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# MUZEUM SUSCH

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## National Gallery in Singapore

For many years Grażyna Kulczyk has been ranked among the greatest private art collectors in Poland.<sup>1</sup> She stands out in the exclusive bunch for several particular features. Firstly, it is quite rare among Polish collectors to share interest in the most recent art, also Western. Secondly, she has conducted a wide range of patronage projects within public space. In 2004, she established the Art Stations by Grażyna Kulczyk Foundation; its mission is to support the development of culture and art. The Foundation conducts display programmes, as well as educational and artistic ones. It also grants creative scholarships, promoting contemporary art and modern dance.<sup>2</sup> The third outstanding feature of Grażyna Kulczyk's activity is the scale on which she acts: she has succeeded in combining the collector's passion with business activity and promotion of high-profile architecture. Her flagship accomplishment is the Old Brewery Commerce, Art, and Business Centre in Poznań, a unique building designed by two Poznań architects: Piotr Bańkowski and Przemysław Borkowicz, who enjoying the support of Grażyna Kulczyk, created this outstanding architectural work of high-quality of detail stylized on 19<sup>th</sup>-century industrial architecture, boasting furnishing of the standard unattainable for any other commercial project in Poland. The Old Brewery has won numerous prestigious architectural awards,<sup>3</sup> yet more importantly, it has turned into a mass-flocked gallery of modern art, venue for promoting eminent art works and platform for artistic activity. The Collector adheres to the 'fifty-fifty' rule: she dedicates half of her time to business activities, while the remaining fifty per cent to art.

Initially, Grażyna Kulczyk's interests were broad, encompassing almost all the trends and movements in contemporary art. With time, her predilections narrowed to focus on minimal and conceptual art. *It isn't easy art, she says, I had taken quite some time maturing for it. Similarly as I never suspected that I might one day become fascinated by the borderland between art and science, and the works created along this meeting line. However, as much as I am*



1. Grażyna Kulczyk in the Muzeum Susch against installation *Ethnic Wars* by Zofia Kulik (1995/2017)

*consistent in these choices, there is one exception: I'm unable to resist purchasing works of female artists who boldly follow their artistic ways.*<sup>4</sup> Her Collection built for many years now features pieces of art that come from different periods, however she favours collecting the most recent art in which she highly appreciates experiment and courage. Next to classical modernity pieces, the Collection boasts works by young Polish prominent artists of both sexes. In 2007, the Old Brewery in Poznań was the venue for the first display of her Collection pieces titled 'GK Collection#1'. Situating the works of Polish Avant-Garde within an international context, the exhibition included works by masters of Polish modern art: Magdalena Abakanowicz, Tadeusz Brzozowski, Jan Cybis, Józef Czapski, Tadeusz Kantor, Jerzy Nowosielski, Roman Opałka, Henryk Stażewski, Władysław Strzemiński, Alina Szapocznikow, and Andrzej Wróblewski, presented side by side with the works by younger-generation artists: e.g. Mirosław Bałka, Marek Chlanda, Katarzyna Kozyra, Piotr



2. Old Brewery in Poznan, after: <http://www.bryla.pl/bryla/56,85301,23224177,s.html>

Lutyński, Marcin Maciejowski, and Dorota Nieznalska. These were accompanied by works by renowned international artists, including: Vanessa Beecroft, Thomas Demand, Zang Huan, Mariko Mori, Thomas Ruf, and Andy Warhol. The display was divided into the rooms of the Nude, Library, Museum, Body Sculpture, Perversion, Fashion, Object, and Religion. A review read as follows: *due to the pluralism of art and identities, the Collection display transfers the debate over art into the sphere of broader questions of democracy. This bestows social significance upon art: visualisation of tough and topical issues. (...) The historical range of art works and division into display rooms makes the gallery of the Old Brewery resemble a museum of modern art. The first Collection's display heralds the creation of the Collector's private museum that will be open to the public.*<sup>5</sup>

