

ZACHĘTA

Sculpture in Search of a Place

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Oskar Dawicki, *Playing with Granat*, 2020, film, object, photo: Grzegorz Press

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Państwowa Wyższa Szkoła
Filmowa, Telewizyjna i Teatralna
im. Leona Schillera w Łodzi



Sculpture in Search of a Place

curator: Anna Maria Leśniewska

collaboration from the part of Zachęta: Julia Leopold

exhibition design: Robert Rumas

exhibition partner: Film School in Łódź

artists:

Magdalena Abakanowicz, Paweł Althamer, Hakan Bakir, Antoni Baran, Krzysztof M. Bednarski, Maciej Bernaś, Cezary Bodzianowski, Emilia Bohdziewicz, Piotr Bosacki, Julian Boss-Gosławski, Michał Budny, Tatiana Czekalska i Leszek Golec, Oskar Dawicki, Xawery Dunikowski, Aneta Grzeszykowska, Izabella Gustowska, Władysław Hasior, Stanisław Hołda, Edward Ihnatowicz, Sławomir Iwański, Zuzanna Janin, Jerzy Jarnuszkiewicz, Krystian Jarnuszkiewicz, Piotr Jędrzejewski, Julian Jończyk, Koji Kamoji, Tadeusz Kantor, Leszek Knaflewski, Marianna Komorniczak, Anna Konik, Paweł Kowalewski, Katarzyna Kozyra, Edward Krasiński, Anna Królikiewicz, Marlena Kudlicka, Kamil Kuskowski, Robert Kuśmirowski, Stefan Kwapisz, Norman Leto, Zbigniew Libera, Józef Lurka, Edward Łazikowski, Jadwiga Maziarska, Antoni Mikołajczyk, Henryk Morel, Szczepan Mucha, Teresa Murak, Ludwika Ogorzelec, Wojciech Oleksy, Stanisław Ostoja-Kotkowski, Włodzimierz Pawlak, Andrzej Pawłowski, Marek Piasecki, Maria Pinińska-Bereś, Piotr Potworowski, Joanna Przybyła, Monika Puchała, Joanna Rajkowska, Józef Robakowski, Andrzej Różycki, Krystiana Robb-Narbutt, Jadwiga Sawicka, Stanisław Seweryński, Janek Simon, Monika Sosnowska, Alina Szapocznikow, Maciej Szańkowski, Andrzej Szewczyk, Marian Szulc, Wawrzyniec Szwej, Iza Tarasewicz, Teresa Tyszkiewicz, Gustav Vigeland, Henryk Wiciński, Krzysztof Wodiczko, Xawery Wolski, Stanisław Zagajewski, Anna Zagrodzka, Krzysztof Zarębski, Sofi Żezmer, Artur Żmijewski

film makers:

Paweł Edelman, Mikołaj Haremski, Ola Jankowska, Łukasz Karwowski, Stefan Matyjaskiewicz, Mitko Panov, Cyprian Piwowarski, Zbigniew Rybczyński, Yann Seweryn, Jacqueline Sobiszewski, Jarosław Szoda, Andrzej Wajda, Ryszard Waśko, Janusz Zagrodzki, Ita Zbroniec-Zajt

The exhibition *Sculpture in Search of a Place* is yet another one in a series of cross-sectional thematic exhibitions at the Zachęta, devoted each year to a different artistic medium [previously painting and scenography]. It tackles the subject of the identity of Polish sculpture over the last sixty years — not so much as a chronology of artistic activity, but as a presentation of the phenomena and creative attitudes that have been essential for its development. It is also the result of the deep fascination and many years of research of its curator, Anna Maria Leśniewska, who has managed to collect the works of nearly a hundred visual artists, including a dozen or so film makers, and present them in the form of an original visual essay.

