

***Spectres of Witches.* Teresa  
Tyszkiewicz**

curator: Bożena Czubak

Documentation submitted for the competition  
for the curatorial project for the exhibition  
in the Polish Pavilion at the  
59th International Art Exhibition in Venice in 2022

exhibition concept

**Teresa Tyszkiewicz**

**Spectres of Witches**

A project presenting the artistic activities of Teresa Tyszkiewicz, who used her art to express women's experience of the world in an intuitive and highly sensual way. The message of the project is an insight into artistic practices that prompt a reconsideration of the borders between nature and culture, between humanity and its surroundings, between the psyche and the external world, the body and the mind, between reality and its representation.

The currently re-emerging eponymous figure of the witch provides references to women's traditions and becomes an inspiration for contemporary ecology, linking emancipatory potential with the actualisation of women's creative powers. The show of the artist, who passed away a year ago, will emphasise what, from the point of view of enchanting the world and resurrecting magical practices, is supposed to be a way of renewing ties with nature. The exhibition, consisting of paintings, films, photographs, and objects, far from being chronological, will highlight the processuality, corporeality, and organic nature of her art, as well as her radically subjective imagination, which situated her artistic practice outside the Cartesian dualism that divides the subjective from the objective. Emotional and intuitive, based on psychophysical experience, Tyszkiewicz's often ecstatic art was realised in the union of the body with the substantial realness of nature.

Tyszkiewicz entered the scene of the artistic avant-garde at the turn of the 1970s and 1980s as an author of experimental films. She engaged in performance, photography, painting, drawing, and created spatial objects and sculptures. Her monumental paintings were usually created using pins. By sticking them into canvasses, paper, photographs, sheet metal, and various objects, the artist developed her own, very individual style and something that few artists have – the almost immediate recognisability of her works. Processuality is inscribed in the way they are created, a time-consuming effort combining the methodical repetitiveness of sticking pins in with the expression of the gesture of piercing various materials. It is a kind of ritual performed daily for many years, which was continued in the writing of poems, and on-camera, usually improvised stagings, captured in series of photos.

The author of the spectacular and incredibly attractive visually paintings takes the viewers' experience beyond visual perception and thus culturally disciplined vision. The materials she used demand to be touched – prickly pins, spiky wires, soft cotton wool, fluffy feathers, dropping grains, hard rocks, cold metals, sticky substances. The swelling, organic forms and bulging materials of her abstract paintings activate irrational, nearly magical powers of transforming matter and energy. The artist's works are neither narrative nor mimetic, they do not tell any stories – they unleash forces that allow stories to tell themselves. To enchant the world in her art is to discover logic and reasoning different from those established by the existing “order of things”.

The artist's paintings cannot be seen outside the relationship with the body that created them; the photographs and films show a way of being rooted in the world in a relationship between body and matter animated by an animistic lack of distinction between the human and inhuman, the visible, explainable and the unconscious. In her totemic forms and imprisoned puppets, she referred to archetypical meanings and subjective, sometimes very intimate, experiences. She combined the spontaneity of her work with the rhythms of nature and the smile of the Medusa.

The project was prepared especially for the Biennale, to show the pioneering role of the Polish artist, who provoked with her art and opened the field for reflections that are becoming a challenge for our times. In relation to the programme of next year's Biennale, the project responds to the formulated needs to imagine different ways of coexistence and transformation in imaginary journeys through the metamorphoses of the body and definitions of humanity. The presentation of Teresa Tyszkiewicz corresponds with the themes of the Biennale and the accompanying doubts about art, science, and myths generated today.

exhibition script

**Teresa Tyszkiewicz**

## **Spectres of Witches**

The scenario of the exhibition will bring out and combine two leading themes in Teresa Tyszkiewicz's work: on the one hand, the women's way of experiencing the world that translates into artistic practise, and on the other, the organic relationship of her art and the matter of the environment.

The exhibition will be constructed from paintings, objects, photographs, and films in which the artist, using various media, dealt with similar themes. The individual works, despite the different techniques, will enter into clear relations, dependencies, and tensions. The matter of the paintings created with the author's physical (bodily) involvement will be developed in photographic representations of the body, covered with pasta or pins, wrapped in paper, foil, or cotton wool. Unconventional materials on the surfaces of canvases made of rice or oats will come to life in sequences of moving images, records of the body immersed in grain or rolling in fluffy down. The organic, as if swelling forms in the shapes of cocoons emerging from the multi-layered structures of the paintings will continue in the film shots of puzzling activities carried by the artist's hands, for example plunging into soft furs or forming round shapes out of thick, sticky substances.

The viewer inside the pavilion will be surrounded on four sides by paintings referencing rituals of renewing ties with the matter of the environment and the organic character of nature. In the photo and video representations that are a record of very subjective experiences that do not always lend themselves to logical rationalisation, references to archetypal meanings will be visible. The sensuality of the images will appeal to sensory perception, their physical materiality will open up to the metaphysical dimension and, above all, to almost somatic feelings towards the bodily experience of the world.

The front wall opposite the entrance will feature monumental paintings from the 1980s. The enormous sheets of canvas and paper, pierced with pins, wrapped in wire, with pieces of raw wood, in which the artist continued the ongoing recording of her own emotions. The extremely expressive compositions combine the fleshy material of the tangled fabrics and solidified paint with the nearly physically perceptible sharpness of metal pins and wires. The paintings, painter, welded, stuck with pins and even chopped with an axe, bear traces of

physical effort, a struggle with their matter. Hundreds of thousands of rhythmically glittering pins visualise the combination of a ritualistic, even methodical repetitiveness with the expression of an obsessively repeated gesture of piercing various materials.