In 2009, Grażyna Kulczyk employed the famous Japanese architect Tadao Ando to design the Museum of Contemporary Art of around 7.000 sq m, meant to be built underground, on the park plot adjacent to the Old Brewery. Regrettably, the project was never implemented; its only raised element was an openwork fence regarded by the authorities as an unauthorized structure. The Art Stations Project in Poznań has remained merely in minor mentions in several monographs dedicated to the art of Tadao Ando. Neither was the attempt to raise the museum of contemporary art in Warsaw successful; undertaken in 2015, already after the sale of the Old Brewery, the project was to be located on a plot on the Vistula close to the new edifice of the Academy of Fine Arts. The Municipality, committed to raising the Museum of Modern Art in Defilad Square, were not

interested in the proposal, despite the fact that the Collector herself wanted to purchase the land, finance the construction of the facility, and intended to donate her Collection to the city in return for covering the running operation costs.<sup>7</sup>

This was not the first instance when a municipality refused to go ahead with the project of raising a museum of modern art. Such was the case in 2000 when New York did not authorize the construction of a new seat of the Guggenheim Museum as designed by Frank Gehry and situated on the East River embankment in Lower Manhattan. Helsinki, too, refused to house another branch of the Guggenheim Museum; there, in 2016, the international architectural competition was annulled. In some cases, indignant collectors whose plans for raising their own museum have been thwarted, transfer their collections to another country. Such was the instance of the collection of Baron Thyssen-Bornemisza who in 1988 planned to extend his Villa Favorita family residence on Lake Lugano, Switzerland, in order to be able to house his increasingly growing painting collection. When the design of the new gallery authored by the celebrated British architects: James Stirling and Michael Wilford was rejected by the local authorities, the collections were transferred to Madrid to be housed in the Palace of Villahermosa, not far from the Prado. Following the adaptation to museum purposes after the design by Rafael Moneo and an extension conducted in 2004, the building has turned into one of the most sumptuous and most-visited museum buildings worldwide. These, however, are exceptional cases, and as a rule, both city authorities and public museums willingly cooperate with private collectors.

The majority of public museums' collections at one point in the past used to be private ones. And this seems to continue to be the rule: the most outstanding contemporary collectors seek support of public museums so as to safeguard the future of their collections and prevent them from dispersing.<sup>8</sup>

Regrettably, in Poland private collectors face an exceptionally challenging situation, both for political and social reasons. The war periods caused much harm to collecting; the majority of private collections were either dispersed or annihilated. Following WW II, properties were nationalized, and private trade in artworks banned. The only valuable private collections of Polish art were created outside Poland (Wojciech Fibak, Marek Mielczuk, Tom Podl).

After the 1989 transformation, a group of wealthy collectors emerged; they present the effects of their collecting passion to the public; these mainly being works by Polish painters, with much emphasis on the artists of Young Poland, the Paris School, and the Kapists. The most recent art seems to be less widely appreciated both by the collectors and the public. The challenges with its reception are stimulated by historical resentments and insufficient education, implying lack of understanding of its essence, role, and impact. According to Anna Maria Potocka, Poles' prejudices towards contemporary art also stem from inaccurate expectations and the conviction that art should be decorative and pleasing.<sup>10</sup> In a national research conducted in 2015 into the perception of contemporary art in Poland as commissioned by the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage, merely 12.5 per cent of the surveyed declared they had no problem with understanding its content, whereas 70 per cent claimed *there were many pieces they could not understand or occasionally did not know what the artist meant*. However, paradoxically, a significant majority, namely over 90 per cent of the respondents, regarded contemporary art as interesting.<sup>11</sup>

In this context the role of the executives of public museums who would like to acquire or purchase private collections of contemporary art is unrewarding. Their intentions may be opposed, particularly if a collection features works controversial morally. The borderline between business and public activity is often conflict-prone in Poland, and in the market of contemporary art this is an extremely heated borderline. The task of private galleries and art dealers is to promote definite artists, while public museums should stay away from commercial mechanisms, since their tasks are different. Public museum institutions are first of all knowledge centres, focused on amassing, researching into, conserving, and displaying outstanding artworks, as well as on varied educational activity.<sup>12</sup> They are centres of critical perception and evaluation of artistic works, analytical process, requiring an appropriate perspective created by institutional independence, time, and investigative distance.

