

Title

Ways to Co-exist: Art and Education at the Manhattan Gallery in Łódź between 1991 and 2016

Sztuka i edukacja w Galerii Manhattan w Łodzi w latach 1991–2016

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Abstract

The Manhattan Gallery, which operated in Łódź from 1991 to 2016, owed its uniqueness to its location and program. Its phenomenon resulted from the co-existence of two, seemingly far-removed functions. On the one hand, its activity was oriented to a local audience, the residents of the housing estate where it was located. This aspect resulted from the institutional frames that determined the status of the venue as a local cultural center. On the other hand, the program and aspirations of the Manhattan Gallery were set by the curatorial concept of Krystyna Potocka-Suwalska, focused on the presentation of progressive art. The goal of the article is to reconstruct the history of the Manhattan Gallery against the background of the changing conditions determined by the city's policy and the political regime transformation alongside reforms of educational and cultural policies. Attention is mostly devoted to the first decade of the new millennium. During that time, the artistic program and the program of the venue as a community and cultural center became combined in activities carried out in urban space, situated at the intersection of art, science, and activism. Actions, research, and performances held outside the gallery often thematized its immediate surroundings: the city, the estate, the block of flats. Local residents, invited artists, and researchers in the fields of sociology and ethnology participated in pioneering urban projects in which the cultural center function – previously a burden for the gallery – became its integral value. The research results presented in the text are based on archival materials and conversations with individuals who collaborated with the gallery in various periods of its functioning.

The Central Residential District [Śródmiejska Dzielnica Mieszkaniowa] of Łódź, popularly called “Manhattan,” consists of eight prefabricated high-rise buildings. At the time of construction in the 1970s, they were the highest residential towers in Poland and a symbol of the country's modernization under Edward Gierek's leadership.¹ Twenty years later, in 1991, a gallery was established in one of those buildings on the initiative of Krystyna Potocka-Suwalska. Its name was

an inheritance, so to speak, from the myth of “Manhattan,” built on a fascination with modernity and from the cultural center that operated on the estate. Over time, the Manhattan Gallery emerged as one of the most significant venues in the country displaying the latest art. Its uniqueness did not result from the exhibition program itself, but rather from its skillful fusion with innovative educational strategies and projects that problematized the city’s identity. This article aims to reconstruct the gallery’s history against the background of changing economic, political, institutional, and organizational conditions, with special focus on the relations between the two main avenues of its activity – artistic and social-educational. I concentrate mainly on the reconstruction of urban projects, a form of synergy between an artistic program and initiatives addressed to local communities. My attempt to explore this hitherto unstudied topic² is based on press research, interviews with individuals involved in the establishment of the venue, and materials from the gallery’s archive, currently stored at the Muzeum Sztuki in Łódź.

“Manhattan” in Łódź – the context of the place

According to Julia Sowińska-Heim, who quotes fragments of debates held at the beginning of the 1980s in *Dziennik Łódzki*, the construction of the estate

represented well the tendencies of the era, when residential housing was considered the most important development task and became an object of constant “care” of the authorities, who also harnessed it for the needs of propaganda [...]. At the same time, on the micro scale, it matched the party-led “Łódź Development and Modernization Program,” which embraced “a radical dynamization of the city’s development” and the acceleration of its “modernization pace” in order to create “a functional and beautiful city” by introducing “modern, metropolitan, forward-thinking” urban solutions.³

The Central Residential District became an attractive place to live. Apartments were granted to cultural personalities, including filmmakers and visual artists such as Józef Robakowski, Julitta Sękiewicz, Mirosława Marcheluk, Zdzisław Szostak, Marek Koterski, and Ryszard Wyrzykowski.⁴ This context, along with its two dimensions – the mythological and the one concerning the political system – heavily determined the character of the Manhattan Gallery. What mattered were not only the monumental buildings, which often became the topic of works presented at the gallery and a pretext to initiate projects devoted to the city, but also – indirectly – the artistic activities undertaken there in the 1980s. One of them was the event *The Dungeons of Manhattan, or Art of Other Media: Exhibition Installation* [*Lochy Manhattanu, czyli sztuka innych mediów. Wystawa instalacja*, 1989], held in the basement of the high-rise at 182 Piotrkowska Street. Another such initiative was the Exchange Gallery [*Galeria Wymiany*], established in 1978, which operated in the apartment of Józef Robakowski. Aside from its function as an exhibition space, the flat also served

the artist as a vantage point from which to observe the life of the estate. Its everyday reality became the topic of the film *From my Window 1979–1999* [*Z mojego okna 1979–1999*], which begins with the words: “My name is Józef Robakowski. I live on the ninth floor of a big high-rise at 19 Mickiewicza Street. Our building has twenty floors – it is magnificent! And it is situated in the very center of Łódź. We proudly call this whole high-rise complex ‘the Manhattan of Łódź’.”⁵ Already then, as in the urban actions and projects from decades later initiated by Manhattan Gallery curator Krystyna Potocka-Suwalska, the estate served as a synecdoche of the city or even the state – images recorded through a window in a huge concrete slab encapsulated the atmosphere in Poland during the decline of communism and the period of political transformation.

Prehistory: 1987–1991

The building next door, at 15 Wigury Street – the same that later housed the Manhattan Gallery – was the site of artistic work and exhibitions organized successively by Sławomir Kosmyńka (1988), Tadeusz Porada⁶ (1988), and Krzysztof Skiba (1989–1990). According to an official agreement, the space was meant to have functioned as a cultural center since 1987: the “Śródmieście” Housing Cooperative signed a contract with the Łódź-Śródmieście District Cultural Center (DDK, later named Śródmieście Culture Forum – ŚFK),⁷ by virtue of which the three-story venue was to house a branch of the DDK and operate as the DK Manhattan.⁸ The agreement stipulated that the main goal of the branch was to “satisfy the cultural needs of the residents – members of the Cooperative, its employees, and local self-government no. 3.”⁹ Despite the efforts of Porada, who initiated actions that combined experimentation with work for the benefit of the local milieu,¹⁰ the DK Manhattan did not have a specified program and was open only occasionally.¹¹ The venue began to operate on a regular basis three years later.¹²

Toward the end of the 1990s, the DK Manhattan branch of the Łódź-Śródmieście District Cultural Center changed its director. The position was filled by Krystyna Potocka-Suwalska, who had previously worked as a voivodeship inspector for visual arts at the Culture Department of the Łódź Municipal Office (UMŁ).¹³ As a functionary, Potocka-Suwalska managed the purchases of artworks from artist-members of the Association of Polish Artists and Designers (ZPAP). She was also familiar with the artistic circle of the State Higher School of Visual Arts (PWSSP) in Łódź, especially artists and teachers working with artistic tapestry and involved in the organization of the International Triennial of Tapestry.¹⁴ Potocka-Suwalska also took interest in new, independent, experimental, and non-commercial artistic practices. She valued the activity of the alternative, artist-led *Wschodnia Gallery*, established in 1984 in Łódź, and sought to support the venue, tapping into the opportunities offered by her position at the Culture Department of the UMŁ.¹⁵ She also contributed to the organization of *The Dungeons of Manhattan*, which she mentioned in

a statement reported by *Kalejdoskop* in 1989: “Appreciating the artistic sense and understanding the need to support such undertakings, the Culture Department offered this event its moral and financial backing.”¹⁶ During her work at the Culture Department, visual arts scholarships from the Mayor of Łódź were awarded to many artists representing the alternative scene, such as Zbigniew Libera.¹⁷

In the same statement from *Kalejdoskop*, Potocka-Suwalska commented on the direction of the development of Łódź’s cultural life and the attitude of the municipal authorities toward non-traditional artistic practices. She pointed out a range of negative phenomena that affected the latest art, and laid out her own vision of reviving the art scene and of the potential of supporting worthy initiatives. She aptly noted “the progressing disintegration of creative milieus and artistic stagnation caused by such factors as the crisis of consciousness, the economic-social crisis, and the ‘standardization’ of the operations of our institutions in charge of propagation and art.”¹⁸ The proposed remedy was to establish a center whose profile would differ from traditional exhibition institutions. Such a center “could create a platform for a confrontation of stances and views represented by people of art and science through activities such as the organization of interdisciplinary symposia, presentations with artists’ commentary and discussion, and plein-air with a component of theoretical reflection.”¹⁹ Given the lack of funding to set up such a venue from scratch, she suggested that “the profile of a pre-existing institution should be complemented and extended so as to transform it into a center of genuine contemporary art.”²⁰ Considering the profile developed in later years by the Manhattan Gallery, we may conclude that it became the very space proposed by Potocka-Suwalska. The procedures related to the appointment of the venue’s new director were accomplished in 1991.

