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# POLOGNE

english translation

## TO TAKE POSITION

Jan SWIDJINSKI

The world in which we live is becoming more and more a global village of mutual dependencies. It is a world of very rapid changes and growing entropy of information. The boundaries between what is natural and unnatural, real and artificial, what can be approved and what cannot, is correct or not, admissible or not, proper or improper are more and more difficult to establish.

This reality is too complicated to be understood; too changeable for us to be able to have an emotional relation to it; too entangled into interdependencies for us to be able to take a neutral position; to be able to isolate ourselves, to find a manhole that would constitute a safe shelter.

A paradox of our artistic and cultural situation seems to consist in the fact that on one hand, not being able to decipher a reality that is too complicated, we cannot assume an attitude towards it, and on the other hand we feel that we have to take a position, that our cultural narcissism does not defend us against the growing entropy, that being passive we cease to be an active and self-determining subject. On the contrary, we change ourselves into objects of other peoples' activities, without a possibility to defend ourselves.

### Theses or questions on culture and economy

Art today is caught between the influences of two needs: the needs of culture and the needs of the market. Compromises, possible between these two spheres; symbiosis is impossible. These are not two different domains in life, these are two ways of conceiving of the same reality.

Beaudrillard in his last book entitled *Cool Memories*, 1987, said "The nineteenth century was a witness to the long-lasting work of destroying appearances in order to draw out something. The twentieth century is a witness to the no less gigantic work of destroying meaning... we have ceased to use both". The post-modernist image of our reality: the death of philosophy, science, politics, ideology. The culture of exhaustion; silence following the hysterical cry of a new expression.

The economic approach to reality forces out the approach in terms of culture that has become the culture of exhaustion. It is a consequence of the constantly increasing process of changes. It is a paradoxical stage of culture when it ceases to produce its own patterns, its own *Weltanschauung*.

Economy as ideology expresses an idea of changes. It simulates a change and it is itself simulated by a change. The principle on which economy is based: exchange is a symbolic representation of the idea of a change.

In order to develop, the economic system requires the subordination of everything else: production, information, work, free time, culture and politics. It requires the subordination of the rich as well as the poor. The world market instead of world history.

The economic system requires the relativization of values. You cannot exchange something that is of the same value for both partners.

In order to develop, the economic system requires a fusion of two discrepancies: a) a relativization of values, which leads to their liquidation, b) keeping and using a system of values, in order to awaken our needs and desires, thus simulating a

process of exchange. c) the destroyed values are replaced by their substitutes. However, these substitutes do not exist without those which they replaced. There are no quotations without originals.

While developing, the economic system needs new values every now and again. However, it is not able to create them by destroying the system of values. Accelerating the process of constant changes, it destroys at the same time what it creates, that is substitutes. In other words, the meaning of the substitute gradually pales as the distance between them and the originals grows. That is the situation of contemporary art.

In the field of the economic system art is not only a commodity but also a symbolic representation of this order the justification of its concept of reality — art together with its new values replacing those which have lost their meaning. Art in the seventies, facing the problem of a too rapid acceleration that destroys its values, attempts to find them outside. However, it is not aware of the fact that this change raises the same problem for art and for life. In the eighties this comeback of art to art becomes as fruitless as the exodus of art towards life in the previous decade.

One cannot reconstruct obsolete values. This comeback to art becomes coming back to something that was art once and is not art any longer. Art may only become a substitute. The same substitute that is employed by economy.

Art becoming a quotation of art ceases to create a sense of culture. It means losing the position it has occupied so far, losing the position of the artist as a member of an elite.

The space for art, for an artist as an acting subject, has moved from the field of the appearances of a pseudo-universal system created by institutions of the commercialized Art World... outside to the field where the process of constant creation of values that are necessary for all of us and for the functioning of our world is going on.

The present time of distracted meanings is not a time of great program, total solutions. There is no social consensus. There does not exist any integrity that can be accepted. Nothing is left but the constant process of small steps, the context in which we function, the place from which we contact others.

### Three texts on art history

*From the moment the modern industrial society came into being, and as change was acknowledged as the fundamental value, change became a factor that creates and destroys art at the same time.*

What is said today loses its meaning tomorrow. As the speed of changes in the surrounding reality grows (the gap between reality and its image grows wider). From romanticism to post-modernism we can observe over and over again the described process of the stratification of concepts and objects — the succeeding stages of a paradoxical culture that while creating its own order destroys it at the same time.

In traditional cultures (better in other cultures than ours), the order which is established once does not change; in the beginning there

was a word — pre-order forever and for everything. Passing time is a medium transporting the once established order to the future. History modifies past experience, adjusting it to different circumstances, but without changing the meaning of truths established once and for all. Words refer to things, things refer to words; there is no gap between them. This gap comes into being only in our culture and it becomes a problem to maintain values in a world of more and more rapid changes.

