

Bartek Buczek, “Too expensive, too weak, too difficult. Several selected recipes for an art work possible in the hypothetical fantasy world”



- Author Bartek Buczek
- Date of production 2014
- Dimensions height: variable, width: variable
- Author's designation artist's signature on the book's cover
- ID no. BS/1063
- Museum [Bunkier Sztuki Gallery of Contemporary Art](#)
- Technique [photography](#), [art book](#), [video](#)
- Material [paper](#), [ink](#), [video film](#)
- Acquired date 2014
- Object copyright Bunkier Sztuki Gallery of Contemporary Art

- Digital images copyright CC BY-NC-ND 4.0 Attribution – NonCommercial – NoDerivatives 4.0
- Digitalisation RDW MIC, Virtual Małopolska project
- Tags [licencje Creative Commons](#), [konceptualizm](#), [książka artystyczna](#), [przepis na dzieło sztuki](#), [artworld](#), [artysta](#), [Wirtualna Małopolska](#), [2D](#)

Bartek Buczek, apart from being a painter of works of art, is also a bouquiniste, an owner of an antique book shop, and he likes to emphasize this. In his painting, as well as when going beyond the boundaries of paintings, one can find not only literary inspiration, but also a melancholy atmosphere accompanying a focused reader, a thoughtful detective, who follows the development of plot threads and narratives. While working on his art in his own way by means of his creative personality, he remains patient. And this is how he plots stories that are almost real, whether on stretcher frames or in the pages of a book.

And yet, it would be a mistake to treat Buczek as an extremely serious artist, drifting in the clouds with the poets. In the introduction to the art book, *Too expensive, too weak, too difficult — a dozen selected recipes for a work of art* possible in a hypothetical fantasy world, he wrote:

The aim of this work is to recall a dozen unaccomplished ideas for works of art, their analysis, consideration of the reasons for their failure, attempts to repent the grief associated with the impossibility of accepting the state they are currently in, and perhaps also the final elaboration of the strategy, according to which they would be considered full-value ones.

Conceptualists in the past lived with the belief that there are artistic ideas which do not need to be implemented or it is even better not to realize them. They placed the poetics of their concepts in the universe of ideas. Buczek is a few steps further ahead. Realizing that some of his ideas are naive, sometimes being no more than just funny, and completely non-transgressive, ostentatious – like a rapper (he is particularly fond of rap) – he shares them with the help of the queen of arts: literature. He is insolent, but charming in his naivety, and this allows him to reach the heights of contemporary art thought and – as might be suspected – literary talent.

He has created an engaging text in which – as an author, artist and visionary – he guides us through a mass of ideas in works such as: *Wirus-hipnotyzer infekujący oprogramowanie odbiorników GPS* [*Virus-hypnotist infecting the software of GPS receivers*], or *500 potraw z ziemniaków* [*500 potato dishes*] and *Zmiana układu dziur w serze* [*Changing the layout of holes in cheese*]. He has also given one of his ideas the humble title: *Na ten czas nic we mnie dla Was nie ma* [*Right now, there is nothing in me for you*]. Bartek Buczek's book is a work that reformulates the possibilities of the traditional assessment of the quality of a work. He realizes ideas considered weak or unworkable in a hypothetical fantasy world, in the conditions of a literary narrative in which they are capable of acquiring the qualities of a finite work. At the same time, he ostentatiously mentions that fantasy does not belong to particularly sophisticated genres.

Elaborated by Krzysztof Siatka, Bunkier Sztuki Gallery of Contemporary Art, 

This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution 3.0 Poland License](#).

Bartek Buczek (born in 1987) is a painter and conceptual artist, the author of paintings, photographs, objects and art books, a former member of the *Ośmiornica* [*Octopus*] group, a bouquiniste, and the owner of the antique bookshop, “Lektury Nieobowiązkowe” [“Non-compulsory Readings”]. He is a graduate of painting at the Academy of Fine Arts in Katowice. He is the author of individual exhibitions, including: *Panic room* (CSW Kronika, Bytom, 2012), *Czarny Romantyzm* [*Black Romanticism*] (BWA Sokół, Nowy Sącz, 2013), *Czarny charakter* [*Villain*] (Bank Pekao Project Room, Ujazdowski Castle Centre for Contemporary Art, Warsaw, 2013) and *Za drogie, za słabe, zbyt trudne* [*Too Expensive, Too Weak, Too Difficult*] (Bunkier Sztuki Gallery of Contemporary Art, Kraków, 2014). He has taken part in numerous collective exhibitions, including: *Boundary* (*Granica*) (Bunkier Sztuki Gallery of Contemporary Art, Kraków, 2013), *O powstawaniu i ginieciu* [*About creation and perishing*] (BWA Katowice, 2014), *Mleczne zęby* [*Milk teeth*] (Baltic Gallery of Contemporary Art, Słupsk, 2014) and *Co ukryte*. *Aktualna sztuka ze Śląska* [*What's Hidden. Current art from Silesia*] (State Art Gallery, Sopot, 2015). He lives and works in Katowice.

