

detail of the damaged work by Maurizio Cattelan *La Nona Ora* (The Ninth Hour), photo by Justyna Butyniec-Podlaska





Goshka Macuga's practice encompasses the roles of an artist, curator, collector, researcher and exhibition designer. She develops complex projects based on archive, historical, and scientific material, films, photographs, objects, sculptures, installation, architecture, art history, tapestries, as well as her own works and those of other artists. Placing them in a new context, Macuga combines past facts with topical issues and present-day reality, highlighting affinities and connections, revealing that which might pass unnoticed or be repressed. She belongs to a group of artists who draw on the formal tradition of Western and American modernism. While often minimal in form, her exhibitions hold multiple layers of meaning and do not easily lend themselves to identification, leaving ample room for interpretation.

For many years now Goshka Macuga has been pursuing her own methodology, unique in comparison to the practice of other contemporary artists, and reminiscent of certain artistic strategies from the past (like those of Marcel Broodthaers). Developing new works, or exhibitions that become exhibits in themselves, Macuga frequently begins with the history of their sites: researching the collections of hosting institutions, the biographies and oeuvres of other artists, as well as establishing direct collaborations with them. By including others' work in her exhibitions — and thus blurring the boundaries between artist and curator — Macuga often transforms them, and questions the notion of authorship.

Goshka Macuga has been living and working in London for over twenty years. Having graduated from an art high school in Poland, she pursued further education at the well-known Central St. Martins College of Art and Design in the 1990s, and then at the renowned Goldsmiths College. With time, Macuga abandoned painting, her primary medium which she came to see as obsolete and restrictive, and turned to installation. Towards the end of 1990s, the artist organized alternative exhibition projects in her apartment, already assuming the role of a curator: inviting acclaimed artists and combining their work with her own. Macuga continued this strategy in group and individual exhibitions (*Cave at Sali Gia*, London, 1999, with, amongst others, Mike Nelson, Keith Tyson and Dexter Dalwood, and *Homeless Furniture* at Transmission Gallery, Glasgow, 2002 with local artists), introducing new forms, architecture, and more complex and multi-layered narratives. In *Picture Room* (2003) for London's Gasworks, the artist recreated the famous Picture Room, a section of Sir John Soane's Museum devoted to the eighteenth-century architect and collector, and used this interior to present the work

of over thirty contemporary artists. In 2006, as part of the Liverpool Biennial, Macuga developed a labyrinthine architectural installation *Sleep of Ulro*. Its expressionism-inspired interior (the inspiration included the 1919 film *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari*), accommodated works by artists participating in the Biennial. The installation, which became a platform for discussion and a setting for performances, also featured a figurative sculpture of the sleepwalker Cesare (one of the characters of the aforementioned film) resting in a white coffin. In *Objects in Relation, Art Now*, displayed at Tate Britain in 2007, the artist focused on the modernist group Unit One and its founder Paul Nash, presenting an array of surrealistic sculptures made of natural materials.

In 2008 Macuga became the first Polish artist selected (along with three other candidates) to compete for the prestigious Turner Prize, awarded annually to the most eminent young British artists (among the nominees were Mark Leckey, Cathy Wilkes, as well as Bangladesh-born Runa Islam). The Turner Prize, awarded since 1984, honours a British artist under fifty for an outstanding exhibition or other presentation of their work in the twelve months preceding. Goshka Macuga was nominated for the solo show *Objects in Relation, Art Now*, and her contribution to the 5th Berlin Biennale in 2008. In the exhibition of the Turner Prize nominees the artist once again chose to delve into the archives, this time focusing on the output of two pairs of artists working in the 1930s — Paul Nash and Eileen Agar, and Mies van der Rohe and Lilly Reich.

Along with the exhibition *I Am Become Death* at Kunsthalle Basel (2009) the artist began working with more politically conscious projects. The show was structured around a number of themes, including neo-colonialism, the arms race, and militant US policy. The title, *I Am Become Death*, was a quote from J. Robert



I Am Become Death,
Kunsthalle Basel, 2009
courtesy of Kunsthalle Basel and Kate
MacGarry, London
photo by Serge Hasenböhler © Kunsthalle
Basel, 2009

←
Triptych, 2011, material from the
conservator's report on the damaged
work by Maurizio Cattelan
La Nona Ora (The Ninth Hour),
photo by Justyna Butyniec-Podlaska

The Bloomberg Commission: Goshka Macuga. The Nature of the Beast, 2009
Whitechapel Gallery, London
courtesy of Whitechapel Gallery and Kate MacGarry, London
photo by Patrick Lears



Oppenheimer (known as the father of the atomic bomb), who, in turn quoted a line from the sacred Hindu scripture *Bhagavad Gita* [The Song of God]. 'Now I am become death, the destroyer of worlds' — was what Oppenheimer allegedly said on seeing the first nuclear test in New Mexico in 1945. The Basel exhibition brought together a number of seemingly disparate works, among them blown-up photographs taken by the German art historian and cultural theorist Aby Warburg during his exploration of the Hopi culture in Arizona in mid-nineteenth century (the most important stage of the scholar's journey across America). Another room featured a video made by the artist in collaboration with the anthropologist Julian Gastelo — an account of Macuga's journey across the US in the tracks of Warburg. Also presented were enlarged snapshots from a Vietnam War veteran's collection bought by the artist on the internet. One of them shows the soldier holding a snake. Macuga saw this as a reference to Warburg and his research on the snake dance practiced by the Indians. While the former can be seen as a symbol of the 'exotic' military intervention of US troops in Vietnam, Warburg, along with his fascination with the Indian civilization, is a reference to the colonization of their culture. Macuga juxtaposed these materials with contemporary events from US history and politics, in particular the economic crisis, and the Iraq and Afghanistan wars. The centrepiece of the Basel show, however, was a series of Minimalist sculptures. The artist reconstructed works conceived by Robert Morris for the exhibition *Participatory Objects*, held at Tate Gallery in 1971 — interactive sculptures which could be experienced physically/bodily by the viewers. Among them was a massive, three metre high, minimalist pedestal, on which the viewers could climb to see the exhibition room from above. Next to this was a rolling hollow cylinder, its movement limited by two rows of sand-

bags placed on the floor on each side of it, within which the viewers could rock from side to side. Morris's sculptures were developed in a period when newly emergent forms of art brought about new forms of experiencing and exhibition practices, attracting audiences that were still unfamiliar to the innovations (Morris's show was soon closed down on account of injuries suffered by the public). The developments in art came hand in hand with revolutionary changes in almost all domains of life. Macuga linked historical events during the Tate exhibition with other manifestations of activism in the period that led to outbursts of energy, anarchy, and rebellion. In this way, the artist created a conceptual image of oppression and violence and, on the other hand, of a resistance that emerged in art (Morris's objects).

