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## DŁUGOSIODŁO – A PAINTED VILLAGE

Katarzyna Markowska\*, Jarosław Szewczyk\*\*

\* Student at the Białystok University of Technology, the Faculty of Architecture, ul. O. Sosnowskiego, 15-893 Białystok, Poland  
e-mails: k.markowska0304@gmail.com, kasiamarkowska3@wp.pl

\*\*Białystok University of Technology, the Faculty of Architecture, ul. O. Sosnowskiego, 15-893 Białystok, Poland  
e-mail: j.szewczyk@pb.edu.pl, ORCID: 0000-0002-2454-2934

DOI: 10.24427/aea-2023-vol15-14

### Abstract

Mural paintings in Długosiodło, a village in Wyszki commune, the Mazovia Province, N-E Poland, have been surveyed, as well as other types of public art in that village. Such semi-vernacular art is a remarkable phenomenon that had arisen from the local culture but is absent in surrounding villages and towns, thus deserving recognition and research from a cultural and sociological viewpoint.

Keywords: countryside architecture; vernacular architectural ornamentations; painted cottages; graffiti; N-E Poland

### INTRODUCTION

Fancy painted cottages or such were an infrequent sight in the old Polish countryside, but in some regions and neighborhoods, such as near Lowicz (in the area of the former so-called “Duchy of Lowicz”) and near Tarnów (in the so-called “Powiśle Dabrowskie”), painting the logs of cottages became a custom in the past, and even inspired talented individuals to creative expression that grew even further beyond this local custom, as was the case with the cottages in Zalipie near Tarnów, painted by Felicja Curyłowa.

All the more noteworthy are today’s country houses, whose aesthetics their owners or users want to improve with thoughtful painting compositions. However, this is not pop-culture graffiti (which is born most often without the knowledge and consent of the homeowner), but paintings applied to the walls of buildings and to objects of small architecture with the aim of aestheticizing them and with respect for the aesthetics of the surroundings, and not to sound subcultural slogans or street protest.

In cities, the relatively tolerated place of pop-culture or subculture graffiti has become undeveloped walls and temporary fences, although for half a century there has also flourished an intolented and combated

mural art that crosses the boundaries of vandalism, which is an expression of rebellion, an occasion for manifestos or even private display (in fact, it has existed since the dawn of mankind, and certainly since the existence of cities, as evidenced by drawings and inscriptions, sometimes vulgar, on the walls of Pompeian buildings). On the other hand, architectural painting techniques are, as it were, returning in glory in the exterior polychromes of cities, created by reliable and experienced artists. These works, sometimes huge in scale and artistically superb, are sometimes called murals. Examples include the so-called Midtown Story with a trumpeter on the roof and a cat in the background - a monumental work by arch. Radosław Berek, a professor at Poznań University of Technology, created in 2015 on the wall of a Poznań tenement on the corner of Śródka and Rynek Śródecki streets, as well as the same author’s mural in Gorzów (2020) and several other, minor ones. In recent years, groups and communities of mural promoters and contractors have been emerging, such as Grupa RW – MalujemyMurale.pl ([www.malujemymurale.pl](http://www.malujemymurale.pl)) and Grupa Murall ([www.facebook.com/murall.studio](http://www.facebook.com/murall.studio)).

The countryside, however, is a very different mural environment from the big cities – different as to scale, including the space available for wall or fence painting. The degree of social consent to outdoor painting (murals)<sup>1</sup>, the scale of creativity, the subject matter of the works, and their longevity are different there.

Thus, if in a village or small town a nice façade polychrome is created, which arouses curiosity, later – social recognition, and then it finds imitators, gives rise to a local decorative fashion and induces autochthons to care about the landscape of this village or town – such a case is worthy of research attention from a threefold perspective: artistic, architectural-landscape and sociological. At least in part, the communal village of Długosiodło in the Wyszaków district of the Mazovian voivodeship is becoming just such a case.

