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FROM A DEMARCATION LINE TO A LIVING ARCHIVE. DOCUMENTARY EXHIBITIONS OF THE FOKSAL GALLERY IN THE BRITISH ISLES

The presence of the Warsaw-based Foksal Gallery in the British Isles through the so-called documentary exhibitions is undoubtedly a special case of artistic contacts across the Iron Curtain. On the one hand, we have a small gallery aiming at 'avoiding the state of certainty,' which has been operating since the mid-sixties, simply taking advantage of 'opportunities' and additionally a gallery operating in the systemic circumstances of the Polish People's Republic, effectively stifling any dreams of international power. "In this country and under these conditions? All you were thinking about was a minimum of normality in your environment," argued Wiesław Borowski, a long-

term gallery manager, one of the main characters in this text.¹ On the other hand, the Foksal Gallery was under the patronage of the Fine Arts Workshops State Enterprise, a state-owned monopolist responsible for the visual and artistic culture of the state. Paradoxically, however, the art critics running the institution placed it outside the official current of art supported by the cultural authorities of that time, presenting art that usually did not appear at the Zachęta Gallery or in the network of so called Bureaus of Artistic Exhibitions.² Yet, it was exactly the Foksal Gallery that was invited to the British 'classy establishments' in 1979 – to Edinburgh, Glasgow, London, and Dublin. I would

like to take a closer look at these events, which I see as the culmination of a longer process, as a result of which a network of personal friendships built across borders translated into institutional cooperation and specific artistic projects carried out by artists and institutions from opposing political blocs. The personages of Richard Demarco, Tadeusz Kantor, and Wiesław Borowski seem to be the key in the 'British case' discussed here and it is on them that I would like to focus my attention. Using the example of a series of exhibitions presenting the achievements of the Foksal Gallery, I will analyse the sequence of events that led to their presentation in the British Isles, and then I will consider the strategies that were employed in organising the exhibitions. This will shed light on a few questions relating to the reception of Polish contemporary art abroad, the opportunities for cooperation in the period of political divisions, and ways of building a position on the basis of documenting art and gallery archives.

Demarco and Polish Art

I will start my story with Richard Demarco (b. 1930), a Scottish artist, theorist and outstanding proponent of European culture. Undoubtedly, his person is absolutely crucial here. This was already emphasized by Nicholas Serota, an influential curator and one of the most eminent British gallery managers. He argued that Demarco – an Italian-descent Scotsman, founder of the Traverse Theatre (1963), co-founder of the Richard Demarco Gallery (1966-1992), co-creating the Fringe Festival in Edinburgh for many years – inspired them all by bringing visual arts from other parts of the world, and precisely from Eastern Europe, long before it became an element of curatorial practice.³ This attitude stems from a number of sources, but first of all, it should be noted that Demarco was involved – initially as a spectator, then as a curator and one of the directors – in the Edinburgh International Festival. This unique event was initiated in the second half of the forties by Rudolf Bing and Henry Harvey Wood. The idea of this enterprise

was international in its very foundations as it was supposed to build a platform of artistic agreement across political borders, because, as Demarco explained, what the world divided by the Cold War needed was the language of art. “the highest level of music, theater, and performing arts. It was a language of healing.”⁴ It was a response to the trauma of World War II, to the divisions it had created, and a way to heal war wounds. The annually held festival gained increasing fame and recognition. Today this general name covers a whole series of independent events (festivals) including various forms of artistic activity.

In the context of Polish art, the 1972 edition was undoubtedly important. The exhibitions organized as a part of the so-called official festival by the Richard Demarco Gallery were already a very important part of this complex event at that time. The festival, in its musical and performative part, was truly international, but this did not apply to the visual program, which was largely limited to the territory of Scotland and, at best, to Great Britain. Taking the opportunity that the festival attracted audiences from outside the British Isles, Demarco tried to overcome these limitations and invited the European avant-garde to Edinburgh. It was thanks to him that a wide presentation of Polish contemporary avant-garde artists took place. Titled *Atelier'72* it overshadowed similar projects after 1945 with its scale.⁵ Of course, the context of this largest exhibition of Polish avant-garde in the West in the post-war history of Poland is somewhat broader, as it cannot be forgotten that two years earlier, the exhibition of German art *Strategy: Get Arts* (1970) had taken place. This exhibition referred to the art community from Düsseldorf (headed by Joseph Beuys), a city that challenged New York as the world's capital of visual arts. Demarco did not want to be considered a representation of the whole of Europe; hence the *Romanian Art Today* exhibition (with Paul Neagu) was held already in 1971. He realized, however, that the small size of this exhibition hampered a proper assessment of what was going on in the East and West.⁶ This is how *Atelier'72* came to pass, with the participation of over forty Polish artists, as well as

Eight Yugoslav Artists (with Marina Abramovic) in 1973. Demarco compared the importance of the Polish show to *Strategy: Get Arts*, which, as Cordelia Oliver (painter and art critic) argued, quickly became a legend, not only in Scotland or Edinburgh itself but it was widely echoed far beyond Great Britain.⁷

Atelier'72 was not only an exhibition-review of the Polish post-war avant-garde but also an attempt to present it in an international context⁸ – which was also credited to Ryszard Stanisławski, the director at the time of the Museum of Art in Łódź. The museum was officially a partner of this undertaking. Wiesław Borowski also participated in its organization, and among the artists there were creators associated with the Foksal Gallery, such as: Stanisław Dróżdź, Zbigniew Gostomski, Koji Kamoji, Tadeusz Kantor, Edward Krasiński, Maria Stangret, Henryk Stażewski and those who had their presentations in it, like Jerzy Bereś, Włodzimierz Borowski, Zbigniew Warpechowski. It was one of the significant advances in opening Great Britain to Polish art. Why did Demarco choose Poland? The organizer himself spoke of it: “for everyone has forgotten what the Poles have achieved. And they helped win the War. I have always believed that Poland and Poles represent the true culture of Europe.”⁹ Demarco had the opportunity to get to know the Polish diaspora in Scotland. Here it was a diaspora of immigrant former soldiers (Polish military units were based in Scotland, and a network of hostels for Poles was established there immediately after the War), Demarco saw soldiers pray in Polish uniforms, he taught their children at an Edinburgh school. As he recalled: “They were a new kind of Scotsmen. (...) I thought Poland was an important unexpected new dimension in Scottish history.”¹⁰ The Traverse Theatre (Gallery) established by him in the sixties, and later the Richard Demarco Gallery, gave him space to implement his plans to overcome the Cold War divisions in the sphere of culture.¹¹ He found a fairly good moment for his ideas. In the early seventies, Poland, under the rule of Edward Gierek, the First Secretary of the Central Committee of the Polish United Workers' Party, started a policy of

opening up to the world and developed extensive trade contacts, also with capitalist states, while still being deeply dependent on the Soviet Union. It was also a time when, in the pursuit of normalising international relations, a kind of second Thaw took place in culture and science. But like the former one, in 1956, it did not last long. Riding on this new wave, however, projects such as *Atelier 72*, officially supported by the Polish Ministry of Culture and Art, as well as the Polish Cultural Institute in London, the consulate in Glasgow, and on the British side - the British Council, became possible. Here, Demarco acted as the director of the Richard Demarco Gallery and director of exhibitions related to contemporary art at the Official Edinburgh Festival, which allowed him to gain access to the Ministry of Culture. During the meeting, he received from the communist authorities a list of artists whom they wished to promote in the West. Yet, he was interested in people who were not on that list.

Wiesław Borowski and *Studio*

International, Kantor with Successes in Great Britain

One of these unlisted people, and one of the most important ones in the narrative unfolding here, was Wiesław Borowski (b. 1931). A Polish art critic of similar vintage to Demarco, he had been co-managing the Foksal Gallery in Warsaw since 1966. At the beginning of the seventies, this gallery was not a completely unknown establishment. In 1970, it participated in the prestigious 3e Salon International de Galeries Pilotes in Lausanne (and Paris), as one of the four galleries from Eastern Europe, taking into account all editions of the event. It was undoubtedly a significant event for the Warsaw-based gallery. This review achieved an international status. Numerous critics arrived in Lausanne, then going straight to the parallel Biennale in Venice from there. They were attracted to the Swiss museum by "determined commitment to what is avant-garde in the contemporary art

and rejecting features of commercialism." The presentation of the Polish gallery did not go unnoticed, but the participation alone - taking into account the situational context of the institution locked on the 'wrong' side of the Iron Curtain - at an international meeting of sixteen galleries selected from around the world (in the third edition) was both unexpected and ennobling.¹² It should therefore not be surprising that Demarco, being in Warsaw in the summer of 1971, headed directly for Foksal.¹³ Borowski recalled it as follows:

then I met him with Kantor; we went to Kraków, he saw a piece of 'The Water Hen'. He was delighted and invited the Cricot 2 theatre to Edinburgh. Simultaneously, he invited a number of Polish artists to an exhibition in his gallery, because he accepted the mission and decided that he was most interested in the art of Eastern European countries. He invited our crew from the gallery, Koji Kamoji, Drózdź, Narkiewicz, Jurkiewicz and many others.¹⁴

This is how the long-term cooperation began. Then, in Warsaw, but also in Łódź, Wrocław and Kraków, Demarco met artists who made a great impression on him and whom he wanted to present on the western side of the Iron Curtain. He spoke about it years later:

It was them who filled me with hope that despite the nightmare of the Cold War, Polish culture had a future ahead of it. They also reassured me that without Poland, Europe would not be able to compete in the field of art with the world centre, which was New York. These Polish artists of the Cold War period recalled still vivid memories of Polish uniformed soldiers I had seen in Edinburgh, who were a living testimony to Europe plunged into the chaos of war.¹⁵

Nicholas Serota, talking about those first Polish-British contacts, first of all emphasised the role played by Borowski: "We all knew that he

ran the [Foksal] Gallery in a very unusual way by the standards of those years. It was his sensitivity and awareness that brought these two related groups of artists in Britain and Poland closer."¹⁶ One of the platforms for this rapprochement turned out to be the prestigious magazine *Studio International*, edited by Peter Townsend (later a friend of Borowski's), which welcomed art from Central and Eastern Europe. Townsend (1919-2006), a publisher, writer and sinologist (with a colourful past in China during the Mao Tse-tung revolution), was at the helm of *Studio International* for a decade (1965-1975). It is the longest running British art magazine, with a tradition dating back to 1893, but had slumped into stagnation before Townsend took it over, lost its radical edge, and was 'international' in title only. The new editor, while preserving the legacy of the magazine, caused it to gain a truly 'overseas' reputation and perspective. Emphasising London's geographic location between Europe and the United States, he made available space on the magazine's pages for new experimental art practices challenging the status quo and hierarchy of power in the art world, including those extending beyond American cultural domination. He developed a network of collaborators; both young and leading critics from Western and Eastern Europe, the United States, as well as South America, Japan and Australia and posted their texts in *Studio International*. All this coincided with the British Council-led modernisation of British contemporary art, which was to become an international export commodity in the seventies. Thanks to Townsend, *Studio International* was at the centre of these changes, and Townsend himself was regarded by many as a key figure in the British art world from the late sixties to the early eighties.¹⁷

This British man turned his attention to what was happening behind the Iron Curtain, being aware of how poorly documented the art from this region is in Western mainstream art magazines. The person of Tadeusz Kantor was introduced to him by Richard Demarco, as both men regularly corresponded with each other.¹⁸ Wiesław Borowski turned out to be an indispensable 'liaison,' but his

appearance in the English magazine was connected with Czech art and the figure of Henryk Stażewski. Still in 1970, a historian and art critic Jindřich Chaloupecký was invited to collaborate with the magazine. He prepared occasional articles on contemporary art in Czechoslovakia. In one of them he referred to the Prague exhibition of Stażewski, a pre-war constructivist, known in Great Britain for his activities in the groups Blok, Abstraction-Création and Cercle et Carré, and his articles attracted the attention of the editor-in-chief of the *Studio International*. In Stażewski, he found a direct connection between the subject of interest to him, i.e., the constructivist understanding of painting and sculpture, and contemporary artistic activity in Poland, the most interesting manifestation of this for him were the happenings and theatrical performances by Kantor, as well as the artistic activities of Edward Krasinski, which he had seen at *Atelier'72* in Edinburgh.¹⁹ Borowski knew them all, befriended them and they established the Foksal Gallery in Warsaw together. It constituted a platform through which these contradictions could function in harmony. At Townsend's request, Borowski conducted an interview with Stażewski in 1974, which was published in *Studio International*. The same year, he presented an article about Kantor and his Cricot 2 theatre to the British audience in an earlier issue.²⁰ In this way, Townsend wanted to deepen the discussion on Kantor's work and show a wider perspective than the British newspapers had shown so far.

The magazine's editor had a good sense of the subject. Undoubtedly, both of the artists, Stażewski and Kantor, can be described as 'artistic guides' of the Foksal Gallery, representing various artistic traditions.²¹ For Townsend, the activity of Kantor in the theatre was a logical extension of the trajectory from constructivism to happening – the theatrical representation of temporality. The other side of this activity took the form of shows – revolutionary for the British – organised by Kantor at the Edinburgh festival. They caught Townsend's interest as practices combining painting, theatre and performance.²² It was similarly perceived

by Borowski, who explained in his text that Kantor's experimental practice had its roots in constructivism and dadaism; that it represents the totality of experiences in which the methods are part of creating the work and not a separate entity; that the Polish artist wanted to show reality in action.²³ Years later, Townsend himself considered Borowski's article about Cricot 2 to be one of the most important during his tenure at *Studio International* (along with such authors as Daniel Buren, Hans Haacke, Carl Andre and Roger Hilton).²⁴

Wiesław Borowski's activity in the British Isles was in large part due to Tadeusz Kantor and the consequences of his meeting with Richard Demarco. The Cricot 2 Theatre, until then completely unknown in Great Britain, achieved its first international success in Edinburgh in 1972. The cooperation between Demarco, Borowski and Kantor developed in the following years. A year later in 1973, Kantor appeared in Edinburgh with a new play: *Lovelies and Dowdies*. Borowski, who was accompanying him in the role of a 'curator' ('accompanying critic'), met Sandy Nairne, the future head of The Institute of Contemporary Arts in London (ICA). He also met Joseph Beuys and Caroline Tisdall who was his partner and a critic from *The Guardian* during the rehearsals of a new play.²⁵ These were important acquaintances. Kantor came to Scotland for the third time in 1976 with his performance the *Dead Class*, which sealed his worldwide fame. The performance aroused wide-reaching interest. It was then that Kantor met David Gothard and Erica Bolton from Riverside Studio, who managed to turn the place into the centre of worldwide dramatic art in a short time. It was them who brought the Cricot 2 Theatre to London for the first time. Meanwhile, Nicolas Serota, in the wake of the audience's highly enthusiastic reaction to Kantor's theatrical experiments, organised a great exhibition of the Polish artist's wrapped-up objects (*French emballage*) with Borowski's assistance the same year. It was held at the prestigious Whitechapel Art Gallery in London. Borowski said:

It was a large gallery, then perhaps the most prestigious, next to ICA, in London. (...) I travelled with Kantor by taxi between Whitechapel and Riverside (two ends of London) every day because they were playing the *Dead Class*. (...) Carol Tisdall wrote a review, some few interviews were in the evening press... However, I would not say it was a success. Kantor outshined his paintings in London with his theatre. *The Dead Class* was the 'number one' event.²⁶

All these trips with Kantor's *Cricot 2* brought Borowski new and valuable international contacts. He made the acquaintance of critics, gallery owners, collectors and, of course, artists. This made it possible to exchange letters, obtain materials and further addresses, as well as to invite people to hold an exhibition in Warsaw. Borowski found invaluable support from Milada Ślizińska and Andrzej Turowski. Together in the seventies they tried to find good foreign artists for the Foksal Gallery. In terms of exhibitions, they could also count on the British Council and the Museum of Art in Łódź - financially and institutionally. As a result, the gallery became ever more international, choosing the "British direction" increasingly often. At that time, Foksal was visited by, among others, Cambell (Tam) Mac Phail (1973), Art & Language (1975), Victor Burgin (1976), John Hilliard (1978, 1979), Ian McKeever (1979), Michael Craig-Martin (1979). All this happened between *Atelier '72* and Foksal's trip to the British Isles.

Documentation Boxes

The opening of the space in the Foksal Gallery to a strong British representation, introducing Kantor to British readers as well as the contacts and friendships with representatives of the local art world, caused the Warsaw gallery to be invited to a kind of 'Foksal tour' around the United Kingdom. Its main element was the retrospective exhibition *Foksal Gallery PSP*, presenting theoretical achievements and documentation of the gallery's

activities over the years 1966-1979. It was shown successively in: Richard Demarco Gallery in Edinburgh (August – September 1979), the Third Eye Centre in Glasgow (October – November 1979), the ICA Gallery in London (December 1979 – January 1980), and the Project Arts Centre in Dublin (June – July 1980). Borowski recalled:

We prepared fantastic documentation and enlargements on photographic canvas with Turowski. Jacek Stokosa, following in Kantor's footsteps, designed beautiful boxes. However, Kantor's boxes were black and ours were immaculately white with black inscriptions. (...) We included all the entries about our texts on the living archive and the entire history of the gallery. Quotes and some enlarged photos. It was quite a load.²⁷

What did it look like in detail?

