ZACHĘTA

## *Jura Shust. Żywica* Solar plexus* – an exhibition about spirituality, technology, and man's relationship with nature

Jura Shust's exhibition at the Zachęta – National Gallery of Art talks about topics related to the relationship between our spirituality and technology, and about the changing perception of nature in the contemporary world. The first solo presentation of the Belarussian artist in Poland, it guides viewers across landscapes such as borderland, ancient woodland, or a Christmas tree plantation. The artist has prepared a new multichannel installation especially for Zachęta, combining videos, sound, various items, and performative actions. The exhibition will be open for viewing between 17 July and 27 September 2026.

The starting point for the exhibition is the borderland between Poland, Belarus, and Lithuania, where various traditions, languages, and belief systems have co-existed for centuries. In his work, Shust draws on ethnobotanical and ethnoreligious research, exploring the traces of animism preserved by folk culture. As part of the *Żywica* Solar Plexus* exposition, the artist returns to the Białowieża Forest to bring back the ancient perception of the forest as a sacred space, where trees serve as connectors between the spiritual world and the world of humans. At the same time, the forest becomes an arena of technological development – from the industrial exploitation of the environment to tests of surveillance and control systems.

"The most fascinating aspect of Jura Shust's practice is how he observes modern technology and speculates on the future that is unfolding in front of our eyes. He shows that AI is slowly taking over the functions that rituals, mythologies, and spiritual practices used to fulfil: it tells us about the world and makes it meaningful. It also becomes the fulfilment of the dream about extra-corporeal life and communication between species. At the same time, it is often used for purposes that serve the profits of specific groups or support military development. It's a fascinating paradox," comments Michalina Sablik, the curator of the exhibition.

Zachęta presents new works, created specifically for this exposition. Arranged across the five rooms at the Gallery, the multichannel installation includes videos, sound, performative actions, as well as items made of resin, wood, metal, and spruce tree roots.

"The exhibition does not follow a linear narrative. It was created as a space where everyone can move around at their own pace, building their own connections between the individual works, and coming up with their own interpretations," notes Shust.

A recurring theme at the exhibition are the tumultuous borderland events: militarisation, surveillance, and migration. They echo particularly strongly in the performance titled *Birds with human heads*, created in collaboration with Belarussian migrants living in Poland. By referring to old beliefs, the practice of glossolalia, as well as the contemporary experiences of the diaspora, the artist weaves a story about the search for new means of communication and coexistence. The performance will be presented during the vernissage on 16 July.

instytucja finansowana przez
institution financed by
Ministerstwo Kultury i Dziedzictwa Narodowego

Zachętę wspiera
Zachęta is supported by
TOWARZYSTWO ZACHĘTY SZTUK PIĘKNYCH

mecenas Zachęty
patron of the gallery
ORLEN

ZACHĘTA

"In my work, the symbolism of the spruce tree is particularly significant; that tree used to be perceived as an intermediary between the spiritual and material worlds. It was used in old transition rituals, planted in cemeteries, and venerated. That story is the main theme of the installation titled *A spruce tree planted near the house*, where I introduce a 15-metre tree into the space of the gallery. For me, it's a story about moving from participation in the living spirited landscape, to appropriating it and subordinating it to man's needs," adds Shust.

The exhibition is accompanied by an educational programme that includes discussions, workshops, guided tours, poetry meetings, botanical walks, and performative actions. The programme elaborates further on two themes from the exhibition: the first one, implemented in cooperation with the Belarussian community in Warsaw, is devoted to memory, migration, and contemporary Eastern European culture; the other one focuses on the Małachowski Square as a space filled with urban nature, and invites participants to discover relationships between people, plants, and architecture. A detailed schedule of the events will be published on the Zachęta website.

Jura Shust – born in 1983, Jura Shust is a Belorussian artist based in Berlin. Fascinated by the relationships between spirituality, technology, and biopolitics, as well as ways of opposing the systems of power, he combines political art with speculative visions of the future. His works have been presented in numerous institutions across the world, including Galerie für Zeitgenössische Kunst GFZK in Leipzig, the S.M.A.K. Municipal Museum of Contemporary Art in Ghent, Mystetskyi Arsenal in Kyiv, Badischer Kunstverein in Karlsruhe, as well as at the Management in New York. He has participated in the 14th Baltic Triennial at the CAC in Vilnius, the 4th Art Encounters Biennial in Timișoara, and the 15th Gwangju Biennale. In Poland, his work has already been shown at a group exhibition at the Arsenal Gallery in Białystok, and in 2025, the Museum of Art in Łódź bought his film, Pine Cone Seeds (2022). He runs the saliva.live portal, focused on exploring the relationship between nature and technology.

**curator:** Michalina Sablik
**special thanks for supporting the exhibition:**
Management, New York; Michael Reznik; Robert Triefus
**media patronage:** Polskie Radio, TVP Kultura, Pismo, naszemiasto.pl

***Jura Shust***
***Żywica* Solar plexus***
**17 July – 27 September 2026**
**Zachęta – National Gallery of Art**
**Pl. Małachowskiego 3, 00-916 Warsaw**

instytucja finansowana przez
institution financed by
Ministerstwo Kultury i Dziedzictwa Narodowego

Zachętę wspiera
Zachęta is supported by
TOWARZYSTWO ZACHĘTY SZTUK PIĘKNYCH

mecenas Zachęty
patron of the gallery
ORLEN