

DOI: 10.11649/a.1299

Article No.: 1299

Adeptus  
nr 9/2017 r. pismo humanistów

Paweł Knut graduated in law, history of art and psychology from the University of Warsaw. He works as a solicitor and is a PhD student at the Faculty of Artes Liberales at the University of Warsaw. He pursues research on hate speech and counteracting discrimination.

e-mail: ppknut@gmail.com

Paweł Knut

## Homophobia in Polish visual culture as an “undiscovered” response to the transformation of sexual norms in Poland after 1989

From its early days, the process of post-1989 systemic transformation in Poland has been accompanied by changes in different areas of social life, including the evolution of norms referring to human sexuality. Some of them were related to the emergence in Poland of a movement for the emancipation of people expressing their nonheteronormative sexuality (i.e. (gays, lesbians, bisexual or transgender people, LGBT)). Shifts in this field, which changed – or at least questioned – what so far had been treated as a norm of human sexuality, were soon reflected in Polish art, or, in broader terms – visual culture.<sup>1</sup> They also resulted in ques-

---

<sup>1</sup> I have made a conscious decision not to analyse the scope of the concepts “art” and “visual culture”, as this would considerably exceed the limits of this article and would not have a significant impact on the discussion. Although further in this text I use them interchangeably, it cannot remain unnoticed that the relation between them has long been the focus of a debate at the intersection of history of art, aesthetics and visual studies (see e.g. Mitchell, 2002). My decision to use not only the concept of “art”, but also that of “visual culture” has been a deliberate choice dictated by the intention to invoke a category which is broad enough to accommodate also those artefacts which, despite the inclusivity of institutional theories of art, are not considered as part of this domain at the intuitive level. I believe, however, that the works discussed in this article would pass the test of artistic merit even on the grounds of institutional theories of art. Jakub Dąbrowski and Anna Demenko observe that “whether or not what we encounter is a work of art is decided on the basis of two factors: firstly, the creator’s intention; secondly, acceptance from the world of art gained according to the set rules of competence” (Dąbrowski & Demenko, 2014, p. 71). It needs to be noted that all artefacts considered in this article fulfil these two conditions, or at least have a potential to fulfil them. To an extent, this is also confirmed by the choice of works presented at the exhibition entitled *New National Art (Nowa Sztuka Narodowa)*, held at the at the Museum of Modern Art in Warsaw and discussed below. In terms of form, they are identical to the artefacts discussed in this text.

The study was conducted at author's own expense.

No competing interests have been declared.

Publisher: Institute of Slavic Studies, Polish Academy of Sciences & The Slavic Foundation.

This is an Open Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 3.0 PL License ([creativecommons.org/licenses/by/3.0/pl/](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/3.0/pl/)), which permits redistribution, commercial and non-commercial, provided that the article is properly cited. © The Author(s) 2017.

tioning the monopolistic position of the heterosexual male and female living in a lasting monogamous relationship confirmed by the act of marriage.

Without making any initial assumptions whether artists' interest in such categories as body, sex, sexuality, the Other and emancipation came as a response to this process or, quite on the contrary, was a factor or catalyst of its progress, their interest in these categories produced two types of reaction in the field of visual culture.

The first of them involved identifying and exposing the exclusion of, and silence over, non-heteronormative forms of sexuality (and mechanisms behind them). This attitude found its full expression in artistic practices which today form an element of what is known under the general heading of critical art, associated with left-wing liberal approach.<sup>2</sup> Without going into the details of its history, it should be noted that works created in this stream were initially received with incomprehension and antipathy on the part of most people and institutions deciding on the shape of cultural life in Poland. Gradually, however, the status of critical art improved and it eventually made its way to the mainstream of institutionalised art. Today, it enjoys a prominent, if not the dominant, position in Polish art of the post-transformation era. Production of critical texts on some of its representatives consolidated their central position in the canon of Polish modern art.

On the other hand, the above mentioned transformation of sexual norms in post-1989 Poland also evoked the opposite response in the field of visual culture. In most general terms, this reaction can be described as artistic practices expressing apprehension about, and opposition to, the ongoing changes; it was associated with right-wing conservative standpoint. In other words, this response involved the emergence of works expressing, among other elements, a strong aversion to non-heteronormativity, including LGBT people. Unlike Polish critical art, they still function mostly outside institutionalised culture<sup>3</sup> and as yet have not been "discovered" for the discourse of Polish art history.

---

<sup>2</sup> One of the principal examples of critical art raising the subject of non-heterosexuality, which resounded in a national public debate on members of the LGBT community, was Karolina Breguła's photography exhibition entitled Let Them see Us (*Niech nas zobaczą*), featuring the images of non-heterosexual couples; the photographs were also displayed on billboards in different Polish cities. For a vivid and interesting historical account of Polish critical art, see Sienkiewicz (2014). An interesting discussion concerning critical art, including its political connotations, was led by Wojciech Makowski in the journal *Gazeta Malarzy i Poetów* (Painters' and Poets' Gazette); the participants were Professor Grzegorz Dziamski, Dr Izabela Kowalczyk, Professor Roman Kubicki, Maciej Mazurek and Janusz Marciniak (Makowski et al., 2001).

<sup>3</sup> So far, major Polish cultural institutions setting the tone of artistic life in the country have rarely included these practices in their exhibitions, for example: New National Art (*Nowa Sztuka Narodowa*) exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art in Warsaw (2 June–19 August 2012), curators: Sebastian Cichoński and Łukasz Ronduda; THYMÓS: The Art of Anger, 1900–2011 (*THYMÓS. Sztuka gniewu 1900–2011*) exhibition at the Centre of Contemporary Art in Toruń (28 October

This article presents a detailed analysis of artistic practices which belong to the latter, i.e. the “undiscovered” stream, and offers an attempt to provide initial answers to the following questions:

- (1) Is it possible to indicate characteristic features of this artistic practices?
- (2) What forms does it involve and what contents does it express?
- (3) Why does it remain almost entirely absent in the mainstream institutional art and art discourse?

## Characteristic features

As yet, Polish literature of the subject does not include publications presenting research directly concerning the phenomenon of artistic practices expressing aversion to non-heterosexual people. Likewise, the interest of Polish cultural institutions in related areas has been rather limited and – sometimes as a result of conscious exclusion – did not involve presentation of such artefacts in exhibitions and accompanying events: *New National Art (Nowa Sztuka Narodowa)* at the Museum of Modern Art in Warsaw; *THYMÓS: The Art of Anger, 1900–2011 (THYMÓS. Sztuka gniewu 1900–2011)* at the Centre of Contemporary Art in Toruń; *Strategies of Rebellion (Strategie buntu)* at the Arsenal Municipal Gallery in Poznań.<sup>4</sup>

An initial identification of this type of artistic practices (and of its affinity with some more general phenomena in the world of art) requires noting that it is a manifestation of a stream which was identified by these institutions and – following the title of exhibition held at the Museum of Modern Art – came to be known as “New National Art”.

