto the picture. As assumed by the modern mathematician and physicist Roger Penrose, matter that exists as energy in probability, is **identical** in all things. In the human body, in the sofa one is sitting on or in the book one is reading, the electrons are the same. This does not mean that electrons are impossible to distinguish one from another: they **are** the same, but what makes a human different from, let's say, a potato or a jar is the pattern in which those electrons are arranged (Penrose 1989: 25, Heisenberg 2000: 107). Moreover, it appears that the majority of natural phenomena are statistical in character, which means that they are not pre-determined (Pollard 2015: 56). In the light of these findings, Kantor's matter expression on the canvas, and especially matter depiction in his *Informel* period, was not sufficient to express the depths this concept contains. And, as noted earlier, neither the probabilistic nor the super-positionary character of the Process, where its true meaning and profundity lies, was expressed by Kantor's finished paintings.

Matter, understood as energy in probability, or in *the act of*, and a Process itself, must therefore be expressed on the canvas with its probabilistic and statistical character in

mind. To do this, one cannot 'generate' the painting through sight, as that will radically and definitely end the probability and superposition of never-before looked-at painting and pinpoint it to the static forms seen on the canvas. Moreover, the manipulation of matter by Kantor or Kierzkowski, or the matter depiction of the Polish painter Jan Ziemski (1920-1988), does exactly that: describes the form while undeniably cutting the *probability to be*, and Process, off. Such a canvas, which expresses Process according to its attributes, must remain open to interpretation, not only metaphysically, as Kantor had expressed it in his *Informel* paintings, but also physically (before the observation), as is possible through MMF in its superposition. As is implied by the quantum mechanics interpretation, in any given system, 'No forces, eternal or internal, known or unknown, can eliminate the element of choice from the picture' (Pollard 2015: 51). And while for Kantor's *Informel* paintings the binary between observer and painting was a source of unavoidable paradox which he could not escape from, the MMF in its Process expression gives the human being the possibility to separate the pre-conditioned judgement and the pleasure/pain of evaluation from the perception of art. Necessary Form implements and demands passing aesthetical judgements; , MMF does not, instead holding the multiplicity of the form in its probability and thus finally allowing a truer representation of matter/Process on canvas.

As seen through the prism of the indeterminate character⁶⁸ of matter, if Process were to be expressed accordingly on the canvas, one would have to find a different form of presentation. It cannot be just the manipulation of physical matter and its effect displayed on the painting as presented in the case of Kantor's *Informel* paintings. After the act of

⁶⁸ '[...] it is evident that the indeterministic features of quantum mechanics are in some way a reflection of the real behaviour of matter in the atomic and nuclear domains, but here the question arises as to just how to interpret this indeterminism' (Bohm 2002: 86).

observation, the reality is 'derived' from the possible variants (collapse of the wave function) to the 'single' reality we see (as discussed in Chapter 3). The observation actualizes reality, makes it necessary. The physicist Krzysztof Meissner argues that the reality one sees is but an emanation of the processes and laws that undermine what we cognitively experience (Meissner 2017). This statement corresponds well with the Platonic concept of the ideal, that to be truly aware, one must first break free from the illusion of the appearances. It is necessary to understand that one sees only this emanation of matter instead of the real Processes.

The above overview of how the concept of 'matter' was developing down the years in philosophy and physics throws some light on how and why Kantor and other matter painters like Kierzkowski treated matter on the canvas. These artists expressed matter as a deterministic substance one can act upon with visible results, rather than as a Process⁶⁹ that cannot be shown in its finality on the canvas, as exemplified by the congeal painting matter seen in Kantor's *Informel* paintings. And even if Kantor's matter was at its theoretical core a movement understood through chance, on the canvas it was still mass of coloured goo, although admittedly it was painted well.

⁶⁹ Bohm argues that elementary particles, which matter is made out of, are shown in Einstein's theory of relativity, as a 'stream of events or a flow of process' (Bohm 2004: 92). Therefore matter itself, according to this view (or process that is the matter) cannot be expressed accordingly on the canvas if painters neglect the 'uncatchable in still form' particle effect in their paintings. Atoms in matter merge with the field of the whole universe. Objects are not independent things in themselves abstracted from everything else according to quantum mechanics. Mysticism makes similar conclusions, as discussed in the next chapter.



Fig. 14. Tadeusz Kantor, *Informel* 1959, 67x80 cm. Picture taken from the webpage of DESA Unicum art auction house; <https://desa.pl/pl/auctions/182/object/21592/tadeusz-kantor-informel-1959-r>

I will not explore Kantor's individual paintings further, or show how his theory is put into practice on the canvas, because all the paintings that are supposed to be expressing matter, and through it a Process, are based on an inaccurate practical assumption. This assumption states that, after completion, the painting must be shown and acknowledged visually. As I argue in this thesis, this supposition cannot express physical or metaphysical Process in consonance with the most vital aspects of Process, namely the dynamics of probability. I will continue to develop this thought further in Chapter 3, where I deal with the observer and observed.

Thus, if the issue or mistake made, as argued in this thesis, lies in Kantor's approach to the practical expression of matter and movement, as mentioned earlier, analysing more of his paintings based on these assumptions cannot contribute to the answers. It was due to

false logic, which he could not escape when trying to capture the Process expression on the canvas, that the painter could not fully reach his goal. It was because the paintings have eventually been shown as a finished product, with a particular form. This is not a mistake I can directly pin-point *on* his paintings by analysing them one by one. It is their logic. Kantor's error thus lies in his intellectual approach to the *relation* of theory and practice in the aforementioned concepts.

Arguing against Kantor's *Informel* matter depiction, I dispute his use of Necessary Form to express the Process, matter and probable character of the universe. Necessary form *is* one without the probability to be, whether in the physical or metaphysical sense. I must point out here that I am not judging the value of Kantor's art, nor arguing against Kantor's paintings in themselves. I argue against his *approach* to those paintings that served as the bedrock of his ideas, and it is these ideas I am contesting.

To solve the problem he formulated, I had to trace the moment where his theory departs from genuine Process and matter expression and its probabilistic character. Necessary Form cannot deliver the 'successive events' that Process demands from its expression. This problem cannot be shown by studying further examples of Kantor's *Informel* canvasses, but only by analysing the theory and moving forward. Moreover, I do not argue against form in general, nor even Necessary Form in particular, as it is used in painting with great success. I am by no means against exhibiting paintings. For the purpose of this particular issue, I simply question the use of Necessary Form as a means to express Process, probability, chance and matter on the canvas.

In accordance with these theories, and despite the many attempts to approach 'matter' in Polish matter painting, two issues stick out: matter expressed *for* visual stimuli, and the validity of approaching matter as a Process. As Anna Z. Jaksender argues (2012: 54),

it was only in the twentieth century that matter was for the first time presented in painting as itself, without the help of 'visual merits'. But what did she mean by 'visual merits'? Since matter painting is experienced through visual stimuli, Jaksender might have suggested first and foremost the dis-illusionary quality of matter in itself, for in matter painting, matter expresses nothing, but itself. This generalization, however, seems too bold when we consider the art of such matter painters as Jan Ziemski⁷⁰ who 'portrayed' the tissue as encountered visually under the microscope or depicting a close-up to the wall's texture on the canvas, which is still a form of the visual representation of something. But although matter painting can 'depict' matter in itself, nonetheless it still is a depiction, with all the observer's 'visual aids', and programming is inherent in the very act of observation. Therefore, one has to agree with Majewski, who argued that the rejection of naturalism in matter painting led to a 'new naturalism' that still depicted nature, the only change being that of the perspective shifting from the macro to micro scale (2006: 67).

But for me, the challenge is to move away from this paradox. Just like Kantor and other matter painters, in my own work I am trying to get to the epicentre of reality without referring to mimetic representationalism. But although it is possible to claim that a *portrait of a Process* which I define as the insight into the structure of the flowing reality, can be derived from the assumptions of matter painting, rather than being a mere continuation of matter painting ideas, my own concept of MMF incorporates matter painting within its

⁷⁰ Jan Ziemski (not to be confused with Rajmund Ziemski) tried to communicate small particles of matter on homogenous canvases, aiming at the depiction of matter structure, making his attempt at matter (physical particle) expression another form of representation, and as such another form of mechanical representation (Ludwiński 1959).

holistic being.⁷¹ Process is also matter, or matter is only a process (Capra 1992: 225), unfragmented, debunking the notion of form shaped into motionless reality (Heller 2015), which, as some have pointed out, is an illusion of the senses⁷² I therefore postulate that change, and probability, are the root of reality: matter understood as a Process is thus, in its core, impossible to shape, impossible to catch and hold still, a movement itself. This crux of matter, through which I understand Process, must therefore be shown on the canvas without the Necessary Form rhetoric, as Kantor did, and acknowledged as his failing.⁷³

As a solution, I propose a non-deterministic explanation of the 'matter concept' in painting. In this new approach, I am arguing that the Process of becoming, which *is* responsible for the structuring of reality and which underlies both the matter and the essence of human being, can be expressed through MMF, because its probable single form was never derived by the observer with predispositions. Matter painting, understood as overcoming of the formless mass (Kępińska 1981: 54), misses the idea of matter as

⁷¹ In Polish painting this attempt is not new: in particular the physics and matter paintings connotation was considered in the intellectual discussions of Lublin's *Grupa Zamek* ('Castle Group'), who wanted to present the equivalent of the structures of the world in their paintings. Jerzy Ludwiński, quoted by Majewski (2006: 139), wrote that the 'Castle Group's' main artists were interested in the expression of the probabilistic fluctuation of elementary particles in their paintings. As matter was a concept that had been radically changed by quantum mechanics interpretations, anyone at least interested in the idea of 'matter' might benefit from its discoveries. The 'Castle Group' knew that, nonetheless 'matter' was expressed by them similarly to other Polish matter painters, through substance manipulation and/or the microscopic structure of matter depiction.

⁷² What the senses perceive, for example, as 'empty' space, argues Bohm, is the plenum (Bohm 2002: 243). 'It is being suggested here, then, that what we perceive through the senses as empty space is actually the plenum, which is the ground for the existence of everything, including ourselves. The things that appear to our senses are derivative forms and their true meaning can be seen only when we consider the plenum, in which they are generated and sustained, and into which they must ultimately vanish'. One can see that our senses are not the best instrument for capturing what is really there. Heller also agrees (2015), as does Omnès (1999: 82), especially when it comes to philosophical interpretations of quantum mechanics and the relation to what is perceived through our senses.

⁷³ I will develop this notion later on in this thesis.

presented by philosophy and quantum mechanics, which sees matter as dematerialised,⁷⁴ in the sense that matter ‘dissolves’ when one penetrates its subatomic level.

Conclusion to Chapter Two

For matter not to lose its primary function, which is its potentiality,⁷⁵ painting means expressing the Process itself – it cannot be locked in the Necessary Form. Kantor’s matter, as argued in this chapter, cannot become the Process on the canvas – for that, matter must be realised as the Process, not as some concrete form. Therefore, I propose to replace the word ‘matter’ with the word ‘Process’. Moving in this direction, I claim that ‘matter painting’ is incorporated within the MMF, since matter occurs within the Process spectrum, as part of the reality. I do not deny or frantically fight the form on the canvas, I simply express it in its probability in possibility. Multi-Meta-Form therefore becomes an event, not the object of art on the macroscopic scale, which we can observe and penetrate with our senses, because matter may appear as a passive and mouldable substance, as it was for Kantor, Kierzkowski, Ziemiński or Tchórzewski, for whom the object seemed to be locked within the form that rigorously defined its contours. A few samples of evidence from the enormous quantum mechanics curriculum, presented here, debunk this materialistic view. Reality and matter are not static, still or orderly. All of these attributes must therefore also be expressed *on the canvas*. Thus, coming back to Kantor’s problem, solved in MMF, Kantor himself wiped out paint marks he felt were too ‘formed’ (Kantor 2005a: 251-252). Through this act, he confirms that his problematic solutions were purely superficial, because even if he somehow

⁷⁴ This opinion was held by the philosopher, Norwood Russell Hanson (Hanson 1963: 549).

⁷⁵ One of the matter properties is its array of ‘statistically revealed potentialities’ (Bohm 2002: 164).

managed to eradicate 'form-ness' from the forms he presented for himself, he definitely could not do that for any observer of his *Informel* paintings. This fact made Kantor's 'matter' expression in his *Informel* paintings locked within a form that he himself had invented for them. And he knew it.⁷⁶ Although he made the right assumptions about matter, which he saw as a synonym of life, a moving energy that chance can express, he failed to adequately present the movement, together with the probability of being, as well as statistical character of matter and that of the majority of processes, on the canvas. After 1962, his analysis of the term 'matter' led Kantor towards a new interpretation of the object and reality ('poor object' and 'reality of the lowest rank' respectively), which he expresses in the Zero theatre, *emballage*, happening and environment art (Majewski 2006: 245), and later on in his famous 'Theatre of Love and Death' (Kantor 2005a: 182). He might have found a new way of expressing the 'matter' and Process there, but his *Informel* painting period came to an end because of the 'formed matter paradox' mentioned earlier. When in 1962 Kantor wrote (Kantor 2005a: 305) that the sense of 'overstepping boundaries' was crucial for him to go beyond *Informel* painting into *emballages*, he meant that to conquer the stillness of fixed forms, he had to trespass into new territories in his art. Matter, which for Kantor was supposed to be moving and wriggling, became still – worse yet, it was turned into ornamentation, which was a form of illusion in Kantor's thought. His paintings became solid, and this type of materialization Kantor recognized as suspicious and unwanted (Miklaszewski 1992: 45). Matter-shaping was indeed a 'forming activity', and it was nothing more than illusion. Kantor thus lost his *Informel* paintings in the hell of form he wanted to conquer.

⁷⁶ I will return to this in the next chapter.

As shown in this chapter, the advances in physics and the theory of matter have led scientists to redefine the notion of matter as an active concept, rather than a materialistic substance. The solution to Kantor's dilemma was thus found in a long process of artistic self-discovery and through the in-depth studies of fields of knowledge that focused on process, matter, illusion, wholeness, probability, possibility, defragmentation and attachment. It was by reaching out to those other disciplines, namely quantum mechanics, philosophy and mysticism, rather than staying confined within the theory of art alone, that I was able to solve Kantor's 'formed matter paradox' and to transform my own paintings from necessity into probability. The contribution of mysticism to solving Kantor's dilemma in his fight with illusion will be explored in the next chapter, which shows how the mystical ideas of Eckhart and Suzuki can lead to the inception of MMF, which unites that which is physical with that which is metaphysical.

CHAPTER THREE

Reality and Illusion

If one wants to express matter on a canvas, which itself is a Process, and if one wants to do so while being in accord with the findings of modern physics, one has to depart from presently used practices and go deeper, beyond mere depictions of matter plasticity/structure. One cannot present Process a posteriori, or 'after'⁷⁷ its movement, which was generated by random chance (Kantor), nor by cautious composition (Kierzkowski) that is frozen on the canvas. The Process must be expressed *in statu*, in the very 'act of transformation', without excluding possibility, which is crucial to the Process itself and therefore, as such, must not be eliminated from the painting. Process, to be *in statu*, 'in the act of happening' on the canvas, must thus become a possibility of form and cannot be locked within its necessity (a single outcome) by the predispositions one might have towards the painting, as discussed in the previous chapter. And while in the previous chapter, I focused on the 'formed matter paradox', referring to the stoppage of physical process,⁷⁸ in this chapter I shall focus on the metaphysical⁷⁹ stoppage. To do so, I shall analyze terms such as illusion, defragmentation and attachment, with reference not only to Kantor's ideas, but also to the philosophical thought of mysticism. And, as I believe that the illusion of a fragmentary world-view stops the metaphysical process, which for me is also a

⁷⁷ Matter on Kantor or Kierzkowski canvases set and hardens. The viewer can see only what the process 'looked' like and how matter 'responded', experiencing just the conclusion of that process, but not the process itself.

⁷⁸ Matter is still 'wriggling' after the observation, but our senses and predispositions do not allow us to see it.

