



# **FIRST PLACE IN THE TABLE?**

**21/04/2022 –  
24/07/2022**



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# FIRST PLACE IN THE TABLE?

TRAFO CENTER FOR CONTEMPORARY ART  
4, ŚWIĘTEGO DUCHA STREET, SZCZECIN

AKS ZŁY / Paweł Althamer / Ruth Beraha / Martinka  
Bobrikova & Oscar De Carmen /  
Maciej Cholewa / The Cool Couple /  
Aleksandra Demianiuk / Mikołaj Długosz / Dobro Pany /  
Femen / Massimo Furlan / Kornel Janczy /  
Łukasz Jastrubczak / Irena Kalicka /  
Kamil Kuskowski / Natalia Laskowska /  
Kornel Miglus / Nagrobki / Juan Obando /  
Pussy Riot / Roman Signer / Katya Shadkovska /  
Zdzisław Sosnowski / Łukasz Surowiec /  
Iza Szostak / Andrzej Tobis / Łukasz Trzciniński /  
Dorota Walentynowicz / Zbigniew Warpechowski /  
Janusz III Waza / Piotr Wysocki

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Stanisław Ruksza

**CO-ORDINATION**

Ada Kusiak,  
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**GRAPHIC  
DESIGN**

Kaja Gliwa

**First Place in the Table?** is an international show of contemporary art dealing with the topic of football and its socio-cultural consequences. The exhibition features the most important artworks that problematize the subject from a complex perspective, alongside a selection of new ones, created specifically for the exhibition in Szczecin.

Nothing could be more wrong than the assumption that contemporary art and football are not closely associated. Football, especially in its mass dimension, has long been of interest to artists. Researchers of contemporary culture, historians of thought, writers or popes all share the above fascination. **“Amongst all unimportant subjects, football is by far the most important”** (John Paul II). Football is a metaphor for the world, a mirror reflecting the processes and phenomena of the current times on micro and macro scales. It tells about everything: the rules of social life, politics and philosophy, art and aesthetics, love and sex. On the one hand, football is a mass spectacle that reflects on issues related to conflicts, wars, tribal rituals, identity politics, the logic of global capitalism, mapping colonization divisions, social inequalities, fan psychology, celebrities and branding. On the other hand, foot-

ball can strengthen the community as “social glue,” breaking the logic of competitiveness and the race towards equality fairplay rules, both on the pitch and outside of it.

**“Football is the last sacred ritual of our time”** (Pier Paolo Pasolini).

Contemporary soccer is a global discipline. It involves millions of people – not only as supporters, professional or amateur players, but also people employed in the broadly understood business related to it, including journalists and gamblers. In addition, the world of computer games has become a new field of sports competition. At the same time, football exists on many levels – both local ones and those related to identity, bringing together small communities which are either based on more traditional patterns or in the process of re-formation. Even though soccer remains a male discipline – patriarchal, if not chauvinistic, its emancipatory potential has been steadily growing. It is not only the rapid development of women’s football, but also gestures of alliance with the LGBTQ+ community or the presence of groups representing alternative visions of reality. Football tells a great story with an

infinite number of minor narratives that strengthen group identities. From the format of the World Cup games, through legends of victories and defeats of national teams, to stories from urban and rural grasslands. The history and status of clubs, such as Olimpia and Pogoń Szczecin, are reflected in the story of the city, the fight for identity and pride (although they have a shorter tradition than other recognized clubs), emerging capitalism after 1989, because “Szczecin’s courtyards don’t taste of béchamel with rocket” (PSONTour, *Alone against all*). A football club can become a screen on which the longings and ambitions of its supporters are projected. Football fans dream that one day their team will close the season with the first place in the table.

**“The real fans of football come from the working class. Now they cannot afford to come and watch the game”** (Eric Cantona). The great football stadium – the stage of television shows – is available live only to the rich and it certainly has its dark face. More than 6,500 underpaid workers from the poorest regions of Asia have died by now during the construction of

the infrastructure for the upcoming 2022 World Cup in Qatar. At the same time, the community of football lovers does not remain homogeneous or ethically unambiguous: there is the shared joy, but acts of violence and the speech of hatred or fanaticism are equally common.

**“In football everything is complicated by the presence of the opposite team”** (Jean-Paul Sartre). At the same time, football proves that it is possible to make a breach in the global consumer system, that there is still reason to leave the house (or the locker room). The emergence of Against Modern Football movement questions the economic dominance of the logic of profit. There are more and more alternative clubs and ephemeral football art beings that begin to inspire professional clubs. Football seemingly contains an element of utopia in itself turning to other hard-to-reach ideas, but similarly to any other optimal social system, the question of competition remains problematic. Paradoxically, as the legendary Italian sports journalist Gianni Brera pointed out: **“the perfect match would end 0-0.”**

Anna Ciabach  
Stanisław Ruksza

# PAWEŁ ALTHAMER

The paths of Paweł Althamer (born 1967) and football have crossed on several occasions. His golden bus, the Dreamer (2011), takes the female and male players of AKS ŻŁY Warszawa (also featured in the show) to away soccer matches. A clear sign of the relationship is the sculpture dedicated to the iconic Polish footballer Kazimierz Deyna. Paweł Althamer created the monument in collaboration with Rafał "Żwirek" Żurek, Roman Stańczak, Julia "Matejka" Althamer and Bruno Althamer. Deyna was a legendary player affiliated with Legia Warszawa and the captain of the national team "Orły Górskiego" [*the eagles of Górski*]. He is known for the famous "Deyna croissant", a goal scored directly from a corner kick in the match against Portugal in 1977.

