

Kamila Szejnoch

Portfolio



Mr BUTTON, Oslo 2006

Sculpture on permanent display in a housing estate in Oslo (Norway). Project for international sculpture competition based on scenes from Henrik Ibsen's drama „Peer Gynt“.

Height: 2,5 m.

Materials: granite, marble, epoxy resin, magnifying glasses inside the binoculars.





CAROUSEL SLIDE SWING, public space project, Warsaw 2008

The installation SWING (September 20th, 2008) was a part of public space project "Carousel Slide Swing", which was publicized by a large number (100) of posters put up in the streets of Warsaw.

CAUROUSEL: Memorial to the Brotherhood in Arms, 1945, Wilenski Square

SLIDE: Memorial to the Red Army heroes, 1945, Skaryszewski Park

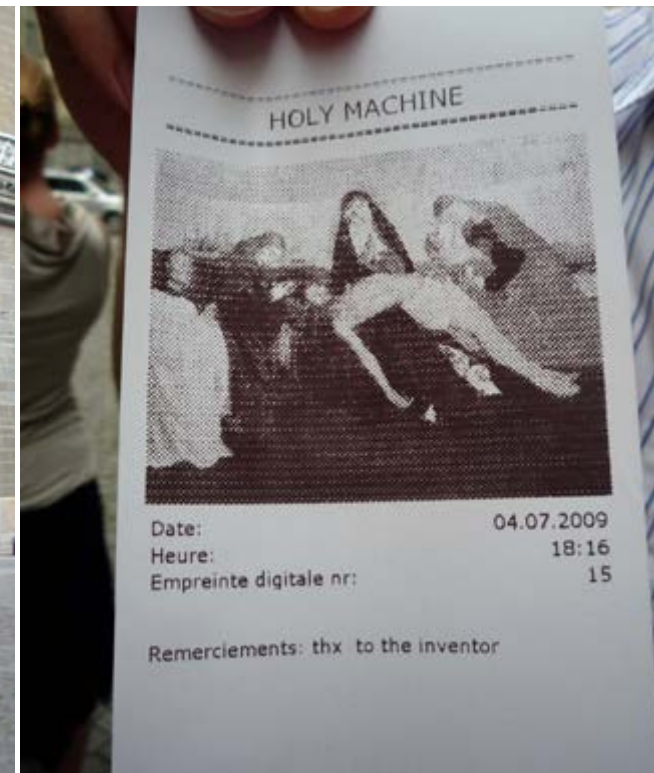
SWING: Memorial to the Berling Army Soldiers, 1985, Okrzei Street





The project Carousel Slide Swing aimed to pursue a dialog with memorials that served as communist propaganda. Although such memorials have been consigned to the historical scrap heap, we can still meet them in the streets and parks. To suggest a change in the function of the monuments is an attempt to build a bridge between the present and the past, to add a contemporary layer distinct from their original style and function. For example the idea of Swing is based on a contrast between the monumental bronze Berling Army Soldier and a tiny individual swung by a big hand of history. It is a monument from a former era, but at the same time - from the Berling Army soldier's point of view - it is a well-deserved tribute paid to his sacrifice. This is an example of how much history can differ from the perspectives of individual and collective memory. My aim is to make this complexity and ambiguity more conspicuous, to show the relation between an individual versus the historical machine.

[K.S.]



HOLY MACHINE, installation / public space project, Fribourg 2009 / Warsaw 2010

The „Holy Machine” is a vending machine that provides religious services. Viewers interact with the machine through a sensory screen - depicting the Pieta from Avignon (ca. 1455) - and receive a receipt delivered to users via a metal slot.

The idea is based on a combination of two seemingly opposite realities - faith and technology - religion and machine. Holy Machine can be perceived as a caricature of rational life, applied to the sphere which is the least rational so far. However, it can be treated as a new form of religiousness as well: It depends on attitude and faith of a receiver, whether the machine is taken seriously or playfully. The both approaches are not to exclude one another.



FLAGPOLE, installation, Open City Festival, Lublin 2010

Lithuanian Square is a city hub in Lublin (a town in eastern Poland). There are state ceremonies held and other occasional events. The square is of a historical importance, there are four important monuments placed:

- Obelisk of the Union of Lublin (a union signed in 1569, by the Kingdom of Poland and the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, which created a single state, the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth)
- Memorial to the Unknown Soldier
- Memorial to the Constitution of May 3, 1791 (Europe's first modern state constitution)
- Equestrian statue of Marshal Jozef Pilsudski (leader of the Second Polish Republic, under whose leadership Poland regained its independence in 1918, after 123 years of partitions)

Each monument represents a part of Polish history and events which still evoke respect. At the same time the story of the square is a fascinating historical mishmash, which may surprise not only with too big a number of stories but also take different directions and sudden turns. My project attempts to illustrate this situation. My idea was to replace a permanently standing flag pole with a new one – a tangled one. The “Flagpole” is supposed to be a joke in an official place, but a diagnosis of the place as well: Since a flag symbolises a positive idea, a flagpole is a supporting construction – in a new shape it can refer to the state's condition and ‘historical winds’ blowing there constantly.



