



Daniel Rycharski, *Scarecrows*, 2018–2019. Installation, found objects. MOMA - Warsaw / Photo Daniel Chrobak. Courtesy the artist.

The Villa Arson is presenting the first solo exhibition in France of Polish artist Daniel Rycharski, born in 1986. His work intersects different social and political contexts such as rural Poland, homosexual culture and faith communities, in a country struggling with conservatism and nationalism.

A graduate of the school of fine arts in Cracow, Daniel Rycharski lives and works in Kurowko, his native village situated in the north-west of Poland in the province of Mazovia. Rurality, its history and traditions are at the heart of his work. He associates farmers, field hands and other inhabitants of his region to the productions that he produces on site.

To this day the work best representing his attachment to peasant culture is *Monument to Peasant* (2015), a direct reference to Dürer's 1525 project Monument to the vanquished peasants which was a tribute to the over 100 000 peasants who died during the peasant rebellions of the Holy Roman Empire. Though the monument's architecture is different, Rycharski's sculpture also includes a figure standing at the top of the edifice, its back stooped in suffering. The figure represents Adam Pesta, the mayor of his village, a farmer himself.

But beyond this focus which highlights rural life, the singularity of Rycharski's work is that he takes on his own gay identity and his GLBT culture at the very heart of his childhood community. In the increasingly conservative Poland of today, this is a real challenge.

This challenge was upheld until recently thanks to his collaboration with the inhabitants, which led to the production of several pieces. The most important are probably the *Scarecrows* (2018 and 2019). These works, set up in the fields, were made with clothes worn by GLBT people. The human shapes of the scarecrows frighten away the birds, but the human smell scares off the wild boars. Associating animal behavior with humans evokes the fear or the embarrassment that a non-heterosexual form of sexuality produces for some of us.

For his exhibition at the Villa Arson, his first outside Poland and his second after the February to April 2019 exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art in Warsaw, curators **Klaudia Podsiadlo** and **Agnieszka Żuk**, aware that the white cube of a French art center would not be adapted to works of art designed for a specific use in the Polish countryside, asked Daniel Rycharski to produce new pieces.

As an answer the artist chose to place religion at the center of his exhibition. How can religion accept xenophobia, nationalism, homophobia, misogyny or antisemitism? This is a burning question in Poland today, which is governed by the Law and Justice party (PiS), openly hostile to any opinion or lifestyle which does not correspond to its ultra-conservative and nationalist ideology.

#### **PRACTICAL INFORMATIONS**

From November 15, 2019 to January 12, 2020.

Open every day except Tuesday from 2 to 6 PM.

Closed on December 24, 25, 26, 31 and January 1 and 2.

Free admission.

#### **Social networks**

#ExpoDanielRycharski

#danielrycharski

#villaarsonnice

@villa\_arson

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## Partnerships

The work *Vera Icon (Veronica's Veil)* by Daniel Rycharski featured in the exhibition was produced in collaboration with the Warsaw Museum of Modern Art (Muzeum Sztuki Nowoczesnej w Warszawie) in the context of the cycle «Monument Mania» of the eleventh edition of the festival *Warsaw in Construction* (October 5 to November 3 2019). (Curators : Łukasz Zaremba, the Institute of Polish Culture at the University of Warsaw and Szymon Maliborski, Warsaw Museum of Modern Art).  
<https://artmuseum.pl/en/wystawy/pomnikomania/3>



To build his project, Daniel Rycharski was inspired by Dietrich Bonhoeffer, a German clergyman and teacher whose assassination was ordered by Hitler in April 1945, who advocated a “non religious Christianity”, in other words freed from its fossilized dogma. *The Double Christ* featured in the exhibition represents two men embracing on a cross, linked beyond all divisions by a love or fraternal friendship such as Bonhoeffer defined them in his theological reflections. Another work shows the head of the artist being slowly disfigured by drops of paint seeping from a stoup. The title of this work, *A Drop Hollows Out a Stone*, became the title of the exhibition; it represents the slow and pernicious action of discrimination filtering through the teachings of the Polish catholic church.

Curators: **Klaudia Podsiadlo** and **Agnieszka Żuk**

## PLEASE NOTE

On **Saturday January 11, 2020**, for the closing of the exhibition, the Villa Arson is organizing a **study day on the political and cultural situation in Poland**, around the book *Hoorays et désarrois. Scènes d'une guerre culturelle en Pologne (Hoorays and Disarrays. Scenes from a cultural war in Poland)*, published on May 16, 2019 by Noir sur Blanc editions in Lausanne under the supervision of Agnieszka Żuk (program to be announced)

## Thanks to

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Daniel Rycharski, *Gateway*, 2014. installation. Photo : MOMA - Warsaw / Photo Daniel Chrobak



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La Villa Arson is a member of UCA - Université Côte d'Azur and part of L'Ecole(s) du Sud, ANDEA, DCA and BOTOX(S) networks.

Media partners: Art Press, ParisArt, Le Journal des Arts, L'Oeil and La Strada



Daniel Rycharski, *Monument to a Peasant*, 2015. Sculpture, mixed media. Photo : MOMA - Warsaw / Photo Daniel Chrobak



Daniel Rycharski, *Ku-Klux-Klan*, 2018–2019. Found objects, mixed media. Photo : MOMA - Warsaw / Photo Daniel Chrobak



Daniel Rycharski, *Banner of saint Expeditus*, 2016–2019. Embroidered cloth. Photo : MOMA - Warsaw / Photo Daniel Chrobak