

BWA

BWA Wrocław Główny
1st floor of Wrocław Główny (main train station)

10.05–8.09.24



Giantesses

10.05—08.09.2024

BWA Wrocław Główny

Artists: Bożenna Biskupska, Urszula Broll, Ewa Ciepielewska, Katarzyna Rotkiewicz-Szumaska, Ewa Zarzycka

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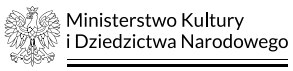
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Urbanowicz, Henryk Waniek

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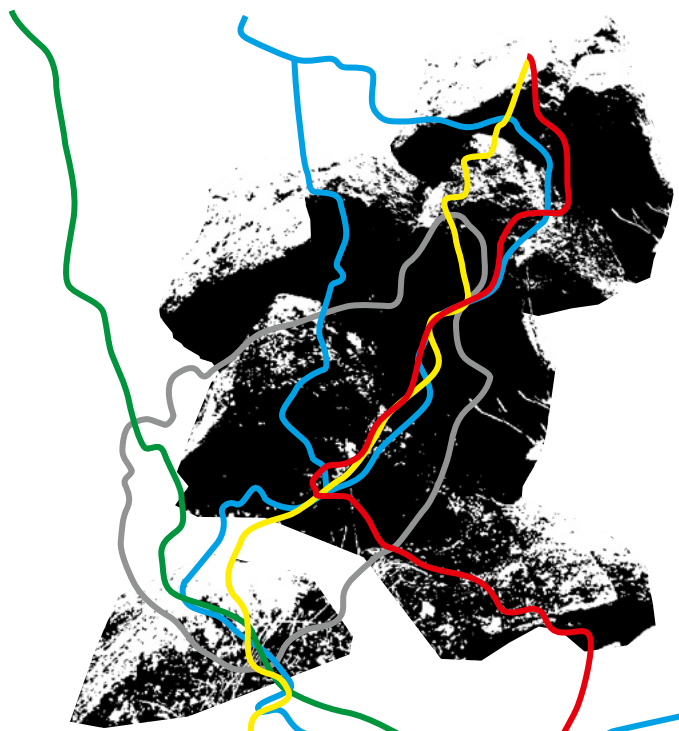
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The protagonists of the exhibition *Giantesses*, despite using diverse media – from painting, through large-scale sculpture, photography, and video, to performance and ephemeral interventions – have much in common. First and foremost, they all have ties with Lower Silesia – whether a childhood spent here, a degree or academic work here, the choice of the region as the backdrop to their visionary projects or artistic practices, or the creation of a home for their community here. The title of the exhibition is a reference to a rock formation in the Ślęża massif – a mountain important to Lower Silesia in view of its location, the beauty of the landscape, and its history, which reaches back to pre-Slavic times, when it was a site of spiritual practices and sun worship. In mythologies, above all Norse mythology, giantesses are mighty women noted for their knowledge, strength, physical qualities, and spiritual beauty.

All the artists whose work is shown in the exhibition are active in the cause of others in parallel to developing their own practices, and striving to create new cultural environments is a leitmotif in all their biographies. Each one of them has at some stage in her life been engaged in collective work; the creation of art places, new circles, and communities; and caring for others. We focus on those aspects of their artistic life and values that involve closeness to people, places, and other creatures, and on the relationships between art and spiritual practices.

In its narrative layer, through its title and the reference to mythology, culture, geography, and the landscape – the Giantess rocks and the Giant Mountains themselves, the highest chain in the Sudeten Mountains – the exhibition draws in Lower Silesia, including Wrocław, but above all its mountainous regions. It is the mountains, with their energy, beauty, unique climate, but also the cultural richness and social

relations that prevail there, that have attracted artists to the region for so many years: communes and art centers have been founded here, but it has also been a place of solitude, as well as spiritual and physical regeneration through contact with nature. The narrative layer is not only about Lower Silesia, however. Our protagonists have spent years in various regions of Poland, and continue to travel around Poland; for many of them, being on the road is a central facet of their identity, and one that recurs frequently in their art.

Giantesses is a narrative exhibition that meanders like a hiking trail, along which we can explore at close hand the work of these artists and places important to them. The first room showcases collective projects and initiatives in which they were involved at various stages of their lives. The following spaces are devoted to their individual practices, revealing the panoramas of their interests and their consistency in building up artistic languages. Each room is organized around a different shape connected with their art and biographies: a triangle, a rock, a bar, a net, and a table. Some of these objects serve functional purposes.

The influence of strong personalities on art is nothing new, and history is made up of the lives of such individuals who have made their mark on the vicissitudes of culture. In the exhibition *Giantesses*, however, we take a slightly different perspective, which is defined in contemporary culture as “weak resistance,” i.e. a turn away from the heroic model of subjectivity and toward activeness in the realm of affective and reproductive work. These five artists are linked by their biographies; they have all had ties to Lower Silesia at various

stages of their lives. Their herstories constitute interesting research material, and show how different the contemporary narrative on life and creativity is when it shies away from being “outstanding” to focus instead on action, though without abandoning self-reflection. It is above all a tangle of threads – everyday life, creativity, and work in the cause of different communities. What our protagonists have in common seems to be agency. This has taken a range of forms at different stages of their lives, but has always involved a buzz of busyness, caring, organization on several levels at once, and constant building or renovating. The exhibition *Giantesses* offers an opportunity to look closely at the life and artistic practices of these exceptional individuals, and at the network of semantic and physical tubers binding together these very different personalities. Each of them knows or knew at least one of the other participants in the exhibition, and thus in addition to the map of the geographical points of importance to our artists, we also have the imagined map of their interpersonal connections.

Another significant hallmark of weak resistance is being active and making an impact outside the center and the mainstream, and this is also something that the protagonists of *Giantesses* seem to have in common. Bożenna Biskupska has chosen as the venue for her activities the village of Sokołowsko in the Dry Mountains; Katarzyna Rotkiewicz-Szumaska moved to Michałowice, part of Piechowice, a town between Jelenia Góra and Szklarska Poręba; Urszula Broll left the city of Katowice for the village of Przesieka in the Giant Mountains. Ewa Ciepielewska, who was born in the spa town of Szczawno-Zdrój, chose the life of a nomad on water, and has for years been conducting the *Flow/Przepływ* river residencies, while Ewa Zarzycka is constantly on the move, shuttling between Lublin, Kazimierz Dolny, Wrocław, and Sokołowsko. Peripheries, or spaces between, are the

field in which these artists feel best, realizing their seemingly utopian, impossible projects.

