



Daniel Rycharski, Szymon Maliborski

***ALL THE DEATHS OF THE VIL-
LAGE TO GIVE IT A NEW LIFE***
**INTERVIEW WITH DANIEL
RYCHARSKI ON THE OCCASION
OF HIS WORK ON THE LATEST
EXHIBITIONS**

This text is a synthetic attempt to collect the threads and sketch a map accompanying us in the preparation of the projects carried out together with Daniel Rycharski. It concerns in particular two exhibitions that will have their première in 2022: *The Dead Class* and *Love Is for Everyone. For Me Too*.¹ These two projects will present new works by Daniel Rycharski that approach the theme of the tensions created by the rapid changes in the relationship between human and land, as seen from the perspective of the Polish countryside. These changes, resulting from the intensification of industrial food production subordinated to the logic of profit, entail profound cultural transformations. They can be seen as the latest chapter in the story of the end of the peasant culture.

According to Rycharski himself, these exhibitions 'are about the social landscape, not so much focusing on my inner experiences as on the reality in which I am living'. As can be inferred from previous works, he is not so much interested in the economic transformation of the countryside (although he is aware of its importance), but rather in looking at its social and cultural consequences, as well as personal stories. It is the direct experience of observing change, sharpened by literature (by Wiesław Myśliwski rather than the most recent items dedicated to the Polish rural history), that leads the artist back to the 'peasant issue' and to new questions: How does the disappearing of family farms translate into individual status and autonomy and how does it refer to the problem of climate change? In what ways do current transformations demand an updating of ideas related to the rural culture, its religiosity, its relationship to animals and the land? (Szymon Maliborski)

Daniel Rycharski: If I wanted to locate on the map of my projects the beginning from which these two exhibitions originate, I would have to go back to *Fears*. The exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art was largely devoted to the theme of the emancipation of homosexuals and their complicated relationship with faith. These new exhibitions are very different, as you have mentioned, they are more about the social environment than about me, although they grow out of everyday observation. During the implementation of the *Family Care*² project in 2020, when I went from farm to farm asking if they would be willing to take in LGBT+ people, I realised that there were very few

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- 1 The exhibitions *The Dead Class* and *Love Is for Everyone. For Me Too* are also a development of the project submitted for the competition for the Polish pavilion at the Venice Biennale in 2021, created jointly by Daniel Rycharski, Szymon Maliborski and Agnieszka Żuk.
 - 2 The *Family Care* project accompanied the 12th Warsaw Under Construction festival, referring to the theme of community. For a week, the group of LGBT+ people who volunteered for the project lived in the Sierpc area, worked during the day and spent time together on family farms, getting to know each other and discussing with the people running them.

such places left. There are no more farmers. A lot of people replied to me that they would not be able to offer them any work, that they no longer farm, they do not keep animals, they do not even have a field, so there is no chance to experience any connection with nature through agricultural work. There were also responses from industrial-scale farmers that this could not be organised, as procedures do not allow untrained people to enter, for example, a herd of four hundred cows. It was that first moment when I realised that I must have missed something. It was then that I deeply realised the scale of the rapid and unnamed changes, that had transformed the Polish countryside. I return to Kurówek and, indeed, there are only three farmers left there.

Szymon Maliborski: This is a very big social change that has taken place in a few years. After all, the life of small farms and their reality were the subject of activities we organised in Kurówek within the *Field Game* in 2014.

Field Game caught the literally last moment to see the remnants of a traditional village with family farms. Jasio Źmijewski [one of the people involved in the project – s.m.] was still alive, some of the farmers had not yet moved out and sold their land. After 2014, most people left and the remaining farms became mostly social farms, maintained by the state, thanks to subsidies from the EU, but no longer living off agricultural production. It was another impetus to return to the theme of the end of peasant culture after projects that focused on faith and engagement in the situation of the LGBT people, and to see how the present can be told from this perspective.

I began to think that the Polish cultural space needed an exhibition about the contemporary countryside. For the past two years, I have been accompanied in this thinking by various books, especially novels and essays by Wiesław Myśliwski, who raised the thesis on the end of peasant culture. I think that this great, thoroughly humanist subject has not been given due consideration in the visual arts.

