

Wojciech Gilewicz
Art Classes
Gdańsk City Gallery 2

Wojciech Gilewicz's artistic practices include on-camera performance, photography, curatorial activities, and ceramic forms. Despite the wide variety of creative media, Gilewicz prioritises painting, which he treats democratically.

The *Art Classes* exhibition is an invitation to work together in painting and other artistic domains: ceramic art, installations, performance, sculptural forms, or simply conceptual ideas. While staying in Gdańsk for the exhibition, Gilewicz will seek creative co-creation and dialogue. He is eager to make new friendships with people open to his company. His works are created through joint effort as everyone is invited to participate in the exhibition process. All they need to do is contact him: come to the exhibition, write an email, send a text message, or reach out to him via Instagram. Gilewicz's exhibit will then become a dialogue, a process created with other participants.

Wojciech Gilewicz began his artistic journey in the early 2000s, the times that preceded the profit-oriented commercial boom on painting. Perhaps this is why he has never treated painting as an object of commercial circulation between individual and institutional art collectors. Gilewicz's paintings are not finite versions. They do not exist as artefacts: their provenance is shaped primarily through the creation process, stemming from observation of the existing reality. The seemingly banal representations of fleeting moments or incidents captured in the streets, the photographic snapshots of reality are free from the pathos of meticulously arranged still lifes or monumental milestones. Their concept is based on the nature of change, careful observations of reality, and the ambiguity of representations, moments, and glances. How else can you describe attempts to paint an advertising billboard or a gas box attached to a building, or even a monochromatic painting of a canvas using the street-inspired colour? In Gilewicz's works, emanations of the surrounding reality are painfully honest and by their nature never finished – just as everything that surrounds us.

At the exhibition held in the Gdańsk City Gallery, Wojciech Gilewicz will show two painting series. One of them, entitled *New Paintings*, has been underway since 2006. It consists of advertising posters from the New York subway, supplemented with Gilewicz's notes. This is a provocation aimed at various artistic gestures expressed through graffiti, inserts, tags, stickers, and all creative activities outside the official circulation, without consent or permits, directly on the city's architectural fabric. The unpredictable world of aesthetic experiences, the riot of painterliness found in the surroundings, allow us to reflect on how we construct the world around us and what drives us to enrich our everyday lives. The series is constantly replenished with new items: a child's felt-tip pen drawings found in the trash, and a found copybook cover from the 1960s. Gilewicz keeps transferring them onto his canvases, creating thick layers of oil paint, which turns his works into almost

sculptural structures. He uses canvases with fixed dimensions of 116.9 x 152.5 cm. Forcing us to stop and focus on seemingly unimportant details, the artist captures moments as fleeting as a leaflet.

Another series presented at *Art Classes* called *Paintings 2002-* comprises a selection of ca. 160 paintings created since 2002, continuously repainted with the help of their co-creators, who are also the audience of his exhibition. The perpetual joint painting of these canvases is governed by the formal agreement, in which the artist presents himself as the sole author of the works, even though the latter are created with the help of his audience. This is Gilewicz's special wicked game. On the one hand, he denies the authorship of his collaborators, following the example of old painter guilds or Dutch painting masters, in which only one painter was named as the author of the painting created by many co-workers. On the other hand, this practice refers, among other things, to the contemporary activities of muralists covering the walls of buildings, bridges, or wastelands with their visions, with no guarantee that their works can survive repainting by their successors. Thus, the original feature of works of artists such as Banksy (even though his art is currently valued at astronomical prices) is transience as these works may be covered by other paintings by random artists. In his art, Gilewicz refers to these democratic ideas, which allow other artists to interfere with his paintings.

Gilewicz's film *Trash Walks* will provide additional inspiration for the activities at the Gdańsk City Gallery. While living in New York, Gilewicz invited his friends to rummage through garbage dumps. He looked for intriguing objects, waste, no longer useful to their original owners, but of aesthetic value to the participants of the unique walks organised by the artist. The film is a record of such walks, but also a contribution to the collective spirit and cooperation that Wojciech Gilewicz would like to offer to the participants of his exhibition. He will therefore show several objects found in Gdańsk and propose a barter. Gilewicz carried out a similar event during the exhibition at the Biała Gallery in Lublin in 2022. If the exhibition viewers wanted to adopt one of the displayed objects, they would have to replace it with another "treasure" from among things that are no longer used at home or found elsewhere. The point is not to bring anything found anywhere, but something that may seem interesting and worth showing. Objects carry different stories; they are witnesses to our experiences. They are tied to various memories and emotions. Wojciech Gilewicz wants us to share them and tell him about our feelings and impressions. He wants them to appear in the exhibition as a part of all of us and gain new life. While the artist will negotiate exchanges on-site, he will promise no bargains. The idea is to enable participation in the exhibition project and promote the partnership-based exchange of goods that can take on new meaning. Together with Gilewicz, we will give them new values.

The exhibition will be closed by Gilewicz's latest creative fascination: ceramic art. Thanks to the possibility of preparing ceramic forms from clay, firing and glazing them in the Gdańsk City Gallery, Gilewicz – aided by Grażyna Tomaszewska, an experienced ceramic artist who has been working in the Gdańsk City Gallery for

many years – will be offering a series of workshops, the effects of which will be incorporated into the narrative of his exhibition. No special skills are required to participate except for willingness, commitment, and creative ideas. The resulting ceramic forms, created with the help of both artists, will be able to appear at the exhibition right after bisque firing and glazing. The workshops will be held at Gdańsk City Gallery 2 (GGM2) at Powroźnicza Street. Those interested should register by email at wojciech.gilewicz@gmail.com.

It is time to return to the exhibition title and explain its meaning. For years, Wojciech Gilewicz has been working with people around him. Thus, his paintings, videos, performances, ceramics, and other works are merely (and as much as) the effect of his dialogue with the people who join him in the creative process. Gilewicz's works are hardly finished artefacts to be enclosed in a museum display case. They transform; they result from joint work, reflections, and creation. This is reminiscent of art classes from school years when we conjured up artistic works under the watchful eye of our mentors in mutual conversation, understanding, respect for individuality, and creative freedom. Wojciech Gilewicz's exhibition is an invitation to work together, without the pre-defined final effect, which we will only know at the exhibition. Come and visit us, and join our art classes.