



EQUALITY SIGNS

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After I had finished painting “Manifesto” I started to wonder if I was still capable painting attractive pictures and if I still wanted to use art to say or do the same as I had done so far – admits Marek Pavellek.

Hate that inspires

Mateusz Gędzba talks to the artist and author of the piece, featured in this bulletin, about transforming internet trolling and hate speech into both a cycle of pictures and into his work as an activist and artist. .

How do you believe we should define beauty?

Beauty is certainly something subjective. You decide if something is beautiful on the basis of your own experiences, for example pleasant associations, peasant smells and sounds etc. Your brain previously registered that you liked something and that is why you perceive it as beautiful. I think that beauty can only arise from pleasant associations, from pleasant sensations.

Do you consider your paintings in the “Manifesto” cycle to be beautiful?

You will see these paintings in my studio facing the wall. I don't look at them at all because they unleash a mass of negative emotions inside me. For me personally they have a negative tone. I would never buy such a painting and I would never hang it on my own wall.

That seems to be a pretty lousy advert for them...

There are people who think these paintings are beautiful. Unlike me they haven't experienced the background to them which is brimming with negative emotions and formed the basis of “Manifesto”.

So where did you get the idea for this project, considering that it's based on negative emotions?

The idea had been brewing in my mind for several years. It stems from my thoughts and experiences as a gay man. Initially, some five or six years ago, I was planning to create a series of homo-erotic images, which were intended to be attractive nudes. When the political scene changed and things in Poland started to become strange, and odd

people started to make themselves heard, for example on the internet, I remembered experiences that I thought I'd forgotten long ago. I realised then that hate would be a good foundation for this project. For almost a year I ravenously feasted on hate on various websites. Every morning I fired up my computer, read the news and watched people go crazy in the comments. I looked at the profiles of the authors of these comments. I discovered that they were active on various right-wing websites, amongst others.

What do you think? How many of these people were real people and how many were trolls?

Judging by their profiles, a great deal of them were genuine. The majority, it seems. I think that the common factor was frustration. They made themselves feel better by lashing out at others. They wanted to feel invincible. They had a common enemy, although this wasn't the source of their frustration.

Were you tempted to enter into dialogue with these people?

There was a moment when I realised that one of the haters was an LGBT person. It turned out that he was pretending to be me and was writing to people. I decided to tell people

in the group he was active in what he had been doing. I felt that certain lines had been crossed. I didn't want to criticise him, I was only concerned that he had been interfering in my very private affairs. With hindsight I realise that there wasn't much point in doing this. It turned out that this person simply craved the attention of others, and that what I did brought him even more “glory”. He continued to turn up the heat. I, on the other hand, decided to completely switch off. Then I got such a kick up the arse that it made me even stronger.

Which picture was the hardest to paint?

The picture of the cross. On the whole it's the most controversial for audiences. At exhibitions it always causes the most commotion. It tells a story involving my family. The situation that inspired it took place one Easter Sunday over dinner. To cut a long story short, a member of my family, a person with a very deep faith, really humiliated me at the table. The whole event completely divided our family. Since then some of us haven't spoken to each other at all. Personally, I find this picture very painful, but I think that of the whole series it's the best in terms of its composition and graphics. However, I'm proudest of the picture “This isn't a country for weak people”.

If you could turn back time and decide again whether to paint “Manifesto”, would you undertake this task again?

Absolutely. Working on it was a sort of cleansing, an internal reckoning with myself. For me the end of this story will be the exhibition to mark the opening of the Krakow Equality Centre DOMEQ and an online auction of my pictures, and I'd like the proceeds to go to organisations that help people in the LGBT+ community.

When you started working on “Manifesto” did you know straight away that you would paint ten pictures?

No, I didn't have such plans. I assumed that the pictures would be the same size and would be in the form of a banner or poster because I wanted to take them with me on the Pride March.

How did you realise that the picture that turned out to be the last one of the project would be the last?

The last picture I painted was the one called “This isn't

a country for weak people”. It was kind of the icing on the cake. I talked about it and showed it to those who were closest to me. It turned out that what it had to say touched each of them, regardless of their orientation. It had a sort of universal message, which everyone could relate to. The picture doesn't divide people into gay and others. The Polish flag is intended to unite all of us, although this maxim refers to the experiences of each and every one of us, to moments when we feel as though we can't cope in some social situation or other.

