

Julia Curyło

2023

STATEMENT

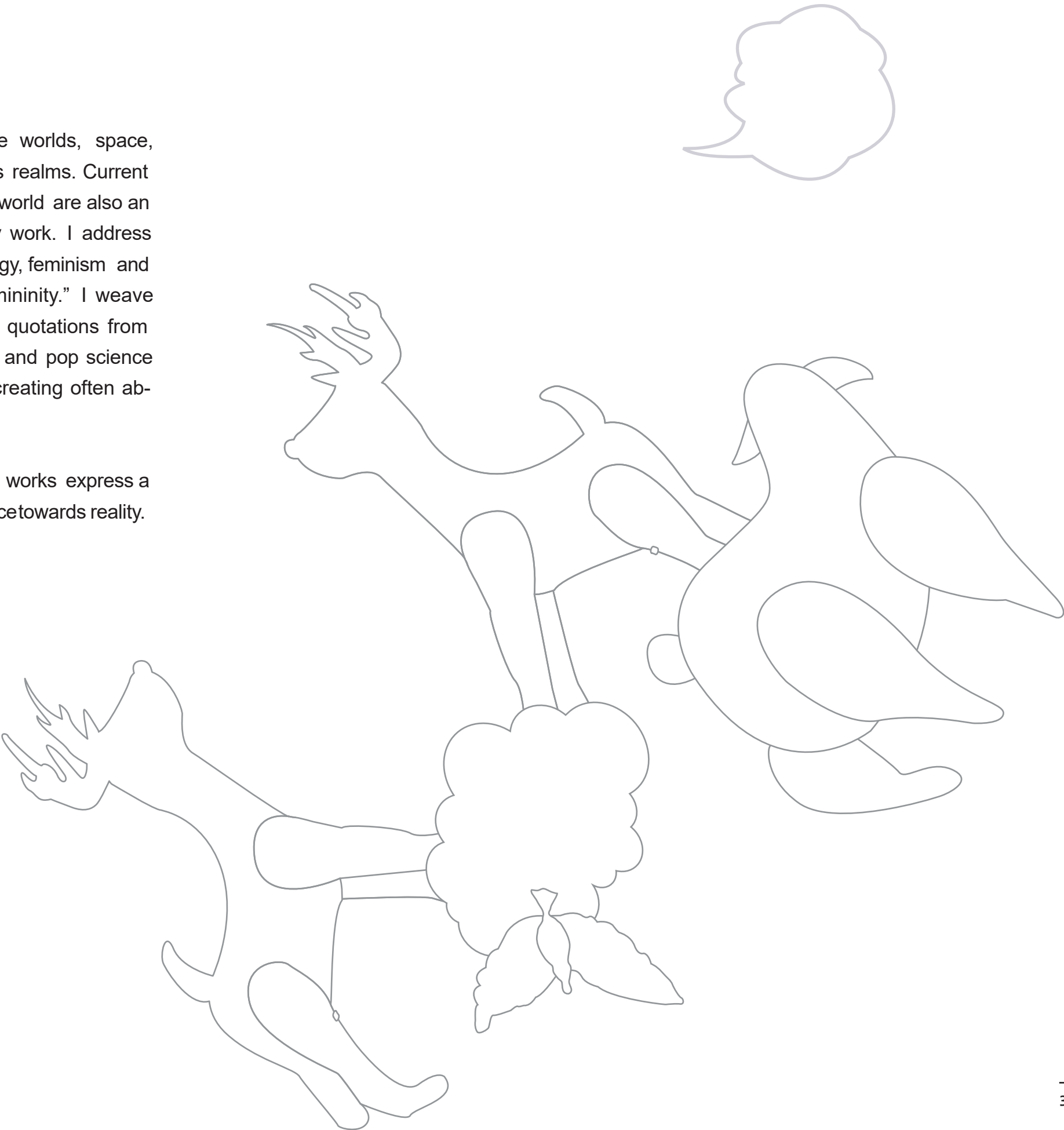
Painting is my contribution to the dialogue on matters of significance and triviality.

I aim to endow my works with ambiguities and complexities that intrigue me: piety juxtaposed with perversion, childishness with maturity, morality with licentiousness, religion with science or beauty with kitsch.

The subjects of my works include: science and culture — both high and popular; nature that envelops us and the civilisation

that devours it; remote worlds, space, mythical and mysterious realms. Current issues that animate the world are also an essential element of my work. I address themes related to ecology, feminism and the broad notion of “femininity.” I weave together various motifs, quotations from art history, pop culture and pop science with humor and irony, creating often absurd associations.

Ultimately, however, my works express a gentle and empathic stance towards reality.



Immersed in surrealistic aesthetics, magical realism and Neo-pop, Julia Curyło's works bring together the search carried out by rationalists and the believers of divine creationism on the origin of the world.

The starting point for reading the series of "cosmic" paintings of the artist is her interest in the current issues popular around the world, such as space exploration and the romantic ethos that has been created around it for the past decades. This special sort of romanticism has been present in both the significance and the visual layer. It is an introduction to new interpretations at the interface of contradictory theories as well as the continuous need for primal spirituality, despite technology development and civilization achievements in science.

