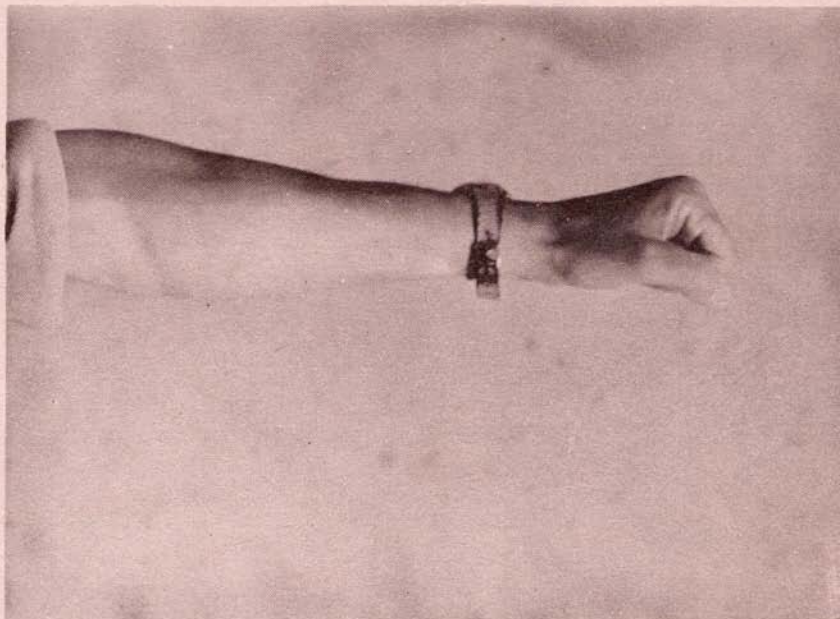
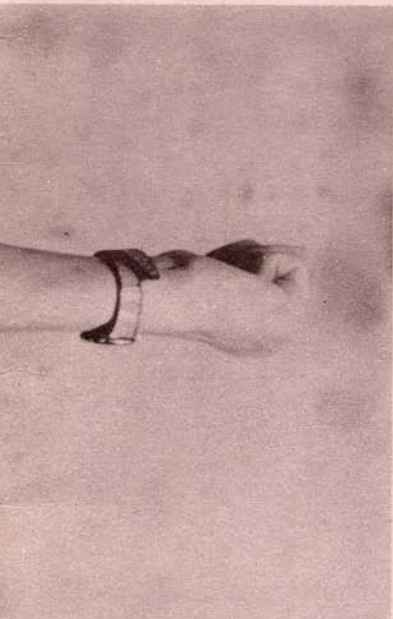


PROJECTS / PERFORMANCES



CZECHOSLOVAKIA / POLAND

**HALLWALLS Gallery, Buffalo
November 4-30, 1977**



Jaroslav Andel, Study for Heraclitus II, 1976

Cover: **Petr Stemberz**, Hand, 1972

INTRODUCTION

At the very end of the 1960s, numerous Eastern European artists departed from traditional aesthetics which resulted in marketable art objects and moved towards the elusive aesthetics and theories of conceptual art. This development was logical as some of the inherent qualities of conceptual art had already surfaced in Happenings, Performances and Events - integral parts of the Czech and Polish art scenes since the very early 1960s. However, none of these previous events were endowed with the painfully individualistic, self-indulgent and often narcissistic attitudes which are characteristic of the current work on view here.

These works fall into numerous categories loosely defined as body art, earth art, auto art, performance art, and so on. Different techniques and materials are used by different artists. For Czech artists Jan Mlcoch, Karel Miler and Petr Stembera, their bodies become the primary vehicles of expression. Although they come from the same philosophical background, their resulting activities vary considerably, according to their individual temperaments. Mlcoch and Stembera present dramatic statements exploring danger and self-torment while Miler discovers and communicates with the world around him through seemingly simple actions. Miler's latest pieces have the clarity of calligraphy drawn in space by the gesture of the body. Wisdom and calm emanate from photographic registration of natural phenomena by Jaroslav Anel. Poetry is at the core of the work by Jiri Valoch while science is the point of departure for Dalibor Chatrny.

