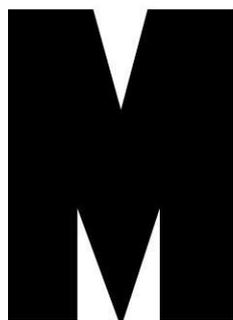


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Performance art, ping-pong, Freak Show The new MSN Warsaw building in motion

Press release, 19 September 2024

The inauguration of the new home of the Museum of Modern Art in Warsaw (MSN Warsaw) will be spread over three weeks. Among the more than 100 diverse events, performance will play a special role. An overview of the Polish and world performance art scene, including works from the Kontakt Collection from Vienna and the premiere of a work by Ndayé Kouagou, aka Young Black Romantics, will provide a unique opportunity to explore the museum's architecture. Audiences will also take part in collective ping-pong tournaments and a "freak show." Meanwhile, open recruitment is underway for anyone interested in presenting their work during the MSN Warsaw opening—for which we invite you to the Turnus Show.

Polish performance art

Twenty-one performances, one group event involving over 30 performers—in sum **over 40 shows across five days in 12 rooms of the new building**. The artists include such figures as **Maria Stokłosa, Ramona Nagabczyńska, Paweł Sakowicz** and **Marta Ziółtek**. The performance program is an invitation for audiences and performers alike to experience the MSN Warsaw building, to sense the height and proportions of the empty galleries, the texture of the walls, the temperature of the floors, the scent, colors and light of the architecture. It's a hint to pay attention to what is usually invisible.

"The opening program for the new MSN Warsaw building will offer not just a review of the Polish choreography scene of the last decade, but also an exceptional opportunity to become acquainted with the museum's architecture through the prism of motion, dance and performance practices," said **Magdalena Komornicka**, the curator of the event. "The MSN Warsaw exhibition galleries will be filled with bodies, motion and sound, and the audience can experience the diverse artistic strategies and the multiplicity of musical, aesthetic and formal approaches. We will show works in process, dance performances, and choreographic installations, including spectacular group performances alongside intimate solo pieces."

The artists invited to take part in the program will do fresh takes on works from years past already familiar to Polish audiences (shows by **Iza Szostak, Agnieszka Kryst, Paweł Sakowicz, Weronika Pelczyńska** and others) and pieces previously staged at MSN Warsaw in its earlier locations (work by **Ramona Nagabczyńska**), as well as new projects premiering alongside the opening of the MSN Warsaw building at ul. Marszałkowska 103 (works by **Maria Stokłosa** and **Marta Ziółek**). We will witness well-established artists as well as the latest generation (**Emma Szumlas, Tamara Olga Briks, Sticky Fingers Club**), and shows by the Polish dance community dispersed around Europe and rarely presenting their works in Warsaw (**Katarzyna Wolińska, Agata Siniarska, Przemek Kamiński, Mary Szydłowska, and aleks borys**).

Kontakt Collection and Young Black Romantics

We will witness exceptional performative works at MSN Warsaw thanks to cooperation with Vienna's [Kontakt Collection](#), an organization focusing on art from Central, Eastern and Southeastern Europe, especially from the 1960s and 70s. The Kontakt Collection, which is celebrating its 20th anniversary this year, combines collecting with research and exhibitions, often held in non-museum spaces such as office buildings or supermarkets.

According to MSN Warsaw curator **Sebastian Cichocki**, co-organizer of the event, "Currently the Kontakt Collection operates under artistic director Kathrin Rhomberg, and links reflections on art from decades past with current political, social and environmental issues. This is because the conceptual practices in our region have often been connected with political activism and awareness of global changes. The name 'Kontakt' (full name 'Kontakt Collection: Association for the Promotion of Central, Eastern and Southeastern European Art,' founded by the Erste Foundation in cooperation with Erste Group) was drawn from the title of a work by the Slovakian artist Július Koller, who insisted that art should be about 'engagement instead of arrangement.' Koller always cared about contact with audiences."