Thus, this article is a contribution to a broader multi-faceted view of the phenomenon of façade painting in the rural landscape of villages and small towns, using the example of the aforementioned village of Długosiodło. The origins and development of façade painting in the said village are discussed, and the effects of this phenomenon are pointed out on the rights of hypothesis. The need for the preservation of Długosiodło's malatures is substantiated.

## 1. DŁUGOSIODŁO VILLAGE

Długosiodło is a communal village with a population of about 1,400 people [Czajkowska H. et al. 2018], located on the edge of the former Biała Forest, which is an area with distinct ethnographic characteristics. Długosiodło already existed in the 13th century as a private bishop's village<sup>2</sup> But at the end of the 17th century, after the Swedish invasion and other historical cataclysms, it was largely depopulated, as were the surrounding villages. Therefore, in the years 1730–1790,

the Plock bishops resettled new landowners, mainly Kurpies from the nearby Puszcza Zielona, to the Biała Forest, in the number of about 300 families, and closer inter-village resettlements were also allowed. Part of today's population of Długosiodło is thus made up of descendants of these 18th-century settlers. In the 19th century and as late as the beginning of the 20th century, they were identified as Kurpies<sup>3</sup>, while over time the Kurpie self-identification of a sizable part of this society disappeared, and it is only in the last few decades that awareness of their ethno-historical identity has been returning among the local population.

Dozens or more old wooden houses have survived in the village and its surroundings, including a dozen with ornamentation characteristic of the folk architecture of the Kurpie Białe region, and a dozen more with ornamentation characteristic of small-town wooden architecture of the early 20th century. (including Jewish, as before World War II the Jewish population made up almost half of Długosiodło's population). However, only one wooden house (at 6 Poniatowskiego Street) in Długosiodło is included in the municipal register of historical monuments, while in the entire municipality – about 30 wooden houses<sup>4</sup>. On the other hand, only six objects from the area of Długosiodło municipality have been entered in the register kept by the Provincial Conservator of Monuments, including only one old house, namely a 19th-century wooden cottage in Stary Bosewo. Protection of the relics of old buildings is therefore rudimentary here, although other villages and towns in the region are no better off in this regard.

The desirability and urgency of preserving old wooden village houses in this municipality, including Długosiodło itself, is a topic for a separate study, while here the subject of consideration is a slightly different, rather new phenomenon – namely, elevation painting

<sup>1</sup> In reference to this category of art, the word malatures was used by Roman Reinfuss (1949), paintings – by Władysław Hickel (1906) and Adam Bartosz (1983), among others, and paintings – by Anna Germel (2015), with the above-mentioned authors, so to speak, intuitively taking these words from the folk artists of these polychromies. Nowadays, media publicity favors the use of the words mural and graffiti, with the former seeming to refer to monumental, large-scale, professionally executed works and to grow positive associations, and the latter acquiring a pejorative meaning and referring to ad hoc painting activities, often vandalism. In view of this, neither the word mural nor graffiti accurately captures the essence of the rural architectural painting discussed in this article. There is also the word polychromy, technically appropriate, but less commonly used today, except by art historians. So we remain here with the word *malatura*.

<sup>2</sup> 1381 people according to the National Population and Housing Census of 2021.

<sup>3</sup> At the beginning of the thirteenth century, Konrad Mazowiecki gave the White Forest to the bishops of Plock. Długosiodło became a private bishop's village around 1203. It is also known that in 1262 one of the battles of the Masovian knighthood took place at Długosiodło against the army of the Grand Duke of Lithuania Mindaugas, during his expedition to Masovia.

