

Krzysztof Jung

Performer

featuring Grzegorz Kowalski

curated by Karol Sienkiewicz

Feb 19 – Mar 29, 2025

Gunia Nowik Gallery

Performer

Krzysztof Jung (1951-1998) brought vitality, eroticism, and homoeroticism to the Repassage Gallery on Krakowskie Przedmieście in Warsaw. There, after completing his studies, he developed his concept of „plastic theatre”, creating a series of performances dedicated to his friends.

In the gallery space, Jung wove intricate webs of thread resembling spiderwebs. With his threading, he connected naked bodies, constructing protective cocoons or traps. In this sensual way, he explored his fascination with corporeality, interpersonal relationships, emotions, feelings, and the mutual dependencies they create. His performances also carried hidden messages addressed

to specific individuals.

In 1993, the Zachęta National Gallery of Art in Warsaw held an exhibition summarizing the activity of the Repassage Gallery. At that time, Jung was responsible for arranging the room dedicated to the period when he himself managed the gallery (Repassage 2, 1978-1979). Within a separate, threaded space, he placed photographs from his own performances. The original prints, preserved in the archive, are being shown for the first time in over thirty years.

The documentation of Jung’s performances, displayed on a table in the center of the gallery, is complemented by a selection of his drawings.

These works provide additional context for his performances, depicting people, places, and recurring motifs significant to the artist.

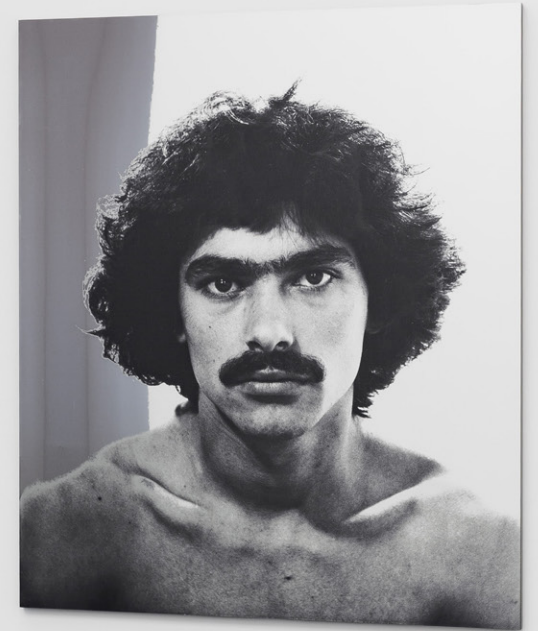
The photographic documentation of Jung’s performances at Repassage Gallery was created by Grzegorz Kowalski, who was closely associated with the gallery. As an annex to the exhibition, Kowalski has prepared a new work dedicated to his friend, entitled *Excavation*. Its main element is a portrait of Jung, welcoming visitors as they enter the gallery. Kowalski juxtaposes Jung’s electrifying sexuality with a memento mori reflection on the impermanence of the human body.

