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Krystian Lupa met Zbysław Maciejewski¹ during the entrance exams to the Academy of Fine Arts in Kraków in 1963. The above photo from a cycling trip was taken two years later, when Maciejewski visited Lupa’s family home in Jastrzębie-Zdrój. Their mutual infatuation and fascination with each other reached a peak around that time. Shortly before, their friendship had entered a phase that would change everything. To put it simply, they had fallen in love. This love would significantly shape their view on life and artistic work. But before it could come to this, they gradually got to know each other over four semesters, slowly accepting the impulses they had previously suppressed.

Lupa was initially irritated by Maciejewski’s apparent provincial immaturity, his gestures that those around them considered infantile, and his unshakeable belief in his exceptionality. Paradoxically, Lupa’s irritation was indicative of his own complexes that he sought to hide from his new acquaintances in Kraków. Lupa was also three years older than Maciejewski and himself came from a far smaller town in the Silesian provinces. Maciejewski, meanwhile, seemed to take little notice of fashionable artistic poses and instead sought to develop his own style. Everyone noticed the exceptional talent of this lad from Tarnów, but his mannerisms proved too much to take for the group of young, sceptical existentialists that Lupa wanted to join. This is how he perceived Zbysław at the time: ‘fearful yet arrogant, with movements that were oddly soft and circling [...]. He was scandalously different from the rest of us...’² He could annoy people with his behaviour and irritate them with his ‘mummy’s boy’ voice, while his cohort viewed him with playful tolerance. But somehow Krystian Lupa came to spend increasing amounts of time with him...

In the 1960s, Lupa and Maciejewski were young lads who dreamed of becoming artists. Their acquaintance was built on incessant, creative ferment, as they inspired each other with ideas and sensibilities. In this article, I would like to concentrate on the various youthful

1 Zbysław Marek Maciejewski was born in 1946 in Pohulanka. He spent his childhood and youth in Tarnów before studying at the Academy of Fine Arts (Akademia Sztuk Pięknych – ASP) in Kraków. He graduated in 1969, having studied under visual arts professor Waclaw Taranczewski. Maciejewski was a lecturer at the ASP in Kraków and at the European Academy of Arts in Warsaw. He died in 1999 in Kraków.

2 Krystian Lupa, ‘ZB – wspomnienie o Zbysławie Maciejewskim’ [‘ZB: Memories of Zbysław Maciejewski’], digital document in the possession of the author, n.p.

projects, the literature, art and film-based games they spent their time on together. These activities provided mutual inspiration, and this formed the foundations of their artistic careers. Through these projects and games, Lupa and Maciejewski creatively transformed the realities surrounding them and, crucially, shaped their own personalities.

Another photograph taken at almost the same time shows the yard of Krystian Lupa's primary school. His parents lived and worked at the school. His mother, Weronika Lupa, is on the left, while his aunt, Flora Freiherr, is on the right. Everyone in the photograph is enjoying freshly picked currants. I want to use this idyllic image as a springboard to the very end of the twentieth century – 1999 to be exact, a critical juncture in the lives of Lupa and Maciejewski. For some, this point in time could be read as the end of the story I am telling here.

In 1999, Zbysław Maciejewski was diagnosed with a brain tumour. The outstanding painter and professor of the Academy of Fine Arts died a few months later. Krystian Lupa only learned of his friend's illness late on and managed to visit him just a few times before his death. They had long since gone their separate ways in both their private and artistic lives, although they continued to meet up occasionally. The dramatic circumstances of Maciejewski's death evoked in Lupa intense memories of the early days of their friendship. He recorded them in his diary, noting them down following his visits to the ailing Maciejewski, after his funeral and on All Saints' Day. These notes came to form a narrative that Lupa titled 'ZB'.