<sup>4</sup> Adam Zakrzewski, the author of a commentary to the encyclopaedic entry *Kurpie* in the Great Universal Illustrated Encyclopaedia [1909, p. 543], wrote: "The Kurpie population currently forms two separate, non-touching ethnographic islands: the northern one north of the Narew River and the southern one along the right bank of the Bug River. In the first of these groups, the ethnographic distinctiveness has so far been preserved quite clearly and can now be considered typical Kurpie. (...) The second, southern group of Ks is located in today's Ostrów County, in the vicinity of Brok and Ostrów, between Brańszczyk, Długosiodło and Naguszew, but it is currently impossible to distinguish the Kurpie population in this area. (...) Only in the municipalities of Brańszczyk, Orło, Komorowo, Długosiodło and Poręba the Kurpie population still forms even more significant separate groups."

from the 21st century. Complementing this research issue is painting on frames and fences and other manifestations of artistic culture, visible in the rural landscape of Długosiodło.

## 2. MURALS IN DŁUGOSIODŁO

Probably a remnant of the proper care for the external aesthetics of houses in Kurpie Białe is the cleanliness and orderliness visible here on properties and in front gardens, as well as the aesthetics of fences and the care visible on the street facades of buildings. Attention to the aesthetics of buildings and fences is also evident in places in their decorative painting. Although facade and fence paintings are few in relation to the total number of about a thousand buildings in the village, but still much more numerous than in other villages known to us, and visible, visually exposed. What is lacking is the sloppy pop-culture graffiti that is so common in larger cities.

### 2.1 Elevation murals

The attention of passing travelers is especially attracted by several buildings on the main Królowa Jadwigi Street (former Dąbrowszczaków Street), whose facades are covered with paintings. These are wooden houses No. 6, 7 and 10. Until recently, paintings also covered the facade of house No. 4, but this one has now been repainted in a uniform light color. An old wooden house at 1 Mickiewicza Street and another wooden house, now defunct, at Królowej Jadwigi Street, formerly located between the current buildings No. 20 and 22, were covered with paintings. Paintings decorated the shutters and doors of the "Dziupla" store at 21 Królowej Jadwigi Street. A closer look at the village allowed us to notice more such buildings and murals even in more secluded places, sometimes quite large, like the mural on the blind wall of the brick building at 7 Kościuszko Street, sometimes smaller, like the mural on the wall of the pub at Józef Poniatowski Street (Fig. 1) or in several places on the walls of the building that is the headquarters of the Communal Information, Culture, Sports and Recreation Center. Meanwhile, behind the church, in the city park, framed by the arm of Kościuszko Street, which bends here, we find racks set up with several huge panoramic painting compositions, each about ten meters long and almost three

meters high. A mini open-air museum was separated from part of the park, whose wooden building and entrance gate are also covered with paintings. We will talk about the paintings on the frames further on, because their genesis is a bit different than strictly facade paintings, nevertheless all these works of painting give Długosiodło a specific expression, create a unique atmosphere of a painted village. This climate would be even more pronounced if it were not for the fact that some of the paintings have already been destroyed. Until recently (until December 2022), some of the already invisible facade paintings, now faded or destroyed, could still be viewed online in the Google Maps portal (Street View option).

The murals in question were generally created in the first years of the 21st century. Some of them no longer exist or are faded and barely visible. Fading and destruction happen fastest on old wooden walls. It is the vividness of the colors, or on the contrary, the fading and faded, that allow the fastest dating of the paintings, or at least testify to whether they were restored or allowed to gradually deteriorate.

Of course, most of the several hundred buildings in Długosiodło do not have paintings, but these dozen or so polychromed objects (also including polychromes on fences and freestanding frames) attract attention and have become an interesting and original rural-landscape, artistic, architectural and probably also sociological phenomenon. Questions arise, of course: where and how did these paintings appear? Who created them? Are the Longosiodla polychromes the work of only a few talented individuals, perhaps a few visual artists - or has the fashion for creating them begun to spread? Does this fashion inspire public recognition and find more imitators, or does it die out when the artists performing it run out? Does it prompt indigenous people to care for the landscape? Are the paintings being restored?

