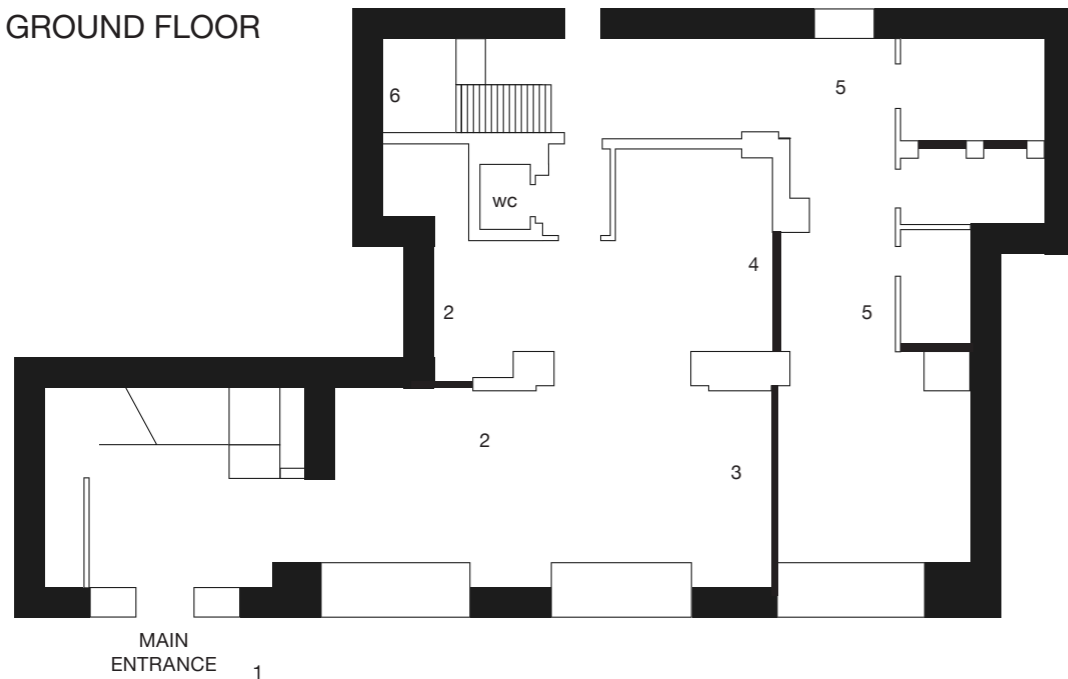
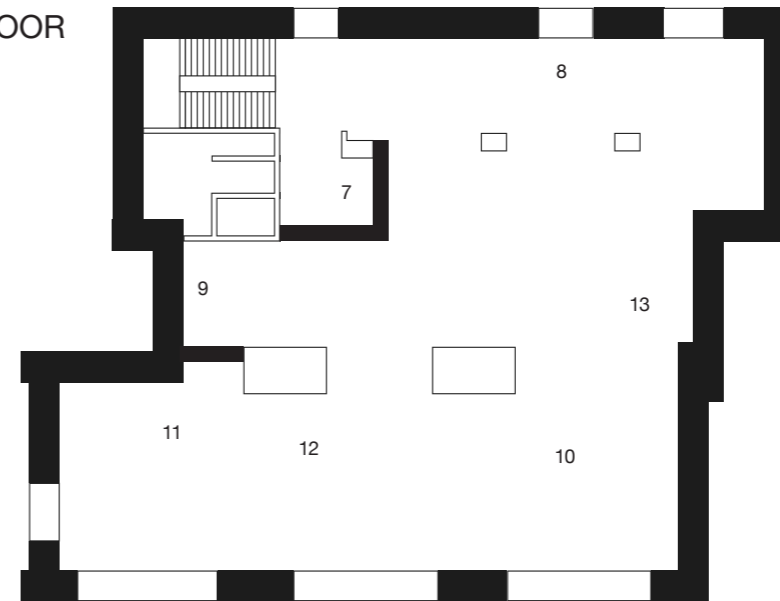


GROUND FLOOR



FIRST FLOOR



GROUND FLOOR

1. MARIA TOBOŁA, *Schadenfreude* (2017-2018)

In an iconic television game show of the late 90s., *Idź na całość* (Polish version of *Let's Make a Deal*), one of the consolation prizes was a yearly stock of a Monosodium glutamate-based seasoning with an intense if limited choice of flavours. In her installation, Maria Toboła (b. 1987), interested in the social and cultural dimension of food and ambitions of the new middle class, treats the show as an illustration of broader processes occurring after 1989 and failed hopes of the economic transformation.

