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DESCRIPTION OF THE DOCTORAL WORK | SUPERVISOR DR HAB. KAMIL STAŃCZAK

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction	5
I The art of spirituality - key inspirations	10
II Motanka doll	20
III Tarot. Tarot Dolls	33
IV Spatial cutout	50
V Figure and space	55
VI Kupala Night	69
VII Forefathers	78
Summary	92
Bibliography	95
Reproductions of works	105

INTRODUCTION

The starting point for my dissertation entitled *Bios and Zoe* is the essay by Peter Augustyniak *Jezus Niechrystus (Jesus Unchrist)*¹ and the ancient Greek concept of life as the interpenetration of *Bios* and *Zoe* described in that essay. *Bios* is biological, mortal life; *Zoe* is life as eternal, immortal, immaterial and sacred energy continually reborn in mortal matter. Under this concept, we are not dealing with a personal deity as a separate entity; the deity here is life and nature itself. *Zoe* incarnates in any material form, and after the death of that form she is reincarnated in another form, in the "eternal circle of life"². As I understand it, *Zoe* as sacred life energy is identical not with a deity (for I do not believe in any deity), but with the soul of the world, a particle of which is found in all entities. *The bios* into which *Zoe* incarnates is all matter, however structured, it can be a person, an animal, an object, but also sound, for example.

The purpose of my work was to present the above concept (the interpenetration of the world of spirit and matter, the eternal rebirth of *Zoe* through *Bios*) using visual methods, appropriately chosen symbols and form.

I chose the topic of the doctoral cycle for the following reasons:

1. Today European culture is at a turning point, a change in values. The change in religious attitudes of Europeans, the search for a new religious paradigm is evident. In view of this, it is important to learn about our cultural and religious roots. In this context, it is reasonable to review religious attitudes and symbols, and to identify motives that are constant in the changing culture and religion, and that can be used in forming new religious attitudes. Such constant motifs are, for

¹ P. Augustyniak, *Jezus Niechrystus, Słowo/ Obraz Terytoria* Publishing House, Gdańsk, 2021, [Kindle edition].

² Ibid, Loc 2074, 77%.

example, symbols (egg, cross, spinner, sun, fire, water) or rituals (such as the feast of the dead).

2. In the era of ecological challenges, it is worth building a post-secular paradigm, in which the deity is life and nature *per se*, for these are values threatened by climate catastrophe and need to be protected. In the afterword to Jung's essay *Odpowiedź Hiobowi (Antwort auf Hiob)*, Olga Tokarczuk writes: "Perhaps we are standing on the eve of the next stage of the divine drama, because the existence of the world in its current form is really seriously threatened. In this apocalyptic situation, it is no longer possible not to see and realize the unity of the deity in the Jungian sense with all creation [and not only with man - note K.H.]. Awareness of this identity can become a factor allowing to save the world from annihilation³".

3. In Polish art and in narratives about Polish culture, the voice of alternative, non-Catholic spirituality (including, for example, occultism, goddess paganism, etc.) is still not heard loud and clear enough. There is also too little talk about the achievements and influence of this trend on Polish culture.

4. I deal with issues of life and death in a religious and philosophical context; a theme that often appears in my art to date is the ancient Greek myth of Persephone, which, by the way, is also an expression of the ideas of *Bios* and *Zoe*. My doctoral series is a continuation and development of my earlier artistic explorations.

I researched the following theses - which seem to have been confirmed in the finished works:

1. It is possible to express a religious-philosophical concept in art by appropriately selected techniques, media, form, etc.

³ O. Tokarczuk, *Posłowie*, in: G. C. Jung, *Odpowiedź Hiobowi*, Wydawnictwo Literackie, Kraków, 2024, Loc. 2,436, 88% to Loc. 2,440, 88%, [Kindle edition].

2. The best form to convey philosophical and religious concepts is symbolic art. Religion is a conventional construct, so it is appropriate to depict religious content in a conventional way as well.

3. It is possible to apply in this context symbolism already existing in the tradition of European culture. By "European culture" I mean certain patterns of behavior - the rituals of culture formed in ancient Greece and in pagan times (including by Slavic paganism), through the era of Christian dominance, the period of secularization in the Age of Enlightenment and in the 19th and 20th centuries up to the present day.

4. The appropriate media for building a symbolic religious-philosophical message are painting and handicrafts (in this case – doll making). These are the first media, known since prehistory, used in their origins to convey religious and magical content, so reaching to these media is to reach to the source of religious art and to the sources of European symbolism. In addition, painting is a narrative medium, suitable for conveying literary content, and such can include considerations of a philosophical and spiritual nature. In handicrafts, grappling with matter is close to meditation - an important element in the process of creating religious works in some traditions, such as the tradition of icon writing.

I used the following research methods:

1. analysis of existing traditional symbolism found in such areas of European culture as religious art (prehistoric, ancient, Christian), rituals, myths and fairy tales, tarot, folklore, literature, etc. Thus, I refer to the festival of the grandfathers and to Kupala (Midsummer) Night, to the figure of the spinner (Athena, the old woman in the Sleeping Beauty tale), to the tarot cards Priestess and Sun, as well as to a whole group of symbols, such as: circle, mandala, cross, egg, mirror, mask, tree, fire, water. In addition, I analyze animal symbols - horse, goat, cow, cat, spider and moth. I also devote some space to the concept of the garden as a happiness place.

2. Comparison of symbolism found in works of different genres (fairy tales, poetry, painting).

3. Jungian method of exploring one's imagination through free associations.

4. My assumption was to use painting and handicrafts (doll making) as media, possibly supplementing them with other media as needed; eventually, in addition to paintings and puppets, I also made spatial sets for the dolls display.

The *Bios and Zoe* series consists of five paintings and twenty conceptual painting sketches for the paintings. In addition, nine dolls, displayed in six spatial installations. The paintings and sketches are done in acrylic on canvas. The dolls are made of fabric; seven of them are so-called motankas (created using the method of wrapping and tying fabric), two - tarot dolls - are sewn. The spatial installations were created from cardboard, from joining "dry" the individual modules, which, by the way, turned out to be the biggest - and perhaps the most interesting - technical and execution challenge in my work.

Central to my dissertation was the very process of arriving at solutions, so a very important part of the series are the painterly concept sketches that precede the creation of the paintings and visualize how my concepts were born and evolved.

The art of the new spirituality operates in a broader, non-artistic context that does not seem to be widely known, so I thought it worth including. Thus, I indicate the historical, intellectual and literary background of my *Bios and Zoe* series, but it should be noted that I do so in a cursory manner, for the purpose of this dissertation is not a scientific historical, philosophical or literary analysis, but only to signal in which tradition my art fits. The description of the dissertation is in the form of an essay. In Chapter I *Art of Spirituality - the most important inspirations* I give examples of religious and spiritual art of other artists. In Chapter II *Motanka doll*, I write about the idea of the folk magic motanka doll, describe different types of motanka and how they are made, I also point out the historical context of

motanka. In Chapter III *Tarot. Tarot Dolls* I reposition two dolls from the *Bios and Zoe* series (*Priestess* and *Sun*) in the context of tarot, I also write about the history of tarot, some of the most important tarot decks and, very briefly and randomly, the history of high magic in Europe. Chapter IV *Spatial Cutout* is devoted to the nitty-gritty of design issues related to the creation of scenery for puppet displays. Chapter V *Figure and Space* deals with the paintings *Spinner* and *Kore in Mandala*, the dolls *Spider Women*, *Moth*, *Cow*, *Goat* and *Goat* and the scenography for these dolls. Here I discuss the symbolism of the works and consider what place the human figure should occupy in the ecosystem - and how to depict the human - space (ecosystem) relationship through artistic means. In Chapter VII *Kupala Night* I describe the symbolism of the painting *Kupala Night* and the installation of the same title, and briefly present the historical context of Midsummer Night. I also write about the painting sketches for the *Kupala Night* painting and my journey to find a way to represent the holiday symbolically. Chapter VII *Forefathers* is devoted to the symbolism of *Forefathers* painting and installation, as well as the symbolism of the *Soul (Onion)* and *Priestess* dolls. In this chapter I also refer to the drama *Dziady (Forefathers)* by Adam Mickiewicz, and cite three different scholarly theories on the interpretation of Part II of *Dziady*. In Chapters II *Motanka Doll* and IV *Spatial Cutout*, I also give examples of motankas and spatial paper works created by others.

In the course of working on the *Bios and Zoe* series, promising themes worth developing in the future emerged, such as the concept and method of making sets for puppets, kaleidoscopic composition, and the use of abstraction to represent symbolic content.

THE ART OF SPIRITUALITY - KEY INSPIRATIONS

what is a symbol ▪ artists of spirituality - some examples ▪ two art galleries and one open air

The art of spirituality is a very broad and unspecific term; after all, any work created out of an inner desire is an expression of the artist's spirituality. However, for lack of other terms, I have decided to use it. I call symbolic works, including my own, which, according to the intention of the author or author, touch on matters related to the sacred.

According to Carl Gustav Jung, a symbol is a word or image that, in addition to its everyday and obvious meanings, also refers to a broader reality⁴. At the same time, however, a symbol can never be fully explained or defined⁵. Nor was it invented intentionally by humans⁶. **Natural symbols** flow spontaneously from our subconscious, and come to the fore in dreams, for example. ("Just as the plant produces the flower, so the psyche creates symbols," says Jung⁷. They are similar to symbols from archaic times and primitive cultures⁸, which manifested, for

⁴ C. G. Jung, *Bliżej nieświadomości*, in: C. G. Jung (ed.), *Człowiek i jego symbole*, KOS Publishing House, Katowice 2018, p. 44.

⁵ Jung *ibid*, p. 44.

⁶ *ibid*, p. 84.

⁷ *ibid*, p. 98.

⁸ *ibid*, p. 131.

example, in the "beliefs and rituals of tribal communities"⁹. In ancient societies (according to Jungian theory), numinous symbols (emanating mysterious power, arousing both terror and fascination¹⁰) were considered sacred and helped assimilate and integrate the "numinous forces of the psyche," that is, the unconscious instincts that guide us¹¹. **Cultural symbols**, used in religions, for example, are ancient natural symbols that have undergone various "more or less conscious" treatments and transformations by society in the course of cultural development. However, they still retain their numinousness¹², and our minds are still able to create age-old symbols that "deeply influence our attitudes and behavior"¹³.

Adrian Frutiger, on the other hand, writes: "Symbolism in an image is the content not fully spoken"¹⁴, influences the conscious and subconscious. A symbolic image stands between the real world and the mystical world (the world of religion, philosophy or magic). So the artist or artist mediates between these two worlds. "In earlier times, artistic craftsmanship was regarded as something miraculous and spiritual. Its symbolic value was so much greater and worthy of adoration the more fully the work expressed its content through artistic perfection, that is, it was more beautiful. A typical example would be an icon, whose spirituality, achieved through specific styling and observed painting canons, allows the symbolic content given in beautiful form to radiate and intensify the experience of the beholder"¹⁵.

According to Gottfried Boehm, the prohibition of making images of a deity that exists in some religions (e.g., Judaism) stems from the belief that an image has the

⁹ Joseph L. Henderson, *Starożytne mity i człowiek współczesny*, in: Jung (ed.), *Człowiek...*, op. cit. p. 147.

¹⁰ PWN Encyclopedia, entry: *numinosum*, <https://encyklopedia.pwn.pl/haslo/numinosum;3949006.html> (accessed 16.11.2024).

¹¹ C. G. Jung, *Bliżej...*, op. cit, in: C. G. Jung (ed.), *Człowiek...*, op. cit, pp. 132-133.

¹² *Ibid*, p. 131.

¹³ Joseph L. Henderson, *Starożytne...*, op. cit., in: Jung (ed.), *Człowiek...*, op. cit., p. 147.

¹⁴ A. Frutiger, *Człowiek i jego znaki*, Do Publishing House, Optima Publishing House, Warszawa, 2005, p. 189.

¹⁵ *Ibid*, pp. 189-190.

"potent power" to evoke a supernatural¹⁶ or magical¹⁷ presence of some higher being, but also making an image of a deity - that is, giving it human or animal characteristics - is an unacceptable reversal of the creator-created roles¹⁸. Boehm also believes, however, that it is the "increment of being," the added value beyond a simple reflection of reality, that is what we expect from a true image¹⁹.

II

As examples of numinous art, "standing between worlds", full of power, we can point to works created by the following artists and artists:

Agnes Pelton (1881 - 1961), American painter, worked in the trend of spiritual abstraction (she also painted figurative paintings). She was interested in the occult, close to the ideas that today we call New Age²⁰, She believed that there is a higher consciousness in the cosmos, spiritual energies that operate in the material world giving and protecting life. She created her own language of symbolic abstraction, with which she expressed this belief in her paintings. Like the artists of Orthodox icons, for Pelton, meditation was part of the creative process²¹. In the 1930s she created desert paintings, inspired by the Desert Hot Springs in California²². They can be described as abstract paintings based on natural

¹⁶ G. Boehm, *O obrazach i widzeniu. Antologia tekstów*, Towarzystwo Autorów i Wydawców Prac Naukowych Universitas, Kraków, 2014, p. 177.

¹⁷ Ibid p. 179.

¹⁸ Ibid, p. 177.

¹⁹ Ibid, p. 179.

²⁰ M. Zakian, Agnes Pelton: Poet of Nature, 14.12.2009, <https://www.tfaoi.org/aa/9aa/9aa269.htm> (accessed 4.11.2024),

B. Davis, *Agnes Pelton Went to the Desert in Search of Solace. Her Paintings at the Whitney Show She Found Something Magical There*, 13.03.2020, <https://news.artnet.com/art-world/agnes-pelton-at-the-whitney-1802346> (accessed 4.11.2024).

²¹ *Agnes Pelton: Desert Transcendentalist, Mar 13-Nov 1, 2020*, <https://whitney.org/exhibitions/agnes-pelton> (accessed 4/11/2024).

²² B. Davis, *Agnes...*, op. cit.

phenomena²³. The painter's starting point is a realistic landscape with sky, earth, horizon line. However, in her paintings, nature transforms into a transcendental landscape, full of surreal energies. Pelton depicts them with delicate flowing lines, biomorphic shapes, flashes of light. The images are abstract or on the border between abstraction and figurativeness.

The same trend of occultism in art and metaphysical abstraction can also include, for example, the Swedish painter **Hilma af Klimt** (1862-1944) or the Swiss **Emma Kunz** (1892-1963).

Carl Gustav Jung (1875-1961), Swiss psychiatrist and psychologist, co-founder of depth psychology and author of the concepts of "collective unconscious" and "archetype"²⁴, among others. Jung continues to influence culture today, including the art of new spirituality²⁵ and the New Age movement²⁶, also in Poland. For example, Olga Tokarczuk states that Jung has had an overwhelming influence on her writing, and the book "Critical Dictionary of Jungian Analysis"²⁷ was first published in Poland just by her, in the 1990s²⁸. Jung's writings into Polish were also translated and published by Urszula Broll (see below)²⁹.

In 1913-30 Jung created "The Red Book"³⁰ - a work of literary, painting and calligraphic art, which is a record of Jung's inner spiritual journey (his dreams and visions). This journey was called individuation by Jung - it is a process of psychological maturation that occurs in adulthood, and begins with a wounded

²³ M. Zakian, *Agnes ...*, op. cit.

²⁴ Foreword to: C. G. Jung, *Odpowiedź Hiobowi*, Wydawnictwo Literackie, Kraków, 2024, Loc. 26, 1%, [Kindle edition].

²⁵ S. Shamdasani, *Liber Novus: Czerwona Księga C. G. Junga*, in: C. G. Jung, *Czerwona Księga*, Vis-à-vis Etiuda Publishing House, Kraków, 2024, p. 19.

²⁶ Z. Pasek, *Neopogaństwo w Polsce a duchowość New Age*, in: Państwo i Społeczeństwo, VIII: 2008, no. 4, p. 205.

²⁷ A. Samuels, B. Shorter, F. Plaut, *Krytyczny słownik analizy jungowskiej*, Unus Publishing House, Walbrzych, 1994.

²⁸ A. Dobkiewicz, *Już w latach 90tych chciała, by ludzie zawyli z rozkoszy na widok księzek Junga Tokarczuk zachęca Polaków do analizy krytycznej*, 06.07.2024, <https://walbrzych.wyborcza.pl/walbrzych/7,178336,31121384,juz-w-latach-90-chciala-by-ludzie-zawyli-z-rozkoszy-na-widok.html> (accessed 5.11.2024).

²⁹ P. Policht, *Urszula Broll*, 3.02.2023, <https://culture.pl/pl/tworca/urszula-broll> (accessed 4.11.2024).

³⁰ U. Hoerni, *Przedmowa* in: C. G. Jung, *Czerwona...*, op. cit. p. 10, and S. Shamdasani, *Nota redakcyjna*, [in:] *ibid.* p. 109.

personality and psychological pain. The goal of individuation is to gain a deeper knowledge and understanding of the self or oneself - to free oneself from the domination of the ego and instead establish a relationship with one's own self, and as a result build a more mature and effective personality and ways of acting in the external world³¹. In "The Red Book" the hero's path is symbolically presented as a kind of myth, in which archetypal entities and phenomena appear: for example, "the image of Eve, the tree and the snake"³²; a god born from an egg³³; the hero's soul leading him to the barren desert of "his own self"³⁴, which symbolizes the beginning of spiritual maturation - the greening of the desert is a sign that maturation is progressing³⁵. The original copy of the work was hand-carved by Jung in ink and illustrated in the style of medieval manuscripts. On the tempera³⁶ illuminations we see a wealth of archetypal symbols, for example: mandalas, the Tree of Life, a snake at the root of a tree. A boat carrying a sun disk, and underneath it in the depths of the sea monster. The sun with a cross inscribed in it towering over the town, and many others. An important archetype is the figure of the old man with wings, the "Old Sage", named by Jung Philemon; this was a symbol of the inner guide, teacher, in other words, a symbol of psychological insight³⁷ and the self³⁸. According to Jungist Marie-Louise von Franz, the self is also represented by the mandala³⁹, while the tree symbolizes individuation⁴⁰. Jung uses various aesthetic conventions. Some of the images may be associated with Celtic art (because of the ornamentation in them), others with more realistic book illustration. Some mandalas, on the other hand, are minimalist.

Unusual meditative paintings were created by **Urszula Broll** (1930-2020). These include watercolors, tempera and inks on paper: mandalas and geometric symbolic

³¹ M-L. von Franz, *Proces indywiduacji*, in: C. G. Jung (ed.), *Człowiek...*, op. cit. pp. 217 et seq.

³² C. G. Jung, *Red...*, op. cit. p. 185.

³³ *Ibid*, pp. 327-340.

³⁴ *Ibid*, p. 143.

³⁵ *Ibid*, pp. 143-149.

³⁶ S. Shamasani, *Liber Novus...*, op. cyt., in: G. C. Jung, *Czerwona...*, op. cit. pp. 49-50.

³⁷ *Ibid*, p. 42.

³⁸ M-L. von Franz, *Proces...*, op. cit., in: C. G. Jung (ed.), *Człowiek...*, op. cit., p. 272.

³⁹ *Ibid*, p. 291.

⁴⁰ *Ibid*, p. 219.

abstractions or "landscapes of mountains, which she called emotional states"⁴¹. Broll made contributions to Buddhism and the New Age in Poland. She translated Jung's texts into Polish. She was an animator of Buddhist life in Silesia. She co-founded the Oneiron group in Katowice - together with artists such as her husband Andrzej Urbanowicz, as well as Henryk Waniek, Zygmunt Stuchlik and Antoni Halor. (Oneiron - Greek for "place of dreaming"). They were interested in esotericism, philosophy and spirituality of the Far East. They also conducted underground publishing activities - they published Jung, Mircea Eliade, the Tibetan Book of the Dead. "Beginning in February 1974, Broll and Urbanowicz published - also the first Buddhist magazine in communist Poland - under the name *Droga* (*The Way*), later renamed *Droga Zen* (*Zen Way*). From the Oneiron group was born the first Buddhist community in Poland. Broll herself eventually settled in a Buddhist community in the village of Przesieka⁴².

The pietas of **Antoni Rząsa** (1919 - 1980) have a very strong numinous influence. Stylistically, they can be described as an adaptation of the folk pattern of sacred wooden sculpture, but their severity is also reminiscent of the art of primitive cultures. *Pieta Nadziei* (*Pieta of Hope*, 1969) depicts a standing Mary with her large hands growing straight from her shoulders like outspread wings. In front of her is an altar table; the top of the altar is, supported by two crosses, Jesus. In *Pieta Przemijania* (*Pieta of Passing* 1967), Mary stands and holds her stiffly reclining son in her arms. Mary's torso takes the form of a weeping mask, and after looking at the sculpture for a while, we realize that it is on the hands of the mask that Jesus rests. Mary, on the other hand, holds her hands on her chest in a prayerful gesture. The sculpture looks like an image of an archaic pagan deity.

⁴¹ Urszula Broll. *Atman znaczy Oddech*, 21.05.2021 - 25.07.2021. Wystawa w Muzeum Karkonoskim w Jeleniej Górze, <http://katarzynakozyrafoundation.pl/projekty/urszula-broll-atman-znaczy-oddech-w-muzeum-karkonoskim/> (accessed 4.11.2024); J. Hobgarska, *Urszula Broll, Atman znaczy Oddech*, wystawa w Galerii Bielskiej BWA, Restart, no. 4 winter 2022, <https://restartmag.art/urszula-broll-atman-znaczy-oddech-wystawa-w-galerii-bielskiej-bwa/> (accessed 4.11.2024).

⁴² P. Policht, *Urszula...*, op. cit. About Broll and Jung's *Red Book* also here: J. Balisz-Schmelz, *Duchowe samokształcenie jako strategia oporu. „Mandale” Urszuli Broll*, in: *Widok. Teorie i Praktyki Kultury Wizualnej*, no. 26, 2020; <https://www.pismowidok.org/pl/archiwum/2020/26-empatyczne-obrazy/duchowe-samokształcenie-jako-strategia-oporu> (accessed 23.11.2024).

Henryk Musiałowicz (1914-2015), painter and sculptor, said: "We must understand that the land is not the property of man, but vice versa - man belongs to the land. What is good for it, is good for us as well (...) Let us look for ways of rebirth, from the field stone (which tells us about the struggles of the once emerging world) to the construction of a bird's nest (a symbol of love and creation), through the vertical of the tree and the level of the horizon - as signposts of truth"⁴³. Musiałowicz was interested in spirituality in nature, seeing humans as part of the ecosystem. His works are related to primitive art, based on symbol and sign, close to magic. Musiałowicz's paintings (e.g., the *Mother Earth*, *Reminiscences* and other series) feature simplified silhouettes - some figures from the afterlife, some figures of gods. Musiałowicz also created wooden sculptures - poles or totems, sometimes resembling a cross, sometimes - ancient religious or magical symbols. He sometimes built his paintings into the poles, as well as natural elements like stones or animal skulls⁴⁴.

Ana Mendieta (1948-85), a Cuban-American artist, worked in ecofeminism and land art. She worked in performance, painting, sculpture and installation. The leading motifs of her art are the body and the earth as a womb bringing life into the world. The artist used natural elements like earth, clay, wood, feathers, leaves, fire, blood, water, but also her own body. Her style is austere, archaic; she referred to prehistoric representations of goddesses and the Great Mother. Mendieta's characteristic is delicacy - this can be seen well in the *Siluettes*. These were more than a hundred installations in nature. They depicted human silhouettes made of earth, plants, branches, such as a silhouette made of sand on the water's edge - gradually washed away, annihilated by water. The whole cycle is an intervention in nature, not destroying it or changing it permanently, but just the opposite - itself

⁴³ <https://www.dompraczeki.pl/uploads/musialowicz/202201-musialowicz-zaproszenie1.jpg> (accessed 5.11.2024).

⁴⁴ M. Kitowska-Łysiak, *Henryk Musiałowicz*, 05.08.2016, <https://culture.pl/pl/tworca/henryk-musialowicz> (accessed 23.11.2024); <https://desa.pl/pl/wyniki-aukcji-dziel-sztuki/rzeźba-i-formy-przestrzenne-wz4x/henryk-musialowicz/z-cyklu-ksiegi-zycia-t3i1/> (accessed 23.11.2024); <https://desa.pl/pl/wyniki-aukcji-dziel-sztuki/sztuka-wspolczesna-klasycy-awangardy-po-1945-fr2c/henryk-musialowicz/z-cyklu-oczekiwanie-cqi8/> (accessed 23.11.2024).

subject to disappearance over time as a result of natural forces. This symbolizes our mortality but also the unity of our bodies with nature. After death, our body reunites with Mother Earth⁴⁵.

Dorota Berger (born 1974) refers to the Old Testament, to the texts of the prophets, in her mystical landscapes. Her tempera paintings on board, usually small in size, are inspired by medieval and early Italian Renaissance painting. Berger's paintings are characterized by delicacy, attentiveness and precision. Symbolic elements such as a tree, rock, rainbow, water (e.g. in the form of a river, spring, rain, sea) appear in her landscapes. The sun, moon, earth or labyrinth - sometimes taking a more abstract form, similar to a mandala. A frequent motif with this painter is the garden, including the medieval enclosed garden. The artist precisely captures details such as field flowers, bushes, trees in the orchard. Sometimes animals (birds, dogs and others) appear in her landscapes, occasionally a human figure. Berger's paintings have the power to put the person looking at them in a meditative mood⁴⁶.

In the spirit of Christian metaphysical abstraction, **Joanna Mazuś** (b. 1994) and **Krzysztof Sokolowski** (b. 1985) create. Together they realize monumental polychromes in sacred interiors. Each of them also has their own artistic practice, but their individual works are similar both in theoretical assumptions and visually.

Mazuś strives for universalism, looking for a language that would reach the spirituality of Christians and non-Christians. He creates with traditional, age-old techniques - bas-relief in linden wood covered with chalk-glue primer, polychromed, gilded with flake gold; yolk tempera on canvas. He makes the primers and paints himself. She paints with laser, which allows, as she writes, to

⁴⁵ K. Wimhurst, *Ana Mendieta's Siluetas*, 3.09.2015, <https://whimsylph.wordpress.com/2015/09/03/ana-mendieta-silueta-series/> (accessed 23.11.2024).

⁴⁶ <https://dorotaberger.pl/> (accessed 5.11.2024).

obtain "a unique sound of color [...] an effect of lightness, breath, life"⁴⁷. Her works (many of which we can describe as mandalas) are simple, economical in composition and color scheme. She often uses concentric, centripetal, symmetrical compositions, built from geometric figures like circles, squares, triangles, rhombuses. Gold, purple, shades of green, blues, broken white, earth colors (sienna, ochre, etc.) appear. Usually in one work Mazus uses two or three, sometimes four colors .⁴⁸

Sokolovski creates polychrome wooden reliefs, paintings on wood, wood panel altarpieces using traditional methods⁴⁹ . He wields a similar universalist language to Mazus intended for people of different faiths, but his works are Christian. He refers to his work by the name "neo-sacred art." This refers to a specific reference to Orthodox icons. Sokolovski starts from traditional figurative icons. In them, he analyzes the compositional structure itself - compositional directions, points of gravity, arrangement of elements in relation to each other, proportions. On this basis, he builds abstract arrangements of his paintings and reliefs. The nature of these works can be described as minimalist⁵⁰. Some of his compositions are strict, symmetrical, but quite often this artist uses free, asymmetrical arrangements. Many of his works are kept in black and white with the addition of gold. Sokolovsky can also be classified as an artist from the New Icon trend; in fact, he took part in the International Workshop of Iconographers in Novica⁵¹.

Pagan Slavism is the theme of **Karolina Matyjaszkowicz's** (b. 1980) paintings. These are magical landscapes filled with figures and spirits from our folklore - russets, meridians, vilas and other representatives of this family. The painter draws

⁴⁷ J. Mazuś, *Malarstwo sztalugowe*, <https://jmazus.com/malarstwo-sztalugowe/> (accessed 23.11.2024).

⁴⁸ <https://jmazus.com> (accessed 23.11.2024).

⁴⁹ <https://galeriabohema.pl/en/artysci/krzysztof-sokolovski/> (accessed 23.11.2024).