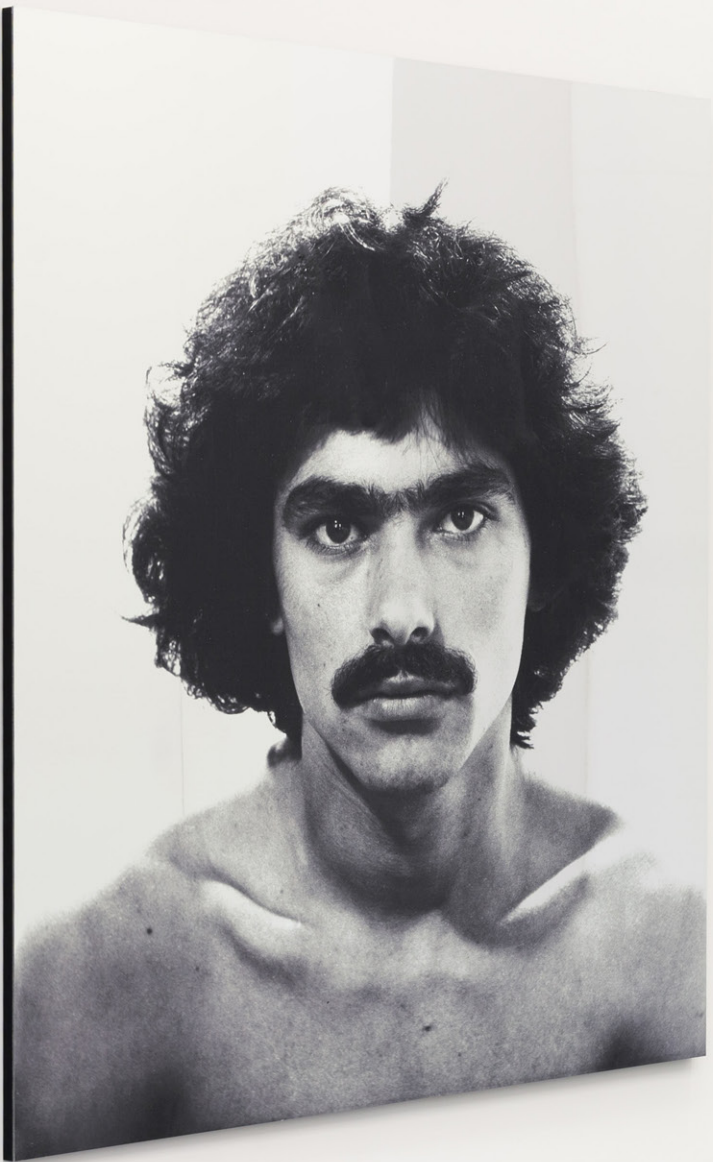
Krzysztof Jung

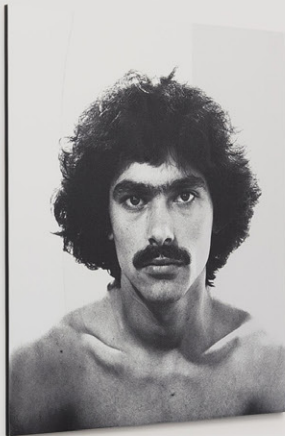
Known mostly as a performer, prolific painter and portraitist, called “the painter of trees” during his lifetime, has become more celebrated over the last few years for his male nudes, intimate drawings, rarely or never shown in public, revealing his queer side and giving an insight into his private life. His works were included in the first large manifestations of LGBTQ-related art, such as *Ars Homo Erotica* (2010), curated by Paweł Leszkowicz at the National Museum in Warsaw, and the Heritage pop-up exhibition organized as part of the Pomada 7 Queer Festival (2017). The changing reception of his works was recapped by his solo exhibitions at Salon Akademii in Warsaw (2016) and Schwules Museum in Berlin (2019). As Jung stated in his will, his friend Dorota Krawczyk-Janisch, based in Berlin, became the sole caretaker of his works after his death. For over two decades, she has been responsible for his estate, and along with his other friends, such as Wojciech Karpiński, she kept the memory of Jung, a great person and artist. From November 2021, working closely with Dorota Krawczyk-Janisch, Gunia Nowik Gallery is representing the Estate of Krzysztof Jung.

Grzegorz Kowalski

Artist and teacher, born in 1942 in Warsaw. As a sculpture student at the Warsaw Academy of Fine Arts, Kowalski studied under Oskar Hansen and Jerzy Jarnuszkiewicz. In the 1970s, together with a group of artists deeply influenced by Hansen’s concept of Open Form, he founded Repassage Gallery in Warsaw. Treating art as a language of communication, he developed new artistic forms that incorporated the creativity of others, such as his question actions—collections of visual and textual responses to existential questions posed to a group (e.g., *Could you and would you like to treat me as an object?*, 1979). As a professor at his alma mater, Kowalski integrated similar collective art practices into his teaching, shaping a new generation of artists. In the 1990s, his students, including Paweł Althamer, Katarzyna Kozyra, and Artur Żmijewski, became leading figures in Polish Critical Art. He lives and works in Warsaw.

