



# **LAYERS OF REALITY**

Katarzyna Kowalska



## KATARZYNA KOWALSKA

She is a visual artist developing her practice in the area of painting, creating site specific installations and objects. Her artistic activity is an attempt to understand and describe in her own language the complex processes of the contemporary world, to find difficult to grasp and not obvious connections, to explore selected phenomena.

Her interests are related to the themes of the future, the city and architecture, place and its identity, as well as the meeting point of planes – the inner and outer worlds. She has systematized her artistic search in three main areas:

**"What Will Be. Reflections on the future"** –

Possible scenarios of the future and the search for good solutions to the challenges of the present,

**"Urban Space \* Immersion"** – observation of dependencies, laws and conditions shaping contemporary cities, reading contexts and processing relationships of selected objects in a specific time and space,

**"Inside / Outside"** – an attempt to discover what is at the meeting point of planes – the inner and outer worlds in the context of both human beings and architecture, place. Observation based on unconscious, instinctive feelings perceived from the perspective

of time, as well as analysis according to preconceived criteria.

Member of the Otwarta Pracownia association in Lublin. Author of several solo exhibitions, among others in TCK Galeria Przytyk in Tarnowskie Góry (2020), Galeria Wejście przez sklep z platerami in Warsaw (2018) or Galeria BWA in Sanok (2017).

She has participated in thematic group exhibitions and art reviews at home (City Gallery in Wrocław – 2019) and abroad (Secondhome Project Gallery Berlin – 2014, Galleri Heike Arndt in Berlin and in Kettinge, Denmark – 2018, traveling exhibitions after the International Mark Rothko Symposium – Vilnius, Riga, Minsk, Brussels – 2019, exhibition of the Mark Rothko Art Center collection, Riga Art Space – 2021). She has participated in symposia and residencies including twice at the Mark Rothko Art Center in Latvia (2018, 2020). She also organizes her own artistic projects (27 Hidden Images – an event in urban space as part of the Night of Culture in Lublin 2017), as well as participates in collective events (artistic situation in the framework of the Wasteland Biennial – 2022). In 2009 she graduated from the Faculty of Art at Maria Curie-Skłodowska University in Lublin (PL), major: painting, specialization: photography. Currently lives and works in Warsaw (PL).

# STATEMENT

In my artistic practice, I move on many formal and problematic levels at the same time, often mixing or excluding them. I build a wide background, from which I extract individual threads and connect subsequent points. I am looking for non-obvious connections between seemingly distant phenomena.

I deal with painting, but the issues under consideration are often developed in other media, contexts and circumstances than those initially assumed.

I started my artistic search by researching modern architecture, the concept of place and the ways of perceiving internal and external space, both in relation to buildings and to people. In my painting works I made visual transformations of architectural solids through texture, contrast and extremes in their presentation. It was an attempt to shift, or even exceed, the boundaries of the inner, emotional, intimate world and what is outside.

At the next stage of my considerations, I enter the issues of contemporary cities perceived as a historical, philosophical, cultural and sociological phenomenon, as a changeable organism that I intend to study. When the means of painting expression are no longer sufficient, they are complemented by activities in space, installations and experiments with new materials

and lighting. I also pay attention to the social and cultural identity of the selected places, the recognition of which I include in the process of artistic activities.

Thinking about cities results in reflections on the current civilization problems related to climate change and its consequences for humanity. When studying successive utopian social, technological, urban and architectural theories, one discovers huge fear and the predominance of dystopian scenarios, but also a rational need to learn about all the mechanisms governing a dynamically changing reality. The observer's curiosity accompanies the desire to seek good solutions both in the artistic expression and social activities, and in the attempt to outline a new, universal narrative on the border of art, philosophy and science.





# PREMISES FOR RENT

Situation. Group works and activities, from the area "Urban Space \* Immersion".



## LOKALE DO WYNAJĘCIA



 **Biennale  
Nieużytków**



Premises for rent is a collective project carried out within the framework of the Wasteland Biennale, an artistic event organized by the 'Group in Action' Foundation. The project is dedicated to spaces that have no or lost their use value, but often have high natural, aesthetic and ecological value. As part of the biennial, which lasted almost a month, we decided to occupy for one evening an abandoned and neglected plot of land in the very center of Warsaw to organize a vernissage there. On the plot we chose, at the intersection of Swietokrzyska and Marszalkowska Streets, the Miniature Park – a collection of buildings demolished during World War II and recreated in 1:25 scale using 3D printing by a group of architects – found shelter in 2021. Left unattended, the miniatures were destroyed and turned, like the plot of land, into a visual and functional wasteland. We were interested in the history and context of the place, what stood here and what potential it had, especially as a wasteland in the city center. As part of the artistic situation that was the vernissage on the abandoned place, instead of artworks, we were able to admire dilapidated miniatures, trash and liquor bottles behind the fence posts set up like in a gallery or museum. We also prepared a billboard, a large-format information carrier in developer style with the words "Premises for rent," which we then hung on the scaffolding standing on the plot. The event was also enriched by "information leaflets" – a series of 12 postcards with an author's photograph of objects from the destroyed Miniature Park and a description of our project.