The research for *I Am Become Death* surfaced in subsequent projects: the exhibition *The Nature of the Beast* at Whitechapel Gallery and *Plus Ultra* at the Venice Biennale. Work on *The Nature of the Beast* (2009) began with the artist sifting through the rich gallery archives in search of momentous events in its history. One such event was the presentation of Pablo Picasso's *Guernica* staged in Whitechapel in 1939. Painted in 1937, *Guernica* became an international symbol of protest against the Spanish Civil War, as well as the manipulations and propaganda surrounding it. The historical Whitechapel show was a social event, co-organized by the Communist Party and trade unions, and supported by people from the art world, such as Herbert Read and Roland Penrose, who helped to finalize the loan. It was also an opportunity to voice political views, and to drum up support for the Republican Army. The 1950s saw another attempt at bringing *Guernica* to Whitechapel, but the request was turned down by New York's MoMA (where the work was kept at the time), as the Americans were obvi-

ously unwilling to support Communist sympathies. In her exhibition, Macuga recalls and re-frames this story. Instead of Picasso's original piece, the artist displayed a 1955 life-size tapestry of *Guernica*, commissioned by Nelson A. Rockefeller, and later loaned by his family to the United Nations Headquarters in New York. In 2003, the tapestry, covered by a blue curtain, served as the backdrop for Colin Powell's speech in which he made a case for the invasion of Iraq. In Whitechapel, however, it was the blue curtain that served as the backdrop for the tapestry. In addition, the exhibition included the figure of Powell in the form of a Cubist-realist bust cast in bronze. The other room featured video footage documenting the ongoing conflicts in Afghanistan, Iraq, Palestine, and Israel. In addition to this, there was a large conference table, with archival material and documents presented under its glass top. The table was not only part of the exhibition display, the room itself was designed to accommodate panel discussions and could be booked free of charge throughout the year-long project. It was used for debates by over a hundred different groups: from people discussing the G20 summit, and members of the Arts Council England, through university and high schools students who organized seminars and lessons, to young art curators, members of Minority Rights Group International, Stop the War Coalition and Polish DeConstruction, to name just a few. In this way, by evoking the atmosphere of before the Second World War, the exhibition came a full circle: from *Guernica*, and its politicized presentation of 1939, to contemporary armed conflicts, and transformation of the gallery into a space for social and political thinking. The exhibition accommodated not only viewers, but also active debate — transparently, as the meetings were held in full view of the gallery audience.

The Whitechapel project was most likely the first time when Goshka Macuga used the tapestry as an exhibit. But the London show itself soon served as inspiration for the artist's own textile work *On the Nature of the Beast*, made for the *Textile Art and the Social Fabric* exhibition at MuHKA, Antwerp (2009). Made after a number of overlapping photographs, the tapestry depicts a group of visitors to the Whitechapel and Prince William delivering a speech in the gallery space, against the backdrop of the rug from the UN Headquarters. Among the crowd, one can see the artist herself, inconspicuous like one of the shadowy figures in Rembrandt's canvases. The composition, being a photographic manipulation, offers a critical commentary on the London project and its plethora of meetings, which the artist was unable to follow in the end. At the same time, Macuga began taking an interest in the historical tradition of tapestries in European colonial empires, which resulted in developing the textile *Plus Ultra* for the 2009 exhibition *Fare Mondi / Making Worlds* curated by Daniel Birnbaum at the Venice Biennale. The work is also replete with historical references, although in this case we are dealing with the more distant era of Charles V and his imperial supremacy. The motto *plus ultra* [further beyond/boldly onwards], called for

transcending the existing boundaries in exploration of land and seas, and claiming new uncharted territories. The tapestry featured a number of symbols and elements combined in the fashion of sixteenth century compositions. Hoisted between and curving around two large columns like a decorative banner, the work included the motto *plus ultra*, and the portraits of smiling leaders of the G-20 Summit. In addition to this, one could see a boat filled with immigrants, a likeness of Charles V with a dollar sign across his face (a reference to the origins of the US dollar which emerged from the Spanish currency used in the colonies), and the mythological Pillars of Hercules which bore the inscription *non plus ultra* [nothing further beyond]. The latter flanked the entrance to the Strait of Gibraltar and where they served as warning to sailors against the perils of the ocean. In this case, drawing on the historical function of tapestries used to glorify the military and political power in the empire and its colonies, Macuga composed a message which is antithetical to that conveyed by her *Guernica*.

The artist once again made use of institutional archives, collections, and history on the occasion of the exhibition *It Broke From Within*, held at Walker Art Center in Minneapolis in 2011. This time Macuga developed a spectacular installation that combined a woven black-and-white photographic tapestry, the minimalist white architecture of the gallery, and works from the institution's collection. The Walker Art Center, founded in 1879 by lumberman T. B. Walker, was officially opened in 1927. 1971 saw the opening of the Center's new wing designed by E. L. Barnes, while another expansion, designed by Herzog & de Meuron, opened in 2005. For the exhibition Macuga reconstructed an unrealized architectural design of a white hall with sunken areas for seating. In these areas, as well as in the open space itself, the artist presented works from the Walker collection by Joseph Beuys, Sherrie Levine, Carl Andre, Marcel Duchamp, and Berenice Abbott. Also in the show was her monumental textile *Lost Forty*. Made after a photomontage, the work depicted various



Deutsches Volk — deutsche Arbeit, 2008
glass, wood, steel, 170 x 450 x 300 cm
Turner Prize 2008
Tate Britain, London
courtesy of Tate and Kate MacGarry, London
photo by Andy Stagg

Plus Ultra, 2009
Fare Mondi / Making Worlds,
53rd Venice Biennale, Corderie
dell'Arsenale, Venice
courtesy of Kate MacGarry, London
photo by Andy Stagg



individuals connected with the Center, as well as with Macuga's previous projects, set against the backdrop of a thick forest (the source of T. B. Walker's fortune) which survived logging due to a surveying error. Among the portrayed were T. B. Walker, the artist herself, a Vietnam soldier, Marcel Duchamp, architects, a member of a Tea Party protest, Aby Warburg, and Joseph Beuys. In this way, the tapestry addressed the question of both participation and engagement.

