



photo by Tomasz Jan Szymański, @solo.show

## MACIEJ CHOLEWA

born in 1991 in Siemianowice Śląskie.

Graphics M.A (2016), doctoral degree (2022) graduated at the Academy of Fine Arts in Katowice.

Visual Artist. Author of objects, installations, prints and photographs. He focuses on themes related to the periphery, local identity and vernacular aesthetics. He relies on his own micro-narratives and the processing of heard stories and contexts.

He lives in Radzionków, a small town which is for him an important source of reference and inspiration.

Author of the *Greetings from a small town* project (*Pozdrowienia z małego miasta*).

[https://www.instagram.com/pozdrowienia\\_z\\_malego\\_miasta/](https://www.instagram.com/pozdrowienia_z_malego_miasta/)

## CONTACT

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## Selected exhibitions and awards:

- *Colonies*, with Karolina Wojtas, Gdańsk City Gallery, Gdańsk, 2022
- *First place in the table*, group exhibition, TRAFO Trafostacja Sztuki gallery, Szczecin, 2022
- *Peripheral vision*, solo exhibition, Szara Gallery, Warsaw, 2022
- *Politics in Art*, group exhibition, MOCAK, Cracow, 2022
- *Utopias/Dystopias. The future of the city*, group exhibition, Rondo Sztuki Gallery, Katowice, 2022
- *Wasn't Built in a Day*, group exhibition during Krakow Photomonth, Bunkier Sztuki Gallery of Contemporary Art, Cracow, 2022
- *Zymby*, group exhibition, Open Jazdów, Warszawa, 2022
- *Subject: river*, group exhibition, former headquarters of Silesian Museum in Katowice, Katowice, 2022
- *You ain't going nowhere*. SURVIVAL 19. Review of Art, Wrocław, 2021
- *Where Swans Fly To?*, group exhibition, BWA Olsztyn, 2021
- *Battlefield*, group exhibition, Bielska BWA Gallery, Bielsko Biala, 2021
- *Throwing their dark and lenghtening shadows across the plain*, group exhibition, MOS, Gorzów Wielkopolski, 2020
- *Reviews 4. Everything flows*, curatorial project with Ula Mikoś, Upper Silesian Museum, Bytom, 2020
- *Black bile*, group exhibition, BGSW Gallery, Ustka, Słupsk, 2019
- *Men Like Gods*, group exhibition, OP OPENHEIM Gallery, Wrocław, 2019
- *Il Mitto Della Piccola Citta*, solo exhibition during Centrale Festival, Fano, Italy, 2019
- *All of Poland. The Journey to the Source of Art*, group exhibition, BWA Wrocław and Gdańsk City Gallery, 2019/ 2020
- *The physics of spending time*, solo exhibition, CSW Kronika, Bytom, 2019
- *Concealed*, SURVIVAL 17. Review of Art, Wrocław, 2019
- *Let your city be as clean as your home*, curatorial project of Karolina's Konopka exhibition, minus1.artspace, Katowice, 2019
- *Children of the Light. The 10th curated exhibition of Bielska Jesień*, Bielska BWA Gallery, Bielsko Biala, 2018
- *Hi, we are dying!*, group exhibition, Szara Gallery, Katowice, 2018
- Award of Vordemberge-Gildewart Foundation 2018, MOCAK, Kraków, 2018
- *Underground stream. About emotions in music*, group exhibition, Rondo Sztuki Gallery, Katowice, 2018
- *Life is a backyard*, inSPIRACJE Festival, TRAFO Trafostacja Sztuki, Szczecin, 2018
- *Seismograph 3*, Bunkier Sztuki Gallery of Contemporary Art, Cracow, Poland
- *A Tear For Bygone Shadows*, group exhibition, The Widna Gallery, Cracow, 2018
- *Evidence of nonexistence*, with Gosia Szandała, City Museum of Tychy, Tychy, 2018
- *How are things?*, group exhibition, Labirynt Gallery, Lublin, 2017
- *The sun also sets*, group exhibition, Tarasin Gallery, Kalisz, 2017
- Award of Trójka's Talents, Warszawa, 2017
- *No Problem*, group exhibition, Potencja Gallery, Cracow, 2017
- *Toxic relations*, with Marek Rachwałik, JEDNA/DRUGA Gallery, Szczecin, 2017
- *Black Beach In My Heart*, group exhibition, Piktogram Gallery, Warsaw, 2017
- *Myth of a Small Town*, solo exhibition, CSW Kronika, Bytom, 2017
- The Grey House Foundation Competition Finalist Exhibition, Grey House Gallery, Cracow, 2016
- *The Tide. Young Polish Contemporary Art*, Art Main Station by mia, Wrocław, 2016
- *The Esteemed Graduates of Polish Academies of Fine Arts 2017*, Zbrojownia Sztuki Gallery, Gdańsk, 2016
- *Hati Hati Hat*, with Bartosz Zaskórski and friends, Księgarnia/ Wystawa, Cracow, 2016

Anna Pajęcka about Small Towns and Maciej Cholewa's art:

<https://bit.ly/3wsvRjZ>

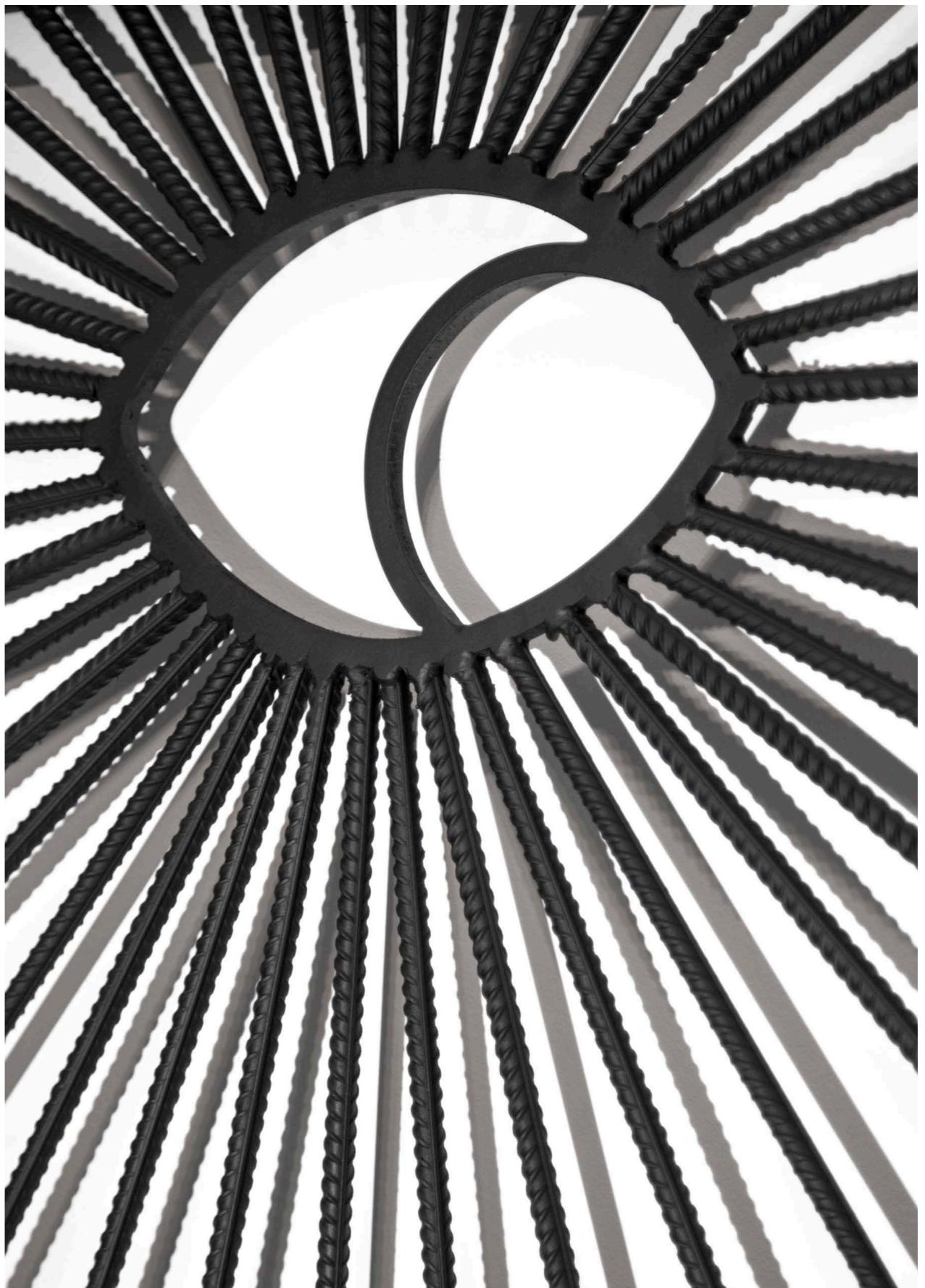
Interview for Szum Magazine: <http://bit.ly/2pAhVTf>

Interview for Gazeta Wyborcza: <https://bit.ly/3SpXnpM>

# PERIPHERAL VISION

Curatorial collaboration and text: Jakub Gawkowski

Medically, peripheral vision refers to the ability to see objects outside the central field of vision, i.e. those that are not directly in front of us. For several years, Maciej Cholewa has been working on an original project in which he treats Radzionków, located in Upper Silesia, as a case study and the starting point for reflecting on the meaning of peripheral areas. The project covers a broad scope of phenomena, such as small-town identity, topography and vernacular aesthetics and architecture and their interrelationships. The exhibition is so structured that it reflects the topography of the town, presenting works and activities created over the years: objects, photographic notes, the author's own stories and the ones he has heard. He uses them as tools to discuss issues of the right to space, the creation of local symbols or the formation of the attitudes of hospitality and inhospitality [...].



(detail) *The Gate for all of those who left small towns and gone to Warsaw*, 2019

## Gates

The works are inspired by metalwork, typical of suburban Poland and small rural communities. Beyond their obvious functions and representational role, gates are a form of visual communication, carrying local mythology, symbolism and identification of a particular social group of their owners.

The objects are an attempt to visually describe the most important issues concerning the broadly-defined notion of periphery, such as gentrification, formation of new civic attitudes, hospitality and inhospitality.



