

ART AS A SPACE FOR PRACTICING LOCALNESS: CONTEMPORARY REFRAMING OF NAÏVE ART IN VOJVODINA (KOVAČICA) AND IN SILESIA (JANÓW GROUP)

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This article deals with art functioning as a practice of localness and an identity activity. Discussing two examples – the town of Kovačica in Serbia, inhabited by the Slovak minority, and the Nikiszowiec housing estate located in Silesia, Poland – the author shows how the so-called *naïve* art today participates in the creation of a sense of belonging to a given place, its memory, the image of its past and the articulation of ethnic and cultural specificity, both on a micro and macro scale (region, national culture, state). In both cases, localness is treated as a task and as a project. Artistic activities undertaken by the individuals from the local communities serve to shape and display the iconographic codes and visual representations, as well as to stimulate the institutionalisation of activities related to the experience and identity of the place. Such instrumentalisation also connotes the reframing of art – a change in its communicative, civilizational or ideological-political context – and leads to the transformation of its semantics, social existence and its status in the field of artistic practices.

Keywords: localness, naïve art, visual code, identity practice, reframing

ICONISATION OF LOCAL KNOWLEDGE

In post-modern knowledge societies, visual art becomes a discursive field, an area of increased critical reflexivity.¹ Its subject are often local values, practices and ways of

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thinking associated with a specific place and the community that creates it; through such a prism visual art is perceived as an active participant in and an instigator of identity policies, a factor supporting the processes of emancipation and self-definition. In the public sphere (going beyond the circle of specialists and academic reflection), art defined in this way is supported by institutions such as galleries, local cultural centres, and especially museums, whose purpose is not only to present works, but also to “cultivate” (Latin *colere*) knowledge. When considering this approach, musealisation (this is precisely what we are dealing with here), appears not so much as a form of establishing a canon (which often leads to petrification, ironically referred to as museumification), but rather a process of aestheticisation, which is a kind of a cognitive strategy, denoting a continuous, mutual flow between the field of knowledge and artistic activity (Hudzik 2012: 14). Powered by the language of art and artistic thinking, and at the same time scientific in its assumptions, the practice of musealisation causes various entities and spheres of reality to regain or gain visibility, while at the same time getting incorporated into the dynamic area of the *episteme*. In this process, the image becomes a medium of reality – a form of presenting and organizing it, as well as an instrument of its semiotisation.

Both this epistemological potential of the visual message and the performative value of exhibiting practices are nowadays readily used in social activities which shape and support local identities as a response to globalisation and Zygmunt Bauman’s liquid (post) modernity. The basic determinant of the effectiveness of these activities is, according to Arjun Appadurai, the transformation of space into a place through the application of symbolic practices that create meaning (Appadurai 2005: 179–199). Those practices help to form a social framework within which specific social forms of thinking and organisation become clear and understandable. Hence, in the process of performing localness, art, as demonstrated by anthropologists, is treated not only as a style, aesthetics, form, but as a cultural system – one of the ways to conceptualise and express social experience (Geertz 1983: 94–120). In this perspective, the visual message is nothing but a visualisation of the cultural universe, an iconisation of knowledge related to place, of *local knowledge*.

The process of performing localness through the application of art or image, which will be discussed in this text on the examples from Serbia and Poland, should be considered on two levels. The first level includes these artistic experiences, works and their cultural contexts, which are considered to be constitutive of the historical iconosphere of a place. In contrast, the second, meta-visual level, constructed by the more or less institutionalised entities appointed for this task, indicates its secondary use. At this level, the reconceptualisation of localness is carried out by means of knowledge preserved in the “collective memory of images”, recognised as sociocultural icons (Drozdowski 2009: 7), material carriers of what is identified as local. Thus, what is at play here is the procedure which Mieke Bal refers to as *reframing* – the change of framework (Bal 1999). In the discussed case, it involves changing the interpretive context of particular visual representations, which in turn allows maintaining and cognitively activating historical forms of localness as part of new interpretations, as well as under new “conditions of anxiety and entropy, social wear and flux” (Appadurai 2005: 181).

