

Foaming at the Mouth.

Kornelia Dzikowska

curator: Anna Walewska

Documentation (excerpt) 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

THE CONCEPT: Everything is fine, until it's not. This moment of transition from one state to the other, incredibly difficult to capture, is what fascinates Kornelia Dzikowska. In the *Pienienie na ustach / Foaming at the Mouth* project for the competition, the Artist attempts to capture it by using construction, mechanism, light and space.

The intention is to create in the Polonia Pavilion, left of the entrance, a multi-level, scaled-up fountain with an original form from which, instead of water, foam will emerge. The fountain will have a raw, construction-like form devoid of a sculptural touch. The remainder of the interior will be a uniform background to the engaging construction. The room will have no dividers; it will be entirely darkened. The fountain will “appropriate” the space via the expanding foam that will spill over the limits of the installation. What will be visible is the light reflecting off of the foam, and not the light source installed inside the construction.

Why foam instead of water? On the one hand, it emphasises the absurdity of the scene which is the premise of the project, and the uncertainty of the situation: is it actually real, or not? On the other hand, it alludes to various idiomatic expressions conveying sentiments to which we refer: “to foam at the mouth”, “to be in a froth over something”, etc. Foam at the mouth can also be a symptom of a drug overdose, and many diseases, including rabies. What is important in the *Pienienie na ustach / Foaming at the Mouth* project is the motif of placing small architecture (a fountain) inside architecture (the Pavilion).

The effect we intend to achieve is to make the interior unreal, so it becomes a space abstracted from time, place, and context. Perhaps it is even not necessarily real or physical. We want to achieve the effect that brings to mind the abyss, as if the fountain was suspended in endless space. So that the scale of the interior filled with darkness is impossible to estimate. We want to avoid defining what precisely this space is. The fountain has an unusual form and only its colour alludes to classic stonework. Our instruments are the large scale (the construction is ca. 4.5 m high), the cascade layout and the monochromatics of the presentation. The situation will be accompanied by the sound of foaming, and the scent of the foam which visitors will be able to touch (for design solutions see “SCRIPT”). Our goal is to evoke the sense that something is about to happen. The feeling is supposed to be intriguing, the situation – engaging and puzzling for viewers who would not be sure either where they are, or what they participate in. On the one hand, it can bring up associations with childhood (soap bubbles). On the other hand, they could feel danger due to the space, lack of information and dynamics of the foam expanding outside the fountain, which in a sense “pushes out” the surroundings. Its vertical form is a combination of what is on the ground with what is high above, and it indicates that everything blends and merges. In striving for

such an impression, we want to inspire aesthetic experiences in viewers. The scene is supposed to evoke uneasiness, but at the same time be fascinating, solemn, and beautiful. We want to use abstract language, a metaphor and the category of absurd, engaging all senses. We want to play with the ambiguity of the scene, obliqueness and associations, leaving room for viewers' imagination to come in.

In preparing the exhibition project for the Polish Pavilion for the 59. Venice Art Biennale, we want to refer to the universal experience which, in our opinion, is shared by everyone who operates in today's world, and which best describes these times.

We treat the Biennale as a surface that will reflect reality through art, sensibility, anxieties, fascinations, and visions of artists from various corners of the world. It gathers and transmits messages. We identify contemporary times as chaos full of tensions in which it is easy to lose control. We want to point to the fact that we exceed all limits which, at the same time, are fading out. Kornelia's work is a reflection of ourselves. The installation presents the world devoid of borders, in which there are no rules, where words cease to have meaning, and the sheer number of stimuli exceeds our receiving capacity. When we describe our state in such a way, we are not governed solely by our own feelings. Data indicate that the amount and scale of psychological disorders increase at an alarming rate year to year across the world. The perpetuated mechanism escalates our thoughts, anxieties, hopes, impulses and desires. It also drives our emotions and pressure and, paradoxically in all this intensity, loneliness and emptiness that we learned to hide and pretend that we have everything under control which, in fact, we are losing. We can ignore this state, but only for a time. The installation presents the culminating moment. The Artist does not identify the causes of that state. She points to the danger of the situation in which we find ourselves and the fact that we all contribute to this mechanism, for example by allowing this situation to continue.

PS: Apart from serving as decoration, fountains were used, among others, for various forms of worship. They are a symbol of life and purification, associated with sentimentality manifested by throwing coins, which is a gesture referring to wishes or prayers with a given intention. In the project description, or on a separate plaque in front of the entrance, we intend to inform that the money people may decide to throw into the fountain will be given to a foundation in Poland selected jointly by the organisers. Thus, we want to wink at the visitors knowingly. We refer to such fountains as Di Trevi from which, before the pandemic, ca. 3,000 euros were recovered every day! We also emphasise the social role and capabilities of art, which seems extremely important nowadays.