Giantesses is the fruit of the curators' personal fascinations, and hence travels and treks, as well as our joint and several visits to Sokołowsko and Michałowice and our participation in the *Flow/Przepływ* residencies. It is the product of hours of conversations and meetings with Ewa Zarzycka wherever she happened to be performing or exhibiting; Katarzyna Rotkiewicz-Szumska in her vast house-cum-theater; Ewa Ciepielewska on the water, in Szczawno, and elsewhere; Bożenna Biskupska in her studio in Różanka and the reconstructed sanatorium; and Roger Urbanowicz, Janina Hobgarska, and Henryk Waniek, who agreed to talk to us about Urszula Broll. We are immensely grateful to them for their friendship, kindness, trust, and willingness to share their knowledge, herstories, and experience.

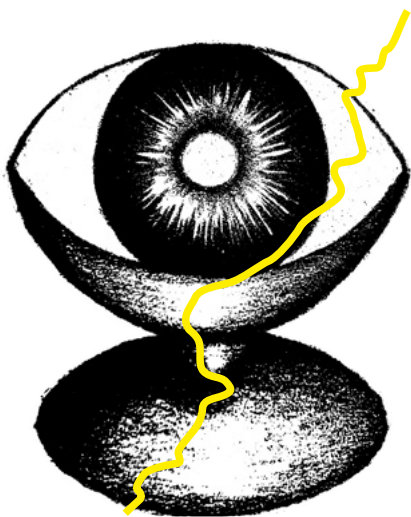
ONEIRON

Urszula Broll
Antoni Halor
Zygmunt Stuchlik
Andrzej Urbanowicz
Henryk Waniek

The attic at 1 Piastowska Street in Katowice is one of the more colorful legends in Polish culture. At first, it was the studio and apartment of the artist couple Urszula Broll and Andrzej Urbanowicz, the place where they received friends, acquaintances and other people with an interest in alternative life and culture, and exploring spirituality in the post-Stalinist reality of the early 1960s. It was also then – and there – that they set up an independent publishing house publishing mostly works connected with Buddhism; Broll and Urbanowicz were two of the first people in Poland to start translating texts on Buddhism into Polish. In the 1970s the Piastowska Street studio also became home to the country's first Buddhist center. In the 1990s it once again became a venue for artistic events, and in the year 2000 an association propagating the work of Hans Bellmer moved in.

Black Pages (Czarne karty) is a collective work by the Oneiron Circle, a group of artists (Urszula Broll, Antoni Halor, Zygmunt Stuchlik, Andrzej Urbanowicz, and Henryk Waniek) who met in the Piastowska Street attic in the years 1967–1973. Their main area of activity was Dadaist happenings and spiritual shows. Foremost among their artistic projects was *Black Pages*, a collective work made in the period 1967–1969. The idea behind it is closely akin to the concept of the Surrealist *exquisite corpse*, a collective creative method whereby sheets of paper or other

supports are gradually filled with successive interventions. As their support, the Oneiron members selected the only thing available at the time: 70x70 cm Bristol paper. All they used was white drawing ink and silver and gold poster paints on a black background. Each of the twenty-eight sheets had its own letter, which inspired the iconographic interventions. Aside from these rules, the contributors had complete freedom, which gives the individual works the impression of being a random body of drawings and inscriptions, each like a world of its own within the square it occupies.



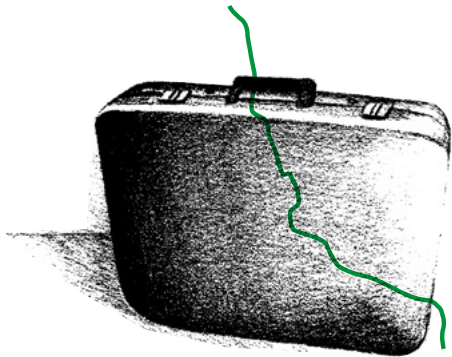
1. The Oneiron Circle (Urszula Broll, Antoni Halor, Zygmunt Stuchlik, Andrzej Urbanowicz, and Henryk Waniek), *Black Pages C, V, Ź*, reprint, 1967–1969

Ewa Zarzycka

SIGNS NOW

Ewa Zarzycka makes performance, photographic, and video art, audio pieces, and written drawings. She started out with photography, which she studied at the Wrocław Institute of Fine Arts under Andrzej Lachowicz. In the 1980s she made some works on film, and after a long hiatus, in around 2008 she returned to work behind the camera (this time the video camera), making mostly filmed performance works connected with her speaking appearances, her most typical form of creative statement. In these performances, Zarzycka shares her thoughts and tells stories based on a long-running plot which has for years featured a palette of real and imaginary characters: the Earth Sciences Professor Husband, the Postman, the Porter Lady, the Playwright Lady Next Door, Mr Philosopher Next Door, and the Kiosk Lady. Her work is a running record of reality incorporating elements of fiction and reflections on her own practice, being an artist, and the pressure to be constantly confrontational and build her “artistic position.” Her works combine a self-deprecating irony, humour, and distance with processuality, a characteristic open-endedness and ephemerality, and even lack of materiality. Zarzycka often contests her own art, subversively claiming that she has no “body of work.”

The main material she uses in her creative output is memory and personal experience, and she is constantly returning to and reinterpreting the past. In this exhibition she returns to Wrocław railway station as she remembers it in the 1970s, when it boasted a cinema, a hairdressing salon, and above all the station bar, which is recreated here. Displayed on the little tables are drawings by Zarzycka (which we strongly recommend reading) and her *Zielona Góra Shorts (Filmiki zielonogórskie)*—short, humorous video performance pieces that serve as a kind of artistic identity statement. Another important facet of the exhibition is her little-known Wrocław photographs, made during her time as a student in the Studio of Visual Activities and Structures under Andrzej Lachowicz. Zarzycka photographed Wrocław's streets and tram networks, but above all she made images of herself and her friends. As such, many of them are performative in character, and their collective aspect is a harbinger of her film *Signs (Przejawy)* made a few years later. We also display some of her most recent works on the theme of travel, which she had been planning for several years.