The simplest solution that might come to one's mind is the introduction of a division between what undergoes changes and what is left unchanged. During the period of romanticism there were two orders of everything replacing one: the world of spirit, i.e. permanent values, and the world of matter with the principle of evolution — constant change in force. In this interpretation a change acquires some positive features; it is a progress, a constant self-improvement. The word "culture" no longer means the order of the whole. It concerns the sphere of spiritual values only. The place for art is just within this domain. In this way on one hand permanent values are preserved, placed within the sphere of culture, and on the other hand, change, different values, are sanctioned, placed in the world of matter. Barriers that might hold back progress are brought down, and at the same time a gap between the two spheres grows constantly. It is more and more difficult for words to express things. The object of the investigations of art is not reality but a difference between the concept of reality and reality itself. It is said that nature seen through the eyes of an artist is a felt impression or an expression articulated by an artist, a picture, an interpretation. Next to what is to be told there reveals itself how it is to be told that slowly dominates the former; a sign that communicates something to someone becomes a message itself. Art becomes something that talks about itself — art for art's sake.

The consecutive stages of this process can be followed by looking at the history of our art and culture from the beginning of the nineteenth century to the modern times. It is also possible to follow emotions accompanying this process. From the euphoria of discovering one's artistic independence, liberating art from the external bonds hampering art, to the feeling of isolation that was far from optimism, to Philippe SOLLERS' statement that literature has become "une curieuse solitude", to a proposition of the Trans-avant-garde that "an artist works on the outer skin of a category of culture" aware of the semantic catastrophe of artistic language and ideology or art. (Banito OLIVA.)

Is it possible to separate the world of spirit from the world of matter? Is it possible for the values of art to become permanent even as material reality is changing? The attempts to find answers to these questions are another leit-motiv of the history of art of the last two centuries. It is also possible to investigate here the same change of emotions, from the euphoria of the avant-garde through the criticism of conceptual art to the feeling of hopelessness of post-modernism.

A change is a positive value. Our best example of that is the material world, which is achieving a higher and higher stage of development by changing itself. But culture, by isolating itself, loses all its most precious contents. Culture should become a part of life; the material world and the spiritual world should enter into alliance. Culture, and therefore art, following life's example cannot stand still, sticking to the once and forever established values. Culture, as well as art,

just like matter while changing in its development becomes more and more perfect. That was the solution of the problem put forward by the avant-garde. And that was the meaning of the avant-garde idea of constant progress, being at the fore of historical events, in the avant-garde.

Just as it is not possible to separate the media from the message, it is not possible to separate a language — this concerns also the language of art — from what this language speaks about, without reaching the absurd; and it is not possible to constantly increase the speed of changes of reality, trusting that one can change the patterns of culture correspondingly. Because time is required not only for creating them, but also for inculcating them into social consciousness.

There is one kind of time required for carrying out changes in physical reality and there is another kind of time for carrying out changes in psychic reality. Therefore at the turn of the sixties and the seventies art faced two alternatives: 1) to give up the values specific to art and say that art can be constituted equally well by painting a picture and drinking a glass of water — fluxus — art is life, life is art or, 2) to try to analyse what is left from the truth of art in the rapidly changing world. That was the subject of the conceptual considerations. Conclusions that could be drawn were not too rapturous and they destroyed definitively the avant-garde's optimism.

Art is what somebody calls art. Every object may become art if somebody calls it that, and at the same time be something else if somebody does not want to call it art. The term "art" has become an empty term. It has ceased to mean anything. This semantic catastrophe took place much earlier than it was discovered by the trans-avant-garde.

There is one more conception of art connected with the problem of constant changeability and the process that accompanies it; that is the process of liquidation of established values: anarchy, the black theatre of ARTAUD as well as SAUSSURE's Anagrams from his earliest period and also JOYCE's *Finnegans Wake* — the introduction to post-modernism — art as a process of constant rejection in order to allow the revealing of what is underneath.

Neither hiding in one's own manhole, nor going outside and accepting the process of constant acceleration of changes, or rejecting what we are not able to hide underneath anything, can prevent a semantic catastrophe. There is an empty space left by culture as a comprehensive order binding to everybody; the social consensus has been destroyed; we have reached the end of the great history of our common culture. (LYOTARD)

The empty space left by one order is occupied now by another order, the economy. But is the new order able to replace the work of the values that have been eliminated?

#### Temptations of economic thinking

The economic comprehension of reality forces us to approach reality in terms of culture. The same reason that brings about the exhaustion of culture causes the development of economy at the same time. Winners are always right. Economy ceased to be merely a method of effective management and became a universal system of approaching reality; the idea of economic growth replaced the more vague avant-garde idea of progress. Ideology as economy has no competitive alternatives. Ideology without alternatives is faith — its truths are obligatory to everyone: those who are well developed and those who would like to have some. The ideal of change as value, adopted by our culture, has found its full significance in economy.

