

VIEWS 2015

DEUTSCHE BANK AWARD

**CHOOSING
THE BEST
YOUNG
ARTISTS**

**ALICJA BIELAWSKA
ADA KARCZMARCZYK
PIOTR ŁAKOMY
AGNIESZKA PIKSA
IZA TARASEWICZ**

**7TH
EDITION OF
COMPETITION**

Paweł Althamer, Julita Wójcik, Elżbieta Jabłońska, Oskar Dawicki, Paulina Ołowska, Monika Sosnowska, Karol Radziszewski, Rafał Bujnowski, Olaf Brzeski, Konrad Smoleński, Anna Zaradny, Agnieszka Polska — these are Polish artists well known also abroad. What do they have in common? All are former finalists of the *Views* competition.

Since the first edition of *Views*, the idea has been not only to award outstanding artists, but also to present a broad and diverse context of young Polish art. Members of each year's nominating committee critically examine the work of artists under 36 years of age and name their candidates. Their propositions comprise a picture of the currently most interesting phenomena in young Polish art. Today, the finalists of the competition's past editions are often artists enjoying wide recognition in Poland, Europe and even the world. Paweł Althamer, Rafał Bujnowski, Monika Sosnowska, Konrad Smoleński or Robert Kuśmirowski were all noticed by the organisers of *Views*; today not only them but many others as well have won oth-

er awards, e.g. the *Polityka* Passport, and their works are shown at some of the world's most prestigious contemporary art venues such as New York's Museum of Modern Art, London's Tate Gallery or the Venice Art Biennale.

Views are, therefore, the best description of the artistic reality, presenting the most significant phenomena of the Polish art market over the past two years. They offer the public a chance to become acquainted with the latest trends and explorations pursued by young artists, each competition being followed by an exhibition featuring all finalists. It is only when taken together that the competition and exhibition comprise the full picture of *Views*. This year we will see the works of **Alicja Bielawska, Ada Karczmarczyk, Piotr Łakomy, Agnieszka Piksa** and **Iza Tarasewicz**. The history of *Views* proves that it is worth getting familiar with their work and that their names are something to remember.

Meetings with the competition finalists:

Piotr Łakomy: 1 October (Thursday), 6 p.m.
Ada Karczmarczyk: 8 October (Thursday), 6 p.m.
Agnieszka Piksa: 15 October (Thursday), 6 p.m.
Iza Tarasewicz: 17 October (Saturday), 6 p.m.
Alicja Bielawska: 29 October (Thursday), 6 p.m.

The winners will be announced during a ceremony on 22 October 2015. The main award is 15,000 euros.

Please take a moment to vote for your favourite artist! The winner of the audience award will be named on 16 November 2015.

Interviews with the nominated artists and more information about the works featured in the exhibition can be found in the magazine *Zachęta — September, October, November 2015*, available at the ticket office and in the Art Bookshop.

Views 2015 — Deutsche Bank Award, 7th edition

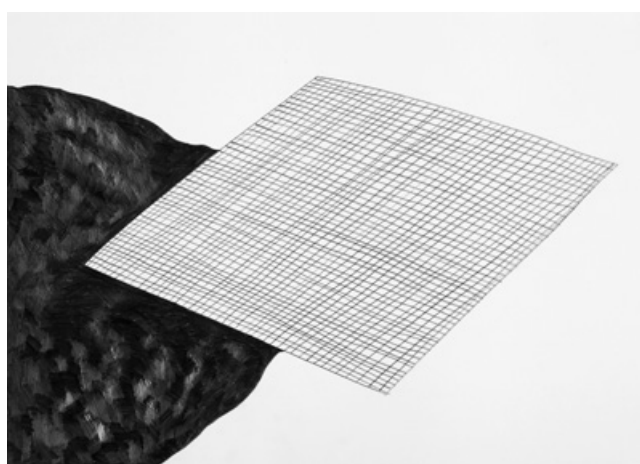
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edited by Katarzyna Kołodziej, Magdalena Komornicka
editorial coordination: Dorota Karaszewska
graphic design: Honza Zamojski
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exhibition
8 September–15 November 2015
Zachęta — National Gallery of Art
pl. Małachowskiego 3, 00-916 Warsaw
zacheta.art.pl
director: Hanna Wróblewska
curators: Katarzyna Kołodziej, Magdalena Komornicka
educational programme and accompanying events: Stanisław Welbel
exhibition production: Jacek Świdziński and team

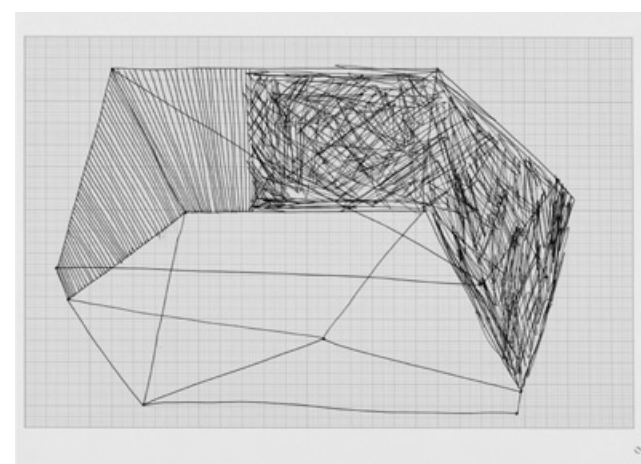
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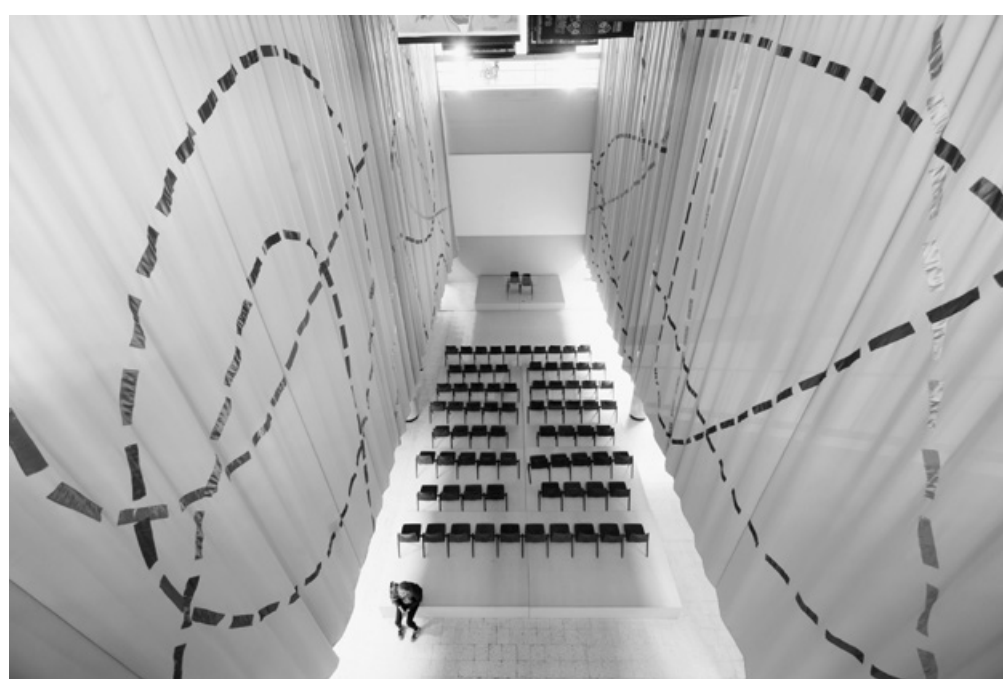
Between Lines (Unveiled), 2013
photo by Bartosz Górka



drawing from the series *Places*, 2012



drawing from the series *Places*, 2012



Four Colours on a Grey Background, 2013, coll. Museum of Modern Art in Warsaw
photo by Bartosz Górka



Muff on a Trapeze, 2014
photo by Bartosz Górka

Alicja Bielawska is a sculptor and graphic designer. The artefacts she makes resemble familiar objects, but she distorts their scale and proportions so that we are forced to define them ourselves, to 'verify them personally'. As Wojciech Kozłowski wrote, 'Bielawska's art is a dialogue between object and man', for she is most interested in what happens to the viewer's memory and perception in contact with her works, which can be called an 'abstraction of reality' but also a 'reality of abstraction', to quote from Miron Białoszewski's poem, 'Sprawdzone sobą' [Personally Verified]. Just like Białoszewski's early work, so Alicja Bielawska's artistic practice can be described as a poetry of objects. The poems contained in Białoszewski's debut volume, *Obroty rzeczy* (1956) [English ed.: *Revolution of Things*, Washington, 1974], are devoted to objects — saved from the war, ruined, removed from their functions, which for the poet constitute a truth about reality. Białoszewski seeks to free things from their contexts and mental stereotypes; wondering at the world around him, he tries to learn it anew. Alicja Bielawska represents a similar attitude to reality — she explores the material world, wondering at it, questioning it, creating her own 'geometry of the everyday'.

