The various faces of intermediality in Lech Majewski’s works

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Abstract

The article examines the role of intermediality in the works of one of the most famous Polish directors, Lech Majewski, who also cooperates with foreign film studios and actors. In his movies, Majewski focuses mostly on the functions of paintings, thus his works are often inspired by great artists, such as Giorgio Chirico, Bosch, Breughel. Such great inspiration is also the reason for which the director tries to present paintings into the other media – as digital images and film. This combination of different media is a really interesting and complex issue, and it is also a topic of the paper.

In the paper, the author focuses on analysis of various faces of relations between different media (mostly between painting and digital movie) in Majewski’s works; it shows intermedia and intramedia configurations and strategies and explains why intermediality is so special in the director’s movies.


Key words: intermediality, anthropology, image, medium, Lech Majewski, digital art
Introduction: Lech Majewski, an artist involved with images

One of the factors that make Lech Majewski’s creations an intriguing artistic phenomenon is undoubtedly the impossibility of classifying the author and his works under a specific movement or even as the core of national art (but he has Polish roots) within the scope of which works by numerous other artists function. Majewski – a director, writer, painter, essayist, composer, set designer, “Renaissance man” – is called by critics a “nomad” and “outsider,” constantly on the road not only between countries and continents but also between various media allowing him to express innovative directorial ideas, for a reason (Zawojski, 2003 and Majewski, Siła...).

In the director’s words – usually in relation to the most ambiguous works of his – a recurring statement appears that the foundation of his art is the image and that he himself, above all, remains a painter, who does not limit himself to implementing his visions on canvas only. The artist speaks of his painting roots in the following way: “In my case, everything starts with the image. Then the form and technique of recording it are different. I am a painter, although I don’t paint on canvas but on film, paper and in space. I have got out of painting, which has evolved into the world, even into this conversation” (Majewski, 2002). This is not the only statement from which it arises that the image is treated by the artist in the total dimension, determining the perception as well as, in a way, existence of reality. Majewski gave the fullest expression of this conviction in his newest movie, The Mill and the Cross, where the story told is nearly completely conditioned by its painting prototype – Pieter Bruegel the Elder’s Procession to Calvary. From the quoted statement it also arises that to the director, as important as the image itself (its meaning, symbolism) is the way in which it is conveyed, because the medium determines the final shape of the image. In relation to the director’s works, Irit Rogoff’s words seem particularly true:

“[V]isual culture opens up an entire world of intertextuality in which images, sounds and spatial delineations are read on to and through one another, lending ever-accruing layers of meanings and of subjective responses to each encounter we might have with film, TV, advertising, art works, buildings or urban environments” (Rogoff, 14).

The theoretician emphasizes that the idea of intertextuality, along with the development of visual culture, has broadened its meaning, as intertextuality does not pertain only to literary texts but now encompasses also “cultural texts” – music, film, artistic works – and becomes intermediality. Testaments to the permeability of texts understood in this way as well as, above all, image media, can be successfully found among the works by the author of Angelus. It also gives rise to Majewski’s film reflection on the idea of intermediality, which gains special meaning in relation to cinema, the most medially eclectic cultural creation.

In this respect, from the point of view of the present text, the most significant seems the relationship between the image and the medium, which, in Majewski’s art, has various
implementations and gains an intermedial dimension. Image anthropologist Hans Belting writes about the combination of the image and the medium as follows:

“The notion of image may only benefit when one speaks of the image and the medium as two sides of the same coin, which cannot be separated, also when they do separate, meaning different things, upon our glance. (…) The medium is characterized precisely by the fact that as a form (mediation) of image it comprises both the form and the matter, usually separated when we speak of works of art and esthetic objects. (…) One cannot reduce an image to the form that the medium comprises when it is the medium of image; (…) There is dynamism in this relationship that cannot be expressed by means of traditional augmentation referring to the question of image” (Belting, 15).