According to the available information<sup>5</sup>, the first large-scale paintings on old houses were created in 2004 during an open-air painting workshop under the project called "Return to Eden." The project was carried out by a group of visual artists and young art enthusiasts under the artistic direction of painter Małgorzata Ewa Czernik and with the support of the Homo Homini Cultural Foundation in Długosiodło. The elevations were also painted later, during subsequent

<sup>5</sup> The organization of these and other open-air workshops was also supported by the Public Junior High School in Stary Bosewo, the Municipal Cultural Center in Długosiodło and the "Praga" Cultural Center in Warsaw (in October 2005, the Długosiodło municipality signed a cooperation agreement with the "Praga" Cultural Center in Warsaw, which joined in the organization of artistic open-air workshops and the Polish Championships of Actors and Journalists in Mushroom Picking organized in Długosiodło).

open-air painting and sculpture workshops<sup>6</sup>, especially during the open-air event “Touching Eden” in 2008 and the open-air event “Artistic Gardens of Eden” in 2009. Some paintings came from the brush of another artist Urszula Pogwizd-Balcerzak. There have been more open-air events organized in Długosiodło (practically every year since the beginning of the 21st century), but the above-mentioned three had the strongest impact on the local architecture and landscape, leaving flower-painted facades of houses. At that time (i.e., from around 2002), separate open-air paintings were also organized for schoolchildren in Długosiodło and nearby Stary Bosew, carried out by the Association for the Development of Długosiodło Municipality under the direction of Ewa Urszula Krysiak, director of the Municipal Center for Information, Culture, Sports and Recreation in Długosiodło. Thus, although most of the local facade paintings are related to the person of painter Małgorzata Ewa Czernik, the entirety of facade painting in Długosiodło should already be treated as a broader phenomenon.

## 2.2. Murals on fences

As already mentioned, a few small painting compositions on wooden fences have also appeared in the landscape of Długosiodło, for example, on the entrance gate to the mini-skansen on the eastern side (from Kosciuszko Street). Their genesis is similar to that of facade murals. However, the actual impact of fence murals on the landscape of this village is negligible, as they are exceptions, but we mention them for the sake of completeness of the argument, and also because, in a way, they are an intermediate category between facade paintings and the next category described below, i.e. murals on frames.

## 2.3. Murals on racks

In addition to facade murals, murals made on panels mounted on freestanding racks in the city park on Kosciuszko Street have been created in Długosiodło since 2012. Their originator and designer was, and still is (as every year there are new mural additions on the attached racks), visual artist Wieńczysław Pyrzanowski, and the contractors – a group of visual artists and students<sup>7</sup>. Wieńczysław Pyrzanowski was also the artistic commissioner of previous open-air events.

Before the huge outdoor murals began to be created in the city park in 2012, in August 2011, during the 13th open-air painting event, its participants painted a large-format painting measuring one and a half by three meters, entitled “The Legend of Długosiodło.” The painting was donated to the Długosiodło Municipality Office. The successful group painting encouraged the participants to continue the team creative work. With support from the Gmina Office, the LAG Równina Wołomińska, the mayor of Długosiodło and the Homo Homini Culture Foundation (run by Urszula and Maciej Zaleg, the de facto organizers of the aforementioned plein-air workshop), another plein-air workshop in 2012, under the artistic direction of Wieńczysław Pyrzanowski, produced a mural measuring 2.7 × 7.5 m, depicting a genre scene in a rural homestead. A year later (2013) another mural panel of 5 m was added, depicting villagers working together to pickle cabbage. A five-meter panel depicting village washerwomen was also added the following year (2014). In 2015, a seven-meter-long panel with a harvest scene was painted, and in 2016, a 2.7 × 5-meter scene of the autumn cabbage harvest was painted. This resulted in a 270 cm high and very long, almost 30 m long mural depicting various scenes of rural life. Residents call it “Four Seasons,” although this is an unofficial and somewhat misleading title.

