

**Przemysław Piotrowski**

*Department of Forensic Psychology,  
Institute of Applied Psychology,  
Jagiellonian University, Poland*

**Zbigniew Bajek**

*Interdisciplinary Studio I,  
Faculty of Painting,  
Academy of Fine Arts in Krakow, Poland*

**Stefan Florek**

*Department of Cognitive Science,  
Institute of Philosophy,  
Jagiellonian University, Poland*

## **THE ARTISTIC STATEMENTS OF INMATES ABOUT FREEDOM: THE “LABYRINTH OF FREEDOM” PROJECT AND ITS POSSIBLE APPLICATIONS**

**Abstract:** It is characteristic for the male prison community that showing one’s attitudes, beliefs and feelings is quite risky. In such an oppressive environment the inmates exhibit various strategies of adjustment. In some cases getting involved in artistic activities is not only a way of spending the time of isolation constructively, but it may also become a stimulus for some positive changes after the inmate’s release. The aim of this article is to describe the “Labyrinth of Freedom” project conducted at the penitentiary in Nowy Wisnicz, near Krakow, Poland, in 2012 and to discuss the inmate’s comments on freedom, the theme of the artistic project. Some possible benefits of the inmates’ artistic activity are also identified. The analyzed data consists of a selected set of inmates’ works, which share the common theme of freedom. The authors are convinced that the project had a therapeutic value because it created a chance for the inmates to express themselves through art and to reach the “outside” audience. Moreover, within the framework of the project, the inmates’ works were given the same status as the works of professional artists, which should have had a positive impact on the inmates’ self-esteem. Their artistic expression increased their sense of importance in the prison community, by reducing their feeling of isolation and dehumanization. The project was then an opportunity to develop the inmates’ awareness, and so to help them take a big step on the path to personal development and freedom.

**Keywords:** art, prison, freedom, inmates, psychotherapy.

## INTRODUCTION

The situation of imprisonment, irrespective of the location of the correction facility, causes discomfort of the inmates, as they are deprived of their freedom. The distinction between ‘positive’ and ‘negative’ forms of liberty or freedom<sup>1</sup> seems to be useful in describing the inmates’ situation: one possesses negative freedom when one is not externally constrained (e.g. by being imprisoned) and positive freedom when one is not constrained internally (e.g. by compulsion or addiction).

The loss of negative freedom in prison is undoubtedly a traumatic experience for the inmates, who have usually already experienced other traumas as well. Finding some form of psychotherapy which can be offered to them seems to be of special value. Although the negative freedom of the inmates is extremely limited, they have – to a greater or lesser extent – positive freedom, and they can express themselves through artistic activity, which opens up the possibility of compensating for the loss of the former kind of freedom by enhancing the latter kind.

Inside the institutions of a ‘total’ character<sup>2</sup> such as prisons, the desire to express one’s personality collides with the requirements of the system at every turn. Moreover, it is characteristic for the prison community (especially at the male penitentiaries) that showing one’s attitudes, beliefs or feelings is quite risky. In such an oppressive environment, the inmates exhibit various strategies of adjustment. In some cases getting involved in artistic activities is not only a way of spending the time of isolation constructively, but it may also become a stimulus for some positive changes after the inmate’s release. Participation in various programs enabling the inmates to undertake creative activities is sometimes a vital stage of self-development; it increases their social and personal competence and self-confidence. It also strengthens their motivation for further education<sup>3</sup>.

It is recommended by the institutions of the European Union that a broad spectrum of artistic activities should be incorporated into the process of prison rehabilitation. The projects run along those lines are conducted within the Leonardo da Vinci, Socrates and Grundtvig programs. The *Grundtvig and*

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<sup>1</sup> P. Taylor, *Philosophy and Human Sciences. Philosophical Papers*, vol. 2, Cambridge 1985.

<sup>2</sup> E. Goffman, *Asylums: essays on the social situation of mental patients and other inmates*. New York 1961.