In this short “introduction” to the understanding of the idea of medium, one may notice that Hans Belting, one of the most interesting theoreticians of imagery and mediality in recent years, departs from its traditional meaning (rooted in the esthetic discourse), problematizing them and closely connecting the two with the category of imagery as well as corporeality. Belting accurately notes that a medium cannot be reduced only to the form of image, that is, for instance, canvas or cinema screen. The exemplary canvas and screen have a large number of various connotations and immanent features that influence the ontology of the image, sometimes transforming, complementing or negating it. There is an unbreakable relation between the image and its medium, thus Belting sets his understanding of the category of medium against the reductional approach of media studies so clearly. This approach (it is difficult not to yield to the temptation to suspect the theoretician of an unjust generalization; however, it seems that Belting formulates the conclusion in this shape in order to show the difference existing between both the discourses) has a clear tendency to identify the medium with technological creations; he separates both the categories, not taking into consideration the play taking place between them (Belting, 50-51).

Majewski is one of the directors who notice this play and ambiguity, obviously experimenting with the boundaries of permeability of images and their media. By means of his works, he proves that both the phenomenon of the presence of paintings in film as well as their unconventional functioning within a different medium require another theoretical reflection in the abovementioned context. The problem of the relationships between the media and images gains importance by means of the fact that both painting and film are understood by Majewski in a specific way and appear in his works in different meanings and variations. It is interesting that paintings corresponding with the director’s audiovisual works come mainly from the Renaissance era, and authors that undoubtedly occupy the most place in his imagination are Paolo Uccello, Hieronymus Bosch and Pieter Bruegel the Elder. Majewski himself states that his first full length movie, The Knight, paid “homage to quattrocento” (Majewski, 1990), and that he refers in his movies mainly to the works by “old masters”. Direct painting trails are very important in interpreting Majewski’s works; however, I am certain that the reflection on this matter should not be limited to finding painting correspondences, as the relationship between film, video and art seems much more complex in the author’s works.
Therefore, to specify the way Lech Majewski’s works exist in the culture of the “new audiovisuality,” I will use the category of a “crash,” and it will not be a mere rhetorical device. The evolution of the author’s creative road from traditionally understood painting through the media of photography and film, to video and digital art, does not constitute mere assimilation into the shape of contemporary culture. What is more, one should also think whether it is actual evolution, as none of the media that Majewski uses exist in the “pure” form, and the author himself states that “film is the continuator of image art. It is thinking by means of images” (Majewski, Sztuka…). His works constantly balance on the border of paintings and media, exploring not only their own surfaces but also the space created between them, frequently showing the helplessness of theory in the face of practical actions. Nullifying the divisions imposed by critics on images belonging to the pre-reproduction or reproduction era as well as the age of digitalization (mentioning Walter Benjamin’s alternative two-stage division into auratic and post-auratic images (Koepnick, 34-35) is also justified here), Majewski seems to implement his own vision of imagery combined with mediality, which has not only an eclectic but also a more hybrid dimension, preserving dialectical cohesion in its diversity. He defines his movies in the following way: “To me, The Gospel According to Harry is a painting, Basquiat is a movie about a painter, Wojaczek is like a graphic, Angelus is about Ociepka and painters, while The Garden of Earthly Delights, I think, does not require a commentary” (Majewski, Gdyby…). Therefore, this short description proves that the category of “film” combining the image and the medium is too narrow to describe the director’s works, while he does not even mention his video-artworks or “autobiographic opera” The Roe’s Room… The inadequacy of theoretical categories to define the author’s strategies is also shown by the fact that Majewski himself has introduced a few terms: “digital neorealism” (Majewski, 2004), “visual fresco,” video-fresco” (Majewski, 2006) which emphasize the coexistence of images and media in his works as well as the problematic character of this coexistence.

