GREGOR PODNAR

Additional Scenes
Curated by Katarzyna Różniak-Szabelska
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In the 1970s, students and graduates of the Leon Schiller National Film, Television and Theatre School in Łódź formed the avant-garde collective Workshop of the Film Form. Making use of the school's technical infrastructure while rebelling against its official curriculum, Józef Robakowski, Wojciech Bruszewski and Paweł Kwiek, among others, developed an experimental artistic programme centred on the analysis of the medium of film and television. The aim was to eliminate from film the elements characteristic of literary expression. Inspired by the legacy of the pre-war constructivist avant-garde, the artists rejected plot, narrative and often representation itself. In their reduced film forms, members of the group focused on perception and the material properties of the moving image, on light, film stock, editing, and sound. Rather than depicting reality, they exposed the mechanisms through which cinema constructs it, urging viewers to look at film itself. Bruszewski was particularly explicit in his criticism of emotional and expressive tendencies in art. As a result, the WFF's analytical and intellectual practice might have seemed rather cold.

Yet this apparently austere strategy was rooted in a profoundly social concern. In 1970s Poland, the film and television industry was tightly controlled by the state and shaped by censorship. The artists exposed how easily these media are manipulated. Their reduction of cinematic language to its most elementary components can also be seen as an attempt to imagine a different mode of communication—one stripped of convention, open to direct encounter, and grounded in the need to rebuild trust between filmmaker and viewer. A closer look at the works from the collection of Muzeum Sztuki in Łódź gathered in the exhibition reveals the model of open education, collective experimentation, Fluxus-inspired humour, the redistribution of authorship, and respect for viewers as active participants in the production of meaning. Trust, collaboration, care, and responsibility for one another and for the image itself were the very foundation that made this artistic practice possible.

Even in this light, it is still striking to find the image of love at the centre of what is known as one of the most analytical currents of the Polish neo-avant-garde. Robakowski's *The Dynamic Rectangle* (1971), one of the WFF's most celebrated structural films, began with a commission to Eugeniusz Rudnik, a pioneer of electronic and electroacoustic music associated with the Experimental Studio of Polish Radio. Rudnik composed an electronic score built from sustained tones and a persistent rhythmic ostinato. In response, Robakowski manually opened and closed the camera's adjustable apertures, translating the changing sound into a transforming red geometric form. The insistent soundtrack and the repeating expansion and contraction of the rectangle evoke both the movement of a machine and the rhythm of a living body. What ultimately emerges is a pulsating constructivist heart.

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Although Małgorzata Potocka never became a member of the WFF, during her studies at the Łódź Film School she remained closely associated with its circle. As both a director and an actress, she approached similar concerns from a distinct perspective. Through optical devices and acts of introspection, she explored how film and television construct representations and continuously reshape the viewer's

perception (*Corrections*, 1983). She expanded the conceptual language developed around the group by applying analytical methods to her own body and image as an actress. Her 1980 photographic series *Notebook (My Body)* was created on the set of a Czechoslovak film, in which she was cast as a tennis player watched in a changing room by a man who was in love with her. The series reclaims control over the image of her body—not only from his gaze, but from the film's representation of her. Years later, a different kind of reclaiming would begin in the field of art history.

Potocka and Robakowski formed one of the most prominent artist couples of the period. However, her artistic practice quietly disappeared from the historical narrative. While co-running Exchange Gallery, located in their apartment, she more often dedicated her attention to supporting the work of others, and later focused on acting. Only recently, encouraged by art historian Marika Kuźmicz, has she returned to her own works, overshadowed by those of her famous partner. Their recovery reveals a significant artistic contribution and the mechanisms through which the art canon, no less than film, is constructed and edited.

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Like the experimental filmmakers of Łódź, Yarema Malashchuk and Roman Khimei were trained as cinematographers, graduating from the Institute of Screen Arts in Kyiv, and turned to visual art through a critical engagement with the film medium. Under radically different contemporary political conditions, they continue to question the cinematic conventions. The transformation of the political system in the region did not liberate cinema. Instead, it subjected it to the imperatives of capitalist ideology and the interests of the commercial film industry. The duo's recent work confronts the heroic representations of war produced by high-budget action films.

Additional Scenes features Pavlo Aldoshyn, who played a Ukrainian soldier in the 2022 war drama *Sniper. White Raven*. Following Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, Aldoshyn joined the army himself and became a soldier. In 2024, Malashchuk and Khimei brought him back from the front for three days to perform the role of a civilian. Jean-Luc Godard believed that every fiction film is also a documentary of its actors. *Additional Scenes* makes this tension impossible to ignore. The knowledge that Aldoshyn is currently a soldier prevents viewers from fully surrendering to the fiction of the moving image and directs their attention to what lies beyond the frame. Once again, highlighting the artifice of film representation opens up the possibility of an authentic connection.

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