

# MARTA OSTAJEWSKA

## THE *FILLIN* PROJECT – ARTISTIC ACTIVITIES (SOUNDWALKS, PERFORMANCES, KNEES-UP’S, *FOOD FOR A STORY*) IN KSIĘŻY MŁYN POST-INDUSTRIAL DISTRICT IN ŁÓDŹ

### Site-specific activities

The city is a place immersed in human activity. It is a total piece of art in which a „game with time and space finds its full dimension”<sup>1</sup>. It is „not the accidental intersection of topography and biography in the light of chronology”<sup>2</sup>. The city lives and breathes with human stories and it is soaked with memories. According to the object-oriented ontology and psychogeography it is not just a stage or scenography for our existence, it is an active partner whom we enter into a dialogue with every day. Artistic activities are a special type of such dialogue. Above all, the site-specific activities assume a real cooperation with the space. This is a kind of ‚relational art’ consisting of a delicate interaction with the place, playing on emotions and saturating the area with additional meanings.

One of the places in Łódź where you can find site-specific actions is Księży Młyn („Priest’s Mill”), the postindustrial district that inspires artists to create new, completely different artistic implementations. It is a place full of stories and emotions that is a living archive of the factory workers’ memories and industrial history of Łódź, but above all, the individual and moving human stories.

In the following text I will present some of the artistic activities that were carried out in Księży Młyn in 2013 and 2014, with special emphasis on the soundwalks Hard Shoulder – stories underfoot and the project *FILLin*. I will refer to the contemporary oral histories and archival memories of the inhabitants from the sixties and seventies of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, that were the starting point for creating these actions.

### A Brief History of Księży Młyn

Księży Młyn in Łódź, called in German Pfaffendorf, is a unique enclave, a ‚city within a city’, the post-industrial district that over the years has been left alone and extremely neglected. It was established by Karol Scheibler on the site of a former mill village. In 1870 he bought the burned spinning mill from the previous owner and created a factory complex and settlements for workers. Księży Młyn consisted

of textile factories, villas, workers' houses and a fire station. There was a school, a hospital, workers' houses, a club (the community center) and a park. The estate was designed for skilled workers, foremen and their families. Its inhabitants knew one another, worked and spent their free time together. The flats at Księży Młyn contained belongings of luxury goods. The situation changed after the war, when the factory was taken over by the communist state. Some of the apartments were changed into the first type of communal flats. In the fast change of pace, this family safe district transformed into a deathly place full of evening brawling. The neighborhood trust created through previous years was brutally destroyed. Due to numerous omissions and deficiencies of funds, the estate and factories have been decaying for years. The revitalization began only in 2013. The City Hall renovated the apartments in Przedzalniana Street and allocated studios for artists there. In 2014 the overhaul of the estate started and it continues till today. In 2015 Księży Młyn was declared a historical monument.

## **Biblo Bagbins lives here and szajbleroki <sup>3</sup>**

Due to its history and aesthetics Księży Młyn has attracted artists, particularly photographers and filmmakers. In the beautiful though ruined factories, movies, music videos, or advertisings were filmed. Theatre plays, parties, fashion shows and commercial events have taken place there.

Księży Młyn has been attracting both artists and tourists. The brick houses are arranged in rows between which grow historic poplars. Kids run around the cobbled alleys, there are beautiful, slightly rusty pumps and pigeons fly above the rooftops to come back to the wire mesh dovecotes. Wild cats stroll around the bushy Cat Trail. There are still the remains of an old barrier across the old railway tracks along which in the past rode the factory train. The ruins of a huge spinning factory and warehouses can be seen with branches of young birch trees growing through the panes of shattered windows. Broken bottles and graffiti: „Franz Kafka for President” or „Biblo Bagbins lives here”. Washing drying on a line, neighbours playing cards, the atmosphere of interwar was mixed with modern banditry. Księży Młyn is a place where the greatest treasures are not historic buildings nor aging poplars nor even fantastic, crumbling factories and the aesthetics of bricks nibbled by time, but its people and their stories, the community created through generations. It is a timeless blend of small histories, full of layers and complementary strands. It is a showcase of textile Łódź which when deprived of the indigenous people, is just a pile of nicely cleaned bricks and elegant lanterns. Without *szajbleroki* Księży Młyn is an impersonal ‚museum’. Therefore as long as there is a bubbling of anger and the memories and passion of the old residents, I will be creating my projects here. I make them for the indigenous people and for all of those who were not lucky enough to meet Marysia, Wiesiek or Jurek and hear their fascinating stories. For those who wish to immerse themselves in the living atmosphere and history of Księży Młyn.

