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## Widmo. Pożegnanie z Zamkiem, powitanie z legendą

Stach Szablowski

Spectrum. Saying goodbye to the Castle, greeting with the legend



Lawrence Weiner, „O wiele za dużo rzeczy, żeby zmieścić w tak małym pudełku” / „Far too many things to fit into so small a box”, instalacja: napis na zachodniej i północnej fasadzie CSW Zamku Ujazdowskiego, 14.06.1996–2013, zdjęcie wykonane w 1996

*Bik Van der Pol gave the institution a treasure of self-knowledge. Unfortunately, it looks like there will be no chance - at least until 2026 - to take advantage of it. Just when the Castle began to reconcile and get along with its ghosts, a ghost comes; there are many indications that now this place will become a set design for the program, not a metaphorical horror.*

*„And I find it kind of funny  
I find it kind of sad  
The dreams in which I'm dying  
Are the best I've ever had”  
Tears for Fears, Mad World*

Dr. Piotr Bernatowicz is a believer; willingly flaunts it publicly. I wonder if he believes (also) in ghosts? He'd better believe, because he'll be the director of the haunted castle in a moment. An institution

whose ghostly figure was evoked by the Dutch duo Bik Van der Pol at the exhibition Too Many Stories Too Fit In So Small A Box.

Here is the irony of fate: the last exhibition at the CCA is the best for months, for years. This exhibition would be a success, but the Minister of Culture, like a perverse wizard, with one touch of his wand not only made Piotr Bernatowicz the new castellan of the castle, but also turned success into elegance. This was not the plan when the Bik Van der Pol project was included in the CCA program. But maybe this was the destiny, and the minister and his protégé, thinking that they were following the normal TKM principle, became unaware the executors of the judgments of that destiny? For is not elegy the most suitable genre for the story of an institution whose genius loci, as Adam Mazur claims in the pages of Dwutygodnik, like a veteran of work in this institution, consists in "eternal decline"?

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I spent half my professional life in the Castle. In 2016 I left by mutual agreement. I live close, to tell the truth I see the Castle from the kitchen window, but after this departure "by agreement" I felt somewhat out of the way to this institution. Usually I fail to get to the U-vernishes. The opening About many stories coincided, however, with Bernatowicz's nomination. On Facebook there were appeals to appear at this vernissage, manifesting solidarity with the institution affected by the misfortune. There are wrongdoings in the homeland, but no one will refuse blood - I thought and went. The Warsaw art industry also came along, it came complete, all familiar faces, all celebrities. Behind the industry, however, there was a crowd of spectators who would care about the fate of the Castle not professionally but with attachment. The crowd was a few weeks later, at the opening of The Power of Secrets by Karol Radziszewski. Karol has his audience, there is no doubt. Does the Castle have it - as an institution? Attendance rates seem to go up constantly, but people go to exhibitions, not indicators.

Or maybe the thing is that the Bik Van der Pol project is institutional criticism, an exhibition in a castle about a castle? Does anyone care - outside the industry of course? Institutional criticism is an extensive genre. Does his success, however, result from the autocratic criticism of artistic institutions or from their narcissism? Who doesn't like to take care of themselves? Institution building is a fundamental problem in postcolonial peripheral countries such as this country. Institutional criticism could be a great topic in Poland, but on the condition that it would go beyond the field of art as a case study of institutionalization processes in general. However, it is 2019 and it is well known that in the Polish artistic world no institutional dust could be invented. Farm relations, cases of mobbing, human exploitation, class conflicts, neoliberal optimizations, authoritarian governance, low level of empowerment, high level of hierarchy - artistic institutions are not free from any of the ills that digest all other institutions in Poland; exceptions confirm this rule. The institutions talk a lot about democracy, but their fate depends, as in monarchies, on the character and charisma of directors and directors. That is why I see the future of the CCA under new governments in a black way. Will Piotr Bernatowicz imbue with the spirit and idea of the institution, which he will soon be heading? Is it rather the Castle will change quickly into the image and likeness of Piotr Bernatowicz?

