

Antonia Petz

ŁÓDŹ - BOAT



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WOLFGANG SOHM ABOUT THE PROJEKT "ŁÓDŹ - BOAT"

Altengbach, April 2008

"Łódź - Boat" poses a question about the effects of the symbolic image of the boat in Łódź's coat of arms, which can be found throughout the whole cityscape as a reference of ownership on preferably each, publicly displayed object appropriated by the Municipality of Łódź. The almost omnipresent image, which has been equated with the public property, indeed "floats" on it, creates an imaginary space of appropriation of an object (e.g. of a manhole cover, of the city hall) as well as appropriation of a process (e.g. a tram ride) quasi as processual current around the image of the boat, that appears to be a space of imagination (e.g. correlations such as origin and ownership relations regarding an object, usage rights, and such) and identification (the city and its inhabitants), from which, by interconnecting imagination and identification, namely the social process, the city seems to be regenerated in the allegoric. The currently public channels, which appear same with the network of veins, enabled the industrial establishment built as a result of industrialization to manufacture textiles in late 19th century that were created in the form we see them today and on which the identification of the town is based until this very day. Together with vast factory palaces used nowadays by the modern film industry, they have become typical symbols of a town with a boat as its coat of arm, which, without sufficient navigable waters, rests upon a network of seemingly almost vanished channels..



ENCOUNTERS WITH THE BOAT

Vienna, February 2008

During my first nocturnal walks across Łódź I was surprised by the sight of two boards, each showing a golden wooden boat with one oar on a red background, mounted on the front of a large, vacant building. In the following days, always again, I saw the boat, adequate to its function as means of transport, on all of the vehicles of the municipal transport service and as the town's coat of arms all over the cityscape. That the town identified with the symbol of its name seemed plausible, yet it was conspicuous that apparently the town possessed neither rivers, and other waters, nor real boats. Initially I found only a couple of somewhat neglected wells instead.

Attracted by the poetry of the boat that does not sit on a surface of water, but seems to exist within an imaginary space of the town of Łódź, I started to attend to a phenomenon of a boat oblivious of any navigable waters. Starting from the history of Łódź's development I betook to search for the rivers and the traces of existence of a boat within the realm of imagination of the inhabitants of Łódź and the effects of this imaginary boat onto the life concepts and visions of the inhabitants, who naturally have, more than once in the course of their history, been affected by existence threatening cataclysms. The single absolute constant in the whole space of Łódź since over 400 years seems to have been this retaining of the sign of a boat in the town's coat of arms and therewith the maintaining of the image of a wooden boat on water, which remains to be found in its prettiest execution, closest to its water element, as a relief on the cast iron manhole covers of the town.

What good is a boat, whose aim is to actually enable transportation on water, without navigable waters? Is a boat without a river not as a house without a roof? Does not an inverted boat compare to a roof without a house and cannot the city space of Łódź, so Łódź itself, be seen as a boat house that is anchored at the bank of the river Łódka? Or did the town, in the heyday of the European textile industry, turn into become a fabric of channels and factories, which, due to the method of textile manufacturing, has itself become a morphological array of woof and warp?

PHOTO SERIES ŁÓDŹ I

Łódź, Spring 2007 The search for the boat hull began with the search for rivers. I researched the course of the channel system and followed by sections the rivers of Łódka, Jasień and Sokołówka. I could not, however, find any boat on any of the water courses.

The photo series Łódź I shows the encounters with the sign of the boat, the rivers, the factories and the people of Łódź. It documents the one-time above- and underground cultural landscape created in the last 200 years, and its relationship with cultural regions and natural watercourses in the urban industrial areas towards the end of the 19th century. The channel system of Łódź was at that time, as a result of the town's leading position in the European textile industry, exemplary.