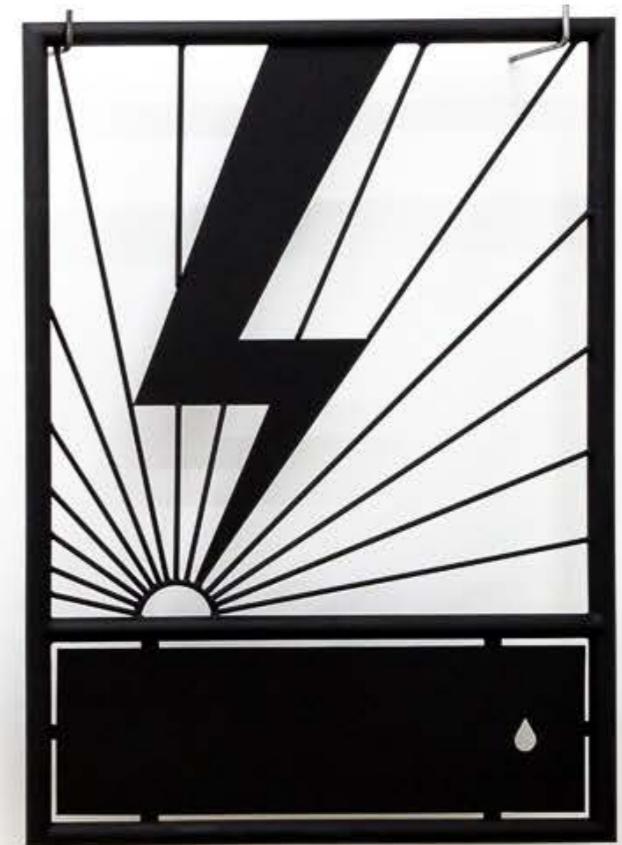
*The Gate for all of those with burning hearts*, 100x140cm, steel, acrylic paint, 2019



*The Gate for all of those who left small towns and gone to Warsaw*  
100x140cm, steel, acrylic paint, 2019

*The Gate for all those who are not afraid*  
100x140cm, steel, acrylic paint, 2020

*The Gate for those who have to fight*  
100x140cm, steel, acrylic paint, 2021



## Greetings from a small town

A long-term project and a visual sketchbook dedicated to the problems of peripheral areas and the study of their relationship with the artist. Provincialism and the periphery in the broadest sense remain difficult to be clearly defined in theoretical terms. The project aims at visually describing the most important problems and aspects of life in such areas.

The sketchbook is a combination of journeys to smaller towns across Poland and the resulting photographic, video and performance accounts of living consciously the life of a resident of a small town.

Part of the sketchbook:

[instagram.com/pozdrowienia\\_z\\_malego\\_miasta/](https://instagram.com/pozdrowienia_z_malego_miasta/)

*Greetings from a small town (selection of photographs 2019 - 2022), 10,5x14,8 cm*

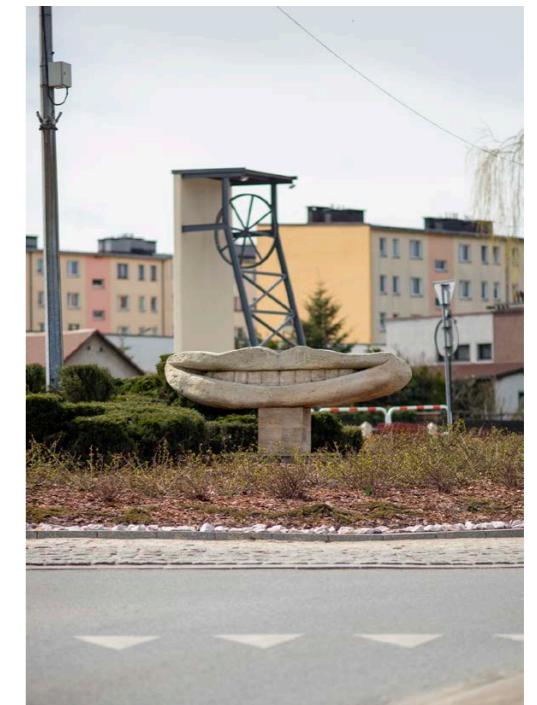
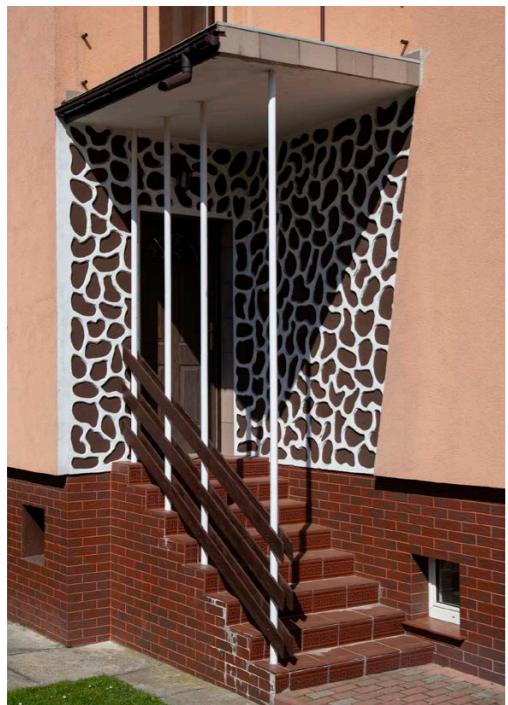




