

Arsenal Gallery in Białystok
January 16 – March 1, 2026

Art for the End of the World

Part of the collection of the Arsenal Municipal Gallery in Poznań

Przemysław Branas, Marta Bystroń, Martyna Czech, Izabella Gustowska,
Inside Job (Ula Lucińska, Michał Knychaus), Karolina Jabłońska,
Leszek Knaflewski, Piotr C. Kowalski, Jarosław Kozakiewicz,
Jarosław Kozłowski, Diana Lelonek, Marysia Lewandowska,
Tomasz Mróz, Dominika Olszowy, Radek Szlaga, Monika Sosnowska,
Ola Winnicka, Liliana Zeic

Curator: Marek Wasilewski

Art for the End of the World

The collection of the Arsenal Municipal Gallery in Poznań, revitalised since 2017, has been developed with financial support from the City of Poznań, grants from the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage, as well as donations and long-term loans. A significant part of the collection consists of works by young artists acquired through the Poznań Supports programme, launched during the COVID-19 pandemic. The collection focuses primarily on local narratives, presenting Poznań as an important site of artistic practice. Many of the works are closely tied to the city's context, and at times to the gallery itself, as the space in which they were created. They are also connected to the artists' biographical links with Poznań, particularly to the local art university and to residencies undertaken here. At the same time, the works remain open to universal interpretations. They stand as a symptomatic testimony to the time in which they were produced.

The exhibition title, *Art for the End of the World*, situates this body of work in relation to crises that are increasingly entering public consciousness. Art created here and now, though motivated by many different impulses, can be read as a story about the end of the world understood as the breakdown of the existing order. It speaks of unpredictable consequences, mechanisms that have slipped out of control, and a pervasive sense of anxiety and disillusionment. Pandemic, war, and the migration and ecological crises form the everyday reality in which contemporary artistic practice is embedded. This collection allows for many possible readings, one of which unfolds in the context of Andrzej Marzec's *Antopocień* and Timothy Morton's *Dark Ecology*.¹

In the introduction to the Polish edition of Morton's *Dark Ecology*, Andrzej Marzec notes that the book leads us into three different kinds of darkness, each corresponding to a successive stage of ecological awareness. The first is associated with melancholy, gloom, and depression brought about by the destructive force of the climate crisis. The second kind of darkness emerges from the uncanniness of the beings inhabiting the Anthropocene, entities that are ambiguous, mysterious, and resistant to established categories. The third darkness takes the form of anarchic play, in which we relinquish the need to control others and abandon the search for obvious solutions.²

¹ Andrzej Marzec, *Antropocień. Filozofia i estetyka po końcu świata*, Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, 2021; Timothy Morton, *Dark Ecology: For a Logic of Future Coexistence*, New York: Columbia University Press, 2016.

² Andrzej Marzec, *Wspólnota spod ciemnej gwiazdy – wplątani w grząski ekologiczny półświatek*, introduction, in: Timothy Morton, *Mroczna ekologia. Ku logice przyszłego współistnienia*, przeł. Anna Barcz, Warszawa: Oficyna Związek Otwarty, 2023, p. 43.

In the face of an uncertain future, art becomes both a form of testimony and a place of refuge. The exhibition *Art for the End of the World* presents a selection of works from the GaMA collection that grapple with crises of reality, relationships, and identity. The works on view reveal a wide range of strategies of resistance, from irony and defiance, through melancholy, to attempts to heal the relationship between humans and nature, as well as with themselves. From this perspective, the end of the world does not appear as a final catastrophe, but rather as a moment of transition, a turning point at which a new sensibility may emerge. The exhibition takes the form of a visual essay on the contemporary condition, suspended between disintegration and hope. Paintings, sculptures, and films assembled within the exhibition space examine the human condition in an era of excess, violence, and climate change. The oldest work included in the exhibition is Jarosław Kozłowski's 1970 assemblage *Absent*. It can be read as an act of protest, a gesture of withdrawal from the art world, but also as a declaration of refusal to participate in a society whose thoughtless actions are leading toward catastrophe. A similar resonance can be found in Leszek Knaflewski's video *You Stand in My Place*, in which the artist switches off a light bulb using a golf club. This gesture functions as a symbolic farewell, including a farewell to his own works, whose titles appear between shots. It is as if Knaflewski anticipated his premature departure and was saying: "the last one turns off the light; what remains after me will be an empty, dark space." Monika Sosnowska's *Concrete* sculptures depict spiders frozen in motion, remnants of our civilisation of steel and concrete. They are twisted and deformed, recalling fragments of modernist structures that have lost their original logic and functionality. In this way, the artist comments on the fragility of modernist utopias and on the belief that pure form and rational structure could produce a lasting, orderly world. The human figure *Colosus*, created by Przemysław Branas, is hollow inside and composed entirely of cardboard boxes from luxury fashion brands. It is precisely this industry that has become one of the main driving forces behind the ecological apocalypse. A commentary on this cardboard monument can be found in Radek Szlaga's painting depicting a pig's head, tellingly titled *Kill Your Idol*. In her ironic film *Public Displays of Affection*, which shows police officers conducting exercises in a small private apartment, Liliana Zeic draws attention to the consequences of fear and perceived threat produced by the institutions of the police state that we allow into our homes. The unsettling, neurotic paintings of Karolina Jabłońska, Martyna Czech, and Marta Bystroń present visions of an untamed, dangerous, and mysterious world, in which it becomes difficult to distinguish dreams from reality. Their works pulse with emotion, exposing inner tensions, anxieties, and uncertainty. By contrast, Tomasz Mróz's sculpture, created during the COVID-19 pandemic, offers a caricatural image of human helplessness, with a head symbolically yet grotesquely weighed down by various burdens. Mróz's work can also be read as a parody of contemplation in nature, where the pursuit of spiritual fulfilment gives way to a depressive vision of numbness and oppression.³