Meanwhile, collectors' motivations are complex, varied, and always subjective; they have been thoroughly analysed by e.g. Anne Higonnet and Krzysztof Pomian. In the modern era, collecting has become an attribute of a high social position and a kind of ennoblement. The tradition of modern private collecting aiming at fulfilling various personal ambitions and needs of the collectors, but also perceived as public service, was formed at the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Two different collectors' profiles were also then formed:

a traditional one, derived from aristocracy, and the contemporary one stemming from plutocracy. The latter was dominated by the Americans: in the USA, collecting was regarded as a kind of public service. Illustrious American collectors, actually in their majority ruthless and violent capitalists, responding to various motivations, sometimes patriotic, on other occasions altruistic, or personal, or also materialistic (inheritance), most frequently decided for their collections to be bequeathed to foundations or public institutions. Many of the collectors sat on executive or supervisory boards of public museums. It was actually thanks to numerous private donations that the first American museums: the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, Museum of Fine Arts in Boston, Philadelphia Museum of Art in Philadelphia, and the Art Institute of Chicago could soon boast outstanding art collections. Some of the greatest American collectors established their own museums: Isabella Stewart Gardner in Boston, Frick Collection in New York, and Albert C. Barnes in Philadelphia. Thanks to the rich collections of Andrew W. Mellon the National Gallery of Art in Washington DC was established. The trend has been continued; the wealthiest individuals create outstanding collections and have spectacular museum buildings raised, to mention merely the recently opened: The Broad Museum in Los Angeles, Sammlung Boros in Berlin, galleries of contemporary art launched by Francois Pinault subsequently at the Palazzo Grassi and Punta della Dogana in Venice, and the newest Bourse de Commerce in Paris.

According to Anne Higonnet, great collectors idealized the chosen period of art history in their museums. Taming time, they would try to pause it and make it more perfect. Thanks to this, they also idealized themselves. The collections often served as their alter ego. Generally speaking, collectors created their own private museums so that they would represent them after their death. After a closer look at the museum space and analysis of the preserved archival records, a shared feature can be perceived in them all – collectors' museums were founded as a mirror image of their creators. Be it with their own portraits or with the amassed collection of artworks, or through its arrangement, the collectors created their own image to pass down to the descendants. Collectors' museum space can be both perceived as a faithful reflection of the time in which they were created, but also as peculiar self-portraits of the collectors.<sup>13</sup> However, regardless of individual motivations of their authors, private collections were one of the most important places where cultural transformation would take place. Possibly in many countries, if not everywhere, they have retained this character to this very day. Public museum collections are as a rule 'delayed' versus innovatory artistic, academic, and historical interests of private collectors.<sup>14</sup>

Examples from the history of museology also prove that directors of some of the most outstanding art museums were sometimes mistaken in the evaluation of the artistic worth of the private collections offered to them. In 1929, Gertrude Whitney who owned the collection of 500 works by her contemporary American artists, decided to donate it to the New York Metropolitan Museum of Art together with 5 million dollars to have a new gallery raised. However, Edward Robinson, Metropolitan's Director at the time, rejected the offer claiming that the collection did not boast



3. Museum in Susch, old brewery building, *Bieraria Veglia*, in the foreground



4. Muzeum Susch, on the left a vicarage adapted as accommodation for artists-residents



5. Muzeum Susch, new brewery building, *Bieraria*, in the foreground, housing the majority of display rooms, with a tower fan above



6. Multipurpose auditorium in the *Bieraria Veglia*, venue for conferences and artistic events

adequate value for his museum. In reaction, G. Whitney founded her own museum whose mission was to collect contemporary American art and assist living artists. The Museum, housed in its subsequent, already forth facility in an industrial building in Manhattan's High Line, is currently one of New York's greatest attractions.<sup>15</sup> A similar incident took place in Basel in the 1990s when Beyeler, an outstanding art dealer and collector, tried for many years to convince the management of the Kunstmuseum Basel to accept his collection of contemporary art. Having been refused, Beyeler decided to raise his own museum. And this is how the most popular Swiss museum today: Fondation Beyeler, located in Riehen, on the outskirts of Basel, was established.

