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The display of a museum's collections can only ever be a story about the development of art as well as the institution itself—its identity, ethos, and how both are constructed and interact. At the Muzeum Sztuki in Łódź, this narrative must also take into account the role of art as a tool of emancipation. Developing an exhibition that highlights all these areas is a daunting challenge; and even more so when we seek to avoid the pitfall of reducing works of art to mere illustrations of ideas and problems from other spheres.

The exhibition *Ways of Seeing* endeavors to respond to these challenges. Organized into thematic chapters, the works on display examine 'seeing' not only as a biological function and a question of perception, but as a socio-political construct that shapes our experience of reality. The title of the exhibition refers to a television series by John Berger in which the art historian demonstrated how social contexts shape the perception of a work of art. A similar view was expressed by Władysław Strzemiński in his *Theory of Seeing*. Our presentation, however, is not limited to encapsulating their arguments; or rather, 'ways of seeing'. Indeed, more so, we have sought to demonstrate the rich variety of ways in which art allows us to experience, interpret, and represent reality.

The titles of the exhibition's subsequent chapters derive from the works in the collection. Each focusing on a different theme, they take art as the starting point for a reflection on perception, on how we experience the world and structure our experiences. They touch upon the relationship between seeing and cognitive processes—memory, space, knowledge—as well as the social aspects of looking, which are dependent on culture, tradition and economics. Through art, the exhibition poses the questions: what does it mean to be seen, and what does it mean to remain invisible?

This publication mirrors the structure of the exhibition, referencing key works in each of its chapters. It is complemented by three essays. The first offers an insight into the exhibition-making process from the perspective of the curatorial team; retracing discussions and methods that accompanied its development and setting them against the backdrop of the museum's history and artistic program. The essays by Mieke Bal and Łukasz Zaremba suggest alternative readings of the exhibition, providing additional context related to both the institution's collection as well as a broader understanding of visual culture. The second volume accompanying the exhibition—an anthology of texts by artists featured in the collection—is a reminder that works are not only objects but also materialized concepts brought into being by individual artistic methodologies. Both publications are intended to make the experience of visiting the Muzeum Sztuki a point of departure for new discoveries made outside its walls; as well as for future returns and re-readings.

I would like to thank the entire team involved in the realization of this monumental project. Since this is also an exhibition about the Muzeum Sztuki as a whole, my gratitude extends not only to all those responsible for the exhibition and the accompanying publications: the technical team, the conservation, education, communication, accounting and administration departments, and the curatorial team, but also to all the wonderful employees of this institution, both present and past. After all, the collection in its present form is the result of the work of generations of museum professionals.

Finally it remains for me to state that the exhibition *Ways of Seeing* represents not only a journey through art history but the very history of this museum: an institution founded by artists, which, since the 1930s, has been a center of the European avant-garde, a hub of global exchange, and a crucible of artistic experiment. Today, we are retracing its artistic lineage and heritage in order to offer the public a new way of seeing and appreciating this unique resource.

Daniel Muzyczuk

What we see and how we see depends not only on our point of observation, but also on the capability of our bodies, the technologies we use, as well as the assumptions, knowledge and beliefs we hold. The art of the 20th and 21st centuries can be said to have examined the limits of perception as well as expanding them, allowing us to perceive that which would likely escape our attention. The collections of the Muzeum Sztuki in Łódź are a testament to how artists have addressed the subject of seeing and its implications.

No single way of seeing is neutral. Technological development has given us insight into things invisible to the naked eye, and allowed us to apply the human scale to the level of the microscopic and the planetary. The era of digital media and the image overload have not only yielded new tools but also compelled us to find new ways of reading reality. At times, geometric diagrams or visual representations of data reflect the complexities of contemporary relationships better than photography or realistic paintings. This exhibition is an invitation to appreciate the diverse ways of seeing and to understand their complexities and correlations: from intimate glances to images from CCTV cameras, from realism to abstraction.

Using either analytical or intuitive language, artists offer their point of view and help us discern other perspectives. They highlight the relational nature of the gaze as well as the power that comes with it—who is looking at whom, and from what position. Art often requires active participation: searching for new ways of seeing and transgressing established formulas. In this way, art can trigger a change of stance—from passive observation to critical engagement, within the museum walls and beyond.

