

**SUMMARY  
OF PROFESSIONAL ACHIEVEMENTS**

dr Agnieszka Mazek

University  
of Natural Sciences and Humanities in Siedlce

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**Name and surname:**

Agnieszka Mazek

**Education, diplomas held, scientific/artistic degrees****2001**

Obtained Academic Title: Master of Fine Arts (Dean's List)

June 19, 2001, Faculty of Arts at Maria Curie-Skłodowska University in Lublin

Discipline: Artistic Education

Subject of theoretical thesis: Monograph of the Neogothic Church of the Elevation of the Holy Cross in Sobieszyn, Supervisor: Jerzy Żywicki, PhD

Artworks completed in the Rotogravure Workshop under the supervision of Artur Popek, MFA (kw. art. II st.)

**2010**

Obtained Academic Title: Doctor of Fine Arts

June 20, 2010, by the resolution of the Faculty Council of Faculty of Arts at Maria Curie-Skłodowska University in Lublin

Subject of doctoral thesis: The clash of reality and imagination in a series of prints

Supervisor: Artur Popek, MFA (kw. art. II st.)

Reviewers: Rafał Stent, Professor, Waldemar Szysz, MFA (kw. art. II st.)

**Information on employment in artistic and/or research institutions:**

2012–2016:

assistant professor of Graphic Design in Lublin School of Arts and Design in Lublin

2015–present:

adjunct professor of Artistic Education in the field of Fine Arts, Faculty of Humanities, University of Natural Sciences and Humanities in Siedlce

This summary of professional accomplishments is a concise description of my artistic, didactic and academic achievements, focusing primarily on my works after achieving the title of Doctor of Fine Arts. For the sake of clarity, I decided to divide the list into three chapters. The first one concentrates mainly on my artistic achievements from before obtaining my doctoral degree in order to highlight the development of certain traits of my works, traits that permeate my work to this day. The second chapter outlines my didactic and artistic experience and works I from after obtaining my doctoral degree, with a more detailed description of a series of prints „Moje Jeruzalem” („My Jerusalem”), indicated as the subject of habilitation proceedings. With regard to it being the largest chapter, I divided it into further subsections, thus ensuring clarity. The last, third chapter details my didactic, academic, popularizing, organizational and charity work, recounting also the books and exhibition catalogues I have designed and illustrated. Every activity I have included in this summary acts as a part of a whole, developing me as a person, as an artist and as a teacher – as I am emphasizing in the conclusion.

## Description of artistic achievements obtained before receiving doctoral degree (2001 – 2010)

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When describing my artistic journey, I would like to begin by recounting the practical part of my master's thesis, as it initiated all my important artistic discoveries and set some traits I hold true to and develop to this day. The thesis was completed in 2001, under the supervision of Artur Popek, MFA (kw. art. II st.) and concluded my studies at the Faculty of Fine Arts of the Maria Curie-Skłodowska University in Lublin; for it I was awarded Dean's List. The thesis consisted of seven prints, sized 68x48cm, and combined two rotogravure techniques: etching and aquatint.

Each print depicted a few key elements backdropped by a white plane. During the creation process I focused on synthesis of the form and on realism of the image. By depicting the elements realistically – thus highlighting their importance – I placed them on a new plane of existence. Lemons dropping on an umbrella became acid rains; sunflower seeds surrounding a vase taken from Van Gogh's „Sunflowers” became a new way of looking at not only the painting itself, but also Van Gogh's art as a whole. My aim was to steer the viewer's attention to something, to fascinate and to surprise them.

The process of creation I went through when working on my diploma helped set the foundations of my artistic journey that are still close to me to this day, traits I work to explore and develop. It was then that I saw the crucial role of sketching (for that reason I chose etching and aquatint) – I will say more on this later. Ever since my master's thesis I have been feeling a strong desire to exchange thoughts with my audience – a desire I have been trying to fulfill in my later works. The dialogue I am hoping to initiate happens not only on my prints per se, but also in the captions I intentionally choose and place underneath them. This was the beginning of my particular artistic style and character that I have been endeavoring to explore and develop in the next periods of my artistic journey – on which I will say more later.

Two prints of the series were awarded Print of the Month in the Grafika Warszawska (Warsaw Printmaking) contest organized by the Mazovia Center for Culture and Art („Powieś mnie na ścianie”/„Hang Me on the Wall” – 2nd Prize, September 2001 and „... i jeszcze kwaśne deszcze”/„... And Acid Rains As Well” – the Award of the Provost of the Academy of Fine Arts in Warsaw).

Next years of my career as an artist allowed me to confront myself with miniature. Nevertheless, I remained faithful to rotogravure; more specifically, to etching and aquatint. In that time, I created a series of prints in the shape of an elongated horizontal rectangle sized 7x14 cm. These works were created as my reaction to the reality I lived in, serving as a kind of a commentary to certain events, a graphic diary of sorts. This fulfilled my need to record – at first, as a sketch, then as an etching – what I saw and lived through, experiences that left a mark on me – a good one or

a bad one. This period in my art could be called a Graphical Notebook – as the works created in that time are all narrative, descriptive. I walked away from the synthesis that could be seen in my diploma; my prints still, nonetheless, consisted of a few key elements – only they have become more pictorial.