In his works, including *Hyperobjects: Philosophy and Ecology After the End of the World* and *Being Ecological*, Timothy Morton develops the concept of hyperobjects: phenomena such as global warming, plastic pollution in the oceans, or radioactivity that are "distributed across time and space," invisible or only partially accessible to human perception, yet exerting immense influence. Morton proposes an ontological model that challenges the classical distinction between subject (the human) and object (the world). All entities, human and non-human alike, are understood as equally valid objects capable of affecting one another. This perspective necessitates a fundamental rethinking of ethics, perception, and artistic practice. For Morton, art enables us to sense or visualise these vast systems and non-human agents that operate beyond our habitual modes of perception – hyperobjects. From this perspective, the exhibition suggests that the "end of the world" should not be understood solely as catastrophe, but rather as the gradual erosion of a reality long regarded as stable and secure. This reading aligns with Morton's diagnosis that we already live in a post-anthropocentric world. The works presented in the exhibition reveal objects, relationships, and processes that exceed anthropocentric frameworks. In this sense, art becomes an "ecological" gesture in Morton's understanding, not as a representation of nature, but as a mode of being in relation with the non-human. This approach is

³ Anna Markowska, "Sztuka jako niedogodność, czyli jak wysadzić w powietrze kopułę wzniosłości," *Czas Kultury*, No 12/2021, <https://czaskultury.pl/artukul/metakrytyka-sztuka-jako-niedogodnosc-czyli-jak-wysadzc-w-powietrze-kopule-wznioslosci/> (accessed January 8, 2026).

evident in the artistic practices of Piotr C. Kowalski's *Nienawiszcz* series, in which the artist relinquishes control over image-making to natural forces, and in Diana Lelonek's *Zoe-therapy*, where portraits of philosophers symbolising patriarchal wisdom are consumed by colonies of bacteria. Jarosław Kozakiewicz's *Horizontal Disturbance* stages a confrontation between enlarged organic structures and the urban order of Poznań's Old Town. Kozakiewicz constructs a dynamic superorganism governed by its own internal logic, one that overtakes and disrupts the city's geometric grid. The object by the duo Inside Job (Ula Lucińska and Michał Knychaus) draws on post-apocalyptic aesthetics, treating them as a space for reflection on contemporary social and existential tensions. Its title, *Get Down, Get Down Little Henry Lee and Stay All Night with Me*, is taken from the refrain of a traditional English folk song. The ballad tells the story of a man who rejects a former lover, who, driven by jealousy, murders him and conceals his body. The most widely known contemporary version of this dark narrative is Nick Cave and P. J. Harvey's *Henry Lee* from the album *Murder Ballads* (1996). Dominika Olszowy's *A Keepsake for Ossowiecki* draws on the aesthetic of television fortune-tellers who skilfully extract money from naïve viewers by offering alluring visions of the future. This phenomenon can be read as a symptom of contemporary society's slide into a new, post-technological Middle Ages, in which rational decision-making gives way to emotions, intuition, and premonition.

In his book *Antropocień. Filozofia i estetyka po końcu świata* (2021), Andrzej Marzec uses the titular concept to describe an era in which the human has ceased to function as the sole centre of meaning and agency. He emphasises that the Anthropocene is not only a geological or climatic issue, but also a philosophical and aesthetic one. Art, culture, and thought must therefore take into account the post-human condition, multispecies coexistence, relationality, and responsibility toward other forms of being. *Art for the End of the World* proposes a deconstruction of the anthropocentric gaze. Art shifts toward what comes "after the human," or toward forms of coexistence between human and non-human actors. The titular "end of the world" may thus be understood as the end of a particular mode of human dominance and the beginning of a different order, one in which the human is only one of many agents, rather than the sole master of the world.

The exhibition also invites us to ask what forms of art are adequate to the time in which we live, the end of one era and the beginning of another. Izabella Gustowska's film, made in 1979, is a spontaneous manifesto of the sisterly duality of twins. It presents a vision of intuitive, wordless communication, pointing to the possibility of relationships grounded in curiosity and trust. Created more than forty years later, Ola Winnicka's music video *Siory* also engages with the idea of sisterhood, this time situated within a broader urban context. In both works, choreography plays a central role, as the figures express their emotions through distinct gestures and movements. Bringing the exhibition to a close, Marysia Lewandowska's *Dismantling the Faculty of Law* searches for a voice of hope within the empty halls of the Collegium Iuridicum in Poznań. Perhaps the theory of kindness formulated many years ago by Czesław Znamierowski offers one way of mitigating the effects of overlapping crises. Znamierowski argued that human beings are inherently social, and that the foundation of morality should be kindness, understood not as emotional affection but as a conscious, sustained commitment to the good of others and to avoiding harm. Kindness, in this sense, forms the basis of social coexistence, enabling communities to function harmoniously. Moral norms acquire meaning only within the context of interpersonal relations and serve to sustain a shared social order. Znamierowski sought to develop a scientific ethics free from religious assumptions, grounded instead in reason and social experience.

The question of what art for the end of the world can be, or should be, may be answered paradoxically, following Jerzy Ludwiński: "it can be anything." Art for the end of the world, or perhaps art at the end of the world, holds the potential to free itself from constraints imposed, among other things, by an anthropocentric way of seeing. It does not need to rely on a single, fixed interpretation, but can instead embrace what is indeterminate and elusive. The works presented in the gallery resist exhaustive reading; they always leave room for intuition and emotion, for individual interpretation. Rather than offering definitive answers, the exhibition encourages a multidimensional and empathetic mode of looking.

Marek Wasilewski

EXHIBITED WORKS:

- 1. Przemysław Branas, Gucci, Louis Vuitton, Prada, Nike, Adidas, Acne, Bottega Veneta, Balenciaga, Miu Miu, Dior, Hermès Paris... (Colosus), 2018, unique object: clothing cardboard boxes found in rubbish bins and on the streets of Florence, brown adhesive tape, plinth made of banana boxes from Biedronka, height approx. 220 cm**

This work is the result of an artistic residency as part of the Deutsche Bank Foundation programme at Villa Romana in Florence. From the artist: 'This work emerged indirectly from my cycling through the streets of Florence and collecting luxury packaging. It takes the form of a colossus with exaggerated body parts: a large head and an enormous penis. The cardboard sculpture grew out of my observation of numerous Florentine monuments and represents a fusion of consumption and art. The title is composed of the names of all the brands whose boxes I used.'

