

# BWA

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# WYSTAWA KASIA FUDAKOWSKI

EN

Gallery  
Power LTD

Kasia  
Fudakowski

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Tauron Polska Energia SA



# *Gallery Power LTD*

**Kasia  
Fudakowski**

*Today energy is an industry—a big one. But it is not an industry like all the others. Energy is fundamental because it is the industry that produces the capacity for all other industries to do their work.*

Barry Lord

*Art & Energy: How Culture Changes*

You enter the gallery. Inside, you immediately become surrounded by a soft semi-darkness. Among the shadows, you notice kinetic sculptures powered by motors and containing components of electric lighting, but they seem incomplete, as if lacking the final impetus to set them in motion. Some of the sculptures may have pulsating lights and are emitting quiet sounds—indications that the gallery is functioning—but there seems to be an atmosphere of suspension. You sense that the energy required to set these works in motion is running out.

Your decision to animate the sculpture should be carefully considered, for setting the mechanism in motion involves depleting the limited power resources. By imposing a limit on the amount of energy the works of art in the gallery can consume, the exhibition becomes an experiment the outcome of which can be predicted but not guaranteed. When you decide to activate a particular sculpture, the interaction not only brings the selected work of art to life and allows you to see it more fully, but also forces you to reflect on choices we make and our responsibility for the resources we consume. As you discover each object, you come to realise that various forms of energy not only shape our experience of art and culture, but also influence the values and mindset of everyone who experiences them.

The seven interactive sculptures encourage visitors to actively participate in the exhibition. Each engagement is both an aesthetic act and a personal choice that influences the collective narrative of the exhibition. Energy serves here as more than just a source of power—it also acts as an artistic medium that engages viewers and turns them into part of the creative process. Moreover, the fact that electricity for the exhibition is supplied by one of the giants of the energy industry further inspires reflection on the relationship between art and industry.

Most of the sculptures in the exhibition use a minimal amount of electricity. The exception is the one titled *Out of Your Hands*, which is equipped with a 2,000-watt spotlight dating from 1985 and controlled by an external mechanism. Through this work, the artist seems to suggest that our control is very limited and that an individual's autonomy is ultimately illusory when faced with corporate, political, and historical forces. The artist offers a critical assessment of the mechanisms that enable creative activity and asks questions about who really wields power in the realm of art.

Kasia Fudakowski was inspired to create this exhibition by the book *Art & Energy: How Culture Changes* by Barry Lord, in which the author claims that culture and art are inextricably linked to the Earth's available resources. Lord presents the evolution from the activities of primitive humans, who were only able to rely on the power of their own muscles, to the harnessing of fire, exploitation of fossil fuels, and present-day use of renewable energy sources. He argues that each new energy source changes the way people organise their communities, communicate with each other, and imagine art. The energy transformation is currently leading to changes in power structures of the social hierarchy. An example of this process is the shift from fossil fuels to solar energy, which is changing global politics, access to energy, and mechanisms of control over resources.

*Gallery Power LTD* explores the complex relationships between energy, power, and culture, revealing their multi-layered

contemporary and historical contexts. Nowadays, when energy has become a strategic resource and the demand for it continues to grow, the artist asks fundamental questions about the mechanisms of power and responsibility.

The exhibition also draws attention to the important role of interaction in the development of a collective consciousness. Interaction not only enriches individual experience, but also creates a community engaged in reflection and discussion. In this way, the exhibition is not only a presentation of works of art, but also a call to action. Every interaction with the sculptures raises awareness of the importance of energy in shaping social values and reveals the web of complex connections between power, culture, and our everyday choices. The project is thus not only a space for artistic exploration, but a trigger for reflection on a future in which energy is a key element in building a more sustainable and equitable world.

Mika Drozdowska

## *Misery Salad* (2023)

- \* animated glass neon, wiring, transformers, toggle switch, smart plug  
PRODUCED BY: Thomas Wendler

How does food, which is a basic necessity for living beings' survival, change its significance in the context of social and cultural norms? The story of Queen Bona Sforza, who had to trade sunny Bari for Poland, where there were long, cold winters and a scarcity of fresh fruit and vegetables, provides a starting point for analyzing this phenomenon. Her weeping over a cucumber salad became a symbol not only of personal disillusionment, but also of the clash between two worlds—nature and culture, survival and luxury.

For many centuries, food has been the basis of the kinetic energy that is essential for physical activity and survival. In the past, food was a source of strength for most people that enabled them to face their daily struggles in nature and difficult living conditions. For Queen Bona Sforza, however, food acquired a different meaning. Cucumber salad, which for many was simply part of a meal, became a symbol of melancholy and loss, thus revealing how, in the upper classes, food had lost its original function.

