

### **Action Lublin! Chapter 3. Operations on Places**

Streets of the Old Town that remember the times of the Union of Lublin, a bus station full of emigrants, busy squares, places of remembrance about the Holocaust, or modernist housing estates that nowadays are vivid images of the effects of transformation. These places, their context, history, and discourses, that are constantly being built around them, become material for artists invited to Lublin. The city is a palimpsest – here, some narratives are wiped off by the other, subsequent generations add their stories reinterpreting the past. At the exhibition in Galeria Labirynt, Lublin becomes a peculiar 'case-study' of the city understood in a broad sense where one can observe clashing of great ideologies, religions, economic, class and national themes, as well as small private stories.

Action Lublin! Chapter 3. Operations on Places is another edition of exhibition and a performative program dedicated to the art of performance in Galeria Labirynt. Each year, young artists confront with the heritage of performance art in Lublin. In this undisputed cradle of performance, first festivals of this art took place, the 'classicists' were coming here, *Ośrodek Sztuki Performance* (Performance Art Centre) was operating in Lublin, and till now international festivals of the art of action and activities in public space are organised in the city. The latest history of site-specific art in Lublin is the core of this year's exhibition as well as Operations on Places exhibition that was firstly presented at the Petach Tikva Museum of Art in Israel in November 2018.

The starting point for the works is 'MapL' video by Mirosław Bałka recorded at the museum of Majdanek concentration camp. From a short distance and in a rather chaotic way, the artist filmed the map of Lublin with black lines marking streets, and red rectangles – places of extermination of Jews during the war. This work was well correlated with photos taken by Israeli performer Adina Bar-On, who performed 'Disposition' in the Old Town. The artist, dressed in a red dress and shawl, led the audience to less official places – old backyards, rubbish bins, forgotten streets. Performing a series of gestures, she created suggestive and ambiguous images referring to media coverage of wars. Such a serious overtone had also the action of Arutiun Sargsyan at Plac Teatralny where the artist sat on a chair dressed in a suit with bare feet and eyes tied with a black band. His presence and rushing passers-by were supposed to be associated with helplessness and weakness in the face of system violence and contemporary problems such as terrorism or mass migration.

In 2009, Robert Kuśmirowski undertook the preparation of 'terrain sculpture' on the square at Żwirki i Wigury Street. The artist excavated a spiral down in the ground, creating a spiral shaped mound next to it. During the action, he lived in the old barracks, was dressed in workers' clothes, drank vodka with passers-by and talked about his work, creating new urban legends. Kuśmirowski's '+/-' action and the way of presenting it at the exhibition with the use of old leather bread bins and briefcases, old photographs and crafted documents

fits well with the aesthetics typical of this 'counterfeiter and manipulator of reality'. His work evokes nostalgia for socialist times in Poland, and also tells the story about dummy city and ease of rewriting the history.

Cezary Bodzianowski performed his 'Liberation' work in Śródmieście district, where he was collecting advertising leaflets. This funny and simple 'mission' ended with the gesture of throwing leaflets into the garbage bin and a short 'liberation' present also in the title of the work. The video from this action shows the city noise, traffic, excess of information, advertisements in the common domestic aesthetics, the artist himself, slightly distinguished from the crowd of grey passers-by by his appearance, flows with the city beat. Similar humour and lightness can be found in the works of Nice Words (Barbara Gryka and Agata Rucińska duo), who performed their actions twice – in Lublin at the station and at the marketplace in Petach Tikva in Israel. The artists asked passers-by to write nice words about the city on kitschy tourist postcards. This very simple gesture without irony, ambiguity, or finally artistic pompousness, distinguishes them from number of activities seemingly involved in the urban space.

The exhibition also includes the 'Lublin Beach' work by the Turkish-German duo, Nezaket Ekici & Shahar Markus, created for their 'Artificial Islands' exhibition in 2016. Artists seem to misunderstand the space around them. Błonia near the Castle (grassy outside plaza) covered with snow are treated by the artists like a beach. They behave as if typical tourists – they put some cream on, have a grill, play badminton, and sunbathe. In the performance, artists from different cultural contexts pay attention to the differences, misinterpretations, and a sense of foreignness as well as bizarreness that often accompany travelling.

'Good Advice' by Cezary Klimaszewski shows how the urban tissue is transformed by ideologies, local politics, and social disputes. The artist films the process of destroying the last part of the Community Centre on the Juliusz Słowacki Housing Estate (Osiedle Juliusza Słowackiego) designed by Hansen. A large pseudo-Gothic church was created in the very place. This example of patriarchal architecture disturbed the Open Form Theory concept and the entire urban layout of the housing estate. The film made without any commentary, draws attention to pathologies, corruption, and the new growing strength of the church during the political transformation. Opposite, a film by Pawilon Stabilnej Formy Group (the Pavilion of Stable Form) is displayed. The group members are Tomasz Kozak, Cezary Klimaszewski, and Tomasz Malec. The video depicts Juliusz Słowacki Housing Estate from the sky, registering 'the theatre of everyday life' from the windows of the car. The artists look critically at the modernist achievements and in a perverse way show how Open Form Theory has been integrated with the Closed Form through the construction of the church.

This year, special guests of Action Lublin! were the students from Professor Janusz Bałdyga Performance Art Studio at the University of the Arts Poznań – Olena Siyatovskaya, Joanna

Pietrowicz, Olga Skliarska, and Berenika Pyza. Their actions were taken immediately before the opening of the exhibition. 'My room is nowhere' performance of Olena Siyatovskaya took place at the bus station. The performer was spreading a plan (1:1 size) of her non-existent room, which she left in Kiev when she was going to Poland. Bringing to mind scenography from 'Dogville', a disturbing film of Lars von Tiera, the action was aimed at drawing attention to the situation of refugees and emigrants from Ukraine. Olga Skliarska performed her action at Grodzka Gate in Lublin, where she was recording the legs of passers-by and writing on her body fragments of sentences she heard from them. The action was repeated at the opening of the exhibition. Joanna Pietrowicz, on the other hand, performed 'First Fall' in front of the Dominican church in the Old Town, whereas Berenika Pyza, referring to her childhood memories and the context of her own family history, for a few days was performing 'Local Excavation', during which she buried unneeded items found in her grandparents' house in Lublin. The exhibition included raw cut film documentation of the activities of young artists as well as objects used during their actions.

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