The entrance wall will showcase the artist's early paintings, in which she experimented with various materials, as well as photographic recordings of her on-camera activities, in which her body was the area of the emotional and physical tests of her own individuality in contact with the reality of these materials. The paintings and photographs will be accompanied by objects. Cages with imprisoned puppets, pierced with pins, actualise the entanglement in cultural repressions inherent in the symbolic contradictions of the modernist grate. Totemic forms, paraphernalia of a witch's retaliation, will open fields for interpretation in categories of magical practices.

Looped projections on the two side walls of the pavilion will enclose the exhibition space, at the same time opening it up with the illusion of three-dimensional, moving images. Selected fragments will expand on representations from the canvasses and photographs, showing in action the artist's rituals of experiencing with her body various materials, elements, and the substantial reality of nature.

Ściana na wprost wejścia

The wall in front of the entrance



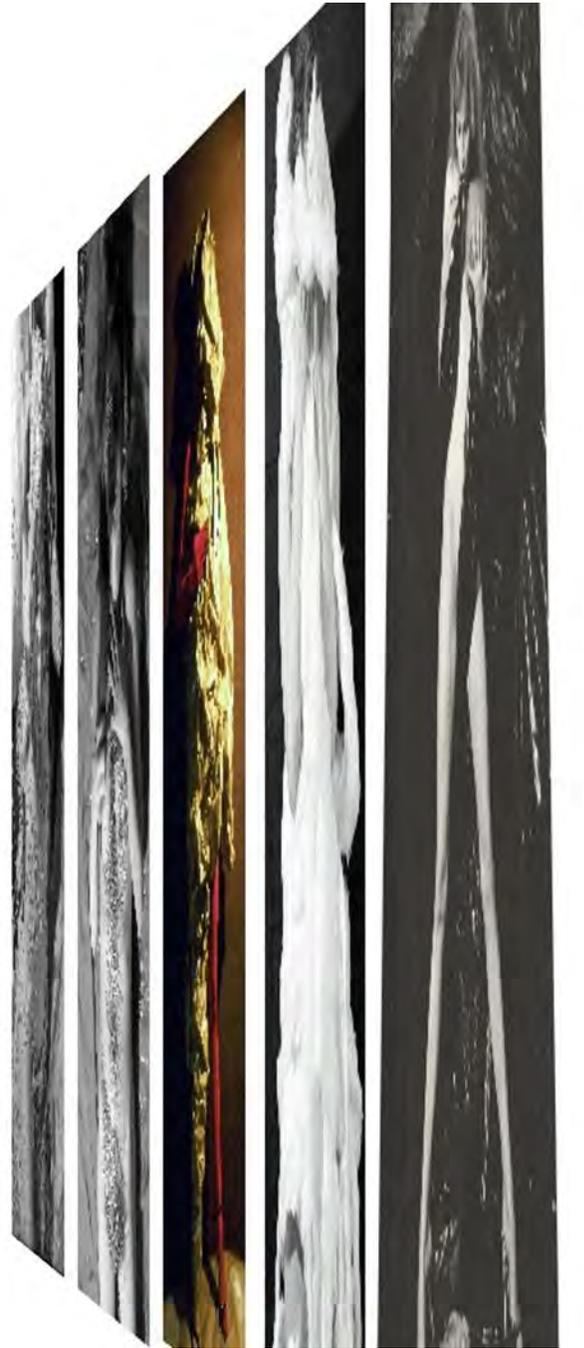
Ściana z wejściem

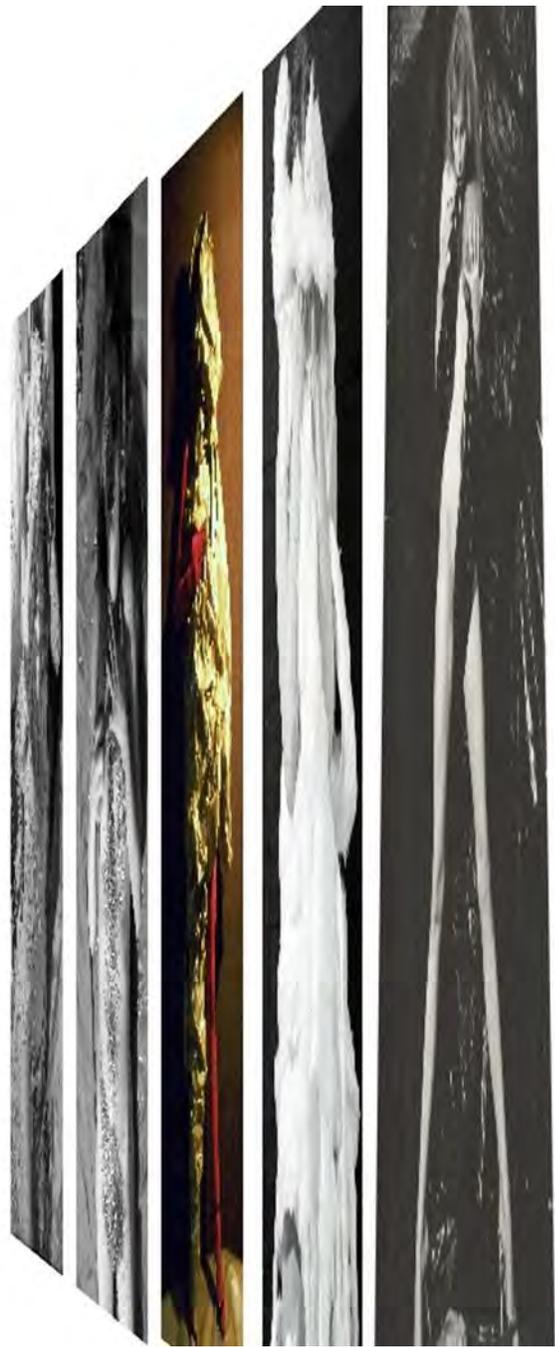
The wall with an entrance

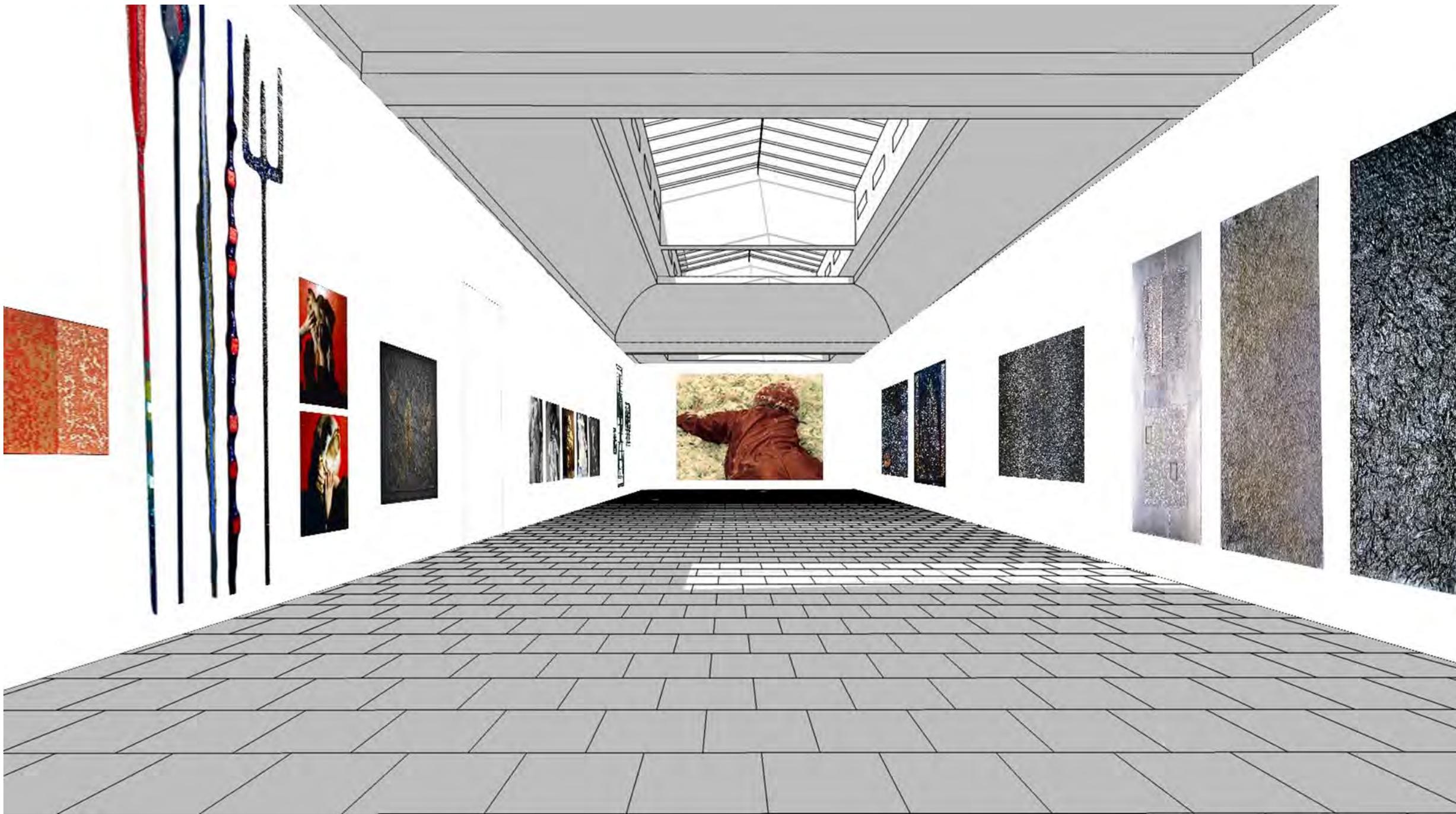


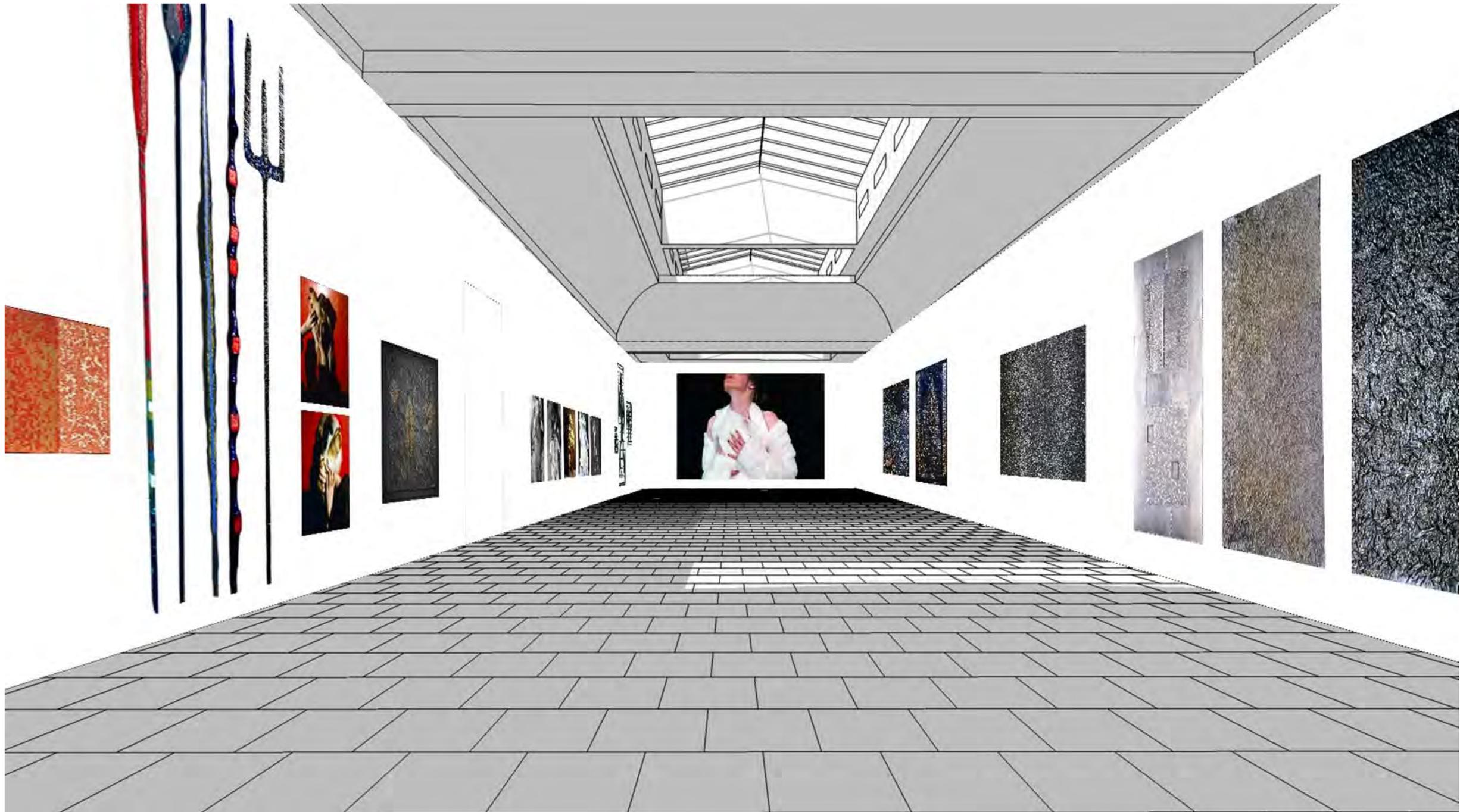
Widoki wystawy

Exhibition views









Kadry z projekcji na lewą boczną ścianę

Frames from the projection on the left side wall





Kadry z projekcji na prawą boczną ścianę

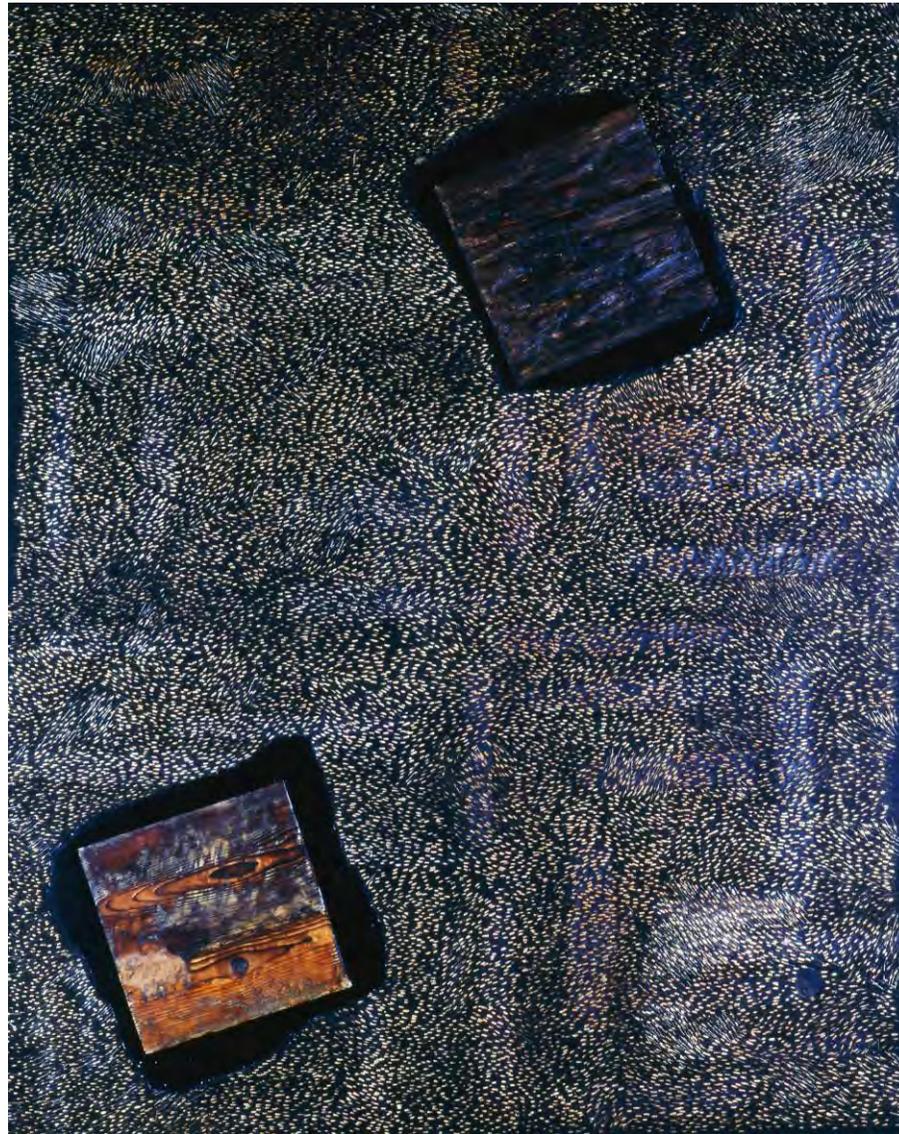
Frames from the projection on the right side wall