Some look for the answer in the language of physics, numbers, and formulas, some draw from the belief in the existence of superbeings. In both cases, the search for the "divine" language that could explain everything that is still uncertain continues and hovers in the realm of speculation.

Space has also inspired Curyło in terms of pure aesthetic forms — dark backgrounds are just like blackboards, ready to write formulas on them, whereas astronauts' suits are just like balloon toys. Realistic fragments refer to "our," well-known, researched and comprehensible reality; space explorers are suspended between it and the mystery.

— Ewa Sulek,
curator, historian of art,
Harvard University, USA

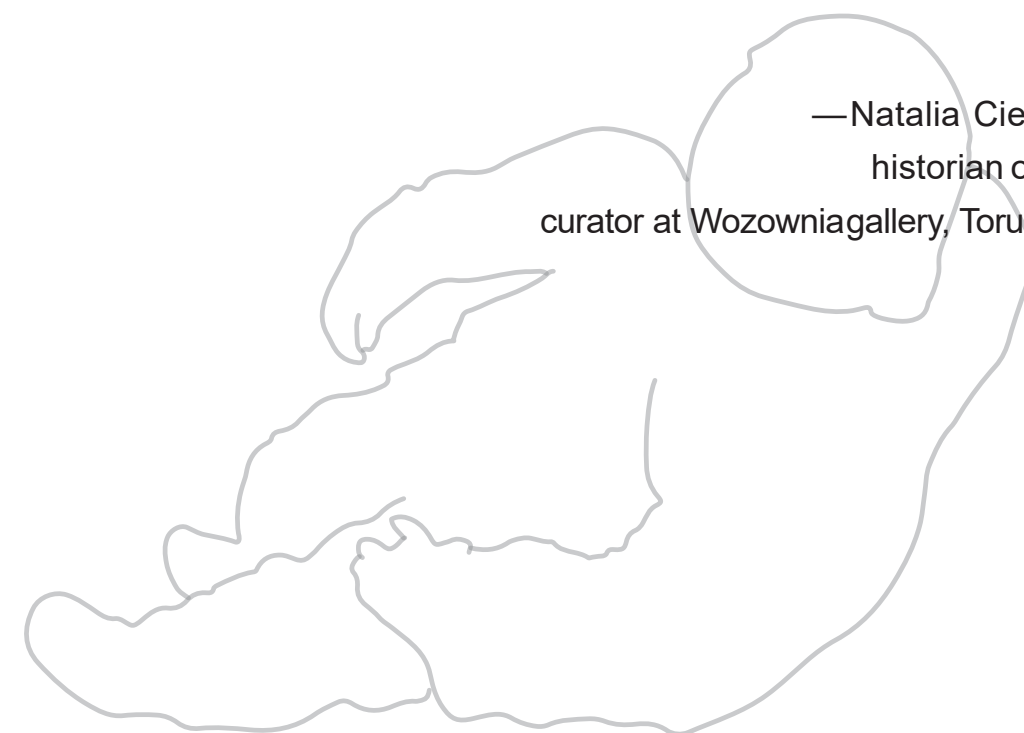


The painter usually places the "action" of her paintings in space, although on occasion she "descends" to the lower troposphere, locating the figures among clouds. However, everything always happens "above and beyond." The visual motif that clasps her work together is the ubiquitous figure of an astronaut. It becomes an incarnation of the "guardian saint" who, as the artist herself notes, watches "the limes between worlds — earthly reality and the unexplored cosmic abyss."

The astronaut-saint figure can be considered a visual metaphor in which tensions between empiricism and faith accumulate.

On the one hand, the spacemen painted by the artist are floating in space, just like the saints bestowed with mystic grace who are shown levitating on the canvases of Baroque masters. The sensation of floating in the air, mentioned by hagiographers, was a supernatural event that testified to the saint's election by the Most High. On the other hand, while viewing Julia Curyło's paintings, one can hardly escape the feeling that the protagonists are simply suspended in a weightless environment, where "the external forces affecting a system do not exert mutual pressure between the system's components, and internal gravitational influences are negligible."

