

# Freiheit zur Freiheit

In Zusammenarbeit mit /  
in cooperation with  
Kanuti Gildi SAAL, Tallinn

# Freedom to be Free

14.6. 19h  
Eröffnung/  
Opening

15.6.–  
22.7. 2018

● Jaan Toomik:  
Oleg



# Marian Bogusz: The Joy of New Constructions

Eine Ausstellung der  
Zachęta Nationalgalerie Warschau

● Christa Jeitner:  
Ermutigung

# Kunsthhaus Dresden

Städtische Galerie für  
Gegenwartskunst

Kuratiert in Zusammenarbeit mit / curated in collaboration  
with Annika Üprus (Kanuti Gildi SAAL, Tallinn) von / by  
Christiane Mennicke-Schwarz, Daniela Hoferer, Robert Thiele  
(Kunsthhaus Dresden)

Im Rahmen von »Freiraum«, einem Projekt der Goethe-  
Institute in Europa in Zusammenarbeit mit 53 Akteuren  
aus Kultur, Wissenschaft und Zivilgesellschaft. Rund  
40 europäische Städte gehen bis März 2019 der Frage  
nach: Was ist Freiheit heute in Europa? Wo ist sie in  
Gefahr? Wie stärken wir sie?

In the frame of »Freiraum«, a project of the Goethe-  
Instituts in Europe in cooperation with 53 actors from  
culture, science and civil society. Until March 2019,  
around 40 European cities will explore the issue: What  
is freedom in Europe today? Where is it endangered?  
How do we strengthen it?

FREI  
RAUM



*Freedom to be Free* is the start of the joint exhibition and event series in Tallinn and Dresden is made in cooperation with Annika Üprus (Kanuti Gildi SAAL Tallinn) and Christiane Mennicke-Schwarz, Daniela Hoferer, Robert Thiele (Kunsthhaus Dresden)

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**FREI** \_\_\_\_\_  
**RAUM**

In cooperation with Kanuti Gildi SAAL, Tallinn.  
Funded by the Goethe-Institut and the Homann-Foundation.

**Christa Jeitner: Ermutigung**

We are grateful for the loans by the artist.

**Jaan Toomik: Oleg**

In cooperation with Kanuti Gildi SAAL, Tallinn

We are grateful for the loans by the artist and Temnikowa & Kasela Gallery Tallinn

**Marian Bogusz: The Joy of New Constructions - (Post)war Utopias of Marian Bogusz**

An exhibition by Zachęta Nationalgalerie Warschau

With works by: **Zbigniew Dłubak, Zbynek Sekal**

Cooperating artists: **Katarzyna Przezwańska, Piotr Kopik, Tomasz Czuban**

Curated by Joanna Kordjak in cooperation with Julia Leupold

FREEDOM TO BE FREE  
JAAN TOOMIK: OLEG  
CHRISTA JEITNER: ERMUTIGUNG  
MARIAN BOGUSZ:  
THE JOY OF NEW CONSTRUCTIONS

# FREEDOM TO BE FREE

## JAAN TOOMIK: OLEG

## CHRISTA JEITNER: ERMUTIGUNG

## MARIAN BOGUSZ:

# THE JOY OF NEW CONSTRUCTIONS

What does freedom mean in Europe today, where is it restricted or threatened? In the frame of the *Freiraum* project initiated by the Goethe Institute in 40 European cities, the Kunsthaus Dresden and Kanuti Gildi SAAL, an art space in Tallinn focusing on performance, raise questions as to the preconditions of freedom from two places far away from each other in Europe – Tallinn and Dresden.

To understand freedom in Europe today from the perspective of art, the partners Kunsthaus Dresden and Kanuti Gildi SAAL Tallinn decided to take a look into the shared past. As partners the two institutions were paired up by the large *Freiraum*-network of institutions selected throughout Europe and in consequence started an intense collaborative process: The curatorial team from Kunsthaus Dresden and Kanuti Gildi SAAL, the first independent venue for contemporary performing arts in Tallinn, in this premiere exhibition as well as in the following program in Tallinn and Dresden raise questions on the preconditions of freedom based on two geographically distant places in Europe. The history of both places until 1989 respectively 1991, was shaped in a similar way by an authoritarian regime and a lack of sovereignty determined by the supremacy of the Soviet Union in the eastern part of Europe.

*“Are Estonians wrong to be happy ...?”* is a question posed by artists in Tallinn. The collective memory in Estonia is shaped by centuries of occupation and bondage. Therefore, great is pride taken in the independence peacefully gained in 1991. Freedom is highly esteemed both in private and public, and has led to an economically successful culture of being allowed to make mistakes. But freedom also entails responsibility – what possibilities and limitations accompany this new freedom?

*“What is art - as a language of freedom - capable of in times of resentment?”* In the past years, Dresden has clearly experienced that many citizens see an apparently glorified cultural homogeneity in danger when changes occur. Right-wing populist attacks, as well as the new culture of conflict and listening, had developed, among other things, as a result of the discussion on the art work *Monument* on the Dresden Neumarkt. These unusual experiences around this artwork which had been initiated and taken care of by Kunsthaus together with the artist Manaf Halbouni, triggered the question of the role of art in times when humanistic and democratic values are under challenge. Art as the voice of an individual person – can or must it even be heard under such circumstances - and what are the circumstances which allow this to happen?

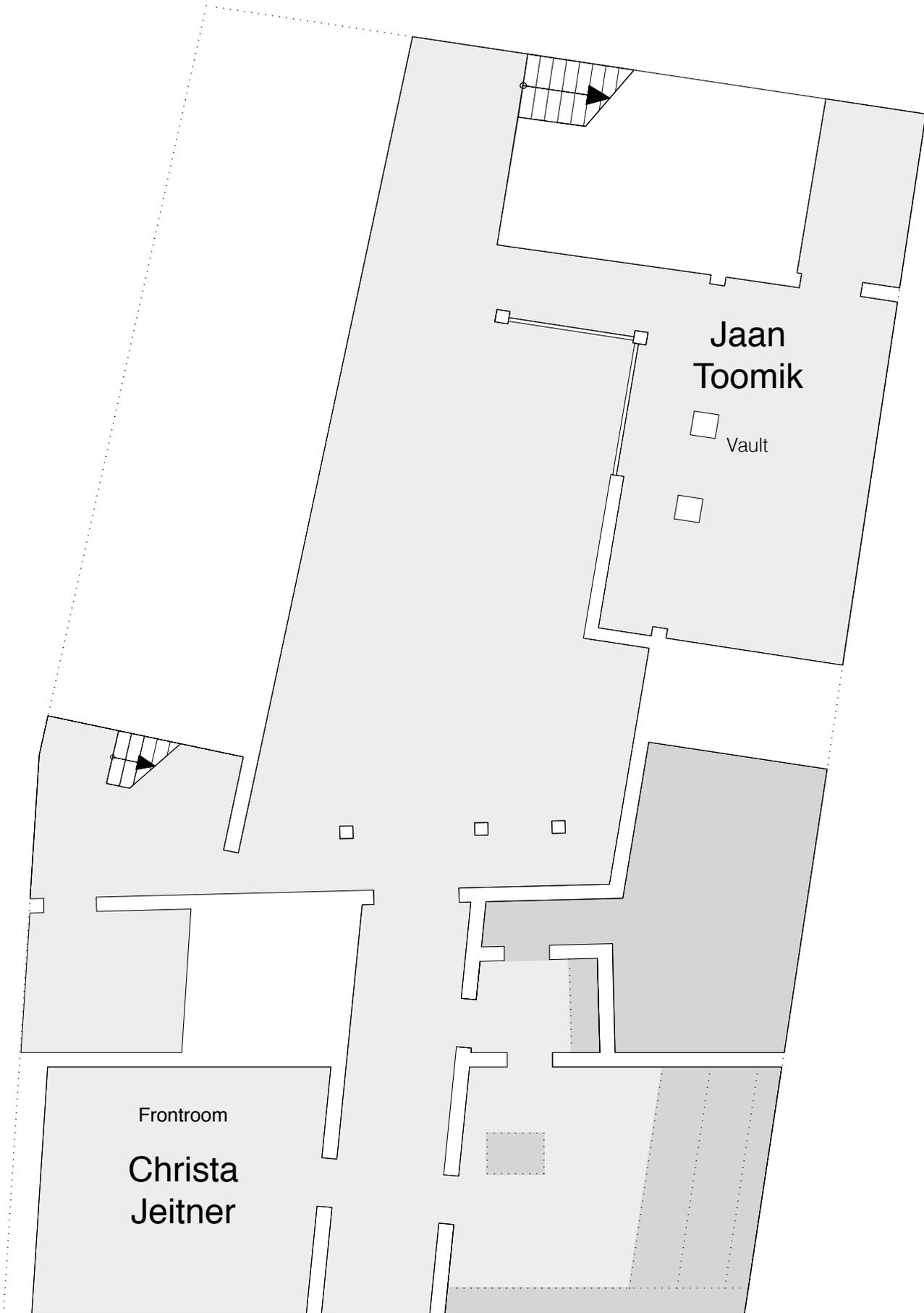
The start of the joint exhibition and event series in Tallinn and Dresden is made by three shows of artists from three geographical and contemporary historical perspectives – between Mauthausen and Warsaw, the GDR and the People’s Republic of Poland, and Tallinn before and after regained independence. Despite the experience of terror and authoritarian regimes, the works of **Marian Bogusz**, **Christa Jeitner** and **Jaan Toomik** reflect the optimism and the independence of a then new generation along with the buoyant striving for new artistic freedom.

