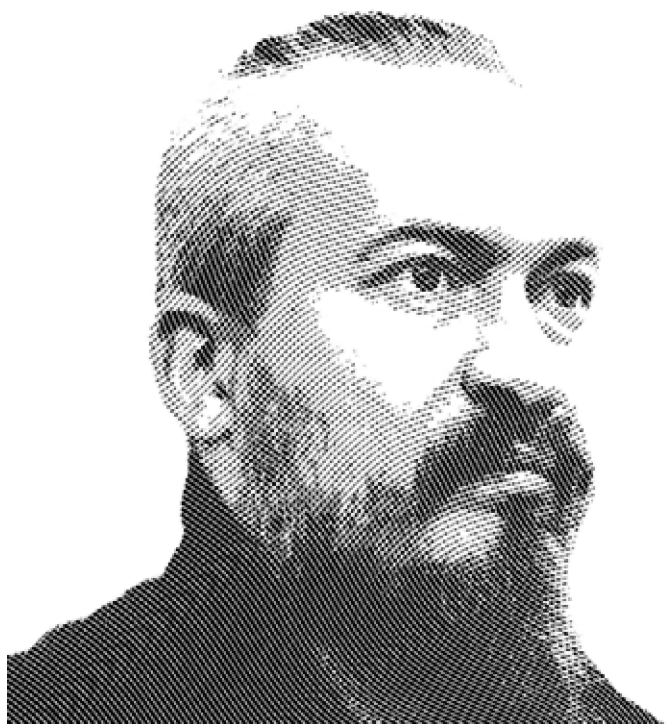


Robert Kuśmirowski

**DIDACTIC AND SCIENTIFIC
ACHIEVEMENTS**

Robert Kuśmirowski



Performer, author of installations, objects, photographs and drawings. Born in 1973 in Łódź.

He studied in the artistic department of the Institute of Fine Arts at the Marie Curie-Skłodowska University in Lublin 1998-2003, where he graduated with a diploma in the sculpture studio of prof. Sławomir Andrzej Mieleszka. In the academic year 2002-2003 he was granted a scholarship, and stayed in the Metal and Modelling Studio at the University Rennes 2, Beaux Arts Rennes. Performer, author of installations, objects, photographs, drawings. Nominated for the annual Passport award from Poland's Polityka weekly, and in 2003, won first place in Raster magazine's ranking of artists. He is associated with the Foksal Gallery Foundation in Warsaw. Lives and works in Lublin.

For the most part, his works are based on the reconstructing or copying of old objects, documents, photographs, or rather on the creation of delusively similar imitations. Often, they do not have a specific prototype, but only evoke the material culture of a certain time. However, their characteristic feature is watch-maker's precision and meticulousness. In the larger installations, the artist's passion of collecting becomes apparent - objects accumulated form hardly apprehensible collections, defined by Joanna Mytkowska as „baroque of excess and entropy of detail.” That is how Kuśmirowski returns to the issues of memory, history, and nostalgia that accompany the visual culture of the far and recent past, slowly disappearing under its new layers. This strategy accounts for the recurring vanitas theme in his oeuvre - the reconstructing of a past material culture becomes a means of picking up on issues of transiency, vanishing, and death. His performances, sometimes accompanied by music composed by the artist, are of a similar character.