IT
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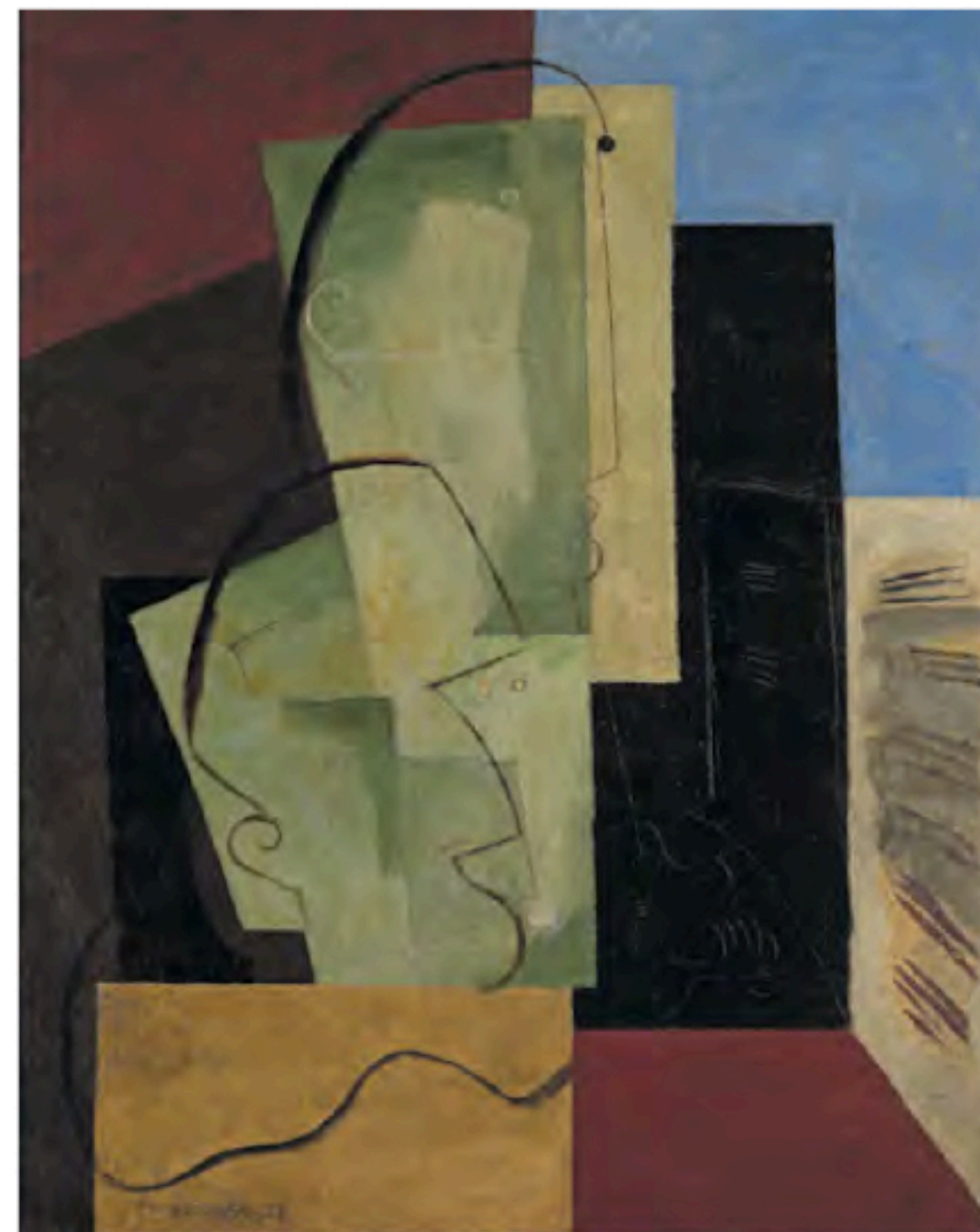
Marian Bogusz
1920, Pleszew–1980, Warsaw



Fugue for Sheet Metal and Wood / Fuga na blachę i drzewo, 1966
wood, oilcloth, copper sheet, metal, 90.5 × 104 × 14 cm
donated by Bolesław Szymański, 1991

The composition comprises a balanced arrangement of vertical and horizontal elements constructed according to the musical principle of counterpoint. It couples the varying colors and textures of the copper sheet and oilcloth by means of a wooden "connector." The work belongs to a series of Bogusz's "fugues" created in the mid-1960s, assembled from metal and plastic. Musical inspirations in his oeuvre, highlighted by the titles of the works, date back to the mid-1950s. The concrete nature of the materials used in this assemblage stems from his experience with matter painting and heralds a period characterized by greater discipline in form.