The synthesis present in my diploma, as well as the narrativity and realism of said miniatures defined the shape and direction of my doctoral thesis, supervised by Artur Popek, MFA (kw. II st. art.) at the Faculty of Arts at Maria Curie-Skłodowska University in Lublin. This cycle was inspired by the clash of my imagination with reality. It was not only a story to tell – not a mere chronicle of meticulously registered series of images; it also consisted of entire scenes taken straight from my imagination, but born from reality. They were planned as an exchange of views with the audience – a dialogue that used to happen frequently in the past. My doctoral thesis was an emotionally charged work. My intention was to have a conversation about human beings with other human beings – in spite of the fact that no human silhouette was present in those prints. I started to form my own language of symbols – a language that, to this day, is present in all my works. It was in this series of prints that a chair started to symbolize a person – a living, specific person, but also an imagined, or a gone one, living but in our memory. This series also initiated the use of a white stool as a symbol of a one specific person in my life, as well as a window as a symbol of openness and a door as a symbol of passing to another reality; it was here that for the first time I consciously used religious symbols – bread, wine, fish.

My doctoral thesis was also the first work where I began experimenting with showing space and all the objects in it differently, abandoning consistent perspective – in order to show each of the elements from a unique angle. This way of creating has remained with me ever since.

Artworks from this period were premiered in 2011, at an individual exhibition called „Zagraj ze mną jeszcze raz” („Play Again with Me”) in the Abakus Gallery in Warsaw. For this exhibition I also prepared a catalogue explaining and presenting this series of prints. They were presented, too, at a second exhibition, under the same title, in the Gallery of Modern Art in Ostrów Wielkopolski (2011). Many of these prints received awards; in 2008, the print „Play again with me” was granted the award of the Starosta of Ostrów at the Polish Salon of Art „Egeria”. A few of them were awarded in the Grafika Warszawska (Warsaw Printmaking) contest („Wracaj, bo pada”/„Come Back, It’s Raining” – July 2008, the Award of the Warsaw Region of the Polish Association of Artists ZPAP; „To pamiętam...”/„This I Remember...” – August 2008, 1st Prize; „Na podsłuchu”/„Wiretapped” – January 2009, the Award of the Provost of the Academy of Fine Arts in Warsaw; „Szach, mat,... pat”/„Checkmate... Stalemate” – July 2009, the Award of the Marshall of Mazovia Voievodship). The entire series – as well as its parts – were presented at various exhibitions in Poland and abroad. Among them were: the 1st International Biennale – the Salon of Western Art in Lublin (2009), the exhibition of the members of the International Print Triennial Society in the International Center for Graphic Arts in Cracow (2012), as well as the XVI International Triennale of Graphic Arts in Frechen, Germany (2011) and two exhibitions in Jurgensen Gallery in

Oetjendorf, Germany: „June Grafik International“ („Young Graphic Art International“) (2012) and „Polen und Seine Grafik“ („Poland and Its Graphic Art“) (2014); my prints were also presented at two exhibitions in Edmonton, Canada: „Prismatika: Illusions of the Universe“ in Steppes Gallery (2013) and „January’s Mist“ in ISBE Gallery (2014).

**Description of artistic work  
after receiving doctoral degree (years 2010-2019),  
with a more detailed description of a series of prints „My Jerusalem”,  
indicated as the subject of habilitation proceedings**

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### **My artistic journey**

My art has always been dominated by traditional rotogravure techniques. Still, my desire to expand my means of artistic expression led me to explore new, interesting solutions.

My work as a graphic designer made me confront myself with digital art. New means of expression fueled my imagination and steered me towards exploring the new medium. I was asking myself how far my fascination goes – and if I am ready to abandon my lifelong devotion to etching and aquatint. I quickly understood that staying true to traditional printmaking and copper matrices mattered more to me than digital art and sharing my thoughts and feelings digitally. For that reason, I my experimenting with digital art lasted for only a short period of time; nevertheless, this experience proved fruitful. In 2010 I received an award in the contest during the Multimedia Szajna Festival in Rzeszów for my work „Jak to możliwe” („How is that possible”).