What's the most irritating question people ask you at exhibition previews?

I'm annoyed when people ask me how long it takes me to create a picture. There isn't a simple answer. People want to know the exact number of hours, they want to think of painting as like working some sort of “shift”, but creating a picture can sometimes take an hour, and sometimes two months.

Do you paint during the day or at night?

Definitely during the day. I most enjoy painting in the morning. In the spring and summer the light is very bright and my studio is on the south side of the building. This means that I can paint until 13.00, but then I must wait. I can't work at night. Once a picture is finished, I look at it at all times of day, because it's always changing depending on the light. If I feel that it looks good at any time of day, then for me it's finished.

The common denominator in “Manifesto” is hate. Have you thought about creating an “anti-Manifesto”, whose common denominator is love?

No. That would be too easy. For me “Manifesto” is my most difficult project so far and the first in which I've expressed myself sincerely. Previously I had created attractive things. The sort that people like but don't arouse emotions, and that people don't talk about in the same way as about this project. After I had finished painting “Manifesto” I started to wonder if I was still capable painting attractive pictures and if I still wanted to use art to say or do the same as I had done so far.

Continuation of the interview on znakirownosci.org.pl

DOM EQ

for all of us

The history of the Signs of Equality Federation proves that working together can bear wonderful fruit. An example is the DOM EQ Equality Centre.

Our story begins long before the federation was founded. And it also sounds rather trite: we shared the same dreams. – *Several years ago people from Kraków's LGBT+ organisations came to the conclusion that in this city there wasn't a place for them in a strictly physical sense. A place that would allow them to work in comfort and that would also support them in building a strong LGBT+ community.* – said the president of the federation Łukasz Siemieniec in the first edition of our bulletin. There were various ideas for creating a Kraków Equality Centre, which was intended to be a shared space for the LGBT+ community. However, they all had the same aim. To start with there were just a few activists, but today there are nine non-profit organisations and informal groups in the federation which work for the LGBT+ community (we introduce them below).

Finally, on 1 October 2016 the Signs of Equality Federation came into being, Poland's first umbrella organisation created with the LGBT+ community in mind. From the very beginning it directed its efforts towards creating a Kraków Equality Centre. This wasn't an easy task, requiring us to find allies, to find out the needs of the local LGBT+ community (and on the basis of these to decide what the function and purpose of the centre would be), bring activists together and secure funding. We succeeded in the latter thanks to the support and trust of the Stefan Batory Foundation. The money that we obtained from this organisation allowed us to rent a suitable house, alter it and partially adapt it to the needs of people with disabilities. Opening the centre was not the sole aim of the federation. It continues to aspire to create and integrate an LGBT+ community. The members of the federation put a great deal of work into building an open society which is diverse and free from any form of discrimination. Thanks to them our community is becoming more involved, visible, and also aware of its identity and rights.

What does the community itself expect of the centre? The results of research that the federation carried out at the beginning of last year show that most of all people want it to be a friendly and open place. Not only for LGBT+ people, but also for people close to them, their families and other residents of Kraków. Four out of five people surveyed said that setting up a place like DOM EQ (although at the time of the research this name hadn't been chosen yet) would be essential for the development of the local community and for building relations between lesbians, gay men and bisexual, transgender and queer people as well as their friends. The research also told us a lot about the LGBT+ community itself in Kraków. These are people for whom it is essential that links between other LGBT+ people be maintained as well as people who follow news about the situation of these people in Poland and throughout the world.

