

Artur Żmijewski. Scenarios of Dissidence

at the Galerie de l'UQAM

Place: Galerie de l'UQAM, 1400 Berri (corner of Saint Catherine), Room J-R120

Dates: October 22 to November 20, 2010

Vernissage: Thursday, October 21 at 5:30 p.m.

Montreal, October 12, 2010 – Does contemporary art have a social impact? Is it an effective political instrument? What issues does it raise? The videos in the exhibition **Artur Żmijewski. Scenarios of Dissidence**, curated by **Veronique Leblanc** and **Louise Déry**, question the viewer's assumptions. Unabashedly controversial and political, they test the limits of ethics and morality, showing us what we would prefer to ignore. A hybrid of media art and documentary, these filmed simulations are a radical confrontation with the reality of that which is other.

By addressing issues of racism, religious ostracism, the clash of ideologies and the elements of national identity, the works of Polish artist Artur Żmijewski destabilize the viewer. The fact that the artist is recognized internationally (MoMA, Venice Biennale, Istanbul, São Paulo, etc.) indicates the power of inquiry conveyed by such works in today's world.

The exhibition

The artist's first solo exhibition in Montreal, *Artur Żmijewski. Scenarios of Dissidence* is a reflection on the political in art. It comprises major works produced since 2001, including a major video installation (*Democracies*, 2009).

Some of these works explore the emergence and development of conflict from a confrontation with radical otherness. They work with the failure of dialogue and the impossibility of negotiation when ideologies are involved in the discussion, whether among groups or individuals. They explore the issue of violence in order to question our ways of *living together*.

Other videos focus on a negotiation between the artist and his subject. They are presented as opportunities to investigate human behaviour in relation to memory and identity (cultural, religious, national). Offering the viewer a more intimate experience, they reflect on the individual and on human vulnerability. Intrigued by flaws, shortcomings, mental inflexibility, the vulnerability of the body and the fragility of life, Artur Żmijewski creates a discourse from a position of dissent, free of the conventions of the dominant discourse or the mundane.

Some of the works

***Democracies*, 2009**

The installation *Democracies* comprises 20 short documentaries showing mass political and religious demonstrations and rallies in which participants display their agreement or disagreement with a cause or an event. These videos, made primarily in Europe between 2007 and 2009, include a demonstration against the Israeli occupation of the West Bank, a crowd of football fans in Germany, and a loyalist parade in Belfast. As these events entail a

variety of political and ideological allegiances, their simultaneous presentation creates a cacophony that embodies the contradictory nature of the confrontation of differing beliefs.

80064, 2004

In this short video, Artur Żmijewski convinces Jozef Tarnawa, a 92-year-old Auschwitz survivor, to restore his tattooed prisoner number. At the tattoo parlour, the man questions whether the number will be authentic once it has been refreshed. Although reticent, he recounts several details of his concentration camp experience. Following an argument with the artist, Tarnawa consents to the experiment but remains ambivalent about its outcome.

Repetition, 2005

A real feature film, *Repetition* (2005) presents a simulation in which the artist attempted to recreate the famous Stanford Prison Experiment, carried out by psychologist Philip Zimbardo in 1971. The experiment involved placing people in a prison setting and assigning them the role of prisoner or prison guard. Although the experiment was scheduled to last two weeks, it had to be stopped after six days because the participants were already exhibiting serious psychological side-effects. In *Repetition*, Żmijewski exposes power relations and examines the phenomenon of violence.

Collaboration with the Cinémathèque québécoise

Repetition (2005) will be screened at the Cinémathèque québécoise on Friday, November 5 at 5:30 p.m. The video will be preceded by *Itzik* (2003), and the screening will be followed by a discussion led by Francis Dupuis-Deri, professor in the [Political Science Department](#), with the curators in attendance **Both videos will also be shown daily at the Galerie de l'UQAM at 4:30 p.m.**

Publication

A bilingual publication on the exhibition is in the works and will be released in early February.

The artist

Artur Żmijewski lives and works in Warsaw, where he was born in 1966. His recent solo shows have included: MoMA (New York, USA), Cornerhouse (Manchester, U. K.), Kunsthaus Graz (Graz, Austria), Foksal Gallery (Warsaw, Poland), DAAD Galerie (Berlin, Germany), Institute of Modern Art (Brisbane, Australia), and Centre Georges Pompidou (Paris, France). His participation in the Polish pavilion at the 51st Venice Biennale was acclaimed in 2005, and his work has been presented at other major international events, such as the 11th Istanbul Biennial, Documenta 12 in Kassel, Germany and the Bienal de São Paulo in Brazil. In January 2010, Artur Żmijewski received the prestigious Ordway Prize, awarded to an artist whose work has had a significant impact on contemporary art.

The curators

Young curator **Véronique Leblanc** has a [Masters in Art Studies](#) from the Université de Québec à Montréal. She is interested in intervention practices and in procedural, contextual and relational practices as well as the links between art, ethics and politics. Her Master's thesis (UQAM) explored issues in the relationship to the other in the creative process in contemporary art, and she considers otherness as a key concept in the analysis of these practices. Her essays have been published in the journals [ETC Montréal](#) and [Espace](#)

[Sculpture](#). She currently works as a researcher at the Galerie de l'UQAM and the Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal.

Louise Déry holds a Ph.D. in art history and has been the director of the Galerie de l'UQAM since 1997. She has worked with numerous artists, including Manon de Pauw, Dominique Blain, Raphaëlle de Groot, Nancy Spero, David Altmejd, Shary Boyle, Daniel Buren, Giuseppe Penone, Sarkis, etc. She is interested in the relationship between body and language, the question of artistic engagement, and the international dissemination of Quebec art. She published the [first monograph on the artist David Altmejd](#) and curated his exhibition at the 2007 Venice Biennale. She was the first winner of the [Hnatyshyn Award](#) (2007) for her work as a curator. She is currently preparing a Michael Snow exhibition for Fresnoy, France.

Public activities

[Screening/discussion](#)

Date: November 5, 2010 at 5:30

Place: Cinémathèque québécoise, 335 De Maisonneuve East

Admission: adults \$7 / students \$6

Screening of the videos *Repetition* (2005) and *Itzik* (2003) in the theatre followed by a round table discussion with the curators, lead by **Francis Dupuis-Déri**, professor in the [Political Science Department](#).

[Noontime Contemporary Art](#)

Dates: Every Thursday at 1 p.m.

Place: Galerie de l'UQAM

Admission: free

A guide will be on hand to discuss the works and answer visitors' questions. Open to all. No reservation required.

[Guided tours of the exhibition](#)

For more information on free activities, contact Julie Bésile at 514-987-3000, ext. 1424 or at: belisle.julie@uqam.ca

Partners

[Canada Council for the Arts](#); [Corporation Québec - Pologne pour les arts](#); [Consulate General of the Republic of Poland in Montreal](#); [Cinémathèque québécoise](#)

Location and hours

[Galerie de l'UQAM](#)

Judith-Jasmin Pavilion, Room J-R120

1400 Berri St. (corner of Saint Catherine East), Montreal

Berri-UQAM metro

Tuesday to Saturday, noon to 6 p.m. – free admission

Information

Phone: 514 987-8421

www.galerie.uqam.ca

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