



Nicolas  
GrosPierre

The picture which grows





*The picture which grows*, series of 536 photographs and installation view, 2011

## The picture, which grows

*The Picture, which grows*, a project carried out in the apartment of photographer Tadeusz Suminski is an attempt to confront, in the shape of a photographic installation, the ideas of tidiness and untidiness, the static and the dynamic, order and entropy. It is also a clash of the order informing the archive of Tadeusz Suminski and a method aiming to disturb this order.

The project's origins are twofold. Inspired by Italo Calvino's *If on a winter's night a traveller*, I had long been interested in a certain formal concept for series of photographs, where each successive image in the series would result from the previous one and would even be impossible without it. This could be likened to the growth of a tree, where the leaves can't grow without branches and the branches without the trunk. In this perspective, we are facing a photograph equipped with an inner growth mechanism which causes it, quite literally, to grow.

In order to apply this idea in practice, I invented the following method: to photograph a room, print the image, hang it in the same room, take a picture again, hang the resulting image, and again and again, until the room would be completely filled with images of itself. Thanks to this method, I do create any new images beyond the original one. All the successive photographs exist potentially in the first one.

I had this formal concept in mind when Karolina Lewandowska asked me to perform a photographic intervention in the archive of Tadeusz Suminski. Walking around Suminski's apartment, I realised that the situation fit my idea perfectly well and would even add extra depth to it. Indeed, the order prevalent throughout the apartment, characteristic for places where archives are kept, would create a wonderful counterpoint for my concept, which in this perspective suddenly started resembling the mechanism of entropy. Achieving *The Picture, which grows* in the apartment of Tadeusz Suminski would be like sowing the seed of entropy in the motionless world of the archives of a late photographer. The order of a photographic archive overcome by photography itself.

Moreover, inspecting Suminski's photographic collection, I was fascinated by the particular attention he paid to composition and order in his photographs. This is not quick news photography, but very carefully arranged compositions, at times acquiring a virtually abstract formal quality: geometric figures, checkers, planes, circles. Those are the motifs I saw in Suminski's photography. The realisation made me very happy, because I realised that I'd be able to naturally include his arranged photographs in my project. The order of the archives and of the photographs themselves would be confronted with the entropic mechanism I'd trigger off in the very same room where those archives and photographs are kept.

The final result is twofold: an installation in the apartment of Tadeusz Suminski, comprising his archive and 536 photographs of the apartment, the archive, and my photographs of Suminski's photographs mounted on the walls, ceiling, and floor. The second result is, of course, the series of 536 photos itself. From this perspective, the project's form and content are absolutely intertwined and identical.

The project is open-ended: no conclusion is provided for because it is always possible to take one more photograph and add it to the installation, and so on, ad infinitum.



*The picture which grows*, details of the installation in Tadeusz Suminski's apartment, Warsaw, 2011.  
These three pictures display manifestations of three ideas put into practice in this work, namely : entropy, mise en abyme and mimicry.



*Kunstkamera #1*, 2009, Lambda D print, 100 x 200 cm

*Kunstkamera* is a photographic installation consisting in an imaginary collection of photographs, shown in an especially designed hexagonal room, and creating a visual and intellectual game for the viewer.

The title, *Kunstkamera*, refers on the one hand to the “Wunderkammer” and “Kunstammer” of the Renaissance: cabinets of curiosities and art, typologies of extraordinary exhibits aiming at showing the world in miniature. On the other hand, the Kunstammers were also paintings representing these very cabinets, where the painter would include hidden meanings only readable by the initiated.

The *Kunstkamera* installation contains both the collection of curiosities, in the form of various photographs, and the photograph representing the collection, thus creating a *mise en abyme*, with the photograph of the collection inside the collection, which is itself represented in a photograph, and so on.

Practically, the installation consists of a hexagonal room, with two entrances opposite each other. The room is thus divided in two: the photographs are symmetrically organised with respect the line created by the two entrances. Each half room contains two side walls, on which are hanging the photographs of the collection, and a central wall displaying the image representing the room itself.

The game begins when the viewer gets acquainted with the photographs, the way they are organised on the walls, and what they represent. As in the “kunstammer” of old, this one contains all sorts of visual and narrative riddles. The topics of the photographs are the keys to these riddles. On the one hand they refer to tradition of the “kunstammer”, the very

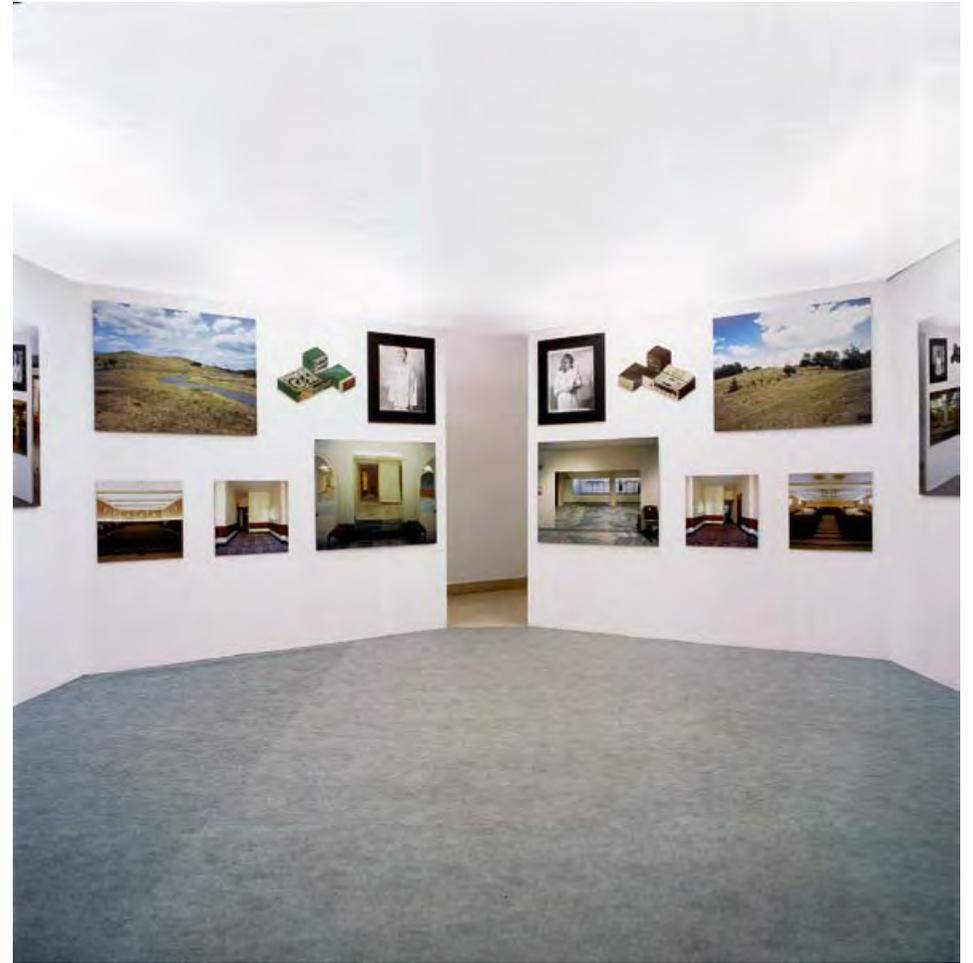
fact of collecting, and the narcissistic obsessions related to it.

On the other hand, they refer to my own private obsessions as a photographer: my tendency to create symmetries and repetitions, and to use a creative instrument which I felt prisoner of, which is the idea of series in photography. The very fact of taking pictures in series is a form of collecting and also an obsession, and *Kunstkamera* is an attempt to embody this idea of series in photography, and ultimately exceed it. That is the reason why the central photograph representing the collection shows different images than those physically hanging on the walls: these are all series whose subsequent images appear only in the *mise en abyme* of the central photograph.

A final and invisible motif consists in that most of the photographs are hoaxes, either visual (what they show is impossible) or narrative (the description I give them is false). Mystification, through digital manipulation, has indeed become an integral part of photography today, and it seemed necessary to me to include some in *Kunstkamera*, as ultimate riddles for the viewer to discover.



Panoramic installation view



Installation views at the Centre for Contemporary Art, Warsaw, September 2009

## Kunstkamera - examples of photographic series



*Collection series, 80 x 100 cm, 2008-2009*

*Air collection.* It is the work of a man who, during all his life, took samples of air of the towns in which he was travelling. This man (who prefers to remain anonymous), was a civil engineer, and his collection shows that during his early career he had the opportunity to travel in the countries of the former COMECON. Only in recent years did he have the possibility to visit countries considered as classic tourist destinations.



*Doubles collection.* Mr. Marzewski, Polish language schoolteacher at the Stefan Batory high school has assembled an apparently impossible collection: natural doubles. The different natural realms are represented: mineral, vegetal, animal, and Marzewski has managed to find perfect doppelgangers, identical doubles. One cannot but notice that if Marzewski was lucky in his endeavour, his naming of his findings is much closer to poetry than to a true typology.