The game show in which contestants could only win by risking everything reflects the spirit of the system governed by the compulsion to be ready to take the risk, leave your comfort zone and make sacrifices for your career. Neoliberalism awards merit and punishes ineffectiveness, perceives competition as a determining factor of interpersonal relationships and defines citizens as consumers whose freedom is best exercised by buying and selling. In a society where "solidarity" is the name of a confectionery manufacturer, fiercely promoted healthy competition easily morphs into schadenfreude.

2. ALEKA POLIS, *The Vistula idol* (2006-2007)

Property of: collection of Zachęta Sztuki Współczesnej in Szczecin

The baluster resembles a human figure with two faces turned in opposite directions, and thus evokes the Roman god Janus, the symbol of power. Two Janus-like faces look into the past and into the future, and reflect Polish divided society. Aleka Polis (b. 1974) alludes in her work to *Profilo continuo del Duce*, a piece by Renato Bertelli, Italian sacral futurist, which was patented on 26 June 1933 and mass produced, enjoying a huge commercial success, and finding its way to desks across the entire Italy and beyond. A series of eight photographs of the Idol taken in various locations in and around Warsaw complete the work.

3. JAROSŁAW KOZŁOWSKI, *Everything Buzzes Apart From What Bubbles* (2012/2018)

Courtesy of Fundacja Profile

The work from a doyen of the Polish conceptual art, Jarosław Kozłowski (b. 1945), fits squarely in the artist's several

decades long interest in the language and its status in relation to reality. In works created in the 70s and 80s as a result of the observations of censorship language and the newspaper of the Polish People's Republic, the artist pondered the phenomenon of language as a means of communication. Through the use of words he reclaimed public space, and he deconstructed and problematised relationships between the image and the word.

Once again, Kozłowski deals with language in a version of the piece *Everything Buzzes Apart From What Bubbles*, arranged especially for this exhibition, in which droning words glide over light display boards. The main focus of his interest is the issue of buzz and overproduction of the content broadcasted by the media. Similarly to the industrial revolution, which apart from progress brought about the degradation of the natural environment and air pollution, the information revolution alongside the omnipresence and universality of information technologies led to the emergence of the information smog. The quantitative problem of the excess and multitude of information sources goes hand in hand with the low substantive quality of the content or the reliability of information, as well as the oversaturation of online resources with false content used as a tool of political conflict.

4. KATARZYNA GÓRNA and JAKUB MAJMUREK, *The Archaeology of Utopia* (2012)

Property of: collection of Zachęta Sztuki Współczesnej in Szczecin

The project consists of a sculpture and a two-channel video projection featuring edited found footage. The subject of both parts of the installation is exploring visual codes of participation developed by the 20th century cinema. In particular, by two of its traditions which created the most vivid images of involvement, participation, group and political communitarianism. So, on the one hand it is Hollywood (from the classic era of the 1930s until today), on the other hand – the social realist cinema (feature films and documentaries), especially those produced in the USSR.

Katarzyna Górna (b. 1968) and Jakub Majmurek (b. 1982) juxtapose two visual codes developed within two very strong "civic religions," seemingly one another's polar opposites, standing on the two sides of the Cold War. This juxtaposition aims at analysing certain correspondences, affinities (deliberate and not) between these two visual codes. Creating a meeting space of utopian sparks in them both: looking into visions of the future, time, progress, community, individual to which they subscribe. And revealing authoritarian structures

similar in both cases. In the situation after the collapse of the socialist project in Eastern Europe and a deep crisis of the American project, such an action has in equal measure archaeological and utopian dimensions.

