

# DOUBLY REGAINED TERRITORIES

Bogdan Łopieński | Andrzej Tobis | Krzysztof Żwirblis



Bogdan Łopieński, picture story from the 1st Biennale of Spatial Forms in Elbląg, 1965. A spatial form by Andrzej Matuszewski being lifted.

*Doubly Regained Territories* is a presentation of three artistic projects: by Bogdan Łopieński, Andrzej Tobis, and Krzysztof Żwirblis. A documentary photographer, a painter who pursues a utopian project of describing the world using a photo camera and a Polish-German dictionary, and a theatre director/performer/ animator who activates local (urban) communities — all three seem with their practices to be regaining peripheral territories lost to everyday banality.

Bogdan Łopieński's photographs send us back to the 1st Biennale of Spatial Forms in Elbląg in 1965. More than forty invited contemporary artists designed and then, in collaboration with the technicians and blue-collar workers of a local machinery plant (Zamech), created several dozen large-scale metal sculptures, many of which are still to be found displayed throughout the city. The press (artistic and not) hailed the birth of a genuine alliance between artists and the working class, artists were given the possibility to experiment on macro scale, Zamech was hailed an arts patron, and a city of a long and complicated history gained yet another component for building its new history and Polish identity. 'The Elbląg forms adapt themselves to their environment. But in the future, we believe, we shall be composing large spaces, modifying natural landscape conditions. We'll live in cities-as-paintings. The art of the future certainly won't be a reflection of reality', wrote the founder of Elbląg's Galeria EL and the Biennale, Gerard Blum-Kwiatkowski.

The A-Z (*Educational Cabinets*) series, a project started by Andrzej Tobis in 2006, is a series of photographs, each accompanied by a bilingual headword and index number from a 1954 Polish-German dictionary. The majority of the photographs were taken in Upper Silesia, where the artist lives. Rather than to any actual events, the images refer us to a certain in-between state: between languages (Polish and German), historical periods and political systems (the past of People's Poland and the present of the new Republic of Poland), between the cool objectivism of an extant view (rather than a staged situation) and the objectivism-undermining Polish-German headword. Between an existing situation and an artistic gesture of adoption — of including that situation in an artistic description of the world. The Zachęta show presents only a fragment of the pending series.

In a way, Krzysztof Żwirblis's *Social Museum* is a peripheral project as well. Even if it takes places in Warsaw (which is not always the case), it takes for its protagonists not monuments, icons, historical buildings or spectacular

events, but local residents. Rather than offering any physical works, the artist turns into an animator, journalist, organiser. The project is constituted/created by people whom Żwirblis persuades to show their private collections, to tell a story, organise their own festival, meeting, walk or public projection. This is a project about interpersonal relationships and about how residents try to make the space around us truly common — public. It is also, like the other projects, a story about the utopian pursuit of an ideal (city as painting, a world described, city as community), but also about failures, inability and unfulfillment.

'We'll live in cities-as-paintings. The art of the future certainly won't be a reflection of reality', Gerard Blum-Kwiatkowski prophesied in 1965. Was he right?

P.S. The title *Doubly Regained Territories* has been inspired by the title of a painting by Marek Sobczyk and Jarosław Modzelewski.

Hanna Wróblewska

# Bogdan Łopieński



Bogdan Łopieński, picture story from the 1st Biennale of Spatial Forms in Elbląg, 1965: Edward Krasieński during the hoisting of his spatial form. Installation of a spatial form (missing since 1988) by Andrzej Milkowski. A spatial form by Juliusz Woźniak. Photographer Janusz Sobolewski, a spatial form by Jerzy Langiewicz.

Magdalena Komornicka: Documenting the 1st Biennale of Spatial Forms in Elbląg in 1965, did you have a sense of participating in a groundbreaking, historic event for Polish art?

■ Yes, of course. I'd seen modern painting before, but sculpture, such sculpture, and on such a scale — never. It was something completely new, different . . . It seemed to me — if you excuse the lofty expression — that I had a mission to document the whole thing. Other photographers took twenty pictures and went home while I spent a week there, photographing everyday.

Besides, from the political point of view it was something incredible. Something like that wouldn't have been possible in any other Soviet-bloc country since it was completely at odds with the socialist realist doctrine. The sculptures were made at a large industrial plant, where some of the workers had been assigned to work with the artists, and then installed in the space of a city, a Soviet-bloc city! Something like that was possible only in Poland! It was fascinating!

I was to take a few pictures for my photo editor, they usually published three of four, and I took two hundred and fifty. I didn't have to take as many, but I wanted to.

Who was the assignment from?

■ I went to Elbląg on an assignment from the *Polska* monthly, where I was employed at the time — the Eastern edition, meant for the other Soviet-bloc countries and the Soviet Union itself, commonly known as 'Polsha'.<sup>1</sup> It was a different magazine than *Polska*, which was published in five language versions — English, French, German, Spanish and Swedish — the editorial offices neighbouring each other within one publishing house.

