

ZBIGNIEW DŁUBAK

HEIR OF THE AVANT-GARDE

JANUARY 17 - APRIL 29, 2018



Untitled, 1970

Press preview: Tuesday, January 16, 10 a.m. – 12 p.m.

Opening: Tuesday, January 16, 6 – 9 p.m.

FONDATION HENRI CARTIER-BRESSON
2, impasse Lebourg - 75014 Paris





Untitled, circa 1946

"I'm not interested in stylistic effects, whether they're derived from modern art or conceptualism. I use shapes, ideas, colours, words, photographs and actions as my materials in a way that best suits my art, to create an empty sign in the context of the reality I live in."

Zbigniew Dłubak

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CURATOR

The exhibition is curated by Karolina Ziebinska-Lewandowska, curator at the Centre Pompidou.

PUBLICATION

The exhibition is accompanied by a book published by Éditions Xavier Barral under the direction of Karolina Ziebinska-Lewandowska, which includes a wide selection of images, an essay by Éric de Chassey and an introduction as well as seven texts by the curator.

COLLABORATION AND PARTNERS

The exhibition is being organised in cooperation with the Fundacja Archeologia Fotografii in Warsaw, where the artist's archives are kept, and with the Adam Mickiewicz Institute operating under the Culture.pl brand within the international cultural programme POLSKA 100 accompanying Poland's centenary of regaining independence. Financed by the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage of the Republic of Poland as part of the Multi-annual Programme NIEPODLEGŁA 2017-2021.

This exhibition also benefits from the support of the Polish Institute in Paris.



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Culture
and National
Heritage of
the Republic
of Poland

THE EXHIBITION

JANUARY 17 - APRIL 29, 2018

"The social role of art consists in introducing the factor of negation into the human consciousness, it challenges the rigidity of systems and conventions in the rendering of reality. Art itself is evolution, it's the introduction of all new means of expression."

Zbigniew Dłubak

The Zbigniew Dłubak - *Héritier des avant-gardes* exhibition is being held at the Fondation Henri Cartier-Bresson between January 17 and April 29, 2018. In the post-war period, Zbigniew Dłubak (1921-2005) was one of the driving forces behind the profound changes in the Polish artistic scene. A great experimenter of photographic forms, he was also a painter, art theoretician, teacher and editor of the *Fotografia* magazine for twenty years, introducing into this publication a robust photographic critique and interdisciplinary approach to the medium. He enjoyed a certain notoriety in Poland during his lifetime. Several monographic exhibitions were dedicated to him and some of his major works are part of Polish public collections.

Although Dłubak was primarily known as a photographer, he initially aspired to become a painter, tirelessly searching for materials for drawing during the war. Very active in these two traditionally separate disciplines, he greatly influenced the decompartmentalisation of artistic forms. He also defended the right of photography to exist as a completely separate discipline.

His first photographic experiments reveal a diversity of inspirations characteristic of pre-war practices, stemming from constructivist and surrealist traditions. Fascinated by linguistics, Dłubak then moves towards the mechanisms of a systematic approach and then onto the disappearance fading of signs.

The work carried out by the Fundacja Archaeologia Fotografii where his archives have been deposited offers a new insight into his œuvre and a new way of looking at it. Continuing in this vein of offering a different reading, this exhibition proposes to highlight the similarities and complementary aspects of photography and painting in his work. It focuses on two decisive periods in the artist's life: the year 1948, which marks the beginning of his career and places it within the avant-garde movement, and the 1970s, which symbolise his ambiguous position regarding conceptual art. The selection presents iconic works and hitherto unseen photographs.

Curated by Karolina Ziebinska-Lewandowska, a specialist in Dłubak's work, the exhibition is accompanied by a book published by Éditions Xavier Barral under the direction of Karolina Ziebinska-Lewandowska, which includes a wide selection of images, an essay by Éric de Chassey and an introduction as well as seven texts by the curator. The exhibition is being organised in collaboration with the Fundacja Archaeologia Fotografii in Warsaw, with the support of the Adam Mickiewicz Institute and the Polish Institute in Paris.

