

Małgorzata Stolarska-Fronia (ed.)



Polish Avant-Garde in Berlin



PETER LANG

This book presents a historical panorama of the Polish avant-garde in Berlin from 19th century historical avant-garde until the recent art. Looking at specific artistic strategies and development of modernist paradigm both in the pre- and post-Second World War period from the perspective of the migration experience, this book offers a deep insight into mechanisms, relations and identity programmes of particular artists or groups. It also reveals the dynamics of eventual cultural exchange or alternative forms of artistic transformation and message that Polish artists imprinted in the Berlin's art scene. Whether historical avant-garde or the neo-avant-garde, the component of novelty inscribed in the term itself ceases to be a sheer, one-dimensional slogan and reveals a whole range of cultural projections that artist-migrants are both creators and the subject of. Here the notion of exoticism, wilderness, but also critical and ironical approach often constitute the perception of Polish art in the Berlin milieu.

The Editor

Małgorzata Stolarska-Fronia, PhD, is an art historian, curator and academic teacher. Her research interests include European avant-garde as a transcultural and transnational phenomenon. She initiated and organized several international conferences and published many articles devoted mainly to the art in Jewish culture.



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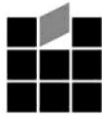
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Małgorzata Stolarska-Fronia

The Centenary of Polish Avant-Garde in Berlin

Abstract: From the end of the nineteenth century, Berlin, a city inhabited by numerous migrants, functioned as a paradigm of multiculturalism. For Polish artists who started appearing in Berlin at the beginning of the nineteenth century, Berlin was not only one of the nodes of an international network but also an important place for confronting one's identity through the migration experience. The experience of Berlin in the life of the Polish avant-garde artists before and after the Second World War is similarly shaped by the polarizing and sometimes canceling senses of familiarity and alienation, freedom (mainly political), and imprisonment (i.e., linguistic). Berlin is a city from which one could return to Poland, or emigrate further, thus it was regarded as a transit point for people and their ideas. The presence of Polish artists in Berlin, and the visible separateness of their art, contradicts the existence of any universalized avant-garde paradigm. Therefore, this publication presents Berlin primarily as a confrontation space of multilayer identity projects and strategies of visually "inscribing" oneself into the city, while seeking to remain separate.

Keywords: Stanisław Przybyszewski, Polish avant-garde, German painters, Jewish avant-garde, experimentation, Berlin

Berlin: The City of Migrants and the Avant-Garde

The phenomenon of artistic travels as a way of gaining new artistic experience, learning, earning, and developing a career has long been a part of historiographic descriptions and memories in cultural history. Artistic travel increasingly becomes the subject of theoretical considerations that seek to determine its appropriate methodological framework.¹ However, more often one abandons the term "artistic travel" to replace it with the word *migration*. The latter concept means not only being on the move for a specific purpose and temporary stay in other land but also implies the complex process of transfer, related identity transformation, a sense of foreignness, and simultaneous attempts to settle and familiarize oneself with foreign cultural spaces

1 For an analysis of these attempts, see Aleksandra Lipińska, "‘Mobility turn’ w historii sztuki? Kierunki i metody badań nad migracją artystów," [Mobility turn in art history? Directions and methods in the research on the migration of artists] in: *Migracje. Materiały LXV Ogólnopolskiej Sesji Naukowej Stowarzyszenia Historyków Sztuki Warszawa 24, 25 listopada 2016 roku*, eds. Anna Sylwia Czyż, Katarzyna Chrudzimska-Uhera (Warszawa: Zarząd Główny SHS Oddział Warszawski, 2017), pp. 9–22.

and practices. From this perspective the impact on professional, artistic development is a part of a larger life-changing experience. The concept of migration refers also to the phenomenon of nomadism. Artists did not necessarily have to travel to a specific destination and then settle there, build a private and professional life. In particular, the first three decades of the twentieth century witnessed the nomadic life of artists whose path led through several countries and cities. Artists' mobility acquired a special dynamism and significance, stimulated not only by career considerations but also by social, economic, and political conditions.

This situation resulted from the changes in the art world and its democratization, which occurred at the end of the nineteenth century and was an effect of modernization processes in European societies. The art world's openness to new ideas, its movement beyond elite environments, and the abandonment of national frameworks of artistic creation supported the emergence of international networks throughout Europe. Networks of contacts followed artists to different parts of the world, crossing the boundaries of their own culture, and entering new areas of artistic milieu with various consequences. On the one hand, what wandered with the artists was their identity, habitus, and the cultural specificity of their homes. On the other hand, confronted with new recipients, they often developed alternative artistic strategies that also entailed new forms of expression. At first alien, with time they became familiar to the local exotic environment, while their diversity often inspired others, which resulted from breaking the routine of just one cultural code. Their work simultaneously revised not only the world they left at home but also their new home: physical distance and departure stimulated a critical perspective and the need to redefine oneself in relation to the place of origin, not to mention the different valuation of ideas encountered in the "new" country.

"Revision" is an attribute that often occurs among the characteristics of the avant-garde or modernism in general. In turn, the latter two terms increasingly often appear in connection with migration experience. As Majewski, Rejniak-Majewska, and Marzec indicate, experience of migration created "self-definitions and languages for describing modernity."² These authors remark that the individual or generational experience of migration generates separate forms of modernism and transforms the idiom of art.

2 Tomasz Majewski, Agnieszka Rejniak-Majewska, Wiktor Marzec, "Migracje intelektualne: paradygmat teorii i materializm biograficzny," [Intellectual migrations: theory paradigm and biographical materialism] in: *Migracje modernizmu. Nowoczesność i uchodźcy*, eds. Tomasz Majewski, Agnieszka Rejniak-Majewska, Wiktor Marzec (Łódź: Łódzkie Stowarzyszenie Inicjatyw Miejskich Topografie, Narodowe Centrum Kultury, 2014), p. 12.

By specifically referring to the “modernism of exile” – characteristic of the art of the 1930s and 1940s – Majewski et al. indicate the importance of the reason for migration: in this case, the escape of European artists persecuted and overwhelmed by National Socialism. Similar to this conceptual framework, the Polish avant-garde in Berlin constitutes a diverse and specific form of modernist attitudes of Polish migrant artists, diverse in different historical and political contexts, as this book attempts to highlight.

From the end of the nineteenth century, Berlin functions as a paradigm of multiculturalism, as it is inhabited by numerous migrants. For Polish artists who started appearing in Berlin at the beginning of the nineteenth century, Berlin was not only one of the nodes of an international network but also an important place for confronting one’s identity through the migration experience. Scholars usually associate artists’ migration in the nineteenth and twentieth century with a specific crisis situation. This situation results either from a political constellation – the case of the early avant-garde, Polish artists born under Partitions,³ and in the Polish People’s Republic⁴ – or the disappearance of certain values and attempts to exceed the established, routinized formulas in Polish culture and the will to confront different cultural or national projects (this mostly applies to artists who create after 1989). Berlin’s special position in the migration experience of the Polish avant-garde emerged from its position as a city between Eastern and Western Europe. Berlin was not far enough that a move would result in a strong sense of dislocation and uprooting but, at the same time, sufficiently culturally different – through a thoroughly dissimilar political and social context – to experience one’s own exoticism. The experience of Berlin in the life of the Polish avant-garde before and after the Second World War is similarly shaped here by the polarizing and sometimes canceling sense of familiarity and alienation, freedom (mainly political), and imprisonment (i.e., linguistic). Berlin is a city from which one may return to Poland, or emigrate further. The presence of Polish artists in Berlin, and the visible separateness of their art, contradicted the existence of any universalized avant-garde paradigm. Therefore, this publication primarily presents Berlin as a confrontation space of multilayer identity

3 Since 1768 until 1918 Poland did not exist as a sovereign country, but remained under the ruling of Russia, Prussia, and Austria, which took up particular parts of former Polish Kingdom. Thus for 123 years “Polish nationality” as a legal term did not exist. After the First World War, when Poland regained its independence the issue of redefining “Polishness” was one of the most urgent questions. At the same time, the united parts of Poland were inhabited by people of different religious and ethnic origins, such as, i.e., Jews who also sought to find a way to express their modern Jewish identity in the “new” Polish country.

4 The name Poland bear during the communist ruling, from 1947 until 1989.

projects and strategies of visually “inscribing” oneself into the city, while seeking to remain separate. Here, the voice of female artists who migrated to Berlin is quite distinctive, both in the case of the historical avant-garde and after the Second World War, especially since the 1980s. A separate chapter of this book concentrates exclusively on this matter.

What forms the key aspect of this book is the bilateral experience that defines the views of individual artists on Berlin: the revision of the feeling of strangeness and familiarity; the facing of its myths as a city of freedom, pluralism, and progress; but also the way in which the German public received their work. This book also revises the position of Berlin as the center that automatically determines the inferior position of migrating artists. When asking about the Polish avant-garde in Berlin, we struggle with a problem inseparably connected with the accompanying feelings of hope, improvement of fate, and personal development. Therefore one of the main questions we might pose would be: Was/is it a real move forward?⁵ This issue can be applied already to the very beginnings of the presence of Polish avant-garde artists in Berlin marked by creative activity of Stanisław Przybyszewski (1868–1927).

The Ecstatic Slav in Berlin: Stanisław Przybyszewski

Berlin today appears as a city of freedom, a colorful multicultural island on the map of Germany, *das Bundesland*, that distinguishes itself from other German lands and cities with its hybridity and social space, in which borders – be it national, cultural, or moral – are fluid. Here, even the ignorance of the German language does not interfere with functioning as a true *Berliner*. We may inscribe the image of Berlin in the postmodernist paradigm through its amalgamous identity that, contrary to appearances, is not far from how the city functioned in the experience and memory of its Polish visitors at the beginning of the twentieth century. First of all, Berlin appeared to Poles to be an axis between the East and the West, a border bridge for many passersby on their way to further destination like Paris or Rome. Polish intellectuals and artists recall Berlin through various expressions, which depends on the social environments they encountered and the ideas they sought. For some, Berlin was a cold foreign nouveau riche town, while others found it filled with signs of Slavic familiarity. The Polish writer Alexander Wat (1900–1967) was inspired by the “red Berlin,” although simultaneously perceived it

5 In the case of artists, we may repeat the question posed in the book *Migracje modernizmu* [Migrations of modernism]: “in the context of expectations and aspirations, is the journey to the land of modernity usually a disappointment?” See: *Migracje modernizmu*, p. 12.

as Babylon, a place filled with decadence and debauchery. In turn, the Polish interwar poet and theoretician Tadeusz Peiper (1891–1969) called Berlin the “laboratory of modernism.”⁶

The moment the first Polish avant-garde artists appeared in Berlin, its status as a metropolis was still nascent; the city was developing dynamically, which revealed both its creative and destructive power. The former manifested itself in the active social life filled with innovative initiatives: galleries, exhibitions, and manifestos that proclaimed the renewal of society and art. The latter revealed itself in growing social inequalities, crises, prostitution, and addictions spreading on Berlin’s streets and cafes. In the 1890s, Berlin’s artistic life moved from elite art salons to cafes, societies, publishing houses, and galleries. From then on, these were mostly Eastern European migrants that inspired the unusual eruption of avant-garde theories and ideas. Among them, Stanisław Przybyszewski was considered “the discoverer of expressionist art”⁷ and the first Polish avant-gardist in Berlin.

The way his personality and ideas were perceived by the German milieu is an example of how the “feeling of foreignness”⁸ contributed to the strengthening of the modernist paradigm and the myth of a migrant-genius in Berlin. One may regard Przybyszewski as a model of an avant-garde Polish artist-migrant in Berlin, whose image was shaped by the colonial viewpoint: the cult of exoticism, savagery, and strangeness that result from ethnic or national differences. To trace the mechanisms of building the myth of the “genius Pole” and the “ecstatic Slav” in German discourse allows to expose the real relationship between Berlin’s homeliness and foreignness in the experience of Polish artists. The analysis of such discourse questions the possibility of the equal functioning of migrant artists in the cultural environment of Berlin and the exchange of artistic thought and authenticity of the message and values that the migrants brought and bring to the culture of Berlin. The analysis reveals the figure of the artist-migrant as an objectified cultural construct whose experience was included in the process of perpetuating the pluralistic image of modernism. This

6 The very interesting insight into attitudes of Peiper and Watt towards Berlin in comparative perspective has been written by Heinrich Olschowsky in his article “Polnische Künstler schauen auf Berlin,” in: *My berlińczycy!/Wir Berliner! Geschichte einer deutsch-polnischen Nachbarschaft*, ed. Robert Traba (Lepizig: Koehler & Amelang, 2009), pp. 197–220.

7 Julius Hart, “Aus Przybyszewski’s Sturm und Drangjahren,” *Pologne Littéraire*, No 20(15.05.1928). Also see Gabriela Matuszek, “Der geniale Pole?": *Stanisław Przybyszewski in Deutschland (1892–1992)* (Hamburg: Literaturwissenschaft, 2015), p.106.

8 *Migracje modernizmu*, p. 13.

process reveals even more complex nature if one realizes that during this time Poland officially did not exist as a state, thus Polish art as perceived by traditional art history in national categories had – among other art streams - rather complicated status. Polish artists were active under the ruling of different partitioning powers, in case of Przybyszewski born near Inowrocław – it was Prussia.

Przybyszewski came to Berlin in 1889, directly after his *matura* (school leaving exams) at the end of secondary school, with the intention to study architecture, which he then converted to medical studies but never graduated either. In 1892, he joined the socialist *Gazeta Robotnicza* [Worker's Daily], and in 1895, together with Otto Julius Bierbaum and Julius Maier Graefe, Przybyszewski founded the art journal *Pan*. He quickly gained popularity in Berlin's cultural circles, especially among the regulars of the then iconic *Zum Schwarzen Ferkel* [The Black Piglet] located on the corner of Wilhelmstraße and Unter den Linden. Thanks to his uncontrollable temperament, oratorical abilities, imagination, and virtuosic performances of piano art to Chopin's compositions, Przybyszewski was hailed as "der legitimste König der Boheme, den Berlin seit Grabbes⁹ Tagen gesehen hat,"¹⁰ – the legitimate king of the bohemian society since Grabbes.

Przybyszewski wrote his most important works in Berlin, which became an inspiration for both the German and Polish avant-garde, especially the one with an expressionist pedigree: *Totenmesse* (1895), *Vigilien* (1895), and *De Profundis* (1895). In the latter, Przybyszewski expresses his views on art, which were a stimulus for the Berlin bohemian society: "*De profundis* focuses on manifesting the pure life of soul, the naked individuality, the state of somnambulant ecstasy, or whatever its countless names may be, which all express one and the same fact, namely that there is something other than the stupid brain."¹¹ Przybyszewski's new art opposed bourgeois tastes and values. According to his view, the art should represent the internal world, reflect "the hours of hallucination, ecstasy,"¹² and express mystical states. Przybyszewski created the foundations of expressionist theories that proclaimed the freedom of artistic emotions expressed in art, the tendency to search for religious beliefs, and the fascination with mystical threads, interpreted among German expressionists as an innate property of the Germanic culture. Many German expressionists referred to Gothic forms in search for the expression of deep states of ecstasy and mysticism.

9 Christian Dietrich Grabbe (1801–1836) was a German dramatist and poet.

10 Julius Bab, *Die Berliner Boheme* (Berlin und Leipzig: Herman Seeman 1904), p. 54.

11 Stanisław Przybyszewski, *De Profundis*, Berlin 1895, p. 1.

12 Przybyszewski, *De Profundis*, p. 1.

Przybyszewski named this inclination already in *De Profundis* “No race produced so many mystics, namely people who participate in the pure visionary life of the soul as the Germanic race.”¹³ Years later Przybyszewski distanced himself from his inclinations towards German culture and ironically recalled his fascination with German mysticism on the one hand, and avant-garde trends on the other: “In the thirty years I was featured in the following “isms:” idealism, naturalism, verism, solipsism, decadentism, and satanism. I was influenced by Berlin’s night cafes, I was a mystagogue and a priest at black masses. I absorbed Strinberg and Nietzsche. My ideology grew from a strain of German mystics, especially Novalis.”¹⁴

From the viewpoint of Przybyszewski’s participation in creating and stimulating the avant-garde in Germany, we should foreground that he was one of the first propagators of the art of Edvard Munch (1863–1944), with whom he was in close relationships.¹⁵ The first exhibition of Munch’s works in Berlin occurred in 1892. However, when mentioning this event, Przybyszewski remarks on the still conservative attitude of the Berlin audience and the criticism that he encountered for favorably reviewing Munch’s exhibition in the magazine *Freie Bühne* [Free Stage]:¹⁶ “Oh Lord! What happened then in Berlin! The name Munch, already popular after the split of German painters in the Kunstverein [Association for Art],¹⁷ has now become terribly popular. Throughout the three weeks of the exhibition, all the so-called ‘intelligentsia’ of Berlin laughed, neighed, and roared with laughter in all the existing and non-existent keys.”¹⁸ Przybyszewski was keen to have Berlin appreciate Munch’s art. The proof of this is the letters that “Stachu” wrote to “Edziu”¹⁹ from Berlin and his home town Węgrowiec: “You, Edziu;

13 Przybyszewski, *De Profundis*, p. 1.

14 Stanisław Przybyszewski, *Moi współcześni*, Vol. I: *Wśród swoich* (Warszawa 1930), p. 122.

15 This issue has been developed in the chapter by Lidia Głuchowska in this volume, pages 81-119.

16 Stanisław Przybyszewski, *Moi współcześni*, Vol. II: *Wśród obcych* (Warszawa 1926), p. 192.

17 I mean the dispute that arose around the organization of Munch’s exhibition, opposed by the conservative part of Kunstverein members, especially Anton von Werner. Max Liebermann was one of the supporters of the exhibition who ultimately led to a split in the organization. Nevertheless, the exhibition was closed after one week. Soon, Liebermann became the head of Freier Künstlervereinigung [Free Association of Artists]. The largely rejected Munch exhibition was finally organized in the Equitable Palaist, rented only for this event.

18 Przybyszewski, *Wśród obcych*, p. 192.

19 Respectively, Polish augmentative and diminutive forms from the names Stanisław and Edvard.

I thought about it carefully: you have to exhibit all your pictures in Berlin in autumn, we'll find the money, I will write a wonderful catalogue. It's going to be a big artistic event."²⁰ In 1894, there appeared Munch's first biography edited by Przybyszewski. Besides Przybyszewski, texts were contributed by Julius Maier-Graefe (1867–1935), Franz Servaes (1862–1947), and Willy Pastor (1867–1933).²¹ A year later, Munch painted a portrait of Przybyszewski. Apparently they both shared the same feeling of being “exotic others” within the Berlin cultural life with all its positive and negative implications.

German colleagues were fascinated by Przybyszewski's charisma, what they viewed as wildness and unpredictability that they ascribed to specifically Slavic characteristics.²² Przybyszewski recalls the alcohol-filled meetings of Berlin intellectuals, many with socialist views, like Richard Dehmel (1863–1920), and he writes about the amazement his poems inspired: “In general, my German pen brothers were amazed and frightened by everything in me, especially the unheard-of paradoxes I preached, all the *à rebours* of my life, the *salta mortale* that I did with their language, the incredible strangeness of everything I wrote, and even the way I was with them.”²³ The German writer Julius Bab (1880–1955) describes Przybyszewski as a “mystical-ecstatic Slav ... a nervous man and a utter alcoholic”²⁴ with demonic features in his personality along with elements of suffering and nervousness.²⁵ The exoticism of Przybyszewski has been stretched to the limits. Matuszak writes that Przybyszewski appears in many memoirs as having a different physiognomy. Maier Graefe describes Przybyszewski as a man with the “head of a Slavic Christ.”²⁶ His wildness and courage in proposing radical and new ideas was linked to his Slavic origin and simultaneously was to bear a glimpse of tragedy, associated with Przybyszewski's “stateless” and migrant role, which perfectly matched the modernist model of the artist.

20 From a letter of Stanisław Przybyszewski to Edvard Munch. No date, probably 1894. Digital Archive of Texts by Edvard Munch, www.emunch.no, sign. MM K 1922. Accessed 12.11.2018.

21 Stanisław Przybyszewski ed., *Das Werk des Edvard Munch. Vier Beiträge: Stanisław Przybyszewski, Dr. Franz Servaes, Willy Pastor, Julius Maier-Graefe* (Berlin: S. Fischer, 1894).

22 For more about the approach to Przybyszewski of his Berlin colleagues, see Gabriela Matuszek “Unser Stachu”. Przybyszewski in den Erinnerungen deutscher Freunde,” *Zeitschrift für Slavische Philologie* Vol. 48, Issue1(1989), pp. 51–69.

23 Przybyszewski, *Wśród obcych*, p. 134.

24 Julius Bab, *Die Berliner Boheme* (Berlin 1905), p. 52; qtd. after Matuszek, “Unser Stachu,” p. 51.

25 Matuszek, “Unser Stachu,” p. 51.

26 Matuszek, “Unser Stachu,” p. 54.

After several intense years in Berlin, overwhelmed by the events in his personal life, Przybyszewski moved to Cracow, where he began a new stage in life as an editor for the magazine *Życie* [Life], which was associated with the Polish vein of modernism. During the First World War, Przybyszewski collaborated with the magazine *Zdrój* [Spring], published by the avant-garde artists from Poznań, later founders and members of the expressionist group BUNT, which also clearly marked its presence on the Berlin art scene. From the perspective of 30 years after he left Berlin, a doyen of both Polish and German expressionists described the city as follows: “My stay in Berlin simply became a torment for me. It is interesting that to this day I cannot free myself from this neurosis.”²⁷

“B” as in Berlin and BUNT

Despite visible ideological differences, the creators of the Poznań group BUNT (1918–1920) continued and even radicalized Przybyszewski’s ideas that were born and spread in Berlin.²⁸ This applies to the revolutionary ideas they preached, the desire to exceed moral standards, and the involvement in Munch’s art. Jerzy Malinowski suggests that Przybyszewski could have influenced the anarchist attitude of BUNT, which he learned in Berlin.²⁹ In turn, Lidia Głuchowska indicates that the poster of the first exhibition organized by the group BUNT in 1918 in Poznań constitutes the borderline of Polish-German character of Przybyszewski’s work. The poster had two versions: Polish and German. The figures depicted on the poster are similar to the famous *Scream* by Munch. The dominant graphic motif of the poster – the *Tower of Babel* by Stanisław Kubicki (1889–1941) – simultaneously symbolizes the “palace revolution” in *Zdrój* and the dethronement of Przybyszewski.³⁰ In the Polish avant-garde, there occurred a generational change to which Berlin was also witness. In the same year, members of BUNT exhibited their works in Berlin, and the group remained in close contact with the milieu surrounding *Der Sturm* and *Die Aktion* magazines. Other Berlin exhibitions presented the work of individual members of the group: August Zamoyski (1893–1970), Jerzy Hulewicz (1886–1941), along with Małgorzata (Margarete, 1891–1984) and Stanisław Kubicki who then lived in Berlin and had an atelier at Herderstraße.³¹ It is this Polish-German

27 Przybyszewski, *Wśród obcych*, p. 37.

28 For more on Przybyszewski and Bunt see Lidia Głuchowska’s article in this volume, pp. 81–119.

29 Jerzy Malinowski, *Sztuka i nowa wspólnota: Zrzeszenie Artystów Bunt, 1917–1922* (Warszawa: Wiedza o kulturze, 1991), p. 116.

30 Lidia Głuchowska, “Awangarda: Berlin-Poznań,” in: *My, berlińczycy! / Wir Berliner!*, p. 166.

31 Cf. Głuchowska, “Awangarda: Berlin-Poznań.”

couple who most vividly inscribed themselves in the history of the prewar Berlin avant-garde, becoming an inspiration and reference point for other artists from Poland. Unlike Przybyszewski, Stanisław Kubicki was an artist well-rooted in German culture. His Polish and German identity were not mutually exclusive or in conflict. His father was a Pole, while his mother – Maria Stark – was a German. Stanisław Kubicki was brought up in Cologne and graduated from architectural studies in Berlin. He had German citizenship, which did not prevent him from operating during the Second World War in the Polish resistance movement,³² for which he was killed by the Nazis in 1942. He was fluent in both Polish and German and wrote poetry in both languages.³³ His conflict with Przybyszewski during the creation of *Zdrój* was based, among other things, on a different opinion about the success in introducing expressionist aesthetics in Polish art. Drove by the negative attitude towards his German experience, Przybyszewski claimed it could not succeed, mainly because it was a “German fashion.”³⁴ In contradiction to Przybyszewski, whose attitude towards Berlin was strictly individual and shaped by the changing amplitude of social interactions, BUNT exemplifies the functioning of the network of avant-garde groups in the transnational environment. Similarly to other artistic communities in Germany, BUNT established its own magazine (*Zdrój*) and spread its works with this powerful medium. Published in 1918, the special June issue of *Die Aktion* journal bore the subtitle *Polnische Kunst* [Polish Art] and depicted graphics by members of BUNT.

The Kubicki couple were part of the avant-garde network of creators who met, among others, at *Cafe des Westens* on Kurfürstendamm. The milieu included not only visual artists and poets but also actors from Piscator’s theater and the society of *Zeittheater*, musicians and playwrights, such as the Galicia-born Jewish actor Aleksander Granach, a pupil of Max Reinhardt and the main actor of the most important expressionist

32 See Stanisław Karol Kubicki, “Słowo wstępne/Zum Geleit,” in: *Bunt, ekspresjonizm, transgraniczna awangarda. Prace z berlińskiej kolekcji St. Karola Kubickiego/Bunt, Expressionismus, grenzübergreifende Avantgarde. Werke aus der Berliner Sammlung von Prof. St. Karol Kubicki*, ed. Lidia Głuchowska (Poznań: Muzeum Narodowe w Poznaniu, 2015), p. 9. Lidia Głuchowska, *Stanisław Kubicki – In transitu – Poeta tłumaczy sam siebie/Ein Poet übersetzt sich selbst* (Wrocław: Ośrodek Kultury i Sztuki we Wrocławiu, 2015).

33 Cf. Peter Mantis, “Przedmowa,” in: *Stanisław Kubicki – In transitu*, p. 20.

34 Lidia Głuchowska’s conversation with Stanisław Kubicki on the occasion of the transfer of his works to the Poznań National Museum in 2015: “Prace plastyczne grupy BUNT wracają do ojczyzny,” in: *Bunt-Ekspresjonizm-transgraniczna awangarda*, p. 49.

films like *Nosferatu*. Stanisław Kubicki also supported the creation of the milieu of Polish migrant artists, who chose Berlin to create outside of the context of a specific nationality. The Polish migrant artists simultaneously had a different experience of the First World War than that of the German artists, which was an apocalyptic event for the Germans and liberating for the Poles, as it stated independence after 123 years of Partitions. However, artists who migrated to Berlin – paradoxically – were not interested in strengthening their Polishness against a foreign culture. On the contrary, they found their homeland for their ideas in the avant-garde projects of artistic experimentation. What was characteristic to this generation is also the experience of multilingualism, which is also part of the migration experience.

Cross-Border, International, Revolutionary

For Polish artists, especially after the First World War, Berlin was the place where they could realize their dreams of international art, free from national divisions and also an outlet for radical artistic and political ideas. At the end of the 1920s, futurist Polish poet Aleksander Wat sought to fulfill his communist hopes in Berlin. The city met Wat's expectations and provided him with strong impressions, but it also exposed inequality and poverty. These experiences fed into not only his poetry but also his political views.³⁵ A year earlier, in 1927, Berlin was visited by Tadeusz Peiper, co-founder of the Cracow avant-garde, editor of the progressive magazine *Zwrotnica* [Rail Switch], and author of the famous slogan of the Polish avant-garde of the second half of the 1920s: "Miasto-Maszyna-Masa" [city-machine-mass]. The task Peiper proposed for poetry was to reflect on modern reality: it was to be precise as the inside of a machine, consist of words piled up like an intricate industrial construction, and be available to everyone. Peiper visited Berlin with the Russian Suprematist Kazimir Malevich, where the two also visited Bauhaus. Peiper retained a distance from the city itself; he wanted to draw inspiration from the art created there but did not succumb to its magnetic charm. As Peiper writes: "Unlike many of my countrymen, I did not visit Berlin or Paris to buy a new fancy idea but to learn the ideological formation of laboratories. And later apply this knowledge in my country."³⁶ Peiper was critical of the social exclusivity of Berlin, uninterested in any mutual inspiration with artists from Poland and Russia, and more focused

35 See Olschowsky, "Polnische Künstler schauen auf Berlin," pp. 214–215.

36 Qtd. after Olschowsky, "Polnische Künstler schauen auf Berlin," p. 216.

on short-term fascination with the exotic and radical,³⁷ which appears like the atmosphere that prevailed around Przybyszewski.

The Polish avant-garde in Berlin also hosted a broad range of Jewish artists, who appeared in the German capital during the First World War and shortly afterward. The co-founder of the group Jung Idysz, Henryk Berlewi (1894–1967), arrived in Berlin in 1921. Berlewi met here with Aleksander Wat and the representative of the Soviet constructivism, El Lissitzky (1890–1941). The change of the Warsaw-Łódź avant-garde environment – strongly represented by the Jewish artists – to Berlin constituted an important caesura in Berlewi's life and work. His views on art became more radical and he ceased seeking a Jewish national style in favor of culturally unambiguous pure artistic form devoid of ideology. In 1923, Berlewi wrote in Berlin the basics of his new theory of “mechanofaktura” (mechanofacture). He co-organized the 1922 Congress of International Progressive Artists in Düsseldorf, extremely important for the international avant-garde.

In the network of the Jewish avant-garde in Germany, together with Berlewi, the co-creator of the artistic program of the group Jung Idysz, Jankel Adler (1895–1949) had been widely acknowledged as a member of the Novembergruppe and Das Junge Rheinland. There also was another artist from the group Jung Idysz, Henryk Barczyński (Barciński, 1896–1941), as well as a graphic artist and sculptor Pola Lindenfeld (1900–1942). From 1916, Rachel Szalit-Markus (1894–1942) also lived in Berlin. Szalit-Markus was associated with the Novembergruppe environment and was extremely active in the local artistic scene. From 1925, Jesekiel David Kirszenbaum (1900–1954), also known as Duvdivani,³⁸ made his presence in Berlin. The Jewish avant-garde in Berlin met at the *Romanisches Cafe* and in the house of the doyen of Jewish Expressionism, Jakob Steinhardt (1887–1963). Originally from Żerków in Greater Poland, Steinhardt eagerly invited Jewish artists from Eastern Europe. He perceived their work as an expression of authentic belonging to Jewish culture, which many Jewish artists in Germany lost in the process of acculturation. The entries and drawings left by guests in the *Book of Minni and Jakob Steinhard* (conducted 1920 and 1927) usually oscillated around the depictions of shtetl landscapes and their inhabitants, which confirm the thesis that the migrant fate of Jewish artists from Eastern Europe – forced by the social and political situation – intensified and perpetuated certain iconographic figures: the images of the Wandering Jew or the shtetl everyday came back to live along with the fascination of their

37 Olschowsky, “Polnische Künstler schauen auf Berlin.”

38 For more on Kirszenbaum, see the chapter by Nathan Diament in this volume, pages 123–136.

German colleagues. Juggling these themes provided Polish-Jewish artists with clients because the images they painted were very popular, but unfortunately they did not have much in common with the avant-garde. This also shows that with the westward departure, the Jewish avant-garde in Berlin gathered around Steinhardt gained no audience that would allow it to develop revolutionary ideas by focusing primarily on creating a new Jewish style in the avant-garde spirit.³⁹ In exchange, the iconographic repertoire depicted by an Eastern European brush or stylus provided the German-Jewish public with a contact with something that simultaneously appeared as authentic, exotic and foreign. And for the artists themselves, this style preserved their way of remembering the old life and, thus, led to the positive self-creation as Ostjude (Eastern Jews) – Jewish migrant with Eastern European roots.

A Broken Network

The Berlin atmosphere of transnational encounters during the Weimar Republic began to thicken in the early 1930s. Berlin was still known as a city of multicultural avant-garde, but now in a negative sense. After Hitler's ascent to power, the Nazi condemned modernist art and used by their propaganda to exemplify the degeneration of humanity. The formal elements represented by the avant-garde – like expressionist deformation or semantic rebuses of the Dada language – along with the ideological elements – like depictions of German street and café life – were perceived as the expression of “foreign” influences in German culture. Thus the exoticism of migrant artist from Eastern Europe, cherished earlier has become a stigma. During the hunt of the avant-garde in Germany, the Nazi especially targeted Jewish artists, among them many from Poland, such as Jankel Adler, whose works appeared on the infamous exhibition of *Entartete Kunst*, degenerate art. The flagship exposition of the Nazi Ministry of Propaganda opened in Berlin at the end of February 1938 and lasted until May 1938. Köpenickerstrasse hosted a warehouse that gathered and stored confiscated artworks labeled as “degenerate.” Many of the valuable works were destroyed, among others, works by Stanisław and Margarete Kubicki, so we know many of their works only from photographs. The banishment of the avant-garde, which often meant the death of the artists, also destroyed the spirit of freedom and buried the myth of Berlin as one of the important centers of the European avant-garde.

39 See Małgorzata Stolarska-Fronia, “Rewolucyjna młodzież ze wschodu i berlińscy patetycy. Związki pomiędzy grupami Die Pathetiker i Jung Idysz,” [Revolutionary youth and Berliner Die Pathetiker. Relations between groups Die Pathetiker and Yung-Yiddish] *Pamiętnik Sztuk Pięknych* Vol. 13(2018), pp. 75–84.

Between Avant-Gardes

In case of the postwar art, especially from late 1980s and 1990s until today, one has to reconsider the term “avant-garde.” The problem is that the concept itself has escaped the control of encyclopedic frameworks and has entered the realm of dangerous colloquiality. The term is sometimes misused by artists themselves along with art critics, and is used as a synonym for words that define bold and experimental art that undermines established canons. According to this understanding, the avant-garde artist in the context of contemporary art is the one who uncompromisingly brings new values both to the sphere of art recipients and the discourse of social life. Beside epithets with meanings fixed in cultural memory, such avant-garde has nothing in common with the prewar formation. The concept of the avant-garde underwent devaluation and its significance also became blurred. Therefore, the latest attempt to clarify the term increasingly emphasizes the need for a distinction between the “historical avant-garde” created until 1945, the later neo-avant-garde, and in contemporary art even post-avant-garde.⁴⁰ As Berg and Fähnders indicate, there occurred a postwar canonization of the historical avant-garde, despite the apparent asymmetry between the prewar and postwar avant-garde: “We should perceive the avant-garde after the Second World War as an unbroken continuation of the prewar avant-garde and not as a repetition of an already failed project.”⁴¹ The different geopolitical context after 1945 led the artists to produce a new idiom of avant-garde art. There emerged new directions – abstract Expressionism, outsider art, environmental art, and feminist art – along with new techniques of expression, such as media art, performance, installation, and happening. This book distinguishes the two avant-garde trends – still identifying their common ideological basis – by using the term “neo-avant-garde” for postwar art.

The Avant-Garde on the Other Side of the Wall

After the Second World War, Berlin was divided in 1961 into two cities with a separate cultural policy. Additionally separated from Poland by the Iron Curtain, it ceased to be the unlimited space for the intercultural meetings of the avant-garde and became an island of new projections and artistic activities, often devoid of the memory of prewar bohemian circles. The city

40 Hubert van der Berg, Walter Fähnders, “Die künstlerische Avantgarde im 20. Jahrhundert – Einleitung,” in: *Metzler Lexikon. Avantgarde*, eds. Hubert van der Berg, Walter Fähnders (Stuttgart-Weimar: Verlag J.B. Metzler, 2009), pp. 10–11.

41 Van der Berg, Fähnders, “Die künstlerische Avantgarde im 20. Jahrhundert – Einleitung,” p. 11.

and its inhabitants struggled with difficult war memories.⁴² The new geopolitical context and the restrictions that constrained the migration of Polish artists to Germany did not mean that the tradition of contacts between Polish artists and the Berlin milieu vanished. However, the intensity of this contact changed – especially after the introduction of the Iron Curtain – along with the intense experience of familiarity and strangeness resulting from the different political context. There was also a sense of transgression that was stronger than in the interwar period not only in the topographical but also in the cultural, social, and political sense. The discourse on Polish artists in Berlin also differed. The notions of “freedom” played now a great role, although – interestingly enough – the models of perception of Slavic immigrants shaped by Przybyszewski’s activities remained in the perceived emphasis of their uncompromising attitude, tendency to irony, and acting outside of the established frameworks of artistic and social habitus.

The latest research on the Polish avant-garde in Germany foregrounds the substantial role of Polish poster art, which enjoyed great recognition in West Germany since the mid-1950s.⁴³ The avant-garde nature of this art was determined by the enthusiastic discourse of German art criticism, which drew attention to joke, jubilation, provocation, and innovation as features different from the prevalent manner of the German artists. The art of Polish poster artists presented in Germany was called the “new wave,” which unambiguously raises an association of complementarity of the words “migration” and “avant-garde.” Regina Wenniger questions the use of the nationally marked term “Polish poster art” to indicate the fact that Polish artists acted in a multinational network, which excludes the possibility to name their art as unequivocally “Polish.”

Wenniger’s doubt concerns the very important issue of the projections and identifications of migrant artists. Confrontation with new environment forces artists not only to reflect on their identity – whether national, ethnic, or religious – but also to confront it in the eyes of others. It is in

42 The Second World War was an important caesura also for the local German artistic life. Saryusz-Wolska emphasizes that “the war is a culmination in Berlin’s cultural history, after which the modernizing discourse of the Weimar Republic retreats, giving way to problems related to history and memory.” Magdalena Saryusz-Wolska, *Spotkanie czasu z miejscem. Studia o pamięci i miastach* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego, 2011), p. 361.

43 Regina Wenniger, “Sztuka polskiego plakatu w Niemczech Zachodnich w okresie powojennym,” in *Porta Polonica. Kultur und Geschichte der Polen in Deutschland*, <https://www.porta-polonica.de/pl/atlas-miejsc-pami%C4%99ci/sztuka-polskiego-plakatu-w-niemczech-zachodnich-w-okresie-powojennym?page=1#body-top>. (Accessed 13.12.2018).

the international environment that migratory identities, and their visual representations appear as multifaceted, ambiguous, and escaping usual categories. The postwar functioning of Polish artists in Berlin was actually a process of constant confrontation of the so-called Eastern heritage with Western culture, of the experience of life in the communist system versus capitalist consumption, and finally, of the deepening hierarchy between the center and the periphery.

After the political thaw of Poland in October 1958, there occurred several Polish art exhibitions in Germany. There was an important exhibition co-organized by the National Museum in Warsaw: *Polnische Malerei vom Ausgang des XIX Jahrhunderts bis zur Gegenwart* [Polish Painting from the Early Nineteenth Century until Today] which took place at the turn of 1962 and 1963 at the Museum Folkwang in Essen, then in West Germany.⁴⁴ The exhibits showed a cross-section of Polish modernism. The prewar generation represented Władysław Strzemiński (1893–1952) and Stanisław Ignacy Witkiewicz (1885–1939). The postwar period included Maria Jarema (1908–1958), Tadeusz Kantor (1915–1990), Jerzy Nowosielski (1923–2011), and Jonasz Stern (1904–1988).

A certain revival occurred in the 1980s, with the appearance of Polish critical art represented by artists who, on the one hand, contested the gray communist reality of the Polish People's Republic, and on the other, remained distanced to Western consumerist culture. The so-called New Expression, sometimes compared to the German *Neue Wilde* [the New Wild], gathered Ryszard Grzyb (1956–), Zdzisław Nitka (1962–), Jarosław Modzelewski (1955–), and Ryszard Woźniak (1956–). The avant-garde nature of Polish artists of that time mostly consisted in the courage to focus on political matters and create a peculiar language of artistic expression based on irony, roles and symbols reversal, and opposition to the Polish formulas of social realism.⁴⁵

A very important point for the presence of Polish art in postwar Berlin was the 1982 appearance of Ewa Partum⁴⁶ (1945–), who paved the way for Polish female migrant artists. This book considers Ewa Partum in a

44 The exhibition appeared also in, respectively, Stuttgart, Karlsruhe, and Essen. See Regina Wenninger, "Polnische Malerei vom Ausgang des 19-Jahrhunderts bis zur Gegenwart. Die erste, 'offiziöse', Ausstellung polnischer Kunst in der Bundesrepublik 1962/63," in: *Porta Polonica*. <https://www.porta-polonica.de/de/lexikon/polnische-malerei-vom-ausgang-des-19-jahrhunderts-bis-zur-gegenwart?page=1#body-top>. (Accessed 13.12.2018).

45 This important issue has been analyzed in detail in this book by Justyna Balisz, pages 243–262.

46 See the chapter by Karolina Majewska-Güde in this volume, pages 191–211.

separate chapter devoted to the Polish women voice in Berlin. Partum's uncompromising artistic activities exposed the essence of the relationship that existed between the art of the East and West of Europe, not to mention between the prevailing hierarchical orders of the art world, marked by a series of dependencies and inequalities, among others, in relations between the artists and the state, the art of men and the art of women, or Western art (center) and Eastern art (peripheries). Her work *Himmel Ost – Himmel West* [The Sky in the East – The Sky in the West], with the Berlin wall as an important motif, was a feminist performance that revealed the subversive position of women reduced to physicality in the social and artistic space, and on the other hand, it also presented a political manifesto. Although Partum's artwork did fit into the trend of German feminist art of the second wave that contested the traditional roles of women entangled in the patriarchal configuration of power, her voice was a complex manifesto that simultaneously⁴⁷ expressed her situation both individually and as a Polish migrant artist.

As a symbol of transformation, transition, separation, and – simultaneously – freedom, the Berlin wall became for Polish artists an important actor in their artistic activities. A year before its fall, in 1988, Teatr Ósmego Dnia [T8D; Eighth-Day Theater] performed a drama based on Zbigniew Herbert's (1924–1998) poem *Report from the Besieged City*. Uncompromising in its critique of totalitarianism and the oppressiveness of the authorities of the Polish People's Republic, T8D was repressed in the 1980s, while its members were denied the right to go and perform abroad. When in the mid-1980s some of the creators finally received passport visas, they manifested their presence in Germany by playing, among others, Tennessee Williams' (1911–1983) play *Auto-da-Fé*.

A Different Reality: The Neo-Avant-Garde of the 1990s

After the Berlin Wall fell, Polish artists focused primarily on presenting their position in the newly regained freedom. Their simultaneous clash with the Western culture and its consumerism found radical and uncompromising expression. Polish artists also referred to the memory of recent history that was blurred by the wave of euphoria from the unification of Germany and the fall of the Berlin Wall, associated with the effects of the Second World War. That is, they mostly focused on Germans' participation in creating and directing the crime machine during the Second World War. Thus, the Polish artist-migrant acted as a confrontational counterimage, situating him/herself on the opposite

47 See article by Teresa Fazan in this volume, page 171–189.

pole of historical and social experience of the Second World War. Zbigniew Libera (1959–) indicates this blurring of memory and its simultaneous instrumentalization for the benefit of political and economic interests in his exhibition work *Bakunin in Dresden* (1990). Modeled on the entry gate to the Auschwitz camp, the installation presents the inscription reading “Christus ist mein Leben” [Christ is my Life]. According to Libera, he wanted to reveal the mechanism of totalitarian systems, in which religion often allied capitalism.⁴⁸

Other important representatives of the critical trend in the art of the late 1990s and the early 2000s were also active in the Berlin milieu. Artur Żmijewski (1966–) exhibited his works in 2007 at the Neuer Berliner Kunstverein. His second individual Berlin exhibition *Democracies* happened in 2009 at Daadgalerie, while in 2012, he was entrusted with the creation of the concept and implementation of the 7th Berlin Biennale.⁴⁹ In 2012, Paweł Althamer (1967–) created a unique project *Almech* exhibited at the Deutsche Guggenheim gallery, located in the representative headquarters of Deutsche Bank at Unter den Linden.⁵⁰ Following the model of his father’s plastic production plant in Wesoła near Warsaw, Althamer founded an art factory in which he created and placed polyethylene casts of artists, curators, visitors, and employees of the German Guggenheim and Deutsche Bank.

At the same time, the position of the feminist art created by Polish migrants who live in Berlin became stronger. Katarzyna Kozyra (1963–) counts among the most active artists on the Warsaw-Berlin line. Kozyra’s works touch on deeply human issues, which many usually push beyond the canons of social issues as inconvenient, unsightly, or even immoral. Kozyra’s projects deal with the subjects of death, transience, old age, ugliness, sexuality, and illness. She exhibited her work at the DAAD Galerie in Berlin in 2006 (*In Art Dreams Come True*) and since then she has been constantly present on Berlin art scene. Her last exhibition, *A Dream of Linnaeus’ Daughter*, took place in 2018 at the Żak Branicka gallery in Berlin.⁵¹

The presence of Polish artists reverberated during the 7th Berlin Biennale in 2012, the event described in this book by its curator. What made it an exceptional event – widely reviewed both in the Polish and German press – was not only the fact that Artur Żmijewski curated and organized the entire event but

48 See <https://artmuseum.pl/en/kolekcja/praca/libera-zbigniew-christus-ist-mein-leben>. (Accessed 10.12.2018).

49 The first hand voice of the curator has been published in this volume, page 215–225.

50 The gallery operated in 1997–2012, and from 2013 there is the Deutsche Bank Kunsthalle.

51 Opened in 2008, Żak Branicka gallery focuses on presenting mainly Polish artists associated with the neo-avant-garde vein.

also that he shifted character biennial passive presentation of art into a social action, a place for exchanging ideas, a space for discussions about the issues of the modern world. The controversy surrounding the Biennale – emphasized in both the German and Polish media – emerged from its political character along with Żmijewski's contestation and criticism of the superficiality of social and artistic life, which indicated that the problem of the lack of activism in the public sphere affects many countries, Poland, Russia, and Germany alike.⁵²

This brief overview of the Polish avant-garde exhibitions and activities in Berlin also captures a very current event from the viewpoint of this book. While Poland was celebrating the centenary of the Polish avant-garde, the visual artist Agnieszka Polska (1985–) won the Berlin National Gallery Award. Polska was invited to an individual exhibition at Berlin's Museum of Contemporary Art in Hamburger Bahnhof, where – from September 2018 to March 2019 – visitors could see her video installation *The Demon's Brain*, which dealt with climate change and the exploitation of nature for profit. By positioning the scenes and narratives in unspecified historical realities, Polska's work shows the development of capitalism while simultaneously revealing its mechanisms and disastrous consequences for our planet.⁵³

A Centenary of Polish Avant-Garde

This book is part of the centenary of the Polish avant-garde celebrated in 2017. On this occasion, a conference on *Polish Avant-Garde in Berlin* took place at the Center for Historical Research of the Polish Academy of Sciences in December 2017. Thus, the volume is the result of the reworked and reviewed papers presented during the conference. Both the conference and the book fit into the celebrations of the centenary, but also continue the Center's activity in the field of cultural contacts between Poland and Germany, not to mention memory studies. A very important event that drew public attention to this subject and signaled its most important issues concerning Polish presence in Berlin was the exhibition *My, berlińczycy! / Wir Berliner!* organized by the Center in 2009, accompanied by a publication edited by Robert Traba.⁵⁴ Another valuable source of Polish traces in Berlin is a book edited in 2008 by Maciej Górny and Dorota Danielewicz-Kerski,

52 Cf. Anna Löse's interview with Artur Żmijewski: "Der Provokateur," *Stern online*, 25.04.2012. <https://www.stern.de/kultur/kunst/7--berlin-biennale-der-provokateur-3063576.html>. (Accessed 10.12.2018).

53 Cf. "The Demon's Brain von Agnieszka Polska," in: <http://www.art-in-berlin.de/incbmeld.php?id=4765>. (Accessed 13.12.2018).

54 Robert Traba, ed., *My, berlińczycy! / Wir Berliner! Geschichte einer deutsch polnischen Nachbarschaft* (Leipzig: Koehler & Amelang, 2009).

Berlin. Polnische Perspektiven 19.–21. Jahrhundert,⁵⁵ which contains source texts that show the Polish view of Berlin from the perspective of various historical, political, social, and cultural experiences. Both publications offer a solid introduction to the more specific issues related to the presence of Polish artists and intellectuals in Berlin, which is also the subject of this book. There are also a number of publications devoted to visual arts, mostly concentrated on the prewar avant-garde.⁵⁶

55 Dorota Danielewicz-Kerski, Maciej Górny, eds., *Berlin. Polnische Perspektiven* (Berlin: Berlin Story Buchhandlung und Verlag, 2008).

56 We should enumerate the studies that focus on the specific thread of Polish prewar avant-garde in Berlin and the rest of Germany published by Jerzy Malinowski, “Polska awangarda w Niemczech 1900–1933,” in: *Między Polską a światem: od średniowiecza po lata II wojny światowej*, eds. Mieczysław Morka, Piotr Paszkiewicz (Warszawa 1993), pp. 260–270; *Sztuka i nowa wspólnota: Zrzeszenie Artystów BUNT 1917–1922* (Wrocław: Wiedza o Kulturze, 1991); *Grupa “Jung Idysz” i żydowskie środowisko “nowej sztuki” w Polsce, 1918–1923* (Warszawa: Polska Akademia Nauk, Instytut Sztuki, 1987); *Painting and sculpture by Polish Jews in the 19th and 20th centuries (to 1939)* (Warszawa-Toruń: TAKO, 2017), pp. 195–293. For more about the history of BUNT, especially in relation to the German avant-garde from *Die Aktion*, *Der Sturm*, and Novembergruppe, see Lidia Głuchowska, “Polnische Künstler und Der Sturm: Enthusiasten und Polemiker. Nationale und transnationale Narrative des postkolonialen Avantgarde- und Modernediskurses,” in: *Der Sturm – Zentrum der Avantgarde*, Vol. 2, eds. Andrea von Hülsen-Esch, Gerhard Finckh (Wuppertal: von der Heydt Museum, 2012), pp. 455–482; *Stanisław Kubicki – Kunst und Theorie* (Berlin: WIR – Literarische Edition, 2001); “Avantgarde: Berlin – Poznań,” in: *My, berlińczycy! Wir Berliner!*, pp. 160–196; *Bunt – Ekspresjonizm – Transgraniczna awangarda! Bunt – Expressionismus – Grenzübergreifende Avantgarde*, ed. Lidia Głuchowska (Poznań: Muzeum Narodowe w Poznaniu, 2015). For more publications about BUNT, see *Bunt-Der Sturm-Die Aktion. Polscy i niemieccy ekspresjoniści/Polnische und Deutsche Expressionisten*, eds. Agnieszka Salamon-Radecka, Andreas Hüneke, Susanna Köller (Gniezno: Muzeum Początków Państwa Polskiego, 2011); *Bunt-Ekspresjonizm-Transgraniczna Awangarda. Prace z berlińskiej kolekcji prof. St. K. Kubickiego/Bunt-Expressionismus-Grenzübergreifende Avantgarde. Werke aus der Berliner Sammlung von Prof. St. K. Kubicki*, ed. Lidia Głuchowska (Poznań: Muzeum Narodowe w Poznaniu, 2015). We should also remember about the publication that accompanied the exhibition *Polnische Avantgarde 1930–1990*, organized by Berliner Kunstverein and Łódź Art Museum in 1993: Lucie Schauer, *Polnische Avantgarde 1930–1990: eine Ausstellung des Neuen Berliner Kunstverein in Zusammenarbeit mit dem Museum Sztuki in Łódź*, November 1992 – 24 January 1993 (Berlin: Neue Berliner Kunstverein, 1992). Postwar avant-garde is a much more complex phenomenon that often escapes methodological schemes and overarching approaches. The most important elaboration of the Polish postwar avant-garde that highlights its circumstances, conditions, and functioning in the context of both East and West Germany, is the book by Piotr Piotrowski,

The celebrations of the centenary of the avant-garde in 2017 abound in exhibitions, conferences, and publications, several of which happened in Germany. One of them was in Düsseldorf – *The Word Lies, the Eye Never: Modernity in Polish Photography 1918–1939* – organized in cooperation with The Art Museum in Łódź, which presented the work of Polish interwar experimental artists: Kazimierz Podsadecki (1904–1970), Stefan Themerson (1910–1988), Jan Marian Brzeski (1907–1957), Jan Alojzy Neuman (1900–1941), Witold Romer (1900–1967), and Krystyna Gorazdowska (1914–1998). The Polish Institute in Berlin showed the exhibition *Bliskość linii prostej. Performatywność awangardy* [Proximity of a Straight Line: The Performativity of the Avant-Garde], focused on the artistic theories of Katarzyna Kobro (1889–1951) – especially her idea of the relationship between space, time, functionality, and movement – and their reception by the Polish postwar avant-garde artists. This exhibition was also organized in cooperation with the Art Museum in Łódź.

An important contribution was the exhibition *Otto Mueller. Maler. Mentor. Magier und sein Netzwerk in Breslau* which took place in the Hamburger Bahnhof Museum (12.10.2018–03.03.2019) and then in the National Museum in Wrocław (09.04.2019–30.06.2019). The curator, Dr. Dagmar Schmengler paid a special attention to emphasise the relationship between German and Polish avant-garde.⁵⁷

Beginning in 2016, Recklinghausen has also hosted a museum of Polish art in Das Museum Jerke, which presents the art of the Polish avant-garde and neo-avant-garde: Władysław Strzemiński, Katarzyna Kobro, Alina Szapocznikow (1926–1973), Andrzej Wróblewski (1927–1957), Karol Hiller (1891–1939), Rafał Bujnowski (1974–), Ryszard Grzyb, and Wilhelm Sasnal (1972–). Moreover, the postwar Polish avant-garde that contested the political reality of the Polish People's Republic appeared in Berlin in 2017 at an exhibition at KühlHaus, *KUNST DER FREIHEIT. Polska Nowa ekspresja*

The Avant-Garde in the Shadow of Yalta. The Art in East-Central Europe, 1945–1989 (London: Reaktion Books, 2011). An important thread of Polish art in Berlin is feminist art represented by such artists as Ewa Partum and Katarzyna Kozyra, whose situation is analyzed by Izabela Kowalczyk in *Ciało i władza. Polska sztuka krytyczna lat 90.* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Sic!, 2002) and *Matki-Polki, Chłopcy i Cyborgi. Sztuka i feminizm w Polsce* (Poznań: Galeria Miejska Arsenal, 2010) along with Agata Jakubowska in: “Divided Body. Ewa Partum’s ‘Hommage à Solidarność’ (Łódź 1982, West Berlin, 1983),” in: *To Each His Own Reality*, eds. Mathilde Arnoux, Clément Layet (Paris: Deutsches Forum Für Kunstgeschichte, 2014), <http://www.own-reality.org/en/publications>. (Accesed 06.06.2019).

57 For details about the idea and development of the exhibition, please see Dagmar Schmengler’s article on pages 65–80.

lat 80. XX w. walcząca [The Art of Freedom: Polish New Expression of the 1980s Fighting]. This exhibition included works by representatives of new expression in Polish art, including Jerzy Truszkowski (1961–), Ryszard Grzyb, Ryszard Woźniak, and Sylwester Ambroziak (1964–).

So far, there have been very few publications in foreign languages that would leave a lasting trace of the celebration of the centenary of the Polish avant-garde. We may mention the Polish-German publication by the National Museum in Szczecin: *Szczecińskie Awangardy/Stettiner Avantgarden* [Szczecin's Avant-gardes],⁵⁸ which accompanied the exhibition of the same name. The book presents the works of German artists and contains articles that analyze the interwar Polish and German weaving art, including art of Kazimierz Podsadecki.

Undoubtedly, Berlin is a city whose borders between the center and the periphery of European art were and remain very fluid. This quality of Berlin stems not only from the transitory character of its urban organism but also from the art of migrant artists from different parts of the world, different cultures, and different religions. Thus, we cannot perceive the presence of Polish avant-garde artists in Berlin through a hierarchical, vertical perspective of the Berlin metropolis that accepts artists who arrive from the periphery. Many chapters of this book may answer the challenging question posed by Piotr Piotrowski: “How does marginal art change the perception of the art of the center?”⁵⁹ Piotrowski’s 2009 idea of transnationality – which seeks to relieve the tensions between the center and the periphery that function in art history discourse – constitutes important methodological assumptions for research on the presence of Polish artists abroad, including Berlin. Thus, many texts in this book refer to Piotrowski’s methodological paradigm of the “horizontal history of art.”⁶⁰ The chapters in this publication seek to show that the Polish avant-garde was something autonomous, peculiar, concrete, individual, and that these traits only gained clarity under conditions of migration. Horizontality in this case is a *sine qua non* condition, because it allows to outline the widest possible perspective of the works of Polish artists, including here artists who belong to cultural minorities, feminist art, and queer art.

58 Szymon Piotr Kubiak, ed., *Szczecińskie Awangardy/Stettiner Avantgarden* (Szczecin: Muzeum Narodowe w Szczecinie, 2017).

59 Piotr Piotrowski, “Towards Horizontal History of the European Avant-Garde,” in: *European Avant-Garde and Modernism Studies/Etudes sur l’avant-garde et le modernisme en Europe/Studien zur europäischen Avantgarde und Moderne*, eds. Sascha Bru, Peter Nicholls (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2009), pp. 49–58.

60 See Piotrowski, “Towards Horizontal History of the European Avant-Garde,” p. 58.

The book in front of you contains chapters that present the current state of research on the Polish avant-garde in Berlin in a broad chronological perspective, from the prewar avant-garde to the present day. The chapters offer a diversity of research perspectives that range from literary studies and art history through gender studies and philosophy to art theory, also from the viewpoint of curatorial strategies and practices of presenting Polish art in Berlin. Three chapters of the book – (1) Center and Peripheries? Mobility and Transfer of the Interwar Avant-Garde, (2) The Feminine Avant-Garde, and (3) Contemporary Art Between Poland and Germany – signal the most important ideas that also characterize the methodological discourse, artistic strategies, and receptions of Polish avant-garde artists on Berlin's mental map. However, the scope of this book is mostly limited to visual, plastic art, while film, literature, and theater still deserve a separate study.

