

## COLLECTIVE PORTFOLIO - 'KULTURA KRESU'

**Magdalena Siemaszko:** researcher, activist and social educator. Biologist and anthropologist, graduated from Warsaw University, combining the perspectives of environmental and social sciences and humanities, scientifically engaged with ecological conflict and social change. Socially engaged activist working with communities through different tools ranging from action research to practice of embodiment, choreography, body and movement work, and narrative. Through last years, along the ethnographic research, she moved towards developing different practices related to art-research approach, centered around social maps and choreographies, co-habiting interventions and inter-species intimacies. She has gained her experience while realizing different projects in diversified urban, rural and forest spaces in Poland, Copenhagen, Indonesia, Katalonia and Tanzania, e.g. at CIFOR and Warsaw University of Botanic Garden. She now lives in the rural eastern region of Poland (Podlasie), in the middle of Białowieża Forest, where she conducts ethnographic research related to the conflict around the logging of the forest. She participates in supporting local networks of cooperation, especially among women and animal activists, provides workshops empowering communities, observes and supports local resistance and negotiation activities and cocreates local artistic projects embedded in local practices (e.g. Kultura Kresu). She works in Center for Wetlands Conservation, coordinating project "Let's remember about wetlands", supporting local caregivers of small peatlands; realize project of Forest Intergenerational Network for Cultural Activization in Białowieża Forest (within European Solidarity Corps scholarship) and Forest Intervention Patrol (Civic Europe Capacity Building Programme). She forms Camp for Forest collective, association "House for Nature and Culture" and ecofeminist collective "Wypuszczone".

**Katarzyna Hertz:** filmmaker, visual and sound artist, researcher, founder of the non profit cultural organization Kultura Kresu (Enclaves), working on a transection of nature and culture in the context of Eastern and Central Poland (for now). Graduated from the University of Arts in Poznań, Poland, German Film and TV Academy in Berlin, currently undergoing an MFA in Philosophy at the Warsaw University. For the last 4 years, she has been developing artistic and collective practices in the region of Białowieża Forest and Podlasie region.

Short statement: For me, art is a personal method of translation and transgression.

It can be an excuse to be childish, to be allowed to ask most radical and nonsense questions, which has been my basic practice since the moment I have memories of life. It is a very simple method: based on the cognitive pattern starting with „and what if...?“, followed by „so what?“ and „why“ - I like to imagine things going extreme, crossing boundaries of my own confusion and existing schemes, preprogrammed patterns and limits of understanding reality. I like to visit places that evoke contradictory emotions at the same time and with the awareness of them working together: pleasure through terror; laughter through sadness; shock through comfort. I imagine this way of creating, as an ongoing war with the casualties of life, perpetual fight with a lazy, habitual mind, that seeks for safety, routine and optimization of energy. Using life, one's own self as a philosophical child actor, participating in the spectacle with the function of a disturber, interrupter, a glitch that spoils the illusion of fiction for the audience, that is how I see myself. Depending on the show, I can change my costumes and theme, charge with new infusions, but the basic motivation stays the same: to expose something. To juxtapose inside within the outside. I have always been interested in the possibility of expanding the individual, singular perception especially through the contemporary narrative structures and experimentation with form, usually by (attempts to) breaking it or absorbing its intended errors as main points of reference. Aberrations, pathologies, errors, dissimilarity, act for me as manifestations of nature's sense of humor, the so-called divine order. They fascinate and attract me, provoking to search for "evidence of chaos", or perhaps the grotesque logic of life. I am deeply interested in survival strategies, coping mechanisms, evolutionary adaptations both collective and individual, both human and other than human. I believe the beautiful balance lies somewhere between sound and silence, movement - stillness. During the last years, working with spaces of sound and rhythm, but also other senses, like smell, touch, taste have become my main focus of interest. I would like to continue developing into that direction, with undergoing projects (for example "Vacationends",

"Kraina Kresu", "Soundbath, bathsound"), while alongside continuing with other film and writing projects.