Marking the start of the joint exhibition and event series, Kunsthaus Dresden presents the work of one of the most influential personalities of the Polish art scene after the end of World War II, **Marian Bogusz** (1920 –1980). His work is based on the idea of an artistic modernism as the driving force of societal developments, combining literature, painting and music, as well as science and technology. While he was incarcerated in the Mauthausen concentration camp, Bogusz already envisioned an architecture for an international artists’ colony on the ruins of the camp. In addition to a selection of paintings and graphics, the exhibition focuses on Marian Bogusz’ modern visions at the intersections of painting, sculpture, architecture, and urban planning – and on the hope that art can lead to social transformation through aesthetic changes.

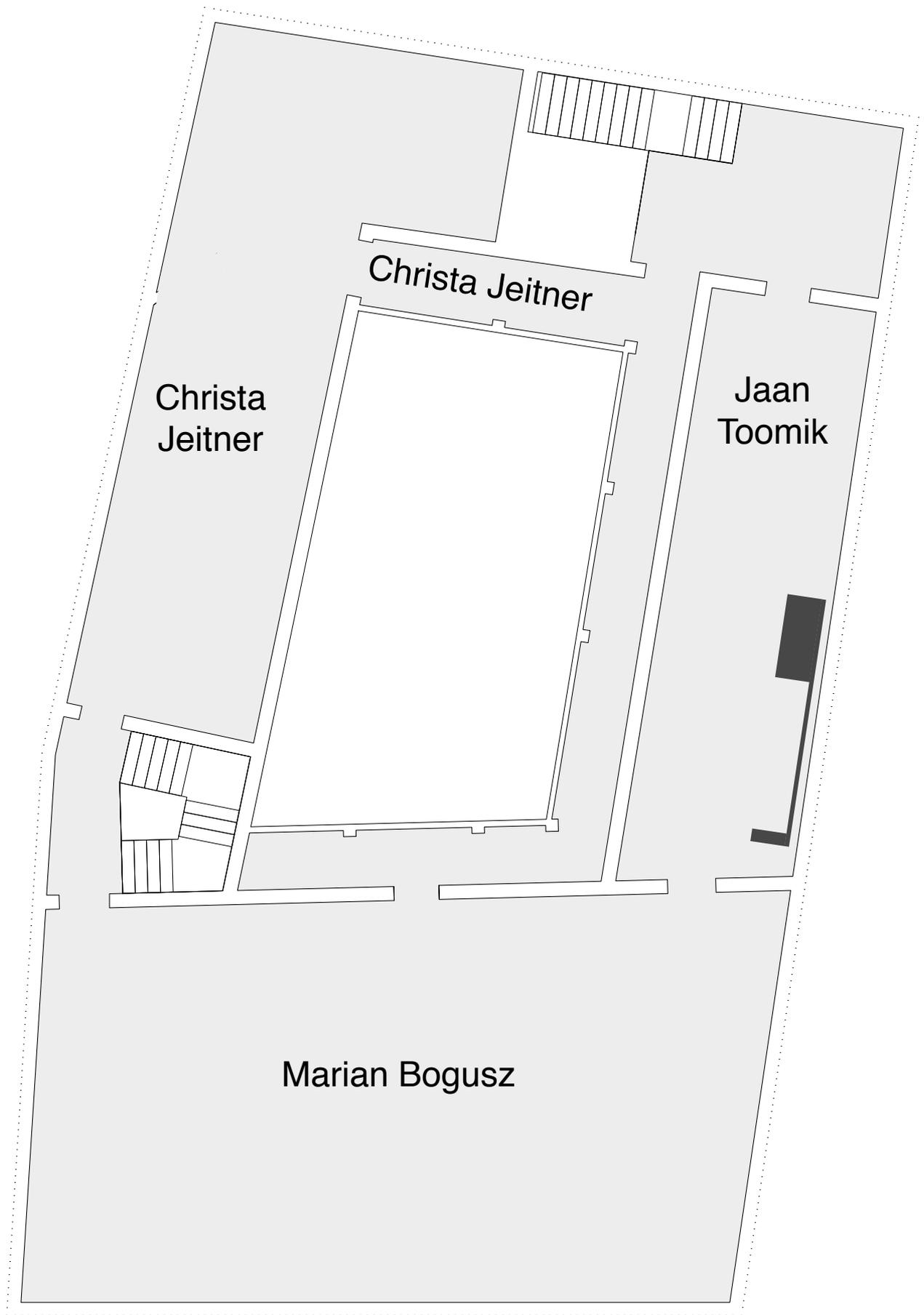
**Jaan Toomik** (born in Tartu in 1961) has become one of the best-known artists in Estonia with his paintings and video pieces. His paintings reflect the experience of compulsory military service under the authoritarian regime of the Soviet Union, as well as existential questions of violence. After Esto-

nia gained independence from the Soviet Union, he created cinematic works and video installations alongside his paintings that deal with the freedom of the individual. Personal experiences, but also the transformation of Estonian society, have led to a series of performative works and installations that controversially explore the altered notions of community and family, the fringe location of Estonia in relation to the rest of Europe, and individual expectations of freedom.

The textile works by **Christa Jeitner** (born in Blumberg in 1935) are testimonies of a generation of artists whose work evolved with the strong desire for freedom of expression and new artistic forms under the difficult conditions of the GDR from the 1960s to 1980s – years in which art was also constantly monitored. At the fore are works that the artist created before 1989 and were influenced by the political conditions at the time, also beyond Germany and Poland. The exhibition includes among others the Auschwitz Cycle which she began 1964. Also presented are works from the 1980s like the Poland commemoration cloths or ›Ermutigung‹ made with reference to a seminal poem by Wolf Biermann.



Floorplan Ground Floor



1st Floor

# CHRISTA JEITNER

## ERMUTIGUNG (ENCOURAGEMENT)

### *Basement Frontroom*

*Ermutigung* [Encouragement] is the title of one of Christa Jeitner's works that was inspired by a Wolf Biermann poem in 1970 and lends the entire show its perhaps programmatic name. The textile pieces by the artist, who was born in Berlin in 1935, are prime examples of the work of a generation of artists searching for its own forms of artistic expression under the difficult conditions of the GDR from the 1960s to 1980s – years in which art, too, was permanently under surveillance. The exhibition presents a small selection of the extensive lifework of Jeitner, compiled in close cooperation with the artist, placing the focus on pieces created prior to 1989 as a pioneering response to the conditions prevailing at the time.

The exhibition *Christa Jeitner: Ermutigung*, one of three concurrent shows revealing a number of interrelations, starts in the display window room. The works presented here are situated in East Germany of the late 1960s and early 1970s. After the artist was forcibly de-registered from the Hochschule für bildende und angewandte Kunst in East Berlin and then studied at the Hochschule für Bildende Künste in West Berlin, which she found to be a stroke of luck, she wound up on the sealed-off side of the city when the Berlin Wall was built. Against the background of her initial experiences with the limits on artistic thought imposed by the new regime, Christa Jeitner experimented with small formats that could be shown in smaller circles in an inconspicuous and flexible way. Approaches of graphic art can also be applied to textile formats, where they develop a unique form of expression granting room to the material's recalcitrance. During this time, the discovery of Ingeborg Bachmann's poems was crucial, and an exchange was possible in small, protected circles which were often associated with the church. The town of Blumberg in the federal state of Brandenburg near Berlin became her center of life, which it still is today. Trips to Poland provided opportunities for artistic exchange; it was finally an "open world" again, "a bit like West Berlin."