My editors usually assigned the jobs according to our fields of interest. It so happened that I did art-related subjects, because that was what I was interested in. That's why I was sent to Elbląg.

You also published interviews with photographers and reviews of photographic exhibitions. Would you say that photographing artistic events was trendy at the time?

■ The West-oriented edition of *Polska* was geared towards that much more than the Eastern-oriented one. You photographed art and documented artistic events because what else if not art was Poland able to catch the West's interest with at the time?

You graduated from the Academy of Physical Education (AWF) and then studied at the Łódź Film School. Where did you learn to take pictures?

■ My father had a camera, the cheapest one, made in the DDR. I used it too, portraying my friends, boys and girls I knew. Nothing special, everyone who had a camera at that age took the same kind of pictures. But as a result I developed a habit of photographing at an early age. From time to time I also took what I called artistic photos [laughs], for fun, those were not 'serious' pictures.

Towards the end of my studies at the AWF, I got myself a decent folding camera — it was capable of taking pictures of very good technical quality — as well as an enlarger (having previously used a self-made plywood enlarger). That was around 1957; the earliest pictures I show in exhibitions are from that year.

I was an autodidact. Through the Club of International Book and Press,<sup>2</sup> I had access to magazines such as *Life* or *Paris Match* and I studied them closely, analysing the photographs published there and trying to find out how they were made. There was also a Polish weekly called *Świat*, very well done, and I waited for each new issue, curious what the photographers would show and trying to take pictures in the same way as they did.

My serious photographic debut took place in 1961, precisely in *Świat*. I was given the cover and two centrefolds, which was something, a genuine distinction! I thought at the time I might not be as talented, as intelligent as the others, but that I'd certainly put up more effort than them [laughs]. That's why other photographers don't have as many pictures in their archives. I believed that was the photographer's role — to document. One can hardly think of another discipline that has such power and such possibilities. All my life — on top of what my editors required from me — I took pictures that you could call 'socialism in a crooked mirror'.

Which photographers inspired you the most?

■ At first, I was inspired by the work of the *Świat* photographers — Wiesław Prażuch, Jan Kosidowski, Konstanty Jarochocki, Wiesław Sławny. I was particularly fond of Prażuch's work. I also liked what Eustachy Kossakowski did. Of the Western ones, I liked Henri Cartier-Bresson the most.

Among the pictures featured in the show there is one presenting a sculpture by Zbigniew Gostomski. In the foreground we see Urszula Czartoryska, in the background are Eustachy Kossakowski with a camera and the photographer Janusz Sobolewski. You told me the pictures tells a private story.

■ [Laughs]. Well, yes. Eustachy Kossakowski introduced me to the Union of Polish Artist Photographers (ZPAF), where I in turn introduced Janusz Sobolewski. I knew Urszula Czartoryska from the *Fotografia* monthly, which I collaborated with. Its editor at the time was Zbigniew Dlubak, an interesting person.

*Fotografia* played a fundamental role at the time since there was no other magazine devoted to the subject, no books or manuals. And for a young photographer like myself, ZPAF membership was a great distinction. The big name at the time was Edward Hartwig; he was followed, had created a kind of school. You could say that school was, in a way, obligatory for the ZPAF members. There were very few photojournalists in the Union; if someone was very good, they admitted him, but basically a photojournalist was regarded a bit like an errand boy with a camera [laughs] . . .

What caused you to bring the Elbląg story to *Zachęta* after forty seven years?

■ Once in a few years I browse through all my negatives, which take me about a month and a half. With time, some photographs I'd earlier paid no attention to start appearing interesting and good. Times change, when you look at a picture several decades later, things that seemed insignificant become important. I was browsing through my archive a year ago and arrived at the conclusion that there were surely people who'd like to see the Elbląg material, that someone would be interested in that . . .

1 The Russian word for Poland [translator's note].

2 A network of outlets that combined the functions of newsagent, bookstore, and reading room, offering international press and book titles, functioned in most of Poland's cities and bigger towns from 1948 until privatisation in 1991 [translator's note].

## From the rules for participation in the 1-st biennial of space forms:

..... acceptance of this invitation is equivalent with an agreement to produce a space form for an area of the town Elbląg agreed upon with the organizing committee, of dimensions not less than 2.00x2.00x2.00 mm ... the space form should be produced from materials (metal) delivered by the organizers, on the premises of the Mechanical Works "ZAMECH".

..... the first three days are destined for making acquaintance with the area of the town . . . and getting acquainted with the material and instruments for the execution of the design. —

..... before starting the final execution of the designed form, the phases of production and all technical problems should be consulted with the specialists of the technical bureau of the biennial . . . .

..... the artists commit themselves to undergo training on servicing the apparatus to be used for the execution of the design, prior to starting its execution.