Toward intermediality

Hans Belting, quoted above, does not pay much attention to intermediality itself, stating that: “Intermediality, on its part, is only one special form of interaction between image and the medium. This interaction encompasses also the mystery of being [Sein] and appearance [Schein] present in the world of images” (Belting, 63). Therefore, the theoretician treats intermediality as one of the faces of mediality, not requiring a separate theoretical look. This concept has lived to see its detailed interpretations in media studies and esthetic discourse, which are worth mentioning here. However, one must note that various theories of intermediality (usually differing not in their general concept but in nuances of meaning or terminology) are so numerous that the ideas of the oldest codifiers, Dick Higgins and Gene Youngblood, are commonly called the “archeology of intermediality” (Chmielecki, 27). Due to this fact, in my reflections, I will refer only to selected theoreticians, whose theses seem the most coherent and symptomatic, expressing the core of Lech Majewski’s intermedial interests best.
In my opinion, theoreticians of intermediality may be divided into those that believe intermediality to be the phenomenon of mutual effect and coexistence of various media (an approach adopted by Yvonne Spielmann, among others) as well as those who speak of intermediality when within one medium various media operations are performed, leading to transformations – and here another term should be applied: *intra*medial transformations. The differentiation between those is ambiguous and still becomes the bone of contention between the theoreticians (Chmielecki, 46). More and more often, however, one encounters theses that try to combine the two aspects of intermediality. In Majewski’s works, both the forms of intermedial relations appear. Polish media theoretician Andrzej Gwóźdź describes intermediality as follows:

“The transience of media structures, the transformations of one medium within another one and the forms of networking various media decide upon the intermediality of messages. When this structure of transience becomes ‘suspended’ in between forms of various media, when it ceases to be transparent, in a way ‘working’ to celebrate the vision, one can speak of media hybrids” (Gwóźdź, 1998, 178).

In his theoretical works, Gwóźdź devotes the most attention to this area in which various media “touch,” combine and adjoin one another; he calls them the “interface”:

“Therefore, speaking of this interface, I mean here this borderline woven both of technologies (the coupling of systems) as well as culture (the meeting of diverse image formations), I mean that what is created at this point of contact causes a number of ‘inter’ consequences: interdiscursive, intertextual, intermedial. They are usually connected with one another, which makes different texts, discourses and media meet in the interimage, mutually affecting one another” (Gwóźdź, 1998, 180-181).

Therefore, Gwóźdź notes that intermedia studies encompass not only intermedial strategies (ways of combining various media), discourses connected with mediality or media themselves perceived as separate beings, but also media creations that belong to the area “in between”. In contemporary audiovisual culture, such creations are not only effects of complicated technological experiments but, above all, movies, more and more often basing on computer technologies and digital camcorders. In his analyses of “media hybrids”, Gwóźdź mentions examples from works by, among others, Ruttmann and Wenders; many of the theoretician’s remarks, in an almost unchanged form, may be related to Majewski’s strategies, who frequently uses analog and digital technologies as well as the oldest media: light, mirror, painting canvas, in one work.

Yvonne Spielmann, on the other hand, deriving the understanding of the medium from the semiotic tradition, supports the “dialogic theory of intermediality”, basing it on the analogy to intertextuality: “Referring to the text–text relationship in a way accepted in the theory of intertextuality, I understand by the term intermediality such mixed forms that arise from correlations of the forms of various media and that themselves mediate in this difference” (Gwóźdź, 1999, 167). Spielmann formulates also the typology of intermedial
relationships, taking into consideration the “dialogic model” and the “transformative model”. The first one consists in the transposition of the characteristics of one medium into another medium (e.g. the characteristics of painting into film); the other one, based on Julia Kristeva’s theory of intertextuality, speaks of the creation of a new constructive form when transfer from one sign system to another one takes place (Spielmann, 66-70). In her theory of intermediality, Spielmann broadens the scope of intertextuality, as the basis of which she accepts Kristeva’s theses. The researcher focuses on the relation between media understood as different sign systems. The approach proposed in the essay is based on anthropology, not semiotics; however, I think it is important that Spielmann pays attention to the analogy observable between intermediality and intertextuality. In my reflections I accept Belting’s understanding of the term medium (which is not equivalent to the sign system), but the context of intertextuality also points to an important fact: media may refer to other media, creating a specific intermedial relationship. In theories of intermediality, this autotelic dimension of the intermedium is more and more often taken into consideration (Kluszczyński, 76).