FOR WHAT? public space project, mural, stickers, Birmingham 2011



The former Custard Factory, adapted as an arts and media production centre

When I came to Birmingham for the 'Post-industrial revolution' residency, I just knew it was a city with industrial heritage. Now I would say that Birmingham is a good example of transformation industrial areas into 'cultural production' zones.

Birmingham's coat of arms – being visible in many places in the city - on reliefs, street lamps, street signs, or even litter bins - contains personifications of Industry (a male figure dressed as a blacksmith) and Art (female figure holding a book and painter's palette). The coat of arms has evolved since 1838, when it was granted to the town. The current one was designed in 1977 and it generally resembles the old coat of arms, but the figures 'swapped the places' on the shield and the male figure now holds a cupel (not a hammer) - a tool used in manufacturing jewellery - an important industry in modern Birmingham.

The thing that has drawn my attention was the motto „Forward”, which I could see almost everywhere, not only on the coat of arms; at least this was my first impression. The motto caught my eye as something which reminded me of communists slogans, that I would never expect to see in a Western country. The most impressive example was a huge inscription FORWARD written on the wall in Digbeth. As I learnt later, it was done as an artwork in 2009. I thought to myself: It was the industrial era which insisted on going FORWARD; while the post-industrial era would rather ask WHAT FOR.



FORWARD, mural, Newso, Juice126 & Zoot79, Birmingham 2009



FOR WHAT?, mural, Kamila Szejnoch, Birmingham 2011



Coat of arms of the city of Birmingham

„During her month long residency Kamila has developed a fascination with the Birmingham coat of arms, using it as a focal point of her research. In particular she is interested in the motto for the city ‘Forward’. For Kamila exploring the significance of symbols and monuments associated with a city is significant, and she often develops whole bodies of work in relation to obscure local references to civic pride. For Post – Industrial Revolution Kamila has developed a series of site specific interventions throughout Digbeth, most notably ‘For what?’ a large scale text piece situated in a car park next to the Custard Factory facing Digbeth High St. ‘For what?’ is a direct response to the ‘Forward’ mural, an earlier art work referencing Birmingham’s coat of arms in a car park on Heath Mill Lane. ‘For what?’ aims to instigate a dialogue about the future and the past of the district by responding to the statement ‘Forward’ with a question.”

Kate Pennington-Wilson, curator of Post-Industrial Revolution



FOR WHAT?, stickers on street signs, Birmingham



FOR WHAT?, sticker, Victoria Square, Birmingham

EAGLE, installation, „Column of Liberty“ (1868)
Polish Museum, Rapperswil, Switzerland 2011

The "Column of Liberty" symbolises freedom, but at the time it was erected, it was an expression of a dream of liberty. Even if we wanted to abstract away from the historical motifs strongly represented in the Polish Museum, the topic still seems to be relevant today. We speculate, if freedom - in a political and international sense - is sufficient and satisfying, even if officially guaranteed.

On the other hand - from an individual point of view - pure freedom is rather an abstract, unreachable ideal, which we strive for, but still having in mind its restraints. The restraints can be positive - in a form of other's freedom, sense of attachment to places, people, or our emotions.



The installation EAGLE intends to clash the ideal with the reality. At the same time the eagle is an inseparable part of the castle - perhaps it feels contented with how it is?

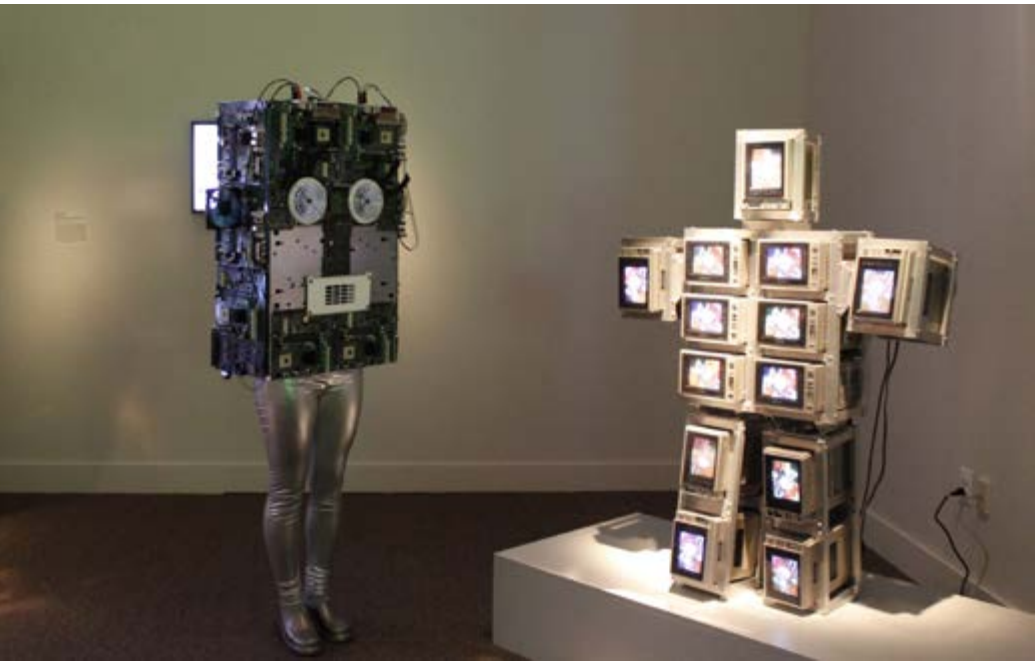


Rapperswill Castle (13th century), where the Polish Museum is located

MOBILE ROBOT, performance, Washington 2013

Performance at the Smithsonian American Art Museum during the Family Day celebrating the exhibition “Nam June Paik: Global Visionary”, Washington 2013.