In the part of the installation involving the found footage, two screens are displaying material edited from pieces of Hollywood movies and social realist productions: social realism and Hollywood. The sculpture which accompanies them presents a kind of an "ideal type" of two figures of viewer-citizens created by these two visual traditions, holding out a hand to each other – as two objects in a museum, constituting the testimony of the past and also as a sign of the chance to reopen the utopian imagination.

5. SZABOLCS KISSPÁL, *From Fake Mountains to Faith (Hungarian Trilogy)* (2012-2015)

The project of Szabolcs KissPál (b. 1967) consists of two projections of quasi-documentaries and pseudo-museum collection of archaeological finds. Through interpretation and narrative-building, KissPál explores the anatomy and symbolic construction of the Hungarian "non-liberal democracy" – based on the national trauma, elements of pagan beliefs and foundations of national myths.

The Treaty of Trianon signed after the First World War, which significantly reduced the surface of Hungary and left millions of Hungarians left outside its borders, a hundred years later still inspires strong emotions, and the promise of restoring the Great Hungary is one of the pillars of the nationalist propaganda. Currently, Turanism makes a comeback as well – a nationalist political religion, according to which Hungarians originate from Central Asia and are related to Altaic people. This view played an important part in the first half of the 20th century, and it is now promoted by nationalist parties. Combining historical facts and archival materials with a fictional narrative, the film *Amorous Geography* (2012) focuses on building an ethnic landscape in the context of not only national, but also European history, together with its racist and colonial burden. At the centre of *The Rise of a Fallen Feather* (2016), there is a Turul – a mythical bird of prey, the symbol of Hungary and its lost part – Transylvania. The last part, *The Chasm Records* (2016), is a display of a collection of historical artefacts and relics from the interwar period which allude to the formation of the national identity and its contemporary manifestations.

The artist emphasises that the project does not only present Hungarian history, but it is rather a case study representative for global processes and leading political rhetoric. In many

European countries we can observe emerging political religions of the extreme right, deeply rooted in local, neopagan traditions and promoting Euroscepticism. They all use similar logic in constructing the past, which can be summarised in the slogan "make ... great again".

6. JOZEF MRVA JR., *Knot Capital* (2017); *Rihanna – Work ft. Drake (8h Wageslave Megamixxx)* (2016)

Knot Capital is a part of a broader artistic project authored by Jozef Mrva (b. 1988), inspired by the knot theory – closed loops arranged in three-dimensional space, which also explored their visual and semiotic potential. In the piece featured in the exhibition, lotto balls are rolling through a knotted structure. Corporate media ceaselessly feed their audience news about the success waiting for them just around the corner, and telling them everyone can join the elite. One of the mechanisms of social control in plutocracy is a practically unwinnable lottery – officially presented as an expression of the inclusive character of the system. It remains a secret why people agree to the injustice of the system which relies on increasing the capital possessed by an increasingly small group of people. One of the reasons can be hope – the great stabiliser of social unrest.

FIRST FLOOR

7. ADELINA CIMOCHOWICZ, *Natural State* (2018)

Adelina Cimochowicz (b. 1992) analyses liminal emotional states and nervous crises using the medium of video and photography. The narrative of the presented work consists of statements from three women – their testimonies of living with a sense of anxiety and threat caused by their housing and economic circumstances. Trance-like movement and a subtle stream of words trickling from the speakers normalise and add an aesthetic quality to the situation of constant tension. Emotional and economic insecurity is a state and a shared experience of these women (victim of reprivatisation, single mother, in debt), as well as thousands of other "working poor". In the state of tension in which they live, the right to an apartment becomes an unattainable luxury, the systemic pathology – their everyday reality and the chronic emotional crisis – the norm: *constant terror of the worst kind runs my life, and it can only get worse.*