⁷⁹ I will be using the term in the same sense that the physicist Krzysztof Meissner used the word 'metaphysics', that is, for something that can no longer be justified by physics itself (Meissner 2015).

transition from a previous state to another one, as with physical process, it (the Process itself) is here understood as internal and spiritual awareness. Thus tension between illusion and reality is also explored by Tadeusz Kantor in his ideas of the 'poor object', 'reality of the lowest rank' and 'reality annexation'. In this part of my thesis, I will use his findings and juxtapose them with the conclusions regarding illusion and attachment presented by two mystics and scholars, Meister Eckhart and D.T. Suzuki. I shall again argue that the Process in its metaphysical sense is a fight with the human illusion of perceiving reality as a multiplicity of still and closed forms⁸⁰ imposed on our minds through one's cognitive predispositions and assumptions concerning the nature of the universe.⁸¹

Kantor's approach to the illusion–reality tension

A closer look at Kantor's approach to understanding illusion and reality shows how he interpreted the metaphysical Process of discovering the real. The fundamental problem undertaken by Kantor in his art was that of the counterbalance between illusion and reality (Pleśniarowicz 1990: 22). It was this inability to escape the safe and regular modes of thinking that human beings are so fond of which Kantor attacked from the very beginnings of his artistic career, be it in the theatre or the gallery. As Krzysztof Pleśniarowicz suggested (1990: 23), one can find in Kantor's art and theoretical writings the following dichotomies:

⁸⁰ I will return to this idea later on.

⁸¹ Let me clarify my position on the limitations of human cognition. It is a well known fact that human observational limits are an intrinsic quality of its being (d'Espagnat 2006:218). In this thesis I refer not only to these natural restrictions, but also the obstructions one invents for oneself. The latter limit is the dangerous one, through which one sees only shadows of the real on the cave's wall.

illusion (fiction) reality

form matter

death life

consciousness object

As such, the left-hand set represents everything that is locked and fragmentary, deceptive and false, but through it one can see that which the right-hand set refers to – a mystery. Both sets need each other to show the totality of being, the undivided whole. When Kantor, as he himself remarked, '[...] from life's reality "I took out" the OBJECT and bestowed upon it the rank of an art work' (Kantor 2005a: 23), the object became, to use Pleśniarowicz's distinction, antagonistic to consciousness. That dirty cartwheel or the old fence pale⁸² has become so hostile to artistic consciousness that a new form of reality emerged, one in which art became the ordinary object and the old, used object became Art. In this respect, object and consciousness have complemented each other because these poor objects, which are so deeply rooted in the activities of ordinary life, have shown no traces of symbolic qualities (pointing beyond itself) or artistic decorativeness. Those objects were reality in its vital sense and not just mere items separated from living spaces that had crept into artistic territory by some mistake. Kantor's motto, according to which art has to be in direct contact with reality,⁸³ as suggested by Miklaszewski (2007: 17), presented the 'poor object' as a protest aimed at 'secluded holy art artefacts' of the past. Placing these 'poor objects' in the

⁸² As used by Kantor in *Odysseus' return*, 1944.

⁸³ I will touch upon this motto later, when I present Eckhart's and Suzuki's ideas and pinpoint the similarities between Kantor's credo and those two scholars' approach to life, in relation to the process of illusion unmasking, which is a metaphysical process of consciousness merged with the evolving and changing world.

area of 'ordinary status'⁸⁴ took their viewers out of the predispositions they may have had before encountering the 'object', with their consciousness in a place which was least favorable to the theatrical performance. The ultimate context of these poor objects was death, the real, actual life-threatening situation that the observer had to face in Nazi-occupied Kraków, as discussed in the introduction. The *a priori illusion* of theatrical conventionality was therefore shattered. Through Kantor's art, the viewer was no longer a passive witness of an artificially created act, but a recipient of this shattering, and as such was simultaneously perplexed and made aware of the instability of the object and the fragility of the Now-art. This was not a mere aesthetic experience, but the awareness that related intimately to the core of one's existence.

Departing from the ideas underlying Kantor's 'Independent Underground Theatre', which were aimed at illusion-shattering, it is possible to analyze the metaphysical process in relation to art. Such an approach to analysis allows me to demonstrate the theoretical background of my idea of the MMF. Thus, illusion negation confronted with the predispositions of the viewer started there, in Kantor's theatre, a medium very different from oil painting, where reality itself, as represented through the 'poor object', was first manifested in *The Return of Odysseus* of 1944 (*Powrót Odysa*).⁸⁵ Kantor wrote in his 'Independent Theatre' essays (Kantor 2005a: 55) that:

⁸⁴ The private rooms where the spectacles '*Balladyna*' and '*Odysseus return*' had been shown were such an area.

⁸⁵ Let me quote Leach here (Leach 2012b: 2-3): 'His stage designs in the late 30s and early 40s were overtly Constructivist in character, but he subsequently abandoned this aesthetics of abstraction for an aesthetics of what he called 'Poor Realism' or 'Poor Reality'. In '*Odysseus' return*', Kantor not only broke from constructivist style, but also invented the 'poor object'.

‘One does not watch theatrical play

like a painting

for aesthetical feelings,

but experiences it throughout.’

In order for a live performance to be, as Kantor remarked, ‘experienced thoroughly’, approaches to staging that were predicated on the illusionistic use of stage space, theatre curtains, scenography and lighting had to be broken down by enabling the **active** participation of the spectators in the reality of the live performance itself. ‘One cannot enter the theatre unpunished’ (*Do teatru nie wchodzi się bezkarnie*) were the famous words Kantor scribbled on the door to the apartment where the production took place in 1944, thus framing the theatre as a place where one could engage as a participant in ‘a theatre-ritual, theatre-initiation’ event.⁸⁶ This illusion-shattering pain loomed over the private apartment of Magdalena Stryjeńska, Grabowskiego Street no. 3, where the play was staged. This was because one’s life cannot be severed from the painful human condition, where, in this Nazi-occupied city, the need for clarity and light was explicit. Unfortunately, only this sort of environment can show the faintest glow and amplify it. As part of this approach, the dramatic mechanism of moral and physical consequences had to become an integral part of the performance. As such, the safety not only of the actors and the director was called into question, but also of the participants themselves. As Stangret puts it, within the ‘expand(ed)

⁸⁶ Jan Józef Szczepański, quoted by Krystyna Czerni (Czerni 2015: 57).

aestheticism and pathos of the tragedy' (Stangret 2006: 11), the participants' safety was also compromised. In *'The Return of Odysseus'*, Odysseus had to return, had to make his way through unpredictability and uncertainty in order to arrive within the reality that was awaiting him. In theatre, just as in *Informel* painting, reality's unpredictability formed the core of Kantor's artistic research. He was aware that, for the real to emerge, the emancipation of illusion needed to brush against indeterminism.

This is how, for Kantor, the idea of 'reality annexation' came to be realized as antithetical to the strict and conventional 'pretending' of everyday-ness, invoked by the reality of the drama. The viewer became the recipient of his or her own limitations and predispositions regarding the fragmentary world-view he or she holds dear. Kantor's practice of using the 'poor object', discussed in Chapter 1, was an idea that later developed into his 'Reality of the lowest rank'. This demonstrates his insistence on the need for the observer to be granted a causal role for the active introspection.⁸⁷ The passivity of the viewer was for Kantor an inadequate position, for intensively experiencing the reality of drama (Kłossowicz 1991). A connection between the public and the drama can be created by conscious participation in the event. If the consciousness is lost, the connection is lost also. In Kantor's interpretation the introspective element was therefore active, and it was needed to snap the audience out of its state of indifference, or rather passivity, and demand that they take part in the activity of the drama-shaping. In *Informel* theatre, Kantor expressed the concept of 'reality of the lowest rank', via destruction and chance. Through that concept, Kantor tried to explain the nature of the human being as a metaphysical

⁸⁷ Introspection here is understood as a reflection upon oneself, an active self-making [Boros 1969: 59] through knowing ones' interiority. Kantor also comprehended introspection as a journey into the self [2005a: 106].

process of becoming part of reality that is not so abstracted from the apparent subject-object dichotomy. The found, real and poor object in Kantor's philosophy merged the spectator with a theatrical performance that *was happening*⁸⁸ in order to withstand the viewer's passivity, and so as not to impose any ideology through the choice of object, which might conventionally function as a symbolic channel⁸⁹ (Flader-Rzeszowska 2015: 301). When Kantor talks about freedom (Miklaszewski 2007: 33), he means it as a direct opposition to the illusion of self-centrism. This idea resonates in the writings of the contemporary Polish philosopher Józef Tischner, for whom the ultimate definition of freedom is that, in order to be free, one has to oppose the illusion of being someone else (Tischner 2015: 15). I would also suggest here that Kantor's 'poor object' reflects such freedom *from the illusion* of the individual, who is looking for the self in the erroneous notions created as an important self-image. Through the 'poor object', Kantor confirms the human freedom of being, of becoming, because illusion can help one to realize one's limitations, which are imposed by reality. Through this confirmation, the distorted self-perception is exposed. That is why Kantor fought for the liberation of the theatrical space: he wanted to free performance from the redundant theatrical perception, namely from the imports of the viewer's mind, which were associating the stage with the conventionality of the drama. These theatrical conventions, taken for granted by most, were challenged by Kantor's theatre. During the *Informel* period in both painting and theatre, Kantor used the 'poor object' (matter, reality)

⁸⁸ Kłossowicz claims that Kantor choose theatre as the most 'process expressing' of the arts (Kłossowicz 1991: 97).

⁸⁹ Flader-Rzeszowska holds that the symbol through which Kantor operated had the power to point towards the covered planes of reality. Kantor merged symbolism with constructivism (Flader-Rzeszowska 2015: 2015), and I would agree that Kantor's art is weighted with symbols, but in the 'poor object' idea, just as in his matter painting, the substance, and in the 'poor's object' case a used item, did not refer to anything except itself.

in order 'to change production into spiritual manifestation and a c t i o n' (Kantor 2005a: 542). This very action is nothing less than a Process in Kantor's thought.

Kantor did not want to divide the process of art creation and lock it in a static object, whose primary function is that of fulfilling the desires⁹⁰ of art consumers. The piece of art in this sense could not be summarized in its definitive shape and form, because the Process would be stopped. In the idea of the 'reality of the lowest rank', as mentioned above, Kantor tries to address the problem of the impossibility of the expression of non-descriptive reality through the mere mimicry of that reality. In my view, however, this problem is not as clearly addressed in Kantor's *Informel* paintings, even though his theory in itself was correct. For Kantor, the art concluded in a painting, displayed to the observers in the gallery, terminated the Process because the creative process is now distilled into form, which is *only* an object for sale (Kantor 2005a: 544). Disappointed with painting as a medium, Kantor has continued to develop the idea of Process in *happenings* and *environments* (Kłossowicz 1991: 97). The theatre is more active in its interposition, and it engages with notions of live-ness, co-presence, corporeality and temporality, contrary to a painting that can only last in the frozen form (Kłossowicz 1991: 97) – except for MMF.

It is important to note that, for Kantor, Process was a spiritual function of a human being (Kantor 2005a: 544), a function that has to be reflected in art. In order to elaborate on how Kantor interpreted the connection between illusion and reality, I draw on the works of Meister Eckhart and D.T. Suzuki, both of whom are philosophers, mystics and scholars who also saw Process belonging to the spiritual. Their work allows us to clarify the problem of

⁹⁰ It is on the matters of desire to consume the work of art, which Kantor noted (Kantor 2005a: 544), where, in looking for the solution of his 'formed matter paradox', Kantor could have benefited from Eckhart's and Suzuki's thought.

illusion and its possible causes and to resolve the problems it causes in painting. Thus, in order to grasp Process from the metaphysical perspective, as expressed through the MMF idea, it is crucial to comprehend how and why theoretical approaches from such apparently disparate fields of study as art, physics, philosophy and mysticism are being combined into one coherent, all-embracing analytical approach to penetrate the problem more deeply and capture its essence more comprehensively.

Going beyond the 'formed matter paradox' of Kantor's *Informel* in MMF was made possible by widening the scope of research beyond Art itself and referring to the works of the mystics, namely Eckhart and Suzuki, where one can find answers to the questions of how and why the illusion of stillness is taken for reality itself. As confirmed by Kłossowicz, Flader-Rzeszowska and Leach, the essence of Kantor's art is largely the same as the core element of mysticism, namely human contact with reality, without any mediation (Cox 1986: 21, Urbański 2000: 106, Turner 1995: 2-4, D.T. Suzuki 2002: 1-3, Kołakowski 2004). Thus, in Kantor's art, the mere depiction of reality is an illusion through which the real must pierce through. Experiencing⁹¹ the real as poor object, matter and motion is thus a solution. The same is true for mysticism, where, in the words of Fritjof Capra:

First of all, mystics are mainly interested in the experience of reality and not in the description of this experience. They are therefore generally not interested in the analysis of such a description, and the concept of a well-defined approximation has thus never arisen in Eastern thought. (Capra 1992: 50)

⁹¹ '[...] the mystical experience of reality is an essentially non-sensory experience. When the Eastern mystics talk about "seeing", they refer to a mode of perception which may include visual perception, but which always and essentially transcends it to become a non-sensory experience of reality' (Capra 1992: 43). For a mystic, therefore, knowing is an inner (introspective) experience without the mediation of fixed ideas.

This view is confirmed by the Polish theologian Stanisław Urbański,⁹² who also suggests that mysticism is a direct road to one's own internal mystery (Urbański 2000: 110) that can be translated as a theoretical starting point for Kantor's *Informel* period. Another representative of mystic thought, the Japanese scholar D.T. Suzuki, claims that true reality lies in the depths of the self (Suzuki 2010: 218) – exactly where Kantor tried to find it in his *Informel* (2005a: 15). Moreover, similarly to Kantor, Suzuki sees that, in the act of mimicking the real, the real is reduced to a systematization, and as such it does not come close to a satisfactory interaction and relation between art and reality (Suzuki, Fromm 2000: 15).

Suzuki was a Zen Buddhist scholar, and as such he saw illusion to be a static, rigid and still form⁹³ perceived by the mind. Here, mystical thought on the essence of illusion comes directly parallel to Kantor's understanding of illusion and is opposed to reality, as in Pleśniarowicz's chart at the beginning of this Chapter. For Eckhart, the concept of illusion was directly related to **distinction**, through which the flow of reality was being stopped (Eckhart 1994: 104). Eckhart and Suzuki agree here that fixed notions and ideas about things turn what is real into an illusion in the human mind. They both also give a similar answer as to how to be free from it. Thus, if one stops one's mind on any external images, one is under the illusion of defragmented reality. In Buddhist teachings, the original mind (*Honshin*) is a 'pure' mind, unconscious of itself and free from illusion, constantly moving with reality (Suzuki 2010: 111).

⁹² Stanisław Urbański was interviewed by me personally in Warsaw 2015 (video recording available at the viva).

⁹³ '[...] all static forms being maya, that is, existing only as illusory concepts. This last idea –the impermanence of all forms – is the starting point of Buddhism. The Buddha taught that "all compounded things are impermanent", and that all suffering in the world arises from our trying to cling to fixed forms – objects, people or ideas – instead of accepting the world as it moves and changes. The dynamic world view lies thus at the very root of Buddhism' (Capra 1992: 211).

According to Suzuki, the flowing mind fulfils all functions that a mind should, without being left to conceptualize the perceived object. It goes with everything that is in motion, and that is the essence of reality. A deluded mind (*Moshin*), on the other hand, is a state in which one attaches oneself to perceived reality, defragmenting it into separate objects and approaching them as if they were emancipated from the flux of reality. One can notice that what stops the flow of reality in Suzuki's mysticism is an illusion of defragmentation and separateness. Kantor's reality (flow)–illusion (still form) tension works on the same principle, namely that the real cannot be locked into static form.⁹⁴ Surprisingly, the cause of an illusionary world-view is exactly the same for Suzuki and Kantor, namely intellectualization.⁹⁵ Kantor claimed that, once freed from the hindering yoke of intellect, imagination could penetrate into the depths of reality (Kantor 2005a: 168). Without it, for Kantor, art reception that is based on intellectual cognition alone is merely consumption (Miklaszewski 2007: 183). Matter for Kantor was also a substance that escapes intellectual attempts to lock it within a definition, and as such, its fluidity was given through it being non-defined. What, then, does intellectualisation do to perceived ever-flowing phenomena? Suzuki claims that '[...] the intellect divides and discriminates, resists and rejects, chooses and decides [...]' (Suzuki 2010: 144). For both Suzuki and Kantor, the intellect is thus a force that shackles the human being in the perceiving of static forms, because it demands a response to phenomena, and so the mind thinks of those phenomena as abstracted from

⁹⁴ This principle is expressed through the whole body of Kantor's *Texts* (2004, 2005a, b). Cf. Kantor 2005a: 19-20, 177, 182-186, 482-484.