Christa Jeitner's works were exhibited as early as 1961, and in 1963 the first museum acquisitions were made. She participated in the prominent exhibition series "grassi 64 und 65." The *Auschwitzzyklus* [Auschwitz Cycle], from which four pieces are shown on the left wall, and her method of condensed abstraction inspired by Bachmann's poetry, among others, mainly emerged from her dealing with terror and guilt, as well as with the abysses of the involvement of Germany's ordinary population in the National Socialist regime. The works featured in the display window frame the decisive caesura in 1965. The *Auschwitzhungertuch* [Auschwitz Lenten Veil] which had already been acquired by the Grassi-Museum, for example, could no longer be publically displayed after the 11th SED Central Committee Plenum and the ensuing restrictive cultural policy of the GDR. The resulting restrictions and maybe also preemptive obedience had the effect of a factual exhibition ban, which also made exhibitions in Poland difficult or even impossible for her.

While Christa Jeitner began establishing a second field of work and theme of life for herself with restoration, a debate on the restrictions of freedom arose in the semi-public space of internal circles. "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled." (Matthew 5:6) In the sense of this Bible verse, a new space and a need for artistic work arose against the resistance aimed at obstructing people's engagement with the political circumstances of the time. In 1969 Christa Jeitner arrived at new forms and formats; her large assemblage *Foltern in San Sebastian und anderswo* [Torture in San Sebastian and Elsewhere] explores the blending of figurativeness and abstraction along the lines of Paul Klee's art and, based on her criticism of the Franco regime and the war in Vietnam, formulates a fundamental denouncement of all forms of violence exerted by government authorities. Shortly beforehand, Wolf Biermann's poem *Ermutigung* had been published by the West German Wagenbach-Verlag, and he also recorded it as song. The poem dedicated to Peter Huchel, the editor-in-chief of the periodical *Sinn und Form*, who was forced to resign in 1962 and since then lived isolated and under strict surveillance, was passed on from hand to hand during that time. In 1970, the same year in which she created *Ermutigung* dedicated to Wolf Biermann, then acknowledged as an "enemy of the people," Christa Jeitner also joined the "Aktion Sühnezeichen" (Action Reconciliation Service for Peace). The originally all-German organization founded by the Evangelical Church in 1954, which in the light of the Church's misconduct called for actively making atonement for the crimes of National Socialism, was inevitably split into two groups after the Wall was built, one in the FRG, the other in the GDR. But since the GDR staged itself as a legal successor of the anti-fascist resistance and therefore flatly denied any responsibility for National Socialism, the work of the group in other countries of the former Eastern bloc, as well, was massively obstructed by visa denials. Jeitner's floor work *Was nennt*

*ihr mich Herr und tut nicht, was ich euch sage* [Why do you call me Lord, and do not do what I say] from 1971, consisting of an altar cloth, also conveys the helplessness and despair of a period in which people oppressed others in the name of the people and restricted freedom in the name of freedom.

### **Continuation on the 1st Floor: Gallery Ambulatory and Hall with Parquet Floor**

In the 1980s, Christa Jeitner continued her work in the ambivalent situation of simultaneous freedom and lack of freedom by plumbing what was possible, something that almost all artists in the GDR experienced. While the artists in the GDR reclaimed free terrain and in the 1970s increasingly risked calling official guidelines into question, concerns arose regarding Poland as a country with a free understanding of art and serving as an interface to the world. With the martial law imposed by the regime of the People's Republic of Poland in 1981, a wave of repression and arrests gripped the entire nation with the aim of smashing and demoralizing the democracy movement of the *Solidarność* union. The worries about the freedom of art in this country that until then had been one of the most important sources of inspiration for Christa Jeitner and provided opportunities for free exchange, led to the *Polen-Gedenktücher* [Poland Commemorative Cloths] from 1983, among others.

The 1970s had brought the artist surprising successes, museum acquisitions, exhibitions in East Germany and abroad, as well as "small freedoms," as she described them, but also a roller-coaster ride of development commissions that were partially removed again just days after completion. A prominent example of this is her large constructive work *Durchdringung* [Permeation] for the Palast-Hotel from her series of *Schnürwerke* [Lace Works] completed in 1978/79. This characteristic work was shown again in 2017/18 at Schloss Pillnitz in the show *The Event of A Thread/ Das Ereignis eines Fadens*. From the cycle titled *Möglichkeiten des Menschen* [Possibilities of Man] with which she accompanied the entire decade with critical vigilance, one exemplary work from 1972 is on view in the Parkettsaal, *Überschrift z. B.: Bad und Desinfektion* [Title, e.g.: Bath and Disinfection]. As with the *Auschwitzzyklus* [Auschwitz Cycle], of which four pieces are featured in the display window room, and the cycle *Das Licht des Nichts* [The Light of Nothingness] (1987 – 1990), inspired by texts of Paul Celan, Else Lasker-Schüler, T.S. Eliot, and others, which are hung in vertical metal racks structuring the room, this work is guided by the intensive search for a form to be lent to the severe consequences of the trauma of collective complicity in the Shoah, which had not been coped with and could not be publically addressed in the GDR.

Already in 1972 Christa Jeitner had become acquainted with translated fragments of *Próby świadectwa* [Rehearsals in Testimony] by the Polish writer Jan Strzelecki. The text published in Poland in 1971 describes the experiences during the German occupation of Poland. The author seeks to convey aspects "that until today are still relevant and can therefore also determine the perspective on the understanding and evaluation of entirely contemporary manifestations." (Strzelecki, foreword to *Próby świadectwa*, Warsaw 1971). The writer, who was born in 1919, had offered resistance against the German occupiers when he was young, and was later active in the resistance against Stalinism and an advisor to *Solidarność*. The essences he formulated for a future society made a deep impression on Jeitner. "*Immersing in the thoughts of those who during the time of National Socialism lived in the area that was the other country, people who were called worthless, a culture that was hated without exception, gave rise to a silent shame. But why shame in my case? I have never identified with those who in Strzelecki's book are only called they. Yet they existed and they spoke my language, came from my region and they came in the name of everyone, and they were there in the name of those who didn't raise their hand against them, whether they wanted it or not. Their power was based even on those who did nothing other than live.*" (From the hitherto unpublished notes of Christa Jeitner on the origin of the bibliophile German edition from 1989).

Searching for the book, Christa Jeitner stood with a white rose in front of Strzelecki's door in Warsaw in 1987. After he was murdered a short while later, she fulfilled the wish conveyed by the writer's widow to once again experience the book in a bibliophile edition by using the means allowing artists in the GDR to publish their own graphic editions. After translating it into German with the help of a translator and her own Polish language skills, she plucked up her courage to make the necessary artistic comments. She created bright drawings on a black ground that stand for the "five years of occupation which Jan Strzelecki ceaselessly describes as tough and dark. The brightness of the trace gains its meaning only through the burdening pressure under which it is recorded: The most extreme for the individual, yet it outshines the darkness only in this place, in this moment. Never does Jan Strzelecki succumb to the utopia that the evil could be swept away."

