

# | GRZEGORZ STEFAŃSKI (b. 1983)

## EDUCATION

### \2014 - ...

Faculty of New Media Art, University of Arts in Warsaw  
(Miroslaw Balka Studio of Spatial Activities)

### \2010 - 2013

Faculty of Multimedia Communications, University of Arts in Poznan

### \2006

philosophy, University Paris X Nanterre, Paris, France

### \2002 - 2008

philosophy, Jagiellonian University, Cracow, Poland

## ACTIVITY

### \2015

\Mimicry, group exhibition, National Ethnographic Museum in Warsaw, Poland

\The memory of a crying tree and the butterfly feasting is like the light of a church, from which a bridge is leading across the river and its banks, on which the crowd is silently carrying a carpet to the library, where the glass doors and order and alarm are, group exhibition of Miroslaw Balka Studio of Spatial Activities, WRO Media Art Bienalle, Wroclaw, Poland

\New Face, solo exhibition, Lookout gallery, Warsaw, Poland

### \2014

\Go-See, solo exhibition, Zpafiska gallery, Cracow, Poland - [www.goseeproject.com](http://www.goseeproject.com)

\Myths. Students/Artists/Teachers. A process of exchange, group exhibition of Miroslaw Balka Studio of Spatial Activities, Fondazione Pastificio Cerere, Rome, Italy

\No Yawning, series of one-week exhibitions, New Theatre, Warsaw, Poland

\inSpiracje Festival, group exhibition, 13 Muz gallery, Szczecin, Poland

\Darkroom I, action performed in Bunkier Sztuki art gallery, Cracow, Poland

\Digital\_ia Festival, group exhibition, 13 Muz gallery, Szczecin, Poland

### \2013

\Hole, group exhibition, TRAFO, Szczecin, Poland

### \2011

\NY Art Book Fair, MoMa PS1, New York

In his latest photographic and video projects Grzegorz Stefański introduces suspension of epistemology. He does not accept current state of reality and artificially creates situations at the nexus of psychology, philosophy and ethics. In his observations he employs art under the least obligation to answer "serious" questions which, paradoxically, provides those very answers. What is common about all Stefański's works is voyeurism as knowledge device. We watch female models in darkness. Deprived of any physical observer, they automatically transform from subjects to objects. They are in fact observed by a mechanical camera that registers young women's behaviour in complete darkness. The camera does not attract interest of women professionally working with their appearance. They very quickly stop performing their aesthetic social function and shed their mask. Does this resignation result from absence of physical observer or rather from loosening social rules because of their "invisibility"?

Photographs taken at different time intervals can answer these, and many other, questions. The role of these pictures is significant despite mechanical repetition of frame. There are subtle differences that allow an insightful reflection on models' behaviour. An identical laboratory device, mechanical observation, is used in other projects (New Face or the 212/62). The artist verifies models as a function and social "model". Under physical strain of endless dancing or invited to watch full-length porn film, they undergo empirical catharsis; from controlled social form to crisis to absolute decline. Grzegorz Stefański is aware that only somebody who uses image for constructing their identity can encourage the reflection ton epistemology by offering an alternative image. Realism in this respect plays a key role and enriched with objective laboratorial methodology becomes non-negatable.

Paweł Bownik



*New Face*  
19.02 – 31.03.2015  
Lookout Gallery  
Puławska str. 41/22  
Warsaw  
curator: Piotr Drewko  
[www.lookoutgallery.pl](http://www.lookoutgallery.pl)



**New Face**, 2013  
video WQHD, 10 min.



## | NEW FACE (2013)

three videos, 1350x2440 px, duration 10 min. each

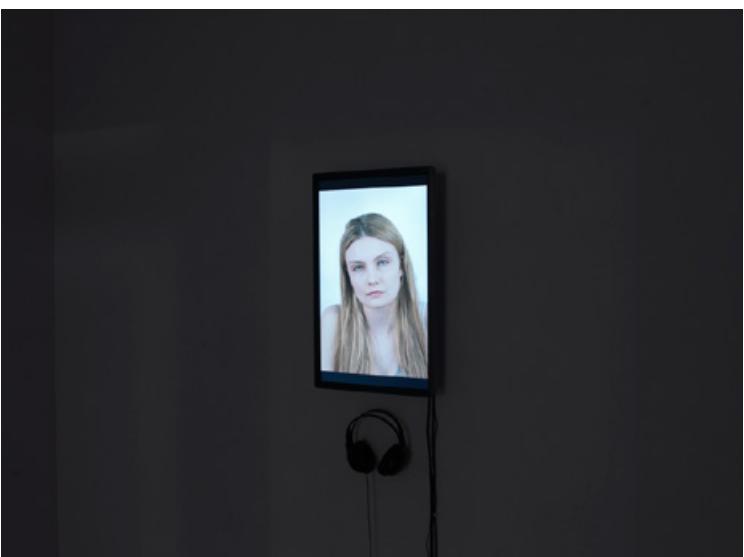
bachelor's diploma in University of Arts in Poznań  
promoter: prof. Krzysztof J. Baranowski

A model is posing en face for the camera. The initial smile, innocent and sincere, gradually disappears and transforms into a grimace of disgust and embarrassment. The sound simmering quietly in the background becomes louder from time to time, providing the context for the young woman's change in mood: in spite of appearances, she is not smiling at the viewer – the film being played on the screen behind the camera is clearly pornographic. Grzegorz Stefański's project NEW FACE appears at first to be nothing but trivial provocation. Here we have young girls blushing at the sight of sexual intercourse, and we blush with them. The artist himself says he is looking for "tensions that create discomfort and question the viewer's natural tendency to form a uniform image." So what is the image created by Stefański? Susan Sontag has remarked that in the standard rhetoric of the portrait making the model face the camera lens means seriousness, honesty, revealing the subject's essence [*On Photography*]. Here, the models' eyes are directed directly at the viewer, their look seems to be a provocative question about the excess of sexual content in the public sphere, about objectifying women in the post-feminist world, and about the relation between the media and the audience. In a sense, the artist created an extreme portrait of contemporary humanity.

Łucja Waśko

### EXHIBITIONS

- | New Face, Lookout Gallery, Warsaw, Poland
- | inSPIRATIONS Festival, 13 Muz gallery, Szczecin, Poland



vimeo password: new\_face\_2013

| NEW FACE (2013)



frame from NewFace #2

vimeo password: new\_face\_2013



frame from NewFace #3

vimeo password: new\_face\_2013

**212 / 62**, 2015  
video HD, 24 min.

The music used in the video is 212 by Azealia Banks.  
The video shows the last 24 minutes of  
62 minutes-long dance improvisation.



## | 212/62 (2015)

video HD, 24 min.

