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**29.5 – 31.8**  
2015

**Vot ken  
you  
mach  
?**

**Sztuka, filmy, koncerty,  
komiksy, wykłady  
oraz dyskusje o żydowskiej  
tożsamości w dzisiejszej  
Europie**

**Art, Films, Concerts,  
Lectures, Talks and Comics  
on Jewish Identities  
in Europe  
Today**

Claire Waffel, *Die Rede*

## Lustrzane przestrzenie

CHRISTIANE MENNICKE-SCHWARZ

Wychodząc rano z domu, większość z nas spogląda w lustro, aby upewnić się co do własnego istnienia i naszej tożsamości. Chcemy sprawdzić, czy ubrania dobrze leżą, ale tak naprawdę ta codzienna czynność ma dużo głębszy sens. Ten krótki, lecz intensywny monolog można przedstawić następująco: „Dzień dobry, oto ja dzisiaj, moja najnowsza wersja po przeżyciu i doświadczeniu całego mojego dotychczasowego życia”.

Zjawisko spoglądania w lustro od wieków jest częstym motywem w literaturze, historii sztuki i pismach popularnonaukowych. Jednak przypominałam sobie o nim w chwili, gdy zaczęliśmy przygotowania do projektu, który stał się festiwalem „żydowskiej” tożsamości, może nawet tożsamości w ogóle. Co tak naprawdę dostrzegamy, patrząc w lustro? Widzimy siebie samych, otoczenie, ale także naszą „historię” (a przynajmniej te jej fragmenty, których jesteśmy świadomi). Jednak aby przekonać się, co widzą inni, kiedy na nas patrzą, potrzebowałibyśmy jeszcze jednego lustra.

Arye Wachsmuth podąża tropem tych rozważań w kilku częściach swojej instalacji pt. *Shever\** (czyż to nie *wspaniałe*). W kontekście jego pracy lustro może być odczytane jako metafora śmiercionośnego potencjału zamkniętych, abstrakcyjnych systemów, jak również potencjału tego, co dystopijne. Skomplikowane lustrzane odbicia, pełne nakładających się i kontrastujących organiczno-abstrakcyjnych form, otwierają jednak pozytywne przestrzenie nietotalitarnego myślenia. Praca przypomina skrzynię z lustrami, w której artysta umieścił pięć tomów oryginalnych protokołów przesłuchań Adolfa Eichmanna przez izraelską policję, z odrębnymi dopiskami oskarżonego. Dokument ten, który został opublikowany dopiero po 20 latach, stał się własnością rodziny Wachsmuthów, ponieważ Alexander Wachsmuth, ojciec artysty, przyglądał się jako reporter procesowi w Jerozolimie w 1961 roku, po czym osiedlił się w tym mieście z całą rodziną, łącznie z małym Arye.

Skąd mam wiedzieć, czy jestem „Żydem”, czy nie? Na przestrzeni dziejów tożsamość ta była w równej mierze kształtowana przez wykluczenie, jak przez religijną samoidentyfikację. Wydaje się gorzkim paradoksem, że była ona brutalnie narzucana dużej grupie ludzi w czasach największej sekularyzacji, pod koniec XIX wieku i na początku XX wieku – w okresie, gdy wszędzie indziej następowało wyzwalanie się z dziedzicznych wzorców religii. We współczesnych definicjach tożsamości wciąż zmagamy się z kolonialistycznym i nazistowskim brzemieniem kategoryzowania ludzi według abstrakcyjnych sposobów myślenia, prowadzących do powstania arbitralnych kategorii i sztucznych interpretacji dotyczących rasy. W przeszłości odpowiedź na pytanie „kim jestem?” mogła zależeć nie od poczucia przynależności czy tożsamości kulturowej, lecz od kartki papieru wyciągniętej z biurowego archiwum, z pieczętką „antysocjal”, „Żyd” lub „Aryjczyk”. Dopiero niedawno udało się przezwyciężyć apartheid w RPA – system, który ignorował jakiegokolwiek historyczne konfiguracje czy społeczną rzeczywistość, kategoryzując ludzi do trzech grup: „czarny”, „kolorowy”, „biały”.

*Vot ken you mach?* to festiwal celebrujący tożsamość młodych Żydów w dzisiejszej Europie, mający na celu przezwyciężenie brutalnie narzucanych tożsamości i zaakceptowanie wspólnej

historii Europy. Wystawa akcentuje wielość tożsamości, nierzadko współtworzonych przez dynamiczną kulturę żydowską, jak również uznaje historyczny fakt bezwzględnej próby eksterminacji tej wpływowej części europejskiej populacji i kultury. Szosa, zamordowanie milionów ludzi, dehumanizacja istot ludzkich i całej europejskiej kultury, zainicjowane i przeprowadzone przez niemiecki totalitarny reżim wybrany większością głosów – to wciąż tkwi w naszych umysłach. Niezliczone rodziny musiały pogodzić się z faktem, że ich najbliżsi zostali zamordowani, przepadli bez śladu lub rozproszyli się po świecie. Musiały także poradzić sobie z faktem, że znalazły się wśród nielicznych ocalałych. Teraz ich potomkowie, w trzecim lub czwartym pokoleniu po Szosa, stoją przed zadaniem określenia swojej tożsamości.

słowa *Heimsuchung* – „odwiedźny” i „nieszczęście”. Szukając ojczyzny, nie da się uciec przed żalem. Paradoksalnie, dopiero po spotkaniu współczesnych Niemców młody bohater trylogii uznysławia sobie swoją żydowskość i staje się „Żydem” w oczach innych. Stojąc wśród bloków-steli Pomnika Pomordowanych Żydów Europy w Berlinie, początkowo pała chęcią zemsty, która później przemienia się w miłość połączoną z nienawiścią (ukazaną poprzez odwołania do bajki *Piotruś i wilk* oraz innych źródeł kultury masowej), tragiczną symbiozę, która w końcu zostaje humorystycznie przezwyciężona poprzez powrót do uniwersalnego archiwum transformacji – zarówno na poziomie jednostkowym, jak i w kulturze popularnej, od szlagerów z lat 20. do Hollywood.

We wciąż trwającym projekcie *Speaking German*, zainicjowanym

rozmówców nie mógł być świadkiem wojny nawet jako nastolatek. Niektórzy z nich mieli jakieś dziecięce wspomnienia z tego okresu, podczas gdy dla innych była to odległa przeszłość. Żaden z bezpośrednich uczestników wojny nigdy się ze mną nie skontaktował”.