WAGA

CONCRETE IN CANALS

1991 - 1992

WAGA

CONCRETE IN CANALS

1991 - 1992

WAGA

CONCRETE IN CANALS

1991 - 1992

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CONCRETE IN CANALS

1991 - 1992

WAGA

CONCRETE IN CANALS

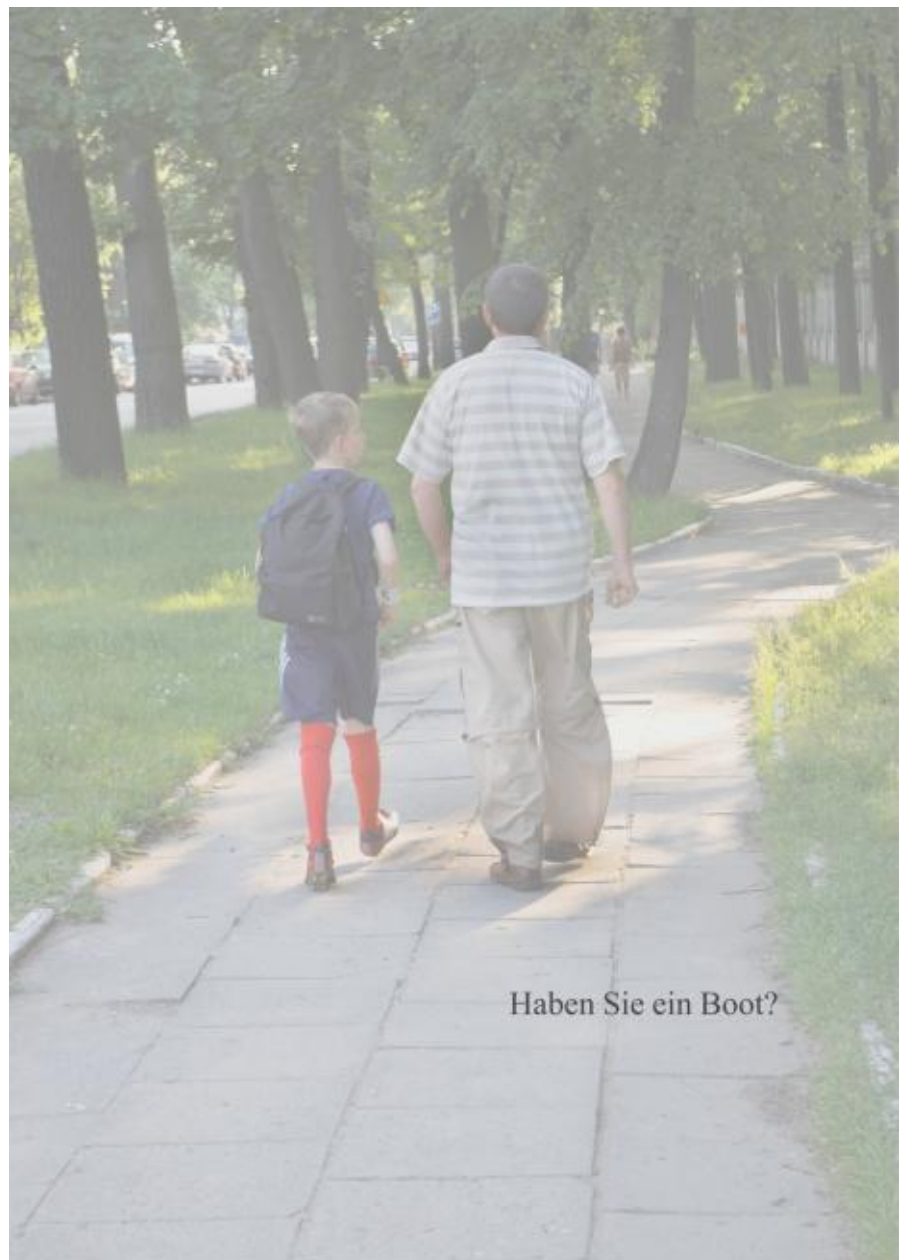
1991 - 1992

WAGA

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1991 - 1992

THE BOAT IN THE IMAGINARY SPACE



Haben Sie ein Boot?

