

The Performativity of Tadeusz Kantor's *Multipart*

Justyna Michalik-Tomala

ORCID: 0000-0003-4865-0566

Analyzing the discourse of conceptualism in the Polish People's Republic, Luiza Nader argues that it "consciously reflected on history and historicization, and the creation of alternative, inadequate histories" as well as "the controversies which surround the archive and the status of documentation" that it triggered and created.¹ Nader employs this critical perspective to discuss selected works and projects of Polish and foreign conceptual artists in the 1960s and in the 1970s, focusing on three most important Polish art galleries at that time – including the Foksal Gallery in Warsaw. Focusing on conceptualism and its interest in history as repetition,² Nader writes her history of the gallery which actively promoted Tadeusz Kantor at the time. It comes as no surprise that the *Multipart* project, which Kantor exhibited in the Foksal Gallery in 1971, is also described in her book. However, it seems that Nader reads *Multipart* as a prelude, as something which merely announces the explosion of mature conceptualism in the Foksal Gallery that is yet to come. Indeed, such a vision was also advanced by other critics – Wiesław Borowski, Anka Ptaszewska, Mariusz Tchorek and Andrzej Turowski – who helped establish the Foksal Gallery as *the* center of the avant-garde in Warsaw. I argue that such an interpretation of *Multipart* is not only a mistake but, more importantly, a gesture that makes it impossible to see the deeper meaning of the project. What is more, it reduces its interpretation to the discourse created by Kantor himself, which has been consistently repeated by critics and scholars to this day. Indeed, I propose to look at *Multipart* from a dif-

¹ Luiza Nader, *Konceptualizm w PRL [Conceptualism in the Polish People's Republic]* (Warsaw: Wydawnictwa Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego, 2009), 299.

² Nader, 301.

ferent perspective – to treat it as an example and a model of an experimental performative archive that corresponds to Nader’s vision of conceptualism as a repetition and production of histories. This archive is, on the one hand, a collection and materialization of artistic ideas and experiences, and, on the other hand, it is also an “artistic” documentation of reality.

Multipart: Multiplication + participation

In order to fully understand *Multipart*, we should analyze both how the project unfolded and the broader context behind it. In the fall of 1969, Tadeusz Kantor, who was then staying in Rome, wrote in a letter to Wiesław Borowski:

Dear Wiesław, I respond to your reminder about multiples with a complete project that came to my mind when I was sitting on a corner – we always sit there – (in a cafe, of course) – and staring mindlessly at the inscription on a rather ugly, pompous tenement house which read *Italiae fines promovit bellica virtus / et novus in nostra funditur urbe decor!*³ What rhythm and impeccable refined Latin – it referred of course to the poor Haile Selassie [Sellasie]⁴ – because the year was *anno domini 1937 imperii primo.*⁵

Later, Kantor described the project in detail:

So: you need to buy 100 canvases, 100 umbrellas (or less, depending on the funds). When attaching umbrellas, follow the instructions⁶ (5 students can do it in 2 days). The cost of materials and labor should be PLN 500 per piece, the cost of the painting should be PLN 1,000 – then 30 paintings should be exhibited and sold to galleries, museums, and private collectors.⁷

The buyers were required to sign a document that specified the scope of their interventions in the work of art. Kantor wrote:

The buyer is obliged to hang the painting in his apartment – the painting will be like a family album. Guests, friends, and acquaintances should sign the painting and write on it their opinions about the painting, about the artist, about art, aphorisms, *rendezvous*, words of appreciation for the artist, insults, curses, lovers should write their names, memories, accusations, farewells (you can write so many things), it should be a verbal assemblage.⁸

³ The frontiers of Italy have been advanced by the valor of war/ and new beauty flows into our city.

⁴ Emperor of Abyssinia [Ethiopia] from 1930 to 1974; he left the country during the Italian occupation which began in 1936 and ended in 1941.