The personal story of the artist's grandmother who, as a child, was given one pickled cucumber for Christmas, but wasn't allowed to eat the whole thing because pickles were considered "too spicy" for children, introduces a further meaning. The strict marking of portions with toothpicks is symbolic of how cultural norms influence our perception of food and its consumption.

*Misery Salad* invites us to reflect on how the fulfilment of basic energy needs, once crucial for survival, has been transformed into complex mechanisms of consumption. As food acquires a symbolic status in society and ceases to be merely a source of energy, its original function becomes distorted.

## *Mussels Motor Mouth* (2023)

- \* steel, plexiglass, acrylic paint, blown glass, steel, motor, smart plug  
GLASS BLOWING: Luke Holden, Vivianne Stroede, Francesca Langer, and Maya Harel  
MOTOR DESIGN AND ASSEMBLY: Nils Benedikt Fischer

The work titled *Mussels Motor Mouth* examines change in social preferences and cultural resistance to new resources—both of energy and food. The work is inspired by Barry Lord's reflections on how societies have shifted from one energy source to another—from wood to coal, oil, and renewables—and the consequences this has had on human culture, economy and mentality. Lord observes that changes in sources of energy affect the way people think about possibilities for development and their perception of which resources are "natural" or "desirable."\*

*Mussels Motor Mouth* explores the potential of cultivating mussels, such as the blue mussel (*Mytilus edulis*), which could not only significantly reduce the impact of meat production on the environment, but also serve as natural filters to purify water of toxins. Studies indicate that if just 1% of the world's coastline were used for their cultivation, this could provide protein for a billion people. However, cultural links to traditional sources of protein are a major obstacle to the widespread adoption of such a solution. The work raises questions about the future of alternative resources and suggests that we are living in a period of cultural "plasticity" in which shifting tastes and acceptance of new solutions are central to the evolution of societies, concerning both food and energy sources.

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\* In the context of Barry Lord's work and ideas, "natural resources" are the raw materials available in the environment, while "desirable resources" are those that societies find valuable and acceptable in a specific historical period.

## ***The Alchemy of the Hinge*** (2023)

★ steel, plexiglass, acrylic paint, light bulb, wiring

*The Alchemy of the Hinge* is a work about the interplay between the natural and technological worlds. It explores the paradoxes of the human quest for energy, which, while drawing inspiration from nature, simultaneously interferes ever more deeply with its structures.

In this installation, Kasia Fudakowski evokes the fascinating ability of the razor clam to soften the hard soil around it by gently moving its shell. Through close observation of these amazing organisms, mechanical engineering specialists have created anchors and tools that can “liquefy” sand and sediment in a similar way, allowing cables to be installed or structures to be anchored to the bottom of seas and oceans in a more effective and energy-efficient manner.

This work raises questions about the rationality of our actions: how can we reconcile the fact that we are creating nature-inspired technologies to reduce energy consumption with the fact that we are also interfering profoundly with the environment through our exploitation of it? Our duality is revealed here—the ability to admire the mechanisms of nature and, at the same time, exploit its resources.

## ***Out of Your Hands*** (2023)

★ Emil Niethammer spotlight manufactured in 1985, 2000 W halogen bulb, camera, smart plug

*How we use energy conditions us. If we are constantly calling on slaves to do things for us, that conditions the kind of person we are. If we can change day into night by flipping a switch, that also conditions us... The cultural values that each energy source brings with it condition who we think we and others are.*

Barry Lord,

*Art & Energy: How Culture Changes*

*Out of Your Hands* is an art installation that incorporates a theater spotlight manufactured in 1985, the year the artist was born. Although the spotlight is no longer used on a stage, its intense light symbolizes both the physical power of energy and the present-day need to control its consumption.

The title of the work seems to imply that control of the light has been given to someone else—the artist’s father, who uses a surveillance camera to remotely control the spotlight. He receives notifications when someone enters the gallery and decides independently whether to switch on the spotlight and for how long. This act emphasizes the element of surveillance and observation, while at the same time inspiring reflection on who is controlling the space. The artist directs attention to the autonomy of the individual juxtaposed with corporate, political, and historical forces. She raises questions about who is truly in charge of the spaces in which art is created and exhibited, and to what extent our freedom depends on external forces.

*Out of Your Hands* invites the viewer to reflect on our reliance on energy and surveillance technologies and how they affect our sense of freedom, responsibility and connection to others. How often is “light”—both literally and metaphorically—beyond our own reach and controlled by forces over which we have very little power?

## **Reasons to Reproduce** (2023)

and

## **Reasons Not to Reproduce** (2023)

✦ engraved brass plates  
PRODUCED BY: [grawerbagatela.eu](http://grawerbagatela.eu)

For human beings, energy is a crucial resource that propels the development of civilization. The installation consists of two brass plates—one engraved with reasons for having children and the other with arguments against reproduction. The work presents both the advantages and disadvantages of the decision to become a parent, while making reference to personal, social, and cultural aspects of this choice.