Przemysław Branas, (born 1987) is a visual artist and performer working with installations, video, and objects. Between 2009 and 2011, he completed his bachelor's and subsequently his master's degree in the Performance Art Studio at the Academy of Fine Arts in Kraków. In 2013, he began doctoral studies at the Interdisciplinary Doctoral Programme of the University of the Arts in Poznań. He was awarded second prize in the *Spojrzenia 2017* competition, organised by Deutsche Bank Polska S.A. in collaboration with Zachęta – the National Gallery of Art. In 2013, he received a scholarship from the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage, and in 2015 he was awarded a prize by the Grey House Szara Kamienica Foundation. He has taken part in artist residencies at Meet Factory in Prague (2016), Sesama in Yogyakarta (2017), and the Terra Foundation for American Art in Giverny (2017).

POZNAŃ SUPPORTS – Supporting artists! Building a collection! The *Poznań Supports* initiative, launched by Poznań city councillors, was designed to support artists who found themselves in a difficult economic situation as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, through the acquisition of significant works for the municipal art collection. The second edition of the programme was held in 2021.

- 2. Inside Job (Ula Lucińska, Michał Knychaus), Get Down, Get Down, Little Henry Lee and Stay All Night with Me, 2019, object: steel, aluminium, digital print on silk, electrical cables, steel mounting system, neon, 140 x 76 x 20 cm**

The work *Get Down, Get Down, Little Henry Lee and Stay All Night with Me* was created for the group exhibition *Ściany Mają Uszy* at Trafostacja Sztuki in Szczecin. It was subsequently presented as part of the exhibition *Cała Polska* at BWA Wrocław and at the Gdańsk City Gallery. From the artist: 'Much of our recent work is oriented towards speculative visions of the future, including those that are uncertain, imagined, or fantastical. Unknown territories and "gaps" within an apparently stable reality serve as points of departure for many of our projects. Formally, the work evokes an abstract portal. Set within an ornamental metal frame, a silk membrane emits a soft light, functioning as a symbolic, imagined passage into a parallel world. Rather than pointing to distant, fantastical realms, this world may instead reveal the latent, hidden subtexts of reality.'

Ula Lucińska (born 1992) and **Michał Knychaus** (born 1987) collaborate as the artist duo Inside Job. Their practice is grounded in interdisciplinary projects that employ a broad range of media and materials. Central to their work are questions of identity formation and the relationships between humans, nature, and technology. Their projects often manifest as multi-layered, immersive environments that draw on futuristic and post-catastrophic imaginaries. They were finalists of the international Artagon IV competition in Paris in 2018 and recipients of the Santander Universidades Award in 2016. In 2018, they received awards from *SZUM* magazine and *Czas Kultury* for their joint diploma project. Their work has been presented through artist residencies (Residency Gurzelen, Biel/Bienne, Switzerland; DriveDrive, Nicosia, Cyprus; Kulturfabrik, Burgdorf, Switzerland), solo exhibitions (including Galeria SKALA, Poznań; Hot Wheels Projects, Athens, Greece), and group exhibitions (including WallRiss, Fribourg, Switzerland; Sattlekammer, Bern, Switzerland; Athens Digital Arts Festival, Athens, Greece; Galeria DuflonRacz, Bern, Switzerland; Ostrale Biennale of Contemporary Arts, Dresden, Germany; Musara Mix Festival, Jerusalem, Israel; New Waves, Museum of Contemporary Arts, Virginia, USA; Callegenera Festival, Monterrey, Mexico).

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3. Jarosław Kozakiewicz, *Horizontal Disorder*, 2021, object, irregular dimensions

Using the centuries-old urban fabric of Poznań's city centre as a point of reference, *Horizontal Disorder* brings into focus the disruption caused by the human-driven creation of increasingly complex urban structures that marginalise non-human life. In light of an ongoing shift in perspective, often described as the 'posthuman turn,' we are beginning to recognise that humans have always evolved in cooperation with other beings on Earth, from microbes to mammals. *Horizontal Disorder* metaphorically articulates experiences of being human within a more-than-human world, while also raising questions about the role of urban structures within the broader infrastructure of life. These infrastructures, both human and non-human, are simultaneously durable and fragile, hidden and visible, yet always present and deeply embedded in a shared world.

Jarosław Kozakiewicz's work was presented at the Arsenał Municipal Gallery as part of the exhibition *Refugia. Keep (out of) These Places* (2021).

Jarosław Kozakiewicz (born 1961) is a visual artist and sculptor, as well as the author of architectural projects conceived as critical interventions in architecture and urban planning. He is frequently described as a visionary. He studied sculpture at the Academy of Fine Arts in Warsaw from 1981 to 1985, and continued his education at The Cooper Union for the Advancement of Science and Art in New York between 1985 and 1988. In 2015, he was awarded the Silver Gloria Artis Medal for Merit to Culture. He is the recipient of numerous awards and serves as a professor at the Academy of Fine Arts in Warsaw. Several of Kozakiewicz's works have received recognition in prestigious architectural competitions, including projects for the Centre for Contemporary Art in Toruń (2004) and the Museum of Modern Art in Warsaw (2007). In 2005, his project won an international competition for the Reconciliation Park near the Auschwitz-Birkenau Museum, and in 2007 his *Mars Project* was completed, a multi-hectare land sculpture that transformed the landscape of a former lignite mine around Lake Bärwalde in Germany. His other projects include often utopian proposals for ecological or symbolic approaches to spatial planning (*Transfer*, 2006) and architecture (*Oxygen Towers*, 2005). In 2006, Kozakiewicz represented Poland at the International Architecture Exhibition in Venice.

4. Diana Lelonek, works from the series *Zoe-therapy*, 2015, 5 objects, 20 × 30 × 2.5 cm

The *Zoe-therapy* series was developed between 2015 and 2017. It was first presented in 2015 as part of the Project Room at the Centre for Contemporary Art Ujazdowski Castle in Warsaw, and two years later at Rodriguez Gallery in Poznań. The works explore the ongoing processes of decay to which both the artefacts of European civilisation and the portraits of great thinkers are subjected. Lelonek employs colonies of microorganisms, fungi, and bacteria that grow over images drawn from *A History of Philosophy* by Władysław Tatarkiewicz. In the artist's conception, this intervention constitutes a critique of anthropocentric ways of perceiving the world.

