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WHY DO WE NEED WOMEN'S FREEDOM? FEMINIST ARTISTIC ACTIVISM AGAINST POWER: ANARCHOPORNOPÓR

(ANARCHO-PORN-RESISTANCE)

Scene1

The body against Power / APO – Anarcho-porn-resistance

The “Anarchopornoopór group” was created two years ago. In composition it consists of: Anna Kalwajtys, Dorota Androsz, Jacek Staniszewski, Dorota Chilińska and katarzyna lewandowska. The name of the collective is a combination of our three favorite words (anarchy, porn, resistance), ideas (anarchy, porn, resistance), life attitudes (anarchy, porn, resistance), theory (anarchy, porn, resistance), and *praxis* (anarchy, porn, resistance). The base of them is freedom – without limits, intersectional and inclusive.

(...) The body art has an ability to strongly influence the viewer (...) Feminist art using the internet can be thoroughly political, challenging to build women's subordination.¹

The key of men enslaving women is having control of their bodies. Methods are diversified – from the shiny beauty industry, to barbaric activities like female genital mutilation or splashing acid on

them. The separation of body from woman is the basis of patriarchal exploitation. Total control over a woman body is the main element of its oppression, so women's sexual emancipation is the key to their liberation. Nudity treated like a gun is one of the new ways to make feminism, so we can change our society. We are naked, because we are feminists.²

She is not a feminist. No, you're not, you stupid cunt.³

Scene 2

The art

The body became the most important medium of the artistic expression. Biological, devoid of a burden of the centuries-old, religious-mythic symbolism, the body as a raw material is frequently used by contemporary arts.

Three discourses, three categories – constructed by me to bring an order to my speech, and to not to dilute the problems related to presenting a body (mine / yours / other) in the contemporary art. The configuration of these three narratives is horizontal, NONE of the

following categories is more important than the previous one. None takes the central position; dates are equivalent, they complement each other, overlapping and permeating each other.

First: the body closest to the ground, its skin, bones, blood, meat. These guidelines refer to the experience of the body itself, namely: body fluids, blood, identity, pain, nudity – body with a vagina and vulva, sexuality, illness, decay, death.

Second: feminism itself (in its many waves), and feminist theory and practice - both situated in historical and artistic context. In my opinion, the category is fully justified because feminism, especially politically involved and critical feminism in the past and now, focuses on the body. The artists use their body through various means of expression, experimenting. The body has become a battlefield against the oppressive misogynist order.

The total artist who is born.

Who is she? She is a woman whose actions penetrate deeply into and under the skin, her own and the ones who look. The total artist uses tools - body, speech and mind - to dismantle the oppressive structures that appear at every level of existence. The total artist does not make a deal with anyone or anything, she represents an attitude that is not in the least conformist and thus nothing embarrasses her. She cuts out pieces of the world and watches them carefully, explores them, and critically comments. Her art goes deep into life. She risks and provokes and forces you to act. The total artist's strength is honesty and authenticity. The total artist is interested in the art of resistance and opposition.

Third: the starting point is the figure of the Other / Alien, someone vague – a cyborg, a creature, an inhuman being. He / she / them is someone excluded from the normative boundaries of anthropocentric, phallic, monotheistic, heterosexual sensitivity. The other is the one that lives in the liminal space, in between,

unrecognized by the general public. Between plus and minus, schematic, binary division are extremely interesting identities, hybrid, other, human and inhuman, placed by Rosi Braidotti in the figure of a nomadic subject.⁴

Scene 3

Combat strategies. THEIR war dance

The world is at the edge of the abyss. My home Poland is close to the abyss as well. Freedom is systematically restricted in every corner of the world. Fascism and brown Nazism are being revived before our eyes. Religion has sold itself to politicians and politicians have sold themselves cheaply to the church, one or the other. The oppressive system created mostly by a white heteronormative male kills human and non-human animals alike in the name of the so-called progress and profit. In Kutno near Toruń - in one of the largest slaughterhouses in Europe, almost 16,000 pigs are slaughtered each day. They are gassed – their death is a very painful and long one. In three days, 50,000 pigs die there. It's like a quarter of the Toruń's population. Nature is raped, explored and killed by man. This is global destruction, the age of emotional imbecile, the time of the Anthropocene, destruction and death.