Premises for rent | 2022 | series of 12 photographs, postcard set, 350 g paper, matte | 10.5x14.8 cm

# ENTANGLEMENT

Installation. Work from the areas of "Inside / Outside" and "What will be. Reflections on the Future."

The installation "Entanglement" consists of a white primed cotton painter's canvas, crumpled and then hung by one corner. The form resembles a crumpled, hooded human silhouette or a tent, inside of which you can look. The white, primed side of the canvas was left untouched. On the other, inner side, a painting has been painted. Its expressive background (four patches of color) are areas of distress that affect us all. The personal areas of loss, struggle, anxiety and crisis are geometric, translucent, bright planes that overlap and interact with the color patches as well. The entire piece is punctuated by a simple lemon-green line, which is the backbone and at the same time a support that maintains stability. On the floor, inside the "tent" is placed a mirror reflecting the space. This creates something like a tunnel into which you can immerse yourself. The work is the result of an accumulation of emotions accompanying us in connection with extremely difficult events and a sense of danger in connection with pandemics, war, climate catastrophe and others, which is further compounded by personal experiences of illness, care and death of loved ones.



Entanglement | 2022 | suspended installation, painting canvas, acrylic, 2 sheets of mirror, LED tape | dimensions variable (height about 160 cm)





# DESTRUCTS

Series of objects. Work from the "Inside / Outside" and "What will be. Reflections on the Future" areas.

I transformed my desire to explore contemporary global mechanisms into the act of building an architectural structure out of plexiglass waste, whose layering of planes, tangled structures would allow me to visualize the elusive systems in which we function. An architectural construction is the existing state, that which is happening around us in a broader context that we cannot see or understand because it is too complex. On the one hand, I want to discover the causes, to trace multidimensional phenomena in order to try to understand why it is so, but on the other hand I feel fear, terror that causes paralysis. This is exactly what happened when I was working on "All Our Doubts". At one point, I involuntarily felt an overwhelming urge to hit the emerging object with all my might. Or to throw it against the wall. I think that the urge to destroy everything around me emerged as a result of the enormous helplessness accompanying me in relation to the observed mechanisms. I refrained from destroying the object in order to take a deeper look at the feeling that emerged. I decided to construct other similar constructions only to subject them to various processes of destruction in a more deliberate manner than impulsive physical action.



Destruction 1 | 2021 | plexiglass, LED strips, acrylic paint | 55x60x45 cm





WE  
ARE  
OPEN  
HEIM

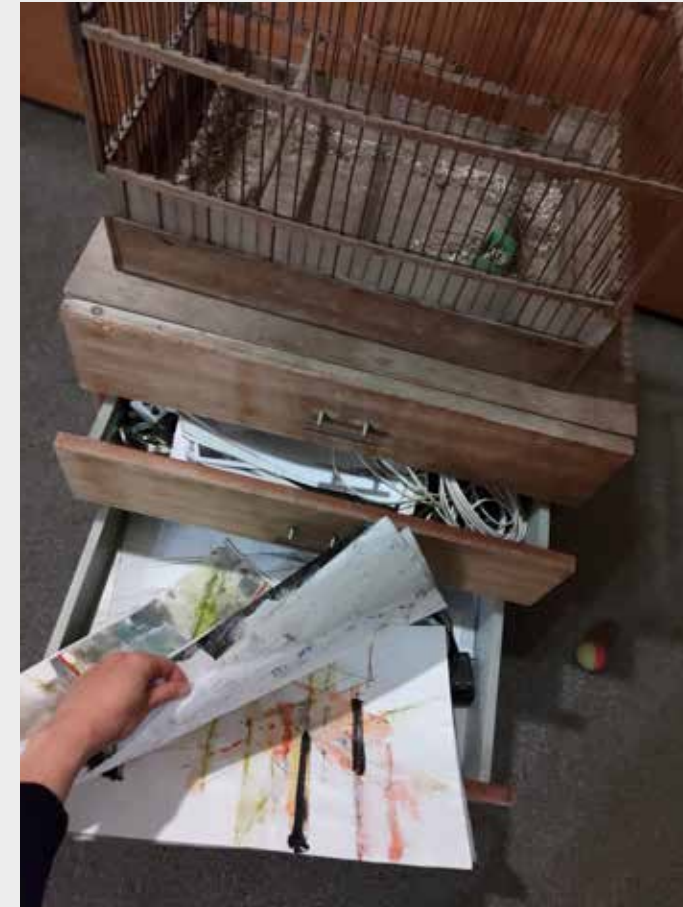
BE  
ER

# ARCHIVE OF THOUGHTS

Installation. Work from the  
"Inside / Outside" area.