Louis Marcoussis (Ludwik Markus)
1878, Łódź–1941, Cusset



Concert / Koncert, 1928
oil, canvas, 98 × 79 cm
donated by "a.r." group, 1931

Two people—two musicians—participate in the *Concerto*. The one above is said to bear a resemblance to the poet Guillaume Apollinaire, to whom, incidentally, Marcoussis owed his new French-sounding surname. The musician below is absorbed reading a strange score, rendered with a few brushstrokes, in gray blotches. There is not a single note on the staves, nor are there clefs, flats, or sharps to be seen. At the bottom, a broken string flows through an ochre rectangle. The painting presents two additional facets: a Cubist one, in which the artist divides and reassembles space from a series of flat geometric shapes (most clearly visible in the depiction of the heads), and a literary one, closest to poetry, but of a very precise kind, in which two words suffice for ten.

Bogusław Schaeffer
1929, Lviv–2019, Salzburg



Score PR – I^a / Partytura PR – I^a, n.d.
ink, paper, 42 × 60 cm
purchased in 1976

Score PR – I^a follows Schaeffer's concept of polyversional music. It is the notation of a composer's intentions that allows for a wide variety of interpretations. By performing the *Score*, the performer becomes an equal co-author of the work, whose components—pitch, rhythm, dynamics, timbre, etc.—are interchangeable, and the performance time is expected to be between 5 and 15 minutes. The work's imprecise interpretation parameters are combined with its visually sophisticated form. Individual performance phases are represented by intervals filled with graphic elements defining the directions in which the sound sequences are generated.

Milan Grygar
★1926, Zvolen



Finger Score / Prstova partitura, 1982
black and white film with sound, 16mm film, 4'38"
donated by the artist, 1983

This film is a recording of the performance of an audio piece based on Grygar's *Finger Score*. Using his fingers dipped in paint, the artist created scores for any instrument, provided that the performers replicated his hand movements. To create the *Finger Score*, the artist impressed his fingermarks on twenty-six sheets of music paper. A guest percussionist freely interpreted the ink marks by playing on a set of cymbals. In the late 1960s, Grygar became interested in chance procedures and began creating drawn scores of sound pieces. In these scores, he loosely suggested the music to be performed, without, however, aiming to define it.



A Picnic at Sunset/ Piknik o zachodzie słońca, 2019
carbonised sugar, jesmonite, mushroom fabric, broken solar panels, cables, painted steel, metal drills, clamps, bolts, screws, 500 × 200 × 300 cm
purchased in 2025
funded by the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage from the Cultural Promotion Fund under the "National Collections of Contemporary Art" program

A Picnic at Sunset is a processual installation in which burnt sugar acts as a time-measuring clock. The passage of time is not constant; its rhythm depends on the conditions prevailing in the exhibition space, such as humidity and temperature. Ingarden creates a work that straddles the boundaries of sculpture and process, drawing attention to the mutability and impermanence of matter, as well as the organic relationship between art and its surroundings. Suspended above the solar panels, the mechanical arms are equipped with "inflorescences" from which a black ooze slowly drips. The sculpture integrates natural and processed components (metal, charred sugar, mushroom fabric, solar panels), creating a self-sustaining ecosystem.



Arton I, 1961
polystyrene, 21 cm
purchased in 1971

Artions are objects created from industrial, often ready-made components of everyday objects. Designed as autonomous entities, sometimes moving and emitting light, they function like living organisms, although they do not belong to the natural world. Borowski referred to them as "nightmarish organisms" created from leftovers, sitting "in a garbage dump." Constructed from impermanent synthetic materials, *Artions* consciously take on a "makeshift" quality, ironically commenting on mass industrial production and the social aspects of consumption. Their form, reminiscent of fanciful sea anemones or dried fragments of coral reef, highlights the relationships between individual elements, while their ephemeral and processual nature suggests the constant industrial cycle of the creation and decay of matter. *Artions* do not aspire to be permanent works of art, but rather record transformation and transience, thus challenging traditional understandings of the materiality and stability of a work of art.