Goshka Macuga's exhibition *Untitled* in Warsaw's Zachęta National Gallery of Art marks the first solo presentation of the artist's work in a public institution in Poland. At the heart of the project is the theme of censorship in Polish art after 1989, and the attacks leveled at artworks, artists, curators, directors, and institutions. The civic initiative Indeks 73, launched in support of the Article 73 of the Polish Constitution — that is the constitutional freedom of artistic creation, academic research, and free access to the cultural goods — has documented over a hundred cases of infringement of the creative freedom guaranteed under that article since the year 1989 (<http://www.indeks73.pl>).

1989 also marked Macuga's move to London and the coming of a new form of censorship in democratic Poland, which the artist observed from a distance, through media accounts and personal contacts. The most infamous events, including acts of destroying artworks as well as nationalistic and anti-Semitic attacks that were deliberately inflated by the media, took place in the context of exhibitions at Zachęta. Working on the project, Macuga adopted her already typical method of delving into the archives of the hosting institution. As always, the artist draws on documents, exhibition documentation, portfolios of artists whose work was presented in Zachęta, long shelves of binders with press clippings and photographs, as well as guest books, feedback books, emails and letters, including private correspondence addressed to Zachęta. Macuga not only chose to include the bulk of the surviving material on the subject in the exhibition, but also used it as a point of departure for new works (the Zachęta show presents exclusively new works), inspired by the practice of other artists: Tadeusz Kantor, Oscar Bony, and Richard Hamilton.

In contrast to Macuga's past projects, which showcased complex pieces in an intricate network of mutual relations, the works in Zachęta seem to be bound by a clear narrative that encompasses the themes of censorship in the gallery context and beyond.

Among the highlights of the show is a 11.5 x 3.7 metre tapestry especially commissioned in Belgium for the exhibition, and made after a photograph also produced for the occasion. The point of departure for the textile was Macuga's re-enactment, or an own reading, of Tadeusz Kantor's 1967 happening *The Letter*. In the original, a fourteen-metre long canvas letter addressed to Foksal Gallery was delivered by four professional mailmen from the post office in Ordynacka Street to the gallery located at the end of Foksal Street. On delivery, the letter was destroyed by a waiting public. The performance was accompanied by a score in the form of a scripted text that commented on the progress of the mailmen and added to the tension. A similar canvas letter was prepared for Macuga's project, this time, however, it was addressed to Zachęta and adorned with somewhat ludicrous stamps with Lech Wałęsa — the symbol of the 1989 transformation. Seven fake mailmen, in uniforms from the 1990s, transported it to the destination where they were photographed. The letter itself was not destroyed, and serves the role of an exhibit, or a prop. In the overall context of the exhibition, the work embodies the dialogue between the institution and the public that took place in various forms over the last two decades. Its character varied from a friendly rapport to outbursts of extreme anger which can be found in letters to Anda Rottenberg. The correspondence, dating from late 2000 and early 2001, does not concern art, but is filled with anti-Semitic slurs and slander. A series of 33 letters, postcards, and envelopes, is included in the exhibition as archival evidence of the attacks leveled at the then director of Zachęta.

The project also features a series of enlarged photographs of artists, curators, and directors of institutions, who were targeted by a similar critique and attacks. Part of this material is sourced from the Zachęta archive and the photographic documentation of its exhibitions. This section

The Letter, 2011, tapestry
photo by Przemysław Pokrycki/Fundacja .DOC



presents images of Piotr Ukiński and curator Adam Szymczyk from the opening of *The Nazis* (2000) — an installation later destroyed by the actor Daniel Olbrychski with the use of a saber; Anda Rottenberg from an award ceremony for the Zachęta staff; Harald Szeemann, curator of the anniversary show *Beware of Exiting Your Dreams: You May Find Yourself in Somebody Else's* (2000/2001) attacked, along with Anda Rottenberg, for displaying Maurizio Cattelan's *La Nona Ora* [*The Ninth Hour*], a sculpture depicting Pope John Paul II felled by a meteor (later destroyed by two Polish MPs); Adam Szymczyk from the press conference accompanying *The Nazis*; Monika Szweczyk, director of the Arsenal Gallery in Białystok who came under heavy criticism for exhibiting the work *I Got a Doggie* in the exhibition *The Dog in Polish Art* (2003); Julita Wójcik from the 2001 performance *Peeling Potatoes*, who was likewise labelled as controversial; last but not least, Dorota Nieznalska, accused of offending religious feelings in 2002 in her work *Passion* from 2001. Macuga subjected the above photographs to a process in which the depicted characters were covered by black screen-printed surfaces. This method of manipulation is reminiscent of attempts at effacing certain individuals labelled as inconvenient or controversial. The photographic series is complemented by the conservator's report on the damaged Maurizio Cattelan's sculpture.

Another exhibition highlight is the monumental (ten meter high) sculpture of a family inspired by 'the live sculpture' *La Familia Obrera* [The Proletarian Family] by Argentine artist Oscar Bony featuring the Rodríguez family sitting on a pedestal for an agreed fee. Bony's piece, first shown at Instituto Di Tella in Buenos Aires as part of the exhibition *Experiencias '68*, used a family to expose the rift between the working and the middle classes. In her own work, Macuga refers only to the form of the live sculpture. Although somewhat ludicrously exaggerated, the piece takes on a new meaning in the local Polish context where right-wing ideologies, proclaiming family and Christian values as fundamental social principles, have been constantly present over the last two decades. It is in the name of those values that the proponents of these ideologies unleashed attacks on art and people from the art scene.