⁹⁵ 'Intellectualization' in this context is different from intellect. For Kantor, intellect was a prerequisite element of art (Miklaszewski 2007: 76). Suzuki also points out that he is not anti-intellectualist, but what he objects to is the usage of the intellect as a mandatory cognitive tool, or taking intellect as the ultimate reality (Suzuki 2000: 49). Intellectualization in both Kantor's and Suzuki's cases can be seen as conceptualization, and as such can be defined as forming notions about reality and holding that those notions correspond *directly* to what reality is.

the moving flow.⁹⁶ That is the crux of Kantor's understanding of matter, since for him, matter was a formless substance that intellect cannot label. It is precisely such labelling that Suzuki describes as a 'stopping of reality' (Suzuki 2010: 98), in which the Process gets stopped in the mind, which leads to confusion. The mind is formless, according to Suzuki (Suzuki 2000: 33), a notion that also corresponds to the idea of formless matter seen as synonymous with life, present in Kantor's thought. All discrimination that sprang out of the disturbed mind, as described by Suzuki, was forced on us by our upbringing, culture and religion. It stops Process in its tracks by labelling and attaching it to what one is experiencing, in accordance to these culturally conditioned predispositions. The physicist Fritjof Capra holds a similar view to Suzuki:

Our tendency to divide the perceived world into individual and separate things and to experience ourselves as isolated egos in this world is seen as an illusion which comes from our measuring and categorizing mentality. (Capra 1992: 29)

⁹⁶ This relation was explored by Bohm, when he presented his argument regarding process, intellect and wholeness: '[...] the key point to keep in mind is that the process has no definable aspect that is absolutely fixed. Intelligent perception is of course needed, for moment to moment, to discern those aspects that should properly change slowly and those that should properly change rapidly, as one works in the "art form" of creation of ideas about "the totality of all that is"'. And he adds: 'We have to be very alert and careful here, for we tend to try to fix the essential content of our discussion in a particular concept or image, and talk about this as if it were a separate "thing" that would be independent of our thought about it. We fail to notice that in fact this "thing" has by now become only an image, a form in the overall process of thought, i.e., response of memory, which is a residue of past perception through the mind (either someone else's or one's own). Thus, in a very subtle way, we may once again be trapped in a movement in which we treat something originating in our own thought as if it were a reality originating independently of this thought' (Bohm 2002: 81), Intellect here, as for Suzuki or Kantor, has its usage, namely to catch ever-moving reality in the act of change, but not to intellectualize the separate phenomena and regard them as real.

According to Suzuki, any 'view' or 'thought' is the outcome of the intellect. Similarly, to the 'particular why,⁹⁷' as expressed in Eckhartian mysticism, intellect may limit one's responses to stimuli because intellect may function only within the spectrum of very rigid borders. By clinging to these 'views' or 'thoughts' and perceiving them as the innermost part of one's self, the human being confuses the programme installed in his or her brain for an actual reality. It is also important to note that Suzuki does not mean that intellect does not have its uses. However, he qualifies this by stating that, as soon as one's intellect encounters something outside the reach of its binary-programmed response, it has to be dropped in order to tap into the creative unconscious. That is how the metaphysical process continues, without disturbance and discrimination. For him, to go beyond illusion is to stop discriminating. To do so, one must not judge by 'stopping' the Process because we are limited in our understanding (Okumura 2010: 148). Therefore, the processual nature of reality, in a metaphysical sense, might be understood as detaching oneself from fixed notions that stop the flow of reality in our minds. Kantor, like Suzuki, Bohm, Capra and Eckhart, tried to express this processual nature. As already noted, Kantor attempted this through his happenings and what he called *environments*, after leaving the *Informel* process expression unanswered on the canvas. How, then, can MMF help one detach oneself from fixed notions and a defragmented world-view imposed on us by our conditioning? What is detachment, and how can it help the expression of Process on the canvas? British scholar and Eckhart translator Oliver Davies writes as follows about the Eckhartian notion of detachment:

⁹⁷ 'The just person seeks nothing through their works, for those whose works are aimed at a particular end or who act with a particular Why in view, are servants and hirelings' (Eckhart 1994: 145). This passage had a profound effect on my painting philosophy, initiating the *portrait of a Process* and MMF research seven years ago.

‘Detachment’ is simultaneously freedom from a libidinous attachment to things through our appetites and a cognitive freedom: that is, liberation from the images of physical things which serve to restrict the mind and alienate it from its own transcendental possibilities. (Eckhart 1994: XXIX)

The most striking part of this definition is the claim that cognitive freedom is a freedom from ‘images of physical things’, that hamper the mind from its ‘possibilities’. As I have shown in Chapter 1, one can define a possibility as an occurrence with a chance of happening < 1 . Furthermore, it has to be understood in the act of happening or before the occurrence takes place, so it must still be open to chance. Thus, detachment, as defined by Davies, corresponds in the same context to physical and now also to metaphysical probability. And since it is the immanent characteristic of both physical and metaphysical reality, the Process that probability expresses in physics and metaphysics is an instance of insight into the core of the phenomena. What hampers the flow of reality, when it is understood as Process and probability of being, is the intrusion of plural ‘external images’ and one’s attachment towards what one perceives as defragmented from ever-moving change, and one’s clinging to those images as if they were a direct description of the real. That is an illusion, as has been argued by the mentioned scientists and philosophers alike.⁹⁸ I also believe that this is the exact problem referred to by both Kantor and Suzuki, where the illusion of representations has to be transcended (Kantor 2004: 357) by the awareness of the real. The ‘stoppage of reality’ is, in both Kantor and Suzuki, antithetical to going with its

⁹⁸ Eckhart (1994), Suzuki (2002, 2010), Kierkegaard (2009: 254), Plato (2008), Boros (1986), Bodhidharma (2009), Heller (2014a, 2014b), Capra (1992), Omnès (2002), d’Espagnat (2006), Stapp (2011), Polkinghorne (2009), Fromm and Suzuki (2009) and many more.

flow (Suzuki and Fromm 2000: 20). One may ask, therefore, can detachment from fixed notions (and forms on a canvas) help Process expression in oil painting?

Detachment and MMF

How, then, can one reflect and express a Process that is not shaped by the conditioning⁹⁹ of the observer or the artist, including myself, into their judging of a painting? How can Kantor's 'formed matter paradox' and necessary form be nullified on the canvas, physically and metaphysically? The answer, I believe, lies with Eckhart and D.T. Suzuki. Both prescribe detachment as a practice to conquer discriminatory world-views that are acting to stop the Process in our minds.¹⁰⁰ Detachment from the Necessary Form is as an internal exercise and a reflection on the nature of physical and metaphysical Process. In the light of the thought of these mystics, it thus appears that the problem of a fragmented reality derives from the observer, who judges the observed 'object' in accordance with his or her predispositions. The objective reality itself, seen through such a discriminatory (self-centred) prism, becomes an illusion. Thus, the problem resides within the artist's mind and consists in our inability to go beyond the intellectual dichotomy of the binary judgement outcome as observed by many thinkers (see Suzuki 2010: 415; Eckhart 1994: 104; Fromm 1993: 3; Nietzsche 2008: 110; Pascal 2004: 56; Kant 2009: 70; Shunryū Suzuki 2011: 25; Jung 2015: 134; Kierkegaard

⁹⁹ Bohm and Peat explored a relationship between conditioning and artistic perception, and came to the conclusion that the artist's perception is modified by the programming of his or her own predispositions (Bohm and Peat 2010: 60).

¹⁰⁰ As does Bohm: 'Only when intelligence operates in a free and creative fashion can the mind be free of its attachment to rigid structures of category and is then able to engage in the formation of new orders' (Bohm and Peat 2010: 110).

2009: 167-169 and Kantor 2005a: 544). In the words of the physicist and philosopher David Bohm,

[...] our thought is fragmented, mainly by our taking it for an image or model of 'what the world is'. The divisions in thought are thus given disproportionate importance, as if they were a widespread and pervasive structure of independently existent actual breaks in 'what is', rather than merely convenient features of description and analysis. Such thought was shown to bring about a thoroughgoing confusion that tends to permeate every phase of life, and that ultimately makes impossible the solution of individual and social problems. (Bohm 2002: 34)

Later, Bohm concludes:

So any notion of totality based on a fixed and permanent distinction between thought and reality must collapse when applied to the totality. (Bohm 2002: 76)

The German psychoanalyst Erich Fromm, who was fascinated by Buddhist teachings and worked with D.T. Suzuki, distinguishes two modes of existence, namely *being* and *having*. This contrast may help explain why observation can be a creative act (Arnheim 1997: 43, Bohm and Peat 2010: 54), but how, on the other hand, it gives rise to a distinction between processes and things, and abstracts them from the whole to judge.

Having refers to things and things are fixed and describable. Being refers to experience, and human experience is in principle not describable. (Fromm 2013: 75)

'It' can be described because 'it' is fixed; an object has such attributes as physical dimensions, mass or chemical structure, and as such it is a mere *thing* in the eye of someone who is in the 'having' mode. Its form might be pleasing, neutral or unpleasant, but as an '*it*', seen through a 'having' mode, it is always defragmented, abstracted from the whole and treated as an unconnected thing in itself,¹⁰¹ with the Process having been lost from view. In the 'being' mode it is the opposite, for one is experiencing life as a constant change, where phenomena are not separated from the whole of existence. The '*it*' disappears, and in its place appear interconnections. One orients oneself towards being, in which there is neither distinction¹⁰² nor having.¹⁰³ In a latter term, a desire to have means *to possess*.¹⁰⁴ Material goods, people and/or ideological artistic convictions can also be (and usually are) possessed. To have means '(using) an external object in order to exist, in order to be oneself as he or she wishes' (Fromm 1993: IX). It means striving for that reality one thinks must be in order to be a true self with the help of the 'object' that constitutes the self. Thus, an object is to be understood here as a being that can be owned, like one owns a book or a coat. When one intellectualizes this *thing*, one tends to evaluate the object that is contemplated upon, describing it in binary categories, creating the discrimination that one is so accustomed to. But then, as already discussed, the nature of this world is continual movement, constantly becoming anew, an ever-going Process. And since the ever-going flow cannot be described in the same way as *things* are described, Kantor was unable to express it in the medium of

¹⁰¹ William G. Pollard presented similar idea, based on Martin Buber's philosophy of 'I and Thou'.

¹⁰² For the Spanish mystic, Teresa of Ávila, self-knowledge equals knowledge of God. It is a union in which all distinctions are lost (Turner 1998: 142).

¹⁰³ The most profound phrase I came across regarding desire and distinction is found in Kierkegaard's 'Works of Love', where he says: 'Small-mindedness has fastened itself tightly to a very particular shape and form which it calls its own; only this does it seek, and only this can it love' (Kierkegaard 2010: 254).

¹⁰⁴ Denys Turner, the British philosopher and theologian, argues that Eckhartian thought of 'the critique of desire' operates on similar assumptions (Turner 1998: 183).

oil painting, in which, once contemplated, the Process is closed and becomes a necessity. Since the aim of Kantor's *Informel* was to show the raw, always-going processes of life by depicting the plasticity of matter, in my understanding his error lies exactly in fixing matter into Necessary Form on the canvas. Process itself has no decisive form until it has been measured, and it continues flowing until judged upon, hence the Necessary Form.

Thus, according to Fromm, human perception creates illusion, which lies in the attachment to and defragmentation of reality by means of its intellectualization into separate and disconnected *units*. This then stops the Process in the mind of the human being, or, to use Fromm's terminology, through the 'having' mode rather than the 'being' mode. The description of reality is presented to the human being through cultural conditioning: in effect, the person mistakes such a pre-conditioned portrayal of reality for the objective reality itself. It is through the metaphysical thought of the aforementioned philosophers and scholars, who advise detachment, that the metaphysical aspect of Process is addressed, making the Process possible to conceptualise and to be expressed through MMF.

Observation and defragmentation of reality: the theoretical background of MMF

The basic theoretical question underlying the present thesis is the relation of the observing 'ego' to artistic creation. How does the very act of observation influence the Process on canvas? And if so, can the word 'observation' be given a pejorative meaning? Observation is a complex process, which can be described and interpreted in several ways. Importantly, a clear distinction has to be made between prolific 'observing' as a creative act, as understood

after Bohm, de Mello, Fromm, Suzuki and Eckhart, and the self-centered, unproductive 'defragmenting' of the whole. Observation in the first interpretation of the term is a relation between observed and the observer, occurring without vicious evaluation and comparison. The simple, yet to the point definition of observation in the physical sense can be found in d'Espagnat (2006: 451), where the author characterises it as: a 'selective turning one's attention to such and such particular'. One acknowledges, through the sense of sight, the surroundings. The observation, it has to be noted, shows us the derived world after the measurements, which is not a recording of what is there independently of us. However, some form of the real exists for the phenomena to be based on, because we human beings do not constitute the whole of reality by ourselves. MMF reflects this point.

To undertake a detailed analysis of the rich and varied literature concerning dichotomous judgement as an inherent feature of observation would mean going beyond the scope of this work. For the present, what is relevant is to show the connection between 'what *should be* on the canvas' with 'what is'. Kantor also wrote about the problem of the 'attached' observer in his text that promotes Process in art and not its finitude constituted in the 'art object' (Kantor 2005a: 544). In Kantor's words:

[the work of art is subjected to] ... ambiguous r e c e p t i o n (in which the contemplation and admiration mix with snobbery, ignorance or condemnation) just to s e e I I it.

Kantor's instincts were thus leading him away from *Informel* painting to happening and *environments*. Though, as discussed earlier, Kantor himself was unable to solve this problem on canvas, in the present thesis I am arguing that the 'formed matter paradox' of Necessary Form can be resolved, providing that the painting will be in all its forms at once, and that

discriminatory and comparative observation is eliminated. This is an exercise in detachment for both the painter and the onlooker, executed in order to make the painting an event in which Process, from a physical and a metaphysical point of view, is depicted without being locked into necessity (single outcome). The viewer and the painter are freed from an illusion of appearances¹⁰⁵ and stillness. Infinite possibility¹⁰⁶ thus arises.

The fragmented character of human perception, through which the mind can only 'use' what it sees and then consume it in order to please the desire to self-sustain one's fictions, was noted by the mystics and by Kantor himself. They postulate that one needs to stop discriminating in order to go beyond illusion. To do so one must not judge, because our understanding is limited. To express the Process, understood to be constant flow and flux, with probability and chance as its core, on the canvas in MMF, I propose to avoid defragmentation. And since defragmentation starts with the discriminatory effects of observation in order to reflect the nature of the matter/process, the cognitive function of visual observation must be limited so that there is no referencing by the observer of his or her inclinatory views. Physical observation must therefore be eliminated from the MMF in the stage of creation, which involves the painter himself/herself, as much as it must be eliminated from the stage of reception, which involves the observer/audience. This is done to prevent physical breaches of the superposition of MMF, thus allowing the form to exist conceptually in all its forms simultaneously. In the metaphysical sense, this manoeuvre allows one to depart from the persistent habit of freezing matter on the canvas into fixed and finite *forms* according to one's dispositions and preferences. In MMF, a radical

¹⁰⁵ According to the Zen mystic Bodhidharma, this is an essence of detachment. 'What mortals see are delusions. True vision is detached from seeing' (Bodhidharma 2010: 55).

¹⁰⁶ According to Suzuki (2010: 156), infinite possibility is the source of creativity.

departure from intellectualization and defragmentation is achieved through the Dimitto technique of painting.