Diana Lelonek (born 1988) is an artist and activist. She graduated in photography from the University of Fine Arts in Poznań in 2014 and completed an interdisciplinary doctoral programme at the same institution in 2019. She also participated in a student exchange with Shanghai Normal University. Lelonek is a member of the international Earth Strike movement, which seeks to encourage governments and corporations to take decisive action to reduce anthropogenic greenhouse gas emissions and to halt the destruction of wildlife. As part of this engagement, she has been involved in organising protests. In 2018, she took part in Poland's first Climate Camp. She was awarded a *Polityka* Passport in the category of visual arts. One of Lelonek's most widely recognised projects is the Center for Living Things, founded in 2016 as part of her doctoral research. Within this project, the artist collects and presents so-called 'trash plants' – objects found at the intersection of culture and nature, for example at illegal dumping sites, which are subsequently transferred to the gallery and exhibited as readymade objects.

5. Tomasz Mróz, *untitled*, 2021, sculpture: silicone, polymer, acrylic, metal structure, 150 × 60 × 40 cm

The work is composed of several elements: a sculpted male head growing directly out of a pair of feet, and a cross protruding from the head, on which silicone worms are placed. Several of the worms lie on the floor nearby. The sculpture was presented in a street-facing display window of the Gallery of Contemporary Art in Opole, where it provoked a public scandal due to its obscene associations. As reported in the press: 'A sculpture whose central element is a cross hung with objects resembling "worms or genitalia" appeared in the exhibition. It is intended to provoke reflection on the pandemic.' The exhibition's curator, Łukasz Kropiowski, wrote: 'The head-foot creature remains trapped in a realm beneath the burdock. It is going nowhere and cannot go anywhere, not only because of its limited mobility, but also due to the fact that its skull is pressed to the ground by a stone. (...) Contact with nature, or the symbols of spirituality present here, perhaps even of esoteric knowledge, are stripped of their original aspiration toward spiritual perfection

and transformed into a vision of exhausting numbness and oppression. It is difficult to determine whether all this reflects the artist's experience of life under lockdown, or can be read as a response to the realities of recent years in Poland...'

Tomasz Mróz (born 1979) lives and works in Warsaw. He is a graduate of the Academy of Fine Arts in Poznań (now the University of the Arts in Poznań) and was a co-founder of the artist collective Penerstwo. His work has been presented in numerous exhibitions, including *Crimestory* at CSW Znaki Czasu in Toruń (2014); *Bóg się mamo nie pomylił*, [Mum, God Didn't Get It Wrong], at the Gdańsk City Gallery (2013); *Skontrum. Evolutions* at the Xawery Dunikowski Museum of Sculpture in Warsaw (2012); *Happiness Is a Warm Gun* at the Rizzordi Art Foundation in Saint Petersburg (2012); *Arbeitsdisziplin. The Spirit of the Art of Poznań* around 2012 at the Arsenal Municipal Gallery in Poznań (2012); *Coming Soon* at Temporary Gallery in Cologne (2011); *E.Y.M / B.B* at Platán Galéria in Budapest (2011); *EVIL III COME BACK or kulka w łeb for myself* at Arsenal Gallery in Białystok (2008); *OMMMMMMM...* at BWA in Zielona Góra (2008); and *Establishment (and its discontents)* at CSW Ujazdowski Castle in Warsaw (2008).

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6. Monika Sosnowska, *Concrete*, 2021, two objects, sculpture: reinforcing steel and concrete, 85 × 112 × 82 cm; 90 × 93 × 88 cm

Monika Sosnowska's works, both titled *Concrete*, were acquired by the Arsenal Municipal Gallery with the support of a grant from the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage. They form significant components of the gallery's collection of the central trajectory of the artist's practice, which is closely linked to the deconstruction of the utopian ideals of modernist architecture. Sosnowska's reflections also resonate strongly with the history and atmosphere of the modernist architecture of the Arsenal Municipal Gallery itself. Her work frequently engages with issues related to urban space, the utopian and anti-utopian dimensions of the city, everyday experience, critical perspectives on modernity, the legacy of post-war housing estates, and analyses of the absurdities of socialist modernism.

Monika Sosnowska (born 1972) is a leading contemporary visual artist working primarily with spatial and architectural installations as well as sculpture. She studied at Schola Posnaniensis (Private Academy of Art) from 1992 to 1993, and subsequently at the Faculty of Painting at the Academy of Fine Arts in Poznań between 1993 and 1998, under the supervision of Professor Jarosław Kozłowski. From 1999 to 2000, she completed postgraduate studies at the Rijksakademie van Beeldende Kunsten in Amsterdam. In 2003, Sosnowska was awarded the prestigious Baloise Art Prize in Basel, and in the same year received a *Polityka* Passport in the field of visual arts. She was a recipient of a Schering Foundation fellowship at Künstlerhaus Bethanien in Berlin in 2004. In 2007, she represented Poland at the 52nd Venice Biennale. Her work was exhibited at the Arsenal Municipal Gallery in 2001.

The acquisition was co-financed by the Minister of Culture and National Heritage from the Culture Promotion Fund, a state earmarked fund, as part of the *National Collection of Contemporary Art 2022* programme.



7. Radek Szlaga, *Kill Your Idol*, 2010, oil on canvas, 100 × 120 cm

Radek Szlaga painted *Kill Your Idol* three years into his involvement with the artist group Penerstwo, whose works are represented in the collection of the Arsenal Municipal Gallery. The painting is characteristic of Szlaga's artistic approach at the time, as well as of the aesthetic tendencies that defined the Penerstwo group, combining elements of brutality with a subversive reflection on the nature of painting as a contemporary medium. The work was presented, among other venues, in the solo exhibition *Iconoclasm* at White Space Gallery in Beijing.

Radek Szlaga (born 1979) is a painter, graphic artist, draughtsman, and installation artist. He has taught at the University of the Arts in Poznań. He studied at the State Higher School of Education in Zielona Góra (2000) and, in 2004, undertook a semester-long scholarship at the Academy of Fine Arts in Prague (AVU). From 2000 to 2005, he studied at the Academy of Fine Arts in Poznań (now the University of the Arts in Poznań), graduating with distinction from the painting studio of Professor Jerzy Kałucki. In 2007, he received the Artistic Award of the City of Poznań and co-founded the artist group Penerstwo. The artist often uses a diminutive form of his first name (Radosław), working under the names Radek or RDK. Art critic Przemysław Strożek has written of his practice: 'By engaging with uncomfortable themes of prejudice, stereotyping, and

stigmatisation, Szlaga crosses boundaries, employing his characteristic strategy of subversion to examine questions of identity and belonging. For this reason, irony serves as a crucial interpretative key to his work.'