First unveiled on October 25, 2015, the sculpture had changed its location several times before it was eventually installed in Warsaw's Praga, in front of the OFFSIDE bar at Brzeska St., a meeting place of the fans and co-founders of AKS ŻŁY. The well-known rule "Don't move Kazik or you will die!" was hung above the monument on several occasions. Each time, Kazik was saved. Currently, the bar's premises are to be taken over by a developer, and Althamer's sculpture is exhibited "away" at TRAF0. The monument will return Warsaw's Praga where it will be installed in front of the new OFFSIDE, on the corner of Wileńska and Zaokopowa Streets.

## Kazimierz Deyna

**sculpture, 2015**  
**courtesy of OFFSIDE bar**  
**and Foksal Gallery Foundation**



## *The King of Radzionków*

**fabric, 2022**

The works of Maciej Cholewa (born 1991) frequently refer to the mythology of Radzionków – the small Silesian town in which he lives. In the 90s, the city gained independence and separated from Bytom. One of its identity binds was the former mining football club – Ruch Radzionków. Following the years of unsuccessful attempts, it eventually became the “dark horse” of the Polish league for several seasons. The video *Saturday Afternoon Fever* by Kornel Miglus, also featured at the exhibition, tells the above story. The unquestionable legend of Ruch is the figure of the footballer Marian Janoszka – “Ecik”, who is depicted on a large pennant or banner of “Cidry” (local name for the club, and frequently for the entire town). Like a lone western rider, the “Silesian Django” of football calmly tosses the ball to score a goal with his famous headshot. The career of “Ecik” is one of the most unusual ones in Polish football in recent years. Janoszka hardly ever moved from his hometown until he was nearly thirty. The Polish football first heard of him when his peers were about to finish their careers.

"37 years and 199 days – these were the numbers on Janoszka's records when he ran onto the pitch in Ruch's debut in the Polish super league. The Silesian team made their debut in great style, defeating Widzew 5:0. Ecik himself added his three cents to this unexpected, but well-deserved victory. He scored a double – these were two out of 22 goals he scored for Radzionków. In the three-season super league history of Ruch, no other player has entered the list of shooters more times than he has" – reported the sports newspaper. Ecik ended his career at the age of 49. There are legends about his hard, mining attitude. In the UEFA Cup match, he was supposed to whisper in Silesian to Zizou (Zinédine Zidane), who complained about the tough play, "stop moaning, just start playing!" There is a beautiful anecdote about Ecik correcting his hairstyle in front of the mirror and whispering to himself: "Only Pelé and myself have such a forehead."



# ŁUKASZ SUROWIEC

## The best player is a taxpayer

sculpture, 2022

The works of Łukasz Surowiec (born 1985) frequently deal with the problem of social inequalities and the application of double standards. The artist asks the simplest but most relevant questions about the *clou* of the discussed problem. He also creates prototypes of instruments of change or social engineering, such as: *Level* – designed to equal the wages of all employees of an art institution, or *Tears Purchase* (a collaboration with Alicja Rogalska) – a point of exchange of 3 ml of tears for PLN 100 in the pawn shop district in Lublin.

For *First place in the table?*, the artist created a site specific work – a cup in form of a black ball with the title inscription: *The best player is a tax payer*, referring to the exorbitant wages of footballers.

Johann Cruyff's transfer from Ajax Amsterdam to FC Barcelona in the 1970s marked the beginning of the continued growth in soccer players' enormous salaries, which have increased by nearly 4,000% (sic!) in a few decades. Are the skills of Leo Messi really forty times

greater than those of Diego Maradona? At the same time, the wages in other jobs have changed only slightly. Along with the gigantic increase in soccer money, the placement of earnings in tax havens or unclear financial transactions have been observed. They have been tracked by the Football Leaks association founded in 2015. The high-profile cases of Leo Messi and Ronaldinho and their trials for tax fraud are only the tip of the iceberg. *The Cup* created by Łukasz Surowiec is a version of the fairplay award for a footballer – a conscious citizen who cares about the budget of his country.





# MASSIMO FURLAN

Swiss artist Massimo Furlan (born 1965) often refers to his childhood memories in his projects. One of the key ones is the voice of a radio commentator coming through the open windows in a deserted city. Like many boys, Furlan dreamed of a career as a great sportsman, replaying famous games in his room and commenting on them.

Although football is a team game, many matches are remembered as lofty myths of a lonely hero. They have been alluded to in works by, for example, Helmut Costard in his portrayal of Georg Best in *Fußball wie noch nie* (1971), or Douglas Gordon and Phillipe Parreno in *Zidane: Portrait of the 21st Century* (2006), focusing on the French football icon. The single hero of the pitch was alluded to three times by Furlan in recreating matches from the 1982 World Cup in Spain. In 2002, he reconstructed alone in Lausanne the final of that World Cup – a match between Italy and West Germany – at the Pontaise Stadium, while in August 2006, at Paris' Parc des Princes Stadium, he played Michel Platini from the semi-final match in which France was defeated by Germany.

A recreation of the match between Poland and Belgium played on June 26, 1982 in Barcelona, when the Polish team won 3 to 0 thanks to Zbigniew Boniek's hat-trick, took place on 14 October 2007 in Warsaw's Stadion Dziesięciolecia. In Barcelona, fans in the Spanish stands

## Boniek

**video documentation  
of the action, 2007**

**Courtesy of the Laura Palmer  
Foundation and Bęc Zmiana  
Foundation**

waved Solidarity flags, and thanks to a live broadcast, the Solidarity logo was shown on television screens in Poland despite the martial law. At the Stadion Dziesięciolecia, Massimo Furlan alone recreated one of the most spectacular games in the history of the Polish national team. He repeated Zbigniew Boniek's 'choreography', and the match was covered live by the famous sports commentator Tomasz Zimoch. Two coaches, Bogdan Hajdas (assistant to Antoni Piechniczek, the 1982 Polish national team manager) and Ryszard Kosiński, sat on the bench near the sidelines and "guided" Boniek one more time.