— Natalia Cieslak,
historian of art,
curator at Wozownia gallery, Toruń, PL





James Webb telescope as a honeycomb, 2023

Oil, acrylic and gold leaves on canvas, 180 × 150 cm

→detail →



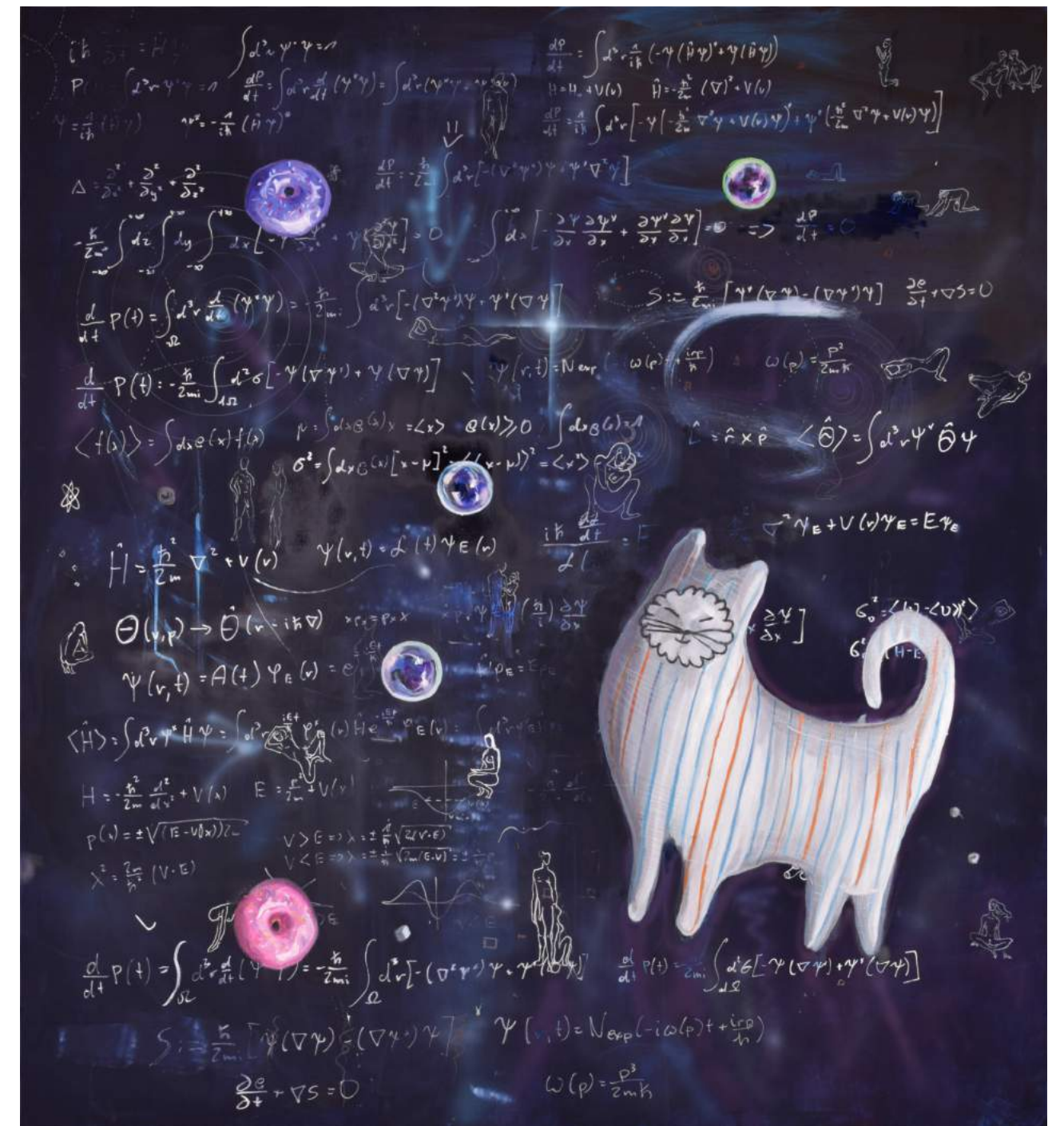
Multiverse, 2020
Oil, acrylic and resin on wood, 180 × 150 cm



Sky map with mysterious hand, 2023
Oil, acrylic and gold leaves on canvas, 160 × 160 cm



Trinity, 2015
Oil on canvas, 170 × 146 cm



Schrödinger's cat, 2015
Oil and acrylic on canvas, 150 × 156 cm



Entropy, 2019

Oil, acrylic, gold leaves and diode on canvas, 160 × 150 cm



Laika in Space, 2016

Oil on canvas, 180 × 150 cm



Saints-Watching, 2015
Mixed technique, oil on canvas, 120 × 160 cm



Multiverse, 2020
Oil and acrylic on canvas, 140 × 200 cm



Pantocrator among fish and birds, 2019

Oil on canvas, 140 × 200 cm



Martian Madonna, 2020

Oil, acrylic, fabric and sequins on canvas, 180 × 150 cm

→detail →

STRANGE STORIES

“Resorting to kitsch aesthetics and blending evocative references to religion and eroticism through her painted inflatables, reminiscent of Jeff Koons’s, Julia Curyło challenges the 21st century viewer.”