2. Ewa Zarzycka, *Signs Now*, video, 28'03", 2017

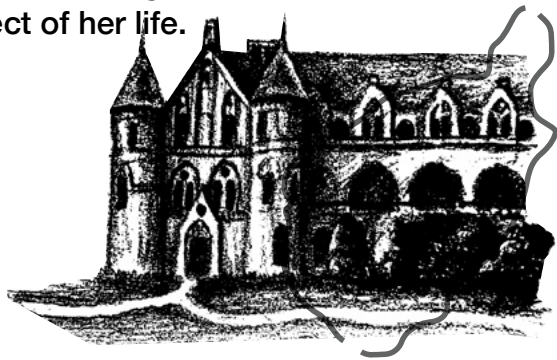
Bożenna Biskupska

FOUNDATION IN SITU SOKOŁOWSKO

She comes from Warsaw, but well over a decade ago she found her place in Lower Silesia, in Sokołowsko, a village outside Wałbrzych, in the Sudete tableland known in Polish as the Dry Mountains. Sokołowsko was once the well-known resort of Görbersdorf, laid out as a complex of sanatoria and parks in the latter half of the nineteenth century by Dr. Hermann Brehmer. Tuberculosis was treated in this mountain micro-climate with a combination of bed rest, strolls, showers, and a carefully managed diet. Sokołowsko was the antecedent of the famous Alpine resort of Davos, the setting for Thomas Mann's *The Magic Mountain*. More recently, Olga Tokarczuk also chose it as the backdrop to *Empusion*, as did Joanna Bator for her novel *Gorzko, gorzko* (Bitter, Bitter), but they are by no means the only ones to have succumbed to its charms of inspiration and attraction.

Bożenna Biskupska, together with her daughter Zuzanna Fogtt and Zygmunt Rytka, relocated their foundation, the In Situ Contemporary Art Foundation, to Sokołowsko, so breathing new life into the depopulating resort. People of culture and artists began to move here, either permanently or for residencies, and the events they organized attracted audiences: contemporary music and jazz festivals (including Sanatorium Dźwięku), the film festival Hommage à Kieślowski, and the Contexts International Festival of Ephemeral Art. Biskupska and Fogtt also reactivated

the long-defunct cinema Zdrowie, and their key project is the gradual redevelopment of the neo-Gothic sanatorium, also known as “the castle,” or “Grunwald,” destroyed by fire in 2005, as an arts center, exhibition space, and events venue. This is to house the Muzeum w Budowie (Museum under Construction), which showcases monumental site-specific works; the archives of Krzysztof Kieślowski, Rytka, and Biskupska; and the collection of the In Situ Foundation itself; there are also plans for temporary exhibitions and a residency program. Biskupska and her foundation operate on a scale that extends far beyond the region, and the scale and intensity of their work would be sufficient to keep several cultural centers busy. Nonetheless, it is encounters with those who come here seeking solace and lasting impressions that is the most important aspect of her life.



3. Bożenna Biskupska, *Describing the House I*, oil on canvas, 1987

4. From left:

Posters from the archive of the In Situ Contemporary Art Foundation, 2011–2024

Film documentation of the work of the In Situ Contemporary Art Foundation, 59'20", 2016–2019

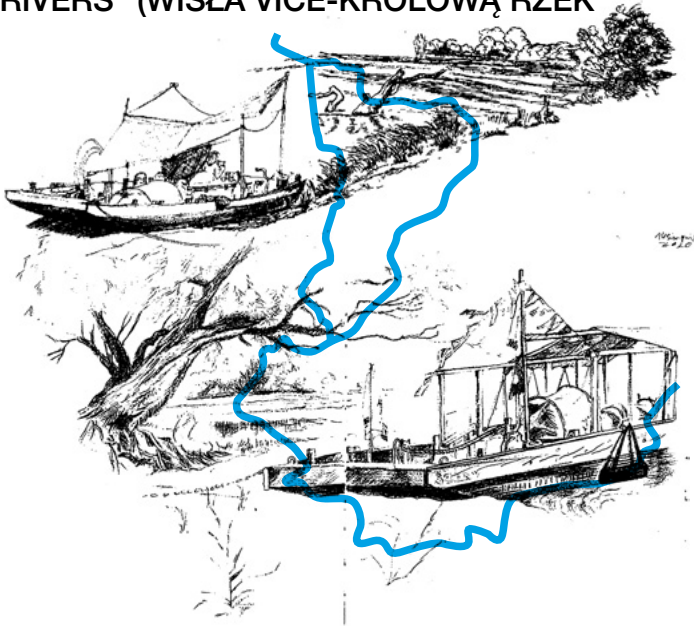
PRZEPLYW FLOW

Ewa Ciepielewska

Flow/Przeptyw is a mobile residency on the Vistula River that was initiated by Agnieszka Brzeńska and Ewa Ciepielewska in 2016. Each year, the artists invite other artists from various disciplines to board the “Solny” scow – a wooden boat that is a reconstruction of a traditional river barge used for transporting goods. Ciepielewska sailed for the first time on the Vistula River in 2008, along the Royal Rafting Route from Krakow to Gdańsk, and has been sailing regularly on the Vistula and other rivers ever since. She is active in groups and communities concerned with rivers – those focused on the popularization of rafting and boatbuilding traditions, those involved in art initiatives and projects connected to rivers, and activist groups and organizations dedicated to the protection of nature and river ecosystems. In 2020, Ciepielewska received the Order of the Vistula River for her work and contributions. When receiving this title, she said: “I’m from Lower Silesia and have never been able to put down roots anywhere – the soil always felt too shallow for me. When I first sailed down the Vistula River twelve years ago, I began to feel as I passed Sandomierz, and then even more strongly somewhere around Czerwińsk, that here, on the river, is where I feel most at home.”

In the *Flow/Przeptyw* project, Ciepielewska shares her love of the river with other artists, inviting them to sail together. The residency involves being on the river together, tuning in to its rhythm,

and observing nature, all of which serves to get to know the environment and each other more deeply. Members of the legendary Wrocław-based group LUXUS – Bożena Grzyb-Jarodzka, Paweł Jarodzki, Jerzy Kosąka, Szymon Lubiński, and Jolanta Ponton – have also participated in these outdoor river art sessions. LUXUS created collaborative art projects on the Vistula, such as a subversive banner proclaiming “VISTULA IS THE VICE-QUEEN OF POLISH RIVERS” (WISŁA VICE-KRÓLOWĄ RZEK POLSKICH).