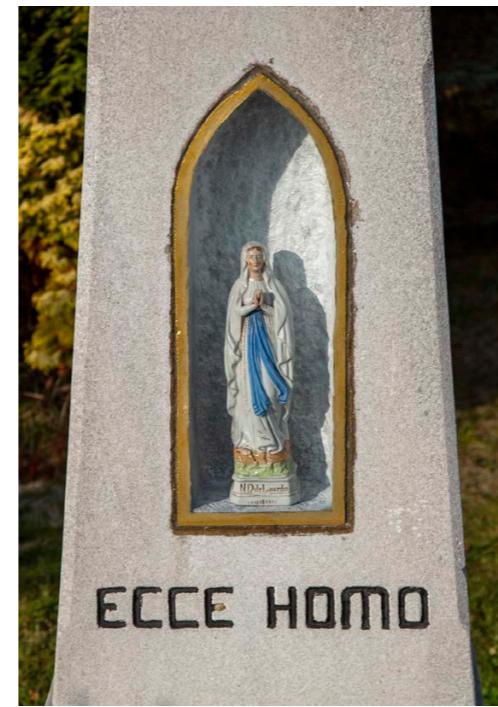
*Greetings from a small town* (selection of photographs 2019 - 2022), view from *Peripheral vision* exhibition in Szara Gallery, Warsaw, 2022



*Greetings from a small town (selection of photographs 2019 - 2022), 10,5x14,8 cm*



*Greetings from a small town (selection of photographs 2019 - 2022), 10,5x14,8 cm*



*Greetings from a small town (selection of photographs 2019 - 2022), 10,5x14,8 cm*

## Radzionków regains access to the sea

The video Radzionków regains access to the sea is a record of an artistic action designed to symbolically secure the little town's connection with the sea. It involved transporting simplified model of the MS Radzionków ship to the Hel Peninsula. The model was borrowed from Primary School No. 1 in Radzionków. The film is accompanied by a text read out by the artist's brother, which is an alternative interpretation of the Radzionków monument commemorating the ship.

The choice of a maritime theme is all the more unusual as Radzionków is located in the heart of Silesia - five hundred kilometres from the place where the ship was launched almost fifty years ago.

In 2020, a paper issue of *Głos Radzionkowski* reported on the planned construction of a lighthouse in the town. The news that turned out to be a prank was also a reference to a joke told by the town residents for many years.

The joke was born in 1998 when Radzionków became once again an independent municipality, after it had been separated from Bytom, and in order to celebrate that restoration of independence, several events took place, during which the residents with a greater sense of humour predicted what direction the city should take. The most frequent slogan was reportedly: „Radzionków demands access to the sea!”.

The work touches upon the themes of identity manifesting itself in smaller towns in many different ways. Attempts to create a narrative about a place, made unofficially by its residents may sometimes assume surprising forms. If, for a moment, we leave aside the content analysis and look at the overall structure instead, it becomes clear that we are dealing with a phenomenon characterised by great freedom and individualism. It includes various micro-narratives, alternative to the mainstream ones, which cannot be easily contained by a specific, rigid framework.

video: <https://vimeo.com/735745491>

*Radzionków regains access to the sea*, HD video 6'39", 2021



## Portrait of The Observer

The work was created in collaboration with Janusz Meszek.

It presents a full-scale portrait of Maciej Cholewa, co-created with Janusz Meszek, self-taught artist from the Dąbrowa Górnica area. The co-creator has his own garden with many original artefacts made using various media.

Janusz Meszek's works illustrate the phenomenon of creatively modelling one's neighbourhood resulting from the need to actively transform the space around you. It stems not only from purely aesthetic needs, but is also an attempt to narrate an everyday reality that cannot be captured by verbal communication alone.

The work also deals with the theme of the observer/researcher coming from outside, but being both a practitioner and an element of small-town life. With the portrait, Janusz tells a story of an encounter, symbolically incorporating the work into his area. In doing so, he creates an uncanny space in which the interpreting subject becomes the object of his own interpretation.

