

# ART AT EP



## WORKS OF ART FROM

Organised by the European Parliament  
in cooperation with the Polish Presidency  
of the Council of the European Union.

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This publication was produced in Luxembourg for information purposes on the occasion of the Polish Presidency exhibition featuring works from the European Parliament Contemporary Art Collection and the Zachęta National Gallery of Art, with the aim of providing an educational reference about the background and artistic legacy of the artists whose creations are displayed, and of preserving and promoting their contribution to Europe's cultural heritage.

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WORKS OF ART FROM

**P O L A N D**

# P R E F A C E



**ROBERTA METSOLA**

President of the European Parliament

Poland's Presidency of the Council of the EU provides a platform and an opportunity for showcasing the country's vibrant culture. The European Parliament is delighted to continue a tradition of rotating presidencies that dates back to 2011, by hosting an exhibition featuring leading Polish artists.

This display, which includes works from the Zachęta National Gallery of Art, illustrates the ways that abstract art can shine a light on crucial themes such as renewal and regeneration. We see this particularly in the expressive works of Roman Artymowski, Tomasz Ciecierski, and Ryszard Grzyb. It also examines the human condition in today's world through the artworks of Zofia Kulik, Zbigniew Rogalski and Tomasz Tatarczyk. I particularly appreciate its fresh approach, which integrates design elements in synergy with the sister exhibition taking place at the same time at the Council of the EU.

Established in 1980 by the European Parliament's then president, Simone Veil, the European Parliament's Collection of Contemporary Art reflects Europe's shared cultural heritage and the changing social attitudes and challenges of our time. It has now grown to almost 600 works from across Europe. Six of the sixteen artists from Poland featured in the collection are included in this rotating presidency exhibition. We recently added five new artworks by contemporary Polish women artists – a reflection of our commitment to addressing current social and political issues while promoting geographical and gender balance.

I am thankful to all those involved in making this exhibition happen. The European Parliament recognises art's essential role in transcending boundaries, challenging perceptions and fostering dialogue. We will therefore always support those who cultivate it.

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**HANNA WRÓBLEWSKA**

Minister of Culture and National Heritage

Ladies and Gentlemen,

In the first half of 2025, Poland will hold the presidency of the Council of the EU for the second time, taking the opportunity to raise contemporary problems in the cultural sphere. The issues and solutions that we will consider during this exhibition will have a reflection in our future. A future in which culture will continue to fill a significant position. We are honoured to present works by contemporary Polish visual artists from the European Parliament's collection, from one of the most important cultural institutions in Poland, the Zachęta – National Gallery of Art in Warsaw, as well as from private collections. This selection not only highlights Poland's rich cultural heritage and showcases the magnificent oeuvre of contemporary Polish artists, including Zofia Kulik, Zbigniew Rogalski, and Roman Artymowski, but also deals with important themes that resonate deeply in modern-day Europe and all around the globe.

Culture is the foundation for building interpersonal relations but also for shaping identities at the local level and in the global arena. This is why raising the visibility of culture and developing public awareness on the subject is so important.

The cultural agenda of the Polish Presidency of the Council of the EU builds on the idea of cooperation and collaboration in a modern world. We are committed to fostering dialogue, understanding and cooperation across divisions. Throughout the presidency, we aspire to become the bridge between different traditions and perspectives, creating a space in which both experienced creators and a younger generation of artists can come together.

In particular, we would like to highlight the growing presence of young Polish artists making their way onto the international art scene. The presentation of Polish art and design in key buildings of the EU's Council and Parliament can serve as a starting point for reflections on our continent's needs today. Through art and design, we hope to symbolically open a new chapter in which Poland – as a co-creator of the future of the EU – upholds key values, such as cooperation and solidarity, but also recognises modern-day challenges – both social and ecological alike.

I invite you to discover this diverse cultural showcase, which prompts reflection and calls for common action for a sustainable and stable future for all of Europe.