The Robot was transported to the United States by plane as a registered luggage.





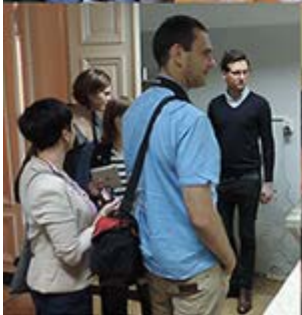
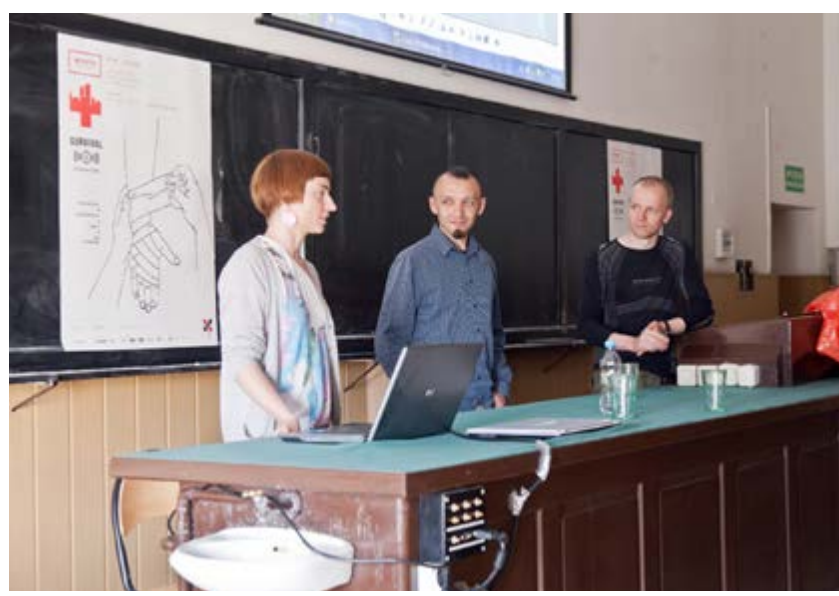
FALOWIEC COLOUR SYSTEM,
public space project, Gdańsk 2013
cooperation:
Laznia Centre for Contemporary Art

FCS is an urban project dealing with colours of architecture. Its starting point was Falowiec (Wavy block) - a block of flats that resembles a wave – in Gdansk district of New Port. The Falowiec in New Port does not stand out because of its length (it is only 250-meter long, the longest one in Gdansk is 860 m) but of its intensive “beachy” colouring.

Near the wavy block we can meet endless rows of garages. This provisional ‘metal town’ consists of around several hundred pieces. It seems that self-organisation of their owners marked the landscape of this place for good. The metal web has grown to enormous size and it has become an element not possible to control - a symbol of taking matters into one's own hands. The project assumes changing ugly front row of 37 garages into a colour sequence ‘borrowed’ from the wavy block. In one of the garages the improvised office was opened, where the owners could choose a colour from the FCS palette. They were also interviewed about their attitude to Falowiec and to the problem of motley housing estates in general.







URBAN SURVIVAL 24h, action/experiment/ workshop hosted by SURVIVAL Art Review 2014 "City – Inflammatory State", Wrocław

The action took place in the former building of the Faculty of Pharmacy of Wrocław Medical University. The motto of the festival was "City – Inflammatory State". The event contained elements of experiment, adventure and training, as well as cooperation within a group of 9 people. The volunteers worked with the invited professional survival coaches ("Universal Survival" from Olsztyn) and spend together 24 hours in the abandoned building. They learnt how to survive and look after basic human needs without a livelihood: How to shelter in an empty building, how to distill drinking water and construct simple lighting and make fire, how to make improvised sleeping bags and finally in what way to evacuate safely from the building.



MINI-WILLA “ŚWIDERMAJER”, installation in the ‘garden’ of the Culture Club “Falenica” near Warsaw, 2015

Transformation of a provisional metal garage/warehouse into a mini-willa ‘świdermajer’ (disappearing wooden architecture of the turn of the 19th and 20th century, specific for the suburban Warsaw area). The mini-willa serves as a toy house for children, an ‘educational model’ of the local disappearing architecture, moreover, it is a simple example of revitalisation of the public space.



BEFORE...