—Anna Ferrari, art historian,
University of Cambridge, UK

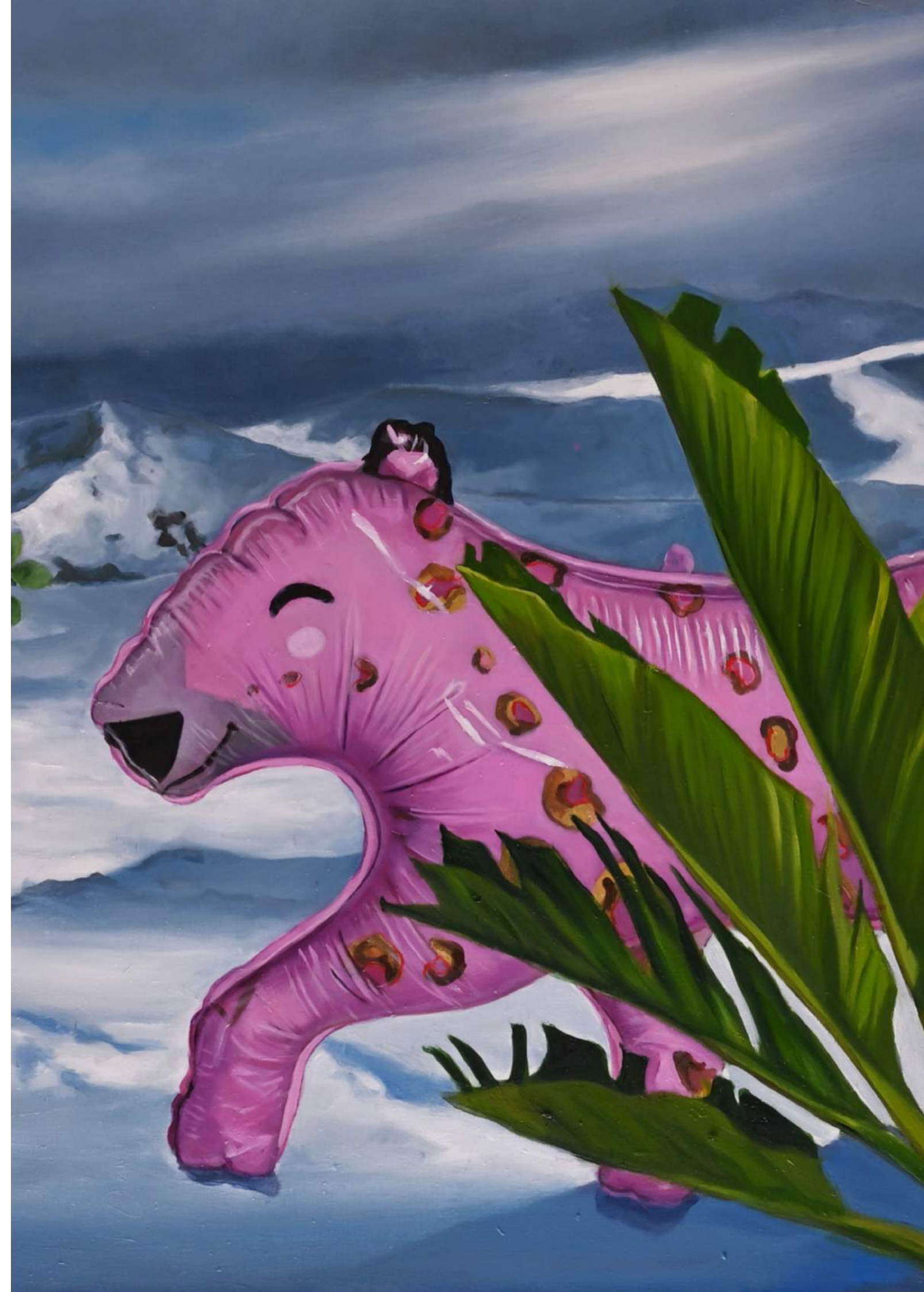
Curyło’s works form a certain flow of meanings and symbols, based not only on her own historical awareness or the painting tradition, but above all today’s popular culture and consumerist lifestyle. Curyło’s paintings please the eye and are saturated with rich symbolism, more or less evident on closer inspection. The artist combines contemporary art with the classics, high culture with low culture, while maintaining in each work its aesthetic and ethical dimension, because, as Umberto Eco wrote: “The richer the possibilities for an interpretation, the greater the aesthetic value of the work, the more diverse reactions it brings, the more facets it shows to the recipient without losing its own identity (...).”

—Joanna Paneth, art historian,
Nicolaus Copernicus University, Toruń, PL

The artist, however, deprecates the seriousness which often accompanies reflection on such themes. She divests herself of this unnecessary burden and weaves her incredible stories in a light and detached way, “abandoning the ambitions typical for modern art: looking for truth and (...) creating some new (progressive) worldviews.” In this sense, she no longer wants to compete with science or philosophy. Rather, she tries to flirt with them, just as she does with mass culture and kitsch.”

—Natalia Cieślak, art historian,
curator in Wozownia gallery, Toruń, PL





Warmwinter, 2022
Oil on canvas, 160 × 180 cm
→detail →



Pet cemetery, 2018
Oil on canvas, 140 × 200 cm



Galliformes, 2009
Oil on canvas, 127 × 192 cm



The story of a foreskin relic, 2020
Oil on canvas, 143 × 209 cm



Euroarabia, 2016,
Oil and acrylic on canvas, 130 × 200 cm



Saint Corona, 2021
Oil on canvas, 150 × 180 cm



Samsara, 2022
Oil on canvas, 150 × 180 cm



Lambs of God, 2009,
Oil on canvas, 187 × 280 cm,
Collection of the National Museum in Gdańsk