The observer in the physical world and the metaphysical dimension of event

Thus, as discussed previously, if an observation is to become a truly creative act, it must not be a passive reception. This very thought was explored by Tadeusz Kantor in his underground theatre, where the observer was forced to question the boundaries between his or her predispositions and expectations regarding theatrical space, time and objects. The idea of an observer, passively and safely studying phenomena and receiving theatrical performance as an outsider and an objective witness, was shattered by Kantor's art. The notion of art touching the real so directly, as seen in Kantor's ideas of the 'poor object', or 'reality of the lowest rank', can be considered as parallel to the concepts of quantum mechanics (static objects are but an illusion of the senses: only relation and interconnection exist) and the findings of mysticism (both East and West) regarding the nature of the observer and the observed and their inter-relationship. As mentioned earlier, the search for answers as to what matter/process is, and how to express it on the canvas without redundant Necessary Form, led me to an investigation of quantum mechanics and mysticism. Importantly, I do not aim to acquire a full and comprehensive insight into the disciplines of quantum mechanics or mysticism, and cannot claim expertise in these fields of thought. However, what I am aiming for here is to draw on those aspects of these fields of thought that relate most specifically to my thinking through of, and practice-led investigations into, the problem of the Process. This has allowed me to regard the problem from different points of view other than painting alone, which can in turn also shed new

light on painting. In the present work I am arguing that, if a painter studies matter/process from different perspectives and knows how it is seen in physics (as energy in motion), and also in metaphysics (the concern with the illusion of fragmented reality), even though this painter may still be limited by his or her individual pre-conceptions and prejudices, he or she will have a more complete picture of reality.

Thus, to approach such a holistic picture, the explanation of how the observer and observed relate to each other in MMF is based on my research into aspects of quantum mechanics and mysticism. According to the American theoretical physicist John Archibald Wheeler, the observer is a part of the observed, and as such, he or she is embroiled, implicated, essential and irreplaceable in this relation of knowing (Wheeler 1973: 244). Therefore, the observer and what is being looked at (measured) are directly related. Mysticism also implies a direct connection here, arguing against notions like positivistic realism.¹⁰⁷ Thus, in quantum mechanics the observer plays an enormous role, not only as a knower, but also as an involved and active being, implicit in the act of 'deriving the reality' from its possibilities. The act of measuring¹⁰⁸ in quantum mechanics is set to choose¹⁰⁹ the

¹⁰⁷ In the words of Capra:

In Eastern mysticism, this universal interwovenness always includes the human observer and his or her consciousness, and this is also true in atomic physics. At the atomic level, 'objects' can only be understood in terms of the interaction between the processes of preparation and measurement. The end of this chain of processes lies always in the consciousness of the human observer. Measurements are interactions which create 'sensations' in our consciousness – for example, the visual sensation of a flash of light, or of a dark spot on a photographic plate – and the laws of atomic physics tell us with what probability an atomic object will give rise to a certain sensation if we let it interact with us. (Capra 1992: 152)

¹⁰⁸ I am not arguing here that an active and aware observer is needed for the determination of reality, as some physicists might have suggested (e.g. Capra), since any measuring device can act upon it, but then again, the measuring device is set up by the observer with a particular frame of mind that will be involved in the observation and interpretation.

¹⁰⁹ 'Observer is needed to determine the position of electron and well established momentum, **the observation itself creates** the reality of the electron' (Davies 2000: XII).

one outcome from probabilities and tendencies. Werner Heisenberg postulates that the transformation from what is possible to what will be definite is decided when the observation is happening (Heisenberg 2000: 22). The observer cooperates with nature in 'pulling' the reality out of the smeared cloud of possible realities, whereby they do not magically create reality from something that is not potentially there. By measuring the real, which is characterised by its potentialities, the observer is posing a question to nature: 'will my experience be this or that?' (Stapp 2014). After a measurement, the question raised by the observer is answered by nature, yes or no, in accordance with its probabilistic attribute. Between the question and the answer lays a state called superposition, which is undetermined yes and no simultaneously. There is a certain probability for 'yes' and a certain probability for 'no', depending on the statistics for the given phenomena. The observer and nature do not know what will be the answer. Before the measurements, the state is in between. It can be conceptualised only through its potentialities. And potentialities are the root of what the Process is, namely a successive flux. Potentialities exist instead of hard matter one can act upon (Stapp 2007: 128). They must be conceptualized as 'travelling' between cause and effect, not becoming either of these. Thus, a painting in superposition is a question asked about a painting form on that painting, without nature's answer. A form of such painting exists in its potentiality of all the forms nature holds for it. Through his *Informel* paintings, Kantor created something we already 'know' (observed and measured). Through MMF, I create an *idea we could potentially know* by its form. This is an active, continuous event.

By including the observer, Kantor's *Informel* was 'frozen' through the act of observation with its inherent predispositions towards self-satisfaction, of which Kantor was aware (2005a: 544). The chance and probability were thus done up to a sole result, to a

specific painting, to a single interpretation that could only cling to what the programme pre-set in the observer's mind said about its reception.¹¹⁰ The probabilistic character of matter and that of the Process was therefore stopped, giving rise to Kantor's 'formed matter paradox'. MMF solves this dilemma, for it does not allow the observer to influence the multiplicity of its physical form, nor is it exposed to the onlooker's personal predispositions and individual taste.¹¹¹ The Process is therefore still within the MMF conceptual event potentiality in its full, ever-changing characteristic, through which the observer's binary judgement¹¹² is replaced by the reflective insight into the nature of moving phenomena, which fully complements the participant, whether painter or bystander, without referring to his or her artistic or philosophical understanding. The observer of the Process is thus free to think about the work of art metaphysically, for MMF does not prompt one's mind to reduce a multiplicity of possibilities to a single form.

Practical part in relation to my theoretical research and MMF's practical validation on the canvas

According to David Bohm, as in science, artists cannot simply depict what pleases them or propose a world-view that is in accord with what they can tolerate and like. This is because such a view stops the movement of creative thought and the Process itself (Bohm 2004:

¹¹⁰ The individual, the observer who finds an object pleasing, is to a considerable extent part of his or her training, upbringing and so on according to philosopher Norwood Russell Hanson (Hanson 1963: 571).

¹¹¹ Bohm has distinguished between a 'creative state of mind' that develops new orders and a 'mechanical state of mind' that only can imitate and holds only to notions that are dear to and secure for oneself (Bohm 2004: 20-21).

¹¹² In this sense, judgment means attachment, and that is an illusion of fragmented reality, which stops the mind from seeing the process.

128). MMF is free from any particular world-view and its interpretation, for, rather than a static form, it proposes a movement in which there is no rigid difference between the forms one contemplates. True form is not a static relic of reality; it moves, and MMF expresses its movement. In the light of discoveries in quantum physics, even the physical forms must be considered as a constant process and motion. The object, according to Bohm, has to be treated as a pattern of movement rather than a solid form. Also, the observable and the observer cannot be separated as autonomous entities; we are *how* we observe, and if we observe in a mechanical and passive way, we stand separated from the Process of the whole by the Necessary Form. And, as there are no sharp divisions in physical or metaphysical conceptualisations of reality, this idea has been accepted in MMF. Thus, MMF catches movement as it is defined by Bohm, not only in the sense of the motion of the object through space, but also as a change, development and evolution both within the object itself and outside it (Bohm 2004: 96), before the structure arises and the process is stopped by the mechanical perception of the passive observer.

As a result of this research-in-practice, I was able to create a painting technique that would allow me to achieve MMF. Therefore, to combat this idle reception and fragmentary judgement and to prevent the work of art from being subjected to the conditioned opinion of the observer, including the artist himself/herself, I have been creating paintings in a dark room with my eyes blindfolded constantly by an eye mask.



Fig. 15. The oil paint-stained eye mask I have used

through the years, 2016.

I have called this technique *Dimitto*, which is taken from the Latin word *dimitto*, meaning ‘to let go’, or in other words, ‘to detach’. *Dimittonism* is a painting technique that I have conceptualized myself in order to paint without *a priori* vision, that is, without that action being guided by some particular form, shape, contrast or composition in mind. *Dimitto* is therefore the practical consequence of my studies on the nature of Process, implemented directly in the painting’s inception. The *Dimitto* painting technique is a tool formulated upon the theoretical basis of enquiries into matter and the implicit tension between reality and illusion. This is evident in the practical dimension of the investigation presented in this thesis. *Dimitto* exists as a participatory bridge between my theoretical deliberations and painting itself, that is undirected by my whims. This method of painting has been practised by me for the last seven years, without, however, its culmination in MMF until the present. *Dimitto* is also a metaphysical exercise in introspection and negation of the Necessary Form, which comes into being by one’s predispositions. As discussed, the Necessary Form arises in the mind of the beholder, who treats the painting as an object abstracted from all the other

processes around it, including him- or herself, and who intellectualizes its 'bits' in order to pass upon it a discriminatory judgment (the binary of like/dislike). Physical process is stopped by such a mind, for it does not realize the ever-changing character of matter. It is through the dictatorship of the observer's pre-set cognitive program that the metaphysical part of the process is also stopped, as I have argued in the previous sections of this Chapter. So, what does stop the Process, whether it is physical or metaphysical, is observation, with its inherent filters of 'particular why', of 'fragmentation' and 'discrimination'. Thus, Dimitto is the first step in removing the observer and allowing for a true process painting representation.

The Dimitto technique of painting and the *portrait of a Process*

Adopting the Dimitto technique was necessary in order to transcend the *a priori* vision. It relates to the particular *painting* my mind tends to strive for while creating a picture, and it serves to detach myself from the shackling structures of this particularity, through which any other painting possibilities would have been eradicated from the canvas except *the one painting* I desired the most. This relation I have discovered thanks to the study of mysticism, and subsequently as a consequence of the examination of quantum mechanics. As a result of this research path, it has appeared that Dimitto can be used to engage with Kantor's 'formed matter paradox'. The fundamental problem here has been answering the question: How can one use the Dimitto as a technique of painting? Both during painting, as well as while handling the painting, I solved it by using a blindfold to detach myself from conditioned notions that are usually transferred onto a picture. I blindfolded myself while

painting it, so no correction or 'aiming at' a specific result might take me over. In this way, I can become free and my creation is no longer enslaved by the desire to get rid of faults and the conscious striving to be free of desires. Dimitto is practised so the painter may learn to accept reality as it presents itself, be it good or bad. My modified tactical vest or blindfold revealed a fear in me that I did not know before: that of losing control over the painting. I have feared these two objects for three years, but with time I became aware of this horror: although the dread did not disappear, I have realised that it was there. Alas, I was not in fear, I felt fear. So now, when I practise Dimitto, I am not in fear, I just feel it, I see it. Although it is there, the difference between the two modes is like that between nothing and everything. I am not afraid of losing control, as I lost it long ago.

The first stage of detachment was an exercise in letting go of the drawing, understood as a set structure, a finished form and a solid status quo. Therefore, I have made a drawing on the canvas that I have purposefully left unfinished in order to prevent myself from experiencing the egocentric feeling of 'correctness' derived from finished work, a feeling that would stimulate the center of reward in my brain. In the act of not-finishing a drawing or a painting, I deprived myself of any artistic fulfilment resulting from confirming the quality of my work, its adherence to the pre-conceptualized form I had in my mind. In refraining from approving the *correctness* of my drawing (Fromm 1993: 3), I have made the ascetic choice, one that eliminated the self-congratulatory approach from my own perception of artwork. The philosopher Alice von Hildebrand describes asceticism as a 'free choice of sacrifice' (2009). I would wholeheartedly agree with this definition and apply it to my concept of Dimitto, summarising it as an ascetic practice of detachment, achieved through selfless brushstrokes.

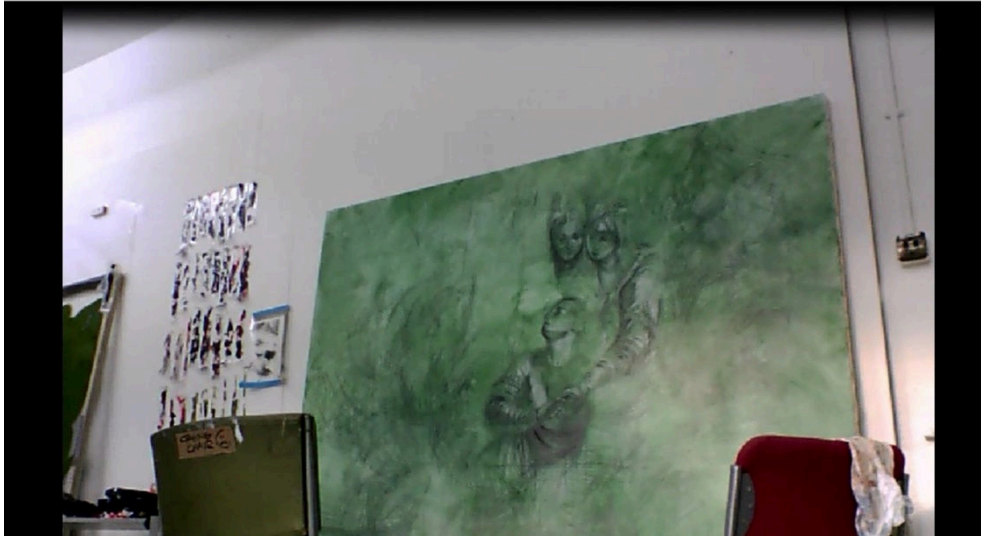


Fig. 15. First stages of

detachment (drawing/form), pencil, chalk and oil on canvas, 2015.



Fig. 16. Continuation of

detachment. Fig. 2



Fig. 17. Continuation of

detachment. Fig. 2

Pain arising from a sort of a loss became present while painting blindfold. At the end, the white paint seen here on the photos, documenting my striving for detachment, was covered with black paint (also painted blindfold), and then the picture was taken out of its frame and destroyed in the final act of Dimitto, the liberation from form.



Fig. 18. 'Detachment from

form'. Canvas before its destruction.

Subsequently, I prepared the theoretical and practical basis for my next painting. This time, I wanted to paint in a more conventional way, that is, without blindfolding. I started from the standard sketches and studies of a human form. I have therefore drawn a couple of standard human form studies.



Fig. 19. Preliminary sketch to human form detachment

(old man) 2015. Pencil on paper, 29.7 x 42.0 cm.

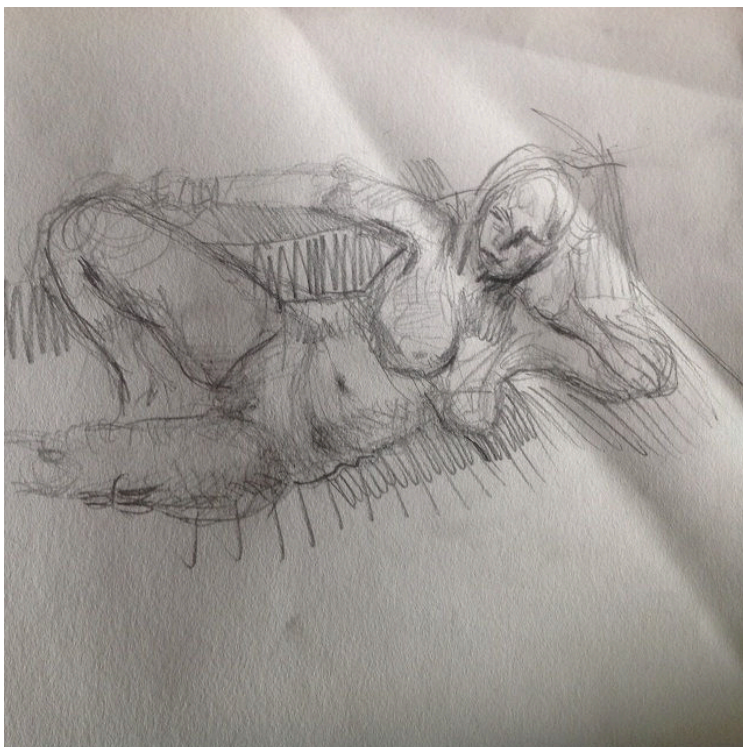


Fig. 20. Preliminary sketch to human form

detachment (old woman) 2015. Pencil on paper, 29.7 x 42.0 cm.