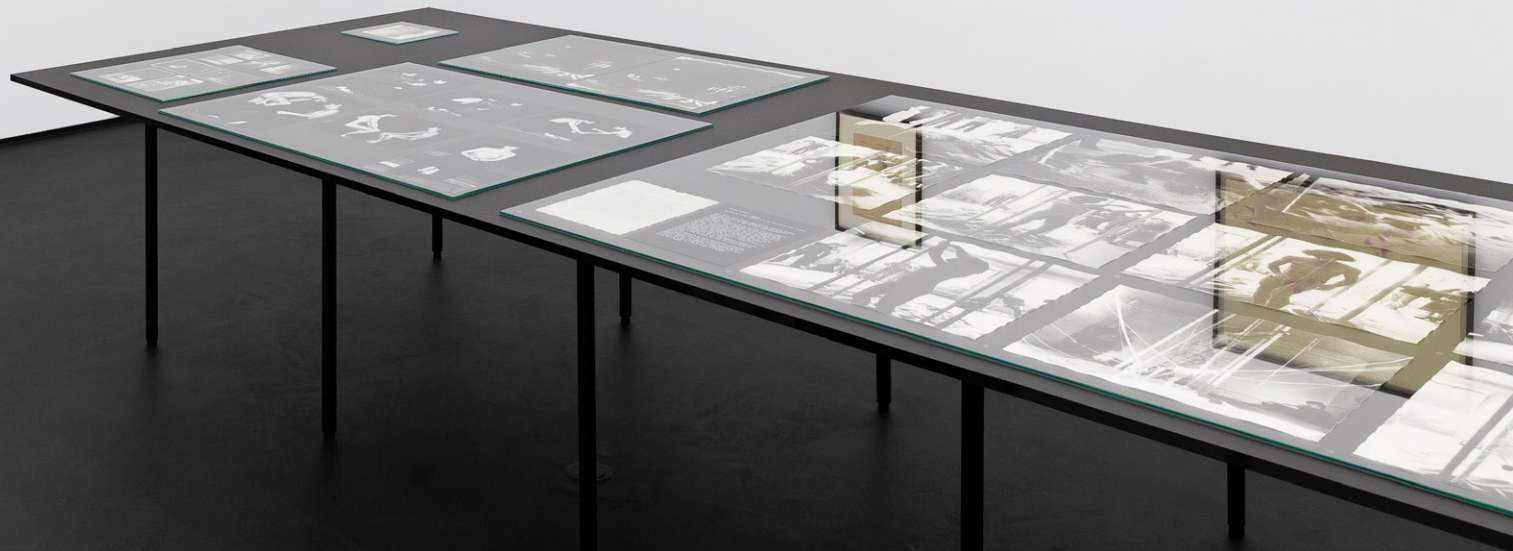






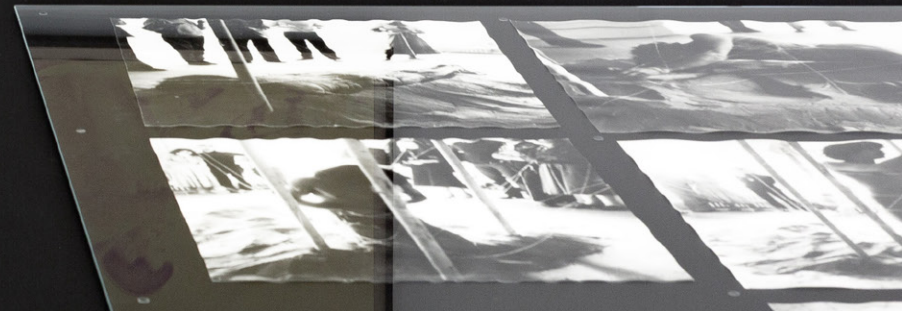
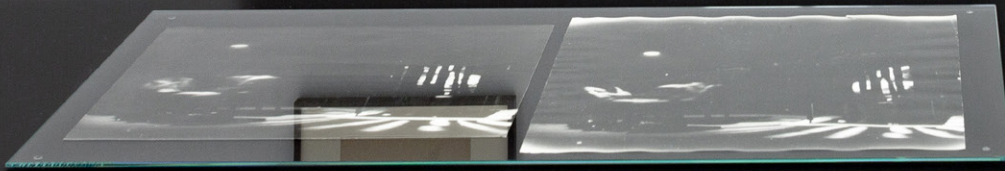












room 1

1. Grzegorz Kowalski
Excavation, 2025
UV print, dibond
137 x 117 cm

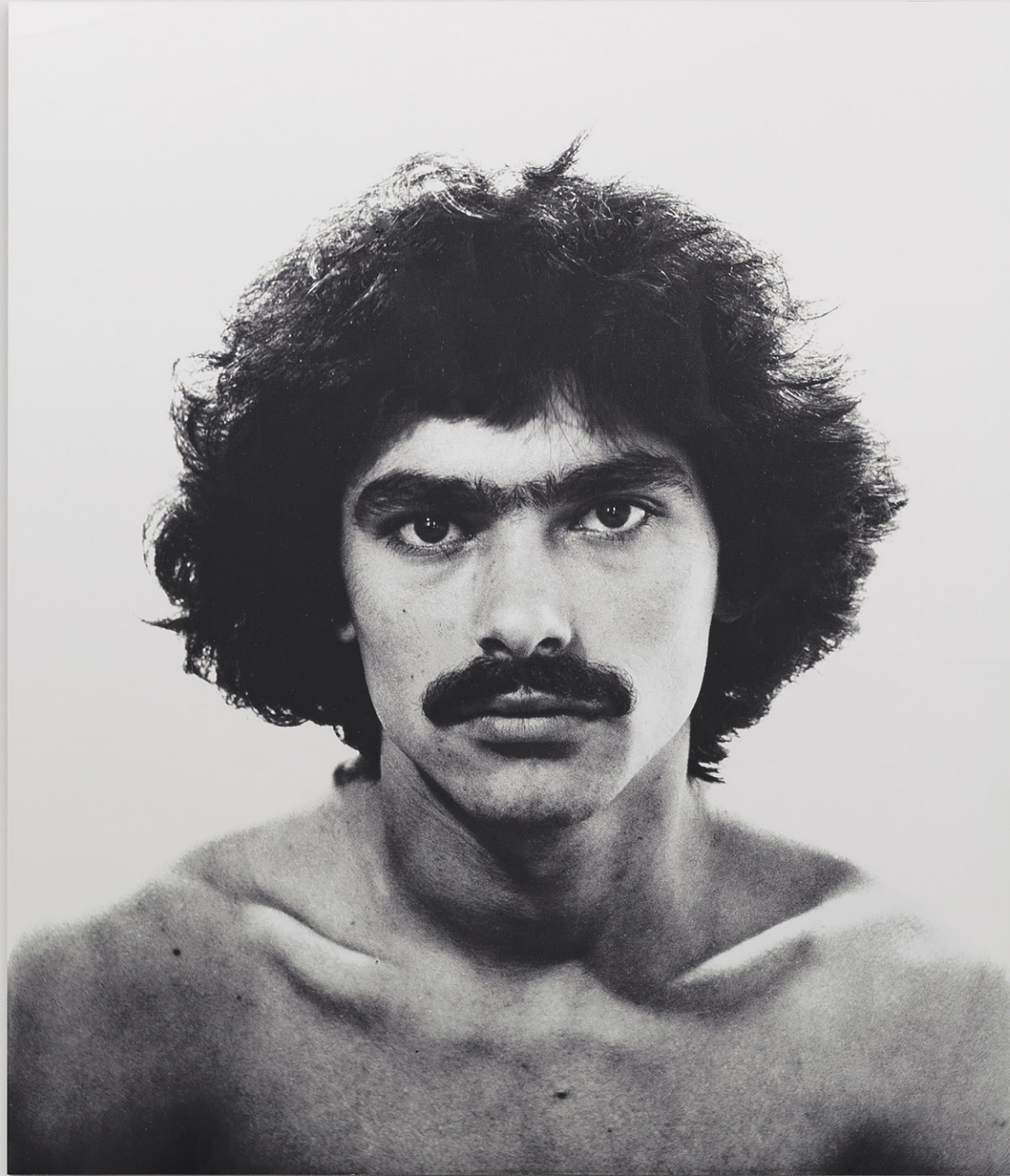
2. Unused excerpt from
the documentary *Imago Krzysia*, 2019
dir. Adam Janisch and Barbara Janisch
1'50''