<sup>3</sup> European Commission, *Prison education and training in Europe – a review and commentary of existing literature, analysis and evaluation*, Birmingham 2011.

*Leonardo da Vinci Catalogue of Projects on Prison Education & Training*, published after the international conference “Pathways to Inclusion. Strengthening European Cooperation in Prison Education and Training”<sup>4</sup>, lists twenty one international Grundtvig projects on “Arts and cultural creativity”. Poland takes part in five of them: *Roots*, *SONART*, *Crossing the Bridge*, *Little Stories*, *Great Hopes* and *Memory and Time*. Poland does not, however, participate in the broadest project of the *PAN European Network*, which involves sharing experience among the representatives of about a hundred institutions from over twenty European countries. The report by the Association of Legal Intervention, which was published within the “Watch 24” project, funded by the Open Society Institute, states that art rooms were in use in three out of eight visited prisons. Additionally, in two more institutions the inmates were able to develop their artistic talents within the educational and cultural groups or art workshops<sup>5</sup>.

Research on the influence of artistic activities on the inmates has been conducted since the end of World War II, but has intensified in the last twenty years. It has been pointed out that artistic activity in penitentiaries has educational, therapeutic and recreational value. It is important not only because it optimizes the well-being of the inmates, but also because it benefits the penitentiary itself, and – in the long term – the whole society<sup>6</sup>. The results of the research show clearly that art therapy increases the level of positive emotions, relieves the symptoms of depression, improves the interactions among the inmates and between the inmates and the staff<sup>7</sup>; it lets the inmates gain deeper psychological insight and express their difficult or dangerous thoughts and feelings<sup>8</sup>; it stimulates the changes which result in an

<sup>4</sup> GHK Consulting, *Grundtvig and Leonardo da Vinci Catalogue of Projects on Prison Education & Training*, Budapest 2010.

<sup>5</sup> M. Nielaczna, *Zmiany za murami? Stosowanie standardów postępowania z więźniami w Polsce* [Changes behind the walls? The use of standards in the treatment of inmates in Poland], Warszawa 2011.

<sup>6</sup> D. Heenan, Art as therapy: an effective way of promoting positive mental health? *Disability & Society* 2006, 21, pp. 179-191; L.M. Johnson, A place for art in prison: Art as a tool for rehabilitation and management. *Southwest Journal of Criminal Justice* 2008, 5, pp. 100-120; R. Parkes & C. Bilby, The Courage to Create: The Role of Artistic and Spiritual Activities in Prisons. *The Howard Journal of Criminal Justice* 2010, 49, pp. 97-110.

<sup>7</sup> D. Gussak, A pilot research study on the efficacy of art therapy with prison inmates, *Arts in Psychotherapy* 2004, 31, pp. 245-259; D. Gussak, The effectiveness of art therapy in reducing depression in prison populations, *International Journal of Offender Therapy and Comparative Criminology* 2007, 5, pp. 444-460.

<sup>8</sup> L.M. Johnson, Jail Wall Drawings and Jail Art Programs: Invaluable Tools for Corrections, *International Journal of Criminal Justice Sciences* 2007, 2, pp. 66-84.

increased internal locus of control<sup>9</sup>; it gives the inmates a chance to build their identity on the basis of positive patterns, to increase their self-esteem<sup>10</sup>, to improve their control over their negative emotions<sup>11</sup>, to correct their interactions with their relatives, to better cope with the discomfort of isolation<sup>12</sup>, and to increase their chance of early discharge<sup>13</sup>.

In sum, artistic activity has positive therapeutic effects on the inmates and can improve their chances of successfully adapting to their social environment. It can also be seen as a key to the inmates' way of thinking, making possible the better understanding of their problems. However, the works of the inmates – the products of their artistic activity – may benefit not only themselves, but also those who view them. An artwork can be seen as a tool of cognitive training<sup>14</sup>, due to its informational potential as an expression of the experience and knowledge of the artist, in this case – an inmate.

