

U–jzdowski

17 April – 17 May 2024 (opening 17 April, 6 pm)

Venice, Viale IV Novembre, 8

Polonia Uncensored. Ignacy Czwartos

Curator: Piotr Bernatowicz, PhD

The exhibition presents fifteen oil paintings by Ignacy Czwartos. The first and largest group of paintings deals with figures and events from Polish history, forbidden by the communist regime between 1945 and 1989, known as the „blanks” in Polish history. These are mainly the stories of the Polish soldiers of the anti-communist underground, who fought against the Soviet totalitarianism between 1944 and 1963. The majority of them were brutally murdered by both the Soviet and the Polish communists.

The second thematic group consists of depictions of German war criminals responsible for the murder of thousands of Poles and Jews, who lived in post-war Germany and were never held accountable for their crimes.

Czwartos also refers to the present - to the criminal activities of Putin’s Russia, which for many decades was treated as an equal political and economic partner by the leaders of democratic Europe.

These are issues that have once again been censored in today’s Poland, which is governed by a liberal-left coalition. They are being erased from the public media and from the institutions of the state. The result has been the emergence of new-old ‚blank spots’ - areas of history that should not be spoken of aloud.

The fate of the project to present Ignacy Czwartos’ paintings in Venice illustrates the process of this new censorship. The scenario of the exhibition of paintings by Ignacy Czwartos entitled: Exercises in the Tragedy of the World. Between Germany and Russia was selected in an open competition for presentation in the Polonia Pavilion as part of the 60th Venice Biennale. The project was approved by the Minister of Culture. However, after the October 2023 elections, the new Minister of Culture suspended the project. Unofficially, one of the reasons given was the promotion of a false understanding of Poland’s past’ and ‚speaking from the position of a victim’. The new authorities in Poland are supposed to decide what is real and what is false Polish history, and they are also reluctant to talk about Polish victims.

Despite state censorship, Ignacy Czwartos’ paintings made it to Venice. The Polonia Uncensored exhibition was created to defend freedom of speech and art. It is possible thanks to the support of the Polish diaspora - a real and living Polonia, represented by doctor Marek Buczkowski PhD, who provided the space for the presentation of Ignacy Czwartos’ paintings in Venice.

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Ujzdowski Castle
Centre for Contemporary Art

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Paintings:



Mors certa, hora incerta
oil on canvas, 2024, 110x200 cm



Landscape with a skull / 1.3.2.4.
oil on canvas, 2024, 110x200 cm



Nord Stream 2
oil on canvas, 2024, 200x190 cm



Wie geht es Ihnen? / What's new with you?
oil on canvas, 2024, 200x190 cm

The title of the painting is taken from the book by Krzysztof Kąkolewski, a collection of interviews with former Nazi Germans who committed crimes in Poland and other countries, and who after the war enjoyed respect and a stable life in the Federal Republic of Germany and the USA. Heinz Reinfahrt, a former SS general, was responsible for war crimes during the pacification of the Warsaw Uprising. His troops murdered approximately 50,000 civilians in Warsaw within a few days. After the war, he lived and worked as a lawyer on the island of Sylt, where he became mayor of the town of Westerland. He was never punished for his crimes. He died in 1979.



Barns are burning. Hermann Schaper – German criminal
oil on canvas, 2024, 180x180 cm

The painting depicts Hermann Schaper, an SS lieutenant who was in charge of the Ciechanów Einsatzkommando, which operated near Łomża in the summer of 1941. He carried out killings of the Jewish population in Radziałów, Tykocin, Rutki, Zambrów, Jedwabne, Wizna and Łomża. In many places they were carried out by gathering the victims in a barn and burning them. He died in Germany in 2002. He has never been punished for his crimes..