*Portrait of The Observer, 170 x 80 x 50 cm, styrofoam, acrylic paint, 2020*

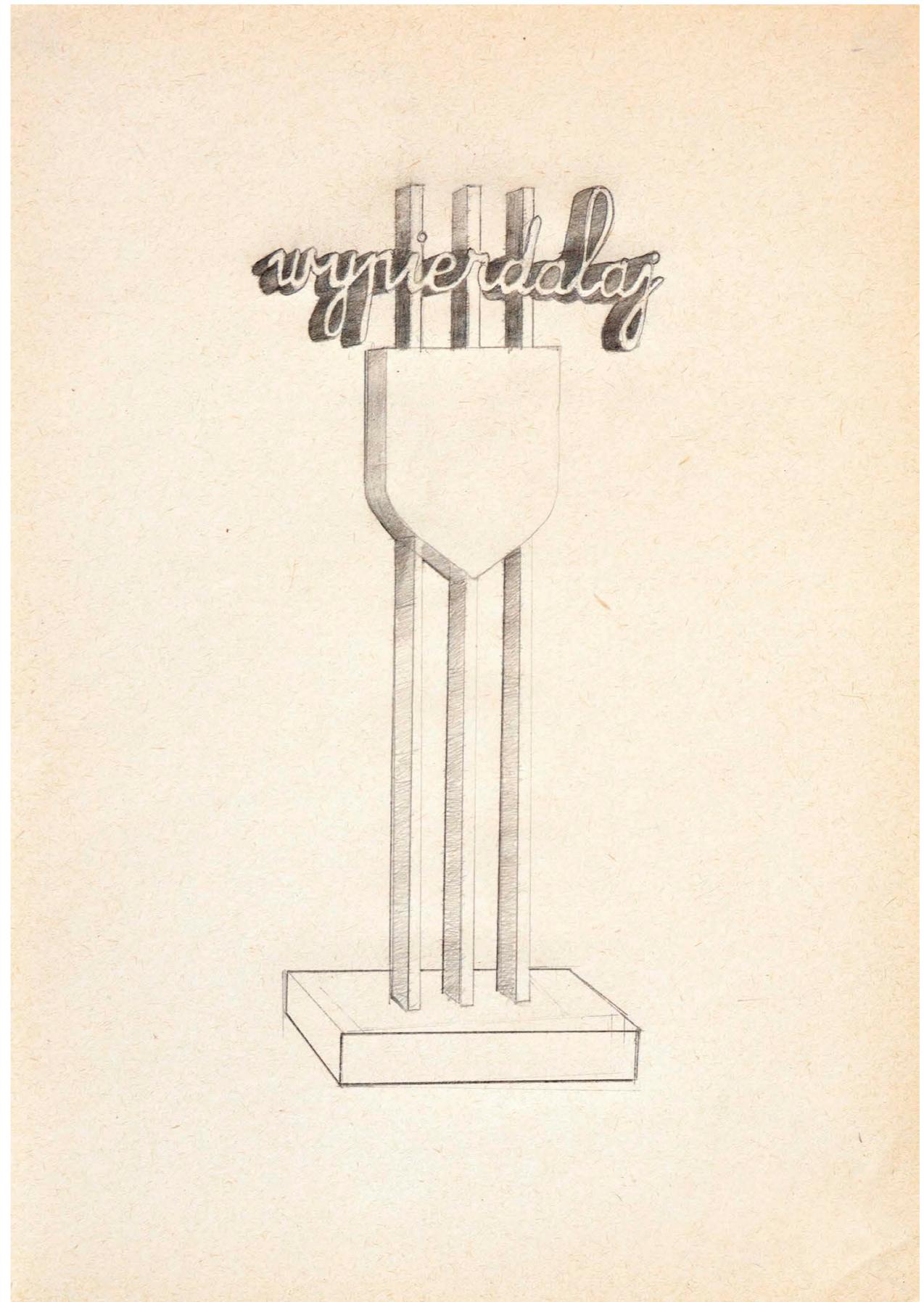


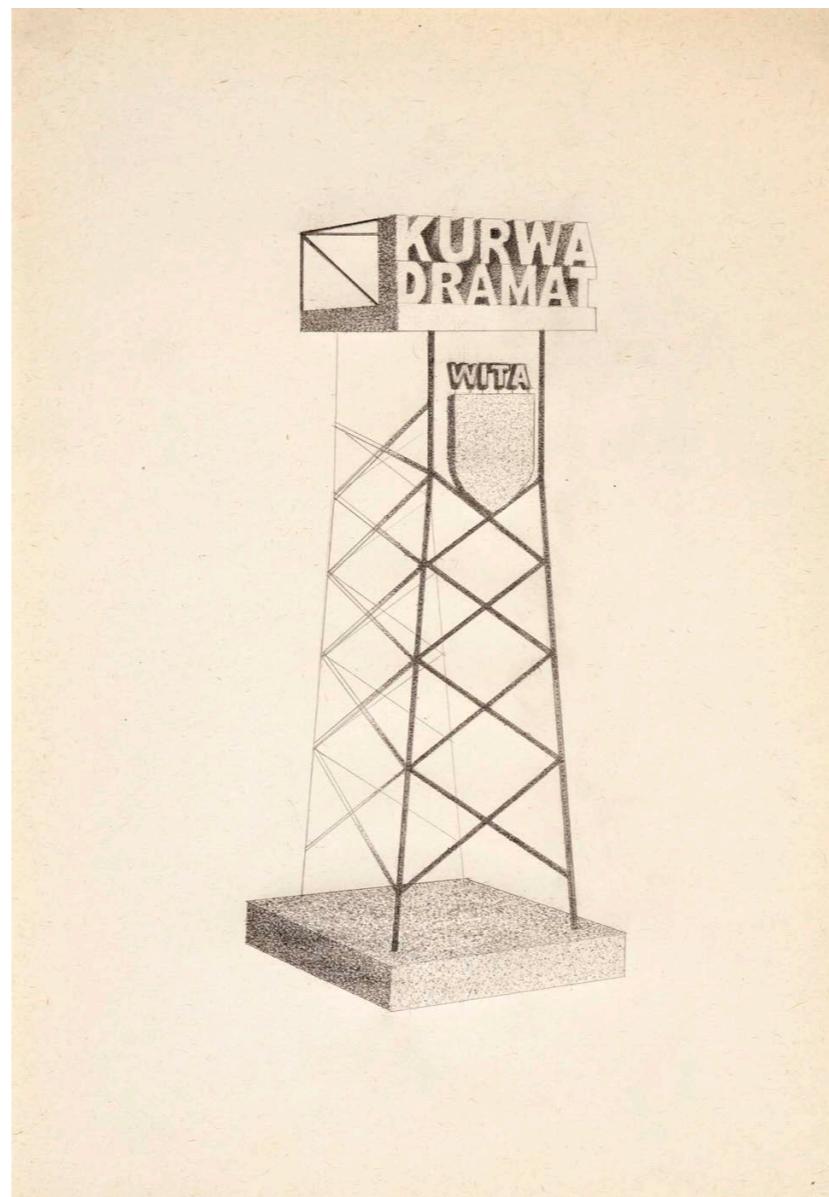
## Inhospitable communes

Welcome signs at the entrance to towns were an important piece of street furniture, which, by means of a simple symbol, were supposed to highlight the character of the town or its hospitality. Nowadays, their form is subject to increasing unification that limits the room for interpretation.

A series of drawings presents designs of welcome signs relating to negative stereotypes about smaller towns. What is important, they are more or less literal interpretations of the words and opinions I heard from the residents I interviewed. The casual manner of conducting the conversations encouraged frank, often politically incorrect comments on everyday life.

Welcome sign design for inhospitable commune (1/4), 20 x 30 cm, pencil on paper





Welcome sign design for inhospitable commune (2,3,4/4), 20 x 30 cm, pencil on paper

## Make Radzionków Great Again

The inscription on the cap refers to the slogan: "Make America Great Again", originally created for Ronald Reagan's 1980 presidential campaign and used again by Donald Trump in 2016. With this paraphrase I do not intend to affirm or comment on the political reality the original is associated with. Its subversive nature is linked to the identity issues that manifest themselves in local communities in different ways. The call for returning to greatness juxtaposed with the name of a small town is utopian in nature. The grand, superpower narrative is rejected here in favour of a micro-narrative, narrowed down to peripheral everyday life and the pride of living it.

The multiplied caps became an element of a particular happening, continuing within and beyond the town's borders thanks to the people wearing it.

*Make Radzionków Great Again [walker]*, 200 x 60 cm, steel bar, red cap, embroidery, 2021



# Myth of a Small Town

A Myth of a Small Town interweaves a projected image of a town with interpretations of stories overheard from small town residents. The exhibition narrative is formally developed as a literary publication inspired by local papers (A Myth of Small Town) and in the form of videos, installations and objects resulting both from a literal as well as a symbolic analysis of a universal small town into its constituent parts.

An excerpt from the paper A Myth of a Small Town:

*Borders of a Small Town aren't distinct. They blur at the very place where the last cubical houses, coated with a Styrofoam insulation and pebbles, give way to the fields, artificially grown woods and orchards. You couldn't tell whether the sparse buildings intervene into nature, or rather nature devours the urbanised areas. The geographical location is favourable to the town, which permeates nature and is perfectly camouflaged by her. Also the residents, hidden within it, remain invisible to an external observer. They avoid perils lurking behind its invisible borders, and a majority of the residents has long forgotten the world existing beyond its limits. Another world might not exist at all. They let the town and its surrounding natural environment to ingest them, turning into its integral part, contributing to its complex and insular organism.*

Publication: <http://bit.ly/2ni79QK>

view from Myth of Small Town exhibition in w CSW Kronika, 2017



## City's Crest

The work was made of concrete, a substance from which a city is literally made of, it's pavements, small architecture that is something permanent and cohesive this has to emphasize one of the most important features of a small town – the integrity understood in a positive and a negative way at the same time.

An excerpt from the paper A Myth of a Small Town:

*The city's crest was made of concrete. It weighs several hundred kilos. It's heavy and overwhelming.*



Concrete 110 x 80 x 30 cm, weight c. 200kg, 2017

## Untitled (Behaton)

Work is composed of concrete paving stones *Behaton* characteristic for Polish cities. One of them contains pieces of artist cervical spine.



45 concrete paving stones, pieces of cervical spine C3 - C6, 2017

## A story of Poles

After the fall into lethargy, caused by a catastrophe, it is hard for small towns to awaken a new world. In the video, people who live in the unspecified, universal Small Town, over time agree with their fate and turn into concrete telecommunication poles. Sometimes such posts take root at the other end of the world, but the lines connecting them to the Small Town remain strong.

Video: <https://vimeo.com/220306202>



HD video 3`30" 2017

## A history of a gate

An installation pertaining to the story of the same title. It's a story of a gate and its explosion that caused a death of two people, based on facts. It is presented in the form of object and play containing a record of the author's grandmother who tells the story of the gate.

Narration: <http://bit.ly/2o7DLvm>

steel gate, 140x100 cm, 2017



## Floor covering

An installation composed of a characteristic toy and a pile of debris underneath. Walking on the image of apparently ideal town is constricted, causes discomfort and problems with using the item as intended.



