

FONDAZIONE MARTA CZOK PRESENTS

THE RISE AND FALL OF THE IDEAL CITY

**PROJECT SPACE
FONDAZIONE MARTA CZOK
CAMPO RIALTO NOVO, VENEZIA**

Welcome to Fondazione Marta Czok's Project Space in Venice. This new base accompanies the Foundation's Permanent Collection, located in the historic centre of Castel Gandolfo, Rome. While the Permanent Collection establishes a retrospective focus on Marta Czok's body of work (British/Italian artist of Polish origins, born in Lebanon in 1947) and in particular on the institutional paintings of the last forty years, our Project Space has a collaborative mission. Here, the concept of exchange is fundamental: inspired by themes that are key to Marta Czok's paintings, such as social commentary, political satire and the experience of migration, our projects foreground new artistic voices and dialogues with national and international institutions, dedicated to exploring the relationship between art, culture and society.

8 June - 26 November 2023

On the occasion of the opening of our Project Space in Venice, Fondazione Marta Czok presents a selection of works from its Collection, seen in dialogue with video artists and film-makers from around the world, in a special collaboration with Takflix, Urban Visions Film Festival and A-Place. Curated by Jacek Ludwig Scarso with Anna Marazuela Kim and Luisa Bravo, this first exhibition is entitled *The Rise and Fall of the Ideal City*, in conjunction with the 2023 Architecture Biennale.

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CURATORIAL NOTES

Dr Jacek Ludwig Scarso

The Renaissance concept of the Ideal City is here a provocation to critically explore the ideological connotations of the urban context and the need for social change, locally and globally. As focal points for transient civilizations, cities are built, rebuilt and destroyed, becoming, both metaphorically and literally, battlefields for power games: social injustice, economic greed, the desire for supremacy, the indifference to an increasingly fragile ecosystem are the backdrop to the lived experience of citizens. The result of human intervention, cities appear to be in constant development, while hiding an increasingly unstable core. Glimmers of hope are offered by the resilience of citizens who, undaunted, fight social hardship, through individual and collective efforts.

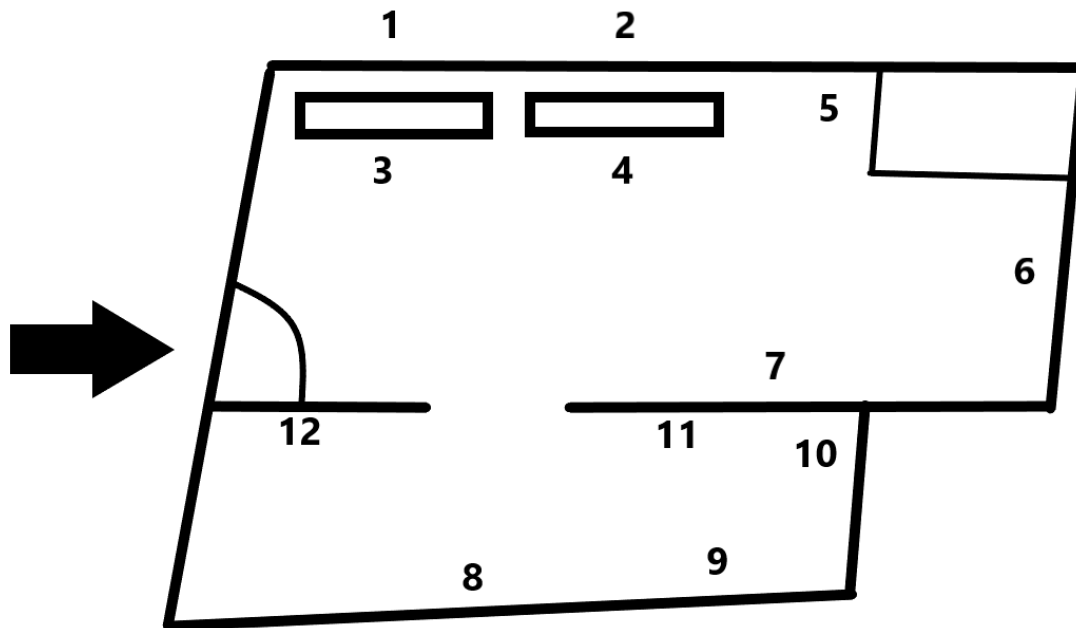
The depictions of the city in Marta Czok's paintings, which vary in period from the early eighties to the last decade, show a satirical perspective on social hierarchies. In these works, the powerful believe that they are unstoppable, yet the world they want to dominate is nothing more than an ideological construction: all is contingent, all is transitory, all can be overturned. At the other end of the social scale, ordinary citizens appear helpless, but it is through their work that the riches of a city are built and that social change is truly made possible.