6

# KORNEL JANCZY

United

The series of three objects was based on data from a legendary match played in 1973 at Wembley Stadium in London. In that game, the Polish national team drew with England, thanks to which they advanced to the finals of the 1974 World Cup, eventually winning third place in the competition.

Kornel Janczy (born 1984) created works that are a kind of scaled-down, three-dimensional infographics. They visualise elements of the match, which the artist selected and analysed:

I. A standing object in the shape of an hour-glass.

Its base is a rectangle with the dimensions of the Wembley Stadium at a scale of 1:100, and its height forms a timeline. White dots placed on it show the time and places where the ball left the playing field.

II. A circular object.

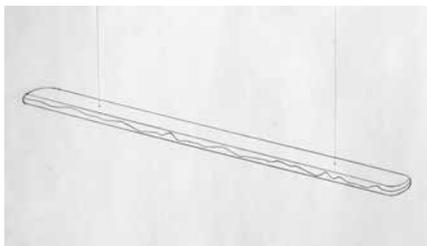
The size of the space inside the circle shows the total time of all breaks in relation to the whole match.

III. Bar-shaped work.

It illustrates the percentage of moments of ball possession by each team in the successive minutes of the game.

## objects, 2022

The artist combines here contemporary methods of analysing and presenting data, including sports data (such as tables), with the metaphysical aura that surrounds some spectacular or unexpected football events. His subjects, apart from their statistical value and the question of the relevance of the data themselves, have at the same time a totemic-landscape character. "It is a romantic story of a certain event, but also a story about football fans' phantasms and the mythologising of sporting events" – writes the author.



## documentation, video, 2012–2022

Femen Women's Movement (ukr. Жіночий рух Фемен) is a Ukrainian women's un-registered social movement formed in Kiev in 2008. Members of the movement describe it as an expression of sexy feminism. The movement opposes prostitution, violence against women, denounces patriarchalism, criticises sex tourism, international matrimonial agencies and it fights against violations of civil rights. Femen's protests against electoral irregularities or, more recently, against the war in Ukraine on the Champs de Mars in Paris, have also been widely publicised.

Members of the movement are known for their topless actions.

On October 29, 2011, on the opening day of Arena Lviv, female activists held a protest against Euro 2012. Two demonstrators were arrested. Later, during the tournament, they disrupted it several times in Poland and Ukraine, and they attacked the Henri Delaunay Cup (the main trophy of the European Championship), wandering around Ukrainian cities.

"The main idea of this championship, as UEFA understands it, is to make money, to sexually abuse Ukrainian and Polish women, and to get men drunk. We are

against Euro 2012. We attack all symbols related to the championship, including the pot standing on a pedestal," the activist Alexandra Shevchenko explained. Femen activists also made a photo shoot for the occasion in the colours of the host countries – Poland and Ukraine.

The Femen movement currently consists of about 300 members in several Ukrainian cities, and some of the founders of the movement are currently in France. It actively protests against Russia's war in Ukraine.



# PUSSY RIOT

Pussy Riot is a Russian anti-Kremlin feminist group that presents its views using a language and form of expression modelled on the overall aesthetic and culture of punk. In 2012, after the rigged elections in Russia, they sang the song *Mother of God, Drive Putin Away* in public in the Moscow's Cathedral of Christ the Saviour, for which they were imprisoned.

On July 15, 2018, during the second half of the final match of the World Cup in Russia, four people invaded the pitch of Luzhniki Stadium in Moscow, temporarily interrupting the match. Reuters identified one of the individuals as Olga Kurachiova, a member of Pussy Riot. The group took responsibility for the incident, issuing official messages on social media: "Hello everyone from the Luzhniki pitch, it's cool here!" – could be read on the group's Twitter and Facebook profiles.



## Pussy Riot disrupt the World Cup final in Russia

**video, documentary,**  
**2018–2022**  
**photo by Thanassis Stavrakis**  
**/AP/EAST NEWS**

The artists are loudly protesting against Putin's Russian war against Ukraine. Nadya Tolokonnikova of Pussy Riot, who spent two years in prison in Siberia for her pro-social activities in Russia, recently released an NFT token to support Ukraine financially. In doing so, it raised over \$5 million in the first few days of sales. In an interview in the British daily *The Guardian*, she said: "We felt, me and my friends in crypto, that we had to react somehow. I'm personally convinced that in situations like this, activism is the only thing that can keep you sane. Just looking at disasters and tragedies and not doing anything about it is really detrimental for the world, but also it slowly destroys you and makes you feel helpless."

Most of the Pussy Riot artists are currently in exile.

## Score

**VR video  
and performance, 2022**

Assuming that art and football are mirrors in which our complex reality is reflected, one has to admit that in both cases the image of the current situation inspires neither satisfaction nor hope.

In *Score*, the artist uses the notion of a foul as a capacious metaphor for what is wrong, unfair, and violent in us and around us. In sports fouls can be intentional or accidental, and not always a yellow or red card are their ultimate consequences. In the further part of the work, however, the artist shows that the consequences of the current situation do not have to be unambiguous, and the result – the score – does not have to be certain. Failure can also be a value. Besides, the Church of Maradona really exists...

**Performance by Iza Szostak,  
accompanying the exhibition  
*First Place in the Table?*,  
on June 25, 2022.**

Iza Szostak has recently been creating works based on the analysis of virtual reality. She is interested in the subject of the virtual body in the context of choreography and dance, as well as new performative forms incorporating VR technologies. Computer-generated characters and space in *Score* may seem unreal and alien, but at the same time they are disturbingly real, as it is the digital image that is the superior message today.

Research for *Score* was accomplished as part of the Grażyna Kulczyk 2021 creative grant.



# KORNEL MIGLUS

## Saturday Afternoon Fever

documentary, 2000

## Fussbal- kongress

documentary, 2006

Both documentaries by Kornel Miglus (born 1957) refer to myths: the first one is about a famous match, while the second one tells the story of a club strengthening a local community.

