

Light and Shadow, Emptiness and Fullness

on the art of black and white

The exhibition presents works by twenty-one artists — lecturers at the WIT Academy — representing various genres and techniques. It serves as a bridge between traditional art and technology, perfectly reflecting the synergy that shapes contemporary creative approaches.

The four categories into which the works have been grouped are not identical with the technological division. The themes of individual sections refer to the condition of both the human being and the surrounding matter.

Psychological, social, and symbolic references accumulate across the works, regardless of the technique chosen by each artist.

By abandoning vivid color in favor of chiaroscuro and strong contrasts, we reach the very essence of the artists' intentions.

In Western culture, opposites are in constant conflict — good fights evil, light struggles against darkness. This metaphysical dualism is reflected in art, particularly evident in the Baroque era.

Christ and the saints emerge from the darkness of interiors, caves, or dense foliage. On Saint Paul's Feast Day, divine light of conversion flows through Caravaggio's paintings. From Rembrandt's prophetic Anna emanates the radiance of wisdom and understanding. White is light; black is shadow. The concept is different in Eastern traditions, where opposites complement each other rather than clash.

In Taoism, the feminine yin, associated with darkness and matter, is completed by the masculine yang, which represents light, space, and the void symbolized by white.

Landscapes composed by ancient Eastern masters reveal this harmony. Black lines — brushstrokes — and the whiteness of paper or silk interact. They create a dynamic interplay between fullness and emptiness, materiality and spirituality.

Contemporary artists draw inspiration from both traditions, as best exemplified by the works presented in the exhibition "The Art of Black and White."

Although in European tradition the term originally referred to workshop graphics — from mezzotint and woodcut to lithography and linocut — today it is most often used in the context of photography.

This exhibition aims to challenge that notion, showing that in every modern artistic medium — whether classical painting, printmaking, or digital works — the interaction of opposites, black and white, remains essential. The image constructed through contrast evokes strong emotions and powerfully engages the viewer's senses.

The monochromatic nature of the works may also serve as a respite from the flood of highly commercialized and overly intense stimuli that surround us in urban and virtual space.

THE SHAPE OF MAN

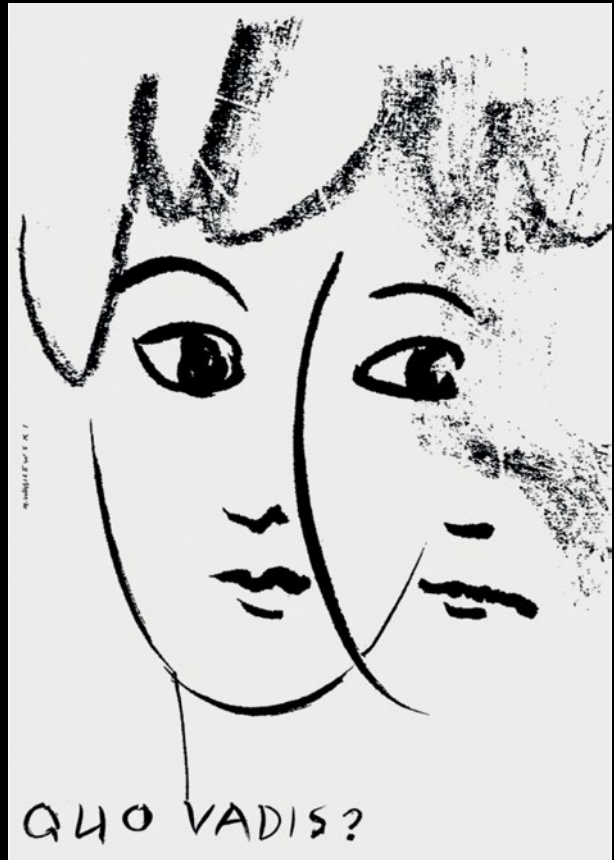
“Where are you going?” ask the ephemeral faces from Mieczysław Wasilewski’s poster, opening the exhibition with simplicity and poignancy. Their minimalist directness finds an echo in Piotr Krochmalski’s drawing inscribed with the words “Direction: Rome.”