## **The city as a living archive**

Dialogue with a place is one of the objectives of urban art. But before we start an intertextual game with space, it is worth exploring its primary characters and stories. One of the methods is to talk with the locals. Another method is just being in a phenomenological experience, tuning into the aura and atmosphere of space<sup>4</sup>. Yet another is to dig into the archives, dive in the history. All of these methods are mutually complementary. A place is never neutral. The assumption that it rises only when we enter is often an expression of arrogance. Just as we are curious about another person we should get to know the place in which we operate. One way may be attempting to explore the emotions and stories associated with it. By hearing the oral histories and reading the archives, by trampling again on the same paths between one façade of a building and another.

„Archives are a record of how the world was experienced by people living in earlier times (...) and archives allow the modern user to sense a former experience”<sup>5</sup> - writes Waldemar Chorążyczewski in the „Notes upon the nature and problems of anthropological archive studies.” Inga B. Kuźma in one of her articles states, „Our research area is the city as the subject of working memory – the city, which

can also be seen as a kind of archive"<sup>6</sup>. Archives of small stories, emotional, subjective and individual stories where daily life is mixed with a great history in many varying proportions<sup>7</sup>. Such records of the daily memories create an alternative space and time. When we research them, transform them creatively and disseminate them, thus we allow them to give voice to those who are invisible, inaudible, on the margin of society, or „beyond the pale"<sup>8</sup>. Archives and memoirs, as well as oral history „which are a gateway to the past and a machinery the time"<sup>9</sup> exude emotions. They allow us to hear a voice from the other side. They are one of the strongest binders that build proximity and relationship. Thanks to them, we tame the given space. The place becomes more ‘ours’ and we begin to react differently to people, objects and wildlife belonging to the area. By reading the signs of the place, after a while we add our own meanings to them. City / district / place becomes a living tree within the rings of which we encrypt stories.

## Oral history

Księży Młyn is buzzing with stories. Mirka, Jurek, and Wiesiek have been living in this district for years just like their parents and even grandparents and they share the memories associated with the place with pleasure.

We have lived here since before the war. I mean my parents. I was born at number nine, Księży Młyn 9, during the war. During the war my parents were moved from these apartments to the attic and the place was occupied by the Germans. After the war my parents returned here. My dad worked as a sorter at the weaving mill. My mother was a weaver. My dad knew Hebrew well, knew Russian and German but he did not sign the Volksliste... although my grandfather was a German. So, because my dad did not sign the Volksliste they degraded him and he worked as an ordinary worker. My mom is from Łódź and she lived here. She married my father. Well, daddy had an apartment here and she started to live here with him. My grandparents, my parents, me, my son, since I have a son and my grandchildren, since I have a grandson and granddaughter, were also born here in Księży Młyn. I'm here very connected. Very connected. My son has an official address here. And I hope that when we pass away he will live here<sup>10</sup>.

There are lively tales that Księży Młyn was once different. „Before, it was one big happy family"<sup>11</sup>. And now „a mess of dirt, this is not what it was before"<sup>12</sup>. Once there was a gatekeeper, there were contests for the most beautiful garden, neighbours used to play chess in front of the houses and dance on the pavement. And now „a mess, theft, and nothing more"<sup>13</sup>.

Trees were planted here. Around these trees were bricks. These bricks were whitened. And there were flowers near the trees. Saturday came, one played.... cabbage with peas, well, because it was the time of war, occupation, cabbage with peas, cake yeast. There were parties in the backyards here. How people partied! They were happy with what they had. One brought something, the other brought something, but today... Today we are scared to go out on the street!<sup>14</sup>.

Stories are shared by Marysia, one of the oldest residents of the estate who married her husband in spite and anger from her former boyfriend, by Krysia the caretaker on Factory Street who is decorating her garden with stuffed animals and goblins, by Jadzia and Grażynka who every weekend go to the dance hall at the surrounding plots, by girls from the Artistic Ateliers in Księży Młyn, Ewa and Natalia as well as by Andrzej, an engineer who worked in the Scheibler factory for years, actually in Uniontex since this is what the factory complex was called after the war. Andrzej recalls the moments of his first days at work the factory, the visit by the Pope, the ‘masculinity test’ and how Scheiblers’ fire brigade won the European Championship. One of the flagship anecdotal tales is the one about spitting into the Vistula river:

The story is set in the Łódź plant cotton industry named the Defenders of Peace Uniontex as it was called this way then. It refers to a group of workers, men of the automation and measurement department. In addition to normal work there were fantastic stories and

projects, sometimes unbelievable. The story I am going to tell concerns a project that began on Saturday afternoon, because on Saturday we were at work, we had to work even on Saturdays then. A group of men went to the restaurant on Targowa Street and after drinking large amounts of alcohol, they found that there was still enough time to go to Warsaw to spit into the Vistula river. And they did so. They went to the Łódź Fabryczna train station. When the train arrived in Warsaw they told the taxi driver to take them to the riverbank where the statue of a mermaid is placed. They spat into the Vistula and then tried to go back to Łódź. Trains then shuttled almost the whole day, but it was evening by then and they had to wait. Therefore they took a catnap on benches, returned to Łódź, then went home. On Monday morning at work they found out that one of the members of the expedition did not come to work. He appeared on Monday, around noon, dressed just in casual clothes, which was surprising because it was November and the first snow began to fall. It was cold. He told the story that when he was waiting at the station he met two ladies who offered him a night stay in Warsaw. And this way he lost his coat, his bag, money, and returned to Łódź only on Monday at noon<sup>15</sup>.