First she makes drawings. These are standalone works rather than sketches or models of sculptures. Their purpose is to test forms and proportions. They are a prefiguration of sculptures, but themselves become objects too. The artist visualises lines, patches, shapes, colours, ideas and observations on paper; with time they materialise in space as sculptures. Browsing through the drawings alone, from the series *Unfoldings* (2010), through *Handy Shapes*, (2012–2013), the large series *Places* (since 2009), the series *Patterns* (2013), to *Lines on a Walk* (2014), one can learn a lot about the artist, her preoccupations, lines of artistic explorations and formal development. In these drawings are also recorded her private, abstract thoughts and observations about the surrounding world. Characteristically, Bielawska is very discerning and careful in selecting the materials for her sculptures. She draws inspirations from everyday life, so the materials are ordinary too, often the simplest, trivial that we usually don't

notice. The artist calls them 'semiproducts': linoleum, faux-wood veneers, floor panels, textiles, metal frames, wood, modelling clay, cardboard, ceramics. Some of them belong to the household, but others originate in an 'in-between' sphere and are not fully defined. 'They have nothing personal about themselves, no character really, being neutral in themselves. But they offer the possibility to build forms that are partly connected with our daily life, and partly separate from it, disrupting the order that we are used to'. With time, linoleum [*Fold*, 2009; *Adopted Shapes (Blue)*, 2012; *Adopted Shapes (Furniture Piece)*, 2012] started giving way to textiles and modelling clay. Besides works such as *Vector* (2012), *Adopted Colours (Red, Yellow, Green)* (2012) or *Rebus* (2014), made of steel rods covered laboriously with modelling clay of various colours, it is worth mentioning *Set II* (2014) — a construction using a blanket and hardened blocks of modelling clay — or *Set III* (2013), which utilises ceramics. Most characteristic for Bielawska, however, are openwork sculptures consisting of forms made of simple steel frames wrapped with coloured textiles [e.g. *Exercises for Two Lines*, 2014, or *When Things Find Their Place (Line)*, 2013]. Textiles, which seem to have been the artist's main preoccupation for several years now [e.g. *Mont Sainte-Victoire*, 2015; *Triangulum*, 2014; *Four Colours on a Grey Background*, 2013; *Between Lines (Unveiled)*, 2013], are rich in meanings and closest to human touch and body, which is why they evoke reminiscences and associations, affect the memory and stimulate the senses.

Bielawska's path towards form can be illustrated by a story she read out at the launch of the exhibition *Alicja Bielawska, Morten Ernlund, Ulla Eriksen, Situation No. 2 (8+2 Days)* at the Starter Gallery in Warsaw in May 2015. It was a fable by Peter Seeborg, *Yndlingsglaset* [The Beloved Glass], from the 1976 volume *Argumenter for benådning* [Arguments for Pardon]: 'Once upon a time there was a king who loved to drink and listen to songs. . . . One day he was visited by his cousin, the ruler of a small duchy in Mesopotamia, who brought with him as a gift a drinking glass that looked no different from other decent glasses and stood out in no way. At first the king simply wanted to put it next to the

dozen other glasses that he always kept within the reach of his right hand. 'Try drinking from it', the cousin suggested. 'It's handmade, it's blown glass.'

The king agreed, but he didn't, as was his usual custom, empty the glass at once. After the first sip, and the second one, he kept silent for a long time. He had never drunk in such small sips before, and when he had finished, he said:

'Throw the other glasses away, I will drink only from this one. Whether it's the smoothness of its edges, the stem, the base or perhaps the shape itself — I don't know, but I'll find an explanation. Fill it again. I'll be thinking while I drink.'

And for many years afterwards the king spent his time wondering what had got him so attracted to that particular glass.' [retranslated from a Polish translation by Bogusława Sochańska]

Bielawska's creative process is the opposite of a quest for perfect form, for an ideal, final definition of reality; it is a fascination with imperfections, with the deficiency of things. As in the story about the king's glass, Bielawska searches for uniqueness in ordinary objects and reflects on the human attachment to them. Each and every one of her works is a finite entity, but it is not clear what constitutes their uniqueness: 'Whether it's the smoothness of its edges, the stem, the base or perhaps the shape itself.' Her works are constellations of shapes, geometric forms and lines. The constructions are displayed so as to evidence the relationships between them, relationships that are to result from a dialogue of sculptures rather than from any attribution of meanings. 'Each and every object is independent, though I show them together. These are distinct pieces that are related in a certain way, close to each other at the given moment.' Bielawska's forms are objects without a clear function, multicolour constructions, often modular, that can be a ladder, a beating stand, a tent frame, a partition screen, a fence, a piece of temporary architecture. What she is interested in, however, is not endowing objects with practical functions but rather freeing the seemingly functional materials and forms from their context, transforming them: 'For me, some of these works are frozen gestures or bodily positions or movements, e.g. swinging on a bar, hold-

ing a handrail, standing on your tiptoes or bending to take a look at something.'

All the forms invite the viewer to interact with them; it is the viewer's presence that affects their shape and character. The sculptures have human dimensions and are constructed in relation to the proportions of the human body. Sometimes this scale is violently distorted (*Muff on a Trapeze*, 2014), but probably for the sole purpose of making us realise the scale of our own abilities. 'Human presence is a natural element of the objects around us'. Sculptures create and define the space around themselves, and the viewer, confronted with their size, enters in relationships with them. 'The body becomes yet another material which the sculpture is made of.' Transformation, distortion, deformation of shapes (both in sculptures and drawings) are best illustrated by the motif of the grid, recurring frequently in Bielawska's work. The expected order of lines is disrupted here, whether by sewing together the pieces of a checked blanket in an unobvious manner or by distorting a handwritten line in a textile design. Thus, carefully and subtly, the artist introduces to her objects an element that disturbs perception, attracts attention and emphasises our habits, trying to make us feel uncertain for a moment. The source of error that so fascinates Bielawska is repetition. The idea of exercising, and thus also of repeating, present in both works and titles, is also manifest in motifs, e.g. in the characteristic borders — 'repeating the same pattern, a preparation for writing letters, copying, stratifying, rescaling it'. After all, looking is also an exercise — the artist suggests we pay attention to what we look at, examine things in detail. She also involves professionals in her creative process: 'I use the help of carpenters, locksmiths, a tailor. . . . The technical solutions, which affect the work's final shape, result from the logic of the material and the technical possibilities or limitations. For me, this is a very important part of working on sculptures.' Technological limitations or being in touch with persons specialising in a specific material or technology and their suggestions — all this contributes to the creative process, enriching the sculptures in often surprising and unexpected ways.

Bielawska's works can call up associations, resemble familiar forms and shapes,

evoke memories etc. As the artist says herself, 'By definition, in my sculptures there's no narration, no references to specific stories or anecdotes. These works are related to an experience of materiality, to a sensitivity to the physical, personal experience of materials.' They call up a chain of associations, but these associations are different for everyone, so they will never make up for a single cohesive story. Bielawska believes that her sculptures require the viewer to devote some time to them, to examine them in detail, for they can help him to appreciate the everyday and ordinary around us.