The aim of this article is to describe the “Labyrinth of Freedom” project conducted at the penitentiary in Nowy Wisnicz near Krakow, Poland, in 2012, to discuss the inmates' comments on freedom, and to consider its therapeutic value. Some possible benefits of the artistic activity of the inmates are also shown. The project was not meant to be only therapeutic. Its instigators considered the beneficial effects of the artistic activity at the penitentiary in a wider perspective, taking into account its diagnostic value as well as “its inherent ability to help people of all ages explore emotions and beliefs, reduce stress, resolve problems and conflicts, and enhance their sense of well-being”<sup>15</sup>.

The project was supposed to raise the level of the inmates' well-being inside the penitentiary and be a stimulus for positive changes after their release.

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<sup>9</sup> D. Gussak, Comparing the effectiveness of art therapy on depression and locus of control of male and female inmates, *Arts in Psychotherapy* 2009, 36, pp. 202-207.

<sup>10</sup> D. Heenan, 2006, *op. cit.*

<sup>11</sup> M.J. Breiner, L. Tuomisto, L. Bouyea, D. Gussak & D. Aufderheide, Creating an Art Therapy Anger Management Protocol for Male Inmates Through a Collaborative Relationship, *International Journal of Offender Therapy and Comparative Criminology* 2011, 20, pp. 1-20.

<sup>12</sup> L.M. Johnson, A place for art in prison: Art as a tool for rehabilitation and management. *Southwest Journal of Criminal Justice* 2008, 5, pp. 100-120.

<sup>13</sup> S. Belton & L. Barclay, *J Block Women of Art Project Report: Evaluating Community Education in a Prison Setting*, 2008. Darwin. Retrieved 25.08.2012 from: [http://www.cdu.edu.au/gshp/documents/JBlockwomen of Artprojectreport.pdf](http://www.cdu.edu.au/gshp/documents/JBlockwomen%20of%20Artprojectreport.pdf).

<sup>14</sup> J. Tooby & L. Cosmides, Does Beauty Build Adapted Mind, *SubStance* 2001, 94/95, pp. 6-27.

<sup>15</sup> C. Malchiodi (ed.), *Handbook of art therapy*, New York 2003.

## THE “LABYRINTH OF FREEDOM” PROJECT

”Labyrinth of Freedom” was a project of artistic activities conducted at the penitentiary in Nowy Wisnicz. It is a closed unit for male multiple offenders under the jurisdiction of the District Inspectorate of Prison Service in Krakow. The originator of the project, Zbigniew Bajek, is the head of the Interdisciplinary Studio One at the Faculty of Painting at the Academy of Fine Arts in Krakow. The “Labyrinth of Freedom” is unique because of its attempt to engage in direct dialogue two completely different groups: inmates and artists. Freedom is one of the most important concepts for both communities.

The participants of the project comprised two groups of people superficially different in all respects. The first group consisted of 28 people – lecturers and post-doctoral, doctoral and undergraduate students. With the exception of Przemysław Piotrowski, a psychologist at the Jagiellonian University in Krakow, they all came from the Academy of Fine Arts in Krakow<sup>16</sup>. The second group of participants was drawn from the inmates of the Nowy Wisnicz Penitentiary.

The process of determining the aims of the project and completing the team of participants was finished by the end of December 2011. On 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> January 2012, the team met with the representatives of the local authorities and the penitentiary at the Nowy Wisnicz Castle; the management of the penitentiary was asked to explain the idea of the project to the inmates and invite those willing to join it to a meeting with the artists. That meeting was held on 18<sup>th</sup> April 2012. More than a dozen of the inmates who decided to participate had had some previous experience with the arts. The presentation of the general idea of the project and of the different understanding of art over the ages was followed by a discussion. The inmates were invited to take part in various workshops on literature, art, film and painting. They could also take part in creating a tapestry – a patchwork on the subject of freedom. The meeting was followed by a concert given by the Heavy Blues Band.