⁵ The year 1937, the first year of the empire. On September 28, 1936, Benito Mussolini, having won the war with Abyssinia, proclaimed the Second Roman Empire. “List Tadeusza Kantora do Wiesława Borowskiego” [Letter from Tadeusz Kantor to Wiesław Borowski], Rome, 1 October 1969, quote after: Tadeusz Kantor. *Z archiwum Galerii Foksal* [Tadeusz Kantor. From the Foksal Gallery archives], ed. Małgorzata Jurkiewicz, Joanna Mytkowska, Andrzej Przywara (Warsaw: Galeria Foksal, 1998), 376.

⁶ See: “Projekt wystawy MULTIPART przesłany Wiesławowi Borowskiemu” [The MULTIPART exhibition project sent to Wiesław Borowski], in: Tadeusz Kantor. *Z archiwum Galerii Foksal*, 378–381.

⁷ “List Tadeusza Kantora do Wiesława Borowskiego,” 376.

⁸ “List Tadeusza Kantora do Wiesława Borowskiego”.

Kantor's project was presented on February 21, 1970, in the Foksal Gallery at the *Multipart*. *Wystawa jednego obrazu w 40 egzemplarzach* exhibition [Multipart: Exhibition of one painting in 40 copies].⁹ At the vernissage, all paintings were sold at a fairly low price, equal to the cost of production. Kantor also stipulated that all buyers¹⁰ must sign a contract which obliged them to handle the painting in a specific way. Indeed, the contract gave the buyers the right and encouraged them to act "on" and "with" the multipart. However, it was strictly forbidden to paint something else on it, although one could "use one's favorite color to paint over the canvas."¹¹ In addition, the buyers were obliged "to send the painting to an exhibition and possibly take part in a meeting of all buyers after engaging in spontaneous creativity for half a year."¹² Kantor also stipulated in the contract that "in case of emergency, the owner of the painting may write to the author or the gallery for advice," at the same time, the artist reserved the right to "comment on each painting during the vernissage and exhibition."¹³

On February 20, 1971, the exhibition *Ostatni etap "Multipartu" Tadeusza Kantora* [The Last Stage of Tadeusz Kantor's Multipart] opened, with 34 *parapluie-emballages* on display, all of which had been transformed by the buyers in the past year. Six paintings were missing – they were either destroyed, resold, or the buyers did not respond to the invitation to participate in the exhibition. Although the buyers mostly filled the white canvas with notes and different objects, creating collages and assemblages, we can divide their artistic interventions into different categories.

Most buyers expressed their opinions about *Multipart* by writing and/or drawing directly on the canvas: "ciekawe – akceptuję – Ciotka nr 2" [interesting – I approve – Aunt No. 2],¹⁴ "ten Tadeusz Kantor chyba świeżo wypuszczony z Tworek" [Tadeusz Kantor must have been discharged from Tworki psychiatric hospital], "dobre, przypuszczalnie początek nowej ery w sztuce [it's interesting, probably the beginning of a new era in art]. Respectively, we also find notes about the everyday life of the buyers and their relatives: "już niedługo urodzi się Karolinka lub Michał" [Caroline or Michael will be born soon] (an inscription which was most likely added later reads

⁹ Zaproszenie na wystawę Multipartów [Invitation to the Multipart exhibition], quote after Tadeusz Kantor. Z archiwum Galerii Foksal, 203.

