

**Summary**

**ADRIANNA KACZMAREK (Adam Mickiewicz University, Poznan) /  
Skull as a tool of metamorphosis in James Ensor's self-portraits**

The article discusses three self-portraits of James Ensor (1860–1949), in which the painter transforms his face into a skull. In each work this transformation takes place differently due to the choice of different media: drawing, printmaking and oil painting, but the common denominator for all is a visible, processual metamorphosis of the artist's image. Elements of the "living" face and the "dead" skull intertwine, which makes the images appear not directly, not clearly, because the status of the character in the image – dead, alive? – is difficult to be unambiguously defined by the viewer. The interpretation of the self-portraits was based on Dario Gamboni's methodology of potential and hidden images.