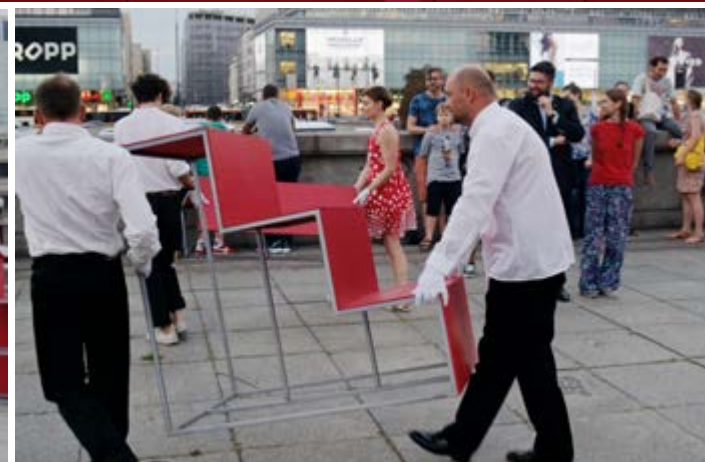
and AFTER...





WAITING ROOM, installation, honorable tribune, Palace of Culture and Science, Warsaw 2015

The aim of the „Waiting-room” installation was to create a temporary friendly space to seat and spend time on the former Honorable Tribune. The monolithic tribune / red stairs / was deconstructed into usable pieces of furniture. So, the object associated with an ideology and politics was transformed into a bigger number of useful elements.



The tribune was built for communist leaders in the Stalinist time, and it hasn't got any new function nowadays. The surrounding square awaits for the new buildings, at the same time the area has been taken over by the long-distance bus station.



COLLECTION, Wrocław 2016, project within a frame of the European Capital of Culture Wrocław 2016
cooperation: Krzysztof Żwirblis

The essence of the „Collection” was to enable the process of communication and exchange between the Ethnographic Museum in Wrocław and the local residents.

The first stage of the process was creating an exhibition at the museum, which would display various physical objects borrowed from the residents of the neighbourhood as well as owners of local pharmacies, pastry shops and florists. The collection presented a selection of archives, memorabilia, family photographs, as well as results of other creative interests – all collected intentionally or per chance. The centrepiece of the exhibition were coloured casts for gingerbread molds made during workshop with local children.

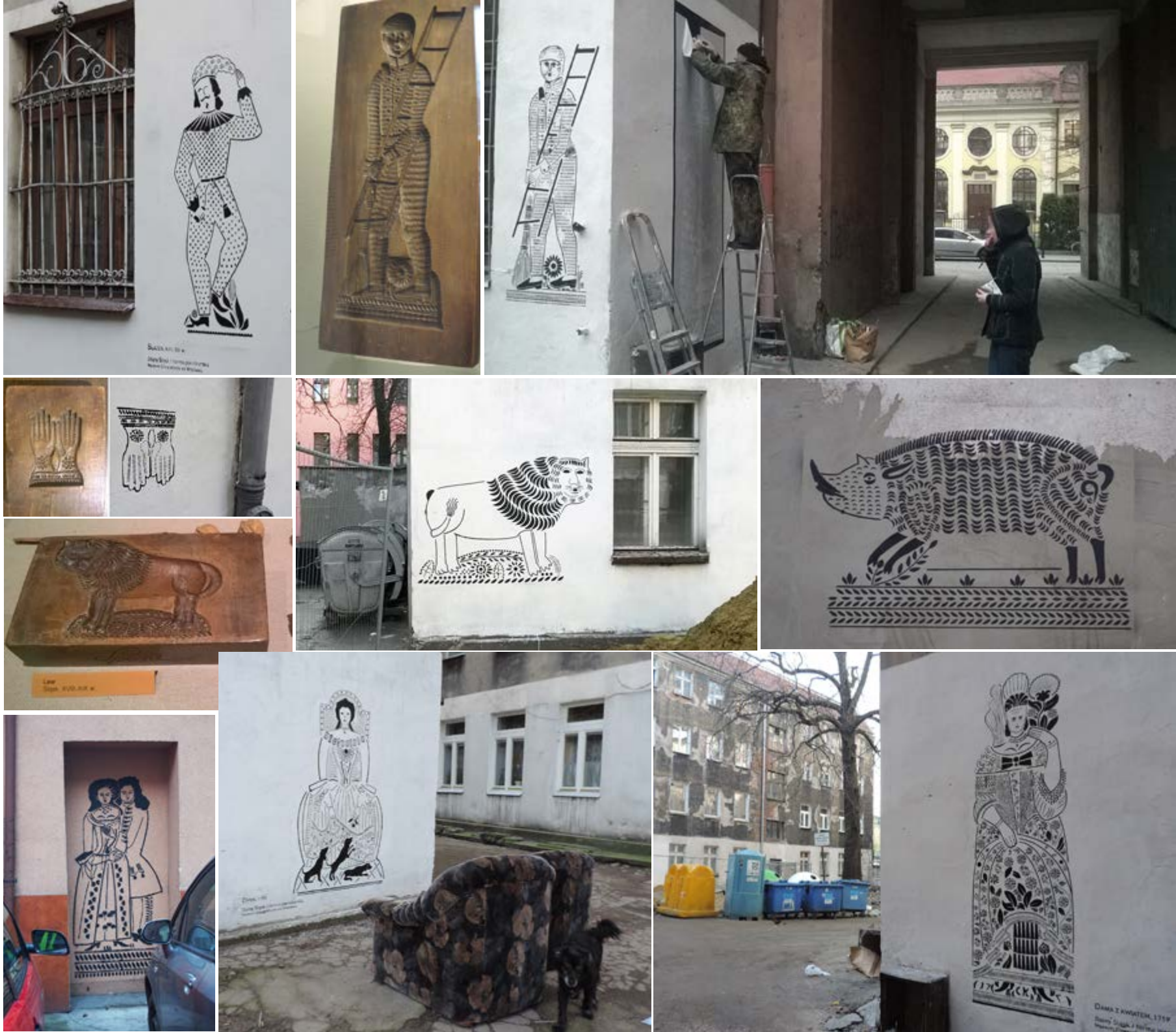
However, one could also find rarities such as a modern silicone mould in the shape of Mickey Mouse's head, a wedding bread or casseroles used for baking Easter rams and hares that have been long kept in the family. Tradition and modernity juxtaposed against one another in the exhibits brought in by the „Pod Słońcem” pharmacy where curiosities such as printed advertising from the early XX century, discovered during the clean-up after the 1997 flood, and even a collection of embarrassing orders could be found. Paintings, quilts and photos made by the residents themselves, could also be seen in their natural context during a separate slide show at the museum.



