

MIESIĄC FOTOGRAFIИ PHOTOMONTH KRAKOW

Krakow Photomonth 2021 – Opening!

The 19th edition of Krakow Photomonth will open this 28 May, in galleries, museums, and outdoor locations around the city, as well as online. The formula for this year's edition will embrace openness in every aspect: openness to new formats of presentation, new audiences, and new topics.

The ongoing pandemic period has been a challenging, extremely intense time for the organisers of cultural events. On top of constraints required in the interests of public health, the situation has made necessary the introduction of significant changes to the core formula of our festival, setting in motion a search for novel ways of communicating with audiences and staging accompanying events. This year, exhibitions in galleries and museums will run in parallel with local events involving the residents of Krakow. Guest exhibitions, including those prepared by art school students, will be an integral part of the programme.

In the words of Joanna Góralach and Tomasz Gutkowski of the Foundation for Visual Arts, the organiser of Photomonth: 'Our ambition is to produce a festival that is a platform for experimentation and a space for cooperation—a sphere of openness in every respect. We are moving away from monumental, hermetically sealed narratives in favour of microhistories and personal encounters. A good meeting, presentation, slideshow, or happening can have the same impact as a traditional exhibition. The exhibitions will therefore serve as a catalyst for discussion rather than ends unto themselves.'

An example of such an approach will be the exhibition *The Gravity of the Situation*, curated by Agnieszka Rayss, which will be presented at Cricoteka (Centre for Documentation of the Art of Tadeusz Kantor). The show will demonstrate how social realities become material for artists and a tool for rebellion, using examples ranging from the seminal art collective Łódź Kaliska to projects by young artists such as Agnieszka Sejud, Krzysztof Powierza, and Dominika Gęsicka. A component of the exhibition will be a programme of educational, interactive, and participatory events carried out in tandem with curatorial teams from festival partners Cricoteka and the Museum of Photography in Krakow (MuFo). As co-organiser, Cricoteka has incorporated this exhibition into its current programme for 2021, through which it is embracing small-scale narratives and the local, and the need to act in solidarity in the face of crisis. Resulting from political and social tensions, *The Gravity of the Situation* narrates our new world in a progressive way, using images, tools, and motifs that transform the seemingly banal and hackneyed into gestures of protest.

The Manggha Museum will host an extensive retrospective of photographs (more than 700 works) by Tomasz Machciński, the author of a legendary collection of self-portraits created in a succession of home studios from the 1960s up to the present day. In his

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portraits, Machciński assumes the role of famous personages—both historical and invented—in the process overcoming the limitations of his own corporeality and health issues. The exhibition will be the first large-scale presentation of Machciński's body of work across the decades, including photographs taken between 2006–2018.

This year's festival resident will be Ada Zielińska, a rising star of Polish photography, who will be presenting a project specifically created for Photomonth, at the Szara Gallery. Zielińska's project sheds light on the financial situation of artists by highlighting concepts and endeavours that were never realised owing to lack of funds. (In fact, one such example will be her first proposal for a Photomonth exhibition, which never came to fruition owing to this very reason.)

The festival organisers' passion for archives will be channeled through Marta Bogdańska's *SHIFTERS* project, an expansive survey of modern human history illustrated from the perspective of animals, from spy pigeons to Wojtek the Bear, with the use of archival images. The show will demonstrate that 'alternative exhibitions are possible.' An audiovisual installation at the level of exhibition, *SHIFTERS* will also take the form of a more than 700-page-long photobook publication. Is *SHIFTERS* an exhibition-plus-book? Or a book-as-exhibition? Our successful experiment with last year's exhibition-book *Wonders in the Heavens and on the Earth*, edited by Jagna Lewandowska and Sebastian Cichocki, confirmed that this is a concept to continue experimenting with.

The ShowOFF Section will once again serve as an incubator for young artistic talent. Suffice it to say that the winners of two of the last three Paszport Polityki (Polityka's Passport) culture awards in the Visual Arts category—Diana Lelonek and Weronika Gęsicka—both originally made their debuts at ShowOFF. Interest in participating in ShowOFF has only increased over time: this year we received nearly 500 applications from forty countries—and with outstanding results! This time around, the ShowOFF format is being adapted. While in previous years, ShowOFF artists were exhibited at Tytano in a group show, this year's artists, in cooperation with guest curators Tomasz Lazar, Silvia Pogoda, and Bartosz Flak, will have their work featured in solo exhibitions in galleries around Krakow. One of the exhibitions will be presented at the Museum of Photography in Krakow, Photomonth's partner museum this year.

We have long since grown accustomed to the fact that, despite their relatively young age, ShowOFF Section artists are prepared to present mature and original artistic statements. Tomasz Kawecki weaves an intimate narrative about the spirits and ghosts inhabiting his childhood home and the nearby forest. Jagoda Valkov also uses the formative potency of childhood memories to creatively recount growing up within the Families of Nazareth Movement. A fresh perspective on corporeality and the erotic is visible in Bartosz Wajer's project, which explores the relationship between pictures and desire. ShowOFF winners also tackle current political issues: Marina Istomina examines

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the petty political games that resulted in catastrophic wildfires in Siberia; and Jędrzej Nowicki covers pro-democracy protests in Belarus.

The organisers' contribution to restoring faith in photography as a tool for both narrating the world and effecting change in it, will be a series of events devoted to contemporary reportage. As part of the programme of outdoor presentations, we will present series focused on contemporary political, climate, and migration crises (including by the winners of the Krzysztof Miller Prize), a slate to be supplemented by meetings with authors of literary non-fiction. We will also display, in public spaces around Krakow, photographs from the RATS Agency's *2020: A Year of Protests* and from the collection of the Archive of Public Protests (APP).

Another example of 'openness' is the Fringe Section. Beginning this year, the Fringe programme will serve as a hub for experimentation, and for the exchange of knowledge and gathering of experience. Students from the most prestigious Polish art academies, along with photography groups and activists, have been invited to cooperate. During the selection process, organisers have paid special attention to projects with a local focus, conceived to take place in Krakow courtyards and housing estates and to involve local communities.

Finally, Krakow Photomonth is an active participant in the international dialogue on the role of images, as well as their significance, catalytic potential, and power. This spring, as a part of the long-term artistic and research project *Why Pictures?* (curated by Krzysztof Pijarski and Witek Orski and jointly implemented by the Visual Narratives Laboratory at the Film School in Łódź; *View. Foundation for Visual Culture*; and Jasna 10/'Centrum Jasna'), some of the world's foremost researchers and theorists of visuality and visual culture—including Joanna Zylinska, Nathan Jurgenson, and Trevor Paglen—together with contemporary Polish theorists and practitioners, will be examining the global republic of images and exploring democratic and communal possibilities for the photographic medium. The initial results of this project have been made available at whypictures.net.

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Krakow Photomonth is financed by the City of Krakow and the Polish Ministry of Culture, National Heritage, and Sports via its Promotion of Culture Fund.

Due to the developing pandemic situation, we are constantly monitoring all relevant restrictions. The final form of the festival programme, and the accessibility of exhibitions and events as well as their formats, will be adapted as necessary, in accordance with current health guidelines, so as to best ensure the well-being of visitors and participants. Information and updates will be posted on our website (www.photomonth.com) and on our social media pages.

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Krakow Photomonth 2021
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www.photomonth.com

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