In 2017, the participants of the open-air event, still under the artistic direction of Wieńczysław Pyrzanowski, painted another panel, filling it with a scene of mushrooming. The artists referred to a local cyclic (annual) promotional event – “The Great Mushrooming” (in autumn 2017 its fifteenth edition was held, and at the time of writing this article, in 2022 – the nineteenth edition). The event is accompanied by the Polish Actors’ and Journalists’ Mushrooming Championships.

A year later (2018), the total length of all mural panels, set up in the city park, had already reached 47.5 meters. At that time, a mural was created depicting the entry of Michał Belina-Prażmowski’s cavalry unit into Długosiodło. The content of the painting corresponds to the actual events. The pretext for the historical theme was the centennial of Poland’s regaining of independence. This mural marked the beginning of another mural series, this time battle-historical. In 2020, a painting composition of a lost painting by Maximilian Gierzyński, “Alarm in the Uprising Camp”, was recreated

<sup>6</sup> Grażyna Bany, Anna Bojas, Łukasz Dymiński, Ola Jamiolkowska, Marek Konatkowski, Dominika Małgowska, Dominika Nasiadko, Julia Pyrzanowska, Matylda Pyrzanowska, Katarzyna Słowikowska, Julian Sulikowski, Zuzanna Trzcińska, Helena Wieczorek and Joanna Żaboklicka. Some of them participated in the painting work only sporadically, others regularly (especially Dominika Małgowska, Matylda Pyrzanowska and Łukasz Dymiński, co-creators of murals from the historical series).

<sup>7</sup> 7,853 people in 2017.



**Fig. 1.** Examples of murals in Długosiodło (Królowej Jadwigi St.); photos by K.M. and E. Krysiak



**Fig. 2.** Examples of murals in Długosiodło (Królowej Jadwigi St.); photos by K.M. and E. Krysiak

on the next large-format panel. In 2021, a battle scene from the November Uprising was painted, depicting the Battle of Ostrołęka on May 26, 1831 (this battle was preceded by two smaller skirmishes, including one at Długosiodło). In 2022 a mural was made commemorating and showing the passage in 1794 of a detachment of the 1st Wielkopolska National Cavalry Brigade under the command of Brigadier Antoni Madalinski. It is known that the unit moved near Długosiodło.

#### 2.4. Summary of architectural painting in Długosiodło

In summary, the architectural paintings visible now (late 2022 and early 2023) or until recently in the public spaces of Długosiodło village include a dozen or so facade paintings in various parts of the village (most in the center) and 10 “murals” on free-standing frames with a total area of about 150-180 m<sup>2</sup> (more than 60 running meters) in the municipal park. These works are overwhelmingly the result of individual artistic initiatives and were created during open-air painting workshops: in 2004-2009, under the artistic direction of Małgorzata Ewa Czernik, the facades of houses in the center of the village were painted, and in 2012–2016, under the direction of Wieńczysław Pyrzanowski, free-standing rack compositions of the “Four Seasons” series were created in the city park, complemented in 2017 by a mural with mushroom picking, and in subsequent years (2018–2022) by murals with historical and battle scenes. It is likely that several minor facade and fence paintings may have been created outside of the above-mentioned outdoor projects. The paintings are generally not renovated, so the older (facade) ones are gradually fading and deteriorating, and some, like on house No. 4 on Królowej Jadwigi Street, have been repainted and covered up. Currently, there is a lack of willingness on the part of residents to make their buildings available for new paintings. Perhaps this is due to the association of the murals with old neglected houses, as the first Longosiodla facade paintings were created on older wooden houses and by now (after more than a decade and a half) they have fallen into neglect.

### 3. OTHER MANIFESTATIONS OF ARTISTIC CREATIVITY IN THE DŁUGOSIODŁO LANDSCAPE

Nevertheless, there is a noticeable saturation of public space with fine arts creations, which should

be considered with the scale of a given settlement unit in mind. As already mentioned, Długosiodło has a population of 1,400 people, and the entire municipality – about 7800–7900 people<sup>8</sup>. This is not much, considering that the statistical Polish municipality has twice as many residents<sup>9</sup>. However, the village of Długosiodło has in its public space not only the murals described above, but also more than a dozen monuments and sculptures and other works of art.

