

October 18th – November 7th, 2013

YOU HAVEN'T SEEN IT YET

the works from *Kolekcja II* that have not been shown so far

Curator: Monika Szewczyk

Stefan Constantinescu, *Troleibuzul 92*, 2009, video, 9 min 1 sec. Work purchased by Galeria Arsenał

Attila Csörgő, *The Peeled City (I)*, 2002, 12 photographs in 3 frames, 23 x 90 cm each. Work purchased by Podlaskie Towarzystwo Zachęty Sztuk Pięknych

Maurycy Gomulicki, *Pussy Mandala*, 2008, digital collage, lambda, dibond, Plexiglas, 3 prints, ø 100 cm. Work purchased by Podlaskie Towarzystwo Zachęty Sztuk Pięknych

Łukasz Gronowski, *Patriot*, 2006, video, 1 min 40 sec. Work purchased by Podlaskie Towarzystwo Zachęty Sztuk Pięknych

Kamera Skura (Martin Červenák, Jiří Maška, René Rohan), *We live here with you I*, 2002, 3 photographs, 150 x 100 cm. Work purchased by Podlaskie Towarzystwo Zachęty Sztuk Pięknych

Szymon Kobylarz, *Cannelloni Bomb*, from the series *Civil Defense*, 2009, wooden display box, other media, 22 x 22 x 9,5 cm; colour pencil drawing, 28,5 x 18 cm. Work purchased by Podlaskie Towarzystwo Zachęty Sztuk Pięknych

Jarosław Kozakiewicz, *IGO (Identified Geometrical Objects)*, 2004, 2 sculptures, wood, 88 x 13,5 x 16 cm, 86 x 13,5 x 7 cm; drawing, pencil on paper, 32,5 x 40 cm. Work purchased by Galeria Arsenał

Daniel Rumiancew, *Autoerotique*, 2003, a two-channel video installation, 10 min 30 sec. Work purchased by Podlaskie Towarzystwo Zachęty Sztuk Pięknych

Jadwiga Sawicka, work from the series *Artist's Task*, 2012, book, collage, 25,5 x 18,5 x 3,5 cm. Work purchased by Podlaskie Towarzystwo Zachęty Sztuk Pięknych

Slavs and Tatars, *Men are from Murmansk, Women are from Vilnius*, 2012, painted glass mirror, wooden frame, 109,5 x 160 cm. Work purchased by Podlaskie Towarzystwo Zachęty Sztuk Pięknych

Konrad Smoleński, *The End of Radio*, 2012, audio-installation, 194 microphones, 210 microphone stands, 20 stereo headphone amplifiers, 5 DVD players and other. Work purchased by Podlaskie Towarzystwo Zachęty Sztuk Pięknych

Purchase of art works for the collection:

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[...] *Kolekcja II* (Collection II) of Galeria Arsenał in Białystok and the Podlaskie Towarzystwo Zachęty Sztuk Pięknych (Podlaskie Association for the Promotion of Fine Arts; henceforth: PTZSP) fulfils all of the conditions for it to be rightfully called a collection. Yet, much like other assemblies of new art in which we find works that are problematic in terms of traditional art collecting – video stored on digital media, project archives, props used in performance pieces, installations or films – it begs the question, often asked by researchers, of whether it is indeed still a collection.¹ Deliberations on the subject of contemporary collecting practices do not lead as much to a reconciliation of these complications (which appears to be impossible) as to a currently-ongoing redefinition and broadening of the sense of what an art collection is. *Kolekcja II*, chiefly comprising works created after 1989, can serve as an illustration of the manifold challenges that new art imposes on collectors. These challenges result as much from the nature of contemporary artistic practice as from objective financial and environmental concerns facing those assembling public collections. The premises guiding the collection's establishment, by way of which the collection should ensure the public a most-comprehensive and most-objective possible introduction to post-1989 art,² are reflected in the collection's general vision and delineate its prospective development by dictating decisions on subsequent purchases.

