

ARTISTS AND WORKS

Kader Attia

born 1970 - creates videos, installations sculptures and photography. He grew up in both Algeria and the suburbs of Paris, and takes a poetic and symbolic approach to exploring the wide-ranging repercussions of Western cultural hegemony and colonialism on non-Western cultures, investigating identity politics of historical and colonial eras, as well as in our modern, globalized world.

Oil and Sugar, 2#, 2007

His hypnotic video shows motor oil being poured onto a crystalline cube of sugar stacked on a silver platter. As the white solid absorbs the black liquid, it crumbles and pools as a glistening viscous mass, rife with open-ended metaphors for art, religion, and politics.

Faycal Baghriche

born 1972 in Algeria, grew up between two cultures, navigating an Arab culture in the private sphere and Western culture in the public realm. Drawing on fundamental principles of image rhetoric, he creates artworks that question the schema that organises human societies. His practice is characterised by simple gestures, which are often attainable without recourse to any specialist expertise.

Family Friendly series, 2012

The series "Family Friendly" consists of a collection of covered-over images taken from art magazines found in Dubai. In the United Arab Emirates, like in many Muslim countries images of nudity are prohibited in the public sphere. Images that include nudity are hidden underneath hand-made ink marks. Each image becomes unique. Baghriche is interested in the aesthetic and social value of these hybrid images.

Mirosław Bałka

born 1958 - one of leading contemporary sculptors in the world today. On the one hand, the artist's place in the art world relies on the fact that he brought in themes of the Holocaust and the importance of remembering it, and on the other hand, it is thanks to the unique language of visual form that he has devised.

Black Pope, Black Sheep, 1987

"Black Pope, Black Sheep" is one of the most important pieces from the early stage of the artist's career. The life-size figure of the man – the pope – is accompanied by a sheep. The pope is crying, water gushing symbolically from his eyes. The artist has thus made a reference to the prophecies of Nostradamus, as well as to urban legends, visions, and apocalyptic predictions about the election of a black pope to the Holy See, which is to mark the end of the world. The work expresses the spirit of the latter half of the 1980's: a time of anxiety, tensions, but also trust in the approaching breakthrough which was to shake the foundations of the world.

Fatma Bucak

born 1982 - Turkish-born photographer and video artist. In her aesthetically refined works she explores topics like gender, ethnic identity, politics and religion.

Melancholia II, 2010

"Melancholia II" series returns to the great archetypes of the Mediterranean culture that encompass the relationships between man and woman. In the photographs entitled Padre, the artist re-enacts the "archaic" drama of a daughter's relationship with the powerful, fearsome Biblical and Koranic father figure. Esso, on the other hand, refers to a little known film by Luis Buñuel, "El", made in 1952, in which the main character obsessively desires the control over "womanhood".

Virginia de Medeiros

born 1973 in Brazil - de Medeiros works primarily with video and audiovisual installations. Her work centers on documentary strategies, as a means to transgress mainstream accounts and question the boundaries between reality and fiction.

Sergio e Simone, 2010

Simone is a transvestite who takes care of a natural spring – Fonte da Misericórdia – as a shrine for the worship of the Afro-Brazilian orishas. Sergio is an evangelical preacher who sees himself sent by God 'to save the human race'. Simone and Sergio are one and the same person. In 2006, Virginia de Medeiros met Simone, who was living in Ladeira da Montanha, one of the most run-down areas of the city of Salvador. Interested in the region's residents, Medeiros began documenting aspects of Simone's day-to-day life in video. About a month

after the initial footage was made, Simone suffered convulsions as a result of her crack use, followed by a mystical delirium in which she found God. After this incident, in which she 'died of an overdose', Simone reclaimed the name Sergio, convinced of another religious mission alongside Jesus.

Köken Ergun

born 1976 in Istanbul - studied acting at Istanbul University and completed his postgraduate diploma studies in Classics at King's College London, followed by an MA in Visual Communication Design from Bilgi University. After working with the American theatre director Robert Wilson, Ergun became more involved in contemporary art, specifically video and performance.