It will be tomorrow, and for now Bik Van der Pol are reading the present from the past, saying: show me your collection and I will tell you who you are. So, the castle showed its collection to a duo of Dutch artists and asked: who exactly am I? "When I invited Bik Van der Pol, we wanted to find out what the collection is and what its status is," says exhibition curator Joanka Zielińska. - What is the founding myth of the CCA, what did the work methodology look like and where did it come from - and whether this method of working with artists and history is still valid for what we do. "

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What is the point of this institution - apart from filling the exhibition halls and ritual spells about dissemination, broadening the circle of the audience, growing attendance and achieving successes, as measured by an unspecified measure? These are the questions that have long been unanswered. But, recently there are not enough questions. They did not fail during the rebranding of the institution, which during Małgorzata Ludwisiak's term of office changed its name and logo, one of the few things that did not require change. Did this change mean a new opening in the CCA? Or was it an empty gesture, seen in the world of corporations, mobile telephones that one day repaint their showrooms from orange to yellow, or vice versa? The answer of the Ludwisiak institution was puzzling. She sounded "u". Listen? "U" like Ujazdowski? Or maybe "U" like Ubu, the Polish king? A stale joke that can get even more ridiculous from January.

In recent years, the castle has placed great emphasis on performance. Was it the result of a deep reflection on the essence of the institution, or was the direction followed in the pursuit of fashion at a time when performance-is-the-new-black? Perhaps both. "The exhibition was to prove the performative roots of the institution," says Joanka. - The whole story about the CCA proves links with the methodology of the Academy of Movement. " Indeed, the legacy of Wojciech Krukowski and the Academy of Movement - a heritage from which the current management of the Castle symbolically cut off, changing its name - is one of the main themes of the Bik Van der Pol project. But it is not everything. By asking the Dutch questions: "what is the Castle about?", "What exactly is the Castle?", The institution heard a deeper answer than the one it could have expected. She learned that she was a legend. Were it not for the circumstances, one could insist that a living legend is at stake. Now, however, in the face of the growing rumbling of the steps of the coming Piotr Bernatowicz, it seems that the afterlife may be at stake.

However, let's repeat the question: who cares about the CCA legend? Well I care. In the middle of the exhibition, I come across an installation that was donated by the CCA to Winter Holiday Camp, a collective of artists, activists of the Occupy Museums movement and, last but not least, castle employees, who at the turn of 2013 and 2014 took over the institution for a short time. In addition to the paintings I create together, I see face casts that in those days Paweł Althamer and his company made from the faces of the castle crew. Among them is my plaster "posthumous mask", painted in cheerful colors and attached to the wall with a steel rod. I completely forgot about this casting! I am not impartial; this is also my story - I myself am one of the scary specters in the Castle!

Winter Holiday Camp - those were the days! The hierarchy of service dependencies collapsed; the vertical structure changed into a horizontal one. Management has been replaced by a rally culture and direct democracy. The voice of the DTP operator or archivist for a moment weighed the same as the voice of the director, but also artists and artists. Personnel did not have them on their list, but the creators are also the subject, not the object of the institution, right? Was Winter Holiday Camp the last chance to save the CCA, develop an alternative institutional model, and stop "everlasting decline"? Or was he rather a classic Polish rebound, provoked by the inefficient rule of the then director, Fabio Cavallucci? The latter was a weak and authoritarian leader; the most unfortunate of connections. His successor, Małgorzata Ludwisiak, turned out to be an incomparably more competent manager; ordered and normalized the anarchized, crisis-stricken institution. However, without diminishing the efficiency of the director, the restoration of order came to her all the more because the CSW community alone did not withstand the pressure of its revolutionary intensification for a long time. All power in the hands of the councils! It sounds good, but power is a heavy burden. Unfortunately, we will not learn from that history whether a horizontal, non-hierarchical institution is possible or a complete utopia. Before we could check it, we managed to get tired. Winter Holiday Camp annulled Fabio Cavallucci's claims to rule the Castle, the director became discouraged, de facto abdicated, turning into the boss-zombie, another castle specter.