The first chapter offers texts that analyze the work of the Polish interwar, historical avant-garde by treating it as a transcultural and transnational phenomenon. The chapter begins with an article about Formists, an artistic group first exhibited in Cracow in 1917, which is considered the beginning of the Polish avant-garde. The researcher of the Formists group, Małgorzata Geron, reminds about the very important moment – from the viewpoint of the centenary of the Polish avant-garde – which was the appearance of Formists at exhibitions in Berlin and Munich, especially their reception by the German art critics. In turn, Lidia Głuchowska's chapter shows the Poznań group BUNT with the backdrop of the milieu associated with *Die Aktion*, *Der Sturm*, and Novembergruppe. Małgorzata Jędrzejczyk adopts an interesting perspective as she traces how Katarzyna Kobro's ideas, who never even visited Germany, penetrated German art. She juxtaposes Kobro's work with another artist who experimented with form and was active in the Berlin avant-garde, the Russian-born El Lissitzky. Thus, Jędrzejczyk uncovers the Eastern European roots of constructivism, only later developed in the international milieu of progressive artists in Berlin. Next, Nathan Diamant writes about the life and art of his kin – the Jewish artist Jesekiel David Kirszenbaum. Associated with Bauhaus and *Der Sturm* and counting among his mentors Paul Klee (1879–1940) and Wassily Kandinski (1866–1944), Kirszenbaum often addressed Jewish themes in his work, such as expressionistic images of Eastern European shtetls and traditional Jewish topoi. Kirszenbaum belonged to a milieu that created in the spirit of Jewish Expressionism and was a frequent visitor to the house of the Berlin “prophet” of this vein, Jakob Steinhardt. The first chapter ends with a text by Dagmar Schmengler, who describes the Berlin exhibition (12.10.2018–03.03.2019) entitled: *Maler. Mentor. Magier. Otto Mueller und sein Netzwerk in Breslau* (Painter. Mentor. Magus. Otto Mueller and his Network in Wrocław). Schmengler was the curator of this exhibition so,

in her chapter, she focuses on the contacts and mutual inspirations between Otto Mueller (1874–1930), the Berlin avant-garde milieu of *Die Brücke*, and the artists from Poland: Stanisław Kubicki, Henryk Berlewi, and Jankel Adler.⁶¹ What forms an important aspect of Schmengler’s text is the dialog with the artistic avant-garde tradition of prewar Breslau by the contemporary Wrocław artist Zdzisław Nitka (1962–).

The second chapter focuses on the often-overlooked aspect of (not only) Polish avant-garde, which is the art of women as a separate specific voice in the history of modern and contemporary art. This chapter is all the more important because in 2018 – the year after the centenary of the Polish avant-garde – Poles celebrated the centenary of Poland’s independence along with the centenary of voting rights for women.

The absence of her(art)story concerns not only the history of prewar art but also its discourse after 1945. And yet, the word “avant-garde” is feminine in both Polish and German. It is not just about recognizing and marking the presence of women in European avant-garde movements, but more about indicating what their choice of the free profession of a painter entailed. How did they define their identity? What were their aesthetic and life choices? This chapter’s article by Anna Dżabagina raises yet another important issue that, although it has been a known fact for a long time, slowly becomes the subject of separate studies and methodological considerations. Dżabagina considers how the avant-garde appears in light of gender studies, broadly understood. On the example of the work of writer and playwright Eleonora Kalkowska (1883–1937), Dżabagina scrutinizes the history of Berlin’s bohemian milieu from the feminine viewpoint and that of the increasingly active queer scene. In turn, from the perspective of twenty-six years from the first exhibition devoted to the Polish avant-garde organized in Germany in 1992 (*Polnische Avantgarde 1930–1990*), Teresa Fazan revises its curatorial concept by indicating the fact that there was only one woman among all the artists presented at the exhibition: Katarzyna Kobro. Fazan argues that this decision is incomprehensible and suggests that it stems from a conservative and masculine attitude that for many years dominated the research of art history. When elaborating the mistake of such an approach, Fazan discusses the figures of other female artists who should have appeared at this exhibition. Among these artists is Ewa Partum, who was the first to criticize the

61 The exhibition catalogs appeared in two language versions, Polish and German: *Maler. Mentor. Magier. Otto Mueller und sein Netzwerk in Breslau*, eds. Dagmar Schmengler, Agnes Kern, Lidia Głuchowska (Heidelberg: Kehrer, 2018); *Malarz. Mentor. Mag. Otto Mueller a środowisko artystyczne Wrocławia*, eds. Dagmar Schmengler, Lidia Głuchowska, Agnes Kern (Wrocław: Muzeum Narodowe we Wrocławiu, 2019).

exhibition by distributing leaflets with the slogan “Polish avant-garde female artists have their great chance only as a corpse.” Karolina Majewska-Güde’s chapter offers us a deeper insight into Partum’s work by showing how – after her move to Berlin in 1982 – Partum and her art evolved from the pragmatic model of feminist and political manifestos to the analytical use of her body and its weaving into performance as an artistic medium.

The last chapter concentrates on the activities of the Polish avant-garde in Berlin from 1945 until the present. Justyna Balisz’s text reveals how Expressionism was viewed behind the Iron Curtain in 1945–1989 as a style with German roots. In this case, the abolition of the hierarchical perspective in accordance with Piotrowski’s postulate becomes a litmus test that shows how much the national characteristics attributed to a particular artistic direction burdened the attempts of return to the “internationalist” paradigm of expressionist art.

The text by Artur Żmijewski – the author of the concept and curator of the 7th Biennale in Berlin – gives the reader the opportunity to explore the curatorial choices and the process of Biennale creation along with an overview of its most important artists.

The book ends with a chapter by the Austrian art historian and philosopher, Monika Leisch Kiesel. Leisch Kiesel proposes a deeper look at two exhibitions from 2017: the 57th Venice Biennale and Kassel *documenta 14*, the latter curated by Adam Szymczyk. Thus, Leisch Kiesel examines the presence of Polish artists at the latest exhibitions in Germany from the perspective of the global history of art and postcolonial studies.

The topic of this book, presenting a historical panorama of the Polish avant-garde in Berlin from the perspective of visual arts, should be further developed into a broader research program that also includes theater, film, and music. Looking at specific artistic strategies and development of modernist paradigm both in the pre- and post-Second World War period, from perspective of the migration experience offers a deeper insight into mechanism, relations, and identity programmes of particular artists or groups. It also reveals the dynamics of eventual cultural exchange or alternative forms of artistic transformation and message that Polish artists imprinted in the Berlin’s art scene. Whether historical avant-garde or neo-avant-garde, the component of novelty inscribed in the term itself, ceases to be a sheer, one-dimensional slogan and reveals a whole range of cultural projections that artists-migrant are both creators and the subject of. Here the notion of exotism, wilderness, but also critical and ironical approaches often constitute the perception of Polish art in the Berlin milieu. The story continues, the migrant Polish artists are still coming to Berlin, they create new projects and exhibit here. However now, their migrant’s experience is not only confronted with germanophonic or European heritage and common German-Polish memory,

in Berlin they experience the encounter with other migrants' stories – those fleeing from Syria, Sudan, or Nigeria. Will this encounter create a new paradigm of Polish avant-garde in Berlin or will it blend into a picture of artistic multiculturalism and globalization? Time will tell.

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**Chapter I: Center and Peripheries? Mobility
and Transfer of the Interwar
Avant-Garde**

Małgorzata Geron

Formists' Relations with the Artistic Milieus of Munich and Berlin

Abstract: This year we celebrate the centenary of the first exhibition by Formists (Polish Expressionists), which took place in Cracow, in November 1917. In their works, Formists combined Cubism, Futurism, and Expressionism with New Classicism and primitive art. In 1913, Herwart Walden organized the exhibition of “Expressionists, Cubists and Futurists” in Lviv; it featured mostly the works by the members of Der Blaue Reiter, Die Pathetiker, as well as Neue Sezession. The artists that were to become the representatives of Formists stayed in Munich and Berlin as early as before the First World War; among them were Eugeniusz Zak, Gustaw Gwozdecki, Zbigniew Pronaszko, Leon Chwistek, or Leon Dołżycki. August Zamoyski, who was married to Rita Sacchetto, a world-famous dancer affiliated with the Munich milieu, studied under Lovis Corinth and Joseph Wackerle. The same year as Formists, BUNT [Rebellion] group, strongly linked with German Expressionism, was formed in Poznań. The two groups collaborated closely, the best illustration of this partnership being the joint exhibitions in 1919/1920 and 1920. Thanks to these relations, Formists indirectly came into contact with German avant-garde. The group’s final exhibition took place in 1922, and a year earlier an issue of Munich magazine, *Der Ararat*, included an article by Julius Rottersmann, entitled “Der Polnische Formismus” that extensively characterized the group’s program and the outputs of its most prominent members.

Keywords: Formists, artistic milieus, Munich, Berlin, German avant-garde, Polish expressionists

In November 1917 Cracow hosted the first exhibition of *Ekspresjoniści Polscy* [Polish Expressionists], a new art group on Polish art scene of that day. Two years later, the group changed its official name to *Formiści* [Formists]. When he referred to this modification, Leon Chwistek, one of the co-founders of the group and its theoretician, who penned the programme manifesto of the formation, *Formizm* [Formism], stated that “[...] Expressionism was employed as a protest against official art,” but the key reason for parting with the original name was the direct rejection of the associations with German art.¹ The statement was followed by a definition of Formism as a trend in art that negated Academism while drawing from Cubism as well as

1 Leon Chwistek, *Formizm*, in: *Formiści. Wystawa III*, exhibition catalogue (Kraków, 1919), pp. 6–7.

from the experiences of Futurism and Expressionism. The new term accentuated a distinct aspect of the interpretation of the form and was frequently accompanied by the adjective “Polish.” Emphasizing this political aspect was associated with one of the most significant chapters in Polish history, namely regaining national independence in 1918. This belief was shared by Konrad Winkler, another member of the group, and the author of its first monograph, which was published while the group was still active. Winkler placed the origin of Formism beyond the influence of the avant-garde trends and emphasized the role of the Gothic sculpture and Podhale folk art (a cultural region in southern Poland at the foot of the Tatra Mountains).²

The group affiliated the artists representing the art milieu of Cracow, Warsaw, Lwów (Lviv), and Poznań. Apart from Chwitsek and Winkler, mentioned above, the members of the group included Tytus Czyżewski (1880–1945), the Pronaszko brothers: Andrzej (1888–1961) and Zbigniew (1885–1958), Tymon Niesiołowski (1882–1965), August Zamoyski (1893–1970), Jan Hrynkowski (1891–1971), Stanisław Ignacy Witkiewicz (1885–1939), Jacek Mierzejewski (1884–1925), Gustaw Gwozdecki (1880–1935), Eugeniusz Zak (1884–1926), Leopold Gottlieb (1883–1934), Roman Kramsztyk (1885–1942), Henryk Gotlib (1890–1966), and Leon Dołżycki (1888–1965). For the most part, they belonged to the generation born between 1880 and 1890, whose artistic attitudes were shaped before the First World War.³ Their creative endeavours were to a great extent shaped by their artistic journeys. Apart from visiting Paris, these creators sought inspiration in Berlin and Munich.⁴

Between 1898 and 1900, Gwozdecki studied at the University of Munich. Apart from the education he received at Stanisław Grocholski’s (1858–1932) private academy, the artist’s further endeavours were greatly influenced by various tendencies evolving within that milieu. On the one hand, he appreciated Franz von Lenbach’s (1835–1904) portrait art, and on the other hand, the realism with elements of Impressionism characteristic of the works by Wilhelm Leibl (1844–1900).⁵ Simultaneously, the symbolic and expressionist

2 Konrad Winkler, *Formizm na tle współczesnych kierunków w sztuce* (Kraków: D.E. Friedlein, 1921).

3 Małgorzata Geron, “Krakow Formist Group (1917–1923). Genesis of Polish Avant-Garde Art,” in: *Poland-China. Art and Cultural Heritage*, ed. Joanna Wasilewska (Kraków: Jagiellonian University Press, 2011), pp. 85–94.

4 Jerzy Malinowski, “Polska awangarda w Niemczech 1900–1933,” in: *Między Polską a światem. Od średniowiecza po lata II wojny światowej*, ed. Mieczysław Morka and Piotr Paszkiewicz (Warszawa: Polska Akademia Nauk Instytut Sztuki, Wydawnictwo “Krağ”, 1993), pp. 260–270.

5 Anna Lipa, “Gustaw Gwozdecki 1880–1935,” in: *Monographic exhibition catalogue*, ed. Marta Gołąb (Poznań: National Museum in Poznań, 2003), p. 44.

tendencies that appeared among the creators of *Verein Bildenden Künstler München - Sezession* [Association of Visual Artists Munich – Secession] and which became later notable for his subsequent creations could not have gone unnoticed by him. The landscapes created during that time demonstrate the influence of so-called *Stimmung*, a phenomenon of atmospheric scenery characteristic of Munich and its artistic mood. These very compositions were to be admired by Anton Ažbè (1862–1905), the Slovenian painter who ran a private painting school in Munich, which was very popular among students from Central and Eastern Europe. Its students included the future founders of *Der Blaue Reiter*: Wassily Kandinsky (1866–1944), Alexej von Jawlensky (1864–1941), Marianne von Werefkin (1860–1938), as well as the Ukrainian Futurists, the Burliuk brothers: David (1882–1967) and Vladimir (1886–1917). For a few months in 1903, Ažbè's students, apart from Gwozdecki, included Eugeniusz Zak and Leopold Gottlieb.⁶ Their artistic education and studies were complemented by contact with the collections of masterpieces of European painting gathered in the *Alte Pinakothek*. Gottlieb created a copy of one of the components of this exceptional assemblage, a canvas by an unknown seventeenth-century Dutch master depicting *Jesus and the Scribes*.⁷

Further, Gottlieb along with Zak, and thanks to the agency of Elie Nadelman (1882–1946), who happened to be in the Bavarian capital at the time, also received an opportunity to familiarize themselves with the opinions of Adolf von Hildebrand (1847–1921). Referring to the patterns visible in his works, the sculptor and professor of the academy emphasized the aspect of two-dimensional reception of the sculpture. Next, since 1904, Roman Kramsztyk had been studying at the Munich Royal Academy of Fine Arts for three years.⁸ Before the First World War, this art school became the academic choice of Henryk Gotlib as well,⁹ and Chwistek visited Berlin and

6 Jerzy Malinowski and Barbara Brus-Malinowska, *W kręgu École de Paris. Malarze żydowscy z Polski* (Warszawa: DiG Publishing, 2007), pp. 45–46, 70; Artur Tanikowski, *Wizerunki człowieczeństwa, rytuały powszedniości. Leopold Gottlieb i jego dzieło* (Kraków: UNIVERSITAS, 2011), p. 47.

7 Malinowski, Brus-Malinowska, *W kręgu École de Paris*, p. 70; Tanikowski, *Wizerunki człowieczeństwa*, p. 49.

8 Renata Piątkowska, *Między "Ziemiańską" a Montparnasse'em. Roman Kramsztyk* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Neriton, 2004), pp. 70–72.

9 Małgorzata Geron, "Henryk Gotlib. The Work in Poland and England," in: *Art of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland & the Republic of Ireland in 20th–21st Centuries and Polish-British & Irish Art Relations, Studia o Sztuce Nowoczesnej/Studies on Modern Art*, Vol. 5, eds. Małgorzata Geron, Jerzy Malinowski, Jan Wiktor Sienkiewicz (Toruń: Nicolaus Copernicus University Press, Polish Institute of World Art Studies, 2015), p. 199.

Munich in 1905. In the capital of Germany, he admired the achievements of Arnold Böcklin (1827–1901). He returned there later, during his mathematics studies in 1909. In one of his letters, he related the impressions triggered by the collections of the Altes Museum and the National Gallery and stated: “The whole German painting is hopeless. But Monet, Renoir, and Segantini, and above all Goya.”¹⁰

Further, Böcklin’s works were noticed by Tymon Niesiołowski.¹¹ His stay in Munich in 1907 was connected to the exhibition of Cracow Grupa Pięciu [Group of Five] (1905–1908), previously shown in Berlin.¹² Apart from Niesiołowski, it included Leopold Gottlieb, Witold Wojtkiewicz (1879–1909), Jan Rembowski (1879–1923), Vlastimil Hofman (1881–1970), and Mieczysław Jakimowicz (1881–1917). The works by the members of Grupa Pięciu possessed a symbolic–literary character, additionally enriched with Expressionist elements. Stanisław Przybyszewski (1868–1927) greatly influenced their artistic attitudes. After a few years spent in Berlin, in 1898 Przybyszewski moved to Cracow, where he took over the editorial board of the magazine *Życie* [Life]. He published the manifesto of the new art, *Confiteor*, in which he affirmed the freedom of the creative individual, uninhibited by any social functions or tasks. Under the influence of the writings by Arthur Schopenhauer (1788–1860) and Friedrich Nietzsche (1844–1900), Przybyszewski formulated the theory of a “naked soul,” in which he emphasized the importance of the subconscious and emotional experience. It was these views that influenced the trend of early Expressionism that crystallized at the time in Poland and became the foundation for early creations of future Formists.

It was in Munich, in 1910 that Stanisław Ignacy Witkiewicz (Witkacy) had an opportunity to see the works by Pablo Picasso (1881–1973) and Georges Braque (1882–1963). Leon Dołżycki probably saw them as well on his way to Italy via Berlin and Munich.¹³ In 1907, while staying in Munich, Zbigniew Pronaszko created his *Portret brata* [Brother’s portrait], drawn with pastel¹⁴ (Ill. 1). In the summer of 1910, Gwozdecki came to Berlin. In the following

10 Małgorzata Geron, *Formiści. Twórczość i programy artystyczne* (Toruń: Nicolaus Copernicus University Press, 2015), p. 56.

11 Małgorzata Geron, *Tymon Niesiołowski (1882–1965). Życie i twórczość* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Neriton, 2004), pp. 62–63.

12 Małgorzata Geron, “Grupa Pięciu (1905–1908),” in: *Sztuka lat 1905–1908. Malarstwo – rzeźba – grafika – krytyka artystyczna*. Post-conference materials, Toruń 21–23 September 2005, eds. Małgorzata Geron and Jerzy Malinowski (Toruń: Wydawnictwo Interdyscyplinarnego Koła Naukowego Doktorantów Uniwersytetu Mikołaja Kopernika, 2006), pp. 10–17.

13 Geron, *Formiści*, p. 56.

14 Geron, *Formiści*, p. 55.



Ill. 1: Zbigniew Pronaszko. *Brother's portrait*, 1907, pastel on paper. District Museum in Tarnów.

months, he sent his works depicting flowers and still lifes (Ill. 2) to the exhibitions organized by the Berlin Juryfreien as well as to the presentations in Munich, Vienna, and Leipzig.¹⁵ The paintings, well-received by the critics, were painted with visible, resolute brush strokes, and their concept was further developed in his portraits, shaped by full-colour planes of significant colour and contrasts, referring to the experiences of Expressionists and Fauvists. Zak, who lived in Paris as well, presented his works several times at the Berlin Secession (1910, 1912), the Free Secession in Berlin (1914), and the Künstlervereinigung [Association of Artists] exhibition in Munich (1912). The presentation of the Berlin Secession (1912) and the Free Secession included the works by Kramsztyk as well.¹⁶ An extensive account of the presentation of the former in 1912 was printed in a Poznań magazine *Literatura i Sztuka* [Literature and art]. Cezary Jellenta praised the outputs of exhibiting artists, among others, Max Liebermann (1847–1935), Lovis Corinth (1858–1925), as well as Max Slevogt (1868–1932). Max Pechstein's (1881–1955) and Max Beckmann's works (1884–1950), in contrast, received negative reviews, just like the Cubist achievements. In the conclusion of his review, Jellenta referred to the poetic nature of an Arcadian landscape by Zak (*Pasterka/Shepherdess*,

15 Lipa, *Gustaw Gwozdecki 1880–1935*, p. 55.

16 Malinowski, *Polska awangarda*, p. 262.



III. 2: Gustaw Gwozdecki. *Still life with a Japanese doll* (Still life with a doll, Still life), 1911, oil on canvas. Muzeum Śląskie, Katowice.

1911?; Ill. 3), which was accomplished by “the extraordinary softness of the line and tone” as well as Kramsztyk’s male portraits.¹⁷ A photograph of Kramsztyk’s *Pejzaż z Cassis* [Landscape from Cassis] opened an account from the exhibition of the Free Secession in Berlin in 1914, printed in *Deutsche Kunst und Dekoration* [German Art and Dekoration] journal. While characterizing the venture itself and the artists participating in it, Walter Georgi referred to the composition of Kramsztyk’s landscapes, which revealed the influence of Cézanne as well as a very captivating painting *Żeglarz* [Sailor] by Zak.¹⁸ In 1922, in the pages of the same journal, an extensive text on Zak,

17 Cezary Jellenta, “Tegoroczna ‘secesja’ berlińska,” *Literatura i sztuka*, No 17(1912) [a supplement to] *Dziennik Poznański*, Vol. 54, No 17(1912), pp. 257–259.

18 Walter Georgi, “Freie Secession Berlin 1914,” *Deutsche Kunst und Dekoration*, Vol. 34(1914), p. 156.



Ill. 3: Eugeniusz Zak. *Shepherdess*, 1911, photo from the artist's archive. National Museum in Warsaw.

written by Heinrich Ritter, was published. While characterizing the painter's output, the author repeatedly emphasized the melancholy and poetic effect emanating from his canvases.¹⁹

Another formist, August Zamoyski who stayed in Berlin even before the First World War, recalled later, "I often spent my evenings at a drawing course run by Lovis Corinth, a famous German painter of that day."²⁰ In the capital of Germany, the artist also began his sculpture training under

19 Hans Ritter, "Eugen Zak," *Deutsche Kunst und Dekoration*, Vol. 50(1922), pp. 2–10.

20 August Zamoyski, "Jak i dlaczego wyrosłem z formizmu," No 1–2(1968), p. 23.

the direction of Joseph Wackerle (1880–1959).²¹ At that time, he also came into contact with the artistic community of the Café des Westens, opened until 1915, and the key figures there—Herwarth Walden (1879–1941), and his wife, a poet, Else Lasker-Schüler (1869–1945) as well as the creators working within the realm of Expressionism.²²

Rita Sacchetto (1880?–1959), a world-famous dancer and Zamoyski's wife, was born in Munich. She became internationally famous thanks to her “dance paintings,” inspired by well-known works of art, which were the synthesis of dance, visual art, and music. From 1905 the artist performed throughout Europe and the United States. Several times (1910, 1912, and 1913) she toured in important German cities (including Frankfurt am Main, Magdeburg, Hamburg, Weimar, Augsburg, and Leipzig). From the beginning of her career, she often performed in Berlin. In 1907, Berlin *Die Post* published a column that discussed the repertoire presented by the artist. Its author, Hans von Oehlschläger, paid special attention to the “dance paintings,” in which Sacchetto “embodies” the character of the Duchess of Devonshire (1757–1806), inspired by the portrait by Thomas Gainsborough (1727–1788), or a Spanish dancer in visual layer referring to paintings by Diego Velazquez (1599–1660) and Francisco Goya (1746–1828), employing compositions by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756–1791), George Friedrich Händel (1685–1759), Anton Rubinstein (1829–1894), and Maurycy Moszkowski (1854–1925).²³ In Berlin Grunewald Sacchetto founded *Plastisch - dramatische Tanzschule* [Plastic-drama dancing school].²⁴ In October and December 1916, Sacchetto and her students performed at the Berlin Blütner-Saal. The performance, described in the folder advertising it as *Tanz und Dichtung* [Dance and poetry], included famous Spanish dances performed by Sacchetto, who also presented an “oriental pantomime,” based on *Djamileh* by Georges Bizet (1838–1875). In the next part of the performance, Anita Berber (1899–1928), her most famous student, together with Sacchetto presented *Gotische Frauen* [Gothic women] to the music of Edvard Grieg (1843–1907) dressed in costumes inspired by medieval fashion.²⁵

21 Katarzyna Chrudzimska-Uhera, *Stylizacje i modernizacje. O rzeźbiarzach w Zakopanem w latach 1879–1939* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Kardynała Stefana Wyszyńskiego, 2013), pp. 161–162.

22 Zamoyski, “Jak i dlaczego,” p. 23.

23 H. von Oehlschläger, “Feuilleton. Rita Sacchetto (Gastspiel in der Komischen Oper),” *Die Post* (Berlin), 9.09.1909.

24 Małgorzata Geron, “Działalność Artystyczna Rity Sacchetto /The Artistic Activity of Rita Sacchetto,” in: *August Zamoyski. Nie tylko z archiwum/Not just from The Archives*, ed. Maria Śledzianowska (Warszawa: Muzeum Literatury, 2019), pp. 218–241.

25 *Rita Sacchetto mit den Meisterschülerinnen ihrer Tanzschule...* (The Programme of the Performance 28. October 1916).

An important point of Sacchetto's career was the joint performances with Alexander Sacharoff (1886–1963) at the Münchener Künstlerhaus (1912).

On the basis of the preserved program, it is known that Sacchetto and Sacharoff, inspired by François Boucher's (1703–1770) paintings, depicting pastoral scenes, danced together to the works by Johann Sebastian Bach (1685–1750), Felix Mendelssohn (1809–1847), and presented fantastic scenes from Pierrot's life (*Dream*) to Robert Schumann's music (1810–1856). Additionally, Sacchetto presented Spanish dances (Moszkowski and Rubinstein), Tarantella (Franz Liszt 1811–1886), while Sacharoff presented dance fantasies (Claude Debussy 1862–1918) and dance in the Renaissance style (Girolamo Frescobaldi 1583–1643).²⁶ Due to his Russian descent, he collaborated with Wasilly Kandinsky (1866–1944), and the artists gathered in Der Blaue Reiter group who collaborated since 1911. Thanks to these joint presentations, constituting a synthesis of dance, music, and visual arts, Sacchetto broadened her scope of artistic activities to the contact with the progressive community.²⁷

The artists who were coming to Berlin around 1910 were greatly inspired by the circle that was gathered around an art magazine founded by Herwarth Walden, and later Der Sturm Gallery, which served as a source of information. One of the outcomes of his endeavours was *The Exhibition of Cubists, Futurists, and Expressionists*, presented in Lviv in the summer of 1913.²⁸ Despite its broad-ranging title, suggesting a review of the three most important trends in modern art of the early twentieth century, the Lviv audience was shown over 80 works, primarily by German Expressionists. Forty-five works, over half of the presented pieces, were created by Alexej von Jawlensky, associated with the Munich group Der Blaue Reiter. The founding father of the group, Wasilly Kandinsky, was presented via two *Studies*. Other exhibitors included the representatives of the Berlin Neue Sezession: Moritz Melzer (1877–1966), Arthur Segal (1875–1944), Heinrich Richter (1884–1981), Cesar Klein (1876–1954), and Wilhelm Morgner (1891–1917) also presented his works, and they appeared in *Der Blaue Reiter Almanach* and *Der Sturm*. Another exhibitor was one of Walden's significant associates, Oskar Kokoschka (1886–1980). Other artists whose works were present

26 Rita Sacchetto und Alexander Sacharoff. *Münchener Künstlerhaus* (The Programme of the Performance 1912).

27 Rainer Stamm, "Alexander Sacharoff – Bildende Kunst und Tanz/Alexander Sacharoff – Dance and the Fine Arts," in: *Die Sacharoffs. Zwei Tänzer aus dem Umkreis des Blauen Reiter/Two Dancers within the Blaue Reiter Circle*, ed. Frank M. Peter (Köln: Wienand, 2002), pp. 20–21.

28 Elizabeth Clegg, "Futurists, Cubists and the Like. Early Modernism and late Imperialism," *Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte*, Vol. 56, No 2(1993), pp. 246–277.

included Ludwig Meidner (1884–1966), the founder of a Berlin group Die Pathetiker, as well as a Czech author, Bohumil Kubišta (1884–1918), who presented his works together with the Neue Sezession, and a member of the Skupina Výtvarných Umělců.²⁹ The catalogue contained large fragments of texts by Franz Marc (1880–1916), Rudolf Leonard (1889–1953), Hans Goltz (1873–1927), and Kandinsky.

In Poznań, the BUNT Expressionist group was formed, almost concurrent with the Formists. Initially, Zamoyski collaborated with them. The artist took part in the first exhibition of BUNT in Poznań, in March 1918 (re-opened in April). Most of the works presented at that time were shown in June of the same year in Berlin at the Franz Pfemfert's (1879–1954) Die Aktion Gallery. On the occasion of this presentation, a special issue of *Die Aktion* was issued (1918, issue 21/22).³⁰ The cover depicted an advertisement of the exhibition and resembled a catalogue list with the names of its participants (Jerzy Hulewicz 1886–1941, Margarete Kubicka 1891–1984, Stanisław Kubicki 1889–1942, Władysław Skotarek 1894–1969, Stefan Szmał 1893–1970, Jan Wroniecki 1890–1948, and August Zamoyski) and the titles of fifty works. Zamoyski presented seven works. Among them were the sculptures, *Łza (Portret Rity Sacchetto)* [Tear (Rita Sacchetto's Portrait, c. 1917)] and *Sansara* (1917), as well as watercolours depicting nudes (Ill. 4–5). Additionally, one drawing of a nude, with its simplified shape defined by a wavy line, was reproduced in the pages of the magazine, among several other works by other exhibition's participants. In July and August 1918, Zamoyski exhibited his works at Pfemfert's Gallery again, concurrently with an exhibition of works by Heinrich Richter-Berlin.³¹ Analyzing Zamoyski's work, one should mention William Wauer (1866–1962), whose works were exhibited the same year in Der Sturm Gallery. The juxtaposition of the sculptural portraits by both artists (e.g., Wauer's *Portrait of Herwarth Walden*, 1917; *Portrait of Albert Bassermann*, 1918; and Zamoyski's *Portrait of Roger Raczyński*, 1918) immediately reveals the characteristic simplification and geometrization of the images, inspired by the avant-garde art. The artists achieved rather original effect by gradually synthesizing the realistic image, without rejecting the characteristic physiognomic features of the model. Further, Wauer's portraits demonstrate even more powerful

29 *Katalog wystawy futurystów, kubistów i ekspresjonistów. Wystawa prac Gustawa Pilatięgo*, exhibition catalogue, Lwów TPSP [Society of Friends of Fine Arts], June–July 1913.

30 *Die Aktion*, Issue 21/22 (1 June 1918). I am very grateful to Dr. Lidia Głuchowska for sharing this issue of *Die Aktion*.

31 Jerzy Malinowski, *Sztuka i nowa wspólnota. Zrzeszenie Artystów Bunt 1917–1922* (Wrocław: Wydawnictwo Wiedza o Kulturze, 1991), p. 26.



Ill. 4: Page of *Zdrój*, Y. II, Vol. V, No 3(1918), p. 72, with a plaster cast by August Zamoyski *Tear*, c. 1917. Private collection.

expressionistic element. Zamoyski, on the other hand, formed the shape of the head and features of the face in a Formist transposition, reducing them to the play of convex and concave forms.

In the summer of 1918, Zamoyski and Sacchetto moved to Zakopane, where they met Witkiewicz, the Pronaszko brothers, and Niesiołowski. The outcome of these relations was Zamoyski's participation in the subsequent Formists' exhibitions, accompanied by Sacchetto's Formist dance shows. His ideas combined the dancer's previous experiences associated with "dance images" and avant-garde objectives, which resulted in a performance focusing on the "weave of elements" such as colour (costume), body movement, and sound, eventually achieving "a construction of a work of art

265 DIE AKTION 266

Hilflos — nur dein — wie damals.
Geist entflo, dem standest du fern.
Brauchtest du sonst jetzt leblose
Glieder zu halten?
Jetzt — da Geist fort —
O! fluch über dich, Mutter des Sohnes,
Die nichts verstand.
Uns keinen Weg zeigte mit ihm,
Uns öden Frauen.
Kleines selbst-loses Kind
da warst du noch da
Dann —
verlorst du ihn und dich.
Frauen,
führerlos
wankend
Wer zeigt uns den Weg?...

Margarete Kubicka


AN MEIN KIND
O kannst Du mir die Erde verzeihen, mein Kind,
diese Erde?
Und mein Versagen, die Hilflosigkeit beim Tod
Deiner ersten Liebe?
Beim Zerbrecen des ersten Menschen, der Dein
war, der Puppe?
Denn für Dich starb mit dieser leblosen Täuschung
ein Mensch!
Es starb zum erstenmal, die Du ihm eingehaucht,
Deine Seele.
Ach, wie traf mich ins Herz Dein wissender Blick
des Vorwurfs.
Dieser erste zögernde Zweifel an der Güte der
Dinge.
Dein Zweifel an meiner Liebe und am stern-
starrenden Himmel des Glücks.

— — — — —
O kannst Du mir die Erde verzeihen, mein Kind,
diese Erde?
Und jenen ersten Anblick, gestern, des Menschen
ohne Arm und Bein?
Ach, wie wir uns eng aneinander hielten um es
zu tragen!
Und wieder starb da in Ahnung der Welt Dein
liebendes Herz.
Das Bild vom guten und schönen Menschen zer-
brach.
Doch nimmer hätte der Engel in Dir begriffen:
„Warum?“
Die Blumen Deiner Augen hingen voll Tau zittern-
der Fragen.
Da geschah die rührende Geste Deines Händ-
chens, das sich mir gab.
Die zarte Geste des Glaubens an mich, die mich
der Antwort entthob.
Der Antwort: Auch durch mich, durch meine
Schweigen verlor er die Glieder.

— — — — —
Und wirst Du mir die Erde verzeihen, mein Kind,
diese Erde?
Einmal, wenn Du stehst vor dem zerbrochenen
Leib des Geliebten?
Und Dein Herz auf immer gestorben ist?

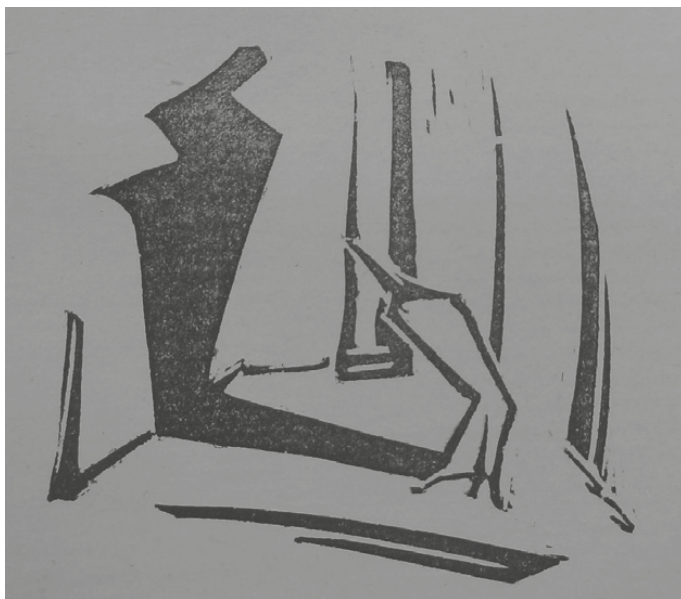
Einmal, wenn Du siehst, daß der Mensch nur
Recht hat an Eins,
Den echtensten, tiefsten Besitz dieser Welt: An
den Schmerz.
Wirst Du nicht in mein Alter treten und Klage
an Klage reihn?
„Was hast Du getan um zu verhüten, Mutter, um
zu verhüten das Leid?
Aus eurer Duldung wurde ein Tor für das Elend,
Mütter!
Und hinter dem Tor setztet ihr uns aus in die
Welt.
Nicht steht mein Fuß in Blüten und Fruchtbarkeit.
Nicht wandle ich den Sternen entlang unter blau-
seidenem Baldachin.
Auf dem Meer schwarzer Schreie, im Wald ab-
gehauener Glieder wuchsen wir auf.
Aus der Hölle Wiedergekehrte waren uns Brüder.“
O Kind, wirst Du mir da die Erde verzeihn?
Woher nahm ich den Mut und das Recht Dich
den Menschen zu geben?
Einmal, ich weiß, wirst Du mir fluchen, mein
Kind.

Claire Studer



August Graf Zamoyski *Zeichnung*

Ill. 5: Page of *Die Aktion*, Issue. 21/22 (1 June, 1918), p. 266, with a drawing by August Zamoyski.



Ill. 6: Page of *Zdrój*, Y.IV, Vol. XI, No 6(1920), p. 185, with a woodcut by Artur Swinarski *Rita Sacchetto's dance*.

without the subject content.”³² All these activities, derived from the idea of “free dance,” to which the concept of Formist dance referred, aimed mainly at combining dance and pantomime, a current stage movement emphasizing the emotional sphere with the modern painting and sculpture. An illustration of such formative presentation was *Kokaina* [Cocaine], a story of a young Hindu man who, after taking the drug, experiences a cocaine trance.³³ Sacchetto directed the performance and designed the costumes, while Zamoyski was the author of the decorations, the paintings, and the staging of the production. *Kokaina* became an artistic success outside Zakopane and was presented in Vienna, Prague, Rijeka, Zagreb, Budapest, and, in 1922, in Munich, in a prestigious Deutsches Theater [German Theater], which was at the time managed by Hans Gruss (Gruß), who put great emphasis on the high level of the performances presented there (Ill. 6).

32 August Zamoyski, *Cele artystyczne Rity Sacchetto (Objaśnienia teoretyczne)* (Kraków, 1919).

33 Geron, “*Kokaina/Cocain* Rity Sacchetto i Augusta Zamoyskiego,” in: *Wokół 1918 roku. Niepodległość i awangarda*, “Pamiętnik Sztuk Pięknych” Vol. 13, eds. Małgorzata Geron, Jerzy Malinowski, (Toruń: Nicolaus Copernicus University Press, Polish Institute of World Art Studies, 2018), pp. 33–42.

The role of “intermediary” between the groups was given to Jerzy Hulewicz, a member of the BUNT group who at the same time cooperated with Formists. During his studies at the Academy of Fine Arts in Cracow (1904–1906), he probably met Czyżewski. Between 1907 and 1910, he stayed in Paris and became affiliated with the artistic colony there, with which Zak, Z. Pronaszko and Czyżewski were already associated.³⁴ Years later, Hulewicz wrote an introduction to a volume of Czyżewski’s poetry, stressing the determination the painter and poet demonstrated in his contestation of conservative artistic attitudes.³⁵ Hulewicz took part in three exhibitions of Formists (Cracow 1918, Warsaw 1919 and 1920). Other members of BUNT: Szmań (Cracow 1918) as well as Skotarek and Wroniecki (Warsaw 1920)³⁶ presented their works as well. The climax of the cooperation between Formists and BUNT were two joint exhibitions that took place in Poznań between December 1919 and January 1920, and then, in May and June 1920 in Lviv.³⁷

The presentations testified to the strong bonds between Formists and BUNT. These were further confirmed by the articles appearing in the *Zdrój* magazine, associated with BUNT. A 1918 text *Ekspresjonści* [Expressionists] distinctly emphasized that “In Poland, the Expressionist movement was marked with the utmost clarity, above all in Cracow and Poznań.”³⁸ The union of aspirations was further confirmed by another text, printed on the occasion of the exhibition of the two groups in Poznań. Its author underlined the diversity manifested in the form and content of the works, simultaneously predicting the emergence of “a clear style, initiating a new era of human development.”³⁹ Apart from the representatives of BUNT, the subsequent issues of *Zdrój*, published between 1918 and 1920, reproduced the works by the following Formists: Chwistek, Andrzej and Zbigniew Pronaszko, Czyżewski, Hrynkowski, Niesiołowski, and Ludwik Lille (1897–1957). The reproductions of sculptures as well as the drawings of nudes by Zamoyski appeared repeatedly, and were described as an “original phenomenon,” and also praised for the “unusual sense of shape” of the sculptures, head-to-head to “the watercolors, no less strong in their

34 Geron, *Formiści*, p. 347.

35 Tytus Czyżewski, *Osiół i słońce w metamorfozie. Włamywacz z lepszego towarzystwa (1 akt 10 minut)*, introduction: Jerzy Hulewicz, Leon Chwistek (Kraków: Gebethner i Wolff, 1922).

36 Geron, *Formiści*, pp. 106, 109, 118.

37 Geron, *Formiści*, pp. 114–117, 119–123.

38 [Jerzy Hulewicz?], “Ekspresjonści,” *Zdrój*, Y.II, No 6(1918), p. 190.

39 [Jerzy Hulewicz?], “Wystawa Formistów i Buntu w Poznaniu,” *Zdrój*, Y. III, No 4(1919), p. 111.

unbridled flamboyance, in frantic swirl of lines bathed in a game of rainbow colors.”⁴⁰ From 1920, the works by Leon Dolżycki, who collaborated as a set designer with Poznań Grand Theater, began to be presented in the periodical.⁴¹ The works by Formists appeared next to the reproductions from the Pfemfert and Walden collections that included the artists of such magnitude as Alexander Archipenko (1887–1964), George Minne (1866–1941), André Derain (1880–1954), Henri Matisse (1869–1954), Pablo Picasso (1881–1973), Roger de la Fresnaye (1885–1925), Vincent van Gogh (1853–1890), and Franz Marc (1880–1916).⁴² One of the covers was decorated with a woodcut by Heinrich Campendonk (1889–1957).⁴³ The works of these artists, associated with *Der Blaue Reiter*, were addressed in greater detail. While promoting his exhibition, which was held at *Der Sturm* Gallery, it was stated that he belonged to the most prominent representatives of Expressionism. As in the context of painting and graphic art, frequently depicting animals, the “extraordinary power of expression” and “the boldness of the colour reaching the sublime”⁴⁴ were emphasized. An equally positive review referred to Josef Čapek (1887–1945), a representative of *Skupina Výtvarných Umělcu*, who was previously introduced in *Die Aktion* magazine. The author of the text focused mainly on the characteristics of the woodcuts reproduced in *Zdrój* that in his opinion characterized with “uncanny simplicity, melancholy, and the power of expression.”⁴⁵ In 1920, the anthology *Brzask epoki. W walce o nową sztukę* [The Dawn of the Age. In the Struggle for a New Art] was released. It contained the texts and the illustrations selected from the issues of *Zdrój* magazine published between 1917 and 1919.⁴⁶ The publication was characterized by a syncretism of poetics and aesthetics. The texts by Przybyszewski, Hulewicz, Kandinsky, and Umberto Boccioni were published in one place and illustrated with the works of Formists, members of the BUNT group, and the artists of the *Der Sturm* and *Die Aktion* milieus, the purpose being the emphasis on the community of artistic aspirations.

40 J. H. [Hulewicz], “Wystawa Buntu,” *Zdrój*, Y. II, No 2(1918), p.59.

41 N.a., “*Madame Butterfly* w Teatrze Wielkim,” *Zdrój*, Y. III, No 4(1919), p. 11; J. H. [Hulewicz], “Z wystaw plastyki,” *Zdrój*, Y. IV, No 1–2(1920), p. 119.

42 See *Zdrój* Y. II, Vol. IV, No 5(1918); *Zdrój*, Y. II, Vol. V, No 1(1918); *Zdrój*, Y. IV, Vol. XII, No 2(1920).

43 See *Zdrój*, Y. III, Vol. VII, No 1–2(1919).

44 N.a., “Odpowiedzi od Redakcji,” *Zdrój*, Y. II, Vol. V, No 1(1918), p. 28.

45 N.a., “Odpowiedzi od Redakcji,” *Zdrój*, Y. II, Vol. IV, No 2(1918), p. 64; reprint in *Zdrój*, Y. II, Vol. IV, No 1(1918), p. 21.

46 *Brzask epoki. W walce o nową sztukę*, Vol. I (1917–1919), (Poznań: *Zdrój*, 1920).

Thanks to these accounts, Formists gained an opportunity to extend their artistic endeavours through contacts established via BUNT.⁴⁷ In the first half of 1918, Formists cooperated with *Maski* [Masks], an art magazine published in Cracow. The result, apart from the publication of an important programme text *O ekspresjonizmie* [On Expressionism] by Zbigniew Pronaszko, was the reproductions of the works by the group members.⁴⁸ Interestingly, their works appeared next to the reproductions of the paintings by Paul Cézanne (1839–1906), van Gogh or Matisse, as well as the works by Marc, Max Pechstein (1881–1951), Kees van Dongen (1877–1968), and Oskar Kokoschka (1886–1980). The introduction of such combination could be related to the article dealing with the issue, broadly understood, of Expressionism, with which the authors mentioned above were associated.⁴⁹ This issue was addressed again in an article by Karol Irzykowski (1873–1944), *Bahr o ekspresjonizmie* [Bahr on Expressionism], referring to *Expressionismus*, a work published in 1916.⁵⁰ Characterizing Hermann Bahr's (1863–1934) views, Irzykowski encouraged reading the book, because it “may serve as a guideline for the people who approach this new ‘ism’ (Expressionism) with prejudice, finding no bridge between their world, and this new one.”⁵¹ In the pages of *Maski*, there was also a reprint of an article by Romain Rolland (1866–1944), entitled *Z literatury wojennej Niemiec* [From German war literature] that mentioned *Die Aktion*. In the

47 See Karol Kubicki, “Zdrój i *Die Aktion*. Współpraca dwóch czasopism kulturalnych w okresie pierwszej wojny światowej/Zdrój and *Die Aktion*. Cooperation of Two Cultural Periodicals During the First World War,” in: BUNT. *Ekspresjonizm poznański 1917–1925*, exhibition catalogue, ed. Grażyna Hałasa (Poznań: National Museum in Poznań, 2003), pp. 80–95; Agnieszka Salamon-Radecka, “Poznańskie stowarzyszenie artystów BUNT (1917–1925) i jego kontakty z niemieckimi ekspresjonistami/Der Posener Künstlerverein BUNT (1917–1925) und seine Kontakte mit den deutschen Expressionisten,” in: *Bunt-Der Sturm-Die Aktion. Polscy i niemieccy ekspresjoniści /Polnische und deutsche Expressionisten*, Ausstellungskatalog, ed. Lidia Głuchowska (Gniezno: Muzeum Początków Państwa Polskiego, 2011), pp. 15–27; Lidia Głuchowska, “Zdrój-Die Aktion-Der Sturm. Czasopisma artystyczne i transfer kulturowy a echa kubizmu w twórczości graficznej artystów grupy Bunt,” in: *Bunt a tradycje grafiki w Polsce i Niemczech*, eds. Lidia Głuchowska, Honorata Gołubińska, Michał F. Woźniak (Bydgoszcz: Leon Wyczółkowski District Museum in Bydgoszcz, 2015), pp. 37–60.

48 Zbigniew Pronaszko, “O ekspresjonizmie,” *Maski*, No 1(1918), pp. 15–16.

49 T. S., “Postępowy znawca sztuki (doraźna pomoc dla snobów i recenzentów),” *Maski*, No 3(1918), p. 56.

50 Karol Irzykowski, “Bahr o ekspresjonizmie,” *Maski*, No 19(1918), pp. 378–380 (part I); No 20, pp. 396–400 (conclusion).

51 Karol Irzykowski, “Bahr o ekspresjonizmie,” *Maski*, No 19(1918), p. 378.

fragment devoted to it, a reader of *Maski* could learn that the movement had an “extremely modernist” profile that focused on literature and art.⁵² In 1919 Czyżewski, while presenting the issues typical for modern poetry in an article that appeared in the journal *Goniec Krakowski* [The Cracow office-boy], provided a brief description of Expressionist poetry, naming several of its representatives: Herwarth Walden, August Stramm (1874–1915), and Rubiner (Ludwig?). While characterizing their works – when juxtaposed with the poetry developing in the Cubist and Futurist milieus – he emphasized that the Expressionists are characterized by the extraction of “what is internal, sensually elusive and spiritual.”⁵³

As a movement, Formists did not present their works outside of Poland. The single opportunity to see a more substantial bulk of their works occurred in Paris in 1922, where their works were displayed as part of the *Jeune Pologne* [Young Poland] presentation.⁵⁴ Therefore, a crucial moment associated with the introduction of the group’s achievements to the German art scene was an article by Julius Rottersmann, *Der polnische Formismus*, [The Polish Formism] published in November 1921 in a Munich magazine, *Der Ararat*.⁵⁵ The text, several pages long and accompanied by illustrations, included the characterization of the group and its leading members. The introduction, aiming at defining the group’s profile, emphasized that the artists who were among its members relied not only on the experience of Expressionists, but also referred to Cubism, Futurism, primitive art, and Gothic sculptures by Veit Stoss (known for the Polish audience as Wit Stwosz). The main body of the text was devoted to Witkacy, whom Rottersmann perceived as one of the “most brilliant artists and personalities of our century.”⁵⁶ This opinion was to be influenced by the references to the aesthetic theory contained in the volume *Nowe formy w malarstwie* (1919)/*New Forms in Painting and the Misunderstandings Arising Therefrom* (1992), that included the theory of Pure Form, characterized in the text, as well as the notions of “tensions of direction” and “metaphysical feeling.”⁵⁷ Regarding Chwistek, Rottersmann drew attention to his theory of “The Multiplicity of Realities

52 Romain Rolland, “Z literatury wojennej Niemiec,” *Maski*, No 18(1918), p. 358.

53 Tytus Czyżewski, “Poezja ekspresjonistów i futurystów” *Goniec Krakowski*, No 153(1919), p. 3.

54 Geron, *Formiści*, pp. 127–128.

55 Julius Rottersmann, “Der polnische Formismus,” *Der Ararat*, Vol. 2, No 11(Munich, November 1921), pp. 284–288.

56 Rottersmann, “Der polnische Formismus,” p. 288.

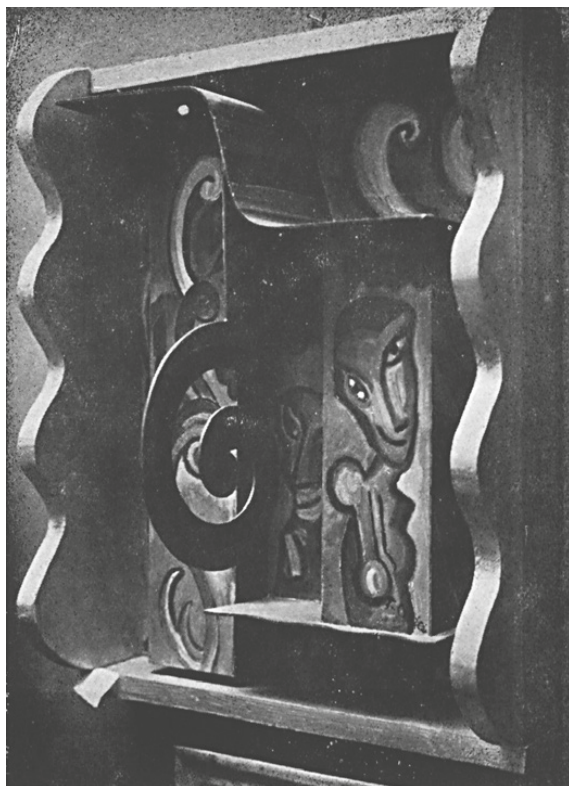
57 Stanisław Ignacy Witkiewicz, *Nowe formy w malarstwie i wynikające stąd nieporozumienia* (Warszawa: ARS, 1919).



Ill. 7: Leon Chwistek. *Swordplay*, c. 1919, oil on canvas. National Museum in Cracow.

in Art,”⁵⁸ as well as the key themes visible in his works that depicted modern metropolises, factory cities (a reproduction of one of the works accompanied the text as an illustration). Additionally, an oil painting, *Szermierka* [Swordplay], which encouraged associations with Severini’s works, was discussed (Ill. 7). In relation to Czyżewski, Rottersmann pointed to the painter/poet’s relationship with Cubism as well as the openness for experimentation that resulted in multiplane paintings, breaking the traditional mode of surface imaging (Ill. 8). Henryk Gotlib’s works were distinguished by the architectural character of the composition. Hrynkowski’s wood-engravings, in turn, were associated with German Expressionism. In the context of Niesiołowski, while mentioning the diverse sources of inspiration, which included paintings by Puvis de Chavannes (1824–1898), Cézanne, and Stanisław Wyspiański (1869–1907), Rottersmann emphasized the hue aspect of independently shaped compositions (Ill. 9). When he referred to Zbigniew Pronaszko, a leading sculptor, whose works were characterized by both synthesis and rhythm of form, also manifested in his paintings that revealed the inspirations with Cubism, he called him “a Polish Archipenko” (Ill. 10).

58 Leon Chwistek, *Wielość rzeczywistości w sztuce* (Kraków: Czas, 1921).



III. 8: Tytus Czyżewski. *Multipane painting*, c. 1921, work lost, reproduced in *Der Ararat*, Vol. 2, No 11(Munich, November 1921), p. 285.

In Rottersmann's opinion, the influence of Cubism could also be traced in Winkler's paintings. One can only presuppose that a result of the text popularizing the works by Formists in Germany could have been an exhibition of the group, organized with the assistance of Hans Goltz (1873–1927), *Der Ararat* magazine publisher, which ultimately did not take place. Surely, one of the outcomes was an article by Rottersmann published in *Formiści* [Formists], a periodical issued by the group between 1919 and 1921, and entitled *Nowa poezja i dramat w Niemczech* [New Poetry and Drama in Germany], devoted to the German artistic avant-garde.⁵⁹ The text, which

59 Julian Rot-Czerwiński [Rottersmann], "Nowa poezja i dramat w Niemczech," *Formiści*, No 6(June 1921), pp. 6–11.



Ill. 9: Tymon Niesiołowski. *Toilette (Venus)*, 1919, oil on canvas. National Museum in Warsaw.

familiarized Polish readers with the poets within the circle of Expressionism and Dadaism, was accompanied by a translation of Yvan Goll's (1891–1950) text *Dyrektor Kinoteratru* [Director of Cinema Theater] and a poem from the series *The Cloud Pump* by Hans (Jean) Arp (1887–1966).⁶⁰

Unfortunately, it turned out that the afore-mentioned issue of *Formiści* magazine was the last one. Towards the end of 1921, the contacts between particular members loosened, and in 1922 the group eventually disintegrated.

60 Przemysław Strożek, “Kim był Julian Rottersmann?” in: *Witkacy 2014: co jeszcze jest do odkrycia?* Materials from the international academic conference on the occasion of the 75th anniversary of Stanisław Ignacy Witkiewicz's death, Słupsk, 17–20 September 2014, ed. Janusz Degler (Słupsk: Muzeum Pomorza Środkowego w Słupsku, 2016), pp. 603–611.



Ill. 10: Page of *Maski*, No 20(1918), p. 369, with a sculpture by Zbigniew Pronaszko *Sybilla*, c.1917–1918, work lost.

The artistic endeavours of Formists that occurred between 1917 and 1922 had an impact on the development of the avant-garde in Poland. Its members, searching for a new concept of form, referred mostly to Futurism, Cubism, and Expressionism. Subsequently, the reception

of those concepts enabled them to exchange ideas with various artistic milieus. This development was greatly influenced by the artistic circles of Berlin and Munich, as well as that of Paris. Even before the outbreak of the First World War, each of those cities became a place of residence for various members of the group: Zak, Gwozdecki, Z. Pronaszko, Chwistek, Dołżycki, and Zamoyski. Poland, reborn after over one hundred and twenty three years of annexation, became the birth place of BUNT group, formed in Poznań almost concurrent with the Formists. Due to the geopolitical location of the city, which until 1918 remained within the borders of Germany, the artists working there remained in close contact with the circles of Die Aktion and Der Sturm. Thanks to that, the Formists collaborating with BUNT extended their relations to these backgrounds as well. Their culmination became an article by Rottersmann devoted to the Formists, published in the Munich *Der Ararat*, thanks to which the achievements of the group had the opportunity to occur in the international trend of the avant-garde.

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Dagmar Schmengler

The State Academy of Arts and Crafts in Wrocław and the Cross-Border Avant-Garde Network

Abstract: Born in 1874 in Liebau in Lower Silesia (now Lubawka in Poland), the expressionist Otto Mueller, internationally known as a former painter from the community of artists known as *Brücke*, taught for more than ten years at the State Academy of Arts and Crafts in Wrocław (formerly Breslau), until his early death in 1930. The innovative ideas generated in the liberal and cosmopolitan atmosphere at Wrocław's Academy were becoming inspirational to the development of European modern art. A network of friends and acquaintances from the worlds of art and culture developed around the academy in the Lower Silesian capital. This was the source of the mutual stimulation and exchange of ideas that flowed between the cities of Berlin and Wrocław. Yet Mueller's enormous influence in his widespread network involved in art and culture has gone virtually unnoticed. This artistic and intellectual environment – and in particular the inspirational interaction between the artists – flourished largely thanks to the close relationship between the cities of Berlin and Wrocław. The exhibition *Maler. Mentor. Magier. Otto Mueller und sein Netzwerk in Breslau* [Painter. Mentor. Magician. Otto Mueller and his network in Wrocław] retells this mutually fruitful chapter of German and Polish cultural history. The central idea of the exhibition was to cast light on Otto Mueller's triple role as painter, mentor, and magician from different perspectives and at the same time to provide a platform for the results of a German-Polish research project. One special feature of the curatorial concept was the principle of the “guest exhibit:” what is meant by this are selected works of Polish Expressionism and international avant-garde, by artists such as Stanisław Kubicki, Jankel Adler, Witkacy, or Henryk Berlewi. Thus, the centenary of the Polish avant-garde obviously continues the discourse of artistic and cultural exchange between Germany and Poland to the present day.

Keywords: Avant-garde network, Otto Mueller, cross-border art, Stanisław Kubicki, Jankel Adler, Witkacy, Henryk Berlewi, Berlin, Wrocław

The Exhibition *Painter. Mentor. Magician. Otto Mueller and his Network in Wrocław* in Current Research

The year 2017 was celebrated in Poland and abroad as the centenary of the Polish avant-garde. The subject of this essay is the exhibition *Maler. Mentor. Magier. Otto Mueller und sein Netzwerk in Breslau* [Painter. Mentor. Magician. Otto Mueller and his network in Wrocław],¹ prepared in Berlin in

1 *Maler. Mentor. Magier. Otto Mueller und sein Netzwerk in Breslau*, eds. Dagmar Schmengler, Agnes Kern and Lidia Głuchowska, exhibition catalogue

German-Polish exchange² and discussed at the conference held by the Center for Historical Research Berlin of the Polish Academy of Sciences.³

Born in 1874 in Liebau (now Lubawka in Poland), the expressionist Otto Mueller, internationally known as a former painter from Brücke group, taught for more than ten years at the State Academy of Fine Arts and Crafts in Wrocław. In the 1920s, the Academy was one of the most progressive art institutions in Europe. We do not know enough about Mueller's enormous influence in a broad network of befriended artists and intellectuals: his circle included artists, architects, art critics, writers, collectors, and his students. This artistic and intellectual environment – especially the mutually inspiring painters – was decisively influenced by the close ties between the cities of Berlin and Wrocław, which also saw the cooperation between their two major museums: especially the Berlin National Gallery played a leading role in the German Empire. When its director Ludwig Justi opened the first Galerie der Lebenden [Gallery of the Living Artists] in 1919 in the Crown Prince's Palace, his focus was on contemporary art development. One example is the *Otto Mueller-Gedächtnisausstellung* [Otto Mueller Memorial Exhibition] in 1931, only a few months after his death, organized on the initiative of the director of the Silesian Museum of Fine Arts in Wrocław, Erich Wiese. In the same year, Ludwig Justi invited this exhibition as a commemoration in Berlin. Both museum directors were distinguished by their great commitment to modern art. Erich Wiese maintained intensive contacts with the local art scene around the Wrocław Art Academy, in particular with professors Otto Mueller and Johannes Molzahn, whose works he bought for the museum.