Work of Polish artist Krystof Zarebski falls more within the realm of performance - it is structured and elaborate, with protagonists and public and is mostly performed at a gallery space. Przemyslaw Kwiek and Zofia Kulik are interested in diametrically opposed phenomena in the process of creation and documentation of art activities and the alteration of the process itself by the activities and materials connected with documentation. But despite the exploitation of different materials and media, there are three common and ruling denominators: time, space and constant change. Photography is also used to register and document singular and unrepeatable events.

Most of the activities documented in this exhibition are illustrations of one central idea: to determine the mental as well as physical relationship of the individual, in this case, the artist, to his environment and to the society in which he is living and working. The work involves a communication between the artist and the outside world as well as a communication with his innermost self. The search for one's own identity and a complete knowledge of that identity is a recurring theme.

The conditions under which these events were carried out are unlike any current situation in the Western world. The artists work without direct knowledge and exposure to thoughts and trends outside of their immediate environment and with almost no feed back or encouragement. Quite naturally, their attention is turned inward - towards themselves and their own feelings. And, ironically enough, the artists' search denies their isolation and results in statements of basic human feelings and values. These works exist in and of themselves, regardless of the structure of the society, the state or the government out of which they came. What ultimately exists is a universal statement.

I am indebted to the Directors and Staff of HALLWALLS for their cooperation during the preparation of this exhibition. I would also like to thank Regina Grol-Prokopczyk for her help in translating the Polish texts and Karen Spaulding for editing the manuscript.

CHARLOTTA KOTIK
Curator of Exhibition

Notes to the Catalogue

All materials exhibited are black and white photographs, unless otherwise indicated. Because none of these are unique prints, technical data and dimensions are omitted. An asterisk indicates works illustrated; a text accompanies each illustration. Because of the nature of this exhibition, its organization and contact with the artists were done primarily through the mail. In some instances, the artists did not supply vital information; unfortunately, most of those facts could not be obtained in any available printed material and thus, are not included here. Requests by artists to specifically use their own translations were honored.

Catalogue of the Exhibition

VLADIMIR AMBROZ

Born 1952. Lives in Brno, Czechoslovakia.

Weekend, October 1975
5 photographs

Tree, November 1976
3 photographs

***Car II**, February 1977
2 photographs (1 illustrated)

TV - Look, March 1977
3 photographs



JAROSLAV ANDEL

Born 1949 in Znojmo, Czechoslovakia. Lives in Prague.

Series for Heraclitus I, 1976

3 photographs

***Series for Heraclitus II, 1976**

5 photographs (3 illustrated inside cover)

***Back to the Elements, 1976**

8 photographs (2 illustrated)

“You cannot step twice into the same river;
for fresh waters are ever flowing in upon you.”
-Heraclitus from Ephesus



ANNA BOLCEWICZ

Born 1944 in Vilnyus, Lithuania. Lives in Wroclaw.

Many Meaning System, 1977

Collage, 7' x 13½"

