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Wrocław



nr 6



Wrocław

It's not easy to write about a place when you've spent your whole life there. The experience of the city changes into a daily routine made up of the same routes, tracks, buses, buildings. The monotony of sights and smells intertwines with the successive layers of memories. In the end, the subjective map of the city turns out to be nothing more than a set of overlapping anecdotes; an endless drift. There's no denying that people who live in the city perceive it tangibly, and they somehow internalize its palpable spirit through their body's memory. The city's persistent spectre keeps recurring in architecture, people's sense of humour, sentimental gestures, patches of greenery, benches, and alleys. Wrocław is an imaginary city created out of nothing. Moreover, it remains widely known for its soft spot for fantasies and urban legends. The swastika in the keystone of the Centennial Hall, the districts built on plans inspired by the symbols of the Third Reich, the underground mazes flooded with groundwater – all those myths, though endlessly ridiculed, continue to reveal Wrocław's symptomatic swing towards a fictional narrative lined with diverse traumas. This tendency was especially mocked by rule-breakers of the 1980s: the legendary LUXUS group and Major Fydrych with his Socialist Surrealism. The locality of Wrocław emerges at the intersection of fiction and authentic history. A lack of being designates the picture of this fragmented city. The particular relationships that constitute this bizarre image include some while leaving others outside a unique twist of threads comprehensible only to the chosen ones. This city of obliterated and vague history, scaled memories, and its uprooted and disturbed residents who lack their own regional cuisine – Wrocław's deficit is revealed in the social fear of what seems unfamiliar, or unknown, and a complete rejection of the city's post-war history. This denial of factual differences can be seen in the quest to eliminate arbitrary architectonic initiatives such as local markets, Gypsies' nomad camps, or unofficial, do-it-yourself barracks, as well as a total lack of respect for the architectural ideas of post-war modernism, which remains associated only with the former sinister political system. The idea of locality primarily consists of a network of contacts and relationships. Those provincial circles of mutual admiration and various strongly overlapping milieus give one a sense of having a terrible stench; a lack of fresh air. On the other hand, this cramped environment thrives on a well-organized network of self-help and more or less permanent, but highly spontaneous DIY initiatives. The public-private spaces allow individuals who remain active in various micro-milieus fields, giving hope of a long-expected intellectual and artistic ferment. Wrocław has been constantly hailed as the capital of the Polish punk scene and squatt movement, and therefore strongly associated with its famous libertarian, independent potential. However, the spirit keeps changing, like all living things. A strong, emotional connection with the city prevents us from making a fair assessment. The tradition of an alternative, grassroots culture seems to be an ultimate value worth fighting for and a priceless basis for further cultural development, doesn't it? On the contrary, it might be just another illusionary urban myth.

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On the cover the photo by Stanisław Sielicki
Panorama, non-existent hotel at Dominikański square
from the cover title: photo by Stanisław Sielicki

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photo:
Stanisław Sielicki

Was or was not



How *Breslau* has *been* becoming Wrocław

*a thing about ghosts from the
cupboard, and not only*

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Many Central European cities have some very bloody pages in their history. Breslau was not the only city to suffer beyond words as a result of the Nazi insanity. It is enough to recall Warsaw, which buried hundreds of thousands of human beings under its ruins.

However, there is this disturbing extra aspect to Wrocław, which made iron and fire define this place from its very beginnings, as equally with the Odra riverbed, whereas the tragic events of the last century were not just an interruption in its urban history, but one of its “normal” cycles. The geographic location of this “island city” has probably not contributed to a peaceful coexistence with its neighbours. After all, “The one, who reigns Eastern Europe, rules the continent; the one, who reigns the continent, rules the Island of the World; the one, who rules the Island of the World, rules the World”. That is why Wrocław has always been the focal point of frictions between political tectonic plates, and thus an extremely luscious treat for everyone with wide political ambitions, starting with Gustaf Adolf on up to Stalin. Consequently, the history of this part of Europe is that of battles, invasions, conquests, but also relatively peaceful settlements. After each friction of this sort different kinds of “leftovers” remained and became ingrained into the urban tissue. Therefore, Mongolian, Celtic, Sarmatic, German or Semitic roots are not only a phantasmal creation of PR specialists dealing with multicultural policy, but an intrinsic historical fact. The only difference is that wherever champions of diversity wished to see the model for a peaceful coexistence, in the majority of cases we had nevertheless been faced with strong antagonisms, which mostly took the form of brutal violence. However, for the inhabitants of the region this

violence was something quite integral and had nearly fused with the city life to become an inherent element. Only the 20th century brought a new solution to this question – the Nazi regime strived to eliminate any frictions, to make the social plane as flat as a still water surface. This hegemonic endeavour to the national uniformity led both to the largest disaster in the history of the continent and the worst disaster to strike “Adolf Hitler’s most faithful city”.

It seems that the city mostly bears the hallmark of the Prussian style – not only in a cultural but also in a military dimension. At the verge of the 19th century Breslau was a real fortress, surrounded by walls and moats. However this military urban coat slowly became inappropriate for a city which was proudly entering modernity. It was only the ambition of “the Absolute Spirit Riding on a Horse”, following the contest of the city, to de-fortify the city and make Breslau a demilitarized zone. It was then possible to adjoin suburbs, up until then walled off by the fortress belt. The fortifications themselves were renamed ‘promenades’, and the former bastions (Taschenbastion and Ziegelbastion) were converted into scenic hills. At least in this respect the Napoleonic Era was definitely advantageous for Breslau, as it is hard to find anyone who would not appreciate this change. The question remains, if a disarmed Breslau which for over 800 hundred years had had a militant attitude to the surrounding reality, cease to be a fortress? Not at all. The status of the stronghold did not really depend on specific fortifications it had rather been an inherent matrix of the city, impossible to be covered over with by avenues and boulevards.

On 23rd May 1847 Breslau was lit up with the glow of gas lamps. Three decades later there were electric trams pacing down the city and linking the city centre with its suburbs. Last but not least, the splendour of the 19th century was also enhanced by Breslau’s Jugendstil, on the other hand, by two virtuosos of architecture – Max Berg and Hans Poelzig. At the same time these were the last breaths of the city before the onset of the Barbarian era which ended up with Festung Breslau.

The city fully deserved the Fuehrer’s love, it held out longer than the command of the Third Reich. Its resistance was not stopped even by the news of his death in the Berlin bunker. Only on 6th May 1945 Niehoff signed the unconditional capitulation and the Festung Breslau crew laid their arms down. During the campaign, there were seven thousand Soviet soldiers, six thousand German soldiers and seventeen thousand civilians killed. The city was in ruins: 90% of southern and western neighborhoods were totally destroyed, the old town was 60% ruined. The gas network was 80% destroyed, and the lighting almost 100%. 80% of the tram rails were unfit for use, and the contact line system was practically non-existent. Three thousand points of the water supply system ceased to exist, as well as seven thousand of sewage points. None of the railway stations were operable. Out of the thirty thousand buildings that survived until the siege, twenty-one thousand were destroyed. In many places rubble reached up to the first floor of the remaining buildings.

The 3rd Reich bestowed Breslau with both the Police and Province Office headquarters from where each day goes out Eberhard Mock – the main cha-

acter of record-breaking detective stories by Marek Krajewski. Interestingly, the historical attribution of these institutions to their material carriers survived the maelstroms of history, so that up until today they fulfil precisely the same functions and house, in their walls, the equivalents of the same institutions – from the Gestapo, through the Militia up to the Police nowadays. You could hardly hear a more gloomy giggle of history...

Apart from the obvious smell of smoke or dust, Wrocław stank with corpses. However after the war there was not much time for sentiment and people immediately got down to clearing the city of debris engaging those who survived and new inhabitants. In February of 1946 the census was taken, which indicated that there were 168,466 people living in Wrocław, of those 76,610 Poles. The numbers speak for themselves as regards the seriousness of this clash. And so the communist authorities made the decision to expel citizens of non-Polish citizenship as soon as possible, in accordance with the Potsdam Agreement. The history is written by the winners. The repatriation points were hastily organised, and so on the 19th of February at 11:00 AM, one thousand five hundred German citizens left Wrocław. Until the 17th of March, with only short breaks, transports were leaving almost every day.

Two years later, thanks to two events Wrocław became widely discussed worldwide. The first event was The Exhibition of the Reclaimed Territories, which left the spike in front of the Centennial Hall as a reminder. The second event was of course The World Congress of Intellectuals for Peace, attended by 46 delegations from almost all over the world, that is the *crème de la crème* of the world's intellectual life. To what was left in urban fabric the authorities pumped up the nationalistic (first in the Communist conglomerate, and then set free) the phantasmal vision of the eternally Polish city. Squares, monuments, roundabouts – everything has been named after the Piasts or Jagiellons, including the shopping malls.

However palimpsests hardly ever work. The smaller the scale, the bigger possibility for success. For such a creation as a city it is just impossible, in particular for a city with such a turbulent history. And history, as you know, likes to repeat itself, unfortunately usually as a farce. History also likes to mock both the winners and the losers. In Wrocław it jeers at almost every step – both at policemen seated on the Nazi walls and students, whose alma mater is housed in the Soviet army's ancient barracks. In both cases some rigour is absolutely desirable. However, in Wrocław, history does not repeat itself as a farce (although by watching the recent brown wave of the flood one could doubt it), but as a mockery or comedy. Its gravity is not the same, what is more – the laughter has a totally different register than its cause.

They say that things excluded from the symbolic sphere (language, culture or simply spirit), always come back, like a boomerang. However this return is never innocent, as they come back in a real form – as something, that has escaped the symbolization process, thus becoming a sand grain in the cogs of a well oiled machine. Usually they are nothing pleasant – this is what we have the language for, and together with it e.g. a system of certain values, to be able

to tame different extra-linguistic monsters, domesticate them with words; make them more familiar. Yet in reality these things do not conform to these attempts. They like to come back as much as history likes to repeat itself. However we already know that in the case of Wrocław, it slips away from easy applications, and thus – having shifted the historical dimension from farce to comedy – we also have to perform the shift within our drawback, that is the return of the real.

When our palimpsest symbolic tissue bursts at the seams, these are not monsters that start peering out of the holes, but grotesque images, comic and improbable visions. These are urban legends – swastika-shaped schools, underground tunnels from Wrocław almost to Berlin, buildings set up in the Reich's coat of arms, and all other colorful yet improbable stories. What is the economy of such stories? I can only risk a hypothesis that what should find its place in the symbolic circuit, that is the urban (i.e. social and historic) narrative understood in anyway, is unable to find its place there. Festung Breslau cannot come back as a horror film, but it does in the form of an almost adventure parable. It is like a ghost haunting an abandoned house, however it does not scare us but amuses us, just like Casper the Friendly Ghost (who, after all, is the ghost of a child unable to find peace, which makes this character even more terrifying).

The phantom of Festung comes back like souls, who were refused a proper funeral. Breslau had to die so that Wrocław could be born. The visible lack of seriousness in respect to the past events, brutally buried under earth or the literally removed German identity of Wrocław, is reflected in the false mirror of urban myths.

Wrocław certainly deserves something more than cheap criminal stories senselessly feeding on these chips of history. Certainly, a chauvinistic policeman with ambitions of being a Latinist is not able to cope with the precise separation of the individual layers of the urban palimpsest. To wade through Wrocław's individual tissues someone endowed with a surgeon's precision is needed. Because of that I am convinced that Wrocław deserves its Joyce, and I also hope that one day it will live to have one.

*Wrocław
the beating
place,
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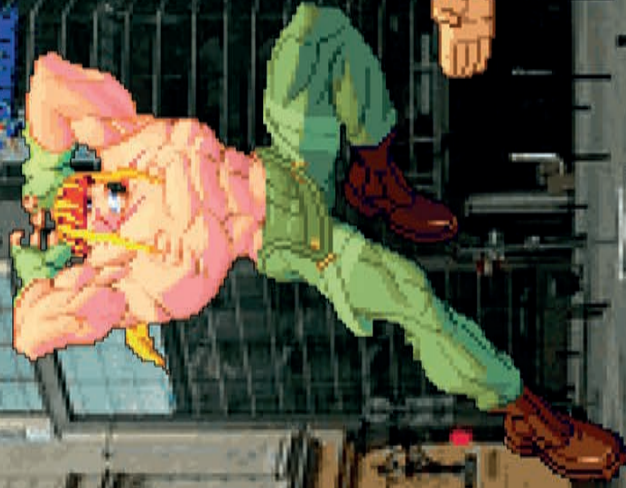
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New Old Town

*sun, green
and modernism
for everyone*

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Photos:
courtesy of Muzeum
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You can build a new world on ruins. A new city. A new neighbourhood. With no limitations, no ballast of the past, without imitating or copying. Full of green areas, sun, fresh air, with all the facilities offered by technology and civilization. You can create a flexible framework to be domesticated by the city's residents, filled with their needs, customs and gestures. Everything is possible – and it is possible to believe in it. Especially in Wrocław, if you are a young architect, a political and cultural thaw is currently taking place and socialist authorities are allowing architects to experiment, analyze and design relatively freely. A strenuously rebuilt city needs flats, and in the Miastoprojekt design offices whole districts are being built in the South, West and in the strict city centre, near the Rynek. These are not just to be agglomerations of blocks of flats, but modern, functional and self-sufficient objects. Everything has already well-considered, the citizens have discussed and are waiting, the press has praised, the ministry has awarded architectural concepts. Nobody knows yet that the plan will fail to be carried out. The new, although old-town housing estate on Nowy Targ Square will be a manifesto of user-friendly architecture only to a lesser degree, and to a higher degree – proof of the incompatibility of ideal assumptions with the possibilities and priorities of a centrally-planned economy.

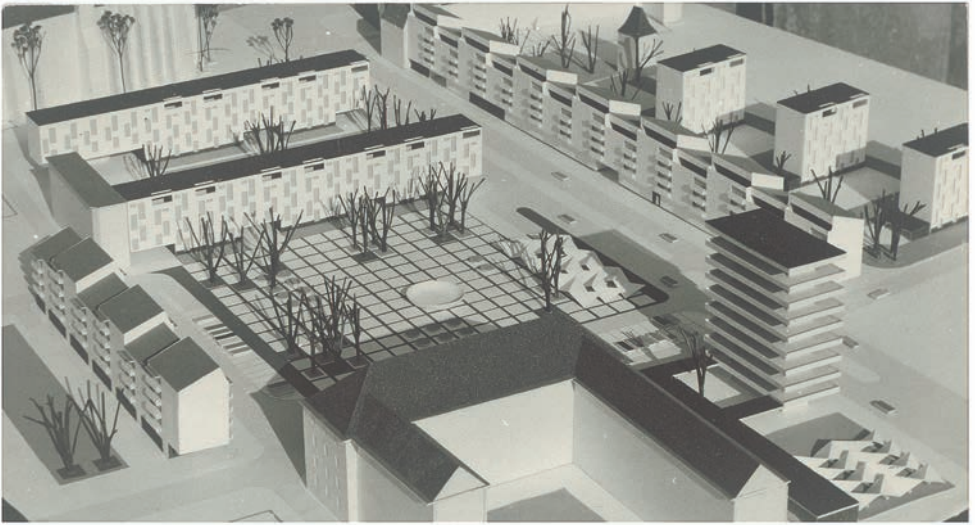
Yet before reality verified these ambitious and visionary ideas, “Słowo Polskie” magazine featured a discussion on how the old town should actually be rebuilt. In 1957 everyone talked about architecture, in cafes, on bus stops, during exhibitions, presentations and lectures. The survey 'Inhabitants of Wrocław: about their city' was an opportunity to share your opinion: answering one out of eight detailed and professional questions (*Do you think it is right to raise residential buildings of a pseudohistoric or modern character in the Old Town area?*) the inhabitants showed both pragmatism (*I am a supporter of a modern style in place of the old hovels, which in terms of investment and reconstruction are too expensive to preserve in their original character and architectural style. I believe that in this case historic buildings would be just a case of expensive snobbery*), as well as aesthetic awareness: *Definitely a modern style! First of all, because they are cheaper, more comfortable in use and they don't pretend to be something they are not. A building 'the same as' the one that used to exist there is not 'the same' building. (...) What is more, a new, modern building neighbouring real historic buildings does not have to look bad. What would look bad would be, let's say, Wawel, if king Zygmunt Stary were making 'references' and Zygmuntowska chapel were Gothic, well, the Gothic style would not exist at all, because references to some preceding style would have been made, there would not even be the recently trendy 'classic' style, because Greek architects would have been referring to something else. How nice would for example New York look for example, if it had been developed 'according to Biskupin'? And all of that as a result of 'referring' to the past¹.*

1. In the National Archives in Wrocław there are several dozen of filled out questionnaires, in which readers answered the questions with great commitment, but in a quite informal tone, allowing themselves to criticize the authorities and even the system. See: The National Archive in Wrocław, PRNmWr, ref. no. 1551, l. 1-114 (quotations come from the collection – original spelling).

This 'recently trendy classic' was of course socialist realism: the turn of 1956 brought the abandonment of architecture 'national in form and socialist in essence', and in the process of designing old town neighbourhoods – a definite departure from reconstruction and conservational creations based on historical forms. Above all, this was related to a shift in the aesthetic paradigm and a negation of socialist realism, but also coincided with the necessity to introduce standardization and industrialized construction methods on a large scale, which were meant to lower the costs and improve the process of erecting buildings. In Wrocław, in the face of massive destruction, increasing the number of new flats was a priority, to a small degree depending on the location or historical context. In the mid 1950s a part of the Rynek and Solny Square were already functioning as a residential settlement and after 1956 the North-East part of the Old Town, the third most important square – Nowy Targ came next. Despite the nomenclature in use, it was not just a 'reconstruction' but rather a 'construction', actually the first opportunity – after ten years – for an open dialogue with the past, for dealing with the history of the still 'unfamiliar city'.