¹⁰The buyers were Kantor's friends and acquaintances, people known in the artistic circles, as well as "regular" people: Anette Ahrenberg – Chexbres (Switzerland), Theodore Ahrenberg – Chexbres (Switzerland), Idalia Bargielowska – Warsaw, Walter Baran – Frackville (USA), "Druga Grupa" [Second Group]: Jacek Stokłosa, Waław Janicki, Lesław Janicki – Kraków, Jerzy Frycz – Toruń, Wojciech Fałkowski – Warsaw, Georg Friede – New York, Inessa Jeleńska (PAP) – Warsaw, Jerzy Kałucki – Kraków, Teresa Kelm – Warsaw, Alicja Kępińska – Poznań, Józef Kulesza – Warsaw, Adam Mauersberger – Warsaw, Ewa and Grzegorz Morycińscy – Warsaw, Katarzyna Markowska – Warsaw, Ewa Pape – New York, Julian Pałka – Warsaw, Pierre Pauli – Lausanne, Achille Perilli – Rome, Hanna Ptaszkowska – Zalesie Górne, Georg Posner – New York, Erna Rosenstein – Warsaw, Marek Rostworowski – Kraków, Krzysztof Rusin – Warsaw, Janusz Skalski – Warsaw, Ryszard Stanisławski – Łódź, Janusz Strzałecki – Warsaw, Janina Ścieszko – Warsaw, Zygmunt Targowski – Warsaw, Bronisław Tomecki – Warsaw, Anders Wall – Stockholm, Wanda Wedecka – Warsaw and "Zuzanna i Spółka" [Susanna and Co.]: Joanna Lichota (née Golde), Krystyna Gutowska (née Kobylińska), Professor Witold Krassowski, Krzysztof Kubicki, Stanisław, Marek Młodecki, Krzysztof Ozimek, Krzysztof Pasternak, Krzysztof Sroczyński, Zuzanna Trojanowska – Warsaw.

¹¹"Warunki umowy Multipartu" [The Multipart contract terms], quote after: Tadeusz Kantor. Z archiwum Galerii Foksal, 208.

¹²"Warunki umowy Multipartu", 202–203.

¹³"Warunki umowy Multipartu", 203.

¹⁴The entire description is based on the information and reproductions of paintings found in: Tadeusz Kantor. Z archiwum Galerii Foksal, 236–253.

that after all “urodziła się Karolinka” [Caroline was born), “nie wiem czy to dobrze, nie wiem czy to źle, wszystko tu zdrożało za wyjątkiem mnie” [I don’t know if it’s good or bad, but everything has become more expensive here except for me], “ja chcę prywatkę a mama utrudnia” [I want to throw a party and my mother is making things difficult for me], etc. There are also inscriptions in foreign languages, such as “I love you Ann,” and expressions of personal views and feelings: “niech żyje Salvador Dali” [long live Salvador Dali], “Kocham Miszę i mój obraz” [I love Misza and my painting]. Various objects were also attached to the paintings, including tickets, letters, keys, threads and ribbons, fragments of newspapers, clothes, postcards, photographs. Some were transformed into artistic compositions, but the Foksal Gallery archives inform us that they were “the least interesting from the point of view of *Multipart*.”¹⁵

We should also, at least briefly, discuss “actions involving the use of the painting in everyday or ‘artistic’ situations.”¹⁶ Ewa Partum, then a student at the Academy of Fine Arts in Warsaw, exhibited two *Multiparts* wrapped in paper as part of her diploma thesis at the Faculty of Painting (she received a very good grade). The *Multipart* project allowed or even provoked owners to use the painting in an unusual way. The most spectacular example of this was a series of actions undertaken by a group of students at the Faculty of Architecture at the Warsaw University of Technology. “Zuzanna i spółka” [Susanna and Co.], as this was the name the students chose for themselves, decided to use the painting as a banner during the May Day parade. A white umbrella was paraded through Warsaw city center, surrounded by red banners, red flags, and portraits of party and state leaders. This event was recorded on film by Krzysztof Kubicki and Marek Młodecki, members of the group.¹⁷

An umbrella – a broken sign

According to the commonly accepted interpretation, which was to some extent confirmed by Tadeusz Kantor, *Multipart* was an attempt to question the concept of a work of art seen as an original and creative work. Kantor did not produce *Multipart* himself – he only came up with a concept and a detailed technical description – and thus he challenged the work of art’s unique status as an artifact. He thus also challenged the role of museums, galleries, and collectors. The artist argued that:

The author transfers the numerous prerogatives of the so-called creativity to other people, whom he does not deprive of hope and the illusion of owning a work of art. However, since the object they possess turns into an everyday, almost utilitarian, object, the author questions the naive and fictitious concept of a work of art.¹⁸

¹⁵This opinion was (most likely) expressed by Wiesław Borowski in his essay published in the post-exhibition catalog Tadeusz Kantor. *Multipart* [Tadeusz Kantor: *Multipart*]. Considering the fact that Kantor closely cooperated with Borowski during the *Multipart* project, it can be assumed that this was also Kantor’s opinion. After all, the contract stipulated that it was strictly “forbidden to paint something else” on the canvas. See: Tadeusz Kantor. Z archiwum Galerii Foksal

¹⁶Tadeusz Kantor. Z archiwum Galerii Foksal.