# P R E F A C E



**MIRIAM LEXMANN**

Quaestor and Chair of the Artistic Committee  
of the European Parliament



**T**he pieces of art displayed in the European Parliament always showcase the country holding the presidency in a unique way. This time, in one of the most prominently located spots, we can catch a glimpse of the uniqueness of the Polish art scene.

These spaces, through which thousands of people pass every day, are a symbol of movement – not only physical movement, but also movement of thought. In the midst of the everyday hustle and bustle of work, with its many meetings, sessions and events, we can stop for a moment and be transported into the unique world of human creativity and fantasy. We should appreciate the uniqueness of these moments and places, which allow us to pause and gain inspiration and strength for the days to come.

The European Parliament's collection has a history spanning more than 40 years and counting almost 600 works of art. Among them are 16 works of art from Poland, including iconic pieces familiar to all of us, such as the striking United Earth glass sculpture by Beata and Tomasz Urbanowicz in the middle of the courtyard of the Weiss Building in Strasbourg, or the Wall sculpture by Anna Baumgart, which captures the emotional and dramatic moment of a group of people fleeing to West Berlin.

The Polish Presidency exhibition draws mainly from the European Parliament's permanent collection. We have selected six works of art from it and complemented them with paintings from the Polish Zachęta – National Gallery of Art. The innovativeness of our exhibition lies above all in the fact that it combines artworks with design, which also links it to the exhibition in the Council of the EU building.

Personally, I am also close to Poland, not only geographically, but also culturally and spiritually. We are also deeply connected by our shared – and victorious – struggle against communist totalitarianism, whose 35th anniversary we are commemorating this year. The strength and indomitability of the Polish soul are a great asset for Europe. I invite you to take a glimpse at its essence and gain a fuller appreciation of it through this exhibition.

I hope you enjoy the exhibition.

# INTRODUCTION

The first artworks linked with Poland appeared in Parliament's art collection long before Poland joined the European Union in 2004. As early as 1981 Parliament purchased *Les Sept Plaies d'Égypte* by Polish painter Serge Kantorowicz. In 1982 it acquired *A Good Boat* by Andrzej Jackowski. The lives of both painters are characteristic of post-war European history; both grew up outside their country of origin, effectively as refugees. This reality is vividly conveyed in *A Good Boat*, displayed in the visitors' area of the Parliament's premises in Strasbourg.

In 2004 Poland joined the EU alongside nine other, mostly eastern European, countries. That year two further significant artworks were donated to Parliament's collection. The first was the iconic glass sculpture *United Earth*, created by Beata and Tomasz Urbanowicz. This sculpture, located in the central courtyard of the Weiss building in Strasbourg, was donated by the mayor of the Polish city of Wrocław. The second piece, of similar symbolic value, was a poster created by renowned Polish surrealist Rafał Olbiński. It was gifted by the Marshal of the Świętokrzyskie voivodeship (province) to mark Poland's accession to the EU.

On 13 December 2006 Parliament's Bureau decided to embark on a programme of acquisition of artworks from Poland and Lithuania. The goal of these acquisitions was to enhance Parliament's contemporary art

collection with representative works from new Member States. The Bureau's 2006 decision resulted in the purchase, in 2009, of seven paintings, two photographs and one sculpture. Notable among these acquisitions were works by sculptor, photographer and performer Zofia Kulik, influenced by feminism, and abstract paintings by Stefan Gierowski, Henryk Stażewski and Tomasz Ciecierski. Anna Baumgart's sculptural ensemble *Wall captures*, on the basis of a historical photograph, the dramatic escape of a group of people – perhaps family members – from East to West Berlin.

In 2019 Parliament adopted new guidelines for its art acquisitions. Its aim remains to ensure that the collection achieves a regional and gender balance, with a focus on artworks that engage with current social or political ideas and topics. In 2020, in line with these new guidelines, Parliament acquired five further artworks by Alicja Bielawska, Diana Lelonek and Gizela Mickiewicz, three highly respected contemporary Polish female artists with rich exhibition histories, whose works are displayed in Polish art museums. This brought the number of Polish works of art in the collection to 16.