## Muzeum Susch

There were a number of vicissitudes that led Grażyna Kulczyk to having the museum built in Susch. Over ten years ago the Collector moved into an old house in a Swiss village in the valley of the Inn. The Engadin does not only stand out with breath-taking Alpine landscape and healthy climate, but also with unique architecture. The best examples of historic sturdy houses covered with coloured ornaments and inscriptions stamped in calcareous plaster can be found in the village of Guarda raised on the steep mountainsides on the Inn River. A little further upstream, the hamlet of Susch is located; it is there that several years ago the Collector purchased two buildings of an old brewery that had formed part of a monastic complex founded here in the 12<sup>th</sup> century. Initially, when the Warsaw museum was still planned, it was to house only the Museum's branch; however, with time, new buildings were purchased and their volume increased, mainly through laborious hollowing of the rock out of which 9.000 tons of rock were carved out. Thanks to this the usable space of the facility doubled from 1.200 to over 2.500 sq m.

The Engadin in the Canton of the Grisons is not merely the country of picturesque villages and famous resorts, but also a place that has for long inspired artists and today attracts connoisseurs of contemporary art. The history of the region is the story of how *the former physical inaccessibility has been turned into social exclusiveness*.<sup>16</sup> In the town of Sent the dealer Gian Enzo Sperone owns his gallery, in nearby Zuoz the famous Monica de Cardenas and Tschudi Galleries operate, each of them featuring Avant-Garde art works on the walls of historic buildings. It is here that the most famous art dealers, collectors, and reviewers meet annually to participate in the Engadin Art Talks to discuss the newest trends and phenomena in the world of art. Sankt Moritz is home to 13 galleries, these including the branch of Hauser and Wirth, global network of art trade with the head office in Zurich, and branches in London, Los Angeles, Hong Kong, and New York.

In order to have the Muzeum Susch designed, Grażyna Kulczyk employed two young Swiss architects: Chasper Schmidlin and Lukas Voellmy. When asked why she had not resorted to some more famous names, the Collector responded that firstly, she had become well familiar with them during the modernization of her Swiss home, secondly, that the local architects had helped her establish very good relations with the local residents and the local authorities,<sup>18</sup> and

thirdly, she concluded that cooperating with young individuals she might be able to influence more the final outcome, since renowned architects were often overbearing, not easily accepting clients' interference in their design. The latter was precisely the reason why the cooperation with the famous Swiss landscape architect Gunter Vogt, e.g. author of the landscape around the New Tate Gallery, commissioned by Grażyna Kulczyk the concept of developing the land around the Muzeum Susch, was breached.

Architectural interferences have been introduced into the building discreetly, almost unnoticeably on the outside. Their single trace, visible to a skilful eye only, are industrial glass sections crowning the ventilation tower of the new brewery building. The tower was slightly raised in order to accommodate to Monika Sosnowska's monumental sculpture Stairs. This installation constitutes as if the compositional axis of the Museum space and a landmark for visitors who meander in the labyrinth of rooms and corridors carved out in the rock. The Museum's varied space is made homogenous with uniform floors and stairs: the concrete used for the floor was added local rock aggregate thanks to which the interiors have a unique coherent dark-green colouring. In many spots old wooden structural elements are exposed. Local craftsmen were employed to provide construction details, fittings, and doorknobs. The structures have been reroofed with copper sheeting, and lime elevations renovated owing to which the modernization integrated the architecture more strongly with the site.<sup>19</sup>