Revision of the cultural center

Preserving the name Manhattan, Potocka-Suwalska forged the identity of the entire three-story space of almost 500 m² and developed its program from scratch. As she recalls: “It immediately dawned on me that it should be an art gallery with an educational program for children.”²¹ According to this concept, the headquarters at 15 Wigury Street was transformed into an exhibition venue with a space for concerts and other live performances, whereas a nearby venue, acquired at the time, in the high-rise at 7 Piłsudskiego Street hosted classes in painting, sculpture, and printmaking. The two spaces operated under the same name – initially the Manhattan Club [Klub Manhattan], later the Manhattan Gallery-Club [Galeria-Klub Manhattan].²² The educational function imposed by the institutional structure²³ was close to the heart of the gallery director, who explained many years later that the creative education program “stems from the conviction that this is the way I prepare future viewers for contact with art and culture – I participate in building

symbolic capital [...], which is so scarce in Łódź.”²⁴

The gallery’s educational activities began almost simultaneously with its exhibition program.²⁵ On the one hand, they embraced traditional classes that sought to develop the artistic skills of participants, and on the other hand they offered workshops in schools, educational meetings at the gallery devoted to questions raised by specific exhibitions, and larger projects engaging the youngest residents of “Manhattan.” The offer of commercial classes soon followed. Enjoying high popularity, courses in dance, musical instruments, and diction responded to the needs of the inhabitants. When asked about the possibility of reconciling “ambitious activity with plebeian needs,”²⁶ Potocka-Suwalska stated that it was indeed possible and practiced at her institution: “We offer aerobics and Callanetics classes, foreign language courses; you can play table tennis and billiards for children.” She also mentioned plans to open a café, which in later years would become one of the important spaces that set the atmosphere of the venue – so important that the next organizational regulations in 1995 included a provision that recognized running the café as one of the Manhattan’s tasks: “Availability of a cafeteria for the participants of classes and events organized by the ‘Manhattan’ Gallery-Club.”²⁷ This was the first moment when the post-transformation pressure of free-market logic manifested itself in the conviction that culture must earn its keep²⁸: “Culture follows economy, from the centrally planned system to the free market.”²⁹

Yet, the core of the educational program embraced initiatives open to all and free of charge. The Manhattan Gallery launched collaboration in this field with the Centre for Contemporary Art (CSW) Ujazdowski Castle in Warsaw and – to a lesser extent – with the Children’s Art Centre (CSD) in Poznań. Long-term educational projects developed with Maria Korczewska and Janusz Byszewski from the Laboratory of Creative Education at the CSW were the first such initiatives in Łódź, aside from classes offered by the Muzeum Sztuki.³⁰ Educational activities, which have since become indispensable to the programs of cultural institutions, were not that obvious in the 1990s. After the political transformation, the systemic approach to cultural education characteristic of the Polish People’s Republic faced a breakdown. This was caused in part by the economic crisis and the change in funding priorities, but also by the pursuit of independence, which manifested itself in the conviction that “the best cultural policy is no policy at all.”³¹

Education formed a separate pillar of the gallery’s structures from the mid-1990s – it was pursued in relation to the Manhattan’s function as a cultural center and clearly separated from the exhibition program. After 1995, the leisure-time activities proposed previously to residents in the form of occasional events gave way to more complex projects.³² The Manhattan began to transform from a local cultural center into an art venue with a strong position among Polish art institutions. At the turn of the 2000s, it exhibited works by Katarzyna Kozyra, Joanna Rajkowska, the Ładnie Group,

and Cezary Bodzianowski. Potocka-Suwalska invited leading Polish performance artists (Zbigniew Warpechowski, Jerzy Bereś); she was one of the first to present butoh dance (Miho Iwata, Daisuke Yoshimoto); she initiated the exhibition cycle *Toward the East [W stronę Wschodu]*, which comprised photographs by Boris Mikhailov and other artists; and she developed the music scene (Ścianka, Mikołaj Trzaska, Mazzoll, and Trupy, among others). One of the major factors that influenced this process was the change in the gallery's institutional structure in 1998.

Cooperative" gallery

As the result of a conflict between Krystyna Potocka-Suwalska and the then-director of the Śródmieście Culture Forum, Dorota Koman, the Manhattan Gallery was excluded from the structure of the organizational units subordinated to the ŚFK.³³ As we can read in *Gazeta Wyborcza* from July 1998, "Two months ago, Dorota Koman, director of the Śródmieście Culture Forum, notified Krystyna Potocka, head of the Manhattan Gallery, of the termination of her employment contract. She offered her a junior inspector position with the events department of the ŚFK as of August 1, after the notice period."³⁴ Potocka-Suwalska reconstructs the course of the events leading to that situation as follows:

When I came to the Manhattan, I paid little attention to what my management – the directors of the ŚFK – would say. That was how I could do anything at all. That was my point of view, my choice. I did what I believed was right. It might not be politically correct to talk about it, but I cared more about the residents than about the management of the ŚFK. I was guided by my freedom to act; I did not imagine constraints. Any constraints made me rage with fury. When they told me that something was impossible, I had to do it anyway.³⁵

The gallery director admits that such an approach was made possible by the circumstances in which the gallery had come into being, among other factors (amid the political transformation, at the beginning of Polish democracy, at a time of general confusion). The situation changed when the director's position at the ŚFK was filled by a new person and Potocka-Suwalska intensified her efforts toward the gallery's independence: "I began to seek autonomy and turn the gallery into an independent institution. I wanted to detach myself from the obsolete structures of the cultural center. I was suffocating. All the money earned was taken away from me, I had to obtain consent to any and all artistic undertakings, my freedom was limited."³⁶ According to the vision of the new management, the ŚFK Manhattan was to become a regular cultural center, and projects that exceeded the core activity of such an institution were treated as superfluous or even considered a threat to its existence. Potocka-Suwalska, whose projects sought to go beyond the schemes of the municipal cultural entities, states: "I hated that structure, which limited the activity of the cultural center to language courses, dance, and sewing classes."³⁷ Her pursuit of greater autonomy was

met by the sharp reaction of the ŚFK: “At that point I was dismissed as the branch director. I was offered the lowest position in the hierarchy: junior deputy inspector.”³⁸ For Potocka-Suwalska, that change could only mean the end of collaboration; however, the gallery did not close down.

A letter to the director of the Culture and Art Department of the Łódź Municipal Office was signed by dozens of artists outraged by the news of Potocka-Suwalska’s dismissal and the gallery’s uncertain situation. The inhabitants of “Manhattan,” who valued the initiatives of the venue’s head, also interceded on her behalf with the municipal authorities, and the director of the housing cooperative declared support for the gallery. As Potocka-Suwalska explains, “Using the structures of the Community Council and the ‘Śródmieście’ Housing Cooperative, the residents addressed the Łódź Municipal Office to defend me and the venue. They defended me because I had begun to implement a range of functions and tasks that were allocated to the cooperative structures. For example, the organization of events – social and artistic undertakings for residents.”³⁹ The municipality reacted by shifting responsibility for the gallery entirely to the cooperative structures; Director of the Culture and Art Department of the UMŁ, Witold Jabłoński, announced the gallery’s takeover by the housing cooperative.⁴⁰ August 1, 1998, saw the termination of the contract from 1987 concluded between the “Śródmieście” Housing Cooperative and the DDK Łódź-Śródmieście concerning the DDK branch under the name DK Manhattan, and both spaces occupied by the gallery were returned to the cooperative.⁴¹ The venue acquired the status of a gallery and community cultural club, operating within the structure of the housing cooperative. Such an organizational model, in which a contemporary art gallery with a strong position on a national scale belonged to a housing cooperative and was co-financed by it, was extremely rare in Poland in the 1990s. There is just one other example, still in existence today, which has functioned since 1988 with the support of a housing cooperative: the Action Gallery [Galeria Działań] run by Fredo Ojda in Warsaw. It forms part of the structure of the Imielin Housing and Construction Cooperative. It is similar to the Manhattan Gallery not only because of its location in a prefab housing estate, but also in terms of an extensive youth program.⁴²

Multitasking on the free market

Paradoxically, the crisis described above and the organizational-institutional change that occurred in 1998 turned out favorably for the gallery. It became a separate entity, not a branch of another institution, which allowed it to radicalize its artistic program and undertake ever bolder and more elaborate projects. On the one hand, it continued its previous projects, while on the other hand it launched new, often innovative initiatives. Yet, the gallery’s financial situation grew more complicated, as was often the case during the political transformation period.

The housing cooperative financed the Manhattan Gallery on the condition that it should maintain

its function as a cultural center whose activities were addressed directly to local residents. Independence was therefore incomplete, but the new position within the structure opened up greater space for experimentation, both in terms of exhibitions as well as education and cultural development. A range of classes for the inhabitants of the estate was provided by the second pillar of the entity, the Manhattan Club. It offered such activities as classes in music (singing, piano, guitar, a song studio), theater (acting, diction, stage movement), dance (ballroom, Latin, rap, hip-hop, eurythmics), and a children's chess club. In later years, the Manhattan Club also organized gymnastics for seniors, aerobics, and dance therapy, among other things. Local Children's Day celebrations, artistic winter holidays, and a summer day camp for the youngest (often with ecological themes) were organized annually. A mixed model was implemented: some of the gallery's activities were free of charge, whereas others had to be paid for (as an additional source of funding). The Manhattan received around 70,000 zlotys of financial support per year for the implementation of its program, as well as designated subsidies from the Łódź Municipal Office (the Education Department supported the educational activity, and the Culture and Art Department partly financed the artistic program and employee remuneration); the remaining costs were covered by the "Śródmieście" Housing Cooperative.⁴³ Krzysztof Diduch, then-head of the cooperative, announced: "the gallery will continue to operate as an entity run jointly by the cooperative and the municipality."⁴⁴ In a free-market spirit, some of the costs were also financed by letting the space for events, conferences, courses, and training.