The Zachęta building already witnessed the most dramatic events in its more distant past. It was here, during the opening of the annual exhibition of the Association for the Encouragement of Fine Arts in 1922, that Eligiusz Niewiadomski assassinated the first President of independent Poland, Gabriel Narutowicz. Niewiadomski was a painter, art historian, critic, a high-ranking official in the Ministry of Culture and Art, and a member of the Association for the Encouragement of Fine Arts. At the same time, he was also an ardent supporter and activist of the extreme right. The assassination of Narutowicz in Zachęta, was also an attack on the institution and a violation of its neutral status. Niewiadomski had already criticized Zachęta before in his articles written



from a nationalist-Catholic perspective. The acts of censoring and discrediting contemporary art that took place after 1989, were also perpetrated in the name of nationalist and Catholic values.

The echoes of the media frenzy that accompanied some exhibitions can be found in the section featuring lithographs and a fourteen meter long board with a rich selection of press clippings, documents, letters, and emails. Macuga's five lithographs are based on a work by Richard Hamilton from his series *Swingeing London '67* — a collage of newspaper reports of drug scandals involving members of the Rolling Stones. Following Hamilton, Macuga composed five similar collages, each focusing on a different figure or exhibition: from a collection of generally critical press reviews that either directly attacked or made a scandal of Piotr Ukiński and his exhibition *The Nazis*, through the cases of Dorota Nieznalska, Maurizio Cattelan's sculpture *La Nona Ora*, Katarzyna Kozyra and her works *Blood Ties*, *Olympia*, and *Men's Bathhouse*, to the exhibition *The Dog in Polish Art*. The flood of lurid headlines in the lithographs (e.g. 'Lady with a Phallus', 'Kozyra's Balls', 'Dick-art', 'Penis Arrested', 'Barking Aggression'), along with material displayed on the board, hints at why the name of Macuga's exhibition is *Untitled*.

Goshka Macuga's exhibition in Zachęta offers a point of departure for revisiting the theme of censorship in Polish art, and a new reading of both facts and artifacts. Its public reception will be monitored, among others with the use of feedback books that will be made available to the visitors. We will observe the exhibition 'at work' . . . In addition, the fact that we have recently celebrated the twentieth anniversary of the abolishing of censorship in Poland (the act which officially lifted censorship was passed on April 1, 1990), offers a welcome opportunity for a discussion on the freedom of speech in the context of recent history. We thus have a unique chance to identify the circumstances under which the artistic freedom is infringed, map the scale of the phenomenon in post-1989 Poland, and to critically reflect on its future.

It Broke From Within, 2011
Walker Art Center, Minneapolis
photo by Gene Pittman



Anti-Collage (Julita Wójcik), 2011, serigraph on photograph, photo by Anna Pietrzak-Bartos



Anti-Collage (Anda Rottenberg), 2011, serigraph on photograph, photo by Anna Pietrzak-Bartos



Anti-Collage (Piotr Ukiński and Adam Szymczyk), 2011, serigraph on photograph, photo by Anna Pietrzak-Bartos



Anti-Collage (Harald Szeemann), 2011, serigraph on photograph, photo by Anna Pietrzak-Bartos

Skandal wirtualny

Media raporty burzą wokół rzekomych przysięg i przysięgi, a nie tożsamości i wyznania. Jakimż tożsamości w wirtualnym świecie?

Różnica między tymi dwiema sferami jest ogromna. W świecie rzeczywistym, gdzie przysięga jest wyznaniem, a wyznanie jest przysięgą, w świecie wirtualnym, gdzie przysięga jest tylko słowem, a wyznanie jest tylko słowem, różnica jest ogromna. W świecie rzeczywistym, gdzie przysięga jest wyznaniem, a wyznanie jest przysięgą, w świecie wirtualnym, gdzie przysięga jest tylko słowem, a wyznanie jest tylko słowem, różnica jest ogromna.

Nadciągająca inkwizycja

Spodobało się tylko krzyżakom. Ktoś chciałby wiedzieć, jak wygląda inkwizycja w XXI wieku?

W świecie wirtualnym, gdzie przysięga jest tylko słowem, a wyznanie jest tylko słowem, różnica jest ogromna. W świecie rzeczywistym, gdzie przysięga jest wyznaniem, a wyznanie jest przysięgą, w świecie wirtualnym, gdzie przysięga jest tylko słowem, a wyznanie jest tylko słowem, różnica jest ogromna.

Gomułka ponowoczesności

Przyjaciele Andy Rottenberga i ich „nowy socrealizm”

Dziś w tym świecie, który podzielił się na światy, w którym przysięga jest tylko słowem, a wyznanie jest tylko słowem, różnica jest ogromna. W świecie rzeczywistym, gdzie przysięga jest wyznaniem, a wyznanie jest przysięgą, w świecie wirtualnym, gdzie przysięga jest tylko słowem, a wyznanie jest tylko słowem, różnica jest ogromna.

Rottenberg, Tomczak i...

W Warszawie, 11 października 2011 r.

W Warszawie, 11 października 2011 r. W świecie wirtualnym, gdzie przysięga jest tylko słowem, a wyznanie jest tylko słowem, różnica jest ogromna. W świecie rzeczywistym, gdzie przysięga jest wyznaniem, a wyznanie jest przysięgą, w świecie wirtualnym, gdzie przysięga jest tylko słowem, a wyznanie jest tylko słowem, różnica jest ogromna.



Wirtualny świat, gdzie przysięga jest tylko słowem, a wyznanie jest tylko słowem, różnica jest ogromna.



Inkwizycja w XXI wieku, gdzie przysięga jest tylko słowem, a wyznanie jest tylko słowem, różnica jest ogromna.



Przyjaciele Andy Rottenberga i ich „nowy socrealizm”, gdzie przysięga jest tylko słowem, a wyznanie jest tylko słowem, różnica jest ogromna.



W Warszawie, 11 października 2011 r., gdzie przysięga jest tylko słowem, a wyznanie jest tylko słowem, różnica jest ogromna.