The diversity of categories of artefacts classified as part of this stream for the purposes of the exhibition in Warsaw makes it difficult to establish a uniform set of criteria which would enable their more detailed characteristics. Critical discussions concerning the event involved

---

2011–15 January 2012), curator: Kazimierz Piotrowski; *Strategies of Rebellion (Strategie buntu)* exhibition at the Arsenal Municipal Gallery in Poznań (28 August–11 October 2015), curator: Piotr Bernatowicz. Although these exhibitions presented mainly artefacts referring to such categories as the nation, patriotism and religion, they indirectly referred also to the issue of sexuality.

<sup>4</sup> Sebastin Cichocki, a joint curator of the exhibition *New National Art*, replying to the question why the group called *The Krasnals (The Dwarfs)* was not included, openly admits: “We often find their methods unacceptable. It is for the same reason that we do not show, for example, a reconstruction of an anti-abortion exhibition or ‘faggotry forbidden’ stickers. We cut off extremisms” (Kapela, 2012). In another interview on this exhibition, Cichocki states: “When selecting the artefacts we refused to accept smuggling contents directed against minority groups” (Gruszczyński, 2015).

the following proposals of common features shared by works of this type: (1) domination of emotional over intellectual value, (2) large scale, (3) self-organisation, (4) expression of collective identity (Krasny, 2012). Sebastian Cichocki, a joint curator of the exhibition, adds their propaganda nature and limited autonomy to the list (Święcicka, 2012). At the same time, what needs to be stressed is that both art historians and critics strongly disagreed whether the selected artefacts in fact shared any common features at all. Another doubt was whether they were manifestations of artistic expression (occasioned, among other reasons, by including front pages of such Polish tabloids as *Super Ekspres* (Super Express) and *Fakt* (Fact) among the exhibits), and whether an institutional decision was enough to award them the status of works of art.<sup>5</sup> A separate issue considered in more detail below is the “ethnographic” nature of the act of their selection and presentation in the space of the Museum of Modern Art in Warsaw.

In connection with the above discussed questions of definition, it should be noted that in spite of problems with a precise delimitation of New National Art, artistic practices displaying aversion to non-heteronormativity shares the same features and thus ought to be seen as part of such practices. An attempt to define this sub-category of New National Art causes further complications. What it seems to include is manifestations of expression that are characterised by oppressive attitude to non-heteronormativity (pejorative, displaying rejection or pathologising). Humanities in general (and social sciences in particular) refer to this type of attitude as “homophobia”. It is defined as an irrational fear of or aversion to people of non-heteronormative sexual orientation (which stems from prejudice against them) (Jabłońska & Knut, 2012; Makuchowska, 2012). Homophobia manifests itself in different forms, most often psychological and physical violence or discrimination, and is treated as qualitatively identical to racism, anti-Semitism and xenophobia.<sup>6</sup> It follows that a homophobic nature of a certain manifestation of expression appears to be a sufficient criterion to consider a part of the area in question. At this point, however, it needs to be noted that sometimes correct classification of certain artefacts as “homophobic art” is difficult. Indeed, homophobic motifs (e.g. the “faggotry forbidden” (*zakaz pedałowania*) graphic

---

<sup>5</sup> In this context, it is worth noting an interesting discussion which developed between the joint curators of the exhibition Sebastian Cichocki and Łukasz Ronduda, the art historian Professor Maria Poprzedzka and the art critic Stach Szablowski in the course of Marcin Pesta’s programme on Polish Radio Two, entitled “Visual objects of the second circulation” (*Obiekty wizualne drugiego obiegu*) (Pesta, 2012). Szablowski stressed that a display of certain phenomena of visual culture (whose authors had not always created them with an artistic intention) at the museum for the purposes of this exhibition did not magically transform them into art; in spite of an attempt to give them artistic legitimacy, they still do not have this status.

<sup>6</sup> See the European Parliament’s Resolution on homophobia in Europe, 18 January 2006.

sign,<sup>7</sup> the word *pedał*, “a faggot”) are used not only by creators who intend to express their antipathy towards LGBT people, but also by ones aiming to criticise homophobic attitudes.<sup>8</sup>

In the case of the latter, the use of references to homophobic contents is subversive: the aim is to point out the problem of homophobia, to criticise this attitude, and to “defuse” homophobic potential encoded in particular words or signs.<sup>9</sup> As yet, however, there is no uniform set of criteria which would (always) allow to make a clear distinction between the oppressive and homophobic on the one hand and the subversive on the other. Analysing the issue, Amy Adler (1996, pp. 1547–1556) suggests the following criteria to resolve this dilemma: (1) artistic status, (2) context, (3) effect on the receiver, (4) sender’s intention. Although Adler rightly observes they are unsuitable if applied individually (i.e. in separation from all other elements of the set), her criticism of the model including all the four criteria does not seem convincing,<sup>10</sup> which makes it – at least to an extent – a useful supplementary analytical tool.

Finally, there are also some problems concerning the periodisation of the stream in question. Some Polish art historians observe that “new” national art is not a new phenomenon but a continuation of much earlier artistic practices (e.g. religious-national artistic practices performed at churches in the Solidarity period, artistic activity connected with the cult of Father Jerzy Popiełuszko) (Poprzęcka, 2012). It is beyond doubt, however, that the practices which are the focus of this article developed much later, after 1989. Although this would require further studies, it might be suggested that their emergence stemmed from – and at the same time was justified by – a gradually increasing visibility and significance of LGBT issues in public debate. Consequently, it would seem to be the case that while New National Art is not an entirely new stream as such, it gradually developed an interest in new social phenomena and began to comment on them. The ensuing result was the emergence of artistic practices which are the subject of this article.

The following part of this text presents examples of post-1989 artistic/visual practices manifesting oppressive attitude to non-heteronormativity which belong to the stream known as New National Art.

<sup>7</sup> In Polish, the phrase *zakaz pedałowania* could mean both “cycling forbidden” as “pedalling forbidden” and “faggotry forbidden” or “gays forbidden”, since in Polish a gay person is often offensively referred to as *pedał* (singular), and gay people as *pedały* (plural), literally: a “pedal” and “pedals” (translator’s note).

<sup>8</sup> For example, the use of the word *pedał* (“a faggot”) in the novel *Lubiewo* by Michał Witkowski (English edition: *Lovetown*, trans. W. Martin, London: Portobello, 2010), or in Karol Radziszewski’s works displayed at his exhibition “Pedały” (Faggots) (Karol Radziszewski, Pedały, private flat, Warsaw, 21 June–5 July 2005).