8. Piotr C. Kowalski, *Nienawiszc I*, 2021, painting on canvas, six modules, each measuring 205 × 60 cm

Artist's statement presented alongside the work during the exhibition *Refugia. Keep (out of) these places*: 'For some time now, I have been working directly in nature and with nature. Nature is not only an inspiration for my work; it is also its material. My studio is always a place in nature, under the open sky, wherever I happen to be working, or where the images form on their own. The painting *Nienawiszc I* was created over the course of an entire year, from 3 September 2019 to 2 September 2020. I placed a stretcher with a white-primed canvas measuring 205 × 360 cm into a beaver pond in Nienawiszc. After a year, the finished painting was retrieved from the water, bearing clearly visible water levels, which had significantly receded. I did not fix or varnish the painting in any way, so as not to erase the scent of a year spent in water, mud, and silt. It served as a witness to everything that took place in the pond over the course of that year. I neither helped nor interfered with this painting.'

Piotr C. Kowalski (1951) studied at the State Higher School of Fine Arts in Poznań (now the University of the Arts in Poznań) from 1973 to 1978, graduating from the Faculty of Painting. From 1993 to 1999, he served as Dean of the Faculty of Art Education (known as the Faculty of Visual Education until 1995) at the State Higher School of Fine Arts and, subsequently, at the Academy of Fine Arts in Poznań. Between 1981 and 2001, he was a member of the Senate of the Academy of Fine Arts in Poznań. He also led the Painting Studio at his alma mater. He lives and works in Poznań and Nienawiszc. Kowalski is the author of the *LIVING NATURE* series, realised directly in natural environments. These cycles include, among others: tasteful and tasteless paintings; transitional, passable, and fleeting paintings; border, near-border, and cross-border paintings; polite and sinful, or impolite, paintings; works created in full sunlight, in shade, without shade, and without a shadow of a doubt; finished and unfinished paintings; paintings made in mountain shelters, on hiking trails, and those that can go to hell; as well as high and low-level paintings created at places such as Mount Giewont and the Lubin copper mine. The artist's works are held in numerous public collections, including the National Museum in Poznań; Zachęta – the National Gallery of Art in Warsaw; the Drents Museum in Assen, the Netherlands; the Arsenał Municipal Gallery in Poznań; the Bielska Gallery in Bielsko-Biała; the Szczecin Zachęta – Centre for Contemporary Art; the Mazovian Centre for Contemporary Art Elektrownia in Radom; and the Museum of Art in Łódź, as well as in private collections in Poland and abroad.

9. Jarosław Kozłowski, *Absent*, 1970, assemblage, mixed media, 121 × 200 cm

The assemblage *Absent* is composed of fragments of the artist's earlier paintings, over which a wrinkled white canvas has been stretched, completely obscuring the painted surface beneath. Suspended from the canvas on a string is a small sign bearing the inscription 'NIEOBECNY' [ABSENT]. During the 1970s, Kozłowski frequently worked with assemblage, creating compositions that extended beyond two dimensions. Works from this period materialised his reflections on presence and absence, developed within the *Present–Absent* series. It was also at this time that the artist's conceptual approach became fully articulated, as he moved away from painting in favour of actions within the symbolic realm, as well as performances and installations. *Absent* was originally intended to be exhibited at BWA (now the Arsenał Municipal Gallery), but shortly before the opening it was removed from the exhibition for being considered too avant-garde...

Jarosław Kozłowski, (born 1945) is one of the most prominent contemporary artists in Poland and a key figure in the development of conceptual art in the country. He was among the pioneers of conceptual art in Poland. He studied painting from 1963 to 1969 at the Faculty of Painting of the State Higher School of Fine Arts in Poznań. From 1967, he was also engaged in teaching drawing and painting at the same institution. Between 1981 and 1987, he served as its rector. He is currently a professor at the University of the Arts in Poznań. Kozłowski has also taught at international institutions, including Statens Kunstakademi in Oslo (1992–1997), Rijksakademie van Beeldende Kunsten in Amsterdam (1996–2004), Academy Without Walls in Lusaka (1999, 2001), and the Faculty of Pedagogy and Art at Adam Mickiewicz University (2005–2010). Between 1979 and 2000, he lectured at a wide range of institutions, including Concordia University in Montreal, Goldsmiths University of London, Academie Minerva in Groningen, Wimbledon College of Arts in London, Middlesex University in London, University of Reading, Hochschule für Bildende Künste in Hamburg, Chelsea College of Arts in London, Byam Shaw School of Art in London, Det Kongelige Danske Kunstakademi in Copenhagen, Glasgow School of Art, Brno University of Technology, Faculty of Fine Arts in Brno, Iceland Academy of the Arts in Reykjavík, and Rutgers University in New Jersey. Kozłowski works with installations, drawings, objects, artist's books, and performance. He consistently treats his artistic practice as a field of critical and self-critical analysis. In 1971, he initiated the international artistic network NET and was actively involved in the Fluxus movement. From 1972 to 1990, he ran Galeria Akumulatory 2, a key venue for the presentation of Polish and international avant-garde art. Between 1991 and 1993, he served as curator of the gallery programme and collection at the Centre for Contemporary Art Ujazdowski Castle.

This project was co-financed by the Minister of Culture and National Heritage from the Culture Promotion Fund, sourced from surcharges established on games subject to the state monopoly, in accordance with Article 80(1) of the Act of 19 November 2009 on Gambling.



10. Martyna Czech, *Besetment*, 2019, oil on canvas, 75 × 100 cm

Besetment is representative of Martyna Czech's distinctive artistic language, which has defined her practice since its early stages. The artist employs a characteristic, deliberately muted and soiled colour palette and, equally crucially, constructs the pictorial field in an unconventional manner. The expressively rendered figure evokes the impression of a victim of torture; together with the formal strategies applied, this generates a sombre, even overwhelming atmosphere. The painting can be read as an intimate microcosm of human relationships shaped by negative emotions, violence, and the exercise of power over the vulnerable. Situations of oppression, suffering, and threat are recurring motifs in Czech's work.