EXTRACTS FROM THE BOOK

Zbigniew Dłubak - Un héritier des avant-gardes

ÉDITIONS XAVIER BARRAL

The first photographic images created by Dłubak, who taught himself to paint and draw in the early 1940s, were undoubtedly strictly utilitarian: they documented the activities of the clandestine army he joined and then, when he was deported to the Mauthausen concentration camp after his participation in the Warsaw uprising in 1944, they were dictated by the tasks the Nazis assigned to him in the camp's photography studio (touch-ups and perhaps portraits or reproductions). The images he shows in Krakow¹ were however preceded by a few more artistic attempts, created in 1947 and early 1948, which show the desire to understand from within two significant trends of what photographic modernism might have constituted in the eyes of a Polish novice. On the one hand, Dłubak creates images of trees using a low-angle shot or fragments of ground using a sharp high-angle shot, stemming from a sort of pictorialism marked by a superficial link with the Germanic New Vision, in keeping with Jan Bułhak, then considered the father of Polish modern photography. On the other hand, he arranges compositions of insignificant little objects (like matches, springs, buttons, screws and so on) on tables, which he photographs like abstract not-to-scale landscapes, as practised by constructivists and notably Florence Henri (some of whose images he might have known, even though he never seems to have mentioned them). However, nothing in these two series really prepares for what can be seen in the photographs shown in 1948. [...]

Dłubak's key originality comes from the fact that he focuses less on producing the supernatural and more on finding it, by blurring the too-certain habits of ordinary vision but without the factual origin of his image obscuring its poetic efficacy. [...]

So, for Dłubak, it's not just about reconciling previously separate artistic traditions, but dismantling the traditional opposition between abstraction and figuration. The use of the extreme close-up (on the scale of macro photography) and technical manipulations (solarisation or pseudo-solarisation, presentation of the negative as a positive) must not be seen as a distancing from external reality but, on the contrary, as a way of penetrating its core; less like a hidden thing than a spiritual vision, and less like burying than a revelation of what is latent within, giving us a subtler understanding of it. As Dłubak writes in 1948 in an article on method called "Reflections on photography": "Photographic realism is a different kind of realism and, fittingly, the faithfulness and attachment to the object, which has the nature of a raw material here, prohibits any artifice, because it is immediately unmasked. Such realism requires one to rely essentially on nature avoiding any narration."²

Éric de Chassey

Extracts from "1948-1949: un réalisme de l'extrême proximité"

¹ At the "1st Exhibition of Modern Art" [I Wystawa Sztuki Nowoczesnej] opened on 19 December 1948. This exhibition included artists from across the country, often young (the vast majority were under thirty): painters, sculptors but also, and this was a huge novelty in Poland, photographers. Zbigniew Dłubak was even one of the key organisers of the event

² Zbigniew Dłubak, « Rozmyślenia o fotografii II », *Świat fotografii*, no 11, January-February 1949, reproduced in Lech Lechowicz and Jadwiga Janik (dir.), cat. exp. *Dłubak, fotografie photographs, 1947- 1950*, Lodz, Muzeum Sztuki, 1995, p. 47

EXTRACTS FROM THE BOOK

Zbigniew Dłubak - Un héritier des avant-gardes

ÉDITIONS XAVIER BARRAL

Two events occurred in 1970 which are traditionally considered by Polish historiography as key manifestations of conceptual art: the Wrocław Symposium '70 and the Świdwin-Osieki '70 (Osieki open air events). It would of course be illusory to bring the appearance of conceptual art in Poland down to this one year, since it was a much more complex process, as demonstrated by Piotr Piotrowski and Luiza Nader in particular. However, referring to these events helps explain the work and engagement of Zbigniew Dłubak during these years. Organised thanks to a close collaboration between local authorities and artistic circles, they brought together artists and art critics, representing various experimental trends in Polish art. The aim of the Wrocław Symposium was to attract an audience not accustomed to experimental art. The primary idea, justifying the participation of local organisations, was to bring contemporary art into the public space, particularly social housing areas, squares and undefined suburban sites. [...]

Finally, for Dłubak, 1970 marks the beginning of a series to which he is to dedicate the next eight years: *Systems – Gesticulations*. This series which, at first glance perfectly conforms to the codes of conceptual art, in reality indicates Dłubak's break from conceptualism. Although he saw theoretical activity as an integral part of his artistic practice, he was convinced of the need to preserve a role of mediation in the artistic object. So why did Zbigniew Dłubak, one of the ardent protagonists of the development of conceptualism in Poland, finally break away from the movement?