Thus, the venue, which ran an elaborate and demanding artistic program, functioned equally dynamically as an entertainment and recreation center for the residents of the estate in downtown Łódź. One of the factors that contributed to such synergy and the unique character of the venue was its familiar, even homely atmosphere. According to the gallery director, "the artists never left hungry; they were always well received and always had good memories of the place. I took care that everyone at the gallery should feel good. In every respect – not only artistically, but also in terms of well-being and emotionally."⁴⁵ However banal it may seem, the kitchen also contributed to that success: "Asia Orłowska started working for us, who was an excellent cook; she prepared meals with great panache, like the best chef."⁴⁶ When asked about the gallery's specific profile, the artist and art critic Anka Leśniak confirms that "the venue had an energy and power of attraction." Remembering the café located in the basement, she adds: "It sometimes happens that artists are taken to dinner after an opening. And Miss Krystyna served them dinner right at the gallery."⁴⁷ The café itself was a unique venue with a major influence on the gallery's character. It was there that the audience would gather after events for the less-formal part of the evening: casual conversation and social meetings, often with alcohol. It was also the best spot to observe the blurring of the division between the Manhattan as an art gallery and as a local cultural center. On the one hand, the café was a space for the artistic milieu to meet at openings, thus contributing to its integration

and offering the possibility of commenting on current exhibitions and talking with artists behind the scenes, and on the other hand – a place visited by the local community, who gathered during cultural events organized for them, such as music recitals and meetings with authors. Some of those events entered the gallery program as the result of suggestions by estate residents. At the time, the basement spaces of the tower block hosted such figures as Anna Szałapak from the Cellar under the Rams [Piwnica pod Baranami, 1996]; Józef Szajna, who visited the gallery during the series *Creators of Polish Visual Theater* (1996); Jan Stanisław Wojciechowski, commissioner of the Polish Pavilion at the 47th Venice Biennale (1997); Andrzej Stasiuk (1998); and Marcin Świetlicki (1999). It is worth emphasizing once again that the non-artistic activities and the kitchen – however important to the local community – also played a role (typical for the 1990s) in the venue's system, by helping to raise funds for the ambitious artistic program.

What stood out among all the activities within the cultural center's mission in the mid-1990s were the long-term educational-creative projects in the form of workshops. At the time, they were still pursued locally, adjusted to the scale of the estate and addressed to children and teenagers; however, they also anticipated later urban projects. As we read in the gallery's program principles:

A workshop is a group experience, but its essential and primary value is an individual process and result. Workshops shift the border of a purely educational activity and go further in terms of creativity. What matters here are not the artistic qualities of the created works, but the experience of creation. Faith in the possibility of creation. Workshops shape a creative approach; they familiarize participants with contemporary art and facilitate its reception.⁴⁸

The first such long-term project, initiated by Janusz Byszewski from the Laboratory of Creative Education operated by the CCA Ujazdowski Castle, began in 1995 and reached its finale fifteen years later.⁴⁹ Named *The Guide to Manhattan [Przewodnik po Manhattanie]*⁵⁰ and accompanied by a publication of the same title, the project involved children and youths from Primary School No. 14. A group of around twenty pupils aged 10–15 worked for half a year under Byszewski's supervision on a publication that depicted the estate as seen through children's eyes. The resulting book resembled typical guidebooks, but adopted a much more experimental form. It comprised materials drawn up by the participants: maps, drawings, photographs, texts, and interviews. Defined in the project description as “democratization of the media,” that working method would today be called participatory: “The role of adults in the undertaking was limited to the general concept, coordination, and providing the young authors with necessary working tools: a camera and a tape recorder to record interviews.”⁵¹ In her discussion of the project, Małgorzata Kosiec referred to the vision of “Manhattan” in the Polish People's Republic as a prestigious and artistic estate, and – most importantly for socialist rhetoric – an estate where different social classes co-

existed. According to Kosiec, however, that vision turned out to be mere myth, a phantasm of wealth offered to the people by the authorities together with housing allocation: “[...] the estate abounds in social contrasts. Suffice it to look at the youngest tenants – here the differences are particularly prominent. The parking lots are occupied by kids hoping that someone will let them wash their car,” and the apartment interiors are filled with the “sounds of TV sets surrounded by the youngest, most faithful viewers.”⁵² Other children on the same estate “live in the sterile world of expensive toys and equipment.”⁵³ Not only was engagement in *The Guide to Manhattan* meant to demystify that “strange, rough, and overwhelming”⁵⁴ place and present it as familiar and homely, but also to allow participants to gain a sense of agency. One of them wrote in the preface to the book: “At the beginning I thought that only selected people would hold the camera in their hands. But everybody did. That made me very happy because I only had two opportunities to use one in my short life.”⁵⁵ Beyond doubt, the sense of agency was also achieved through joint work on the book as a specific, tangible outcome of the project.

The traditional model of education, based on a hierarchical relation between the master and the pupil, and therefore the unidirectional transmission of knowledge from a person enjoying authority to those who need educating, was replaced at the Manhattan Gallery by a participatory model. The class leader (a cultural developer rather than a teacher) became a participant here and took part on an equal footing in the process of mutual learning. Such a process is founded on the free flow of knowledge and seeks to reach an outcome that is not premeditated and often surprising. As opposed to the traditional educational model, in which the specific needs of a given group are presumed, here those needs are revealed and formulated only in the course of joint work. Today, Janusz Byszewski explains this manner of collaboration as follows: “If [...] we situate ourselves inside, the relations become mutual (based on cooperation, dialogue, exchange), and the phrase ‘to teach’ should rather be replaced with a different one.”⁵⁶

Thinking about the city: research and educational-social projects as art

After the year 2000, the activity of the Manhattan Gallery began to reveal a distinctive programmatic tendency with a focus on urban projects.⁵⁷ The hitherto separated dimensions – the artistic, and the cultural-educational activity for estate residents – found a common platform in the early 21st century in the form of projects pursued outside the gallery in urban space. Those projects – long-term, devoted to topical social issues – significantly tightened the bond between the activities of the Manhattan as a cultural center and as a contemporary art gallery. From 2002, Potocka-Suwalska invited artists to create projects in response to a set problem or topic. Those activities combined the characteristics of artistic residencies, research projects, art biennials, and art festivals – and sometimes even local community festivities. By going out into the estate and

entering various sites around Łódź, the activities addressed the local reality – investigating, highlighting, and commentating on it. Participating artists often concentrated on questions from the fields of sociology and anthropology; in some cases, the organizational support of the gallery director offered them the possibility of working with the help of researchers active in a given field. Owing to this turn in the Manhattan's activity, social-educational projects, hitherto separated from the artistic program, took the form of art pieces heavily embedded in the Łódź context. The city was thematized, researched, and documented: "The gallery initiated a consistently developing debate about Łódź's disintegrated identity."⁵⁸ Notably, what fully manifested itself in the gallery context during that period was the influence of the competition-based free-market economy on the cultural situation. The Manhattan archive includes a bulky folder with dozens of documents, letters, requests, and e-mails sent out by Potocka-Suwalska to private individuals, companies, institutions, foundations, and functionaries. The gallery director needed to seek financial and in-kind support from corporate entities such as McDonald's and Selgros.⁵⁹

The first urban project was *Łódź/Łodka/Boot/Lodke* in 2002. It was devised as an attempt to define the then-current identity of Łódź against the background of the city's multicultural tradition, which no longer corresponded to its modern-day condition. The brochure accompanying the project was prefaced with a text by Lucyna Skompska, who underlined that "Łódź has a magnificent, unique past. But that past, locked amid shibboleths like in a prison, does not participate in the present. How then to give wings to the idea of tolerance, the idea of the co-existence of different cultures, when we are detached from knowledge that would allow us to consciously participate in the world of various convictions and confessions, styles and forms of art, social groups and subcultures?"⁶⁰ As someone affiliated with the Łódź artistic milieu of the 1980s and 1990s, which grew out of neo-avant-garde circles, Skompska situated the *Łódź/Łodka/Boot/Lodke* project in the tradition of the Muzeum Sztuki in Łódź and the Workshop of the Film Form [Warsztat Formy Filmowej], counting on the initiative to contribute – akin to how *The Dungeons of Manhattan* and *Construction in Process* [Konstrukcja w procesie] had – to a renewal of the city's ties with avant-garde art.⁶¹ The author also stressed that the Manhattan Gallery was somewhat predestined to organize the event because, aside from exhibiting art, the institution "has long organized seminars and discussions devoted to the current situation of Łódź, its culture, and the city's future development."⁶² The undertaking was divided into two parts. In September 2001, nine artists invited by the gallery convened in Łódź. During their three-day stay, they were supposed to explore the project principles in more detail and discover, or – in the case of local artists – rediscover the city for themselves. Apart from excursions, they also participated in discussion sessions devoted to Łódź and the gallery itself, with the participation of sociologists and art historians.⁶³

The meeting resulted in ready ideas for works that were supposed to materialize during the next

