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### **The Modern Face. Polish Self-Portraits in Print**

A face is "a sign of identity, (...) a vehicle of expression, and, finally (...) a site of a representation (literally and figuratively)" (Belting, 2017, p. 4). But in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, its *status quo* has been questioned because modernity contested a Romantic notion of the unitary and transparent subject symbolised by a European, mimetic image of face. In his comprehensive study "Sources of the Self : The Making of the Modern Identity", Charles Taylor investigates this new mode of subjectivity characterised by defragmentation and deconstruction of self with the help of the history of philosophical idea, literature, and art. The main Taylor's thought is that modernity, in general, expresses a deep incoherence of a soul and deny deep spiritual aspirations and intuitions. In the light of this changes, "20<sup>th</sup> art has gone more inward, has tended to explore, even to celebrate subjectivity" (Taylor, 1989, p. 456) by challenging a mimetic portrait defined as "an authentic facsimile of life" (Belting, 2017, p. 9). What takes place in the exploration of self in arts, especially in the genre of self-portrait, is looking for a new language to visualise separated rational ego. From now, "[t]here is a self-conscious awareness that what is appearing isn't to be found reflected through the surface of ordinary things." (Taylor, 1989, p. 469). So, artists deface, simplify, or even destroy their self-images. They put masks on their faces to demonstrate a breaking with self-consistency and conventional beliefs of artists' socio-cultural roles. The phenomenon of mask in art is described by Hans Belting in his seminal work "Faces and Mask: A Double History", in which he emphasises that face representations in art and culture play a critical role in communication and society. Throughout the history, death masks, painted portraits, contemporary media, and even ultrasonography images of masked faces try to embody a "truth" of a mask's weaver. The evolution of artistic techniques corresponds with a shift from face to brain – now some neurological images "develops the higher manifestations of conscious life" (Belting, 2017, p. 72) and carries an essence of individuality.

As Belting talks about anthropological "face histories" in plural and encourages to provide the own microhistory of face within his framework, my project intends to study the artist's face in self-portraits in printing techniques created by Polish printmakers in 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>th</sup> centuries. Its primary aim consists of establishing, describing, and analysing the relation between self-portrait prints and the representation of a face as a mask in the visual, ritual, and social contexts.

The present study is specifically based on analysing prints made by five artists and groups: Leon Wyczółkowski, Bunt Group (Jerzy Hulewicz, Stanisław Kubicki, Stefan

Szmaj), Jerzy Panek, Krystyna Piotrowska, and Grzegorz Banaszekiewicz. Each of them represents different style, self-representation strategy, and usage of masks. While works of Wyczółkowski and Bunt members rest in the Romantic ideas of the artist's role as the society's demiurge, printmakers creating after WWII direct themselves into more impersonal, scientifying image of inconsistent self. In his woodcuts, Panek puts himself on dregs of society. Piotrowska fakes an objective vision of her disjointed face in lithography, whereas Banaszekiewicz uses ultrasound to investigate the inner self in multimedia installations. In accordance with the Belting's face history, chosen self-portraits show a progressive shift towards a modern self expressed by ever newer artistic and non-artistic techniques. With the help of the Taylor's study, the self-portraits analysis will be completed with a context of a turbulent modern self characterisation.