*Fussbalkongress* recalls one of the most important (for Polish supporters!) matches of the Poland national team - the Frankfurt "Water Battle" against Germany during the 1974 World Cup in Germany. The participants of the game are also featured in the film. The Poles lost the game, although in the preceding matches they they had done done much better than the Germans. The defeat inspired the myth about Poland as a nation of losers suffering for Europe. And how important was this match for Germany? Does anyone else remember this?

*Saturday Afternoon Fever* tells about the love for football and the fate of people whose lives have revolved around the soccer club Ruch Radzionków in Silesia, also featured in Maciej Cholewa's work.

Suddenly, the 3rd league team advanced to the 1st league. The only amateurs are boys playing loud matches in the backyards. The professionals play in Ruch, which has climbed to the First League. The host of the stadium is Jerzy Żydek, the main character of the film, who is supported by his friends from the former team – voluntarily as the club is very short on cash. Other devoted fans also sponsor him as much as possible. Nearly everyone in Radzionków is interested in football. Ruch is their pride. Its successes are perhaps the only reason to rejoice in the reality raising fears for future. There have been gradual employment cuts in the local mine that will be eventually closed down. As its director says, there are no reasons to continue the production. Young people are feebly wondering how to invest their severance pays. The older ones worry about their future. But when Ruch is playing a match at home, all the sorrows go by the wayside. And Jerzy Żydek is dreaming. He did not expect to become the host of the premier league team. But since it happened, why wouldn't he host the European Championship team?



# DOBRO PANY

installation, 2022

The words DOBRO PANY [GOODNESS RULEZ] have been appearing on Szczecin's walls for some time now.

There are rumours of the formation of a mysterious team with an unspecified identity and an unspecified number of members. They are said to include artists, free thinkers, "coloured birds"... The authors of the inscriptions are unknown, however as the word "Pany" [Rulez] indicates the language and attributes of football fans, or even football fanatics. Assuming that Goodness plays football... This does not exclude, however, that the members of this group are also involved in poetry writing, karaoke performances, and the very act of arranging and organising a meeting (let's assume even a football match) turns into a performative event. In Dobro Pany the boundary between players and spectators is blurred. Rules are set ad hoc or they are not set at all.



The photographs come from the series *A-Z (Educational Showcases)* by Andrzej Tobis (born 1970), a long-term photographic-linguistic project based on an illustrated Polish-German dictionary from the 1950s. It is an open-ended and utopian project: due to its scale, probably impossible to complete.

Tobis's photographs are not staged but found in the chaotic landscape of post-transformation contemporary Poland. This "conceptualism with a human face" contains a lot of anecdotes, funny rebuses, being also an accurate socio-political observation.

Tobis made the following assumptions for the project: the photos may only be taken on Polish territory; the photographed situations and objects are not arranged or digitally edited – they must be found; each entry in the German and Polish version is provided with an index number from the original dictionary; the photo and the entry placed under it on a white stripe form an integral entity.

This time, photographs selected by the artist (some of them are shown for the first time) form a set about the "difficulty of space in the context of football:

- compressed space, i.e. the showcase *the goal area*;

## A-Z (Educational Showcases)

**photography, 2007–2022**  
**courtesy of the ING Polish Art Foundation**

- space/prestige in a state of degradation, i.e. Lewandowski in the showcase *the place where advertisements are placed*, and the visitors' locker room in the showcase *the changing booth*;
- ambiguity of the pitch/game space in the showcase *football* – it is unclear whether a pitch in a basement flooded with water is a cool or not cool situation;
- the mix of sacred and profane spaces, religious pressure, Catholicism encroaching on the pitch, i.e. my favourite display case on the subject – *the penalty area*\*\*.

\* commentary by Andrzej Tobis



122 • der Torraum

123 • pole bramkowe

# ZDZISŁAW SOSNOWSKI

## Goalkeeper

**video, 1975**  
**courtesy of the**  
**Profile Foundation**

Zdzisław Sosnowski (born 1947) wrote in the artbook *Goalkeeper forever* (2009): "For some I am an artist, and for others I am a goalkeeper. Meanwhile, in my life the boundaries between the field, the game, gender relations, private and public spaces have blurred. I was a goalkeeper all the time, in every place, and every situation – defending various values, various assumptions and unfortunately not always successfully. Goalkeeping became an addiction".

*Goalkeeper* was presented for the first time at Warsaw's Galeria Współczesna in 1975. The artist impersonated a goalkeeper dressed in a white suit. In spite of the greyness of communist Poland, the project retained the aesthetics of mass culture. Sosnowski focused on analysing the processes of mass media's simulation of contemporary myths, promotion of idols and their spectacular careers. He created the figure of a celebrity, adored by crowds of fans and assaulted by beautiful women. In the first part of the video, we see him in a white suit, dark glasses, a hat and a cigar in his mouth during

a spectacular goalkeeping parade amidst cheers and applause from the fans. In the next shots we observe an erotic play – women's heels dwelling with him to retrieve the ball. The next part is set in a flat, where the women want to take the initiative in retrieving the ball. The two spaces, private and public, overlap.

Sosnowski noticed the marginalisation of art in the situation of the growing importance of popular culture and science. He implemented actions aimed at undermining the world of art and based on strategies of appropriation and the aesthetics of repetition.

The film features Halina Lenartowicz, Zdzisław Sosnowski, Teresa Tyszkiewicz.



## Group of death

installation, 2022

Nagrobki [*Tombstones* in Polish] is a band established by two visual artists Maciek Salamon (born 1984) and Adam Witkowski (born 1978). Their lyrics are about passing, death and dying. The artists have already recorded several cult albums, they also create music for theatre performances. Last year, before EURO 2020/2021, they recorded a "football" song *Nadzieja umiera ostatnia* [*Hope Dies Last*]. The Polish team lose in its unique style... The artists wrote at the time: "The issue with this song is as follows:

- 1) We do like football.
- 2) We don't quite respect national values.
- 3) Above all, we have been invited to two football-related exhibitions this season. So something should be prepared for these exhibitions. And the Euro is a wonderful opportunity!
- 4) Maybe we will try the Eurovision next year?"