It is no secret that Lupa keeps a diary. Every day he writes up his experiences and any ideas related to ongoing theatre projects on his computer. Excerpts from the diaries have appeared as collections of short stories or in notes accompanying his new productions. The short story 'ZB' exists only as a computer file, however, perhaps because it is particularly intimate. I would like to respect this and therefore limit myself to saying that, in my view, it is an exceptionally sophisticated artistic narrative drawn from Lupa's own memory. It conjures up a landscape that is not necessarily nostalgic, but rather is full of dynamic images and emotions that have not faded with time but – perhaps because they have been committed to text – continue to pulsate with exceptional force. For me, this short story is another vehicle enabling time-travel back to events from several decades ago, back to stories that continue and to some degree remain present.

11 October 1999, 15:33. He had two scars: one from having his appendix removed in Wodzisław – he almost paid with his life for that operation because it turned out that his appendix had already ruptured and the pus had spread to his intestines... [...] We were on tenterhooks for three days, then I visited him in hospital ... then he came to Jastrzębie ... the wound refused to heal ... a gap kept opening between the bottom two stitches, a hole into his stomach from which pus continued to flow... It was a strange situation, this body could fail at any moment... I would change his dressings, then we would make love in the school office ... carefully and with a sense of fear mixed with a degree of disgust that this body could rupture like his appendix ... and the sticky yellow pus would come flooding out. Then we went to the film set in Bolków... No, not quite! Before that, his father

Teofil came to Jastrzębie with angry wrinkles etched on his forehead just as I was drying photographs. They were photos of a cycling trip to Ruptawa and from the garden, after returning from the trip. Collecting currants with mother and Flora... Zbyszek is holding a small cup, tipping it playfully... Soon afterwards, during the night, he had an attack... I found him in the morning in the garden where he had fled in excruciating pain... But then the wound finally healed over... The second scar ran perpendicularly beneath his chest, taking a broad diagonal path – this was from having his spleen removed... A mysterious scar that I first saw perhaps a year after the operation... Everything is hidden from me, I learned of the illness so late on... [...] And now everything is there on his body. So why do I not think of him but of his scars as I sit on a church pew? Perhaps tracing former wounds offers better, easier access – to this being masked by death, to this face that now lies cold, expressionless and so grand? [...] So I returned to the scars as if, in the midst of it all, they could offer something unchanging and secure. Meanwhile, the priest gave a eulogy for Zbysław Maciejewski, a great artist whom he had the honour to call a close acquaintance. A mass was held... An angelic voice sang again ... but it no longer brought me to tears.³

This passage is taken from Krystian Lupa's now digital diary. Above is an image of its 'analogue' origins: handwritten notes in exercise books that reveal a genuine palimpsest of crossings-out, additions and not always legible notes and drawings. Lupa's notebooks from his student days do not possess a regular structure, as they instead constitute a loose, hybrid form written around lecture notes. They also include numerous descriptions of his dreams. Part of the notebooks from the past is closely connected to one of the rituals of his friendship with Maciejewski, who also recorded his dreams. Every week they met at the Miodosytnia pub on Mały Rynek in Kraków, where they would hold an 'oneiric' review. Whoever was judged to have the most interesting notes from his dreams got to drink for free. 'There was never any significant controversy as we both treated it as a bit of fun,' Lupa recalls.⁴ The two friends had a series of rituals and activities that took the form of creative play. This developed further in their shared flat. They recorded their first literary efforts and notes relating to films they had watched in their notebooks, too. Later they would share their thoughts.

Both men were cinephiles. They went to the latest films and were regulars at the arthouse cinema Sztuka, among others. They watched and discussed passionately the latest films by Bergman, Visconti, Antonioni, Truffaut and Godard – the undoubted male masters of the cinematic canon. However, nothing inspired their cinematic imagination as much as their discussions about women in cinema – great divas like Brigitte Bardot, Marilyn Monroe and Greta Garbo, alongside other female icons of their age, some of whom have been forgotten today: Emmanuelle Riva, Delphine Seyrig, Monica Vitti and Jeanne Moreau... They formed a genuine cinematic canon that shaped the young Maciejewski and Lupa. Their fascination inspired artworks, as did the photos they exchanged of, for example, Bardot, which then led to further works and portrait sessions.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

