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Paradoks widza / The Paradox of the Spectator

The Paradox of the Spectator about the programme of Malta Festival Poznań 2016

Denis Diderot, the author of *Jacques the Fatalist* and co-author of the *Encyclopédie*, is rarely associated with the work *Paradoxe sur le comédien* (*Paradox of the Actor*, 1770-1778), which is in fact, the first attempt in history to theoretically organise acting techniques. Why a paradox, we may ask. Because according to Diderot, an actor on stage was supposed to imitate feelings so vividly as to impart them upon the audience, and at the same time, so superficially as to not to lose control over them and to consciously influence the effect produced among viewers. Diderot was the first to thus separate imitation and purgation (mimesis and catharsis), which at his time, defined acting. Setting the eighteenth-century philosophy of theatre on a new course, he also established that the art of acting must constantly be redefined, that it was essential to constantly seek new languages of expression and to reflect on the workings of theatre.

Such a reflection is apparent in the work of Lotte van den Berg, the curator of the Malta Festival Idiom *The Paradox of the Spectator*, who reverses the perspective on how the performing arts are understood. In her approach, theatre does not begin with the actor but with the viewer: the one who chooses to watch. Van den Berg believes that to pause, to take a seat and to watch requires similar courage to the one required to go out on stage. What does the act of watching entail? Why do we constantly need to look at others? Who determines the plane of being a spectator and the personal responsibility for what one is looking at? What makes us look away and what can we not take our eyes off? And how are we changed by the image we look at? The word "paradox" in the title of this year's Idiom points to the inner contradiction of being a "spectator": not only in the latest play, but also in social life.

In the modern world, we are all snooping and being snooped on. This problem was opened up for discussion two decades ago by the Big Brother television franchise. Today, judging by the role of the Internet, the show seems a harmless episode in the history of popular culture. Thanks to YouTube, Facebook, Twitter or blogs, snooping has become widespread. We can constantly both monitor the lives of others and be observed. And we do not find this at all surprising. We disapprove of the increasing number of cameras recording our behaviour in malls, workplaces or at road junctions, but are happy to upload photographs on the web, to reveal the details of our private lives and to create our own self-images: to fashion ourselves anew based on how we would like to see ourselves. It is not enough to say anymore that life is a theatre where we alternate between being the actors and viewers of our own and someone else's fate. The metaphor of people playing roles imposed upon them by a director is

no longer sufficient, whilst the theatre it refers to has become obsolete. Contemporary artists use various approaches in their attempts to activate viewers, and to depart from the traditional stage/audience system and the active/passive division.

Viewer participation has become so important because, today, daily life forces us to consciously take stances, and this produces consequences: both ethical and political ones. News like the Nepal earthquake, the suicide bombing in Pakistan or the tsunami in Japan reaches us immediately. New technologies widen our access to information, and consequently, the spectrum of being a witness affecting our sense of shared responsibility for the reality in which we live. How do we determine the limits of this responsibility in a globalised world? Are we still capable of empathy as we face such a magnitude of disaster? What stance should we adopt towards events taking place in the other hemisphere? Should we become spectators, witnesses or actors? Should we watch, report or take part? How can we live our own lives as we concern ourselves with worldwide problems? Should we build walls or share in the suffering of others? The example of refugees coming to Europe from Syria and Africa shows that the viewer/actor/witness position in the modern world is variable, and must therefore, be constantly re-problematised. This is a matter that concerns us all.

For some, Diderot's proposals from over two centuries ago may be valid, and for some completely outworn. However, in *Paradoxe sur le comédien* we can clearly see the enormous intellectual effort of this Enlightenment thinker who wanted to influence the theatre of his time, to change it and to point it towards new pathways. The role of a performing arts festival is to make a similar effort in order to initiate a discussion on artistic practice in relation to the phenomena of the era in which it exists. During the twenty-sixth Malta Festival, we want the viewers, the passers-by, the artists, the guests and the organizers to form a group together in order to discover some new perspectives on being a spectator. The performances, installations, lectures, films, concerts and debates will create an eclectic fresco which, in many ways, will bring to light the eponymous paradox of the spectator: it will problematise the act of watching and provoke those involved to look. The Idiom programme features projects which give a similar role to the viewers, who will decide for themselves what they want to see and what meanings to accept in their act of perception and identification. This includes a performance where the audience looks at the action from afar and experiences a growing sense of helplessness, as well as a live installation that introduces ambiguous images into public space, forcing passers-by to stop, and to consciously look

at and define what they find confusing. There will also be a show reminiscent of a wild party over which we lose control, a tour of an abandoned theatre where the division of roles between the supernumerary, the viewer and the actor becomes completely obscured, and a performance/conversation in which the viewers/actors will jointly consider alternative debating methods.

In the context of the Idiom, of particular importance will be this year's Generator Malta, the plane for engaging a particular group of viewers, actors and witnesses, i.e. the residents of Poznań. The city, which has always been present at the Malta Festival as a subject, an experimental training ground and an inspiration, stands alongside the viewer as a protagonist in which we can also see a paradox. To its residents, the city displays a dual dimension: it can be a shared asset that belongs to society and supports connections, but also a sphere that alienates people and conforms to the interests of some narrow groups. Finally, it is a plane of rebellion and resistance, the scene of fighting for freedom. These latter values will be referred to by Jan Komasa in a multimedia performance commissioned by the Malta Festival to commemorate the sixtieth anniversary of the Poznań 1956 protests.