The second stage, and at the same time a different direction for the project, was transferring some figural motifs from the museum's collection of gingerbread moulds to the walls adjacent to the backyard. A gallery of resized graphics, inspired by the traditional gingerbread moulds, was a form of commentary on sometimes vulgarized modern-time forms of inscriptions and graffiti. It is worth mentioning that the artistry of carved woodem baking forms depicts the traditional importance of this craft in historical Lower Silesia. Traditionally gingerbreads served as a gift for communicating specific content, where the majority of shapes were of symbolic significance.

The Collection is an attempt at a cultural exchange between the Ethnographic Museum and its surroundings. It is also an invitation to approach contemporary objects as if they were living ethnography, while still being a fun attempt at exploring the culture of the past and the present.

Kamila Szejnoch
Krzysztof Żwirblis



RECONSTRUCTION, urban action, Gdańsk 2016
cooperation: Centre for Contemporary Art „Łaźnia”

Wiesław Gruszkowski's photograph has become the starting point for the „Reconstruction” project. In cooperation with a historical reenactment group the post-war situation was recalled by recreating the old photograph in the centre of the contemporary city.

The post-war curtain of the facades of tenements was briefly covered with another one.

The contemporary tourist face of the 'Old Town' was replaced with a window recalling the history and the reconstruction of the destroyed city.

During two-day action passers-by could have had their photographs taken against the background of the ruins of Gdańsk with the polar bear - and receive a photograph as a souvenir.

Archive photo:

Wiesław Gruszkowski /in the picture on the right/, Gdańsk 1946 r. The Old Town

Street photographer, Marian Ziemia, with a rolled background on his arm. His wife Maria is carrying a camera. Beside them the Piszczek sisters: Adelajda (with a chair), Maryla and Czesława (with a bucket) on their way to the site at Targ Drzewny street. /Original rolled background in the picture showed a view of pre-war Gdańsk/





NAZAR, public space project, Gellerup*, Aarhus, Denmark 2017

Cooperation: Sigrids Stue art platform

**Gellerup - an immigrant district of Aarhus, which is inhabited mostly by the people from the Middle East (approx. 80%)*



The starting point of the project is a round shaped bus stop in the Gellerup district. Its original form was combined with a motif of Nazar – an amulet popular in the Middle-East. NAZAR is an eye-shaped amulet believed to protect against the evil eye. The Arabic word „nazar” means „sight” or „seeing”. As a legacy of the Turkish Ottoman Empire, it is a common sight in Turkey, Lebanon, Palestine, Israel, Egypt, Armenia, Iran, India, Iraq...





CONTACT MINE, public space project /
Monument to the Glory to Sappers (1975)
Warsaw 2017



ZEN GARDEN, Japanese House, Tainan, Taiwan

- Who is going to tidy up your room? Krasnoludki*?
- My Mum used to ask me when I was a child...
“Krasnoludki?” - is a quite common rhetorical question - when it comes to work that nobody wants to do.

*„Krasnoludek” (plural: Krasnoludki) is a Polish mythological type of gnome / dwarf, wearing a pointy red hat. Those friendly small creatures are often present in literature, in particular in fairy-tales. In bygone beliefs dwarfs were protective home spirits. They embodied the souls of ancestors. During the day they hid under the floor, behind the stove, in mouseholes or in a blacksmith's workshop or barn. At night, when people went to sleep, they showed up and finished domestic chores and protected children against evil spirits. They were usually skillful and helpful. The households where they lived were prosperous and looked after. In return home dwellers used to leave food for them in small bowls. Their favourite food was bread, butter, groats, milk and honey. The most well known fairy-tale about dwarfs, written by the Grimm Brothers (German cultural researchers / collectors of folk tales) in the 19th century - is “Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs”. A popular story for children.