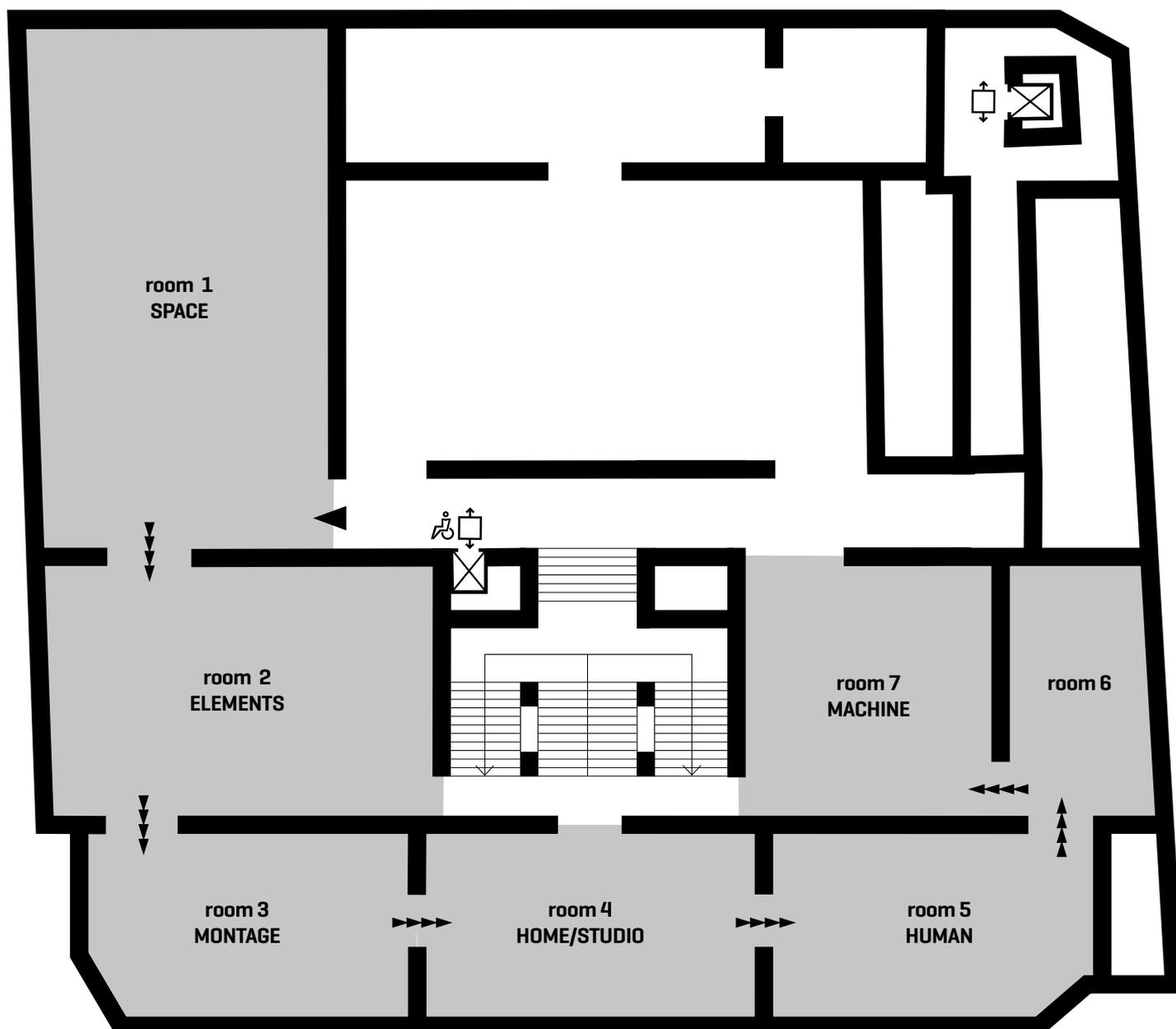
It is not without a reason that the exhibition features the famous *Pregnant Women* by Xawery Dunikowski, a classic and precursor of modernist sculpture in Poland, who had a huge impact on the next generations of artists. His works provide a kind of starting point for the exhibition, if one tries to look at the subject of sculpture and the changes it has undergone over the years from historical perspective. Next to them, visitors can see, among others, polyester forms by Alina Szapocznikow and figurative private nudes by Katarzyna Kozyra. Also present here are works of folk art and African masks which, through their primal power of expression, have been shown by the curator as constitutive for the phenomenon of sculpture.

Another key to the exhibition is offered by the theory of the four elements, inextricably linked with the concept of spirituality. These forces of the world — primal, constitutive and form-creating — have been the inspiration for the works of Robert Kuśmirowski and Norman Leto, created especially for the exhibition. Next door, Katarzyna Kobro's artistic output is invoked through the works of other artists, illustrating the significant role of the artist's concept of departing from understanding sculpture as a solid towards seeing it as a form coexisting with space. *Monumental Composition*, the biggest piece in Magdalena Abakanowicz's woven oeuvre, is just such a form.