The festival programme is not about instructing the viewers or telling them what is right or wrong in our private and collective strategies of looking. We wish to present a variety of perspectives on and attitudes towards being in the world, as well as some different possible approaches to the observation of and participation in the arts. What does it mean "to act" or "to watch" or "to act by watching"? Theatre, sociological and anthropological philosophy, politics and everyday life are inextricably intertwined, and Lotte van den Berg points out that in these uncertain times we need dialogue, i.e. skilfully conducted conversation, more than ever. The paradox of the spectator will not be removed, but a reflection upon it may help us understand that which surrounds us and take a conscious stance.

Dorota Semenowicz, Katarzyna Tórz

Programme Section, Malta Festival Poznań

April 2016

The Paradox of the Spectator

curatorial text

Tuesday 22 March

Brussels has just been attacked; the images and stories about it are coming in as I write. What concerns me most is that I seem to be getting used to it. A few months ago, after the attacks in Paris, I was terribly upset. Now I seem to already know it. The reactions, the measures being taken, they're already kind of familiar. Today's attacks scare me less and that's precisely what really scares me.

Kasia Torz, dramaturg for the Malta Festival in Poznan, asked me to work with her on a section of the programme for the 2016 edition called 'Idiom'. The starting point of our discussion was the relation between the actor, the witness and the spectator. Is it important to differentiate between these roles, these different ways of engaging? To be honest, at this moment I don't know.

As a spectator, you occupy a safe place; a spectator does not fear for his or her life. Your connection to the action is indirect, hypothetical; it goes through your mind and emotions. As a witness, you are in the midst of the action, look at it from the epicentre, where you can be hit, devoured. As an actor, the one who acts, you cannot be separated from the action and are responsible for it. In Brussels today, nobody in the metro station was a spectator. Here in Amsterdam, am I a spectator or a witness? And does it matter?

In my experience it is better to be where the action is, because there things are more clear. One night I got a phone call: my younger brother had just had an emergency operation and they had found a tumour in his belly that most likely was cancerous.

My mother was there, my sister was there. I was at home and had to stay at home. I couldn't get to the hospital until the morning. The nerves, the nausea, the absolute helplessness I felt that night – all of that was gone as soon as I walked into the hospital room and saw him, could sit next to his bed, embrace him. Coping, dealing with something from afar is hard for me, my thoughts keep spinning around. When a good friend of mine died, I was in his house with his wife and kids. We peeled vegetables, boiled water, made soup. The fact that we could do something, literally do something, helped.

When we are not where the action is, we do our best to create an overall picture. Radio, television, the Internet. The live blogs

intensify, experts are flown in. We speculate, know for certain. Politicians act as if they have the situation under control, but they don't. Nobody really knows what to do next. Everybody is caught up in the moment, in the midst of the confusion. We let ourselves be caught up in the idea that we know what's actually going on, that we have an overview of the situation, but everything is complete chaos.

In the theatre, too, we create the illusion of an overall picture. The stage is built so that everybody can see everything, seemingly to put us at ease. The illusion of a watchtower. We give ourselves an elevated place and watch from the dark. For me, today, the notion of this place off the ground, close to the stage, in the dark, has lost its credibility. Right now I don't believe there is a place to which we can withdraw, a place where we can watch in peace and quiet. At the same time I long for it more than ever. For silence all around me. To focus, zoom in and forget about the rest.

Is it conceivable to watch from a safe place in the full awareness of being in the midst of the world? This touches upon Brecht's epic desire, the breathing mechanism of knowing and not knowing, of belief and unbelief, of forgetting, remembering and forgetting again. As a spectator, forgetting yourself, becoming absorbed in what you are observing on stage and then suddenly becoming aware again that you exist and are sitting on your chair in the dark, that the action is not only taking place on stage but that you yourself are also undertaking action while you watch and together with hundreds of others are creating the stage.

Looking is an action. By looking, I am connecting myself with the world around me. It feels like I am touching it with my eyes. My gaze wanders around the room; I look at the chairs, the floor, the window. I feel connected with the cold glass in the window frame, and then beyond that, with the garden, the trees outside. It seems like I am exploring from a distance the things I am looking at, my eyes glide over them, touching them lightly and carefully. I'm still sitting here on my chair at the kitchen table, yet I have connected with the brick wall on the other side of the street, far away from me. My eyes linger on the redness of the bricks and the grooves between them. I imagine what it must be like to be there, to be a wall.

The videos, photos, words stream in through Facebook and news sites. A photo of a woman, enervated, slumped on the ground, catches my eye and won't let me go. Her clothes are in shreds, breasts exposed. Do I want to see this? Should I be seeing this?

Han, a contemporary philosopher, compares the modern person with a wild animal. We are not safe anywhere. We are like the hyenas that consume their prey in the middle of the prairie, always alert, always on their guard, constantly aware of the possibility of being attacked and eaten up themselves.

Spectators absolve themselves of the obligation to respond directly. They can totally wallow in watching and do not feel any obligation to change or influence what they see. At least, not while they are watching. We can lay that role aside, walk out of the theatre and start taking action, knock down walls, build bridges. But when we are sitting in our seats in the dark, we can watch and give our complete attention to what we are seeing. In that sense, giving yourself the role of a spectator, or perhaps even permitting yourself that role, is purposely not taking action. We step off the roller coaster of ongoing potential.

Today, however, is different. I won't allow myself to be a spectator. I feel I am a witness and am obliged to go into action. Right away, I share what I have seen, send it on, take a position, show myself (look at me, I saw this). Watching the sunset, and while I'm doing that being distracted by potatoes boiling over on the stove, the telephone ringing, children needing to pee and in the meantime looking at images of the devastation in Brussels. Don't try to impose order on this sorry mess. Take a picture of the sunset. Put it on Facebook. Claim that you watched it.