8. ODILE BERNARD SCHRÖDER, works from the series *Revolution-Revelation* (2017-2018)

Courtesy of the Pola Magnetyczne gallery

The starting point for the works of Odile Bernard Schröder (b. 1962) are visual materials from the French presidential campaign of 2017. The artist juxtaposes images of skirmishes of protesters with the law enforcement, the documentation of the events in the campaign, screenshots of televised debates and photos of defaced election posters. She diligently analyses all materials in terms of their content and form, and then processes them using analogue photographic methods, obtaining compositions on the verge of documentary and abstraction, reportage and dreamlike visions. Scenes created by OBS – in which politicians are transformed into dark creatures, television anchors to witches privy to mysterious knowledge and pollsters become necromancers contacting the world beyond – reflect the character and style in which politics is currently done. Instead of reforms or modernisations, populists on both sides of the political scene place negation above constructive skills. A realistic, substantive programme is replaced with demagoguery, wishful and magical thinking. Rituals, exorcisms, spells and symbolic gestures of parting with the past and cutting off from one's opponents become more important than actual actions. However, this magical or ritual character of politics looks a bit different in the Polish context, where the presence of priests in the public life and constant references to metaphysical powers is nothing new.

9. ANNA BAUMGART, *Franciszka Wróbla bunt jest niepewny* (2015)

The project of Anna Baumgart (b. 1966) is a contemporary look at the problem of the young unemployed. Documenting an encounter with a jobless young man, the artist alludes to a 1967 documentary film *A Year in the Life of Franek W.* by Kazimierz Karabasz. His protagonist was Franek Wróbel, a twenty-year-old from a small village, entering adulthood in the harsh reality of the Communist Poland in the 1960s. In search for a job, he found himself in the Voluntary Labour Corps in Chorzów where his story begins. Filmmakers accompanied the young man for a year, watching closely all aspects of his life, registering vocational courses connected to the job search, his subsequent work, holidays in the family home and even his spare time. Through a long and patient work with an inexperienced actor, Karabasz created an objective portrait of a young man of that time, who found himself in the heart of the Silesian agglomeration.

Anna Baumgart’s film with a working title *Franciszek Wróbel’s rebellion is uncertain* attempts – from the perspective of a person entering the adult life – to answer the question: how much changed within the last few decades? What ambitions and opportunities twenty-year-olds of today have? Does the rebellion, typical for the young generation, help them to operate in the current reality? And what are the realities of the young unemployed and a systemic solution for them?

10. MONIKA SZPENER, *Pokémon* (2016-2018)

Monika Szpener’s *Pokémon* is an illustration of show politics, post-political thinking and understanding politics as a performance. The artist created sculptures of Donald Trump, Jarosław Kaczyński, Vladimir Putin or Angela Merkel transformed into fictional creatures from a video game (pocket monsters) with varying powers. In the times of the deficit of the involvement in social issues, the interest in political questions, in what is public, often comes down to commenting behaviour or unfortunate statements made by actors of the political spectacle, making memes instead of doing politics. Animalistic representation of strong actors of politics corresponds with a long tradition of zoomorphic representations of rulers, from the Mannerist *bizarre* to satirical television programmes such as the *Polish Zoo*. The grotesque presentation of the ruler deprives them of the terror of power, and through humour, it saves from getting stuck in the social hell.

11. DITTE EJLERSKOV, *I Splurge Myself* (2017); *Ass Grab Fuzz* (2018); *My Bajan Letters* (2016)

It all began long ago with an email from a scammer from Barbados. I replied, and an enthusiastic correspondence unfolded. Before our dialogue came to an end, Fergal the scammer had, on my request, travelled across the island to document Bajan pop star Rihanna’s home – writes Ditte Ejlerskov (b. 1982) about her work. The publication and the film are the record of her contact with an online conman, their relationship, as well as the artist’s solitary trip to Barbados. She alludes to the aesthetics of tacky representations of tropical landscapes and problematises the position of a European painter idolizing the media image of a distant island. Ejlerskov’s project combines private history with the story about a relationship in the Internet age, and about the universal feeling of disappointment that arrives when projection meets reality.