(Hamburger Bahnhof – Museum für Gegenwart – Berlin, 12.10.2018–3.3.2019) (Heidelberg: Kehrler, 2018). *Malarz. Mentor. Mag. Otto Mueller a środowisko artystyczne Wrocławia*, eds. Dagmar Schmengler, Lidia Głuchowska i Agnes Kern, exhibition catalogue, Berlin and Wrocław (Hamburger Bahnhof – Museum für Gegenwart – Berlin, 12.10.2018–3.3.2019; Muzeum Narodowe we Wrocławiu, 9.4.2019–30.6.2019) (Wrocław: Muzeum Narodowe we Wrocławiu, 2019).

2 *Malers. Mentors. Magiers. Otto Mueller und sein Netzwerk in Breslau* was an exhibition at the Berlin National Gallery in cooperation with Alexander und Renata Camaro Stiftung and Muzeum Narodowe we Wrocławiu.

3 *Polish Avant-Garde in Berlin/Polnische Avantgarde in Berlin*, Center for Historical Research of the Polish Academy of Sciences, 14.12.2017–15.12.2017, conference in German and English by Małgorzata Stolarska-Fronia.

In the twentieth century, many regarded Berlin as an art center and “hub” of transnational avant-garde movements. Artists and intellectuals of all nationalities and faiths moved to Berlin from all over Europe. Thus, we always speak about the avant-garde as a cross-border network: artists exchanged ideas and inspirations to further disseminate them among other people and platforms. As a source of modern transfer of art and culture between the cities of Berlin and Wrocław, we should refer to the interdisciplinary illustrated *Schlesische Monatshefte*⁴ [Silesian Monthly], especially under the editorial management of Franz Landsberger.

The central idea of 2018 exhibition and catalog was to cast light on Otto Mueller’s triple role as painter, mentor, and magician from different perspectives. One special feature of the curatorial concept is the principle of the “guest exhibit:” what is meant by this are selected works of Polish Expressionism and Neo-Expressionism, art movements that up to now have received little attention in Germany. Like spotlights, they enable unique visual comparisons and reveal new intercultural contexts over the epochs while underlining the German-Polish orientation of the exhibition. Only few people do know that many artists of the Polish avant-garde mastered both Polish and German language, such as Stanisław Kubicki, Jerzy Hulewicz, or Henryk Berlewi. The selective inclusion of Polish Expressionism in particular – also of Neo-Expressionist artists like Zdzisław Nitka (b. 1962) who was affiliated with the Academy of Fine Arts in Wrocław since his studies – enabled not only unique visual comparisons but also continuous contemporary dialogue between Berlin and Wrocław. The year 2018 also called attention to the 1917 German-Polish group of artists BUNT [Polish for “revolt”] whose members held their first exhibitions in Berlin in April 1918. The name BUNT and the inscriptions on the posters were in both languages, German and Polish, as an expression of a progressive and cross-border artistic intention. The artists in the group belonged to an international avant-garde network between Berlin, Poznań, Cracow, and Łódź. Their ideas were developed through exchanges and their message spread in the leading art journals of the time, such as Franz Pfemfert’s *Die Aktion* and Herwarth Walden’s *Der Sturm*.

Thus, the centenary of the Polish avant-garde obviously continues the discourse of artistic and cultural exchange between Germany and Poland to the present day.

4 Cf. *Schlesische Monatshefte. Blätter für Kultur und Schrifttum der Heimat* (Breslau: Kulturbund Schlesien, 1924–1939). Continued as *Schlesien* (Breslau: Grauerl.-NS-Schlesien, 1939–1943).

The Connection to the International Avant-Garde: Die Brücke and BUNT

In 1910, Otto Mueller still had a guest role at Die Brücke exhibition in the Ernst Arnold Gallery in Dresden, only to present a little later in Berlin as a member of the group. The criteria for the enrichment or even change by Mueller's impetus certainly lay in the related view of artists and their propagated unity of man and nature, of art and life. Moreover, Otto Mueller also opposed the authority of the academy and bourgeois morality, just as his colleagues at Die Brücke.

Otto Mueller replaced traditional oil-on-canvas painting with distemper-on-hessian (a coarse jute fabric). Ernst Ludwig Kirchner later praised Mueller in the following words: "He brought us the allure of the distemper."⁵ *Woman in Boat* (Ill. 1), acknowledged by Erich Heckel and Otto Mueller as a valid example of Brücke painting,⁶ demonstrates the visual result of this technique in its frescoesque effect. In its spontaneity and rough control, the picture captures the pictorial idea and the resulting impression of incompleteness, thus we may evaluate it as a program painting. In 1966, *Woman in Boat* entered the collection of Brücke-Museum in Berlin. As a document of the artistic friendship between Mueller and Heckel and their mutual artistic esteem, this again proves the great influence that Mueller exerted on his broad modernist network.⁷

The theme of the nude and nude in landscape was central to Mueller's work, as it was to other Brücke artists. The erotic element as a creative impulse played a similar role for Mueller as it did for Kirchner, although with a different effect on the viewer, which mainly surfaces in the more withdrawn treatment of colour and shape by the former. Over the years, Mueller developed his Expressionist mode of operation, particularly characterized by flatness, reduced modelling of the body, subdued, earthy colours, especially present in the Wrocław years 1919–1930.

The nude/nude in landscape not only remained dominant in Mueller's oeuvre but also provided the impetus for the 1919 employment at the State Academy of Arts and Crafts in Wrocław. There, the Silesian Otto Mueller was to revolutionize the nude painting, which was still directed by the conservative history painter, Professor Eduard Kämpfer.

5 Ernst Ludwig Kirchner, "Chronik der Künstlergruppe Brücke" (1913), in: *Dokumente der Künstlergruppe Brücke*, ed. Magdalena M. Moeller (München: Hirmer, 2007), No 34, p. 122.

6 Erich Heckel to Emmy Mueller, Karlsruhe, 18.5.1953, copy of a hardly legible letter with a typewritten copy of the original, Erich Heckel's estate.

7 Cf. Christiane Remm, "Über Otto Muellers Mitgliedschaft in der Künstlergemeinschaft Brücke," in: *Maler. Mentor. Magier*, pp. 71–77.



Ill. 1: Otto Mueller. *Frau im Boot* [Woman in Boat], 1910, distemper on canvas, 96 × 70 cm. Brücke-Museum, Berlin. © Brücke-Museum, Berlin/Photo: Roman März.

Again, as a proof of programmatic Expressionism – this time on the Polish side and “guest exhibit” in the Berlin exhibition – appeared the linocut *Akt z chmurami* [Nude with Clouds; Ill. 2] by Stanisław Kubicki. The work was created in Silesian Schömburg (today Chełmsko Śląskie) during his military service, and it is reminiscent of the art of the Brücke group and also stands as a programmatic image for the aesthetics of Expressionism, still new in Poland at that time. Like the iconic linocut *Wieża Babel (Rewolucja)* [The Tower of Babel (Revolution)] and as *Sinnbild der Generation* [Symbol of the Generation], Kubicki’s graphic art shows the leading values of Polish Expressionism: one possible interpretation sees the motif as a sign for the fall of the “old world” by the establishments of the “new community” longed for by the proponents of Polish Expressionism: transnational, social, and ensuring gender equality.⁸

8 Lidia Gluchowska, “Der Expressionismus in der polnischen Kunst – ein Überblick,” in: *Maler. Mentor. Magier*, p. 379.



Ill. 2: Stanisław Kubicki. *Akt z chmurami* [Nude with Clouds], 1916/1963, linocut, 18,3 × 23,7 cm. Collection of Prof. St. Kubicki, Berlin. © Photo: Muzeum Narodowe, Poznań.

Kubicki was associated with Germany and Poland and with two media: the fine arts and literature. As the authoritative head of the anarchist Poznań artist group BUNT, Kubicki created their manifestos and posters and also established contacts with the international avant-garde in Berlin. Kubicki addressed the social and political changes of his time, as he was particularly interested in the avant-garde utopia of the new community.⁹ His expressionistic and cubist-constructivist graphics and paintings captivate us with their exemplary formal stringency.¹⁰

With regard to the question of “continuity and new impulses”¹¹ in the contemporary examination of modern painting in general and Otto Mueller

9 Cf. Lidia Głuchowska, *Stanisław Kubicki – in transitu. Poeta tłumaczy sam siebie/Ein Poet übersetzt sich selbst* (Wrocław: Ośrodek Kultury i Sztuki we Wrocławiu, 2015).

10 His notable cubist-constructivist works are the pastel *Kwitnienie* [The Blooming, 1928] available at the exhibition. Cf. Lidia Głuchowska, “Kunst, Politik und Eskapismus. Expressionistische Künstler-Seher und avantgardistische Konstrukteure der Welt in der polnischen Kunst- und Kulturgeschichte,” in: *Maler. Mentor. Magier*, p. 409.

11 Marek Śnieciński, “Kontinuität und neue Impulse. Zeitgenössische künstlerische Dialoge mit der Malerei der Moderne,” in: *Maler. Mentor. Magier*, p. 361.

in particular, Marek Śnieciński describes “a unique phenomenon in Polish art.” Śnieciński foregrounds the works of Zdzisław Nitka as a classic of Neo-Expressionism, for whom Otto Mueller’s work represents “an important inspiration and an elementary point of reference.”¹² On the one hand, Nitka himself mentions the 1979 exhibition devoted to the Brücke at the National Museum in Wrocław while, on the other hand, he and Mueller share the same landscape impressions. Today, Zdzisław Nitka lives in the Polish town of Oborniki Śląskie (formerly Obornigk), where Mueller died in 1930 of a lung disease.¹³

Nitka’s 1986 work *Opalający się jesienią* [Sunbathers in Autumn], with his nudes in landscape and expressive colouring, is reminiscent of the fruitful time of the artistic group Brücke (Ill. 3). He quotes as a “picture in picture” the woodcut *Akte auf Teppich I* [Nude on Carpet I] of 1911 by the Brücke member Karl Schmidt-Rottluff. The writer and chronicler of Wrocław (also the wife of Johannes Molzahn, professor of the State Academy of Fine Arts and Crafts in Wrocław) Ilse Molzahn recalls the visits of Mueller’s Brücke friends like Erich Heckel or Schmidt-Rottluff, especially for larger festive occasions like the legendary Academy Festivals. This proves that the exchange of Brücke artists and the mutual esteem extended beyond Berlin, at least as far as Otto Mueller was concerned.

With his 2003 portrait *Mężczyzna w kapeluszu Otto Mueller* [A Man with a Hat Otto Mueller], Nitka makes reference to Ernst Ludwig Kirchner’s *Otto Mueller mit Pfeife* [Otto Mueller with Pipe] and creates a modern recognition of the eminent Expressionist. What reminds us of Mueller’s style in Nitka’s painting are the strong contours and the expression of blue and brown. With moving, swirling brushstrokes, Nitka alienates Mueller’s face and captures its characteristic traits like the narrow eyes, angular facial outline, and the eponymous hat. Thus, this tense relationship of “continuity and new impulses” shows clearly the special appreciation of Mueller as the former influential professor of the twentieth century held by his contemporary colleague at today’s Academy of Fine Arts in Wrocław (Akademia Sztuk Pięknych im. Eugeniusza Gepperta we Wrocławiu).

12 Śnieciński, “Kontinuität und neue Impulse,” p. 362.

13 Cf. Andrzej Jarosz, *Zdzisław Nitka* (Wrocław: Akademia Sztuk Pięknych we Wrocławiu, 2014), p. 90. Nitka also designed the sculpture in memory *Otto Mueller – mężczyzna ze słonecznikiem* [Otto Mueller – a man with a sunflower], 2018, painted steel, 250 cm, Oborniki Śląskie (PL).



Ill. 3: Zdzisław Nitka. *Opalający się jesienią* [Sunbather in Autumn], 1986, tempera and collage on cardboard, 50 × 70 cm. Private Collection. © Zdzisław Nitka.

In a Network of Journals

The German-Polish group of artists BUNT held their first exhibition in April 1918: The name “BUNT” along with its lettering on posters was designed to be meaningful in German and Polish, as an expression of a progressive and cross-border artistic intention.¹⁴ In Polish, it means “revolt” while in German, “colorful.” The artists in the group belonged to an international avant-garde network that included Berlin, Poznań, Cracow, and Łódź.¹⁵ Especially Stanisław Kubicki and his wife Margarete Kubicka – the only German and female artist at BUNT – campaigned for the dissemination of their new aesthetics and progressive social ideas.

14 Cf. Lidia Głuchowska, *BUNT. Ekspresjonizm. Transgraniczna Awangarda. Prace z berlińskiej kolekcji prof. St. Karola Kubickiego/BUNT. Expressionismus. Grenzübergreifende Avantgarde. Werke aus der Berliner Sammlung von Prof. St. Karol Kubicki* (Poznań: Muzeum Narodowe w Poznaniu, 2015), fig. pp. 7, 8; Lidia Głuchowska, “Der Expressionismus in der polnischen Kunst – ein Überblick,” in: *Maler. Mentor. Magier*, p. 380, Fig. 142, 143.

15 Głuchowska, “Der Expressionismus in der polnischen Kunst – ein Überblick,” pp. 379–392.

BUNT's ideas were exchanged and their message spread in the leading art journals of the time, such as Franz Pfemfert's *Die Aktion* and Herwarth Walden's *Der Sturm*. Several works of its members appeared in these two Berlin magazines and at various exhibitions.

In 1918, both *Die Aktion* and the Polish avant-garde magazine *Zdrój* [Source] dedicated a special edition to the BUNT group. They both selected a meaningful motif of the Polish expressionist and BUNT member Stanisław Kubicki: a rower battling against the flow.¹⁶

In Berlin, Herwarth Walden's Gallery and even his journal *Der Sturm* was considered at the time as one of the foremost addresses for the avant-garde: it represented artists such as the constructivist Teresa Żarnower and Henryk Berlewi. The latter became internationally well known primarily through the publication of his *Mechano-Faktura* theory and the eponymous graphic works.¹⁷ Henryk Berlewi's work *Bottles Still Life (Mechanofacture)* from 1922 (Ill. 4), long absent from museums, first appeared at an exhibition of the November Group in 1923, and we may consider it as to be a precursor of the *Mechano-Faktura*. In the Berlin exhibition, the multilingual Polish avant-gardist Berlewi became an important link in the extensive network from Berlin to Poland.

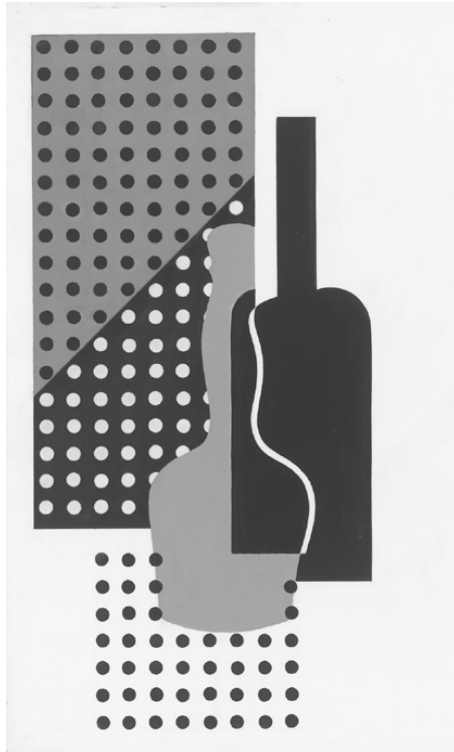
The artists who belonged to the inner circle around Walden and Pfemfert were not only professors of the Wrocław Academy of Fine Arts – like Carlo Mense, Georg Muche, and Johannes Molzahn – but also former members of *Brücke*. For example, in February 1920, Molzahn exhibited in the same exhibition in *Der Sturm* as the abstract-constructivist Stanisław Kubicki. For this reason, comparable works of these two artists also appeared in dialogue at the exhibition *Maler. Mentor. Magier. Otto Mueller und sein Netzwerk in Breslau*. The international avant-garde journals of the 1920s and their exhibitions connected the cross-border network of leading artists of European modern art.

The Eastern Jewry and the Avant-Garde

An important aspect in this case study of cross-border avant-garde on the Wrocław example includes the Jewish community and culture. At the

16 Cf. Stanisław Kubicki, *Wioślarz* [The Oarsman], printed on the title page of the special issue of *Zeszyt Buntu* [Bunt's Books],” *Zdrój*, Vol. 2, No 1(1918); Stanisław Kubicki, *BUNT* [Rebellion], printed as the special issue on Polish art, *Die Aktion*, Vol. 8, No 21–22(1918). Cf. Lidia Gluchowska, “Der Expressionismus in der polnischen Kunst – ein Überblick,” p. 382 f, Fig. 145, 146.

17 *Der Sturm* [quarterly], ed. Herwarth Walden, Vol. 15, No 3(September1924), (H. Berlewi, H. Arp, K. Schwitters, F. Marc), n.p.



Ill. 4: Henryk Berlewi. *Flaschen-Stillleben* [Still Life-Bottles (Mechano-Faktura)], 1922, reconstruction from 1922 (1960 or 1962?), gouache, 55 × 37 cm. Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Kupferstichkabinett. ©Henryk Berlewi Archive/Photo: Dietmar Katz

beginning of the twentieth century, Wrocław had the third largest Jewish community in the German Empire, next to Berlin and Frankfurt am Main. Partly due to the presence of the Jewish theological seminary Fraenckel'sche Stiftung – a college for rabbis – the Lower Silesian capital Wrocław developed into one of the most important centers of Jewish learning in Europe. The engaged Jewish community also played an important part in the artistic and cultural scene. Małgorzata Stolarska-Fronia has recently shown how attractive Otto Mueller was for the younger generation of Jewish artists: especially Mueller's reputed preoccupation with magic and mysticism excellently combined with Jewish artistic approaches and key issues of their own identity.¹⁸

18 Małgorzata Stolarska-Fronia, "Jüdische Künstler und Künstlerinnen um Otto Mueller," in: *Maler. Mentor. Magier*, pp. 367–377.



Ill. 5: Otto Mueller. *Polnische Familie* [Polish Family], 1919, distemper on hessian, 179,5 × 112 cm. Museum Folkwang, Essen. © Museum Folkwang, Essen/ARTOTHEK.

Shortly after his 1919 arrival in Wrocław, Otto Mueller painted *Polnische Familie* [Polish Family; Ill. 5].¹⁹ Most scholars interpret this picture as Mueller's autobiographical testimony of love affair with the art student Irene Altmann, from a Jewish bourgeois family. The relationship was short-lived, as Altmann's father opposed the couple's marriage. Mueller thus processed his painful longing into a family portrait. As a non-Jew, he chose a Christian

¹⁹ In the list of works, pictures with a similar theme are also grouped as *Polnische Familie (Judenfamilie; Polen)* [Polish Family (Jewish Family; Poland)]. Cf. Florian Karsch, *Otto Mueller zum hundertsten Geburtstag. Das graphische Gesamtwerk* (Berlin 1974), p. 137 f.

representation in which he gives the central role to the young Irene Altmann, employed with Madonna-like features of a radiant aureola and a child at her breast. The stern bohemian Otto Mueller simultaneously addresses in this double portrait poverty and restlessness. Was Wrocław welcoming for him in art and private life? For the harmonious artist Mueller, art and love were two mutually dependent components.

The Polish “guest” of the exhibition juxtaposed with Otto Mueller’s *Polnische Familie* was Jankel Adler’s double portrait *Moi rodzice* [My Parents] from 1920/1921 (Ill. 6). Adler painted it to the results of recent research, in the studio of his friends, the artist couple Stanisław and Margarete Kubicki in Berlin shortly after emigrating from Poland to Germany.²⁰ This fact once more highlights Berlin as a meeting place and “hub” of the cross-border avant-garde and its network of artistic exchange. This painting also has an autobiographical background, but it presents a traditional marriage relationship. Adler made reference to his personal and artistic identity with this portrait.

He uses the title and the double portrait of his parents to indicate his sense of belonging to Eastern European Jewry and his Chassidic family tradition. The composition and direction of reading draw the eye from the bottom to the top: Adler’s mother is portrayed as a full figure; she is sitting and pointing upwards. Although the father is partly concealed by her, he is all the more present intellectually and characterized by his intensive stare and his gesture of blessing. He in turn is pointing to the Hebrew text placed in the Mezuzah: the most important and first prayer that a father teaches his children. This scroll – which Adler integrated into the painting as a collage – is kept in traditional Jewish households. Both parents point expressly to religious teaching; the father, however, seems to be the one who taught him the Law of God.

Jankel Adler, who came from Tuszyn near Łódź, is referring to his religious and artistic education. At the time of painting in 1920/1921, he was already an artist of the European avant-garde and an active member of the Yung-Yidish group.

In *Moi rodzice* Adler combines old and new impressions – Eastern European mysticism, cabbalistic teachings, Cubism, and Dada intermingle, whereby the artistic influence of Marc Chagall can also be felt.

From a sociocultural viewpoint, the two family paintings underscore the relationships of modernism and the European Modern Art with Jewish circles. Especially in Wrocław, these relationships consolidated in the first

20 Cf. Głuchowska, “Der Expressionismus in der polnischen Kunst – ein Überblick,” p. 382.



III. 6: Jankel Adler. *Moi rodzice* [My Parents], 1920/1921, oil on wood, 136 × 54 cm. Muzeum Sztuki, Łódź. © Muzeum Sztuki, Łódź, VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn 2018.

three decades of the twentieth century on a personal and institutional level. In particular, cultural life and art were decisively supported by Jewish organizations, sponsors, and patrons. For example, the Jewish lawyer Ismar Littmann was a particularly prominent collector of the works of the professors at the Wrocław academy like Otto Mueller, Alexander Kanoldt, and Carlo Mense. He also collected famous transregional works, including Jewish avant-garde painters such as Chagall and Adler.²¹

21 Cf. Magdalena Palica, “Über die Museumssammlungen und großen jüdischen Privatsammlungen der Moderne in Breslau,” in: *Maler. Mentor. Magier*, p. 131.

Epilogue

The highlight and dialogue in the Berlin exhibition *Maler. Mentor. Magier*: charged with emotion developed over the juxtaposition of German and Polish Expressionism: Otto Mueller's *Selbstbildnis mit Pentagramm* [Self-Portrait with a Pentagram; Von der Heydt-Museum, Wuppertal] and the self-portrait by Stanisław Ignacy Witkiewicz, also known as Witkacy, *Ostatni papieros skazańca* [The last Cigarette of the Condemned; Muzeum Literary im. Adama Mickiewicza, Warszawa). The two works are captivating in their iconographic parallels and magical appeal.

Painters tried to depict the artist as a magician.²² Artists were to appear to have access to areas hidden from non-artists. As a seer, withdrawn, they were to make use of a hidden inner sense. This myth about artists was particularly popular again at the beginning of the twentieth century. It is significant that the figure of the artist-magician enjoyed great popularity, especially in bohemian and avant-garde circles. Wherever artists attempted to liberate themselves from the rules of the well-adapted bourgeois society, wherever emerged new artistic styles and alternative lifestyles.

Although Wrocław's Otto Mueller and Cracow's Witkacy had never met, they appear as kindred spirits in their self-portraits: they are magicians, prophets, and conjurers of other realities.

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22 Cf. Isabel Fischer, "'Die Kunst ist eine magische Sache'. Über das Bild vom Künstler als Seher und Magier in der deutschen Kunst- und Literaturgeschichte der Moderne," in: *Maler. Mentor. Magier*, pp. 397–401; Lidia Głuchowska, "Kunst, Politik und Eskapismus. Expressionistische Künstler-Seher und avantgardistische Konstrukteure der Welt in der polnischen Kunst- und Kulturgeschichte," in: *Maler, Mentor, Magier*, pp. 403–411.

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Lidia Głuchowska

Artists from Poland in the International Milieu of Classical Berlin Avant-Garde *Die Aktion*, *Der Sturm*, and Die Novembergruppe¹

Abstract: Herwarth Walden, the founder of the famous gallery and art magazine *Der Sturm*, described Berlin as the “Hauptstadt der Vereinigten Staaten von Europa.” In the first three decades of the 20th century it became the most important metropolis in East Central Europe, which attracted artists from the whole region and from the European peripheries, especially those who were closer to the international utopia of the new world than to the particular concepts of new states and national art, among them numerous painters, architects, and writers from Poland. The Nestor of the Polish avant-garde in Berlin was Stanisław Przybyszewski, who in 1894 published the first monograph of work by Edvard Munch and the first on theory of Expressionism *avant la lettre*, based on his work, which he called “Psychical Naturalism”. The most spectacular presentation of Polish new art in the capital of Germany was the special issue of the magazine *Die Aktion* called “Polnische Kunst” [Polish Art] and the exhibition of the group Bunt [PL: Revolt; DE: Colourful, Exaggerated] at the end of the First World War, in June 1918 in the editorial rooms as well as its three following shows and publications. Apart from this, the important role in this circle was played by the author of the poster of the first Dada-soirée in Zurich, Marceli Słodki, who became a director of the Wilde Bühne, representing the theater of the absolute linked to *Die Aktion*, as well as the art critic of the École de Paris, Adolf Basler. Artists from Poland who could be described as having multiple identities, in the sense of their national self-identification, also contributed to the success of artistic imperium of *Der Sturm* during all phases of its existence – since the first exhibition in his gallery (Franz/Franciszek Flaum, 1912) and first Yearbook of his magazine (Tadeusz/Thaddäus Rittner) through the Erster Deutscher Herbstsalon 1912 (Stanisław Stückgold and Ludwik Markus/Louis Marcoussis). Before the First World War also Basler contributed to *Der Sturm*, publishing his reviews on art. After the Great War, several artists and writers from Poland sympathized with Walden’s artistic center, among them Aleksander Wat, Anatol Stern, Szymon Syrkus, Tadeusz Peiper, and Kazimir Malevich (the last, however, was presented there as

1 This article has been prepared in the framework of the project NPRH (National Program for Development of Humanities) *Łódzka awangarda jidysz. Krytyczna edycja źródeł* [The Łódź Yiddish Avant-Garde. Critical Edition of Sources], supervised by Prof. Krystyna Radziszewska, Institute for German Studies, University of Łódź.

the Soviet one), as well as Jakub Steinhardt and Jesekiel David Kirszenbaum. The first who exhibited in *Der Sturm*, 1919/1920, was however Stanisław Kubicki, initiator of the abstract art in Poland, followed by Teresa Żarnower, Mieczysław Szczuka, Henryk/Henoch Berlewi, and Feliks Krassowski, who co-introduced to Walden Productivism, new media and typography, photomontage and experimental theater. The third artistic circle in Berlin that was crucial to artists from Poland was the Novembergruppe, which co-organized the I International Exhibition and the Congress of the International Union Progressive Artists in Düsseldorf, enthusiastically revised by Berlewi. These events are regarded as the most important contribution of the artists from Poland abroad to the founding of the Constructivist International. To the separatists of the Congress Kubicki, who together with the former members of the anarchist group Die Kommune, organized the International Exhibition of the Revolutionary Artists in Berlin, initiating the founding of the Group of the Progressive Artist in Cologne, the leading New Reality formation in Germany. Kubicki, who after his discussions with Malevich about the art scene in the USSR denied the proletarian art, regarded as the cosmic communist among them, co-initiated the ecologic streaming in art. The contribution of artists from Poland to the development of Berlin as an exchange center of modernism and avant-garde still desires rediscovering and critical source studies.

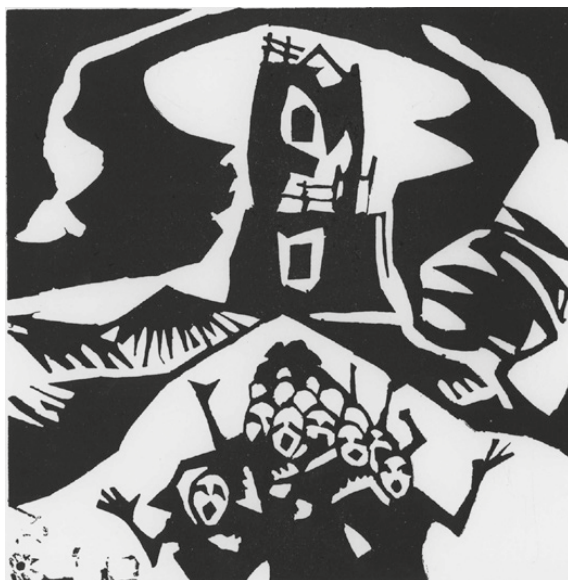
Keywords: Classical avant-garde, multiinternational milieu, Der Sturm, Die Aktion, Die Novembergruppe, Constructivist International, Stanisław Przybyszewski, Adolf Basler, Teresa Żarnower, Stanisław Kubicki

Berlin as a Station of the Polish Avant-Garde

Berlin as a *station/Kunstort* of the international avant-garde is a category used for nearly twenty years in research on the topography of cultural history, especially the artistic network (Ill. 1).² Already in the eighteenth century, Berlin was viewed as a haven for political or religious migrants.³ However, it was not until the Weimar Republic (1918–1933) that Berlin ascended to the rank of an international avant-garde center that rivaled Paris and New York. Berlin's pacifist atmosphere and *genius loci* after the German defeat in the Great War were also beneficial to artistic radicalization. The low cost of living and publishing, related to the rising inflation – which culminated in 1924 as a consequence of the postwar contribution – created conditions attractive not only to economic migrants but also cultural mediators, especially from

2 Timothy O. Benson ed., *Central European Avant-Gardes: Exchange and Transformation, 1910–1930* (London: MIT Press, 2002); Krisztina Passuth, *Treffpunkte der Avantgarde. Ostmitteleuropa 1907–1930*, transl. Aniko Hamath (Dresden: Verlag der Kunst-Philo Fine Arts, 2003).

3 Gertrud Pickhan and Verena Dorn eds., *Berlin Transit. Jüdische Migranten aus Osteuropa in den 1920er Jahren* (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2012), p. 16.



Ill. 1: Stanisław Kubicki. *The Tower of Babel II*, linocut. Courtesy: Prof. St. Karol Kubicki, Berlin. Photo: Lidia Głuchowska.

Central and Eastern Europe.⁴ Among them were artists from Poland, some of whom settled here for longer, while others only left imprints of their creative innovations in magazines, which were the most important medium of communication of the avant-garde network that intensified the cross-border and transnational cultural transfer.⁵ This made Berlin more attractive to them than the previously preferred Munich.⁶

A monograph of the Polish avant-garde in Berlin, which does not exist yet, should encompass the wealth of interdisciplinary phenomena and

4 Lidia Głuchowska, “From Transfer to Transgression. Yiddish Avant-Garde – a Network within the Universal Network of the International Movement or a Complementary One?,” in: *Transferts, appropriations et fonctions de l’avant-garde dans l’Europe intermédiaire et du Nord*, ed. Harri Veivo (Paris: L’Harmattan, 2012), pp. 143–168.

5 E.g. in: Peter Brooker, Andrew Thacker, Christian Weikop, et al. eds., *Modernist Magazines: A Critical and Cultural History*. Vol. 3, part 2: *Europe 1880–1940* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).

6 Halina Stepień, “Polnische Künstler in München,” in: *Wanderungen: Künstler – Kunstwerk – Motiv – Stifter*, eds. Małgorzata Omilanowska, Anna Straszewska (Warszawa: IS PAN, 2005), pp. 79–101.

achievements of artists, only a part of which has already been studied in more in-depth source studies. The representation of German art or art created in Germany is often overshadowed by French (Parisian) and North American (New York) art. But even monographs on, e.g., idioms of Cubism in Poland, similar to publications on Czech Cubism⁷ or esotericism and occultism in Polish art,⁸ which would sum up at least the stage of archival research, are a starting point for more insightful methodological findings. In turn, the available studies on avant-garde (or modernist) currents in art require supplements or revisions, at least in reference to the links between artists from Poland and the international artistic milieu of Berlin.

Modernism and the Classical (Neo-)Avant-Garde

It is a real challenge to write about a phenomenon as difficult to define as the “Polish avant-garde in Berlin”. A concept such as “Polish art” may raise reservations – like the term “avant-garde”⁹ itself – if it includes both the achievements of representatives of other ethnicities and nationalities in Poland and abroad, should they have originated in Poland. On the one hand, the classic avant-garde artists – those active in the interwar period and earlier – perceived themselves as “the international of spirit” on the peripheries of official national art. On the other, the term “avant-garde” meant something different in 1908 than in 1918, 1928, 1938, and after 1945. Although in a strict sense we understand “avant-garde” as a movement that seeks to revolutionize society rather than only perform formal experiments – which is the domain of modernism – many scholars doubt even such differentiation. A separate aspect of discourse is the distinction between figuration and

7 Jiří Svestka and Tomáš Vlček, *1909–1925 Kubismus in Prag* (Düsseldorf: Kunstverein für die Rheinlande und Westfalen, 1991); Lidia Głuchowska, “In the Shadow of the Official Discourse: Towards a Revision of the History and Theory of Polish Idiom of Cubism,” *Ars: časopis Ústavu dejín umenia Slovenskej akadémie vied*, Vol. 47, No 2(2014), pp. 156–171; Głuchowska, “Zdrój – Die Aktion – Der Sturm. Art magazines and cultural transfer in relation to the echoes of Cubism in the graphic work of the Bunt group artists,” in: *Bunt a tradycje grafiki w Polsce i w Niemczech* [Bunt and the Traditions of Graphic Art in Poland and Germany], eds. Lidia Głuchowska, Honorata Gołuńska and Michał F. Woźniak (Bydgoszcz: Muzeum Okręgowe im. Leona Wyczółkowskiego, 2015), pp. 37–60.

8 Lidia Głuchowska, “Okkultismus, Esoterik, Mystik und die Ikonographie des Unsichtbaren. Das Beispiel der Posener Gruppe Bunt und des Bauhaus-Professors Lothar Schreyer,” in: *The Avant-Garde, Modernism and the Fate of a Continent*, eds. Sascha Bru et al. (Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2009), pp. 306–327.

9 Christine Magerski, *Theorien der Avantgarde: Gehlen – Bürger – Bourdieu – Lubmann* (Berlin: Springer, 2011).

abstraction, often perceived as a sine qua non of the radical avant-garde. Similar reservations also appear with respect to other frames of description of such phenomena such as Central Europe/Central-Eastern Europe or late avant-garde, introduced to the historiographic discourse conducted from the perspective of centers, to which researchers from the peripheries – which occupy the majority of the world – react critically and seek alternative categories of description of local or regional artistic phenomena. Yet another level of reflection concerns the distinction between the classical avant-garde and the neo-avant-garde, especially in areas like Slovakia or Croatia where, in the interwar period, the former did not exist in these terms.¹⁰

Categories of the City/Metropolis of Art and National Art: The Topoi of *Polish Berlin* and Berlin as *the Capital of the United States of Europe*

Although the topos of Polish Berlin is as strong as Russkij Berlin or Jewish Berlin,¹¹ the studies of the Polish avant-garde in Germany and their capital retain an only synthetic character.¹² Moreover, they do not always appear terminologically precise.

In the history of the Polish avant-garde in Berlin, the reference to this and other artistic loci sometimes manifests itself as a non-neutral category. One should remember, that the 1918 term “Polnische Kunst” meant to refer to the Berlin exhibition of the Poznań-based group BUNT (Revolt, 1918–1922), was of too extended meaning. Namely, it concerned the achievements of only one so called Expressionist (that means representing “new art”) group, by no means representative of the aesthetic production in the areas of the then non-autonomous country, which before the Great War was partitioned among Prussia, Austro-Hungary, and Russia. Therefore, the title “Polnische Kunst” referred to the artworks of a small

10 Richard Gregor, “Methodological Overlaps: Central-European Neo-Avant-Garde of the 1960s Reconsidered in Relation to the Interwar Avant-Garde,” lecture at the conference *Beyond Center and Periphery. New Approaches to Bohumil Kubišta and Central-European Art around 1910*, Institute of Art History at the Faculty of Arts, Charles University in Prague, December 10–11, 2018.

11 Verena Dohrn and Gertrud Pickhan, eds., *Transit und Transformation. Osteuropäisch-jüdische Migranten in Berlin 1918–1939* (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2010), p. 10.

12 E.g. Jerzy Malinowski, “Polska awangarda w Niemczech 1900–1933,” in: *Między Polską a światem*, eds. Mieczysław Morka, Piotr Paszkiewicz (Warszawa: IS PAN, 1993), pp. 260–271; Lidia Głuchowska, “Polish and Polish-Jewish Modern and Avant-Garde artists in the ‘Capital of the United States of Europe’ c. 1910–1930,” *Centropa*, Vol. 12, No 3(2012), pp. 215–355.

collective of visual artists and writers, who officially initiated their activities in the western district of Polish territory, although one should remember that it was conceived as a cross-border and inter-district movement from the beginning. Moreover, this group was only the most radical aesthetic and political example of contemporary Polish art. The term “Polnische Kunst,” used at the end of the Great War by the Berlin publisher of *Die Aktion* (1911–1932) to underline the international, anti-imperialist profile of this journal, was later replaced by the term “Poznań Expressionism,” although this one was similarly inadequate. The inadequacy resulted from the fact that BUNT’s artworks represented various directions of contemporary new art and referred to an artistically provincial city in comparison to Berlin, but also to Warsaw and Cracow, which thus reduces it to a local phenomenon, long marginalized in both Polish art history and art history in general.¹³ Due to Poznań’s non-metropolitan character, citing it here as a locus artium has a particular meaning and opposite effect to, say, a reference to the cosmopolitan capital of Bohemia in the (non-coincidentally) German-language article *Prager* by Max Brod, which describes the Czech-German-Jewish Osma [The Eight] group with the intention of its cross-border promotion.¹⁴ This was obvious to Pfemfert, who used the concept of “Polnische Kunst” to describe the works of BUNT with categories related to the nation – occupied by Germany which he treated as an ideological enemy – and not to a city devoid of avant-garde tradition. For this publication, it is of spectacular significance that the achievements of the BUNT group were included in the presentation of Berlin’s multigenerational Polish community as part of the exhibition *My berlińczycy!/Wir Berliner! Historia polsko-niemieckiego sąsiedztwa* [We Berliners. A History of Polish-German Neighbourhood].¹⁵ Taking these terminological assumptions into account, this article refers to the postulates of a decentralist historiographical discourse initiated after 1989. By employing more recent research, also based on documents written in minor languages, the contribution rather aims to characterize case studies from a cross-border perspective than risk generalization and the resulting inaccuracies that relate

13 Lidia Głuchowska, “‘Poznań Expressionism’ and Its Connections with the German and International Avant-garde,” in: *The Routledge Companion to Expressionism in a Transnational Context*, ed. Isabel Wünsche (New York: Routledge, 2018), pp. 92–113.

14 Nicolas Sawicki, “Seeing the Local, Within and Beyond the National: Narrative Strategies for an Expanded Modernism,” lecture at the conference *Beyond Center and Periphery*.

15 Lidia Głuchowska, “Avantgarde: Berlin – Poznań,” in: *My, berlińczycy!/Wir Berliner!: Geschichte einer deutsch-polnischen Nachbarschaft*, ed. Robert Traba (Berlin: CBH PAN and Koehler & Amelang, 2009), pp. 160–196.

to the category of style or nation. The following deliberations first concern canonical phenomena from the history of new art – as various “isms” were often described collectively in the interwar period – that is, both modernist and avant-garde art created by artists coming from (sometimes only historical) Polish territories. Second, this presentation focuses on the artistic output associated with the three most important and mutually intertwined creative circles in Berlin, the metropolis called by Herwarth Walden – the owner of Der Sturm gallery and publisher of the eponymous magazine (1910–1932), “Hauptstadt der Vereinigten Staaten von Europa,”¹⁶ the capital of the United States of Europe. By focusing on visual arts, the following overview of phenomena includes the discussion of publications and exhibitions in Walden’s art empire along with the characteristics of the Polish artistic contributions to the profile of a competitive center of international cultural exchange. That is, the aforementioned periodical *Die Aktion* and the rank of its exhibition space along with the initiatives and exhibitions of the November group, which emerged in the atmosphere of the revolutionary events of 1919 in Berlin. Due to the limited framework of this chapter, the phenomena already described in the literature will be treated only as a reference to devote more attention to those that still require research.

The Beginnings of the Polish Avant-Garde in Berlin and *Die Aktion*’s Milieu

Stanisław Przybyszewski is considered the Nestor of the Polish avant-garde in Berlin. At the end of the nineteenth century, he became famous in the city as “der geniale Pole” and gathered Berlin’s international bohème society by celebrating the achievements of the Norwegian artists Edvard Munch and Gustav Vigeland throughout Europe. Przybyszewski interpreted their works in the spirit of misogynist metaphysics of the sexes popular at this time.¹⁷ This would-be medicine doctor also contributed to the renewal of German prose by incorporating into it the scientific terminology that fascinated his colleagues, naturalists of the literary commune in Friedrichshagen near Berlin. As the publisher of the Polish-language *Gazeta Robotnicza* [Workers’ Newspaper] and the author of the *Homo sapiens* trilogy (1895–1896), Przybyszewski propagated anarchism and, next to Friedrich Nietzsche and

16 Herwarth Walden, “Neue Reisekopfbücher [1]. Berlin,” *Der Sturm*, Vol. 14, No 3(1923), pp. 46–48.

17 Lidia Głuchowska, “‘Totenmesse’, ‘Lebensfries’ und ‘Die Hölle’.” Przybyszewski, Munch, Vigeland und die protoexpressionistische Kunsttheorie,” *Deshima*, No 1(2009), pp. 93–130; Głuchowska, “Munch, Przybyszewski and *The Scream*,” *Kunst og Kultur*, Vol. 96, No 4(2013), pp. 182–193.

August Strindberg, is considered the patron of *Die Aktion*, in which he himself published,¹⁸ paving the way for other artists from Poland.

Praised so much during fin de siècle, Przybyszewski's prose did not survive the test of time. However, his legend lives on as – in the climate of the scandal of Munch's widely criticized Berlin exhibition – Przybyszewski dedicated to Munch an apologetic 1894 essay *Psychischer Naturalismus* [Psychic Naturalism], promptly translated into many languages, and then published the first monograph about Munch's paintings, *Das Werk des Edvard Munch* [The Work by Edvard Munch].¹⁹ In fact, in reference to the work of the author of the aforementioned *Skirk* [Scream], today one of the most recognizable paintings in the world, Przybyszewski created the first theory of Expressionism *avant la lettre* – which he called “psychischer Naturalismus” and the “scream of the soul” – which unquestionably is his crowning achievement. Moreover, Przybyszewski inspired the early work of Wojciech Weiss from Cracow, who also exhibited his paintings in Berlin two decades later, in 1913.

While none of Przybyszewski's essays on art appeared in *Die Aktion*, the one who became a famous art critic in this magazine was its Poland-born Paris correspondent Adolf Basler. Basler mainly promoted the work of École de Paris. The Polish-Jewish artists from this circle exhibited, among other places, at the salon of the Free Secession in Berlin in 1914, and the works by one of them – Moïse Kisling²⁰ – were reproduced in *Die Aktion*. Basler was one of the first critics to notice the birth of a new Expressionist style that – unlike Przybyszewski – he explicitly defined “as universal and as spiritual as Gothic.”²¹ Initially, Basler applied this term to all currents of new art, eventually referring to it in opposition to classicism and fauvism. The censorship during the Great War made the editor of *Die Aktion* change the profile of the magazine and transform it into a forum for the presentation of contemporary “isms,” also exhibited in its editorial offices.

Around 1915, Marcelli Słodki joined *Die Aktion*. He later became famous as the author of the opening night poster in Cabaret Voltaire, the center of Zurich Dada. The motif of the poster resembles some of the woodcuts

18 Stanisław Przybyszewski, “Zu Franz Jungers Skizze ‘Dagne’,” *Die Aktion*, Vol. 3 (1913), pp. 406–411; Malinowski, “Polska awangarda,” p. 261.

19 Stanisław Przybyszewski, “Psychischer Naturalismus,” *Die neue deutsche Rundschau (Freie Bühne)*, Vol. 5(1894), pp. 150–156; Stanisław Przybyszewski ed., *Das Werk des Edvard Munch. Vier Beiträge von Stanislaw Przybyszewski, Dr. Franz Servaes, Willy Pastor, Julius Meier-Graefe* (Berlin: S. Fischer, 1894).

20 Adolf Basler, “Moderne Kunst,” *Die Aktion*, Vol. 3, No 10(1913), col. 893; Alfred Basler, “Der Pariser Herbstsalon,” *Die Aktion*, Vol. 3. No 10(1913), col. 1203–1205.

21 Adolf Basler, “Nowa sztuka,” *Museion*, Vol. 3, No 12(1913), p. 23.



Ill. 2: Marcei Słodki. Without title, linocut, *Die Aktion* Vol. 6, No 3–4(1916), p. 36. Courtesy: Prof. St. Karol Kubicki, Berlin. Photo: Lidia Głuchowska.

published by Słodki in 1915 and 1916 in Pfemfert's magazine (cf. Ill. 2). Moreover, Słodki also reproduced in those pages circus scenes and portraits of, among others, Leo Tolstoy, Alexander Pushkin, and Fyodor Dostoyevsky. In 1918, Słodki became the artistic director of Wilde Bühne theater, affiliated with *Die Aktion*, and later created graphic designs for books. In time, he became a member of École de Paris and continued cooperation with the Polish art scene.²²

There are indications that Słodki inspired Stanisław Kubicki, who had lived in Berlin for the longest time of all the representatives of the Polish avant-garde and in 1916 had contact with Pfemfert.²³ Two issues of the

22 Tomasz Majewski, "Marcei Słodki," in *Polak – Żyd – Artysta. Tożsamość i awangarda*, eds. Jarosław Suchan and Karolina Szymaniak (Łódź: MSL, 2009), p. 26; Głuchowska, "Polish and Polish-Jewish Modern and Avant-Garde artists," fn. 46.

23 S. Karol Kubicki, "'Zdrój' and 'Die Aktion'. Cooperation of Two Cultural Periodicals during the First World War," in: *Bunt. Ekspresjonizm Poznański*

Zurich periodical *Dada* still remain in the Kubicki's archive in Berlin. From one of them, Kubicki reprinted in his special issue of the Poznań *Zdrój* (Source; 1917–1922) the manifesto *Note 18 sur l'art* by Tristan Tzara as a proclamation of a new man and a call for a transnational alliance of artists.²⁴ Moreover, Kubicki retained close relations with the Berlin Dadaists. Proof of this are his works *Wohin?* [Where to?] and *Eintretender* [The One, Who Is Entering] from 1919 along with the cover of a brochure by the “Dadasoph” Johannes Baader, *Das Geheimnis des Z.R. III* from 1924.²⁵

Kubicki and his wife Margarete played a pivotal role in the history of *Die Aktion*, having initiated a series of publications and exhibitions of the abovementioned group BUNT. This was part of a series of art presentations from various countries, which expressed anti-militarism.

Although Margarete Kubicka (née Schuster) was the only German and woman in the group, even the name BUNT was already conceptualized as bilingual, which reflected the paradigm of Expressionism in both languages. In Polish, it means “rebellion,” and in German “colorful, motley, vivid,” which refers to the anti-naturalistic colour scheme promoted earlier by the Dresden group *Die Brücke*. It is no coincidence that the posters of BUNT's first Poznań exhibition in April 1918 were printed in Polish and German, which broke the postwar *status quo* of hostility between the two nations inhabiting the city. Simultaneously, the group prepared an exhibition in Berlin and its program brochures, also published in two language versions, in *Zdrój* and *Die Aktion*. The similar graphic design emphasized the close relation of the two publications. At the covers of both magazines appeared the same motif, which expressed opposition to the artistic mainstream and bourgeois mentality: an oarsman rowing upstream. However, the Polish brochure presented the oarsman from the back, while the German from the front (Ill. 3a, 3b). In the second case, the face of the figure was reminiscent of Munch's *Skirk*. It already appeared earlier, multiplied in the linocut *Wieża Babel* [The Tower of Babel] from the poster of BUNT's first exhibition, renamed by Pfemfert, *Revolution*. The explosive synergy of words and images in these publications increased the strength of the group manifesto that wanted to revolutionize not only the image of art but also the society.

1917–1925 [Bunt. Poznań Expressionism 1917–1925], ed: Grażyna Hałasa (Poznań: Muzeum Narodowe, 2003), pp. 80–95; Lidia Głuchowska, *Avantgarde und Liebe. Margarete und Stanisław Kubicki 1910–1945* (Berlin: Gebr. Mann, 2007), pp. 39–40, fn. 77.

24 Tristan Tzara, “Note 18 sur l'art,” *Zdrój*, Vol. 6, No 2(1919), p. 51.

25 Lidia Głuchowska, *Stanisław Kubicki – in transitu. Poeta tłumaczy sam siebie/Ein Poet übersetzt sich selbst* (Wrocław: OKiS, 2015), pp. 108–184.

ZDRÓJ

ROK 2 KWIECIEŃ 1918

TOM III. ZESZYT 1

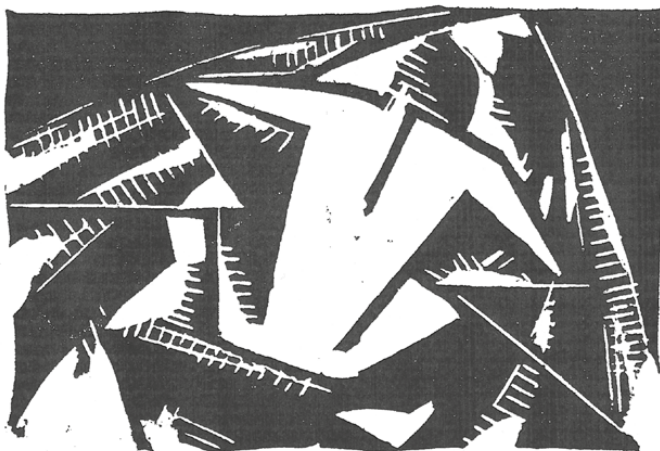
DWUTYGODNIK POŚWIĘCONY SZTUCE
I KULTURZE UMYŚLOWEJ :: :: ::

ADRES REDAKCYI I ADMINISTRACYI: OSTOJA — POZNAŃ PLAC WILHELMOWSKI 17.

ZESZYT „BUNTU”.

TREŚĆ: Czytelniku pobożny — Adam Bederski. Krzyk — Stanisław Kubicki. Wiersze — Jomar Förste (spolaczył Nowina). Groteska moralna — Adam Bederski. Lucifer grzmi — Lech Suchowiak. Balada. Skarga młodzieńca po nocnej mitrędze. Sonet młody. Przeszłości — Adam Bederski. Do świętego Buntownika — Jerzy Hulewicz. Zwycięstwo — Małgorzata Kubicka (spolaczył Stanisław Kubicki). Fragment sceniczny z kantaty uroczystej z tańcem — Franz Werfel (spolaczył Nowina). Z cyklu „Dekadami — Lech Suchowiak. Uwagi o Sztuce — Stanisław Kubicki. Miscelanea. Zapowiedź wystawy „Buntu”.

RYCINY: Drzeworyty: Jerzego Hulewicza, Małgorzaty Kubickiej, Stanisława Kubickiego, Władysława Skotarka, Stefana Szmaja, Jana Wronieckiego. Rysunki: Jerzego Hulewicza i Augusta Zamoyskiego.



Wiosłara — Stanisław Kubicki (Drzeworyt)

III. 3a: Cover of the special issue of *Zdrój* (Zeszyt Buntu/The Bunt Issue), with the linocut by Stanisław Kubicki *The Rower*, *Zdrój* Vol. 3, No 1(1918). Courtesy: Prof. St. Karol Kubicki, Berlin. Photo: Lidia Głuchowska.

Bunt's cooperation with *Die Aktion* culminated in four exhibitions. Apart from the aforementioned, there were also individual shows of works by Jerzy Hulewicz, the publisher of *Zdrój*, August Zamoyski, as well as Margarete and Stanisław Kubicki. In *Die Aktion* appeared five literary and program pieces by Kubicki and Adam Bederski along with three drawings and twenty-three prints (among others, by Jerzy Hulewicz, Jan Wroniecki,

Die Aktion

M/R

WOCHENSCHRIFT FÜR POLITIK, LITERATUR, KUNST
VIII. JÄHR. HERAUSGEGEBEN VON FRANZ PFEMFERT NR. 21
22

SONDERHEFT „BUNT“: INHALT: ST. KUBICKI: HOLZSCHNITT (TITELBLATT) / ST. KUBICKI: ANMERKUNG / Adam Bederski: Der Welt; Flucht; Moralische Groteske (aus dem Polnischen übertragen von St. Kubicki) / Jan Wroniecki: Hl. Franziskus (Zeichnung) / Wladyslaw Skotarek: Holzschnitt / August Graf Zamoyski: Akzeichnung / St. Kubicki: Der Gefangene / Novina: Der Gast (vom Autor verdeutscht) / Margarete Kubicka: Zwei Gedichte / Jerry Hulewicz: Zwei Aktstudien / Cläre Studer: An mein Kind / Otto Freundlich: Der Turm zu Babel / Bakunin an Ogarjew / St. Kubicki: Holzschnitt / Edlef Köppen: Anruf / Stefan Szmai: Holzschnitt / Alfred Gruenwald: O dieser Stunde / Margarete Kubicka: Zwei Holzschnitte / Richard Fischer: Nichtsein-Erlösung / Alfred Günther: Rückkehr der Toten / Wilhelm Stolzenburg: Tagebuchblatt / Otto Steinicke: Vers / Carl Zuckmayer: Auftakt / Wl. Skotarek: Zeichnung / Maximilian Svava: Der Schwarmfölen und die Ente / Kubicki: Selbstporträt / F. P.: Ich schneide die Zeit aus; Kleiner Briefkasten / Verzeichnis zur VII. Sonderausstellung: „BUNT“



SONDERHEFT „POLNISCHE KUNST“
VERLAG, DIE AKTION, BERLIN-WILMERSDORF

HEFT 80 PFG.



Ill. 3b: Cover of the special issue of *Die Aktion* “Polnische Kunst [Polish Art]” with the linocut by Stanislaw Kubicki *Bunt* (Revolt) in: *Die Aktion* Vol. 8, No 21/22 (1918). Courtesy: Prof. St. Karol Kubicki, Berlin. Photo: Lidia Gluchowska.

and Władysław Skotarek), including four linocuts at the covers – two by Kubicki and one self-portrait of Hulewicz and Stefan Szmałaj each. The publication of the latter and Kubicki's poem *Dämmerung* [Twilight] in September 1919 concluded BUNT'S cooperation with *Die Aktion*. Hulewicz officially ceased contacts with Pfemfert when, in mid-October 1918, the publisher of the Berlin magazine opted for the October Revolution and later propagated party-line communism. Already before that, Przybyszewski as the co-editor of *Zdrój* warned Hulewicz not to get stuck in a "blind alley of some 'Aktion'"²⁶ in his article *Powrotna fala naokoło ekspresjonizmu* [The Return Wave Around Expressionism], in which he promoted "ahistorical Expressionism", thus indirectly contributing to the Polonization of this style, while in the book *Ekspresjonizm, Słowacki i "Genezis z Ducha"* [Expressionism, Juliusz Słowacki, and "Genesis from the Spirit"], he proclaimed an innovative thesis about the spirituality of matter, that is, an Expressionism of the sciences.²⁷

Polish Contribution to *Der Sturm's* Artistic Universum

Berlin's gallery and magazine *Der Sturm* counts among one of the world's most famous avant-garde centers. A lesser known fact is that during the Great War, the site also served as the facade of a nationalist press office at the service of German militarism.²⁸ The more insightful studies on the cooperation of Polish artists with Walden's artistic empire of *Der Sturm* have a short tradition, although they co-created the journal's importance almost throughout its entire lifespan.

Tadeusz/Thaddäus Rittner published several of his literary texts already in the first three yearbooks of *Der Sturm*, starting with the first issue in 1910. With time, Walden cooperated with artists associated with Poland and representing various styles, from symbolic Post-Impressionism through Secession and Cubism to Constructivism. There are reproductions of works

26 Stanisław Przybyszewski to Jerzy Hulewicz, München, in: *Stanisław Przybyszewski, Listy III*, ed. Stanisław Helztyński (Wrocław: Ossolineum, 1954), p. 42.

27 Lidia Gluchowska, "Der Erste Weltkrieg – Unabhängigkeit Polens – Polonisierung des Expressionismus," in: *Die Künste in Zeiten politischer Zäsuren und gesellschaftlicher Transformation. Agens, Arena, Projektionsraum*, eds. Michaela Marek, Aleksandra Lipińska, Katja Bernhardt (Berlin/Warszawa: Humboldt Universität und Technische Universität/IS PAN, forthcoming).

28 Maurice Gode, *Der Sturm de Herwarth Walden ou l'utopie d'un art autonome* (Nancy: Presses Universitaires, 1990); Kate Winskell, "The Art of Propaganda: Herwarth Walden and 'Der Sturm' 1914–1919," *Art History* Vol. 18, No 3(1995), pp. 315–344.

by six of them in *Der Sturm*, and the works of the other two are listed in exhibition catalogues of Walden's gallery. Moreover, Jakob Steinhardt from Wielkopolska (belonging to Die Pathetiker milieu) and Jesekiel David Kirszenbaum from Galicia were associated with Walden,²⁹ but they did not in fact participate in Polish artistic life.³⁰ *Der Sturm* was also supported by the publishers of the Warsaw magazine *Nowa sztuka* [New Art], Aleksander Wat and Anatol Stern,³¹ along with the architect Szymon Syrkus and Tadeusz Peiper – the editor of the Cracow-based *Zwrotnica* [Steering]; however, they did not take part in Walden's exhibitions and publications. The works of Kazimir Malevich – who identified himself as Polish – appeared in *Der Sturm* as examples of Soviet art.³²

Artists from Poland collaborated to create the success of *Der Sturm* in the first phase of its existence before the Great War, among others, by participating in the first exhibition in its gallery in 1912 and in the First German Autumn Salon,³³ before Walden organized a famous traveling exhibition presented, among others, in Lviv.³⁴

Franciszek/Franz Flaum partook in the inaugural show in the *Der Sturm* salon by showing his sculptures next to paintings by Georges Braque, Oskar Kokoschka, and Edvard Munch, as well as the groups Die Brücke and Der blaue Reiter. Flaum was already known in Berlin from earlier, as in 1901 he presented his work in his own studio and, in 1902, at the Great Berlin Art Exhibition. In 1906, together with the painter Ignacy Stryczyński, Flaum created a successful Polish cabaret in a fashionable Berlin artistic venue: Café des Westens.³⁵ In his atelier at Möckernbrücke, Flaum hosted, among others, the poet and anarchist Erich Mühsam and his friend, aforementioned Przybyszewski,³⁶ who interpreted Flaum's Rodin-inspired sculptures in a

29 Renate Treydel, "Kirszenbaum, Jecheskiel Dawid," in: *Allgemeines Künstlerlexikon*, Vol. 80 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2014), pp. 333 f; Caroline Goldberg Igra, "Framing the Shtetl: The Manifestation of a Cubist Style in the Work of Early Modernist Eastern European Jewish Artists," in: *Cubism, Its Idioms and Revisions "Out of the Center." Aesthetics, Functions and Political Connotations*, eds. Lidia Głuchowska, Vojtěch Lahoda (Praha: Artefactum, forthcoming).