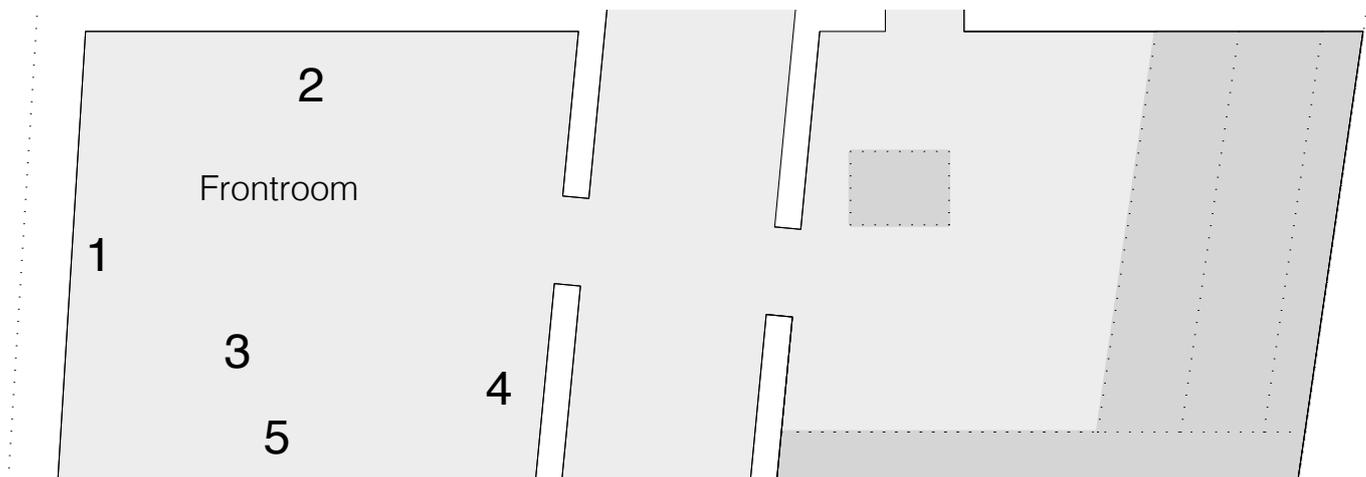
Posters in the gallery ambulatory stand for the announcement of the action *Im Gedenken an Verfol-*

*gung und Vernichtung der Juden* [In Remembrance of the Persecution and Murder of the Jews] in the Französische Friedrichstadtkirche in Berlin marking the anniversary of November 9, 1938, which Christa Jeitner along with Manfred May and Friedrich Stachatz had insisted on in November 1988. Christa Jeitner's bibliophile edition of Jan Strzelecki's *Próby świadectwa – Erproben im Zeugnis* in German translation was published in September 1989 concurrently to the wave of GDR citizens fleeing via Hungary.

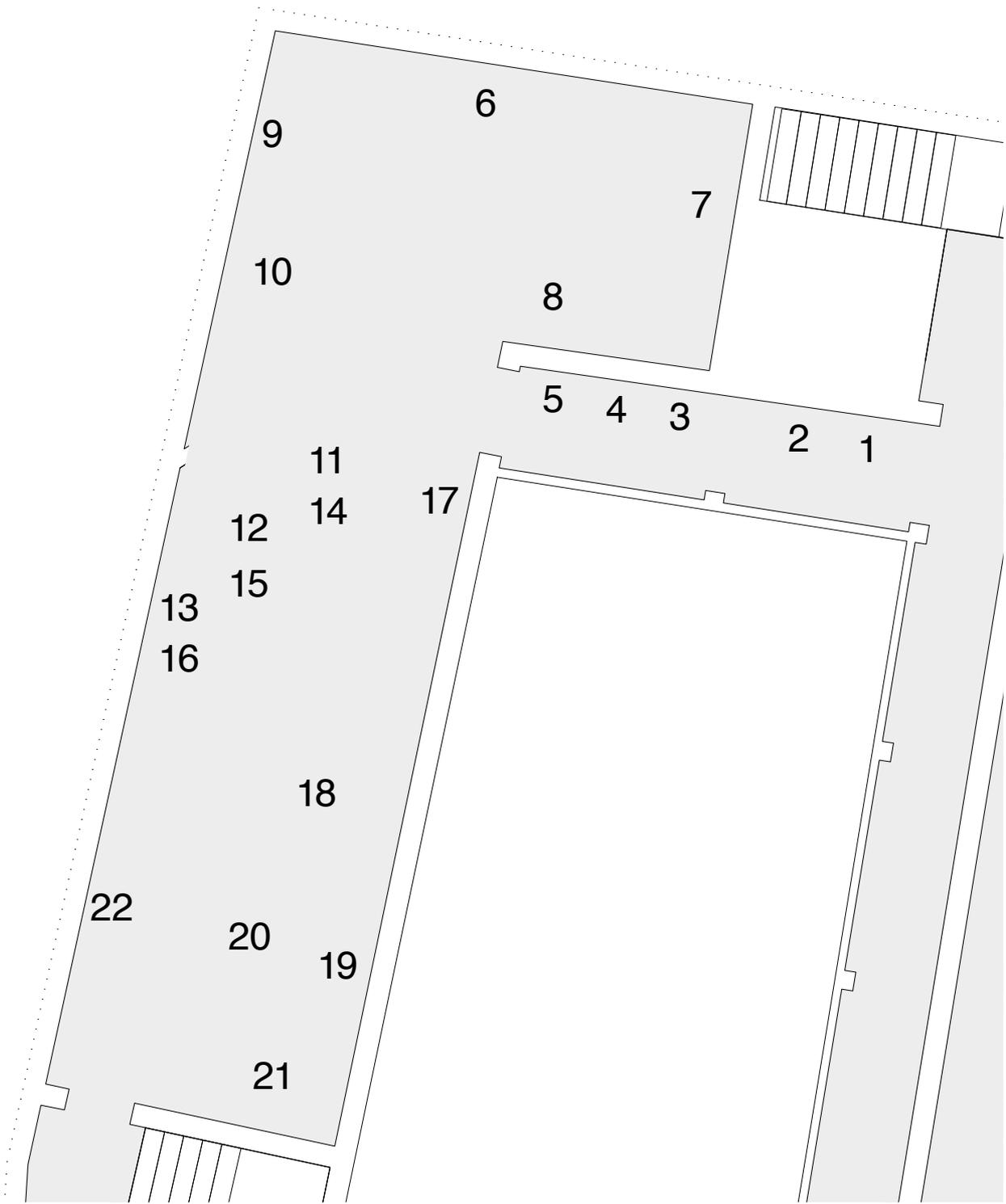
The caesura of 1989 and the uncertain developments of the period following reunification, in which artistic work standing in a tense relationship to the regime seemed to no longer play a role, led to Christa Jeitner ceasing to create art altogether from 1990 to 2006. Jeitner's more recent works from the beginning of the new millennium are carefully annotated found objects referring to the necessity of modesty, turning to human beings and focusing on the functional form. On the theme of the exhibition *Freiheit zur Freiheit* [Freedom to Freedom], Christa Jeitner describes the urgency in her own words, "now that we are free, it is time... ." These works, like the floor piece („... mit abgehäutetem Finger“, *Paul Celan*) [(“... with skinned finger”, Paul Celan)] from 2012, *Lehmziegel* [Clay Brick] from 2006 and *Korsische Hacke mit Umhüllung* [Corsican Hoe with Cover] from 2017, refer “to the perfection of the functional form that has evolved by adopting what is most affordable in producing devices and building elements necessary for life.” The artistic treatment of the material, characterized by the utmost respect for human traces in the produced objects, even had her disassemble a work from 1964 made of an old and patched linen that she had received from a farmwoman by reversing all interventions. A hole that became visible after removing the patch is now covered by a foil to visualize the foreignness of the intervention. Christa Jeitner, who has been accompanying her oeuvre since the mid-1980s with as yet unpublished notes, writes: “What now becomes readable is form and format, the long usage, and finally the traces of my treatment. The restoration withholds nothing. The cloth now expresses itself.”

**Christa Jeitner** (\*1935) lives and works in Blumberg near Berlin. From 1954 she studied at the Hochschule für bildende und angewandte Kunst in East Berlin and after her de-registration at the Hochschule für Bildende Künste in West Berlin. After reunification, she received her diploma in fine art/painting in a rehabilitation procedure in 1996. In addition to exhibitions from 1961 onward, museum in Germany and abroad have acquired her works since 1963. Fritz Kämpfer, the former director of the Grassi-Museum Leipzig, described the period from 1965 to 1973: “It was indeed like an exhibition ban.” Jeitner repeatedly traveled to Poland to deal with the country's history and culture. With a stipend, she spent a longer period of time in Warsaw, where the independent Polish art scene became her window to the world. From 1965 she also worked as a textile restorer, followed by academic work, teaching positions and publications in both fields. From 1969 she became active in Aktion Sühnezeichen. After ceasing to create art in 1990, she resumed doing so in 2006 with the work complex *Gegenstände und Flächen* [Objects and Surfaces]; in 2007 a selection of her work was included in the archive of the Akademie der Künste in Berlin.