## SELECTED WORKS

**1) VACATION FROM HELL** - a nomadic performative piece, a traveling spa for the contemporary soul. 2019/2021, dir. Katarzyna Hertz,  
with: Magdalena Siemaszko, Weronika Lewandowska, Natasza Topor, Justyna Kisielewska, Ewa Hubar, Agnieszka Bućkowska; Sound: Monika Pich, Katarzyna Hertz  
2021 - September (planned), Baerenzwinger, Berlin, Germany, curated by Maja Smoszna; 2020 - August, City Gallery Arsenal, Białystok, Podlasie, Poland, curated by Monika Szewczyk

Exhibition text by Katarzyna Hertz, Olga Cielemeńska:

Refrigerium is a waiting room for souls. A place of cooling and temporary consolation. In the shadows, seekers of purifying rituals, sedation and escape from the overwhelming fever gather. On the top of the volcano stands the Tuner. When a fire stirs up silence, she calls the matter to life. At the foot of the volcano the ashy remnants of everyday things are extinguished. In this frozen landscape, female figures move. They have not noticed that time has shifted to a non-temporal dimensions and expectation has become a practice of life. The Brewer loops hasty gestures to host the stranger. She offers a promise of abundance and attention that cannot be fulfilled. The Hybrid Maker creates signs-warnings. The light leads to the mother's belly. From all over the world, they summon the whispers of the heater, the kennels, the dream openers, the preachers. In the guts of a worn out power plant, in the fumes of oil and metals, a cloud rises. Burning relieves bodies of exhaustion.

The work was realized over the following 3 days, every day for exactly 6 hours, in the building of the former hydroelectric power plant in Białystok. Using the architecture and topography of the existing space, its peculiarities, scars, character - in general the whole "body" of the building, and treating it as such, the staging (choreography and scenography) created by me and the artists collaborating with me was supposed to release the demons - energies sleeping in it, to lead through a specific ritual of purification, refrigeration. By means of subtly and precisely arranged actions and interferences (e.g. using the smell emitted by the wooden floor in the main hall, which for years absorbed the oils driving the mechanism of the power plant, and mixing it with a very strong scent of cut lilies, working with light, emphasizing the structural elements of the interior, and the acoustics of the building and its dimensions), we managed to wake up to life an oneiric organism, in which the planes of individual and collective experience intersected. Each of the female performers was assigned a specific role and stayed in a closed fragment of space, however their rituals and gestures took place in time synchronization based on sound signals (drowned audio tracks, voice signals, mechanical sounds). Guest-participant through his/hers active presence and decisions (to be an active or passive participant; which routes to choose), co-created the atmosphere of the common, shared „body”, and relieved his/hers own tensions, expectations and habits.

Visual materials: <https://vimeo.com/453785217/0576c01d04>,

<https://vimeo.com/445801948/11c9edbf8>

Press: <http://blokmagazine.com/podlasian-vacation-from-hell/>

## **2) HYBRIDS AND HUMANS 2021 FIELD WORK, DOCUMENTARY FILM**

"Hybrids and humans" starts as an experimental documentary film but becomes an interdisciplinary philosophical, eco-sociocultural study about fear, safety and aberration. It begins with us, artists/filmmakers and researchers, going out to the streets of Białowieża, a village in the middle of the Białowieża Forest, one of the last fragments of "pristine" European lowlands, a uniquely biodiverse, UNESCO protected zone. A few months ago, a she-wolf appeared in town, abandoning her culturally assigned sphere – the forest and crossing the unwritten boundaries of between nature and "law of the jungle." Her behavior confused and scared the local community and scientists. The wolf plays with dogs. She trespasses. Is she a hybrid – a mix of a wolf and a dog? This would mean crossing the scientific ideas of the purity of the original species. Will she be put in a rehabilitation center? Killed? She will never become "a true wolf", neither can she stay with us. But why not? We ask local residents if they have seen the wolf, to later dive into the common psyche of the pulsating, social organism, the contradictory opinions, projections, prejudices, imaginations and beliefs about the natural world. Language, having developed evolutionarily from a crave for (explanatory) patterns, is responsible for ideas of "protection", "revitalization" and care. Listening and observing gestures, we adopt the perspectives of dogs and the forest. Both become translators and witnesses to our "hybrid-human case" on the edge of the forest laboratory.

