

U-jazdowski

Late Polishness

Forms of national identity after 1989

(The term "Late Polishness" has been borrowed from the text
of Tomasz Kozak)

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Late Polishness:

Forms of national identity after 1989

The project explores current forms of Polish identity. The exhibition provides a space to discuss *Late Polishness*. It contains over 100 works and projects of a few dozen contemporary visual, cinema and theatre artists. The exhibition is seen as a story about *Late Polishness* that will further be developed in the accompanying discussions, lectures and screenings.

In order to describe the current condition of national identity the curators have decided to use the term *Late Polishness* coined by Tomasz Kozak, an artist and essayist. It can be described as Polishness under the pressure of a fluid, late modernity, a Polishness that since 1989 has been confronted with the complexity of global reality, a Polishness that has had the chance to experiment with various scenarios of modernization and learn things the hard way. It is also a Polishness which doesn't always fit into old, outdated forms, thus it has been trying on new ones, displaying insecurities about whether it will still be able to recognize itself. It is what Kozak called "a Polishness racing at dusk towards its own boundaries. The Polish spirit, with Hegel's owl on its shoulder, galloping on Gombrowicz's horse with Kmiecic's sword in its hand. This figure of emancipation symbolizes a drive to a new form of self-knowledge."

Form is the key category to describe *Late Polishness* in this project. What are the shapes of the contemporary experience of Polishness? What are its representations? What images, symbols, figures and narrations has it been hiding under? In order to address this questions the curators have turned to various forms of art, as it is artists who have always moulded the collective and national imagination.

Artists from different generations have been invited. They include such contemporary classics as Krzysztof Wodiczko or Krzysztof M. Bednarski, as well as artists that redefined Polish art after 1989: Artur Żmijewski, Paweł Althamer, Oskar Dawicki, or Wilhelm Sasnal. The exhibition also includes artists who recently entered the world of art, such as Honorata Martin, Daniel Rycharski, Stach Szumski and Katarzyna Przezwańska, to name just a few.

Artists' versatile and individual perspectives show us the complexity of the phenomenon of national identity which is approached from a political, as well as existential, personal, mythological and even aesthetic point of view.

Stanisław Szukalski's (1893–1987) oeuvre is the starting point of this exhibition. He was an extraordinary sculptor, painter, graphic artist, designer and theoretician, the leader of the Tribe of the Horned Heart. After Poland regained independence in 1918, this visionary of powerful imagination embarked on a utopian project to radically redesign the Polish imaginarium of national identity. As Polishness began anew in the 1920's, Szukalski explored the possibility of finding a completely new form to use in national identity. We are now returning to this question and looking for an answer in visual culture and in the works of artists created after yet another new beginning that was brought on by the events of 1989.

Maurycy Gomulicki and Jacek Staniszewski present a contemporary interpretation of Szukalski's works that sets the scene for the exhibition's narrative in which diverse and even contradictory forms of Polishness co-exist within the contemporary discourse on national identity. We were interested in key figures, people, events, pictures Polish imagination is currently organized around. Lech Wałęsa, John Paul II, the Warsaw Uprising, the Smoleńsk Plane Crash, the dispute over

the myth of Solidarity, the dispute over the remembrance of Holocaust are only some key motifs that in our opinion lie at the centre of the discourse on Polish national identity. They are also drivers of the debate. We look at how the legacy of romanticism and modernity is critically processed by Polish contemporary art. We are interested in discourses that offer a fresh approach to Polishness that goes beyond pre-set paradigms from the past, e.g. a revised perspective on Polish identity which comes from working through the long-suppressed peasant origins of our society, or a post-colonial theory which offers a new, interesting interpretation of notions fundamental to Polish national identity, such as the Partition of Poland, democracy, the Eastern Borderlands, or current attempts at adapting western, liberal culture to the local conditions. We also take a look at variations of Polishness which are impossible, phantasmatic, tropical, and imaginary. Together with the artists we try to get to the limits of the notion of national identity. We are particularly keen on critical approaches, on artists who challenge current forms of national identity instead of reproducing them, who question their relevance and check whether these forms measure up to the pressure of the present, who engage in a dialogue with Polishness, or even a dispute. Artists that put Polishness to test. Some of the questions they ask are difficult, but without asking we will never find answers.

Two visual essays are an integral part of the exhibition. The first was prepared by Jakub Majmurek, a film expert, critic and columnist. It shows the perspective of the cinema on the problem of *Late Polishness*. It is a video installation that tells a story divided into six chapters: new capitalist realism, exclusion, globalism, roots, gender, and space. The second essay was written by Tomasz Plata, a theatre expert and curator. It contrasts works of visual artists with

fragments of theatre plays of the most outstanding Polish directors after 1989 such as Jerzy Jarocki, Jerzy Grzegorzewski, Wojciech Krukowski, Krystian Lupa, Krzysztof Warlikowski, Monika Strzepka, Jan Klata, Michał Zadara, Marta Górnicka, and Wojtek Ziemilski.

The exhibition will also hold debates with specialists representing a broad range of academic opinions and world views – among them you will find the editors of the *Cracow Pressje* monthly and Jakub Majmurek, a film expert; professor Andrzej Nowak or professor Andrzej Szczerbski and Maria Kobielska, PhD, a researcher of the remembrance policy, Michał Łuczewski, PhD, an expert in rural culture, Jakub Banasiak, an art critic, and Aneta Rostkowska, a curator who studies social and economic processes in art.

The guide presents the recommended order of visiting the exhibition and descriptions of the works.

1 Hubert Czerepok

You Will Never Be a Pole (2008)

neon sign

One of the many areas of interest of Hubert Czerepok is the critical analysis of xenophobic behaviours and their place in Polish society. The work is the artist's reaction to the banner by Jagiellonia Białystok fans that read: "Roger, nigdy nie będziesz Polakiem" ("Roger, you will never be a Pole") that was strung out on the stands of the stadium during a match against Legia Warsaw. The addressee of the offensive sign was a footballer from the Legia team, Roger Guerreiro, who holds Polish citizenship.

Czerepok included the symbol of Fighting Poland and the sign of the Celtic cross in the outline of the letters. Those emblems are on the T-shirts and flags of the participants of manifestations organized in Poland by members and sympathizers of the highly nationalistic movements, gathering strength, such as the National Radical Camp (ONR) and the All-Polish Youth (Młodzież Wszechpolska), which are openly supported by football hooligan environments. The misappropriation of the symbols of the Warsaw Uprising by extreme right-wing organizations and neo-fascists, who identify themselves with the sign of the Celtic cross as an alternative for the Nazi Swastika, appears to be, at its best, history's cruel joke on Poland.

2 Lava

dir. Tadeusz Konwicki (1989)

courtesy of ZEBRA Film Studio

After nearly two decades since the famous play by Kazimierz Dejmek, important not only for its artistic values, but also

political ones (March 1968), Gustaw Holoubek turned back to *Dziady* (*Forefathers' Eve*), concentrating on *Wielka Improvizacja* (*The Great Improvisation*). The film adaptation of the drama by Mickiewicz, directed by Tadeusz Konwicki, provoked Maria Janion to formulate her famous thesis about the end of the domination of romantic paradigm in Polish culture. We now know that the thesis was much exaggerated and not reasoned properly, but at the turn of the 80s and 90s, it became extremely popular in national intellectual circles. It cannot be overestimated, just like Konwicki's film, *Lava*, which in 1989 was received with mixed feelings. The film was mainly viewed by participants of school trips and was an ambitious try of embracing the heritage of the entire 20th century seen through the prism of Polish romanticism. The said romanticism was apparently dying in *Lava*, but its death was quite spectacular. For one to become convinced of it, they need only to glance at the hypnotizing Holoubek.

3 Stanisław Szukalski room

design
Maurycy Gomulicki
texts
Jacek Staniszewski

4 Grzegorz Kłaman

Black Eagle (2015)
rubber

The artist creating in the idiom of critical art has, for years, been performing surgeries on the tissue of national symbols. He is the author of, among others, *Flaga dla III RP* (*Flag for the Third Polish Republic*) (2001), in which, to the white and red fabrics of the Polish flag, he added a black strip that symbolizes the influence of the Church on the life of the state.

The black eagle is the transformation of the original colour of the main element of the national emblem into its

negative, it's as if the white colour of the honourable bird got blackened or charred. The form also underwent transformation – Kłaman's eagle was transformed and became amorphous, liquid, seemingly losing its balance, and in this process it lost its recognisability and dignity of a national symbol.

5 Paweł Althamer

Pacanów (2017)
mixed media

6 Michał Szлага

Brasilia (2011)

documentation of Paweł Althamer's artistic action happening
Billy-Goat
courtesy of Open Art Projects

All wise Polish goats,

– to count them all I've not the strength!

Formed a council, gathered

and decided on the following:

*"In the famous town Pacanów,
so smart are the blacksmiths,
with a know-how of shoeing goats,
so all goats can walk in their full glory.*

*Therefore a goat or a she-goat,
a very wise one at that,*

must go to test on shoes,

and be off to the town Pacanów.

*And when the traveller returns,
ready shod but healthy,
all the goats will learn,*

if its pleasant to have goat-shoes."

That is the beginning of the saga of adventures of Matołek the Billy-Goat, the character from the fairy tale created in 1933

by Kornel Makuszyński. The Billy–Goat, a Polish Candide who “is searching in the whole wide world for something that is very close” – the mystical Pacanów, the place where his identity could reach its full extent.

The Billy–Goat, whose adventures generations of Poles grew up reading, appears in his white and red costume as a figure of gullible Polishness, but one that is still fighting. The character of Makuszyński’s tale is usually led astray by this quest; the longer the Billy–Goat seemingly heads towards Pacanów, the further he gets away from it – however, he gets closer to self-enlightenment. Paweł Althamer has been impersonating this iconic figure for the last few years. In the self-made costume of Matolek the Billy–Goat, as a naïve wanderer, the artist embarks on short and long journeys, from his closest surroundings to the villages of the Dogons in Mali.

Some of those journeys were documented by the photographer Michał Szlagaj. In his photos we see Althamer-the Billy-Goat confronting modernity embodied in the futuristic architecture of Niemeyer in the capital of Brazil, but also in the ruins of the Gdańsk Shipyard, a symbol of Solidarity that became an emblem of the price paid for the Polish transformation.

7 Kuba Bąkowski

Emblem with Crown, a Study (2010)

plexiglass, electronics, stroboscope lamp,
microcontroller, programming

8 Michał Budny

Untitled (Borders) (2006)

paper tape
Piotr Bazylko’s collection

9 Oskar Dawicki

This Is Not a Flag (2014)

photography wallpaper
courtesy of the Raster Gallery

10 Ewa Sadowska

White Above Red (2012)

video, 50"

Ewa Sadowska’s video displays the reproduction of Mark Rothko’s classic 1957 colour field painting White over Red. Sadowska sings a formalist description of the painting, using the melody of the Polish national anthem. A (Polish) spectator, enraptured by the well-known melody, may be tempted to project national contents onto the abstraction of Rothko’s painting. The autonomy of the language of art, vital for Rothko, reveals itself as a rather utopian premise. However, the notion of national identity is just as much (if not even more so) abstract. The abstraction of Polishness seeks itself within established forms: melodies, colours and emblems. In this sense, the problem of identity turns into an artistic issue *par excellence*. It becomes a formal problem of aesthetics, representation and visual perception.

11 Paweł Susid

Untitled (Boredom) (2007)

acrylic on canvas

Susid worked out his own, visual-verbal language, which he applies to comment on reality. A short text combined with a minimalistic art form constitutes the essence of his paintings. The artist organizes this material into a disciplined message, compatible with the geometry of the canvas. These “word paintings” by Susid, however detached they appear, always hit our habits and flaws thus conducting a brilliant game of contexts. They serve the spectator with reflection, in a man-

ner that is either pointed or ironic, and, at times, poetic and philosophica.