As the first, timid shy attempt to introduce contemporary themes to a historical surrounding one can consider Młodzieżowy Square (the northern section of Świdnicka Street), designed in the last phase of socialist realism and which acts as a sort of a testing ground for young architects. The next, much more serious task of that architectural team (Włodzimierz Czerechowski, Ryszard Natusiewicz, Anna and Jerzy Tarnawski) was a holistic plan of the North-West part of the Old Town, presented at the Regional Architecture Show in 1957. The design preserved the existing scale of the buildings and system of streets, suggested a new setting for important crossroads and squares: green areas, a tall hotel with a cinema emphasizing the corner of Nowy Targ and Piaskowa Street, as well as a new wing added to the Market Hall: the inhabitants of Wrocław were to walk wide pavements and see free-standing glass showcases filled with attractive confectionery. It was a totally new quality and the complete antithesis of projects for this area which, from the beginning of the 1950s, had referred to the pre-war buildings.

Nowy Targ, demarcated in the 13th century, up until 1945 was a market square, surrounded by various developments, consisting of buildings of medieval and modern provenience – at the turn of the 19th and 20th century some of the old tenements were demolished to make room for the edifice of the Oberpräsidium der Provinz Schlesien (currently a city government building), some of them were raised and rebuilt. In the middle of the square, where fairs were taking place and a market was located (wood and herrings were the main products traded there), in 1732 a fountain of Neptune was created, called 'George with pitch-fork' by the locals. In its historical form, Nowy Targ ceased to exist in 1945 – war damage affected not only parts of the tenements, but the neo-baroque Oberpräsidium and a tenement on the corner of Jodłowa Street as well. The ruins were pulled down and in 1953 Emil Kaliski's architectural team started to work on the new shape of this place: the third



old-town square was planned to be rebuilt as a residential area, according to the conservational doctrine already applied already in the Rynek and Solny Square – the new buildings were supposed to be historical in character and recreate, as much as possible, the original facades of the old tenements, ignoring the 19th and 20th century buildings, which were considered to be of no value. However, in the face of the large financial expenses required for the reconstruction of the Old Town, as well as a change in attitude in the conservation circles towards these kinds of architectural developments, this concept was abandoned. A big marketplace started to function on the empty square already cleaned of debris, independently from any plans for development and according following its century-long tradition, soon became one of the most important landmarks on the map of Wrocław.

The development of the project for Nowy Targ took Włodzimierz Czerechowski's team a few years and was finished in 1961. Yet, before the final version of the square that met all the demands of the Worker Settlement Management Building (in Polish: *Dyrekcja Budowy Osiedli Robotniczych*) came into being, between 1957-59, an experimental prototype building, in which technological (transversal construction walls) and functional (flexible plans for flats) solutions planned for the rest of the settlement were applied, was built nearby, on 29-31 Szewska Street. The concept of flats, whose interiors can be shaped by each resident was revolutionary on the national level, it was a manifesto for a new model of living: the offer was 'a whole range of types of flats. From studio-space, two-storeyed (with an open, two-storeyed space), as well as though divided into single or double bedrooms. The arrangement of flats could be changed by moving or removing wall units, according to the changing needs of the user'². The designers themselves were given accommodation with a studio in that building and had long discussions with the future residents who, because of their varied origins and education, had very different demands and visions.

2. Quotation from Włodzimierz Czerechowski's letter.

That's how, in the late 1950s social consultations and designing flats adjusted to individual needs were made possible in Wrocław – it was a sensation on both a Polish and European scale (a similar system of residential units was developed in 1961, thus two years after the building in Wrocław was built, by John Habraken and the Dutch at SAR, and on a greater scale it was put into use in England and the USA in the following decade).

In 1958 the team of architects received a 3rd award from the Town Planning and Architecture Committee for their experiment on Szewska St. and a 1st place award for the initial design of the Nowy Targ buildings. In 1960 the construction of an estate for four thousand residents began, however the finished project differed from the previous conceptions. The buildings, whose interiors were designed as flexible units that could be modified, were broken up into a specific number of flats, from studio flats to bigger apartments, and given out without taking the needs of the tenants into account. The previously tested social experiment had no chances to be finished under the conditions of this kind of top-down planning. The residents were provided with tools by the architects which they were not able to use. Only today, by eliminating the partition walls, are the residents timidly discovering the potential of the so-called 'free-planning' of the 1960s.



The biggest changes were made to the northern frontage: sloping roofs were rejected, and the ground floor which was of a commercial character, and meant to house, among others, a cafe, was turned into flats. The reason was simple – designing service outlets in all three frontages resulted in exceeding the standard – the commercial area was too big in relation to the residential area. Assigning all ground floor units to shops, hairdressers, bookshops or cafes would at least be an extravagance in this case, and replacing them with flats – a cheap and effective solution, which was backed by the necessity to increase the number of units. Behind the northern frontage a second, identical block of flats was built. Originally it was supposed to be arched, just like the street nearby, but again economy won out and the design was simplified. During the construction, the designers had to show a lot of flexibility – the western corner was modified when relicts of a medieval known as the House of Trzebnica Maids (in Polish: *Dom Panien Trzebnickich*) was discovered nearby, and the decision was to preserve and expose them in a glass pavilion that was finally intended as a photography gallery. Additional means were almost always found for the testimonies of the Piast past of this kind in Wrocław – and that is why Nowy Targ was expanded with an element that had not been included in any previous projects.

The architects had expected to place a modern fountain in the middle of the square, which would have referred to a pre-war Neptune fountain – a single-storeyed, light commercial pavilion with a fanciful, broken roof that was supposed to stand next to it. A tall hotel was to be located on the corner of Piastowska St. It would have optically balanced the massive edifice of the former Oberpraesidium. Piastowska St. was to have the rank of a city corso, a representative promenade connecting Dominikański Sq. and Ostrów Tumski. None of these elements were realized: the pavilion was not raised, instead of the fountain a flowerbed was installed, and the cost of relocating tram lines from Nowy Targ turned out to be too high and because of that Piaskowa is now a busy street and not a pedestrian zone. In the middle 1960s on the corner intended for the tall hotel a 'Navicentrum' office building designed by Bożena and Waldemar Hinc from Warsaw was built. This rather low object of dense, ribbed divisions of elevation in no way matches the well-thought out buildings by the architectural team of Czerechowski, Natusiewicz and Tarnawski, it is an example of an ill-considered decision made according to short-term need, with no respect for the author's concept nor for the city space.

After all the Nowy Targ development, currently unkempt and in fatal technical conditions is, in spite of appearances, a studiously composed whole, within which the buildings have preserved the traditional, compact character of frontages of different forms and visual expression. The eastern and western frontages, both with service outlets on the ground floor, are based on alternate pattern of higher and lower segments with pitched roofs, highlighted by perpendiculars of brick chimneys. The horizontal rhythm on the other hand is introduced by light, horizontal strips of balconies with concrete balustrades. The northern frontage is calmer – it is a long, compact block with a flat roof,

whose elevation was designed as an abstract, geometrical image, composed of two modules with windows in three shapes, diversified with clearances on the ground floor and loggias on the top floor. The graphic character of the elevation was additionally highlighted with the use of a strip of black ceramic plates below the windows and a white and grey colour scheme contrasting with the redness of brick and black terra-cotta (today only the remains of these materials and colours are left on the elevations).

The integral part of the whole concept was the geometrical flooring of the square, based on an association with the old-town, chessboard system of streets, regularly divided by strips of basalt into light squares, part of which were intended for lawns, a part for horse chestnut trees and a single bigger one – for a large flowerbed, a reserve for a never built fountain. Nowy Targ was not supposed to be a competition for the nearby Rynek and Solny Square, it was designed as a semi-public space, to a small extent oriented towards representative functions (a city government building and parking lot in front of it), and to a definitely larger extent on creating an intimate, green place, encourage leisure which was at least partially meant to compensate the residents of the small flats. A large amount of greenery was one of the priorities of the whole undertaking – similarly to the whole Old Town concept, Nowy Targ was also assumed, according to the directives of Athens Card, to introduce a maximum amount of sun, green and fresh air. This is why the wooded green areas and interiors between the blocks of flats with playgrounds were designed: *The area of Nowy Targ is an almost completely new part of the city centre. It differs from the old buildings not only in architecture. On the vast area on the back of the residential blocks of flats, playgrounds for children are being installed, grass is being sown and bushes planted. Every flat has access to the sun*³.

Implementation of this ambitious plan which was the development of the area destroyed during the war – which as a matter of fact meant to create it from scratch – spread out over the years. Perhaps if the plan had not been so wide-ranging, the whole investment would have started earlier, and thus the necessity for restrictive savings introduced after 1960 would have been avoided, at least partially. The economy turned out to be merciless, and in the face of the cuts, new hotels, cafes and shops had to remain on paper only. The square itself became a quiet, green place, and its somewhat lazy atmosphere was closer to a community backyard than the center of a big city. The decades that followed unfortunately brought a degradation of this space – the parking lot took up almost half of the area, the benches disappeared and the lawns, trees and bushes needed nurturing.

Nowy Targ entered a period of political transformation with the odium of a neglected place, surrounded by schematic architecture of People's Poland. In the Atlas of Wrocław's Architecture published in 1998 the square was considered as grey and monotonous, and it was postulated to replace the current development with a new one, which would match the historical context better. Such suggestions appeared both in official discussions concerning the future of the city, and among Wrocław's inhabitants –

3. As cited in:
Nowy fragment
śródmieścia,
"Gazeta Robotnicza",
no. 90, 12 IV 1963,
p. 4.



negative connotations with the historical era were translated into very harsh and often unreflective judgements based only on shallow knowledge. In the 1990s the architecture of post-war modernism received no recognition neither from scientific circles nor from public opinion, and the media narrative unequivocally associated it with the period of the People's Republic of Poland, under whose system, no valuable buildings could have emerged, and all that was built, blemished Polish cities and were fitted only for demolition. A rational evaluation that the paintings or films of that period underwent did not include architecture, which contributed on the one hand to great neglect and destructions, and on the other – to delays in the process of accepting the legacy of the last 50 years, which in case of the Wrocław was very important in forming a local identity. The situation began to change after the year 2000, when the now finished historical period of Socialist Poland became a point of interest for a generation which had no prejudices and a negative attitude towards the era and who wanted to get to know the art of their grandparents' generation. This arduous process of revalorization of post-war architecture which, because of the times in which it was created, as well as the state to which it has been brought is actually still taking place. Wrocław's symbol of all the shortcomings of the 1960s architecture is nothing else but Nowy Targ – in February 2006 in a local issue of "Gazeta Wyborcza" an article appeared under the provocative title 'We demolish and we earn', began

with the words: *If we were to demolish the blocks of flats on Nowy Targ and recreate its historical buildings, one could earn even a dozen million zloty. And the square would be more beautiful*⁴. The initial plan of the Wrocław Development Office (somewhat unrealistic and characteristic for the period of economical boom) was met with diametrically opposing reactions, from the enthusiastic to the very critical. Its authors stood in defence of the project, backed up by history of art and architecture students and professors, who also opposed the idea of adding historicized facades to the existing blocks of flats (as such ideas also appeared in the press). The conception of reconstruction, raising understandable doubts both from economical and ideological points of view, was met with quite a strong resistance from the conservation department: such a reconstructed square would be an artificially created Disneyland, a simulacrum, creating safe associations with the ideal past of Breslau, and negating the close and real (and yet already historical) phase of the city's development.

The best example which demonstrates how the perception of post-war modernism has changed over the course of the years that followed appears to be the verdict of the competition jury, which in 2010 evaluated works submitted to the contest for a project of rebuilding the groundwork of Nowy Targ (and construction of an underground parking lot). The winning work by the Roman Rutkowski Architekci office respected the copyrights, preserved the most important qualities of the place (such as the regular net of divisions), it was designed with urban furniture and a pavilion – an element that was not implemented half a century ago. With the end of the work in the summer of 2013 another stage in the history of Nowy Targ and the space that required renovation has begun, at the same time, a period of domestication and acceptance. The newly implemented groundwork, despite preserving the original division is proof that modernization and a striving for perfection are not always the best solution, especially in places which, because it serves the basic, residential function, should have a certain margin of freedom and flexibility. There is no trace of lawns or hedges on the ideal, granite chessboard, and the discrepancy between this official, representative space and the neglected houses that surrounds it is currently very clear, both in the visual layer (granite perfection versus concrete falling apart), as well as in meaning. The square itself becomes a separate, allocated territory, theoretically intended for all Wrocław inhabitants and tourists – hence, among others, the idea to organize ecological fairs there under specially designed sheds and on topdown established conditions. How these concepts will work out will become clear in the course of the next few years, yet the resignation from the community's semi-privacy for the sake of anonymous representation does not seem to be an optimal solution. One gets the impression that in the contemporary culture of events, spectacular actions and squares-showpieces there is no place for green areas of no imposed script or with no fireworks. And after all, Nowy Targ was never competition for the Rynek, the 'city's salon', and perhaps there is no need to turn it into a unique space by force; the trees planted 50 years ago give a clear sign

4. <http://wyborcza.pl/1,76842,3158555.html>

that the show is taking place somewhere else, while here you can rest in the shade, have a chat, and stay for a while. A bit like at home, a bit like in the backyard.

Nobody knows yet what results the competition for the Neptune fountain will bring; its form already raises emotions, which in the face of the dictate of the granite bricks is not the major issue – perhaps the space for the fountain (currently empty, surrounded by somewhat rescaled couches) should be taken up by a shallow pond, around which reed and sweet flag would grow freely, softening the symmetry of the new seats and the perfect surface of the ground-work. Or at least a big lawn – just so that one could look at some greenery. Preserved old horse chestnut trees, in the shade of which the passers-by sit, and the small, perhaps unattractive front gardens of the northern frontage, which we owe to the strict standards from the beginning of the 1960s, in combination with the new part of the square are like a shy sign of opposition against creating representative and finished places.

In the course of the last half-century, Nowy Targ has changed diametrically and is still changing: it is already confirmed that no demolition or retroversion will take place. The most important characteristics of the buildings will be preserved, which will be taken care of by the conservation department. Perhaps we should return to the idea of Piaskowa St. only for pedestrians or consider replacing the office building with a new one, but one that would be modern through and through, and would complement the authentic, although neglected, urbanist tissue. Since Nowy Targ, and all studies, sketches, initial plans and detailed analyses, experimental projects as well as what has been created on their basis – the buildings, interiors between the blocks, alleys and scenic perspectives – are, after all, a testimony of an at times fascinating, and at times clumsy search for contemporary forms to describe a complicated and multithreaded narrative of the Old Town. They are a testimony to a short period of creative freedom, when you could design everything: a new settlement, city, world.

zdjęcie
z archiwum
autorki



DIY



*Wroclaw from
Bird's Eye View,*
Antoni Wajda
– born 1976,
painter, illustrator,
social satire, published
a hooligan – delirious
book about the lives
of Polish immigrants
in the United Kingdom
“Banbury – events
in the brig”

Szczeliny w mieście

Anna Mituś
interviews
Jacek Jankowski
(Ponton)
28.06.2013

a concert of
the Kormoran group
in the Water Tower
on Wiśniowa Street,
photo from
the artist's archives



*You are the author of the amazing projects **Cormorants** and **Eden**. I'd like you to tell me about Wrocław in the eighties in the context of the inspiring space which enabled them. For my own purposes, I'll call this space the 'private public space'. I'd like to hear more about what we've once discussed, all those bizarre cracks in the urban tissue which have provided a unique space for your art.*

Space wasn't limited back then. I'd say that it was unenclosed and therefore incredibly easy to penetrate. You could easily climb most of the buildings and people would gather in the towers, church naves, and even on the roofs. There were regular parties organized practically non-stop. You could for example sneak into the Holy Cross Church by climbing up the scaffolding, you just



a concert of
the Kormoran group
in the Water Tower
on Wiśniowa Street,
photo from
the artist's archives

had to know exactly which hatch to open. This scaffolding was installed for the renovation purposes but it remained there over a decade and even later on. Most of those public places were easily accessible. You could, for instance, jump unattended into the tropical pond inside the palm house or take a spontaneous swim in one of the public swimming pools.

Siemion described those events in his novel 'Niskie Łaki'.

Siemion mixed fiction with reality and this literary switch has actually annoyed certain people. At one point, for instance, he claims that Miki Mousoleum had played a concert at the Opatowice Weir. This is not true, it was actually our performance. We used to play there a lot after all. Once, we even performed an act of autodestruction. We put on the gas masks and set off some riot control gases. The peace-oriented crowd rushed in a blind panic to the exit ladders while we were watching the whole scene from a distance. As I said before, you could freely explore the public space in the eighties. People would climb on various abandoned buildings, cranes, churches etc. Of course we had to run away sometimes, for example from the police. However, it was a common routine for us and we did it on a daily basis. That was simply the way we used to hang out. There were plenty of abandoned tenement houses. They functioned in a way like squats and we treated those buildings like our private space. We would even change the locks to have our own keys to certain rooms. There were also plenty of places where you could organize a spontaneous event. Whole quarters stood empty because the people who used to live there before World War II had been forced to leave and run away. Those spacious lofts remained inhabited so it was a perfect opportunity for us to move in.

Did those places exist up until the 1980s?

Sure. I think that even up until the '90s. There were plenty of them. I remember one tenement house on Ofiar Oswiecimskich Street, now there is a bank there. It was a building with a well inside, a loft shaped like a horseshoe, and a direct access to the roof. It served us as a kind of a main party place, some people even lived there because it was in a mint condition. I used to live there as well. The space was perhaps a little unfurnished and there was no running water but it was well-preserved. People used apartments like these for different purposes, many bizarre things were happening there.

Would you describe those places as proto-squats or would you just call them dens as your friend Staszek Sielicki does?

Squats have always been a bit like that. It depends on who lives there. Let's face it, you can have a den even in a proprietary flat. It is a matter of the tenants' mentality, their individual attitude and manners. I remember a lot of really crazy parties, which eventually made the rooms look here and there like a battlefield. However, I'd say it was a marginal phenomenon.

What did these parties look like?