Human beings are a bipolar species in a state of permanent moral underdevelopment. We appeared on this planet as a prey animal, just look at our physical clumsiness. We fight natural disabilities with constant heat and megalomania, and because of the latter we have gods. God is the highest degree of anthropocentrism, while capitalism is the beloved child of the patriarchy.⁵

But many of us have not yet fallen into capitalist apathy. Women - warriors from all over the world have begun their war dance. The world will be reborn when the patriarchy, responsible for all evil, perishes. This order did not work, the time has come for a CHANGE at the base of which are: effortless, selfless empathy, compassion,

collective work, intersectional feminism incorporating all excluded and degraded identities, be it male, female, non-binary, multi-species. Everyone is welcome with us.

Scene 4

Actions. Art in activism

I would like to tell you about five projects important for me, in which I have been involved in the last few years. They all concern broadly understood feminism, but also artistic and social activism. These projects are:

1. *And why do we need women's freedom?*
2. *Black Venus Protest*
3. *Rebelle*
4. *Death of the Patriarchy*
5. *Female Fighters*

(The *BVP* and *REBELLE* posters were made by the Polish artist Jacek Staniszewski).

And why do we need women's freedom?

Extensive action, organized by activists from Toruń: Arek Pasożyt - artist, Liliana Zeic - artist, Magdalena Kos - artist, Tomasz Kolczyński - poet, Dorota Chilińska - artist, katarzyna lewandowska - art historian.

Three years ago in Poland there was the centennial of Poland regaining its independence after more than 100 years partition, and it was also the centennial of Polish women winning their elementary citizens rights – that is, the right to vote and decide for themselves and their country. The director of the Centre of Contemporary Art in Toruń organized an exhibition entitled: *Why do we need freedom?* The exhibition chronologically covered a broad perspective of art history, from the writer and artist Witkacy – the time before World War II till today. Thirty six male artists and two male artistic groups were invited. At the exhibition dedicated to freedom and democracy, not a single female artist was presented.⁶ In his bizarre curatorial text, Waldemar Kuczma did not refer to this in any way, apparently not seeing the problem at all.

We decided to act. We created an organizational group. We wrote an open letter to the Director-Curator first, which he was kind enough to completely ignore. We made the matter known to the public in the media. On the day of the vernissage we made an action in which a lot of people from Toruń took part, many of them had nothing to do with art. On the eve of the vernissage we met in the studio in the attic and together we prepared 'dresses' from cardboard. I call them 'dresses,' because they were supposed to become our clothes, or armours. If we just had slogans on cardboard placards to hold in our hands, the municipal security and the police might have wanted to take them from us.

On white dresses we wrote front and back: "where are they? or "where is" or "where are the artists," or we wrote specific names of Polish artists that we think should be found at the exhibition about freedom. The inspiration was taken from the action associated with Ana Mendieta, an outstanding Cuban artist, who today is an icon of engaged feminism, one dedicated to the Mother, Sister Nature and ecofeminism. Like other artists, Mandieta fought for her subjectivity in art in the 1970s. Women were mostly invisible, constituting the backdrop for male art at the time. They were defined as muses, lovers or wives of great artists. There was neither feminist theory and feminist practice in the art space.

In 1985, Mendieta was most likely murdered by Andre Carl - a minimalist sculptor, her husband. He was never proven guilty, yet controversy about Mendieta's death remains. From her death to today there are protests with the main slogan: "where is Ana Mendieta?", which means not only a question about her, but also about all other artists, especially those identifying as women, whose voices prevail unheard.

We stood in a long line in front of the CoCA and when the vernissage began, we went inside. We talked with the audience, we listened to the speech of the director-curator. He compared us to terrorists in his gibberish. The online petition was signed by 510 people. We received huge support from all over Poland. The artists were touched that we claimed their status as autonomous artists.

Another very important activity was the debate at the CoCA - in front of the institution's glass entrance. The director did not agree that the discussion would take place along with his participation in the CoCA, so we organized it in front of the centre, on the pavement. We invited to the debate a few people: Ewelina Jarosz - art historian, Liliana Zeic - visual artist, Anka Leśniak - visual artist, and myself. The audience was quite large. The main theme of our discussion was the marginalization of the female language in the space of art, the invisibility and transparency of art created by women and other excluded identities. We also discussed the role of the curator in contemporary strategies and the disgusting hierachic and institutional dependence.