The music used in the video is 212 by Azealia Banks. The video shows the last 24 minutes of 62 minutes-long dance improvisation.

cooperation: Iza Szostak

camera: Mikołaj Syguda

dancers: Magdalena Fejdasz, Helena Ganjalyan, Karolina Krynicka

212/62 is the attempt to verify whether it is possible to achieve a satisfactory portrait in extremely conventional structure. The method explored in this situation is a sprawling, tiring repetition of a dance that is being accompanied by a popular song. Dancers improvise using their natural environment yet they are confronted with unnatural situation of repetitive scheme and cultural stereotype of the image of Three Graces. A group pictorial painting represents the tension between the ease and strict concept.



frame from the video

| 212/62 (2015)



frames from the video

Grzegorz Stefański concentrates in his works on the relation between the purely aesthetic, the abstract and the cognitive experience of photography. In situations arranged by himself, he records the things that happen beyond the controlled intention to extract meaning in a photographic representation. Stefański asks about the possibility to locate photography between the literal character of the image of the world and the image that shifts the burden of gaze and elaborating on it onto the viewer. Everything that happens on the surface of artist's visions is unquestionably very attractive, but it can be read in various ways once we change the perspective. Following that idea Grzegorz Stefański do not explore the image itself but the process of looking, which ends with specific image. In Stefański's project, the camera highlights the alienating character of sight, which is dominated in this case by an analytical and critical outlook on the problem of seemingly flawless, rational and purely descriptive portrait photography.

In his work *New Face*, which preceded the project, the artist arranged a quasi-documentary situation based on an uncomfortable relation with a person sitting directly in front of the camera. Captured on video, women's faces focused their gaze on something that evidently attracted their attention. Only after a moment

did the viewer realise that the rustle heard from short distance was actually the sound of a porn film, which formed part of the arranged situation. In that work, we were dealing with a voyeuristic scene where devouring the image was dampened and paradoxically indifferent. Due to that measure Stefański gets rid of all the unauthentic features of the traditional portraits. Seemingly aesthetic scene becomes caricature of stereotypical portrait. The pleasure of looking is disturbed by uncomfortable situation, which negates artificiality and objectiveness of the portraiture. In his project *Go-See*, he continues the reflection on mechanical observation, which is seemingly unreflective and unconscious. We are confronted with a similar scheme of shortened distance and strong feedback between the observing and the observed. Models in front of the camera are not entangled in voracious, lecherous and infantile fashion photography. In this context, we are dealing with a reversed situation where photographs shown in a condensed form tear the humdrum process of posing and recording out of complete lethargy. In the project *Go-See*, the artist's gaze is intentionally mechanical, and for this reason the process of portraying accidental and unintended gestures does not discriminate anything. It is also a method of operation on a portrait, overturning its classic form. On the other hand, it is also a critique full of ambiguities because we are

witnessing here a delicate shift of meanings that refer to tropes related to the contemporary pop cultural category of beauty. Apart from a camera, which takes photos upon self-activation, Stefański uses a video camera, which carefully documents everything that happens in a completely darkened room. The narration, which is thus introduced guarantees a rupture with the illusory character of theatrical, manneristic and often pretentious relations. In this configuration, the series of systematic and automatic photographs starts to acquire a clearly performative character.

Looking at the work *212/62* we should ask ourselves what is the artist's connection to vision? According to the more advanced streams of cognitive poetics, photography's relationship to vision is to be found through the acts and conventions of perception. It is an intermediary between the personal and the collective faculties of sight. As an artist he becomes an activist employing visual formula and cognitive stimuli to represent his or her expression as it is found in the world or how such a world of expression is truly seen. The artist who aims to reconstitute expression will thus assign and choreograph visual prompts and artistic demarcations to guide forces within the imagined viewer by way of the photographic frame. As onlookers we are confronted with the artless surface, absent of human hand, and

an image that we know, subconsciously, is replica. Thus, it falls to the viewer to steer their way of seeing within the force and charge of the artist's photographic frame, or, instead, allow themselves to be guided as guest. In Stefański's vision the project *212/62* is "the attempt to verify whether it is possible to achieve a satisfactory portrait in extremely conventional structure. The method explored in this situation is a sprawling, tiring repetition of a dance that is being accompanied by a popular song. Dancers improvise using their natural environment yet they are confronted with unnatural situation of repetitive scheme and cultural stereotype of the image of Three Graces. A group pictorial painting represents the tension between the ease and strict concept".

Piotr Drewko

**Go-See**, 2013

1st series of 4, 40 photographs in each, 20 x 30 cm  
DV infrared video



**Go-See**, 2013

infrared DV video, 20 min.