“assembly” in June 2002. Potocka-Suwalska invited Paweł Althamer, Anna Baumgart, Cezary Bodzianowski, Artur Chrzanowski, Marcin Maciejowski, Artur Malewski, Józef Robakowski, Robert Rumas, and Jakub Stępień to participate in the project. Skompska characterized the approaches of that group of artists as follows: “Just as the Łódź avant-garde and neo-avant-garde did in the past, today they define their approach as analytical and cognitive, observing social behavior, investigating interpersonal relations, tracing the development of popular culture.”⁶⁴ She also announced that “the artists will take their art to the streets, to the people. The goals they set for themselves remain in the field of art, although they are formulated in a language that combines in the strangest way metaphors with terms from the disciplines of sociology and ethnography [...]”⁶⁵

The invited artists came up with a variety of ideas for a dialogue with the reality of Łódź. In April, Robert Rumas set up the New Time for Łódź Committee [Komitet Nowy Czas dla Łodzi], which conducted a public fundraising campaign to activate the clock on the gate of Izrael Poznański’s factory and palace complex in Ogrodowa Street, which had been out of service for years. Up until June 7, the day of the artist’s action *Quarter of an Hour* [*Kwadrans*], donation certificates were sold in the form of postcards. Profits were supposed to cover the costs of repairing the clock. During the action, which was joined by the municipal authorities headed by then-mayor Jerzy Kropiwnicki, the clock began to work again, but was fifteen minutes fast – that was supposed to indicate the additional quarter of an hour for the city’s revival, the symbolic “new time for Łódź.” Toward the end of May, the press began to publish announcements concerning actions proposed by Artur Malewski and Marcin Maciejowski. The former invited the inhabitants of Łódź to take part in walks following the traces of people who had shaped his perception of the city; the latter published drawings in the job listings section of *Gazeta Wyborcza* that looked like employment opportunity adverts at the Manhattan Gallery. These were a camouflaged invitation to the artist’s exhibition *New Jobs* [*Nowe miejsca pracy*]; however, the adverts also provided an apt and bitter commentary on the situation of the era: “While job listings abound in adverts, the unemployment rate remains high. Similarly, in the case of this advert, reality is clearly at odds with the promising illusion: quite the opposite, the gallery needs to reduce employment.”⁶⁶ As opposed to Maciejowski’s adverts, the events announced in the press by Malewski did actually occur. On June 7 and 8, the artist organized two walks. Participants of the first visited spots along the daily route of a homeless person, Andrzej “Harry Argentina,” and the second followed the steps of a wealthy girl, Marianna. The two walks showed the city from extremely different perspectives, but their routes approached one another and intersected at many points.⁶⁷ In turn, Paweł Althamer returned to the idea, abandoned years before, to build a dojo in Łódź – a hall to practice the Japanese martial art of kendo. According to Japanese masters, Łódź was meant to become the most important European kendo center. Althamer, a kendo beginner at the time, drew attention to the role such a venue could play in teaching discipline and the safe release of aggression.⁶⁸ In the *Łódź*/

Łodka/Boot/Lodke project, the artist only managed to outline his concept, but he returned to Łódź five years later to fully implement it. It was also then, in 2007, that a three-month kendo workshop took place, organized in collaboration with the “Opoka” Family Support Foundation, alongside workshops in communication and ways of dealing with stress. The participants of Althamer’s *Kendo Project* [*Projekt kendo*] were teenagers and policemen; the initiative culminated with a tournament between the two groups.⁶⁹

The projects created within *Łódź/Łodka/Boot/Lodke* also included Cezary Bodzianowski’s action *Partnership of Cities, Brotherhood of Blood* [*Partnerstwo miast, braterstwo krwi*], which addressed regional collaboration between Łódź and the German city of Chemnitz. The artist visited institutions in charge of international cooperation in both cities and conveyed his proposals concerning further forms of collaboration. Another artist, Artur Chrzanowski, designed and published a series of postcards seeking to “unmask the latent complexes which the people of Łódź suffer from.”⁷⁰ Around a dozen documentary photographs printed as postcards depicted various spots in Łódź, but were signed with the names of iconic locations from around the world: “The idea [...] is very simple and consists of an attempt to find a lookalike. For example, the Colosseum in Rome. We know what it looks like [...] now imagine that the author of ‘postcards’ found that Colosseum in Łódź! [...] you won’t recognize it from a distance. Where is the Colosseum located? It stands in one of Łódź’s parks and it is an ordinary, tiny amphitheater [...].”⁷¹ Chrzanowski used the same model to depict the Orient Express, the pyramids of Giza, and the World Trade Center.

The visual identification of the entire *Łódź/Łodka/Boot/Lodke* project was created by Jakub Stępień in the form of “a design, widespread in folders and billboards, resembling a red-and-white football supporter’s scarf with the name Łódź written in four languages: Polish, Yiddish, German, and Russian,”⁷² the languages of the four nationalities that used to inhabit the city. Stępień’s scarf “stirred the interest of the fans of Widzew and ŁKS alike – two feuding football clubs. When they asked ‘Who do you support?’ they heard ‘The Manhattan Gallery,’ which aroused their curiosity about the newly discovered venue.”⁷³ One can probably agree with the opinion that “getting football fans to discuss contemporary art and the city’s identity is an unquestionable success of the project, which was meant to operate at many levels of social life and remain close to the most topical issues.”⁷⁴

Understood as an analysis of the city’s identity, the project did not end with the activities in urban space – it was recapitulated a year later in the form of an exhibition and a debate with “people of culture, science, the media, and politics.”⁷⁵ As in the case of the debates about the city organized previously by the Manhattan Gallery, politicians and businesspeople were absent. In spite of this – or perhaps because of it – empty words were avoided during the discussion. A range of activities

was proposed in order to improve the cultural situation in Łódź. Those ideas included publishing an art directory for visitors to the city, undertaking steps toward the integration of the academic milieu, establishing a local art magazine that would function as a discussion forum, and founding a cultural counter-committee as a unit independent from the municipal authorities. In order to put the proposals into practice, participants decided to establish an association and delegated selected individuals to outline its status.⁷⁶ Although the initiative turned out to be ephemeral, it was perhaps a greater success than the short-lived interest of football fans in contemporary art.

A result of one of the debates, and also the continuation of *Łódź/Łodka/Boot/Lodke*, was yet another artistic-social urban project, *A Woman for a Soul* [*Kobieta na duszę*] from 2003, which again focused on researching the city's identity. It was supposed to pursue "similar explorations, concentrating this time on a selected topic: the social situation of women in Łódź."⁷⁷ The project found its starting point with the stereotypes and hackneyed slogans that built the image of Łódź as a "textile industry city," "city of the unemployed," "city of women textile workers," or a "city of women." The invited artists sought to update the "women's myth" of Łódź, referring to the very special position occupied by women in the city's history: "It was they who largely built the historical, social, and cultural image of the city. They arrived here with the rise of the textile industry. They populated factories in Łódź. They became the symbol of the city propagated in the Polish People's Republic, a topos of Socialist Realism."⁷⁸ It was also they who suffered most acutely the consequences of the transformation in the 1990s, losing their jobs overnight.⁷⁹ Potocka-Suwalska pointed out that a similar summary of the "social and historical role of women in connection with a specific place, its tradition and history, has never become an object of artistic analysis before"⁸⁰ – neither in Łódź nor in any other major art center in Poland. She emphasized at the same time that she did not want yet another manifestation of feminist art, and highlighted the project's difference from popular exhibitions that approached the topic of women's experience in a biased way. She stated that the project "results from the need to reflect on the situation of women in Łódź [...] from the perspective of the city's current identity. It is also a reaction to the omnipresence of women's issues in galleries, not only in Poland, to its one-dimensionality and connecting them primarily with corporeality and sexuality."⁸¹ *A Woman for a Soul* reversed that perspective: instead of drawing generalizations and reducing women's experience and womanhood to a single model, it concentrated on specific individual situations, presenting the relation between a (specific) city (with its entire historical background) and a woman. The invited artists were Anna Beata Bohdziewicz, Edward Dwurnik, Elżbieta Jabłońska, Barbara Konopka, Anna Krupska, Zbigniew Libera, Marta Pszonak, Dorota Podlaska, Magdalena Samborska, and Julita Wójcik. The performance by Wójcik is the best remembered among project participants and continues to function as an urban legend among the people of Łódź. The artist carried it out before the exhibition opening at one of the abandoned factories that had previously employed masses of women. Wójcik "brought two sacks

and two brooms to the first floor of the abandoned and devastated D wing of Geyer's White Factory. Dressed in a cleaner's outfit, she scattered shavings around the hall and started to sweep the floor."⁸² Titled *To Sweep up after Textile Workers [Pozamiatać po włóknarkach]*, the action addressed the history of the city as an industrial center, a textile industry hub that employed thousands of women in monotonous jobs.