⁵⁰ E. Kiedio, *Abstrakcja i ikona. Sztuka neosakralna Krzysztofa Sokolovskiego*, in: *Więź*, 2.03.2018, <https://wiesz.pl/2018/03/02/abstrakcja-i-ikona-sztuka-neosakralna-krzysztofa-sokolovskiego/> (accessed 5.11.2024).

⁵¹ https://www.facebook.com/story.php/?story_fbid=625297983141888&id=100069850747110&_rdr (dostęp: 5.11.2024),

K. Winnicka, *Nowa Ikona*, <https://muzeum.sanok.pl/pl/wydarzenia-aktualnosci/395-wystawa-nowa-ikona-w-zamku-krolewskim-w-sanoku> (accessed 5.11.2024).

from folk art; the plants and figures in her paintings can be understood as an allusion to the Łowicz cut-outs. The magical mood of the works is built to a great extent by color. I would directly call this artist a master of color - she uses a wide range, original, unobvious color combinations, sophisticated shades of colors⁵².

III

A very important gallery dealing with contemporary Polish religious art (Christian and alternative) is the Gallery of Contemporary Sacred Art, Sacrum **House of the Washerwoman** in Kielce. There we will see a permanent exhibition presenting Catholic art, as well as temporary exhibitions of artists with different spiritual attitudes. For example, the Praczk House has shown art by Mazuś, Musiałowicz, Wańek, Antoni Rząsa, Tadeusz Boruta and others⁵³.

In Krynica Zdroj, meanwhile, there is a **Gallery of Contemporary Icons** in the parish house of the Greek Catholic Parish. On display there is a collection of icons from the International Iconography Workshop in Novitsa. The annual open-air workshop in Novitsa is designed for artists who want to renew the language of the icon as a liturgical work. It is attended by people from Poland, Ukraine, Belarus, Lithuania, Georgia and Romania. (It is organized by the Association of Friends of Novitsa and the Sarepta Brotherhood.)⁵⁴

⁵² <https://matyjaskowicz.art/> (accessed 5.11.2024).

⁵³ <https://www.dompraczki.pl/> (accessed 5.11.2024).

⁵⁴ *Nowa Ikona, Nowica 2009-2017. Międzynarodowe Warsztaty Ikonopisów w Nowicy*, Stowarzyszenie Przyjaciół w Nowicy, 2018, p. 4; *Gallery of Contemporary Icons*, <https://www.cerkiewkrynica.pl/galeria-ikon/> (accessed 23.11.2024).]. [<https://ikonynowica.blogspot.com/> (accessed 23.11.2024)].

II

MOTANKA DOLL

unknown past of the Slavs ▪ folklore ▪ what is a motanka ▪ how I made my motankas ▪ motankas of other creators ▪ guide to making magic dolls

I

I began work on my doctoral series by making seven motankar dolls inspired by Slavic magic folk motankars. Today's motankars often claim that the motankar tradition is pre-Slavic, with roots in pagan times. However, if we are making nods to indigenous Pto-Slavic traditions in our art, we must remember that we don't know who or what we are bowing to. This is because we have no knowledge of what ancient traditions actually looked like and when customs that may seem pre-Christian to us today were really born.

It is not known who were the people who lived in our part of Europe at the time of the Roman Empire. Their culture did not survive until the Middle Ages - it collapsed at the turn of the 4th and 5th centuries AD⁵⁵. We can talk about the Slavs - that is, people who spoke the Slavic language⁵⁶ - from the 6th to the 7th century. Their culture developed in continuity until the Christianization⁵⁷. Still, we

⁵⁵ K. Janicki, *Cywilizacja Słowian. Prawdziwa historia największego ludu Europy*, Wydawnictwo Poznańskie, Poznań 2023, pp. 15-16.

⁵⁶ *Ibid*, pp. 53, 56.

⁵⁷ *Ibid*, p. 16.

have little information about them. We don't know where they came from⁵⁸ (perhaps they were descendants of a previous culture, or maybe they came from somewhere?), what languages they spoke before (perhaps Slavic language began to develop only at the end of the Roman Empire)⁵⁹. Our ideas about their world are often speculations⁶⁰. Records about the Slavs began to appear in the 6th century⁶¹, but their reliability is questionable. Their authors are outsiders, Christians and Muslims, who did not necessarily understand or even approve of the Slavic reality⁶². In any case, in the earliest Middle Ages (6th century) our ancestors were described as barbaric savages and cruel⁶³. It was not until many years after the baptism of Poland that Polish history began to be written down. (Gall Anonim's *Chronicle* was written at the beginning of the 12th century, Wincenty Kadlubek's *Polish Chronicles* at the turn of the 12th and 13th centuries, Jan Długosz's *Rocznik czyli kroniki sławnego Królestwa Polskiego* in the second half of the 15th century). Customs described in these sources do not have to be pagan at all - they may have appeared already after baptism⁶⁴.

"Modern" research on Slavic studies was initiated by the Romantics. In the 19th century, the concept of the nation-state was born in Europe, so the need arose to conduct historical research in such a way that it would show that national distinctions between the peoples of Europe had always existed. The Romantics turned their attention to folklore - they recognized that folk cultures are expressions of these age-old national distinctions. The Brothers Grimm, followed by others, began to write down folk tales under the influence of the "patriotic cult of folk creativity"⁶⁵. Things were similar in Poland. At that time, the religion and culture of the original Slavs were poorly understood; there were not many reliable historical sources on the subject. In view of this, two research attitudes developed:

⁵⁸ Ibid, p. 12.

⁵⁹ Ibid, p. 42.

⁶⁰ Ibid, pp. 25, 227, 228-229.

⁶¹ Ibid, p. 17.

⁶² Ibid, pp. 142-143.

⁶³ Ibid, pp. 16, 19.

⁶⁴ Ibid, p. 143.

⁶⁵ I. Calvino, *Wstęp* in: I. Calvino, *Baśnie Włoskie*, Czyły Barbarzyńca Publishing House, vol. 1, Warszawa, 2002, pp. 8-10.

the folklorists believed that the ancient history of the Slavs could be reconstructed⁶⁶ on the basis of contemporary folklore⁶⁷. Skeptics - including Mickiewicz - thought that since there was no evidence for the existence of something it should be assumed that it did not exist⁶⁸.

After the Enlightenment, the Romantics took a renewed interest in *the sacred*, and began to view folk culture as an expression of spirituality. Ludophiles viewed the world in metaphysical terms. They believed that the nation, the individual, nature and history constitute a cosmic unity, animated by the same spirit⁶⁹. In ancient times, in their view, people felt themselves to be identical with nature and the absolute. They lived and acted in an innate state of clairvoyance⁷⁰. Their creativity, according to the Slavophiles, was collective and unconscious⁷¹ (people would be, in this conception, merely transmitters of a higher, cosmic wisdom). A metaphysical, but also national spirit spoke through them, while the result of their creative activity was myth. According to ludophiles, modern folk tales are the remnants of this ancient myth⁷², recognized by humanity through revelation⁷³. Thus, a cosmic spiritual truth is encoded in folk tales.

In view of the above research assumptions, it is hardly surprising that the authors of this trend reconstructed history so as to prove that the pre-Slavs were never a savage or barbaric people⁷⁴. On the contrary; there was a view that the culture of the pagan Slavs was "full and perfect", and this was destroyed by Christianity⁷⁵.

⁶⁶ M. Janion, M. Żmigrodzka, *Romantyzm i historia*, Słowo/ obraz terytoria Publishing House, Gdańsk, 2001, p. 30.

⁶⁷ Ibid, p. 32.

⁶⁸ Ibid, pp. 31, 34.

⁶⁹ Ibid, p. 19.

⁷⁰ M. Janion, *Purpurowy płaszcz Mickiewicza*, Słowo/ obraz terytoria Publishing House, Gdańsk, 2001, p. 84.

⁷¹ Ibid, p. 79.

⁷² Ibid, p. 79.

⁷³ Ibid; M. Janion, M. Żmigrodzka, *Romantyzm...*, op. cit. p. 27.

⁷⁴ M. Janion, M. Żmigrodzka, *Romantyzm...*, op. cit. p. 31.

⁷⁵ Ibid, pp. 31-32.

The price of the development of civilization is the loss of intuition, unity with nature, deterioration of spiritual condition⁷⁶, inner rift and suffering⁷⁷.

Skeptics adopted different beliefs. They did not treat folk tales as sources of metaphysical or historical truth. They tried to reconstruct the history of the Slavs on the basis of medieval chronicles, which contained descriptions of earlier times⁷⁸. They believed that folklore was subject to the same criteria of aesthetic evaluation as any other creation, so on the ground of art they transformed and adapted folk works freely⁷⁹.

Subsequent eras continue to study folklore as a historical source. At the same time, archaeology is developing - especially intensively over the last thirty years, and thanks to this, too, we are learning more and more about the medieval past in our areas⁸⁰.

II

Personally, I like to refer to folklore in my work, and I am close to the outlook of romantic skeptics: without evidence, we cannot claim that something existed in the past, and if it exists today, we are free to transform and adapt it without worrying about the supposed "eternal" rules of what that something should look like. In this spirit are my dolls, as well as some paintings (I discuss them in the following chapters). I refer to the folklore of today, in its current form or as I experienced it in my childhood.

⁷⁶ M. Janion, *Purpurowy...*, op. cit. p. 83.

⁷⁷ M. Janion, M. Żmigrodzka, *Romantyzm...*, op. cit. pp. 18-19.

⁷⁸ Ibid, p. 31.

⁷⁹ M. Janion, *Purpurowy...*, op. cit. p. 79.

⁸⁰ K. Janicki, *Cywilizacja Słowian. Prawdziwa historia największego ludu Europy*, Wydawnictwo Poznańskie, Poznań 2023, loc. 403 ff. [Kindle edition].

Why did I choose the mothballs in particular? In the *Bios and Zoe* series, I try to touch the soul - that is, the forces of nature, which we can also call the spirits of ancestors, plants or animals. In Motanka I see a symbol of a demon, embodying these powers and spirits of nature.

In Poland, we do not have a tradition of motanka magic dolls, but in recent years a motankar movement has appeared in our country. We owe this to Ukrainian and Belarusian women who are settling in Poland and instilling their puppetry tradition in us. Everything I know about motanki (and convey below), I know from the oral accounts of my motanki teacher Lilia Potonia, who creates in the Belarusian tradition. However, in the Polish-language Internet today you can find information on the subject from Polish female artists who have since developed their puppetry practice⁸¹ or, for example, on the websites of museums⁸².

Motanka is a magic doll, and by magic we mean influencing reality with symbolic actions so as to activate supernatural forces and with their help achieve the desired results in the real world⁸³. In the case of the motanka, it is only white magic (i.e., magic that brings only positive results, without harming anyone; it is generally protective magic, fertility magic or the attraction of luck, good fortune or the help of supernatural forces). A doll is usually several to several tens of centimeters in height. It is created from cloth, without sewing or pinning (stabbing dolls is used in black magic to cause someone pain, in hoeing it is taboo), sometimes also from straw or grass. We give the doll a shape by tying pieces of cloth with thread or string. Often these are recycled fabrics - for example, you can use old clothes of someone near and dear to you so that the doll takes on the energy or qualities of that person. A motanka never has facial features or eyes. Instead, in place of a face, she may have a cross swept out of thread - or nothing at all. (As it is believed, along with the face, the doll would gain a personality, while if

⁸¹ for example: <https://urbanmagia.com/> (accessed 24.11.2024).

⁸² <https://etnomuzeum.eu/zbiory/lalka-motanka> (accessed November 24, 2024);
<https://mnwr.pl/motanki-ukrainy-pokaz-i-wystawa/> (accessed November 24, 2024).

⁸³ R. Bugaj, *Nauki tajemne w dawnej Polsce. Mistrz Twardowski*, Replika Publishing House, Poznań, 2022, p. 11.

it had self-awareness it would prefer to act in its own affairs rather than those of a human). There are different types of mothballs depending on their physique or function (by function, the basic division is into ceremonial, talismans and toys), but within these general categories we find numerous types, each specializing in dealing with a different matter; one can see the resemblance to Catholic saints here). Among them are dolls for love, health, wealth; protecting against evil powers, granting wishes; dolls - travel talismans and many others. Ritual hankies, on the other hand, are associated with the seasons, the agricultural calendar and the holiday calendar⁸⁴. Below I describe only a few of them:

Bieregini is among the most important moths with the strongest magical potential. She represents the housewife, the mother, and can also be considered a symbol of the Goddess, the Earth Mother, the Great Mother. She brings protection, happiness, prosperity, fertility. It is a pillar doll - in the center it has a structure made of a wooden rod (for example, from a birch branch, since birch is considered a female tree). The rod is wrapped with a roll of cloth and tied with string. This forms the torso. The head is made from a piece of cloth stuffed with something soft (like thread or small rag clippings) and tied with string or thread. The head is sewn onto the torso and tied to it. It is crucial that the Bieregini has breasts, and just the right size. This symbolizes protection, feeding but also a good, competent housewife and mother of the family. We make the breasts like a head and tie them to the torso. Arms are made from small rolls of cloth - they should be tied at the ends or wrapped with thread through the entire length. The arms are also tied to the torso. Bieregini is dressed in a blouse, skirt, apron and belt. The apron and belt symbolize orderliness in life, self-control and nobility, so the traditional motanka is always clothed in them. On her head the Bieregini must have a scarf - a symbol of a married woman. In the head of the doll it is good to place a coin for attracting money. In the tarot, the equivalent of this motanka can be the Empress (card No. III of the Great Arcanes)⁸⁵.

⁸⁴ According to the accounts of L. Potonia, a teacher of motanking according to the Belarusian tradition.

⁸⁵ According to the accounts of L. Potonia.

Spiridon is also credited with powerful magical powers. It depicts a man holding a sun wheel in his outstretched hands. It is associated with a breakthrough in life, a fundamental change, a variation of fortune, the courage to change, and causality. It was traditionally performed during the winter solstice. The sun in his hands symbolizes the victory of light over darkness. Spiridon is among the hankies more difficult to make. It is necessary to make a roll of cloth, omote it with string to hold it steady and bend it in half. These are the legs. From a single piece of square fabric we make the head, torso and hands properly tying it and tie it from the top to the legs. We make up his kaftan, belt, cap, beard - tying everything. The whole thing has to be stiff and stable enough for Spiridon to stand on his own. To make a **sun for Spiridon** we make a circle from wire. The spokes can be made of wire or sticks, we omote them with yarn or strips of fabric. We can see the affinity in meaning between Spiridon and the tarot Wheel of Fortune (Great Arcana card No. X)⁸⁶.

Kuwadka is the easiest to make: take a piece of fabric, for example, about 30x30cm, roll it and fold it in half. We roll the smaller piece of fabric and tie at the ends with string or thread. We tie to the larger roll across and at such a height that a Latin cross comes out. The top part is the head, and the cross roll is the hands. The lower part of the cross is the rest of the body. The costume - skirt, blouse, apron and belt - is also made using the tie technique. Kuwadka can have various meanings, first of all it brings good luck. But we can also, for example, make her more hands (as the first pair is made - from rolls, then we tie them one under the other). Then she will become a specialized helper supporting us in the realization of our life dreams and duties. Each of her hands will be used to handle a different matter. A mothball with five pairs of hands is called a **Ten-Handed Woman**. If she has six or eight hands we call her **Filipowna**. Filipowna represents a married woman, so we must always have a scarf on her head. The Ten-Handed Woman symbolizes a young maiden, so she has a braid on her head⁸⁷.

⁸⁶ According to the accounts of L. Potonia.

⁸⁷ According to the accounts of L. Potonia.

A graceful hoe is the small **Ziarnuszka** (from „ziarno” – grain), of the soft motankas species (without structure). It symbolizes fertility, prosperity, fertility. A roll of cloth is tied tightly from one end, and then threaded to the other side. This creates a sack, which we fill with grain or peas. We then tie it from the top. To mark the neck we tie the pouch with thread. The grain must be clothed with glamour. We tie the skirt directly at the neck. There can even be several belts. After tying the belt, we tie the arms (made from rolls of fabric) to the neck. On the head we tie a scarf. We can add lace for more lushness to the outfit and a pouch with a coin or grain. The grain bag has a function as a talisman of wealth (sometimes also for getting pregnant) or a ceremonial one for the end of the harvest - for ceremonial purposes, it was made in September after the seeds were harvested, and in the spring the seeds were sown from it into the ground⁸⁸.

There are also moths representing the animal world. **Koza** („koza” – goat) brings happiness, joy and fun, but also vitality, fertility and strength. It was created for Christmas. It often takes the form of a pillar puppet (like Bieregini). Traditionally, she must have horns, ears and a beard. Her costume is colorful, joyful and rich. It is advisable to tie a bell to the goat, which brings merriment and stimulates energy. However, at one of the hoeing workshops I attended, I also met a minimalist goat - a cupped goat, without an outfit, only with a beard and magnificent horns in strips of fabric braided. **Radość – Ptak** („radość – joy; „ptak” – bird) is a female bird attracting happiness and beauty in the spring. She belongs to the type of pillar motanka with breasts. Radość - Ptak wears a headscarf on her head with a shaped pout that sticks above her forehead. The shawl falls freely over the doll's shoulders like a veil, this forms conventional wings. From smaller pieces of cloth, we form six birds and tie them to the hands of the motanka⁸⁹.

Finally, we also have cross motankas - built on the construction of a cross (we create it from two sticks tied at right angles). The two beams of the cross can be tied with cloth, the head is sewn on (as in a pole motanki) and the breasts and

⁸⁸ According to the accounts of L. Potonia.

⁸⁹ According to the accounts of L. Potonia.

tresses are tied on. Cross motanki include, for example, **Mokosz** (Mokosha) depicting an alleged Old Slavic goddess. Her Christian name is **Praskiewa Piątek** („piątek” – Friday). She is a protective talisman for women. She symbolizes the joy of being a woman and patronizes crafts related to linen - spinning, weaving, sewing, embroidery. She helps get pregnant and takes care of pregnant women. A mokosh can have several skirts, a spare does not have to have but a belt is necessary. Her hair is to be loose (unlike other mothers who wear scarves or braids). A headscarf is not required. Ribbons should be tied to the doll's hands, no matter how many, but certainly one red and one blue. (The red one symbolizes, among other things, life, protection, umbilical cord, while the blue one symbolizes the bond with the heavens and the souls of the ancestors). Each ribbon has some of our intention encoded on it (when tying a ribbon to a doll, we think of our intention, a wish). In addition to ribbons, there may also be linen strings. Praskiewa could also have a ceremonial function. Then it was made together by a group of women to start a time of knitting together. Immediately after making it, it was ritually drowned in water to take away the bad energy⁹⁰. As for the goddess Mokosha - it is a common belief today that such a goddess existed in Slavonia as an incarnation of the Great Mother, however not every historian gives credence to this. Janicki writes that this figure could just as well have been an entity borrowed from Iranian beliefs or even invented by someone chronicling⁹¹.

The cross-dressing doll is also the only Polish mothanka, or **Marzanna** - winter and death⁹². In the lexicon *Księga Żałoby i Śmierci* we read: "Marzanna - mentioned as early as by Jan Długosz the name of a pagan "snowman", a symbol of winter, cold and death. It is usually presented as a puppet. "Existing to this day custom of >>melting Marzanna<< has ancient roots in the beliefs of pagan Slavs"⁹³. However,

⁹⁰ According to the accounts of L. Potonia.

⁹¹ K. Janicki, *Cywilizacja...*, op. cit. p. 224.

⁹² According to the accounts of L. Potonia.

⁹³ M. Wańczowski, M. Lenart (eds.), *Księga Żałoby i Śmierci*, Oficyna Wydawnicza RYTM, Warszawa, 2009, entry: *Marzanna*, p. 254.

Leonard J. Pełka believes that the hypothesis that a pre-Christian vision of death is preserved in the Marzanna ritual "raises objections and doubts"⁹⁴.

When creating motankas, it is advisable to refer to the magic of colors. Red - very readily and often used in hankies symbolizes life, health, beauty, energy, protection. Red thread or ribbon also symbolizes the umbilical cord in hankies intended to promote pregnancy. The color blue is associated with ancestors and the absolute, heaven and faith. We can also practice number magic - for example, by omoting a doll three, seven, or, say, twelve times - the number three is magical; this will ensure the power of our motanka. Seven is the number of the moon, women, magic. Such procedures as using the clothes of loved ones, avoiding needles, supplying dolls with coins take us into the realm of sympathetic magic, of course. The cross on the doll's face has a protective effect and symbolizes the sun⁹⁵.

My Bios and Zoe series motankas are adaptations of well-known patterns. I made them in the traditional way, but transformed existing types or created my own, with different symbolism. I write about the meaningful layer of my dolls in subsequent chapters, here I will briefly discuss the making:

Cow is a modified Bieregini. *Goat Woman* and *Goat Man* - a modified Goat. The other figures - both *Spider Women*, *Moth*, *Soul* and their meanings I came up with myself. *Spider Woman Small* is made like the Ten-armed Woman (kuwadka). *Spider Woman Big*, *Cow*, *Goats* and *Moth* are pillar dolls. The horns of the *Cow* and *Goats* are made as we make hands and tied to the heads. *Goat Man's* penises, the *Goat Woman's* vaginas, and the *Cow's* flowers are also made from tied fabric and tied to the torso. *Moth*, instead of an attached head, has a beaded skull sewn on top of the torso. *Soul* is made on a cross-stitch construction although unusual, because instead of one pair of hands there are three, moreover, puristically speaking it is not a moth (although it looks like it) because - in addition to the

⁹⁴ L. J. Pełka, *Polish folk demonology*, Iskry Publishing House, Warsaw, 1987, p. 177.

⁹⁵ According to the accounts of L. Potonia.

traditional tying - I also sewed it with a needle. I used bamboo rod for all the internal constructions.

I made the dolls from natural fabrics, primarily linen and cotton (although I made the wings of *Moth* and the skirt of *Spider Big* from tulle). For the skeins, I used linen string and moulin. I made *the soul* from linen and denim embroidered with gold thread (in the chapter VII *Forefathers* I explain why denim and embroidery on it.) Linen is one of my favorite materials in general. I use it not only in motankar but also in other dolls. (I've also started using linen in fashion making, which I'm currently learning; the first attempts are promising.) I like it for its beauty and nobility - it is natural and durable. It is pleasant to sew with it, it is easy to cut and stitch, it has a pleasant surface to the touch, flax surplus smells great which also encourages sewing. Such velvet, for example - a material equally beautiful and noble - is, however, very ungrateful to work with. It is hard, so it is difficult to pin down. During stitching, it shifts. It is sometimes better to stitch it by hand for precision, but then you have to put effort into driving the needle into it. Working with velvet is tiring and precipitating. Does this mean that I categorically reject velvet? No, sometimes it is worth paying the price of frustration for the magnificence of the effect. However, linen allows you to achieve an equally elegant result much more simply from the point of view of workload.

As I said above, motankas are present in Poland today - for example, in the work of Norka Katarzyna Niedźwiecka (alias Belanorqua), a photographer, graphic designer, dollmaker and craftswoman. Niedźwiecka creates ritual masks in which she refers to archaic masks, and for photography she dresses models in stylized costumes and headdresses, in the ethnic spirit. She is an author of dolls in various techniques, not just motankas. Niedźwiecka's art clearly shows an interest in archaic Slavic culture and folklore. The atmosphere of her works is somewhat melancholic, as if on the borderline between day and night or even between the world and the hereafter. Niedźwiecka uses natural materials like linen, wraps, lace, sometimes embroidered fabrics, dried plants. She uses subdued colors. In my opinion, her skeins rise above the "handicraft" category and can freely lay claim to

the "art" category. They are made with precision, somewhat rustic in character. Their costumes are in the spirit of early medieval fashion. Niedźwiecka "has a weakness for the disturbing, dusty, somewhat >>worldly<< side of folklore hence her interest in the mysterious Slavic faceless dolls, their history, legends and symbolism"⁹⁶, as we read on the website of the *Żywa Pracownia* in Krakow, where Niedźwiecka has led motankas workshops.

An attempt can be made to point out the differences between Ukrainian and Polish mothballs with the caveat that patterns and ideas, however, can flow both ways. Ukrainian dolls have a rich form. Their costumes refer to traditional folk garments, often with ethnic ornaments. Sometimes these dolls have magnificent wreaths on their heads and multicolored crosses in place of faces, woven very precisely. They look more "formal", festive. Polish motanki are simpler, and more casual in expression. Their clothing does not show the ethnographic passion so typical of Ukrainian dolls. Sometimes with their clothes they refer to folk costumes, sometimes not. They often have a blank face, without a cross. Their appearance is more "everyday".

Motankas are naturally not the only magic dolls present in the Western world today. For example, in one of London's esoteric bookstores I found a guide to making magic dolls by Lucia Starza⁹⁷. The performance techniques that Starza recommends are different from mothballs however the idea is the same. Also, the functions of the dolls are similar: helper⁹⁸, protecting from evil (her name is *Kitchen Witch*), doll for love, wealth and money, travel talisman, as well as goddess or seasonal dolls associated with holidays - in this case, pagan Britain⁹⁹. Similarly, the use of number magic¹⁰⁰ and color magic, among other things, is also

⁹⁶ <https://zywapracownia.pl/motania-czwartkowe-spotkanie-trzecie-podrozniczka/> (accessed November 24, 2024).

⁹⁷ L. Starza, *Poppets and magical dolls. Dolls for spellwork. witchcraft and seasonal celebrations*, Pagan Portals series, Moon Books Publishing, Winchester UK, Washington USA, 2018.

⁹⁸ Ibid, p. 8.

⁹⁹ Ibid, pp. 57-88.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid, pp. 33-34.

recommended¹⁰¹, although the symbolism in the Starza's book is more elaborate than in our native motankas.

¹⁰¹ Ibid, pp. 24-25.

TAROT. TAROT DOLLS

tarot dolls ▪ what is tarot? ▪ the symbolism of the Priestess card ▪ the symbolism of the Sun card ▪ a brief history of tarot and the most important decks ▪ background outlined in a few words

I

*The Bios and Zoe series includes two tarot dolls: *Guślarka* (Priestess) referring to the card of the Popess (Priestess) and *the Sun* - according to the card of the Sun. In previous years I made several tarot dolls (*Empress, Emperor, two Devils and Death*). This time I chose archetypes from the tarot that I can associate with the rituals of the grandfathers and the Kupala Night: the Priestess can lead the ceremony of meeting the dead. On the other hand, Midsummer Night is a solar holiday - hence the sun symbol. In addition, as I write below, the Sun card contains a utopian vision of happiness, and some of the symbols associated with the Kupala Night also, in my opinion, refer to happiness as utopia - a thought I elaborate on in the chapter VI *Kupala Night*.*

I made the dolls according to a pattern originally developed by me. They are sewn from linen canvas and stuffed with a clothing insulator. I made the genitals of both dolls and the mask of the *Guślarka* from linen stiffened with fabric stiffener. Here I used the method used in millinery to create flowers for hats: Using a brush, cover the fabric with stiffener on both sides (usually the stiffener should be diluted with

water first). We hang the soaked fabric to dry. Once dry, from the stiffened fabric we cut out the elements of our future spatial figures (in the case of flowers, these are petals and leaves, while in my project they are rhombuses, hexagons, etc.). We form the cut out elements with heat - I ironed them with an iron to heat them up properly. Once the elements are shaped and have time to cool down we glue them together. Finally, I glued the finished spatial shapes to the dolls. For gluing I used wikol glue. This is a method I learned from Svetlana Faulkner's online course on the [domestika.org](https://www.domestika.org) online platform¹⁰². On the hands of the dolls are small abstract stamps embroidered with gold and silver thread. Gold symbolizes the sun and transcendence, while silver (seen only on the *Guślarka*) symbolizes magic, night and the moon. (I write more about *the sun* in chapter VI *Kupala Night*, and about *Guślarka* in chapter VII *Forefathers*.)