# Kunstkamera - examples of photographic series



*Americana* series, 40 x 60 cm, 1950's (anonymous)

*Scientifica* series, 40 x 60 cm, 2009



*Mirrors series, 80 x 100 cm, 2009*

*Vedute series, 80 x 100 cm, 2009*

# The Library



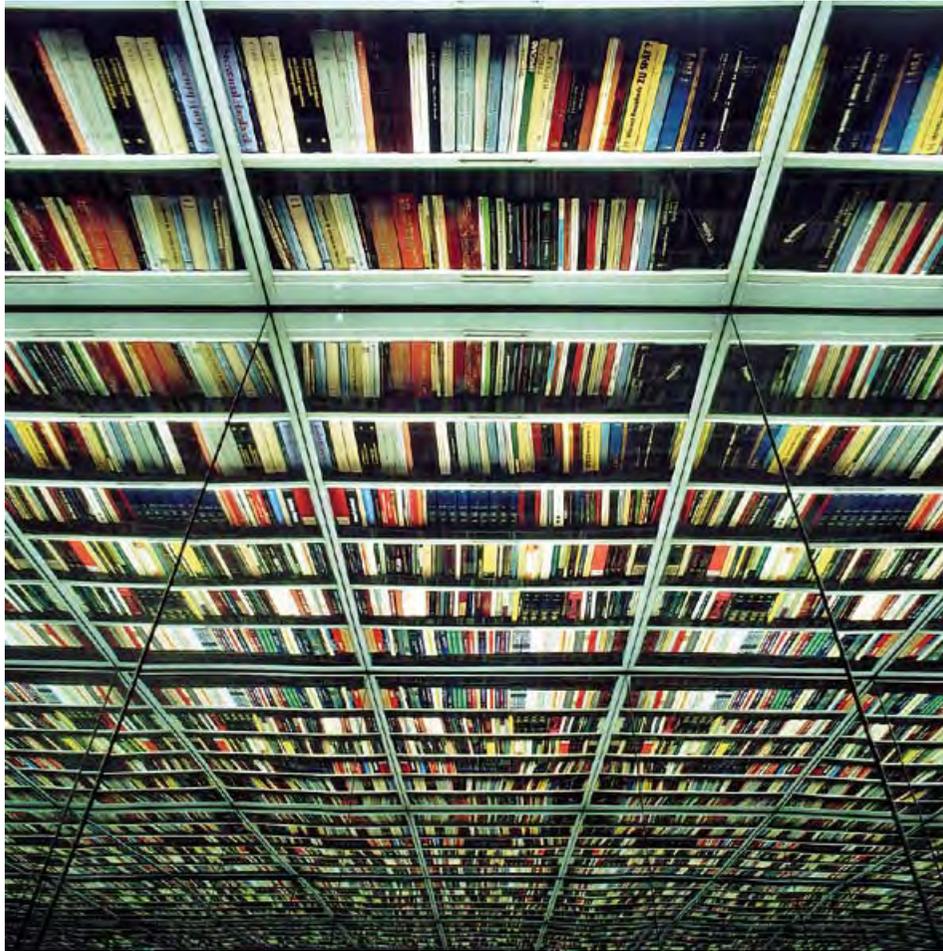
## *Never-ending corridor*

Lambda D-prints in light boxes and mirrors, 2006

160 x 130 x 95 cm

The *Library* project is not the representation of a specific library, but rather an attempt at representing the very essence of the idea of a library. It is loosely inspired by Jorge Luis Borges' novel *The Library of Babel*, where the author describes the universe as an "infinite and cyclic" library. The project is thus an attempt at showing, through a photographic installation, the library as an infinite gathering of books, but that can be contained in a single book.





*Never-ending wall of books*

Lambda D-prints in light boxes and mirrors, 2006

160 x 130 x 95 cm

The Library project is made out of several pieces, the two major ones being the *never-ending corridor*, and the *never-ending wall of books*. Each of these pieces is a large photographic installation made out of light boxes inserted in a system of mirrors, mimicking in this way the limitlessness of the library.



# The Library



## *Library Building*

Photographic object, 2006.

Lambda D-prints on a plexiglass lightbox

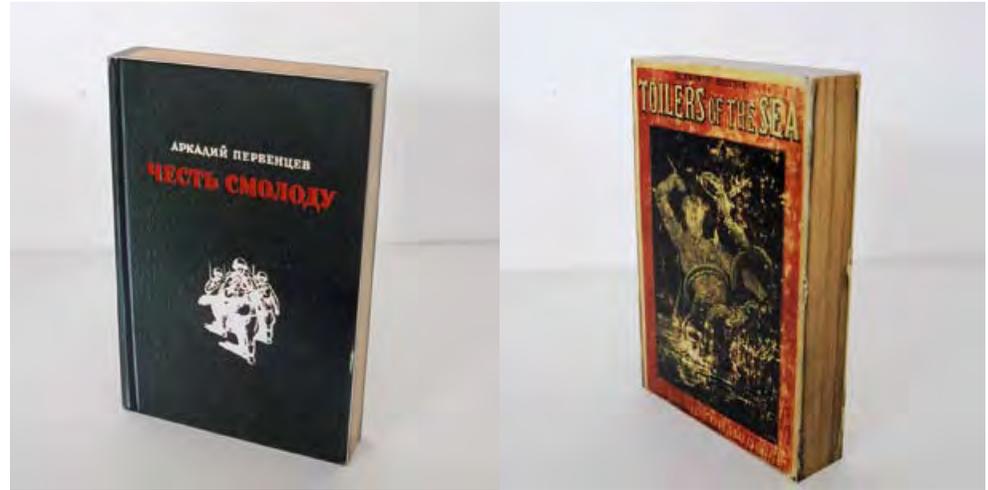
85 x 40 x 20 cm

The *Library Building* is a miniature of an imaginary library, displaying in a double sided plexiglass lightbox the different parts of a library : catalogue rooms, reading rooms, corridors, and of course the book depot.



Life size photograph of bookshelves hidden among real books

The *library* project displayed a number of traps for the viewer. As seen above, life-size photographs of bookshelves were placed on the site of the installation (Warsaw's largest antiquarian bookshop), as well as fake books (photographs glued on rigid cardboard) were hidden among real books.



Examples of fake books

All pales before the book



*All Pales before the book*, photograph, 20x30 cm, 2011



The installation entitled *All pales before the book* is the result of chance, but maybe also of necessity.

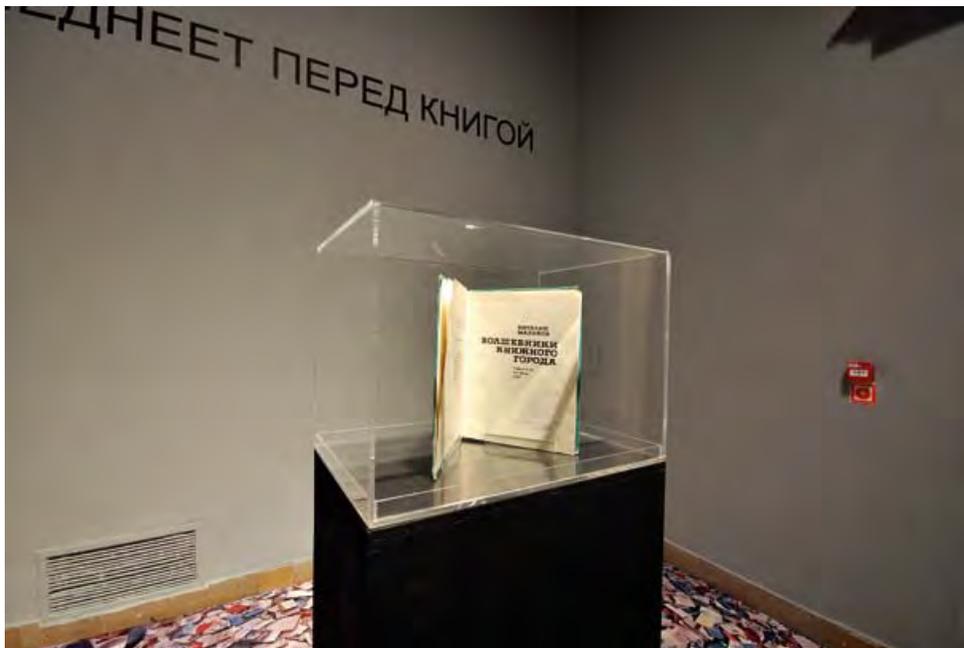
Traveling across the Kaliningrad district, in order to photograph ruined German churches, I found myself, by chance, in a small village where stood a small school. From the outside, the building looked absolutely normal. It so happened that it was in fact abandoned, and its interiors thoroughly ruined by vandals. The height of devastation was reached in the school library, where all the books had been thrown from their shelves on the floor, creating a 20 cm thick layer of books onto which one could not not walk. Saddening sight. The irony of this whole situation was the fact that I found, among the hundreds of volumes laying on the floor, a book entitled *Enchanters of the City of Books*, a children's tale about the workers of a printing house, "heroes of our times", the people that actually make books. I salvaged this one book, and placed it at the centre of this installation which reproduces this devastated library.