The first garden dwarfs as a lawn ornament figurines were made in the 19th-century in Germany, and since then they have spread to other countries in Europe. A Disney cartoon version of the Seven Dwarfs made the motif even more popular and created their 'official' image. In the 1960s the first plastic garden dwarfs were manufactured and they followed the style of the 1937 depiction of the seven dwarfs in Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs by Disney. Nowadays mass-produced garden dwarfs are often synonyms for kitschy decoration.

BEFORE...



I HAVE A DREAM, public space project, Katowice Street Art AiR 2018 / „Katowice City of Gardens”

The project consists of the Zen Garden on a mine slag heap and the Silesian Dream-book. **Silesian Dream-book** interprets dream 'archetypes' - taking into account symbols typical for the culture, nature and history of the Silesia region. Mine, mine slag heap, zen garden, gierkówka (Gierek highway), Spodek (Saucer arena), coal SPA, Silesian dumplings, smog, garden city, palm... These are only some of the 100 entries which you can find in the book.



Zen Garden* on the mine slag heap in Kostuchna / Katowice

Materials: white gravel, stones, plants

The Zen Garden was intalled as a new symbol collected in the Dream-book.

Zen garden* is the most minimalistic kind of Japanese gardens - a miniature landscape composed of rocks, moss, pruned trees and bushes, gravel or sand that is raked to represent ripples on water. Classical zen gardens were created at temples of Zen Buddhism and were usually relatively small. They were intended to reflect essence of nature in a metaphorical way. Rocks usually symbolise mountains and white gravel represent water. It can be an abstract composition of „natural” objects in space - a composition whose function is to stimulate meditation.

In the harmony and perfection of zen gardens we can find endless human longing for happiness and the lost paradise. Classical zen gardens were created to help monks in everyday practice.. Isn't the mine slag heap in Kostuchna the ideal place for meditation?



LOST PARADISE, temporary installation, Changsha, China 2019

The site-specific project refers to the Broad company's area, where we can find not only the factory, but also the wild terrain with the lake. The combination of the industrial and the natural part is what makes the space exceptional. The gradual recreation of this natural oasis - undertaken by the owners of the Broad company, shows their/our longing for the „Lost Paradise“. Lost paradise which we miss nowadays - an untouched, pure and genuine natural environment.

The archetypal myths of the “Lost paradise” can be found almost everywhere around the world, in both civilized and primitive cultures throughout history. One of them tells the story about the Eden garden: Adam and Eve, according to the creation myth are the first man and woman. They are innocent and unembarrassed about their nakedness. They are told that they can eat freely of all trees in the garden, except for the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.. However, a serpent deceives Eve into eating forbidden fruit, and she gives some of it to Adam. After eating the apple, God clothes the nakedness of the man and woman, and banishes them from the paradise forever.



Pit-house, (X)sites Kattegattleden 2019 Festival /June - September/ Halmstad, Sweden

Pit-house consists of grass, metal, tent, reindeer lichen, ferns, water and midsummer pole. Feel free to decorate it!



ETERNAL, public project / European Capital of Culture Plovdiv 2019 Bulgaria

The project was a game with the existing monument "Hillock of fraternity" (Bratska Mogila), opened in 1974 on the 30th anniversary of the so called Socialist revolution in Bulgaria. The figural sculptures inside commemorate regaining the independence of the country (1878), which was previously a part of the Ottoman Empire. The monument is also dedicated to the victims of the World War I and the WWII.

The memorial is a modernist version of the Thracian mound, it is 23 m high and it has 90 m in circumference. As a remnant of communist period, it is neglected, covered with graffiti, usually closed, and the eternal flame has long gone out...

In September, with the help of multi-colored light and sound, the form came alive and turned into UFO, celebrated with a transgalactical party with the special interference of the Plovdiv based DJs denitza & sayulke.

Sound: Ola Ko



GS REAKTYWACJA / projekt w przestrzeni wiejskiej, Zelwa, Suwalszczyzna 2020

Pawilon Gminnej Spółdzielni w Zelwie został zbudowany około roku 1975. Działał tu długo sklep spożywczo-przemysłowy, jednak od blisko dwudziestu lat budynek stoi pusty. W sierpniu teren został kupiony przez małżeństwo z Warszawy - nowi właściciele planują urządzić tu dom letni. Pomyślałam, że w międzyczasie pawilon warto wykorzystać do działań artystycznych. Projekt „GS Reaktywacja” został zrealizowany w ramach stypendium artystycznego Ministra Kultury „Kultura w sieci”.

Wspólnie z zaproszonymi artystkami - Izabelą Chamczyk i Iwoną Teodorczuk-Możdżyńską - przeprowadziłyśmy sesję spontanicznego malowania



TEMPLE, installation, Eleusis European Capital of Culture, Greece 2022

The idea of TEMPLE assumed upgrading the old dressing booth - its form and 'function'. Around the world we can see various kinds of small chapels within certain aesthetic canons. The installation was inspired by Greek small chapels we can meet near the streets and roads, but not only... The TEMPLE is rather an expression of a fusion belief, and re-interpretation of existing chapels. It was going to serve for reflection, meditation, or just spending time. At the same time - apart from its 'usefulness' - as any other 'sacral' object - it may also express gratefulness, faith or intention.