2. SELF-PRESENTATION

SELF-PRESENTATION

Most of my achievements in the field of art are based on the production of objects, documents, photographs, entire rooms, large buildings, situations, but rather the creation of their deceptively similar representations, which in reality never occurred and did not take place. They do not have their definite prototype, but only evoke the material culture of an era. However, they are always characterized by certain accuracy and meticulousness only to make the message sent to the recipient clearer. In this way, it refers to the rich memory, history and floating nostalgia that accompanies the visual culture from a distant and somewhat closer past, slowly disappearing under successive layers of modern culture. Recalling past aesthetic goods, fragility of things, disintegration and intensity of the contemporary world, becomes a method for undertaking the subject of transience, passing and death. A large part of my work has a Vanitas coating in its message. My actions and performative actions have a similar character, complemented by music composed by me. One of the most important aspects of my work should be the problem of the passage of time, including the already mentioned vanitas element, both in relation to people and the effects of their activities, among others, in the field of architecture. It is important what role a single man plays with his knowledge and sensitivity. A kind of aura of melancholy is present, even in the "reconstruction" of the Evangelical cemetery, with the D.O.M. inscription (Deo Optimo Maximo), excavated archaeological site with just discovered remains of human skeletons (Waterfram, Transgression of imagination, Galeria Biała, Lublin 2007), in the crypt with the artist's embalmed body (Mot tiden/AgainstTime, Bonniers Konsthall, Stockholm 2007), in the fragment of one more tombstone (Demont, General renovation, Galeria Biała, Lublin 2008), or the discovered human corpse after the execution and removal of the escarpment (One by One/Lichtung in the Berlin Kunst Werke 2012). I try to make my realizations, objects and installations function in carefully prepared interiors of the gallery or in a strictly defined public space and are a strong message given to a potential recipient.

The origins of my creative discoveries date back to 1989, when I accepted the invitation to co-create the electro-acoustic group "Radio OXO", composing and performing musical pieces, expanding my field of imagination. It is important to be able to sort out various schemes, patterns in the flexible resources of the mind, which we cannot see in music. Such practice has significantly contributed to the transition to the visual sphere. In 1998 I started my studies at the Institute of Fine Arts of the Faculty of Arts of UMCS in Lublin, which completely absorb by free time. As a fifth-year student, within the international exchange Socrates-Erasmus, for one academic year (2002-2003) I was studying at the volume studio at the Renes 2 University in France and in the Metal and modelling studio in Beaux-Art in the same city. After returning, I obtain the diploma in the monumental sculpture studio with Sławomir Mielezko and I start an extremely lively creative activity, the tangible effect of which is a whole range of individual and collective exhibitions. After a few years, in 2007, I become a lecturer at the home Art Department of UMCS, with which I am associated to this day as an adjunct at the Department of Intermedia and Drawing.

For the first time, the audience had the opportunity to take a closer look at my work in 2001. At that time, as a third year student, as part of the first edition of Pozaginania rysunek, which was organized at the Institute of Fine Arts of the Faculty of Arts at UMCS, I made a series of drawings of various forms and documents, such as: an old MPK ticket, an exam card, a sticker for the registered letter, a supermarket tag, various certificates, proofs of payments, etc." In fact, they were precise

drawings with great care for the selection and deliberate destruction of paper. They were the drawing “copies” of typical documents of various types, made and displayed on a 1:1 scale, absolutely indistinguishable from the originals. That was the purpose, and so these works have been interpreted as the borrowing and only the framing of these documents, without any chance of suspecting they were a drawing.

A year later, in February 2002, at the second edition of Pozaginania rysunkowe, as part of the Young Art. Forum of Biała Gallery, I contrived an unusual situation involving the use of the local structures of the Polish Post Office. From the post office of a village where I temporarily lived, I sent three letters to the address of the Biała Gallery. And it would not be surprising if it were not for the fact that they were entirely drawings made by me, including the “glued” stamps. In one case I deliberately made a mistake in case of denominations. At the post office in Lublin, it was noticed that the fee was lower than required and the parcel was sent back to the post office in the village in order to fill the missing amount. Here, a real stamp was added, supplementing the drawn one, and a fee was added for sending it back again to Lublin. The letter arrived at the Biała Gallery just before the opening of the exhibition. It was exceptionally carefully stamped and described, with all relevant signatures and two stamps: one original and the other one made by me. In brief, the employees of the Polish Post Office unknowingly took part in artistic provocation, confirming with the strictly administrative actions both its authenticity and adding to it – and thus sponsoring it – 2 zlotys and 85 grosz, taken out from the public money.

