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I Have Never Painted a Painting

Artists: Andrzej Szewczyk, and Jakub Gliński, Zuzanna Janin, Grzegorz Kozera, Hanna Nowicka-Grochal, Monika Mamzeta, Jan Mioduszewski, Anna Panek, Katarzyna Przezwańska, Zofia Rydet, Mateusz Szczypiński, Grzegorz Sztwiertnia, Honza Zamojski, Ewa Zarzycka; curators: Jan Mioduszewski, Agnieszka Rayzacher

Exhibition: May 25, 2019 – July 19, 2019

Performance by Ewa Zarzycka: June 15, 2019, noon

Andrzej Szewczyk (1950-2001) was an artist who mounted a silent attack on painting in an attempt to release himself from the shackles of traditional imaging without abandoning the essence of painting altogether. lokal_30, in collaboration with the Simulart Collection, revisits the artistic practice of Andrzej Szewczyk through the prism of the work of contemporary artists.

The exhibition comprises several threads that we discerned in Andrzej Szewczyk's art. Some of them have already been distinguished by art critics, whereas others result from our own reading. The thread related to writing, letter and book was present in Szewczyk's work from the beginning of the 1980. The artist's practice of "writing" paintings, akin to meditation, is connected with icon painting (referred to as "icon-writing" in Polish), an important tradition for Szewczyk. This section of the exhibition combines his works with such pieces as Ewa Zarzycka's drawing that refers to Malevich, further exploring the thread of meditation and reflection on the nature of art. A modernist trope is also followed by Mateusz Szczypiński, whose newspaper crosswords collage relies on the artist's own alphabet: a grid of squares created using primary colours. Honza Zamojski creates a humorous training guide for the artist, and Grzegorz Kozera launches a game with his invitation to the exhibition, a game so often played by Szewczyk himself. Finally, Jan Mioduszewski aka Furniture Factory builds a "socle" for "plumbography": books immersed in lead, which he situates (according to Szewczyk's will) in an object made of found drawers.

The thread of painting – of key importance, and yet often well hidden in Szewczyk's work – is addressed in the "paint roller" pieces originating from the Collection: paintings created by Szewczyk in the 1970s. Painted "like house painter's paintings", they propose an avant-garde solution of the question of the painting, marked by a search for simplicity, the essence of the very act of painting, reaching the limits of painting. We have chosen works by Szewczyk that reveal a surprising scale: from Purism to a pictorial effect, and we juxtaposed them with a painting by Katarzyna Przezwańska, who also explores the question of the painting plane. Andrzej Szewczyk's painting *Barocco* – a palimpsest of two periods of the artist's work (crayon shavings superimposed on a piece painted with a paint roller) – inspired an intervention by Anna Panek, who takes interest in painting beyond the rectangle of the frame. Gazing from an entire wall is *The Painter's Eye* by Grzegorz Sztwiertnia (Szewczyk's assistant in the 1990s), whose work abounds in meta-painterly commentaries, while his reflection on the status of the painting is a thread that connects him with his mentor. Every artist has pieces that disturb the core tone of their oeuvre. For that matter, Szewczyk authored several small-scale Expressionist works. One of them is juxtaposed in the exhibition with a trash installation and a record of a wild visceral performance by Jakub Gliński, carried out in 2018 at lokal_30.

An important theme that is often overlooked in Szewczyk's practice is the body. We have found it in an ephemeral drawing created with the use of menstrual blood, in *A Straw Mat of Mariana Alcoforado*, and in the humorous piece *It's Hard for Mother of God to Say Straight What's Happening under her Armpits*. A dialogue with these works is established by Hanna Nowicka's *Initiation* – a video that combines questions related to the female body with the contemporary discourse on painting. This section also includes the small scale collage *Amazon* by Grzegorz Kozera, in which the artist uses pubic hair as a material to create an expressive drawing.

In Szewczyk's work we have also distinguished the thread of religion and spiritual explorations, which sometimes adopted a lofty tone, although they also resulted in humorous pieces, such as *Promised Land a Bit Like Promised Cloud* and the paint roller work *Pope with Salmon* (1979). This small-scale painting, which addresses folk religiousness, is juxtaposed with a photograph by Zofia Rydet, whose cycle *Presence* (1982–1984) provides a meticulous record of the world of residents of Polish villages and towns. Szewczyk's practice approaches religion in an unorthodox and syncretic manner – volumes from his "plumbographic" libraries may be seen as cross-sections of church naves, plaques of the Ten Commandments, but also as Jewish steles. This section of the show also features a work by Monika Mamzeta in which the artist debates on the patriarchal nature of Roman Catholicism. This piece connects with reflection on the presence of women in the Church, discernible in Szewczyk's references to the biography of Mariana Alcoforado and to the Mother of God. We also juxtapose two epitaphs here: Szewczyk's *Paper Grave for Mum* and Jan Mioduszewski's *Plank for Dad*. The exhibition comes to an end with Szewczyk's little intervention in the invitation to his exhibition at the Muzeum Sztuki in Łódź, which manifests a self-ironic take on the "museification" of the artist, displayed beside an ash skull by Zuzanna Janin.

Jan Mioduszewski
Agnieszka Rayzacher