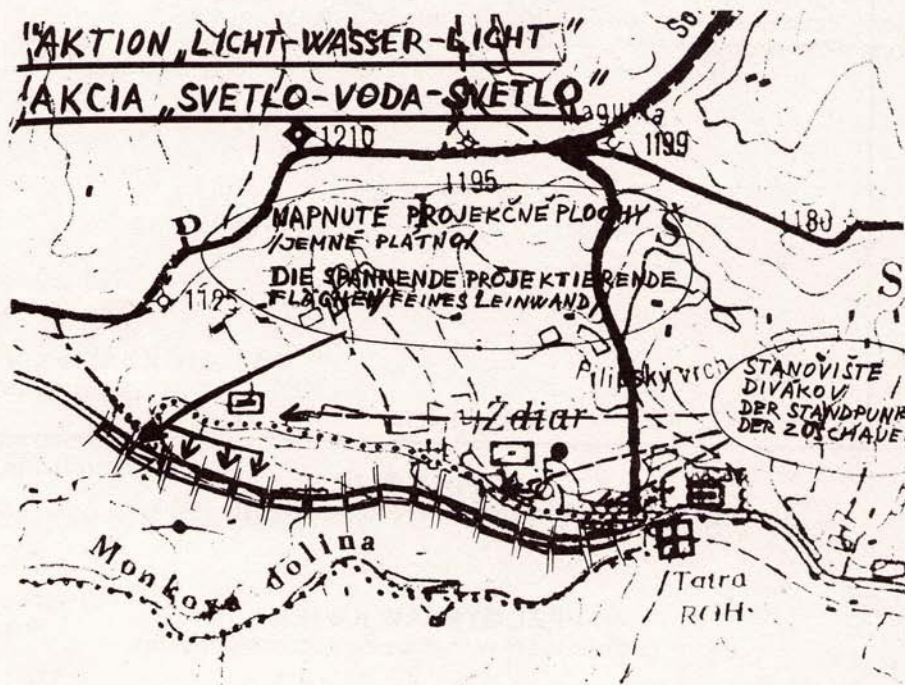
MILAN DOBES

Born 1929 in Prerov, Czechoslovakia. Lives in Bratislava.

***Light-Water-Light, 1975**

3 photographs from a series (1 illustrated)

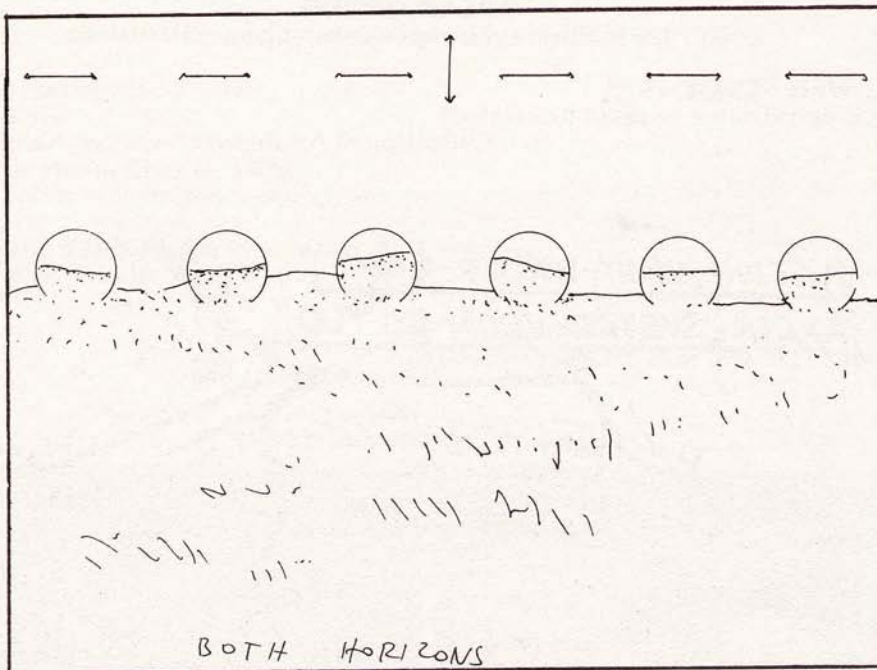
Collection of Art Research Center, Kansas City, Mo.

**DALIBOR CHATRNÝ**

Born 1925 in Brno, where he currently resides.

Mirror Orientation 1-4, 1973-1975

1. Projection of the verbal record of two opposite entities
3 reproduced etchings, each 5½ x 7"
- *2. Realization in the landscape
3 reproduced etchings, each 5½ x 7"; 2 photographs (1 illustrated, p. 6)
3. Visual continuation of space through the use of the mirror surface
3 photographs; 2 mirrors
4. Points of contact - reflection - notation
2 photographs



ZOFIA KULIK

Born 1947 in Warsaw, where she currently resides.

and

PRZEMYSŁAW KWIEK

Born 1945 in Warsaw, where he currently resides.