Again I'm reminded of the night my brother was in the hospital diagnosed with cancer and I was at home and could not go to him. I'll never forget how the nerves wracked my body. I wanted to do something, couldn't do anything. This is precisely the feeling in which we trap ourselves. We are apathetic witnesses, passively involved, present in a state of paralysis. We are like a rabbit caught in a car's headlights when we know and see something from afar.

Actor, witness, spectator. We play all of these roles at the same time. The problem, I now understand, is our inability to differentiate between them. It has a paralyzing effect: not daring to choose a role with regard to the action, not making any clear statement about your engagement. It's understandable, but also shows a lack of self-discipline. You let yourself be carried away by the issues of the day.

You are your own refuge. I read that when I was 18 in a booklet about Buddhism while doing research for an essay I had to write for history class. It has stayed with me ever since. You are your own refuge. I can find repose in watching. I can find repose in acting. I can find repose in acting through watch-

ing. Doing everything at the same time tires me. But if I dare to choose, if I dare to put myself at the epicentre of my own actions, I can find repose in whatever I'm doing.

The paradox of the spectator

The paradox of the spectator is being far away and close by at the same time. The paradox of separating yourself from the objects, people and situations you are watching and at the same time connecting yourself to them. The movement of distancing yourself and coming closer happens similarly. You differentiate yourself from the other and at the same time you become part of a new one-ness through watching. We try to establish order by creating an overall picture, positioning ourselves as observers of the world in front our eyes, and at the same time we cannot help but realize that things are constantly happening all around us, that we'll never get the full picture and that control is impossible. We are in and out of the situation at the same time. The challenge is not to solve this paradoxical situation, this field of confusion, but to go through it, to experience and explore it. Together with the Malta Team of dramaturges, production managers, educators, communicators and technicians, I have built for you a program that gives you the possibility to do just that. To hang around in this field of confusion, walk around in this place of not knowing. We present you theatre spaces that offer the possibility to experience both the exhausting chaos of today's world and a challenging refuge within it.

Lotte van den Berg

The Paradox of the Spectator

programme

MISS REVOLUTIONARY IDOL BERSERKER (Japan) Extreme Voices

17, 18.06, 16:00, 20:00 (50') / Scena Robocza

Twenty-five actors, singers and dancers set in motion a theatrical machine showing the frenetic dimension of the consumption culture. The artists boldly blend a variety of media, combine solemnity with comedy and humour, and shake the viewers' daily routine. In a breathtaking profusion of colours and stimuli – videos, loud music and catchphrases – they pull the audience into a wild party. The show is not recommended for people suffering from asthma, epilepsy, claustrophobia or oversensitivity to stroboscopic lights.

DRIES VERHOEVEN (Holland) Ceci n'est pas

18–25.06, od 14:00 / Półwiejska street

Ceci n'est pas is a performance art installation situated in a busy part of the city. In small glass showcases the performers freeze in unsettling poses, resembling museum exhibits behind soundproof glass. In a series of ten daily changing tableaux vivants, the artists explore the collective anxieties and taboos of contemporary European societies. These startle the viewers and make them uneasy, delivering the opportunity to look at reality from a different perspective.

LOTTE VAN DEN BERG (Holland) Building Conversation

18–26.06, 16:00 (360') / Liberty Square

Conversation as a work of art. Van den Berg finds inspiration in conversation techniques from all over the world (from South African tribal traditions to contemporary philosophical theories) and uses them in subsequent editions of her project in various European cities. Conversations are collective creations. How do we talk with one another? How could we do this differently? When are we a spectator in a conversation, and when are we an actor? How does this affect the thoughts we express and the stances we take? The Malta Festival presents three types of conversation: Conversation without Words, Agonistic Conversation, Parliament of Things.

LOTTE VAN DEN BERG (Holland) Wasteland

24, 25.06, 19:00 (60') / Jordan Bridge

The performance plays out in an open space, a forgotten and deserted no man's land. From afar, the audience observes nine vulnerable characters and their passage through the world, as they surrender to the laws of life and death. Cruelty has no cause or consequence. The performance is told through images, in a disturbing, hypnotic silence. The project was inspired by the novel *Disgrace* by J. M. Coetzee.

JULIAN HETZEL (Germany, Holland)
Sculpting Fear

25, 26.06, 20:00 (70') / CK Zamek, Great Hall

Today, we have an app for every aspect of reality. We won't get caught in the rain or lost, nor forget anything. We already know everything because the whole world is contained in a data cloud. We do not need to fear anything. In his project, director, musician and visual artist Julian Hetzel explores the beauty of disaster. How do human bodies and eyesight respond to it? What happens when reality astonishes us? The project is made up of a performance and a foray into public space.

ANT HAMPTON (United Kingdom)
The Extra People

26, 27.06, from 17:00 to 20:30 every 30 min (90') / assembly hall Collegium Da Vinci (previously WSNHiD)

A site-specific performance. Some viewers are seated in the auditorium and some on the stage where they follow instructions given to them via headphones (later the groups change their roles). The audience members are not required to have any stage experience or creative ideas; they do, nonetheless, become the co-authors of the show by following the instructions. One of the protagonists is the theatre per se, primarily as an institution that displays a specific structure of behaviours.

THE SPECTATORS GROUP WORKSHOP

20–26.06

The core idea of the project is to create a possibility for spectators to meet during the festival in an open non-hierarchical environment and exchange ideas, experiences and impressions; find out what other's have in their heads and expand our understanding of what has happened in a specific performance through the eyes of others. We'll witness ourselves as spectators and explore what happens when we use our eyes. Besides seeing performances in the evening, we will meet every day in the afternoon.