- 1 *Ermutigung. Wolf Biermann, Peter Huchel gewidmet.* [Encouragement. Wolf Biermann, dedicated to Peter Huchel], (Das Grün bricht aus den Zweigen, wir wolln es allen zeigen), [The green is sprouting from the Twigs, let's show it to ever yone] Textile object, 1970
- 2 *Massaker in Vietnam oder: Foltern in San Sebastian und anderswo* [Vietnamese Massacre: Torture in San Sebastian and Elsewhere] Textile object, 1969
- 3 *Was nennt ihr mich Herr und tut nicht, was ich euch sage (Lk. 6,46),* [Why do you call me Lord, and do not do what I say ] Textile object, 1971
- 4 *Auschwitz Zyklus* [Auschwitz Cycle] , Textile object 1964  
From left to right  
*Auschwitz-Reliquien, Lager* [Auschwitz relics, camp]  
*Auschwitz-Reliquien, Haare* [Auschwitz relics, hair]  
*Auschwitz-Reliquien, Rauch* [Auschwitz relics, smoke]  
*Auschwitz-Reliquien, Lumpen* [Auschwitz relics, rags]
- 5 Windowsill: 3 sketches on *Was nennt ihr mich Herr und tut nicht, was ich euch sage* (Lk. 6,46) [Why do you call me Lord, and do not do what I say ](Lk. 6,46)“, photo copy, 1971



## Floorplan Ground Floor



1st Floor: Gallery Ambulatory  
and Hall with Parquet Floor

- 1 Poster for the memorial room *50. Return of the Reichskristallnacht*, Französische Friedrichstadtkirche, Berlin, 1989, in Remembrance of the Persecution and Murder of the Jews in Berlin marking the anniversary of November 9, 1938
- 2 Exhibition view, Französische Kirche, Berlin, 1989
- 3 Poster for the exhibition *Jan Strzelecki / Christa - Maria Jeitner: Ein Buch* [Jan Strzelecki / Christa - Maria Jeitner: A Book], Galerie Passage, Berlin, 1989
- 4 Poster for the exhibition *Jan Strzelecki / Christa - Maria Jeitner: Ein Buch* [Jan Strzelecki / Christa - Maria Jeitner: A Book] in Poland
- 5 Exhibition view, Galerie Passage, Berlin, 1989
- 6 Jan Strzelecki: *Erproben im Zeugnis* [Rehearsals in Testimony], 12 textile works by Christa – Maria Jeitner, 1989  
2 bibliophile editions of *Erproben im Zeugnis* [Rehearsals in Testimony] published by Christa Jeitner, 1989, with issues with vignette, volume *Aktion Sühnezeichen* [Action Reconciliation Service for Peace] with vignette
- 7 Cycle *Das Licht des Nichts* [The Light of Nothingness]  
VI  
*Erinnerung an den Schatten, Jan Strzelecki gewidmet*  
[Memory of the Shadow, dedicated to Jan Strzelecki]  
Textile object, 1987-1988
- 8 Cycle *Möglichkeiten des Menschen* [Possibilities of Man]  
*Überschrift z.Bsp. Bad und Desinfektion* [Title, e.g.: Bath and Disinfection]  
Textile object, 1972
- 9 Cycle *Das Licht des Nichts* [The Light of Nothingness]  
IX  
*Paul Celan: Engführung* [Paul Celan: The Straitening]  
Textile object, 1987-1988
- 10 Ohne Titel [Untitled]  
*(Paul Celan: ... mit abgehäutetem Finger)* [(Paul Celan: ... with skinned finger)]  
Textile object, 2012
- 11 Cycle *Das Licht des Nichts* [The Light of Nothingness]  
I  
Paul Celan:  
„In der Mandel - was steht in der Mandel?  
Das Nichts.  
Es steht das Nichts in der Mandel.  
Es steht und es steht....“  
[Inside The Almond – What remains Inside. The Nothing. It remains Inside the Almond. It remains an remains ...]  
Textile object, 1987-1988
- 12 Cycle *Das Licht des Nichts* [The Light of Nothingness]  
III  
T. S. Eliot:  
„O dark dark dark. They all go into the dark,  
The vacant interstellar spaces,  
The vacant into the vacant,  
...“  
Textile object, 1987-1988
- 13 Cycle *Das Licht des Nichts* [The Light of Nothingness]  
IV  
Else Lasker-Schüler:  
*Es ist ein Weinen in der Welt,  
Als ob der liebe Gott gestorben wär,  
Und der bleierne Schatten, der niederfällt,  
Lastet grabesschwer.* [Else Lasker-Schüler: There is weeping in the world, As if the dear god were dead, And the leaden shadows that fall, Weigh heavily as the grave. ], Textile object, 1987-1988



- 14 Continued Cycle *Das Licht des Nichts* [The Light of Nothingness]  
X  
*Das neue Chaos oder das Chaos des Neuen* [The New Chaos or The Chaos of the New]  
Textile object, 1990
- 15 Continued Cycle *Das Licht des Nichts* [The Light of Nothingness]  
XII  
Schostakowitsch:  
*Nicht Schwarz, nicht Weiß* [Not black not white]  
*nur schmutziges Grau* [only dirty grey]  
Textile object, 1990
- 16 Fortgeführter Zyklus *Das Licht des Nichts*  
XII  
Schostakowitsch:  
*Nicht Schwarz, nicht Weiß,*  
*nur schmutziges Grau*  
1990
- 17 *Das war gewesen* [That had been], Textile object, 1993
- 18 *Fundstück pur:*  
*Korsische Hacke*  
*mit Umhüllung* [Pure found piece: Corsican Hoe with Cover]  
Object, 2017
- 19 *Fundstück:*  
*Lehmziegel mit Tasche* [Found piece: Clay Brick with bag]  
Object, 2006
- 20 *Fragmente Bernau von 1666*  
*Holz II* [Fragments of Bernau of 1666: Wood II]  
Object, 2016
- 21 *Stückwerk*  
*Rückwärts zum polnischen Laken* [Piecemeal. Backwards to the Polish Linnen]  
Textile object, 2015
- 22 *Polen-Gedenktücher* [Poland Commemorative Cloths], 1983-1984  
Textile objects, from left to right:  
  
(1) *Trauerhaut - Homage à Tadeusz Brzozowski* [Mourning Skin - Homage à Tadeusz Brzozowski]  
(2) *Trübe Weite* [Cloudy width]  
(3) *Keine Aufschrift* [No inscription]  
(4) ... *nach Różewicz* [...for Różewicz]

# JAAN TOOMIK

## OLEG

### ***Ground floor: Vault***

After completing his military service, a soldier of the Soviet army takes the train back home. 25 years later, he sets off again on a ritual journey to confront the memories that have burdened his soul all these years. Jaan Toomik's film *Oleg* from 2010 bears autobiographical traits. As a work that in an unsettling way reflects on the experience of obligatory military service, which he shared with most men of his generation in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union, this short feature film lends the first institutional solo exhibition of Jaan Toomik in Germany its title. His painting *Unknown Soldier* (2014) is a variation of his dealing with the military service and appears as a brute update of the famous antiwar song *Where Have All the Flowers Gone* from the 1950s, albeit without the romanticism of flowers swaying in the wind – death and blooming vegetation directly clash here in all their existentiality.

Jaan Toomik, born in 1961 in Tartu, ranks among Estonia's most renowned painters, filmmakers and video artists. In both his filmic works and paintings, he reflects on existential traumas of loss and mortality, as well as experiences of physical and structural violence. After finishing his military service in the first half of the 1980s, Jaan Toomik studies painting at the art academy in Tallinn and develops his own neo-expressionist style with works such as *Menstruation* (1989). In the same year as radical changes affect all of Europe, he tests "post-conceptual, post-media" performance approaches (Hanno Soans in: Jaan Toomik: *Run*, Archive Books, Berlin 2010). Also in 1989, Jaan Toomik spends several months in Prague on a stipend he received as a student of painting. He reacts to the local population declaring him complicit in the suppression of the past decades as an actor of the hated Soviet power with a satirical performance. With a sign in Estonian stating "My prick is clean!" around his neck, he patrols the Charles Bridge in front of a naturally uncomprehending local and tourist public. This performance anticipates two life themes – the targeted balancing act regarding the entanglement in and the breaking of taboos of contemporary political issues, on the one hand, and the question of the role of the (male) avant-garde artist, as an actor, a fringe phenomenon, or possibly also a victim and symptom of current political events, on the other. At a much later point in time, *Self Portrait with Cut Penis. Homage to Van Gogh* from 2015 sarcastically and humorously alludes to a famous theme of art history, the naked artist in a self-portrait; the staging of impotency as a possible artistic pose.