The exhibition consisted of 10 parts. Part I contained a text describing the contents of the exhibition, a reproduction of the *Documentation* (1971) leaflet, a photograph from *The Sinking* with a text about this action from the *Panoramic Sea Happening* (1967), a photo of the gallery archive (box) and a fragment of the text from the *Living Archive* manifesto (1971), fifteen exhibition posters and the famous photography from the action *We See You* (i.e., the faces of critics and artists at the gallery's window, 1969), texts about the history of the gallery and its basic tasks.²⁸ Part II discussed the stage of the gallery development, called 'gallery against exhibition.' It consisted of the manifesto text *Introduction to the General Theory of Place* (1966), a photo and text from Tadeusz Kantor's *Popular Exhibition* (1963), a photo from Włodzimierz Borowski's *The Sinking* with a description (1966), a photo from Zbigniew Gostomski's *Environment* with a description (1967). Part III presented the 'elimination of art in art,' which included a text by Wiesław Borowski of the same title (1967), photographs of Władysław Strzemiński's unistic painting with a fragment of

The *Unism*, from Kantor's *Multipart* action along with an agreement signed between the artist and the buyer of the work (1970), from Henryk Stażewski's exhibition and a photo of his white relief and linear sculpture by Edward Krasiński. The stage of the gallery's development referred to as 'the object beyond painting' defined the fourth part which consisted of four photographs from Kantor's happenings (*The Letter* - 1967, *Panoramic Seaside Happening* - 1968, *An Anatomy Lesson According to Rembrandt* - 1969) along with two scores and actions: Alain Jacquet's *Tricot* with description (1969), Druga Grupa [Second Group]'s *Iodine* (1968), *Four-Person Hat* by Kantor's Students (1969), Jerzy Bereś's manifestation. It was supplemented by subsequent texts: Kantor's definition of a happening and his text on the object, Anka Ptaszewska and Wiesław Borowski's comments on happenings, a table with a list of happenings implemented in Poland. Part V was filled with documents which fit in with the slogan 'gallery against the gallery,' i.e. the manifesto *What We Do Not Like About the Foksal Gallery PSP* (1968), a description of individual events (with numbering) and then photographs: of the gallery's participation in an exhibition in the Wrocław Town Hall (1967), Gostomski's *Windows Without a View* and Kantor's can with the inscription 'open in 1984' (1969) created as part of the Winter Assemblage. It was complemented by subsequent photographs on canvas: a drawing by Zbigniew Warpechowski (1971), a view of the *Collective Exhibition* (1971) and shots from the Golden Grape Symposium in Zielona Góra – an action of Kantor's students *We Are Not Asleep*, a stand and the action of copying Druga Grupa [Second Group] (1969). *Things and Thoughts* constituted part VI of the exhibition and included a photograph of the letters and typescript of Laszlo Lákner (1972), photographs with a description of the action *Remembering* by Druga Grupa (Second Group) (1972), a line in the Tam Mac Phail gallery (1973), a reading at the Bernar Venet gallery with text (1973), reproductions from a photocopy of Victor Burgin's photographs (1976), three photographs presenting a series of Jarosław Kozłowski's shows *Metaphysics, Physics, ics* (1972,

1974), Gostomski's diagram *It begins in Wrocław* (1970), Kantor's conceptual emballage *Cleopatra's nose* together with text (1971), a photograph of the rainbow and a sketch from the exhibition *Braille* by Alain Jacquet (1970). This part ended with a photograph showing the installation *Between* by Stanisław Dróżdź (1977), accompanied by the lonely English word 'between' on the side. The next stage of the gallery's development was described by the authors of the exhibition as 'gallery against documentation.' This section, or Part VII, referred to the *Living Archive* exhibition (1972), which was presented by means of the photographs of the exhibition, reproductions of a flyer and a letter to artists, a description of the exhibition. They were accompanied by a reproduction of the *Documentation*. Part VIII covered what was hidden under the slogan 'gallery against pseudo-avant-garde:' the original poster for the exhibition *Documentation* (1971), a translation of the text from the poster, and an excerpt from Borowski's article *Pseudo-avant-garde* (1975). The next part, 'art and something else,' already IX, was represented in large numbers by photos and short descriptions accompanying them. It consisted of the following artists' works: Andrzej Szewczyk's *Paintings from Chlopy* (1978), Kantor's *Everything Is Hanging by a Thread* (1973), *Grey Rabbit... etc.* Art and Language (1975), wall paintings by Joel Fisher (1978), *Vehicle* (1973) and *Drawing of a Line* (1974) by Krzysztof Wodiczko, *Thinking out loud* by Tom Marioni (1975), *Particolare* by Giovanni Anselmo (1974), *Projection II* by Druga Grupa (Second Group) (1973), *It can be presented everywhere* by Robert Barry (1973), Gostomski's *Ulysses* (1970), Ben Vautier's banner with slogans (1974), one of Dróżdź's 'ideaforms,' Michael Craig-Martin's wall drawing (1979), *Photographs* by Zygmunt Targowski (1971), Christian Boltanski's *Les images stimuli* (1978), John Hilliard's photographs (1978). The last one, part X, referred to the 'collection outside the gallery' and was illustrated with a reproduction of the text *Collection* by Borowski and Turowski (1978).

The same set of documentation was presented successively in Scotland (Edinburgh,

Glasgow), England (London), Ireland (Dublin), but in each of these places, it was 'packaged' differently. The broadest perspective was proposed by Richard Demarco. He included photographs and texts from Foksal in his gallery (depicting 'its philosophy and approach to artists and art education'). At the Gladstone Court, he organized a presentation of *Ten Polish Contemporary Artists from the Collection of Muzeum Sztuki Lodz* (these were "selected sculptures and paintings from one of the most important collections in Poland"). At the Fruitmarket Gallery, he juxtaposed two veterans of the Polish avant-garde with exhibitions: *Stanislaw Witkiewicz 1885-1939* (featuring him as "an artist and playwright who was one of the main inspirations for contemporary Polish theatre, especially Kantor and his Cricot 2") and *Henryk Stażewski – Recent Paintings* (these were "contemporary works by one of the founding members of Constructivist groups in Poland, collaborating with Malevich and Miro"). The whole thing was advertised by him as *Polish Avant-Garde 1910-1979*.²⁹ In the Third Eye Centre in Glasgow, apart from the documentary exhibition, the above-mentioned shows of works by Witkiewicz and Stażewski were presented. Only the boxes with the documentation of the Warsaw gallery's activity appeared in Dublin. On the other hand, at the ICA in London, which – as Borowski recalled, gave them the best rooms on the floor – the artists from Druga Grupa (Second Group), i.e. Lesław and Waclaw Janicki and Jacek Stokłosa, appeared as a 'living element' in the creative output of Foksal presented in a documentary fashion.³⁰

They came to London thanks to the fact that Sandy Naire, the head of this prestigious institution, paid for their trip to England. Naire was fascinated by Kantor's work and had helped organise the performance *Lovelies and Dowdies* at Demarco's in Edinburgh a few years earlier (he even replaced Borowski in the role of a millionaire in this performance - it was his first stage appearance, after which he became Kantor's only British 'actor').³¹ Borowski recounted:

Druga Grupa (Second Group) did various shows with us in the gallery, excellently prepared, very witty actions. Our documentary exhibitions, shown in English, might have been a bit boring for the viewers, too sophisticated, conceptual and propagandistic. Turowski was very involved in them, the Janicki family and Stokłosa were there as a living example.³²

Druga Grupa (Second Group), associated with Kantor and his Cricot 2 theatre and with the milieu of the Kraków Krzysztofory Palace, also collaborated intensively with the Warsaw-based Foksal in the first half of the seventies.³³ The artists who formed the group recognized the necessity of 'intervention activities' - actions revising the rules of conventions, conventionalized objects and activities. Most often it was achieved by exaggerating one of the elements organizing a given situation – for example, a simple life activity – and reducing it to an absurdity.³⁴ Their activities included various artistic media: happening and a form similar to the performance in our present-day understanding thereof, as well as painting, graphic techniques, and processed photography. The activity of Druga Grupa (Second Group), as Łukasz Guzek wrote, can be situated at the turn of the artistic eras: the elements of the works created under Kantor's influence belong to the visual arts of the sixties, while their attempts to free themselves (and to deny this dependence) should be referred to the artistic issues of the seventies. In the artistic practice of the group's creators, paratheatrical and happening actions and Dadaist wit were combined with conceptual thinking, which dominated especially in their event-type actions. More than once, playing with such notions as 'art' or 'work,' they questioned the institutions of art, its functioning in the buy/sell system, and the sense of producing objects-artefacts.³⁵ In one of the performances, they referred to the idea of *The Living Archive*, which was directly referred to in the documentary presentation of the Foksal Gallery in the British Isles. It was a performance called: *Remembering* (1972) carried out in a Warsaw

gallery, in which the artists learnt by heart any text proposed by the audience, declaring a 'full commitment to remembering' and at the same time not using it for any purpose.³⁶ Luiza Nader saw it not only as an extreme test of the memorising capabilities of artists, but also as a contestation of the practice of abusing the "procedures of indexing reality and documenting one's own activity," present both among conceptualists and in the bureaucratic space of a gallery or archive.³⁷

The presence of *Druga Grupa* (Second Group) in London confirmed the self-critical approach represented by the Foksal Gallery, and at the same time brought 'some ease and distance to serious art' – especially that a seminar and a discussion about the gallery were organized before the presentation of Foksal's documentation. It was attended by Borowski and artists cooperating with the Warsaw facility: Michael Craig-Martin, Joel Fisher, and Ian McKeever. In his speech, the Polish critic emphasized that the Foksal Gallery functions on the outskirts ('off the main routes') of Western art, and at the same time its situation in Poland is similar, on the border of official and approved cultural life. In this context, he argued that, as an isolated gallery, it did not show art that was representative of Polish art in general.³⁸