From the oral histories slowly emerge the living face of Księży Młyn, where rats were running around before the sewer was installed and the toilets were still in the cells, where despite the fact that „people came from various sides and spoke different languages, they lived together in harmony”, where there were „flowers, flower beds”, „oil lamps”, games such as „hide and seek”, „cabbage with peas, yeast cake”, „den”, „fairs”, „every weaver has the title of master” and „40 square meters was a fortune”. Stories linger recorded on a voice recorder. They create a mini archive of Księży Młyn history. Placed on the website they allow one to immerse oneself in Marysia’s story about the liquidated library when books were flying over the street, in the memoirs of Jurek whose grandmother learned to read at the organist’s or Wiesiek who was excited to tell about his neighbour’s stolen coal. The three of them are no longer with us. Their stories were soaked with joy, sadness, disappointment and hope. We can still listen to them or watch them since they have been transformed into a short animated documentary movie *Księży Młyn*<sup>16</sup> and ‘archived’ on the website. It also became an inspiration for comics and illustration by Justyna Apolinarzak. The voices of the people for whom Księży Młyn was the most important place on earth can at last be heard. Before they were presented on the website, the project existed in a space within the Art Factory in Łódź. Each story recorded on mp3 could be listened to on the station created in the gallery. Each station consisted of original objects belonging to the inhabitants: Krysia’s stuffed animals along with her plant pots full of conifers, a big factory cart, documents found in the weaving mill magazines, a checkerboard and the old clock brought by Andrzej. The presentation was combined with the release of the animation *Księży Młyn*, tasting moonshine alcohol and traditional, Polish meals. The animated documentary also appeared at the Grand Opening of the Festival of Animation *O!Pla* at the Museum of Cinematography in Łódź. The voices of szajbleroki began to slowly push through the cracks of Łódź cultural life.

## **Hard Shoulder – stories underfoot (soundwalks)<sup>17</sup>**

One of the ideas for the memories to be heard out loud was to create soundwalks in Księży Młyn based on the stories of the residents, not only on the current ones but also on those from the archives. The Institute of Ethnology and Cultural Anthropology at the University of Łódź has an extensive archive of Łódź factory workers. In the sixties and seventies anthropologists and ethnologists conducted a series of in-depth interviews with the residents of Księży Młyn. They were related to family histories and biography, habits, leisure activities, work, beliefs, daily and Sunday food, etc. Most of the interviews, especially those regarding the biography of the families retained a specific language and vocabulary. In a short description about the interviewee you could find his/her address, first name, last name and date of birth, sometimes the description of a job: master weaver, weaver, warehouse worker, locksmith, spinner, etc. The archives contain fascinating, poignant stories that outline the fate of workers who were living in Księży Młyn:

My father was a carpenter in Scheibler’s factory, mother worked at the weaving mill. Parents worked 12 hours a day. At night my mother laundered. She was taking a container of soup and a piece of bread to her work. My sister was 8 years old and she had to work too. I went to

school in Księży Młyn where I finished 3rd grade. At school we learned Russian and German. Teachers were all Poles. Those who could afford it sent their children to school and so the new teachers were born. My father liked to drink, but we did not walk in clogs. My father moonlighted to give us bread in the winter. He was making coffins in the winter. Children raised themselves, begrimed, spat, a child raised a child. Childhood was deplorable. In our house we had five children. I was 9 years old and I already worked. I mangled underwear. Later I worked spinning. Everyone stuck to the work with his hands and feet. You can call me a Scheibler's grandson. For a nod of the foreman and on the blink of an eye I knew what he wanted. I had seven children. Only two are alive by now. At that time in the factory women had only six weeks of maternity leave. When a child died I had to wrap the child in a curtain from a window or linen and bury the corpse in that. There was no money for the clothes. One of the children fell ill with meningitis, there was nothing to sell, so I sold my wedding ring. I did not love my husband, I felt disgusted with him. When on the day of the wedding he kissed my hand, I was washing my hand for two days. I spent my life with him. I had children with him. Now I would have kicked him. I would not stay with him.  
Valeria, b. 1902, pensioner, Przedzalniana Street 57 (Andrzej Piotrkowski noted it in 1969).

