



Grzegorz Stefański

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Born in 1983, Grzegorz Stefański graduated from the Faculty of Philosophy at the Jagiellonian University in Cracow, Poland and Photography at Art University in Poznań, Poland. In 2016 he graduated from Mirosław Balka's Studio of Spatial Activities at the Fine Arts Academy in Warsaw. In 2016 he received Felix Slade Award to undertake MFA degree at Slade School of Art in London. He lives and works in London and Warsaw.

He creates cinematic and photographic projects as well as delegated performances. Protagonists of his works are introduced to space between private and public. In his works he deals with identity, relations and mimesis. He blurs the boundaries between documentary and fiction (restraint, 2016) and by using memory as an archive of identity, he questions differences between facts and fiction (do-over, 2016; Paul, 2015). His visual aesthetic is simple and often reductionistic.

He made his debut in 2010 with solo exhibition emptybottles in Goldex-Poldex Gallery in Cracow, Poland. Since then his works were presented e.g. during Manifesta 11 in Zurich (2016), in MoMa PS1 in New York (2010), in The New Theatre in Warsaw (2016), in Pastificio Cerere Foundation in Rome (2014), in Bloomsbury Theatre, London, in Ethnographic Museum in Warsaw (2015) and during Wro Media Art Biennale in Wrocław (2015).

education

- | **2016 - 2018** Slade School of Fine Arts, London (MFA)
- | **2014 - 2016** Mirosław Balka Studio of Spatial Activities (MA, University of Arts in Warsaw)
- | **2010 - 2013** Photography, University of Arts in Poznań, Poland (BA)
- | **2006** Philosophy, University of Paris X Nanterre, Paris
- | **2002 - 2008** Philosophy Department, Jagiellonian University, Cracow, Poland (MA)

awards, residencies

- | **2016** Felix Slade Scholarship, Slade School of Art, London
- | **2015** ARTECITYA, residency at Apollonia Foundation, Strasburg

solo shows

- | **2016** *do-over*, New Theatre, Warsaw
- | **2015** *new face*, Lookout Gallery, Warsaw
- | **2014** *go-see*, Zpafiska Gallery, Cracow
- | **2010** *emptybottles*, Goldex-Poldex Gallery, Cracow

group shows, screenings and others

- | **2017**
Short Waves Festival, screening, Poznań, Poland
On Primrose Hill, group show, Primrose Hill, London
Authentic Tongues, delegated performance, Bloomsbury Theatre, London
- | **2016**
Work Work Work, Leipzigerstrasse 63 - Berlin / Marszałkowska street 19 - Warsaw
Visual Spa, Blue Tower, Warsaw
Is There Somewhere?, delegated performance, Manifesta 11, Zyrych
Studio for Students: Video Art Now, Studio Gallery, Warsaw
Short Waves Festival, screening, Poznań, Poland
Wola Warm+Up, group show at Wola Museum, Warsaw, Poland
- | **2015**
Team, group show, Salon of Academy Gallery, Warsaw, Poland
Exquisite Corps of Polish Photography, group show, BWA Avangard Gallery, Wrocław, Poland
Does on your island night begins later?, collective activity, Gdansk Shipyard, Gdansk, Poland
Mimicry, group show, National Ethnographic Museum in Warsaw, Poland
Just between us, those videos are very serious ones, group show, BWA Zielona Góra Gallery, Poland
The memory of a crying tree (...), group exhibition of Mirosław Balka Studio of Spatial Activities, WRO Media Art Biennale, Wrocław, Poland
- | **2014**
Myths. Students/Artists/Teachers. A process of exchange, group show of Mirosław Balka Studio of Spatial Activities, Fondazione Pastificio Cerere Gallery, Rome, Italy
No yawning, group show, New Theatre, Warsaw, Poland
inSpirations Festival, group show, 13Muz Gallery, Szczecin, Poland
darkroom, action performed in Bunkier Sztuki Gallery, Cracow, Poland
Just between us, those videos are very serious ones, group show, 1A Collective, Poznań, Poland
Digital_ia Festival, group show, 13 Muz Gallery, Szczecin, Poland
- | **2013**
Hole, group show, TRAFO Gallery, Szczecin, Poland
- | **2011**
NY Art Book Fair, MoMa PS1, New York
Second Annual Zine and Self-Published Photo Book Fair, New York
Pile of Photography, Museum of Modern Art, Warsaw, Poland
Publish yourself!, Czulość Gallery, Warsaw, Poland

***blow out* (2016)**

six-channel video installation with sound, dimensions variable.