Collage, 1977

Collage, 8 panels, each 11¼ x 8¼"

Curriculum Vitae, 1975

8 portfolio pages, each 11¼ x 8¼"

From the text of **Curriculum Vitae**:

The artistic production in Poland today has the following characteristics:

- a) the artists are not interested in and do not have the conditions to work with the traditional materials:
stone, clay, easel painting;
- b) more and more works appear which are on the borderline between performances, theatre, happenings and vernissage display without the usual exhibition following (the public):
we have become accustomed to call these manifestations of artistic work activities.

We have been trying to document all activities for four years now, whether or not we organized them ourselves, participated in them or just took part as observers. But it is not just the documentation.

Because we interfere with the event with our presence - our microphones and our cameras - we make the activities become logical results of previous activities which have already occurred, and have been documented. On the other hand, we organize and direct audio-visual displays of these documents; we prepare various forms of shows, with various commentaries, meant for various environments.

KAREL MILER

Born 1940 in Prague, where he currently resides.

Little Stones, 1975

3 photographs

Discovering of the River, 1975

4 photographs

***Closer to the Clouds, 1977**

1 photograph (illustrated, p.8)

***Being Smelled by Fresh Grass, 1977**

1 photograph

The Saint Me, 1977

1 photograph

Ica-Rus, 1977

1 photograph

Art returns to man to the first act of consciousness, before the world he is given, before existence that is imposed on him. Art returns us to the eternal moment when human consciousness approaches the world from that other one, to beingness from its unbeingness. Art is a fascination, a dazzling as Blanchot puts it; it recalls the world to us in the glow of consciousness. It is the first consciousness. It is also the first prayer.
-Jindrich Chalupecky: **Nothing but Artist**
Prague, 1974

In the center of my attention are hypotheses: hypothetical experiences, hypothetical thinking, hypothetical feelings. My works are not models of experiences, feelings or ways of thinking. I am trying to formulate our hypothetical behaviour.
-Karel Miler, 1977



JAN MLCOCH

Born 1953 in Prague, where he currently resides.

***Hanging - The Big Sleep**, August 1974

2 photographs (1 illustrated p. 10)

I suspended myself by hands and feet from silon ropes fixed at three points. My eyes were covered with black masking tape and my ears stopped with beeswax.

Plastic Bag, June 1974

3 photographs

The Fiery Door, October 1975

1 photograph. Performed in the A.M. Potocka Gallery, Warsaw.

They Shall Not Return, April 1976

1 photograph. Performed in the Small Fortress of the former concentration camp in Terezin, Czechoslovakia.

Fire in the Exhibition Palace, February 1977

1 photograph

***Plastic String**, March 1977

3 photographs (1 illustrated, p. 10)

I fastened one end of a rope to the wall of a basement and made a noose at the other end, in the middle of the room.

