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TRACES of nature

The application of ecoprint technique to create paintings

Description of the doctoral thesis

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Art happens all the time, everywhere. All we have to do is to keep our minds open.

Jacek Tylicki

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Introduction

The topic of this doctoral thesis was formed on the basis of my life-long fascinations and experience connected with the use of plants to dye fabrics. As a person who comes from Podlasie region, I have visited the meanders of the Biebrza and Narew rivers since my childhood. The theme of nature in art has accompanied my life since I was a student. At first, it was pure inspiration when creating first drawings and then paintings. However, for the last years nature has not only been a theme of my works, but also a creative material. Ecoprint technique which I started to apply enabled me to search for space to express myself, i.e. “to paint with nature” and also to discover the trace of nature. Plants have replaced a brush and printing ink.

My main goal was to paint pictures on silk fabric using ecoprint technique, which is also called contact print, ecoprint or botanical print. These names imply a technique which is closer to workshop graphics and it is true partially, however, thanks to long-standing work I found and improved my own painting language in which ecoprint technique is only a starting point of my creative work. Generally speaking, ecoprint relies on direct transfer of a dye from a botanical material onto the surface of a fabric excluding a dye bath. In order to make a print reflect the plants applied, a fabric needs to have a very close contact with nature. For that purpose, a Japanese technique of shibori dyeing, known since ancient times, is applied. I was able to achieve various, unique effects thanks to the fact that I did not stick to strict binding schemes but I experimented a lot. As a result I created 24 fabrics made of natural silk each in the shape of a cylinder, which made up an installation hung in space on a rectangular plan of about 4×8 m in length and 3m in height.

My works are a result of research and observations of the possibilities given to us by nature. My everyday environment is urban space. Most of my adult life I have spent in Tricity and paradoxically that is the place where I feel close to nature. My flat and workshop are located close to an old Oruński park in Gdańsk and walks by the sea have always allowed me to drift away from reality. The moment when we got locked down in the pandemic, I began to feel an even greater need to be close to nature. My thoughts wandered off to questions what could give me a breather and peace. It was nature with its strength and wisdom that helped me out. Nature accompanies me every day – it regenerates me, energizes and brings peace. It delights me with its uniqueness and beauty. Can I stop it and take with me? To some extent yes – using leaves, flowers and branches and applying contact print we receive a permanent trace on the surface of a natural fabric. It is a trace which is close to recording nature – keeping it on the surface of silk. Nature is elusive, it passes by, changes with seasons, whereas silk is associated with softness, lightness, warmth and pleasure of a touch. I am interested in the combination of these features – the possibilities it gives on the surface of silk.

Pandemic time strengthened the need to be immersed in nature every day. It also drew my attention to cherishing little moments and showed the benefits of staying in silence and looking into my soul. I achieved that thanks to nature which almost magically took over my fears and concerns. A forest and a park catered for botanical material which was subsequently transformed into natural dye. Nature is the basis of my creative work; it constitutes the material that I apply to a fabric.

At this point I need to mention another goal of my work which is the description of the technique I use as well as the process of creating textiles, and in particular the factors which have an impact on the final looks of a textile or a group of textiles.

The trace of nature

The trace of one human being is the trace of all people. Everyone needs only defined, unverified conditions to let exist what is natural and yet unknown and joyful.¹

Arno Stern

Arno Stern, a French pedagogist, artist and founder of a famous painter's studio Malort, in his book *The Trace* says that a trace can be made only when a process of creation is free from expectations, judgements and compulsion to represent something. My painting with nature on natural silk is „the trace of nature”.

As stated in the PWN² encyclopedia, the word „trace” has i.a. two meanings: “a mark left on a surface after walking or riding by someone or something” and „signs indicating that something existed or occurred”. Following this trail and referring back to the title of my work, the trace of nature is a sign for me, a record of nature left on a silk fabric in my case. This trace is an effect of a process which takes place when a natural technique of contact print called ecoprint is used.