Stephen Kaltenbach
★1940, Battle Creek



Blood – Flesh, from the series: *Time Capsules*, since 1970
steel, 10 × 31 cm
purchased in 2016
funded by the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage under the “Collections” program, priority: “National Collections of Contemporary Art”

The inscription on the surface of the metal cylinder suggests its body-related contents. A gentle bell ringing can be heard when the object is manipulated. The work is part of the *Time Capsules* series, developed since 1967, which is governed by the principle of withholding information. It consists of closed metal containers engraved with information about their contents and/or instructions on when to open them. The possibility of opening the containers challenges the established notion of a work as a timeless object and casts doubt on the role attributed to art institutions in managing the time of a work's presentation and its message.

Guglielmo Achille Cavellini
1914, Brescia–1990, Brescia



Shirt, 1976
men's shirt (cotton, polyester), felt-tip pen, 74 × 60 cm
donated by the artist, 1976

The men's shirt was covered with text describing facts from the artist's biography. It corresponds to Cavellini's program of “autohistorization,” which involved noting the significance of his own work in the evolution of art. The artist used gallery walls, fabrics, clothing, and other objects as supports, imprinting his own history on them with a marker. He edited and issued publications showcasing his current achievements and describing his extensive contacts in the art world. His self-promotional tactics served to highlight the artistic infrastructure. The work was created for Cavellini's exhibition at the Pryzmat Gallery in Kraków (1976).