LOCALNESS AS A PROJECT

The creation of localness (understood as the identification with a territory, neighbourhood, being in the community, immersion in the social microsphere, and even virtual experience) is one of the strongest responses to globalisation and the liquidity and unpredictability of (post)modernity today. On the one hand, the modern world still wishes to see localness as a structure of feelings based on the habitus, the reproduction of neighbourly interactions, the need to root the subject (Appadurai 2005: 181–183), whereas on the other hand, it renders localness as an object of commoditisation and consumption, or a component of the tourist scenario. In the post-socialist countries, the interest in indigenising cultural experience, reminding, creating and reconstructing localness has become one of the ways to organise the world after the breakdown of macro-structures, which – having revealed their temporal and spatial relativity – ceased to give real support. Therefore, it is quite understandable that acting for the sake of localness has become a distinguishing feature of the condition and post-dependent (post-colonial) awareness of these societies.

Creation-oriented modernity makes us think about creating and processing localities in terms of a project or a task. This performative approach has a twofold origin. It is not only the result of bureaucratisation of social life, which forces us to plan, conceptualise or to control all public activities, but it also has a specific theoretical-anthropological foundation. On the basis of their numerous ethnographic studies, Clifford Geertz or Arjun Appadurai (Geertz 1983; Appadurai 2005) prove that localness is not a given value and that it is sustained by means of localised ritual activities. Parallel to this mechanism, one of the techniques that effectively stimulates the process of creating and cultivating localness today turns out to be the tourist ritual. This ritual grows, if not on a sensation, then at least on the idea, the image of the essence, authenticity and coherence, personified in what is local and indigenous, autochthonous. Hence, localness ceases to be a closed communicative circulation, a self-reproducing everyday practice directed primarily towards the inside, and institutions are now taking over the designing, articulating and distributing of what is called “local” while trying to reconcile different goals – culture-forming, educational and commercial.

Localness (self-)presented at festivals, in museums and galleries searches for visible, easily recognizable distinctions (Wieczorkiewicz 2012: 57). The signs of difference are provided primarily by material creation, hence the special role of art, which becomes an important hermeneutic tool in exhibiting practice, combining the activities of looking and understanding in a coherent cognitive situation. We can therefore speak of the situation which James Clifford calls *collecting of culture* (Clifford 1988). Art is a way of expressing local experiences and truths, but is also a form of reconstructing local cultural codes. It also enables extraction of aesthetic value, which is important given that localness is primarily conceived in the exhibiting space as a project to be viewed.

The discussed mechanism of flow from historically and ethnographically captured art as the carrier of local knowledge to localness (re)constructed through the language of

exhibition and incorporated into broader knowledge structures is nicely illustrated by the contemporary activities related to the phenomenon of naïve art. I will analyse them here by comparing two ways of producing and portraying local reality – in the first case by reference to the work of a group of self-taught painters from Janów in Upper Silesia in Poland, and in the second – on the example of achievements of non-professional artists from Kovačica in Vojvodina in Serbia. It can be assumed that the collective character of creativity leads to naïve art – in both cases – encompassing the meaning of the expression of identity, growing out of a specific social and cultural background, and therefore, serving the cultural and social articulation of self-knowledge of the community. Both regions are characterised by a complex and difficult past, ethnic heterogeneity, clear historical, civilisational and cultural separateness from the political centre and resoundingly articulated regional consciousness. At the same time, during the period of democratic transformations, which meant the decentralisation of state structures and de-marginalisation of peripheral areas, both regions faced the need to redefine their own subjectivity anchored in history and the specific cultural landscape.

PLACES AND ART COLLECTIONS

A distinctive feature of Vojvodina is its multiculturalism. It originates from a borderland character of the region, its complex history, the dynamics of which are determined by varied nationality, and by numerous migrations. In this territory, Balkan and Central European resonance is echoed in customs, mentality, civilisation, politics, artistic culture, etc. The region's contemporary culture is determined by the predominant Serbian and Hungarian communities, but also by the numerous Slovak, Romanian, German and Roma minorities (in the past also by the Jewish minority) which co-create a multi-ethnic and multi-religious configuration bearing a number of properties of insular structure.² Against the backdrop of the Balkans, Vojvodina is distinguished by highly developed and diversified agrarian culture and the associated multi-generational agricultural traditions. This land does not only have a political and administrative register, but also has symbolic and cultural geography and an interconnected mythology.