We invite people who watch for their profession, professional spectators such as security officers, laboratory technicians, bird-watchers and painters as well as theater spectators. You'll get a lot of input to enrich your exploration. On the last day we will share our findings with an audience.

LOTTE VAN DEN BERG

I use the essence of theatre as my trademark: theatre is live, theatre is here and now. You can't switch it off or casually change channels. You're right in the middle, you're part of it. Spectators and performers are in the same space, they have chosen to be there and depend on one another. My theatre stems from a firm belief in people coming together. The fact that we may show our vulnerabilities in theatre, in each other's company, to me is extremely comforting.

Lotte van den Berg, www.lottevandenbergnu

Building conversation is the core of what is theater for me. We often tend to say that theater is meeting place. And very often I don't think we use this. The experiment of thinking together... Can we think together? Is this ours? We never think alone. The thinking always happen in between people. Can we speak about God? And what happens if we try?

Lotte van den Berg, a fragment of the interview with Daan't Sas, Münchner Kammerspiele

The cause of our greatest fear isn't death, but the uselessness of our life. In „Wasteland“ that fear becomes material not to hurt or damn but to bring comfort.

Lotte van den Berg, a fragment of the interview with Daan't Sas, Münchner Kammerspiele

When I worked on Malta's program, and I thought about the viewer paradox I came back to a place I loved very much, the place occupied by the viewer. There, you can relax, things you watch come to you, but you don't have to immediately reach out to them. You exist there in a more relaxed, less burdened way. I always regarded that sphere as a space of comfort, and that is why several years ago I felt the need to leave it. I thought I should stop making theatre, that it is not enough, that I want to go in a completely separate way. Someone once said that extasy is a place beside all things, a third space. Sometimes it reminds me of going somewhere, but not directly. It is like playing something out through something else. This is how I perceive abandoning theatre, talking about all that is happening around us with other means.

Lotte van den Berg, a fragment of a conversation with Katarzyna Tórz. The interview in its entirety will be published in the theatre periodical "Didaskalia", no. 133 / 2016 (June 2016)

In her works Van den Berg constantly struggles with the dispersed no-man's land of theatre as a genre. She reduces actors' actions, words, narration to the minimum. She looks in the opposite direction than previous generations, which first had to radically eschew drama. Similarly to her peers from Dutch and Flemish theatre, she returns to the borders, which have been crossed a long time ago, she crosses them during a short excursion. Distrust towards theatre of representation has settled in, it requires neither struggle, nor provocation, nor demonstration. It became obvious.

Florian Malzacher, „People who watch people“, "Didaskalia" No. 113/2013

DRIES VERHOEVEN

I don't want to influence the opinion of the viewer as a moralist. I believe that when conceptualising and describing images, I should be standing beside them. I understand what buddists meant by drinking tea from a cracked goblet, but I am a Dutchman with a designer kitchen at his house. I want to show the viewer how aversion was born in them and in me, what we don't want to see in 2013 as a community. Full stop. Regardless if it's good or bad.

Dries Verhoeven, a fragment of the director's text about the project "Ceci n'est pas"

"Ceci n'est pas" is a project, which primarily tells us about viewer's reactions. Through confronting him with shocking images, I want him or her to feel guilty and make them ask themselves "am I just going to stand here?"

Dries Verhoeven, a fragment of the interview with Martin Herceg "Badische Zeitung", 28.11.2014

ANT HAMPTON

I think of theaters as very transparently psychological spaces – buildings which spring into existence as a direct result of how our minds work. When a theater is full, its audience and function take over and we may not think so much about what a strange invention it is. But when I walk into an empty theater it's like I can really feel the collective drive of so many humans over so much time, all that desire to watch and be watched, and how it has somehow consolidated itself into so many seats and so much stage space.

Ant Hampton a fragment of the interview for „FringeArts“

MISS REVOLUTIONARY BERSERKER

I am trying to create an explosion of the culture that is Japan. If I don't do that then I feel we can't depict our real selves living in Tokyo in 2015. Our lives are being filled with a growing number television stations, newspapers, magazines, millions of websites, smartphones, Twitter and lots more, so there is no way we can see or absorb all of this huge confusion of information around us. I recreate this world by presenting a chaotic space with too much going on for the audience to absorb.

Toko Nikaido, founder of Miss Revolutionary Berserker, a fragment of the interview with Masashi Nomura, „Performing Arts Network Japan“, 28.4.2015

Actor, witness, spectator.

Meetings at Liberty Square

As every year, Malta's artistic programme will be accompanied by Forum – meetings during which we discuss the cross-section of the festival's main theme. This year it is a relation between viewer, actor and spectator – constant change of position from which we watch the world. We will analyze this issue from the point of view of people who participate and observe professionally: actor, documentarist, photographer, film director and investigative journalist. We will also talk about what we do not perceive: about vacant and hidden urban spaces, and about people who, even though they live in the city, remain unnoticed – immigrants. The journalists of Polish Radio Three, Barbara Marcinik, Agnieszka Szydłowska and Michał Nogaś will host the meetings.

THEATRE. MEETING WITH MARIUSZ BONASZEWSKI

18.06, 17:00

Are actors aware of the presence of the audience or do they disregard them during a performance? Is their work simply a composition of gestures, facial expressions and voice modulation? Is an actor's job mechanical or does it open up to a spiritual process? Where in this process does the audience fit in? Malta's guest speaker is theatre and film actor Mariusz Bonaszewski. He worked several times with most important Polish theatrical directors, Jerzy Grzegorzewski, Krzysztof Warlikowski, Jerzy Jaroński among others.