Breakfast on the beach, 2013,
Oil on canvas, 150 x 220 cm



Giants, 2015
Oil on canvas, 160 × 240 cm

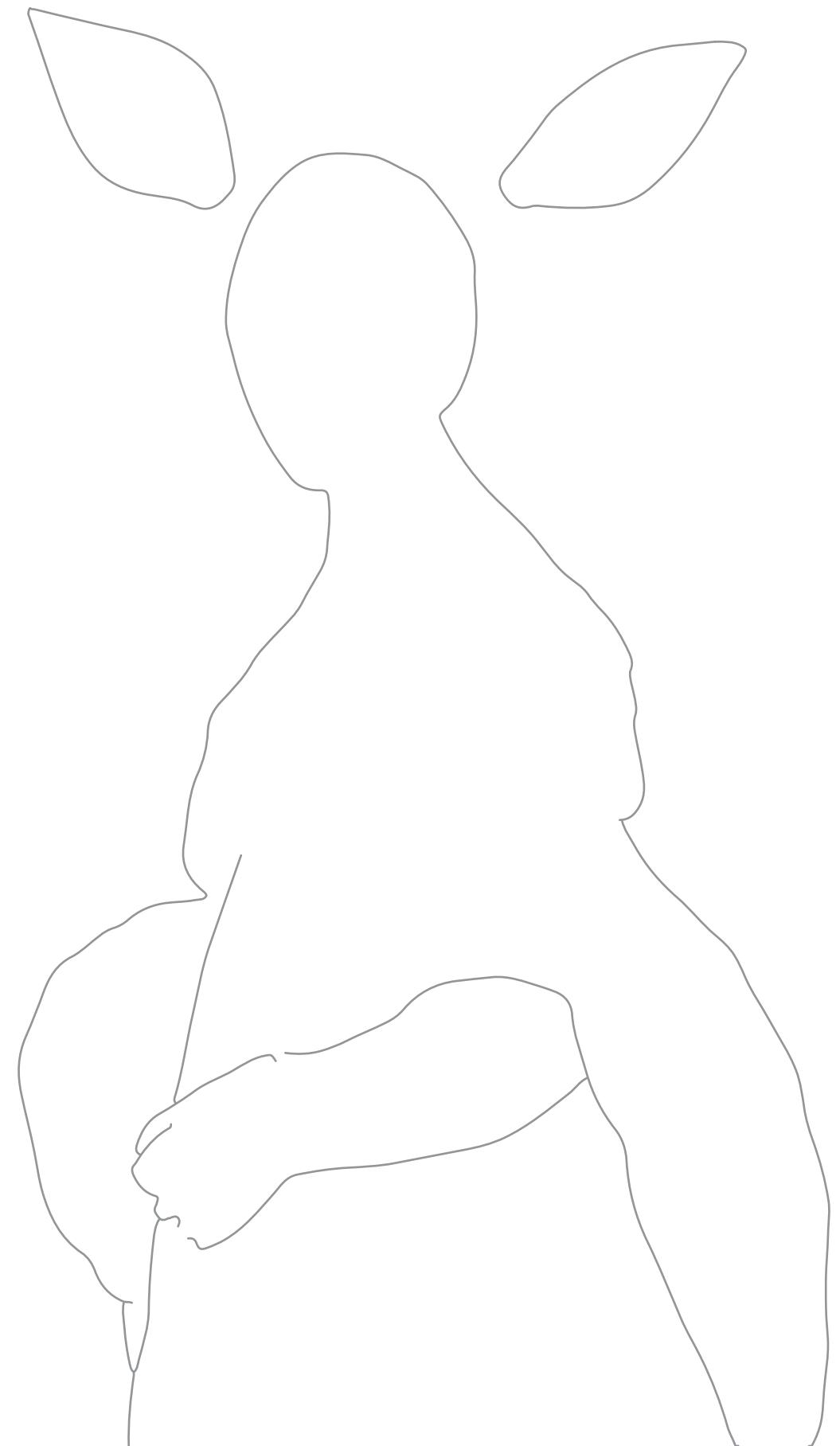
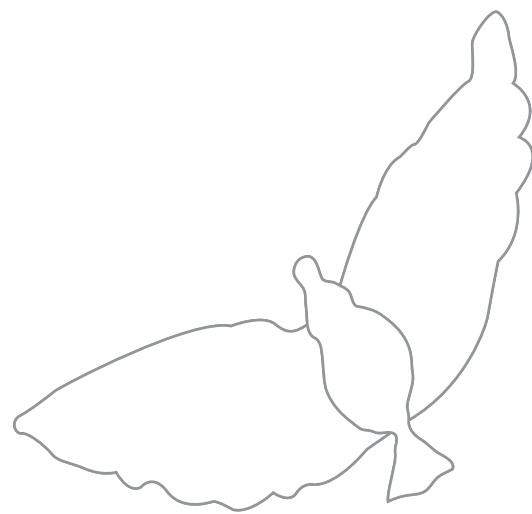


Weapon Madonna, 2015
Oil on canvas, 205 × 150 cm
→detail →

PORTRAITS

Filter portraits are an ironic joke about the modern world, Instagram filters and narcissistic mass culture. I also pose a provocative question: Did old portraits serve the same purpose as modern social media galleries?

—Julia Curyło





Portrait with filter (Dog ears), 2021,

Oil on canvas, 100 × 80 cm

→detail →



Portrait with filter (Rainbow), 2021
Oil on canvas, 100 × 80 cm



Portrait with filter (Girl with a Pearl Earring),
Oil on canvas, 50 × 39 cm

***Chicks* by Julia Curyło, hen shaped sculptures filled with air and covered with print, depict the most interesting phenomena of “women and feminist art” around the world and constitute a very modern and grotesque form of a woman’s painting exhibition.**

The mere visual form of the *Chicks* plays a fundamental role in Curyło’s vision. Each exhibit sports citations, interpretations, elements referring to the female artists and their works that compelled Curyło to create *Chicks*.