A quest for new experiences and a desire for further artistic development led me to the Łódź Academy of Fine Arts, where I took part in the International Summer Courses for Printmaking and Textile Art in 2013 and 2014. This experience opened me to new techniques and explorations; I became fascinated with collagraphy and began mixing it with other techniques, creating a short series of prints. The most visually interesting of them use the motif of a scarecrow as a symbol of fear – but sometimes also friendship or submissiveness. The courses in Łódź were an occasion to set myself free from conventions and to search for new possibilities – I opened my eyes to new directions in the world of printmaking. It does not mean, of course, that I stepped away from my techniques of choice entirely. Etching and aquatint were still present in my artworks alongside mixed techniques (collagraphy, monotype or screen printing); only during that time I kept on searching for the right size of my works. For this reason, the prints created in that period were quite large (mostly in the shape of a horizontal rectangle); I also created a few square 10x10cm miniatures. These artistic explorations were seen and appreciated by other artists and by critics as well; for the print „In Memoriam” I received the Award of the Provost of the Academy of Fine Arts in Warsaw in the Grafika Warszawska (Warsaw Printmaking) contest in August of 2012. The miniatures created in the following years were included in the International Triennial of Small Graphic Forms exhibition in Łódź (in 2011, 2014 and 2017) and in the exhibitions during the Mini Print International of Cadaqués (in 2011, 2015, 2016, 2017 and 2018).

Another interesting experience was an invitation to participate in the project „Dom ze Słów” („A House Made of Words”) organized by the „Grodzka Gate – NN Theatre” Center. Basing upon va-



rious written and recorded stories about family homes, I illustrated some items that were present in them; I then created a print (using etching and aquatint) that bears the title „Dom Słów” („A House of Words”). It was a fascinating and exciting challenge; it was very emotional as well, as many people shared with me their personal experiences and memories from their family homes. Their stories, alongside my prints and drawings were then used to create the installation „Dom ze Słów” („A House Made of Words”), accompanied by an exhibition of my artworks. The drawings can be still seen on the project’s website: <http://teatrnn.pl/domslow/dom-ze-slow/>. The print „Dom Słów” („A House of Words”) was included in the exhibition after the art contest „Konfrontacje Sztuki” („Art Confrontations”) that took place in Test Gallery in 2018.

In order to protect my matrix during the process of etching, I usually use shellac dissolved in denatured alcohol. I have mentioned earlier that my master’s thesis marked the beginning of my interest in some artistic directions I keep on exploring. One example of such explorations was using cream instead of shellac in order to create one part of one of the prints. I used this method again a few times in the later years; in time, I became increasingly intrigued by it and began experimenting with using different cosmetics: hand creams, face creams, greasy and non-greasy ones – but also mascaras, lipsticks and eyeshadows. Maybe, in the future, I will create a print using all of these „enhancers” of a woman’s face. So far, I focused mainly on the use of different kinds of creams in printmaking. My first attempts were surprising: a greasy cream protected the matrix entirely; with a non-greasy one, the effects depended on its quantity and the thickness of the layer. The thicker the cream layer, the better the protection. My goal was to achieve effects similar to brushstrokes. A great example is the 2018 print „Pod niebem pełnym cudów” („Under the Sky Full of Miracles”), which included a fragment of Van Gogh’s „Starry Night”. This print shows the effect of using different creams perfectly.

Art experiments using creams were present additionally in the creation process of some prints of „Moje Jeruzalem” („My Jerusalem”) series. The effects can be seen in the prints „Tęsknota” („Longing”), „Jestem w raju” („I Am in Paradise”), „Modlitwa” („Prayer”) and „Zwiastowanie” („Annunciation”). In each of the stones of the Western Wall depicted in „Tęsknota” („Longing”) the permeation of ferric chloride through the layer of the non-greasy cream can be clearly seen, allowing for mellow transitions of color and creating the impression of stone blocks. The experiments can be seen in detail in the upper part of the artwork, which – like the sky in the print „Pod niebem pełnym cudów” („Under the Sky Full of Miracles”) – was taken from Van Gogh’s art, more particularly from the painting „The Sower”. In order to imitate the Van Gogh’s brushstrokes, I used two kinds of cream: a greasy and a moisturizing one. The first one was used to create a bright sun and its reflexes; the second one – to create the effect of them shining through one another.

The print „Tęsknota” („Longing”) is the only art in the series „Moje Jeruzalem” („My Jerusalem”) that has the shape of a rectangle and that is larger than the rest. That is because the cream is never precise enough to be used on a smaller format.

The print „Modlitwa” („Prayer”) is also the result of my experiments with creams; here – as in „Tęsknota” („Longing”) I used them to create the impression of a stone wall. Nevertheless, as the graphic elements are significantly smaller, it is harder to notice the use of these substances. Furthermore, operating a small brush to use cream on smaller surfaces is more difficult; the effects are also harder to control. This was also the case in „Zwiastowanie” („Annunciation”) and in „Jestem w raju” („I Am in Paradise”); the creams I had access to behaved differently when used on a small brush and were challenging to work with on a smaller surface. For example, the greasy cream became thicker quickly and it was quite arduous to spread it evenly on the plate. Nevertheless, despite the difficulties, the final results are noticeable and – sometimes – quite remarkable. In „Zwiastowanie” („Annunciation”) it can be seen in the intricate shadows on the stone wall and in „Jestem w raju” („I Am in Paradise”) – in delicate tonal transitions in the clouds visible in the window „cut out” in the sky.