Very different. I was mostly interested in making music. We would play on any kind of instruments until we were dead on our feet. I remember one concert that lasted for two or three days without a break, just with some naps

Acoustic
experiments
in the tunnels
of Międzyrzecki
Rejon Umocniony,
photo:
Jacek Jankowski



in the meantime. I remember that we used to jam on the construction site that belonged to the Wrocław University of Technology. This block, situated near the Grunwaldzki Square, remained under construction up until the mid-90s. This completely empty building was comprised of ten floors and an amazing terrace. It provided the perfect acoustics. We used the pipes suspended from the roof down to the ground to play some incredibly spatial banging sounds there.

Cormorants?

Various people. A kind of regular squad combined with some satellite groups that appeared in different configurations. It was very informal, I guess. Nobody insisted on any official regulations. There is no sense to throw around names now, because memory plays tricks. Everyone remembers a completely different set of people.

Apparently you had the keys to the lofts in all the buildings around the Old Market Square, some bomb shelters and even to the Opatowice Weir. Can you tell me more about those places?

You didn't even need the keys. You could just wander in. The tenement houses formed those characteristic squares closed within four streets. You could just go around the block by jumping from roof to roof. Most of the buildings stood open so we could enter whenever we wanted to. Sometimes we even put in new locks in certain rooms to gain some privacy.

Once we played in the Sedesowce (this is what people use to call the famous skyscrapers designed by the Polish architect Hawrylakowa), where my mother lives. We played a concert in the lift shaft, in a small room at the top of it. Eventually, the police arrived and took us all to the police station. However, those were the times when we would just return to the same spot and continue smoking joints while joyfully playing on instruments that didn't require any electricity. You could just make the whole block hear the music through the lift shaft. And it was not malicious, as we played really nicely. (Laughs) However, I remember that once this whole aura of the martial law in Poland provoked someone to fire a tear gas or a smoke bomb. Suddenly, here came the firefighters, but they didn't associate us with the fire alarm, and just told us to get out of there.

One of the most interesting places was the Water Tower on Sudecka Street, maybe not in terms of acoustics, but it was a very popular meeting place with regular events. We used to go there every couple of weeks. Actually, dozens of people visited this place. It was a common concert spot with such great power and potential that the present-day clubs can hardly conquer. However, we had to transport various equipment up the staircase all by ourselves: amplifiers, microphones, cables etc. People would carry this whole stuff simply on their backs, using some ropes to squeeze and pull these packages through the holes in the walls and burned ceilings... Just to bring them back a few hours later. Now it seems absurd, but it was an amazing space worth our efforts, no matter

*buildings designed by Jadwiga Grabowska – Hawrylak, which belong to the most important achievements of the brutalist and futuristic style in post-war Polish architecture

that it was heavily devastated by fire. The tower had its own unique atmosphere which was difficult to imitate. The ground floor was inhabited, but we used to sneak inside on the pretext of renovating which our friends conducted in the barrel at the top of the property. We started to play regular concerts there and everything was going just fine until one day, when people who lived there became anxious. One night, they decided to pull the plug on us. Suddenly everything went completely dark and quiet. They also closed the exit door so we got trapped inside the barrel without electricity or fresh air. That sudden outage led to a real Armageddon. Moreover, someone accidentally spilled some toxic paint and we were all smeared in this poisonous liquid and left alone in complete darkness. Finally, the police arrived and we managed to get out, all covered in paint. The fact that no one got killed was a true miracle.

Did all your actions incorporated such traits of horror?

Yes, but it seems to me that they also functioned as a kind of catharsis. I'd rather say that it was more of a horror into which we were getting ourselves on purpose. I guess this is the reason why it worked for us so well.

How old were you?

It's difficult to say. Twenty-something, it was some time after the martial law in Poland.

Did these actions align with any socio-political assumptions as to how the squat movement grounds its principles?

It was actually very simple. On the one hand, there was this whole society impaired by militia, but on the other, there were us acting in the public space. Generally speaking, any kind of performance in the open public meant exposure to some extent of oppression back then. Whether was it for some drunk type, an importunate policeman, or an undercover cop, playing music in these types of places was inevitably associated with potential trouble. But the stakes were high. We were exploring the areas where we were able to do or create whatever we wanted in various weather conditions at any time of the year. We adapted the abandoned luxurious interiors for our own purposes. It was an incredible independence. Just imagine such freedom – to have your own room in the center of the town to do with what you wish with the comfort of not being harassed by anyone. We didn't identify our activity with any specific political ideology. Nowadays such connections tend to appear, but they seem like a secondary attachment of exaggerated meanings. Usually certain complications appeared when we tried to organize some events in the neighbourhoods controlled by the police, let's say a concert at the Wrocław Central Station etc. The truth is, we were simply interested in any kind of space with unusual acoustics, which under normal conditions would have been out of our range.



Tower in the Church of Saint Cross (Kościół Św. Krzyża), from the artist's archives

I guess that Wrocław seemed like a unique place to you at that time. The desolate post-German metropolis embroiled in the aggressive propaganda of the recovered territories symbolized a one-of-a-kind challenge as a 'resistor' persistently displaced from the official historical memory. How did you perceive Wrocław in that heroic period? Was it of any major significance to you and the people you worked with?

I perceived Wrocław as a weathered rock, or as a specific nest for some simple organisms. Of course you could also find places of higher metaphysics, but this organic aspect seemed to me to dominate the most at that time. All you could see were these gray streets, without all the present-day ads, which looked like a weathered sandstone canyon where unknown creatures dug themselves some pits. They resembled the after-images of life that had once been present and then disappeared. All that remained, were these sluggish, dying traces of an unknown existence. A kind of a zone. The areas like Trojkat or Jednosci Narodowej Street reminded me of an eroded rock with some voles nesting inside.

I understand that you don't want to omit anyone, but would you just try to name but a few of those who belonged to the so-called core group within this environment you've just described?

I don't think that such a group could be distinguished at all. It was more of a crowd that decided to unite in order to create something meaningful. Those were the times that even if you didn't have an instrument of your own, you could just come and play on someone else's stuff. If you didn't know how to play, you could just scream. There was this common conviction that if every-

one is an artist, then everyone can create an a work of art. It was a strong current at that time. Everyone was encouraged to express themselves in their chosen artistic field, regardless of expertise. Sometimes it came out surprisingly well. People who held instruments for the first time in their life, were actually producing really great things. Everything was based on the foundation that we could create situations and things that had no right to exist in those realities. There were no entertainers, only a pack of people who were attending the same parties and had mutual friends. Communication wasn't as easy as it is now, there were no cellphones nor Internet. There were only the public telephone booths with telephones for coins. Surprisingly, it magically worked for us and we managed to contact and meet up somehow. Nowadays, you can invite people over a hundred times on some social networks, send them e-mails and text messages, and they won't bother to come anyway.

I know that you also explored the places beyond the urban space. I guess you were tempted by the forest where you used various abandoned bunkers and the like as a kind of reverberation chamber resulting in various mental-acoustic effects?

Places like that places provided us with a high level of separation from the influence of civilization. We were fascinated by the military zone with its bunkers reaching up to several meters underground, which represented a totally unreal world, free of radiation waves or sounds coming from the outside. Constant temperature and total darkness created the ideal conditions for communing with your inner self and a few people had major introspections there. Those were not always purely psychological experiments, it did sometimes happen that some drugs played a part. Sometimes we also used to travel to the natural caves in the Tatra Mountains. People went there to confront their inner self, but also to spend time jamming, sight-seeing, making friends etc. It was all about exploration. No one valued the military aspect. From time to time the Russian soldiers came from the base and pretended to shoot at us, but no one took them seriously. Back then, all those informal independent groups were very open-minded. Now I have the impression that the subcultures are much more airtight psychologically. People look suspiciously at each other and it seems very difficult for them to integrate with other creative environments. We were totally fraternized, although there were people with completely different stories, with varying degrees of education, from different generations, too. If someone was promising, he was admitted to the gang right away.

Well, you seemed promising, didn't you? Apparently your nickname 'Ponton' (ponton) comes from the fact that you once promised your older colleagues, including Staszek Sieklicki, a pontoon, which your mom kept supposedly somewhere in the closet. They had a plan to break into the Water Tower from the river. And so, a few weeks later, when they happened to meet you somewhere in the city, they kept shouting: pontoon! pontoon!

That's not true. I got the nickname from an older punk colleague, named Johnny Bus, because I simply looked like a pontoon. Stanislaw always tried to be mean, but recently his jokes appear to be less and less witty, but ok; because it's fun. The legendary pontoon existed for real. It was extremely heavy. We used it for rafting trips, one of which almost ended up fatally in the turbine of the power station right behind the University Bridge. It turned out that, despite paddling, the inflatable boat and its contents floated straight into the device. The timbering there was quite vertical, and if it hadn't been for a wire sticking out, it would turn us into minced meat. We had lots of fun.

The creation of the Cormorants originates from a funny story. I've come to know that you played the trumpet in the church orchestra?

The priest had to select the altar boys and he picked out the worst hooligans. He was a fanatical priest who wanted to redeem his own difficult youth by serving God. In a positive sense, I mean. He didn't want the children to go astray, so he bought instruments and trained his orchestra, which played not only hymns, but also some jazzy songs. We were encouraged to take those instruments with us to practice at home. Nevertheless, Satan wasn't sleeping, so to say, and we ended up in a bad company. We used to go somewhere in the city where the acoustics was good, like for example under the Peace Bridge. Then we played a Marian hymn and my colleague shouted through his megaphone to the rare night passersby, 'I'm speaking to you, I'm your God'. Pranks like that. It was fun so we started to meet up, mix in with other groups. We organized jam sessions so that people who do not normally play with one another, could come together to smash together different concepts. It produced some interesting results and worked as an impulse for further development.

Did you record it?

Well, we had some cassette players, but, as you can imagine, the quality was poor, and only a few of those recordings survived, almost nothing at all.

Who was your audience?

The spectators were also the creators. There was no distinction between audience and artists. However, when someone got tired, he would just take a break. Everyone had a good time and participated in the gig under the same rules.

Did you organize the first flash-mobs in Wrocław?

Such ideas appeared spontaneously. I don't know if you can give me any credit. I think it's pointless. Such actions were usually spontaneous creativity without any theoretical framework. We acted beyond the categories of art and the conceptual approach. I learned only a decade ago that activities like this have

been recently categorized as flash mobs. Before then, the ideas just came up and we saw them through.

Were you high?

We had to prepare ourselves for each project. Registration required special preparations as we had to find the camera and the cameraman. The VHS was out of reach, we had to use 16 mm tapes, but we had only two of them at our disposal. You've mentioned stimulants. Many people were on a permanent high and mastered the ability to effectively act in this state.

Did it influence the poetry of those events? Their specific syntax or flow?

That was an effect of the immersion in different independent elements of that epoch. The events were not correlated, there were many individuals who acted on their own, but miraculously it all synchronized perfectly.

In 2010 Ha! Art! released a book about the independent culture after the change over. This publication completely ignores the existence of the independent culture in Wrocław. What could be the reason for this snubb?

This is the mechanism of re-writing history by authors immersed in knowledge, but related to other environments. These types of books and exhibitions write the history all over again. Eventually people repeat this one-sided version of the past, because they refer it to the book they've read or the exhibition they've seen and which has shown a given trend's progenitors. This is an inevitable process of reconfiguring the common memory. I honestly couldn't care less. Everyone has the right to incite his memory, or even take care of their own business. The fact that some groups, who explore the roots of contemporary phenomena from today's perspective, do not perceive us as crucial, can also result from a lack of interest in anarchist foundations. The actions happening in Wrocław weren't ideologically declared and they represented a totally ephemeral nature. It was all about finding a great way to live, not to wrap oneself in a flag.

The Story of Wrocław Squats

text:
Hubert Kostkiewicz
– born 1979,
an activist in squat
movement of Wrocław,
a member of the collective
Centrum Reanimacji
Kultury (the Center
for Culture Resuscita-
tion), guitar player
in the Kurws

One should also get used to mutuality since childhood, develop this primary human virtue in the days of early youth, as people raised in selfishness are not always able to perform the task of human brotherhood when living conditions will require it from them.

EDWARD ABRAMOWSKI

the authors
of quotations
wish to remain
anonymous

the photos from
squats' diaries,
provided by people
mentioned
in the text

Perhaps kids have always set up their bases. They build houses in trees or find abandoned dug-outs, cottages, storerooms and other places away from the adults. The base is an autonomous space, a place beyond. As it is being created, it automatically arouses imagination. It can become absolutely everything: a kitchen offering mud soups, a shop, a battlefield, the camp of an enemy army or a spaceship for intergalactic travels... The base is a space partially made up, contractual, which functions according to internal rules, changing its functions according to the daring fantasy of the play's participants.

A slogan of the French Situationists 'All power to the imagination' has been transformed into 'Vacancies to the imagination' in Wrocław. A need for an indeterminate space of no definite, set borders was the common denominator of many places. And they were not established by political activists, which of course does not mean that they were devoid of ideals. The politics resulted directly from the practice. The ideas appeared rather as tools for everyday experience, so there was no need to stick to them tightly.

When I came here in the middle of 2001, Grotowski, the Kalambur theatre, Luxus and Orange Alternative were already merely shadows on the walls. Wrocław was shining with a brand new light. The energy of a dynamic environment, for which no limits existed, because its members believed in the power of their own self-organization, became also my fuel. The sense of your own place and ease of doing things together were building our identity. But this story starts long before my arrival, since the squatters's movement in Wrocław has been forming and transforming itself in a certain continuum

for almost two decades. Before the legendary Rejon 69 came into being, other arbitrarily created places had already existed in Wrocław. They took the form of residential spaces (an attic on Kniaziewiczza Street, 1993-1996), party spaces (a tenement on Purkyniego Street) or centres with culture-forming ambitions (the Saska restaurant in Biskupin district). However, because of the limited extent of this text I shall mention only a small slice of the history of Wrocław-based squats.



Reja 69 – we know there are unique places

Król was the owner of a deteriorating house with an orchard and frames of glasshouses. That is that they called him. The guy was about twenty years older than them. His passion was gliders. Perhaps this is why he was looking favourably on a gang of enthusiasts. The deal was a small monthly rent and so in September 1996 Rejon 69 came into existence – quite a fully-fledged idea of a place – a melting pot, where many different people crossed paths.

Compared to what had been happening in Wrocław before, it was a next-generation squat. A consequence of conscious choice, a particular lifestyle. A sum of experience from the earlier trips to Berlin, Paris, Amsterdam and fervent observations of everything that involved squatting. Up to that moment, despite attempts, not much was happening in the city, there was a great hunger for a place which would be able to contain all the energy that had been accumulating through years. 'When it finally emerged, many people felt very comfortable there.' Including Król, by the way, who, walking across the vast orchard did not hide his satisfaction with the fact that the house in which he grew up was undergoing a revival.

In order to get along with the owners of the local allotments, they helped the elderly with digging their gardens. The shabby building held in disrepute as a drug addict's den, after a whitewash and colour paint lifting no longer scared off the dog owners walking their pets. There was no sewerage inside, so they installed a barrel with an alarm system in the basement. As water from the run-off was beginning to overflow, there was a short circuit in the cables which resulted in a melody being played upstairs. Then you had to go downstairs and empty the barrel. The issue of the toilet was solved in a similar way, with the difference that there was a sack in a barrel, which you emptied with gloves on and a gas mask. No picnic. In the garage there was a mini bar and one of the glasshouses housed a concert hall. 'We had to lower the ground level so that more people could come inside. We transferred a few tons of soil to a garden nearby with wheelbarrows'.

Police raids have always been an indispensable element of the squatter's life. 14th June 1997 at 3 a.m. police officers knocked at the gate. The apparent cause was an unlocked car in front of the building. 'We were sleepy, someone opened the door. The cops – of course with no piece of paper authorizing them to come inside – entered, beating and insulting us. Everything looked as if it was a planned action, because a moment later a swarm of paddywagons appeared – they must have got the whole Grunwald police headquarters involved, as apparently it could not take other notifications at that time.' The squatters sued the police, organized a press conference and a spontaneous demonstration. Media lived and breathed their reports. The case found its end before the European Court of Human Rights, which in 2009 ordered the Polish state to pay compensation for the abuse of power by its officers.

Rejon was not only a Mecca of the Polish independent scene and an important landmark in its dynamically changing infrastructure. As an spontaneous meeting place, it provoked situations of environmental mix, was an origin of city trends and culture-forming situations.

A group of friends and a sense of mutual trust were enough to effectively break the spell of a reality. The snowball gathered speed, others were joining in. There was no place for a sitting room in the house, so on warm nights people would sleep in the garden. Most of the travellers visited mainly for the idyllic atmosphere. There were also those who stayed longer. When in September 1999 Król decided to sell the allotment for so that blocks of flats could be built, it was obvious that the environment had grown larger and instead of a one subsequent place, a few of them would be needed.

Kromera 6a

They went in through the wide open door. Everything seemed like a piece of cake, but it was difficult from the very start. First of all: no possibility to connect the electricity. Second: no water installation. Third: dust-up with the neighbours. The kids from the backyard wanted to chase off the slobes but they were just kids. They tried to threaten them with some mythological Nazis

from Czajkowskiego Street. One day they put a letter written in the hand of a 10-year-old into the letter box. It wrote: Fuck off you dirt, we'll come over here, etc. Signed: Czaja Hools. For some time the letter was hanging in the sitting room as an object of special anecdotal value.

As if that was not enough, a retiree who was evidently disturbed by the new tenants lived directly opposite. To this day nobody knows if he happened to be the one responsible for the visit of undercover cops who decided to pop in one night.

One of them climbed as far as the first floor level and came in through the sitting room window. He took out a gun and, pointing at the dog, said: 'Take this mongrel away or I'll shoot it'. They were off duty. None of them showed a police badge. Instead of truncheons they had table legs. And they looked like some kind of mafia. The case was mitigated only by the officers alarmed about it by the journalists. Finally it came to nothing: one person was detained, the rest were booked.