These artists contributed to breaking conventions and aspired beyond the responsibilities assigned to them. They were pioneers who spoke loudly and fearlessly about the challenges faced by women and who empowered their bodies. The series revolves around ten unique *Chicks*: Artemisia Gentileschi, Barbara Kruger, Frida Kahlo, Georgia O’Keeffe, Mary Cassatt, Shirin Neshat, Yoko Ono, Natalia LL, Niki de Saint Phalle, Natalia Goncharova.

The *Chicks* were made with the unique FiDU technology of inflatable steel, used for the first time in an art object.

Julia Curyło’s most recent project, the *Feministic Hens*, marks her return to the motif of hens—representing the painters and painters whose specific works have a special meaning to her. Again, the mere visual form of the work plays a crucial role—Curyło selected objects and fragments that spoke to her formally. The artist alludes to the works of Artemisia Gentileschi, Mary Cassatt, Suzanne Valadon, Louise Bourgeois, Sonia Delaunay, Frida Kahlo, Lee Krasner, Paula Modersohn-Becker, Georgia O’Keeffe, Niki de Saint Phalle, Marina Abramović, Yoko Ono, Barbara Kruger, Jenny Holzer, Shirin Neshat, Alina Szapocznikow and Natalia LL.

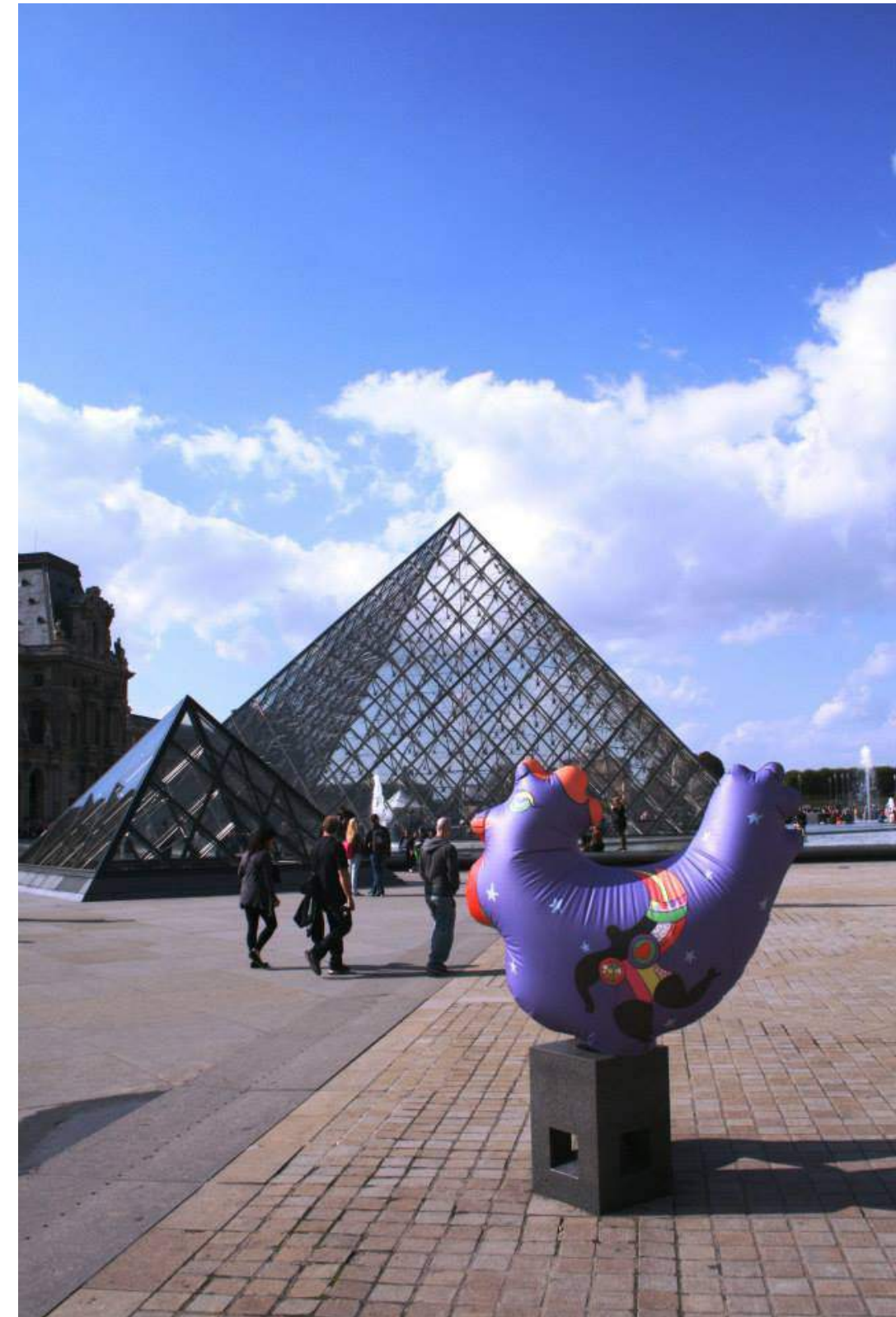
The main focus of Curyło’s *Hens* is women and their issues (in the case of Shirin Neshat it is the status of women in the Islamic society, for Natalia LL—the objectification of the female body; Artemisia Gentileschi or Sonia Delaunay are rare examples of female artists who were included in the Western art history *canon*, while Mary Cassatt

works were accepted as canonical only to be deemed atypically feminine—delicate, enjoyable and decorative).

