Warsaw, 8 June 2021

**Magical Socialist realism**

**There are four of them. In pairs, they walk around the forests and wetlands of the Lublin region. WWII has ended recently. Their conversations combine hope laced with fear and faith in a better tomorrow, even though each of them longs for a different future. *The Thousand-Year Plan,* the latest work by Agnieszka Polska, will be on display at the Museum of Modern Art in Warsaw from 2 July.**The impressive video installation features respected theatre and film actors, including Jaśmina Polak, Bartosz Gelner, Piotr Polak and Julian Świeżewski, and the voice of Antonina Nowacka, voice and sound artist.

The exhibition consists of a video installation, on show at the Museum on the Vistula until 19 September 2021, and a number of accompanying events taking place both at the Museum and online. Visitors will be able to take part in the “Electric Summer School” Symposium featuring the sociologist Benjamin Bratton, philosophers Mckenzie Wark, Bogna Konior and Katarzyna Czeczot, and watch “Iskra TV” [Spark TV] — a series of short films created by experts, such as the post-war energy engineer Jacek Szyke or the  researcher of electrifciation Rafał Zasuń, introducing the history of electrification and its socio-political contexts.

*The Thousand-Year Plan* is a new artwork created especially for this exhibition by Agnieszka Polska — a **two-channel video work that explores the threads of modernization and electrification processes in the Polish countryside following WWII.** In her work, the artist consistently engages with the subject of technological progress and industrialization. Polska capably intertwines social issues with her protagonist’s personal stories, and subtly poetic narrative, images and sounds. This brought Polska international recognition — she exhibited at the New Museum and MoMA in New York, Centre Pompidou and Palais de Tokyo in Paris and Tate Modern in London. Berlin’s Hamburger Bahnhof awarded Polska with the prestigious Preis der Nationalgalerie award. In Warsaw, we will see her latest effort — and exploration of the history of modernization in post-war Poland’s rural areas.

From its inception, electricity aroused both fear and delight. “Illuminating darkness” was seen as a superhuman driving force, or — as socialist electricians would have it — “the secret stolen from lightning.” In the interwar period, just 1 village out of 100 was electrified. It wasn’t until 1950 that universal electrification became an official objective of the central government. To a large extent, it was a grassroots enterprise in which small communities, or the so-called popular class, were heavily involved. Farmers and peasants built fragments of the infrastructure, laboured unpaid, and often provided engineers with a place to stay the night. At the same time, partisans were still hiding in the forests, convinced that the next stage of the war was still ahead of them. Following WWII, the partisan struggle continued to affect everyday life in eastern and south-eastern Poland. These partisan units were strongly anti-Soviet and anti-communist. The number of people involved in armed resistance against the Soviet and communist authorities at any given moment of the early post-war period is not thought to have exceeded 20,000, and it decreased to around 2,000 after the 1947 amnesty. Many rogue partisan groups committed crimes against civilians, especially against various ethnic minorities such as Jews, Ukrainians and other Slavic groups. For peasants and partisans electrification meant something entirely different. *The Thousand-Year Plan* sheds light on a story that has so far been overlooked in the discussion on modernization in post-war Poland*.*

**The exhibition’s curator, Natalia Sielewicz:** “Agnieszka’swork and the events programme that make up the exhibition will portray electrification as an undertaking bursting with contradictions and a multi-speed process. It reversed the traditional division into top-down and bottom-up modernization; a division into those who bring the light and those who meekly receive electrification.”

By embedding her protagonists in post-war history, Polska poses the most relevant questions: how is access to infrastructure empowering, and in what ways does its lack exclude from modernization? **Which social groups and institutions control technology and impose the agenda for collective life?**

Agnieszka Polska’s film is an innovative look at the first post-war years, a strong voice in the recently launched discussion on the history of the working class in Poland. Referring to the poetics of the exhibition, the curator Natalia Sielewicz proposes the term “magical socialist realism,” and explains “Polska’s work deliberately integrates the spiritual and metaphysical spheres with nature and the process of technologization of life.”Polska treats technology and modernization as fully-fledged heroines of her narratives. She does not separate them from nature, but even strengthens this non-obvious association. “The artist “animates”, that is revives technology with the help of a suggestive soundtrack and digital animation thus providing it with agency and sentience, or — on the contrary — “electrifies” the forces of nature and the surrounding landscape.” — adds Sielewicz. The artist employs evocative imagery, powerful soundtrack and poetic narrative to convey the most universal emotions: longing, fear, hope, and the feeling of loss. In this way, she portrays technology as a sensory and spiritual experience adjacent to dream worlds, imaginations, supernatural phenomena and mystical rituals, thanks to which “night turns into day.”

**THE THOUSAND-YEAR PLAN:**

Video installation: 2 July – 19 September 2021, Museum on the Vistula

Electric Summer School (International Symposium): end of July, online

Iskra TV: online

Koncert / Set DJ: opening 2 July, Museum on the Vistula

Mini website with texts by Natalia Sielewicz, Aldona Kopkiewicz, Przemysław Wielgosz, Rafał Zasuń and Bartłomiej Derski: plan1000.artmuseum.pl

**Agnieszka Polska** (b. 1985 in Lublin) is a visual artist making films, animations, and photographs. In her work she explores themes related to technological progress, problems of industrialization and global warming. The poetic relationship between image and sound, and reflections on the social responsibility of individuals play an important role in her work. She exhibited in the New Museum and MoMA in New York, Centre Pompidou and Palais de Tokyo in Paris, Tate Modern in London, Hirshhorn Museum in Washington and Hamburger Bahnhof in Berlin. Polska also participated in the 57th Venice Biennale, Gwangju Biennale, 19th Sydney Biennale, and the 13th Istanbul Biennale. In 2017, she received the prestigious Preis der Nationalgalerie award funded by Berlin’s Hamburger Bahnhof, where she staged a multi-channel video installation entitled *The Demon’s Brain* the following year. She is the winner of the Film Award from the Polish Film Institute and the Museum of Modern Art in Warsaw that gives artists the opportunity to produce a full-length feature film — her *Hurrah, We Are Still Alive!* premiered in 2020.