

## REMNANTS OF THE CURRENT

The haunting past pulses beneath the skin, while the sharp edges of drone-like flowers emerge from the walls, evoking a sense of danger and anxiety about what lies ahead. The works of Zuza Golińska and Cezary Poniatowski respond to the surrounding reality in a moment of transition, marked by the erosion and failure of political and social structures, climate catastrophe, and technocratic acceleration. Embodying the persistent impact of the past — both metaphorically and materially — their works reflect on speculative future scenarios, where reality and fiction become inextricably intertwined in a moment suspended in anticipation.

Part of Zuza Golińska's sculptural practice is deeply rooted in the industrial heritage of her hometown. In her work, she often employs materials sourced from a shipbuilding workshop located on the border of the Nowy Port neighbourhood and the Gdańsk Shipyard area in northern Poland. For several years, Golińska has developed her practice there, reflecting on the transformed industrial landscape within a post-socialist reality. Using discarded materials such as scrap steel, she envisions a not-so-distant future — one where technology pervasively overtakes nature. The works from her *Swarm* series, presented at the exhibition, balance between fluidity and danger: powder-coated in *Signal Red*, they convey a sense of alertness and unease. Suggestive of stick insects and Venus flytraps, natural forms mutate and merge with technology, some morphing into aggressive, drone-like structures. Here, Golińska references the concept of drone swarms — autonomous machines operating collectively. Not limited to military use, such systems are increasingly deployed in agriculture, flying over vast fields to irrigate, map moisture levels or capture detailed images that detect pest infestations. This amalgamation reflects how technology adopts the decentralized systems found in nature, such as the swarming behaviour of insects or flocking of birds. The reality of ecological collapse and technological dominance that Golińska hyperbolizes is filled with hybrid plant-like machines, mutated insects, and reworked agricultural equipment. *Swarm* can be interpreted as a metaphor for pervasive algorithmic systems, where the same principles that govern natural collectives are repurposed for surveillance and control.

The works of Cezary Poniatowski are dystopian, dark reliefs made from sewn-up carpets and faux leather, resembling wounded skin. Poniatowski creates distorted forms full of narrative potential, where the familiar and domestic merge into grotesque shapes. With absurdity and dark humour, his works reflect a process of healing from a painful socialist past, whose lingering influence remains. Poniatowski's works are closely tied to the period of “zombie socialism”, a hybrid of anti-communist ideology and the sudden shift to a neoliberal reality of free markets, digital acceleration, and technocracy, which gave rise to retrotopia tendencies.

Beneath the pulsating surface of the reliefs lies a hidden tension, evoking a feeling of entrapment—directly linked to the materials used: faux leather was once commonly employed to soundproof entry doors in homes across the former Eastern Bloc. Here, alien-like heads of noise-cancelling earmuffs render the works mute and isolated, while binoculars rest on ash-like sand, tirelessly following the viewer. This surreal atmosphere can be understood as what the artist describes as a defensive reaction of the brain to overwhelming stimuli: the sensation of derealisation. The works at the exhibition seem to be regenerating in the moment just after the catastrophe. In *Aether*, ventilation elements on the toxic-green surface of the carpet function as filters designed to cleanse the atmosphere, while the hollow interior appear to contain potentially “dangerous” substances, such as old, musty air. Still, a suggestion of recovery remains: on what resembles a seething surface from which spike-like needles grow, butterflies reside—hinting at the possibility of renewal and transformation.

Golińska and Poniatowski expose the fragility of ecological, political, and social systems, suggesting what might emerge from this space of rupture and loss—but also potential. Marked by strangeness, hybridity, and metamorphosis, the traces of the past blend into the uncertainty of the future, where bright-red flowers, ready to become traps, stand alongside mute, pulsating surfaces that carefully follow our movements.