As critics have repeatedly observed, *Kolekcja II* is grown deliberately, consistently and with a high degree of aptitude in valuating contemporary artistic phenomena.³ Its beginnings reach back to the early 1990s, when Monika Szewczyk became the director of Galeria Arsenał (still known as BWA) and the curator of the collection taking shape there.⁴ Initiating a new chapter in the life of the Białystok institution, she declared the previously-established *Three Streams. Realism – Metaphor – Geometry* collection, which mainly gathered Polish paintings from 1965–1985, to be complete and decided to cease its further expansion. Along with striving to develop a coherent programme for the gallery's exhibitions, educational activity and publications, Szewczyk began to unfurl a new collection programme. Thanks to this initiative, the Białystok gallery found itself among only a handful of institutions in Poland assembling collections of new art after 1989. The curator's decisions took the long view and can be considered brave taking into account the conditions in those days. They laid the groundwork for Galeria Arsenał's future achievements and its current status as one of the country's leading galleries, one that has successfully managed to promote Polish art beyond its borders.

A breakthrough event was the 2005 establishment of the PTZSP, whose mandate was to expand and promote Galeria Arsenał's collection.⁵ The collection, which for the previous fifteen years had grown solely thanks to modest own funds and the generosity of artists, was now able to be considerably expanded and have its gaps filled in through subsidies that were allocated for the use of the PTZSP. These subsidies were disbursed as part of the "Znaki czasu" [Signs of the Times] National Culture Programme established in 2004 by Waldemar Dąbrowski (the then Minister of Culture). Also instrumental in the collection's rapid growth at that time were financial support of city and voivodeship authorities and donations from artists and private sponsors. Significant progress was noted as early as the first year of the PTZSP's existence: *Kolekcja II*, counting 58 pieces before 2005, was now larger by 21 works. Presently, in late 2012, the collection boasts 212 works of art, and so, we can acknowledge that the "Znaki czasu" programme has been a success in Białystok. It is worthwhile to also recall the remarks of Bożena Kowalska, who points out that this project has achieved its aims only in those areas where the collections are overseen by individuals capable of selecting valuable pieces from the expanse of new art⁶ and – it should be added – of thinking of the assortment as a single whole whose individual pieces maintain a constructive dialogue between each other.

Today's purchase policy is still by and large dictated by the vision outlined by Monika Szewczyk at *Kolekcja II*'s inception. From the very first days, she has been acquiring works by recognised artists representative of key trends in Polish art post 1989 as well as artists who were just beginning their artistic career. [...] As far as circumstances allow, works by artists from Western Europe and even the United States are also acquired for the collection. Such additions are selected with great care and are often included to supplement clearly discernible threads arising in the collection (the purchase of David Diao's painting is a case in point) or as works that are in some way connected with Białystok and undertaking a dialogue with the city (such as Sibylle Ettengruber's performance recording). In recent years, we can clearly observe a tendency in which the focus of *Kolekcja II* is shifting away from predominantly Polish art towards a broader representation of art from East Central Europe at large. From the moment of the PTZSP's establishment and the accompanying availability of new sources of funding, to date, the collection has grown by 28 works by artists from this region, most of them purchased in the last four years.

Selecting works to be included in *Kolekcja II* compels one to consider what image of new art will be put forth by the curator's assortment. This doesn't necessarily refer to how faithful the collection is to the whole of artistic phenomena taking place of late – to create a collection with the intention to fully mirror such a range of culture would be a vastly utopian-minded undertaking. The selection of pieces is a necessary process, and the choices, made with the collection's profile in mind, do not by default have to lead to a diluted or inadequate picture of contemporary tendencies in art.⁷ Above all, the process serves to delineate key issues at the core of artistic reflection and arrive at a constructive synthesis of these issues. Therefore, we can see *Kolekcja II* by way of the narratives running through it, which intersect at various levels and form a network of inter-related content. Cyclical exhibitions of the collection's holdings are organised to accentuate the patterns that emerge.⁸ [...]