A subsequent project adopted yet another perspective on the city and its condition. An attempt was made to analyze Łódź's geographical location in the center of the country, along with its potential and limitations. Titled *Binary City: Łódź-Warszawa – Utopia and Reality [Miasto binarne: Łódź-Warszawa. Utopia i rzeczywistość]*, the initiative referred to the binary city vision formulated by architect Jacek Damięcki. "In terms of its boldness, the concept equals the designs of the greatest visionary of today's urban studies, Rem Koolhaas. Damięcki appears to share Koolhaas's conviction that a major influence is exerted on culture by the development of urban infrastructure, especially when a certain threshold of scale has been exceeded. According to Damięcki, only the merger of the two largest agglomerations will allow for the creation of a metropolis on a European scale."⁸³ Putting that utopian vision into practice was said to have been possible owing to the development of the transport network: the construction of a high-speed rail connection between Łódź and Warsaw, and an airport located between the two cities. Importantly, Damięcki did not pursue a simple reversal of the binary opposition between the dominant capital city and provincial Łódź. According to his concept, their new relation was to be founded on harmonious co-existence. He proposed a "complex hybrid of the two urban organisms that would guarantee not only the preservation of differences, but even the intensification of diversity and fostering local identity."⁸⁴

The invited artists from Łódź and Warsaw – Cezary Bodzianowski, Agnieszka Chojnacka, Wojciech Gilewicz, Katarzyna Kowalska, Robert Kuśmirowski, Konrad Kuzyszyn, Anka Leśniak, Artur Malewski, Anna Orlikowska, Andrzej Miastkowski (Wspólnota Leeżeć), Anita Pasikowska, Wiktor Polak, Igor Przybylski, Grupa Twożywo, and the Szu Szu Flying Gallery – were asked to create works concerning relations between Łódź and Warsaw. Their starting point was Damięcki's futuristic concept, but also the real relations between the two cities observed by their inhabitants. Alongside Potocka-Suwalska, the project was co-curated by Grzegorz Borkowski.

Akin to previous projects of this kind initiated by the Manhattan Gallery, *Binary City* launched with a two-day seminar. In October 2005, the artists convened in Łódź to participate in the meeting and the theoretical introduction, *Ideas, Utopias, and Reality: Artists in Public Space [Idee, utopie i rzeczywistość. Artyści w przestrzeni publicznej]*. The topic of urban relations was analyzed both through the prism of urban studies as well as history, sociology, politics, and art history. Special emphasis was placed on the question of ephemeral works in public space. Less than a year later,

in June 2006, the residents of Łódź could already see one such piece:

In Łódź Fabryczna railway station [...] a team appeared, to install a red banner with a thought-provoking message in simple white letters. Even today, this type of visual persuasion brings to mind the Socialist Realist propaganda code to such a degree that even before the entire banner was installed, passers-by could be heard saying: “How come? May 1 has already passed.” When the entire wording of the installed slogan began to glow white on red, it turned out that it concerned something completely different.⁸⁵

The person responsible for all the confusion was Cezary Bodzianowski, who chose to participate in the project in the place where the daily commute of masses of Łódź residents on the Łódź–Warsaw/Warsaw–Łódź route began and ended. His banner installed there read: “The most beautiful women in Warsaw are visitors.” As the project catalog explains, that message “is not only a joke, as it underscores the contribution of the residents of Łódź to shaping the modern-day image of Warsaw.”⁸⁶

The daily commute between the two cities was also addressed by Łódź artists Wiktor Polak and Agnieszka Chojnacka. The former installed the inscription “here” at the railway station in Łódź, and “there” at the station in Warsaw, as well as another pair of separated, nonsensical words: “fik” and “mik.” Polak drew attention to the way the two cities got along: “The Łódź perspective is radically different from the perspective of Warsaw, and the place from which one leaves is not indifferent.”⁸⁷ Chojnacka created the piece titled *Stereo*, which was a recording of the sounds of Łódź commuter rail and the Warsaw metro. The two channels combined to form a single audio piece and “created an acoustic illusion that connected the two cities and demonstrated – somewhat against daily experience – the similarity between them.”⁸⁸ According to the general project principle, the artists from Łódź presented the documentation of their works at the XX1 Gallery in Warsaw, and the artists from Warsaw – at the Manhattan Gallery.

The results of two of the actions carried out in public space can still be seen today. In Moniuszki Street, off the city’s main promenade Piotrkowska Street, Piotr Kopik, Ivo Nikić, and Karol Radziszewski, working together as Szu Szu Flying Gallery, installed a star similar to those in nearby Łódź Stars Avenue, inspired by Hollywood’s Walk of Fame. “This new star does not represent a specific person, but the very idea of art’s presence in urban space – it is rather a discrete impulse that compels mindfulness.”⁸⁹ Instead of a film star’s name, it bears the inscription “szu szu, Łódź-Warszawa.” Szu Szu’s star – one of the most conceptually interesting street art projects in the city – continues to puzzle many residents of Łódź and visitors until today.

In turn, the remnants of the action by Robert Kuśmirowski demonstrate a completely different

character. The artist undertook an exploration of the historic water supply canals that stretch for miles under the streets of Łódź. The action *Canal [Kanał]* concerned the section of infrastructure located underneath Wolności Square. Kuśmirowski “roamed the most distant nooks and crannies of the underground city with the hope of coming across traces of human presence, objects forgotten or left on purpose, inscriptions, letters hidden in cracks in the walls.”⁹⁰ The artist’s action culminated in a double finale. Firstly, the found objects and replicas of imaginary finds were shown at an exhibition. Secondly, the action and its media-hyped opening, which featured the then-mayor, representatives of the Waterworks and Sewage Company, and numerous journalists, led to the establishment of the “Dętka” Canal Museum, still in operation today. “Dętka” can now be visited by everyone, but unfortunately the objects from Kuśmirowski’s journey to the depths of Łódź’s underground, initially displayed at the museum, are no longer there. That is why few people nowadays see the connection between the Canal Museum and the Manhattan Gallery, without which the underground museum would never have come into being.

The last major project initiated by the Manhattan Gallery before relocating to Piotrkowska Street was held in 2008 under the title *In the City Full of Contradictions: Identity Documents [W sprzecznym mieście. Dokumenty tożsamości]*. Despite what its title might suggest, it did not concentrate on the city, but on the “Manhattan” estate – the phrase “the city full of contradictions” was used as a synecdoche that served to highlight the specific character of the estate as a separate, self-sufficient organism, full of contradictions – a micro-city within a city. The undertaking, which incorporated research into the estate in the gallery’s immediate vicinity, was the most scholarly of the projects discussed so far. It was inspired by the thought of the Brazilian urban planner Jaime Lerner, who formulated the concept of “urban acupuncture.” Potocka-Suwalska justified the necessity and meaning of the project as follows: “In a city ‘awakened’ in the new political reality, this hitherto nameless space became an object of artistic strategies and activities [...] which gave it value [...]”⁹¹ Artistic activities “reach the history of the local inhabitants and thus help to reveal the truth and memory of a specific place, determine its specificity and character, and confront mythology with reality.”⁹² These were meant to “remove the odium of anonymity from this place. To research it (both literally and metaphorically, because participatory art is often said to conduct research, as with social sciences) in order to ‘touch’ it, initiate movement, and elicit a reaction – to the place and within it.”⁹³

Aside from artworks, the project embraced ethnographic field research pursued thanks to the collaboration between the gallery and the Institute of Ethnology and Cultural Anthropology at the University of Łódź. The research group led by Professor Inga Kuźma comprised four students of ethnology along with Agnieszka Iwaszkiewicz and Krystian Darmach. The research concentrated on the estate and its residents. Its goal was to “determine and reveal various faces of this place”⁹⁴

and result in the eponymous identity documents, “of an artistic, scholarly, and documentary character.”⁹⁵ Due to the scale of the estate, the group of inhabitants chosen by Potocka-Suwalska for research was limited to “people of art and culture, creators, artists, media representatives, architects, plastic artists, individualities”⁹⁶ living on the “Manhattan” estate. A total of several dozen interviews were conducted, which provided the basis for the second part of the project, the “social installation.” Potocka-Suwalska described its course as follows: “This part of the project is co-created by the estate residents (whom we call ‘Manhattaners’) – those who still live here, those who passed away, and those who moved out. They spoke in various ways: directly, through the medium of film, through their piece/artwork, or staged situations. A process was launched of formulating various narratives, histories, and stories about a place that merits distinctive determination and definition.”⁹⁷ Among those social installations, presented in the section *Manhattaners’ Film Narratives* [*Filmowe narracje manhattańczyków*], were films made in the estate such as *Inner Life* [*Życie wewnętrzne*] by Marek Koterski, *The Old Man and the Dog* [*Stary człowiek i pies*] by Witold Leszczyński, and a film by Michał Dalecki, one of the first residents of “Manhattan.” Documentation was also made available, created by Wacław Kabziński – a local popular-cultural developer and documentarist. A musical-verbal installation by the composer Zdzisław Szostak was also presented.