The new work *Grupa śmierci* [*Group of Death*] with images of the current Polish national football team is a painting installation referring to action painting or iconoclastic activities (Kmicic shooting at images of the Bilewicz family in Henryk Sienkiewicz's *Potop / The Deluge*), but also to children's pranks. Who wouldn't want to play football in the halls of an art institution, at school, or anywhere else where it's not usually done? But let's not be afraid of overtly military semantic references either. After all, everything is allowed in art...

Part of the installation is the documentation of the process of creation and the title song recorded for the exhibition. Its live premiere will take place during the concert of Nagrobki at the afterparty of the Szczecin exhibition.



# MARTINKA BOBRIKOVA & OSCAR DE CARMEN

## *In the midst of two worlds*

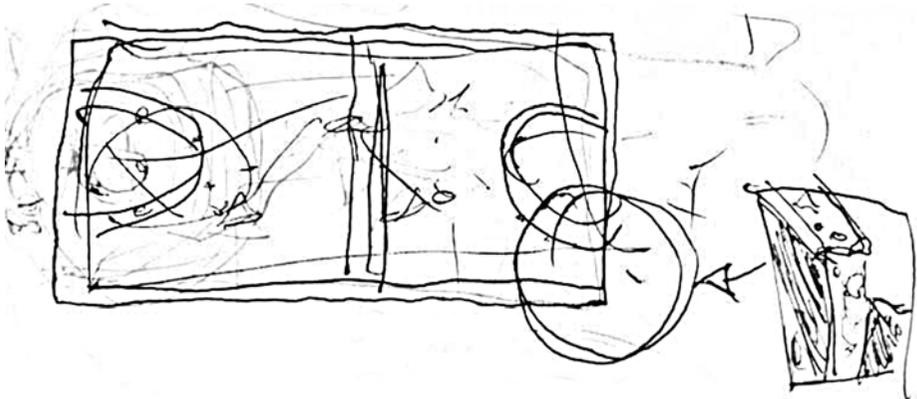
For Oslo-based international artistic duo (founded in 2005) *First Place in the Table?* was an impulse to form an analogy between the exhibition and soccer match. The artists frequently raise issues related to the functioning of the art world, and how it is influenced by socio-economic conditions. Their activities, based on interaction with representatives of various communities, frequently focus on studying the mechanisms and strategies within a particular system and searching for alternative solutions. *In the midst of two worlds* is a work in progress. It is a simulation-based research project in which the artists featured in the exhibition

2022

are footballers, and the gallery space is the pitch on which the match is played.

Both in art show and football struggles, Martinka Bobrikowa and Oscar de Carmen are interested in relations, systems of power, rules and patterns of operation, as well as the attitude of the artists to their position in the game.

As long as the show is on view and the ball is in play, everything is possible.



*Pro Revolution Soccer* is a modified version of the popular video game *Pro Evolution Soccer (PES)*, which was hacked by an artist and introduced the Zapatista National Liberation Army (Spanish: Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional, EZLN) as a new team. This revolutionary movement was founded in the state of Chiapas, a poor region of Mexico, to protect the interests of its indigenous peoples, taking its name from one of the leaders of the Mexican Revolution, Emiliano Zapata. The EZLN gained international fame with the rebellion launched on January 1, 1994. Today, Zapatista doctrine is a syncretic mix of socialism, liberation theology and libertarian municipalism. Its supporters demand, among others, granting of autonomy to indigenous peoples, introducing direct democracy and rejecting neoliberalism. One of the more recognisable symbols of the EZLN is the black balaclava worn by its supporters – women, men and children. It symbolises the equality of all supporters of Zapatism and the possibility of joining their movement no matter who they are. The movement does not have an official leader, but Subcomandante Marcos is considered to be the informal one.

## Pro Revolution Soccer

video game, 2019

A native of Colombia, Juan Obando (born 1980) refers to the legendary football challenge that the EZLN made to the club Inter Milan. Although the match between the two teams never occurred, the ties between the Zapatistas and the Italian club are still close – mainly thanks to Javier Adelmar Zanetti. The big star and long-time captain of the Italian team openly supports the EZLN. Obando not only opens up a virtual space for the Zapatista movement, where it symbolically establishes its next autonomous zone, but also breaks, following other illegal users, the dictates of corporations in the sphere of digital technology and mainstream sport.



# KAMIL KUSKOWSKI

## *Club Colours: Pogoń Szczecin, Legia Warszawa*

acrylic on canvas, 2004  
Courtesy of the Collection of  
Zachęta Regional Collection of  
Contemporary Art in Szczecin

In his post-conceptual painting, Kamil Kuskowski (born 1973) uses the works of other artists, ready-made images or those existing in the public iconosphere. He appropriates and transforms them in the spirit of neo-Dada or appropriation art, emphasising the autotelic status of visual work.

*Club Colours* are stretchers in the size of typical scarves worn by football fans at matches (20×160 cm); the artist also painted pennants. In his paintings he faithfully reproduced the patterns and colours of Polish sports clubs. He juxtaposed colours which arouse antagonisms and aggression of fans of opposing teams at stadiums. Kuskowski brings out the tribal background of football fandom. The exhibition presents *Club Colours*, referring to the clubs Pogoń Szczecin and Legia Warszawa, whose supporters' groups used to maintain mutual "sztama" [*peaceful coexistence*] until 2013.