The inmates had a chance to express their views on the main subject of the project, which was freedom, until June 10<sup>th</sup>. Each of the more than 400 inmates received a sheet of paper sized 20 x 20 cm with the printed inscription “Wolność” [Freedom]. They were asked to express their feelings on the

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<sup>16</sup> Stefan Florek, philosopher and psychologist at the Jagiellonian University, joined the project in its final stage.

concept in any way convenient to them. Several meetings were also held with smaller groups of inmates interested in discussing art. Between April and June 2012, about 20 per cent of the inmates expressed themselves artistically in some way (e.g. by means of collages, drawings or simply by crushing the sheet into a ball). Taking into account the specific character of the group and the distrust of the inmates towards the “outsiders”, it should be stressed that this was quite a large number. It also shows that the artists managed to engage in a dialogue with the people who spend their time behind bars.

At the end of the first stage of the project an exhibition was arranged at the Nowy Wisnicz Castle on June 16<sup>th</sup>. It consisted of the works of the students and faculty of the Krakow Academy of Fine Arts as well as the works of the participating inmates. Professor Zbigniew Bajek used the nearly 500 submissions to create an installation entitled *Labyrinth of Freedom*. Thirty of these submissions came from the students and faculty; the rest were contributed by the inmates. Eighty per cent of the inmates chose to submit blank sheets of paper, which is itself a form of expression; twenty per cent submitted ninety works.

Some examples of the inmates’ works will be discussed in the next section of this article. Analyzing the contributions obtained during the project, we discovered that the advantages of the influence of art on the inmates in penitentiaries also include the diagnostic potential of the works.

## **THE FREEDOM OF THE IMPRISONED – PSYCHOLOGICAL ASPECTS**

It would be difficult to find another community in which the word “freedom” is as frequently used as among prison inmates. Inside a penitentiary, freedom is an object of dreams, memories and plans for the future. As a forbidden fruit, it becomes the inmates’ object of desire, alongside women and alcohol. In a straightforward or symbolic way – it becomes the main theme of the inmates’ tattoos. But simultaneously, for many inmates the prospect of release is a source of an internal, often unconscious, conflict and fear. It is sometimes a curse for the inmates to imagine the ways in which their partners, left outside the prison walls, “use their freedom”. The “psychological presence” of freedom in the lives of the inmates may thus manifest itself in many ways. One may say that the mental representations connected with freedom play a central role in the inmates’ cognitive and emotional functioning.

Today, we consider the freedom to decide who we are and how we run our lives as one of the most important values – especially in the Western individualistic societies. At the same time, in difficult situations, we often willingly give up our freedom along with the responsibility for the decisions that are to be taken, to somebody else: a group of colleagues, experts, politicians, institutions or the state. We need to feel safe, while freedom and independence are not always easy. The sense of safety, a warm meal and a place to stay are sometimes much more valuable than freedom as such. Indeed, there are inmates who commit some minor crimes in order to spend the winter inside the penitentiary. Some other criminals – although they would never admit it – are truly relieved to be back in the predictable, familiar world of the prison after a short period outside it, because it is only behind bars that they can “be somebody”.

It seems that, although they declare their desire to be free, most of the inmates’ behaviour and way of thinking shows they are in fact running away from freedom. This is because freedom entails being self-aware, making decisions and taking responsibility for them. The privations of imprisonment are not limited to the tangible ones: the inmate’s state of mind and his dysfunctional habits impose more serious limits on his positive freedom<sup>17</sup>.

### **THE ART OF THE INMATES ON THE SUBJECT OF FREEDOM**

Expression reflects individual perception and way of thinking. A person’s life situation, and associated emotions obviously have a significant impact on the process of creation and the work itself. The male inmates have to deal with objectively difficult circumstances, as part of the community that negatively evaluates the expression of positive emotions and more broadly any signs of sensitivity and sensibility. At the same time, the inmates keenly feel the need for independence and personal freedom. Considering their special situation, it was to be expected that the project would be important for the inmates. On the other hand, it was difficult to predict the form and content of their works. Some of the inmates’ works may strike the readers/viewers with their simplicity, superficiality and naivety. On the visual level, they frequently feature sailboats, butterflies, birds, and plenty of open space (Figs. 1 and 2).

