

Interview of Tatiana Wolska given on the occasion of her solo show *Leisure as Resistance* at the Midlands Art Center in Birmingham (UK), 2024.

1. Can you tell us about the emphasis on resourcefulness that underpins the exhibition and the work you are creating?

I use resourcefulness symbolically. I am inspired by barter systems and the transformation of material. This comes from my childhood in Poland, where everything was transformed. When I arrived in France in 2000, everybody was speaking about ecology. I discovered a new appreciation of recycling and sustainable processes.

2. Do you hope to inspire people to consider being more resourceful in their approach to making and creating art?

Yes, everyone has their own approach. After Frieze in London, I received dozens of messages a day from people reacting to the exhibition. Their amazement at the recycled nature of the work inspired people to think about the potential of waste. This is what I wanted to develop for my exhibition in Birmingham, in particular through the workshops. I want to raise people's awareness and create place for community and exchange. There is a real exponential and contagious effect to the project, where new ideas are born through dialogue. By organizing workshops, there is the activation of a community already working on these subjects. I offer them a place to meet and exchange ideas, so that their projects can come together.

3. You give found objects a second life through your works and sculpture – what is your collection process like? Where do you find your materials?

I find them everywhere: in the street, in the garbage cans... I collect everything that crosses my path. It also happens that friends mobilize and bring materials directly to my studio. I used to take absolutely everything, but now I need more space in order to create.

4. The exhibition will also feature a number of your drawings. Do you see your drawing process as a form of mindfulness?

Drawing has a therapeutic aspect for me. What I qualify as “lazy drawing” is a completely free creative mechanism that is not influenced by any particular thought process. I draw for myself, without the stress of a useful production or obligation. In a society where everything has to make sense in a precise, organized and efficient way, I need this freedom. I think that drawing allows to release stress and to free one's creativity. It is a motor that propels ideas. When someone tells me they have no ideas, I advise them to draw.

5. A key part of the exhibition will be a makeshift shelter, inviting audiences to engage with a clothes swap, seed swap, and a library. How important is it for you to create a place for leisure and rest within the exhibition?

This idea goes back to the project of the municipal gallery in Nice, which took the form of a utopian vision of nomadic, democratic and relational architecture. In Birmingham, it was important to create a comfortable, welcoming space where people could relax, let their children play, meet up and have a cup of tea. In the city, there is a lack of spaces where people can relax for free. The exhibition is also a reaction against this economy of comfort and rest so it is crucial that visitors can make the space their own.

6. What do you hope audiences gain from attending the series of workshops and participatory events, and from visiting the exhibition?

I hope there will be a collective contamination. Everytime I host a workshop, there are interesting exchanges of ideas. A lot of people are working on parallel economies and dreaming of another way of life, far removed from overconsumption and capitalist excess.

7. Is the idea of collaborating with local community groups something you will continue in your practice?

Yes, I like to amplify the collective aspect via my work. Capitalist society separates us from one another, and the lack of solidarity distrust of others is prevalent. Collective utopias are unfortunately stigmatized, and I want to go against that in my practice.

8. Finally, how important is it for you to be showcasing your work in Birmingham, UK?

My exhibition in Birmingham is the realization many projects that I have had in mind for a long time. There were already premises in other projects, but never in such an accomplished and polymorphous way as here. Birmingham also has a special character as an industrial city. Writer Caroline Perez talks about the place of women in England and the breakdown of close ties. A network of mutual aid and support is built up in parallel, and it is precisely in this axis that my artistic practice is articulated.