*All Pales before the book*, photographs, 20x30 cm, 2011

All pales before the book



*All Pales before the book*, installation view at the Centre for Contemporary Arts, Warsaw, 2011



*All Pales before the book*, installation view at the Centre for Contemporary Arts, Warsaw, 2011

# The Bank

*The Bank* is a photographic installation which plays with the idea of the financial institution, where the bank stands as a metaphor of wealth, and more generally, all material things.

*The Bank's* key driving ideas are the following : on the one hand, that one is always drawn to what is hidden and concealed, and that one always wants to discover what is behind closed doors. And on the other hand, that appearances may be deceiving.

Practically, the installation consists of series of photographs and of photographic objects which are designed to tickle the viewer's curiosity and try to discover what is hidden behind the innumerable doors of *the Bank*.

Formally, *the Bank* is organised on three sets of elements.

First, the viewer is confronted with photographs of deserted and disused New York banks interiors.

Second, the viewer enters the vault, which is made out of 10 life size photographs of safe deposit boxes. There are approximately 2000 safe deposit boxes represented in this vault, each one with a number. The numbering of the safe deposit boxes hide a secret message, invisible at first sight, that the viewer is invited to decipher.

Third, and finally, the viewer is confronted with the Safe, at the core of the installation. It is a photographic object representing a life size bank safe, whose doors may be opened.

Metaphorically, *the Bank* is an attempt at tackling the finiteness and illusory character of all material things. Once all doors have been opened, the viewer may well realise that there really is nothing to be found.



Safe deposit boxes 5-I  
Photographic wallpaper, 2009, 100 x 200 cm.

*Safe deposit boxes 3-1 (detail)*  
Photographic wallpaper, 2009, 100 x 200 cm.

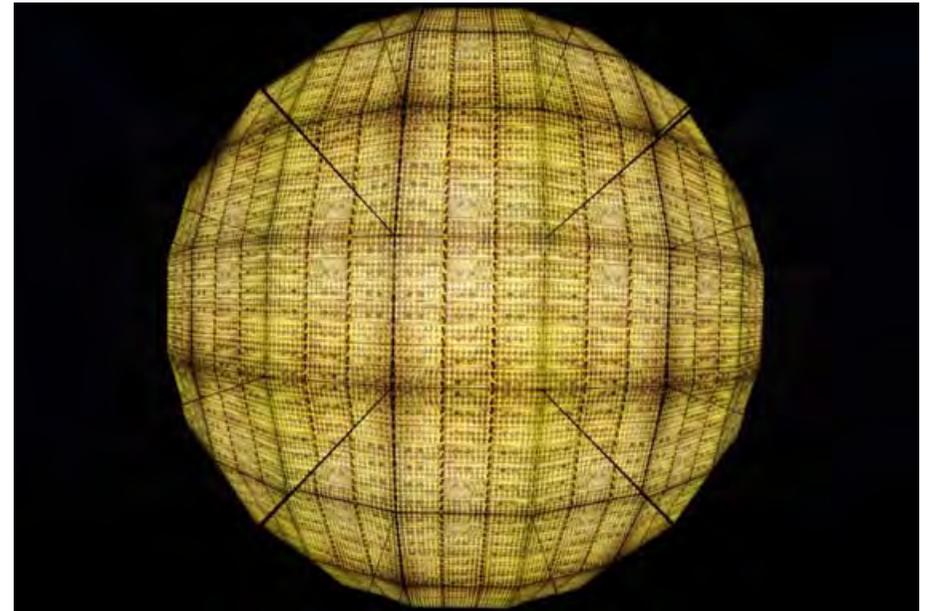




*The Vault* (installation view at BWA Warszawa, 2011)



*The Safe* (installation view, doors closed)



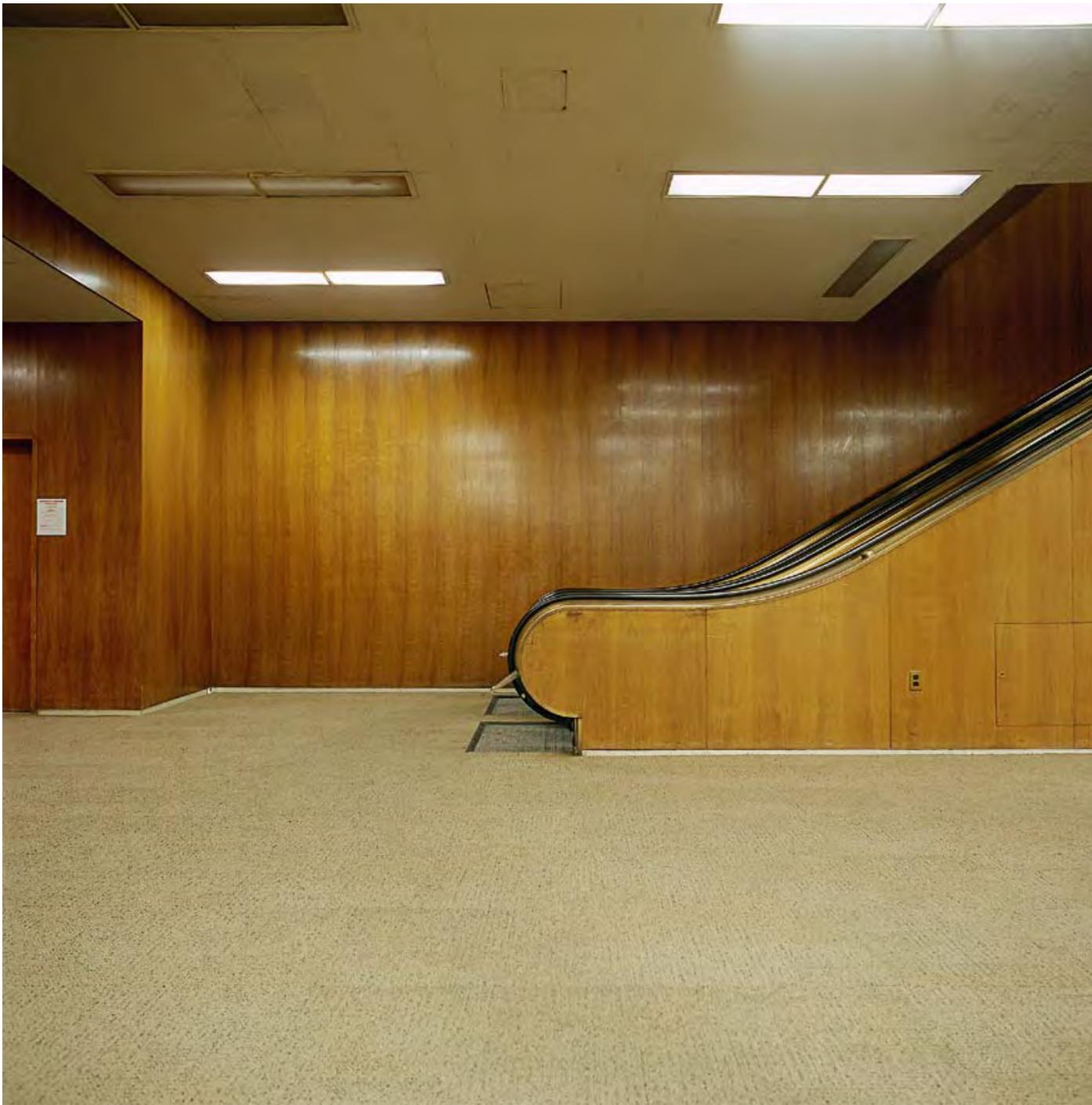
*The Safe* (interior)

Photographic object, Lambda D-prints on aluminium, lamps, mirrors, 2009, 70 x 70 x 90 cm.



*The Safe* (installation view, doors opened)

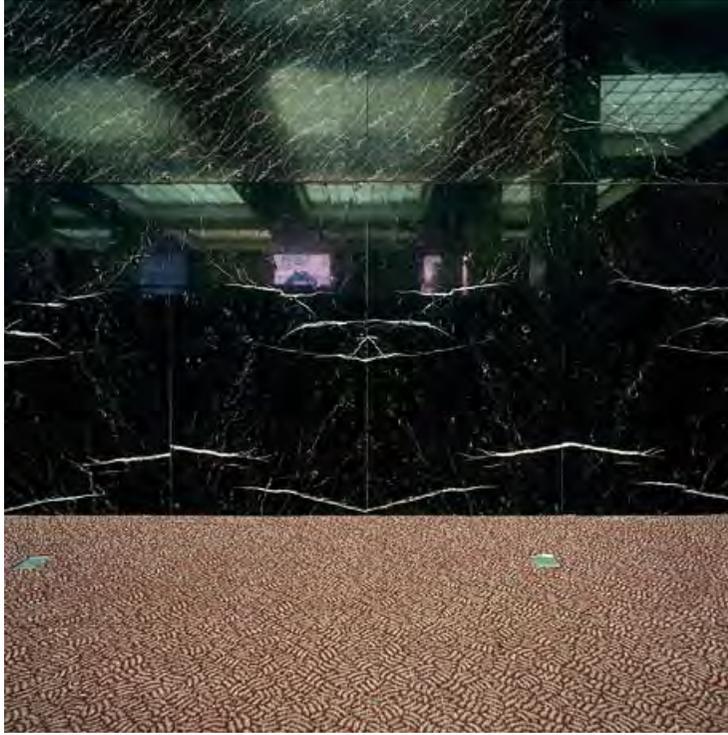
The *Safe* constitutes the core of the *Bank* installation. From the outside, it looks like a massive bank safe, life size. Its doors may nevertheless be opened. Its inside hides a structure made out of safe deposit boxes, which appears actually larger than the safe that contains it.