Recently, however, the village has made itself comfortable in the exhibition world. We have seen significant presentations of this topic from the Venice Biennale of Architecture, where it was presented by the Polonia Pavilion, to the *Countryside* project by Rem Koolhaas at the Guggenheim Museum. Historical and anthropological publications from the folk history strand have been appearing regularly for the past two years. At the same time, I notice that we still have a breach in telling this experience on a different scale than the macro one, or that we recount the distant past.



Daniel Rycharski, Installation view 'Dorothea von Stetten Art Award 2022', Kunstmuseum Bonn, photos: David Ertl

These are very valuable exhibitions and publications, from Adam Leszczyński to Jan Wasiewicz. However, this is not something that interests me very much. Leszczyński's *Ludowa historia Polski* (Poland's Rural History) focused on the countryside from a distant past, a minimum of one hundred and fifty years ago. This is the time period covered by the open-air museum in Sierpc and I always found it a model reference on how not to talk about and perceive the countryside. Sometimes I feel that the current interest of the 'intelligentsia' in serfdom is similar to the fascination of ethnographers from a hundred years ago pulling out an object to build on its basis the idea on the essence of folk art.

And no one is interested in the profound changes the Polish countryside is undergoing at this precise moment, after joining the European Union in 2004. In a year that, from my perspective, is revolutionary and perhaps even more important than 1989. Also in the field of science, sociology, ethnography too little attention is paid to this



turning point. I thought that what happened after our accession to the EU is precisely what we needed to do an exhibition about. In his book *Toast na progę*³ (Toast on the Doorstep) Andrzej Mencwel puts forward the thesis that if we were to find the date of the final death of peasant culture, this death of small farms only feeding the farmers' families, it is precisely the moment of the accession to the EU. The revolutionary moment, when the village gets something, changes for the better along with subsidies and money. And the price for this change is small farms, on the ruins of which industrial holdings are built.

So, we are in the here and now, the story is anchored in the moment, as you like to put it, when the countryside was annexed to Poland, a nodal point in the recent social memory.

3 A. Mencwel, *Toast na Progu*, Kraków, 2017.

I think it is a good thing that we are doing our homework on the rural history and books such as Radek Rak's *Baśń o węzowym sercu* (The Tale of the Serpent's Heart), which won the Nike Literary Award, are appearing. However, I notice a lack of this other pole in theatre, literature or feature films dealing with contemporary times. My impression is that the cinematic image of the modern countryside is getting worse and worse. It is a burden that hinders us, a ballast that must be discarded in order to finally be like the Western world. This is not much different from the early 1990s, when it was also explicitly raised.

We can observe in the Polish visual arts something that can be called a folk turn. There is, for example, Karol Palczak, who paints his village with a certain tenderness, there is Małgorzata Mycek, a non-binary person who shows herself as a transgender person who does not fit in with the conservative province of the Podkarpacie (Subcarpathia) region. There are, of course, other artists as well, although it seems to me that these themes come to them through their fascination with the aforementioned folk history. In my case, it is exactly the opposite. This theme does not come from a fascination with serfdom, with discovering peasant roots. It draws from my here and now. I do not fully trust academics who dig in the archives and try to describe the reality from a few hundred years ago on the basis of source material, when I have people living here and now with whom I can work. I trust them more than these sources.

In this context, how do you perceive the sculpture-monument called *Gate* created for the round anniversary of the abolition of serfdom, which you made in 2014?

Gate made for the one hundred and fiftieth anniversary of the abolition of serfdom is probably my most often borrowed work. Recently it was to be presented at an exhibition in Katowice.⁴

I just had to create it because in the visual arts, there was no work treating serfdom for almost a decade. However, more than bridging the gap in the local artistic life, I was concerned to see if the subject was remembered by the countryside residents. If I establish my *Gate* for example in Kurówek, will it move the local people? Of course, it turned out that it would not. On a subconscious level, people have repressed this memory. They do not want to remember it; it is like denying the time of poverty and humiliation. The people who would directly remember the times of serfdom are no longer alive, their children's generation is dead as well. In my opinion, it will never

4 *Interior*, BWA Katowice, Katowice, 2022, curated by Marta Lisok, <http://bwa.katowice.pl/wystawy-i-wydarzenia/interior/>

be possible to artificially instil such a memory in the countryside, although on some level I understand the idea behind the initiatives aimed at such commemorations.