30 Ziva Amishai-Maisels, *Jakob Steinhardt. Etchings and Lithographs* (Jerusalem – Tel Aviv: DVIR, 1981).

31 Przemysław Strożek, "Cracow and Warsaw: Toward the Avant-Garde," in: *Modernist Magazines*, pp. 1192–1195.

32 *Der Sturm*, Vol. 28, No 4–5(1927) .

33 *Erster Deutscher Herbstsalon, Leit. H. Walden*, (Berlin: Der Sturm, 1913).

34 Głuchowska, "Poznań Expressionism," pp. 93–94.

35 Malinowski, "Polska awangarda," p. 261.

36 Erich Mühsam, *Ausgewählte Werke*, Vol. 2 (Berlin: Volk u Welt, 1978), pp. 524–525.

similar spirit as the works of Munch and Vigeland, but additionally applied in their descriptions the categories of race.³⁷

Moreover, the First German Autumn Salon included works by Stanisław Stückgold, an artist-engineer fascinated with anthroposophy and a well-known cubist rarely associated with Poland by international researchers, Ludwik Kazimierz Władysław Markus/Louis Marcoussis, who again exhibited in Walden's salon in 1922,³⁸ presenting watercolours, oil paintings, and paintings on glass. One of their projects was later reproduced in *Der Sturm*.³⁹ Stückgold was invited to the famous German Autumn Salon as a former student of Henri Matisse and Simon Hollósy and was known as a painter of luminous landscapes, flowers, and animals. In the same year, Stückgold opened a painting school that – with a one-year break caused by the outbreak of the war – operated until 1921, when he moved it to Paris, where it existed from 1923 to 1926.⁴⁰ Stückgold was already recognized in the city by André Salmon, Guillaume Apollinaire, and Pablo Picasso⁴¹ beforehand as one who strived to “invent a tonal geometry” and “used art as a mystic.”⁴² He developed a style that Theodor Däubler considered appropriate for the decoration of a modern synagogue.⁴³ Stückgold also made a name for himself as a portraitist of well-known personalities: Martin Buber, Albert Einstein, and Else Lasker-Schüler.⁴⁴ He vividly described his pro-Polish and pro-Jewish self-identification in a letter to Paul Westheim from 1917.⁴⁵ Today, we may find his works in Goetheanum and MoMA.

37 Stanisław Przybyszewski, “Franz Flaum”, *Deutscher Musenalmanach für das Jahr 1897*, (Wien: Wilhelm Arent, 1897), pp. 103–108; *Franz Flaum. Fünf Essays von Rudolf von Delius, Emil Geyer, Cesary Jellenta, Samuel Lublinski, Stanislaw Przybyszewski* (Berlin: K. Schnabel, 1904); *Der Sturm: Erste Ausstellung: Der Blaue Reiter, Franz Flaum, Oskar Kokoschka, Expressionisten* (Berlin: Der Sturm, 1912).

38 Solange Milet and Dora Vallier, eds., *Louis Marcoussis: catalogue raisonné de l'œuvre gravé* (Copenhagen: Cordelia, 1991).

39 102. *Ausstellung: Louis Marcoussis – Gemälde, Aquarelle, Glasbilder; Sturm-Gesamtschau* (Berlin: Der Sturm, 1922); Louis Marcoussis, “Stilleben,” *Der Sturm*, Vol. 12, No 3(1921), p. 53.

40 Angela Matile, *Stanislas Stückgold*, <http://biographien.kulturimpuls.org/detail.php?&id=954>. (Accessed 14.01.2019).

41 Albert Steffen, *Selbstgewähltes Schicksal*, Vol. 1 (Dornach: Verlag für Schöne Wissenschaften, 1961), p. 277.

42 Andre Salmon, *Stanislas Stückgold, 1868–1933* (Paris : Les Gémeaux, 1954), p. 8.

43 Clemens Weiler, *Stanislaus Stückgold* (Wiesbaden: Limes Verlag, 1962), p. 12.

44 Sigrid Bauschinger, *Else Lasker-Schüler. Biographie* (Göttingen: Wallstein Verlag, 2004), p. 224; Else Lasker-Schüler, “Stanislas Stückgold,” *Berliner Tageblatt*, No 58–59(1929), p.7.

45 Bauschinger, *Else Lasker-Schüler*, p. 224.

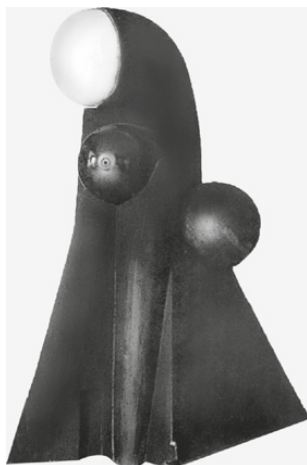
Another artist of the *Sturm* circle, Marcoussis emphasized his ties with Poland by joining the Polish company of the French Foreign Legion (1914–1919) and personal and professional contacts with the Polish art scene in the interwar period, even after obtaining French citizenship.⁴⁶ He connects the first phase of Walden's gallery with its second, postwar phase, initiated at the turn of 1919 and 1920 by Kubicki's exhibition. The latter immortalized the former stage of Flaum's cabaret, aptly called Café Großenwahn [Café Megalomania] in the background of his aforementioned cubo-dadaist painting *Der Eintretende*. In *Der Sturm*, Kubicki exhibited his works as the only representative of BUNT, although also Jerzy Hulewicz had contacts to the gallery and is evidenced by his entry in the visitors' book. In *Der Sturm*, Kubicki most likely presented his work alongside Paul Klee, Johannes Molzahn, Oswald Herzog, Heinrich von Boddien, Paul Buns, and Hilla von Rebay. After his exhibition there, he sold the paintings *Der Ruderer* [Oarsman] (which graphical version, as mentioned above, appeared on the covers of *Die Aktion* and *Zdrój*), *Demut* [Humility], and *Tänzerin* [Dancer], which are only known from preserved graphic versions or descriptions, and the watercolour *Vase with Blumen* [Vase with Flowers]. Kubicki also exhibited *Kirche vor Aufgehender Sonne* [Church Tower in the Setting Sun] and *Ekstase* [Extasy], today in the collection of the Berlinische Galerie. The latter painting still bears *Der Sturm*'s exposition label. The majority of the presented works were constructivist compositions created from a cluster of parallel lines in a dynamic arrangement, foreshadowing Kubicki's mature style, who is considered to be the first consistent representative of geometric abstraction in Poland.⁴⁷

After 1918, there were five more Polish artists who cooperated with *Der Sturm* (or there were maybe six – there is no documentation to dispel this doubt). At the end of 1923, the Walden Gallery presented works by the constructivists Teresa Żarnower and Mieczysław Szczuka⁴⁸ (and perhaps also Henryk Stażewski), who previously exhibited together at the May

46 Irena Kossowska, *Louis Marcoussis* (*Ludwik Kazimierz Marcoussis*, www.culture.pl/baza-szytki-pelna-treść/-eo-event_asset_publisher/aANS/content/louis-marcoussis-ludwik-kazimierz-markus). (Accessed 14.01.2018); [wikipedia.org/wiki/LouisMarcoussis](https://pl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Louis_Marcoussis). (Accessed 14.01.2019); Jerzy Malinowski, *Malarstwo i rzeźba Żydów Polskich w XIX i XX wieku* [Painting and Sculpture of the Polish Jews in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Century] (Warszawa: PWN, 2000), pp. 180, 225, 282.

47 Głuchowska, *Avantgarde und Liebe*, pp. 49, 118, 396–397; *Der Sturm*, Vol. 10–11 (1919) pp. 152, 155.

48 *Der Sturm*, Vol. 14, No 6(1923) pp. 87–89; “Ze sztuki,” *Nasz Przegląd*, No 75(1923), p. 3; Malinowski, *Malarstwo i rzeźba*, p. 224.



Ill. 4: Teresa Żarnower. *Architecture – Sculpture*, in: *Der Sturm* Vol. 14, No 6(1923), p. 87. Courtesy: Prof. St. Karol Kubicki, Berlin. Photo: Lidia Gluchowska.

Exhibition of New Art in Vilnius/Wilno and in the following year co-created the Warsaw-based group and magazine *Blok* [Block]. Reproductions in the first issue of *Blok*, as well as in *Der Sturm*, and *Dźwignia* [Lever] are the only documentation of their lost oeuvre presented in Berlin. Their exhibition in Berlin probably consisted of fifty-seven drawings and watercolours along with six sculptures and spatial projects (and Stażewski possibly presented three suprematist paintings).⁴⁹ Other participants of the same exhibition were probably Aurél Bernáth and Lothar Schreyer.⁵⁰

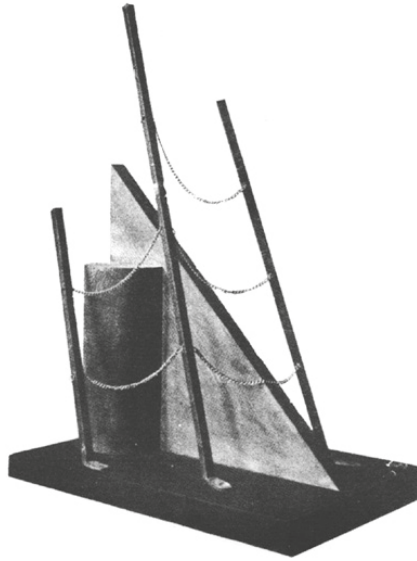
In 1923, *Der Sturm* only published a reproduction of Żarnower's massive sculpture (Ill. 4), not as impressive as her other dynamic compositions, reminiscent of the works of Alexander Archipenko,⁵¹ and Szczuka's *Raumkonstruktion – Plastik* [Spatial Construction – Sculpture; Ill. 5], now known as *Pomnik rewolucjonisty* [The Monument of a Revolutionary; 1922].⁵² Szczuka created it only two years after *Autoportret*

49 Andrzej Turowski, *Budowniczości świata. Z dziejów radykalnego modernizmu w sztuce polskiej* [The Constructors of the World. The History of Radical Modernism in Polish Art] (Kraków: Universitas, 2000), pp. 61–63, 386.

50 Marina Dmitrieva, “Polnische Künstler und Der Sturm,” in: *Grenzüberschreitungen. Deutsche, Polen und Juden zwischen den Kulturen (1918–1939)*, ed. Marion Brandt (Berlin: Peter Lang, 2006), p. 56.

51 Teresa Żarnower, “Architektur-Plastik,” *Der Sturm*, Vol. 14, No 6(1923) p. 87.

52 Mieczysław Szczuka, “Raumkonstruktion – Plastik,” *Der Sturm*, Vol. 1, No 6(1923) p. 89.



Ill. 5: Mieczysław Szczuka. *Spatial construction* (“Statue of a revolutionary”), in: *Der Sturm* Vol. 14, No 6(1923), p. 84. Courtesy: Prof. St. Karol Kubicki, Berlin. Photo: Lidia Głuchowska.

z *Paletą* [Self-Portrait with a Palette], a hybrid contamination of the avant-garde cubo-constructivist form and conventional iconography. This demonstrates the enormous pace of stylistic and ideological evolution of the romantic constructivist Szczuka, who (like Kubicki) had previously created expressionist works with religious themes.⁵³ However, it is documented that in *Der Sturm* there were also other works by Szczuka exhibited: non-figurative projects of monuments for Ludwik Zamenhoff, Karl Liebknecht, and Fyodor Dostoyevsky, most probably inspired by the *Project of the Monument to the Third International* by Vladimir Tatlin and the text *Plastik* [Sculpture; 1922], published in Yiddish by Josif Tchaikow in the Warsaw magazine *Chaliastre*.⁵⁴

Szczuka was also the one who created the first Polish mobiles, that is, assemblages exhibited in Warsaw in 1921, in which the critics noticed

53 Turowski, *Budowniczość świata*, pp. 37, 39, 56.

54 Herwarth Walden, “Mietschislaw Stschuka,” *Der Sturm*, Vol. 29–30, No 1(1928–1929) p. 185; Turowski, *Budowniczość świata*, p. 271; Józef Czajkowi (Josif Tchaikow), “Skulptur,” *Chaliastre*, Vol. 1(1922), pp. 50–52; transl. in: *Warszawska awangarda jydysz* [The Warsaw Yiddish Avant-Garde], ed. Karolina Szymaniak (Gdańsk: słowo – obraz – terytoria, 2005), pp. 233–243.

the influence of Tatlinism and Dadaism,⁵⁵ and they claimed him to be one of the anticipators of “typomontages and photomontages, and even cinemontages.”⁵⁶ In *Der Sturm*, Szczuka presented three works representing this new medium. Like the artists of the Czech group Devětsil (Carline), he treated photomontage as “poezjoplastyka” [poetry like fine art]. *Kemal's Constructive Program* exemplifies socially engaged art close to journalism. However, like Szczuka's other photomontages, this work contains a hint of lyrical humour, while the figure of the ancient leader among the symbols of technology condenses the message that the former Greek province is becoming a source of progress.⁵⁷

Szczuka and Żarnower advertised *Der Sturm* and other avant-garde periodicals in *Blok* (e.g. No 8–9/1924), thus confirming own accession to international modernity. Their Warsaw magazine *Blok* had a representative office in Berlin and published accounts of Berlin art exhibitions. Szczuka's 1923 presence in *Der Sturm* may however seem unusual, because the productivist character of his work was alien to Walden's aesthetics and ideology. Noteworthy is that in *Der Sturm's* six-years-later, among others, Szczuka was to retrospectively legitimize the access of the publisher of this magazine to post-expressionist modernity by indicating that he had promoted new media when they were still struggling to make their way even into constructivist periodicals. During 1928/1929 he posthumously dedicated a text to Szczuka, who died in an accident in 1927. In this contribution, Walden proudly reminded about the exhibition of his scenographic and typographic projects and fragments of abstract film. He also reproduced a translation of Szczuka's article *Projekt architektoniczny* [Architectural Project], its four urban sketches, a neoplastic interior design, and two photomontages, whose form was already appreciated in 1929 but in 1923 perceived as too radical.⁵⁸

The artist associated with *Der Sturm* earlier and longer than Szczuka was Henryk Berlewi. Initially, both collaborated, which resulted in the International Exhibition of Young Art in Łódź in December 1923, where some representatives of the group Yung-Yidish (Young Yiddish/Jung Idysz, 1919–1923) circle in Łódź and Warsaw constructivists met – and consequently in the 1924 formation of the Blok group. However, the cooperation

55 Henryk Berlewi, “Konstruktywista” [The Constructivist], in: *Mieczysław Szczuka*, eds. Anatol Stern and Mieczysław Berman, (Warszawa: Wyd. Artystyczne i Filmowe, 1965), p. 134.

56 Turowski, *Budowniczości świata*, pp. 21, 56–57.

57 Mieczysław Szczuka, “Photomontage,” “Kemal Pasha,” *Der Sturm*, Vol. 29–30, No 1(1928–1929) pp. 192–193.

58 Walden, “Mietschislaw Stschuka;” Mieczysław Szczuka, “Ein architektonisches Projekt,” *Der Sturm*, Vol. 29–30, No 1(1928–1929) p. 193.

of these two artists soon turned into competition for primacy in the Polish avant-garde. Berlewi took over the opening of the group's first exhibition in the Laurin-Klement salon by one day and opened his individual exhibition in Austro-Daimler's salon on 14 March 1924; he also (together with Aleksander Wat and Stanisław Brucz) prepared the first issue of the *Jazz* magazine, competing with *Blok*.⁵⁹

Berlewi's controversial attitude and propensity for fleeting alliances oriented toward self-promotion also surfaced in his relation to Walden, because Berlewi left an ambivalent assessment of *Der Sturm* in his accounts from 1922.⁶⁰ Nevertheless, he exhibited his works in *Der Sturm*'s gallery with Aurél Bernáth in August 1924, and *Der Sturm* released his *Mechano-Faktur* program with its reproduction in September that year (Ill. 6).⁶¹ When reviewing Berlewi's exhibition, Ludwig Hilberseimer – whose works appeared in *Blok* – emphasized that “Berlewi seeks to achieve the maximum of energy development with the minimum of resources.”⁶² Whereas Rachel Wischnitzer noted with amazement the evolution of Berlewi's style: the abandonment of Jewish Expressionism in favour of anti-individualism (international constructivism).⁶³ This change occurred due to El Lissitzky, who visited Warsaw in 1921 at the invitation of Kultur-Lige and participated in discussions with Polish artists in Berlewi's studio at Senatorska street, perhaps together with Szczuka and Żarnower.⁶⁴ In the mechanofacture referring to the typography of *De Stijl*, geometric and chromatic reduction accompany the principle of seriality of analogous forms in variable

59 Turowski, *Budowniczość świata*, p. 67; Lidia Głuchowska, “From Abstract Film to Op Art and Kinetic Art? Henryk Berlewi's Mechano-Facture as a Transmedial Adaptation of the Experimental Films by Viking Eggeling,” in: *The Aesthetics of Matter. Modernism, the Avant-Garde and Material Exchange*, eds. David Ayers et al. (Berlin and New York: De Gruyter, 2009), pp. 306–327.

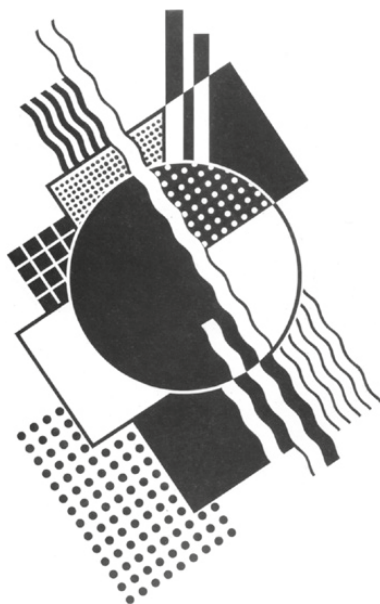
60 Henryk Berlewi, “The International Exhibition in Düsseldorf,” transl. Wanda Kemp-Welch, in: *Between Worlds: A Sourcebook of Central European Avant-Gardes, 1910–1930*, eds. Timothy O. Benson and Éva Forgács (Cambridge, Mass. and London: The MIT Press, 2002), pp. 397–399.

61 Henryk Berlewi, “Mechano-Faktur,” *Der Sturm* Vol. 25, No 6(1924), pp. 155–159.

62 Ludwig Hilberseimer, “Bildende Kunst. Polen,” *Sozialistische Monatshefte*, No 9(1924), p. 12.

63 Rachel Wischnitzer-Bernstein, “Mechanofaktur. Henryk Berlewis Ausstellung im ‘Sturm’,” *Jüdische Rundschau*, 8.07.1924.

64 Henryk Berlewi, “Nieco o dawnej awangardzie” [Something about the Old Avant-Garde], *Życie Literackie*, No 27(1957), p. 5; Berlewi, “El Lissitzky in Warsaw,” in: *El Lissitzky*, eds. Jean Leering, Wieland Schmied (Hannover: Max Vandrey, 1965), pp. 60–61; El Lissitzky, “Das goveyn zayn di kunst” [The Win Over the Art], *Ringgen*, No. 10(1922) transl. in: *Warszawska awangarda*, pp. 110–121.



Ill. 6: Henryk Berlewi. *Mechano-Faktur*, linocut, in: *Der Sturm* Vol. 15, No 3(1924), p. 157. Courtesy: Prof. St. Karol Kubicki, Berlin. Photo: Lidia Głuchowska.

systems that produce a pulsating impression. Hence, the mechanofacture is often regarded as an anticipation of op art, and Berlewi as the “father” of kinetic art (next to László Moholy-Nagy and Josef Albers).⁶⁵ His formal concepts crystallized under the influence of Viking Eggeling, Moholy-Nagy, Hans Richter, and Mies van der Rohe. From the perspective of contacts with the international constructivist avant-garde, reporting the 1922 exhibition of Russian art in Berlin, Berlewi wrote a synthesis of its progressive tendencies. He perceived suprematism as an example of *l’art pour l’art*, thus a suicide of art,⁶⁶ and was fascinated by film experiments by Eggeling, Richter, and Vilmos Huszár. The dynamic transformation, which the films

65 *Henryk Berlewi Temoinages* (Paris: Center d’Art Cybernetique, 1965), transl. in: *Henryk Berlewi* (Zielona Góra: BWA, 1967); Passuth, *Treffpunkte der Avantgarden*, p. 212.

66 Henryk Berlewi, “Yidishe kinstler in der hayntiger rusisher kunst. Tsu der rusisher Kunst-oyssttelung in Berlin 1922” [Jewish Artist in Contemporary Russian Art], *Milgroim*, Vol. 2, No 3(1923), pp.14–16; Głuchowska, “From Transfer to Transgression,” pp. 158–160; Malinowski, *Malarstwo i rzeźba*, pp. 118–119; Dmitieva, “Polnische Künstler und Der Sturm,” p. 55.

contained, enriched by the utilitarian element, became the basis of Berlewi's own artistic idea.

Berlewi, Żarnower, and Szczuka – they all drew inspiration from the international film theory and practice of their time.⁶⁷ Berlewi's mechanofacture is an adaptation of the cascading rhythm of triangles and squares from Eggeling's abstract movies, which Berlewi commented on alongside Theo van Doesburg's work in his article from 1922.⁶⁸ We also noticed Eggeling's influence in the preserved fragment of Szczuka's abstract film.⁶⁹ In turn, Żarnower anticipated the cinematic-theatrical character of the new art in the catalogue of the aforementioned Vilnius/Wilno exhibition in 1923.⁷⁰ The fact of their cooperation with *Der Sturm* should be an impulse for the future revision of the negative judgements about this journal, created in the second half of the 20th century. They turn out to be the co-funders of modern typography and design, and Walden proved his excellent intuition by promoting their work.

Walden's awareness of the latest trends in art surfaced in his 1926 article *Theater*,⁷¹ which also offers two photographs of Feliks Krassowski's *Scena narastająca* [The Increasing Stage] – stage design to Adam Mickiewicz's *Dziady* [Forefathers' Eve] (Ill. 7) – an example of “absolute theater”, promoted in *Der Sturm*, among others, by the future Bauhaus lecturer, Lothar Schreyer.⁷²

Theater historians name Krasowski alongside Andrzej Pronaszko and Ivo Gall as the three great Polish contemporary stage designers.⁷³ Krasowski collaborated with theaters all over Poland, including Juliusz Słowacki Theater in Cracow in 1924–1926. There, he became associated with the circle around of the aforementioned *Zwrotnica* magazine published by the “pope of the Polish avant-garde,” Tadeusz Peiper.

67 Głuchowska, “From Abstract Film,” pp. 51–54

68 Henryk Berlewi, “Viking Eggeling und zayn abstrakt-dinamisher film” [Viking Eggeling and His Abstract-Dynamic Film], *Albatros*, No 1(1922), pp. 17–18, transl. In: *Warszawska awangarda*, pp. 245–251.

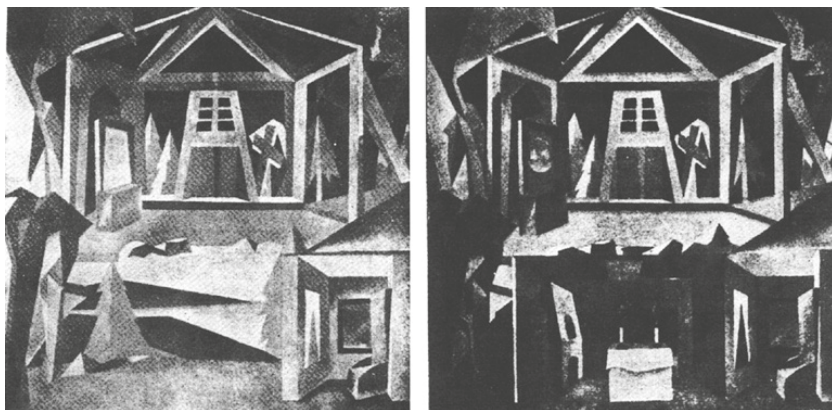
69 Mieczysław Szczuka, “Fotomontaż,” *Blok*, No 8/9(1924), n.p.

70 Teresa Żarnower, “Chęć zbadania niezbadanego” [The Will to Study the Unresearched] in: *Katalog Wystawy Nowej Sztuki* [Catalogue of the New Art Exhibition] (Wilno, 1923), n.p.

71 Herwarth Walden, “Theater,” *Der Sturm*, Vol. 27(1926), pp. 33–44.

72 Głuchowska, “Okkultismus,” pp. 306–311.

73 Iza Rusiniak, “Nauczyciel zdziwionej publiczności” [The Teacher of an Amazed Public], <http://www.artbiznes.pl/jsp/artbiznes/artysty.jsp?Typ=detal&IdArtysty=107994>. (Accessed 14.01.2019); *Mysł teatralna polskiej awangardy* [Theater Thought of the Polish Avant-Garde], ed. Konstanty Puzyna (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Artystyczne i Filmowe, 1973).



III. 7: Feliks Krassowski. *Wachsende Szene* [Increasing Stage], design for the theater set for the performance of a drama *Dziady* [Forefathers' Eve], written by Adam Mickiewicz, in: *Der Sturm*, Vol. 17, No 3(1926), pp. 44, 45. Courtesy: Prof. St. Karol Kubicki, Berlin. Photo: Lidia Głuchowska.

It was Peiper who published Krassowski's brochure *Scena narastająca* [Increasing scene], in which the latter propagated the economical use of decorations, supplemented with the development of the play. Once shown, stage buildings were not to disappear in subsequent stages but remain, tied to the next constructions into an organic whole.⁷⁴ Walden presented this concept in *Der Sturm* in the same year, which proves that he quickly reacted to contemporary theory and artistic practice. He probably met Krassowski through Peiper, who accompanied Malevich during his trip to Berlin.⁷⁵

The publication of photographs with Krassowski's stage design in 1926 was one of the last items in *Der Sturm* that referred to Polish art. As mentioned, afterward Walden only wrote an extensive homage in honor of Szczuka (1928/1929) and, a year later the painting of Marcossius' *Etude*, in another attempt to retrospectively highlight the output of his periodical and the gallery.⁷⁶ Interestingly, the person to commemorate the last moments of

74 Feliks Krassowski, *Scena narastająca: zasady i projekty* (Kraków: Zwrotnica, 1926).

75 Andrzej Turowski, *Malewicz w Warszawie* [Malevich in Warsaw] (Kraków: Universitas, 2002), pp. 128–139, 211, 213–214, 217; Lidia Głuchowska, "Station Warsaw. Malevich, Lissitzky and the two traces of cultural transfer between 'East' and 'West'," *Centropa*, Vol. 13, No 3(2013), pp. 241–257.

76 *Der Sturm* (*Die neue Malerei*), ed. Herwarth Walden (Berlin: Der Sturm, 1929), p. 17–18.

Walden's life in a Soviet gulag was nobody else then Aleksander Wat, mentioned above already several times.⁷⁷

Die Novembergruppe and the Utopia of the International of the Spirit

The links of avant-garde artists from Poland with the international interdisciplinary association Die Novembergruppe have not been documented thus far, although there was an exhibition organized recently devoted to them.⁷⁸ Their reconstruction is as far complicated, as the relevant source material appeared, among others, in Yiddish and Hebrew, for example, in the magazine *Milgroim/Rimon*, where Jankel Adler and Henryk Berlewi were mentioned as presented at the exhibitions of the group.⁷⁹ There is also documentation of the participation of the latter in two of Novembergruppe's exhibitions, including the Great Berlin Art Exhibition in 1923 and the Second Exhibition of this group, at which a prototype of mechanofecture, *Martwa natura z butelkami* [Still Life with Bottles] was presented. Contrary to certain accounts, the Kubickis kept the distance toward Novembergruppe, as they did toward Arbeitsrat für Kunst [Work Council for Art], because their anarchist world view opposed any institutionalization of artistic life.

Due to the limited state of research on the associations of Polish artists with the Novembergruppe, the focus of this contribution is devoted to their participation in the Düsseldorf Congress of the International Union of Progressive Artists (May 29–31, 1922)⁸⁰ and the accompanying First

77 Aleksander Wat, “śmierć starego Bolszewika” [Death of the old bolshevik], *Kultura* No 1–2(1964), pp. 2–40, here p. 29.

78 *Freiheit: Die Kunst der Novembergruppe 1918–1935* (Berlin: Berlinische Galerie, 2018); Isabel Wünsche, “Transgressing National Borders and Artistic Styles: The November Group and the International Avant-Garde in Berlin during the Interwar Period,” in: *Art/Histories in Transcultural Dynamics, Late 19th to Early 21st Centuries*, eds. Pauline Bachmann et al. (München: Wilhelm Fink, 2017), pp. 291–307.

79 “Artistic and literary chronics,” *Milgroim*, Vol. 2, No 5(1923), pp. 39–40; Alicja Słupska, “Milgroim magazine as a carrier of the idea of a new Jewish art and modern reproductive graphic art,” in *Bunt a tradycje grafiki*, pp. fn. 7, 103–114.

80 Maria Müller, “Der Kongress der ‘Union fortschrittlicher internationaler Künstler’ in Düsseldorf,” in: *Konstruktivistische Internationale. Utopien für eine Europäische Kultur 1922–1927*, ed. Bernd Finkeldey (Ostfildern-Ruit: Cantz'sche Verlag, 1992), pp. 17–22. For more, see Lidia Głuchowska, “Cosmopatriots? Internationalism and patriotism in the thinking of the classic avant-garde. The case of Stanislaw Kubicki (1889–1942),” in: *The Avant-Garde and the State*, ed. Dorota Monkiewicz (Łódź: MSL, 2018), pp. 141–148.

International Art Exhibition (May 28–July 3, 1922),⁸¹ co-organized by the group together with Der Junge Rheinland and Dresdner Sezession. These two events are regarded as the most important foreign contributions of the Polish avant-garde in the interwar period. Berlewi enthusiastically reported about both of them in his review, being probably the most consistent document of these events.⁸² What contradict Berlewi's view are the manifestoes of the ephemeral group Die Kommune, co-edited by the Kubickis, in which they and their friends declared, among others, that "We have declined [to participate]"⁸³ and criticized the organizers for the creation of a cartel aiming at the centralization and bureaucratization of artistic life. Berlin Dadaists like Hannah Höch, Raoul Hausmann, Otto Dix, and George Grosz along with Artistes Radicaux like Hans Arp, Viking Eggeling, Marcel Janco, and Hans Richter presented a similar approach even before the Congress.⁸⁴ Die Kommune opposed the co-funders of the cartel and the circle of *Der Sturm* with their performatively presented theses that accused them of following particular interests. The members of Die Kommune state that, "It has not crossed any of their minds to disband in the interests of a greater international community.... We originally gave our association the name of Die Kommune. We now detach the label from our brows and state that this group no longer exists. Our connection will continue, even without a name, if we as human beings are truly connected."⁸⁵

Poland was represented at the Congress by twelve participants,⁸⁶ including Germany-based Henryk Berlewi and former members of Yung-Yidish: Henryk Barciński/Henoch Barczyński (then associated with Dresdner Sezession), Pola Lindenfeld (from Wiesbaden), Jankel Adler and

81 Stefan von Wiese, "Ein Meilenstein auf dem Weg in den Internationalismus. Die '1. Internationale Kunstausstellung' und der Kongreß der 'Union fortschrittlicher internationaler Künstler' 1922 in Düsseldorf," in: *Am Anfang: Das Junge Rheinland. Zur Kunst- und Zeitgeschichte einer Region 1918–1945*, ed. Ulrich Krempel (Düsseldorf: Claassen, 1985), pp. 50–51; Berndt Finkeldey, "Die 'I. Internationale Kunstausstellung' in Düsseldorf 28. Mai bis 3. Juli 1922," in: *Konstruktivistische Internationale*, pp. 23–30.

82 von Wiese, "Ein Meilenstein," p. 53, fn. 25; Berlewi, "The International Exhibition in Düsseldorf," pp. 397–399.

83 "Second Manifesto of the Commune," transl. David Britt, in: *Between Worlds*, pp. 394–397; for more, see Lidia Głuchowska, "Nicht unsere Werke sind wichtig, sondern das Leben. Performative Manifestationen der Gruppen Bunt und Die Kommune," *Expressionismus*, Vol. 2(2015), pp. 15–36.

84 von Wiese, "Ein Meilenstein," p. 51; Müller, "Kongress," pp. 20, 21.

85 "Second Manifesto of the Commune," p. 396; *Manifesto of the Commune*, transl. David Britt, in: *Between worlds*, p. 395.

86 von Wiese, "Ein Meilenstein," p. 54.

Marek Szwarc (representatives of the organizers Das Junge Rheinland; the latter was a correspondent of the French section), Stanisław and Margarete Kubicki (representatives of BUNT; both de facto German citizens however she, following the Polish custom, signed the participants` list as Stanisla[wo]wa), and perhaps also Artur Nacht-Samborski.⁸⁷ Works by Szwarc and Adler appeared in the catalog and received positive reviews in the press.⁸⁸ Moreover, in the catalog there are references to aforementioned Stücgold and Kissling, as well as Józef Hecht, Henryk Hayden, Maryan, Szamaj Mondzain, Józef Rubczak, and Waclaw Zawadowski, who all were mentioned as representatives of Poland. Marcoussis was a member of the French section, while Lazar Segall and Abraham Weinbaum belonged to the Russian one.⁸⁹ Berlewi perceived the exhibitions as “attempt at reviving and taking stock on the grounds of the achievements of the new art so far,” which represents two opposing currents: the “material-constructive” and the “individual-destructive.”⁹⁰ The former is to include Expressionism, which “agony” Berlewi saw in the works of Dadaists and Die Novembergruppe. Instead, he highly valued Russian constructivism and similiar trends of Western art, created by Frenchmen along with Eggeling and Richter,⁹¹ as well as Hungarians – Moholy-Nagy and László Peri – and the Dutchman Theo van Doesburg, editor of *De Stijl*.

The founding proclamation of the Congress was signed for Poland by Szwarc, Kubicki, and Adler.⁹² Paradoxically, the proceedings focused not on artistic but on administrative issues. Berlewi (the same as Adler elected to the main board as a delegate of Eastern European Jewry) proposed to organize the next Congress in Warsaw (at this time the main European center of the Yiddish avant-garde)⁹³ and to define the notion “international artist,” but this did not happen.⁹⁴ His statements contradicted the theses of the abovementioned *Second Manifesto of Die Kommune*. Its co-authors – Kubicki, the Dadaist Raoul Hausmann, Otto Freundlich, and Franz Wilhelm Seiwert – split the debate together with Gert Wollheim from Das Junge Rheinland by protesting against the presence of Herbert Eulenberg (who signed the prowar nationalist petition of ninety-nine intellectuals) on

87 Jerzy Stajuda, “Artur Nacht-Samborski (I),” *Miesięcznik Literacki*, Vol. 12, No 9 (1977) pp. 68–79.

88 Finkeldey, “Die ‘I. Internationale Ausstellung’,” pp. 24–26.

89 Malinowski, *Malarstwo i rzeźba Żydów*, pp. 175, 180.

90 Berlewi, “The International Exhibition in Düsseldorf.”

91 Głuchowska, “From Abstract Film,” pp. 41–59.

92 von Wiese, “Ein Meilenstein,” pp. 55, 57.

93 *Warszawska awangarda jidysz*, pp. 8, 11–13.

94 von Wiese, “Ein Meilenstein,” p. 55.

the honorary committee. Die Kommune also accused the organizers of misunderstanding the internationalism expressed in the creation of national sections within the Exhibition and Congress. Die Kommune also objected to their cooperation with art dealers Gustav Flechtheim and Karl Nierendorf, whom they first implicitly criticized in their Manifesto for “commercial parasitism.”⁹⁵ Created during the Congress by van Doesburg, Richter, and El Lissitzky, the International Faction of Constructivists also left the proceedings. The mentioned separatists were followed by others.⁹⁶

The Exhibition and Congress did not turn into series of events. Paradoxically, the separatists, described in the local press as “a handful of Dadaists,” became the real avant-garde of the following years.⁹⁷ From their circle emerged both the Constructivist International, which linked the co-founders of a universal rational style in design and architecture, as well as Gruppe progressiver Künstler [Group of Progressive Artists; 1923–1933] founded in Cologne, which emerged from Die Kommune. After returning to Berlin, Die Kommune organized the International Exhibition of Revolutionary Artists in the working-class district of Prenzlauer Berg, which was to be the opposition of the *mercantile* exhibition in Düsseldorf. Apart from the Kubickis, Poland was represented by their colleagues from the radical wing of BUNT: Skotarek, Szmaj, and Adler (even though he was the one who tried to keep the Congress separatists from leaving the proceedings). The invitations to the International Exhibition of Revolutionary Artists are depicted on Kubicki’s linocut *Der Einsame* [The Lonely], which shows a revolutionary – without a social context – an avant-garde figure of the artist’s alienation.

For Kubicki, the Berlin exhibition was the last stage of the utopian new community and the end of faith in the power of the supranational message. He abandoned the writing of bilingual revolutionary poems-manifestos (1918–1921)⁹⁸ and social critical contents in his paintings. They were replaced by escapism in the apotheosis of nature. A pendant to the linocut *Der Einsame* is the pastel *Der Mensch und die Tiere* [Man and Animals; 1928]. This time the presented figure appears not in isolation but among other beings, which Kubicki declared to be equal to people in his theosophical texts, among others, published in *a bis z*, the magazine of Gruppe progressiver Künstler. For this reason, its editor, Seiwert, called Kubicki “a cosmic communist”⁹⁹

95 Peter Mantis, *Versuch einer Rekonstruktion. Internationale Ausstellung Revolutionärer Künstler 1922 in Berlin* (Berlin: Neuer Berliner Kunstverein, 1975), n.p.

96 von Wiese, “Ein Meilenstein,” p. 54, fn. 34–35.

97 von Wiese, “Ein Meilenstein,” pp. 54, 55.

98 Głuchowska, *Stanisław Kubicki – In transitu*.

99 Głuchowska, *Avantgarde und Liebe*, pp. 130–131, 163, 238.

and in a sense acknowledged him as an initiator of the ecological movement. Also *in a bis* z Kubicki, the former *spiritus rector* of the radical wing of BUNT, questioned the relationship between art and politics in his article *Proletarische Kunst* [Proletarian Art], drawing conclusions from his Berlin conversations in March 1927 with Kazimir Malevich, who was disappointed with the socio-artistic situation in the Soviet Union.¹⁰⁰ As it appears in this context, Kubicki was closer to the religious socialism and the anarchist intellectual-aristocratic “international of the spirit”, a world without borders, party apparatus, and other beurocracy than to any political propaganda.

Entartete Kunst

Hitler's ascent to power caused the emigration of many artists. Among them was Adler, whose paintings appeared in the infamous exhibition *Entartete Kunst* [Degenerate Art]. After SA's revisions in his Berlin home, Kubicki left for Poland. His last, unfinished image, *Moses vom brennenden Dornbusch* [Moses in front of the Burning Bush; 1933/1934] – just like his famous *Turmbau zu Babel* [Tower of Babel; 1917] depicted at the Bunt's posters – refers to the utopia of “a new man”, but this time not to its culmination but to the end of an era of “great spirituality”. During the Second World War, Kubicki joined the Polish resistance movement and was murdered by the Gestapo as a courier to the neutral state embassies in Berlin.¹⁰¹ Marcoussis died in 1941 near Vichy, where he and his wife Alicja Halicka escaped after the German invasion of France. After the tragic death of Szczuka in 1927, Żarnower continued their work alone (from 1937 in exile) until she committed suicide in New York in 1950. After the Second World War, the ideas of the avant-garde were cultivated by Krassowski and Berlewi until 1967 and by Stażewski until 1988.

Berlin's Exterritoriality and the Present Echoes of the Classical Polish Avant-Garde

French artistic imperialism¹⁰² and the resentment of Polish society resulting from more than a century of occupation of a large part of Poland by Prussia, and then the trauma of the two World Wars, often made many

100 Głuchowska, “Station Warsaw. Malevich, Lissitzky,” *Centropa*, Vol. 13, No 3 (2013) p. 255; Głuchowska, *Stanisław Kubicki – In transitu*, pp. 227.

101 Głuchowska, *Stanisław Kubicki – In transitu*, pp. 224–244.

102 Cf. the subtitle of the magazine *Montjoie: organe de l'impérialisme artistique français*.

identify – and thus marginalize – the art of the Berlin avant-garde with German art. However, Berlin was – also in 1945–1989 – a place of transfer of radical creative ideas, an extraterritorial entity in the German territory. This resembles the somewhat extraterritorial, location-changing, and most famous international school of design – Bauhaus (where Barciński and Kirszenbaum received their education). The Berlin avant-garde viewed itself as internationalist, anational, while one may describe most of the artists from Poland associated with *Der Sturm* as cross-border and multi-ethnic individualities.¹⁰³ Meanwhile, at the end of the Great War, there existed two competing paradigms of art. The first referred to the idea of – emerging from the prewar empires – new nations with their need for official, national-propaganda representation. The second stemmed from a parareligious pacifist-anarchist conception of a spiritually new community. Its statement would show a map of the world from the cover of *Blok. Revue internationale d'avantgarde* with the commentary “Dokąd dociera Blok?” [Where Does Blok Reach?] stands for its self-identification. It shows the wide distribution range of periodicals of the international avant-garde network.¹⁰⁴ For the above reasons, the new Polish state promoted no “art that did not represent national creativity,” while negating German (read: international) aesthetics.¹⁰⁵ The situation did not change much after 1945, because 1948–1953 artistic historiography was viewed through the doctrine of socialist realism. The propagated art was to be “national in form and socialist in content.” In this sense, it was the opposite of the avant-garde, even when some of its members were cosmopatriots and sacrificed their life for Poland during the Second World War.

A significant extension of the Polish (and peripheral) research perspective resulted from external factors, like the dissolution of the so-called Eastern Bloc, exhibitions *Europe, Europe* (1992) or *Central European Avant-Gardes ca. 1910–1930* (2002),¹⁰⁶ and the initiatives of the European Network for Avantgarde and Modernism Studies.

103 Lidia Głuchowska, “The ‘New World’ of the Avant-Garde and the ‘New States’ in Central Europe. Perspectives of a Postnational and Postcolonial New Art History. Postface,” in: *Transnationality, Internationalism and Nationhood. European Avant-Garde in the First Half of the Twentieth Century*, eds. Hubert van den Berg, Lidia Głuchowska (Leuven: Peeters Publishers, 2013), pp. 195–197; Głuchowska, “Polish and Polish-Jewish Modern and Avant-Garde artists,” p. 218.

104 *Blok*, Vol. 2, No 10(1925).

105 Mieczysław Treter to Eckart von Sydow in a letter concerning Stanisław Kubicki, Warszawa, 25.02.1930; Głuchowska, *Avantgarde und Liebe*, p. 69.

106 Ryszard Stanisławski, Christoph Brockhaus eds., *Europa, Europa. Das Jahrhundert der Avantgarde in Mittel- und Osteuropa* (Bonn: Stiftung Kunst

A stronger internal stimulus for research into the history of the Polish avant-garde – including those artists operating in Berlin – mainly appeared with the aforementioned centenaries: of the Polish avant-garde and the independence of the Polish state. On their eve in 2015, the exhibition *Bunt – Expressionismus – Grenzübergreifende Avantgarde. Werke aus der Berliner Sammlung von Prof. St. Karol Kubicki* [Bunt – Expressionism – Cross-Border Avant-Garde. Works from the Berlin Collection of Prof. St. Karol Kubicki] co-occurred with the return of BUNT’s graphic artworks to Poland. The show was devoted to the group, which, as mentioned, most spectacularly recorded itself in the history of the Berlin artistic community, and simultaneously promoted a post-national debate about its work.¹⁰⁷ An important impulse for the latter one was also the exposition *The Avant-Garde and the State*, which broke the Polonocentrism of research into this subject. Similar demonstrations appeared in other “new states” already on the anniversary of the outbreak of the Great War and its end,¹⁰⁸ giving a preview of theoretical and historiographic reactions to the phenomenon of Berlin as a crucible of artistic exchange, not only between the center and the periphery but also between the avant-garde formations outside of the center.¹⁰⁹

To date, a crucial aim of this research is to create a postscript to the revision of the historiography of Polish artistic avant-garde in Berlin. It has been realized, among other places, within the current exhibitions *Maler. Mentor. Magier. Otto Mueller und sein Netzwerk in Breslau* [Painter. Mentor.

und Kultur des Landes Nordrhein-Westfalen, 1992); Benson, *Central European Avant-Gardes*.

107 Lidia Głuchowska ed., *Bunt – Ekspresjonizm – Transgraniczna awangarda. Prace z berlińskiej kolekcji prof. St. Karola Kubickiego/ Bunt – Expressionismus – Grenzübergreifene Avantgarde. Werke aus der Berliner Sammlung von Prof. St. Karol Kubicki* (Poznań: Muzeum Narodowe, 2015).

108 E.g. Gundega Cebere, ed., *1914. War and modernism (Muzeya raksti/Museums Writings 6)* (Rīga: Latvijas Nacionālais mākslas muzejs, 2015); Ginta Gerharde-Upeniece, ed., *1914* (Rīga: Latvijas Nacionālais mākslas muzejs, 2014). Liis Pählapuu, ed., *Geomeetiline Inimene/Geometrical Man* (Tallinn: Kumu kunstimuuseum, 2012); Kateřina Pietrasová and Marie Bergmanová, eds., *First Republic 1918–1939*, (Praha: National Gallery, 2018); Lidia Głuchowska, “The Great war and Expressionism Apart of Center – ‘The rite of spring,’ ‘Masochism,’ ‘Suppression,’” in: *The Great War*, eds. Paulina Kurc-Maj, Anna Saciuk-Gąsowska, Paweł Polit (Łódź: MSL, 2018), pp. 39, 64; Karel Srp, Lenka Bydžovská, eds., *Rozlomená doba 1908–1928/Years of Disarray 1908–1928* (Olomouc: Arbor vitae societas/Muzeum umění, 2018).

109 Lidia Głuchowska, ed., “Berlin as a Center of International Modernism and a Turnstile of the Avant-Garde,” *Centropa*, Vol. 12, No 3(2012) pp. 215–355.



III. 8: Andrzej Bobrowski. *Transformacja M/S (Margarete/Stanisław)*
 [Transformation M/S (Margarete/Stanisław)], linocut, 2015, 62 × 89,3 cm.
 Courtesy: Lidia Głuchowska, Berlin. Photo: Lidia Głuchowska.

Magician. Otto Mueller and his Network in Breslau],¹¹⁰ and *Expressions of Freedom. Bunt and YungYidish. An Exhibition, Which Was Not* (after 100 years of remaining on the failed joint exhibition of the Poznań- and Łódź-based groups,¹¹¹ whose members later cooperated in Berlin). The latter show is accompanied by the presentation *Hommage à Yung Yidish* created by artists from Łódź and Israel, as well as the *Hommage à Bunt* prepared by the graphic artist from the Poznań University of Fine Arts. The latter already referred in their work to programs and aesthetics of BUNT, namely by creating a replica of the radical avant-garde symbol from Kubicki's linocut *Turmbau zu Babel* [The Tower of Babel; 2014], a double portrait of the

110 Lidia Głuchowska, "Kunst, Politik und Eskapismus. Expressionistische Künstler-Seher und avantgardistische Konstrukteure der Welt in der polnischen Kunst- und Kulturgeschichte," in: *Maler. Mentor. Magier. Otto Müller und sein Netzwerk in Breslau*, eds. Dagmar Schmengler, Agnes Kern, Lidia Głuchowska (Heidelberg: Kehrer, 2018), pp. 303–411.

111 *Ekspresje wolności. Bunt i Jung Idysz. Wystawa, której nie było* [Faces of Freedom. Bunt and Jung Idysz. Exhibition, Which Was Not], Muzeum Miejskie, Łódź, June 12th –September 30th 2019.

Kubicki's couple, *Transformation M/S* (2015; Ill. 8), and a common portrait of the seven founding members of Bunt (2018), which constitutes a *pars pro toto* of their never-created group portrait and the non-existent common portrait of the Polish avant-garde collective in Berlin.

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Chapter II: Transnational Avant-Garde and Migrating Identities

Nathan Diament

The Resurrection of J.D. Kirszenbaum

Abstract: The author Nathan Diament, a survivor of the Holocaust, is the grand-nephew of the Polish Jewish artist Jesekiel (Jecheskiel) David Kirszenbaum. Around fifteen years ago, he took upon himself to start research as well as to locate and collect all possible remnants of his granduncle's remaining artworks. J.D. Kirszenbaum's artistic oeuvre, for the most part overlooked in the annals of art history, offers testimony to an entire generation of Eastern European Jewry. His contribution to the modern art world, virtually lost and forgotten, has finally come back to light. It has been restored to its proper place beside the accomplishments of other great artists of his period including Haim Soutine and Marc Chagall. Kirszenbaum was a student at the Weimar Bauhaus in the late 1920s – he was taught by Paul Klee and Wassily Kandinsky. His work belongs to several schools of paintings: Cubism, Impressionism, Expressionism, and abstract art. They are characterized by the perpetual wandering of those searching for a better future. It provides an extraordinary testimony of a generation nearly lost.

Keywords: J. D. Kirszenbaum, Duvdivani, Eastern European Jewry, Haim Soutine, Marc Chagall, Bauhaus, Paul Klee, Wassily Kandinsky

Introduction

Personal Path

Before presenting my research and its results on the painter J.D. Kirszenbaum, I would like to introduce myself. My name is Nathan Diament. My two brothers and I were born in Brussels, to Josek and Gitla Laja Diament who were born in Poland and arrived to Belgium in the 1930s.¹

During the Second World War, we were hidden by three non-Jewish families. These families were responsible for saving us and have each, since then, been recognized by Yad Vashem as Righteous Among the Nations. We reunited after the war and were one of the few complete Jewish families to survive. There is no question that this was a miracle.

The destiny of my parent's families was not as fortunate. All of my mother's relatives who lived in their hometown of Staszów,² were taken to the Death Camps – from where they never returned. The only ones to survive were my mother's sister, who lived in Palestine at the time, and my great uncle,

1 For more, see Nathan Diament, *J. D. Kirszenbaum, 1900–1954: The Lost Generation* (Paris: Editions Somogy d'Arts, 2013), pp. 21–32.

2 Diament, 1900–1954, pp. 129–168.

Jechezkiel Kirszenbaum, who lived in France during the Holocaust. On my father's side, only the sisters who lived in France and those who already lived in Palestine survived.

Although this great uncle came and visited us in 1947, staying with us for several months when we were still in Brussels, we would never see him again after our departure from Belgium. We immigrated to Israel in 1949 and my formative years, including my childhood years, primary and high school studies, and military service, were all spent there. In the early 1960s, I started my academic studies and professional career in London, eventually moving to Paris. I returned to Israel in 1969 where I continued my professional managerial career.

Following the death of my mother and my aunt in 1996, my brother and I received a great number of Kirszenbaum's paintings as well as the archival material that had been collected by my aunt. She lived in Paris in the 1950's, and had been very close to him.

I have had the honor to live in a house upon whose walls hang painted portraits of many of my mother's family members whom I never had the opportunity to know and love. On these same walls were paintings describing the daily life in the village of Staszów through which I became acquainted with the shtetl and its Jewish population.

All of these works were the fruit of my mother's uncle's brush. They are part of the ones we know about that remained since more than six hundred works, stored in his Paris studio, were destroyed by the Nazis during the War. It has been left to us to conserve what remains and to catalog his artistic legacy so that it will assume its rightful place in the history of Jewish art. Beyond leaving behind a testimony of life in the shtetl, Kirszenbaum's oeuvre exhibits aspects of many of the most significant developments in Modern Art: from Cubism to Expressionism to the Abstract.

Today, I am involved in two main activities. The first one is being a member of the Committee of the Righteous at Yad Vashem, responsible for allocating the title of the Righteous Among the Nations to those who endangered their lives to save Jews during the Second World War. The second is conducting a research about my great uncle, J.D. Kirszenbaum, which I began fifteen years ago, upon leaving my former managerial activities in Israel, and has received all of my attention since this time.

At the beginning of this undertaking, the Head of the Art History Department at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Prof. Ziva Amishai-Maisels, suggested that I attend courses related to my future research ambitions and, soon enough, I found myself back in school at the age of sixty-five.

For two years, I took courses at the Hebrew University, learning a great deal about the different periods in which Kirszenbaum worked, about the art

that had influenced him. It was then that I realized that I needed a partner who was even better versed in art history and capable of pulling together the strands of information I had discovered, and presenting it as a cohesive study. By working closely with Dr. Caroline Goldberg Igra, an independent art historian specializing in Early Modern European art history, we succeeded, over the course of years, in restoring the artistic legacy of my great uncle, one of the lost generation of painters.

My Return to Berlin

When I think about Berlin, the city I had visited on the occasion of the conference *Polish Avant-garde in Berlin*, my feelings are mixed. Eighty-five years ago Kirszenbaum fled from there with his wife, abandoning all his works of art and belongings; leaving many friends who he was never to see again.

I will never know what he would have thought, seeing me in a place from which he had to flee – the place that saw the start of his artistic career, where he began to build a solid reputation as an artist.

J.D. Kirszenbaum: The Painter³

General Introduction to His Life

J.D. Kirszenbaum (Ill. 1) was born in 1900 in Staszów, a small village in Poland not far from Kielce. His artistic training began at the age of twelve in his small village. There he completed signboards and portraits.⁴ Short on artistic opportunities, Kirszenbaum soon picked up and left for Westphalia and later to the Bauhaus in Weimar, Germany, in 1920, seeking professional development away from the cloistered life in the shtetl. He is one of many of a generation of wanderers.

Weimar, Germany

Kirszenbaum's first stop in 1923 was at the Bauhaus that was then recently established by Gropius in Weimar. There he encountered a number of illustrious teachers including Paul Klee, Wassily Kandinsky, Lyonel Feininger, and László Moholy-Nagy. This period accounts for the first true flowering of his art. The influence of his mentors was immense. Describing Kandinsky he

3 Sources: Family archives, correspondence with friends, colleagues, and painters (Paul Citroen-Alix-de Rothschild, Ronald Lindgreen), also press cuttings.

4 Caroline Igra, "Exploration of Personal Displacement," *Ars Judaica*, Vol. 10 (2014), pp. 69–91.



Ill. 1: Jesequel David Kirszenbaum. *Selfportrait*, 1925, oil on canvas. Frans Hals Museum, Haarlem.

wrote: “Kandinsky with the breath of his heart and clarity of his thoughts, influenced me most especially in how he changed me from a formalist artist to a figurative one despite his own inclinations.”⁵ Regarding Klee’s influence he stated: “I was deeply influenced by Klee’s interior world and the variety within his endless imagery of dreams.”⁶ (Ill. 2)

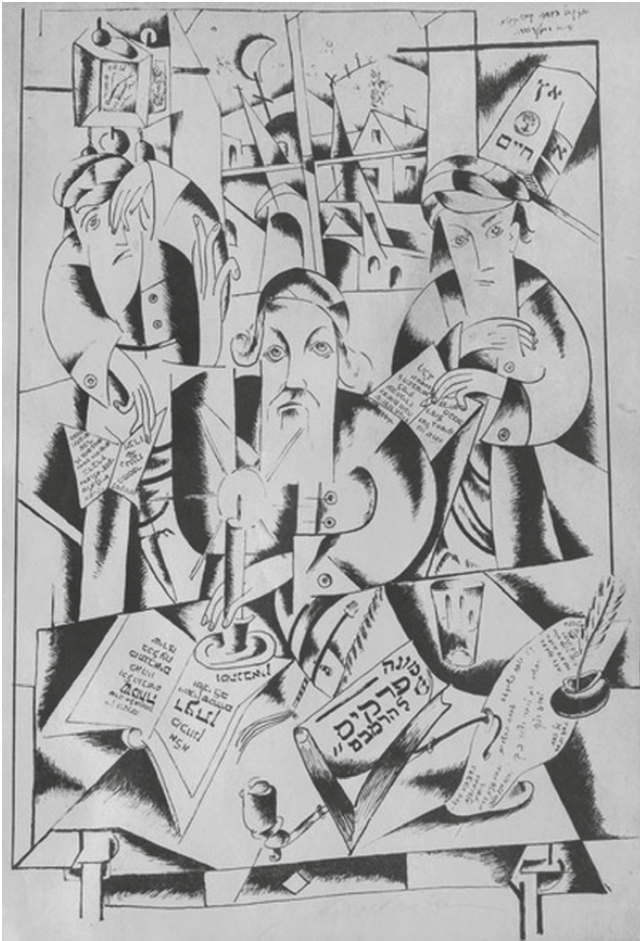
Berlin

Kirszenbaum’s participation in the artistic avant-garde dates to the years he spent in Berlin, 1924–1933. It was there that he developed both his art and his political inclinations.⁷ His introduction into the circle of a gallery owner, Herwarth Walden, was career changing. Walden’s Der Sturm gallery was the center of the artistic avant-garde not only in Germany, but in other centers even further east and west into the Netherlands. His influence was widespread, affected not only through gallery exhibitions but furthermore by the publication of a magazine of the same name.

5 Frederic Hagen, *J. D. Kirszenbaum* (Paris: Galerie Karl Flinker, 1961), pp. 25–27.

6 Hagen, *J. D. Kirszenbaum*.

7 Johanna Linsler, *Irreparable (1933–1945), [Irreparable- Lebenswege jüdischer Künstlerinnen, Künstler und Kunstkenner auf der Flucht aus dem „Dritten Reich“ in Frankreich]* Koordinierungsstelle (Magdeburg, 2013), p. 268.



III. 2: Jesekiel David Kirszenbaum. *Studying the Maimonide*, 1925, ink on paper. The Kirszenbaum Estate, Tel Aviv.

Through Walden's support, Kirszenbaum organized his first solo exhibition at the gallery of Der Sturm in April 1927. It featured eighty of his works and set the artist on a path toward artistic renown. Kirszenbaum went on to participate in several other important exhibitions including local ones, such as Juryfreie Kunstausstellung in 1929 and international ones, such as the exhibition in Utrecht, Holland, in 1931.⁸

⁸ Inna Goudz, *Herwarth Walden und die jüdischen Künstler der Avantgarde*, (exhibition catalogue) (Wuppertal: Von der Heydt Museum, Zentrum der Avantgarde,

In addition to his works with oil, Kirszenbaum became a very active caricaturist during this time. His illustrations, for example: *Der Sportliche Hausfreund* [The Sporty Family Friend], *Opitsche Verwirrung* [Optic Confusion] and *Bureau Gespräch* [Berau Conversation], were published in a range of contemporary Berlin newspapers including *Magazin fuer Alle*, *Der Querschnitt*, *Der Rote Pfeffer*, and the *Berliner Tageblatt* (Ill. 3). These cartoons were, most often, satires of German society similar to the type executed by Georg Grosz, focusing on the vulgar behavior of local individuals. For these works, he used the pseudonym Dudivani.⁹

Like other Jewish artists from Eastern Europe, Kirszenbaum had socialistic inclinations, and once in Berlin he became active in the circle of Jewish artists in Berlin, i.e. Steinhardt's house and also in *Assoziation Revolutionärer Bildender Künstler* [Association of Revolutionary Visual Artists]. This activity worked against him, as it did against so many others during the Nazi time.