Upper Silesia is an area associated with industry, primarily metallurgy and mining, which has – since the second half of the eighteenth century – stimulated the development of urbanism in a way similar to the Western European pattern. This is a borderland cultural space, formed in the course of the centuries-long coexistence and rivalry of the dominant German, Czech and Polish language-ethnic groups, with the participation of the indigenous Silesian,³ Jewish elements, and (after the Second World War) an influx from the

² For comprehensive data on the population structure by ethnicity in Vojvodina, see *Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia. Population by ethnicity, age and sex* (2011).

³ The term "Silesians" has different meanings. It means, for example, the population living in the region, regardless of nationality; but also a group that declares a distinct national identity, residing in the geographi-

territories of Eastern Poland. The specificity of the region was also determined by the formation of a separate regional identity, whose determinants, in addition to territorial identification, were the ethnolect (based on dialects of the Polish language with strong Czech and German influences), the ethos of physical labour and the customs which were a fusion of parish religiosity and workers' traditions.

In the context of the subject discussed in this article, particular attention should be drawn to the fact that both Vojvodina and Silesia define their own autonomy through cultural specificities, under the conditions of constant reconfiguration of geopolitical structures and contexts. In both cases, the specific character of regional culture is conceptualised by – among other things – referring to artistic traditions and practices associated with particular places and communities. The non-professional, amateur, folk character of these forms of expression serves to authenticate their indigeneness and originality. Simultaneously, the mere inclusion of naïve art in the area of institutionalised visibility (not to mention including it into the machinery of tourist attractions) ultimately results in a permanent transformation of its ontological foundations and its social functions.

VISUAL CODES OF SLOVAKNESS IN VOJVODINA

Naïve art in Vojvodina is associated primarily with Kovačica, a town located in the eastern part of Banat, and inhabited predominantly by the Slovak population. The beginning of non-professional painting dates back to the 1930s, and its evolution should be considered as a manifestation of the modernisation of folk forms of art. Among Kovačica residents, Martin Paluška and Jan Sokol were the first to try their hand in this field; with time, others joined in – Mihal Bireš, Vladimir Boboš, Jan Husarik, Zuzana Chalupová and others. After the Second World War, the ideological and organisational patronage of the Yugoslavian socialist authorities promoted intensive development of the amateur art scene, and as early as the 1950s, painters from Kovačica presented their works as a group more and more often. In 1955 a public gallery, *Galerija narodnih slikara* (Gallery of People's Painters), was established there, later renamed *Galerija naivne umetnosti* (Gallery of Naïve Art). The popularity of naïve art rose in Yugoslavia and internationally thanks to discussions by theoreticians and art critics, the most significant of whom was Oto Bihalji Merin, who authored, among others works, the monograph titled *Das naive Bild der Welt* (Bihalji Merin 1959). Self-taught painters were also supported by professional artists such as Krsto Hegedušić or Stojan Trumić, who, as early as during the inter-war period, treated folk and naïve art as the inspiration for socially engaged and ideological art. For obvious reasons, such interpretation gained importance in socialist Yugoslavia, because it allowed

cal area of Silesia, and therefore within the borders of Poland and the Czech Republic. It was constituted among people formerly indifferent to nationality, as an alternative proposal for uniquely Polish or German identification. In total, according to the current census, Silesian nationality is declared by over 800,000 Polish citizens and by over one thousand Czechs (Główny Urząd Statystyczny 2012).

treatment of naïve creativity as an alternative to the art of bourgeois modernism devoid of values, and thus enabled its inclusion in the political project of a new culture as the platform of class emancipation. The ethnic element was also an important factor at that time. I believe that the authorities favoured the art of the Slovak minority in Vojvodina because it was completely consistent with the ideological assumptions of the policy of brotherhood and unity, which served as a way to control ethnic diversity for the sake of the prime goal of building a multinational classless Yugoslav society (Valentik 2003).