W POSZUKIWANIU ŁODZI - SEARCHING FOR THE BOAT

**Installation in the Biology Library
of the Vienna University
Vienna, November 2007**

By means of the photo series "Łódź I" and the poster series made especially for the installation and installed between the bookcases of the library, I was able to transfer the atmospheric realm that I had been able to record in "Łódź I" into the realms of imagination, which arise as a result of library work contrasting with the knowledge representation present there in books, in the form of writing and image. With the photographs I installed representations of symbolic fusion of culture and nature, which is to be allegorically found in the channels as well as in the boat image.

Six inhabitants of Łódź were asked, by means of four posters, "Do you own a boat?" and "What would you do, if you had a boat?" Printed on the above mentioned posters between the rows of library bookcases, the pictures of these people, who seem to move to the outside of the library, parallelize the aisles between the rows of books with the sidewalks of Łódź. The path through the posters to the outside of the image itself led along the optical prolongation of the aisles, which were created between the rows of the library bookcases. When a student stepped into the aisle, he followed for a certain piece of the way the person from the poster out from the physical space. The question about the boat printed on the poster was addressed also to the student entering the imaginary space of the boat of Łódź.

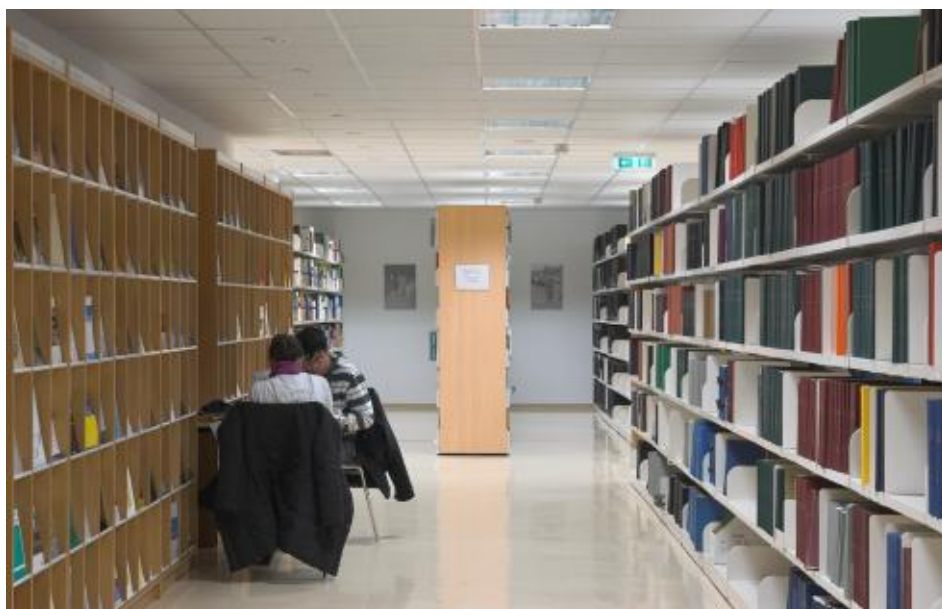




PHOTO SERIES ŁÓDŹ II

**Biology Library
of the Vienna University
Vienna, November 2007**

The photo series shows the students of biology, who, in the course of their studies in the library, move through installation "W poszukiwaniu łodzi - Searching for the boat", reading students in the reading room of the library, where the photos from the series "Łódź I" are exhibited, as well as photos of the poster series hang on the end of each aisle.









IN THE SPACE OF THE IMAGINARY BOAT



Was würden Sie machen, wenn
Sie ein Boot hätten?

LOKALIZACJA ŁODZI - LOCALIZING THE BOAT

**Interactive Installation in the
Galeria 87 Urzędu Miasta Łodzi
Łódź im Februar 2009**

"Localizing the boat" was an attempt to get to know something about the visions of the inhabitants of Łódź, who in their daily life are confronted with the symbol, or the identity finding process, of their changing town. For the acoustic localization of the boat and its photographic documentation, by means of photos from the three previous project phases I built an association chain to the imaginary Łódź's boat I posit for. In the back of the exhibition area there was a booth connected with a recording device, which, in the publically accessible, condensed with identity models space of Municipality of Łódź, created a neutral zone, a one-person-island exempted from any perception of time. It offered the exhibition visitors and the employees of the Municipality the possibility to answer the question "What would you do, if you had a boat?" addressed to them. The acoustic insulated walls of the recording booth shut each speaker off from the public space. By closing the booth door they stepped out of the noise of the environment into sudden silence. Thereby they unexpectedly got into their own selves and, by focusing on the boat visions, into the space of the imaginary Łódź's boat. By the process of imagination and linguistic formation the unexpected acoustic vacuum has been filled with the sound waves of their speech, with their visions and with the spirit of an imaginary boat.