SCRIPT, shortened version: The project *Pienienie na ustach / Foaming at the Mouth* shifts the accent from everything that surrounds us to human beings and their emotions. When crossing the threshold of the pavilion, the viewer will see a monumental installation consisting of the construction, the mechanism, and light, combined with a completely darkened space. The foam emerging from the construction will get outside the limits of the installation. The interior architecture will be made uniformly black, which will make it “invisible”. We want to distort the viewer’s perception so that the floor merges with the ceiling, and the scale of the interior is impossible to estimate. We want to bring out the theatricality of the performance, and for this purpose use the entire surface of the pavilion, launching a sequence of associations around what this place could possibly be. The fountain will be scaled-up, “pushing out” the interior, and the foam is supposed to “appropriate” the space. The action conveys the motto of the project: Everything is fine, until it’s not (and it becomes dangerous). The danger lies in the loss of control. Components of the installation:

1. Construction: placed left of the entrance. The crucial element of the construction is the sculpture made of acrylic resin whose colour will resemble the shade of grey of stone fountains. The sculpture is composed of five round elements 4.5 cm thick, with ridges ca. 6 cm high each; they are connected by a system of steel supports embedded in composite and chromium-plated connectors between the levels. The construction is ca. 4.5 m high, and the combined surface of all levels of the fountain is ca. 60 square metres. The weight of the construction will be ca. 800 kg plus installation elements / ca. 1 ton total. The construction will be fire-proofed.

2. The Mechanism in the construction is responsible for collecting, distributing and draining water. We need three containers: a water tank with 3000 litre capacity, 500 x 600 x 20 cm; a tank with a filter (with the same parameters as the first tank) and a container for the foaming agent with the capacity of ca. 300 litres. The tanks will be connected to the pump with a hose installed on the inside of the construction, which will feed water from the tank to the top of the fountain, so it reaches foam generators installed in top circles. The tanks, the pump, and the filter will be hidden under the bottom level of the fountain resting on 3 supports. The supports fitted to the bottom circle go through an anti-skidding grating installed 30 cm over the floor level, and they rest on a mat placed on the floor between these tanks (the mat will protect the floor from the foam and moisture, and the grating will protect the visitors, and additionally hide the mechanism). The subsiding foam will drip through the grating directly to the container, from which, after filtering, it will be pumped back into the system. Inside the

construction, an electro-hydraulic installation will be hidden, which will be built in consultation with experts. The mechanism combined with the steering unit of the pump provides appropriate circulation, which guarantees the desired effect. The foam will be produced cyclically. The proposed rhythm to set in the steering unit: 5 minutes of producing, 3 minutes of subsiding. We estimate 10% of weekly water loss from the tanks. Once a month, the tanks will be resupplied by a person especially employed for the purpose. Water that does not make it back to the tank with a filter will evaporate, and possible excess will be removed during maintenance. The floor surface will be protected by a mat. Water necessary for the operation of our installation will be taken from the water source by the canal, opposite the Pavilion. In order to use it, we will apply for a relevant permit to the La Biennale di Venezia Foundation. In case the application is rejected, we will use the services of a water supplier. Having in mind the necessity to apply sustainable solutions, we will make sure to recycle the water used in the installation, and after the exhibition closes, hand it over to the port of Venice where it will be used to wash boats and yachts.

3. Pavilion Space: the space is an equally important element of the installation. There will be no dividing walls. It will be completely darkened and painted black. We will use blinds to cover the glass skylight in the roof of the Pavilion. The floor will be black as well, thanks to the mat that will protect it from water and the aforementioned grating, also black. We want to create an impression of no space at all (“black hole” effect).

4. Light: will be a construction element of the fountain which is intended to bring out and emphasise all its spectacular aspects and aesthetic qualities of the foam. It must be intriguing, showcase the character of the scene, and its conceptual premises. We intend to use flexible, linear hermetic fixtures, with a milky diffuser profile. Light sources will be mounted inside fountain circles, to remain outside the field of vision of the observer. This means that the circles below the line of sight will be lighted from the level of upper circles, from which the stream of light will be directed downward. Circles above the line of sight will have their source of light in their upper portion, and directed upward. Light fixtures are supposed to softly illuminate the foam and emphasise the construction elements. We want the light to be warm. If it turns out that the effect requires extra lighting, we will use an additional lamp, which will be installed on the top, so as no one can enter the illumination angle, and to make the source as invisible as possible. What will be visible is the light reflecting off of the foam, and not the light source.