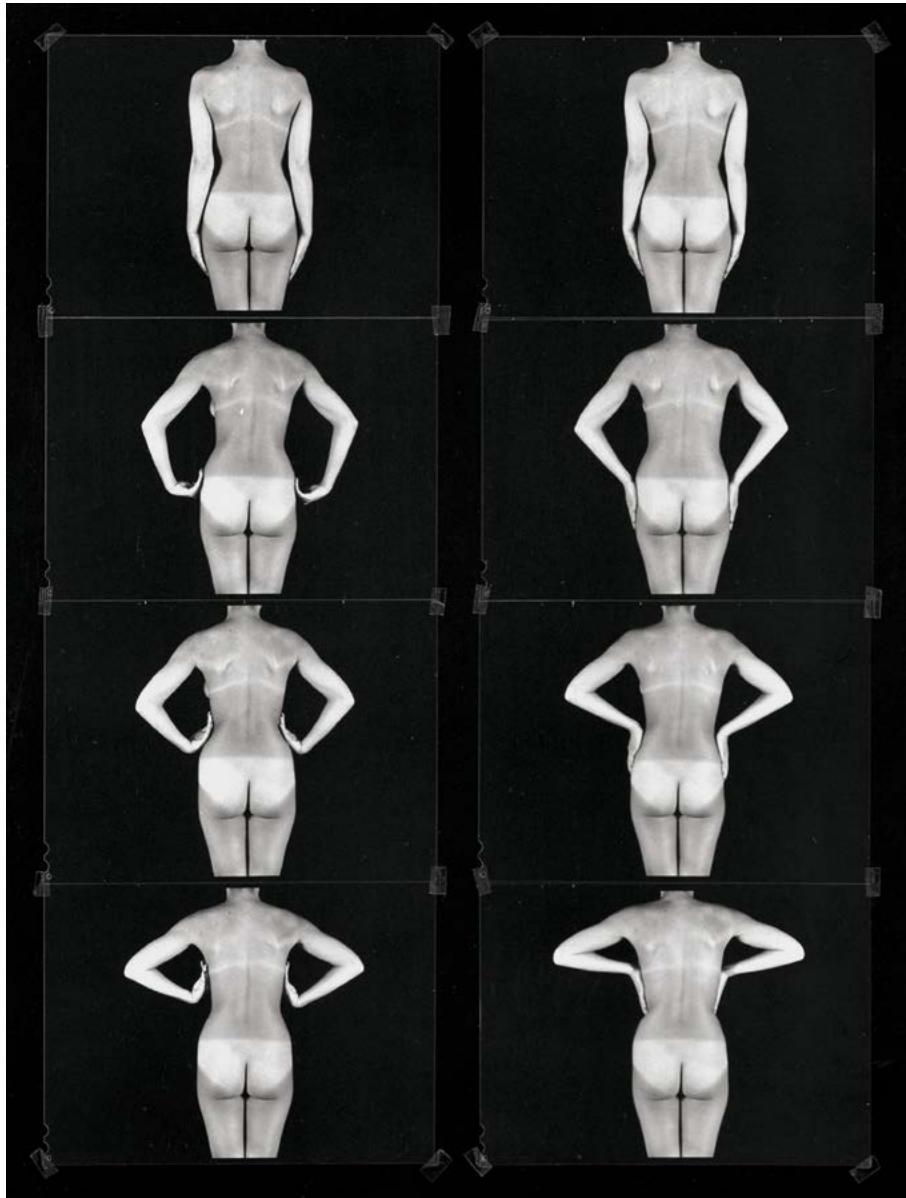
His writings suggest some answers to this question. In 1977, when the movement was still very much alive, he wrote: "In aspiring to total purification, conceptual art has created a list of 'don'ts' regarding methods of recording and transmission. [...] But conceptualism immediately developed a morphology of its own means [of expression] and became frozen.¹". In an (undated) manuscript, he added: "The causes of the failure of conceptualism: an erroneous interpretation of art (false models of ancient art); an under-estimation of the fight against aestheticism in the first half of the 20th century; too much attention paid to ways of recording ideas; unjustified faith in the existence of the idea outside its recording; the belief in the advent of a new era of art through the choice of another material for realising ideas.²" He too relied on this new morphology but tried nevertheless to preserve his autonomy. He didn't believe in the annihilation of the artistic object, considering the work of art as the result of an encounter. The object started the social dialogue.