Pomimo tego że wielu z nas deklaruje wyzwolenie się od dehumanizującej przeszłości jako swój cel, niemal wszystkie prace pokazywane na drezdeńskiej wystawie świadczyły, że proces ten nie dobiegł jeszcze końca.

Wideo autorstwa Claire Waffel, w którym zaangażowała profesjonalną aktorkę do odegrania przemówienia ojca artystki w pustej sali koncertowej berlińskiego Domu Kultur Świata, porusza temat milczenia. Rzeczywiście, wszędzie w Europie przemilczenie było główną reakcją drugiego pokolenia po wojnie na Szosa. Rodzice Waffel starali się nie mówić

Bauhaus, zaprojektował w tym duchu napis „Jedem das Seine”, który został umieszczony nad bramą wiodącą do obozu. Pomimo oficjalnego odrzucenia modernizmu przez nazistów Bauhaus jako styl był przez nich częściowo akceptowany. Ehrlich, po zwolnieniu z obozu w 1939 roku, w dalszym ciągu projektował różne obiekty, w tym willę komendanta buchenwaldzkiego obozu i obozowe zoo. W 1946 roku, twierdząc, że został zwolniony z jugosłowiańskiej niewoli, Franz Ehrlich powrócił do Niemiec i został mianowany kierownikiem działu odpowiedzialnego za odbudowę Drezna. Biorąc pod uwagę fakt, że poświęcił swoją pracę magisterską Bauhausowi, po czym stał się uznanym architektem w NRD, biografia Ehrlicha skłania do ponownego przyjrzenia się jego życiu, uwzględniając białe plamy w życiorysie.

„Vot ken you mach?” Cóż począć? Aaron Lebedeff, rosyjski kompozytor żydowskiego pochodzenia, zadał to pytanie w Nowym Jorku w latach 20. Niemał 100 lat później, w projekcie, który zapożyczył swój tytuł z piosenki Lebedeffa, pada wiele artystycznych odpowiedzi. Lebedeff pisał swoje piosenki w zanglicyzowanym jidysz z domieszką niemieckiego, co było językowym wyrazem konstatacji, że tożsamość ciągle się zmienia, jest zawieszona między różnymi „pochodzeniami”. Jidysz, będąc językiem wywodzącym się ze średnio-wysoko-niemieckiego, z domieszką hebrajskiego, aramejskiego, jak również języków romańskich i słowiańskich, odpowiada naszemu dzisiejszemu pojmowaniu tożsamości jako konstelacji potencjalności. U Lebedeffa jest to język imigrantów, praktyczna mieszanka przeszłych i obecnych migracji, odnosząca się do poczucia zanurzenia w nieuniknionym procesie zmiany tożsamości, ukazany słowami: „A co, jeśli *yid* wyglądał jak goj?”

Tak też się stało: wszyscy zgolili pejsy. Dzisiaj postrzegamy lata 20. jako zapowiedź naszego współczesnego myślenia o tożsamości jako konstelacji, składających się ze skomplikowanych, a nawet sprzecznych fragmentów, którym jednak udaje się trwać razem i których syntezą jesteśmy świadkami, ilekroć spoglądamy w lustro.

Wystawa *Vot ken you mach?* jest prezentacją prac wykonanych za pomocą różnych środków wyrazu przez młodych współczesnych artystów z Europy, którzy postanowili przyjrzeć się historii i teraźniejszości żydowskiej tożsamości. Zaproszeni artyści badają historyczne konstelacje doświadczeń i tożsamości, traktując indywidualność i historię w sposób otwarty. Tym, co łączy tych przedstawicieli trzeciego pokolenia po Szosa, jest chęć porzucenia utartych ścieżek między zahamowaniami, żądaniem rekompensaty a traumą. Ich artystyczne decyzje i refleksja nad obrazem mają za zadanie wskazać drogi wiodące do przyszłych form tożsamości.

Projekt pt. *Vot ken you mach?* został pomyślany jako festiwal obejmujący różne formaty, od koncertów i filmów po wykłady i performanse odnoszące się do sztuki i (żydowskiej) tożsamości, mający na celu zaakcentowanie wielości postaw i procesualnego charakteru tożsamości. W przypadku drezdeńskiej odsłony wystawy nacisk został położony na różnorodność strategii ewolucji tożsamości w popkulturze, nowe sceny kultury żydowskiej w Europie Wschodniej, rodzinne tajemnice i brak komunikacji pomiędzy pokoleniami, pamięć jako obowiązek, niepisany motyw żydowskiej zemsty w historii kultury oraz – co najważniejsze – poszukiwania

Amit Epstein, *Protocol Syndrome*

Właśnie z europejskiej perspektywy dzisiejsza żydowskość jest wciąż blisko związana z żalobą, tym uniwersalnym poczuciem straty, którego doświadczają ludzie na całym świecie. Jednakże żydowskość jest również, co może być uznane za jeden z najważniejszych kroków ku emancypacji współczesnych społeczeństw, tożsamością, która jest twórczo rozwijana i interpretowana przez młode pokolenie – zarówno w wymiarze kulturowym i religijnym, jak również – lub przede wszystkim – indywidualnym.

Jak postrzegamy siebie, kiedy patrzymy w lustro? Zadanie zdefiniowania samego siebie i wspólnej tożsamości nie stoi tylko przed tymi z nas, których rodziny były w przeszłości prześladowane. Leży ono w centrum europejskiej tożsamości, ponieważ urodziliśmy się w kulturze, która została brutalnie zdeformowana i która musi być wynaleziona na nowo przez młode pokolenie.