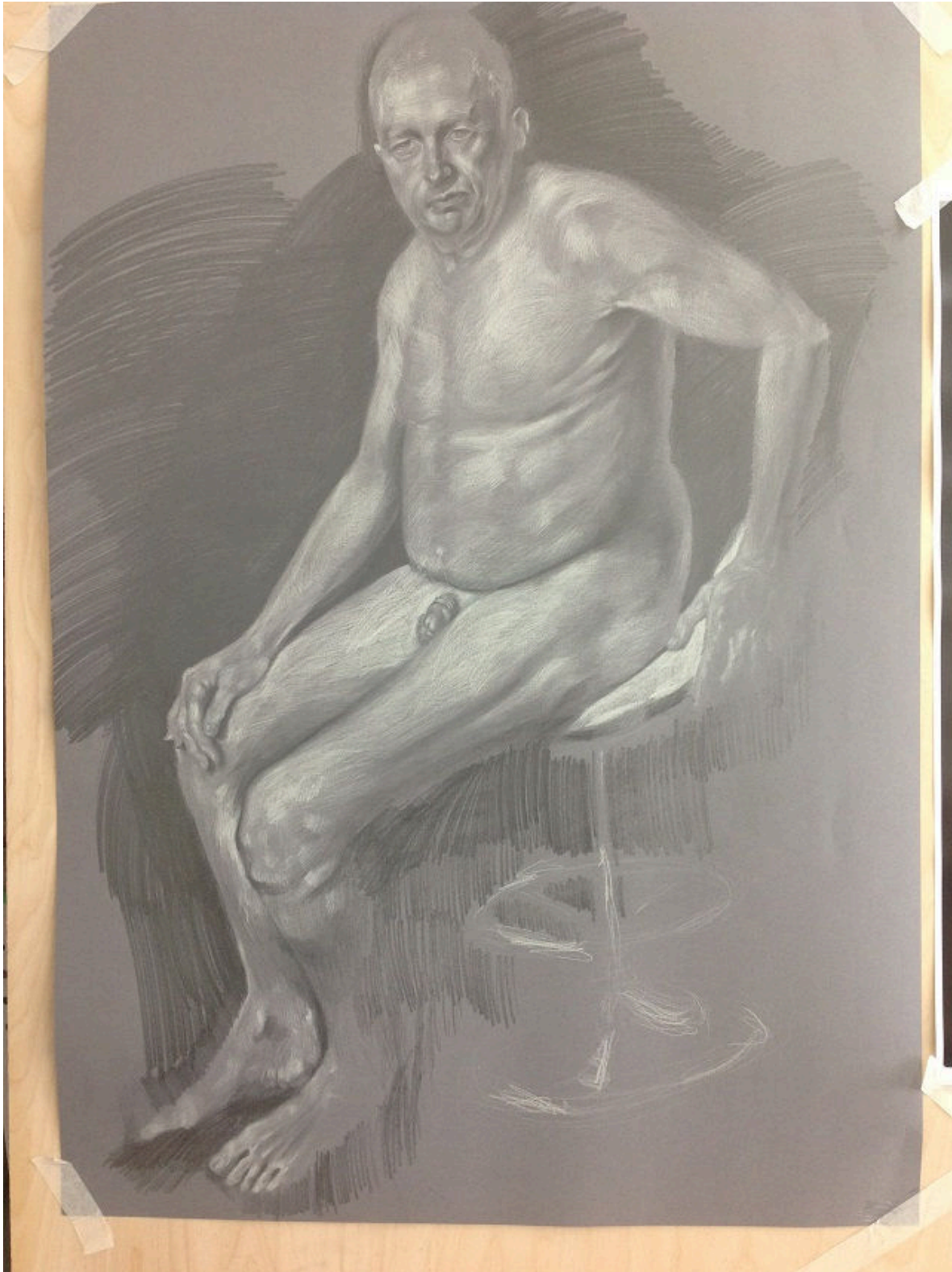


Fig. 21. Study of an old man (form detachment) 2015. Pencil and chalk on paper, 59.4 x 84.1 cm.



Fig. 22. Study of an old womn (form detachment) 2015. Pencil and chalk on paper, 59.4 x 84.1 cm.



Fig. 23. Study of an old

womn (form detachment/ head detail).

To follow the convention, I decided on a classical diptych formula. Thus, I chose to paint two very different human forms, one of the complete stranger (to capture the physical human condition), whose name I would never know, the other of my good friend (to capture the metaphysical human condition), whose name I will not mention for ethical reasons. I have approached several homeless people, presenting myself and asking their permission to photograph them with a view to using them as models to base my picture upon their physicality. To make my point clearer, out of a series of pictures of human forms, I have finally settled for this particular body, as it was the most striking in its physicality.

The body of a homeless person becomes here an unlovable 'object', as discussed by Kierkegaard, who claimed that the 'unlovable object' is the only being that has to be related to one personally. I set out to amalgamate my own self with this person, and I have achieved it introspectively, through the brushstroke, for as a painter I have to become what I paint, and even, dare I say, to love what I encounter and transfer that feeling onto the painting, so that nature will become a picture. This picture I have painted in alla prima technique (to differentiate both canvases even further from each other), that is, painting on wet canvas with no layers, decisive brushwork, and looser and quicker hand movements, often bearing the visible markings of paint.



Fig. 25. Preliminary drawing for first painting

detachment exercise (detail) 2016, chalk and oil on canvas, 180 x 160 cm.

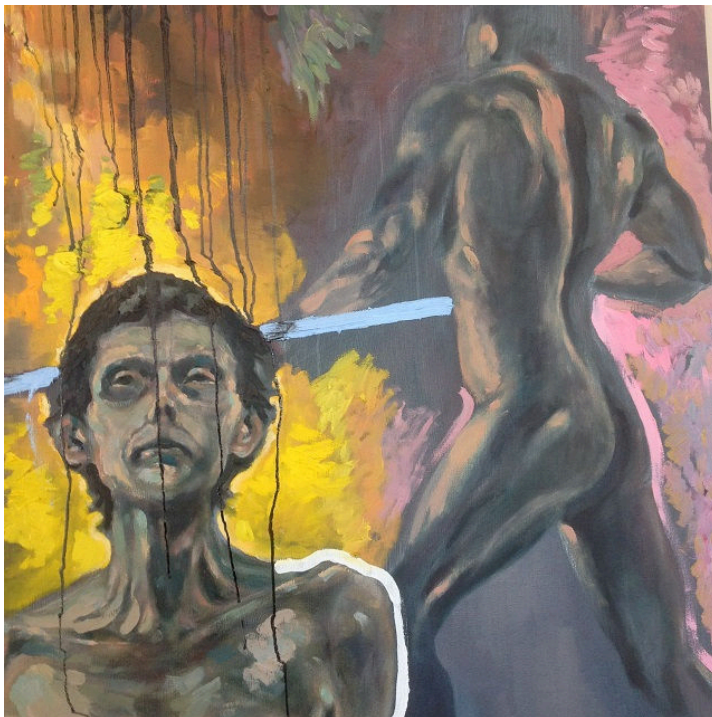


Fig. 26. Unfinished first painting detachment exercise

(detail) 2016, chalk and oil on canvas, 180 x 160 cm.

By contrast, my other painting, which I was creating at the same time, represents a more metaphysical human condition. As noted by Dietrich von Hildebrand in his axiological texts (2016: 144), the ontological value of the spiritual 'possesses great metaphysical beauty'. I have tried to capture the essence of the spiritual in my friend's pose and gesture, and later, to juxtapose it to a purely corporeal manner of representation, seen in the first painting. This was meant to balance out the altogether physical aspect captured in the first canvas, so that the two pictures can be related to each other in a complementary way, within a diptych propinquity. To further intensify the difference between the physical and metaphysical aspects of the human condition, I painted this painting using grisaille (grey monochromatic underpainting) and finished it off in standard thick-over-thin technique (working on layers), in direct contrast to the alla prima technique used on the first canvas. The alla prima way of painting always felt to me most intuitive, without unnecessary intellectual fencing inside the painter. The layered, thick-over-thin technique, more precise, with colour formed through its transparency, rather than the accurate tone's bravado of alla prima, demands patience and a planned execution.

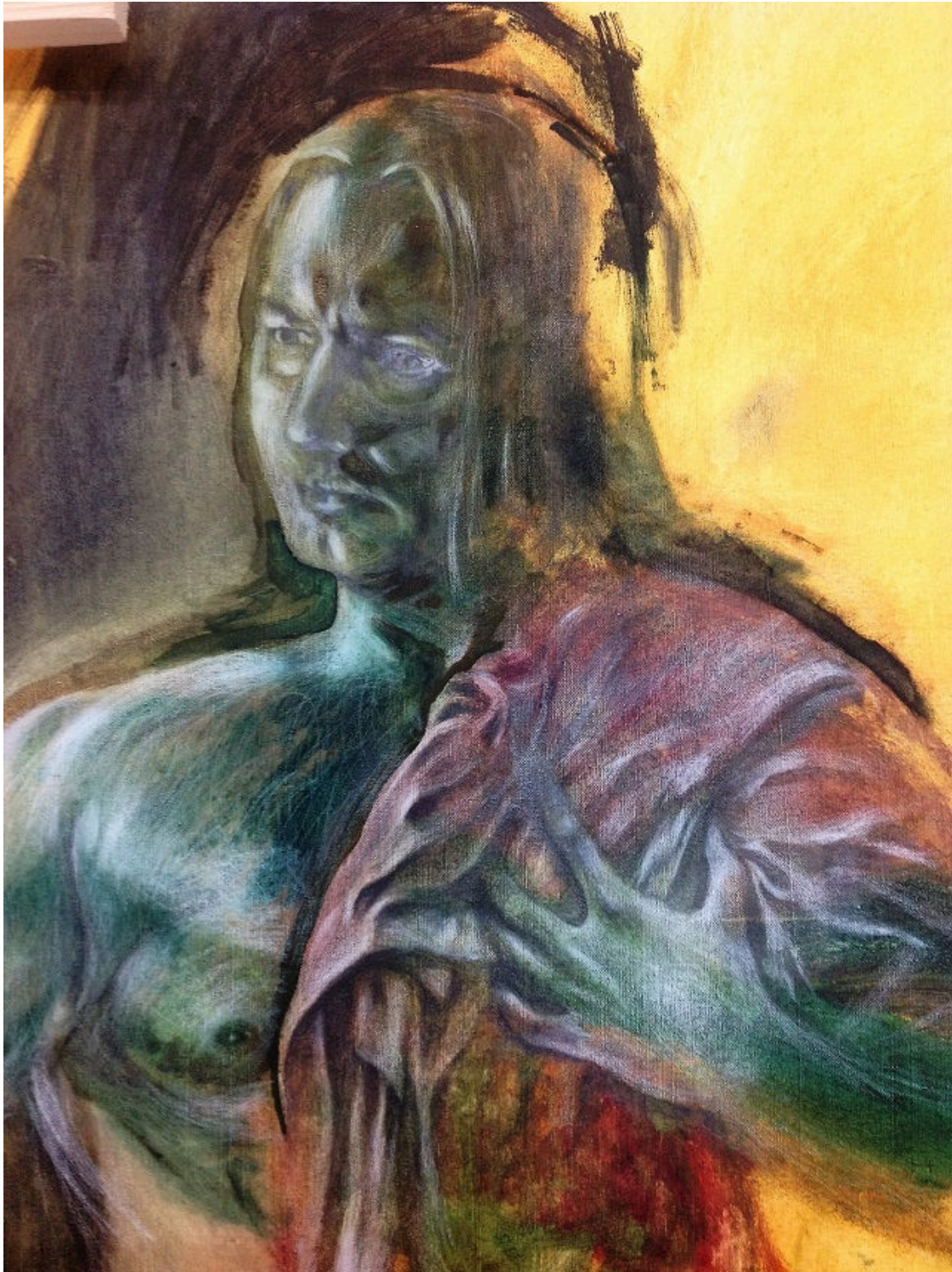


Fig. 27.

Preliminary drawing and underpainting, second painting 2016, chalk and oil on canvas, 150 x 120 cm.



Fig. 28. Second layer (unfinished,

second painting 2016, 150 x 120 cm.

In order to deprive myself of the pleasure of viewing the finished form, before the first canvas was completed, I painted over it blindfold. This way, I aimed at the detachment from my painting pre-conceptions, the ultimate prerequisite of Dimitto. After this exercise, the canvas was taken out of its frame, so that the frame could be used for another painting. At this point, the canvas was destroyed. One can, however, perceive the frantic paintbrush and the impetuosity of the hand movements. Objectively, bad paintbrush is visible on the photo (Figs. 29, 30), as the expression of frustration caused by the necessity of not finishing the painting and of my mental pain caused by detachment.



Fig. 29. First painting painted over in Dimitto just

before the destruction 2016, oil on canvas 180 x 160 cm.

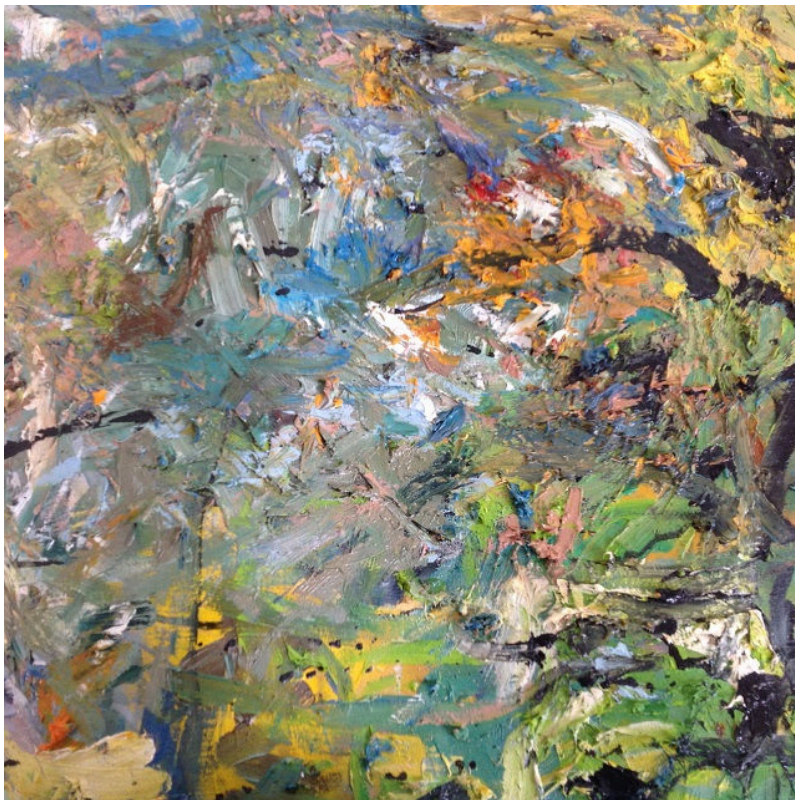


Fig. 30. Bad brushstroke, 2016, second

painting (detail).

In line with the requirements of the Dimitto, the second painting was also taken out of its frame and destroyed unfinished, once again in order to detach myself from my a priori vision and my own expectations. I started this stage referring to the best-known form, that of a human figure. In order to systematically reduce the heavy 'correctness' of finished form and to detach myself from all the predispositions I might have towards this intimately known silhouette, I started with figurative painting and drawing. I wanted to sever myself gradually from the strongest idea of form I have within me, pre-conditioned in my mind. Nature awareness and figurative representationalism are themselves the pretext for starting painting in the first place, at least for me. Knowing and loving the image of nature is my entry point into the paradise-like painting experience. Bearing all this in mind, for the first two paintings I chose a figurative approach. In line with the demands of the Dimitto's act of detachment, I used only couple of stretchers, so that the canvas is always within the limbo of a never finished idea. The next canvas (as shown on the photo and in the video available at the viva for the examiners) was painted from start to finish with the blindfold on. However, as in the previous paintings, colour mixing on the palette was done without a blindfold, as I was not yet ready to let go of this single element, which personally I found the hardest to let go of, colour being my dearest love. This stage took me years to overcome and let go. Multitudes of paintings were created and destroyed during this time (dating back to 2012). Some of them were recorded (photo and videos available at the viva to examiners), some were not. What is interesting, not just from a painting but also from a psychological point of view, is how the brushstroke changes from chaotic, raging and incompetent to precise and confident. Let me share a couple of images from this period (I include here only paintings I have painted for this PhD).

