

WAYS OF SEEING

subjective warsaw

ART
GUIDE

FEB 2021
PDS PROJECT



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SUBJECTIVE WARSAW ART GUIDE: REVIEWS

'This is a very convincing and widely exhaustive "subjective guide". I feel like you all poured your hearts into its creation and the dedication just bore into my soul as I was reading it.

The insights are also all very fascinating, especially in the context of their diversity in your small "community" - good job on thinking originally, yet genuinely!'

PAULINA

YOUNG ART ENTHUSIAST,
AKADEMEIA HIGH SCHOOL
STUDENT

'A truly captivating guide. I enjoyed learning not only about the interesting and unique art pieces themselves but also reading all your interpretations - the poems and the short stories.

It made me feel like I was indeed in a museum with all my friends, who showed me their interpretations of their favourite art works.'

POLA

CULTURAL EXPLORER,
AKADEMEIA HIGH SCHOOL
STUDENT



DOMINIKA JAGIEŁŁO

The Modern Art Museum in Warsaw/
Muzeum Sztuki Nowoczesnej (MSN)

'Imagine you find yourself in a strange city that offers millions of opportunities, and various art places you 'must visit'. Hard choice, right?

But what if you had a friend, a guide that is there all for you and shows you 'creme de la creme', their own ranking of the masterpieces including both classic and modern art? It could be a panoramic painting, a sculpture, or even a snowman. You name it!

Let's find out!

A gang of brilliant and creative students took their time and effort to create 'Ways of Seeing: SUBJECTIVE WARSAW ART GUIDE'. In this unique book, not only do the young art enthusiasts present extraordinary pieces and share their views of art from Warsaw collections but they also respond to it and DO ART!

It was a privilege to be a part of this process, to invite the students to the Museum of Modern Art in Warsaw, to inspire them and, what's more, to be inspired by them!

Thank you guys, your art guide is great work!'

OUR PROJECT: HOW IT ALL STARTED



Imagine going to the museum with your closest friends. You all stand in front of the first painting you come across. And now notice how the same image evokes completely different memories and emotions in each of you. No two people in the world are the same since we all come from various backgrounds, we have our own stories, and our own mindsets. Therefore, we decided to explore that individuality. The project is all about perceiving and responding to art subjectively.

In our guide, you can dive into ten unique perceptions of art presented by us: a group of creative individuals who are not afraid of the unknown. Our aim was to showcase how personal art can be. Our inspiration came from a writer and an art critic John Berger who claims that 'art is infinite in meaning' and we couldn't agree more.

As a form of homage to his well-known classic based on 1972 television series, we decided to call our art guide 'Ways of Seeing: Subjective Warsaw Art Guide'.

The Process

Over the course of 10 weeks, we analysed and discussed art with many fascinating people, including artists and art experts. We learned about multiple points of view and various ways of looking at art, as well as what it means to different people. It was especially interesting to see how everyone from our project group responded to questions such as "Is this art?" when looking at controversial pieces. This helped us experience in practice that everyone sees art differently and the perception of it is an individual choice. For example, we met the surrealist artist Tymek Borowski who shared with us his definition of art, which is as follows:

**IT'S THE
DIFFERENCE
BETWEEN THE THING
YOU MAKE OR DO
FROM THE DEFAULT
WAY OF MAKING OR
DOING IT. [IT] CAN
BE PAINTING OR
EVEN DRIVING YOUR
CAR. IT'S A WAY
FOR PEOPLE TO
SHOW THEIR
ATTITUDE TOWARDS
REALITY
AND SHOW HOW
THEY APPROACH
THINGS**



Overall, it was great to have the experience.

Additionally, we collaborated with the Museum of Modern Art in Warsaw (MSN) and got to meet two inspiring art experts: Dominika Jagiełło and Petra Skarupsky. They taught us about the way that museums choose artworks and what makes an art collection more valuable. Thanks to their insights we got our creative juices flowing and wrote some of our first art guide entries based on pieces from their collection.

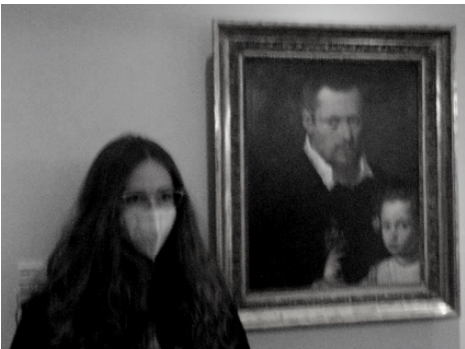
In the course of the process of creating the subjective art guide, apart from meeting many interesting people, we had the amazing opportunity to visit the National Museum in Warsaw. It was a great and fun learning experience as we got to come together as a team and actually experience the artworks which we had previously researched individually.

All these extraordinary experiences helped us reach our ultimate goal of the project: the creation of our very own 'Ways of Seeing: Subjective Warsaw Art Guide'.

Our Creation

After that whole journey, we are proud to present to you our one and only art guide! Here, you can find out more about a variety of pieces by artists whose works are exhibited in Warsaw art galleries or who live and work here. Every piece in the art guide is followed by some brief information about it, where it is located, and so much more. Each is also accompanied by a creative response by a member of our project group - as a form of forewarning, there were no constraints in our creative process so what you witness here is purely the imagination of our wonderful participants. The entries have also been sent to employees of several museums in which the pieces are exhibited and we got loads of enthusiastic feedback. Our initiative has been described as a project that 'has never been done before. And with that, let us invite you to read on, celebrate art and individuality with us and most importantly enjoy!

OUR GANG



From top left corner:

Aniela Nowacka, Iggy Badowski, Piotrek Kozak, Maciek Bogusławski, Jagoda Szubert, Ewa Raczkowska, Natalia Hutten-Czapska, Jula Podoba, Jan Bakić-Pawlak, Laura Tokarska

PROJECT MANAGERS



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WHAT DOES ART MEAN TO YOU?



01 ANIELA

Art is fiction and reality put together. But honestly, without all of the "deep" meanings, it's just pretty and fun to look at.

02 PIOTREK

Point of view creates art. Art is subjective, therefore, nothing is objectively art.

03 MACIEK

Art makes me think.

04 JAGODA

Art is a form of expression of anything, as a matter of fact. Whatever hides in your head, pour it on paper, on a canvas, into a song - whenever you want to tell the world something you can do it through art. Art will listen to you.

05 IGGY

For me, art is a different method of expressing your emotions.

06 EWA

To me, art is the visions that people bring to life and celebrate.

07 NATALIA

Art is choosing to admire the beauty in the world around us.

08 JULA

Art for me is people presenting their impressions of either things they see, feelings and emotions influenced by their imagination through creativity. Art can be found everywhere.

09 LAURA

Art is a very big aspect of our lives. We can use it to express ourselves and portray our emotions in a physical form. I think it's a very crucial and beautiful part of everyone's life. Art is definitely not appreciated enough.

10 JANEK

I honestly do not know as it is a mystery to me, but I learned a lot pozdro (Inspired by Iggy Bado).

HOW TO ENJOY A MUSEUM VISIT: **KEY TIPS**



We've all been to various museums but how is it possible that two people visiting the same art gallery might have completely different experiences?

Of course, we're unique individuals who approach art in a range of ways. However, based on our own personal experiences, we've thought that it might be a good idea to share with you some of our tips on how to have an enjoyable museum experience so that your next visit isn't exhausting, overwhelming or simply boring.

ANIELA

Relax and just walk around. You don't have to know what you are looking for. Let yourself discover everything during your visit.