The use of cosmetics on matrices was an interesting experience; by no means is the use of these media fully explored. There are more questions regarding this type of experiments; I am aware that my work has been only the beginning of discovering new possibilities in printmaking. The curiosity born during these explorations leads me to continue them on.

### **Drawing as the foundation of my artistic voice**

Drawing has always been the cornerstone of my printmaking. A pencil is, for me, an indispensable tool; a line – an essential element of my artistic voice. My sketchbook has always been my truest friend during my travels – the real and the imaginary ones. As long as I can remember, I had this desire to preserve my experiences in the form of a sketch. For me, it is the most natural and quickest of forms of recording one’s perceptions. A moment with a sketchbook in hand, even climbing up Rysy – the highest summit in Poland – is enough to document a transient impression. Photography is excellent for that purpose, of course. But for me, it is not the same. Drawing lets me quite literally touch the creative process – something I would not feel with photography. It is quite a sensual experience; it has a real impact on my artistic process and lets me record the impression even more intensely. This is how I created my hand-drawn „postcards”. It does not mean that I renounced photography entirely; my photographs help me create and design some of my prints as well.

Nevertheless, I see sketching as the foundation of my printmaking, referring not only of the lines on the matrix and on the copies; each and every one of my prints is based upon an earlier drawing – even if a rough sketch. This is the very first stage of working with a copper matrix. I then draw on the varnish using a steel needle; the matrix is later bathed in ferric chloride. The drawing is usually a straight line, often the contour of an element – but sometimes also its shading.

Often my prints are inspired by aforementioned sketchbooks. This was the case with the print series „Moje Jeruzalem” („My Jerusalem”). Using a black and a white pencil on a linen-colored paper – and sometimes using a transparent marker, too – I tried to capture the moment I was in. The color of the paper was intentional, as it corresponded with the colors I was surrounded with in the Holy Land – earth, stones, walls – and its entire atmosphere. It is worth noting that my prints were not exact copies of these sketches; the drawings served as an inspiration, a remainder of what it was like in Israel. Although both travels to the Holy Land were marked by a hurry that is the unavoidable companion of all sightseeing tours, I dedicated all the spare moments to drawing. A short break on the Mount of Olives to see the Jerusalem panorama was an occasion to draw the city; a moment of rest after standing in a long line to see the Tomb of Jesus was enough to capture my experiences and to draw them as elements of the Basilica’s architecture. The sound of silence accompanied by the birds’ song in the Wadi Qelt valley became a sketch that I kept on returning to, remembering that sweet melody amidst the noises of everyday life. The sketches from the Holy Land carry all kinds of emotions – I carried those feelings on to the copper matrix, creating prints that told the stories of all the places I have been to.

My last visit to Israel was not captured solely in sketches. This travel inspired me also to create realistic drawings, made with white pencil on black paper. One of them was included in the exhibition accompanying the M. E. Andriolli International Drawing Contest (Międzynarodowy Konkurs na Rysunek im. M. E. Andriollego) in Nałęczów. The exhibition was or will be also presented in Otwock, Lublin, Karczew, New York, Biała Podlaska and Przemyśl. These drawings are also a part of my illustrations of the book „Via Dolorosa” by Jarosław P. Woźniak (2019), which include not only works in white and black pencil, but also collages made from white and gray paper.

### **The title as the key to imagination**

Titles have always had an important role in my artistic experience. Every print is given one; each and every one of my titles is well thought out. For me, it is a combination of literary and visual art – and an attempt to have a conversation with the audience. A title, using the imperative mode, is often a call-out to the viewer; this has been the case in, for example „Wy dajcie im jeść” („You give them something to eat”) or in „Zdejmij sandały” („Take off your sandals”). I am trying to convince my viewers to take concrete actions. The title may catch their attention and help them reflect on the issues. This is one of the goals of my art.

Giving my prints a title, I realize I am opening myself up not only through the visual, but also through my words. The title could be called the key to my imagination. My viewers may want to get to know it better, to see what is inside me. I am not afraid of it – I know it is never entirely possible. Each viewer reads the title differently, drawing upon their own individual experiences. Does longing depicted in the print mean the same thing for me and for my audience? I doubt it; nevertheless, I believe that the title will prompt my viewers to ask themselves what the autho-

ress meant, to deepen their own reflections and to give honest answers to questions they ask themselves.

The titles in the cycle „Moje Jeruzalem” („My Jerusalem”) often involve specific names, like Simon, Magdalene or Pilate. I used them not only to refer to historical figures, but also to help the viewers see themselves in the people depicted. Creating the triptych „Jerozolima Szymona” („Simon's Jerusalem”) I did not want just to tell the story of Saint Peter; I wanted it to be about everyone, including myself. It could be the story of just about anyone, after all.