I was born in Przedzalniana Street. There were seven siblings at home. My mother did not work. My father was a foreman and he worked for Scheibler. Until 1914 we shared one room. Later we had a room with a kitchen. Parents did not require any help from me. I spent time in the yard with the other children. I went to school on Targowa Street, later on Księży Młyn. I was a bit lazy. I had one notebook and I noted everything in it. My childhood coincided with the time of World War I. The factory stopped production. My father did not have work. He made boxes for ties. I used to help him. It was poverty and hunger. We walked to the factory canteen to get some soup. We took nine portions. Sometimes there was a potato in it, sometimes not. Mother always shared it among the youngest. At 16 I went to work in Scheibler's factory. In 1930 I became a foreman. I met my wife at the factory Club. The second wife I met earlier than the first one. My second wife is a widow, I am divorced. The first wife left me during the war. Her parents signed the Volksliste. She took all the furniture, and I took her barefoot and naked.  
Felix, b.1906, forman, Przedzalniana Street 67 (Andrzej Piotrowski noted it in 1969).

On the basis of archival interviews from Księży Młyn, three soundwalks were created: *I was born on Szlezing, Kwela Park, snorkel and carousel, Gas lanterns and carp in breadcrumbs*. Each of them was built on a different story; they took place at different times of the year and ran along a different route. Participants received maps, headphones and mp3s with uploaded stories. Each walk took about an hour. The first one *I was born on Szlezing* (June 2014) concerned the lifestyle of workers, the rules in a factory, education, neighbourly coexistence, weddings, christenings, funerals. Walkers had the chance to enter the houses and feel the cobbled pavement underfoot. The tales from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries mingled with the rhythm of life of the current inhabitants. Unplanned and spontaneous interactions added a local colour to the walk. In addition to the passive form of listening to the story, the recipient had to also perform minor tasks such as to draw a pigeon in the sand, play hopscotch, make paper boats and place them in a bucket of water, feel, taste the space...

Go inside, up the stairs. Feel the creak of the stairs underfoot. Take a look at the structure of the stairs and cracks in the paint. Stop for a moment on a step, lean against the wall, close your eyes and smell that smell which permeates the walls. Do not be ashamed, no one will see you. And so what if they did? Otherwise, your fingers will not feel the trembling voices of szajbleroki that are frozen in the bricks, under the paint. Jump up the rest of the steps. On the left side on the door you will find the name on the plate. Keep it in mind. Repeat it under your breath. From now on until the end of the walk, it's your name, so try not to forget it.  
Station 5, Przedzalniana Street 57 (gate, smell).

Soundwalks created from fragments of archive stories, half real half fictitious, are told by the narrator, Stefek – the weaver, the hero who guided the audience and sewed together the various stations.

Oh, you are here already. Great! This scrub belongs to you? Okay, okay, no offense. Let's move, otherwise I will get trouble from my foreman if I don't get back to work on time. Take a map in your hand. Do you know how to push the buttons? So let's go! Oh, I am Stefan,

Stefek, the weaver. I'll show you around everything and how it works. I will not be a hoaxer. I'll bluntly tell you everything. Because I'm not a hack, I have a real job in my hand. I was born on Szlezing. My parents moved to Księży Młyn when I was three. I know every corner here. And I went to work in 1921. My father was a greaser. They knew him here. I wasn't old enough but my father spoke to the head of the department and they took me. Of course I was not a weaver immediately. I helped everywhere. At first I had to see a lot and for the help and education my father gave a few rubles or a small bottle of vodka to this weaver who taught me the basics.

Stefek-the weaver.

The next soundwalk *Kwela Park, snorkel and carousel* took place in the autumn, in October 2014. Its route ran from Źródlińska Park I by the Księży Młyn estate to the Źródlińska Park II. During the walk you could get to know the various forms of leisure activities of the factory workers: dating in the park, fairs, barrel organ and street musicians. You could listen to the old hits, make a kite fly, look at the pigeons, listen about picnics, learn how to ask a lady to dance and figure out what a 'snorkel' was:

Before the war a 'snorke' was popular. On the square were erected all sorts of carousels, big wheel with ponies. You could spin the wheel and buy different toys on the stalls. It was almost like a circus. Children from the working class families in the twenties didn't go on vacation. They spent the whole summer in Łódź. On Saturday evenings stallholders came down to the square with their tables and stalls and placed on them all sorts of toys and decorative items. There were wooden pipes, coloured cockerels with colourful feathers tucked in the tail which whistled, colourful fans, metal watches for children, rings with colourful meshes, broaches, bracelets strung on a rubber band, trumpets and many different knick-knacks from which children could not take their eyes off.

Station 19, *Kermess*.

*Gas lanterns and a carp in breadcrumbs* was the December walk. It started in the Art Book Museum (the manufacturer's villa of Henryk Grohman), ran through the area of lofts located in the renovated complex of Scheibler's factories and ended at Kreatoora the Artistic Atelier of Ewa Źochowska. Participants roamed through Księży Młyn in the freezing cold. On the way they were tasting moonshine alcohol, throwing stones into the semi-frozen pond, telling their fortune with a straw.