I would like to mention the artists who treated nature as a „creator” of their works. The best known artist using nature to create textiles and applying ecoprint technique is an Australian woman India Flint. Her works are displayed in museums all over the world. She forms installations which are intrinsically linked to the tophophilia of a given place. She begins her process of creation with a walk around a place. She calls herself a botanical alchemist and she says: „My practice conflates the visual and written poetics of place and memory, using ecologically sustainable contact print processes from plants and found objects together with walking, drawing, assemblage, mending, stitch and text as a means of mapping country, recoding and recording responses to landscape – working with cloth, paper, stone, windfall biological material, water, mineral, bones, the discarded artefacts and hard detritus of human inhabitation, the local weed burden. My work has kindly been described as » the earth as the printing plate and time as the press «”³.



India Flint in a eucalyptus forest

¹ Arno Stern, *Odkrywanie śladu. Czy jest zabawa malarska*, Wydawnictwo Element, Gliwice 2016, s. 178.

² <https://sjp.pwn.pl/szukaj/%C5%9Bład.html>

³ <https://www.indiaflint.com/india-flint>



“Shelter” Hahndorf Academy,
Southern Australia;

India Flint's works of art embrace art, theatre, science and fashion. She is also an author of two books: *Second Skin* – about provenance and prospects for textiles in our life – and *Eco Colour* – about alchemic process of producing textiles with the use of leaves, roots, bark and flowers. Moreover, she founded the School of Nomad Arts, where she teaches people from all over the world how to transfer dyes from nature onto a fabric, clay, wood, stones and paper. A process relying on obtaining a botanical print through hitting a plant with a hammer directly on the fabric, which the artist called „hapazome”, snatched this name across the world despite the fact that this method comes from an ancient Japanese technique called „tataki zome”. Flint invented ice flowers since delicate petals are very vulnerable to high temperatures. She is a master in eucalyptus print.



„thoughts and prayers” from an
exhibition „Blind travelers”
Southern Australia, 2020

Jacek Tylicki comes from Sopot but he works in the USA. As the first Polish artist he entrusted the process of art creation to nature. In 1973 he began a cycle of works titled *Natural Art*, where he used nature as a creative medium, with the exclusion of human interference. During his travels abroad (Sweden, India, Island, Oceania, Poland) he would spread sheets of canvas and paper in the areas of wildlife and he left them there for a long time to expose them to the influence of nature. Forest clearings, river banks and trees became the place of form creation and creators at the same time. The whole process of creation which had been reserved to artists only, Tylicki left to natural powers. The cycle *Natural Art* consists of over 900 works.



Jacek Tylicki, *Natural Art* no.81, 3 days by the river bank, southern Sweden, 16.06–19.06. 1978 72,7 × 50,7 cm



Jacek Tylicki, *Natural Art*. no.343,
20 days on a forest meadow,
Sianowo Leśne, Kartuzy, Polska,
09.05–29.05. 1979 47,5 cm x 35,5 cm



Leszek Brogowski writes on Jacek Tylicki's website: „(...) in *Natural Art* the agency of artist-genius has become redundant because nature itself without man's interference has revealed its ability to dictate the canons of beauty. In fact, such aesthetic nature production turned out to be something fascinating, spreading an immense richness and countless variety of forms – colourful, sophisticated compositions, fine details, chiaroscuro, creating thought provoking and inexpressible moods and so on”⁴.

Jacek Tylicki, no. 1, 4 days on a meadow,
southern Sweden,
16.07–20.07.1973, 46 cm x 46 cm



Jacek Tylicki, Natural art. no.183
(Created by Nature), forest old trees,
southern Sweden,
17.08–29.08.1976, 47,5 x 35,5 cm



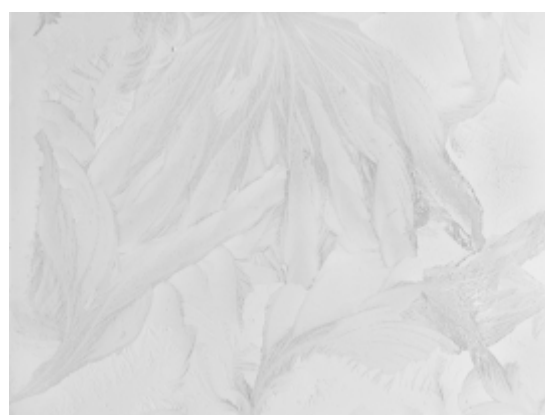
Jacek Tylicki, watercolour paper,
4 days by the river bank, Sweden,
1973, 473 x 354 mm.