Lupa's lithography and Maciejewski's canvas, both from the mid-1960s or thereabouts, are just two examples of many versions of the same female motif. They each transformed the image of the film star in their own way, offering interpretations of Bardot from their own perspective. What was crucial for Lupa was to analyse Bardot's acting, thus highlighting the nuances and subtleties that offered a direct reference to her personality. As he wrote in one of his notebooks:

To a large extent, Bardot's acting involves creating an image, a work more closely resembling autobiographically inclined writing than the representational artform of acting as traditionally understood. Bardot's art, like the work of other great film actors, creates new values. It enriches our understanding of the phenomenon of humans' internal psyche, enabling us to access ourselves in the artistic realm as both tools and subjects of knowledge simultaneously. It is thus hardly surprising that Bardot's main concern in her statements about working in film relate to the issue of honesty and the truth of communicating one's own personality, just as the main concern of painters, musicians and writers is individuality and creative originality – and, above all, the honesty of this originality.⁵

While it was Lupa who infected his friend with the cult of Bardot, we should not overlook the fact that Maciejewski took a somewhat different view of her. As Krzysztof Lipka, Lupa and Maciejewski's mutual friend, recalls, 'Zbyszek was easily and willingly infected by his friends' enthusiasm, and so while this originated in Krystian's influence, I remember perfectly well how Zbyszek delighted in Bardot and her style. This is the key word: style – it was never solely about beauty. Zbyszek had an exceptionally keen sensibility for questions of style, gesture, mimicry, for the theatre that great women, whether in life or on screen, could extract from their own bodies.'⁶

Lupa's adoration of Bardot goes back to the time before he met Maciejewski, since he was infected with a passion for her by a secondary school classmate. Lupa sought to transfer this fascination with her to Maciejewski. Indeed, Zbysław was not entirely convinced, as he preferred the more subtle Marilyn Monroe or the intriguing Kalina Jędrusik. He was the first person to convince Krystian of her charms, despite his strong resistance! And so on... Lupa and Maciejewski's friendship thus featured a regular cast of actresses. I mention their attempts to outdo each other in their adoration of female film stars not just because it formed part of their friendship, but also because of their hidden meaning. The beginnings of their acquaintance as students at the Academy of Fine Arts not only involved establishing common artistic ground but also slowly coming to terms with their non-normative and, in Lupa's case, unaccepted sexuality. Brigitte Bardot, a woman, an

⁵ Fragment of a sketch dated 21 April 1967, in Krystian Lupa, 'Fragmenty z archiwum rękopisów' ['Fragments from an Archive of Manuscripts'], *Didaskalia*, 10 (2010), p. 20.

⁶ Jerzy Wojciechowski, *Zbysław Marek Maciejewski. Ryciny i rysunki z daru Jana Krzysztofa Kamińskiego w kolekcji Gabinetu Rycin Biblioteki Uniwersyteckiej w Warszawie* [*Zbysław Marek Maciejewski: Prints and Drawings from the Gift of Jan Krzysztof Kamiński in the Collection of the University of Warsaw Library Print Room*], exhibition catalogue (Warsaw 2001), p. 41.

unattainable star and object of desire, formed part of a 'triangle' in their relationship. She served as a medium for the desire between the two men, thus providing a certain alibi and, later, a cultural form for giving expression to a different sexuality that both men were initially ashamed of admitting to. From today's perspective, we might argue that the role of the female film icons in Lupa and Maciejewski's relationship could be interpreted in terms of what Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick termed 'homosocial desire' in the 1980s. The two men's bond to Bardot is ambivalent, although it is difficult to ignore the sense that this female figure was not simply a means for communicating strictly artistic ideas. This becomes quite evident in the aforementioned short story 'ZB', at the point where Lupa recalls the winter break following their third semester of studies, with the friendship with Maciejewski slowly turning into an infatuation:

Towards the end of the winter break we built a huge statue of snow in the garden. It was a female figure with a long neck like an African woman, wearing rings, with breasts like melons and a magic black triangle in her loins. All our senses were driven towards masculinity, yet we built a small goddess, a woman, out of snow... Everything was in flux and we didn't know who we really were...⁷

Let us skip forward to the 1970s. While no longer living together, Lupa and Maciejewski remain in an intense friendship. Maciejewski dedicates himself to painting and gains the recognition of artistic circles in Kraków and later throughout the country. Lupa, meanwhile, is still unclear about what he wants to do. After studying at ASP, he turned his hand to cinema at the Łódź Film School. In both milieux, erotic themes, particularly homosexual takes on the subject, were explored increasingly openly in comparison to what was happening just a few years earlier. This does not mean that the approaches were any less subtle, however. Lupa offers the following take on the circumstances surrounding their artistic projects at the time: 'Homosexuality was simultaneously hidden and openly expressed. It was like a rare exotic flower: a cultural emanation, an artistic genre.'⁸ One example is Maciejewski's work *Trzy Gracje* [*The Three Graces*], created around 1971.

The illustrations are formed of six stills from a documentary film made by the budding film student Lupa in the studio of the increasingly established artist Maciejewski. The ideas contained in the images and the accompanying film open up a wealth of possible interpretations. First, Maciejewski is clearly in dialogue with the classical and canonical takes on this motif, namely Raphael and Rubens, as he conducted his particular 'gender substitution'⁹ through his depiction of the titular minor goddesses of beauty and joy. Second, Maciejewski is clearly in dialogue

⁷ Lupa, 'ZB'.

⁸ Krystian Lupa, 'Poza wspólną wiarą' ['Outside the Common Faith'], interview by Marcin Kościelniak, *Didaskalia*, 15 (2015), p. 55.

⁹ I use the term 'gender substitution' following Jerzy Wojciechowski in his analysis of *The Three Graces* in Jerzy Wojciechowski, *Zbysław Marek Maciejewski. Autoportret, niecierpliwość, ekstaza – twórczość z pierwszej połowy lat 70. XX wieku (i nieco późniejsze prace)* [*Zbysław Marek Maciejewski: Self-portrait, Impatience, Ecstasy—Work from the Early 1970s (and Somewhat Later Works)*], exhibition catalogue (Warsaw: Galeria aTAK, 2011), p. 144.

with himself as he creates two versions of the image in parallel. The perspective offered by Lupa's film camera only adds to the artistic polyphony as it diligently records (but necessarily also frames) everything taking place in the studio. And just to add another layer of meaning, it should be noted that the three Graces depicted by Maciejewski are all different takes on the same model, Jan Krzysztof Kamiński, with whom the artist shared a flat. His *Three Graces* and everything related to this motif – its transformations and rewriting in conditions that demanded dialogue and a shift in perspective – can be considered elements of his specific artistic method, one that emerged spontaneously as a result of both the demands of the moment and the two artists' tendencies. Both men consistently and incessantly transformed surrounding realities. Zbysław would draw on anything he could get his hands on, be it a napkin or matchbox, if he did not have his sketchbook with him. Krystian never parted with his photographic camera, whose lens, a 'second eye',¹⁰ captured fleeting moments.

According to Krzysztof Lipka, 'Young Zbyszek's greatest charm was his seductive view of the world, which was undoubtedly ironic, scornful, caricatured, but also full of acceptance and indeed awe. This was a vision he could express expansively in his words and drawings. Krystian was fascinated by Zbyszek's approach to life and thus tried to go toe-to-toe with him.'¹¹ Zbysław drew; Krystian commented and took photographs. Together they incessantly reworked and rewrote the world around them.