Karolina Ziebinska-Lewandowska

Extracts from "1970: l'art du concept (non) assimilé"

¹ *Uwagi o sztuce i fotografii* [Comments about art and photography], 1977, *Fotografia*, no 8, 1969

² Untitled text, reproduced in *Teoria sztuki Zbigniewa Dłubaka* [Theory of art of Zbigniew Dłubak], Magdalena Ziółkowska (dir.), Warsaw, Fundacja Archeologia Fotografii, 2013, p. 145



Gesticulations, 1970-1978

"Photography is in phase with the rhythm of life. It impatiently looks for new images. The more effigies it accumulates, the greater its appetite; it's increasingly obsessive. Not only does it record but, subject to the imagination, it also creates new phenomena. It constantly takes us on new adventures, it shakes us up, and does not allow us to rest."
Zbigniew Dłubak

ZBIGNIEW DŁUBAK

CHRONOLOGY

- 1921 Zbigniew Dłubak is born on April 26, 1921 in Radomsko. Both his parents are teachers.
- 1934 He moves to Warsaw and starts college. He has access to avant-garde Polish magazines in the public library and, due to his political involvement in socialist and communist youth organisations, he is temporarily suspended from school.
- 1939 During the first years of the war, he studies the theory and history of art and reads some fundamental Polish texts by Władysław Strzemiński, as well as the writings of Witkacy. He paints, draws and buys his first camera.
- 1941-1944 An active member of the resistance, he is arrested on the 10th day of the Warsaw insurrection and deported to Auschwitz, then transferred to Camp Mauthausen in Austria. He is assigned to the photography laboratory and manages to draw in secret. He organises a clandestine exhibition of drawings inside the camp, with the Polish painter Marian Bogusz and the Czech artist Zbynek Sekal, also interned there. After his release, he goes to Prague and discovers Czech surrealism.
- 1946 Suffering from tuberculosis, he spends some time at the Otwock sanatorium and it's here that, deprived of painting materials, he starts taking photographs and his first photographic project is born.
- 1947-1950 Dłubak photographs small objects, roots and rocks in close-up and trees from unusual perspectives. He meets Henryk Stażewski and Władysław Strzemiński, two of the most important Polish avant-garde artists.
- 1948 He becomes a member of the Association of Polish Photographers. A dozen experimental photographers feature in his first solo exhibition for the Warsaw Young Artists and Scientists Club. Publication of his first texts on photography and contemporary art. He participates in *Wystawa Sztuki Nowoczesnej* ["1st Modern Art Exhibition"] in Krakow and *Wystawa Fotografiki Nowoczesnej* ["Exhibition of modern photography"] in Warsaw which he also organises.
- 1953 Dłubak is appointed editor-in-chief of the magazine *Fotografia* which, under his leadership, has a major influence on the milieu of Polish photography for over twenty years.
- 1954 After a break of several years, he starts painting again.
- 1955 Along with Marian Bogusz, Barbara Zbrożyna and Kajetan Sosnowski in particular, he is a founding member of Grupa 55 [Group 55] whose aim is to find a new language in painting based on the device of the metaphor. Grupa 55 exhibits in artists' studios and organises a street exhibition.
- 1957 He starts the series of paintings called *Amonity* [Ammonites].
- 1959 Dłubak starts the series of photographs called *Egzystencje* [Existences], described as an objection to informal art. He writes numerous theoretical texts, including an article entitled "Does abstract photography exist?" in *Fotografia*.
- 1965 For the Biennale Form Przestrzennych ["Spatial Shapes Biennale"] in Elbląg, he creates the large-scale sculpture *Forma przestrzenna* [Spatial form] in the public space. Starts the *Movens* series of paintings.