Ashura, 2012

The Battle of Karbala was a military engagement that took place on 10 Muharram, 61 AH (October 10, 680) in Karbala, in present day Iraq, between the forces of Yazid I, the Umayyad caliph and Hussein, the grandson of prophet Muhammad. Hussein and all his supporters were killed; women and children were taken as prisoners. This battle is central to Shi'a Muslim belief in which the martyrdom of Hussein is mourned by an annual commemoration, Ashura (Aşura in Turkish). Köken Ergun has worked in close collaboration with the Shiite inhabitants of Zeynebiye district in Istanbul, documenting their preparations for the ceremonies which involves a mass theatre performance and the isolated weeping ritual at the end of the Ashura day.

Nilbar Güreş

born 1977 - Turkish artist Nilbar Güreş explores the themes of female identity, the role of women, the relations between women and their homes, women and public spaces as well as the relation between women amongst each other. She also focuses on the image of Muslim women in Europe, racism, and what it means to be a migrant. Her works include drawings, collages, performances, installations and photographs.

TrabZone, 2010

TrabZONE takes us on a journey to Black Sea region, one particular city, Trabzon, which is known for its attachment to religious and national values. Güreş looks for the hidden and the uncanny taking place behind the protection of traditional structures. Nilbar Güreş believes that a 'radical' performance of usually restricted gendered body may deterritorialize the space, break the

foundations of these restrictions and change how she remembers the restrictions she has experienced herself.

Rivers of heaven, 2011

Using a medium traditionally associated with the art of woman, she makes collages that subvert, often in a playful way, the accepted ways of representing themes like religion or femininity, using explicit or even scatological imagery. Rivers of Heaven, with two angels urinating with a rainbow stream, make a clear reference to the representation of Paradise, present in the fifteenth verse of chapter 47 of Quran: "(Here is) a Parable of the Garden which the righteous are promised: in it are rivers of water incorruptible; rivers of milk of which the taste never changes; rivers of wine, a joy to those who drink; and rivers of honey pure and clear."

Jonathan Horowitz

born 1966 - American artist; uses a wide variety of techniques in his art: video, sculpture, sound installations, and photography. His artistic stance is based on a critical analysis of diverse cultural constructs, such as the media's image of war, consumerism, and cultural gender.

Crucifix for two, 2010

Crucifix for Two comes from the series of works in which the artists tests the relationship between pure aesthetics of minimalism and semantic power of symbols. Horowitz underlines the impotence of the elegant abstract forms of minimal art to commemorate traumatic events or refer to the current socio-political reality. He uses simple blocks of wood, which bring to mind sculptures of Robert Morris, and composes them into the doubled sign of the cross – the most powerful symbol of Christianity. Hence he also subverts the traditional religious symbolism and by turning singular torment of the savior into a shared suffering, he refers to the struggle and oppression of gay people.

Gülsün Karamustafa

born 1946 - Turkish artist Gülsün Karamustafa investigates ideas of mobility—displacement, immigration, expatriation, exile, and relocation. Her oeuvre includes painting, collage, installation, and video.

Trellis of My Mind, 1998

Trellis of My Mind is a narrow frieze that shows about 300 colored illustrations from Islamic, Christian, and Jewish manuscripts copied onto transparent film and

then superimposed and overlapped so as to create a kind of visual space containing our collective past. The proximity and affinity of the three religions are rendered apparent inasmuch as the pictures themselves and their structures resemble each other closely.

Double Jesus and Baby Antelope, 1984

In the mid-to-late 1980s Karamustafa while working as an art director in film, began to appropriate wall carpets that could be found in the homes of migrants from the Turkish countryside. This series of textile collages earned her the label of 'arabesque painter'. Double Jesus and the Baby Antelope is a work the artist sewed together out of commercially available wall-hangings such as can be purchased at the Grand Bazaar.

Paweł Kwiek

born 1951 - In the 1970's Pawel Kwiek was a member of the two most dynamic circles of the Polish neoavantgarde: the Film Form Studio in Łódź and the group of Oskar Hansen's students, with whom he tried to translate his idea of Open Form to the medium of film, photography and video. In 1980 his art went through a thorough change as he moved from the rational avant-garde strategies to spiritual and sacral art, yet still executed with avant-garde methods.

