

Michał Misiak
Artist's Statement

I have always looked at images abstractly. I was never much interested in the narratives or literary references they contained. I was searching for something that would lead me beyond the physical boundaries of the canvas. At that same time I was painting landscapes -- searching in them for something I felt was present in the work of the artists I admired: Mark Rothko, Barnett Newman, Ives Klein and Wojciech Fangor.

The amount of my experience at that time and the need to be as authentic as possible in my work did not allow me to make a major step away from representation. I discovered that the reason my paintings were being created was not to reference the visible world. These works were my attempts to record certain feelings and states of mind I was in in response to the natural world. I also realized that the feelings I tried to record in my work were not always connected to visual stimuli. Frequently they came from the world of sounds or combinations of stimuli recorded by the other senses.

I then started to paint works „from recollection”, where, not yet giving up representation, I tried to eliminate all the unnecessary elements and to concentrate only on this „important feeling.” I gave a lot of thought to the relationship between the three components: the artist, the viewer and the artwork. In this I was inspired by the ideas of the renowned composer Witold Lutoslawski. I felt that his theories regarding music were so universal that they could as easily be applied to visual arts.

From then on, while creating a painting I felt that my works were only a stimulus for creating a feeling in the viewer that I wanted him or her to experience. To achieve that I had to appropriate the role of a viewer. I have always wanted to create a situation wherein the artwork does not appeal to the viewer immediately and directly, but, gradually, pulls the observer into its space, revealing a world different than the one experienced empirically. It became necessary for me while creating these works to recollect this state (feeling) that would become the „subject” of the work.

Some time ago, while working on a monumental linocut, I had to solve a problem involving large grey surfaces. I decided that the composition would only involve the black of the printing ink and the white of the paper. I started to cut in the linoleum a multitude of lines, one next to the other which, from a distance, created the effect of grayness in the eye of the viewer. This work pulled me in, rather in the spirit of the Benedictine monastic order's motto, *Labora est ora* („To work is to pray”). I felt that I lost myself in the activity, that the concentration and repetition of movement put me into a state of contemplation. This state (feeling) is what I wanted the viewer to experience. That's how my first paintings composed of lines were created.

I call these works meditations because of the process of their creation, which is as important to me as the work itself. I am asked frequently why I don't use special tools or techniques which would help me make the lines flawless, without small curves or bulges of paint. This would not make sense in my work. Although my hand has become more steady, it is not possible to achieve the absolute ideal of perfection. This is very important since I see it as a very human aspect, one where we constantly try to achieve the absolute which it is not possible to achieve. The imperfections also add to the work a certain unpredictability which fascinates me. In my most recent series of works I use the physical phenomenon of wave interference. Parallel lines, like the waves of certain frequencies, comprise the first layer of the composition, upon which the second set of lines (waves) running in different directions is added. The result is the emergence of a new image that seems to be "immaterial," an optical phenomenon the characteristics of which depend on the thickness of the lines, distance between them, and the angle of their intersection. This image is not created by the painter but exists only in the viewer's eye.

What is happening in the viewer's eye while looking at the work is more important to me than the painting's narration, decorativeness or material appeal. It is apparent that I share some ideas with the Op Art movement. However, I feel that its emphasis on ideal execution is limiting. My goal is to create work which goes beyond a material barrier and beyond the use of formal means, work that can reveal a different reality. That's why the very contemplative process of a creating is more important for me than the resulting work.

The final result -- a striving towards the absolute -- is my motivation.