

# WOUND/RANA

## MARTA ZIÓŁEK

1.

### I ENTER. BODY-EYE

To come into the wound, to enter, to develop inside it like an inflammation, to penetrate.

I think, the eye of the viewer is something that penetrates the work of art; to strike a blow at the work (the artist reveals her breast)...

Pinińska-Bereś, *De(con)struction of the Leaning Tower II*, 1995

How did I end up here? Pink tower/ wound-vagina –

- rolling and unrolling
- fall (vertical – horizontal)
- soft – hard
- stairs to the wound

Whisper: wound (from the Old English wundian) – a breach in the physical body or psychic tissue. The Greek word “wound” refers to the word “trauma”, which means a wound or a process of wounding and is associated with a physical act of damage, violation. The Latin vulnus means a cut, a hole, visible and invisible, reveals and exposes fragility, vulnerability.

**BODY-WOUND:** November 2003, the work of Piotr Wyrzykowski, who took part in the Spojrzenia competition of the Deutsche Bank Poland S.A Culture Foundation and Zachęta – National Gallery of Art, *Wideopamiętnik Widżeja*, was not presented at the Zachęta – National Gallery of Art.

Wyrzykowski: *For me, it was the closing of the possibility of showing my project, an amputation of the body of my art carried out by the hands of a state institution to secure cooperation with a private sponsor shaping his image as a benefactor.*

I move on. Self-defense.

Piotrowska, *Untitled (Self-defense)*, 2014

### Word-image: EMOTIONAL DEPENDENCY

I notice: a pink curtain – the lips of a wound. In mythology, wound is an opening, a gateway, a window onto a hidden history. The body evokes memory as means of illumination, mourning, conscious reflection.

I notice: hair. A fragment of an artwork which is not here. A table with skeleton legs. A deer standing next to it. One of the wounded woman's hands is under the tabletop. The other hand connects with the Nayarit figurine. A small brown body, a trace of a root. The figurine is



Marta Ziółek, *Rana/Wound*, fot. Daria Irena Górniewska



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## **BODY-WOUND:** Kahlo, Wounded Table, 1940

Whisper: It is 1955. She died a year earlier, and earlier she had given this painting to the Soviet Union. It is not known why this particular one, since it is “un-political.” So, it is shown in 1955 at the exhibition of Mexican Art at the Zachęta, I wanted to know why this particular one, but there is no available documentation from this exhibition. In any case, the institution accepted it, but the institution in the form of art criticism did not. The fact that this painting disappeared ceases to be so shocking when you see it as it was seen then. Today we perceive it as a painting by one of the most important artists of Mexican visual art. At that time, in 1955, who was she considered to be? Of the numerous press clippings documented in the Zachęta archive, only four contain a mention of Kahlo.

Two include her among the representatives of surrealism, negatively assessed by the communist consensus of art criticism:

1. *The surrealist compositions – like F. Kahlo’s The Wounded Table and several semi-surrealistic and symbolic works – do not spoil the impression of the whole exhibition.*
2. *Maybe only Frida Kahlo, whose father came from Germany, presents art related to the fashionable trends in Western Europe in her paintings.*

The other two reduce her work to particularism:

1. *The Wounded Table by Frida Kahlo – the work of a paralyzed artist, drastically presenting her own tragedy...*
2. *Moreover, several works show that even in Mexico some artists sometimes approach their work too subjectively, not caring whether their own concepts are understandable to society. An example here is The Wounded Table by Frida Kahlo...*

My thoughts are interrupted by the sounds of a lesbian manifesto...

*We are the apocalypse  
We will be your dream and their nightmare  
Loud, bold, sexy, silly, fierce, tasty. And dramatic*

Zeic, *Strong Sisters Told Their Brothers*, 2019

## 2.

I think the thought that comes to mind: maybe Kahlo’s body was violated by heteropatriarchy? What does that mean?

I move on. A belly appears, bellies, they are always in plural.

Janin, *Untitled (Belly), from the Follow Me. Change Me. It’s Time series*, 1995

The superpresence of a fragment, the body manifests itself in its own fragment. I lie down, I am lying here now, how long can I lie here now? I think, why is my body here? What is my body here? It deals a blow to the artwork. I get up, slowly losing strength and patience. Works exhibited earlier in the exhibition have an advantage over works exhibited further. The exhaustion of the body. I shorten the attention given, but I do move on.

