



**Justyna Górowska**

***Origins***

curator: Anna Batko

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[www.theorigins.site](http://www.theorigins.site)

The story we want to tell is about skin. About the skin we live in and the skin that needs skin. About the two square metres of a layer that warms, protects and separates us. It marks the border between the inside and the outside, which is here and there at the same time, while it also dismantles the category of place. It is like a perfectly tailored uniform which stretches, creases and rips with time. Afterwards, it probably only just exists, having nothing to cling to.

This story is also about the epidermal. It begins in the 1920s or even earlier, on the threshold of revolution. The birth of a new man, the postulates of freedom and equality are to be accompanied by a new art. A specific nexus between aesthetics and ethics, between social and artistic revolution. Constructivism of simple means and spatial functions. New art is meant to shape non-bourgeois tastes and saturate proletarian masses with socialist ideology. It is born in the shadow of industrial civilisation, in the fumes of capitalism, a system shaken from time to time by outbursts of social wrath. Brimming with subcutaneous tensions, this atmosphere may reflect the modern-day era, the clashes and dissonances related to technological progress and global conflicts that involve race, gender and social class. One hundred years later, nobody discerns a revolutionary potential in abstraction. It is a decoration, a processed zombie form, an outer layer separated from entrails and existential guts, which looks good on a wall. It looks best in a nouveau-bourgeois interior that resembles a hotel rather than an apartment.

In the 2020s, almost every aspect of social life finds its counterpart in virtual space. The body has entered the post-face era, in which face is merely a structure and, as such, it can be replaced with a different body part. It is the skin that has meaning. Artificial intelligence codes its colour, gender, ethnic and social origins. This has a commercial aspect – it sets the target of advertising campaigns, but also a biopolitical aspect related to control, law enforcement and invigilation. The algorithm behind computer software reproduces prejudices; it is racist, homophobic and sexist, and the data it collects feeds capital – not only that of global corporations, but also of the Chinese government and Trump's election staff. Subordinated to micro-regimes, our visibility, even if only seeming, inevitably legitimises the structures of this exclusion.

Zombie formalism is making a comeback. *Origins* is something of a computer game whose space is filled with skin and Constructivist abstraction – a dusty and antiquated form which we seek to fill with the body. The viewer-avatar is strolling inside it, a figure with no gender or race, who dons a mask and interacts with objects. Even if their reality is currently shedding skin like a snake, its tissue remains a field of underlying, permanent war. The world's skin is changing, writes Tadeusz Peiper, but not the world itself and not the prejudices diligently kept under the wraps of political correctness and neoliberal order. *Origins* resurrects utopia and drags skeletons out of the closet. But it also examines the skin, which constantly coats itself with new layers. And it traces its innervations. Microscopic corridors that lead somewhere. The avatar is and is not in this space, which screams with every gland of the body: touch me!

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The exhibition addresses the history of Polish Constructivism, including the forgotten oeuvre of Henryk Wiciński and his theatrical projects that never came about. The starting point is the visionary design of a Constructivist stage, but also the costumes that reduce abstraction to "sensual structures of the sight", designed for the spectacle *Triangle and Circle* at the experimental Cricot Theatre. For the avant-garde revolutionary, the stage design was meant to work like an abstract painting – and organic machine built with simple geometric shapes and abstracted patches of light. The actor formed part of that machinery, a marionette whose body collapsed in aggressive matter, leading the viewer's gaze to the interior. What Wiciński sought was the liberation of emotions, psychosomatic feeling and looped sense of subjectivity. The presented collages are based on scans of faces of invited project participants – their skin of various shades and pigmentation, which became the material of an abstract composition, not only a historical Frankenstein, but also a collective body. In other words, it is a body whose Constructivist form allows it to function like a single skin and become a medium of social polyphony, while preserving at the same time the individuality of the bodies that build it. A chosen abstraction can be superimposed on the face in the form of a digital mask, which makes it impossible to recognise ethnicity, and therefore allows for manipulating the algorithm. The body superimposed on another body thus becomes a subversive gap in the virtual system to which we are all condemned. To a greater extent today than it is usually the case.



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\*\*\*Opening of the website  
[www.theorigins.site](http://www.theorigins.site)

Technical information: Loading of the site depends on the speed of your internet connection, on browser version (preferably updated Mozilla Firefox and Chrome) and on the device on which it is displayed. It may take from 15 seconds to several minutes.

Move around the space with the arrow keys and the mouse that controls the movements of the head. To move faster use the arrow key and Shift button.

If you want to blur your ethnicity and the cheat the computer algorithm reproducing prejudices, put the mask on:  
<https://bit.ly/35i9cHa>

Enjoy!