..... during execution of the design on the premises of the Mechanical Works "ZAMECH" it is absolutely binding to observe all the rules and regulations for working safety and hygiene.

..... the erection of the space form and its location in the place chosen by the author is carried out under the control and supervision of the author, after consulting the specialists from the technical bureau of the biennial.

..... the erected forms compose a collection of an open gallery of space forms and are the property of the Mechanical Works "ZAMECH" and of the town of Elbląg.



IX Kulturpflege, Unterhaltung, Entspannung Tabl. 113–129	IX Opieka kulturalna, rozrywka, wypoczynek tabl. 113–129
113 Kulturveranstaltungen	113 Przedstawienia zespołów artystycznych
114 Volksmusikinstrumente — Noten	114 Instrumenty muzyczne — nuty
115 Orchesterinstrumente	115 Instrumenty orkiestrowe
116 Konzert — Ballett	116 Koncert — balet
117 Theater	117 Teatr
118 Film — Kino	118 Film — kino
119 Rundfunk	119 Radiofonia
120 Schrift	120 Pismo
121 Buch — Zeitung	121 Książka — gazeta
122 Volksbibliothek — Museum	122 Biblioteka ludowa — muzeum
123 Klubhaus	123 Klub — świetlica
124 Brett- und Kartenspiel	124 Szachy — warcaby — gra w karty
125 Photographie I	125 Fotografia I
126 Photographie II	126 Fotografia II
127 Gesellschaftstanz	127 Taniec towarzyski
128 Zirkus	128 Cyrk
129 Jahrmarkt	129 Jarmark

# Andrzej Tobis

Magdalena Komornicka: How did you come up with the idea of the series A–Z (*Educational Cabinets*)? How did you get hold of the dictionary?

■ Andrzej Tobis: I bought the dictionary at a second-hand bookstore as a student. I liked the drawings. I was studying graphic design and I used them in several projects. After completing my studies, I stopped practicing illustration. The dictionary stood on the shelf at my home for years. It's hard to say precisely where the idea of the project came from. I'm a painter and for a very long time I had a problem with the illustrativeness that my painting was encumbered with. A gradual process of getting it rid of the illustrativeness meant that I kept thinking about the relationship between the visible reality and the imaginary one. In 2006, I decided to use photography to tell about the world around me. I had a vague idea of what I wanted to say, but no idea how to do it. None of the photographic I knew seemed appropriate. I wanted for an image of reality, possibly faithful and impartial, to convey a sense of doubt, uncertainty about what you see. Perhaps also a sense of surprise. I often noticed that the longer I looked at an image of reality, the more it surprised me. And the more it surprised me, the harder it was for me to name what I was looking at. One day, when I accidentally reached for an old illustrated Polish-German dictionary, published in the DDR in 1954, I had a brainwave and felt relieved that I didn't have to name what I saw — I could use ready-made definitions tied to specific images. The only thing I needed to do was to find their visual equivalents in the reality here and now. The principle of connecting word with image was to remain open and unpredictable. That unpredictability of connections was to result from confronting the dictionary's organised structure with the chaotic reality.

The photographs are not arranged, so each of them has its own history?

■ Sometimes, unintentionally, that's precisely the case. Sometimes there is no history at all, but sometimes the history leading up to the picture is more interesting than the picture itself.

How many entries have you illustrated so far and how many are left to be illustrated?

■ The project is by its own nature utopian, impossible to be completed for many reasons. The original dictionary doesn't say this clearly, but the truth is that its intention was to facilitate communication between the German and Polish working class. The vocabulary is highly technical. I don't think it possible or reasonable to illustrate all the seventeen entries on the different kinds of pipes. That's why I can't say how much work is left yet. I've created several hundred images so far, of which the *Zachęta* show features about a hundred.

Is the project about confronting reality? About the relationship between word and its definition, or about testing the boundaries of language in describing the world?

■ As I said before, the intentions were complex. The need to confront a reality I could no longer ignore was one of the first and foremost ones. Then, in the course of work, new, often surprising contexts emerged — historical, political, cultural, linguistic. The insufficiency, or actually helplessness, of language in describing the world also became an important element.

The dictionary's structure reveals its purpose and propagandistic character. Do you find this politically-motivated manipulation of language interesting?

■ We all know that the word has great power. The way you define the world reflects the way you perceive and understand it. No wonder, therefore, that the temptation to manipulate has always been great and will always remain so. It matters not only how we change reality, but also how we call the reality we've changed. The very change of a definition's meaning already changes the reality being defined.

What does the dictionary not include?

■ For instance, flour, brick, or father. The first edition missed many fundamental articles and concepts. With the third edition, they came to reason and added flour and father. But brick is still not there. I try to make up for these omissions and everyone who visits the exhibition will leave it thinking that brick is in the dictionary after all.