This is a satire on modern relationships between humans and animals, yet also a metaphor for consumerism. Małgorzata Sobocińska-Kiss likewise explores interpersonal connections, revealing both stylized and expressive figures drawn through a diversity of lines. Their multiplicity and comic-like quality allow each viewer to create a personal narrative about the depicted characters.

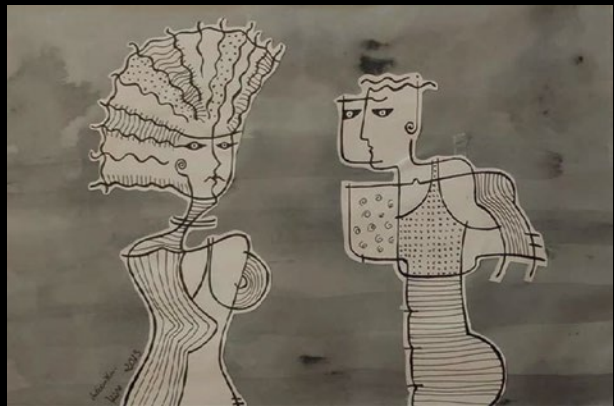
“Innocence Happens on the Way Home” is the title of a painting by Sylwia Caban-Wiater. Although rooted in everyday life, it takes on a distinctly metaphysical tone. The human figures arranged in sequence resemble a ladder of generations—or perhaps people we pass in our lives. Are they walking into shadow or toward the light? The oil painting arouses curiosity and gentle unease, offering no definitive answer.

Each viewer must decide for themselves. Ambiguity also permeates the works of Aneta Jaźwińska. Her images of children looking directly at us, captured in moments of play, lack carefree joy. Their faces appear too mature. The human image, both literally and metaphorically, is brought to a close by Piotr Janowczyk’s film.

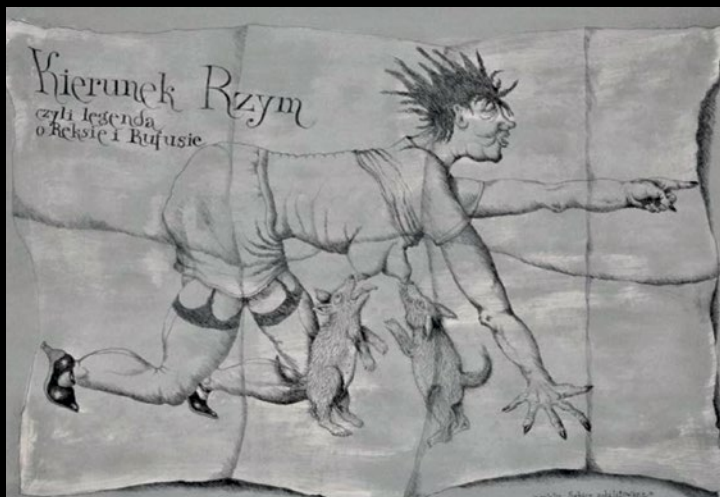
The artist records classical dance, inscribing the performers into geometric forms. White straight lines surround human silhouettes, constructing complex structures whose shapes transform with every motion of the dancers’ bodies.



Mieczysław Wasilewski | Quo vadis? | 2025



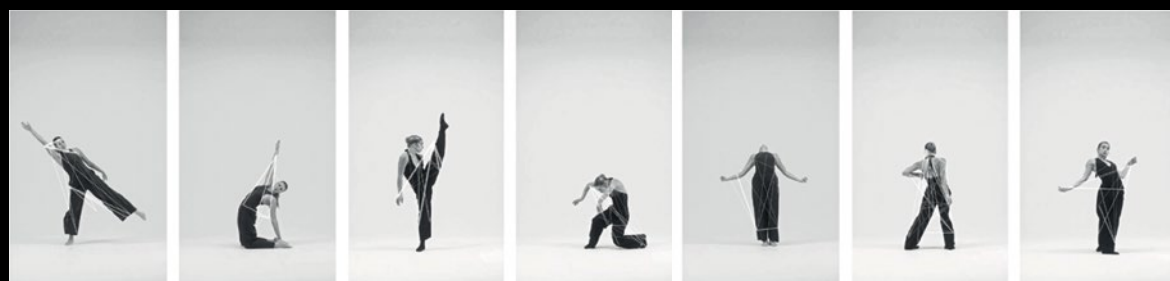
Małgorzata Sobocińska-Kiss | Venus and Mars | 2013