<sup>9</sup> For example, a word that has been successfully “defused” is the English word “queer”.

<sup>10</sup> According to Adler, some of these criteria are in fact contradictory (e.g. the irreconcilable conflict between the sender’s intention and the effect of the message on the receiver), which makes it impossible to include them in one model.

## Forms and contents

Polish literature of the subject still does not include comprehensive studies which would provide basic knowledge about the forms used in, and contents expressed by, artistic practices of homophobic nature.<sup>11</sup> Although an overview of types of forms and contents presented below is certainly not complete or exhaustive, this typology provides a draft sketch of the area under consideration and its limits. It includes the most popular types of forms and contents identified in the course of research of the Polish iconosphere conducted for the purposes of this article in June 2016 (with examples provided for each category).<sup>12</sup>

### Homophobic “patriotic streetwear”

This category includes garments with images or slogans featuring contents relating to LGBT people in the context of broadly understood patriotic subjects. The most popular here is clothing with the “faggotry forbidden” (*zakaz pedałowania*) graphic sign, sometimes accompanied by the verbal slogan (see Illustration 1).<sup>13</sup>

Other examples in this category include clothes with:

- an image featuring pictogram silhouettes of a family composed of a man, a woman and two children (a boy and a girl); the parents are holding an umbrella with an emblem of the Polish national flag, which protects the family from the rainbow-coloured rain pouring down from a black cloud; sometimes the image is accompanied by the slogan “Family is the strength of the nation” (*Rodzina siłą narodu*);<sup>14</sup>
- an image featuring a graphic silhouette of a human-powered scooter accompanied by the slogan “Right-turned from birth, Poland free from faggots” (*Od urodzenia prawoskrętny, Polska bez pedałów*);<sup>15</sup>

<sup>11</sup> There are publications presenting examples of this kind of artistic practices while discussing other subjects, e.g. (Wilczyk, 2014).

<sup>12</sup> For the purposes of this analysis, I consulted a number of different sources, including: the Internet (in particular: news websites; websites of conservative/right-wing/national organisations and initiatives; the so-called “patriotic streetwear” online shops; popular consumer-to-consumer sales platforms; the Polish Patent Office and patent offices in different countries; churches and officially recognised religious organisations (*związki wyznaniowe*), religious organisations and initiatives; sports fans’ forums; publishing houses focused on patriotic publications; street art artists; organisations focused on collecting information on hate incidents and crimes); reports of non-governmental organisations working towards respect for human rights; publications on hate symbols for police officers.

<sup>13</sup> See for example: <http://www.kibice.net/forum/viewtopic.php?f=5&t=21726> [accessed 30 June 2016].

<sup>14</sup> See for example: <https://grafikapatriotyczna.pl/pl/p/Koszulka-Rodzina-sila-narodu-damska/531> [accessed 30 June 2016].

<sup>15</sup> See for example: <http://www.sfk.sklep.pl/patriotyczne/21-chlopak-i-dziewczyna-normalna-rodzina.html> [accessed 30 June 2016].

- the slogan “A boy and a girl, a Normal Family” (*Chłopak i dziewczyna Normalna Rodzina*, rhymes in Polish);
- “eat train love sleep repeat” icons with captions (in English); the icon for “love” features pictogram silhouettes of a man and a woman in a position resembling that in the “faggotry forbidden” sign;<sup>16</sup>
- an image featuring Julita Wójcik’s giant outdoor installation entitled *The Rainbow* (*Tęcza*) ablaze (the work was erected in Plac Zbawiciela (Saviour Square) in Warsaw);<sup>17</sup>
- an image featuring a razor and a butterfly knife, accompanied by the slogan “I’m a homophobe” (*Jestem homofobem*).<sup>18</sup>



Illustration 1: A T-shirt; source: <http://www.kibice.net/forum/viewtopic.php?f=5&t=21726> [accessed 30 June 2016]

This type of clothing is addressed both to men and women (featuring practically the same contents). Although it is also available in children’s sizes, in this case the contents

<sup>16</sup> See for example: <http://www.odziez-uliczna.pl/index.php?p511,t-shirt-eat-train-repeat-bialy> [accessed 30 June 2016].

<sup>17</sup> See for example: <https://patriotycznekoszulki.cupsell.pl/produkt/221736-T-cza-black.html> [accessed 30 June 2016].

<sup>18</sup> See for example: <http://archiwum.allegro.pl/oferta/bluza-druga-strefa-jestem-homofobem-czarna-roz-xxl-i5040454452.html> [accessed 30 June 2016].

are somewhat different, e.g.: “50% mum! 50% dad! 100% Poland” (*50% mama! 50% tata! 100% Polska*), “Thank you mum and dad that I’m Polish” (*Dziękuję ci mamo Dziękuję ci tato, że jestem Polakiem*).<sup>19</sup>

## Stickers, slaps, lanyards

This category includes stickers, slaps and lanyards with images or slogans featuring contents relating to LGBT people. Again, the most popular motif is the “faggotry forbidden” sign, sometimes accompanied by the verbal slogan.<sup>20</sup>

Other examples in this category include stickers and slaps with:

- an image featuring pictogram silhouettes of a family composed of a man, a woman and two children; the parents are holding an umbrella with an emblem of the Polish national flag, which protects the family from the rainbow-coloured rain pouring down from a black cloud; sometimes the image is accompanied by the slogan “Family is the strength of the nation” (*Rodzina siłą narodu*);<sup>21</sup>
- an image featuring graphic silhouettes of a family composed of a man, a woman and two children (a boy and a girl), accompanied by the slogan “I might be banal, but let’s distinguish: a mum is a mum and a dad is a dad!” (*Mogę być banalny, ale tata tatą, mama mamą rozróżnijmy!*; a near rhyme in Polish) (see Illustration 2);<sup>22</sup>

as well as lanyards with:

- the “faggotry forbidden” sign, accompanied by such slogans as “My mum and dad tell me: find a girl and not a guy” (*Mówi mi mama, mówi mi tata, szukaj dziewczyny, a nie chłopaka*, rhymes in Polish); “Let the retard progressivists call me a homophobe, but I still think homosexuality is an illness” (*Postępowcy zidiociali niech mnie nazwą homofobem, bo ja homoseksualizm wciąż uważam za chorobę*, rhymes in Polish).<sup>23</sup>

<sup>19</sup> See for example: <https://grafikapatriotyczna.pl/pl/p/Body-dzieciece-patriotyczne-100-Polska/630> [accessed 30 June 2016].