During the discussion in front of the CoCA's glass door, the artist Aleka Polis together with Krystyna Kuta - the heroine of the 1980's Solidarity movement, who now has a one-person cleaning company, made a performances. They scrubbed a slogan stencilled on the sidewalk outside the institution: "where are the women artists?". They used vinegar for washing - this is a reference to the use of this acidic liquid during home abortions. They say, women used it before the war. This reference describes many women's hellish past and present. Poland has currently the most restrictive law among the European countries regarding the right to choose an abortion. The Polish government would like to change it anyway by introducing even more barbaric anti-abortion law, that would penalise not just the medical stuff, and a woman, but also anyone who would help a woman to get information, a pill, or drove her to the clinic abroad. So again, we organized the Black Protests to oppose patriarchal power. Black Protests have stopped the fanatics, at least for the moment. It was a joint success – the success of hundreds of thousands of girls and women who dressed in black and went out on the street to fight for their lives, health, safety and freedom. We won that battle. But there is always more - for an access to free contraception for access to doctors without the 'conscience clause' (that allows them to refuse the prescription of the contraceptive pill,

or to perform the abortion, if their conscience forbids them), for protection against domestic violence, for loosening the anti-choice law - we still have to fight.

Returning to the performance: the result was a beautifully-scrubbed pavement with a large inscription: "where are the artists?!" and above it three big glued rags that Aleka Polis and Krystyna Kuta had used to clean it. There was a single line written on each of the rags:

- 1.Today on the pavement.
- 2.Tomorrow in the underground.
- 3.The day after tomorrow on the Antipodes.

Questions to the Director

A public reading of "Questions to the Director" outside the door of the Centre of Contemporary Art took place at the end of the exhibition *Why do we need freedom?*, that had excluded the voices of the women artists. The "Questions to Director Kuczma" were read every half an hour during the eight-hour workday of the institution. There were sixteen questions, among them:

1. Why were only the voices of men taken into account while making the exhibition about one hundred years of Poland's independence?
2. Why, despite the centenary of winning the electoral and citizen rights by Polish women, were the achievements of women in the context of freedom omitted from this exhibition?
3. Why did the female image appear only as an artist's art object in the exhibition?
4. Why can a woman's body symbolize freedom, or the state itself, but her creativity is denied?
5. Why was a woman defined in this exhibition solely by her sexuality or symbolic sacredness?
6. Why did the exhibition not go beyond the patriarchal way of perceiving a woman, which encloses her in the dualism of the myth: 'whores' or 'saints'?
7. If, as the director of the CCA claims, "art has no sex," why is the male vision of art considered universal and neutral, and the only one that creates a canon of art?

Black Venus Protest

From the manifesto:

The Black Venus Protest movement was created in the summer of 2017 as a result of joint activities with the CALDODECULTIVO collective, which gave us a tool in the form of an artistic project about women and for women. We, women from the first group of Black Venus Protest, realised from the very first day of the project, that these activities should be transformed into a wider movement – thus giving ourselves and other women a new face of opportunities for action in the field. Black Venus is you and me. Since then, whenever the need arises, Black Venus goes out into the streets to mark their solidarity in opposition to the political and social status quo and supporting each other.⁷

I took part in group II. The action took place October 13-14, 2018 in Gdańsk and Gdynia. "The Care Manifesto" was written in which we criticized patriarchal power focused on profit, exploitation, and inbred.

The women's revolution continues! Care revolution! We are fighting!

In Gdańsk, dressed as brides in wedding dresses, and with black flags, we stood in front of monuments that commemorated deceased heroes. They are always males who sacrificed their lives for their homeland. Women have been wiped out from so-called great history. We thanked women and gave them their remembrance back.

Later we married ourselves at the sea by taking the oath:

Aware of my rights and responsibilities arising from being a free human being, I solemnly declare that I am entering into a holy relationship with myself and pledge myself love, loyalty, honesty and trust in myself. I promise that I will do everything to follow my own path, enjoy life and fulfill it in my own way, for my own benefit and everything that lives.⁸

The next day girls went to Gdynia and dressed in black with black flags, they visited places dedicated to soldiers. They wrote important key words on our legs about oppression against the weaker in the modern world: rape / war / violence.

Rebelle

The curators were Dorota Chilńska and myself.

The starting point was the text of the "Declaration of the Rights of Women and Citizens" by Olimpia de Gouges (1748-1793) fully translated for the first time into Polish and published by the Academy of Fine Arts in Gdańsk.⁹

In her Declaration, de Gouges pointed out the contradictions in the French constitution and the inadequacy of the attempts at that time to formulate universal laws. She uncompromisingly showed that the subject of the declared equality of rights are in fact white, adult men, and the apparent universalism of revolutionary ideas is based on the exclusion of large parts of society. The most important expression of freedom for her was freedom of speech and for a decade of her life she tried enforce this law. Referring to the idea of Henri Rousseau, de Gouges proposed a 'social contract' based on equal rights and obligations as a substitute for traditional marriage. Her writings both literary and political, clearly headed towards contemporary feminist philosophy. As the only woman, she was sentenced to death during the 'great terror'.¹⁰

Four REBELLE installments took place so far:

The first *Rebelle* was held in Toruń. A group of 11 artists came from Łódź. They form FRACTION – the first Polish all-women artists collective. They showed their works and Anka Leśniak had a speech about their activity since the Polish Black Protest in 2016.