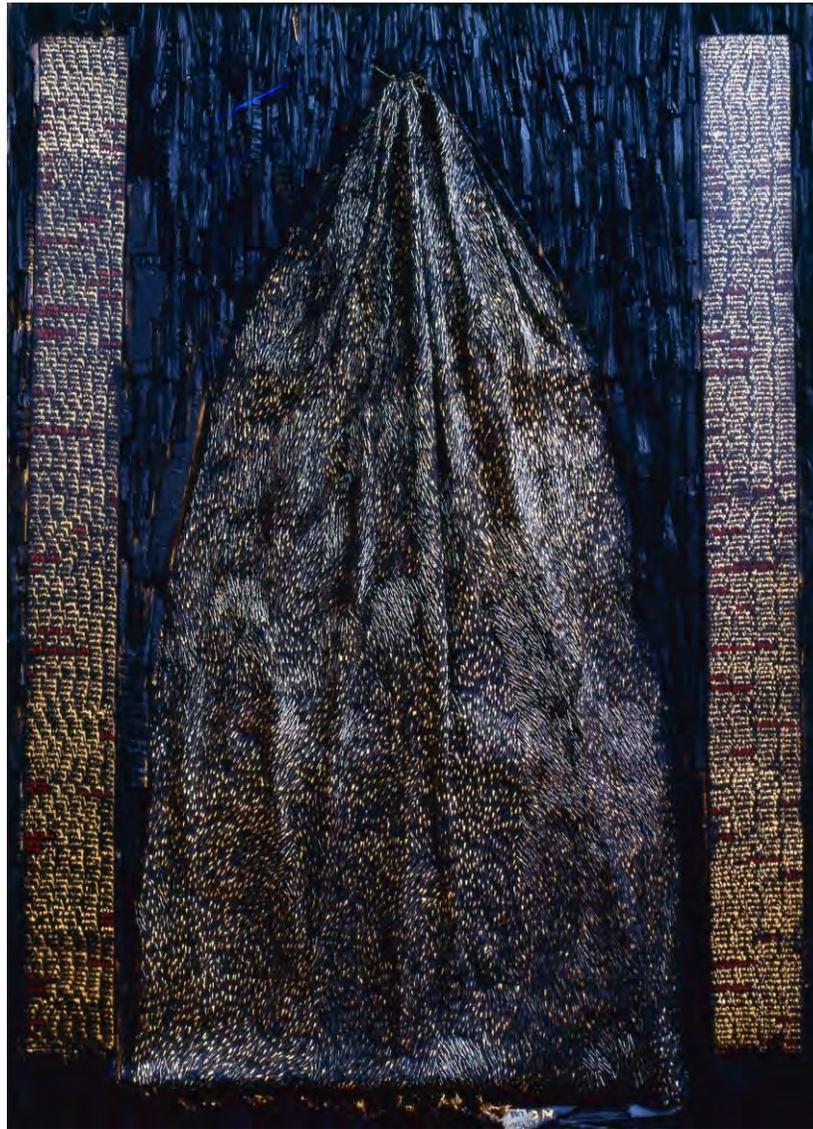
Zdjęcia poszczególnych prac

Photos of individual works



*Dwa drewna*, 1988, drewno, szpilki, akryl i olej na płótnie, 202 x 235 cm

*Two Woods*, 1988, wood, pins, acrylic and oil on canvas, 202 x 235 cm



*Worek*, 1988, drewno, szpilki, akryl i olej na płótnie, 250 x 180 cm

*Sac*, 1988, wood, pins, acrylic and oil on canvas, 250 x 180 cm





*Złoty*, 1986, szpilki i akryl na płótnie, 185 x 300 cm

*Golden*, 1986, pins and acrylic on canvas, 185 x 300 cm