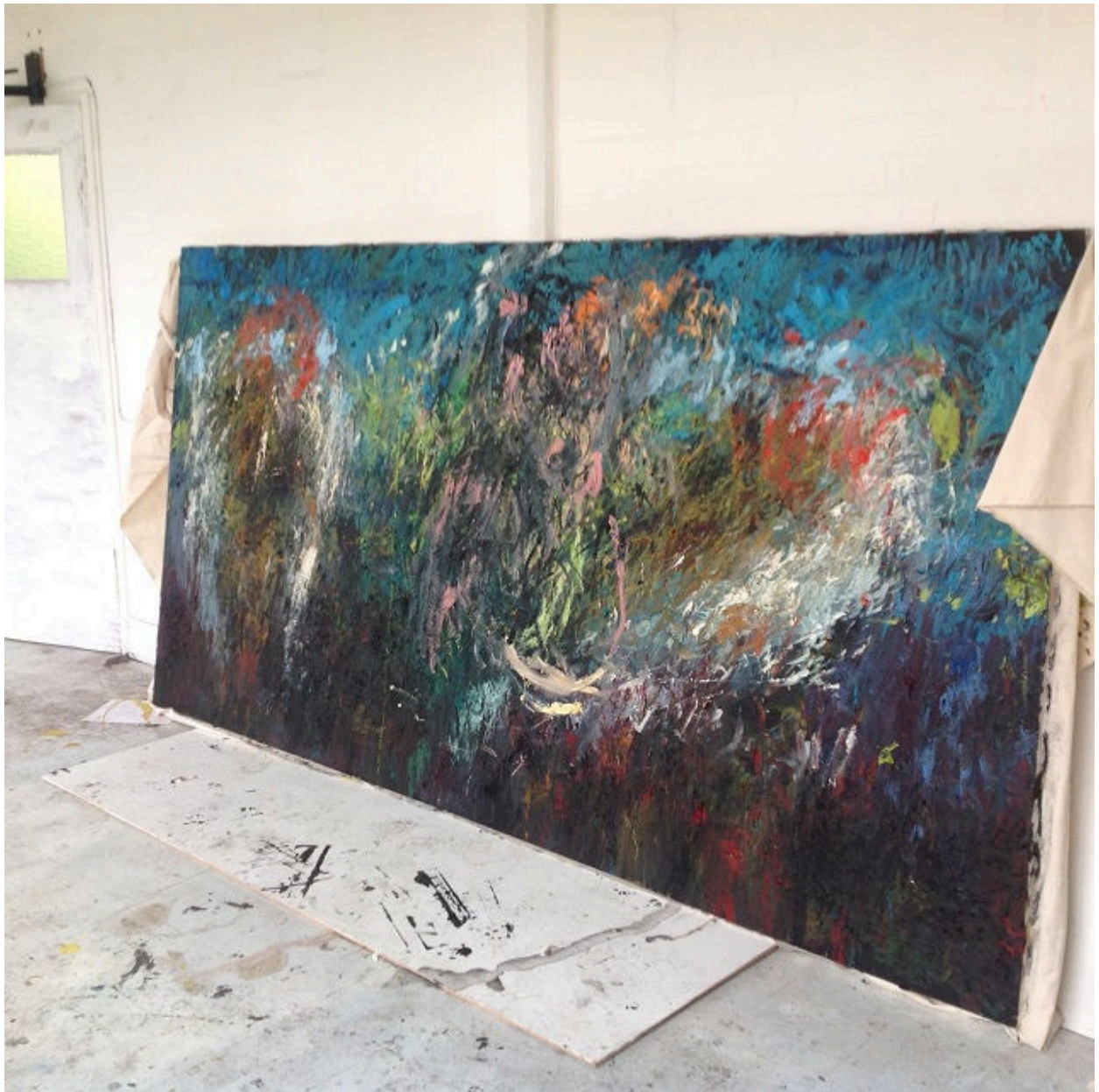


Fig. 31. Practice canvas no. 3 2016, oil on canvas, 150 x 300 cm.

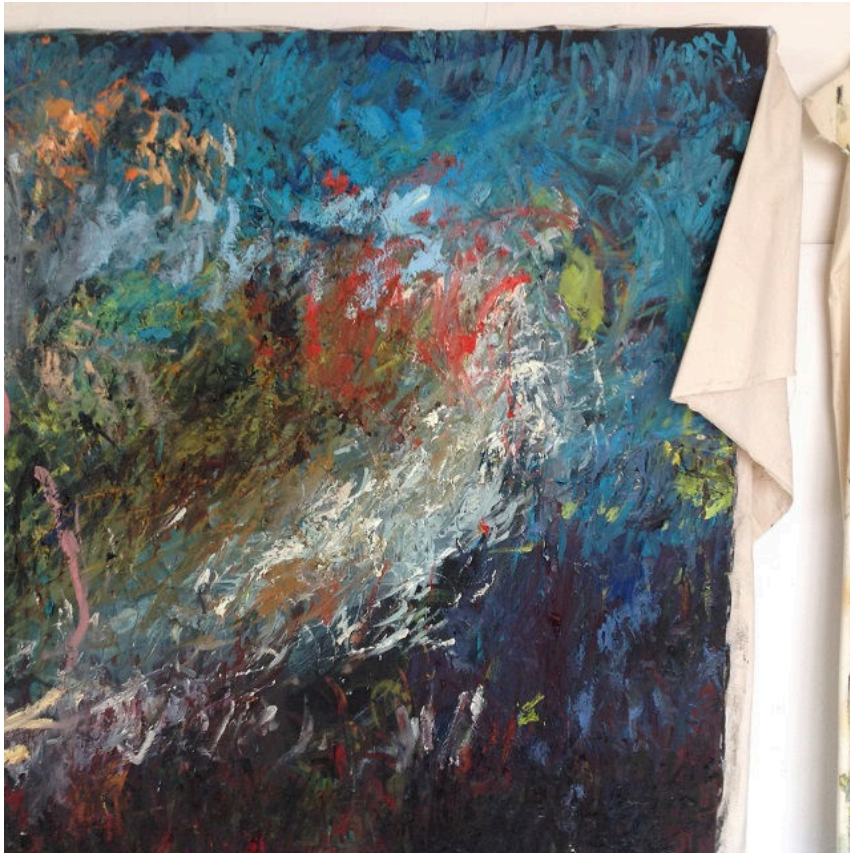


Fig. 32. Practice canvas no. 3 (detail).



Fig. 33. Practice canvas no. 3 (detail).

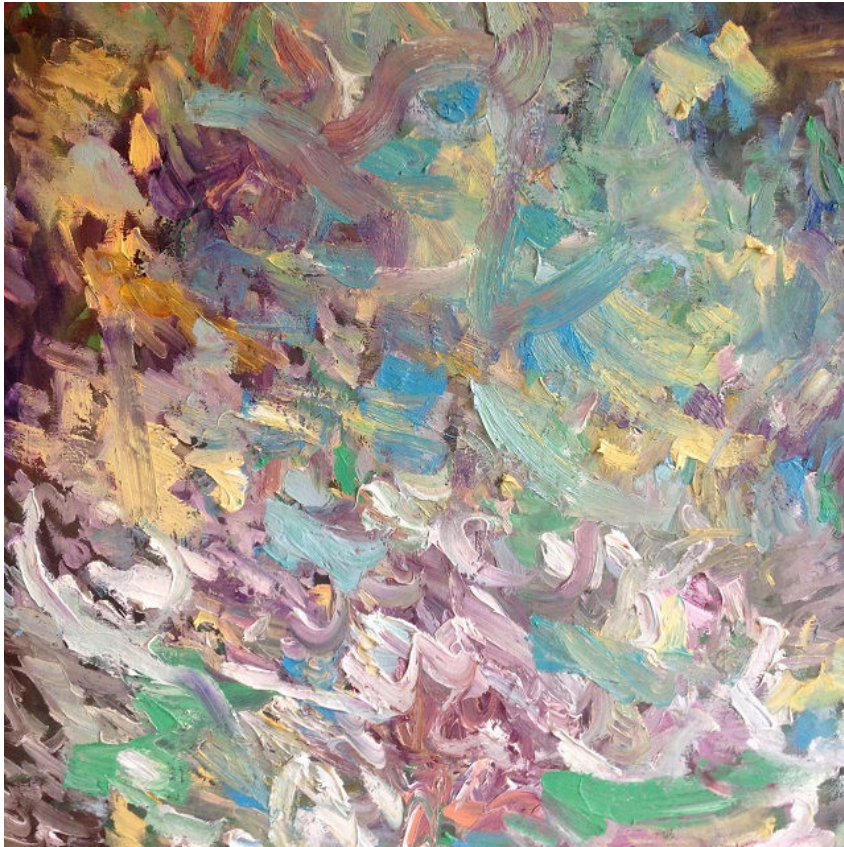


Fig. 34. Practice canvas no. 4 (detail)

2016, oil on canvas, 150 x 120 cm.

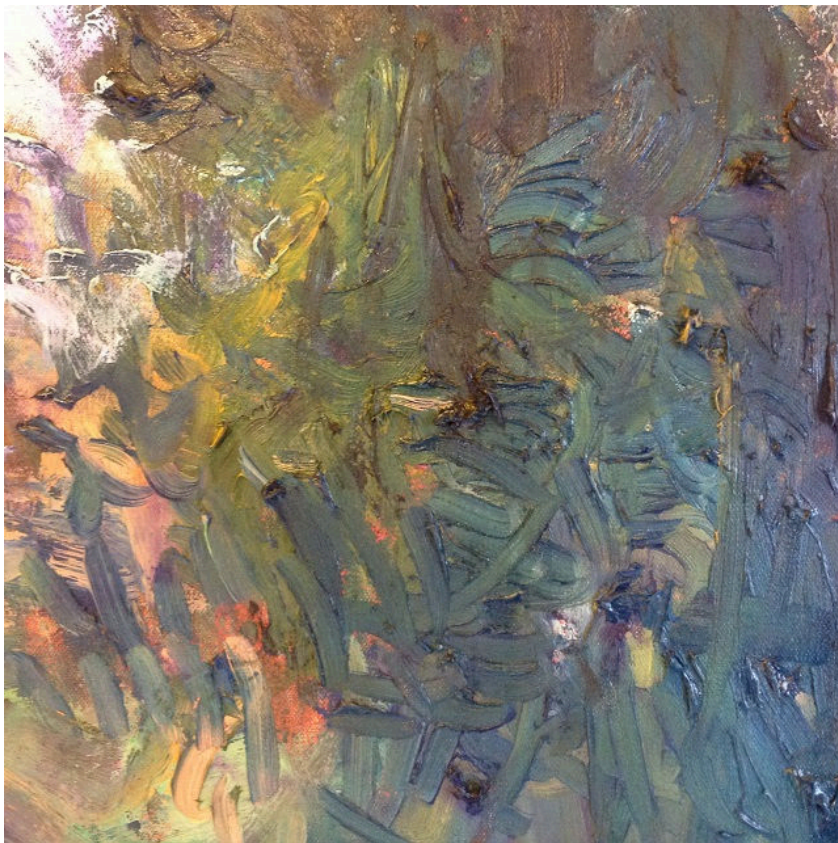


Fig. 35. Practice canvas no. 5 (detail)

2016, oil on canvas, 180 x 160 cm

MMF was expressed for the first time, although admittedly not yet fully functional, during my upgrade exhibition. Only the first half of the entire development of that painting, in which the frame was recycled from the previous painting, as Dimitto technique demands,¹¹³ was recorded, as can be seen on the photos and video that will be available during the viva. In this phase, I was still looking at the palette while mixing the paint for the first half of the process. One painting that has arisen on the palette after 2.5 years of its usage was painted with my artistic consciousness of colour mixing and was done according to my colour sensitivity. It is the last one for which I used my sight to guide me in colour mixing. It comes from the period of transition between conscious colour-combining and totally random paint usage.



Fig. 36. The palette painting, 2016, oil on wood, 30 x 60 cm.

¹¹³ In Dimitto, when the painting is done it is taken out of its frame and thrown away, so the art object cannot be created.

The second part of this process (not recorded) saw the implementation of the Dimitto technique in its full spectrum, without looking at anything or thinking about anything in particular, where thoughts came and went with the brushstroke. In my Confirmation of Registration exhibition, the back of the painting was used as a projection surface for the video (as seen in the recording of the first half of painting). The video captures the application of oil paint to the canvas (photo). It is not an all-encompassing recording, since the camera never captured the last phases of the painting. The possibility of form contained in the MMF idea is thus expressed here by showing the process of form becoming, but never being. Ultimate form is never determined by the act of observation but only proposed, as is visible in the pictures and videos (available during the viva). The surface to which paint has been applied is facing the wall, not the onlooker, who cannot determine the final form of the painting without physically rotating the canvas. Through this act, the Necessary Form would immediately arise. One can only relate to the very possibility of that form through the video screened on the reverse of the painting, which is in the process of becoming, close to it, but not yet fully expressing the Process in either the physical or metaphysical senses. Yet, here the MMF is not fully operational, since one can destroy the probability of MMF by observing the form on the canvas and seeing the 'now Necessary Form'. At the end, the painting became the Necessary Form, as it was observed in order to take photos and study the brushwork that in this case is objectively good and effortless. The photo below shows the sequence of layers. A video recording of this painting will be available to the examiners during the viva.



Fig. 37. Starting of the

painting, where I still choose colours. 2016, oil on canvas, 160 x 130 cm.



Fig. 38. 1st layer.

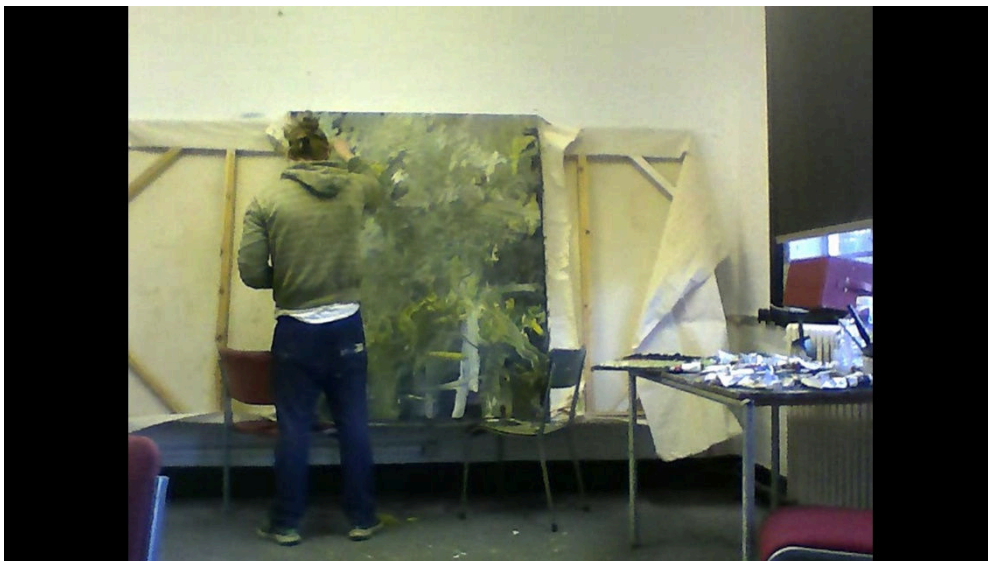


Fig. 39. 2nd layer.



Fig. 41. 3rd layer.



Fig. 41. 4th layer.



Fig. 42. 5th layer.



Fig. 43. 6th layer.



Fig. 44. 7th layer.