Piotr Krochmalski | Direction Rome | 2016



Aneta Jazwińska | Girl | 2025



Piotr Janowczyk | Body lines 02 | 2024



Sylvia Caban-Wiater | Innocence happens on the way home | 2025

SIGNS OF WRITING

In these works, nature serves as an inspiration, though it is transformed into a universal message. It also raises questions about the future of humanity. Symbol and image intertwine in posters, collages, and compositions.

In Bartosz Mamak's work, simplified human silhouettes drawn with black lines merge into letters forming the word *fentanyl*. This potent painkiller easily leads to addiction and often to death. The poster thus becomes both commentary and warning, as well as a visual metaphor for an alternative—its figures perform movements reminiscent of physical exercises. Perhaps the viewer will notice that the forms themselves carry a different, hidden meaning.

Ludmila Kwiatkowska inscribes cats into graphic signs. Their softness harmonizes with the sinuosity of lines forming ovals, circles, and semicircles—akin to the animal figures in the paintings of Franz Marc (1880–1916). Quadrupeds,

humanity's companions, also play a significant role in Grzegorz Rogala's digital graphics. The artist constructs shelves resembling medieval altars or museum vitrines, containing extraordinary natural specimens—hybrids of human and animal, or interspecies creatures. Enclosed within frames, frozen in stillness, they fascinate through their strangeness.

These works also pose questions about humanity's future. Nature likewise inspires Michał Piekarski, though in his art it takes on typographic form. His wordplay, arranged with deliberate precision, creates visual poetry rooted in medieval manuscripts yet most vividly realized by the Fluxus artists. Piekarski paints with words.

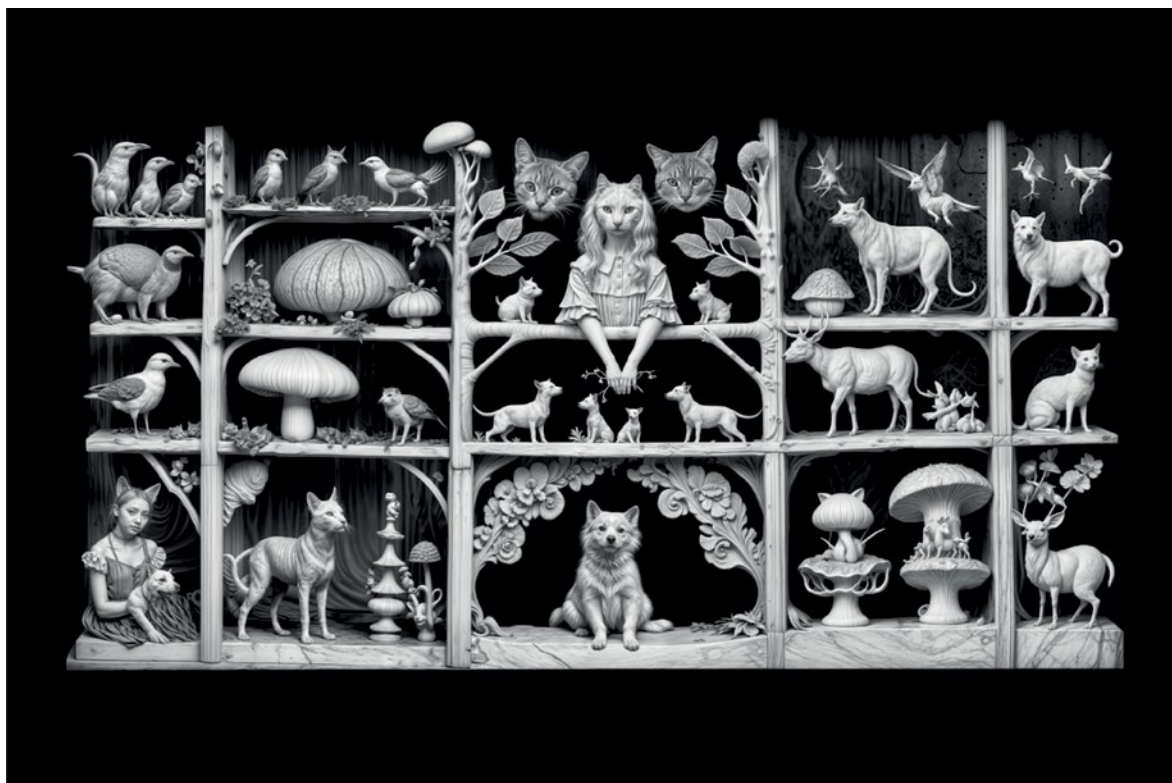
Justyna Kabala and Anna Klos, in turn, intertwine letters and words with visual forms. The former creates drawings; the latter composes collages from fragments of old newspapers, letters, leaflets, book pages, and other found materials. In both cases, a successful synergy of signs emerges.