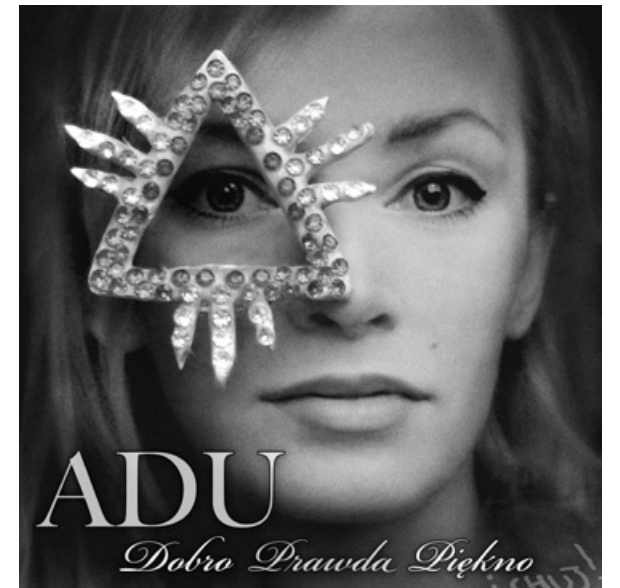
One of the elements of Alicja Bielawska's works is also the word. Word, letter, sign and poetry. Our attention is drawn by the titles of works as well as exhibitions, suggesting a narrative and latent stories. They have various sources: book quotations, fragments of poems, excerpts from private conversations. 'I perceive my works as fragments extracted from reality and shuffled, as samples, sections of the layers of the material everydayness'. Her drawings and borders operate in a similar way; they are like writing, like hieroglyphs with the dynamics and form of letters, like sentences from a book whose contents we will never know. In this, they are similar to the semi-abstract sculptures and objects that we can fill with our own content. The sum total of Bielawska's interest in the word and object and her formal explorations on paper are her artist's books. She has been publishing them since her studies (*Eighty Drawings Between Each Other, Places, Memory of Spaces*, all published by Gerrit Rietveld Academie, Amsterdam, in 2009). 2010 saw the publication of *The Mountains — Grow Unnoticed* (with Sarai de Haan) and *Can't Wait to See You Here* (with Rikke Vagner Petersen, Ulla Eriksen and Barbara Skovmand Thomsen). The latest book is a minimalistic collection of drawings with the artist's text, *Disordered Structures*, published by Italy's NERO last year. (MK)



Ada Karczmarczyk as ADU in the missionary vestment, 2015, photo by Ada Karczmarczyk



Embryo, 2012
photo by Ada Karczmarczyk



ADU Goodness Truth Beauty, 2014, CD cover
photo Ada Karczmarczyk



BLOG, 2009
photo by Ada Karczmarczyk



Jaraj się Marią, 2013
photo by Ada Karczmarczyk

A multimedia artist, performer and singer, **Ada Karczmarczyk** views her art as an avant-garde evangelisation mission. A follower of Christian values, she seeks to promulgate them online. In her video blog (<http://adakarczmarczyk.blogspot.com>), she styles herself as ADU, a Catholic pop music superstar. She composes, records and publishes audio tracks and music videos that are a proposition of new religious art: light-hearted, colourful and dancey. Taking example from contemporary pop-music icons, such as Madonna, Beyoncé, Kate Perry or Lady Gaga, she wants to be a pop spiritual leader. Her live performances are disco masses/sermons, but Karczmarczyk doesn't indoctrinate; with her affirmative attitude, she seeks to provoke spiritual reflection.

At the core of the artist's practice is her video blog where she posts short video performances. From today's perspective, it is also a documentation of her path towards conversion, which can be followed chronologically here. The first post, published on January 2, 2008, is a trailer for *Crisis*, a short film series showing Karczmarczyk's everyday life as she struggles with an artistic block. The situation, nagging questions about the sense of art making, self doubts, failed attempts at self-definition, lack of decisiveness etc. caused the artist to start filming herself in prosaic situations. A series of tongue-in-cheek films offers an insight into her privacy and her actions in domestic space, showing Karczmarczyk creating an abstract grid by tracing marker lines between moles on her body (*Moles*); doing gymnastics using pieces of furniture (sofa, cupboards etc.) (*Exercises*); standing immobile, tied to a carpet-beating stand in a ballet dancer's costume (*Ballet*); or spitting at her art school (*Spitting*). Documenting her ways of dealing with the artistic crisis, the video diary became for Karczmarczyk a therapy of sorts. Art helped her to set the direction of her artistic practices.

Continuing to film herself, Karczmarczyk made another short film series, *BLOG* (2009), where she carefully crafts her image in everyday arranged and complicated situations, referring to cartoons, YouTube and Jackass videos. With her characteristic sense of humour and irony, she records slapstick moments where

she tries to squeeze into a dress (*Green Dress*), ineptly make up a bed (*Bed*) or crawl, bound, onto railway tracks (*Railway Tracks*). She also explores the sources and symptoms of neuroses and phobias, e.g. bathing ('bathing is a nag / I get lost in the tub / lost in the shampoos, conditioners, in the tube of the balm / dirty living is what I like'); nervous scratching of the body and objects (*Scratching*) or an unwillingness to eat. 'In this playful drive for almost automatically recording her pranks, she falls into the very trap of reality that she's so eager to avoid. When she puts her head into a tree hollow, pretending she can't pull it back, simulation suddenly starts becoming reality. . . Provocation is followed by reaction. Creation entails materialisation. A Jackass fan becomes a Jackass protagonist.' Karczmarczyk's art spawns episodes in her own life. And so self-creation and reality orchestration erase the boundary between life and film; between the 'real self' and the 'virtual self'. As she puts it herself, she creates situations by 'tweaking up' reality. And so, exploring further the potential of short video performances, she records another series of videos *My Sweet Sixteen* (2010), inspired by MTV's show under the same title, which deals with issues of adolescence. Playing a teenager refusing to grow up, determined to remain in her safe world of childhood, the artist performs gestures that are supposed to halt the changes she is undergoing: she hides inside a dollhouse, pricks pins into a push-up bra, or pretends to be kissing with a vacuum cleaner. Taken together, the scenes convey the idea of fleeing from the oppression of changes. Continuing the video performance format, in 2010 Karczmarczyk made a series of short videos titled *American Girl* while on a residency in New York. Alluding to cult music videos and Hollywood movies, she styles herself as the cool 'American girl', walking around the streets like her idol Madonna as Susan in *Desperately Seeking Susan* (1985). Karczmarczyk plays up clichés commonly associated with the Big Apple, busking, ostentatiously chewing gum on the subway, taking candid photos, or imitating hat tricks reminiscent of Michael Jackson's choreography. This search for 'Americanness' and the stereotypical roles involved mean that the protagonist becomes car-

icatural and grotesque, emphasising her strangeness in the city.

Ada Karczmarczyk's artistic strategy causes the physical reality to merge with the virtual one; events in her life find a reflection in her successive videos. The period of spiritual investigations and of pre-occupation with new religious movements was represented in the trancey, hallucinogenic exhibition *EZO-POP-ART* at Kraków's Bomba Club in 2012. The video *Opening of the Gate* (2012), woven with grand scenes featuring pop megastars, is a hypnotic meditation leadings towards a light not yet defined by the artist.

A major catalyst of changes in Karczmarczyk's life was her unrequited love for the performance artist Oskar Dawicki, the protagonist of Łukasz Górczyca and Łukasz Ronduda's book *Half Empty* (Warsaw, 2010). Having interpreted it as a call for help, she decided to respond and save Dawicki from what she perceived as imminent self-destruction. She rewrote the book, replacing negative fragments with positive ones; she sent the successive chapters to Dawicki under the pen name 'Cosmos', starting in March 2012. It was then that she coined the slogan 'Go towards the light and don't bullshit' and realised that Dawicki was the first person she wanted to proselytise. She felt a sense of mission. The theme of an amorous performance directed at the literary Oskar Dawicki returned in the exhibition *Just Love Me* at the Arsenal Gallery in Białystok (2014). Focusing on her experience, Karczmarczyk reflected on the essence of love and platonic fantasies. Her art again became autotherapeutic.