The foundations of economy are constituted by exchange: a certain "x" in exchange for a certain "a" to a certain "y" in exchange for a certain "b" which is owned by "y" and which is not owned by "x", who would like to have it. Thus the stimulator of this exchange is inequality of desires and ownership, and at the same time equality of the value of what is exchanged. There

cannot function an economic arrangement between those who own and those who do not own — there only annexation is possible. Likewise, this type of agreement cannot work between those who want the same thing.

On one hand economy is a symbolic representation of change, and on the other hand it is a representation of a difference between "own" and "not own", "want" and "do not want". The same thing in order to be exchanged must have a different value for both sides, more valuable for the one who wants to have it than for the one who wants to exchange it for something else. The value of a thing that is the subject of exchange is relative then. The higher the level of relativization, the greater is the chance to exchange. The potentialities of exchange are getting wider as the number of participants of exchange increases; the more diverse and the more temporary our needs and desires, the more frequently we change them, and the easier it is to exchange things, whose characteristics are not constant and can change in relation to the needs of the market, as opposed to things whose characteristics are settled once and forever.

There is a fundamental difference between culture and economy, which can easily be transformed into a conflict. This is so because what is good for one side is bad for the other one! Permanence of values for culture, impermanence and relativization for economy. Both sides have universal aspirations; the order of culture should supply with answers for all questions and it should be the order for all members of the society of a given culture; the economic order can be fully developed if it gets rid of everything that restricts it and if it increases the number of participants of exchange to the highest degree and frequency of exchange.

As long as there exists a natural or inherited inequality in ownership, needs and desires, there exists a possibility of co-existence for culture and economy, and the spiritual world does not collide with the material world. When these inequalities are equalized and when the market is fully supplied, then economy has to increase the domain of its functioning by subordinating spheres which have not been seized so far. It has to attempt to make its rules-laws a part of the consciousness of those who have not been subordinated so far. It has to attempt to get rid of a different point of view. It has to replace thinking in terms of the spiritual world by thinking in terms of the material world. It has to replace the values of culture by the values of economy. At the same time a process of greater and greater relativization of values seems to be necessary, replacing constant values with inconstant ones which leads to their gradual liquidation. The aim of economy is not to satisfy needs and desires — if that were so, the advertising that arouses desires would be unnecessary — but to gain profit from an exchange. Therefore economy aims at constant growth of the quantity of exchange and in this way stimulates a constant growth of changes. About problems it raises for culture I have written above.

In order to develop freely, economy has to get rid of values but at the same time it must have them in order to stimulate our desires of exchange by means of them. The solution to these contradictions is replacing values with their substitutes. The advantage of a substitute in this case is the fact that it is not "real", it is artificial, it is an appearance, it is something temporary. We are seized with its charm for a moment, we do not become attached to it and we are able to leave it and to replace it with something else at any moment. Thus publicity, mass media, television, mass entertainment replace high art. What attracts us is a surface — this feature of art which is advocated by Banito OLIVA for modern art — impression, expression that attracts attention — that is advocated by new expressionism. The banality of a substitute, the shortness of information, a set of video fragments instead of a whole, video clips, physiology are not shortcomings from the point of view of economy, but on the contrary are virtues. Because they shorten the time of reaction, they activate the process of exchange, and increase the number of trans-

actions that are carried out. Culture does not want to lose its position and therefore it saves itself by subordinating itself to economy; it becomes a propagator of values other than those which have been giving meaning to it; it becomes a propagator of economic values: profit, the speed of operations that are carried out, the technical efficiency, accuracy, precision. A man faces competition with a machine which is more efficient in this particular case. That is the process of reification of the yuppie generation.

Art in the sphere of economic order is not only an article of trade but also becomes a symbolic representation of the order and its concept of reality — art with its institutions.

In the traditional cultures an artist was a mediator between those who formed the truth of culture and the society as receivers. When our culture became the culture of change an artist became a co-creator of these truths and as co-creator entered the elite. It is a position he occupied yesterday and is losing today, becoming a subject to economic order. Post-modernist art says honestly about itself that in its state of exhaustion it is not able to put forward values. It can only be a description of a situation, the world of exhausted values of culture. It can only be a quotation of history, a substitute of something that has ceased to exist — a sing of a sing. One is not a creator without creating, when one does not fulfill the function connected with being in an elite, one ceases to belong to it.

Is economic order able to replace the work done by culture? Is a substitute able to replace a value fully? Is it able to manage without it? Doesn't the simulated speed of changes blur the reality that exists for us in the simulacrum, in what we quote? Is it possible for a sing which ceases to be a sing of something else than itself to exist? Doesn't economy as a total system of thinking while developing and liquidating values liquidate its own meaning at the same time?