12. KAROLINA MEŁNICKA, Z****® (2018)

I’m not your typical fitness instructor. I am ZIN – this is how members of the Zumba Instructor Network, licenced teachers of aerobics with elements of Latin dances, introduce themselves. This global phenomenon is analysed in the work of Karolina Mełnicka (b. 1988). Zumba – a type of physical activity, a registered trademark, and a cult and lifestyle for some people, combines inclusiveness with a transnational community: anyone can be ZIN, but teaching, using the music and special sportswear requires a membership and monthly fees. A spectacular success of Zumba (12 million participants each month) results partly from its availability, democratization and, the most importantly, the opportunity to earn money and climb up the organisational pyramid. These rules are similar to those used in companies relying on multi-level marketing – Herbalife, Amway or Avon – which offer quasi-religious experience of the personal involvement in building the brand and a better, beautiful, healthy and rich world, restoring the balance between the career and the wallet on one side and caring for physical and spiritual development on the other.

13. ALEKSANDRA SKA, *I’m fucking angry* (2018)

The piece by Aleksandra Ska (b. 1975) is a manifesto of the participant of women’s protests and black marches, who rebels against taking away her reproductive or employee rights. For the “Manifa” feminist march in Poznań in 2018, the artist created a looped emblem painted on a large shawl which she wore during the protest, appropriating, in a way, male rituals connected to reserivist leaving the service. The shawl lived on, because after the march, people who identified with the protest signed their names on it. Aneta Szyłak (curator of the festival Inspiracje where the work was presented) wrote: *Ska transformed a graphic sign she had previously created into an opalescent, three-dimensional*

sculpture of female rage, coiling in anger like a viper. Strong, looping, billowing power accumulates gigantic energy which seems to be ready for immediate mobilization and action. With its shining arms, the piece outlines the field of insufferable oppression and the accompanying constant tension. The tension of submission which will finally transform into the mobilisation to cast off its yoke. [...] The feminist voice of anger lands, in its basic graphic form, more in the field of quasi-anonymous, post-artistic practices; it would fit on a sticker, t-shirt or a poster. In the current form, it is tested anew in the field of art as an object with the status of a sculpture. From the street it returns to the gallery, it seems to be a lively but abstract form which only in close-up reveals its angry face. The back and forth movement of this idea between the field of art and post-art reminds us how important visual competences of female and male artists are for the political combat.

BASEMENT

14. NAGROBKI, *Work progress* (2017-2018), *Foray* (2017)

Nagrobki – a musical group co-created by Maciej Salamon and Adam Witkowski, in recent years has become one of the most important fixtures on the Polish music scene. They operate successfully both at art shows and in theatre. The visual side of the band’s work manifests through obsessive references to the theme and iconography of death, modern *vanitas* and Thanatotic-funeral design. In their video works, sculptures, posters, album covers or T-shirts. But they are not just accessories to the music – they rather showcase conscious relationships between works and strongly emphasise the paradoxical vitality of death. The band sometimes define their activities as necro-polo (in reference to another genre of Polish music). This is yet another facet of the Polish Thanatos topos. However, the art of Nagrobki transcends the cabaret convention. As Francis Picabia once wrote in a *Cannibalistic Manifesto*: „Death is a serious business”. Black humour on which Nagrobki heavily rely has, after all, a powerful existential dimension, and their Dadaist, low budget DIY strategy reveals the fragility and contingency of fate. The music video Foray was based on the Telewizja Gdańsk footage of riots initiated by the populist political party Self-Defence in Nowy Dwór Gdański in 1999. The music was created for the play *A word about Jakób S.* directed by Michał Kmiecik. While the map entitled Work progress, with marked locations of the shows Nagrobki played, on the table in the shape of a broken outline of Poland, can refer to the necro-politics done in a populist manner on the coffins of old political concepts, colonising with “our” dead, or a country occupied by Catholicism.

15. DÓRA MAURER, *What Can One Do with a Cobble Stone?* (1971)
Property of: MOCAK Museum of Contemporary Art in Krakow

In the pictures documenting her performance, Dóra Maurer (b. 1937) makes a series of poetic gestures using a cobble stone – an item recognisable from our everyday life, the motif of conceptual art and at the same time, a symbol of riots and social rebellion. Maurer, one of the most prominent figures of the Hungarian neo-avantgarde, treats the object like a baby: she holds, caresses or kisses the stone, just to throw it later far away from her, indicating the ambivalence of their relationship. Apart from feminist interpretations related to the role of a woman and a mother, the piece has political connotations as well, alluding to the nature of social movements, protest and civil disobedience. Referring to the overlooked revolution of 1956 or 1968. Edit András notes that the artist’s actions can be read as reclaiming tenderness and sensitivity which are usually pushed to the margin of male, military resistance movements. Maurer’s gestures bring to mind dreams and positive emotions which push people to go out on the streets, promising comfort, dignity and respect.