The ready-made installation was created during the pandemic of 2021, at a very difficult time for me personally, with the accumulation of crises. On the one hand, it is an attempt to sum up a certain stage in my life and, at the same time, the work I have done in the area of art. On the other hand, it is a story about objects temporarily taken out of the context of a place, which I give new meanings for the needs of artistic activities.

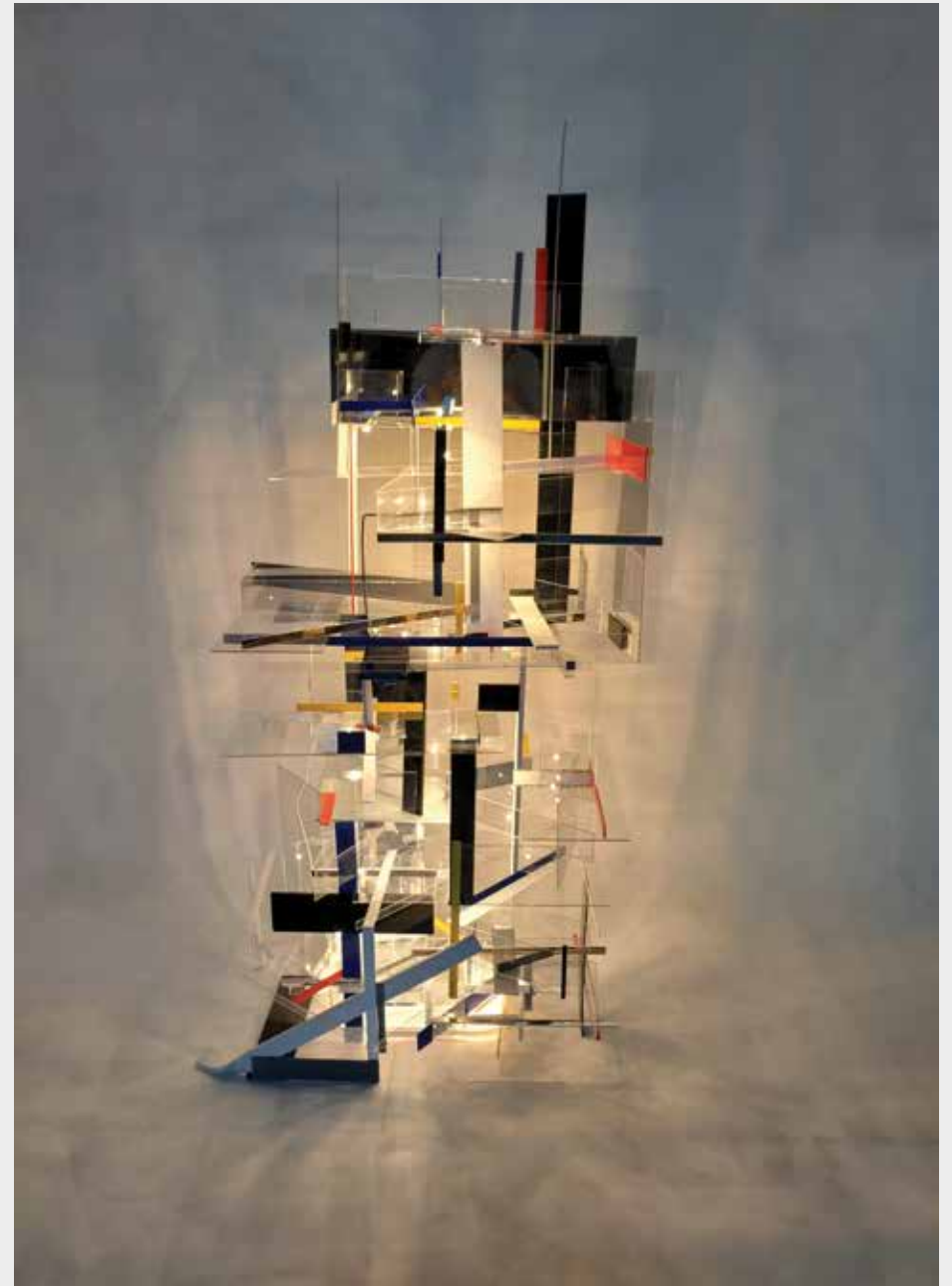
Anxiety and the need to put in order the chaos around me brought associations with useless pieces of furniture that were once used to store and organise various things. Now they serve as a dusty archive of waste. The background against which the spectacle of the present takes place, everyday life goes on, and we make an effort to function normally in a changed, more and more difficult reality.