[Watch *Imago Krzysia* on Vimeo](#)

As part of the exhibition, Grzegorz Kowalski, a friend of Jung and the author of the documentation of Jung's performances, created a presentation dedicated to him. It consists of two elements: a 1981 portrait of Jung printed on mirror and a short film excerpt. Kowalski used a fragment

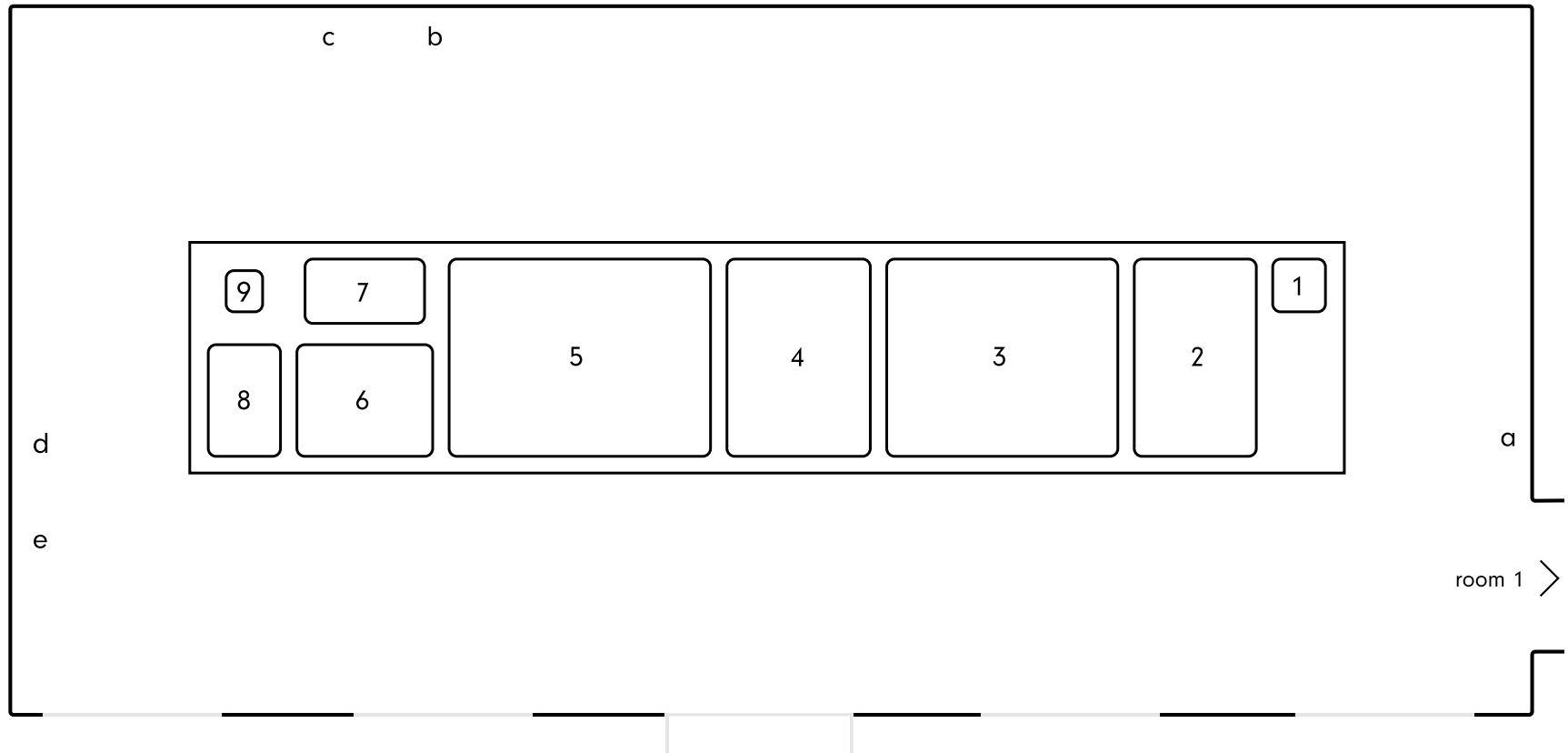
of his own statement for the documentary *Imago Krzysia* (2019) directed by Adam and Barbara Janisch, the son and daughter of Dorota Krawczyk-Janisch. The filmmakers focused on Jung and the relationship between the artist and their family. Kowalski's statement was not included in the

final version of the film. In it, he recalls dreams in which Jung visited him after his death and a recurring fantasy—the need to imagine what his friend's body might look like many years after his death.





room 2



1. Diploma studies

1976

Gołków near Warsaw

slides from the archive of Krzysztof Jung

Jung's first threading took place in the spring of 1976 as a rehearsal for his diploma thesis *Visual and Non-Visual Aspects of Space*. His friend Sławomir Gajus served as the model. The photographic studies from this project depict his bound body and

close-ups of threads digging into his skin. Threading became a signature element of Jung's spatial interventions and performances, especially at the Repassage Gallery. There, in 1977, he made his debut with *Space Tangled in Public*. In March 1978, also at

Repassage, Jung threaded a chair, dedicating the installation to Krasimira Dimczewska, a Bulgarian artist and his great love from his art school days.