#### 3.1. Historical monuments, contemporary sculptures and other art forms

At Królowej Jadwigi Street (Dąbrowszczaków) on property No. 5 there is a monument to Tadeusz Kościuszko erected on October 15, 1917, on the 100th anniversary of Kościuszko’s death, so the monument itself is now more than a century old. In 1977, a second monument to Tadeusz Kościuszko was erected at the intersection of Królowej Jadwigi and Mickiewicza streets. This monument, too, still stands today, and was renovated a few years ago.

In more recent times, over the past two decades, wooden sculptures have appeared in Długosiodło’s landscape, made by Kazimierz Sikorski, a local sculptor (a graduate of the State High School of Arts and Crafts in Kielce), who has his own studio and gallery in Długosiodło. Some of his works are outdoor sculptures: a few stand near the market square, some in the park, and a few – on private properties. Kazimierz Sikorski is also the author of sculptures exhibited occasionally, such as elements of New Year’s nativity scenes.

Sculpture-painting compositions also adorn several newer buildings, including the top of the house at 22 Królowej Jadwigi Street (decorated with compositions alluding to Kurpie cut-outs) and buildings on a private property on Prince Józef Poniatowski Street 34.

The public space of Długosiodło also sometimes exhibits paintings on boards, painted by Iwona Rychlik, an artist from nearby Stare Bosewo, 3 kilometers away to the northwest. Permanently standing in the center of Długosiodło is Iwona Rychlik’s composition entitled “Kurpianeczki. “Kurpianeczki”.

#### 3.2. Temporary Art Installations

The aforementioned open-air artistic events for professionals, as well as smaller open-air events for young people and some other cultural events in the village of Długosiodło attract artists from outside

<sup>8</sup> In 2023, the population of Poland was 37,750,000 inhabitants, and the number of municipalities was 2477, which gives an average of 15,240 inhabitants per municipality.

<sup>9</sup> Own calculations based on publicly available satellite images.

or bring together local art amateurs, so that open-air artistic activity then becomes part of the local landscape. This activity has in the past also included art installations, performances and other manifestations of art temporarily shaping the landscape. For example, in 2015, the aforementioned Margaret Czernik held an open art workshop culminating in an outdoor show with performance elements entitled 'Margaret's Dancing Gardens'.

Some promotional initiatives work in a similar way, such as Przystanek Rękodzieło, which is – according to its creators – “a social initiative of Długosiodło commune inhabitants, promoting the culture and tradition of the Biała Forest”<sup>10</sup>. It has been ongoing since around 2015 and also includes artistic activities.

### 3.3. Summary of landscape impact of art that is not 'murals'

Monuments, sculptures, sculpture-painting compositions, paintings on boards, temporary installations, performative works and outdoor participation by local and outside artists have all had a significant impact on the landscape of Długosiodło, although this impact is most evident during celebrations, workshops and open-air art events.

This raises questions about the degree of social acceptance of artistic activity. After all, art is, in a way, an attempt to overcome routine, life's schematism, habits and blind rules - an attempt necessary to produce aesthetic values that rise above the everyday and the banal. This is why artistic activity can, to some extent, clash with the habits, values and rules that have united small communities for generations. Is this the case with Długosiodło? An answer to this question is beyond the scope of this article, as it would require sociological research, nevertheless such a question should at least be posed, noting the strength and scale of the artistic ferment initiated by artists coming from outside.