¹⁷*Multipart*, a black and white movie directed by Krzysztof Kubicki and Marek Młodecki, produced by: Stodoła Filmmaking Club in Warsaw, 1971, running time: 14' 6".

¹⁸Tadeusz Kantor. Z archiwum Galerii Foksal, 211.

Wiesław Borowski emphasized Kantor's rather ambiguous role in the entire project, which he did and did not create:¹⁹

The *Multipart* project is also a new "meeting" between painting and psychic reality, marked by the participation of "other," unknown, "ready-made" people from outside the artistic circles. The end result of this procedure is also a "ready-made" object that found its way into Kantor's painting, and it is not a painting of his.²⁰

Luiza Nader noticed a similar ambivalence in the artist's actions, drawing attention to their ironic and grotesque character:

Multiparts as fictional works, the sale and collection of which can be described as absurd, gave rise to absolute uselessness. Appearance and absurdity turned out to be elements of the strategy of resistance to models of reception and interpretation that look for functionality, usefulness, or aesthetic gratification in the work of art, that set epistemological and ontological goals for art, or that see it as a form of sublimation.²¹

Still, we can reject this interpretation and try to reflect on the possible "functionality and usefulness" of *Multipart* – perhaps it will turn out that the actual ambivalence of this project transcends the ontology of a work of art.

From the formal point of view, multiparts, paintings purchased by "collectors" which today do not function within a single collection, constitute the "archive of *Multipart*," which was an artistic project carried out by Kantor at the Foksal Gallery, testifying to its history with their materiality. At the same time, a single painting is a stand-alone archive of individual or group buyers – many micro-histories of individual works may thus be reconstructed. Following this line of reasoning, *Multipart* can also be seen as an archive that allows one to discover Kantor's inspirations, artistic ideas, designs, and actions; in other words, it is an archive that makes it possible to (to some extent) reconstruct his creative process or philosophy of art. Small clues, the ones which often go unnoticed, thus become important. If we were to engage in such a reconstruction, we should start by saying that *Multipart* is yet another project in which the artist used one of his favorite motifs, that is an umbrella. In one of Kantor's numerous texts devoted to an umbrella we read:

1964. The first umbrella attached to the canvas. The very choice of this object was an unexpected discovery for me, and the decision to use this utilitarian object to replace the sacred artistic painting practices was then, through profanation, an act of emancipation. Certainly greater than gluing a piece of a newspaper, string or matchbox to the canvas. I wasn't looking for a new object to use in a collage but rather an interesting *emballage*. The umbrella is a kind of metaphorical

¹⁹The current status of multiparts is really interesting in this context: officially recognized as Kantor's works, they are subject to copyright protection. The rights to Kantor's works now belong to the artist's heirs.

²⁰Wiesław Borowski, "Kantor. Ambaláže i Multipart" [Kantor: Emballages and Multipart], *Współczesność* 28 (1970).

²¹Nader, 265.

emballage, it is a “packaging” for many human affairs, it contains poetry, uselessness, helplessness, defenselessness, selflessness, hope, and ridiculousness.²²

The umbrella as a metaphorical “*emballage* for many human affairs” often appears in Kantor’s paintings and theater performances, and its ambiguity and varied, as the artist wrote, “content” is always palpable. According to the principle of *emballage*,²³ the umbrella provides shelter, allows one to survive, but also makes one inaccessible and sets boundaries that cannot be crossed.