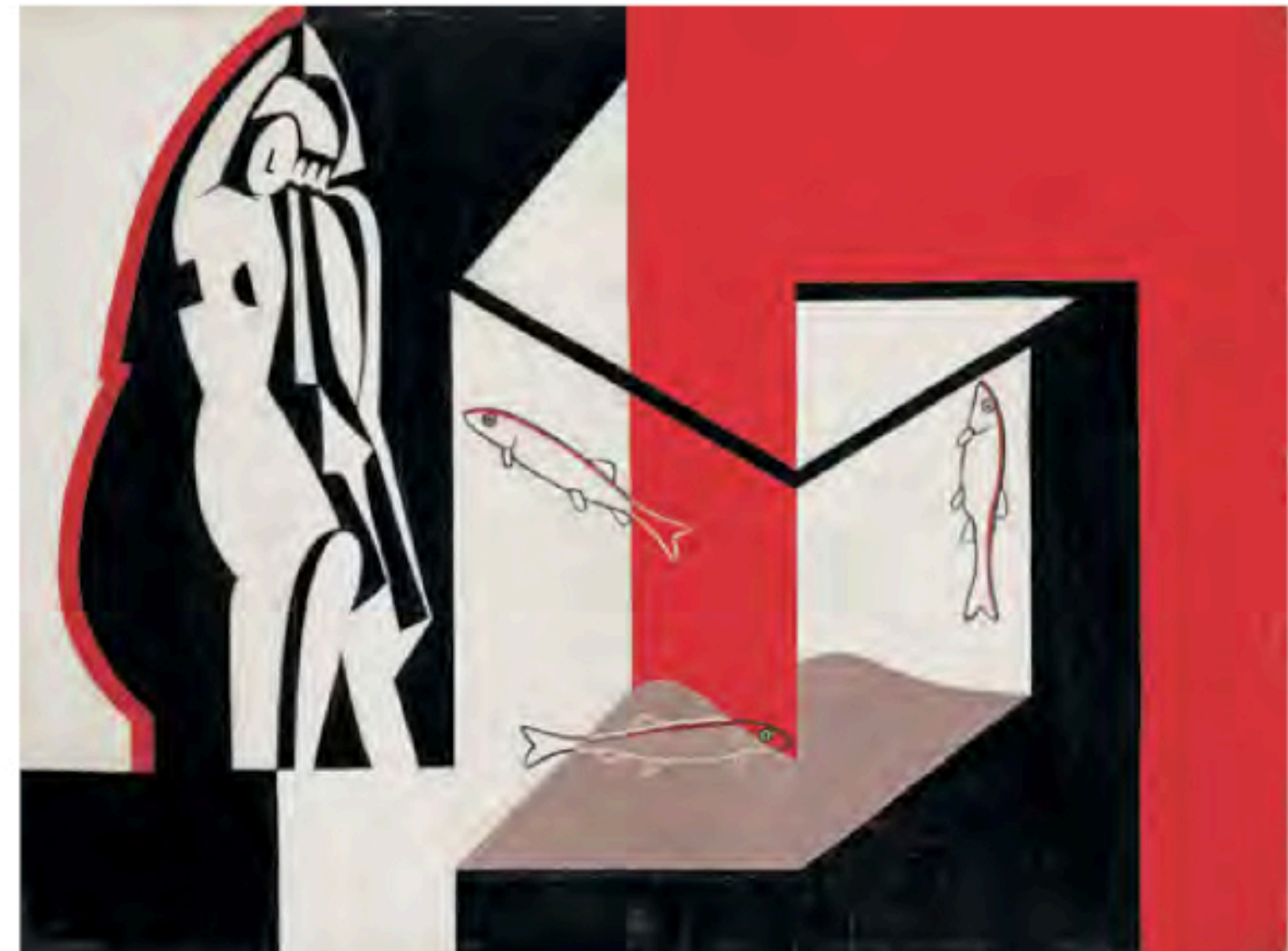
Katarzyna Kobro
1898, Moscow–1951, Łódź



Nude (2) / Akt (2), 1925–1927
plaster, 28 × 17 × 32 cm
donated by the artist, 1930

The sculpture depicts a figure with her face hidden in her knees. Katarzyna Kobro created female nudes, studying her own body or depicting loved ones. Due to their limited volumes and the gendered experience they encompass, these works go beyond the conceptual framework through which Kobro revolutionized the idea of sculpture. She herself called it “relaxation art.” In her theoretical work and her most famous *Spatial Compositions*, Kobro drew on universal ideas characteristic of modernism: infinite space and a modular, disembodied, and genderless figure.

Maria Nycz-Borowiak
1896, Warsaw–1944, Warsaw



Still Life / Martwa natura, 1928
oil, panel, 39 × 51 cm
donated by “a.r.” group, 1931

The painting’s clear divisions and flat color patches evoke Neoplasticism. Contrary to the principles of this movement, however, the artist introduced diagonal lines and arc-based forms, suggesting spatial depth. She added elements of figuration to the abstract composition; fish suspended in space and a female nude in the shape of a fish create a surrealist whole. Nycz-Borowiak was a leading protagonist of Polish Constructivism, a member of the collectives Blok (1924–1926) and Praesens (1926–1930), who in her works combined inspiration from various avant-garde art movements with motifs drawn from still lifes and everyday surroundings.

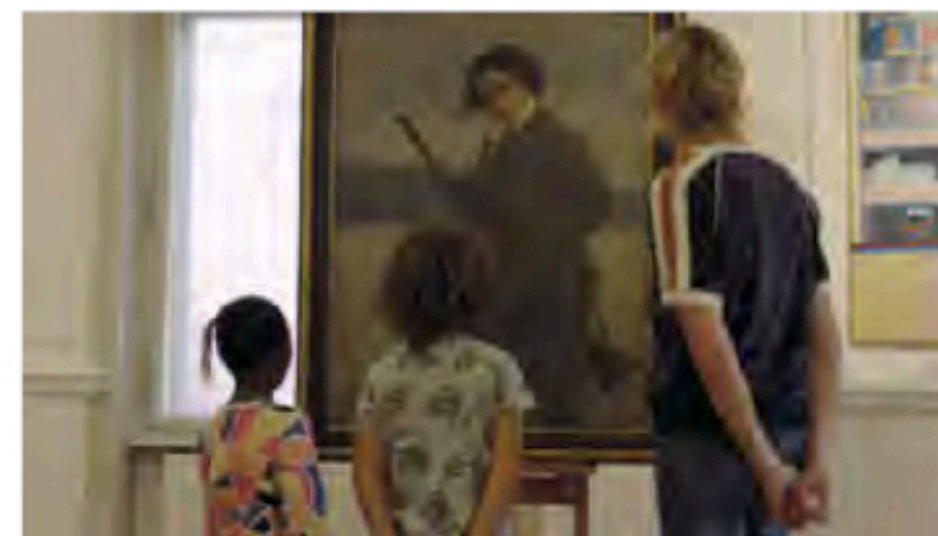
Käthe Kollwitz
1867, Königsberg–1945, Moritzburg



Self-portrait / Selbstbildnis, 1920
lithography, cardboard, 27 × 23.5 cm
purchased in 1977

Käthe Kollwitz worked at a time when opportunities for women as artists were very limited. She created over a hundred representations of herself, following the tradition of graphic self-portraits practiced by artists such as Albrecht Dürer and Rembrandt. She never embellished her own images. Seeking to appeal to the widest possible audience, she remained faithful to realistic figuration. Printmaking was her primary medium. Kollwitz believed in its intimacy, which facilitated a connection with the viewer. She also remained convinced of printmaking's relevance when it came to presenting social themes, and the egalitarian nature of its ability to create multiple prints.