The painting comes from the collection of Sylwia Spurek and Marcin Anaszewicz and is on deposit at the Arsenal Municipal Gallery.

Martyna Czech (born 1990) is a painter who received the Grand Prize at the 42nd *Bielska Jesień 2015* Painting Biennale while still a student at the Academy of Fine Arts in Katowice. She has since garnered numerous prestigious awards and presented her work in a wide range of exhibitions, with her paintings included in important public and private collections. Drawing on the legacy of Neo-Expressionism, Czech has developed a distinctive and immediately recognisable artistic language. Her work engages with intense emotions and extreme experiences, which she translates into powerful visual forms. She frequently examines toxic relationships.

11. Karolina Jabłońska, *Girls Fighting*, 2019–2022, oil on canvas, 45 × 40 cm

Girls Fighting aligns with the cartoon- and comic-inspired idiom that Karolina Jabłońska frequently employs and that has become characteristic of her practice. Two flatly rendered female figures are depicted in the midst of the titular confrontation. Yet the fight is suggested only by the clenched fist of one figure, while the other gently holds her opponent. The absence of facial features invites an allegorical reading of the scene. The dominant blue palette further contributes to a sense of estrangement and unreality. Despite numerous details in clothing and jewellery, the figures function more as signs than as individual characters. This effect is reinforced by the use of light outlines in several areas, separating bodies or garments from the background. The implausible nature of the 'fight' lends the title a deliberately ironic and subversive quality.

The painting comes from the collection of Sylwia Spurek and Marcin Anaszewicz and is on deposit at the Arsenal Municipal Gallery.

Karolina Jabłońska (born 1991) is a painter and co-founder of the Potencja group and gallery. She studied at the Academy of Fine Arts in Kraków, where she completed her diploma in 2015 in the studio of Leszek Misiak. From the outset of her studies, the central figure in her paintings has been a female protagonist bearing facial features reminiscent of the artist herself. Jabłońska works within a grotesque idiom, engaging in dialogue with the Old Masters and frequently reinterpreting and transforming quotations from their paintings. She has participated in numerous exhibitions and lives and works in Kraków.

12. Marta Bystroń, *Ribbon*, 2017, acrylic on canvas, 80 × 100 cm

Marta Bystroń's painting *Ribbon* depicts three women connected by the titular red ribbon. The treatment of the figures evokes both the aesthetics of book illustration and the painterly language of the French artist Henri Matisse. The scene remains deliberately ambiguous, and the setting is imbued with a sense of mystery, giving the figurative composition an intriguing, almost hypnotic quality. The moment captured on the canvas recalls a secret ritual enacted within a dark, fairy-tale world. The viewer becomes a kind of witness, peering into an intimate encounter between three female figures. At the centre is a passive woman who appears to be the focal point of the scene, touched by the other two, who seem to serve or adore her. Beyond its evocative atmosphere, Bystroń's work is distinguished by its pronounced aesthetic qualities, most notably its sophisticated and expressive use of colour.

Marta Bystroń (born 1986) received her bachelor's degree in 2016 from the Academy of Fine Arts in Warsaw, Faculty of Media Art. She is a visual artist working with painting, illustration, and graphic design, including projects for institutions such as the Maria Skłodowska-Curie Museum, the Institute of Physiology

and Pathology of Hearing, and Requiem Records publishing house. In her painting practice, she presents women and girls in a symbolic manner, surrounding them with a fairy-tale atmosphere. She is also the author of independent illustrated publications, including *Little sister*, *black.coffee.black.humor*, and *Obrazek na dziś* [Picture of the day].

Video works:

13. Marysia Lewandowska, *Dismantling the Faculty of Law*, 2021, video, 19'56"

Marysia Lewandowska's work is an intimate, subdued narrative led by a single female voice, which guides the viewer through the empty corridors of a university in a mood of quiet nostalgia. The absent protagonist is Czesław Znamierowski (1888–1967), who served as Professor of Philosophy in the Department of the Theory of State and Law at Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań from 1945 to 1967. The professor, the artist's great-grandfather, understood ethics in a distinctive way, defining it as 'a set of principles of good social coexistence, dictated by benevolence.' Through this film, the artist pays tribute to him while calling attention to values that are increasingly neglected today. Prior to making the work, she conducted extensive research in both family archives and the archives of Adam Mickiewicz University.

Work produced by the Arsenał Municipal Gallery in Poznań.

Marysia Lewandowska (born 1955) is an artist born in Poland who has been based in London since 1985. Her practice examines the public role of archives, museums, and exhibitions, with a particular focus on missing or marginalised female voices. She initiates projects that engage with the property of others in order to generate new relationships between forms of knowledge and ownership, prompting reflection on the social and immaterial dimensions of the public sphere. Her projects include *How Public Is the Public Museum?* at Moderna Museet in Stockholm (2010); the film *Triple C. Editing the Century* presented at the Vienna Biennale (2015) at MAK; *Re-Negotiation* at Artspace, Auckland (2015); *Property, Protest, Commons* at Asia Art Archive, Hong Kong (2015); *Comment Is Free* at the Institute of Modern Art, Brisbane (2016); and *Millions Will Thank You*, marking the 50th anniversary of the naming of the Hayward Gallery in London (2017). *It's About Time* was a special project curated by Ralph Rugoff for the Applied Arts Pavilion at the 58th Venice Biennale. Her work has been presented at institutions including Tate Modern in London, Moderna Museet in Stockholm, the Museum of Modern Art in Warsaw, Muzeum Sztuki in Łódź, Museu Tàpies in Barcelona, Kunstwerke in Berlin, and Whitechapel Gallery in London. She served as Professor of Art in the Public Sphere at Konstfack in Stockholm (2003–2013), the Chinese University of Hong Kong (2014–2016), and most recently at Goldsmiths College in London.

