

## **Tomasz Ciecierski**

This is my collection. I have been collecting postcards for many, many years now. Some of them date back to the late '70s. I have been mostly collecting photos of my favorite artists, reproductions of their paintings and also various others from my travels. Anyway, simultaneously to painting, I have been making collages.

This, for example, is a collage dedicated to Natalia Goncharova. The next one is for one of my favorite artists, late Blinky Palermo. I drew these schemes here. His paintings were incredibly simple. Colorful sometimes, but mostly black and white with only some directions indicated: the construction of the painting or something. So here I made these drawings that are inspired by his paintings. There are often photos here. These aren't my photos, but photos made by different well-known photographers, and they show these artists.

This one is for two of them: René Magritte and Yves Klein. It's a very famous photo of Klein jumping off a building. Oh, maybe this one now. So this is Georgia O'Keeffe and she's here together with, among others, Constantin Brâncuși, because I made Brâncuși in 2012 and after some time, I don't know when, around ten years ago, I was going through my old drawings and suddenly I saw that this gives me a possibility of making another ones. So this one with Georgia O'Keeffe is made on a different kind of paper, because it's probably impossible to find this one now. Following a similar rule, I made an identical one. There are these desert horns of hers and so on.

This is Marcel Broodthaers. He is... or maybe he was, I'm not sure if he's still alive, a poet. Anyway, I always appreciated him a lot. I would often look at his works in Sedeljk and in a museum in Brussels. It's a poet who would sometimes, instead of writing, instead of using words, he would use things or objects, and sometimes he would even sculpt and create very, very interesting objects. Next, this one is Claes Oldenburg. Generally, this is sort of... I'm just extremely fond of pop-art. I'm really sentimental about him, Tom Wesselmann, Roy Lichtenstein, and all of them. Anyway, here, in addition to his photo, I put some crayon drawings of the things, these sculptures, that he made. There's a lipstick and a shovel. He also made a chair and a flying iron. Wonderful, magnificent things. Next, Cy Twombly. It's also my favorite artist. Here, I always add a brush to painters. A brush or a palette, you'll see. For example her, Louise Bourgeois, doesn't have any brush. She has other things, other objects that she sculpted or weaved or something. However, going back to Twombly, we can see him young twice here, old with his back to us, and then twice in front of this magnificent painting that is a part of the Menil collection. What was like... brilliant, was that they first bought Twombly's paintings and only after that they built a museum for them. So each of these paintings, like this watercolor one, is hanging on a wall that matches its proportions and that's how this whole museum is designed. Max Beckmann now. A very cool, excellent painter. As I said before, for painters I sometimes add tubes of paint. Here, as I think that that's the case of most painters, probably Twombly's as well, that the paint is all around the floor, so I took a photo of the floor in my studio and I made this collage in his memory, let's say. That's Oskar Kokoschka. Here, in turn, there's this... mess specific to all... well, I have a mess like this, piles of paints and brushes... this dirt, it's awful. René Magritte and Max Ernst here. Next, Henri Matisse. I thought that he was, I don't know, I don't want to say... well, that he really liked colors! So I put these photos of my colorful sinks. Karel Appel here, you can see some brushes. Robert Rauschenberg didn't paint, so he doesn't have any brush. Ellsworth Kelly here. Here... it's Jean Arp. I made some drawings of his soft, delicate forms that blend, intermingle and so on. Here, Yves Klein with his... I don't know how to call it... performance with light.

I also gave him a dog. I don't know if it was his dog, but I thought that maybe he had one. Frida Kahlo. Piet Mondrian. David Smith, an American sculptor. Sam Francis. My favorite Willem de Kooning. I actually like his last paintings as well. Some say that they are far worse. They are just different! Besides, for how long can one keep on painting their wife? This is Otto Dix. And this, Francis Picabia. There are two or three more in the making. They're not finished yet. There's Kurt Schwitters and somebody else... anyway, when I saw this first collage from... 2011 or something... I suddenly picked up speed and started to make and make and make them and it still brings me joy.

## **Natalia Brandt**

There are two series of works that directly refer to Kurt Schwitters' work. The first one is a series of collages, assemblages called *Belated Conversations with Kurt Schwitters*. These conversations are held through a play of colors, composing different surfaces, using pre-existing objects, or their parts, adapted from the surrounding reality. In a way, they are like painted stories referring to selected collages, works of Kurt Schwitters. In practice, it means that each of these paintings, these assemblages, is accompanied by a corresponding work's reproduction, just like here. Another series of works, drawings, shows a whole spectrum of impossible figures or impossible spaces. Just like here.