The conversion — a breakthrough moment preceded by a several-year-long spiritual quest — caused the artist to redefine her practice. Inspired by pop music and driven by the idea that religious art should enjoy mass appeal, she started composing and recording songs under the stage name of ADU (2013), such as *Go Towards the Light and Don't Bullshit*, *Excited by Mary* or *The Beat of Jesus' Heart*, proposing a new, pop-style Catholic representation and iconography, alluding directly to folk religiosity and verging on kitsch. *Testimony*, an exhibition about a spiritual transformation, held at the CCA Ujazdowski Castle in Warsaw in 2013, was a coherent proposition of new sacral art,

the artist seeking to translate Christian values into the language of contemporary art. 'I have decided to bring closer all that seems distant, to live up all that seems rigid, to disentangle all that seems complex, to make attractive all that seems boring, to give sense to all that seems useless, to instil a sense of thinking with modern art and not in isolation from it, while at the same time retaining the light, distanced and abstract qualities of my work, in short — to make cool the things that seem uncool in the Catholic religion, and that make a great tool for changing the world for the better', she wrote in an exhibition-accompanying statement. Karczmarczyk preaches using a light-hearted, pop music video-inspired formula. Employing simple means, she creates aesthetically pleasing visual equivalents of traditional religious art: diagrams explaining Christian values, critical exegesis of her idols' music videos; illustrations arranged antithetically, net art-style (good and evil deeds). A zirconium-studded human embryo figure was made in response to Damien Hirst's diamond skull (*For the Love of God*, 2007), the artist defying the affirmation of death with an affirmation of life. Karczmarczyk uses visual juxtapositions — light vs. darkness, life vs. death, good vs. evil, truth vs. lie — that are meant to provoke reflection. With its rainbow hues, the music video *The Mass* resembles a post-narcotic, kaleidoscopic hallucination with the altar as its centre-piece. It hypnotises and introduces the viewer to trance-like aesthetics that emphasise the positive message of Christianity. Karczmarczyk thinks of her conversion as a mission and feels the need to preach. For her, Christianity and Catholicism are very pop, hence the aesthetics. In 2014, as ADU, she released the music album *Goodness Truth Beauty*, an attempt to combine art, religion and pop culture. Karczmarczyk, it is worth adding, is personally responsible for the whole audio and video production process, herself programming the beats, recording vocals (inside a wardrobe), and editing and producing the videos (which have several dozen thousand views each on her blog and YouTube channel).

As a post-internet artist, Karczmarczyk fully exploits the potential of self-promotion and self-expression through a blog

of 'girlish' aesthetics. She consistently projects her own 'self', controlling her image. She lives parallel lives in the virtual world and the real one. And her concerts — precisely orchestrated shows with choreography, visuals, chorus, and a band of cardboard angels bearing the artist's face — are they onstage simulations of a blog author or performances?

Karczmarczyk's most recent project, *The Brides*, featured in the *Views 2015*, takes up the theme of the feminine nature of the Church. Referencing Biblical passages comparing Christ to a bridegroom and the Church to a bride, the artist creates images of three Churches — Catholic, Protestant, and Orthodox — accentuating the differences between them. She herself becomes a personification of the Church and stresses its feminine aspect related to maternity, seduction, visual appeal and attraction. *The Brides* are a breakthrough project where she abandons her previous 'girly' style and adopts a more feminine look, with red instead of pink, with high heels and red lipstick. Ada Karczmarczyk — a total artist — consistently projects her new identity, adding an ecumenical context to her evangelisation mission. As she writes on her vlog, 'I'm Ada and I want to make the world a slightly better place.' (KK)



Blind Meeting, 2012
photo by Christian Siekmeier



A Room with a View, Pecham Car Park, London, 2013
photo by Piotr Łakomy



Untitled (Current Weight), 2011



Tomorrow Will Be Smaller, Stereo Gallery, Warsaw, 2014
photo by Michał Lasota



Liste 19, Basel, 2014
photo by Piotr Łakomy

Piotr Łakomy's work is a constant exploration of the boundaries between sculpture and painting. Painting construed as an information medium, serving to process data in time, to interpret space, to study structures, forms, textures, materials. Łakomy's works are a changing, but constant, interpretation of the landscape of the surrounding reality. For him, sculptures, objects and installations are a form of 'landscape painting', filtered through the utopian designs of visionary architects, the philosophy of American Minimalists, studies of the continuity of space, sometimes by the New York school of poetry or Frederick Kiesler's idea of co-realism.

In 2009, at the BWA Zielona Góra, Łakomy's first solo exhibition took place, *Shapes*, a presentation of his graduation project. The seemingly abstract painting recorded the textures and forms of urban tissue, urban landscape, its details, shapes and colours. Arranged in spatial compositions, the paintings brought to mind the work of artists such as Chris Johnson or Tal R. This way of thinking about space and landscape (including the everyday, familiar, domestic one) led to a preoccupation with ready-mades, at first in the classic Duchampian sense of an everyday object that is elevated to the status of art by the artist's gesture. Today Łakomy has been moving away from the ready-made object, transforming it until it is redefined. In 2011, the artist published the book *T-HOOD*, a collection of photographs showing unintended sculptural situations resulting from the popular practice of 'reserving' car parking space using pieces of furniture, wooden boards, boxes etc. — spontaneous ready-mades in Poznań's urban space. A year earlier, in a solo exhibition at Copenhagen's TTC Gallery, besides ready-mades, Łakomy showed his first styrofoam pieces; he was testing the material, dissolving it by means of spray paint. Styrofoam, the lightweight, sturdy, insulating and warm material of an interesting texture that had transformed the landscape of Polish cities, became one of the artist's trademarks. Another project was *DUST SNOW* (2010), a winter sculpture park organised with the participation of invited artists at Poznań's Wilson Park. The event's second edition, called *DUST SHOW* (2011), took place on

a beach at Amager Park in Copenhagen. The documentation of both ephemeral projects was published in the form of artist's books in association with Morava Books. Classified as curatorial projects, both *DUST SNOW* and *DUST SHOW* were in fact an experiment of sorts, establishing a place for asking questions and searching for answers, for exploring certain artistic attitudes informed by a preoccupation with the object. An interesting complement to Łakomy's collective practices, or actually a recapitulation of his notion of 'guest appropriations' is the work *Individual Group Therapy* presented in the exhibition of the 10th Eugeniusz Geppert Competition for young painters in 2011. Artists invited by Łakomy to co-create it included Nicolas Poillot, Alex Vivian and Aaron Graham. The title refers to the concept of self-help therapy groups for persons suffering from similar issues.

In 2012, Białystok's Arsenal Gallery staged Łakomy's important exhibition, *I See No Evil, I Hear No Evil, I Speak No Evil*. The curator, Kuba Bąk, wrote about it: 'These are austere objects, made up of waste that is too embarrassing to look at. Concrete, clothes driers, styrofoam, car varnish. On the one hand, they do not belong to the established visual order, and yet they directly and indivisibly derive from it. Truncated values stand out from the surrounding reality and compose their own degraded universe' [transl. by Marcin Turski]. The influence of philosophies informing the artist to this day, e.g. the ideas of the American Minimalists — especially Robert Morris — or the aesthetics of Joseph Beuys, can be clearly felt here. What fascinates Łakomy in Minimal Art is not so much the form itself (though its echoes can be found in his own work) as its corporeal and spiritual aspects. He finds particularly interesting the theories of Robert Morris, who had rejected the idea of the object's exceptionality and analysed the viewer's role in the art work as well as exploring the concepts of chance, temporariness and ephemerality. It seems that, like the Minimalists, Łakomy perceives his artistic practice as a path towards shedding 'redundant information'. In the works presented in the Białystok show there resounded an emphatic reference to the scale of the human body, a reference that

would prove important in the artist's subsequent practice. The first impulse leading to the eventual strategy was the sculpture *Untitled (Actual Weight)* (2011), a piece that related to human weight (the artist's in this case) which as a result of his gestures became 'inhuman'. A single person was unable to move the small metal sculpture, weighing 69 kilograms and painted with car paint, by so much as an inch. The successive works gradually assumed a 'human scale', not only in terms of size but also of human potential. Works from 2012, measuring 183 centimetres in height, no longer related to the artist's height, but were the result of his efforts to define universal size and proportions. 'One-Size-Fits-All', Łakomy quotes John Ashbery's jocular reference to one of his poems, inspired by a slogan on a pack of socks. Of the same height was the human figure model adopted by Le Corbusier in his architectural canon. Beginning work on his Modulor system in 1942, the Swiss-born architect settled for the average height of the US police officer; the outstretched hand defined the basic floor height of 226 centimetres. Also important for Łakomy's further practice were the American sculptor Tony Smith's famous remarks about his work *Die*: 'Q: Why didn't you make it larger so that it would loom over the observer? A: I was not making the monument. Q: Then why didn't you make it smaller so that the observer could see over the top? A: I was not making an object.'