The second *Rebelle* also took place in Toruń. We showed a four-channel video installation of Wiola Ujazdowska - a young Polish artist who has lived in Iceland for several years. The title of her work is Medea, taken after one of the first mythological refugees. Ujazdowska referred to the cruel

modern law that allows absolute ignorance towards the OTHER. Anna Kalwajtys – a Polish performer, a total artist made a performance Olimpia referring to the revolutionary attitude of Olimpia de Gouges.

The third edition of Rebelle took place at the Academy of Fine Arts in Gdańsk - I work there. A symposium and a very strong performance by Anna Kalwajtys took place. It concerned the character of Olympia de Gouges and her revolutionary call: WOMAN, WAKE UP. The artist's nudity, her loud cry finally went out into the public space caused a lot of aggression in people. The doorman at the Academy did not want to let her go, saying that a woman does not behave in such a way, that she should be quiet. On the street, Kalwajtys was challenged by aggressive women, the police were called. It ended well for us.

Death of the Patriarchy

The exhibition and performative acts, which took place on November 15, 2021 in the Academy of Fine Arts in Gdańsk were an attempt of a summary of two views of the newspaper *Death of The Patriarchy*. In this publication, which is dedicated to all living beings, we wanted to collect the biggest amount of the manifestos – written ones, and those visual ones, which were a critical voice towards the patriarchy. We invited a lot of people. Jacek Staniszewski devised a newspaper where he added images of female fighters – women all around the world, who were murdered by the oppressed system. One year ago, the group Anarchopornoopór made a performance in the BWA Gallery in Bydgoszcz, using parts of manifestos that were put in vol.1. This year, in cooperation with the One Night Public Gallery,¹¹ edition 2 of the newspaper initiated an episodic, one-day action *Forecourt Action – The exit of patriarchy*. Within the whole happening, Dorota Androsz, who is an actress in Teatr Wybrzeże, recorded some parts of manifestos, which were heard in an action in Sopot. We think that topic that we have chosen is the basis for a reflection about humans and beyond humans.

During this event, in the art gallery where the manifestos were, we could see touching video work *Anatema* made by Dorota Chilińska. Kalwajtys, in her red dress, in a Warsaw and psychodelic scenerio, was presenting fragments of manifestos in the voice of Androsz. Both of them also performed in the piece *Agonia*; this was a moving visualisation of the situation in the autumn of 2021 on the Polish-Belarusian border. In a serious immigration crisis, people are being detained there. They are dying of hypothermia, because they do not have food, they are tired. The authorities used the situation to play a political game involving people, and taking their basic rights to be free and be treated as humans. Anna Chabowska realized a performance *Please, Stop*, which talked about rape.

I go to demonstrations, pickets, or court hearings with a banner „Death of the patriarchy.” This flag was made by Xavier Bayle. It is some kind of totem, which warns the enemy and protects a friend. Jacek Staniszewski and myself hand out in town reprinted manifestos from the first and second editions of *Death of the patriarchy*. They were posted up in Bydgoskie - one of the districts of Toruń. They stayed there for a long time, but were eventually removed by some person.

FEMELE FIGHTERS \ MURDERED BY THE PATRIARCHY

Koncept: katarzyna lewandowska

Graphics: Jacek Staniszewski

Hevrin Khalaf
murdered in 2019. Syria
Farkhunda Malikzada
murdered in 2016. Afghanistan
Marielle Franco
murdered in 2018. Brazil
Jill Phipps
murdered in 1995. England
Jolanta Brzeska
murdered in 2011. Poland
Anna Politkowska
murdered in 2006. Russia
Marie Catherine
murdered in 2012. Syria
Daniela Carrasco / El Mimo
murdered in w 2019. Chile

Almaas Elman
murdered in w 2019. She was pregnant.

Marsha P. Johnson
murdered in 1992. USA

Daphne Caruna Galizia
murdered in 2017. Malta

Tsepe Kyi, Tibetan
self immolation in 2014, Tibet

Hande Kader
murdered in 2016. Turkey

Angel / Kyal Sin
murdered in 2021, Birma

Regan Russel
murdered in 2020, Canada

Jelena Grigoriewa
murdered in 2019. Russia

Milo Mazurkiewicz
suicide in 2019, Poland

Antonio Gramsci:

Indifference is apathy, parasitism, cowardice, it is not a life. That is why I hate indifference¹⁴

I dedicate my text to all female fighters who were murdered by the patriarchy.