THE GALLERY 87 OF MUNICIPAL GOVERNMENT OF ŁÓDŹ

The Galeria 87 (Gallery 87), owned by the Municipality, is a part of the magistrate represented by the boat coat of arms. From the architectonic point of view the exhibition area connects three institutions which attend to identity issues of the city of Łódź, and in this way take care of the local and international spreading of its self-image. The employees, as well as the whole public, enter the building at Piotrkowska 87 Street. In order to be able to move between different institutions, one needs to cross the exhibition area in the gallery.

Next to the gallery there is a porter's lodge, a tourist information center as well as various storerooms in the ground floor of the historic building. Three columns divide the space facing Piotrkowska Street into front and rear part. In the middle part an open staircase leads into an open-plan floor. It houses an outpost of the "Władysław Reymont" Airport. The newly set up booking center "Zentrum Lotów z Łodzi" is now an interface between the center of the city of Łódź and the world outside of the city.

A small corridor connects this infrastructure with the Office of Promotion, Tourism and International Cooperation (Biuro Promocji, Turystyki i Współpracy z Zagranicą) at back part of the building. The responsibility of the three departments contains also support and development of projects, which should help the creation of positive image of the city nationally and internationally. In this building condensed with identity models I addressed the citizens of Łódź with the question: "Co byś zrobił/ła, gdybyś miał/a łódź? - What would you do, if you had a boat?"



AUDIO DOCUMENTS TO ŁÓDŹ'S BOAT

Galeria 87 Urzędu Miasta Łodzi
Lodsch im Februar 2009

"What would you do, if you had a boat?" This question is the onset of a series of audio recordings, in which the existence of imaginary boat in the imagination space of the citizens of Łódź manifests itself acoustically. The 30 minute DVD-Video in Polish language should be listened to by means of headphones.

At first muffled noise of the vernissage penetrates through the headphones into the ear. After some time, you hear the sounds of opening of the booth door that scrape the floor, entering and sitting down. Male voice starts talking, coughs slightly, hesitates, gets up and leaves the booth, closes the door. The steps fade away. The inside of the booth is almost totally quiet. You listen into the space. You wait. Your own physique seems to remain present inside the booth. The phase of hearing nothing lasts. Suddenly the door opens. With the entrance of a person, brisk noise of the surrounding swashes into the space. Something rustles. Sounds of breathing. A woman starts talking.

