Pologne (English translation) : To take position

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The world in which we live is becoming more and more a global village of mutual dependences. 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 out 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 people's activities, without a possibility to defend ourselves.

Theories or questions on culture and economy. Art today is caught between the influences of two needs: the needs of culture and the needs of society. From the moment the modern industrial society came into being, there were two orders of everything — a) a representation of the idea of a change, and b) a representation of this order the justification of its permanence values... If we look 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 and ideological pressure, to the recognition of its fundamental value that is far from optimism, to Phillipe SOLLERS' "une cuirasse solitaire", 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... Art together with its new cultural function creates 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 appearances of a pseudo-universal system created by institutions of the commercialized Art World... This fact becomes a sign that communicates something to someone, a message that can be accepted. Nothing is lost but he 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 by dichotomies... 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-ordred forever and for everthing. Passing time is a medium transporting the once established order to the future. History modifies past experiences according to different circumstances, but without changing the meaning of established once and for all. Words refer to things that are. Culture, 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 romanization 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 kept alive in 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 everyday become obsolete, 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 no longer the fundamental value of art that is at stake, it is the artist's motive to which art as a means of communication articulates itself, a picture, an interpretation. Next to what to be told there reveals itself how it is to be said 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 find answers to those questions: Are we in the beginning of a new era? Do we leave the world of spirit? What is the new quality of our art and culture? 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 implicit motif 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 is filled with culture and art. 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, an idea of constant change and exchange for an event in history, which the avant-garde idea of constant progress, being at the same time the ideal 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 — without touching the border of another culture, without reaching; and it is not possible to constantly increase the speed of changes of the material world that one can change the patterns of culture correspondingly. Because time is just like matter while changing in its development, we are not able to hide underneath anything. The fore of historical events, in the avant-garde.

The solution of the problem put forward by the culture causes the development of economy at the same time and also JOYCE'S finnegans Wake is perceived as a symptom of a new era. The same time that has been eliminated? The value of a thing that is the subject of exchange is relative. The higher the level of relativization, the greater is the chance to exchange. The potentialities of exchange are greater the more participants of exchange increases; the more diverse and the more temporary our needs and desires, the more frequent we change them, and the easier it is to exchange things, whose characteristics are not constant and can change in relation to 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 developed if it is possible, and by this 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 become equalized and when the market is supplied, then economy has to increase the domain of its functioning by subordinating spheres which have not been seized before. 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 points 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 of constant values by the constant ones which leads to gradual liquidation. The aim of economy is not to satisfy desires and desires — if that were so, the annihilating that arises 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 give 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, it is not posted in the air for a moment, then it will be impossible to take it and we are able to leave it and to replace it with something else at every 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 new expressionism. It becomes identified with artistic value. 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 sold as an article of trade but also becomes a sign 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? It is an impression, expression that attracts attention. Doesn’t the simulated speed of changes blur the reality that exists for six in the simulacrum? In what we quote? Is it a thing that does not exist or a thing that 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. There are two separate spheres of social life, but two different ways of approaching reality.

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The economic comprehension of reality forces us to approach reality in terms of culture. The same reasoning is possible in the economic comprehension of culture. Culture causes the development of economy at the same time. Winners are always right, economy ceases to be merely a method of effective management of the material world. We are seized with its charm for a moment, we do not become attached to it and we are able to look at it as an isolated object. When entering into the aware as to 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 developed if it is possible, and by this restricts it and if it increases the number of participants of exchange to the highest degree and frequency of exchange.

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In all investigated cultures the felt-motif 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, ethical 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?

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

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.

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.

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

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

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

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.

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.
A two-day "marathon" of actions, performances, installations and shows, called Imagination Test, took place in and around the Warsaw Gallery Dzilalan/Gallery of Actions in the Ursynow-Inniel 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 serigraphy of a bolt of lightning with many ramifications. The serigraphs were arranged in rows of different colors: red, yellow, blue, white 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 BERYDZSAK'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 leaves 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 beaten floor into bread. Her action made one think of work and holiday, life and growth, the feminine: woman the feeder, earth and food. Outside the gallery, Maciej STYPOŁKOWSKI 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 Spot, Andrej DUDEK-DÜBER, with a pair of boots from his hippie period in front of him, was meditated in a lotus position or crossed amongst 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 lay-out of geological strata was the most beautiful and where the rope left an impression. The next stage was an unpolluted meadow, cornfield, 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.

Pawel 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 Dzilalan includes the organization of nationwide surveys of ephemeral art.
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/physical technology, the com-
position of an image, etc. We are now trying to
analyze the art theory/video Conceptualism, and
that of the artist's inner experience.

To a much greater degree than classical arts,
sculpture, painting and architecture, photogra-
phy has partaken of the development of contempo-
rary art techniques such as film, video, televi-
sion, 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 ex-
pression. 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 ex-
cess that the photographer's task now is to investiga-
to 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 strik-
ing situations transforming the art of photogra-
phy into an act of exploration. This is where
contemporary photography — also in photogra-
phy presented at the Mala Galeria — differs from
classical photography, which draws on the
number of possible meanings in the case of all provincial art, both ancient and
contemporary. Although it seems that there are
dreamt about, that the gorgeous flowers are
not only of the names of over one hundred artists who have exhibited their
prized. And only very few of them will ever notice
them.

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 sit-
uation becomes even graver. The category of
understanding becomes another slumbering block
of art. It is not so long ago, that travelling charis
tes 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 prob-
lems 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 the concept of analysis,
linked to different externals it dwarfs and dies. What
happens when a new world of art is being crea-
ted, 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
eclusively to ourselves. We try to prompt them,
to adjust everything that does not suit their
image we ourselves created. We must accept the
paradox 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. "World-
liness" and "timelessness" are notions created
for insignificant people lost in the jungle of
their work which to the fashionable world
— long at lost and insignificant. "World-
tional should be destroyed and replaced with
shoddy imitations of art, that is to say with art
itsy-witsy in the place of the features most indispensable to
every artist: self-confidence and impudence. It is
this fever that demands that everything au-
thetic should be destroyed and replaced with
shoddy imitations of art, that is to say with art
being centrally controlled. This manipulation
of even bigger profit for it takes the responsi-
bility 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 standing
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 Unfill. 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 indestructible
Gallery Kalypso is an important 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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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 circumstances; as economic circumstances influence each other, a record of my work at the table or on the floor. As these 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.

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Improbable Peregrinations of Gallery of Actions

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 milieus, groups; in other words there are teams glued together by a convergent or homogenous 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 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.

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" 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, hide democracy and dreams. Unification, wars, 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 inseparable 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 lever of the street, the multiple, the supraindividual. 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 programme. They are rather postcards from a peregrination to which the Gallery invites all who demand the improbable.