Painting and film, drawings and photography – in short, the visual arts – seemed to provide the leitmotif for efforts to describe the events in the two men's student years. Literature, too, should not be overlooked, because the 'literary' imagination was, after all, at the root of many of Lupa and Maciejewski's artistic endeavours. As their close friend Marzenna Maria Smoleńska put it, 'During that period, the dominant medium in our circles was the word. The word was the true vehicle.'¹² Maciejewski's early paintings were largely anecdotal pieces featuring psychological and social observations. As Lipka emphasises, those works 'certainly entered the realm of painted literature.'¹³ A similar case can be made for Lupa's early works. This led to misunderstandings with his tutors at the Faculty of Painting and then at the Faculty of Graphic Arts at ASP, and later at the Łódź Film School. The symbolism in Lupa's output as a student was indicative of his sensibility not only for visual art but also, more significantly, for literature.

The above remarks can serve as an introduction to the 'phenomenon' known as Moszczenica. In this village near Łódź there was an estate that belonged to Krzysztof Lipka's family. It became the venue for legendary vacations. As Lipka himself recalls,

10 This term comes from Marzenna Maria Smoleńska. See Marzenna Maria Smoleńska 'Kraków tętnił życiem...' ['Kraków Was Pulsing with Life...'], interview by Waldemar Wasztyl *Didaskalia*, 100 (2010), p. 2.

11 Krzysztof Lipka, 'Wspomnienia o Zbyszku Maciejewskim' ['Memories of Zbyszek Maciejewski'], transcript in the possession of the author, n.p.

12 Smoleńska and Wasztyl, p. 4.

13 Lipka, 'Memories'.

The phenomenon known as Moszczenica – and it was without doubt a phenomenon thanks to its astounding beauty and my sense of bliss there – can be summed up in two words: house and garden. [...] The garden was so big that you just kept walking along the fence and it never ended, it seemed like you would never reach the gate that led to the driveway by the porch. There was a huge veranda across the front of the house covered in green and yellow five-leaved ivy that turned a brilliant red in autumn.¹⁴

The above photo was taken in 1972 on the veranda in Moszczenica during the second summer vacation spent there. There are three young men: Maciejewski, Lupa and Lipka – Messrs M. and L. This abbreviation will crop up again in our story... What did the vacationers get up to? Well, the kinds of things that young people get up to in quiet and secluded places. But what interests us most are the quasi-artistic games, rooted in literature, that Lupa initiated. He read aloud a great deal, be it Thomas Mann or Alain Robbe-Grillet or the latest translations published in the periodical *Literatura na Świecie*. And his friends listened with pleasure. He was an indefatigable reader, capable of getting through a whole novel, cover to cover, in almost a single sitting. He was also an outstanding interpreter of texts, with his listeners sometimes crying with pleasure. Lupa was likewise responsible for what he termed *czyczymych*, a word he made up to mean 'a mess', primarily in the sense of literary and narrative chaos. A *czyczymych* session would go like this: those present would sit in a circle and one person would start telling a made-up story before suddenly stopping, leaving the next person in line to continue the plot however they pleased, and so on, until the narrative strands had become completely mixed up and random. The fictional narrative could sometimes develop over a whole week and constituted something of a literary joke and jape. One such story involved an old countess who went to the country and invited along her friends, the Marquess von Pizd, the Hollywood star Rita von Ziółkovsky and the insidious Bettina Cataracta. The estate provided the backdrop for various extraordinary, surreal happenings – someone blowing up a defensive tower, that kind of thing. The whole experience was one long but tasteful joke. Lupa even tried to record these improvisations. Unsuccessfully. Memories are all that remain.¹⁵

A few years later, Lupa would suggest another literary game to his friends which was recorded and given the title *M.i.L [M&L]*. This was intended to be a serialized novel created in the *czyczymych* form by the four friends whose surnames began with M and L: Maciejewski, Lupa, Lipka and Miedziewski.¹⁶ Ultimately, though, it was only the men beginning with L who completed the task, creating two instalments. One of them is worth examining more closely. The first part of *M&L*, written by Lupa, resembles 'potential' literature, as it seems like a collage of

14 Fragment of Krzysztof Lipka's unpublished autobiographical novel *Okna na zachód [West-facing Windows]*, cited in Jerzy Wojciechowski, *Maciejewski: Self-portrait*, p. 34.