<sup>20</sup> See for example: <http://www.szaliki.fora.pl/gielda,37/s-vlepki-okragle-8cm-antypo-gwtvn-ue-zakaz-pedalowania-gnls,13107.html> [accessed 30 June 2016].

<sup>21</sup> See for example: <https://grafikapatriotyczna.pl/pl/p/Naklejka-patriotyczna-Rodzina-Sila-Narodu/710> [accessed 30 June 2016].

<sup>22</sup> See for example: <http://tomypolacy1939.blogspot.com/2015/06/moge-byc-banalny-ale-mama-mama-tata.html?view=snapshot> [accessed : 30 June 2016].

<sup>23</sup> See for example: <https://www.google.pl/search?q=smycz+zakaz+peda%C5%82owania&num=20&espv=2&tbn=isch&tbo=u&source=univ&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwieovDRusfNAhUBGZoKHQbzBj0QsAQIHA&biw=1440&bih=801#imgrc=-0pKSEkgMPPJOM%3A> [accessed 30 June 2016].



Illustration 2: Grafika Patriotyczna (Patriotic graphics), sticker; source: <http://tomypolacy1939.blogspot.com/2015/06/moge-byc-banalny-ale-mama-mama-tata.html?view=snapshot> [accessed 30 June 2016]

## Graffiti and posters

This category includes a variety of works in different techniques containing graphics, slogans or inscriptions featuring contents relating to LGBT people. Again, the most popular motif used in this case is the “faggotry forbidden” sign, sometimes accompanied by the verbal slogan.<sup>24</sup> Other examples in this category include stencil graffiti featuring the “faggotry forbidden” sign accompanied by the slogan “We say no to deviances” (*Zboczeniom mówimy nie*).<sup>25</sup>

A particular type of graffiti is works painted by fans of Polish football clubs, for example:<sup>26</sup>

- graffiti featuring a Cupid with his bow and arrows and two males wearing football shirts in the colours of Cracovia FC (Cracow) hugging each other; the accompanying

<sup>24</sup> See for example: <https://nrstreetart.wordpress.com/category/graffiti-kategorie/> [accessed 30 June 2016]; this graffiti was produced by the NR StreetArt group in a housing estate (Osiedle XXX-lecia) in the Silesian town of Wodzisław Śląski.

<sup>25</sup> See for example: <https://nrstreetart.wordpress.com/category/szablony/> [accessed 30 June 2016]; this stencil was produced by the NR StreetArt group; information about the work was made available in January 2010.

<sup>26</sup> Some photographs of this type of graffiti that are available on the Internet were taken by Wojciech Wilczyk in the course of work on his artistic project conducted in 2009–2014, which involved documenting graffiti produced by football fans; this photography collection was first exhibited in the Atlas Sztuki gallery in Łódź (5 December 2014–16 January 2015), and the accompanying photo album *Święta Wojna* (The Holy War) was published in 2014 (Wilczyk, 2014).

inscription reads: “Once Cupid fucked up his arrows... Cragovia faggots” (*Pewnego razu amor popierdolił strzały... Cracovia pedały*, rhymes in Polish);<sup>27</sup>

- graffiti featuring the inscription “ŁKS 1908, faggots” (*pedały ŁKS 1908*) in the colours of ŁKS Football Club (Łódź), painted on a wall in Berka Joselewicza street in the city of Łódź; the work was documented by the photography artist Wojciech Wilczyk in November 2013 (Wilczyk, 2014);
- graffiti featuring the abbreviation “KSP” (Polonia Football Club, Warsaw) with the letters in the colours of the club; the shape of the letters resembles that of a penis; next to the abbreviation is a drawing of a pig wearing a Polonia FC football shirt and holding a rainbow flag with a centrally placed round emblem resembling the logo of the Iron Front from the period of the Weimar Republic (also known as the anti-fascist circle);<sup>28</sup> the accompanying text reads: “We’re getting fucked up our asses by Cracovia [FC] and we give Sandecja [FC] a blow job; that’s us, bandits from K6” (*cracovia rucha nas w dupę, a od sandecji bierzemy do mordy, to my bandyci z k6*);<sup>29</sup> the work was produced by the group called Warsaw FanaticS in 2014 (see Illustration 3);
- graffiti featuring two males in a position resembling that in the “faggotry forbidden” sign; the one bending over has the inscription reading *milicja* (Citizens’ Militia, communist police) on his collar; the accompanying text reads: “Why does the ZOMO still protect homo? Because Mister Officer likes it up [his backside]! 21.05.2011 Let’s go all of us to oppose the perverts... Wisła [FC] hooligans will be there for sure!” (*Dlaczego zomo wciąż chroni homo? Gdyż lubi pan władza, gdy mu się wsadza! 21.05.2011 idźmy wszyscy sprzeciwić się zboczeńcom... kibole wisły na pewno tam będą!*);<sup>30</sup> the initial question and answer rhyme in Polish; ZOMO: Motorised Reserves of the Citizens’ Militia, anti-riot police force in communist Poland) (Wilczyk, 2014).

Another group of artefacts to be noted here are posters designed by the artist Wojciech Korcuć, used a number of times in poster campaigns of his Movement for Moral Hygiene (Ruch Higieny Moralnej), for example:

<sup>27</sup> <http://www.wykop.pl/link/627607/niektorzy-kibice-umieja-docenic-walentynki/> [accessed 30 June 2016].

<sup>28</sup> The Iron Front was a coalition of German political parties and organisations aiming to oppose changes to the political system of the Weimar Republic. Active in the early 1930s, it was banned when Hitler came to power.

<sup>29</sup> <http://www.wfs.fotolog.pl/2014,archiwum.html> [accessed 30 June 2016]; other works by this group were presented in the above mentioned New National Art exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art in Warsaw.

<sup>30</sup> The date and text featuring in the graffiti most probably refer to the March for Equality (Marsz Równości) held on that day in Cracow. That particular year, the march was confronted by a strong counter-manifestation organised by the political party called the National Revival of Poland (Narodowe Odrodzenie Polski).