COMMUNITY. MEETING WITH WOJCIECH JAGIELSKI

19.06, 17:00

Are feature stories creation, observation or participation? How much time does it take to capture the modes of action of individuals and societies? How do you make a reader experience what a reporter did in their first-hand encounter with the characters? Malta's guest speaker is Wojciech Jagielski, PAP journalist; Gazeta Wyborcza reporter for African, Central Asian, Caucasian and Transcaucasian affairs (1991-2012); author of several books, including *The Night Wanderers* (2010), *Modlitwa o deszcz* (2012) and *Wszystkie wojny Lary* (2015).

COMMUNITY. MIGRANTS

20.06, 17:00

Why do migrants choose Poland? How do they feel here? What problems do they face? How can their integration be supported? Malta's guest speakers are Marta Mazuś, author of *Król kebabów i inne zderzenia polsko-obce*; Myroslava Keryk, Ukrainian historian and sociologist, expert on the Ukrainian community in Poland; Nidal Kalboneh, Palestinian musician and composer living in Poznań; and Agata Kochaniewicz – migrant consultant in Migrant Info Point, streetworker.

CITY. VACANT BUILDINGS

21.06, 17:00

How many vacant buildings are there Poznań? How can their usability be restored? What good practices exist for their interim management? What role can the city council play? Malta's guest speakers are: Paulina Grębosz – member of the *Napraw Sobie Miasto* Foundation (Katowice); Mariusz Wiśniewski – Deputy President of Poznań; Jakub Głaz, architecture critic, journalist, member of the *Otwarte* group.

CITY. MEETING WITH MARCIN KĄCKI

22.06, 17:30

What do we not want to see in the city and why? Tabooed stories, urban allegiances and human drama. How do we uncover them? From which webs of entanglement should we extract them? What does the work of an investigative journalist entail? What is the most difficult part of the job? Malta's guest speaker is Gazeta Wyborcza journalist Marcin Kącki who specialises in investigative, social and historical journalism, and author of several books including *Maestro. Historia milczenia* (2015) and *Białystok* (2015).

AUTOBIOGRAPHY. MEETING WITH PIOTR SIEMION

23.06, 17:30

Can a writer be seen as a spectator, actor and witness of his own life? Are journals and autobiographical novels an escape from the fiction that is mass-produced in our world today? Autobiographies are considered a literary genre that is based on the honesty of the narrative act. Is an autobiography the voice of a personality or is it a story? Can this act be deprived of self-creation? Malta's guest speaker is writer and lawyer Piotr Siemion, author of *Niskie Łąki* (2000), *Finimondo* (2004) and *Dziennik roku Węża* (2015).

PHOTOGRAPHY. MEETING WITH WOJCIECH GRZĘDZIŃSKI

24.06, 17:00

From portraits of famous people and snapshots of friends, to photographing war and crime scenes. Is it easier to hide behind a camera to observe others? Is a photograph an objective account of events or a photographer's expression? Malta's guest speaker is Wojciech Grzędziński who has worked as a war photographer in Lebanon, Georgia, South Sudan and Afghanistan. Between 2011 and 2015, he was head photographer at the President's Chancellery and personal photographer to the President of the Republic of Poland.

ARCHIVES. MEETING WITH JAN KOMASA

25.06, 17:00

What insights do archives give of the past? How do filmmakers use archival materials? Do they disrupt their original meaning? How far do they go in their creative process, and what tools do they use to carry it out? Malta's guest speaker is filmmaker Jan Komasa, director of *Suicide Room* (2011) and *Warsaw 44* (2014), author of the multimedia event commissioned by Malta Festival Poznań to commemorate the 60th anniversary of June '56.

CITY. ARCHITECTURE FOR CULTURE

27.06, 17:00

Does architecture play a culture building role? How does it combine social and cultural issues? How does an architect's vision fit into a city's development strategies, and what conflicts of interest do architects have to face? Malta's guest speakers are Vice President of Poznań Jędrzej Solarski whose responsibilities include supervising investments in culture; Maria Godlewska, architect working in Poland and France; Jakub Szczęsny of Centrala architectural studio; and Michał Merczyński, director of Malta Festival Poznań.

All the colours of the world for the opening of Malta Festival Poznań!

The 26th edition of Malta Festival Poznań will be open with "The Colour of Time" street festival – a parade which can be joined by anyone at any moment. The streets and squares of Poznań will be enveloped in the magical climate of communal celebration! We start in the city centre on 27 Grudnia Street on 17 June!

The spectacle, which will be created by musicians, dancers and actors was directed by the French group Artonik, i.e. Alain Beauchet and Caroline Selig. The spectacle refers to the traditions of the hindu holiday Holi, which is primarily celebrated in India. In Artonik's interpretation of the holiday it is a trance happening, all about dancing and drawing in regular people to join the fun. Hundreds of people of various ages – children, parents, students, pensioners – all join the dancing theatrical parade, which passes through several "stations" to reach the final destination to culminate in an explosion of colours and sounds. All colours of the rainbow are a symbol of forgiveness and new beginnings, they signify diversity and reconciliation.

Alain Beauchet confesses: "The idea came up in 2011 when there was a big discussion in France about extremist parties, foreigners, xenophobia, single-sex marriages (...). The situation was so aggressive and brutal, that we longed to put ourselves in a completely opposite frame of mind – to be joyful and open, to meet, to gather, to invite everyone to take part and not to say «I don't want him here» and close up". The Director also adds, "The spectacle is for everyone, but most importantly for «non-audiences», i.e. people who don't go to the theatre. Because they don't have the money, because they don't understand it, because they don't have a sufficiently elegant shirt".

"The Color of Time" street parade will be free-of-charge and open. It will be co-created by 70 volunteers from Poland. It is the third visit of the famous French Artonik group to Malta Festival Poznań.