Usually I come up with a title after finishing a print, although sometimes it is the title that inspires the work. This was the case with „Magdalena” („Magdalene”). Giving the titles to my prints is like giving names to my children. Names are important for all people; we often identify with our names and search for patron saints. It is very similar in the case of my works. The title without doubt influences how the viewers see my works; it is important for me to make my audience familiar with my art through the „names” of the prints as well.

### **„Moje Jeruzalem” („My Jerusalem”) – art in search for God, man and oneself**

The series „Moje Jeruzalem” („My Jerusalem”) consists of sixteen square miniatures and one larger, rectangular print sized 36x26,5 cm. Most of them were created using etching and aquatint – sometimes with the use of drypoint; two of them are mezzotints.

All works were created in the years 2016-2019; the series was presented on an individual exhibition in the Test Gallery of the Mazovia Center for Culture in Warsaw in 2019.

This series was inspired by my travels to the Holy Land; one took place in 2015, the other – in 2018. The same places evoked all kinds of different emotions. The first trip was filled with fear and surprises; the second – with joy, peace, sense of security and wonder.

My impressions of Israel were quite intense, mixing fear with safety and peace, rawness, roughness and simplicity with opulence and splendor, monochromatic scenes with colorful spectacles. This is the Israel that lives within me. Maybe it really is like that – it is, after all, a multi religious and multicultural country, a land full of contradictions, but also of harmony.

My exploring of the Holy Land was accompanied by the poems of Roman Brandstaetter from the volume „Pieśń o moim Chrystusie” („Song of My Christ”). I was deeply moved and intrigued by them; they were a significant influence during the creation of this series of prints.

„Moje Jeruzalem” („My Jerusalem”) is not merely a story of the beauty of the Holy Land or even a recount of my experiences; it is also a dialogue with others: with people of Israel, with those

that walked these paths with me, and with my audience. This series is also a conversation with myself – and, first and foremost, a personal search for God. This is what sets „Moje Jeruzalem” („My Jerusalem”) apart from my earlier works.

The catalogue I designed for my exhibition in the Test Gallery indicated „Zwiastowanie” („Annuntiation”) as the opening print for the series. Although it was not the first one to be created, it sets the foundation for my reflections upon God, life and the material and spiritual world. „Zwiastowanie” („Annuntiation”) was – among other prints – inspired by the poetry of Roman Brandstaetter and by my memories and experiences from the Nazareth Synagogue.

The well-known story of Annuntiation, as described in the Bible and depicted by countless artists before me, tempted me to use it to express myself. The print – although with no people visible – is an attempt at telling a story about people. The scene is a depiction of a dialogue with God. The beam of light is a symbol of a conversation – and of relations between the real, the material and the transcendent. The light is the words that we say to God; a prayer, a profound relationship. The flickering light of a candle joins with the Eternal Light, and from there takes its radiance. The feather in the foreground recounts the biblical scene directly – there is an angel present, apart from the woman. He left a small trace of his presence and went on...

Recounting the life of Christ and other biblical figures, together with my observations and experiences from the Holy Land, serve as the foundations of telling a story about my life, and as the basis of a current social commentary. „Miasto Dawida” („The City of David”) is a print that was created as a reaction to building a wall between Israel and Palestine. The biblical image of feeding the multitude – accompanied by the title „Wy dajcie im jeść” („You give them something to eat”), which is a direct quote from the Gospel – refers to the illegal immigrants, the issue that was broadly discussed by political and religious leaders at that time; the print is an attempt at making the voice of starving people heard. My artworks are a kind of a social commentary – art is an important means of discussion about current issues. The print „Wy dajcie im jeść” („You give them something to eat”) intentionally includes a motif inspired by the mosaic from the church of Tabgha, joining it with the image of bread and falling breadcrumbs – a symbol of starving people.

My visit to the Holy Land did not consist only of visiting biblical places; it also involved observing and joining the daily life of the local people. Visiting the new Jerusalem – trotting the streets, looking at umbrellas suspended in the air or at sculptures on the streets – was a pleasant and interesting experience. An ordinary market full to the brim with a vibrant crowd of different people was also a sight I will not forget. Maybe it was not so ordinary after all? In a scenery that seems ordinary, in the midst of a smorgasbord of stalls filled with fruits and vegetables, surrounded by the smell of cardamom and coffee, treating myself to a variety of halvahs, I had a chance to experience something extraordinary. My intense experiences were the inspiration of the print „Smaki Jerozolimy” („The Flavors of Jerusalem”), which touches the topic of multiculturalism through an

entire range of different, albeit hidden, symbols. The memories and feelings of my walks through the city took on the form of the print „Jestem w raju” („I am in paradise”).

