

Central Museum of Textiles, Łódź

Interview with Małgorzata Markiewicz

Next week we will open the jubilee exhibition "Open Departments. Closed Departments ". Prepared for the 60th anniversary of CMWŁ, the exhibition breaks with the vision of a museum as a form of a closed institution, cataloging and researching the past. Rather, it shows it as a structure open to interpretation, a field of artistic activity. It is a kind of laboratory in which three contemporary artists, inspired by a rich collection of artistic, industrial and clothing fabrics, conduct three different narratives.

We invite you to read an interview with the artist **Małgorzata Markiewicz**, who examined the history of our institution from the perspective of her own artistic practice.

Based on what topics did you build your narrative in the exhibition Open Departments / Closed Departments? How important was the leitmotif, i.e. the jubilee of the Museum, to you?

The idea appeared very quickly, on the Intercity train one hour late on a dark winter evening, while browsing the publications previously received from the museum's main curator, Marta Kowalewska, issued on the occasion of earlier anniversaries. My attention was drawn to the fact that textiles and weaving in Poland are very feminized fields, and yet the texts contained in CMWŁ publications, written about women artists and museum employees, lack feminatives. The texts were characterized by a lack of consistency in the use of female endings, the higher the position in the hierarchy, the more often women called themselves masculine, however, using feminatives to describe less prestigious functions performed by them. On the occasion of the jubilee, I felt it necessary to pay attention to this and understand why it was so.

What objects / works do you reach for and what inspired you for further searches and interpretations?

I was inspired to work, apart from the previously mentioned issues, by double (two-warp) fabrics from Podlasie, brought back to life by Eleonora Plutyńska. Made by weavers, they fascinate with the old technique and patterns passed down by women from generation to generation. Based on this centuries-old tradition, Plutyńska encouraged her students to work more intuitively, in which they could be guided by matter.

A great stir at the Biennale in Lausanne in 1962 was caused by Polish artists, incl. Magdalena Abakanowicz, Jolanta Owidzka. They presented hand-made fabrics, which as a practice was closer to the tradition of folk weaving than salon tapestries created on the basis of painted cartons by weaving masters. In Lausanne, voices were heard that these Polish "girls" need to be put on the right path, that they are too uncontrollable and are breaking the rules. This entry by women into the context of culture that has so far ignored all other people, who are not white men, and creating stories about myself, with my own language, on my own terms, inspired me to work.

When I was thinking about the whole of my project, I heard quotes from Helene Cixous's text "The Laughter of Medusa", which talked about centuries of displacing women from the mainstream, from history, from text, about depriving them of the right to speak, about the dominant shame of women, which inhibited them against the explosion of emotions, words, passions and self-expression, talking about yourself. I am preparing the character "Monsters from the Forest" for the exhibition. It has eight tentacles, each from a few to several meters long. It comes from the dark areas of the subconscious mind that arouse fear and disgust, and is the embodiment of repressed desires and drives,

subjugated in women by culture. And fear of it is also fear of the creative power of women. For now, I have called it Medusa because when we look at it and tame it, it turns out to be a part of us and it is beautiful.

The exhibition presents objects from various CMWŁ collections: artistic fabrics, industrial fabrics and clothing. It is an invitation for the viewer to the world of various forms interpreted anew. What can visitors expect?

The individual parts of the exhibition will certainly differ, my part is a trip from a country cottage, through meadows, to a dark forest. I think one should focus on receiving works with many senses, through smell, sight, touch and hearing.

There is an ongoing discussion about the role of museums. What do you think this role should be?

The future of the museum is the possibility of working with its collection given to contemporary artists. With a huge treasury of the past, the museum can serve as a source from which we draw inspiration as creative people. By placing works from the collection in new contexts, they gain a different dimension, enter into a dialogue with contemporary works, and thus open up new ways of their interpretation. Therefore, museums should be open to cooperation. The director of the CMWŁ, Aneta Dalbiak, also showed readiness to change. One of the activities that I proposed as part of the jubilee exhibition is the introduction of female forms of names of functions performed in the museum by women. These changes will be introduced only to those employees who are willing to do so. New is coming!

Małgorzata Markiewicz lives and works in Krakow. She is a graduate of the Faculty of Sculpture at the Academy of Fine Arts in Krakow. In 2015, she obtained a doctoral degree.

She studied at Konstfack and at the Critical Design Studio at the Faculty of Architecture of the Royal Academy of Technology in Stockholm.

The artistic practice of Małgorzata Markiewicz examines the complexity of contemporary gender dynamics in the context of the home environment and broadly understood society. From the very beginning of his work, he uses fabric as a medium in his works. She is the author of the Gombrowicz monument in Krakow. The works were presented, among others, by in Zachęta - National Gallery of Art, Center for Contemporary Art Ujazdowski Castle, Sculpture Park in Bródno MSN, Central Museum of Textiles in Łódź, The Photographers Gallery in London, Matadero in Madrid, Berardo Museum in Lisbon and many others. He collaborates with the l'étrangère gallery from London.

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