„Minęło trochę czasu. Nie powinieś tak długo czekać, ale oto jestem” – posługując się takimi cytatami z dawnych i obecnych hitów kultury popularnej, Amit Epstein w swojej filmowej trylogii dokonuje niemożliwego: nazywa traumy i zadawione relacje między katem a ofiarą, które w trzecim pokoleniu wciąż są żywe, i ukazuje ich nieoczekiwane zabawne przenikanie się. Film Epsteina można oglądać, posługując się oboma znaczeniami niemieckiego

w Monachium w 2004 roku, mieszkająca w Londynie artystka Sharone Lifschitz wizuualizuje tożsamość jako główny powód spotkania. Artystka zamieszcza w kilku niemieckich gazetach następujące ogłoszenie: „Młoda Żydówka odwiedzi Niemcy i chciałaby porozmawiać o niczym szczególnym z kimkolwiek, kto czyta to ogłoszenie”. W ten sposób otwiera się przestrzeń artystycznej wymiany, mająca na celu nie tyle znalezienie prostych odpowiedzi, co nawiązanie osobistego dialogu i kontynuowanie go w dyskusji społecznym. Po zamieszczeniu ogłoszeń Lifschitz wyruszyła w czterotapową podróż po Niemczech. Od kwietnia do września 2005 roku spotkała się z 45 osobami i parami, które odpowiedziały na ogłoszenie. Cytaty z tych rozmów zostały następnie umieszczone na banerach w monachijskiej przestrzeni publicznej. Fotografie dokumentujące spotkania nie koncentrują się na rozmówcach, lecz na przejawach gościnności – nakrytych stole, jedzeniu i pić. Pomimo że Lifschitz pokazuje we Wrocławiu inną pracę, chciałam poświęcić kilka zdań tej realizacji, ponieważ jej rezultaty są całkowicie niewidowskowe, co było chyba zamierzeniem artystki. W przeciwieństwie do dramatycznego przedstawienia bohaterów u Epsteina, spotkania Lifschitz z ludźmi, którzy odpowiedzieli na jej ogłoszenie, rozgrywają się na bardziej codziennej płaszczyźnie osobistego zainteresowania kulturą. „Z racji wieku, żaden z moich

swoim dzieciom o żydowskim pochodzeniu ich matki. Wychowując dzieci w małym niemieckim miasteczku, obawiali się, że wyjawienie prawdy może doprowadzić do dyskryminacji ich córek przez innych mieszkańców”.

Przemilczenie i unikanie mówienia o pokrewieństwie z Żydami, zarówno publicznie, jak i w gronie rodzinnym – to doświadczenie wielu rodzin, w których rodzice lub dziadkowie chcieli w ten sposób chronić swoje dzieci. Piękne, choć porożrywane autoportrety Krystyny Piotrowskiej z końca lat 70. i początku lat 80. odnoszą się do budowania przez artystkę swojej tożsamości od początku, po tym kiedy jako młoda kobieta dowiedziała się o żydowskim pochodzeniu matki. W rezultacie integralność jej lustrzanego odbicia rozpadła się na kawałki, sfragmentaryzowane cechy trzeba było ostrożnie sklejać na nowo.

W procesie ponownego odkrywania współczesnych tożsamości (w Europie i w diasporze) stawką jest nowoczesna, postępowo-liberalna narracja. Rafał Jakubowicz, artysta i współkurator wrocławskiej odsłony wystawy *Vot ken you mach?*, razem z Nikolą Radiciem Lucatim w ich instalacji pt. *Das Seine* odnosi się do historycznej syntezy dwóch przeciwstawnych kierunków w niemieckiej historii: artystycznej awangardy oraz nazizmu. Franz Ehrlich, więzień obozu koncentracyjnego w Buchenwaldzie, a wcześniej student zainteresowany

„normalnego” życia przez Żydów na odcień.

Chciałabym podziękować Valentinie Marcenaro, która, jako aktywne członkini Gminy Żydowskiej w Dreźnie, zachęcała mnie do kontynuowania badań i była współkuratorką tego trwającego ponad dwa lata projektu. Z przyjemnością dowiedziałam się, że Rafał Jakubowicz będzie współkuratorem drugiej, jeszcze większej odsłony wystawy *Vot ken you mach?* we Wrocławiu. Jestem szczególnie wdzięczna Dorocie Monkiewicz, która głęboko wierzyła w ten projekt i naszą współpracę. Poznawanie artystów oraz praca przy tym wyjątkowym projekcie, razem z moim zespołem i wspomagającą mnie kuratorką Danielą Hoferer, były jednym z najbardziej inspirujących momentów w mojej karierze zawodowej.

Ten wspólny proces tworzenia i myślenia, który toczy się we współpracy z wrocławską publicznością, nie byłby możliwy bez hojnego wsparcia i zaufania Niemieckiej Federalnej Fundacji Kultury, pomocy Ostdeutsche Sparkassenstiftung oraz Ostsaächsische Sparkasse Dresden. •

Christiane Mennicke-Schwarz jest kuratorką wystawy *Vot ken you mach?*, dyrektorką Kunsthau Dresden oraz Miejskiej Galerii Sztuki Współczesnej w Dreźnie.



Aaron Lebedeff

Arye Wachsmuth, *Shever\* (czyż to nie wspaniałe)* [*Shever\* (ist ja fabelhaft / isn't it fabulous)*]

## Mirror Spaces

CHRISTIANE MENNICKE-SCHWARZ

With a glance into the mirror most of us assure ourselves of our own presence, of our identity at the moment we leave our home in the morning. We check whether our clothes are in the right position, but something more is happening in this small quotidian action. It is a small yet intense soliloquy: Good morning, this is who I am today, the most current version of myself with all my life and what I have experienced so far behind me.

The phenomenon of our personal glance into the mirror has been one of the most compelling in literature, art history and popular knowledge for centuries; however, it came back to me intensely when we started to work on what became a festival of "Jewish" identity, but maybe even more, of identity as such. What is it exactly that we see when we look into the mirror? We see ourselves, our current environment, and our "history" (as much as what we know of it), more or less consciously, but in order to see exactly what someone else sees when looking at us, we would need an extra mirror.

Arye Wachsmuth reflects this in his employment of the mirror in several parts of his installation *Shever\* (ist ja fabelhaft / isn't it fabulous)*. The mirror can be read as a metaphor of the deathly potential in a closed system of abstractions, as well as of the potentials of the dystopian: Fractured and fragmented, with organic and abstract forms superimposing and contrasting each other, the complexities of layered mirror reflections open up positive dimensions of non-totalitarian thought. In the mirrored box in his installation, Wachsmuth placed the original five volumes of Adolf Eichmann's interrogation minutes, a record produced by a special department of the Israeli police with handwritten commentaries by Eichmann himself, which was handed out to a small group of journalists following the trial at the time. This document, which was not published until twenty years later, came to the family estate through Alexander Wachsmuth, Arye's father, who in 1961 came to Jerusalem to follow the trial as a reporter and, in consequence of this experience, decided to move here with his family, including Arye as a small child.