People's individual stories also make it clear that there is a need for a place such as DOM EQ. Dawid Wojtyczka – a federation volunteer – recently shared his experiences on Facebook: – *The smiley boy you see today has come a long way to get where he is. And with hindsight I know that it would have been easier for me if I had been able to have a normal chat with someone about this – without fear of being rejected, judged, put down or humiliated. Because along the way I've experienced all of these feelings more than once. At that time there were no places like this, and there are still too few. But soon this will change!* (...) [DOM EQ – editorial note] *It'll be a place where the teenaged Dawid would have thrived.*

Dawid has started a crowdfunding initiative that raises money for the centre. Patryk Pat Chlewiec – the chief editor of Vogule Poland – has also been involved in it. The story of this well-known journalist is particularly moving, and concerns his relationship with a man who died shortly after telling his parents that he was gay. His heart attack most probably resulted from a congenital defect and stress arising from the reaction of those closest to him. – *He simply wanted to have a supportive family, a feeling of security* – writes Patryk, and he said he was convinced that the Kraków DOM EQ would play a role here.

After these few years it's time to bring the chapter in which the Kraków Equality Centre was set up to an end. The next part will involve the things that will happen right inside it, because we will share the DOM EQ together. The date of our new beginning is 15 June 2019. Let's hope there will be lots of other success stories!

/ Dariusz Janusz Krupa



The LGBTQ+ choir Krakofonia

Let's sing with pride!

We are an amateur choir that brings together people who identify themselves as LGBTQ+ as well as their friends. This year we celebrate our fifth anniversary. / 2019 is a record year for us not only in terms of the number of singers (there are now almost fifty of us!), but also in terms of the number of concerts. We sang at a service to mark IDAHOT, at a concert with Die Mainsirenen from Frankfurt, in Sopot at Gdańsk, Gdynia and Sopot Pride and even at the Tatoofest convention in Kraków. But the best is yet to come; in autumn we'll be giving our anniversary concert, complete with lots lovely songs and surprises. We'll be taking you on a wonderful journey through the last five decades of LGBTQ+ music. We're preparing hard for the concert and promise great fun for everyone!

www.krakofonia.org - chorkrakofonia@gmail.com - @LGBTQkrakofonia



Trans-Fusion, a Foundation that supports Transgender People

Everyone has the right to be themselves

The vision of the Trans-Fusion foundation is absolute respect for the human rights of transgender people in Poland, to ensure them equality in society and to make sure that they don't experience any discrimination in any area of life, particularly as far as respect for identity and gender expression are concerned.

transfuzja.org - kontakt@transfuzja.org - @FundacjaTransFuzja

We did it! After years of efforts and satisfying work (referred to next) we're opening Krakow Center of Equality DOM EQ. We invite you all.



15 June - the opening of DOM EQ!



Here we'd like to thank everyone who has contributed towards setting up the centre. We value the support we have received, all your work, time, words of encouragement and motivation! We are particularly grateful to our wonderful volunteers, our member organisations and firms who have become our friends (we cannot forget to IG and HSBC who have offered us both material and personal support).

May this be a place that opens its doors to everyone. A friendly and inclusive place. A place full of acceptance and that teaches acceptance.

Together we'll create an LGBT+ community!

- this is the slogan that guides the Signs of Equality Federation. Below we present all of our member organisations and their priorities.



The Bears of Poland Association

Bears are friendly "beasts" – they'll only attack you with a big hug. Since 2009 their "safe haven" has been the Bears of Poland Association – an organisation that until then hadn't been represented in the Polish LGBT+ community. / The association currently has over 200 members who work actively to integrate and promote the bear community in Poland and abroad. It runs health and education projects for bears and their ever growing number of supporters. There are centres for Bears of Poland activists operating in eight Polish cities, which organise local, national and international initiatives and events for the bear community. / The association is open for all those who want to join a crowd of happy guys with plenty of positive bear energy!

bearsofpoland.pl - stowarzyszenie@bearsofpoland.pl - @BearsOfPoland

The Culture for Tolerance Foundation

The Culture for Tolerance Foundation was founded in 2005 to promote an attitude of openness and tolerance towards people of a non-heterosexual identity through educational and artistic work. We are the oldest LGBT+ organisation in Kraków that is still active. The aims the foundation sets itself are to encourage and promote the artistic work of gay, bisexual and transsexual people, to raise awareness of gender and sexual diversity and to build an open civil society. The foundation is currently undergoing a lot of organisational changes and will soon relaunch with a completely new programme. Keep up to date with what we're doing so that you don't miss any of the Culture for Tolerance events!