# ALL OUR DOUBTS

Object. Work from the "Inside / Outside" and "What will be. Reflections on the Future" area.

The present times in every dimension are characterized by complexity, disillusionment, uncertainty, and anxiety. We observe the growing complexity of social life and the emergent processes that shape it. The phenomena occurring are difficult to describe, impossible to predict, and often we do not know how they arise. No one is able to comprehend them entirely with reason, to order interactions between individuals, objects or events. Recognizing contemporary mechanisms that generate difficulties, I attempted to build architectural constructions whose layered systems of planes and tangled structures would allow me to visualize the elusive systems in which we function.



All our doubts | 2021 | plexiglass, LED strips | 120x50x35 cm





View of "Windows '21" exhibition | 2021 | store window at 2 Staszica Street in Lublin





# UNCERTAINTY

Site Specific Installation. Work from the area of "What will be. Reflections on the future".

Installation made of waste acrylic glass – plexiglass, rectangular plates of different lengths, widths, thicknesses and transparency, as well as colored (limited number) and mirrored elements reflecting light. The whole installation can vary in size and shape, from smaller forms that can be easily moved, to ones made on the scale of an entire room.

The installation "Uncertainty" was created and exhibited as part of the solo exhibition "Operating manual for Utopia island" at the Tarnogórskie Cultural Center in 2020. It is a form of reflection on the shaping of the future, on the dangers of climate catastrophe, oncoming technological, informational and biotechnological changes and their consequences.



Uncertainty | 2020 | Plexiglas sheets, metal rods, lighting | variable dimensions





Uncertainty | 2020 | exhibition view in Tarnogórski Cultural Centre, Przytyk Gallery | Tarnowskie Góry

# OPERATING MANUAL FOR UTOPIA ISLAND

Series of paintings. Works from the area of "What will be. Reflections on the Future".

The project is an attempt to create a space for multifaceted reflection on the times to come, both in our near future and in the inexperienced distant future. The title is a paraphrase of the thought "Operating Manual for Spaceship Earth" by Richard Buckminster Fuller, who already several decades ago warned about climate change and the limited resources of the Earth. The above words became a pretext for a closer look at global problems, resulting in several possible versions of the future observed through the prism of the present.



