

ENGLISH SUMMARY

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ARK. TOWARDS A SOCIAL HISTORY OF THE LABIRYNT GALLERY AND BWA LUBLIN (1969–1993)

Labirynt Gallery and BWA Lublin Gallery, despite its undeniable role in the history of Polish art in the seventies and eighties, has not yet become the subject of in-depth research. Instead, it has become a myth, the core of which is the belief that the Labirynt Gallery and BWA Lublin Gallery was a kind of extraterritorial place in the era of the People's Republic of Poland (PRL), excluded from the operation of cultural policy – and thus exempt from boycott after martial law imposed on December 13, 1981. This myth (like any) was constructed *ex post*, in this case on the grounds of the anti-communist hegemony that dominated the public discourse – including art history – after 1989.

In this article, I propose to look at the history of the Labirynt Gallery and BWA Lublin Gallery in 1969–1993 through the social history paradigm. It is an approach that assumes that under communism the relations of power and society are much more complicated than the binary model of enslavement and resistance depicts. Rather, it is a kind of web of interactions, tensions and tactics in which social actors have more or less, but real, agency. In this view, communism is also a broad modernization project, whose agenda included a range of solutions supported by different social strata. I try to use this perspective to show the whole complexity of the functioning of the Labirynt Gallery and BWA Lublin Gallery during the era of the People's Republic of Poland (PRL).

Based on extensive source material, so far unexplored, I put forward the thesis that Labirynt Gallery and BWA Lublin Gallery was fully subject to the policy of the authorities. In turn, these were either favorable or indifferent towards it. Director Andrzej Mroczek did not even have to negotiate his program. This is particularly evident in the

case of the BWA Lublin Gallery, an institution much more exposed and dependent on local and central authorities than the Labirynt Gallery, which operated as a part of local community center (dom kulturalny). As I show, in the eighties BWA Lublin Gallery was continuously developing: opening more branches, implementing the established program, smoothly cooperating with the CBWA Gallery. Also, cooperation with the local and central authorities was exemplary.

The article tries to show that Andrzej Mroczek was not a dissident (like the myth says), but a political realist. In this vein, I propose to speak of BWA Lublin Gallery as an 'ark' for an artistic movement which was dramatically weak institutionally, while politically it was completely indifferent. The Lublin 'harbor' allowed it not only to survive, but also to develop.