Bartosz Mamak | *Fentanyl* | 2025



Luiza Kwiatkowska | *Curious cat* | 2021



Grzegorz Rogala | Fairy tales and fables | 2025



Michał Piekarski
Acacias | 2020



Justyna Kabala
Aphrodite of Capua | 2021



Anna Kłos | La geometria fantastica | 2021

THE GEOMETRIZATION OF CHAOS

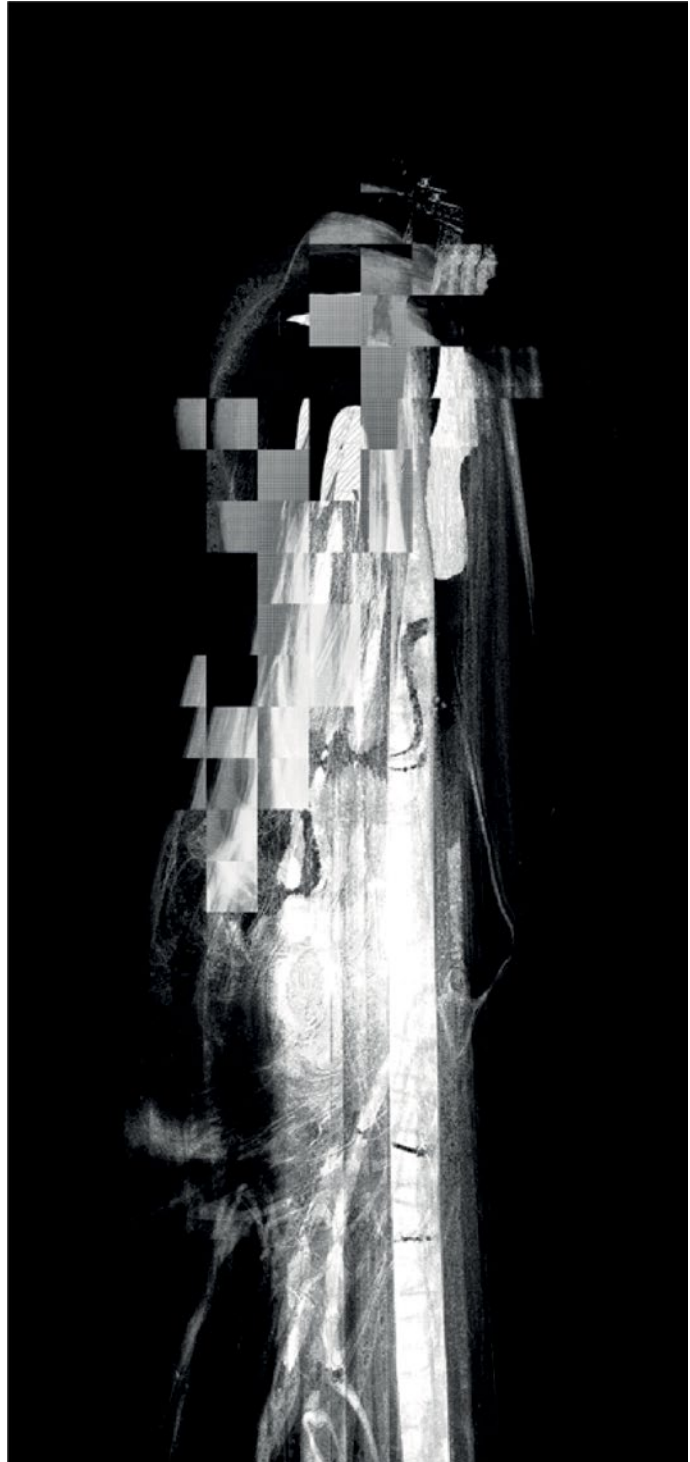
The artists' compositions speak of an attempt to impose order on what is irregular, fluid, and undefined. The first arranges strips cut from black and white paper so that their uneven shapes form a rectangle — an effort to tame the untamable chaos, a metaphor for the movement and transformation of the world.