⁴<http://www.tylicki.com/tylicki-polska.html>

Traces and traces of nature have been present in many artworks of Professor Piotr C. Kowalski from Poznań. One of the cycles where nature paints by itself is *Frosty paintings*. Karolina Jabłońska describes them as follows: „*Frosty paintings*, which are created with Joanna Janiak, are exposed to the frost. Very low temperature, which affects the painting surface, leaves its trace in the form of patterns resembling flowers, similar to those left on the panes of glass during very severe winters”⁵.



-7°C, XXXV, 2011, acrylic, laminate



-11°C, 2011, acrylic, pane of glass

Another cycle of this artist, where he paints only with the use of nature, is *Blackberry paintings*. In 2000 Alicja Kępińska wrote in the exhibition catalogue: „Piotr C. Kowalski is a painter. However, he does not close a painting in traditional frames of this term (...) In the process of creation he reveals, as if in passing, the nature of its source. The source is not only art and its internal »laws«; these could be also impulses, surprising in their profane nature: it is e.g. a case of blackberries which the artist picked up and which turned out to be poisonous (in ecological sense). »I was so embittered that I made paintings from them«. This soft transition between life experience and art's life is the essence of artist's actions”⁶.



Still Nature, 1982

⁵ <http://www.piotrckowalski.pl/index.php?/project/parawany>

⁶ <http://www.piotrckowalski.pl/index.php?/project/przejciowe>

The artworks coming from the cycle *Cut/rusty paintings* (2017) – as Maciek Kurak writes in the text to the exhibition catalogue – „are created by themselves, the artist puts an object on the canvas to receive its trace. The imprint of the reality copy happens on its own. It's a very practical process of creation as it does not require artist's engagement in it; a painting is created through reactions happening in nature”⁷.



Cut painting II, 2003

Other cycles, whose main theme was a trace, are *Passerby paintings – Happened – Is* and *Passerby paintings*. There is a unique imprint of the city – there are traces of passing by cars, pedestrians, dust, dirt and pieces of pavement and sewage wells.



Castle Culture Centre, Poznań 2017

⁷ <http://www.piotrckowalski.pl/index.php?/ongoing/--przerzniete--cut>

Silk as the material

Silk is a fibre of animal provenance (protein) which is derived from a cocoon of a silk moth (*Bombyx mori*) or tasar moth (*Antheraea pernyi*). It is also a name given to fabrics produced from a yarn derived from this fibre. Silk fabrics are shiny, smooth, sleek, soft, thin and very pleasant to touch.

The oldest found scrap of silk fabric, discovered in 1984 at the archeological site in Henan (China) dates back to 5600 years ago. The scientists from the textile institute in Shanghai discovered that „a scrap of pale crimson gauze was boiled before dyeing and a pigment was probably sourced from ochre containing hematite”⁸. This way China is seen as a country where mulberry trees were planted, silk moths were grown and silk fabric was woven earlier than anywhere else.

There are two basic categories of fibres: cellulose (cotton, linen, bamboo) and protein (sheep, alpaca and angora wool and silk). Generally speaking, protein fibres tend to be dyed much more easily so they produce better effects of ecoprint. After many attempts natural silk turned out to be the best medium for a “botanical print”. I used as my painting surface natural silk type ponge 6 – light, semi translucent fabric of plain weave, unsurpassed in its delicacy after heat treatment.

My adventure with silk as artistic material began a few years ago during my travel to India which delighted me with its variety and the scale of contrasts. Heaps of pigments stored in huge metal vessels were just available in the streets. The number of colors and their intensity blew my mind although at the same time dirt, dust and poverty were all around. Huge vats, working people and piles of fabrics they produced remained unforgettable. What impressed me enormously was the intensity of hues on the silk and the number of shades that could be obtained.