14. Leszek Knaflewski, *You Stand in My Place*, 2010, video, loop

In *You Stand in My Place*, the artist repeatedly strikes a lit light bulb with a golf club, shattering it. Before each successive swing (gestures typical of a golfer) the title of one of his works appears on the screen. The illuminated bulb functions as a metaphor for an idea, a concept, a moment of insight or awareness. Through its repeated destruction, the artist symbolically dismantles these ideas, which are also his own works. A key element of the piece is the sharp, violent sound of the breaking bulbs, which lends the video a distinctively ominous and relentless rhythm.

Leszek Knaflewski (1960–2014) was a visual artist and an outstanding educator. Born in Poznań, where he also lived and worked, he developed a multidisciplinary practice encompassing installations, objects, photography, drawing, video, and audio performance. From the 1990s onward, his work was situated at the intersection of visual art and music. He constructed object-instruments, such as *The Electric Coffin*, which he played and used to create spatial acoustic installations. Between 1980 and 1985, Knaflewski studied at the State Higher School of Fine Arts in Poznań (later the Academy of Fine Arts, now the University of the Arts in Poznań), where he earned a diploma in painting. From 1983 to 1990, he was a member of the Koło Klipsa group and a co-author of all its public presentations. He collaborated with numerous musical formations, including *Rasa*, *Sten*, *Socrealism*, *Art Sound Project*, *Drum Machina*, and *Kot*. From 1990 onward, he was deeply engaged in teaching. He served as a professor at the Faculty of Multimedia Communication (Intermedia programme) at the University of the Arts in Poznań, as well as at the Faculty of Arts of the University of Zielona Góra. Among his former students are artists such as Wojciech Bąkowski, Piotr Bosacki, and Konrad Smoleński. His work was exhibited widely in Poland and internationally.

15. Liliana Zeic, *Public Displays of Affection*, 2017, video, 6'40"

The video documents police training exercises carried out inside a private apartment. A special police unit rehearses procedures intended to control (protect) mass gatherings, marching in an endless loop through a kitchen, a living room, and a child's bedroom. *Public displays of affection* refers to acts of physical intimacy

performed in the presence of others. As Zeic explains: 'One form of expressing democracy is the public assembly, which allows people to communicate with one another in a particular way and to manifest their views. Freedom of assembly is guaranteed by constitutional law. In this work, I focus on the physicality of boundaries related to the temporary legality of an assembly, which mark the demarcation line between participants and police units tasked with protecting mass gatherings. These synchronised police formations remain in constant, intimate bodily contact. Their integrity depends on the durability of the connections constructed between them, which must be sustained through continuous movement, turning, and action. Yet this closeness and intimacy are structured strictly by the function of the police formation.'

The work was produced in collaboration with Forecast Festival, the Adam Mickiewicz Institute, and the Polish Institute in Berlin.

Liliana Zeic (formerly Liliana Piskorska, born 1988) is a visual artist and Doctor of Fine Arts. She graduated from the Faculty of Fine Arts at Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń and studied at the University of Warsaw in 2011. In 2017, she completed her doctoral degree at the Faculty of Fine Arts in Toruń, under the supervision of Elżbieta Jabłońska. She was a finalist of the Forecast Forum at Haus der Kulturen der Welt in Berlin in 2017. In 2019, she received the Audience Award in the *Spojrzenia 2019* competition (Deutsche Bank Award), and in 2020 she was awarded OP YOUNG and nominated for the WARTO Award. Her works are held in public and private collections, including Zachęta – the National Gallery of Art in Warsaw and the Wrocław Contemporary Museum. In her artistic practice, Zeic addresses social issues from the perspective of radical sensitivity rooted in feminist and queer theory and practice. She focuses on the relationships between the state, Central European identity, and the position of peripheral identities, engaging in particular with themes of queer lesbian experience and non-heteronormativity. Working intermedially, she produces installation and sculptural elements, video works, photographs, and text-based projects.

POZNAŃ SUPPORTS – Supporting artists! Building a collection! The *Poznań Supports* initiative, launched by Poznań city councillors, was designed to support artists who found themselves in a difficult economic situation as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, through the acquisition of significant works for the municipal art collection. The second edition of the programme was held in 2021.

16. Dominika Olszowy, *A Keepsake for Ossowiecki*, 2012, three-channel video installation, 11'47"

A Keepsake for Ossowiecki is Dominika Olszowy's diploma project. Conceived as a three-channel video installation, the work engages with the prophecies of Stefan Ossowiecki, a Polish engineer active at the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, a close associate of Józef Piłsudski, and a figure associated with paranormal phenomena, including clairvoyance. The artist appears in the lower corner of the video, dressed in a white robe and positioned in a manner reminiscent of a sign language interpreter. She delivers a remixed compilation of prophecies concerning Poland, gathered from clairvoyants and prophets from around the world. At first glance, the video resembles a fragment of an esoteric television programme. Across the three screens unfolds a panoramic vision of the cosmos, its vastness shaped according to popular imagination and taste: mystical celestial bodies swirl against a backdrop of colourful galaxies and nebulae. An impassioned voice foretells great cataclysms and transformations, signs in the heavens and on earth, the downfall of nations, and the future glory of Poland. Elements of Polish Romantic mysticism intertwine with New Age exaltation. Moving beyond pastiche, Olszowy ventures into cosmic depths where, amid the stars, Polish xenophobia and megalomania subtly and unsettlingly come to the surface.

Dominika Olszowy (born 1988) studied at the Faculty of Intermedia at the University of the Arts in Poznań from 2009 to 2012. In 2011, she was a finalist of the Samsung Art Master competition. Between 2012 and 2014, she continued her education at the Faculty of Media Art at the Academy of Fine Arts in Warsaw. In 2018, she received the Special Award of the ING Polish Art Foundation during Warsaw Gallery Weekend, and in 2019 she was awarded the *Spojrzenia* prize granted by the Deutsche Bank Foundation. Olszowy's practice operates at the intersection of multiple media, including video, performance, sculpture, installation, and scenography. She founded the ephemeral Gallery Sandra and co-created the radical hip-hop group Cipedrapskuad. She is also a member and co-founder of the moped gang Horsefuckers M.C.