II

Tarot is a deck of 78 cards for divination (it can also be used for meditation.) On each card is a symbolic image expressing some idea or phenomenon. The deck is divided into the Great Arcana (22 cards) and the Minor Arcana (56 cards). The Great Arcana depicts archetypal characters or concepts, such as the Pontifex, Justice, and the Mage. The Minor Arcana has a structure similar to a deck of playing cards. Thus, there are four colors: swords (correspond to spades), cups (correspond to pockets), denarii (diamonds) and mace (clubs). Within the colors, we have families made up of the following figures: King, Queen, Knight, Squire, number cards from 1 to 10 and Ace. Each card has its own meaning, while the entire deck is a symbolic system, which I would compare to the meaning systems on which fairy tales are built. Tarot divination involves drawing a number of cards

¹⁰² S. Faulkner, *Floral Textiles: make 3D Accesories with Denim*, <https://www.domestika.org/en/courses/4501-floral-textiles-make-3d-accessories-with-denim/course> (accessed 16.11.2024).

and laying them out in a specific order. The images on these cards are then arranged in a narrative sequence similar to the structure of a fairy tale: the protagonist encounters various characters and situations. Each of them individually symbolizes something, but combined all together they carry a more complex message inherent in that particular tale (or, in the case of the tarot, that specific distribution).

III

The card of the Popess (Priestess, High Priestess) is numbered II. In the Marseilles tarot, the card shows a seated non-young woman wearing a papal cassock and with a tiara on her head, with an open book in her hands. A veil is spread behind the Popess, sometimes two columns are visible on either side of the veil. In some Marseilles decks, an egg lies next to the Popess.

Świat Tajemny. Leksykon magii, okultuzmu i parapsychologii gives the following meanings of the card: "Woman, duality, balance of opposites, gateway leading to the Temple, vestibule of the mysteries,; thought of God, spiritual mother and bride, goddess Isis, Virgin Mary,; *gnosis* or "knowledge" of the divine; unconscious memory, soul; Jungian archetype of the soul (*anima*)"¹⁰³.

The symbolism of the Marseilles tarot is dedicated to Alejandro Jodorowsky's book *The way of Tarot. The spiritual teacher in the cards*¹⁰⁴. Jodorowsky writes that the Priestess refers to the indestructible, intact and innocent part inside us, which has never been hurt or affected. She is a spiritually mature therapist, a guide. She connects with the pure mind and with the world of matter. Pope's book is the

¹⁰³ R. Cavendish (ed.), *Świat Tajemny. Leksykon magii, okultuzmu i parapsychologii*, Wydawnictwo Łódzkie, Łódź, 1992, entry: *Tarot*, p. 270.

¹⁰⁴ A. Jodorowsky, M. Costa, *The way of Tarot. The spiritual teacher in the cards*, Destiny Books Publishers, Rochester, Vermont • Toronto, Canada, 2009.

same color as her body - this indicates that Pope's knowledge flows from the body, from matter. According to Jodorowsky, the Priestess has the following meanings: purity and purification. Faith, faithfulness, trust. Sanctuary, high spiritual quality, honesty, truth, principled. Seriousness and rigor. Silence, solitude, isolation. Matriarchy, pregnancy, virginity. Sexually - sublimation, but also frigidity and frustration. Priestess represents dormant, just maturing potential, accumulation of energy, a state of waiting, patience. The egg, sometimes appearing next to her, is a symbol of her pregnancy. In this respect, the Priestess is the same archetype as "the goddess Isis, the magical source of fertility and transformation, and the Virgin Mary, destined to give birth to God. In Catholicism, the ostrich egg is a symbol of the birth of Christ"¹⁰⁵.

We see similar symbolism, for example, in Piero della Francesca's painting of the *Altar of Brera* (1472-74): a shell-shaped stone canopy rises above the Madonna, with an egg hanging from the shell.

In the context of references to Isis and Mary, the Priestess is an archetype of the Sacred Feminine, at the same time, however, we must remember that the Holy Mother in esoteric terms is not quite the same construct as the Holy Mother in Catholic terms.

The priestess is also a gate, as symbolized by the veil behind her. This obviously has connections to giving birth to new life (although the drawn veil can symbolize virginity) but it also means that this figure as a teacher initiates us into spiritual and mental life. In my opinion, the affinity of the Pope card with Catholic paintings depicting St. Anne teaching little Mary to read is very clear. St. Anne usually sits in these paintings holding a spread book on her lap or in her hands. Little Maria is usually standing or sitting next to her mother. She often hugs or is embraced by Anna.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid, pp. 132 - 137.

Esoteric decks do not reject the traditional symbolism of this card, but in them the Priestess often becomes a shaman or sorceress who presides over magical rituals. My *Guślarka* is an esoteric magician, a master of esoteric ceremony, a link between the world of the living and the hereafter. But she also symbolizes a gate - I write more about this symbol in the chapter VII Forefathers when discussing the scenography in which *the Guślarka* is shown.

IV

The Sun card bears the number XIX. It symbolizes happiness, joy, love, life, development, vitality. In the Marseilles tarot, the card depicts two children in a garden surrounded by a wall. Above them in the sky in the center of the composition reigns the Sun depicted as a face with rays surrounding it. Drops of fire fall from the sky to the ground, which can be seen as warmth and sunlight surrounding the children. In the Rider-White-Smith tarot, we see one child riding a horse, with a garden wall and sunflowers behind them. In the sky rises the Sun reaching the earth with its rays.

In *Świat Tajemny. Leksykon magii...* we read that the Sun card symbolizes "enlightenment, the liberation of the mind from circuitous wisdom, orthodox ideas, petty matters and troubles [...]; identification with the One Life of the Universe; man as a child in the sense of innocence and simplicity [...]"¹⁰⁶.

Jodorowsky states that the Sun in the Marseilles tarot means: happiness, fulfillment in every possible aspect. Life. Love, solidarity, help, happy relationship. The archetypal parent. Child or childhood. Twinning, rivalry. Success. Wealth. Warmth and light. Summer. Intelligence and awareness. Building, development.

¹⁰⁶ R. Cavendish (ed.), *Świat Tajemny...*, op. cit., entry: *Tarot*, p. 272.

Total union of heaven, earth and man. Excessive sun, however, does not give life but takes it away, the earth becomes deserted under too strong rays. According to Jodorowsky, **the two children** on the Sun card symbolize friendship, support and mutual help - in some decks, one twin leads the other - a blind man. The children also symbolize inner work - our conscious part helps the other, more primitive and animal part to develop (in some decks one of the twins has an animal tail)¹⁰⁷. In my opinion, the pair of twins on the Sun card signifies the power of joie de vivre and immense energy that only young organisms in the growth phase - human and animal children - can have.

A walled **garden** with children in it has, in my opinion, connotations of *hortus conclusus* - an enclosed garden, a fortunate place, eternal bliss. We encounter just such a garden in *Powieść o Róży (Le Roman de la Rose)*, a 13th century French allegorical poem. The work was begun by William of Lorris and completed by John of Meun¹⁰⁸. A boy longs to win a rose - that is, the girl of his desires¹⁰⁹. Picking a rose bud is a sexual act¹¹⁰. The action takes place in a sensual garden, described as an "earthly paradise"¹¹¹. The garden is in the shape of a square¹¹² and is surrounded by a "wall armed with blanks"¹¹³. It grows magnificent plants: numerous trees of many species¹¹⁴, abundant grass, and flowers that bloom all year round¹¹⁵. In the most beautiful retreat grows a magnificent lush pine tree, the largest of all the trees in the garden, and next to it beats the Narcissus spring¹¹⁶. All around, birds sing magnificently¹¹⁷ and gentle, herbivorous animals dock¹¹⁸. Elegant, beautiful young people are playing in the garden¹¹⁹. They dance merrily¹²⁰

¹⁰⁷ A. Jodorowsky, M. Costa, *The way of Tarot...*, op. cit. pp. 241-245.

¹⁰⁸ Introduction to: W. of Lorris, J. of Meun, *Powieść o Róży*, Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, Warszawa, 1997, p. 9.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid, p. 13.

¹¹⁰ Ibid, p. 18.

¹¹¹ W. of Lorris, J. of Meun, *Powieść...*, op. cit. p. 63, v. 636.

¹¹² Ibid, p. 81, v. 1323.

¹¹³ Ibid, p. 50, v. 131.

¹¹⁴ Ibid, p. 81, v. 1323-p. 82, v. 1360.

¹¹⁵ Ibid, p. 83, v. 1400-1410.

¹¹⁶ Ibid, p. 83, v. 1425-p. 84, v. 1434.

¹¹⁷ Ibid, p. 64, v. 665.

¹¹⁸ Ibid, p. 82, v. 1375-1382.

¹¹⁹ Ibid, p. 63, v. 615-616 and v. 630.

and indulge in love¹²¹. These carefree and happy people are allegories of desirable things in life. Their names: Joy¹²², Courtliness¹²³, Cupid¹²⁴, Beauty¹²⁵, Wealth¹²⁶, Sincerity¹²⁷ and similar. On the outer wall of the wall are allegorical portraits¹²⁸ painted in gold and azure¹²⁹. They depict what is not allowed into the garden: Hatred¹³⁰, Betrayal¹³¹, Vulnerability¹³², Greed¹³³, Stinginess¹³⁴, Envy¹³⁵, Bitterness¹³⁶, Old Age¹³⁷, Hypocrisy¹³⁸, Misery¹³⁹.

The pine tree, the main tree in the garden in *Powieść o Róży*, is a symbol of sex, masculinity, immortality but also paradise¹⁴⁰.

Also in medieval religious art, paradise was readily depicted as a garden. In religious symbolism, *the hortus conclusus* is Mary's virginity, while the garden's enclosure is her protection from sin. Plant symbolism was important in these depictions - "references to the Virgin Mary, Christ, saints, demons, virtues and sin". The lily (purity) and rose (eternity and uniqueness) were primarily associated

¹²⁰ Ibid, p. 65, v. 728.

¹²¹ Ibid, p. 80, v. 1294.

¹²² Ibid, p. 65, v. 729.

¹²³ Ibid, p. 67, v. 781.

¹²⁴ Ibid, p. 69, v. 865.

¹²⁵ Ibid, p. 72, v. 992.

¹²⁶ Ibid, p. 73, v. 1019.

¹²⁷ Ibid, p. 77, v. 1191.

¹²⁸ Ibid, p. 50, vv. 132-135.

¹²⁹ Ibid, p. 59, vv. 465-466.

¹³⁰ Ibid, p. 50, v. 139.

¹³¹ Ibid, p. 50, v. 155.

¹³² Ibid, p. 50, v. 157.

¹³³ Ibid, p. 51, v. 169.

¹³⁴ Ibid, p. 52, v. 197.

¹³⁵ Ibid, p. 53, v. 235.

¹³⁶ Ibid, p. 54, v. 292.

¹³⁷ Ibid, p. 55, v. 339.

¹³⁸ Ibid, p. 57, v. 409.

¹³⁹ Ibid, p. 58, v. 441.

¹⁴⁰ W. Kopaliński, *Słownik symboli*, Oficyna Wydawnicza Rytm, Warszawa, 2006, entry: *Sosna*, p. 398.

with Mary¹⁴¹. Jung, on the other hand, believed that the walled garden was the symbolic interior of the womb¹⁴².

The idea of happiness embodied in the symbolism of *hortus conclusus* is a utopian vision, so it can be assumed that the Sun card also speaks of happiness in a utopian sense.

In the Rider-Waite-Smith tarot, the child in the Sun card is sitting on the back of a **horse**. Horseback riding according to Kopalinski is "joy, comfort, satisfaction"¹⁴³. Horse is happiness, sun and moon. *Elan vital*, fertility, love, sex, libido. Wind, fire, lightning. Freedom, speed, boldness¹⁴⁴. The form of this animal is taken by the sun god Helios and Demeter, Poseidon and Hades¹⁴⁵. The horse is also a psychopomp - it transports the souls of the dead to the afterlife. This animal was sacrificed to the spirits of ancestors and chieftains who died in battle¹⁴⁶ and to the gods of the sun, waters, the underworld¹⁴⁷.

Magical steeds are found in fairy tales. For example, in the Bulgarian fairy tale *Złote jabłka i dziewięć pawic (Golden Apples and Nine Peacocks)*, magical palfreys are bred by a witch and ridden by a dragon king, a prince and a princess¹⁴⁸.

In the *Sun* doll, I combined both cards - Marseilles and Rider-Waite-Smith: my *Sun* takes the form of a horse. In addition, since the doll was supposed to refer to the Kupala Night I made a change in meaning compared to the symbolism of the card, instead I referred to one of the cultural connotations of the horse. Thus, *Sun* is sexual in nature - he is a hermaphrodite, his female-male sex organs are arranged

¹⁴¹ J. Jagła, *A jak w średniowieczu wyobrażano sobie raj?*, July 16, 2017, <https://niezlasztuka.net/o-sztuce/ogrod-rajski-w-sztuce-sredniowiecznej/> (accessed 16.11.2024).

¹⁴² C. G. Jung, *Bliżej...*, op. cit., in: C. G. Jung (ed.), *Man...*, op. cit., p. 125, caption ill. 25: *Rajski Ogród*.

¹⁴³ W. Kopalinski, *Słownik...*, op. cit., entry: *Koń*, p. 155.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid*, p. 153.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid*, p. 154.

¹⁴⁶ M. Wańczowski, M. Lenart (eds.), *Księga...*, op. cit., entry: *Koń*, p. 203.

¹⁴⁷ W. Kopalinski, *Słownik...*, op. cit., entry: *Koń*, p. 154.

¹⁴⁸ M. Rościszewski [B. London], *Słowiańskie baśnie i bajki*, Replika Publishing House, Poznań, 2023, pp. 47-52.

as if during sexual intercourse. This is due to the erotic nature of Cupalnocca. Throughout history, bi-sexual deities have been symbols of life, creation of the world, fertility, fertility of nature¹⁴⁹.

V

Tarot appeared in the 15th century in Italy¹⁵⁰. The oldest known deck is the **Visconti-Sforza tarot**, and it was used to play¹⁵¹. Its author is Bonifacio Bembo (ca. 1420-ca. 1486)¹⁵²; he painted many copies of this deck for the Sforza family - it is believed that 11 or 12¹⁵³. Like many other ideas of the Italian Renaissance, the tarot spread throughout Europe, and the Visconti-Sforza deck became the prototype for subsequent Italian and European cards¹⁵⁴. In the 17th century in France, a deck called the **Marseilles tarot** was created based on it. The first Marseilles tarot was published in 1659 by Jacques Vieville, a Parisian playing card maker. Jean Noblet published a second Marseilles deck in 1664, and he was followed into battle by other manufacturers in Paris, Marseilles and Lyon¹⁵⁵. During the 18th century, the visual scheme of the cards and their style became firmly established¹⁵⁶. The Marseilles Tarot is still published today in Poland and in Western countries. Contemporary decks are some better artistically and performance-wise, others worse, but all replicate the same French scheme.

¹⁴⁹ W. Kopaliński, *Słownik...*, op. cit, entry: *Obojnak*, p. 257.

¹⁵⁰ J. W. Suliga, *Tarot Magów. Pierwszy krąg wtajemniczenia*, Dom Księgarski "Esoteric", Warszawa, 2006, p. 16.

¹⁵¹ J. W. Suliga, *Biblia Szatana. Dzieje kart tarota*, Poligraf Publishing House, Brzezia Łąka, n. y., p. 37.

¹⁵² *Ibid*, p. 35.

¹⁵³ *Ibid*, p. 37.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid*, pp. 37, 38.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid*, p. 100.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid*, p. 101.

Until the 19th century, tarot was used for playing and for divination. In the 19th century there was a split between tarot - divination cards and tarok - playing cards. In Europe of that time, occultism was developing; nineteenth-century occultists began to transform the tarot, add meanings to it¹⁵⁷, change the plastic scheme. Thus was born the **esoteric tarot**¹⁵⁸ incorporating the symbolism of Kabbalah, alchemy, astrology, theosophy, magic¹⁵⁹.

(Esotericism, occultism - mysticism, spirituality, magic, mystical symbols; the study of mysterious and hidden aspects of reality and the search for knowledge of transcendence, cosmic forces or spiritual beings. Esotericism - also secret knowledge, hermetic, accessible to initiates¹⁶⁰.)

In 1910, the esoteric **Rider-Waite Tarot (Rider-Waite-Smith)** came out in England. The author of the ideas was Arthur Edward Waite (1857-1942), the author of the images - Pamela Colman Smith (1878-1951), both from the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn (I write about the Order below). They included occult symbols in the deck, and changed the traditional visual and, to some extent, semantic canon. (Rider, on the other hand, was the first publisher of the deck)¹⁶¹.

A very important esoteric deck is the **Tarot of Thoth** (Crowley's Tarot). Its first edition was published in 1944. The author of the concept is Aleister Crowley (1875-1947), British occultist, the author of the images - Lady Frieda Harris (1877-1962), British occultist and painter¹⁶². Thot is the ancient Egyptian god of wisdom, secretary to Osiris when judging the dead. Egyptians believed that Thot was the author of the Book of the Dead¹⁶³. Books of the Dead in Egypt were religious

¹⁵⁷ J. W. Suliga, J. Opalinski, *Tarot Magów. Kultowa talia tarota*, Sun Kler agency, Warszawa, 2013, p. 7, [tarot deck booklet].

¹⁵⁸ Ibid, p. 9.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid, p. 7.

¹⁶⁰ <https://ksiegarnia.pwn.pl/Ksiazki/Parapsychologia-Okultyzm-Magia,2196923,k.html?srsId=AfmBOoqh2bnSJxhtxpXkHuxcl4cB6KNBoKUMPNxp9eLT0FjDdcyQCbR> (accessed November 24, 2024);

<https://bookland.com.pl/ksiazki/ezoteryka-i-parapsychologia> (accessed 16.11.2024).

¹⁶¹ J. W. Suliga, *Biblia...*, op. cit. pp. 147 - 151.

¹⁶² Ibid, p. 159.

¹⁶³ <https://mitologia.fandom.com/pl/wiki/Thot> (accessed 16.11.2024).

manuscripts, guides to the posthumous journey into the afterlife. Such a book contained magic spells, songs, drawings¹⁶⁴.

The Tarot of Crowley and Harris is saturated with Kabbalah, numerology, astrology, Egyptian mythology, Christian symbolism¹⁶⁵, Eastern symbolism¹⁶⁶, references to Greek deities - e.g. to Dionysus¹⁶⁷, Mercury¹⁶⁸, Demeter¹⁶⁹ etc. Is the magician Aleister sure he knew what he wants to communicate to us? Let's hope not; otherwise he would be unreliable as an oracle.

It is believed that the Marseilles, Rider-Waite-Smith and Thota tarot are among the most popular decks in the world today¹⁷⁰.

Leonora Carrington (1917-2011) also created her esoteric deck - for her own use. Carrington did not use tarot for divination, but as a tool for her psychological and spiritual development; she believed that tarot had the power to alter consciousness. Her tarot was developed in the 1950s. It consists of the Great Arcana itself. The cards carry occult, alchemical, kabbalistic, but also feminist and ecofeminist meanings. The leading motif in the deck is Sacred Femininity. The female figures are depicted with white faces and bodies as the White Goddess - that is, one goddess containing all the others, but also a goddess in her lunar aspect. (Carrington was influenced by Robert Graves' book *The White Goddess*.) [The female deity is also the Earth, so the Sacred Feminine signifies the sacredness of the Earth. - my note] The waist is simple and ascetic. It has little detail, the importance of each element counts. Carrington used gold and silver flakes, which

¹⁶⁴ <https://manuscriptum.pl/nasze-dzie%C5%82a1/ksi%C4%99ga-umar%C5%82ych> (dostęp: 16.11.2024).

¹⁶⁵ A. Arrien, *Wielka Księga Tarota Crowleya. Praktyczne zastosowanie starożytnych symboli wizualnych*, Prague, 2010, p. 11.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid*, p. 27.

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid*, p. 27.

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid*, p. 31.

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid*, p. 37.

¹⁷⁰ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Book_of_Thoth (accessed 16.11.2024).

stems from her love of alchemy¹⁷¹. Other than that, however, the deck has an ascetic color scheme. It is painted delicately but at ease.

Poland can boast an esoteric, visually beautiful **Tarot of the Magi**. The author of the concept is Jan Witold Suliga (1951-2023), a scholar of tarot and its history (but also ethnographer, cultural anthropologist and director of the Ethnographic Museum in Warsaw from 1990-2006)¹⁷². The painter of the deck is Jan Opalinski (1956-2014). In the Tarot of the Magi we meet kabbalistic, alchemical, astrological, numerological, magical symbolism¹⁷³. The deck was first published in 1991¹⁷⁴.

VI

Tarot, unlike folk motanka, is associated with European "high" magic. This one, as Roman Bugaj writes, began to develop rapidly in the Renaissance, and drew from ancient, Greek and Roman magic¹⁷⁵. (The ancient magical sciences, however, were also known to Europeans in the Middle Ages¹⁷⁶.) In Poland, alchemy, already from the Middle Ages¹⁷⁷, and astrology developed most strongly, and both subjects were taught at the Krakow Academy¹⁷⁸. The community of scholars - alchemists - was thriving in Cracow, it was engaged in the study of natural sciences, mathematical and astronomical sciences, chemistry¹⁷⁹. Also doctors were active in this circle¹⁸⁰. In the 16th and 17th centuries, alchemy gained such popularity that

¹⁷¹ Susan L. Aberth, Tere Arcq, *The Major Arcana of Leonora Carrington*, Fulgur Press Publishers, Lopen, 2024, pp. 11-14, [tarot deck booklet].

¹⁷² *Żegnamy dr Jana Witolda Suligę*, <https://ethnomuseum.pl/blog/zegnamy-dr-jana-witolda-sulige> (accessed November 24, 2024).

¹⁷³ J. W. Suliga, J. Opalinski, *Tarot Magów. Kultowa...*, op. cit. pp. 11-27.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid*, p. 3.

¹⁷⁵ R. Bugaj, *Nauki...*, op. cit. p. 5.

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid*, p. 415.

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid*, p. 130.

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid*, p. 129.

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid*, p. 133.

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid*, p. 134.

the Church - although Churchmen also dabbled in alchemy - began to fight the field, which in effect slowed down the development of chemistry in Poland¹⁸¹. On the other hand, the astrological school of Krakow, centered around the Krakow Academy, gained notoriety outside Poland as well. Astrologers after the Cracow school taught at European universities, provided astrological advice to kings, popes, aristocrats¹⁸². (During the Renaissance, astrologers were respected like doctors¹⁸³.) Other fields of magic, such as crystallo-mancy (crystal divination), catoptromancy (mirror divination) kabbalism, chiromancy and others were practiced secretly, outside the academy, and did not develop as they did in Europe¹⁸⁴. Magic, astrology, alchemy were supported by Polish kings - Sigismund Augustus, Stefan Batory and Sigismund III Vasa¹⁸⁵. Over time, the arcane sciences from the academy and the royal court penetrated into the circles of the nobility and the bourgeoisie¹⁸⁶. At that time, as is well known, there were sanctions for practicing witchcraft, although they were milder in Poland than in Europe - from the 16th to 18th centuries, according to Bugaj, several thousand people lost their lives in witchcraft trials in Poland - not many compared to other European countries. As Bugaj notes, witchcraft trials were class-based - the victims of these trials were mainly the people and the bourgeoisie. Magnates, people of high standing who cultivated magic, were not threatened by the justice system¹⁸⁷.

The upper classes also had their own category of phantoms and ghosts that, unlike folk spirits haunting somewhere in the wetlands, operated in palaces, castles and manors¹⁸⁸. There were various White Ladies¹⁸⁹, Black Ladies¹⁹⁰, or Mad Barons¹⁹¹.

¹⁸¹ Ibid, p. 139.

¹⁸² Ibid, p. 151.

¹⁸³ Ibid, 150.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid, p. 129.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid, p. 416.

¹⁸⁶ Ibid, p. 415.

¹⁸⁷ Ibid, pp. 418-419.

¹⁸⁸ L. J. Pełka, *Polish...*, op. cit. pp. 218-225.

¹⁸⁹ Ibid, p. 220.

¹⁹⁰ Ibid, p. 218.

¹⁹¹ Ibid, p. 222.

After the Age of Enlightenment, which rejected all irrationality, Europe in the 19th century returns to an interest in spiritual matters, but already with a new sensitivity. On the one hand, there is a "Catholic reaction" - after the Congress of Vienna, the alliance of the throne and the altar and the position of the institutional churches are strengthened, and Christianity is linked to conservatism. On the other hand, there is an attitude of so-called "heterodoxy" - interest in occultism (belief in supernatural reality, associated with the use of magic), religions and philosophies of the Far East, myths of ancient pagan Europe (Greek, Roman and native, in Poland - Slavic)¹⁹². From these interests began to grow new religious and mystical sects, from which, moreover, came strong criticism of the institutional Church for its impeding of progress and entering into alliances with despotic countries¹⁹³.

To the mystical trend belonged Andrzej Towiański (1799-1878), who in Paris formed the grouping *Sprawa Boża* (The Cause of God) and brought together Polish nationalists, revolutionaries and occultists¹⁹⁴ from the emigration of 1830-31. This grouping developed the messianic idea in France, which had a "significant influence on the development of modern occultism" in Europe. Towiański's protector and spiritual disciple was Adam Mickiewicz (1798-1855). It was the poet who introduced him to the Polish émigré circles, and when the bishop of Paris caused Towiański's exile for preaching content undesirable by the Church, Mickiewicz, on behalf of the exile (then residing in Switzerland), headed the "Cause of God" for a while¹⁹⁵. The grouping, to which Juliusz Słowacki also belonged, was active from the 1840s to the 1870s¹⁹⁶.

Subsequent eras have continued the work of Romanticism. At the end of the 19th century, Hermetic Order of Golden *Dawn* was thriving in London. It was a magical association. Its achievements significantly influenced subsequent occult groups in English-speaking countries. The order emerged from the English Rosicrucian

¹⁹² M. Janion, M. Żmigrodzka, *Romantyzm...*, op. cit. pp. 12-13.

¹⁹³ Ibid, p. 13.

¹⁹⁴ R. Cavendish (ed.), *Świat Tajemny...*, op. cit, entry: *Mesjanizm polski*, p. 160.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid, entry: *Towiański Andrzej*, p. 281.

¹⁹⁶ https://pl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ko%C5%82o_Sprawy_Bo%C5%BCej (accessed November 24, 2024).

Society, which included a group of Masonic masters interested in the occult. By design, Golden Dawn was an exclusive organization with a difficult entrance. The purpose of the association was to cultivate Western traditional secret teachings¹⁹⁷. As I write above, to people from this circle we owe the famous Tarot Rider -Waite - Smith.

One of the members of the Order of the Golden Dawn was Aleister Crowley (1875-1947). In time, he founded his own Order of the Silver Star. Crowley adapted elements of Eastern culture such as yoga, tantra and tantric sexual techniques, Buddhism, and elements of Chinese magic to Western occultism. He practiced sexual magic extensively. In addition, he considered himself a channel for sending information from Hidden Guides - supernatural minds with superhuman knowledge and power. He was hostile to the "false and pernicious principles of Christianity"¹⁹⁸. He is believed to have had a strong influence on modern occultism¹⁹⁹.

In the world to this day, England has a strong position in esotericism, with a thriving publishing and animation movement there. Important publishing houses include, for example, Fulgur Press²⁰⁰ or Scarlet Imprint²⁰¹. In London you will find numerous esoteric bookstores, for example Treadwell's Bookshop²⁰², Watkins Books²⁰³, The Atlantis Bookshop²⁰⁴, Astrology Shop Books²⁰⁵. London also hosts an annual Tarot Conference²⁰⁶. Also well-known British literature for children and young people in Poland comes from the same intellectual tradition - I am thinking, for example, of the series of books about Narnia by Clive S. Lewis, about Mary Poppins by Pamela L. Travers (20th century) or the Harry Potter saga by J. K. Rowling (20th / 21st century).

¹⁹⁷ R. Cavendish (ed.), *Świat Tajemny...*, *op. cit.*, entry: *Złoty Świty*, p. 322.

¹⁹⁸ *Ibid*, entry: *Aleister Crowley*, pp. 50-53.

¹⁹⁹ P. Grey, *Czerwona Bogini*, Okultura Publishing House, 2013, p. 119.

²⁰⁰ <https://www.fulgur.co.uk> (accessed November 24, 2024).

²⁰¹ <https://scarletimprint.com> (accessed November 24, 2024).