the excerpt from the book by Izabela Kopania „Open Set. Works from *Kolekcja II* of Galeria Arsenał in Białystok and Podlaskie Towarzystwo Zachęty Sztuk Pięknych”, Białystok 2012

¹ T.F. de Rosset, "The art collection, is it still possible?", *Modernity of collection*, eds. T.F. de Rosset, A. Kluczeńska-Wójcik, K. Lewandowska, Toruń 2010, p. 341.

² K. Kopania, *Arsenał sztuki. Galeria Arsenał w Białymstoku i jej Kolekcja II* [The Arsenal of Art. Galeria Arsenał in Białystok and Its *Kolekcja II*], Białystok 2006, p. 34.

³ See for example K. Kopania, op. cit., passim; M. Wasilewski, *Kolekcja Galerii Arsenał* [The Galeria Arsenał Collection], Białystok 2004 [CD containing a presentation of *Kolekcja II* of Galeria Arsenał in Białystok], Ł. Gorczyca, *35-lecie Galerii Arsenał w Białymstoku* [35 Years of Galeria Arsenał in Białystok], "Art & Business", 2000 no. 5, p. 8; K. Sienkiewicz, *Żywa kolekcja* [A Living Collection]; B. Deptuła, *Wirująca kolekcja* [A Buzzing Collection], texts available at the Galeria Arsenał website: <http://galeria-arsenal.pl/kolekcja-ii/informacje.html>.

⁴ On the history of Galeria Arsenał and *Kolekcja II*: K. Kopania, op. cit.

⁵ For more on this subject, see: M. Szewczyk, *Funkcjonowanie programu „Znaki Czasu” na przykładzie Podlaskiego Towarzystwa Zachęty Sztuk Pięknych*, w: *Krytyka i rynek sztuki* [The Functioning of the "Znaki Czasu" Programme as Exemplified by the Podlaskie Towarzystwo Zachęty Sztuk Pięknych], ed. D. Monkiewicz, Warsaw 2008, pp. 93–95.

⁶ B. Kowalska, "Collectors in the face of their times", *Modernity of collection*, op. cit., p. 20.

⁷ cf. remarks of M. Szewczyk: "Determining the 'Contemporary by Museum Art Collections'", *Modernity of collection*, op. cit., pp. 97–107.

⁸ Taking place were many exhibitions presenting *Kolekcja II* as well as shows centred on works belonging to the collection. To name a few: *Jeux interdits* [Forbidden Games], Polish Institute in Paris, 2006, curator: Monika Szewczyk; *do trzech razy sztuka!*, Galeria Arsenał in Białystok, 2006, curators: Agata Małodobry, Anna Pohl, Patrycja Sikora, Piotr Stasiowski, with assistance from: Agata Bieńkowska, Ilona Forýś; *Polka Palace*, Galeria Arsenał / the old power plant in Białystok, 2008, curator: Monika Szewczyk; *Pejzaż polski* [Polish Landscape], Museum of Contemporary Art in Minsk, Belarus, 2009, curator: Monika Szewczyk; *Obraz kolekcji* [Image of the Collection], Galeria Arsenał in Białystok, 2010, curator: Wojciech Łazarczyk; *Minimal Differences*, White Box, New York, 2010, curators: Denise Carvalho, Monika Szewczyk; *Świadome zgody* [Conscious Consents], Galeria Arsenał / the old power plant in Białystok, 2011, curators: Daniel Rumiancew, Joanna Zielińska. The last exhibition listed is especially notable because it was the first exhibition in the collection's history which involved a dialogue with the works of Galeria Arsenał's previous collection *Three Streams*. It should be pointed out that Szewczyk invites contributions from curators with no ties to *Kolekcja II*, which doubtless allows the collection to be shown from novel perspectives.