From the very beginning it was not easy for the self-proclaimed Stanisław Ignacy Witkiewicz cultural centre established in February 2000, but the people were tough. Nobody even noticed the emergence of Wrocław's environment that grew bigger day by day, becoming more aware of itself and of the powers it released. The problems that followed were there only to strengthen it.

The Kromera eviction was a solid energetic kick. A few hundred people took to the streets in a rough and tumble demonstration that involved with the police, during which the car of president Zdrojewski suffered damages. Even if the Kromera residents were considered just as a margin, nobody consented to the wilfulness of the police. Two months later an idea to re-occupy emerged Kromera. A bit hesitantly at the beginning, later more courageously, the tenants returned to live under their own roof. Waiting for the police that did not come again. More or less at that time, high up on the wall of the building a slogan 'We only want peace' appeared.

Włodkowica 10

48 parking places, 4000 m² of space, including 2800 m² of office space and 400m² of commercial space. Wall Street House is in the heart of Wrocław. Yet before the office block was built, the space had housed industrial barracks, and Włodkowica Street had not been as busy as it is today. In February 2000 the people from Rejon found their way there. They were a bit desperate as they had to leave their previous place by the end of the month, and they couldn't find anything reasonable despite months of intensive searching.

A great number of people, kith and kin included, got involved in the repairs of Włodkowica. The whole infrastructure was built immediately: the residential space with seven bedrooms, a sitting room, kitchen and bathrooms, as well as a concert hall, library, garden and playground for children. Electricity and water were connected. Just a week later the first event took place: a vocal group OVO performed some a cappella Old-Slavic singing (some of the band members later squatted in a house on Bończyka Street).

NICE
HEALTHY
DINNER



B4
BIG FEST
EVENING
& NIGHT

Integration with the neighbours proceeded just as quickly. From the first day the squat was visited by kids and more inquisitive neighbours. Friendliness was also displayed by the Jewish community centre. Some elderly lady said in a local newspaper: 'Since they have been here, it has become somehow brighter, happier'. This however made no impression on the head of ArC2 company that owned the premises, and was also a tycoon in Wrocław's building market at that time. Despite many talks he was irreconcilable.

'And if tomorrow the Gypsies come and rape somebody, who will answer for that? I will!' They were given two days to move out. They said goodbye to the place with a gig and a happening.

'We had a lot of stuff that we crammed into friends' places and some garages. Then we got into the van – five people, three cats and three dogs – and drove around in search of another building.'

CRK Jagiellończyka

'We had to start the talks with the city council, because otherwise it would all fall apart, people would scatter. As long as the energy was there we had to do something about it. After Włodkowica, or perhaps even earlier – at Rejon – we realized that such a broad spectrum of people willing to do something is a value in and of itself. The first aim of Jagiellończyka was to cement this community together. The base was important for us, the infrastructure. And that the young would not have to start from scratch.'

The centre of independent culture on Jagiellończyka 10D got its name – 'FreeDom' in honour of the final scene of Braveheart, in which a tortured William Wallace exclaims the word 'Freedom'. It is very likely that that place wouldn't have existed at all but for Bohdan Aniszczyk, a councillor of the Christian National Union. A social worker and a conservative, he was heavily involved in the case and made a decision to grant the building, the keys to which we were handed in September 2000.

'The goal may be romantic, it may be vague, but in order to pursue it, you have to take the reality into consideration. Squatter's in Wrocław, apart from being pragmatic, has also shaped a specific environment. An environment open to unconventional, undogmatic thinking.'

The deteriorating back-premises which until recently had housed a sewing room needed to be furnished somehow. At that time not much could be found on the streets and nobody could afford to buy anything. Two independent groups spent months searching every nook and cranny of Switzerland, looking for things with which a cultural centre could be built. Lamps and sockets were unscrewed from abandoned buildings. Radiators, stoves, carpets and beds were taken away. Everything with a blessing given by squatters from Zurich, Biel, Bern, Lausanne and Geneva, who organized what they could in acts of solidarity.

The kids came first. After all they had always been prowling around the backyards, peeping in every corner and crack. It was their land. 'You are different

than the adults, because you do not talk about money all the time.' We became friends. It was the first truly neighbourly relation with the representatives of the neighbourhood about which nobody wanted to remember and about which tall stories were told. Once, when we organized a group action to paint the backyard entrance gate, we received a phone call from the Board of Municipal Resources that made claims that we had done it without permission. We were ordered to bring the gate to its previous state: a dirty, greasy niche with flakes of paint coming off in large pieces.

The rumour in Nadodrze was that somebody had an itch for our building. The concert hall would make a perfect place for a warehouse or a stockroom. After the intervention of the Community Council, CRK faced a stream of inspections. Since we received the building in a terrible shape and everything we did there we did at our own expense, there were many things to pick on.

Defending out cultural centre from being closed down, inspired by British Reclaim the Streets, 22nd February 2002 we took to the streets to organize our own street party. The parade took off from Staszica Park and was supposed to reach the Rynek, yet after going several dozen metres it was cordoned off by the police from both sides of Kazimierza Jagiellończyka Street. There were about 300 of us. And – according to media reports – 500 of them. Some were armed with smoothbore weapons, dressed in modern Robocop-like suits, others were still wearing uniforms from the bygone era. From the windows nearby you could hear 'Zomo! Zomo!' [the former paramilitary police in Communist Poland – translator's note]. An undercover cops that passed me, uttered nervously 'You'll have your building, just get the fuck out of here, now!' In the end, we managed to reach the Rynek and present our demands. The police got scolded by the media for 'using forces disproportionate to the threat'. We kept the building and were left relatively alone.

Nadodrze was held in disrepute as a dangerous and pathological neighbourhood. Before it became an apple of the revitalization specialists' eye, everyone had been giving it a wide berth. We were warned that someone might come and break our windows. There were those who did not believe that we would stay there for a longer period of time. Meanwhile we felt exceptionally good and became intimate with this neighbourhood. We were kept at a distance and were be called pokemons, but at the same time we were respected. When a neighbour came to ask us for help regarding an eviction, there was no need to explain anything. She lives there to this day. No calculated strategies, simple human solidarity did wonders. The act of serving free food in Staszica Park (Food Not Bombs), the distribution of free vegetables among those in need or participation in a strike by the employees of the hospital on Rydygiera Street as well a lot of other minor situations cemented our ties with the neighbourhood. They strengthened the sense of belonging here. This is our home and nobody has the right to kick us out.

When Black Submarine Gallery moved in to the building on the right side of the patio, and some time later Akwen 116 association joined in, there was an idea to create a conglomerate of different autonomous groups. An identity



shift came about as a result of mixing between environments was taking place. The strictly squatter's FreeDom slowly ceased to exist, as something of a much broader context was emerging – Centrum Reanimacji Kultury [literally: Centre for the Reanimation of Culture – translator's note]. The name has always seemed pretentious to me, but I have to admit that it clearly stressed the new direction of development. The place slowly solidified, taking on an institutional form. The initial spontaneity was replaced with arduous everyday activities, the immensity of which has become visible only with time. 'We were connected by the awareness that few people has/had/will have such an opportunity for creation in its pure form. On the one hand the multidimensional activities of the centre, the enormous amounts of energy put in it, the lack of subsidies, encouraging one another to keep going and the incredibly inspiring positive reactions from the outside. On the other, our group – sharing private and public space as well as workspace – remained a support to one another.'

Comparing the project of CRK activities that we submitted to the City Hall in 2000 with what we managed to carry out, I have noticed that, to my surprise, we have actually achieved more than we had expected. That had its price. It took a toll on our relationships. With no new modes of management adequate to the dynamically changing situations and with no clear vision it will be extremely difficult for us to run this place in the future. This city within the city has had many different faces for over a decade. I still keep my hopes up, but at the same time I am concerned about the shape of the next one. The overrunning renovations of CRK premises owned by the city have put us in a difficult situation, and simultaneously given us an opportunity to wake up from the trance of intensive work as well as to step back to look at our modi



operandi from afar.

Wagenburg

Trucks from Berlin drove all day and all night. With wagons attached, they could move with a maximum speed of 20km/hour. Destination: Braci Gieryskich Street. In May 2001 the first wagenburg at this latitude comes into being accompanied by a spectacular festival, attended by people from across all of Europe. On the one hand the wagenburg's lifestyle is a substitute for a rural idyll in the heart of a big city. On the other, it is a prose of life, which includes absorbing basic activities. The water does not pour out of the sink itself and organizing winter fuel can leave you drained of energy.

When you have to change places, the move is a complex operation in terms of logistics, often getting the whole environment involved. Wrocław's wagenburg has experienced many moves and related perturbations: from the Biskupin neighbourhood to Sikorskiego Street, the parking lot on Legnicka Street, a few years on Paczkowska Street and finally the Green Island on Na Grobli Street. When the place is finally found and there is a perspective for a longer stay, the morale of the group improves and a colourful microcosmos pours out of the wagons.

'After passing through some rough terrain you reached the fence. And behind the fence you suddenly saw a circus camp. Neat wagons on wheels, motor homes, a common kitchen, a concert hall, a practice room for all kinds of jugglers, circus performers and artists. Quiet with greenery, hens and a pack of dogs, each of which looked like a Romanian vagabond, or at least had different coloured eyes. The ideal solution for a group in which everyone wishes to remain autonomous, and at the same time do so-called stuff together.

Costume parties, theatre performances, film nights or music festivals lasting several days. As a squat, the place was much different than the others. After the first trips to Switzerland, Germany or France I understood that wagenburgs have a magical ability to pullulate, clone and teleport to different places around the world. It is like a EU standard.'

Bończyka

A small red brick house with a big, green area and a historic shed. A charming place standing a bit aside, far away from big-city backyards – but close to the embankment. A totally new, better standard of squatter's living, bringing to mind occupied Italian or Swiss villas rather than any of their Polish equivalents.

The owner of the area was Dexpol company, and before that perhaps the Agricultural University, since its employee previously resided there with a family. It is possible that it had been a place for some experimental plantations, because when they entered the premises for the first time in 2004, they found plant drying cabinets there.

The building was basically set up by girls only. The only male specimen was turned into 'a bearded woman'. Because some of the residents were connected to the feminist group Liberta, the false rumour was that men were barely tolerated there.

'At first we were hiding, covering the windows, sleeping in the same room. The first space we did was the kitchen – the brain and heart of home at the same time.' The owner of the area turned up a few weeks later, at exactly the moment when they were unloading a delivery of vegetables for a weekly Food Not Bombs action. Finally they were allowed to stay under the condition that they would help in the reconstruction of the shed, which suddenly was no longer historic. They applied for a prepayment meter: they're students, it's dark, it's cold. Dexpol agreed and even paid half of the fee. The second half they collected by organizing a benefit on Jagiellończyka. There were no major problems with neighbours. The girls visited neighbouring houses to introduce themselves.

We used to go to bonfires and occasional parties there. The smell of green without the dust of Nadodrże neighbourhood, no screaming or broken glass. An open-air cinema, social kitchens, free shops and circus performances also took place there. But what I remember most was celebrating common ties in the company of close friends. 'Nobody thought about looking for a paying job, saving for rent, renting a flat. We had an alternative vision. That we would keep skipping, squatting, working abroad, on-the-side, in recycling. That was our recipe. A recipe for the whole world'. The anniversary of that place fell on 2nd of April 2005. A birthday cake with candles landed on the table. When we struck up with 'Happy Birthday', the sirens hooted. Somewhere far away in Vatican the pope died. Bończyka ceased to exist a year later.



Krzycka (*The Corpus Christi House*)

It was 10th June 2004 when two extremely excited brothers were rushing by bikes with a cart filled with everything that should be included in a young squatter's kit in the direction of an old, post-German villa in the Krzyki neighbourhood. On their way they passed a Corpus Christi procession.

'It was an absolutely ridiculous contrast: on one side a sluggish march of a god-fearing crowd, on the other – two boys, with flush faces, going hell for leather to finally break the property rights.' Krzycka was set up by a group of less than ten people. They were mainly social activists, collaborating with Wrocław-based branch of Amnesty International, "Recykling Idei" magazine, the Basta ecological association and Centrum Reanimacji Kultury.

Unfortunately it turned out that the three-storeyed villa with a garden and a sitting room, which 'lacked only a piano to make you feel as if you were in *Żelazowa Wola*' had served as a meeting place of local thugs for a long time. Clumsy attempts to turn them out broke out in a small war, and the group had to barricade themselves in to protect themselves from the rising wave of sieges. "Our mate rubbed salt into the wound, which meant that in between the raids he had to escape by jumping over of local gardens fences so that he would not be noticed by the enemy. We evacuated a moment later. We did not have the slightest chance.'

Snapshots

There is not the slightest chance for the series of snapshots of people's lives and places in the squatter's Wrocław that I have presented to fully reflect the spirit of the culture which, with different results, realizes the need for building social utopias. It instinctively aims at creating grassroots structures of mutual aid, as Abramowski wrote, 'performing the tasks of human brotherhood', taking the risk of experimenting in the field of direct democracy. Active participation in activities of this informal movement provide us with a chance to develop tools that will allow us to better understand ourselves and others. The mechanisms learned can be analogically applied on a larger scale: to how the state or the society functions. Even if – paradoxically – the starting point is the original need to accentuate one's individual distinctiveness, to create a breach in the system for oneself.

Want to do something? Then do it, that's all.

Dominika Łabędź,
founder
of DIY Gallery U,
interviewed by
Joanna Kobylt

photos:
Sonia Mielnikiewicz

How did the U gallery begin? Three young artists needed the neglected space of an unoccupied building with a defunct tile stove to present their own works?

No. It just happened. Rafał found a building on Jedności Narodowej street. He had an idea to create a place for different activities. He thought of bicycles and the circus. One day I went there to see the space. My first thought was: the Gallery! Let's set up a the Gallery! I called for Gosia Sawicka, she suggested Marysia Orzeszyna who at once agreed. And it started. There was the first exhibition, thinking, contriving. It was just after my graduation. I was convinced that there were various possibilities. I felt that Wrocław needed a space like this: free, not ossified. I did not think about space only for our needs.

You say that there wasn't any space 'like this'? What space? Could you define it?

I think that the answer to that question is going to mix with my present expectations, I feel there wasn't any small and young gallery like this. "Young" means run by young people and for young people, free from institutional censorship. That sharp and radical point of view was very interesting for me then. I came back from a scholarship in the Netherlands. There were thousands of such places. Many initiatives were formed, new places. There was more creative freedom. It is directly connected with money of course. Prosperity influences social structure, so much different there. Everything is more carefree and easier to organize. An important point for our initiative was the help of CRK which supported Gallery U from the very beginning. Everything was mixed. It was an exchange of experiences.





I think you often hear that the initiative is good but quite hermetic. What's the key of choosing artists and activities?

It's true that so far we have invited mainly our friends. The reason is simple. All exhibitions are expense-free. We have never invited people to realize a project, as it takes place in other galleries, because we didn't have money. After the first exhibition, people started to apply and the gallery developed. There was a kind of natural power. It turned out that young people do not want to exhibit in big institutions but prefer small places.



Is the formula of a “zero budget” is an assumption?

No, absolutely not, but I think it is nice and creative. It turns out that you can work that way for 3,5 years. However, there are many ideas and the need for financing individual actions.

What are the guidelines for U Gallery?

First of all – promoting young artists, actions outside official channels. It is easier to exhibit in U Gallery than in a well-known gallery with its own brand. Concentrating on that environment in one place and what follows (or maybe precedes) – collective action. It's started to become very visible this year. It started, I think, when the CRK was closed, and with the collective exhibition “B city”. It was a unfortunately very poor documentation of the 10 years of CRK's work. Since then we have been preparing cyclic meetings, collage parties. Such forms of activity seems very interesting to me. Meeting, being and working in a group, creating a series or publishing a fanzine. Of course that is, to some extent, spending free time in a creative way, but it is also our work (in a group you feel the need to do something). I am interested in triggering social creativity. That collective action does not take place just within the group of artists. It is not about celebrating the title of “the artist”, it is about the fact that everyone who wants to can become an artist. We meet people who do not belong to the artistic world, they are not interested in it. What's fascinating is utilizing of that space and its being “outside” other institutions, in that sense U is not a gallery. It is a form of social sculpture made by people who come there and exhibit. I like it that it works that way.

However, I lack the crystallization of certain phenomena and observations which appear and are connected with running the gallery. Last year I wanted to publish a book which was supposed to be strictly connected with U gallery and with bottom-up actions. It was supposed to be a guidebook for social creativity. “B City” was an ironic name referring to postcards' “A cities” – a kind of official vision of a city. Creating a guidebook was supposed to be the effect of collective work. I invited a few people to cooperate together as well as such initiatives as CRK (which was still functioning then). It was connected with the revitalization of the Nadodrze (a neighbourhood in Wrocław) and the processes that accompanied it.

Was it a guide with practical examples? For instance – how to find a place, make a gallery in an unoccupied building?

We didn't mean it to be a guide in the sense that we would teach, step by step: build a shelf like Adam Słodowy. We wanted to present ideas how to organize gardens for inhabitants on the roofs of their houses. Simple ideas which could improve social life in Nadodrze which is much more commercialized although

we should not exaggerate. I don't want to say that the neighbourhood is gentrified, it is revitalized. It was about organizing social life in a commercialized and uniformized downtown. The guide was supposed to show how to maintain neighborly relations, how to co-create a balanced social structure. The publication was planned to have two parts: practical and substantive. The first one was to present specific activities in a public space. The second one was to be prepared by people who work on the subject from the theoretical side. When I didn't get the grant – I left it and got to something else. A year earlier the problem was crucial and the emotions were different. I really wanted to record that moment because I know that enthusiasm is fleeting. For example CRK was closed and it was a big commotion but also sadness. Not so long ago we closed the “Second wave” – another important place. I wanted to record some actions, freshness and unrest which were occurring at that moment and which would fly away forever. It was supposed to be a guide about Nadorze, a place which was slowly disappearing or maybe had already ceased to exist. It is still creative, there are many initiatives, the new offices for foundations and associations are built.