In line with established tradition, the Polish Presidency exhibition combines artworks from Parliament's collection with those from the presidency country. However, a unique aspect of this exhibition is

its direct connection with the exhibition in the European Council's Europa building, achieved by selecting similar design pieces and involving the same curatorial team. In a way, it is one exhibition composed of two parts.

Parliament's exhibition also interacts directly with its setting, the Spinelli building in Brussels. A vibrant, bustling environment draws us in, and this is then offset by a quiet corner – as part of the exhibition – with chairs and plants, offering a place to rest and disconnect from the surrounding hustle and bustle.

The exhibition's title, *Regeneracja*, alludes to the theme of interaction between humans and the environment and to the vital need to care for limited natural resources. It draws a clear parallel with the ever-relevant theme of environmental protection. The title, however, evokes additional parallels, as words like 'regeneration' and 'recovery' can also apply to society, the quest for peace in Europe or economic revitalisation. In this regard the Polish Presidency exhibition is highly topical and highlights the multifaceted role of art in our society.

Cultural Outreach Unit  
**DG COMM**

## Regeneration

Is there stillness between the movements? This question posed in the title of Alicja Bielawska's work from the European Parliament's collection (currently on display in Strasbourg) inspired the selection of artworks to be displayed at the European Parliament during the Polish Presidency of the Council of the European Union (January–June 2025).

In the daily rush we experience both in the corridors of the Parliament and on the streets of European cities, we often fail to pause for a moment of stillness. Pausing even for a moment allows for reflection, admiration, careful observation – appreciating what surrounds us and focusing our thoughts before making important decisions.

The presentation of Polish art and design in the Council of the European Union buildings – Justus Lipsius and Europa – and in the seat of the European Parliament takes place under the slogan 'Regeneration'. This slogan unites and reinforces the key themes of the Polish Presidency of the Council of the European Union: security in its many dimensions, co-determination of the future of Europe,

solidarity and the labour market for young people. It also touches on the issue of man's relationship with the environment and the protection of natural resources – a common good that we should care for in order to ensure a secure future for Europe and the world.

At the European Parliament, we sought to create a space to pause amidst the daily rush and an opportunity to reflect and marvel at the richness of nature. Thanks to works from the local art collection, augmented by paintings borrowed from Warsaw galleries and private collectors, we can look at nature through the eyes of contemporary Polish artists. The selected works, although they represent only a fragment of the very diverse Polish contemporary art scene, allow us to gain familiarity with its major trends.

The abstract paintings of Roman Artymowski, which open the show, combine the artist's avant-garde inclinations with the heritage of Colourism, which plays an important role in Polish art history. These are reimaginings of landscapes experienced during travels, which the artist translates

into vibrant, colourful compositions. Tomasz Ciecierski's relief work, composed of many small paintings, has a more meditative tone. Here, too, we are dealing with a record of a landscape filtered through the artist's memory and sensitivity – an image of space, which Ciecierski reduces almost to abstraction, maintaining a clear horizon line in his colourful compositions.

Alicja Bielawska's work expands reflections on landscape and space to include issues of time and materiality. In a composition reminiscent of a clock face, a ceramic sphere captured by brass hands invites us to pause for a moment in stillness. The transience of the moment is also of interest to Ryszard Grzyb, an artist associated with New Expressionism of the 1980s, who compares the noiseless flight of a rhinoceros to that of a butterfly. This juxtaposition of figures from the animal world illustrates the richness and diversity of nature.

Works by Zbigniew Rogalski, Emilia Kina and Zofia Kulik focus on issues of representation and the human role in the world. Zbigniew Rogalski's painting depicts globes – tools used to represent the world that give us the illusion that we can experience and comprehend it in its entirety. Their flat representations seem to slip out of our hands.

The subject of painterly illusion is also dealt with by Emilia Kina in a painting that makes use of the artist's characteristic curtain motif. The question of humanity's position in the world is posed in Zofia Kulik's photographic collage – placed in the centre of her hypnotic, ornamental composition, it appears both defenceless and squeezed into the geometry that provides the structure of the composition.