The entries have been translated from German to Polish rather clumsily. Do translatorial curiosities such as 'sloping ice rink' matter?

■ Not in any fundamental way. They only add a sense of eeriness, serving as an additional signal (for the Polish reader) that something is wrong here. But besides their comical effect, the linguistic abnormalities mean that the dictionary is not anonymous. It comes from a specific place in the historical and geographical sense. As a result, the time and place of the 'reissue' also become significant.

In one interview you compared the moment of connecting word with image to an act of arresting the world, taking control of it. Your dictionary already has several hundred entries, have you managed to bring the world under control?

■ The comment you mention was part of a longer reflection on the nature of dictionaries in general. Taking control of the world by taking control of the language in which it is described acquires an ominous significance in the specific case of this DDR dictionary. In it, we deal with a situation in which the formula of a dictionary, which should be neutral by definition, has been used for propaganda purposes.

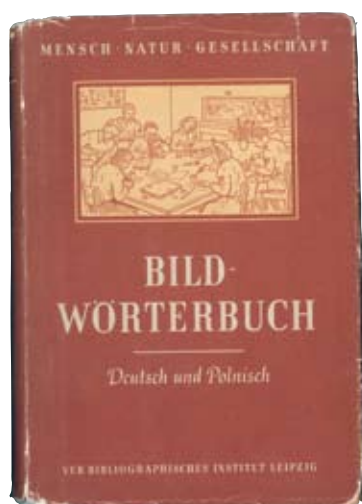
Returning to your question, I hope that A–Z (*Educational Cabinets*) shows, among other things, that all serious attempts to take control of the world produce grotesque results at best.

It is also a project about relationships between systems, between different historical times; would you call it sentimental?

■ For me, it obviously has a sentimental dimension too, for the simple reason that I myself, when starting to work on it, was someone between the systems and times it tells about. This is the series' added value, my personal satisfaction, resetting a private dictionary — checking whether words I'd learnt in my youth mean the same today. And to what extent words that seem familiar to me are able to describe the world I see around me. Perhaps the project has similar significance for other people too, but I don't know that.

The *Zachęta* collection includes a non-exhibition version of the series in the shape of a set of educational charts. In the exhibition we are showing educational cabinets. Why such a form?

■ You don't read dictionaries. You reach for them. At least you did when dictionaries still came in material form, as books. So the ideal form for A–Z (*Educational Cabinets*) would be a book, which everyone could have at home, reaching for it more or less often, like you do with normal dictionaries. A limited edition of fifty three charts enclosed in a box is an indirect attempt to approximate that ideal. The number fifty three is the difference between the date of this edition and the first edition of the original dictionary. Educational cabinets, in turn, are the best way of publicly presenting the A–Z series within the so called exhibition format.



Andrzej Tobis

From left, top:  
from the A-Z (*Educational Cabinets*) series:  
*Wall Adage*, 2007  
*(Wanderer's) Map*, 2008  
*Stereometry*, 2007  
*Rubber Tyre*, 2006

From left:  
Fragment of table of contents and cover of *Illustrated German and Polish Dictionary (Słownik ilustrowany języka niemieckiego i polskiego / Bildwörterbuch Deutsch und Polnisch)*, VEB Bibliographisches Institut Leipzig, 1954)



Krzysztof Żwirblis

*Social Museum*, Lublin, 24 June 2011  
*Social Museum*, Skaryszewska Street, Warsaw, 1 October 2011  
*Social Museum*, Muranów, Warsaw, 10 December 2011

Following, top:  
*Social Museum*, Mariensztat, Warsaw, 11 December 2010

# Krzysztof Żwirblis

Magdalena Komornicka: Where did the idea of the *Social Museum* come from? Was it informed by your earlier cultural-animation projects such as *Low-Cost TV*?

■ Krzysztof Żwirblis: Pursuing the earlier projects, *Low-Cost TV* in particular, I discovered that there would always be people who have more to say and are willing to share their story. The direct impulse came from a visit to a small shop at Saska Kępa (Warsaw). The place was full of the owner's craftsman diplomas, of handmade decorations. I thought it was a small, private museum which the owner could take you on a tour around — a tour around their life, everydayness, their personal history. People often feel exploited in such situations, but if you make them feel comfortably enough they'll gladly cooperate and with my previous projects I knew how to give them that sense of comfort.

*Social Museum* was also informed by my knowledge of art, especially Oskar Hansen's Open Form theory, my work with Akademia Ruchu, Jerzy Grotowski's story about his travels around Poland in the Solidarity year (1981), the happenings I organised as a high-school student, and so on . . .

How did you choose the locations for the *Social Museum* projects?

