

## LIQUID TONGUES

### AN EXHIBITION AT THE POLISH PAVILION FOR THE 61st INTERNATIONAL ART EXHIBITION IN VENICE

**Liquid Tongues** is an audiovisual installation by **Bogna Burska** and **Daniel Kotowski**, in which the community **Choir in Motion** (Chór w Ruchu), composed of hearing and Deaf people, interprets the songs and communication systems of whales through both spoken and sign language. The creators of the project seek alternate ways of communicating, inspired by *more-than-human* life. They pose questions about the capacity to build new relations and sensitivities, crossing the lines between seemingly disparate worlds.

The exhibition will be on show at the Polish Pavilion during the **61st International Art Exhibition – La Biennale di Venezia** in 2026. The organiser and producer of the Polish Pavilion is **Zachęta – National Gallery of Art**.

This exhibition centers on tales of loss and reconstruction, both in the natural world and in culture. It traces a path from the reborn culture of whales to contemporary efforts to restore languages and narratives pushed to the margins by dominant modes of communication. *"Our project concerns communication and, on one level, languages. It is vital for us to approach these themes without narrowing them down to human forms and definitions. Art gives us the tools to join very different experiences and ways of expression,"* says **Bogna Burska**.

The film by **Bogna Burska** and **Daniel Kotowski** takes place in two settings: underwater and on the surface. The artists and the thirty performers of the *Choir in Motion* become characters in a libretto they authored themselves, performing a series of dialogues and group scenes. The narrative unfolds through the songs of the Choir, and under- and above-water images of the performances. The choir, consisting of hearing and Deaf people, performs through singing and sign language, evoking various forms of communication developed outside of the dominant spoken language systems.

According to curator **Ewa Chomicka**, the project draws attention to voices that are overlooked in dominant narratives; in this work, they become heard: audible and visible. A change in perspective—moving between the worlds above and below the water—shows that what we normally consider the primary mode of communication may not work in other conditions. In turn, voices that were previously weaker or inaudible may acquire new strength. The installation conveys these ideas through images, sound, and physical experience, involving the viewer on several planes at once.

The project continues themes from *Revolt of the Deaf.: Renewal* (Zachęta, 2025), which formed a remarkable community of hearing and Deaf people who learned from each other despite their linguistic differences. *"We are used to thinking about spoken language as the most natural, treating it as the overriding form of communication. Other forms have long been sidelined. Preserving alternative ways of communicating also means protecting diverse ways of thinking and perceiving the world,"* artist **Daniel Kotowski** points out. In this regard, *Liquid Tongues* is not just an art experiment; it is also a project for social change—widening the field of communication and building more flexible, subjective communities.

The team was inspired by **Roger Payne's** legendary recordings, *Songs of the Humpback Whale* (1970), which led to a ban on whale hunting. The complex songs of humpbacks demonstrate that a wealth of non-human sonic cultures exists. Today, research into cetacean songs points to their intricate structures and complex forms. *"It is we humans who have defined what language or intelligence are. Meanwhile, discoveries concerning the communication of whales undermine our sense of being exceptional. That is why it is more valuable to seek similarities than differences to support dominance—to recognise a plurality of life forms and ways of communication,"* adds curator **Jolanta Woszczenko**.

The visual and sonic layer of the installation creates an environment in which **Magda Mosiewicz's** cinematography, **Aleksandra Gryka's** musical compositions sung by the *Choir in Motion*, and the choreography by **Alicja Czyczel** weave into a polyphonic score.

In her concept based on the metaphor of **"minor keys,"** late **Koyo Kouoh**, curator of Biennale Arte 2026, has invited us to hear what is delicate and insufficiently audible—the quieter voices, micro-memories, and neglected narratives. *Liquid Tongues* aligns with this perspective, offering a vision of the future based on empathy and interspecies care. It is a tale of communication as a space for meeting and relationships.

The 61st International Art Exhibition will take place from **May 9 to November 22, 2026**.

