

Sedno rozumienia i tworzenia przez mnie sztuki wynika z procesu doświadczania. Nie determinuje mnie żaden manifest programowy. Wychodzę z założenia, że każdy z nas przeżywa życie w indywidualny sposób i tworzy własne specyficzne wzorce myślowe. W związku z tym jestem przeciwna wydawaniu jednoznacznych osądów czy ocen, także w sztuce. Moim celem jest dać odbiorcy jedynie asumpt do jego intymnych refleksji i własnych interpretacji.

Sztuki plastyczne są najbliższą mi formą wypowiedzi i oddziałują na mnie najsilniej, dlatego szczególną uwagę w każdej pracy przykładam do aspektu wizualnego. Interesuje mnie w nim to, co ujawnia się przy pierwszym kontakcie, w bezpośrednim doświadczeniu, jeszcze przed organizującym je pojęciowo działaniem języka i kultury. Stąd źródłem moich realizacji, niezależnie od tego, jak mocno wchodzi w dyskursy kulturowe, jest subiektywny, osobisty i sensualny stosunek do rzeczywistości. Każdorazowo wybieram inną, często diametralnie odmienną przestrzeń realizacji dzieła, a praca jest odpowiedzią bądź komentarzem na specyfikę danego miejsca i czasu.

www.szpener.pl

https://pl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Monika_Szpener

<https://galeriajednadruka.wixsite.com/jednadruka>

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MONIKA SZPENER

CV/PORTFOLIO



At the beginning of the 2000s, Jan Sowa devoted an interesting essay entitled *Deserters of the Consumption Society* to the 1970s generation, to which Monika Szpener also belongs. The researcher noted that its representatives are the last people to remember the realities of communism. Their memory is a first-hand, direct memory, based on personal experience, which evolves in many different ways, sometimes transforming into a kind of specific nostalgia. In reference to this kind of memory present in the former Eastern Bloc countries, scholars of recent East German history and culture use the term 'Ostalgie'. It is also increasingly becoming part of museum narratives relating to recent history. The depiction of communist memory in these institutions in a somewhat sentimentalising way is achieved through the reconstruction of everyday realities alluding to social relations specific to that era, illustrated by a range of characteristic attributes of everyday life (equipment, toys, furniture, etc.) easily recognisable to audiences sharing the experiences of the time. What is the purpose of the archaeology of this everyday memory proposed and interpreted by Monika Szpener? In a way, it is an attempt to deal with a certain social and cultural burden that her generation is burdened with. The aforementioned Sowa wrote about this experience of being suspended between the epochs of poor communism and neoliberal economics and consumer society, emphasising the disillusionment of the 1970s vintage, which occurred just after the hope and euphoria associated with the 1989 breakthrough (....) It may, however, also be linked to a sense of a certain frustrating marginalisation, a crisis of being suspended in the 'in-between' sphere, not fully comprehensible to earlier or later generations, not to mention the privileged Western world, which after 1989 went from being an unrealistic dream fuelled by single copies of colourful magazines smuggled from abroad to Poland, separated by the Iron Curtain, to being unproblematically available at one's fingertips. (...) Szpener decided to sculpt the attributes of youthful dreams, such as a cassette recorder with CD, a walkman, a television, a video player, a desktop computer, telephones, and a wide range of Western gadgets once available only in Pewex shops. By choosing as a medium ceramic clay, associated with a creative technique that has remained unchanged since prehistoric times, the artist in a way mummifies unwanted heritage, giving it a form reminiscent of archaeological objects. As such, they represent additional historical values and anthropological meanings, and the attempt to museumise them, legitimises and reinforces their presence in official cultural memory. (MW)