²⁰² <https://www.treadwells-london.com> (accessed November 24, 2024).

²⁰³ <https://www.watkinsbooks.com> (accessed November 24, 2024).

²⁰⁴ <https://theatlantisbookshop.com> (accessed November 24, 2024).

²⁰⁵ <https://www.londonastrology.com> (accessed November 24, 2024).

²⁰⁶ <http://tarotconference.co.uk/> (accessed 16.11.2024).

On Polish soil, for example, the poet Maria Pawlikowska-Jasnorzewska (1891-1945) was an esotericist and tarotist. As Magdalena Samozwaniec writes in her biography of Pawlikowska, the poet was interested in white and black magic, esotericism, kabbalah²⁰⁷, astrology (she arranged horoscopes)²⁰⁸, she also painted a tarot deck for her use²⁰⁹. She believed in reincarnation²¹⁰, attended spiritualist séances²¹¹. Her interests also included Far Eastern beliefs²¹², but also Freud and his views on dreams²¹³. The poet's fascination can be seen in her poems ²¹⁴.

In Poland in the 1960s there was, as I write in the chapter *The Art of Spirituality...* an esoteric group called Oneiron, which turned into the first Buddhist commune in Poland.

From 19th-century occultism, but also from the thought of Jung, among others, comes the modern New Age movement, which some describe as a religion (or rather a set of religions) of the self or consciousness, as opposed to religions of the book and tradition, such as Judaism and Christianity. The movement was born in the 1970s among American hippies. It draws on North American Indian religions, Sufi mysticism, Buddhism, Hinduism and Western esotericism and Gnosticism. He offers a utopian vision of the future: behold, the world is at a turning point. The Age of Fish, or Christianity, of patriarchy and dominance of institutionalized religions, full of wars, violence and injustice, is coming to an end. And the Age of Aquarius begins, and with it comes a new paradigm of culture - man should undergo a spiritual transformation that will change the world: there will be unity with nature and an end to competition. The New Age does not institutionalize religion; external authorities and rules are replaced by internal responsibility. Within the framework of this spiritual philosophy, we are dealing with a non-personal sacrum (such as *mana*, energy or power). Belief in salvation after death is

²⁰⁷ M. Samozwaniec, *Zalotnica Niebieska*, Świat Książki Publishing House, Warszawa, 2010, p.156.

²⁰⁸ Ibid, p. 14.

²⁰⁹ Ibid, p. 198.

²¹⁰ Ibid, p. 152.

²¹¹ Ibid, p. 140.

²¹² Ibid, p. 195.

²¹³ Ibid, p. 136.

²¹⁴ Ibid, pp. 142, 136, 153.

sometimes replaced by belief in reincarnation. Holism and ecological thinking are prominent in New Age philosophy: the world is a whole, we are part of it, and the earth is a living and sentient being. An important element of New Age is the appreciation of the feminine²¹⁵. Characteristic of New Age adherents is spiritual individualism, walking their own spiritual paths, each and everyone constructs their own religion and vision of life after death²¹⁶.

Tarot has become one of the tools of new age spiritual practice, hence various (and at various artistic levels) ecological tarot, goddess tarot, Wiccan tarot, astrology tarot, witch and witch tarot, dream tarot, Jungian tarot and even reincarnation tarot are created today.

²¹⁵ Zbigniew Pasek, *Neopogaństwo...*, op. cit. pp. 204-205.

²¹⁶ *Ibid*, p. 209.

IV

SPATIAL CUTOUT

Set designs for puppets - idea, execution ▪ paper as a narrative medium - two examples

I

We can define soul as intelligence in nature, and the expression of this intelligence is all material structures created by nature, animals and humans; crafts and technology, but also the behavioral patterns of different species or language with its grammatical rules. By organizing a space we also build a structure, so a doll placed in a three-dimensional structure symbolizes the soul in matter (or a structure with a doll inside it symbolizes matter and its soul). So I assumed that I would build spatial structures for the puppets, which I can conventionally call scenographies. Designing and making these forms proved to be the biggest technical challenge of my doctoral work.

The conventional space for a doll is a doll's house. However, a conventional doll's house would not fit the conventional, schematic, primitive form of my motankas or their symbolic meaning. I assumed that the construction for them should also be conventional, simplified and symbolic. I took cutouts and pop-up books as my starting point for designing it. The cutout is a medium that has always had a fairy-tale and magical expression for me; it is related to the doll, coming from the same world of handicraft and folklore. Pop-up books have also seemed to me something

magical and unusual since childhood. They contain great technical ingenuity - that is, what for me is the expression of spirit in matter. Some time ago I experimented with spatial constructions from paper, and at that time I used online courses of cutouts and pop-up books on the [domestika.org](https://www.domestika.org) platform. Here they are:

- Noah Arata, *Paper Cutting: Create Paper Scenes with Depth*²¹⁷,
- Silvia Hijano Coullaut, *Pop-Up Book Creation*²¹⁸,
- Silvia Hijano Coullaut, *Interactive Pop-up Books: Create a Paper World*²¹⁹,
- Silvia Hijano Coullaut, *Advanced Techniques for Creating Pop-Up Books*²²⁰,
- Paz Tamburrini, *Paper Cutting Illustration: Create Extraordinary Books*²²¹.

Based on this knowledge, I have now developed my own method of making stage sets for motankas. The stage sets are built from panels. Some of the panels are in the form of a very simplified, abstract cutout - or have openwork, for which the cutout was the starting point. In *Garden* scenography, the panels are a combination of relief and openwork, while in *Kupala Night* the panel is in the form of relief. I decided that the best building material for the scenography would be cardboard - a simple, raw, common and resajkling material. It is easy to work with, it is completely unpretentious - in short, it suits the motankas. The panels that make up the scenography are not glued but joined. Thanks to this, the structure

²¹⁷ N. Arata, *Paper Cutting: Create Paper Scenes with Depth*, <https://www.domestika.org/en/courses/1864-paper-cutting-create-paper-scenes-with-depth/course> (accessed 2.11.2024).

²¹⁸ S. Hijano Coullaut, *Pop-Up Book Creation*, <https://www.domestika.org/en/courses/958-pop-up-book-creation/course> (accessed November 2, 2024).

²¹⁹ S. Hijano Coullaut, *Interactive Pop-up Books: Create a Paper World*, <https://www.domestika.org/en/courses/2068-interactive-pop-up-books-create-a-paper-world/course> (accessed November 2, 2024).

²²⁰ S. Hijano Coullaut, *Advanced Techniques for Creating Pop-Up Books*, <https://www.domestika.org/en/courses/1370-advanced-techniques-for-creating-pop-up-books> (accessed 2.11.2024).

²²¹ P. Tamburrini, *Paper Cutting Illustration: Create Extraordinary Books*, <https://www.domestika.org/en/courses/1963-paper-cutting-illustration-create-extraordinary-books/course> (accessed November 2, 2024).

can be assembled and disassembled, it is easier to store, protect and transport. If any element of the structure is destroyed, it is sufficient to reconstruct only that one element. However, the decision that the individual elements will not be glued but joined "dry" raised further questions. I'm already leaving aside the obvious problems like how to join so that it would hold and not require excessive tugging when folding and unfolding. More difficult by design were the issues - what to do with the joints. Hide them? Leave them without pretending how they are? Make them into decorative elements? I decided that the connectors should be treated like the threads in hoeing dolls, that is - they are a structural element, they are visible, they can even be decorative - while not trying to hide or pretend to be something they are not. As a result, therefore, the joining of cardboard elements in the sets repeats the way the doll is made - the cardboard structure is not glued but joined, just as the puppet is not sewn but tied. The elements that connect the whole are visible, just as in a motanka the strings or threads that unite the elements of the doll are visible. Some of these connectors are more decorative, with rounded or expressive forms based on acute angles, some for visual effect are a bit larger than would result from purely structural considerations. Others simply exist, and their form and size are based solely on their function.

The next difficult questions were about workmanship - how to make the scenography and with what. In the end, I drew out all the elements and cut them out by hand. I used a bookbinder's knife to cut out straight lines and curves (I finished details such as the corners in the triangles with a paper scalpel). I cut the round holes with medical tools that go under the name "biopsy punch" "biopsy cutter" etc. and are available for purchase in medical stores. For drawing out the openwork in cardboard panels, I used a ruler, an setsquare, a compasses and patchwork rulers in the shape of a rectangle and an equilateral triangle. The rulers give more precision in plotting angles. On the Internet, you can find them in sewing and hobby stores under the name "patchwork ruler/ setsquare" or "equilateral ruler". I made the reliefs in such a way that I cut the elements of the decorative patterns separately from cardboard and glued them to the panels.

On the meaningful side, the stage sets are an addition and development of the content carried by the dolls. For example, the scenography design for *Spider Woman Small* motanka symbolizes the technical thought behind the spider's construction of the web. The set design for scenography design for *Spider Woman Big*, through its restless form, speaks to the aggressive nature of the spider, and more broadly to the aggression and ruthlessness of nature. The scenography of *Soul (Onion)* and *Guślarka (Priestess)* builds a space for the celebration of the grandfathers, a ritual for the dead, and is related to the symbolism of death and rebirth. I describe these and other scenographies in more detail in the following chapters.

II

In today's Polish art, an example of telling a serious story with the language of spatial paper construction are the works of Małgorzata Malwina Niespodziewana from the *Kobro* series. This series includes linocuts made in the pop-up book technique, included in two series: *Katarzyna 1898-1936* and *Katarzyna and Nika 1936-1951*. The first, bright part - *Katarzyna* - depicts Kobro's childhood and youth, her marriage to Strzeminski, their move to Poland and her artistic activity²²². The second part - *Katarzyna and Nika* - refers to the last, wartime and postwar period of the sculptor's life, her existence in poverty, her illness and death. Among other things, *Katarzyna and Nika* includes a moving scene when Katarzyna chops up her wooden carvings to cook food on them for her daughter. Black predominates in this section; the only bright frame is the family scene with Kobro, Nika and Strzeminski on the beach by the sea²²³. The linocuts in both series are kept minimalist in tone, black and white with few red accents.

²²² http://www.niespodziewana.pl/kobro_katarzyna.html (accessed 2.11.2024).

²²³ http://www.niespodziewana.pl/kobro_nika.html (accessed 2.11.2024).

Completely unusual, very narrative cutouts were made by H. Ch. Andersen. The writer, while telling a story at a social gathering, would cut out the paper at the same time, and at the end of the story he would unfold the finished work and show it to the gathered²²⁴. In his cut-outs we meet fantastic, fairy-tale characters in surreal situations (however, these are not illustrations for any of the writer's published fairy tales)²²⁵. Andersen's artistic style can be described as rather crude, but at the same time his works are precise despite the fact that, according to accounts, he used large and heavy scissors. The cut-outs, which the author used for gifts to friends and for charity²²⁶ have survived to the present day in the number of about four hundred. They are mainly in the collection of the Odense City Museum in Denmark²²⁷. Several Andersen cut-outs are in the possession of Princeton University in New Jersey²²⁸. New York's Metropolitan Museum of Art also has Andersen cutouts - they show two on their website²²⁹.

²²⁴ *Hans Christian Andersen and the Art of Cut Paper*, <https://meridian.org/wildswans/cutpaper.html> (accessed October 28, 2024).

²²⁵ A. Halliday, *The Exquisite, Ephemeral Paper Cuttings of Hans Christian Andersen*, 1.03.2021, <https://www.openculture.com/2021/03/the-exquisite-ephemeral-paper-cuttings-of-hans-christian-andersen.html> (accessed 28.10.2024).

²²⁶ *Hans Christian Andersen and the Art of Cut Paper*, op. cit.

²²⁷ A. Halliday, *The Exquisite...*, op. cit.

²²⁸ A. C. Armstrong, *Hans Christian Andersen's Papercuts*, 24.10.2023, <https://specialcollections.princeton.edu/2023/10/hans-christian-andersens-papercuts/> (accessed 28.10.2024).

²²⁹ *A Fully Cut Fairy Tale*, <https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/406971> (accessed October 28, 2024).

FIGURE AND SPACE

Figure-space relationship ▪ Spinner, Spider, spider in web ▪ Kore in mandala - meanings of symbols ▪ Moth flies to light ▪ Animals in garden - creating harmony

I

While looking for a method to represent *Bios* by means of a spatial structure, I also wondered about the place of human and animal figures in the structure. Where in the hierarchy of ecosystem elements is there a place for humans? To what extent is he or she important? Is it better to show the human figure at all - or perhaps it is better to eliminate it altogether to show that the ecosystem is not a background for man, but the main character? How important is the animal? Perhaps a better animal instead of a human, or perhaps it would be better to depict animal-human hybrids as a symbol of the equivalence of animal and human in nature? In the end, I gave several different answers to this question, but I do not settle on which is the best. I accept that different answers can be equally good.

The human figure in my paintings has come a long way from being the only element that fills the entire area (the painting *Spinner*). In the next painting – *Kore in the Mandala* - a spatial structure appears, and the figure is repeatedly reduced in size and becomes one of several components in a higher order - but it occupies the center of the composition. The human body is still the cosmic center here. In the next work - *Kupala Night* - there is no figure, the structure itself remains, and

at its center is the flame as a symbol of all and omnipresent life energy. *Forefathers* - the last painting in the series - can be described as a synthesis of the previous works. The human figure returns, but is reduced to a mask, simple in shape, and together with the animal mask becomes the component from which the space is built. A flame remains at the center of the composition.

The paintings *Kore in Mandala*, *Kupala Night*, *Forefathers* and the unmentioned above *Plant in Kaleidoscope* are my personal mandalas. "Mandala" means wheel or circle, although it can also be shaped like a square, pentagon, star or flower. Its center concentrates cosmic energy, while its perimeter is a boundary that protects what's inside and keeps the energy in focus²³⁰. M-L. von Franz believes that this symbol helps to regain balance²³¹, harmony behind the self and with the cosmos, inner peace and meaning and order in life²³². Mandala is found in Asian culture - in Hinduism and Buddhism²³³, but not only. In Christianity, as Jungist Aniela Jaffé notes, mandalas include rosettes in the cathedral, halos of the saints or, finally, Christ surrounded by the four evangelists²³⁴ [we find this image somewhat transformed in the Tarot as the World card - my note]. Jaffé also calls a mandala a medieval city with a church in the center and surrounded by walls, and an ancient city where the center - the mundus - was a stone covering a corridor to the world of the dead²³⁵. The mandala is also Paris with its streets converging on L'Etoile Square or Washington²³⁶. Such a city sanctifies the lives of the people living in it²³⁷.

Returning to the relationship of the figure to the space - this problem also stood in the puppet sets. The solution looks similar to that in the painting *Kore in Mandala*: the character is an element assigned to a larger structure. However, it retains autonomy and individuality.

²³⁰ R. Cavendish (ed.), *Świat Tajemny...*, op. cyt., entry: *Mandale i Mantry*, p. 143.

²³¹ M-L. von Franz, *Proces...*, op. cit. in: C. G. Jung (ed.), *Człowiek...*, op. cit. p. 291.

²³² *Ibid*, p. 292.

²³³ R. Cavendish (ed.), *Świat Tajemny...*, op. cyt., entry: *Mandale i Mantry*, p. 143.

²³⁴ A. Jaffé, *Symbolika w sztukach wizualnych*, in: C. G. Jung (ed.), *Człowiek...*, op. cit. p. 335.

²³⁵ *Ibid*, p. 338.

²³⁶ *Ibid*, p. 339.

²³⁷ *Ibid*.

The series of paintings in the *Bios and Zoe* series opens with *Spinner*. In mythology, a spindle spinning a thread symbolizes the cycle of birth, life and death. The spinner steering the spindle represents the principle animating the processes of life. My painting portrays a woman with a spindle, spinning a thread from her saliva. Spinning a thread from saliva shows the affinity of Spinner with spiders (the spider is a symbol of spinning). The woman's skin is the color of fresh, damp clay - thus showing her connection to the earth, and more broadly to the world of matter. The scarf on the heroine's head symbolizes work, especially craftsmanship and domestic work.

Greek mythology features a triad of spinners - the three Myrres, daughters of Night and Erebus. Their names: Klotho, Lachesis and Atropos. Klotho spins the thread of human life, Lachesis are measured with a rod, and Atropos cuts²³⁸. The thread is linen²³⁹. The three spinning women appear in the Grimm brothers' fairy tale *On the Evil Spinning of Flax*²⁴⁰. There is also a very well-known motif in folklore of an old woman with a spindle who leads a princess into a hundred years' sleep.

The symbol of spinning (and weaving, including the weaving of human destiny) is the spider²⁴¹. The spider is the animal of Athena, goddess of wisdom, craftsmanship²⁴², war and strategy²⁴³, who was also the first teacher of weaving and spinning²⁴⁴. Arachne, a Lydian princess boasted that she wove a garment more beautifully than Athena. The goddess destroyed the princess' work as punishment, and the princess hung herself from the rafters. Athena in order to save Arachne's

²³⁸ R. Graves, *Mity greckie, Vis-a-vis/* Etiuda Publishing House, Kraków, 2009, p. 36.

²³⁹ *Ibid*, pp. 37 and 179.

²⁴⁰ J. Grimm, W. Grimm, *Żyli długo...*, op. cit. pp. 40-41.

²⁴¹ W. Kopaliński, *Słownik...*, op. cit, entry: *Pająk*, p. 294.

²⁴² R. Graves, *Mity...*, op. cit. p. 80.

²⁴³ *Ibid*, p. 81.

²⁴⁴ *Ibid*, p. 80.

life turned her into a spider and the string into a spider thread²⁴⁵. Therefore, the spider is a weaver.

According to Kopalinski²⁴⁶ the spider further symbolizes: creator, work, craftsmanship, dexterity, patience. Cunning, cunning, deceit and trap. Aggression and cruelty. Finally, the moon, rain and black magic. It has ties to the Great Goddess. "The spider thread in folklore [is] the rope or ladder by which fabulous beings climb up to (or descend from) the sky," he said. , as well as "freedom [and] liberation"²⁴⁷. The web, on the other hand, is "[...] the mystical center associated with development and creation," and "the web with the spider in the center - an image of the Cosmos"²⁴⁸. The spider weaving the web organizes the Cosmos²⁴⁹.

The spider or web, in my opinion, represents work as the realization of the innate need to create. Spinning and weaving a spider web from saliva - building a structure here is a biological and physiological activity. In other words - building a structure is the fulfillment of a natural need of the organism. Such work makes one happy, gives life meaning and creates the identity of the being, animal and human, carrying out this activity. However spinning flax can also symbolize pathological, degenerate work that makes one unhappy: In the Grimms' case, in the aforementioned fairy tale *O złym przędzeniu Inu*, the king forces his wife and daughters to spin flax incessantly, in quantities that are unneeded by anyone. Spinning, referred to here as "anguish", is synonymous with hard labor under duress, with no meaning or purpose. It does not give fulfillment but frustration and weariness²⁵⁰.

The installation *Spider Woman Small* refers to the innate need to work, as well as to craftsmanship and technical thought, and in a narrower sense to the construction of a web and to the cobweb as a craftswoman. ***Spider Woman Small***

²⁴⁵ Ibid, p. 82.

²⁴⁶ W. Kopalinski, *Słownik...*, op. cit, entry: *Pająk*, pp. 294-295.

²⁴⁷ Ibid, p. 295.

²⁴⁸ Ibid.

²⁴⁹ Ibid.

²⁵⁰ J. Grimm, W. Grimm, *Żyli długo...*, op. cit. pp. 40-41.

doll is minimalist in form, reminiscent in aesthetics of archaic, primitive images of idols of various cultures. She is woven from black fabric and natural-colored linen threads. Linen strings hang from her face like a thread made of saliva. She has the form of a *mothanka kupawka* - *Filipowna* (as I write in the chapter II *Motanka doll*, the *Filipowna* or *Ten-Handed* help their owners with daily chores - they have many hands to manage these chores efficiently). Thus, in *Spider Woman Small* I used the form of the many-armed *kuwadka* to represent the spider's eight legs, but also as a symbol of craft or technical work.

The scenery for *Spider Woman Small* consists of five square panels arranged one behind the other, of the same size. Each of the panels (except the last one) has a square hole cut in the center. In the depth, on the last (fifth) panel of the composition, a doll is placed. The square holes on the second and third planes are parallel to the outer edges of the panels. The sides of the first and fourth openings are angled slightly, as if rotating around. This is an allusion to the concentric design of the spider web and to the circular movement of the spider weaving the web. (A spider web has a warp of threads spreading radially and a weft woven around it.) The square symbolizes, among other things, matter, earth and body, as well as structure, space and order, and solidity and unambiguity. Rational mind, but also absolute²⁵¹. The circle symbolizes heaven, soul, divinity, absolute, infinity. Perfection. Perfect movement and cyclicity²⁵². So we have a circle inscribed in a square with a mothball - the demon of nature, or *Zoe* symbol - placed in the center. When the work was ready I realized that it could be understood as a kind of spatial mandala.

In the **installation *Spider Woman Big*** I talk about the ruthlessness, cunning, deadliness and aggression of nature. The installation is a multi-plane openwork structure, inspired by the openwork of a spider web. It is designed to be viewed from multiple points and angles. However, only from certain points can *Spider* doll be seen in it. Unlike in most of the other installations, where the dolls are

²⁵¹ W. Kopalinski, *Słownik...*, op. cit, entry: *Kwadrat*, p. 180.

²⁵² *Ibid*, entry: *Koło*, p. 150.

prominently displayed, here we are dealing with a motanka that hides rather than shows itself. This is due to her insidious and evil intentions. Like many other spiders, she tries to stay out of sight hoping that this will make it easier for her victims to fall into her web. The design is composed of triangles and bevels, introducing dynamics, aggression and anxiety - after all, it is a deadly trap.

I began the process of designing the scenery by drawing out the spider web. Then, in a series of sketches, I simplified and geometrized its shape. In the next step, I made according to these sketches several cut-outs, which I superimposed on each other. In this way I got a frontal spatial composition, a kind of abstract variation on the theme of the spider web. In the end, however, I decided to position the individual layers of the cutouts not one behind the other, but at different angles to each other - like the walls of a building. In this way, the final design of the scenery was created.

Spider Woman Big motanka is made of linen canvas, linen threads and tulle in shades of navy blue. Inside she has a bamboo rod construction. From her face hang silver threads of saliva on a spider web. At her eight limbs, however, she has a form similar to that of a human figure. She is clad in a skirt and has a headscarf on her head. This attire brings her close to the woman in the painting *Spinner*.

III

The painting ***Kore in Mandala*** refers to my *Kora/Persephone* series of paintings from 2013-17. The myth of Kore, who for part of the year as Persephone is the goddess of death in the Underworld Kingdom of the Dead, represents the idea of the eternal rebirth of life. Kore, in turn, is the personification of grain. In order for a grain to germinate it must first be buried in the ground and die, so Persephone reigning in Hades is also a dead seed in the ground. Kore's return from the

underworld occurs at the time of grain germination. *Kore in the Mandala* depicts the goddess resting underground. The space of the painting is divided by the vertical and horizontal axis of symmetry into 4 equal rectangles. This creates a background in the form of a checkerboard with fields of dark green and light - pink. In the center of the image is a circle - the Earth Sphere. Upward from it grows a tree, downward - its roots. The tree and roots coincide with the vertical axis of symmetry. They have the form of tridents. Inside the globe, on the horizontal axis of symmetry rests a sleeping girl. She is painted sketchily, in a rather simplified manner, only the face is more detailed. The whole figure takes the form of a sign. The globe is surrounded by a river depicted in a simplified way with lines and dashes. An egg is stuck in the branches of a tree. The two axes of symmetry form the shape of a cross.

The globe in my painting symbolizes a uterus filled with fetal waters. The tree is life, fertility, growth, the egg in the crown of the tree also represents life and fertility. The streams around the globe represent life, purification, rebirth, but also, as rivers of Hades, death. The body horizontally represents death and sleep, regeneration and incubation of energy before rebirth in a new life cycle. As Kopalinski writes, being in a dream is a symbol of the world, life and the sweetness of life, death and the subconscious; dreaming is a way of contacting the dead²⁵³, a method of divination and prophecy²⁵⁴. In dreams we find guidance from the subconscious. Water is the subconscious, dreaming is an immersion into the subconscious.

The earth on the background of the checkerboard represents the passage of time - light and dark fields arranged alternately symbolize days and nights, following each other as a result of the planet's rotation. (I'm referring here to medieval miniatures, where the earth is depicted as a sphere at the center of the cosmos, surrounded by circles representing the celestial spheres, and the background is a checkerboard-cross. One of these miniatures depicts Christ throning above the

²⁵³ W. Kopalinski, *Słownik...*, op. cit., entry: *Sen i sny*, p. 369.

²⁵⁴ *Ibid*, p. 370.

spheres. On another, two angels turning the spheres of the universe with cranks²⁵⁵.) Also, rivers flowing in a circle symbolize time. When the Earth makes a quarter turn the girl's body will align itself vertically as a tree trunk and a stage of rebirth and growth will occur.

The composition lines of the painting build the shape of a cross. The cross has very extensive symbolism, it can be the axis of the world, life and immortality, spirit and matter, among other things. It also symbolizes the creative force, the penis and sexual love. The cross inscribed in a circle can mean the sun, the round year, the creative principle, health and life²⁵⁶. The vertical represents activity and growth, the horizontal represents passivity, stopping, regeneration. For me, on the other hand, the cross further represents an organizing principle - if, for example, from among the chaotically scattered branches we take two random ones and cross them with each other at right angles, we already get some nucleus of organization of space in the chaos.

A very important cultural symbol is the tree. For me, it is primarily a representation of life (biological and spiritual). It can also mean fertility, rebirth and growth. It is the axis of the world: the roots are the chthonic realm, the trunk - earthly life, the crown - heaven²⁵⁷. In various cultures, trees and sacred groves are worshipped religiously²⁵⁸. Jung argues that "in the life of primitive man, the tree can play a vital role, sharing his soul, voice and common destiny"²⁵⁹. Pełka believes that even today in Polish folklore, elements of worship of trees such as oak, birch, aspen, beech and wild elder are still preserved²⁶⁰.

Familiar trees, such as the apple tree of paradise, grow readily in myths; fairy tales, too, are full of magic trees. For example, in the Bulgarian fairy tale *The Golden*

²⁵⁵ R. Bartlett, *panorama średniowiecza*, Arkady Publishing House, Warszawa, 2002, pp. 196-197.

²⁵⁶ W. Kopaliński, *Słownik...*, op. cit., entry: *Krzyż*, p. 171.

²⁵⁷ Ibid, entry: *Drzewo*, p. 67.

²⁵⁸ Ibid.

²⁵⁹ C. G. Jung, *Bliżej...*, op. cit., in: C. G. Jung (ed.), *Człowiek...*, op. cyt., p. 73.

²⁶⁰ L. J. Pełka, *Polska demonologia...*, op. cit. p. 42.

Apples and the Nine Peacocks, a magic apple tree grows in the king's garden, which bears golden fruit every night²⁶¹.

M-L. von Franz is of the opinion that the tree in the dream symbolizes individuation²⁶².

The tree is also associated with death. It is "the abode of the souls of dead people in many myths and fairy tales. In the Grimms' fairy tale, Cinderella plants a hazel branch on her mother's grave, the branch grows into a tree that fulfills Cinderella's wishes"²⁶³. In Oskar Milosz's Lithuanian fairy tale *Królowa Węży* (*The Queen of Snakes*), the mother of the family turns herself and her children into trees out of despair after the death of her husband²⁶⁴.

Some believe that under the oak tree were buried those who died without a rite of passage, a violent, tragic death. It was believed that the oak tree on the grave would ensure such a person's resurrection²⁶⁵. Also on Jewish tombstones in Poland was the motif of a tree as a symbol of life or vanitas²⁶⁶.

After all, also nowadays in Europe and Poland there are cemetery forests, where biodegradable urns with ashes of the dead are buried around the roots of trees²⁶⁷. In some European countries, the custom of placing the ashes of the deceased

²⁶¹ M. Rościszewski [B. London], *Słowiańskie...*, op. cit. p. 40.

²⁶² M-L. von Franz, *Proces...*, op. cit. in: C. G. Jung (ed.), *Człowiek...*, op. cit. p. 219.