**Go-See**, 2013

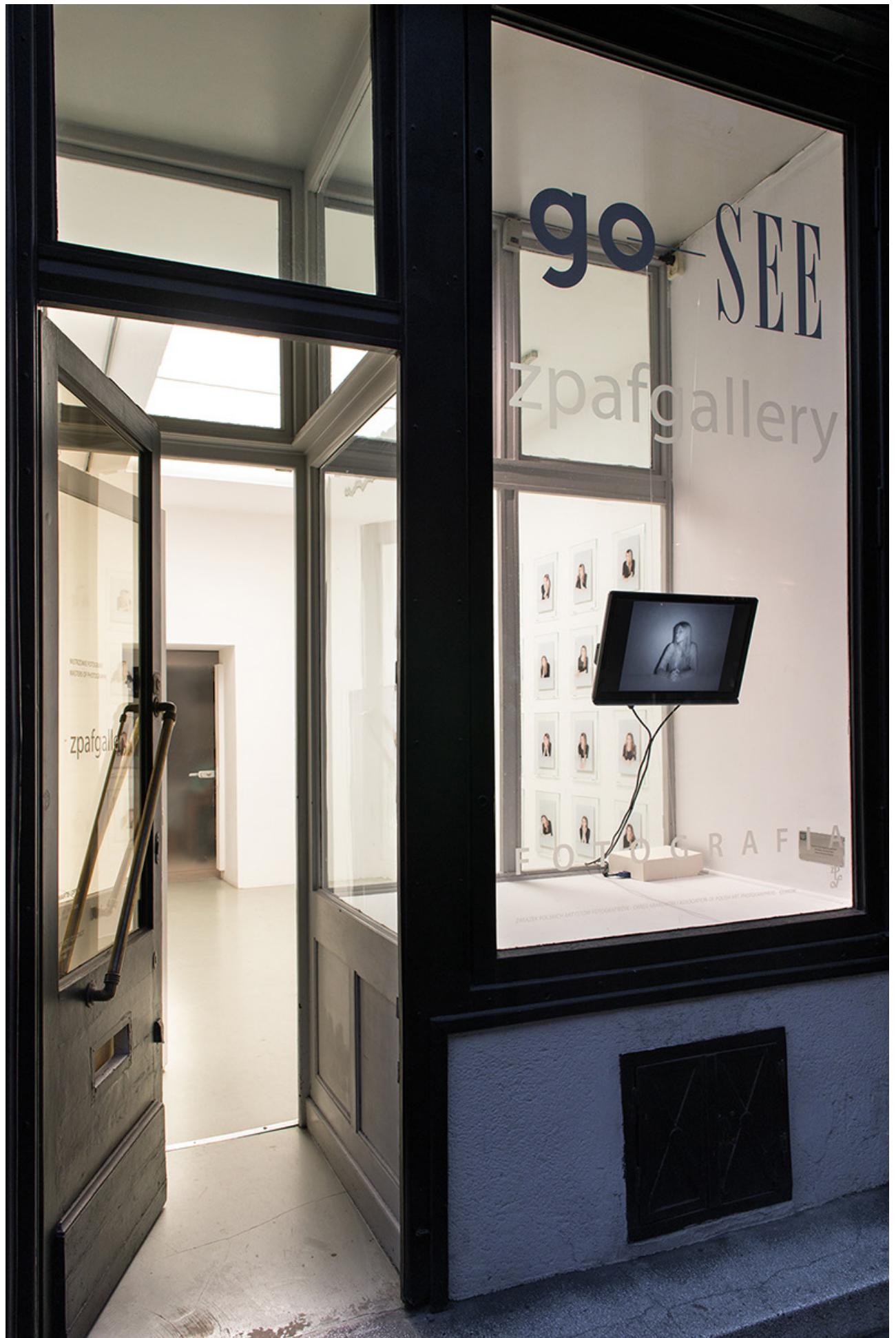
wideo DV w podczerwieni



# go SEE

18.10 - 9.11.2014

ZPAF gallery  
St. Thomas street 24  
Cracow, Poland  
curator: Piotr Drewko  
[www.goseeproject.com](http://www.goseeproject.com)



**Go-See**, 2013

1st series of 4, 40 photographs in each, 20 x 30 cm  
DV infrared video



## | GO-SEE (2013)

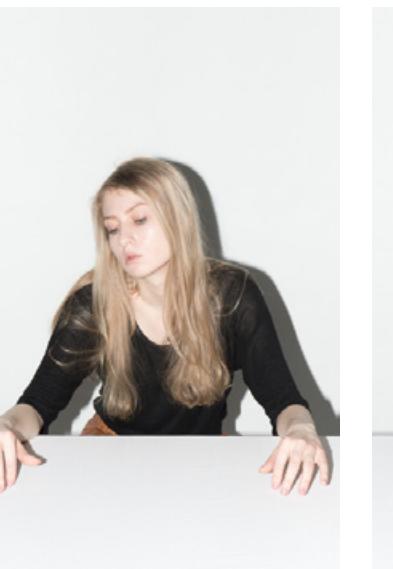
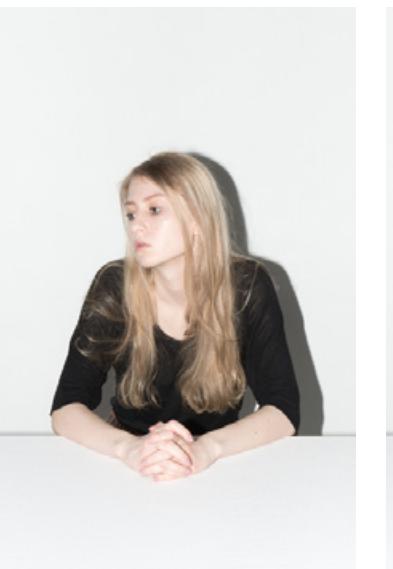
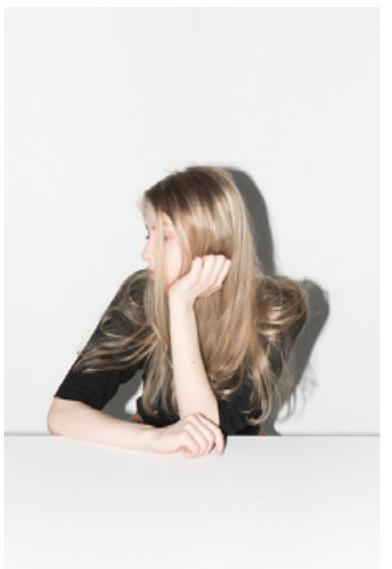
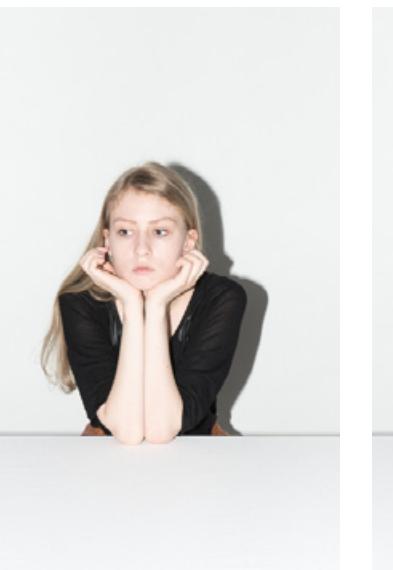
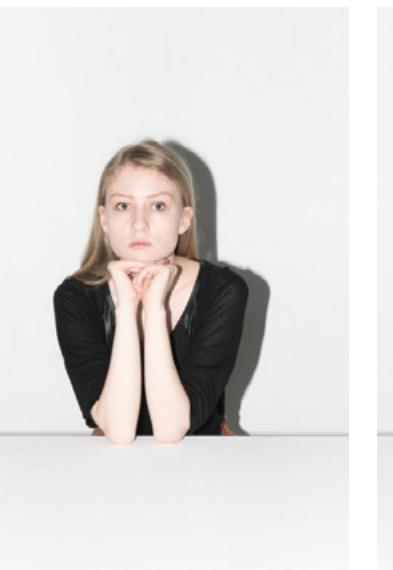
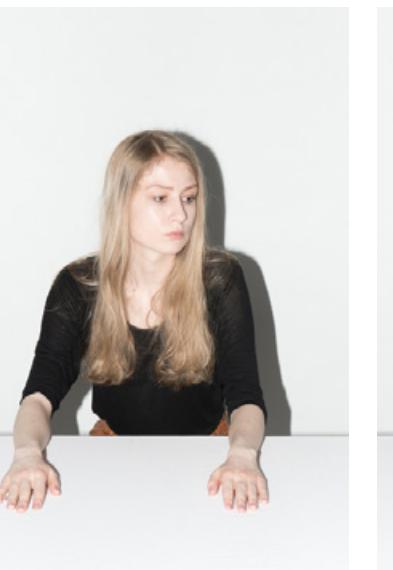
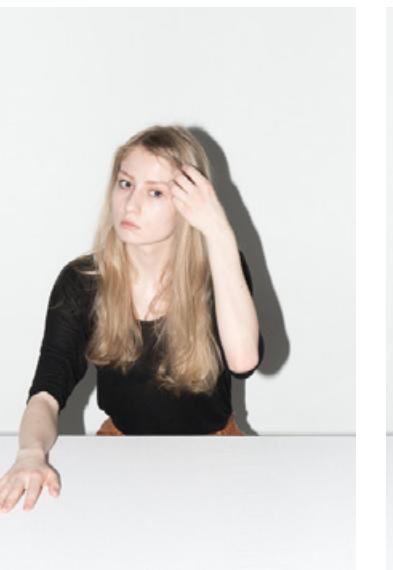
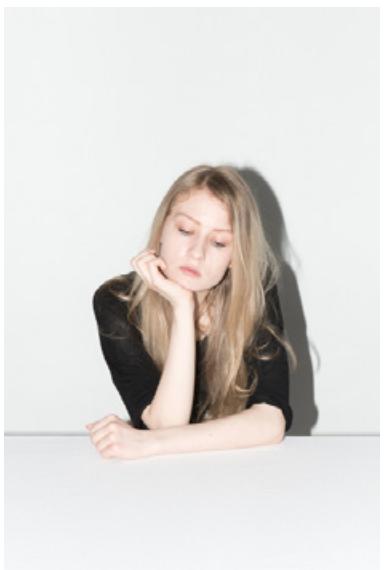
digital photographs 20x30cm, lambda prints mounted on 30x40 glass, four series, fourty images in each serie  
infrared DV video, 720x576px