# AKS ZŁY WARSZAWA

AKS (Alternatywny Klub Sportowy – translation: Alternative Sports Club) ZŁY is the first democratic sports club in Warsaw. It was established in 2015 as a grass-roots initiative. From the very beginning, its founders extended their invitation to anyone who wanted to contribute. The name of the club refers to the title character of Zły (translation: *the evil one*) from the novel by Leopold Tyrmand. AKS ZŁY has no owner. It is owned by people – the members of the open association: athletes, coaches, people involved in all activities of the club. All you need to do is cheer, fill in the form at the stadium, and pay modest fees. The key decisions are made democratically at the general meetings of the association members. During the games of AKS ZŁY, the supporters of Legia and Polonia sit peacefully next to each other. You will not experience any hatred towards your rivals. The team has several equal sports sections, including football – women’s “bad beasts” appear in the third league, and men’s “bad boys” play in class A. ZŁY trains children and adolescents, it involves refugee players and activists. The club is guided by the philosophy of equality in theory and practice: “Warsaw has always been a cultural melting pot, and we want to recreate this atmosphere in the club. We want AKS ZŁY sports events, starting with football, then other disciplines, to become a pretext for experiences and entertainment shared by people with different backgrounds. We want to give everyone an opportunity

## documentation, 2015–2022

to “taste” the experience of participating in a project they can genuinely influence, and where they can spend time in a friendly atmosphere, cheer and take part in the life of the club”.

AKS ZŁY is a two-time winner of UEFA Grass-roots Awards. The award recognizes grass-roots initiatives for their contribution to promoting football and fair play.

From the 2021/2022 season, the male team of ZŁY plays in the prestigious European league Fenix Trophy (an alternative to the commercial Super League concept), which brings together alternative football teams: Brera Calcio Milan, AS Lodigiani 1972 Roma, FC United of Manchester, Afc DWS Amsterdam, HFC Falke e.V. Hamburg, Prague Raptors Football Club and Cuenca-Mestallistes 1925.



The Swiss artist (born 1938) for years has been creating works based on slapstick humour and the absurd juxtaposition of particular elements. The material of his art is often everyday objects, landscape elements or machines, but also – last but not least – explosions, acts of destruction and gunshots.

In the performance *Fussballkanone* [*Football cannon*], a ball is shot from a cannon straight into an open tent. And basically that's it: goal! In Signer's works, tension and anxiety are discharged quickly and without any commentary or even a hint as to what connects the elements used. Without knowing whether we are dealing with a juvenile joke (and the artist's age has nothing to do with it) or a metaphor for conflict or an offensive act, we are left to interpret his next action on our own.

**Flux Laboratory,  
Zurich, 2015**  
**performance documentation,**  
**video: Tomasz Rogowiec,**  
**Aleksandra Signer**  
**0'53''**



# JANUSZ III WAZA

## Dzyndzłowanko

**documentation of works  
in public space, 2011–2022  
+ inscription, 2022**

The identity of the Łódź street artist who introduces himself as Janusz III Waza remains unknown. However, his sur-realistically absurd inscriptions on walls, based on football fans' hate speech, have a group of admirers and followers. With some exceptions, Waza's works are focused on two Łódź-based sports clubs: ŁKS (Łódzki Klub Sportowy) and RTS (Widzew Łódź, since 1922 – Robotnicze Towarzystwo Sportowe Widzew). In this way, the legendary "Łódź Derby" – an over hundred-year old competition between the two clubs – found its new artistic expression. "My superior dream is a derby where the football fans shot around creative slogans «ŁKS doesn't read books!», «Widzew drives a Tico!». That would be something," the author said in an interview.

It turns out that funny, but still biting slogans can be an antidote to the xenophobic language of aggressive football fanatics. This is also shown by the recent anti-government and pro-choice protests in Poland, in which ironic slogans written on cardboard played a significant role.



## *Wish List (Ships)*

**installation, 2022**

"Pogoń will be Brazilian or none" is one of the most popular quotes in Polish football. The author of those words was Antoni Ptak, who owned the Pogoń Szczecin sportsclub between 2003 and 2007. His vision of building a club from Szczecin based on Brazilian footballers was supposed to be a revolution of Polish football, but became a disgrace. Some of those bought were mere hobby footballers, doing their everyday jobs in Brazil. Others were quickly verified and sent back to their homeland. The myth of Brazilians as the best footballers was supposed to work in terms of image and bring success, which reflected the fantasies of Poland during the economic transformation.

The installation of Łukasz Trzciński (born 1975) – portraits of Brazilian footballers (secondrate players of the Szczecin-based Pogoń sportsclub and the world stars of the Brazilian national team whom Pogoń could never afford) decoratively burned in white plates (coins/vessels/circles) – refers to this story. It

also alludes to the "footballers' market," but also to the beginnings of slavery, when it was decided that the wild tribes of the New World living in the areas conquered by Europeans were not fit for work, so it became necessary to import black slaves from Africa. *Wish List* brings the story five centuries forward, when Brazilians were imported to Poland after recognition that native Poles were not able to play football. The conditions of labour and slavery changed, ships were replaced by airplanes, but the mechanism of exploitation and the division of the world into more and less privileged zones remained the same – we can experience neo-colonialism in full bloom.

Dariusz Wołowski and Michał Pol talked about market mechanisms in commercial football in 1998 with Ryszard Kapuściński in *Gazeta Wyborcza*:

"– Abuses in football do not please anyone, except those who benefit from them. The worst for me are transfers of players from club to club - a modern form of human trafficking. It leads to such paradoxes that clubs do not have a single player from the country the club represents. It is turning football into a professional circus. But it will get worse. It will come to the point where teams will be teams from a particular country in name only. And supranational leagues will be established (RK).



– In Poland it happened that the president of a club took out a loan from a bank against the collateral of his players. As he could not pay it back, the bank put the players up for sale. They were bought by another club. They had to change teams and cities, against their will.