15 Krzysztof Lipka mentioned Moszczenica and *czyczymych* in an interview with the author of this text on 19 April 2012, transcript in the possession of the author, n.p.

16 Stanisław Miedziewski, a member of Lupa's cohort at PWSTiF (the Łódź Film School), now a director who lives in Słupsk, where he runs his own theatre company.

rehearsals and sketches for ideas that want to develop into fully fledged literature. An autobiographical game was inscribed into the nonchalant structure of this instalment, one that had indeed been conducted consciously, albeit ironically and loosely, for some time. It was a game related to memory and identity, thus one in which the narrator and young artist (or, to be precise, 'prototype artist') convinces readers – but above all himself – of his artistic vision of life. Lupa would put it succinctly many years later: 'We turned life into art.'¹⁷

The setting for this fragment is an authentic collage hidden behind the covers of Lupa's notebooks. I removed them while going through his private archive and took a photo, thus unintentionally creating an illustration for *M&L*:

How many forgotten oddities can be found inside the covers of old notebooks that have been filed meticulously in a chronological pile in a drawer? What is to be found on their pages is more familiar. Literary sketches, short stories, reflections, poems, dreams – anything from this collection that was of any value according to Mil was typed up and read to a handful of friends. [...] And there? Today, Mil found two photos behind the foil covers of the notebook. A different smiling face, one now alien and useless, yet in that moment the face was intoxicating because it was itself a discovery that disrupted the nodes of feelings that had long since scarred over. [...]

The thrill of discovering oneself

Reading the paths taken by one's fruitless and fertile thoughts. [...]

Rediscovered, they acquire the value of archaeological discoveries.

[...] A desk filled with fallen piles. Letters. Geological layers. [...]

When someone coming after you enters this world without you, they will mess everything up with profane hands and then declare it all disorderly and nonsensical before dumping it in the rubbish heap in the name of order and hygiene.

Yes, Mil. You have yet to present it to the world. You remain locked inside yourself.

Here you are yourself in perfect and true form – you will never create for others the same kind of authenticity. Yet here, too, truth and perfection are legible only for you. When you create something that can be taken away, perhaps or indeed certainly you will cease to be yourself, but then you will become YOURSELF for others. [...]

Mokre, August 1975¹⁸

Mokre is now part of the town of Mikołów, but at the time it was a lush green space where Ludwik Lupa built a house for himself and his family, who moved there from Jastrzębie-Zdrój. Both places, Mokre and Jastrzębie-Zdrój, constitute significant myths in Krystian Lupa's oeuvre. There are complete constellations of fantasies, complexes, great beginnings and equally great abandoned projects surrounding these places.

Lupa shared a host of stories about childhood in the mythical land of Juskuńia, an underground kingdom whose capital was Yelo, a land well-hidden in the greenery of the garden, as well as a number of disturbing stories created in the nooks and crannies of the school loft

¹⁷ Lupa, p. 49.

¹⁸ Lupa, 'Fragments', pp. 18–19.

or in soot-covered basements. He organized peculiar 'pilgrimages' to the land of childhood, both in the metaphorical sense (with storytelling seances and flicking through his childhood drawing) and in the most tangible form. The above photograph offers testimony to one such outing. It would be no exaggeration to describe it thus: Zbysław Maciejewski at the temple of childhood with Krystian Lupa. Why did these excursions prove so essential to Lupa? 'When I started studying at the Academy of Fine Arts, I suddenly felt that "something" was missing that was once criminally abundant. To be able to return to the realm of the imagination, I had to go back to childhood.'¹⁹ At one point in his diary Lupa would state, 'I am not even sure that what I am writing is the truth. What I do know, however, is that from the moment that it is WRITTEN it becomes the truth...'²⁰