2. *Metamorphosis*

March 10, 1978

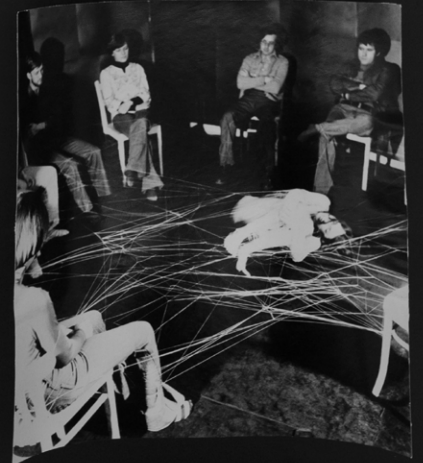
Repassage

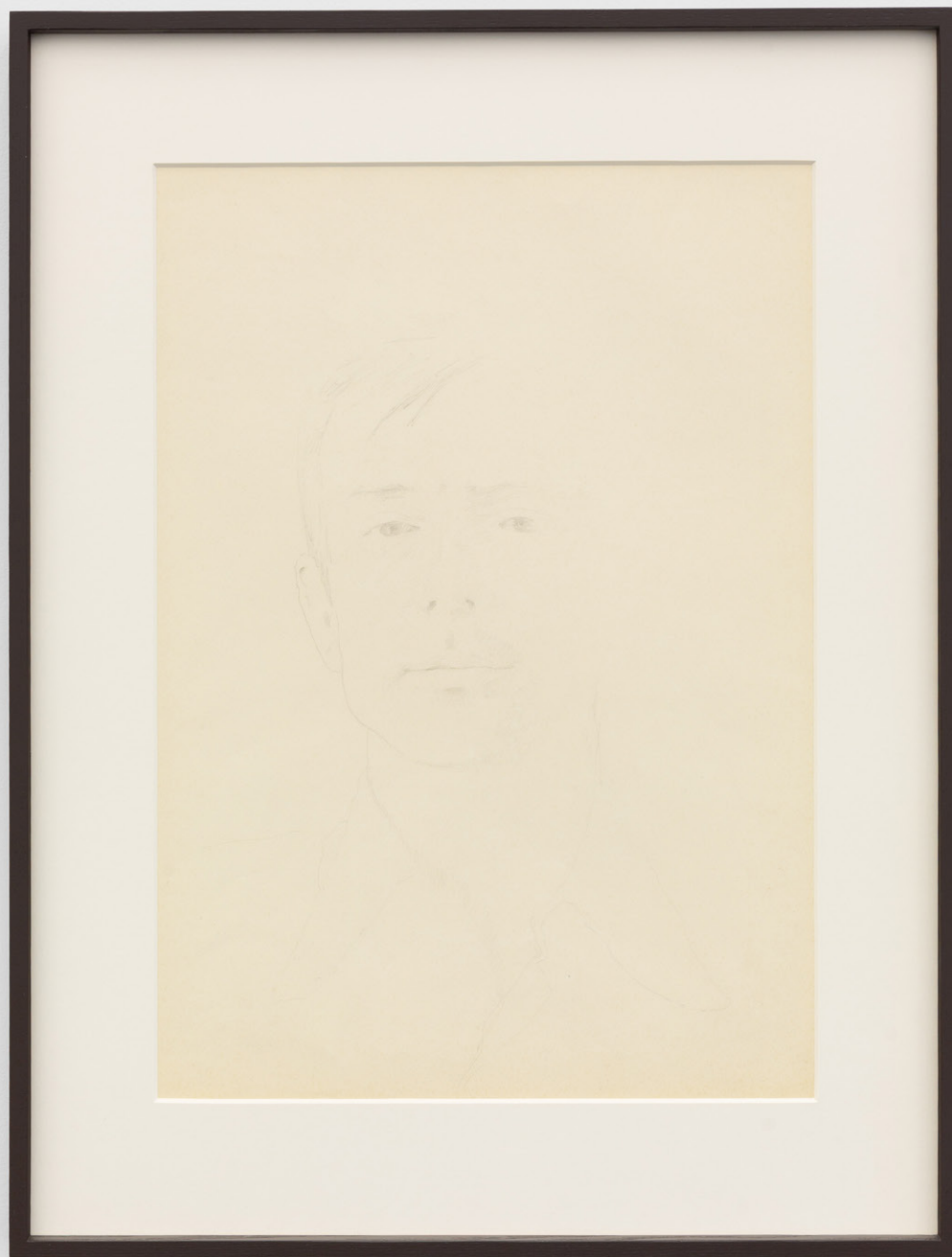
photo by Grzegorz Kowalski

Jung's first performance at the Repassage Gallery was inspired by a story by Franz Kafka. The artist connected a naked model, Ryszard Nowicki, to a dozen or so seated participants using a web of threads. Grzegorz Kowalski recalled: "The person moved, trying in vain to straighten his legs and arms, fell to the side, hit the floor with a dull thud.