What happened in 2001 and 2002 can be considered – in retrospect – only as a kin dog introduction, a desire to greet the audience, to present them with own ideas and workshop skills.

The first major and ideally complex artistic show was a life-size goods wagon shown with the entire interior of the railway station, recreated from my memories and placed in the Biała Gallery in 2002. At that time I showed, in two rooms of the gallery, the “materialized” records of memories related to the journey, twenty or thirty years ago, that is from the time of my childhood. In the first room, I recreated a fragment of the railway waiting room, and in the second room, I placed a “copy” of the freight car on rails on a 1:1 scale. The enormous pietism characterizing the majority of my works then, recalling the realities of the era, allowed viewers to travel back in time to a nostalgic return to the past reality. Keeping all the details and specifics, the characteristic atmosphere of those time, I did not copy – as some people thought – a specific waiting room, seen and registered in memory somewhere in a Polish province. Like the life-size wagon from the Biała Gallery was not the one wagon captured by the camera lens standing somewhere on a station siding in Lublin, but a phantasm, perfected by the sum of knowledge about this characteristic and extremely common fragment of our reality, related to the development of the network railway in many cities. The Wagon work was presented in various versions on the occasion of several exhibitions, i.e. (Novart.pl, Young Art Festival, Krakow 2004; 4th Berlin Biennale for Contemporary Art, Berlin 2006; Die Kunst ist super!, Hamburger Bahnhof, Berlin 2009, where it was purchased for the collection).

Due to the huge number of individual and collective exhibitions, I put a considerable part of my artistic output in the next part under the name.

“Self-presentation with selected photographic documentations”

Already during the first years of teaching students, I accepted the tactics of conducting classes with the need to make the achievements, final and term works of all students public. The result of these activities is more than a dozen exhibitions in the halls and corridors of the Art Department, institutions, private rooms, abandoned buildings and during outdoor trips. Already in 2008, I accepted

the function of the curator of student exhibitions to give these events the character of full-fledged public shows, necessary for the student's independence and the sense of participating in real and important situations. All works and exhibitions as a curator and organizer of artistic events are in the next part entitled:

"Curating and organising exhibitions"

In 2009, seeing a huge shortage of exhibitions of young students and graduates as well as other creative environments, I founded the **Towot Squat** in the former workshop of the Reinforcement Plants in Lublin and the Workshops of Mechanical School, handed over to my person at the hands of the Mayor of the City. In the first year of our activity, we invited professors with their students, artists, the first shows took place, concerts, performative actions, accompanying various occasions and cultural events of the city. Here I inaugurate the cyclic exhibition "**No Budget Show**", which is always held at the end of the academic year, where nearly 40-60 artists have the opportunity to present their works, entering the idea of the exhibition. The observed potential of such cultural gatherings was met with full understanding in many institutions in Poland, thanks to which the No-budget movement already had its views in the National Centre of Culture in Warsaw (NBS 3), the Museum of Contemporary Art in Cracow MOCAK (NBS 4), in the Foundation of Stefan Gierowski and the headquarters of the PKO Polish Bank in Warsaw (NBS 8). A year later, in 2010, under the banner of **Towot Squat**, a series of musical events organized in the air during the cold winter under the name of "**Died Moroz Convention**" was inaugurated. Musical calls exceeded my expectations. It turned out that we hit a niche of cultural needs, usually fulfilling a calmer period of outdoor events. There have already been 9 meetings, for which we invited several dozen bands. The list of bands is on the attached posters reproductions.