(...) The cult of corporeality is also reflected in the method, with the artist pulling down a plaster-fixed form, obtaining an ideal imprint of the skin's surface, the shape of muscles, bodily details. An in-depth analysis and contemplation of the body, an obsessive care for its ideal shape. for its ideal shape. Culturism, understood as the cult of the body, makes it rise to the rank of a religion, a man whose body is perfectly sculpted becomes a deity, while the body itself is treated as a kind of monument. Is there room in this practice, based on obsessive perfection, for deviation from the norm? This sculpture is a hybrid, a non-normative mixture of human and animal bodies, a bastard created from a peculiar crossbreed, a separate species in itself characterised by supernatural traits and qualities, a misfit growing from a deviation from the canonical norm, from the template. Hybridity is illustrated here with a casual allusion to the figure of the Egyptian god Anubis with a human body and the head of a jackal. The taxidermy to which the head of the anonymous dog used to create this sculpture has been subjected brings us face to face with the dead animal on the one hand, but on the other offers it life after life as an element of the artwork. Anubis, as an Egyptian god linked to the theme of death, can be interpreted as a kind of memento mori - a reminder of the transient nature of beauty, youth, life, particularly relevant in the context of temporal worship of the body and self-indulgence. A sense of this vanitas is suggested in this work by the non-canonical appearance of the portrayed man - we have before us the monumental body of a hero depicted not in an exalted pose of a victor on a pedestal, but at rest, immersed in melancholic reverie. (MW)