5. LUXUS Group, *The Vistula Is the Vice-Queen of Polish Rivers*, banner, 2017
6. Ewa Ciepielewska, *Sunset on the Vistula at Kilometer 710*, oil on canvas, 2019
7. Linda Lemon, *Flow/Przepływ*, video, 3'13", 2023
8. Ewa Ciepielewska, *A Polish Hare Looks at the Construction of the Vistula Spit Canal*, oil on canvas, 2023

CINEMA THEATER MICHAŁOWICE

**Katarzyna
Rotkiewicz-Szumski,
Zbigniew Szumski**

Katarzyna Rotkiewicz-Szumski came to Michałowice, a village between Jelenia Góra and Szklarska Poręba, in the early 1990s. Here, with her husband Zbigniew Szumski and a group of other artists (Jan Kochanowski, Tadeusz Rybicki, Dariusz Skibiński, Bogusław Siwka, and Mariusz Mielęcki), she founded an alternative theater that combined the visual arts with performance and movement theater. Her vast wooden house, for years the seat of the Cinema Theater and the home of the community of those who founded it, was before the war a tourist accommodation and in the Polish People's Republic period a holiday base for the Workers' Holiday Fund (Fundusz Wczasów Pracowniczych). Today, it is a shelter for people seeking a place for themselves and hoping to become part of both the Michałowice myth and the village's everyday life. Those who come here are artists from a range of disciplines: the visual arts, music, theater, and literature. For some of them, a visit intended to last a few days runs over into a residency lasting several months, or even many years. Productions are still being created by the Michałowice Cinema Theater which then go on tour all over the world. The theater also organizes events, festivals, and educational programmes for the local community. Rotkiewicz-Szumski is its set designer and producer, and continues to act. She watches over everything that goes on in Michałowice with care and concern, from the living entity that is the house itself, with the constant repairs that it

requires, through those who stay in it, to the diverse artistic activities that germinate there.

To say that Katarzyna and Zbigniew Szumski's house is a house with a soul is saying nothing. People who have been coming here for years can still get lost in its nooks and crannies, where sculptures by Bogdan Ziętek, their hostess's bric-a-brac treasures, theatrical furniture, and life-sized figures of deer or polar bears hide ready to surprise them. Even simply being in the house in Michałowice is a balancing on the fine line between different worlds – theater, the visual arts, music, but also the real and surreal worlds, where a shared meal at the table that remembers many wild feasts can unexpectedly turn into a performative act. This is a place of singing, writing, creating, practising yoga, meditating, and cooking, which bind those who experience it to the fibre of this wonderful, mysterious building.



9. Katarzyna Rotkiewicz-Szumski, Zbigniew Szumski, curtain from the Cinema Theater, acrylic on canvas, 1992

BOŻENNA BISKUPSKA

In her early work in the mid-1970s, Bożenna Biskupska concentrated on vibrant color, in painting and on fabric. She gradually shifted into increasingly severe spatial forms, in the early 1980s moving into large-scale sculpture, and over the years, the figures from her paintings also took on this third dimension. Both this personification and Biskupska's observation of her own works come up frequently whenever she talks about them. They are primarily sculptures inspired by the human figure, though far removed from any literality. Often appearing in groups, and made from concrete or natural materials – wood shavings, tow, sisal, metal, or wood – they have become repeating signs or individual freestanding forms. Biskupska works in cycles, some shorter, others extended and recurring like a leitmotif. Foremost among them is *The One-legged Man (Jednonogi)*, a trope which has dominated Biskupska's artistic imaginary for several decades. This unreal figure, standing on one leg, has taken the form of huge, usually concrete statues, but also smaller, even quite diminutive figurines cast in bronze. The repetitive character of this motif, the almost obsessive creation of more and yet more of them, is, the artist says, part of her message: "This dogged

repetitiveness of mine in these figures is how I hope to help people realize that every one of us matters, even though there are eight billion of us on earth.”

In *Giantesses*, we juxtapose some of Biskupska’s expressive paintings from the 1980s with her sculptures – static, seated figures, and the contemporary wanderer: *The One-legged Man*. The whole is encapsulated in the geometry of a black triangle. Among the paintings is *The Old Woman (Babka)*, one of only a few of Biskupska’s paintings with a narrative. This story is connected with the eponymous subject of the work: the elderly woman resident in the house purchased by the Biskupski family in the Brodnica Lakeland – even after the house changed hands. “The old woman was like a tree: almost invisible but always present,” the artist recalls.





Bożenna Biskupska, *Old Woman*, from the *Non omnis moriar* series, 1987, oil on canvas, 210 x 135 cm,
Photo Ł. Brodowicz, courtesy of the Wallspace Gallery

The triangle first made an appearance in my 1988 one-woman show in the Museum of Lubusz Land in Zielona Góra. It was my own installation in the exhibition space: I tipped several tonnes of sand onto the floor and covered it in black dye. Inscribed into the triangle was an orange rhombus, making the layout more three-dimensional. Over the several months of the exhibition, the extreme weight of this installation in fact affected the structure of the parquet floor, which proved to have warped – but nobody held that against me. The Wrocław triangle, created especially for *Giantesses*, is light, flat, and creates an impression of depth, of an abyss or a hole. You could say that it is in opposition to the one in Zielona Góra. That was the formal inspiration for it, but it has a different meaning.