**BODY-EYE:** Smoczyński, *The Secret Performance*, 1985

Word-image: **DARK AND SURREAL**

Word-image: **FICTIONAL SPACES**

A hand (gesture). I think of bone for the first time.

**BODY-WOUND:** Brzeski, *Untitled, from the Art Is Violence series*, 2006–2007

Splinters, wood, wooden wound, to fall apart...

**BODY-WOUND:** Szapocznikow, *Headless Torso*, 1968

Word-image: **EROGENOUS SYNTHETICS**

Word-image: **FLEETING SENSATIONS**

...to kiss, lick, suck, nibble, bite, scratch, stroke, smooth, caress, rub, touch with fingertips, stroke (with lips), squeeze, press, knead, tug, massage, tease, rub, nibble, pinch, pat, pull, grab, hold, blow on, tickle...

Fragment, again, female body as fragment, part, object, hair, forehead, temples, eyebrow line, eyelids, ears, nose, cheeks, lips, inside of mouth, tongue, teeth, jaw line, chin, neck, nape, shoulders, arms, elbow bends, forearms, wrists, hands, inside of palms, fingers, armpits, collarbone line, chest, breasts, nipples, belly, navel, sides of torso, lower abdomen, back, buttocks...

The silent artwork asks me a question – and what do I say to it??

**BODY-EYE:** Stern, *Composition of Killed Forms*, 1975

Bones – feet – hands. Fingers, toes (counting bones as work with mourning). I am reminded of the ritual of washing the bones, I think, lament, doing as lamenting.

**BODY-WOUND**, whisper: Mexican tradition of cleaning bones. After a loved one dies, their body is buried in a cemetery. Three years later, the family digs up the bones, cleans them with a brush and places them on a clean embroidered sheet in a wooden box in the family crypt. The bones remain there for a whole year so that the family or anyone walking through the cemetery can see them, and visit them. Every year between October 25th and November 2nd the villagers go to the tombs, clean the bones, and decorate the graves with flowers and candles in anticipation of the arrival of the souls.

I see a forest – voice / throat – regret / voice – open wide

Ukłański, *Untitled (Open Wide)*, 2012

...abjecting, breathing, talking senseless, crying, gasping, groaning, hissing, humming, murmuring, mumbling, opening, pouting, respiring, rasping, screaming, shouting, sighing, singing, sloshing, sobbing, spitting, spluttering, stuttering, sucking, swearing, tasting, whispering, whistling, yawning...

**HEADLESS TORSO/  
POPIERSIE BEZ  
GŁOWY**

**THE SECRET  
PERFORMANCE**

**SZAPOCZNIKOW, 1968**

**SMOCZYNSKI, 1985**

3.

I move on.

Macuga, *Untitled*, 2011

Word-image: **NASI OR NAZI**

Word-image: **BAD BLOOD**

Word-image: **CHUJART**

Whisper: There are tons of papers there which are kept in these metal cabinets, a bit like in a columbarium. When one opens these bulging binders, everything kept in foil, sort of cut out of the rest of reality, it is like opening a festering wound.

I am sitting in the archive on the fourth floor of this marble temple of art, sort of behind the scenes, just like – that is how I imagine it – Macuga in 2011, when she had the exhibition on censorship.

This is a silent scream because the opening of this wound is taking place in silence, no one is listening.

I think of a horse from Kozyra's *Pyramid of Animals*, with which it all supposedly started and

I think this art is like a dressage mare, something to make political and other careers on.

April 11, 1990, Act on the Liquidation of State Censorship. New censorship practices are emerging:

1. as the defender of moral truths, also called constitutional rights  
(see: art. 196 of the Penal Code on “offending religious feelings”),

2. as a defender of higher interests, also  
called economic or corporate.