Kirszenbaum's personal and artistic development was disrupted by the unsettled situation in Germany, and in 1933 he fled to Paris with his new wife Helma, leaving all his belongings, and a budding career, behind.

Paris

The artist's career truly blossomed in Paris. He arrived in the city in 1933, after fleeing from Berlin stepping right into the heart of the artistic and intellectual life in the Montparnasse Quarter. At local cafés such as the *Rotonde*, he sat side by side with other illustrious impressionist painters, such as the Jewish artist Amadeo Modigliani. His exposure to the development of early modern painting, as explored within the City of Light, greatly influenced his own exploration of brushwork and color in the name of expression.

In Paris, he found his niche within a group of the avant-garde painters that included Georges Braque, Henri Matisse, Pablo Picasso, Chaim Soutine, and Marc Chagall (Ill. 4). His interest in their aesthetics, in the direction in which they were developing their art, was obvious.

His career flourished in Paris, and he participated in many major exhibitions, including the *Salon d'Automne* and the *Salon des Superindependants*, before the occupation of the city by the Germans.¹⁰

2012), pp. 519–539. Diament, J. D. *Kirszenbaum*, Fig. 17, 18, 62.

9 Hebrew for “cherry tree.”

10 Nadine Nieszawer, *Jewish Artists of the School of Paris, 1905–1939* (Paris: Somogy Editions d'Arts, 2017), pp. 11–25, 177–178.



III. 3: Duvdivani (Jesekiel David Kirszenbaum). *Langweilige Zeiten*, in: *Illustriertes Wochenblatt für Humor und Satire, Wochenbeilage zum Berliner Tageblatt*, No 56,1927.

The Holocaust

The establishment of the Vichy collaborationist government in Paris put an end to the stability Kirszenbaum and his wife had enjoyed. Foreigners were imprisoned and sent to Camps. Helma was deported and sent to Auschwitz, where she eventually perished. Kirszenbaum himself was imprisoned in



Ill. 4: Jesekei Dawid Kirszenbaum. *The Jewish Villagers Greeting the Messiah*, 1937, oil on cardboards. Alix de Rotchild donation, The Israel Museum Collection.

various camps in the South of France in the Limousin area. He survived, however, escaping and hiding in the South of France (Ill. 5).

During the German occupation of Paris the artist's studio was looted and his works were burnt. More than 600 paintings and drawings, the majority of his oeuvre, were destroyed.¹¹

Many of his best friends, including artist Felix Nussbaum, never came back from the concentration camps, and although he survived, Kirszenbaum was never the same – falling into a deep depression.

Returning to Life

It was the Baroness Alix de Rothschild who truly restored Kirszenbaum to the world of the living. She had taken it upon herself, at the end of the war,

11 Hagen, J. D. *Kirszenbaum*, pp. 34–35; Diament, J. D. *Kirszenbaum*, pp. 29–30, Ill. 6.



Ill. 5: Jesekiel Dawid Kirszenbaum. *Exodus of Mother with two Children*, 1945, oil on canvas. Private Collection.

to help Jewish artists living in France, truly believing in the importance of their artistic contribution.¹²

She raised Kirszenbaum's spirit by encouraging him to return to teaching and painting, insisting that he leave the devastation of Europe behind by traveling. With her support he traveled to far-off places including Brazil and Morocco, enjoying the warm climate and finally achieving emotional rebirth. These exotic destinations directly affected his palette as well as his mood, resulting in a completely new style of magical works positively glowing with vibrant color and optimistic in nature – tributes to life. Much of the pessimism he had expressed on the canvas during and after the Holocaust, vanished.¹³ (Ill. 6, 7)

A Turn to Abstraction

Back in Paris after his travels, Kirszenbaum began to explore new avenues of interest. One was rooted in reality, memorializing his lost Jewish past

12 Hagen, *J. D. Kirszenbaum*, pp. 36–37.

13 Diamant, *J. D. Kirszenbaum*, Fig. 83–84, 86–87, pp. 111–117.



Ill. 6: J.D. Kirszenbaum in his Paris studio 1950. Photo from The Kirszenbaum Estate, Tel Aviv.

and the other was completely abstract, removed from everything earthly. Many of the works created during this period are completely devoid of subject matter, pushing the limits of the kind of semi-planes and shapes he had explored much earlier, during his period at the Bauhaus, into an entirely new dimension (Ill. 8).¹⁴

All of this was cut short when Kirszenbaum passed away in 1954, far before his time.

Epilogue

It is essential that Kirszenbaum's artistic legacy be restored to the annals of Early Modern European Art, not only because of its contribution to the history of art, but also because it provides documentation of a period that has been destroyed forever: a period that saw the development of Zionism, the involvement of Jewish artists in the concurrent social and cultural revolutions of the late 19th and early 20th century and the horrors of the Holocaust.

The first retrospective of Kirszenbaum's work was held at the Galerie Weil in Paris in 1962. Now his artwork can be found in several Israeli museums,

14 Diament, *J. D. Kirszenbaum*, Fig. 78, 80–82, p. 117.



III. 7: Jesekiel David Kirszenbaum. *San Jean Festival in Sao Paulo*, 1952, oil on canvas. Fonds National d'art Contemporain, Paris.

including The Israel Museum in Jerusalem (where there are numerous graphic works and paintings that were donated by the Baroness Alix de Rothschild), the Tel Aviv Museum of Art, and the Museum of Ein Harod.

Other works can be found in the Frans Hals Museum in the Netherlands, the French National collection at the Pompidou in Paris, the Warsaw Jewish Historical Institute, the Petit Palais in Geneva, as well as a number of private, family collections in Israel and throughout the world.

In 2013, I initiated the Publication in Paris of the book *J.D.Kirszenbaum 1900–1954: The Lost Generation - from Staszów to Paris, via Weimar, Berlin and Rio de Janeiro*. In the same year, two exhibitions took place in Israel: the first one at the Ein Harod Museum and the second at the Tel Aviv Museum of the Jewish People – The Diaspora Museum.

In 2014, the website <http://www.kirszenbaum.com> was launched.

In 2015, his works were presented in Paris at the Galerie Vassiliev (previously the Musee du Montparnasse).



III. 8: Jesekiel David Kirszenbaum. *Jardin Abstract*, 1952–1953, watercolor on silk. The Kirszenbaum Estate, Tel Aviv.

More exhibitions took and are to take place in several Museums in European countries:

There are informations that “disappeared here, please add them again:

- The Museum of Persecuted Arts in Solingen, Germany (2019).
- The Mimara Museum in Zagreb, Croatia (2018).
- The Boulogne-Billancourt new Jewish Center and the “Musée des Années Trentes” (a Paris suburb) – for its inauguration at the end of 2020.

Negotiations are currently taking place regarding future exhibitions in the US and Germany.

Kirszenbaum spent his life memorializing the life left behind, earning him the title in the contemporary press of the “Artist of the Jewish Soul.” I have taken on the project of his resurrection as a duty, bringing his work to a wider audience, reintroducing his contribution in order to maintain, as he did through his brush, the memory of a lost generation.¹⁵

15 Vincent Noce, “The resurrection of J. D. Kirszenbaum,” *Liberation.fr* (3.4.2013).

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Małgorzata Jędrzejczyk

Art as Organization of Life: Katarzyna Kobro and El Lissitzky

Translated from German by Mikołaj Gołubiewski

Abstract: Katarzyna Kobro (1898–1951) is one of the most important figures of the Polish avant-garde. However, Kobro's biography shows no clear trace indicating their possible contacts and friendships with the Berlin avant-garde artists of the first half of the twentieth century. This fact is surprising, as many avant-garde artists from Poland – like the members of the BLOK group – actively connected with Berlin avant-garde groups. Nonetheless, the revolutionary and radical formula of Kobro's *Spatial Compositions* reflects many of the ideas important to artists such as El Lissitzky, who also worked in Berlin. In this article, I use the example of Kobro's and Lissitzky's art to show the internationality and correspondence of the interwar artistic tendencies between Poland and Germany. Their art allows me to discuss their idea of the role and concept of art as a contribution to the new organization of the living space and society. Above all, this text focuses on significance of space and a new spatial experience, so important for Kobro's and Lissitzky's art experiments.

Keywords: Katarzyna Kobro, El Lissitzky, BLOK group, *Spatial Compositions*, *Proun*, Władysław Strzemiński

Most scholars now consider Katarzyna Kobro (1898–1951) to be one of the most important figures of the Polish avant-garde. Although Kobro's biography shows no definite trace of her possible contacts and collaboration with the Berlin avant-garde artists of the first half of the twentieth century, her revolutionary view of sculpture reflects many of the ideas essential for Berlin-based artists like László Moholy-Nagy or El Lissitzky. Therefore, we may ask how did the possible intellectual and artistic exchange look between the circles of avant-garde artists active in Germany and Poland in the 1920s and early 1930s. Moreover, were the new artistic ideas and the new concept of art – formative for Germany-based artists like El Lissitzky – pioneering for Polish artistic experiments of that time? In this article, I explore these questions and utilize the example of Katarzyna Kobro's art to show the internationality as well as the correspondence of the artistic tendencies of that time between Poland and Germany.

Katarzyna Kobro is mostly known as the author of *Spatial Compositions* – a new type of sculpture. However, other fields of her artistic activity are no less important, including experiments in architecture and interior design. We may perceive them as a further development of the concepts tested by Kobro in her sculptures. In Kobro's own opinion, the basic prerequisite for a modern sculpture is the loosening of mass, the renunciation of the body in favor of a spatial composition, and the fusion of the internal space of the sculpture with its external space. In one of her theoretical treatises, Kobro expresses the following about the nature of sculpture: "Sculpture is the shaping of space.... One should realize, once and for all, that sculpture is neither literature, nor symbolism, nor individual psychological emotion. Sculpture is nothing but the shaping of form in space. Sculpture addresses all people and speaks to them in the same language. Its language is form and space."¹

Born 1898 in Moscow, Katarzyna Kobro witnessed the October Revolution and its consequences for art. She was very familiar with the new revolutionary and post-revolutionary artistic approaches, both through her studies at the Moscow School of Painting, Sculpture, and Architecture (later the Second Free State Workshop) and her membership of the UNOVIS group formed around Kazimir Malevich. Still, likely because of the political situation in Russia, around 1922 Kobro decided to leave the country and move to Poland together with her husband, Władysław Strzemiński. Shortly after their move, Kobro and Strzemiński became the key figures of Polish Constructivism and members of the three important Polish avant-garde groups: BLOK, then Praesens, and then a.r. Although Kobro and Strzemiński never themselves visited Berlin or Paris, they were well connected with artists from Western Europe. What could additionally contribute to their awareness of Western artists was the fact that several of their Polish avant-garde colleagues had a direct connection to the Western art scene.

For example, such artists of the BLOK group as Henryk Berlewi, Mieczysław Szczuka, or Teresa Żarnower regularly participated in the Berlin art scene and presented their works there. Henryk Berlewi even lived in Berlin in 1922–1923 and maintained close contacts with the circle surrounding the gallery and magazine *Der Sturm*. In Berlin, Berlewi also cultivated his acquaintance with El Lissitzky, which significantly contributed to the change in his formal language – initially reminiscent of Cubist

1 Katarzyna Kobro, "Rzeźba i bryła" [Sculpture and Solid], *Europa*, No 2(1929), p. 60. Available in English translation in: *Between Worlds: A Sourcebook of Central European Avant-Gardes, 1910–1930*, ed. Timothy O. Benson, Éva Forgács (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2002), p. 658.

collages – and culminated in the creation of his *Mechanofactures*. Szczuka and Żarnower also stayed in Berlin several times and exhibited their works in Der Sturm gallery.

There are many other examples of such close links between artists living in the Weimar Republic and the Second Polish Republic.² They significantly contributed to the migration and extensive exchange of ideas between the avant-garde circles in both countries along with the establishment of supranational art tendencies. Constructivism, with its theoretical postulates and formal solutions, counted among the artistic phenomena that exceeded national borders and sought international reception. Most link the beginnings of constructivism with the artistic experiments around and shortly after the Russian Revolution of 1917. However, these tendencies reached a fertile ground in other parts of Europe, including Berlin, as early as in 1921.³ We may say that Berlin became the center of Western constructivism of the time. Constructivists from various parts of Europe lived and worked in Berlin, including Hungary, Poland, and Russia. El Lissitzky lived in Berlin since 1921, while Naum Gabo moved here from Moscow in the following year. The concept of constructivism and the associated concept of art implied the use of objective, calculable, and comprehensible principles applicable in artworks. What became important for constructivists was the interest in industry and achievements of technological progress, which allowed them to create new foundations for formal solutions. The basic conditions of constructivism were, among other things, experimentation with form and material along with artistic engagement in the new construction of life and social order.⁴ Constructivists rejected the idea that a work of art is a product of individual genius. Groundbreaking for many European artists, the constructivists clearly phrased these preconditions, among others, in the program of a working group at the Institute of Artistic Culture (INChUK) in Moscow on March 18, 1921.⁵ Members of the

2 The Second Polish Republic or the Second Republic of Poland refers to Poland between the First World War and the Second World War.

3 The first Congress of International Progressive Artists in Düsseldorf (May 1922) founded the International Fraction of Constructivists, which in September 1922 formulated the Manifesto of the Constructivist International Creative Working Community; Christina Lodder, “Art into Life: International Constructivism in Central and Eastern Europe,” in: *Central European Avant-Gardes: Exchange and Transformation, 1910–1930*, ed. Timothy O. Benson (Los Angeles, Cambridge: MIT Press, 2002), p. 178.

4 Lodder, “Art into Life,” pp. 173–174.

5 The program (*Pervaiya programma robochey gruppy konstruktivistov*) was written in Moscow by the critic and artist Aleksei Gan and published in the

BLOK group were also interested in these new tendencies and strove to promote constructivist practices as the basis for modern avant-garde art in Poland. What contributed to their postulates was their eponymous magazine and personal contacts with contemporary artists in Berlin or Paris. Of course, the connections with Moscow were also understandable. Despite the constructivist striving for a universal formal language explained by Lissitzky in the magazine *Veshch/Gegenstand/Objet*,⁶ for example, there were numerous peculiarities and formal differences between the constructivists resulting either from sociopolitical conditions or from different ideas about the role of art.

El Lissitzky was one of the most important artists to transplant constructivism from Russia to the West. We may also perceive Lissitzky's art as an important starting point for Katarzyna Kobro's research into new artistic ideas and new concepts of art. While he was still in Russia, Lissitzky was a member of UNOVIS, like Kobro, although the two worked in different branches – Kobro in Smolensk, Lissitzky in Vitebsk – at that time, they might have met personally. Lissitzky was the figure who mixed the politically and socially underpinned constructivist postulates with a call for autonomy and experimentation with the form of an art object, peculiar to many Western artists. What is striking is that social transformation through new constructivist art was not a political declaration for Lissitzky, just like it was not so for Kobro.⁷ Lissitzky was deeply convinced that the task of the modern artist is not to partake in political propaganda but advance artistic transformation. At least in the early 1920s, and just like Kobro, Lissitzky distinguished himself from the productivist tendencies that many constructivists sought as the final goal of artistic experimentation.⁸ Lissitzky believed that the role of art is to develop a new parallel sign system independent of all existing systems of representation. Moreover, Lissitzky emphasized the main task facing the new artist: to advance a new construction of society and organization of the world by means of new design foundations for artistic activity – in different areas like print design, interior design, painting, and architecture. Lissitzky postulated a new organization of a work of art, human environment, and formal language. These emerged not only from his typographic or

Moscow journal *Hermitage*, No 13(1922). Cf. Lodder, "Art into Life," pp. 174; Lodder, "El Lissitzky and the Export of Constructivism," pp. 27, 44 (ft. 2).

6 El Lissitzky, Ilya Ehrenburg, "Die Blockade Russlands geht ihrem Ende entgegen," *Veshch/Gegenstand/Objet*, No 1–2(1922), pp. 1–4.

7 Lissitzky and Ehrenburg wrote "we cannot imagine creating new art forms without transforming the social forms," in: Lissitzky, Ehrenburg, "Die Blockade Russlands," p. 3.

8 Lodder, "Art into Life," pp. 176–177.

painterly projects but also spatial productions. In 1923, Lissitzky designed the so-called *Prounenraum* [Proun space] for the great Berlin Art Exhibition.⁹ In 1926 and 1927, he was commissioned to design two exhibition spaces for abstract art, one in Dresden and then one in Hanover. In these three projects, Lissitzky translated his (so far) superficially developed *Proun* idea into three or even four dimensions — and developed the basic features of his program of transferring abstract artistic ideas to real living spaces. Lissitzky began working on *Proun* paintings around 1919. His *Prouns* were compositions of abstract elementary forms. In these pictures, Lissitzky attempted to break with the typical perspectivist systems of representation in favor of new, more complex spatial solutions that would introduce novel spatial conditions into images. Lissitzky intended forms and contrasts of size and scale to introduce an optical dynamic into his *Prouns*. He described these images as a “the interchange from painting to architecture”¹⁰ which, as Lissitzky put it, should not be understood as a painting, but as “a structure around which we must circle, looking at it from all sides, peering down from above, investigating from below.”¹¹ He also noted that “*Proun* begins on the surface, proceeds to the spatial model construction, and continues to the construction of all objects of general life.”¹²

The new compositional thinking tested in *Prouns* led to the development — through the medium of images — of new principles of coexistence of certain parts with and among each other. However, two-dimensional solutions were only a starting point for Lissitzky’s search to materialize the idea of a new spatial organization. Another step was the transfer of painterly *Proun* structures into three or even four dimensions, as exemplified by the abovementioned *Prounenraum* presented in Berlin. In his project, Lissitzky wanted to arrange the whole space — not only the walls but the ceiling and the floor — although, ultimately, he was not allowed to change the floor. His first *Prounraum* contained basic shapes (a line, a surface, a rod, and a sphere) performed with simple colors (black, white, gray, and red). The walls and the ceiling formed a sequence, a rhythm of scenes deconstructing

9 *Proun* is a neologism created by Lissitzky, an abbreviation of “project of establishing the new” in Russian.

10 English translation in Peter Nisbet, “An Introduction to El Lissitzky,” in: *El Lissitzky 1890–1941. Catalogue for an Exhibition of Selected Works from North America Collections, the Sprengel Museum Hanover and the Staatliche Galerie Moritzburg Halle* (Harvard University Art Museum, Hanover, 1987), p. 30.

11 El Lissitzky, “Proun,” in: Sophie Lissitzky-Küppers, *El Lissitzky: Life, Letters, Texts*, translated by H. Aldwinckle and M. Whittall (New York: Thames & Hudson, 1980), p. 329.

12 Lissitzky, “Proun,” p. 345.

the impression of the uniform box-like space. The spatial situation consisted of individual sculptural phenomena divided over time, which jointly formed a spatial composition. With this project, Lissitzky aimed to guide the observer through the exhibition architecture, including the introduced painterly and relief-like abstract compositions, in order to evoke in the observer a new spatial awareness. Therefore, his task was to set the viewer in motion rather than provide him with a specific and optimally defined viewpoint.¹³ The concept of *Prounenraum* based on creating an alternative spatial design and thus addressing the spatial imagination and perception of the beholders. Lissitzky's spatial composition was thus harmonized by ongoing movement of people.¹⁴

The idea to transfer spatial experiments to a real space also returned in Lissitzky's later projects of exhibition spaces. In 1926 Lissitzky realized the *First Demonstration Space – Cabinet of Constructivist Art* for the International Art Exhibition in Dresden. This design was followed one year later by the *Cabinet of Abstracts* for the Museum of the Hanover Province. Similar to the Berlin *Prounenraum*, Lissitzky also strove to realize his spatial experiments in these two productions, mostly on the surface, in three or even four dimensions. However, in these later projects, El Lissitzky went even further than in his Berlin project. The visitors of the exhibition spaces in Dresden and Hanover were not only supposed to explore new spatial conditions but also participate in the design of the exhibition spaces themselves. Among other things, the activation of visitors should happen by the application of movable wall elements and the possibility to experience the space as an optically dynamic form. The beholders could conceal pictures and choose the coloring of walls by sliding panels. The artworks in both exhibition spaces thus appeared in an environment changed by viewers, and so the entire exhibition offered constantly new perspectives.¹⁵ El Lissitzky reported as follows: "With every movement of the viewer in the space, the effect of the walls changes... Thus, an optical dynamic emerges as a result of human walking. This game makes the observer active."¹⁶ Hence, this environment called upon the viewer to tackle the spatial situation physically, bodily.

13 Vgl. Forgács, "Definitive Space," p. 48.

14 El Lissitzky, "Prounenraum. Große Berliner Kunstausstellung 1923," in: *El Lissitzky, Maler, Architekt, Typograf*, p. 361.

15 Margarita Tupitsyn "Zurück nach Moskau," in: *El Lissitzky 1890–1941. Catalogue for an Exhibition of Selected Works from North America Collections, the Sprengel Museum Hannover and the Staatliche Galerie Moritzburg Halle*, ed. Peter Nisbet (Cambridge: Harvard University Art Museums, 1987), p. 34–36.

16 El Lissitzky, "SSSR's Architektur," in: *El Lissitzky, Maler, Architekt, Typograf*, p. 367.

Lissitzky's two-dimensional *Prouns* and their transfer to spatiotemporal structures manifest a specific conception of art as a means of changing the human surroundings. He created a new sign language that meant not a form of cognition of something that already exists but opened up a world of new possibilities of construction and organization. Lissitzky's artistic practice made the abstract system of pictorial composition into a system of organizing the experienced and experienceable spaces, which corresponded to the constructivist call to not decorate but organize life.¹⁷ With his spatial structures, Lissitzky created a connection between the ideas expressed through abstract forms and the spaces of everyday experience, even if these were still not found in everyday situations but artistically designed scenes. Thus, Lisstzky's *Prounenraum* in Berlin or his *Demonstration Spaces* in Dresden and Hanover may be perceived as an attempt to merge aesthetic concepts with their utilitarian application. These projects combine the search for new formal solutions with a belief in their social and political significance.

Lissitzky's idea of the *Proun* provides an important context for the study of Polish experiments of the artistic avant-garde.¹⁸ We may trace considerable similarities between Lissitzky's artistic ideas and those of Poland's progressive artistic circles of the time, including the art of Katarzyna Kobro. Moreover, we may suppose that Kobro's art theory and practice rest, in many respects, on comparable foundations as Lissitzky's artistic experiments. While Kobro's art theory clearly corresponds with the ideas formulated in the artistic circle of De Stijl – especially with elementarism – what also appears important for her is the constructivist ethos of artistic engagement in organizing the world anew. Interestingly, both Kobro and Lissitzky applied fundamental meaning to space. Like for Lissitzky, the central artistic problem in Kobro's theory of sculpture became space and time. Why did Kobro make space the most important element of her artistic theory and practice? Why did she see the shaping of space as the main task of the new sculpture? What purpose should serve her experiments with space and how could the new spatial experience embodied in her sculptural compositions lead to a new organization of everyday life?

17 Matthew Drutt, "El Lissitzky in Deutschland 1922–1925," in: *El Lissitzky, Jenseits der Abstraktion, Ausstellungskatalog der Ausstellung El Lissitzky. Jenseits der Abstraktion, Fotografie, Design, Kooperation in Sprengel Museum (17.01–05–04.1999)*, ed. Tupitsyn Margarita (München – Paris – London: Schirmer/Mosel, 1999), p. 11.

18 Clemena Antonova, "On the Problem of << Reverse Perspective >>: Definitions East and West," *Leonardo*, Vol. 43, No 5(2010), p. 467.

Kobro's sculptural compositions and art theory can be understood as an area of convergence of sculptural and architectural problems. Kobro emphasized this, for example, in a statement published in 1935, in which she argued that sculpture was an architectural problem, which tasked artists to work like in laboratory on spatial and compositional solutions as a means of organizing movement and functionalizing the city.¹⁹ The design of space was one of the most important elements of Kobro's artistic practice, particularly the task of architecture. For Kobro, works of sculpture and architecture both share the task of organizing space; be it an esthetic space of sculpture or the experienced spaces of architecture. Thus, we may understand Kobro's sculptural compositions – composed of material elements and immaterial space (with the important role of time) – as a preliminary stage to the large-format spatial solutions. With this in mind, Kobro's artistic experiments appear to be a starting point for the forms that are to influence and transform human living spaces and psyche much more directly. Artistic activity represented for her a field of investigation, on which artists work on new solutions that could gain access to nonartistic reality. Therefore, an artwork for Kobro was not an everyday object that resembles factory products. Artistic work should retain autonomy, while its development should not be identical but parallel, for example, to the manufacturing processes in the industry or to the actual fabric of modern city buildings. Although Kobro wanted the results of artistic experiments to contribute to the new shaping of life and human environment, this should not happen by its direct and immediate transfer into everyday life. This process of influencing human habitat should happen, rather, indirectly and as a further development of the experiments with spatial composition conveyed in her sculptures. The new organization of space and creation of a uniform temporal rhythm could propagate its potential, for instance, onto the field of architecture or interior design that could shape human life directly and immediately. Seen in this light, like Lissitzky's *Prouns*, Kobro's sculptures can serve as a field for the elaboration and further development of basic model solutions, later transferred to other areas, such as architecture, furniture design, work organization, social order, and world perception. As with Lissitzky, Kobro makes human activity in space be a starting point of her work. Both artists refer to a spatial concept that thematizes the relationship between the beholder and the environment. Kobro's sculptural experiments with perception and space led to the development of new formal solutions, which prepared the ground for the modern organization of the human environment and its rhythm of life. We find some

19 Katarzyna Kobro, *Without Title* ("Dla ludzi niezdolnych do myślenia"/For people incapable of thinking)," *Forma* No. 3(1935), p. 14.

reflections about this matter Kobro's text written jointly with Władysław Strzemiński, *Kompozycja przestrzeni. Obliczenia rytmu czasoprzestrzennego* [Composition of Space: Calculations of Spatio-Temporal Rhythm]:

- “2. Sculpture does not compose forms for themselves but composes space.
- 3. The energy of successive forms in space creates a spatiotemporal rhythm[...].
- 5. Architecture organizes the movements of people in space – this determines the character of its spatial composition.
- 6. Architecture does not just consist of designing comfortably functional apartments.
- 7. Architecture creates a complete union between the arrangement of utilitarian things, inventive construction, and the color qualities and orientation of forms which themselves uphold and direct the rhythm of human life within architecture.”²⁰

Moreover, one should remember that Władysław Strzemiński wrote in *Bilans modernizmu* [The Effects of Modernism] that the architectural projects shown in the 1926 Praesens exhibition “resulted” from the new formula of sculpture developed by Kobro, understood as a spatial composition.²¹

The comparison of artistic experiments by Katarzyna Kobro and El Lissitzky may lead to the conclusion that their art can be seen as a specific development of the constructivist call to create a new world construction or organization. Like Lissitzky, Kobro's model of artistic participation was also placed between the conviction that art can influence life and the call to aesthetic experimentation. Katarzyna Kobro experimented with space and time-spatial sequences, which then assumed the form of her works. Kobro also incorporated as an important component of new sculpture the viewer's processes of perception, so important for Lissitzky. Moreover, Kobro's art represents an important contribution to the reflections on the relationship between artistic and architectural experiments. Thus, we may see it as part of a process of striving for a modern organization of different areas of human life. Furthermore, the compilation of Kobro's and Lissitzky's theoretical and practical contributions shows that the research on the possible interrelations and exchange of ideas between European avant-garde artistic circles can rely on more indirect connections. However, such interrelations as the problem of the new organization of life combined with a specific concept of art still require further investigation; hence such research will greatly contribute to current debates about the avant-garde. Moreover, it

20 Katarzyna Kobro, Władysław Strzemiński, “Kompozycja przestrzeni. Obliczenia rytmu czasoprzestrzennego” [Composing Space/Calculating Space-Time Rhythms], *Biblioteka Muzeum Sztuki w Łodzi: Seria Reprinty* (Łódź: Muzeum Sztuki w Łodzi, 1993), p. 79; English translation available in: *OCTOBER*, No 156 (Spring 2016) p. 53.

21 Władysław Strzemiński, “Bilans Modernizmu,” in: *Władysław Strzemiński. Pisma*, ed. Zofia Baranowicz (Wrocław: Zakład im. Ossolińskich, 1975), p. 121.

could show such internationally recognized and well-researched phenomena as Bauhaus or constructivism in a new light, as part of a much broader and multifaceted process.

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Chapter III: The Feminine Avant-Garde

Anna Dżabagina

Berlin's Left Bank? Eleonore Kalkowska in Women's Artistic Networks of Weimar Berlin¹

Abstract: The author refers to works by, e.g. Shari Benstock (*Women of the Left Bank*) and Cristanne Miller (*Cultures of Modernism*) to describe Berlin in the first decades of the twentieth century from a gender perspective and look at the opportunities that this metropolis offered to its women-settlers, who searched for their space of personal and artistic freedom. While Benstock describes the constellation of women in Paris, which consisted of such modernists as Gertrude Stein, Natalie Barney, Sylvia Beach or Edith Wharton, the author sheds light on a network of connections of Eleonore Kalkowska, a Polish-German writer, who shortly before the Great War started attending Max Reinhardt's acting school, and after 1918 decided to settle in Berlin and in the late 1920s managed to succeed, e.g. in the avant-garde Zeittheater movement. This article presents Kalkowska's relations with the artistic milieu of female painters and sculptors associated with the Verein der Berliner Künstlerinnen [Association of Berlin Female Artists] and also efforts of "New Women" (as emancipated, ambitious, professionally active women were called since the turn of the centuries – see, e.g. Sally Ledger, *The New Woman. Fiction and feminism at the fin de siècle*) to create institutions and media of self-representation, which shaped the women's metropolis until 1933.

Keywords: Eleonore Kalkowska, Weimar Berlin, artistic networks, New Women, Sally Ledger, Max Reinhardt, Shari Benstock, Cristanne Miller

In *Women of the Left Bank*, Shari Benstock created a collective portrait of Paris's women's literary milieu in the first half of the twentieth century. She outlined women's topography of the city and a network of female writers, editors, literary critics and publishers, connected with each other

1 The research was funded from the budget resources for education in the years 2014–2018 as a research project "Polish-German Works and Reception of Eleonore Kalkowska (1883–1937)" under the Ministry of Science and Higher Education "Diamond Grant" programme (no. DI2013 011443). Part of the project consists of the publication of a monograph on Eleonora Kalkowska's Polish and German works and their reception scheduled for 2020. The research conducted in Deutsches Literatur Archiv in Marbach was possible due to the Marbach Scholarship, awarded to the author by Wissenschaftlicher Beirat der Deutschen Schillergesellschaft in November 2015. The author would like to thank prof. Tomasz Szarota for providing access to Kalkowska's correspondence and documents from his private archive.

by interpersonal and institutional relations, forming a unique network of “midwives of modernism,”² which was located in the vicinity of the Latin Quarter. By bringing to the forefront the biographies and works of women such as Gertrude Stein, Natalie Barney, Sylvia Beach or Edith Wharton, Benstock made a significant reconfiguration within the understanding of female-writers participation in the process of modernism production. One of the keys to the scholar’s historical investigation was a common biographical feature of her “women of the left bank:” each was an immigrant who moved to Paris in search of personal and artistic freedom. Another key was related to interpersonal connections between the left bank’s “settlers:”³ their friendships, relationships and cooperations. Last but not least was the characteristic of Paris itself – a characteristic that allowed these women to “discover themselves as women and as writers in Paris.”⁴ Furthermore, Berlin was examined from a similar perspective by Cristanne Miller in *Cultures of Modernism: Gender and Literary Community in New York and Berlin*, which analyzes the impact of Berlin’s environment on the development of Else Lasker-Schüler’s literary career. Miller states that it was Berlin – and not the other metropolis – that enabled the writer to succeed, and also “allowed her to make the most of her interests, minimal formal educations, and ambitions.”⁵ At the same time Miller, citing the work of Benstock, notes that in the literary circles of Berlin this type of women’s “self-help” network was lacking, while the “female visual artists seemed more active in providing each other pragmatic support and generally in the infrastructure of modernism than were writers.”⁶ It is undoubtedly true that female visual artists of that time seemed to be more self-organized; however, writers of Weimar Berlin were also searching support in women’s communities, and the city itself was favourable to the development of such networks, in some cases even surpassing Paris in opportunities offered. Just as Paris, it was like a magnet that attracted women, artists and immigrants. For the purpose of this paper, I would like to suspend the division into “visual” and “literary:” from this wider perspective, I would try to outline the constellation of female artists, who – similarly to Benstock’s settlers – “invaded” Berlin in the first decades of twentieth century in the search of artistic and personal freedom.

2 Shari Benstock, *Women of the Left Bank: Paris 1900–1940* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1986), p. 20.

3 Benstock, *Women of the Left Bank*, p. ix.

4 Benstock, *Women of the Left Bank*, p. ix.

5 Cristanne Miller, *Cultures of Modernism. Gender and Literary Community in New York and Berlin. Marianne Moore, Mina Loy, and Else Lasker-Schüler* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2007), p. 21.

6 Miller, *Cultures of Modernism*, p. 45.



Ill. 1: Author Unknown. Eleonore Kalkowska, ca. 1920s–1933, photo, Berlin.
Source: Private collection of Tomasz Szarota.

Looking at the metropolis from their perspective, we can also draw a topography of relations between women onto the map of Weimar Berlin.

Like the author of *Women of the Left Bank*, in this paper I would like to focus on an immigrant writer, who – alike Benstock's heroines — searched for freedom of the cosmopolitan metropolis, established her own women's network and managed to make her entry into literary avant-garde. Such a person was Eleonore Kalkowska (1883–1937),⁷ Polish-German writer,

7 Kalkowska was born in a Polish-German family in Warsaw in 1883, and she went to German-language schools in Breslau and St. Petersburg. She studied at the Sorbonne in Paris. Debuted in 1904 with Polish-written collection of short stories – *Glód życia* [Hunger for Life] – but continued her literary career as a German-speaking writer. After the Great War she divorced her husband, Marceli Szarota, and moved to Berlin. For more on Kalkowska's works and biography, see, e.g., Agnes Trapp, *Die Zeitstücke von Eleonore Kalkowska* (München: Marin Meidenbauer, 2009); Anna Dżabagina, "Life trajectories and constellations of Eleonore Kalkowska," *Comparative Yearbook*, Vol. 8 (2017), pp. 317–336; Anne Stürzer, *Dramatikerinnen und Zeitstücke. Ein vergessenes Kapitel der Theatergeschichte von der Weimarer Republik bis zur Nachkriegszeit* (Stuttgart-Weimar: Metzler, 1993); Joanna Ławnikowska-Koper, "W obronie sprawiedliwości: Eleonora Kalkowska (1883–1937) między Warszawą a Berlinem" [In the defence of justice: Eleonore Kalkowska (1883–1937) between Warsaw and Berlin], *Roczniki Humanistyczne*, Vol. 63, No 5(2015), pp. 143–158.

who shortly before the Great War started attending Max Reinhardt's acting school, after 1918 decided to settle in Berlin and in the late 1920s managed to succeed by her involvement in the avant-garde Zeittheater movement (Ill. 1). Among her closest connections were active and politically engaged women (some of them more, and some of them less known), such as the anarchist Emma Goldman;⁸ journalists Milly Zirker and Margit Freud; the composer with communist sympathies Grete von Zieritz; painters like Gabriele Münter, or related to Verein der Berliner Künstlerinnen [Association of Berlin Female Artists]: Milly Steger, Käthe Münzer-Neumann, Rachel Szalit-Marcus and Alice Michaelis. They all shared something in common: for each of them Berlin had become the homeland of choice. Although, unlike the *Women of the Left Bank*, not every one of these women was an immigrant in the strict sense (like Kalkowska, born in Warsaw, or Szalit-Marcus from a Jewish family from Łódź),⁹ each one of them was a settler, who conquered and co-created metropolis of New Women. Each one of them tried to make the most of the opportunities, which emancipated, internationalist, avant-garde Berlin had to offer. What's more, a look at the map and the topography of these women shows that while the "left bank" of Paris was centered around the Quartier Latin, the "left bank" of Kalkowska's Berlin was placed in the vicinity of Charlottenburg and Wilmersdorf (neighborhood, where at the same time some centers of modernist exchange, such as the Romanisches Café or the residence of the Berliner Secession, were placed). Looking at these points on the not only sheds some light on this particular network, but also reminds us what Berlin had to offer to its women settlers.

New Women's Berlin

In the first decades of the twentieth century, Berlin was in the avant-garde of women's emancipation. At the turn of the century, the city on the River Spree had become a scene of dynamic changes,¹⁰ as architect Despina Stratigakos wrote: "Around the turn of the twentieth century, women began to claim Berlin as their own.... From residences to restaurants a visible network of

8 Kalkowska's connections with Goldmann was mentioned by Jan Zieliński, "Sprawa Jakubowskiego. Doniesienia drobne. Dramaty," [Jakubowski's Case. Small Reports. Dramas] *Rzeczpospolita*, No 6(2006), p. 15.

9 Carola Muysers, "Rahel Szalit-Marcus," in: *Fortsetzung folgt! 150 Jahre Verein der Berliner Künstlerinnen 1867 e.V.* [To be continued! 150 years of the Association of Berlin Women-Artists 1867 e.V.], ed. Birgit Möckel (Berlin: Vice Versa Verlag, 2017), p. 145.

10 Miller, *Cultures of modernism*, p. 26.

women's spaces arose to accommodate changing patterns of life and work."¹¹ These changes took place both in the physical and symbolic space: female journalists, artists, activists and reformers "portrayed women as influential actors on the urban scene, encouraging female audiences to view their relationship to the city."¹² A symptomatic example of these changes may be a guidebook *Was die Frau von Berlin wissen muss* [What the Woman of Berlin Needs to Know], which was published in 1913. It was a guidebook written by women for women. Unlike previous home and family handbooks, this one in a revolutionary way encouraged its women-readers to go beyond their private space – "to find their lives and identities in the streets and institutions of the modern city"¹³ – and to explore areas previously reserved exclusively for men. Berlin was shown from an "artistic, scientific, literary, political, theatrical, musical, and social standpoint"¹⁴ in twenty-five essays by women-experts, who delivered to the readers a "know-how" of the women's metropolis. For example, Dr. Rhoda Erdmann, a pioneer in cellular biology, listed paths available to women who wanted to devote themselves to scientific research.¹⁵ Another event analyzed by Stratigakos was an exhibition that took place in 1912 in the exhibition building at the Zoological Garden: *Die Frau in Haus und Beruf* [The Woman in Home and Work]. During this exhibition "women designers had arranged the halls filled with display of women's labor, an all-female orchestra serenaded the crowd with music by female composers, and female writers stocked a library with books authored and bound by women."¹⁶ *The New York Times* noted that the exhibition – which was visited by four million people in just four weeks – presented "every sphere of activity, domestic, industrial, and professional, which women have so far invaded."¹⁷

For the young, self-aware women who had dreamed about developing their own artistic career – one of which was Kalkowska, who at that time first paved her way in Berlin – the city might have looked as though it were the fulfillment of dreams. Probably women's "success stories" – the scene for which was Berlin of that time – mattered as well. Miller in *Cultures of Modernism* draws attention to the role played by Lasker-Schüler in shaping the female literary scene of Berlin. Recalling the names of writers who

11 Despina Stratigakos, *A Women's Berlin. Building the Modern City* (Minneapolis-London: University of Minnesota Press: 2008), p. ix-x.

12 Stratigakos, *A Women's Berlin*, p. x.

13 Stratigakos, *A Women's Berlin*, p. 1.

14 Stratigakos, *A Women's Berlin*, p. 1.

15 Stratigakos, *A Women's Berlin*, p. 1.

16 Stratigakos, *A Women's Berlin*, p. 97.

17 Stratigakos, *A Women's Berlin*, p. 97.

moved to the capital of the Weimar Republic at the end of the 1920s (e.g. Ilse Langer, Irmarg Keun, Vicky Baum or Gertrud Kolmar), Miller states that “while there is no evidence that Lasker-Schüler provided assistance to these women, her stature must have facilitated their entrance into the literary avant-garde.”¹⁸ However, if you look at the development of the literary career of Lasker-Schüler, it would not be an overstatement to say that the position of an expressionist could also affect the writers of the younger generation (such as Kalkowska). Since her debut (*Styx*, 1902), the career of Lasker-Schüler took on a staggering pace – until 1911. The writer published three volumes of poetry, an album with sketches, a collection of stories and poems, and a play. By the end of the first decade of the twentieth century, the poet became “one of the most widely noted writers of the time.”¹⁹ In this context, it is not a surprise that after the Great War Kalkowska – by then also as the author of the acknowledged feminist pacifist manifesto from 1916, *Der Rauch des Opfers. Ein Frauenbuch zum Kriege* [The Smoke of Sacrifice. Women’s Book about the War] decided to move to Berlin to pursue her literary career. The fact that in 1930 she was nominated for a Kleistpreis or that in 1933 in *Die Dame*²⁰ Hans Kafka mentioned Kalkowska (next to Lasker-Schüller) among the most important women dramatist of the Weimar Republic may prove that it was a good decision.²¹

Charlottenburg/Wilmersdorf

Kalkowska’s Berlin topography begins in the areas of Charlottenburg and Wilmersdorf. The writer herself lived at Sybelstrasse 24. A painter, Käthe Münzer-Neumann, lived nearby at Augsburgers Straße 44. Born in 1878 in Breslau, she studied painting in Paris, and as part of her study trips she visited

18 Miller, *Cultures of modernism*, p. 34.

19 Miller, *Cultures of modernism*, p. 35.

20 It is worth noting, that published since 1912 by Ullstein *Die Dame* was an “ultra-modern social magazine of women’s fashions,” which in the 1920s instead of models presented pictures of “prominent women ... wives of renowned politicians, writers, and artists, as well as theater celebrities, singers, dancers, and movie stars” – Mila Geneva, *Women in Weimar Fashion. Discourses and Displays in German Culture, 1918–1933* (Rochester-New York: Camden House, 2009), pp. 54, 62.

21 Hans Kafka, “Dramatikerinnen. Frauen erobern die Bühne” [Women-Playwrights. Women Conquer the Stage], *Die Dame*, No 8(1933), pp. 16–17. Kafka also mentioned Anna Gmeyer, Marieluise Fleisser, Esther Grenen, Ilse Langer, Elisabeth Hauptmann, Friedel Joachim, Rosie Meller, Elizabeth von Castonier, and Christa Winsloe.

Warsaw and St. Petersburg.²² Her sister, also an emigrant to Berlin, Elise Münzer, was a writer and journalist: in fact the first female-correspondent hired by *Berliner Morgenpost*.²³ Rachel Szalit-Marcus also chose the neighborhood of Wilmersdorf and Charlottenburg and lived at Stübbenstrasse 3.²⁴ The painter was born in 1894 in the Kovno district, and raised in Łódź. In the years 1911–1916 she studied in Munich, where together with Henryk Epstein and Marcei Słodki she co-created a small colony of Łódź artists.²⁵ She moved to Berlin in 1919 and took an active part in the November Revolution, later becoming a member of the Novembergruppe and the Berliner Secession.²⁶ With the Berlin Secession, which had its residence at Kurfürstendamm 232, also Kalkowska was connected,²⁷ as well as her life partner of that time,²⁸ sculptor Milly Steger (Ill. 2.).

Before Steger settled in Berlin in 1918 (at Nollendorfstrasse 31/32), she had already earned a loud and scandalous artistic career. Two years Kalkowska's senior, she studied at Karl Janssen's atelier in Düsseldorf, while in Berlin her mentor and collaborator was Georg Kolbe. For a while she also studied at the atelier of August Rodin in Paris.²⁹ Just before the outbreak of the Great War, she was recruited by Karl Osthaus to his artistic colony in Hagen – note: she was the only female artist in this milieu – where in 1911 she was commissioned to make sculptures for the façade of the newly constructed

22 Carola Muysers, “Käthe Münzer-Neumann,” in: *Forstsetzung folgt!*, p. 117.

23 Ruth Federspiel, Hannelore Emmerich, “Elise Münzer,” *Stolpersteine in Berlin*, <https://www.stolpersteine-berlin.de/de/biografie/1063>. (Accessed 29.08.2018).

24 Adresses from *Mitglieder-Verzeichnis 1930*, stored in the archive collection VdBK 4196 in Akademie der Künste in Berlin.

25 Jerzy Malinowski, Barbara Brus-Malinowska, *W kregu Ecole de Paris. Malarze żydowscy z Polski* [In the Circle of Ecole de Paris. Jewish Painters from Poland], (Warszawa: DiG, 2007), p. 118.

26 Muysers, “Rachel Szalit-Marcus,” p. 145.

27 In April 1917, the group organized the author's evening, during which Kalkowska read her first drama – *Leyla* – and parts of *Der Rauch des Opfers* – see programme in “Teilnachlaß Eleonore Kalkowska” (sign. BF000131281) in Deutsches Literatur Archiv in Marbach. Subsequent references to the collection will be marked with a shortcut DLA.

28 Trapp, *Die Zeitstücke von Eleonore Kalkowska*, p. 22.

29 Ulrika Evers, *Deutsche Künstlerinnen des 20. Jahrhundert. Malerei – Bildhauerei – Tapiserie* [German Women-Artists of the 20th Century. Painters-Sculptors-Tapestry Weavers] (Hamburg: Ludwig Schultheis, 1983), p. 334. For more about Steger, see also, e.g., *Die Grenzen des Frauseins aufheben. Die Bildhauerin Milly Steger 1881–1948* [To Lift the Boundaries of Womanhood. The Sculptor Milly Steger], eds. Birgit Schulte, Erich Ranfft (Hagen: Neuer Folkwang-Verl. im Karl-Ernst-Osthaus-Museum, 1998).



Ill. 2: Author Unknown. Milly Steger in atelier sculpting *Eleonore Kalkowska's* "Büste", ca. 1925, photo, Berlin. Source: Private collection of Tomasz Szarota.

municipal theater,³⁰ which became the germ of the scandal, in the center of which the sculptor's name was soon located. As Carmen Stonge wrote:

when the over-life-size [women] nudes were unveiled, the city fathers were outraged and the spectators scandalized. Public sculpture of the time was expected to tell a story or point to a moral, and Steger's work did neither. Petitions were

30 Steger was "one of the first women to receive commissions for architectural sculptures" – Ute Seiderer, "Between Minor Sculpture and Promethean Creativity. Käthe Kollwitz and Berlin's Women Sculptors in the Discourse on Intellectual Motherhood and the Myth of Masculinity," in: *Practicing Modernity: Female Creativity in the Weimar Republic*, ed. Christiane Schönefeld (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2006), p. 95.

circulated demanding that the works be removed. Teachers forbade students to view the “obscene” sculpture.³¹

The publicity around the theater in Hagen and the struggle for the preservation of sculptures added impetus to Steger's career and brought her fame.³² As Birgit Schulte noted, at the beginning of the 1920s, no review of sculpture could have omitted the Steger's name, and some critics regarded her as the most important woman sculptor of the Weimar Republic.³³ At the same time, while the Steger sculptures presented in Hagen provoked a scandal, other factors – such as gender-crossing identity and openly nonheteronormative life choices – was not scandalous at all—at least in Berlin. Shari Benstock stated, that Paris at the belle époque gained “international fame as the capital of lesbian love.”³⁴ As an example, she gives biographies of, e.g. Gertrude Stein and Alice B. Toklas, Natalie Barney or Sarah Bernhardt, who led openly nonheteronormative life. However, this type of openness and tolerance of Paris had serious limitations: on the one hand, it did not concern women who were not protected by belonging to higher social classes,³⁵ on the other hand, it did not allow for real visibility in a public space. Instead, lesbians and bisexuals “avoided ... public spaces, preferred to create their own private spaces within the city, processing a nineteenth-century salon and adjusting it to their needs,”³⁶ and created a kind of “underground Lesbos” in which they could try to live in accordance to their own sexuality and seek support in a community of sisters.

Meanwhile, the nonheteronormative community of Berlin – both female and male – went a few steps further. From the end of the 19th century – e.g. due to the activities of Magnus Hirshfeld and the movement for the abolition of paragraph 175, which penalized male homosexuality – Germany was in the world avant-garde of the homosexual emancipation movement.³⁷

31 Carmen Stonge, “Women and the Folkwang: Ida Gerhardi, Milly Steger, and Maria Slavona,” *Woman's Art Journal*, Vol. 15, No 1(1994), p. 5.

32 In 1916, after seeing the caryatids and getting to know the sculptress Else Lasker-Schüler wrote the poem dedicated to the artist Milly Steger: Birgit Schulte, “Die Grenzen des Frauseins aufheben – die Bildhauerin Milly Steger 1881–1948,” *Frauenvorträge an der Fern Universität*, No 29, <https://www.fernuni-hagen.de/imperia/md/content/gleichstellung/heft29schulte.pdf>. (Accessed 2.08.2018); also see Miller, *Cultures of Modernism*, p. 83.

33 Schulte, “Die Grenzen des Frauseins aufheben,” p. 16.

34 Benstock, *Women of the Left Bank*, p. 47.

35 Benstock, *Women of the Left Bank*, p. 44.

36 Benstock, *Women of the Left Bank*, p. 451.

37 See, e.g., Robert Beachy, *Gay Berlin. Birthplace of a Modern Identity* (New York: Vintage Books, 2015).

Numerous associations, meeting spaces, as well as diverse media addressed to a nonheteronormative community operated in Weimar Berlin. At the same time, these circumstances took part in creating such community, and the process itself was enhanced by the development of mass culture. Queer women created their own visible subculture. Special magazines were published, such as widely circulated *Die Freundin* [The Girlfriend], which “made a direct address to women, articulating their desires and offering them ‘modern’ new conceptions – and choices – for gender roles, sexuality, relationships and, hence, possibilities for identification.”³⁸ Incidentally *Die Freundin* – which was published since 1924 to 1933, first as a monthly, then as a weekly – was connected to Human Rights League,³⁹ which means that it offered not only a medium of communication, but also showed ways of social activation. The number of meeting places for queer women was also surprisingly high – Ilse Kokula states that in Berlin itself there were approximately 50 clubs and bars for nonheteronormative women, diversified also by the economic and social status of visitors.⁴⁰ There was even a guidebook that described the most popular of them – *Berlins lesbische Frauen* [Berlin’s Lesbian Women] by the homosexual journalist and writer Ruth Roellig, who published it in 1928 with a forward by Magnus Hirschfeld.⁴¹ The role of such places – as well as their popularization – was of considerable importance: “In creating a sense of community through common experience, clubs informally politicized lesbians, linking the social scene to the homosexual right movement.”⁴² In this context, Berlin created a unique space of freedom, openness and emancipation – impossible on such a scale anywhere else at that time. Given this freedom, it is not surprising that when the biographer of Gabriele Münter – a prominent expressionist, co-founder of Der Blaue Reiter, who returned to Berlin in 1925 – describes the painter’s friendly gatherings with Kalkowska at the Romanisches Café, he characterizes the

38 Angeles Espinaco-Virseda, “‘I feel that I belong to you’: Subculture, *Die Freundin* and Lesbian Identities in Weimar Germany,” *Spaces of Identity*, Vol. 4, No 1(2004), p. 84.

39 Espinaco-Virseda, “‘I feel that I belong to you,’” p. 87.

40 Ilse Kokula, “Freundinnen. Lesbische Frauen in der Weimarer Zeit” [Girlfriends. Lesbian Women in the Weimar Period], in: *Neuen Frauen. Die zwanziger Jahre* [New Women. The Twenties], eds. Kristine von Soden, Maruta Schimdt, (West Berlin: Elefanten Press, 1988), p. 160.

41 Ruth Margarete Roelig, *Berlins lesbische Frauen* (Leipzig: Gebauer, 1928).

42 Espinaco-Virseda, “‘I feel that I belong to you,’” p. 86. More on the subject, see, e.g., Jens Dobler, *Von anderen Ufern. Geschichte der Berliner Lesben und Schwulen in Kreuzberg und Friedrichshain* [From Other Shores. History of the Berlin Lesbians and Gays in Kreuzberg and Friedrichshain] (Berlin: Gmünder, 2003), p. 104–116.

writer as “Die politisch engagierte, pazifistische, sozialkritische, freiheitlich denkende Dichterin, die zudem ihre Bisexualität lebte.”⁴³ [The politically committed, pacifist, socially critical, liberal-minded poet who also lived her bisexuality] (Ill. 3).

Seen from this perspective, Berlin appears to be a place where women built their own communities and their own spaces of freedom, without limiting themselves to the private sphere. A good example is the institutional common denominator that connects women of Kalkowska's network: Käthe Münzer-Neumann, Rachel Szalit-Marcus, Milly Steger, and Alice Michaelis. It was the Verein der Berliner Künstlerinnen,⁴⁴ a unique association that began its essential work introducing female artists into artistic circulation in the middle of the nineteenth century.

“Der Kunstverein der Schwestern” [The Art Society of Sisters]⁴⁵

This association was founded in 1867 by twenty-nine women-artists and sixty-two “Kunstfreundinnen,” [Women Friends of Arts] supported by the politician Wilhelm Adolf Lette, the painter Oscar Begas and the inventor Werner von Siemens. The Verein's main role was to strive for the possibility of public appearance for its members – participation in exhibitions, contests, scholarships as well as the presence on the art market. The Verein also established a drawing and painting school for women. Although the tuition fee was higher than in the men's academies, the courses were, however, at the highest level and provided students with a full and comprehensive artistic education. Interestingly, while there were also men among the lecturers, the school itself was always managed exclusively by female-artists.⁴⁶ Statistics regarding the number of students show the need for such an organization. Teresa Laudert pointed out, that when in 1896 Paula Modersohn-Becker – one of the most famous students of the turn of the century – started her

43 Gudrun Schury, *Ich Weltkind: Gabriele Münter. Die Biographie* [I, the World's Child. Gabriele Münter. The Biography] (Berlin: Aufbau Verlag, 2012), p. 198.

44 Initially Verein der Künstlerinnen und Kunstfreundinnen zu Berlin.

45 Quote from the letter of Clara Heinke to Ottilie von Goethe (1866) – see: Carola Muysers, Bärbel Kovalevski, “Der Kunstverein der Schwestern... das klingt sehr großartig, nicht wahr?” [The Sister's Art Society... That sounds great, doesn't it?], in: *Fortsetzung folgt!*, p. 41.

46 Teresa Laudert, “Auf eigenem Wegen. Schülerinnen und Lehrerinnen der Zeichen und Malschule des Vereins der Künstlerinnen und Kunstfreundinnen zu Berlin” [On Their Own Way. Pupils and Teachers of the Drawing and Painting School of the Association of Women-Artists and Art Friends of Berlin], in: *Fortsetzung folgt!*, p. 24.



III. 3: Milly Steiger. *Buste of Eleonore Kalkowska*, ca. 1925, reproduction in: *Die Kunst für alle: Malerei, Plastik, Graphik, Architektur*, Vol. 41 (1925– 1926), p. 321. Source: http://digi.ub.uni-heidelberg.de/diglit/kfa1925_1926/0361 (licence: CC BY-SA 3.0 DE). ©Universitätsbibliothek Heidelberg.

education at the Verein's school there were almost four hundred students at the time.⁴⁷ In 1911 when it could not fit into its previous atelier, the Verein had to move to new location at Schöneberger Ufer 38.⁴⁸ This organized women's "self-help"⁴⁹ already in the second half of the nineteenth century gave female-artists the opportunity to participate in Berlin's artistic life. During the Weimar Republic, the Verein was already an established institution with over half a century of history, still attracting new adepts. On Berlin's cultural scene, the

47 Laudert, "Auf eigenem Wegen," p. 21.

48 Paula Anke, "Ein Glücksfall oder wie die Kunst zurück ins Atelier fand" [A Stroke of Luck or How Art Found Its Way Back to the Studio], in: *Fortsetzung folgt!*, p. 15.

49 Laudert, "Auf eigenem Wegen," p. 23.

Verein organized regular exhibitions, competitions as well as balls and social gatherings in cooperation with Lyzeum-Club. Besides the already mentioned Modersohn-Becker, with which the Verein was also associated, e.g. Käthe Kollwitz, Jeanne Mammen or August von Zitzewitz, illustrator from *Die Aktion*, whose atelier since the 1920s was a meeting place for artists, writers and intellectuals.⁵⁰ For many years, Szalit-Marcus and Münzer-Neumann were also among the Verein's members. In turn Milly Steger in the 1920s opened her own sculpture class in drawing and painting school (Zeichen- und Malschule) and in 1927 she became a head of the association.⁵¹ Gabriele Münter also showed her works at the Verein's exhibitions (Ill. 4).

The role of the association cannot be overestimated. Not only because of the actual institutional support that it offered to women with artistic ambitions, but also because of its part in the creation of new role models and identities for women, which could be undertaken by other settlers of Berlin. In 1912, the association took part in the already mentioned ground-breaking exhibition *Die Frau in Haus und Beruf* [A woman at home and occupation].⁵² However, this representational role became most evident in the late 1920s. In November and December 1929, the Verein der Berliner Künstlerinnen was showing the exhibition *Die Frau von heute*⁵³ [The Woman of Today]. This event was in a way the answer to the exhibition *Das schönste deutsche Frauen-Porträt* [The Most Beautiful German Women Portrait], which took place a year earlier. While the exhibition of the most beautiful portraits of German women was created by a male jury and presented works almost exclusively painted by men, the Verein's exhibition presented without exception women's works selected, in addition, by an all-female jury.⁵⁴ This time it was not women's beauty that became the center of attention, but their professional and social activity. The main goal of the exhibition was to show the

50 Laudert, "Auf eigenem Wegen," p. 37.

51 Carola Muysers, "Milly Steger," in: *Forsetzung folgt!*, p. 141.

52 "Chronik des Vereins der Berliner Künstlerinnen 1867–1992" [Chronicle of The Association of Berlin Women-Artists 1867–1992], in: *Profession ohne Tradition. 125 Jahre Verein der Berliner Künstlerinnen* [Profession Without the Tradition. 125 Years of the Association of Berlin Women-Artists], eds. Dietmar Fuhrmann, Carola Muysers (Berlin: Kupfergraben, 1992), p. 439.