In this context, let us recall once again the circumstances surrounding the creation of *Multipart*. The tenement house mentioned by Kantor in the letter to Borowski still exists today and is located at Piazza di Sant’Andrea della Valle in Rome. Erected, according to the Latin inscription, in the year Italian fascism began, it actually brings to mind the shape of an umbrella. The vault above the see-through double front gate is in the shape of a perfect semicircle, as if cut off from the rest of the opening by a horizontal beam. The shape of an open umbrella created in this way further extends into a handle formed by a line between the gate wings. Apart from this purely iconographic inspiration, the emperor of defeated Abyssinia, Haile Selassie, also comes to mind. According to protocol, a servant always carried an umbrella to protect the emperor. The emperor’s umbrellas were richly decorated, encrusted with jewels, and often trimmed around the edges with a decorative trim. The reference to an architectural detail is surprising, because a trim may also be seen on the horizontal beam above the gate, in the form of small decorative elements. The emperor’s umbrella – apart from its obvious utility functions – also symbolized power and status. Interestingly, not only the Ethiopian court saw the umbrella as a symbol of power. Similar interpretations may be found in Tibetan Buddhism, the culture of China and Japan, and the Catholic Church.²⁴ Such unusual contexts recorded in this unique archive definitely expand the field of interpretation of the project. In Kantor’s *Multipart*, the umbrella – a symbol of power, strength, and individuality – becomes a broken, useless, ridiculous object, unceremoniously and anonymously attached to the canvas. Its uniqueness is additionally negated by multiplication. And since the project “questioned the concept of a work of art” and “deprived it of its dignity,” as Kantor argued, the umbrella also became a “broken” sign – a sign which questioned its original meaning. This is particularly clear in the context of Krzysztof Kubicki and Marek Młodecki’s movie – a broken umbrella paraded in front of a grandstand points to the inevitable fall of (any?) power.

²²Tadeusz Kantor, “Parasol” [Umbrella], in idem: *Metamorfozy. Teksty o latach 1934–1974. Pisma* [Metamorphoses. Texts about the years 1934–1974. Writings], vol. I, selected and edited by Krzysztof Pleśniarowicz (Kraków – Wrocław: Ośrodek Dokumentacji Sztuki Tadeusza Kantora CRICOTEKA – Ossolineum, 2005), 313.

²³On the idea of emballages, see: Tadeusz Kantor, “Manifest ambalazy” [Emballage manifesto], in idem: *Metamorfozy. Teksty o latach 1934–1974*, 300–304.

²⁴I wrote more about this topic in: Justyna Michalik, *Idea bardzo konsekwentna. Happening i Teatr Happeningowy Tadeusza Kantora* [A Very Consistent Idea. Tadeusz Kantor’s Happening and Happening Theater] (Kraków: Universitas, 2015). I repeat these observations for the sake of clarity of my argument.

Living archives

Archiving and documenting his artistic legacy became extremely important for Tadeusz Kantor in the 1980s; it almost bordered on obsession. Eventually it materialized in the form of the Cricoteka²⁵ together with its most important part – the archive. Importantly, Kantor never held any official function (in the administrative sense) in this institution. It was run by the people chosen by the artist; they were usually connected with his theater performances in some way. This does not change the fact that Kantor, as (as he put it) the “spiritual patron saint” of the center had a say in the way it operated. In one of his numerous letters to the director of Cricoteka, he thus commented on its structure:

The main goal of the Cricot 2 Theater Center is to provide the next generation of theater people with years of experience collected by myself and my team [...]. The archive is the CENTER of the entire institution [...].²⁶

The artist wanted the archive to be constantly expanded (even after his death). Moreover, as Krzysztof Pleśniarowicz noted, it was supposed to be a *Living Archive* – it was meant to preserve Kantor’s artistic legacy “not in a stiff librarian system but in the minds of the generations to come.”²⁷ Kantor wrote that:

The idea of the “Living Archive” [emphasis, T.K.] guided all my efforts and the work I devoted to the organization and functioning of the Documentation Center Cricot 2 Theater.

The role of the “Living Archive” is and will be [emphasis, T.K.] in the future:

preserving the idea of this historically significant center, for these ideas will (should) become part of the foundation on which the theater and our successors will create further advancements in the future.

Probably by opposing them.