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<sup>17</sup> P. Piotrowski & S. Florek, Juvenile robbers: their disturbed rationality and innovative ways of restoring it. *Teaching Innovations* 2009, 12, pp. 5-24; S. Schleim, Brains in context in the neurolaw debate: The examples of free will and “dangerous” brains. *International Journal of Law and Psychiatry* 2012, 35, pp. 104-111.

We can assume that such motifs are an expression of the needs that cannot be fulfilled inside the penitentiary or at least are not completely satisfied because of the nature of the place of isolation.



Fig. 1. Drawing by an inmate:  
[Freedom]



Fig. 2. Drawing by an inmate:  
[Freedom]

It seems that many inmates associate freedom with the ability to travel or move at will. This accounts for the fact that windows, bars and walls are a frequent motif (Fig. 3), along with some verbal comments or symbolic expressions of the ability to enjoy one's life (Fig. 4).



Fig. 3. Drawing by an inmate:  
[Though not my body, my soul is free]



Fig. 4. Drawing by an inmate:  
[It's a strange world]

Some of the inmates' works are overtly aggressive and sexist. The world portrayed by the collages below is peopled with "tough men" flaunting their arms. A Rambo-type "duraman", a "lord and master" sits comfortably in an armchair (on a throne?), while scantily clad women are crawling at his feet. The masked characters on the left of the image also evoke the domination and aggression of the masculinity ethos (Fig. 5). The same work also contains some clues about the author's emotional way of experiencing his situation. The head of the crucified Christ and the crosses are symbols of the "path of torture" that he has already walked. The other elements suggest that he has walked it bravely and arrogantly, using power to exercise his "rights" when necessary. Looking at the second collage and reading the headlines it is composed of, one is struck by the number of words connected with violence ("death", "terror", "torture", "funeral", "crime", "hatred", "anarchy", "war", "hell", "victims"). This "world map" is completed with "sex" and "sport".

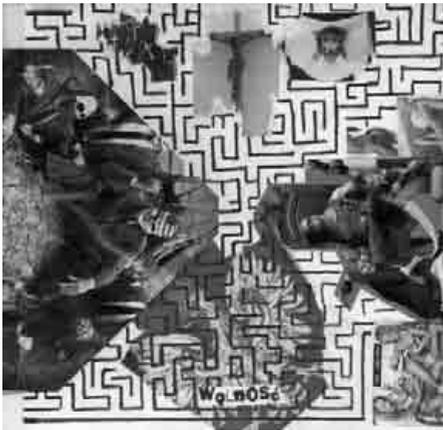


Fig. 5. Collage by an inmate

[psychoactive substances; terror; death; crime; sex; 'clean' torture; devastation; hatred; anarchy; hell; sport; wars; 31 casualties; reviews; who is going to pay for your funeral?; your hobby becomes your job]



Fig. 6. Collage by an inmate

Self-pity is easy to see in many of the verbal works. One of the inmates complains: "They put me in jail in the Communist times; I don't know how the present system works". Another inmate says: "Freedom is a wonderful thing; you just need to get there. There is nothing good for me there, when they release me, I will be sixty. No prospects for the future but 1) homelessness 2) hard time in shelters 3) death in some place where nobody cares". Naturally, there is nothing wrong in complaining about one's life situation.

But in the case of the inmates – criminals serving time – a deeper reflection would surely be useful, not only on their fate, but also on why they had broken the law and on the situation of their victims. This kind of self pity invites others to see the perpetrator as a victim (viz. the homelessness, a hard time, and lonely death in the above-quoted statement).

The next group of the verbal works glorifies freedom. One of the inmates composes the poem: “Freedom is a world with no fear/ oh, freedom, speak to me/ it is so hard to understand you here/ in search of you I go dreaming”. Another inmate declares: “Freedom is everything that’s good and beautiful to me”. Yet another one states that “Freedom is one of the most beautiful things for a man; you can be poor, old, sick or handicapped, but always a free man”. Some of the works present an idealized vision of freedom as a chance to be with relatives. One of the inmates says, “freedom = life = home – family – love – friendship”. Another one identifies freedom with his girlfriend: “For me, freedom is a desire to touch her/ it is her tenderness/ it is being good to her”.