Observing the life of the people of the Holy Land was, for me, yet another experience that let me get closer to people of a different nationality, culture and religion. We are different – still we all walk in the same direction. This is what I wanted to say through the print „Wędrowcy” („Wanderers”). „Modlitwa” („Prayer”) depicts a fragment of a scene I witnessed by the Western Wall; however, it does not refer only to Jewish prayer. Every prayer is – in my opinion – a sigh to God, reaching to Him, leaning on the wall of our own imperfections, turmoils of everyday life, our egoism. In this print, prayer is symbolized by small white rectangles, soaring over the heads of praying men, lost among the stones of the Wall. I have mentioned earlier that I sometimes use photography in my creative process. This was the case with this print – it was created from photographs processed in a graphics software, in order to achieve the effect I wanted.

Most of the prints in the cycle refers to events and people mentioned in the Bible. The triptych „Jerozolima Szymona” (Wybór, Bojaźń, Decyzja) („Simon's Jerusalem. The Choice, The Fear, The Decision”) was created upon an icon of a rooster I saw on one of Jerusalem's walls. The rooster is present on all three prints. In the first one – as a faint silhouette in a curtained window; in the second – as its real depiction; in the third one – as a shadow on the wall. In every case, it is the symbol of Saint Peter's denial. I am trying to show through these works that the denial was inevitable ever since the beginning of his relationship with Christ, that it was his stigma – but it also acted as a turning point. I do not want to concentrate on the blame, but rather show that a good use of a dire situation can bring about something better, symbolized by an open lock and a faint light shining through the darkness of the barely open door.

Another historical figure that can be found on my prints – albeit not being drawn explicitly – is Pontius Pilate, the Roman prefect of Judea during the life of Jesus Christ. This print was directly inspired by my visit in the Antonia Fortress, and by Roman Brandstaetter's poem „Koncert birnamski” („Birnam Concert”). This print refers specifically to Pilate washing his hands. The chair – the throne – is the symbol of power, casting a long shadow on the gesture, making it unreliable. How many gestures like this can be seen in the world, where badly executed power becomes the source of cheap sensations, private interests, and dishonest intentions? This print attempts to dialogue with the viewer, but lets him think for himself. In this print I used convergent perspective, which only strengthens the conclusions: the misuse of power leads us nowhere.

Via Dolorosa is the name of the street that Jesus walked while bearing the Cross on the way to His death. It is also the title of one of my prints, created as a way of recording what I saw and experienced on this way. The Way of the Cross is, in the mind of any Christians, a solemn and contemplative one; in contrast, the one in Jerusalem is quite different from this. The clamor of the crowd, punctuated by the loud calls of the shopkeepers; terrible heat and slippery stones under weary feet; this is the image that stayed in my mind and this is what I drew on that copper

matrix. Contoured sandals symbolize dozens of stalls selling them every day and the feet of the countless pilgrims constantly treading this path. Lost amongst the shoes are the faint silhouettes of people, crossed by two lines forming a cross. This composition stays truthful to the atmosphere of that place.

Only three of the prints in this series refer to Christ Himself: the etching/aquatint „Zdejmij sandały” („Take off your sandals”) and two mezzotints: „Pieta” and „Vera Icon”.

„Zdejmij sandały” („Take off your sandals”) refers to Jesus' prayer in the Gethsemane. This story moves my heart deeply; my visit to the Church of All Nations was very emotional as well. The olive trees – the darkest elements of the composition – are the symbols of fear, terror and spiritual battle. The chalice in the background represents suffering; it is being filled up with small dots: human weakness, harm, evil and pain. There is a pair of meticulously drawn sandals in the foreground; they look like they do not belong in the print, as if they were quite literally standing on it. They come from a different plane of reality – even if visually similar to the rest of the work. The title of the print is a reference to the sandals; it is taken from Exodus, where God says to Moses: “Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy ground” (Ex 3:5). For me, personally, the moment when Jesus prays in Gethsemane calls for that kind of reverence.

The two mezzotints I decided to include in the series „Moje Jeruzalem” („My Jerusalem”) are not inspired by the Holy Land as such; even so, although they were not rooted in my memories and impressions from trips to Israel, they share the topic with other prints in the series. Both of them draw upon the theme of the Passion of the Christ. „Vera Icon” takes us to the VI Station of the Cross and to the story of Saint Veronica, who wiped the weary face of our Savior. „Pieta”, in turn, recalls the moment of taking Jesus down from the Cross and putting Him in the arms of his Mother. Again, these prints are not realistic illustrations of those scenes. A careful observer will notice that the face on the cloth – hung in the sky – is a portrait of not one, but two people. There is a second face behind the face of Christ. Who is it? I drew it this way intentionally, in order to intrigue my audience; I will not, however, answer this question – this will remain my secret. The print „Pieta” is not a realistic depiction of the scene either. The silhouette of Mary is schematic; we know it is Her only by a faint halo crown behind her head. The cloth she is holding recalls the Shroud of Turin. She is not therefore holding Jesus Himself, but only the reflection of His body. My use of this technique was deliberate – mezzotint allows for a deep black which was an indispensable means of expression in these prints.