My journey to India, January – February 2008

⁸100 pytań o jedwabiu, red. Xu Deming, wydawnictwo Kwiaty Orientu, Skarżysko-Kamienna 2019, s. 27.



My journey to India, January – February 2008

Protein fibre, such as silk is faster, easier and more susceptible to pigments thanks to a different molecular structure than cellulose fibre (cotton, linen, hemp, jute or sisal). Silk needs a lot less pigment in a dyeing process and as such it produces the darkest hues. For thousands of years people knew only plant dyeing – synthetic colors and their dominance in the world is the history of the last 200 years. Sensitivity to colors coming from nature is in our genes. The knowledge of shades of nature has been passed down from generation to generation. Nature's creations were used to dye bodies, vessels or clothes. People have always underlined their otherness with colors. The role of a color was not only to adorn bodies and clothes, but it had also a symbolic meaning – it defined social and professional status and belonging to groups. The impact of colors on our sociological and psychological behaviors and physical health has been the subject of scientific research for many years now. The discovery of synthetic pigments and a subsequent production on a mass scale eliminated natural pigments from the market. I do hope we will be coming back to the tradition tapping into nature in the production of colors in the years to come.

The example of this type of activities could be an exhibition „Recipe for color” which took place in February 2022 in Łódź in Punkt Odbioru Sztuki gallery. Olga Ignasiak and Karolina Gębka created a multi-dimensional artistic and research project which is based on homemade pigments from vegetables, herbs and fruit. A curator of this exhibition Maja Wolniewska said: „Artists start painting in the kitchen – cooking, drying and searching for recipes for natural pigments and dyes. They study the changes occurring in decoctions and delicate transitions dependant on the use of extra ingredients, such as soda, citric acid or salt. They make use of what is growing under the window: lilac, nettle and foremost cabbage creating a surprisingly wide range of colors of unique properties, non-existent in industrial pigments”⁹. The artists comment on their activities in the following way: „Cabbage is our major muse and inspiration. We source dyes and pigments from it and we create paints on that basis. We take advantage of the strength, wisdom of nature and come back to the roots as the first paints were sourced from minerals. Our activities can be defined as slow painting and conscious painting where the process of creation begins long before paint is squeezed out onto a palette”¹⁰.



Recipe for colour, Łódź, January – February 2022

⁹ <https://uml.lodz.pl/aktualnosci-lodzpl/arttykul-lodzpl/farby-z-owocow-i-warzyw-kapusta-bohaterka-wystawy-w-galerii-punkt-odbioru-sztuki-id47039/2022/1/25>

¹⁰ Tamże..

(<https://www.asp.lodz.pl/index.php/pl/inne-wystawy/3077-przepis-na-kolor-wystawa-dr-aleksandry-ignasiak-i-karoliny-gebki>)

Ecoprint technique

Before I describe what ecoprint technique is, it is necessary to mention the oldest technique of obtaining color from nature, i.e. natural dyeing. Dyeing a fabric relies here on preparing a dye bath from a natural resource, in a defined temperature and with the use of stain which makes a dye embed in the fibre. In this process a fibre is immersed in a decoction. Long enough stirring allows a fabric to be dyed evenly with one color or with a pattern – thanks to a Japanese technique of shibori dyeing. This way plants have been used for centuries to create colorful textiles. This apparently simple recipe consists of many factors which have an enormous impact on the final effect. Therefore it takes many years of experience to handle this method properly.

Katarzyna Lech from the Faculty of Chemistry of Warsaw University of Technology in her article “*Sekrety barw-czyli sztuka tekstylna okiem chemika*” (*Secrets of colors – textile art from the point of view of a chemist*) says: „Dyeing techniques trace back to pre-writing times, and ethnic studies on primitive peoples indicate that the skills of adorning one's own skin and clothes appeared at the lowest level of human evolution. The knowledge of particular dyes was passed down to the next generations and a range of botanical and animal substances used depended on their availability on different continents”¹¹. Dyes are substances that can color fabrics directly or by means of additional elements. „Due to their origin natural pigments used in dyeing can be divided into pigments of natural origin (derived from roots, wood, pulp, bark, leaves, flowers, shells, seeds and resins) and of animal origin (produced from some molluscs and bugs). There are also those that come from lichen and fungi”¹².