Is it fair to say, then, that folk history is more needed by the ‘intelligentsia’ for yet another reworking of the historical narrative than it is a tool for rural emancipation?

I have never seen this kind of story as a tool for rural emancipation. Tomek Rakowski, an anthropologist and ethnographer who has accompanied our projects starting with the Peasant Monument, said that ‘peasant is a kind of figure for thinking’, which means it is used in attempts to reconstruct the past in various ways. It is supposed to fulfil its purpose. And, by the way, when it is used to explain the past in one way or another, it projects interpretations of the current situation. We can quote here the famous words about the way people in corporations are treated like the dark mass. I think it is a misunderstanding to explicate the ‘manorial’ relations currently prevailing on the Polish labour market by serfdom. This obscures the issue more than it produces a better understanding, and certainly does not lead us to a deeper knowledge of the today’s countryside. People generally like the countryside of the past, the safe countryside, as I often say, the kind of countryside that no longer stinks of the peasant.

But let us return to current affairs, to the space of the here and now, to the emotions that pervade the latest realisations. In 2016, you created a work consisting of an empty bed pierced by a gravestone cross, strongly associated with cemetery, for an exhibition we prepared at Galeria Labirynt.⁵ Even then, the subject of loneliness, both spiritual (a gay believer) and very physical, was bothering you. Now you add to this setting a coffin, which can be passed through like a gate. It is a work entitled *The Dead Class* and we are looking at it right in Kurówek with its open interior framing the landscape.

This work is in some sense a continuation of the *Bed* and works well combined with other objects. It gets most interesting when there is a man close to it who can be seen through the open lid. It is a traumatising piece of furniture for me, I cannot stay near it for more than five minutes, I have to walk away from it so as not to see it. After a while you start to calculate: ‘OK, so it is in a coffin like this that I will spend eternity, that is quite a long time.’ This is repeated by virtually

5 *Communis. Renegotiations of the Community*, Galeria Labirynt, Lublin 2016, curated by Szymon Maliborski, Łukasz Mojsak, <http://communis.labirynt.com/>.



everyone who has seen the work. Entering the exhibition through it, one has the impression that the whole exhibition is one installation, a book broken down into individual chapters. From the material perspective, it is a converted plain coffin, lined in white satin with lace, but it opens on both sides and you can squeeze through it. Passing through you can really get the chills.

The Dead Class, on the other hand, is the generation of my grandparents, actually up to the 1950s, the generation of the last small farmers. It is with them that the centuries-old history of peasant culture ends, at least as described by Wiesław Myśliwski. This community also included doubly excluded members, such as a late dairy farmer from Kurówek, who was both a small farmer and a non-heteronormative person. *The Dead Class* is thus a class understood as a 'social class', and Mr Janek's story, which no one wrote down and listened to, became the inspiration for the project. Following Andrzej Mencwel and his book *Toast on the Doorstep*, I wanted to create just such a doorstep or threshold, a transition from one reality to another. Of course, this is just one death of the countryside from the many others

that occurred in the last century, along with the gradual ending of its isolation through reform, war, the experience of communism and the disappearance of landed gentry. However, 2004 brings a qualitative change: this threshold of capitalism crossed by the rural society means that there is no longer any room for such forms of existence. When you talk to anthropologists and sociologists, they say there is no such thing as the end to the countryside, which is probably true from the demographic point of view and around large agglomerations. But if you go much further away from the centres, for example to the vicinity of Sierpc, Kurówek or Smorzewo, you can see how these villages are becoming more and more empty. The people in the village themselves tell me that for them the village is over. Peasant culture was defined by human's closeness to nature. Industrial agriculture does not presuppose such a relationship, nature is not treated as a partner, it is exploited. *The Dead Class* is a threshold, a definitive transition from one social world to another, but of course it also has its metaphysical, existential dimension. What is the death of a village and what will its afterlife be like?