*Banks, #1*  
Lambda D Print on wood, 2009, 50 x 50 cm.

*Banks, #4*

Lambda D Print on wood, 2009, 50 x 50 cm. .



*Banks, #7*

Lambda D Print on wood, 2009, 50 x 50 cm.



*Banks, #3*

Lambda D Print on wood, 2009, 50 x 50 cm.



The photographs of deserted and disused New York bank interiors stand as a mute comment to the installation.

## Mausoleum (with Olga Mokrzycka)



In the *Mausoleum*, Groszpiere and Mokrzycka reproduced on a life-size scale the private collection of stuffed animals of Nugzar Dzanishia, who shot them and stuffed them all by himself. More precisely, this collection of 700 animals is the only “living” space of a huge cultural and commercial complex of the 1970’s, now abandoned under the Republic Square in Tblisi, Georgia.

Groszpiere and Mokrzycka then transferred this photographic frieze in the abandoned underground club-lounge below the Tribune at the foot of the Palace of Culture in Warsaw, where the Communist dignitaries used to assist at the military parades on May 1st.

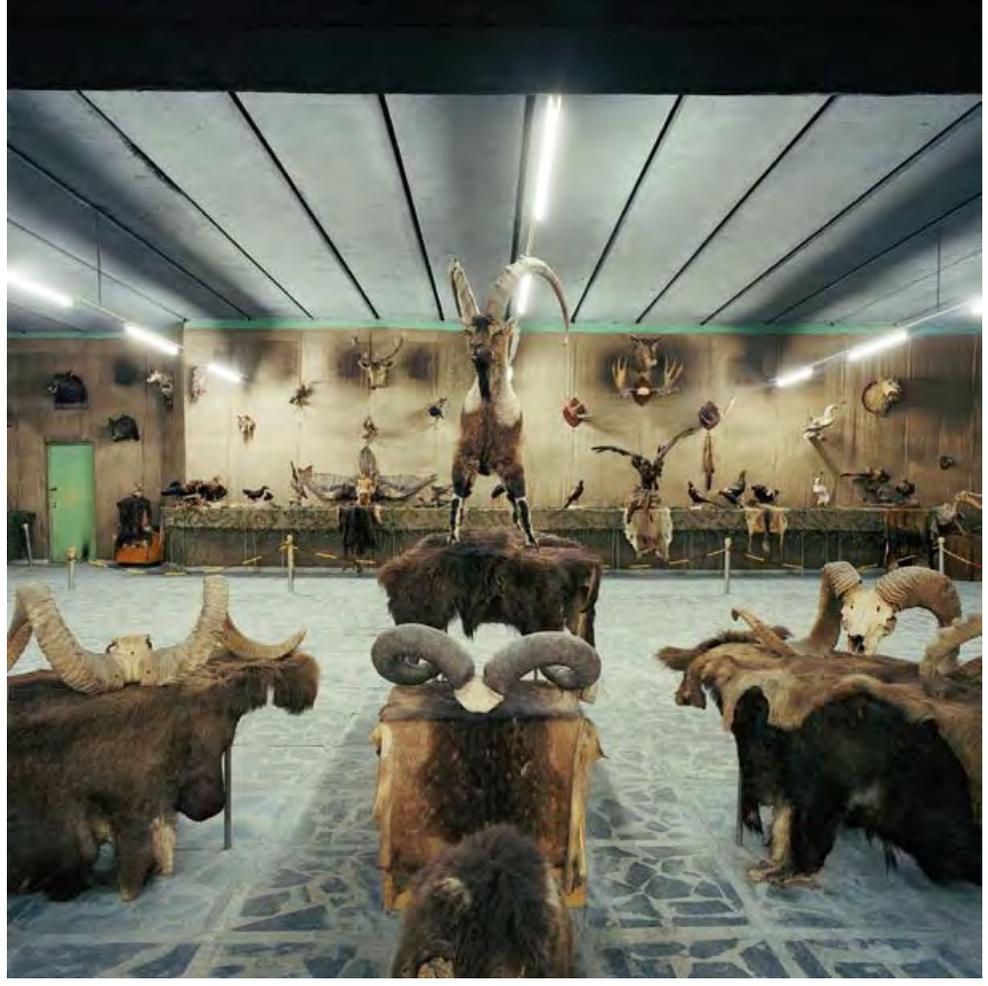
The 10 metre long frieze takes us not only to another place, but also back in



time. It is a reference to the wunderkammer of old, but also to the time when propaganda kept hidden what was happening in real life. In this way the stuffed animals, placed in the social realistic interiors of the Tribune are relics of a past, which, not without any reason, is currently being buried.

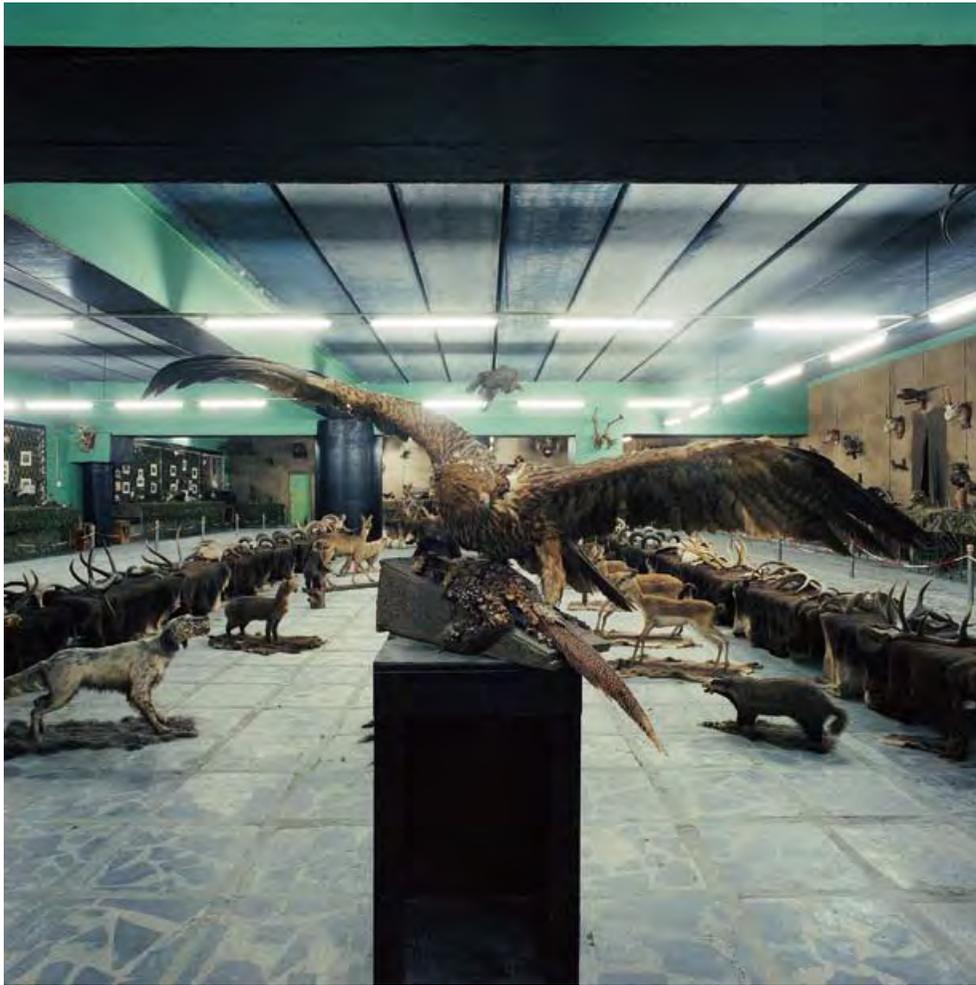


The commercial complex housing *Animal's World*, Tbilisi



Inside view of *Animal's World*, Tbilisi





Inside view of *Animal's World*, Tbilisi



Nugzar Dzanishia's office desk, *Animal's World*, Tbilisi

Frieze, 2007, Lambda D-print, 100 x 1000 cm.



