

FROM THE EDITORS

PERCEIVING IMAGERY

For primates (including, of course, every one of us), the primary sense that allows us to gain our bearings in the world is sight. Thus, looking, seeing, forming mental representations of phenomena around us represents the essential mechanism by which humans to orient ourselves amidst the surrounding reality. Looking is therefore primary – it even precedes speaking. This is confirmed by one of our basic cognitive schemas: “seeing is believing.” But are the images we perceive really (faithful) reflections of phenomena in the world? Or are they merely distinctive visual representations thereof, constructed by us in line with socially established visual codes? Today we know for certain that any image, created or perceived, intended to be a “neutral” (e.g. photography) or artistic (e.g. painting) representation of reality, is never just a transparent window on the world – it is always an interpretation, made from a particular perspective and point of view. The “iconic turn,” an important turning point in contemporary culture (called “the image culture”), has made us realize the importance of multifaceted reflection on the socio-cultural manifestations of visuality and the ways it is perceived. This visuality is not necessarily of an artistic nature. The ubiquity of images, deeply ingrained in certain cultural discourses, and the universality of their assimilation have important anthropological, cognitive, and discursive consequences. This is because images are, in a sense, “texts” – generating meanings, fused into a semantic whole by the user of the culture, in each act of reception. Thus, the truth of an image comes to light only when it is read as a text – for only reading an image as a text reveals its structural character. And “seeing” is itself always a negotiation of meaning between the sensory stimuli perceived by the viewer and his or her knowledge and expectations.

PROF. BOGUSŁAW SKOWRONEK

Alek Slon, Lake Play, 2020

A visual artist and curator, Alek Slon studied philosophy at the University of Warsaw and painting at the Academy of Fine Arts in Rome. “This painting shows a lake where I used to go on vacation as a little boy.

I still occasionally visit the place, and regardless of the weather and season, I always see it that way: as a sunny land of adventure and carefree fun,” he says.



ALEK SLON



THE MAGAZINE
OF THE POLISH
ACADEMY
OF SCIENCES

nr 4/76/2022
Quarterly
ISSN 1731-7401
500 copies printed

© Polska Akademia Nauk

Polish Academy
of Sciences,
Communications
Department
PKiN, pl. Defilad 1,
00-901 Warsaw,
Poland

www.pan.pl
www.academia.pan.pl
academia@pan.pl

EDITORIAL STAFF

Jolanta Iwańczuk
Editor-in-Chief
Earth Sciences

**Katarzyna
Kalinowska**
Editor

Marcin Pietras
Biological
& Agricultural Sciences

Justyna Orłowska
Journalist

Daniel Sax
Editor,
English-Language
Version

Andrzej Figatowski
Bartek Sumowski
Graphic Designer

SCIENTIFIC COUNCIL

Jerzy Duszyński
President of the Polish
Academy of Sciences
(Chairman)

Stanisław Filipowicz
Roman Słowiński
Grażyna Borkowska
Katarzyna Turnau
Witold Rużyło
Antoni Rogalski
Henryk Szymczak

Translation by
Sax Translations

Printed by
Agencja Wydawniczo-
Poligraficzna Gimpo