The hen shape refers to the commonly used Polish idiom “kura domowa” (literally: domestic hen), i.e. a housewife, a woman who neglects her personal and professional growth for the sake of her domestic duties. In our society, it is a derogatory term that fits into the notion of parochialism and subjugation. In the animal world, the chicken is a domesticated species—it was artificially created with the intention of being bred for eggs and meat. Curyło, by applying to her *Hens* the imagery of “female” art, transforms them into “ornamental hens”—⁵⁹marked and touched by Art. This amplifies the contrast between art, a synonym of high culture, and the gender stereotype of a “domestic hen.” It leads to another fundamental matter: the stereotypical and diminutive view that women’s art can only be ornamental, decorative, pretty and easy to understand. Julia Curyło’s selective use of other artists’ works clearly contradicts this, demonstrating that women’s art can be unsettling, difficult and demanding in its reception.



Chicks: Jenny Holzer, Natalia LL, 2013
Polyurethane, print, 140 × 180 × 100 cm, Wrocław



Chicks: Niki de Saint Phalle, 2014
Polyurethane, print, 140 × 180 × 100 cm, Louvre, Paris



Tulips, 2009
Soft PCV, 300 × 150 × 150 cm, Warsaw



Lambs od God, 2010
Large format reproduction (33 sq m), mural, Warsaw



Lambs of God

The painting shows inflatable Lambs of God flying over Warsaw. The Lambs of God depicted in Curylo's work refer to the phenomenon of kitsch in the mass-produced devotional objects in Poland. They point to a mind-numbing aesthetic that symbolises and leads to superficial faith which, like a soap bubble, may burst at the slightest wind gust.

Lambs of God won the A19 Competition organised in 2010 by the Warsaw-based gallery "Pociąg do Sztuki," and its large-format reproduction was later used to decorate the platform of Warsaw's Marymont underground station. The exhibition was scheduled to last until the end of April.

However, due to the discontent of a large group of commuters with the mural's subject, explicitly expressed by one of the passengers (who captioned the lambs with the notice "trash, not art"), the program council in charge of exhibitions at the Marymont underground station decided to get rid of the troublesome animals a month earlier. The forthcoming Easter was a major factor underlying the decision.

The Christological symbol reinvented as plastic inflatable bodies (such lambs are sold in sex shops as erotic toys) turned out to be an unacceptable invasion of public space.

The *Lambs of God* (the use of plural is intended) illustrate perfectly the ambiguity and duality of the world Curylo likes to play with; on the one hand, the lambs are, like humans, a sinful flock. On the other hand, they are God's creation, precious and innocent.



Cosmos in donut, 2018,
Oil on wood, inflatable swim ring, 94 × 94 × 25 cm

BIO



Julia Curyło was born in Warsaw. She studied at the Academy of Fine Arts in Warsaw, where she obtained her degree in the painting studio of Professor Leon Tarasiewicz and the public space art studio supervised by Professor Mirosław Duchowski in 2009. In 2021 Julia Curyło received her PhD at the Academy of Fine Arts in Warsaw. The title of her dissertation was “Cosmogonies, between faith and science.”

She is the author of paintings and installations presented in the public space of the city.

In January 2010, she won the contest organised by A19 Gallery, located in Marymont subway station in Warsaw. The large-format mural entitled “Lambs of God” she presented there won her fame. In November, the same year, Curyło received

the Grand Prix awarded by the Minister of Culture and National Heritage as well as the Award of BWA City Gallery in Bydgoszcz during the 2010 PROMOTION in Art Gallery in Legnica. In May 2011, she was nominated for the prestigious award of the 10th Geppert Competition. Both in 2012 and 2016, Julia Curyło was awarded the Scholarship of the Minister of Culture and National Heritage.

Curyło participated in over 60 exhibitions in Poland and abroad. Her paintings can be found in numerous private collections and national art institutions like the Warsaw Rising Museum, Museum of Fine Art in Legnica and National Museum in Gdańsk. In 2021, her book entitled “The co(s)mic painting of reality in the art of Julia Curyło” was published by Unicorn Publishing Group.