Dividing Lines and Dialogue Between Traditions

The reactions of the British press referred largely to these ideas. At the beginning, one can recall the enthusiastic opinion of the *Daily Telegraph*, in which the author agreed with Demarco's words that the Warsaw gallery is among the most fascinating ones in the world. Terence Mullaly emphasized the gallery's international reputation and the fact that it had a guaranteed place in the history of the twentieth-century avant-garde. He also noticed that the gallery presented art completely different from the 'ruthless conservatism' of the socialist realism doctrine, with which modern art in the Soviet Union, and thus the entire 'artistic production' in

the countries of the Eastern Bloc, may be associated with it.³⁹ Felix McCullough from *Art Review* emphasized that it was Richard Demarco's direct contacts with Ryszard Stanisławski and Wiesław Borowski and the Ministry of Culture in Poland that led to the organization of this three-part exhibition in Edinburgh. Owing to this, what was official and acceptable was allowed to meet what was radical in Polish art on a neutral ground. According to the reviewer, this testified to a specific situation of the Polish art scene, the possibility of a certain tolerance and compromise. The festival featured the constructivist works of Henryk Stażewski, the 'restlessly romantic' works of Stanisław Ignacy Witkiewicz, and the documentation of the Foksal Gallery – which was supposed to speak of a real struggle of the avant-garde for existence and development in a culturally and politically conformist environment.⁴⁰ No wonder that Edward Gage wrote in *The Scotsman* that it was good that Polish art of the twentieth century was included in the official program of the Edinburgh festival – more so because that the same year Poland made newspaper headlines around the world thanks to the visit of the new Polish Pope in his own country. The author reminded his readers that this was the second presentation of contemporary Polish art in the British Isles. For him, it was of great value that, unlike *Atelier'72* (which, due to the enormity of the project, the variety and the different scale of the works, did not give him an appropriate perspective and possibility of evaluation), the 1979 exhibition which was limited to the presentation of twelve artists and documentation of one gallery showed what was crucial in the field of fine arts after 1900. On one hand, the author emphasized the centuries-old feature of Polish culture, visible in the artistic visions of Witkiewicz and Stażewski, i.e., international connections and openness to external stimuli, and on the other – he noted the presence and achievements of a small, independent gallery from Warsaw, which had always devoted itself to avant-garde issues. Gage recalled that it was established, inter alia, to 'bind broken trends of the Polish avant-garde' and at the same time to refer directly to new trends in world art. The critic

saw these connections in this exhibition, of course, in the person of Tadeusz Kantor, whose ‘surreal imagination is the link between Witkiewicz and the present day.’ After all, one could also connect Henryk Stażewski, one of the co-authors of the collection constituting the basis of the Museum of Art in Łódź, with contemporary artists whose works were also included in the collection of this institution. Stażewski then presented his reliefs from the sixties, which, in the eyes of the critic from *The Scotsman*, presented an interesting, but well-known range: from optical effects through randomness, the problem of order and disorder, white on white, to the sets of lines characteristic of minimal art ‘in search of order in chaos.’⁴¹

This theme – two coexisting traditions – was also strongly emphasized by Paul Overy in *Art Monthly*. He regretted that the subsequent editions of the documentary show of the Warsaw gallery in the British Isles lacked the exhibitions accompanying it at the Edinburgh festival. Only documentation consisting of photographs and texts was shown at ICA, and therefore, in his opinion, in isolation from the previous ones, it might “have given the impression of yet another conceptual spectacle, indigestible, devoid of self-criticism and incomprehensible.” “However, if someone wants to trouble themselves watching it, he explained, they will notice that it is a completely different exhibition, and it is worthy of attention. This is an exhibition of art documentation, not works of art.” The author, referring to the words of the organizers, referring to the text of the *Living Archive*, pointed out that it was another attempt at opposing “pretentious practices of manipulating the material documenting aesthetic activities” and efforts to identify them with art itself.⁴² Overy stressed that the documents from Foksal would have been easier to understand if they had been shown together with the works of Witkiewicz and Stażewski, because it was dramatic expressionism and cold constructivism that set the framework for post-war Polish art, in particular the art presented at Foksal. Contemporary sculptures and paintings from the collection of the Łódź Art Museum – whose authors were, among others, artists

associated with the Foksal Gallery - would have also emphasized this important, comprehensive perspective in his opinion.⁴³ The same author in the previous two issues of *Art Monthly* drew the general background for the exhibitions organized by Demarco, including the display of the Foksal Gallery documents. In the first of his texts,⁴⁴ he discussed the situation of art in Poland, starting from the time of the partitions, the constructivism of the twenties and German occupation, to transition smoothly to the subject of Museum of Art in Łódź, Ryszard Stanisławski and Henryk Stażewski, drawing attention to the artistic milieu of Wrocław represented by Zbigniew Makarewicz, Zdzisław Jurkiewicz, Barbara Kozłowska, Maria Michałowska and the Pawilon Gallery in Nowa Huta, discussing the importance of Tadeusz Kantor and Józef Szajna, highlighting Magdalena Abakanowicz and, of course, Foksal Gallery in Warsaw. Overy explained that the British art world was truly ‘insular’ and that it was only interested in whatever could be heard from its closest neighbour (France) and a distant ‘cousin’ (the United States). The art of Eastern Europe – apart from the period of fascination with Russian constructivism – is an unknown territory for the British. Richard Demarco tried to change this situation with the exhibition *Atelier '72* and the performances of Kantor and Nicolas Serota with the exhibition of Kantor's emballages at the Whitechapel Gallery. Hence, Demarco's latest initiative, organized under the slogan *Polish Avant-garde 1910-1979*, was so valuable to the author of the article. Its own important place therein was occupied by the Foksal Gallery, which Overy perceived as the most avant-garde gallery in Warsaw in terms of its program.⁴⁵ The British critic visited it a year earlier, in 1978, paying attention to several aspects of its operation and location: a quiet alley in the centre of Warsaw, the vicinity of the headquarters of the Association of Polish Artists and Designers (government control?), activities not aimed at a wider audience, fulfilling rather the function of an information centre for artists and insiders. It reminded him of the famous and influential Nigel Greenwood Gallery and Lisson Gallery in London

- except that the Warsaw gallery was supported by the state monopolist and did not conduct any commercial activities.

In the second text, Overy narrowed the perspective to Edinburgh itself.⁴⁶ He explained that the display of the documents of the Foksal Gallery was a series of events making up the Polish month of Polish art in Edinburgh. When Richard Demarco organized his four exhibitions (including Foksal) as part of the festival, the Polish Cultural Institute showed a 'different image' of Polish contemporary art, an alternative to the Polish avant-garde. It was an exhibition of Polish fabrics entitled *the Łódź School of Realism*, but according to the critics, 'it was not surprising and did not arouse much interest' (because the works of Magdalena Abakanowicz were missing there). In the text, he, again, drew attention to the polarization of attitudes between expressionism and constructivism among Polish artists, and, at the same time, emphasized the role of the Foksal Gallery presenting 'a clearly defined concept of its mission among various phenomena taking place on the stage of Polish art.'

There were also critical opinions in the press. The author of *Weekly Hibonna* drew attention to the not-so-new jargon in the exhibition announcements (questioning the nature and function of the gallery as a physical space where work is presented, and as a commercial institution where works of art have commodity value and essays on the goals and activities of the gallery that are "long, written in a pompous style and difficult to understand in places."⁴⁷ On the other hand, Waldemar Januszczak in *The Guardian* wrote about problems with the translation of texts and about exotic phrases in the exhibition catalogue, about the show being "a tribute to bold typefaces," about the walls at ICA looking "as if they had been wallpapered with pages from an English-Polish dictionary, as if there had been an invasion of black and white, words and letters taken out of their proper context," about the fifteen-year history of the gallery reduced to "a group of travelling posters that felt comfortable on the ICA exhibition walls." It seems, however, that the

chief art critic of *The Guardian* lacked a deeper perspective. He focused rather on the controversy often resulting from the reception of conceptual art.⁴⁸ Paul Overy, in the aforementioned text *Polish Month in Edinburgh*, explained that the show in London (presenting, inter alia, famous Western conceptualists) could lead to the conclusion that Foksal is a gallery devoted to conceptual art when subjected to superficial assessment. In his opinion, this would be an incorrect assessment, as evidenced by Kantor and his influence on the functioning of the gallery.⁴⁹

The press overviews above show some recurring themes in the reception of the Foksal Gallery exhibition by British art critics. They saw it primarily as performing the role of a 'liaison' between various avant-garde traditions and between East and West. Their reviews, therefore, referred to what Demarco had already said on the occasion of *Atelier'72* and Kantor's *The Demarcation Line* watched by him.⁵⁰ Demarco was impressed not only by the *Water Hen*, staged by Kantor, but precisely by this installation shown as a part of the collective exhibition of Polish avant-garde. By drawing a line on the black, plastered surface of the wall and on the floor, and adding meaningful slogans to it, Kantor made it clear that the art world of the twentieth century, whether it was located east or west of the Iron Curtain, was really divided by a line that separates the real avant-garde from the false one. Consequently, as Demarco said: "The Demarcation Line was an affirmation that I accepted as a confirmation of Kantor's readiness to work under the aegis of Galeria Demarco in defence of the values and goals of Foksal Gallery." He also identified it as a work of art explaining the ethos of the Foksal Gallery, summarizing its history and *raison d'être*, and affirming it as a space for experiments.⁵¹

Undoubtedly, with his *Demarcation Line* Kantor pointed to the staid and re-forming divisions in art. The fact that it was 'adapted' in many fields by the organizers of the Foksal Gallery shows that this was partly due to its institutional position, torn between being subject to a state institution (PSP) and protective (and at the same

time critical) of activity in the field of art. The idealistic concept contained in this idea was never fully implemented.

The Problem of Documentation and the Strength of the Institution

However, in the analysis of the 'Foksal tour' around the British Isles, one cannot ignore the second key theme, which was the documentary nature of this exhibition. It showed the exhibition strategy applied at that time, which had been developed in the gallery environment since the beginning of the seventies and concerned the problem of documentation/archive. Considering the efforts the gallery organizers made over the decade in the field of theory and exhibition, it was the most important problem for them at that time. The *Foksal Gallery PSP* exhibition shown in Edinburgh, Glasgow, London, and Dublin was preceded by several, it seems, similar 'documentary undertakings.' A closer look should be taken at them, and the sequence of these events is as follows.