The important context for this ongoing end is that it is taking place unnoticed. In Poland, there is little need to recount it on a regular basis. Meanwhile, it is one of the motivations of your action to show this process in different dimensions.

Well, the ethnographers for sure have not launched any works on 'saving' this rural present day by building open-air museums of the current Polish countryside, as it was the case at the beginning of the last century when folklore was invented. I feel that the countryside's materiality is overlooked, a lot of things go unrecorded. We have to talk about it, make it visible, and at the same time make clear that this phenomenon has not been well recorded. I wonder to what extent my exhibitions illustrate this problem, because they are, after all, strong transformations operating in the realm of symbols and using the language of contemporary art. On the other hand, I sense that some circles may conclude that I am becoming someone who slows down the cultural progress. As long as I was dealing with the emancipation of the countryside and pointed out, for example, its non-heteronormativity, it was fine. However, the moment I start to appreciate the countryside, I stand on the side of its superficial religiosity, then the acceptance ends. Even if faith is superficial, it was at the same time the source of a great many phenomena, for example, strategies for explaining the world, making it bearable for oneself when various tragedies or sufferings happened. At the same time, I do not believe

that this kind of faith is a source of homophobia. At some level, rural residents (farmers) have something in common with other excluded people, such as the LGBT+ people. It happens that the level of contempt towards these social groups is similar. If you want to insult someone, you can say 'you faggot' or 'you redneck'; both these terms are highly stigmatising and some people would like to see these two groups disappear. Of course, the countryside is not perfect, it represents the same level of inequality and exploitation or hatred as elsewhere.

Since the topic of the open-air museum and sending specific groups to the past has come up, let us pause with it for a moment to talk about how it is included in the exhibition. It is a space created on the same principle as folk art, by intellectuals wishing to salvage what they found valuable (mainly in an aesthetic sense) from the peasant world. It plays the role of a distorting mirror of the peasant culture. It is also a place, a setting for *The Dance of Death*, a registration of the paratheatrical action you have in mind, in which you literally send the farmers back to the open-air museum, to the space of what is already past. Please tell us how this intertwining of the open-air museum and folk art as imagery of the countryside works in what you create?

The Dance of Death, one of the works I am planning, takes place right in the Sierpc open-air museum. People have not noticed, because how are they actually supposed to notice, that farmers have become a minority. It is estimated that there are between 330,000 and 550,000 people living on their own farm income in Poland. From a city perspective, I often hear that 'the peasant is power, end of story', that the countryside elects our government, our president. However, in this countryside, where about forty per cent of the population lives, farmers have become a minority, statistically they no longer are at home. Somewhat along the same lines as other minorities, whether national, religious or sexual. In *The Dance of Death*, I want to show that it is time to take the modern countryside to the open-air museum, to unseal our notions of folklore. It is there that the action of this performance takes place, where the assembled minorities collectively perform the dance of death, in the face of which it does not matter who you are, because everyone is equal. The climax features an 'ethnographic uniform', a variation on what a contemporary folk costume might look like. It is also about looking at the mechanisms of the creation of what we consider to be folk, to what extent it can be an inclusive category in the present day.

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Kunstmuseum Bonn, photo: David Ertl