@Kultura dla Tolerancji



Stowarzyszenie Tęczówka

The Tęczówka Association

This organisation works for LGBT+ people. We are concerned with teaching society, including promoting tolerance and counteracting discrimination, particularly with regard to sexuality and gender identity. Our work centres around the social integration of gay, bisexual and transgender people. Our aim is also to promote health – mainly through HIV/AIDS prevention. We do outreach work, run support groups and we organise meetings and events (for example Coming Out Day). Since 2018 we have been the main organiser of Katowice Pride.

teczowka.org.pl - kontakt@teczowka.org.pl - @stowarzyszenie.teczowka



Polistrefa Diversity Foundation

We'll create a society that doesn't discriminate, in which everyone is treated equally.

We are an independent nationwide non-governmental organisation that deals with counteracting discrimination and promoting human rights. We have been working since 2010 for people who are perceived stereotypically and who experience discrimination, particularly with regard to their religion or lack of religion, nationality and ethnic origin, sex, psychosexual orientation and gender identity. We organise training sessions, workshops, discussion and networking meetings, conferences, "living libraries" and a "Place of Worship Night". We carry out research and write reports and recommendations for public institutions. We provide those who experience discrimination with psychological and legal support.

www.polistrefa.pl - fundacja@polistrefa.pl - @fundacja.polistrefa

And what will happen after the opening? We are planning to launch a legal and psychological support programme, to organise events of an educational and antidiscriminatory nature, as well as cultural and artistic events. During the weeks following the opening the member organisations will start their work in the centre DOM EQ.



We encourage you to follow our programme of events on our webpage www.znakiorownosci.org.pl and our fan page on Facebook. @FederacjaZnakowRownosci

And don't forget our address: ul. Czyżówka 43 (near Matecznego Roundabout).



"One World"

An HIV/AIDS Prevention and Support Association

We are an association that deals with the prevention of HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases. Our philosophy is to accept our service users, to have a non-judgemental attitude towards them and to raise awareness of how people can minimise the risk of HIV infection or other STIs. We also offer HIV support to people who have just been diagnosed, people who have been infected for a long time, people who show signs of HIV-phobia and those who have been sexually abused. We are a diverse team made up of people from various professions. There are doctors, laboratory diagnosticians, psychologists, psychotherapists and lawyers, amongst others. We run consultation and diagnosis drop-in clinics in Kraków and Rzeszów, offering free and anonymous HIV tests.

jedenswiat.krakow@gmail.com - @StowarzyszenieJedenSwiat



We, the Parents

An association for the mothers, fathers and allies of LGBTQIA people

The parents LGBTQIA people are the straight people who are most often affected by homophobia, transphobia and other prejudices. We are an effective mouthpiece for LGBTQIA people thanks to our individual experiences and general values. / Above all we are here to help – you can call us, write to us, come to our monthly open meetings, share your fears and listen to the experiences of others who have been in a similar situation and accept that their child is different. Our help is directed towards LGBTQIA people and their parents, i.e. to everyone involved in the family crisis that is coming out. / We appear in public and in the media, defending the dignity of all LGBTQIA people in the name of love, truth and family values.

www.myrodzice.org - info@myrodzice.org - @myrodziceosobLGBTQIA



The Faith and the Rainbow Foundation

Do not let your hearts be troubled. My Father's house has many rooms

We work for gay, bisexual and transgender Christians, speaking out for the complete acceptance of LGBTQ people in society. We believe that every sexual orientation and gender identity is a gift from God and can be reconciled with one's faith. We oppose every form of discrimination of LGBT people, especially that motivated by religion. / We strive towards the creation of a friendly society in which Polish LGBTQ Christians feel completely accepted (and also comfortable with their sexuality) and in which they will be able to develop their faith and spiritual life. We are also trying to bring about changes in the teaching of issues related to the acceptance of same-sex relationships, relationships involving transgender people and we aim for families started by LGBT people to be given full recognition. We believe that in altering the Church's awareness we'll contribute to increasing the level of tolerance and acceptance in society as a whole.

fundacja@wiaraiteczka.pl - Kraków: krakow@wiaraiteczka.pl - @WiaraiTecza