The first one of them, unsurprisingly, was *Tadeusz Kantor. Happening and Happening-like Actions 1963-1970* (1970). It was implemented according to a script produced by Kantor, who wanted to develop the idea of an archive of his own work in this way. At the Foksal Gallery, they presented photograms from such events as *Cricotage* (1965), *The Dividing Line* (1966), *Die Grosse Emballages* (1966), *The Water Hen* (1967), *The Panoramic Sea Happening* (1967), *An Anatomy Lesson according to Rembrandt* (1968), *The Little Cosmetic Operations* (1969), *The Chair* (1970). They were accompanied by photographic montages depicting the idea of an exhibition at the post office (1965), photographs of drawings of emballaged figures related to the idea of a journey, and texts of musical scores and manifestos from happenings and performances.⁵² Kantor said: "We've been talking about the documentation of the creative output for a long time – a lot – I had a *fixation* on this point – it turned into something

autonomous."⁵³ It was, in a way, a continuation of the thinking initiated by him with *Popular Exhibition* (1963), when the artist gathered 937 objects in the basement of the Krzysztofory Palace: drawings, reviews, notes, and objects revealing, on one hand, the 'anatomy' and, on the other, the 'waste' of his creative process.

A year later, the art critics Wiesław Borowski and Andrzej Turowski, who ran the gallery, presented the texts of *The Living Archive* and *Documentation* (1971). As Turowski himself explained, they were the result of endless conversations aimed at determining the place and role of the gallery in the situation of groundbreaking changes in the artistic field (including the conceptualisation and dematerialisation of artistic activities), which they attentively observed. "We formulated them in two declarations: the first critical one, entitled *Documentation* and referring to the 'sinking' of the gallery's documents during *Panoramic Sea Happening*; the second one, called *The Living Archive* and attempting to delineate a new area of the gallery's activity, which was to be 'non-interference' in the sphere of creativity, its unfixed thoughts and elusive actions."⁵⁴

The action *The Sinking* (1967), with the participation of Wiesław Borowski, Zbigniew Gostomski and Mariusz Tchorek, consisted of the literal sinking of a large box marked with the address of Foksal Gallery PSP on the high seas. The public was told that "important documents" of the gallery were inside. These were to be: manuscripts, chronicles of pseudo-artistic events, applications and replies to applications, press clippings, recorded speeches, receipts, transcripts, minutes, photographs, exhibition offers, personal data.⁵⁵ *The Sinking*, carried out as an independent action by the 'Foksal Crew' community, independent of Kantor, although implemented at the same time and in the same place as the rest of the events that made up the *Panoramic Sea Happening*, took on a special character, as a specific form of dialogue between critics and Tadeusz Kantor. This was undoubtedly the time when a vigorous and emotional discussion began about how the gallery should operate. The next two years, when the

organizers of the gallery switched from criticism of the exhibition to the criticism of the gallery as an institution, were even more significant in this respect. Therefore, one can also see something else in this event – the question about its history posed for the first time by the founders of the gallery. In other words, *The Sinking* was in fact the proper beginning of a self-discursive practice, which would henceforth be one of the characteristic features of the Foksal Gallery. Considering the fact that the gallery had operated for a year and a half, such a clear manifestation of self-awareness distinguished it from similar domestic institutions.

It should come as no surprise, then, that it was the photo from *The Sinking* that appeared on the first page of the *Documentation* leaflet. This is related to the person of Turowski, who, when collaborating with the gallery from around 1970, proposed a new artistic strategy. It consisted of building a relation between artists and the gallery, understood no longer as a ‘place’ (as declared in the gallery’s most famous program manifesto, *Theory of Place* 1966), but rather as an institutional structure with its own history.⁵⁶ It also corresponded with the views of Kantor, whose presence at Foksal led to the confrontation of the original ideas of the gallery’s organizers with the practices of happenings. As Paweł Polit argued, “it is difficult to assess the impact of Tadeusz Kantor’s intervention on the activities of the Foksal Gallery. One thing seems certain: his ideas and artistic propositions set a new direction for the Gallery’s activity, which turned towards conceptual art around 1970.”⁵⁷ At the same time, ‘the world of art has entered the era of DOCUMENTATION.’

This situation required critical intervention. Borowski and Turowski suggested opposition to the rapidly growing tendency to document and archive, in particular, ephemeral works. They wrote: “we create the illusion of the survival of artistic ideas, and in fact we have a tangled magma of artistically useless and commercially useful ‘traces’.”⁵⁸ The concept of *The Living Archive* was supposed to be a remedy for this. The authors of the text postulated adopting a strategy of defining a work when it is ‘neutrally valid.’ This meant that the

only way to avoid the manipulation of an artistic fact – performed by ‘the artists themselves,’ ‘show organizers,’ ‘greedy audiences’ – is to capture it in the suspension between dispatch and receipt. This ‘in-between’ state was to be the target point of activities undertaken to create a ‘framework for creative activity’ within *The Living Archive*. Borowski and Turowski therefore proposed doing away with the superficial reception of art that would include artistic self-analysis and penetration of an artwork’s structure with the purpose of sharing it – their suggestion was instead to isolate the surviving artistic fact in the documentation. The authors of the text called upon the artists to send materials to *The Living Archive* (this is the way *Living Archives* were supposed to be formed). Years later, Turowski recalled that:

(...) in 1971, as if in spite of the archive concept denoting all that is dead, we called the Foksal Gallery archive ‘a living archive’. On the other hand, we took the life away from the documentation being extremely popular in that period. (...) As the documentation had been put to death, we had to revive the archive as the means of ‘conveying’ art, as a place which is ‘neutral’, non-interfering, and storing whatever returns and exists.⁵⁹

In this context, the uselessness of the collected material was intended to distinguish *The Living Archive* from other documentary artistic collections.

This is what *The Living Archive* – *Documentation* (1971) and *The Living Archive* (1972) exhibitions became like. Catalogues, photos and posters were displayed on the walls, tables and on the floor in the exhibition hall, but it was done in a specific way, because they were packed in plastic bags and therefore unavailable. The viewer could only listen to tape recordings. The critics’ intentions were clear: the enormous number of documents made them impossible to read, denied their meaningfulness, and at the same time ‘protected’ artistic facts as an ‘isolated

message.’ As a consequence, however, one could get the impression that the artists’ statements were treated as an object - the lack of access to them deprived them of the capability of exerting influence.

Another documentary exhibition, which showed photograms, publications and writings of the gallery’s artists, had a different character. While previously the aim was to ‘sink’ (protect) an artistic fact, this time it seems that it was already about its exposure. At the 1976 exhibition, *Documents of the Artists (Stanisław Drożdż, Zbigniew Gostomski, Lesław and Waclaw Janicki, Jarosław Kozłowski, Roman Siwulak, Maria Stangret, Jacek Stokłosa, Zygmunt Targowski, Andrzej Welmiński, Krzysztof Wodiczko)*, *Documents of the Gallery (1966-1976)* all documents were placed in frames and panels, putting selected names in order. A certain narrative of the show was forming around them. As Luiza Nader suggested, this visible change occurred after the publication of the article *Pseudoavant-garde* by Wiesław Borowski, as a result of which “the order of the exhibition clearly contrasted with the anarchic proposal of the *Living Archives*, somehow referring to Tadeusz Kantor’s *Archiving Machine*.”⁶⁰ In his intervention text, Borowski, on the one hand, defined the titular phenomenon and pointed to its manifestations, and on the other hand, declared that, in the name of defending the neutrality and disinterestedness of the work understood as an ‘isolated message,’ he distanced himself from the ‘levy *en masse*’ of the avant-garde and remains faithful to the ethos of the genuine one.⁶¹ This declaration became a source of conflict and a very clear community-internal division in Polish art.

This topic also appeared in Borowski’s speech at the ICA in London. The critic argued that “the field of artistic experience is limited not only to the processes of devaluation, degradation or rejection,” that it also includes “the accumulation and strengthening of values,” that gallery operators should ask themselves whether “the gallery provides the right context for artists” and whether its institutional activities ensure their independence.⁶² Interestingly, this

topic was addressed in the British press as well. In his review of the London edition of the exhibition of Foksal’s documentation, Paul Overy, being oriented in the matters of Polish art, elaborated quite extensively on the subject of the ‘pseudo-avant-garde’ phenomenon, against which Borowski and Turowski spoke sharply.⁶³ Aiden Dunne also referred to this when he wrote that the Warsaw Gallery, undermining its status, was situated in the position of the ‘fortified avant-garde.’ He noted the difference between the pure (‘blue-eyed’) avant-garde and the ‘pseudo-avant-garde’ only in the differently accepted value scales of both formations.⁶⁴

Self-analysis – Self-criticism – History of the Self

From this broader perspective, it is clear that, even more than in the case of the previous documentary exhibitions, the *Foksal Gallery PSP* exhibition established its own history. It became an illustration of the text on the history of the gallery shown at the exhibition (in part I). This proposal combined the development of the Warsaw institution with the development of art from that time, referring directly to the interaction of artists and critics. Subsequent and interleaving phases listed at the exhibition were defined as fragments of texts by the gallery organisers, to whom specific ‘artistic facts’ were assigned. Until 1979, nine such developmental periods had been defined: ‘gallery against exhibition’ (1966), ‘elimination of art in art’ (1966-1969), ‘object outside painting’ (1965-1969), ‘gallery against gallery’ (1967-1970), ‘things and thoughts’ (1970-1974), ‘gallery against documentation’ (1971-1972), ‘gallery against the pseudo-avant-garde’ (1974-1977), ‘art and something else’ (1974-1979), ‘collection outside the gallery’ (1975-1979).⁶⁵ One could find in them, among other things, the questioning of the exhibition as a form being secondary in relation to the work and artistically inactive; creating a site for conducting – on the basis of acts of

renunciation, negation, disapproval, elimination in art – a constant dialogue with the boundaries of art; transcending the painting and theatrical form, back to life, which was to be ensured by the formula of the happening; questioning the ‘regime’ of the gallery itself through the activities of artists. These stages were exemplified in specific productions that appeared at Foksal and which were shown during the ‘Foksal tour’ in The United Kingdom.