Floor covering, debris, 3x5 m, 2017

## Small town farewell

The installation shows a fragment of a story of the same title. It is an attempt to imagine an apocalyptic situation of the city's literal breakdown. Video is exhibited in a room filled with debris from the communal waste disposal site. It creates staffage, a stage design that aims to show the topic of city's entropy, where the receiver becomes a viewer of a spectacle about a breakdown and death of a city.

Video: <https://vimeo.com/220306928>

debris, HD video 5` 44" 2017



## OTHER WORKS

# They feed and defend

People's Herstory of Poland

In cooperation with Justyna Plec.

Forced labour, the restriction of movement to a minimum and the ever-present violence of the nobility defined the life of the average peasant of the serfdom period. Although the everyday life of the low, working class has been relatively well documented in the historical literature, it is still difficult to maintain the balance by being able to tell women's stories. This is often due not so much to the bad intentions of contemporary female authors, but to the scarcity of source material and the multi-level structure of patriarchal relationships. Although poor existential conditions affected the majority of the underprivileged, there is ample evidence that the oppression experienced by peasant women was exacerbated by family relationships. They were not only the property of the master, but often also of the household male population. Exploitation and the lack of any opportunity for social advancement reduced women to a utilitarian object. The lockdown they experienced in a way continues today. Although serfdom was abolished in the 19th century, most statistics show that even in the richest countries, the opportunities for women relative to men are still not equal. Our mothers, grandmothers, sisters still all too often experience domestic violence and actual, widely accepted exploitation linked to a phantasmagorical idea of the role of the model woman.

The phrase „They feed and defend” was the motto inscribed on the banners of the Kosciuszko insurrection scythe-men units. Our intention was to create a coat of arms for scythe-women, with the distinctive men's horned cap known from insurrectionist iconography replaced by a headscarf and images of women who not only fight but also feed and defend.



steell, 120 x 170 cm, weight. approx. 50 kg, 2021  
photo by Małgorzata Kujda

# Mushroom Picker Story

It's a story heard during a biology lecture that illustrates one of the stories in the city's newspaper. It tells a story of a mushroom picker who died because of an overdose of mushrooms poisoned by lead. The work is composed of a repeating video showing the mushroom picker's death and objects:

Hubs made of lead, placed around the wall next to the displayed film and porcelain mushrooms placed in various places in the exhibition space.

Fragment of the narration:

*There are many metal-bearing soils that are full of growing mushrooms. Nevertheless, some of the pickers tend to treat ecotoxicology as an insane idea of crazy scientists. There is a well known story of a mushroom picker who didn't listen to scientists that suggested that his harvested mushrooms are toxic. He believed that appropriate preparation of the mushrooms will make them free of the poisonous contamination. He laughed at the scientists and rejected any incredible arguments.*

*'It will boil off' – He used to say.*

*After dozen of years, lead and other heavy metals that gathered in his organism led to irreversible cancer changes that caused his death and the scientists were laughing that he became another nutrient for decomposers. They were right. His life and apparent death will be repeated uncounted number of times.*

Video: <https://vimeo.com/220309199>

HD video 1`30", lead, 19 objects 5 x 5cm to 15 x 15cm, 2016





lead, 19 objects 5 x 5cm to 15 x 15cm, 2016

## Sharing the table

It is an extension of the earlier work, titled The Mushroom Picker-Story.

Small objects hidden in several places in the gallery represent decomposers, organisms that constitute the last stage of the food chain. Feeding on organic remains, these creatures devour our bodies to bring about a kind of reincarnation, dissolving what's left of us into billions of particles that will circulate in the natural cycle for all eternity, or at least until planet Earth ends its relatively short life. As a matter of fact, decomposers have no ill intentions towards us. They do not care about wars, geopolitical changes or any kind of culture. The disappearance of humans will make little difference to them. When they have digested our bodies they will simply find new ones. A large group of such organisms consists of fungi. Some of them are known for their toxic properties. Lead present in exhaust fumes, tyre residues and even that naturally occurring in metal-bearing soils brings us closer to the point where our dead bodies become food for all kinds of microconsumers. And although we don't notice each other, it is certain that we will all meet again quite soon.



lead, 20 objects 1 x 1cm to 20 x 20cm, 2019

## Father talks about Supersam

The work includes a story told by the author's father and a processed video found on the internet. It recalls the memory of a Jewish cemetery that no longer exists, called Judol by local children. In the 1970s, the necropolis was demolished to make room for the construction of one of the first supermarkets in Silesia.

The project is rooted in history, while at the same time it subscribes to Michel Foucault's proposed notion of anarchoeology - it reveals and presents the hidden, understated history of parts of the city and its melancholic states.

Video: <https://vimeo.com/315215397>

HD video 3' 50" 2019



## Those that carry light

The work consists of a plaster object referring to the characteristic gesture of blessing known from many religious representations. The blessing usually performed with the right, masculine hand of Christ or saints, was replaced by a cast of the left hand of a woman, in which the ring finger and index finger were covered in gold.

The object is accompanied by an audio recording of an excerpt from Friedrich Nietzsche's *The Joyful Wisdom* (fragment 125, translation by Leopold Staff). An important role was given to the narrator, who is also a symbolic figure. The text is read by Roman Kostrzewski, leader of the legendary heavy metal band Kat, who has often been accused of Satanism.