One of the elements of the installation was the incense used in Greece. Burning incense is a practice that spans through the centuries and across the globe. For example Native Americans have been using white sage during rituals and ceremonies - to get rid of negative energy and vibes. The ritual of burning incense or herbs is known as smudging. The purpose of smudging is to cleanse, purify or bless people and places. You may wish to smudge when you first move into a house or an office space. It's a strong way to cleanse a space of negative energies, to purify and gain power.



Location: Neglected dressing booth at the beach in Elefsina

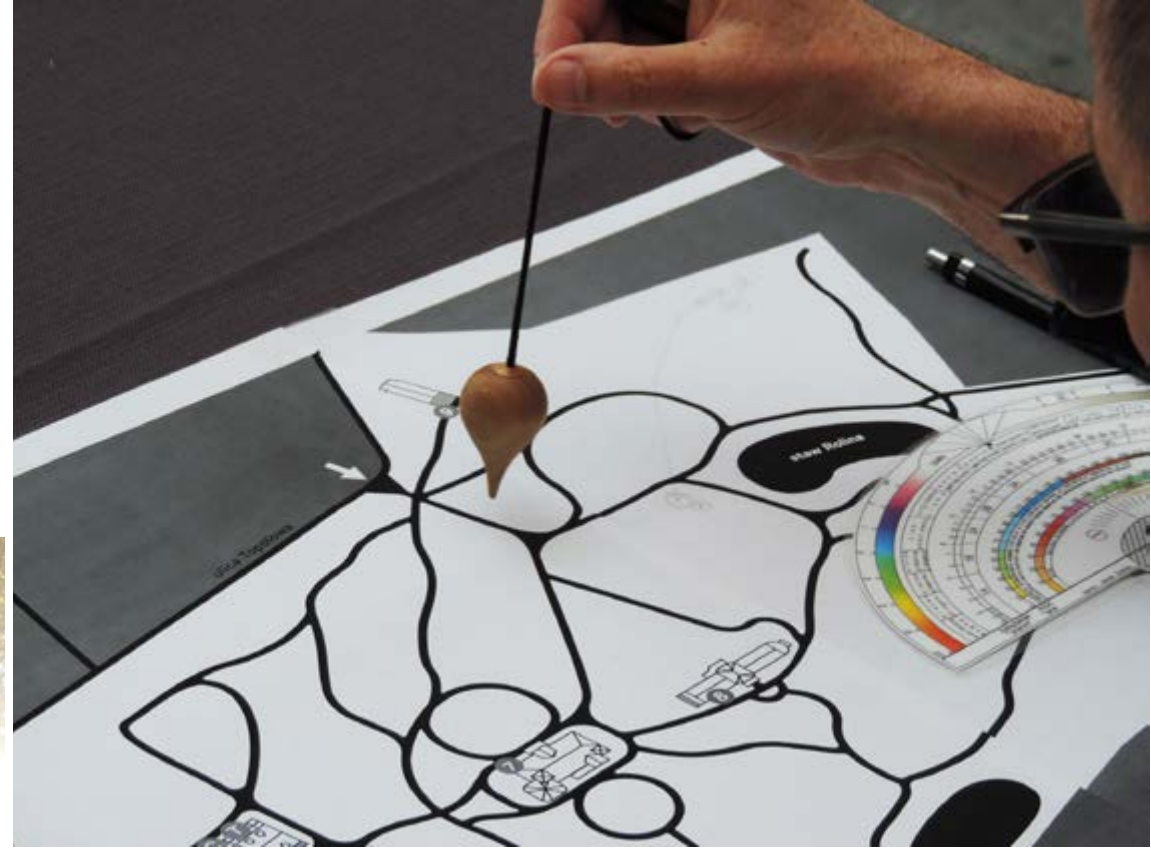


Elements: Dressing booth, magic wheelbarrow, seashells, white gravel, zen rake, golden fruits, incense Byzantine, candle, golden seat, local 'icons', ribbons



PLACE OF POWER, residency / research / video / installation
Centre of Polish Sculpture, Oronska 2022

There had been rumours about an earth "chakra" in the park of the Centre of Polish Sculpture. I decided to check this legend out during my artistic residency in 2022. The first step of the project assumed examining the space with the participation of a professional geomancer / dowser. The research was carried out by Jakub Zemla - the master of radiesthesia and bioenergy therapy. The process was recorded – 10 min. video shows the results of the research in the park and explains what radiesthesia is about. Later on - in the best chosen spot - the swing was designed and installed. It marks visually the beneficial zone. The installation can be used for sitting, swinging, resting or meditation.