- a poster featuring the image of a penis with a sketch of a human brain on the glans; the text reads: “You’re a homo, OK, but don’t faggotise minors! (particularly for money)” (*Jesteś homo-ok ale nie spedalaj nieletnich! (zwłaszcza za pieniądze)*); the poster campaign was held in July 2011 (see Illustration 4);<sup>31</sup>
- a poster featuring the “priority to the right” road sign with rainbow-coloured strips attached to the four ends of two crossed black lines, which makes the sign resemble a swastika; the accompanying text reads: “You’re a homo or not, OK, but cut out this nonsense about fascism! (and stop nagging about this ‘hate speech’ thing all the time)” (*Jesteś homo lub nie – ok! ale nie faszystuj bez sensu! (i nie chlap «mową nienawiści»)*); the poster campaign was held in November 2011.<sup>32</sup>



Illustration 3: Warsaw FanaticS, graffiti, 2014; source: <http://www.wfs.fotolog.pl/2014,archiwum.html> [accessed 30 June 2016]



Illustration 4: Wojciech Korcuć, poster: “You’re a homo, OK, but don’t faggotise minors! (particularly for money)” (*Jesteś homo-ok ale nie spedalaj nieletnich! (zwłaszcza za pieniądze)*), 2011; source: [http://www.kampaniespoleczne.pl/opinie,3438,krotki\\_zywot\\_spedalania\\_nieletnich](http://www.kampaniespoleczne.pl/opinie,3438,krotki_zywot_spedalania_nieletnich), photo: Ewa Tomaszewicz [accessed 30 June 2016]

<sup>31</sup> <http://tysol.salon24.pl/331498,nieloprawni-politycznie> [accessed 30 June 2016].

<sup>32</sup> [http://queer.pl/data/article/192835\\_cf8994dfc730b5fe90efeeb2673bec19\\_510.jpg](http://queer.pl/data/article/192835_cf8994dfc730b5fe90efeeb2673bec19_510.jpg) [accessed 30 June 2016].

## Comics and magazines

This category includes comics and magazines featuring graphic contents relating to LGBT people, for example:

- the comics authored by Jakub Kijuc, whose protagonist is Jan Hardy (which could be translated as John Proud), commander of the army unit called R.O.T.A. The book *R.O.T.A. XX #1*, including comic strips published in the *Warszawska Gazeta* (The Warsaw Gazette) and *Polska Niepodległa* (Independent Poland) magazines, involves motifs related to the fight against gender ideology, such as the burning of Julita Wójcik’s outdoor installation entitled The Rainbow (*Tęcza*) in Plac Zbawiciela (Saviour Square) in Warsaw,<sup>33</sup>
- the conservative quarterly *Fronda Lux*, some of whose front covers involve references to LGBT issues, e.g. a photomontage image of smiling Leopold Tyrmand (a Polish writer) in a beach outfit, sitting next to a blow-up crocodile and balancing a beach ball on top of his finger; the scene is set against the background of Julita Wójcik’s Rainbow installation ablaze (no. 68/2013, see Illustration 5); three males wearing ballerina outfits having snacks and beer, the accompanying caption reads “gender bullshit” (*gender srender*) (no. 70/2014).<sup>34</sup>



Illustration 5: The *Fronda Lux* magazine, front cover, no. 68/2013; source: <https://xlm.pl/ksiazka/fronda-68-lux> [accessed 30 June 2016]

<sup>33</sup> <http://janhardy.pl/produkt/r-o-t-a-xxi-1-jan-hardy-crossover/> [accessed 30 June 2016].

<sup>34</sup> <https://xlm.pl/ksiazka/fronda-68-lux> [accessed 30 June 2016] and <http://www.pismofronda.pl/tag/fronda-70> [accessed 30 June 2016]; other *Fronda Lux* front covers were also presented at the New National Art exhibition in Warsaw.

## Textual/musical works<sup>35</sup>

This category includes textual/musical works with lyrics featuring contents related to LGBT people; they belong to the genre of rap music, for example:

- “Cwele” (Bitches) by the rapper Kiszło Boruta, including the following fragment (rhymes in Polish):

It’s so off-pissing it’s un-fucking-believable  
 two blokes sucking their dicks somewhere in the alley  
 round the corner queers stroll around with their handbags  
 faggots rushing home to play with their jewels  
 if you don’t know how to use your dick you should get it cut off  
 it’s Poland, not Brussels, there’s no place for you here  
 they are already every-fucking-where, like fucking locusts  
 they must be laying foundations for the rainbow by the block already  
 it’s not prejudice, it’s pure hate  
 I don’t say cure them, I prefer to kill them  
 it’s too late to kill them off, we’ll try to stop them  
 unless you want to watch blokes fuck each other  
 the state won’t help us, they’re fucked up in the head  
 they even have a dick with tits as one of them  
 sometimes I lose hope for the better  
 then I turn on my telly and they fuck about gender (...).<sup>36</sup>

- “Zakaz pedałowania” (Faggotry Forbidden) by the rapper Wuem Encecha, including the following fragment (rhymes in Polish):

You faggot cunt, you don’t even know how much I take the piss.  
 You run around with your ass against the wall instead of living a normal life.  
 I can see you’re pushy about it, and the worst thing is that it’s legal.

<sup>35</sup> Considering their use of the musical medium, these works are borderline cases of visual culture. The decision to include them in this overview was dictated by the fact that – mainly on the Internet – they function in two forms which are often practically independent: as textual/musical works and as textual works. The lyrics of the songs often become “detached” from their original medium and, in fragments or in full, begin to function in the form of a string of quotations in comments, press articles, official notifications of a suspected criminal offence, etc. The significance of this type of texts was noticed by Peter Fuss, who included printouts of anti-Semitic posts from Fronda and katolik.pl internet forums in his exhibition in Koszalin; Peter Fuss, *Jesus Christ King of Poland*, 25 January 2007–15 February 2007, Galeria Scena, Koszalin (Fuss, n.d.).

<sup>36</sup> The fragment in Polish: “Nóż się w kieszeni otwiera to jest kurwa jakiś dramat / dwóch facetów gdzieś pod bramie pały sobie opierdala / zaś za rogiem cioty łążą z damskimi torebkami / śpieszno pedałom do domu by się bawić klejnotami / nie wiesz co się robi z fiutem to trzeba Ci go ujechać / to jest Polska nie Bruksela tutaj miejsca dla was nie ma / jak jebana szarańcza rozjebali się już wszędzie / już pod blokiem pewnie leją fundament pod tęczę / to nie uprzedzenie tylko czysta nienawiść / nie używam słowa leczyc preferuje kurwy zabić / za późno by ich wytępić spróbujemy to zatrzymać / chyba że chcecie oglądać jak się chłopcy będą dymać / państwo nam nie pomoże pojebało im się we łbach / nawet chuja z cymami mają w swoich szeregach / czasami tracę nadzieje czy w temacie lepiej będzie / wtedy włączam telewizor i pierdołą mi o gender (...).”