Katarina Zdjelar
★1979, Belgrade



Gaze Is a Bridge / Pogled je most, 2023
film, digital recording, 22'28"
donated by the artist, 2024
photo courtesy of the artist

The film's main motif is *Self-Portrait with a Rifle* (1912) by the painter Nastia Rojc (1883–1964), co-founder of the Club of Women Artists (1927), which united Croatian and Yugoslav women artists; Rojc was also one of the first people in Zagreb to live openly in a same-sex relationship. Photographer Ana Opalić and her partner Martina Zvonić comment on its small reproduction. The women alternately express poetic associations with the image and exchange tender glances, revealing their emotional bond and the perspectives of their own biographies. In the second part of the film, set at the National Museum of Modern Art in Zagreb, the gazes of the protagonists and their families confront Rojc's original self-portrait. In Katarina Zdjelar's approach, the gaze becomes a tool for understanding and entering into a dialogue with the past.

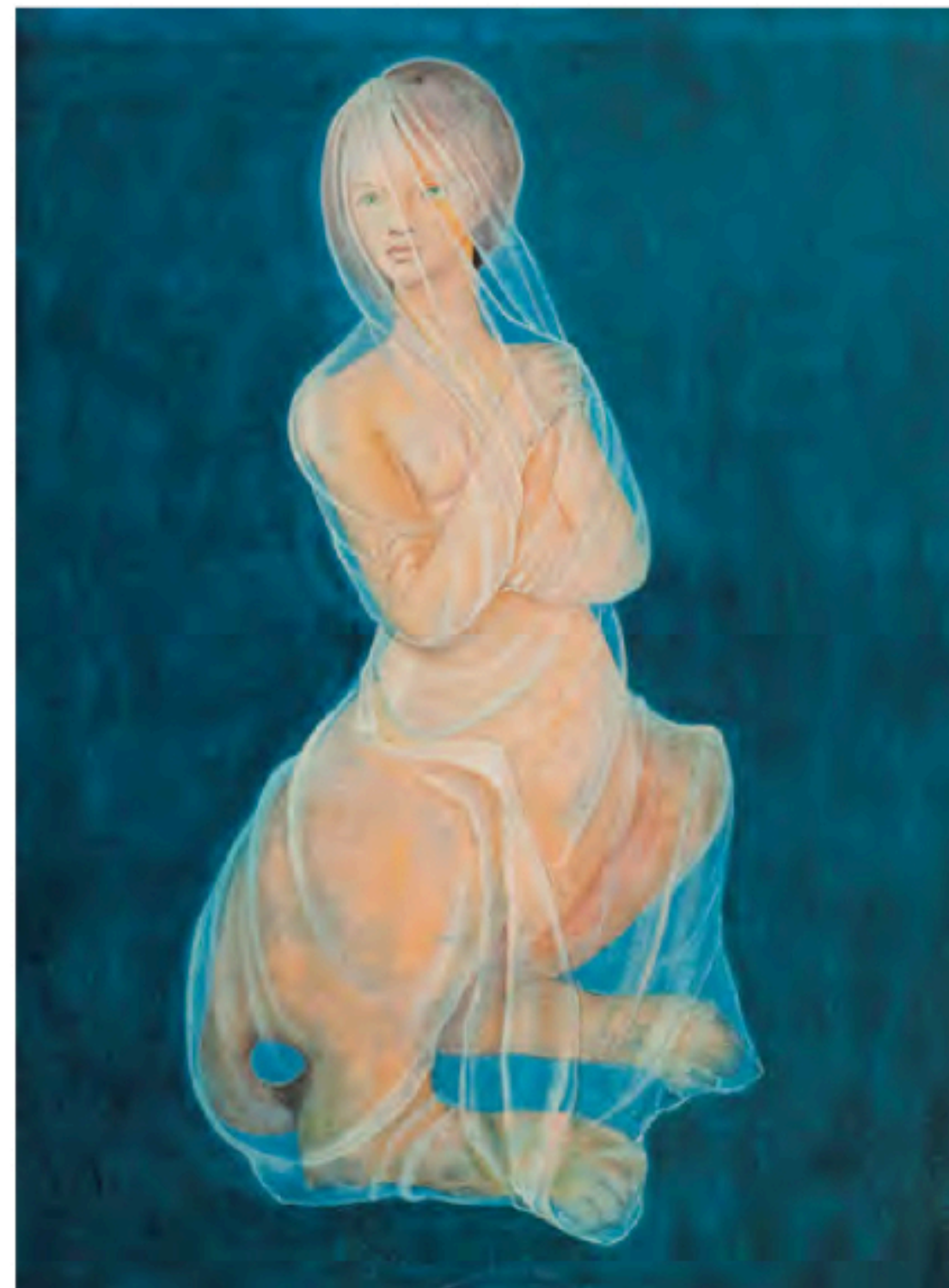
Sergei Eisenstein
1898, Riga–1948, Moscow