I also organized a number of exhibitions for people from outside the academic world, thus showing how much potential lies dormant in people who are not familiarized with art education and what emotional and aesthetic charge is included in work done without help and indication by others. This was the case with the exhibition organized with six prisons in Lublin, Zamość, Hrubieszów, Chełm, Krasnymstaw and Opole Lubelskie, where I collected several dozen artworks of people serving sentences for the "Art§" exhibition. The show took place at the Cultural Centre in Lublin and for many authors was a strong signal to start or continue creative practices. Another package of experiences is the work of people and patients with permanent or temporary mental disorder. I visited several dozen psychiatric facilities, the creativity galleries Art Brut and hospital museums. The result of these queries and meetings was an exhibition organized in the National Gallery of Art in Sopot entitled "**PALINDROM**" 2015. The exhibition included the work of two extreme artistic environments, showing the variety of forms used in artistic expression, but reducing them to a common visual denominator. It is a collection of works created both by today's esteemed artists, artists at the beginning of their creation and people who have revealed their mental disorders in their works. An important assumption of the show was the neighbouring layout of works and their purposeful compilation, in an impossible way to recognize works, between a healthy, well-functioning artist and the one suffering, isolated and doomed to the effects of various drugs prescribed during the clinical trials. A year after the publication of these works in the Sopot gallery, I was again invited to be a curator to perform a kind of a "treatment", this time the topic narrowed down to one important detail. Eyesight and its multiplication, thus showing different creative attitudes with a clear de-figuration and crumpling of the reality around us. I had the pleasure to touch the phenomenon of "creativity" once more, to see "not my images", to experience someone's practice, to provoke meetings, discussions and to reveal "the own". This was the inauguration of the second exhibition with the palindromic title of **KREW-WERK**, as a collection of works by artists aware of their creations and people deprived of this knowledge. The exhibition talks about the power of the eyes, the crooked perception of reality, increased perception and its enforced deficit. It is a triumph of vision disorders with the beauty of such disability, the consolidation of works, no longer established

by the organ of sight, and opposition to what is visible. Consuming the exhibition, we could conclude that we are no longer recipients of the proposed collection. The collection is tormenting our presence by introducing a sense of concern and long-unreported shame. A mass amount of glances directed at the recipient may seem suffocating. However, only in such numbers we can get closer to the madness propagated by most of the invited artists. After handing over the work to all participants, institutions and collectors, I was asked to react again to the exhibition, this time with the collection of artwork from the Neuropsychiatric Hospital in Lublin, where the "Galeria pod czwórka" is located. This is how the "**AB/ramowi/Ce**" exhibition was created, thanks to which the first public exposure in the history of the gallery took place, due to its closed nature for people coming from outside without being patients of the hospital.

From the beginning of my years of work at the University, I have been participating in dozens of organized **workshops**, dedicated to the students, artists, institutions, school youth and seniors. In most of them, practical classes are carried out, showing in a quick and non-technological way, how a substitute of happiness can be made of simple and achievable materials, in the form of manual work. The column below lists some of them:

Migros Museum in Zurich, 2007 Technical workshops for artists
Kunstverein Hamburg 2005, Workshop for casting items
ASP Gdańsk, Medianacje 2015, "Wyprawka"
ASP Wrocław, Centre for Art. Documentation, "Imaging"
Art Museum in Lodz and ASP Łódź, "Workshops" 2017
ASP Kraków, Harenda 2014, Master workshops
ASP Kraków, Harenda 2015, The "Not allowed" workshops as part of a scientific conference under the same title.
Labyrinth Gallery in Lublin 2016, Workshops for elementary students
MOCAK, Kraków 2016, "Touch the art" workshops for the blind
Art. Bunker Kraków, Workshops for children, casting items

In 2010, on behalf of the City of Lublin, I was invited to build a cultural program, necessary to apply for the title of the **European Capital of Culture** in 2016. For several years, together with the group established for this purpose, day after day, the concept of a celebration program was created. My share was to enter events that I already initiated in 2009 "**No Budget Show**" and a year later "**Died Moroz Convention**" to the list of permanent events of the city. I proposed the creation of the "**6-th year of studies**" where the potential graduate, already without the supervision of pedagogues, could receive a scholarship, a social room and a room to carry out his/her work for one year. The second proposal was to create a Museum of Design, built, created every day by the residents of Lublin, bringing what has already been used but is not yet "old". In this way, without any costs, the City receives the Museum from the residents, who in 5-10 years will start to gain importance and make us all aware that beauty awakens after years and it is worth investing in such a collection to have one of the more completed collections from our era.