During my studies I've been reading Stefan Themerson a lot and it turned out that one of his books was sort of a dedication to Schwitters showing the whole spectrum of his work, including the concept of Merzbau, which is this form combining architecture, sculpture and installation which has been put into practice three times. At first, in Germany, in a big tenement building where Schwitters lived, he came up with an idea of integrating possibly all the things that he had found and that were visually appealing to him. It was also based on his objective to connect, as well as to establish relations, with objects in the real world. So this architecture was absorbing these pre-existing objects, like cartons or planks. It created these caves that were often dedicated to fellow artists, for instance to Jean Arp.

What also fascinated me was this kind of universality of this idea, meaning that each time he was forced to leave the space where he was living and working on this piece that was incorporating the whole architecture, each time he was able to start it all over again. What I found interesting as well was that one could paint using pre-existing materials. Another aspect that has led me to organically adopt this form of artistic expression is that I have a tendency to hoarding, collecting various things found in an antique store, such as magazines, books, illustrations or different types of fonts. It's also about considering these qualities that are usually disregarded and treated like garbage, like something degraded... and I think that what really felt right to me was this possibility of opening these boxes and drawers full of things and various scraps to build another world through painting.

## **Ryszard Waśko**

The paintings from this series are indeed dedicated to Władysław Strzemiński and his concept of unism, where the objective was to make all the elements of his paintings, such as the color and the form, somehow connected as a unity. It's kind of static for me. I prefer when things are more dynamic, just dynamic actions. Strzemiński reminds me of this American minimal artist, Carl Andre. In his sculptures, he referred to the notion of the American road, where basically everything is static. One walks the road and there is nothing going on. No matter how many meters they cross, everything stays the same. Everything is fused together. In my paintings, I adopted a different concept, one that suits me more, which can be described as the concept of a street. There's a variety of things happening on a street. All is changing, nothing is static. It's dynamic all the time and, in this regard, to these two artists, mostly to Strzemiński because we're talking about painting, there is an opposition, or a different way of constructing a painting. Most importantly, just as in the case of Strzemiński: the color is important in painting, so I wanted to create a homogenous surface, sort of a background that, this surface and this color, was a starting point to the subsequent development of this painting. I used these, let's say, snake-like forms. Strzemiński also made one painting that had these snake-like forms. In his case it was evenly spread.

In my case it's also kind of balanced and evenly spread. What was also significant was the way in which Strzemiński applied the paint, that he did it by hand and that it's visible. For me, it was about making it like on a street, that a street is rather precisely constructed. Practically every street. That's why the form of its development is based on this precise paint application. It was applied layer by layer, multiple times, starting kind of from nothing, from the background. With each line I simply added more paint and this formed a relief, that was the idea. I did it in different spots. Like on a street, there is another street here, another there and so on. At the same time, as one stands on a street, this street sort of densifies, its elements densify. There is practically only light at the end. The second characteristic of developing this street, this form, was that each line made the color lighter. Therefore, there was a certain dynamic between these particular, let's say, streets. It was all unfolding this way and that was the general principle of constructing these paintings. What's also important is that, looking at Strzemiński's paintings, wherever one stands the painting looks the same. It's kind of static. In my case, like on a street, one moves a little and suddenly something new happens. There are different things happening on a street: someone passes by, a shadow falls there, the sun comes out here and so on. It's similar here. For example, standing on this side, we see the relief, right? We see how it's made of layers. Yet when we stand in front of it, it seems to be flat. Well, that's the overall concept of these paintings.

## **Ewa Partum**

*The Luncheon on the Grass* was an idea in '71. It was about the language of conceptual art. Searching for this language, I got interested in art history and *The Luncheon on the Grass* became my inspiration. I considered it as something groundbreaking in the history of art and therefore, I used it for my conceptual art interpretation. It somehow became a key to what conceptual art is. As