Artonik (France)
The Color of Time

17.06, 19:00 (80') / start: 27 Grudnia street

Pippo Delbono returns to Malta Festival Poznań

One of the most important European directors, who staged his unforgettable "Urlo" on Działyński Różany at Centrum Kultury Zamek in 2007, is returning to Malta Festival Poznań, this time around with his play "Orchidee".

As Delbono puts it, the play grows out of the vital, all-embracing need to, despite all, talk and write of love", "Orchidee, like all my plays, is an attempt to to stop the time I live in. To stop my time, the time of my team, the time of the people who have been at my side for many years, but also the time we all live in – Italians, Europeans, citizens of the world – the time of confusion, in which I, we, many of us feel lost." – adds the director.

Pippo Delbono has been implementing a cycle of theatrical projects in cooperation with professional actors and amateur artists with various degrees of mental disability. This is how Compagnia Pippo Delbono came to be. Its performances bear the traces of a carnival. Sacrum and profanum co-exist side by side in it, as does truth and fabrication, ecstasy and serenity, falling into the abyss and returning to reality, tears and laughter. Pippo Delbono has been presenting his theatrical productions at the most important festivals and theatres all over the world. In 2009 he was awarded the New Theatrical Realities distinction, which was granted as a part of the European Theatrical Award to artists creating new theatrical conversations.

The Poznań performances of "Orchidee", one of the newest theatre plays of the director will mark the fifth visit of Pippo Delbono to Malta Festival. In July the director will be the guest of Nowe Horyzonty festival, which will feature the retrospective of his films..

Compagnia Pippo Delbono (Italy)
Orchidee

22, 23.06, 19:00 (120') / CK Zamek

The Generator Malta Concept: Myopia – Short-sightedness

This year's Malta Festival Poznań idiom focuses on the role of spectator / actor / witness, and explores the positions from which we each observe the world. We can use these roles to see our existence in the city. Sometimes, we passively travel across it and watch it from a distance. At other times, we are an incidental witness, and there are also times when we act and take on the role of urban activists. This is even more interesting if we assume that not only our perception of the city, but also all our activities within it, are determined by the place from which we are looking at it. If we regard the distance from and object of cognition as a basic parameter that locates us in relation to the object, then our eyesight becomes an invaluable tool which allows us to identify and select both the content of our cognition and our own roles (albeit, the world will from time to time impose these upon us). This year, our proposal is to take a look at the city and our presence (or non-presence) in it from the point of view of a short-sighted person.

Short-sightedness expresses the dual nature of the action of looking. On one hand, it makes us zoom in, or make our eyes work in a way to clearly see the particular elements of reality. On the other hand, it allows us to achieve a depth of focus on an image that cannot be replicated by a "healthy" person. By losing our everyday distance, we wish to reach beyond ourselves as we seek new observation habits. Consequently, we have based the Generator Malta programme on a simple binary premise: what is seen / unseen in the city and what is visible / invisible. What does this mean? We are aware that experiences of the city are not shared by all the residents. We would like to expose and reflect on the places, narratives and people who are outside the day-to-day visual field. We ask about the cause of their absence from discourse and experiences, and try to work together to give us tools that provide for unconventional explorations. In the midst of all this we position ourselves as the residents of Poznań, whose current status as a participant of urban life is often reduced to a functional role: either user or consumer.

We would like to encourage everyone to establish a relationship with the inaccessible and the unnoticed, to escape from the conventions impressed on the city by routine, traffic, business dynamics and consumerist lifestyles. We have divided our projects into several thematic fields which suggest the directions of our investigations, whilst leaving room for our own associations, tales, questions and activities.

Malta Generator.

An antidote to urban myopia

To discover things, you need to unleash all your senses – sometimes you need to go out, search, experiment, while sometimes you need to pause and observe the surroundings in contemplation. Therefore Malta, instead of lecturing ex cathedra, invites you to take a walk, watch, listen to sounds and silences, discover Poznań in motion, immerse yourself in urban tales and the stories of their characters.

BALCONIES FULL OF ART

We shall begin with peering around Plac Wolności. As part of the "Myopia" project, Krzysztof Łukomski with artists and designers from the School of Form shall busy themselves with the balconies and the facades of buildings around the square. This will be a unique situation as the objects and interventions prepared by them will only be seen if you focus your sight, use binoculars or a telescope. The curator of the project not only calls into question our relation with space, but also confronts our traditional thinking about a work of art being an object which can only be appreciated while hanging from a white gallery wall.

WALKS AROUND THE HIDDEN CITY

One of the key points of the program will be a cycle of city walks entitled "The hidden city". We invited unusual guides, like aficionados of various fields such as microbiology, botanics, sociology or architecture to show us their point of view of the city. Together we wish to invert the rule according to which it is the map that regulates our experience of space. With Jadalnia Warszawa we will see how many edible plants there are in the city centre, Franek Sterczewski shall guide us around the city-utopia, i.e. show us the sites of unrealised architectonic projects, Benek Ejgierd shall give away some secrets of Poznań nightlife, while Michał Podgórski will show us the effects of several grassroots projects implemented by the inhabitants that offer an alternative to the metropolitan aesthetics.

A MAN OF NO TOWN?

Our urban horizons will be broadened by film etudes made for the "Field of vision" project. Migrants from counties such as Saudi Arabia, Palestine, India, Ukraine, USA, Russia and Brazil shall show us Poznań from their perspective, which although often marginalised, is necessary in the globalised world. The films were created over several weeks by migrants and Poznań filmmakers in collaboration with Migrant Info Point and Poznań Film Commission and under the supervision of the distinguished documentary film-maker and cameraman Bogdan Dziworski.