ZBIGNIEW DŁUBAK

CHRONOLOGY

- 1966 Appointed as a teacher at the Lodz School of Fine Arts, he occupies the post until 1976. First solo exhibition of paintings at the Foksal gallery in Warsaw with *Movens*.
- 1967 The Galeria Współczesna, in Warsaw, presents the photographic installation *Iconosphere I*.
- 1968 Dłubak participates in the group exhibition *Fotografia Subiektywna* ["Subjective Photography"] in Krakow, then Warsaw. He presents the *Ikonosfera II* [Iconosphere II] project.
- 1970 Starts the *Systemy* [Systems] series combining paintings and photographs. The photography part which he works on until 1978 has two elements: *Gestykulacje* [Gesticulations] and *Kolekcja* [Collection]. He starts creating the paintings in 1974. With Natalia LL and Andrzej Lachowicz, he founds the *Permafo* gallery and magazine in Wrocław.
- 1971 Exhibition of the *Tautology* series at the Permafo gallery. "I'm actually exhibiting two points of view. I'm questioning the identity of the object's perspective. Combining two perspectives of the same object is tautologous. From two questionable elements, I'm constructing a belief in the reality of the object." Participating in the group exhibition called *Fotografowie poszukujący* ("Photographers on a quest"), at the Współczesna gallery in Warsaw, the works exhibited by Dłubak include a photographic sculpture, *OnOna* [HeShe], as well as *Tautology*.
- 1972 Three-month trip to New York where he works on the *Ocean* series, a collection of images of the Atlantic combined with a text-manifesto. *Ocean* is exhibited the following year. Dłubak is dismissed from his duties as editor of the *Fotografia* magazine after allowing the publication of historical photographs considered politically incorrect by the censors.
- 1976 He sets up the Seminarium Warszawskie [Warsaw Seminar], an informal group of young artists who meet to discuss theory, practice and the social role of art.
- 1978 He starts the photographic series *Desymbolizacje* [De-symbolisations], reinterpretations of paintings by Polish painters. It consists of freeing objects from their symbolic meaning. Very active on the Polish photography scene, he gives talks, writes and participates in many solo and group exhibitions across the country.
- 1980 The series *Czynność – gest* [Action – gesture] highlights how hand movements become abstract when making gestures out of context.
- 1981 He begins the series of minimalist paintings called *Asymetria* [Asymmetry].
- 1982 Following the introduction of martial law in Poland, he moves to Meudon, in the Paris region.
- 1983 Dłubak starts the photographic cycle *Asymetria* which he continues until his death. It consists of several series: trees, boxes, faces, parts of the body. Together, they form an observation of the surface of things. In the 1990s, his works are exhibited in many group and solo exhibitions, especially in Poland.
- 2005 Zbigniew Dłubak dies on August 21 in Warsaw.



Untitled, circa 1950

PRESS VISUALS

TERMS OF REPRODUCTION

The use of press visuals is permitted and exempt from royalties solely for the purposes of promoting the exhibition at the Fondation Henri Cartier-Bresson. Cropping is not permitted and only three visuals per medium can be published.

001

Untitled, circa 1946

© Armelle Dłubak/Archeology of Photography
Foundation, Warsaw



002

I recall the solitude of the straits, 1948

illustration for Pablo Neruda's poem "Le cœur
magellanique"

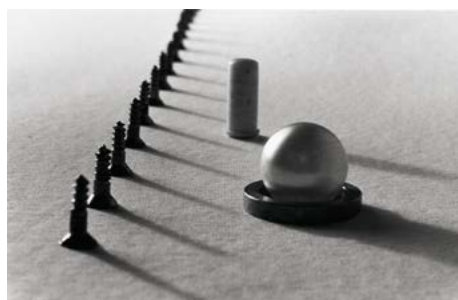
© Armelle Dłubak / Archeology of Photography
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003