ZEN Beach/ installation / city beach, Warszawa 2022







POWER PLANT

Kamila Szejnoch

Otwarcie wystawy: 07 grudnia, godz. 18.00

8 grudnia - 31 grudnia 2024

Bohema / Dawna Fabryka Pollena / Szwedzka 26a, piętro 2, Warszawa



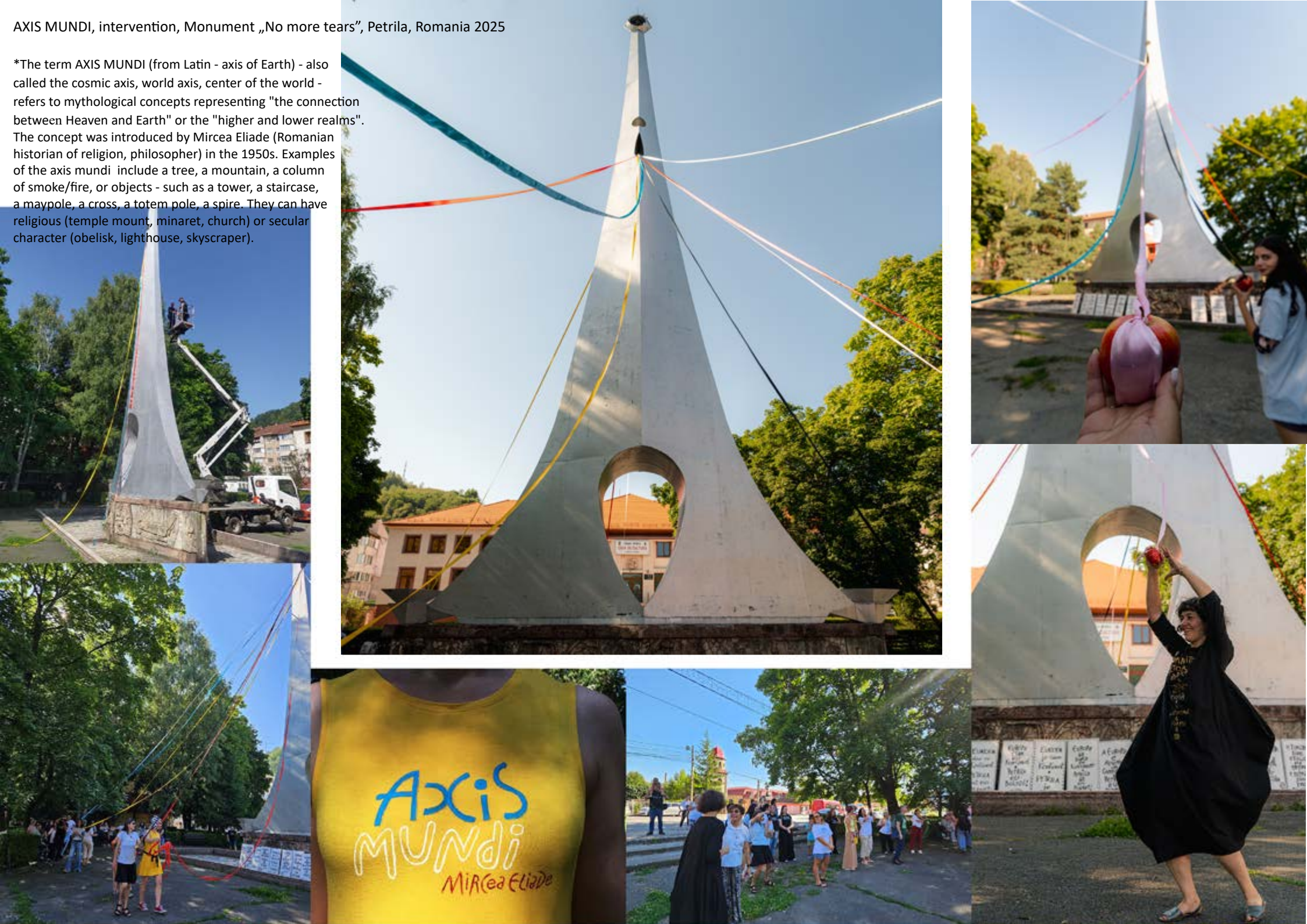






AXIS MUNDI, intervention, Monument „No more tears”, Petrila, Romania 2025

*The term AXIS MUNDI (from Latin - axis of Earth) - also called the cosmic axis, world axis, center of the world - refers to mythological concepts representing "the connection between Heaven and Earth" or the "higher and lower realms". The concept was introduced by Mircea Eliade (Romanian historian of religion, philosopher) in the 1950s. Examples of the axis mundi include a tree, a mountain, a column of smoke/fire, or objects - such as a tower, a staircase, a maypole, a cross, a totem pole, a spire. They can have religious (temple mount, minaret, church) or secular character (obelisk, lighthouse, skyscraper).





Links to the chosen videos:

GS Reaktywacja, 2020:

<https://vimeo.com/485929097>

ETERNAL, 2019:

<https://vimeo.com/364035229>

I HAVE A DREAM, 2018:

<https://vimeo.com/295775545>

POCZEKALNIA, 2015:

<https://vimeo.com/185547562>

FALOWIEC COLOUR SYSTEM, 2013:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SZsCPGtMT9M&feature=emb_logo

MASZT, 2010:

<https://vimeo.com/100628987>

HOLY MACHINE, 2010:

<https://vimeo.com/99929754>

HUŚTAWKA, 2008:

<https://vimeo.com/99928538>