It would be easiest to summarize the research on intermediality with a statement that it pertains to any possible operations taking place in the space between media and inside of their structure, which lead to the creation of new hybrid, inter- and intramedial creations. The processes, as Maryla Hopfinger rightly notes, are “the shift out of pre-arranged, accepted and so far preserved divisions. Secondly, they are the recognition of new possible connections, combinations, relationships. Finally, they consist in the merging of diverse output components into a new integrated whole” (Hopfinger, 72). One may also add, quoting Andrzej Gwóźdź, that “[i]t is, generally, about such ways of imaging that constitute explicit interference in the older and the newer, although already adapted, rules of visibility, founded on the mechanisms of representation, proper to traditional cinematographic imagination” (Gwóźdź, 2003, 160). Manipulation of media and on the border of media allows artists to reach new image qualities in cinema and audiovisual art. More and more interesting opportunities within the scope of mediality appear, although they do not pertain only to the formal or technological aspect of the works (at least in the case of authors aware of the sources of their experiments and their consequences), but translate into their message, casting a new light on interpretative possibilities. I will take into consideration this significant aspect of intermediality in my analysis of Majewski’s works.

The digital paintbrush – Majewski’s intermedial strategies

“In his creations, the author of Wojaczek declares himself to be an adherent to the mysticism of the frontier, a supporter of the territories and phenomena from ‘in between,’ where a special kind of tension is created, of which idle homogeneity is deprived” (Lebecka, 9). His beliefs are reflected also in the media matter, in which he incorporates images that he shapes. Here I would like to propose the analysis of selected intermedial strategies present in the director’s works and think about what consequences for the shape of intermedia may arise from the application of electronic technology by Majewski.
A significant stage in the shaping of intermedia in the artist’s works was the decision to utilize digital media, because it opened a completely new field of creative explorations, the result of which are, above all, video-installations and video-artwork. As I have mentioned before, Majewski is not a director in whose works technological effects dominate. He is not fond of technological novelties, but inspired by “old masters” and the spirituality of eras gone by. In the image he looks mainly for the “Faustian depth,” which is denied to digital images, accused of being simulative (Chmielecki, 171). Therefore, it appears that Majewski, when he first reached for a digital camcorder, was forced to do so by the hardships of creating The Roe’s Room, which was first staged as an “autobiographical opera” and then transposed into the medium of video, now displayed both as a movie as well as a series of installations (in this form it could be viewed during Biennale 2001). As Zawojski rightly notes, work on The Roe’s Room was much more the forecast of the artist’s future media experiments than an actual turning point on his artistic road (Zawojski, Poezja...). However, the passage out of the borders of the analog medium showed the way in which Majewski would perceive work with a digital camcorder. This is expressed by the metaphor of the “kino-brush” (cinema-brush) formulated by Lew Manovich, the validity of which is explained by the theoretician as follows:

“I would like to compare the shift from analog to digital filmmaking the shift from frescos and tempera to oil painting in the early Renaissance. (...) The switch to oils greatly liberated painters by allowing them to quickly create much larger compositions (think, for instance, of the works by Veronese and Titian) as well as to modify them as long as necessary. This change in painting technology led the Renaissance painters to create new kinds of compositions, new pictorial space, and new narratives. Similarly, by allowing a filmmaker to treat a film image as an oil painting [my emphasis – E.T.], digital technology redefines what can be done with cinema” (Manovich, 293).