normally, *The Luncheon on the Grass* is a painting where there is something happening, there are some people and there is also a naked woman. Later it turned out that this woman is also an important, significant story, because she's not just a random woman, but is also involved in art. It was Gisliind Nabakowski who discovered it. For me, what was important was that it was something startling at this time, when Édouard Manet painted it, and basically that it was surprising that something like this could happen. So I wanted to interpret it conceptually and I rejected the form of a painting - conceptual art, as we know it. I decided to illustrate only this completely tautological idea that is the title, *The Luncheon on the Grass*, and I created this big white canvas lying on the grass, which symbolically said *The Luncheon on the Grass, after É. Manet*. Next to that, there was a white inscription painted on the grass itself: *The Luncheon on the Grass*. So generally, it was a representation of what was supposed to happen there, but without any visual picture as in the case of painting. That's why Alicja Kępińska, for example, called it the key to conceptual art, because it was just a kind of a tautological statement and this inscription was exactly what was to be said: *The Luncheon on the Grass* is a form of what there is to be communicated, a so-called *message*. It took place in Elbląg, during what is known as *The Dreamers' Congress*. The work was located in the public space, thus it had been visited there, in the park, on the grass. It's one of my first conceptual works in '71.

It was here, in Elbląg, in a park, that this conceptual installation *The Luncheon on the Grass* was realized. It's an example of a work, of a piece of art, about art, about another piece of art from art history. Art about art.

### **Jarosław Kozłowski**

The idea behind the works entitled *Exercises in Imaging* has, in fact, a very long history. It dates back to the 70s, the time when the question of what conceptual art actually is was still being discussed. For me, it was related to the very distant problem of universals, which is a problem of to what extent universals exist objectively and to what extent they are constructed, given meaning, by us. I returned to this thought in 2018, hence this series of works. In some sense, I've been associating this revisit, or reference to these earlier reflections, with the conversations I had been having for many years with Jurek Ludwiński, at the time when he was teaching at the Academy in Poznań. He would come to me after class once a week and we would talk about art for many hours, arguing, debating and provoking each other very boldly. One of the questions that we discussed was this very significant question of to what extent the eye, the sight, is a factor that constitutes the value of an artistic work, to what extent it objectively exists and whether the values it carries exist in the image. It was a question of making sense, giving meaning, providing substance to what art is. Standing in front of a painting, or anything, does the viewer perceive what is being suggested or do they give it meanings that result from their competences, their sensibility, their curiosity, their way of thinking.

One of the reasons that brought me back to this topic was this very particular conversation with Jurek Ludwiński, when I invited him to give me a word and a sentence that would be, as I was planning, a part of the work... it was in the mid 90s, the work that was on my mind at the time. Jurek

gave me the word *lamp* and the sentence *And yet again I put a finger in the eye*. This *finger in the eye*... the *lamp* was also a very interesting point of reference, but this *finger in the eye* interested me in a particular way. During our conversation I was apparently absent-minded, thus I didn't ask him what it meant, in what sense did he give me a sentence that contained this kind of act, an act of autoaggression. After all, on one hand, the eye constitutes our perception of the world, our perception of what surrounds us, our perception of art as well. On the other hand, covering the eye represents the need for reflection, the need for being included in a perceptual process, a thought process, a cognitive process. I never asked him about it. A dozen years had passed and the problem of a finger in the eye kept on intriguing me. I think what he meant was the need for self-reflection meaning finding substance, or interpreting what we see, by closing or covering the eye in order to assign a meaning to what we look at, to give it substance, to judge it. In this sense, this sentence seems very important in the context of what I've talked about at the beginning, the reflection on the existence of universals and the way in which they exist – whether we receive them or create them. These works refer precisely to that: to the point that something exists. In this case, that it exists in art and that, looking at what is in front of us, we give it a meaning, as well as value and substance. Hence the dualism of these works – when something *is* an image and almost the same thing *isn't* an image, depending on our relation to it.

### **Alicja Karska & Aleksandra Went**

Alicja Karska: We weren't Professor Franciszek Duszeńko's students. We met him at school, but our most meaningful encounter with his work took place in his studio. Without him, unfortunately. His studio was taken care of by Robert Kaja, who invited us there.

Aleksandra Went: He had a feeling that we'd like... that we might be interested in this topic. Maybe it was because Professor Duszeńko had never had an actual exhibition of his work, a solo exhibition. Instead, his career was mostly based on large-scale spatial projects and maybe that's why...

AK: And on pedagogical work.

AW: Yes, yes. There were these works hidden in his studio that basically nobody had ever seen.

AK: Yes and from what we've heard... we found his artistic practice incredibly moving because he would come to his studio every day and work every day, and these forms were very small because he didn't have the spatial, and probably financial, possibilities nor offers to create large-scale works, so, he would make these tiny drafts, constantly being on standby. He worked all the time regardless of not receiving any specific orders.

AW: Without any reasons.

AK: Yes, mhm. Yes.