I asked modeling agencies to select starting models, the so-called NEW FACES. I had never met or talked to either of them. On the day of the appointment they were led by my assistant to a completely darkened room, where they were automatically photographed with a camera fitted on a tripod (one picture every 30 seconds over 20 minutes, which resulted in the total of 40 photographs). Simultaneously, the event was being filmed with an infrared camera. During the sessions the models received no instructions. My role was reduced to a simple presence in the darkness.

### EXHIBITIONS

| Go-See, Zpafiska Gallery, Cracow, Poland, 2014  
| New Face, Lookout Gallery, Warsaw, Poland, 2015







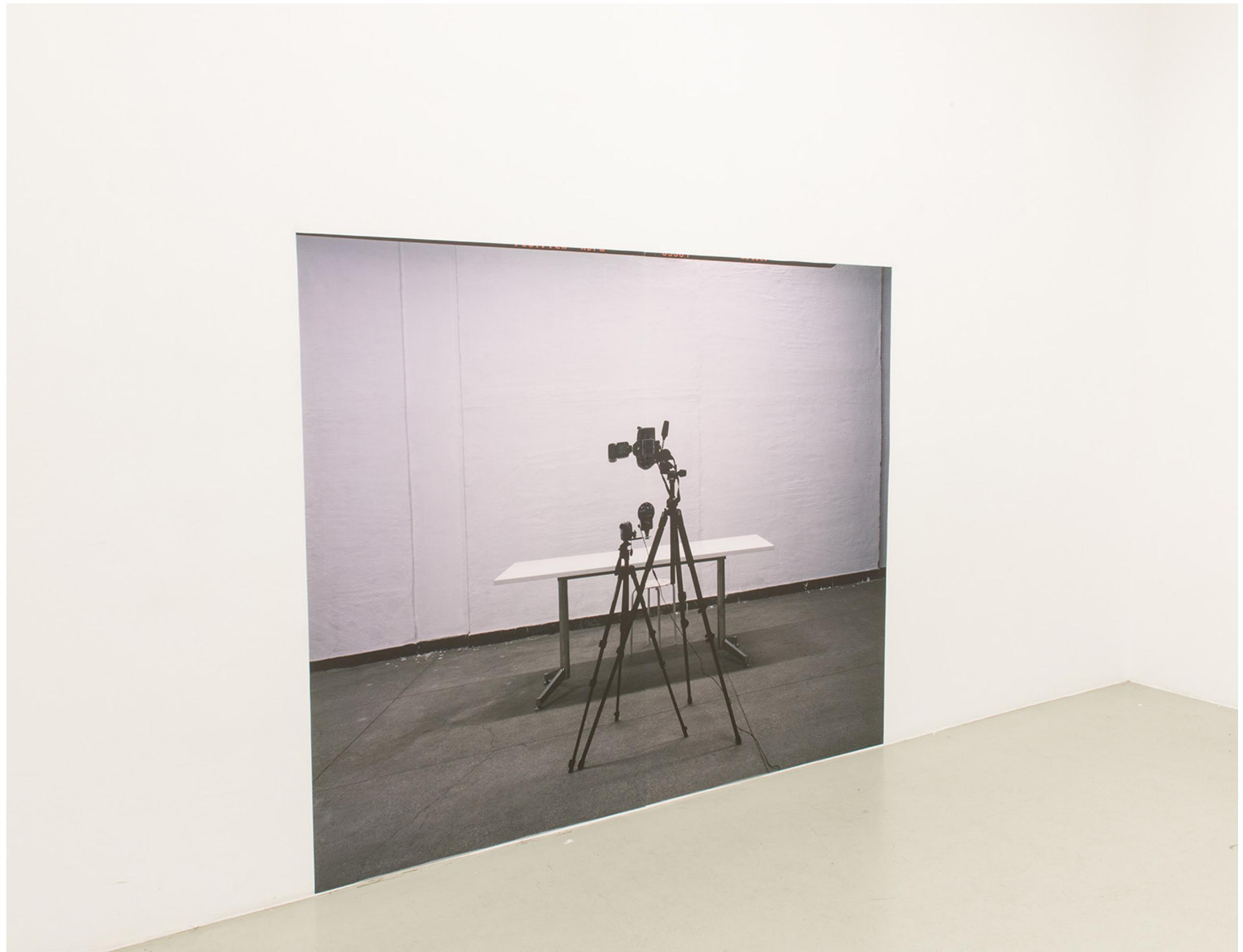
**Go-See**, 2013

poster 147 x 121 cm



**Go-See**, 2013

poster 147 x 121 cm





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## | HAPPY DOG STATUE (revision) (2015)

mulage, site-specific, Miroslaw Balka Studio of Spatial Activities  
The author of the original statue: Bogna Czechowska

In October 2004 Happy Dog statue was unveiled to the public on Mokotów Field in the centre of Warsaw. The idea came from the office of *Four Paws* - popular magazine of dog's enthusiasts. "The idea of the statue was to demonstrate a happy dog - dog that is loved and taken care of" (afterthewikipedia.pl). The statue is situated in the park which is very popular to walk one's dog to.