This is how the narrativisation of the gallery's history was carried out by the gallery itself. But it could not have been otherwise. Turowski already argued that the gallery is an institution in a state of permanent crisis and at the same time it possesses a nature revealing its repressive nature towards artistic facts. The critic wrote about the gallery that, “The practice did not consist in exhibiting works, but in exposing itself, revealing internal contradictions, constantly updating questions about the status and place in the context of the diagnosis of the contemporary condition of culture.”⁶⁶ As a result of these questions, answers had to emerge, one of which was the *Foksal Gallery PS* documentary exhibition.

In this context, this exhibition can actually be considered as an effect of the institution's strength in the face of previous theoretical research and exhibition practice. This is a trait that was not so clearly identified by Western commentators at the time but was nevertheless reflected in the interest that the Foksal Gallery aroused, and the importance attached to it later.⁶⁷ In the exhibition catalogue from 1979 at the Richard Demarco Gallery in Edinburgh, the organisers clearly indicated their view of the functioning of such an institution as a gallery. However, its text, *The inevitability and failure of the archive*, suggested that this exhibition as a visual discussion and presentation of the theoretical and historical position of the Foksal Gallery through the display of documents, became the criticism of the gallery and revealed its institutional weakness.⁶⁸ It was a permanent element of the gallery's narrative created for the Western audience, which constantly emphasised its functioning ‘in between.’

Undoubtedly, it was important for Richard Demarco, the main initiator of Polish art exhibitions in the British Isles. When he arrived in Poland as one of the first emissaries from the West, curious about what was happening in the countries cut off from Europe by the Iron Curtain, it was after only a few days' stay that he understood, as Borowski explained, the situation of artists and the Polish tradition of the mid-twentieth century. “This tradition has such features as indecision, uncertainty, and failure to fulfil; existence somewhere ‘in between’, ‘on the edge’, marginalised.”⁶⁹ Demarco, being an admirer of Joseph Beuys, considered art to be a universal tool of social change. Therefore, he consciously strove to create a platform of understanding between the East and West through art. Such a general dimension and message was imparted by him to the presentation of the achievements and ideas of the Foksal Gallery in Warsaw, which he co-organised. As an organiser of artistic life, he focused on building bridges and not on defining boundaries. This is why he became one of the first to show artists from the other side of the Iron Curtain. He believed that art is derived from meeting friends and their readiness to work, based on shared values, ideals, hopes and willingness to take risks.⁷⁰ It seems that he found like-minded (and active) people of art in Wiesław Borowski, Tadeusz Kantor and even Peter Townsend. It resulted in many years of relationship, cultural dialogue and artistic projects, which were of particular value to the Warsaw Gallery. Borowski recalled: “Maybe we felt a foretaste of laurels, or even worse, a foretaste of importance. These were interesting adventures and they were, in a way, donated”. They were donated by “Demarco – a little bit – and a little bit by Kantor, without him knowing of it.”⁷¹

Looking from today's perspective, it is clearly visible that within the Foksal Gallery there were international contacts in addition to the current cultural policy, which allowed the milieu of its artists and art critics to enter the international art circulation on a scale comparable at that time only to the Museum of Art in Łódź. And the

institutional power of both institutions cannot be even compared. Unusual personalities turned out to be the basic capital that allowed for taking appropriate actions. This specific *networking* between artists and institutions from opposing political blocks translated into institutional and artistic cooperation. It seems it was the only road available for a small exhibition institution from Poland in the divided world of those times. In my opinion, this cooperation determined the international success of the Foksal Gallery. Klara Kemp-Welch was also convinced of this. Even though during late socialism, large institutions, such as the Central Bureau of Artistic Exhibitions (today's Zachęta) which organised official international exhibitions, in some of which the so-called artist galleries had contacts with foreign artists, the researcher stated: "Nevertheless, the international program of the Foksal Gallery in the seventies had no equal in terms of the calibre of the world of art celebrities, artistic ambition, and the coherence of conceptually oriented exhibitions."⁷² Thomas Skowronek commented on this in a similar way. He noticed that both the first foreign presentation of the Foksal Gallery at the 3e Salon International de Galeries Pilotes in Lausanne (1970) and subsequent British exhibitions (1979-1980) could serve as a framework for 'rhetorical appropriation of Polish art and its separation from the Eastern bloc.' He explained that in both cases there were similar methods of regulating the symbolic order: a scientific idea and a neutral representation of contemporary art. In a world divided into two opposing political blocs, this interpretation, according to him, allowed art to be seen as a 'means' for crossing borders.⁷³

What is important is that the cooperation with Demarco strengthened the position of the Foksal Gallery and its status vis-à-vis the Western art world, but at the same time the narrative construed by the gallery itself became the dominant narrative. Its key elements were documentary exhibitions presenting the gallery's constantly interleaving history and history of the self as well as its ongoing struggle with its own institutionality. In this way, a vision of the gallery was created,

sometimes tending towards a kind of mythology. This task was made easier by some highly vivid and imagination-stimulating facts, such as the dynamic beginnings of the gallery, the close and mutually stimulating cooperation of critics and artists (including artists of such calibre as Henryk Stażewski and Tadeusz Kantor - as shown by the texts in *Studio International*), the undertaking of an avant-garde discourse (including the search for continuity with the pre-war avant-garde), the theoretical activities that responded to the trends of world art. All of these points, marked on the axis of the Foksal Gallery's development and shown from Edinburgh to Dublin, created its authority and entitled it to become a subject in discussions with institutions and artists from the western side of the Iron Curtain. At the same time, there seems to have been a great awareness within the gallery circle of both the pitfalls and benefits thereof. After all, there were activities conducted by the critics that no longer signalled the existence of the institution (self-analysis), but rather questioned the principles of its functioning. The self-criticism of the gallery can therefore be treated as a kind of attempt to start everything anew. Nevertheless, the myth of the gallery continued to develop, and these paradoxical attempts became an integral part of it (a history of the self).

Notes

¹ Wiesław Borowski, *Zakrywam to, co niewidoczne. Wywiad-rzeka*. Interviewed by Adam Mazur and Ewa Toniak (Warszawa: 40000 MALARZY, 2014), 285

² In the years 1949-1994, Zachęta, as the Central Bureau of Artistic Exhibitions, together with branches in the largest Polish cities, formed a network of state institutions involved in the organization of contemporary art exhibitions, control of exhibition traffic, as well as popularizing activities in the field of fine arts.

³ After: Richard Demarco, *Richard Demarco and Joseph Beuys: A Unique Partnership* (Edinburgh: Luath Press, 2016), 12.

⁴ Richard Demarco, "Do You Have to be a Pole to be a Genius: An Interview with Richard Demarco." Interviewed by Filip Lech. *Culture.pl*, published electronically 10.12.2014, accessed 1.12.2022, <https://culture.pl/en/article/do-you-have-to-be-a-pole-to-be-a-genius-an-interview-with-richard-demarco>.

⁵ Artists who took part in the exhibition included, among others: Magdalena Abakanowicz, Jerzy Bereś, Maria Stangret, Wanda Czelkowska, Stanisław Dróżdż, Stanisław Fijałkowski, Zbigniew Gostomski, Władysław Hasior, Zdzisław Jurkiewicz, Tadeusz Kantor, Koji Komoji, Marek Koterski, Edward Krasieński, Natalia Lach-Lachowicz, Roman Opalka, Teresa Pagowska, Józef Robakowski, Jerzy Rosołowicz, Bogusław Schaeffer, Henryk Stażewski, Józef Szajna.

⁶ Richard Demarco, ed., *Atelier '72: an exhibition of contemporary Polish artists* (Edinburgh: Richard Demarco Gallery, 1972).

⁷ Ibidem, 2-3. Demarco considered these three exhibitions the most important among those he prepared as part of the Edinburgh Festival. See: Richard Demarco. "The art world, like the Edinburgh festival itself, is in danger of being identified with the world of entertainment and leisure." Interviewed by Janet McKenzie. *Studio International*, published electronically 10.10.2014, accessed 1.12.2022, <https://www.studiointernational.com/index.php/richard-demarco-edinburgh-international-festival-joseph-beuys>.