How do I know whether I am "Jewish" or not? Throughout history this identity has been shaped as much by exclusion as by religious self-definition, and it is the most bitter that it became violently imposed on a large number of people at the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth century, when the liberation from inherited patterns of religion was everywhere. In all our modern categories of identity we are still struggling with the colonial and Nazi German burden of categorizing humans along abstract lines of thinking, creating arbitrary categories and artificial constructions of race. "Who am I?" could back then be rapidly answered not by your current sense of belonging and practised cultural identity, but by a bureaucratic file, stamped "antisocial", "Jewish" or "Aryan". Only very recently has the system of apartheid in South Africa been overcome, which ignored all proof of its own historical configuration and social reality and filed people in three categories "black", "coloured" and "white".

*Vot Ken You Mach?* is a festival, a celebration of young Jewish identities in Europe today, which is meant to celebrate the overcoming of these violently imposed

identities, while embracing the shared history of Europe with its manifold synthesis of identities, largely formed by a vibrant Jewish culture and the brutal attempt to destroy and eradicate this very influential part of European population and cultural formation. The Shoah, the millionfold murder and dehumanisation of people and the entire European culture, which was initiated and executed by a totalitarian German regime installed by the majority of the people, has been in our minds until today. It left innumerable families with the task of coming to terms with the fact that their relatives had been violently murdered, disappeared or dispersed in the Diaspora, coming to terms with belonging to those who survived, and facing the task of defining an identity, now in the third and further generations after the Shoah.

Today, "Jewishness" is an identity which in the predominant European perspective is still closely connected with mourning, a universal feeling of loss experienced by people all over the world.

However, it is also, and this might be one of the most eminent steps of emancipation our societies are heading for today, an identity which is actively pursued and interpreted by a young generation, culturally and / or religiously, but, most importantly, individually.

How do we see ourselves when looking into the mirror? The job of defining one's

self coming home to where his family used to live evolves from the impulses of revenge at the first encounter with young Germans of his age between the steles of the Holocaust memorial in Berlin into a love-hate relationship. This modern fairy tale is based, among other popular sources, on the story *Peter and the Wolf*. The sense of fatal symbiosis is in the course of the narrative humorously overcome by recurring to a rich shared archive of both personal as well as historical transformation in popular culture, from the shared *Schlager* (hit) of the 1920s to Hollywood.

Also in *Speaking Germany*, an ongoing art project that began in Munich in 2004, the London-based artist Sharone Lifschitz visualises identity as a principle of encounter. In several German newspapers, the artist placed an ad reading: "Young Jewish woman visiting Germany would like to have a conversation about nothing in particular with anyone reading this" and thus opened up an artistic space of exchange that is less oriented towards simplifying answers but rather opens up towards a personal dialogue and its continuance in the social discourse. The project started with the ads in various local and national newspapers, then set off on a tour of Germany in four legs from April to September, 2005, in which the artist met a total of 45 individuals and couples who had responded to her offer in the newspaper. Quotes from these conversations are

in the exhibition in Dresden presented evidence of this process still being underway.

Claire Waffel's video, staging a speech of her father re-enacted by a professional actress in the empty auditorium at Haus der Kulturen der Welt in Berlin, speaks of silence. Omission was indeed the predominant response in the second generation after the Shoah all over Europe: Claire's parents avoided mentioning her mother's Jewish family background to their children growing up in a small town in western Germany because they were afraid that this knowledge might cause other people to discriminate against their daughters.

Omission and avoidance of making Jewish family ties be known publicly, and even inside the family itself, is an experience shared by many whose grandparents or parents remained silent in order to protect their children from being harmed. Krystyna Piotrowska's beautiful and yet completely torn apart self-portraits from the late seventies and early eighties tell of this experience of reinventing her identity from scratch, after having learned as a young adult about the Jewish background of her mother's family side. The integrity of her mirror image is smashed as a result, what remains are fragmented features, tentatively placed in a loose composition.

It is our modern narrative of progress and liberation as such which is at stake in the process of rediscovering of our contemporary (European and Diasporic) identities. By using a historical typography in his installation *Das Seine*, created together with Nikola Radić Lucati, Rafał Jakubowicz, artist and co-curator of the exhibition *Vot Ken You Mach?* here in Wrocław, refers to the historical synthesis of two developments conceived of as contrary in German history: the artistic avant-garde and National Socialism. As an inmate of the Buchenwald concentration camp, a former student of Bauhaus Franz Ehrlich designed the gate inscription *Jedem das Seine* in the style of the Bauhaus, which was partly adopted by the Nazis despite the official despise of international modernism. After being released in 1939, Ehrlich went on to design further structures, including the commander's villa in Buchenwald and the camp zoo. In 1946, after having allegedly been imprisoned in Yugoslavia, Franz Ehrlich returned to Germany, where he became the head of the reconstruction department in Dresden. As a master student of the Bauhaus, but also as a celebrated architect in the GDR, Ehrlich's biography invites one to call into question what is seemingly clear by considering the ambiguity of the missing parts of his biography.

"Vot ken you mach?" What is to be done? The Jewish-Russian composer Aaron Lebedeff posed this question in New York in the 1920s. In the project named after his song, a large variety of artistic answers are given almost one hundred years later. At the time, the song written in Anglicized Yiddish mixed with German fragments gave a linguistic form to the observation that identities are in a state of flux between different "descents": Yiddish, a language derived from the Middle High German, mixed with fragments of Hebrew, Aramaic, Romance and Slavic languages, in itself strongly corresponds with our present-day notion of identity as a constellation of potentialities. In Lebedeff's song it is evidently a language of

Rafał Jakubowicz, Nikola Radić Lucati, *Das Seine – Forschungsprojekt*

immigrants, a pragmatic mix resonating with past and present influences of migration, while addressing a sense of being drowned in an inevitable process of transforming identities – "What happens if the yid looks like the goy?"

Clearly this was what happened: Everyone took off the *peyes*, and the 1920s are today again understood as forerunning our contemporary fundamental understanding of identities as constellations, composed of complex and sometimes even conflicting fragments, which however manage to co-exist and are synthesised when we glance into the mirror.

*Vot Ken You Mach?* presents works in diverse media by young contemporary artists in Europe concerning the history and the present of Jewish identity. The artists of the show examine historical constellations of lively experience and identity, constructing conditions that enable treating individuality and history in an open way. What they have in common in the third generation after the Shoah is their concern to depart from established patterns between inhibition, compensation and trauma and, by means of formal artistic decisions and the re-investigation of image production, point ways to future forms of identity.

*Vot Ken You Mach?* was conceived as a festival of various formats, including concerts, films, talks and performances related to art and (Jewish) identity, in order to stress the diversity of voices and the character of identities as fundamentally processual. The thematic focuses of the programme of events around *Vot Ken You Mach?* in Dresden therefore included strategies of identity shifts in pop culture, new scenes of Jewish culture in Eastern Europe, family secrets and the silence between generations, remembrance as obligation, the unwritten cultural history of

Jewish revenge and – most importantly – the search for a "normal" Jewish everyday life.

