



The Magazine of the Polish Academy of Sciences

No. 4 (40) 2013

Quarterly

ISSN 1731-7401

Edited by:

Polish Academy of Sciences

© Polska Akademia Nauk 2013

Editor Address:

Polish Academy of Sciences
Office for Popularizing and Promoting Science
PKiN, pl. Defilad 1, 00-901 Warsaw, Poland
e-mail: academia@pan.pl
www.academia.pan.pl

Subscription:

academia.prenumerata@pan.pl

Editorial Staff:

Jan Strelau
Editor-in-Chief

Anna Zawadzka
Deputy Editor
Humanities

Katarzyna Czamecka
Managing Editor

Agnieszka Kloch
Biomedical Sciences

Agnieszka Pollo
Mathematics, Physics,
Chemistry, Technology

Kinga Malecka
Earth Sciences

Daniel Sax
English Language Editor & Translator

Caroline Stupnicka
Translator

Paweł Adamów
Art Director

Scientific Council:

Chairman:
Michał Kleiber
President of the Polish Academy of Sciences

Aleksander Posem-Zieliński

Jerzy Duszyński

Henryk Szymczak

Lucjan Pawłowski

Jacek Zaremba

DTP by Studio J.P.J.

Printed by Edit Sp. z o.o.

From Academia

Alice was right?

We communicate by various means: words and sentences, gestures and texts, signals and pictures. We use our telephones, Skype, we write emails letters, text messages, we post comments on websites. While speech, texts, and images are the basic means of communication, imagery is increasingly gaining importance. Bombarded with so much information, readers frequently focus not on text, but on illustrations. This was already realized by Alice in Wonderland: 'What is the use of a book,' she thought, 'without pictures or conversations?' We constantly encounter pictures, logos, drawings, not only in books, newspapers, and on websites, but also in the urban space – in the form of street art on the sides of buildings, fences, walls, and sidewalks. Graffiti artists, typically anonymous, leave us messages in the form of ornately shaped letters, human figures, and symbols. Some viewers treat this as an act of vandalism, unlawful interference in public space, the destruction of public property, while others try to interpret the message. Consider the bizarre humanoid figure on this issue's cover, painted on the wall of the Stuzewiec racing track (with the owner's permission). As we pass by, we can sense the presence of a mysterious artist, we smile and yet wonder what he or she wanted to convey. Or take the much more primitive graffiti shown below (meaning loosely "But what do you mean?!", scrawled next to a pay-phone). What did the "artist" here want to communicate? All such artistic works, however advanced or primitive their form, are a way of initiating dialog. Of sharing information, engaging one another. They help us feel a sense of commonality, of sharing. It is no coincidence that we find the same Latin root in communicatio (communication) and communio (community).

ACADEMIA staff

Jakub Ostrowski



BUT WHY?!