

ALEKSANDRA SKA THE WIDOW

Exhibition:
17.01 – 30.03.2025

Curator:
Jarosław Lubiak

Authors and artists
participating in the project:

Animation:
argentinox sintetico

Embroiderer:
Miszela Boruczkowska

Music:
ehh hahah

Composer:
Julia Górna

Costume designer:
Wiktor Krajcer

Video operator:
Maciej Sierpień

Author of legal provisions
and commentary:
Marcin J. Stępień

Conductor:
Joanna Sykulska

Graphic designer:
Piotr Wardziukiewicz

Tattoo artist:
Małgorzata Zając

Choir:
**Adrianna Bąk
Konrad Handschuh
Anna Ludek
Ilona Tomaszewska**

Coordinators:
**Ada Kusiak
Anna Sienkiewicz-Rogaś**

The Widow is an artistic project based on personal experience. In 2014, Aleksandra Ska faced the death of her husband. The experience of loss involved a change in her marital and social status. Trying to cope with the condition, the artist embarked on a process of working through her personal experiences and cultural expectations as well as the social and legal provisions relevant to the widowhood.

The Widow is one of the effects of the above process. Dedicated to loss, it is not intended to reflect on or commemorate it. On the contrary, the artists sees it as the beginning of a transformation. The transformation forced by a painful event that has a complicated course, including saying goodbye to the deceased, coming to terms with the loss, reconstructing life in the new circumstances, and confronting the socio-economic condition.

The project is an ongoing process to which Aleksandra Ska has invited a team of collaborators. Since widowhood is a social condition, working with it requires a collective action. The exhibition is an essential element of the process, but it does not put an end to it. Other than loss of memory or the death of the affected person, living with and in the state of loss has no closure.

The Widow represents what was born during the process – the results of the search for forms and means of transformation.

The film *The Widow*, co-produced by Aleksandra Ska and Maciej Sierpień, shows a partially masked character travelling through different environments to reach

the phase of monstrous metamorphosis. The wandering becomes a form of transformation of the widow's figure. The final metamorphosis scene was created by argentinox sintetico. The film soundtrack was composed by ehh hahah.

The transformation is also illustrated by drawings titled *Declipses*. Made with ashes, they represent the reversal of the crisis seen as a descent into darkness. At the same time, they clearly manifest the game of covering and revealing, one of the main themes of the project.

The above game is also exemplified by the scarf *Twilight* embroidered by Miszela Boruczkowska. The cloth functions as a transformation mask – a key object in the transformation ritual.

The ritual is a performative event accompanying the opening of *The Widow* at TRAF0 Center for Contemporary Art in Szczecin. The ceremony features the performance of the song *mi-me-o-mia* by the choir under the direction of Joanna Sykulska. Composed by Julia Górna, the mournful lament is changed into an anthem of transformation.

One of the elements of the ritual is the *Signature* tattoo by Małgorzata Zając. The design of the transformation sign was created by reshaping the esoteric and mystical figure of the flower of life. Tattooing is performed on the *Catafalque* vivisection table – an object designed by Aleksandra Ska as an anti-pedestal. The costumes for the participants of the ceremony/performance have

been designed by Wiktor Krajcer. The tattooing has a double meaning. It can be understood as a sealing of the change in the personal status, or as a call to change the social condition of the widowed. It represents the signing of a new social contract, breaking with patriarchal inequalities and injustice.

Marcin J. Stępień's proposal of provisions regulating the right to security allowance in the event of widowhood is crucial for the "new agreement." The font used to write them down was designed by Piotr Wardziukiewicz through transforming the classic Trajan. The proposed regulations are not intended to remain a dead letter of the law. The new typeface establishes "living" letters; the tattoo is a signature on a living body. These are the first steps, symbolically initiating the implementation of the law.

Widowhood does not have to mean being locked in the shadow of death. Loss can open up a transformation of individual and social life.

Aleksandra Ska

Artist, professor of fine arts and head of the Studio of Affective Practice at the Academy of Art in Szczecin. Her works question the established social and cultural patterns relating to gender identity, affective expression, interpersonal relationships and life roles. She uses installations, videos and objects not only as forms of artistic expression, but also as tools of dissent. Her goal is to disrupt social and cultural patterns of thinking and to act through art.

WORKS:

1. **Declipses 1-6**
stone paper, ashes, saliva;
119 cm x 89 cm
2024
2. **Catafalque**
lacquered MDF board, wood;
220 x 65 x 86,5 cm
2024
Used by Małgorzata Zając to create the tattoo *Signature*.
3. **Twilight**
collaboration:
Miszela Boruczkowska
beads, semi-precious stones,
silk velvet, silk lining;
57 x 46 cm
2024
4. **The Widow**
collaboration: Maciej Sierpień
animation: argentinoo sintetico
sound: ehh hahah
video, audio; 8' 55", loop
2024
5. **Draft Provisions Governing the Right to Widowhood Support, including Reasons and Grounds**
author: Marcin J. Stępień
2024



6. **Documentation of the choir's performance under the direction of Joanna Sykulska – interpretation of Julia Górna's piece "mi-me-o-mia"**
(2024)
Video and audio recording:
Maciej Sierpień
2025

TO PARTER