The last of the prints in the series is called „Magdalena” („Magdalene”) and recalls a real woman from the Bible. It is the culmination of the cycle, because it draws on the topic of the Resurrection, even if it does not show the Resurrection itself. The print tells the story of a woman whose new life began after having met Jesus. This work depicts a whole range of symbols: the light symbolises resurrection and Magdalene's new life; the stones recall the scene from the Gospel where

others tried to stone her – a symbol of her pain, burden, embarrassment and sin; the poured-out liquid is the symbol of her love, recalling another fragment of the Scripture – the anointing at Bethany.

All the feelings and emotions I have experienced during my travels to the Holy Land took on visual form in the largest of the prints in the series, called „Tęsknota” („Longing”). The title expressed what I feel when thinking of that land; but to think I only expressed my emotions directly in that title would be wrong. Two soaring birds are the symbol of freedom; the bright sun behind the Western Wall is the symbol of hope, joy, peace and good – but most importantly, a portrait of God, who lives in the Holy Land forever. What was I yearning for when creating this print? What is the viewer yearning for? I hope for each one of us to find their own answer; this is what I was aiming for by giving this print that specific title.



## Didactic, academic, popularizing and organizational work

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I began my work as a teacher in 2012 by becoming an assistant professor of Graphic Design in the Lublin School of Art and Design. I worked with both full-time and extramural students. My experience as a graphic artist and a digital graphic designer allowed me to adopt a different approach to teaching and to create a curriculum that included topics from both of these fields. My aim was to inspire my students to think critically and to guide their creative process. In order to achieve it, I began by teaching graphic design for one year; the final project during this course was to illustrate a series of abstract notions using only lines. The feedback I received after this course was quite enthusiastic – the students wrote that it opened their minds to abstract and synthetic thinking, which is indispensable in any designer's work. The exercises I gave my students served as a means of teaching them the notions of composition, color, perspective, characters, symbols and letters – teaching their definitions and ways of using them. One of my most invaluable experiences during that time was being a thesis supervisor. The works I had a chance to guide were – among others – book illustrations, visual identities, and posters that caught the eye of the viewer by virtue of their originality and visual clarity. One of my students – Dominik Łyszczarz – was granted an award from the President of the Polish Patent Office for his poster for a contest about protection of intellectual property held by the Polish Patent Office in 2012.

In 2015 I also began to teach printmaking in Lublin School of Art and Design. Through sharing my own knowledge and experience, I successfully encouraged my students to create interesting and artistically mature monotypes and linocuts – black-and-white along colored ones. Although I only got to teach it for one year, I can proudly say that the works of two of my students – Natalia Czapla and Magdalena Rachoń – were accepted for the exhibition of the XII International Ex-libris Print Contest held in Gliwice in 2016. Both were created during my classes.

In 2015 I was hired as an adjunct professor of Artistic Education in the Institute of Fine Arts at the Faculty of Humanities of the University of Natural Sciences and Humanities in Siedlce, where I work to this day. I had the chance to teach visual grammar, graphic design, visual structures and painting and graphic techniques in education – nevertheless, the main part of my didactic and academic work is teaching the fundamentals and different techniques of printmaking.

As a printmaking aficionado, I am constantly striving to inspire my students to love it as well, not only by sharing my knowledge and experience, but also by giving them thought-provoking prompts and subjects for their own works. When giving them their subjects, I try to talk with them about them – not only to make them more concrete, but also to search for hidden meanings and additional issues we had not seen earlier. In graphic design we call this process making a mind map; in class, I call it a brainstorm. These conversations not only help the students to see the issues multi-dimensionally, but also open them to one another.

As I have mentioned earlier, I consider drawing to be the foundation of printing; I also aim at teaching this to my students. This is why I put such an emphasis on it; drawing is the starting point of all their artistic activities and the basis of their later print.

Despite the fact that Artistic Education is a Bachelor's Degree program, destined to last three years – or six semesters – when working on my four-semester curriculum within it, I seek to teach them the full scope of printing techniques. This is why I included all the basic rotogravure, letterpress and experimental techniques.

I usually begin by teaching monotype; it is a fairly simple technique and an ideal occasion to make the students familiar with matrices and copies – and with the uniqueness of printmaking itself. Monotype, by virtue of its simplicity, gives the students broad creative possibilities; this is why the students usually take it up with great interest and come back to it after classes. It is worth noting here that my Artistic Education students are people who are only beginning their artistic – and printing, for that matter – journey. They are, for the most part, high school graduates who had never had any printmaking experience whatsoever, but who would like to further develop their talents.

Another techniques I like to teach my students is linocut (sometimes it is plaster printing); first, it is black-and-white, then – colored. When creating colored linocuts, I encourage my students to experiment and to mix different colors. During the next semesters, we cover different rotogravure techniques: drypoint, etching and aquatint. The two years of printmaking end with creating artworks using mixed techniques and a collagraphy assignment. This way the students learn to use the techniques intentionally, and – by mixing them and experimenting – discover an artistic voice of their own.