A dialogue between contrasting perspectives—through the close juxtaposition of the plates—invites the viewer to reflect on contemporary problems and aspirations in a world that places emphasis on both individualism and the need to belong to a community. The installation alludes to ideas contained in books written by Marvin Harris\* and Barry Lord\*\*, both of whom point out that life requires a balance between spending energy on reproduction and striving for cultural development. Read in this context, the plates encourage us to think differently about resources of emotional, social,

and vital energy, highlighting the duality of the human condition, since decisions that we make become part of a larger story and the evolution of civilization.

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\* "Anthropologists have long recognized that in the broadest perspective, cultural evolution has had three main characteristics: rising energy budgets, increased productivity, and accelerated population growth." Marvin Harris, *Cultural Materialism*.

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\*\* One definition of energy is the capacity to "do work." "Our fellow primates, like us, have kinetic energy in their bodies that comes from transforming biomass, and with that kinetic energy they can make use of the world around them to extend and intensify the impact of their energy. Homo sapiens have carried these energy conversions much further—some would say too far—not just to survive and reproduce, but to create the surplus production and population we need to develop and sustain a broader sociopolitical and aesthetic culture." Barry Lord, *Art & Energy: How Culture Changes*

## ***The Show Must Go On and Off and On and Off and On and Off and On...***

(2023)

✦ steel, motor, plexiglas, varnish, hand-blown glass, tassels, LED lights, toggle switch, wiring, smart plug

*Consciousness of time related to menstruation and childbirth was undoubtedly taught between generations of women as girls grew to a childbearing age. Our earliest female ancestors had to develop a collective awareness of time. Since we could not have survived without this awareness, and because it had to be learned and practiced collectively, cooperation among women to teach and live by it was undoubtedly our earliest and longest lasting instance of working together to achieve greater energy efficiency. Sexual energy is a primary form of energy because it enables us to reproduce our species, and this cooperation among women made that energy more efficient.*

Barry Lord, *Art & Energy:  
How Culture Changes*

This installation raises critical questions about the role of sexual energy as a fundamental form of energy in the context of women's history. The quotation from Barry Lord's book draws attention to the importance of collaboration between women in shaping a collective consciousness of time, linked to menstrual cycles and childbirth. It is also worth exploring some of the ramifications of this narrative.

Does the reduction of sexual energy to its reproductive function not overlook a range of experiences that go beyond procreation? Collaboration between women was not only a way of being more efficient but was also often associated with coercion and constraints imposed by patriarchal structures. In a society where women were obliged to fulfil the functions of mothers and caregivers, cooperation could be both a source of strength and a form of control.

Regarding sexual energy solely as a basic force for the survival of the species can lead to dangerous simplifications. It diminishes the complexity of relationships between women, who do not always strive towards a common goal—for example, the production of offspring—and ignores the experience of those who cannot or do not wish to have children, but nevertheless make an important contribution to society and culture.

The experience of sexual energy is not limited to its reproductive dimension; it is also a source of personal power, pleasure and resistance.

## ***The Dark Legend of Queen Bona*** (2024)

blown glass, steel, fabric, motor, e-ink screen, electric pull switch, wiring

Kasia Fudakowski's work titled *The Dark Legend of Queen Bona* alludes to a dramatic scene depicted in a painting by Poland's most famous historical painter, Jan Matejko, in which Queen Bona Sforza, presented as an old, hunched-over figure, sits on a throne surrounded by wealth and jewels, about to reach for a cup of poison symbolizing the imminent end of her reign. This moment, like a lamp switch, marks the demise of her power.

Just as energy has the power to transform reality, the figure of Queen Bona, her ambitions, and her dramatic end show how the pursuit of influence and significance can lead to major transformations, both positive and negative.

Fudakowski asks how mechanisms of change can shape reality and ideas about dominance in today's world. As Lord demonstrated in his book *Art & Energy*, a change in energy sources can be perceived as a metaphor for broader processes of social transformation. The shift from carbon-based energy to renewable energy sources has affected transformations in economic structures and relations between people. Similarly, the ambitions of Queen Bona and the Habsburg dynasty illustrate how the quest for dominance can lead to significant transformations in social hierarchies.

The artist encourages viewers to reflect on the dynamics of power and its dependence on available energy resources. Ultimately, changes in energy sources have far-reaching consequences. The contemporary world, in which energy plays a key role in geopolitics, demonstrates how control over energy resources can shape alliances, conflicts, and global strategies.

Today, as in the past, the struggle for influence and the drive to modify reality are important topics that require critical analysis. In a time of global energy crises and changing geopolitical dynamics, understanding the relationship between energy and dominance is becoming crucial for the future of societies around the world.