Tomasz Tatarczyk's muted composition shows traces of human footsteps in a snowy landscape. This contemplative painting, using only black, white and a rich range of greys, reveals the possibility of a close relationship with nature.

The presentation of the artworks is complemented by a space for relaxation and quiet work, filled with the latest in Polish design. Designed by Katarzyna Baumiller, it allows visitors to acquaint themselves with the creations of contemporary Polish designers, while also creating a space for the exhibition's titular regeneration.

### **Aleksandra Kędziorek**

Curator of presentations of Polish art and design in the Council of Europe and European Parliament buildings



**ROMAN ARTYMOWSKI**

**ALICJA BIELAWSKA**

**TOMASZ CIECIERSKI**

**RYSZARD GRZYB**

**EMILIA KINA**

**ZOFIA KULIK**

**ZBIGNIEW ROGALSKI**

**TOMASZ TATARCZYK**

# Roman ARTYMOWSKI (1919–1993)

The spheres in Roman Artymowski's paintings evoke suns hanging low over the horizon. The abstract artist's work is deeply rooted in the Kapist tradition, a significant movement in Polish art history. This series of solar scenes was created from the 1970s onwards, inspired by the artist's many travels. In the 1960s, Artymowski worked at the Academy of Fine Arts in Baghdad and travelled to Damascus and Morocco, before going on to lecture at both the National School of Plastic Arts in Łódź and the Academy of Fine Arts in Warsaw.

He recalled: '... the most significant moments in my life were during my travels and explorations, when those ever-changing landscapes – earth and sky, in various tones and sophisticated textures, in changeable and different moods and omnipresent light – became part of me, and stayed with me for years, bearing witness to my successive painting adventures'. The compositions, sophisticated in colour, clear and majestic, are full of heat and internal light. They may express joy or hope, as well as a feeling of danger, or, as art historian Bożena Kowalska put it, 'evoke a contemplation of the mystery of existence, the universe and infinity'.



Landscape XXI, 1978



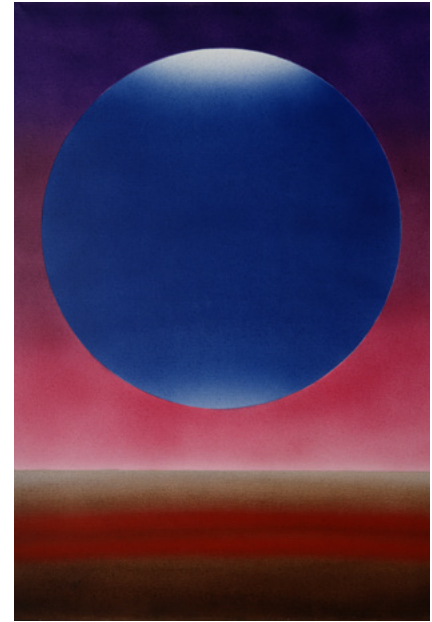
Acrylic on canvas, 92 × 64 cm  
Zachęta National Gallery of Art Collection, Warsaw

Landscape LXXXXVII, 1985



Acrylic on canvas, 100 × 73 cm  
Zachęta National Gallery of Art Collection, Warsaw