(...) He tensed his muscles, the threads cut into the body, snapped. (...) Bound to the chairs, we physically felt what our eyes saw and our ears heard—every movement of the 'victim' was transmitted by those countless threads that tethered us to him." Jung dedicated his first performance to his friend, Wojciech Karpiński (**drawing a**). He met the

writer during a holiday in Zakopane in the spring of 1975. It was Karpiński who suggested he read Kafka's story, guided by Jung's fascination with entomology, which at the time manifested in his insect-erotic drawings.





a. Krzysztof Jung
Portrait of Wojciech Karpiński,
ca. 1985–1990, pencil on paper
50 × 36 cm

3. Love

March 12, 1978

Repassage

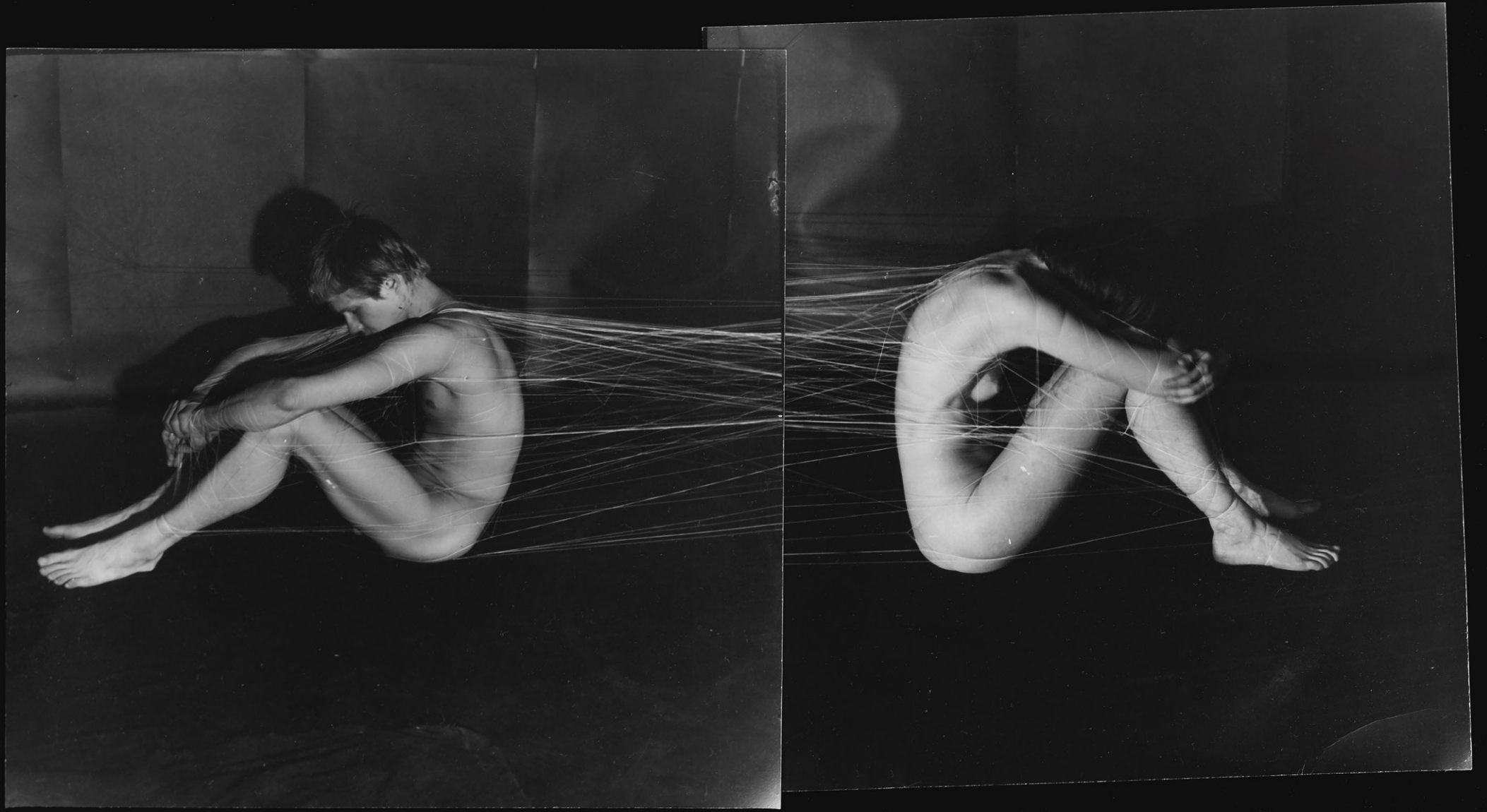
photo by Grzegorz Kowalski

The photographs document two rehearsals that preceded the public performance at the Repassage Gallery. Jung's models were his friends, Mary Olejniczak and Jerzy "Słoma" Słomiński. He first connected their naked bodies with white thread as they sat back-to-back, then extended the network

into a spiderweb above them. During the actual performance before an audience, Andrzej Bersz set the threads on fire. Grzegorz Kowalski recalled "numerous small flames creeping up the threads of the structure hanging from the ceiling." Czesław Furmankiewicz intervened, extinguishing the flames

with his fingers, burning his hands in the process. The performance was dedicated to Furmankiewicz. He later explained: "One evening, we talked about my statement on the possibility of experiencing the transcendent sphere of pure love through art."





4. *Cocooning*

January 17, 1979

Repassage 2

photo by Grzegorz Kowalski

During the so-called winter of the century, Krasi-mira Dimczewska visited Poland. Jung invited her to participate in a performance at the Repassage Gallery. Naked, they wove threads around seated participants and four white vertical pipes in

the center of the gallery. As the web thickened, they began to entwine themselves within it, eventually forming a cocoon. The performance was dedicated to Grzegorz Kowalski, who recalled: "I searched for personal meanings within it. How-

ever, I did not feel the need (and it would be a bit inappropriate) to ask Krzyś about them. Besides, we both avoided moments that could force us into a literal interpretation of motivations. Some things were meant to remain unsaid."