But it is a designed action. That original spirit doesn't exist any more. People who do not run foundations, institutions, who do not have higher education are not able to organize anything there. I mean for example sports teams, young boys who wanted to set up a sports club, they were very excited. I wanted to record unique moments of mobilization, movement like these. The key was to catch the moment which gives you the right to act and a driving force. That's the moment when you know that you can do something and you just do it. It often happens that when people find out that we run the gallery on our own they raise their eyebrows, they exaggerate the difficulty. And that is simple. You want to do something? Then you do it, that's all. You don't ask for permission.

Residence and a place of work

editors:
Anna Mituś
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photos (unless
the otherwise noted):
Sonia Mielnikiewicz

What's the role of a workplace for young artists from Wrocław? In Wrocław the community, social and group tradition was a bone of contention in the 80's and the site of self-organization in the 90's. It shaped demonstrations of private spaces that were "made public" such as charismatic academic studios, squats, illegal concert spaces and homes as DIY exhibits. Has this tradition gone down in history?



Olaf Brzeski

– born in 1975,
sculptor,
draftsman
and author
of artistic
films



My workplace influences me a lot. The studio has to encourage, however I think that the perfect studio is more of an outline than a state that is possible to achieve. It's like work; aspirations are on the increase. The depot in Legnicka street is a kind of conglomerate of dreams of what a workplace should be like for everyone. I close myself off in my space, looking for privacy, I don't like guests. Karol, who together with Marcin and Beata, has his space next to mine, aims at creating an open place where artists can come and, as a large base which is constantly being extended, find solutions to all the problems connected with technology and realization.

Many people come there, use its potential, create their projects in many fields. It is a place of craft, in a positive sense, which smoothly changes its functions. It can become a photo or a film lab. When we are finished taking photos, the space is strewn with sawdust from a joinery necessary for the next project. A joinery project soon changes into a paint shop, then into ironworks and finally the place is full of sofas and tables ready for an evening party. It's a good place. In its undefined and smooth form it is disinterested, not calculated; chaotic and alive. Places like this create a kind of circulatory system on the map of Wrocław. Because of them the city lives organically, these are arteries which run constantly, not just short, festival showcases.



Joanna Synowiec

– born in 1980, together with Wojciech Jeżewski has founded the club-and-bookstores: *Złe wychowanie* (2008 with Krzysztof Bańkowski, ZW worked for half a year at Kościuszki square in a devastated local bar – previously *Cepelia*) and *Falanster* (from May 2009 to December 2012, then as *Druga Fala* until July 2013) which refers to the rules of participatory economics

Falanster: Wojciech Jeżewski, Mariusz Sibila, Joanna Synowiec, Iza Wiśniewska, Sonia Sobiech, Igor Wenc, Paweł Rawicki, Zosia Reznik, Joanna Kobylt, Łucja Łopatka, Martyna Kuligowska, Aneta Jerska, Kuba Majchrzak, Hubert Kostkiewicz



When we opened *Falanster* I didn't want it to be my job, I wanted an adventure. Later it turned out that running that project was hard work which only from time to time became fun and pleasurable. *Falanster* was a place based on social engagement where the work was not hierarchic. It resulted from our ideas and the needs of many people who were a part of it, it also involved taking a bit of a chance. It referred to utopia but was also a real action to extend a battlefield for self-organization and public space.

It had, like we had, its disadvantages. For some people it was "closed" because of its home-like feel, for others it was a home and some saw a space which made some actions possible that could lead to social or political changes, or where they could do something expressive. Everyone has the right to *Falanster*, everyone who feels that this place is important on the city map. I feel it!

Joanna Stembalska

– born in 1979,
curator at BWA Wrocław, animator,
editor of publications dedicated
to street art, from 2008 she has
runs a series of urban exhibitions:
“External artists” and “Out of Sth
presents” and ““Out of Sth vol. 3”;
in 2014 she is going to run
a new workshop space: Out of Sth
in Studio BWA

The mall at Ruska 46 street is a very interesting phenomenon, and laboratory where many various cooperatives comingle.

A few years ago I was involved in some works created by RTR (We do it together). Together with places like Falanster, Studio BWA, Art Brut Gallery and Niskie Łąki we founded an informal coalition of people – not only artists – who wanted to liven up a common back alley which was just a concrete wall with ragged plaster. We wanted to show its users that they could influence that fragment of common space. Presently “that Ruska street’ does not exist but I want to apply my experience and use the potential the space provides in order to create, in Studio BWA, an artistic collective. I see it as a natural extension of our interests in the difficulty of classifying phenomena in public space. It should face the problems which Out of Sth wanted to solve and, at the same time, be open and available for artists from Wrocław place with the appropriate infrastructure and tools, where the workshops, meetings and debates can take place. There will also be studios of screen printing, video and a platform for a creative exchange of artists between Wrocław and London.

photo from the archive
of Joanna Stembalska



Norymberga

– noise-rock group from Wrocław; its members say that their motivation comes from boredom, frustration and too much free time, culminating in *teenage angst* by people who are close to middle age

the team since 2012:
Paweł Malinowski, Iwona Jarosz,
Marcin Siehankiewicz, Karol
Morawski, Kuba Majchrzak.

Until recently, we worked in a rehearsal room under Falanster. We moved there when a renovation crew entered CRK where we previously had rehearsals. The animators from CRK and our friends took part in the events organized by Falanster – as authors or participants. Naturally between going up and down things started to comingle. There was a kind of union when it comes to opinions and cultural preferences. Druga Fala which was founded after Falanster took under its wings The Kurws, Norymberga and Zrobię To Sobie. Then new groups appeared – Margaret Thatcher, Ukryte Zalety Systemu, and other, smaller projects. All the groups influenced one another, they had mutual members who switched between bands.

The room was used also as a concert hall.

During the height of its popularity an idea was born to put out a record on which each band would play a song. Calling it a scene is maybe too much but, for sure, the bands gathered in one place and time, and they also had personal connections. When Druga Fala was closed, at the end of August, we put on a concert and almost all the bands from the basement of the club took part in it. Nowadays we rent a room somewhere else which, of course, costs more.





photo:
Paweł Starzec

Kuba Suchar, Filip Zawada

Filip Zawada

(pseudonym Filip Itoito)

– born in 1975, poet, musician (Pustki, Indigo Tree), photographer, performer; director and actor in arthouse films

Kuba Suchar

– born in 1975, drummer, multimedia artist, posters artist. Founder and leader of the now defunct Robotobibok; currently co-founder of Mikrokolektyw (Delmark Records), Slug Duo (Vytvornia OM), Three Beards Quartet, Forest Underground

they work with Ośrodek Postaw Twórczych (OPT) – a municipal, cultural institution founded in 2002 on the initiative of young artists from the Zappa group and Jarosław Jachimowicz



photo:
Dagmara Świątek

KS: At the very beginning we worked for OPT almost for free. It lasted for nearly 8 years. If I understand well what a collective is, I think we created something more than just a collective. We made a structure consisting of people who, in spite of difficulties and poverty (seriously), stuck together and followed through on our intended plan. And the plan was to create a place where we could work on our projects and work with other people at the same time. I think that the best definition of OPT is that it is a formation in constant movement. The substance which is elastic, resilient and changeable. The people changed of course. It turned out that some of them couldn't handle it. You can imagine what happens to a rubber ball which falls into a combine-harvester. The fun begins. It is worse when a sausage falls into the machine.



photo:
Ewa Golińska-Schilling

FZ: We, Kuba and Filip, work with a few people, each of them has their own studio. Those studios work with one another. The graphic studio helps the photo lab with producing books etc. Because of the collective we can see our artistic work and that is very stimulating.



photo
from the author's
archive

Czarny Latawiec (Black Kite)

(Daniel Brożek)

– born 1978, active in the fields of sound and music criticism, curator at Scena Dźwiękowa during art review Survival, DJ and producer, author of the blog cantilluminati.blogspot.com

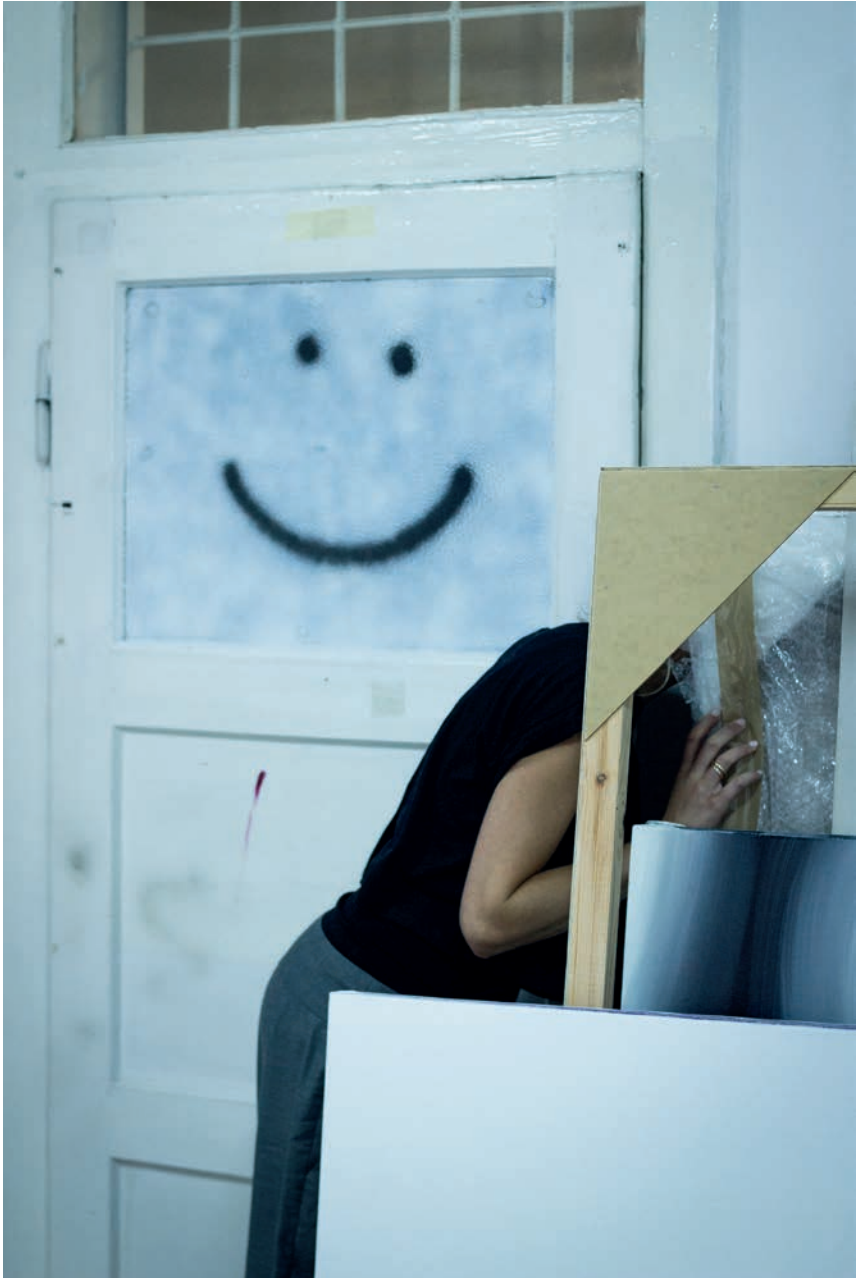
Although social media is developing with global tubes for the exchange of thoughts and despite common access to the world of music in the MP3 format, new ideas in sound art come from participation, and the already blurred boundaries between the artist and listening is deepening. What is crucial is the possibility to directly confront the new phenomenon, test it against criticism and reinterpret it in our own actions. In Wrocław over the last few years range of possibilities in new music has been possible only due to grassroots actions, in most cases without any support from national or local budgets. CRK, Falanster / 2 Fala (2nd Wave) galleries U and G23 – these are the places which have always been open to new sound phenomena, visual firework which fit urban folders and adulate tastes of eternal artistic directors.

Beata Rojek

– born in 1985,
she paints and draws
cartoons; she feels
confused by emptiness
and the essence she
finds in the trembling
accumulation
of interlocking
impulses



I've had my studio for a year. At the beginning I was really fascinated by the fact that I had it. I thought that the work would be different, more effective and that I would be able to predict how much time I needed to work. Then I went through a phase where I had doubts, having my own studio costs. It turned out that sometimes it costs too much, especially because I have unstable income. However, I don't want to go back to the living room in my flat. Firstly because the materials I work with are noxious and secondly because the studio is a place of solitude, a place for meditation. Places accumulate the energy we produce, that's why it is not hygienic to sleep where you work. The studio is also a kind of sanctuary, a reservation that cuts off everything unimportant. My studio is located in the back alley on Ruska street. I like that there are these kinds of places like: Studio, Rita Baum, Art Brut and there are people around. It makes me feel safe. When Falanster existed, the back alley seemed to be more coherent, you could sit and talk. Nowadays when I go into the back alley, I try to get to my door as quickly as possible. There should be more made-public, private spaces. There are a few ones which draw artists but it's too few in the scale of the whole city. Maybe new places will open, closed to unaffiliated. That's OK if you can change the tightness, including those places which are open for exhibitions and different initiatives.



Aleksandra Urban

– born in 1978, graduated from the Department of Painting and Sculpture from the Academy of Fine Arts; she paints and creates objects

photo:
Marcin Łuczowski



The reality is that I live with Marcin Łuczowski in a one-room flat. We don't have a studio because we don't have any money (we hardly have any money for a loan or bills because I let myself be an artist and I don't work for money). It's like this – with one hand I stir boiling soup and with another – I paint. I have 100 paintings on a mezzanine and a bed under it. I wonder whether one day I will die because my art has fallen on my head. I have a romantic vision of a studio and gallery but it is not realistic. I must admit that I like working at home and having my artwork here. I would get rid of Marcin if I could because two artists, their work and a dog in one place is too much. This is the reality. I am a kind of asocial artist, I am an introvert when I work, not interested in any hipster get togethers, squatting or exhibitions in flats, I haven't seen many good ones. My experience is that drunk and doped groups show poor works which have been placed on a fence with psychedelic music to accompany them. Social actions, when it comes to art, are not interesting, I prefer close contact directly with an author.

Marcin Łuczowski

– born in 1977, graduated with a degree in painting from the Department of Painting and Sculpture from the Academy of Art and Design in Wrocław, 2004; he is a painter, sculptor and photographer

photo:
Aleksandra Urban



A studio – is a difficult subject. There are artists who for free or almost for free work in huge spaces. I haven't had so much luck. The small “studio” where I work imposes some frames and restrictions but I don't want to be completely blocked. In a small space you make different (smaller) things. I have bigger problem with time than with space. I feel that storing works of art is one of the most disheartening elements of creative work.

I like galleries organized in these types of informal places. They present art without compromises and without complexes. Sometimes the quality is poor but at the same time it is more valuable than in the “official” galleries. For sure there is a lot of positive energy.

Truth, Krystian Czaplicki

– born in 1984, he is a graduate from the Department of Interior Design and Designing (Academy of Art and Design in Wrocław); the artist places enigmatic, poetic objects around the city which break the routine of the urban landscape, sometimes provoking the intervention of the city police

I have a mini studio in my grandmother's basement, however for a few years I have used it as a storeroom. Most of my works of art are made by local specialists on the basis of prepared visualizations and technical drawings.

When the project is big many different groups work on it.

I think that their studios and spaces where they prepare my sculptures have influenced the aesthetics of my work. When I work with subcontractors for whom it is often their first contact with contemporary art, I try not to complicate their work with the artistic sense of my objects so as not to create an unnecessary barrier and distance. I say straightforwardly what I would like my work to look like and what effect I want to get.

I've learnt to "capture" the most interesting moment in the process of production, I follow that process and ask them to finish their work in the chosen moment which intrigues me the most and has a kind of light which I would not receive on my own. I have never felt the need any mutual inspiration to work or with other artists. I never wanted to be associated with a cooperative. I always work on my own, however I think that for many artists from Wrocław those places were and still are important.

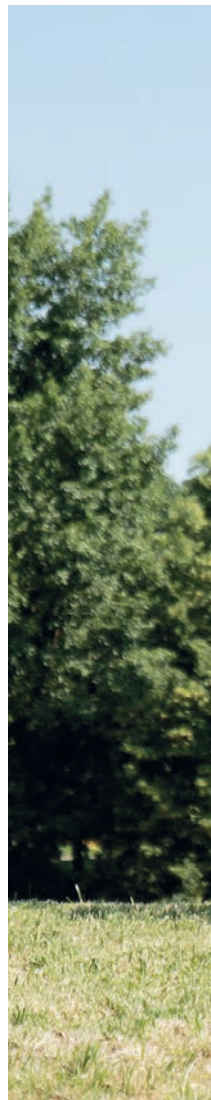
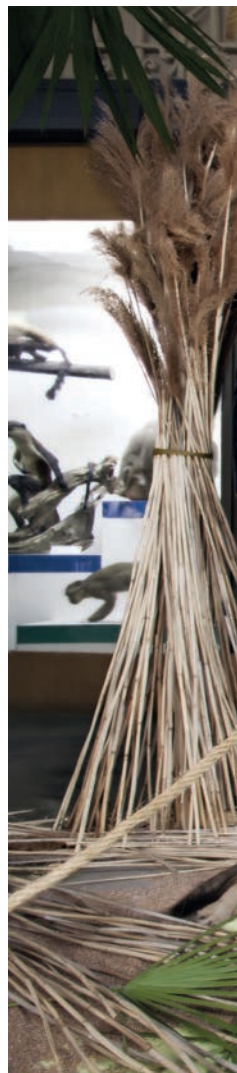


photo:
Edyta Jezierska
/ by courtesy
of the artist
and BWA Warszawa



Anna Rymarz

– born in 1985, graduated in 2010 from the Department of Painting and Sculpture from the Academy of Art and Design in Wrocław; she tries to tackle the idea of "Disney-like" luck



I live in an old house in Szczytnicki Park. The house was previously a squat for the students and graduates from the Academy of Fine Arts, it was about 15 years ago. Nowadays those students have their own children and the squat became legal house – a flat. Many people had their studios there but I've lived there for a long time with Darek Orwat.



photo:
fragment
of the series
„Safe Rituals”
Anny Rymarz,
concept and completion:
Katarzyna
Szczepkowska



Karolina Freino

– born 1978,
visual artist, adapts various
techniques and media of art,
she graduated from the Department
of Painting and Sculpture
from the Academy of Art and Design
in Wrocław, –Edinburgh College of Art
(School of Sculpture) and Bauhaus
University in Weimar (MFA "Public
Art and New Artistic Strategies");
she is a member of the international
artistic group *Usualy4*

The basic place of my work is in my head and the public spaces where I carry out my projects. I don't have a studio. The computer which I often use is in my house which is a collective house.