53 *Mitteilungen des Vereins der Künstlerinnen zu Berlin*, No 11(1929), p. 17. About the exhibition: Eva Züchner, "Frauenfreunde und Kunstfreundinnen. Zwei Porträt-Ausstellungen am Ende der zwanziger Jahre" [Women Friends and Art Lovers. Two Portrait Exhibitions at the End of the Twenties], in: *Profession ohne Tradition*, p. 259–269.

54 Züchner, "Frauenfreunde und Kunstfreundinnen," p. 259.



III. 4: Gabriele Münter. *Eleonore Kalkowska liest* [Eleonore Kalkowska is reading], reproduction in: Gabriele Münter, *Menschenbilder in Zeichnungen: 20 Lichtdrucktafeln*, Hrsg. G.F. Hartlaub, Berlin 1952. Source: <http://digi.ub.uni-heidelberg.de/diglit/hartlaub1952/0031> (licence: CC BY-SA 3.0 DE). ©Universitätsbibliothek Heidelberg.

‘New Woman’ from the perspective of the new women themselves. Sixty-five artists exhibited ninety portraits and sculptures that presented “prominente Frauen aus der Gesellschaft der Politik, der Wissenschaft, der Mode und des Sports”⁵⁵ [prominent women from the society of politics, science, fashion and sport]. Among them were artists, writers, actresses and dancers – e.g. Colette, Pamela Wedekind, Carola Neher and also Eleonore Kalkowska,

55 Züchner, “Frauenfreunde und Kunstfreundinnen,” p. 265.

who was depicted by Käthe Münzer-Neumann on a painting called *Die bedeutende Frau*⁵⁶ [The Remarkable Woman]. Beside the artists, the exhibition also presented a woman lawyer, a pair of doctors, two politicians, secretaries, a flower saleswoman. Rachel Szalit-Marcus exhibited the painting *Imigrantin als Bardame*⁵⁷ [Immigrant as a Barmaid]. Katharina von Kardorff – wife of the vice-president of the Weimar Republic, herself one of the most famous personalities of the political world at the time – took patronage over the exhibition and drew attention of the press and the audience. The exhibition was widely noted and was the undoubted success of the Verein der Berliner Künstlerinnen. However, the world, which was represented and symbolized by the exhibition, was soon to be destroyed.

Broken Paths, Diverging Roads

At the beginning of the 1930s, the possibilities described above began to close, and the paths of the heroines of this artistic constellation began to break away. Despina Stratigakos brings up the second edition of *Was die Frau von Berlin wissen muss*, which was published in 1932, to show the dramatic changes that took place between the prewar period and the end of the Weimar Republic. As far as “in 1913 women faced formidable legal and social hurdles in their quest for meaningful lives, the barriers in 1932 seemed, in some instances, even greater, as women, along with men, struggled simply to exist”.⁵⁸ The collapse of the world economy, which was extremely painfully felt in the Weimar Republic, the drastic rise of unemployment and nationalistic tendencies and NSDAP rise to power destroyed the world of Weimar Berlin. March 1933, when, following elections, Hitler took over the Reichstag, was a turning point in the life of forementioned women-artists. Kalkowska, who at the end of the 1920s became known as a socially involved, critical playwright, was hailed as an anti-German author. When at the turn of 1932 and 1933, the Schillertheater staged her *Zeitungsnotizen* [Newspaper Notes], a play about suicides caused by rising unemployment, after several performances it had to be cancelled, because of Nazi hit squads that began to manifest outside the theater. The writer was arrested twice and in March – as a Polish citizen – she was deported from Germany and spent her last years in exile (first in Paris, and later in London).⁵⁹ The fate of Rachel Szalit-Marcus, who was Jewish, was even

56 Photograph of the painting available in: Züchner, “Frauenfreunde und Kunstfreundinnen,” p. 264.

57 Züchner, “Frauenfreunde und Kunstfreundinnen,” p. 267.

58 Stratigakos, *A Women's Berlin*, p. 169.

59 She died in Bern in 1937.

more tragic. She fled to Paris in 1933 and found herself deeply disappointed with her situation: “Sitting here makes no sense. Now I hate Paris. So many material and emotional concerns – I did not have anywhere. I am alone in my atelier... I wish I could escape from this city – I do not like it here,”⁶⁰ she wrote to Kalkowska in 1934. She stayed in Paris during the Second World War and in 1942 she was captured and then murdered in Auschwitz.⁶¹ After Hitler’s rise to power, Käthe Münzer-Neumann – as a Jewess – also fled to Paris. She managed to survive the war and after 1945 she continued her artistic career in France, while her sister Elise Münzer, who stayed in Berlin, was arrested in August 1942 and then murdered in September in Treblinka.⁶²

After 1933, the “Aryan” origin and willingness to collaborate became conditions of staying in Berlin and preserving even a vestigial form of the previous life, which became the case of Milly Steger. While with each passing month in exile, Kalkowska was increasingly disappointed and terrified by the policy of the Third Reich, Steger remained in Berlin. Despite the fact that her Weimar period works were labeled as “degenerate art,” she did not stop working.⁶³ When in 1934 Kalkowska wrote a vastly ironical and critical text titled *Hitler! Sei gegrusst* [Greetings, Hitler!],⁶⁴ Steger turned to Staatskommissar Hans Hinkel, asking for the chance to meet the Führer, whose bust Lyzeum-Club ordered from her.⁶⁵ But also Steger, whose studio had been destroyed during the bombing of Berlin in 1945, at the end of her life remained with almost nothing.⁶⁶ In 1933 the world of New Women’s Berlin in its unique shape was destroyed.

It would be an overstatement to say that the outlined constellation exhausted the topic or that it was representative of an experience of all female artists in Weimar Republic. Although the aforementioned women were by no means

60 “Tutaj siedzieć nie ma sensu. Nienawidzę teraz Paryża. Tyle trosk materialnych i serdecznych – nigdzie nie miałam. Jestem sama w moim atelier ... Chciałabym uciec z tego miasta – nie podoba mi się tutaj” – Rachela Szalit-Marcus to Eleonore Kalkowska, ca. 1934, letter stored in a private archive of Prof. Tomasz Szarota.

61 Muysers, “Rahel Szalit-Marcus,” p. 145.

62 The painter’s bio incorrectly states that her sister escaped to Paris with her (Muysers, “Käthe Münzer-Neumann,” p. 117). See: Ruth Federspiel, Hannelore Emmerich, “Elise Münzer,” *Stolpersteine in Berlin*: 29 August 2018: <https://www.stolpersteine-berlin.de/de/biografie/1063>.

63 Stonge, “Women and the Folkwang,” p. 7.

64 Unpublished manuscript is stored in DLA.

65 Dariusz Cierpialkowski, Carina Keil, “Der Verein Berliner Künstlerinnen in der Zeit zwischen 1933 und 1945” [The Association of Berlin Women-Artists in the Period Between 1933 and 1945], in: *Profession ohne Tradition*, p. 390.

66 She died in 1948: Stonge, “Women and the Folkwang,” p. 7.

an exception, just as their life or identity choices were not the exception. Beginning their ways on the margins – whether as immigrants or as Jewess, or women in general, or nonheteronormative women – in the first decades of the twentieth century, they have all decided to claim Berlin as their own. They have created their own areas of freedom and artistic expression, cooperation and friendship networks, institutions and spaces to exhibit their own identities and representations. They have looked for their affiliation with local communities of women. And Berlin gave to those “citizens of the world” (such as Gabriel Münter, who described herself as a “Weltkind” [World’s child], or Kalkowska – “ein fleischgewordenes Stückchen Pan-Europa”⁶⁷ [a piece of Pan-Europa’s body]) a sense of affiliation, and to its women settlers a space to create. A space – such as “the left bank” of Paris – worth noticing and remembering.

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67 Schury, *Ich Weltkind*, p. 198.

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The Unsaid Presence: Discussing the Absence of the Female Artists on the *Polnische Avantgarde* 1930–1990 Exhibition

Abstract: In 1992 the Neuer Berliner Kunstverein [New Berlin Art Society] together with the Muzeum Sztuki w Łodzi [Museum of Art in Łódź] held an important exhibition, which was presented in the Staatliche Kunsthalle Berlin between November 28, 1992 and January 24, 1993: *Polnische Avantgarde 1930–1990* [Polish Avant-garde 1930–1990]. Curators decided to divide over 60 years of Polish contemporary art history into the three phases: (1) the Unists, (2) the generation born in the 1930s, and (3) the artists born after the Second World War. They were aware of the limitations: it was impossible to make a comprehensive presentation of the Polish avant-garde in one exhibition. However, one basic absence cannot be overlooked: the lack of representation by female artists (among 80 artworks by 12 artists, there were only 4 works by Katarzyna Kobro). As the curators themselves noted, it was one of the most important and one of the very first exhibitions presenting Polish avant-garde art in the Western Europe after 1989. The lack of female representation was an oversight, as noted Ewa Partum, one of the most important Polish avant-garde artists who decided to openly oppose the masculinisation of the history of art: during the exhibition she distributed the envelopes with the motto “Polish avant-garde female artists have their great chance only as a corpse.” In my chapter, I would like to discuss briefly the history of the exhibition and comment on the curators’ decisions as well as emphasise the critique of the tendency to which they submitted, namely the masculinisation of the history of art. By following the path set by Partum, I would like to add to the critical tradition by both pointing out important Polish female avant-garde artists and suggesting some analytic means of rethinking the dominating art canon.

Keywords: Female artists, Polish avant-garde, Katarzyna Kobro, Ewa Partum, exhibition

Due to the ambiguity of the notion of the twentieth-century avant-garde art – originating from the diversity and multitude of its facets, sometimes even contradictory – one of the most frequent and advantageous ways of defining is to emphasise its transnational character. Hence, tracing the relations between artists, curators, and critics from the different nations appears as one of the most constructive means of researching the dynamics of the modern and postmodern avant-garde.¹ The sociopolitical situation

1 I refer here to the notions of the modern and postmodern avant-garde introduced by Jean-Francois Lyotard, e.g., in *The Postmodern Explained to Children: Correspondence 1982–1985* (Sydney: Power Publications, 1992).

in Europe before and after the Second World War makes it especially difficult and worth researching: the internal and international politics were extremely dynamic and deeply influenced the art worlds, both on the local and transnational level. The narratives around artistic production are produced simultaneously and post-factum, always entangled in the current intellectual and ideological currents and discussions. Hence, however some dependencies were clear and possible to diagnose on a regular basis, others are only to be understood from the perspective of time and reformulation of the dominant discourses and methods of the knowledge production.

After the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, the need to recover interrupted narratives about the artistic creation of the twentieth-century avant-garde was strong and manifested itself in various ways. One of them was a drive to curate exhaustive, comprehensive exhibitions which without a doubt was a great challenge and responsibility in the situation when aftermaths of the Cold War interrupted the flux of the knowledge between countries of the West and East Europe. Thus, for the time being, the means used while curating the exhibitions shaped the main narrative about the art of the region. At the same time, the critical approach to the art history was introduced in Eastern Europe relatively late. As a result, there was a risk of creating simplified narratives and reproducing the dominant discourse by deciding to create the consistent image rather than admitting the multitude and diversity of the activity of the avant-garde artists. In this chapter, I would like to critically analyze an important exhibition which while achieving to share the vast artistic production of the Polish avant-garde art in Berlin failed to meet the requirements of the critical approach to the art history. While it raised some controversy at the time, it was not further discussed in the critical, discursive context.

In 1992 the Neuer Berliner Kunstverein [New Berlin Art Society] together with the Muzeum Sztuki w Łodzi [Museum of Art in Łódź] held an exhibition that was presented in the Staatliche Kunsthalle Berlin between November 28, 1992 and January 24, 1993: *Polnische Avantgarde 1930–1990* [Polish Avant-garde 1930–1990]. The exhibition presented in Berlin was one of the most important and one of the very first introducing the Polish avant-garde after the Cold War – not only in Germany but also in Western Europe. The curatorial choices met with a resolute opposition of Ewa Partum, one of the most important Polish neo-avant-garde artists who during her visit in the gallery distributed the envelopes with the motto: “Polish avant-garde female artists have their great chance only as a corpse.” The artist decided to openly oppose what she believed was the act of the masculinisation of the history of art. Her firm and personal

reaction exposes how actually vital the problem of the uncritical approach to the art canon is. She used the means of art in order to oppose dominating narrations she did not see plausible. Similar statements are proposed by the contemporary art historians and critics, who on the other hand reach towards various critical tools. The issue of the masculinisation of the history of art was frequently discussed by the researchers² and Ewa Partum, viewed as one of the most important feminist Polish artists,³ is usually mentioned in this debates. In this chapter, I would like to add to this critical tradition by focusing on the *Polnische Avantgarde 1930–1990* exhibition. It is important since – as mentioned above – the means of exhibiting the art turn out as the implicit interpretation and explicit formation of the narrative about the artists and the art market itself. First, I would like to briefly present the history of the exhibition and explain the choices made by the team of the Polish and German curators. Then, I would like to propose a list of names of the most influential female artists who created during the time frame set by the curators. My main aim is to share their art by evoking names and placing their work within the context in which they were active. However, I am aware that this kind of practice is in fact a weak gesture: the retroactive evocation of artists unrecognised due to the discrimination raises many problems and is powerless without the critical analysis of the dominating discourses. Thus, at the end of my

2 There are many Polish scholars who directly discussed the presence of the female artists in the art history discourses, among whom Izabela Kowalczyk, Agata Jakubowska, and Monika Król should be noted. In the context of Partum's work, Ewa Majewska tackles this problem directly in her article "Feminist Art of Failure, Ewa Partum and the Avant-Garde of the Weak," *View. Theories and Practices of Visual Culture*, Vol. 16 (2016) pp. 1–28, which had a great influence on this paper.

3 As Ewa Majewska notices, when discussing supposed feminism of the artistic work, some hold that creation may only be perceived as such when the author deliberately situates her work in the context of feminist theory. For example, Piotr Piotrowski holds that a feminism framework should not be applied to Partum's work; see Piotr Piotrowski, *Art and Democracy in Post-Communist Europe* (Chicago: The Chicago University Press, 2012). However, there are many who believe that critical power of art operates at a different level of communication, thus does not have to formulate a discursive, fully conscious voice. Andrzej Turowski formulated the notion of "feminist conceptualism" in order to grasp Partum's influence on both critical power and conceptual aspect of her art of the time; see Andrzej Turowski, "The Greatness of Desire: On the Feminist Conceptualism of Ewa Partum in the 1970s," in: *Ewa Partum*, eds. Aneta Szyłak et al. (Gdańsk: Fundacja Sztuki Wyspa, 2013).

chapter, I would like to point out the most influential contemporary critical tools used when researching the history of art.

The History of the *Polnische Avantgarde 1930–1990* Exhibition in Neuer Berliner Kunstverein in Berlin, 1992

The idea of the exhibition goes back to 1984. During the 1980s and 1990s, Arnold Heidemann⁴ undertook several exploratory journeys to Warsaw and Łódź in search of partners for cooperation on the exhibition. Due to the political situation in Poland at that time initially it was impossible to accomplish the goal he set, namely to choose independently and create a satisfying selection of the Polish avant-garde art works. After 1989 a group of curators – Dr. Lucie Schauer, Dr. Inken Nowald, Dr. Peter Funken, and Maria Morzuch⁵ – achieved to establish the concept of the exhibition. The Muzeum Sztuki in Łódź [Museum of Art in Łódź] and the Neuer Berliner Kunstverein [New Berlin Art Society] agreed to take on a mutual responsibility for the forthcoming project. The curators of the *Polnische Avantgarde 1930–1990* exhibition divided over 60 years of Polish twentieth-century avant-garde art history into the three phases: (1) the Unists, (2) the generation born in the 1930s, and (3) the artists born after the Second World War.

The first period is marked by the activity of Władysław Strzemiński (1883–1952), Katarzyna Kobro (1898–1951), and Henryk Stażewski (1894–1988), who managed to create an independent visual language. The activity of Strzemiński and Kobro led to the opening of the neo-plastic room in the Museum of Modern Art in Łódź which was a genuinely exceptional space for the avant-garde art of the time. The Unism was an aesthetic trend specific to the Polish art of the 1920s and 1930s and was originated and proclaimed by Strzemiński in his publication *Unizm in painting* from 1928.⁶ The concept was consequently derived from the artistic currents of the first decades of the twentieth century, opposing the tradition of the figurative

4 As noted in the catalogue of the exhibition, its idea was initiated by Arnold Heidemann, Berlin lawyer born in Silesia and a collector of the exclusively Polish art works (i.e., numerous works by Henryk Stażewski, Wojciech Fangor, Ryszard Winiarski, and others).

5 Lucie Schauer was the president of the Neuer Berliner Kunstverein [New Berlin Art Association] in years 1975–1994 and was the leading curator of the exhibition. Inken Nowald and Peter Funken were curators invited to work on the exhibition and Maria Morzuch represented the Polish contribution to the curatorial program.

6 Władysław Strzemiński, *Unizm w malarstwie* (Łódź: Muzeum Sztuki, 1994). The book was first published in the series Biblioteka Praesens, No 3, 1928, and reprinted by the Museum of Art in Łódź in the series *Reprints*, No 3/94, 1994.

painting (strongly influenced by Malewicz's suprematism and neoplasticism of Piet Mondrian and Theo van Doesburg). According to the Unists, paintings should influence the viewer not through the objects depicted within but solely through the power of the plastic elements (colours, shapes, and relations between them). What was novel, however, was that the elements of the painting should not create contrasts and were to be enclosed within the frame of the picture.⁷ Due to the political circumstances of the 1930s, the contact between Poland and the Western art world was limited; however, the activity of the Unists was known to the artists outside of Poland, and both Strzemiński and Kbro were in contact with avant-garde artists from abroad.⁸ Their art gained wider popularity in post-war Germany only after their death, thanks to Dieter Honisch⁹ who in 1973 curated the huge exhibition in the Folkwang-Museum in Essen.¹⁰ Consequently, he helped to curate the exhibition which is the subject of my paper.

The Unism had no straightforward influence on the subsequent trends in Polish art. However, many artists were stimulated by the idea of uniformity of the picture and its consequences. This indirect influence can be observed in many works displayed in the exhibition shown in the framework of the second period: the generation born in the 1930s, whose artistic

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- 7 The idea of the Unism was well-described by the artists of the a.r. group (“revolutionary artists” or “real avant-garde”) set up by Strzemiński, Kbro, and Stażewski in 1929. See also Grzegorz Sztabiński, ed., *Władysław Strzemiński, Wybór pism estetycznych* (Kraków: Universitas, 2006) and Julian Przyboś, “Rytm i rym,” *Linia*, Vol. 2 (1931). Unism is frequently discussed as one of the most important art currents in the Polish early avant-garde.
- 8 Kbro and Strzemiński were the founders of the most important Polish avant-garde groups (Blok 1923–26, Praesens 1926–30, a.r. 1929–36). They both participated in the international art life and kept contact with members of the European avant-garde (e.g., Piet Mondrian, Theo Van Doesburg, Hans Arp, and Kazimir Malevich). In 1923, they initiated the first exhibition of Polish constructivism in Vilnius and, in 1932, they became the members of the Paris-based group Abstraction-Creation.
- 9 Dieter Honisch was an art historian and curator, in years 1975–1997 the director of the Neuen Nationalgalerie in Staatlichen Museen in Berlin. He contributed to the discussed exhibition as an expert on the Unism and the author of the article “Poland’s Contribution to 20th Century Art” about Strzemiński and Kbro. See Lucie Schauer, *Polnische Avantgarde 1930–1990: eine Ausstellung des Neuen Berliner Kunstverein in Zusammenarbeit mit dem Muzeum Sztuki in Łódź*, 28. Nov. 1992 – 24 Jan. 1993 (Berlin: Neue Berliner Kunstverein, 1992).
- 10 Exhibition *Constructivism in Poland 1923–1936*. BLOK, Praesens, a. r. was presented in the Museum Folkwang Essen (12.5.1973–24.6.1973) and Rajksmuseum Kroller-Müller Otterlo (14.7.1973–2.9.1973). The catalogue has been edited by Ryszard Stanisławski et al. and translated to English by Piotr Graff and Ewa Krasieńska.

activity occurred after the Second World War, mostly in the 1960s. The curators emphasised the abstract and geometrical tendencies of the works included in this part, clearly aiming to create a strong connection with the former artistic trend. Ryszard Winiarski (1936–2006) with his systematic treatment of the numbers was included, as well as Stefan Gierowski (1925–) who experimented with colour and tended towards geometrical forms. Zbigniew Gostomski (1932–2017) was presented with his cubes and series of derivations based on the mathematical rhythm. The curators chose also Edward Krasiński's (1925–2004) space-consuming installations with characteristic blue line connecting all the elements included. There were also works by Kajetan Sosnowski (1913–1987) and Roman Opałka (1931–2011). The third period – the generation born after the Second World War – was represented by three Polish artists whose minimal, abstract, or conceptual objects were presented: Marek Chlanda (1954–), Mirosław Bałka (1958–), and Jarosław Kozłowski (1954–).

The idea of the exhibition itself makes it impossible to create a comprehensive representation of the Polish avant-garde: the marked time frame is simply too wide to be represented only by twelve artists within one exhibition. During sixty years included in the time frame of the exhibition a lot of events occurred in the Polish art history.¹¹ However, I would like to point out two major problems with this selection. By trying to create a consistent continuity from the early avant-garde (marked by the artistic groups from before the Second World War such as Blok, Praesens, a.r.) to the late avant-garde (various neo-avant-garde movements arisen after 1945), the curators excluded many art trends crucial to the Polish avant-garde art of the twentieth century, which did not directly ensue from the constructivist art of the 1930s.

Next to the transnational character of the artistic production, the other crucial features of the avant-garde art are its sociopolitical involvement and awareness of the multitude and diversity of the artistic creation.

11 The history of the Polish avant-garde art was deeply influenced by the political events which occurred during that time, from regaining independence in 1918, throughout the Second World War and period after 1945 marked by the Cold War. Almost forty years of the Polish People's Republic (1952–1989) was internally diverse due to the changing authority and its attitude towards freedom of art. Exhibition ends with the beginning of the transformation which itself was a very dynamic sociopolitical moment. Avant-garde art remained marked by those conflicts and crises: either through biographies of the artists or explicitly by their creation. There are some publications attempting to trace the history of art in the broader sociopolitical context; e.g., Piotr Piotrowski, *In the Shadow of Yalta: Art and the Avant-Garde in Eastern Europe, 1945–1989*, trans. Anna Brzyski (London: Reaktion Books, 2009).

The artists exhibited in Berlin were avant-garde in those respects; however, they represented selected part of the avant-garde art of their time. In some theoretical approaches, avant-garde is not the notion framing the certain stream or period in the history of art but rather the idea of constant, creative distrust towards what is already there, willingness to search for new ways of expression, and critic of the society.¹² In a way, the approach of the curators is a turn away from the idea of the avant-garde as such: the art streams alternative to geometrical abstraction such as Tashism, Surrealism, Neoexpressionism, performance, and critical art were excluded. This would not be so problematic if not for the fact, that – as the curators justly emphasised themselves – it was one of the most important and also one of the very first exhibitions presenting Polish avant-garde art in Western Europe.¹³ Perhaps the title of the exhibition and the surrounding narrative should have been more specific, so they would not mislead as exhaustively covering the topic of the Polish twentieth-century avant-garde art.

For now, I will overlook this critical issue and focus for the time being on the latter problem of the exhibition: even within those restricted frames, some crucial artists were omitted – both male and female. It does not come as a surprise that after becoming acquainted with the program of the exhibition, Ewa Partum felt entitled and even obliged to oppose the curators' choices: exposing Polish art of the 1980s and 1990s in such way to foreign publicity might have been very misleading.¹⁴ The question whether her works should have appeared on the exhibition is uneasy as she does not

12 As the concept of the avant-garde art is associated with the artistic movements of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century such as Futurism, Dada, Surrealism, or Constructivism, the notion of the neo-avant-garde – introduced in the 1960s during the transition from the late modernism to the early postmodernism – refers to what could be called the second wave of the avant-garde (e.g., abstract Expressionism, pop art, nouveau réalisme, neo-dada, and fluxus). However, as Peter Bürger underlines in his *Theory of the Avant-Garde* from 1974, despite the possibility of the distinction between “historical” and “neo-” avant-garde, the common socially critical approach creates a coherent vision of the avant-garde art as such with its dynamic and diverse means of operating. See: Peter Bürger, *Theory of the Avant-Garde*, trans. Michael Shaw (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984).

13 See: Lucie Schauer, *Polnische Avantgarde 1930–1990: eine Ausstellung des Neuen Berliner Kunstverein in Zusammenarbeit mit dem Muzeum Sztuki in Łódź*, 28. Nov 1992 – 24 Jan 1993 (Berlin: Neue Berliner Kunstverein, 1992).

14 Due to the Cold War and its consequences, countries of the West and East Europe were deprived of contact and exchange of the information. As noted before, the curators were under the great responsibility: means used while creating the exhibitions shaped the only narration about the art of the region.

fit into the limited vision of the avant-garde art presented by the curators. Problem is that this particular omission might have added up to the grander exclusion hindering the presence of her and other female artists' work. There were quite many female artists who successfully achieved to accomplish the greatness set by the male authority or – which I would argue to be more accurate – despite the difficulties imposed on them contributed to the idea of the mainstream avant-garde art on their own rights. In the article attached to exhibition's catalogue, *Poland's Contribution to 20th Century Art*¹⁵ Dieter Honisch who programmed the first period of the exhibition expressed his awareness of how abbreviating the selection was. He listed some avant-garde Polish artists who were excluded despite their importance and influence; however, only male artists were mentioned. Thus, the lack of the representation of female artists of the avant-garde turns out to be double – they were not only omitted, their absence was not even considered to be problematic.

Is the Women's Claim to Be a Part of the History Legitimate? Introducing the Female Avant-Garde Polish Artists

As noted before, there are many problems with a retroactive evocation of the artists unrecognised due to the gender discrimination. Firstly, there is a problem of the archive: the lack of the interest in what women created prevented the survival of many art works, which were not properly valued, stored, and documented. What is more, the very concept of a great art piece is historically based on the male authority – as well as the decision to recognise some themes as significant. Women's claims of recognition were always dependent on their ability to follow the rules of the patriarchal society. Therefore, female artists who wished to become important, had to submit to the rules dictated by the masculine mainstream. However, even that granted no guarantee of the successful existence within the art market. As Monika Król notices while analysing the problem of the partnership in the avant-garde Polish art in the 1930s, many female artists were partners of the appreciated male artists. Therefore, their art was either ignored, treated with less attention, or even usurped by their partners.¹⁶ Kobro herself – despite the unquestionable importance of her work – remained on the margin of

15 Dieter Honisch, "Poland's Contribution to 20th Century Art," in: *Polnische Avantgarde 1930–1990*, p. 48.

16 Monika Król, "Collaboration and Compromise: Women Artists in Polish-German Avant-Garde Circles, 1910–1930," in: *Central European Avant-Gardes: Exchange and Transformation, 1910–1930*, ed. Timothy O. Benson (Los Angeles: Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 2002), pp. 338–356.

the Łódź avant-garde cricle. It was due to certain life events (migration, loss of works destroyed during the war, supporting her daughter, and struggle with the fatal disease) but also her relationship with Strzemiński.¹⁷ It seems implausible that among Polish artists of nearly sixty years there was only one influential, important female artist and that is exactly the impression that could be derived from the program of the *Polnische Avantgarde 1930–1990* exhibition. Is it thus possible to rethink the history of art so that it includes the female artists who never gained the recognition they deserved? For each period marked by the curators, I would like to select a few Polish female artists. Some of them were well acknowledged in their times, some of them gained recognition very late or even after their death. I chose artists whose work relate to the idea of the exhibition, namely due to their active participation in creating the aesthetics we speak of.

The absence of Maria Jarema's (1908–1958) sculptures and paintings is the most significant. The curators limited the first period of the exhibition to the avant-garde activity of the artists working in Łódź. Maria Jarema lived and worked in Cracow (which was also a very important center of the Polish avant-garde art) and was a member of Grupa Krakowska [Cracow Group].¹⁸ Many of her artworks would have fit not only the aesthetics of the exhibition but would also have expanded and completed the idea of the early Polish avant-garde by showing currents alternative to Unism that were also derived from the aesthetics of the avant-garde of the early twentieth century (e.g. suprematism). The next artist I would suggest is a Russian-Polish painter and designer Nadia Léger (1904–1983), who was in fact a student of Strzemiński. Other important Polish artists of the early avant-garde who represent the abstract, suprematic approach to painting were Maria Nicz-Borowiakowa (1896–1944) and Jadwiga Maziarska (1913–2003). Another artists missing from the exhibition but worth noting was Teresa Żarnower (1897–1950), another great female artist who worked both in Warsaw and Berlin, creating a strong connection between the early Polish and German avant-garde.

17 Their dramatic relationship was described by their daughter Nika Strzemińska in her book *Sztuka, miłość i nienawiść: o Katarzynie Kobro i Władysławie Strzemińskim* (Warszawa: Scholar, 2001).

18 After Poland regained independence in 1918, Polish avant-garde developed rapidly in different centers including Warsaw, Łódź, Cracow, Lviv, and Poznań. This topic was discussed recently within the exhibition *Urban Revolt. Avant-Garde Art from the Collection of the National Museum in Warsaw* (27 October 2017–21 January 2018). See the catalogue: *Urban Revolt. Avant-Garde Art from the Collection of the National Museum in Warsaw*, eds. Ewa Skolimowska, Anna Turowicz (Warsaw: The National Museum in Warsaw, 2017).

The second period marked by the curators was the largest one: there were six male artists included, who to a large extent were born in the 1930s. This generation was very productive for the Polish art and what is worth noting a few female artists emerged who achieved to create their own unique aesthetics, which in no way subordinated to any existing art trends. One of them was definitely Magdalena Abakanowicz (1930–2017),¹⁹ who specialised in creating large, spatial compositions based on fabric, using also other materials such as stone, wood, and bronze (e.g. *Backs*, 1967–1980). By using the technique of weaving – traditionally associated with women – in creating both flat pictorial spaces (e.g. *Andromeda II*, 1964) and the avant-garde sculptural forms (so-called Abakans,²⁰ e.g. *Abakan Red*, 1969), she achieved to revolutionise the perception of the material of art. Both *Abankans* and other spatial, organic structures prove high technical skills as well as boldness in experimenting with the materials. Her art developed consequently, showing faithfulness to the law of the series (all her works are divided into sets). This consequence combined with the diligence and the desire to develop the individual language made Abakanowicz a truly independent and outstanding artist.

The other influential artist was Alina Szapocznikow (1926–1973).²¹ Her style evolved during the years of her artistic activity, expressing in each period the independence and genius of the artist. Much of her work was inspired by the experience of the fatal illness, reflecting the changes going

19 It is difficult to give an exhaustive bibliography since number of the texts were devoted to the works of Abakanowicz, many of which were included in the catalogs of the monographic exhibitions; e.g. Mariusz Hermansdorfer, *Magdalena Abakanowicz, the Catalogue of the Exhibition in Wrocław*, trans. Jan Rudzki (Wrocław: Muzeum Narodowe, 1995). Her name also appears in Polish and foreign publications on the most important artists of her generation (alongside Opalka, Wodiczko, Bałka, Gierowski, Botlański). See also Joanna Inglot, *The Figurative Sculpture of Magdalena Abakanowicz: Bodies, Environments and Myths* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004); Mariusz Hermansdorfer, *Magdalena Abakanowicz* (Wrocław: Muzeum Narodowe, 2011).

20 The Abakans were soon admired around the world. For example, at the 1964 International Biennial of Tapestry in Lausanne and 1967 Sao Paulo Biennial where she earned the gold medal.

21 Similarly to Abakanowicz, due to the scale of the Szapocznikow's work many monographic and collective publications were written. I will mention a few of the most important: Agata Jakubowska, *Multiple Portrait by Alina Szapocznikow* (Poznań: UAM Scientific Publisher, 2007); Marek Beylin, *Ferwor: Alina Szapocznikow's Life* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Karakter, 2015); Agata Jakubowska ed., *Alina Szapocznikow – Awkward Objects* (Warsaw: Museum of Modern Art, 2011).

on in the female body. The artist tackled the issues of intimacy and was interested in biological, organic forms. Szapocznikow experimented with materials, introducing some new ones to her repertoire and moving from more typical such as plaster, iron, concrete in her early years to the polyurethane and vinyl when she developed her own, personal language of expression (manifested by imprinting her own body parts in the material). Her art was both poetic and ironic showing boldness in presenting what would be called “female” perspective at the time. However, in the early period of her artistic career she achieved to create sculptures fitting into the modes of the uniformal aesthetics (*Monster II*, 1957, *Balet*, 1958, *Firebrand*, 1962). So did other influential female artists who to this day did not gain deserved recognition: Teresa Pągowska (1929–), Wanda Czełkowska (1930–), and Alina Ślesieńska (1926–1994).²²

Was Ewa Partum’s Claim for the Women to Be the Part of the History of Art Justified? Critical Strategies of Opposing the Dominating Discourses

The last period marked by the curators – artists born after the Second World War – is probably the most problematic, especially because it strongly evokes the need to pose the issue I suspended before: whether the feminist art did not put into question the shape of the existing canons. The Polish art of the 1980s and 1990s is very diverse and what is significant, it was the time of changes in the approach to the presence of the women in the art as the feminist theory was being introduced with a delay. In consequence, many supreme female artists emerged, whose works differed significantly, proving there is no such thing as “femininity” in the arts. The main aim of the curators of the exhibition was to present “the artists who have set standards; not only in their home country, but far beyond its borders”²³ and expose “the genuinely Polish contribution to international art,”²⁴ which as

22 To some of the artists enlisted above there are separate publications devoted (usually written by the occasion of the retrospective or monographic exhibitions). Some of them are depicted in the collective publications: the catalogue of the exhibition *Polish Women Artists* in The National Museum in Warsaw, ed. Agnieszka Morawińska (Warsaw, 1991); Jolanta Maurin-Białostocka, *Słownik artystów polskich i obcych w Polsce działających* (Wrocław: Zakład Narodowy Imienia Ossolińskich, 1975); Zofia Baranowicz, *Polska awangarda artystyczna 1918–1939* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwa Artystyczne i Filmowe, 1979). Many are widely described on the portal Culture.pl (in Polish, English, and Russian).

23 Lucie Schauer, Eberhard Roter, “Introduction,” in: *Polnische Avantgarde 1930–1990*, p. 9.

24 Schauer, Roter, “Introduction.”

they most accurately emphasise, has not yet been comprehensively done. The exhibition was supposed to display the most influential artists of the time, and in the curators' approach one can sense a certain desire for purity, for creating a comprehensive, coherent, and essential vision of the avant-garde art history, as it were, a clear line developing the idea of geometric, abstract, and uniform aesthetic. As noted before, a particular vision of art is not, as a rule, excluding the many artists – not only female but also those discriminated on the other basis²⁵ – whose creation was also representative for the Polish art of the time.

Polish culture of the 1980s and 1990s was without a doubt very reluctant to the revolution in the approach to the art provoked by feminist and gender studies.²⁶ However, a desire to bring to the light forgotten or undiscovered Polish female artists could be observed among curators and theorists. In 1991 The National Museum in Warsaw held an important exhibition: *Polish Women Artists*. In the introduction to the catalogue, Agnieszka Morawińska notes that the mere idea of the exhibition – namely devoting it solely to the female artists – raised a lot of controversies, not only among the theorists and curators but also among the invited female artists.²⁷ My article reminds the curator's gesture: one of placing the female names next to the male within the spacetime of the history. I introduce the notion of "spacetime of history" to emphasise the material and not the exclusively discursive nature of the gesture proposed above. In the article, of course, the act remains within the narrative; however, a wider cultural task is to position the works of the female artists in the broader domain of visibility – physical, virtual, discursive, etc. In the same time, we have to be aware that this way of narrating the history implies that female creation emerged parallel

25 Here I only discuss gender as a base of the exclusion; however, race, nationality, ethnicity, socioeconomic status and sexual orientation also caused and to this day cause the foreclosure from the art world. What is more, many artists excluded themselves from the dominating narration by being too radical or unrecognised within the existing trends. In many cases the factors listed above cross, making it difficult to exhaustively trace the way discrimination operates. Contemporary scholars aiming to rethink the history of art need to reach towards the critical theory and gender studies in order to fully comprehend the problem of discrimination. It is important to remember that intersectionality – an analytic framework attempting to trace how interlocking systems of power impact the marginalized ones – was initiated by black feminists such as Anna Julia Cooper, Gloria Wekker, and Kimberlé Crenshaw.

26 See, e.g. Izabela Kowalczyk, "Feminist Art in Poland Today," in: *Feminist Art in Poland*, ed. Katy Deepwell, *n.paradoxa online*, Issue 11, October 1997.

27 Agnieszka Morawińska, "Artystki polskie," in: *Artystki polskie. Katalog wystawy*, ed. Agnieszka Morawińska (Warszawa: Muzeum Narodowe w Warszawie, 1991).

to but separately from the mainstream with only few female artists actually influencing it. To some extent, this is true as the female artists were deprived of opportunities and access to the art market. It is obviously not plausible for women to have their own exhibitions or standards of greatness in order to satisfy their omitted importance and influence. However, both ways of changing the dominant narrative – by evoking artists in writing or exhibiting and by looking closely at their work in the sociopolitical context using the means of the critical theory – are needed. As Deleuze has noticed, using the means of both molar and molecular politics are at hand: soft power of including into the mainstream narrative and revolutionary act of leveraging it should be used simultaneously.²⁸ It is a good moment to evoke the important question posed by Linda Nochlin in the 1970s. As she noted in her famous article from 1971, *Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?*,²⁹ a feminist critique of the discipline of the art history is needed “to reveal biases and inadequacies not merely in regard to the question of the woman artists, but in the formulation of the crucial question of the discipline as a whole.”³⁰ Referring to the Nochlin’s thoughts, in her article *The Others? Women and the History of Art* Maria Poprzęcka states, that “it is therefore necessary not to add the woman to the existing art history, but to rewrite the history of art.”³¹ The abolishment of the notion of greatness, which has been setting the standards of valuable art throughout the centuries of the art history, could help to eliminate the merit of Nochlin’s question.

As Izabela Kowalczyk has pointed out, during transformation “Polish artists have not come up with feminist programmes and theory related to their own unique position. Some of the most prominent women artists have denied having any connection with feminism. This trend however was connected with lack of a public art discourse in Poland, and a lack of critical tendencies.”³² However, there were female artists whose art can now be recognised as critical as it influenced the radicalisation and made it possible for feminist art to emerge after 1989. Natalia Lach-Lachowicz, Maria Pinińska-Bereś, and Izabella Gustowska can be listed as the examples: even if not explicitly feminist, they introduced female motives and means into

28 Gilles Deleuze, Felix Guattari, “Kafka. Toward a Minor Literature,” in: *Theory and History of Literature*, trans. Dana Polan, Vol. 30 (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986).

29 Linda Nochlin, “Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?,” in: *Women, Art and Power and Other Essays*, Linda Nochlin (New York: Harper & Row, 1988).

30 Linda Nochlin, “Why Have There Been No...”

31 Maria Poprzęcka, “The Others? Women and the history of art,” in: *Artystki polskie. Katalog wystawy*, p. 19.

32 Izabela Kowalczyk, “Feminist Art in Poland Today,” p. 13.

mainstream discourse. Partum's case stands out as exemplary (Ill. 1, 2, 3). Her art, usually approached as merely feminine, was inherently embedded in the sociopolitical context of the Polish transformation. Nowadays, she is considered one of the most important Polish and European avant-garde artists. Her art therefore stands out as the example of the *weak power* in the arts. Contemporary, postmodernistic critical analysis of the history of art brought about different notions framing the avant-garde creation not coming under the mainstream discourses and at the same time critical towards them namely, the creation of the common willing to democratise artistic production and fight for the rights of the multitude. In the following paragraphs, I would like to point towards some of the theories aiming to rethink the history by looking for the agency and importance of the overlooked artists. By using them we can understand how the female art changed – in many cases implicitly – and may change the history of art finally becoming a part of it.



Ill. 1: *Tautological Cinema* [Kino tautologiczne], film by Ewa Partum, 8 mm, 4:20 min (black and white), 1973. ©Ewa Partum & ARTUM Fundacja ewa partum museum.

While analysing Ewa Partum's work and its possible political and subversive power, Ewa Majewska discusses the notion of weak political and cultural agency, frequently recalled by feminist, gender, and leftist theories. She creates a notion of the *weak* avant-garde "which combines the feminist rejections of patriarchal visions of genius and creativity and emancipatory claims originating in the peripheries, with their demand for an expanded epistemology – one including marginalised and colonised territories in art history and practice."³³ As Majewska underlines, there are many ways in which the strategy of weakness can manifest itself and accomplish a self-aware and emancipatory art. The Deleuze's notion of the minor literature could be introduced: by resisting and consequently escaping the dominating languages and predetermined forms of expression, the art piece refuses to identify with the majority model and searches for the genuine alternative outside or even within the system.³⁴ Jack Halberstam introduces the concept of failure as an artistic act of resistance towards neoliberal productivity, capitalistic means of disciplining the individual, and sex/gender regimes; and as for the theoretical analysis, he proposes the low theory which can critically research given artistic production without sustaining within conservative, determined narrations.³⁵ Hal Foster, on the other hand, while searching for the novelty of the neo-avant-garde movement, points to the irony and distance which can be embodied by the aesthetics of differentiating, reflexive repetition, and appropriation.³⁶ Polish art historian Piotr Piotrowski could be added here: while analysing the avant-garde history in Poland and Eastern Europe, he introduces the notion of the horizontal art history.³⁷ In this approach, hierarchies are being noticed, criticised, and aimed to be omitted in order to expose the power relations and discover the artistic creation which was not appreciated at the time. We can see how both artistic and theoretical tools intersect at this point: producing art and the critical commentary surrounding it (curating, writing) go hand in hand

33 Ewa Majewska, "Feminist Art of Failure, Ewa Partum and the Avant-garde of the Weak," *View. Theories and Practices of Visual Culture*, Vol. 16 (2016) p. 1.

34 Gilles Deleuze, Felix Guattari, *Kafka. Toward a Minor Literature, Theory and History of Literature*, trans. Dana Polan, Vol. 30, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986).

35 Judith Halberstam, *The Queer Art of Failure* (Durham, London: Duke University Press, 2011).

36 Hal Foster, "What's Neo about the Neo-Avant-Garde?" *October*, Vol. 70 "The Duchamp Effect," (Autumn 1994), pp. 5–32.

37 Piotr Piotrowski, "Towards a Horizontal Art History," in: *Crossing Cultures, Conflict, Migration, and Convergence*, ed. Jaynie Anderson (Melbourne: The Miegunyah Press, 2009), pp. 82–85.

and together may contribute to change. However, as history shows, the theoretical critical commentary usually appears with a delay. It could be argued that the work of female artists is not and in fact never was the mere representation of the women' issues. As Majewska underlines, "feminist art practice offers subversive strategies of resistance which can be seen as elements of a larger, more universal project of the weak avant-garde working for social and cultural change."³⁸



III. 2: *Self-Identification* [Samoidentyfikacja], photo collage, 1980. ©Ewa Partum & ARTUM Fundacja ewa partum museum.

What is important, though, is that the artistic and critical means listed above are not extrinsic towards the principles of the avant-garde. On the contrary, they consequently ensue from the change initiated by it. The gesture of Ewa Partum is thus both avant-garde and critical at its core: by using the artistic means she opposed the conservative, purist approach to the narratives surrounding the avant-garde art. Her act could stand as the example of the weak power, which was frequently used by Polish artists, notably those active within the Polish critical art. As noted before, the curators in the 1990s

38 Ewa Majewska, "Feminist Art of Failure, Ewa Partum and the Avant-garde of the Weak," p. 15.



III. 3: *Self-Identification* [Samoidentyfikacja], photo collage, 1980. ©Ewa Partum & ARTUM Fundacja ewa partum museum.

might not have been able to take into account the critical discourse which in this part of Europe explicitly emerged only after the communist period. In fact, feminism as a politically effective statement initiating new languages of artistic expression was born in Poland in the 1990s and had a significant share in the reorganization of the discourses surrounding art and its history. Such selection of the unequivocal masterpieces of the avant-garde shows a lack of the recognition of the changes happening in Polish critical art in the 1980s and 1990s, for which the strong gestures of the artists were suspicious and what was weak, marginalised, unfinished, and indistinct turned out to be particularly worth considering. Feminine artistic language, easily reduced to what is intimate, weak, associated with the alleged female hypersensitivity, narrated either as decorative and useful (Abakonowicz) or as solely particular (Szapocznikow) in fact initiated the subsequent critical, *weak*, and involved approach discussed in this paper. The omission of women is a typical gesture of the curator who is aiming to sketch the broad spectrum of phenomena and see what prevails and dominates in the culture. This totalizing and unjust interpretation demands both artistic intervention – done by Ewa Partum – and critical reflection that should be an ongoing process of rethinking, dishonouring, provoking, and proposing new ways of seeing.

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Karolina Majewska-Güde

An Atlas of Ewa Partum's Artistic Practice: Resignifications in Ewa Partum's Feminist Performances in West Berlin (1982–1989)

Abstract: This paper inscribes Ewa Partum's artistic practice onto the multiple axes constituted by binaries such as East – West, local (distribution) – global (redistribution), national – transnational and historical alterity – interpretative presence. The text consists of three parts. First, I will briefly explain my research method indebted to the methodology of horizontal art history, and I will position the analysis of the fragment of Ewa Partum's artistic practice – the performances realized in West Berlin – within the broader context of my research project. In the second part, I will introduce the topic of Ewa Partum's feminist practice in socialist Poland, drawing special attention to the meaning of the artist's primary tool, her naked body, employed in her feminist performances. In the last and most extensive section, I will present an analysis of selected performances realized by Ewa Partum in West Berlin.

Keywords: Ewa Partum, artistic practice, feminist performances, West Berlin, multiple axes, naked body

An Atlas/Horizontal Monograph

Ewa Partum is considered a pioneer of Eastern European feminist art produced within the conceptual idiom.¹ Her work belongs to two discursive

1 Partum's identification as a feminist artist was initially not acknowledged by art historians. In 1997, Izabela Kowalczyk has argued that Polish female artists used some elements of feminist aesthetics in their work in a superficial manner not reflecting on a new paradigm of art related to the feminist turn: Izabela Kowalczyk, „Wątki feministyczne w sztuce polskiej” “[Feminist Motifs in Polish Art]” *Artium Quaestiones*, Vol. 8 (1997), pp. 135–152. The situation has changed after a series of retrospective exhibitions (2001, 2006) of Partum's art that presented her practice as explicitly feminist and further development of feminist scholarship. Several authors conceptualized the initial stage of Partum's practice (1965–1974) by analysing works such as *poems by ewa* with the imprint of Partum's lips or statements such as “my touch is the touch of a woman” (1971), in proximity with the notion of “latent feminism,” defining Partum's practice as “feminist intuitions” (see Ewa Małgorzata Tatar, “The Modes of Surfaces – Ewa Partum's and Teresa Tyszkiewicz's Feminist Projects,” *La Triennale*, No 2(2012), pp. 30–39, http://www.cnap.fr/sites/default/files/article/123910_le-journal-de-la-triennale-2-4headsandaneer-emilierenard).

formations: the historical neo-avant-garde that emerged during the 1960s and contemporary art with its temporal and semantic transition related to the “seismic change that significantly realigned the manner in which art addresses its spectators” in 1989.² Partum’s work can also be chronologically divided into Polish (1965–1982), West Berlin (1982–1989) and transnational/global (from 1989) periods. Partum herself established a double continuity of her work identifying her practice as conceptual and feminist.

Ewa Partum’s move from Poland to West Berlin in 1982³ and her absence from Poland during the transformation period,⁴ i.e. during the time that

pdf. (Accessed 15.05.2014)) or “feminist interventions” (see Izabela Kowalczyk, Prekursorki,” *Obieg*, 2011. <http://archiwum-obieg.u-jazdowski.pl/obieg/v/20998#1>. (Accessed 15.05.2014)) and inscribing Partum’s works into “proto-feminism” (see Ewa Toniak, „Niemożliwa?,” in: *3 kobiety. Maria Pinińska-Bereś, Natalia Lach-Lachowicz, Ewa Partum*, exh.cat., Warszawa: Zachęta Narodowa Galeria Sztuki, 01. March–08. May 2011, pp. 4–10) or “individual feminism” (Agata Jakubowska, „Niemożność porozumienia - feminizm indywidualny Ewy Partum”, *Obieg*. 2006. <http://archiwum-obieg.u-jazdowski.pl/teksty/5852>. (Accessed 16.04.2014). At the same time Partum’s art was gradually re-inscribed into the collective narrative of Eastern European feminist art ruptured by the resistance of many Eastern European neo-avant-garde female culture producers to identify themselves as “feminist artists.” Partum’s discursive self-identification as a feminist artist was indeed unusual for a neo-avant-garde artist working in socialist Europe and exceptional in the Polish art scene in the late 1970s. In 1978, during the ZPAP [Association of Polish Visual Artists] Art Festival, Partum articulated her concern with the feminist problematic as the “problem of a woman” in her *Emphatic Posters* series accompanied by the statement “my problem is a problem of a woman”. The artist frequently referred directly to the notion of feminist art in her polemical article in the magazine *Kultura* from 1979 where she explicitly defined feminism as an intellectual framework and interpretive context for her art. Cf. Ewa Partum, “Prawdziwy problem Ewy Partum,” *Kultura*, Vol. 38, No 849 (23 September 1979), p. 8. Partum spoke directly about feminist art in her manifestos *Change* (1979) and *Self-Identification* (1980), in which she articulated issues such as identification as women, patriarchal culture and the inequality between men and women. Partum also employed the notion of feminism in the titles of her presentations announcing the performance *Change* during the Art Festival in Łódź (1979) as *Feminist art*. Thus, in my analysis I propose interpreting Partum’s feminist aesthetics as a series of context-based and situated feminist identifications.

2 Alexander Alberro, “Periodising Contemporary Art,” in: *Crossing Cultures: Conflict, Migration, Convergence, Proceedings of the 32nd Congress of the International Committee for the History of Art*, ed. Jasynie Anderson (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2009), p. 961.

3 On 26 November 1982.

4 “Transformation” period refers to the period of systemic transformations and social changes in a decade after the fall of communism in Poland (1989) that took

the new institutional order of the Polish art world was being established, excluded her temporarily from assuming a visible position within the Polish art scene in the 1990s.⁵ The subsequent inclusion of Partum's art in the Polish art history of conceptualism and feminist art was determined by two factors: a generational change – an influx of art historians who did not participate in the neo-avant-garde milieu and who operated within the framework of post-structuralist methodology – and an introduction of feminist discourse into Polish art history in the 1990s.⁶ The dynamic of the appearance of these narratives was related to the broader geopolitical context, namely the political change of 1989. The post-1989 “rearrangement in the field of visibility”⁷ was an effect of the increased interest in Eastern European art produced “in the shadow of Yalta.”⁸ In this constellation, considerable attention was given to Partum's artistic practice in socialist Poland, whereas Partum's work in West Berlin has never become a subject of systematic study.

The heterogeneous practice of Ewa Partum, which includes many differentiated formats such as conceptual poetry, performance, installation, photomontage, film, intervention, statement and action, was (is) interpreted and historicized from many perspectives and locations. My inquiry focuses not only on the semantic shift within Partum's work from the autonomous conceptual practice to the socially engaged feminist art, but on the re-locations of this practice and its re-distribution from the socialist East to the capitalist West (Berlin) and, subsequently, to the contemporary global art world. I articulate these trajectories within a nonlinear narrative that does not focus

place within the realms of economy (an introduction of free market) and political system (an introduction of parliamentary democracy).

- 5 Aneta Szyłak recognizes the reasons for the concealment of Ewa Partum's work from visibility in Poland as being a consequence of both the artist's anti-establishment attitude and her re-location to Berlin, which resulted in the fact that “she did not participate in the transformation and rearrangement of the Polish institutional art scene after 1989.... She was written out of Polish art history until the beginning of 2000.” Cf. Aneta Szyłak, “The Non-Transmittability of the Message. In the Context of the Exhibition and Monograph, Ewa Partum, The Legality of Space,” in: *Ewa Partum*, eds. Aneta Szyłak et al. (Gdańsk: Instytut Sztuki Wyspa, 2013), p.10.
- 6 An exhibition *Artystki Polskie* [Polish Artists] curated by Agnieszka Morawińska in 1991 at Muzeum Narodowe in Warsaw is considered a symbolic beginning of Polish feminist art history.
- 7 Szyłak, *Ewa Partum*, p. 12.
- 8 I refer to the title of Piotr Piotrowski's book *In the Shadow of Yalta: Art and the Avant-Garde in Eastern Europe, 1945–1989*, trans. Anna Brzyski (London: Reaction Books, 2009).

on reconstructing an uninterrupted chronology but rather on the circulation of ideas, objects, texts and knowledges and their local reconfigurations in alternated geopolitical contexts.

In so far as the work of Ewa Partum has been produced, distributed and interpreted in three distinctive semantical, ideological and institutional spaces, the perspective of horizontal art history, understood as a narrative strategy – with its central notions of “parallax effect” (localization of meaning)⁹ and “framing” is particularly valuable.¹⁰ Moreover, it promises to “overcome a commitment to vertical relations and enables the pursuit of a (feminist) art history that prioritizes the horizontal axis.”¹¹

The constitutive notions of horizontal art history as proposed by Piotr Piotrowski in his texts and lectures¹² are indebted to the vocabulary of post-colonial studies as well as to feminist retroactive art history understood not as a strategy of inserting marginalized names into the hegemonic narrations but as an attempt to change the existing paradigm. Within the horizontal paradigm, the dualism of periphery and center is replaced by a dynamic model that focuses on a set of relations between centers and plural margins, as well as “margin to margin” relations. Piotrowski proposed scrutinizing

9 Piotrowski describes the parallax effect as a process of transformation of meanings of concept such as “autonomy” or “utopia” and of neo-avant-garde strategies implemented in the context of real socialism. See, for instance, his analysis of Alex Mlynářčik’s works in Piotrowski, *In the Shadow of Yalta*, p. 231.

10 This procedure, as defined by Piotr Piotrowski in several of his publications, relates to the Culler-Bryson concept of “framing”. See: N. Bryson, “Art in Context,” in: *Studies in Historical Change*, ed. Ralph Cohen (Charlottesville: UP of Virginia 1992); p. 21. See also Piotr Piotrowski, “The Framing of Central Europe,” in: *2000+ ArtEast Collection. The Art of Eastern Europe. A Selection of Works for the International and National Collection of Moderna Galerija*, eds. Zdenka Badovinac, Peter Weibel (Ljubljana and Innsbruck, 2001), pp. 15–22.

11 Andrea Dimitrakaki, *Gender, Artwork, and the Global Imperative. A Materialist Feminist Critique* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2013), p. 41.

12 Piotr Piotrowski elaborated his concept of horizontal art history around in a series of articles and books, see especially: “On the Spatial Turn, or Horizontal Art History,” *Umeni/Art*, No 5(2008), pp. 378–383; “Towards Horizontal Art History,” in: *Crossing Cultures: Conflict, Migration, Convergence, Proceedings of the 32nd Congress of the International Committee for the History of Art*, ed. Jaynie Anderson (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2009), pp. 82–85; “Towards a Horizontal History of the European Avant-Garde,” in: *Europa! Europa? The Avant-Garde, Modernism and the Fate of a Continent*, eds. Sascha Bru et al. (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2009), pp. 49–58; “On the Spatial Turn,” in: *Promises of the Past. A Discontinuous History of Art in Former Eastern Europe*, eds. Christine Macel, et al., (exhibition catalogue) Paris, Center Pompidou, 14 April–19 July 2010 (Paris: JRP Ringer, 2010), pp. 212–215.

local contexts of artistic production, providing that the notion of “local” is not essentialized but conceptualized in performative terms – not as a spatial or as scalar quality that refers, for instance, to the national state but as constituted in the process of communication, as lateral networks. This perspective enables the mapping of a set of dynamic relations between Partum's work and the time-places (locations) from which she operated and operates and from which her art is being re/distributed.

Piotrowski applied and exercised his model of horizontal art history within a transnational comparative study of the Central Eastern European neo-avant-garde and contemporary art. I am working towards challenging his narrative model by adapting it to the format of transnational gendered monographic study.

A monographic focus on the sovereign (male) artist was one of the main tasks of art history from the outset of the discipline. However, within the horizontal paradigm, a monograph is decentralized as a genre and assumes the form of an atlas: a set of articulations connected with each other in a nonlinear but problem-centered way. As a multi-perspectival whole, an atlas constitutes an enfolding multiplicity; it is conceived as an interrogation that undermines the notion of completed history but also stays away from the notion of art perceived as an individual mythology. Delinearization is the means of focusing on breaks, ruptures and gaps in the sequential historical narrative and to develop multiple narratives that expose the circulation of concepts and ideas within Partum's practice and its reception.

The notion of an “atlas” also emphasizes a performativity of the framing and the contingency of interpretation – in other words, the meanings are produced by asking particular questions. The question I would like to explore here is how Partum navigated the realities of change and re-location in her performances in West Berlin. In order to accomplish that task, I need to sketch briefly Partum's feminist artistic strategy as developed in Poland during the 1970s and at the beginning of the 1980s.

Partum's Feminist Performances in Poland 1974–1981/Rhetoric of Disinterestedness

In the series of photo collages titled *Self-identification* (Ill. 1), exhibited for the first time in 1980 in Warsaw,¹³ as well as in her other feminist performances realized in socialist Poland, Partum problematized the social position to which the patriarchy submitted women. In these works, Partum engaged in feminist politics of cultural recognition. By inserting into the art

13 Galeria Mała PSP- SPAF, Warsaw, April–May 1980.



III. 1: Ewa Partum. *Self-identification* [Samoidentyfikacja], 1980, photo collage, Warsaw. ©Ewa Partum & ARTUM Fundacja ewa partum museum

scene the previously static and marginalized feminine naked body and activating it “in space and time as actor rather than object”¹⁴ Partum not only re-claimed the role of the creative individual for women and inverted the logic of modern art where the female body was identified as a bearer rather than a producer of meaning, but also re-occupied the territory secured for the male neo-avant-garde artist.

In the manifesto that accompanied *Self-Identification*, Partum announced that she would perform naked until the social situation of women improves. In accompanying collages, Partum specified the context of her statement referring directly to the conditions and choices available to women in Polish People’s Republic. From that date, she used her naked body in her performances – bracketed by the narration produced within her art practice – sexually neutralized and devised as a “feminist sign”.