JAGODA

Take your time, observe the artworks that intrigue you for as long as you want, unless you absolutely have to rush through the exhibitions; maybe take a notebook and write down random ideas that come to your mind seeing art - they don't have to make sense nor be anyhow outstanding - it can greatly exercise your creativity and openness

EWA

Before going to a museum, remember to visit its website and look at the floor plan of the museum so that you know where everything is. It'll help you avoid getting lost when you're there.

JULA

When picking a museum that you want to explore make sure you are interested in the artworks that you can find there. Then, during the museum visit remember to focus on spending time with the exhibits that bring you joy. While observing the pieces, think about their meaning and the details such as colours etc.

JANEK

Wear a sweatshirt under your coat because it gets cold when you go to a popular museum where you might have to queue in the cold for hours.



PIOTREK

Relax and just walk around. You don't have to know what you are looking for. Let yourself discover everything during your visit.

IGGY

If you have time, relax and discover all the paintings you would like to see. Although if you have a tight schedule I would recommend going to the museum's website and choosing which paintings you would like to see.

NATALIA

Look at paintings that intrigue you. Why does it leave an impression on you? Does it trigger an emotion or a memory? Notice the colours, expressions, texture and all the small details that make the artwork. Make sure to have a lot of time, but don't feel the pressure to spend a lot of time there or to analyze every painting. Don't force it.

LAURA

Before going to a museum make sure you know what you're into when it comes to art, the style and type of paintings so that you can enjoy your trip to the fullest.



GEMS FROM WARSAW ART
COLLECTIONS AND
OUR CREATIVE RESPONSES



ANIELA NOWACKA



UNTITLED PAINTED WITH A HAMMER
by Tymek Borowski, Warsaw-based
artist, 2009

ENTRY 1

This artwork was painted with acrylic on canvas in 2009. This painting is a most extraordinary piece with almost every color you could ever imagine splattered all over it with a hammer, which I find very amusing.

The centre of the picture attracts our attention very easily as that's where we can find the most vibrant colors. On the edges of the canvas, there are mostly monotonous colors that don't catch our eyes as quickly. Slowly moving to the centre we can discover more colorful sensations happening that transition smoothly into only vibrant colors in the middle. Even though there are lots of different colours; the dominant ones are white and black which add a certain depth to the image.

A POEM INSPIRED BY THE PIECE

OWN

While lying in the darkness that I was thrown into,
I miss the world that I have not yet been shown.
I miss the colours that lie up and above,
I wish I could stand up and fly there just like a dove.
I wish I could spread my wings and escape,
Live in the heaven that I would create.
No judgments, no expectations and no control,
a place where all would be free and so would my soul.
While lying in the darkness that I was thrown into,
I realize out of the blackness it's breaking out- the world of my own.



ENTRY 2

This painting depicts a person observing a garden while smoking a cigarette. The garden is painted with a very vibrant almost neon green colour. It portrays peace and thoughtfulness. The painting in itself seems very simple but is comforting in some way because we are not only observing the painting but we are observing someone who is already watching something.

APPARENT GARDEN

by Łukasz Korolkiewicz, 1976,
The Museum of Modern Art in
Warsaw

A SHORT STORY INSPIRED BY THE PIECE

STRESS

I came back home, nothing made sense. This whole day was a complete disaster yet I wasn't sad or mad. I felt nothing. I felt tired. I put my bag down and noticed the letter I had received yesterday lying on the counter. The words REJECTED and SORRY flashed at my face like two giant stars. But I wasn't filled with rage or disbelief. I felt empty. I felt drained of life. I went to the living room where my friends were supposed to be laughing and having fun yet I drove all of them away with my stupid impulsive actions. Now I have no friends, no job, no place in school. I have nothing. No one. But when I look outside the grass is still green. The trees are still in the same place. Nothing has changed. I light a cigarette and stare at the still trees and the green grass. They stare at me.

ENTRY 3

It is an oil painting which has been shown at many exhibitions but its home is the National Art Museum in Warsaw. The painting presents a beautiful garden in the sunlight with apple trees and stunning flowers. Walking through it we can see a woman in a gorgeous blue gown and a little nude boy. In the background another woman is walking who I think may be the maid. With the first glance at this painting, we can immediately observe that the dominant colour is green as there are multiple shades of it everywhere. The colours are very vibrant and saturated, almost unrealistic.



STRANGE GARDEN
by Józef Mehoffer, 1902 - 1903
The National Museum in Warsaw

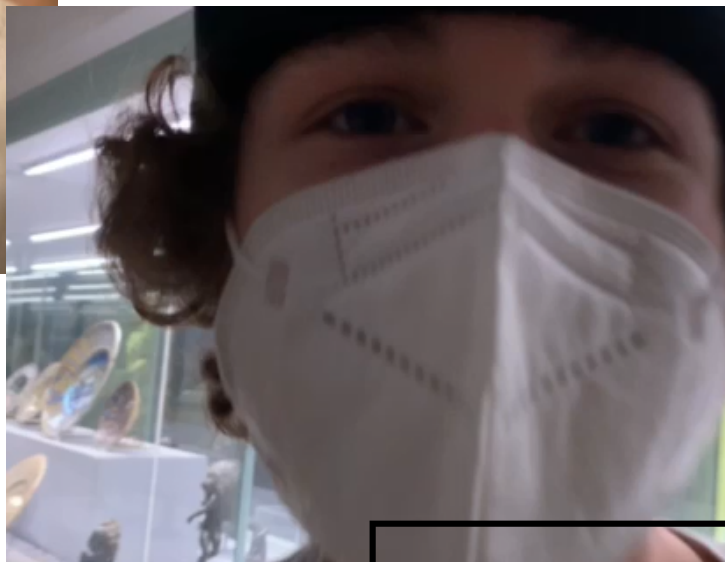
A POEM INSPIRED BY THE PIECE

THE GARDEN

The day was beautiful. The sky was bluer than I had ever seen before and the grass greener than ever. Different flowers broke through the ground and created little routes to heaven. I felt the light spring breeze go through my nose into my lungs. Nature was alive and trying to talk to me. I listened.



**IGGY
BADOWSKI**



**JANEK
BAKIĆ-PAWLAK**

ENTRY 1

In this painting, Jan Matejko depicts a great battle between Poland-Lithuania and the Knights of the Teutonic Order which happened in medieval times (1410).



THE BATTLE OF GRUNWALD
by Jan Matejko, 1878
The National Museum in Warsaw

The setting is in Tannenberg, Northeastern Poland (Polish: Stębark). In the centre of the painting, we can see a figure dressed in red; it's the Lithuanian grand duke Vytautas the Great (Witold). Vytautas is more visible in the composition than his cousin, Polish king Władysław II Jagiełło, who is there in the second plan. This was the beginning of the end of the Teutonic Order. The victory of the Slavs in the battle basically revived the state of Poland-Lithuania.

It took 6 years to complete, from 1872 to 1878. As is stated on the museum's webpage, a French critic, viewing the painting in Paris in 1879, declared that "it requires eight days of study before one could properly appreciate it." The painting is indeed extremely detailed. The piece is extremely impressive and required an incredible amount of skill to complete. Matejko targeted this painting at Otto von Bismarck, the German Chancellor, who was practising Germanisation, by promoting German culture and attempting to eliminate Polish culture. Matejko sought to remind von Bismarck about the victory over the Teutonic order and also to raise hopes and morality of the Polish people during the period when Poland was not an independent state.