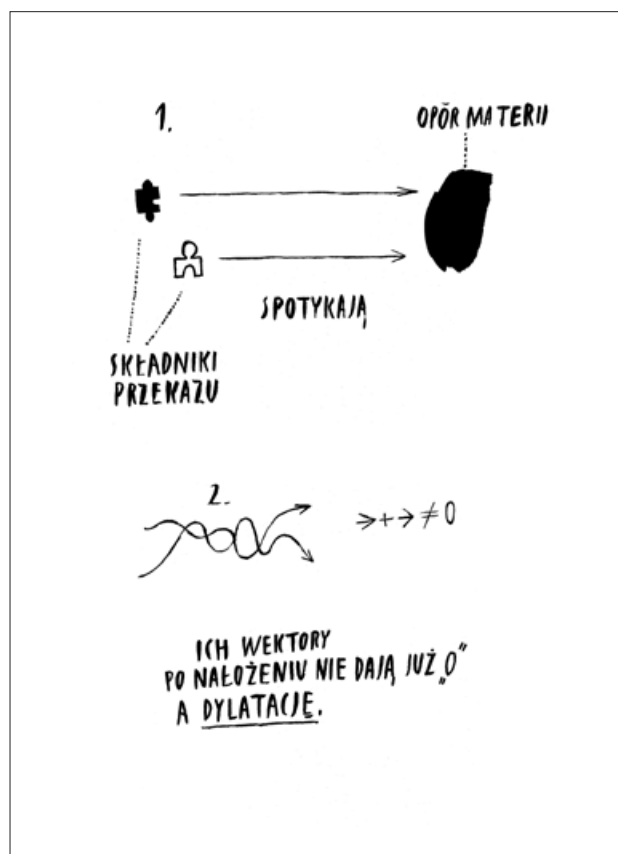
The corner (angle) is also perceived by Łakomy as a universal form. Filled with meanings, this particular locality in space appears in the work of Robert Morris, but also in the title of the British grime MC Dizze Rascal's debut album from 2003; in Łakomy's oeuvre, it is the theme of numerous works, e.g. *Untitled (XYZ)* (2013) or *Untitled (Men's Room)* (2015). Another characteristic element in Łakomy's work is light and its sources, e.g. the light bulb. He uses and interprets the motif in all kinds of ways, as an energy medium, a testimony of time, an information about space and architecture. In *Blind Meeting* (2012), two light bulbs placed opposite each other are divided by a styrofoam cube, burning through the material to 'meet'. In *Need Room* (2013), time is measured off by three different sources of light: a light bulb, a fluorescent lamp and a LED lamp. Particularly

significant for the artist's way of thinking seems the work *Room with a View* (2013), installed at a parking lot in London. The installation consists of extant architecture: a concrete corner to which Łakomy had added an openwork metal construction. When dusk falls, a single bulb in its corner goes on, creating a space between the concrete wall and the metal structure, defining and sculpting it; the simple gesture means that the empty space acquires a shape and the viewer's perception changes. From those investigations ensued three exhibitions in 2014: at Liste 19 in Basel, *Tomorrow Will Be Smaller* at the Stereo Gallery in Warsaw and at the NADA fair in Miami. The Basel project combines light, movement and viewer interaction in defining a specific space at a specific time. The artist had used light-sensitive materials and mirror surfaces here (polished aluminium printing plates), exploiting their properties to collect data from the environment or create landscapes. The viewer leaves 'bodily traces' inside such an installation, organising and building space, evoking a mental image lasting a fraction of a second, always different and unique. The artist compares the space/architecture he organises to the human body with its systems and organs. Architecture, as Frederick Kiesler, put it, has no beginning or end, like the human body. In the shows at the Stereo Gallery in Warsaw and the NADA fair in Miami, Łakomy had introduced colour, using yellow aluminium reflective road tape that highlighted the installations' temporariness and ephemerality. In his other works there appear physical objects such as a life jacket or a safety vest; these objects, which become sculptures only through interaction with the human body, share a common characteristic: they are meant to provide safety and protection. As such, they can be regarded as a prefiguration of the ideas underlying Łakomy's most recent work, featured in the *Views 2015* competition show. Early in 2015, Łakomy had another solo show at the BWA Zielona Góra, called *Endless Room*, a reference to Frederick Kiesler's utopian unrealised design. The exhibition consists of an empty space with a luminous horizon appearing at the viewer's eye level; changes in light intensity are matched to the changes in the sound level of the accompanying

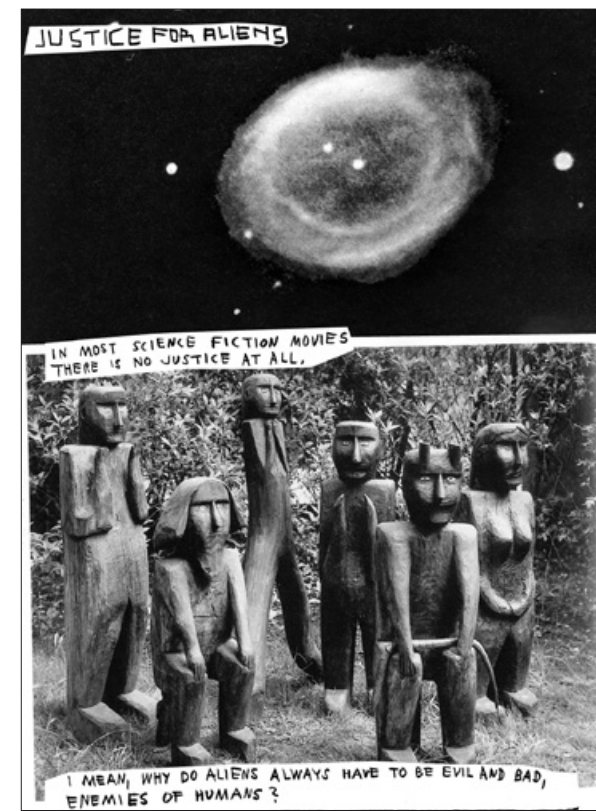
soundtrack. 'Let's take the horizon', wrote Michał Lasota. 'We perceive as a line something that is only a frame of our vision of the landscape, something that moves as we move, that unfolds in time and space. An ordinary pencil, on the other hand, is a three-dimensional object that can be easily reduced to a point if we look at it exactly perpendicularly. Let's imagine a faculty of the mind that would allow us to predict the first consequences of our prosaic decisions. This could be, for example, an ability to see what's behind the corner as we are walking down the street. . . . Thus Łakomy redefines the path of our perception — we start with a three-dimensional object to finally realise that we are dealing with a landscape — a sculpture of the landscape.' Both this and the artist's latest work, featured in the *Views* exhibition, represent a sum total of his theoretical and formal investigations so far. A tent, 170 centimetres in height, adjusted to 'human scale', with light generated by three different sources in the rhythm of human breathing, has been made of light-sensitive material. It is like the human organism, like the Kieslerian endless house and housing — the simplest form of architecture according to Adolf Loos. It is a reflection and image of the surrounding reality, the viewer being its witness and participant. Finally, it is a contemporary version of co-realism — an illustration of the dynamics of constant interaction between man, his natural environment and technology. (MK)