⁸ Dominik Kuryłek even suggested that "the size and diversity of the art shown at *Atelier'72* was a reaction to the glaring absence of artists from the East at the largest international event at that time," that is, *documenta 5*, which Demarco had visited two months earlier. It was then, for the first time in Kassel that the participation of artists exploring the formula of a happening and the Fluxus movement had become possible. That same year, a very important exhibition for the British art scene, *The New Art* was held too, at the Hayward Gallery in London, which was the first 'museum presentation' of conceptual art. The artists who showed their works then had their individual exhibitions at the Foksal Gallery in Warsaw (Art & Language, Victor Burgin, Michael Craig-Martin, John Hilliard). At the Edinburgh Festival, as Kuryłek argued, international audiences could see that Polish art from *Atelier'72* was on a par with art created on the western side of the Iron Curtain (including a slightly earlier presentation of German art from Düsseldorf as part of *Strategy: Get Arts*. See: Dominik Kuryłek, "Ujawnianie nieobecności. Zbigniew Warpechowski na wystawie polskiej sztuki współczesnej *Atelier'72* w Galerii Demarco w Edynburgu," *Pamiętnik Sztuk Pięknych*, no. 9 (2015): 197-201.

⁹ Demarco, "Do You Have to be a Pole to be a Genius: An Interview with Richard Demarco."

¹⁰ After Iga Bożyk, "Richard Demarco and Demarco Archives," published electronically, accessed 27.07.2022, https://polishscottishheritage.co.uk/?heritage_item=richard-demarco-demarco-archives.

¹¹ Demarco undertook many initiatives related to Polish art there. Until 1979, i.e. the time of the documentary exhibition of the Foksal Gallery, these were the following events: 1966 – exhibition of Polish film posters (Traverse Gallery, Edinburgh). 1967 – exhibition of 15 British painters from the Richard Demarco gallery (exceptionally at ZPAP, Warsaw) and an exhibition of 16 Polish Painters including Maria Anto, Tadeusz Eysymont, Ryszard Gieryszewski, Juliusz Narzyński, Roman Opalka, Anna Trojanowska-Kaczmarek (Traverse Gallery). 1971 – Józef Szajna (Richard Demarco Gallery, Edinburgh). 1972 – *Atelier'72*, group show of 42 Polish artists, in collaboration with Lodz Museum of Art (Richard Demarco Gallery) and Kantor's Cricot 2 Theatre production of *The Water Hen* (Forrest Hill Poorhouse, Edinburgh). 1973 – Tadeusz Kantor's lecture in Edinburgh Arts 1973 (Richard Demarco Gallery), *Formula X* lecture and installation by Zbigniew Makarewicz (Edinburgh), Kantor's Cricot 2 Theatre production of *Lovelies and Dowdies* (Forrest Hill Poorhouse). 1974 – Magdalena Abakanowicz's lecture in Edinburgh Arts 1974. 1975 – Performance Events by Barbara Kosłowska and Makarewicz, and Edinburgh Arts '75 Festival Exhibition including Kosłowska and Makarewicz. 1976 – Kantor's Cricot 2 Theatre production of *The Dead Class* (Edinburgh College of Art, Edinburgh and Riverside Studios, London). See: *Chronology (selective record of exhibitions, performances and events)*, accessed 27.07.2022, https://www.demarco-archive.ac.uk/richard_demarco_chronology.pdf.

¹² See: Anna Dzierżyc-Horniak, *Początki są zawsze najważniejsze... Geneza i działalność Galerii Foksal: teksty programowe, wystawy, wydarzenia, artyści, 1955-1970* (Warszawa-Toruń: Polski Instytut Studiów nad Sztuką Świata-Wydawnictwo Tako, 2019), 469-82.

¹³ At that time, Demarco also visited the Museum of Art in Łódź and Krzysztofory in Krakow, met with Wanda Gólkowska, Jerzy Rosołowicz, Zbigniew Makarewicz and Józef Robakowski, and he watched a play by Józef Szajna and Magdalena Abakanowicz's studio in Warsaw. See: Kuryłek, "Ujawnianie nieobecności," 198.

¹⁴ Borowski, *Zakrywam to, co niewidoczne. Wywiad-rzeka*. 314-15.

¹⁵ Richard Demarco, "Sztuka jako lekarstwo," *Tygodnik Powszechny*, published electronically 18.11.2013, accessed 27.07.2022, <https://www.tygodnikpowszechny.pl/sztuka-jako-lekarstwo-21138>.

¹⁶ Katarzyna Murawska-Muthesius, "Emballages at The Whitechapel. Interview with Nicolas Serota," in *Kantor was here. Tadeusz Kantor in Great Britain*, edited by Katarzyna Murawska-Muthesius and Natalia Zarzecka (London: Black Dog Publishing, 2011), 65.

- ¹⁷ Andrew Brighton and Joanna Melvin, "Peter Townsend," *The Independent*, 01.04.2009. See: Joanna Melvin, in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography 2005-2008*, edited by Lawrence Goldman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 1124-25.
- ¹⁸ Joanna Melvin, "Studio International Magazine: Tales from Peter Townsend's editorial papers 1965-1975." (Ph.D. Dissertation, University College London, 2013).
- ¹⁹ *Ibidem*, 290.
- ²⁰ Wiesław Borowski, "A conversation with Henryk Stazewski," *Studio International* 188, no. 969 (1974): 72-73; "Tadeusz Kantor and his Cricot 2 theatre," *Studio International* 187, no. 962 (1974): 22-23. In the following years, other texts by the Polish critic appeared in the magazine: "The Paintings from *Chłopy* of Andrzej Szewczyk," *Studio International* 196, no. 999 (1983): 34-35.
- ²¹ I analyzed this thread extensively in the book dealing with the first, the so-called the 'heroic' period of the Foksal Gallery's activities. See: Anna Dzierżyc-Horniak, *Początki są zawsze najważniejsze...*, 62-100.
- ²² Joanna Melvin, "Studio International Magazine," 298.
- ²³ Borowski, "Tadeusz Kantor and his Cricot 2 theatre," 22.
- ²⁴ Joanna Melvin, "The Living Archive, the Death of Rubbish and the aesthetics of the Dustbin," in *Kantor was here. Tadeusz Kantor in Great Britain*, edited by Katarzyna Murawska-Muthesius and Natalia Zarzecka (London: Black Dog Publishing, 2011), 149.
- ²⁵ Wiesław Borowski, "Tadeusz Kantor and his friends in the UK," in *Kantor was here. Tadeusz Kantor in Great Britain*, edited by Katarzyna Murawska-Muthesius and Natalia Zarzecka (London: Black Dog Publishing, 2011), 25.
- ²⁶ *Zakrywam to, co niewidoczne. Wywiad-rzeka. 63-67. The Emballages 1960-1976* exhibition was held from September 22 to October 31, 1976. It is worth noting that for the curator Nicholas Serota, the newly appointed director of the Whitechapel Art Gallery, this was the first presentation at this venue. The author of the original concept of the exhibition was Ryszard Stanisławski, and the decision to organize the exhibition in London was taken by Jasia Reichardt, then director of the ICA, of Polish descent, actively involved in promoting Polish art in the United Kingdom. The exhibition presented an aspect of Kantor's work other than the theatre, focusing on the theme of 'objects of the lowest order' – painting works and objects created by the artist in the sixties and the early 1970s. Years later, Serota admitted that the link to Kantor's happenings and theatre was missing; certain one-dimensionality of the exhibition prevented the depth and complexity of Kantor's artistic practice from being revealed.
- ²⁷ *Ibidem*, 394.
- ²⁸ I have prepared a description of the exhibition based on the drawings with the exhibition scheme of *Foksal Gallery PSP*, found in the Foksal Gallery Archives, Warsaw.
- ²⁹ Poster and press release from Richard Demarco Gallery, Foksal Gallery Archive, Warsaw. Interestingly, as Demarco informed in a letter to Janina Ładnowska from the Łódź Museum of Art, the exhibitions of Witkiewicz and Stażewski were an official part of the Edinburgh Festival, while the presentation of the Foksal Gallery and artists from the collection of the Łódź museum – as part of the Richard Demarco Gallery program. See: Richard Demarco, *A letter to Janina Ładnowska*, 16.04.1979.
- ³⁰ Borowski. *Zakrywam to, co niewidoczne. Wywiad-rzeka. 362*
- ³¹ "Tadeusz Kantor and his friends in the UK," 25.
- ³² *Zakrywam to, co niewidoczne. Wywiad-rzeka. 395.*
- ³³ They carried out the following actions in the Foksal Gallery: *Zapis bromowy (1970)*, *Kolekcja (1970)*, *Giewont (1970)*, *Łózko (1971)*, *Zapamiętywanie (1972)*, *Seans filmowy. Projekcja II (1973)*, *Pierwsze Nienaturalne Złoże Kamieni Szlachetnych (1973)*, *Kanon (1979)*.
- ³⁴ "Druga Grupa: Lesław Janicki, Waclaw Janicki, Jacek Stokłosa," in Wiesław Borowski, Małgorzata Jurkiewicz, and Andrzej Przywara, eds., *Galeria Foksal 1966-1994* (Warszawa: Galeria Foksal SBWA, 1994), 129.
- ³⁵ Łukasz Guzek, *Rekonstrukcja sztuki akcji w Polsce* (Warszawa-Toruń: Polski Instytut Studiów nad Sztuką Świata; Wydawnictwo Tako, 2017), 100.
- ³⁶ *Druga Grupa, Zapamiętywanie*, (Warszawa: Galeria Foksal PSP, 1972). Leaflet.
- ³⁷ Luiza Nader, *Konceptualizm w PRL* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego, 2009), 258, 60.
- ³⁸ The text of Borowski's statement in the ICA, Foksal Gallery Archives, Warszawa.
- ³⁹ Terence Mullaly, "Poland presents two faces," *Daily Telegraph*, 29.12.1979.
- ⁴⁰ Felix McCullough, "Edinburgh Festival 1979," *Arts Review*, no. 18 (1979).
- ⁴¹ Edward Gage, "Expressions of the Polish intellect," *The Scotsman*, 27.08.1979.
- ⁴² Here, Paweł Polit saw a similarity between the statements in *The Living Archive* (and also *Documentation*) by Wiesław Borowski and Andrzej Turowski and the distinction between 'primary' and 'secondary' artistic information in Seth Siegel's approach. This, according to him, concerned the status of the 'isolated message' held by the conceptual work versus the forms of its recording and distribution. An American gallerist spoke similarly, arguing that "art presentation and art are not the same thing." See: Paweł Polit, "Rozbijanie monolitów znaczeń. O sztuce konceptualnej w Galerii Foksal," in Michał Jachula and Justyna Wesolowska, eds., *Galeria Foksal 1966-2016* (Warszawa: Galeria Foksal-Mazowiecki Instytut Kultury, 2016), 61.