IGGY:

I mostly like the painting because of how intimidating the size of it is. It weighs 400kg and has an area of 42m². I have seen this painting once at the Wielkopolski Palace in Kraków, Poland. When I looked at the painting I felt as if I was looking at a god but it was actually an item. The painting is shaded in a dark way; Matejko did this because at the end of the day, any kind of war has a dark and negative background.

SHORT STORIES INSPIRED BY THE PIECE

THE BATTLE OF GRUNWALD BY IGGY BADOWSKI

Władysław II Jagiełło and his army had a clear target, to kill and take over the land of the Germans. The army rose by dawn and travelled on their horses. Early in the morning while travelling, they heard a suspicious noise coming from the woods. Everybody stopped, Władysław hopped off of his horse, whipped out his sharp blade, ready to take action. He looked left, right and centre but couldn't see anything. Suddenly, one of the knights screamed towards Władysław, "Behind you!". He turned around and to his surprise, he saw a huge wild dog jump on him with his sharp teeth and claws. Władysław tried to defend himself but in its rage the beast bit his face.

One of the army members managed to scare the giant dog away but Władysław's whole face was covered in blood. He was in agony because of the pain he was experiencing. Władysław told his knights to go on without him, to fight for the country. The whole army started to panic because they didn't have a leader. A strange gloom was cast over Władysław's brave warriors and they seemed paralysed.

After a few seconds, which felt like an eternity, one of the army members gathered his courage and shouted "We can't give up now. We need to do what's best for our country". Everybody could sense that the words resonated with them and all the fear had disappeared.

Now they were ready. Ready to win this battle and make their king proud.



THE BATTLE OF GRUNWALD

BY JANEK BAKIĆ-PAWLAK

Swords clashed, shields collided, each soldier consumed with the order to vanquish his enemy. For years, the Teutonic master, Ulrich von Jungingen had oppressed and imposed laws on the Polish and Lithuanian people. Soldiers fighting under Vytautas were driven by the notion that their families and friends had been slaughtered because of the Teutonic master. Each was motivated and dedicated to drive a blade through the centre point of von Jungingen's chest.

The competing trumpets blared a cacophony of misdirection in the background. "Ziołnierz Badowski", who was one of the soldiers, strained to concentrate and understand the battle formations being called by the trumpeters. Glancing at his fellow companion "Ziołnierz Bogusławski", Badowski howled, "Bogusławski!". Ziołnierz Bogusławski did not understand though. Losing hope and accepting the fate of death, Badowski used his last breath and shouted, "What is our battle formation? I didn't hear the trumpets."

Dazed and distraught over the deadly battle raging all around them, Bogusławski cried out, "No one heard the trumpet call. You should be consumed by only one desire, your sole command: kill von Jungingen! Awaken the same emotion of pain and suffering that he forced you to endure under his laws and the mayhem and atrocities done to your entire nation!"

Hearing those words, Badowski's heart brimmed with rage, fire and fury. Out of the corner of Badowski's eye, the white robe danced, belying the underlying evil of the Teutonic master on his spree of violence. Twenty meters away stood the killer of Lithuanian and Polish people; only twenty meters between Badowski and finding vengeance and his inner peace.

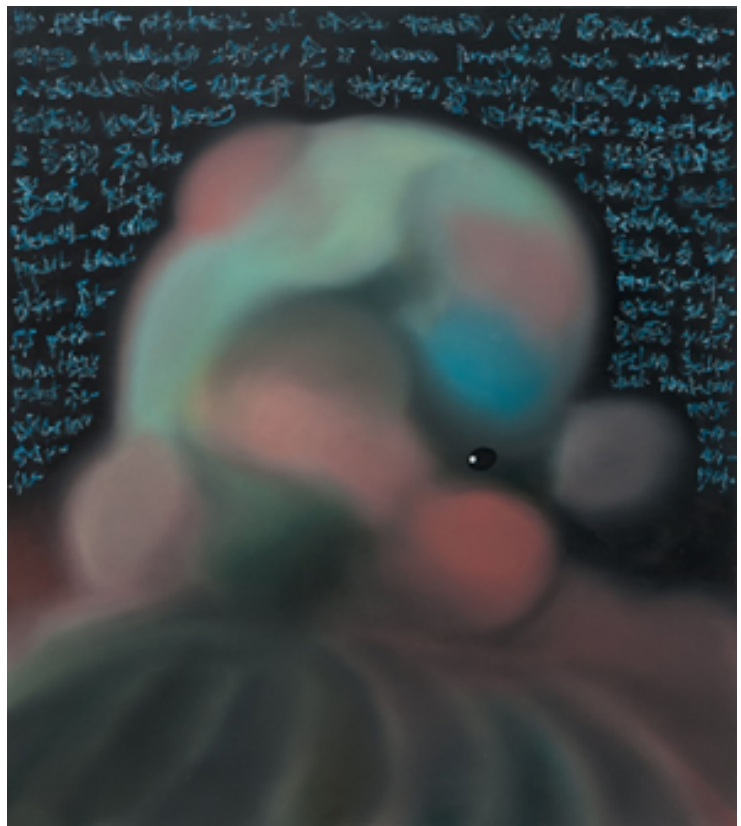
Waving his blade as if trying to conquer demons of the sky, Badowski leapt into the countless soldiers that raged in the battle between him and the Teutonic master. Badowski's blade passed through the limbs of numerous subjects toward von Jungingen. Facing the fear of his family, the fear of his friends, the fear of his nation; Badowski raised his blade and, screaming "Essssssaaaaaaa", he drove it through the centre of von Jungingen's chest. As the tip of the blade emerged from von Jungingen's upper back and von Jungingen's mouth gushed with blood, instantly, Badowski could sense that something had just finished. As the battle was finally over. Badowski shouted to the heavens, "Let this be a reminder to any future oppressors of Poland; we cannot be defeated nor broken!"



PIOTREK KOZAK

ENTRY 1

The picture shows a blurry shape in watery colors. The background is black, however, it is filled with dark aqua blue scribbles. As the title suggests it is a portrait of Franciszek Starowieyski (Polish painter, illustrator, printmaker, poster artist, theatre and TV set designer). This image reminds me of Warsaw. In front we can see a blue/green shape frog on a rock perhaps. The object may seem like a random shape. It is hard to distinguish what the object in the foreground is. For me the composition is a great metaphor of life in Warsaw. While being in the capital we can see a lot of people doing many different things and, simultaneously, keeping the city alive or in a rush. We see them, however, we cannot say what those particular people are doing. Just like the figure in the foreground in the painting. We can see it, but that's all there is.



UNTITLED STAROWIEYSKI
by Tymek Borowski
Warsaw-based artist, 2010

A POEM INSPIRED BY THE PIECE

PRETTY CIVILIAN CONTEMPLATES THE CYCLE OF CITY LIFE

Frog in a city
Dog chasing kitty
Smog in a city
slogs a bitty one
fun is done
if you can't run
man with gun won today
but shut down in may
City so pretty
no one thinks "what a pity"
sun just like city
will die before the evening
and again like a phoenix



THE INTERPRETATION OF OBSERVATIONS (01)
by Olga Czrnyszewa, 2009
The Museum of Modern Art in Warsaw

ENTRY 2

The painting shows a person selling or preparing food outside and judging by the surroundings, it is next to a block of flats. We can see that the face of the main character of the painting is blurry and the only thing we can tell from looking at it is that he's smoking a cigarette.

Next to the center, we can see a folding table with cucumber and grated carrots on top of it. In the background there is one person walking away from the center of the painting and further back we can spot a person running. The colors are quite pale, foggy and blurry.

