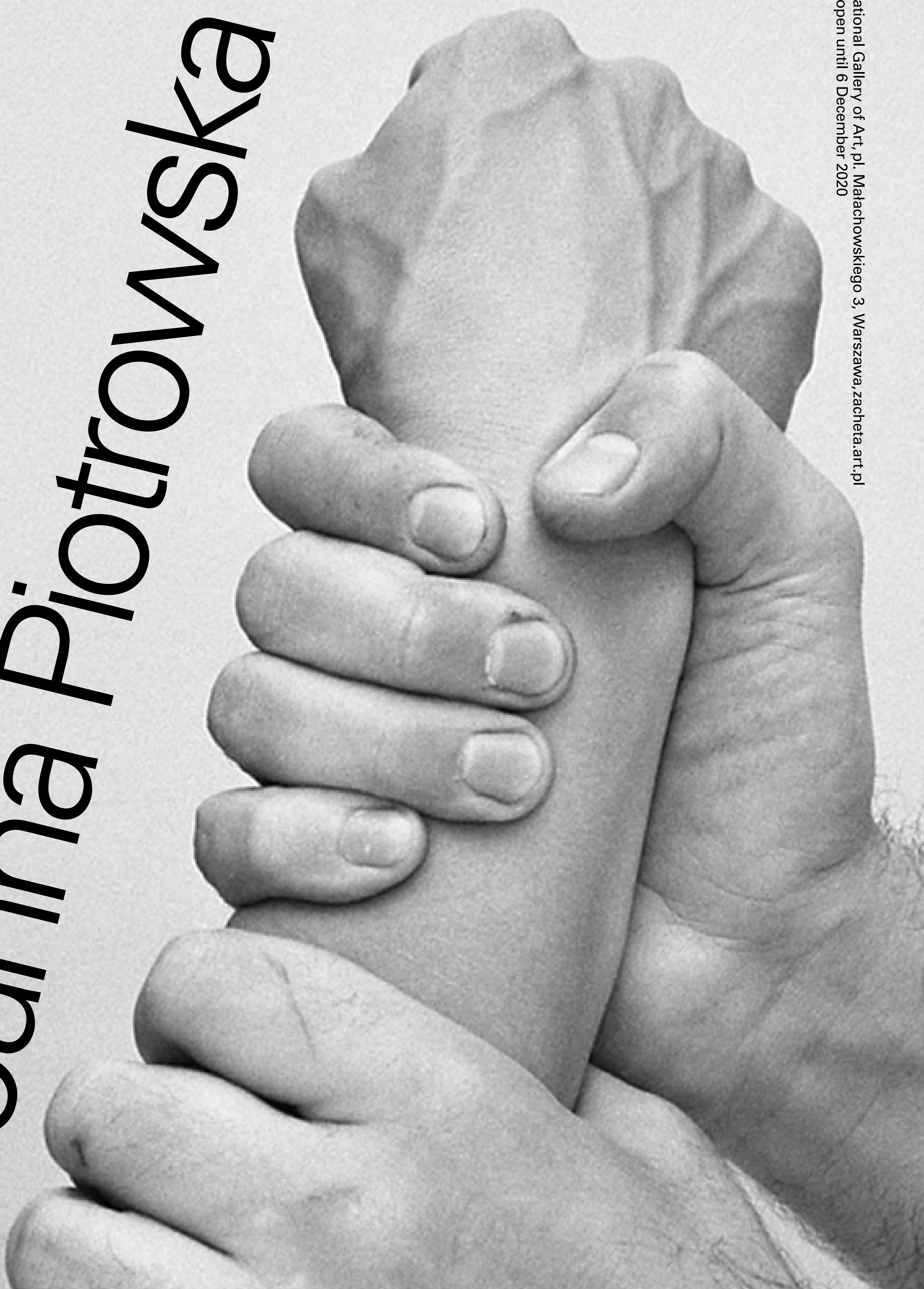


# Frowst

Joanna Piotrowska



## **FROWST AT ZACHĘTA. CLOSENESS AND DISCOMFORT IN JOANNA PIOTROWSKA'S PHOTOS**

**The suffocating nature of family relationships, the oppressive role of social institutions, physical and structural violence against women, the need for power and control over animals — these are the main topics that accompany Joanna Piotrowska's work. With exhibitions in leading art institutions around the world (including Tate Britain in London and MoMA in New York), Piotrowska is today one of the most important Polish artists of the young generation. On 18 September, Zachęta — National Gallery of Art will open its monographic exhibition *Frowst*. This is the first such extensive presentation of the artist's works in Poland.**

The exhibition will include, among others, the series *Frowst* (suffocation, mustiness), which brought the artist international recognition. The famous series of photographs refers to Bert Hellinger's pseudo-scientific method of family constellations, popular in Poland, which has been very controversial for years. The staged photographs resemble photographs from a family album. **A daughter sits on her father's lap, a brother puts a hand on his brother's shoulder, sisters lie on the same armchair. Forced proximity of adults causes discomfort and anxiety.** The 'suffocation' visible in the works perfectly describes complicated family relationships.