Apart from these concepts, the authors of the works on display have also been interested in the human being. The exhibition presents works related to the human body, its death and decay, but also to the senses. Another topic discussed by the curator is the artist's home and studio seen as a specific, intimate place of work and life, full of creative energy. The exhibition is also an opportunity for the visitors to look at the phenomenon of sculpture going beyond lexical definitions, revealing its links with other areas of art: music, theatre, photography, performance and an autonomous film work. Thus, the exhibition features Oskar Dawicki, who has been usually associated with the art of performance, and staged his latest work in the Zachęta's exhibition rooms, depopulated due to the lockdown. The last part of the exhibition is dominated by Edward Ihnatowicz's interactive kinetic sculpture *Senster*, which leads to another topic — machine-sculpture.

The exhibition covers a very vast area — both in terms of its historical and thematic approach, as well as the way it presents the very phenomenon of sculpture: from a compact solid to space, from classic to modern forms of expression. This is also reflected in spectacular site-specific installations by Ludwika Ogorzelec in the space of one of the rooms and by Iza Tarasewicz in the Zachęta's main staircase, manifestations of the broadly understood art of space, which also includes sound.

The exhibition is accompanied by a screening of film studies by filmmakers from the Film School in Łódź and an online publication containing texts by the artists participating in the exhibition, a long curatorial text and extensive visual material.



room 1 — Space

The sculpture is part of the space in which it is located. Therefore, it should not be separated from it. The sculpture enters into the space and the space enters into it.

Katarzyna Kobro, 'Rzeźba i bryła', *Europa*, no. 2, 1929, p. 60

room 2 — Elements

We speak about an element when a force seems to come from nowhere; when it unexpectedly erupts beyond our control and beyond our power of judgement.

Piotr Bosacki

room 3 — Montage

The art of space is 'theatre' today. It is not static. It is a multimedia show with sound, lights and projections. In my works, action is connected with sound, installation, objects, things and presence.

Krzysztof Zarębski, 25 July 2020

room 4 — Home/Studio

Intimate space — between the vision and the materiality of the object

room 5 — Human

Although we use the most advanced technologies, we are constantly dependent on our sensory system, emotions, the *resonance instruments* that our bodies and senses.

room 7 — Machine

Towards a thinking machine

Edward Ihnatowicz, *Towards a Thinking Machine* [1975], w: *Artist and Computer*, ed. Ruth Leavitt, Harmony Books, 1976, pp. 32–34

The exhibition takes up not only seven exhibition rooms, but the main hall, the space of the representative staircase and the building's façade.

Iza Tarasewicz, *Flowing in Waves Towards Equilibrium*, 2011–2020, Installation: steel, aluminium



photo: Monika Stolarska/Zachęta archive, CC BY-SA

I have been fascinated with Michael Serres' book *The Birth of Physics* for years, and that is where the title of my newest installation at Zachęta comes from. The work had its start in Georgia. In 2011, during a several-months' residence stay there, I drew a plan that had exactly the shape of the installation presented at Zachęta. Generally speaking, the drawing, called *View*, is a philosophical diagram of the meeting of two abstract points, in which the strongest field of interaction falls in the middle, the cumulation of waves/lines is placed in the centre of the largest circle, and within it, three small rings represent intellectual power, physiology and *élan vital*. The drawing shows my version of the hylozoic view that ascribes life, the ability to move and spiritual properties to all matter. The hexagon built with the rigorous geometry of tight ropes is the embodiment of chemical structures that create nearer and further materiality, without divisions into better–worse, important–unimportant, etc.

The work shown in the exhibition is the schema of a meeting. For me, the meeting is a trembling, a flow, an exchange focused on changeability, sometimes illogicality, randomness or surprise, and the era of COVID-19, in which we currently find ourselves, will most certainly intensify our desire for directness despite risk, chaos and the unexpected effects of interaction. This is something we see in the protests taking place globally.

Iza Tarasewicz, 2020

Xawery Dunikowski, *Pregnant Women*, 1906, patinated bronze, Xawery Dunikowski Sculpture Museum in Królikarnia, Branch of the National Museum in Warsaw



photo: Daniel Rumiancew/Zachęta archive, CC BY-SA

Everything points to Xawery Dunikowski being the first artist in Poland who made sculpture into art. Before him, in his own words, 'it was as if there was nothing'. Objectively speaking, there were only statues. Statues or commemorative figures. Dunikowski showed that sculpture can be an independent artistic statement. I am thinking, above all, of the Young Poland period of his work. Despite initial resistance, he convinced the 'Sarmatian heads' that sculpture is art and not just public praise.