MA in Mirosław Bałka Studio of Spatial Activities.
The New Theatre, Warsaw, 23-26.09.2016,

vimeo acces click [here](#), password: blowout

Main character of Michelangelo Antonioni's „Blow Up” has been digitally removed from the final scenes of the film. Myriad Park sequence was broken up into six screens and set up in the exhibition space according to the logic of how it was shot. The audio sphere of the installation was the original sound from the film also cleaned from any sounds made by the protagonist. Both decisions - removal of main character and blowing out the linear sequence of the film - were made to remove guarantors of the meaning of this motion picture. The result is ambiguous pictorial situation, familiar yet uncanny. Spectator's sight encounters a void.



blow out, installation view, The New Theatre, Warsaw, 23-26.09.2016



blow out, installation view, The New Theatre, Warsaw, 23-26.09.2016



***do-over* (2016)**

one-channel video projection, sound, dimensions variable,
duration 1 min, looped

performance: Daniel Sałaciński

picture: Mikołaj Syguda

vimeo acces click [here](#), password: doover

do-over is a review of few gestures detached from score for classical music pieces. Young conductor was asked to remind those music scores and play choose measures to the camera. Slackened moments of reminding those measures contrast with sudden bursts of conductor's body turning into a medium of musical force majeure. The memory is an archive and the body becomes a vessel for de-contextualized gestures that appear as abstract choreography of male's ferocity.



do-over, film still



do-over, film still

***restraint* (2016)**

three-channel video projection, duration round 16 sec.
each, looped, dimensions variable

vimeo acces click [here](#), password: restraint

Two men in nazis uniforms present to the camera how to incapacitate civilian with bare hands. Calm anticipation followed by position-taking, then few efficient moves and pause at the end of the sequence. Re-enacted choreography of struggling bodies balances between theatre and documentary (participants are members of historical reconstruction groups) emphasising the role of the body as the vessel for both the good clean fun and catalyst of involuntary violence. Though looking and lasting almost the same at the first sight, each video is another try of restraint. Triplication is fake but repetition triggers a search for differences by gazing at the images thus involving viewer into this choreographic rehearsal for spectacle of abuse.





restraint, installation view, Studio gallery, Warsaw, 2016

go-see (2013)

digital photographs 20x30cm, mounted on 30x40 glass, infrared DV video, 720x576px, 147 x 121 sticker on the wall

vimeo acces click [here](#), password: gosee

Project deals with questions about the nature of sight, need for visibility and the mechanism of production of the images. The frame for those questions is “go-see”: a popular relational scheme of encounter between model and an artist in commercialized industry. Used as relational ready-made it is reduced to the very basic situation: in the completely darkened room model encounters no one but automatically set-up cameras. The author steps back from the process of production of those portraits forcing the model to constant self-control under the sight of the anonymous voyeuristic spectator. Go-see is a situation that unveil mechanisms of power and visibility obsession that lay behind the production for the sake of disintegrated spectacle of “models and other lovely things” (McKenzie Wark, The Spectacle of Disintegration). The catalyst for those question is complete darkness and silence as if they - paradoxically - could visualise the dilemmas of sight.



go-see, film still



go-see, installation view, zpafgallery, Cracow, 18.10 – 9.11.2014

***darkroom* (2012-2014)**

performative action, infrared DV video, 720x576px, audio

vimeo acces click [here](#), password: darkroom

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



darkroom, film still

***new face* (2013)**

WQHD video, duration 10 min.

vimeo acces click [here](#), password: newface

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



new face, film still

***Paul* (2015)**

whisper phone game, two-channels video documentation, dur. 40 min.,
dimentions variable

interpreters (in order of appearance):

Roberto Jean, Laurent Bicrel, Charlotte Achkar, Coline, José Baert

vimeo acces click [here](#), password: paul

Paul was a performative game, based on the forwarding of the original story by the following participants. Their task was to pass the story to the next interpreter and when the memory would fail, the participants could fill the gaps with their personal experiences. The original story, told by Roberto, was a distant memory of his boyish relationship with his stepfather – Paul who had mysteriously passed away. Facts from the past were mixed with the boyish mythology whereas the game paradoxically became a test for its authenticity, as if the individual's identity could be confirmed by the collectively generated myth.

Produced as part of the resident artist placements of the City of Strasbourg and with the support of Apollonia and the City of Gdansk



Paul, film still



wake-up call (2014)

announcement, mobile phone, conversation,

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.