I also had the pleasure to participate in several **scientific conferences** devoted to creative topics, i.e. the National Interdisciplinary Scientific Conference "Artist – curator – institution – recipient. Spaces of autonomy and models of criticism" the Arsenal Gallery in Poznan 2012, The conference "Image of reality – analysis of selected realistic attitudes in contemporary art" Harenda, Zakopane 2014, "Not allowed" conference – rebellion of stereotypes in creative attitudes" Harenda Zakopane 2016. I was a participant in several **Jury** deliberations. In 2015, at the invitation of the Art Museum in Lodz, I was **the chairman of the jury for the Kobro Award**, the work in the Jury of the IV Art Festival "Narratives, Installations and Interventions in Public Space" Gdańsk 2012, the work in the Jury of the international show "Landart Festival" Lublin 2015. Jury member at the FAMA Student Festival 2010 in Świnoujście. I did a lot of posters for musical theatrical and visual arts. For two years I worked as

a graphic artist with the Ramp Theatre in Warsaw, for which I made posters and leaflets for, among others *Songs of Murderers*, *To be like Frank Sinatra*, *A Jew*. Throughout 2008 I made covers for the Lublin ZOOM register, published every month.

I also take a series of photographs and self-portraits, necessary to tell something more than just the presented exhibition. Such photos are placed on posters or exhibition walls, as information about the hero or the host of the reconstructed place. The passion for photography, or the desire to manipulate the human senses, have found – and still find – a vent in another of my activities, more specific. This time it is about “publishing” activity, a peculiar passion for creating and publishing books. I myself write a lot of texts, signed both with my own surname and with nicknames (e.g. I impersonate a library director, Dr. Vernier, or I answer editorial questions as MSc Eng. Witold Abramczyk), typically humanistic texts, or definitely compilatory, addressing selected phenomena in the field of sciences close to me, physics, chemistry or mathematics, which I combine with the statements of other authors – real and fictional ones – domestic and foreign, translated into Polish, and then I create books of them, alone or in cooperation with others. Both authentic ones, bearing the obligatory ISBN number, and completely fictional “viruses”, produced in one unique copy [Georges Perec -*Voyage d’hiver* (Winter Journey) made for the Conrad Festival in Cracow 2016 and the exhibition at the National Gallery Zachęta in Warsaw 2017 “Life. Instructions”] dated for the II half of the XIX century, or at most in a few, sufficiently developed, so that they could be found in antique shops, standing peacefully on the shelf among real rare bird. All invented, from the beginning to end, and then carefully designed. In addition to numerous drawings of my authorship that give the impression of fuller technical documentation, complicated mechanisms and machines from the 19th and 20th century, which functioning contributed to the development of our civilization, also contain photographs in which what is real is mixed effectively with what has already gone forever, leaving the recipient with the nostalgic feeling of longing for a wonderful past full of memories. This past, which I suggestively raise, and then make it a starting point for further very creative activities. I am also the author of several covers for my **artistic books** and books of other authors, i.e. “Shoes for Messiah” by Paweł Laufer, or “A political accident” by Masza Potocka. I have published several art books designed using old-fashioned materials or rapidly degrading ones, i.e. (*Melancholy Objects*) with my photographs and a book design for Susan Sontag, the *Album Casmorama* published in Berlin for the exhibition in Trento in 2015, the *Album Traumgutstrasse* 2015 with hand-glued photographs as part of the exhibition at the Academy Salon in Warsaw, *Humanbomber* 2011, designed comprehensively including rubbed dirt and technical signatures on all copies, “MM nuclear engineering” a technical book with 6 large-format drawings and photo documentation from the *Swimming Pool* exhibition in the Migros Museum in Zurich 2007, “*Fundamentals of Electro-Aesthetics*” 2015, National Gallery in Sopot.