What’s going on in our country, it’s so fucking pathetic.  
 Just tell me why we shouldn’t use the word *pedał* [faggot]?  
 They’d even enjoy getting fucked by a dog.  
 Check it out, mate: ‘You’ve got something on your chin’,  
 says one guy to another after a morning blowjob.  
 He used to be a bloke and he’s a woman now, just a bit of fucking change.  
 He might get to earn some cash at the Top Model. (...) <sup>37</sup>

## Football match choreographies

This category includes football match choreographies (produced by fan groups and organisations), which sometimes feature contents relating to LGBT people, for example:

- a card stunt presented at the Wisła Cracow vs. Standard Liège game on 16 February 2012, featuring the “faggotry forbidden” sign and crossed images of Che Guevara, the hammer and sickle, and the Antifa sign (see Illustration 6). <sup>38</sup>



Illustration 6: A football match choreography, 2012; source: <http://www.nop.org.pl/2012/02/21/zakaz-pedalowania-na-meczu-wisly/> [accessed 30 June 2016]

<sup>37</sup> The fragment in Polish: “Ty kurwo, pedale, nawet nie wiesz jak cię błażnię. / Latasz z dupą wciąż przy ścianie, zamiast żyć rurowo normalnie. / Widzę robisz to nachalnie, a co gorsza to legalne. / Co się dzieje w naszym państwie, jakie to jest w chuj banalne. / Weź mi powiedz, dlaczego nie używać słowa pedał? / Dla nich byłoby przyjemnie nawet, gdyby pies ich jebał. / Ty spójrz mój koleżko: «masz coś na brodzie» / Mówi chłopak do chłopaka, to po tym porannym lodzie. / Był mężczyzną, jest kobietą – taka kurwa mała zmianka. / Może uda się w Top Model trochę zarobić sianka (...)”

<sup>38</sup> <http://www.nop.org.pl/2012/02/21/zakaz-pedalowania-na-meczu-wisly/> [accessed 30 June 2016]; Antifa is an organisation aiming to oppose far-right initiatives.

It is worth concluding the above overview with some additional observations. All manifestations of practices considered in this article seem to involve a relatively simple (intuitive) reception. They most often rely on invoking a limited set of motifs which are easily recognisable in Polish society (e.g. the “faggotry forbidden” sign, the rainbow, the word *pedał*, a “faggot”), with other elements added as required. The authors of such artefacts very often remain anonymous or use pseudonyms. It is also worth noting that their works most often involve strong (negative) emotions. In order to stir or reinforce them, the creators sometimes mix homophobic motifs with other elements that are strongly negatively received by Polish society (e.g. by associating LGBT issues with communist or fascist regimes). Although this would require further studies, it might be the case that a strong emphasis on expressive character observed in these practices stems from relatively frequent associations with musical communication (i.e. rap music) observed in this category of authors.<sup>39</sup>

## **Reasons for the near absence of such practices in the mainstream institutional art and art discourse**

The practices presented above function practically only in the non-institutional environment: they reach the receivers directly, without any institutional involvement in general, and that of institutions shaping contemporary Polish art in particular. Neither are such artistic practices present in the environment of art dealers or critics. The final part of this article offers an attempt to explain the situation.

The fact that such practices remain “undiscovered” could be attributed to a lack of critical mass which would be able to prompt an adequate reaction and generate interest on the part of institutionalised art. In this case, their exclusion would seem to stem from treating them as immature, vulgar, devoid of any deeper or valuable ideas or – at best – from their recognition as low art. This line of reasoning could be substantiated by drawing analogies to the dynamics of development of Polish critical art, which was initially strongly contested for the same reasons. This argument, however, does not seem convincing.

---

<sup>39</sup> Studies concerning the relation between hate speech and music indicate that the popularity of this association stems from the nature of the musical medium: (1) music implies “an honest signal” (e.g. a fast tempo stirs associations with excitement rather than rest), (2) music is polysemic (i.e. individual receivers can interpret the same signal somewhat differently) (Grant, 2017).

In fact, some creators considered here have already been noticed by art institutions, and their works which do not involve homophobic motifs have been exhibited (e.g. football match choreographies produced by the Warsaw FanaticS group were presented in the exhibition *New National Art*). As regards other practices discussed in this article, it should be noted that although they have not entered the institutional world, in terms of form they are identical to the practices of contemporary art. This resemblance has been noticed by the joint curators of the exhibition *New National Art* at the Museum of Modern Art in Warsaw:

(...) we can see that the stream of national art features all strategies of contemporary art. For example, anti-abortion exhibitions is their version of critical art, and Falubaz [speedway club] fans hanging up a forty-metre-long scarf on the giant statue of Christ in the town of Świebodzin is a case of subversive strategy. Another example is performative re-enactment of important battles of the Warsaw Uprising. (Krasny, 2012)

Paradoxically, then, even if the types of artefacts presented above have not so far been acknowledged as art, they at least have a potential to achieve artistic status by way of association with practices which already belong to the canon of contemporary art. Consequently, it seems that artistic or visual practices considered here do not wait to be "discovered" at all, as they display all the features that should have brought their recognition by art institutions a long time ago.

A more plausible explanation of this situation is that the practices in question are kept "undiscovered" on purpose. In addition, it looks like, to an extent, this state of affairs has its advantages both for Polish art institutions and for the authors creating works invoking homophobia. This can be attributed to a number of, sometimes interrelated, reasons.

Firstly, it needs to be noted that Polish mainstream contemporary art was at some point "taken over" by left-wing artistic practices, which are also dominant in critical art. This clear orientation is reflected in how the principal vectors of contemporary art are defined. As a result, practices that diverge from the pattern are either excluded from the field of art, or their recognition is at least problematic, which sometimes is the case despite their resemblance to mainstream contemporary art in terms of forms and strategies. The dividing line is often far from clear. For example, works by Peter Fuss gained acceptance from the institutional art world. The artist presented his billboard featuring images of well-known Polish public figures with an anti-Semitic caption reading "Jews, get out of a Catholic country" (*Żydzi won z katolickiego kraju*) as part of his exhibition at Galeria Scena in Koszalin

(which also included printouts of anti-Semitic posts from internet forums).<sup>40</sup> Although his intention was to expose and criticise anti-Semitism, a number of receivers misinterpreted the message.<sup>41</sup> On the other hand, similar acceptance is denied to textual/musical works by Kiszło Boruta (e.g. the above mentioned “Cwele” (Bitches)), which express extreme aversion to non-heterosexual people and for this reason function only in independent circulation, as they are not broadcast on the radio or television.

Secondly, the current situation in institutional art has not been conducive to the emergence of a non-oppressive language of critical discussion about artistic practices of homophobic nature. Consequently (as is clearly visible also in this text), their description is practically confined to the language of “ethnographic discovery”<sup>42</sup> and legal classification.<sup>43</sup> Although it gives an air of cool objectivity to the analyses in which it is employed, the actual result involves persistent continuation of the dominant narration, one that exoticises and pathologises this kind of artistic practice.