AW: He simply had a need to do it.

AK: Yes, his own need. It was very touching for us and also close to our approach and to what we do.

AW: And, above all, the quantity and immensity of these drafts were so... well, it made a big impression on us back then.

AK: Yes, yes.

AW: One could find drawings of different sizes there and also such metalwork or tiny plaster and wooden forms. It was all so filigree, so pretty.

AK: Yes. And this continuity of work. One could feel this perpetual work there. Perpetual... and, what follows, his presence and his person.

AW: This visit encouraged us to make him this... exhibition. [laughing]

AK: Yes, yes.

AW: An exhibition of his sculptural drafts.

AK: I also remember that we would often talk about home, about safety. And these things somehow coincided because, at that time, the future of his studio was uncertain. After he passed away, nobody knew what would physically happen to this space and these things. So this transitional moment was very moving and somewhat tragic to us. Naturally, we instantly related it to ourselves as artists as we all reflect on the things that we manufacture and the energy that we put into our works.

AW: That these works might later actually become some kind of a problem. [laughing]

AK: Yes, yes.

AW: It's sort of tragic.

AK: So we captured these reflections and emotions and put them into this work. We built a home for each one of these tiny sculptures. A sculpture's home is a gallery. This mental shortcut went even further, thus these homes are represented by shipping crates, so this metaphor got completed here. We entered the studio with great curiosity, of course. We were a bit intimidated because we knew that it wasn't accessible to the public and that the works hidden there were never exhibited. Naturally, curiosity got the better of us and being there brought us an enormous pleasure and joy, so these emotions were really extreme.

### **Krzysztof Wodiczko**

Lines started to appear all around me. In press photos, on television. They would also show up acoustically, in what we would hear from the cable radio speakers in manufacturing, in factories or workplaces. In newsreels. Everywhere, one could see an incredibly precise organization of all these images, photographs, film reports on what was happening. It was all very precisely visually organized so that we wouldn't get confused in understanding what it was about and also so that we'd apply it to ourselves, meaning to our gestures, our behaviors, our way of thinking. Thus, this line was present absolutely everywhere and was constructed. It was apparent heading towards various gestures, in the forms of relations between people, in their groupings, in presenting as a collective force, as a

harmoniously functioning community. Also in meetings and arrangements, agreements, communities and progress, moving forward. I started to see diagonal, vertical and horizontal lines. In the works that were more artistic, rhetorical, they were diagonal. In the moralizing ones, referring to, I don't know, religion, vertical architecture, somewhere between God and earth, between superior forces and worldly affairs, the lines were vertical. The horizontal ones were set in the images of this social community or agreement, handshakes and so on. But in truth, it's not important whether they were vertical, horizontal or diagonal. What's important is that they existed and that we were applying them to ourselves. Unconsciously, and therefore, they became kind of our mental bone structure. We would feel them in our legs, in our hands, in our way of moving and so on. I'm exaggerating, of course, but... or maybe actually I'm not exaggerating. We weren't aware of it. It takes an exaggeration to realize how we were really a part of this whole system that was a construct. So the reference here is to what we've talked about many times with Andrzej Turowski and to his very convincing and clear book entitled *In the Circle of Constructivism*, where I saw the whole constructivist and productivist movement as a great ethical and political project of the avant-garde in some kind of dialogue with Marxism or Leninism but really in the hands of the avant-garde utopia.

However, in reality, at the time when we were discussing Turowski's book, this reality was, of course, constructed by the Political Bureau, by the authorities, as well as by political advertising, or perhaps any kind of advertising that was also reaching us from the Western world. Thus, the world was already constructed. The point wasn't about how to construct it further but about seeing its structure, revealing its linear nature, detecting the guidelines of all these images, the whole system of how the world was presented to us and seeing ourselves in it, because we had been seeing ourselves there, we were also getting filmed, noticing these hidden lines that had never been drawn. So I began to draw them. To draw them next to propaganda images, as well as propaganda art, or art having propaganda features, or art being clearly, like, intended to transmit some powerful concepts. It all aligned, the images or... the propaganda aspect of art and the artistic aspect of propaganda, these two things aligned to me. Now, correlating the images with the lines, for example vertical, horizontal and diagonal, I was suggesting this fact that we all are, move according to guidelines, in thought and in action, by our relation to these images.