Although naïve art became dominant in the cultural life of Slovaks in Serbia during SFRY, it is difficult to reduce the phenomenon of *the Kovačica school of naive painting* to the socialist formula of “art of the people for the people”. As the works of Zuzana Chalupová, Martin Jonas and other authors from this period presented in Kovačica galleries prove, its distinctiveness and unique character were determined by a coherent aesthetic quality, characterised by a repetition of certain motifs, and at the same time, a combination of individual styles and poetics.⁴ Despite deep transformations within this artistic movement, its specific quality has been continued by successive generations of Slovak painters in Serbia. It is expressed through the typical flat Banat landscape, depictions of specific, rural and small-town architecture, as well as in pictorial representations of historical events, folklore, customs, daily and seasonal activities of the local Slovak community. A permanent motif of the visual stories by artists from Kovačica is the agricultural landscape, a view of the surrounding fields with corn and pumpkins elevated to the rank of totems. Sometimes they are simply props of agricultural everyday life, but much more frequently they turn into symbols or magical objects straight from fantastic fables – the phallic nature of a corn cob or the swollen roundness of a pumpkin become an inspiration for fairy-tale metamorphoses and cosmogonies. The symbolic figure of the rooster has a similar function, as a permanent element in the poetisation of visual imagery in the Kovačica microcosm.

In her article based on ethnographic field studies, Gordana Blagojević states that even older generations of local artists preserved not so much the real, current image of Kovačica, its surroundings and inhabitants, but the remembered, former vision of their native village, filtered through their own biographical experiences. Present-day followers of the naïve painting tradition draw on the same repertoire of themes; what is more, they often use the works of their predecessors (Blagojević 2012: 187) in order to create an aura of authenticity through iconographic matrices fashioned after these past generations. Today, looking to the past and referencing the specific visual quality of the old masters is a sign of rootedness and homely quality of their work which is an aesthetic component of the visual history of not only their home town, but also of the culture of Slovaks in Vojvodina and in Serbia.⁵

⁴ Selected paintings can be seen in the Gallery of Naïve Art in Kovačica (<http://old.naivnaumetnost.com>).

⁵ The author develops these concepts in the monograph *Slovačko naivno slikarstvo u Srbiji. Etnoantropološka studija identitetskih praksi* published by Fondacija Babka Kovačica in 2014 (also published in Slovak and English as *Slovenské insitné výtvarné umenie v Srbsku. Etnologicko-antropologická štúdia*

PICTORIAL CHRONICLES OF SILESIA SUBURBS⁶

Cultural significance of the amateur art movement which developed in Silesia in the twentieth century is most comprehensively defined by the activity of painters associated with the Nikiszowiec workers' housing estate. Nikiszowiec was founded at the beginning of the twentieth century for employees of the *Geische* mine located near Katowice on the initiative of its German owners. In the interwar period, when the lands of the Upper Silesia were included as an autonomous district of reborn Poland, they were incorporated into the municipality of Janów, and in 1960 they were included within the administrative borders of Katowice. After the Second World War, during the communist rule in the local mine, which was then given a new name – *Wieczorek* (to commemorate Józef Wieczorek, one of Silesian communists), due to the efforts of cultural instructor Otto Klimczok, a common room was opened in 1946. It gathered talented amateur artists from amongst the workers of the mine and nearby industrial plants. Soon, Ewald Gawlik, Erwin Sówka, Paweł Wróbel, Leopold Wróbel, Paweł Stolorz, Bolesław Skulik, Eugeniusz Bąk began to publicly present their work under the name of “Circle of Non-Professional Painters”. They were led by Teofil Ociepka, a miner by profession, and an esotericist by passion: self-taught, and a member of the Rosicrucian Lodge since before the war, he began to paint under the influence of the “master of secret arts” and spiritual guide Philip Hohmann (Wilk and Chlewiński 2012).

What cemented the group, was not just art, but also the environment, work and social status (class), which the communist party executives tried to manage ideologically and use politically (Jackowski 1984). Initially, Janów's artists were expected to create art in line with the principles of socialist realism (“naïve socialist realism”), aimed at strengthening the folk character of the state rebuilt under the dictate of the Soviet Union after the war. It was only after 1956, during the period of thaw, that artists from Janów were allowed more creative freedom, and could more freely search for their own, individual forms of expression. However, their endeavours were still being forced into the framework of state-managed and state-controlled amateur craftsmanship, which was, during the communist period, supposed to be the best testimony to the consciousness and creative needs of the “working people of cities and villages”, a reference system enabling self-definition of the socialist Polish national identity. In the post-war period, the concern for the Polishness of Silesia became a political priority for the authorities at both the state and local level. This was an ambitious agenda, given that the region's participation in the collective life of the Polish state had been negligible for nearly 600 years. Nevertheless, despite the past dominance of Czechs, followed by Austrians and Prussians, Polish traditions, especially folk

prejavov identít, Kovačica 2016; *Slovak Naïve Art in Serbia Ethnoanthropological Study of Identity Practices*, Kovačica 2018). This work has a popularizing character, synthetically describing naïve art traditions in Kovačica and for the most part includes a presentation of the work of individual authors (Blagojević 2014).