# Mausoleum (with Olga Mokrzycka)



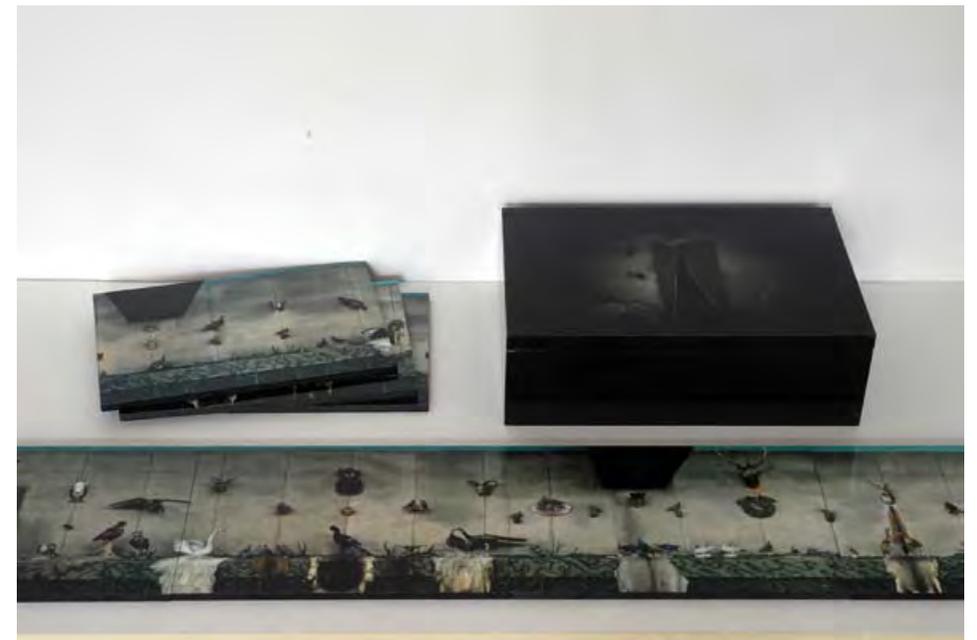
Views of the installation inside the Palace of Culture Tribune



Exterior view of the Palace of Culture Tribune



Box, 2007, Lambda D-print on wooden box, 27 x 15 x 5 cm



# The Self-Fulfilling Image



*The Self-fulfilling Image*, Lambda D-print, 110 x 210 cm, 2009.



*The Self-fulfilling Image*, documentation of the actual opening. Cueto Project, New York, June 2009

*The Self-fulfilling Image* aims to create a photograph that is both the result and the cause of its own existence, bringing to life this photograph through a performance. Conceptually, the project takes its cue from the idea of the “self-fulfilling prophecy,” which creates the conditions that makes it become true. At the same time, this photograph takes its inspiration from the “one image story” in the manner of the Renaissance tradition depicting different sequences of the lives of Biblical figures as a visual narrative for a complete story.

*The Self-fulfilling Image* merges both propositions into single project: a large photograph placed into a specific venue and brought to life through a performance. The “hero” of the photograph is the artist, Nicolas Groszpiere. *The Self-fulfilling Image* appears at first glance like a simple urban landscape photograph, but is in fact an intellectual game and a commentary on his own situation as an artist in New York.

The photograph depicts a wide-angle landscape of a street of Chelsea seen from a bird’s eye view. Chelsea as the heart of the NY art scene. In the first sequence, Nicolas Groszpiere is seen walking in the street carrying a huge framed photograph. This photograph is the same one that the viewer is looking at, and which is currently

being described. In a second sequence, further down the street, the artist is meeting with someone, a gallerist, to whom he is presenting the photograph. The third sequence represents the opening of Nicolas Groszpiere’s exhibition in a gallery: the photograph hangs on a wall of the space, and Nicolas is in discussion with a person, possibly the gallerist. And, finally, in one of the windows of the street buildings, one can distinguish a reflection of a person taking a photograph from the other side of the street: it is the artist taking the picture.

The performance is what is actually happening in the third sequence of the photograph, i.e. a real opening of a show, in a Chelsea gallery, with the actual photograph hanging on the wall of the gallery where it is seen hanging in the picture. The actors of the performance are the viewers that came to the opening: they are part of the picture which they are looking at.



*The Self-fulfilling Image*, detail.

# The Glass Trap



The Ciech building in Warsaw, March 2010, a few months prior to its demolition.

In the heart of a deserted office building, Nicolas Groszpiere has recreated a dreamlike winter garden. For a few days, before the picturesque, glass and metal structure is destroyed, the artist has devised in its core an illusory and infinite space. *The Glass Trap* is an attempt at capturing the fleeting soul of a soc-modernist pyramid placed on its head.

*The Glass Trap* is a premiere for Nicolas Groszpiere inasmuch as he has willingly put aside his primary medium, photography, to create a living picture. The extraordinary, illusory winter garden set inside an abandoned 1980's office building that will shortly be destroyed is a typical site specific installation inspired by the venue, and imagined as an addendum to its history. The glass cube filled with plants is the only living element in a building destined for destruction. The installation is at the same time a kind of mental emergency exit, but also as an amazing kaleidoscope opening in front of the very eyes of the viewer an endless space full of vegetation, in the heart of a massive but absurd (because built upside down) pyramid.

Groszpiere finds once again some potential in a meaningful but abandoned and forgotten place, in this way filling up the alternative topography of the city with yet another unsuspected and surprising situation. The meaning and great strength of the artist's practice lies in his ability to get under the city's skin and emphasising the idea that a significant aspect of the city is also the space hidden behind the enigmatic facades of the buildings. In this way, Groszpiere expands the notion of public space, immersing in an urban game not only us, viewers, but also intimate office spaces, libraries, and administrations.



*The Glass Trap*, installation view at the Ciech building in Warsaw, 2010.

# The Glass Trap



The winter garden of the Ciech building, prior to Nicolas Groszpiere's intervention.



*The Glass Trap*, installation view at the Ciech building in Warsaw, 2010.



*The Glass Trap*, details of the installation in the Ciech building in Warsaw, 2010.



# Concrete Jungle



Installation view

The *Concrete Jungle* installation is an attempt at bringing to life one of my favourite sights, that of plants growing behind windows, usually in staircases or halls of concrete blocks, and seen at night. They always were some kind of living and comforting sight in an overall mineral and aggressive environment.

I always thought of it as a splendid subject to photograph. However, as I was thinking about a way of achieving such photographs, it appeared that the sensuality of living plants was so great that I could not resist the urge of using one, and creating the adequate living conditions in a miniature and claustrophobic concrete block.

In parallel, the plant is presented on a photograph, artificial copy of a living organism. Therefore, the photograph will remind of how the plant looked like when it was originally installed in its new home, when the real plant will be all but dry leaves.

NG

## Addendum

While doing research on greenhouses, I read that 19th century British socialists hated the Crystal Palace (the largest greenhouse ever built, destroyed in the 1930's), because the attraction it created was so huge it distracted the working classes from making the revolution. Astonishing as this information was, it came as no surprise to me.



*Concrete Jungle*

Bio-photographic installation.

Concrete, wood, glass, lamps, earth, various plants, Lambda D-print in lightbox,  
2008, 70 x 70 x 60 cm.

# The Glass House

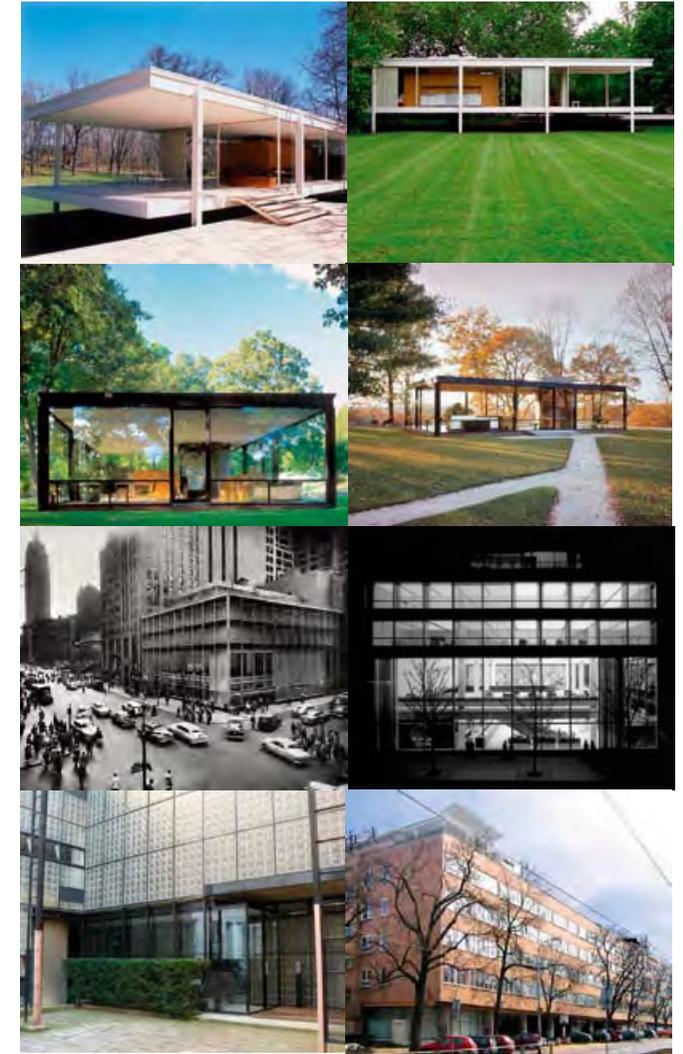


The *Glass House* has two distinct and yet somewhat similar inspirations.