Another set of works is completely different: their authors make an attempt at rebellious humour. In those works psychoactive substances – drugs and alcohol – are the main “road to freedom”. Here one can meet a fishing enthusiast, for whom even the fishing rod floats are shaped like beer bottles (Fig. 7), and a marijuana advocate who sees prison enshrouded in smoke coming out of the cells’ windows, and calls it a “coffee shop” (Fig. 8).

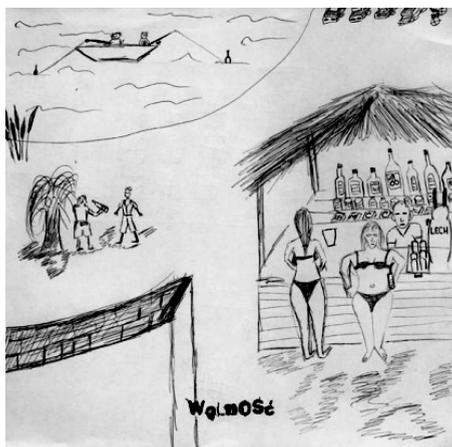


Fig. 7. Drawing by an inmate  
[Freedom]



Fig. 8. Drawing by an inmate:  
[There is life and freedom in prison]

One of the inmates drew a bottle of alcohol and added the honest comment: "I know! It kills, but I still love it". We can see an element of reflection in this comment, and although reflection in itself is not a cure, some action taken on its basis might be a step in the right direction.

Some of the inmates' works feature carefully worked-out plans for after their release. One of the more general ones is: "Get out of here and get to work; never go to Jail again. That's what I think of freedom". A precise, ten-point plan can be found in a work by another inmate, who wrote: "1) My freedom begins with the social help centre in my town; 2) Arranging accommodation; 3) Organizing private vocational course for Forklifts and Excavators; 4) Membership in A. A. group on Fridays; 5) Church; 6) After courses finding a job; 7) Applying for a social flat; 8) Always sober; no cigarettes; 9) Finding a woman for a permanent relationship (Christian)". The last point, and so a kind of definition of freedom is: 10) "Obeying the 10 Commandments".

The last group of works seems to be the most surprising. They are declarations of belief in some positive values. One of such works consists of a list of references to biblical quotations about freedom (Fig. 9).

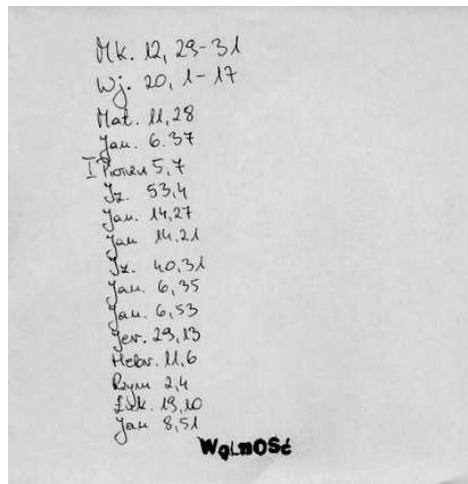


Fig. 9. Drawing by an inmate:  
[Freedom]

Another inmate summarizes his views in the sequence: "freedom – choice – no government oppression – life – not vegetation – no lie or falsity"; and the use of the maxim "days create history, minutes decide about happiness" is

accompanied by the author's comment: "and seconds may last forever! Only he who has lost it can appreciate it!".

