

Estate of Maria Pinińska-Bereś

Patricia Ayres  
Susan Cianciolo  
Nancy Lupo  
Cora Pongracz  
Brandon Ndfife

*Infanta with Tiny Bell*

July 10 - August 16, 2025  
136 Orchard St, 10002, New York

*I do not adhere to any sculptural discipline,  
I do not refer to any style  
(...) I have my own intimate little world.*

MPB

Galeria Wschód is pleased to present a group exhibition led by archival works by Maria-Pinińska Bereś (1931–1999). This exhibition is part of a year-long program by Wschód New York presenting Polish historical and avant-garde voices in dialogue with contemporary positions.

Maria Pinińska-Bereś was a Polish sculptress, an author of installations and environments, performer. She graduated from the Faculty of Sculpture at the Academy of Fine Arts in Kraków in 1956. Pinińska-Bereś is known to be a pioneer of feminist art in Poland - in her works, with a certain notion of enigmatic ambiguity, she often explored the motif of the female body, which was articulated by variety of materials, colours, objects, and activities stereotypically associated with femininity. The conceptual and stylistic complexity of Pinińska-Bereś' oeuvre initially consisted of figurative sculptures combining excessive concrete forms, soft fabrics, and papier mâché.

*In my beginnings I felt the urge to redefine sculpture. Freeing the form from statuesqueness became my goal. It was a dramatic struggle. By giving up the perfect traditional sculpting skills I had acquired and by imposing an unconventional mode on myself I have made a radical breakthrough... I got rid of weight in my works (MPB).*

From the early 1970's Pinińska-Bereś drifted away from a distinctive figuration, and endeavored to implement more abstract means to her sculptural language. She began to experiment with more soft, lightweight materials (employing fabrics stuffed with cotton wool and flexible PUR foam) and color pink, which then became one of the emblematic elements of her installation-based works. They evolved into erotically charged, immersive works in the form of spatial installations and sculptures.

*Maria Pinińska-Bereś's works and practices defy easy and unequivocal pigeonholing. They are partly bulky, partly erotic, subtle and charged with humor ... They articulate the complex existential experience of the artist who in the specific conditions of the Polish People's Republic, during the Cold War, sought her way out of the tight corset of society's restrictions and the patriarchal order, as well as her path—as a woman—in the art system (Heike Munder and Jarosław Suchan).*

All in all she produced more than 150 sculptures and authored nearly 20 actions.

The archival drawings presented in the exhibition are graphical studies and sketches to her sculptural works *Window. De-construction of the Leaning Tower* (1992); *Two Graces Commenting on the Departure of the Third* (1990); *Infanta with Tiny Bell - the Cage* (late 1990s); *De-construction of the Leaning Tower* (1995).

The video recording in *The Black Box* is a lecture by Maria Pinińska-Bereś that took place on 24th of January 1989 at the Centre for Polish Sculpture in Orońsko, PL.

*Having had increasingly ambivalent feelings about exhibiting a fixed object in a fixed environment, I was searching for new entrances on a given situation*

Laurie Parsons, 1991

Patricia Ayres' (b. 1975, New York) practice is fueled by fascination with the body - its role, presentation, transformation. Her anthropomorphic sculptural forms evoke the visceral and the uncanny. Often bound or hung by straps and butcher hooks, her works are created from stitched, wrapped, and stained strips of fabric, sewn elastic, various dyes, anointing oil, sacramental wine, iodine. That kind of material components come from an extensive lexicon of fashion the artists absorbed and perfected over the years. Her vividly striking objects, even though constructed out of unassuming materials, bring out an inherent sense of discomfort and disruption. Ayres' works often explore a certain notion of anxiety, sexuality, and shame. There is undeniable tension embedded in Ayres' practice - abstract yet vividly present - a tension between the bodily intimacy and limitations, pressures imposed by religion, or generally speaking by a variety of societal constraints, and the grotesque of that phenomenon.

Susan Cianciolo (b. 1969, Providence, Rhode Island) is a New York based conceptual artist, designer, filmmaker. Her practice is predominantly inspired by fashion, crafts, domesticity - having emerged as a central figure of the deconstructed fashion in the 1990's she has formed very characteristic sensitivity creating a distinctively vast visual language employing a variety of genres, media and materials. Cianciolo's installations, sculptures, textile-based works, costumes can be perceived as meaningful systems ingrained in her life and work. That kind of approach, being emblematic for the artist's practice, is carried out by her *kits* - visually and personally charged assemblages composed out of folded, quilted mats on top of which sits the box filled with items from her archives to be sifted through by visitors. Letters, photographs, notes, posters, fabric off-cuts, book covers, labels, and sketches - almost endless constellations of materials that become a memorable collage of the artist's own history.

Nancy Lupo's (b. 1983, Flagstaff, Arizona) sculptural practice is one of activation and emphasis. Her works draw out the sculptural elements of a familiar everyday objects. She usually creates optically arresting *mosaics* - an intricate systems of materials and objects - creating sculptural or (rather) object based installations or interventions. Although her floor-bound arrangements have a strong notion of complexity, the artist's presentations generally include ordinary objects. Elements, parts, things we tend to overlook or disregard. As the artist puts it *Everything is something* [...]. Lupo is interested in re-evaluating the way we perceive the actual thing we are seeing - she is evoking a strong, almost metaphysical immersive experience that is impacting and shaping our perspective.

Brandon Ndife (b. 1991, Hammond, Indiana) creates objects that share an unusual resemblance to discarded, second-hand furnishings and organic matter (e.i. fruit, tree branches, and soil). He is somewhat drawn to domestic nature of objects - purposefully exploring its materiality due to their unique potential to encapsulate, and manifest, the American life under capitalism - with all its social, class, and ecological disparities. Employing uncanny poetics, dramatic colors, and vast variety of media, Ndife's distinctive symbolic code enmeshes the universal complexities of the human experience. The hand-built unsettling assemblages almost devour the once known objects from their elementary simplicity. Their history is being replaced with a new substance of reality - recognizable yet elusive, something that *operates as portals that get us thinking about objects that are larger than our systems, larger than ourselves*.

Cora Pongracz's (b. 1943 Buenos Aires, Argentina, d. 2003, Vienna, Austria) most well known photographic works are the ones portraying Viennese art scene of the 70's. She documented social activities, friendships, love affairs of artists, activists, critics of that time creating rather ambiguous and expressive *photographic histories*. What is most captivating though is how her almost exclusively black-and-white photographs appeared to shift the perception of portraiture. By focusing thoroughly on the relationship between the camera and the portrayed the materialized image seems to be the result of performative process suspended in time - something very sensitive, mysterious and melancholic. *Cora Pongracz did no staging—neither of the individuals nor the camera nor herself* - she succeeded in forming simultaneously a sense of distance and anticipation encapsulating a certain notion of intimacy that is difficult to forget.