In her staged photos and videos, the artist focuses on exploring human relationships and their bodily expression. **She examines characters entangled in the context of social institutions, struggling with**

**manifestations of power, emotional dependencies and the violent element of human nature.** In addition to subject related to family, sense of security and home, the position of women and the psychology of girl rebellion play an important role in the circle of her interests. Her black-and-white, handmade, gelatin silver prints and videos on 16 mm tape are more of a record of performance or spectacle than a documentary.

Under the influence of texts by the American feminist and developmental psychologist Carol Gilligan, who dealt with the issues of women's voice and resistance, **a series of photographs was created, presenting teenage girls in poses taken from self-defence textbooks.** These works refer to the ubiquitous, structural and physical violence against women, but they are also a story of a rebellion of women and girls against a culturally sanctioned narrative that disciplines women. Oppression also appears in **works depicting models pointing out 'sensitive spots' on the body — the places most vulnerable to attack and pain.**

The exhibition will also feature the latest series of **photographs documenting cages and animal enclosures arranged in a pattern of human dwellings.** The photographs reveal the dominance of humans over the animal world, the need for control, the lust for power, as well as fear. Some of the works depict objects used to play and stimulate animals, which look like instruments of torture, medical instruments or erotic toys. The exhibition closes with a presentation of the project in which **Piotrowska asked her friends to build hideouts in their flats, imitating children's games.** The photographs reveal not only the temporariness and lack of security, experienced today especially by young people, but also the illusion of material comfort. It turns out that it is difficult to build a true refuge from the piles of things we own.





**Joanna Piotrowska** — visual artist, photographer. She was born in 1985 in Warsaw. She studied at the Academy of Fine Arts in Kraków and the Royal College of Art in London. Her monographic album *FROWST* was released in 2014, to the delight of critics. Her works have been presented, among others, at the Museum of Modern Art in New York, at the 10th Berlin Biennale, at Tate Britain in London and at a solo exhibition at Kunsthalle Basel in Switzerland.

**Exhibition:**

***Joanna Piotrowska. Frowst,***  
**18 September – 6 December 2020,**  
**Zachęta — National Gallery of Art,**  
**pl. Małachowskiego 3, Warsaw**  
**Curator: Magdalena Komornicka**  
**More information: [zacheta.art.pl](http://zacheta.art.pl)**

**The exhibition is accompanied by essays by Mira Marcinów and Joanna Bednarek.**

‘For capitalist modernity, the family is a model of human relations supposedly untouched by the self-interest we have to show by competing with each other in the market, and which provides a respite from that competition. At the same time, its actual functioning and the success of the therapeutic industry, which is supposed to correct its deficiencies, show that the **burden on the family to provide authentic, close emotional connections puts it under enormous pressure, with which it cannot cope.**’

(excerpt from text by Joanna Bednarek)

**Joanna Bednarek** — philosopher, translator, writer, member of the editorial office of *Praktyka Teoretyczna*; her texts have been published, among others, in *Teksty Drugie*, *Krytyka Polityczna* and *Czas Kultury*. Author of books, among others, *Linie kobiecości. Jak różnica płciowa przekształciła literaturę i filozofię?* (2016), *Życie, które mówi. Nowoczesna wspólnota i zwierzęta* (2017) i *O pochodzeniu rodziny* (2018).

**‘Specialists speak of zoochosis — psychosis caused by isolation, captivity, subjecting caged animals, as if in a kind of zoopticon, to permanent surveillance. Some veterinarians and behaviouralists say that there are no animal mental disorders other than human-induced madness.** We have no evidence that an animal living in the wild, outside the anthroposphere, could go mad. This is because animal psychiatry can be talked about in relation to animals to which we assigned some functions. The functions that other species are forced to perform for us. Thus, pet, fur, laboratory or circus animals are treated by zoopsychologists, which leads to the conclusion that only imprisoned

animals suffer mentally. Thus, animal psychiatry is the result of human appropriation’.