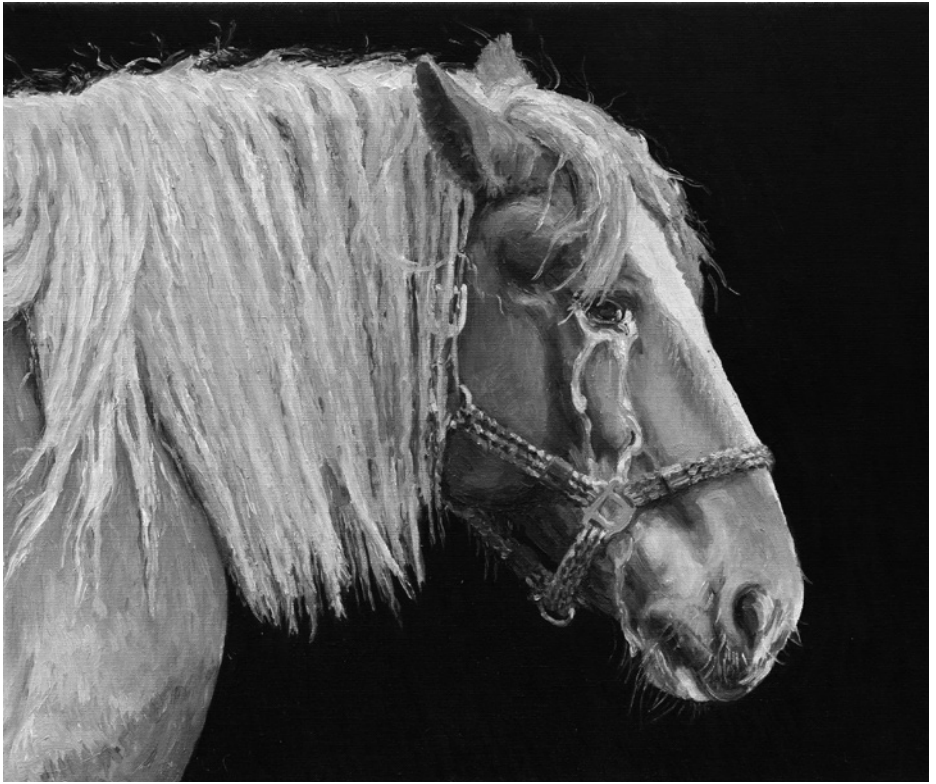
Are you interested in using the mechanisms of 'folklorisation' to create a situation that does not degrade the countryside, does not deprive it of its contradictions, giving it a chance for social expression?

The peasant did not know what folklore was. It was only the urban intelligentsia at the end of the 19th century who began to indicate him what was folk. This is why I do not like the folklore inspiration, folklorism for sale. Which does not change the economic importance of folk art, when it used to be practised by the poorest and was a source of income for them. What interests me in folk art is not aesthetics, but its social origins and function. Folklore, folk art also emerged at the turn of the previous centuries to unify Polish society, to overcome the division between peasants and nobility. After the regaining of independence, serfdom was still very well remembered. We had to come up with something that would incorporate the villagers into the Polish nation. This is what folk art did, and in this I see an opportunity for activities like mine, or the activities of cultural activists in general. We now need again this unification of the nation, of society, and it seems to me that this can be done through art: the new folk art. This is how I like to think of my activity: as a new version of folk art.

There is a direct reference to this new folk art, to the mechanisms of its creation and circulation in your series of objects *Cepelia from the Pigsty*, the three sculptures you are about to present in Bonn. On a material level, the work incorporates what was once unworthy of being called a thing worth saving.

Cepelia from the Pigsty originated from my reading of peasant diaries. These books show what peasants went through, especially in the inter-war period, and how many things they had to deny themselves in order to establish these family farms that are disappearing today. The diaries show the price they had to pay, which was enormous. Now it is easy to see that the former farmers have already sold off their equipment. The wooden troughs remain unused. And for me, it is an object that has never been tempting to anyone, neither the intelligentsia in the past or, nowadays, as a utilitarian thing. It was not beautiful from the visual point of view, it could not be monetised, you could not actually do anything with it. The troughs have not found their way into ethnographic museums and have not been recognised as part of the culture. This unwanted object became the basis for my work. I clad the trough with thousands of coins and turn it into a precious thing. There is a bit of a joke in it too, as those allowed close to the trough can gorge themselves, so the pigsty transforms to glamour. For me, however, it is also a story about how agriculture used to be seen not

Daniel Rycharski, *Crying Horse #2*, 2022, oil on canvas, 50 x 60 cm,
courtesy of the artist and Gunia Nowik Gallery



as a branch of the economy but as hard work. In the dead peasant culture, it was sacralised, becoming a branch of metaphysics rather than economics. That made it bearable: this demanding work also met spiritual needs. *Cepelia from the Pigsty* thus touches on social issues, but it also has a spiritual, metaphysical layer.

I think this is the essence of these activities. Narratives on the changing countryside, as we said earlier, can be sometimes found in today's culture, but it is very rare to capture and narrate changes in the spirituality and religiosity, to go beyond a commentary on the banality of religious practice. Metaphysics is also the missing part that is not experienced in traditional folklore. In your work you point out that rejecting metaphysics leads to a loss of balance.