Without fuel in the form of resistance to the director, the machine producing grassroots reformist enthusiasm quickly stopped. Weary of the hardships of empowerment, we dreamed of returning to normal work. And Małgorzata Ludwisiak's dream came true: the rallies came to an end, the employees returned to their jobs, the Occupy Museums returned to New York, and the trade unions - aspiring to Cavallucci as the leading labor force of the community - returned to their place during the dispute with Cavallucci. But is normality really the point in the institution of art, as well as in art itself? Is there "normal art" at all?



Winter Holiday Campm, fragmenty po akcji 2013/2014. Maski, obrazy, akt darowizny, fot. Pat Mic



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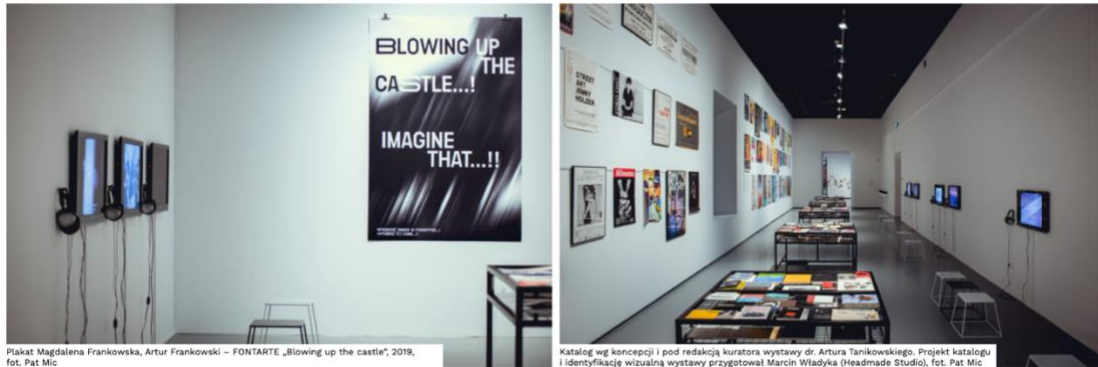
Winter Holiday Campm, fragmenty po akcji 2013/2014. Maski, obrazy, akt darowizny, fot. Pat Mic

One can say anything about the legendary institution - the one from the Bik Van der Pol narrative, except that it was normal. Anyway, how else could she become a protagonist of the legend?

The substance of the castle is late in the Polish People's Republic, its shape has an early Baroque form, but at the Bik Van der Pol exhibition this place takes on a gothic expression and becomes the scenery of amazing stories. Voices haunt the castle; the exhibition is based on a script - a poetic text that the artists stuck from conversations with the people of the Center for Contemporary Art about its history. It's an oral history, actually whispered. The script is played in the exhibition halls; You can also take a portable speaker and play text to your own rhythm. Anecdotes, rumors and (founder's) myths seep from the speaker. "Creating an institution with virtually no money was a challenge. Somewhere in the wilderness. Even the taxi drivers didn't know how to get there. The park was the domain of exhibitionists and a place for gay encounters. There was no audience. No lights. It was like breaking through a jungle with a machete, "whispers a voice.

I remember that ghostly castle, "somewhere in the wilderness." I literally got lost in it in the early 1990s. I was in high school; I didn't know anything about contemporary art, and I didn't know about the existence of the castle; he grew up before me when I was wandering around Jazdów. I saw an exhibition: I didn't understand much of it, but it was enough to realize that I had just found the art I was looking for without

even knowing it. Did this accidental encounter with a castle - not plastered, built from some PRL blocks, a courtyard where weeds grew - influenced my further life?