– and with image, one may wish to add to the theoretician’s words. The author’s understanding of the digital medium as a revolutionary sender of artistic messages is significant here due to the fact that not many theoreticians draw as far-reaching conclusions, limiting themselves to the negation of digital imagery (Gwóźdź, 2004, 115-116). Manovich’s theses are, nevertheless, confirmed by Majewski himself in his works and statements. Magdalena Lebecka quotes commentaries by the artist in which he emphasizes that work on generating proper pictures for The Mill and the Cross with the use of a computer was a painting experience to him, a painter’s work, which is different from the traditional form only in the measures utilized (Lebecka, 153). However, asked about the “digitalism” of The Garden of Earthly Delights, the artist replied: “This is how I felt. As if holding a paintbrush and attacking the reality with it” (Majewski, 2004). Majewski, not yielding to the common demonization of digitalism, noticed another stage of the evolution of the painting medium in it. He even contained his feelings in the categories that he calls applied creative strategies. The notions “moving fresco,” “video-fresco” or “digital neorealism” paraphrase terms derived from the painting tradition. Therefore, Majewski has found a very interesting way of adapting electronic technology to implement his ideas: he treated it as a painter’s tool, the painter, as the director himself declares, painting not only on canvas, but engaging other media and
creating hybrid structures from them. It is the “point of contact” of painting, photography, film and digital imagery, where series of installations and video-artworks (DiVinities, The Blood of a Poet) as well as movies (The Garden of Earthly Delights, Glass Lips, The Mill and the Cross) have been created.

The Garden of Earthly Delights is a movie in a number of aspects special among Majewski’s works. One of the reasons is, undoubtedly, the application of digital media that the director used to avoid on a large scale before. The point of departure of the work is the central part of the triptych painted by Hieronymus Bosch c. 1500 (Devitini Dufour, 46). This is a very complex vision, full of allegoric and symbolic references. From the very beginning, Majewski established dialogic perspectives of looking at the work in the movie. One of them is presented by Claudine, an art historian, whose ambition is to reach the whole complexity of the universe of Bosch’s painting. The woman wishes to find in the work the answer to the question over which she agonizes, that is whether man is able to reach the paradise, whether such a reality exists and if it does, then why the painter presented it in an everyday world and did not refer to the vision of Eden present in the Bible. As the action develops, it turns out that the protagonist suffers from an incurable laryngeal tumor; therefore, we may assume that in Bosch’s painting she also looks for solace and confirmation that physical death is not the end of existence itself. Another perspective is adopted by Chris, Claudine’s partner, an engineer and “advocate of symmetry believing in the golden division, Pythagorean, homo faber” (Lebecka, 127). The man admires the technical excellence of Bosch’s work and thus attempts to carefully film even its smallest elements. Chris uses a digital camcorder also to record every moment of their visit to Venice. Therefore, Claudine will try to penetrate Bosch’s work as intensely as possible, trying to experience The Garden as fully and in as much detail as she can (in order to do so, she will create “living pictures” inspired by Bosch with her lover); Chris, on the other hand, believing in the mimetic power of the digital camcorder, will try to capture as much of the last weeks of Claudine’s life as possible.

In The Garden, the digital camcorder expresses Chris’s opinions on the topic of the relationship between images and reality. It allows the man to record the most intimate moments of his relationship with Claudine and the everyday life that they lead together in Venice. Critics have emphasized a number of times that this exceptional, two-level role of the camcorder (within the plot and as a formal means) determines the uniqueness of Majewski’s movie (Sobolewski, 2004). It is difficult not to agree with the opinion that the choice of the digital medium has determined the shape of the author’s work. The director himself has called his method “digital neorealism” (Zawojski, Poezja...), emphasizing the special role of the new medium in imaging the reality. What is more, in The Garden of Earthly Delights, the digital camcorder was used in order to maximize the intimacy of the message. Grzegorz Dziamski points to this role of video in general:

“The thing about video that attracted artists, aside from the medium’s newness, was its intimacy and the possibility of instantly replaying the recorded images. Video could be
used as a witness to the most personal actions and confessions of the artist, as it happened in video recordings (…)” (Dziamski, 37).

