

PRESERVATION (ZACHOWYWANIE)

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I know that she lived in a small, inconspicuous house on the outskirts of Poznan. She did not possess much. She embroidered and liked flowers because she planted them all around the house. We „met each other” in a rather peculiar way, when I moved into her home. Objects that remained there were the only signs capable of telling the story of her life. In the process of segregating and arranging objects in cartons, which lasted a long time, so that each item could be given due respect, a sense of communing with an extraordinary collection was born. Ordinary, everyday objects and equipments have grown to the status of objects of contemplation because of their tangible relationship with the person. Krzysztof Pomian in the book *Collectors and Curiosities* states that "every natural object known to people and every human product is present in a museum or in a private collection"¹. It is no surprising that there are everyday objects, but also waste, used items that are qualified as part of an important set.

However, the case of the *unconscious collection* is particularly interesting to me. They are created by objects not collected with the intention and according to a specific key by their owners, but only accumulated in the course of life. Such sets of objects become a secondary defined collection, by a person who finds such a set of objects, and then meets with the opportunity (but more often simply with the obligation, as it happens almost always when the same place is to serve the next generation) classify items into categories, organize them according to a certain key, decide on their further fate. It is a process in which "care is not limited to the sphere of objects - but is also naturally extended to care for a person"². As if what was preserved in matter was the equivalent of what is immaterial, impossible to see - only preserved in the memory of the person. and finally, it is the contemplation of the fragility of human existence.

Treating objects as elements of individual being, that is, looking at the traces of human activity and activities they bear, we are able to use them to engage in dialogue with the past. Such an open attitude towards the past has characterized, according to Marian Golka, social memory, that is "everything what from the past is present now and everything that is made in the present with ideas about the past"³. In Golka's opinion, "memory is a condition for the permanent functioning of

¹ K. Pomian, *Collectors and Curiosities. Paris and Venice 1500-1800*, trans. E. Wiles-Portier, Polity Press, Cambridge 1991, p. 5.

² Anna-Sophie Berger in conversation with Laura McLean-Ferris, *Take care*, „Flash Art” 312, January-February 2017.

³ M. Golka, *Pamięć społeczna i jej implanty*, Warszawa 2009, p. 7.

the community", that is nurturing and preserving what allows building social bonds. Objects are preserved and at the same moment they also retain the memory by traces of use.

Meeting with worn out objects, in acceptance of their "imperfect" materiality, lies the potential to make them useful again, to activate their meaning in the present. It seems fruitful in this context to recall the figures of Mnemosyne, the mother of muses and the giver of memory in Greek mythology. The goddess not only made it possible to "continue the life of memory"⁴, but she was also "the ruler of language, even attributed to its invention"⁵. It is thanks to her that people have "the ability to name and remember things". Consideration of personal items in the context of collective memory allows me to reveal the potential of how seemingly hermetic stories can be shared thanks to the objects that are then the language and the plane of communication.

⁴ P. Brożyński, *Wstęp do wydania polskiego*, in A. Warburg, *Atlas obrazów Mnemosyne*, trans. P. Brożyński, M. Jędrzejczyk, Warszawa-Kraków 2017, p. XVII.

⁵ Ibid.