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## Transformations in Polish art after 1989

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## Transformations in Polish art after 1989

Anna Markowska (editor of the section)

### Introduction

It is quite commonly believed that the country's independence did not contribute to changes in art. It is said that Polish people already gained a large degree of freedom after October 1956. Although at first the freedom was based on modernist autonomy, in the next decade it was expanded to include critical art, which then came into existence, and in the decade following martial law the chafing consensus with the authorities was completely severed. In such a perspective political changes after 1989 can be treated only as the icing on the cake. But in fact, can such a completely different political and economical context forcing changes in mentality and traditions be treated so lightly? In addition, another view, also depreciating the role of independence, can be encountered quite frequently. In this perspective ideological limitations and censorship compel a more careful form and more intelligent content; an artist has a wall that they rebound from and that shapes them, which perfects their expression. Today there is no such wall, so the level of art in the free country has plummeted.

A quarter of a century after the free elections it is time to look at post-1989 art in a different way: the new situation formed a new field of activity, a different responsibility of the author and diverse horizons. Our thesis is that the freedom of the artist in an independent country has an influence on the shape of the art created. Thanks to the regime change, the birth of democracy and abolition of censorship, artists gained an opportunity to critically evaluate the political situation. The map of artistic concerns started to feature completely new issues - social problems such as justice, identity differences, discrimination, exclusion, as well as issues such as shame, being lost or the inability to find one's own place in reality began to be taken up. Art that rewrites Polish history appeared. Budding capitalism, consumerism and institutionalism became sources of criticism. The voice of trans-species solidarity and the turn to ecological art intensified. Camp art became more popular and blasphemy, scandal and stardom turned into artistic strategies. Unexpectedly, it turned out that preventive censorship exists, that an artist (specifically a female artist) may be subject to a devastating eight-year long trial and on the way to court in no way only metaphorically spit on by people who had never seen the art in question. The problem of losing local specificity emerged because the global art world absorbs everything. Thus the problem of building a local hierarchy of value increased dramatically because of the hidden wave of neocolonialism which seems to be dictating to Poles from the outside who is a great artist based only on commercial criteria. Meanwhile, the map of Europe has changed and the availability of internet and airline communications brought us closer not only to Spain and Great Britain but also to China and Japan.

Transformations in Polish art after 1989 is the title of a scientific session that took place in the Labirynt Gallery in Lublin in December 2014. In order to consolidate the Lublin discussion, we would like to invite you to continue it in *Art and Documentation*.