The streets are for the sun and not for people, 1948

© Armelle Dłubak / Archeology of Photography
Foundation, Warsaw



004

Untitled, circa 1950

© Armelle Dłubak



005

Sketch for the series *Ammonites*, 1959-1961

© Armelle Dłubak



006

From the series *Existences*, 1959-1966

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Foundation, Warsaw



007

From the series *Existences*, 1959-1966

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008

Study for *Iconosphere I*, 1967

© Armelle Dłubak / Archeology of Photography
Foundation, Warsaw



009

Untitled, circa 1970

© Armelle Dłubak / Archeology of Photography
Foundation, Warsaw



010

Tautologies, 1971

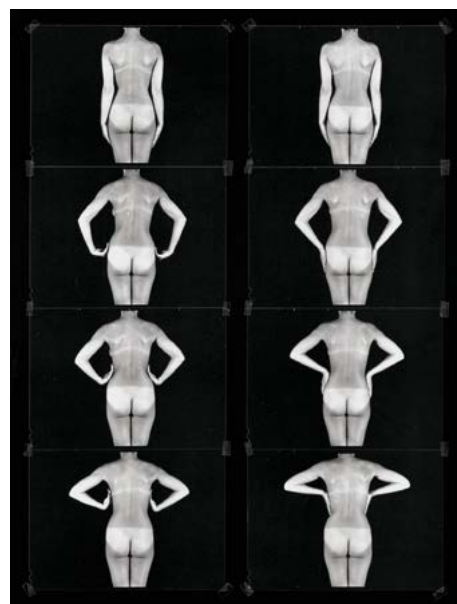
© Armelle Dłubak / Archeology of Photography
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011

Gesticulations, 1970-1978

© Armelle Dłubak / Archeology of Photography
Foundation, Warsaw



012

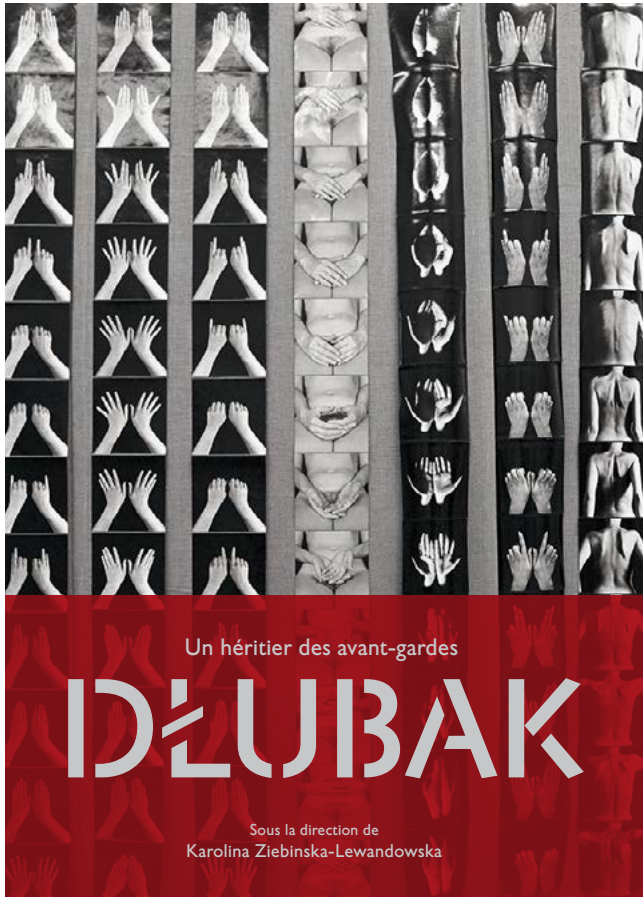
Desymbolisations, 1978

© Armelle Dłubak / Archeology of Photography
Foundation, Warsaw



THE PUBLICATION

XAVIER BARRAL EDITIONS

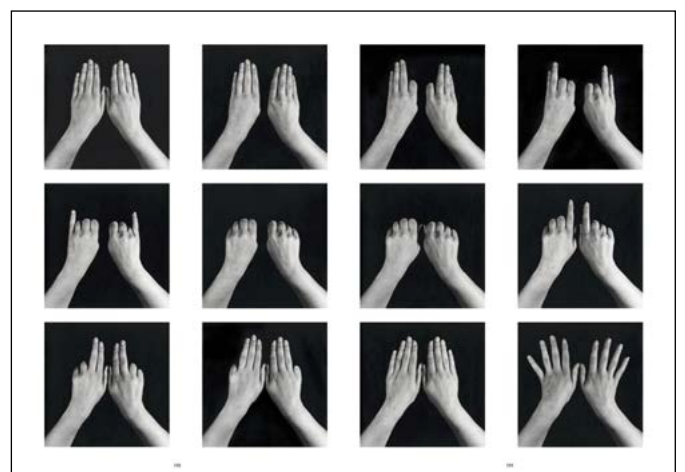
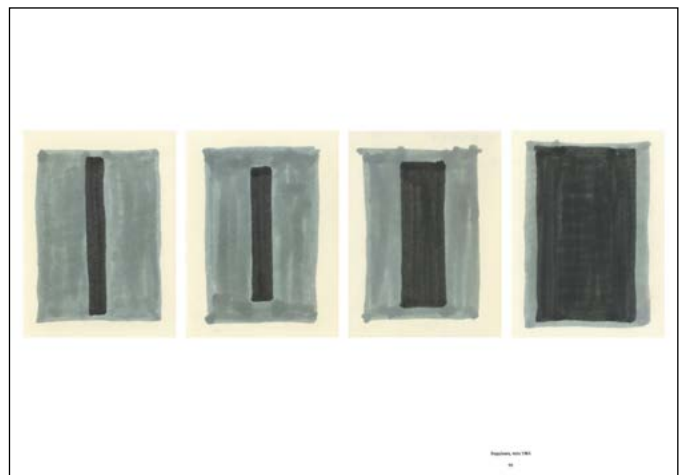