Ecumenism of art, 1988

Ecumenism of art is a series of black and white photographs, which show the artist holding a sheet of paper that is painted over with a different color on each print. Kwiek shows the opposition between black, white and color as an opposition between sacred and profane. Color, for him, is a representative of sacrum, with its power and intensity contrasted with the ordinariness of reality. Moreover, the work emphasizes ecumenism of art, which is more radical than ecumenism of institutional religion - art can include the elements of different religions, which no church can do.

Meetings with the light, 8 photographs, 1991

Meetings with the light show Paweł Kwiek in different poses and facial expressions, juxtaposed with the golden geometrical figures drawn on the photographs, that refer to the sphere of sacrum. The artist attempted to show subjective feelings and traumas related to religion in relation to the shapes that envision "objective" forms of God. This confrontation between subjective and objective is for him an illumination - a "meeting with the light" .

Prayer, 1990

Prayer is a photo documentation of the performance under the same title. In the first part of the action, Kwiek was lying on the floor with a group of people standing on his body. In the second part the same group was holding the artists up in the air. In both situations Kwiek was praying aloud. The meaning of the work was existential: regardless of one's situation, failure or success, one has to remain himself and sustain his spiritual identity.

Teresa Murak

(born in 1949)

Easter Carpet, 1974

The Procession, 1989

Murak was one of the first Polish artists to work with performance, land art, and interventions in public space. The selected documentation of two artist's pieces The Procession and Easter Carpet emphasizes the main themes in her art of the 1970s and 1980s: performances with organic materials (e.g. seeds, sourdough), and the act of faith and sacrifice (e.g. religious rituals, offerings, building up communities). She was one of the main artists participating in the "church exhibition movement" in the 80s during the Martial Law, realizing actions such as mud splashes in the church naves. She co-organised processions and public prayers, where her organic sculptures played an important part of the liturgy.

Walid Raad

born 1967 - Walid Raad has worked with mixed media installation, performance, video, photography and text to create a substantial body of work that offers multi-layered narratives on the contemporary history of Lebanon.

Scratching on things I could disavow: Prologue, 2007-2014

In 2007 Raad initiated an art project on Islamic, modern, and contemporary art in the Arab world. The artist wrote: "I present works that relate to my ongoing engagement with "Islamic Art" and "Modern Arab Art" - their objects, shapes, colors and lines; their institutions, discourses, stories and histories; their creators, sponsors, and viewers". Raad shares a fictional story on the mysterious escapade of Islamic artworks from Paris to Abu Dhabi which after a few decades evolve in surprising way, they "trade skins, limbs, faces and organs with each other". Their morphing identity brings forward the question of striking similarity between religious rituals and codes of contemporary art institutions, with its secular "shrines" and "holy relics".

Zofia Rydet

(1911 - 1997) - one of the most prominent characters in Polish photography, she became active as an artist in the 1960's, producing the photographic series "Little man" and "The passing time". During this period she also started working on a series of photomontages, titled "The world of emotions and imagination". From 1978 for almost the rest of her creative life she worked on her most significant artistic achievement – the "Sociological Record".

Zofia Rydet, Sociological Record (selection of photographs), 1978–1997

Rydet had already reached an advanced age when she began to work on what would become her magnum opus: the Sociological Record a sweepingly comprehensive photographic "portrait" of Polish domestic life that would come to span decades, regions, and even countries. Many of her photographs combine the disciplines of portraiture and still-life documentation: we see a person in a room, and we also see a room and all of its individuating details surrounding and indeed elaborating upon the person facing the camera. A following selection from the body of over 16.000 negatives focuses on the material manifestations of the spiritual life of the Polish countryside.

Wael Shawky

born 1971 - Wael Shawky creates films and video installations, and is the founder and artistic director of MASS Alexandria, a shared artist studio, meeting, screening, and performance space.

Cabaret Crusades: The Path to Cairo, 2012

The film "Cabaret Crusades: The Path to Cairo" is a part of Wael Shawky's project dedicated to the Crusades, reinterpreted according to Arabic chronicles and historical documents. The source material for the screenplay was Amin Maalouf's book "The Crusades Through Arab Eyes". This hour-long film covers events which occurred during the 48 years from the end of the first crusade in 1099 until the beginning of the second in 1147. The film adheres to puppet-show conventions, and contains elements of musicals, popular science programmes, nativity plays, and even horror.