12 Nicolas Grospierre

Smyk Store (2016)

photograph

For a number of years, Nicolas Grospierre has been photographing architecture, with a particular interest in socialist modernism. The buildings of that period (especially the public ones) bear the stigma of aversion rooted in Poland's past communist regime. Therefore, a number of these buildings of unwanted heritage were disposed of, without a twinge of guilt, back in the 90s, to make space for new property developments. Only recently, mostly people in their 30s have initiated the debate on the vast heritage of Polish socialist modernism as an object of communal memory and identity. This theme is also surprisingly popular among contemporary Polish artists.

The Central Shopping Mall (CDT), popularly called *Smyk*, designed by Zbigniew Ihnatowicz and Jerzy Romański, is indeed an outstanding building. Erected between 1949–52, quite literally among the sea of ruins of Warsaw, it brought to life the idea of metropolitan modernism. It was criticized at the very beginning by the already dominant socialist realism doctrine. However, it was one of the few functionalist buildings in Warsaw at that time. Although it survived the 1975 fire, it was almost completely demolished in 2014 by the current investor. Only the reinforced-concrete framework of the façade was left. The investor declared they would recreate the CDT's original look from sixty years ago. Grospierre photographed *Smyk*'s façade on which the developer projected the visualisation of its future appearance,

i.e. its modernized copy. The copy however, lacks authenticity.

13 Nicolas Grospierre

Phoenix (2016)

book, photographs

Phoenix is a unique book that displays its own destruction and, as the legendary bird, rises from its own ashes.

14 Nicolas Grospierre

Bunker (2014/17)

photographs in a metal box, 4 framed paper sheets, video

A bunker invokes one's peril and/or survival instincts. It can also serve as a metaphor of the past, in which we are all trapped in some way. Grospierre photographed, methodically, all items stored in a Cold War era nuclear bunker on the outskirts of Warsaw, left intact since its construction. The bunker was supposed to help civil defence troops, in the case of a nuclear or chemical strike. The outcome of the work are 100 photographs in a pack shot aesthetics that display each and every item stored in the bunker, e.g. gas masks, telephones, combat suits, helmets, badges, chemical reagents, medical equipment, manuals and leaflets. The prints were numbered and captioned, which created a fully documented collection that one may entitle "100 indispensable things to survive a nuclear strike". The photographs were put into a metal box and hermetically closed and sealed. Grospierre also made a detailed list of all photographed items.

The sealed container with the photographically documented contents of the bunker reminds one of the mythical Pandora's box. The nuclear strike survival kit, hidden by means of an artistic gesture, stands for all fears, perils and evil energy of that period, a time which humanity is now trying to forget.

15 Witek Orski

Rejuvenation (2017)

photographic installation

The classic Polish landscape photographer, Jan Bułhak, was a tireless promoter of the genre in its patriotic, even nationalist, version. Due to the fact that he made his works during a particularly tumultuous period, he used landscape photography as a purely political tool. His images of “homeland views” constituted a significant patriotic voice in the debate on Polish borders undergoing changes at that time. Bułhak’s Poland included both the Eastern Borderlands (*Kresy Wschodnie*) and the so-called western Regained Lands (*Ziemie Odzyskane*), together with a vast sea border in the north and wide mountain ranges in the south. In a 1938 book manifesto, entitled *Fotografia Ojczysta* (*Native Photography*), he revealed the creative philosophy of his photography, the glory of the homeland and in service to the nation. He also described the methods and techniques that constituted the ethos of a native photographer. One of the most absurd tips was the suggestion that clouds over Poland should be photographed in such way, as to give them full justice to their supposedly exceptional Polish features. An adequate epilogue to such a farce is the fact that, once *Native Photography* was reissued in 1950, Bułhak replaced all nationalist and romantically spirited images of meadows, villages and cemeteries of Vilnius with photographic tributes to the industrial achievements of communist Poland and the deeds of the Red Army. He quietly replaced “the nation” with “the working people” in the text.

Rejuvenation is an act of ironic criticism of photography (and other forms of art) as art that is made for the nation's glory; on the other hand, it is a gloomy reflection upon what was done to the Polish landscape after the democratic transformation. It was subjected to modular uni-

fication (by means of i.e. prefabricated materials such as setts), spatial segregation by fences, noise barriers, guard rails, landscape and architecture being turned into potential advertising spots for billboards. Poland, rebuilt under a sky of clouds and according to the raging capitalist logic, does deserve to be pictured as thus.

16 Michał Szлага

Poland (2004/2017)

photographs

courtesy of the Fort Institute of Photography

Is it possible to photograph Poland? Michał Szлага did not adopt any pre-established assumptions while preparing for this assignment. He decided to explore intuitively the manifestations and displays of contemporary Polishness. Over ten years, Szлага accumulated a photo archive of thousands of images, during both private and professional travels all over the country. He photographed “Poland” with a small Olympus mju II film camera. This amateur device enjoys certain fame among the professionals as a quick-shot tool.

Poland is a paradoxical project: it is encyclopaedic in scale and heterogeneity, and yet extremely subjective and fragmented. It is based on the photographer's instinctive reactions to Polish situations that happened to him during his journeys. The image of Poland manifests between the lines of these situations. It is an image cemented together out of landscapes and snapshots of behaviours, locations, items and signs. It is the image of a country in rushed transformation. Many different, often contradictory forms are superimposed. These forms, installed in Polish spaces, gain a life of their own. During the journey across the country that we embark on thanks to Szлага's work, it is hard not to think that the essence of what we are presen-

ted with is the result of imagery and projects initiated in Poland, as well as their outcomes and reality.

17 Yael Bartana

Jewish Renaissance Movement in Poland

(2008–2017)

The film trilogy by Yael Bartana, entitled *And Europe Will Be Stunned*, is an exercise in political imagination. It is a fictitious story that simultaneously grazes many vulnerable spots on the body of two national identities: the Israeli and the Polish. It is not a coincidence that in 2011, Bartana was the first international artist to represent Poland at the Venice Biennale, and she did so with this very project.

The project begins with the 2008 film *Nightmares*. The protagonist, played by the intellectual leader of the new Polish left-wing, Sławomir Sierakowski, makes a speech to call upon the three million Polish Jews killed in the Holocaust to return to Poland. The two subsequent parts of Bartana's trilogy develop the political fiction narrative: they speculate on what could have happened if Sierakowski's utopian call had actually been answered.

For the trilogy's needs, Bartana established a fictional Jewish Rebirth Movement in Poland, i.e. a kind of reversed Zionism focused on re-emigration, a return to the diaspora. The concept itself erodes the very ideological foundation of the Israeli society. Simultaneously, it once again presents the question of the role of the presence/absence of the Jewish minority in Polish society. A Jew was the closest Other for Poles, used to define modern Polish identity and its limits. Can we be ourselves without the Others? What happens to the community, when the traditional Other becomes a great Absentee? Bartana also works on another questions, by fictionally staging that, which would be obviously impossible to achieve in reality: a certain

reversal of the course of history. A reversal of the irreversible. The fictional Jewish Rebirth Movement in Poland aims for the impossible, but touches upon real issues. Although the organization does not exist politically, it does have its own emblem, publishes manifestos, organises congresses and debates. Bartana sees the Movement as a platform for the critical processing of ideas and a laboratory of the imaginary. Her premise is that certain realms of reality are only accessible when inflicted with fiction. And this is only possible in the "laboratory conditions" of artistic & political speculation.

18 Oskar Dawicki

I Never Made a Work on the Holocaust (2009)

pencil on paper

private collection, deposit of the Museum of Modern Art in Warsaw

The memory of the Holocaust was repressed in communist Poland, silenced and pushed away into collective subconsciousness. It thus caused symptoms of a national neurosis. The question on how to remember the Holocaust returned with greater impact after 1989. It catalysed the debate on potential revisions of Polish identity. What role did we perform in the making of this memory? That of a righteous one among the nations? Or a powerless witness of the Holocaust? Or an indifferent witness? Or one that must share responsibility for this act? The initiation of the debate in this regard hit a particularly sensitive spot of Polish identity i.e. the very foundation of the traditional Polishness concept, which is martyrdom, feeling like a victim who may fail or suffer violence, but who has morally won. Unfortunately, Poland did not come out morally clean from the Holocaust. To suppress this fact within the framework of Polishness required changing its symbolic framework. An operation as such cannot be performed painlessly.

Artists started to tackle this problem since the early 90s. The memory of the Holocaust as a discourse capable of altering Polish symbolic territory became one of the great art themes of the post-1989 era. The proliferation of such statements, however, posed a risk of trivialization and instrumental treatment. Dawicki eventually joined the debate, but on his typical terms, paradoxically and ironically. The hand-written inscription that reads "I Never Made Any Work on the Holocaust" may be interpreted as the artist's resistance against obligations imposed onto him, such as the participation in nationwide debates or creating art on issues *du jour*. At the same time, Dawicki contradicts his declaration by touching upon the problem he supposedly wants to avoid, and which cannot be entirely avoided anyway.

19 Dorota Nieznalska

I Am Polish, Thus My Responsibilities Are Polish...

part of *The Reverent Remembrance!* series (2013/2014)

installation: photography, object (rye, wood, knitwear)

The work makes a direct reference to the history of Nieznalska's family and her relation to Roman Dmowski on her father's side of the family. Nieznalska entitled her work after a quote from the writings of this principal ideologist of Polish nationalism. The photographs document two performances: one on the 11th of November 2013, at the Bródnowski cemetery in Warsaw, by the family tomb of Nieznalska's ancestor, Roman Dmowski; the other on the 4th of November 2013 in Sopot, by the tomb of her great-grandmother Rozalia, née Dmowska. On National Independence Day in Poland (November 11), Nieznalska shaved her head, in the fashion of Polish nationalists, and went to Warsaw, in order to lay, on the tomb

of Roman Dmowski, a wreath made from the ears of Polish rye, decorated with a white and red bow and the quote that makes up the title of the work.

In her works, for several years Nieznalska documented and submitted to critique examples of hate speech in public spaces. One of her points of interest were the aggressively racist and anti-Semitic slogans, appearing among the football hooligan communities. The rhetoric of the hooligans, which fits into the phenomenon of symbolic violence, is not distant from nationalistic attitudes of far-right organisations. The artist points to the social mechanisms forming the favourable conditions for hate speech and its advancing popularization, not only at football arenas, but also in politics.

20 Paweł Susid

Untitled (The Nation Covers a Man) (2005/2009)

acrylic on canvas

21 Grzegorz Klaman

Transparent (2010)

polyester resin sculpture, UV light, white fabric

property of the artist, deposit of The National Museum in Szczecin

The main part of the work is a sculpture made of transparent resin, depicting Lech Wałęsa. Its style refers to social realist sculptures portraying the workers. The room is filled with ultraviolet light, reflected by the white fabric on which the statue stands. It prevents the spectator from accommodating their eyesight. The transparent resin seems to disappear and a hallucinatory, unreal atmosphere is created around Wałęsa. In order to take a good look, one has to tread on the pristine white drapery. Klaman's work was created during violent attacks targeted at Lech Wałęsa, who was accused of collaboration with Poland's communist secret police, Służba Bezpie-

czeństwa. The transparency of the matter used for the statue of the legendary “Solidarity” leader suggests that his background must be thoroughly scanned in order to reveal the truth. The artist appears to be rather sceptical about whether the full truth about the past could ever be divulged. The Transparent Man, while illuminated, paradoxically becomes non-transparent. Dieter Roelstraete, a Flemish critic, wrote in Klaman’s monograph: “Klaman’s object of interest is not Wałęsa as a human being, or even Wałęsa’s actual contribution to the change (...), but rather the symbol ‘Wałęsa’ as a location of historiographical contestation – a research station from which one can control the descriptions and transcriptions of political history.”

22 Jakub Woynarowski

and the Institute of Architecture

Dorota Jędruch, Marta Karpieńska,

Dorota Leśniak-Rychlak, Michał Wiśniewski

Impossible Objects (2014)

collection of the Józef Piłsudski Museum in Sulejówek
The first showcase of the artwork took place at the *Impossible Objects* exhibition in the Polish Pavilion at the 14th Venice Architecture Biennale in 2014. The exhibition was produced by Zachęta National Gallery of Art.