This picture reminds me of CCTV recording with identity protection. It might be seen as a critique of a bazaar by portraying the seller as a criminal. However on the other hand it might be a just portrayal of daily life. However, I guess the key concept behind the image is to allow people to find their own individual interpretation as the title implies.

A POEM INSPIRED BY THE PIECE

CREATING A REASON FOR REVENGE

-what would you like? a good bike?
-I should like that but I want a cat!
-I can't give you that. forgive me.
-i do
 -(what a relief)
 -what's that noise?
 -Run boys!
 -What about our toys?
 -Run and you will have peace! I see (police came for me)

ENTRY 3



FANTASY – A FAIRY TALE

by Stanisław Ignacy Witkiewicz, 1922
The National Museum in Warsaw

Witkacy was a Polish writer, painter, philosopher, novelist, and photographer. The piece presents imaginary animals in a bizarre environment. On the left side, we can see a person maybe with a rod or a sword. In the background, there is a red mountain with a face. Dominating colours are red and green. On the right part of the painting, there is a visible creature of light red and light green colours. That beast is looking at a person in a dark purple robe with a red face. Faces of the creature and the person are really close. There is also a chicken with rooted legs. The chicken has no feathers, only black skin. His face is pointed to the left. He seems to be looking at a person with a sword. This image might work like a dream since it evokes certain feelings, however, we cannot say what we are looking at.

A POEM INSPIRED BY THE PIECE

THE AFTERGLOW OF A WAR. DEALING WITH REPRESSIONS IN A VILLAGE

I can see a light from behind the red mountain
I can see a fight that happened last week
I could see a bite
I can see bright light that got turned down
Now we've drown under the crown in our forgotten town



MACIEK BOGUSŁAWSKI

ENTRY 1

This mural was painted by an iconic artist, Blu. The painter is a mysterious character who conceals his identity and all that is known about him is that he is a man who comes from and lives in Bologna, Italy. He painted here the soldiers to show our city's history like he does with many other cities where he creates his works. He depicted here marionette-like soldiers to show that even the people in power during a war are merely puppets. This green colour is also quite symbolic since it is one of the first murals where Blu employed any colour in his work. This piece cherishes the great history that Warsaw experienced and gives you a feeling of appreciation that you did not have to endure the hardships of life during any conflict.



THE MURAL PAINTED BY BLU
2010

Kamienica pod Żaglowcem, on 45 Sienna street

A SHORT STORY INSPIRED BY THE PIECE

[...]

I gazed upon the battlefield; so many corpses in sight, those of my comrades as well as those that belonged to my supposed enemies. In the Polish army, we were taught to eliminate all the Nazis because they were scum, who were extinguishing the vibrant life in our cities. However, I constantly asked myself: 'are those men I slaughter actually the soulless monsters that we've been warned against?' Scum is worthless and does not have a cause nor empathy towards others. I could not diminish a soldier to worthlessness because if so what was I myself? I looked to the right, a dump of corpses larger than I had ever seen. I approached it and one of the Nazis said: 'No worries, I don't hate you, you are a mere puppet and I hate the pupatter'. These words struck me like a lightning and altered my ideologies as I realised that I was actually just an actor on someone's stage where I couldn't control my next move. From that day on, I swore to hate the puppeteer, not a defenseless puppet.

ENTRY 2

It is an oil painting depicting Malczewski's grandson as Alex Wielopolski, who was a Polish politician in the early 1860s. He is the central figure of the painting and on his sides there are two women; one beautiful and ambitious meanwhile the other one is old and frail.

The beautiful lady on the left is half-naked, intelligent (as she is breaking the shackles) and expressive. She symbolises the possible future of Poland which is optimistic. Her virtuous nature reflects the Young Poland that could potentially change the faith of the country and free the nation from the tyranny of their oppressors. Meanwhile, on the other side there is an old, weak lady who has submitted to her shackles. She stands for the Polish people who embraced their lack of freedom rather than oppose it. This contrast highlights the significance of the Young Poland who can change the country.



POLISH HAMLET. PORTRAIT OF ALEKSANDER WIELOPOLSKI

by Jacek Malczewski, 1903
The National Museum in Warsaw

A SHORT STORY INSPIRED BY THE PIECE

POLISH HAMLET

As the proud monarch of the Polish, I gazed upon my land, so uncertain. Various people populated this country: from ambitious Poles to frail, demotivated souls.

At the time we were living through a serious crisis and I hoped that maybe the ambitious few would potentially resolve this dilemma.

One day, I left my castle and embraced the populace, as one man approached me. In my eyes, he classified as a frail, demotivated soul that I looked down on from my chambers. He showed me his new invention that he claimed 'would change everything'.. Flabbergasted, I realised that this invention could possibly solve our conundrum.

'How could such a peasant create this miraculous invention?' I pondered intensely.

'Where are you from?' I asked him.

In a broad accent, he replied: " I live in this shed, 50 km north from here with my unemployed mother and father" With no traces of royalty nor any expensive education, this man did what no other man had done with their vast resources. It made me wonder that maybe Poland was not a country divided into two very different groups: the useful and the useless. It appeared as a country where everybody had some importance and could be equal to one another.

JULA PODOBA



ENTRY 1

It is an acrylic painting created in the year 2010. This beautiful artwork depicts some geometric shapes in different soft pastel colours. The colours make the art piece seem cheerful, safe and peaceful, even though it has a lot going on and is rather abstract. It doesn't represent anything specific but it appears organised. It reminds me of a mosaic with an organic flower motif. On the other hand it could be seen as some kind of construction. Everyone can interpret it in their own way.

I see it as a happy piece which relaxes me. The way the squares aren't perfectly painted reminds me of a kid's drawing or even scribbles with pastel highlighters. That's why, to me it feels familiar and safe.

UNTITLED PIECE

by Tymek Borowski
Warsaw-based artist, 2010



A SHORT STORY INSPIRED BY THE PIECE WHAT HAPPENS AFTER

I opened the yellow door and found myself looking at a purple corridor. A purple corridor leading to different doors, different corridors. It made me wonder what this labyrinth was, what this world I found myself in was. Different colours, different constructions and some kind of machinery. Everything was still and silent. I found myself in the same situation I had been last time. It was rather a blessing that I found my way out and woke up in that world. It seemed so much more peaceful. Each colour made me feel in a familiar kind of way. They all put my body at rest. I didn't feel any pain. The bright yellow cheered me up, however, not too much. I didn't feel excited, I felt calm. The light shade of green brought back my memories from when I had been still in the normal world, in the first world. I couldn't even say I missed those times. They had been painful and hard. This color only reminded me of the happy times that only rested at the back of my head at peace. Orange and red made me warm. They didn't bring me any heat but gave me some kind of assurance of love and safeness. I knew I didn't have to worry. My eyes saw purple. It added even more harmony. I caught a glimpse of pink. I felt relaxed and while I was wandering through those halls, blue surrounded me and took me to a better place.



JEWESS WITH ORANGES
by Aleksander Gierymski, 1880-81
The National Museum in Warsaw

ENTRY 2

'Jewess with oranges' is a 66cm by 55cm portrait painted with oil paints on canvas. This is known as the author's most precious piece. The realistic painting presents an old Jewish lady holding two baskets of oranges in both her hands. The woman looks poor, helpless, powerless, old and exhausted with the scarf on her shoulders and wrinkles on her serious face. Despite her poverty, she managed to put some flowers in her auburn hair. In the background there is Warsaw or more like roofs of Warsaw houses. In contrast to the woman, in the foreground, the colours of the city are cold, light and not intensified; this shows that Warsaw is ruined and those are colors of sadness and melancholy. On the other hand, the woman is painted with warm colours such as red, orange and yellow that present life, heat and southern climate. The intensified colors also indicate that the woman is the main focus of the painting.