I wanna be your dog*

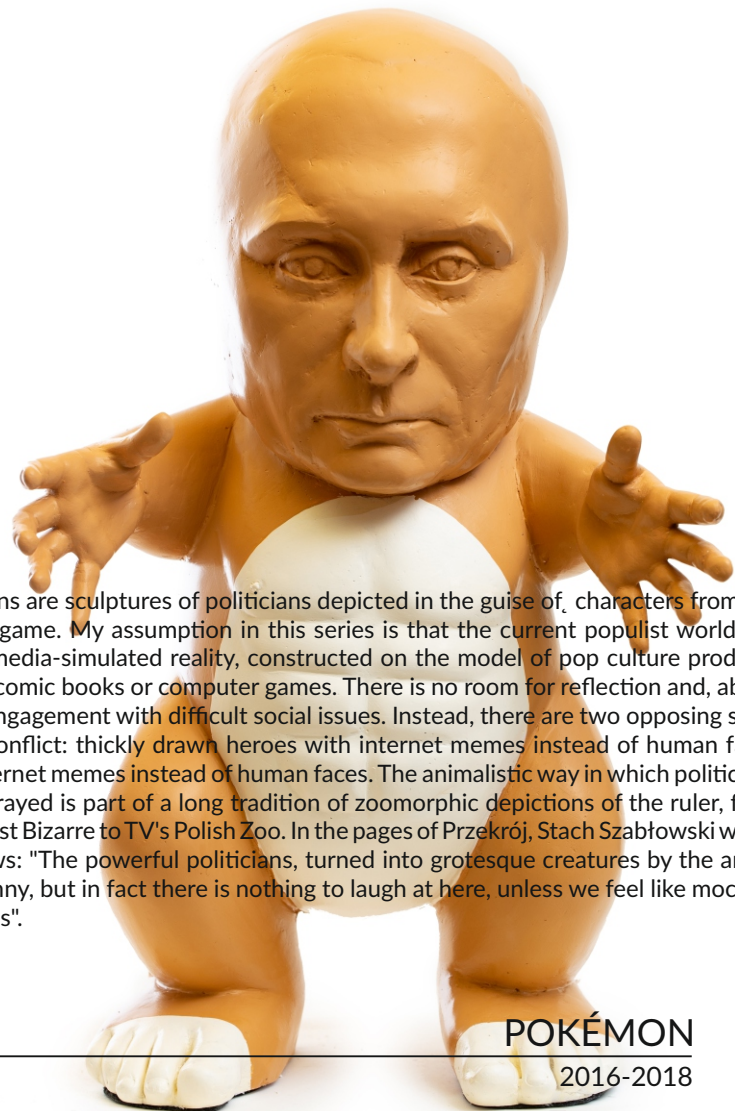
2021



„Halo History” is a project born firstly out of a need to make contact and share stories, and secondly out of a desire to preserve a fragment of the fading history of social communication. (...) Thus the first archive of Szczecin's informal oral history was created. It was presented in the form of an artistic installation, which Szpener gave the form of a telephone booth, situated in the public space of the city. The second instalment of the project took place in the fair hall in Gdynia. This is a much more consolidated place, characterised by a peculiar identity created in a specific socio-professional context. A strong sense of integration within the community functioning on a daily basis within the hall, representing an enduring attachment to maritime and commercial traditions, gave a definite shape to the stories collected by Szpener. One gets the impression that there is a somewhat familial atmosphere among the interviewees, tinged with friendship, camaraderie, but also a bit of gossip or rivalry, which sometimes even leads to slight animosity. There is no doubt that many of the threads in the recorded memories could serve as a contribution to an anthropological-cultural study of the community of the Gdynia market hall, which is to a large extent connected to the maritime traditions of the city, somewhat nostalgic about the communist era, resourceful and eager to act grassroots, and incredibly diverse in terms of sensitivity and life experiences. From the point of view of cultural relevance, the 'Halo History' project has two key elements: field recording and oral history. Collecting field recordings is a method that has been used for many years in ethnology. By going into the field, the researcher begins to integrate himself into the place of his observations, while his interviewees assume the role of active participants in the project. (...) Despite its unavoidable subjectivity, this method offers the possibility of presenting a polyphonic narrative about the past. (...) For we are living ever faster, surrounded by information noise that drowns out fleeting memory, often downplaying simple everyday matters and ignoring the role of memories. In this sense, Monika Szpener's telephone booth becomes a mobile archive of informal, social, non-political, subjective history about a given place and the people who create it, whom the artist encourages to actively and consciously exercise their memory. (MW)