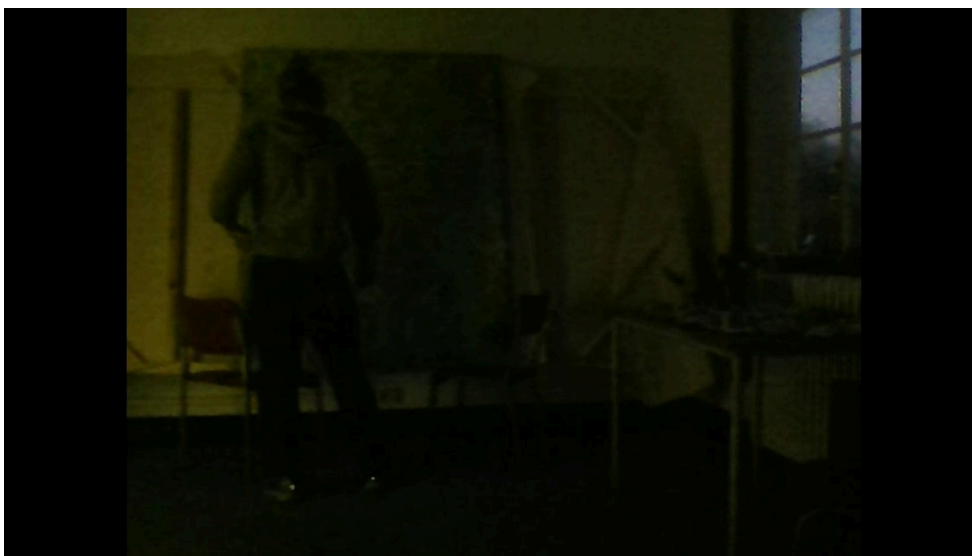


Fig. 45. 8th layer.



Fig. 46. 9th layer.



Fig. 47. 10th layer.



Fig. 48. 11th layer.

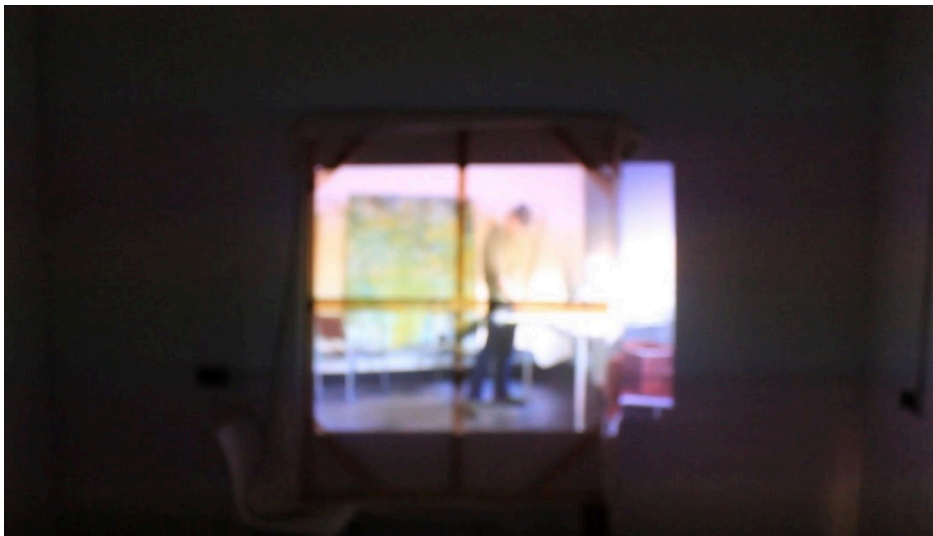


Fig. 49. Not fully functional

MMF on exhibition, 2016.

The photographs below show a finished canvas and brushstrokes that, after years of hardship, are finally more fluent. This reflects my mind being at ease and aware.

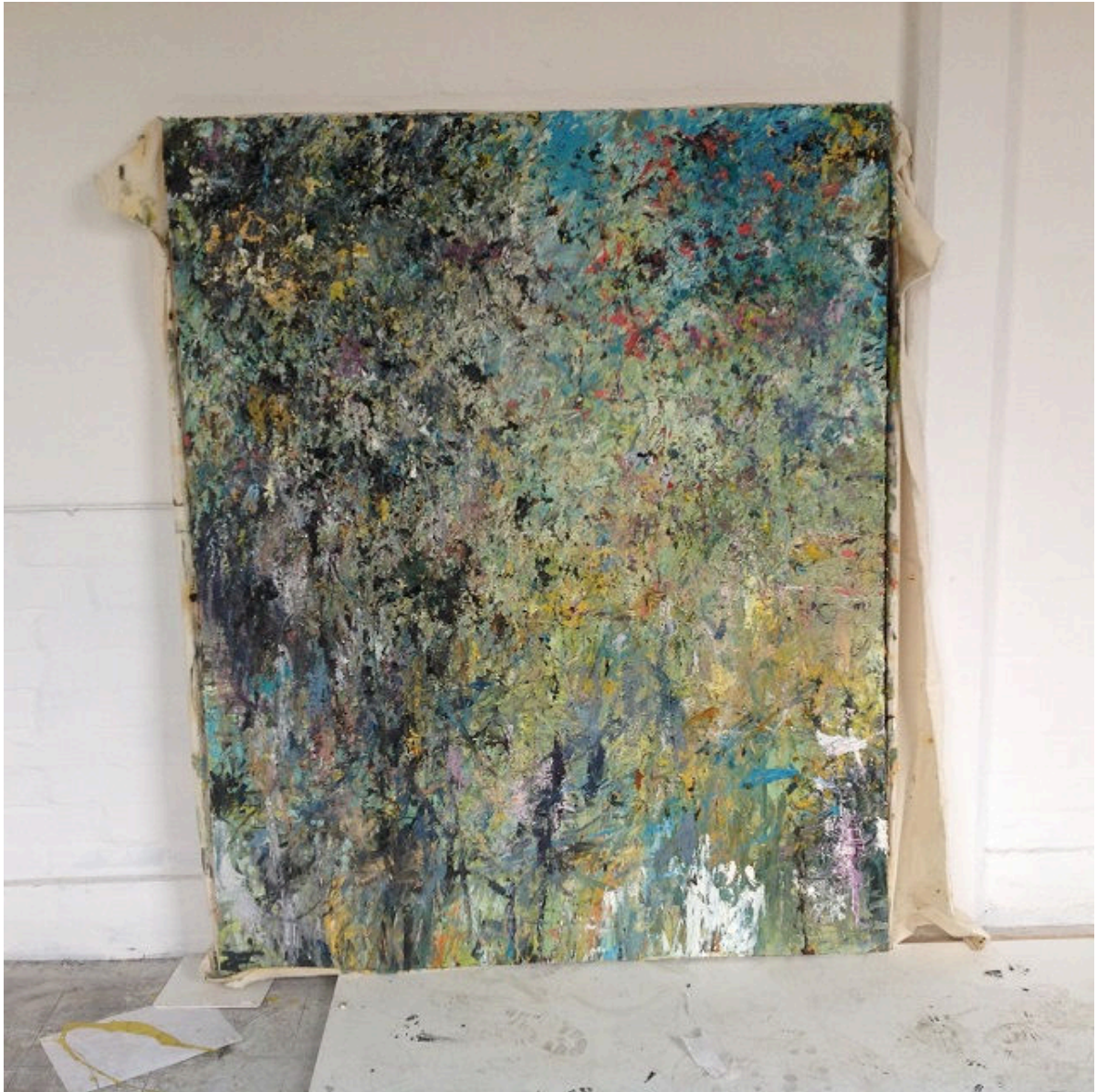


Fig. 50. Now necessary form, *IMG_0428* 2016, oil on canvas 160 x 130 cm.



Fig. 51, IMG_0428, detail.



Fig. 52, IMG_0428, detail.

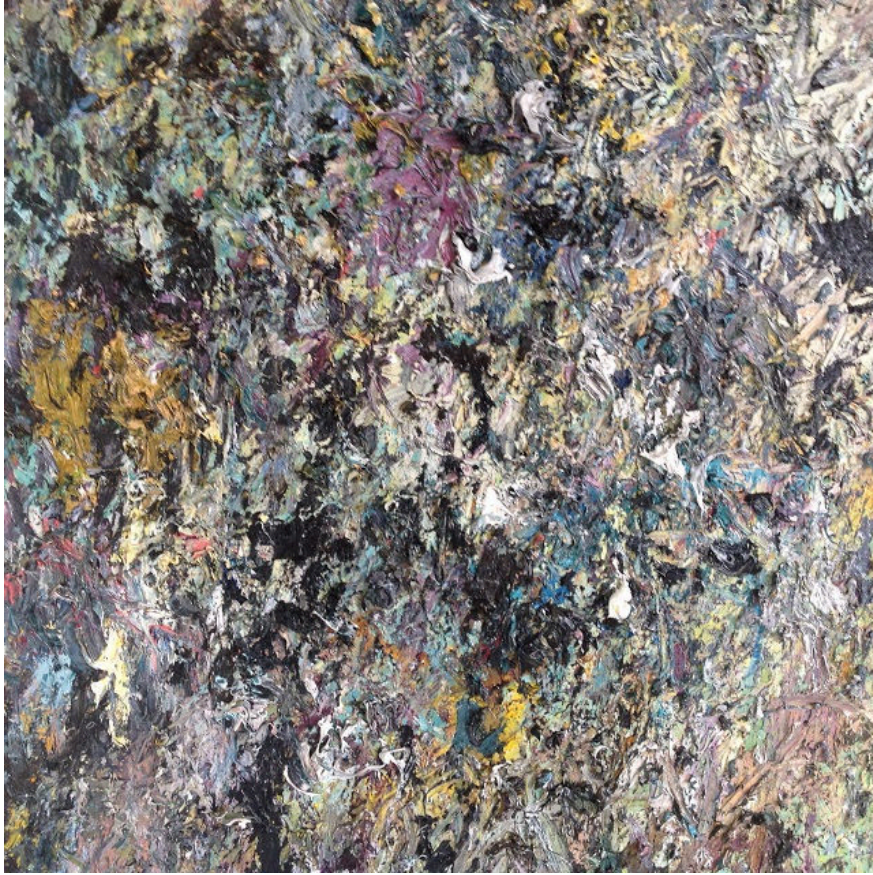


Fig. 53, IMG_0428, detail.



Fig. 54, IMG_0428, detail.

Finally, the last stage of development shows canvases (documented by photos), which were all painted using the Dimitto technique from start to finish. That is, I was blindfolded, and to maximize the detachment, the colour was squeezed from tubes randomly bought by someone not familiar with painting or with my own colour preferences. It was randomly put into the pouches on the vest I wore, which had been modified by myself for the easy usage of colours and more random paint selection. Thus, the pockets on the vest were randomly filled with paint, for which I reached blindfolded, therefore I had no notion of what colour I was using. The vest had another, more practical advantage, for while I was blindfolded in the dark, I did not have to search blindly for paint tubes but had them on me.



Fig. 55. Practice canvas no.

7 (detail) 2016, oil on canvas 150 x 120 cm.



Fig. 56. Practice

canvas no. 11 (detail) 2016, oil on canvas, 180 x 160 cm.



Fig. 57. Painting vest that I wear when I

use the Dimitto technique. Paints are randomly selected from the pouches then applied on the palette for maximum randomness of the colour selection.

The last painting is the culmination of the theoretical research and of my practical findings. It is **a portrait of a Process**, and as such, is the only painting to express the Process defined and conceptualized as a result of interdisciplinary theoretical research. Thus, the entirely operational MMF was born in a dark room, with its window boarded up, and with no possibility of anyone else entering it. This time I used a different palette, as the old one was too familiar for my brush to travel on. The Dimitto technique was for the first time correctly applied from the start, first, by tucking the oil paint tubes into the vest randomly and reaching for them when needed. This way one can squeeze the colour from the paint tube onto the palette unaffected by anything, since one does not have to take the blindfold off to apply the paint to the palette. Also, the randomness of the colour was unaltered. By reaching for the paint, while blindfolded, which was randomly tucked into the vest pouches and used on the palette without any thought about it or as a measuring act, I have kept the probabilistic characteristic of matter in its ever-moving flow. The coincidence of the colour became the probability of colour in multi-form. The weight of all the paint tubes stuck in the vest troubled me physically at the beginning, but after years of practice the brushstroke and my aimless gestures concerned me no more, nor did the weight of the vest. After all the years of painting blindfold, the Dimitto technique, which has always been just a means to an end, was used in all its detaching and introspective potentiality, the very acts of blindfolding or random paint selection being but mere tools. In this last painting I have welcomed the true *portrait of a Process*, in which the form has been transcended from its singularity and actuality to MMF, a never closed form in which all the possibilities of shape coexist at once. By detaching myself from *a priori* vision and from the binary judgement that prefers 'this over that' on the canvas, in order to find the solution that pleases my conditioning the most,

I let my intimately well-known movement, that of the brushstroke, go wherever it will. In this act, I release all the forms normally hampered by my predispositions and allow them to happen at the same time on the canvas. This way the illusionary stillness of fixed forms is combated by the reality in motion. Matter, as an active and flowing concept, is always in its probability and as such moves in the flux. The pleasure of 'finding the right painting' is eliminated from the equation with this process, so the multi-form may arise. This form is not bound to anything in particular, whereas the painting gesture is pure repetition. I welcome the thought that comes to my mind, and with the brushstroke I try to let it go, so that only the work itself stays, without the comfort of the 'fragmentary view' and 'intellectualization' that had previously bound me and railroaded the canvas to a single outcome. The observation (mine or otherwise), as previously noted and argued in this thesis, would interfere with the physical and metaphysical Process expression on the canvas. Therefore, it was eliminated completely in this stage. Since the present work is a PhD thesis demanding documentation of the procedure, to be consistent with the MMF I had to deliver it without actually showing (in the video or photo) any part of the painting. And although such a requirement imposes particular logistical problems, I have found a solution to this dilemma in mounting a small camera on the end of the brush, with the lens fixed not on the painting but on the wall behind my back. In this way, I have recorded the painting (half of the development again), through the brushstrokes, without compromising the multi-form. A video of these recordings will be available during the viva.

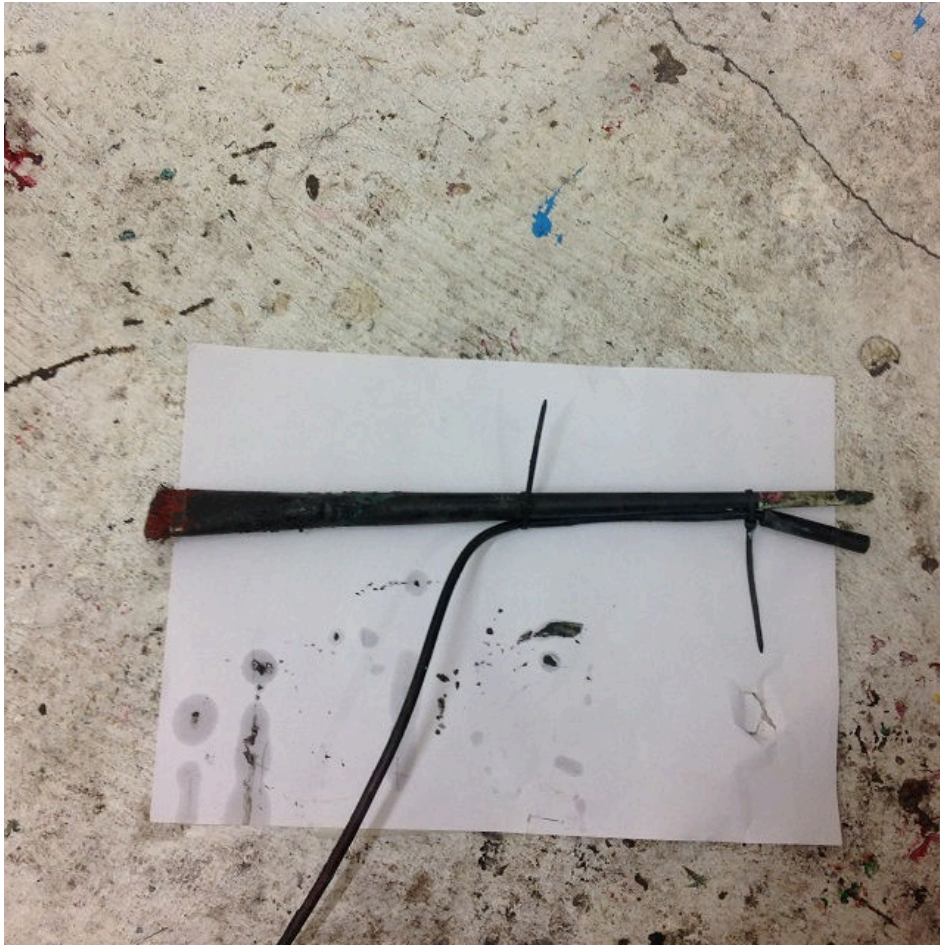


Fig. 58. Paintbrush I have

used to paint and simultaneously record the paintbrush motion without compromising MMF, 2016.