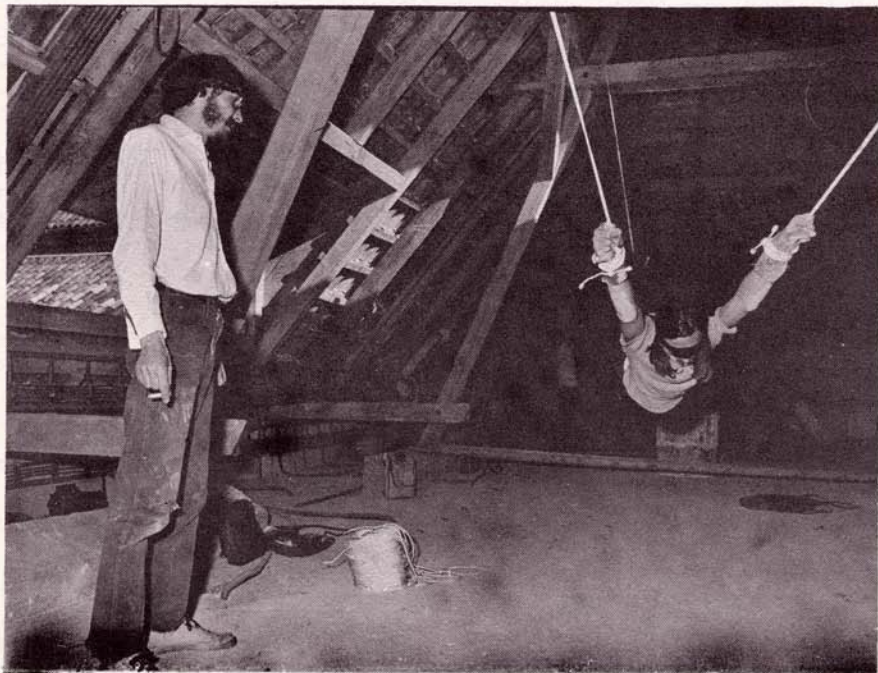
I put the right foot of one of the spectators in the noose.

Then I fastened one end of the rope around his left wrist, and ran the rope around a pipe on the opposite wall. I pulled on the rope abruptly, dragging my partner towards me. He began to resist. After a short struggle, he pulled me back and freed himself. We left the room together.

Night, May 1977

2 photographs

My first work **The Climbing on the Mountain Kotel** was conceived as a metaphor for the departure and the return among people. Since then I never did anything without this meaning. Sometimes there were few people, sometimes more - it is not important. I am interested in the changes they experienced during the action; I want to alter them through that action. I do not like the word spectator; its meaning suggests non-involvement. The reason I am doing very simple actions is because I am intensely aware of those present. The unpredictability of their reaction is the most interesting part of the whole event. For example, in **Plastic String**, I counted on my victory over the participant - I had planned to fight him, to tie him and then I would leave. It was to be up to him to get out - but there was a fight for the rope - and I lost.



TOMASZ SIKORSKI

Born 1953 in Warsaw, where he currently resides.

TV - Set Event, 1976

3 photographs

***Fire Table, 1977**

6 photographs (1 illustrated)

Untitled, 1977

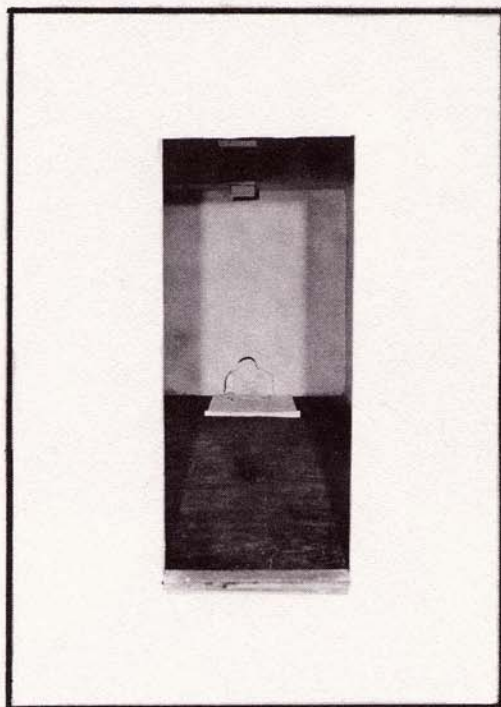
2 photographs



ADRIENA SIMOTOVA
Born 1926. Lives in Prague.

***Communication and Limitation**, April 1977
5 photographs (1 illustrated)

In two rooms of a soon to be demolished house, I organized a one day action which could be called **Communication and Limitation**. In this action I was touching the problem of the performance. It really was a kind of long lasting performance taking place in the precisely defined time and space which is contrary to the abstract time and space of the traditional "picture." In this defined time and space people were moving among the figures or their fragments created by me - people were coming, leaving, staying, standing, sitting. A deep interaction was created between them, the figures and me. Contrary to the law of the performance, my figure-protagonists remained after the action was over but would never have the same specific relation to their environment.