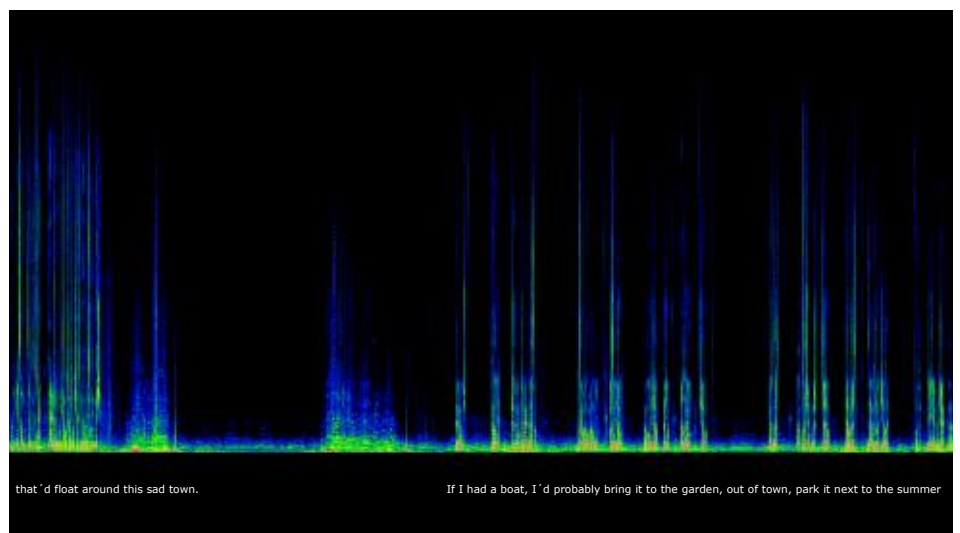


"If I had a boat, I'd sail into the sea. I'd like to see the beautiful horizon, that gives breath, gives the perspective. That's all."

"The question was what would I do if I had Lodz, right? So, what would I do? I'd leave all as it is, 'cause it's beautiful, there are many monuments, but I do miss something more cheerful, merry, different, and maybe I'd suggest tree homes designed by Magdalena Abakanowicz, where people live so to say inside a tree, the tree is a house, it's branchy, and there are many apartments, rooms in there. Or Hundertwasser, who designed such fairytale houses, colorful, with distorted lines of windows, stories, everything is colorful, so multicolored and perhaps it is less interesting on a mass scale, but we'd need some of such fairytale houses. Thank you."

"If I had a boat, I'd cook a huge, delicious soup in it and I'd feed with it all the fish swimming around. And then I'd catch them, and make soup out of them. Basically, I'd be cool to have a boat-shaped car, that'd float around this sad town."

"If I had a boat, I'd probably bring it to the garden, out of town, park it next to the summer house, the house, and maybe sometimes, in the evenings or the afternoons, I'd sit inside with my family or with friends and have a nice time. Or perhaps I could sell it or give, or lend it to my friends, who like going to the Masuria or somewhere else, I don't know, to some river or the sea, and use this boat for a longer trip. Or maybe one day I'd even join some small expedition. Thank you."



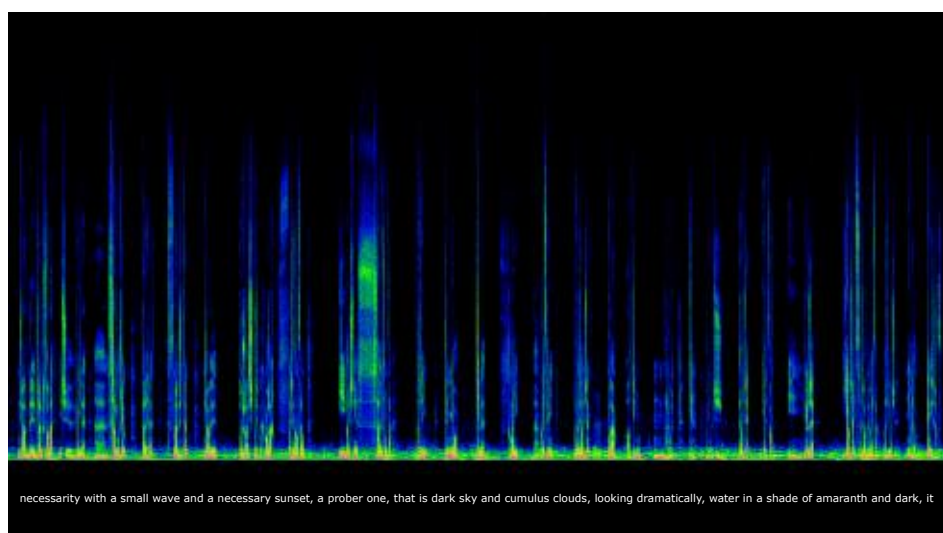
"If I had a lifeboat, no, if I had a boat, I'd rebuilt it into a lifeboat and save some people by taking them some place far away, to a deserted island."

"If I had a boat in Lodz, I'd attach wheels to it and sail down Piotrkowska Street, Naturowicza Street to the Zdrowie Park. Thank you."