The architecture of Swiss museums has been developing entirely autonomically, away from the brouhaha of the fashion for spectacular iconic museum buildings, these often of more prestige than the collections they house. In Switzerland, architecture is subdued to art, which can be seen in the examples of refined, contextual museum buildings characterized by formal restraint and economic, however perfect, detail. Its theoretical grounds were worked out in the 1970s by Donald Judd whose idea was to create space for art free of any museum or commercial task in which each element and detail is harmonized with the main idea of the building.<sup>20</sup> The most outstanding examples of the trend were raised in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century: the Kirchner Museum in Davos (Annette Gigon and Mike Guyer, 1992) and the Kunsthaus Bregenz (Peter Zumthor, 1997).

The overall impression of the Muzeum Susch is different: it features less minimalism (though mentioned by its authors) and more harmony yielded through the unity of traditional architecture, naturally coherent with the surroundings, also thanks to the craftsmanship of the local architects capable of masterly introducing their interferences into the already existing building matter. Hans Jorg Ruch is an outstanding master in this respect; his studio specialized in modest and well-balanced architectural interventions into Engadin historic homes. His accomplishments which have brought him world renown, are generally known, and published,<sup>21</sup> and must have inspired Chasper Schmidlin and Lukas Voellmy.

## The Collection

It is the personal experience of Grażyna Kulczyk, an entrepreneurial and creative woman, that are at the ideological



7. Sculpture Stairs (2016–2017) by Monika Sosnowska

core of her Museum – it is supposed to be an institution where stereotypes are overcome, a place in which women will speak in full voice. *I understand problems which women encounter in their artistic projects, I am emotionally bonded with them... My museum will give the voice to those women who previously did not have the opportunity to be heard.*<sup>22</sup> The activity of the Muzeum Susch conducted as part of the Art Stations Foundation CH is based on five programme pillars. The Collector has defined this formula as 'museum plus'. Apart from thematic exhibitions planned to be held every six months, also resorting to the Grażyna Kulczyk Collection, though not only, plans are made for annual academic conferences to be hosted, as well as cyclical dance and performance events; furthermore, residential grants for artists, critics, and curators are envisaged. In cooperation with the Basel Academy of Art, the Museum has established its own research Instituto Susch implementing *The Women's Centre of Excellence Programme*, being gender studies aimed at investigating women's accomplishments in the area of art, culture, and science, redefining educational programmes, and searching for a new *social contract*, namely a shared language between the sexes that might use the potential and accomplishments of visual arts.<sup>23</sup>

Due to a small scale and historic character of the building, the transformation of the interior of the convent brewery into display space was not an easy task. A solution to the problem was, however, found by commissioning works that might fit well in definite interiors from specific artists. Such conceived site-specific pieces form part of the permanent display, climaxing it and forming reference landmarks for visitors. Each of these works constitutes a separate sign, yet



8. Sculpture Herd I (1990) by Magdalena Abakanowicz

together they form a unique and meaningful scenography for temporary displays, establishing varied bonds with the works presented in them. The unifying axis is formed by the earlier-mentioned *Stairs* by Monika Sosnowska: an expressively twisted ragged steel structure that can be interpreted variously: from St Jacob's ladder leading to heaven, to deformed fire escape stairs.

The artists who prepared works for the permanent display include e.g.: Mirosław Bałka, Heidi Bucher, Izabella Gustowska, Jarosław Kozłowski, Zofia Kulig, and Joanna Rajkowska. Also works that had been created earlier found home here and had interiors adjusted to their needs. We mean Magdalena Abakanowicz's sculpture *Flock I* from 1990 and the photo installation by Piotr Uklański *Real Nazis* from 2017: a peculiar 'wall of shame' composed of over 200 portraits of men and women who served during WW II in Nazi military and police formations.

