

### DESCRIPTION FOR THE GENERAL PUBLIC

The research project "Art in Poland and Surrealism" involves a study on so far less researched yet significant issue of the relationships of art in Poland with the French and international Surrealist movement. I will try to answer the question, in what way, starting from the 1940s, artists in Poland took special interest in the art and theory of Surrealism and to what extent it influenced their art. My main scope of interest is the decade of 1940s. Yet the research will be reaching also into other areas, since particular problems of the relations of selected artists with Surrealism emerged earlier, already in the 1930s, or were continued later, in the 1950s or even 1960s.

In the scope of my research there will be such artists as Tadeusz Kantor, Jerzy Nowosielski, Erna Rosenstein, Jadwiga Maziarska, Zbigniew Dłubak, Marian Bogusz, Jerzy Kujawski, Bogusław Szwacz, Alfred Lenica as well as art theoretician Mieczysław Porębski. I do not explore their work at its full length, but instead I extract and research specific issues. The other question is what was their knowledge on French Surrealism and the art circles close to it during immediately after the Second World War. Yet, taking into consideration various dates of birth of the aforementioned artists, this problem should be traced back into the 1930s. Next issue I will bring up is the impact of this knowledge on the attitudes they assumed in the 1940s and during the following decades.

The output of the aforementioned artists will be approached from the perspective of particular problems. For example Erna Rosenstein work would be crucial for the analysis of the representation of the Shoah in the context of motifs and techniques of Surrealist art. I will ponder why it was precisely the language of Surrealism (as one of variations of the Avant-garde), that was capable of embracing the traumatic memory of war. Using the example of Marian Bogusz painting and Zbigniew Dłubak photography I will demonstrate a significant, yet not very well known episode of the art in Poland. Those artists bringing up the issue of colonialism, by the means of a metaphor of a journey to distant land, in fact spoke about their own „here and now". Thus in other words they tried to embrace a tremendously difficult situation of their own country, that just went through the war which can also be understood in colonial terms. I will approach the art that emerged in the circles of modern art in Kraków and Warsaw, from the point of view of that moral challenge: to give testimony to the most cruel events they witnessed. I will advance the argument that Surrealism was the language of art that made possible the transmission of the most difficult memories, affects, images.

I propose a capacious definition of Surrealism, according to the view that already in 1940s the movement was rather dispersed, and represented by many various exponents in various countries. It also lacked specific style that could be defined in formal categories. Its specificity could be rather traced on structural and ideological level. My definition encompasses first of all particular Surrealist attitude towards the image, where the contradiction between representation of reality and fantasy is invalidated. There is neither a contradiction between a documentary and visionary qualities of an image. I will try to prove that Surrealism (and all forms it inspired), for artists in Poland in the period of 1945-1949 was the most interesting alternative to the Realism, especially when one takes into account the most plain and reductive version of Socialist Realism. Secondly I define Surrealism as a certain political attitude, where left-wing views are united with the anti-totalitarian stand. I will show that Surrealism of the 1940s assumed dissident positions not only in Prague, Kraków and Bucharest, but also to some extent in Paris.

Novelty of my approach would be the assessment of the critical reception of Surrealism in the field of literary as well as art criticism. The task that so far nobody ventured will be to compare pre-war and post-war critical reception of the Surrealist movement in Poland. The research will comprise museum and private art collections, archives in Poland and abroad as well as literary and art magazines and periodicals from 1930s and 1940s. The research will result in publishing a book.