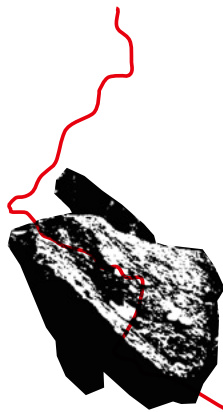
Bożenna Biskupska

1. *Old Woman*, from the *Non omnis moriar XI* series, oil on canvas, 1987
2. *One-legged Man*, sculpture, reinforced concrete, 2023
3. *Bird in the Window*, from the *Figures series*, oil on canvas, 1989
4. *Non omnis moriar IV*, oil on canvas, 1984
5. *Organism*, sculpture, reinforced concrete, 1985
6. *Sitting Man*, sculpture, reinforced concrete, 1985

KATARZYNA ROTKIEWICZ- SZUMSKA

At the beginning of her career, after graduating from the Department of Painting and Printmaking at the State Institute of Visual Arts in Gdańsk, Katarzyna Rotkiewicz focused on non-representational painting. In time, particularly after she moved to the Giant Mountains in Lower Silesia, synthetic, sweepingly painted landscapes began to emerge from these abstract forms. As we move from room to room in her house in Michałowice, we repeatedly have the impression that these huge canvases are like windows, even though what they depict is by no means literal. In around 2010, after a hiatus of many years, when she devoted herself to theater work, Rotkiewicz-Szumaska returned to painting. Her experience in acting and work with the body prompted her to leave her earlier landscapes behind in favour of faces and portraits. This gave rise to *Gallery of Silesian Repatriates (Poczet repatriantów śląskich)*, a collective portrait of the Michałowice community in which she adopts various of the many media she uses – painting, photography, film, and even the spoken word – to honor her neighbours, people who, like her, are incomers to Michałowice, bringing their manifold histories with them.

It is virtually impossible to discuss Rotkiewicz-Szumaska's work in isolation from her house itself, which is filled with objects from her collections and items from the many theater set designs she has created. This is the reason why the exhibition also includes collector's items from all over the world and from a range of registers. This symbolic house is rounded off by a panorama composed of large-scale canvases painted by her in the late 1980s, which together form an imagined mountain landscape. Against this background we see portraits and faces from several of her cycles of painting – portraits of her Michałowice neighbors, people of the theater she has met over the years, media celebrities, historical figures, and even death masks. "Inscribed into the map of our face is the path of our individual life, but also the paths taken by our ancestors. There is also a certain transgression – our future. The thread that binds all my works together and gives me no peace is the thread of passing. I was never able to go in a single direction. Balancing on the cusp comprises the hope of a liberation, of overcoming oneself," the artist says.



A Random Order of Things

On three platforms, I have assembled a selection of objects that have accompanied me for years, every so often finding new places for themselves in my house. Their relocations, disappearances, and reappearances mark successive stages of my life in Michałowice. Most of them end up first in the antechamber: my studio. Some spend years there, serving me as models. One of these was the head of a doll, which before reaching my studio had spent many years in a boiler room and had acquired a dusty, tarry patina. Well-blackened, it proved a great model for portraits. A similar thing happened to two souvenirs from our theater travels, a Mexican sculpture of a queen and a wooden figure from a Brazilian village representing some unspecified kind of animal.

We live in a region of glassworks, and at one time we would find glass waste just lying in the street. That's how we came by these lumps of glass, which were dug up during repairs to the road in Piechowice. They became an organic element of our house, filtering the light that falls into the building in a rather dark corridor.

Some of the objects came with us when we moved from Gdańsk, among them a number of sculptures by Józef Chełmowski of Brusy in the Kashubia region. *Lot's Wife (Żona Lota)* and *Cave (Jaskinia)* are magnificent examples of his work, which we discovered in the '80s. Chełmowski would embellish them with often apocalyptic Bible quotes, which continue to accrue new, contemporary meanings. The two sculptures by Bogdan Ziętek we bought in the 1990s at an exhibition in Szklarska Poręba. They both immediately found their perfect place, and we can hardly imagine the house without them; they are the pearls of

our collection. Many of the objects came to our house from antiques markets near and far. I brought the plaster busts of Jesus back from a market in Brussels. Arranged in a corridor opposite a mirror, they form an installation which Tadeusz Rolke photographed for a double-page spread in one of his albums. The faded plastic acrobat doll attached to the mechanical wire contraption is something I bought in Old Jerusalem. The cast-iron Taiwanese moving tableau of teeth being pulled by a dentist I came across at a market in Cieplice. And I bought the entire collection of historical-patriotic-religious items from their creator, one Andrzej Wójcicki of Chełmsko Śląskie, at the huge annual antiques fair in Jelenia Góra. These are prize finds that I could not resist. Brought home, they are given new life, and wait patiently for a place of their own. Together, they form a melange of styles, historical contexts and meanings, a mishmash that strongly defines me. In the chaos, I find sense, succor, asylum, and pleasure. Another piece that made it into the exhibition is an installation composed of a human skull, a dog's jawbone, and a Mickey Mouse cap from Disneyland. It stood for years in my room, until finally I used it to paint my picture *Mickey Not Dead*. Two pendants to the collection are *Chalice (Kielich)*, a sculpture by Stach Szumski, and *White Altar (Biały ołtarz)*, a composition by Zbyszek Szumski. The house in Michałowice is also our family home. A duty to the quotidian.

Katarzyna Rotkiewicz-Szumaska

1. *Untitled*, from the *Skulls* series, acrylic on canvas, 1989
2. *Untitled*, from the *Landscapes* series, acrylic on canvas, 1989
3. Objects from the collections of Katarzyna Rotkiewicz-Szumaska and Zbigniew Szumski

4. From left:

- Nazareth Panadero*, from the *Artists* series, oil on canvas, 2017
Niels "Storm" Robitzky, from the *Artists* series, oil on canvas, 2017
Man in Bicorne, oil on canvas, 2016
Lutz Foerster, from the *Theater* series, oil on canvas, 2017
Mirosław Dąbrowski, from the *Michałowice Portraits* series, oil on canvas, 2013
Flowers, oil on canvas, 2017
Rabbit, from the *Objects in the House* series, oil on canvas, 2019

5. From left:

- Jacek Łapicki*, from the *Michałowice Portraits* series, oil on canvas, 2014
Doll, from the *Household Objects* series, oil on canvas, 2023
Hydrangeas, from the *Flowers* series, oil on canvas, 2017
Poet, from the *Artists* series, oil on canvas, 2020
Luchador, from the *Objects in the House* series, oil on canvas, 2013
Rudolf Nureyev, from the *Artists* series, oil on canvas, 2014
Portrait of a Man, oil on canvas, 2024

6. From left:

- One-eyed Man*, from the *Objects in the House* series, oil on canvas, 2013
Mickey not dead, from the *Objects in the House* series, oil on canvas, 2019
Untitled, from the *Theater* series, oil on canvas, 2021
Nazareth Panadero, from the *Artists* series, oil on canvas, 2019
Brown, from the *Theater* series, oil on canvas, 2024