But it is precisely in such cases that one must have full knowledge of their ancestors.²⁸

Kantor was actively involved in creating his archive – both in the ideological and technical sense. He described in detail what was to be collected and cataloged and how. He also took care of the artistic *emballage* of the collection – he designed special boxes, tables, cabinets,

²⁵The first and main seat of Cricoteka was located at ul. Kanonicza 5 in Kraków; in 2014 the institution (and the Archives) was moved to a new building at ul. Nadwiślańska 2-4. On the history of the center and the archiving methods used there see: Anna Halczak, “CRICOTEKA: «konieczność przekazywania»” [CRICOTEKA: the need to document and inspire], in: *Dziś Tadeusz Kantor! Metamorfozy śmierci, pamięci i obecności* [Tadeusz Kantor today! Metamorphoses of death, memory, and presence], ed. Marta Bryś, Anna Róża Burzyńska, Katarzyna Fazan (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego, 2014), 303–313 and Natalia Zarzecka, “«Cricoteka» – żywe archiwum” [«Cricoteka» – a living archive], *Zarządzanie w Kulturze* 3 (2002): 159–176.

²⁶Letter from Tadeusz Kantor, typescript kept in the Cricoteka.

²⁷Krzysztof Pleśniarowicz, *Kantor. Artysta końca wieku* [Kantor: Artist of the end of the century] (Wrocław: Wydawnictwo Dolnośląskie, 1997), 301.

²⁸Tadeusz Kantor, “Oświadczenie” [Statement], typescript kept in the Cricoteka Archive, I/000604.

and other furniture for storing artifacts. Kantor wanted his archive to fulfil two important functions – it was to be a museum and an academic institute:

The Archive must function as a museum – it is essential and necessary. Without it, art and culture do not advance. The museum stores works, achievements, experiences, and ideas. It preserves the past and tradition. It ensures the continuity of cultural development. The Center serves these purposes, as a museum it preserves Tadeusz Kantor's theatrical and painterly legacy and the artistic output of the troupe.²⁹

Kantor's personal involvement in organizing the archive turns the archive into an art project, the artist's "last, unfinished work."³⁰ Karolina Czerska analyzed the performativity of Kantor's archive, conceived of not only as a collection in the Cricoteka archive but also as "different 'voices' of individual archives of broadly understood performance, where [Kantor] was an actor and a creator."³¹ Drawing on Jacques Rancière, Czerska emphasized that the artist was the one who originally "created the perceptible" and made visible what was/could be accessed. After Kantor's death, his co-workers ensured that the archival message would be kept intact, and that Kantor's ideas would live on undistorted. We should point out that Kantor had come across the concept of the *Living Archive* much earlier, in the early 1970s, during the *Multipart* era, although he probably had not realized that he would use this concept in the future. I am, of course, referring to the critics associated with the Foksal Gallery with whom Kantor worked closely. Wiesław Borowski, Anka Ptaszkowska, Mariusz Tchorek and Andrzej Turowski asked questions related both to the functioning of an art gallery in general and the documentation or the gallery in the context of their own understanding of the *Living Archive*.

In August 1971, during a meeting in Kuźnica on the Hel Peninsula, Borowski and Turowski presented two important texts: *Żywe archiwum* [Living Archive]³² and *Dokumentacja* [Documentation].³³ According to Luiza Nader, they responded to the "uncontrolled proliferation of documentation – both in conceptual art and the history of the Foksal Gallery."³⁴ In *Żywe archiwum*, both critics "emphasized a breach between ephemeral experience and its inherently fragmentary and manipulable documentation. They noticed that collectors and museums absorbed, objectified, and commodified artistic documentation, and also pointed to the logic of the document itself, insofar as the document demands to be transformed so that

²⁹Letter from Tadeusz Kantor to the Minister of Culture and Art, the Cricoteka Archive, c. 1987 r.

³⁰See: Małgorzata Paluch Cybulska, *Archiwum Tadeusza Kantora. Wprowadzenie* [Tadeusz Kantor's Archive. Introduction], lecture delivered at the symposium *Kantor-Archiwum. Konteksty i transformacje* [Kantor-Archive. Contexts and transformations] [video], <https://www.cricoteka.pl/pl/sympozjum-kantor-archiwum-konteksty-transformacje/>, date of access 31 Jan. 2023.