PETR STEMBERA

Born 1945 in Plzen, Czechoslovakia. Lives in Prague.

Transposition of Two Stones, 1971

6 photographs

***Hand, 1972**

6 photographs (cover illustration)

Extinction, November 1976

1 photograph

Jump, No. 1, February 1976

1 photograph

***Jump, No. 2, November 1976**

1 photograph

There were two jumps. The length of the first one (from the wall to the center of the room) was determined by a strip of rubber elastic tying my feet to a metal bar against the wall. From the place I reached during my first jump, I jumped the second time with the same intensity as the first jump but this time I was not tied down by the elastic. Along the wall there was spilled acid.

Autoportrait - Narcissos, No. 1, December 1974

1 photograph

Parallel Deprivation, February 1976

1 photograph



Each piece I did has much to do with the relationship to the world around, with the possibilities of it, with the freedom of man . . . Using the danger in my pieces is an expression of the fact that our relationship to the world, to the others are painful. No relationship is free.
-Petr Stembera, 1977

JIRI VALOCH

Born 1946 in Brno, where he currently resides.

Memory, 1975

1 photograph

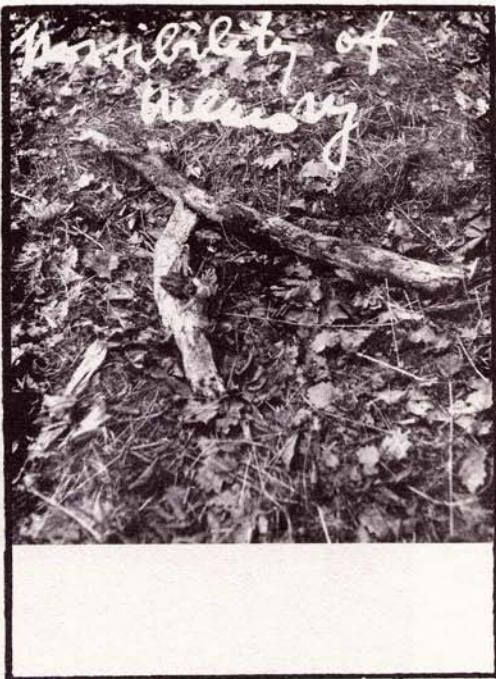
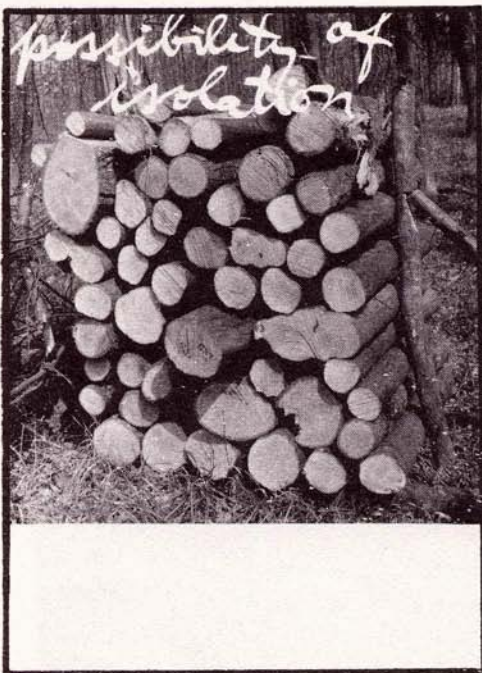
Word, 1975

1 photograph

***Possibility of. . . .**

(Observing the Landscape), 1974

8 photographs (2 illustrated)



KRZYSTOF ZAREBSKI

Born 1939 in Warsaw, where he currently resides.