HALO HISTORY

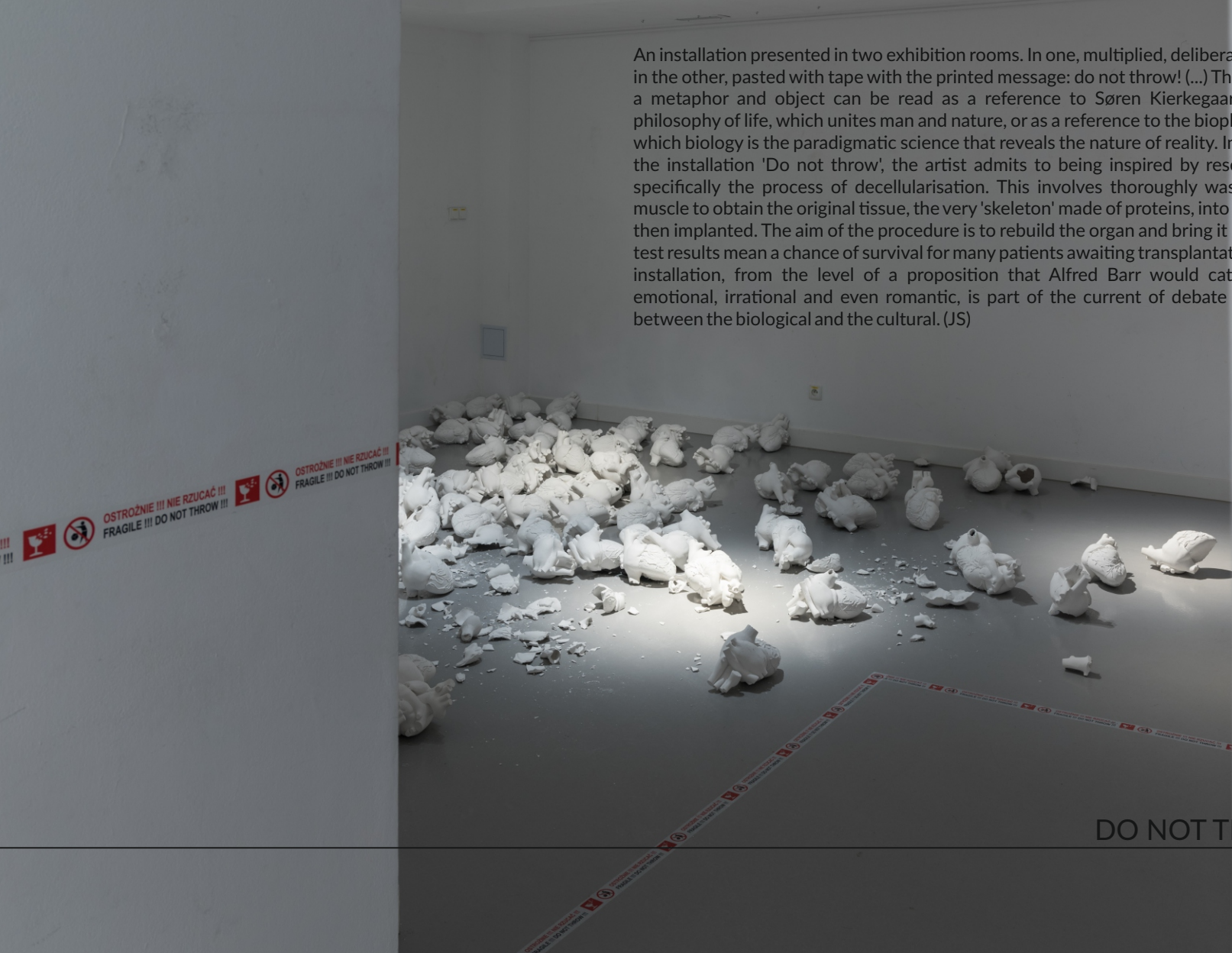
2020-2021



Pokemons are sculptures of politicians depicted in the guise of characters from the popular game. My assumption in this series is that the current populist world is a deeply media-simulated reality, constructed on the model of pop culture products such as comic books or computer games. There is no room for reflection and, above all, for engagement with difficult social issues. Instead, there are two opposing sides to the conflict: thickly drawn heroes with internet memes instead of human faces with internet memes instead of human faces. The animalistic way in which politicians are portrayed is part of a long tradition of zoomorphic depictions of the ruler, from Mannerist Bizarre to TV's Polish Zoo. In the pages of *Przekrój*, Stach Szabłowski wrote as follows: "The powerful politicians, turned into grotesque creatures by the artist, look funny, but in fact there is nothing to laugh at here, unless we feel like mocking ourselves".

POKÉMON
2016-2018

An installation presented in two exhibition rooms. In one, multiplied, deliberately broken objects; in the other, pasted with tape with the printed message: do not throw! (...) The use of the heart as a metaphor and object can be read as a reference to Søren Kierkegaard's concept of the philosophy of life, which unites man and nature, or as a reference to the biophilic perspective, for which biology is the paradigmatic science that reveals the nature of reality. Indeed, in the case of the installation 'Do not throw', the artist admits to being inspired by research in cardiology, specifically the process of decellularisation. This involves thoroughly washing out the heart muscle to obtain the original tissue, the very 'skeleton' made of proteins, into which stem cells are then implanted. The aim of the procedure is to rebuild the organ and bring it back to life. Positive test results mean a chance of survival for many patients awaiting transplantation. Thus, Szpener's installation, from the level of a proposition that Alfred Barr would categorise as organic, emotional, irrational and even romantic, is part of the current of debate on the relationship between the biological and the cultural. (JS)



DO NOT THROW

2019



As if by magic, or more precisely with a compressor of white paint, a piece of a cluttered, abandoned vintage-style room became an elegant, somewhat dreamlike sculptural composition. A piano, a chair with clothes hung on it, a kitsch painting, bottles and glasses have been frozen in the pose of a sophisticated still life for several months. Particularly charming is the piece with the samovar, animal skull, crockery and patéphone - a true memento mori. Whitewashing? Of course! Forgiving damaged objects the guilt of the past, cleansing the space of the dirt and disorder of time past. Colouring, unrealising, abstracting. The enchantment of this noisy clutter into an almost sacral, yet at the same time somewhat surreal in flavour, silence. It is surprising how a painterly gesture has constructed a truly sculptural situation. The white-painted objects acquired a patina of special nobility and an aura of timeless apprehension, an 'immortalisation' proper to classical sculpture. (LW)

STILL LIFE

2014