Rottenberg zrezygnowała z kierowania Zachętą

Anda Rottenberg zrezygnowała z kierowania Zachętą. W Warszawie, 11 października 2011 r.

W obronie Andy Rottenberg

W Warszawie, 11 października 2011 r. W świecie wirtualnym, gdzie przysięga jest tylko słowem, a wyznanie jest tylko słowem, różnica jest ogromna.

Osławienie polskiego PIN Clubu

W Warszawie, 11 października 2011 r. W świecie wirtualnym, gdzie przysięga jest tylko słowem, a wyznanie jest tylko słowem, różnica jest ogromna.

W obronie Andy Rottenberg

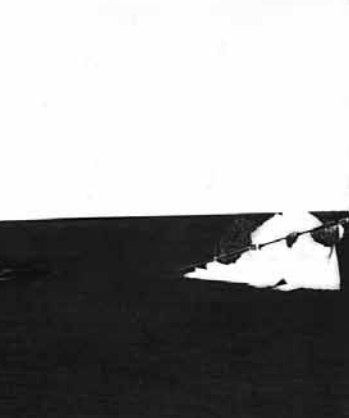
W Warszawie, 11 października 2011 r. W świecie wirtualnym, gdzie przysięga jest tylko słowem, a wyznanie jest tylko słowem, różnica jest ogromna.

Polsko, Ciebie błyskotkami łudzą



Polsko, Ciebie błyskotkami łudzą, gdzie przysięga jest tylko słowem, a wyznanie jest tylko słowem, różnica jest ogromna.

Zdjęcie miesiąca



Zdjęcie miesiąca, gdzie przysięga jest tylko słowem, a wyznanie jest tylko słowem, różnica jest ogromna.

Antysemicka nagonka zastąpiła dyskusję o kulturze

W Warszawie, 11 października 2011 r. W świecie wirtualnym, gdzie przysięga jest tylko słowem, a wyznanie jest tylko słowem, różnica jest ogromna.

Kara za obronę Ojca Świętego

W Warszawie, 11 października 2011 r. W świecie wirtualnym, gdzie przysięga jest tylko słowem, a wyznanie jest tylko słowem, różnica jest ogromna.

Polacy zostali obrażeni

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Uderzenie w Ojca Świętego

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Antysemicka nagonka zastąpiła dyskusję o kulturze

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Antysemicka nagonka zastąpiła dyskusję o kulturze

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Antysemicka nagonka zastąpiła dyskusję o kulturze

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Jaja Kozry

Wymy „Kozry” zaczęły się dziesiąt lat temu. Wtedy to w Warszawie powstała grupa artystów, którzy zaczęli tworzyć sztukę, która miała być odpowiedzią na pytanie: jak wygląda świat, w którym żyjemy?

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Zwróć na siebie uwagę - oto uproszony cel Terza Jaj. Jest to niewątpliwie chorobą umysłową.

Dotyka wszystkich, szczególnie zaś mitych trójek artystów, polityków i żurnalistów rzezi obcojęzycznego i intelektualnego.

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TO MI ZWISA

JEST UWAZANA ZA NAJWIĘKSZĄ SKANDALISTKĘ I PROWOKATORKĘ POKOLENIA TRZYDZIESTOLATKÓW. JEJ PRACE SZOKUJĄ, OBRĄŻAJĄ, BUDZĄ WSTRĘT, RZADZIEJ FANTAZJĘ. NIEKTÓRYCH KRYTYCY NAZYWAJĄ KOZRYE NIEODRODZINNYM DZIECKIEM DOKTORA MENGELE I SUGERUJĄ, ŻE NIEPOWOLNIE WYKORZYSTUJE BAZAŻY Z LUDZKIEJ SKÓRY



MAMIA JANUSZ WRÓBLEWSKI

W tym celu zaczęli tworzyć sztukę, która miała być odpowiedzią na pytanie: jak wygląda świat, w którym żyjemy? W tym celu zaczęli tworzyć sztukę, która miała być odpowiedzią na pytanie: jak wygląda świat, w którym żyjemy?

Andalicyzna laureatka

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Dama z fallusem

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ŻYCIE

Dożyć

W tym celu zaczęli tworzyć sztukę, która miała być odpowiedzią na pytanie: jak wygląda świat, w którym żyjemy? W tym celu zaczęli tworzyć sztukę, która miała być odpowiedzią na pytanie: jak wygląda świat, w którym żyjemy?



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Katę przeciw przemocy ostali się Kalfajory i kapusta

Zła krew

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Artysta musi być zawsze na dnie, tylko z dnem można krzyczeć, aby być słyszalnym. Tam, gdzie dno, może wspólnie się rozdzielić.

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Kozrya a satanizm

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Piotr Szaryński

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Obyczaj

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Sr... więc jestem!

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Jan Słoniowski: **James S. Ackerman wrote that specialization leads to limitations, and if the task of the critic is to formulate value judgments on works of art, and the task of the historian is to understand the art of the past, then neither of them can fulfill their task properly without working in both fields. Ackerman claims that dry history and flowery criticism are the price paid for the excessive division of labor. Your practice challenges the clear-cut divisions defining the profession of the curator, artist, historian . . .**

Goshka Macuga: It seems to me that we have been witnessing the development of the profession of curator for at least a decade now. In the UK departments offering such training appeared on a mass scale. Curators play an increasing role, and often enjoy the status of celebrities, people who are sought after and appear everywhere. They get a lot of exposure in the media. I think that the definition of both artistic and curatorial practice holds so much freedom and creativity in itself that drawing a clear line between them would be quite artificial. While working on *Sleep of Ulro* I acted as artist, curator, and even architect, trying to create a scenario framing the material. I collaborated with other artists, and commissioned works from them which were to be presented in the context of my own. I was trying to challenge the traditional understanding of the concept of authorship. This was to be an ideal museum, created by me from scratch. I was the one who negotiated the works from other institutions, and I had the final say about their choice and interpretative context. In a way, I also became a critic, making judgments about what's 'good' and what's 'bad'. It seems to me that such a decision can be made by anyone, there is no objective beauty. This is where Duchamp comes in along with his concept of nominating something as a work of art.