Happy Dog statue [revsion] (2015)

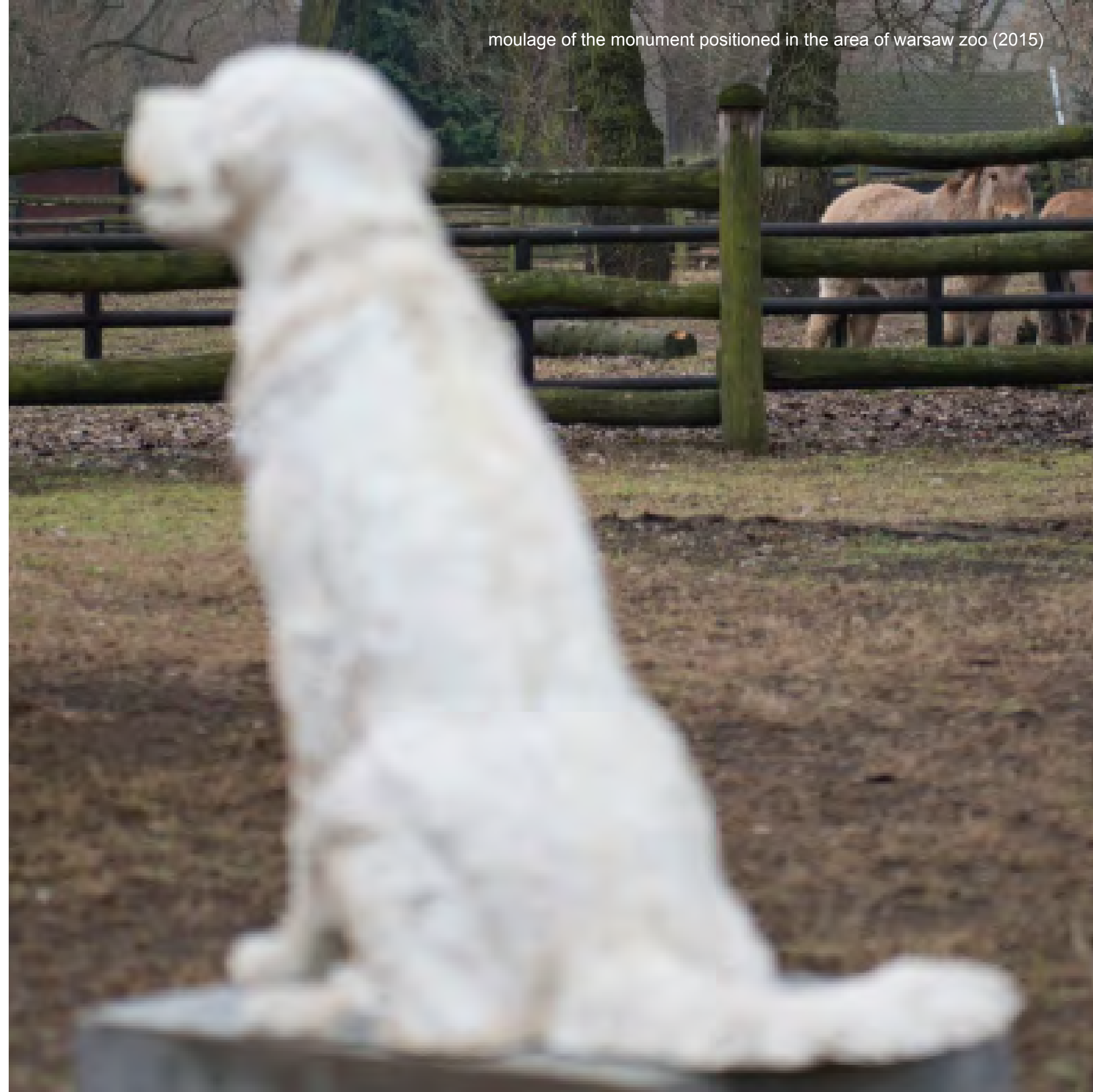
mulage, stone monument, site-specific action
The author of the original statue: Bogna Czechowska

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

The critical gesture - referring to situationist's détournement strategy - of repositioning the statue's moulage into the zoo environment is an attempt to revise its original meaning. Swapping the context of the original monument that represents official narration about human relation with beloved animal, unveils its unsaid aspects such as enslavement, domination or aggression. Extracted form the dark cellar into the daylight, the moulage of the monument represents what is hidden from rational and official narration.



original cast of bronze in Mokotów Field in Warsaw (2004)



moulage of the monument positioned in the area of warsaw zoo (2015)

pocket-size economy (2016)

Wrigley's Orbit chewing gum, saliva, two polish groats, dimensions 2x2cm

This sculpture was created during a tour in Muzeum Sztuki in Łódź. Part of PKO Polish Bank art collection.



***emptybottles* (2010)**

internet blog, exhibition, book





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
curator of emptybottles exhibition,
Goldex Poldex Gallery, Cracow, Poland, 2010