After completion, the final painting was put into a heavy-duty thick material and hard-wired so that no one could look at it.



Fig. 59. *Portrait of a Process* 2016, oil on canvas, 180 x 160 cm, still in my studio after completion.

In this state, the fully functional MMF was born and is now somewhere in an old shed on the premises of the University of Reading. Ultimately, therefore, my final piece, or the practical presentation of it, is composed of pictures and video recordings (available at the viva), of sketches and oil paintings that were the build-up to the process as well as a part of it, just to deliver me mentally and spiritually to the final painting, a Multi-Meta-Form.

The question may then arise of how I was 'choosing' when to paint and when to finish the painting, without setting the arbitrary boundaries that would normally be directly connected to '*a priori* vision'? I painted when the layer was congealed enough for another layer to be applied to the previous one, so the paintbrush may wear off bit by bit. I did this for two reasons. First, the painting's ending would have to be determined by something other than coincidence – for example, by myself deciding that it is finished. I could not allow the MMF to be reduced to my whims, even in this aspect. Therefore, I painted until the bristles of any of the paintbrushes I used were no more, until only the ferrule remained, without much hair left, so that I physically feel the ferrule 'wheeze' on a thickened oil texture. The bristle hair withered on the gravelly disc of the canvas matter itself, which refuses to be subjugated to the illusionary shaping of Kantor's mere actions of MOULDING, SQUEEZING, CRUMPLING and so on. Matter is still within the process, within continuity. MMF seemingly passes the objects that appear to be solid into a conceptualization of a relations. Process *is*.



Fig. 60. These are some of the

paintbrushes I have used. Three of them (the three on the left) have no more hair attached to the ferrule. Therefore three paintings were finished while using this set. Others have still some time left, both for them and the painting to be completed

Thus, it is the ordinary, mechanical wear and tear of brushes, not my egoism, which determines when the painting is done: nothing conscious or arbitrary dictates the painting's finalization. The second and more important aspect of the Dimitto is: *when* I paint. Again, this is not determined by my will, but by the mechanical properties of the used materials: I give the layer a few days to coagulate, then I paint. By doing so, I am not at the mercy of inspiration and the vagary of the muses I eliminate from the painting process, all being a part of the detaching technique of Dimitto painting. Dimitto has forced me to paint several canvases simultaneously, something I have never done before, because without the Dimitto I could only focus on one painting, as the difficulty and drudgery of 'resolving the canvas

accordingly' was too much to bear. On account of these two reasons, the action of painting is deprived of any stimulus other than repetition of the movement performed by the painting hand, in which the 'aiming' brushstroke element is removed from the *a priori* vision.

The psychological ballast of this detaching technique and its mental heaviness can be seen in the brushstrokes. Thus, the early canvas had more frantic and naive brushstrokes, whereas the later ones are characterized by the mature, profound and fluent mark. It was my usual practice in the past that I did not really experience a painting I was creating, because I was too busy figuring out what it really meant. Dimitto provides a remedy for this problem. I can experience painting through myself, not only by finding solutions to its initial problems, but more importantly, I can finally paint without myself holding the painting back. Matter on the canvas (oil paint in my case) does not change in itself in MMF, for the constant change occurs through its probability of form and constant movement. The movement destroys the deadness of a presumptive construction on the canvas. The Process in MMF prevents the reality stoppage by the mind that 'takes the photo' of what eyes see to process the information about reality in its own interiority and then defragments this picture to yet new separated objects and beings cut off from the flow of reality, violating the continuity of the real. In MMF, I avoid defragmentation by expressing the never-ending possibility of form and the statistical and probabilistic character of the Process. Possibility is never closed, its movement continues, because there is *no purpose on the canvas*. The canvas is getting physically heavier, due to the layers of oil paint applied to its surface, and because of this its physical structure is also growing (mass increase). Good and bad, correct or incorrect brushstrokes, are transformed into a pure gesture of self-emptying in which the essence of the brushstroke is an expression of the aimlessness. Colour exists without

artificial arrangements that are designed to express the painter most accurately through tone and contrast. They are there, without interference from my creative purpose, discrimination, intellectualization or *correction*. The Process, through the repetitive brushstroke and randomness of colours or detachment from my painting baggage, is ongoing, as it should be. Physically, the painting is in its all-forms, because it is within the heavy-duty wrapping, and it serves as a proposition, or rather, as an approach towards the multiplicity not seen. As such its form is not intellectualized, nor defragmented and discriminated upon in accordance with one's predispositions and conditioning. Not a single thought ever stopped this painting from moving, not a discriminatory view with predispositions ever made this painting still and fragmented. Therefore metaphysically, the Process is happening on the painting, but also it is happening in my mind, because I do not cling to the idea of its finalization in order to get it right or 'to solve' the painting like many painters, who, like Kantor or Jan Cybis, have lost many sleepless nights because the painting was not 'properly' resolved (Cybis 1980: 285). This idea is best illustrated by the following story concerning what a Zen and archery Master once said to the German philosopher Eugen Herrigel:

“The right art”, cried the Master, ‘is purposeless, aimless! The more obstinately you try to learn how to shoot the arrow for the sake of hitting the goal, the less you will succeed in the one and the further the other will recede. What stands in your way is that you have a much too wilful will. You think that what you do not do yourself does not happen’. (Herrigel 1988: 46-47)

Examining the canvas I photographed for the PhD documentation, I have discovered that those canvases to which I was still attached by mixing colours on the palette and using my

sight to 'get the colour right' were as if from a naïve apprentice. This included the first stages of the Dimitto, where the picture was painted without looking at the brushstroke on the canvas, but the colours on the palette were consciously mixed (the palette painting I presented on the picture a few pages back is a document of this) and aimed to get the 'right' painting placed onto the canvas. It struck me that these paintings, their brushstrokes and flow of the paint, are QUALITATIVELY and OBJECTIVELY worse than the pictures painted later on, when I do not look at the colours, nor aiming at particular form. When I did not care anymore for the technique to prove my painting skills or colour sensitivity; when I did not care one bit about the paint and the painting as an object in itself; when I did not wait to paint again, but did it just because it was time to paint, as the layers had hardened; when I had lost all interest in the painting: it was only then that the picture became a real painting for me. The flow on these canvases is unhampered; the unity of the brushstrokes became a true insight into the painting reality. Truly a heaven on earth is this painting reality. And even though I was not consciously aiming at improving the quality of the painting, the quality of the brushstroke and its flow did improve, proportionally to my gesture freed from any *a priori* vision. When I was trying to aim at a particular form, shape or colour contrast to prove my painting understanding and superiority, the brushstroke, texture and overall quality of the painting were insufficient, or downright poor. This leads to the ultimate conclusion: the more unhampered the mind, the better the painting expression and the more penetrating the depth of reality. To use a metaphor for this relationship, the painting and I are like two vortexes on the surface of the lake; we penetrate and infiltrate each other, creating one new vortex. There is no control on my part and no control on the part of the canvas. It became clear that the very process of painting, as distinct from the matter/Process, is more fluent on the more recent canvases compared to the paintings

painted previously, for which I was focused on the best possible shapes, tones, forms and colour connotation. Thus, with less and less aim in my movement, more 'painting' emerges. This is not a description of reality, but the work of someone who is painting a boat or a withered shed. On the old canvases one can see the stoppage my mind did to confirm itself as a creator and demiurge; one can clearly see it in the texture or the brushstroke. However, when I painted years later, unconcerned about the future of my picture, the opinion of others, the money I might make or indeed not concerned about any mundane things, the painting became a real painting. From my point of view as a painter, I ceased to care if I ever painted again, and I was not looking forward to painting again. I painted because I simply paint at the time I am painting. The canvas is getting heavier – what joy it is! More painting without concern means less aiming for the fulfillment of ideations that have to happen on the canvas. I have exchanged sight, this prime impressionist organ in painting, for hearing. I hear where the paint was not layered; I hear when the brush meets the congealed texture of the paint. I hear the painting and I obey the ferrule 'whistling' on the hardened layers of paint.

Conclusion

Having presented the findings of my theoretical research on the relationship between Kantor's *Informel* period, quantum mechanics and mysticism, I proceeded to look for my own definition of the term 'Process'. Thus, the term 'Process' as used in in this thesis is explained in the first part of this text. Here, the term 'Process' is located in the world of physics and defined as change, closely related to the concepts of matter, probability and chance. The notion of Process, which is interwoven with the concept of matter, was investigated from the perspective of Kantor's *Informel* period. To give my thesis a wider cultural context to the matter dilemma on the canvas, the discussion also included other prominent Polish matter painters. This also allowed me to obtain a deeper insight into the problem of what matter really is, considered not only from the physical but also from the philosophical angle, as the term itself is of both philosophical and physical origin. My conclusion was that matter itself is a Process of constant change and transition, whether seen through the lens of philosophy or physics. On the one hand, Kantor's 'matter' comprehension did express this fluidity in his theoretical writings, but on the other hand, as I have discovered, his interpretation of matter on the canvas was too materialistic¹¹⁴ and definitive to be an expression insightful enough to capture the essential characteristic of matter. As suggested by Capra, Bohm, Heller, Hanson and other philosophers and physicists studying matter, it is not a static thing, but a Process, a flux, and always-mobile energy, with indeterminism as its crux. Therefore, I have concluded that, since matter is a physical

¹¹⁴ Matter was 'depicted' as a substance in itself that physical forces can act upon and shape, and even though Kantor acknowledged the chance and probability in his painting experiments, he presented his paintings as the conclusion of the possibility and chance 'after', not the chance itself 'in the act of'.

process, to express its dynamics, the artist cannot reduce it to a mere Necessary Form captured on the canvas, he or she must go beyond the mere manipulation of physical matter and beyond a definite conclusion. To express the Process, the form on the canvas must *physically* exist within all its possibilities at once, in its *multiplicity*, thus preserving the probabilistic character of matter. The second part of this thesis focused on presenting the Process from a metaphysical perspective, as expressed in the notion of 'illusion negation' which could be seen in Kantor's art and in the mystical writings of Eckhart and Suzuki. I have referred especially to Kantor's idea of the 'poor object' and 'reality of the lowest rank', as I believe these are the most significant examples of his illusion negation theory.

Subsequently, I have juxtaposed these ideas with Suzuki's 'stoppage' and Eckhart's 'particular why', which have also undertaken the problem of Process and its halation by the illusion raised in the conditioned human's mind. As a result of illusion, the reality, which itself is in constant Process, is interrupted, and fragmentary vision stops the observer from seeing the movement. Kantor's art and ideas are strikingly similar to Eckhart's and Suzuki's when it comes to Process and illusion negation, but their answers are different. I have argued that the mystical solution of 'detachment' might be helpful in expressing the Process throughout and in freeing the recipient (and creator) from the illusionary stillness seen on the canvas. Through detachment from the fixed notion of the defragmented and binary like/dislike dichotomy and judgement, the process can be expressed on the canvas as a flow in a metaphysical sense. However, the canvas and the whole process of painting and detaching oneself from one's conditioning must be understood here as an internal event, an introspective act, not as merely watching unformed painting. Therefore, I have proposed that the observation and possessive attitude to one's work, resulting in its intellectualization and fragmentation, must be eliminated from both the creative and the receiving side of

painting. My practical part of this thesis, the research on the canvas, shows how this can be done. By using the Dimitto technique, I exercise spiritually, attempting not to cling to my own mind's expectations of what should be on the canvas. This letting go of form discredits my own artistic program of what good painting should be. Moreover, the recipient is free from passing a judgement on the form and closing it with his or her fragmentary view and intellectualization, which usually¹¹⁵ follow the act of observation. Form is thus presented in all its possibilities at once, rather than being locked into a single outcome, measured in accordance with the binary judgement as good versus bad or pleasant versus unpleasant. And from the physical and metaphysical points of view, such a form is not static, but dynamic. It is a multiple, metaphysical form in which both, physical and metaphysical processes are never halted or time-bound. It is the MMF.

Considering Kantor's own theories of matter and Process, and continuing his thought into physics and metaphysics, Process is understood here as a transition between probability and actuality that never *is* but always becomes.¹¹⁶ It is a movement, a flux in a constant forming that never forms. As such it is opposed to the illusion of stillness, created within the immanent structure of human consciousness. Influenced by the ideas of Bohm,¹¹⁷ Fromm (2013), Eckhart (1994) and Suzuki (2010), in my search for answers to Kantor's problem, I looked for the expression of Process on the canvas, an expression that *must* not

¹¹⁵ Buddhism teaches that Buddhas are free from this.

¹¹⁶ Erich Fromm related this to a process as a synonym of life: 'Living structures can be only if they become; they can exist only if they change. Change and growth are inherent qualities of the life process. Heraclitus' and Hegel's radical concept of life as a process and not as a substance is paralleled in the Eastern world by the philosophy of the Buddha. There is no room in Buddhist thought for the concept of any enduring permanent substance, neither things nor the self. Nothing is real but processes' (Fromm 2013: 22).

¹¹⁷ 'I regard the essence of the notion of process as given by the statement: Not only is everything changing, but all is flux. That is to say, what is the process of becoming itself, while all objects, events, entities, conditions, structures, etc., are forms that can be abstracted from this process' (Bohm 2002: 61).

stop it through finished presentation on the canvas and formalization in the mind of the observer or participant. The act of the Process is now. However, when presented to the observer on the canvas as the *result of* function and only as a *past* that has already constituted itself in necessity that the onlooker now contemplates, the Process is stopped. The past is already given: it is not the Process. Process means happening and becoming at once. Process expressed in MMF also implies no dichotomy between the act and the result, because the result functions only through the *proposition* of MMF that does not depend on anything the observer may like/dislike to fully comprehend its physical and metaphysical nature. Form on the canvas is being transcended constantly from its single and actual existence to MMF, a form in which all the possible forms coexist at once. In MMF forms are predictive rather than descriptive, just as quantum mechanics demands from objects (d'Espagnat [2006:110]). This also explains why Kantor's *Informel* could not express matter as Process and motion, despite Kantor's correct intuition. *Informel* could only describe what is there on the canvas, in which case the prediction mentioned by d'Espagnat is lost, while the object is out of the superposition (has been observed).¹¹⁸ The Process must be understood not as the *a priori* or *posteriori condition*, as a shape, a form of an entity, but as the change this entity is subjected to. In this, MMF becomes an insight into the wholeness of reality. My own lesson is this: paint your picture like you paint your garage doors. Understand through the brushstroke. I am a painter, and I can express myself absolutely

¹¹⁸ Formalism, as shown in the Introduction, in which form in superposition was presented as a succession of this form (*F*), looked like the following: '*F*'; *F1*, *F2*, *F3*, *F4*, *F5...Fn*. This is now changed into the final formalism, which looks not like a direct succession of form, but a sum of all the forms a painting in conceptual superposition might hold. It looks like the following: $MMF = F1 + F2 + F3 + \dots Fn$ (where 'n' stands for a natural limit to that form).

through colour. Therefore, to finish this dissertation, I humbly borrow a few beautiful words of Bukkoku Kokushi (Suzuki 2010: 120) that express the idea of MMF and Dimitto:

No target's erected,

No bow's drawn,

And the arrow leaves the string:

It may not hit,

But it does not miss!

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