***Flowers, 1971**

1 photograph

Exercises - Faucet Handles, 1971

1 photograph from a series of 3

Performance, 1972

1 photograph

Points of Contact, 1976

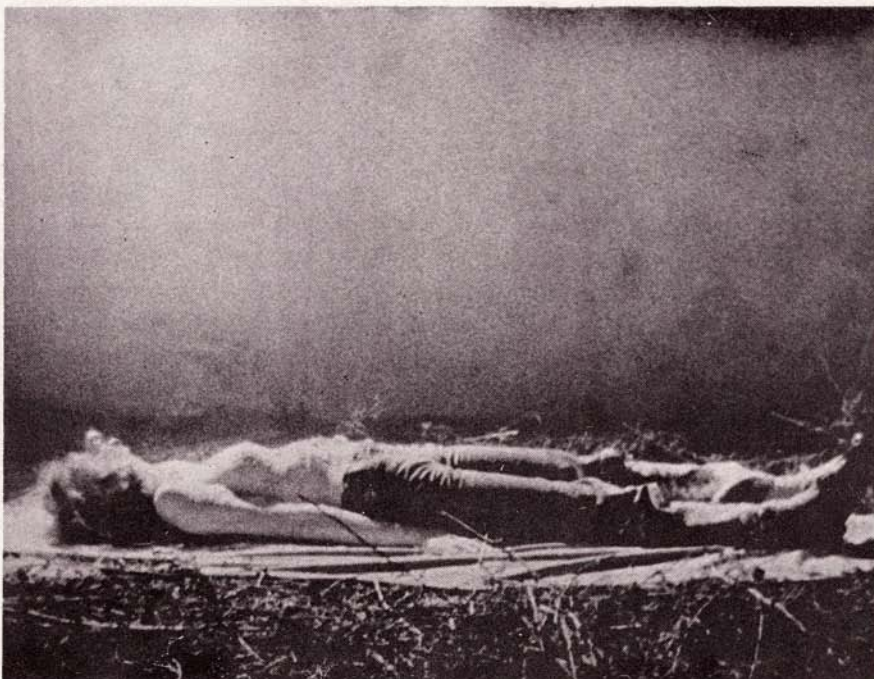
1 photograph

Zones of Contact, 1977

1 photograph

"Zarebski is a perpetual experimenter, discovering new fields of experience by creating new configurations of varied elements. Besides showing simple relationships, he searches for the visual equivalent of specific sounds - of defined spheres of touch within the human body. In these performances Zarebski arrives at a rare kind of perception. He shows the changing of our sensibility through the tearing down of stereotypical situations."

Jan Stanislaw Wojciechowski, 1976



Hallwalls is a non-commercial gallery, dedicated to the exhibition and presentation of contemporary art in Buffalo, New York. Its programming serves to bridge the gap between museums and their historical concerns and the gallery system and its commercial interests. Founded by a group of young artists, Hallwalls is staffed by a growing community of artists who are primarily interested in maintaining a gallery space for exhibition of work by area artists and encouraging a dialogue of ideas and work with other art communities. Since its inception in 1974, Hallwalls has sponsored over 400 events ranging from artists' presentations, performances, installations, critics' and writers' lectures and readings, to film and video screenings.

Due to the cultural isolation which exists between the United States and Eastern European countries, contemporary art work, particularly performance events, are sheltered in relative obscurity. This exhibition and its catalogue hopefully will provide stronger insight into the problems and concern of Czechoslovakian and Polish performance artists including both the political and poetic implications of their work.

Hallwalls would like to thank the following people for their contribution in making this exhibition and catalogue possible: Charlotta Kotik, Assistant Curator of Prints and Drawings at the Albright-Knox Art Gallery; Charles Clough, President of Hallwalls, Inc.; Robert Longo, former co-director of Hallwalls Gallery; Ann Rosen, co-ordinator of the Hallwalls/CEPA press. Hallwalls would also like to thank Margaret Brady, Diane Bertolo and William Currie for last minute assistance.

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