In dialogue with these works, we present a selection of short films from Ukraine specially curated by Anna Marazuela Kim: these include works from Takflix, which partners with international organizations to showcase Ukrainian cinema abroad. Founded by filmmaker and producer Nadia Parfan, Takflix is the world's largest online collection of Ukrainian films on demand, introducing new audiences globally to classic and new works, and supporting Ukrainian filmmakers directly with its revenue.

Also featured are two recent films by the Kyiv-based artists, Yarema Malashchuk and Roman Khimei. Currently on view in museums across Belgium, in collaboration with ICOM, *Explosions Near The Museum (2023)* reflects on the aftermath of the plundered Kherson Regional Museum, one of Southern Ukraine's largest and oldest collections of antiquities, and its postinvasion future. The second film, *How It's Made (2021)*, registers tensions in a factory between the post-industrial past and the present, and was presented at the Future Generation Art Prize in Kyiv.

Thanks to this dialogue, *The Rise and Fall of the Ideal City* aims to be a stimulus for critical reflection on the urban context, but also for inspiration on how artistic languages in different disciplines may bring new ideas and important testimonies with respect to this context.

WORKS ON SHOW



1. REVOLUTION, Marta Czok (2012) Acrylic, graphite and ink on canvas
2. ABOVE AND BELOW, Marta Czok (1989) Oil and graphite on canvas
3. NOISE, Marta Czok (1992) Oil and graphite on canvas
4. THE RAIN, Marta Czok (1987) Oil and graphite on canvas
5. TREE OF LIFE, Marta Czok (2019) Acrylic, graphite and ink on canvas
6. THE OTHER HALF, Marta Czok (1987) Oil and graphite on canvas
7. TAKFLIX / Yarema Malashchuk and Roman Khimei: selection of short films curated by Anna Marazuela Kim
8. PINOCCHIOLANDIA (AERIAL VIEW), Marta Czok (2014) Acrylic, graphite and ink on canvas
9. ONCE UPON A TIME, Marta Czok (2012) Acrylic and ink on canvas
10. LIBERTÉ, ÉGALITÉ, FRATERNITÉ, Marta Czok (2023) Acrylic and graphite on canvas
11. HISTORIA, Marta Czok (2019) Acrylic and graphite on canvas
12. NEWS STORY, Marta Czok (2022) Acrylic and graphite on canvas

Art, Politics and the rise and fall of the Ideal City

Dr Anna Marazuela Kim

A city is a machine with innumerable parts made by the accumulation of human gestures, a colossal organism forever dying and being born, an ongoing conflict between memory and erasure, a center for capital and for attacks on capital, a rapture, a misery, a mystery, a conspiracy, a destination and point of origin, a labyrinth in which some are lost and some find what they're looking for, an argument about how to live, and evidence that differences don't always have to be resolved, though they may grate and grind against each other for centuries.

Rebecca Solnit

Cities are places of hopes and dreams, of aspirations for economic and social wellbeing, community and belonging, but equally of forces and structures that work against the very ideals and people they are meant to support. The question of what constitutes a good and just city, as it fosters these ideals, has in recent years taken on renewed urgency, as the United Nations predicts that seventy percent of the world's population will live in urban settlements by 2050. Cities are both the epicentre of the greatest challenges of our age – social, political, and ecological – as well as the necessary grounds to answer them. It is this duality, or dialectic, that gives insight into the complexity of our cities– as “a colossal organism forever dying and being born,” an “argument about how to live.” As a deeply social and political species, we seem inexorably drawn to live together in this form, as an ideal fostering the highest form of life. And yet it is a form which, paradoxically, may lead to our eventual demise: the end of life on a planetary scale, the ultimate Rise and Fall.