7. From left:

Untitled, from the *Objects in the House* series, oil on canvas, 2013

Emilia Suwaj, from the *Michałowice Portraits* series, oil on canvas, 2014

Untitled, from the *Theater* series, oil on canvas, 2022

Gladioli, from the *Flowers* series, oil on canvas, 2021

8. *Male Nurse*, from the *Theater* series, oil on canvas, 2019

9. Untitled, from the *Toys from the House* series, oil on canvas, 2024

10. From left:

Mister Gaga, from the *Theater* series, oil on canvas, 2020

Rabbit, from the *Objects in the House* series, oil on canvas, 2018

Bloody, from the *Theater* series, oil on canvas, 2013

Sister, oil on canvas, 2013

Untitled, from the *Flowers* series, oil on canvas, 2021

Joseph Beuys, from the *Artists* series, oil on canvas, 2018

11. From left:

Charlize Monster, from the *Artists* series, oil on canvas, 2013

Untitled, from the *Flowers* series, oil on canvas, 2019

Dancer, from the *Artists* series, oil on canvas, 2021

Madonna and Child, from the *Objects in the House* series, oil on canvas, 2018

Nun, oil on canvas, 2013

Dominique Mercy, from the *Theater* series, oil on canvas, 2017

12. *The Ur-Family*, oil on canvas, 2024

13. *The Twilight of Brown*, oil on canvas, 2024

14. *Patient*, from the *Theater* series, oil on canvas, 2019

Katarzyna Rotkiewicz-Szumaska, from the *Theater* series, 2021, oil on canvas, 40 x 40 cm



BWA

BWA Wrocław Główny
1st floor of Wrocław Główny (main train station)

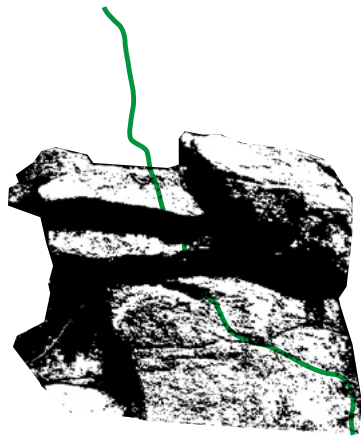


10.05–8.09.24

EWAZARZYCKA

Ewa Zarzycka makes performance, photographic, and video art, audio pieces, and written drawings. She started out with photography, which she studied at the Wrocław Institute of Fine Arts under Andrzej Lachowicz. In the 1980s she made some works on film, and after a long hiatus, in around 2008 she returned to work behind the camera (this time the video camera), making mostly filmed performance works connected with her speaking appearances, her most typical form of creative statement. In these performances, Zarzycka shares her thoughts and tells stories based on a long-running plot which has for years featured a palette of real and imaginary characters: the Earth Sciences Professor Husband, the Postman, the Porter Lady, the Playwright Lady Next Door, Mr Philosopher Next Door, and the Kiosk Lady. Her work is a running record of reality incorporating elements of fiction and reflections on her own practice, being an artist, and the pressure to be constantly confrontational and build her “artistic position.” Her works combine a self-deprecating irony, humour, and distance with processuality, a characteristic open-endedness and ephemerality, and even lack of materiality. Zarzycka often contests her own art, subversively claiming that she has no “body of work.”

The main material she uses in her creative output is memory and personal experience, and she is constantly returning to and reinterpreting the past. In this exhibition she returns to Wrocław railway station as she remembers it in the 1970s, when it boasted a cinema, a hairdressing salon, and above all the station bar, which is recreated here. Displayed on the little tables are drawings by Zarzycka (which we strongly recommend reading) and her *Zielona Góra Shorts (Filmiki zielonogórskie)*—short, humorous video performance pieces that serve as a kind of artistic identity statement. Another important facet of the exhibition is her little-known Wrocław photographs, made during her time as a student in the Studio of Visual Activities and Structures under Andrzej Lachowicz. Zarzycka photographed Wrocław's streets and tram networks, but above all she made images of herself and her friends. As such, many of them are performative in character, and their collective aspect is a harbinger of her film *Signs (Przejawy)* made a few years later. We also display some of her most recent works on the theme of travel, which she had been planning for several years.





Ewa Zarzycka, May 1 in Wrocław, 1977,
photograph, courtesy of the artist

In 1999 I wrote a piece called “When I First Came to Wrocław Many Years Ago.”

It’s a well-known fact that the history of art holds many secrets of varying caliber. And as an artist, I have a secret of my own. Through this exhibition – my part of it – I want to confess this secret. It’s the afterimage of the station bar where I spent the whole night the first time I came to Wrocław, and where I felt right at home. What I want to do in sharing this is to draw attention to our situation as humans on “the journey that is our life” – or indeed on any other, more specific journey, and finding ourselves in what appears to be a hostile place, such as a railway station, for instance. A place where we ought to feel alienated, but paradoxically we feel “right at home” – as safe and comfortable as in our own home.

That space, and all spaces like it, are to me, and others in similar situations, welcoming places. This exhibition room, with the afterimage of the bar, which makes me think of a lively space full of people, their conversations, the sounds of coffee machines, and so on, is the quintessence of a place where life is being lived to the full, the real stuff of life.

Ewa Zarzycka

1. *When I Came Here into this Room*, audio installation, 38'20", 2024
2. *Tram Networks*, video, 6'27", 2024
3. From left:
Photographic Notes (Wielka Racza), photograph, 1976
Photographic Notes, photograph, 1976
Photographic Notes (A Sporting May Day on the Island of Love), photograph, 1976
4. From left:
May 1 in Wrocław, photograph, 1977
May 1 in Wrocław, photograph, 1977
May 1 in Wrocław, photograph, 1977
5. From left:
Photographic Notes (Wrocław), photograph, 1976
Photographic Notes (Wrocław), photograph, 1976
Photographic Notes (Wrocław), photograph, 1976
6. *Photographic Notes (Wrocław)*, photograph, 1976
7. *Photographic Notes (Faces)*, photograph, 1975
8. Photographic documentation and poster from the exhibition *Not Yet an Object* in the City Gallery in Wrocław, from the artist's own archive, 1993
9. *When Many Years after the First Time*, reprint, 1999
10. *Suitcase 1*, object, 2024
11. *Guest*, from the *Zielona Góra Shorts* series, video, 6'27", 2011
12. *It's Obvious That Being a Teacher*, reprint, 2011