Printmaking techniques have evolved through the years; for that reason, I am not limiting myself only to my own knowledge and experiences, but I make use of a full scope of different sources, and I encourage my students to do the same.

In my work, I aim to show my students the history of printmaking, inspiring them to learn from the experiences of others. This is why we often watch and discuss famous works in class.

I have also been the supervisor of the Edu-Art Student Association, founded in 2015. Our work includes organizing workshops for schoolchildren; we strive to spread the love for art among them and to encourage them to explore it for themselves. The workshops are also an excellent way for the students to gain some real-life experience in the field of their studies. Any student from our university can partake in our activities; this is an excellent occasion to instill the passion for art among others. The members of the Association do not work solely within the confines of their University; we also intend to step and act outside of it, by, for example, organizing workshops in schools and kindergartens and organizing exhibitions and museum excursions. What is more, the

members of the Association designed a mural to commemorate the Battle of Iganie for the 100 Years of Polish Independence

The Polish Parliament declared 2017 as the Year of Saint Albert, which sparked in me the idea to organize an art contest for high school students from Mazovia, Poland. The main topic of the contest was „Gdybym miał dwie dusze...” („If I had two souls...”) and was inspired by Saint Albert's words that he famously said to a friend painter of his, who criticized him for having abandoned painting. This contest not only helped people to get to know his art, but also resulted in interesting and mature works that were sent in for the contest. The visual identity of the contest was co-authored by me and the members of Edu-Art.

As an artist and a professor, I am striving to popularize graphic art by organizing print workshops during the open days at the University of Natural Sciences and Humanities in Siedlce, focusing mostly on printing – but sometimes on graphic design as well.

In 2018 I began an ongoing collaboration with Wawer Center for Culture in Anin, organizing a yearly exhibition of the works of my students. The first exhibition – „Preludium” („Prelude”) – took place in May of 2018; the next one is planned for April of 2019. „Preludium” was met with such a warm reception that two of the displayed works were sold.

In 2019, I will be organizing a plain air art event – planned for July 2019 in Gródek upon Bug. The event will be called „Tydzień Foto-graficzny” („The Photo-graphics Week”), as the projects are planned to combine different techniques: photography, drawing and printmaking. The goal is for the students to create a print based on their photographs and drawings, to broaden their artistic – photographic and graphic – horizons and to help them use different media and techniques more intentionally as means of expressing their own artistic voice.

In the academic year 2017/2018 I served as an internship tutor; moreover, since 2016, I have been the year tutor for the Artistic Education students.

In 2016, my article „Tradycyjne techniki graficzne wypukło- i wklęsłodrukowe i ich wpływ na współczesne wypowiedzi artystyczne” („Traditional rotogravure and letterpress techniques and their influence on modern artistic statements”) was published in the book „Sztuki wizualne w edukacji. Patrę – widzę – wiem, 1” („Visual arts in education. Looking – seeing – knowing, Part 1”).

Since 2018, I have been a reviewer for the journal „Biuletyn Edukacji Medialnej” („The Bulletin for Media Education”) of the Catholic University of Lublin.

Furthermore, I designed several exhibition catalogues. One of them is „Niecodzienność w codzienności. Grafika” („Peculiarities of Everyday Life in Prints”) – the catalogue accompanying the exhibition of my works held in Puławy in 2019, where I share my experiences and graphic experiments

I have mentioned before. Another example would be the catalogue for my exhibition in the Test Gallery in 2019, where I presented my newest works from the print series called „Moje Jeruzalem” („My Jerusalem”).

I have been a member of the Association of Polish Artists and Designers since 2005; I have been a member of the International Print Triennial Society in Cracow since 2008 as well.

As a socially conscious person, I strive to support different charities through my art. My works were sold at auctions for leukemia patients, organized by the Professor Julian Aleksandrowicz Foundation for Prevention and Treatment for Blood Diseases in the years from 2012 through 2016.

In 2018, my works were displayed on the exhibition „Świadectwo” („Testimony”) organized by the Jesuit Gallery in Poznań. The exhibition ended in an auction; all profits went to legal support for Pakistani Christians.

This summary is a brief description of my artistic, academic, popularizing and organizational work. I concentrated only on the most significant activities in each of these disciplines, emphasizing only those that pertained to the main topic – the print series „Moje Jeruzalem” („My Jerusalem”), which is the subject of the habilitation proceedings. The descriptions I have included are its inherent part. My works of art have frequently been a source of inspiration for the works of my students. Their zeal and fresh minds have – in turn – been an impulse for me, encouraging me to review or expand certain aspects of my own artistic or academic experiences. Although the summary has been divided into chapters describing different time periods and domains of my activities, each and every one of them has developed me as a person, as an artist, and as a human being.

*Agnieszka Masel.*