Thirdly, not only discussion about, but also attitude to this kind of artistic practices bears strong connections with legal approach. This is particularly visible in imposing the discourse of hate speech, which, to an extent, is applied to stigmatise such works. Indeed, some examples provided above (e.g. graffiti produced by groups of football fans) do fulfil all the criteria to be recognised as extremely offensive and vulgar cases of the so-called homophobic hate speech. However, if used extensively, this approach is conducive to treating the artistic practices involving more or less oppressive references to non-heterosexual people (which could be discerned in e.g. the *Fronda Lux* magazine covers mentioned above) practically only in terms of criminal offence, even despite the fact that they might display – sometimes considerable – artistic qualities.<sup>44</sup> It needs to be pointed out that artistic immunity does not extend to protecting this kind of output. This consideration aside, if particular practices are explicitly offensive to non-

<sup>40</sup> Peter Fuss, *Jesus Christ King of Poland*, exhibition, 25 January–15 February 2007, Galeria Scena, Koszalin (Fuss, n.d.).

<sup>41</sup> In one of his interviews concerning the exhibition, Fuss explains: “I received voices of support from nationalist organisations. It was only later that they realised something was wrong, that Fuss was not ‘our guy’ and that they had been ridiculed. Those who had supported me and wanted me to join their crusade against the Jews concluded that I’m a Jew, or a German, Poland’s enemy at any rate” (“Szumi huczy,” n.d.).

<sup>42</sup> This comparison to the approach of an ethnographer and explorer is occasioned by a number of comments concerning this kind of art. For example, in one of his interviews Sebastian Cichocki explains the approach guiding his and Łukasz Ronduda’s selection of artefacts for the exhibition *New National Art* as follows: “we looked for ‘magical’ objects that serve to build communities” (Gruszczyński, 2015).

<sup>43</sup> Practically, comments or descriptions of such works immediately involve their initial legal classification as a criminal offence, or a discussion of whether (and if so whose) personal rights have been infringed.

<sup>44</sup> In this context, it is interesting to observe that this kind of art is entirely excluded from the art market, which usually does not have a problem with the marketization of different artistic practices (even when artefacts are produced using the media that do not seem to lend themselves to marketization, or express contents that might be found offensive).

heterosexual people, they deserve a legal response regardless of whether they might represent certain artistic values. For it is difficult to avoid an impression that homophobic hate speech is increasingly more often trying to reach the safe haven of the realm of art. The process seems to intensify with the gradual diffusion of the language of public debate that does not allow hate speech; likewise, legal responsibility for its use is an accepted solution. As a result, what is being pushed out of the language of public debate is increasingly more often expressed in the language of art. To some extent, this phenomenon can also be attributed to the fact that artistic language enjoys a greater autonomy and independence (which stems from such factors as a widespread general perception of the position of the artist in the spirit of Romanticism). What tends to be overlooked, however, is that each artefact of this kind should be assessed on an individual basis in order to avoid automatic, and sometimes unfair, evaluation of these practices in terms of legal norms. It also seems that the authors themselves are aware of possible legal consequences, which at least partly explains why their works (especially those particularly vulgar) mostly remain anonymous.

Fourthly, the current model of financing mainstream artistic and cultural activity is based on scholarships and grants awarded to individual artists within particular schemes, which practically limits the availability of funding for the kind of artistic practices discussed in this article. The funding schemes in question often include availability criteria making direct or indirect references to such values as the "promotion of diversity" and "respect for human rights",<sup>45</sup> and require a portfolio of relevant artistic work (which, ideally, has been noticed by established artistic institutions). Applications failing to meet these conditions are rejected. Although this would require further studies, the situation might involve the risk of self-censorship on the part of some artists, who could decide not to address certain issues. In addition, institutions deciding on the allocation of funds want to avoid accusations of "promoting" homophobic art. As a result, support to this artistic practice is limited and it is financed from alternative sources (e.g. football fan initiatives).

To sum up, the current status quo seems to be comfortable for mainstream art institutions. They avoid confronting practices which are fundamentally at odds with the paradigms dominating in the world of institutionalised modern art. They also avoid accusations of supporting the exclusion of certain social groups (e.g. LGBT people), thereby eliminating the risk of possible legal responsibility for involvement in the "promotion" of such practices.

---

<sup>45</sup> This is particularly the case of schemes financed or co-financed from European Union funds. I am grateful to the visual artist Antonina Gugala for drawing my attention to the fact that such criteria are part of official regulations and have an impact on the contents of grant applications (particularly in film production).

On the other hand, the situation appears beneficial also to the creators producing this kind of artefacts. It enables them to create a myth surrounding their work, one based on the cleavage between the “regime” art of the “official circulation”, where they have no access, and the “art of the second circulation” (*sztuka drugiego obiegu*). Although functioning in the latter has its downsides, the principal advantage is that this art is not subject to “pressure from the authorities”, which makes it truly “free and independent” and therefore able to tell “the truth” about today’s Poland. An interesting example of this narrative is one found in a blog entry by the NR StreetArt group (which produced the above mentioned graffiti featuring the “faggotry forbidden” sign in a housing estate in the Silesian town of Wodzisław Śląski), explaining the motivation for their activity as follows:

Graffiti is a means of creative activity and expression of views that have no place in the mainstream. It is a protest against the system, it is a culture of freedom of thought and speech, which the demoliberal state wants to limit so much. The nationalist movement in Europe is going through a period of rapid change and the process is reaching Poland, where activists begin to realise the need for new methods that will have an impact on an increasingly greater spectrum of young people. The aim of this website is to popularise and present new forms of street activity. Street art offers broader potential for activism and propagation of nationalist ideas in the name of the principle ‘Time for art; Art for freedom’ (*Czas dla sztuki; Sztuka dla wolności*). (“Czas dla sztuki. NR StreetArt,” n.d.)

Paradoxically, then, although the current form of the field of art in Poland is extremely unfavourable for these creators, they take advantage of the situation. The fact that they are on the margins of the art world is used to continuously strengthen their narrative of exclusion and victimisation, and to stress their essential protest against this state of affairs. At the same time, it also enables them to substantiate the development of practices discussed in this article.

