

CoCAin..

Review of Contemporary Art Centres and Museums



01.09.14 - 01.09.14
The Veranda House
The Veranda House
The Veranda House

01.09.14 - 01.09.14
Karlheinz
Karlheinz
Karlheinz

01.09.14 - 01.09.14
High Performance
The JULIA OTTO-SCHULZ COLLECTION by Gail
The ZKM Karlsruhe Museum until 1994

Fr - Sa 17 - 20.00
Simplifier in Rahmen der Ausstellung
Doris Brock Vostell
Frühe Funktionen der Performance

Save the Date 11-11.01
Präsentation
App Art Award 2014

ZKM Karlsruhe

No. 6

MUSEUM OF CONTEMPORARY
ART IN KARLSRUHE (ZKM) /
Museum of Contemporary Art
in Krakow (MOCAK)

THE WOZOWNIA ART GALLERY IN TORUŃ - TAMING THE PILLARS

Marta Smolińska

Nowadays, galleries, contemporary art centres or museums are willingly located in post-industrial architecture, as its large spaces are ideal for displaying installations, objects and large-format paintings. Meanwhile, the Wozownia Art Gallery in Toruń is an example of a military storage building adaptation, where the original purpose of space has been definitely changed. While visiting exhibitions presented in the Wozownia, one can without hesitation say that art has not only demilitarised this building, but also assimilated, according to its own needs, its specific construction, resting on rows of wooden pillars, and got into a fascinating symbiosis with it.

In fact, the gallery occupies the building of the former Prussian artillery carriage house, built in neoclassical style in the 1920s. This edifice is unique in Chełmno Land, dating back to the first period of enlargement of the Toruń Fortress in the times of the Prussian annexation. It is entered in the register of monuments. The Wozownia, built in the years 1819-1821, was the depot of artillery vehicles and cannon carriages. The building was founded on the medieval stone-and-brick walls of the original cellars and perfectly integrated with the residential and business urban structure of the southern part of the Old Town. The Wozownia's scale, size and stylistic form were consistent with the late Baroque and early Neoclassicist décor of neighbouring burgher tenements. The interior area, both the ground hall and the upper one, which is less spacious, is characterised by extraordinary divisions of space, which is a result of supporting the ceilings by rows of wooden pillars, arranged in six bays that carry three horizontal trusses. Endeavours to hand the building over for exhibition purposes were already started in the 1970s by the then director of the gallery, Marianna Olechnicka, however, this eventually took place only in 1997.

Thus the particularity of the Wozownia's interior consists of supporting its ceilings by the rows of



*The building of Wozownia before adaptation
Photo: Archives of Wozownia Gallery*



Katarzyna Podgórska Glonci, 'Found. Retained', 2008. Photo: Archives of Wozownia Gallery

dark, wooden pillars, that branch off under the ceiling. In the hall on the ground floor, these pillars are high and monumental, while in the hall on the first floor, with a lower ceiling - much smaller, more squat in proportions. Their dark silhouettes expressively divide the space and seem to reign over it absolutely. Therefore, every action, every arrangement of expositions in the Wozownia must take place **towards the pillars**, taking into account their expressive presence that could not be ignored. And, always from the beginning, one needs to solve the question of the line of reference to these columns - to pretend they do not exist, to engage them into the concept of display and possibly "neutralise", or perhaps to exploit and emphasize their presence. For there should not be a struggle between the exposed works and the existing environment; they should come into existence in it under the most favourable conditions for them, so when the massiveness of pillars would efface itself. Therefore, an arrangement of the exposition is a different experience each time; this difference is constituted on the basis of the individuality of works selected for display and their nature perceived now towards the pillars. Sometimes, projects created earlier unexpectedly begin to interact with the Wozownia's context, as if they have been made just for it. Another situation occurs, when these pillars are treated as a challenge, as equal partners, for

which, toward which, and through which the works are prepared especially for the Wozownia's interior - especially for one particular presentation which is not likely to occur elsewhere.

Every artist and curator, while preparing an exhibition at the Wozownia, must therefore deal with its unusual interior and come up with a way to "tame" the pillars, which are the dominant element in both halls of the gallery. It seems that especially interesting in such spaces are the exhibitions which do not try to blur the history and structure of the Wozownia, but - on the contrary - manifestly expose it and enter into various dialogues with it, recalling the original military-and-storage purpose of this edifice.

In 2000, Jerzy Olek, while presenting the exhibition *Bezwymiar iluzji* [*The Dimensionlessness of Illusion*], distributed his photographs in the Wozownia's upper hall in such a manner that they were almost invisible and integrated with the pillars. Thus, the viewers were looking for the works of art in the room, which at first glance was apparently empty, and had to notice the surrounding architecture itself.

Then, in 2007, in the lower hall, an exhibition of Jan Berdyszak, entitled *Słupy i reszty* [*The Pillars and the Rest*] was held. The goal was to expose the wooden pillars as places where all kinds of rest: empty bottles, pieces of paper from a shredder, materials



Jerzy Olek, *'The Dimensionlessness of Illusion', 2000. Photo: Archives of Wozownia Gallery*

etc., accumulated. Hence, the pillars played a key role in turning the attention to what we usually consider a negligible waste. Their monumental construction has somehow ennobled the leftovers by designating their place in the gallery space. One year later, in the exhibition *Odnalezione, utrwalone [Found, Retained]*, Katarzyna Podgórska-Glonti displayed meticulously folded clothing between the wooden arms of pillars, the cubes of fabric tightly filling the "openwork" structure of pillars. The variety of clothing colours contrasted with the dark tint of the wood. And the clothes themselves - in combination with the pillars that are marked by a long history - stimulated memories to set off on long journeys in time. Thanks to the

concept of Podgórska-Glonti, the memory storages of timber and clothes complemented each other, creating a new nostalgic wholeness. Therefore, the peculiar interiors of the Wozownia - if someone is able to tame them - are a great source of inspiration for creating surprising artistic situations and inscribing his or her own works into the context of the former military storehouse building. /



Jerzy Olek, *'The Dimensionlessness of Illusion', 2000. Photo: Archives of Wozownia Gallery*



Jan Berdyszak, 'The Pillars and the Rest', 2006/2007. Photo: Archives of Wazowmia Gallery