#### A place for art

*Art is caught between the influences of culture and the needs of the market. There are possible compromises between these two spheres: cultural and economic. A symbiosis is not possible. These are not two separate spheres of social life, but two different ways of approaching reality.*

Economy subordinates art in two stages. In the first one it leaves the problems of art to the artist and limits itself to a role of mediator between artist and customer. The work of art is subject not to one but to two different systems of values: artistic and economic. A person who estimates the artistic value of a work is not necessarily a customer; and a customer does not have to be guided by artistic values in his choice. From the economic point of view profit is important, and profit grows as the first value becomes more and more subordinated to the second one which is the economic value. The first stage is over and it gives way to the other when artistic value becomes identified with economic value. Economy is not able to accomplish its aim as long as it does not succeed in subordinating not only artists and art but also artistic institutions, creating out of galleries, art magazines, publishers, international exhibitions, art festivals... art criticism and history of art Art Business agencies with specialists in organization, publicity and artistic ideology and mediation. This market grows according to the laws of economy when it monopolizes itself, including into its range a greater and greater area; when it becomes the international market of economic co-operation in the sphere of art — when Art World becomes a synonym of Art Business Art, losing in this process its own distinctive values, and beginning to function as a symbolic representation of the economic offer; it expresses the material success scored in the process of the exchange of goods. This whole process can be observed with the naked eye by observing what has happened to art in the last decade. The consequences are obvious and noticeable.

1 The drastic reduction of funds for the development of art in most countries: art as an article of trade should be self-financing.

2 The artist as producer loses his former privileges; he is subject to the same regulations and laws as all other producers are, disregarding what he produces.

3 The drastic decrease of the number of art galleries and artistic ventures financed by public funds.

4 In the cultural policy accepting free competition in art. The result was the constant process of closing down local and national art centres and replacing them with the financially strong centre of New York in the eighties.

5 Replacing various schools deriving expression from their own traditions, and their own context, by the international uniform style.

6 The constant lowering of the dignity of art criticism being replaced by the advertising of art, an article of trade.

7 Obliterating the differences between High Art and mass art.

8 The constant lowering of the social role of art and artists — art as entertainment.

9 Consequently, the lack of new artistic propositions, the lack of program which can be clearly seen during international art ventures (as for example at the last Documenta.)

#### Another Place for Art

In all investigated cultures the leit-motiv is the need to create a world, where all members of a given culture would feel safe. This safe world of culture is like a memory of one's childhood; we know what is good, what is white and what is black, we know that we can trust it. It protects us against a sudden menace. It can supply us with answers to all our problems. It is a stable world of

culture we can rely on. Other cultures are like this. Our culture is not. Our world is neither safe nor stable. There are no clear rules and explicit values there. Living with others we depend on ourselves. The other means a competitor in the struggle for survival. The proposition of economy: profit in terms of money, does not solve all the problems that are being solved by cultures. The relativization of values, this motive power of the economic order, liquidates the constant points of reference the social consensus can be built upon. We live in two worlds: the world of the common market and the world of one's own problems.

The replacing of common culture with economy bears double consequences:

Changing the so far existing system of values and replacing it with a new system in which the main value is a notion of profit. Old values function as relics of the past, quotations of history. This is the sense of the nostalgia for the past of neoconservatism. Otherwise the old values function as substitutes that simulate the pseudo-needs for the use of the exchange of goods. As a consequence there comes a lack of social trust in the social function of great ideas, visions of the past, ideas of humanity, the good,... the whole repertoire of notions employed by culture so far which has lost its meaning in a new structure. Hence the obvious crisis of trust in the old public institutions serving the values of old culture. Therefore come non-political character, non-ideology, non-ethical character, non-aesthetic character as the dominant attitudes.

As a result of the impossibility to satisfy the essential social needs within the frames of economic order which have been served by the old culture so far the creation of local subcultures replaces the universal culture: various kinds of communities, ethnical and religious ones, movements of minorities etc. The world within which modern art looks for support ceases to be "a world at all" and it changes into the world of our context, the reality of the environment in which we live. The culture which has been

economic order functions in this world alone. Within this sphere there is a place for art that co-creates the constantly modernizing new values.

What are the conditions required for art to function?

1 A network of non-commercial galleries functioning in various places and in various social backgrounds. Opposing the centralization connected with the international Art Business.

2 Galleries of a contextual profile connected with a definite place and community, with their problems — here and now, facing this situation — opposing the anonymous character of the international market of Art World.

3 Galleries that keep in touch with one another all over the world. Not to impose one's attitudes upon others but in order to talk to others about oneself and to understand oneself and one's own problems by realizing the differences. Opposing the trend of Art World towards the unification of art by advertising artistic trends in force. The common market will replace the common world.