Untitled (Lucien), n.d.
crayon, paper, 20.8 × 15.9 cm
purchased in 2018
funded by the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage from the Cultural Promotion Fund under the "National Collections of Contemporary Art" program

The works reference the Greek myth of the abduction of the Trojan prince Ganymede by Zeus, who, enamored with the boy, took the form of an eagle and carried him off to Mount Olympus. Eisenstein's drawings reveal a lesser-known side of this avant-garde filmmaker. For him, they constituted a form of creative expression, affirming what is sensual, intuitive, and defies rational analysis. In this scene of bodily interaction, the artist is primarily interested in themes of transformation, evolution, and processuality, conveyed through fluid lines.

Leonor Fini
1907, Buenos Aires–1996, Paris



Veiled Sphinx / La Sphinx voilé, n.d.
lithography, paper, 69.5 × 52 cm
donated by the artist, 1979

A veiled hybrid figure reveals an eye gazing at the viewer. The Sphinx, which the artist identified with, featured in Leonor Fini's work from the 1940s as a figure of feminine power, mystery, instinct, and freedom. Connected by critics with the Surrealist movement, Fini disassociated herself from the group, considering it to be patriarchal. However, she was drawn to art that allowed for a connection to the subconscious, revealing that which cannot be seen, and reflecting inner transformations.

