EVA CHAPKIN / ELIŠKA KONEČNÁ / GOSHKA MACUGA / PAWEŁ SOBCZAK /
PATRYK RÓŻYCKI / GRZEGORZ PIENIAK / JOANNA PIOTROWSKA /
MARA VERHOOGT / LILIANA ZEIC

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Relationships. Space. Shelter

WORKS FROM THE COLLECTION
AS A COMMENTARY ON THE EXHIBITIONS
BODY. PAIN AND PLEASURE AND *UTOPIAS OF THE PRESENT*

COMPILED BY
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The exhibition *Relationships. Space. Shelter* presents an emotional selection of just a few works drawn from the much more extensive collection of Sylwia and Piotr Krupa – the founders of this place. The shelter in which the works are displayed was discovered by accident. During the advanced stages of renovation prior to the Foundation's opening, a historical site unexpectedly emerged from the walls – a space which, despite its transformed character, now has the chance to continue its original mission. Here, art can feel safe.

Whenever I encounter this collection – whether in the warehouse, during transport, in the database, or in the process of making acquisition decisions – I eagerly look for what is new, often discovering recently created works I have not yet had the opportunity to see within the context of other exhibitions. Over time, a strangely familiar bond develops between me and a painting, evoking a feeling of understanding akin to identifying with the protagonist of a novel written in the first person. It is something between the flutter of excitement and the comfort of an embrace from someone who understands you – even if you hardly know each other.

I cannot imagine what kind of relationship Sylwia and Piotr have with their works, especially those removed from their own walls. Nor do I have insight into the criteria guiding their choices or the emotions that accompany them. What I do know is that they treat their works with exceptional care. I sense that theirs is a relationship of a different order – mature, committed, and responsible. Were it a romantic relationship, we might call it "stable", whatever that means today.

I believe that the collection itself constitutes an exhibition – one curated and continuously shaped by artists, and perpetuated by the collectors. It is a living exhibition, perforated and dispersed across many hearts and locations. My contribution here is but a temporary foster home, offering shelter to a fragment of it. Preparing an exhibition "from the collection," especially a private one, involves considerable risk. We do not select works from an unlimited global pool, but from within a deeply sensitive, private, and even spiritual sphere. There is no coherent narrative or deliberate selection designed to support a thesis; instead, a story of tenderness emerges – about hope, the need for care, intimacy, and comfort.

Relationships. Space. Shelter comprises works so personal that presenting and discussing them feels like self-exposure. It would therefore be naive to attempt to construct a substantive curatorial narrative analysing each piece. The starting point is rather the relationship with the collection itself, which invites exploration of the stories embedded in the individual paintings, objects, and photographs, in the artists' biographies, and in the identities and worlds they have created. Some of the works turn to autobiographical themes, while others address

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collective experiences and ideas. A common thread may be sought in the broad notion of relationships – difficult, utopian, absent, hybrid, or sexual. To me, each of these is apt, for they all concern collision and the perilous attempt at dialogue with a silent wall.

The narratives of the concurrent exhibitions at the KAF – *Body. Pain and Pleasure* and *Utopias of the Present* – have provoked in me intense reflections on our current social moment. How is it possible that art seems to remain the last domain that has not lost hope? Although it stands under constant scrutiny, facing numerous challenges (which is, in fact, beneficial), within this collective suffering art still offers a stable refuge. It appears to be (almost) the only place where one can feel safe – with one's identity, one's voice, and one's values. Perhaps this is why I remain so deeply attached to it. Is it cowardice that keeps me inside this bubble? Perhaps.

While working on both of the aforementioned temporary exhibitions, I unexpectedly confronted things that cannot be spoken or written – at least, not by me, nor is there any need to. In such moments, art intervenes with a gesture of tenderness and understanding, telling these stories more sensitively than I ever could. At times, it seems to read my thoughts. During a period of personal turbulence, I found myself working on an exhibition concerning the male gaze, while simultaneously returning to Erica Jong's *Fear of Flying* after many years. Both contexts reminded me that the era of phallocentrism – in which we believed ourselves still to be functioning until quite recently – has left behind its decaying consequences in the form of how relationships continue to evolve, particularly the most neglected ones: our relationships with ourselves, however we identify.

Beyond the fact that the works I have chosen reflect a part of myself, in dialogue with *Body...* and *Utopias...* they extend the exploration of corporeality, care, and relationality in their multidimensional forms. Yet the need to break taboos surrounding sexuality applies not only to queer individuals and women. Will the distinction between queer and non-queer become a new axis of binary division? Perhaps the utopias envisioned by younger generations are those in which sexual identity, or one's position along any spectrum, becomes irrelevant – because each identity is equal and accepted.

The challenges of intimacy affect every being. I am deeply moved by the sensitivity with which the recently acquired works – created here and now – approach encounters of souls, fragile emotions, and alternative identities. Their broad perspective enables the observation of phenomena that, without trivialising them, often converge on shared concerns, for they concern us, the viewers. These works mirror the present: they are a map of relationships – between the human and the non-human, memory and the future, touch and distance. They create worlds born of care.

Natalia Barczyńska