"Yes, of course I lived in the Castle. Once, on a Sunday morning, I heard strange voices. I look out the window and the Dalai Lama is standing in the courtyard. He performs a ritual with Buddhist songs. It was a real awakening. " These are not my memories, but the text from the speaker, an echo of the old castle aura in which Bik Van der Pol envelops selected artifacts from the CSW collection. Adam Mazur writes that it is not so much a collection as "the remains of a legendary collection of art from the times of Wojciech Krukowski and to some extent his successor, Fabio Cavallucci. Yes, leftovers. Remains of lost works and withdrawn deposits. Reconstructions and fragments of exhibitions. " Leftovers, afterimages, specters. After all, the work of Lawrence Weiner is spectral, which Bik van der Pol paraphrases in the title of the exhibition. "Too many things to fit in such a small box" - an inscription designed by an American conceptualist was placed on the facade of the Castle in 1996. In 2013, during the renovation of the facade carried out by Cavallucci, work was - ups! - painted over. But not exactly; if you know where to look, you can still see the outlines of letters under the layers of paint. Małgorzata Ludwisiak made efforts, but Weiner did not agree to recreate the work. At the exhibition, we can see the artist's handwritten letter to the curator Milada Ślizińska, along with the drawing-concept of the inscription. Bik Van der Pol accurately note that the CCA's collections are not so much a collection as an archive.

But what kind of archive is it where field stones are stored? They used to be an installation by Richard Long, and the installation was in the collections of the CCA, to which Jarosław Kozłowski, the curator of the castle collection, handed it over. When he left, he took with him the most important part of the deposit, i.e. Long's own certificate. Without a certificate, the work of art turned back into a pile of stones. The CSW, however, carefully stores them, unlike many other objects that either got lost or destroyed somewhere, stored in the infamous worlds, hidden in brushwood, which until recently were full of the building of the CSW Laboratory.



Richard Long, „Kamienne koło”, 1977, widok wystawy Bik Van der Pol, „O wiele historii za dużo, by zmieścić w jednym pudełku”, fot. Pat Mic

*Bik Van der Pol show the installation of Nedko Solakov; in the description they say that at work mice brooded and wanted to eat it, but a cat appeared and devoured the mice. The exhibition is full of such stories and such objects. Jobs that mice didn't eat. Jobs that were less fortunate and only documents left. Works that remained at the Castle but do not have any documents. These amazing stories are the secret of the polyszynela. "In the city", in the environment, the knowledge that the CSW collection is a "complicated matter" is common. Bik Van der Pol's revelation is about proposing that these embarrassing secrets not only reveal but look for the source of the institution's identity.*

Małgorzata Ludwisiak has put a lot of effort to rationalize this crazy institution. It's her - finally! - managed to grub up brushwood next to the castle and eliminate the sheds hidden in them, the hell of works that did not fit in real warehouses. I left my jacket in the changing room before entering the exhibition. Once, in this place, in a small square under the stairs of a cafeteria, the Okna gallery operated. The curator Marcin Krasny, another specter of the castle's past, organized groundbreaking exhibitions of young artists in this packer. Hardly anyone, even among the employees of the Center for Contemporary Art, knew that Krasny, who had been implementing projects at this institution for years, is not employed in it, not even for garbage. It is also part of the castle legend. A curator who was seen every day in the corridors, although he was not formally there. 80 exhibitions per year, projects implemented on every possible and impossible square meter of the facility, in basements, storerooms, in corridors, on crazy papers, without a budget; vacuity horror, fever, enthusiasm, unprofessionalism, anti-professionalism.



Zbigniew Libera, „Kąpielowicz”, 1991, widok wystawy Bik Van der Pol, „O wiele historii za dużo, by zmieścić w jednym pudełku”, fot. Pat Mic

In the Bik Van der Pol investigation, all clues of this legend lead to Wojciech Krukowski and his Academy of Movement. We are watching the Academy in the documentation of Other Dances: early 1980s, old video. On demagnetized, fuzzy material, the performers change into further spectra. All the better! The more blurred the image, the more space for the imagination, the more plastic the material is for building a legend. Adam Mazur believes that by mythologizing the era of Krukowski, Bik Van der Pol indirectly criticizes the term of office of Małgorzata Ludwisiak - and he himself eagerly develops this criticism. Is he right Well, considering the past, I'm probably the last person to be a lawyer Ludwisiak. Rebranding was a shot in the foot, it is a shame to kill the Circulation in general, the Korpo model for an art institution is not my poetics, just like the PR jargon that the Castle has recently tried to communicate with the world. The flagship project of this term, Plasticity of the planet Jarosław Lubiak, prepared for years, came out correctly, like a professionally made product of an exhibition institution - there will be no legendary material for it.