Self-identification was not the beginning but rather the culmination of a series of performative gestures aimed at developing the individualized

14 Amelia Jones, *Seeing Differently: A History and Theory of Identification and the Visual Arts* (London and New York: Routledge, 2012), p. 31.

language of feminist art. In 1979, Partum declared her naked body “a work of art” during the performance *Change. My Problem Is the Problem of a Woman* realized in Galeria of the Association of Polish Visual Artists - Na Piętrze in Łódź during the Festival Week of Łódź Art V [Tydzień Plastyki Łódzkiej] that took place 24–30 September (repeated later in the Galeria Art Forum in 1980 for the documentary film *poem by ewa* by Ryszard Brylski). This performance was a step further from the earlier action *Change* (1974) in which the artist arranged half of her face to be aged before the watching audience and camera. The re-arranged photographs from *Change* were distributed as posters on the streets of Warsaw. Titled *Empathic Posters* (1978 and 1979), they blurred the boundaries between public and private spheres further while also introducing feminist issues directly into the public space. Also in 1974, a significant rearrangement within the ongoing series of *poems by ewa* took place, which has been identified as a process of engendering a supposedly universal subject of a conceptual work of art. Partum included her personal experience of motherhood in the *poem by ewa* with her breastfed daughter (1974). Moreover, in 1978, the poem *my touch is the touch of a woman* (1971) assumed the formula: *my problem is the problem of a woman*. During this process, Partum's body became a tool for her feminist practice: initially, the artist used its surfaces – lips, face and skin; later its photographic representation and finally the naked body became an active agent in her performances.

However, the meaning of Partum's Eastern European naked body differed from the Western corporeal body used as a tool for self-discovery in feminist body art practices; it was not a body conveying a notion of an embedded desiring subject referring to the ontology of presence. In Partum's works, the use of the acting body also cannot be inscribed into the non-idealistic reading launched from poststructuralist and phenomenological perspectives.¹⁵ Its meaning must be considered within the framework of both local artistic strategies and local forms of visual culture.

Since the 1960s, the body has been a tool frequently employed by male Eastern European neo-avant-garde artists in performances and actions. Piotrowski argued that although there have been many male artists exploiting their naked bodies, only a few would “gender” or “sexualize” their bodies in their practices. In Poland, it was Jerzy Bereś who “turned his gender into a medium of expression”¹⁶ and named his naked body employed

15 Amelia Jones, *Body Art/Performing the Subject* (Minneapolis and London: University of Minneapolis Press, 1998), p. 20.

16 Piotr Piotrowski, “The Male Artists' Body. National Identity v. Identity Politics,” in: *Gender Check, A Reader*, ed. Bojana Pejić (Köln: Walther König 2010), pp. 127–137, p. 130.

in performances *A Monument*. Beres's body, discursively turned into a tool within his artistic practice, was indeed gendered but not sexualized; it was not presented as a sensual or erotic body but merely as a body marked as male.

The body employed by Partum in *Self-identification* and her performances was also gendered, i.e. marketed as feminine but not sexualized: it was a body without pleasure and without excess – the body without expression. It included what Dimitrakaki called “a certain corporal reality that is instrumental to the labour of the sign, that is, of the female artists' body.”¹⁷ But it also included cultural marks of female sexuality. Like many other female artists such as Yayoi Kusama or Hannah Wilke, Partum was performing wearing high heels and heavy makeup. Unlike her Western colleagues, however, Partum was not operating in the context of a consumerist culture saturated with images of objectified, fetishized women. Thus she was not engaging with mass-media culture, as in Poland this culture was in a different stage of development.¹⁸

In the Polish visual culture of the 1970s, both mainstream popular culture and artistic culture, the naked female body was a bearer of two possible meanings: it was either revealed as a sexual object for a male desiring gaze, heterosexual erotization and objectification or – as in more conservative and traditional artistic practices – allegedly sublimated through disinterested judgement and revealed as an object of contemplation, a synonym of an object of beauty or formal harmony (the exhibitions *Polish Venus* organized by Cracow Photographic Association from 1970 until 1991). In other words, it followed the traditional classic valorization of the female body “as a topos of pleasure and passivity.”¹⁹ In this constellation, Partum worked to propose

17 Dimitrakaki, *Gender, Artwork, and the Global Imperative*, p. 76.

18 However, some form of proto-consumerist popular culture existed that was characteristic of the post-totalitarian condition of the 1970s. Writing about the consumerist revolution introduced in the 1970s under the label of “second Poland,” David Crowley argued that the 1960s and 1970s saw the growth of “socialist consumerism” across the Block; however, it was “a phenomenon found largely, if not entirely in the realm of images rather than things.” Films, culture and lifestyle magazines such as *Ty i Ja* [You and Me] adapted from French sources, press articles, books and TV programs, as well as advertising and selected western European and American films screened in Polish cinemas offered a visual spectrum of ideals of the female body, beauty and desire. The series of exhibitions *Polish Venus*, focused on female photographic portraits and acts, became a symptom of the relative liberalization of Polish visual culture in the 1970s. Cf. David Crowley, “Consumer Art and Other Commodity Aesthetics in Eastern Europe under Communist Rule,” in: *Natalia LL. Beyond “Consumer Art,”* ed. Agata Jakubowska (Warsaw: CSW Zamek Ujazdowski, 2017), pp. 129–143.

19 Piotrowski, “The Male Artists' Body,” p. 128.

a new reading of the naked female body within visual culture that went beyond the “rhetoric of the pose”²⁰ where the body acquires its meaning from the outside. On the one hand, the artist revealed the economy of the gaze and exposed the practice of objectification and fetishization of the female body in her manifestos. On the other hand, Partum re-appropriated the “rhetoric of disinterestedness” of the active male naked body and utilized it as a strategy in the struggle for recognition.

The notion of disinterestedness recalls the Kantian paradigm of the disinterested attitude of the viewer towards a work of art – an encounter where the judge must not have a subjective interest in the work he judges – i.e. based on taste – he must rather operate within a universal and indifferent mode to the existence of the artwork. The Kantian disinterested judge of the aesthetics was at the same time the paradigmatic subject of the modern era.²¹ Within the conceptual art and its critique of visuality, this notion transformed into the assumption that it is the language that is neutral and transparent. In her earlier conceptual linguistic works from the series *poems by ewa*, Partum deconstructed the supposedly indifferent speaking subject of conceptual art re-inscribing her “personal I” or by revealing the “desiring subject”. In her performative body works, she extended this procedure to demonstrate that the supposedly universal subject of performance is produced/enacted by the gendered body.

The Feminist Emigrant Body – Performances in West Berlin (1982–1989)

The transfer of Partum's art practice from socialist Poland to West Berlin and especially her strategy of performing naked must be seen as a process of the resignification of her artistic tool followed by a re-articulation of its meaning in the new political, social and artistic context. As bell hooks argued, by moving, we confront the realities of change and location.²² In the case of Partum's transfer from East to West, the realities of change and location merged into a new discursive staging of her work. In West Berlin, Partum was forced to confront herself not only with changes related to the political re-location (from real socialism to liberal democracy) but also with

20 Craig Owens developed the notion of the “rhetoric of the pose” in his 1984 article, “The Medusa Effect, or The Specular Ruse,” published in Craig Owens, *Beyond Recognition. Representation, Power, and Culture* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1994), pp. 191–217, here: p. 198.

21 Jones, *Seeing Differently*, p. 27.

22 bell hooks, “Choosing the Margin as a Space of Radical Openness,” *Framework: The Journal of Cinema and Media*, No 36(1989), pp. 15–23.

the changes of her own location/position as a speaking subject, as well as with the changes related to the reception of her work. I would like to consider briefly these changes and, in the further part of this paper, look closely at the ways in which Partum navigated through them in her performances, focusing on a group of performances based on Kant's texts.

In performances realized in Poland, Partum employed her naked gendered body as a female body; in West Berlin, it was not merely a female body, it had also become an emigrant body. This change of social status had consequences for Partum's artistic practice – it meant that the meaning of her basic tool had been politically rewritten. As Agata Jakubowska argued, “in Poland, as a woman, she (Partum) was a subaltern but a privileged one.”²³ In West Berlin, she became a subaltern in a double way - as a woman and as an immigrant.... and as a consequence, she stopped speaking mainly on behalf of women.”²⁴

Partum's naked acting body has been inscribed into the binary system of identification (emigrant-immigrant), which, after the political events of 1989 and 2004, has been re-conceptualized within a vocabulary that enables us to distinguish between privileged voluntary transnational migrants who follow the imperative to travel generated by global capital and those who move because of expulsions generated by capital or war as political, economic and ecological refugees. As an Eastern European, a single mother, and an emigrant, Partum's position was closer to that of a political refugee than to the privileged position of a transnational migrant. The artist left the country during the Martial Law²⁵ that limited her rights as a citizen and prevented her exhibiting her work outside of the underground “third culture” network.²⁶ (Partum's emigration was a part of the wider phenomenon known in Polish historiography as the “second great emigration” or the “solidarity emigration” when around 1,000,000 left the country encouraged

23 Agata Jakubowska, “Divided Body. Ewa Partum's Homage a Solidarność (Łódź 1982, West Berlin 1983), online publication of the Research Project: *OwnReality* (23.) *To Each His Own Reality. The Notion of the Real in the Fine Arts in France, West Germany, East Germany and Poland*, ed. Mathilde Arnoux (Paris: Deutschen Forum für Kunstgeschichte Paris, 2017), <http://www.perspectivia.net/publikationen/ownreality/23/jakubowska-en>, p. 14.

24 Jakubowska, “Divided Body,” p. 17.

25 13.12.1981–22.07.1983.

26 In his book *Znaczenia modernizmu. W stronę historii sztuki polskiej po 1945 roku* (Poznań: Rebis, 1999), Piotr Piotrowski describes initiatives outside of the binary system of the official culture and Catholic Church – such as the Carpet Cleaning Gallery, in which Partum performed her first edition of *Hommage a Solidarność* (9.08.1982) – as “third culture”.

by the liberalization of the emigration policy in the 1980s).²⁷ Thus Partum was displaced due to the pressures related to the local political situation and faced with new pressures and constraints in her chosen location. Partum as an exilic subject was therefore at the opposite pole of the subject represented in Martha Rosler's *Frequent Flyer* (1975): as an infrequent flyer, she did not embrace or represent mobility. On the contrary, she has become "immobilized" in various new ways.

Within the medium of performance based on the utilization of the naked body, Partum's immobilization as a "living subject" in West Berlin and the immobilization of the meaning of her body as an artistic tool has collapsed.

In this new context, her acting body, which was previously constructed as a pure, or "straightforward signifier" of feminism, was transformed into an allegory or personification.²⁸ Partum performed naked in front of the Western and expatriate audience as a representative of the Eastern European radical dissident artists. Agata Jakubowska has argued that Partum came to symbolize Eastern Europe as such; moreover, her naked body has become an "allegorical figure embodying the concept of her work."²⁹ Jakubowska relates the allegorization of Partum's naked body to the disappearance of the emancipatory character of Partum's nakedness. However, I would like to argue that this immobilization of the meaning of her body was something Partum approached actively and in many different ways, ranging from referring directly to the political framing (*West East Shadow*, 1984) and its cultural ramification as a personification of nature (*From the Subject to the Object of Art*) to seeking to disturb this reading by emphasizing its (the body's) individual biography (*Pirouette*, 1984; *Hommage a Leonardo*, 1986).

27 In 1982 permission for legal emigration was granted to around 24,000 Polish citizens.

28 In her introduction to *Vision and Difference*, Griselda Pollock refers to the analysis of Elisabeth Cowie's article (1978) – her "theorization of the social production of sexual difference." Writing about the body as a sign, Cowie argued that "Women are a visual sign, but not a straightforward signifier". Cf. Griselda Pollock, *Vision and Difference. Femininity, Feminism and Histories of Art* (London and New York: Routledge, 1993), p. 13. Partum sought to re-claim the function of a straightforward signifier for the female naked body. Within her artistic idiolect, she created discursive conditions where her naked body could assume the function of a feminist signifier.

29 In her comparative analysis of both editions of Ewa Partum's *Hommage a Solidarność*, Agata Jakubowska concluded that the usage of Polish language and the presence of an interpreter created a situation in which the binary oppositions of Man versus Woman, Dressed versus Naked, and West versus East dominated the performance's meaning. Cf. Jakubowska, "Divided Body," p. 12, and p. 15.

The other factor that has to be considered with regard to Partum's relocation is the change of the context itself. The context needs to be understood broadly, not only in terms of political or social conditions but as proposed by Appaduray "as a space that generates meanings by generating real and possible relationships and intended and unintended effects for viewers."³⁰ Partum transferred her feminist practice from a country with an absence of feminist discourse to a country with a developed feminist movement, from real socialism to liberal democracy, from the communist culture of double-speak to the mass culture of consumption and from a country behind a metaphorical Iron Curtain to a city curtailed by a real Wall.

In this new context, Partum's confrontational strategy of critical pedagogy and rising feminist consciousness as developed in performances in Poland lost its purpose. Effectively, the artist gradually turned inwards towards a more personal story, a biography of her body and its connectivity with the bureaucratic state/city apparatus. In other words, Partum's critical pedagogy transformed into body art – a formula of art through, on and about the body. Also, her new works re-conceptualized the topic of victimhood from positioning women as victims of the patriarchy towards presenting her personal experiences and entanglements. At the same time, Partum re-conceptualized the body as the actual object of political and physical oppression (mentioned in *West-East Shadow* 1984, *Marriage disaster* 1987).

Finally, it is important to consider the transfer of Partum's practice in the context of the rupture related to the chronology of neo-avant-garde practices in the West and in the East. The status of performance art – a medium pragmatically employed by Partum in her feminist work – differed in West Berlin and in socialist Poland at the beginning of the 1980s. The Galerie Rene Block, which was a hub of experimental performance art throughout the 1960s, was closed in 1979. The art world's interest in performance art was replaced by a new enthusiasm for expressionistic painting (Neue Wilde) and post-punk music. Examining the unifying role of performance art as an autonomous art practice in both Berlins during the 1970s, Claudia Mesch has argued that performance reached its cultural zenith in West Berlin in the 1960s and that by the 1980s, it was cast as a failure in terms of its political effectiveness by West German intellectuals.³¹ On the contrary, the Polish performance scene was still very vibrant at the beginning of the 1980s.

30 Arjun Appaduray, *Future as Cultural Fact. Essays on the Global Condition* (London and New York: Verso, 2013), p. 264.

31 Claudia Mesch, *Modern Art at the Berlin Wall: Demarcating Culture in the Cold War Germany* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2009), p. 18.

Moreover, as Agata Jakubowska emphasizes, the female nude “virtually vanished from contemporary art around 1980.”³² I would like to propose that in this context, Partum radicalized scenarios of her performances resigning from activism in favour of more expressive and dramatic body actions and at the same time moving towards the analytical use of performance as a medium. Instead of reproducing statements about the objectification of female bodies, she proposed a deliberation on the status of the object and subject in art based on action.

Kristine Stiller argued that action in art not only “couples the conceptual with the physical but at the same time shifts the conventional subject-object relation instantiated in traditional viewing conditions away from their sole dependence on re-presentation (metaphor) to connection (metonymy).”³³ This line of inquiry, i.e. the performative questioning of the relationship between the subject and the object of art and problematizing their relation through the notion of connectivity, became vital for conceptualizations of Partum's West Berlin performances.

One set of strategies explored by Partum that I would like to discuss relates to the use of her body as a surface for dispersed text. In these works, Partum explored the relationship between the subject and the object of an artwork, also articulating this topic in the titles of her works. The strategy of working with the surface of the body had already been employed by Partum in her work *Absence/Presence* (1965) and then developed further in both performances of the work *Change* in 1974 and 1979, as well as in the above-mentioned *Marriage Disaster*. In works realized in the following decade, Partum combined the strategy of transforming the body surface with the strategy of performing text.

In winter 1988, during a group presentation at Galerie dr. Gudrun Schultz at Checkpoint Charlie in Kunsthaus run by Berufsverband Bildender Künstler [Professional Association of Visual Artists], Partum realized the work *From the Subject to the Object of Art* (Ill. 2, 3); and a year later during the event *Abstract Book/Der Kongress* at Bahnhof Westend in Berlin, Partum realized the performance *An Act of Thought Is an Act of Art* (Ill. 4). In both realizations, the artists re-thought and problematized the rhetoric of disinterestedness by directly referring to Kant's work.

During the performance *From the Subject to the Object of Art*, the artist read aloud fragments from Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* (*Thesis/*

32 Jakubowska, “Divided Body,” p. 15.

33 Kristin Stiller, “Uncorrupted Joy. International Art Action,” in: *Out of Actions, Between Performance and the Object 1949–1979*, ed. Russel Ferguson (London: Thames & Hudson, 1998), p. 227.



Ill. 2: Ewa Partum. *From the Subject to the Object of Art*, 1988, performance documentation, West Berlin. ©Ewa Partum & ARTUM Fundacja ewa partum museum.

Antithesis) in Polish to the predominantly German audience. After reading, she decomposed the text into letters and, while spelling them out, she placed black letterset letters on her naked body from her feet towards her face and into her mouth to the point when she choked and could not speak any further. The performance was presented in the context of Partum's other linguistic works. On the floor of the gallery, Partum distributed white cardboard letters releasing a subsequent edition of active poetry. Partum also presented canvases covered with characteristic cardboard letters painted white and encrusted with black letterset letters from the series *Textinstallations* (1988/1989). Thus, in this constellation, the physical space of the gallery, the space of the canvas and Partum's body were linked as the realm for the materialization of deconstructed language. Moreover, during her performance, Partum used a music stand that was also an element of her linguistic installation with canvases. In a review published in *Berliner Kunstblatt* in 1989, Karoline Müller emphasized the contrast between the white cardboard letters and black letterset letters representing, according to the critic, the two worlds in which Partum worked and lived, concluding that "the body is a canvas and a frame. Hands and letters function as a paintbrush and paint" ("Der Körper ist das Leinen und der Keilrahmen. Hände und Buchstaben sind Pinsel und Farbe").³⁴

34 Karoline Müller, "Ewa Partum," *Berliner Kunstblatt*, No 62(1989), p. 51. The author writes: "Partum brought to the gallery two music stands. On one of them a



Ill. 3: Ewa Partum. *From the Subject to the Object of Art*, 1988, performance documentation, West Berlin. ©Ewa Partum & ARTUM Fundacja ewa partum museum.

In the second performance released during Abstract Book organized by the DER Kongress artistic group at Bahnhof Westend on 14–15 October 1989, Partum repeated the scenario *From the Subject to the Object of Art* with yet another fragment of Kant's work – a well-known passage from *The Critique of Practical Reason* (1788): “Two things fill the mind with ever new and increasing admiration and awe, the oftener and more steadily we reflect upon

text of the installation that hung behind her was placed. The composition created from white and black letters presented as earlier in Poland white, and as currently in West Berlin – black letters. White letters that represent the innocent Poland and are taken from the story about 24 h peregrinations of Leopold Bloom written by Irishman James Joyce. The black ones urge to always want everything, recognise everything, and change everything are taken from German writer Johann Wolfgang von Goethe. A letter salad, a mix of two worlds, in which she (Partum) lived and worked.”

them: the starry heaven above me and the moral law within me.” This performance was accompanied by a presentation of the *book by ewa: Gendanken Akt is ein Kunstakt* [An Act of Thought is an Act of Art].

As Karen Lang argued, the idealized Kantian subjects progressing from the “starry heavens above me” to “the moral law within me:” “charts a path from nature to reason that opens onto vistas of infinite possibility once the ‘animality’ of the subject is left behind. The autonomy of the subject is only maintained in so far as the subject’s relation to nature has been minimised, or covered over.”³⁵ Partum uncovered the relation to nature by revealing the subject as a gendered body; she repeated Kant’s words, decomposed them into letters and choked on them while performing the most radical critique. She performatively reversed the order in which the Kantian subject is being established in a move from nature to reason. Her nakedness re-presented “defining negativity,” about which Judith Butler writes that it defines the subject from the outside.³⁶ Certainly, Partum did not advocate a re-emergence of the subject in nature but rather she revealed the fictiveness of the Kantian subject as one that has to transcend internal and external nature.

In the aforementioned essay, Lang also argued that while “Kant’s philosophical enterprise indicates how the subject of reason is male,” the nature of its representation in art history remains predominantly female and “appears in the guise of personification.”³⁷ By resisting the alegorization of her own body and putting it to action, Partum revealed the “Kantian performativity” in art history – “drama played out between male and female, wherein the female will be equated with nature, while the male will serve as artist, philosopher, or ideal spectator.”³⁸

At the same time, Partum made a statement on the fetishization of an art object and proposed its re-installment through action, removing it from the realm of metaphor (representation) into the realm of connectivity and relationality. The title of the second performance – *An Act of Thought is an Act of Art* (Ill. 4)– was also written in paper letters outside the building and set on fire by the artists, as in her *Aesthetics* performances. This was not another attempt at the dematerialization of art but rather a further elaboration of the metonymical relation between the subject and the object

35 Karen Lang, “Kantian Performativity in Art History,” in: *Performing the Body/ Performing the Text*, ed. Amelia Jones and Andrew Stephenson (London and New York: Routledge, 1999), p. 13.

36 Judith Butler, *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of Sex* (London and New York: Routledge, 1993), p. 190.

37 Lang, “Kantian Performativity,” p. 14.

38 Lang, “Kantian Performativity,” p. 14.

of art, the conceptual and physical relationship within an artwork. The remaining ashes were distributed in signed envelopes to the members of the audience as documents of artistic action and objects produced through the event: demythologized works of art.

There are also two further aspects of these performances that must be considered, both related to the specificity of the Polish conceptual tradition and conceptual artists' preoccupation with Kant's writings. Kant's texts have been used by many Polish conceptual artists in their critical interventions, which aimed at a deconstruction of the system of written language.³⁹ At the same time, the subject of conceptual art assumed a Kantian model of the *cogito* that guaranteed the smooth and free transmission of content that was achieved at the cost of the medium of language.⁴⁰ Partum reformulated this conceptual tradition – she not only deconstructed Kant's writings by spreading the letters over the surface of her body but moreover she choked on them, swallowed them: she performatively enacted the non-transitivity of the language, undermining the modernist myth of the transparency of the language used in conceptual textual games.

The other aspect of Partum's textual performances relates to the use of her body as a substitute for a public space. In the conditions of centralized spectacle in socialist Poland, Partum distributed letters (*active poetry* 1971–) in public venues and open spaces seeking to access and penetrate the post-totalitarian public sphere. In the pluralistic space of West Berlin, distributing letters in public places merely required permission from the authorities or a private owner and did not create comparable tensions. In order to access public debate in a liberal democracy, the artist had to penetrate the borders that run through her *geobody* rather than to perform in a public space as such.

I would like to conclude by referring to a visual document, namely a publication from August 1987 *Zur Physiologie der Bildenden Kunst. Künstlerinnen Multiplikatorinnen Kunsthistorikerinnen Berlin 1985–1987*. [About the Psychology of Visual Arts. Women Artists, Multipliers and Art Historians, Berlin 1985–1987],⁴¹ which featured Partum's photographic portrait among other Berlin-based female cultural producers.

39 See, for instance, Jarosław Kozłowski's book *Reality* (1972) based on Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* in which the artist reduced Kant's treatise to its punctuation showing the "pure and neutral reality of the texts, beyond its meaning."

40 Anna Burzyska, *Dekonstrukcja, Polityka i Perfomatyka* (Karków: Universitas, 2013), p. 162.

41 Inge Huber and Karoline Müller, ed., *Zur Physiologie der bildenden Kunst, Künstlerinnen, Multiplikatorinnen, Kunsthistorikerinnen Berlin 1985–1987. Porträts, Materialien, Register* (Berlin: Ladengalerie, 1987).



III. 4: Ewa Partum. *An Act of Thought Is an Act of Art*, performance documentation, 1989, West Berlin. ©Ewa Partum & ARTUM Fundacja ewa partum museum.

In this portrait, Partum's face and cleavage are depicted covered with black letterset letters. The portrait specifies Partum's artistic genealogy as a synergy of body and text. Considering Partum's position as an emigrant artist, this linguistic dimension assumes additional meaning: it alludes to the difficulties in communication and the perplexity of the process of translation. Partum's face and body are depicted as a filter that decomposes linear text, making it incomprehensible. This portrait can be interpreted as a metaphor of Partum's artistic practice in the decade of the 1980s in West Berlin, namely: the condition of "the non-transmitability of the message."⁴²

42 *Made by Me – The Non-Transmitability of the Message* is the title of Partum's lecture given in 1979 in Maximal Art Gallery in Poznań.

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Chapter IV: Contemporary Art Between Poland and Germany

Artur Żmijewski

The 7th Berlin Biennale 2012

Abstract: This chapter presents a personal insight by an artist and curator of the 7th Biennale in Berlin 2012, Artur Żmijewski (1966–) into curatorial choices and strategies represented during the Biennale. The author elaborates on main projects revealing the social character of the art presented in Berlin, thus emphasizing the important field of contemporary artistic projects – social and political activity.

Keywords: Berlin Biennale, curator, strategies, 2012, social activity, political activity

As a former curator of the 7th Berlin Biennale (BB), I would like to tell you a short story about this event. I would like to introduce a few artworks or projects, which were part of this exhibition that took place in 2012 in Berlin. It is, of course, rather brief selection of these projects, artworks and events, which were presented during the Biennale. I would also like to explain how the Biennale had been created and how it was composed. What I mean by this, is to clarify the curatorial strategy behind the exhibition by presenting examples of artworks and describing the preparation and production processes. Thus I would like to reveal the mystery that viewers might have faced – what was the motivation of the curatorial team for their choices.

Anatomy Lessons, Christina Lammer, 2012

The first work was rather not well known, it was a kind of clandestine work (Ill. 1). It was situated in the Charité hospital in Berlin – the place suggested by Christina Lammer, the Austrian sociologist and anthropologist, involved in a research on medical procedures. She invited artists, Paweł Althamer and surgeons who also worked as clinicians: Michael Häfner and Ulrich W. Thomale. Their healing method is to use surgical procedures. But there are surgeons who make drawings before the operation to explain procedures to their patients. For the performance proposed by Christina they agreed to conduct an anatomy lecture by using tools usually belonging to means of art. As a result we had clinicians painting along with artists. It begun with the drawn image of the human body but ended with a sort of abstract image created together with the viewers and Paweł Althamer. Ulrich W. Thomale is involved in the investigation of human brain. He offers a serious therapy for children who have different kinds of brain diseases, usually tumours, but also problems with the liquid circulation in brain. In their artistic happening/action artists



III. 1: 7th Biennale Berlin: Christina Lammer. *Anatomy Lessons*, 2012.
Photo: Agnieszka Szreder.

together with doctors started to paint different anatomical structures – the map of human brain with all its complications. Michael Häfner, a gastroenterologist, who in his work uses different instruments to help him diagnose and cure, joined the team. However, this time instead of usual surgical tools he used the technique of artistic painting, and Polish artist Paweł Althamer was assisting him. The final result turned out to be a sheer abstraction. It was important for Christina Lammer to show how the clinician creates an image and how it should be subsequently comprehended by the viewers. During her research in hospitals she discovered that a few days before the surgery, the same clinicians meet their patients in order to explain them the process of the surgery. They do it by making drawings. In other words – they visualize what will happen to the bodies of their patients during the operation, they visualize the whole medical procedure. The goal of this peculiar drawing or painting session was to build trust between clinician and the patient. I found it very interesting – to say metaphorically – that the role of art is to build trust as clinicians-draftsman-artist do.

The First Congress of the Jewish Renaissance Movement, Yael Bartana, 2012

The next project had been proposed by the Israeli artist Yael Bartana (1970–) (III. 2). She is a female artist who in 2007 initiated a movement



III. 2: 7th Biennale Berlin: Yael Bartana. *The First Congress of the Jewish Renaissance Movement*, 2012. Photo: Marcin Kaliński.

which she called *Jewish Renaissance Movement*. She introduced a semi-artistic, semi-social idea of Jews returning to Poland. As we know from the history, over 70 years ago the Jewish community in Poland was annihilated and those who survived had been expelled in the 1950s and 1960s from the country. In result 3 million Jews were killed or expelled. Bartana's idea was to invite the Jewish community to come back to the very place, which – from the historical perspective – in fact also belongs to them. She made the series of movies *...and Europe will be stunned* (including films: *Zamach/Assasination*, *Wall and Tower*, *Mary Koszmary/Nightmares*), presenting this imagined moment for which she even appointed a leader of the movement: Sławek Sierakowski, the chief editor of the *Krytyka Polityczna* (a left-wing Polish periodical). In the main scene of the *Mary Koszmary/Nightmares* Sławek Sierakowski is giving a speech inviting Jews to come back to Poland. Bartana's project inspired me and encouraged to build on her idea and create a situation of continuation and support for this movement in order to give a chance for the next step. For me, it was also important that this particular work represented Poland in the Polish pavilion during Venice Biennale in 2011 – Israeli artist instead of Polish artist was presenting her artwork in the national pavilion. I regarded it as an incorporation of the idea of the movement presented in the movie – Jews coming back to the country of their origin, Polish diaspora. Because

that's her idea, that Jews live in a diaspora in the Middle East. It is, in fact, a very complex idea. She accepted proposal of continuity and suggested that we should organize a congress, which could take place in theater in Berlin. Bartana invited spectators and organized a round table, which enabled people to introduce their own ideas and proposals – sometimes radically political – and to discuss it with the rest of the members of this gathering. So, approach to the idea of Jewish comeback was on this way strongly politicized. Yael Bartana herself joined the Congress wearing a t-shirt with the logo of the movement: JRMIP. The Congress lasted three days, and people were talking, discussing, presenting their opinions and asking questions.

Draftsmen's Congress, Paweł Althamer, 2012

Many of the projects of 7th BB were based on public meetings and collective actions. Basically, I wanted to offer a social approach to art. My aim was to offer the groups of people the possibility of creating a kind of temporary communities, to meet and act collectively. Another example of such an approach was a project by Paweł Althamer, called *Draftsmen's Congress* (Ill. 3). It took place during 7th BB in St. Elisabeth church in Berlin. Actually, this space has been desacralized and does not serve as a church anymore. It has been rented to us by the community which takes care of this building and protects it. We have built a 5 meters high wall inside the church. The floor had been covered with white boards and people were invited to draw and paint everywhere around them – also on the floor. Many layers of paintings and drawings covered the walls. I perceive this action as a very democratic situation in which people were allowed to criticize, sometimes demolish, sometimes develop the artworks, drawings and paintings made by the others before them. The walls became a subject of constant modification – it was a kaleidoscope of forms, shapes and colours. The invitation to this event in a form of the big banner was painted by Paweł Althamer, and it was hung on the fence surrounding the ex-church. The final act of this performance took place at the very end of the Congress, when all white boards had been cut into pieces and given to the people in yet another democratic gesture as it had been designed by people; and then it was given to the people, free of charge. It was an act of creating a free art for everyone who was interested.

Happy New Fear, Mario Lombardo, 2012

Another, slightly less known action, based on drawings, was performed by Mario Lombardo and his office. Mario Lombardo is a designer, working



III. 3: 7th Biennale Berlin: Paweł Althamer. *Draftsmen Congress*, 2012.
Photo: Marcin Kaliński.

on book and journal designs, posters, etc. He was responsible for designing the BB logo. It consisted of white number 7 inscribed in the black circle. He also designed the book accompanying the exhibition as well as invitations and posters. He additionally hit upon the idea to paint shops and markets windows as well as windows in abandoned houses in Berlin. This action that actually took place, bore the title *Happy New Fear*, and in fact had a power of prophecy as we are now experiencing fears growing nowadays around the world and in Europe. On the one hand, it is frightening, but on the other – there is a jolt of hope in it. His action is based on collective memory of the German citizens, reminding of the pogrom in 1938 called the *Kristallnacht*, during which Jewish temples, shops as well as private house have been demolished and marked with a Star of David and anti-Semitic slogans. It was the first step of exclusion of Jewish citizens of Germany, by forcefully placing brutal labels on the property of the “others,” which subsequently ended by making labels on their bodies in ghettos and concentration camps. Lombardo “used” this memory to talk about the new fears in the context of the former ones.

New World Summit, Jonas Staal, 2012

Another congress that took place during the Biennale was called *New World Summit* and was proposed by Dutch artist – Jonas Staal. The main idea behind this initiative was to organize a meeting of representatives of the so-called terrorist organizations. It was a result of artist's disagreement with the politics of exclusion performed by different states and in contrary to these politics. He invited representatives of real terrorist organizations to take part in this project, thus exposing a great risk on his undertaking. The political risk was huge and even lawyers had to be involved in order to judge whether it should and could be done or not. Finally we found out that there were diplomatic channels existing between governments and terrorist organizations and there were people who performed a role of ambassadors of these organizations. They were free and they could meet representatives of different states and even discuss issues. So, this was a meeting with *those* people, who had a mandate to represent unacceptable bodies. Due to Staal that kind of exclusion to label certain organizations as “terrorist” is often used as political step. Members of these organizations – blamed for conducting terrorist activity – are no longer protected by human rights. This step was a risky step, but also created a space for democratic debate, a kind of parliament. The physical structure of the inner reminded a form of parliament too: a round table at which people do not take their positions in hierarchical way, but rather present their equality. Spectators were also allowed to present their opinions as well as to ask questions. Moreover, after closing this project Jonas Staal remains involved in building such spaces. However, not for representatives of terrorist organizations anymore, but for different communities in different countries.

Self#governing, Marina Naprushkina, 2012

Another example of curatorial strategy based on support of a certain social activity performed by an artist, was a publication of a newspaper prepared by Belorussian who lives in Berlin: Marina Naprushkina. The paper was also designed to be distributed in Belarus. The title of this work was *Self#governing*. I met Marina and she told me about her project and her activity, and I proposed her to design and publish the next issue of this magazine. She accepted my offer, developed one of the issues as well as a presentation during the exhibition which took place in Kunst-Werke in Berlin. We have also created a Western version of the magazine, for Western spectators and readers, while there was also Belarussian version existing, meant for Belarussian citizens. In this issue of the magazine Naprushkina presented her vision – rather a fantasy, even if it seemed to be very realistic – of the future

of Belarus. Through this act she also made political proposal. According to Naprushkina people in Belarus do not want to change the situation because they consume perverted profits out of the current situation. So, she made a complex proposal in which people do not loose what they have but they in fact create access to wider profits. Unfortunately, her prophesy or, rather, wishes have not been fulfilled. It remained a phantasy about alternative future of this certain country.

Institute for Human Activities, Renzo Martens, , 2012

The next example of the curatorial strategy I would like to present was based on the idea continuing a certain artistic idea proposed by certain artist. Similar to what we have done with Yeal Bartana's project we offered a continuity to another artist – a Dutch artist Renzo Martens. He took part in the 6th BB presenting a movie about poverty. In this film, he presented his view on how poverty creates huge profits for the Western societies. The best example were photographic agencies, who collect photographs of children suffering from hunger, raped women and killed people and sell these photographs to the Western newspapers thus making profits. I considered this approach presented by him on the 6th BB very interesting, and I wanted to see how it could be continued during the next edition. I felt that the curatorial team should offer the artist an opportunity to continue, to make the next step in his career, in his artistic development.

For the 7th Biennale Martens proposed the project called *Institute for Human Activities*. It was based on the idea of building a small village in Congo, the country where people live and work on plantations. The plantations produce goods, which are to be consumed in the West. People working on these plantations suffer from extreme poverty. His aim, however, was not to do something exactly for these people. Instead of it he wanted to build a village with a residency program and invite artists from Western countries to be involved in artistic creativity – make paintings, sculptures, make movies on the spot. Martens said: “I can not present mechanisms of exploitation of plantation's workers, but I can show perversions of my artistic world” – meaning that he is also able to make profits out of it using his position as an artist. Martens wanted to emphasize that poverty is exactly something what creates profits. He had the idea of increasing the salaries of the people working on plantations from about 3\$ per month up to 5\$ during a few years. In this sense the project has not been completed, and I do not know the ultimate result, it seems as it is still a work in progress. As far as I know, people from the plantation started to make sculpture out of chocolate and also built a center. The artist also moved there with his family.



Ill. 4: 7th Berlin Biennale: opening of the *Roma and Sinti Memorial in Berlin* designed by Dani Karavan; memorial was open because of the pressure made by Roma curator and activist Timea Junghaus and Romani Elders, 2012. Photo: Zofia Waślicka.

Sinti and Roma Memorial, Timea Junghaus, 2012

Probably the most ingenuous but nonetheless very interesting project of the Biennial was an unfinished Monument of Roma and Sinti Murdered During the Holocaust (Ill. 4) designed by the Israeli artist Dani Karavan. The monument was placed in one of the Berlin's parks, very close to Reichstag. Its construction started before the Biennale and was not actually meant to be part of it. But since it was not finished and urged by a Roma curator living in Budapest (Hungary) – Timea Junghaus – we decided to put the construction process forward. Junghaus created a society consisting mostly of very influential Roma members and also invited Dani Karavan. Additionally, she organized a few public actions trying to push the Berlin administration and even Bundestag to complete the monument. And something that seemed to be impossible, came true – at the end of 2012, the construction was complete, and the monument had been unveiled in the presence of officials including Angela Merkel. At the beginning I named this project naïve, because of this quite astonishing course of things – frankly I am still not sure how did it happen that the monument came into existence – whether



III. 5: 7th Biennale Berlin: Łukasz Surowiec. *Berlin-Birkenau*, 2012. Photo: Marta Górnicka.

it was us – the BB, or Timea made it, or was it simply a mixture of different circumstances which are difficult to define. However, from my point of view, the most important was the process and the motivation of Timea. She emphasized that there are still many attacks and acts of violence on Roma people around Europe, because they are often perceived as citizens less worthy, not different to how they were treated during the Nazi times. So she wanted to show that Roma people are worthy to have a monument, especially the one commemorating their victims. By introducing this object in the public area of Berlin both Timea and the Roma community expected a shift, a kind of visible change in the situation of Roma people in Europe.

***Berlin-Birkenau*, Łukasz Surowiec, 2012**

The project I will elaborate on now, has been described by some journalists as kitschy or even stupid. It was made by Polish artist Łukasz Surowiec, who collected seeds of birches from around the Auschwitz Concentration Camp and planted them again, letting them grow in new areas. He also took those birches to Berlin and planted them in many locations of the city, he

explained it as his way of commemorating the victims of the Nazi regime. Plants were even offered to the Berlin citizens to pick it up and take care of it – to let it grow (Ill. 5). Many people made it.

This project developed in an interesting way. The director of the Bergen-Belsen museum situated on the site of the former camp asked the organizers of the BB for donation about 20 of those trees in order to plant it on the area of the camp. There are no barracks, no buildings, only the edge of the camp is marked by trees. The aim of the director was to complete this fence of trees with those planted by Surowiec in places where there were gaps. These plants from Auschwitz are now growing in Bergen-Belsen and in Berlin.

PM 2011, Teresa Margolles, 2011

As the most artistic project of the Biennale, I consider the work by Mexican artist – Teresa Margolles. She created a wall of images, framed, and perfectly hanged in this nice order. She found out that there is a magazine published in Mexico, called *PM*, which combines semi-porn, erotic photos with the images of corps of people who are being killed by Mexico Mafia every day – and publishes it on the cover page. The artist collected successive issues day by day, thus gaining also the documentation on victims of the drug mafia. It was the most artistic, but also the most terrifying of the projects reflecting a specific approach of the artist towards the reality.

Berlin Biennale Press Agency, Tomáš Rafa, 2012

We also invited Tomáš Rafa, an artist and journalist from Slovakia, who has devoted his life to documenting different political events around Europe. He focused on right-wing marches of radical activists thus documenting a growing nationalism and xenophobia around Europe. Then he published his movies on the internet. We presented his films in a big space along with documents made by different activists from all over the world who documented political situation in their countries.

Presence of the Members of the Occupy Social Movement During BB7, 2012

The last Biennale activity I would like to present here is neither a project nor a work of art. It was rather an invitation, and these are exactly the results of this invitation that I would like to show. It was probably one of the most controversial events during the 7th Berlin Biennale. It was associated with

big social movements, such as *Occupy Wall Street*, *M-15/Indignados*, etc. These movements involved many people around the world, united by a wish to create an alternative politics and perhaps alternative social reality without using violence. They created an alternative non-violent way of public debate. It was probably the first time in my life when I could discuss different issues with people without hurting anybody and nobody hurting me. It was absolutely fantastic. We decided to invite people to take part in those activities at the BB and to offer them a platform for discussion, approaching viewers as well as to have a quiet time to think and to make a step forward. We also travelled to Barcelona, Madrid and Paris, trying to create links, and to approach those people in order to convince them that they should come to Berlin and join the Biennale. And they joined. Unfortunately, the opinions presented by the mass media were not positive, they accused us of “exhibiting people,” calling our project “a human Zoo.” Obviously, it was not my goal to transform gallery’s place into a human zoo. My intention was rather to create a space for an alternative way of debating and discussing issues.

The debate started with the main press conference of the BB7. The social activists approached us (me and Gaby Horn, the director of BB) and said that they want to conduct a press conference of the BB. They wanted to “design” the space and they did – they designed it into a round table. Thus, instead of the hierarchy, a new kind of an open space had been created manifesting the equality of all participants: journalists, activists and employees of the Biennale. It started with some manifestos and continued with the discussion with journalists. They also designed additional space where they were holding meetings and where they also slept during the Biennale. This big space on the ground floor became the most prominent space of Kunst-Werke. It represented the aesthetics of the social movements which was in fact a free style of presentation. They continued meetings, discussions, etc. There is a film which documents the participation of representatives of these social movements. At the end of the day, they declared that both me and Joanna Warsza, who was my co-curator, are not curators anymore, but rather former curators. So we lost power, in fact. This process of losing power was very painful for me, but at the same time very interesting. It was a kind of BB7 conclusion.

Monika Leisch-Kiesl

Contemporary Art Between “East” and “West”: Signs • Images • Codes

Translated from German by Mikołaj Gołubiewski

Abstract: Thoroughly oriented towards visual science and semiotics, Monika Leisch-Kiesl’s chapter takes us into the current debates of global art history and postcolonial studies. For a second time, this time virtually, she visits selected major international exhibitions of 2017, specifically the 57th Venice Biennale and *documenta 14* in Kassel, to ask about the “Polish” artists available there. She analyzes selected works along the lines of the notions “Signs • Images • Codes” developed in her 2016 monograph *ZeichenSetzung | BildWahrnehmung* and shows how these concepts allow us to encounter different societies and cultures, which gives justice to both the feeling of proximity and the experience of Otherness.

Keywords: Global art history, postcolonial studies, Venice Biennale, *documenta* Kassel, Polish artists, otherness, semiotics

An Approach

I am not an expert on Polish art. Neither am I an expert in art history nor the avant-garde, nor contemporary art. I approach the complex and heterogeneous field of artistic creation in Poland and among Polish artists as a seeker and learner. Of course, such an approach stands in the midst of debates about a “Global Art History” or the question of “art in inter- and trans-cultural contexts.” This is a firm research focus of our university, the Catholic Private University Linz, which gives special place to the question of forms of communication of art in/from Eastern/Central Europe.¹ The interest of a non-Pole, specifically an Austrian, in Polish art must unavoidably lead

1 For an overview of the activities of the Faculty of Philosophy and Art History of the Private Catholic University Linz in the field of “Global Art History,” see ku-linz.at/kunstwissenschaft/forschung/global-art-history, with links to two lecture series in *Global Art History*, the first from winter semester 2015/2016, the second from winter semester 2017/2018; the third one from winter semester 2019/2020 is focused on Central and Eastern European contemporary art historical narratives. The results of the first series of events were published in the book edited by Julia Allerstorfer and Monika Leisch-Kiesl, *Global Art History. Transkulturelle Verortungen von Kunst und Kunstwissenschaft* (Linzer Beiträge

to the awareness of the questions and theoretical approaches of postcolonial studies.² Experiences of both closeness and strangeness characterize every such encounter between countries and cultures. The domination of the West and associated imperial structures are deeply embedded in our patterns of perception, thought, and action.

One may consider such a biography of an art historian as mine, with different facets, as exemplary of many researchers from Western/Central Europe. I have biographical roots in Hungary, friendly contacts with Bulgaria, whereas my interest in Poland developed not least from its current political situation. Moreover, I notice that I know very little about Poland from my history lessons from the 1970s in Linz and that I was never explicitly involved with this region in the course of my art history studies in mid-1990s Munich. There are but traces of a confrontation with Eastern/Central Europe in my teaching since the 2000s. For example, together with a Croatian colleague, I supervised a dissertation on Croatian art of the 20th century.³ Since 2011, my lecture *Art History II (1800–Today)*, “Focus 3: Avant-Gardes in Central Europe,” glimpses at the situation in Eastern/Central Europe with a focus on the centers in Poznań, Kraków, Warszawa, and Łódź.⁴ I offer courses in *Art Theory and Esthetics I and II*, and since 2017 a lecture on *Art Theory and Esthetics III*, which deepens the theories and discourses of the twentieth and twenty-first century. One of its five themes presents contributions from Eastern/Central Europe and Russia. I am currently in the process of establishing contacts with colleagues from Polish universities and cultural institutions. Translation is the constant companion and challenge in all of these initiatives, and not only due to Europe’s enormous linguistic diversity.

An expectation or one of my experiences from the study of art history and contemporary art is that dealing with the art of a country generally helps to see and understand “it” – the country’s political, cultural, and ideological

zur Kunstwissenschaft und Philosophie 8, Bielefeld: transcript, 2017). The volume contains contributions in both German and English, and the abstracts are bilingual.

- 2 For an introduction to the current theoretical debate, see the recent publication by Julia Allerstorfer, “The West and the Rest? De- und postkoloniale Perspektiven auf Kunst und Kunstgeschichte(n),” in: eds. Allerstorfer, Leisch-Kiesl, *Global Art History*, 2017, pp. 29–46. The especially interesting approaches are those by Monica Juneja and Christian Kravagna. Monica Juneja, *Can Art History be Made Global? A Discipline in Transition* (to be published in 2018); Christian Kravagna, *Transmoderne. Eine Kunstgeschichte des Kontakts* (Berlin: Polypen, 2017).
- 3 Božo Raič, *Kroatische Kunst in den neunziger Jahren des 20. Jahrhunderts. Malerei und Neue Medien* (Linz, 2002).
- 4 Cf. Timothy O. Benson, Monika Król, *!Avantgarden! in Mitteleuropa 1910–1930*, exhibition in Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Haus der Kunst München, and Martin-Gropius-Bau (Berlin, Leipzig 2002/2003).

developments – in a subtler manner. Simultaneously, dealing with “art” involves understanding things and moments that we could not learn from history books and media coverage. My contribution to the project gathering experts in the histories of Polish art will be to employ fundamental reflections in visual studies to question the meaning and relevance of images (of art) – among others – in inter- and transcultural discourse. In doing so, I position my reflections in visual studies in the notion of “learning” or “forgetting” [Lernen bzw. Ver/Lernen]. As a regular visitor to biennials and the *documenta*, I obviously encounter contemporary art from Eastern/Central Europe, not only from Poland. What do I learn and recognize from reflecting on such works? My explanations will first take us on a tour of two of these major exhibitions from the key events of 2017: the Venice Biennale and *documenta 14*. In the course of this guided tour, I will explain the ways of “learning/forgetting” and with art as explained by the theorems of “signs”, “images”, “codes”: notions that I thoroughly discussed in my most recent study.⁵

“Polish Art” at the 57th Venice Biennale and *documenta 14* in Kassel

The difficulty of naming a presence of “Polish art” at last year’s major exhibitions already begins with a definition of the term “Polish art,” which is why I prefer the notion “artistic works from Poland.” But even this characterization presents problems. On the one hand, its national borders shifted several times during the twentieth century. On the other hand, many artists born in the region of Poland lived and continue to live in different art centers in Europe and beyond or witnessed important stages of their artistic career in cities outside of Poland. In my search for clues, I therefore traverse shaky grounds and, as it were, constantly hop along their borders to and fro.

The Venice Biennale

The obvious thing to do is to head straight for the Polish Pavilion. Since its founding in 1895, the Venice Biennale based on the concept of a “world exhibition” with national curators. That is, the Biennale proposes itself as a “show of countries” with the aim of informing each other. From its very

5 Cf. Monika Leisch-Kiesl, *ZeichenSetzung I BildWahrnehmung. Toba Khedoori: Gezeichnete Malerei* (Wien: Verlag für moderne Kunst, 2016). Parts of this book are translated into English under the title *Evoking a Sign | Perceiving an Image. Toba Khedoori: Drawn Painting*, © 2018, available online: www.leisch-kiesl.com.

beginnings, the Polish pavilion held a prominent position here. However, I will begin my tour with the so-called international exhibition curated by the Frenchwoman Kristine Marcel under the slogan “Viva Arte Viva”. Among the total of 120 participants, we find a number of Central and Eastern Europeans, including two from Poland: Agnieszka Polska (born 1985 in Lublin, lives and works in Berlin) and Alicja Kwade (born 1979 in Katowice, lives and works in Berlin). Alicja Kwade is a conceptual artist of international renown who recently exhibited at Haus Konstruktiv in Zurich. Kwade appeared with two works at the Biennale. *WeltenLinie* is a walk-in mirror installation in the Venetian Arsenal while *Pars pro Toto* offers a site-specific installation of thirteen stone globes with outdoor sound, which seemed to both condense and fortify the gravel floor, the surface of the channel’s waters, and the surrounding architecture of the Arsenale. While we may perceive Kwade’s works as a continuation of the constructivist tendencies of the Polish avant-garde, Agnieszka Polska directly focused her video *Sensitization to Color* (2009; ill. 1,2) in the Pavilion of Artists and Books on a fragment of Polish art history.⁶ The winner of the 2017 Nationalgalerie Berlin Prize for her ten-minute-long animated film *What the Sun Has Seen*, Polska pays with her Venetian film a grayscale cinematic homage to the artist Włodzimierz Borowski, born in 1930 in Kurów and deceased in Warsaw in 2008. “Włodzimierz Borowski,” as the site Culture.pl explains, “was one of the artists whose work reflects the major changes in Polish avant-garde art from the 1950s until the end of the 1970s.”⁷

Let us move on to the Polish Pavilion, curated by Barbara Piwowarska, an art historian and freelance curator who works primarily in Warsaw.⁸ Piwowarska invited the American filmmaker and photographer Sharon Lockhart to perform in the pavilion. Sharon Lockhart (born 1964 in Norwood, Massachusetts, lives and works in Los Angeles) is a photographer and filmmaker who quietly observes and documents social situations in different countries and continents. Lockhart often shows children and adolescents, snapshots from photo albums, but also everyday situations such as kitchen facilities or street situations. We should mention her work that dealt with Poland already in 2009. In *Podwórka* [Backyards], Lockhart describes the backyards of Łódź as children’s playgrounds.⁹ The title of her biennial presentation *Little Review* (Ill. 3,4) was inspired by the popular eponymous children’s supplement *Mały Przegląd* of the (Jewish) newspaper

6 The work is available at cagrp.org/view/venice2017/index.php?id=15984.

7 culture.pl/en/artist/wlodzimierz-borowski.

8 Cf. curatorsintl.org/collaborators/barbara_piwowarska.

9 Cf. www.lockhartstudio.com/index.php?films/podworka/.

Nasz Przegląd [Our Review], published between 1923 and 1939, the year of the German invasion of Poland.

Already this brief insight hints to the links between “East” and “West” in the contemporary art world. For instance, A French curator links two Polish works into one – internationally oriented – exhibition, while a Polish curator employs for the Polish Pavilion an American artist, who presents a work about Polish cultural and media history.

documenta Kassel

Adam Szymczyk, the artistic director of *documenta 14*, has received plenty of commentary. A native Pole, Szymczyk studied art history in Warsaw, completed a curator education in Amsterdam, in 2003–2014 he was the director of Kunsthalle Basel, and in 2017 he was named the artistic director of *documenta 14*, which he introduced with the slogan “Learning from Athens”. And adequately, as its first part happened in Athens. What was the presence of “Polish” artists at this rare event? The visitors lively debated the more spectacular works, such as *Realism* by Artur Żmijewski, which is a six-channel digital video installation in black and white that allowed men that lost their legs in amputation to demonstrate how they cope with their everyday difficulties. Another popular piece was the photo tableau *Real Nazis* by Piotr Uklański shown in the Neue Galerie, which confronts the viewer with portrait photos (film stills) of mostly well-known personalities of real and semi-real (?) Nazis. Only a few rooms further, spanning over several spaces, we saw *Tumeurs* made by Alina Szapocznikow in 1970, a sculptural installation consisting of objects made of polyester resin and glass fiber mixed with photographs. Born in Kalisz, Poland, in 1926 and deceased in Paris in 1973, Szapocznikow is difficult to classify: she spent her youth in concentration camps, studied art in Prague and Paris, then returned to Poland, and finally died in France. Her works displayed at the *documenta* are a sculptural examination of her own disease of breast cancer. In the immediate vicinity of these shocking sculptures, we saw drawings by Wróblewski and Strzemiński, which – at first – seemed much quieter and more restrained. However, I will tend to them more as they develop my reflections on the “learning/forgetting” of art. The plaques under these works repeatedly mentioned “a Polish artist,” as was in the case of Andrzej Wróblewski (born 1927 in Vilnius, died in 1957 in the Tatras), characterized as follows: “in a departure from the patterns of Polish colorism, Wróblewski developed his own individual imagery.” The exhibition showed two series on paper, *Mourning News* from 1953, all of which allude to disasters and civil unrest – one to a flooding in the Netherlands – and another to street scenes from the People’s Republic of Poland, “in which

everything comes to a standstill, as the news of Stalin's death appear on March 5, 1953." Another work was by Władysław Strzemiński (born 1893 in Minsk, died 1952 in Łódź) described as "an important representative of the Polish avant-garde" and further informed the viewer about his wounds received in the First World War, later his studies in Russia, and then about his emigration (?) in the early 1920s with his wife to Poland, finally about his stay during the Second World War in Łódź, where he witnessed mass deportations and the atrocities of the German occupation. We naturally assume that the graphite drawings from the 1940 series *Deportations* (Ill. 5,6) reflect these experiences.

What can we learn from this brief presentation about the relations between "East" and "West" in the contemporary art world? *documenta* is no "world exhibition" like the Venice Biennale but an international/global exhibition against the background of the current situation of the world. If Biennale is more of an art show, *documenta* is a statement that uses the means of art. Looking at *documenta 14* as a whole, we clearly notice that it was a political statement spanning a complex East–West and North–South network across the globe. We may thus succinctly answer the question about the role of Poland in this network. A Polish, internationally active curator brings to a worldwide exhibition, among many others, some works of Polish artists, who actively create in the present, as well as those who operated in the 1940s, 1950s, and 1970s.

The "Learning/Forgetting" of Art: "Signs" – "Images" – "Codes"

It is well known that Adam Szymczyk has called for "learning/forgetting" [Ver/Lernen] in the best sense of the word. How should we imagine the required cultural technique? I shaped this learning/forgetting from exhibition to exhibition for myself into the following image. I had the impression that I should constantly setup my mind anew to correctly see and read things. Hence, I apply the requirement of "learning/forgetting" to both events – the Venice Biennale and *documenta 14* – and that with the focus on "Polish" contributions.

I had the impression that almost all the works address "remembering:" a call for remembering the Polish art and media history by Agnieszka Polska and Sharon Lockhart; a remembering of the Nazi era by Piotr Uklański, of the Holocaust by Alina Szapocznikow, of war mutilation by Artur Żmijewski, a documentary remembering of a natural disaster or a political tremor by Andrzej Wróblewski, and a withdrawal of remembering by Władysław Strzemiński.

Do I "understand" what they want to remember? Yes and no.

“Yes,” these works affect me in a fundamental way regarding the perception of art. Therefore, I will initially reflect on them as “images.” And “no,” I do not know many things. Works like the ones mentioned here are partly based on extensive research; conversely, this results in the frequently voiced reproach that such works are too intellectual. This is the place, in which we need “codes” to help us. Finally, under the concept of “signs,” I will try to show how works of art awaken the “gaze” of the beholder.

Images

If I describe the works as “images,” then I would first describe the phenomena of sensory perception based on the theory of phenomenology. All people make such perceptions more or less in the same way, whereby they use them differently and link with them different experiences.

In the example of Agnieszka Polska, I would describe the cinematic surface of black and white, the sound of a male voice (initially incomprehensible to all unfamiliar with Polish), a calm rhythm of filmed photographs, fade-outs, the movement through exhibition spaces captured by the hand-held camera, and close-ups. Everyone associates certain experiences and feelings with these elements, regardless of their cultural background.

If I describe the works as “images,” then in the case of Sharon Lockhart I would describe the calm mode of observation, the skilfully staged and perfectly crafted photographs, and the postures or movements of the youth presented as if in slow-motion. Thence, a hermetic situation arises from the perfection of these images, initially captivating, but we quickly become irritated by the uncertainty whether we have already understood everything...

If I describe the works as “images,” in the case of Artur Żmijewski I would describe a spatial situation that places viewers in a position in which they can never survey everything at the same time, thereby overstraining and irritating them; thus, I describe the individual scenes that create a rather unpleasant intimacy that shock and cause disgust on the one hand, while, on the other hand, touch almost tenderly. These scenes awake in all visitors associations and memories of injuries, wars, athletic training, or the banalities of everyday life.

If I describe the works as “images,” in the case of Piotr Uklański I would first describe the color effect of the photo tableau, then the confrontation with sometimes unpleasantly familiar faces, mixed with other, often unknown; I describe how to think about what possibly – indeed – connects them. And we suddenly find ourselves in a situation in which we do not know whether we want to solve the riddle or not.

If I describe the works as “images,” in the case of Alina Szapocznikow I would describe the dirty, iridescent surface, the light-pink to brown-gray

coloring, the amorphous monsters, the intrusive and simultaneously labile presence of the objects that also cast shadows. They may stir resistance: Do I really have to watch this in the atmosphere of the exhibition, in which I just delved into the reading of drawings?

When I describe the works as “images,” in the case of Andrzej Wróblewski I describe the contrast of black/gray, on the one hand, and cream/ocher, on the other, the rough paintbrush artworks, the line of waiting people who, in their seriousness, do not lack a certain element of the comic. Hence, we get the impression of a reportage of unknown content, but general enough that they could be easily transferred to more familiar cases.

When I describe the works as “images,” in the case of Władysław Strzemiński I describe the fragile but equally sure line, the wavy lines that shape the contours, I recognize or only guess human shapes – and a hunch that all the figure fragments are figures of people’s backs...

Images influence and create a specific situation of attention. The examination of the works, possibly combined with even sketchy hints, put recipients in a certain mood, a special condition of concentration, let them experience and evoke memories, awaken associations, gain insights about... What do I say now? What do they evoke? They appear different yet somehow connected. Polish art and media history, the fate of Poland, persecution and war, illness and mutilation, refugees... In short, the examination of art evokes sensations, forms experiences, gives knowledge, which can only be won as/in the “image.”

