

OP EN HEIM

**NO TIME TO GRIEVE
FOR ROSES WHEN
THE FORESTS
ARE BURNING**
Bogusz – Derda
– Kasperska
– Savashevich

Exhibition
summarizing
the OP_YOUNG
program

Artists:
Katarzyna Bogusz,
Marcin Derda,
Klaudia Kasperska,
Ala Savashevich

Curator:
Kama Wróbel

EXHIBITION GUIDE



**Duration
of the exhibition:**
9.03–28.04.2024

Organizer:
OP ENHEIM

Co-organizer:
VOP

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Project co-financed
with funding from
the Municipality
of Wrocław

As part of the OP_YOUNG mentorship programme, the OP ENHEIM space is once again bringing together young artists to reflect on difficult, but also highly topical issues. Using the language of art, they analyse themes that are important to them, sometimes intimately, at the same time raising them to a universal level. We are delighted to be once again able to actively follow and support this process, together with the Municipality of Wrocław and the programme's patron, the Berlin-based notary and law firm GENTZ.

The times in which we happen to live present us with many challenges. On the one hand, we are expected to continue to reckon with and analyse the past, but on the other hand, we are faced with an ever-accelerating, ever-changing everyday life in which futuristic and post-digital themes are increasingly present. No Time to Grieve for Roses When the Forests Are Burning is a story with multiple references to totalitarianisms and systemic oppression, human greed and the destructive power of the individual, also in the context of appropriation, expropriation and destruction.

Not so long ago, also in Poland, we experienced an oppressive system whose remnants have grown into our mentality, like a hard core. It has seeped unnoticed into our lives over the years and continues to echo in our daily routines, secretly sowing its seeds in successive generations. Ala Savashevich, an artist of Belarusian origin who has spent years working on the theme of collective memory and identity formation in societies with a history of authoritarianism and patriarchy, explores similar issues in her latest installation. On a formal level, the artist refers to the exhibition Arm and Protect, curated by Joanna Sokołowska, in which a prominent role was played by a chainmail. This time, the object is discreetly hidden among bundles of carefully combed raw linen, speaking to us from beneath the multiplied images of model students. It becomes a core, a backbone, shaped by the system over the years, which imperceptibly formats unsuspecting young minds by turning itself into an integral part of their mentality. Our mentality. We still remember the greyness of the communist and post-communist world, the solemn assemblies and parades, and the code of the model citizen who never crosses the line, being systematically trained, tamed and programmed to think correctly – Homo Sovieticus. The artist confronts us, the viewers, with her own experience and memory. She provokes us to ask ourselves questions such as, Where does the system end? Where do we begin? The moment of breaking through is the most difficult. "It is terrible to read and become aware of yourself and the system you grew up in," as Savashevich puts it.

Marcin Derda's reckoning with the past is equally intense. His work, titled A View of the Four Sides of the World although personal, evolves into a multi-layered narrative of universal significance. In his typically unembellished way, the young artist's exploration of memory and that which has been lost speaks not only of the system or the interests of the state, but also of the painful appropriation of identity and roots, nature and landscape. In his two-channel video installation, he symbolically traces back his family history in an attempt to find their place of residence in a village that no longer exists, from which they were evicted in the 1980s. The place he reaches bears no resemblance to the village from the memories and stories of the artist's grandparents and father, being a currently flooded post-mining area that nature is trying to reclaim. On 18 January 1982, by a decision of the Konin Lignite Mine authorities, the process of forced relocation of the inhabitants of the village of Komorowo began. This was not an isolated case – since the 1940s, a number of larger or smaller areas in the Konin region, including some populated ones, had been allocated to mining. Displacement, uprooting and the precedence of state and economic interests over the well-being of the individual are the main themes of Derda's story, which we can also analyse in the context of post-war resettlement actions. Interestingly, the artist seems unaffected by the subject he is portraying. Not for a moment does he reveal his opinion, or even hint at it through a telling frame that could lead us to the "right" interpretation. Instead, he leaves us alone with whatever feelings are aroused by the cold, devastated, yet at times endearingly beautiful landscape. It is as if he wanted to draw our attention to more important issues, such as the destruction of nature, the exploitation of resources or the obliteration of ecosystems.

This is undoubtedly a beautiful story of the disappearance and transformation of landscape, clearly visible to the human eye, but also seen through the prism of the cyclicity of nature, where our actions are inscribed in its unchanging rhythm.

Just as progress is. We are invited into a colourful world by Klaudia Kasperska, who uses her installation to play games with the viewer, in her own half-serious way. On the one hand, she shows us a spatial work in the spirit of the well-known Maria Jarema, and on the other, she introduces us to a fully digital, or rather post-digital, world. She asks the unsuspecting viewer about their immersion in the technologised reality and whether they are aware of it at all. This seemingly simple, experimental art hides many important questions about the identity of contemporary human, who is struggling with increasing digitisation while being so deeply immersed in it that it would be difficult to function normally without it. Let us bear in mind, however, that the term "post-digital" in Klaudia Kasperska's practice not only describes society's attitude towards digital technologies, but also illustrates a certain visual-perceptual relationship, i.e. how digital technologies have changed the way we feel and see over the past decades. It is precisely this change, now expressed through the featured object, that is the main motif of the Wrocław-based artist's art and research. The translation of Maria Jarema's painting into the language of a kinetic-light installation is an attempt to transform the flat, traditional medium into a spatial combination of the digital, the electronic and the multi-dimensional. Kasperska deprives one-dimensional forms of their flatness and materiality, but preserves the impression of their ephemerality and semi-materiality, just as ephemeral and semi-material creations of digital culture are.

So where are we headed? Katarzyna Bogusz, whose work provokes reflection on the fundamental truths of existence, encourages us to think about it. She uses the motif of the philosopher's stone, which here takes the form of a golden, multifaceted object derived from the well-known depiction in Dürer's *Melencolia I*, but deconstructed. Bogusz unfolds before us the solid matter of the stone, revealing that it is empty inside. She thus combines Western and Eastern thought, turning emptiness into the equivalent of perfection. According to the Buddhist tradition, the extinguishing of consciousness leads to a state of perfect emptiness of the mind, often associated with enlightenment. The process of understanding, which can be achieved through exploration and practice, shows that the essence, that ideal substance that has been sought for centuries, is precisely emptiness – always available and often underestimated, like the philosopher's stone according to Mircea Eliade. The candles * † in the room represent a symbolic transition. From this perspective, excess and lack, birth and death, represent the gate of time.

Four attitudes. Four voices and four contemporary problems. In their own way, all the featured works tell a story about time seen from different perspectives, while also serving as a starting point for an intergenerational conversation.

The exhibition summarises the fourth edition of the mentoring programme for young artists from Lower Silesia, which aims to support and activate the local art scene. The equal winners of last year's edition were Katarzyna Bogusz and Klaudia Kasperska, while honourable mentions went to Marcin Derda and Ala Savashevich.

Kama Wróbel

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* *Lilla Weneda* is an 1839 drama by Juliusz Słowacki. It tells the story of the feuding families of Weneda and Lechita and their struggle for land and power. Read as an allegory of Poland's fate during the period of the November Uprising and stylised as a myth, its structure is inspired by Celtic, Slavic and Norse mythology.