*Translated by Piotr Styk*

## Bibliography

Adler, A. (1996). What’s left?: Hate speech, pornography, and the problem for artistic expression. *California Law Review*, 84(6), 1499–1572. <https://doi.org/10.2307/3481093>

- Czas dla sztuki. NR StreetArt. (n.d.). Retrieved June 30, 2016, from <https://nrstreetart.wordpress.com/o-nas/>
- Dąbrowski, J., & Demenko, A. (2014). *Cenzura w sztuce polskiej po 1989 roku: Aspekty prawne*. Warszawa: Fundacja Kultura Miejsca.
- European Parliament. (2006). Resolution on homophobia in Europe, 18 January. Retrieved August 10, 2017, from <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//TEXT+TA+P6-TA-2006-0018+0+DOC+XML+V0//EN>
- Fuss, P. (n.d.). *Jesus Christ King of Poland* [Exhibition]. Retrieved June 30, 2016, from <http://peterfuss.com/jesus-christ-king-of-poland>
- Grant, M. J. (2017). Musical communication, "hate speech", and human rights law. In W. Gephart, & J. Leko (Eds.), *Law and the arts: Elective affinities and relationships of tension* (pp. 217–250). Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann.
- Gruszczyński, A. (2015). Kibice, Smoleńsk, *Fronda* – czy to nowa sztuka narodowa? *wyborcza.pl*. Retrieved May 6, 2017, from <http://warszawa.wyborcza.pl/warszawa/1,34862,19146162,kibice-smolensk-fronda-czy-to-nowa-sztuka-narodowa-rozmowa.html?disableRedirects=true>
- Jabłońska, Z., & Knut, P. (Eds.). (2012). *Prawa osób LGBT w Polsce*. Warszawa: Kampania Przeciw Homofobii.
- Kapela, J. (2012). Cichocki, Ronduda: Walczymy o lepsze pomniki papieskie. *Krytyka Polityczna*. Retrieved May 6, 2017, from <http://krytykapolityczna.pl/kultura/sztuki-wizualne/cichocki-ronduda-walczymy-o-lepsze-pomniki-papieskie/>
- Krasny, M. (2012). Dom strachów. Nowa Sztuka Narodowa w MSN. *Obieg*. Retrieved June 30, 2016, from <http://www.obieg.pl/rozmowy/25307>
- Makowski, W., Dziamski, G., Kowalczyk, I., Kubicki, R., Mazurek, M., & Marciniak, J. (2001). Wartością sztuki krytycznej jest to, że wywołuje dyskusje i prowokuje do rozmów o wartościach... *Gazeta Malarzy i Poetów*, 2001(2–3). Retrieved June 30, 2016, from [http://witryna.czasopism.pl/gazeta/artukul.php?id\\_artykulu=56](http://witryna.czasopism.pl/gazeta/artukul.php?id_artykulu=56)
- Makuchowska, M. (Ed.). (2012). *Przemoc motywowana homofobią, Raport 2011*. Warszawa: Kampania Przeciw Homofobii.
- Mitchell, W. J. T. (2002). Showing seeing: A critique of visual culture. In M. A. Holly, & K. Moxey (Eds.), *Art history, aesthetics, visual studies* (pp. 231–250). Williamstown: Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute.
- Pesta, M. (2012). Obiekty wizualne drugiego obiegu. Polskie Radio. Retrieved June 30, 2016, from <http://www.polskieradio.pl/8/402/Artykul/677141,Nie-mamy-skarbu-To-nasza-katastrofa-narodowa>
- Poprzęcka, M. (2012). Nowa sztuka narodowa na lewicowej platformie. *Herito*, 3(8), 180–188.
- Sienkiewicz, K. (2014). *Zatańczą ci, co drżeli: Polska sztuka krytyczna*. Kraków: Wydawnictwo Karakter, Muzeum Sztuki Nowoczesnej w Warszawie.

Szumi huczy. (n.d.). vlep[v]net. Retrieved June 30, 2016, from <http://vlepvnet.bzzz.net/post/40614055762/szumi-huczy-x-na-pocz%C4%85tek-chcia%C5%82bym-ci%C4%99-zapyta%C4%87>

Święcicka, O. (2012, 31 May). Sztuka po prawej stronie. Muzeum Sztuki Nowoczesnej szuka narodowego stylu. *naTemat.pl*. Retrieved June 30, 2016, from <http://natemat.pl/16869,sztuka-po-prawej-stronie-muzeum-sztuki-nowoczesnej-szuka-narodowego-stylu>

Wilczyk, W. (2014). *Święta Wojna*. Łódź: Atlas Sztuki, Wydawnictwo Karakter.

## Homophobia in Polish visual culture as an "undiscovered" response to the transformation of sexual norms in Poland after 1989

The article presents the basic characteristics of various artistic practices stigmatising non-heterosexuality that emerged in Poland after 1989 in response to the transformation of sexual norms and the growing emancipation of LGBT people. Discussing the form and content of selected practices, the article argues that they can be classified as a form of the so-called "New National Art" and observes the inadequacy of the language used by Polish art critique, which exoticises and pathologises this kind of artistic practices. The author also comments on the phenomenon of deliberate overlooking of these practices by national art institutions. Finally, he explains why the absence of "undiscovered" artistic practices focused on exclusion and stigmatisation of LGBT people seems to be beneficial for both major Polish art institutions and the "excluded" artists themselves.

### Keywords:

homophobia, transphobia, art, hate speech, law, sexuality, sexual norms, transformation

## Homofobia w polskiej kulturze wizualnej jako „nieodkryta” reakcja na przemiany norm seksualnych w Polsce po 1989 roku

Artykuł omawia podstawowe cechy praktyk artystycznych piętnujących nieheteroseksualność, które wystąpiły w Polsce po 1989 roku na skutek przemian norm seksualnych i zapoczątkowania procesu emancypacji osób LGBT. Charakteryzuje formy, jakie ta twórczość przyjmuje oraz treści, jakie wyraża. Wskazuje również na zasadność zaklasyfikowania tego rodzaju twórczości jako odmiany tzw. nowej sztuki narodowej. Sygnalizuje problemy związane z używanym przez polską krytykę sztuki językiem, który egzotyzuje i patologizuje tego rodzaju twórczość. Odnosi się również do zjawiska zamierzonego „nieodkrywania”

tych praktyk artystycznych przez krajowe instytucje sztuki. Wreszcie, wskazuje dlaczego ta celowa nieobecność praktyki artystycznej nakierowanej na wykluczanie i piętnowanie osób LGBT wydaje się korzystna zarówno dla najważniejszych polskich instytucji sztuki, jak i dla „wykluczonych” twórców.

**Słowa kluczowe:**

homofobia, transfobia, sztuka, mowa nienawiści, prawo, seksualność, normy seksualne, transformacja

**Note:**

This is the translation of the original article entitled “Homofobia w polskiej kulturze wizualnej jako „nieodkryta” reakcja na przemiany norm seksualnych w Polsce po 1989 roku”, which was published in *Adeptus*, issue 9, 2017.

**Citation:**

Knut, P. (2017). Homophobia in Polish visual culture as an “undiscovered” response to the transformation of sexual norms in Poland after 1989. *Adeptus*, 2017(9). <https://doi.org/10.11649/a.1299>