⁶ This is a reference to the title of a monographic exhibition of works by Paweł Wróbel, organised at the Silesian Museum in Katowice in 2017, which was also invoked as the theme of the artist's series of paintings presented as part of the permanent exhibition (Wilk 2017).

ones, proved to be persistent and could become the carrier of the region's identity policy. From this perspective, the autochthonous art of self-taught painters from Janów was easy to incorporate into the canon of artistic culture, which was defined in line with national and class criteria, and to instrumentalise it in the process of redefinition of Silesianness.

Attempts to ideologically subjugate the art of Silesian naïve artists to the socialist doctrine and its aesthetics failed. Strongly individualised talents and imagination could not be forced into an imposed pattern. In this respect, the fate of Teofil Ociepka's oeuvre provides an interesting case study. Ociepka saw his art primarily as an interpretation of his readings of occult writings and philosophical treatises, as an illustration of spiritual teachings which he himself not only practiced, but also propagated among the members of the miner art circle. However, the formula of art imbued with esoterica, as well as religious motifs transformed in the aura of the esoteric spirit, aroused the opposition of the animators of cultural life in Silesia at the time, because it collided with the concept of proletarian art, which was to be realised by nonprofessional artists-miners. In this situation, the then director of the Museum in Bytom, Józef Ligęza, advised Ociepka to turn to legends and Silesian lore, and thus keeping the fantastic element that was an individual feature of his depictions. Thanks to references to local folklore, magical imaginary and fairy-tale creatures – *Utopiec*, *Strzygoń* or *Skarbnik* – the artist could continue to cultivate his penchant for the spiritual character of his art, and at the same time gained the approval of the authorities and could publicly exhibit his paintings. With time, his work became recognizable not only in the region, but also across the country and abroad (Jackowski 1984).

Ociepka's holistic visions, where – as Jackowski relates – religious imagination, the belief in dwarves, magic and nuclear physics were seamlessly interconnected, influenced amateur painters from Janów (Jackowski 1984: 45). Like the master, they saw their work as a mission, an ethical pursuit addressed not only to the immediate environment, but indirectly to the world. For them, exploring the art workshop was a form of spiritual improvement, which, however, was supposed to remain strictly related to the place – the people and the landscape – that created it. The native environment of the mining micro-region was a natural space for the Janów collective's quest; it was most fully expressed in paintings that may be referred to as social landscapes. They reflect the community of origin, tradition, historical experience and the fate of the micro-society from which the artist originated.⁷ Ewald Gawlik, Paweł Wróbel, and the other representatives of the "mining artistic bohemia", recorded the phenomenon of industrial suburbs – the everyday life of the family and neighbourly relations in Silesian workers' estates (called *familoks*), colourful gardens, which – thanks to the care and skills of women – turned into small oases amid the lunar landscape of the industrial desert.

The value of these depictions certainly lies in the individuality of each artist's view, although it is not difficult to notice that the horizon of their imagination remains deeply

⁷ Selected Ociepka's works can be seen in the Museum of the History of Katowice in Nikiszowiec.

internalised in provincial aesthetics, based on sacral art, folk design and the familiar iconosphere of town fairs and suburban workers' yards. They become the background for painted stories from the Silesian world, for scenes showing how its inhabitants celebrate together and bustle about in their everyday lives. This new artistic sensitivity was shaped at the intersection of the industrial experience and the semi-rural traditions of Silesian suburbs, traditions centred around the family, the housing estate and the parish. It is obvious that the mining landscape of Silesia is a hallmark of the iconography of the region, but in the works of another artist from Janów, Erwin Sówka, a dehumanised, overwhelming, often infernal landscape becomes the object of disturbing, visionary, surreal transpositions. As if the gesture of derealisation was to give it some new, metaphysical meanings. Homeliness and sacrum are juxtaposed with exoticism and eroticism. Sówka's style, referred to in the literature as mystical realism, is perfectly embodied in one of the artist's most famous paintings: against a mine shaft the miners' patroness, Saint Barbara, in a mining helmet with a front lamp and a veil attached, stands wearing beads around her neck and red underpants; at her feet, as if underground, a naked miner and a woman lie in a coal trolley, dark sky stretches over the upper part of the painting, with Ursa Major and Ursa Minor, and the circle of the moon. There is no doubt – the world is a whole, a structure of mystical connections between the human and the cosmos. "I am not a pessimist or an optimist, I am a man who knows what it is all about, and I consider myself to be that way", says Sówka, and he knows what he is saying (Szejnert 2007: 468).