Many of the inmates' works seem to be – as shown above – quite simple and direct expression of their emotional state. This can be seen as an attempt to reduce the tensions associated with the suppression of emotions; for some inmates involved in the project, this had a cathartic effect. In the case of other inmates, however, the significance of their works appears to result from a deeper and more complex analysis of their situation and position in the community. Their participation in the project brought about a deeper psychological insight, a phenomenon described by Johnson (2008).<sup>18</sup> Those inmates' works focus on the planning of their future, the identification of their core values and specific goals, accompanied by pointing out the ways of achieving them. It is worth noting that some of these plans include lifestyle changes, e.g. relating to the elimination of bad habits. In this case, the artistic expression is an analysis of and a plan for the future, based on the revision of the existing cognitive scripts. Particularly significant, however, is the fact that 80 per cent of the inmates who were asked for their comments on freedom refused to give any. This can be taken as a form of expression in itself. There is no doubt that this showed mistrust and withdrawal. This is hardly surprising, because the Wisnicz prison is an institution for serious offenders and the relationships among the inmates and the outside visitors are not easy.

It seems that for many inmates positive interaction with the artists would have a particular advantage. We believe that art therapy can result in some positive changes in the inmates' lives due to the fact that it is non-directive, it respects the autonomy and the privacy of the inmate, and it encourages the development of the sphere of positive freedom. It can also reduce the inmates' lack of confidence more effectively than other forms of therapy.

The fact that the authors of the project managed to overcome the distrust and dislike of a large percent of the inmates, along with the positive effects of the project, including a joint presentation of the works of the inmates and the artists in the same exhibition album (see the cover in Fig. 10 below), offers hope for a higher proportion of inmates actively participating in the future editions of the project.

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<sup>18</sup> L.M. Johnson, 2008, *ibidem*.



Fig. 10. The cover of the exhibition album *Labirynt wolności*  
[Labyrinth of Freedom]

## CONCLUSIONS

Analyzing the inmates' works that we collected during the project, we discovered an additional advantage of the influence of art on the inmates in penitentiaries – namely, its diagnostic potential. It is obvious that one should get a right, detailed diagnosis before commencing any therapeutic work. In addition, it is vital not to label the inmate with a clinical identification or an inflexible belief about the essence of his problem. To diagnose means to understand the world in the way the inmate understands it – his/her outlook on life, beliefs, fears, hopes and plans. A literary or art work enables one to find a “foothold” – a subject of conversation forming a common ground for a meeting during which the natural mistrust or hostility of the inmates towards the prison staff may be overcome. Both sides can see each other from a different point of view, not through the lens of their current social role and the limits consequent upon it. For the members of staff at a penitentiary (not necessarily psychologists) such conversation may become a valuable source of knowledge about the worldviews, attitudes, stereotypes, likes and antipathies, emotional status and many other aspects of the inmates' psychological functioning; and so enable the selection of the best therapeutic activities. This is so because an artistic presentation of one's views activates a projection mechanism whereby one's character and emotions are externalized in an unconscious, spontaneous way.

Artistic activity allows the inmates to comment on various topics. Despite the simplicity and accessibility of the tasks, it offers an opportunity to communicate complex psychological states, not available with the employment of other methods<sup>19</sup>. In the prison environment – often hostile and threatening – it helps the inmates to develop self-awareness, opens a space for the expression of emotions and creates a chance for opening up to other people in a safe way<sup>20</sup>. The artistic choices and art works do not need to be discussed by the authors – this could be difficult for them. At the same time, artistic activity allows the inmates to express themselves honestly, without the defense mechanisms used in everyday life. The use of art introduces diversion, prevents boredom and stagnation, very common in the prison community<sup>21</sup>. Art therapy enables the inmates to better understand themselves: their attitudes toward freedom and their potential to make use of it. It may also help them to participate in the life of the community after being released. Engaging the inmates in art therapy can be used to fulfill their need to be productive<sup>22</sup>. In the case of a project focused on freedom, they can also feel especially competent due to their unique and traumatic situation.

In order to obtain psychotherapeutic effects, it is obviously vital to choose the correct subject of the artistic work of the inmates. We hope that the described project dedicated to the basic problem of the inmates – the loss of freedom, which had mainly diagnostic functions, has shown its merits. The fact that some of its component motifs (like home or family) are already used in classical projection techniques is an additional advantage. Thanks to that, the penitentiary staff can use an extensive set of literature which may additionally aid the process of correction. Although most of the inmates connect freedom with the past and/or future, their sense of and feelings about freedom has an impact on how they manage their time “here and now”.