A SHORT STORY INSPIRED BY THE PIECE

THE MAN

"I'll take two oranges." I whispered with my dry, cracking lips to the old man. 'I can only afford two' I thought to myself when he turned around and shockingly did not look in pain.

His eyes were strangely bright and filled with some kind of joy. His pale face managed to lightly smile at me and with his wrinkled hands he passed me the whole basket of ripe oranges whispering back "take them all."

I will never forget the man. I will never forget his face that I still remember every detail of. It was scarred. Every scar held a different story and made him who he was. Every scar and every decision, every situation made him give me that basket of oranges. His thin lips were shaking as if in fear. However, he was calm and every single part of his body was at rest.

With his grey eyes that I noticed, he reminded me of my husband. The man I loved and will love until the rest of my days and the man I hope to see soon and visit him with the basket of oranges.



JAGODA SZUBERT

ENTRY 1

"Pompeii - Selected" is a collection of 34 photographs taken in 1980 by a Polish artist Eustachy Kossakowski, currently in the collection of the Museum of MODern Art in Warsaw. The particular photo chosen above is a black and white negative with the dimensions of 35 by 25 mm. The photo itself is relatively simple and geometrical in form. From the foreground all the way to the right side of the picture we can see ancient columns stretching to what seems like infinity, beyond the lens of the camera. They are all perpendicular to the bottom. Besides this obvious, central element, there are also faint shadows falling between the pillars but other than that there is nothing else to dwell upon. The composition is imbued with stillness and an atmosphere of calming or possibly distressing silence. When it comes to interpretation, the crucial aspect is the context of the photo which we can deduce from its title. What makes those columns thrive with meaning and deeper sense is the fact that they are from Pompeii.



POMPEII

by Eustachy Kossakowski, 1980
The Museum of Modern Art in
Warsaw

While looking at them one cannot help but to reflect upon the ever so true tale we all know - the tale of the city buried in ashes. When looking at it I start to wonder whether we as a society tend to worry too much - and by that I mean, Pompeian people led lives just as we did and then one day they were faced with a catastrophe which ended those lives just like that, as if they were of not much value. Nowadays every person is chasing something, often material things, possessions and the photograph makes me wonder whether that's the real key to happiness.

A SHORT STORY INSPIRED BY THE PIECE

THE CITY OF ASHES

The bright tone of a familiar voice pierced the air, so odd and unexpected in the omnipresent silence. For a moment all their surroundings were still - nothing dared to shift as much as an inch, for fear it would disturb some sleeping deity who could snap out of its sleep at the slightest, most delicate sound. Faint shadows danced on their faces as the sun gradually went down, reminding them, with every minute how insanely long they had been there. But the place had a certain force, not a physical one - more like an absolute certainty in the back of their minds that if they left, that same sleeping deity would sooner or later punish them somehow. With lips still clenched together, they sat on a very plain, shimmering rock. Now the sun was starting to hide behind the first building in sight - a never-ending row of majestic marble columns. Not one of them damaged, not one leaning towards its neighbour as if seeking company. It was destined to never have. All of them proud and straight like a Royal Guard whose task is to not let anyone through at any cost.

Barely audible rustles of grass wandered around their ears. It sounded like an abomination. This was the only breach of unspoken rules, set here, in this strange yet fascinating place, they could afford. It seemed as though even thoughts would be heard by one another. And so they sat in silence, until...

"Well," followed by disapproving tranquillity.
"Nothing in particular," and that was it.



DICE GAME

by Zdzisław Beksiński, 1973
The National Museum in Warsaw

ENTRY 2

"Dice game" is a painting by a Polish painter, sculptor and architect Zdzisław Beksiński. It was painted in 1973 on a fibreboard with oil paints, its dimensions being 1m by 1.25m.

The image falls into the genre of dystopian surrealism and according to the author's nomenclature it's been created in his 'baroque' period of artistry - the earlier one, when all his artworks were quite strange, unsettling and very much fantastic.

While looking at "Dice game" one might experience a feeling of uneasiness, maybe even irrational fear. In the foreground we can observe a mysterious figure, its face misshapen and covered - only two excessively large palms placed on a table before it, as if offering the viewer a dice, as if inviting us to play along. The background behind the creature is lit dimly by an emerging moon, heavy, brown clouds floating to cover the only light in sight. All the colours used in the painting are warm with brown, ochre and rotten, ashy orange hues overpowering the whole depiction. The image is imbued with a sense of anticipation and the uncertainty of what will happen next. After all, the strange, shadowy figure is still waiting for us to pick up the dice and throw it.

A SHORT STORY INSPIRED BY THE PIECE

...AND THEN THERE WAS ONE

There were five in total. They sat in a circle. But if one were to look at them from high above, the only judgment one could make is that they were insanely poor at assembling basic shapes. Roughly in the middle lay a wooden board, stains all over it, looking as if it had been aggressively torn out of a rotting wall by one of the assembly members. To add to the ridiculous image which the wood presented, they had covered it with a dusty, white cloth in a desperate attempt to cover up all its imperfections. And finally, in the very middle of that cloth, symmetrically for once, lay a dice.

If you asked me about the time when it all happened, I wouldn't tell you, nor would they. They simply didn't know, their minds were rather preoccupied. Judging by the dimly glowing moon, hiding anxiously behind a heavy, gray cloud it was somewhere either insanely early in the morning or irresponsibly late at night. Looks were passed on from man to man, a strange emptiness in each one of them. No one noticed the moon, no one paid attention to the clouds which made the surroundings even gloomier. No one cared about the other.

The one at the northmost point of their circle-resembling creation stretched out a hand. It was covered with wrinkles, the coarseness of the skin visible even from afar. He tightened his grip on the dice, lifted it slightly and waited. Second one, second two, second three and a throw. The only sounds audible were the faint taps of the dice at the exhausted wooden board. First tap, second tap, third tap and stop. Four. It landed on a four. An empty pair of eyes shifted its gaze at their equally empty companions. Hand outstretched one more time, counting. First at himself, then two, three, stopped at the fourth one. The rules were unspoken, but the fourth one knew. He blinked once, twice and stood up, turned around and walked away. One down, four to go.

And on it went. They had gone one by one until there was a single pair facing one another. The circle had perished. One of them shook nervously and snatched the dice as quickly as he could as if wanting it to finish, the quicker the better. He threw. Five. It landed on a five. Emptiness disappeared, now his eyes were filled purely with resignation. He stood up, turned around and walked away.

The moon had hidden entirely. The dark was impenetrable, a single thing lost in its vastness. Gleaming whites of the last remaining pair of eyes. There were five in total but now there was one.



MATERIAL WORLD: MODEL #01
by Tymek Borowski
Warsaw-based artist, 2016

ENTRY 3

"Material World: Model #01" is a piece painted with acrylic paints on canvas, the dimensions of it being 80cm by 65cm. It's been sold for 10 000 zlotys to a private collection. The image itself is quite abstract and open to interpretation. It uses a lot of warmer tones such as ashy brown, muted yellows and ochre - all of them nicely corresponding to one another. It consists mainly of what one might call stains of colour, chaotically distributed among swirls and twists of paint. On the right side of the artwork the colour palette is leaning ever so slightly towards lighter tones contrary to the delicately darker left hand side. That difference is in fact barely visible and the colours are rather evenly distributed if such chaos could be described in those terms. In conclusion, one cannot explicitly define what is depicted in the artwork and it's up to each viewer to determine that.