As the gallery director emphasized, “an integral part of the social installation was Joanna Warsza’s action *Who Were the Indians of Manhattan?* [*Kim byli Indianie Manhattanu?*] – staged walks with residents of the estate.”⁹⁸ Warsza explained the title of her project as follows: “Why does the famous Broadway thoroughfare unexpectedly run diagonally across a city built on a grid of perpendicular streets? The main axis of New York’s Manhattan is the trace of a trail carved in the past by indigenous peoples.”⁹⁹ Seeking to draw attention to local phenomena and meanings – a code generated by “Manhattaners” from Łódź – the curator proposed trips with estate inhabitants.¹⁰⁰ Indigenousness symbolized by the eponymous Indians referred in this case to being local and “initiated,” a status also experienced during the walks by those from outside the estate. Participants had the opportunity to see “Manhattan’s” “million-dollar view,” shown by Małgorzata Bączyńska – a “collector” of the sunrises and sunsets visible from her window. More courageous individuals could join the walk titled *Stained Glass Windows and Mosaics in the Block of Flats, Drunkenness on the Staircases* [*Witraże i mozaiki w bloku, pijaństwo na klatkach*], led by Paweł “Runa” Fabiszewski, who described himself as a “sculptor, painter, stained glass maker, pure vodka.”¹⁰¹

The ethnologist’s efforts yielded some completely unplanned results. Records of conversations with residents, compiled in the form of an archive of memory of “Manhattan” inhabitants, found its way to the Institute of Ethnology and Cultural Anthropology at the University of Łódź. The

Topography Association and the Museum of History of the City of Łódź also took an interest in the materials. “Therefore,” as Inga Kuźma notes “the project evolved. It became a catalyst for activities not only with strictly scientific, research, documentary, and source studies potential, but also cultural and social potential in the broadest sense. It generates results that can be directly tapped into by all interested residents of Łódź.”¹⁰²

Ten artists were also invited to the *In the City Full of Contradictions* project. Some were familiar to viewers from their previous actions (Julita Wójcik, Artur Chrzanowski), whereas others were only just beginning their careers after graduation (Emilia Kuryłowicz). One of the works – inspired, like Warsza’s project, by New York’s Manhattan – established a symbolic connection between Łódź and New York. Krzysztof Topolski proposed an activity somewhat similar to that created by Agnieszka Chojnacka during *Binary City*. The goal was to connect two distant spaces using an audiosphere. Topolski asked two New York artists to conduct field recordings around their own Manhattan. Those sound impressions later aired on Żak Students’ Radio, operated by the Łódź University of Technology (PŁ). Listening to New York recordings in the “Manhattan” estate in Łódź allowed two places that shared a name to mutually overlap – virtually, but also sensorially.

A completely different response to the invitation came from Jacek Niegoda. Instead of seeking links with the Manhattan across the pond, he concentrated on working with existing contexts and the memory of the place. Niegoda came up with an idea to establish the “From My Window” Estate Committee, thus referring directly to the film by resident and artist Józef Robakowski. At the time of the urban activities pursued within *In the City Full of Contradictions*, the facade of the building where Robakowski lived was covered with a large-scale advertisement for the Media Markt company in the form of a giant arrow. Niegoda wanted to shift the arrow so that it would point at Robakowski’s window – the same that had served the artist as a vantage point for many years and contributed to the making of one of his most important films. Owing to the establishment of the committee, Niegoda’s project also stimulated social integration – estate residents and committee members acted together toward a common goal.

In the City Full of Contradictions: Identity Documents was undoubtedly one of the most elaborate, internally complex, and crucial activities initiated by the Manhattan Gallery, owing to the quality of the art projects and the value of the ethnographic research, as well as to the openness, inclusiveness, and collaboration with the local community at every stage of the undertaking. It was also one of the few situations when estate inhabitants engaged fully and in large numbers with artistic initiatives proposed by the gallery.

Manhattan Piotrkowska

The period of urban projects came to an end in 2012. It was then that the Manhattan Gallery relocated. The gallery was forced to move from the estate that gave it its name to the very center of the city – to Piotrkowska Street. After the period when its activities had clearly formed part of the specific character of the Central Residential District for years, it was uprooted and “replanted” in a location that may seem more prestigious, but had nothing in common with the *genius loci* from which the gallery emerged. The reason behind the relocation was the financial problems of the cooperative within whose structure (and venue) the Manhattan operated. Everything happened overnight: “Last Friday I am summoned by the director and handed a dismissal letter. The gallery is supposed to close down on September 1. This is what the management board has decided. I am told that the gallery costs too much and the cooperative has debts. The Manhattan Gallery, with its twenty years of history as an important venue for Polish artists and local residents – because, aside from exhibitions and concerts it also offers artistic workshops, for example – ceases to exist.”¹⁰³ In a conversation with the gallery director I asked how it could happen that the same cooperative that had defended the gallery a few years before and taken it under its wing later sent it packing. Her answer was: “There was a huge financial crisis. The cooperative ran up debts and was looking for ways to throw off financial burdens. At some point it started dissolving its various structures. They started with the Manhattan Gallery, then they closed down the garage, the technical building, and now they have a trustee in bankruptcy.”¹⁰⁴

The director of the “Śródmieście” Housing Cooperative, Krzysztof Diduch, indebted the cooperative to the dizzying amount of 30 million zlotys. The Culture Department of the UMŁ, which had largely financed the gallery’s program until that point, sought to negotiate with the cooperative. The self-government authorities proposed to cover the cost of the venue, but the cooperative, which had previously let the space free of charge, now fixed the rent according to market prices, which exceeded the budget capacity of the UMŁ. However, even the most attractive rate would not have saved the gallery, as the cooperative went bankrupt and the trustee sold its properties to reduce the gigantic debt. Not only did that relatively short period change the fate of the gallery, but also the estate where it had begun. Toward the end of July 2012, Dorota Jarecka commented in *Gazeta Wyborcza* on the course of events:

Nothing is ever certain in Polish culture. The director of the “Śródmieście” Housing Cooperative, Krzysztof Diduch, dismissed Potocka-Suwalska. The cooperative is in financial trouble. I believe that the director has problems; newspapers in Łódź wrote about it. He is facing a lawsuit for having trees cut down to make space for an apartment building. The striking aspect, however, is that he failed to consult his decision to close the gallery with the municipality, which covers the cost of its program. The fact that the director sees the gallery as his property is a symptom of the privatization of culture.¹⁰⁵

The Manhattan Gallery operated for four more years in the venue on Piotrkowska Street, much smaller than its previous premises. The gallery's offer had to be significantly limited: it stopped organizing educational-social projects and no longer functioned as a cultural center and community club, essentially focusing on its exhibition program. Potocka-Suwalska continued to invite artists who represented current phenomena in Polish art. In its new seat, the gallery presented works by Monika Drożyńska, Zorka Wollny, Łukasz Jastrubczak, Ada "Adu" Kaczmarczyk, and Karol Radziszewski, among others. Equally important during that period were shows by young artists from Łódź (Ola Koziół, Joanna Szumacher, Aleksandra Chciuk, the Robosexi duo, Paweł Hajncel), as well as performance art presentations, characteristic of the Manhattan's profile. Yet, given the conditions of the venue, the latter were often staged in the street. Four years after the relocation to Piotrkowska Street, the activity of the Manhattan Gallery came to an end. There were many reasons behind that decision, but one of the main factors was the change of the gallery's location. The new space posed many constraints, and was no longer rooted in the context of the estate, which had been crucial for projects that problematized its former immediate vicinity. Moreover, artists who had previously been keen to visit the Manhattan because of the atmosphere of the venue itself now refused to participate in exhibitions. Potocka-Suwalska remembers: "When I invited Gomulicki, he saw the premises and said he would not appear in such a space."¹⁰⁶ Another major reason for the gallery's closure was the waning enthusiasm of its director: "I simply suffered a burnout. I also have a weaker relation to what is happening now in the arts."¹⁰⁷ The ultimate factor was urban renewal: in 2017, all entities occupying spaces at 118 Piotrkowska Street were forced to abandon them.¹⁰⁸ It was then that, after 25 years of running the gallery, Krystyna Potocka-Suwalska chose to bring her activities to an end.

Outlined above, the history of the Manhattan Gallery on the one hand demonstrates the distinctive influence of economic-political conditions, changing with the country's political regime, on the functioning of cultural institutions. On the other hand it shows the self-reliance and programmatic consistency of a gallery director who – regardless of external conditions – strove to pursue her own program, based on a combination of artistic and educational-social functions, within a single institution. Although the question of the origins of strong interest in the role of creative education remains debatable (it is difficult to judge whether it came as a consequence of the cultural policy of the Polish People's Republic, organized around cultural centers and oriented to propagation, or from the individual views and interests of the gallery director, or else from the influence of the location, in a residential estate, designed according to the modernist, comprehensive – and at the same time typical of a welfare state – vision of fulfilling social functions), the strong presence of educational and social initiatives throughout almost the entire period of the gallery's existence remains a fact. Those activities were most fully pronounced after 2000, when the hitherto

separated educational and artistic pillars intersected in long-term projects that combined creative, social, and scholarly aspects, while simultaneously initiating debate and research concerning the identity of Łódź.