A dye bath from golden rod and madder, 2021

¹¹Katarzyna Lech, *Sekrety barw, czyli sztuka tekstylna okiem chemika*, w: *Tkanina. Cenne dziedzictwo. Przedmiot współczesnych badań*, „Tkanina w Polsce”, t. 1, Stowarzyszenie Historyków Sztuki, Warszawa–Łódź 2020, s. 143.

¹²Tamże, s. 144–145.

The biggest experience, knowledge and merits in the field of natural dyeing in Poland can be attributed to post-doctoral degree Katarzyna Schmidt-Przewoźna, prof. IWNiRZ. In 2020 her monograph titled *Barwienie metodami naturalnymi. Rośliny barwierskie i ich potencjał (Natural methods of dyeing. Dyeing plants and their potential)*. It is a work that crowns the scientific achievements of the Professor and it is also enriched with the chapters written in the cooperation with other specialists in this field. Here is an excerpt of the review by prof. post-doctoral degree Ireneusz Domagała: „Presented in the publication the results of the analyses of dependences between a natural fibre and a method of dyeing show various dyeing techniques together with vast photo documentation. Moreover, the study of the relationship between a natural dye and a fabric reveal other interpretational levels – in the area of symbolism, colors and history. Time and mutual confrontation demonstrate the process of integration of the present and the past, and thanks to the author's look at natural dyeing it is possible to see the realm of plants and insects in a countless combination of colors and shades”¹³.

One more book is worth noting here. In 2019 a book *Dzikie barwy (Wild colors)* by Aleksandra Bystry, an artist from Łódź, was published in Poland. It is a kind of a guide about natural dyeing of fabrics with the use of plants. This book pays a lot of attention to detail, contains vast knowledge and thanks to author's wide experience gives ready recipes for dyeing in a natural way many kinds of fabrics. Aleksandra Bystry shows the richness of plants growing in our fields and meadows which can be used to obtain an enormous range of colors to dye fabrics and to produce natural inks used for painting. Much earlier, in 1986 *Farbowanie barwnikami naturalnymi (Dyeing with natural pigments)* by Weronika Tuszyńska was published in Poland.



Natural silk and cotton dyed in a natural water bath, yellow – golden rod, gingerish and pinkish – madder, brownish – nut, grayish – sumac, 2021

¹³*Barwienie metodami naturalnymi. Rośliny barwierskie i ich potencjał*, red. Katarzyna Schmidt-Przewoźna, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Przyrodniczego w Poznaniu, Poznań 2020.

In my work I have used ecoprint technique which is also referred to as botanical print, ecoprint and contact print. It relies on direct transfer of a dye from a botanical material onto the surface of a fibre excluding a dye bath. We do not obtain a homogeneous color as it happens when dyeing naturally, but a detailed print of a botanical material used in the process on a fabric. In order to make a good print, it is necessary to provide a close contact between a botanical material and a fibre where we want to obtain a print. Like in case of natural dyeing, the final effect is determined by a number of factors:



The stages of printing edible chestnut leaves on silk, 2020

Plants are the most important factor in the process of painting on fabrics. What matters here is as follows:

- A species (not every plant has dyeing properties),
- Growth conditions (type of soil, season of the year, exposure to the sun),
- Harvest time (part of the day, season of the year),
- Amount and storage method (drying, freezing, fresh usage are three methods of exploiting plants).

Plants constitute the biggest variable in the process of obtaining a print color. They are the source of pigments thanks to which they give color; however, not all plants are suitable for dyeing.