Landscape LXXI A, 1983



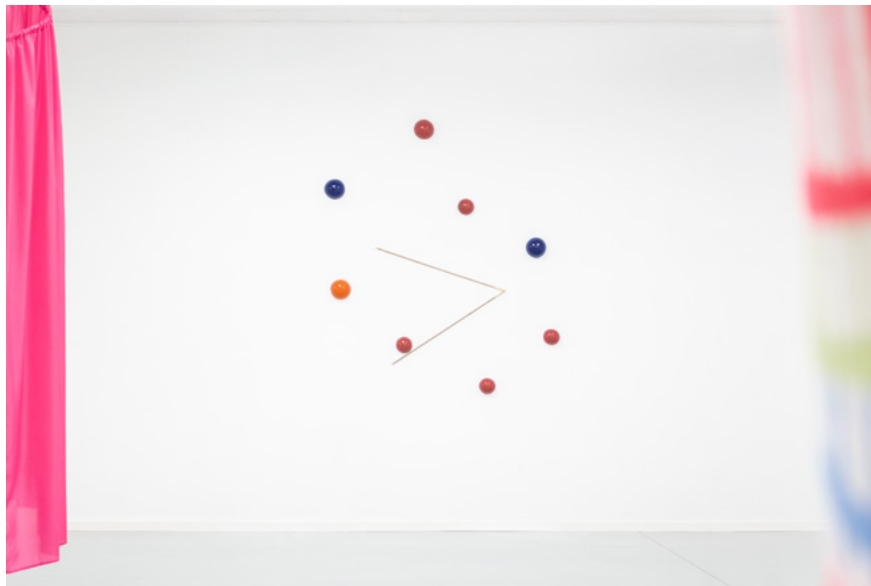
Acrylic on canvas, 100 × 73 cm  
Zachęta National Gallery of Art Collection, Warsaw

# Alicja BIELAWSKA (1980)

Changing time (I), 2021

Alicja Bielawska's works focus on everyday things – simple objects and how they relate to people, spaces and each other. Through this, she aims to arouse feelings and connotations – haptic experiences that evoke or remind, that resonate in the viewer's memory. In her practice, she uses drawings and sculptures, often working with ceramics and fabric. She also adds choreographic and performance elements to her projects. Basic

choreographed elements – movement and time – can also be found in *Changing time (I)*. The brass pointers immobilise colourful glazed ceramic hemispheres that move in cyclical rhythms. The stillness of the multi-element composition seems to be temporary, as if the spheres might at any moment recommence their previously interrupted trajectories, thus highlighting the relativity of time and how we experience it.



Glazed ceramics, brass, 200 × 172 cm  
Owned by the artist

# Tomasz CIECIERSKI (1945–2024)

Untitled 94/95, 1994

Tomasz Ciecierski's works call to mind da Vinci's philosophical, poetic *Treatise on Painting*. A graduate of, and later lecturer at, the Academy of Fine Arts in Warsaw, following a period in which he engaged in a dialogue with European art history, seeking the essence of painting in his works, in the 1980s he became interested in landscapes. This soon became the leitmotiv of his creations. While Ciecierski's landscapes became more and more synthetic over the years, they always verged on the abstract

In the relief compositions that he made using overlapping layers of smaller paintings, the artist sought to push the bounds of painting. Sometimes he would combine several elements in one work, adding photographs, drawings and postcards to a composition. He painted from memory the landscapes that he saw on his many travels. Abstract, synthesised memories of the blue of the sky or the sea define the horizon line visible in the works.



Oil on canvas, part 1: 89 × 89 × 6 cm, part 2: 130 × 172 × 10 cm  
European Parliament Contemporary art collection

# Ryszard GRZYB (1956)

Rhinoceros with butterflies, 1991

'The rhinoceros is as silent (when it runs) as the butterflies that swirl around it in the warm air'. These are the words of Ryszard Grzyb, neo-expressionist painter and founder of the art collective 'Gruppa' (alongside Paweł Kowalewski, Jarosław Modzelewski, Włodzimierz Pawlak and Ryszard Woźnak), which dominated the Polish art scene in the 1980s. *Rhinoceros with butterflies* is part of the artist's animalistic period. Using simple, repetitive animal motifs, Grzyb harks

back to prehistoric cave paintings. He presents an ancient theme in a modern light, using bright, strong colours in quick and dynamic brushstrokes. His painting is bold, decorative, ornamental, poetic and full of humour – as is the text in which he describes his creations: 'Rhinoceroses and painting are connected: rhinoceroses are old, ancient creatures, while painting is an old art form in the world of computers and 21st century technology.'