Drifting city | acrylic on canvas | 100 x 100 cm | 2018



Digital dictatorship | acylic on canvas | 100 x 120 cm | 2020



Rising tides | acylic on canvas | 100 x 120 cm | 2020





Sensual space to live in the future | acrylic on canvas | 100 x 120 cm | 2020

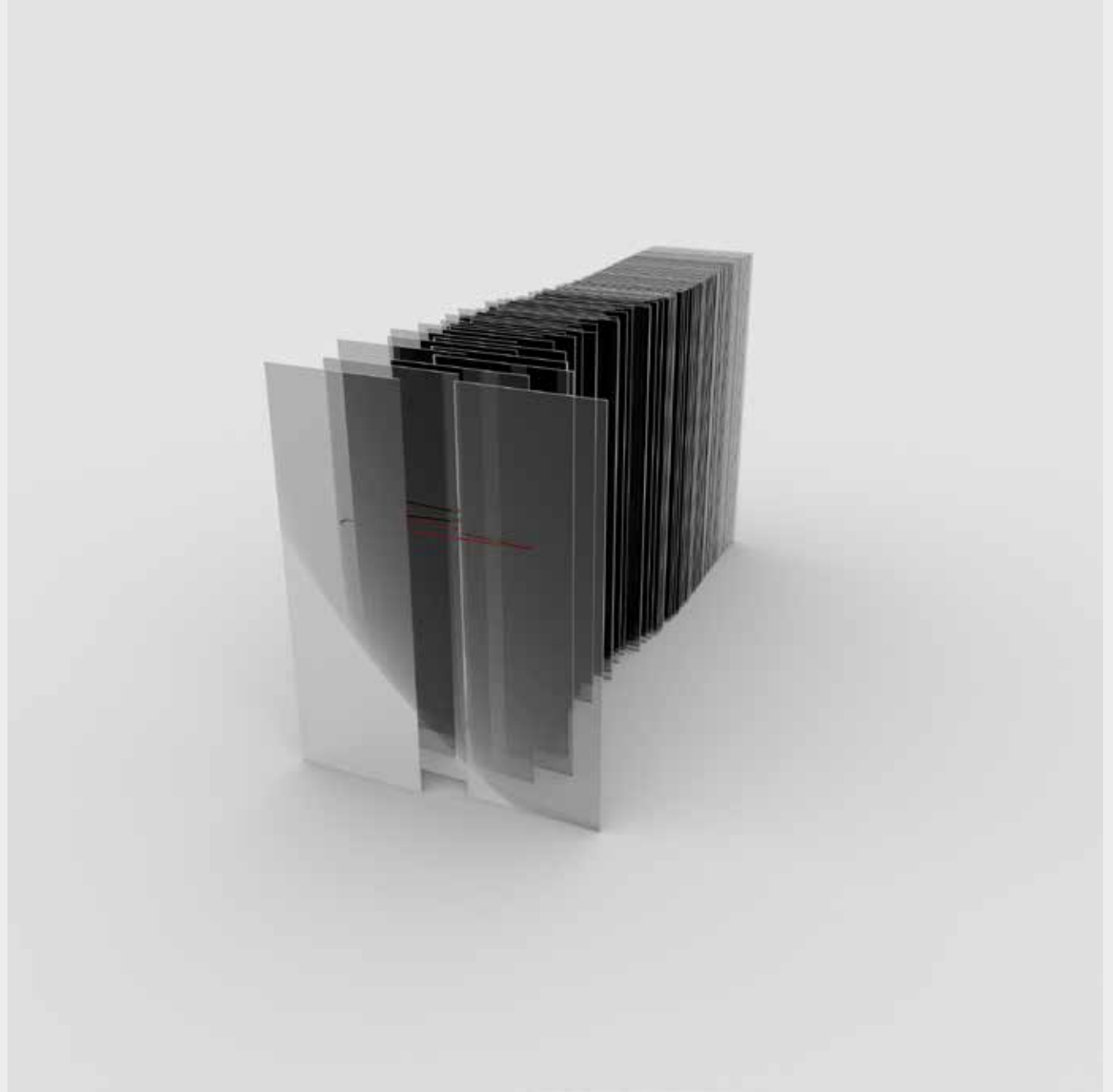
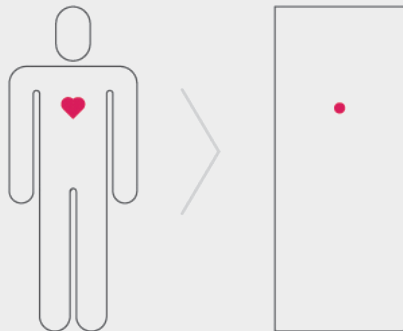


Emotional space to live in the future | acrylic on canvas | 100 x 120 cm | 2020

# PRESENCE

Site Specific Installation  
Project. Work from the areas  
"Inside / Outside" and "Urban  
Space \* Immersion".

Spatial installation "Presence" is dedicated to the Monumental Hall located in the Museum of the History of Polish Jews POLIN. The project was prepared in response to the Museum's individual invitation to participate in the competition for the concept of an artistic work. It refers to the civilizational heritage of Polish Jews, who participated in various fields of culture, art, politics, science and economy, thus contributing to the development of our civilization. It is a reflection on the fate of the Polish and Jewish nations, which overlapped and intertwined throughout centuries of their coexistence on the territory of the Polish state. It is a metaphor of the continuity of fates in spite of differences, religious and identity.



visualisations: Andrzej S.Bieniek

# INVISIBLE CITIES

Series of paintings. Works from the "Urban Space \* Immersion" area.





[illegible][illegible]



Thin Cities | 2018 | acrylic on canvas | 50x70 cm



Cities and eyes | 2018 | acrylic on canvas | 50x70 cm



Cities and signs | 2018 | acrylic on canvas | 50x70 cm



"Invisible Cities" Exhibition | 2018 | "Wejście przez sklep z platerami" Gallery | Warsaw



# HYPERCITY

Installation. Work from the "Urban Space \* Immersion" area.



HyperCity | 2018 | acrylic on glass, metal, lighting, display cube with animation | 120x40x40 cm | installation made with Andrzej S.Bieniek







# PENTHESILEA

Installation. Work from the "Urban Space \* Immersion" area.



Pentheseilea | 2018 | 27 cubics | variable dimensions



Penthesilea | 2018 | exhibition view at Galerie am Kietz | Schwedt/Oder (DE).

# 27 PAINTINGS FOR LUBLIN

Urban game. Works and actions from the areas "Inside / Outside" and "Urban Space \* Immersion".