■ I'd been collaborating for some time with the Staromiejski Dom Kultury<sup>1</sup> on various kinds of workshops and poetry-related projects, so when the idea occurred to me, it seemed obvious that I should do it together with the SDK. Together we selected Mariensztat as the location. Why? Due to its candy-sweet feel — the little market place and so on . . . it seemed an obvious choice! Due to the project's being financed by the SDK, we had to complete it before the year-end. As a result, we were able to experience an incredible finale in a raging snowstorm.

In Lublin, I thought about a place I'd seen many years before, the Juliusz Słowacki Housing Estate.<sup>2</sup> The Hansen-designed local culture centre had meanwhile been demolished in order to pave the way for the construction of a church, ruining the original layout. Choosing this place was my homage for Polish modernism. I could have chosen a place tougher in social terms, more predatory, but the desire to commemorate the modernist values prevailed.

The *Social Museum* at Skaryszewska Street (Warsaw) resulted from my collaboration with the Komuna Warszawa theatre collective. In Muranów (Warsaw), in turn, there was this playground, which was also a centrally-located square, decorated with street furniture that brought to mind Henry Moore's sculptures. I thought it was a place that could serve as a space of meetings, discussions, a genuine piazza.

It is important to hold the finale in a place that is available to everyone, public, so as to avoid entering someone's territory. Through the choice of location, I want to emphasise that *Social Museum* is for everyone like public space, that it is open to everyone, that it is a place where issues important for the local community can be voiced.

Weather permitting, I hold visual-arts workshops for kids in the open air, which is also a natural place for meeting the local community. In Lublin, this was an ideological premise — a workshop in the place where a community culture centre used to stand. All it took was a temporary roof, a moment of curiosity, some visual materials, and there suddenly was a reason for being together.

Did anything change during the project's successive instalments?

■ Definitely, especially in terms of my contact with people, the participants. The first instalment was based on people, those willing to take part in the project, contacting each other. It was an interesting tissue, in fact, which grew slowly in the neighbourhood. I wondered where it'd lead us. How far would it go? The effect was very good, we reached interesting people and places. With every instalment we've been more active in searching for the potential participants.

What do you find the project's most difficult part?

■ The toughest part is the decision: where and when. To start working and talking to people, I need to have many things confirmed, all kinds of permits obtained, including the collaboration of the housing cooperative and the management. Without this, no single leaflet can be posted on the door! If we're talking autumn or winter, we need space to house the project. All this has to be determined before you start talking to anyone. The preparatory stage is the toughest one.

I thought the hardest part was dealing with people, persuading the local community to participate. *Social Museum* is a project about human relationships and these are often full of tensions, meaning you can encounter latent issues in the course of the work, discover 'skeletons in the closet' . . .

■ Often the participants approach me, but usually it is I who approach them, with my ideas, needs, requests, and so on. Sure, everyone requires an individual approach and this is indeed difficult sometimes. There's a trace of bitterness in some conversations. People don't feel convinced it makes sense for them to go public with their stories and collections . . . Participating in a project like this brings people much closer. We are the social museum. This is precisely what I wanted them to realise: that they are a museum. Everyone has their history, their mementoes, and works.

What were your goals? To bring people closer together or to re-appropriate public space?

■ Both. The actions were to convince people that it is possible to use public space, that it is a space that can be used. I also wanted to present people's creativity and pass the elders' stories on to younger people. Another aspect is the status of the works or objects that I borrow from people. What art is for them and what is not? The most important thing is to create conditions for a shared experience, the means don't need to be sophisticated, a few spotlights, a few people working on it and you'll have an effect that will present both the people and the place in a completely different light.

Have the projects changed anything? Did you contact the participants afterwards?

■ I'm not in constant touch with them, but I do get messages about friendships, about good memories. According to the Ośrodek Rozdroże in Lublin, the *Social Museum* at the Hansen estate caused the management to decide to revitalise the Open Form Theatre — the site where the finale took place. Which we, together with the residents, had re-appropriated from its sub-cultural users. Following the action in Muranów, in turn, the owner of the hosting bistro invited a photographer who'd taken part in the finale to create an exhibition there.

It works a bit like acupuncture, doesn't have to cause an immediate effect . . . I think ahead and would really like to cause some real change . . . To make these communal meetings more Italian in style, so that they have places that unite them. I don't know what the next project will be, but it will certainly concern the relationship between space and the human social activity.

What came as most important for the participants themselves?

■ I think it was the possibility to present their stories in public space, the appreciation of their keepsakes and stuff by others . . . And probably most importantly, a stronger sense of territorial community and shared responsibility for space. After all, *Social Museum* is based on working with people and among people.

1 Culture centre in Warsaw's Old Town [translator's note].

2 Designed in the early 1960s by Oskar Hansen, built 1964–66 [translator's note].

## Interview with Grzegorz Laszuk (Komuna Warszawa), excerpt from the film *Social Museum. Praga 2011*

Krzysztof Żwirblis: . . . did you manage, in your opinion, to establish any kind of bond and exchange with the local residents?