The critical gesture of repositioning the statue's mulge into the zoo environment is an attempt to revise its original meaning. Swapping the context unveils the other side of human relation with beloved animal such as enslavement, domination or aggression.



mulage of the statue positioned in Warsaw's Zoo



The original statue - cast of bronze - is situated in Mokotów Field in Warsaw



## | Darkroom (2012)

performative action

infrared DV video documentation, 720x576px, audio recording



### Darkroom – An Alternative Portrait

Darkroom is a term with several denotations and numerous connotations. It's mainly a synonym for a place for performing anonymous sexual acts; it's a space of the taboo, the forbidden, the inaccessible. On the other hand, it can simply refer to a dark room for developing photographs. Grzegorz Stefański's *Darkroom* also takes place in complete darkness. Anonymous people, perfect strangers to each other, meet in extremely new and specific conditions. In the minimally created space and on the pretext of dealing with a simple task in pairs (building a tower with wooden blocks scattered over a table), they undergo a specific analytical examination, watched by a discreet, fascinated, almost voyeuristic observer. With no possibility of any visual or verbal communication, the participants need to work out some avisual and a-verbal forms of communication with a view to comprehending, describing and controlling the space; by using intuition and the sense of touch; by finding and delineating their own territory and its boundaries; and finally by frequent violations of those boundaries in order to complete the task "given" by the artist together. An audio-visual recording of the behaviour of the "actors" becomes their individual as well as collective picture; an alternative portrait emphasising and depicting more than just physical or psychic characteristics. Stefański's *Darkroom* refers to the idea of environment but, as opposed to its canonical form, the project is of an open construction, refuses any passive experiencing of the surroundings, provokes the participants to act and promises catharsis and transgressive experiences in exchange.

Andrzej Kłos



| action performed during Digital\_ia Festival, Szczecin, Poland 2014

| action performed in Bunkier Sztuki gallery, Kraków, Poland 2014

| action performed in AS gallery, Cracow, Poland 2012

| Darkroom (2012)

performative action

infrared DV video documentation, 720x576px, audio recording



and green eyes, I think.