– That should be punished. This way of using another human being is a modern form of *slavery*. I think the situation in sport demands regulations just as in other areas of the economy. For example, anti-trust laws have been introduced that put up barriers to certain practices. In the area of human trafficking, international rules – defining not only the financial but also the ethical aspects of transactions – would be useful. I think this will eventually be enforced by world opinion, which will want to maintain some humane standards in football (RK)."

# ŁUKASZ JASTRUBCZAK

## *Rapid Vienna vs. Rapid Vienna*

video, 6'19", 2008

The work by Łukasz Jastrubczak (born 1984) is based on FIFA 06 video game. In a computer-controlled match, the Austrian team Rapid Vienna (original name: Sportklub Rapid Wien) plays... against itself.

Both the concept of such a game and its outcome direct our attention to alternative, utopian concepts that also appear in the world of football. The possibility of breaking the pattern of two different opposing teams whose outcome remains unknown until the end of the game seems intriguing. At the same time, it was not by accident that the artist chose a team from Vienna – the city of Sigmund Freud, the founder of psychoanalysis, in which he was interested at the time of creating his work. In this context, the match appears to be a constant inner battle we fight against ourselves.



# ZBIGNIEW WARPECHOWSKI

## Football

The performance took place during the opening of the exhibition *Fakty 74*, which featured Natalia LL, Andrzej Lachowicz, Jerzy Rosolowicz and Kajetan Sosnowski, among others. The immediate impulse was the approaching FIFA World Cup in Munich, which in Poland was accompanied by propaganda of national success and the then authorities.

Zbigniew Warpechowski (born 1938), dressed in the original uniform of the Śląsk Wrocław football team, drenched himself in water and mud before entering the gallery. "Prepared" in such a way, he burst among visitors and artists, kicking a ball and accidentally destroying the sculpture by Kajetan Sosnowski. Then he fell down simulating an injury and trying in this way to divert attention from this unfortunate event.

Unexpectedly, 1974 was the year when the Polish national team won the bronze medal at the championships, and the elimination "match on the water" in Frankfurt will always be remembered by Polish football fans.

**Art Exhibitions Bureau,  
Wrocław, 1974  
documentation of  
the performance, photographs:  
Krzysztof Ptak, at al.**



# NATALIA LASKOWSKA

## Kiss on a football field

series of 3 paintings, 2022

In *The Semiology of Everyday Life*, Umberto Eco writes that an average football fan is the equivalent of an erotomaniac who visits pornographic cinemas. They peep at others without doing so themselves.

The analogy between football (played or watched) and sex, the common denominator of which is primarily feeling of satisfaction, seems quite obvious and relatively easy to accept. The matter becomes more complicated when we acknowledge the patriarchal schema of discourse on football, which does not fully allow for the erotic dimension of struggles between teams of the same sex. Analysing the football circles more broadly, we can see similar behaviour among football fans.

Natalia Laskowska (born 1986) in her painting series does not, however, situate the centre of gravity here, but seems to go a step further. The homosexual couple of male football players, shown in three shots, kiss affectionately and passionately on the football field. They pay no attention to the witnesses of the spectacle gathered in the stadium, because it is not about the fans' attention but about what happens be-

tween the two players. On one of the canvases we can see female figures from Paul Gauguin's *Vision after the Sermon (Jacob Wrestling with the Angel)* in the stands, which opens another field of interpretation, both in relation to the post-impressionist canon itself, as well as the biblical theme. The presented paintings with their neon, wavy colours have something of a mirage or a dreamlike vision, they seem unreal, impossible, and yet visually appealing.



# RUTH BERAHA

Italian artist Ruth Beraha (born 1986) is interested in community rituals. She focuses not only on their integrative but also exclusive potential.

*Non sarai mai solo* ("You will never be alone") is a sound work based on the lyrics of football chants by Livorno Calcio fans. Beraha invited the professional choir from the club's home town – Rodolfo del Corona, conducted by Luca Stornello – to perform the songs.

The work is not just a simple transformation of a sports "plebeian" expression to high vocal art. The key element is the choral song itself – its essence is the harmonious sound performed by several singers. The phenomenon of cheering is primarily a community experience at sports events. It has its roots in the strong identification with the group, the feeling of unity with the crowd. Therefore, it resembles an ecstasy experienced during a religious ceremony. At the same time, there is an aspect of the appropriation of the individual's subjectivity by the masses, a characteristic feature of the most oppressive political systems.

In this context, the title *You Will Never Be Alone* sounds at least ambiguous - as a promise of support from the group, but at the same time of potential supervision and verification of the values professed by the group.

## *Non sarai mai solo*

sound installation, 2019



foto: Eila Białkowska, OKNOstudio

**fotografia, 2016/2022**

The work comes from a photographic series inspired by the book *Nowe Ateny* [*New Athens*] by Father Benedict Chmielowski (1700–1763). This work, first published in 1745–1746, is considered the first Polish universal encyclopaedia. Although the text was written at the dawn of the Enlightenment, the author's technique and message were already considered archaic, expressing Polish obscurantism of the Saxon times rather than modern European ideas.

It is hard to deny that football in our country (and elsewhere) is also one of the repositories of views that are not necessarily progressive, but are, to put it bluntly, xenophobic, violent and chauvinistic, imbued in the spirit of archaically understood patriotism and national pride. This dark side of the football spectacle, rooted in Sarmatian (and other) myths, meets favourable conditions in the current political and social situation, and the ethos of football fans, who by definition are against the authorities, becomes questionable... Perhaps we should return to the motto recalled by Kalicka (born 1986): 'The dragon is hard to beat, but one must try'.

from the series:  
*The dragon is  
hard to beat, but  
one must try  
(New Athens)*



Video documentation of the *Transeuro 2012* happening prepared during Euro 2012 by artist Piotr Wysocki (born 1976) and curator Stanisław Ruksza as part of the Grolsch ArtBoom Festival in Krakow. It was a football match between artists and representatives of LGBTQ+ circles, challenging the strong paradigm of a football fan/football player as male and heterosexual. Earlier, in the spring of 2011, Wrocław's Teatr Polski staged Paweł Demirski's play *Tęczowa trybuna* [*Rainbow Stand*], directed by Monika Strzępka, with a group of gay football fans as a starting point. *Transeuro 2012* went even further. It did not remain on the level of a play on stage. It was a real football match in the Wawel Krakow stadium, with players, fans, referees, coaches. It was commentated live by a sports announcer and a Vietnamese drag queen – Kim Lee.

