

IGOR ZABEL
AWARD FOR
CULTURE AND
THEORY 2018

Laureate

Joanna Mytkowska

**CURATOR AND DIRECTOR OF THE
MUSEUM OF MODERN ART IN WARSAW**

The jury has awarded Joanna Mytkowska the Igor Zabel Award for Culture and Theory for her committed and outstanding work as the director of the Museum of Modern Art in Warsaw.

Since 2007, Mytkowska has been at the helm of the Museum of Modern Art in Warsaw, which was founded in 2005. Taking over the directorial post at a turbulent moment of radical change in the political landscape of municipal and state politics, in just over a decade, Joanna Mytkowska has managed to develop an art institution that has become a game-changing player in Poland and an internationally referential art institution. Her tireless effort in implementing new architectural plans for the museum's permanent building (scheduled to open in 2022) as well as her ability to not only successfully conduct the museum's activities in different temporary locations (in Warsaw and in other sites across the whole country), but to also develop a museum that is an engaged and inspiring participant in local and international social and artistic life, deserve the highest appreciation and respect.

With its programmatic focus on the post-World War II period and artistic production in "countries of transformation", the Museum of Modern Art in Warsaw realises exhibitions and an accompanying programme dedicated to major and relatively overlooked artists, such as Oskar Hansen, Alina Szapocznikow, Mária Bartusová, Ion Grigorescu, Július Koller and Edi Hila. At the same time, the museum features a younger generation of Polish artists and inscribes their work into an international context. Moreover, on the grounds of its growing collection, which is in constant dialogue with current developments in society, dedication to archiving and complex thematic shows, the museum has become a site for profound research and knowledge production.

The incessant act of revisiting the past while keeping pace with the contemporary lies in the centre of the museum's exhibition programming and its ambitious education programme, including its website with such highlights as Filmoteka Museum (a collection of artists' films, comprising a few hundred titles, available online) and Artists Archives (a project involving the digitalisation and presentation of archives of artistic practices after 1945).

Among the museum's most strategic projects are community-based programmes regarding the city of Warsaw: such as the on-going series *Warsaw Under Construction*, which maps the urban, social and cultural development in the city; and the Bródno Sculpture Park, developed in close collaboration with the local community.

The critical, self-reflective and civically responsible museum is an idea for which Mytkowska works successfully: "an institution which is not stagnant but an active protagonist which animates the civic sphere, a place which constantly keeps questioning its goals and duties towards the audience" (in Mytkowska's own words).

The jury acknowledges the extraordinary intellectual, curatorial and civic achievements that Mytkowska has developed over the last 15 years, especially as the director of MoMA in Warsaw. Notable are her exceptional commitment to reaffirming the relation of art to society in times of radical socio-political transformations and her outstanding expertise on art from Central and Eastern Europe. Joanna Mytkowska shares with Igor Zabel not only the intellectual commitment, but also the cosmopolitanism and generosity that open spaces for change and new modes of thinking.

Short biography

Joanna Mytkowska is an art historian, curator and director of the Museum of Modern Art in Warsaw (since 2007). In the 1990s, Mytkowska started her professional career as a curator at the Foksal Gallery in Warsaw, a legendary, non-commercial art space set up by artists in 1966. Soon after, she co-founded (with Andrzej Przywara and Adam Szymczyk) the Foksal Gallery Foundation in Warsaw with the aim of establishing research and funding opportunities for Polish contemporary art as well as taking care of the legacy of Polish avant-garde artists, such as Henryk Stażewski and Edward Krasiński. She worked there from 2001 to 2007. From 2006 to 2007, she worked at the Centre Georges Pompidou in Paris, where she also later curated *The Promises of the Past: A Discontinuous History of Art in Former Eastern Europe* (2010, with Christine Macel), one of the most significant survey exhibitions of art from Central and Eastern Europe. She also curated important exhibitions in different international museums and art venues, such as the Polish Pavilion with Artur Żmijewski at the 51st Venice Biennale (2005) and the exhibition *Alina Szapocznikow: Sculptures Undone 1955–1972* (with Elena Filipovic), which travelled also to MoMA, New York (2012).

2018 jury members

Adam Budak – CHIEF CURATOR, NATIONAL GALLERY, PRAGUE

Ana Janevski – CURATOR, MOMA, NEW YORK

Erzen Shkolli – DIRECTOR, NATIONAL ART GALLERY OF ALBANIA, TIRANA