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### **Matter Painting in Poland – On the Margins of the Thaw’s “Modernity”**

The aim of my research, which is carried out with funds from National Science Centre, is to submit a thorough analysis of the works created by Polish artists in the style of matter painting, which developed in European abstract art in the late 1940s and the 1950s. The most important and noticeable feature of this style was the abandonment of traditional medium (the paint) and introduction of materials so far foreign to this discipline (fabrics, wood, sand or metal etc.). Among the artists who contributed to matter painting were e.g. J. Dubuffet and J. Fautrier in France, A. Tàpies and M. Millares in Spain or A. Burri in Italy. Since the mid-1950s and in the 1960 also Polish artists created with the use of non-painterly materials, as evidenced by the works by artists related with The Cracow Group (J. Maziarska, A. Marczyński, T. Rudowicz, J. Stern), the Nowa Huta Group (D. Urbanowicz, W. Urbanowicz, J. Tarabula, J. Jończyk, J. Wroński) or the Zamek Group from Lublin (W. Borowski, T. Dzieduszycki, J. Ziemiński) and the authors who were not associated with any group (e.g. B. Kierkowski, A. Matuszewski).

As results from the large number of works by the abovementioned artists deposited in Polish museums, it is clear that matter painting was an important part of Polish artistic practice of the turn of the 1950s and 1960s. A numerous group of those paintings, despite a variety of formulas proposed by Polish artists, share many common features, which are, for example, using non-painterly materials or composing it on two dimensional surface of the painting. For this reason, matter painting should be considered as a separate current in the Polish art of the Thaw period. The specificity of Polish examples of matter painting, however, has not been considered by the researchers so far. The works created by Polish artists have been interpreted in the context of “the Thaw modernity”, which was said to develop mainly in the field of abstraction *informel* (informal art). This perspective led Polish researchers to recognise matter painting as a part of *informel* or the evidence of the evolution of Polish artistic practice, which was believed to go from traditional painting to activities in three-dimensional space (*assemblage*) or to those bordering on conceptualism.

Simultaneously, many of the works created in the field of matter painting, was not analysed as a separate style of art, but rather in search of the features characteristic of the paradigm of Polish “modernity”. As a result, works organised by ideas and intentions different from those typical of the mainstream were not treated as a subject of research – were analysed only partially or even omitted by the authors of studies on Polish post-war art. For this reason many of them, situated on the margins of the Thaw “modernity”, till now have not been analysed in terms of its uniqueness.

The focus of my research are the analyses of the works created by Polish artists in the style of matter painting, which till now have remained in the periphery of interest of art historians. My intention is to study those paintings and propose interpretations from the point of view of their visual aspects, which will serve as an alternative to the existing ways of looking at them. This analysis will provide insight into the specificity of the formulas of matter painting developed by particular authors, as well as characterize this style in Polish art. Thanks to the conclusions drawn from the studies on the empirical material gathered as a result of queries in Polish museums<sup>1</sup>, it will be possible to define the specificity and importance of Polish matter painting, especially in relation to other artistic phenomena of the thaw “modernity”, such as abstraction *informel* (based mainly on the use of paint) and *assemblage* (based on the use of three-dimensional elements). Due to the fact that matter painting has been a marginal area of the Thaw "modernity", not well recognised in Polish art history, this project might be a viable contribution into the history and research about Polish artistic practice of the late 1950s and 1960s.

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<sup>1</sup> National Museum in Warsaw, National Museum in Cracow, National Museum in Poznań, National Museum in Wrocław, National Museum in Kielce, National Museum in Gdańsk, National Museum in Szczecin, Museum of Art in Łódź, Lublin Museum, Leon Wyczółkowski District Museum in Bydgoszcz, District Museum in Toruń, Museum in Chełm, Jacek Malczewski Museum in Radom.