The main component of the project is showcased at the Ujazdowski Castle is a 1:1 replica of the canopy installed above the entrance to the crypt in the Wawel Castle, where Józef Piłsudski is buried. The original canopy was made in 1937, designed by Adolf Szyszko-Bohusz.

Impossible Objects was to answer the call by Rem Koolhaas, the curator of the Venice Architecture Exhibition in 2014 *Fundamentals: Absorbing Modernity 1914—2014*. The complex process of absorbing modernism in the context of local identities is analysed by the authors of *Impossible Objects*, on the basis of the architecture design of the ca-

nopy from the Wawel Castle, designed to commemorate Józef Piłsudski. The final shape of the canopy, designed by Szyszko-Bohusz, is quite inconsistent. Its historicist base is made of spolia referring to countries that partitioned Poland among themselves in the past: a granite pedestal of the Bismarck’s statute in Poznań, recast Austrian cannons and jasper columns from Warsaw’s Alexander Nevsky orthodox church. It is finished off with a plaque that bears a Latin inscription, which on its own represents modernist formal language. The rectangular plaque is bound to the canopy’s bottom part with small metal spheres, fixed to the columns’ capitals.

The canopy’s replica differs from the Wawel Castle’s original: the plaque that covers the entire structure is separated from its bottom. It looks as if it was hovering. A slit between the two aesthetic conventions, one invoking historic forms, and another one modernist forms, emerging as a result of an artistic intervention, indicates the incompatibility of modern forms and traditional contents. It also accentuates the fissure between a fantastic conservative vision of the future and a modern disguise with which it has been decorated.

23 Peter Fuss

Santo Subito (2007/2017)

resin, video

Peter Fuss is a pseudonym that conceals the identity of a street art practitioner from Poland’s Tricity metropolitan area, who consistently remains anonymous. He uses critical art methodology and makes use of codes that appear in the Polish public sphere, in order to point out alarming trends that have gained traction in universal consciousness.

In the showcased artwork, Peter Fuss regards the modes in which the image of Pope John Paul II functions in Po-

land: either as official statutes, distributed all over the country, or as cheesy gadgets widely offered by the so-called “papa-businesses”. The enormous demand for devotional papal articles generates a similar offer. A great assortment of items is available at bazaars and sanctuaries nationwide. Among the “souvenirs” (manufactured mostly in China) one finds trashy figurines, wall clocks, thimbles and lighters.

Both catalogued collections of papal portraits are accompanied by a series of papal figurines signed by Fuss: in the form of garden gnomes, the mould casting and paintwork all done by the artist.

24 Igor Omulecki

Maria Janion (2002)

print, acrylic glass

In Poland, Romanticism stretches far beyond the historical frames that delimit this artistic and philosophical movement in other European cultures. Modern Polish identity has been constructed by this very paradigm, and even to this day it contains visions and notions stemming from Romanticism. Deciphering these visions in a contemporary context remains crucial for understanding Polishness. Professor Maria Janion's role is invaluable in this endeavour. Her critical analyses of Romanticism provide priceless tools needed for the interpretation of the phantasms and convictions that form the building blocks of our identity. It is impossible to talk about the current condition of Polishness without entering the circle of Romantic fantasies, but it would also be impossible without Janion's ideas that help us to break free from that enchanted circle of visions and to look at it from a distance.

25 Monika Drożyńska

House Party (2016)

hand embroidery

courtesy of the artist and Exhibitors Bureau / Polish Modern Art Foundation

Culture vs nature, theory and oppression vs cosmos and love. The artist juxtaposes theoretical and linguistic spheres, invented to rule the world and people, with life and the energy of the world. The work is a garland, typical of house parties, embroidered by hand. It merges fragments of the Polish anthem, iconography of nationalist and European symbols, as well as images of flowers and other plants related to paganism, into one semiotic whole.

26 Jadwiga Sawicka

Bitter Left-wing, Sweet Right-wing (2017)

lightboxes, prints on paper

Sawicka recycles words: she chooses individual terms or sentence fragments taken from newspapers, commercials or digital media and later includes them in her paintings or reproduces them as prints, in order to focus the viewer's attention onto them. In effect, she manages to restore connoted emotions to the barren words, granting them the material form and visual distinctiveness of objects. The artist refers to this practice as: “searching for forms in order to comment on emotions”.

This artwork was inspired by *A Minor Apocalypse*, a book by Tadeusz Konwicki, where we can read about “the bitter left and the sweet right”. This phrase, interpreted more blatantly in the context of political stances and worldview stigmas, has been combined with the sense of taste, something non-rational, that implies moral judgement, even if it's subject to mischievous reinterpretations.

The lightboxes are accompanied by a background of city landscapes. Their aesthetics is random, oblivious to any moral or political categories.

27 Artur Żmijewski

Democracies (2008)

HD video, 4h 37'

courtesy of the artist and the Foksal Gallery Foundation

Democracies is a vast collection of short documentaries. Each of them records a different form of politicality practiced and manifested in public spaces. Żmijewski points the lens of his camera at a ritual of a secular, state funeral, demonstrations organised by trade unions, riots, historical reconstructions reenacted on the streets of Polish cities, as well as religious processions. He looks at those events with a “cool eye”: he does not comment, does not take sides in the ideological, political and social disputes he witnesses. He’s more interested in the aesthetics of those gatherings, the colours of the banners, the speech rhetoric, the choreography of the marches, the scenarios of conflicts and rituals – the pure form of politicality in its multiple manifestations.

The full version of *Democracies* includes documents shot in different countries (among others in Israel, Germany, Ireland or Belgium); however, for *Late Polishness* we limited ourselves only to the Polish cases documented by the artist.

28 Jacek Adamas

Untitled (2011)

mixed media

In 2009, Jacek Adamas took part in Paweł Althamer’s *Common Task* celebrating the 20th anniversary of the elections held on July 4, 1989, a symbolic date marking the transition from the communist regime to a free democratic state. The project envisioned Althamer flying to Brussels with his fellow

neighbours from an apartment block in Bródno, Warsaw. It was a spectacular idea, in that, the group arrived in Belgium on a golden aircraft whilst wearing golden jumpsuits. They had their photo taken on the Brussels airfield, and the picture later made the cover of the prestigious *Artforum* magazine. However, although he is a friend of Althamer and colleague in the renowned Kowalnia, Adamas has been a long-time critic of the Polish transformation and neoliberalism, standing up for those left behind in the wake of the socio-economic transformation that followed after 1989.

When Adamas came across *Artforum* featuring the golden Boeing on its front cover, he decided to turn the tables and glue another picture to the back cover of the magazine: the photo of the presidential Tupolev following its crash in Smoleńsk. When spread out, covers facing up, *Artforum* suddenly becomes an indictment of domestic realities, juxtaposing images that symbolically represent two Polands: the one living its post-1989 success, the other living the tragedy of the transformation.

29 Włodzimierz Pawlak

Airplane (2011)

oil on canvas
private collection

The painting was displayed in 2012 at Włodzimierz Pawlak’s solo exhibition *Airplane Anatomy*. The creation of the entire series of abstract paintings presented therein was triggered by the Polish President’s plane crash in Smoleńsk on April 10th, 2010. Pawlak refers to the tragic event indirectly, through intellectual analysis and formal interventions on the canvas’ surface, departing from the simplest shape of a paper plane drifting through the air. The combination of this striking shape and national colours transforms the artwork into a

commentary on the disaster, not limiting the field of interpretation. Other works of the artist feature two constantly recurring and mutually complementary topics: existentialism and image theory.

30 Artur Żmijewski

Catastrophe (2010)

HD video, 57'08"

It is becoming increasingly clear that the Smoleńsk Catastrophe was a turning point in the symbolic dynamics that shape contemporary Poland. Killing almost one hundred senior establishment figures, including the president himself, the catastrophe shook the entire political scene. But what was perhaps more important, was that the liberal, post-political language, framing domestic discourse since 1989, could not provide a vocabulary in which the tragedy could be understood. Which is why to make sense of the catastrophe and to express their shock, people soon started turning to conspiracy theories and historiosophical speculation, often fuelled by anachronistic images and ideas.

In his film, Artur Żmijewski captures these dynamics at play. With his camera ready at hand, the artist took to the streets of Warsaw in the days that followed the ill-fated flight, documenting unfiltered public response to the trauma, while wandering through demonstrations, vigils, and common prayers. Although the catastrophe itself quickly became a matter of political dispute, Żmijewski is far from taking sides. Keeping his distance, he is simply watching the rituals, listening to people talk about the crash, observing the society struggling to articulate this collective shock.

31 Paweł Susid

Untitled (Anniversaries, When Stretched or Shortened, Become Unsuitable) (2009)

acrylic on canvas

32 Karol Radziszewski

Fag Fighters (2007–2016)

collages courtesy of the BWA Warsaw Gallery
video from the collection of the Ujazdowski Castle
Centre for Contemporary Art

Fag Fighters is a fictional gay militia, invented by Radziszewski in a series of artworks developed via different media and in diverse locations. *Fag Fighters* roam the streets leaving graffiti tags. They spread fear and violence (also sexual) among straight people. Their signature garments are pink balaclavas. In the film *Fag Fighters: The Prologue*, Radziszewski clarifies the origin of the emblem: the balaclavas were hand-knitted for the gang members by the artist's grandma. She was only vaguely aware of her grandson's artistic concept. It is one of the many artworks by Radziszewski that develop along the division lines between two social orders: family ties and gay culture. These two are hard to align. And yet, the artist stays within the lines of both.

The argument about rights, position and visibility of LGBT individuals in public life became one of the most important themes of the debate on changing and pushing the boundaries of traditional Polish identity. Radziszewski took part in that debate by using the characters of warriors, rebels, guerillas — embedded deeply in this identity. However, he did so in a mischievous way, as the *Fag Fighters* impersonate the fear present in conservative discourse: the fear of homosexuals as a subversive element, undermining the traditional and patriarchal social order. In this perverse way, Radziszewski makes the homoph-

obes' night terrors come true: the emancipation of the LGBT community brings about a catastrophic vision of the future, as homosexuals take over public space and impose their non-heteronormative order. In this narrative, an unexpected reversal of roles occurs as the bullied become bullies themselves; the threatened, start to threaten. The artist, as a hacker, takes control of the language and phantasms of his opponents. The ironic idea does not weaken the emancipatory power of the endeavour. The inception of Fag Fighters and a blunt, if not violent, depiction of their activity is also the artist's objection against the reproduction of the image of gay people fitting into the heteronormative expectations of the majority. Radziszewski purposefully and completely fails to fulfil these expectations. We tend to accept the Other all the more willingly when they cease to be alien, and start to resemble ourselves instead. The artist does not accept this deal.

33 Igor Omulecki

Knight (2003)

archival print

The intense and emotional way in which Poles relive historical narratives is an important constituent of Polish identity that should not be underestimated. Poles keep projecting the past onto the present, and current events are constantly interpreted in a way that one sees cues from the past. This fascination manifests in many ways, one of which is the movement of historical reconstructions that has been on the rise in Poland since 1989. In 2003, Igor Omulecki photographed a participant of one such event. The participant, a knight in full armour, was taking part in a re-enactment of the Battle of Grunwald. This figure of a warrior clad in steel was captured away from the turmoil of the battle, during a moment of me-

lancholic reverie. We don't know what this Medieval "knight" was thinking about, as the flash shed its light on him amidst a 21st century, dark Polish forest. Nonetheless, his downright anachronic presence in present times is an interesting point of departure when reflecting on the theatricalisation of history, on how we participate in collective pasts, and on the persistence of certain figures that, in spite of the passing time, still yield the power to fuel our imagination.

34 Robert Rumas

Pope John Paul II, Dust Mites (2006)

colour photography on aluminium, alkyd paint, DVD film, 7h
collection of the Centre of Polish Sculpture in Oronsko

The photograph features a blow-up of a trashy figurine of Pope John Paul II, covered with dust and the effects of the artist's direct work on the print: a meticulous dotting on the surface (a reverse process applied in photography conservation to restore the areas where colour had been lost). The happening, broadcast by Rumas, took place in 2006 in Toruń. The initial, unfinished version of the artwork was supposed to be interactive, using video technology: a spectator would approach the screen, the installation would then react by zooming in on the figurine, until the dusty structure could be seen.