A collection subject to special care. On the preservation of modern art using the example of the digitized resources of the Bunkier Sztuki Art Gallery, made available on the Malopolska's Virtual Museums website

Is a conservator needed for contemporary art, if it is new? The availability of increasingly refined artistic materials should potentially translate into the greater durability of works of art, resulting in a gradually smaller need for maintenance treatment. It would then be sufficient to cover them with so-called preventive maintenance, which consists in providing appropriate storage conditions and in preventing damage and undesirable changes. Such reasoning, however, does not fully fit modern works of art, which only in a few cases rely on the use of innovative technologies and professional materials that have stability certificates. They rather represent a cross-section of what is currently within the artist's reach, ranging from all kinds of materials (not necessarily intended for artistic use), through mass production objects and the most recent inventions of technology, to natural matter, and even living organisms. Mineral photoluminescent substances, sets of cosmetics, virtual diagram scripts and stuffed animals are only a few examples of the material that contemporary artists are working with and which can all be found in the resources of the Bunkier Sztuki Gallery of Contemporary Art. Preserving these original and often complex compositions, which are unpredictable and, therefore, difficult to plan in terms of their renovation, requires particular caution from their keepers. Expertise in material appraisal and the search for the best methods of conservation often necessitate engaging authors and specialists in the field of applied means and technologies.

Works which were created yesterday, a decade ago or even decades ago and fall within the artistic tendency to experiment, innovate and break existing art conventions, diverge from works of classic art even more than purely material issues would indicate. Fairly often, they do not even take on the form of an object. It often happens that they are not even designed to last in an unchanged material condition. Contemporary artistic realizations can be expressed through processes and recurring or non-recurring events, just as well as through objects. In such cases, the very idea of making them durable and converting them into part of an art collection seems to contradict the very nature of these works, which are permanently embedded into a specific moment and place, happening in the present.

The creation of this kind of collection, even though extremely hard, is still being initiated by individuals whose goal is to collect works being emblematic for present times. The collections of Bunkier Sztuki, among which there are many examples of variable installations, artistic actions, interventions, processes and projects, bear testimony to this. Their maintenance is demanding. It has to be carried out with caution to preserve their temporary and situational character. This involves taking responsibility not only for objects, but also for actions allowing for their presentation in accordance with the artistic idea, and even for the implementation of artistic concepts. A keeper of this type of collection must answer the question: what exactly are the objects in his/her care: a piece of work, its documentation, a remnant or an execution instruction? And how, with the help of materials at his/her disposal, can he/she ensure the preservation of its authentic expression?

Taking care of modern art works goes far beyond material analysis, monitoring the state of preservation, preventing damage and compensating for any loss. It focuses on conceptual issues to the same extent as on the physical level of a given work. The conservator's scrutiny encompasses the problems concerning the status, functions and the mutual relations envisaged for the material, means applying oneself in order to make artistic assumptions a reality. Do they constitute a work of art or a record of a bygone realisation? Are they an isolated creation or one of the many possible variations of an idea? Do they serve the purposes of passive contemplation or are they supposed to initiate the recipient's actions? Is it their specific appearance that matters rather than the process obtained through their participation? Recognizing these issues is important in order to protect a work of art properly. It allows us to determine what exactly

their destruction and loss means in any given case and also choose a suitable moment for the conservator to intervene. Scratches on the surface of the sculpture by Maurycy Gomulicki, *Beast (Bestia)*, which had become a mascot for the youngest audience in the open air, would be small-scale damage. A similar scratch on Tomasz Baran's painting with a uniformly coloured surface would be damage on a larger scale.

The identification of the importance of damage in the case of contemporary works is not very obvious. As the example of another monochromatic painting from the Bunker of Art collection proves, what may seemingly appear to be damage is sometimes an object of conservation care. The canvas in question is part of the project *Revitalizations (Rewitalizacje)*, implemented by Wojciech Gilewicz in Sanok. For a few weeks, a green square with a hole cut out in the middle replaced the missing fence of a street flowerbed. The flaws and surface scratches created during that time are an important element of the work. They are material proof of implementing the assumptions of the artistic project, which consisted in improving the image of the city and filling in the devastated urban fabric with pictorial dummies. The removal or repair of defects would be equal to the erasure of the significant history of the object, documented also by means of a film, which may accompany the painting during its exhibition in a gallery.

Violation of the work's integrity is related to the damage of its substance only in some cases. It is equally important to present it in a correct form, one consistent with the intentions of the author. Therefore, a significant part of the contemporary art conservator's attention is devoted to the problem of obtaining information about mutual relations — spatial and ideological — between elements of a given work. Artistic projects, consisting of many complex components, can easily lead to misleading combinations or juxtapositions. In order to prevent this, it is not enough to be in possession of all the necessary components of the work: it is also indispensable to have instructions for their use.