The walks took place every two hours in groups of ten - fifteen people. Participants signed up by e-mail and came to the starting point on a particular hour to pick up the audio devices and maps. They returned to the same place (in the case of the third walk, the starting and the ending points were different) returned the equipment and shared their impressions. Walking caused great excitement among the participants. In particular the interaction with the space, mixing past stories with the present day activities of the estate and the unexpected meetings and conversations with contemporary residents of Księży Młyn made a special impression.

When I was on the trail, at every station I was trying to talk with people. I encouraged them to listen to the excerpts related with their place – e.g. the pigeon breeder listened to the fragment about pigeons, a resident of the building near the fire department verified the knowledge of the fire brigade, etc. It was a great complement to the walk – also the audio experience (that was a conversation!).

Artur Chrzanowski, from the visitors book.

The Soundwalks were not only unusual artistic activities outside the standard distinction between the fine arts and design. They were primarily a way to reproduce the positive atmosphere of the old district, a presentation and promotion of Księży Młyn with its complicated history. A way to open it up for people who are unaware of the beauty of this post-industrial estate. The goal of *Hard Shoulder – stories underfoot* (soundwalks) was to ram art into the peripheral and neglected space, to create a platform to sustain the stories and the voices of the marginalized. Strengthening the voice of people who love this place and are strongly associated with it. If we look at the reactions of the participants of the soundwalks, all the above objectives were met. The Soundwalks became a part of a bigger project on Księży Młyn – *FILLin*. A project that intended to give a voice to the residents of the estate, so they would again feel safe and at home there. To feel that they really belong to this space, not only through the past, but also by current and future actions.

## The project FILLin – site-specific actions on Księży Młyn

After a series of interviews with residents and artists who received ateliers in Księży Młyn, there arose the idea of creating a series of site-specific artistic actions on the estate. The interviews were full of grief and longing for a place where the residents could dance, meet and talk. The inhabitants were longing for knees-ups, pretty gardens, the order, the sense of security and a dialog. A prominent feeling was one of enclosure within the four walls and the fear of both the residents and the artists who were not fully able to open up to 'the Other'. The awakening of the spirit of the old Księży Młyn, a fulfillment, establishing a relationship both with the space and with the residents, became the main goal of the project *FILLin*. It was motivated by an aim to overcome mutual distrust in order to create a community that could work for a space and for/together with diverse local residents. All with reference to the history and family character of this postindustrial district.

The project consisted of a series of artistic, participatory activities. There was a picnic in the Źródlińska Park that included the old-fashioned games (*Peek-a-boo around the corner*), the knees-up on the pavement (*Enchanting last day of summer*), home cooking and sharing a story (*Food for a story*), soundwalks on Księży Młyn (*Hard Shoulder – stories underfoot*) and performances in the Art Book Museum (*Stop-Motion 2.1.*).

Initially residents of Księży Młyn were wary, but with time they started to participate, they shared stories, brought cakes and drinks to the knees-ups. Kids came to blow great soap bubbles and eat chocolate mousse. The actions attracted passers-by who broke through barriers. At a knees-up on one bench artists sat with the locals, then the co-owner of the shop *Train to Łódź*, local children and residents of the lofts all danced together. Participants of the soundwalks wandered through the block, immersing themselves in the authentic stories, interacting with the place, wild cats, pigeons and locals.

Systematically the project documentation appeared on the website and on Facebook. During the ephemeral actions *The story cards* and *The visitors book* were filled. On the website a cookbook was created with traditional recipes from Łódź. There also appeared urban legends and fragments of the soundwalks. For a few months anyone could participate in oral histories presented on the web. A rich video documentation containing snapshots of the artistic actions was made. Documentation of the project was shown at the Łódź Design Festival in the selected Artistic Ateliers in Księży Młyn. Information about the events appeared in local newspapers and on their websites. Catalogues of the project were available in the artistic shops and the ateliers of Łódź. They appeared also in the archives of the Institute of Ethnology and Cultural Anthropology at the University of Łódź and were presented at the conference *City-Art* in the Cultural Centre CKZ in Poznań (March, 2015).

### The story cards

One of the most interesting documents created during the project turned out to be *The story cards*. They were introduced for the first time during the action *Food for a story*. Initially they were supposed to be only a part of the first event but their distribution during the cooking and eating in the backyard proved to be a hit. Both residents and passersby picked up a pen and shared their stories there. In the alley in front of house number seven, a big green tent was put up with tables and chairs inside. In the corner of a big tent there were *The story cards* on which each participant could write a text connected with Księży Młyn. Tourists and residents who initially responded timidly at what was happening in their alleys sat at the table. After some time they began to share not only food but also memories. Kids from Księży Młyn were drinking hot chocolate. Jadzia from the first floor placed the speakers on the windowsill and played upbeat music at full volume. The event really got going, the artists feasted with the locals and real and fictional stories filled the cards. *The story cards* initiated the creation of a new layer of legends and anecdotes related to Księży Młyn. Here are some of them:

When the sun shines the old street takes on a warm glow. The leaves on the trees look fresh and you get the impression that the street was built recently. In a window on the first floor you can see little Marysia looking from behind the curtain. The girl lifts her head from the book and stares at you. She thinks she would like to go away and leave, away from the street and the city. Here her mother spent dozens of years, every day going to the factory. The first shift – mum makes the girl braids in the evening because she does not know how to comb her

hair. She gets up at seven and her mum goes to work at five. The second shift – after school the girl finds at home two sandwiches with sausage covered by a plate. The third shift – she didn't manage to fall asleep before her mum left and now she is trying to find her way to bed. She does not want to open her eyes in the dark room. The first shift again.....and then the third, fourth and fifth grade. She finishes school and the factories are silent. Is it the way it was supposed to be?

Anonymous, (half-fictional half-real) story.

The first time I was in Księży Młyn was in the days when there were garden gnomes walking between the houses. It was easy to find them because they did not hide from people at all. They were quite unusual for gnomes. They wore hats and beards like dwarfs. They did not have green skin like creatures from the north of the continent should have. The gnomes could be walking in the district even today, but one day an investor from Australia came to Łódź and decided to change the workers' housing into expensive apartments. He figured out together with the President of Łódź that they would move the residents to another location and renovate the empty houses. The gnomes were speechless. They were so clogged up that they froze with shock. The residents took those poor, solidified gnomes into the garden near the house at Fabryczna Street. After years it turned out that they had become clogged up completely unnecessarily. The investor went bankrupt, the new President of Łódź continued the renovation and the residents did not have to leave Księży Młyn. It was more or less like this.

Aleksandra, 32 years old, a fictional story.

Laundry was hanging in the window of house number 2, proudly waving at every gust of wind. Night came. A housecoat fell to the ground, then the housecoat was eaten by a cat. The cat did not survive. He lives happily in cat heaven with good memories of Księży Młyn.

Ola, 27 years old, a fictional tale.

Księży Młyn is a dream kingdom. Among the trees live little girls – princesses and a few princes with only a little power but with huge dreams. Meetings are stealthy, fulfilling only temporary needs and dreams spin on and on... towards the park, pond and adjacent firehouse.

Elżbieta, 40 years old, a fictional story.

## Games and plays

Common leisure activities were an important element both in the archival stories as well as in the contemporary interviews: picnics, games in the park, the activities in the Factory Club where the theatre was, brass band and dances. On New Year's Eve Scheibler's workers danced at parties in the factory to the music of the fire-fighters band.

Jadzia: Once, in the old days, there were even dances next to the pond where there is now a museum, on the corner of Przedzalniana Street. We used to go there. And then, there was a Community Centre, the Club. There was a cinema, a cafe, and dance parties.

Grażynka: In the Źródlińska Park there is something round, such a thing, like a gazebo and on Sunday there often played an orchestra, a band. In the Zrodlińska Park, in the middle of the park.

Jadzia: Now also, in the summer, the whole holiday every Sunday somewhere around 17:00 there are various events.

Grażynka: And here could they not make a dance hall where we could dance?

Jadzia: But here there were picnics, dear! People danced on the pavement. That was a scene. This place here was full of people.

Grażynka: And now all gone.

Jadzia and Grażynka story, „People danced on the pavement”<sup>19</sup>.

After work, when I was a bachelor I went to play the accordion and the violin at weddings or

birthdays. Sometimes as you went down the street the whole group played and sang, it was allowed. In the yard we were doing „an opening of the season”. The neighbours from our house collected some money and set up tables in the backyard. It was playing, it was singing and drinking on this occasion. Today if someone did it they would say that he is crazy. After work we sat in the yard and talked. As it got dark everyone went to sleep. On Sunday we went into the forest, to the field. Children were taken by the hand, the food was in a bag and we went riding. In the past people were in tune with their surroundings. It was always someone’s nameday, or a wedding or so on and we always felt invited. The hosts welcomed us, giving vodka and food. Today a jumble of people live here, neighbours but I do not know their names. I do not know how they came to be here, they did not work in a factory. Not many sit in the backyard, fewer people know each other. Before the war I knew everyone in the house.

Zenon, a master of spinning, Przędzalniana Street 57.

From most of the conversations there appeared the yearning for common everyday fun, spending free time together. Therefore in the project *FILLin*, a dance party was initiated in the lanes, the *Enchanting last day of summer* and a picnic in the *Źródlińska Park Peek-a-boo around the corner*. The first event took place in spite of heavy rain. Because of the rain the knees-up started an hour later but even so the turnout was high. The arbour was moved from the grass on the paths to the pavement in front of a house so that dancers would not get stuck in the mud. Residents filled benches and chairs and Suavas Lewy mixed sounds from the twenties and thirties. There was swing, jazz and ragtime music. *Jadzia* from number seven *Księży Młyn* supplied us with the electricity. Residents brought cakes and drinks and danced together with the artists from the Artistic Ateliers. For a moment even the residents of the lofts appeared. Happy kids were playing between the benches. The co-owner of the store *Train to Łódź* serenaded dancers with coffee. The knees-up ended after dark.