At the end of 2010, I submitted relevant documents for opening the **doctoral degree**, After writing the thesis, going through the entire procedure and performing the new exhibition in 2012, I started the defense with a positive result. The main problem I posed in my doctoral dissertation was to put a copy of a given work or piece of reality on an equivalent level as the original one, and in some cases I provided its justified superiority over the original. The topic of my doctoral dissertation “The superiority of a copy to the original” was to look for differences and contextual addictions between the copy and the original. This is the moment of juxtaposition of two age-old allies, both in the field of art and in everyday life. The idea of imitating art is the basis of the theory of art from Antiquity to the avant-garde of the 20th century. Copying gains a significant meaning beyond the mere creation of a copy. In the sources of historical records, the idea of copying and the aesthetics that followed behind it was inherent in the idea of illusion, understood not only as a visual illusion, but also evoking feelings, impressions, mental states, and the spiritual transformation of the recipient. This platform of principles has been separated in the history of the theory of art, depending on the position one of them was exposed. The strong change in the hierarchy of validity between the original and its designate was evidence of building distance to the subject of my work. The resulting copies gain new meanings and cultural context. Manual work in the illusion of reproduction in the digital era

seems to be an effort, if not superfluous, then perverse in its luxury. The artist does not appear here as a contestant of technology. Modern civilization becomes the reference point of this work. I want to ultimately recreate, copy and reflect it. The appearance of the "other media" term, which was enigmatically used to name everything that was not done with traditional artistic techniques, today takes on a different meaning. Today, these mysterious "other media" is the basis of art, painting and graphics gain the status of "others".

We should also mention the most important aspect that defines my work. Evidence. The apparent obviousness of things and realities that create these things. What I do and plan to do in the next shows can seem obvious: mappings, dummies, simulations, incarnations. However, after a moment of dealing with these realities, the person begins to feel that s/he was about to pass too soon, s/he feels a form of virus, because suddenly the obviousness is cropped, framed, set on a wedge that is supposed to draw attention to it, it becomes unclear. It is like an obvious word to be repeated many times, until it becomes bizarre, incomprehensible, intrusive, sometimes scary (only the mass of the copies made becomes noticeable).

After many years of struggling with finances, running a non-profit organisation **Towot Squat** in Lublin, I decided to transform this movement into a Foundation. That's what happened. In 2015, I became the founder of the non-governmental organization the "**Towot Squat Foundation**". After gathering the right people, mostly my former graduates (today they form the Foundation's board), we acquire new urban spaces for future artists, graduates of Fine Arts Schools, but also people from Cultural Studies, Technical Universities and humanities.

In 2013-2014, I conducted classes as a **professor** with students at the International Academy of Art in Salzburg, International Summer Akadymy of Fine Arts in Salzburg. In 2013, I dealt with the issues of building art objects and installations. I proposed a cycle of classes called "Everyone has the same chance" and I distributed the same amount of materials and tools. With such a just division, only imagination could have exploded and the effect of the final work amazed the students themselves... that it is possible to make a thing, object that is worthy of publication just from trivial materials, with a little bit of effort. In 2014, after talking with the President of Salzburg, I went out with the students to the open air, in an area inscribed on the UNESCO heritage list. This time the classes were held in the subject of "Pub Art (Public Art)", where during the day there was work on the implementation of intervention in the city tissue and in the evenings there were meetings and exchange of experiences gathered from the whole day. The assumption of the final exhibitions in both cases and given themes was to publicize these activities with an exhibition, inviting the entire artistic and cultural environments of the city, and the most important people together with the President of Salzburg.