Zbigniew Libera, July 2020

Magdalena Abakanowicz, *Monumental Composition*, 1973–1975, sisal, linen, wool, Museum of the Origins of the Polish State in Gniezno, deposit at the Central Museum of Textiles in Łódź



photo: Monika Stolarska/Zachęta archive, CC BY-SA

Perhaps my path was different because I lacked the courage to introduce a permanent object into my surroundings, considering it to be feeding the rubbish dumps of human ambition. That is why I created arrangements in a space, which were like a frozen ceremony that was prepared to disappear. My woven forms, which were considered weaving, were sculptures that could be rolled up — and then they would be gone.

My three-dimensional woven forms are a protest against the systematisation of life and art. They grow in a slow rhythm, like creations of nature . . . Like creations of nature, they are organic. Like other creations of nature, they are objects for contemplation.

Magdalena Abakanowicz, *Rzeźba Polska*, 1987, Centrum Rzeźby Polskiej w Orońsku

Robert Kuśmirowski, *Monolith*, 2020, own technique



photo: Monika Stolarska/Zachęta archive, CC BY-SA

Most of my work is not based on the production of classical sculpture. I am interested in its affinities. I construct objects, whole spaces, small architectural forms, ordinary situations, photographs, or rather creating their deceptively similar representations, which in reality never existed and probably never happened. Can they be called sculptures if they go beyond the definition and have no specific prototype, but only evoke the material culture of a certain era? However, they always have a certain resemblance to objects we know and recognise in their message, so that the message sent to the viewer is monumental and therefore more credible. . . . That is why, in the interior of the Narutowicz Room in Zachęta, I leave a six-metre monolith, a boulder, something like a natural body or a free-standing metamorphic rock, excavated and set in an abnormal environment. However, for the world of sculpture, it will be a primal, proper, initial material.

Robert Kuśmirowski, 14 July 2020

Oskar Dawicki, *Playing with Granat*, 2020, film, object; music: Fryderyk Chopin, performed by: Paweł Mykietyń, cinematography: Mikołaj Łebkowski



photo: Grzegorz Press/Zachęta archive, CC BY-SA

For me, one of the more interesting themes in this work was the potential of the symbolic manipulation — or even symbolic violence — which I committed painlessly, against a completely unaware, and therefore completely innocent, being. I was also drawn to the possibilities for interpretation or extrapolation of this symbolic figure in interpersonal, cultural or social relations, etc. Moreover, I believed in the power of the metaphor — a black-and-white dog chasing its own genitalia in the empty Matejko Room . . .

Oskar Dawicki, 2020

Ludwika Ogorzelec, *Aggression*, from the series *Space Crystallisation*, 2020, installation



photo: Monika Stolarska/Zachęta archive, CC BY-SA

Space Crystallisation is a modification of a physically and semantically determined space through a line that intersects itself in appropriate orders. In other words, it is the breaking up/division of a space into blocks/crystals to obtain new aesthetic-mental qualities that activate the consciousness and subconsciousness of the human/spectator introduced into this 'active' space. I invite the human into my sculpture where they stop being only a spectator. Following the changing image of the drawing of a line in space, they are forced to adapt their body to the spatial situation. Thus, their emotions of aesthetic nature are expanded with the emotions resulting from an unusual spatial situation, shattering the stereotypes of their behaviours.

Ludwika Ogorzelec, cited after: *Ludwika Ogorzelec. Krystalizacja przestrzeni. Akcja twórcza od 1981 roku. Rzeźba*, exh. cat., Wrocław: Muzeum Architektury we Wrocławiu, 2019

Edward Ihnatowicz, *Senster*, 1968–1970 [reconstruction 2017], kinetic sculpture, AGH University of Science and Technology in Kraków



photo: Monika Stolarska/Zachęta archive, CC BY-SA

Edward Ihnatowicz [1926–1988] was a sculptor of Polish origin living in London. He signed the contract for the production of *Senster* in April 1968, commissioned by James Gardner, a representative of the Philips corporation entering the digital technology market. After two years, the sculpture was sent to the Netherlands. It was installed at Evluon, the newly opened Philips exhibition pavilion. The exhibition in Eindhoven ran for four years, after which *Senster* was formally removed from the pavilion's inventory. Over time, the work was considered lost.

Re: Senster is an undertaking to reactivate the original work. In April 2017, the AGH University of Science and Technology in Kraków purchased the installation from its owners at the time, the company Delmeco, operating in the Netherlands. After being transported to Kraków, the skeleton was deposited in the Faculty of Humanities, where conservation work began. The reconstruction was completed thanks to the academic community of AGH: representatives of the humanities, engineers, as well as craftsmen's workshops operating on the local service market and artists associated with the Faculty of Intermedia of the Academy of Fine Arts in Kraków.

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