5. *Creating Through Others and
the Horizon of Freedom*

May 20, 1980

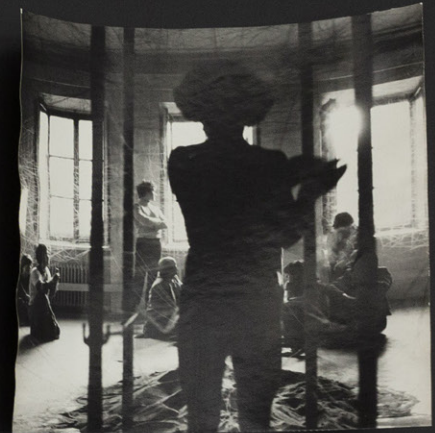
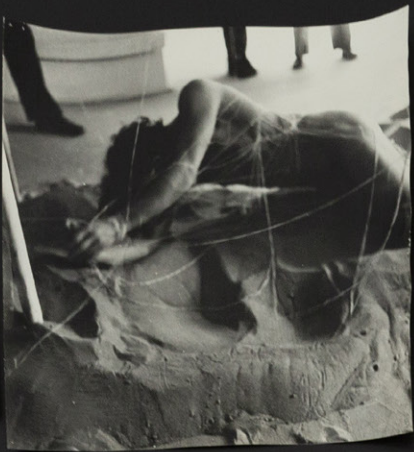
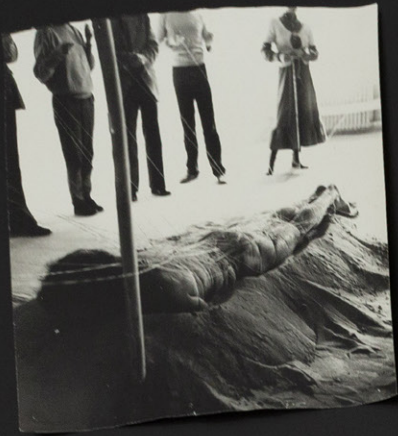
Re'Passage

photo by Grzegorz Kowalski

At the beginning of the performance, Jung lay in the middle of the gallery, buried in sand. Mary Olejniczak distributed spools of thread to those present. Their ends, hidden within a pile of sand, were tied to the artist's body. Emerging naked, Jung broke these bonds and began weaving his own cocoon. The remains of the performance were on

display in the gallery for the next ten days. Jung's text accompanied the performance, in which he wrote: "What is creation through others if not constant communion with them? And yet, being among people, being for people is almost an instinctive, biological need. So, to fight for absolute freedom for oneself—no, no, it is too arrogant to claim that

I truly possess such individuality. It is the multitude of human lives that moves us forward in time and expresses us." Next to the photographs, we present a typescript of Dorota Krawczyk-Janisch's text from the archive.



THE PHOTOGRAPHY OF THE HUMAN BODY IN THE
ARTS OF THE EAST AND WEST
BY
ALFRED STIEGLITZ
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Dorota Krawczyk

GESTURE

/By gesture, I mean stepping into the situation you have created/

Your "Still life"—a living silence—endures, irritates, provokes. Now that I am able to focus—something I couldn't do during your performance—I will tell you what I felt and what I thought afterward.

I wanted to approach you and set you free, but I was afraid of that decision. It would have been too great a responsibility toward others. I felt a connection with you through my hands; I couldn't let go of it. Yet, when you tore the threads from my hands, I did not bend down to pick them up. While they were in my hands, I only tried not to cause you pain—nothing more. Then I felt hostility, rage toward those who were not focused. It did not turn into aggression; it remained within me, and I refrained from expressing it. I felt a need for contact, for concentration, but inside, there was mostly anger, helplessness, and a sense of entrapment. I wanted to break free from my subjectivity, but I couldn't.

When, toward the end, you sat down exhausted, I clung to the thought of helping, as if that could validate or justify my presence in this situation. But that, too, turned out to be a failure.

I gave in, tangled up by Nicole and Grzegorz. I didn't have much conviction about this act of helping; I later realized that my powerless hostility, my desperate grasping for any impulse or emotion, was something I needed above all—to gain, if only in this way, a sense of my own authenticity. It justified me, gave me a way to escape from myself. If only for a moment.

Dorota Krawczyk

GEST

/Gestem nazywam wkroczenie w sytuację przez Ciebie stworzoną/

Twój "Still life" - żywa cisza - trwa, drażni, prowokuje. Teraz, gdy potrafię się skupić, czego nie umiałam zrobić w trakcie Twojego działania, opowiem Ci o tym co czułam i co pomyślałam potem.

Chciałam do Ciebie podejść i uwolnić Cię, ale bałam się tej decyzji. Byłaby zbyt dużą odpowiedzialnością wobec innych. Dłońmi czułam kontakt z Tobą, nie byłam w stanie zrezygnować z niego, a jednak, gdy wyrwałeś mi nici z rąk nie schyliłam się aby je podnieść. Gdy były w moich rękach starałam się nie sadawać Ci bólu - nie więcej.

Wtedy poczułam wrogość, wściekłość wobec tych, którzy nie byli skupieni. Nie przerodziła się jednak w agresję, pozostała we mnie, cofnęłam się przed jej okazaniem. Czułam potrzebę kontaktu, koncentrację ~~wewnątrz~~ ~~huby~~ ~~okamie~~ ~~stała~~ ~~bezrad-~~ność, zniewolnienie. Chciałam wykazać się ze swojej podmiotowości i nie umiałam tego zrobić.