A SHORT STORY INSPIRED BY THE PIECE

[...]

It feels like It was nothing even though It was material. In some sense It existed - no one quite sure how or in what way - but It did. It behaved like air, like a constant presence without which you would cease to exist. However debatable Its significance might be, no one could deny that It was, that It still is of some importance. Imagine painting a picture, not a perfect one, no it didn't have to be. Imagine painting a paradise. A place where you imagine you would be happy. But now take what you see and turn it upside down - you paint the absolute opposite of the dream-like Arcady. You have your vision. You begin. You wield a brush in your hand, with all your will wishing that it could shield you from your creation. You can feel Its presence glowing through the paint.

It was strongly rooted in it, with every stroke of the brush It left a trace, unnoticeable but there. It moved through the coarse bristles, like air but more aggressively, more deadly. It acted as though It had every opportunity to possess your soul whenever It wanted.

You force the paint down the canvas, covering the white, hollow space with a comforting presence of colour. But it's not comforting, not anymore, not that It is there. And you realize that It has in fact gained control over you. You realize that more than anything you want to throw away your painted paradise, you don't want it - it's too obnoxiously overwhelming. It feels like a race, to gain more and more, to furnish that little dream of yours with the splendid, the beautiful and the pompous. And you ask yourself - for what? To impress? To feel happy? But do you? You cast one last glance at the rainbow of shades before you. What is the It that we're chasing? It seems like It had caught up and is now speeding forwards without any control or restraint.

EWA RACZKOWSKA



ENTRY 1

This piece is a digital portrayal of the rubble that was left after Warsaw was destroyed in World War II as a structure resembling a building in the modern-day city. The rubble towers over the office buildings, around three times the height of the Palace of Culture and Science, which stands on its right. Were it scaled down, it would not stand out from the rest of the city that much, except for its irregular shape; the rubble would fit the mould of a square prism, if not for the many ridges that stick out to every side. The tower of rubble is an approximation of the dimensions the actual remains of Warsaw would have, gathered in a solid structure and placed in the city as it is today. The image is a digital collage of the artist so to see it, a viewer would only need to visit the artist's website.

RUBBLE OVER WARSAW

by Tymek Borowski
Warsaw-based artist, 2015-17

A SHORT STORY INSPIRED BY THE PIECE

.....

I didn't remember there being quite so little of it. Decades before, when I had walked the deserted streets of Warsaw, struggling to find solid footing among all the rubble that littered the ground, it had seemed as if the sea or grey would never end.

Then again, those decades I mentioned, all that time I'd been away. Only then, as I leaned on the railing of the Palace of Science and Culture, I saw a monument to all those long-forgotten memories, the pearly skeletons, stacked into an almost neat tower like just another of the tourist traps that swallowed money and melted it into keychains that jangled with the hope of a world better than the one I had left behind when I finally reached the edge of my ruined city.

When I squinted, I could almost see the flickering silhouettes of people I had once known climbing the structure. There was Anna, perched in the shadow of a ridge, a bullet hole in her chest. There was Isaak, his nimble limbs skittering up the bricks, the back of his head no more than mangled flesh. There was Greta, or what was left of her, inside the rubble, looking out the remains of a window.

I closed my eyes and turned away.



PHOTOGRAM II/14

by Bronisław Schlabs, 1957
The Museum of Modern Art in Warsaw

A SHORT STORY INSPIRED BY THE PIECE

PHOTOGRAM II/14

The days pass in a blur. The living drift by on tangled strings of fate, guided by invisible hands. My gaze slides over them, unable to linger on any of their colourful silhouettes. For a moment, in the corner of my eye, I think I see myself among them. The way I used to look.

But do I even remember what I used to look like? I turn towards the shape, but it fades before I can see it clearly. I try to focus on what remains of that person. Images flash before my eyes, of laughter and motion and life, but I can't quite recognise the faces. Or maybe the faces aren't there at all. Maybe they're all a blur of incoherent features and light hitting near-transparent skin. Maybe I want them to be, so I don't have to say I don't remember the people who I used to hold so dear.

The images fade.

ENTRY 2

This image is a silver gelatin print of a photogram. Its dimensions are 29.5 x 39.5 cm.

As far as I know, no interpretation of the image exists online. The artist is deceased, which adds to the intriguing sensation that the artwork evokes. The colour scheme is monochrome, with most of the space being taken up by solid black, which contrasts heavily with the varying shades of grey of the rest of the image. The black shapes are the background, as in all photograms, but Schlabs's utilisation of negative space makes it the most prominent feature of the artwork. The shapes vaguely resemble human figures, and the positions they are in give them a look of melancholy. However, it is impossible to determine what is depicted in the image. The interpretation is up to the viewer, which surrounds it in further mystery.

ENTRY 3

This is an oil painting which depicts a young girl in a blue dress standing in a greenhouse. She is holding a wicker basket of flowers. The figure is backed by a creme-coloured wall that contrasts with the dark greens of the plants. On her head there is a round straw hat. She's standing in a natural pose, as opposed to the formal portraits that were typical for the 19th century. The size of the canvas, 235 x 180cm is quite surprising if we take into account the subject matter since at the time such large formats were normally reserved for works of other genres, for instance, history paintings.

IN THE ORANGERY

by Olga Boznańska, 1890
The National Museum in Warsaw



A SHORT STORY INSPIRED BY THE PIECE

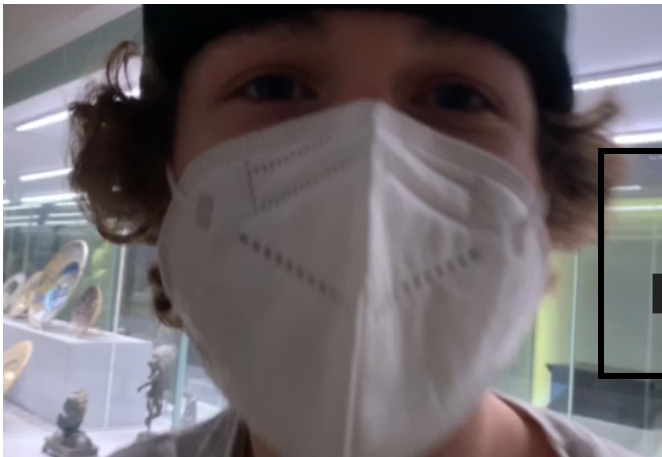
IN THE ORANGERY

There was nothing new about the flowers. As I walked through the main alley of the sprawling greenhouse, their petals tickled my hands the way they had the day before, and the week before, and the month before. I still avoided my fingers snagging on the sharp leaves of my brother's plants, the ones he had bought two years ago, the ones that stood lined up against the glass walls because my mother didn't want them disturbing the image she had so carefully crafted.

The basket in my hand didn't feel any different, either, a constant weight that reminded me I wasn't floating in a recurring dream. I had never really had recurring dreams, only had heard of them from a friend. I let my thoughts carry me away to my fondest dreams, where I could see the clear river and the reeds that grew just by it, with a faceless figure beside me, holding my hand and almost smiling.

The flowers by the river in my dreams were always the same as the ones in the greenhouse, arranged in the same way, with clear divisions between them, no two kinds intermingled. Sometimes I wondered if their placements would change if I moved the real ones, but I imagined my mother slamming a newspaper on the table, preparing to take my head off, and I knew it was better to just keep wondering.