First, I had been interested in the facade of the Polish National Bank, seen at night, and especially its windows, which showed the most exuberant and diverse display of plants. It looks like an extraordinary burst of green life, brought and kept to life in an austere and brutal environment.

Second, I found the idea of the Glass House, in 20th century architecture theory and practice, very attractive. To me it summed up the beauty and utopian character of modernism. On the one hand, it was an idea progressive and dystopian at the same time : glass thought as a way to improve humanity's living conditions, but also as a means to control it. On the other hand, all modern buildings nicknamed "glass houses", were nearly always thought of as great architectural achievements, but impossible to live in.

The *Glass House* merges these two inspirations into a single photographic piece.



Glass Houses in modern architecture (from top to bottom and left to right) :

*Farnsworth House*, Mies Van der Rohe, 1951, Plano, IL.

*Glass house*, Philip Johnson, 1949, New Canaan, CT.

*Manufacturer's Hanover Trust*, Gordon Bunshaft, 1954, NYC.

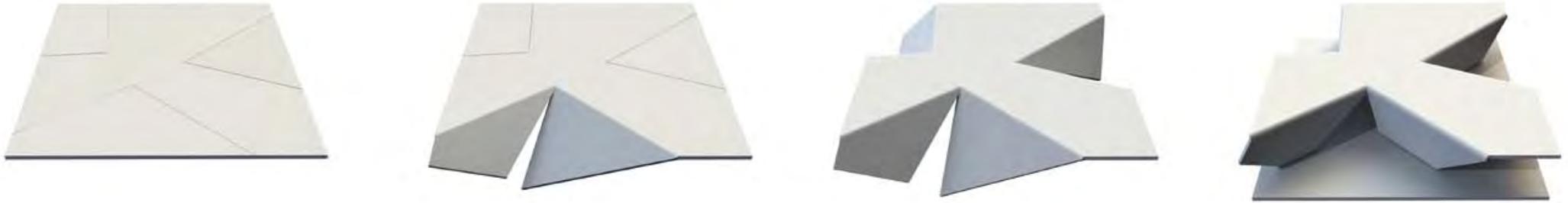
*Maison de verre*, Pierre Chareau, 1932, Paris.

*Szkelany dom*, Juliusz Zórawski, 1937, Warszawa.



*The Glass House*  
Lambda D-prints in lightboxes, lamps, aluminium, 2009, 90 x 90 x 50 cm.

# Paper Planes



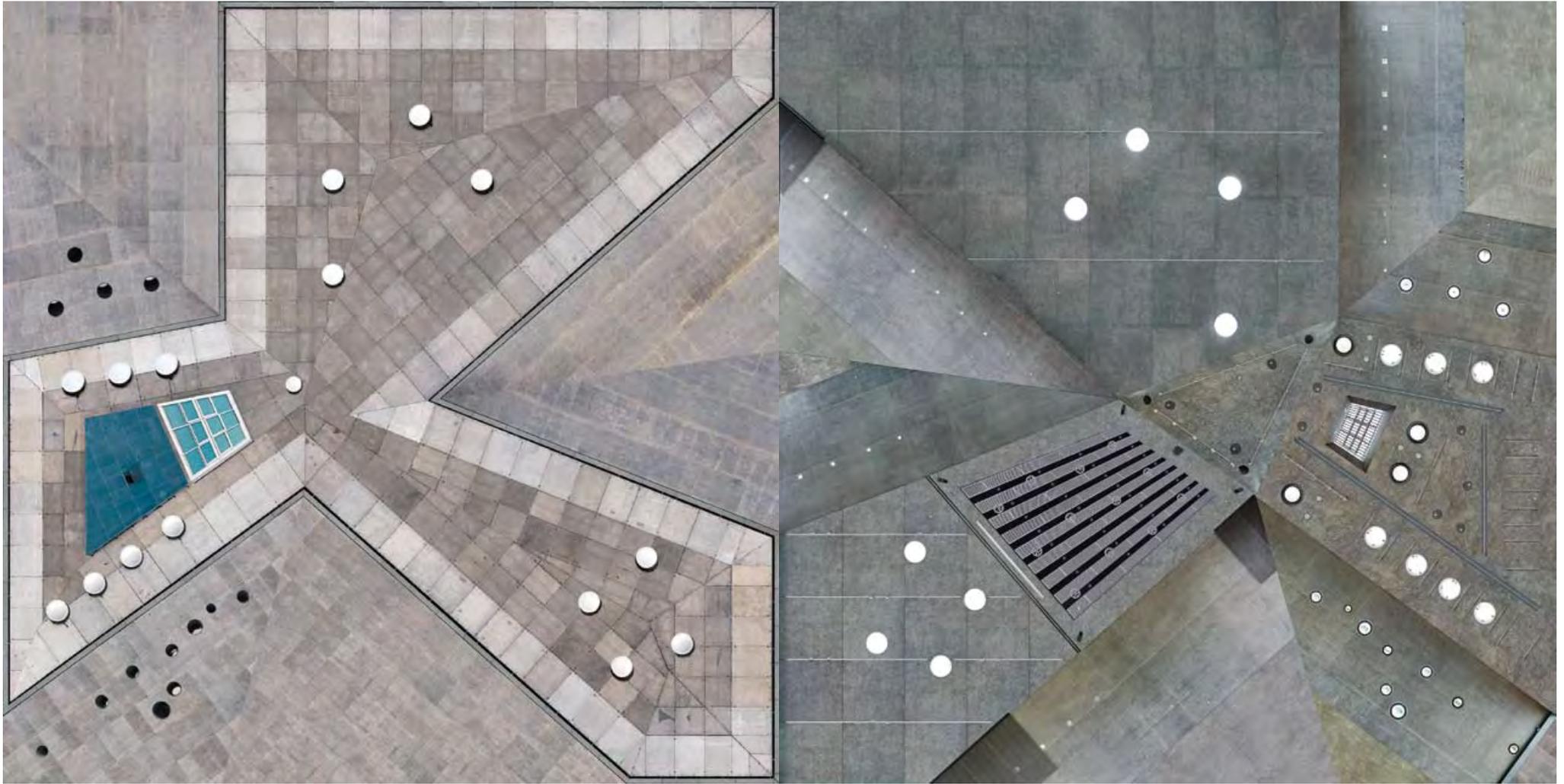
Polish Aviation Museum design. Justus Pysall architekten, 2010

The exhibition's starting point was the Polish Aviation in Cracow, designed in 2010 by the Berlin architect Justus Pysall, in partnership with ARUP. Paper Planes was inspired by this building, and is an interpretation of it, its origin, its function and its form. The work was initiated with the acknowledgment that a) the building was designed as if it was made as an origami, a paper cut-out from a square area, and b) that the end result is a shape that looks at the same time like a gigantic aircraft propeller or a flying wing, both shapes associated with the idea of flight. Groszpiere's process in this exhibition was two-fold. First, it consisted of photographing all the actual building's surfaces (concrete walls, rooftop, windows and floors) to "recreate" the original square out of which the building was cut-out. It is thus the reverse track that led to the actual building: going from the real material and photographing it to produce the original square that was used to create the museum's design. Second, using the obtained square as an imaginary piece of paper, printing this square on photographic paper and creating real paper planes out of it. The end result of the work consisted of 2 sets of photographs and photographic objects:

- 1) photographs of the museum, showing its transformation from an architectural design into the original square
- 2) 5 different paper airplanes, all made out of the double-sided photograph which represents the flattened out building.



Axonometric views of the Polish Aviation Museum, showing the three phases of its flattening out. Lambda D-Print, 80x100 cm, 2011.



Flattened out views of the Polish Aviation Museum. Exteriors and Interiors  
Double sided photograph, 150x150 cm, 2011.

# Paper Planes



*Paper Planes*, installation view at Phase 2 ARUP, London, 2011



*Paper Planes*, installation views at Phase 2 ARUP, London, 2011

The Revolution eats its own...



*The Revolution eats its own...* is a site specific piece commissioned to celebrate the 21th anniversary of the first free elections of June 1989 in Poland.

The piece was located in the historic printing house *Dom Słowa Polskiego*, which in the 1950's printed communist propaganda, and in the early 1990's the first non-communist newspaper *Gazeta Wyborcza*. However, with the economic changes that occurred in Poland after 1989, this printing house has been shut down, as the value of its site being far greater than itself, and a new office complex will take its place.

*The Revolution eats its*

*own...* is a visual and photographic comment to this situation. Georg Büchner said that a revolution is like Saturn, it devours its own children, and it seems the capitalist one is no exception to that rule. The printing house is currently in the process of selling all its assets, be it its land, walls, or machines. In a way, it has been a victim of its own activity, as it is the freedom (be it political, but also economic), that it has promoted (with the printing of *Gazeta Wyborcza*), that has led to its demise.

I have chosen to photograph different parts of the printing house : machines, furniture, walls, and present them as three-dimensional objects that actually look like books, from a distance. They are displayed in an exhibition cabinet that was used to show the printing house's products, since it seems that they are the few remaining things that the printing house is capable of producing.