*Szpilka i metal*, 1988, szpilki, blacha cynkowa, płótno, 300 x 160 cm

*Pin and Metal*, 1988, pins, zinc sheet, canvas, 300 x 160 cm



*Surowy*, 1983, szpilki, drut na płótnie, 300 x 150 cm

*Raw*, 1983, pins, wire on canvas, 300 x 150 cm

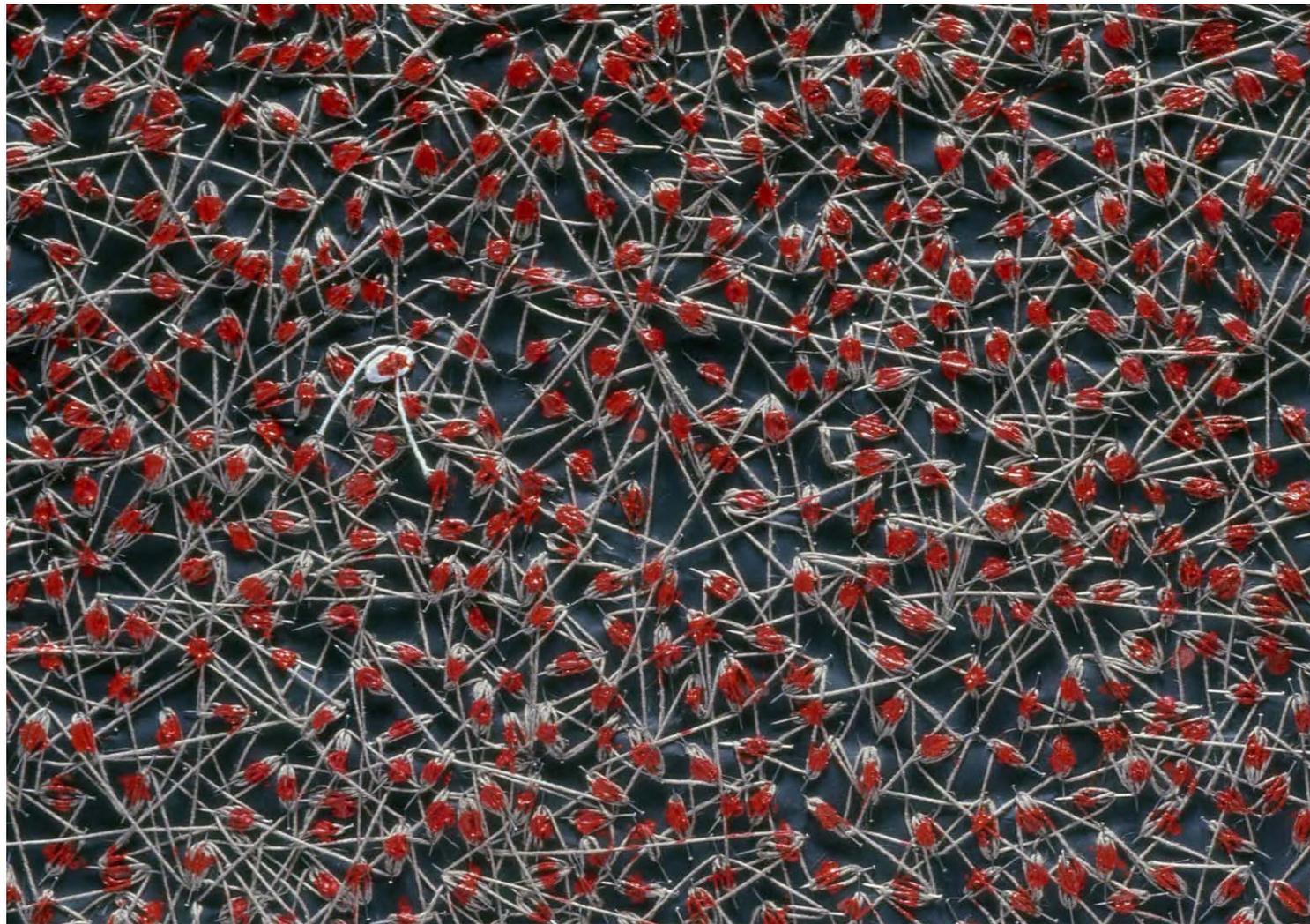




*Czarny*, 1984, szpilki, drut, papier na płótnie, 300 x 150 cm

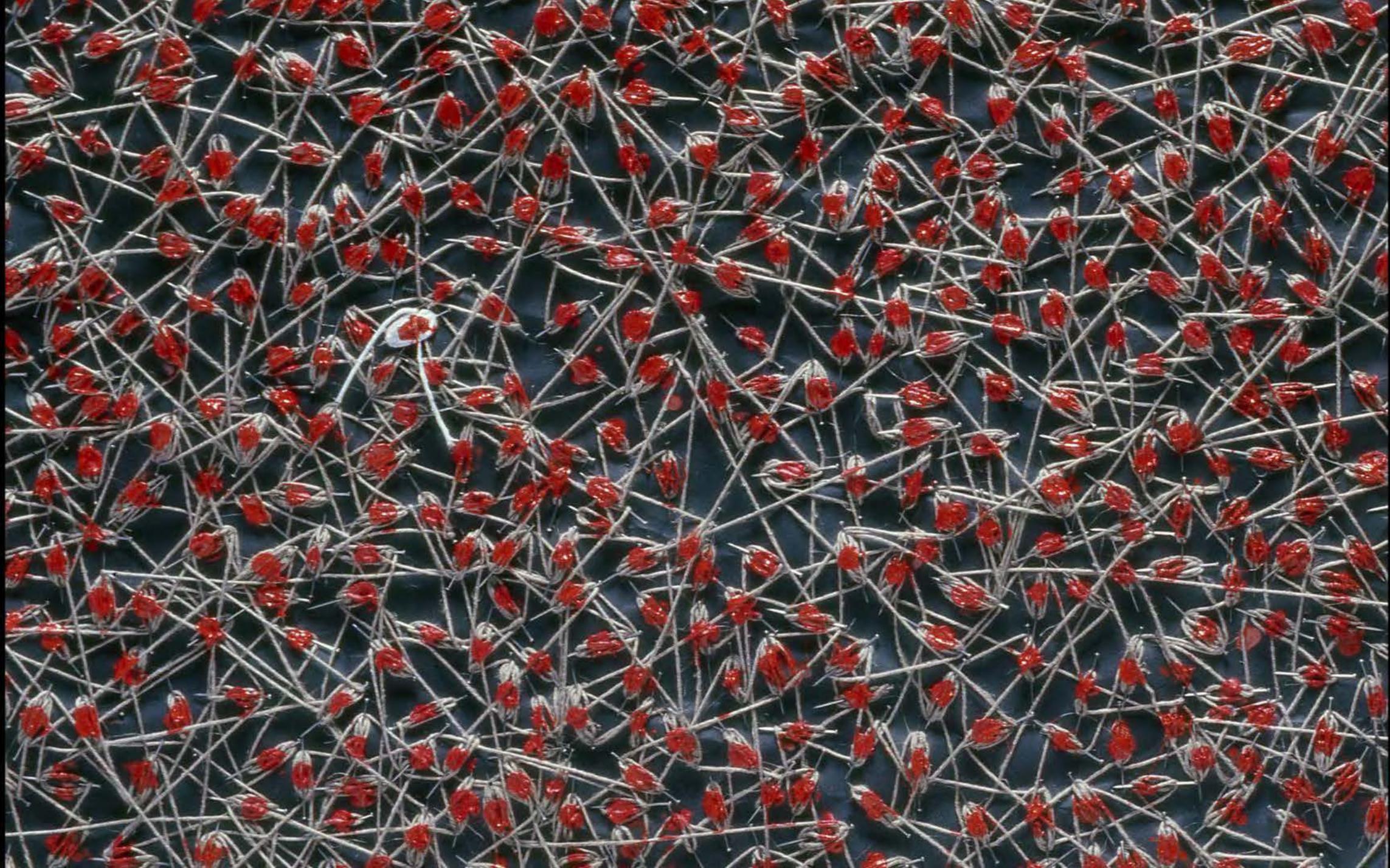
*Black*, 1984, pins, wire, paper on canvas, 300 x 150 cm