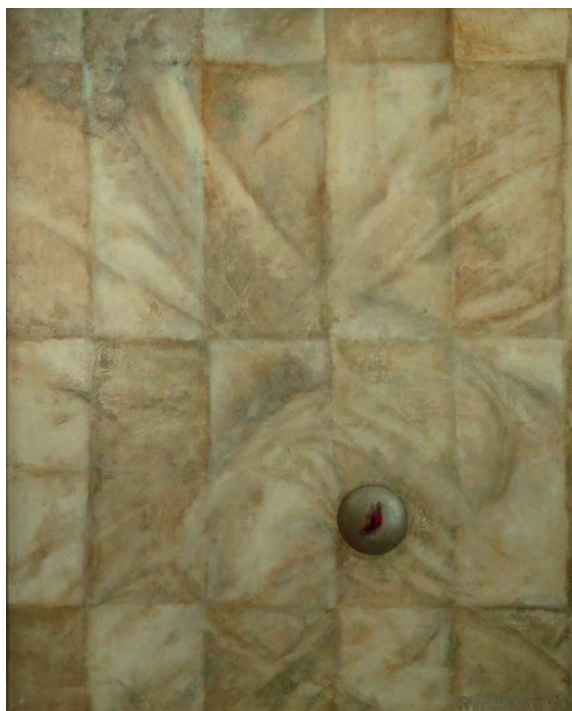
Another artist inscribes biomorphic forms into grids or aligns seemingly uniform solids in ordered sequences. The last of the creators multiplies and simplifies the depicted objects so that they become abstract patterns — stencils rather than tangible entities.

In contrast to Ryszard Sekula's strategy of unifying the subject in his art, Zenon Balcer deconstructs and fragments it. Beams of light, captured in photographic frames, are digitally modified by the artist.

The introduced glitches alter perception through geometrization. Nature's soft forms are simplified by cold, digital algorithms. Yet in Rafał Strent's *Memory*, the opposite process occurs. An ordered structure, influenced by the circular motion of an object, collapses into disarray — much like our neatly arranged memories that, when stirred by unexpected stimuli, come alive and intertwine.