In a sense, my studio is where I am. It has its pros and cons because work likes to influence other parts of life and the other way round. The artistic group, which I am a part of, and an association where I am a member – these are also my studios. Being commonly at work (not necessarily common work) is an important and necessary element for development.

Kama Sokolnicka

– born in 1978,
visual artist, the author
of projects connected
with place and of works
where she joins and deforms
the planes of individual
memory and media
representations of history

Synchronization with other groups and collectives has never been my strong side but their neighborhood is a good thing. I don't follow tradition although it's not a bad thing. I can complain about the city but I like living here and I always come back, on the other hand it's difficult to move away from here. The place, of course, influences my work when it comes to substantive and physical – economic sides; Wrocław can give power but it can take it away at the same time. My studio is in a room of my friends' home, which I've rented for a few years. Our flat is too small and my friends understand that my work is connected with irregular income. The room is nice, it is only 17m² and for some time there has been no place for anything, for me, for the next projects. I cannot work only on the computer, I need a real space. Recently I had the possibility to prepare new material in guest studios abroad – to compare is dangerous although the problems are everywhere. We'll see what happens in the future.

photo by courtesy
of the artist
and BWA Warszawa



Man, that negro stole my show

In the film *Man, that negro stole my show!* I play the role of a homeless, black man who lives on the streets of Wrocław. My charismatic gestures and expressive, chaotic language with its religious content which appeared insane and mixed-up, as meant to bring to mind a street preacher. When he disappeared I even conducted an investigation and found out that he had probably died. Then I decided to replace him. Hiding my face behind a latex mask I appeared in the Kosmonautów housing development where I live with my family. For a few days I tried to introduce a virus into the local community which used to the predictable rituals in the closed square of beauty shops, churches, drugstores, small shops, psychological or urology clinics etc. The kosmonautów housing development provides the residents with everything they need, they do not have to visit the “outside world.” The title of the work is a fragment of commentary by the black, American artist David Hammons on the elections won by Barrack Obama in 2012.



text and film stills:
Piotr Skiba
– born 1980,
visual artist, painter,
draftsman, author
of films in which he
presents the subject
of madness,
maladjustment
and loneliness



stills from
Piotr Skiba's video
*Man, that negro
stole my show!*
2012







training grounds,
Hubert Kielan
Michał Grzegorzek

H.K. – born 1986,
postgraduate student
in the Department
of Architecture
from Wrocław University
of Technology, graphic
designer, set designer,
he runs a design studio
in Wrocław, and
cooperates with the
gallery BWA Dizajn
www.kielandesign.com

M.G. – born 1988,
graduated with
a degree in
Polish Philology
from the University
of Wrocław, founder
and producer
of Sekretne Kino
(Secret Cinema),
works in BWA Dizajn

talk:
Anna Galik
Joanna Synowiec

Nomada

We are?

A group of people – an association who work for immigrants in Wrocław.

What needs do you see related to this topic?

We need to popularize the subject of violence that stems from hatred, especially when it comes to immigrants, to support people who have experienced violence and develop campaigns which will prevent such incidents. The need to support immigrants who have problems with documenting their residence. Campaigns for Romanians Roms who are economic immigrants and require a multifaceted approach to their situation, for instance: education, health care, a living space, availability of work, relationships with neighbors. All those actions aim to sensitize our society, to counteract inequalities, to analyze the situation of immigrants in Wrocław, and their needs.

Why, for many years, is there a discussion about multiculturalism in Wrocław when the statistics and researchers claim something else?

As Nomad we take part in the discussion, involving ourselves in actions for a diverse society although we know that it's just a myth. When we set up our association we knew that we had to think about the real marginalization of immigrants' problems. We also knew that it was a small group. Talking about multiculturalism in Wrocław refers to the past, and the “here and now” does not reflect in the quality of life of immigrants such as students from African countries or Roms from Romania. Their dissimilarity and specific particular conditions for a general normal life situation determines their inability. That's why they are subject to verbal aggression and often to physical violence. Multiculturalism in Wrocław is, in a sense, – in my opinion – an assumption which has not had any chance to come to fruition so far. It is also a kind of gimmick that's supposed to attract investors such as Google, and tourists. When we look at statistics or talk with immigrants we can see that in fact we are not a multi-cultural city. We are far from that although we can hear more and more foreign languages in the city center. I see Wrocław and its multiculturalism in money spent on folklore, in inviting a few bands to Wyspa

Association
NOMADA
is a NGO
from Wrocław
which works to shape
the solidarity
and understanding
between people
of different origins
and social status.
The organization
is involved
in human rights,
popularizing
and protecting them,
especially towards
excluded groups,
immigrants, foreigners, as
well as ethnic, social
or religious minorities.



*Lands,
municipality's
ownership,
Hubert Kielan
Michał Grzegorzek*

(Słodowa Island) and the two-day festival which presents various cultures. I don't mind these types of campaigns but they are far from everyday life. Referring to those festivals and calling them integrating activities is an abuse. Additionally it stereotypes minorities – closes them in a kind of museum and conditions pictures of them.

Debate about multiculturalism is a debate about prosperity, development and social inequalities. Immigration is a kind of the effect of social enrichment. Immigrants decide to live in the city where they have chances – contrary to the place they come from – to get work and make money to live on. Wrocław however does not have that magnet. It rather attracts foreign capital with the cheap, Polish labor force – like in the special economic zone.

I must agree with you, I also migrated to London where it was easier to find work and lead a better life.

Wrocław does not have welfare comparable to London or Berlin, why does it attract people from African countries? What are their motives to come here?

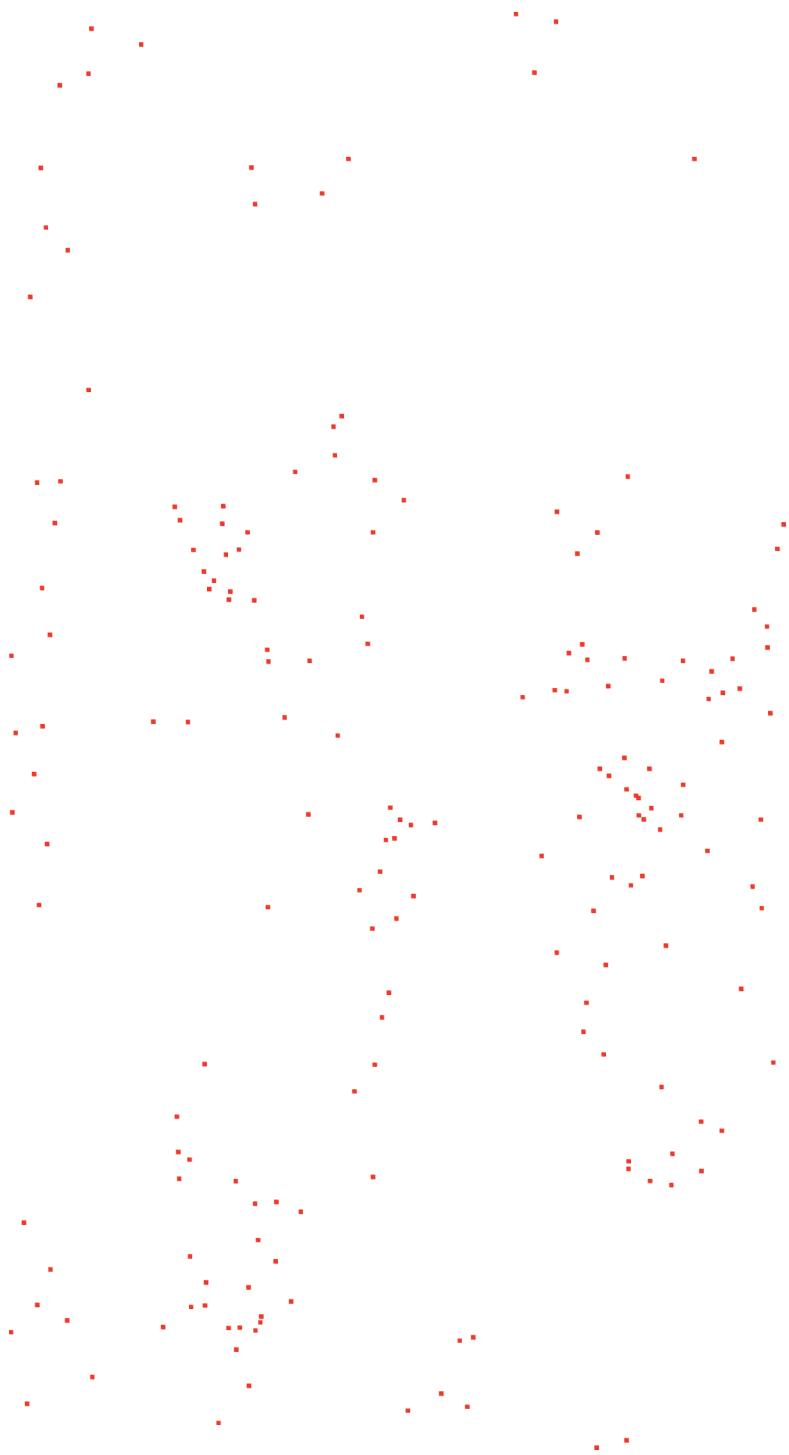
It is mainly about education. They look for the possibilities to study in their countries. 90% of people who choose Poland and whom I know came here because of economic reasons. It is cheaper to study in Poland than in London or Paris.

Do you think it is all the same for them whether to study in Łódź, Warsaw or Wrocław?

When it comes to higher education - most of them start in Łódź – there is the most popular Polish language school. However all the universities want them. It means money. When they complete the education in the Polish language school they choose a university in the city where they have friends from their countries who have already paved the way.

And what is the reality of an immigrants' life in Wrocław?

A huge obstacle for immigrants who come to Poland and do not have any family or friends here is the language in the Department of Foreigners in the Governor's Office. They must prove that they have the right to stay on in of Poland (or in the Schengen Zone), that they've come to work or study. They do not know Polish, they speak English or French and the contact with the Office is very frustrating, minus the subjectiveness of the situation. It is a nightmare. If you do not have your own interpreter to accompany you,



points,
Hubert Kielan
Michał Grzegorzek

if you have no one who holds your hand and shows you what to do and how to fill in the questionnaires, you are lost. That's why people from Cameroon are left on their own. They can only find someone from their diaspora or a friend of their friends who, if they have time and are not at work or at university, will find a few hours to help as interpreters, waiting with them in the long queue.

What does the everyday life of these immigrants look like? Of those who, for example, completed their education or work here?

If we talk about those who completed their education and work for corporations, it is work. I am thinking mainly about people from different African countries. Work and maybe beer with their acquaintances, and home. They say that they had fun during university and they do not need to meet new people. They had to pave the way and learn how to avoid problems, develop defense mechanisms and deal with racist incidents they come across every day. It has cost them a lot of health and discouraged from leaving their houses when they have so little time, have families, work and friends. They do not need to go out and they have friends with whom they spend evenings. They are very busy, work takes up much of their time. They complain that they have problems to find time for old friends. I meet students only in those places where I know I will meet them: chosen night clubs or student houses. I see also new people who came here to pass the entrance exams for university. Recently I met a group of boys who loved music and dance. They chose club Mundo to get together. However even there they met with verbal and physical violence – racist attacks. They stopped going there when one of the bodyguards assaulted a very calm man. They said that they would never go there again and boycotted the place. They meet in another club, in Melanz. Their friends did the same. They have to look for safe places all the time. They visited Mundo because it was the place on the map of Wrocław where many foreigners met, also those who took part in Erasmus, but the place did not meet their expectations. It did not provide the basic need of safety and trust. It does not mean that they go to every club. I do not see them when I pass the beer gardens, everyone blends in there. There are many foreigners from Western Europe. My friends, who have different skin color – Africans, in the evenings choose safe places such as student houses, with grass lawns nearby, small pubs near their homes which they consider safe.

What do you think of accusing us of supporting – with our actions and attempt to popularize the subject – the discourse about multiculturalism in Wrocław if we take into account the invisibility and small scale of immigration?

Don't we blow some air into the balloon of multiculturalism?

Yes, we do.



*Missing people –
places in Wrocław
from 2000 until today
(according to Itaka
database),
Hubert Kielan
Michał Grzegorzek*

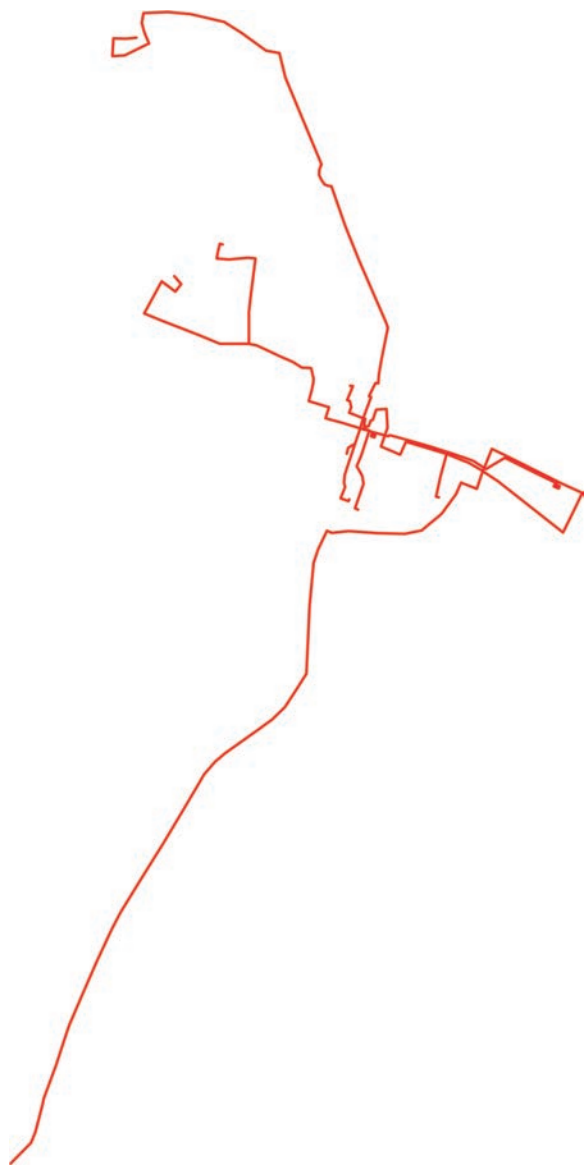
I must admit that I did not take into account the popularity of the subject, rather my need to work in the areas destined for long-term campaigns. The roms have lived here for more than 15 years, let's not kid ourselves and pretend that they have been invisible. They sit near the same churches and in the same places. They just change their homes. I think that the situation has changed because we turned up and the media started to talk about the problem. Unfortunately it started a campaign against them. It shows that as a society we are not ready for "others" who come from foreign lands and who need support. The problems of the Roms are becoming more and more common and since then we've had two arson attempts on their camps, and NOP calling for the final solution.

Wrocław's pluralism of traditions and cultures is an important element of the promotional policy of the city. Maybe Wrocław should become an ambassador of all immigrants and work towards closing the detention camps in Poland (a hunger strike took place there at the beginning of the year), influencing the Department of Foreigners and simplifying the procedures related to documenting their residence, preparing experimental projects with the Romanian Roms. Maybe the image of multi-culturalism should make the authorities and the society feel, in some sense, responsible for immigrants, their problems and needs, as we use them to legitimize multiculturalism in Wrocław.

Almost two years ago, when the city police tried to evict the Roms from their camp, we published a statement in *Gazeta Wyborcza* with which we wanted to draw attention to the city's responsibility, the city which is perceived as being multicultural but was trying to get rid of quite a large group of Roms. Especially at a time when European Union popularizes actions for Roms, their education and health, the possibility to integrate into society. That was in March 2012. Now the situation – I hope – has changed. We, the Nomada, are not a group who will only stand on the barricades during eviction, we started the discussion with the authorities about the situation of the Roms. Everything takes place due to the last events which do not concern the Roms directly, but present the situation of tension and aggression in Wrocław. I think it must have become visible. In 2011 when we published on the Internet a report about violence towards immigrants "Do you have a problem? Violence motivated by hatred in Wrocław" I felt that most people who should have been interested in the subject, thought that we exaggerated. I think there was a kind of narration that there are few incidents and we spoil the picture of an "open" and "pleasant" city.

The city is an agglomeration where many different groups have their own interests and try to fight for them on the condition that they feel entitled enough. Is there any chance that groups of immigrants, maybe those from Africa, feel entitled enough to put forth their demands and

curves,
Hubert Kielan
Michał Grzegorzek



fight for improving their quality of life? To gain attention and sharing their perspective?

It is hard to say whether they are going to fight but I see that after a few years of cooperation with us they want to organize themselves and work for their community. I am happy that on the 21st of August the first meeting of a section of “Africa otherwise” from Wrocław is taking place. The organization operates in Warsaw. Now it's time to introduce it to Wrocław. I hope that the meeting will start campaigns which can improve immigrants' everyday life. They would decide about the range of topics.

In your opinion – what will the future of the Roms in Wrocław be like?