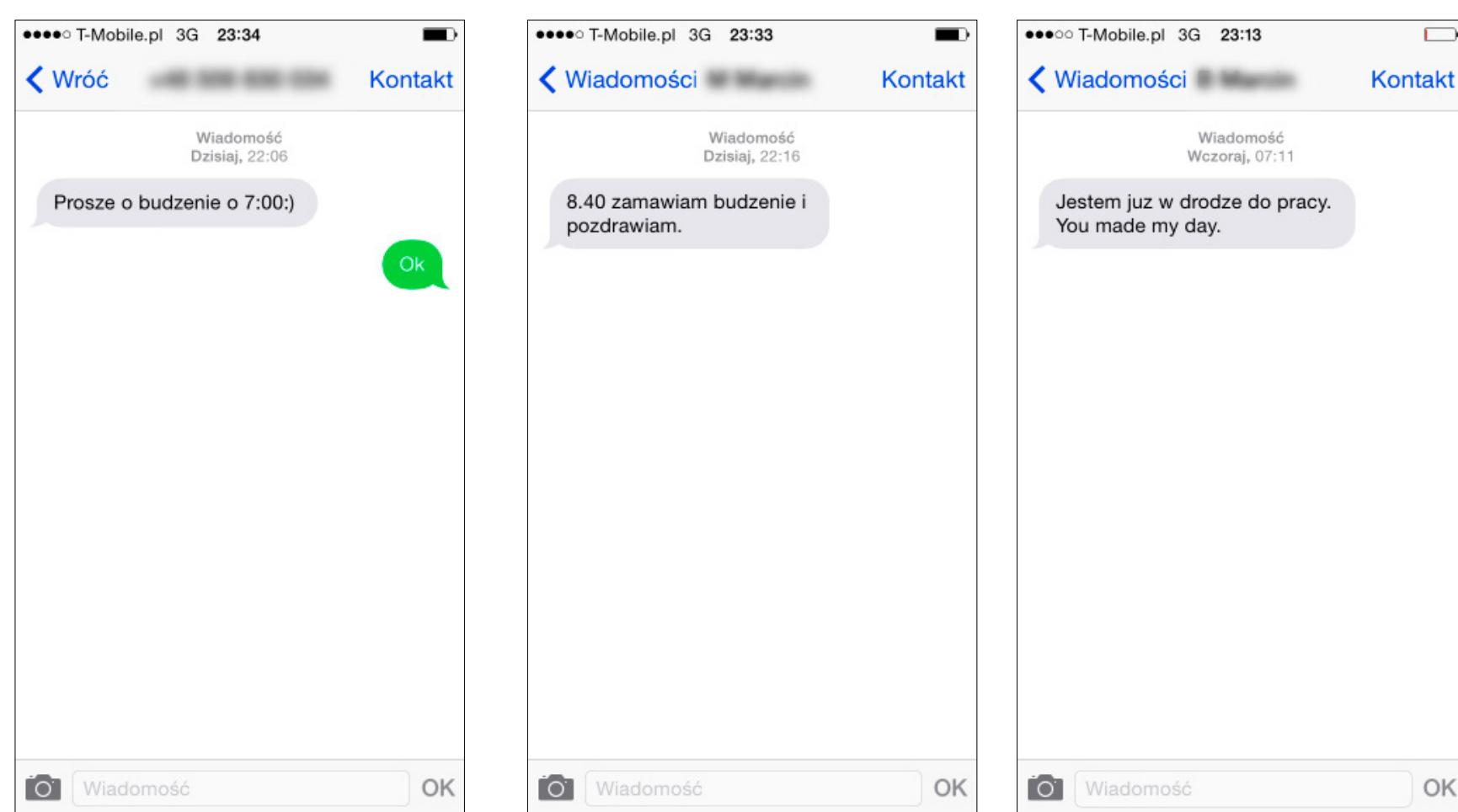
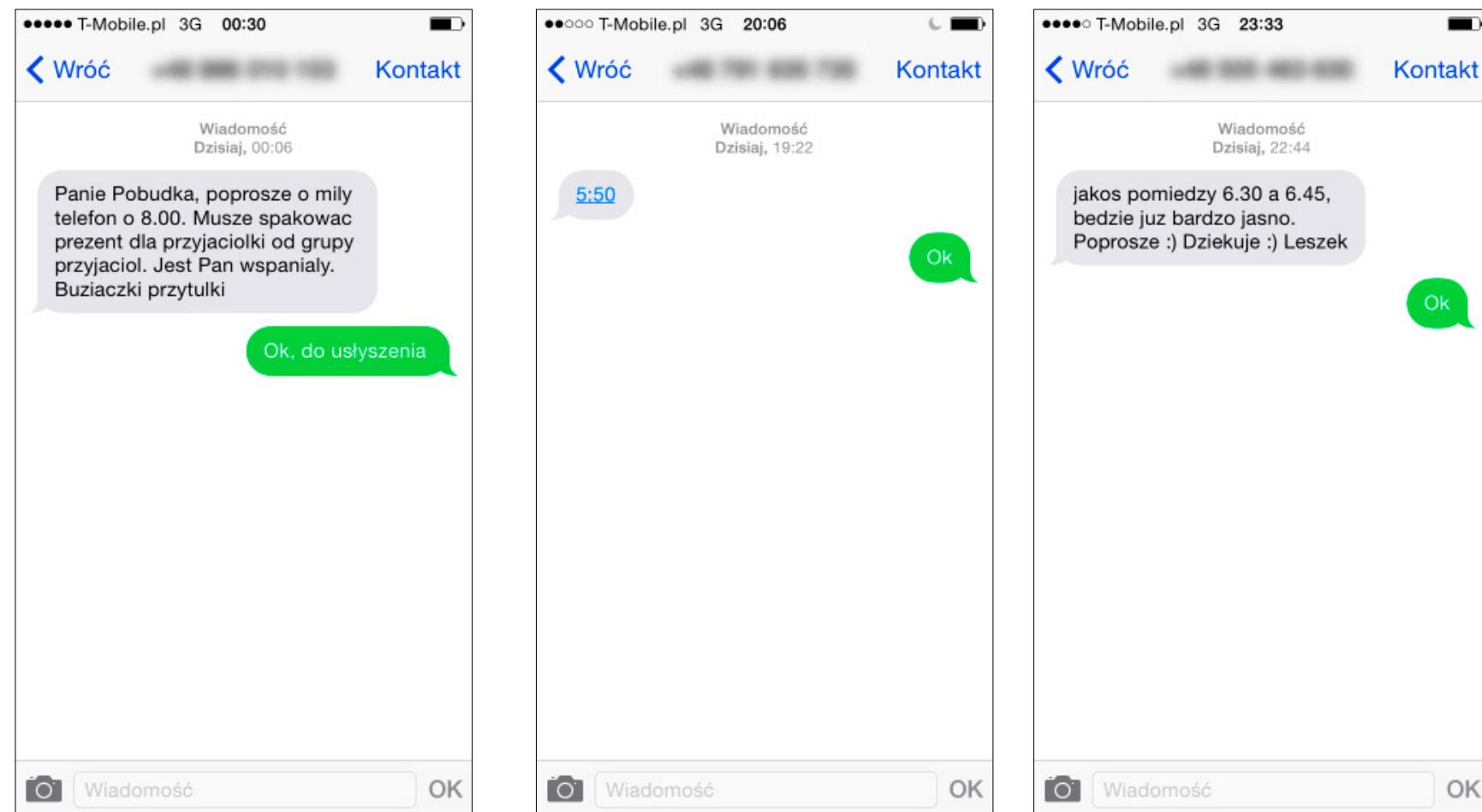
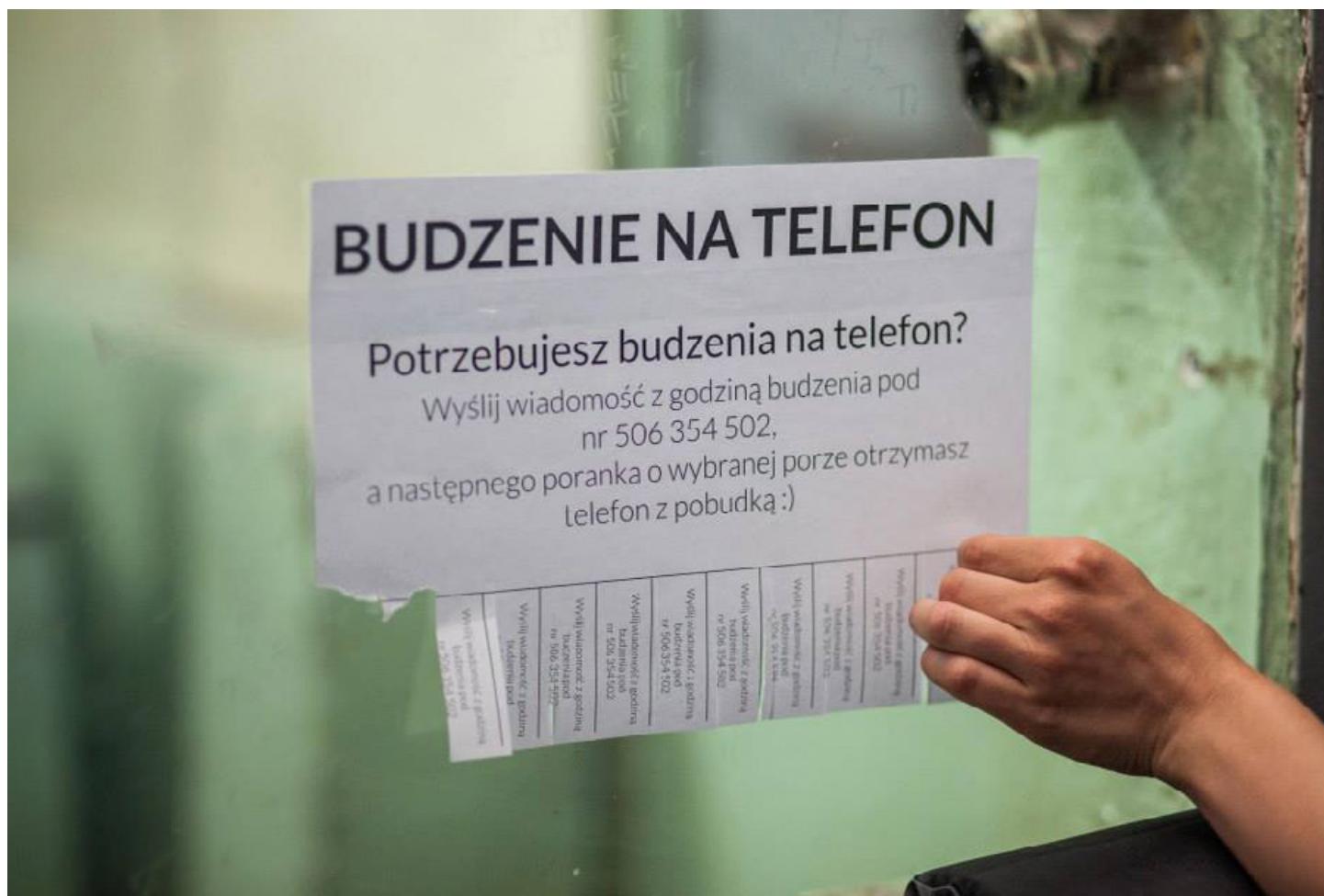
And I think that guy was also this sweet type.

## Wake-up Call (2014)

announcement, mobile phone, conversation

I work made during *No yawning* project, The New Theatre, Warsaw, 10-31 July 2014 |

This piece is an offer of a free wake-up service in the form of a phone call that can be voluntarily ordered by a willing participant. It's an offer of a contract of mutual exchange of intimacy. To be executed, each party needs to question their assumptions and get out of their habits. A participant's trust is rewarded with the artist's help to overcome the difficulties of starting a new day. Curiosity results in an unusual encounter. The piece makes use of social contract and provocatively alludes to nostalgia for non-mediated human contact. It begs the question of the borders of intimacy, mutual trust and social alienation.