Grzegorz Laszuk: This wasn't our intention really. We had tried to do such things before as Komuna Otwock and it didn't really work. So we kind of knew we weren't good at this because unlike you, we don't have the enthusiasm and competence to get along with people so well and pull them into community work. Besides, we are highly distrustful of art's ability to change the social reality, so we prefer to focus on ourselves and our theatre audience, that is, the so called declining middle class. And it's aimed at them. We're in this particular place, a strange apartment building that would require heavy social work, but we also know that it'd require a great, great deal of enthusiasm, skill, talent and devotion. And we're only part-time here and give our all making this theatre and pursuing purely artistic activities. And we don't have the time for anything else. We're all amateurs and concentrate mainly on the theatre (so Piotruś Borowski with Studio, so Darek Kunowski with Scena Lubelska). We want to make theatre, but we don't live by it. So it's



just one drop too much for us to offer the time that we want to devote to theatre to the local community, which we like but which, it is my feeling, doesn't like us, and certainly doesn't know us. We have no foothold. But this is also, in my case at least, a result of what we did in Otwock and Ponurzyca, in the countryside, when it turned out that to have good relations with people is beyond human capacity. You'd simply have to give up theatre and just do things with the people, for the people, seeking their favour constantly, all the time. And we simply said, forget it. It was a failure, but also life's lesson.

### Róża Karwecka, participant of the Social Museum action

There is a street in Praga, Warsaw, that will soon become famous again. For the first time it gained notoriety during the occupation as the location of a transit camp from which people caught in street roundups were sent to forced labour and concentration camps. Now it has become the site of the social museum under the direction of Mr Krzysztof Żwirblis. I am talking about Skaryszewska Street.

A street like any other, where we live, shop, work. We pass by its residents with various feelings, greeting some, ignoring others. It is also my street, it has been mine since 1945. This is where I went to the Primary School no. 14, to the Pallottine church, participated in Corpus Christi processions. This is where I played, getting to know the area inside out. But time passed and everything has changed here: the gas lamps, the cobblestones, which have given way to asphalt potholes, and the people.

And it was only when Mr Krzysztof Żwirblis summoned the residents to two events,<sup>1</sup> on the lawn, in the green square that Mr Doroszewski (a social activist from our building) once created together with the locals, planted the trees, installed benches, that the street got a second life. We greeted each other like long-time acquaintances, like friends. And then I saw anew how our street looks like, who lives here, and what happens here.

I learned that Ms Basia at the umbrella shop has a large collection of umbrella handles, that at the School no. 89 there is an exhibition room rich in materials about the occupation-era transit camp, that instead of the Sawa sewing room at no. 15 there is now a wonderful arts studio and that in the other rooms they train karate, play drums, and so on. And that besides the municipal guard station the former Polus at the corner of Skaryszewska and Lubelska houses three theatre groups, that there are arts studios, a café, and that our street is generally completely different now. The carol-singing evening attracted a much greater crowd this time and the Christmas party offered new joy and a hope of community for the residents of Skaryszewska Street.

<sup>1</sup> The other was *Christmas Party and Neighbourhood Choir*, which consisted in singing carols together in the green square to amplified accompaniment. Then was a procession with the tree to the theatre space, where there was a meeting with the participants and a presentation of Christmas iconography, including an explanation of the origins of Christmas (25 December as the ancient Roman holiday of the Birthday of the Invincible Sun, or *Dies Natalis Solis Invicti*) [K. Żwirbilis's note].

# Biographical notes



### ANDRZEJ TOBIS

Born 1970, graduated from the Academy of Fine Arts in Katowice, where he currently teaches. Works in the fields of painting and photography. Winner of the 34th Bielsko Autumn National Painting Competition (2003). In 2007, the first instalment of his project *A-Z (Educational Cabinets)* was shown at the CCA Kronika in Bytom. He lives and works in Katowice.

#### Selected solo exhibitions

- 2002 *Now I Move Through the City*, Galeria Kronika, Bytom
- 2005 *Nové Mesto*, Polish Institute, Bratislava
- 2007 *A-Z (Educational Cabinets)*, CCA Kronika, Bytom
- 2008 *A-Z (Educational Cabinets)*, 1/9 Unosunove Arte Contemporanea, Rome; *A-Z (Schaukasten als Bildungseinrichtung)*, Polish Institute, Berlin
- 2009 *A-Z (Schaukasten als Bildungseinrichtung)*, Polish Institute, Düsseldorf; *A-Z (Educational Cabinets)*, CCA 'Signs of Time', Toruń
- 2010 *A-Z (Educational Cabinets)*, as part of the Festival of Four Cultures, Central Museum of Textiles, Łódź