²⁶³ W. Kopalinski, *Słownik...*, op. cit, entry: *Drzewo*, p. 70.

²⁶⁴ O. Milosz, *Baśnie i legendy litewskie*, Pojezierze Publishing House, Olsztyn, 1985, p. 98.

²⁶⁵ M. Wańczowski, M. Lenart (eds.), *Księga...*, op. cit., entry: *Dąb jako drzewo zmarłych*, p. 83.

²⁶⁶ *Ibid*, entry: *Drzewa na nagrobkach żydowskich w Polsce*, p. 96.

²⁶⁷ A. Gurgul, *Chcesz po śmierci spocząć w lesie? Masz taką opcję. Odwiedziliśmy las cmentarny*, 01.11.2023, <https://wyborcza.pl/7,177851,30353844,chcesz-po-smierci-spozczac-w-lesie-masz-taka-opcje-odwiedzilismy.html> (accessed 31.10.2024);

R. Szczepkowski, *Las pamięci gotowy – nowa forma pochówku w Łodzi niebawem dostępna*, 2.08.2024, <https://metropolie.pl/artykul/las-pamieci-gotowy-nowa-forma-pochowku-w-lodzi-niebawem-dostepna> (accessed 31.10.2024);

D. Salus, *"To las i na przedmioty, które do niego nie należą, nie ma tu miejsca"*, 11.2020, <https://www.goethe.de/ins/pl/pl/kul/ges/22032965.html> (accessed 31.10.2024).

together with seeds in a biodegradable urn is also beginning to develop. The seeds grow into a tree as a kind of new incarnation of the deceased²⁶⁸.

Another great symbol is water. Associated with water or river is the symbolism of life, death and rebirth, fertility²⁶⁹. Purification, renewal, regeneration and healing²⁷⁰. Water is also subconsciousness, oblivion, but also chaos, changeability, immensity of possibilities²⁷¹. In ritual bathing, immersion in water demarcates two stages of life, it is the death of the old and the birth of the new, as well as the sanctification of body and soul; being immersed is a break in time that allows initiation²⁷². Water is also the creative powers and the power of nature, as well as a return to the mother's womb and to pramateria. According to the Jungian interpretation, crossing the river is a "profound change of attitude"²⁷³. In Edward Lear's poem *O Żeglarzach Dżamblach (The Jumblies)*, crossing the sea is the accomplishment of something great, pioneering, risky, which few would dare to do. It is the fulfillment of a daring dream²⁷⁴.

Thus, *Kore in Mandala* represents the idea of reincarnation, but also carries symbolism similar to the meanings of the tarot Priestess (the Popess) (I write about the meanings of this symbol in the tarot in the chapter III *Tarot. Tarot Dolls*).

²⁶⁸ M. Bachowski, *Ta urna zmieniła ponad 100 tys. zmarłych w drzewa*, 30.10.2022, <https://noizz.pl/design/ta-urna-zmieniła-ponad-100-tys-zmarłych-w-drzewa/2tnkd16> (accessed 31.10.2024).

²⁶⁹ W. Kopalinski, *Słownik...*, op. cit., entry: *Woda*, p. 480.

²⁷⁰ Ibid, entry: *Kąpiel*, pp. 139-140.

²⁷¹ Ibid, entry: *Woda*, p. 480.

²⁷² Ibid, entry: *Kąpiel*, p. 140.

²⁷³ M-L. von Franz, *Proces...*, op. cit., in: C. G. Jung (ed.), *Człowiek...*, op. cit., p. 272.

²⁷⁴ E. Lear, *Dong co ma świecący nos i inne wierszyki Pana Leara*, Babel Tree Publishing House, Warszawa 1999.

The symbolism of the rebirth of life is also carried by the **Moth installation**, with the **motanka Moth** flying to the light. The installation is constructed of two double walls. The walls converge at an acute angle. Inside the resulting space is a puppet. It is attached to the wider wall, while from the front it is partially covered by the other, narrower wall. Insects do not care about being clearly visible, on the contrary, they have a habit of disappearing from our sight, only to appear a moment later somewhere else entirely. If we want to observe an insect we have to track it and look out. My *Moth* behaves in a similar way.

At the same time I show the movement of *Moth* towards the light - there are small holes in the walls of the installation, as if particles of light. They are most dense near the upper inner corners of the walls. This symbolizes the light coming from above.

The navy blue and yellow doll is made of a bamboo rod wrapped in linen, her hands are also made of linen, and her wings are made of tulle. On top of *Moth's* torso is a skull made of glass beads.

The butterfly signifies the soul, by showing the moth's flight towards the light, it symbolizes the soul's quest for rebirth. The phases of a butterfly's life: egg, caterpillar, pupa and adult form (imago) represent life, death and resurrection²⁷⁵. From here, however, the moth may be the dark side of the butterfly - some associate it with black magic like the black cat or vampire; in antiquity there was a belief that "the night butterfly corpse head [...] flies out of Hell"²⁷⁶.

²⁷⁵ W. Kopaliński, *Słownik...*, op. cit, entry: *Motyl*, pp. 234-235.

²⁷⁶ *Ibid*, p. 235.

The Garden installation depicts animals among plants, and refers to the beauty, fertility and happiness-generating power of nature. It has the form of a hexagon. On its outer edges are alternating panels with reliefs and motankas - *Cow*, *Goat Woman* and *Goat Man*. The reliefs on the panels depict plants in a simplified way. On the first relief we see limp stalks with pods hanging from them. The second panel depicts a flower or blowfly. On the third panel is a tree. Its trunk consists of brick-like rectangles - a reference to the structure of plant cells visible under a microscope. Branches grow out of the trunk. In the representations of plants are incorporated openwork, which are arranged in the shape of eyes or mouths. This is a kind of masks - a symbol of the spirits of plants or, in other words, the personalities of plants.

Hexagon is the number six, and it symbolizes: symmetry, balance, harmony and peace. Beauty, fertility, development and abundance. Freedom, pleasure and spirituality²⁷⁷. Three animals is the sacred, magical and lucky number three, associated with life, fertility, development, the sun²⁷⁸.

The Motanka Cow refers in form to archaic representations of deities: it has the shape of a totem - a pole with a head and four breasts, without limbs. Breasts symbolize love, kindness, feeding and care²⁷⁹; milk prosperity and abundance²⁸⁰. *The cow* is made of floral fabric and adorned with a garland of flowers (made of different colored linens), like statues of ancient deities²⁸¹. Flowers represent beauty, gentleness, joy, love, fertility of nature, celebration, etc.²⁸². In mythology, the cow is the Great Mother, she is the pet of Hera, Athena, Demeter, Aphrodite, Urania. The cow goddess is Hathor, the Egyptian sky goddess. She has a solar disk

²⁷⁷ Ibid, entry: *Sześć*, p. 413.

²⁷⁸ Ibid, entry: *Trzy*, pp. 437-438.

²⁷⁹ Ibid, entry: *Pierś*, p. 311.

²⁸⁰ Ibid, entry: *Mleko*, p. 228.

²⁸¹ Ibid, entry: *Kwiat*, p. 181.

²⁸² Ibid.

on her head and her horns are rays, making the cow a symbol of the sun. The animal also has associations with the moon and the monthly cycle²⁸³.

We meet the Great Mother Cow in Italo Calvino's tale *Krowia Głowa (Testa di Bufala)*. The title character is a magical mother - tender, generous and caring, who, however, is able to bring her daughter to order when she forgets herself. She prepares her daughter for life, takes care of her good fortune²⁸⁴.

The connection between cows and the moon is clearly revealed in the story of the dancing cow in the novel *Mary Poppins*. A calm and respectful cow one starry night starts dancing and can't stop - until she jumps over the moon²⁸⁵.

Among the traditional motankas is the Goat. It symbolizes joy, happiness, health. It has the form of a woman with the head, horns and goatee of a goat, and may have clothes on. I have slightly modified this type of motanka. My implementation features a pair of **Goat Woman and Goat Man**. *Goat Woman* is made of red linen and blue linen string, *Goat Man* is made of navy blue linen, orange check cotton and natural colored linen string. They are not clothed. *Goat Man*, like *Cow*, has no hands, the form resembles a herma. In my version, *Goat Woman* has three vaginas, and *Goat Man* has three erect penises. Both motankas symbolize happiness, joy, fun, vitality, fertility, sex, and the forces of nature.

A cow and a goat are horned animals, and the horn also has its own symbolism. It is the moon, sun, ray and lightning. Sexuality and fertility (penis and links to the monthly cycle through the moon). Weapons, strength, power and aggression. Beauty, maturity and abundance. Horns belong to pagan deities: to the Great Mother and the goddesses of the moon and seas. To Dionysus, Zagreus, Pan and

²⁸³ Ibid, entry: *Byk*, pp. 32-33.

²⁸⁴ I. Calvino, *Baśnie Włoskie*, Czuły Barbarzyńca Publishing House, vol. 2, Warszawa, 2002, pp. 15-21.

²⁸⁵ P. L. Travers, *Mary Poppins. Collected Stories*, Jaguar Publishing House, Warszawa, 2014, pp. 46-54.

Faun. To the solar gods: Zeus, Helios and Apollo. To Poseidon, god of the sea. And, of course, to the devil²⁸⁶.

²⁸⁶ W. Kopaliński, *Słownik...*, op. cit, entry: *Róg*, p. 360.

VI

KUPALA NIGHT

*mysterious pagan past ▪ Midsummer rites ▪ sacred fire ▪ fern flower ▪ inventing
Kupala Night: installation and painting*

I

In ancient and medieval times, religious systems were not standardized. Each locality may have had its own deities and rituals²⁸⁷, religion had no dogma or ethical system²⁸⁸. Rituals consisted of offering sacrifices to the gods or performing divination²⁸⁹.

Norman Davies notes that throughout the Christianization of Europe, a thousand years, paganism and Christianity coexisted. (Armenia was baptized in the 5th century, Lithuania in the late 14th and early 15th centuries.)²⁹⁰ The Christianization of Slavonia lasted from the 9th to the 13th centuries, and in many places during this time bivariarchy (the practice of paganism with Christianity) persisted²⁹¹. During this time, paganism and Christianity confronted, fought but also influenced each other. Paganism was revived several times²⁹². Eventually, elements of

²⁸⁷ K. Janicki, *Cywilizacja...*, op. cit. p. 231.

²⁸⁸ *Ibid*, p. 232.

²⁸⁹ *Ibid*.

²⁹⁰ N. Davies, *Europa. Między Wschodem a Zachodem*, Znak Publishing House, Kraków, 2007, p. 21.

²⁹¹ L. J. Pełka, *Polska demonologia...*, op. cit. p. 12.

²⁹² N. Davies, *Europa...*, op. cit. p. 21.

paganism merged with Christianity in folklore²⁹³ and folk syncretic religiosity²⁹⁴. Today again - 600 years after the baptism of Lithuania - currents of return to paganism are developing in Europe and Poland.

We do not know what the beliefs of the Slavs were before baptism²⁹⁵. Even if they had a complex religious system, no relics of it survive²⁹⁶. We also do not know whether all Slavs practiced the same faith and rituals²⁹⁷. We do not know the names of their deities²⁹⁸. Janicki believes that the Slavs may not even have had any temples at all, and performed rituals in their place of life or among nature, and what some take to be the remains of temples would in fact be something else²⁹⁹. However, it is assumed that the Slavs had animistic beliefs - they worshipped the forces of nature, natural phenomena³⁰⁰. Pełka believes that the remnants of these beliefs are the demons of Slavic folklore³⁰¹ - and they are demons of bodies of water, swamps, meadows, forests, even mud³⁰². Janicki believes that their names, which we know today from Slavic bestiaries, are, however, later³⁰³. According to Pełka, the Slavs practiced a cult of cyclical birth and death of life in nature³⁰⁴. Their festivals - as an agricultural people³⁰⁵ - may have been, it is assumed, linked to the agricultural calendar³⁰⁶. The Slavs may also have made offerings to higher powers in request for something; "to pray" („modlić się”) originally meant "to ask"³⁰⁷. However, this is still not much information.

²⁹³ Ibid, p. 22; L. J. Pełka, *Polska demonologia...*, op. cit. p. 13.

²⁹⁴ L. J. Pełka, *Polska demonologia...*, op. cit. p. 13.

²⁹⁵ L. J. Pełka *Polska demonologia...*, op. cit. p. 11; K. Janicki, *Cywilizacja...*, op. cit. p. 217.

²⁹⁶ K. Janicki, *Cywilizacja...*, op. cit. p. 225.

²⁹⁷ Ibid, pp. 222-225.

²⁹⁸ Ibid, pp. 224-225.

²⁹⁹ Ibid, p. 233.

³⁰⁰ Ibid, p. 226; L. J. Pełka, *Polska demonologia...*, op. cit. p. 81.

³⁰¹ L. J. Pełka, *Polska demonologia...*, op. cit. p. 42.

³⁰² Ibid, p. 81.

³⁰³ K. Janicki, *Cywilizacja...*, op. cit. p. 226.

³⁰⁴ L. J. Pełka, *Polska demonologia...*, op. cit. p. 100.

³⁰⁵ K. Janicki, *Cywilizacja...*, op. cit. p. 91.

³⁰⁶ Ibid, p. 226.

³⁰⁷ Ibid.

The lush vision of Slavic paganism, which, in spite of the facts, lives on in the public consciousness³⁰⁸, results, according to Janicki, from research methodological errors: drawing excessive conclusions from "anecdotal" archaeological research³⁰⁹ and reconstructing the picture of religion by filling in the gaps with elements of Greek or German mythology (this method is based on the mistaken assumption that each group believes according to the same scheme as all other communities)³¹⁰. Another mistake Janicki points out is the uncritical reading of the sources. Late medieval chroniclers attempted to reconstruct pre-Christian history, but this was hundreds of years after baptism; it was not until the Romantics - a thousand years after baptism - that folk tales began to be written down systematically and on a larger scale. However, even if some echoes of paganism remained in them, since Christianization the pagan and Christian threads have intertwined and glued together in such a way that they can no longer be separated from each other³¹¹. For example, what is written about supposedly pre-Christian rituals concerning sex, love and marriage is "either a splinter of much later customs from selected regions, or a fantasy based on rural folklore from near-contemporary times, deeply imbued with Christian influence"³¹².

II

In the *Bios and Zoe* series, I refer to two traditional Slavic holidays, but I refer to their contemporary form as I myself have always celebrated them. These are: Kupala Night - the festival of *Bios*, celebrating biological life in its greatest bloom and associated with fertility, the reproduction of material life, and forefathers - the festival of *Zoe*, the soul, ancestors and reincarnation.

³⁰⁸ Ibid, p. 227.

³⁰⁹ Ibid, p. 229.

³¹⁰ Ibid, p. 230.

³¹¹ Ibid, p. 229.

³¹² Ibid, p. 143.

Midsummer Night, also known as Kupala Night or Kupalnocka, is celebrated on the night of June 23/24, around the summer solstice, marking the start of astronomical summer. The PWN Encyclopedia online says that Kupala Night originated from the agrarian cults of farming communities. These cults have existed since the Neolithic, and would have been based "on the idea of a connection between human life and plant vegetation." The rituals of this night are called "Saturdays"³¹³. They were supposed to ensure health and fertility. On Midsummer Night, bonfires were burned, herbs were thrown into them, and divination and dancing took place. Girls would release garlands with lit candles into the river as an omen for finding a mate. Sobótki may have been a remnant of ancient spring magic rituals. (These customs were also practiced during Pentecost.)³¹⁴

Pełka cites a description of Midsummer rituals dating back to the 16th century by Marcin of Urzędów: women burned bonfires, sang, danced, girded themselves with mugwort, made "offerings" of it and hung it on trees. The Renaissance chronicler sees these rituals as adhering to pagan customs and worshipping the devil³¹⁵. According to Pełka, the burning of Midsummer fires on the banks of waters and the letting go of garlands are remnants of pre-Christian nature worship. Fire and water, the powerful and most difficult elements to control, had an important role in this cult³¹⁶. (Pełka also cites other customs with the same roots, such as the prohibition against insulting fire, such as by spitting into it, or like throwing a coin into the first bath of a newborn descendant³¹⁷.)

³¹³ Encyclopedia PWN, entry: *noc kupały*, <https://encyklopedia.pwn.pl/szukaj/noc%20kupa%C5%82y.html> (accessed 24.11.2024).

³¹⁴ Encyclopedia PWN, entry: *sobótka*, <https://encyklopedia.pwn.pl/haslo/sobotka;3977056.html> (accessed 24.11.2024).

³¹⁵ L. J. Pełka, *Polska demonologia...*, op. cit. p. 14.

³¹⁶ Ibid. p. 42.

³¹⁷ Ibid.

In pagan cultures we find sacred fire on altars, which was constantly maintained³¹⁸. Alexander Brückner gives, after Jan Długosz, a description of the conversion of Lithuania in 1387: King Jagiełło ordered, before the eyes of the followers, to extinguish the sacred fire that was burning on the altar in Vilnius under the care of a priest. He ordered the altar to be torn down. By Jagiełło's order, the sacred Lithuanian groves and forests³¹⁹ were also cut down, and sacred animals kept in homes³²⁰, such as vipers³²¹, were killed.

The age-old belief in the sanctity of fire can also be seen in the myths about the stealing of fire from the gods by various heroes. In the tale *Święty Antoni daje ludziom ogień* (*Sant'Antonio dà il fuoco agli uomini*) - a folk adaptation of the myth given by Calvino, fire is stolen by Saint Anthony - from hell. He is helped by a certain clever pig³²².

Kopaliński believes that the lighting of the Midsummer fire was also about magically assisting the sun. (To aid the sun, fires were also burned during the winter solstice and the spring and autumn equinoxes.)³²³ Water and fire have magical cleansing powers, hence jumping over midsummer bonfires³²⁴.

Midsummer Night is a very joyous holiday, associated with the climactic, most exuberant flowering of life, with fertility and love. In the rituals of looking for a partner is contained the hope of happiness. At the same time, a very gentle, almost imperceptible melancholy smoulders in this magical festival of youth. Starting tomorrow, the sun will begin to disappear and before long we will already be preparing for winter and darkness. This sadness can be seen in the legend of the fern flower. The fern blooms only on this one magic night of the year, and

³¹⁸ W. Kopaliński, *Słownik...*, op. cit, entry: *Ogień*, p. 266.

³¹⁹ A. Brückner, *Starożytna Litwa. Ludy i bogi. Szkice historyczne i mitologiczne*, Pojezierze Publishing House, Olsztyn, 1984, p. 79.

³²⁰ *Ibid*, p. 80.

³²¹ *Ibid*, p. 79.

³²² I. Calvino, *Baśnie Włoskie*, vol. 3, Czuły Barbarzyńca Publishing House, Warszawa, 2002, pp. 348-350.

³²³ W. Kopaliński, *Słownik...*, op. cit, entry: *Ogień*, p. 267.

³²⁴ *Ibid*, p. 268.

whoever finds and plucks the flower will achieve good fortune. This is the promise, but in fairy tales the blooming ferns turn out to be unattainable for the heroes. From my childhood I know a fairy tale about a boy who, after a whole night of searching, finally finds a fern flower, but the moment he reaches out for it - a rooster crows, the spells stop working, the flower disappears. In the Czech fairy tale *Złote Źródło (Golden Spring)*, three fern flowers picked on Midsummer Night will give the finder wealth in the form of countless bars of gold. The fern flowers must be picked. They are the key to the rock, inside of which beats a golden spring - you need to draw from it with a pitcher, leave the rock and pour the water in a place on which the moonlight falls, and then the water will concentrate into a golden bar. You can repeat this action as many times as you like, but you must not lose the flowers in the process. The hero enthusiastically proceeds to draw and pour the golden water, but in this memorization he loses one flower, the spell breaks, the rock closes and the hero is trapped inside forever³²⁵. The fern flower as a symbol of transience and lost illusions also appears in the Italian fairy tale *Moc kwiatu paproci (La potenza della felce maschio)*, unrelated to the Slavic Kupala Night: when three fern flowers are found no one will be killed by a bullet again, and they should be sought at midnight on the first of August. To pick them, one cannot be frightened, whatever happens. However, the hero succumbs to his fears - and loses the flowers. Fails to save humanity from death by bullet³²⁶.

In his work *Fern Flower*, Jozef Ignacy Kraszewski adapts a folk legend. His protagonist manages to pick a magical flower and thanks to this he acquires wealth, social status, a palace, servants - but this ultimately makes him unhappy and even leads to his doom. The realized utopia becomes a dystopia³²⁷.

So the festival of the summer solstice may be a moment of utopian happiness in a sacred space outside of time, but the legend of the fern blossoms beckons us back to the commonplace.

³²⁵ M. Rościszewski [B. London], *Słowiańskie...*, op. cit. pp. 73-80.

³²⁶ I. Calvino, *Baśnie...*, vol. 3, op. cit. pp. 345-347.

³²⁷ J. I. Kraszewski, *Kwiat Paproci*, <https://wolnelektury.pl/katalog/lektura/kwiat-paproci.html> (accessed 17.11.2024).

Kupala Night is a solar holiday, so I started my work with the sun - by figuring out how to represent it symbolically. I searched for the shape of the sun using the method of noting down more ideas as painting sketches.

In the first sketch (*Sun with tongues on gray background*), the sun has the figure of a person throning in the sky. The figure places flames of fire on the ground with its long tongues. This can mean giving life and energy, but also burning the earth. The second sketch (*Sun with tongues on brown background*) is another color variant of the first one. On the third (*Tarot Sun*) I refer to the Sun card in the tarot. Two children are playing in an enclosed garden, as in the Marseilles Tarot. Above them shines the Sun - Horse, referring to the horse figure from the Rider-White-Smith Tarot. It has the head and legs of a horse, while the arms and torso of a man. He points his hands upward in an orant gesture. (I write more about the tarot symbolism of the Sun card in the chapter III *Tarot. Tarot Dolls.*)

The fourth sketch (*Sun-Horse on Midsummer Night*) depicts the Sun-Horse in the Midsummer space, towering in the sky. Below it flows a river - a place of celebration. Events are shown synchronously. The sun shines high as if it were daytime, but its reflection in the river suggests the time of sunset. The river and sky are depicted in the dark colors of night. Sparks of light fall from the Sun-Con's hands like rays in full daylight, but their reflections in the dark water become the lights of garlands released after dark. Compared to the tarot sketch, the figure of the Sun-Horse itself changes slightly. It acquires a sexual character. He is a hermaphrodite, his female-male sex organs are arranged as if during sexual intercourse. This is due to the sexual nature of the Kupala Night, contained, for example, in the ritual of letting go of garlands.

The latter painting sketch became the basis for the making of *Sun* doll and the installation and painting *Kupala Night*. I wanted to convey the spirit of Midsummer

Night as succinctly as possible. The simpler the form of the work, the more powerful it is, the easier we can concentrate on it and even enter a meditative state. Creating the final version of the work is therefore about simplifying the idea, choosing a key element and discarding the others.

Kupala Night installation is four slogans presented visually in a grand simplification: sun - fire - water - sexuality. The minimalist object takes the form of a trapezoid-shaped panel wider at the base. In the upper part of the panel, the doll *Sun* is placed on a vertical axis of symmetry. Below her is a relief depicting her mirror image, several times reduced in size. This is an allusion to the reflection of the setting sun in the mirror of the river. The relief is arranged with stripes, suggesting waves of water. The doll has the figure of a man-horse in the pose of an orant. It is maintained in the colors of the setting sun, but also fire. It's body has a color of dark, intense pink. It has golden sparks embroidered on it's hands. *Sun's* penis is colored yellow like a ray.

IV

As I write above, the basis of the *Kupala Night* painting is a sketch depicting the Sun-Horse on the Midsummer River. From this sketch I took the colors, the reflection of fire in the water and the allusion to sexuality.

The painting - mandala (square) depicts a concentric geometric composition with a vertical and horizontal axis of symmetry. It is composed of four superimposed squares, starting with the smallest one in the center. In the very center of the painting a flame of fire is delicately marked. The whole arrangement is a reflection of the compositional elements in relation to the vertical and horizontal axis of symmetry. The side walls of the squares are slightly concave, which emphasizes the reflection of these figures horizontally. The point of reflection of the flame

coincides with the point of intersection of the two axes of symmetry with the diagonals of the painting.

The colors of the painting are those with which Midsummer Night might be associated - the green and brown of the forest on the outer squares, the sand of the beach on square two. Meanwhile, the muted pink of the middle square is the calmed color of the sunset over the river. The reflection of the composition with respect to the horizontal axis of symmetry also suggests that we are dealing with a mirror of the river. The calm color scheme gives harmony, tranquility.

On the pink square, in the center of the painting, we see a very gentle flame rising to the sky and its reflection in the water. It is the light of a campfire on the riverbank and a garland on the waves. The shape of the flame is also a sexual allusion - the flame depicted as a straight, vertical, phallic line is surrounded by tiny sparks arranged in a vaginal shape. Also, the color pink can be associated with the color of the human body. The flame in the geometric structure is a symbol of the soul in matter, *Zoe* in *Bios*.

Why is a painting depicting such a vibrant holiday so very peaceful? I think it stems from how I experienced Midsummer Night as a child. In some years I used to go with my family to watch garlands being let loose on the Vistula River. We had a wide view from the observation slope on Albrechtówka. I could see the huge sky, the river below; the sunset, and then the lights of the garlands in the darkness. Being so far from the center of the ceremonies, I did not feel the dynamics of the moment. From my point of view, the situation was static, not much was happening. I focused on the sunset and felt the harmony, the calm, the stoppage in time. So even though in the initial sketches for the painting I was moving toward more dynamics, eventually childhood memories dominated my imagination. As a result, the painting *Kupala Night* is perhaps the most meditative work of the entire *Bios and Zoe* series.

VII

FOREFATHERS

the ritual of the forefathers and Mickiewicz's gaze ▪ *the symbolism of the painting* Forefathers ▪ *the symbolism of the installation* Forefathers ▪ *the stages of designing the painting* Forefathers ▪ *the painting* Plants in kaleidoscope

I

Some of the works in the *Bios and Zoe* series relate to the November holiday of the dead. (In today's Poland, it is customary to celebrate All Saints' Day on November 1 and Day of the Dead, or All Souls' Day, on November 2. I, as a non-Catholic, celebrate the Feast of the Dead – forefathers (dziady) - on November 1.) The group of works in question includes the painting *Forefathers*, painting preparatory sketches for it, and an installation with the same title (two dolls in a scenography - spatial cutout).

The ritual of the so-called Belarusian forefathers, which was suppressed by the Church, was still practiced in Belarus in the 19th century³²⁸. The ceremony - feasting for the dead, singing - was supposed to bring relief to the souls³²⁹. It is sometimes believed that the memory of this custom was perpetuated by Adam Mickiewicz in part II of *Dziady Wileńsko-Kowieńskie (Vilnius-Kovno Forefathers)*³³⁰.

³²⁸ L. J. Pełka, *Polish...*, op. cit. p. 12.

³²⁹ Ibid, pp. 12-13.

³³⁰ K. Kornacka-Sareło, *Niechaj podbiegną młodzieńce.... Myśl frankistowska w Dziadach Adama Mickiewicza*, in: *Opuscula Gnesnensia*, 21, Gniezno, 2018, p. 12.

The custom of feasting for the dead itself dates back to pre-Christian times. Janicki reports that grave feasts were one of the elements of funeral ceremonies. The funeral itself did not have to be "gloomy or even solemn." A so-called "trinity" - games, wrestling - was held over the dead. A so-called "digestion" was also cooked (in Poland, until the 15th century, it was called a wake). According to Janicki, this was less about a funeral feast and more about "drunkenness"³³¹. A feast was also held on the anniversary of the death of the deceased at the burial site³³². Remnants of these customs survived not only in Belarus - in Bohemia, funeral processions, masked dances and calling shadows of the dead were still held in the provinces in the 19th century³³³. At the same time, Janicki cautions that it is not known, however, what Slavic pagans thought about the afterlife and whether they believed in an immortal soul at all³³⁴.