## 4 DISCUSSION

As already mentioned, there is a “Mini-Skansen” in Długosiodło<sup>11</sup> with old cottages with old furnishings, and 14 km south of Długosiodło in the village of Brańszczyk there is a small open-air museum named after Maria Żywirska. It was established as a local government initiative<sup>12</sup>, thus, probably to some extent, it testifies to the appreciation of their own architectural traditions by

the inhabitants of the region (by the way, the patron of the open-air museum, ethnographer Maria Byczynska-Żywirska, was born in Brańszczyk, some of her publications were even devoted to the surrounding area of the Kurpie Białe Forest, e.g., *The Kurpie Białe Forest* [M. Żywirska 1949; M. Żywirska 1967].

It seems tempting, then, to hypothesize that the aesthetic sensitivity and cultural awareness of the residents of Długosiodło and the surrounding villages is greater than elsewhere, which could be indicated by open-air museum initiatives, artistic initiatives and culture and art creators operating here, as well as the presence in Długosiodło's urban space of the aforementioned sculptures, frame murals and painted elevations.

However, not everything supports such an interpretation. In Długosiodło, the old wooden buildings are quickly disappearing, the facade paintings from a dozen years ago are not being restored, while the most active artists and cultural activists (including organizers and participants of professional open-air painting workshops) do not come from Długosiodło, but from outside. Most of the manifestations of artistic activity are imported, so to speak.

Arguably, however, there is a process of gradually increasing self-identification of rural residents with the art around them in the built space. This is partly attested to by discussions on the Internet; moreover, it would also be expected, since analogous processes have occurred in the past in cities, where murals with high artistic values have appeared. One of the best-known examples of cities identifying themselves with mural art is the London neighborhood of Brixton, where murals have been created since 1982, and the stimulating factor of this art were the unresolved social problems (including a series of strikes and protests in 1981), as if reactivated by mural art. Fortunately, local artists rather than youth subcultures were involved in composing the murals in Brixton, which protected the urban space from aesthetic vandalism.

We also have positive examples of mural art from the Długosiodło area: murals in Ostrołęka (35 km north of Długosiodło) by Anastasia Drabot, a graduate of the Faculty of Architecture at the Warsaw University of Technology; murals in Ostrow Mazowiecka (20 km east of Długosiodło), or murals in Pułtusk. They prove that it is possible to internalize mural art by the local community. Here, it is worth noting factors unfavorable for community integration, including: the creation of

<sup>10</sup> According to <http://rekodzielodlugosiodlo.blogspot.com> (accessed 1.1.2023).

<sup>11</sup> The open-air museum was established in 2015 from the funds of the Rural Development Program, as part of the project Protection of cultural heritage through the creation of an open-air museum in Brańszczyk at the planned route of St. James to Łomża.

<sup>12</sup> This initially informal name has already begun to be used in [Plan... 2014, p. 15].





Fig. 3. Examples of murals in Długosiodło; photo E. Krysiak



Fig. 4. Examples of murals in Długosiodło; photo: K.M. and E. Krysiak



Fig. 5. Examples of murals in Długosiodło; photo: K.M.



Fig. 6. Examples of murals in Długosiodło; photo: K.M.

murals with political, martyrological or religious messages, or with accentuated symbolism in general, as well as naive compositions – but also overly ambitious works. Such murals polarize local communities, and their perception changes over time – viewed for the first time, they arouse interest; viewed again, they cause weariness; viewed repeatedly, they arouse irritation in some viewers. Not surprisingly, murals created not by visual artists, but by architects, sensitive to the specificity of urban space, are often the best received – here positive examples are the already mentioned Anastasia Drabot, as well as Radosław Barek, architect and professor at Poznań University of Technology, author of, among others, the so-called Śródek Mural (2015) or the mural on Jagiełły Street in Gorzów Wielkopolski (2020).