Such accumulation of dust and mites, i.e. the physical matter of time, on a plaster figurine, does not undermine the authority of the person it represents. The natural process of material decomposition, diminishing the recognisability of the worshipped object, shows that a deep understanding of spiritual and religious duties is superior to a simple worship of sacred icons.

35 Wilhelm Sasnal

Paintings (2013–16)

oil on canvas

Sasnal ascribed his work to international art trends. However, he has done so without dissolving his own identity in the universal experience, he has done quite the opposite. He tends to universalise personal experience, his participation in Polishness as well. Over the course of years, Sasnal has cited Polish history, figures prominent to national identity, as well as Polish spaces, manifested in the form of landscapes. He taps into the trend of contemplating Polishness where national identity is a subject of critical processing rather than a monolith of imagined features that the artists are expected to reproduce and perpetuate.

The artworks selected by Sasnal for the exhibition form an anthology of themes linked, through subtle associations and references, with the abstract ideas of late Polishness: from our anachronistic compulsion to re-live history in the present moment, through religion, all the way to the fear of the Other, which, albeit negatively, cements national identity.

36 Katarzyna Przezwańska

Untitled (2014)

maquette, mixed media

courtesy of Dawid Radziszewski Gallery

Przezwańska became interested in the aesthetics and quality of space in the Polish parliament based on the premise that the environment in which Polish lawmakers work has an impact on their decisions. She inquired the MPs and analysed the buildings of the parliament (Sejm) from many perspectives. Then, she proposed a new, revitalised design for the Assembly Room. The model presenting this idea was made in collaboration with the WWAA architecture studio and visual artists Leszek and Maciej Jasiński.

Przezwańska took into account the MPs' complaints about uncomfortable seats, bad air quality, ugly carpets or inadequate lighting. She then decided to add live plants to the interior and distributed the MPs' seats according to their place of origin rather than political affiliation. More importantly, however, she proposed completely new, energetic colours to support the well-being of those making the most important decisions in the country. Przezwańska is convinced that art can be a driving force, and that correctly composed colour schemes impact human beings and their emotions. The model of the Polish parliament is an incentive to provide the political elite with better working conditions by improving the aesthetic value of their workplace.

37 Janek Simon

Polyethnic (2016–2017)

home-made 3D print composed of polylactide (PLA)
and polyethylene terephthalate (PET)
courtesy of the Raster Gallery

The series of figures *Polyethnics* continues the artist's experimentation with 3D printing. Simon uses a 3D printing device of his own design. Thanks to the machine, "the word becomes flesh" and imagination becomes tangible reality. In this particular case, the starting point was a figure of "a true Pole". While looking for an image of such character, Simon realised it could only be made out of a sequence of layers. Therefore, the figures emerge just like national identity does: following a certain script. However, it contains many different cultural codes. The final effect is not a "clean" and coherent image; quite the opposite: the figures are collages in essence.

38 Oskar Dawicki

Fix Bayonets (2005)

DVD, 1'

courtesy of the Raster Gallery

"For the hand they lift against Poles—a bullet in return", yells Dawicki. The film features an adult, but one speaking with the voice of a child, though it belongs to Dawicki himself. Years ago, he recited a patriotic poem "Bagnet na broń" ("Fix Bayonets") by Władysław Broniewski. Declarations of unconditional will to shed blood (that of his enemies, as well as his own) for the Homeland, pronounced by a little child, are shocking. They are deeply embedded, however, in collective awareness and in the mind of each and every person who has been taught the national identity discourse since early childhood — before one has gained an understanding of the bloody and menacing words that were put in their mouth.

39 Daniel RycharSKI

Commemorative Archway for the 150th Anniversary of the Abolition of Feudal Service

(2014)

welded object

Tacky metalwork that brings to mind small-town aesthetics, vivid, folk-art colours, and the archway form, borrowed from the giant order of official architecture—RycharSKI's work is a hybrid, familiar to Polish culture, where it is common to interpret freely and adapt universal patterns to local concepts. The event commemorated by the archway, i.e. the abolition of feudal service on Polish territories annexed by Russia, is chronologically distant. However, in the recent years it has been, again, an object of vivid interest of researchers and thus plays an important role in the modern thinking on Polish identity. Serfdom had an impact that reaches modern times. Feudal relationships and class divisions, as well as certain

colonisation of a major part of the society by Polish elite have been transposed into modern times. Such researchers as Jan Sowa or Andrzej Leder decided to reinterpret them, in order to verify the image of contemporary Polishness. In this sense, the event commemorated by the archway has a contemporary character. Just like the challenge of processing one's peasant roots — a rather universal thing in Poland, however denied and marginalised for years, due to the main national identity narrative. Daniel RycharSKI taps into such discourse, nonetheless he does so from an insider's point of view. He is one who does not "discover" his roots; he has never denied them. Raised, and currently working in the countryside, RycharSKI is interested in contemporary peasant culture. As he was making comments on the archway, he admitted that the memory of feudal service is not a relevant issue in the contemporary Polish countryside. The artist himself recognised that he adopted "an urban standpoint" towards the rural reality while building the archway in his home village, Kurówek.

40 Daniel RycharSKI

Cross (2017)

object

RycharSKI built a wooden cross, decorated with symbolic ornaments. The wood comes from a forest where two young people committed suicide. The very cross is made from the wood of a tree on which one of the youths hung themselves.

LGBTQ individuals are still more likely to commit suicide than others. The index dropped in Poland in the early 21st century, but recently it has again been on the rise. Homophobia and fear of community rejection and aggression place non-heteronormative individuals in a high-risk group. The youth inhabiting provincial areas that do not have ac-

cess to local LGBTQ community support are particularly in danger.

Rycharski makes a reference to the problem by means of Christian symbols. As most Poles, including LGBTQ people, he grew up surrounded by them. The cross, a symbol of martyrdom, but also of the abolition of death, was made to be carried during an ecumenical Way of the Cross, organised by Wiara i Tęcza (Faith and Rainbow), a Christian LGBTQ community, of which Rycharski is an active member. Wiara i Tęcza connects people that disagree with the non-heteronormative individuals being banned from public life, the Catholic Church and Christian spirituality included.

41 Paweł Althamer, Robert Brylewski,

Aga Szreder, Joanna Świerczyńska,

Zofia Waślicka, Artur Żmijewski,

Rafał Zwirek, Natalia Żychska

Homage to Lech Wałęsa (2016)

acrylic and pastels on canvas

Lech Wałęsa's presence remains well preserved on the crossroads of key myths, arguments and narratives of contemporary Polishness. The debate on the state of the Polish national community leads, sooner or later, to the argument on the role played by the legendary leader of Solidarity. National hero? Popular hero? Traitor? The man who toppled down communism? A trade union activist who pushed Polish workers towards the abyss of raging capitalism? Yet another chapter of this argument developed in 2016. Documents leaked from the private archives of the former head of Polish communist secret police that claim young Wałęsa was its secret collaborator. Adversaries of the former president took not only to destroy the myth of Wałęsa, but also to reinterpret modern history of Poland.

When under attack, Wałęsa was supported by many.

Among the supporters were the group of artists "Nowolipie" and their friends. They made an allegoric painting: homage for the historic leader of Solidarity. They travelled with the painting to Gdańsk and gave it to Wałęsa personally. It was placed in the former president's office at the European Solidarity Centre. To create and to donate the painting was not only an act of support for a politician in distress, but also an informed choice of the artists who picked a side in a political argument by signing up for the values represented by Lech Wałęsa.

42 Karol Radziszewski

About a Strong Boy (2016)

acrylic on canvas

courtesy of the BWA Warsaw Gallery

The painting was based on the research for the project *pany chłopy chłopy pany* (*masters peasants, peasants masters*), in which Radziszewski participated. The endeavour was organised by BWA Sokół gallery in Nowy Sącz, curated by Magda Ujma and Wojciech Szymański, and developed in the Sądecki Etnographic Park. This enormous heritage park became the framework for the deliberations upon the image of rural Poland in contemporary culture.

About a Strong Boy is based on an educational and propaganda display board from communist times, found in the heritage park's archive. The board was made by an anonymous yet skilled artist who undoubtedly did their homework during the pre-WW2 search for Polish national style. It illustrates class conflicts in the countryside by means of a cautionary tale, vaguely based on a short story by Chekhov. A young master hires the protagonist, a young peasant. His work is to be compensated with the right to

flick the nobleman. The master intends to outsmart the peasant by making him go to hell — literally. However, the protagonist survives the trouble and claims the reward for his feudal service. It is a straightforward, revolutionary and subversive act of class violence.

Radziszewski decided to transpose this historical propaganda representation to contemporary art. He created his own, albeit accurate, interpretation painting of *About a Strong Boy*. By doing so, he noticed how the historical class conflict is being updated by the ongoing revision of the impact of the unprocessed feudal service trauma and a long-term denial of peasant origin in reference to the social condition of contemporary Poles.

43 Robert Rumas

Allocation (2007)

colour photography property of the artist
deposit of the Wrocław Contemporary Museum

44 Paweł Susid

Banner (Progress is Behind Us) (2016)

acrylic on canvas

45 Radek Słлага

Paintings (2014 – 2016)

oil on canvases
courtesy of the artist and the LETO Gallery

The image of Polishness is one of the regularly recurring themes in Słлага's works. He sees painting as an area for experiments with this image. Słлага places upon it the filters of personal experience, readings and associations. He introduces foreign pathogens into the Polish identity genome to cause unforeseen mutations. He reaches new, potentially feasible frontiers of Polishness, through characters that balance on the brink of many cultures, such as the Polish-American terro-

rist Ted Kaczynski, or the Polish-British novelist Joseph Conrad, the moralist of colonialism at its heyday and the author of *Heart of Darkness*. Słлага mixes the images of Polish highlanders with those of Afro-Americans; he constructs alternative cartography and searches for Polishness as a postcolonial, African, tropical, Congolese representation; one that rests in the desert, or in the jungle, in the heart of darkness. Creolisation, bastardisation and hybridisation are all basic methods in Słagara's research agenda, based on the premise that one has to trespass the border of identity, both collective and individual, in order to explore it.

46 Wilhelm Sasnal

Poland Israel (2000)

oil on canvas
private collection

47 Janek Simon

The Year of Poland in Madagascar (2006–2017)

poster, courtesy of the Raster Gallery

The operation carried out by Simon in Madagascar in 2006 was a critical reflection upon the advertising policy of Polish culture abroad, as well as an exercise in the geography of Polish political imagination.

The 21st century brought about intense cultural diplomacy activities, executed by such public institutions as the Adam Mickiewicz Institute, whose signature product “Polish seasons” presented in different countries (*Year of Poland in France, Germany, etc.*) was mocked by Simon as a discourse of national artistic expansion. He achieved this through his work, *The Year of Poland in Madagascar*, that was not authorised by any official institution or body. The main (and, frankly, only) event of the “season” was an exhibition of modern art. Simon invited fellow artists from

Central Europe to participate and brought the artworks to this African island in his personal luggage. In Madagascar, he operated within the blurred lines of obliquity: whether he represented himself, or the culture of his nation.

Of course, the project's location is no coincidence. In the geography of Polish political imagination, the distant Madagascar occupies a special place. In the 18th century, Maurycy Beniowski, an adventurer, exile and traveller, worked on colonising the island under French rule and attempted to become its emperor. In the 1920s and 1930s, Madagascar became the object of colonial fantasies and substantial plans of Poland: at that time recently set free from the quasi-colonial dependence from her mighty neighbours herself. In Simon's project, the African island becomes a place where the post-colonial discourse and the discourse on Polish identity, seemingly distant, meet on the turf of contemporary cultural policy.