In the collection of Bunkier Sztuki, one of the most complicated cases is the work by the Strupek Group *Rocket (Rakieta)*, originally created as an artistic performance, and finally transferred to the collection in the form of a rich set of materials, consisting of conceptual sketches, scenario, costumes, props and photographic documentation. Their utility has allowed a fairly free repetition of the course of the performance. In the case of static shows, the aesthetic dimension of artefacts has been emphasized — the work then takes the form of an installation whose shape outline is determined by the authors' guidelines.

The work *+48 XX XXX XXXX* by Jan Hoelt may also appear in a dual form, which is both an artistic intervention in the public space and its perverse, semi-fictional documentation. The gallery is impermanent possession of only the elements necessary to present the latter version, which are compiled into a fixed composition for the needs of each exhibition. The outdoor form of the work, which has been exhibited only once so far in Cracovian Błonia for several months, has only been preserved in a project form. It is the basis for the restoration of the work in the same shape of a standard factory-made steel barrier, with a knitted scarf with a telephone number hanging over it. The scarf, following these assumptions, has been produced in many copies, to enable regular replacement of this willingly appropriated element of the work. Restoration of the work also requires a helpline to be launched, which is indicated by the characters on the scarf and which initiates an artistic intrigue planned by the author.

The examples mentioned highlight a sensitive area of contemporary art. An important element in the exercise of custody over works of art is, in fact, their display. It is sometimes an activity more complicated than the mere retrieval of an object from the warehouse, hanging it on the wall or placing it on a plinth. The exhibition is often the only opportunity to see the work in its entirety, but also the moment in which it is easiest to misrepresent it. Many artistic projects create the need to assemble physically unconnected fragments, and even to make certain parts from scratch. The responsibilities of collection conservators include: supervision over the appropriate course of these actions as well as deciding whether a certain work should be destroyed after the exhibition or not. This applies above all to large-size objects, ones which are easy to reproduce and — as in the case of Hoelt's work — ones which do not require the participation of authors at subsequent exhibitions of the work. Their re-production may prove to be a more prudent solution than the long-term provision of appropriate storage conditions.

This specificity of contemporary art works causes meticulously and methodically maintained documentation to become the basis and integral part of the conservation of resources. New techniques of creating visual mappings – including digitalization – are also helpful. They allow the physical parameters of the work to be preserved with great precision and in full spatial dimension. Their usefulness turns out to be invaluable in the case of such works as Valtki Horvat's installation, *BalanceBeam # 0715*. At every exhibition, it requires an accurate reconstruction of the configuration of objects placed on a wooden beam extending between two chairs. No technical tool, however, can show the sense of repeating this activity. It consists in finding the titular balance in the process of arranging another set of round and spherical shapes in the right order.

Documentation, on which the possibility of preserving artistic projects often depends, rarely resembles a technical instruction containing a list of simple tasks to be performed. It happens (as happened in the case described above) that it introduces a requirement to act out the activities important for the work, in which there is a certain amount of randomness. Sometimes, they leave a considerable margin for discretion, assuming the need to adapt a work to a given place and circumstances. The element of freedom and flexibility, embedded in an artistic project, becomes the subject of protection. Its recording by means of photography, film or three-dimensional visualization can lead to excessive attachment to a single image of the work. This situation is not possible in such works as *Rocket* by the Strupek Group or even a formally simple installation by Tomasz Dobiszewski from the series *Anecdotes (Anegdota)*. The latter consists of photographs depicting a desert and the shadow of a figure observing it, which is created by pouring sand on the floor (intentionally without the use of a template) and looks a touch different each time.

Works that evade the possibility of their recording are far from rare. Such cases include projects constantly developing over time, such as the second of Wojciech Gilewicz's works, held in the care of Bunker Sztuki. *Paintings 2002* – is a painting process carried out on eleven supports. This process continues thanks to the commitment of the gallery to repaint them at least twice a year according to the guidelines provided by the artist. These paintings have become their own documentation by accumulating further layers on the surface. The main object in the proper conservation of the work is regular continuation of the painting activity.

A collection of contemporary art turns out to be a laborious project. Conservation of the works, which are collected not in the form of objects, but in variable installations, interventions and actions, is not limited to eliminating physical threats and counteracting dangerous incidents. It rather turns into continuous action, inextricably linked to the programme of public access to works of art. Without the involvement of the actively and conscientiously conducted conservation, a significant part of this type of collection would only be a dead and rather curious collection of instructions, documentation, props and replicas, from which individual works could not easily be extracted in their full splendour. Works of this kind, without any conservation, simply do not exist.

Elaborated by Kinga Olesiejuk,



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution 3.0 Poland License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/3.0/pl/).

See all works from the collection of [Bunkier Sztuki Gallery of Contemporary Art](https://www.bunkier sztuki.pl/).

See all works from the collection of [Museum of Contemporary Art in Kraków MOCAK](https://www.mocak.pl/).