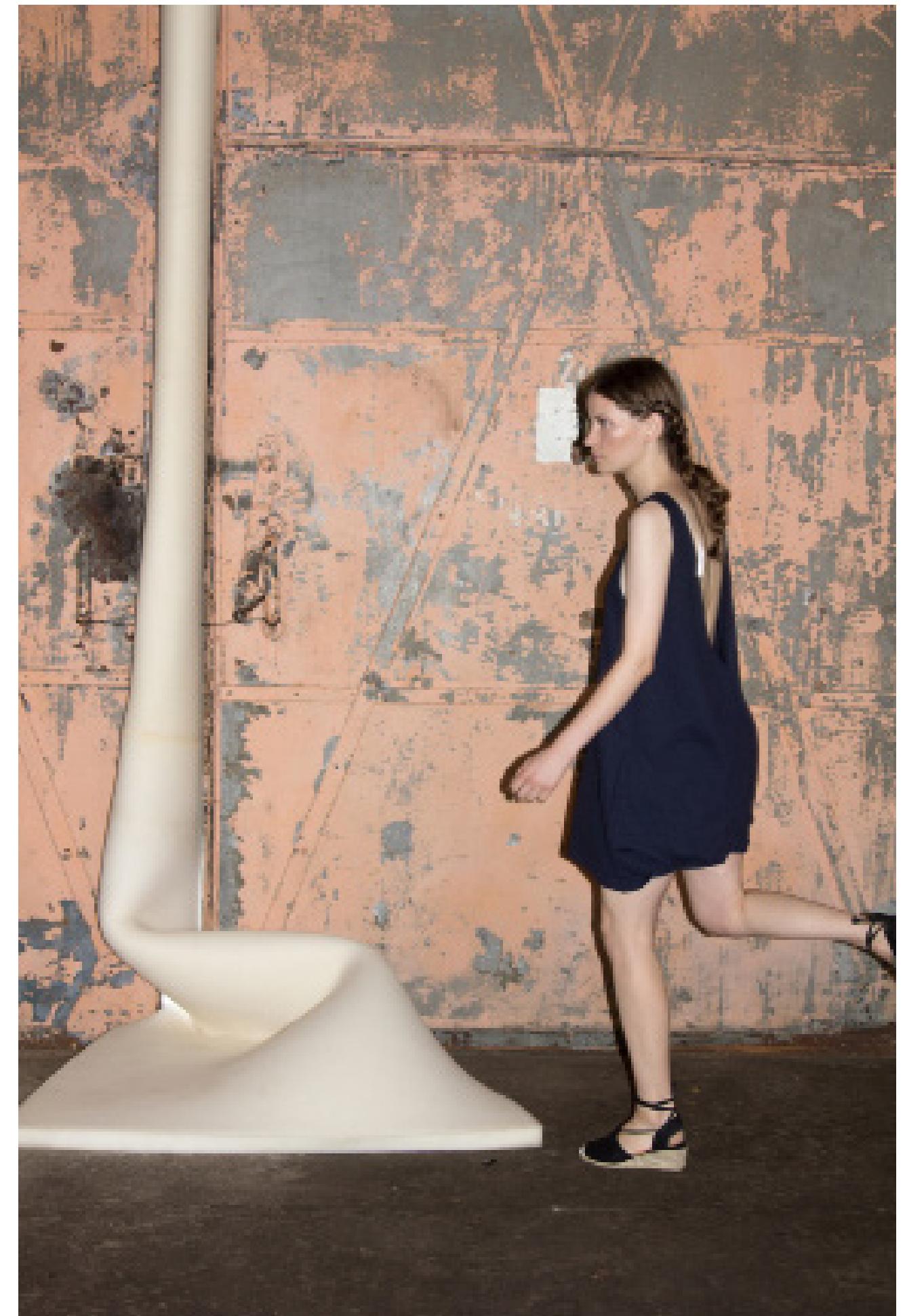


| no one from the family is here  
a little child would have survived  
she put her arm around it  
in her hands it became a kitten(2014)

performance, storytelling (with Monika Skomra)

| work made during *No yawning* project, The New Theatre, Warsaw, 10-31 July 2014 |

Organized in an industrial space of Warsaw's Nowy Teatr, the action introduced a group of female models into a group of guests at the closing night. The calm, cool and collected girls unhurriedly strolled around the exhibition venue but kept "away" from the event. They attracted attention with their attractiveness but simultaneously created distance with their distinctness. They were let in on a secret: initiative key-sentences. They were required to intuitively reveal them to some viewers who, transgressing normal visual curiosity, expressed a readiness for encounter.



## | Crying for Situationist (2014)

bottle cooler; water-filled bottles; herbs

| work made during [No yawning](#) project, The New Theatre, Warsaw, 10-31 July 2014 |

*Crying for Situationist* is an object at the disposal of viewers. They have a right (or perhaps even responsibility?) to influence its structure by taking one of its parts and using it as they wish. Yet they will have to face the consequences of their and other viewers' decisions. It is a trap object; seemingly hilarious, it can be a silent catalyst for existential sensitivity. Or just a simple bottle cooler.