Zbigniew Dłubak - Un héritier des avant-gardes
Éditions Xavier Barral

Under the direction of
Karolina Ziębińska-Lewandowska
Text by Éric de Chassey

January 2018
17 x 24 cm
320 photographs and drawings
256 pages
39€

ISBN 978-2-36511-166-9



RENCONTRES EVENTS

CONVERSATIONS

The Fondation Henri Cartier-Bresson proposes a cycle of bi-monthly conversations around photography led by Natacha Wolinski, art critic.

Zbigniew Dłubak, figurehead of Polish photography

With Karolina Lewandowska, curator for photography at the Pompidou Centre and Leszek Brogowski, philosophy of art professor and vice-president of research at the University Rennes 2.

Thursday March 8, 2018, 6.30 to 8 p.m.

> Free admission but spaces limited, booking required: contact@henricartierbresson.org

THE FONDATION HENRI CARTIER-BRESSON SYMPOSIUM

Mobilities: a cycle of four events proposed by Jean-François Chevrier, art historian, professor at the Paris School of Fine Arts and exhibition curator. Today, more than ever, the study of artistic forms and particularly photographic works, calls for an historic and critical examination of the forms and language of mobility. The four events show how photography can play a part in this project when it is associated with social experimentation as well as with the arts of the image and the body in motion.

Paris extra muros

By Camille Fallet, photographer.

Thursday February 15, 2018, 6.30 to 8 p.m.

Urban fields and other

Marina Ballo-Charmet, artist, chats with Stefano Chiodi, historian and art critic.

Thursday April 12, 2018, 6.30 to 8 p.m.

> Free admission but spaces limited, booking required: contact@henricartierbresson.org

WEDNESDAYS ARE FREE!

Every Wednesday, from 6.30 to 8 p.m., admission is free for all visitors to the exhibitions at the Fondation.

> Free admission

SATURDAY GUIDED TOUR

On the last Saturday of every month, the Fondation offers a guided tour of the exhibition at 11.30 a.m.

> Last Saturday of each month at 11.30 a.m.

> Free on presentation of entry ticket

> Booking required: médiation@henricartierbresson.org

The Fondation Henri Cartier-Bresson sincerely thanks Olympus, partner of the Rencontres events, for its support.



Study for *Iconosphere I*, 1967

INFORMATION

PRESS PREVIEW

We are delighted to invite you to a press preview on Tuesday 16 January 2018 between 10 a.m. and 12 midday.

RSVP : Emilie Hanmer / +33 1 56 80 27 03 / emilie.hanmer@henricartierbresson.org

or on ligne : [sign up here](#)

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OPENING HOURS

Tuesday to Sunday: 1 – 6.30 p.m. Mercredi

Wednesday (free nights): 6.30 – 8.30 p.m.

Saturday: 11 a.m. – 6.45 p.m.

TICKET PRICES

Full rate 8€ / Concessions 4€

Free for Friends of the Fondation HCB

Free on Wednesday nights (6.30 – 8.30 p.m.)

FRIENDS

Friends of the Fondation benefit from a year's unlimited access to exhibitions, invitations to openings, bookshop reductions, priority registration for Rencontres events and private tours of exhibitions with the curators.

Full Member Rate: 100 euros Students/Concessions: 60 euros

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PARTNERS

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