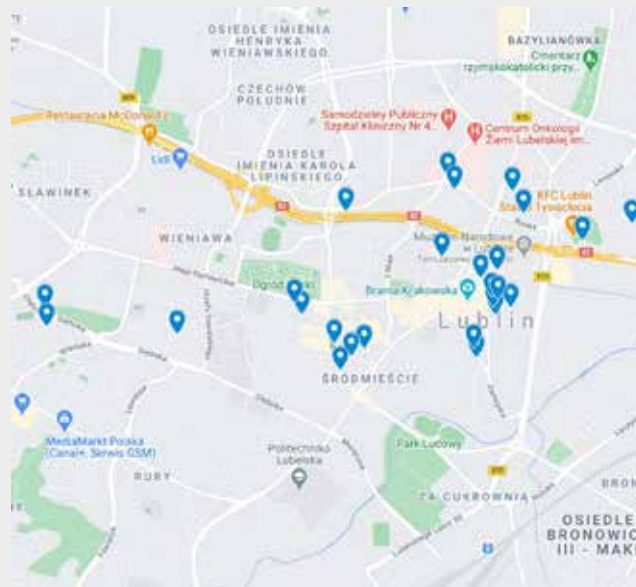
27 places, 27 paintings, each hidden. In June 2017 I invited all participants of the Night of Culture to search for lost paintings in the urban space.

A social project, it took the form of an art-related urban game. For the event I painted 27 small canvases, as many as there are districts in Lublin. The inspiration came from specific places with a special – emotional and nostalgic – meaning. In each of them I hid a painting dedicated to a given space.

Selected places were marked on a specially prepared map, which was made available online and was supposed to bring their location closer to the festival participants and those looking for paintings. While searching, we look around and thus we look more carefully at the city.

If one of the paintings is found, it can be taken away or left in the same place for the next seekers. It is important to take a picture

of the painting in the place where it was found and share the picture on Instagram or Facebook with the hashtag #27obrazow.















# OLFACTORIC PICTURE

Object. Work from the areas of "Inside / Outside" and "Urban Space \* Immersion."



During my summer residencies in Berlin in 2017 and 2018, I conducted observations and activities in the central districts of the German capital, related to the analysis and comparing the quality of visual space. Finally, the project focused on printed materials, stickers and painted messages, creating a colorful background of the city. Paper messages accurately reflect the process of information overproduction in the contemporary world. While collecting visual information, my attention was drawn to places heavily covered with posters, walls and poles with accumulated masses of paper, moist and falling off under its own weight. One such roll of paper served me as research material, and then became the basis for creating the object "Olfaktoric picture". Cutting off a thick roll of posters glued one on top of the other allowed me to observe its successive layers. The closer to the center the more moisture, mold and intense odor. Creation of a small object with such a strong and unpleasant smell is to investigate the possibility of transporting it, storing and preserving it for further experiments.



Olfaktoric picture | 2017 | fragments of old posters, wallpaper glue, canvas | 20x20 cm







# PERSPECTIVE LANDSCAPES

Series of Paintings. Works from  
the area "Inside / Outside"

"Perspective Landscapes" is a story about the meeting points of our interior and exterior, translated into the visual language of architecture. The abstract painting series shows interpenetrating, complex systems of planes, creates a space built of non-existent, transparent architecture, non-places and imaginary worlds in such a way that we do not know whether we are observing them from the inside or the outside. These observations are accompanied by the state of inner stoppage and reflection, which makes us seem absent, drifting with our thoughts between reality and imagination.