Before the whole *Line as a guideline* operation happened, I had to reflect a little on a line as a line, meaning how this line functions in the artistic world, in the political world, in the social world. And such laboratory study of a line took place in the form of a line hung in the middle of a gallery as a sort of a thin rod, a line inherent in the corner of a gallery, where it drafts itself as a shadow, a line explicitly drawn, set on a wall, and a line drawn on a rectangular canvas as an image of a line.

### **Józef Robakowski**

The *Fetishes* have a rather unusual story. It's a set linked to the Exchange Gallery. The Exchange Gallery was an idea where various artists would hand over their works to me, as a kind of "entrustment" and in return, I would give them mine. This way, costlessly, a huge collection has been created. It's currently passed to the Museum of Modern Art in Warsaw. These works, there were so

many of them at my place that I just had to start eliminating them somehow. This elimination consisted of... well, some of them were very, very dear to me. These were the works given to me by my friends, artists from all around the world actually, and this set is kind of a highlight on my friends. There were several sets like this, of course. This one shows these friends that I wanted to have close to me, close to my body. I sort of matched them with my body as a kind of adoration, a kind of desire to be close to these works, to these people who I cooperated with. It's a series that has multiple versions and there is a story to be told about each one of them. I think this one is the first one to have an audio-description and it will now be characteristic for the Fetishes.

### **Ewa Harabasz**

Going through newspaper front pages, everyday while having breakfast, I noticed that most of the photographs... I was very much struck by the fact that the photographs that get chosen by many people, by well-known photographers... I noticed a strong resemblance and thus I began to explore it further, a resemblance to Caravaggio's paintings. Caravaggio was an artist who focused on gesture. And gestures were exactly what I observed in all of these photographs. How to convey or highlight these gestures that remind me... that I think the public should see and that there really is a big resemblance. First of all, Caravaggio's gestures were gestures of suffering, crying, lamenting. And so I noticed that in these photographs that we see, women, men, people very much in a position of suffering, people suffering, they adopt these gestures, or these gestures are purposely searched for so that we notice them. To make them more visible, I think back then I thought... I applied a specific technique using different colored pencils that weren't really supposed to draw but to, actually, cover up the whole story behind a photo, its background, in order to highlight hands and legs. And now it only depends on the works' viewer whether this movement, this gesture, has truly been captured and whether it's seen the way I see it. In this case, it's a crying woman. It's a tiny photograph. The technique that I used includes enlarging the photo to the size of a painting. One practically can't see the crying women. We can only guess. Their hands, however, are positioned exactly like hands in various Caravaggio's paintings. And this painting here shows a person being pulled from rubble, a body actually, and the way in which it's being touched and pulled out is precisely the same gesture, or the same moment, that Caravaggio also depicted in his paintings.

### **Mirosław Filonik**

This work was basically made out of waste, namely TV waste. These are the same lamps as the ones used in large screens. Its geometry was intended to be variable depending on the point of view. There is also a reference to Waclaw Szpakowski, who, just before he passed away, created a whole different concept of his linear patterns, which was sort of a new idea. Had he lived 10 years longer, the drawings would probably have gotten reshaped even more, forming something somewhat three-dimensional. Szpakowski's geometry had a pattern that was unfolding. Starting with the simplest



shape, a triangle, it would unfold it into polygons fading somewhere in the depth of space. It was drawn there in a kind of... let's say they were unfolding spirally, so one stemmed from another and so on, more and more. Working on this piece, I also realized that it would make sense to mirror something that Szpakowski had in mind, hence the time switch. It counts the time in sequences and extends this whole spectrum infinitely. That was my intention knowing his early works, ranging from very minimalist patterns to the ones that extend into downright incredible labyrinths. Szpakowski's principle is using one single line, one elongated line that builds the pattern. One end goes in and the other goes out. His concept was to make the viewer follow the line, like in a labyrinth we follow a thread that is supposed to lead us out because otherwise we get lost, so just tracing the line of the pattern required a real mental effort not to get lost, not to lose the thread somewhere on the way, because then one would have to start again. In the simplest patterns it was also... let's say that such turns to bends, to the line's returning points, one could count at least a thousand of them, depending on the density of the pattern. It was unbelievable and very meditative. Besides, all of his works... all his life was one great meditation. That's where this continuity comes from, let's say it was there for most of his life. Almost all his life, not without reason, he was engaged in this continuity. He was interested in... well, these rhythms were also related to his love for music. He kept on returning to his violin and he was also trying to somehow play certain elements of his patterns, which led to the fact that, after he died, some composers and musicians got interested in his work, treating his patterns, his lines, as a representation of a sound, a musical notation.