Gdy pod koniec siadłeś zępczony, chwyciłam się myśli o pomocy, jakbyś tym mogła potwierdzić, uzasadnić siebie w tej sytuacji. I to okazało się fiaskiem. Podałam się zamotana przez Nicole i Grzegorza. Nie miałam zbyt wielkiego przekonania do tego aktu pomocy; uświadomiłam sobie później, że to uczucie bezsilnej wrogości, to rozpaczliwe chwytywanie się jakichkolwiek odruchów i emocji potrzebne było przede wszystkim mi, aby choćby w ten sposób uzyskać poczucie swojej autentyczności. Usprawiedliwiała mnie, dawała możliwość ucieczki przed sobą. Na krótko.

6. Joint Performance

November 25, 1980

National Confrontations „Young Art – Łódź 80“, Art

Propaganda Center in Łódź

photo by Janusz Prajs (exhibition copy)

7. Conversation

December 22, 1980

Re'Passage

photo by Grzegorz Kowalski

At the end of 1980, two performances took place within a month, differing in detail, each involving Jung himself, Wojciech Piotrowski—his partner at the time—and his friend Dorota Krawczyk-Janisch. Seated opposite each other on chairs, the two men first sewed their clothes together, then removed them. Meanwhile, a woman, enclosed in a black,

cuboid “cage” made of black canvas, slowly cut it into strips, gradually revealing herself and her nakedness. Dorota Krawczyk-Janisch recalled in 1999: “There were several significant layers: the personal one, meaning our emotions, agreements, and misunderstandings; the experience of being separate, apart, when one is gay; and the act of

opening up to others— a symbolic connection, not only erotic but also creative.” Wojciech Piotrowski, first a partner and then a long-time friend, became the subject of many of Jung’s intimate drawings (**drawing b**).





b. Krzysztof Jung
Man in Bed (Wojtek), 1979
crayon on paper
49 × 64 cm

8. *Trace*
 Dziekanka Gallery
 May 4, 1989
 photo from the archive
 of Krzysztof Jung

In the early 1980s, Wojciech Karpiński emigrated from Poland, and his Parisian apartment became Jung's second home. During his first visit to Paris in 1983, introduced by Karpiński, Jung met the circle of the Parisian "Kultura", including the painter Józef Czapski and the writer Konstanty "Kot" Jeleński. Under Czapski's influence and inspired by his work, Jung focused on painting.

Jeleński's death in a hospital in Paris on May 4, 1987, was a shock for the entire community. On the second anniversary of his death, Jung commemorated him with a performance epitaph. It took place in the Dziekanka Gallery in Warsaw, where, in the 1980s, some artists previously associated with Repassage, which had been shut down with the introduction of martial law, moved their activities.

In the same month, Jung opened his first painting exhibition, entitled *Paradise*, in Dziekanka.

Dariusz Chudzik, the artist's partner, and the artist's friend and model Artur Burchacki, participated in the performance. The room's darkness was contrasted by a white canvas lying on the floor, and Jung threaded the space above it. On the canvas, a naked Dariusz lay, filling the plaster negative of his body. He was painted white on his back. A naked Artur appeared in the room as the sower, with the canvas draped over his shoulder, throwing stones onto the floor. Darek stood up, tearing the thread web and left the room. After some time, Artur returned and placed small lit candles on the stones. The destroyed white spiderweb and, as Jung described it, "the negative of an aroused torso"

remained in the room.

In 1989, Jeleński's homosexual relations and the actual cause of his death—AIDS—were not widely known. Only his closest circle of friends were aware of his illness. Today, Jung's performance can be considered one of the first works in Polish art addressing the epidemic, dedicated to someone who died from AIDS.

During Karpiński's visit to Poland in the summer of 1991, Jung traveled with him to Rybienko, a settlement on the Bug River where Jeleński had spent his childhood summers. The result was a series of landscapes by Jung marked by queer memory (**drawing e**).





e. Krzysztof Jung
Landscape (Rybieńko), ca. 1991
watercolor on paper
29 × 42 cm

9. *Light for Mikołaj*

1980s

pencil on paper

The drawing *Light for Mikołaj* remains a mystery. Despite efforts, it has not been possible to determine what it concerns. Although titled and dated July 23 by Jung, the year of its creation remains unknown. It may refer to some private event or be a sketch of an idea for a performance that Jung never realized. Here, this drawing represents numerous actions by Jung that were deliberately undocumented—private gestures that survived only in the memory of participants and witnesses or

were lost to time. It evokes Mikołaj, with whom Jung was in love in the early 1980s and whom he portrayed many times (**drawing c**). Their separation was painful. On December 11, 1982, in the presence of several people, including Mikołaj, Jung staged a performance titled with a quote from the Book of Job: “Instruct me, and I will be silent; show me where I have gone astray.” He tied himself with threads, cut his hair while watching Mikołaj’s face in a mirror, set fire to the cut hair, and used a knife

to free himself from the bonds. During his name-day gathering in 1986 at Jungówka, the summer home of the Jung family, the artist withdrew from his friends, placing small candles along the slope. The action symbolized his departure. “A magnificent illumination took place before our eyes – the slope lit up with dozens of lights,” recalled Kowalski in a text in the catalogue for Jung’s posthumous exhibition.



Sciatto der Khatagos 2307



c. Krzysztof Jung
Mikołaj, smiling, ca. 1981/82
pencil on paper
28,5 × 20,5 cm



d. Krzysztof Jung
Untitled, ca. 1979
pencil on paper
51 × 36,5 cm

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