INDIVIDUAL EXHIBITIONS

- 2023 — The Bride , Unicorn and other words, Biegas Gallery, Warsaw
 — Floating in the air, Julia Curylo, Emilia Bogucka, Plocka Gallery, Płock
 — *The Bride Stripped Bare (or not) by Her Bachelors*, Galeria Miejsce Sztuki 44, Świnoujście
- 2021 — *Cosmogonies*, Biegas Museum, Warsaw
- 2020 — *Weightlessness*, Wozownia Gallery, Toruń
- 2019 — *Desert project*, Building Bridges Art Exchange, Los Angeles
- 2018 — *My cosmogonies*, Stalowa Gallery, Warsaw
 — *Utopia Images*, Miejsce Sztuki 44, Świnoujście
 — *Metaphysical Visions, Physics and Applied CS Institute*, Nicolaus Copernicus University, Toruń
- 2017 — *Surreal Visions*, Italian Art Factory, Pietrasanta, Italy
 — *Artist Speaks*, Adam Smith Center, Warsaw
 — *Cudawianki*, Galeria (-1), The Olympic Center, Warsaw
 — *Paintings*, BWA Gallery, MOS, Gorzów Wielkopolski
- 2016 — *Miraculous Visions*, Scena Gallery, Koszalin
 — *Miraculous Visions*, Galeria Miejsce Sztuki 44, Świnoujście
- 2015 — *Wonderful Stories*, Zamek Gallery, Reszel
- 2014 — *Eurorabia Julia Curylo/Liza Sherzai*, Fass Gallery, Sabanci University, Istanbul
- 2013 — *Hello Modernity*, City Gallery in Wrocław, Wrocław
 — *Divine Element 8-14 TEV*, BWA in Bydgoszcz, Bydgoszcz
 — *Temptations, wonders, and delights*, Biała Gallery, Lublin
- 2012 — *H0 Element*, aTAK Gallery, Warsaw

GROUP EXHIBITIONS

- 2022 — *Nord Art*, Büdelsdorf, Kunstwerk Carlshütte
 — *WomenArt Power*, Galeria Elektrownia, Radom
 — *Blafem! Nistki*, Galeria Domu Norymberskiego, Kraków
- 2021 — *The land of the forefathers of youth singing*, Galeria Miejsce Sztuki 44, Świnoujście
 — *Freedom, I love and understand*, Łaźnia Gallery, Radom
- 2020 — *Mojave Madness*, Yucca Valley Visual and Performing Arts Center, CA
- 2019 — *Compass of art*, 2019, Biegas Museum, Warszawa
 — *Out of Poland*, Arena 1 Gallery, Los Angeles
 — *Robinson Ship*, Museum of Architecture, Wrocław
- 2018 — *2018 Young Art Compass*, Galeria (-1), The Olympic Center, Warsaw
 — *Lejanías, arte joven polaco en la colección de K. Musiał*, Centre del Carme, Valencia
 — *Spring Dreams*, Biała Gallery, Lublin
 — *Five Prudent Maidens and One Reckless Man*, City Gallery in Wrocław, Wrocław
 — *Multiple Space*, Tamarin Art Centre, Mauritius
- 2017 — *2017 Young Art Compass*, Galeria (-1), The Olympic Center, Warsaw
 — *Art Work*, Art Arsenal, Kiev, Ukraine
 — *2017 Young Art Compass*, (-1) Gallery, Warsaw
 — *Krak-Art*, Vienna Woods, Los Angeles C.A, USA
- 2016 — *2016 Young Art Compass*, Galeria (-1), The Olympic Center, Warsaw
 — *Euroarabia. Paradise, Exile, Inferno*, JCE Young European Art Biennial, Hala Stulecia, Wrocław
 — *2016 Art Compass*, (-1) Gallery, Warsaw
 — *Santa Monica Art Studios show*, Los Angeles, USA
 — *The Eagle Has Landed: Apollo 11–45 Years Later*, Wozownia Gallery, Toruń
 — *The Eagle Has Landed: Apollo 11–45 Years Later*, BWA Zielona Góra, Zielona Góra

- 2015 — *Female Painters*, Biała Gallery, Lublin
- *Apollo11– Eagle Has Landed*, Galeria Działań, Warsaw
- *Transformation Records*, Płocka Gallery, Płock
- 2014 — *Ostrale*. Festival of Contemporary Art 2014, Dresden, Germany
- *biala.art.pl*, Biała Gallery, Lublin
- *Art3 inaugural exhibition*, Art3 Gallery, New York, USA
- *Strange stories*, Stalowa Gallery, Warsaw

AWARDS

- Nomination in the 10th Geppert Competition, 2011
- Grand Prix of the Minister of Culture and National Heritage, 2010
- special prize awarded by BWA City Gallery in Bydgoszcz, 2010
- 1st place in A19 Competition organised by Pociągdo Sztuki Gallery, Warsaw, 2010

COLLECTIONS

- Museum of Contemporary Art,
The Fountain, 180×150cm, oil and acrylic on canvas, 2016
- National Museum in Gdańsk,
God's Lambs, 280 × 187cm, oil on canvas, 2009
- Warsaw Rising Museum,
Warsaw Rising '44, 155×200 cm, oil on canvas, prints, airbrush, 2014
- Museum of Art in Legnica,
A Chick, the Hope of Art, 157.5×233cm, oil on canvas, 2011

CATALOGS

- *Julia Curyło. Utopia Images*, Miejsce Sztuki 44, Świnoujście, 2018
- *Julia Curyło, painting and objects*, Miejsce Sztuki 44, Świnoujście, 2016
- *Wonderful Stories*, Zamek Gallery, Reszel, 2015
- *Hello, Modernity!*, City Gallery in Wrocław, 2013
- *Divine Element 8-14 TeV*, BWA Gallery, Bydgoszcz, 2013
- *H0 Element*, aTAK Gallery, Warsaw, 2012
- *Indulgences and Wonderful Visions*, Wozownia, Toruń, 2011
- *Magical Reality*, Art Gallery in Legnica, Legnica, 2011



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