The operations of the Muzeum Susch were launched with the display titled *A Woman Looking at Men Looking at Women*. The display, quite bold sexually, presented one of the main motifs of Grażyna Kulczyk's collection, being at the same time her main interest, as focused on women – artists who in their works are searching for meanings of femininity in various aspects: social, political, cultural. Through expressing sexual emancipation and posing queries questioning the traditional gender roles, the exhibition tackles the main elements of feminist theories. Many of the works display a woman's perception of the body which becomes more a source of joy than the ideological battlefield. Next

to the female artists of solid prestige, it also shows works by the artists who have only recently won the position in the world of art they deserve. However, what matters most are the words in the introduction to the Catalogue: *it speaks of the artists, who regardless of their gender, have found in themselves enough passion, talent, and courage not just to free themselves from sexual norms, but also to move beyond the traditional framework of art, its typical divisions and limitations.*<sup>24</sup> Among the displayed artists the following names can be found: Louise Bourgeois, Ellen Cantor, Lucio Fontana, Natalia LL, Teresa Pągowska, Erna Rosenstein, or Alina Szapocznikow. The exhibition bears powerful emotional overtones, its forms suggestively appeal to imagination and stamp the public with a deep meaningful experience. When asked how the exhibition was received by Susch's residents who had had their special preview before the exhibition's launch, in her response Grażyna Kulczyk quoted the view expressed by one of them following the visit: *all of this shown here is simply so human.*

A visit to the Muzeum Susch inevitably implies traveling; it requires appropriate effort and time, which through the sequence of events resembles more a pilgrimage to a site of cult. The Collector encourages this slightly mystical approach claiming that *in the remote and beautiful mountain surroundings, we are afforded the opportunity to do something different and disruptive, to encourage a 'slow-art' approach to appreciating art in a contemplative, quiet context.*<sup>25</sup> In another interview she says the following: *the planned nature of Muzeum Susch means that it will continue*



9. Mirosław Bałka, *Narcissussusch* (2018)





10. Zofia Kulig, *Ethnic Wars. Large Vanitas Still Life* (1995/2017)

to evolve – it will be shaped by artists and academicians as well as Muzeum's own multifaceted activities. I hope that it will educate and inspire people, not only in matters relating to art but to think differently in their approach to everything. I would like it to become a point of reference – both as a site of cultural pilgrimage and as a new model for art and ideas.<sup>26</sup>

We can regret that Grażyna Kulczyk's private museum was not created in the Collector's native country. On the other hand, however, she has built a bridgehead of Polish art in the Western world, thus opening up the opportunity for the artists of her choice to come to existence in the wide world context. Grażyna Kulczyk says about it: *on the one hand the Muzeum Susch aims at supporting the dialogue between art being created in East-Central Europe and the broadly conceived West. On the other, it is drawing the world's attention to the art of outstanding women. For me personally this also means investing in the fulfilment of my mission: of promoting Poland abroad. A facility of such high profile, created by the most outstanding architects and artists, located in the heart of Europe, and visited by opinion leaders from around the world, will be Poland's courageous flagship.*<sup>27</sup>

### The future of the Muzeum Susch and the Grażyna Kulczyk Collection

Over the recent years Grażyna Kulczyk's career as collector has gained momentum and international dimensions. In 2014, Madrid's Santander Art Gallery was the venue of the exhibition featuring pieces from her Collection,

perversely titled *Everybody is Nobody for Somebody*.<sup>28</sup> It was for the first time in history that a prestigious European gallery had invited a Polish collector. The exhibition displayed over 100 works from the period spanning the 1940s to the present day. The works by such artists as e.g. Magdalena Abakanowicz, Wojciech Fangor, Zofia Kulig, Zbigniew Libera, Roman Opalka were displayed side by side with the pieces by Jenny Holzer, Donald Judd, Bettina Rheims, or Antoni Tàpies. The Spanish daily 'La Razón' wrote the following: *Polish Avant-Garde is invading Madrid; this mattered all the more as it was for the first time that attention was drawn to Polish artists in general. Reviews also observed the varied character of the Collection: beauty and darkness, religion and eroticism, aesthetics and provocation, entertainment and reflection are combined in the GK Collection, which has two clearly defined themes: one feminist, and another colder and more rational related to kinetic art, conceptual art, Op Art and abstract art.*<sup>29</sup>