## PROJECT TEAM & CREDITS

**Artists:** Bogna Burska, Daniel Kotowski

**Curators:** Ewa Chomicka, Jolanta Woszczenko

**Cinematography:** Magda Mosiewicz

**Choreography:** Alicja Czyczel

**Music and Conductor:** Aleksandra Gryka

**Exhibition Architecture:** Marcin Kwietowicz

**Performers:** Natalia Wilk and Choir in Motion: Aleksandra Lipska, Aleksandra Olszowska, Barbara Baranowska, Beata Akbas, Camila Bine Aliste, Cura, Dagmara Siwczyk, Edyta Pawłowska, Elżbieta Balano, Ewa Chomicka, Irena Klein, Julia Kaźmierczak, Julia Supel, Justyna Orlińska, Kasia Paterek, Katarzyna Pawluk, Lesia Lupookova, Małgorzata J. Berwid, Małgorzata Kozek, Maria Bonarowska, Maria Jolanta Nałęcz-Jawecka, Natalia Lidwa, Natalia Pacyga, Natalia Trybuła, Paulina Gojtko, Paulina Gul, Piotr Woźniakiewicz, Teona Moz, Tomasz Nowakowski, Urszula Iwińska, and Urszula Szwed-Strych

**Film Production:** Studio Mx35

**Second Conductor:** Sean Palmer

**Sound Director:** Katarzyna Szczerba

**Film Editor:** Maja Ziarkowska

**Visual ID:** Noemi Markwas, Aleksandra Sienkiewicz

**Commissioner:** Agnieszka Pindera, Director of Zachęta – National Gallery of Art

**Biennale Office:** Michał Kubiak (Vice Commissioner), Anna Kowalska

**Financed by:** The Ministry of Art and National Heritage

**Zachęta Patron:** ORLEN

**Main Exhibition Partners:** Polish National Foundation, PKO Polish Bank Foundation, Adam Mickiewicz Institute

**Exhibition Partners:** dela.art collection, Gdańsk Centre for Contemporary Art, Polish Institute of Linguistic Diversity, Academy of Physical Education in Warsaw, Perlage Arte Foundation

**Supported by:** Polish Institute in Rome, The Society for the Encouragement of Fine Arts

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## BIOGRAPHIES

**Bogna Burska** – A visual artist using various forms of expression and a writer of texts for the stage; currently a professor at the *Academy of Fine Arts in Warsaw*. Her works touch on themes of physicality, memory, and emotion, often referencing social narratives and the visual clichés of pop culture. She juxtaposes beauty with what is generally considered ugly, repulsive, or discarded. Recently, she has primarily focused on themes of communication and mutual attempts at understanding within changing ecosystems. She has participated in numerous exhibitions in Poland and abroad, blending art with research and educational perspectives.

**Daniel Kotowski** – An artist and performer whose practice focuses on the experience of the Deaf, as well as problems of language, communication, biopower, and biopolitics. His work examines the limits of physicality through modes of expression beyond the dominant structure of speech. He has presented his work at the *Museum of Modern Art* in Warsaw, *Zachęta – National Gallery of Art*, and the *Studio Theatre* and *Pickle Bar* in Berlin.

**Ewa Chomicka** – A curator, cultural anthropologist, and facilitator who runs the *Museum Practices Laboratory* at the *POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews*. She develops interdisciplinary projects joining contemporary art, research, and activism, often of a performative, social, and interventionary nature. She is also involved in environmental initiatives.

**Jolanta Woszczenko** – A curator associated with the *Łaźnia Centre for Contemporary Art in Gdańsk* since 2008 (currently *Gdańsk Centre for Contemporary Art*). She is interested in experimental film and video forms, as well as communication processes—both between the artist and viewer and across various media and disciplines.

**Choir in Motion (Chór w Ruchu)** – An experimental community choir seeking non-standard means of expression at the threshold of music, performance, and visual art. The choir treats these as tools for building community and communicating beyond words.

## CONTACT & LINKS

**Websites:** [www.labiennale.art.pl](http://www.labiennale.art.pl), [www.zacheta.art.pl](http://www.zacheta.art.pl)

**Social Media:** [facebook.com/polishpavilion](https://facebook.com/polishpavilion), [instagram.com/polishpavilionvenice](https://instagram.com/polishpavilionvenice)

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