Today, the paintings of the masters from Janów are increasingly treated as the original visual record of cultural content that forms the essence of the Silesian experience. This characteristic was used by Lech Majewski in his 2001 feature film *Angelus*, building individual frames of the story about self-taught painters from Nikiszowiec on quotations or paraphrases of their own works (Majewski 2001). The director shows reality through events, but adds a meta-visual level – constructed using painterly references. He proves that visual representations are a notation of a certain kind of knowledge about reality, firmly rooted in local experience and aesthetics, and at the same time an example of a distinct and specific way of articulating it.

FROM COLLECTION TO INSTITUTION

Rich non-professional creativity, cultivated by several generations of artists, has an extremely extensive institutional base in Kovačica. In addition to the already mentioned Gallery of Naïve Art, founded in the period of socialist Yugoslavia, naïve art is also displayed in the Babka Kovačica Gallery, which was opened by Pavel Babka in 1991, as well as by the private gallery *Uramljene uspomene* (Framed memories), established in 2016 by Ján Čeh, once a long-time director of the local cultural centre. A collection of paintings by Martin Jonaš, a leading representative of Kovačica naïve art has been on display at his memorial home *Spomen kuća Martina Jonaša* (Martin Jonaš's Memorial Home)

since 2014. All these facilities were created after the dissolution of Yugoslavia, at various points during post-Yugoslav transformation, on the wave of change in the organisational principles of cultural life in Serbia. These institutions protect and popularise the achievements of the “Kovačica school of naïve painting” and provide institutional support for contemporary artists who continue its tradition.⁸ Even if this kind of artistic practice has lost its original, root character, as a result of – among other things – professionalisation and commercialisation, maintaining this heritage is seen as the key task of the Slovak community in Vojvodina (artists and animators from Kovačica, for example, cooperate with non-professionals from the nearby Padina, also inhabited by Slovaks).⁹ However, works by contemporary artists from Kovačica, created with the awareness of the artistic craft and the knowledge of its social and cultural value, should be classified as popular art, so-called folk-art or ethno-art,¹⁰ for which naïve art – treated as a historical phenomenon – is one of the possible reference points as separate aesthetics, as well as an artistic brand recognizable on the art market.

Paintings presented in Kovačica galleries are an accumulation of local memory, and as such they also realise the iconographic programme of expressing the Slovak national minority identity. In the course of the transformation – involving, among other things, the process of decentralisation of Serbia and the reintegration of Vojvodina based on a rational, balanced policy of multiculturalism – the exhibiting practice became an institutionalised form of transferring local, ethnically independent values into the public space and the area of visibility established by the region and the state. After the Serbian state crumbled under Slobodan Milošević, the efforts to pluralise the sphere of culture and strengthen local entities – regulated by the Act on the Protection of National Communities and Ethnic Groups from 2002 – gained new meaning. In a situation of continuous inefficiency of state mechanisms, Vojvodina, as an area located in the immediate vicinity of the European Union, is also supported by the EU in its attempts to develop an open, aggregative (inclusive) model of multiculturalism, in which localness would become a catalyst for new solidarity, instead of becoming a carrier of particularisms (Tripković 2007: 31).

Institutional interest in the Janów group during the post-socialist transformation is closely related to the programme of revitalisation of post-industrial Upper Silesia through activities promoting culture – exhibitions, festivals, educational workshops, independent artistic interventions, etc. Following changes in the economic model of the state and the accompanying reprivatization processes, many mines were closed, many structures, including natural ones, were neglected and devastated. As a consequence of these changes the significance of the region diminished, and the region – which was an industrial centre

⁸ For detailed information about local institutions see: <http://naive-art-kovacica.com/en/institucije>.

⁹ An example of this cooperation is precisely the activity and the collection of Ján Čeh, the creator of the gallery “Framed memories”.