48 Karol Radziszewski

Chapel (2017)

installation

Ceremony (2016)

video documentation of a performance that took place at the "Sui generis" festival; curators: Eugenio Viola and Angel Moya Garcia; producer: Associazione Culturale Dello Scompiglio

Ryszard Kisiel, photographs from the series *Indian girl-shaman* (1985/1986)

The reconstruction of the queer theme in the history of Polish culture is an important component of Radziszewski's work. In the process of restoration of this untold, cursed history, Radziszewski innovatively combines different strategies. He intertwines the classic research methodology involving archives, documents and oral history testimonials, with means of artistic expression: documentary and mockumentary, performative reconstructions and reenactments. The artist transgresses

traditional historiography and updates it on contemporary ground, as a live experience.

However, for Radziszewski the history of Polish queer culture has never been a separate episode, enclosed within a geographic and national frame. Quite the opposite: one of the key elements of his strategy is to weave the research objects into a complex network of international contexts and search for close (e.g. Central European), as well as distant and non-obvious associations, analogies and equivalents.

One such place of amalgamation of themes of a variety of origins is *The Chapel*. Radziszewski uses it to display the recording of a performance-ritual he presented in 2016 in Italy, as part of the Sui Generis festival, curated by Eugenio Viola and Ángel Moya García. The ceremonial robe, decorations, and phallic make-up remind us of Ryszard Kisiel, a promoter of gay culture in the final days of the communist rule in Poland and editor of "Filo", the first queer zine in communist Central Europe. He is also the protagonist of one of Radziszewski's research projects. During *The Ceremony* in Italy, Radziszewski restored the squaw-shaman creation that Kisiel had conceived during one underground performance and photographic session in the mid-1980s.

The ceremony where Radziszewski impersonates Kisiel is inspired by candomblé rituals. The figurine on the altar represents Maria Padilha: an Afro-Brazilian patron of prostitutes and transsexuals usually depicted surrounded by roses.

In the syncretic Afro-Brazilian worship traditions, spirituality is much less institutionalised than in the Polish case, where it has been almost completely dominated by the Catholic Church. The artist approximates two seemingly distant parts of reality. The bridges he builds between them are not only

made of curious analogies between the forms of expression of non-normative identities and bottom-up, non-institutional spirituality; they are also made of contemplation of interpretative opportunities, created by transferring the discourse into a completely different set of cultural, geographical, and perhaps even metaphysical coordinates.

49 Irena Kalicka

photograph series

A Horse Is a Horse, All Can See What It's Like; A Dragon Is Hard to Defeat, but One Must Try (2015–2016)

courtesy of the Foundation Profile

“A horse is a horse”, “A dragon is hard to defeat, but one must try”. These are just two of the countless thoughts of wisdom contained in *Nowe Ateny* (*New Athens*) – a book by the priest Benedykt Chmielowski. Published in mid-18th century, it is said to be the first Polish-language encyclopaedia that attempts to explain the world from a Sarmatian point of view. Irena Kalicka refers to the text in her staged photographs. She takes some of the 18th-century beliefs, superstitions, resentments and phrases, outdated as they may seem, but still deeply embedded in national awareness, and tests what they sound like once processed through the filters of contemporary popular culture, gender discourse and forms of Polishness.

50 Piotr Uklański

Untitled (Pope John Paul II) (2004)

colour photography, ed. 5 1AP

collection of the Museum of Modern Art in Warsaw

In 2004, Uklański represented Polish art at the São Paulo Biennial. He showcased a monumental Pope John Paul II's portrait, made up of people photographed from the air. Several thousand Brazilian soldiers posed for the photograph, pla-

cing themselves within the contours of the Pope's head. Apart from the large-format picture, there is also a series of smaller photographs.

“I created the Pope's portrait with the military's help, with people of many races. (...) For me, it transmits a message of peace,” said Uklański.

51 Stach Szumski

Visualization of a Świątowid Monument for a Housing Estate (2016)

Metrosexual Hussar (2016)

pyrography

Zadruga Podhale (2016)

pyrography

Stach Szumski is an artist that enjoys walking down the meandering paths of the contemporary Polish imaginarium. To where do these paths lead, one might ask? To the underground market of imported Chinese goods? Towards the aromatic eclectic oriental fast food places? To the metrosexual incarnation of true city dweller Poles? Or maybe they lead to the great Slavic past, unlocked by a fantasy novel and reflected in the turmoil of a well prepared historical re-enactment? According to the artist, Polishness will either become a hybrid or cease to exist. He contributes to the hybridization himself in times when the nationalization and assimilation of kebabs has become a common occurrence. Szumski approaches the new evolving notion of nativeness with the frivolous nature of a post-graffiti artist, who is able to simply exchange his spray can for a pyrographers workshop. An artist that sets up, in virtual spaces, neo-pagan totems of Świątowid (*Svetovid*) – a Slavic God, whose four heads belong to the same “Übermensch” (*super-human*), the king of steroids, bench presses and housing projects, with attack dogs at his feet.

52 Bartosz Zaskórski

Villages (2015–2016)

video, acoustic performance

Villages take up a distinctive place in the phantasmatic geography of Polish identity. The country is the place of origin of a greater part of Polish society, but, at the same time, a rejected place, where we find the ignored history of exploitation, humiliation and violence. An alcove of the remorse of the Polish elites, for their implementation of feudal service, but also a space that was propagated, by said elites, as a depiction of bucolic bliss. Considering how hard it is to make amends with the reality and the history of the countryside, it is constantly being invented anew.

Bartosz Zaskórski in his studies does not try to escape the imaginary perception of the village; in turn, he makes these concepts the topic of his research. In the series of video-acoustic stories, the artist takes on the role of an ethnographer, who, as an observer, describes ten villages and the customs of their residents. Thanks to an undetermined and self-conceived methodology, the artist presents us with a very specific, though somewhat fragmented knowledge. The village in this case is not a real place, but rather an area where one undertakes field studies, an isolated space, whose reality is defined by the fixation and monomania of the alienated local population.

53 Honorata Martin

Egress Into Poland (2013)

multimedia installation

collection of the Museum of Modern Art in Warsaw

“I got lost in my own country” – says Honorata Martin in her documentary *Egress Into Poland*. In the summer of 2013, the artist left her apartment in Gdańsk and, bringing along her dog, headed down south, walking around 30 kilometres a day be-

fore finishing her journey in Wrocław. Her *Egress into Poland* had unfolded on several levels. The first, was a journey into an unknown country usually experienced as a blurry image, as we speed through the landscape in a car or on a train. The second, was a journey where, the traveller confronted herself, perhaps more than anything else: her own pre-conceptions, fears, and loneliness. Finally, throughout her *Egress into Poland*, the artist was also, if not first and foremost, confronting alienation. Martin may have been walking through her own country, but the lingering question was: is she really at home in this place, is this where she truly belongs? How far does one need to go before one’s individual identity can no longer connect with the identities inhabiting various spaces and places that collectively exist under this abstract idea known as Poland? As soon as she left Gdańsk, the artist found herself away from her own network of intimate relationships that secure her place in the world, now, thrown into a non-identity of neither a tourist, pilgrim or tramp, becoming an *Alien par excellence*.

Martin returned from her journey with a film and a collection of drawings, notes, photographs and video materials that she arranged to map her personal experience of Poland.

54 Paweł Susid

Untitled (Mountains: Łysa and Jasna) (2014)

acrylic on canvas

55 Kle Mens

Pieta (2016)

video, 4'25"

cinematography: Barbara Kaja Kaniewska;
stylisation: Hanna Podraza; producer: Agnieszka Dziedzic, Koi Studio;
co-producer: Jasna Sprawa Studio; music: Ariel Ramirez, Misa Criolla, UCLA University Chorus; conductor: Rebecca Lord
mobile phone recording 3'24"

Kle Mens (Klementyna Stępniewska) made a film, in which she uses the Pietà, a popular motif of Christian iconography. It's the subject in Christian art depicting the Virgin Mary cradling the dead body of Jesus, in as much, it's the universal allegory of pain. The artist intentionally draws upon things sacred in her work, yet places it in a contemporary styling (the props refer to competition in sports).

The Latin concept of pietàs is ascribed not only to the act of lament or devotion, but also to parental love and to the love of one's nation.

An important element of the work is its music, a fragment of the famous piece by the Argentinian composer Ariel Ramirez *Misa Criolla* (*Creole Mass*). The piece was composed in the 1960s, after Ramirez's visit to RFG (West Germany), as his personal reflection on the crimes of the Holocaust. "I felt that I needed to compose a deep and religious piece about respecting life that would be able to unite people of all religions, races, skin colours and roots". This piece is an homage to human dignity, courage and freedom, it is a message of "Christian love".

The work is accompanied by the documentation *Nationalist Armed Group Interrupts a Meeting with Artist* (a meeting related to the Kle Mens exhibition „Kato” April 2016 at BWA Tarnów).

56 Oskar Dawicki

Profane Gymnastics (2013)

pigment-based print on canvas
private collection and the Regional Collection
of Zachęta Sztuki Współczesnej Association in Szczecin

With *Profane Gymnastics* Oskar Dawicki tries on poses painted by Andrzej Wróblewski in his *Executions* (1948–1949). The posturing looks uncomfortable, impossible, tragic – we see Dawicki bending his image in breakneck gymnastics. In

these exercises in iconography Dawicki is resorting to body language in an attempt to engage in a dialogue with his artistic predecessors – one cannot help but ask, however, whether Dawicki, who is nothing if not a contemporary, ironic, "profane" artist, is able to play along with the rules of artistic tradition. At the same time, by impersonating the people shot by a firing squad painted by Wróblewski, Dawicki seeks to relieve the trauma and tragedy deeply ingrained in Polish identity. Coming from Generation of Columbuses and with the war still fresh in memory, Wróblewski was painting his *Executions* while being intimately familiar with these experiences. For Dawicki, however, an artist of late Polishness, these experiences are distant and unfathomable: he may act them out, but the ability to live them out is absent. We see him mimicking figures portrayed in *Executions*, but the jacket he is wearing in his *Profane Gymnastics*, a glittery attire of a showman-entertainer, stands in stark contrast to Wróblewski's aesthetics. It has been twenty years since Dawicki debuted this – now trademark – jacket in his performative act, and turned it into a signature prop worn by a stage persona who, while being one with the actual artist, lives on as a fictional character of his own design.

57 Jakub Woynarowski, Jakub Skoczek

Blue Age (2017)

58 Artur Żmijewski

Holy Mass (2011)

HD video, 18'24"
courtesy of the artist and the Foksal Gallery Foundation

Is Catholicism an integral part of Polishness? Can we imagine a completely secular Polishness? Contemplating said questions is an important motif of discussion about national identity in postmodern and post-Age of enlightenment cir-

cumstances. An interesting voice in this discussion is that of Artur Żmijewski and his work "Holy Mass". Whilst creating this project, the artist prepossesses that, even though the question of catholic liturgy as a mystic and spiritual experience will always divide the believers and non-believers, the form of this liturgy will always be a specific occurrence with a precise manuscript, just like the Church will always be an institution of social basis, regardless of our own beliefs. Żmijewski decided to examine this pure form of Catholic religious service by de-sacralising this ritual, through the representation of *Holy Mass* on the stage (in 2011 in the Dramatic Theatre in Warsaw and three years later in the Stary Theatre in Cracow). The roles of the priests were portrayed by actors; the liturgy was recreated faithfully, maintaining all canonical phrases and attributes, however the ritual was deprived of a key element, its religious meaning. The mass was not "said" in the theatre, it was only "performed". Thanks to this, a hyperrealistic representation of a religious service, in the scale of 1:1, was created in the secular order of the arts.

{Exhibition film essay}

59 Jakub Majmurek

The Cinema of "Late Polishness"

How has Polish cinema defined and projected "Polish form" in the last few years? What patterns, aspirations and imaginative screenplays has it served to the viewers? The part of the exhibition devoted to film intends to study this topic. The cinema has always been the object and tool of study.

This investigation has resulted in a set of six film essays. Each constitutes a separate artistic and intellectual statement. They have been created by teams composed, in each case, of a cinema theoretician and an artist. Each team had to interpret one key phrase with the help of Po-

lish cinema. These terms were the following: new capitalist realism, exclusion, globalism, roots, gender and space. Each of them refers to one of the centres, around which Polish cinema wove its visions in the last few decades. The artists had no other limits for their work apart from their own imagination.