Two paintings by Łukasz Korolkiewicz, *Incognito* and *Flesz [Flash]*, are portraits of Maciejewski and Lupa, respectively, from the mid-1970s. The canvases would be mentioned in the 2001 book *Labirynt [Labyrinth]*, a selection of autobiographical texts from Lupa's diaries together with short stories in which he turned to the garden of his childhood in Jastrzębie and his room in Mokre. This publication provided Lupa with a perspective on himself as he appeared in old notes and photographs, confronting the myths of the past and recalling distant yet completely fresh memories, such as his encounter with Zbysław in the abandoned room in Mokre... The scene opens with recollections inspired by a couple of photographs where the men, young and handsome, can be seen wandering through the outskirts of Mikołów:

24 July 1994

In the photographs, two long-haired lads in bell-bottomed trousers wander along this street before taking a walk through the manicured gardens. [...] Now we have sat down heavily – he is in the armchair, I'm on the sofa – and we look at each other, at the old pictures, and back again. Two portraits by Łukasz Korolkiewicz – 'scrawls' rather than pictures, as Zbyszek put it... Zbyszek is eating ice cream, wearing a glittery glove, while I smile at the spectator with carmine lips. The transvestite dreams of a hirsute devil...

We were supposed to go on, upstairs. Zbyszek said, 'Well, grandad Krystian won't be able to get up.' Is that all he saw in me as I sat on the sofa, the passing of years? 'Everything has become so terribly overgrown, such a thicket.' 'Yes, it has, it has...,' I reply as my thoughts wandered [...]. 'Terribly...,' Zbyszek won't let the subject go. 'Well,' he adds after half an hour, 'so very sad...' A sigh. [...] Everything that could possibly get caught up in images etched in the memory – it has all changed. The terrace is crumbling, the walls are dirty, the property is neglected... The paint is peeling from the doors. But this was once a new house, we slept here on the veranda before it was even finished... Perhaps it has aged even quicker than we have? [...]

I am a little bit ashamed of this room... A room belonging to a previous person [...] who did not know what to do with himself,

19 Krzysztof Mieszkowski, 'Juskunia', *Notatnik Teatralny*, 54–55 (2009), p. 33.

20 Krystian Lupa, *Labirynt [Labyrinth]* (Warsaw: Wydawnictwo W.A.B., 2001), p. 52.

a pretentious, neurasthenic, long-haired young lad. He decided to become an artist and wondered what he had to say. [...] The room becomes something like a personal museum, a museum of youthful lies.²¹

Many works offering a biographical portrait, whether they are literary pieces or paintings, give off a sense of the tension between truth and myth. This is the case with all these works, *Incognito*, *Flash* and *Labyrinth*... Ultimately, they do not depict different worlds but rather two ill-defined concepts that become entangled in the process of negotiating identity, digging up memories and rewriting experiences – ‘turning life into art’, as Lupa put it. Indeed, Lupa dedicated himself to this process from the beginning of his studies. It cannot be stressed enough that he found an equal partner in this process, somebody close to him, a person who provided a source of inspiration while also serving as a critic and someone who would crush any illusions he had about himself. According to a close observer, during the most intense period of their artistic adolescence, Krystian Lupa and Zbysław Maciejewski ‘lived in complete psychic-intellectual symbiosis, although they differed fundamentally from one another.’²²

To sum up, it would be no exaggeration to state that his friendship with Maciejewski is one of the key elements of Lupa’s artistic biography. The two friends, who met as trainee painters and became lovers, mutually constituted each other as artists, inspiring each other to become involved in a genuinely creative game, sharing their fascinations and intellectual discourses. The diverse sources of inspiration that they shared indeed suggest a ‘complete psychic-intellectual symbiosis’. Let us take as an example something that seems to be a mere ‘detail’. Lupa managed to infect Maciejewski with this obsession with Bardot, even though Maciejewski was more sceptical of her charms as he saw great sensitivity in Marilyn Monroe. Yet in the end he submitted to his friend’s claims...