_The Garden_, however, does not have a uniform media structure. The whole movie was recorded with a digital camcorder but, within this basic medium, painting and photographic media are also present, nuancing the structure of the movie. The ubiquity of Bosch’s triptych in _The Garden_ is emphasized by a series of interesting scenes featuring the protagonists. When they move into the apartment in Venice, Claudine talks her lover into reconstructing selected scenes from _The Garden_. The woman focuses on preserving their fidelity to the original. There are a few sequences presenting the “living pictures” in the movie. In one of them, Claudine asks Chris to look for a toad for her and then puts it on her breasts and looks at herself in the mirror in order to feel like the woman in Bosch’s painting. The lovers lock themselves in a suitcase that is supposed to imitate the huge shell from _The Garden_; they also build a large plastic film cocoon, inside of which they make love, following the example of the characters in the painting. Moreover, Chris impersonates the triptych man who walks on a rope balancing an egg, symbolizing perfection, on his head. In another scene, the lovers bathe in a city fountain, imitating the characters who, in the painting, gather around one being the spring of youth. Finally, there is a sequence in Majewski’s movie in which the protagonists, wrapped in transparent material, take on the poses of men and women in Bosch’s work. The director films them by means of freeze frame images. It appears that Claudine, somehow transferring fragments of the painting universe into her own reality, wishes to “feel” the depicted reality, “touch” it the way she touches objects in the Venice apartment. This special kind of exegesis of the triptych intensifies her esthetic experience of the work, because the woman no longer fulfills the role of a mute viewer but becomes a subject actively constituting the meaning of the painting. Therefore, she projects her own experiences onto the world presented in Bosch’s triptych, at the same time deeply contemplating and… reviving the work.

The device used by Majewski is especially interesting and coherent with the director’s views on painting. It is also a special kind of an intermedial device that consists in the revival of the picture, not only by means of giving it a digital form but also by means of “recreating” it as a pantomimic show. Writing about various kinds of intermediality, Andrzej Gwóźdź states the following:

“Intermediality appears to be (…) the merger of forms – combining the form(s) of one medium ‘on the part’ of the form(s) of another one, which causes various figurations of self-reflexivity of the media; or it pertains to the process of transposition of the form(s) within the same medium (and thus refers to intramedia transfer [my emphasis – E.T.])” (Gwóźdź, 2004, 18).

Therefore, the theoretician is right to note that the “merger” of media forms does not consist in the creation of “clusters” of various messages only. Intermedia transpositions can take place both between media (in different variants) as well as within one basic media structure. This is what happens in Majewski’s works, in the most general terms.
In order to clarify this differentiation, I suggest speaking of intramediality rather than intermediality in the case of the abovementioned media relations taking place in *The Garden* (as well as *Angelus* and, partially, *The Roe’s Room* and *Glass Lips*). The media differentiation that can be observed in the abovementioned works does not appear between media but inside of the major medium, and this operation slightly changes the basic pattern of intermediality. As for intramediality, we still have to deal with the creation of borderline or hybrid images; however, this phenomenon takes place not “on the border” of media but within their structure. In other words, if in the film medium another medium appears, which does not function within it only as a quote from the reality which does not mean anything, then it transforms this basic media structure and overlaps it. The picture that appears in a media place constructed in this way is conditioned not only by the movie’s formula but also by the characteristics of, for instance, canvas or photography. Due to the mutual permeating of the media and their coexistence within one structure one may say that the formula arising from it is composed of a few separate mediatizations which have overlapped one another.

As early as during the creation of *The Garden*, Majewski began working on a series of miniatures created by means of the medium of video, called *DiVinitieS*. They took their final shape only three years after the premiere of the movie in 2006. Along with another collection of video-installations *The Blood of a Poet* (they combined into the movie *Glass Lips* later), they are an example of using the hybrid element of digital technology in combination with “traditional” media (pre-digital era). As given by Soulages:

“In reality, the digital image allows for an infinitely richer, more complex, practical and esthetic use. Digital esthetics is the esthetics of endless hybridization. It opens to the culture of hybridization, to the new order of seeing and the new way of producing, transferring and perceiving images” (Soulages, 149).

Majewski treats the digital image in a similar way. Working with a digital camcorder gave him new experiences and allowed him to reach effects that would otherwise be unattainable for a traditional camcorder; it also influenced the viewers’ perceptive process. I have already emphasized that to the artist, digitally generated imagery is another stage of the evolution of painting; therefore, in the series of installations and video-artworks, paintings and poetic images also occupy an important place.