Birch leaves before a dyeing process and eucalyptus leaves after soaking in iron mordant, 2019

Fibres used in the process are another variable. They are divided into animal fibres or protein ones (wool, silk, hair, soy, and casein fibres) and cellulose fibres (cotton, linen, hemp, jute and sisal). Protein fibres due to a completely different molecular structure bind with a natural botanical material a lot more easily and produce much darker hues. They have also drawbacks – they are delicate, prone to mechanical damage and stains; they are also very sensitive to temperature changes. Cellulose fibres can withstand high temperatures, they are more durable and resistant to alkaline agents. The downside is a longer and multi-stage process of dressing and dyeing and prints might be more delicate.

Water is an important variable practically at every stage of the process – starting with staining fabrics, through boiling and ending with rinsing. The following aspects influence the process: hardness and softness of water, its mineral ingredients, temperature and its pH.

Vessels and tools might be variables as well. Copper, enameled and aluminum vessels affect color and print intensity. Other tools might also have an impact; therefore it is better to use the ones which do not affect the process, i.e. glass, plastic and tools coated in glaze and enamel.

Dressings and mordants are extra substances that accompany the process of botanical print and which allow pigments to penetrate fibres faster and more intensely. They affect color, its intensity and durability. The type of dressing, its quantity and the method have an impact on the final effect. The most commonly met natural dressing is tannin which can be found in galls, sumac, blackberry and tea leaves. The oldest and best known dressing is alum which makes colors more intense. Other substances used are: iron sulphate, copper sulphate, aluminum acetate, copper acetate and argol.

Time is another crucial variable in this process, but we have influence on it. It relates to the length of particular stages of fabric creation: storing plants, heat treatment and finish.

All the factors described above affect my creative work with the fabric (painting, sometimes graphics). I call it trace of nature left on silk and it is a way of rebuilding sensitivity to the world around. I do not mind it if my original intention differs from the final effect as what matters is unpredictability, ephemerality and some sort of instability.



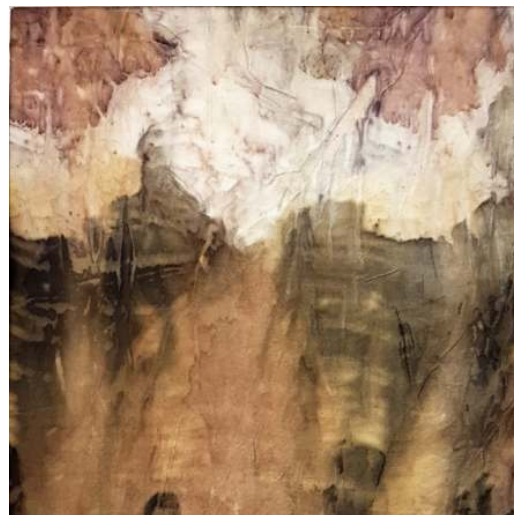
The process of cooking and drying the fabrics and removing leaves, 2019

The creative process

When I first stumbled upon ecoprint many years ago, I did not know anything about it. My initial works based on the use of plants came to fascinate me by the effects they gave. Later it turned out that those attempts were already experiments and ways of finding my own path and thanks to that this technique engrossed me utterly. Back then I had no idea how my activities in the process of creation affected the final effect. The outcome was not perfect prints of plants used in the process. Paradoxically I relied on my intuition then and it gave rise to an exploration process. The creative process itself was of great value to me – it was inspirational and opened me up to a new area of exploration and experimenting. I discovered that ecoprint was just a starting point to discover a sea of possibilities which nature can offer in the process of painting. I knew that nature would replace traditional paints and that painting begins the moment a plant grows in soil. At that point I thought of an idea of trace that nature can leave on a fabric.



Spirits of the forest II, silk, 2019, 13 x 13 cm



Spirits of the forest III, silk, 2019, 13 x 13 cm

Aleksandra Bystry (the author of the book *Dzikię barwy*) in one of her first internet posts about her first attempts at ecoprint compared those activities to monotyping – one-off print. Most plants are used only once, however, there is an exception – maybe not the only one, but I came across only this one case and these are all eucalyptus varieties. The leaves of this plant are exceptionally thick, stiff and abundant with tannin therefore they can be used for printing a couple of times. They also require much longer soaking before use. The most popular and recognizable eucalyptus leaves in Poland are the ones which are round, cool green, a bit faded in the sun, used by florists to decorate buquets. The trace they leave is intense ginger and orange in full range of shades. Another variety available in Poland is an eucalyptus with long, narrow leaves which are quite minute. The hues we may obtain depend on dressings, but they vary from aubergine shades through grey and brown to black ones, with big color intensity.