Birkenau
oil on canvas, 2023/2024, 80x80 cm



Deutscher Schäferhund / German Shepherd
oil on canvas, 2021, 140x140 cm



Fish III
oil on canvas, 2024, 200x190 cm



Fish II

oil on canvas, 2023, 200x190 cm

The painting depicts three anti-communist resistance fighters killed in 1951 in the fight against the communist military services, and is based on posthumous photographs taken by officers of the UBP (Office of Public Security, an agency established in 1945 to formally protect state security, but which in fact served to eliminate all forms of resistance during the emergence and consolidation of communist power in Poland): Second Lieutenant Mieczysław Dziemieszkiewicz „Rój”, Henryk Kakowski „Henryk”, Józef Miączyński „Bohun”.



Stryj's Soldiers

oil on canvas, 2022, 200x190 cm

Soldiers of the NZW troop (National Military Union was a Polish anti-communist organisation founded in November 1944 after the collapse of the Warsaw Uprising) under Jan Malinowski „Stryj”, killed in a clash with a communist military group in Sinogóra on 12 February 1949.



Zdybek. Session

oil on canvas, 2020, 200x190 cm

Roman Kaszewski „Zdybek” (first from left), a soldier of the WiN troop (Freedom and Independence Association, a Polish anti-communist underground organisation founded on 2 September 1945 and active until 1952) and two other soldiers killed on 26 October 1947.



Żelazny's Soldiers/ 1.2.3.4.

oil on canvas, 2018, 200x200 cm

The painting depicts anti-communist WiN partisans under the command of Edward Taraszkiewicz „Żelazny”, who were hiding in the Lublin region and were tracked down by the UBP Operational Group. Stanisław Turbicz „Kazik” and Edward Taraszkiewicz „Żelazny” were killed while trying to escape from the roundup on 6 October 1951. Two others, Stanisław Marciniak „Niewinny” and Józef Domański „Łukasz”, were captured, persecuted and finally executed in the UBP prison at Lublin Castle on 12 January 1953. In Czwartos's painting, captured partisans support their colleagues who were killed during the raid.



Janina Żubryd and Antoni Żubryd "Zuch"

oil on canvas, 2018, 200x200 cm

Janina Żubryd and Antoni Żubryd „Zuch”, soldiers of the NSZ (National Armed Forces was a Polish right-wing underground military organisation from 1942. During the Second World War, NSZ troops fought against Nazi Germany; from 1944 to 1946, the NSZ fought as part of the anti-communist resistance) were shot dead in the village of Malinowka on 24 October 1946 while trying to escape abroad by Jerzy Vaulin „Mor, a former Home Army soldier recruited to cooperate with the UBP. Janina Żubryd was eight months pregnant at the time of her death.



Epitaph for Cursed Soldiers

oil on canvas, 2016-2017, 200x200 cm

The painting depicts the commanders of the anti-communist resistance who were executed in the MBP prison (Ministry of Public Security, a ministry formally responsible for internal security, public safety, but which in fact protected the communist dictatorship in the Polish People's Republic and acted on behalf of and under the dictates of the Soviet authorities) at 37 Rakowiecka Street in Warsaw.

Major Hieronim Dekutowski „Zapora”, executed on 7 March 1949.

Major Zygmunt Szendzielarz „Łupaszko”, executed on 8 February 1951

Lieutenant-Colonel Antoni Olechnowicz „Pohorecki”, executed on 8 February 1951



Epitaph for Józef Franczak “Lalek”

oil on canvas, 2016, 200x200 cm

The last soldier of the anti-communist resistance movement, Sergeant Józef Franczak „Lalek”, killed during a raid by communist military troops in Majdan Kozic Górnych in the Lublin region (eastern Poland) on 21 October 1963.

Ignacy Czwartos (b. 1966) is a Polish painter, draughtsman, one of the co-founders of the Otwarta Pracownia Independent Artists Association and Gallery in Cracow, established in 1995. He graduated from the Adam Mickiewicz University, the Institute of Art Education in Kalisz under prof. Tadeusz Wolański's workshop in 1993. His works have been exhibited in numerous important Polish galleries and museums, such as the Zachęta National Gallery of Art in Warsaw, the Wrocław Contemporary Museum, and the Center for Contemporary Art Ujazdowski Castle in Warsaw. Czwartos lives and works in Cracow.



Media kit