"Good morning. If I had a boat, I'd be needy. But the boat would have to be a bit luxurious, have a cabin with a big bed, a bathroom with a small shower, would have to sail the warm seas, necessarily with a small wave and a necessary sunset, a proper one, that is dark sky and cumulus clouds, looking dramatically, water in a shade of amaranth and dark, it should be romantic and poetic. And I know that as a inhabitant of our lovely town of Lodz, I don't have any chance to have it come true. Greetings."

"Lodz is my home town and, though I know it is ugly and dirty, I love it a lot and I know, from the bottom of my heart I know, that it is beautiful, one just needs to love and like it and find in it all there is to find, and in your heart as well."

"If I had a boat and had no love, the star would not drop into my tea, the unwritten poem would stop in mid-air, I wouldn't hear what you say without saying a word and I wouldn't follow the footprints on the water."



"Antonia Petz, location: Lodz. What is Lodz to me? Interactive installation. Lodz is mainly my home town, an open town, modern, influencing people by means of its metaphysics and spirituality, a town deserving rediscovery, town of art, action, town that can be easily called the European New York. For me Lodz is the future, Lodz is not only rivers that are gone, that have been built over, Lodz is not only a former industrial town, Lodz is not only a town of pubs, clubs and the intelligence escaping into the nearby Warsaw. Lodz is not a black hole, but indeed future. But future for whom, and in what, depends solely on us."

"I am afraid of water, so if I somehow would have a boat, I'd probably not use it according to its traditional purpose. But since I am from Lodz and this symbol is somehow close to me and I identify with it, I'd find another use for the boat. For instance, as a bed or a swing in the garden. An oar is more problematic, but surely I'd find some function for it as well."

"Good morning. If I owned a boat, I'd travel all over the world, but what is a boat without its port and that's what the town of Lodz is to me: my port. Thank you."

"If I had a boat, I'd go under the deck to relax, I'd let it rock me, or I'd turn it into a dark room. Or an art atelier. And every evening, after work, I'd relax under the deck. Thanks."

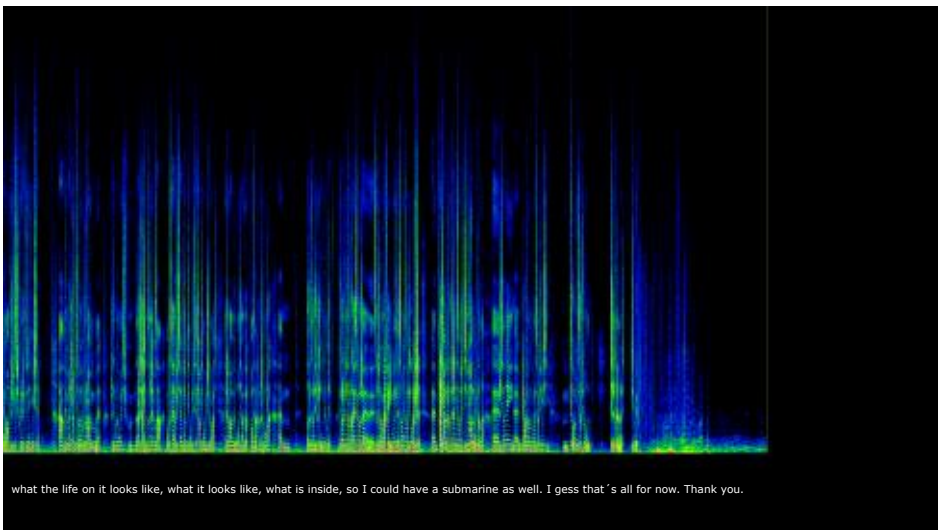
"Lodz. Lodz is for me a symbol of movement, high and low tide, travels in time and space, a place, where you can make your dreams come true. To the small Lodz came people of different cultures, full of ideas and with opened hearts, they created, turned small into huge, made it famous, and going away, they left behind architectonical masterpieces, unique atmosphere of Lodz. We need to save it all from forgetting, go on creating, don't allow the grayness to take over, connect old beauty with the modern, expand Lodz giving it a unique style, continue the begun masterpiece. If I had a boat, I'd take all the most beautiful of Lodz's places into it and sail into the world. River, sea, port. Lodz needs to be shown to the world, so that people want to come and stay here, to create, as the ancestors. The emblem of Lodz - the boat tells us: move the oars, row, row, row. Thank you."

