



Bałka and Maciejowski. The contemporary context of the exhibition

The introduction to the exhibition will comprise works commissioned by the Royal Castle to two distinguished artists: Mirosław Bałka and Marcin Maciejowski, who commented on the modern aspect of the tapestries' reception, and also an animation (mapping) which is the key to the reverse narrative of the exhibition.

Bałka's Passport and Three Rays

Mirosław Bałka's *Three Rays* installation will be displayed in the arcaded courtyard from March 18. It refers to the process of creating tapestries and to the threads used to weave them. Three threads, stretched between the columns of the courtyard's floors like strings in a Renaissance instrument, will play a subtle tune, engaging in a dialogue with this Place's harmony and beauty. They will initiate a discourse on the order, discipline and beauty of the times in which the tapestries were created. They will create a piece referring to haiku poetry – built from the castle's architecture, the dividing line and the architecture of the sky above. The *Three Rays*, by “sewing together” the arcaded courtyard, remind us of the technique and process of creating tapestries. They also remind us of the touch of the tapestry makers' hands which is invisible for the audience but essential to making any artistic vision come to life.

Bałka's second installation, *Passport*, consists of “portraits” of the chests used to transport the national treasures (including some tapestries) from Canada to Poland in 1961. The “portraits” were taken in a passport photograph fashion. The particular background, lighting and position of the object before the lens guarantees the objectivity of the presentation and retains each chest's individual qualities. The chests are immortalised because of their significant role: they protected and secured the tapestries during their transport to Poland, they stayed in close relations to them, and they played the role of couriers crossing the borders. When we look at them, we think of the people who carried them and saved our national treasures.



Maciejowski's *A Visit to Wawel*

In the midst of the pandemic, in times of global unrest, **Marcin Maciejowski** discovered harmony and incredible optimism for the world emanating from the tapestries. He wanted to see them in person, so he visited the Castle one day before it was closed to visitors again in autumn 2020. However, he confused the time and reached the Castle with his partner when... the ticket windows were already closing. The Castle's library remained open for another hour, so they spent the time looking through everything linked with the tapestries, with the enthusiasm of people who were late for an exhibition, but at the last moment seized a different opportunity. Numerous postcards that pictured the tapestries' details substituted for the original tapestries, catching the pair's attention with careful observation of nature, which the authors of the cardboards freely combined with fantasy. Maciejowski took a picture, and on its basis, he executed *A Visit to Wawel* (2020, oil on canvas, 43 x 31 in), a painting adopting a comic book style with a colour scheme derived from the tapestries. The painting, gifted by the artist to the Royal Castle, became a spontaneous record of a visit to the museum during unusual times, which creates desire to see the royal tapestries in person.

Marcin Maciejowski also prepared visual identification for the advertising campaign, which introduces the audience to the exhibition space in an inapparent manner, using cartoon commentaries, words that were actually uttered during Maciejowski's two visits to Wawel, picked up and remembered by this exquisite reporter of the contemporary times.

Slawomir Majoch, Deputy Director for Museum Collections,

Wawel Royal Castle