Simultaneously, as an art scientist and philosopher who grew up in Western and Central Europe (in the German-speaking area), I do not “understand” much. This is the point in which, according to the established terminology, what comes into play are “codes.”

Codes

Based on semiotics, the notion of “codes” allows us to explain and reflect on the social and cultural contextualization of art production and reception. With their own prior knowledge, all visitors will understand some codes without problems (and without reflection), but not many. In this point, they must inform themselves. Their willingness to do this varies depending on the quality of the artistic work and the disposition of the respective visitor, as shown by spontaneously expressed and medially disseminated critiques of the exhibition.

For example, in the case of Agnieszka Polska I understand that it must be the art of the 1940s and 1950s, while I suspect an Eastern European work on the basis of the sound of the language, references to fashion, and the atmosphere of the time. I have not yet known Włodzimierz Borowski – I read

about him from the English subtitles – and might be curious to find out more about this artist.

In the text accompanying the Sharon Lockhart’s presentation in the Polish Pavilion, we learn that: “The name of the project by Sharon Lockhart refers to *Mały Przegląd* [Little Review], a historical newspaper supplement to the popular magazine *Nasz Przegląd* [Our Review], written and edited entirely by children. *Mały Przegląd* was founded by Janusz Korczak – a prominent pedagogue and writer with a revolutionary approach to the issue of children’s rights and the need to listen to their voice, which was published in 1923–1939. It featured sections on politics, sports, and culture, written by children functioning as correspondents from all over Poland. The children were given a chance to present their broad knowledge and accurate observation on the world as well as prove their unique receptivity.” This description is combined with the large-format photographs of young people, gathered over an open magazine. But the explanation helps to connect the reading of the young people with an important chapter of Polish or Polish-Jewish/Jewish-Polish self-understanding. On the basis of this, visitors may be motivated to learn about the media landscape and the fate of Poland in the 1930s (and beyond).

Let us briefly address the “codes” of further works. The explanatory text under Żmijewski’s work refers to the Chechen war; by Alina Szapocznikow we read about concentration camps; while Piotr Ukłański is accompanied by the obvious and possibly secret machinations of the Nazi regime. The same applies to the graphic works by Andrzej Wróblewski and Władysław Strzemiński. The analysis of the codes relevant for the presented works helps to understand intellectually the thematic contents and, thus, enables a social and cultural contextualization of the works, which are initially considered more intuitively.

Signs

The notion of the “sign,” which is again borrowed from semiotics, more precisely the notion of “evoking a sign” [ZeichenSetzung] extended by phenomenological ideas, enables me to clarify the question of how “images”/“artworks” gain individual and social relevance. An image, particularly a drawing, has a genuine openness. An image (of art) does not only “work;” it is not just located in a complex field of “codes;” it “communicates” with its viewers. What does that mean? The punch line surfaces from two of the abovementioned works.

Let us choose a photograph from Sharon Lockhart’s serially structured work *Mały Przegląd*. At first, viewers feel like they are in a theatrically charged situation; they recognize reading and possibly associate it with the

reading room of a library. But then there is also the situation of staging – for whom? – and in the selected work viewers may notice the look of one of the young people from the picture. Thus, what viewers initially observe from a certain distance becomes a situation of the Other. This look is a challenge.

A thought by Gilles Deleuze helps to characterize this elusive challenge in the encounter with art. In a small book *Proust et les signes* [Proust and the Signs, 1964],¹⁰ Deleuze attempts to read Marcel Proust's *À la recherche du temps perdu* [In Search of Lost Time] with the notion of the sign. Therefore, everything is a sign, and Deleuze distinguishes four types of signs: social signs, signs of love, sensory signs, and signs of art. They stimulate and regulate the entire social life. I see the point of Deleuze's/Proust's understanding of signs in the fact that he does not ask about the origin, but rather about the effect of the signs. Signs influence the individual, which keeps individual and social life going. For our considerations in this chapter, the most revealing type of sign is not that of art – as one might assume – but rather the third type: the sensory signs. This type entails an intense sensory experience, which we do not immediately understand but feel like an imperative that allows us to seek meaning. This is what I wanted to show with the above examples: the entanglement of a sensory experience in the image and the appeal for a confrontation in the realm of signs that leads further and stimulates our cognitive capacity more. I call this shift from perception to thought, or the answer to this appeal, “evoking a sign.”

To allow Gilles Deleuze speak: “The *leitmotif* of Time regained is the word “force”: impressions that force us to look, encounters that force us to interpret, expressions that force us to think.”¹¹ He points to a genuine productivity of reading signs. “To think,” continues Deleuze, “is always to interpret – to explicate, to develop, to decipher, to translate a sign.”¹²

Less obvious, but equally effective, is this appellative quality of the “sign” in graphic art. Let us recall Władysław Strzemiński's *Deportations* again. Their strength lies precisely in their fragility; in the yellowed paper; in their equally steady yet irritated stroke; in the frayed and fringed outline; in the shaky signature. Even without the historical reference, one gets the impression of a withdrawal, a farewell, a fading of what was left behind and never noticed again. The knowledge of the historical circumstances charges these works with content, seriousness, and urgency. And yet they are not

10 Gilles Deleuze, *Proust and Signs. The Complete Text* (Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 2000); French original: *Proust et les signes*, 1964.

11 Deleuze, *Proust and Signs*, p. 95.

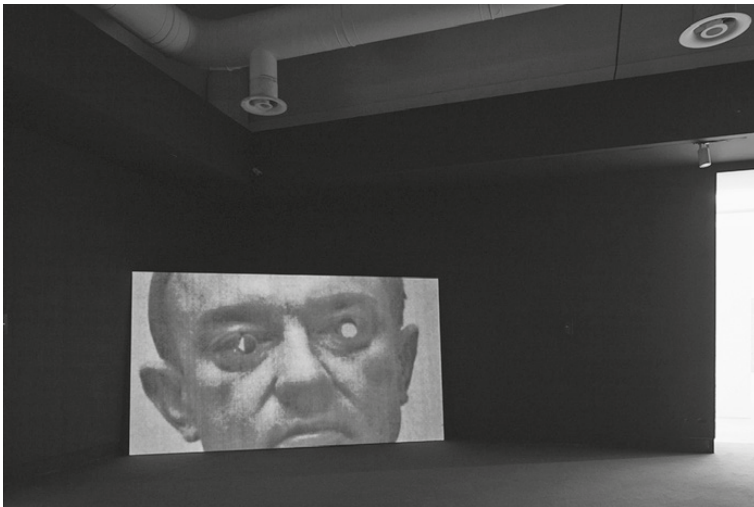
12 Deleuze, *Proust and Signs*, p. 97.

spellbound by this unique historical event. It is precisely in their unpretentious appearance that they are open to a continuation and further narrative.

Drawings touch us with an authentic manner, often in their withdrawal, in what they do not show, and – they let us think.

Signs • Images • Codes Between “East” and “West”

I argue that the examination of works of art from even the lesser-known cultures and societies along the lines of “image,” “code,” and “sign” or “evoking a sign” helps us access a deeper reflection. Moreover, it enables the perception of what is closest to us, the intuitive understanding in the observation of images, and the experience of the Other via the irritation that we do not understand the language(s), as well as the thematization of historical and political contexts. The notion of “evoking a sign” combines the – ultimately theoretically incomprehensible – impact of art and its cognitive output as an individual and collective relevance.



III. 1: Agnieszka Polska. *Sensitization to Colour/Uczulanie na kolor*, 2009, video, 5'02", 57th Venice Biennale, *Viva Arte Viva*, Pavilion of Artists and Books, 2017. Photos: Francesco Galli, Images courtesy of Venice Biennale. Video available at: <http://cagrp.org/view/venice2017/index.php?id=15984>. Video © the artist and courtesy of ŻAK | BRANICKA, Berlin.



III. 2: Agnieszka Polska. *Sensitization to Colour/Uczulanie na kolor*, 2009, video, 5'02", detail <https://art-collection-telekom.com/de/artwork/agnieszka-polska/three-videos-narration-sensitization-colour>.



III. 3: Sharon Lockhart. *Little Review*, 2017, 57th Venice Biennale, Giardini, Polish Pavillon, detail: <http://labiennale.art.pl/en/wystawy/little-review/>. Courtesy: Polish Pavilion. Photo: Bartosz Górka.



Ill. 4: Sharon Lockhart, *Today in Politics, Our Review, No 167 (8863)*, June 16, 1939, National Library of Poland, Warsaw, February 3, 2017, framed chromogenic print, 161,3 x 200,7 cm. Image: Courtesy of the artist, Gladstone Gallery, New York and Brussels, neugerriemschneider, Berlin, and Zachęta – National Gallery of Art, Warsaw.



Ill. 5: Władysław Strzemiński. *Deportations*, 1940, graphite on paper, *documenta 14*, Kassel, Neue Galerie. Photo: Monika Leisch-Kiesel.



Ill. 6: Detail: Władysław Strzemiński. *At the sidewalk*, from the series *Deportations*, 1940, graphite on paper *documenta 14*, Kassel, Neue Galerie. Photo: Monika Leisch-Kiesl.

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Justyna Balisz

Foreign Relatives: How German Is Polish Post-War Expressionism¹

Abstract: This paper illuminates the historical and cultural conditions of the reception of expressionist idiom in Poland in the period 1945–1989. It deals with two generations of Polish artists whose work was associated by critics and art historians with Expressionism. The first is the generation of artists whose formative years spanned the period of the Second World War (the case of artists exhibited during the legendary *Arsenał* exhibition in 1955), while the second is the generation of artists born a decade after the war (the case of neoexpressionist *Gruppa* in the 1980s). Interestingly, almost every instance of expressionist poetics after the Second World War in Poland provoked some critics to make comparisons with German art and – consequently – initiated discussions about the actual identity of Polish art. This notion enables to show the complex dynamics of cultural processes. While the avant-garde sought to create a network that dismissed existing hierarchies and moved a-historically – Expressionism’s national specificities bring to the fore how the process of cultural interaction plays out beyond simple binary oppositions that posit the contradictory nature of the national and the international.

Keywords: Polish art, post-war Expressionism, neo-Expressionism, *Neue Wilde*, *Arsenał*, *Gruppa*, cultural interaction

1 In this article, I am interested in two generations of artists. The first is “the generation of war,” that is, artists whose formative years spanned the period of the Second World War (many of them were in the army, the underground army, and concentration camps), while the second is the generation of artists born a decade after the war, when members of the first generation made their artistic debuts. Critics defined the work of this first generation of artists quite casually as “expressionist,” primarily because they used means of expression typical for a broadly understood interwar Expressionism, but did not define it as a separate trend. This is understandable particularly because the presence of artists discussed here was ephemeral, their art found no continuators for many years to come, while artists in question followed individual creative paths, remaining on the margins of the mainstream (of both the official as well as the underground art circuits). The first attempts to distinguish the new phenomenon of revived expressionist language after the war came in the late 1960s (primarily in West Germany, but also beyond). Since the 1980s it was commonly associated with the overriding notion of Neo-Expressionism, which is considered to cover also the work of the second generation of artists discussed here. Their work is characterised by a rejection of traditional standards of composition and of idealisation in favour of intentionally primitivist aesthetic and bright colours, as well as predominance of urban subject matter often rendered with irony.

In her video work, *Muzeum Solidarności* [Museum of Solidarity, 2013–2014], a Polish artist from Poznań – Julia Popławska (b. 1991) – presents a portrait/interview of Waldemar Miksa – a worker at the Gdańsk Shipyard. Curiously, during this interview, Miksa’s narrative moves far beyond the expected account of his professional career and his own understanding of the work ethic. A significant part of this account is made up of personal reflections on selected examples of literature, music, and art, including the painting of the so-called Polish *Neue Wilde* (Polish New Fauves). Miksa’s opinion about this movement is highly critical: “When I looked at the Polish new Fauves (Nowi Dzicy), I had an insistent impression that they simply had no knowledge of the craft of painting.” Rafał Jakubowicz, at whose studio Popławska was studying at the University of Fine Arts in Poznań, admits in one of his texts that with this casual remark Miksa made “a very apt observation.”²

In what sense was that “an apt observation”? Miksa uses the term “Polscy dzicy” [Polish Fauves], which is a direct reference to the German *Neue Wilde* movement.³ In the 1980s, this suggestive but highly general term was used to define any neoexpressionist work created in German art at the time.⁴ The term proved so attractive that it was immediately used to define those Polish artists who worked with a similar aesthetic. As the example above suggests, they were commonly defined this way.⁵ Since Miksa’s negative opinion about the “Polish *Wilde*” was formulated in reference to the Viennese exhibition of the German Expressionism, it can be read as a covertly expressed belief that “Polish *Wilde*” were no match for their German counterparts (prototype?).

Taking this intriguing opinion as a starting point for further investigations, I shall seek to illuminate the historical and cultural conditions of the reception of an expressionist idiom in Poland and Germany in the period 1945–1989. This will help me reconstruct the circumstances when almost every instance of expressionist poetics after the Second World War in Poland provoked critics to make comparisons with German art and – consequently – initiated discussions about the identity of Polish art, as well as worked as an indicator

2 Rafał Jakubowicz, “Robotniczym. Sztuka w ujęciu radykalnym,” in: *Wyparte dyskursy. Sztuka wobec zmian społecznych i deindustrializacji lat 90.* (Szczecin: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Akademii w Szczecinie, 2016), p. 99.

3 *Die 80er: Figurative Malerei in der BRD*, ed. Martin Engler (Köln: Hatje Cantz Verlag, 2015).

4 Cf. *Die 80er. Figurative Malerei in der BRD*, ex. cat., ed. Martin Engler, Städel Museum, Frankfurt am Main 22.07.2015–18.10.2015 (Ostfilfern: Hatje Cantz, 2015).

5 Bożena Kowalska, “Polscy Nowi Dzicy,” in: *Projekt*, No 4(1984) p. 16.

of the condition of Polish-German relations. Occasionally, discussions surrounding post-war Expressionism crossed the existing political-cultural boundaries and helped expand the horizon of Polish-German dialogue.

To explain fully these sometimes hardly justified fears and doubts that arose with each reemergence of Expressionism in Poland after the Second World War, I will need to analyse the origin of German Expressionism in terms of a historically, culturally, and politically determined artistic idiom. This, in turn, invites analysing Expressionism in a comparative and contextual perspective, with reference to devices developed by horizontal art history, which investigates the migration of forms and its consequences, such as modification or complete transformation of their meaning, which occurs when cultural and geopolitical borders are crossed.⁶

I will investigate this process by referring to two episodes in Polish postwar art history, when the reemergence of Expressionism coincided with major events in political life. The latter made a significant impact on the reception of the meaning and function of Expressionism. Moreover, associations with German art provoked understandable problems stemming from the complicated and difficult relations between Poland and the two German states after the war.

The first of these episodes can be easily identified as a part of the propagandist-agitational 5th World Festival of Youth and Students, organised in Warsaw in 1955. One of the Festival events was an exhibition that came to be known in Polish art history under the popular name *Arsenał* (from the place where it was shown⁷). The second episode spanned a much longer period: it begins with the Martial Law of 1981 and ends with the onset of political transition in 1989. A symbolic manifestation of this second wave of Expressionism was the exhibition *Ekspresja lat 80-tych* [Expression of the 1980s], presented in 1986 at the Biuro Wystaw Artystycznych [Office for Art Exhibitions] in Sopot. Apart from having a symbolic meaning, this exhibition had a historical significance as well: it provided an institutional framework for this significantly growing phenomenon.

Both exhibitions, *Arsenał* and *Expressionism of the 1980s*, enjoyed extensive resonance in the press and still continue to be regarded by Polish art

6 Piotr Piotrowski, "Towards Horizontal Art History," in: *Crossing Cultures: Conflict, Migration and Convergence. The Proceedings of the 32nd International Congress in the History of Art, 13–19 January 2008*, ed. Jaynie Anderson (Melbourne: The Miegunyah Press, 2009), pp. 82–85. See also Mieke Bal, *Travelling Concepts in the Humanities: A Rough Guide* (Toronto, Buffalo, London: University of Toronto Press, 2002).

7 This was the popular name of "Zachęta" Club at 52, Długa Street in Warsaw. At present, the National Museum of Archaeology is located under this address.

history as events symptomatic for current political climate: the post-Stalinist “thaw” in case of the *Arsenal* event and Solidarity in case of *Expressionism of the 1980s*. Let us start with the former.

The 5th World Festival of Youth and Students (Festival of Peace and Friendship)⁸ took place in Warsaw from 31st June through August 15, 1955. The Warsaw edition of this cyclical event happened three years after Stalin’s death and on the tenth anniversary of the ending of the Second World War, which provided an additional ideological undertone. The festival banners shouted slogans that accentuated the pacifist attitude of communist authorities and anticipated the policy of opening Poland to the West. The festival dictionary featured recurring notions such as: anti-militarism, anti-imperialism, international friendship, and global peace.⁹

In this atmosphere of ubiquitous brotherhood, sisterhood, and joy, there opened the Nationwide Exhibition of Young Visual Arts, whose motto, “Against war – against Fascism,” seemed to fit perfectly the message of the entire Festival.¹⁰ But while the authorities had enthusiastically supported the exhibition throughout the stages of its preparation and conceptual

8 Andrzej Krzywicki, *Poststalinowski karnawał radości. V Światowy Festiwal Młodzieży i Studentów o Pokój i Przyjaźń* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Trio, 1955).

9 The World Festival of Youth and Students gained an additional and unexpected dimension when West Germany joined NATO in October 1954. In response to that, socialist states decided to create their own military organisation for the protection of Eastern Europe, which was founded less than a year later, on May 14, 1955, under the name the Warsaw Pact. A direct consequence of these events was the additional motto added to the Festival: “Against aggressive, imperialist military pacts,” while one of the Festival days was organised under the slogan: “Young people and students are fighting against re-emerging German militarism”. “The Festival will be a great demonstration of youth united in the fight for better future, friendship, and peace, against the war instigators who are rebuilding the criminal Wehrmacht,” claims the document signed at the 2nd Polish Youth Association [ZMP] meeting at the turn of January and February 1955.

10 Harbingers of the “Thaw” appeared in Poland already in 1954, when purges in the security apparatus were initiated, some political prisoners were released, and the first student theaters were formed. The campaign against the so-called bureaucratic aberrations of Socialist Realism began with the 11th Session of Culture and Art, in mid-April 1954. From this moment on, Socialist Realism was gradually dismissed. Exhibition at the Arsenal was originally a private initiative, while the idea itself crystallised at the turn of 1954 and 1955 among young Warsaw-based artists (including Marek Oberländer, Jan Dziędziora and Jacek Sienicki) and art historians (Elżbieta Grabska, Andrzej Wallis). See Andrzej Osęka, “Dramat Arsenалу,” in: *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 5 February 1992, p. 17.

development, its final result disoriented them so deeply that they felt obligated to call a special committee to discuss the matter.¹¹

Equally negative was the show's reception by a significant number of art critics and historians.¹² The major accusation against the featured artists was that they ostentatiously evoked the atmosphere of hopelessness, drastic cruelty, and sadness, expressed both on the formal level (through deformation and clumsy, austere aesthetics), as well as on the level of subject matter (desolate landscapes, "abject"¹³ still lives, and melancholic portraits). Among Arsenal-featured paintings most renowned and widely discussed by the press are Jan Dziędziora's *Meal* (1955) – which depicts an impoverished, greedily eating man; Jerzy Cwiertnia's *Thirst* (1955) – a black-and-white fragment of a man's face, imploringly raised upwards in its expression of pain and exhaustion; two paintings by Marek Oberländer – an unassuming still life with onions rendered in muddy colours (*Onions*, 1955) and representation of three figures with bloody stars of David carved in their foreheads (*The Stigmatised*, 1955); *Conflagration* (1951) by Waldemar Cwenarski, who died a tragic death in 1953, an apocalyptic vision with fragmented figures wreathing in flames; and Hilary Krzysztofiak's still life with horse jaw (*Jaw*, 1955).

Outraged critics claimed that with their unethical approach, artists promoted nihilism and defeatism among Polish citizens, which was seen as

11 Andrzej Matynia, "Krajobraz przed Arsenalem," in: *Art&Business*, No 7/8 (2005), p. 15. Exhibition at the Arsenal was important for two reasons: the first was that formal solutions employed by artists provoked many contradictory opinions among art critics, the second that it worked as an impulse for numerous polemical texts, published when the exhibition was on show as well as in subsequently released analyses. The latter are concerned with demonstrating the significance (or lack thereof) of the Exhibition in 1955, defining its position on the timescale of development of Polish art after 1945, and conducting its moral, historical, and artistic assessment. The Exhibition was, indeed, the first "post-Thaw" manifestation of artistic individualities, yet it took place under the auspices of the state and therefore it is often defined as "compromising". Wojciech Włodarczyk, "Nowoczesność" i jej granice," in: *Sztuka polska po 1945 roku. Materiały Sesji Stowarzyszenia Historyków Sztuki, Warszawa, listopad 1984*, ed. Teresa Hrankowska (Warszawa: Polskie Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1987), p. 23; Mieczysław Porębski, "Dziś to znaczy kiedy?," in: *Sztuka dzisiaj: Materiały Sesji Stowarzyszenia Historyków Sztuki, listopad 2001*, ed. Maria Poprzęcka (Warszawa: Stowarzyszenie Historyków Sztuki, 2002), p. 13; Iwona Luba, *Rok 1955* (Warszawa: Muzeum Narodowe w Warszawie, 2005).

12 Katarzyna Grabowska, "50 lat minęło," in: *Art&Business*, No 7/8(2005) p. 24.

13 Julia Kristeva, *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*, trans. Leon S. Roudiez (New York: Columbia University Press, 1987).

socially harmful and contradictory to the idea behind the exhibition and the Festival (as well as, obviously, socialism).¹⁴ However, there were also several critics who identified the exhibition's pronounced "ugliness" as a positive value.¹⁵ From there, it was just one step to associations with German art, since "ugliness" (identified with the lack of idealisation and with deformation) was often mentioned by German art historians as one of the major features that helped measure the level of Germanness in German art and was also seen as an important marker of Expressionism.¹⁶

In this context, quite understandable was the fact that most of the Polish critics recognized the connection between *Arsenał* works and Expressionism.¹⁷ These associations, however, were rather vague and based primarily on stylistic affinities with expressive language of forms that emerged in interwar Germany, which were combined with intentional anti-aestheticism: technical nonchalance, primitively rendered figures, domination of subjectivism, and emotions over calculated composition, but also – on thematic level – an interest in critical and social issues. It was possibly this latter feature of Expressionism, which emerged as a reaction to the final years of the Weimar Republic in the shadow of the rising fascism, that was meant by Piotr Krakowski, a Cracow-based art historian, who visited the exhibition

14 Joanna Olkiewicz, "Wystawa upiórów i nadziei," in: *Dziś i jutro*, No 32 (14.08.1955) p. 11.

15 Andrzej Jakimowicz, "Wstęp," in: *Ogólnopolska wystawa młodej plastyki pod hasłem 'Przeciw wojnie-przeciw faszyzmowi' zorganizowana z okazji w Światowego Festiwalu Młodzieży i Studentów: malarstwo, rzeźba, grafika* (exhibition catalogue, Warszawa: Ministerstwo Kultury i Sztuki, 1955), pp. 9–10; Jacek Antoni Zieliński, "Etos arsenałowy," in: *Arsenał 1955. Przełom, epizod, kontynuacja* (Katowice: Muzeum Śląskie w Katowicach, 2010), p. 23.

16 In 1919, the art critic Karl Simon wrote: "This unnatural quality, this ambition not to be admired but to express spirituality, this ugliness [diese Hässliche], which is the search for truth, this austere and violent art, it is and always will be the true German art." Cited in: Christoph Engels, *Auf der Suche nach einer 'deutschen' Kunst. Max Beckmann in der Wilhelminischen Kunstkritik* (Weimar: VDG Weimar, 1997), p. 187. Cf. Thilo Franke, *Die Nationalität von Kunstwerken* (Berlin/Boston: De Gruyter, 2012), pp. 128–129; Volker Gebhardt, *Das Deutsche in der deutschen Kunst* (Köln: DuMont, 2004), pp. 438–442; and Annkathrin Kohout, "Deutsch und Hässlich: über Georg Baselitz," *sofrischsogut* (22 Februar 2018) <https://sofrischsogut.com/2018/02/22/deutsch-und-haesslich-ueber-georg-baselitz/>. (Accessed 29.04.2018).

17 Jakub Dąbrowski, "Recepcje Arsenału, czyli co recypowali 'arsenałowcy'?" in: "Recepcja Arsenału". *Symposium naukowe z okazji 60. rocznicy Ogólnopolskiej Wystawy Młodej Plastyki w warszawskim Arsenał* (Gorzów Wielkopolski: Nadwarciańskie Towarzystwo Upowszechniania Dziedzictwa Kulturowego, 2015), p. 31.

together with a Warsaw-based colleague Elżbieta Grabska and was surprised to find similarities between the *Arsenał* paintings and German art of the turn of the 1920s and 1930s.¹⁸ Many years after the *Arsenał* events, Przemysław Brykalski, one of the painters featured at the show, stated that the exhibition was intentionally manipulated by his Expressionism-loving colleagues.¹⁹

The most radical opinion about the dangerous liaisons between the *Arsenał* artists and German Expressionism²⁰ was formulated by Paolo Ricci – an Italian artist and art critic, as well as a member of the Italian Communist Party. Dismayed at what he saw at the exhibition, he did not conceal his moral indignation and asked: “How can that be that no one cared to remember that Expressionism was an outlet of the German nation’s unrest, which had, in a sense, paved the ground for Hitlerism?” – and later: “It is incredible that in this day and age, in a country whose nation is building socialism, artists evoke the monsters of decline.”²¹ For contemporary scholars who

18 Piotr Piotrowski, *Znaczenia modernizmu. W stronę historii sztuki polskiej po 1945 roku* (Poznań: Rebis, 2011), p. 47.

19 Zieliński, “Etos arsenalowy,” p. 18.

20 Andrzej Osęka calls Ricci a “smart doctrinaire” who “was right in his diagnosis,” since he was the only one to fully define the Expressionism of the “*Arsenał* artists” by locating their work in the tradition of German Expressionism of the Weimar Republic. Particularly interesting are the analogies that he spotted between the works of Polish *Arsenał* artists and the stylistics of the socially engaged works of German artists gathered around the ASSO communist association of artists founded in 1928. Andrzej Osęka, “Pożegnanie z upiorami,” in: *Wprost*, 31 July 2005, <https://www.wprost.pl/tygodnik/79042/Pozegnanie-z-upiorami.html>. (Accessed 12.07.2018). Up to date, this aspect has escaped critical attention. Reconstructing sources of inspiration that were or might have been important for *Arsenał* artists, researchers mention primarily contemporary Mexican painting and printmaking, the work of van Gogh, Picasso, Renato Guttuso, and André Fougeron. Therefore, there are mostly references (to use contemporary lingo) to “progressive” art of Italy, Mexico, and France. Cf. Dąbrowski, *Recepcje Arsenalu*. In interwar Poland, expressionist poetics was cultivated by the Poznań-based BUNT group, founded in 1918. Its members maintained extended connections with the Berlin expressionist circles. This tradition has not been discussed either. See Jerzy Malinowski, *Sztuka i nowa wspólnota: Zrzeszenie artystów Bunt, 1917–1922* (Wrocław: Wiedza o Kulturze, 1991); *Bunt. Ekspresjonizm poznański 1917–1925*, ed. Grażyna Hałas, Agnieszka Salamon (Poznań: Muzeum Narodowe w Poznaniu, 2003); Marina Dmitrieva, “Polnische Künstler und der Sturm,” in: *Grenzüberschreitungen. Deutsche, Polen und Juden zwischen den Kulturen (1918–1939)*, ed. Marion Brand (München: Meidenbauer, 2006), pp. 45–64.

21 Andrzej Matynia, “Krajobraz,” pp. 16–17; and Andrzej Osęka, “Pożegnanie z upiorami,” in: *Wprost*, 31 July 2005. <https://www.wprost.pl/tygodnik/79042/Pozegnanie-z-upiorami.html>. (Accessed 12.07.2018). An interesting polemic with

quote these statements.²² they merely express a twisted logic and argumentative absurdity, stemming from the Italian critic's ideological bias, as he was most probably delegated to Poland by the communist authorities.

However, this opinion about Ricci is a serious simplification; to give justice to his intentions, one must first understand the highly problematic reception of Expressionism after the Second World War.

It is commonly acknowledged that since the publication of Paul Fechter's book, with its short title *Der Expressionismus*,²³ Expressionism began to be associated with a German sensibility and since then was perceived as a key notion used to substantiate the claim about the unique spiritual and intellectual nature of Nordic countries, a proof of a deep connection between German art and German identity. Significantly, the Fechter's book was published in 1914, at the wake of the Great War, during which – as argued by Modris Ecksteins – the military struggle was not so much for territorial or political domination, but above all for spiritual and cultural one.²⁴ It was no coincidence that the cover of Fechter's book featured a Gothic-inspired woodcut – *Illustration eines Heiligen* [Illustration of a Saint]– by Max Pechstein, one of the members of Die Brücke, which was an apt introduction into the book's claim about the Gothic (that is: German) roots of

Ricci was published in the Party-run magazine *Przegląd Kulturalny* [Cultural Review] by Izaak Celnikier, a Marxist painter of Jewish background, winner of the first prize for his expressionist painting *Ghetto* (1949), in which he revisits his war-time experience, universalising it through the reference to a motif from Christian iconography. Cf. Marcin Lachowski, "Getto w obrazach Marka Oberlandera i Izaaka Celnikiera," in: *Ikonotheka*, No 20(2007), pp. 37–50.

22 Izabela Kowalczyk, *Podróż do przeszłości. Interpretacje najnowszej historii w polskiej sztuce krytycznej* (Warszawa: Szkoła Wyższa Psychologii Społecznej, 2010), p. 453, fn. 115; Matynia, "Krajobraz," p. 17.

23 Initially, Expressionism was a term of relatively incomplete definition that was used in France to describe the work of French artists (Gustave Moreau, André Derain, Maurice Vlaminck, Henri Matisse) since the late nineteenth century. It simply meant "self-expression". In Germany, it was used for the first time during the exhibition of the Berlin Secession in 1911 to define French art that derived from Cubism and Fauvism. After its appropriation and further definition by Fechter, who also rendered it into a style of "Gothic provenance," it became linked with the expression of powerful emotions, allegedly typical for German art (Ger. *Eindruck versus Ausdruck*). Donald E. Gordon, "On the Origin of the Word 'Expressionism'," in: *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, Vol. 29 (1966) pp. 376–380.

24 Modris Ecksteins, *Rites of Spring: The Great War and the Birth of the Modern Age* (Boston, New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1989).

Expressionism.²⁵ Naturally, this kind of argument required prior definition of where and how this alleged Germanness would express itself. Fechter distinguishes the following features: anti-intellectualism, emotionality, spirituality, and, last but not least, metaphysical propensities,²⁶ that is, the predisposition that makes the “chthonian” nature of German soul [Ger. Innerlichkeit], the same that Thomas Mann identified as the source of the fatal “demonic” forces of life, find its ultimate expression in the irrational frenzy of Nazism and war.²⁷

However, before the ideologists of National Socialism deplored Expressionism as the model of “degenerate” style, some circles made efforts to make it the regime’s official aesthetic. Expressionism was enthusiastically promoted by Joseph Goebbels, founder of the *Kraft durch Freude* [Strength through Joy] organization that was Rosenberg’s rival. Goebbels appreciated the Nordic qualities of this painting and the rhetorics used in its description as ideal allies in propagating the Nazi worldview.²⁸

This ambiguous history of Expressionism’s reception during National Socialism, oscillating between admiration and condemnation, was the main reason why rehabilitation of representatives of this movement after the war was purely formal. In reality, Expressionism became an object of a new political debate, which increased further with the deepening division of Germany.²⁹

In West Germany, beginning in the 1950s, Expressionism disappeared almost entirely from the art scene, which became, instead, dominated by abstraction – seen as neutral and transcending any historical and political reality. In East Germany, in turn, as a movement tainted both by modernism as well as by National Socialism and therefore doubly discordant with the doctrine of Socialist Realism, Expressionism became the main object of attack during the so-called *Formalismusdebatte* [Formalism Debate]

25 Karen Lang, “Der Expressionismus und die beiden deutschen Staaten,” in: *Kunst und Kalter Krieg. Deutsche Positionen 1945–89*, [exhibition catalogue], ed. Stephanie Barron, Sabine Eckmann (Köln: DuMont, 2009), p. 87.

26 Karen Lang, “Der Expressionismus.”

27 Thomas Mann, *Germany and the Germans* (New York: Library of Congress, 1945), p. 15.

28 John Willett, *Expressionism* (London: McGraw-Hill, 1970), p. 216.

29 Maike Steinkamp, *Das unerwünschte Erbe: Die Rezeption ‚entarteter‘ Kunst in Kunstkritik, Ausstellungen und Museen der SBZ und frühen DDR* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2008). Cf. Christian Saehrendt, *„Die Brücke“ zwischen Staatskunst und Verfemung: expressionistische Kunst als Politikum in der Weimarer Republik, im ‚Dritten Reich‘ und im Kalten Krieg* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2005).

of 1948.³⁰ Brought to light again were arguments formulated by Gyorgi Lukács and Alfred Kurella, who in the 1930s accused Expressionism of propagating values and ideas that helped the Nazis conquer German souls.³¹

As it transpires, while the problems encountered by Expressionism after the war in Germany were partly justified, in Poland, this simple relationship of cause and effect becomes significantly complicated. It would seem that outside Germany Expressionism should be neutralised through de-contextualisation. Yet nothing of the sort occurred. Directly responsible for this state of affairs were both political factors and – possibly – the dominant image of Germany, shaped by the negative historical experience and pervading both the politicised and centrally managed collective consciousness, as well as the popular sentiments of Polish citizens.

Despite the significant changes that occurred in arts in both German states over the decades, such as partial rehabilitation of Expressionism in East Germany, and its triumphant comeback on the wave of “picture hunger” in the 1970s and 1980s³² in the West, the burden of “the local German style” was impossible to obliterate completely. The most widely discussed and quoted article, an uncompromising criticism of figurative-expressive tendencies, was written by the German art historian Benjamin H. D. Buchloh – based in the USA and connected with the circle of the Marxist *October* magazine. According to Buchloh, the rebirth of the figurative-expressionist tendency was an expression of growing conservatism and a reflection of the victory of the market over art’s critical concerns. Although Buchloh tried to avoid personal attacks in his text, he wrote it in reaction to the Venice Biennale of 1980, when the German Pavilion showcased monumental, expressive-romantic canvases by Anselm Kiefer.³³ In 1984, Donald Judd, the pope of Minimalism, accused contemporary German painters (including Kiefer) of reactive cultivation of kitsch and flirting with nationalism: “Perhaps this is the parody of nationalism, but I don’t believe in

30 Eckhart Gillen, *Das Kunstkombinat DDR: Zäsuren einer gescheiterten Republik* (Köln: Kunst Verlag, 2005), p. 63

31 Maike Steinkamp, *Das unerwünschte*, pp. 179–183. In this respect, a breakthrough, or actually an exception confirming the rule, was the year 1954, when Ludwig Justi, director of the National Gallery in Berlin, arranged an entire room dedicated to “degenerate artists,” including the interwar expressionists. Maike Steinkamp, *Das unerwünschte*, pp. 319–323.

32 Wolfgang Max Faust, Gerd de Vries, *Hunger nach Bilder: deutsche Malerei der Gegenwart* (Köln: DuMont, 1982).

33 Benjamin H. D. Buchloh, “Figures of Authority, Ciphers of Regression: Notes on the Return of Representation in European Painting,” in: *October*, Vol. 16 (Spring 1981).

that.”³⁴ A bad reputation did not cease when the boom for German painting faded away. In his *La Responsabilité de l'artiste. Les avant-gardes entre terreur et raison*, published over a decade later, the French art historian Jean Clair openly reiterated the claim about the close spiritual affinity between German Expressionism and National Socialism.³⁵

But let us now return to Poland. As I already mentioned, another eruption of Expressionism in Polish art after 1945 came during the political turmoil of Solidarity's growing presence and the gradual erosion of the communist system. As researchers emphasise, just like the *Arsenał* exhibition, this phenomenon was largely a generational protest.³⁶ This is how it was described by Ryszard Ziarkiewicz, initiator of the exhibition *Expression of the 1980s* at the BWA in Sopot. Ziarkiewicz, who defined himself as a “canvasser” or a “messenger” of Expressionism,³⁷ had an ambition to develop a comprehensive public presentation of this phenomenon, which had been growing since the early 1980s and was as ubiquitous as it was dispersed. It is not my intention here to discuss this exhibition in detail, but I would like to focus on two artists featured in the show, whose art works show formal and thematic affinities with parallel phenomena in the art of West Germany.³⁸ These two artists are Marek Sobczyk and Jarosław Modzelewski.

34 Cited in Hans Belting, *Die Deutschen und Ihre Kunst* (München: C.H. Beck, 1992), p. 58.

35 Jean Clair, *La Responsabilité de l'artiste. Les avant-gardes entre terreur et raison* (Paris: Gallimard, 1997).

36 Leszek Jodliński, “Słowo od Wydawcy,” in: *Arsenał 1955. Przełom*. Jodliński emphasises that he does not mean generation in terms of people born in the same period, but in an artistic sense. Ryszard Ziarkiewicz, on the other hand, talks about an emerging “generational awareness,” while his understanding of the new expressive style should now be seen more as an expressionist impulse than a stylistic determinant. *Republika bananowa. Suplementy do sztuki polskiej lat 80.*, ed. Jolanta Ciesielska (Wrocław: Ośrodek Kultury i Sztuki, 2009), pp. 10–11. Maryla Sitkowska defines Gruppy as an “emanation of the approach and artistic expression of the 80s generation.” *GRUPPA 1982–1992. Ryszard Grzyb, Paweł Kowalewski, Jarosław Modzelewski, Włodzimierz Pawlak, Marek Sobczyk, Ryszard Woźniak*, ed. Maryla Sitkowska (Warszawa: Galeria Zachęta Warszawa, 1992), p. 3.

37 Ziarkiewicz, “Ekspresja?”, p. 10.

38 As a matter of fact, I should not be making a distinction here between East and West Germany, because in the 1980s the wave of Expressionism spilled onto both German states. Nevertheless, artists discussed here referred to their peers from the West, just as Polish critics positioned Polish artists only in relation to West German painters. Most certainly, it was believed that artists such as Bernhard Heisig, or Jan Hartwig Ebersbach, due to their teaching practice at state-run Academies, were “Staatskünstler” [State artists], making Party-approved art. This was, of

Sobczyk and Modzelewski were two of the six founders of Gruppa,³⁹ a Warsaw-based art group started in the mid-1980s. Its “German-sounding” name, with a doubled “p,” seems to have been coined on purpose, suggesting the artist-members’ attention towards Germany. Available sources provide contradictory information about the year of Gruppa’s final consolidation. Maryla Sitkowska, who played the role of a chronicler of the group’s activities, links the final crystallisation of its objectives with Sobczyk and Modzelewski’s Solidarity-funded scholarship to Düsseldorf in 1984.⁴⁰ Regardless of whether this information is true or merely a story that fits the narrative of Gruppa’s beginnings, the scholarship was undoubtedly an important transition moment for its members. According to the artists, up to that point their expressionist sensibilities were developing in isolation from their Western counterparts. They considered Ryszard Grzyb, one of the group members, the “pioneer of Neue Wilde in Poland.”⁴¹ Before he moved to Warsaw, Grzyb studied at the Wrocław Academy of Fine Arts (until 1945 the city was the German Breslau) and, by the end of the 1970s, he experimented with Expressionism. The source of his inspiration was the work of a Wrocław-based, prematurely deceased artist Waldemar Cwenarski (1926–1953). Another Polish artist to whom Gruppa members often referred was the Cracow painter Andrzej Wróblewski (1927–1957). Just like Cwenarski, Wróblewski also died as a young man and gained a legendary status as a solitary painter, “of unique and singular quality.” Noteworthy, Cwenarski’s and Wróblewski’s paintings were showcased at the 1955 *Arsenal* exhibition.⁴²

course, not the case, since these artists took the strategy of “exploding” the Party art doctrine from within and this way made an impact on its conventions and modifications. Cf. Karl-Siegbert Rehberg, “‘Mitarbeit an einem Weltbild’: die Leipziger Schule,” in: *Kunst in der DDR. Eine Retrospektive der Nationalgalerie*, (exhibition catalogue), eds. Eugen Blume and Roland März (Berlin: G+H Verlag, 2003), pp. 45–59; *Bernhard Heisig: Die Wut der Bilder*, ed. Eckhart Gillen (Köln: DuMont Buchverlag, 2005).

39 All active members of GRUPPA were listed in the title of book first mentioned in note 29.

40 GRUPPA 1982–1992, p. 4 and p. 51. Contradictory information can be found on page 60 of the same book, where Sitkowska, in spring 1984, takes note of the release of the first issues of *Oj, dobrze już* [Come on, it’s all right now] magazine, which included an essay by Ryszard Woźniak titled “Gruppa i jej frakcje ze względu na nazwisko i miejsce urodzenia, 13 III 1984” [Gruppa and its Fractions according to the name and birth place, 13 III 1984].

41 GRUPPA 1982–1992, p. 28.

42 The motif of *Arsenal* features in Ryszard Grzyb’s series of paintings from 1988–1990: *The 1960s*, *Bread*, *Butter*, *Milk*, and *Marmelade are Molecules of Our Humanity*, and *Virgin Mary with Ribbons*. As Maryla Sitkowska suggests, they

The new expressive and figurative painting of the 1980s should be considered in the context of Solidarity and the social and political ferment that it caused. A large number of artists representing new expressionist painting displayed sympathy towards the Solidarity movement.⁴³

Opposition sought to negate and objectify the politically instrumentalist image of Germany and its citizens⁴⁴ as a way to repair mutual relations and build a platform for cooperation and mutual understanding through an emphasis on common interests of non-sovereign Poland and divided Germany.⁴⁵ The scholarship in Düsseldorf, granted to Sobczyk and Modzelewski in 1984, was possible thanks to the support of their German colleagues. In Düsseldorf, on 13 November 1982, they organised an auction for Solidarity: *Gegen das Kriegsrecht in Polen – für Solidarność* [Against the Martial Law in Poland – for Solidarność], with art works donated by German artists. Funds procured through their sale were used to cover scholarships. The first to receive them were Sobczyk and Modzelewski – “ambassadors of Gruppa”⁴⁶ in Germany.

The residency of Gruppa artists in Düsseldorf, which hosted a large exhibition of new German painting,⁴⁷ as well as their excursions to Hamburg,⁴⁸ allowed them to confront their work with that of their German peers to

were not intended as a series, but when seen in retrospect, they form a natural triptych where each work summarises another decade. *Chleb, masło, mleko...* [Bread, butter, milk...], which shows a worker by the table, “matches the tone of *Arsenal* painting – those roots unknown from personal experience.” Maryla Sitkowska, *GRUPPA 1982–1992*, p. 10.

43 Shortly before 4 June 1989, as part of the action *Głos przyrody na Solidarność* [Nature votes on Solidarity], Gruppa artists jointly painted a fence in front of a voting club at Niespodzianka cafe in Warsaw. Maryla Sitkowska, *GRUPPA 1982–1992*, p. 5.

44 Jacek Kubiak, “Uwagi o stosunku opozycji demokratycznej do zagadnień niemieckich,” in: *Polacy wobec Niemców*, pp. 395–407.

45 In contrast to the art community, authorities in Bonn regarded Solidarity with much scepticism, which cooled down the previous pro-German approach. Nevertheless, those were the first steps towards a revision of stereotypical and instrumentalist perception of Germany. Jacek Kubiak, “Uwagi o stosunku opozycji,” pp. 395–407.

46 Jarosław Modzelewski/Marek Sobczyk, *16 wspólnie namalowanych obrazów* [Sixteen jointly painted pictures].

47 Exhibition *Von hier aus. Zwei Monate neue deutsche Kunst in Düsseldorf*, which took place on 29.09.1984–2.12.1984 at Halle 13 Messe Düsseldorf.

48 To visit Rattinger Hof bar, frequented by Manfred Büttner and Albert Oehlen. Dorota Monkiewicz, “Rozmowa z Ryszardem Grzybem, Jarosławem Modzelewskim, Markiem Sobczykiem i Ryszardem Woźniakiem,” in: *Jörg Immendorff, Znaki, symbole i wizje*, (exhibition catalogue), ed. Dorota Folga-Januszewska (Warszawa: Muzeum Narodowe Warszawa, 1998), p. 87.

whom they were so eagerly compared in Poland.⁴⁹ Although they continued to consistently nurture the belief in a self-generated nature of their work, the great popularity of Neo-Expressionism in West Germany motivated them to follow the artistic path they chose before visiting this country.⁵⁰ In Germany, Sobczyk and Modzelewski played with their alleged or actual German inclinations – now, it was not only the form, but also the subject matter and titles of paintings that provoked such comparisons. In Düsseldorf, Sobczyk and Modzelewski used packing paper brought from Poland to create four large-scale collaborative works, named later *The Düsseldorf papers*.⁵¹ In these paintings, artists referred to their German experience, which brought them a breath of freedom and new energy, as well as a comfortable work environment, but also made them acutely aware of their cultural incompatibility, resulting in a sense of alienation and solitude (paintings *Die Einsamkeit* [Loneliness] and *Das Gebet des deutschen Pfarrers oder die Bleistiftprobe* [The Prayer of the German Pastor or the Pencil Test]).⁵² With sharp clarity, they noticed the postwar insistence of (non)memory. As a result of this observation, they made *Warum zwei fremde Künstler keine Synagoge gefunden haben* [Why Two Foreign Artist Have Not Found any Synagogue], painted after a walk during which they made futile attempts to get passing inhabitants of Düsseldorf to show them the way to a synagogue. In Sobczyk and Modzelewski's painting, figures of ignorant passers-by form an (incomplete) star of David. As Anda Rottenberg noted: "These paintings opened up a poignant conversation with German art and German history alike. But Germans failed to notice that, their opinion about Poles has not changed since the prewar period."⁵³

From this point on, travels to Germany and Germany-related motifs became permanent elements of the the output of Gruppa artists. Germany came to represent one of the topics that helped them confront Polish

49 Artists claim that this was a result of their ignorance: both of the Neue Wilde art as well as of Gruppa's. Monkiewicz, "Rozmowa," p. 85. Sobczyk ends this argument by saying: "The truth is there was a lot of parallel inspiration, but also that it was our own, personal style."

50 Monkiewicz, "Rozmowa," p. 86.

51 Collaborative work on paintings was taken up on three other occasions. This practice is another shared feature with German Neue Wilde, who combined the expressionist impulse not only with traditional medium of painting, but also with performative action.

52 Jarosław Modzelewski, Marek Sobczyk, *16 wspólnie namalowanych obrazów*, ex. cat., ed. Ewa Gorządek (Warszawa: Centrum Sztuki Współczesnej Zamek Ujazdowski, 1998).

53 Anda Rottenberg, *Przeciąg. Teksty o sztuce polskiej lat 80* (Warszawa: Fundacja Open Art Projects, 2009), p. 377.

identity. A large number of Gruppa's paintings challenge Polish myths and provide an allusive, mostly ironic reference to current situation in Poland, which makes them too hermetic for a viewer unacquainted with Polish reality. Marek Pawlak, one of Gruppa members, recalls: "We were expressive, but above all we were political, that is, national."⁵⁴ Polish critics made negative comments about Gruppa's connections with Neue Wilde, yet they also considered them "continutors of the symbolic-romantic tradition, which organises itself around values."⁵⁵ Critical reception was no different in case of paintings shown at the *Arsenał*, which some critics appreciated as yet another incarnation of the spirit of Polish Romanticism.⁵⁶

"Germany, at least for my artistic practice, was the most important reference. It is a country which I always visit to learn something new. It is the only country which offers me information about my own position"⁵⁷ – declared Marek Sobczyk. However, Germany was an important reference point not only for Sobczyk. The aftermath of the war brought a more acute awareness of antagonisms and socially shared stereotypes. The situation changed over several decades after the war, yet Polish-German relations were consistently marked by the period of Nazi occupation and the memory of experienced suffering.⁵⁸ This aspect was recognised by Poland's communist authorities who decided to use it for political purposes, making Germany an important reference point for identity politics, which helped integrate Polish nation around state institutions; for that reason, the Party leaders "treated German issue as a means to ease communication between the authorities and society."⁵⁹

54 Dorota Monkiewicz, "Artyści Grupy rozmawiają z Dorotą Monkiewicz o Jörgu Immendorffie, sztuce polskiej i niemieckiej, o Polakach i o Niemcach. Rozmowa z Włodkiem Pawlakiem," in: *Jörg Immendorff*, p. 84.

55 Ewa Gorzadek, "Wizualne equilibrium," in: *16 wspólnie namalowanych obrazów*, p. 6.

56 Jacek Antoni Zieliński writes, for instance, that the work of Jacek Sienicki, one of participants of the *Arsenał* exhibition, represented "a romantic concept of beauty." Jacek Antoni Zieliński, "Etos arsenałowy," p. 23. On the other hand, Izabela Kowalczyk notes the evoked misery of these works and links them with the notion of "Romantic frenzy," as defined by Maria Janion. Izabela Kowalczyk, *Podróż do przeszłości*, fn. 111, p. 453.

57 Monkiewicz, "Rozmowa z Ryszardem Grzybem," p. 89.

58 Andrzej Sakson, "Niemcy w świadomości społecznej Polaków," in: *Polacy wobec Niemców. Z dziejów kultury politycznej Polski*, ed. Anna Wolff-Powęska (Poznań: Instytut Zachodni, 1993), pp. 408–415 also, in the same volume: Jadwiga Kiwerska, "W atmosferze wrogości (1945–1970)," pp. 45–65.

59 Kiwerska, "W atmosferze wrogości," p. 68.

In his 1969 book, *In Search of Cultural History*, Ernst Gombrich provides an account of the dynamics of art's development in national frameworks when he remarks that art expresses not only the national character, but also, in equal measure, art of a particular nation co-creates national specificity, since language, medium, and tradition make an impact on those who inherit and use them. Therefore, it is impossible to separate and analyze these subtle mutual interdependencies as disconnected.⁶⁰

Gombrich is right to dismiss his readers' wrongful assumption that art is only an emanation of national character by highlighting the fact that this relation is mutual: never pointing in one direction alone. One is bound to notice that this allegedly nuanced approach immediately meets new obstacles. In this model, national art would be a kind of self-referential, autopoietic system existing inside monadic national structures, with inherent autonomous processes of cultural exchange. Understandably, however, the dynamics of cultural processes is much more complex than Gombrich envisaged. Among other things, this stems from the fact that even the most isolated societies fail to keep their geopolitical and cultural borders sealed; those are constantly crossed, which significantly effects modifications of "national" cultures. This way, cultures are never closed-up repositories with quasi-natural processes of continuous condensation, but they form a complex system of interconnected vessels.

Relationships are formed both through osmosis, that is, a slow, non-invasive, and unintentional process, as well as through a purposeful intrusion into foreign territory, which can be either aggressive or, on the contrary, an expression of protest and insubordination. The latter form revealed itself when artists in communist Poland moved beyond the limitations imposed by doctrine; theirs was not an open criticism, but merely a formal transgression. Every act of this kind was automatically political. While the avant-garde sought to create a global network of exchange – a network that dismissed existing hierarchies and moved a-historically – Expressionism's national specificities bring to the fore how the process of cultural interaction plays out beyond simple binary oppositions that posit the contradictory nature of the national and the international.⁶¹

Quite evident, too, is how powerfully rooted are the myths of national provenance of some forms of expression, as well as how easily these beliefs become challenged when similar phenomena show parallel or independent emergence in different contexts. Art is born both in response to and in conditions of existing social, national, and – importantly – political reality.

60 Ernst Hans Gombrich, *In Search of Cultural History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969).

61 Cf. Piotr Piotrowski, "Towards Horizontal Art History."

However, it is also a result of cross-border intercultural communication. When these factors are put together, they make up a multilayered weave, where a complete picture is made by interconnected local and external factors. At the same time, it is a picture altered by self-projections and projections through which external interpretive matrices are adopted – as seen on the example of the *Arsenal* exhibition, as well as often false symmetries and actual asymmetries, which establish certain hierarchies that artists may challenge, taking up an intentional dialogue with established paradigm and its accepted cultural meaning (the case of Gruppe).

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Signs • Images • Codes

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- III. 2: Agnieszka Polska. *Sensitization to Colour/Uczulanie na kolor*, 2009, video, 5’02”, detail: <https://art-collection-telekom.com/de/artwork/agnieszka-polska/three-videos-narration-sensitization-colour>. 238
- III.: 3: Sharon Lockhart. *Little Review*, 2017, 57th Venice Biennale, Giardini, Polish Pavillon, detail: <http://labiennale.art.pl/en/wystawy/little-review/>. Courtesy: Polish Pavilion. Photo: Bartosz Górka. 238
- III. 4: Sharon Lockhart. *Today in Politics, Our Review*, No 167 (8863), June 16, 1939, framed chromogenic print, 161,3 × 200,7 cm, National Library of Poland, Warsaw, February 3, 2017. Image: Courtesy of the artist, Gladstone Gallery, New York and Brussels, neugerriemschneider, Berlin, and Zachęta – National Gallery of Art, Warsaw. 239
- III. 5: Władysław Strzemiński. *Deportations*, 1940, graphite on paper, *documenta 14*, Kassel, Neue Galerie. Photo: Monika Leisch-Kiesl. 239
- III. 6: Detail: Władysław Strzemiński. *At the sidewalk* from the series *Deportationen/Deportations*, 1940, graphite on paper, *documenta 14*, Kassel, Neue Galerie. Photo: Monika Leisch-Kiesl. 240

About the Authors

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In 2015, she received PhD in art history from the Jagiellonian University, writing her dissertation on the reception of the Second World War in German art with the emphasis on the medial aspects of the collective memory published as *Przeszłość niepokonana. Sztuka niemiecka po 1945 jako przestrzeń i medium pamięci* (Undeclared Past: German Art after 1945 as a Space and Medium of Memory), Universitas 2018. She works as assistant professor at the University of Warsaw and teaches at the Cultural Studies Faculty at the Jagiellonian University. Her teaching and research areas are: art and memory, medial aspects of art since 1945, politics, theories and praxis in historical/national representations after 1945, German-Polish bilateral art relations, critical issues in contemporary art and theory.

Nathan Diament has dedicated the last fifteen years to researching the life and work of his great-uncle, Polish artist J.D. Kirszenbaum.

Toward this effort, he left the managerial activities which he had occupied most of his professional life, and studied Jewish Art at Hebrew University in Jerusalem.

The fruits of his labor came in 2013 with the publication of the book, *J.D. Kirszenbaum 1900–1954 the Lost Generation*, and the organization of a number of exhibitions of the artist's work in Israel at the "Ein-Harod Museum," the "Tel-Aviv Museum of Jewish People" and the "Villa Vassilief" in Paris.

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Małgorzata Jędrzejczyk is art historian and curator. She studied art history at the Jagiellonian University in Cracow (MA), the University of Vienna, and the Humboldt University in Berlin. She graduated in the interdisciplinary PhD program “Society – Environment – Technologies” at the Jagiellonian University in 2016, and was a doctoral student at the Jagiellonian University, Institute of Art History (2012–2018). Jędrzejczyk is author of articles on modern and contemporary art and architecture. She edited the Polish edition of the *Bilderatlas Mnemosyne (Atlas Obrazów Mnemosyne, Warszawa 2015, with P. Brożyński)* and *Composing the Space. Sculptures in the Avant-Garde* (Łódź: Muzeum Sztuki; London: Walther Koenig, 2019, with K. Słoboda).

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Dr. Karolina Majewska-Güde is an independent researcher, curator and art critic. She graduated in Art History from Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań and in Visual Histories from Goldsmith College, London. She defended her doctoral thesis at the Institute of Art and Visual History at Humboldt University of Berlin completing a dissertation on Ewa Partum’s artistic practice. Her research is in the field of methodology of transnational and feminist art histories, Eastern European neo-avant-garde practices, contemporary issues of circulation and translation and production of knowledges through art. She is the Head of Archive at Artum Foundation ewa partum museum. She is a member of AICA.

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Dr. Dagmar Schmengler is an art historian who works as scientific project manager for the Alexander and Renata Camaro Foundation in Berlin since 2013. She is the initiator and curator of the German-Polish exhibition *Maler. Mentor. Magician. Otto Mueller und sein Netzwerk in Breslau* in cooperation with Berlin National Gallery (12.10.2018 to 3.3.2019 at Hamburger Bahnhof – Museum für Gegenwart in Berlin).

Schmengler's dissertation *Masken von Reims* [The Masks of Reims], a highly acclaimed sculpture ensemble at the Reims Cathedral, received the Benvenuto Cellini Prize in 2009. She teaches, conducts research, and works around the world on exhibition projects. From 2005 to 2007, together with curator Barbara Ciciora (Muzeum Narodowe w Krakowie), Schmengler coordinated the bilateral exhibition project between two world heritage sites of Cracow and Bamberg, *Münchner Historienmalerei des 19. Jahrhunderts*. From 2009 to 2013, Schmengler worked at the Staatsgalerie Stuttgart, and in 2012 she co-curated the large exhibition *Mythos Atelier. Von Spitzweg bis Picasso, von Giacometti bis Nauman*.

In recent years, her work has focused on historical emotion research, especially the analysis and categorization of meaningful forms of expression in painting and sculpture along with the study of the international avant-garde and Expressionism. Dagmar Schmengler is the author and editor of numerous scientific publications.

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Artur Żmijewski (born 26 May 1966 in Warsaw) is a Polish visual artist, filmmaker and photographer. During the years of 1990–1995, he studied at Warsaw Academy of Fine Arts. He is an author of short video movies and photography exhibitions, which were shown all over the world. Since 2006 he is artistic editor of the *Krytyka Polityczna*.

His solo show *If It Happened Only Once It's As If It Never Happened* had been presented at Kunsthalle Basel in 2005, the same year in which he represented Poland at the 51st Venice Biennale. He has shown in Documenta 12 (2007), and Manifesta 4 (2002); Wattis Institute for Contemporary Art, San Francisco (2012, 2005); National Gallery of Art Zacheta, Warsaw (2005); Kunstwerke, Berlin (2004); CAC, Vilnius (2004); Moderna Museet, Stockholm (1999). In 2009 he presented series *Democracies* at Foksal Gallery Foundation, Warsaw; and created new work for The Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) in New York as part of their Projects' Series in September 2009. Cornerhouse, Manchester, presented the first major UK survey of zmijewski's work, spanning his practice from 2003 to the present day, from November 2009–January 2010. He was the curator of the 7th Berlin Biennale in 2012 – in which he opened the curatorial process as a collaboration.

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