"If I had a boat, I'd get on it and sail away, don't know where to yet, maybe to some beautiful place, with vivid, green nature, with endless sea. If I had a boat, I'd take all close people on board and show them the world they have never seen before. If I had a boat, I'd have a chance for a different life. I could start everything anew, from the start, create the most impossible scenario. If I had a boat, I'd have to care for it, that it wouldn't get overgrown by lichens, take care that it has a place to sail. All that would happen, if I had a boat. If I had Lodz, if I could influence that town, I'd change a lot, mainly the way people live and who they are to each other, how they treat each other. That's all, thank you."

"If I had a boat, I'd like to find a river, that'd be appropriate for my boat. On board I'd take my friends, family. I'd like to show them places I love or places I've never seen, but would like to see. But I'd also like to go back. Thank you."

"Good morning. I'd like to answer the question, what I'd do if I had a boat. Actually I have not thought about it, but I think that it'd depend on the boat. If I had a simple boat, like on the town's emblem, I'd surely want to go down the river and see, what goes on on the banks, what it looks like, how far I can go, maybe in not longer than one day, I'd like to see, how the surroundings look, how people live on the banks, what they do, what the landscape looks like, so that boat would help me get to know world, to broaden my horizons, but would also be such a diversity in my everyday life, an escape from the everyday life, this reality, that I live in each day, in town. And if I had a bigger boat, then I'd surely travel, on a longer reach, if I may say so. That is outside of Poland, of course, I'd have to, I'd want to learn to sail. I'd sail the boats... Pardon, the oceans, the seas, so as to see how other people live. Maybe it's a bit due to the fact that I have graduated in geography, that my interests are a bit geographical. But I'd also like, for example, to see a submarine, what the life on it looks like, what it looks like, what is inside, so I could have a submarine as well. I guess that's all for now. Thank you."

"So what would I do, if I had a boat. Since I like water a lot, so I guess if I had a boat, it'd mean I'd live close to some water, which could be for me a very desirable condition, Since, as I have mentioned, I like water and sea very much, so probably



what the life on it looks like, what it looks like, what is inside, so I could have a submarine as well. I guess that's all for now. Thank you.

I'd sail this boat cross waters and oceans of the world and would be very, very happy, because one of my childhood dreams was to become a sailor, so I believe the boat would make it possible for me. And so, yes, if I had a boat, I'd sail it. Thank you."

"What would I do, if I had a boat? If I had a lot of money, I'd hire a crew and go on a very long cruise. But as I was in Berlin, I adored the channels they have over there, so I'd pull all our rivers from the underground, here in Lodz, and it would be wonderful to sail down one river, then down another. As far as I know there are eighteen of them, so there would be some space for sailing. Thank you."

"If I had a boat, I'd probably turn it into a house, close it, make it my place, the way I like it, it'd have to be warm, there would have to be things I like there, as far as possible, but I'd take my family and probably would sail, but not across the sea, but in the sewers connecting towns, moving but aware that I can return. And probably I'd visit town, and the space around, between the towns, would be a kind of a rest, as it normally is. When we live in a town, we try to escape from it, 'cause we tire of the masses, and sometimes it is other way around, when we live on a total wasteland, we hurry to get there where many people and I probably this option would suit me best, because I'd have both, in a way. I'd have the rest and space, at the same time I'd have the things that interest me. I'd watch towns from the position of a person, although I don't live in a town, but am in it quite a lot, a person, who needs to see such cultural relations, watch how people behave, be with them there, where they, I don't know, spend their time every day, where they eat, drink, watch, I don't know, visit galleries, attend exhibitions, go to restaurants. And afterwards I probably would like to escape it and enter a house, and in this case my house would be my boat. And that's the simplest way to describe what it'd look like. Thank you."