Oil on canvas, 220 × 230 cm  
European Parliament Contemporary art collection

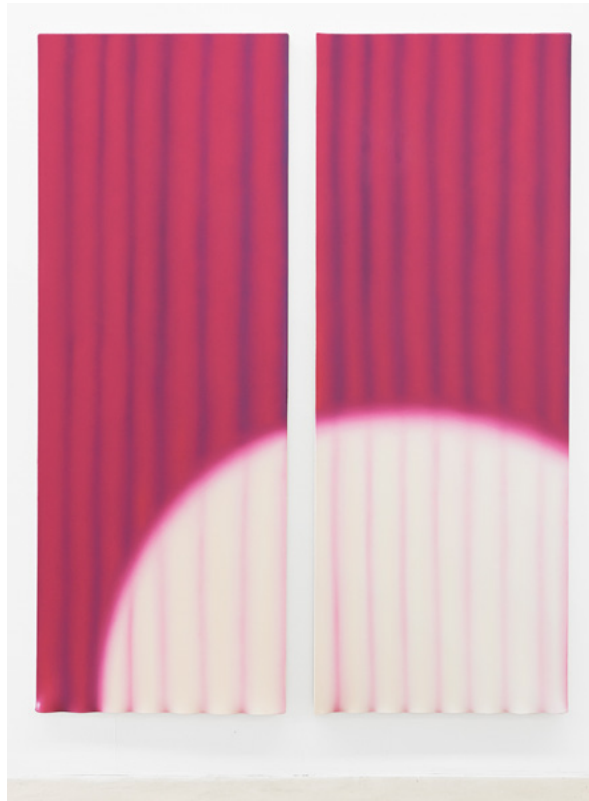
# Emilia KINA (1990)

Untitled, 2021

In her work, Emilia Kina, painter and graduate of the Academy of Fine Arts in Kraków, often draws on the motif of a curtain. This theme is strongly rooted in European art history and theory: it appeared in the story of ancient Greek painters Zeuxis and Parrhasius, who competed to make the most realistic illusion, until one of them tried to lift a 'curtain' that the other had painted. It also brings to mind Leon Alberti's famous concept of

a painting as a window on the world. Curtains appear in both court portraits and in 19th century photography studies. In Emilia Kina's erudite and aesthetically charming works, the painted illusions are enhanced by modified canvases. The artist sculpts these to create a wave effect and it is on these scenographically treated fabrics that she paints a spotlight beam that imitates a theatre performance.





Oil on formed canvas, 161 × 60, 161 × 61 cm  
Private collection

# Zofia KULIK (1947)

Holbein's Pavement, 2006

This photographic collage by Zofia Kulik, a legendary figure on the modern Polish art scene, is based on the floor in Hans Holbein the Younger's *The Ambassadors*, one of the most mysterious paintings of Renaissance humanists and diplomats. At the centre of the perfectly symmetrical, ornamental composition, made up of geometric shapes, multiplied human forms and clouds, is a human figure lying down. Previously working with

Przemysław Kwiek as KwieKulik (1971–1987), in her individual pieces (from 1988) the artist focuses on working with archives and images. She analyses various visual motifs, multiplies them and makes them into rich ornamental compositions that resemble the patterns of floors, rugs and mandalas. Her works are stories of visual representation, identity and power structures. They feature a kaleidoscope effect that hypnotises viewers.



Lambda 400 dpi, DIBOND, plexiglass, 121 × 121 cm  
European Parliament Contemporary art collection

# Zbigniew ROGALSKI (1974)

Globes, 2008

Zbigniew Rogalski, painter and graduate of the University of Fine Arts in Poznań, often uses photographic aesthetics in his work. He shows chance objects and everyday items against a backdrop abstracted from context. The apparently neutral pieces problematise the viewer's gaze. The globes depicted in the European Parliament Contemporary art collection's work give people the false impression that they can take in the whole world, pick it up in their hand – the canvas, apparently tangible, becomes

a flat illusion. In his work, Rogalski touches on the topic of representation in art – its capacity to reflect reality. By depicting steam on a mirror, painting fog or, as in *Globes*, playing with perspective, the artist creates optical illusions and disrupts and distorts our perception. In this way, his work forms part of the discourse on illusion and realism which has existed in art since its very beginnings. His works also engage in dialogue with modern media: photography, film and cartoons.