16. ŁUKASZ SUROWIEC, *The Waiting Room* (2013/2015)

Works of Łukasz Surowiec (b. 1985) can be perceived in many dimensions, although they often possess also a populist undertone, by distinguishing the menacing “elite” and the aggrieved “people.” The presented piece is a film collage from a part of the exhibition *Dziady* in the Bunkier Sztuki gallery in Krakow. The exhibition consisted, among others, of a performative space,

accessible 24 hours a day (in the basement of the gallery). The space, called the Waiting Room, has been handed over to “beggars, weirdos and those living their life as a performance”, with the rules of the “social contract” displayed on its walls. The Waiting Room was very soon adopted by the Krakow homeless who turned out to be the most enterprising group.

17. KWIEKULIK, *School* (1971)

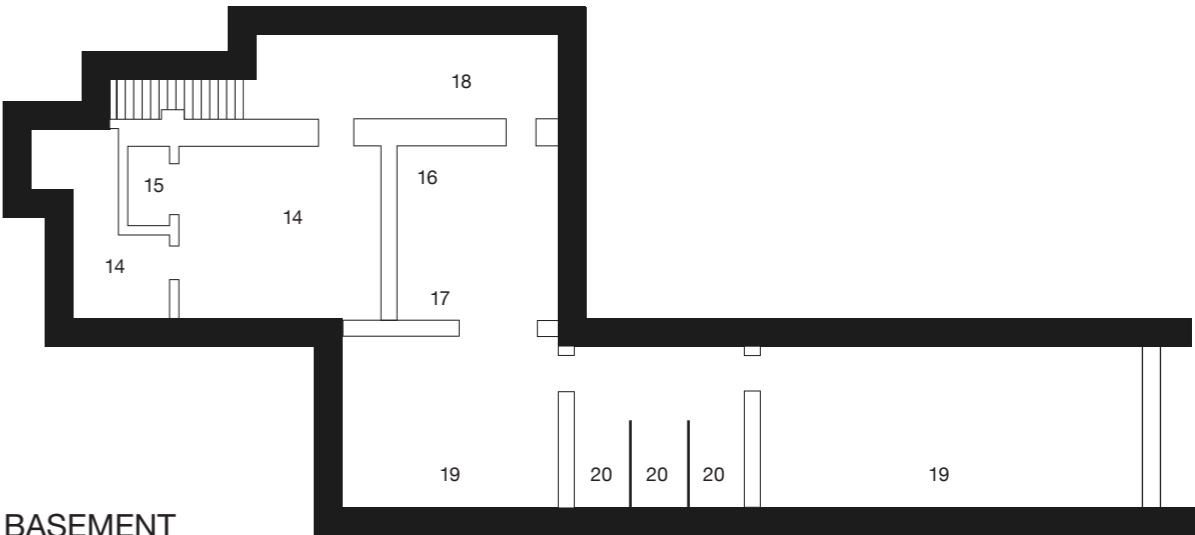
An excerpt of the film *Open Form* made in the earliest period of the cooperation between Zofia Kulik (b. 1947) and Przemysław Kwiek (b. 1945). Based on the premises of Hansen’s Open Form, artists arranged actions that directly influenced society and negotiated norms acceptable within it. “Provoking with a camera” consisted of intruding in a situation as found, and start filming people, thus affecting their behaviour. In the episode featured in the exhibition the method was used on high school youth. Students, encouraged by the presence of the camera, started a rebellion during which they painted teacher’s nicknames on a paper sheet and then burned it in a bonfire lit in the middle of the classroom. Creating a space unhindered by the tyranny of regulations, where no rules apply, was an action ahead of both the political reality of the time and the language of art contemporaneous to the artists. The film can be an example of activities performed by artists-populists who, in their art, give agency to protagonists, providing for them an opportunity to act, and making – even for a moment – a 180-degree turn of accepted power relationships.