In 2015, Grażyna Kulczyk became member of the exclusive Modern Women's Fund Committee at New York's MoMA and member of the Russia and Eastern European Acquisition Committee at London's Tate Modern. In 2018, the well-known portal ARTnews ranked her among Top 200 Collectors.<sup>30</sup> A spectacular media success was also brought about by the opening of the Muzeum Susch: articles on the topic were published by almost all renowned magazines, publishers, and portals dealing with art, architecture, and fashion.

The Swiss curator Dora Imhof in her book *The Private Museum of the Future*, in which she also included Grażyna



11. Main temporary display hall; in the foreground, sculpture *Florian* (2013) by Sarah Lucas, with painting *m 42* (1970) by Wojciech Fangor above it.

Kulczyk's profile, remarks that the situation in the world of art has been essentially revalued. Firstly, contemporary art has been widely accepted and appreciated, while its prices have soared to the levels affordable only by the richest collectors. By this token, illustrious works of contemporary art have turned into symbols of status, influence, and power. The dominating role of money in the world of contemporary art is often violently opposed, both on local levels, this testified to, among others, by attacks against collectors and museum projects they promote, as well as globally, the latter often expressed through extreme political movements and anti-capitalism campaigns, sometimes also headed by artists. Similar was the kind of undertone in the Polish artist Rafał Jakubowicz's criticism of Grażyna Kulczyk for *her participation in bourgeois culture dominated by thinking in terms of celebrity splendour, culture appropriated by business elites and constituting entertainment for the rich; he considered her idea to have a museum built as a strategy of building one's own monument and socialising one's own losses.*<sup>32</sup>

However, the role, impact, and responsibility of private collectors in the world of art remains unquestioned. Having at their disposal often unlimited financial resources, they can make their decisions independently, experimenting, and implementing radical collection concepts, in contrast to public museums whose directors boast modest means and report to political authorities. Imhof compares public museums to transatlantic liners with determination heading in the direction once settled, while private collectors resemble a fleet of motorboats speeding wherever they instantly choose. Meanwhile,

sooner or later even the richest collectors will face the questions of succession, of securing their collections, and preventing them from dispersion and oblivion. Most commonly they can hardly count on their families, and only institutions can help them: either the institutions they have established themselves, appropriately anchored and equipped with solid funding, or large public museums.

It seems that Grażyna Kulczyk is now facing some major challenges, namely securing institutional stability to the entities she has created: the Muzeum Susch and her private collection of art. As much as the future of the Swiss museum will be most likely taken care of by the local government or one of the academic institutions affiliated with it on a regular basis, the future of the Collection as such does not seem certain. Piotr Rypson, the former Director of the National Museum in



12. Alina Szapocznikow, *Bellies* (1968?)

Warsaw, has observed that Grażyna Kulczyk *has created a phenomenal consistent collection, yet also skilfully placing Polish artists in an international context. Earlier we had only one similar case of encasing Polish artists within a broader more universal story of art: the collection of the Museum of Art in Łódź, created by artists themselves in the 1930s.*<sup>34</sup> Maybe thus the Grażyna Kulczyk Collection should become the core of the Museum of Modern Art being currently raised in Warsaw?

Andrzej Rottermund claims that one of the most important tasks of museums in Poland is to *minimize the civilizational gap distancing us from the developed countries of the EU.*<sup>35</sup> The Grażyna Kulczyk Collection, full of important and engaged works, breaking stereotypes and conventions, would perfectly serve this very purpose.

