

Nicolas Ponce, Korpys / Löffler  
Thriller  
Galeria Wschód, Warsaw  
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*What are you afraid of?*

I have been asked this question recently by my friend, curator and critic Krzysztof Kościuczuk. We were discussing art as usual when the dynamic of the conversation shifted towards more current issues and how we react to the chaos, uncertainty and fear that we both feel enclosing on us.

Krzysztof is now at HEAD in Geneva teaching students from all around – Germany, France, Palestine, Israel, Belgium.. I asked him, how do you tell someone I hear you and keep the discussion civilized, gentle. How can you accommodate so many different, sometimes radical perspectives, how do you ease that tension? Do you try to address the anxiety and doubt so visibly present?

He then told me about a work by his former student Nicolas Ponce *November 85'* — the title being a code word used among diplomats and public servants in the city of Geneva.

He then continued: *over two days towards the end of 1985 the U.S. president Ronald Reagan and Soviet General Secretary Mikhail Gorbachev met for the first time to discuss the ongoing tensions and the Cold War arms race. All of the identifying marks have been painstakingly edited out in the oneiric film of artist Nicolas Ponce. Set to a soundtrack of a late 1970s horror classic, the archive footage of the Geneva Summit is hardly identifiable, the late 19th century villa north-east of the city offers a setting that could serve well in a movie about paranormal events or a spy plot, the people captured on film make for excellent cinematic extras verging on the comical in the way they are dressed and act when the camera is around.*

It is a very hypnotizing video imbued with a strong sense of a historical event being unraveled and at the same time depicted almost like a parody – its own cliché.

*Nuclear Football* by Korpys / Löffler immediately came to our minds.

The artists focus on issues of “security” and its sociopolitical ramifications, illuminating unseen systems of surveillance and control, often from marginalized perspectives. The *Nuclear Football* (2004), narrates George W. Bush’s recent visit to Berlin from a journalistic underling’s point of view. As members of the official press team, the artists recorded the dry runs, idle waiting, and secret-service preparations at the airport and the presidential palace. Ignoring pageantry and pomp, they instead reveal what is usually hidden...

*The nuclear football is a briefcase, the contents of which are to be used by the president of the United States to communicate and authorize a nuclear attack while away from fixed command centers, such as the White House Situation Room.*

I then said – it all seems like a *Thriller* to me. We are presenting an exhibition that is addressing – in some way – our current state of mind.

Krzysztof kindly agreed to write the text for the show.