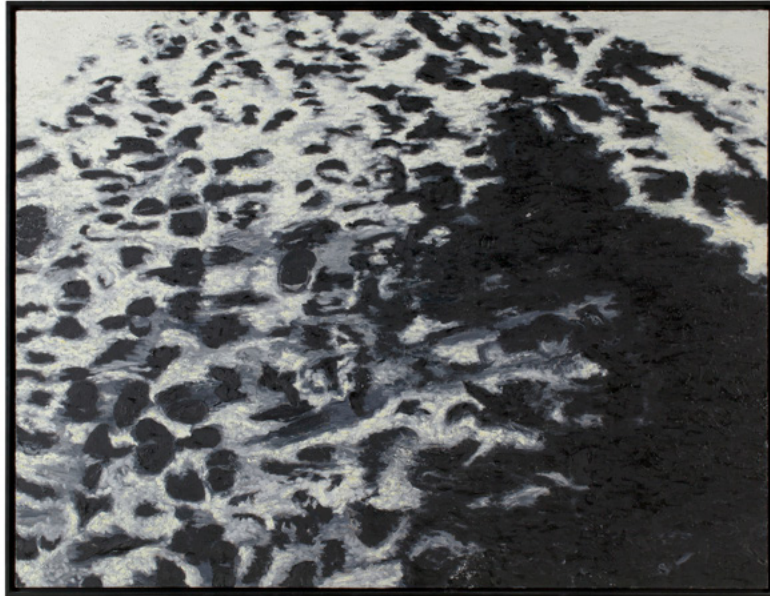
Oil on canvas, 150 × 216 cm  
European Parliament Contemporary art collection

# Tomasz TATARCZYK (1947–2010)

Step by step XII, 2006

Tomasz Tatarczyk, painter and graduate of the Warsaw University of Technology and the Academy of Fine Arts in Warsaw, made his works in a rafting village on the Vistula river, far from the hub of artistic life: 'My studio is located away from the hustle and bustle of the big city. There's a wide river, there are hills, forests, fields, gullies and cliffs, wild and tame animals, good and bad people as well as people and places that have been marked by their presence, alongside changing seasons and days that vary from one to the next.

Everything here is felt more intensely than it is in the city.' His intimate, muted paintings provide close, direct contact with nature. With restrained colour palettes of white, black and a rich range of greys, Tatarczyk's synthetic compositions are characterised by their simplicity, although they also contain an element of mystery, of understatement. The artist invites the viewer to contemplate nature – by drawing our attention to a limited area, he creates anticipation of the reality that extends beyond the edges of his painting.



Oil on canvas, 130 × 170 cm  
European Parliament Contemporary art collection

**I M P R I N T**



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The European Parliament, Brussels, Belgium

**Curator:**

Cultural Outreach Unit, Directorate-General for Communication  
/ Aleksandra Kędziorek

**Texts:**

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/ Aleksandra Kędziorek

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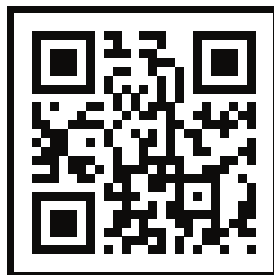
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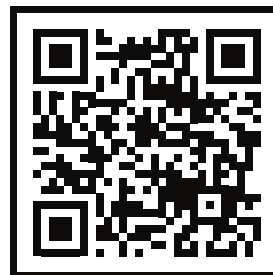
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Wydarzenie kulturalne polskiej prezydencji w Radzie UE  
Cultural event of the Polish presidency of the Council of the EU  
Événement culturel de la présidence polonaise du Conseil de l'UE



Ministry of Culture and National Heritage  
Republic of Poland



ADAM  
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