NEW CAPITALIST REALISM is a genre and a visual and ideological code that started to appear in Polish films in late 1980s and, with certain modifications, has survived until today. In the narrative layer, it tackles the motif of a protagonist from the People's Republic of Poland facing the transformation from socialism to capitalism, together with the social roles and consumerist habits it entails.

In that period, people often felt dazzled by the aesthetics of consumerist abundance, glamour and middle class. The cinema of new capitalist realism not only accompanied Poles during the times of transition to a free market economy. Not only did it address the needs of viewers who – acquainted with US films that had been flooding Poland since the 80s – were asking for mainstream Hollywood-like entertainment; but apart from that it also inadvertently fulfils a formative, pedagogical function. It shows aspirations, new value hierarchies, prestige and consumption. It copies the models of Western audiovisual industry, at the same time constructing the order of Polish copycat transformation. And although we imitated the West, just like in case of cinema, the lack of technical resources did not allow us for a perfect copy, thus forcing us to be original in an individual way.

In fact, new capitalist realism started as far back as the late 70s (with the TV series *07 zgłoś się*): the transformation of desire towards yearning for capitalism started in Polish films long before anyone could even imagine the Ro-

und Table Agreement or the Balcerowicz Plan. This trend is visible mostly in film genres such as gangster movies, children films and comedies. Since the late 90s it emanated strongly via romantic comedies with the smooth aesthetics of IKEA and the private TVN channel introduced in Poland by this genre.

Capitalism as a system created winners and losers. After the dreams of success evoked in Polish cinema, the next film essay deals with the issue of EXCLUSION. The cinema always seems to have a twofold approach to this topic: on the one hand, it includes the excluded, making them socially visible; while on the other hand stigmatizing that what actually should be excluded. Therefore, films equally stigmatize the excluded as well as make their voices heard.

The topic of exclusion is part of the social cinema category. But did it actually have any chance to emerge in Poland after 1989? Did it develop consistent codes to present the fate of those who fell victim of the transformation, to display the structural injustice and all the pathologies of young Polish capitalism? Maybe instead of empathetic, progressive social cinema, we actually have been given exotic images of “social pathology” in the sauce of moral panic? What has been the method of presenting economically, socially or sexually excluded individuals and groups in films? And how did the image of exclusion evolve in the last decades? Joanna Ostrowska and Łukasz Surowiec have tried to tackle those issues in their video-essay.

The fall of the iron curtain was supposed to open Poland to the world. The cinema created here, free from the limitations of the former regime, was supposed to finally climb to the global level and become a member of the global cinematic family, participating in the creation of global dreams. But it was not to be. After the fall of the iron curtain, the West lost

its interest in the movies that were being shot here. In spite of that, our domestic cinema did not cease to dream global dreams.

It tried, in many different ways, to inscribe Poland into the networks of various GLOBALISMS: artistic strategies, communication tactics, images, aspirations and orders of desire. The dream of globalism was dreamt in every corner of Polish cinema: from the cheapest TV productions, through the niches of artistic experiments, to national block-busters. Gangster movies featured the dream of the *Good Fellas* from the Warsaw Praga district; romantic comedies dreamt of New York and Paris, artistic productions were formatted to fit the taste of important film festival selection committees; all those forms of representation have a common denominator: the desire to become global. The next chapter of this exhibition is an attempt to interpret this desire.

Local images are always the other side of the coin when it comes to global fantasies. The cinema, apart from trying to place the Polish community in a global space, has also made constant endeavours to root this community and shape its identity. Many identity-related fantasies – and attempts at their deconstruction – can be found in the landscape of Polish films from the last few decades. Construction of the myth of the Warsaw Uprising; renovation of Sarmatian fantasies; the myth of Solidarity; the black legend of PRL (People's Republic of Poland) and at the same time, nostalgia for the times of socialism; images of fathers passing “the commander's sword” onto their sons; portraits of mothers in tales on the preservation of national memory: things we have all seen on the screen many times.

This is why the next term that was interpreted by the artists were ROOTS.

Film fantasies, whether global or local, are always ensnared in gender. The cinema is one of the most erotic and genderised mediums of art. It participates in the formation of gender models: masculinity, femininity, sexual relations, sexual contracts and gender identity.

In the last 30 years in Poland, all these categories were being renegotiated - often in a quite frenetic way. This included the anti-women backlash in the symbolic and political layer in the 90s; the reception of feminism; the empowerment of sexual minorities and, finally, the “war against GENDER ideology” waged in the last years by the right wing. For this reason, gender was the next key word interpreted by the artists invited to co-create our exhibition.

The oldest Polish definition of the cinema says that films are the “visual form of humans dealing with matter”. This visual form is often a human figure confronted with space. This is why we had to ask about the category of SPACE in recent Polish cinema.

The locations of Polish films are mostly urban. Films are made in cities and until today they seem related to urban life. High population density, unintentional meetings of people bumping into one another, dense – yet invisible – networks of mutual relations: this is a natural matter for the cinema, a medium based on editing.

How are cities viewed in Polish films from the last decade? What else can we find between the cosmopolitan spectacle of Warsaw as a global city, and other cities viewed as consumer tourist resorts, like the historic Cracow or Sandomierz? The last part of our research on the late Polishness cinema tries to answer this question. The images it presents are the point of arrival for the film journey that started with the beginning of the new capitalist realism aesthetics.

The essays presented in the exhibition assume different strategies. Some artists proposed classical found footage films – made of edited pre-existing materials – others opted for fictional movies. Some preferred a wide, panoramic view, others focused on a fragment of a film biography of one single actress or just one movie collated with an artefact of old Polish literature. Some works are composed of images only, others feature academic commentaries.

The entire endeavour is positioned at the intersection of art and science, creation and critique. Altogether, the essays present an original outlook on the history of Poland and cinema of the last few decades. This vision is, for obvious reasons, subjective and eccentric. It omits some elements, that many would consider indispensable while speaking of the most recent films and of contemporary Poland, instead often focusing on seemingly annoying and irrelevant details.

Nonetheless, the advantage of this approach is that it does not fall in the category of boring, academic query. It studies certain topics from a distinct artistic and intellectual stance. Through the possibility of raising controversy, it invites to the debate.

⟨Exhibition theatre essay⟩

Tomasz Plata

*The Past Comes as a Shock:
Late Polishness and Theatre*

“Zero Point”

2 *Lava*

dir. Tadeusz Konwicki (1989)

60 Witold Gombrowicz

The Marriage

dir. Jerzy Jarocki, the Stary Theatre in Cracow (1991)
courtesy of the Stary Theatre in Cracow

“The curtain has been lifted...” - says Henry, the protagonist of Gombrowicz’s play *The Marriage*, who is a soldier stranded in the trenches of the Great War and dreams of nothing but going back home. Alongside the character we enter an empty space, where we can barely see in, due to the darkness. The director, Jerzy Jarocki, eloquently orchestrates this situation: when one curtain is lifted, immediately another appears. What do we find behind it? “A void, a desert, emptiness.” Jarocki’s 1991 play, described by many as his best, was first interpreted on an existential basis, as a noteworthy example of “theatre of essence” happening outside of historical time. From today’s point of view, we can analyse *The Marriage* as a play that grapples the topic of the Polish transformation. “The curtain has been lifted” and what we see before us is emptiness. “Poland” once again means “the middle of nowhere”.

“Spectres of Marx, Spectres of Mickiewicz”

61 Adam Mickiewicz

Forefathers’ Eve – 12 improvisations

dir. Jerzy Grzegorzewski

The Stary Theatre in Cracow (1995)

courtesy of the Stary Theatre in Cracow

The play shows many unknown or avoided aspects of Mickiewicz’s play *Dziady* (*Forefathers’ Eve*). The topic of nationality was practically non-existent in it, the main character underwent a transformation, he was rather a modernist melancholic, aimlessly wondering on the stage, than a romantic lover or prophet. In the last scene, Jerzy Grzegorzewski arranged a show of theatrical weakness: the portrayer of the main character, Jerzy Radziwiłłowicz, recites the *Great Impovation* quietly, hidden in the depth of the stage, strangely still. Moments earlier, he spoke the words: “The darkness hides the land, the people lay asleep...” The

result was very suggestive, as we had received the image of a man, an individualist and sleepwalker, observing the society that was submerged in lethargy. This presentation of *Forefathers’ Eve*, only a few years younger than Konwicki’s *Lava*, comes from a new world full of tradition and phantasmic identities.

62 Krzysztof M. Bednarski

Marx NLC (Noctilucent clouds – Silver Lining) (1978–2016)

aluminium

courtesy of the artist and the Centre for Intercultural Creative Initiatives “Crossroads” in Lublin

Marx overthrown, tossed onto the pavement (similarly to the Dzierżyński monument which was destroyed in 1989 in Warsaw), or perhaps Marx freed of his role as an ideologist of real communism, so he can thus float peacefully in space? When we analyse Krzysztof M. Bednarski’s work, it’s hard not to think of the specters of Marx from Jacques Derrida’s book published shortly after the fall of the Soviet Union. According to the philosopher, one must associate with those specters, due to the fact that we are forced to come back to the Marxist idea of “irreducible justice”. Derrida presents Marx as a messianic prophet, who proclaims his “emancipatory promise” from the netherworld. In this case, the correlation lies in the basis of confronting the deconstructed figure of Marx with the deconstructed (by Grzegorzewski) Mickiewicz.

63 Krzysztof Wodiczko

Projection on the Adam Mickiewicz Monument in Warsaw (2008)

Exactly 40 years after the censorship of the play *Dziady* (*Forefathers’ Eve*) directed by Kazimierz Dejmek, in the

same place where the student protest started, that, during the following weeks, turned into the March 1968 Polish political crisis, Wodiczko attempted to turn Mickiewicz into his political ally. Through his projection onto the monument of the famous bard, the artists brought back expressly selected words of the poet, so as to not only recognize in him the leader of national rebellion but, more so, a revolutionists of social norms. In accordance with his intent, expressed by the artist during an interview: “We must create a Mickiewicz that we deserve. (...) Undoubtedly Mickiewicz is an author who contributed to the martyrological vision of Poland that still weighs heavily upon us, but also (...) had a certain vision of socialism”. So perhaps, as Marx fell from the pedestal, Mickiewicz, remodelled into a left-wing revolutionist (“Poland states to the people: give up all local affairs and turn towards freedom”, a philosemite (“I would not want the Israelites to leave Poland”), a supporter of European integration (“To want to improve the state of the nation with no regard for the state of affairs in Europe, is to act against the interests of that very nation”) climbed back onto the monument?

“After Communism, After Solidarity”

64 Akademia Ruchu

Everyday Life After the Great Revolution: Two

directed and created by Wojciech Kukowski (1991)
courtesy of Akademia Ruchu

A multi-headed creature enveloped in a bloody red skirt floats atop a bloody red background. This several minute sequence was the ending of a performance of the Warsaw Akademia Ruchu prepared in reaction to the 1989 breakthrough. Their findings were not happy ones: the leader of

the group, Wojciech Kukowski, unambiguously suggested that Poland was still stuck in its former political system, drowning in a metaphorical Red Sea. No one spoke so vehemently in theatre performances at the beginning of the 90s of the Polish revolution not living up to its promises.

65 *H., Based on William Shakespeare's Hamlet*

dir. Jan Klata, Wybrzeże Theatre in Gdańsk (2004)
courtesy of the National Audiovisual Institute

Hamlet searches for the killers of his father whilst walking around the ruins of the Gdańsk shipyard. The ghost of his father appears to him as a Polish hussar. So then, who does embody the killer Claudius? A figure closely resembling post-communist leaders of Poland, post-political opportunists. Through these images Jan Klata reconstructs the Polish battle for remembrance after the communist rule. In the end, when settling accounts, everyone loses, both the side that chose Solidarity, and those who chose “the future”. Nonetheless, the naive and orthodox, yet noble Hamlet, who still demands amends for past injustice, captures the public's heart.