13. *Nothing Occupies the Reader Like This*, reprint, 2001

14. *Suitcase 2*, object, 2024

**15. Video recording from the *Zielona Góra Shorts* series
From the Train, from the *Zielona Góra Shorts* series,
video, 3'16", 2011**

***Mirror Aside*, from the *Zielona Góra Shorts* series, video,
1'10", 2011**

***Standing Dialog*, from the *Zielona Góra Shorts* series,
video, 1'04", 2011**

***Hand*, from the *Zielona Góra Shorts* series, video, 1'39",
2011**

***Truck*, from the *Zielona Góra Shorts* series, video, 2'01",
2011**

CIEPIELEWSKA EWA

Ewa Ciepiewska comes from Szczawno-Zdrój near Wałbrzych. She studied painting in Wrocław, where in 1982, she, Paweł Jarodzki, Bożena Grzyb-Jarodzka, and a number of other students from Konrad Jarodzki's studio founded the legendary group LUXUS. This collaboration, joint creation, and in time also activism became as important to her as her individual artistic path, and the two became closely intertwined. In recent years, Ciepiewska has devoted most of her time to ecological work, in particular hydro-feminist activism. She is particularly passionate about rivers, which are the subject of her work on the project *Flow/Przepływ*. This is a type of residency on rivers, established to inspire more artists to do creative work in direct contact with water and nature. It usually takes place somewhere on the Vistula, which since 2016 has been the setting for informal joint performative plein-air rafting events lasting weeks at a time.

In this exhibition we show paintings on canvas and paper from all periods of Ciepiewska's artistic career. The earliest ones, made when she was still a member of Wrocław's counter-culture community, are imbued with a vibrant energy and alive with hallucinatory colors, reflecting the hunger for spirituality that consumed her in

that period. They emanate esotericism, witchery, and the desire for a life in harmony with nature, and feature motifs popular at the time among people with a penchant for New Age ideas. For Ciepielewska this was not merely a youthful fascination, however; she still practices Buddhism, Taoism, and other forms of self-improvement. Many consider her a shamanic figure, but above all she is simply active in the cause of preserving biodiversity on Earth. All this is present in her work, whether in her paintings inspired by the landscapes she observes during her meanderings along the Vistula on the scow or in her portraits of her spiritual gurus. Animals are another major trope in her work, particularly the animals of the Chinese zodiac. The animals in this twelve-year astrological cycle feature in the calendar she paints every year: the Rat, the Ox, the Tiger, the Rabbit, the Dragon, the Snake, the Horse, the Goat, the Monkey, the Rooster, the Dog, and the Pig. In these works, Ciepielewska fuses inspirations from Oriental art with her own boundless invention and imagination.



Ewa Ciepielewska, *Tenga Rinpoche [?]*, 1989, oil on canvas, 129.5 x 97.5 cm,
courtesy of the Warsaw BWA Gallery

The fishing net that has been repurposed as a hammock in this exhibition came from a fish farm on the Martwa Wisła river [a branch of the Vistula river] that no longer exists. It was loaned to me by a friend with whom – as is common in social networks – I have for years shared passions and the same outlook on life: we sail the Vistula in wooden boats, and we do not fish.

During last year's *Flow*, when we sailed from Gdańsk towards the Przegalin lock, we stopped at a jetty heaped with piles of colorful nets no longer of use to anyone. The idea for the hammock was there for the taking. I am deeply grateful to Grzech Wierzchowski for sharing his net and his idea.

We love the Vistula in all its wildness!

Ewa Ciepiewska

1. *Mushrooms, Or: Might-for-the-Night*, oil on canvas, 1985
2. *New Age, Age 33*, oil on canvas, 1993
3. *The Shining*, oil on canvas, 1989
4. *Helenka*, oil on canvas, 1993
5. *Nova Blue*, oil on canvas, 2011
6. *Mr King and the Rabbit*, oil on canvas, 1993
7. *Misty in Roots (Couscous)*, oil on canvas, 1990
8. Works from the *Creatures from the Chinese Zodiac* series, gouache, 2010–2024

9. From left:

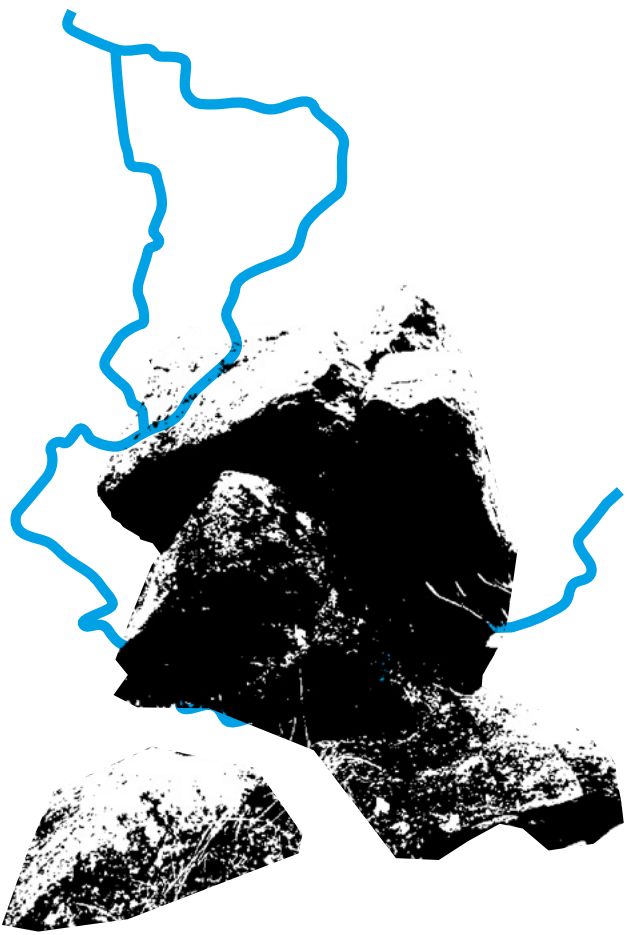
Xu Yun, oil on canvas, 1987

Master Namkhai Norbu with Cat, oil on canvas, 1993

Tenga Rinpoche, oil on canvas, 1989

BWA

BWA Wrocław Główny
1st floor of Wrocław Główny (main train station)