### ***Continuation on the upper floor: Hallway, Hall with Concrete Floor***

In addition to his conceptual works, pieces such as *May 15 – 31* (1992) unsettle the Estonian audience in the early 1990s: Jaan Toomik carefully filled his daily meals and the corresponding excrements into glasses. Alongside obviously citing Piero Manzoni's *Mierda de artista* from 1961, this piece also comments on the extremely desperate living conditions in the time right after independence and the collapse of the Soviet empire. The exhibition at the Kunsthaus confronts two works created after Toomik's international breakthrough with his first laconic video pieces.

*Waterfall* was created during a stipend residency in the United States. A man, the artist himself, stands in front of a huge waterfall. No sound can be heard. Then the man opens his mouth and the roaring noise "gushes" from his mouth. *Landscape with chimneys* (2017) the painting just opposite, and *Untitled from 2018 (Family Business)*, the most recent works selected for the show, introduce the theme of rurality, albeit without any glorification. The depicted scenes share an openness regarding time. It is therefore possible to situate the motifs – a gloomy landscape in which chimneys are possible signs of an industrial plant, with a kneeling man in the foreground who is perhaps digging in the ground, or also the chubby boy learning to shoot under the negligent supervision of male adults – in both the 20th and 21st century.

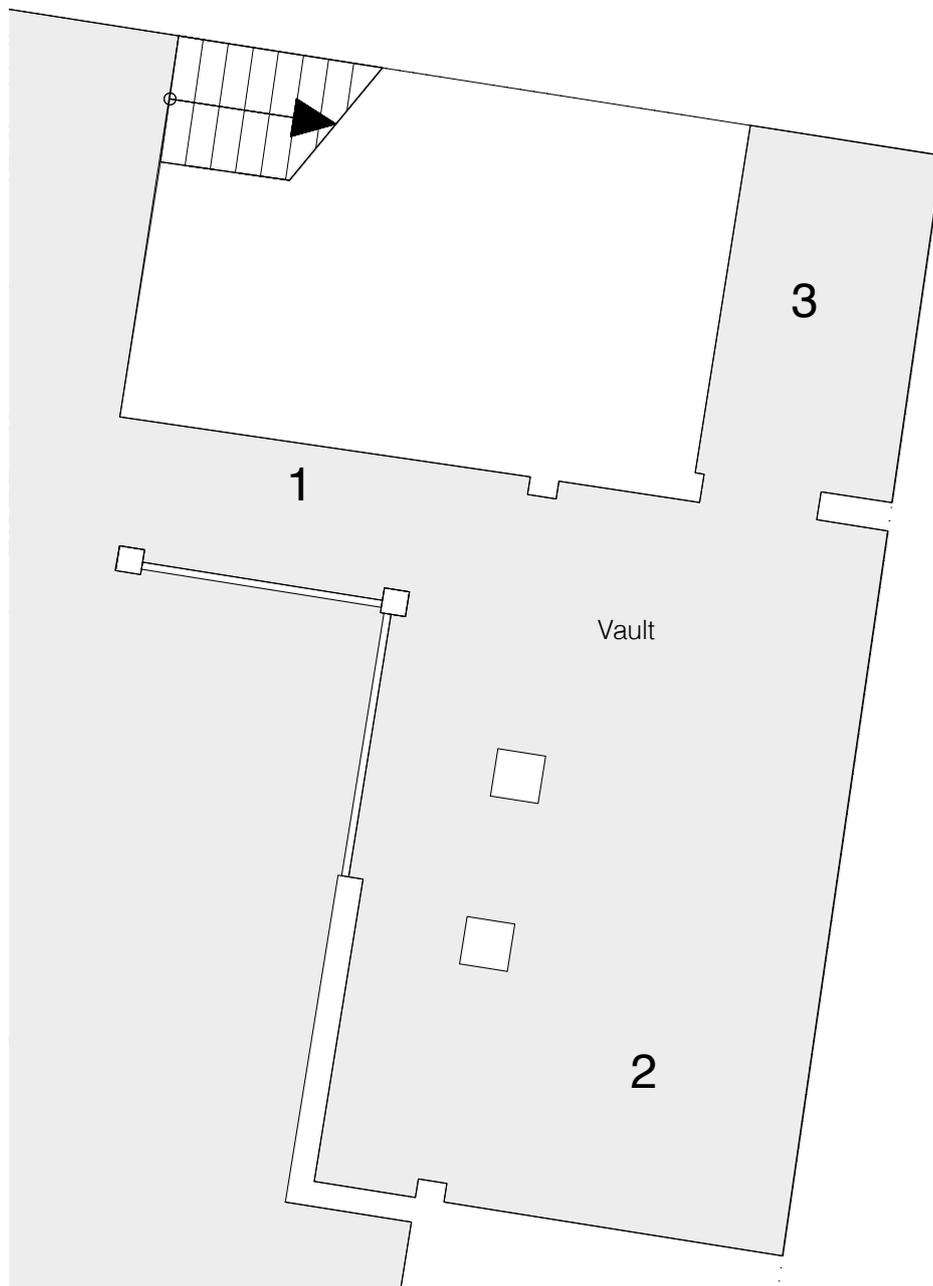
*Untitled* from 2010, a Beta SP recording, shows a man tied to a piece of farmland via his penis. Like an animal, he goes round and round in the radius of the rope. Notions of freedom or bondage in its most literal sense are linked by new references in this archaic situation, and the theme of masculinity is once again addressed. Inevitably, the question arises as to the continued existence of rural, indeed compulsive and brutal attachment in the present. Soil, turf, territory are categories that are present here in the corporeality of the muddy farmland.

*Check yourself*, the painting on the the opposite wall, is yet another self-portrait: the half-naked body of the artist in the studio is partially dissolved in a wildly gesticulating pose, while the head positioned outside of the studio as a central pictorial space looks in through the window. From a curatorial point of view, the picture appears as the embodiment of the artist as a self-promoter constantly reinventing himself in hectic activity, the desperate epitome of the creative individual marketing himself in capitalism. *Untitled* from 2002 shows a man who falls from a great height and disappears in the ground. For the work that was made after the death of Jaan Toomik's brother and, as a performance, entailed a great risk of injury, Toomik was trained at a stunt school.

In Toomiks work various themes recur: the issue of being existentially bound to the randomness of the living body, the family not as the cradle of comfort but also as the paragon of unsolvable mysteries as well as violent and socially bound interrelations. *Dancing with Dad* shows Toomik dancing on his father's grave. "It's a symbolic dance with my father who died in 1971 when I was nine years old. I never had the chance to dance with him in real life." (Jaan Toomik, in Jaan Toomik, *Run*, 2012) The song Voodoo Child by Jimi Hendrix accompanies the dance.