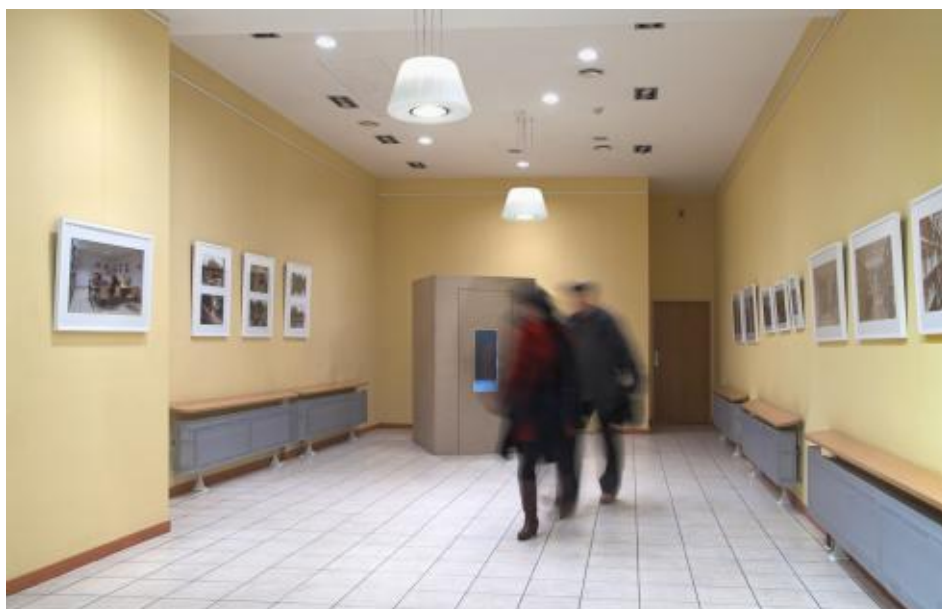
"I was thinking that in my life there was an episode connected with a boat. It was in a period, when I was a young man, wondering about my future. And at some point came this incident with a boat. A boat that was supposed to be such... It was, of course, more of a dream, especially in those times, that could not really come true, but there it was. It was about, that this boat was to be such a... A ship, that was to be a place, where I could live. It was such an oasis of my freedom, a place, where, thanks to which I could move around, get to know other cultures, other people, and at the same time return to my asylum, to this asylum of freedom, to this ship. I don't know, I guess that's all, I mean I could add something still, but what? So that's all that could maybe have anything to do with my life on that ship. I guess that's all."

PHOTO SERIES ŁÓDŹ III

Galeria 87 Urzędu Miasta Łodzi
Łódź, February 2009

The photo series documents the processes during the interactive installation "Lokalizacja łodzi - Localizing the boat". It shows the inhabitants of Łódź that participated in the process of localizing as well as the employees of the Municipality of Łódź who crossed the installation on their daily way to work.

Over and above the documentary function, the staged photographs show the whole course of the project "Łódź - Boat" in its temporal, contentual and spatial succession by means of a picture detail. This way the recordings of the channels from "Łódź I" in the installation in Gallery 87 are not only present in the original, but also in the photograph "Lesezone" - "Reading area" from "Łódź II". The photographs of this installation expanded the stratification of time and space by an additional layer. Therefore, "Łódź III" includes also an excerpt of all project phases in one picture.



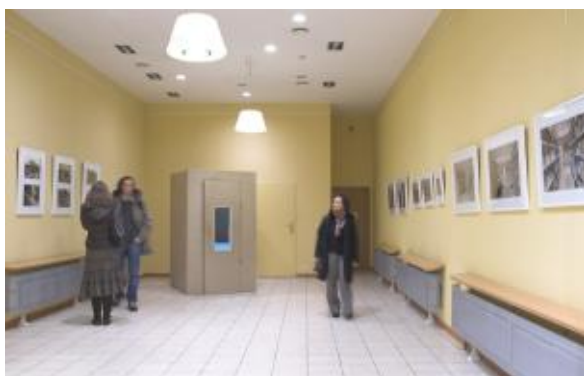






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Translation of the audio documents from Polish to English: Aleksandra Kulesza - Fink

Translation of the accompanying texts from German to English: Aleksandra Kulesza - Fink

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