*DiVinitieS* are twelve video miniatures shown simultaneously on separate screens. Therefore, the viewer can, by means of navigation, select images that he or she wants to see, arranging the order of watching. Initially, scenes from *The Blood of a Poet* were shown in a similar way, in which Majewski broke away from the linear manner of narrating, ceding this role to the viewers. *DiVinitieS* are characterized by the author as follows:

“*DiVinitieS* are visual poems. Each fragment of the series is a separate world, both particular movies as well as the whole series are contemplative in nature. It was very important to refer to tradition, especially the Renaissance, and, generally, very important in the creation of the series was Hans Memling’s *Last Judgment*. The concept
of video-artworks was born while viewing this painting in Gdańsk. The showcase in which The Last Judgment is placed made it difficult to experience the work – one had to force his way through glass reflections – so I took a camcorder and filmed it. Then I noticed that hell in the painting was completed with the silhouettes of people reflected in the showcase” (Majewski, Wywiad…).

Therefore, from the author’s words it arises that his series of video-artworks are deeply conditioned by the painting medium and the poetic image. The intermedial correspondence existing in this way makes them a hybrid work “taking place” in the space between media. Each of the media has a mighty influence on the shape of the whole. Majewski, in this case, does not mention photography, although it is also present when the camcorder is still. Thus the series DiVinities can be called quite a classic formula of the intermedium.

The Blood of a Poet is also strongly rooted in the tradition of non-digital media, exploring the borders of media permeability:

“It [The Blood of a Poet] is the borderland of three worlds: art, film and photography. Thirty three separate video-artworks projected simultaneously belong to the world of art, arranged linearly become a film; photographs and lightboxes are a separate chapter. Poetry and painting are immanent elements of my artistic origins” (Majewski, 2006).

Majewski says directly that the series of installations is the art of the media borderland; it is created on the border of media, through their mutual permeability, complementation and exclusion. In Glass Lips, it functions as some pre-set structure, in the series The Blood of a Poet, although it presents exactly the same story inspired by Jean Cocteau’s poetic movie, it gives much more possibilities of the viewer’s participation. Just as in the case of DiVinities, the work is watched simultaneously on several screens. Thus it is the viewer who takes the decision which pictures and in what order to see.

“Video-artworks – each of them separately – are closed, self-sufficient wholes. However, they can be read together through the continuity of characters appearing there. Simultaneously projected on walls, like moving frescos, they allow us to combine them in a potentially unlimited number of ways – with black and white photograms, colorful lightboxes as well as with sculptures, as it happened during the 2008 exhibition at Warsaw Zachęta.”

– as Magdalena Lebecka comments on the exhibition of Majewski’s works. Her statement shows that not only are the works themselves intermedial in nature, but also the way of their presentation shows the dialogism of the transmedia message. The miniatures from both the series are at times presented together, complementing one another and conducting a dialog. It is the viewer who should decide how they will be composed. I would not like to overuse the fashionable category, although we can speak here of receptive interactivity. Although the viewer receives ready-made images and cannot change anything as
far as they are concerned, his or her will and imagination replace the narrator, arranging a non-linear series of images. Majewski believes that in this way, video art opens a new area between the work and the viewer:

“Narrative tradition sets limitations. Video art makes the viewer the co-creator of narration, moving from one screen to another; he or she can come back or leave, thinking that it is not interesting at all. Here begins a completely new story, a completely new dimension. Closer to the reality, because I perceive reality non-linearly (...). It is good to penetrate new means of expression in order to touch some deeper reality, if just for a moment” (Majewski, Siła...).