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17. Izabella Gustowska, *Relative Features of Similarity. Wichna and Hanka*, 1980, digital transfer, 16 mm film

Izabella Gustowska began work on the *Relative Features of Similarity* series in 1979. At the time, she was deeply engaged with the idea of the relativity of similarity, as well as with questions of the copy and the original, doubles, and twins. Her artistic inquiry encompassed notions of substitute twinship and twinship by

choice. As Gustowska herself is a twin, the project also carries an autobiographical dimension. The artist has acknowledged that taking up this subject was, in part, a search for identity. Through experiments with photography, she gradually constructed a new, personal form of reality. Her work traced the erosion of boundaries between an original truth, a truth recorded photographically, and a final truth actively created by the artist. This process unfolds across the series. In an expressive and nuanced manner, Gustowska examined issues of similarity and twinship. 'The game I conducted led to peculiar configurations in which fact becomes elusive and fiction intertwines with reality,' she remarked. Above all, she defended the autonomy of her artistic decisions and the independence of her imagination. As a result of her reflections and formal experimentation, she produced singular, almost hypnotic works that have become firmly embedded in the canon of feminist representation. Art critic and historian Paweł Leszkowicz has noted that Gustowska laid the foundations for a contemporary feminist art history in Poland. The graphic works in the series were produced using the auto-offset technique or mixed media. Both the graphic works and the video address questions of resemblance and the relationships between twins. All of the graphic works depict female figures.

The video documents a performance involving two women. The *Relative Features of Similarity* series is regarded as one of Izabella Gustowska's most significant and recognisable bodies of work.

Izabella Gustowska has been associated with Poznań since birth (1948). She graduated from the State Higher School of Fine Arts in Poznań (now the University of the Arts). Following her diploma, she began teaching at her alma mater, where she went on to hold a number of key positions, including head of the 4th Drawing Studio, later the Multimedia Actions Studio, and subsequently the Studio of Performative and Film Practices. Since 1979, nearly one hundred students have completed their diplomas under her supervision, many of whom are now leading artists recognised in Poland and internationally, as well as respected educators and curators. From 1979 to 1991, she ran Galeria ON in Poznań, and from 1991 to 1994 she co-directed the gallery. Her artistic practice spans a wide range of media, including painterly objects, printmaking, photography, video installations, video performance, and film. In 1984, she received the Birgit Skjold Memorial Prize for innovation in printmaking at the Eighth British International Print Biennale in Bradford. She participated in the 17th and 19th São Paulo Biennials (1983 and 1987), as well as the Sixth Triennale in New Delhi (1986). In 1988, she represented Poland at the 43rd Venice Biennale. A year later, she produced the large-scale works *Secret I, II, III* at the printmaking studios of the University of Alberta in Edmonton. Her works are held in museum collections in Poland and abroad, including the National Museum in Wrocław, the Museum of Modern Art in New York, and the private collection of Grażyna Kulczyk, focused on Central and Eastern European art, housed at the Muzeum Susch in Switzerland.

The Arsenał Municipal Gallery in Poznań presented two solo exhibitions by Gustowska: *Dreams* (1994) and *Floating Once Again* (1997).

This project was co-financed by the Minister of Culture and National Heritage from the Culture Promotion Fund, sourced from surcharges established on games subject to the state monopoly, in accordance with Article 80(1) of the Act of 19 November 2009 on Gambling.



18. Ola Winnicka, *Siory*, 2020, video, 6'42"

Ola Winnicka's work was presented in 2020 at the Arsenał Municipal Gallery as part of the exhibition *Magical Engagement*. The music video, created by the artist together with the band Siory, which she founded, was co-produced by the gallery specifically for this exhibition. The exhibition booklet accompanying *Magical Engagement* described the group as follows: 'Siory is romantic revolutionism, Joan of Arc set within a nostalgic, urban, Polish, marshland landscape.' The central message of the video is the idea of sisterhood understood as a form of sisterly solidarity. In the choreography developed by Dorota Michalak, emphasis is placed on the expressive, rebellious attitudes of the dancing girls. Their gestures, charged with strength, convey both resistance and a strong sense of self-worth. An important element of the work is also the specially designed costumes by Marta Szypulska and Angelina Jankowska.

Ola Winnicka is a multimedia artist whose practice spans illustration, painting, sculpture, animation, and music. She is a graduate of the Academy of Fine Arts in Poznań (now the Magdalena Abakanowicz University of the Arts), Faculty of Printmaking, and the founder of the group Siory. Lives and works in Poznań.

EVENTS AND EDUCATIONAL ACTIVITIES ACCOMPANYING THE EXHIBITION:

- January 16, 2026 (Friday), 6pm – opening night
- January 16, 2026 (Friday), 7pm – concert by the Coals duo
- January 17, 2026 (Saturday) – 12 noon: curator and author guided tour of the exhibition
- February 8, 2026 (Sunday), – 11am–12.30pm: "The Beginning Is the End, and the End Is the Beginning. We Make Drawings on the Collection." Family workshops accompanying the exhibition Art for the End of the World for children aged 6 to 9 with their guardians. Led by Joanna Tekla Woźniak from the Arsenał Municipal Gallery in Poznań. Details and registration at galeria-arsenal.pl
- ARSENAL PLAYGROUND**
January 20 – March 27, 2026 (Tuesday – Friday), 10am–3pm
Workshops for organised groups accompanying the exhibition, led by educators from the Arsenal Gallery in Białystok. We welcome groups of 5 to 20 people. Please book your dates a few days in advance. Ticket price for participation in the workshops: PLN 10.00 per participant. BKDR or KDR card holders receive a 50% discount on the ticket price (PLN 5.00). Details and registration at galeria-arsenal.pl
- MAN-U-FACTURERS**
February 3 – March 1, 2026 (Tuesday – Sunday), 10am–5pm
Self-service baskets for families and friends with sets of creative activities enhancing the reception of the exhibition. No registration required, free of charge.

SOME WORKS IN THE EXHIBITION MAY CONTAIN SENSITIVE CONTENT AND/OR SENSORY STIMULI

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Galeria Arsenał w Białymstoku / Arsenal Gallery in Białystok, ul. A. Mickiewicza 2, 15-222 Białystok, galeria-arsenal.pl
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EXHIBITION OPEN: from Tuesday to Sunday, 10 am – 6 pm. Last admission at 5.30 pm

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