Zenon Balcer | *Echo of light 2* | 2025





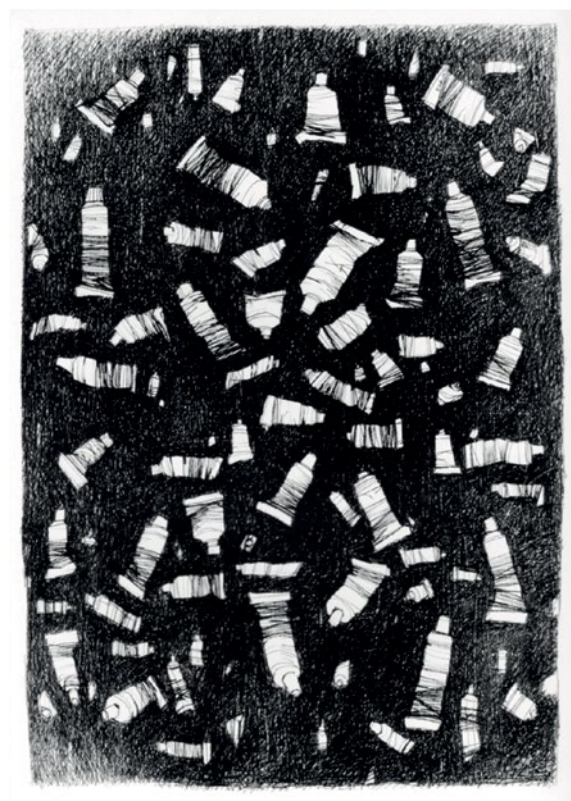
Rafal Strent | Memory | 1990



Janusz Pabel | Dream vision | 2005



Anna Nowokuńska-Maksymiuk | No. 3 from the Gridometry series | 2023



Ryszard Sekuła | Details | 2015

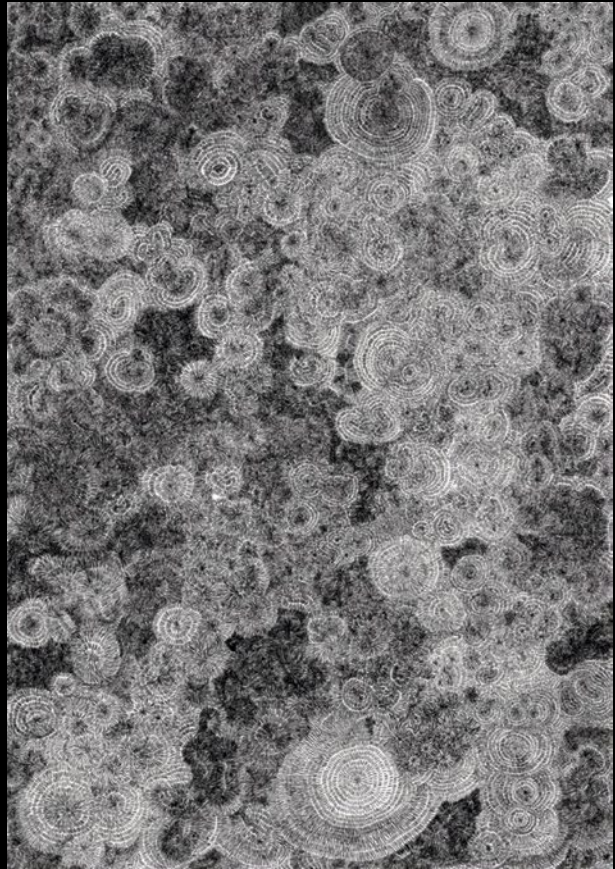
STRUCTURES OF NATURE

Nature delights in creating patterns that it repeats infinitely. Seemingly identical natural structures, when observed closely, reveal their individuality and uniqueness. Every snowflake differs, every feather, shell, lichen, or grain of sand... These similarities and differences inspire the works of Dariusz Młacki, Dominika Korzeniowska, and Joanna Mankiewicz.

Drawing on Dadaist tradition, the first artist presents objects “made” from unconventional materials. Instead of paper, an envelope is crafted from bird feathers, acquiring metaphorical meaning. Repeated feathers form decorative structures, while abstract circular forms become ornamental elements in Korzeniowska’s graphics.

Following the horror vacui principle, they evenly cover the entire surface, like organic life forms inhabiting inorganic matter. They evoke fossils or the interiors of fractured stones. Stylistically akin to Mankiewicz’s paintings, yet unlike Korzeniowska’s static and monumental works, Mankiewicz’s compositions are full of motion. Formed of white and gray dots on a black background, they evoke various associations — from human tissues and blood vessels seen under a microscope to nocturnal landscapes viewed from above. They illustrate the resemblance between micro- and macrocosm, resonating with Eastern Taoist thought.

In Wiesław Szamborski’s painting, small spots become light, while simplified floral forms take on spatial abstraction. Flowers enveloping the branches of blooming meadowsweet create three-dimensional natural structures. ■



Dominika Korzeniowska | Expansion from the Monocultures series | 2023



Wiesław Szamborski | Spirea | 2007



Dariusz Młacki | Feather Envelope | 2024



Joanna Mankiewicz | Persistent existence | 2020