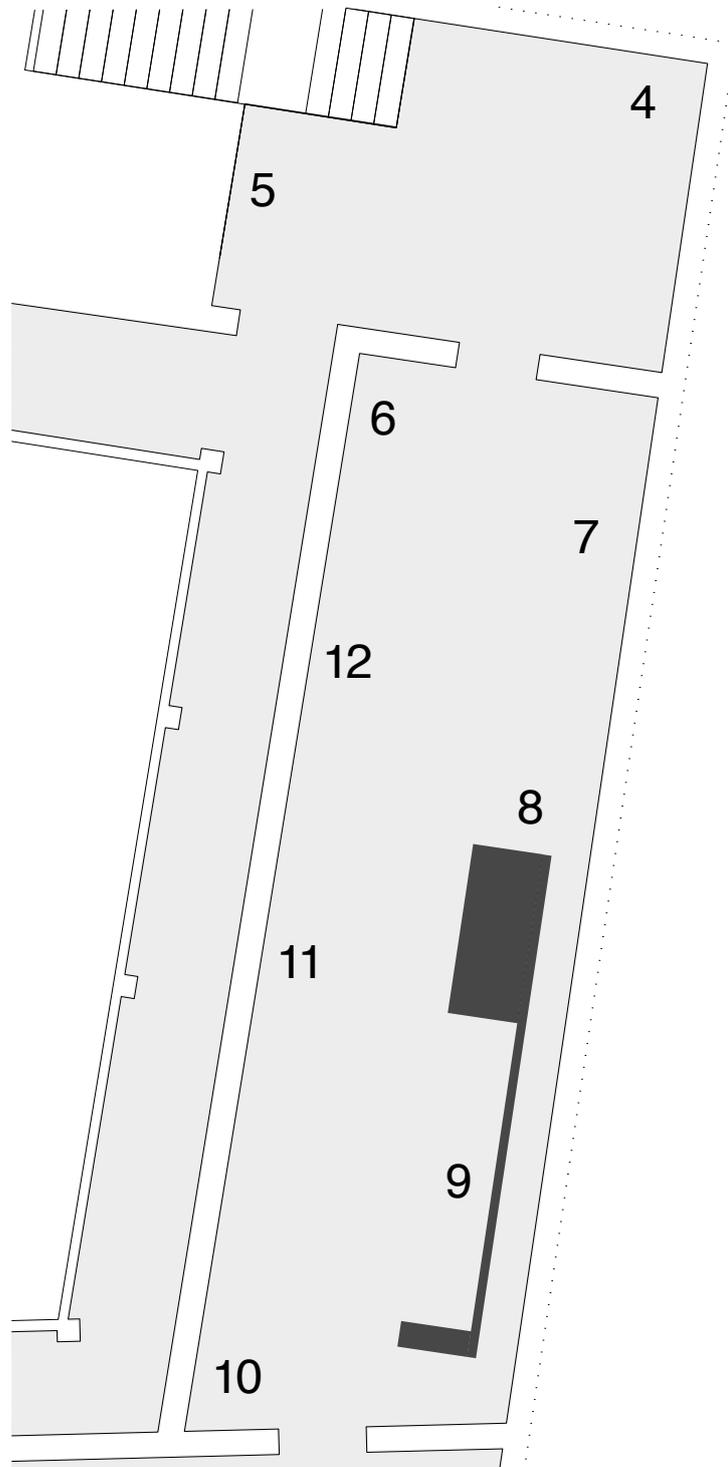
Also the motive *Family Tree*, a tree or a pyramid of persons awkwardly intertwined alludes to notions of rootedness, or rather captivity, in complex structures that one cannot control (*Family Tree*, 2014). As a recurring motive in Jaan Toomik's oeuvre it is part of his own biographic dealing with the theme of family, but can possibly also be seen within the complex structure of the history of the repeated occupation of Estonia, first by the German Wehrmacht, then by the Soviets and the Stalinist purges, leading to the flight, displacement and return of families, which might render narratives of family, procreation and fathership yet in a modified light.

- 1 *Unknown Soldier*, 2014, acrylics on canvas, 190x140cm
- 2 *Oleg*, short film, 35mm, 21:00min, 2010
- 3 *Self portrait with cut off penis. Homage to Van Gogh*, 2015, acrylics on canvas, 100x150.cm



Floorplan Ground Floor: Vault

- 4 *Landscape with Chimneys*, 2017, acrylics on canvas, 110 x 246 cm
- 5 *Waterfall 2005*, video installation, DVD, 2005
- 6 *Untitled from 2001*. video installation, BETA SP 2001
- 7 *Dancing with Dad*, 2003, video installation, DVD 3:55 2003
- 8 *Untitled, Ink on paper, no year*
- 9 *Check Yourself*, 2016, acrylics on canvas, 200 x 250cm
- 10 *Untitled*, video installation, BETA SP 0:37, 2002
- 11 *Family tree*, 2014, acrylics and spraypaint on canvas, 250x200cm
- 12 *Untitled 2018 / Family Business*, 2018, acrylics on canvas, fabric, 126 x 156 cm



1st Floor

# MARIAN BOGUSZ

## THE JOY OF NEW CONSTRUCTIONS

(Post) War Utopias by Marian Bogusz

Curated by Joanna Kordjak

In Collaboration with the artists Katarzyna Przezwańska, Piotr Kopik, Tomasz Czuban

Translations from Polish by Agnieszka Gryz-Männig

### **1st Floor: Main Hall**

*Before the camp's liberation we managed to consult neither the arrangement of individual studios nor the entire urban planning scheme. I made it right after the liberation . . . According to my layout plan, within the territory of the 'Russenlager' there are houses of sculptors, painters and architects. It is all close to quarries. Passing terraces, we enter the upper part of the estate where houses of writers and musicians are located. Here you can find concert and exhibition halls, an amphitheatre and rooms for meeting and discussions . . .<sup>1</sup>*

The project of the International Housing Estate of Artists described by Marian Bogusz in a letter to his friend, Manuel Muñoz, is a point of departure for the narration of the present exhibition which sketches a portrait of one of the most important and colourful figures of the Polish post-war artistic scene — a painter, sculptor, scenographer and designer.

His powerful impact on Polish artistic life consisted, first and foremost, in the ability to stimulate and weld various artistic circles by establishing clubs, galleries, initiating exhibitions and (since the 1960s) staging numerous all-Poland artistic events such as open-air workshops and symposia. Only to a limited extent does the exhibition bring together the artist's painting output, concentrating mostly on other areas of his activity.

The modernist concept of the International Housing Estate of Artists, which was to be built on the ruins of the concentration camp, became an expression of faith in the emancipatory potential of art. Also the exhibitions secretly organised together with a group of artists (including Zbigniew Dłubak, who used the pseudonym Andrzej Zdanowski at that time, and Zbyněk Sekal, a Czech) affirmed this belief. These actions constituted a form of resistance and defence against dehumanisation in the conditions of extreme oppression. For Bogusz, his war experience turned out crucial, if not fundamental, on account of the artistic relationships fostered at that time, also international ones (including essential contacts with Czech artists and, thanks to them, Czech surrealism), and the political views adopted during those three years.

Bogusz came back to the designs created in the Mauthausen camp in 1979 at his exhibition *Architectural Visions 1944–1945* (and in the implemented idea of the Housing Estate of Young Artists in Rawka, Skierniewice). Precisely in those modernistic architectural visions of a housing estate-monument he outlined a certain model of modernity, which was later on referred to in his artistic activity. This model, rooted in the pre-war avant-garde, assumed that there is synergy — the co-existence of various disciplines of art: literature, painting, sculpture and music, as well as, following the modernist postulates of avant-garde artists, the integration of music with science and technique, according to the Utopian concept of collaboration or even collective artistic work devoid of rivalry.

In particular, the sense of community, role of teamwork (as an integral element of the creative attitude) and understanding of art as collective experience, which were shared by artists organising a secret artistic life in the camp conditions, largely determined the character of the subsequent work of Bogusz. His stance owed equally much to the Utopian belief in the actual influence of art and its role in social transformations fulfilled by shaping an aesthetic human environment. The change of spatial organisation, in the artist's opinion, could exert effect on interpersonal relationships and, as a result, change social relationships. A similar way of thinking became the driving force behind various activities undertaken by Marian Bogusz since the 1960s. The symposia initiated by him (i.a. in Łosiów in 1972, Krapkowice in 1974 or Opole in 1974/75) were linked by the idea of reorganising the space of cities, small towns and even villages as part of collectively developed interdisciplinary designs which would combine the elements of painting, sculpture, architecture and urban planning. On the one hand, the artistic events held in the so-called Recovered Territories (to a different degree involving local communities) were in line with the state's internal policy conducted at that time (aiming at the integration of those areas with the rest of the country) and the related propaganda strategy of the authorities (using culture, also modern art, as its own tool). On the other hand, these events provided Bogusz with the opportunity to change the scale of his artistic experiments and carry out grand projects. 'Visual artists

shared the desires of architects', he wrote. Only the combination of avant-garde experiments of painters and sculptors with innovations in the field of architecture and urban planning could produce new non-stereotypical spatial solutions. Even if in the vast majority of cases the outcomes were eventually not implemented, it was the very model of collective work on the design, adopted during the symposia, which seemed to matter to Bogusz.