And so I wondered, until the door opened with a quiet creak, and I whirled to see my brother, a red, hand-shaped imprint on his cheek. He ripped out the first flowers he saw and disappeared, probably running back to kneel in front of whatever lady he had wronged. I smiled to myself at the image.



JANEK BAKIĆ-PAWLAK

A POEM INSPIRED BY THE PIECE

...

The rows are endless,
The admirers lost in it, breathless,
The negative thoughts
they have, relentless.

The painting goes on forever,
Each person looking at it,
on their own endeavor.

The objects have a pattern,
Just like the rings of Saturn,
The shelves are repeating,
Repeating, repeating,
Similar to a heart beating.

At the same time,
It is random,
Similar to a surprising
and unpredictable phantom.

Just like the painting:
Raw, indirect, random, casual,
Number, object, contrast,
King, stretch, spring, Debate



UNFINISHED REGISTER

by Jan Tarasin, 1989

The Zachęta National Gallery of Art

ENTRY 1

The work is an oil painting by Jan Tarasin who is a famous contemporary Polish artist. His paintings speak "about the harmony and disharmony of the world through visual signs" (source: culture.pl). This painting is one of the few of his works that are part of the permanent collection of the gallery. 'Unfinished Register' is considered to be one of his most interesting pieces. The 'shelves' or partitions in the painting are a common characteristic of Tarasin's work and can be identified in many of his creations. The objects and shapes are placed in a way which resembles a pattern, yet at the same time it is a random selection of objects. The contrast of the pattern and random objects highlights the uniqueness of each item. The objects are of various colors and shades; the levels of brightness also differ. This creates the effect that each object has its own nature, therefore bringing the objects to life. This also gives us the impression that there is motion in front of us and that the objects are mobile and moving. The horizontal partitions suggest the continuity and everlasting nature of the painting. My favorite aspect of this piece of art is the countless interpretations that one can come up with when examining it.



**JULA
PODOBA**



**NATALIA
HUTTEN-CZAPSKA**



THE SNOWMAN OF QUOTES

by Oskar Dawicki, 2008
The Museum of Modern Art in Warsaw

ENTRY 1

The Snowman of Quotes' shows a snowman frozen in a freezer. This is a visual representation of being frozen in time, since without the freezer the snowman would melt away. It also shows isolation as the moment that the freezer would be opened, the snowman would be gone.

Moreover, the chiaroscuro (light/dark contrast) further creates the impression of isolation as everything beyond the freezer itself is dark and empty. The dramatic shadow also creates a sad atmosphere. This concept is deepened by the fact that the snowman has no mouth, which represents the inability to communicate, connect as well as lack of identity.

The medium itself is snow, which usually symbolises hardship and death, communicating pain through this picture. Now it is made into spheres. A circle symbolises timelessness and something without an end. Overall, this photograph communicates the isolation and loneliness of being frozen in time.

Jula Podoba: I find this art piece is very interesting and original as it is made out of snow kept in a refrigerator, which is just a crazy idea to keep such a thing in a museum art collection and think of it as an art piece.

POEMS INSPIRED BY THE PIECE

FROZEN IN TIME

BY NATALIA HUTTEN-CZAPSKA

Stuck away in the land of the forgotten,
My heart is dead,
My mind is rotten.
No more tears from all the crying,
No more point for even trying.
Deep down I know
I'm dying.
Living on borrowed time,
Stolen memories keeping me from fading.
Words kept unspoken,
Alive but broken.
Silent screams,
Hopeless dreams
Keeping me awake
How can I be dead if I feel pain?
How can I be alive if I hear the screams of those who no longer walk the earth,
maybe the land of the living?

TRAPPED ON DISPLAY

BY JULA PODOBA

I am trapped and can't get out
They said I will not like it, they said I'll be in doubt
they told me I'll be lost
filling with exhaust
But I feel safe. I feel taken care of.
There is no love
but in some way, the light above
how bright it shines
reminds me of good times
and brings out the almost dead smiles
The shining light
fills me with delight
I keep on telling myself, this is the only way
otherwise there is no other day
I must be on display.



ENTRY 2

THE PORTRAIT OF A MAN WITH HIS DAUGHTER

by Sofonisba Anguissola, 1580
The National Museum in Warsaw

I feel mesmerised by this painting because it's very different from most pieces that I've seen. Even though it only shows a man and his daughter, with the man dominating over her, the daughter is what grabs the attention the most. While the man looks away to the side the girl is staring straight at the person viewing the painting, making her more noticeable.

Moreover, even though in the 16th century not much attention was brought to painting children in an accurate way, the girl is painted with the same care and precision as the man. Additionally, her face is paler than her father's, which makes it contrast with the background more, ultimately making her stand out and, overall, more noticeable. What's more, interesting is that she is holding a mirror in her hand, but rather than looking at her own reflection she's looking at the viewer. This shows the curiosity of the child and gives her a unique personality. She isn't passive and unaware, living in her own closed off, sheltered world. Unlike lifeless figures in most Renaissance paintings of children, she isn't painted like a doll and actually looks realistic. She is intriguing and aware, as well as peculiar in her manner.

A SHORT STORY INSPIRED BY THE PIECE

...

He stood there patiently as the lady painted him on the canvas, stroke by stroke, detail by detail. I stood on the stool next to him, staring into the mirror as the odd woman requested, throwing glances in her direction every once in a while.

'What is she doing here? Why must I stand here with him?' I asked myself.

I looked across the room where on the couches surrounding the small table sat the rest of my family. My brothers talked amongst themselves while my mother looked at me with her cold, empty expression. We didn't get many visitors at our house at the time, especially not strange ladies who painted. Regardless, I didn't question it and simply stood still.

I kept forgetting that the mirror was supposed to be the object of my interest, rather than the woman. I couldn't help but stare at how her hands moved smoothly so that the brushes could ever so slightly touch the canvas leaving a carefully planned stroke of dark paint.

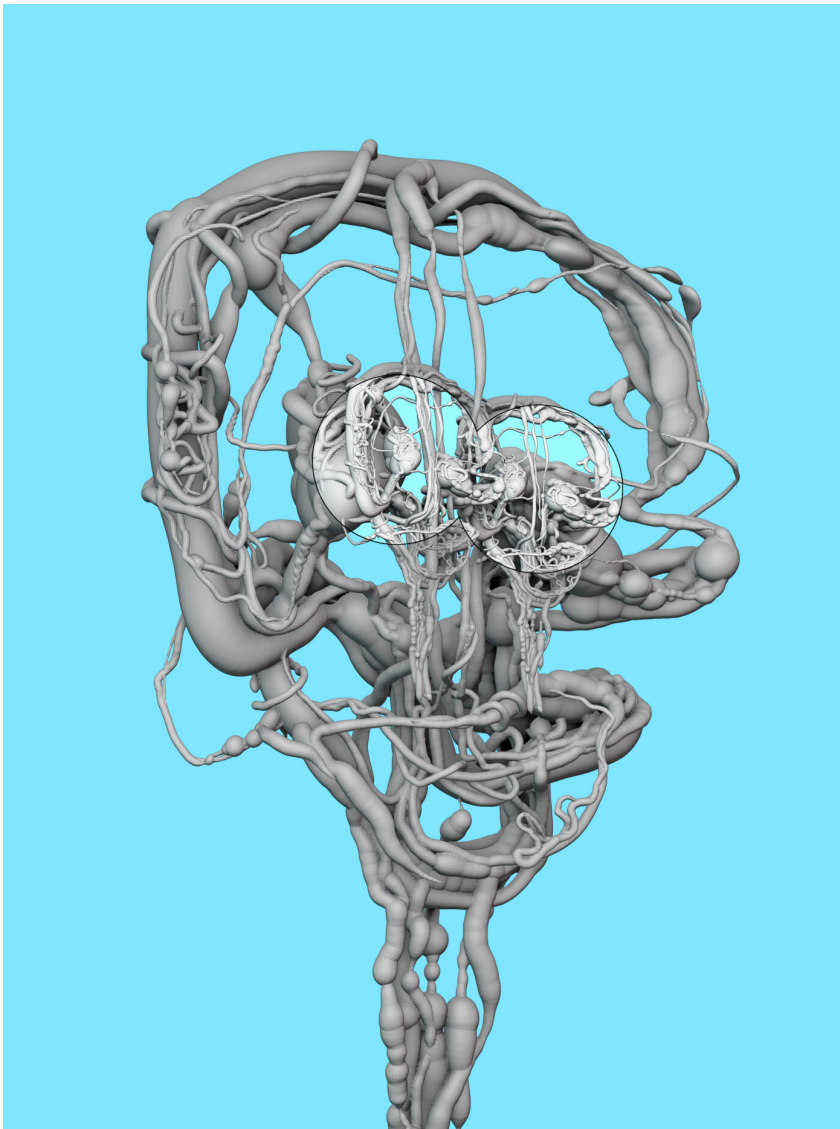
My father noticed as my hand quivered in pain underneath the weight of the expensive mirror. I didn't dare speak up about my discomfort. Silently, without throwing a glance in my direction, he strongly held my hand and a wave of relief washed over me. I wanted to send him a grateful smile but didn't dare move.