Slavs and Tatars

(from 2006) - Slavs and Tatars is an international art collective formed in 2006 around the nucleus of Kasia Korbacz and Payam Sharifi. The artists use a variety of media and forms of expression to create installations and objects, give performative lectures, and print their own publications.

Mother Tongues and Father Throats, 2012

Artistically, the Slavs and Tatars collective covers a geographical and cultural territory stretching from the former Berlin Wall in the West to the Great Wall of China in the East known as Eurasia. The group's projects confront seemingly opposing or incompatible concepts, such as Islam and Communism, metaphysics and humor, or pop-culture and geopolitics. Mother Tongues and Father Throats is a perfect example of the group's interest in linguistic issues and is dedicated to the "khhhhhhh" sound, which is not present in Western civilization and therefore marks a clear boundary between East and West.

PrayWay, 2012

PrayWay is an example of the group's interactive relational works, based on juxtaposition of forms and symbols related to the issue of the geographical and cultural territory of Eurasia. PrayWay is based on the collision of the sacred and the profane – the rahlé, the traditional book stand used for holy books, and the takhtor river-bed, vernacular seating areas used in tea-salons. It is part installation, part sculpture, part seating area, and all polemical platform.

Zbigniew Warpechowski

born 1938 - one of the pioneers of performance art. Since 1960's he was active as a performer, painter, sculptor and writer. He calls his practice the "avant-garde conservatism", which aims at connecting traditional values with new media – the achievement of the neo-avantgarde revolution in art.

Autopsy, 1974

In the action called Autopsy Warpechowski submerged his head in the aquarium, from which a moment before he had taken out a fish. The audience could experience consequences of this exchange of ecosystems – a simultaneous suffocation of the artist and the fish. The action was intended as a philosophical and poetic warning - just as the fish does not survive immersion in such an illusory, conceptual water - so people do not survive long in a seemingly objective, rational reality, that slowly sucks life, spirituality and humanity out of them, and that is not their proper "ecosystem".

Prayer for Nothing, 1974

The Prayer for Nothing shows the artist suspended "between heaven and earth"

in prayer. In the 1970s Warpechowski became increasingly interested in the concept of Nothing, which for him referred to the sphere that is absolutely pure, selfless and devoid of any pragmatic functions. In this sense he believed "Nothing" to be synonymous with the notions of Art and Absolute. Moreover, the work was an ironic reference to the focus of the neo-avantgarde artists on the media analysis and self-referential photographic and film works.

Champion of the Golghota, 1978, fragment of the documentary Champion off by Małgorzata Potocka

Since 1978 Warpechowski realized a series of performances that share a common personage of a "champion". Dressed in a sports outfit, with a special bag with a folded cross made of metal tubes, he performed actions related to the way of the cross and the crucifixion. Artist unfolded the cross and "hanged" himself up, drank Coca-Cola, scattered Marlboro cigarettes around, sprayed himself with a deodorant Deo-Spray Brutal etc. Warpechowski, as a believer, in The Champion of Golgotha wanted to refer to the modern idolatry, the superficial religious faith of the Polish society and the excessive veneration of the symbols, idols and kitschy devotional articles. In his view, those physical objects of worship are averting attention from the immaterial sphere of religious experience and the difficult moral choices and sacrifices associated with the principles of faith.

Artur Żmijewski

born 1966 - one of the most influential figures in Poland's public life – an artist, curator, publisher, commentator and art director (Krytyka Polityczna). He believes that art can be used to effect real change in social life, language, and memory.

The Mass, 2012

The Mass documents the rehearsals and the theatrical re-enactment of the liturgy of the Roman Catholic mass, with professional actors cast in the lead roles. Żmijewski organized the performance in the Dramatyczny Theater in Warsaw in order to test the theatrical quality of "the most commonly staged play in Poland". Though the performance was an "exact copy" of the original, the final aim of the mass – the transfiguration of the wine and bread into the body of Christ - did not happen. The performative function of the language failed in the secular context and the prayer turned into the powerless set of words.