**Abstract:** Opened in January 2019, the Muzeum Susch crowned the collecting efforts of Grażyna Kulczyk, who, following her failed attempts at establishing a contemporary art Museum in Poznań and Warsaw, finally found home for her collection in a small Swiss village located between two Alps resorts: Sankt Moritz and Davos. The combination of both spectacular mountainous landscape and the edifices of an old convent into which the display has been built, as well as the site-specific art pieces, contribute to creating a peculiar

atmosphere of the place. Nature, architecture, and art have all merged into one total work here, namely into a contemporary Gesamtkunstwerk. Poland is echoed in the Museum: e.g. the genuine name of the institution: 'Muzeum Susch' is a combination of Polish and German words; furthermore, the pieces presented in the collection are to a great extent made up of works by contemporary Polish artists; wooden walls of the Museum Café are decorated with prints showing the Zakopane 'Under Fir Trees' (*Pod Jedlami*) Villa. The question whether Grażyna

Kulczyk's collection has found its final home here, or continues open. The collector herself does not provide whether it is still possible for it to return to Poland, an unambiguous answer to this.

**Keywords:** Grażyna Kulczyk, Muzeum Susch, contemporary art, private art collections, museum architecture.

## Endnotes

- <sup>1</sup> T.F. de Rosset, *O polskich kolekcjach artystycznych XX wieku* [On Polish Art Collections of the 20th Century], in: T.F. de Rosset, A. Kluczevska-Wójcik, A. Tołysz, *Kolekcjonerstwo polskie XX i XXI wieku. Szkice* [Polish Collecting in the 20th and 21st Centuries. Sketches], NIMOZ, Warszawa 2015, p. 254.
- <sup>2</sup> <http://www.artstationsfoundation5050.com/fundacja/o-fundacji/>
- <sup>3</sup> Including the 2008 ICSC Award for a cutting-edge shopping centre.
- <sup>4</sup> P. Sarzyński, *Niezwykłe kolekcje Grażyny Kulczyk* [Extraordinary Collections of Grażyna Kulczyk], 'Polityka' 8 April 2014.
- <sup>5</sup> P. Leszkowicz, *Wystawa sztuki z kolekcji Grażyny Kulczyk* [Art Exhibition from the Grażyna Kulczyk Collection], Culture.pl, March 2007.
- <sup>6</sup> E.g.: *Tadao Ando: Recent Project*, Y. Futugawa (ed.). ADA Editors, Tokyo 2009, P. Jodidio, Ando, Complete Works 1975-Today, Taschen 2018.
- <sup>7</sup> T. Żylski, *Szwajcaria – Polska 1:0* [Switzerland – Poland 1:0], in: *Muzeum sztuki Susch* [Susch Art Museum], 'Architektura' March 2019 (294), p. 38.
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- <sup>14</sup> K. Pomian, *Zbieracze osobliwości* [Collectors of Curiosities], *słowo/obraz terytoria*, Gdańsk 2012, p. 323.
- <sup>15</sup> See: A. Jasińska, A. Jasiński, *Nowa siedziba Muzeum Sztuki Amerykańskiej Whitney w Nowym Jorku* [New Building of the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York], *Muzealnictwo* 2018, No. 59, p. 177.
- <sup>16</sup> S. Szablowski, *Czarodziejskie góry, czyli sztuka lata wysoko* [Magic Mountains or Art Flies High], 'Przekrój' 22 March 2019 (3565).
- <sup>17</sup> The quoted words come from Grażyna Kulczyk's interview given to the Authors of the paper at the Muzeum Susch on 28 April 2019.
- <sup>18</sup> Chasper Schmidlin comes from the Engadin; his great-grandad was one of the founders of the famous Zuoz Lyceum Alpinum, while his great-grandma Selina Chönz, who lived in the hamlet of Guarda, wrote the most famous Swiss fairy tale for children titled *Schellen-Ursli*.
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- <sup>30</sup> <https://www.artnews.com/toc/2018-artnews-top-200-collectors/> [Accessed: 1 June 2019].
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- <sup>34</sup> Piotr Rypson talking to Piotr Sarzyński, *Państwo zaspalo* [The State Has Let the Chance Slip], 'Polityka' 15 May 2019, No. 20 (3210), p. 82.
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