When I finally saw the piece I could see that in the painting I wasn't looking at the mirror-like I had been instructed. My eyes were staring at the viewer like I had been staring at the painting lady.

A POEM INSPIRED BY THE PIECE

...

The window to the soul,
The hidden black hole.
Shapes the way we see the world,
Forms memories we so dearly hold,
Shapes the stories which are often told,
Connects people, both young and old.
Teaches us happiness, sadness, love and hate,
Shows us the uncertainty of our fate.
Shines like bright stars,
Leading the way through the shadows.
The light that blinds us from seeing the darkness,
So bright.
They fail to see that the star is the brightest,
Right before it collapses.



PORTRAIT OF RODGER VOORHIES

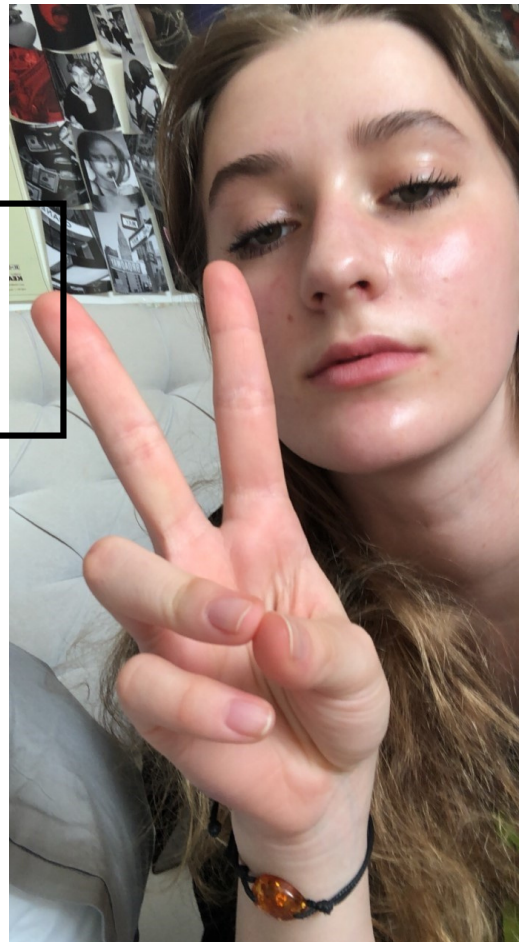
by Tymek Borowski
Warsaw-based artist, 2020

ENTRY 3

This contemporary "Portrait of Rodger Voorhies" does a great job of creating an impression with something that appears to be random. While the portrait itself appears to not follow any strict rules, it doesn't fail to communicate emotions.

The colours heighten the mood in the work of art. The colour blue could symbolize stability, inspiration or wisdom. These themes match this picture as it portrays Rodger Voorhies who works at the Melinda and Bill Gates Foundation, which is why he may be seen as inspirational or wise. Moreover, the subject of the painting is shown using a seemingly random grey shape. Even though it appears quite abstract, it still somewhat resembles a human face with some facial features. It may mean that everyone is a bit of a mess. The colour gray may symbolise neutrality and balance which is a contrast to the seemingly chaotic form and shape of the grey mass. The eyes are round sections of the mass which are made lighter.

LAURA TOKARSKA



ENTRY 1

The following art piece is a portrait of Kazimiera Szczuka, a well-known literary critic, journalist, and social activist. It is a rather abstract painting. There are multiple colors and we can't figure out if it's a face. There is an outline of two eyes and a very long and rather large nose. There are multiple squiggles and colors mixed up together and used to shade. The colors vary from pale and bright to dark. I am amazed by the variety of colors Tymek Borowski used here and the fact he was capable of making it look good.

For some the art piece is confusing, however, I find it rather interesting and the fact it's semi-abstract makes me drawn to it. I really like the fact that the painting isn't boring and makes me want to stare at it.

This particular painting reminds of a character from The Smurfs. The main villain of the whole show reminds me of this painting because of his large nose. I feel like the painting represents a rather evil figure and Gargamel was the villain in the show, thus my connotation.

This painting also reminds me of a face of a dying person. In some sense I perceive the painting as an image of a decaying face. The face painted here isn't tight like a normal person's face is. It's falling apart and drooping and the multiple colors represent the confusion and amount of thoughts going through a person's head. The face seems like it can't take it anymore and starts falling apart.



PORTRAIT OF KAZIMIERA SZCZUKA 2

by Tymek Borowski

Warsaw-based artist, 2007

A SHORT STORY INSPIRED BY THE PIECE

...

As I got out of bed, at the same time I did every day I looked in the mirror, however, today was different. As I looked into my own eyes I felt each and every one of the hairs on my neck thrust upwards one by one. It was one of the weirdest feelings I had ever experienced and I could not stop thinking about it the whole day. It meant something, there's no way that wasn't a sign. I had to be careful I thought to myself.

During my lunch break in school, I went to the bathroom and looked in the mirror again. As I looked at myself, I saw a figure standing behind me. My heart dropped to my stomach. I turned around rapidly to find out no one was there. I was left alone, standing in the school bathroom, questioning my sanity. I pushed the doors and frightfully ran out the toilet. I didn't want to be alone. I arrived in the cafeteria, where I sat with my friends and tried forgetting about what I had seen.

After my afternoon art class, I had to go to the toilet to wash the paint off of my hands. I walked into the bathroom, however, this time it seemed darker and the lights seemed dimmer while the tiles were dirtier. The whole atmosphere was different in a way I could not describe. I slowly tiptoed towards the sink with my eyes closed. I didn't want to open them since I was scared of what awaited me in the mirror. Slowly I opened my eyes and looked in the mirror. That was when I saw him. His face had more colours than you could imagine. I don't know if you could even call it a face. It was rather an outline of a human face. It looked like it was falling apart and about to melt. I was paralyzed, I couldn't move or scream. I just glared and as I stood there with my fingers digging into the sink, he walked closer and closer. His mouth opened, I saw darkness.

That's all I can remember; never ending darkness.