For some time now the practice of a number of artists has been characterized by a phenomenon Dieter Roelstraete has termed the 'historiographic turn'. This approach to the past as a material is symptomatic for artists engaged in historical reckoning in post-Communist states. Do you think that your background has somehow determined the choice of material you are working in?

Indeed, the actual medium I'm working in is history. I'm from a generation which saw it as something really important. We were shaped by it, but we also discovered that we can't rely on the official historical record. Now, memory of the past is seen by most as worthless. By changing the narrative of certain events, manipulating the factual material, I write

history anew. It's like negotiating facts. One way or the other, I guess it's a popular tendency for people to recall things from long ago and not to remember positive things that happened, say, last year. The past becomes blurred, we can only reach for its essence in the period of our youthful optimism.

In spite of the fact that you often give up the traditional tools of a painter or sculptor for the sake of means of mass communication, material plays an extremely important role in your work, you gravitate towards traditional crafts: making tapestries, sculpture, ceramics . . .

That's also in reference to the past, a nostalgia towards the materials, the traditional crafts. Of course, it's not about mastering the profession, I don't want to be a master weaver, sculptor, or ceramist. Using various media in such a way leaves a lot of room for mistakes in the making. While mistakes can hold value in themselves. I find some media particularly attractive for the meaning they convey, like the tapestries which have a strong historical function that I'm trying to invoke.

The Emperor Charles V, to whose motto *plus ultra* you referred in the tapestry presented in Venice's Arsenal in 2009, used this medium as a political banner (tapestries could be sent to the most distant reaches of his vast empire). Nelson A. Rockefeller, a philanthropist and art enthusiast, used this property of tapestries to make Picasso's work known to a wide public. Apart from buying *Guernica* in 1955 (which you used in Whitechapel), he commissioned a number of tapestries with Picasso's paintings from Atelier Dürnbach, which were later presented in his house in Albany and loaned to various institutions. I have the impression that your approach to art is similar: with a focus on egalitarianism, accessibility, as well as involving the viewer in the creative process, as in *Picture Room* . . .

In the project I made for Gasworks, the exhibition had a number of layers which had to be opened up, but I didn't want the public to do it themselves — this would run the risk of destroying the works. So, again, you can see that we're faced with the responsibility of the curator. The opening was done by hired gallery guards, who were in fact the first interpreters of my work. The guards would often do this ineptly, and they would communicate a false message. This was of value in itself, because it demonstrated their own interpretation of my work. In spite of the fact that I make installations which are open to the public; of which, in a sense, the public can become part, it seems to me that art isn't for free. The idea of an artist

who allows others 'into' his or her work, who allows viewers to become co-authors, is very interesting, but it seems to me that art should be only presented to people who are prepared for it. Of course, in a time when art is widely available through digital media, this call sounds quite utopian. But as far as physical contact with artworks is concerned, it should be reserved for a narrow audience. Being at the Gwangju Biennale in South Korea, I saw factory workers from across the country transported there in buses, along with their families, to perk up the number of visitors. I think they had a rather vague idea about art. The thing that immediately jumped into my mind were the official celebrations in the People's Republic of Poland. The availability of art is only a value when the public is properly introduced to it. This is one of the themes of the exhibition in Zachęta.

In your practice, you often appropriate others' works for your own needs. You also quote artists who did the same thing, like Sherrie Levine. This is how you create what could be called *mise en abîme*. In the Zachęta exhibition, the gallery's Matejko Room will feature *Polish Family*, inspired by Oscar Bony's 'live sculpture' *La Familia Obrera* [The Proletarian Family] from 1968. You also re-enacted Kantor's happening *The Letter* from 1967, in order to create a tapestry. The distinction between the subject and the object of your quotes seems to get blurred . . .

I'm very much interested in the notion of authorship. Speaking of Sherrie Levine, one needs to remember Duchamp and the idea of transubstantiation. He was the one who spoke about the relationship between the artist and the viewer. An object becomes an artistic object when this relationship is shaped competently. In the exhibition in Zachęta, I'd like to use the voice of viewers and present materials which are not part of the fiction created by me. I'm drawing on documents coming from the outside — from the space of viewers. Everything I found in Zachęta's records seemed extremely valuable. The words of critique levelled at art are a form of negotiating its content, but also of negotiating language. The political transformation brought freedom of speech which was avidly used by many artists. Thus, those who protest against their statements, must assume that some ideal concept of language of art exists. Unfortunately, they aren't making it clear as to what that should be, or exactly what their point is. Thinking about what actions to quote, to make my statement best correspond with the rather simple and common language used by the authors of texts I encountered, I came to the conclusion that the only choices were pop art and conceptual art. I eventually decided to refer to the tradition of conceptual art.

To both its European variety as well as the more brutal South-American one . . . For the much-discussed exhibition *Experiencias '68*, at Instituto Di Tella in Buenos Aires, Bony hired real people, representatives of the working class, and sat them on a pedestal with a note: *Sitting idly with his wife and son, Luis Ricardo Rodríguez, earns twice his daily wage. Bony wanted to highlight the class disparity between the hired, seemingly elevated family, and the gallery public. For what reason did you choose to refer to this 'delegated' performance?*

A lot of remarks which I read in the Zachęta guest book concerned whether taxpayers' money was being appropriately spent by the state cultural institutions, which is why I think that Bony's performance fits this situation very well. Bony was trying to confront social reality, the problem of unemployment, with the issue of spending on art, and our control over it, or lack of it. In a sense, a family is also symbolic as a social unit. This is where the educational aspect comes in, which should be a part of all artistic practice. Should art be moral? And to what extent the artist bears the burden of educating the society, the youth and the children?