POZNAŃ FROM ABOVE

We will also look at the town from above. As part of the second edition of "Crown of Poznań", which enjoyed huge popularity last year, we will open the rooftops of office buildings and hotels which are usually closed to the public. We will have a look at Poznań from the highest floors of Okroągłak, Poznań International Fairs and Nobel Tower. In addition, for the first time we will free the views spreading from the rooftops and terraces of private apartments. The cycle will be finished with a screening of the film "Man on a Wire" on the rooftop of the tenement house by Plac Kolegiacki.

VACANCY IN TOWN

Poznań's uninhabited buildings will also be caught in our network of perceptive interventions. Used by no-one, they disappear from our field of vision and become phantoms, sometimes in the very centre of the city. Wojtek Urbański, co-creator of the band Rysy, will compose a series of sounds for the old Józef Struś Hospital building located on Szkolna. While the band ka-kofoNIKT invites you to dream with them together in an uninhabited building during a whole-night experiment - an eight-hour musical and visual journey.

THE WHEEL PRESPECTIVE

We will also test the city from "the perspective of the wheel". Together with Rowerowy Poznań, Kolektyw Kąpielisko and Poznań's cyclists we will attack the potholes in bicycle paths with seed bombs, and during the cult goldsprint race we will find out who is the fastest cyclist in Poznań.

THE SQUARE AT LIBERTY

Plac Wolności (Liberty Square), however, shall remain the beating heart of the festival. Before we hit the town, we will exercise "New habits of perception". The series will include reporter's workshops with Marcin Kącki, photographic workshops with Wojciech Grzędziński and the Potworki group, anti-discrimination workshops with Magda Szewciów, and sound workshops with the Za Dusznó group. Morning warmups will be conducted by idiom artists and dancers from Malta's Stary Browar New Dance program. And because the shortest way to the heart is through the stomach, we invite you to our traditional Sunday breakfasts with cooking aficionados and Tuesday dinners by the long table.

(R)EVOLUTION

We will also comment on the role played during the recent months by Plac Wolności as a place of public debate, as well as demonstrating and confronting views. We wish to invite you to the "(R)evolution" series which equips the participants with necessary "tools" for public expression, of yourselves and your will. Together with SARP Poznań we are planning an architectonic lab, a part of which the architects will prepare spatial planning projects for Plac Wiosny Ludów to prepare it for free expression. The Bękart graphics studio will invite us to invent slogans and create banners, while Klancyk Improvisation Theatre from Warsaw will conduct improv classes, playing with the idea of speeches in public.

Children at Liberty on Malta

Children at Liberty is a call to co-create communities with the youngest citizens. Among the crossed wires of prohibitions and orders of the metropolitan jungle, the voice of children should be an important factor in constructing new paths to freedom. Uninhibited imagination and fresh perception free of received schemata seem to be key in the discussion on civil society and the city.

The Children at Liberty on Malta program is in its third edition, and this time it will delve into the topic of the viewer paradox from the perspective of a child. Everyday from 11:00 to 19:00, we will be inviting children and their caretakers to an open space of multi-sensory games and tales out of this world, all under the watchful eyes of animators. After school, on weekdays, following the initiative of artists Aleksandra Winnicka and Marcin Piątysek, volunteers will be constructing planet Freedo – a three-dimensional installation full of caves and castles, bustling with creative energy. Access to it will be guarded by riddles and challenges created by children – the inhabitants of the planet. The first years child's life are crucial for its development. Bearing that in mind, we created workshops for the youngest festivalgoers and their parents. Their sensory and motor skills will be cultivated by Grupa Zabawowa "Farbuszki", while children's body-consciousness and mindfulness will be taken care of by Hanna Kanecka and Aleksandra Bozek-Muszyńska.

Weekends in the Children at Liberty zone is not a time to rest from imagination. On Saturday Zofia Małkiewicz will invite family teams to collect and examine samples of the tissue of the city. They will be used to create a new monument of the city. On Saturday mornings Maja Brzozowska-Brywczyńska and the Danish Culture Institute will invite us on a journey around the subject of difficult and brave love, which will be concluded with workshops. On Sundays the Teatr Sytuacje Grupa shall present "Dziwne Zwierzęta" ["Strange Animals"], while Zielona Grupa shall invite everyone to storytelling sessions. Sunday afternoons will be crowned with family CZYTOGRUSZKI workshops, where among other things children shall create magical invisibility cloaks.

Fourth season at community gardens

For the fourth season we will be cultivating community gardens in Wilda and Łazarz with local inhabitants and partners. The first edition of Malta Generator saw the creation of green squares and recultivation of abandoned urban spaces through setting up gardens. Through consistency, stubbornness, hundreds of meetings and countless undertaken actions, these places obtained their own identity as Wilda Garden and Łazarz Garden. Now the initiative at those gardens are taken over by neighbour communities and local leaders which have crystallised during those four years. In the meantime, the idea of gardens started finding more and more followers – Poznań saw the rise of several similar places.

We regard these processes with immense satisfaction, while planning further actions. Next year we plan to completely hand over the role of the host to local inhabitants, to which we are already getting ready in the ongoing season.

At Łazarz Garden, Malta Generator and the inhabitants will be developing and implementing their own ideas as a part of the "Sąsiedzi" ["Neighbours"] initiative. It is a part of the "Włącz Łazarz. Nowi bohaterowie" ["Engage Łazarz. New heroes"], preceded with design workshops, where the participants learn about the tools necessary for the realisation of their ideas. Several communities from all over Poland will come to share their best practices on a picnic of neighbour initiatives, which will be the first such a meeting in Poznań. We will be continuing the much loved open-air film screenings and concerts. Asia i koty will be one of the performers.