4 Galleries open to reality, which do not camouflage through art what really goes on there.

5 Galleries where a problem is more essential than the way it became aesthetic by means of artistic media.

6 Galleries of artists, organizers-animators and communities that communicate with one another, opposing the division within an artist — a producer of works of art, a receiver — a customer and a mediator of a transaction.

7 Galleries where may be revealed problems, anxieties, hopes of "these people", "this community", and not theoretical problems of generalization of a man and his problem.

8 Galleries where an artist is conscious of his limitations as well as of his freedom. He is able to keep his status of acting subject, he is able to express his opinion.





## GALERIA DZIAŁAN

Bożena KOWALSKA

A two-day "marathon" of actions, performances, installations and shows, called *Imagination Test*, took place in and around the Warsaw Gallery Działan/Gallery of Actions in the Ursynowimielin housing estate. The event was attended by twenty artists from different parts of Poland who annexed the space of the gallery, the square in front of it, and the housing estate reaching as far as the Kabacki Forest. The foremost impression was one of variety. The event was accompanied by critical statements and discussions.

A few very interesting installations were mounted inside the gallery where Janusz DUCKI showed his *Drying Room*—two blocks reminiscent of silhouettes of buildings, made up of prints of a single serigraph of a bolt of lightning with many ramifications. The serigraphs were arranged in rows of different colors: red, yellow, blue and black-and-white.

Cezary STANISZEWSKI and Andrej MITAN made small hobby-horses of white paper, and stuck some pieces to the inside and outside walls and gallery doors.

Jan BERDYSZAK'S installation, *A State of Morality*, consisted of a table placed on a glass slab, and a plank, with a big stone at one end and five loaves of bread at the other, at the edge of the table. The balance was very delicate so that the stone could easily outweigh the bread and fall on the glass.

Teresa MURAK'S performance was likewise disturbing and prompted profound reflection. She covered a table with a white table-cloth and kneaded leavened flour into bread. Her action made one think of work and holiday, life and growth, the feminine: woman the feeder, earth the feeder.

Outside the gallery, Maciej STYPULKOWSKI sprinkled white and yellow pigment inside an 18 x 18 m. square on the lawn, and copied the Leonardian module of man with his arms spread and legs astride. The man, in a prone position,

could only be seen from the upper stories of the nearby buildings.

In his performance called *Metaphysical-Telepathic Space*, Andrzej DUDEK-DÜRER, with a pair of boots from his hippie period in front of him, meditated in a lotus position or strolled among large semi-transparent foil sheets. Then he used three projectors to show slides of burning candles, scenes of various cities, his own performances, and finally a portrait of Albrecht DÜRER. The accompaniment was sitar music.

Fredo OJDA'S action, called *Track*, consisted in guiding the public along a fairly varied route to show them first the life of the housing estate, then sand excavations where he unearthed a length of rope previously buried where the layout of geological strata was the most beautiful and where the rope left an impression. The next stage was an unpolluted meadow, corn-field, and the nearby forest. Finally, there was a stream with a slab of glass hidden in it. The same actor in white who took the rope out of the pit picked up the glass with algae stuck to it. Then he fixed it to a rope, hoisted it to a tree of Kabacki Forest, and contoured a tree reflected in it. All the sounds accompanying the action were recorded. As usual in his undertakings, OJDA moved on the border area of nature and civilization.

Paweł KWASNIEWSKI'S performance, entitled *Soliloquy*, consisted of a sequence of scenes touching upon social issues. In all the scenes, he used a bicycle on which he rode from one station to another, glasses of colored liquids and white cardboard on which he placed different objects. Throughout the performance, he stripped successive masks off his face. The installations and actions presented had a varying semantic value and artistic rank.

It is quite a good thing that Warsaw has come by a gallery specializing in this particular form of art. The ambitious program of the Galeria Działan includes the organization of nationwide surveys of ephemeral art.

## MALA GALERIA, SMALL GALLERY

Marek CRYGIEL

"Photography is often understood as a technique which is used to register things and events. Approached in such a way it is only and exclusively a reflection of the world and irrespective of how we use it will remain a mere reflection. But since a photograph is artificially created by man there will always arise the question about the intention that guided the photographer when producing it. If art is his intention, then the photograph ceases to be evidence of phenomena and facts, briefly speaking of the world, and becomes the testimony of an idea. One of the aims of the Small Gallery is the presentation of the creative work of those artists who are in search of new artistic ideas. It is, of course, a risk, because some of the exhibitions presented will not find general recognition, but as is the case with any kind of search, such a risk is a necessity. It is not our intention that exhibitions should necessarily display completely finished works of art. On the contrary, the very assumption of the character of the Small Gallery is that its exhibits are of a working character, subject to discussion. This is closely connected with the rapidly changing situation in art and the awareness of the need to reveal this situation in an up-to-date way".