The neo-liberal reality we live in also has an impact on relationships between closest relatives. The postmodern nuclear family dominated by external relations, where everyone acts on their own, where there is no cooperation or discussion, it's not the family which Bony and you place on the pedestal. In Whitechapel Gallery you installed a round conference table resembling the one used in the United Nations Headquarters in New York. Throughout the whole year, the space could be rented for meetings, conferences, and lectures. The gallery hosted supporters of 'Green Theology', groups of university students, as well as foundations and art collectives of various kinds. The discussions could be observed by the gallery guests. The aim, in this case, was not so much to make the debates (which are usually held behind closed doors) public, but rather to present various methods and levels of generating a discourse. The exhibition in Zachęta is not the first show in which you draw on the attacks on art as a form of argumentation. For example, at the Walker Art Center, you referred to the project *Building Minnesota* by Hock E Aye Vi Edgar *Heap of Birds*, which came under heavy criticism from the local residents of the Twin Cities. *Experiencias '68*, which we mentioned before, ended up with the police taking down Roberto Plata's installation . . .

Kantor's happening, to which I refer in Zachęta, consisted in literally sending an object, the letter, down the streets of Warsaw, from the post office at Ordynacka Street to Foksal Gallery, where it was destroyed by the waiting public. I'm not sure if the ending was intended by the artist, but this is actually not important here. What I meant was to refer to the act of violence towards a work of art. The destruction of Uklański or Cattelan's works was an extremely active reaction to art, however, such acts don't contribute to intellectual exchange. A discussion will never be constructive if one of the parties does not possess adequate knowledge. In the UK, media interest in art probably began with the YBAs. From that time, all artistic actions, and the controversial and 'media' ones in particular, were covered by the press and television. The Turner Prize competition, for example, had live coverage which focused mostly on scandals accompanying the event. It seems to me that we're dealing with a similar situation in Poland, where, since 1989, people's attention is being drawn to the wrong things. Rather than trying to inform people about the artist's intentions, the media are preoccupied with fanning the flames of scandal, reproducing and reinforcing usually the wrong interpretations, formulated from the perspective of an unprepared public. I think that there's still just a handful of people who know the intentions of Uklański or Cattelan. But everyone seems to remember what happened in Zachęta and to have negative associations about it — which is exactly what happened with the aura of the works of those artists. The way I see it, the debate which is much needed should address the possibility of an alliance between the artists and the media. I mean a possibility of explaining art to people and avoiding misinterpretations . . .

Tony Shafrazi said in 1980 that his act of protest against the fact that William Calley was pardoned¹, was meant to separate the work of art from history and offer it a new life. Shafrazi claimed that his act was an active participation in the creation of *Guernica*. Do you see acts of vandalism directed at the work of Cattelan and Uklański in a similar way?

When an action is motivated by the will to destroy something, it can lead to anarchy. Such a constructive and destructive approach to the history of art, or history in general, is quite complicated. Looking at the actions of the Polish MPs who destroyed artists' works, we can see them as a form of a happening,

¹ In 1974 Shafrazi spray-painted Picasso's painting *Guernica*, which hung in the Museum of Modern Art, with the words 'KILL LIES ALL', protesting against President Nixon's pardon of war criminal William Calley, an accomplice in the My Lai massacre in Vietnam.

an artistic action. I'm not sure if their intervention in the work was meant to contribute to its meaning. But I also can't dismiss such an option. I wouldn't want to place art in a confined circle. I think that everyone can become engaged in the debate around it. The important thing is keep the discourse on a certain level. This is where we reach an important function which the cultural institutions should serve. I recently talked with a person in Poland who told me how he walked in and out of a gallery with the same feeling of emptiness in his head — there was nothing attractive. I think that this is a failure for the institution. There are things which people don't understand in exhibitions but still they leave the gallery excited, they want to learn something and know more. The relationship between art and the public becomes tangible. The exhibition has a certain added value. Value judgments on art in this case seem to be of minor importance. And while a provocation is important, it should not be used as an end in itself.

Your works are always closely related to the space in which they are presented, drawing on its history. Eligiusz Niewiadomski² is a figure who is immediately associated with Zachęta . . .

The murder of Narutowicz has an undeniable influence on the power of this place. I wanted to refer to it as a form of protest, to demonstrate the means used to present one's arguments. I draw on the material from Zachęta's archive which documents the history of changing reactions to Polish art since 1989. It's quite interesting, as this was also the point at which I left Poland. So I'm working on history I didn't know before. But I'm not following the Polish political scene, I know neither about the attitude of society towards the Kaczyński brothers, nor about the particular MPs who attacked the artists. I take into account the fact that this can be used against me. I also didn't work here in the field of art when the possibility of free expression emerged. I know artists from my generation who worked in Poland throughout that period, and I was very much interested in ways of addressing certain problems and history that we share to some extent. The cases of censorship in art, not only in Zachęta but across the whole of Poland, are widely known. But nobody has attempted to bring them all together. As for myself, I'll be only quoting a few cases, addressing all of them would be simply impossible.

² Eligiusz Niewiadomski was a Polish painter and art critic and a member of the right-wing National Democratic Party. In 1922, during an exhibition opening in Zachęta, Niewiadomski assassinated Gabriel Narutowicz, the first president of the Second Polish Republic.

Goshka Macuga

Born 1967 in Warsaw
Lives and works in London

Goshka Macuga is represented by Kate MacGarry (London), Galerie Rüdiger Schöttle (Munich) and Andrew Kreps Gallery (New York).

SELECTED SOLO EXHIBITIONS

2011

It Broke From Within, Walker Art Center, Minneapolis
Untitled, Zachęta National Gallery of Art, Warsaw

2010

Galerie Rüdiger Schöttle, Munich
Newspeak: British Art Now, The State Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg

2009

The Bloomberg Commission: Goshka Macuga. The Nature of the Beast, Whitechapel, London
I Am Become Death, Kunsthalle Basel
All that Is Solid Melts into Air, Mechelen, Belgium

2008

Gottesegen, Galerie Rüdiger Schöttle, Munich

2007

Objects in Relation, Art Now, Tate Britain, London
What's in a Name?, Andrew Kreps Gallery, New York

2006

Mula sem Cabeça (Headless Mule), *How to Live Together*, 27th São Paulo Biennial, São Paulo
Sleep of Ulro, The Furnace Commission, A Foundation, Liverpool

2005

Kate MacGarry, London

2003

Kabinett der Abstrakten, Bloomberg SPACE, London
Picture Room, Gasworks Gallery, London