During the picnic, music was also played in the park. Suavas Lewy and Marcin Garncarek were playing on ukulele, guitar and saxophone. *Księży Młyn*’s kids made big soap bubbles, played games (hide and seek, hopscotch, tossing a coin), created old fashioned toys, threw a frisbee and modeled things in clay. We spent the whole Sunday afternoon recalling traditional games and filled the area of the historic oak with music and laughter.

The Soundwalks were also imbued with elements of games and plays. The participants had to perform several mini tasks: fly a kite, draw a manufacturer, play hopscotch, throw a pebble into a pond, find a stick, remember the name from the plate on the door, etc. All these activities allowed the participants to establish an intimate relationship with the space, imperceptibly building a relationship with the place which thus became closer, more ‘ours’. All the activities of the project *FILLin* were held in essential, non-accidental places, saturated with history and open to interactio

## Stop-motion 2.1.

One of the places right on the border of *Księży Młyn* was an old villa that once belonged to the industrialist Henryk Grohman. Now the Art Book Museum is located there. This place is full of history, striding between yesterday and today, a beautiful building that due to an unclear legal situation is slowly falling apart. Leaking roof, breaking walls, bushy overgrown garden. This atmosphere of temporariness was reflected in the actions of performers during *Stop-Motion 2.1*. Piotr Pasiewicz, Paweł Grala and Suavas Lewy created in the garden a swaying, wooden structure accompanied by pulsating, jagged, electronic sounds. Paweł Korbus explored different horizontal dispersions. Beata Marcinkowska cut words from a newspaper and created poetry in space. Robosexi made a wooden puzzle that was arranged in a pattern melting into the floor. Tomasz Mażewski gave a concert on his own constructed sound machine. I paved the paths with my body and finally took a bath in an old bathtub filled to the brim with leaves.

The place resonated perfectly and distributed artistic energy. Artists passed through the rooms, wandered up the stairs and filled the space, touched it with their bodies and sounds. *Stop-motion 2.1*. was a transmedia action that used movement, image, word. One of the main mechanisms was reproducibility and looping.

The stop-motion technique is not only an animation technique that allows a physically manipulated object to appear to move on its own. It is also a button that stops the machine when something goes

wrong. This button is also used to stop the tape, look at a single frame, capture the moment like a fly in a spider's web. A point between just before and just after. This combination of places, objects and people, this meeting in the fulFILLment was one of the final events of the project *FILLin*, a kind of looped dialogue.

## **FUL(L)fillment**

Activities closely related to the urban space modify municipal codes. They domesticate the space. Such a modification of everyday practices, the spatial system of meanings of the city, undermining the utility of one dimensional space (the houses are not just used to live in and benches to sit on) leads to a broadening and redistribution of places in the city. These actions invade the space and symbolically appropriate it. Through movement and actions different from the assumed use of space, they proceed towards its peaceful takeover named by Lucia Sa as „the incorporation strategy”<sup>20</sup> – the transformation of part of the city, transforming a street into your ‘own’ space, the place. This occurs often through an element of game, play, fun, but also dance, picnic or even walk.

The space in which site-specific actions are created is often full of traces of the past, energy, the history of the place. Each site contains memories of the past. And each completed action adds a next level to the memory of the location, a crumb, a new story. Images and metaphors created by the artists remain in a space forever. Just like the colourful headphones of the soundwalks or the green arbour from which you could catch sounds of swing and jazz or taste a delicious hot chocolate or homemade bread brought by one of the artists to the action *Food for a story*. The ladies from Księży Młyn are talking about this bread even now.

The *FILLin* project was supposed to fill the gaps, fill the deficiencies in the relationships within the neighborhood, help residents to establish closer relations with the artists from the Artistic Ateliers, connect yesterday with today, also to give a voice to the inhabitants of Księży Młyn, restore the status of their memories and stories, create a mythical, safe space for a dialogue, meetings and conversations. To achieve this goal seemingly trivial actions were used: a picnic, shared cooking, dance or walking. It turned out that these type of actions become a spark to recreate the tissue of social and neighbourly trust and this can give a voice to those whom usually nobody listens to.

However, such ephemeral, one-off actions are not sufficient. Currently in Księży Młyn there are held fairs, created art studios, cafes, souvenir shops, and an Academic Centre of Design. Concerts are held in Źródlińska Park. However, Księży Młyn can gain much more if it manages to create a space in which ‚yesterday’ could meet with ‚today’, the spirit of the old Księży Młyn with the modern design and rebellious artists. A place that would ensure the continuity of the story and become a space for a dialogue, since Księży Młyn is a living archive, and its greatest asset is its people and their stories.