Wilda Garden will be musical and botanical. During Museum Night we will have a performance of Make Like a Tree, which – according to a BBC ranking – is "a star of Ukrainian export music". The concert will be accompanied by an exhibition of photos from a journey around the world, from which he draws his musical inspirations. During Malta Festival we will have the performance of the band Cukierki from Warsaw. The gardens also host regular workshops. We will be creating mobile gardens in jars with Generacja, a foundation from Gdańsk, we will be cataloguing the plants of Wilda in our Urban Herbarium, we will be relaxing by the drowsy sound of the "Sleepin" project. We will also be hosting the Abandoned Spaces Biennale, which will be working on animating unused space in the city.

Jan Komasa will direct a multimedia spectacle to commemorate the 60th anniversary of Poznań June 1956

– It was a full-fledged, conscious, civic movement - people raised in the pragmatic culture of the region decided that what is happening with the country is reprehensible and one should not stand for it – says Jan Komasa, who will direct a multimedia spectacle to commemorate the 60th anniversary of Poznań June 1956. On the 28 June at 22.00 on Plac Mickiewicza Malta Festival Poznań, upon the invitation of the City of Poznań, shall present the story of the first rebellion against communist power, brutally suppressed by the military.

Jan Komasa is the author of the artistic concept of the event and its script. He is one of the most talented and renowned artists of Polish cinematography, born in Poznań and still very much associated with this city. The director is best known for films such as "Sala samobójców" ["Suicide room"], in which "real-life" acting was combined with computer graphics, as well as the acclaimed "Miasto 44" ["Warsaw 44"] in which the director took on the legend of the Warsaw Uprising in a truly Hollywood style. In 2014 Komasa received the prestigious Paszport "Polityki" award.

The Malta spectacle will be a fusion of visual arts, dance and music. The director will be cooperating with Mikołaj Mikołajczyk – a choreographer, who has been associated with Poznań's Polski Teatr Tańca and Teatr Wielki (as a soloist). The music will be created by Bartek Wąsik and Miłosz Pękala from Kwadrofonik (also awarded with Paszport "Polityki") in cooperation with Royal String Quartet. Electronica meets live percussion, pianos and string quartets. The visual, dance and music side of the spectacle will be reinforced with technology, which will create the atmosphere of terror of invigilation.

Ten years ago, on the 50th anniversary of Poznań June 1956, Malta Festival organised an open air spectacle. The spectacle was directed by Izabela Cywińska and referred to her acclaimed play "Oskarżony: Czerwiec pięćdziesiąt sześć" ["Accused: June fifty six"] which she made in 1981. This year's event will discuss the strike which took place 60 years ago using a language accessible to the modern viewer. The open-air free-of-charge spectacle will be simultaneously the finale of Malta Festival Poznań, which begins on 17 June.

Komasa / Mikołajczyk / Kwadrofonik

KSENOPHONY. SPECTACLE JUNE '56

A MULTIMEDIA SPECTACLE

POZNAŃ JUNE 1956

28.06, 22:00 / Adam Mickiewicz Square

admission free

production: Malta Festival Poznań

JAN KOMASA

I wanted to propose something other than a martyrological spectacle. I propose an event that will be artistic through and through and comprehensible the world over, as it will be expressed with the medium of dance and not words, which can be variously interpreted.

quote for Malta Festival Poznań

There is a constant need of domination – there are always those who come and know better, they force us to think a certain way. We try, but nothing comes of it. Some of us are conformists and pretend that life is good. Others rebel and the opposition is expressed in various ways. Sometimes also bloodily.

quote for Malta Festival Poznań

I would like it to be a universal tale, a tale of revolution. This revolution may be interpreted socially, but it can also be read intimately, as a struggle with one's demons and with fear.

quote for Malta Festival Poznań

MIKOŁAJ MIKOŁAJCZYK

If I tried to tell the story with movement only, it wouldn't make sense. However, I want to tell emotions with movement, emotions which people had then, and which we've always had, when we cannot breathe freely, when we have no opportunities for self-realization, when the collective eats us up, steam-rolls over us, does not allow any sort of existence. Such internal rebellion is enscribed in movement and dance.

quote for Malta Festival Poznań

Innocence came into the foreground. I don't know why. I always thought that it is maturity that offers material for movement, for emotions, for dance. And here it turns out that it was innocence, which completely blew us away.

quote for Malta Festival Poznań

BARTEK WĄSIK

They say that Eastman's music is a sort of maximal minimalism. His music is very repetitive, loud. It is a sound which is to penetrate the listener to their very gut and move them deeply.

quote for Malta Festival Poznań

His compositions are extreme. This piece is all about playing as loud and as fast as possible. Time serves as a backbone here. The notes include markings telling the pianist what they are to play in a given minute. But these are only suggestions, because every sound may be played in many variants and that is why we need to share the same timing. This piece never sounds the same (...) It is minimalism, but maximal. It sounds like an approaching catastrophe.

a fragment of Bartek Wąsik's conversation
with Kajetan Kurkiewicz, "Gazeta Wyborcza Poznań", 31.3.2016

MICHAŁ MERCZYŃSKI

We will use metaphors and the language of modern art. We want to show a fresh interpretation of those events and reach out also to young people.

a fragment of Michał Merczyński's conversation
with Kajetan Kurkiewicz "Gazeta Wyborcza Poznań", 31.3.2016

MALTA FESTIVAL POZNAŃ

17 – 28 / 06 / 2016

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241 events

780 artists
and activists

21 countries

58 locations

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17 – 28 / 06 / 2016

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Paradoks widza / The Paradox of the Spectator