Modern agriculture, and therein lies the problem with modern capitalism, attempts to remove this spiritual sphere, which leads to disunity and to human tragedies. The question of balance is addressed in a key work for the exhibitions we prepare, namely the *Yin Yang*. This sculpture, which is central to me, came from the fact that I ride around the countryside on my motorbike or bicycle and

Daniel Rycharski, *Crying Horse #1*, 2022, oil on canvas, 50 x 60 cm,
courtesy of the artist and Gunia Nowik Gallery



look for objects, usually thrown out of the barn. This is how I found a wheel from a chaff cutter thrown away by a female farmer who told me her story. She had a farm with her husband that, after 2004, did not adapt to changes, they did not modernise it and things started to deteriorate. He became depressed, alcoholic and so his driving licence was taken away, which made him destroy police cars outside the police station in anger. As a result, he was sent to prison, which did not improve anything and he died shortly after his release. It was the wheel from this farm that I used. In its metal frame, it has inscribed a kind of Yin Yang symbol, which can be read as a symbol of balance. I read in a study by Amanda Krzyworzeka who conducts research in the Podlasie (Podlachia) region, the opinion of a farmer who said that a litre of milk should cost as much as a litre of petrol, it is one of several recurring dreams. The wheel from the chaff cutter was glazed over and I poured milk and petrol into the created reservoirs. It is a work about the search for an impossible balance. For me, it has a level of agricultural micro-history, a level of general reflection on rural modernity. Much has changed for the better after we joined the UE, but there have been costs. This man was one of



many who bore them. It is a bit of a voice of these farmers. There is also a theme of ecology in this work: the impossible balance between nature and its exploitation driving the climate catastrophe. It is the kind of general sense that is easy to read, the search for balance in a world where there is none. It is a central and ambiguous work. Very important to me.

In our conversations, various ideas for further activities often emerged, referring to significant leads from the Polish visual culture. *The Dead Class* is a quotation from Tadeusz Kantor, in the series of paintings *Horses Are Crying*⁶ one can sense an allusion to the work *Pyramid of Animals* by Katarzyna Kozyra, and in *Letter from Heaven* a reference to the popular TV series *Ojciec Mateusz* (Father Matthew), but also to the character of the alternative Artur Żmijewski. As if the

one connected to the world of critical art should be replaced by the figure of the actor bearing the same name and surname. I find this reworking of the heritage of the classics through a different sensibility incredibly interesting and important. Especially that several texts included reflections on the relationship of your practice with the tradition of critical art of the 1990s.

My art shows well the shifting of the sensibilities in artistic practice. It is critical but also empathetic. It is not about transcending, about believing that the artist can do more and that with a radical gesture – killing animals, forcing a group of people to do something they do not want to do – he or she can show some aspect of reality. We are already in a different place after twenty-five years of critical art, it is a kind of a generational response to this phenomenon. The differences lie in the understanding of the importance of empathy and an awareness of the responsibility when you act

⁶ A series of paintings by Wojciech Witkowski. The fireman-artist has been working with Rycharski since 2018. This time they are creating together a series of paintings depicting horses going to slaughter. It is an attempt to use a classic medium and an amateur style to alter the meanings of often romanticised representations of horses firmly incorporated in the culture.

among people. I think a very similar thing is happening in young cinema and young theatre. I look at the people who are involved in it and I see that they do not believe uncritically in their professors acting on the limit of ethics.

Apart from ethics, I am interested in what you might call your gesture towards people and working with what they know from their daily life and what they appreciate. This is the source of the strength of your work: creating from elements that are recognisable to people. This is the practical dimension of empathy; it is then easier to feel the main idea behind your realisations.

This has already happened with the *Peasant Monument*. It was simply to be a well-liked and readable monument for the villagers, something that could be understood immediately. The work *Letter from Heaven*, for which I would like to invite Artur Żmijewski, the actor widely known for his role of father Matthew, to come to the village and read out the letter by Piotr Ściegienny, originates in the same approach. It is part of the story of Ściegienny impersonating the Pope and writing a letter to the Polish peasants in the 1840s in which he was telling them to reject serfdom and fight for freedom. Today it could sound like a call for solidarity.

