

Listening to Dawn

Wojciechowski's Last Sculpture

The story of the sculpture began with my ceiling. We were neighbors, Richard would drop by sometimes. He came to like my house, its high vaulted cedar ceiling in particular. He used to say, "It wouldn't be bad to hang something from that ceiling."

One day he fell ill and I drove him to the hospital. We were waiting to be seen by a doctor when he suddenly said he would make a sculpture for me. He wanted to know what I would like, but I could not answer the question. Then he said he would sculpt me. We had a good laugh at the idea—his sculptures are famous for the provocative distortions of their models' forms.

Eventually we decided to leave the choice of the subject to him as, frankly, what it would be was not as important to me as the fact that he would be its creator.

And... almost nine years had passed since that day. I was sure he had forgotten.

One day, a few months before his death, he called me unexpectedly—"Maria, I haven't forgotten, I'm working on it." I knew he was seriously ill at that time, I knew he needed to be in hospital.

When we used to visit him in those days, still in his home, I could see a large shape in the middle of the room, all covered with burlap. I was guessing it might have been "my" sculpture; Richard loved to surprise.

And that's what it was. This extraordinary masterpiece turned out unexpectedly large, huge. Richard wanted to hang it by a chain all by HIMSELF, he would not let anyone help him. One cannot imagine how this frail, seriously ill man could do it alone, standing on that tall

ladder! At the time we didn't even know yet that his arm was partly paralyzed. Now, when we need to move the piece around, for example for renovations, it takes two strong men to accomplish the task.

The sculpture represents a woman leaning out of a window, intent and listening... Listening to Dawn.

Her face is marked by black furrows running down her cheeks, like the lines left by tears. The sumptuousness of her clothes contrasts with the wooden frame, styled like a simple country fence. Thanks to the presence of this sculpture, my house has gotten a different character.

I asked the artist what thought he was trying to express—he replied, "A psychiatrist should listen." I thought, Hmm...

It's difficult to give thanks for something that exceeds our expectations, so I don't remember what I said back then. I think for the artist himself, this could have been a kind of closure, too.

He died soon thereafter.

Maria Daszkiewicz, Psychiatrist



Wysłuchana w Brzask, autor: Ryszard Wojciechowski, 2002