For a long time we solicited meeting with the authorities, we wanted to talk about the future of our Romany neighbors. It is happening now. I don't know whether it is a good time to celebrate but I feel very optimistic about that. I hope to set up a group of experts who can talk with the city. We will organize a conference together with other institutions who have succeeded in helping Roms in Europe so that we can learn and take advantage of their good practice, but also learn from their mistakes. I really hope that together we can elaborate on an experimental strategy to support the Roms.

Do you hope for the Romanian Roms to become the citizens of Wrocław?

Yes, I hope they will have the chance. If they want they can become citizens. Some of them declare their willingness and want to stay here. We have to leave space also for the Roms who do not want to enter the system and want to live like they already do – it is also very important.

What about the fear of a Romanian Roms flood? The media often say that today there are 80 people and in a while there will be 180 of them.

That fear is driven by media. There are not so many Romanian Roms and if we take them into account on a European scale – it really is a minority. The word “flood” is inadequate. It's obvious that other Roms will come. Why was it easy for me to migrate to London? Because I had friends there who settled and helped others. You want to come because it is easier to earn money and live. The mechanism is similar to the migration of Poles to the West, who didn't always succeed and achieve economic success. We need to take into account that it can happen, that if we find a good idea it may cause more Roms to seize the opportunity.

I guess that if they take part in is experimental program they will have the possibility to become independent as it is in the case of large families who need health care, free education etc?



Michał, Hubert
03.08.2013,
Hubert Kielan
Michał Grzegorzek

Yes, creating perspectives also for future generations. They will have the chance to find work, develop their skills or learn new skills, and not only have the right to stay in Wrocław. For the future generations to have more options than just sitting outside churches.

Thank you for your time.



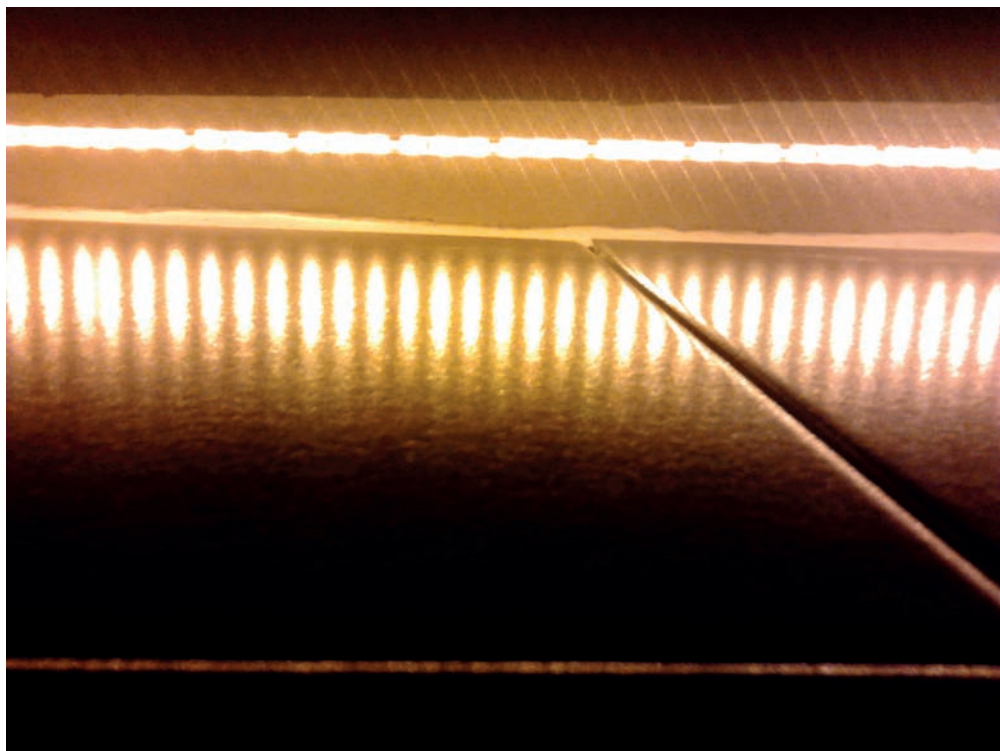




Hiking trails

the photo on the left
on the previous page:
Stanisław Sielicki
– born 1958, biologist,
in the 90's member
of the group from
Wrocław – Luxus,
photographer;
photos he has taken
since the 70's
document, in cold,
objectifying aesthetics,
the urban landscape,
friends and events





photos:
Dominik Podsiadło









Leprosy

text:
Maciej Bączyk
– born 1977,
cultural expert,
practices photography,
project activities
("Invisible Map
of Wrocław" realized
together with
photographer
Karol Krukowski
and 16 invisible
citizens), installations
and sound art,
he is a member
of performance
and music group
Male Instrumenty
(Small Instruments)

Leprosy

Czermień looked at his watch. It was already twenty-five to seven. The wave of pedestrians on the sidewalk grew even thicker; they were all waiting for the lights to change. Finally, it shined green. In a moment, the corner was deserted. Czermień lifted his eyes and on twenty screens he saw a drowned girl's motionless face.

Ścibor-Rylski sets the plot of his story in the very center of Lower Silesia. In order to lend authenticity to the events as he describes them, the text is fraught with Wrocławian accents – the names of streets, squares and housing projects, where the main protagonist, who is looking for his brother, meets his one-time friends from his criminal past. Sometimes Rylski also makes references to the cultural life of Wrocław in the early 1970's, and interweaves all this into the dense network of streets and bars of the crowded city-center, where for only one day and night Stanisław Czermień (played by Zygmunt Malanowicz) will lose the fight for his brother Witek.

The film version of the story maintains this character, and thus we can see numerous scenes filmed against the city backdrop of Wrocław in the early 70's. And although the film diverges from its literary original at many points, the altered or added scenes do not distort the overall, social and urban character of the story. In my opinion it is exactly this feature that makes "Leprosy" a special film and provides us with a reason to reflect upon locality, understood in this text as being at one's own place, in one's own neighbourhood, on one's own pavement – trodden by those who had been here before – just in the 70's. The inhabitants of Wrocław back then were not afforded this luxury. They moved along a ground which had been uprooted and became available to them only after the borders had been moved. It is obvious that they had never seen any films produced in Breslau while looking for fragments of their own world, their own history. This film experience allows us to see the things that have already disappeared. Dead people talk to us from the screen. They revolve in a world frozen in film frames, obligating the next generation to jump into the past. And it does not matter here that we are dealing with a fictional film. Bear in mind, I focused on this layer of the image which clearly makes up part of my own history, too. I've watched and analysed films shot in Wrocław 40 years ago and I've experienced a deepened reflection on the place where I live.

Wroclaw Feature Film Studio

Edward Gierek's epoch was a time when the local society took on a new, colorful quality. Perhaps that was the first moment when the mental burden of the horror of the 2nd World War was pushed aside by the ordinary, everyday needs of a little stabilisation. It was also a time for relaxation and mass entertainment, which did not necessarily have to recall the fight against the occupying powers. In the collective consciousness, the 1960's were represented by the Four Tank Man and A Dog TV series and Captain Kloss, whereas the 1970's – by the forty-year-old engineer Karwowski. The indigenous Polish film production responded to the needs of the new, post-war society. The catalog of films produced in the capital of Lower Silesia is quite big – but not so big as to immediately become speechless with the urge to list it all at once. The Wroclaw Feature Film Studio is a spot worth visiting in the first place (just like the main protagonist of Leprosy does, just after he is released from the custody).

– *The People's Hall* – said Czermień and sat beside him.

(...)

– *Where should I drop you off?* – asked the chubby guy.

– *At a film set.*

– *Going to get a job?*

– *I already have. I'm playing an upbeat railwayman, who lends some money to his poor buddy from the sanitation services.*

If Czermień really had gotten on at a film, he would have had a chance to appear in several other crime films and dramas, produced in Wrocław at the turn of the 1960's and 1970's: "The Murderer Leaves A Trace" (1967) – dir. Aleksander Ścibor-Rylski, "Golden Wheel" (1971) – reż. Stanisław Wohl (screenplay: Aleksander Ścibor-Rylski), "Plague" (1972) – dir. Roman Załuski, "Anatomy of Love" (1972) – dir. Roman Załuski, "The Bread roll" (1973) – dir. Anna Sokołowska, "The Dog" (1973) – dir. Janusz Kondratiuk, "I Killed" (1975) – dir. Stanisław Lenartowicz.

Of course in its portfolio WFF does have some outstanding films, such as Wojciech Haś' *The Manuscript Found in Saragossa*, however we are interested in the average films set against a reality concurrent with their emergence. As with "Leprosy", they should have a characteristic, Wrocław-oriented idiomatic expression and include a large number of outdoor shots (the above titles satisfy to these requirements, maybe apart from the short film "The Dog", the action of which takes place entirely in the tower blocks on Grunwaldzki Square).

As a matter of fact, each of these films could be separately investigated. However, for our purposes I suggest a trip deep into the film "Leprosy" (with some additions – as it will turn out later). Let us treat Trzos-Rastawiecki's film as the starting point to meet the city, its atmosphere and completely fresh



LEPROSY
 direction:
 Andrzej
 Trzos-Rastawiecki
 screenplay based
 on the story
 Leprosy
 by Aleksander
 Ścibor-Rylski
 music:
 Tomasz Stańko
 premiere:
 December 1971
 atelier
 and laboratory:
 WFF in Wrocław

25-year-old history. Let us have a close look at the shots taken by Antoni Nurzyński, observe the background and distant background. Let us set our sights on what can be seen from the windows of our protagonists' apartments, or what flashes in front of our eyes when Czermień cruises the 1000 MB Skoda (1000 Minor Botches) through the city center. Let us draw our attention to the vision of the city created by the editorial means and selection of locations. Let us pick up addresses, neighborhoods and other urban signposts. Finally, let us simultaneously follow the thread of the story, based on which the film was made. Having done so, we will have an additional layer overlapping these film images – in some points synchronically, in others – as a counterpoint. The trip through the Wrocław of the early 70's, tracing blackmailers engaged in forcing minors into prostitution, is a proposition to look for the city which had just only started to build up its identity.

Odra

– I'll spare you – said Budny dully. (...) Fifteen years and maybe a few months old. Death by drowning.

The screen flashed with light again. This time, a wide panorama of the Odra river in the vicinity of the Mills appears. The bridge, the empty quays, the hollow tenements by Księcia Witolda Street. And the rough flow of the river, bursting out of an open sluice.

If looking for a surrealist film from Wrocław in the 1920's, then the citizens militia's stock footage, screened for Czermień by lieutenant Traszka and captain



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Kadr

Budny at the police station on Łąkowa Street, seems perfect (7'20"-8'3"). A strongly contrasted image, styled by the cameraman to be like an amateur film, depicts the murdered girl's body being fished out from the Odra River. First we see the spot where the body was found – on the stairs leading down to the river there stands a female militia officer – visible in the background is the bridge between Podwale and Mostowa streets. Next, the militia is pulling up the drowned girl. There are two men in black coats and hats waiting on the bank. This scene could easily fit into René Clair's "Entr'acte" or a René Magritte painting. In this case there is no difficulty in identifying the location. It is the water confluence by the Pomorski Bridge. It is currently being modernized and already now we can see that the original look has changed. From the spot where the militia fished out the body we have an excellent view of the southern hydro power plant's brick building which dates back to 1924, designed by Max Berg himself. Having been released from custody on Łąkowa Street and settled a few small affairs in his girlfriends flat, Czermień heads to exactly this place. He waxes on about the concrete quays, where the body had been fished out a few days earlier. However this time, to the shots of the Pomorski Bridge some images from the City Port at Kleczków (17'28"-18'12") were added. Those who do not know Wrocław would not be able to notice this topographically preposterous combination. Still, these shots go well together, and combined with Stańko's music create a very classy ambience. It would be worth persuading everyone interested in seeing Wrocław from a new, less familiar perspective, to use the opportunities offered by the Odra and its nooks and crannies. A trip by boat or kayak on the river is a subject for yet another story – however it is worth suggesting this option here. Because of decades of enormous negligence, Wrocław's water infrastructure can take us back to the times much more distant than 1970's.

Pubs, dive bars and clubs

The International Book and Press Club (EMPiK), Kościuszki Square

Czermień only meets his old friends in the EMPiK club on Kościuszki Square – today, in July 2013 – he would meet them in the Biedronka discount grocery store. At the turn of the 60's and 70's EMPiK neighboured the "Mona Lisa" Gallery, a place run by Jerzy Ludwiński, who was particularly important to Wrocławian Conceptual Art (as of 26th July 2013, Jerzy Ludwiński's Archive is being exhibited at the Wrocław Contemporary Museum).

He turned around, approached the door at the other side and pushed it ajar gently. Behind it, there was quite a big hall, leading to the press reading room. From time to time a gallery of different artistic oddities was organised there, under the auspices of Mona Lisa. That day, the space was dominated by gigantic abacuses and black boards, hung on threads and densely packed with metal needles; there were red dice on some of them. These were "open systems", into which the public was allowed

to interfere as they pleased, that is they could slide the balls on the abacuses or move the red dice from one nail to another, and therefore participate in the act of artistic creation. So far, few people had been willing (...).

Everything indicates, that Czermień met Matusiak (Witold Pyrkosz) and Kunz (Henryk Hunko) at Wanda Gołkowska's (a lecturer at the Academy of Fine Arts in Wrocław) "Open System" exhibition. Unfortunately, in this case the film producers had chosen a totally different variant and located the old friends' meeting in a tram heading to the Olympic Stadium (along Ludomir Różycki Avenue and Szytnicki Park – currently this route is run by tram numbers 9, 17 and 33+) (28'37" – 31'13"). The scene in the tram shows the hazardous practice of tram riders at that time– jumping in and out of the moving tram, and the old type of trams with their characteristic sliding doors and seats made out of wooden spokes. The advantage of the tram route going along Szytnicki Park is that with relatively little imagination we can feel as if we were travelling by tram through the forest. We can crown this surreal experience by visiting the Olympic Stadium, in search of the monumental manifestations of the 3rd Reich's architecture.



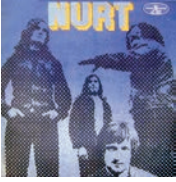
Wanda Gołkowska,
work from
the exhibition
Układ Otwarty
(Opened Setting)
in the gallery
Pod Moną Lisą,
1967

The music club – the concert of Romuald & Roman's band

Before we watch the film we learn that we are dealing with a criminal story focused on a subject which was relatively unpopular in the period of PRL cinematography. The practices of criminal groups consisted, among others, in: forcing people into prostitution, gang rape and blackmailing, and all this on people, whose ages prompts the use of the word – paedophilia. The film itself is rather mediocre. For many viewers it is Tomasz Stańko's music that would be its main value (the beginnings of the 70's were one of the best periods of his work. Will the "Leprosy" film soundtrack ever be released as an album? This question is well-grounded, as Stańko's trumpet is not the only musical attraction to be found in the film).

A short visit to a dive bar at the Main Railway Station (54'59" – 55'44") lets us recall the times when the Station was vibrant with life and the freedom brought about by trading and consumption was so big that you could drink draught beer directly on the platform. Once again Czermień meets Tuś (in the literary original their meeting took place in Maria Magdalena's Church and near the Opera House), to move into the midst of the club world just a moment later.

As in much of the film, instead of Wanda Gołkowska's exhibition we see the interior of the tram, a bit later we witness a scene not to be found in Ścibor-Rylski's story. The missing scenes of the Wrocławian Conceptual Art are compensated by the fiery appearance of Romuald & Roman band (56'44 – 60'00"). Where does the concert take place? We are provided with a hint by a characteristic mosaic behind the backs of the musicians, including: Romuald



the cover of EP NURT

Piasecki, Roman Runowicz, Kazimierz Cwynar and Ryszard Sroka. *Everything can happen in one night*, sings Runowicz and indeed, the film's action enters its climactic phase. As early as the same night Czermień meets his brother Witek and makes an attempt to pull him out of serious trouble. We can find the song If Everyone Could Forgive on the album of the NURT band from Wrocław (Aleksander Mrożek, Kazimierz Cwynar, Ryszard Sroka & Roman Runowicz). An excellent album from 1973, combining exuberant rock, good lyrics and Tomasz Stańko's free jazz phrasing, is a collector's rarity (of course it was made available as a vinyl lp, which has never been re-issued).

© Filmoteka
Narodowa

Tropem adresów i mieszkań

During his urban wanderings Czermień meets Mr. Sitko – a dog breeder from the neighborhood of Klecina. After a short exchange he reveals the real reason for his visit. He is not interested in poodles...

- *Tell me, Mr Sitko, how d'you order these girls of yours.*
- *What girls?*
- *The fifteen-year old ones.*
- *Man, what're you talking about?*
- *I want to get a contact, I just want to know where you buy these squirts, nothing more.*
- *Man, get lost from here or I'll set the dogs on you... get the fuck out, what're ya waiting for!*
(42'20")

As you can easily guess, Czermień does not follow Mr Sitko's advice, just the contrary – he terrorises the dog breeder with a chain, turns him out of his apartment and even uses his phone twice. That's how he is able to pick up another clue. Unfortunately, as he finds out later, a false one.

