

with the personal accounts of diverse witnesses, readers need a basic grasp of the siege of Königsberg's timeline and the military maneuvers in East Prussia to fully appreciate the text.

Warszawa

Izabela Paszko

**Bettina Bereś: Awangarda między kuchnią a łazienką.** Maria Pinińska-Bereś i Jerzy Bereś [Avant-garde between Kitchen and Bathroom. Maria Pinińska-Bereś and Jerzy Bereś]. Universitas. Kraków 2024. 375 S., Ill. ISBN 978-83-242-4030-2. (PLN 69,—)

The volume constitutes a vivid and insightful analysis of the lives and compositions of two outstanding figures in Polish contemporary art, Maria Pinińska-Bereś (1931–1999) and Jerzy Bereś (1930–2012). Written by their daughter, Bettina Bereś (1958–), the book's three chapters possess a distinctive character, combining methodical analysis with a uniquely intimate and personal narrative.

The first two chapters describe the author's multi-generational family history. Reaching back to the times of her great-grandparents and situated amidst a backdrop of fluctuating political and social conditions, the book presents a gallery of diverse and interesting characters who shaped the family. Maria Pinińska-Bereś's ancestors came from the Luxembourg bourgeoisie and the Polish nobility. The artist's mother, Lya Heinzel, decided to give up her studies in Switzerland and marry the soldier Piotr Piniński. The future artist grew up in a modernist villa in Poznań, isolated from her peers from lower socioeconomic backgrounds and surrounded by wealth. Life in this "ivory tower" was interrupted by the outbreak of World War II, which took away her father, murdered in Kharkiv, and the family, having lost their high status and wealth, had to adapt to the new reality. Jerzy Bereś, born in Nowy Sącz and the son of a railway worker who was a member of the Polish Socialist Party, was raised in a completely different environment.

Maria Pinińska and Jerzy Bereś came from different worlds, and their wedding was perceived as improper. Their life paths first crossed at the Academy of Fine Arts in Kraków, where they studied together at the Faculty of Sculpture from 1950 to 1956, under the supervision of the outstanding modernist artist Xawery Dunikowski, among others. The artists made their debut at the exhibition *Przeciw wojnie, przeciw faszyzmowi* [Against War, against Fascism], commonly known as the "Arsenał," held in Warsaw in 1955.

Going down in history as an open and independent statement against socialist realist art, the exhibition was considered a breakthrough in the Polish artistic world. The couple formed part of a new generation of artists emerging, who, instead of works characterized by realistic form and socialist content subordinated to party guidelines, produced forms of expression based on the deformation of form and vibrant imagery. The 2nd Kraków Group was reactivated in 1957 on the wave of change. Under the leadership of Tadeusz Kantor, it gathered artists who maintained contact between Polish art, which was developing behind the Iron Curtain, and Western European art. The Bereś duo became affiliated with the milieu and, like other members, absorbed the information that was coming in, which served as a source of inspiration for their creative endeavors. Throughout the changes occurring in contemporary art in the following decades, Bettina Bereś presents how the achievements of her parents were linked to their personal experiences and beliefs.

Maria Pinińska-Bereś is considered a pioneer of feminist art in Poland. Boldly questioning stereotypes about the role of women in a patriarchal society, she was known for experimenting with various methods of artistic expression. Creating forms that referred to the female body, she applied soft materials, often playing with refined eroticism, such as a sponge covered with fabric, pillows, and quilted fabrics. Jerzy Bereś, on the other hand, gained recognition thanks to his sculptures made of natural materials, mainly wood, and performance art, which he called "manifestations" or "masses", having the character of happenings and performances, which constituted a commentary on politics, religion, art and philosophy.

As the author had the advantage of intimately witnessing the entire creative process, the book constitutes an invaluable source of information, revealing the behind-the-scenes details of each work's creation. This allows readers to witness the emergence of fascinating artistic concepts, as exemplified by Pinińska-Bereś's introduction of the papier-mâché technique.

The author presents the relationship of Maria and Jerzy, both as artists and as people affected by the daily qualms and realities of communist Poland. Drawing on her childhood memories, the author discusses the hardships her parents had to overcome to receive a provision for an apartment in a block of flats, a telephone, or even to enroll their child in kindergarten. These personal stories are illustrated with photographs from private archives, depicting these characters as they navigated life, interwoven with documentation of artistic events. This gives a sense of tangibility to the publication.

What united the artists was a belief in the freedom and purity of art as well as a search for original means of expression that went beyond the conventions and fashions of their time. Nevertheless, it was easier for the man to develop his career in this duo. As the author often describes, guests visiting their house were mainly interested in her father's work; they wanted to meet Jerzy Bereś. During these visits, as the daughter bitterly notices, the mother was not perceived as an artist but rather as a mere housewife, brewing tea while preparing lunch or dinner. Pinińska-Bereś's works remained underappreciated for a long time. The artist died while preparing for her monographic exhibition. However, in recent years, her achievements have come to the fore, along with the development of research on feminist art and subsequent monographic exhibitions (the most recent ones in Wrocław 2024, Leipzig 2024/25 and The Hague 2025).

This book is a fascinating biography of two outstanding artists who developed their careers independently despite being married and working together in Communist Kraków. Although their styles and areas of interest remained a fascinating juxtaposition, their shared life and interconnecting art enriched their creative distinctiveness. By combining a research perspective with a personal one, this publication, which encourages reflection on the role of art and the relations between artists and the world around them, is a valuable work on contemporary art addressed to a broad audience

Toruń

Małgorzata Geron

**Regine Dehnel: *Übernommen, weiterverteilt, zerstreut.*** Die Zentralstelle für wissenschaftliche Altbestände und NS-Raubgut nach 1945. (Zeitschrift für Bibliothekswesen und Bibliographie, Sonderbd. 126.) Vittorio Klostermann. Frankfurt am Main 2024. 840, 180 S. ISBN 978-3-465-04633-2. (€ 219,-)

Die Zentralstelle für wissenschaftliche Altbestände und NS-Raubgut (ZwA) war ab 1953 für die Verteilung wissenschaftlicher Literatur auf dem Territorium der DDR zuständig, die als „herrenlos“ betrachtet wurde. Unter den von der ZwA bearbeiteten mehr als acht Millionen Bänden befanden sich auch während des Nationalsozialismus geraubte und entzogene Büchersammlungen, die im Zuge der Bodenreform ab 1945 enteignet, und Bücher, die in Zusammenhang mit sog. Republikflüchtigen zurückgelassen wurden. Der Band ist das Ergebnis eines an der Abteilung Historische Drucke der Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin angesiedelten und vom Deutschen Zentrum Kulturgutverluste mitfinanzierten Projekts. Ziel der Studie ist zum einen eine umfassende Untersuchung der Institution und ihre Verortung innerhalb des Bibliothekswesens der DDR sowie ihre Interaktion mit diversen Kultureinrichtungen und Bibliotheken. Zum anderen werden die Schicksale ausgewählter Bücher bzw. Sammlungen rekonstruiert, die nach 1953 von der ZwA bearbeitet wurden. Von zentraler Bedeutung ist für Regine Dehnel die Frage, in welchem Maße die Zentralstelle NS-Raubgut verteilte. Die Studie befasst sich vorrangig mit sog. sekundären NS-Raubgut oder NS-Raubgut aus zweiter Hand, das bereits vor 1945 den rechtmäßigen Eigentümern entzogen worden war, jedoch erst