In turn, when considering the influence of creative circles on the space of small towns and communal villages, or when looking for references (seeking comparisons with Długosiodło), it is worth remembering the examples of towns with visual arts high schools.. Artur Grottger State High School of Visual Arts in Suprasl (founded in 1944), J. Chelmonski State High School of Visual Arts in Naleczow (actually functioning since 1947) and, to a lesser extent, the State High School of Visual Arts in Kościelec (functioning since 1979), which all enrich the urban space with the creative activities of their students and teachers. Other examples of the influence of artists on small towns include Rudnik nad Sanem and Nowy Tomyśl (west of Poznań), where open-air wicker workshops are held, and wicker sculptures and land-art works have been an integral part of the aesthetics of these towns for decades. These examples show that in the social dimension, the integration of art into architectural space (its acceptance) takes time, takes place gradually, and at the same time is two-way: residents also learn aesthetic sensitivity, and the sowers of the seeds of such sensitivity are the visual artists.

A community center can also be an activator of artistic creativity. An interesting study of the impact of creative community centers on local communities in the Mazovian Voivodeship was conducted in 2022 (the study was carried out by the Association of Creative Initiatives “e” with a team of sociologists under the direction of Dr. Maria Theiss; it resulted in the report *Zoom na domy kultury – diagnoza mazowieckich domów kultury*). Among other things, they sought answers to the questions: “Does the operation of community centers enable participation, activation and creativity of residents? What is the social range and diversity of the community center’s program, including activities to reach different groups? With the help of programs and

*other activities, how do community centers contribute to the integration of the local community, the creation of ties between residents and the networking of local institutions? Who are the community center employees and how do they work as a team?” [Zoom... 2022, p. 33]. “Is the purpose of the community center’s activity art education – to increase the competence of participants in a particular field (e.g., playing an instrument), or to stimulate creativity, which is a feature of everyone? (...) What form should mass events take? (...) Can they also be an element of community identity building? Is their role to provide a product or to integrate the community?” [ibid, p. 39]. “Who should be the main audience for community center activities? Is their role to provide a product or to integrate the community?” [ibid, p. 39]. “Who should be the main audience for community center activities? Are community centers elitist places whose proposal is aimed at narrow groups of sophisticated audiences? Rather, is a community center a place that invites various social groups and is not afraid to involve them in joint activities?” [ibid, p. 41]. It concluded that “the identification by the community center of uncooperative groups of residents and comprehensive attempts to include them in the activities of the community center are, in our view, a good indicator of the integrative role of the community center” [ibid]. It seems that, by analogy, the key to raising the aesthetics of downtown spaces in towns may be “the recognition of uncooperative groups of residents and comprehensive attempts to include them in the activities” of the creative, and that the success of activities such as those in Długosiodło is due, among other things, to the charisma of those involved in culture and art there, and their ability to involve others in joint activities.*

## CONCLUSIONS

The architectural landscape of Długosiodło abounds (for such a small village, with a population of 1,381 in 2021) in monuments, sculptures, sculpture-painting compositions, paintings exhibited in public space, temporary installations, performative works, and, above all, architectural façade and frame paintings, including more than a dozen façade paintings in various parts of the village (most in the centre) and 10 ‘murals’ on free-standing frames with a total surface area of approximately 150–180 m<sup>2</sup> (over 60 linear metres) in the city park. The works in question were created between 2004 and 2022 as part of open-air art events with the participation of outside visual artists, and some also as a result of local artists and young people participating in minor open-air painting events organised by the local community centre (the contribution of young people has

not been accurately estimated here, however). Facade paintings are generally not renovated; there is a lack of willingness on the part of local residents to make their buildings available for new paintings. In spite of this, the artistic activity of local and visiting creative circles constantly enriches the space of Długosiodło with works of art. However, the boundary of public support behind which such works would also be created by 'ordinary' residents has not yet been broken. Nevertheless, Długosiodło has become, and still remains, a kind of ruralist phenomenon – the authors have called it here a 'painted village' with deliberate exaggeration to suggest the need for appreciation and scientific monitoring of the phenomenon of the emergence and persistence in its rural space of a wide range of artistic works (especially large-format murals), for it is an interesting socio-cultural, artistic, ruralist-architectural phenomenon, perhaps already worthy of protection.

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