#### Selected group exhibitions

- 2003 *34th Bielsko Autumn National Painting Competition*, Galeria Bielska BWA, Bielsko-Biała
- 2007 *Reconnaissance of Painting*, Galeria Sektor I, Katowice; Galeria Bałtycka, Słupsk/Ustka
- 2008 *Red Eye Effect. Polish Photography of the 21st Century*, CCA Ujazdowski Castle, Warsaw; *Silesia activ 3*, BWA Katowice; *Museum of Unnatural History*, CCA Kronika, Bytom
- 2009 *The Silesian Collection of Contemporary Art*, Signs of Time, Galeria Bielska BWA, Bielsko-Biała; *Energy Class B*, Ormeau Baths Gallery, Belfast; *2nd Biennial\_Art Sector*, Galeria Sektor I, Katowice; *Tableau – A Banished Diction*, Galeria Bałtycka, Słupsk
- 2011 *The Passage Effect*, Otwarta Pracownia, Cracow; Upper Silesian Museum in Bytom; Galeria Bałtycka, Słupsk; *Gift Exchange*, Contemporary Museum, Wrocław; *Marginalia*, as part of the 7th Biennale of Photography, Poznań

Andrzej Tobis, *Wall Newspaper*, from the *A-Z (Educational Cabinets)* series, 2007

### BOGDAN ŁOPIEŃSKI

Born 1934 in Warsaw, graduated from the Academy of Physical Education in Warsaw and studied in the State Film School in Łódź. In the 1960s, he worked freelance for the magazine *Fotografia*, publishing interviews and reviews of photographic exhibitions. In 1965–73, he worked as photojournalist for the Polonia publishing house, the *Perspektywy* weekly, and the Interpress news agency. Member of the Union of Polish Artist Photographers (ZPAF) since 1969. His works are in the collections of the National Museum in Wrocław, the National Library, the ZPAF as well as in private collections.

#### Selected solo exhibitions

- 1974 *Title To Be Decided*, Stara Galeria ZPAF, Warsaw
- 1977 *Beyond the Polar Circle*, Polish Journalists Association, Warsaw
- 1981 *Safe Speed*, Stara Galeria ZPAF, Warsaw
- 2006 *Past Perfect Tense*, Stara Galeria ZPAF, Warsaw (as well as Bielsko-Biała, Kielce, Ostrowiec Świętokrzyski)
- 2009 *Varsovians*, Galeria Asymetria, Warsaw

#### Selected group exhibitions

- 1966 *Spatial Forms in Elbląg* (with Eustachy Kossakowski), National Museum in Warsaw
- 1967 *World Press Photo* (honorary mention), The Hague
- 1974 *Press Photography Competition* (1st Prize), Warsaw
- 1980 *The Art of Reportage*, National Museum in Wrocław
- 1989 *Auschwitz-Birkenau* (with Karina Łopieńska), St. John the Divine Cathedral, New York
- 2007 *Polish Photography of the 20th Century*, Palace of Culture and Science, Warsaw
- 2008 *Poland of the 1970s*, Palace of Culture and Science, Warsaw
- 2010 *Four Seasons of Gierek*, Dom Spotkań z Historią, Warsaw
- 2011 *The 1960s*, Dom Spotkań z Historią, Warsaw

### KRZYSZTOF ŻWIRBLIS

Born in 1953, is an art historian and critic, curator, actor, and director. With a degree in art history from Warsaw University, since 1976 he has been a member of the theatre group Akademia Ruchu. In 1992–97, curator of the AR Gallery at the Tęcza Cinema/Theatre in Warsaw, currently curator of Galeria Studio in Warsaw. Since the mid-1990s he has pursued his own artistic practice, since 2005 focusing on long-term artistic actions with the participation of local communities (*Low-Cost TV*, 2005; *Social Museum*, since 2010).

#### Solo exhibitions

- 1994 *Dust*, Warsaw Culture Centre
- 2008 *Family* — *Society* (with Roch Forowicz and Agata Groszek), Galeria Studio, Warsaw; *Unselfish Urban Space* (with Aleksandra Wasilkowska), lokal\_30, Warsaw
- 2011 *Actions, Interventions*, Galeria 2.0, Warsaw

#### Selected group exhibitions

- 2003 *Poland*, Teatr Academia, Warsaw
- 2004 *Belmondo*, 14th Malta Theatre Festival, Poznań; *Inc. Art Towards the Corporate Appropriation of Places of Public Expression*, Warsaw, Szczecin
- 2007 *Concrete Legacy* — *From Le Corbusier to the Homeboys*, CCA Ujazdowski Castle, Warsaw
- 2008 *Chain Reaction (Upgrade! International)*, Skopje
- 2012 *Save as Art*, as part of 3rd Art and Documentation Festival, Galeria Imaginarium, Łódź

## ACCOMPANYING PROGRAM

### 4 March, Sunday, 12.15

Curatorial guided tour — Hanna Wróblewska  
meeting in the main hall / admission included in entrance fee