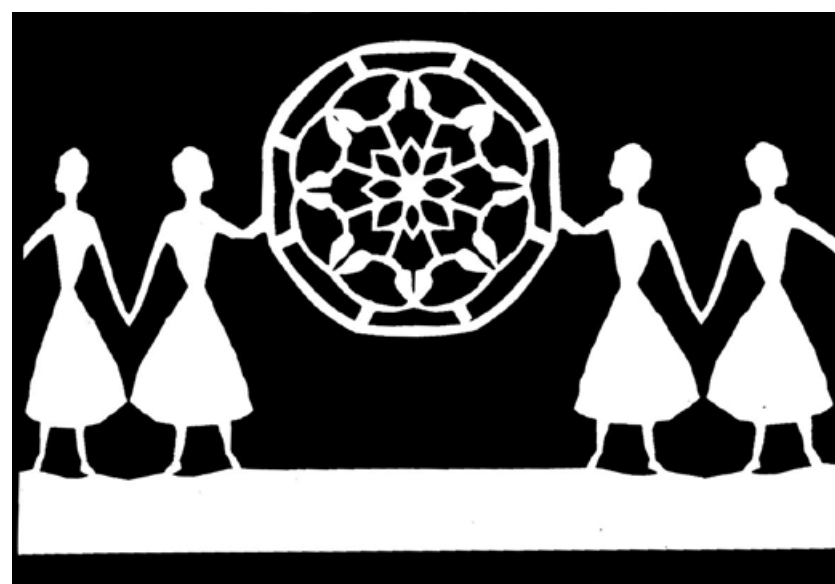
AM I GAY?, 2013



Expansion Joints, 2009



Justice for Aliens, 2014



IT'S JUST A SPIN OF INNER LIFE, 2014, fragment of the zine cover

Agnieszka Piksa operates at the intersection of word and visually, creating narrative drawings, comics and visual essays. Using a simple line, she seeks to give shape to word and explores its plasticity. She thinks with words; it is them that provoke her actions. She draws comics based on literary texts (by Vladimir Palibrk, Ernst Junger, Aleksandra Tyszczyk, Jerzy Ficowski or Gerolamo Cardano, among others), academic writings, legends, poems, songs, dreams, user manuals, phrasebooks, e-mails, online chats and so on. She illustrates text 'against' its contents, as it were, forsaking narrative linearity, the unity of place, time and action, and the omniscient narrator: 'My narrator either knows nothing or doesn't exist.' She illustrates reality using synthetic lines, emphasising their materialisation: Piksa draws in real time, immediately illustrating ideas or associations arising at the given moment. In 2009, she published her debut graphic novel, *Albert Bienenstock*, about the protagonist of Stephen Fry's book *The Hippopotamus*. For Piksa, it is a universal tale that 'happens everywhere and nowhere, never and always'. In 2013, she published *The Unknown Genius*, a graphic novel based on a story by Mikołaj Tkacz, about the unexpected success of Ernest Ludwig, a portrait painter fascinated with human ugliness. Piksa uses a simplified line, and figurativeness coexists with abstraction here. For three years now she has been running a visual diary, recording her keen observations of reality. Its fragments were published in 2015 as *Drift, free drift of winged thought* (Mönchengladbach, 2015). Using a bullpen, the artist illustrates autobiographical stories from everyday life, the art world, her travels, but also other people's dreams or overheard conversations. Through minimalist

drawings accompanied by witty commentary, she evokes situations from Kraków, where she lives and works, or from trips to the Tatra Mountains or Berlin, among other places. She has a sensitive ear for the moments when someone says something that is out of tune with the circumstances, remembering their enunciations word for word. These words gnaw at her until she writes them down and illustrates them. And so, with an ironic sense of humour, she reveals the behind-the-scenes discussions and comments made by the curators and artists present at the 31st São Paulo Biennial ('Those homeless in São Paulo / It's relief for me to know / that they are drunk'), or illustrates Kornel Janczy's anecdote about his public art experiences ('I stuffed my car with balloons. A hundred of them. You can't buy less. I had half an hour to blow them up. / Then people came and I don't think they noticed the installation').

In her narrative drawings, Piksa frequently refers to the avant-garde tradition. In 2011, she authored the visual design of the exhibition *Eyes Looking for a Head to Inhabit at the ms² in Łódź*, and made drawings inspired by the writings of Katarzyna Kobro and Władysław Strzemiński, e.g. *Letters to Julian Przyboś (1929–1931)*, *Spatial Composition (1931)*, or *Theory of Vision (1948–1949)*. Working based on fragments of texts, she made an attempt to translate the language of the avant-garde into contemporary parlance and to interpret its theoretical reflections: to expose latent meanings and subject them to visual manipulation. Her drawings are not just an illustration of ideas; rather, and in the first place, they are an attempt to reinterpret the avant-garde, including in the context of repressed emotionality. A series of drawings inspired by Strzemiński's essay on Surrealism, *Aspects of Reality (1936)*, focuses on corporeality, highlighting the emotions (even desire) she had found in it.

What is characteristic for Piksa's work is a constant search for visual contrasts, as reflected in her photomontages. She likens the process to editing a documentary about reality, the result being 'pseudo-films'. Her first photomontage comics, based on texts by the Serbian writer Vladimir Palibrk (*The Process of Life*;

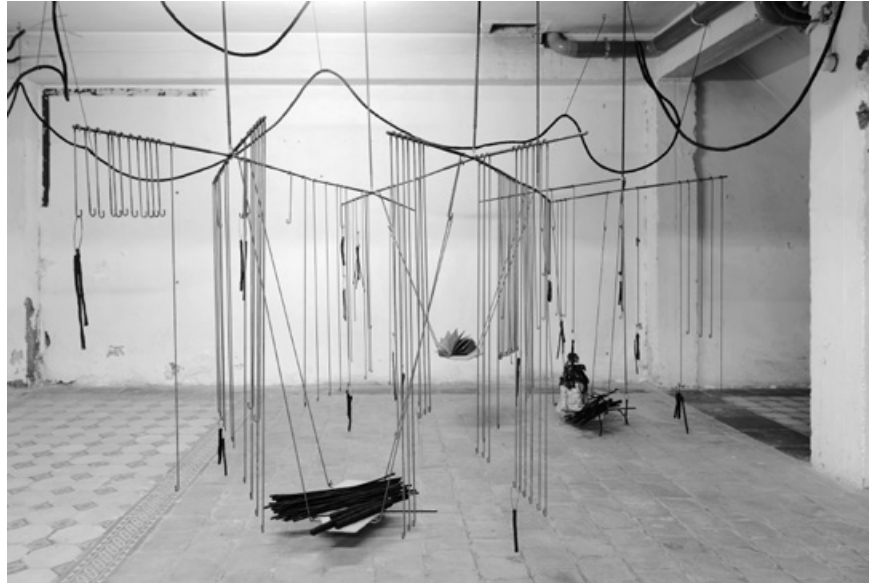
Letter from a God; Justice for Aliens) and Władysław Strzemiński (*Today We Know*), were featured in the zine *IT'S JUST A SPIN OF INNER LIFE* which was presented at the 31st São Paulo Biennial in 2014. The chronological order of the chapters suggests attempts to establish communication between Earth and Heaven, which turn into a dialogue when the latter replies. The artist is preoccupied with metaphysics, visions, dreams and outer-space themes such as the discovery of planets or the existence of alien civilisations. By exploring the motif of alternative realities — visualised using existing images of tribal statues, figurines etc. — Agnieszka Piksa touches upon the subject of alterity and transposes it also into the mundane dimension. The Other is not necessarily an alien from another galaxy; it may be someone living next to us. The question resounds about the figure of the Other — exotic, unfamiliar, incomprehensible, remaining at the fringes of society: 'I MEAN, WHY THE ALIENS ALWAYS HAVE TO BE EVIL AND BAD?' Piksa juxtaposes images from two books: Aleksander Jackowski's *Folk Art* and *The Origin of Cosmos*, pointing out that the academic findings and folk myths contained in them are on a similar level of knowledge and use similar tools; hence the comparison of pixelated photographs of outer space with embroideries and cut-outs. The impossibility of cognition is also a theme of other comics by Piksa, such as *Cannibals at Large (2009)* where the motif of the black hole, borrowed from John G. Taylor's *Black Holes: The End of the Universe? (1973)*, becomes a metaphor of that which we cannot experience and study because we lack the tools to do so. The artist seeks to establish visual rules to organise the chaotic reality. She draws diagrams and concept graphs in an attempt to describe the indescribable. This is the other side of her artistic practice, opposite to the photomontage comics. And so textual works dominate in her project *Tropes*, featured in the *Views 2015* exhibition. The title, which in Polish can also mean 'tracks' (as in 'animal tracks'), reflects Piksa's diagrammatic method, where she explores specific thoughts by breaking them down into elements. The result are visual essays referring to conceptual works.