2002

Friendship of the Peoples (with Declan Clarke), Project Arts Centre, Dublin
Untitled, Foksal Gallery Foundation, Warsaw
Homeless Furniture, Transmission Gallery, Glasgow

2000

Cave, Kunstakuten, Stockholm

1999

Cave, Sali Gia, London

SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS

2010

Newspeak: British Art Now Part One, Saatchi Gallery, London
Tutto e' connesso: ricerche e approfondimenti nell'arte dell'ultimo decennio attraverso la collezione, Castello di Rivoli, Turin
Star City. The Future Under Communism, Nottingham Contemporary

2009

The Dark Monarch: Magic and Modernity in British Art, Tate St. Ives
Textile Art and the Social Fabric, MuHKA Museum of Contemporary Art, Antwerp
Fare Mondi / Making Worlds, 53rd Venice Biennale, Corderie dell'Arsenale, Venice

2008

Turner Prize 2008, Tate Britain, London
The Great Transformation: Art and Tactical Magic, Frankfurter Kunstverein, Frankfurt; travelling to MARCO Museo de Arte Contemporanea de Vigo, Spain
5th Berlin Biennial for Contemporary Art, Neue Nationalgalerie, Berlin
Martian Museum of Terrestrial Art, Barbican Art Gallery, London
Santhal Family: Positions around an Indian Sculpture, MuHKA Museum of Contemporary Art, Antwerp

2006

How to Live Together, 27th São Paulo Biennial, São Paulo
Moving in Architecture, Camden Arts Centre and Curzon Cinema Soho, London
Mathilda Is Calling, Institut Mathildenhöhe, Darmstadt

2005

Communism, Project Arts Centre, Dublin
The British Art Show 6, Baltic, Gateshead & touring the UK
Go Between, Amt der Landeshauptstadt Kultur, Bregenzner Kunstverein, Bregenz, Austria

2004

Autumn Catalog Leather Fringes, Kunsthalle Basel
Perfectly Placed, South London Gallery, London

2003

The Straight or Crooked Way, Royal College of Art, London
CHOCKERFUKINGBLOCKED, Jeffrey Charles Gallery, London

2002

To the Glory of God: New Religious Art, Liverpool Biennial, Liverpool
London Underground, Taipei Fine Art Museum, Taipei, Taiwan
Pause, Conception, 4th Gwangju Biennale, South Korea
The Haunted House of Art, Outline Gallery, Amsterdam

2001

Zawody malarskie, Galeria Bielska BWA, Bielsko-Biala
Woof Woof. Becoming Animal, Austrian Cultural Forum, London
Skuggspel, Tullkammaren, Umeå, Sweden
Free Wahlen / Uptight Out of Control 3, Staatliche Kunsthalle, Baden-Baden, Germany

1999

The Mountain and the Valley, Cubitt Gallery, London

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

Press

2010

'Art Propaganda and Politics: Goshka Macuga, Didem Yaziki'. *Res Magazine*, March, pp. 130-33

2009

Scharrer, Eva. 'Goshka Macuga: Kunsthalle Basel'. *Modern Painters*, May, p. 70
Searle, Adrian. 'Whitechapel Gallery Reopens with Picasso and Anthrax'. *The Guardian*, March 31

Glover, Michael. 'Goshka Macuga at the Whitechapel Gallery'. *The Times*, March 30, p. 9

Watson, Grant. 'Friendship of the Peoples: On the Work of Goshka Macuga'. *Afterall*, Spring, pp. 64-70

'Knowing This . . . Goshka Macuga in Conversation with Monika Szewczyk about Projects in Progress'. *Afterall*, Spring, pp. 72-80

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Academic Session
The Future of Censorship
17-18 February 2012 (Friday-Saturday)

The session seeks to explore the mechanisms of censorship in art over the course of the last two decades. It will be divided in two parts. The first part will address issues from the field of theory of censorship, its legal and institutional determinants, counter-censorship efforts undertaken by social activists and journalists, as well as censorship strategies in the history and theory of recent art. The second part will seek to explore and understand selected examples of censorship, and will bring together both artists and art theorists. The papers and materials produced in the course of the session will be published in the catalogue accompanying the exhibition.

The session is organized by
Ewa Majewska, PhD (Culture Institute, Jagiellonian University) and Maria Brewińska and Stanisław Welbel (Zachęta National Gallery of Art).

see more about the session at www.zacheta.art.pl

Screenings
Film Tuesdays — *Censored!*

10 January 2012 (Tuesday) 6 pm

Wielka ucieczka cenzora [The Censor's Great Escape], dir. Grzegorz Braun, Poland, 1999, 56 min.
The history of Tomasz Strzyżewski, a censor who led to the publishing of the *The Black Book of Polish Censorship*.

17 January 2012 (Tuesday) 6 pm

Damned in the USA, dir. Paul Yule, UK, 1993, 68 min.
in English

A look at Donald Wildmon and the American Family Association's push for increased censorship of film, the arts, and music in the US.

24 January 2012 (Tuesday) 6 pm

The War You Don't See, dir. John Pilger, Alan Lowery, UK, 2010, 97 min.
in English

A documentary which challenges the media for the role they played in the Iraq, Afghanistan, and Israel-Palestine conflicts.

31 January 2012 (Tuesday) 6 pm

The Trap: What Happened to Our Dream of Freedom, dir. Adam Curtis, UK, 2007, 180 min. (BBC documentary series, 3 episodes)
in English

In this series of three one-hour programs the English filmmaker Adam Curtis explores the idea and definition of freedom.

All screenings take place in the multimedia room
(entrance from Burscego Street)
free entrance

guided tours and workshops for children, youth and families
more details at www.zacheta.art.pl



Zachęta Narodowa Galeria Sztuki
pl. Matachowskiego 3
00-916 Warszawa
director: Hanna Wróblewska

Goshka Macuga
untitled

3 December 2011 – 19 February 2012

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Maria Brewińska

COOPERATION

Katarzyna Kołodziej

EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMME
Stanisław Welbel and team

EXECUTION

Anna Muszyńska and team

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Triptych, 2011, material from the conservator's report on the damaged work by Maurizio Cattelan *La Nona Ora* (The Ninth Hour), photo by Justyna Butyniec-Podlaska