(excerpt from text by Mira Marcinów)

**Mira Marcinów** — philosopher and writer, doctor of humanities in psychology at the Jagiellonian University, assistant professor at the Institute of Philosophy and Sociology of the Polish Academy of Sciences. She deals with the philosophy of psychiatry and the theory of madness, with particular emphasis on Polish heritage. Author of books: *Szaleństwo jako wybór* (2012), *Historia polskiego szaleństwa* (2018), *Bezmatek* (2020).

**Complete texts are available at**  
**[zacheta.art.pl/en/wystawy/joanna-piotrowska-zaduch](http://zacheta.art.pl/en/wystawy/joanna-piotrowska-zaduch)**

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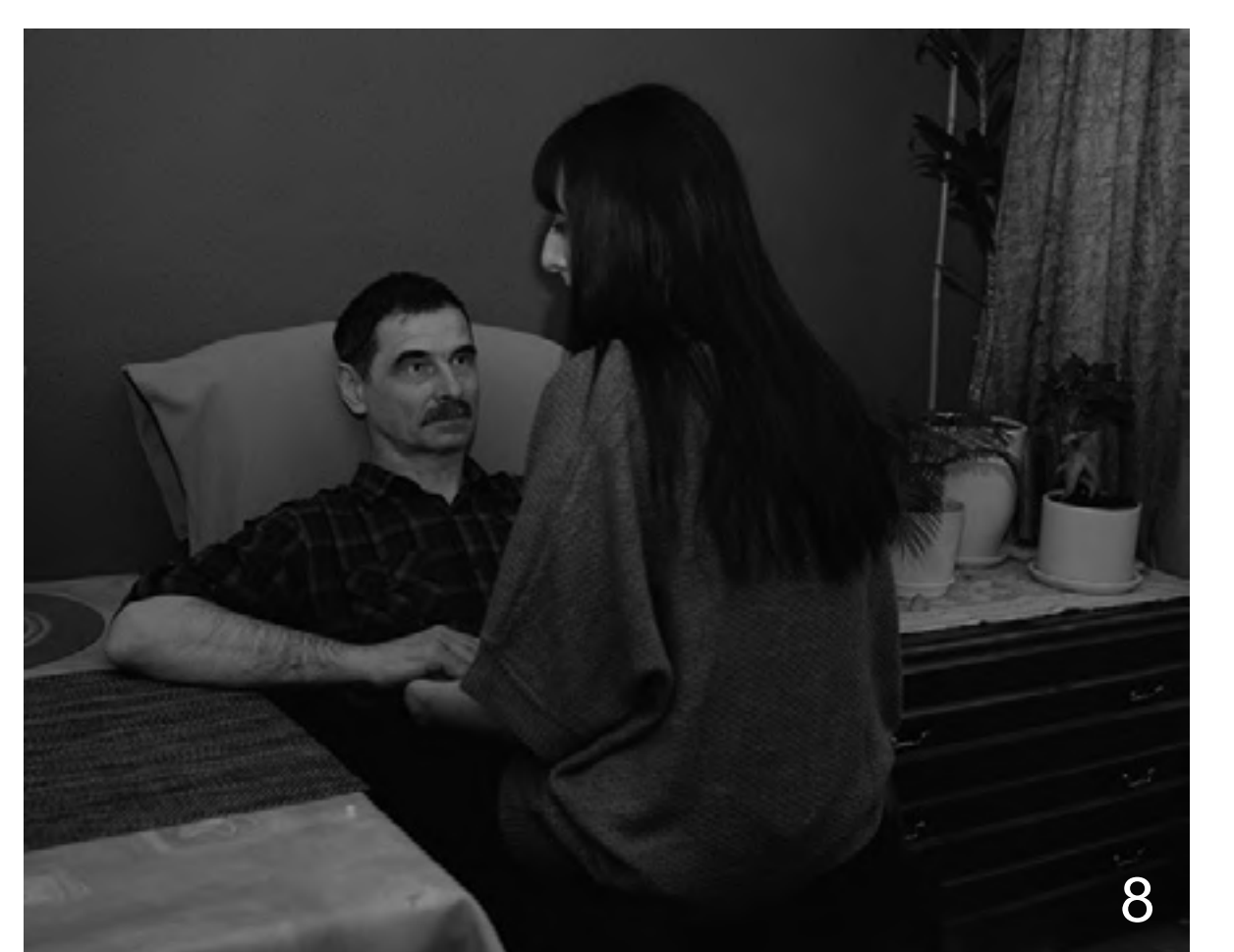
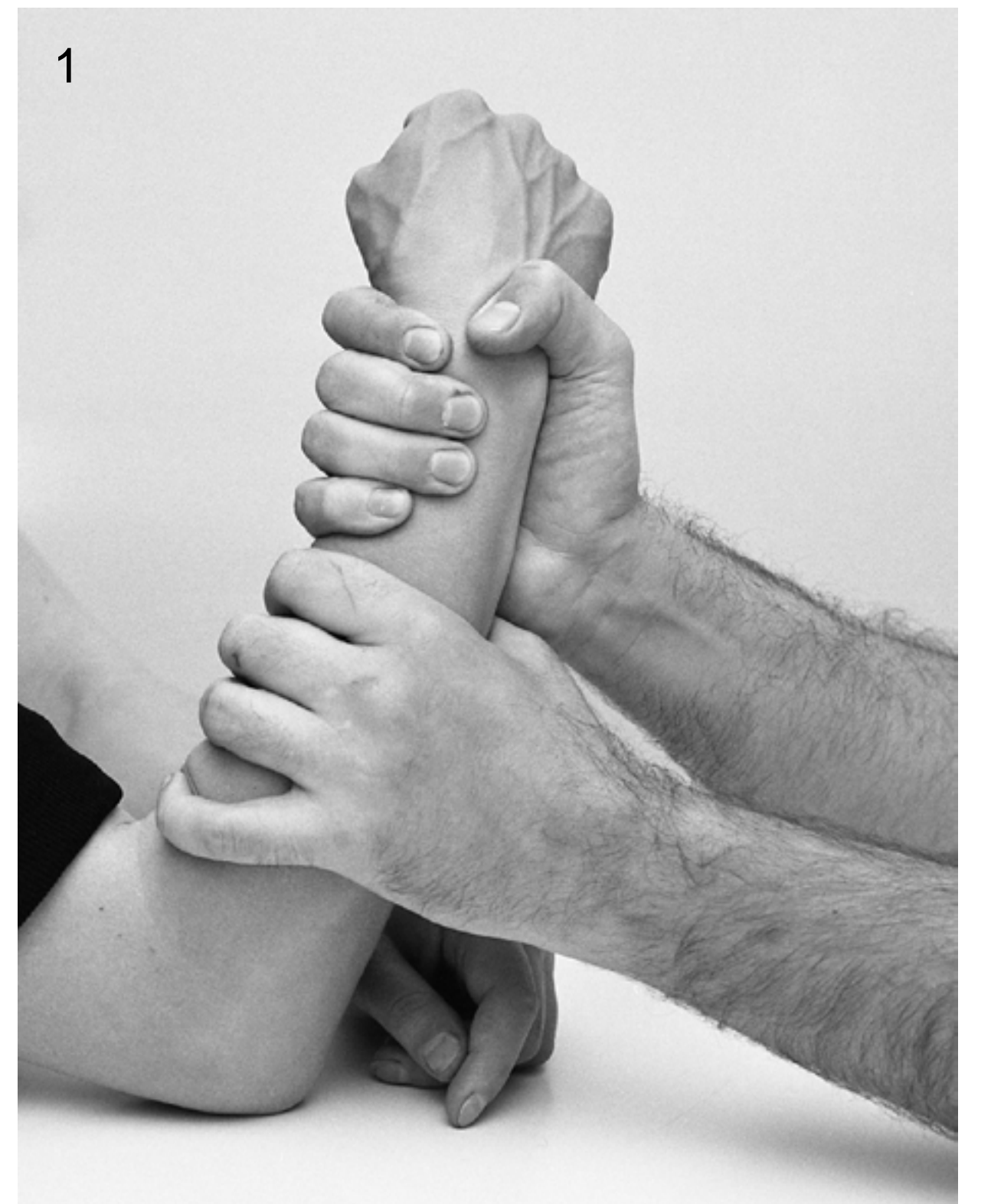
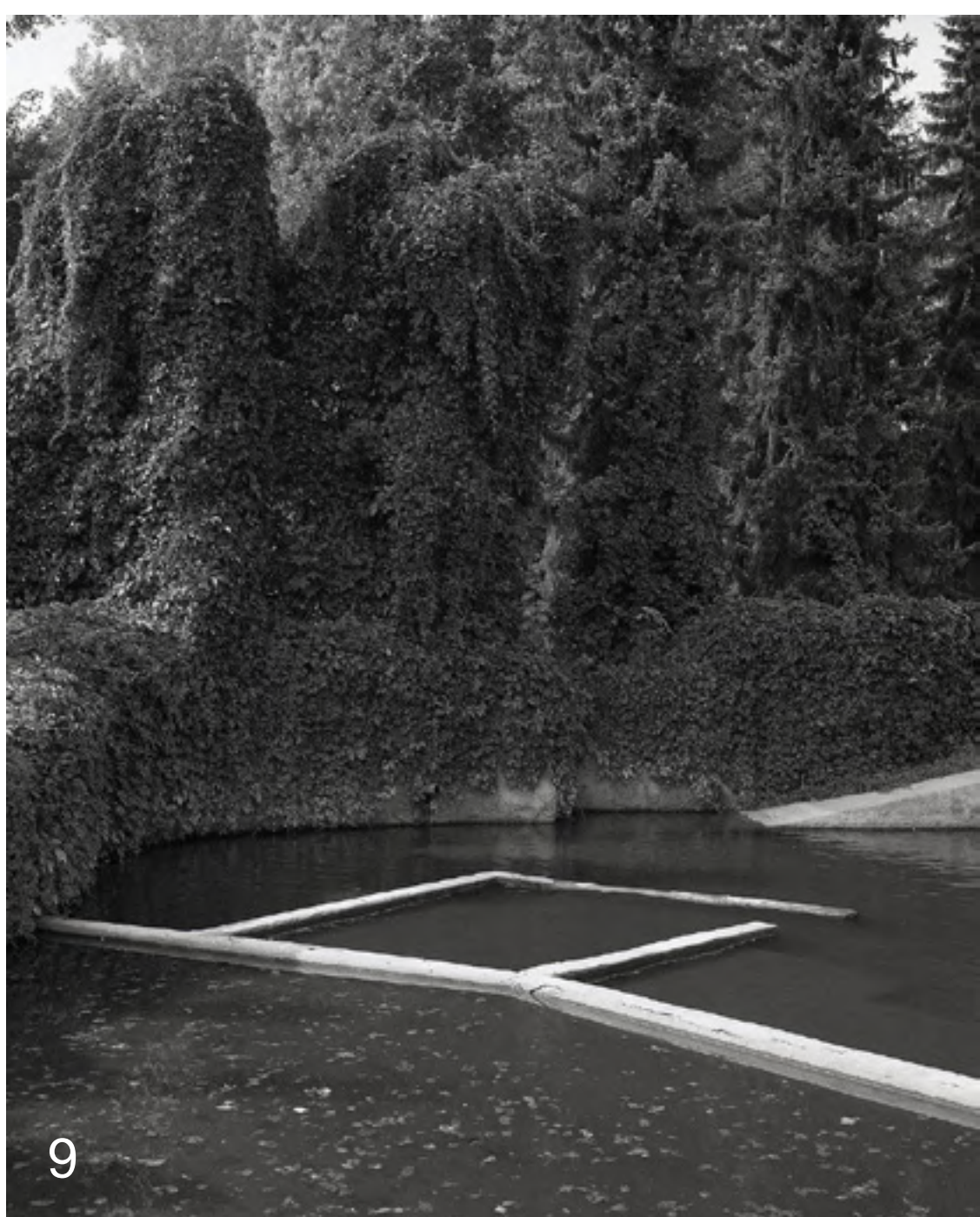
#### **Press images**

[zacheta.art.pl/pl/prasa](http://zacheta.art.pl/pl/prasa)

(to access Zachęta’s press images, you will need to register)



# Press images



**1** Joanna Piotrowska, *Untitled*, 2015 **2** Joanna Piotrowska, *Untitled*, 2014 **3** Joanna Piotrowska, *Untitled*, 2019 **4** Joanna Piotrowska, *Untitled*, 2015 **5** Joanna Piotrowska, *Untitled*, 2015 **6** Joanna Piotrowska, *Vital Points I*, 2019

**7** Joanna Piotrowska, *XXIV Frowst*, 2013–2014 **8** Joanna Piotrowska, *VII Frowst*, 2013–2014 **9** Joanna Piotrowska, *Enclosure XXX*, 2019 **10** Joanna Piotrowska, *Biting Ball*, 2019 **11** Joanna Piotrowska, *Untitled*, 2017 **12** Joanna Piotrowska, *Enclosure I*, 2019