³¹Karolina Czerska, *Performatywność archiwum Tadeusza Kantora* [The performativity of Tadeusz Kantor's archive], in: *Performatywność reprezentacji: widzialne/niewidzialne* [The performativity of representation: visible/invisible], ed. Karolina Czerska, Joanna Jopek, Anna Sieroń (Kraków: Księgarnia Akademicka, 2013), 21.

³²Wiesław Borowski, Andrzej Turowski, "Żywe archiwum" [Living archive], in: *Tadeusz Kantor. Z archiwum Galerii Foksal*, 425–426.

³³Wiesław Borowski, Andrzej Turowski, "Dokumentacja" [Documentation], in: *Tadeusz Kantor. Z archiwum Galerii Foksal*, 424.

³⁴Nader, 310.

it can become part of an institutionalized collection or a bureaucratizing archive.”³⁵ Expressing the belief that “DOCUMENTATION is more difficult to destroy than museums and collections,” both critics wished to “challenge it.”³⁶ Indeed, Borowski and Turowski argued that the *Living Archive* should not so much as disseminate facts but isolate and neutralize them. It was not the work that was accessible but only the information about it. These ideas gave rise to the *Living Archives* exhibitions at the Foksal Gallery, which presented both the materials owned/archived by the Gallery and those sent especially by artists. The project was ironic, or mocking, in nature, because the artists who wanted to share their documents with the public and at the same time prevent anyone from accessing the living archive laminated all the materials. From today’s perspective, this undoubtedly reminds one of Kantor’s *emballage*.³⁷

In this context, we can think of *Multipart* as a response to questions related to the status of a work of art and its documentation. These problems were undoubtedly discussed in the Warsaw artistic circles to which Kantor belonged at that time. This response is therefore both ironic and paradoxically ambiguous.

Finally, we should pay attention to one more aspect, namely a kind of aporia inscribed both in *Multipart* (as already mentioned) and in Kantor’s version of the *Living Archive*. Nader claims that the critics associated with the Foksal Gallery challenged the “archive of death,” as described by Jacques Derrida, an archive determined by structures based on repression and prohibition. And Kantor’s archive is an almost exemplary implementation of what Derrida warns against when he writes about contemporary “archive fever.” In this approach, Kantor functions as an *archon* – he creates and controls a clearly defined and formatted discourse about himself. At the same time, the archive at Cricoteka was meant to be “living,” that is, on the one hand, constantly supplemented with new materials (which could at times probably disturb the coherence of the message, of which Kantor could and should have been aware) and, on the other hand, “living” in the minds of young people who would like to use and transform Kantor’s ideas (they must be able to use the archive freely). The ambivalence and liminality of Kantor’s *Living Archive*, therefore, repeats the ambivalence and liminality of *Multipart*, in which almost every artistic situation created by Kantor was immediately stopped and questioned – both as regards his own and other people’s participation in the project. Therefore, *Multipart* is not so much a response to questions related to documentation and the archive as its performative model.

translated by Małgorzata Olsza

³⁵Nader, 310–311.

³⁶Borowski, Turowski, “Dokumentacja”.

³⁷Wiktoria Szczupacka writes about the living archive of the Foksal Gallery in the context of institutional criticism in: “Galeria przeciw galerii i żywe archiwum, czyli teoria i praktyka Galerii Foksal z perspektywy krytyki instytucjonalnej” [Gallery against gallery and the living archive, or the theory and practice of the Foksal Gallery from the perspective of institutional criticism], *Sztuka i Dokumentacja* 19 (2018): 169–185.