The urge, common for all these initiatives, to influence social life by shaping the human environment went together with the idea of democratising the access to contemporary art and aesthetic education, so important for Bogusz. He attempted to put it into effect in different ways. One of them was the project of setting up a collection of contemporary art and ensuring a permanent place of its display.

In ruined Warsaw, where he came back just after the war, in his capacity as a head of the Painting Section of the Club of Young Artists and Scientists Bogusz implemented the above-mentioned concept of a modern art gallery — in two small rooms of the former Institute for Propaganda of Art (in the Home of the Polish Armed Forces in Warsaw at Królewska street 13). The exhibition programme of this place, functioning only three years (1947–1949), put it on the map of the Polish artistic life of the second half of the 1940s. The programme, with great probability outlined as early as during the artist's stay in the camp of Mauthausen, assumed new thinking about modernity and the ways of showing it. In this regard, the crucial elements for Bogusz were: an interdisciplinary character and pluralism of presented artistic approaches and, so vital for them, space for free exchange and contrast of various views. Similar ideas underpinned the activity of the Crooked Circle Gallery (of the Fine Arts Section of the Crooked Circle Club set up in 1956). As part of the gallery's activity Bogusz made numerous attempts to implement the concept of popularizing contemporary art and aesthetic education (at that time the idea of 'artistic Mondays' emerged, i.e. meetings with modern art in work places and workers' hostels and the use of Warsaw factories as exhibition spaces). A new gallery of contemporary art for Łódź (a museum-monument dedicated to Władysław Strzemiński) was intended to realise the idea of wide access to modern art — literally visible from the street (through the building's glazed walls). Its design, developed in 1956 as a result of the discussion about plans to establish the Central Museum of Contemporary Art, was one of several projects in which Bogusz addressed the topic of modern exhibition space. The graphic design of the route connecting the National Museum in Warsaw with the Zegrze Reservoir (1971), initiated by Marian Bogusz and Jerzy Olkiewicz, responded to the need to work out a new formula for displaying works of art in a manner which would correspond to contemporary sensitivity.

The current exhibition highlights only some aspects of the activity carried out by Marian Bogusz. His organisation of exhibitions appears here especially noteworthy. It is also a pretext for bringing back his activity in the field of spatial arrangement of exhibitions which is exceptionally interesting and as yet too little researched. Bogusz played a substantial role in this respect as a head of the artistic section of the Club of Young Artists and Scientists. Thanks to his support this institution encouraged bold experiments, including those related to exhibition space arrangement. Bogusz is also recollected as an originator, author of the idea and stage design of one of the key exhibitions of the Polish Thaw period — the exhibition of Katarzyna Kobro and Władysław Strzemiński in the Centre of Propaganda of Art in 1956 and subsequently in the Central Bureau for Art Exhibitions Zachęta in 1957. This activity of the artist was closely connected with his vast experience in stage design.

### **Marian Bogusz**

Born in 1920 in Pleszew, died in 1980 in Warsaw. A painter, sculptor, scenographer, designer as well as organizer of cultural activities. He spent World War II (since 1941) in the concentration camp in Mauthausen. After the war he came to Warsaw to study painting at the Academy of Fine Arts in Warsaw (1946–1948) as a student of, among others, Jan Cybis and Jan Sokółowski.

In 1947 Bogusz became the head of the Painting Section of the Club of Young Artists and Scientists which existed till 1949 in the Home of the Polish Armed Forces in Warsaw. Other members of the section included Zbigniew Dłubak, Stanisław Fijałkowski and the doyens of the pre-war avant-garde: Henryk Stażewski, Maria Ewa Łunkiewicz-Rogoyska, Władysław Strzemiński and Marek Włodarski. Its activity was commenced (in May 1947) by the *Exhibition of Works of Modern Visual Artists* — the first and one of the most important all-Poland displays of modern art in the 1940s. Bogusz was also a co-organiser and participant of the First Exhibition of Modern Art in Cracow (1948/49).

Parallel to doing painting and drawing, he created the graphic setting of exhibitions, designed catalogues and book covers. Since the late 1940s the artist was also active as a scenographer (cooperating e.g. with the Powszechny Theatre in Łódź and later with the Lalka Puppet Theatre in Warsaw or the Baltic Drama Theatre in Koszalin). In the next decade he designed the décor of the Pavilion for the Leipzig Trade Fairs (1950, 1951, 1952, 1956) and in 1956 he competed in the contest for the design of the Polish Pavilion for the Brussels World's Fair.

In the period of the Polish Thaw he was one of the key figures of the Warsaw artistic milieu, becoming actively involved in the city's artistic life. At the turn of 1954 and 1955, Bogusz, together with Zbigniew

Dłubak, Andrzej Szlagier, Andrzej Zaborowski and Barbara Zbrożyna, set up Group 55 (which was later joined by Kajetan Sosnowski). In 1955 the Fine Arts Section of the Club was created, comprising the members of the Crooked Circle Club, a club of the Warsaw intelligentsia. The function of the head of the Section (represented by Zbigniew Dłubak, Ewa Garztecka, Barbara Jonscher, Alina Szapocznikow and Barbara Zbrożyna) was performed by Marian Bogusz. In 1956 the Crooked Circle Gallery was opened in the Staromiejski Cultural Centre as one of the forms of the Club's activity. Afterwards it was called the Gallery of Modern Art and led by Bogusz till 1965. The exhibition space of the club constituted one of the main points on the cultural map of the capital. Not only were the works of the most important Polish contemporary artists presented here (starting from Magdalena Abakanowicz and Włodzimierz Borowski, through Henryk Stażewski and Alina Szapoczników, ending up with Jerzy Tchórzewski and Barbara Zbrożyna) but also individual and collective public displays of foreign artists' output were mounted. In 1959 Bogusz staged an exhibition of the international group Phases to which he belonged. One of the most crucial initiatives of the gallery was the exhibition *Confrontations* organised on the occasion of the AICA International Congress of Art. The artist also took part in the organisation of the Second and Third Exhibition of Modern Art in the Central Bureau for Art Exhibitions Zachęta in Warsaw (1957, 1959).

In 1963, together with Jerzy Fedorowicz, Bogusz co-organised the First Koszalin Plein-Air Workshop in Osieki (this event was cyclically held till the 1980s). He got involved in the organisation of the symposia of the Golden Cluster in Zielona Góra and, most notably, in one of the most important exhibitions, *Space and Expression*, which took place as part of the Third Symposium in 1967. In the 1970s he initiated a number of plein-air and conference events, mainly in the Opole region (Łosiów-1972, Górażdże-1973, Krapkowice-1974, Opole-1974/1975, Otmuchów-1975) as well as Western Pomerania (Ustka-1972).

Moreover, at that time Bogusz co-organized and participated in all essential events focused on public space. He contributed to the organisation of the First Biennale of Spatial Forms in Elbląg (and participated in it himself). On the initiative of Marian Bogusz and Jerzy Olkiewicz in 1971, the graphic design of the route National Museum in Warsaw–Zegrze Reservoir, an intended location of the museum's branch, was developed. In the following years Bogusz co-organised and participated in the exhibitions *Proposals for Warsaw* and *Sculptors for the Wisłostrada Route*, presenting options of spatial solutions for the capital. He was also an initiator and exhibition officer of the Lublin Artistic Meetings (1976, 1977), events with the participation of artists from all over Poland who showed their designs of the spatial arrangement of the Sunny Hill housing estate of the Lublin Housing Cooperative.

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<sup>1</sup> Marian Bogusz: *Wizje architektoniczne 1944–1945, Projekt Osiedla Artystów 1979 w Miesiącu Pamięci Narodowej*, exh. cat., Galeria Za, Rawka, 26.04–10.06.1979.



In Dresden the question "What is art - as a language of freedom - capable of in times of resentment?" was developed in a collaborative workshop hosted by Kunsthau Dresden. We are grateful for the participation of: Karl Siegbert Rehberg, sociologist, Dresden, Justus H. Ulbricht, historian, Dresden, Svea Duwe, artist, Dresden, Manaf Halbouni, artist, Robert Thiele, curator, Dresden, Daniela Hoferer, curator, Dresden, Christiane Mennicke-Schwarz, curator, Dresden, Eva Meyer, philosopher, Berlin, and Ulla Heinrich, curator Dresden.

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