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1. For a discussion of the topic, see: Marcin Zaremba, “‘Bigosowy socjalizm.’ Dekada Gierka,” in: *Polacy wobec PRL – strategie przystosowawcze*, ed. Grzegorz Miernik (Kielce: Kieleckie Towarzystwo Naukowe, 2003); Maciej Gdula, “Odważ się być średnim! Genealogia i przyszłość polskiej klasy średniej,” *Krytyka Polityczna* no. 42 (2015), 83–132; Jakub Banasiak, “Prześlona dekada. Próby modernizacji państwowego systemu sztuki 1971–

- 1980,” in: *Awangarda i państwo*, ed. Dorota Monkiewicz (Łódź: Muzeum Sztuki w Łodzi, 2018), 311–326. ↵
2. The Manhattan Gallery is the subject of two edited volumes released on the occasions of the 20th and 25th anniversaries of its foundation, but neither offers a comprehensive overview of the institution’s history; see: *Inne miejsce. Galeria Manhattan – 20 lat*, eds. Aleksandra Talaga-Nowacka and Krystyna Potocka-Suwalska (Łódź: Stowarzyszenie “Obszary Kultury,” 2011); *Galeria Manhattan. 25 lat działalności*, ed. Magdalena Milewska (Łódź: Poleski Ośrodek Sztuki, 2017). ↵
 3. Julia Sowińska-Heim, “Artystyczne i naukowo-dokumentacyjne podróże po łódzkim Manhattanie,” *Sztuka i Dokumentacja* no. 11 (2014), 55. ↵
 4. *Ibid.*, 56. ↵
 5. Józef Robakowski, *Z mojego okna 1979–1999*, 16 mm, video, 20 mins, <https://vimeo.com/197377733> (accessed September 20, 2019). ↵
 6. Head of the DK Manhattan between April and October 1988, previously director of the Art Forum (1977–1981) and the Na Piętrze Gallery (1975–1976), and director of the Association of Culture Creators [Stowarzyszenie Twórców Kultury] between 1984 and 1987. ↵
 7. Łódź-Śródmieście District Cultural Center was established in 1982 as a result of the transformation of the “Lodex” Company Cultural Center. It operated as the Śródmieście Culture Forum from 1991, and as the House of Literature in Łódź from 2012 until today. ↵
 8. District Cultural Centers began to be established in all districts of Łódź in the 1960s. The DDK Łódź-Śródmieście was founded relatively late, in 1982. The reason was strong “competition” from the institutions that functioned as cultural centers, operated by all companies. As a higher order institution, the District Cultural Center was meant to supervise smaller centers – company common rooms and clubs – in content-related terms; based on a print obtained by the author from the House of Literature in Łódź: “Geneza powstania,” s.l., s.a. ↵
 9. Agreement concluded on October 17, 1987, between the “Śródmieście” Housing Cooperative and the Łódź-Śródmieście District Cultural Center, Archive of the House of Literature in Łódź. ↵
 10. Porada’s first initiative was an action by the pARTner Studio – one of the first groups in Poland engaged in artistic education, which at the time comprised Jerzy Andruszko, Janusz Byszewski, Wiesław Karolak, and Tomasz Teodorczyk. For a discussion of the topic, see: Łukasz Czapski, “Janusz Byszewski: Naśladownictwo jest niewolą,” Portal Organizacji Pozarządowych, August 7, 2013, <http://wiadomosci.ngo.pl/wiadomosc/897580.html> (accessed September 20, 2019); *Kalejdoskop* no. 9 (1988), 12. ↵
 11. One of the reasons behind the difficulties experienced during that period was the working

model followed by Kosmyńska, who presented marginal phenomena, often without the consent of the authorities. According to Ewa Bloom-Kwiatkowska, Porada tried to help Kosmyńska by seeking a legal basis for his activities, but the latter refused to accept the compromise it entailed: “Tadeusz certainly knew what he was doing. Above all, he was much older than us, more experienced, and he meant well – he wanted the gallery to survive. Sławek, in turn, was surely not a good partner for Tadeusz to collaborate with. He followed his own path and refused to listen to anybody. And Tadeusz had to cope with that, but we did not manage to stay in the venue. A letter came, we had to leave the place.”; the author’s conversation with Ewa Bloom-Kwiatkowska, March 21, 2018. For a discussion of the topic, see: Xawery Stańczak, *Macie swoją kulturę. Kultura alternatywna w Polsce 1978–1996* (Warsaw: Narodowe Centrum Kultury, 2018), 69. ↩

12. We should underline here that the history of the Manhattan Gallery begins only in 1991. There was no continuity between the program devised by Krystyna Potocka-Suwalska and the previous activities pursued in the venue, either officially, under the banner of the DK Manhattan, or otherwise. ↩
13. Iwona Klamann, “Z magistratu,” *Kalejdoskop* no. 9 (1989), 2–3. ↩
14. Krystyna Potocka-Suwalska, “Łódź – centrum tkaniny artystycznej,” *ibid.* ↩
15. The group of artists who established and ran the Wschodnia Gallery in its initial period (Jerzy Grzegorski, Adam Klimczak, Mirosław Ledwosiński, Janusz Cegięła, Jarosław Dąbrowski, and Paweł Duraj) received financial support from the artistic scholarship program offered by the Mayor of Łódź at the time. Headed by Potocka-Suwalska, the committee that evaluated applications granted them individual scholarships, which allowed them to renovate the gallery venue and begin activity; see: Tomasz Załuski, “Galeria Wschodnia – biografia miejsca,” in: *Galeria Wschodnia. Dokumenty 1984–2017*, eds. Daniel Muzyczuk and Tomasz Załuski (Łódź: Galeria Wschodnia, Fundacja In Search Of..., Muzeum Sztuki w Łodzi, 2019), 39. ↩
16. Klamann, “Z magistratu,” 2–3. ↩
17. “Stypendia twórcze Prezydenta Miasta Łodzi w 1990 r.,” *Kalejdoskop* no. 6 (1990), 20. ↩
18. Klamann, “Z magistratu,” 2–3. ↩
19. *Ibid.* ↩
20. *Ibid.* ↩
21. The author’s conversation with Krystyna Potocka-Suwalska, July 15, 2016. ↩
22. Despite the changes in the institution’s name – Manhattan Club from 1991 and Manhattan Gallery-Club from 1995 – it was commonly called the Manhattan Gallery throughout the entire period of its operation; the same name also featured in all printed matter published by the gallery. ↩

23. Although the venue was taken over by Potocka-Suwalska after the political transformation, it is worth remembering that the cultural policy of the Polish People's Republic, which became the foundation of the network of District Cultural Centers (the DK Manhattan functioned within that structure during its initial years), placed emphasis on questions of accessibility and the propagation of culture. For a discussion of the topic, see: Franciszek W. Mleczeko, "Przemiany gospodarcze – świadomość potrzeb kulturalnych – szanse rozwoju instytucjonalnych form upowszechniania kultury," in: *Domy kultury w Polsce Ludowej*, ed. Józef Kargul (Wrocław: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Wrocławskiego, 1985). ↵
24. Krystyna Potocka-Suwalska, "Wstęp," in: *Inne miejsce. Galeria Manhattan – 20 lat*, 9. ↵
25. The cover of a catalog of one of the exhibitions of works by children features the information: "The drawing and painting studio by the Manhattan gallery and club has operated since September 1992."; catalog of artistic works by children from the school year 1998/99, Archive of the Manhattan Gallery. ↵
26. Tomasz Bieszczad and Janusz Wiśnioch, "'Manhattanu' dzień powszedni," conversation with Krystyna Potocka-Suwalska, *Kalejdoskop* no. 11 (1993), 23. ↵
27. Ordinance no. 13/95 of the Director of the Śródmieście Cultural Center concerning the introduction of organizational regulations, Archive of the House of Literature in Łódź. ↵
28. A rapid decrease in budget revenues in the initial period of political transformation caused considerable disturbance to public finances – the budget revision accepted in November 1991 reduced funding for culture by more than 30%. Furthermore, decentralization processes were combined with the significant influence of neoliberal concepts. For a discussion of the topic, see: *Kultura Polska 1989–1997. Raport*, ed. Teresa Kostyrko (Warsaw: Instytut Kultury, 1997); *Kultura polska w nowej sytuacji historycznej*, ed. Jerzy Damrosz (Warsaw: Instytut Kultury, 1998). ↵
29. Krzysztof Dudek, "Kultura w ćwierćwieczu transformacji," in: *Kultura i rozwój* (Warsaw: Narodowe Centrum Kultury, 2015), 68. ↵
30. The author's conversation with Krystyna Potocka-Suwalska, April 19, 2017. ↵
31. Dudek, "Kultura w ćwierćwieczu transformacji," 71. ↵
32. From 1992 until the gallery's closure – despite manifold changes in the program – its ongoing, core educational activity was ensured by artistic studios in drawing and painting (along with sculpture and graphic art) run by the gallery. ↵
33. Aside from the personal conflict, we can also see here the process – characteristic of the era – of closing down cultural institutions or getting rid of them by positioning them at the local level: "One of the consequences of reduced funding for culture was the dissolution of a considerable number of cultural institutions and artistic groups [...]"; Dorota Ilczuk and Anna Wieczorek, "Finansowanie kultury ze środków publicznych," in: *Kultura polska*