My special thanks go to Valentina Marcenaro, who as an active member of the growing Jewish Community in Dresden, encouraged this research and was my co-curator in the following curatorial process, which we shared for more than two years. It was a pleasure to find Rafał Jakubowicz as co-curator for the second, even larger *Vot Ken You Mach?* exhibition in Wrocław, and I would like to express my special gratitude to Dorota Monkiewicz, whose trust in this particular project and the collaborative process was essential. Meeting the artists and collaborating in the development of this exceptional project together with my team and Daniela Hoferer as the curatorial assistant was one of the most inspiring experiences in my professional career.

This shared process of production and thinking, which goes on in collaboration with the audience in Wrocław, would not have been possible without the generous support and trust of the German Federal Cultural Foundation, and the initial endorsement of the Ostdeutsche Sparkassenstiftung together with the Ostächsische Sparkasse Dresden. •

Christiane Mennicke-Schwarz, curator of *Vot Ken You Mach?*, director of Kunsthau Dresden, Municipal Gallery of Contemporary Art, Dresden

Amit Epstein, *Protocol Syndrome*

own as well as our shared identity cannot be limited to those of us who have a proven family record of prosecution. It is a task dwelling inside the European identity, as we were born into a violently deformed culture of this entire continent, due to be reinvented by a younger generation.

"It's been a while. I know I shouldn't have kept you waiting but I'm here now." With the aid of quotes from pop music and (historical) hit culture, the artist Amit Epstein in his film trilogy succeeds in accomplishing the impossible: Naming the trauma, the undealt-with perpetrator-victim relations that still remain effective in the third generation, as well as their unexpected, humorous transcendence. Epstein's film can be viewed in the double sense of the German word *Heimsuchung* (visitation / affliction): When searching for the homeland, there is no way around grief. It is only in the encounter with Germany today that the young protagonist of the trilogy paradoxically feels Jewish and becomes a "Jew" in the eyes of others. The story of

spread again on banners in the urban space of Munich and documented in photographs, which focus not on the people but on the hospitable aspects of the encounter – the way the table was laid, and what everyone was drinking or eating while their conversations went on. Even though Sharone Lifschitz will present another work in Wrocław, I'd like to refer to this work because its results are so remarkably, maybe even programmatically, unspectacular. In contrast to the drama unfolding in the imagination of Amit Epstein's protagonists, the encounters she had with people responding to her ads evolved on a more quotidian level of personal cultural interest. "None of the persons I met was old enough to have been even a teenager during the years of the war. Some had childhood memories; for others, it was history lying far in the past. No-one who had actively taken part in the war ever contacted me."

Even if an emancipation from the dehumanizing days of the past is a declared goal for many of us, almost all works we showed







result in their belonging to any Jewish organisations, not to mention Zionist ones, but instead led to loyalty to something we could term "Jewish sensitivity and commitment".

Yael Bartana in her *Jewish Renaissance Movement in Poland*<sup>39</sup> suggested a slightly different approach to rebuilding Jewish life. She wanted to initiate not just an artistic movement, but a left-wing political movement. The manifesto reads: "We direct our appeal not only to Jews. We accept into our ranks all those for whom there is no place in their homelands – the expelled and the persecuted."<sup>40</sup> The final part of Bartana's *Polish Trilogy*, a film titled *Assassination* (2011), was, as the curator of the exhibition in the Polish Pavilion of the 54th Venice Biennale Sebastian Cichocki put it, "An attempt to imagine the Movement's myth of origins. And since we are in Poland, it must be founded on blood and sacrificing the leader!"<sup>41</sup> The role of the leader-sacrifice (making reference to the assassination of President Gabriel Narutowicz, Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, and – indirectly – the air crash in Smolensk) was assumed by Sławomir Sierakowski. Undoubtedly, both *Polish Trilogy* and the Jewish Renaissance Movement were artistic successes, although the project did not work out as a political initiative. It is simply impossible to build an authentic movement on fake death. The first and so far only congress of the Jewish Renaissance Movement in Poland was held in Berlin in 2012, as part of the 7th Berlin Biennale. Let us remember, however, that for quite some time we have witnessed a revival of Jewish life and culture in Berlin, albeit following different principles than those put forward by Bartana.

Many Israeli artists are currently moving to Berlin, this extraordinarily open city that is considered one of the centres of global art (in spite of the occasional racist and anti-Semitic excesses, including brutal assaults). At the turn of 2014 and 2015, an exhibition prepared by Aya Lurie and titled *Back to Berlin* was held at the Herzliya Museum of Contemporary Art.<sup>42</sup> "The influx of Israelis to Berlin in the last few years has resulted in the creation (...) of Israeli Jews diaspora of a kind. For them, Berlin is also becoming a new place of life. Their attitude to the past varies."<sup>43</sup> Following Gruber's interpretation, the desire to live in Berlin can be perceived as a "third generation" syndrome: the desire to discover and seize hold of knowledge withheld, denied, or ignored by older generations, be they parents, grandparents, or ruling elites.<sup>44</sup> Amit Epstein, an inhabitant of Berlin, in his film trilogy *Stockholm Syndrome* (2007–2010), successfully combines the conventions of a musical, spectacle and video clip. The trilogy is a compilation of various, seemingly conflicting, genres and conventions. Unlike what the title suggests, *Stockholm Syndrome* does not talk only about the victims' positive feelings toward the oppressors, but also about a predilection for the victims stemming from the oppressors' complex. Epstein freely juxtaposes the symbolism of the Holocaust and images of Berlin memorial sites (e.g. Menashe Kadishman's *Fallen Leaves* and Peter Eisenman's memorial) with mass culture clichés (e.g. James Bond films soundtrack, music by Britney Spears, Depeche Mode, Madonna, Marlena Dietrich, and Leonard Cohen). In the final part of the trilogy titled *Jewish Revenge*, we see scenes shot near the land-art *Monument to the Negev Brigade* in Beer-Sheva, Israel, commonly known as *Andarta*<sup>45</sup>, which was designed by Dani Karavan in memory of the members of the Palmach Negev Brigade who fell defending Israel during the 1948 Arab-Israeli War. Wearing a uniform-like outfit with CaHaL soldier's stripes, Epstein is holding a colourful toy water gun in his hands. Over the memorial tower, the *Reichsadler* looms ominously. The scene is accompanied by the song *Eretz Zavot Halav* (*Land of Milk and Honey*). This language would be hard to accept by most of the "second generation" artists.