Vitaly Komar
★1943, Moscow



Alexander Melamid
★1945, Moscow

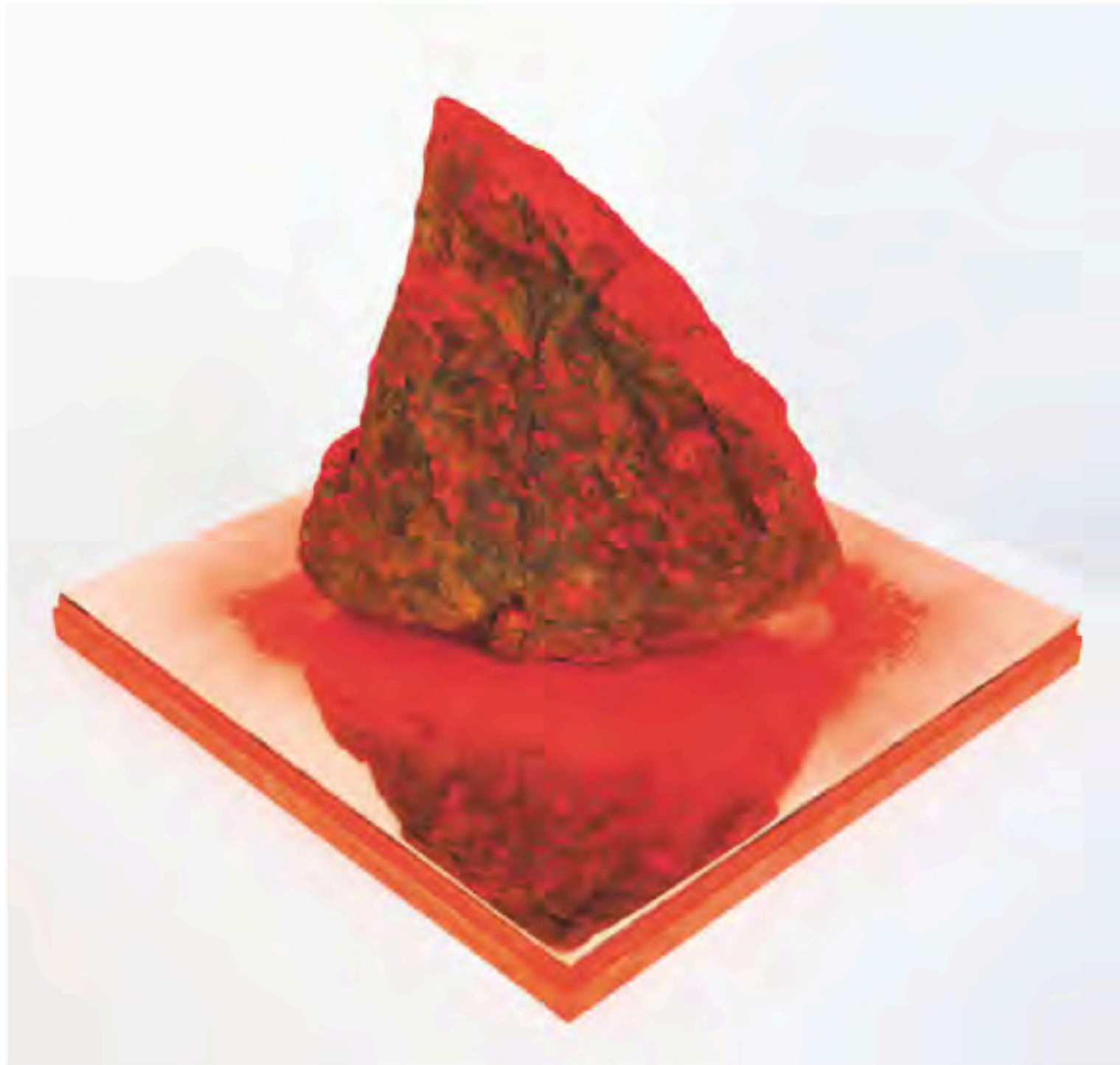


Superobjects—Supercomfort for Superpeople, 1975
photographic paper, photosensitive emulsion, graphic ink, paper, 25.5 × 20.5 cm (each)
purchased in 2016
funded by the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage under the "Collections" program, priority: "National Collections of Contemporary Art"

Superobjects—Supercomfort for Superpeople is a catalogue consisting of 36 pairs of photographs and captions that depict and describe utopian Soviet devices and consumer goods. *Superobjects* is also a set of prototypes that reference the avant-garde goals of revolutionary artists and the consumerist methods for selling products in the capitalist world. The work's title refers to the official language of socialist propaganda and the overarching goal that guided all activities in the USSR: the creation of a new individual. Seemingly useless objects respond to as yet unknown needs. In this work, Tatlin's productivism meets Soviet reality, being dreams of consumption and shops filled with goods that have mysterious uses.



Lita Albuquerque
★1946, Santa Monica



Red Mountain, 1981
stone, copper, pigment, 30 × 30 × 10 cm
donated by American artists (Échange entre artistes 1931–1982) on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the founding of the “a.r.” group, 1983

Red Mountain belongs to a larger body of work in which Lita Albuquerque combined organic matter and intensely colored pigments. This approach found expression in both ephemeral land art works, in which she complemented landscape elements with natural pigment, and in her permanent sculptural works. Albuquerque’s work focuses on the scale and insignificance of humanity in the infinite cosmos: “I was interested in this impossibility of seeing,” she said, “the ability to perceive only what surrounds us, while simultaneously being aware that [...] what we perceive is only part of a much larger whole.”

Antje Majewski
★1968, Marl



Skarbek, 2005–2016
rabbit glue color, acrylic, silver leaf, linen, wood, digital slide show, video, dimensions variable
donated by the artist, 2025
documentation courtesy of the Ujazdowski Castle Centre for Contemporary Art, from the Mediateka collection (photo by Jan Smaga)

Majewski employs a mythological figure to speak about the modern regime of extraction and the appropriation of natural resources. In Silesian mining folklore, Skarbek (Treasurer) is the spirit of the mine, guardian of the deposits, and protector of miners. Skarbek rewards honesty: he warns of danger with a knock or the flickering of a lamp, while he punishes greed by extinguishing the lamp or bringing about misfortune, such as the collapse of the mine. The musical and theatrical layer introduces a repetitive, hypnotic rhythm of exploitation, while the puppets, with their visible “mechanics,” reveal the relationships between power and labor. Created in the mining town of Bytom, Skarbek transforms folklore into a tool of criticism, showing how myth and the promise of wealth legitimize landscape transformations and the