

Katarzyna Kozera MFA

Jan Matejko Academy of Fine Arts, Cracow
Faculty of Graphic Arts

The title:

Society in the State of Emergency

Supervisor:

Agata Pankiewicz PhD
Professor of the Jan Matejko Academy of Fine Arts, Cracow

Reviewers:

Prof. Piotr Chojnacki, PhD
Prof. Andrzej Tobis, PhD

ABSTRACT

In my dissertation *Society in the State of Emergency*, I analyse public spaces in the small towns of Poland and document degraded areas where the elements of the urban tissue are often covered with large-format advertising, illegally raised structures or pseudo-architectural objects. Such areas are excluded, abandoned, often overgrown by greenery.

I'm particularly interested in the hidden meaning of such areas and how past events "recorded" there affect local communities. I posit the question in what way the history and tragic events during the World War II and the Holocaust left traces in the physical landscape and in the individual and collective memory of the inhabitants of those areas.

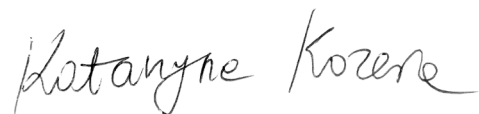
What is a memorial place and a memory of a place, how the past inscribed in public spaces influences the present and our transgenerational consciousness? Such places – filled with historical, cultural and personal meaning – awake strong emotions: anxiety, guilt, alienation, uncertainty.

Unawareness and lack of acknowledgement of history that "screams" in the spaces marked by the war trauma places us as a society in the state of emergency. By turning away from the past we lose touch with the reality – we can neither fully function in the present nor understand ourselves and the world that surrounds us.

Past events become surrounded by myths and local urban stories because our memory is constantly affected by transformation and deformation.

Balancing on the edge, these areas are constantly evolving sets of meanings which mirror our individual and collective attitude towards them and the way in which they are perceived.

On the one hand, they are immaterial testimonies of past events, on the other, they are literal traces and imprints, marked and ingrained in the landscape.



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