In the Wrocław exhibition, Haim Maor<sup>46</sup> is an artist representing the "second generation", who, incidentally, used a similar motif of a raven-*Reichsadler* in the context of Tel Hai (*A Message from Auschwitz-Birkenau to Tel Hai*<sup>47</sup>, 1983). In his 1988–2009 series of works titled *The Faces of Race and Memory*, he juxtaposed black-and-white photographs of his family, friends and neighbours with photographs of his German friend Suzanna and her family. The artist said: "In my works, people's portraits are confronted by juxtaposing them and putting opposite each other, by 'cataloguing' them in the viewer's awareness as 'Jewish' or 'Aryan'. The drawings and the photographs act as catalysts for surfacing the viewer's prejudices, who thus becomes a 'potential racist'."<sup>48</sup> By doing so, the artist put the viewers in a highly uncomfortable position. When looking at the portraits hanging on the wall, they automatically classified some faces as "Jewish" and others – as "Aryan", and fell into a trap of Nazi racial categories. The portraits were presented in a way resembling the exhibition in Block 11 of the Auschwitz-Birkenau National Museum. "It was unsettling simulation in which the present resembled the past, in which my close relatives looked like criminals or concentration camp prisoners," Maor said.<sup>49</sup>

Finally, *Vot Ken You Mach?* poses questions about Yiddish culture, which the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe hailed in 1987 as "once a cross-national culture in Europe, a mediator for intellectual advance and also a component of local national cultures."<sup>50</sup> *Mame Lushen* (*Mother's Tongue/Language*) is the title of Haim Maor's 2006–2007 installation. Maor said: "In Yiddish, מאַמע־לישן means שפּט אַם (pronounced 'sfat am', i.e. 'mother's tongue'). It is written with Hebrew letters. מאַמע־לישן (pronounced 'mame') means 'mother' in Yiddish. The second word is written 'לישן' ('lashion'), but it is stressed as 'לישן' ('lushen'), not 'לישון' ('lashion'). In my work I used the same font that is used in the siddur, which resulted in the emergence of references to prayer. I embroidered the black appliqué of the letters on a floral fabric belonging to my mother. This fabric was taken from the end of a bale of cloth, and for this reason its lower part is colourless. It conveys an impression that my mother's language is disappearing. Indeed, Yiddish was my mother's tongue, but I do not use it. I feel emotionally attached to this work because I found this piece of cloth after her death, and I gave it a new life."<sup>51</sup> The work provokes questions about which language is the "mother tongue" for a large part of Israel's society, for the children of refugees from Europe who struggled to pull themselves together in a culturally alien world, which was fully grasped by Amos Oz in his *A Tale of Love and Darkness*.<sup>52</sup> Haim Maor's experience is characteristic of the "second generation", who had to grow up in the shadow of their parents' traumas, who wanted to confront – usually to no avail – the family history, and consequently, in an indirect way, the painful European history. Haim Maor was brought up in a home where no language was properly spoken. His parents were not fluent in Hebrew. They talked to their son in Yiddish and to each other – in Polish, especially when they wanted to make sure he could not understand. The artist's parents also had a basic knowledge of Russian and Czech. Thus Maor grew up in a home where various words were mixed up, where broken languages were spoken.<sup>53</sup> Although Haim Maor did understand and speak Yiddish as a child, he does not use this language anymore, similarly to many other Israelis of his generation. Yiddish culture was buried together with European Jews. In Israel, Yiddish nowadays functions only in religious communities, and it can be heard in the Orthodox quarters. Apart from that, it is an object of interest mainly for historians and linguists, and, to a lesser degree, for artists.<sup>54</sup>

46 Cf. Haim Maor, *They Are Me*, exh. cat., The Open Museum, Tefen Industrial Park, 2012.  
 47 Cf. Haim Maor, *The Faces of Race and Memory: Forbidden Library*, exh. cat., Massuah – The Institute for the Study of the Holocaust, Kibbutz Tel Itzhak, 2005.  
 48 Cf. Batia Barulin, "Haim Maor – znicz pamięci. Artysta z drugiego pokolenia po Holocaustie" ["Haim Maor – Memory Candle. An Artist of the Holocaust Second Generation"], *Pro Memoria*, Auschwitz-Birkenau Museum's periodical, 2009 (2), p. 143.  
 49 "Midrasz wizualny albo trzecie znaczenie. Z Haimem Maorem rozmawia Rafat Jakubowicz" ["A Visual Midrash, or the Third Meaning, Rafat Jakubowicz in Conversation with Haim Maor"], *Midrasz* 2014 (6), p. 10.  
 50 After: Ruth Ellen Gruber, *Virtually Jewish...*, op. cit., p. 40.  
 51 "Midrasz wizualny albo trzecie znaczenie...", op. cit., p. 10.  
 52 Amos Oz, *A Tale of Love and Darkness*, Harcourt, 2005.  
 53 Cf. "Midrasz wizualny albo trzecie znaczenie...", op. cit., p. 9.  
 54 In Warsaw in June, 2006, the exhibition *The Neighbour Next Door. Yiddish in Israeli Contemporary Art* was held as part of the 5th edition of the *Neighbours for Neighbours* festival, curated by Yifat Lajst. Among the participating artists were Ariel Yanay-Shani, Moshe Gershuni and Haim Maor. Cf. "Neighbour next door. Jidysz we współczesnej sztuce izraelskiej. Z Yifat Lajst rozmawia Rafat Jakubowicz" ["Neighbour Next



Sharone Lifschitz, *If I Were To Forget You*

Yiddish in Israel is attractive only for a handful of enthusiasts, although their number is growing in the wake of the grandchildren's increased interest in their grandparents' emigrants' renounced Diaspora culture.