In Zaremba's *Images Come Out to the Streets* there is this nice sentence: *In the face of Polish gallery “scandals,” we still mostly occupy a position just above the abyss – the abyss of complete naivety or the abyss of complete cynicism. It is worth moving between them, as far from the edge as possible.*

When it comes to me, these images, clippings, scraps knock me off my feet somewhere around the edge. I don't even know what naivety and cynicism would mean here. “Every statement is subject to a series of conditions and violence inscribed in society; censorship is the responsibility of “dispersed actors”; media and art market are structured on inequalities. The default state of freedom of speech is what the state of nature is for Rousseau: a utopian simplification, serving the liberal status quo. As Żmijewski put it, *we may assume that Daniel Olbrychski in his legendary speech at Zachęta was not an idiot, but a knight of truth.*

Jagielski's text *Kmicic's Cut: cut always indicates what is hidden... censorship cut allows to remove (i.e. hide) uncensored, obscene images.*

Zaremba cites three basic iconoclastic strategies of Mitchell's topology: *destruction, disfigurement, concealment.*

During my archival visits, I create a post-1989 censorship toolbox:

- to cut, to tear, to violate
- to hide, to abandon, to defile
- to attack, to spit on, to slash...

Supposedly, artworks cannot be touched, but in reality, they can be... McKim-Smith writes *that censorship practices reach for the “rhetoric of rape:” ... just as assaults on women are prohibited in theory but accepted in practice, attacks on paintings are deplored in law but tolerated in reality.*

**BAD BLOOD/  
ZŁA KREW**

**NASI OR NAZI/  
NASI CZY NAZI**

**CHUJART**

Does the body of the image, like the female body, expose itself to attack simply because it exists? Is looking at a painting already violent? Who am I in relation to you, artwork? My body-eye is something that penetrates your body. To strike a blow at the artwork.

Kulik: *...it seems to me that I am constantly grappling with some invisible blade that I am trying hard to turn away from myself and point outwards – at others? It is not gentleness that fills me, but a suppressed desire to attack.*

And there is only the problem of direction:

towards myself or away from myself?... Accepting subordination as my problem and my subject, full of fear and at the same time full of hatred towards the situation in which there is a compulsion to subordinate, I take artistic revenge, seizing every weapon (symbolic and formal) used against me...

Kulik is not a coincidence.

Kulik, *Archive of Gestures*, 1987

Word-image: **POINTING**

Word-image: **APPEARED TO BE DEAD**

I move on. Kozyra again, but now as a puppet, she's not even there

Kozyra, *Here I Am*, 2024

I am here now as well.

Kahlo began to be recognized 30 years after her death, in the 1980s. *The Wounded Table* was never found. So, it disappeared when it was basically considered an aberration in the context of Mexican art. So, we have an underappreciated painting that disappears and then we look for it, because in the meantime the reception of art has changed so much that we have recognized her. But the painting has not been found. Where is it? Maybe it is suspended in a time of history in which her art was not appreciated? Even if we cannot recover the material body of the painting, can we somehow recover it in this history? And is mediation a way? "Concepts incomprehensible to society", "the work of a paralyzed artist." When you look at this table – which is her embodiment – this skin torn from the legs, the wood that bleeds... this is the history of the canvas that bleeds. No one defended her. Mourning has not been done. If something is underappreciated during life, then when and



Marta Ziółek "Rana/Wound", fot. Daria Irena Górniewska

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Fragment wypowiedzi Zofii Kulik wz. z wystawą *DARK DECO* organizowana przez  
Niezależne Stowarzyszenie Kuratorów w USA, Katalog „Obecność III” Poznań, maj 1992

This booklet was created during work on the Performance *WOUND* created within the exhibition *Tears of Joy*. I would like to thank Karolina Vyšata and Adrianna Artowicz from the documentation department of *Zachęta*, as well as the curatorial team, for supporting my research.

*Tears of Joy*, *Zachęta* – National Gallery of Art, 08.06 – 29.09.2024

Curatorial team: Maria Brewińska, Michał Jachuła, Katarzyna Kołodziej-Podsiadło, Joanna Kordjak; curatorial cooperation: Jess Łukawska

The *WOUND* arises from the affective relationship with *Zachęta*, its collection, archive, and exhibition *Tears of Joy*. *WOUND* concerns the mediation of artworks, the transmission of their material un/presence through the receptive performing body. By setting in motion the silent vibration of the selected works, *WOUND* enters into a dialogue with the traces of censorship, destruction, and rejection present in them, as well as their abject, triumphant corporeality.

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Dramaturgical Collaboration: Teresa Fazan

Text: Dramaturgical Collaboration: Teresa Fazan

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The fabric, inspired by the Rorschach inkblot test, was created in collaboration with Angelika Markul

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