Two "anti-happenings" by Július Koller will be reconstructed for MSN Warsaw. The first of them, *Univerzálny Futurologický Otažník (U.F.O.)* from 1978, will be repeated several times outside the museum during the opening days, with the participation of children from Warsaw elementary schools (taking part in the museum's program Primary Forms). The second anti-happening will involve the **chalk outline of a space resembling a tennis court, recreated each day** in one of the exhibition galleries on the second floor. Koller was known for combining art with sessions of ping-pong and tennis, always striving to maintain "fair play." The MSN Warsaw opening weekend will also include an appearance by the Hungarian artist [Katalin Ladik](#)—poet (concrete, sound and visual poetry), writer, performance artist, actor, and creator of visual works. Another aspect of the collaboration between MSN Warsaw and the Kontakt Collection will be the **performative exhibition *When I State That I Am an Anarchist***. It alludes to the work of the charismatic artist **Christopher D'Arcangelo**, who was not well known outside New York avant-garde circles but organized actions targeting the hierarchical system of art institutions, such as handcuffing himself to museum benches and barriers. The curator of the exhibition and author of the libretto, **Pierre Bal-Blanc**, will interpret seven episodes from D'Arcangelo's life.

Finally, the Parisian artist **Ndayé Kouagou** is preparing a new performance piece to mark the opening of the new MSN Warsaw building. The point of departure for the practice of this artist, also known as [Young Black Romantics](#), is original texts drawing on the expressions and poetics of the digital landscape of TikTok and Instagram. The artist's performances address the extreme emotions we experience at the point of contact between private and public: anxiety and fragility, but also self-confidence and a sense of agency.

Ping-pong, "freak show" and Turnus Show

Table tennis has a long tradition of influencing art, and found a place in installations by Edward Krasiński and Rirkrit Tiravanija, and indeed in the happenings of Július Koller accompanying the opening of MSN Warsaw. Greeting the new museum building will be an opportunity for casual play and animation at the museum tables adapted by the artists. Over the weeks of the museum opening, there will also be two tournaments (individual and team) for anyone interested in taking part.

The "freak show" planned for the MSN Warsaw inauguration at ul. Marszałkowska 103 will include all varieties of performative actions, from monodrama and opera arias to drag shows. They will constitute the individual artistic expression of the performers inhabiting the experience of the corporeal extraordinary. The artists are united in their shared way of thinking about disability as an artistic tool and employment of the notion of the "freak" in their own diverse practices. Through the "freak show" they recover the idea of joint performances, but created in isolation from "therapeutic art" or "special art."

The history of "freak shows" dates back to cabinets of curiosities with exhibits of "freaks of nature." Later performances within the circus world by people with unusual bodies, although now regarded as exploitative, often served as a space for creative expression, a place where a "queer" community was formed. Meanwhile, medicine has pathologized the possibility of such performances. How will this bodily queerness play today in the prestigious space of the museum's new building?

As co-curator **Filip Pawlak** explains, "Freak shows, excluded from the history of performance art, were treated for a long time as low-brow entertainment and a source of oppression for persons with disabilities, but in many instances they were a source of creative expression with emancipatory power. In our *Freak Show*, we allude to this tradition as a potential key to regaining an affirmative identity. We also seek other clues to our history and heritage. We want to appear individually and in dialogue, where we try to answer an important but still unresolved question: How to speak of the melancholy and sadness arising from bodily otherness? Is it possible to express sorrow in the face of dominant body-positive ideologies? How to build pride in what is socially accepted as an image of failure?"

Meanwhile, **signups are underway for the Turnus Show**, a full-scale event in which anyone can appear. The only restrictions are the stage itself and the overall theme, "Show." On October 26, the second day of the opening of the MSN Warsaw building, the Kinomuzeum stage will become the place where people selected in an open recruitment will present their

own free expression in front of an audience: from paintings to performances, from tricks to poetry readings and cracking jokes. Show what you can do! Everyone wins! The best of the best! Fun, accessibility, and overstatement will rule the day. The curators of the event, **Marcelina Gorczyńska** and **Kamila Fałęcka**, are accepting entries until 22 September. Details and rules at the MSN Warsaw website artmuseum.pl

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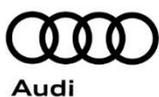
Construction of the MSN Warsaw building is financed by the City of Warsaw. The general contractor is Warbud S.A.

The building is designed by the New York architectural firm Thomas Phifer and Partners in conjunction with APA Wojciechowski sp. z o.o., and the designer of the constructions and installations is engineering firm Buro Happold. A consortium of Ecm Group Polska sp. z o.o. and Portico Project Management sp. z o.o. serves as contract engineer for the project. The museum's legal adviser for the development is KKLW Kurzyński Łyszyk Wierzbicki Sp.k.



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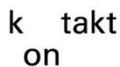
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