¹⁰ Often, this creative work boils down to simply using traditional Slovak folk motifs of fabrics, costumes, etc., in a decorative function for the handicraft production of objects – ceramics and paintings, as well as mass-produced tourist souvenirs.

and the driver of state economy in the period of People's Poland – was marginalised. At the turn of the 20th and 21st centuries, plans to protect the socio-economic potential of Silesia included not only material substance, but also local material and symbolic heritage. Many cultural centres were entrusted with this mission, including The Silesian Museum in Katowice, established in the disused Ferdynand mine (Krzyk 2016), its ethnographic department located in the building of the former municipal laundry in Nikiszowiec and a private Gallery called the Wilson Shaft Gallery (Galeria "Szyb Wilson"), established in the Wieczorek mine (2001). Their activity is motivated by the effort to restore values, give new meanings and re-establish the usefulness of sites and post-industrial facilities affected by physical and social degradation (Kwiatk 2013; Stano 2013). In these circumstances, the reference to the non-professional art of miners from Janów was only a logical consequence of the adopted strategy based on the idea of neighbourhood. It stemmed from the assumption that only real involvement in the life and memory of a place can induce residents to identify with the initiatives of cultural animators.

REGIONAL THINKING AND THE ETHOS OF LOCALNESS

In conclusion, it should be emphasised that the aforementioned institutions, by including naïve painting into their permanent exhibitions, educational and popularizing programmes, re-contextualise collections and visual narratives about the micro-communities of Kovačica and Upper Silesia contained within them. Through these actions, the images gain the status of cognitive scripts, and the collections are treated as a repository of local knowledge. This means that the art reveals its specific ways of perceiving reality and divulges the accepted patterns of thinking about the world and the principles of organising local truths that arise from indigenous, concrete, particular experiences and symbolic traditions. In the cases discussed, the visual characteristics of nonprofessional painting become both a transmitter of intra-cultural meanings and values, as well as a tool for their articulation for the outside world. Today, the original artistic practice, based on a strong relationship with the place and its history, serves not only to recall and affirm the creative presence of small peripheral communities in the contemporary life and the past of the region, but also becomes a part of identity politics modelled by extensive reference systems created by the state or the macro-region of Europe. Continuity plays a key role and is enhanced by institutionalisation and a living generative message. They provide identity work with the necessary dynamics: it is on the oscillation between memory and design, between nostalgia and dreams, that the activating power of the local is founded. This allows tradition to become a quality that is not only persistent but also living, existentially vital, stimulating change through knowledge. One can therefore say, referring to John Austin's distinction, that in this perspective localness is not a *constitutive* petrifying reality, but a *performative* (Austin 1962).

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UMJETNOST KAO MJESTO IZVEDBE LOKALNOSTI: SUVREMENI NAČINI PREOBLIKOVANJA NAIVNE UMJETNOSTI U VOJVODINI (KOVAČICA) I U ŠLESKOJ (SKUPINA JANÓW)

Ovaj se članak bavi umjetnošću koja funkcionira kao praksa lokalnosti i identitetska aktivnost. Na temelju rasprave o dvama primjerima – gradu Kovačici u Srbiji, u kojem živi slovačka manjina i naselju Nikiszowiec u Šleskoj u Poljskoj – autorica pokazuje kako tzv. *naivna* umjetnost danas sudjeluje u stvaranju osjećaja pripadnosti mjestu, njegovom pamćenju, prikazu njegove prošlosti i artikulaciji etničkih i kulturnih specifičnosti, kako na mikro- tako i na makrorazini (regija, nacionalna kultura, država). U oba slučaja lokalnost se shvaća kao zadatak i kao projekt. Umjetničke aktivnosti pripadnika lokalnih zajednica služe kao način oblikovanja i prikazivanja ikonografskih kodova i vizualnih prikaza, kao i način poticanja institucionalizacije aktivnosti vezanih uz iskustvo i identitet mjesta. Takva instrumentalizacija ima za posljedicu preoblikovanje umjetnosti, odnosno promjenu njezina komunikacijskog, civilizacijskog i ideološko-političkog konteksta koja dovodi do transformacije njezina značenja, društvenog postojanja i statusa u polju umjetničkih praksi.

Ključne riječi: lokalnost, naivna umjetnost, vizualni kod, identitetska praksa, preoblikovanje