### 15 March, Thursday, 18.00

Exhibition meeting with Andrzej Tobis  
moderation: Bogna Świątkowska  
meeting in the main hall / admission free

### 17 March (Saturday), 10.00

Open lecture as part of *Sculpture Yesterday and Today*, a teacher training workshop co-organised by WCIES and Zachęta: Katarzyna Chrudzimska-Uhera, PhD, Institute of Art History, Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński University in Warsaw, *Spatial Forms in the Open Air. From the History of Polish Sculpture of the 1950s–1970s*. Presenting a selection of open-air sculpture pieces installed in Polish cities as part of art plein-air and symposiums, the lecture will reflect on the political, social and artistic context of the era as well as on the present-day significance of objects that have become embedded in the urban iconosphere.

multimedia room / admission free

### 27 March, Tuesday, 18.00

Film screening, *Prawo i pięść*, dir. Jerzy Hoffman, Edward Skórczewski, Poland, 1964, 93 min. Film preceded by a screening of selected Polska Kronika Filmowa newsreels with propaganda materials on the Regained Territories

35 mm analogue screenings, Prexer projector

projector operator: Wiesław Wudzki

multimedia room, entrance from Burschego Street / admission free

### 30 March, Friday, 12.15

Meeting from the *Looking/Seeing. Contemporary Art and Seniors series*  
moderation: Barbara Dąbrowska and Maria Kosińska

by sign-up only, phone + 22 556 96 96 or e-mail j.kinowska@zacheta.art.pl

meeting in the main hall / admission free

### 5 April, Thursday, 18.00

Meeting with Karina Dzieweczyńska, screening of Artur Żmijewski's film *Sculpture Plein-Air. Świecie 2009*, and a presentation of slides from the plein-air.

*Sculpture Plein-Air* documents an open-air sculpture workshop organised by Artur Żmijewski in the town of Świecie in northern Poland, to which he invited artists as well as the workers of a nearby metal construction manufacturing plant, a reference to the practice, popular in the 1960s and 1970s in People's Poland, of plein-air and symposiums based on the idea of artist-worker collaboration, such as the Biennale of Spatial Forms in Elbląg.

Karina Dzieweczyńska is an art historian and curator. Since 2008, she has carried out solo projects in her home town of Świecie, e.g. as part of a series called *Awakening/Reactivation (Świecie Town — a New Look)*. Since 2011, associated with Elbląg's Art Centre Gallery EL, where this year's edition of Awakening will take place. Documentation of 2008–2010 *Awakening* projects will be presented at the 7th Berlin Biennale. www.karinadziewczynska.pl

multimedia room, entrance from Burschego Street / admission free

### 19 April, Thursday, 18.00

Meeting with Bogdan Łopieński

moderation: Joanna Kinowska

multimedia room, entrance from Burschego Street / admission free

### 22 April, Sunday, 12.00

A walk following the traces of the 1st Biennale of Metal Sculpture in Warsaw, which took place in 1968 in the Wola district. Like in the case of the Elbląg Biennale of Spatial Forms, here too the idea was of cooperation between artists and the industrial working class, in this case, the Marcin Kasprzak Radio Works. Thirty five artists created some sixty works as part of the Biennale and many sculptures installed along Kasprzaka Street and thereabouts have survived to this day.

moderation: Paweł Giergoń

12.15 — guided exhibition tour

14 — walk starts; meeting point: in front of the former Gen. K. Świerczewski plant, corner of Kasprzaka Street and Prymasa Tysiąclecia Avenue; duration: ca. 180 minutes  
admission free

Paweł Giergoń is an art historian, editor of the website sztuka.net, and a researcher and documentalist of People's Poland-era architecture, sculpture and architectonic art in Warsaw. Curator of the 2011 show *Hanna and Gabriel Rechowicz. Pictures in Architecture* at the Kordegarda Project. www.sztuka.net

### 22 April, Sunday

**We invite you to the finale of the fifth Social Museum action**

**Details at [www.zacheta.art.pl](http://www.zacheta.art.pl)**

**Exhibition is accompanied by workshops for children, youth, and adults.**  
**Details at [www.zacheta.art.pl](http://www.zacheta.art.pl)**



Zachęta National Gallery of Art  
pl. Małachowskiego 3, 00-916 Warszawa  
www.zacheta.art.pl  
director: Hanna Wróblewska

#### exhibition

*Doubly Regained Territories. Bogdan Łopieński, Andrzej Tobis, Krzysztof Żwirblis*

3 March – 13 May 2012

curator: Hanna Wróblewska

assistant curator: Magdalena Komornicka

execution: Marek Janczewski, Krystyna Sielska and team

educational programme: Stanisław Welbel and team

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Romańczuk, Barbara Szafrąńska, Wacław Tokarski, Maria Tomczak, Zespół Szkół Specjalnych no. 89 in Warsaw

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