18. JIŘÍ ŽÁK, *Shattered Epistemologist* (2017)

Jiří Žák (b 1989) uses the medium of video-essay, setting his works in the context of issues concerning information distribution, the language of media and constructs of “truth” and “post-truth.” In the work featured in the exhibition, empty spaces of an anonymous building are the scene for a choreographer and dancer Meïmouna Coffi. The choreography inspired by gestures used for operating touchscreen electronic devices is combined with a rhythmic sound and sequences of political slogans and comments borrowed from the media. Screens and mobile apps require constant attention, while capturing it for a shorter time than traditional media, which contributes to the circulation of inaccurate information and to misinformation. Multiple superimposed layers of the visual collage – sequences of movements, words and abstract images – with each passing minute turn the attractive form of the film, resembling a music video, into something increasingly more disturbing. Directions in space become mixed up, just like the displayed phrases and terms, creating a situation typical for the information revolution where meanings shift and become worn down.

19. JOANNA RAJKOWSKA, *Suiciders* (2018)

In her latest project, Joanna Rajkowska (b. 1968) portrays women who committed suicide, handing over her own body to them. The work is equally a response to how easily judgments are passed in a black and white world. In the words of the artist, the essence of the work is (...) *a feeling of inability. It concerns the inability to feel true empathy, the inability to understand a woman (...) who attempts to destroy herself, at the same time terminating the lives of others. My point is that I have never reached such a border, such a state of body and mind. (...) Sitting in a comfortable European country, we can only feel Schadenfreude, an inner satisfaction these atrocities do not happen to us.* The project uses photo documentation of suicide attacks gathered over the last few decades. Taken in Indonesia, Russia, Israel and Pakistan, the photographs are juxtaposed with almost identical images featuring the artist’s living body in the place of the remains of the victims. Rajkowska uses the modified technique of trivision rotating signs whose ancestor is a “simultaneous” image of two saints, painted on respective sides of a concertinaed, wooden board. Instead of superimposing images in a photo collage, this technique rather makes us realise the difference – to see it, we have to change our point of view. *When I ‘lend’ my body to the woman whose body was torn by an explosion, I do not do it for real. Photoshop allows the illusion of presence at the site of the suicide attack; the lighting is set up for the photo shoot, but in reality I am not – and will not be – there. While working on this piece, especially during the photoshoot, I realize myself and help other realize the dif-*



BASEMENT

ference, the distance and this impossibility of participating in this act. Art neither brings anything closer nor does it help in anything or ‘lend’ the body. The only thing that really happens is an act of a profound difference. (Joanna Rajkowska)

20. DAVID CHICHKAN, from the series *Lost Opportunity* (2017); documentation of the events from 7 February 2017
Courtesy of Visual Culture Research Centre

David Chichkan (b. 1986) often alludes in his works to the tradition of social realist painting or political poster and considers his anarchist-communist beliefs to be inseparable from his artistic practice. In February 2017, the Visual Culture Research Centre in Kiev organised an exhibition of his works devoted to the situation in Ukraine post-Maidan. Chichkan perceives Maidan events as the expression of anti-authoritarian tendencies, the attempt to build a fair society in which there would be no room for xenophobia or exclusion. In his works, the artist asked what the protests of 2013 were and what they could have become. He indicated lost opportunities for a societal revolution with decent living conditions and universal equality at stake. He looked for reasons of this failure in the intensification of anti-communist sentiments and radical nationalism. After the exhibition opened, on February 7, a group of men in balaclavas stormed the VCRC, assaulting one of its employees, vandalizing the exhibition and stealing four pieces. Words “Glory to Ukraine” as well as a trident within a Celtic cross, used by neo-Nazi movements, were written on the walls.

The exhibition uses banners from the performance *Stateswomen, Sluts of Revolution, or the Learned Ladies* (The Polish Theatre in Bydgoszcz, 2016), set design: Michał Korchowicz.

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