10.05–8.09.24

URSZULA BROLL

This legendary Polish artist died in 2020 at the age of almost 90. She lived and worked for a long time in Katowice, where she was one of the members of the Oneiron Circle, and prior to that, while still a student in the Department of Printmaking in Katowice, the experimental avant-garde group St-53. In their studio at 1 Pias-towska Street in Katowice, Broll, along with Henryk Waniek, An-drzej Urbanowicz and others, organized seminars and meetings. They also studied eastern and western spiritualities there, had all-consuming discussions, and delved into the first translations of Jung and Buddhist literature. In the early 1960s, these studies and interests moved Broll to begin creating geometric works in muted colours, which in time came to bear increasing resem- blance to Buddhist mandalas, without ever actually taking on this form. Broll said: “I have a very profound relationship with my own works; I essentially make them for myself, to discover what I don’t know about myself... In silence, in peace, in communion with a mandala and my own experience, I find mental balance.” In the early 1980s, the artist followed her Buddhist community to the Lower Silesian village of Przesieka. She remained there al- most to the end of her life, painting, meditating, a member of the Buddhist group, but also active in the local art community.

The works by Urszula Broll exhibited here form a relatively cohesive collection, despite having been created over several decades. Most striking among them are the geometric watercolours (a separate group betrays her fascination with the oeuvre of the German painter Paul Klee) and two oil paintings connected with her spiritual practice. The intricately detailed pen-and-ink drawings also call to mind Far Eastern art. On the one hand they include references to Buddhist iconography, but on the other they are also clearly inspired by views of the Giant Mountains that Broll loved so dearly; these were also an important subject of the watercolour mountain landscapes that she painted for many years.

On the table built in 1976 by Paweł Górski, a poet, painter and carpenter who was staying in the house at 1 Piastowska Street at the time, we have a display of books connected above all with Broll's spiritual practice, selected by her son, Roger Urbanowicz.



The Table's Story

Trees have a good memory, so I can recount everything in detail. The only thing I don't know is whether we were felled in 1888 or 1889, because we use a different calendar. Either way, afterwards we were split into good thick beams, corded, and eight years later transported to Schloßstrasse. There, we were used as the roof beams on the fifth floor of a huge townhouse. The attic and corner tower could not have existed without us for the next sixty-seven years, for we were the spirit of that place.

Little happened. Laundry was hung up there to dry, household junk stored there, soot and dust gathered. And so it went on until 1964 – and that date we know for sure, because it was mentioned by the craftspeople who came to make the alterations. It was to become the studio for a lady who was a great artist.

Some of us stayed there and continued to support the roof. But four were taken down, because they would only have gotten in the way. We were afraid that they would chop us up into smaller pieces and burn us, but our fate proved more merciful than that. A bearded gentleman saw us and announced that we were the perfect material for a table. And not just any table: we were five meters long, and so we remained.

It wasn't a refined piece of furniture; it would have been better suited to an inn. But life was far more interesting in the studio. We served Urszula – or rather her husband, Andrzej, and their little boy Roger. Many things were stood on us – plates, glasses, bottles, ashtrays, books, and all kinds of beautiful objects. Once, a drunk actor from Grotowski's theater even climbed up onto us! And the people who sat at that table! I'm hard put to count the Jerzys alone – Ludwiński, Illg, Lewczyński, Nowosielski, Prokopiuk. Then Jacek Woźniakowski and Jacek Waltoś. Later on, Stefan Morawski, Zygmunt Lis, Janusz Bogucki, Marian Bogusz,

Zygfryd Dudzik, Stanisław Fijałkowski, the Obremianka sisters, Zofia Rydet, Zdzisław Beksiński, Henryk Mikołaj Górecki, Mariusz Tchorek, Aleksander Wojciechowski, Tadeusz Brzozowski, Hilary Krzysztofiak, and many others whose names I will pass over here. But first and foremost the closest friends of the house: Zygmunt, Antoni, and Henryk.

And so it went on, for ten years or so, until the householders converted the room into a Buddhist zendo, which was not at all the place for a table. We were moved to the apartment a floor below, and shortened to three meters, because there was not enough space there. That necessitated any number of operations – we were dismantled, transported, shortened, reassembled, cleaned, and polished to a high gloss. We still weren't what you might call a salon piece, but we sensed that we were loved.

What went on in our former home we know only at second hand. Somewhere along the line the Buddhist thing broke up, as did Urszula and Andrzej's marriage, and he went to live elsewhere. Later, Urszula also moved away, to the beautiful Sudetes. But she didn't forget her table. It wasn't easy to get us from Katowice to Przesieka, and the cottage was small, too – cosy, but somewhat cramped. The only place there was space for us was in the kitchen, and there our journey ended.

I can't count all the people who have sat at us since then aside from Urszula herself and her Henryk Smagacz, because all that has gone. But wood has a good memory and retains everything.

Henryk Waniek, February 2024

1. Untitled, n.d.

2. *Blackness*, oil on canvas, 1969

3. From left:

Untitled, oil on canvas, 1985

Untitled, oil on canvas, 1986

4. From left:

Untitled, gouache, 1988

Untitled, gouache, 1974

Mysterious Mountain, gouache, 1997

5. From left:

Untitled, gouache, 2002

Zones IV, gouache, 1989

Untitled, gouache, n.d.

Untitled, gouache, n.d.

Untitled, gouache, 1999

Mount Destiny, gouache, 1973

6. From left:

Untitled, gouache, 1998

Inner Flame, gouache, 1996–1997

Zones III, gouache, 1989

7. From left:

Untitled, gouache, 1969

Untitled, gouache, 1966

Untitled, gouache, 1964

Untitled, gouache, 1967

Untitled, gouache, 1963

8. From left:

Transformations, ink on paper, 1968

Untitled, ink on paper, 1990

Untitled, ink on paper, n.d.

Untitled, ink on paper, 1970

Untitled, ink on paper, 2004

Untitled, ink on paper, 1988

Untitled, ink on paper, 1988

Sacred Mountain, ink on paper, 1997

Untitled, ink on paper, n.d.

Untitled, ink on paper, 1998

Urszula Broll, *Inner Flame*, 1997, watercolor on paper,
65 x 47.5 cm, courtesy of the artist's family