66 *Death and the Maiden*

dir. Roman Polański (1994)
courtesy of the Monolith Films

Based on a popular play by the Chilean playwright Ariel Dorfman, this hitchcockesque thriller is an attempt to make amends with a totalitarian past. The main character had been an oppositionist who was tortured by the secret police years ago. By pure coincidence, in a remote residence, she runs into the policeman responsible for her treatment. This begins the psychodrama, where the victim becomes the perpetrator, who interrogates the policeman in order for him to admit to his crimes (be they real or imaginary).

Dorfman wrote about Chile after the Pinochet dictatorship, but in Polański's version we can with no doubt make a connection to Poland after the fall of communism.

67 Wojciech Tomczyk *Nuremberg*

dir. Waldemar Krzystek (2006)

A former colonel of the People's Republic of Poland secret service manipulates the daughter of one of his former victims, a journalist, into writing the story of the crimes he committed years before. The representative of a totalitarian system stages a situation that is supposed to make him suffer the consequence of his own deeds. In other words, the former perpetrator tries to rebuild the proper course of things, where every crime must be punished. Wojciech Tomczyk's text, disclosed in the form of a theatre drama, is close to the idea, supported by the Polish right-wing, that the communist past must be amended.

68 Krzysztof M. Bednarski *Victoria–Victoria* (1983/2006)

carrara marble, shadow projection
artist's deposit at the Ujazdowski Castle
Centre for Contemporary Art

Krzysztof M. Bednarski's sculpture, created at the beginning of the 80s, shows a hand forming the renowned symbol of victory, but, in this case, with trimmed fingers. At that time, the work was a very legible political commentary. Just after the period of martial law in Poland, it reflected the failure of the Solidarity movement. After 1989, the same sculpture can be interpreted in another way: as a symbol of times where the former ethics of the Solidarity movement started to melt away when confronted with the young democracy and the free market. For the twentieth anniversary of the

first free elections (after the fall of communism) in Poland, the artist showcased a new, more optimistic version of his work (the trimmed finger "grew back" thanks to a projection cast onto the sculpture), but even this positive note could be analysed as a delusion: these fingers appeared only as shadows, an illusion that can never really be grasped.

69 Grzegorz Kłaman *Solidarity Made in China*

plastic toy soldiers produced in China (2007)

The topic of the Solidarity movement, as well as its birth place: the Gdańsk shipyard, appear in many of Grzegorz Kłaman's works. The artist has consistently worked with the symbols of Solidarity and the process of its transformation into an ideology.

The renowned Solidarity movement's logo is made up of plastic toy soldiers, shaped in various battle stances. Kłaman's work consciously enters into dialogue with the larger scale, more monumental work *Untitled (Solidarity)*, 2007, by Piotr Ukląński. Ukląński created a "live" Solidarity logo at the Gdańsk shipyard, forming its shape by setting up thousands of soldiers dressed in red and white. On the photograph, taken from a bird's eye view perspective, we can see the figures forming the contours of the famous sign. There is also another photo of the same work, in which the artist captured the dispersing of the crowd, its disintegration into individuals, where the strong shape of the legendary logo dissolves into an unrecognisable, shapeless stain.

Solidarity's legacy and the historical assessment of this multi-million trade union movement will remain a political dispute. In social perception, the myth of Solidarity can either end up as a powerful yet empty symbol (as would

suggest the work by Ukiński), or as an experience of ever-lasting potential, which can always be activated, because its sense is still up-to-date.

70 Grzegorz Klaman

Solidarity Guerilla

photo series (2014–16)

The entire series is composed of ten panoramic photos taken at the Gdańsk shipyard and in one of the Silesian coal mines. The project also includes a prototype of a partisan vehicle, made up of a shipyard supply cart and fake rifles. Potential users of said vehicle took part in the photo shoot, these included representatives of trade unions, squatters, social activists defending the rights of people on strikes or tenants on the verge of eviction, as well as people responsible for the safety of protestors.

In his photographs, the artist draws inspiration from 19th century nostalgic paintings of Polish borderlands by Chełmoński's and Brandt, in which we can see steppe landscapes, groups of Tatar scouts or insurgents taking breaks from battles. Klaman's modern rebels patrol post-industrial terrains and abandoned work places. Their simmering need for protest is juxtaposed with peasant and Cossack uprisings in Ukraine in the 17th century. The self-organized social power of the Cossack and Ukrainian peasant rebellions against the feudal service imposed by the Polish nobility and aristocracy have become an iconic point of reference to the rebellion anticipated by the title of Klaman's series.

71 Grzegorz Klaman

This is the Head of the Traitor (2016)

black rubber, electrical cables, polyethylene net

From the black rubber model of Lech Wałęsa's head we see dangling electrical cables that resemble arteries. The head has been placed in a net spread out in the castle's tower. Klaman's artistic fantasy refers to the dramatic dispute, which has been taking place in Polish society for the past several years, of whether Wałęsa's political past make him a hero or a traitor. The fiercest opposers of the leader of Solidarity have no doubts and strive to discredit his role in Solidarity and the subsequent triumph of the movement in the abolition of the communist system in Poland. Klaman's work draws on the Polish title of the famous Fred Zinnemann film *A Man for All Seasons* (Polish title: *This is the Head of the Traitor*), which tells the story of the conflict between Thomas More and the King of England, Henry VIII. Sir Thomas More, as a distinguished humanist and politician, did not want to take the Oath of Allegiance to the British monarch, because he did not approve of the king's political and religious decisions. He then was branded a traitor and beheaded for treason. More was a man who, till the very end, let his conscience be his guide. The politician, who in 1535 was deemed a traitor, was canonised in 1935, and in the year 2000 declared by Pope John Paul II the "Patron of Statesmen and Politicians".

"Historical Politics"

72 Thomas Bernhard

Extinction

dir. Krystian Lupa

The Dramatic Theatre in Warsaw (2001)

courtesy of the National Audiovisual Institute

Franz-Josef Murau comes back to his hometown of Wolfsegg for the funeral of his brother and parents. His trip is also a way to cope with his difficult past, like the fact that

his family collaborated with Nazis. The climactic point of the play is the scene where Franz enters the children's house where war criminals were hid after the 2nd World War. The gesture of opening the windows suggests the "airing out" of one's own conscience and the disclosure of long-hidden sins. The 2001 premiere of *Extinction* took place at the same time as the social dispute around the Jedwabne affair (after the publication of Jan Tomasz Gross' *Neighbours: The Destruction of the Jewish Community in Jedwabne, Poland*). The play was then analysed as an appeal for all to shed light upon their controversial pasts, and to take responsibility for them. In the last sequence of the play, Franz-Josef, in a gesture of reparations, donates his entire fortune to the Wolfsegg Jewish community.

73 William Shakespeare

The Tempest

dir. Krzysztof Warlikowski

TR Warsaw (2003)

courtesy of the National Audiovisual Institute

The sorcerer Prospero causes an airline catastrophe in order to bring over onto his island his former persecutors. Krzysztof Warlikowski's Shakespearean *Tempest* is transformed into a ritual of cleansing oneself from sins. In the foreground, we once again see the Jedwabne affair, though Warlikowski steers his work in a different direction when compared to Lupa in *Extinction*. This time, the ending has more to do with revenge than forgiveness.

74 (A)pollonia

dir. Krzysztof Warlikowski

New Theatre in Warsaw (2009)

courtesy of the National Audiovisual Institute

And once more we have Warlikowski on culpability and the incredibly difficult act of forgiveness. (A)pollonia is the

story of three women, all who sacrificed their lives for some greater cause. Alongside the mythological Iphigenia (who was sacrificed by her father, to appease the gods before the battle of Troy) and Alcestis (who died so her husband could live), we have Apolonia Machczyńska, who was executed by Nazis for the crime of concealing Jews during the 2nd World War. The long final sequence, where Israeli tribunal rewards Machczyńska with the medal of the Righteous Among the Nations, brings no relief whatsoever. This scene has been analysed as another commentary to the Jedwabne affair and the lost opportunity to collectively cleanse the nation of guilt. Joanna Tokarska-Bakir wrote: "You didn't want to apologize for Jedwabne? Fine, so now learn to live without forgiveness".

75 Paweł Demirski

To War!!!

dir. Monika Strzepka

The Jerzy Szaniawski Dramatic Theatre in Wałbrzych (2009)

courtesy of the Jerzy Szaniawski Dramatic Theatre in Wałbrzych

To change Poland is to rewrite its history – this is something Paweł Demirski has been hinting at for years, especially as he has rewritten: the biography of Lech Wałęsa, *Fore-fathers' Eve*, *The Un-Divine Comedy*, as well as many native pop culture works, such as the *Czterej Pancerni i Pies* (Four Tank-Men and a Dog) TV series, which has been re-written and turned into the play *Niech Żyje Wojna!!!* (*To War!!!*) with Brecht-like temperament, highlighting all the ideological and political complexity of the original series, concentrating mostly on the social class subtext (the key being the change of Olgierd, an educated person, into Czereśniak, the plebeian). The goal of this seems to be obvious: to discredit any narrative simplifications, which cause historical events to be turned into martyrology. In the end, the only character

who comes out unchanged in this process is the dog Szarik, who forces a moment of silence onto all the remaining characters.

76 Juliusz Słowacki *Father Mark*

dir. Michał Zadara
Stary Theatre in Cracow (2005)
courtesy of the Stary Theatre in Cracow

We are first presented with an image of Poland as a besieged fortress (symbolized by the city of Bar being defended by confederates from the tsarist army). Next to a presentation of the messianic traditional spirituality (the main character) we see many antisemitic motifs with an underflow of mutual Polish-Jewish fascination (Judyta and Kosakowski) and simple Polish patriotism of the football hooligan type (Kosakowski's soldiers). This representation of Polishness, perhaps not too interesting on itself, is later on counterbalanced by the appearance of not the Russians, but the UN forces, at the city of Bar. Consequently, the story rapidly turns to current events: Father Mark begins to describe the native consciousness just after its meeting with Western culture. We see many references to postcolonialism, in turn, the background conveys the mythology of the Warsaw Uprising.

77 Wilhelm Sasnal

Gadgets based on Wilhelm Sasnal's mural
for the Warsaw Uprising Museum (2007)

In 2007, Wilhelm Sasnal received an invitation to place a mural of his own design on the wall surrounding the Warsaw Uprising Museum (joining other artists such as Edward Dwurnik and the Twożywo art group). His proposition for the artwork was simple, yet dramatic, yellow pansies resembling human skulls, on a black background. The mu-

seum rapidly took the chance to use this motif on many of its souvenirs such as: bags, T-shirts, notebooks, pen drives and even fridge magnets. This can be considered the most prominent contemporary art contribution to the reconstruction of the Warsaw Uprising myth.

78 Karol Radziszewski *Insurgents* (2011)

mural for the Warsaw Uprising Museum

In 2011, Karol Radziszewski was one of the artists invited to work with the Warsaw Uprising Museum. His project unfortunately was not completed. The mural representing shirtless insurgents (only men) was rejected by the museum authorities as being too erotic. In the *Late Polishness* exhibition we come back to Radziszewski's project, where it takes on a larger scale than originally planned.

79 Karol Radziszewski

Untitled (two paintings from the Ali series) (2015)
acrylic on canvas
courtesy of the BWA Warsaw Gallery

Mermale (2017)
acrylic on canvas
private collection in Warsaw

He came to Warsaw in 1922. His profession: jazz musician. He worked as a drummer at the most prominent clubs of the capital. In September 1939, he took part in the Siege of Warsaw; during the Nazi occupation, he distributed underground newspapers and helped those in hiding. During the Warsaw Uprising, he fought under the nickname "Ali" as part of the Iwo battalion in downtown Warsaw. Karol Radziszewski, through his series of paintings, has made the Nigerian, August Agbola O'Brown, (the only Warsaw Uprising insurgent of African descent) a true hero. The stylisti-

cally consistent works, covertly drawing on Picasso's fascination with African motifs, are yet another attempt made by Radziszewski to diversify the lately growing number of narratives about the Warsaw Uprising.