The above text was written at the beginning of the existence of the gallery. We now enter our eighth year of activity, during which period we have held over 100 exhibitions. It should be added that the activity of the gallery is connected more with a modern approach to the role of the media, than with the traditional division of art into various branches, such as: painting, graphic arts, photography, etc. That is why whenever the author's conception requires it different techniques have been used, such as: films, video, graphic pictures, xerographic prints, text. The one hundred or more exhibitions have also included other types of artistic activity which were on display in the gallery, such as performances, film shows, discussion meetings with various authors. Another form of work of the Small Gallery are the *Small Archives* to which everyone has access, where people can acquaint themselves with the documentation of artists connected with the Small Gallery and also with material published by other galleries, museums and contemporary art centers. In addition to this we possess our own collection of catalogues, containing reproductions of works and theoretical statements in Polish and English. Some of these catalogues should be a personal, possibly most cohesive artistic statement, not necessarily in words, and not as is the rule, a review of works, awards, distinctions, etc.

After a short break in the activity of the gallery in 1982, caused by the proclamation of martial law, we have resumed work and want to continue with the line initiated in the 1970's. One should be aware of the fact that this is not so simple since the situation in art has also undergone substantial changes. It is our intention to register these changes through continuation of exhibitions, based on differentiated approaches to and understandings of art, exhibitions in which artists will more frequently, though certainly not always, make use of photography.

Recently we have broadened the formula of artistic searchings by exhibiting works which in some way verify and enrich the already accepted sphere of photographic statements. This does not mean renouncement or giving up of the tasks we have set ourselves. It is an attempt to reach out for slightly different spheres, which are generally supposed to have become the subject of apparent reevaluations. I have in mind here realistic photography, which refers more directly to the present day. But time will show whether our often solitary efforts will introduce anything essential into the panorama of the latest art.



## A QUEST FOR TEN YEARS

Jacek MALACKI

Hartwig, Robotowski, Hilgemann, Dlubak, Kwiek, Potocka, Boulez, Mikołajczyk, and Pruszkowski are only some of the names of over one hundred artists who have exhibited their

works at the Mala Galeria. In our attempt to find the common denominator of all these works, we should reach out for the concept of analysis. In the case of the Mala Galeria, we have had several types of analysis, linked with the process of seeing, chemical/optical technology, the composition of an image, social/sociological analysis, the analysis of art theory/video Conceptualism, and that of the artist's inner experience.

To a much greater degree than classical arts, sculpture, painting and architecture, photography has partaken of the development of contemporary art techniques such as film, video, television, happenings, performances, and other fields such as sound recording and communication, photography has fed on knowledge from the visual and mental reality surrounding it. Hence its apparent non-homogeneity, its resistance to being forced back into classical forms of expression. Janusz BAKOWSKI, whose exhibition inaugurated the gallery's activity ten years ago, says: "With today's techniques, everyone can take a superb photograph. This is not possible in painting, sculpture and music". Aware of this fact, artists practicing photography are all the more induced to carry on research based on system vision and analysis rather than on isolated

images of the surrounding world.

Photographers who have given up realism have done so on the grounds that contemporary societies have been portrayed to such an excess that the photographer's task now is to investigate into the chaotic multitude of meanings rather than presenting the external forms of daily life.

A search for values, an inseparable element of creativeness, has often led to aesthetically striking situations transforming the art of photography into an act of exploration. This is where contemporary photography — also in photography presented at the Mala Galeria — differs from classical photography, which draws on the aesthetics of painting, photographic documents and photo-reportage. Because of this difference, in addition to photographs-art objects, there are also photographs-signs. According to TatarKIEWICZ, the functioning of art as a language depends on signs as well as objects. This is, generally speaking, the purpose of the research and analyses of which I have spoken above. Our goal is to construct photography as a language. The number of possibilities is infinite. We shall have access to some, thanks to the operation of the Mala Galeria.



## WALDEMAR PETRYK

Waldemar PETRYK

The past has left us a troublesome legacy, a countless number of objects of art. The best we have been able to do was to date them all and classify only the titled, that is classified, ones. The art of the earliest ages is better off, for nobody in his right mind claims he understands even a bit of it. As we look in the later approaches, the situation becomes even graver. The category of understanding becomes another stumbling block of art. It is not so long ago, that traveling circuses were full of magicians who explained the most knotty problems with the use of a few hackneyed and trite terms. In this verbal rope-dancing they worked themselves into such a frenzy that they failed to notice that their bored audience had already left the circus. So they got offended with their silly audience and rumor has it that they gather in seclusion and explain the great problems to each other.