- w dekadzie przemian*, eds. Teresa Kostyrko and Marcin Czerwiński (Warsaw: Instytut Kultury, 1999), 190. ↵
34. AP, JP, “Galeria nadal śródmiejska,” *Gazeta Wyborcza*, July 3, 1998. ↵
35. The author’s conversation with Krystyna Potocka-Suwalska, April 19, 2017. ↵
36. The author’s conversation with Krystyna Potocka-Suwalska, July 15, 2016. ↵
37. Ibid. ↵
38. Ibid. ↵
39. Ibid. ↵
40. AP, JP, “Galeria nadal śródmiejska.” ↵
41. Agreement from July 31, 1998 between the Śródmieście Culture Forum and the “Śródmieście” Housing Cooperative, Archive of the House of Literature in Łódź. ↵
42. See: Monika Weychert-Waluszko, “Galernicy sztuki,” *Obieg*, August 13, 2014, <http://archiwum-obieg.u-jazdowski.pl/teksty/33122> (accessed September 20, 2019). ↵
43. The author’s conversation with Krystyna Potocka-Suwalska, July 15, 2016; AP, JP, “Galeria nadal śródmiejska.” ↵
44. AP, JP, “Galeria nadal śródmiejska.” ↵
45. The author’s conversation with Krystyna Potocka-Suwalska, April 19, 2017. ↵
46. Ibid. ↵
47. The author’s conversation with Anka Leśniak, June 26, 2017. ↵
48. Program principles of the Manhattan Gallery, leaflet, 1995, Archive of the Manhattan Gallery. ↵
49. Mail correspondence and leaflets, Archive of the Manhattan Gallery, folders: *Przewodnik po Manhattanie*, *Przewodnik po Manhattanie II*, sign. 1995/1a, 1995/1b. ↵
50. This and other educational and social-artistic projects are discussed in: Sowińska-Heim, “Artystyczne i naukowo-dokumentacyjne podróże po łódzkim Manhattanie.” ↵
51. Małgorzata Kosiec, “Magia Manhattanu,” *Kalejdoskop* no. 11 (1996), 29–30. ↵
52. Ibid. ↵
53. Ibid. ↵
54. Ibid. ↵
55. “Wstęp,” in: *Przewodnik po Manhattanie*, collective authorship of the project participants, ed. Janusz Byszewski (Łódź: Galeria Manhattan, 1996), n.p. ↵
56. Janusz Byszewski’s statement, see: “O edukacji kulturalnej i artystycznej rozmawiają Anna Hryniewiecka, Janusz Byszewski, Sylwester Gałuszka i Mikołaj Robert Jurkowski. Prowadzenie dyskusji: Bogna Świątkowska,” in: *Edukacja kulturalna jako projekt publiczny?*, eds. Marta Kosińska, Karolina Sikorska, and Agata Skórzyńska (Poznań: Galeria Miejska Arsenał, 2012), 365. ↵

57. The second, equally prominent, avenue of the program at the time developed around performance art. It is not discussed here, however, as it goes beyond the scope of this text. ↵
58. Agnieszka Kulazińska, "Dolce utopia – między sztuką a społeczeństwem," in: *Inne miejsce. Galeria Manhattan – 20 lat*, 15. ↵
59. Letters to sponsors can be found in almost every folder with documentation of the gallery's projects at the turn of the century; see: e.g. Archive of the Manhattan Gallery, folder: *Kobieta na duszę, opisy, foldery, sponsorzy, patronaci medialni*, sign. 2003/3. ↵
60. Lucyna Skompska, "Wstęp," *Łódź/Подка/Boot/Lodke* project brochure, Archive of the Manhattan Gallery, folder: *Projekt Łódź/Boot – Artyści biorący udział – dokumentacja*, sign. 2002/2. ↵
61. Ibid. ↵
62. *Program pobytu artystów uczestniczących w realizacji projektu artystyczno-socjologicznego pt. "Łódź/Boot/Подка/Boat" w dniach 6-8 września 2001*, Archive of the Manhattan Gallery, folder: *Projekt Łódź/Boot – Artyści biorący udział – dokumentacja*, sign. 2002/2. ↵
63. Ibid. ↵
64. Skompska, "Wstęp." ↵
65. Ibid. ↵
66. Wioletta Kazimierska-Jerzyk, "Kulturowa tożsamość," *Exit* no. 3 (2002), 2776. ↵
67. Ibid. ↵
68. Brochure of the project *Łódź/Подка/Boot/Lodke*, Archive of the Manhattan Gallery, folder: *Projekt Łódź/Boot – Artyści biorący udział – dokumentacja*, sign. 2002/2. ↵
69. Marta Skłodowska, "Sztuka walki zamiast sztuki dla sztuki," *Gazeta Wyborcza*, June 21, 2007, 7. ↵
70. Kazimierska-Jerzyk, "Kulturowa tożsamość," 2776. ↵
71. Maciej Cholewiński, "Pocztówki z miasta," *Kalejdoskop* no. 10 (2002), 44–45. ↵
72. Kazimierska-Jerzyk, "Kulturowa tożsamość," 2776. ↵
73. Kulazińska, "Dolce utopia – między sztuką a społeczeństwem," 19. ↵
74. Ibid. ↵
75. Aleksandra Talaga-Nowacka, "Złożmy się i załóżmy," *Gazeta Wyborcza*, March 22–23, 2003, 6. ↵
76. Ibid. ↵
77. Krystyna Potocka-Suwalska, *Kobieta na duszę, założenia wstępne*, Archive of the Manhattan Gallery, folder: *Kobieta na duszę, opisy, foldery, sponsorzy, patronaci medialni*, sign. 2003/3. ↵
78. Ibid. ↵

79. Ibid. ↵
80. Ibid. ↵
81. Ibid. ↵
82. Aleksandra Talaga-Nowacka, "Pozamiatać po historii," *Gazeta Wyborcza*, May 21, 2003, 6. ↵
83. Jarosław Lubiak, "Trans-tele-portacja. Infrastruktura fantazmatyczna miasta binarnego," in: *Miasto binarne: Łódź–Warsaw. Utopia i rzeczywistość*, project catalog (Łódź: Galeria Manhattan, 2006), n.p. ↵
84. Ibid. ↵
85. Grzegorz Borkowski, "Binarne relacje," *Obieg*, June 1, 2006, <http://archiwum-obieg.u-jazdowski.pl/prezentacje/6023> (accessed September 20, 2019). ↵
86. Cezary Bodzianowski, "Transparent," in: *Miasto binarne*, n.p. ↵
87. Justyna Kowalska, "Budowanie mostów między Łodzią i Warszawą," *Obieg*, December 15, 2006, <http://archiwum-obieg.u-jazdowski.pl/recenzje/9489> (accessed September 20, 2019). ↵
88. Anna Chojnacka, "Stereo," in: *Miasto binarne*, n.p. ↵
89. Grzegorz Borkowski, "Szu szu na ulicznym bruku w Łodzi," *Obieg*, November 11, 2006, <http://archiwum-obieg.u-jazdowski.pl/prezentacje/6017> (accessed September 20, 2019). ↵
90. Gabriela Jarzębowska, "Kanał Roberta Kuśmirowskiego. Pamięć ukryta w przedmiocie i kłopoty z teorią," *Obieg*, October 19, 2006, <http://archiwum-obieg.u-jazdowski.pl/teksty/5895> (accessed September 20, 2019). ↵
91. Krystyna Potocka-Suwalska, "Wstęp," in: *W sprzecznym mieście. Dokumenty tożsamości*, project catalog (Łódź: Galeria Manhattan, 2008), n.p. ↵
92. Ibid. ↵
93. Inga Kuźma, "Badania etnograficzne na łódzkim 'Manhattanie'," *Journal of Urban Ethnology* no. 9 (2008), 8. ↵
94. Potocka-Suwalska, "Wstęp." ↵
95. Ibid. ↵
96. Kuźma, "Badania etnograficzne," 7. ↵
97. Krystyna Potocka-Suwalska, "Wstęp do drugiej części projektu," in: *W sprzecznym mieście*, n.p. ↵
98. Ibid. ↵
99. Joanna Warsza, "Kim byli Indianie Manhattanu?," in: *W sprzecznym mieście*, n.p. ↵
100. Joanna Warsza often uses walks as a form of art in her projects. The concept is discussed in more detail in the conversation with Warsza: "Problemy wiszą w powietrzu – o projektach w przestrzeni publicznej," interview by Agnieszka Iwaszkiewicz and Inga Kuźma, *Journal of*

- Urban Ethnology* no. 9 (2008), 104–109. ↵
101. Ibid. ↵
102. Kuźma, “Badania etnograficzne,” 11. ↵
103. Dorota Jarecka, “Koniec Manhattanu?,” conversation with Krystyna Potocką-Suwalska, *Gazeta Wyborcza*, July 25, 2012, http://wyborcza.pl/1,75410,12185772,Koniec_Manhattanu_.html (accessed September 20, 2019). ↵
104. The author’s conversation with Krystyna Potocka-Suwalska, July 15, 2016. ↵
105. Dorota Jarecka, “Prywatne, niczyje, publiczne,” *Gazeta Wyborcza*, July 25, 2012, http://wyborcza.pl/1,75410,12185769,Prywatne_niczyje_publiczne.html (accessed September 20, 2019). ↵
106. The author’s conversation with Krystyna Potocka-Suwalska, July 15, 2016. ↵
107. Ibid. ↵
108. Some of the entities that rented spaces in the tenement house, such as the Odlot Gallery and the Surindustrielle café-gallery, stayed there for longer, despite the order to leave. As of today (July 2019), the renovation of the building has not yet begun. ↵

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