David Ben-Gurion insisted on making Hebrew, not Yiddish or Ladino, the official language of Israel. Abandoning the language of the Diaspora severed the ties with European history and culture. Jews from all over the world who emigrated to Palestine and then to Israel, coming from different cultures and speaking in many languages, ended up in a peculiar melting pot. Later, by means of the army and the educational system, they underwent integration processes aimed at uniting the immigrants, homogenising Israeli culture and turning the newcomers into Israelis-builders of a new country. Ari Shavit wrote: "People replace a name with a name [e.g. Haim Binyamin Moshkovitz Hebraized his name to Haim Maor, which translates as 'life from light' – R. J.'s note], a tongue with a tongue, an identity with an identity. To survive, they cleanse themselves of the past. To function, they flatten themselves. They turn into people of action whose personalities are rigid and deformed, whose souls are shallow. They lose the riches of Jewish culture as they are shaped by a new synthetic culture that lacks tradition and nuance and irony."<sup>55</sup> Yiddish triggered associations with the Holocaust. Just after the war, there was no room for the survivors in the public debate. "The Holocaust and its millions of dead have been ever-present in Israel from the day of its establishment and the link between the two events remains indissoluble. The Holocaust has always been present in Israel's speech and silences; in the lives and nightmares of hundreds of thousands of survivors who have settled in Israel, and in the crying absence of the victims."<sup>56</sup> Idith Zertal wrote. The Israeli society has had to struggle with many threats, which often called for sacrificing lives, which in turn led to revoking any weakness in favour of strength and vitality. Hence the aversion to the survivors, who had been tainted with degradation, fear, and death, and who thus diverged from the image of a "new Hebrew" by representing the negatively-marked figure of an "old Jew" of the Diaspora. "The State of Israel (...) was, in its first, formative decade, a monument to selective amnesia and erasure of certain chapters in Jewish history that would have hindered its constitutive effort and contradicted the state's narrative of power and renewal."<sup>57</sup> Zertal wrote. For this reason, the victims of the Holocaust and 300,000 of its witnesses, who were looking for a home in the new state, were refused a place in the imaginarium and the symbolic field of the emerging society. "Although [the survivors] changed the visage and the fabric of the society, they were the 'absent presences' of the country. It was heroes, not victims, time. Acts of commemoration of the Holocaust were few and sporadic."<sup>58</sup> It was not until Eichmann's 1960 trial when a fundamental change, or breakthrough, had occurred. It was the first time when the dark experiences of the Diaspora, the bestiality of Nazi terror, the tortures and the price of survival could be openly discussed. And even more importantly – people began to listen. Segev wrote: "The Eichmann trial marked the beginning of a dramatic shift in the way Israelis related to the Holocaust. The terrifying stories that broke forth from the depths of silence brought about a process of identification with the suffering of the victims and survivors."<sup>59</sup> Unfortunately, the opening up of the Israeli society to the voice of the survivors also led to using the Holocaust in political fights whose stake was short-term goals, not always noble. Zertan went on: "From the partisan-poet Abba Kovner to the right-wing leader Menachem Begin, from the Palmach commander Yitzhak Sadeh to the soldier-general Ariel Sharon, from Ben-Gurion and Nathan Alterman to the song writer Haim Hefer and the politician Benjamin Netanyahu, through right, left, center, and fringe politics, the Israeli discourse of power was perceived not only as a vital necessity in the context of the Israeli-Arab conflict, but also as a form of atonement, endowing the

Holocaust and the history of the Diaspora with retroactive, belated meaning. The process was dialectic. Memory of the Holocaust invested the local conflict with significance, and extracted it from its political and historical dimensions, while the discourse of the conflict consolidated and reinforced the role of the Holocaust as the constituent myth of the Zionist-Israeli meta-narrative. Both the Holocaust and the ongoing conflict were thus detached from their specific historical contexts, from their complexities and inner contradictions as historical events; borders between them became blurred, turning them into closed, critique-proof mythical realities, bound together and sustaining one another. The Jewish Holocaust, and Israeli power, had thus become a central factor in consolidating the Israeli identity and in fortifying social cohesion and solidarity within Israel."<sup>60</sup> The Holocaust quickly assumed the status of a kind of lay religion that brought together the multiethnic and multicultural Israeli society (interestingly enough, it also became an important element of the identity of immigrants from Arab countries). The Holocaust addressed the need of referring to the past, to common heritage and shared history that the new state clearly lacked. "[Israelis] are the offspring of a nation, a religion, and a culture that has dismissed the present and left the future in the hands of faith and fate. The past thus becomes an object of worship. Since the beginning of the 1980s, they have been worshipping *moresheet hashoah* – a somewhat peculiar term, meaning 'the heritage of the Holocaust.'<sup>61</sup> In the 1990s, the subject-matter of the Holocaust raised increased interest in Israel. This "eagerness to embrace the past is often no less problematic and charged with contradiction than the earlier tendency to deny it."<sup>62</sup> The interest in the past affected the attitude to the then living Holocaust survivors, and their fate (they often lived and died in oblivion, in very bad conditions), only to a limited extent. It is not hard to guess that the main consequence of the social discussion about the recent past was the prominent presence of the Holocaust in the media, becoming "a central subject of literature and poetry, of theater, cinema, and television."<sup>63</sup> Also of visual arts (before that, the tragedy of European Jews had been present neither in the media nor art). The Holocaust played an important role in the identity-building process of the new Israelis and in the policies favoured by the state of Israel; both the omission of this subject in the 1950s, which resulted indirectly from the Yishuv's sense of guilt for not having done everything to save European Jews, as well as the peculiar explosion of interest in the wake of Eichmann's trial, when the Holocaust rhetoric started to be used for political aims. As Zertal wrote, "Through a dialectical process of appropriation and exclusion, remembering and forgetting, Israeli society has defined itself in relation to the Holocaust: it regarded itself as both the heir to the victims and their accuser, atoning for their sins and redeeming their death."<sup>64</sup>

In the first episode of the 2014 film by Prague-based artists Tamara Moyzes and Shlomi Yaffe, titled *Polish Bourekas* (in Israel, "bourekas" is a popular type of film comedies based on racial stereotypes, in which the modern Ashkenazim are contrasted with the benighted Mizrahim) and shot at the POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews in Warsaw, we see Yitzhak Rabin talking in Yiddish with Yigal Amir, who murdered Rabin on 4 November, 1995. Three years of a brutal hate campaign and defamation of the prime minister, with numerous references to the Holocaust symbols (e.g. the SS and the Judenrat), in which the extreme and moderate right depicted Rabin as a traitor, and his government – as the "Oslo government", resulted in many provocations and acts of violence, and eventually – in murder. Yigal Amir, a right-wing radical student, was brought up believing that anyone giving up even one square centimetre of the Promised Land is a traitor to his own nation, and withdrawing from the occupied territories is identical to annihilation of Jews in Europe. Thus, as a self-proclaimed Jewish partisan, he decided to act. Tamara Moyzes and Shlomi Yaffe provocatively situated Rabin and Amir's meeting in an empty black space – a kind of "costume" referring to the

reality of the Warsaw ghetto (the characteristic bands with the Star of David). Zertal wrote: "Identifying Yigal Amir with World War II Jewish partisans or ghetto fighters is no more blatantly untenable than likening the State of Israel to a burning ghetto or a death camp, or the outrageous comparison of withdrawal from part of the land to walking 'like sheep to the slaughter' into the crematorium, or depiction of the Arabs as the reincarnation of the Nazis. Yet it was the latter assertions which made that claim applied to Amir possible. One may dispute the cliché that words can kill, but not the fact that they create a world, structure consciousness, construe a motive for action, even if not necessarily on a one-to-one basis."<sup>65</sup> In Moyzes and Yaffe's film, Rabin's assassin says: "The thing that hath been, it is that which shall be; and that which is done is that which shall be done."

