

**INTERVENTION, MEMORY, AND COMMUNITY: PUBLIC ART AND
ARCHITECTURE IN WARSAW SINCE 1970**

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation examines the relationship between art, architecture, and public space in Warsaw since 1970. With an awareness of the marks and erasures of history, I consider the political, social, and cultural transformations of the last five decades and how such changes are represented, omitted, and problematized in the urban landscape. Beginning with the 1970s, I discuss a series of exhibitions, performative interventions, monuments, and public art initiatives in relation to the broader context of Warsaw's evolution from the Polish People's Republic (PRL), through the transition years of the 1990s, to EU membership, and into the current phase of global capitalism and growing populist nationalism. My case studies illuminate the ways in which these art initiatives have had the potential to promote engagement with the urban landscape, raise questions about history and memory, and produce conditions that allow for the building of community.

Chapter one examines a series of socialist-era exhibitions that used Warsaw as theme and inspiration, and boldly envisioned an alternative reality for the city, with artists reinventing public spaces and proposing ways for art to improve everyday life. The performative interventions of Akademia Ruchu, an artist collective founded in 1973, are

the subject of the second chapter, which examines their Warsaw street-actions and community engagement, illuminating the importance of site and the power of the everyday. Chapter three analyzes the successes and failures of four monuments dating from 1985 to 2010, and discusses how such commemorative projects illustrate new aims in the construction of national narratives in the post-1989 period. Finally, chapter four examines the local communities and participatory practices in the work of two contemporary art initiatives: Stacja Muranów and the Bródno Sculpture Park. Together these chapters illuminate the complex relationships between art, artists, and the physical spaces they inhabit. I argue that Warsaw plays an active role in how these projects are understood, and that these meanings are often closely bound up with the realities of everyday life, both as it existed under state socialism and in the current post-socialist city.