There is a belief that Mickiewicz does not literally describe what the ritual actually looked like. His work is sometimes interpreted as an adaptation of a folk ritual³³⁵. In the introduction to Part II of *Dziady*, the writer informs us that the ceremony is celebrated in modern times in the villages of Lithuania, Prussia and Courland. It has the form of a feast of food and alcohol during which the spirits of the dead are invoked, while it originated in pagan times. At that time it was called a "goat feast," and was presided over by the Goatman (Guślarz, Huslar) - a poet-priest. "It is noteworthy that the custom of treating the dead seems to be common to all pagan peoples, in ancient Greece in Homeric times, in Scandinavia, in the East and so far across the islands of the New World"³³⁶ - Mickiewicz writes and states: "In the present day, since the enlightened clergy and landlords have tried to eradicate the custom combined with superstitious practices and superfluosity often reprehensible, so the common people celebrate the Grandfather's Day secretly in chapels or empty houses near the cemetery"³³⁷. Although Mickiewicz describes the

³³¹ K. Janicki, *Cywilizacja...*, op. cit. p. 325.

³³² Ibid.

³³³ Ibid.

³³⁴ Ibid p. 319.

³³⁵ M. Janion, *Purpurowy...*, op. cit. p. 79.

³³⁶ A. Mickiewicz, *Dziady*, part II, Siedmioróg Publishing House, Wrocław, 2017, p. 11.

³³⁷ Ibid.

beliefs of the people as "brooding fabrications", he sees that the purpose of the rituals is pious and moral³³⁸.

Leszek Kolankiewicz believes that the poet "emphasized the Greek parallel - evoking the Samogitian ritual of killing a goat in sacrifice to ancestral spirits and chthonic deities, called the goat feast, unambiguously associated it with the song (circle) of the goat, tragedy. He thus combined his romantic fascination with folklore with his romantic love of beginnings"³³⁹.

It is worth noting the thesis put forward by Katarzyna Kornacka-Sareło. She believes that *Dziady* refers to neither pagan nor Christian rituals, but to the practices of Jewish mystics. The researcher reminds us that Mickiewicz was a Frankist³⁴⁰ (and that this is a fact that Polish researchers of his work do not like to face³⁴¹); the poet's wife, Celina Szymanowska came from prominent Frankist families³⁴².

The Frankists are a Jewish mystical sect. It arose in Poland in the 18th century - just like Hasidism³⁴³. The mystical current in which both these movements were active was born in the 16th century in the Galilee Safed - a theosophical school was founded there³⁴⁴ and Kabbalistic philosophy flourished. A prominent contributor to the Safed school was Isaac Luria of Safed³⁴⁵. The 17th century saw the activity of Shabtai Tzvi, known as the messiah-apostat, a continuation of the 16th century Kabbalists. He made a conjunctural conversion to Islam with his followers, which led to the formation of a crypto-Judaic sect of Donmei in Thessaloniki³⁴⁶.

³³⁸ Ibid.

³³⁹ L. Kolankiewicz, *Dziady. Teatr święta zmarłych*, Słowo/ obraz terytoria Publishing House, Gdańsk, 2020, p. 31.

³⁴⁰ K. Kornacka-Sareło, *Niechaj...*, op. cit. p. 8.

³⁴¹ Ibid, p. 23.

³⁴² Ibid, pp. 8-9.

³⁴³ Ibid, p. 5.

³⁴⁴ Ibid, p. 18.

³⁴⁵ Ibid, p. 23.

³⁴⁶ Ibid, p. 6.

The Frankist sect numbered several thousand people, mostly from the lower social strata, and its founder and leader was Jacob Frank (claiming to be the reincarnation of the Tzvi)³⁴⁷. Unlike the Hasidim, the Frankists accepted baptism, which, however, had a purely pragmatic basis - "continuous and ever-recurring pogroms" in which several hundred thousand Polish Jews and Jews were killed at the time (Khmelnysky Uprising, Humanska Slaughter)³⁴⁸. At the same time, baptism opened the door to their development and social advancement. After conversion, however, they continued to practice the Frank version of Judaism, and in order to maintain their religious distinctiveness, they married only among themselves³⁴⁹.

Sarelo argues that certain themes of *Dziady* cannot even be understood without knowledge of Frankism and Frank's views³⁵⁰. Mickiewicz coded these themes for the initiated, knowing the anti-Semitism of Polish readers³⁵¹ - and he deceived those: in the introduction to Part II, he argues that these are folk pagan rituals of Lithuania, Prussia, Kurland (Latvian), although according to the researcher he knew little about them³⁵². The rituals described in Part II of *Dziady* are heterodox Kabbalistic rituals³⁵³ with Frankist elements and from Hasidic-Frankist folklore, such as necromancy (calling up spirits), nigromancy (black magic) and reincarnation (*gilgul* - Kabbalistic metempsychosis)³⁵⁴. On the other hand, there were no traditions among either Lithuanian or Slavic Christians of talking to ghosts or summoning spirits³⁵⁵. Also, Mickiewicz's Guślarz has nothing to do with pre-Slavic, Pralitic, Prussian shamans, etc.³⁵⁶. He is a tzaddik (miracle worker)³⁵⁷ performing magical rituals³⁵⁸, studying the Bible and kabbalah³⁵⁹. Jewish tzaddikim

³⁴⁷ Ibid.

³⁴⁸ Ibid, p. 5.

³⁴⁹ Ibid, p. 8.

³⁵⁰ Ibid, p. 9.

³⁵¹ Ibid, pp. 10-11.

³⁵² Ibid, p. 11.

³⁵³ Ibid, p. 22.

³⁵⁴ Ibid p. 14.

³⁵⁵ Ibid, p. 11.

³⁵⁶ Ibid, p. 18.

³⁵⁷ Ibid, p. 12.

³⁵⁸ Ibid, p. 16.

and kabbalists were intermediaries between the world and the hereafter - and the Guślarz makes contact with the dead in the same way³⁶⁰. The cross he uses is not really a cross of Christians but of Frankists, used in their ceremonies and symbolizing Frank's power³⁶¹. The frankist motif is also a sexual orgy. Zosia's spirit states: "Let the young men run up, Let them seize me by the hands, Let them draw me to the ground, Let me have a moment's play with them"³⁶² - this is a desire for group sex; Mickiewicz is openly referring here to Frankist practices and the Frankist search for "holiness in sin". Frank preached that in order for the redemption of the Jewish people to come, especially the end of wandering in the Diaspora, the traditional Judaic rules restraining Jews from sexual promiscuity must be discarded³⁶³. "The time of Paradise - Eden - will then come, in which it will be possible to give vent to carnal lusts, and it will even be advisable at that time"³⁶⁴. The first generations of Frankists practiced premarital and extramarital sex, orgies, allowed prostitution and incest³⁶⁵.

In *Dziady* we are also dealing with the Kabbalistic motif of the wandering of souls. According to Jewish mystics, people who despise others and are insensitive to others are reborn after death in the bodies of insects, eternally threatened by danger and fearful for their lives³⁶⁶. Part IV features the soul of an evil man (could it be the Evil Lord from Part II?) reborn in the form of a knocker ("little worm")³⁶⁷ and moths, in which are reborn those who "during their lifetime" extinguished "every ray of education" - censors, obscurantist rulers and that sort of company who now must fly to the light, although they don't like it³⁶⁸. There are more references to Frankist thought in the piece. Significantly, also the messianic ideas in *Dziady* are taken from Frankism and Jewish mysticism³⁶⁹.

³⁵⁹ Ibid, p. 18.

³⁶⁰ Ibid.

³⁶¹ Ibid, p. 20.

³⁶² A. Mickiewicz, *Dziady*, op. cit. p. 29, vv. 470-473.

³⁶³ K. Kornacka-Sareło, *Niechaj...*, op. cit. pp. 14-15.

³⁶⁴ Ibid, pp. 15-16.

³⁶⁵ Ibid, p. 15.

³⁶⁶ Ibid, p. 25.

³⁶⁷ A. Mickiewicz, *Dziady*, op. cit. pp. 61-62, vv. 670-692.

³⁶⁸ Ibid, pp. 83-84, vv. 1213-1239.

³⁶⁹ Kornacka-Sareło, *Niechaj...*, op. cit. p. 20.

The last painting I painted as part of the *Bios and Zoe* series is the canvas *Forefathers*. The work is maintained in shades of purple. It depicts a kaleidoscope, in which a geometric arrangement made up of human and cat masks is infinitely reflected. In the center of the painting is a triple reflection of a flame, which is reached by the tongues of the masks clustered around it. Perhaps they are feeding on the candle we light for them, which is the energy and warmth of life and our memory. Or perhaps their gesture shows the transmission of life to the next generation.

The painting expresses my belief that the soul can incarnate in any biological entity, so not only in another human but also in an animal or plant. The alternating arrangement of human and feline masks on top of each other symbolizes the rebirth of the soul in various biological species. We can understand this image in three ways: as a representation of successive generations. As a representation of previous incarnations of the souls of our ancestors, that is, those incarnations in which they existed before they were born as our relative or kin. But also as a symbol of the previous incarnations of our souls. In this sense, our ancestors - grandparents - are the dead in whom our soul previously lived, and who did not necessarily belong to our lineage or even to our species when they were alive.

The reflections of the masks symbolize the infinity of the process of rebirth of life. A kaleidoscope is a constant new composition of the same elements, which change with each rotation of it. It is a resajkling of life - the same elements of matter dying and being reborn create a different form each time, as well as a resajkling of souls - the same souls wander through successive generations of biological entities.

Purple in my painting is the color of mystery, magic, spirituality, magical night, when the door between worlds opens. (In magic, purple is associated with night and the moon, winter and the north side of the world³⁷⁰.)

I use **the flame** in *Forefathers* as a reference to the candles we light for our dead on their holiday, but also as a symbol of the soul, life and energy³⁷¹.

The mirror has numerous and varied connotations, including those related to death. It is a link to the hereafter³⁷² and other space-time. It shows events from distant places or times, and is sometimes a gateway to the world of the dead. Kopalinski cites a great many meanings of this symbol. Among them: life, destiny, prophecy, divination, revelation, contemplation³⁷³. "In fairy tales and legends, the mirror showed distant events, the faces of people staying far away or dying"³⁷⁴. "The mirror - in the folklore of many countries - often reflects the soul of a person [...] evokes images of people who stood before it in the past"³⁷⁵. For the time between someone's death and funeral, mirrors were covered in her or his home³⁷⁶. This is because it was possible to see someone dead through them, or even some soul could pass through this way to the world of the living³⁷⁷. In the interpretation of the Jungian school, the mirror symbolizes reflection and self-reflection³⁷⁸.

The ritual **mask**, as Leszek Kolankiewicz writes, represents the spirit of the deceased person "Mask dances [in primitive cultures] are always dances of

³⁷⁰ M. Winczewski, *Moc amuletów i talizmanów na co dzień*, Astropsychology Studio Publishing House, Białystok, 2005, p. 43.

³⁷¹ For more on this symbol, see W. Kopaliński, *Słownik...*, op. cit., entry: *Ogień*, p. 266, entry: *Świeca*, p. 420; M. Wańczowski, M. Lenart (eds.), *Księga...*, op. cit., entry: *Znicz*, p. 609.

³⁷² M. Wańczowski, M. Lenart (eds.), *Księga...*, op. cit., entry: *Zwierciadło*, p. 612.

³⁷³ W. Kopaliński, *Słownik...*, op. cit., entry: *Lustro*, p. 204.

³⁷⁴ Ibid.

³⁷⁵ Ibid, p. 205.

³⁷⁶ Ibid.

³⁷⁷ M. Wańczowski, M. Lenart (eds.), *Księga...*, op. cit., entry: *Zwierciadło*, p. 612.

³⁷⁸ M-L. von Franz, *Proces...*, op. cit. in C. G. Jung (ed.), *Człowiek...*, op. cit. p. 298, caption to illustration no. 116.

spirits"³⁷⁹. A. Jaffé believes that the mask in primitive cultures is an emanation of the animal demon³⁸⁰, and since this is so, it must also symbolize the animal side of human nature³⁸¹. I take a different view than the Jungian school. I believe that man is not the center of the ecosystem; in my image, the cat is not an emanation of human instincts but of a life force that knows no boundaries between species.

Tongue is an amazing, expressive element. In the image of *Forefathers*, it symbolizes the bonds and communication between the living and the dead; I also consider it a symbol of the demon world. (In turn, Kopaliński states that language is, among other things, dexterity, cunning, speaking, gossip - but also flame³⁸². Polish ritual art sometimes depicts a devil with a tongue. In some European countries there is the demon-cap Krampus, traditionally depicted with a long tongues and a rod. He is known in Germany, Austria, northern Italy, Croatia and Slovenia, among others³⁸³. On Christmas Day (or December 6³⁸⁴) Krampus, together with St. Nicholas, visit children. While polite children can count on gifts from St. Nicholas, Krampus comes to mete out punishment to naughty urchins³⁸⁵. Numerous images documenting Krampus's actions can be found online, thus, for example: times with a rod, pulling a little naughty boy by the ears and a little mischievous girl by the braid, slapping the head with his tongue, as well as putting the culprit in a basket and taking him out of the house.

Where did the **cat** come from in my painting? The honest answer is: I don't know. It was not in the plans. I had intended to paint a mask of a cow or a horse (since both of these animals had already appeared in the *Bios and Zoe* series) or a bird (as a symbol of the soul and as a reference to the birds from the second part of *Dziady*; in Mickiewicz's work, the spirits of people who were wronged by their master during his lifetime and now - when he, too, has already moved to the

³⁷⁹ L. Kolankiewicz, *Dziady...*, op. cit., p. 46.

³⁸⁰ A. Jaffé, *Symbolika...*, op. cit., in C. G. Jung, *Człowiek...*, op. cit., p. 327.

³⁸¹ *Ibid*, p. 328.

³⁸² W. Kopaliński, *Słownik...*, op. cit, entry: *Język*, pp. 126-128.

³⁸³ <https://pl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Krampus> (accessed 7.11.2024).

³⁸⁴ *Krampus i perchta*, <https://www.salzburg.info/pl/salzburg/adwent/krampusy-i-perchty> (accessed November 7, 2024).

³⁸⁵ <https://pl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Krampus> access (accessed 7.11.2024).

afterlife - bring justice to his soul) appear under this figure. However, when I proceeded to make conceptual sketches of the masks, on my drawings, among the cattle and fowl suddenly began to appear - a cat. Without any conscious intention on my part. When such a situation happens to me, as a rule, I change the idea and follow the impulse. I believe that this results in a better work, flowing straight from deep imagination. This was the case this time, too. I decided that the cat - since it was already somewhat self-imposed - nevertheless fits well with the ancient ritual. It is a magical animal and carries a mystery. In fairy tales we often meet it as a companion of witches and wizards, and it also has connections with demons from the afterlife.

Having decided on the cat, I still decided to verify its symbolism post facto. In Pełka I found confirmation of my first association - cats were attributed in folklore with associations with magic, the devil³⁸⁶, and sometimes - especially black cats - with death³⁸⁷. In addition to the same meanings, Kopaliński states that the cat also symbolizes, among other things: the sun, the moon (because it hunts at night), the soothsayer. And also sin, misfortune, darkness, perfidy, betrayal. She is the mythological animal of the goddesses Isis, Artemis, Hekate and Freya (the Scandinavian goddess of fertility and magic). In Egypt, the cat was Bastet - the goddess of fertility, happiness, joy, warmth of the sun³⁸⁸.

In culture, the cat also appears as an individual with a strong character, with a unique and interesting personality. A brave, brave and brutal highwayman, endowed with a sexual temperament at the same time. The same applies to female cats. A beautiful example of such a view of cats is Charles Bukowski's series of poems *About Cats (On cats)*³⁸⁹.

³⁸⁶ L. J. Pełka, *Polska demonologia...*, op. cit. p. 185.

³⁸⁷ Ibid, p. 177.

³⁸⁸ W. Kopaliński, *Słownik...*, op. cit, entry: *Kot*, pp. 161-162.

³⁸⁹ Ch. Bukowski, *O kotach*, published by Noir sur Blanc, Warszawa, 2017.

Pop-esotericism is also not indifferent to the charismatic mammal. On the Internet we can find various "cat" tarot with representations of cats instead of people, including a deck with the sensational title: "Cats Rule the Earth"³⁹⁰.

III

The *Forefathers* installation takes the form of a gate constructed of curtain-like cardboard panels. In the gate, two dolls are placed in the center of the composition. In the foreground is the *Guślarka* (Priestess, Tarot Doll). Behind her in the further plan the *Soul* (Onion). The gate builds a sacred space. (It can be a temple, a cemetery but also any other place where we perform rituals.) It symbolizes the process of transition from one form of life to another, from profane space to sacred space, from ordinary time to festive (ritual) time. The transition between worlds (on the night of the grandfathers the door between our world and the hereafter opens). Also the transition that is the birth and death³⁹¹.

The *Guślarka* doll alludes to the figure of the Guślarz from Mickiewicz's *Dziady* and to the Priestess card in the tarot. She is a mediator between worlds like both of these characters. She is sewn from linen in purple - the color of spirituality. She is depicted in the pose of an orant. On the doll's hands are embroidered abstract stamps of silver and gold. Gold stands for transcendence, silver for night and the moon, and as the moon is an emblem of goddesses - the color silver also symbolizes sacred femininity. On her face, *Guślarka* wears a ceremonial mask. The doll's vagina is shaped like a butterfly. The butterfly symbolizes the soul,

³⁹⁰ <https://www.znak.com.pl/ksiazka/tarot-koty-rzadza-swiatem-karty-tarota-przewodnik-catherine-davidson-308679?> (accessed 23.11.2024);

<https://www.empik.com/tarot-koty-rzadza-swiatem-karty-tarota-przewodnik-davidson-catherine,p1508279530,ksiazka-p> (accessed 23.11.2024);

<https://www.taniaksiazka.pl/tarot-koty-rzadza-swiatem-karty-przewodnik-catherine-davidson-p-2075577.html> (accessed 23.11.2024).

³⁹¹ On the symbolism of the gate also here: W. Kopaliński, *Słownik...*, op. cit., entry: *Brama*, p. 25-26, entry: *Drzwi*, p. 70-72.

transformation, while the vagina symbolizes transition and birth; the combination of the two symbols signifies reincarnation. In my work, the butterfly-vagina is a meaningful repetition of the gate-soul arrangement (i.e., a stage set in the form of a gate and the *Soul* doll placed in it). The Pontifex (Priestess) in the tarot is also a gate.

The *Soul (Onion)* doll is made partly from raw linen and partly from recycled denim. By creating a doll out of worn pants, I symbolize the recycling of soul and matter in nature. *Soul's* face and robe (both denim) are embroidered with designs using the sashiko technique. This is a traditional Japanese technique used to strengthen old clothes to keep using them or sewing something new from them. I learned it from an internet course on the [domestika.org](https://www.domestika.org) platform mentioned in previous chapters. The course, called *Introduction to Japanese Sashiko Stitching*, is taught by Japanese sashiko master Atsushi Futatsuya. Futatsuya introduces the idea of this embroidery method and conveys some basic, easy-to-follow stitches³⁹². In general, this method is easy, but requires patience. On the other hand, the very idea of sashiko - reinforcing used fabrics to give them new life, to create a new thing out of them - resonates perfectly with my concept of resajkling rebirth of life. I did the embroidery on the doll with gold-colored thread, which symbolizes transcendence.

Soul wears a crown with a bulbous form, also from its shoulders grow small bulbs or onions. This symbolizes the incarnation of souls into plants as well. (The onion also has its own magical meanings - healing and protection, attracting money, arousing desire, and even - put under the pillow - is said to send prophetic dreams. It is also used in exorcisms³⁹³.) I made the bulbous elements crowning the doll from stiffened denim, modifying the conventional method of making flowers from

³⁹² A. Futatsuya, *Introduction to Japanese Sashiko Stitching*
<https://www.domestika.org/en/courses/4952-introduction-to-japanese-sashiko-stitching/course>
(accessed 16.11.2024).

³⁹³ S. Cunningham, *Encyklopedia magicznych roślin. Drzewa, kwiaty, zioła*, Astropsychology Studio Publishing House, Białystok 2009, pp. 74-75.

fabric - I also used this method for *Guślarka* and *Sun* - I write more about it in the chapter III *Tarot. Tarot Dolls*.

The shape of the gate in the *Forefathers* installation refers visually to the onion-shaped elements of the *Soul* doll.

IV

I proceeded to design the painting *Forefathers* without a preliminary vision of the work. I tested various solutions and saw where they could lead. The starting point is a painting sketch depicting a figure of the sun with a tongue - the same one from which I started working on the painting *Kupala Night*. In the second step (*Pink Soul*), I painted a figure of the same shape and in the same space, but in a different color scheme. The figure is pink, and so is the background. I associated it with the soul, and the flames on the gray ground - with the candles we light for the dead. So I went in that direction. In the next sketch (*Brown Soul*), I replaced the flames with plants. The soul (with a slightly altered shape) sits in a wreath and touches the flowers with its tongue. Candles and flowers on graves are a kind of feast for the dead. We can consider the tasting of candles and flowers with tongues as the consumption of food by the dead. We can also accept the interpretation that it is the spirit of the deceased who lights the fire for the living with their tongues, that is, in this way they pass on the spark of immortality, life to the next generation.

In the following sketches, I tried to figure out what specific shape the soul should take. I decided to depict it not with a whole figure, but with a mask. To determine the form of the mask I started with a sketch of my own face en face (*Self-portrait - sketch*). In subsequent sketches, I simplified the face, geometrized it and sought an increasingly simple and synthetic form for it (*Self-Portrait - Mask I* and *Self-Portrait - Mask II*). I arrived at a silhouetted patch in the shape of an oval face with ears en

face, on which is superimposed a smaller patch depicting a simplified profile of the face. In the center of the composition, a flame is smoldering in the background of the masks (*Mask with flame on black background, Mask with flame on red background, Mask with flame on yellow background*). The superimposition of successive masks on each other symbolizes the succession of generations, and the fire symbolizes the soul. In the next sketches appears, in addition to the mask of a man, also the mask of a cat (*Mask with flame - Cat, Mask of Man - Cat on yellow background, Mask of Man - Cat on red background, Mask of Man - Cat red and blue*), as I have already written above - our ancestors are also animals, as souls are reborn in various entities, including plant and animal. In the final phase of designing the painting *Forefathers*, I decided to show the ancestors represented by masks as a reflection in a kaleidoscope (*Masks in kaleidoscope in primary colors, Masks in kaleidoscope purple I, Masks in kaleidoscope purple II*).

Sketches in which I look for the shape of masks are kept in primary colors. I assumed that the soul is a basic and undecomposable element, so it can be represented with primary colors. However, this assumption did not work out in practice, It turned out that the resulting compositions are more pop-art than mystical. Therefore, in the end, I chose purple as the color of *Forefathers*. Purple is the color of spirituality, it builds a mood of mystery and vies with the night time, when we are visited by the spirits of our ancestors.

V

While designing the painting *Forefathers*, I also spontaneously created the painting *Plant in Kaleidoscope*, depicting a fragment of a red stalk reflecting into infinity. The stalk in the painting is made up of cells. In the center of each cell we see a nucleus, and in the center of the painting several clustered seeds of red color, which repeat the shape of the cell nuclei. The symbolism of the work is similar to

that of the painting *Forefathers* - the infinite mirror image is the eternal process of renewal of life, the seeds in the center are a symbol of life and passing it on. Unlike the *Forefathers* painting, however, this one does not refer to any beliefs or myths.

SUMMARY

The purpose of my work was to depict through visual means the concept of life as an intermingling of *Bios* and *Zoe*.

I put forward the following theses:

1. It is possible to express a religious-philosophical concept in art by means of appropriately selected techniques, media, form, etc.
2. The best form to convey philosophical and religious concepts is symbolic art.
3. It is possible to apply in this context symbolism already existing in the tradition of European culture.
4. appropriate media for building a symbolic religious-philosophical message are painting and handicrafts (in this case- puppetry).

I used the following research methods:

1. analysis of existing traditional symbolism found in such areas of European culture.
2. Comparison of symbolism found in works of different genres (fairy tales, poetry, painting).
3. Jungian method of exploring one's imagination through free associations.

I intended to use painting and handicrafts (doll making), possibly supplementing them with other media if necessary; eventually, in the course of my work, I decided that it was indeed worth extending the range of media to include scenographies for the dolls; the scenographies not only act as a display space for my dolls, but also complement their symbolic message.

It should be said that in the *Bios and Zoe* series, the goal of my work was achieved and the theses were confirmed.

In the description of the work I referred to a sundry of female artists, creators and works. However, I am aware that I have not exhausted the entire list. I do not mention works that did not provide me with leading inspiration, but of course both Midsummer Night and the Feast of the Dead are sometimes depicted in Polish art. Zofia Stryjeńska, for example, refers to Midsummer Night (series of gouaches on paper, 20th century) - she captures the folkloric and erotic aspect of the holiday (girls throwing garlands and boys planting garlands in bushes, dancing together around bonfires). The letting of garlands is also depicted by Artur Grottger (watercolor *Wianki - Wreaths*, 1859). The motif of the Midsummer fire in the night landscape can be found, for example, in Władysław Podkowiński (oil *Sobótka - study*, 1893/94), Ferdynand Ruszczyc (*Sobótka*, 1898) and others. Witold Pruszkowski depicts the search for the fern flower in *Kwiat Paproci (Fern Flower)*, 1875, oil on canvas). Matyjaszkowicz focuses on the magical, erotic and floral aspects of the holiday in *Kwiat Paproci (Fern Flower)*, 2017, acrylic on canvas). The feast of the dead, for example, is depicted by Witold Pruszkowski in *Zaduszki (All Souls)* (1880, oil on canvas). In this painting, we see a frightened apparition of a young girl hovering over a grave³⁹⁴. Witold Wojtkiewicz's watercolor *Zaduszki* (undated) depicts a bit of *a dance macabre* with skeletons, a bit of an occult ritual (or perhaps even a black mass?)³⁹⁵. The action of Leon Wyczółkowski's (1852-1936) painting *Dziady (Forefathers)*, oil on canvas, 1896) is set in full sunlight. Five men in country costumes sit in a row one behind the other³⁹⁶.

In the *Bios and Zoe* series, there were threads that are worth expanding in future cycles. These include, in particular:

1. The concept and the very method of making scenography for dolls - while I am actually most interested in the issue of displaying small-format dolls, but it also seems possible to create similar large-scale spatial realizations for other purposes.

³⁹⁴ A. Stempinska, *Piękno nie z tego świata, czyli metafizyczny obraz Witolda Pruszkowskiego "Zaduszki,"* 31.10.2019, <https://niezlasztuka.net/o-sztuce/witold-pruszkowski-metafizyczny-obraz-zaduszki/> (accessed 17.11.2024).

³⁹⁵ <https://zasoby.msl.org.pl/arts/view/7957> (accessed 23.11.2024).

³⁹⁶ <https://cyfrowe.mnw.art.pl/en/catalog/437619> (accessed 23.11.2024).

Both the executive technique and the narrative possibilities inherent in set design can be explored and developed.

2. Symbolically and visually, the concept of kaleidoscopic composition has potential in my opinion. As a starting point for further explorations, I would especially see here the painting *Plant in Kaleidoscope*, where the plant takes on an abstract form and the painting itself becomes a mandala.

3. I find encouraging tropes in the painting *Kupala Night* - here we have the reduction of all the content associated with the ritual to a single, simple symbol placed in a minimalist and abstract space. The idea of using abstract conventions to represent symbolic content is worthy of further work.