Multiperspective Landscape 1 | 2014 | acrylic on canvas | 80×120 cm

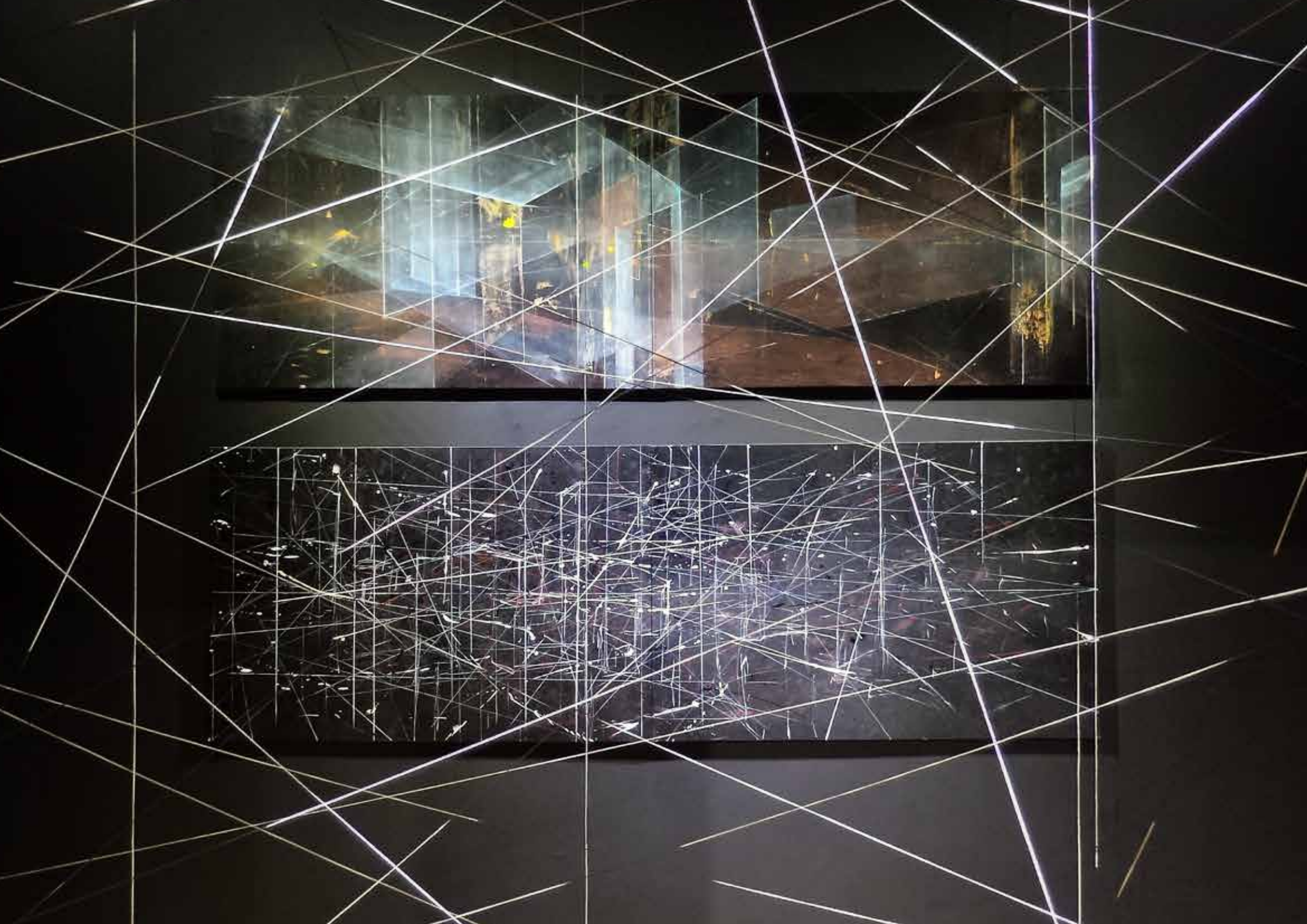


Multiperspective Landscape 2 | 2015 | acrylic on canvas | 80×120 cm



Multiperspective Landscape 3 | 2015 | acrylic on canvas | 80×120 cm



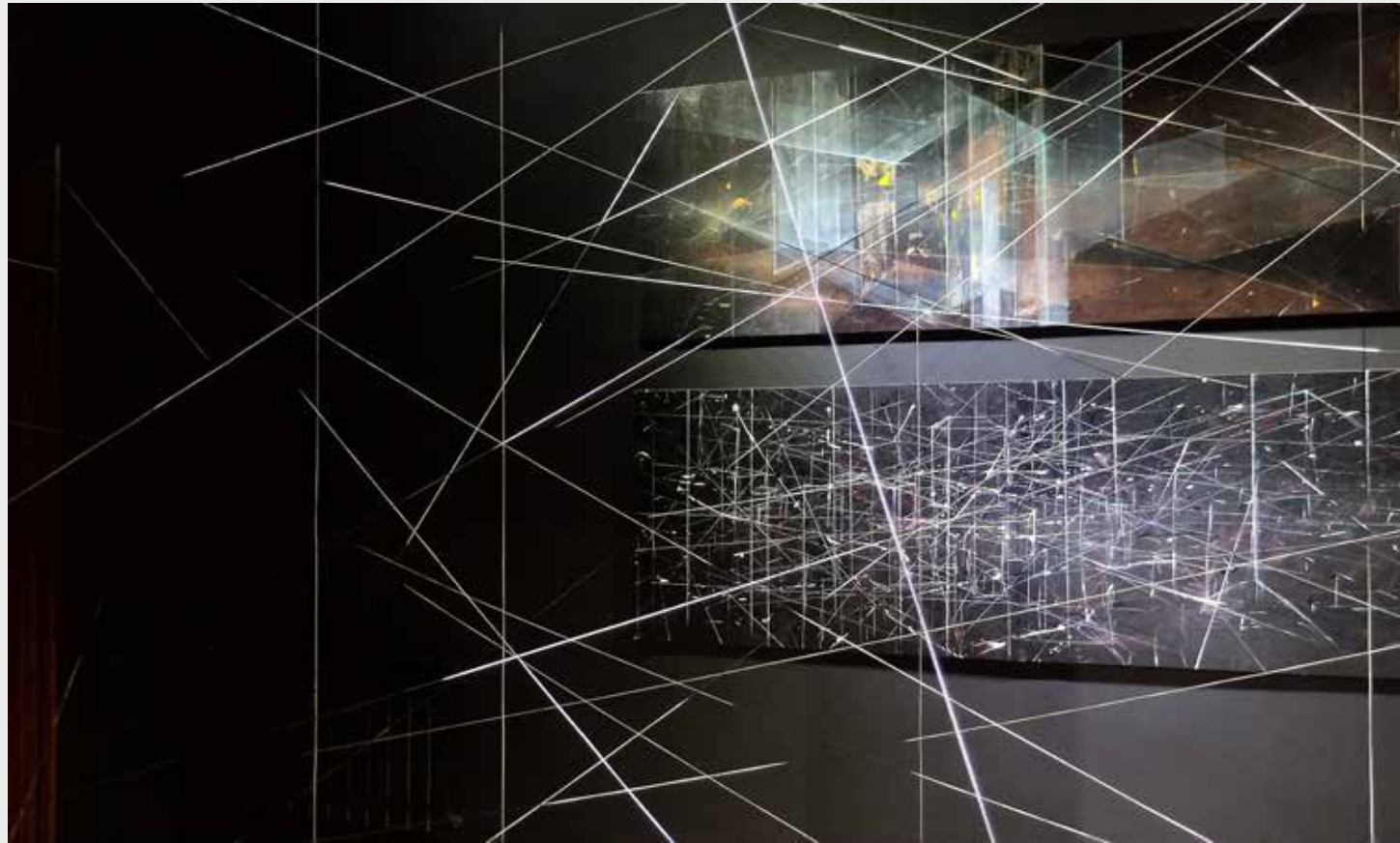




# DEFRAMESTRATION

Site Specific Installation. A work from the "Inside / Outside" area.

A site specific installation that crosses the boundaries set by the technique in which the work was made. It was created at the BWA Gallery in Sanok during the solo exhibition "Experiencing Space" in 2017. It is based on two paintings: "Multiperspective Landscape 6 black" and "Multiperspective Landscape 7 black" from the series "Perspective Landscapes". It is an attempt to take the planes composed on canvas beyond the framework of two dimensions and transfer into three-dimensional, real space so that the viewer can physically immerse in the world created in paintings.



# BRUTALISM

Series of Paintings. Works from the "Inside / Outside" area.



Non-existent spaces | 2015/2019 | acrylic on canvas, plaster, wikel glue | 100×270 cm



The painting series "Brutalism" is the raw architecture of concrete in its tangible concreteness, squat, out of the context of the place and somewhat unreal. The surface of the painting is like a relief, it wants to be touched. Buildings are strange hybrids of structural solutions consisting of quotations and fragments of the latest architecture. We can recognize some places by them, but the transformations made create new blocks, non-existent and often impossible.