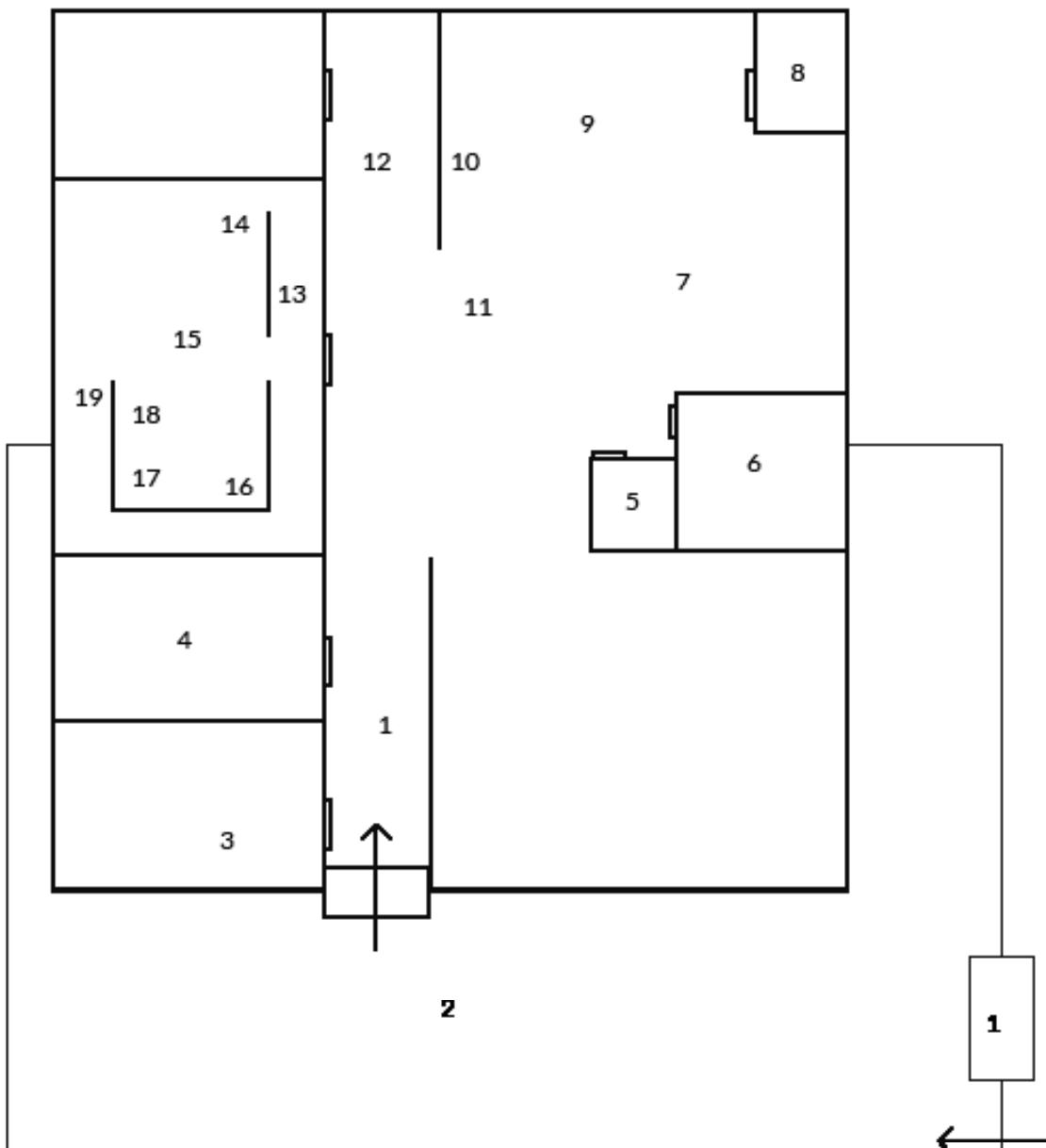


## | Art Album (2014)

double sided, black and white A4 printing

| work made during [No yawning](#) project, The New Theatre, Warsaw, 10-31 July 2014 |

Art Album is an activity that violates the meta-level of the exhibition. Its goal is to break viewers' and involved artists' regular and common habits of visiting a gallery. Right before the opening, the "exhibition maps" are supplanted by identical ones with names of made-up artists and titles translated into foreign languages. Artists lose logistic control over viewers who unwittingly move around the deceptive space. Placed in the new context and out of the logic of the exhibition and real artists' names, the art pieces become independent and allow viewers to be creatively interpreted.



00. Linah Afya Nahas - „Time is getting old so fast“  
(spreaded around the hall)

0. Émile Demers - "Wake-up Call"  
(spreaded around the hall)

1. "The sun possessed me and I felt like laughing. I laughed and no more a sad child, with pen-holder wounds, walked along walls that night. I laughed in the same way as when I was small and sure, innocently insolent, that one day I would need to turn everything on its head, turn everything irreversibly"  
(Collaborative action in the hall / sound installation by Axel Dirkse)

2. Amina Arriaga Centeno, Sille L. Christiansen - „I love the sea“  
(intervention in the work of Kai Cardoso Oliveira)

3. Camila Fernandes Castro - "Ouch!"

4. Eliano Dellucci - "AWE/FULLY/NICE" (intervention in the work of Linah Afya Nahas)

5. Sille L. Christiansen - "Mary The Goalie"

6. Linah Afya Nahas - "Mum, what shall I do with my life now?"  
(Intervention in the work of Matij Šindler)

7. Sofia Knihtilä - "Hamlet"

special thanks to Culture Department of Japan Embassy in Poland for borrowing Yukata and Get

8. Ságy Jozsi - "The Great Calmness"  
(intervention in the work of Sille L. Christiansen)

9. Eliano Dellucci - „Hamlet II“ / Camila Fernandes Castro - „MY ART“

10. Ságy Jozsi - "I believe that live is a tremendous adventure"

11. Camila Fernandes Castro - „Blue screen“

12. Mee Huang - "Castle"

13. Amina Arriaga Centeno - "If you want you can get it"  
(intervention in the work of Émile Demers)

14. Rúna Finnbogadóttir - "Breeze"

15. Mee Huang, Sofia Knihtilä - "NO-need-NO-less-No"  
(response for the work of Émile Demers "Wake-up Call")

16. Matij Šindler - „We watched the film today but I can't recall anything“  
(intervention in the work of Eliano Dellucci)

17. Amina Arriaga Centeno - „Stalagmite piece“  
(intervention in the work of Eliano Dellucci)

18. Atle Mattsson - „Careful stalking study“ (continuation)

19. Émile Demers - „The art atlas“

## | emptybottles (2010)

| internet blog, gallery exhibition, art book

### Beautiful Twenty-Somethings

Blocking for Grzegorz Stefański's EMPTYBOTTLES

The photo shows a naked young couple. A boy sprawled in an armchair, and girl resting lazily on his lap. In the background, there is a wooden casing, old-school furniture and a glass of wine. An image which might be from an old Polish film. The plot is simple and universal – they meet on a sunny afternoon and spend a few joyful months together. Then she leaves. Scenery: a rented flat, Kraków, winter. The romance boasts an epilogue on Skype. The boy and girl in the photographs are something like an archetype of the Polish Adam and Eve. So normal as to be atypical. And even when I already know that the Polish Eve is really Ella and that she lives in Newcastle, that first impression remains. The camera is always close; it becomes part of the game between the partners (or maybe even their erotic toy?) The photographs are honest and unpretentious, which is without doubt their strong point. Each intimacy, however, has its own limits, which is why we have decided not to show a few frames. A specific privacy has once again turned out to be highly universal. (Looking at Grzesiek's photos for the first time, I was very curious about what sort of music he listens to. It turned out it was jazz. He even has his own radio programme.) The exhausted convention of the snapshot seems here to be totally natural and justified. The composition, often accidental, turns out to be exceptionally aesthetic. EMPTYBOTTLES is a set of photographs which could form the storyboard for a film. A classic tale, with jazz in the background. This, too, is how I thought of the whole presentation while Grzesiek –who, as he put it, "trusts me organically") and I were preparing it together. What results might come of this in the future depends solely on him. As the artist says: "The thing is, not to get bored".

Karol Radziszewski



### EXHIBITION

- | 2010 *emptybottles*, Semptybottles, solo exhibition during Photomonh Festiwal, Goldex-Poldex gallery, Poland
- | 2011 NY Art Book Fair, MoMa PS1, New York
- | 2011 Second Annual Zine and Self-Published Photo Book Fair, New York
- | 2011 Publish yourself!, group exhibition, Czułość gallery, Warsaw, Poland
- | 2011 Rough-Cut publication, curator: Rafała Milach, Institute oF Visual Culture, Cracow, Poland 2011

| emptybottles (2010)



| emptybottles, solo exhibition during Photomonh Festiwal, Goldex-Poldex gallery, Poland, 2010