*Transeuro 2012* was not only a football match, but also a celebration – a picnic, a manifestation of joy and tolerance. The participants used the sport- and football-

## Transeuro 2012

video, 2012

related language, however, the purpose was not competition, but equality and good mood. Dressed in pink and blue (trans colours), the *Transorly* [*Trans-eagles*] were not professional football players, and some of them had no previous football experience. The 'pink' goalkeeper quoted Doctor Berna from the Polish cult movie *Seksmisja*: "It doesn't matter who won. It's important who played". The happening also made reference to cross-dressing in ballet, e.g. men in female costumes in Tchaikovsky's *Swan Lake*. This is a legitimate comparison in the case of football, for it was Dmitri Shostakovich who used to say: "Football is the ballet of the working class".



# ALEKSANDR\* DEMIANIUK



*Me Gay.  
He and I*

**scarf, 2021**

"Queer is not always a manifestation of otherness, it can also be critical or engaged art, and a form of political protest. Inspired by various attitudes and activities in the field of art and activism, I decided to intervene in the field of aesthetics associated with homophobic order, consciously changing its meanings. Thus, I make attempts to queer the visual attributes of football fan circles. The strong manifestation of homophobic attitudes, which in various groups constitute the basis of identity, finds its consequences in the brutality with which this collective is ready to confront every manifestation of otherness. My empathy leads me to empathise with the oppressed, which is why the transformation I am making is somehow camouflaged. I am trying with this gesture to allude to the efforts that non-heteronormative people make to hide

*Football fans  
from the Town  
of Griffin unite*

**pennant, 2022**

their secret for fear of probable aggression from culturally unaccepting communities of difference."

*Me Gay. He and I* - the "renewed" scarf of a football fan of the Jagiellonia Białystok sports club. The inscription has been corrected, using the Białystok dialect ("śledzikowanie"), consisting in lengthening the "i" in "j" e.g. /bjajłystok/, /jagjellonja/.

*Football fans from the town of Griffin unite* – "improved" pennant of Pogoń Szczecin sports club. The griffin found another griffin to kiss with."\*

\* text by Aleksandr\* Demianiuk (born 1998)



# DOROTA WALENTYNOWICZ

Talking about gender inequality in football, or sport in general, is a Pandora's box and bottomless pit at the same time.

Dorota Walentynowicz (born 1977) offers us a set of several facts in the form of diagrams-ceramics, which show how explicit these disproportions are and how enormous the scale of male domination is. After all, what works better on our imagination than money?

"Women's football is the future," says Alessandro Bonipetri, son of the famous Giam-piero Boniperti of Italian Juventus, organiser of the international women's football tournament. And this should be considered not only a wishful thinking, but also a quite possible scenario, because the development of this field has greatly accelerated, and female football still has an untapped commercial potential, which is certainly not without significance. At the same time, we must keep in mind an English expression "show me the money" which means: "how much money you are really willing to pay?". While there is no shortage of declarations, including among the male football elite, things are somewhat different in reality, and not only in financial terms. Women are still in an "aspirational" position and the GPG (Gender Pay Gap) between men and women is relatively stable.

## Watch me work

**object, 2022**



In the summer of 2008, in a forest near the village of Gaudynki, a dozen or so models were invited by Mikołaj Długosz (born 1975) to take part in a reconstruction of so-called "ustawka", an arranged fight of football fans' fight. "I took twenty guys, young guys, simple ones, often heavy built, to the forest and we took photos of an arranged fight of football fans, hated and considered the uttermost barbarity by *Wyborcza* newspaper. But I wanted to show exactly what the classics showed in Greek and Roman figures. We look at these aggressive barbarians in museums and it is nice, and interesting. In Poland, we haven't seen such pictures yet, for arranged fights of football fans are a fairly recent thing," said the artist in an interview with *Gazeta Wyborcza* in 2008.

## Arranged fight

series of photographs, 2008



# KATYA SHADKOVSKA

The lyrics of the song *Daggers drawn* were based on authentic entries on an online forum of football fans. The fact that it was not a channel of niche ultras groups and the choice of slogans was quite random indicates the prevalence of this type of content and language in football circles.

Katya Shadkovska (born 1973) is a video artist who also explores the potential of ASMR (Autonomous Sensory Meridian Response) in disseminating pro-social ideas. This time, she invited rappers Ryfa Ri and 3y Gun Kara to collaborate, creating a hip-hop video which refers to the mainstream patterns of the genre, while breaking them on many levels. Thus, we have a feminine, non-binary rendition in a soft whisper of lyrics whose emotional charge is definitely closer to hateful shouts in a stadium.

It seems interesting in this context to ask whether the key to changing patriarchal prerogatives and a culture based on violence might not be (or not only) changing the content of the message, but also the person sending the message and its form?

## *Daggers drawn*

video, 2022





Publication accompanying  
the exhibition

# FIRST PLACE IN THE TABLE?

presented at TRAF0 Center  
for Contemporary Art in Szczecin  
(21.04.2022 – 24.07.2022)

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Published by:  
TRAF0 Center for  
Contemporary Art in Szczecin

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Szczecin 2022  
ISBN: 978-83-961521-6-9

Financed by the  
City of Szczecin



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Contemporary Art in Szczecin  
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