A kind of 'hope in the dark' project when you have to go beyond the 'suffering subject'? that has dominated art?

I am currently reading Roch Sulima's latest book, where he talks about, among other things, how he gave lectures in the villages. During one of them, a peasant asked: 'why are there no nails in the commune cooperative stores?' And then Sulima does a half-hour lecture on the subject, after which the peasant says to him: 'No, actually, nails are available in the store, I just wanted to see how you would explain yourself.' And this was supposed to be the project that does not need to be explained, because people know how it is like. If you go to the countryside, everyone knows father Matthew. However, no one has heard of Artur Żmijewski, the artist. It is like creating Żmijewski for one's own purposes, using the same method as he used to, i.e., by somewhat exploiting a man, perhaps against his will. This

7 'Suffering subject', one of the fundamental themes emerging in anthropology and ethnography after the disappearance of the savages, i.e., the shift of interest from primitive peoples to the subject who suffers and experience injustice. It is also a figure very prevalent in the visual arts, one of the default themes addressed in the field of artistic production. See: J. Robins, 'Beyond suffering subject: toward an anthropology of the good', *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 19, 2013, pp. 447–462.

would be a kind of an activist use of a well-understood cultural code. People know father Matthew, so they will trust you and listen to your letter about the need for social solidarity. Use what they know, what they accept, and someone they would really like to see. I would absolutely like to go back to the people, bring them together and give them something optimistic, something that is empowering, rather than something that may be visually interesting but at the same time has a depressing effect. This is how, one might say, I understand this movement towards the good and beyond suffering.

Since we are talking about good, let us touch further on the subject of love. Young farmer Patryk Ruszkowski, one of the people you work with, talked about the tattoo he has on his arm with a quote from the Rammstein song *Love is for everyone. For me too*. So far, it is just a wish, but simple and pertinent enough that it has stayed with us as the title of the exhibition.

As I pointed out, the death of the countryside and loneliness are themes that tell the story of life in the social stratum. At the same time, they talk about you as an individual, about the fact that everyone can be left alone. This is the biggest problem of the countryside, the desire for love is an aftermath of this. When I go to Kurówek, I remember that a year ago we still had neighbours turning up, but now I do not see them anymore. The kind of people who acted as hubs, to whom you could go to get something done, to talk to, have all moved on or gone away. What is left is the big farm of the Kikolski family, who are constantly working hard with their cows and cannot even go on holiday. But I like what Myśliwski writes: that the individualism that came after peasant culture (that you can decide for yourself without looking at the group) is perhaps worth its death. We cannot be limited to nostalgia about how it used to be. I have only now begun to seriously study this writer, who has been analysing this topic for many years. What I am now doing could be called 'queering' Myśliwski. He is, for me, the most outstanding Polish prose writer, but I miss something in his work. As usual with him, we have a modernising countryside and various people who are struggling with this reality. He describes a village of philosopher farmers, rather than filthy farmers. His literature is not breaking through to the mainstream now. When I ask my students who are interested in the theme of the countryside, they ignore this name.

Updating this heritage and bringing it back as a source of inspiration could be an interesting move, as it seems so different from current sensibilities. But, at the same time, is it good at explaining the reality we face?

The aforementioned authors, Mencwel, Sulima or Myśliwski, show me the countryside not from the nostalgic side, as it could be expected. They rather alert me to the pitfalls of such thinking. They also disagree on many issues with one other and want to argue constantly. On average, every ten years this topic is brought up and one of them has to write a text about it.

So there has to be an exhibition on this topic as well. Are we talking about the death of the countryside to give it a new life?

Definitely, yes. And the exhibition can give rise to a theatre play or a film. And that is basically the point.

June 2022

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Daniel Rycharski

artysta i grafik, doktor nauk o sztukach pięknych, laureat nagrody Paszport „Polityki”. Absolwent Akademii Sztuk Pięknych w Krakowie. Zajmuje się działaniami artystycznymi w przestrzeni wsi, jest twórcą wiejskiego street artu. Urodził się w 1986 roku w Sierpcu. Działa ze społecznością rodzinnej miejscowości Kurówko.