How we have arrived at this predicament, in which the city is central to ideals of civic life which it is always in danger of failing, has a long historical arc. Aristotle and Plato provide the first extant attempts defining the fundamental dynamic between the political and the place of the city, in the idea of the polis. In Aristotle, social and political virtue, or human flourishing (eudaimonia), are necessarily bound to a form of life imagined within a city-state. Plato's Republic, an inquiry into the ideal form of the city that gives rise to justice and the just, or virtuous, human life – as well as challenges to that ideal – famously banished artists and the arts of poetry as threats to its realization. With roots in Classical Roman thought, the ideal city reaches an apogee in the city-republics of the Italian Renaissance. While indebted to classical ideas, they nonetheless suggest a countermodel to Plato's Republic in which the arts play a crucial role – not only in the development of the architecture of its great cities, but in critical arguments concerning the life of citizens within. In their critical commentary on the ideal city, historically and in the present, Marta Czok and the artists of this exhibition continue this trajectory.

Marta Czok

British of Polish origins and based in Italy, Marta Czok was born in Beirut (Lebanon) in 1947. The following year, her family moved to London as political refugees. She lived there until 1974, completing her studies at St Martin's School of Art and taking part for several years in the Royal Academy Summer Exhibition.

Over the past forty years, her works have been shown in Europe and worldwide, also as part of the "Alitalia per l'Arte" project. In 2000 Alitalia commissioned a triptych by Czok, donated to Pope John Paul II for his 80th birthday. The same year, the French Embassy to the Holy See invited her to create a work on the theme of the Jubilee. In collaboration with Albemarle Gallery, London Mayfair, the Royal Caribbean also commissioned a work by Czok for their ship Navigator of the Seas. In 2008, the Polish national television TV Polonia dedicated a documentary to Marta Czok, focusing on the relationship between her work and the legacy of the Second World War.

Among her most recent exhibitions, several deserve a special mention, including Icons&Idols, a multimedia show held in 2013 at Museo MACRO in Rome; the retrospective exhibition at Castello di Calatabiano, organised by Museo MACS in Catania, 2014; her show Mother Rome at Museo Carlo Bilotti in Rome in 2016; her solo exhibition at the Italian Institute of Culture in Warsaw, which was held in 2017; the exhibition Baroque Intrusions at Museo del Barocco al Palazzo Chigi di Ariccia, Rome in 2018; her solo show O Nas at Konstanciński Dom Kultury Hugonówka in Poland in 2023.

Marta Czok has worked on several touring shows, including the one dedicated to Children of War and of the Shoah at Palazzo Ferrajoli (Rome), Museo Civico di Albano and Palazzo Antico Ghetto (Padua) and About Us, an exhibition on the theme of humanity, at Palazzo dei Papi (Viterbo), Palazzo Zuckermann (Padua) and Palazzo Zenobio (Venice). In Poland, since 2020, the show To Nazywasz Sztuka? has toured first in Warsaw at the Museum of Caricature, and then in Lublin at the Centrum Spotkania Kultur, with future destinations to be announced.

Marta Czok lives and works in Castel Gandolfo (Rome), Italy. Her works can be found in public and private collections worldwide.

TAKFLIX

Takflix is an exclusive VOD streaming service to watch Ukrainian films, hand-picked by our curators and supported by cinema lovers from all around the world. As the largest online collection of Ukrainian films, 50% of Takflix revenue goes straight to Ukrainian filmmakers

Takflix provides a unique opportunity to discover Ukrainian culture through your screen – all while directly supporting the local film industry. Launched in December 2019, it constantly updates its selection of Ukrainian films.

Takflix partners with international organizations to show Ukrainian cinema abroad, as well as introduce our audience to foreign cult classics and noteworthy releases through special seasonal projects.

The Rise and Fall of the ideal city

Marta Czok

With Takflix, Yarema Malashchuk and Roman Khimei

Exhibition curated by Jacek Ludwig Scarso

Film selections curated by Anna Marazuela Kim (Takflix) and Luisa Bravo (Urban Visions / A-Place)

Fondazione Marta Czok

CEO: Valter Scarso

Senior Curator: Jacek Ludwig Scarso

Associate Curators: Anna Marazuela Kim, Uros Gorgone

Advisors: Luisa Bravo, Cesare Biasini Selvaggi, Sarah Carrington,
Jonathan Thomson, Slawka Scarso

Cultural Collaborators: Mae Shummo, Jacqueline Jubert, Joseph Robson,
Barbara Codogno, Marina Moreno

Technical Collaborators: Giulio Maggiore, Renato Morbiato,
Lucia Miarelli, Francesca Costantini, Domenico Drogheo

Collection Associate: Beatrice Boban

In collaboration with:

A-Place Linking places through
networked artistic practices



TAKFLIX



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