Years later, in his theatre production *Persona*, Lupa made Marilyn Monroe and not Brigitte Bardot the central protagonist. Let us also consider the later versions of *The Three Graces* whose creation Lupa recorded on film as a student. Are these variations and their discursivity not painting-based precursors of Lupa’s later theatre productions – those made once he was a professor at the theatre school, when two versions of the same work entered into dialogue with each other, or of the famous diploma pieces at the National Academy of Theatre Arts (PWST), where members of the young theatre company played different roles each night while performing the same piece? His relationship with Maciejewski enabled Lupa to explode a certain myth and mistaken conception about his own image, inspiring him to instead construct a completely different narrative about himself and his own potential.

Let us return to the beginnings described in the short story ‘ZB’. Maciejewski irritates Lupa with his infantile nonconformity and belief in his own genius. Lupa clashes with this alienated yet honest lad while himself posturing as an existentialist and Don Juan – and, to

21 Ibid., pp. 21–22.

22 Lipka, ‘Memories’.

make it clear, a heterosexual Don Juan. This is quite evident in their poses in the photograph, above. Zbysław is lost in dreams and leaning in towards his partner, while Krystian has a swaggering smile on his face with his hands in his pockets. Effortlessly, simply by virtue of his stubborn presence, Zbysław managed to question some of the fundamental self-mystification that Lupa had built up inside himself. At the same time, he infected Lupa with something that he very much lacked as he stumbled from one higher education institution to another, namely the conviction that he had made the right choices, and belief in his own indefatigable creative potential. They indeed 'turned life into art' and made 'art through life'. In the above photo, Krystian is visiting Zbysław in Tarnów. Maciejewski had yet to earn a place in art galleries and was just starting out as a student, which means that he had to hang his pictures up on a fence to show them to his friend. But this does not bother anyone because the act is authentic and unpretentious.

So many photographs, references to literature and paintings, and hardly a word about theatre. It would therefore be appropriate to pay tribute to Melpomene in conclusion. Krystian Lupa stated: 'I started going to the theatre while I was still at ASP, influenced to do so by a classmate who was a massive theatre lover.'²³ I think the name of the friend goes without saying. He has appeared often enough in my narrative. A decade later Lupa would go on to make his directorial debut with a piece performed on the experimental stage at the Słowacki Theatre. He opted for Sławomir Mrożek's *Rzeźnia* [*The Slaughterhouse*] at the outset of his career. 'Be a conscious creator of yourself'²⁴ is the credo that Skrzypek (Fiddler) lives by in Mrożek's drama. 'A mature eccentric type' who searches for the meaning of existence and seeks to define himself through love and, ultimately, art: that is precisely the figure Lupa chose to be the central protagonist of his debut as a director. *The Slaughterhouse* was the first student work to debut on Scena Miniatura. The director's stage designer was Zbysław Marek Maciejewski.

Translated by Paul Vickers

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²³ Aleksandra Szydłowska, 'Przestrzeń' ['Space'], *Notatnik Teatralny*, 54–55 (2009), p. 83.

²⁴ For this and the following quote on the staging of *The Slaughterhouse*, see Lupa, 'Fragments', pp. 21–22.

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ABSTRACT

Waldemar Wasztyl

'We didn't know who we really were': Krystian Lupa and Zbysław Maciejewski

This text was first presented at the conference 'Krystian Lupa: Artist and Educator' at the Academy of Fine Arts in Kraków in December 2018. It outlines the history of Lupa's relationship with the painter and art professor Zbysław Maciejewski. It tells the story of a love that significantly impacted the sensibilities of two young students at the Academy of Fine Arts. The author explores the homoerotic tropes in their relationship and their influence on the two artists' early works as well as on their individual attitudes. This biographical 'game' is presented against a backdrop of excerpts from Lupa's diaries and memoirs written by his friends. The article employs a nonchronological narrative and thus jumps between different periods: student years and initial mutual infatuation, early efforts at producing literature, art and film, nostalgic memories recalled years later, and references to Lupa's contemporary works. The text draws on unpublished excerpts of Lupa's diaries. The narrative is constructed around several images taken from his private collections: photographs, drawings, artworks and short films.

Keywords: Krystian Lupa, biography, homosexuality, queer.