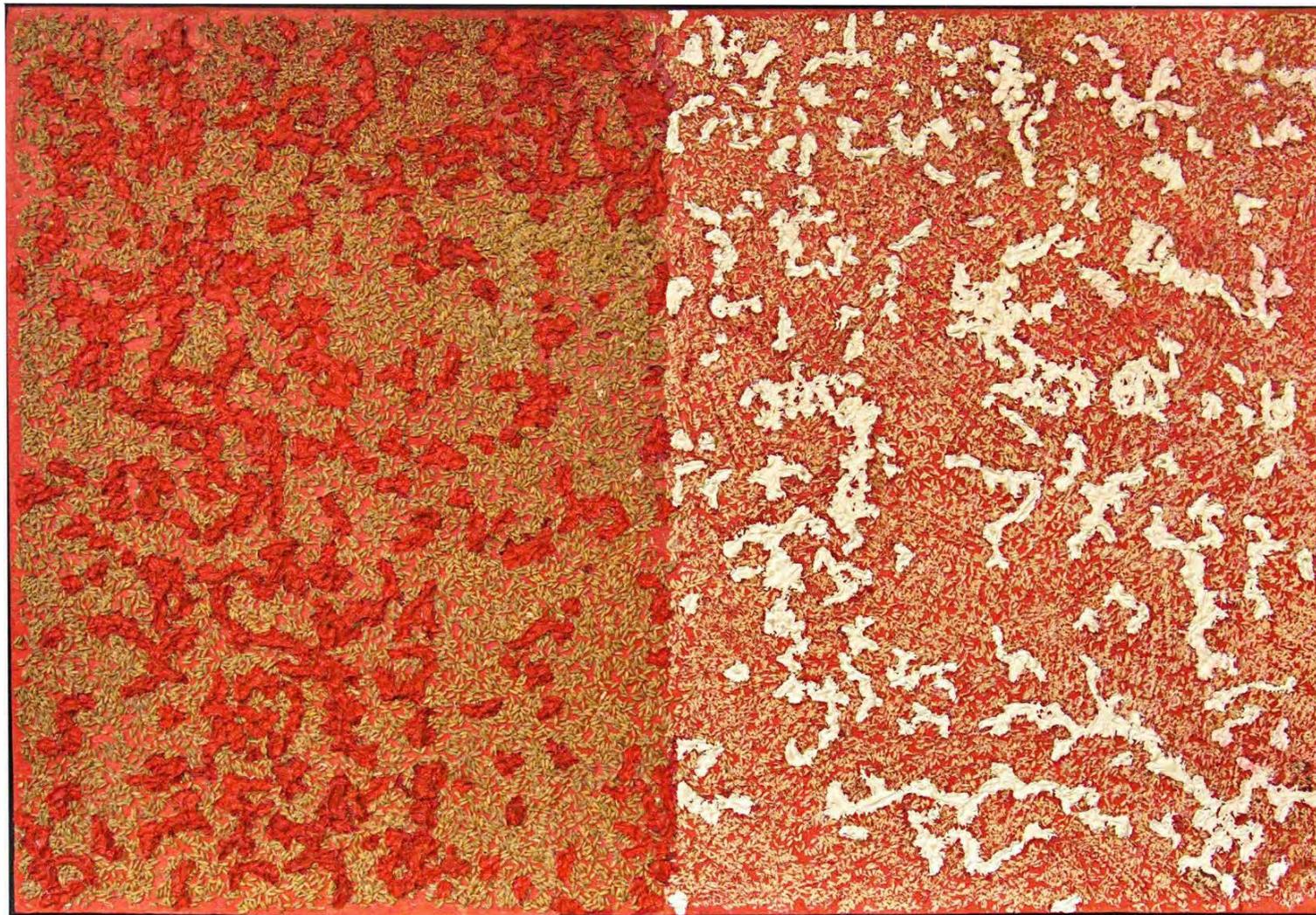




*Szpilki*, 1981, szpilki, sznurek, olej na kartonie, 68 x 98 cm

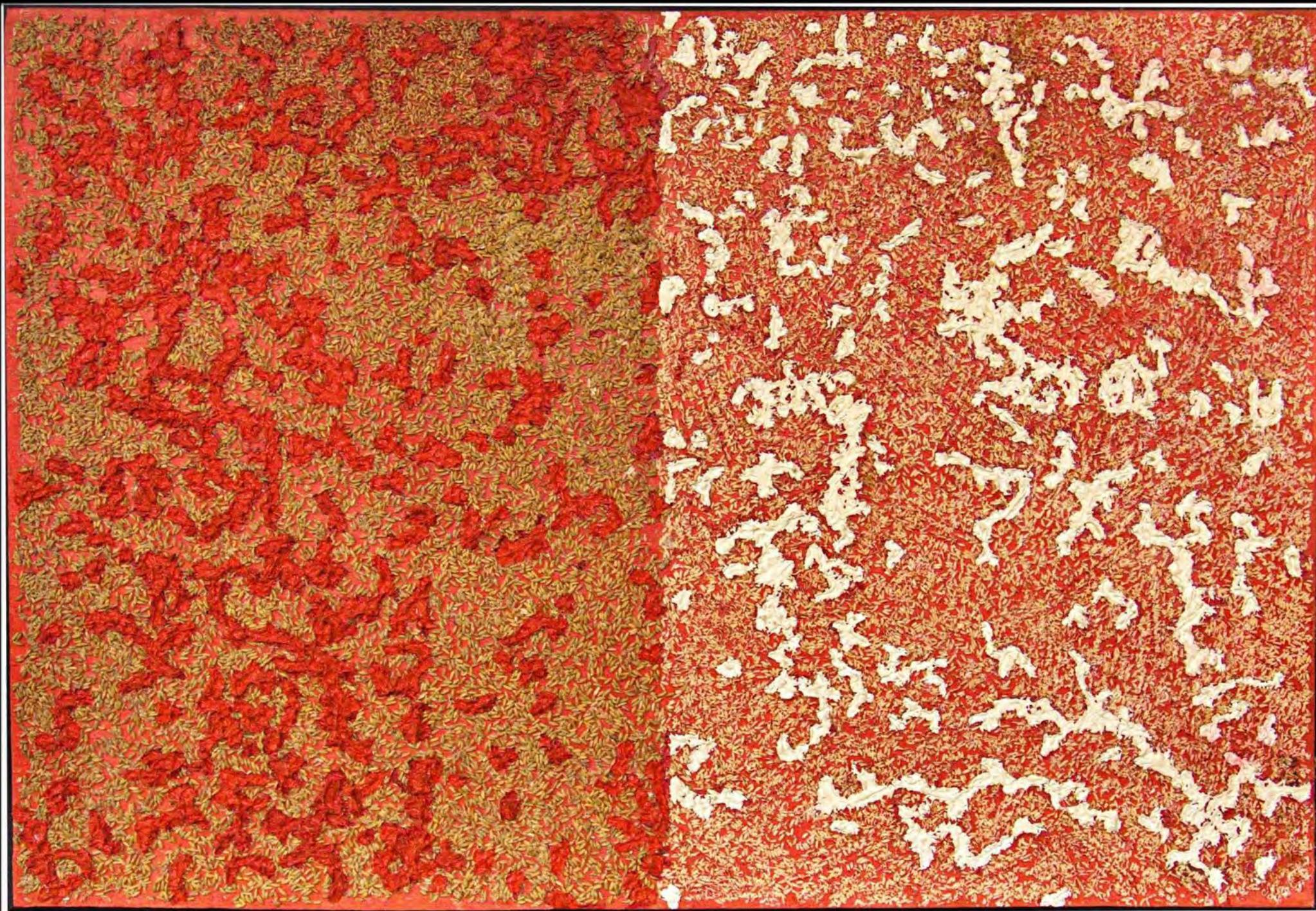
*Pins*, 1981, pins, string, oil on cardboard, 68 x 98 cm





*Ziarno*, 1979, ryż, owies, akryl, olej na płótnie, 70 x 100 cm

*Grain*, 1979, rice, oats, acrylic, oil on canvas, 70 x 100 cm





*Totemy*, 1989, drewno, płótno, szpilki, akryl, olej, wysokość od 390 do 405 cm

*Totems*, 1989, wood, canvas, pins, acrylic, oil, height from 390 to 405 cm







Z serii *Kopyto*, 1981, fotografia, 100 x 100 cm



From the *Hoof* series, 1981, photography, 100 x 100 cm



*Aseret W*, 1983, szpilki, drut cynkowy, karton, papier, akryl, olej na płótnie, 147 x 155 cm

*Aseret W*, 1983, pins, zinc wire, cardboard, paper, acrylic, oil on canvas, 147 x 155 cm







Z serii *Kluski*, 1984, fotografia, 150 x 100 cm

From the *Noodles* series, 1984 photography, 150 x 100 cm



Z serii *Szpilki*, 1984, fotografia, 150 x 100 cm

From the *Pins* series, 1984 photography, 150 x 100 cm



Z serii *Papier*, 1982, fotografia, 150 x 100 cm

From the *Paper* series, 1982 photography, 150 x 100 cm



Z serii *Wata*, 1981, fotografia, 150 x 100 cm

From the *Cotton Wool* series, 1981 photography, 150 x 100 cm



Z serii *Folia*, 1982, fotografia, 150 x 100 cm

From the *Foil* series, 1982, photography, 150 x 100 cm



*Klatki*, 1990, drewno, metal, płótno, szpilki, akryl, 315 x 140 x

*Cages*, 1990, wood, metal, canvas, pins, acrylic, 315 x 140 x 67 cm





Projekcja na lewą boczną ścianę

Left side wall projection

Fragmenty filmów

*Obraz i gry, 1981; Oddech, 1981; Dzień po dniu, 1980; Ziarno, 1980*

Excerpts from the films

*Image and Games, 1981; Breath, 1981; Day after Day, 1980; Grain, 1980*

Projekcja na prawą boczną ścianę

Right side wall projection

Fragmenty filmów

*Stadium*, 1982; *Arta*, 1984

Excerpts from the films

*Stage*, 1982, *Arta*, 1984