## ENDNOTS

<sup>1</sup> Marcin Sierńka, „Wrażenie estetyczne jako reakcja na rzeczywistość – kontra = The aesthetic impression as a reaction to reality – versus,” <http://simon.hell.pl/wrazenie.html>. [The Lettrists or about drifting and psychogeography (...) The Internationale lettriste movement, important from the point of view of our considerations, was initiated by the short text “Formulary for a New Urbanism” signed by Gilles Ivain (under the pseudonym was hiding Ivan Chtcheglov). The author wrote that the city is a total work of art. (...) This text has helped to develop the lettriste two interesting techniques: drift and psychogeography. Translated by author].

<sup>2</sup> Edward Relph, *Place and placelessness* (London: Pion, 1976).

<sup>3</sup> The locals of Księży Młyn called themselves *szejbleroki* from the name of the manufacturer Scheibler.

<sup>4</sup> Augustyn Bańka, *Spoleczna psychologia środowiskowa = Social psychology of the environment* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe „Scholar”, 2002). [Norberg-Schulz (1980) in his concept makes the assumption that a place has always its *genius loci*, a specific aura, and atmosphere. *Genius loci* is not a scientific category and there is no empirical evidence that it exists. According to Małgorzata Solska this category “is perceived subconsciously, acts on emotions in a sensitive and actually immaterial way” and according to Ewa Rewers is a kind of ontological metaphor. Translated by author].

<sup>5</sup> Waldemar Chorążyczewski, „Uwagi o przedmiocie i problematyce z antropologizowanej archiwistyki = Notes to the nature and problems of anthropological archive studies,” in *Toruńskie konfrontacje archiwalne*, t. 4: „Nowa archiwistyka - archiwa i archiwistyka w ponowoczesnym kontekście kulturowym,” ed. by Waldemar Chorążyczewski, Wojciech Piasek i Agnieszka Rosa (Toruń: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Uniwersytetu Mikołaja Kopernika, 2014), 34.

<sup>6</sup> Inga B. Kuźma, “Archiwum jako teren działalności społeczno-badawczej = Archive as an area of research and social activity,” in *Toruńskie konfrontacje archiwalne*, t. 4: „Nowa archiwistyka - archiwa i archiwistyka w ponowoczesnym kontekście kulturowym,” ed. by Waldemar Chorążyczewski, Wojciech Piasek i Agnieszka Rosa (Toruń: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Uniwersytetu Mikołaja Kopernika, 2014), 89.

<sup>7</sup> The Marysia’s story (nr 19). The story is about a day when World War II started <http://www.ksiezy-mlyn.pl/slowo-opowiesci/#6>.

<sup>8</sup> Magdalena Wiśniewska, “Archiwum społeczne – archiwum emocji = The social archive – archive of emotions,” in *Toruńskie konfrontacje archiwalne*, t. 4: „Nowa archiwistyka - archiwa i archiwistyka w ponowoczesnym kontekście kulturowym,” ed. by Waldemar Chorążyczewski, Wojciech Piasek i Agnieszka Rosa (Toruń: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Uniwersytetu Mikołaja Kopernika, 2014), 80. [“Postmodern historiography shifts the focus to the “margin” on “what is beyond the pale”. (...) Micronarratives replace place of metanarrative. (...) The memory is considered as a key – giving liberation to the groups which history has been deprived of voice. Translated by author].

<sup>9</sup> Ibidem, 84.

<sup>10</sup> The Mirka’s story <http://www.ksiezy-mlyn.pl/slowo-opowiesci/#7>.

<sup>11</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>12</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>13</sup> The Wiesiek’s story <http://www.ksiezy-mlyn.pl/slowo-opowiesci/#8>.

<sup>14</sup> The Mirka’s story.

<sup>15</sup> The Andrzej’s story <http://www.ksiezy-mlyn.pl/slowo-opowiesci/#leaf>

<sup>16</sup> The fragment of the animation movie *Księży Młyn*, <http://www.ksiezy-mlyn.pl/ruch-animacja/>.

<sup>17</sup> The project was developed through an artistic grant from the President of Łódź in 2014. Written and directed by Marta Ostajewska, audio: Suavas Lewy, lector: Konrad Borusiewicz, graphic artist: Justyna Apolinarzak, photos: Anita Andrzejczak, video: Adam Musiałowicz.

<sup>18</sup> The project was implemented through an artistic grant (visual arts) from the budget of the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage for 2014.

<sup>19</sup> The Jadzia and Grażynka’s stories <http://www.ksiezy-mlyn.pl/slowo-opowiesci/#3>.

<sup>20</sup> Lúcia Sá, *Life in the Megalopolis: Mexico City and São Paulo* (London: Routledge, 2007), 58.

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