Installation views at the Dom Słowa Polskiego, Warsaw, June 2010



Details of the installation.



Examples of photographic artworks.





The *Embassy* project is a semi-fictional semi-documentary series of photographs of an embassy of an Eastern European country of the former COMECON. The photographs were indeed all taken in a real Eastern European unused embassy, however it has been chosen to modify slightly some of them, in order to produce confusion in the viewer's mind as to whether what he is watching is true or not. The viewer is thus invited in a slightly Kafkaesque journey through empty offices which become more and more claustrophobic and unreal. In a reference to the Cold War diplomatic habits of manipulation, as well as to the former soviet bloc's use of photomontage, these photographs are seemingly documentary, ergo objective, whereas in reality the viewer will never know if what he sees is true or not, truthful or manipulated.

*The Embassy*, 2008, series of 17 photographs, Lambda D-print on wood, 65 x 65 cm, 65 x 85 cm, 65 x 100 cm and 65 x 170 cm.



# The Embassy





*The Embassy*

series of 17 photographs, Lambda D-print on wood, 2008, 65 x 65 cm, 65 x 85 cm, 65 x 100 cm and 65 x 170 cm.



*K-Pool*  
Lambda D-print on aluminium, 2011, 80x 195 cm.

Rem Koolhaas, in *Delirious New York*, ends his book by an imaginary tale about Russian avant-garde architects, who escaped the Soviet Union to reach New York. The decision to escape the USSR was made in the 1930's, and the means of transportation was a floating swimming pool, which, when all the architects were swimming synchronically, would move in the opposite direction. Thus, swimming towards Moscow, they only reached Manhattan in the mid-1970's. Unfortunately for them, the Manhattan of the 70's had little to do from what they had dreamed of at the onset of their journey. It is this moving, wonderful and absurd endeavor that inspired me to create K-Pool. K-Pool stands for Koscisuko Pool, an open air swimming pool in Brooklyn, NY (built in 1958-60 by Morris Lapidus), whose intricate design and incredible shapes I used to re-create Rem Koolhaas' vision.

K-Pool i Spólka (which could be translated as "K-Pool and company"), juxtaposes this imaginary swimming pool with real achievements of Soviet Union architects, the very colleagues of those who decided to flee the USSR. While these were swimming, back home, they were erecting astonishing buildings. But also swimming pools, which now, for the majority of them, rest unused, as a final irony to this visual journey.

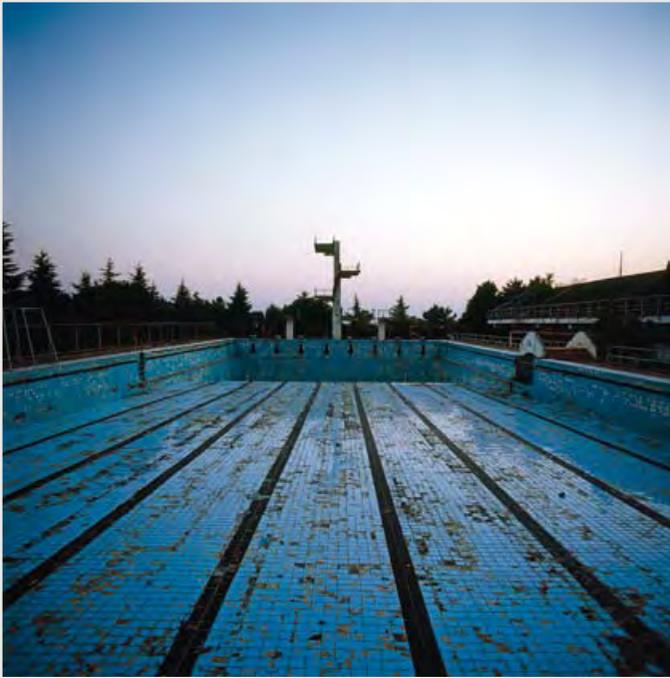


Installation views at PF Gallery, Poznan, 2011

# K-Pool i Spólka



*K-Pool i Spólka*  
series of 13 photographs, Lambda D-print on wood, 2004-2010



## W-70

The context of the *W-70* project was the *Concrete Legacy* exhibition at the CCA in Warsaw in June 2007, which “focused on concrete block housing as one of the gravest consequences of Modernist architectural thought”, and its embodiment in Poland.

The W-70 system was the most popular prefabricated multi-storey home system in Poland during the 1970s. The first step of the *W-70* project consisted in photographing approximately 4000 pictures of different elements of this system, in order to be able to re-assemble them later according to one’s will.

Using the photographed prefabricated modules as “raw material”, the second step of the *W-70* project consisted in creating visual and spatial situations where the viewer could appreciate the concrete block houses from different perspectives (literally and metaphorically).

I have indeed been fascinated for long years by concrete block houses and in this project I wanted to convey this fascination, either using some visual properties of perspective (as a reference to the tradition which lead to the Modernist school of architecture), or confronted the viewer with unusual architectural situation. In this way, I tried to achieve pieces that would amuse and intrigue the viewer, and maybe make him look at the modern block houses differently.



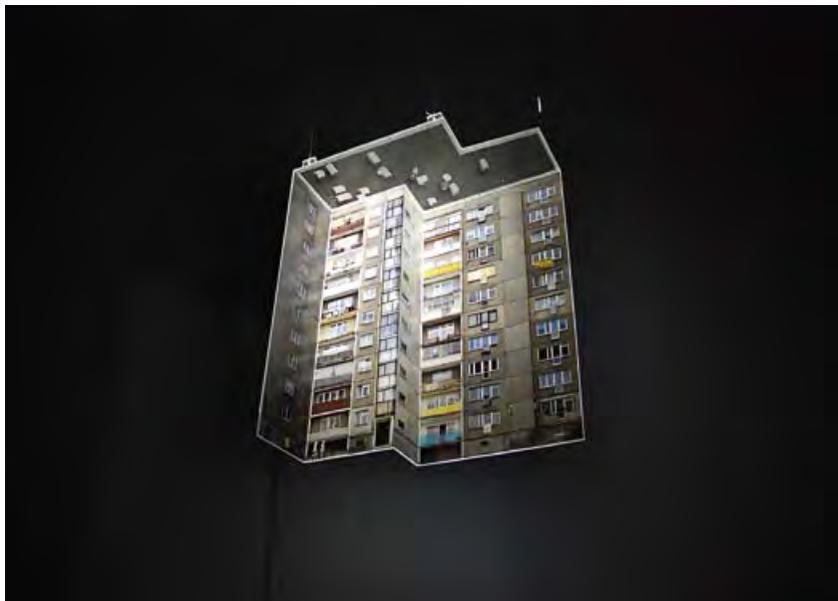


Examples of construction modules of the W-70 and Zory prefabricated systems.





*3d -> 2d.*  
 Anamorphic photographic wallpaper, 2007, 210 x 250 x 150 cm



*3d -> 4d.*  
 Axionometric photographic object, 2007, Lambda D-print in plexiglass  
 light box, 60 x 80 x 25 cm



*Monolith.*  
 Photographic object,  
 photographic wallpaper on wood, 2007,  
 250 x 120 x 20 cm.

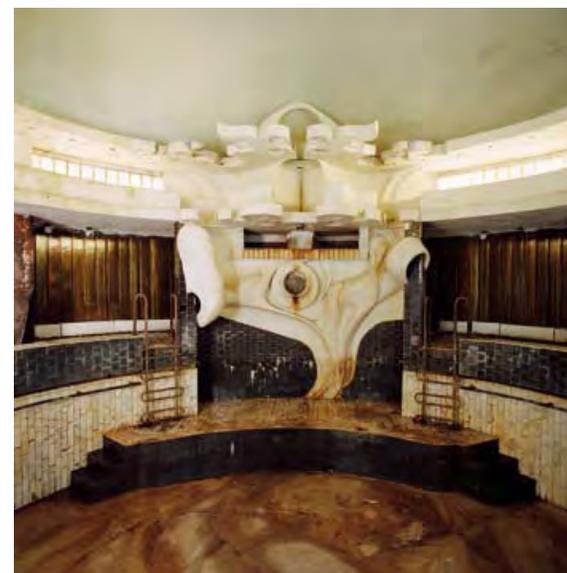


*Zory*  
Photographic wallpaper, 2007, 280 x 195 cm.



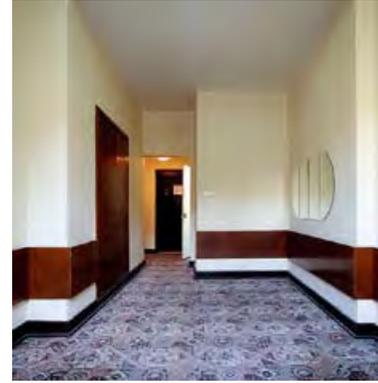
*Axonometric Housing Bloc (Manhattan)*  
Lambda D-print cast in plexiglass, 2008, 100 x 140 cm.