Museums | 2013 | acrylic on canvas, gypsum, wokol glue | 100×180 cm



# ABSTRACT COMPOSITIONS

Series of paintings.  
Experiments in painting.

The basis of work on the cycle of geometric – expressive arrangements of surfaces were formal experiments: spatial – compositional, color and extending painting techniques with various tools, materials, or even weather conditions. In the multi-layered structures created, great emphasis has been placed on texture and contrast achieved by transparent techniques of glazing and gesture painting. The rich texture, apart from traditional painting methods, is created by communist flock wallpaper from abandoned buildings, pieces of paper from notebooks written in elementary school, insulating tape, ground coffee, different consistencies of glues, frost, paint splatters used many times, squeegee marks, waste from artistic activities collected and reused, and many other objects.



Flying away | 2011 | acrylic on paper glued on PVC foam, black, wooden, matt frame | 100×100 cm





80×80=6400 | 2013 |  
collage, acrylic on canvas | 80×80 cm



60×90=5400 | 2013 |  
collage, acrylic on canvas | 90×60 cm



110×40=4400 | 2013 | collage,  
acrylic on canvas | 110×40cm



## CONTACT

[www.katarzyna-kowalska.com](http://www.katarzyna-kowalska.com)

[kontakt@katarzyna-kowalska.com](mailto:kontakt@katarzyna-kowalska.com)

+48 508955823

## STUDIO

Żoliborz, Sady Żoliborskie 3a/1 str, Warsaw

Facebook: /KatarzynaKowalskaART

Instagram: /katarzyna.fif.kowalska



**XK**