They can broaden the area of freedom inside the penitentiary – by working, learning, taking up therapy or trying to stay fit. We are convinced that the “Labyrinth of Freedom” project has a therapeutic value as it creates the chance for the inmates to reach “outside” audiences and to use the means of expression offered by art. It is an opportunity to develop the inmates’ awareness, and so take a big step on the path to personal freedom. It would

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<sup>19</sup> E. Kramer, *Art as therapy with children*, New York 1993.

<sup>20</sup> D. Gussak & E. Ploumis-Devick Creating Wellness in Correctional Populations Through the Arts: An Interdisciplinary Model. *Visual Arts Research* 2004, 30, pp. 35-43.

<sup>21</sup> D. Gussak, The effects of art therapy on male and female inmates: Advancing the research base, *Arts in Psychotherapy* 2009, 36, pp. 5-12.

<sup>22</sup> L.M. Johnson, 2008, *ibidem*.

certainly be naive to expect that the positive effects of taking part in artistic activity will come quickly or easily. The majority of the inmates participating in the project have a history of living in a pathological environment, as a result of which they cannot manage their everyday duties properly or live up to the expectations of typical social roles. They experience the stigma of being rejected. In other cases, a low level of cognitive competence and a lack of any cultural experience may become a barrier. But if we are to be serious about the correctional role of penalty, we need to give the inmates opportunities to build their self-esteem, provoke reflection, enable them to see themselves in a wider context than through the lens of their criminal status; and we need to work on this constantly. Taking into consideration both our own experience and the inmates' artistic expression we can see that our journey through the "Labyrinth of Freedom" was a valuable source of reflection for both sides. Talking about their meetings with the artists, the inmates noted that they had a feeling – so rare behind bars – that they are finally being treated "as humans". This was the best review and acknowledgement of the project.

*Translated by Daria Muzyczka  
Proofreading by Simon Dale*

#### **WYPOWIEDZI ARTYSTYCZNE WIĘŹNIÓW NA TEMAT WOLNOŚCI: PROJEKT "LABIRYNT WOLNOŚCI" I JEGO MOŻLIWE ZASTOSOWANIA (streszczenie)**

Specyfika społeczności więziennej sprawia, że nieskrępowane ujawnianie swoich postaw, przekonań lub uczuć jest ryzykowne. W tej specyficznej sytuacji psychologicznej, której istotnymi składowymi są przemoc, nuda i poczucie osamotnienia, osadzeni przejawiają różne wzorce przystosowania. Dla niektórych z nich zaangażowanie się w działalność artystyczną może być nie tylko sposobem na konstruktywne spędzanie czasu, ale także bodźcem do pozytywnych zmian po wyjściu na wolność.

Celem artykułu jest dokonanie charakterystyki projektu „Labirynt wolności”, zrealizowanego w 2012 roku w Zakładzie Karnym w Nowym Wiśniczu, ze szczególnym uwzględnieniem wypowiedzi osadzonych na temat wolności. Podsumowaniem opracowania są wnioski dotyczące możliwości diagnostycznego i terapeutycznego wykorzystania artystycznych wypowiedzi osób pozbawionych wolności.

Autorzy są przekonani, że opisany projekt, poprzez stwarzanie więźniom możliwości nawiązania dialogu z osobami „z zewnątrz” i kontaktu ze środkami ekspresji, które oferuje sztuka, ma wymiar terapeutyczny. Może przyczynić się do zredukowania stresu izolacji, podnieść samoocenę i zmniejszyć poczucie alienacji. Jest szansą rozwijania świadomości, a więc zrobienia istotnego kroku na drodze ku osobistej wolności.

**Słowa kluczowe:** sztuka, więzienie, wolność, osadzeni, psychoterapia.