Scene 5

Expectation

Orlan:

I'm interested in art that turns upside down whatever we assume beforehand, which is shocking, which is outside norms and outside the law. Art must be uncomfortable. My work is blasphemous.¹²

Regina Galindo:

I live in a country full of violence, hence my art also is violent. My body is not taken as an individual body, but as a social body, a common body, a global body. Being me or looking from my perspective, becomes her perspective, his experience, because we are all ourselves and others at the same time. The body, which is the body of many people, which is still being created, which is still opposing itself, because the world causes pain, restrains, suffocates, destroys; let us, who are also the others, do not just try to survive, but let us react, resist, create.¹³

Ikonography

AND WHY WE DO NEED WOMEN'S FREEDOM?



photo: Marek Krupecki

BLACK VENUS PROTEST

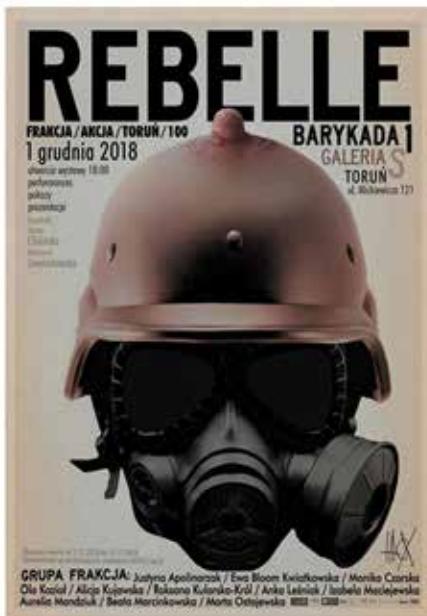


poster design by Jacek Staniszewski
photo: Alina Żemojdzin

DEATH OF PATRIARCHY



REBELLE



2



3

- 1, 1a. design by Jacek Staniszewski
2. photo: Marek Krupecki
3. photo: Bartosz Żukowski

FEMALE FIGHTERS



EXPECTATION



photo: Adam Fisz

Notes

¹ Amalia Jones, *Body Art. Performing the Subject* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998).

² Inna Szewczenko, "Rozbieranie się," w *Prawda jest konkretna. Artystyczne strategie w polityce. Podręcznik* (Warszawa: Fundacja Nowej Kultury Bęc Zmiana, 2019), 174-175.

³ Siksa, (nickname of Polish feminist artist), 2017.

⁴ Rosi Braidotti, *Nomadic Subjects. Embodiment and Sexual difference in Contemporary Feminist Theory* (Cambridge: Columbia University Press, 1994); *The Posthuman* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2013).

⁵ Xavier Bayle, "Political species," *Splesz*, <http://www.splesz.pl/xavier-bayle-gatunki-polityczne/>.

⁶ In the exhibition, we could see a black-white picture that was made by Krystyna Gorazdowska. She took a photo of her teacher - Antoni Rząsa. This work she titled *Father*.

⁷ The Black Venus Protest initiators were Magdalena Mellin and Monika Wińczyk. Both of them are creators of the idea and texts that define BVP activities.

⁸ Joanna Krysiak, (author of the text of the oath), *The Wedding*, 2018.

⁹ Olympe de Gouges, *Deklaracja Praw Kobiety i Obywatelki*, 1st edition, introduction and edited by katarzyna lewandowska, Rafał Michalski (Gdańsk: Biblioteka ASP w Gdańsku, ASP w Gdańsku, 2018).

¹⁰ katarzyna lewandowska, Rafał Michalski, "Olimpia de Gouges – zapomniana HERoni Rewolucji Francuskiej," *Sztuka i Dokumentacja* nr 19 (2018): 97-124.

¹¹ The Gallery was founded on the initiative of Wery Morawiew and Robert Sochacki.

¹² Orlan, "Referat," *Magazyn Sztuki* nr 9 (1/96) (1996): 19-29.

¹³ Nie patrz prosto w słońce, 27.06-13.09.2009 (Toruń: CSW w Toruniu, 2009), 14-15. Exhib. cat.

¹⁴ Monika Weychert, "Nasz opór codzienny," *Akademia w Mieście* nr 7 (10/2020) (2021): 70-80.

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