We use the same words "artist", "art", to describe the achievements of thirty thousand years, and so we take for granted that art is identical. We see art as a collective unconscious-

ness and as such it is free of all limits. The same symbols came and come into being irrespective of time and place, while if we try to subordinate it to different externals it dwells and dies. What happens when a new world of art is being created, happens at exactly the same time and simultaneously in all the works of art preceding it. No artist can find his absolute motive just in himself — he must be placed in the long line of the dead. But in spite of that we turned the artists of the earliest ages into some strange creatures living only on meat and magic. All other human problems such as life, love, freedom, we reserved exclusively to ourselves. We try to prompt them, to adjust everything that does not suit their image we ourselves created. We must accept the axiom that the artist was able to do everything he wanted to do and that he did not do only what he did not care about. This statement holds true also in the case of all provincial art, both ancient and contemporary. Although it seems that there are people who believe in the existence of the Centre of Art and in the standard metre kept in its vaults, yet only very rarely the events — and not only of

an artistic nature — that with time turn out to be of importance to the world, take place in the capital-centre. Nine times out of ten somewhere out-of-the-way, far away from the fashionable world some unimportant people carry on with their work which to the fashionable world — if only it knew about it — would seem strange perhaps, but in any case unimportant. "Worldliness" and "timelessness" are notions created for insignificant people lost in the jungle of culture by others just as lost and insignificant but gifted with the features most indispensable to every artist: self-confidence and impudence. It is this fever that demands that everything authentic should be destroyed and replaced with shoddy imitations of art, that is to say with art being centrally controlled. This manipulation is of even bigger profit for it takes the responsibility for the work off the artist and lays it on the Centre. Every day we meet new groups of creators of the most modern art and see dancing with abandon to the joyful descent of the artists-critics. And only very few of them will ever notice that they have not landed in the place they dreamt about, that the gorgeous flowers are made of paper and the-glaring sun of tinfoil. If you happen to meet them, don't even try to stop them.





## THE TRUTH ABOUT GALLERY KALYPSO

Waldemar PETRYK

The successive period of Gallery Kalypso activity (1983-1986) finished as I had been kicked out of my flat. The possibility of managing in an empty apartment was the necessary clause to continue ideas of Kalypso Gallery. After 1986, the lack of a permanent space turned out to be a wholesome medium for Gallery Kalypso ideas thrive on.

This short period enabled us to realize our understanding of art. An understanding which throws away all those things, which grow over a piece of art as an excrescence until it is dead. I mean: trade, advertisement, snobbism. It is a smoke, which has already asphyxiated a lot of similar initiatives. It is only a coincidence that we have avoided such a fate. Otherwise Kalypso Gallery could be acknowledged along with the rest of them; fortunately, everything has gone in a different way: Gallery Kalypso has nothing and especially, has no chance to become "le salon".

Eclecticism and decadence — not "le salon"!

Every next show made by or in Kalypso Gallery is from another basket.

Another danger I can see: these are art groups — but in practice, destruction groups.

The group is guided by its own logic of decay. Artists are afraid of refusal. They start to fight against each other. Day by day they give up this, what is incomparable. You can make a herd, or its leader, guilty for your own unfulfillment. Fortunately, Kalypso Gallery did not become an art group. Such a possibility did not occur. Because of these facts:

Gallery Kalypso does not exist  
 Gallery Kalypso is indescribable  
 Gallery Kalypso is an unimportant phenomenon  
 Gallery Kalypso takes all possibilities into account.

As a matter of fact, Kalypso is about 30 000-40 000 years old, all the words written above are really uninteresting for Kalypso.

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 Warsaw, June 5th, 1988.

## DAS ZIEL

Joanna CZERWINSKA

One by one all together from any distance towards the target/thin, transparent material for instance antiseptic gauze hanging in the space we throw: any sharp pointed or heavy

objects for instance: knives, scissors, stones... then or at the same time we throw: any light or flying objects for instance paper birds to the moment of being tired, bored, or even longer.



## NET

Joanna CZERWINSKA

That which exists and that which I am creating is an entirety. I don't presage the past, I don't take in the future. My Now is without beginning and without end. It's a part. The entirety is finite and simultaneously infinite. It's for all and for myself. The entirety is dynamic, it changes depending on my activities. I take in an infinite number of elements which may be substituted. Books, dregs, installations, performance art convertible parts. They are equivalent.

Books: They reflect my current interests, meditations, desires and dislikes as well as they are my note-books, a shorthand of my activity possibilities; they are simultaneously fun.

Dregs: They are like table and chair, they're real and useful objects. They too have become authentic although a palimpsest — because of economic zeascushistorical record with some layers — a record of my work at the table or on the floor. As those they could come into existence only on the plane and in my opinion, they bring back the possibility of coming into existence an artistic picture on it. Not necessarily must the plane be changed from a level to a vertical one.