Visual Materials: <https://vimeo.com/523550166>

## **3) MULTI-SPECIES ETHNOGRAPHIES, INTERVENTIONS AND ARTISTIC-RESEARCH PRACTICES TOGETHER WITH THE COMMUNITIES OF BIAŁOWIEŻA FOREST (2019 - ONGOING)**

Białowieża Forest, known as "the last primeval forest in Europe" is a space where different worlds intermingle, values, traditions and borders between what is human, wild, new, old, peripheral and globalized clash. It is also a field of constant negotiations and conflicts, and one of the key issues is the borderline between nature and culture and the possibility of sustaining or negating this dichotomy. The apogee of years of friction became the conflict over the logging of old and precious forest fragments that erupted in 2017 and ended up in the European Court, attracting worldwide attention and drawing, among others, tumults of activists, scientists, artists, and others who wanted to defend the forest from logging. At the same time, an equally important group speaking in the discussion were representatives of local communities, long living in and with the forest, whose identity has been built over the years largely on the basis of forest management. The history of the locals is simultaneously marked by a history of war, displacement, migration, colonial relations and class divisions. Hence, the new orders associated with the conflict become a source of insecurity for the local residents. All this together creates a very dynamic socio-political field, which I have been observing and researching for the past two years. In my ethnographic research, I focus primarily on practices of reclaiming political agency in the local community and redefining identity in the context of global intersections, as well as practices of care and mourning, involving humans and non-humans. At the same time, in the last year I have been developing practices of action research and artistic research, exploring among others the issues of boundaries, negotiation, difference and cohabitation. Recently, I started a project called '*Everyday Choreographies of Teremiski*' (Teremiski is the little village I live in), that explores the social map of everyday rituals, rhythms and paths drawn by inhabitants (human and non-human) and its effects and political potentials, materialized in the space of the village, meadows and houses. Following the observation, I also propose interventions and actions (e.g. using walking, space-sharing and composition methodologies) that allow experimenting with the delimited boundaries and the potential of their shifts. Moreover, I am also focused on exploring and proposing the practises of care, inclusive for very different actors present in the locality. I work

especially with women, through experimenting with various embodied and care-giving methods (inspired by contact improvisation, culture of consent, culture of circles, tantra, radical politics) that serve the community-building and mutual support creation (realized through *Wypuszczone camps*, *Circles of Forest Witches* and *Forest Intervention Patrol*). The other focus is *More-than-human Intimacies*, exploring the possibilities of relations, cohabiting, closeness, communication, bond-building and sexuality among non-humans: animals (mostly dogs and mice) and plants (trees and vegetables) - themselves and with humans through the embodied, affective, *queer ecology* approach and everyday-life documentation.

#### **4) KRAINA KRESU/ENDLANDS 2020/2021**

RESEARCH, FIELD WORK/FIELD RECORDING

In this project we have been collecting sounds (field recording) and conversations with a variety of people living and working in Podlasie Province. The idea behind it, was to capture local ecology in transgression, in a continuous process of transformation and change. The causes behind the processes of entropy are wide: economical, seasonal, political, individual, physical, emotional and environmental. We talk to people representing both modern, progressive views, as well as with those traditionalists, who claim the rule of human and need of control over the ecosystems. We talk to the old and young; alcoholics, housewives, scientist, beekeepers, shamans, all sorts of people in relation to their life in local nature. When composing the episodes we intertwine their voices with sounds: human and nature-produced, creating long melodic compositions that together create a story of periodicity, undulations, permeations. Our goal is to build a whimsical archive or documentation of disappearance, decay and hope. Being painfully aware of the climate change consequences I feel a duty to be a bare witness, maybe trying to preserve pieces of the „trial” in a cosmic sense.

media: <https://www.facebook.com/Kraina-Kresu-103129078422295>,  
<https://radiokapital.pl/people/kasia-hertz>