As part of *Tropes*, the artist samples two of her older shows, *Expansion Joints (2009)* and *Concept Clouds (2011)*. The former refers to a structural-engineering term denoting a 'gap in steel or concrete to allow for thermal expansion'. The artist relates the concept to the visual sphere where messages are distorted due to the resistance of matter. Piksa's diagram deals with aberrations in the transmission of images and a search for black holes in them. Through *Expansion Joints* the artist expresses 'solidarity with the concepts of systemic dysfunction, non-linear time and the quality of involuntary communication'. *Concept Cloud*, in turn, illustrates how linkages between words arise; when the root is extracted from the sum total of their intersection points, the result is *INTENTION*. Piksa's mathematical formula leads to the original source of utterance. Another graph, *Clarity/Inertia*, was inspired by Oskar Hansen's Open Form theory, and the *Riddle of the Sphinx* ('Which creature has one voice and yet becomes four-footed and two-footed and three-footed?') has been represented in an abstract fashion by breaking the human figure down into lines. The first image is a square, the second one consists of circles, the third one of straight lines, and colours have been matched to the shapes according to Leon Chwistek's zone theory of painting [*strefizm*]. Through linguistic and visual experiments Piksa strives to establish cognitive rules while inviting the viewer to interact. She publishes her comics, diagrams, narrative drawings, posters and illustrations at her blog (<http://agapixa.blogspot.com>) which she treats as a visual diary revealing her strategy of using a single story to confront usually distant themes. The specific collage of contents has its roots in Piksa's obsessive collecting of amateur literature. She is inspired by linguistic awkwardness and talentless writing as expressions of unknown artistic attitudes. The motto of her blog, 'COBRA GARDENING FORTUNE-TELLER', refers to the titles of periodicals that encompass the whole of existence: 'Cobra is about the struggle between good and evil, the light of the mind against dark forces. Gardening is harmony achieved through simple activities. And of fortune-telling I've seen a little bit too much recently.' (KK)

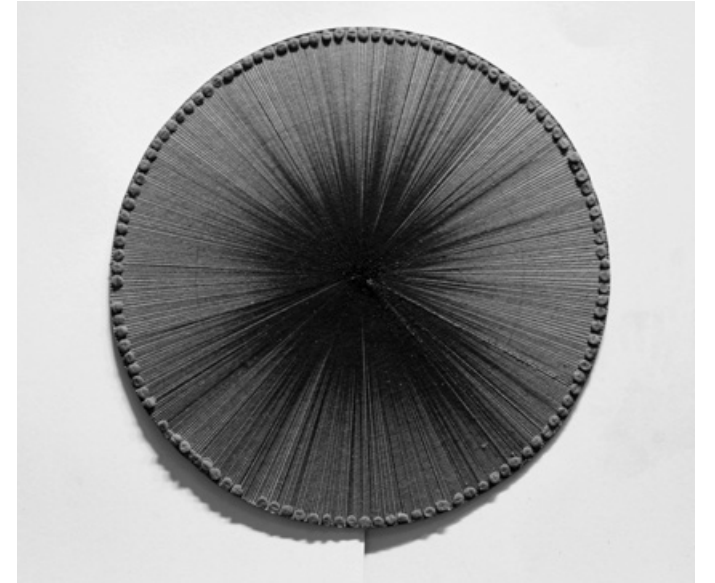
All quotations from <https://lukaszbiolkowski.wordpress.com/2011/11/13/kobra-dzialkowiec-wrozka-rozmowa-z-agnieszka-piksa/>, accessed 17 August 2015.



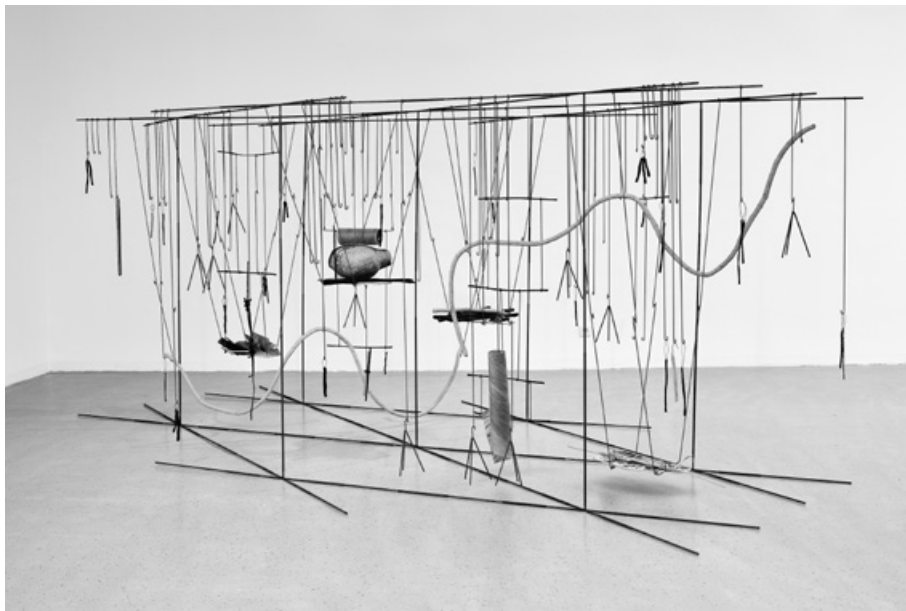
Infinity Sign, 2008, exhibition *Clinamen*, The Xawery Dunikowski Museum of Sculpture in Królikarnia, Warsaw, 2013
photo by Piotr Żyliński



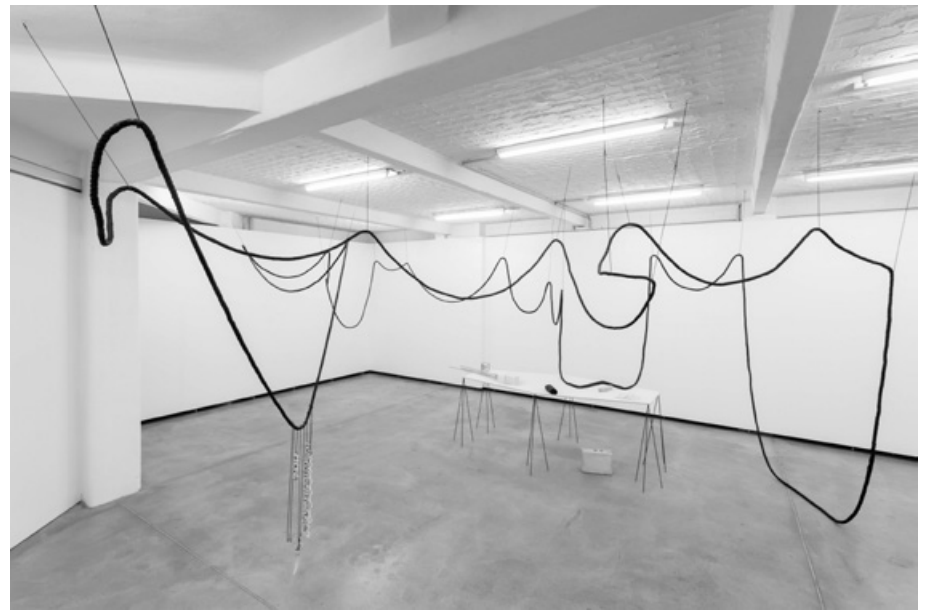
The Means, the Milieu, Objectif Exhibitions, Antwerp, 2014
photo by Isabelle Arthuis



Oneness, exhibition *Creature*, National Museum Tbilisi, 2011
photo by Justyna Mielnikiewicz



The Means, the Milieu, exhibition *Procedures for the Head*, Polish Art Today, Kunsthalle Bratislava, 2015



Collaborating Objects Radiating Environments, exhibition, Künstlerhaus Bethanien, Berlin, 2014
photo by Ivo Gretener

Iza Tarasewicz perceives the artistic process as an instrument of knowledge, of its transformation and recycling. She creates objects and installations undergoing constant transformations that provide new information. She works with physical matter that she explores, tests and experiments with: 'Verging sometimes on hylozoism (the notion that all matter is actually animate), my works serve as temporary junction points of energies, place, time and ideas — assuming the character of events unfolding in the course of the successive interactions.' She uses 'humble', ordinary, everyday materials, combining them with industrial ones such as steel, cement, hemp fibre, rubber or elastomer. She always starts with an idea, looking for the exactly right materials to express it; she makes numerous notes, drawings, models. She never uses ready-made solutions; making sure to observe the properties of materials, she learns their processing and production technologies, and her studio is a site of constant experimentation. Physical grappling with matter is uncompromising. For Tarasewicz, the process of production is a state of absolute creative freedom; it is unpredictable, and each decision entails successive steps in the process. The purpose is not to create a perfect form, but one that will preserve the 'truth of the material' while serving as an information medium.