All I do creates a net. Books and dregs are some of its threads.

I hope to close the net perhaps but perhaps to hang it up.





Alina Anka KOWALSKA

**Studio Dzienkanka, Warsaw, April 1985:** Spatial arrangement entitled *Man is God's Joke Created to Infuriate Woman*; I change a white area into a crazy room. I hang a mass of red bows on the walls, ceilings, the window, the floor and a free standing chair. One can spend about 20 minutes in this room, then one gets a headache.

**Remont Workshop, Warsaw, June 1985:** Performances *Alienation of frustration*. Costume, upper half, symbol of armour; lower half, typically female, narrow black skirt, black stockings, high heels. I begin to build a tent from branches. I reject any help. The woman-knight alone makes a home. The home, symbol of intimacy, but also of alienation, closure and creation. Then I place red bows around the house in a circle. Marking off the boundaries. Boundaries for others, and in some sense boundaries for myself. I enter the house. The position I find myself in becomes tiring and inconvenient. I stay there as long as my aching legs can stand it. I set up the tent. Freedom. I collect the bows and pin them on the men. They are my boundaries and I am theirs.

**Melkweg, Amsterdam, August 1987:** Performance *Fourth Incarnation of Anka K.* On the wall appears a slide, an abstract landscape. I stand face to the wall with raised arms. I describe a circle clockwise. A loudspeaker gives forth music and text *You are not the one I took you for, stop*. On the wall appears a slide with bows. From the loudspeaker comes the sound of breaking dishes and glass at short intervals, and the text *"You are not the one you should be"*. During this time I put on rubber gloves and paint my fingernails with red lacquer. Stop.

The sound of a beating heart mounts. I stand by the wall and begin to paint the bow with a red spray. The text is heard *"You are not the one I wanted you to be"*. Stop. I lie down on the blank folio. A wonderful kind of mysterious music is heard. I begin to fold myself into the folio; the text is *"You are not the one whom I would like you to be"*. I wind myself with the folio completely into a black ball.

**Park of Culture in Amsterdam, August 1987,** Installation: A large area of glass is covered with white-and-red bows. When the public draws near, a very loud heartbeat is heard. Everybody stands still in expectation. This lasts a few minutes. The heartbeat stops. The people go away.



## IMPROBABLE PEREGRINATIONS OF GALLERY OF ACTIONS

Jacek DRABIK

There is a district in Warsaw which was built rather promptly and much unreasonably. Over 100 000 people live there in ugly, standardized houses. The district's architecture makes its inhabitants unable to integrate. And its insufficient infrastructure effectively drowns the short moments described by sociologists as "leisure time". It is in this ugly, unreasonable, shattered and exhausted area that the Gallery of Actions is based.

Time is one of the possible axes of culture/art analysis. Time sets forth a framework for acts of rejection or continuation. It gives a chance for conscious choice. It gives way to proposal-polemic relations. It sets up institutions. It organizes awareness. It is essential to experience, and continuously reminds us that art is a process rather than a state. The two-year experience of the Gallery of Actions makes it possible to initially evaluate its place in the process.

There are generations, trends, schools, local milieux, groups; in other words there are teams glued together by a convergent or homogeneous relation to creation. Such teams strive for support from already existent frameworks or they set up new instruments of promotion of their work. Galleries were and are one of such traditional instruments. They create a focus that is closely shared by at least a few. Through galleries the sum of activities of several persons can be contained within a clear trend.

The Gallery of Actions is not affiliated to any team of authors. Thus, the presented authors take the risk of being present in a "non-ascribed-to" place while the risk for the Gallery stems from

the uncertainty regarding to what extent another proposal will be an individual, personal, different statement. Ideally, the Gallery seeks for consistent attitudes. Practically, to err happens to give satisfaction.

The Gallery's experience confirms that it is worthwhile to search only between the ideal and the uncertain.

Civilization brought fire, the wheel, semiconductors, TV, bide democracy and dreams. Unification, war, environmental problems, totalitarianism, stress, etc. come as its shadows. News media, posters, reportages, street demonstrations are a "direct" description-response to the whole mess. Art has the wonderful right to indirect, ambiguous references. The church of experimental art excels in it. The two extremes of responding to the world are obviously inseparably bound together. This is only a matter of accents and of a role played in a given time in the social theatre.

The Gallery of Actions is naturally connected with a private recognition of the world. However, at the same time it remembers the fever of the street, the multiple, the supra-individual. It only wants to present the typical through individual, and perhaps most extremely personal, responses, to give the unique evidence of the social and general.

These few remarks may fail to present properly and systematically the Gallery's program. They are rather postcards from a peregrination to which the Gallery invites all who demand the improbable.