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REPRODUCTIONS OF WORKS

LIST OF WORKS

Spinner, 2023, acrylic on canvas, 40x50cm

Kore in Mandala, 2023, acrylic on canvas, 40x50cm

Kupala Night, 2023, acrylic on canvas, 50x50cm

Conceptual painting sketches for *Kupala Night*:

Sun with tongue on grey background, 2023, acrylic on canvas, 30x30cm

Sun with tongue on a brown background, 2023, acrylic on canvas, 30x30cm

Tarot sun, 2023, acrylic on canvas, 30x30cm

Sun-Horse on Midsummer Night, 2023, acrylic on canvas, 30x30cm

Forefathers, 2024, acrylic on canvas, 85x85cm

Conceptual painting sketches for *Forefathers*:

Yellow figure with tongue in grey sky, 2023, acrylic on canvas, 30x30cm

Pink Soul, 2023, acrylic on canvas, 30x30cm

Brown Soul, 2023, acrylic on canvas, 30x30cm

Self-portrait - sketch, 2023, acrylic on canvas, 30x30cm

Self-portrait - Mask I, 2023, acrylic on canvas, 30x30cm

Self-portrait - Mask II, 2023, acrylic on canvas, 30x30cm

Mask with flame on black background, 2023, acrylic on canvas, 30x30cm

Mask with flame on red background, 2023, acrylic on canvas, 30x30cm

Mask with flame on yellow background, 2023, acrylic on canvas, 30x30cm

Mask with flame - Cat, 2023, acrylic on canvas, 30x30cm

Mask of Man - Cat on yellow background, 2023, acrylic on canvas, 30x30cm

Mask Man - Cat on red background, 2023, acrylic on canvas, 30x30cm

Mask Man - Cat red and blue, 2023, acrylic on canvas, paper tongue,
30x30cm

Masks in a kaleidoscope in primary colours, 2023, acrylic on canvas,
30x30cm

Masks in kaleidoscope purple I, 2023, acrylic on canvas, 30x30cm

Masks in kaleidoscope purple II, 2023, acrylic on canvas, 30x30cm

Plant in kaleidoscope, 2023, acrylic on canvas, 30x30cm

Moth, installation:

Moth, 2024, cardboard, height 48cm, width 48.5cm, depth approx. 30cm

Moth (doll), 2023, wool, tulle, bead embroidery, linen string, H 22cm,
wing width 28cm

Spider Woman Small, installation:

Spider Woman Small, 2024, cardboard, H 51.5cm, W 50cm, Dep 20cm

Spider Woman Small (doll), 2023, wool, linen string, H 17.5cm, W 20cm

Spider Woman Big, installation:

Spider Woman Big, 2024, cardboard, H 64cm, W approx 74cm, D approx
60.5cm

Spider Woman Big (doll), 2023, linen canvas, linen string, embroidery floss,
tulle, H 27.5cm, width with legs 23cm

Garden, Installation:

Garden, 2024, cardboard, height 57.5, cm, width approx. 70cm, depth
69.5cm

Goat (doll), 2023, cotton, wool, linen string, H 27cm, horns 21.5cm wide

Goat Woman (doll), 2023, linen cloth, linen string, height with horns
34.5cm

Cow (doll), 2023, linen canvas, cotton, linen string, height with horns 36cm,
width of horns 19.5cm

Kupala Night, installation:

Kupala Night, 2024 cardboard, height 82cm, width approx. 62.5cm,
depth approx. 20cm

Sun (tarot doll), 2023, linen canvas, embroidery, height 35cm

Forefathers, Installation:

Forefathers, 2024, cardboard, H 81cm, W 62cm, D 42.5cm

Guślarka (Priestess; tarot doll), 2023, linen canvas, embroidery, H 43cm

Soul (Onion; doll), 2024, linen canvas, denim, embroidery, linen cord,
gold cord, height 60cm, hand width 34cm



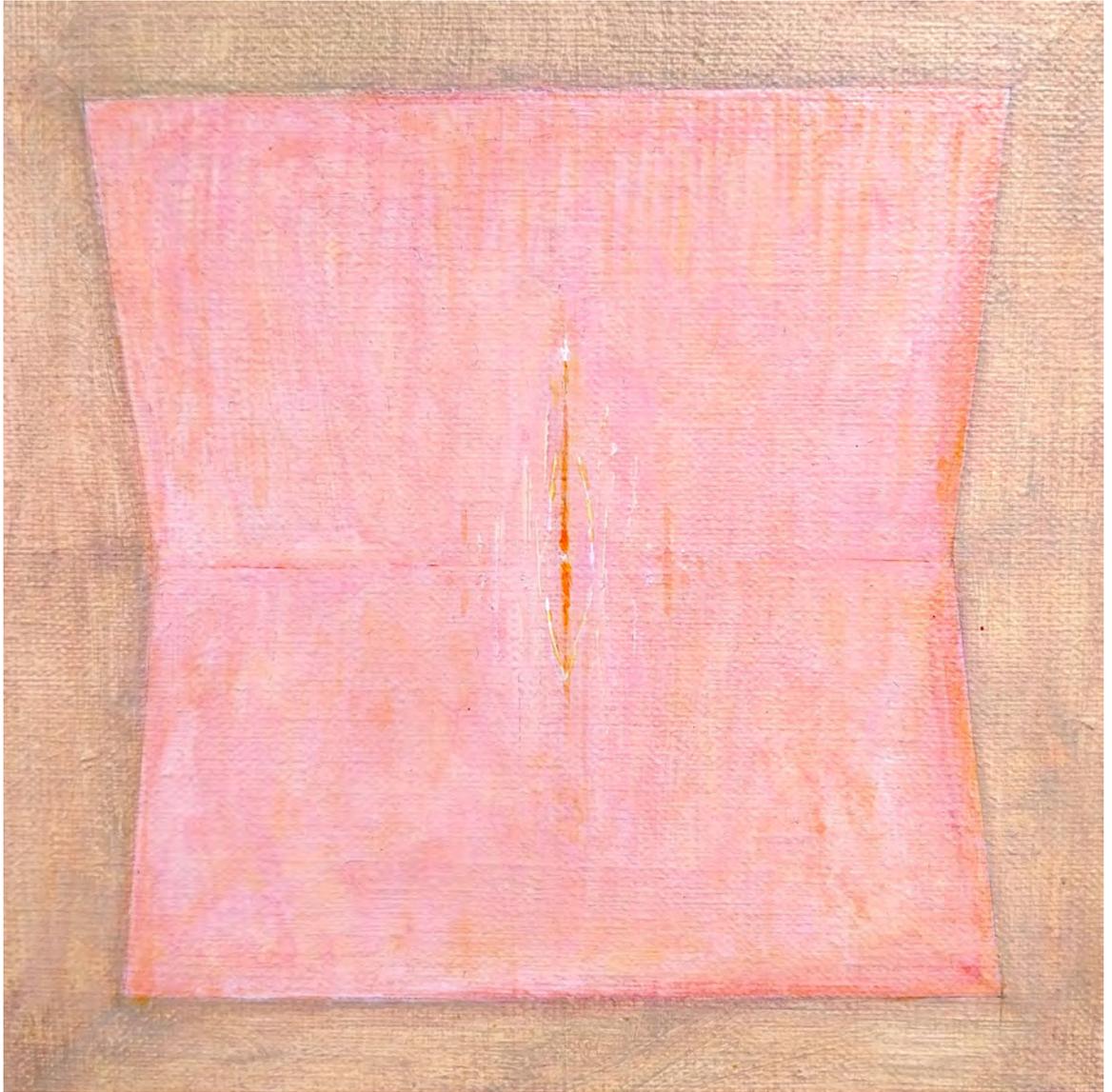
Spinner (Przędka), 2023, acrylic on canvas, 40x50cm



Kore in Mandala (Kora w Mandali), 2023, acrylic on canvas, 40x50cm



Kupala Night (Noc Kupały), 2023, acrylic on canvas, 50x50cm



Kupala Night (Noc Kupały), 2023, acrylic on canvas, 50x50cm

detail



Conceptual painting sketches for *Kupala Night*:

Sun with tongue on grey background (Słońce z jęzorem na szarym tle), 2023,

acrylic on canvas, 30x30cm

Sun with tongue on brown background (Słońce z jęzorem na brązowym tle), 2023,

acrylic on canvas, 30x30cm

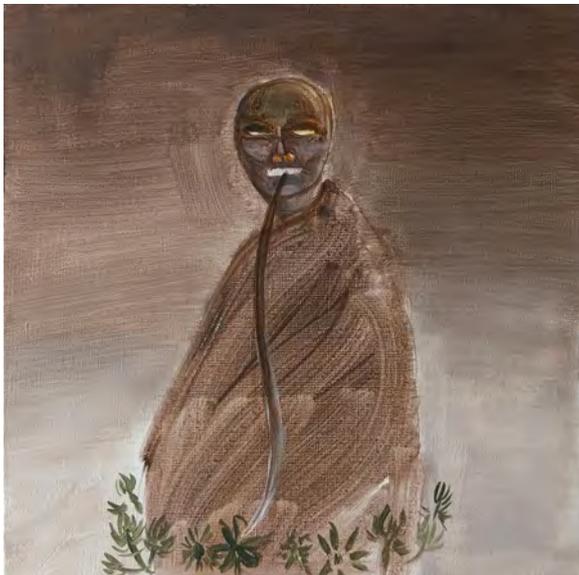
Tarot sun (Słońce tarotowe), 2023, acrylic on canvas, 30x30cm

Sun-Horse on Midsummer Night (Słońce-Koń w Noc Świętojańską), 2023,

acrylic on canvas, 30x30cm



Forefathers (Dziady), 2024, acrylic on canvas, 85x85cm



Conceptual painting sketches for *Forefathers*:

Yellow figure with tongue in grey sky (Żółta postać z jęzorem na szarym niebie), 2023, acrylic on canvas, 30x30cm

Pink Soul (Różowa Dusza), 2023, acrylic on canvas, 30x30cm

Brown Soul (Brązowa Dusza), 2023, acrylic on canvas, 30x30cm

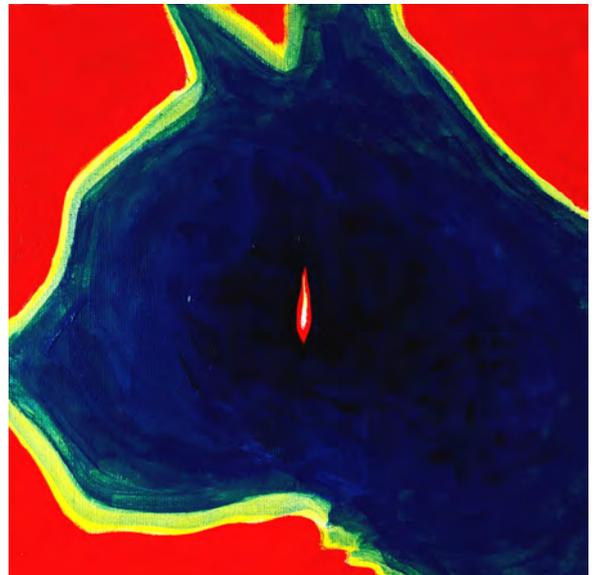


Conceptual painting sketches for *Forefathers*:

Self-portrait - sketch (Autoportret – szkic), 2023, acrylic on canvas, 30x30cm

Self-portrait - Mask I (Autoportret – Maska I), 2023, acrylic on canvas, 30x30cm

Self-portrait - Mask II (Autoportret – Maska II), 2023, acrylic on canvas, 30x30cm



Conceptual painting sketches for *Forefathers*:

Mask with flame on black background (Maska z płomieniem na czarnym tle), 2023, acrylic on canvas, 30x30cm

Mask with flame on red background (Maska z płomieniem na czerwonym tle), 2023, acrylic on canvas, 30x30cm

Mask with flame on yellow background (Maska z płomieniem na żółtym tle) 2023, acrylic on canvas, 30x30cm

Mask with flame - Cat (Maska z płomieniem – Kot), 2023, acrylic on canvas, 30x30cm



Conceptual painting sketches for *Forefathers*:

Mask of Man - Cat on yellow background (Maska Człowiek – Kot na żółtym tle), 2023,
acrylic on canvas, 30x30cm

Mask Man - Cat on red background (Maska Człowiek – Kot na czerwonym tle), 2023,
acrylic on canvas, 30x30cm

Mask Man - Cat red and blue (Maska Człowiek – Kot czerwono-niebieska), 2023,
acrylic on canvas, paper tongue, 30x30cm

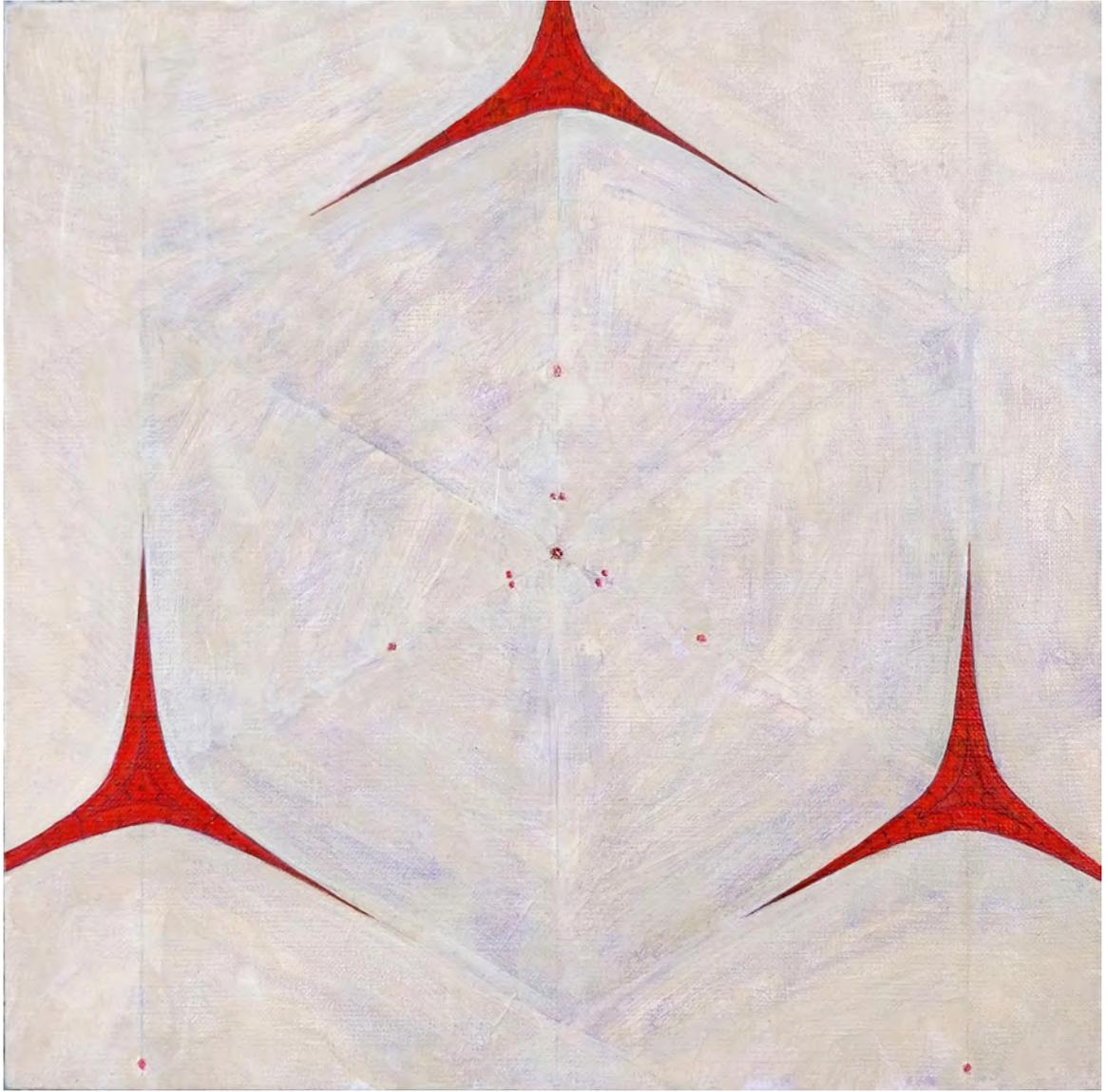


Conceptual painting sketches for *Forefathers*:

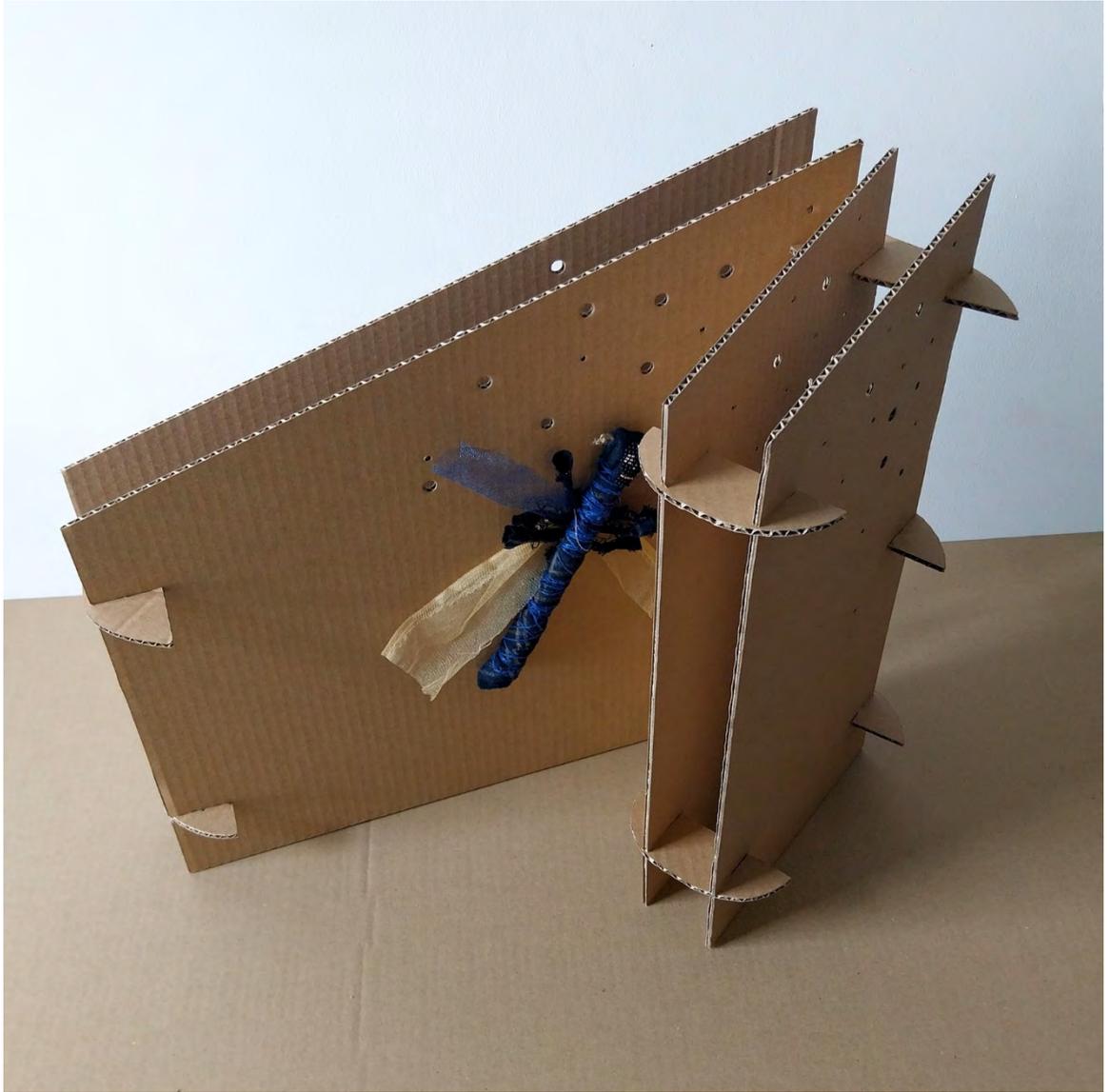
Masks in a kaleidoscope in primary colours (Maski w kalejdoskopie w kolorach podstawowych), 2023, acrylic on canvas, 30x30cm

Masks in kaleidoscope purple I (Maski w kalejdoskopie fioletowe I), 2023,
acrylic on canvas, 30x30cm

Masks in kaleidoscope purple II (Maski w kalejdoskopie fioletowe II), 2023,
acrylic on canvas, 30x30cm



Plant in kaleidoscope, Roślina w kalejdoskopie 2023, acrylic on canvas, 30x30cm



Moth (Ćma), installation:

Moth, 2024, cardboard, height 48cm, width 48.5cm, depth approx. 30cm

Moth (doll), 2023, wool, tulle, bead embroidery, linen string, H 22cm,

wing width 28cm

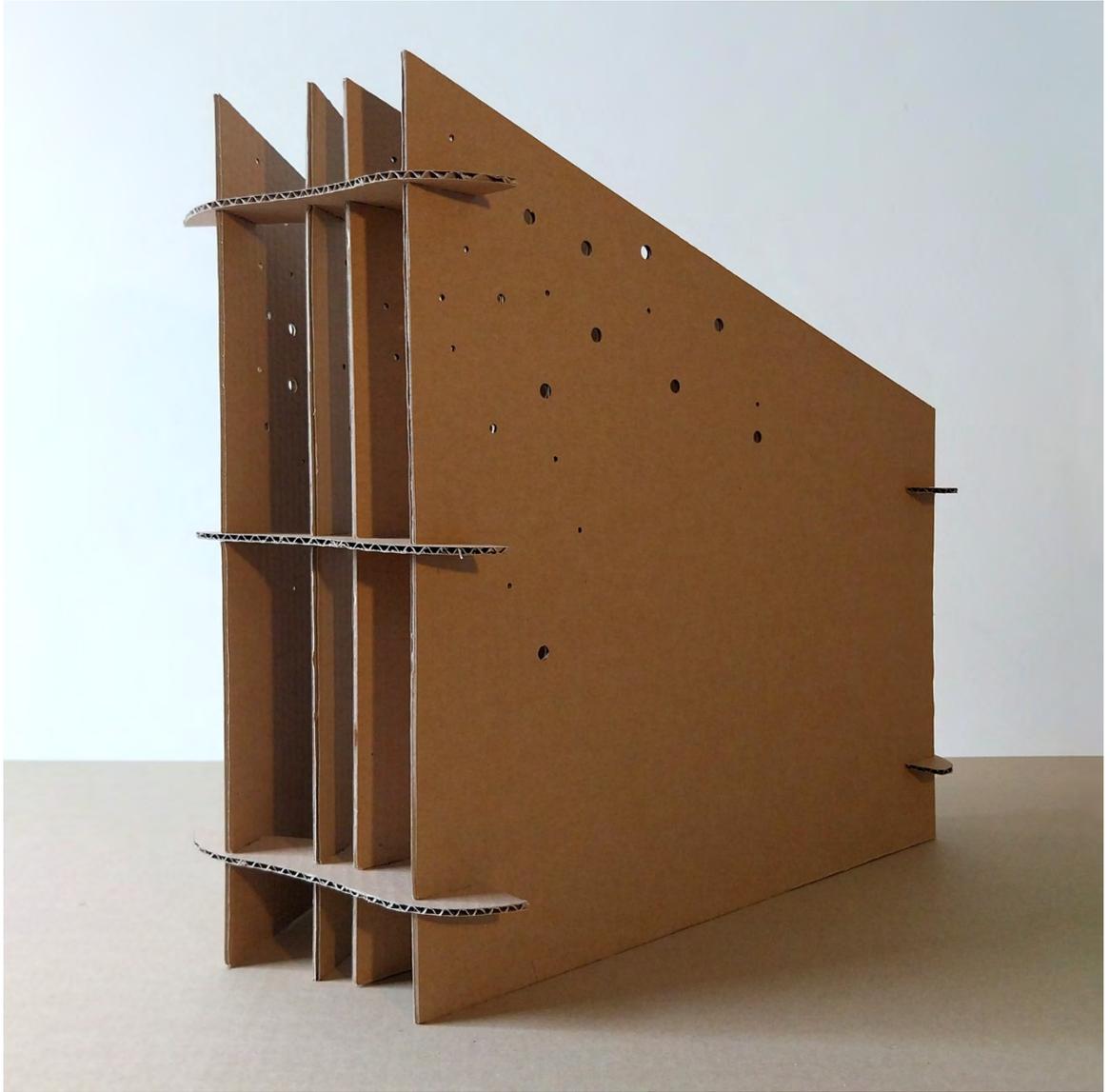


Moth (Ćma), installation:

Moth, 2024, cardboard, height 48cm, width 48.5cm, depth approx. 30cm

Moth (doll), 2023, wool, tulle, bead embroidery, linen string, H 22cm,

wing width 28cm

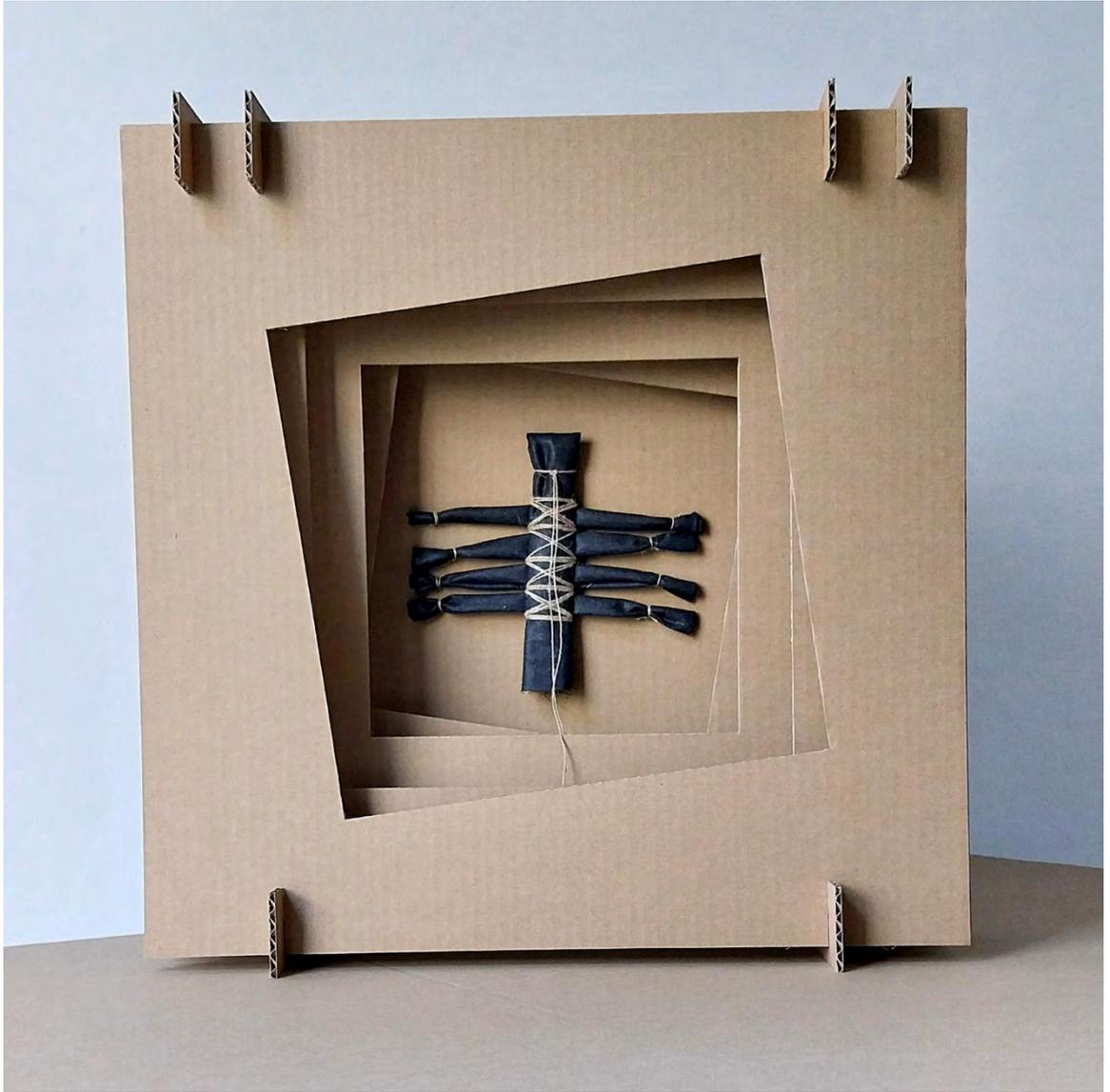


Moth (Ćma), installation:

Moth, 2024, cardboard, height 48cm, width 48.5cm, depth approx. 30cm



Moth (Ćma), 2023, wool, tulle, bead embroidery, linen string, H 22cm,
wing width 28cm



Spider Woman Small (Pajęczyca Mała) installation:

Spider Woman Small, 2024, cardboard, H 51.5cm, W 50cm, Dep 20cm

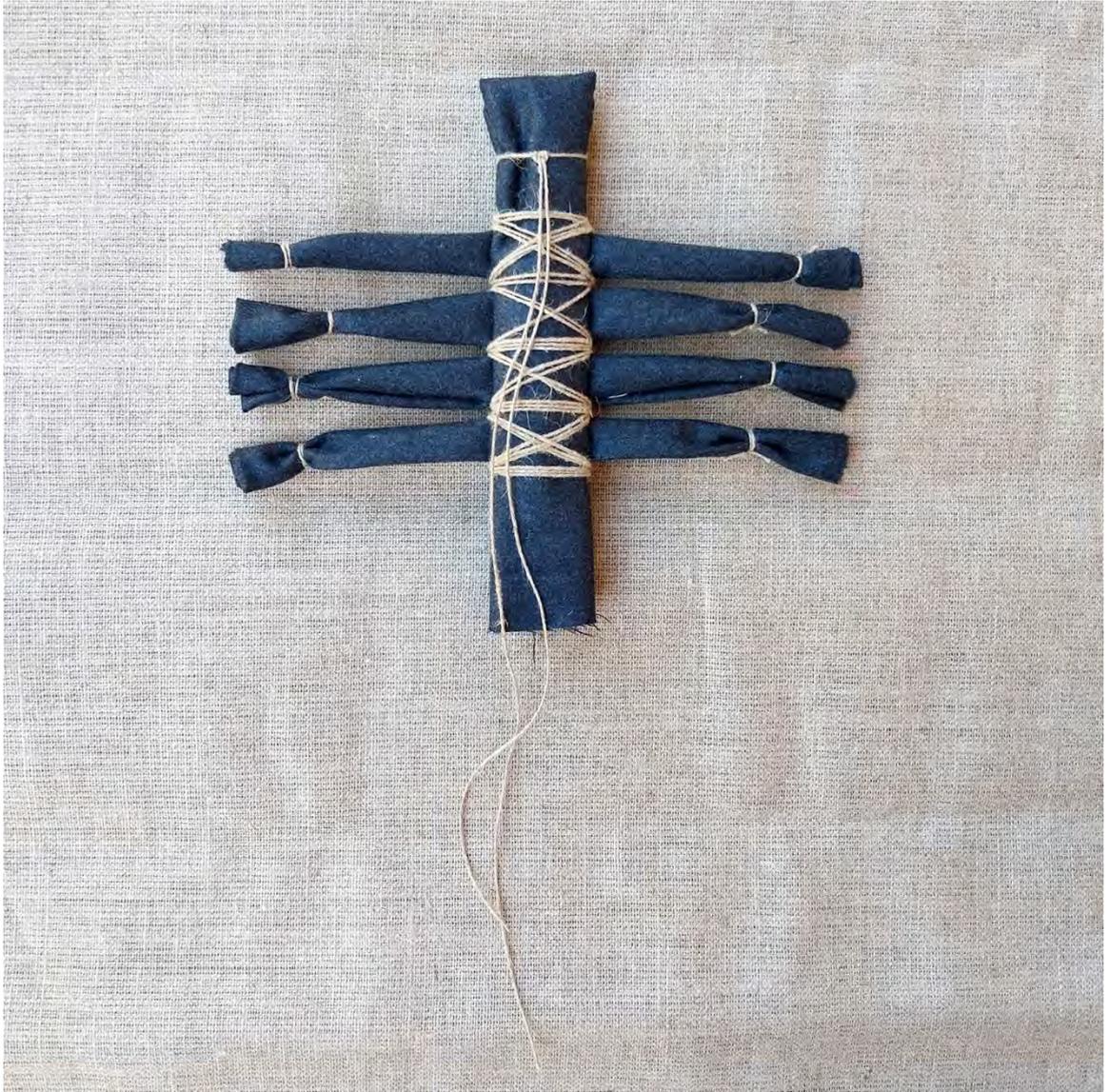
Spider Woman Small (doll), 2023, wool, linen string, H 17.5cm, W 20cm



Spider Woman Small (Pajęczycyca Mała) installation:

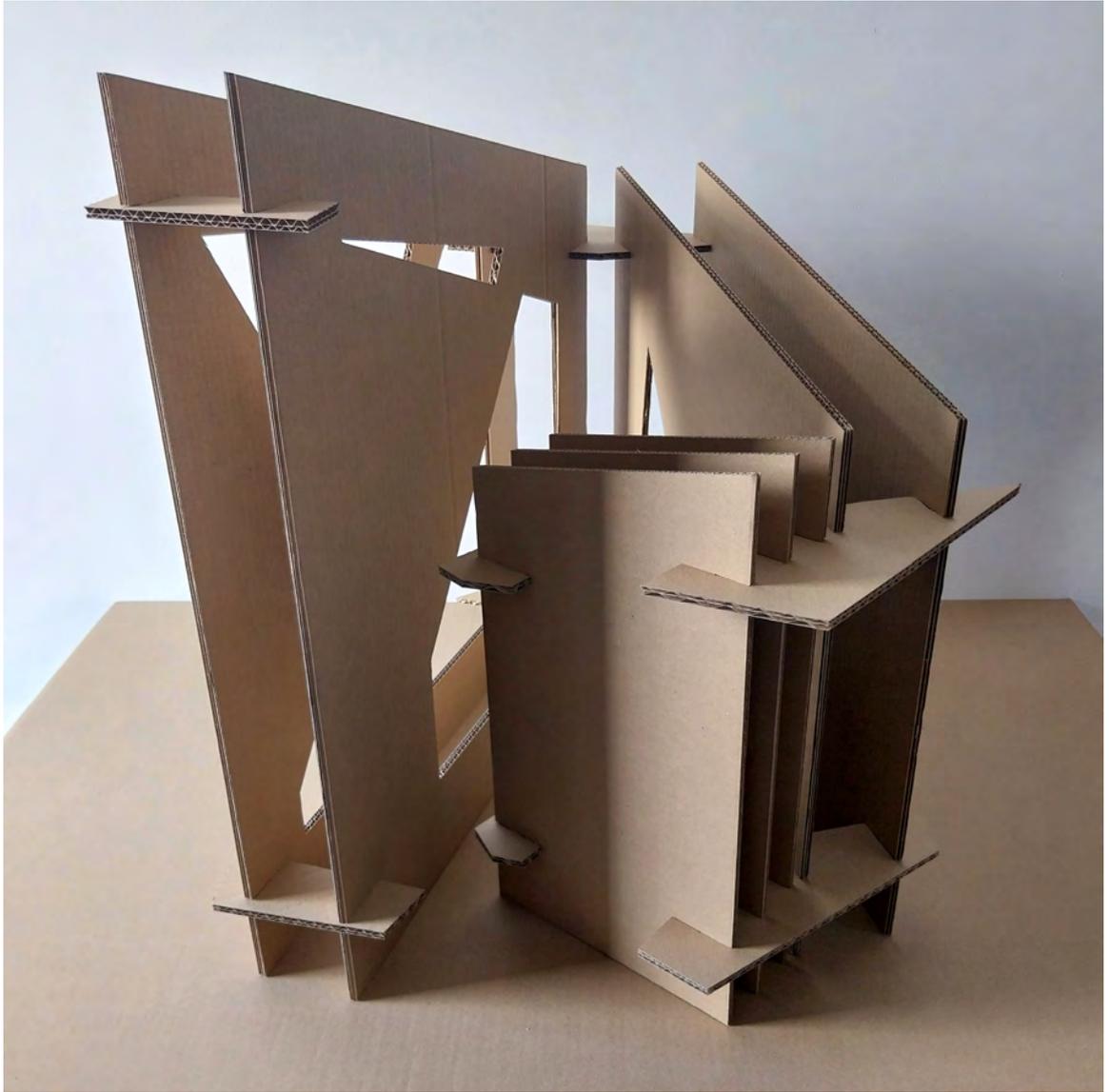
Spider Woman Small, 2024, cardboard, H 51.5cm, W 50cm, Dep 20cm

Spider Woman Small (doll), 2023, wool, linen string, H 17.5cm, W 20cm



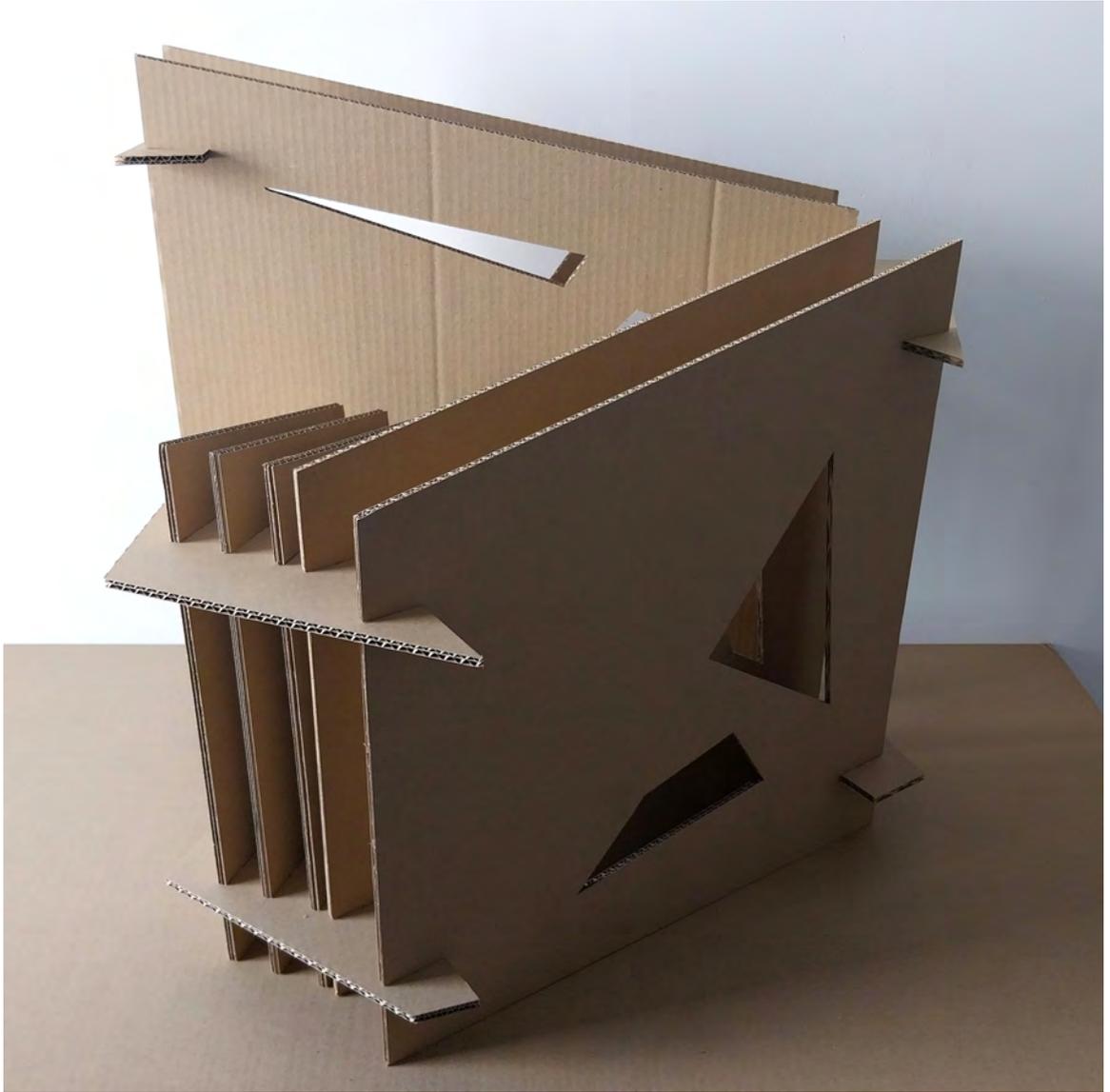
Spider Woman Small (Pajęczyca Mała), 2023, wool, linen string, H 17.5cm,

W 20cm



Spider Woman Big (Pajęczyca Duża), installation:

Spider Woman Big, 2024, cardboard, H 64cm, W approx 74cm, D approx 60.5cm



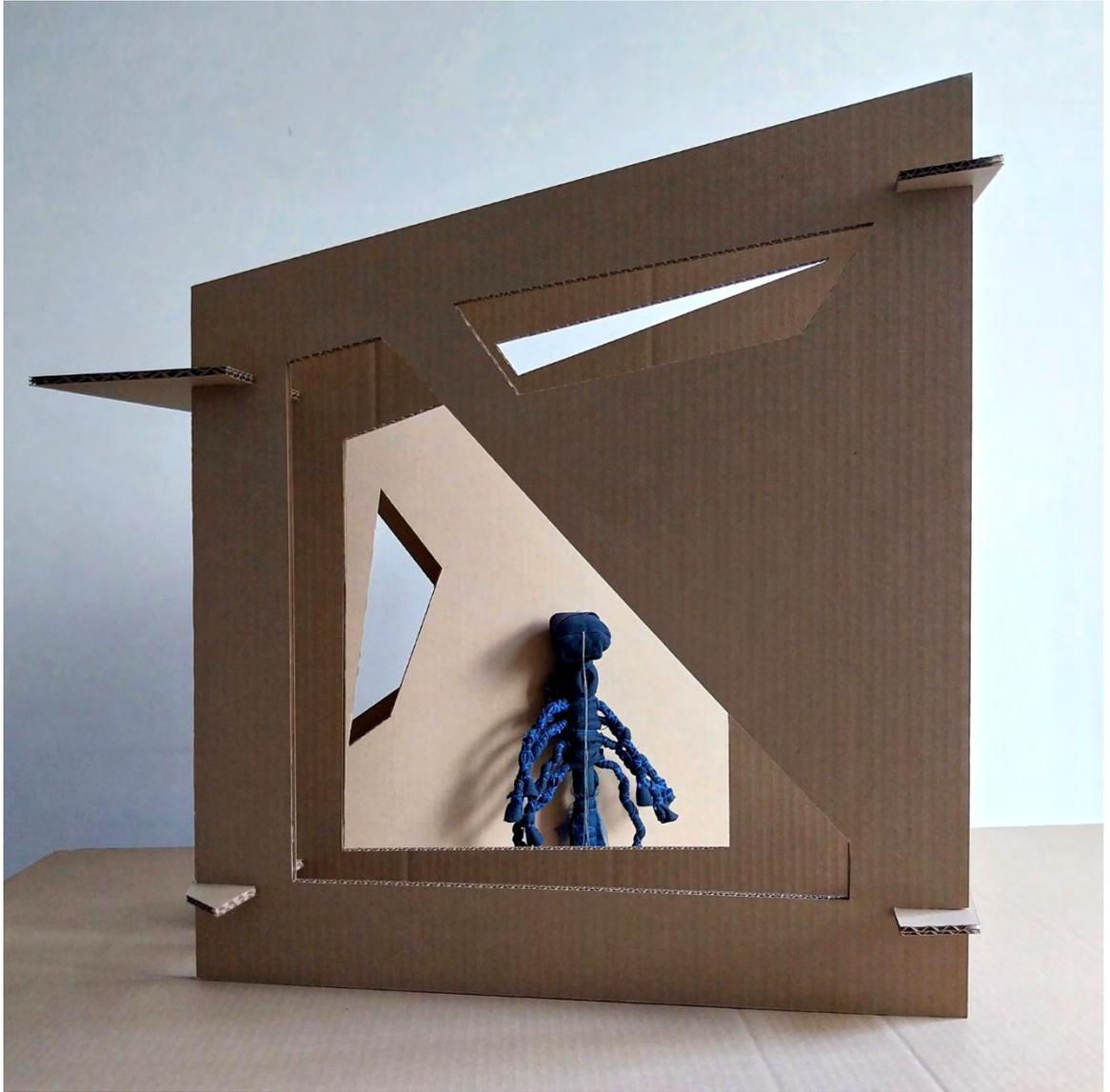
Spider Woman Big (Pajęczyca Duża), installation:

Spider Woman Big, 2024, cardboard, H 64cm, W approx 74cm, D approx 60.5cm



Spider Woman Big (Pajęczyca Duża), installation:

Spider Woman Big, 2024, cardboard, H 64cm, W approx 74cm, D approx 60.5cm

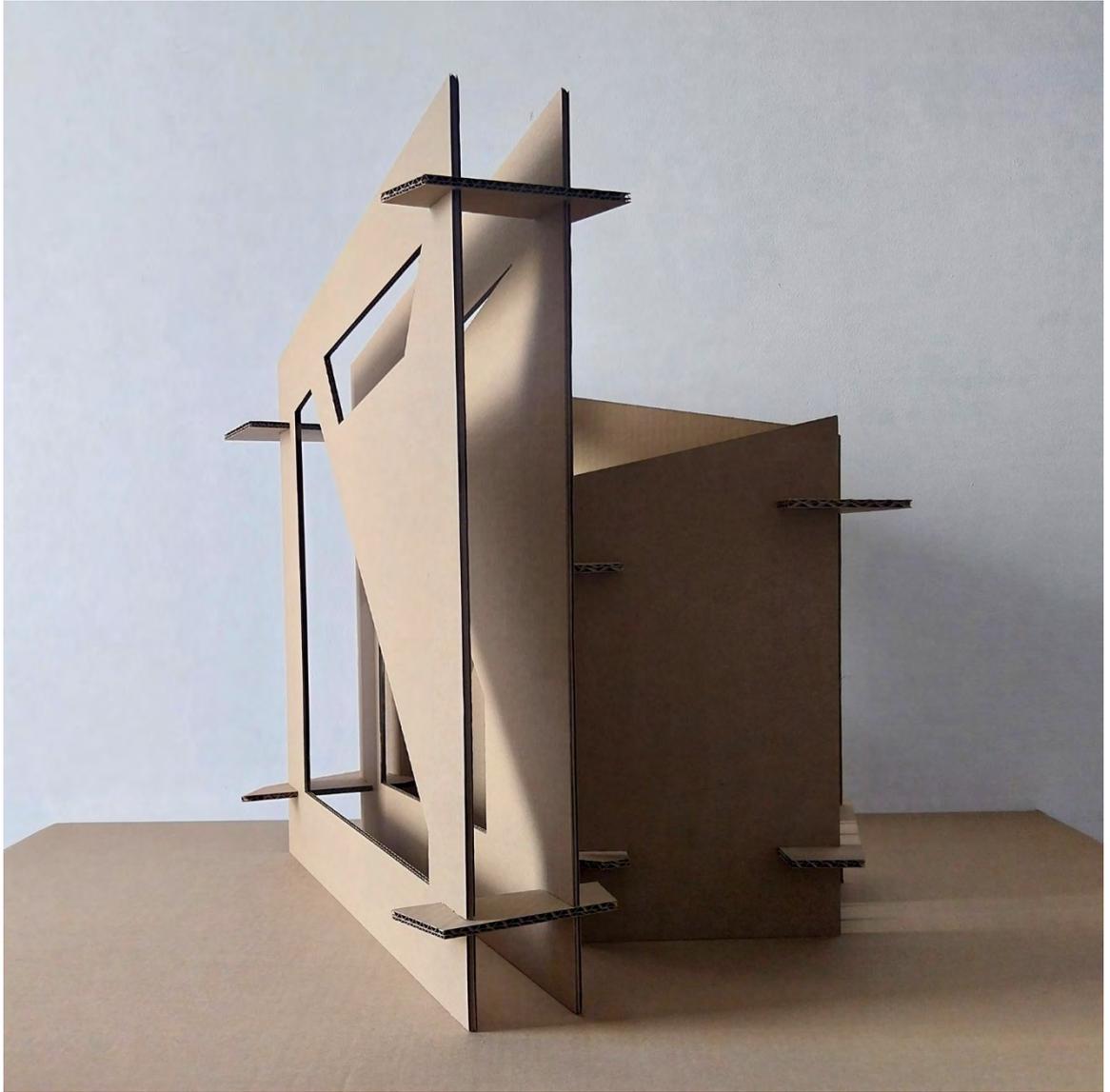


Spider Woman Big (Pajęczycyca Duża), installation:

Spider Woman Big, 2024, cardboard, H 64cm, W approx 74cm, D approx 60.5cm

Spider Woman Big (doll), 2023, linen canvas, linen string, embroidery floss, tulle,

H 27.5cm, width with legs 23cm



Spider Woman Big (Pajęczycyca Duża), installation:

Spider Woman Big, 2024, cardboard, H 64cm, W approx 74cm, D approx 60.5cm



Spider Woman Big (Pajęczycyca Duża), 2023, linen canvas, linen string, embroidery floss, tulle, H 27.5cm, width with legs 23cm



Garden (Ogród), Installation:

Garden, 2024, cardboard, height 57.5, cm, width approx. 70cm, depth 69.5cm

Goat Man (Kozioł, doll), 2023, cotton, wool, linen string, H 27cm,

horns 21.5cm wide



Garden (Ogród), Installation:

Garden, 2024, cardboard, height 57.5, cm, width approx. 70cm, depth 69.5cm

Goat Man (Kozioł, doll), 2023, cotton, wool, linen string, H 27cm,

horns 21.5cm wide

Goat Woman (Kozą, doll), 2023, linen cloth, linen string, height with horns 34.5cm

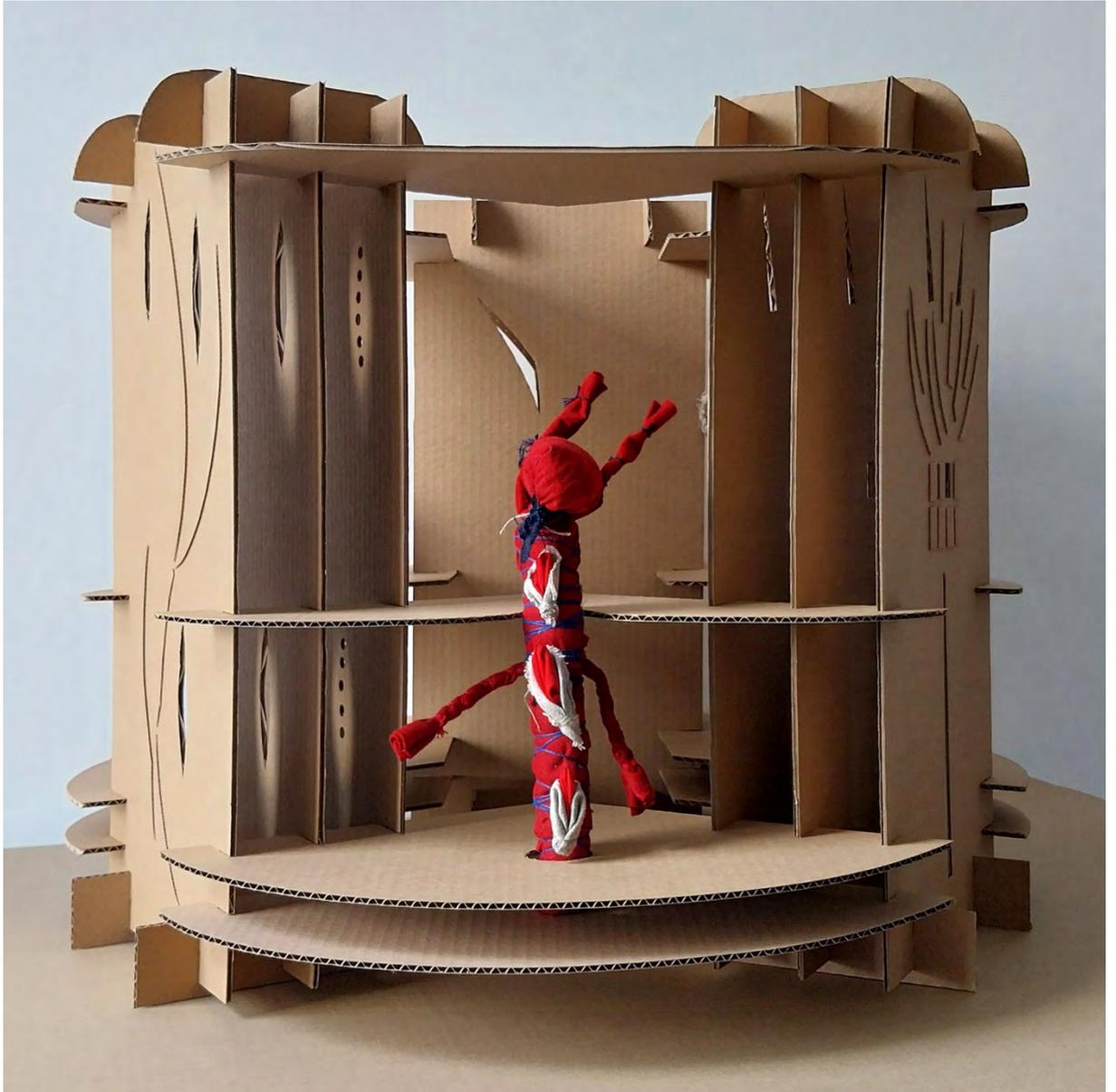


Garden (Ogród), Installation:

Garden, 2024, cardboard, height 57.5, cm, width approx. 70cm, depth 69.5cm

Goat Man (Kozioł, doll), 2023, cotton, wool, linen string, H 27cm,

horns 21.5cm wide



Garden (Ogród), Installation:

Garden, 2024, cardboard, height 57.5, cm, width approx. 70cm, depth 69.5cm

Goat Woman (Kozia), 2023, linen cloth, linen string, height with horns 34.5cm



Garden (Ogród), Installation:

Garden, 2024, cardboard, height 57.5, cm, width approx. 70cm, depth 69.5cm

Goat Woman (Kozia), 2023, linen cloth, linen string, height with horns 34.5cm

Cow (Krowa), 2023, linen canvas, cotton, linen string, height with horns 36cm,
width of horns 19.5cm



Garden (Ogród), Installation:

Garden, 2024, cardboard, height 57.5, cm, width approx. 70cm, depth 69.5cm

Cow (Krowa, doll), 2023, linen canvas, cotton, linen string, height with horns 36cm,
width of horns 19.5cm



Garden (Ogród), Installation:

Garden, 2024, cardboard, height 57.5, cm, width approx. 70cm, depth 69.5cm

Cow (Krowa, doll), 2023, linen canvas, cotton, linen string, height with horns 36cm,
width of horns 19.5cm



Goat Man (Kozioł, doll), 2023, cotton, wool, linen string, H 27cm,
horns 21.5cm wide



Goat Woman (Koza, doll), 2023, linen cloth, linen string,

height with horns 34.5cm



Cow (Krowa, doll), 2023, linen canvas, cotton, linen string,
height with horns 36cm, width of horns 19.5cm



Kupala Night (Noc Kupały), installation:

Kupala Night, 2024 cardboard, height 82cm, width approx. 62.5cm,
depth approx. 20cm

Sun (tarot doll – Słońce), 2023, linen canvas, embroidery,
height 35cm



Kupala Night (Noc Kupały), installation:

Kupala Night, 2024 cardboard, height 82cm, width approx. 62.5cm,
depth approx. 20cm

Sun (tarot doll – Słońce), 2023, linen canvas, embroidery,
height 35cm



Sun (tarot doll – Słońce), 2023, linen canvas, embroidery,

height 35cm



Forefathers, Dziady Installation:

Forefathers, 2024, cardboard, H 81cm, W 62cm, D 42.5cm

Guślarka (Priestess, (Kapłanka); tarot doll), 2023, linen canvas, embroidery, H 43cm

Soul (Onion; doll), (Dusza (Cebulka)), 2024, linen canvas, denim, embroidery, linen cord, gold cord, height 60cm, hand width 34cm



Forefathers, Dziady Installation:

Forefathers, 2024, cardboard, H 81cm, W 62cm, D 42.5cm

Guślarka (Priestess, (Kapłanka); tarot doll), 2023, linen canvas, embroidery, H 43cm

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Guślarka (Priestess, (Kapłanka); tarot doll), 2023, linen canvas, embroidery,

H 43cm



Soul (Onion; doll), (Dusza (Cebulka)), 2024, linen canvas, denim, embroidery,
linen cord, gold cord, height 60cm, hand width 34cm



Soul (Onion; doll), (Dusza (Cebulka)), 2024, linen canvas, denim, embroidery,
linen cord, gold cord, height 60cm, hand width 34cm – back side