References

- Borowski, Wiesław. "Malarstwo Kantora. Ambaláže i Multipart". *Współczesność* 9 (1970): 8.
- Borowski, Wiesław, Andrzej Turowski. "Dokumentacja". In: *Tadeusz Kantor. Z archiwum Galerii Foksal*, ed. Małgorzata Jurkiewicz, Joanna Mytkowska, Andrzej Przywara, 424. Warsaw: Galeria Foksal, 1998.
- . "Żywe archiwum". In: *Tadeusz Kantor. Z archiwum Galerii Foksal*, ed. Małgorzata Jurkiewicz, Joanna Mytkowska, Andrzej Przywara, 425–426. Warsaw: Galeria Foksal, 1998.
- Czerska, Karolina "Performatywność archiwum Tadeusza Kantora". In: *Performatywność reprezentacji: widzialne/niewidzialne*, ed. Karolina Czerska, Joanna Jopek, Anna Sieroń, 21–60. Kraków: Księgarnia Akademicka, 2013.
- Halczak, Anna. "CRICOTEKA: «konieczność przekazywania»". In: *Dziś Tadeusz Kantor! Metamorfozy śmierci, pamięci i obecności*, ed. Marta Bryś, Anna Róża Burzyńska, Katarzyna Fazan, 303–313. Kraków: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego, 2014.
- Kantor, Tadeusz. "List Tadeusza Kantora do Wiesława Borowskiego". In: *Tadeusz Kantor. Z archiwum Galerii Foksal*, ed. Małgorzata Jurkiewicz, Joanna Mytkowska, Andrzej Przywara, 376–377. Warsaw: Galeria Foksal, 1998.
- . "Parasol". In idem: *Metamorfozy. Teksty o latach 1934–1974. Pisma*, vol. I, selected and edited by Krzysztof Pleśniarowicz, 313–314. Kraków – Wrocław: Ośrodek Dokumentacji Sztuki Tadeusza Kantora CRICOTEKA – Ossolineum, 2005.
- . "Projekt wystawy MULTIPART przesłany Wiesławowi Borowskiemu". In: *Tadeusz Kantor. Z archiwum Galerii Foksal*, ed. Małgorzata Jurkiewicz, Joanna Mytkowska, Andrzej Przywara, 378–381. Warsaw: Galeria Foksal, 1998.
- Michalik, Justyna. *Idea bardzo konsekwentna. Happening i Teatr Happeningowy Tadeusza Kantora*. Kraków: Universitas, 2015.
- Nader, Luiza. *Konceptualizm w PRL*. Warsaw: Wydawnictwa Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego, 2009.
- Pleśniarowicz, Krzysztof. *Kantor. Artysta końca wieku*. Wrocław: Wydawnictwo Dolnośląskie, 1997.
- Szczupacka, Wiktoria. "Galeria przeciw galerii i żywe archiwum, czyli teoria i praktyka Galerii Foksal z perspektywy krytyki instytucjonalnej". *Sztuka i Dokumentacja* 19 (2018): 169–185.
- Zarzecka, Natalia "«Cricoteka» – żywe archiwum". *Zarządzanie w Kulturze* 3 (2002): 159–176.

KEYWORDS

ABSTRACT:

The article is an attempt to analyze the *Multipart* project as an example and a model of an experimental archive. This archive is, on the one hand, a collection and materialization of Kantor's ideas, previous experiences, and inspirations, and, on the other hand, an 'artistic' documentation of the everyday life of the buyers and 'users' of these peculiar works. In particular, I focus on the extent to which *Multipart* may have been an inspiration for Kantor, or a stimulus, to create a 'living archive' of his work, on which he principally focused towards the end of his life. I read such attempts in the wider context of critical and theoretical texts written by the critics associated with the Foksal Gallery at the time, who discussed the way in which an art gallery was run and posed questions about documentation or the gallery as a 'living archive'.

KANTOR

M u l t i p a r t

ARCHIVE

NOTE ON THE AUTHOR:

Justyna Michalik-Tomala – Ph.D., Assistant Professor at the Department of Drama and Theater at the University of Łódź, Poland. The author of *Idea bardzo konsekwentna. Happening i Teatr Happeningowy Tadeusza Kantora* [A Very Consistent Idea: Tadeusz Kantor's Happening and Happening Theater] (2015). Her research interests focus on the theater of the 20th century avant-garde.