80 Komuna//Warszawa

Uprising 1944. Sitting 2009

poster/happening documentation

August 1st, 2009, 5 o'clock PM, the members and supporters of one of the most important Polish experimental theatre groups Komuna//Warszawa gathered in the centre of Warsaw, at the Dmowski roundabout. At the precise moment of the W-hour, when thousands of people were paying tribute to the Warsaw Uprising insurgents, the group and its supporters calmly sat down on the pavement, holding low-key banners with the words: Uprising 1944, Sitting 2009. The group explained their intents in the following texts accompanying the happening: "No chance for winning the fight, 200 thousand victims, a city destroyed. Today, another conceited anniversary of the national bloodshed spree. Enough is enough! We declare a new national model: SITTING is better than RISING".

The Warsaw Uprising began with simultaneous coordinated attacks at 5:00 PM on August 1st, 1944 (the so called W-hour).

"Strategies of Resistance"

81 Anna Baumgart

Female Bomber (2004)

fabric, silicone, polyester resin

property of the Masovian Centre for Contemporary Art
"Elektrownia" in Radom

A young woman, evidently pregnant, in a red dress that unveils her pubis, wearing a pig-face mask, her fists clenched. Pregnancy, also referred to in Polish as "a state of bliss", has been depicted in a completely untraditional way.

We see a rebel, a woman who is sure of herself. She is not armed, but her stance radiates potential aggression, that can be released, if the woman feels cornered by society. The white and red colours impel us to analyse her as the allegory of a nation, modern Polonia, under the facade of a woman and mother. Polonia is no longer a victim, but a warrior, though her pig-faced mask suggests she is rejected by society. Perhaps she can be viewed as an alternative version of *Matka Polka* – the idealised concept of an all-powerful Polish mother eager to sacrifice herself for her family. A role model for those who believe that Polishness can take on different forms from those dictated by tradition.

82 A Constitution for a Choir of Poles

dir. Marta Górnicka

The New Theatre in Warsaw (2016)

courtesy of the New Theatre in Warsaw

Several dozen people, standing in a row, rhythmically recite the Polish constitution. The members of the Women's Choir, next to them children, pensioners, Vietnamese and Jewish people, a football fan, the members of Theatre 21 (made up of people with Down syndrome) allotment holders, known actors from the New Theatre, representatives of the "Strzelec" shooting club, and refugees from Chechnya and Crimea. The show premiered on the 1st of May 2016, i.e. the International Workers' Day, during a great national debate caused by the turmoil surrounding the Constitutional Tribunal. Marta Górnicka reacted to this crisis with a powerful gesture: she showed that the Polish constitution is not a project of an ethnically homogeneous group, but a very diverse group of individuals.

83 Łukasz Surowiec

Robe of Polish Sins (2017)

research/art project, anonymous survey, object, mixed media

In accordance with eastern tradition, icons (religious paintings) are sometimes encased in metal ornaments called rizas (robes), made of precious metals (gold, silver) often encrusted with precious stones. The Black Madonna of Częstochowa has a set of nine such robes, they can be considered as pledges of worship and a confirmation of her cult. The newest robe was made for the 100th anniversary of the re-coronation of the revered icon, as a gift from the nation to the Pauline monastery of Jasna Góra, offered in September of 2010. This riza includes a small fragment of the presidential Tupolev Tu-152 that crashed near the city of Smoleńsk on the 10th of April, 2010. The piece of metal found near the crash site was brought to the Jasna Góra Monastery by a Polish nun.

The new work by Łukasz Surowiec is an entirely hand-made project and is the 10th robe made for the Black Madonna of Częstochowa. Traditionally, the robes entrust sadness and pain of the faithful onto Our Lady and Jesus. Surowiec's robe has a different meaning, it symbolizes all Polish sins, all that we (Poles) are ashamed of when we think of Poland and Polishness. The collection of Polish sins was created on the basis of an anonymous survey carried out by the artist, that included answers from people of different ages, sexes, levels of education, that live in metropolitan areas and less populated areas alike. The artist travelled around Poland to collect tangible evidence of said "Polish sins", which he later used in the making of the robe presented at the exhibition.

84 Wojtek Ziemilski

Short Narrative (2009/2017)

dual-channel video

A chair, a desk lamp, a computer, a microphone and, next to it, a screen. Wojtek Ziemilski faces the viewers and speaks. It all looks a bit like a corporate or academic presentation. The narrative speaks mostly of the grandfather of the artist, known during the times of the People's Republic of Poland as count Antoni Dzieduszycki, accused in 2006 by the IPN (Institute of National Remembrance) historians of being an agent of the secret political police. Can this be considered yet another attempt to make amends with the communist past? Not really. It's more an attempt to escape the pressure of meta-narratives, historical generalizations, and instead focus on personal memories and, in some cases, personal confabulations. The key to facing one's shameful past is to do it alone, because basically memory is something individual. It's a declaration of faith in individual, personal experience but also in its politically subversive power.

"Late Polishness over the Rainbow":

85 Julita Wójcik

Joint Rainbow Archive (2017)

86 Julita Wójcik

Discussion Space (2017)

87 Tomasz Kozak

LATE POLISHNESS: Memory Not/Naturally Traversing? (2017)

Tomasz Kozak

LATE POLISHNESS: Reactionary Naturalism or Progressive Naturalism? (2017)

photographic wallpaper, dimensions variable

Tomasz Kozak

Akteon (2015)

directed by: Weronika Szczawińska; playwright: Tomasz Kozak
film directed by: Tomasz Kozak; stage design: Natalia Mleczak;
music: Krzysztof Kaliski; actors: Szymon Czacki, Krzysztof Kaliski,
Weronika Szczawińska and Tomasz Kozak
premiere: December 18th, 2015 at the Labirynt Gallery in Lublin

Throughout the whole exhibition space:

88 Mariusz Libel

Shade over the exhibition (2017)

The work located in the Water Tank in front of the Castle:

89 Krzysztof Wodiczko

Veteran Vigil Light (2017)

video projection 22'40"

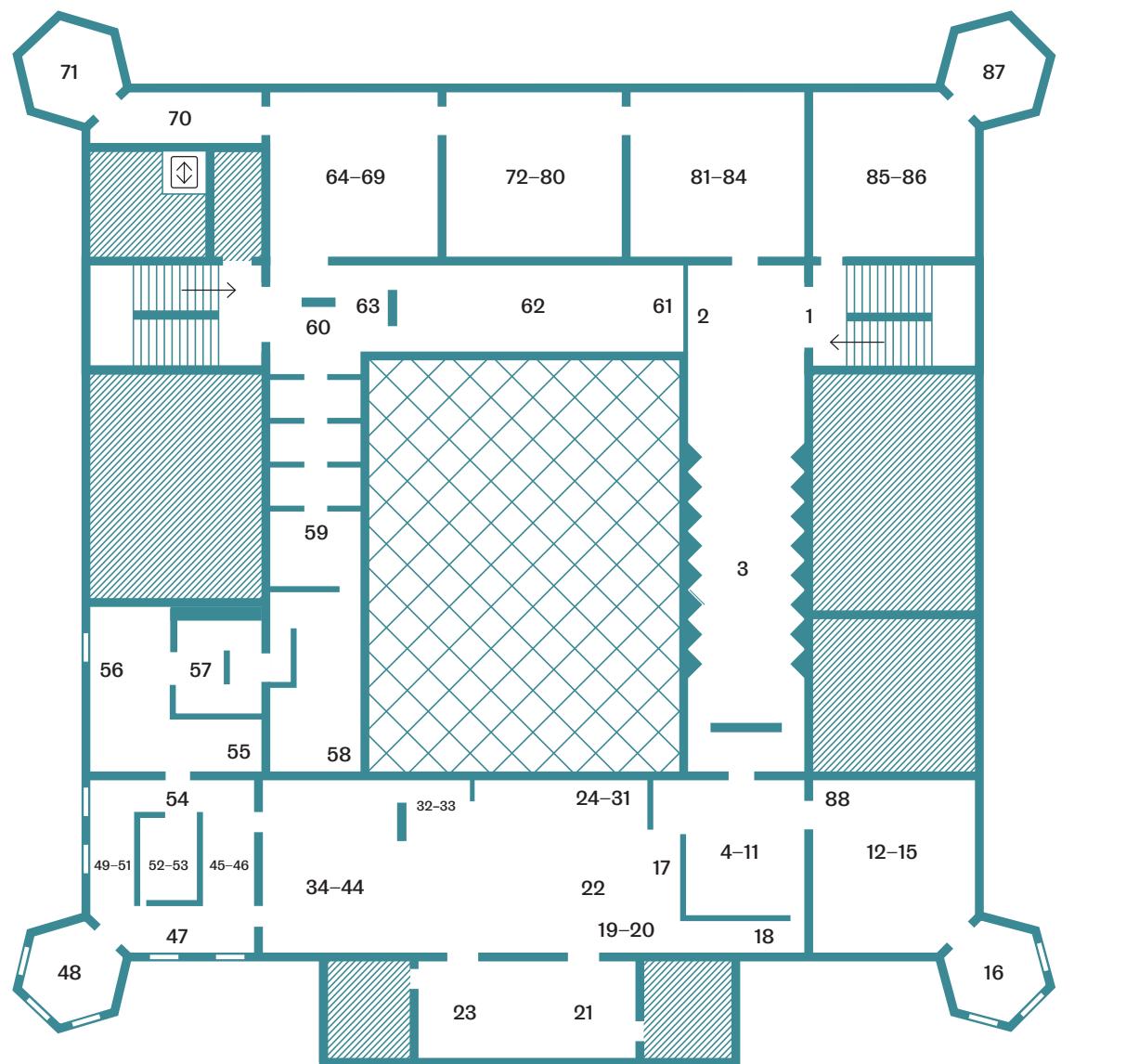
courtesy of the Profile Foundation

The first work by Krzysztof Wodiczko about the trauma that Polish veterans of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan face after coming home was a projection on the Wzgórze Partyzantów (The Partisan Hill) in Wrocław. The artist has been interested in this topic for the past several years, undertaking it in an international, and thus, universal context. In 2007, he made his first project alongside American veterans (*War Veteran Vehicle* in Denver), and in 2009, with English veterans (*War Veteran Vehicle* in Liverpool).

The artist collected accounts from Polish soldiers, who came back from the front mutilated and traumatized, and also from their close ones and caregivers. Selected fragments of those interviews have been synchronized with a projection of a virtual vigil light. The flame of said light flickers with the words of the veterans who describe their thoughts and ordeals. The protagonists of this project are invisible, but the flickering light that twinkles to their voices is a proof that they are still there.

U-jazdowski

first floor



Education

Education programme accompanying exhibition:

<http://u-jazdowski.pl/en/edukacja>

Discussions

The discursive program *⟨Transformations⟩*, accompanying the exhibition, along with being a critical component of it, will be implemented in the form of meetings–debates, to which researchers of culture, philosophy, social sciences, and economics as well as artists will be invited. The aim of the discussion is to analyze the processes that comprise the “transformation.” In addition, the following topics will also be discussed: religion’s position in society, politics of memory, ecology in Polish culture as well as the role of culture, visual arts and literature in the transformation of Polish societies in the last twenty years. *⟨Transformations⟩* is to become an occasion for substantive polemicising about these complex and varied processes. Invited to participate in the discussions, amongst others, are Professor Andrzej Kassenberg, Professor Zbigniew Karaczun, Cecylia Malik, Aleksandra Jach, Professor Lechosław Lameński, Dr. Piotr Rypson, Dr. Maria Kobielska, Jakub Moroz, Dr. Paweł Rojek, Ph. D Jan Sowa, Michał Zaradny, Professor Dariusz Kosiński, Dr. Michał Łuczewski, Ph.D Dariusz Skórczewski, Professor Przemysław Czaplinski, Dr. Tomasz Plata.

<http://u-jazdowski.pl/en/programme/social-projects/transformacje>

Obieg

The 3rd issue of the Internet magazine “Obieg” entitled Polishness: Meaning and Practices of National Identity will complement the issues presented at the exhibition.

<http://obieg.u-jazdowski.pl/>