Apart from this Australian plant, I used our domestic leaves and flowers. Most fabrics were created from fresh plants, not dried ones – I prefer working with the former. The species of bushes and trees I collected botanical material (leaves) from are as follows: maple, smoke bush, nut, birch, tamarisk, sumac, chestnut, rose, strawberry, geranium and wild strawberry.



A collection of leaves and flower petals right before ecoprint process, 2020

My fabrics can be divided into two groups depending on the heat treatment they undergo: boiled in water and steamed. Steaming occurred in two ways. First, according to a classic method, fabrics are laid down in a vessel on a special sieve through which steam goes. It turned out very soon that my workshop was not adapted (lack of ventilation pipes) to processing large amounts of fabrics due to the fact that during hours' long boiling or steaming there is an enormous amount of essential oils which I am oversensitive to. It would be best to use this technique outdoors.



Steamed fabrics in a pressure cooker and on a sieve, 2019

We avoid the risk of being exposed to a strong smell of vapors floating in the air during hours' long boiling then. Essential oils have extremely high concentration and they can lead to poisoning when being exposed to them in an unventilated room. At some point I started to use a pressure cooker to steam fabrics. This way I minimized the emission of intense smell and I could work longer. Yet, it turned out that silk is very vulnerable to damage so I had to trial test steaming time.

The process of boiling in a conventional boiler took between 1 to a few hours. Sometimes it was spread over a few days so that a fabric could be immersed in decoction all the time, which was a deliberate action meant to achieve a greater intensity of the print. Classic steaming takes between 2 to 3 hours, depending on the type of plants used.



The process of cooking, fabrics soaked in water, 2019

The process of drying fabrics was carried out in many ways too. A basic method relies on taking out and spreading a fabric right after boiling or steaming. At the start of my work I was so curious about the effect that I did it almost every time. Later after I had already made hundreds of silk fabrics and found more patience in me I started to search for other possibilities of obtaining different print effects. Therefore I prolonged the process by leaving rolls in water where they used to boil for a day or two, which made the prints much darker. We obtain a similar effect when we take a roll out of water. We do not unfold it, however, but leave it until it dries for a day or two. In the first case a print and a background will be darker; in the other case the points of contact between a plant and a fabric get darker. After steaming I would leave a fabric until it dried in the pressure cooker without opening it experimenting also with time. We can also expose a fabric to the sun to deepen the print color. However, in our latitude it is difficult since we have too little sunshine in summer. Some fabrics, after taking them out of heat treatment and unfolding, I put to a washing machine to rinse them mechanically. This way I obtained a delicate hue of the whole surface, which is unattainable when rinsing manually.

I started my attempts at botanical print with small formats and a large quantity of plants and various types of fabrics, yet, natural silk was a dominant one. In the course of acquiring experience fabrics became larger and a quantity of plants, dressing and mordant used in the process became smaller. Despite the fact that it is said that ecoprint is eco-friendly, I do not agree with that. For instance, the use of iron sulphate which speeds up the process of drawing a pigment from a plant is not eco-friendly. At my next attempts I did my best to use the minimal amount of additional substances or to resign from them completely so that the fabrics could be chemistry-free. That is why each item out of 24 textiles is different; my struggling to keep „the cleanliness of the process of creation” is visible there. My last works are very minimalist and very bright.



The process of rolling silk out after being steamed, 2019

It is the way of rolling fabrics that influenced a repetitive pattern of plants or their fragments. In my initial works most textiles are built through a huge contrast which emphasizes their spacious nature. Later textiles represent more subtle hues or their gradient is more delicate, which is strengthened by the penetration of light through silk. In a few works a trace of plants is clearly visible like a graphic print; in others we can spot only contours or fragments of edges whose sharpness fades away into a smudge of color.