Link to the recording (in Polish): <https://tiny.pl/7kn71>

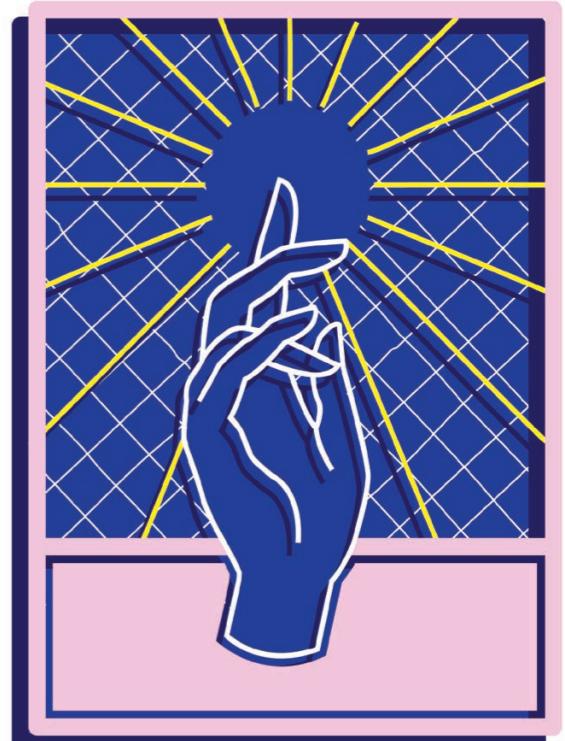
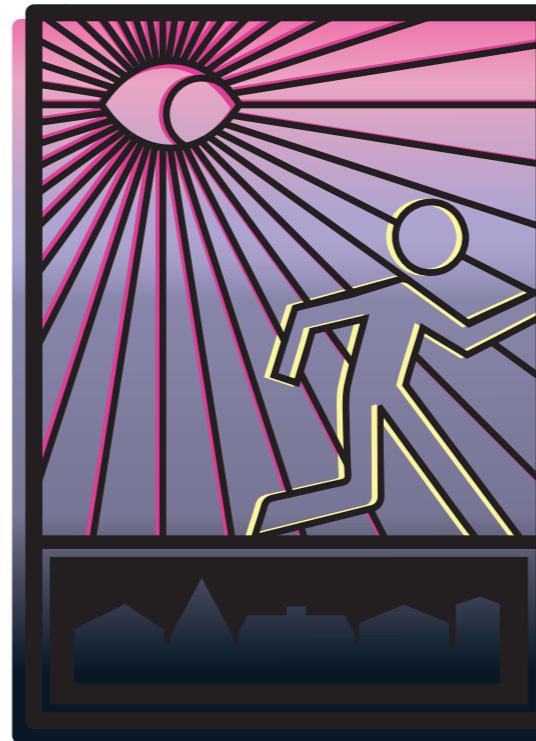
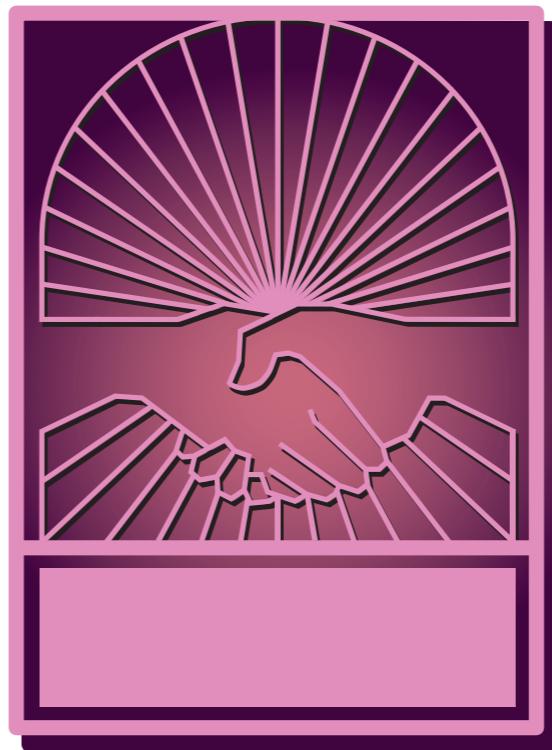


ceramic gypsum, golden metal leaf, voice recording mp3 320 kbps 5'37", 2018

## Gates design

The works are inspired by metalwork, typical of suburban Poland and small rural communities. Beyond their obvious functions and representational role, gates are a form of visual communication, carrying local mythology, symbolism and identification of a particular social group of their owners.

The objects are an attempt to visually describe the most important issues concerning the broadly-defined notion of periphery, such as gentrification, formation of new civic attitudes, hospitality and inhospitality.



*The Gate open to everyone*, 50x70cm, pigment print, 2021

*The Gate for all those who are not afraid*, 50x70cm, pigment print, 2019

*The Gate for all of those who left small towns and gone to Warsaw*,

50x70cm, pigment print, 2019

*The gate for all those that carry light*, 50x70cm, pigment print, 2019

## A Gateway for All Those on the Sea

The design of the gate decoration was inspired by the map of Europe's Refugee Crisis, published by the Business Insider website. The object is one in a series of gateways, whose iconography refers to current socio-political issues, such as intolerance or the restriction of women's rights.



100x150x5 cm, steel, acrylic paint, 2019