I think that the fullest and the most spectacular testament to the realization of intramediality is the director’s newest movie, The Mill and the Cross. The digital tale about Bruegel the Elder’s painting seems to shape a completely new face of the relations between media, the point of departure of which has become electronic technology, because we view a film work in which the newest achievements of computer graphics have been used in order to recreate a painting: its colors, perspective, composition. From the verbal message of one of the graphic artists and editors working on the movie, I know that the crew began their work by filming Bruegel’s painting in extreme detail. Each element was augmented so that one could see the tiniest movements of the paintbrush and nuances of color combinations, which are not visible to the naked eye. The painting by the “old master” was later recreated by means of the film media with unusual accuracy. The graphic artists had to become painters who, by means of computer technology, reconstruct the whole process of creating The Procession to Calvary. In the album issue of The Mill and the Cross, one may find pictures illustrating this difficult graphics work (Gibson, Majewski, 176-177) as well as an interesting storyboard depicting particular shots, prepared by Jerzy Ozyga (Gibson, Majewski, 199-218). In the movie, various sketches for the painting discussed by the movie Bruegel with the merchant played by Michael York are shown as well.

Therefore, the painting does not function in Majewski’s work as a quotation, it is not encrusted within the diegesis, but creates the portrayed reality as much as digital technology does. Of course, we cannot see the canvas and we can view the work only on the screen; however, it is this special case when the properties of two different media permeate themselves. In the movie, the composition and perspective applied were transferred from the painting. The characters wear handsewn and handpainted clothes, taking on poses of the characters in The Procession to Calvary. Moreover, the spacetime within which the actors move is not completely natural either – it has been transformed in a way that perfectly imitates that from Bruegel’s work. I have also mentioned that Majewski considered transforming the pictures into ones that would seem painted with oil paint and tempera on canvas. In as perfect a way as possible, in The Mill and the Cross, two kinds of mediality were fused to combine into an unusual experiment with the formulas of cinema and painting.

In his essay devoted to The Procession to Calvary, which was the main basis for the movie scenario, Michael Gibson notes that Bruegel’s painting may be called a Renaissance
movie. The art historian supports his notion with the fact that the work is not just depicted— it was told and now it creates a special kind of narration (Gibson, Majewski, 109). Therefore, the process of transforming it into a series of moving pictures appears to be a natural operation, using the film potential present in it.

Currently, it is difficult to precisely name this kind of intermedial relationships, as Majewski’s movie is not a simple combination of various media; it is not based only on using intramedial relations either, although we encounter mediatization a few times in it. In The Mill and the Cross, media that seem very remote from one another appear to paraphrase, permeate, specify each other, presenting interesting image coincidence, escaping final categorizations. Here it is appropriate to add that each time this device deprives the viewer, not accustomed to such complicated media structures, of the treacherous comfort of the voyeur. On the receptive level, the multiple mediatization “rouses” the viewer from perceptive patterns, “forces” him or her to stop longer in front of given fragments, surprises the viewer and gives him or her food for thought.

Conclusion

As has been stated before, Majewski’s works negate a number of common image patterns, proposing completely new solutions; thus the artist is frequently forced to create suitable categories and names for his activity. In this case, Andrzej Gwóźdź’s words seem appropriate:

“(…) therefore, one needs to ask about the status of contemporary audiovisual images, and, in this context, dare formulate the basis for new electronic imagery, founded intermedially, which would make us realize the changes occurring in the contemporary iconosphere, under the influence of numerous points of contact of media corporealities, among others” (Gwóźdź, 2003, 39).

The various and complicated faces of intermediality, about which Gwóźdź writes and which can be found in Lech Majewski’s works, are the best evidence of the changes taking place in image ontology. It is difficult to categorize it, as even the notion of intermediality does not comprise the full scope of media relations that can be observed in the director’s works. It is not the first time that the theoretical thought cannot catch up with artists’ imagination.

To me, the most interesting attempt at approaching the complexity of contemporary images revived by media seems a thesis by Ryszard Kluszczyński, who, writing about film as a new kind of intermedium, emphasizes that it is “sending, seeing one medium through another one, mutually stimulating and activating other media” (Kluszczyński, 76). Only so broad an approach toward the issue, in my view, allows us to point to the possible faces of mediatization, within the scope of which a new dimension and shape of contemporary imagery is created. The analysis of complex media formulas constituting a very important aspect of Lech Majewski’s works should make us realize those changes.
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