The balneological hospital of Druskinnikiai in Lithuania, designed by A. and R. Silinskas was built in 1976-81. Having served for merely 20 years, it was shut down and destroyed in 2005, to be replaced by a (probably more) profitable water-amusement park. *Hydroklinika* is an attempt at documenting the hospital through a global, objective and systematic approach. Therefore, no part of the building, was neglected and all were photographed likewise. *Hydroklinika*, 2004, series of 32 photographs, Lambda D-print on wood, 50 x 50 cm.





The Europejski Hotel is one of Warsaw's Palace hotels. Built in the 1870s, and left almost untouched by the war, it was nationalised by the communist regime and remained then one of the most prestigious hotels belonging to the Tourism State Company, Orbis. It was only in 2005 that the former owners of the hotel, the Potocki family, were given it back. The hotel currently awaits renovation, since the verdict reprivatising the Hotel stated that it could not be used as a hotel until 2008. However, before handing back the hotel to the Potockis, the Orbis Corporation took away all of the furniture and interior decoration it could possibly take. The Hotel is thus at the moment an empty shell, with all of its rooms unused.

The *Hotel Europejski* project is a systematic inventory of the hotel rooms. All of the photographs were framed and shot likewise. In this way, one may easily notice that there are only three variables in the very sober decoration of the rooms: the carpet, the general arrangement of the walls, and the ceiling height. And yet it seems there are countless possible combinations, since although it is difficult to distinguish one room from the other, they are in fact all different.

*Hotel Europejski*, 2006  
series of 28 photographs,  
Lambda D-print on aluminium, 50 x 50 cm.

# Milk Bars





The milk bars are a network of low cost restaurants, spread all over Poland. Created at the end of the '50s and belonging then to the State, milk bars were largely privatised after 1989, but remain partly state financed today. In this way, milk bars continue to be places where people with little money may eat well, at a low cost. Their name comes from the fact that no alcohol is sold at milk bars. Since the beginning of the 2000s, milk bars have received heavy competition from western style fast-food restaurants, and consequently they have started to disappear, one after the other.

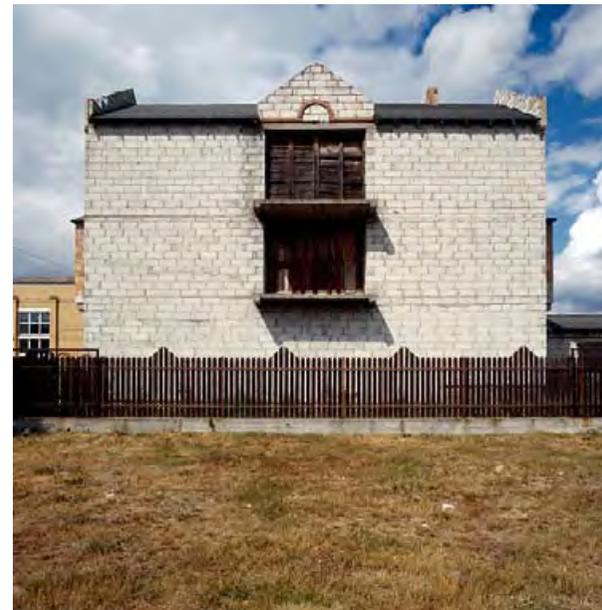
*Milk Bars*, 2004

series of 24 photographs,

Lambda D-print cast in plexiglass, 20 x 20 cm.

Not Economically Viable





Poland is littered with unfinished houses. Each of these houses stands for a tragedy but also an aesthetic experience. They stand for tragedies, because one can imagine the different reasons that have led to the abandonment of the house: death, loss of a job, loan refusal, all stories making the current owners «economically not viable», according to banking terminology. But they are also aesthetic experiences, because this architecture, most of the time lacking originality and ugly, mutilated by its empty windows, is in a way sublimed by the very exterior signs telling about these personal tragedies.

*Not Economically viable*, 2003-6

series of 15 photographs,

Lambda D-print on aluminium, 50 x 50 cm..





Emalite glass is a synthetic opaque and multicoloured glass that appeared in the 1950s. Inserted in aluminium frames, it is used to cover the facades of buildings with modular panels of any requested colour. Its simplicity of use as well as its modularity account for its popularity in the 60s and 70s in Western Europe and in the countries of the socialist bloc. However, emalite glass does not age well, and is often replaced by other covering material, not as colourful.

*Kolorobloki* comprises a series of photographs of emalite glass covered buildings. These photographs are composed in a modular way, i.e. using the modularity of the emalite glass panels as they are used as a construction material. Thus, although all the buildings are, in real life, different, their photographs have been manipulated so that their facades have all the same proportions and the same number of floors. Some buildings have been shortened, while others have been enlarged, by adding the required number of modular panels. The only unaltered motif in these photographs is the colour of the façade.

From a certain perspective, emalite glass panels are one of the last heirs of the modernist tradition in architecture, where simplicity and functionality are cardinal values. Modularity, from this point of view, is one architectural feature best suited to building something functional and cheap, but also maybe elegant. Nevertheless, as far as emalite glass is concerned, given the poor quality of the materials used, one often faces a kind of degenerate modernism.

However, *Kolorobloki* is not a criticism of modernism in architecture, on the contrary. It is a project that uses the grammar of modernism to show its limitations, but with a great dose of sympathy for that architecture as well as for the buildings photographed

*Kolorobloki*, 2006, series of 7 photographs, Lambda D-print on aluminium, 100 x 70 cm

NICOLAS GROSPIERRE

Born in Geneva, Switzerland on September 28, 1975

#### EDUCATION

1998-1999 London School of Economics. MSc. in Russian and Post-Soviet Studies

1997-1998 Institut d'Études Politiques de Paris. Msc. in Political Science

1997 Diploma of the Institut d'Études Politiques de Paris

#### AWARDS, GRANTS, RESIDENCIES

2009 Prize of the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Poland

2008 Golden Lion at the 11th Venice Architecture Biennale for best National participation  
Artistic Residency at Location 1, NYC

#### SELECTED INDIVIDUAL EXHIBITIONS

2011 *The Bank*, BWA Warszawa, Warsaw

*One thousand doors, no exit*, Graham Foundation, Chicago

*Lost in Architecture*, 1000 Plateaus art space, Chengdu

*Modern Tales*, PhotoEspaña 2011, Madrid

*Paper Planes*, Phase2 ARUP, London

*K-Pool i Spolka*, PF Gallery, Poznan

*The Picture, which grows*, Fundacja Archeologia Fotografii, Warsaw

2010 *Tattarrattat*, Palazzo Dona, Signum Foundation, Venice.

*The Glass Trap*, site-specific exhibition, with the Raster Gallery, Warsaw

2009 *Kunstkamera*, CCA, Warsaw

*The Bank*, Location 1, NYC

*The Self-Fulfilling Image*, Cueto Project, NYC

2008 *Hotel Polonia* (with K. Laksa) Polish Pavilion at the 11th Venice Architecture Biennale

*Disco Zacheta (Hotel Polonia)*, Zacheta National Gallery, Warsaw

*Hydroklinika*, Ecco - Espacio Cultural Contemporaneo, Brasilia

*Hydroklinika*, The Artist's House, Jerusalem

2007 *Mauzoleum* (with Olga Mokrzycka), with Raster Gallery, Warsaw,

*Biblioteka*, University of Warsaw Library

2006 *Biblioteka*, In-situ exhibition with the CCA, Warsaw

2005 *Hydroklinika*, Polish Architects Association Pavilion, Warsaw

2004 *Lithuanian Bus Stops*, Teatr Academia, Warsaw

*Portraying Communities : Podgorze*, CCA, Warsaw

*Lithuanian Bus Stops*, Rebell Minds Gallery, Berlin

2003 *Portraying Communities : Kamionka*, Teatr Academia, Warsaw



#### SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS

2011 *Enklawa*, CCA Zamek Ujazdowski, Warsaw

*Skontrum*, National Museum in Warsaw

*The Journey to the East*, Galeria Arsenal, Bialystok

2010 *Modernizacja*, PhotoEspaña 2010, Cuenca

*NineteenEightyFour*, Austrian Cultural Forum, NYC

*Fitting in space*, Zico House & 98 weeks gallery, Beirut

*Dreams (un) real*, Avant-Garde Institute, Warsaw

2009 *Take a look at me now*, Sainsbury Center for Visual Arts, Norwich

*Awake and Dream*, Signum Foundation, Palazzo Dona, Venice

*Przypadkowe Przyjemności*, BWA Katowice

2008 *Where the East Ends*, Nassauischer Kunstverein, Wiesbaden

*Red Eye Effect. Polish Photography of the 21st Century*, CCA, Warsaw

*Bloody Beautiful*, Ron Mandos Gallery, Amsterdam

2007 *Concrete Legacy*, CCA, Warsaw

*The Memory of this Moment...*, former Schindler factory, Cracow

2006 *The New Documentalists*, CCA, Zamek Ujazdowski, Warsaw

2004 *Young Polish Art*, Polish Embassy in Tokyo

*Die Nacht ist meine Welt*, Rebell Minds Gallery, Berlin

2003 *BRONorblin*, Norblin Museum, Warsaw

2002 *Block-Neighbourhood-Apartment*, Raster Gallery, Warsaw