In Shlomi Yaffe's 2004 film titled *Yad Vashem's New Museum*, we see the characteristic Avenue of the Righteous Among the Nations at the Yad Vashem Institute in Jerusalem. However, instead of focusing on the trees or the plaques with the names of the Righteous, the camera follows a Palestinian worker, one of many employed at the construction site of the memorial, who uses his break to pray, and then returns to his cement mixer. The Palestinian workers are building a monument-narrative about the tragedy of the Jewish. It is accompanied by the song *Jerusalem of Gold*, which expresses the desire to return to Jerusalem. Written in 1967 by Naomi Shemer, it is a kind of unofficial national anthem of Israel, contrasted with the lay *Hatikvah*. As Ari Shavit wrote, "The State of Israel refuses to see its Arab citizens. It has not yet found a way to integrate properly one-fifth of its population."<sup>66</sup> Against



Tamara Moyzes, Prague 7

this backdrop, let us refer to Judith Butler's reflection on Jewish ethics: "My contention is that being able to depart from those communitarian moorings as they have been historically formed is a difficult and necessary struggle and that some aspects of Jewish ethics require us to depart from a concern only with the vulnerability and fate of the Jewish people. I am proposing that this departure from ourselves is the condition of a certain ethical relation, decidedly nongological: it is a response to the claims of alterity and lays the groundwork for an ethics in dispersion."<sup>67</sup>

Damir Nikšić, an artist from Bosnia and Herzegovina, in his perverse film *If I Wasn't Muslim* (2005) referred to Sheldon Harnick and Jerry Bock's song *If I Was a Rich Man*, written for the musical *Fiddler on the Roof*, based on Sholem Aleichem's 1894 stories about Tevye the Dairyman (in Polish theatre, actors playing Tevye usually appear with fake beards, which triggers unintentional comical effect and contributes to strengthening cultural stereotypes). *If I Wasn't Muslim* begins just like the original, with the artist's short soliloquy to God, although this time it is Allah. Nikšić appropriated and used the commonly recognizable and banal cliché of Jewish adversities in order to talk about the sufferings of Bosnian Muslims. The artist relocated the story from Anatevka (whose entire Jewish population of "troublemakers" were about to be evicted by an edict of the Tsar, as we remember from the original) to today's Bosnia, indirectly referring to the Balkan civil war – the most bloody and shocking conflict in Europe after 1945 (the

65 *ibid.*, p. 199.  
 66 Ari Shavit, *My Promised Land...*, op. cit., p. 402.  
 67 Judith Butler, *Parting Ways. Jewishness and the Critique of Zionism*, New York, 2012, p. 26.



Ruth Novaczek, Radio

Door. Rafat Jakubowicz in Conversation with Yifat Lajst"], *Arteon* 2006(10), pp. 26–27.  
 55 Ari Shavit, *My Promised Land...*, op. cit., p. 162.  
 56 Idith Zertal, *Israel's Holocaust and the Politics of Nationhood*, Cambridge, 2005, p. 3.  
 57 *Ibid.*, p. 94.  
 58 *Ibid.*  
 59 Tom Segev, *The Seventh Million. The Israelis and the Holocaust*, translated by Haim Watzman, New York, 2000, p. 361.  
 60 Idith Zertal, *Israel's Holocaust...*, op. cit., pp. 167–168.  
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 62 *Ibid.*  
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 64 Idith Zertal, *Israel's Holocaust...*, op. cit., p. 3.

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**Jednodniówka Muzeum  
Współczesnego Wrocław**  
**Wrocław Contemporary Museum  
One-Day Newspaper**

Redaktor naczelny / Editor-in-chief: Bartek Lis  
Teksty / Texts: Rafał Jakubowicz, Christiane Mennicke-Schwarz  
Tłumaczenia / Translation: Karol Waniek  
Korekta / Proofreading: Aleksandra Zoń  
Projekt / Layout: Maciek Lizak

Publikacja towarzyszy wystawie *Vot ken you mach?*  
(29.5 – 31.8.15, Muzeum Współczesne Wrocław).

This publication accompanies exhibition *Vot ken you mach?*  
(Wrocław Contemporary Museum, 29.5 – 31.8.15).

Zespół kuratorski / Curatorial team: Rafał Jakubowicz (Poznań),  
Valentina Marcenaro (Drezno), Christiane Mennicke-Schwarz (Drezno),  
Dorota Monkiewicz (Wrocław)  
Producent wystawy / Exhibition producer: Paweł Bąkowski  
Kuratorka debat / Curator of debates: Katarzyna Reszke  
Kurator sceny muzycznej / Music programme curator: Adam Moryc  
Koordynacja / Co-ordination: Bartek Lis  
Organizator / Organizer: Muzeum Współczesne Wrocław

Adres redakcji / Address:  
pl. Strzegomski 2a  
53-681 Wrocław

Nakład / Circulation: 2000

Redakcja nie zwraca materiałów niezamówionych (teksty, zdjęcia, rysunki) oraz  
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Projekt realizowany we współpracy z Kunsthaus Dresden, finansowany przez Niemiecką Federalną Fundację Kultury  
i Ostdeutsche Sparkassenstiftung / Project in cooperation with the Kunsthaus Dresden funded by the German Federal Cultural Foundation  
and the Ost deutsche Sparkassenstiftung  
Dofinansowano ze środków Fundacji Współpracy Polsko-Niemieckiej / Co-financed by the Foundation for Polish-German Cooperation

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gemeinsam mit der  
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**FUNDACJA WSPÓLPRACY  
POLSKO-NIEMIECKIEJ  
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ZUSAMMENARBEITUNG  
FUNDATION FOR  
POLISH-GERMAN  
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