But it would be unfair to insist that during the Małgorzata Ludwisiak nothing important and valuable happened in the Castle. After all, the other dances of Agnieszka Sosnowska were brilliant and the daring solo of Maria Lobody, who was brought to Warsaw by Ewa Gorządek. It was a great - the best in Warsaw - performative program, there were projects by Joanna Zielińska and Michał Grzegorzek, who invested in the institution with new energy and successfully attracted a young, fussy audience who had turned their backs on the castle. Now Grzegorzek is showing Karol Radziszewski's exhibition; it can be seen next to the spectacular Bik Van der Pol show.

*For nothing change the name, new business cards and website. Even a crew exchange for nothing; in the current team, hardly anyone knows from their own experience the heroic times of Wojciech Krukowski, to which the institution is now increasingly willing to refer. We managed to say goodbye to the old employees, but the old ghosts were not able to exorcise.*

The castle has a great finish, it ends with class. However, all this is not enough to reactivate the legendary condition that the Dutch talk about. But was it even possible? The first years I spent in the castle belonged to the heroic period, but even more were years filled with discussions: how to locate and fix the leak through which the castle's charisma leaks? This leak began even during the times of Wojciech Krukowski, at the beginning of the 21st century. 80 exhibitions a year, projects in packers, making something out of nothing - this vitality had its dark side, the fever promotes visionary, but it digests the body. The castle was tired, made mistakes and was severely criticized for them. The hole through which

symbolic capital flowed from the institution was not found, because it was not there. This era has changed, the transformation has ended. Krukowski's CCA was her child, genius, but unable and unwilling to grow up in otherwise right fear that when she grew up she would become an ordinary institution, responsible, reasonable, boring. Fabio Cavallucci is completely lost in this poetry of immaturity. Małgorzata Ludwisiak tried to fight her, stop her bending, and put the institution in a vertical position. Can you challenge genius loci, though?

Oppose ghosts? The specters are vindictive, especially since at the Bik Van der Pol exhibition it turns out that they are more real and relevant to the identity of the Castle than the flesh and blood program that was recently carried out here. One of the exhibits at the exhibition is the old CSW logo, a metal plastic object that was created during the time of Wojciech Krukowski and hung in the lobby, in the side entrance to the building. Bik Van der Pol moved it to the gallery and lit it so that it casts a great shadow on the wall. For nothing change the name, new business cards and website. Even a crew exchange for nothing; in the current team, hardly anyone knows from their own experience the heroic times of Wojciech Krukowski, to which the institution is now increasingly willing to refer. We managed to say goodbye to the old employees, but the old ghosts were not able to exorcise. This exhibition could be a great starting point to stop exorcisms and start a creative dialogue with the specters. Joanna Zielińska and the Dutch did an amazing job. The risercz since 2015 has not been in vain; Bik Van der Pol gave the institution a treasure of self-knowledge. Unfortunately, it looks like there will be no chance - at least until 2026 - to take advantage of it. Just when the Castle began to reconcile and get along with its ghosts, a ghost comes; there are many indications that now this place will become a set design for the program, not a metaphorical horror. The castle can even be blown up. It happened to him once, in the 1950s Stalinist sappers razed the building to the ground. Then he appeared again like a phantom and may disappear again. How will we remember him then? What is the moral of the Bik Van der Pol exhibition? Is a non-institutional institution possible? A countercultural institution?

Can art be taken out of the hands of the art industry? Is it possible to dance in the institution other dances than those to which the orchestra of bureaucracy, HR and PR departments play? Common sense and experience say no. And all this happened - in the legend of the Ujazdowski Castle. The institution created by Wojciech Krukowski was unbelievable, today it would be impossible. The legend of this institution is true. The sense of the exhibition, in general the meaning of the Castle, lies not in nostalgia, but in the dialectical clash of the impossible and the real.