Silk after the process of steaming, 2019



Long eucalyptus leaves before and after ecoprint technique, 2019



Eucalyptus leaves reused to make a print and the moment of rolling out silk, 2019

All textiles that belong to the cycle were created over the period of three years in similar conditions. In a photographic display I present them as textiles hung flatly against a white wall to show them as a whole and also as a selected fragment. It was impossible to prepare photographic documentation in my workshop due to textile size and uneven natural lighting. The colors that can be obtained on silk thanks to nature fall into earth colors. The act of juxtaposing them with silk type ponge 6 of plain weave and low weight gives extra effects in the external light. Depending on the type of light, its source and intensity it will penetrate the silk producing different effects and moods each time.

The moment I was preparing the exhibition opening my doctoral thesis, I knew that ultimately the textiles would take a shape of a cylinder hung in space. Hanging my works for this exhibition, I decided to present my installation in this concrete room. I imagined 24 columns shaping a cube that I would hang in space. Particular textiles would not touch either floor or ceiling but they would form a colonnade hung in the air which could be watched from outside and inside and entering the centre of the installation could make us feel surrounded by nature.



Fabric and installation shooting session backstage, 2021

Nature is subject to changes every day. My paintings will be subject to such natural change as well. I mean the color of my works – its intensity may evolve over time. Obviously this process will not be rapid and will not be seen overnight. Nevertheless, I do accept the impact of nature and natural processes which influence my textiles.



Silk right after cooking, 2018

At this point it is worth noting that a sense of sight is not the only way we can sense my paintings. They can be sensed through smell as well. Smell substances contained in plants which were intensely sensed during a heat treatment process „got imprinted” with color and permeated silk fibres. Each textile has its unique smell code thanks to plants used. It can be sensed with a nose in the right humidity. I can hazard a guess that this type of painting is a living tissue subject to constant changes.

The technique I use in my paintings on silk and which I refer to as „traces of nature” is a way of drawing attention to the richness of the botanical world around us, not only as an inspiration to create but also a rich scope of creative material. It takes us back to our roots. We should derive from old culture and knowledge, coming back to old techniques and giving them new meanings. My creative work is an attempt to evoke interest in old techniques, wake up sensitivity to using old methods and create modern art with their use.



Landscape, silk, 19x19cm, 2018

**Selected artworks
made with ecoprint technique**



Earth (from a series), silk, 2015, 90 x 90 cm



Earth (from a series), silk, 2015, 90 x 90 cm



Moments (from a series), silk, 2014, 90 x 90 cm



Earth (from a series), silk, 2014, 180 x 45 cm



Garden, silk, 2017, 90 x 65 cm



Look up, silk, 2018, 90 x 65 cm



Parallel worlds, silk, 2019, 300 x 114 cm



Morning mists (a series), silk, 2018, 13 x 13 cm



A conversation, silk, 2018, 270 x 90 cm



Parallel worlds (from a series), silk, 2018, 13 x 13 cm



Outside the window (from a series), silk, 2017, 90 x 65 cm



I am IV (a fragment), silk, 2018, 270 x 90 cm





I am II (from a series), silk, 2018, 130 x 90 cm



A map, silk, 2017, 130 x 90 cm



Kharna (from a series), silk, 2017, 90 x 30 cm



In other worlds (from a series), silk, 2018, 13 x13 cm

**Photographic record of artworks
included in the doctoral thesis
„TRACES of Nature”**







































Fabric no.1, eucalyptus leaves, silk, 2019, 300 x 114 cm



Fabric no.1 (a fragment)



Fabric no.2, birch leaves, silk, 2019, 300 x 114 cm



Fabric no. 2 (a fragment)



Fabric no.10, catalpa leaves, silk, 2020, 300 x 114 cm



Fabric no. 10 (a fragment)



Fabric no.17, sumac leaves, silk, 2020, 300 x 114 cm



Fabric no.17 (a fragment)



Fabric no.18, nut leaves, silk, 2020, 300 x 114 cm



Fabric no.18 (a fragment)



Fabric no.22, flower petals, silk, 2021, 300 x 114 cm



Fabric no.22 (a fragment)

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