- *I was to call you back in five minutes.*
 - *Yes, I'll give you the address. Are you driving?*
 - *I am.*
 - *So don't rush. The girl will be there at four.*
 - *Ok, where?*
 - *It's in Gajowice, Grabiszyńska 16-22 Street, did you write it down?*
 - *I don't need to, I only need the number of the building and the apartment...*
 - *Third floor, number 25.*
 - *Knock or ring?*
 - *Doesn't matter.*
 - *Thank you.*
- (45'15")

Before Czermień drives to Gajowice, he walks leisurely through a beer garden somewhere in the center of Wrocław. Where? Maybe on Kościuszki Square or Świdnicka Street, maybe in the Market Square. The city is relaxed, it is about 4:00 PM. A lot of pretty girls are by the tables, in downtown trendy cafés. In the foreground, as extras, we can see the same people all the time, as it turns out they are associated with to the gang of pimps and blackmailers. Czermień sets off in his borrowed Skoda to Gajowice and he quickly realises he is being followed. Ścibor-Rylski's story however does not include this scene. Perhaps it was reckoned that a car pursuit would be good for an otherwise slow narration, raise the tension and intensify the atmosphere around the main character. Yet it is not entirely obvious who chases Czermień and why. We do not see the driver nor do we know his reasons for why he sets off pursuing him through the streets of the very city center. In the first, long take we see Kuźnicza street, down which the main hero drives towards the University Church. On the right he passes an optical store (the corner of Kuźnicza and Nożownicza). The Daniluk family establishment has existed since 1945, but in this particular place only since 1969, that is after the last war rubble had been removed from there. The Skoda takes a turn, then speeds up to drive down Kotlarska Street and turn on Łaciarska Street after a moment, and then into Nożownicza again. Today, the streets down which Czermień makes his escape are totally empty. Not even a car near the sidewalks. At a high speed he drives on to Garbary Street, which nowadays seems to us as abstract as a tram going into a forest.

The chase ends up taking a breathtaking turn at Piaskowa Island. The Skoda loses its mysterious oppressor by turning sharply from the Młyński Bridge deep into the Island. The mysterious driver drives away further on. We never learn who it was. Czermień waits in the car a moment longer (here, he again



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Kadr

hears the screech of tires – as if the other car had again gone down the Młyński Bridge and turned the wrong way once more). Having made sure he's lost his "tail" he walks to Gajowice. Normally, it would take him 30-40 minutes to get from Piaskowa Island to 16-22 Grabiszyńska Street on foot, but with the invention of the film editing and the discovery of its incredible possibilities by the Russian film school, just a few seconds later we can see him going up the third floor in an elevator, and looking for apartment no 25.



performance
of Teatr Pantomimy
"Odejsie Fausta
(The Departure
of Faust)",
direction:
Henryk
Tomaszewski,
premiere 1970

Leprosy and Plague

The huge radio and electronics store on the corner of Świdnicka and Oławska Streets flashed with twenty screens of different sizes. They were all broadcasting the local Wrocław program. You could not hear the sound through the glass; it would have been deafened by the incessant traffic anyway. But the image on all

of them was clear and spotless: a group of actors from “Pantomime” simultaneously multiplied 20 times, waving around a motionless Faust.

In the Middle Ages, leprosy was considered to be a sign of God’s wrath. What sins did the young protagonists of Trzos-Rastawiecki’s film have on their consciences, these young, long-haired city dwellers, cruising between Kościuszki Square and the Market Square? The beginning and end of the film are framed by documentary photos of fashionably dressed girls picked out of the crowd, who unaware of the pestilent air walk down the sidewalks. This was a visibly post-war generation of people born in early 1950’s. Not even for a moment does the film recall the context of the 2nd World War, whereas Ścibor-Rylski’s story only winks and nods once at it: ***Further on there was a huge white space – the empty reminiscence of the housing estate, which disappeared from here 25 years ago, during the battles for the city.*** 25 years later we have congested streets, full cafés and pubs, militia equipped with cutting-edge technology and devices, Conceptual Art and searing, guitar rock. In Ścibor-Rylski’s text there are modernistic housing estates piling up and rapid streams of cars: ***At a quarter past four he was in Gajowice. The housing estate, being the pride of Wrocław, was all in a leaden glow. (...) The Swedish elevator took him to the third floor.*** In this ambience, the leprosy of the title signifies the bug damaging minds of the first post-war generation at the threshold of the moral laxity of the early 1970’s. This film does not have a happy end. This disease is incurable; it is the punishment of sin and a plague.

Plague

- *There is a plague in the city. What importance do your schedules and plans have now?! Who knows how many people are now walking down the streets, spreading the disease! We can’t wait any longer.*
 - *Are you sure it’s smallpox?*
 - *Yes.*
 - *Our inventory of the vaccine is just enough to satisfy the needs of a small village and not a city of half a million.*
 - *You want to involve us all in a scandal!*
 - *A physician should have some imagination. Do you want to see corpses in the streets to make you believe?*
- (26’30”)

“Leprosy” had its premiere in December 1971. Four months later, “Plague” hit the screens. It is Roman Załuski’s psychological drama, based on Jerzy Ambroziewicz’s book. It has been exactly 50 years since the last epidemic of smallpox in Poland, which was one of the last ones in Europe. Since 1980 smallpox has been deemed to have been entirely eradicated. On the 15th of July 1963, in Wrocław, an anti-epidemiological state of emergency was announced,



PLAGUE
 direction:
 Roman Załuski
 screenplay based
 on the book *Paraza*
 by Jerzy Ambroziewicz
 premiere:
 April 1972
 atelier:
 WFF in Wrocław

and the quarantine of people exposed to the virus lasted three more months. Załuski's film falls into the popular model of catastrophic cinema, however these are mostly faces covered with the rash characteristic of smallpox and scabs that frighten the viewers. The film is much more interesting due to its city locales set against Wrocław at the beginning of the 1970's. Employees of the sanitation services and physicians constantly cruise around Wrocław. Sometimes, with the help of the militia, they pull sleepy people straight out of their beds, at night, on Świdnicka Street, near the bookstore and the Kameralny Theatre. "Leprosy" – 1971, "The Plague" – 1972, and in this context the hot city, full of unsuspecting inhabitants on crowded streets. Smallpox comes down on them like the Egyptian plague – nobody wants to believe doctor Adam Rawicz's diagnosis, who identifies the symptoms of smallpox in one of his patients, and then on his own, deduces the chain of infection.

"The Plague" is another film and another multi-thread story. We will find in it the sunny, laughing Polish People's Republic, colourful KDM housing estate, the gloomy interiors of Wrocław's hospitals, the cafe near Zwierzyński Bridge and the empty highway, down which our main character together with the driver (Bogusz Bilewski without his beard) pace towards Bolesławiec.

Neither "Leprosy" nor "Plague" have undergone any decent digital reconstruction. They are not available in a DVD format, either. Just like many other, less popular PRL titles they are rarely shown on TV and are of course available on the Internet (for all those, who after having overcome their moral reluctance will have to satisfy themselves with very compressed copies recorded from television broadcasts). In this connection, awaiting a decent DVD box from 1970's Wrocław, I have to leave this text without a bang, counting on it in the not too distant future.



Reading the city through the prism of the local production is sometimes difficult. Because of this the author requests your help in pinning down two places that keep nagging him:

1. At what street do we see the gateway no. 14, near which Czermień beats up a passerby?
2. Where was the concert of Romuald & Roman band held?



text:
Jacek Zachodny

The Island



Do you see things or do you just look at them? Important places seem to be no longer valid as I push my way through the obscurity defined by time. The delightful and recognizable landscapes, sounds, smells, which I now recollect, eventually evoke a tedious melancholy. The Island. Archipelagos are generally scattered around the world. Those who happen to visit places like them know perfectly well that islands are guided by their own rules. People who live there don't usually approve of any external authorities and they create a specific form of community that's based on their alienation and barriers which seem difficult for others to cross. This is a kind of community against threats. For instance in case of a flood, you can observe how the rescue operation gets limited by the banks of the river. The islanders live close to each other, their individual worlds combine and permeate. They tolerate the neighbours and this toleration founds the basis of their small society. Almost like in a primitive tribe, they know practically everything about the other members of their community. The sounds of love and gentle moans of pleasure as well as regular, hollow echoes of quarrels about nothing can be easily heard through the thin walls. Muffled laughs and curses seep through the open windows along with the birds' singing coming from the gardens.

The islanders would like to have everything at home, or at least apply a shrunken grid map of the world to their own island. This particular one is no different in this respect from the others. Even its name the Great Island, which has been widely used since the 1997 flood of the Oder, speaks for itself. Here you have the green area with the pitches in the middle of the Sepolno district, which the dwellers use to call Maracana, and the twenty five meter-high hill formed on the ruins of the German defence system named by the local: Kili-manjaro. In the past it was mostly exploited as the perfect spot for the local motocross racings, but now it mostly attracts the fans of extreme downhill cycling. And there is of course the famous Eye of the Sea (Morskie Oko) – a large, natural, muddy pond situated at the altitude of 116 metres above the sea level. Further on, you'll find the Olympic Stadium – the certainly in decline, but still breathtaking modernist sports complex together with the Olympic Pool, which used to amaze thanks to its monumental size, but now severely destroyed is being slowly absorbed by vegetation; the Champ de Mars (Pola Marsowe) – the largest flat green area in the city that's famous for the Adolf Hitler's speech to a fanatic crowd; the Japanese Garden – created in 1913 by the Orient's enthusiast Count Hohenlohe and the master Mankichi Arai of Tokyo, restored to glory by gardeners from Nagoya; the Centennial Hall – the reinforced concrete monument inscribed on the list of Unesco; the Four Domes Pavilion, the former Film Studio, now completely devastated; the Pergola with its huge multimedia fountain which regularly scares birds from the adjacent park; WuWa – the housing estate retained after the modernist housing exhibition of German Werkbund held in 1929 and the huge African pavilion in the Zoo. Finally, the Spire (Iglica) – a monumental 96 meters high steel picket imported for the exhibition of the Recovered Territories in 1948. All of these really impressive

black and white photos: Sonia Mielnikiewicz – born 1984, graduated with a degree in philosophy and Netherlands Studies from the University of Wrocław, student of Erasmus at Universiteit Rotterdam, scholar of the Minister of Science and Higher Education, has been published in magazines: "Zwykłe zarcie (Simple Food)", "Ultra Zurnal", "Romka Magazine"

colour photos: Jacek Zachodny – born 1969, Wrocław visual artist, author of multimedia installations, films, paintings and happenings, in his works the artist studies the way in which the difference between the western conceptions of time, death, the end and duration define present times



names make you wonder whether the islanders decided to gather all the world attractions in one place as if they refrained from ordinarily stating, 'I'm going to the city centre to see something', but preferred to say, 'I'm going for a walk'.

The marshy climate with an endless numbers of mosquitoes and flies, ubiquitous moisture and the regular flooding of the Oder has made the island a hypnotic and spiritual place. The autumn mist covers and blankets everything, stops time, absorbs all sounds. The spring air holds back smoke coming from the chimneys, summer brings refreshment and the cold air and winter evokes feelings of melancholy and isolation. Vegetation invades every nook and cranny. Green moss fills the gaps that have crumbled during wintertime and ivies desperately try to cross prohibited paths of sidewalks and crawl onto streets, move over rough walls or look in through the windows while trying to break in. Ants walk this ivy path absorbed by their daily routine of carrying crumbs or sugar crystals, the most precious commodity in their vast country. The walls overgrown with creeper hide new-born birds; the tragedies unfold when jittery parents watch helplessly as martens devour their offspring. Their shrill clamour spreads across the district and only insiders know that the drama's happening just now. The whole area bursts with life due to domestic cats, wild cats, rats, voles, field mice, frogs, raccoon dogs, hedgehogs, night-time foxes, squirrels, water rats and wild boars. The sky belongs to birds and skeins of geese flying over the heads, announced by a particular gagging noise. If you look closely, you'll probably notice a predator on the horizon or a heron gliding through the night.

Magpies, jays, waxwings, nightingales, finches, and ubiquitous starlings eat the ripened cherries in the canopy. Wild pigeons, the monogamous dreamers, always in pairs, look proud and surprisingly different from their street brethren. Loud and emotional colonies of sparrows in the hedges, herds of tits, common swifts, swallows, and grosbeaks nestle high in the crowns of old oaks. Old houses offer lots of windowsills gaps, gutter holes, and neat brick hollows. During wintertime, the flocks composed of thousands of rooks create an amazing spectacle flying high in the sky. The night belongs to owls which continue



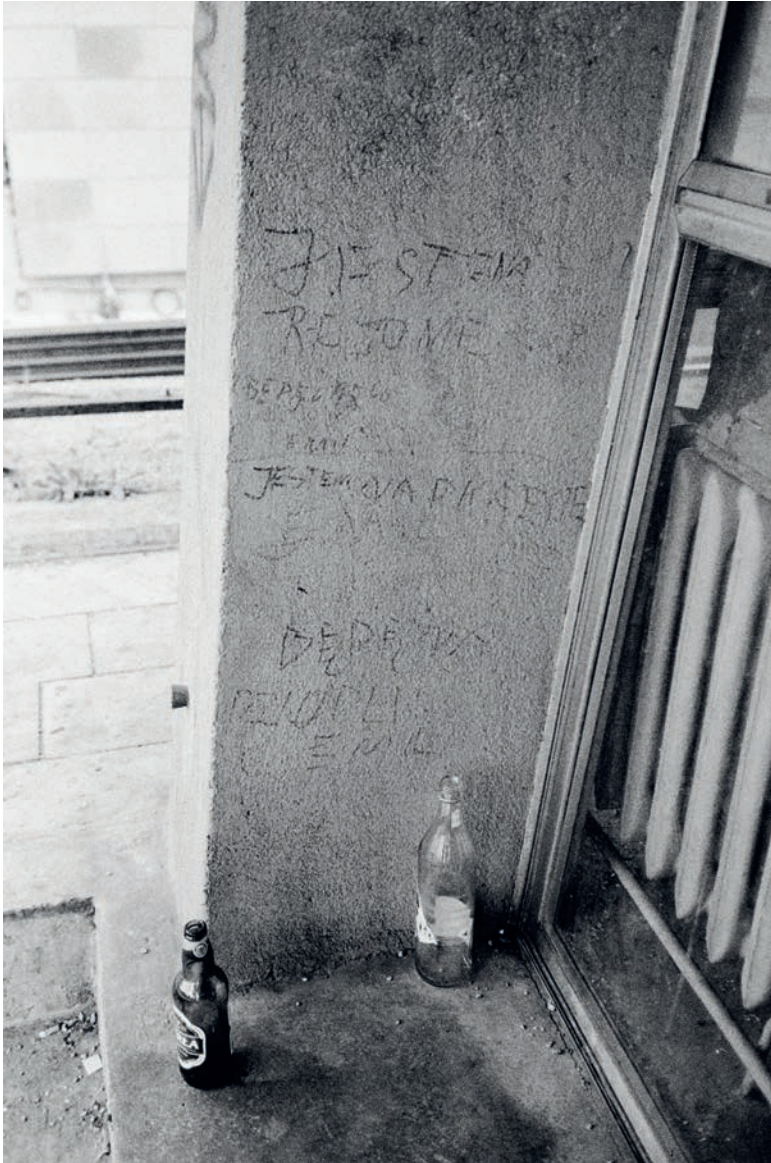
to hoot for hours and frighten others with their ominous, screeching, poignant sounds. In the nearby zoo, during summer nights, you can smell of wild animals and hear the slightly hoarse roar of a lion. Bats circle hungrily in unpredictable flights, forming large groups and making strange ticking sounds on the border of human hearing. Cats mating fights are filled with groans that sound like a baby crying. Martens fight crazily; they suddenly turn up struggling in the midst of battle grafted together, completely oblivious to their surroundings, and disappear. Night hunting. Sunrise in the garden shows its evidence: the tufts of hair, blood and partly eaten bird bodies with traces of an unequal struggle.

If you turn away somewhere for too long, you'll notice that everything in the place from which you looked away is now overgrown and is evolving at an alarming rate. Nature takes its time and consumes old stories while the humid winter frost is bursting monoliths of beliefs that were to be eternal. Everything here represents its own unique design. This is the world created out of power, beyond the political system, implemented by at least four generations; the British garden city concept, adapted and implemented by German architects and engineers, almost intact during the World War II, eventually inhabited by refugees from the East and immigrants from central Poland, a blend of the rural and metropolitan population, a cocktail of traditions, languages and dialects, cake names and aesthetic styles. Most local shops run tabs. Stores are the meeting places where people talk, exchange information on missing cats or pay each other compliments. Drunk neighbours are discharged home or at least seated on the bench, there's no need to call the police. You want to get on well with your neighbours.

The old German furniture, fragments of history, the identity of the old days; the whole past is poured onto the surface of everyday life. The twenty-first century Biedermeier shirts hang on clothes hangers with nostalgic inscriptions: *L. Prager, Herren – u. Knabenmoden Breslau 1. Albrechtstr. 51; Ring 41, Ecke Albrechtstrasse, Gebr. Gruttner / Breslau*. There are also other signs of the ubiquitous past: the ringtones – *bitte drehen*, old front door – *miele*, letter boxes – *briefe*, old basement locks, light switches. Kitchens may still hide small metal, enamel shelves with three containers decorated with German imprint: *Sand, Seife, Soda*, which belonged to the standard equipment of each kitchen in the newly completed houses in the thirties. Some of the former Breslau citizens are still alive; they're the residents who still remember Zimpel from the war-era childhood. They remind me of single, old, withering trees.

What can you do here? Just act as a keen observer of the social experiment, and if you get tired of its unique, stable pace, you can start exploring the heart of extensive gardens and get lost in the kilometres of narrow paths. Try to get to know the locals, they're the most valuable guides. If you don't succeed, you'll certainly find the comfort in walking on the borders of fantasy and neglect, contemplating the multitude of concepts regarding the design of the public space. Be careful though, you could achieve a blissful stasis. What you'll find here, is a biotic structure characteristic of many countries in Asia. Everything

is hand made. Do it yourself. Gardens, houses, sheds, small buildings, walls, fences, gazebos, small greenhouses, paths, lanes, barns, clothes horses, car parks, driveways, porches, flowerbeds, bird feeders, small workshops at the back of houses, pumps with ground water, rock gardens etc. which has been invented, designed and made by their owners. Despite the apparent impression of chaos and neglect, it should be appreciated that, unlike in other parts of the city, the residents here truly determine the face of the space they inhabit.









Collection 5
Jerzy Kosalka
– born 1955,
visual artist,
member of LUXUS,
author of installations
and objects, author
of subvertising brand
Cosalca, his works
present subjects
connected with history,
mythology and social
psychology