- ⁴³ Paul Overy, "Foksal at ICA," *Art Monthly*, no. 28 (1979): 21-22.
- ⁴⁴ "Polish Month in Edinburgh," *ibidem*, no. 30 (1979): 12-15.
- ⁴⁵ A critic from *The Sunday Telegraph* wrote about it in a similar way, arguing that Galeria Foksal from Warsaw is the intense focus of new thoughts and vision in Poland. See: Michael Sheperd, "Some of the greatest shows on earth," *The Sunday Telegraph*, 19.08.1979.
- ⁴⁶ Overy, "Polish Month in Edinburgh," 10-11.
- ⁴⁷ Anonymous, "Poles Apart," *Weekly Hibonnia*, 31.07.1980.
- ⁴⁸ Waldemar Januszczak, "Foksal," *The Guardian*, 12.01.1980.
- ⁴⁹ Overy, "Polish Month in Edinburgh," 10-11.
- ⁵⁰ This work related to Kantor's happening *The Dividing Line*, carried out on December 18, 1965 at the Krakow SHS (the Association of Art Historians, Kraków Division).
- ⁵¹ Richard Demarco, "Tadeusz Kantor's Cricot 2 Theatre at the Edinburgh Festival," in *Kantor was here. Tadeusz Kantor in Great Britain*, edited by Katarzyna Murawska-Muthesius and Natalia Zarzecka (London: Black Dog Publishing, 2011), 35.
- ⁵² Małgorzata Jurkiewicz, Joanna Mytkowska, and Andrzej Przywara, eds., *Tadeusz Kantor. Z Archiwum Galerii Foksal* (Warszawa: Fundacja Galerii Foksal, 1998), 43. Another exhibition of this type referring to Kantor's work took place seven years later: *22 lata działalności Teatru Cricot 2 i Teatr Podziemny 1942-1944 Tadeusza Kantora* (1977). It was prepared again according to the script of the artist from Krakow. It is worth adding that it was preceded by an exhibition at the Krzysztofory Gallery: *Żywa dokumentacja – 20 lat rozwoju Teatru Cricot 2*, presenting photographic documentation of the Cricot 2 Theater (1976). Caroline Rose's Cricot 2 photogram show was of a similar nature (Foksal Gallery, 1978). See: *Tadeusz Kantor. Z Archiwum Galerii Foksal*, 46.
- ⁵³ Tadeusz Kantor's notes on documentation after: *ibidem*, 47-48.
- ⁵⁴ Paweł Polit, "O sztuce konceptualnej. (Andrzej Turowski w rozmowie z Pawłem Politem)," in *Refleksja konceptualna w sztuce polskiej. Doświadczenia dyskursu: 1965-1975*, edited by Paweł Polit and Piotr Woźniakiewicz (Warszawa: CSW Zamek Ujazdowski, 2000), 52.
- ⁵⁵ Jurkiewicz, Mytkowska, and Przywara, *Tadeusz Kantor*, 160.
- ⁵⁶ See: Wiktoria Szczupacka, "Galeria przeciw galerii i Żywe Archiwum, czyli teoria i praktyka Galerii Foksal z perspektywy krytyki instytucjonalnej," *Sztuka i Dokumentacja / Art and Documentation*, no. 19 (2018): 172, 77.
- ⁵⁷ Paweł Polit, "Czy można spóźnić się na koniec historii Galerii Foksal?" in Karolina Łabowicz-Dymanus, ed., *We see you: The Foksal Gallery activities 1966-1989 / Me näeme teid: Foksal Galerii tegevus 1966-1989 / My was widzimy: działalność Galerii Foksal w latach 1966-1989* (Warszawa: Mazowieckie Centrum Kultury i Sztuki-Galeria Foksal, 2009), 106.
- ⁵⁸ Wiesław Borowski and Andrzej Turowski, *Dokumentacja* (Warszawa: Galeria Foksal, 1972). Leaflet.
- ⁵⁹ Zofia Kulik et al., "Na marginesie idei i praktyki archiwum," *Obieg*, no. 1-2 (75-76) (2007). Also see: Piotr Piotrowski, *Dekada. O syndromie lat siedemdziesiątych, kulturze artystycznej, krytyce, sztuce – wybiórczo i selektywnie* (Poznań: Obserwator, 1991), 32-33.
- ⁶⁰ The *Archiving Machine* is an object resembling a Torah or a hand-wound cinematograph, designed especially by Kantor for the *3e Salon International de Galeries Pilotes* exhibition in Lausanne in 1970. 'Machine' was used to review the documented activity of the Foksal Gallery in the years from 1966 to 1970. See: Nader, *Konceptualizm w PRL*, 313.
- ⁶¹ Wiesław Borowski, "Pseudoawangarda," *Kultura*, no. 12 (1975): 11-12.
- ⁶² Wiesław Borowski, statement in the ICA, London, 20.12.1979, Foksal Gallery Archives, Warsaw.
- ⁶³ Overy, "Foksal at ICA," 21-22.
- ⁶⁴ Aidan Dunne, *In Dublin* 1980.
- ⁶⁵ "Rozwój sztuki – przemiany galerii," (Warszawa: Foksal Gallery Archives), Typescript. It can be assumed that the study was created in 1978, as the texts related to it and available in the gallery archives come from this year: *Historia i Status Galerii Foksal and Podstawowe zadania galerii*.
- ⁶⁶ After: Nader, *Konceptualizm w PRL*, 269.
- ⁶⁷ Peter Townsend was certainly interested in this perception, but this fact was only revealed by Joanna Melvin's analysis of his archive. Shortly before the second performance of the Cricot 2 Theatre in Edinburgh (1973), Wiesław Borowski sent him the texts of *The Living Archive* and *Documentation* with an intriguing photograph and a description of the 'sinking' of the gallery's precious collection of documents. Although they were not published in the magazine, Townsend considered their significance in the context of his own practice and the functioning of *Studio International*. It was an appealing idea for him, and he pondered the strategies that would need to be employed in order to destabilize the ideal status of the archive, and why a 'sinking' process might be necessary. See: Melvin, "The Living Archive, the Death of Rubbish and the aesthetics of the Dustbin," 155.
- ⁶⁸ *Galeria Foksal PSP* (Edinburgh: Richard Demarco Gallery, 1979), Exhib. cat. See also: Melvin, "The Living Archive, the Death of Rubbish and the aesthetics of the Dustbin," 155.

⁶⁹ After: Janet McKenzie, "10 Dialogues: Richard Demarco, Scotland And The European Avant Garde," *Studio International*, published electronically 20.01.2011, accessed 27.07.2022, <https://www.studiointernational.com/index.php/10-dialogues-richard-demarco-scotland-and-the-european-avant-garde>.

⁷⁰ After Bożyk, "Richard Demarco and Demarco Archives."

⁷¹ Borowski. *Zakrywam to, co niewidoczne. Wywiad-rzeka*. 362. He continued: "it was fine, but we felt edgy.... you could sense that something was about to crop up." It was already the end of the 1970s, and soon the gallery – after its success, which undoubtedly the presentation in such a prestigious place as the London ICA proved – was to be closed down for the duration of martial law in Poland.

⁷² Klara Kemp-Welch, "Galeria Foksal i stosunki międzynarodowe," in *Galeria Foksal 1966-2016*, edited by Michał Jachula and Justyna Wesolowska (Warszawa: Galeria Foksal-Mazowiecki Instytut Kultury, 2016), 70.

⁷³ Jacqueline Niesser et al., "Cultural Opposition as Transnational practice," in *The Handbook of COURAGE: Cultural Opposition and Its Heritage in Eastern Europe*, edited by Apor Balázs, Apor Péter, and Horváth Sándor (Budapest: Hungarian Academy of Sciences, 2018), 561. Also see: Thomas Skowronek, "Crossing the Border: The Foksal Gallery from Warsaw in Lausanne/Paris (1970) and Edinburgh (1972 and 1979)," in *Art beyond Borders: Artistic Exchange in Communist Europe (1945-1989)*, edited by Jérôme Bazin, Pascal Dubourg Glatigny, and Piotr Piotrowski (Budapest-New York: Central European University, 2016), 388.

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