Tarasewicz's work is based on a constant exploration of the exact sciences, something that is already evident in her early works devoted to organic matter changing its properties and decomposing. In 2008, at Poznań's Pies Gallery, her first solo exhibition took place, called *Hand Made*. It featured objects made of animal hides and horsehair (*Mascots*), and of fermenting pork formed into the shape of a dead wolf (*Wolf*). The show's title referred to both the manual processing of meat and to the 'ritual' of animal slaying. The artist is interested in the process of changes and the externalisation of inner things. She uses organic matter: animal hides and fats, intestines, wax, clay, paraffin or yeast dough. Her 2008 solo exhibition at the Arsenal Gallery in Białystok, *Brawn*, featured a selection of works that were decomposing, giving off a stench and changing their form: *Dirty Bomb* (2008), an extremely

obese figure made of animal fat and paraffin; *Sign of Infinity* (2008), plaited with prepared pig intestines; and *Wounds* (2008), made of pork bladders. *Brawn* (or head-cheese) is the 'luncheon meat obtained from the head of a pig after separating the brain, ears, tongue and eyes, treated as a second-rate food'. It can be a 'metaphor of human self-aggression'. Tarasewicz's works are about the human condition, about extreme psychological states; they relate to physiology, balancing between notions such as hunger and satiation, surfeit and want. Referring to personal experiences, they are also archetypal; speaking in universal terms about human nature and objectified animality, they comment, using minimal means, on the human-animal relationship. Tarasewicz has been consistently treading this path and exploring 'degraded' materials, as reflected in her successive solo shows: the graduation-project *Breadwinner* (2008), *Nugget* (2009) or *Oneness* (2011) at the Polish Institute in Budapest, featuring figurative sculptures: *Kids and Animals*, a series made of salt dough; *Mother and Child*; *Connection*; or *Hand Made* (drawings). These works deal with the 'impossibility of drawing a clear line between play and risk, love and enslavement, victim and perpetrator'.

The artist draws also from the natural sciences. One of her key references are fungi, organisms that elude the grasp of knowledge. Tarasewicz is fascinated precisely by this arcaneness and mysteriousness; she is interested in their complex connections as a form, a pattern to be explored through art. She interprets fungi in the context of holism — the philosophical notion that all phenomena are connected — and her studies of chaos theory. Everything is permitted, both error and coincidence; nothing is excluded. Fungi became the point of departure for the 2010 show *Connection* at the BWA Zielona Góra. The title refers to an imminent connectedness between content and form, something that is characteristic for Tarasewicz's art. The processing of basic materials leads to abstract outcomes.

With time, the artist gradually reduces the materials she uses, a tendency that radicalises during her stay in Georgia: 'During my residency in Georgia in 2011, I had a breakthrough. I decided to minimise

my resources even more. I became very interested with the term "the architecture of emptiness", that was certainly a result of my distinct feeling of loneliness. Five months in another country was a powerful moment that pushed me out of the familiar artist zone. Now I don't necessarily feel like a sculptor' [cf. culture.pl]. In Georgia, Tarasewicz accepts the restrictions and limitations that determine her creative process and this, paradoxically, gives her a lot of artistic freedom. While there, she makes abstract works using organic materials such as plant dust, clay or animal skin. The reduction of the means of expression leads Tarasewicz to forsake figurativeness. This formal breakthrough becomes evident in the exhibition *Creature* (2011) at the Tbilisi History Museum. 'If I were to choose my most important work, it would be *Oneness* — a very quick sketch on cardboard. I brought this piece with me from Georgia. It is a very good representation of my passion for unity and the circulation of energy that bring on both positive and negative emotions, as well as experiences that shape us.' [cf. culture.pl].

The artist moved away from figurativeness and the anthropomorphic discourse. Important for her was an exhibition at Warsaw's Królikarnia (the branch of National Museum in Warsaw), called *Clinamen* (2013), which featured her works combined with objects brought out from the storage rooms of the museum, such as the tools used by Xawery Dunikowski or post-war photographs of the Królikarnia palace. The title, borrowed from Lucretius' *De rerum natura*, denotes the 'unpredictable swerve of atoms, introducing an element of randomness and unpredictability'. [cf. Iza Tarasewicz. *Clinamen*, Warsaw: Królikarnia, National Museum in Warsaw, 2013]. Tarasewicz explores the chaos-inducing collisionality and matter in constant movement. 'During production especially I try to bear in mind that things do not arise in the course of a rational organisation of elements but rather through constant turbulences and bifurcations.'

Her practice is interdisciplinary — she is the author of the performances e.g. *Fungal Follies* (2014), in which she returns to the theme of mushrooms, or of the series of analog photographs, *Matrix* (2013). Also in 2013 she published a vinyl record, *ύβρις*

oparopiou/oratory of hubris/oratorium arogancji (ArtBazaar Records), featuring her experimental pieces performed by the soprano Małgorzata Trojanowska, Robert Piernikowski and a traditional singing group from Białystok.

Tarasewicz's present artistic attitude crystallised during a year-long residency at the Künstlerhaus Bethanien in Berlin (2013/2014) and was manifested in the exhibitions *Strange Attractors* (Polish Institute in Berlin) and *Collaborating Objects Radiating Environments* (Künstlerhaus Bethanien). The artist keeps minimising her means of expression; she refers to abstract diagrams, graphs and charts used in the exact sciences to systemise knowledge, continuing her studies of chaos theory.

Currently there has been a shift of accents as Tarasewicz began focusing on interpreting specific spaces and making art in relation to them; thus she opens up a field for the viewer's potential interaction with the works. The purpose of her art is to put the recipient in an uncomfortable situation that will initiate reflection; it is aimed at communication with the viewer.

The artist's preoccupation with the exact sciences and philosophy materialises in abstract forms. Unlike figurativeness, abstraction is unlimited. Inspired with the exact sciences, Tarasewicz makes works that mediate the knowledge derived from them. She is fascinated not just by information itself, but also by speculation, the actual basis of science. Drawing on philosophers' sketches and logical-philosophical schemas, she writes/draws 'diaries with numerous relationship graphs, inspired by the Pantheists and Pre-animists, and ultimately by the Hylozoists' [cf. dwutygodnik.com]. She continues working with matter as before, but with a new logic, creating modular works, providing for repeated use, hence the important idea of workshop serial production. The project is open-ended and geared towards further editions, which is why she refers to it as a 'proposal'.

The successive instalments of exhibitions from a series started in 2014, presenting sets of works relating to chaos theory, which Tarasewicz has been exploring for several years now, include *Through the Obvious Impossibility of the Arrangement of Signs* (Arsenal Gallery, Białystok, 2014), *The Means, the Milieu* (Objectif

Exhibitions, Antwerp, 2014) and *Sorry for All the Ups and Downs* (Syntax Projects, Lisbon, 2015). Their continuation is the latest project, *TURBA, TURBO* (title borrowed from Michael Serres's book *La naissance de la physique dans le texte de Lucrèce*, 1977, English ed.: *The Birth of Physics*, 2000), featured in *Views 2015*. The starting point here was a modernist round flower bed whose form the artist had associated with the Large Hadron Collider at the CERN near Geneva. Situated in a tunnel 27 kilometres in circumference, the machine accelerates elementary particles to near speed of light and collides them with each other. A comparable surface area could be occupied by the famous fungal colony in Oregon or by the mythical city of Z, mentioned in *Exploration Fawcett*, a speculated account of Colonel Percy Harrison Fawcett's 1925 expedition to the Amazon (he never returned from the trip, so the author's identity remains unknown). An important role is also played here by the motif of a huge anaconda, the shape of which the form of Tarasewicz's installation relates to. Woven through all this is the theme of fascination with absurdity, of incredulity, speculation and mystery present in each of the elements. Tarasewicz's work is an abstract equivalent of a collision of particles, resulting in chaos. *TURBA, TURBO* has an open form and, like the artist's recent works, will never be a finished project, allowing for its transformation into new configurations in the future, depending on the site-specific context. In her successive projects the artist will 'recycle' the existing forms, combining them with a new set of sculptures/tools and thus realising a recycling economy. She views her artistic practice, which allows her to gain knowledge, as a great open project of constructing and deconstructing forms of infinite potential. (KK)