[02:29.33] **DOMINICA TYLCZ**
Okay, well, welcome everyone. Thank you very much for joining us today for the first event of the Spring Speaker Series program. Today we have a conversation with our amazing guest, Joanna Warsza. My name is Dominica Tylcz. I'm a second year graduate student in the Center for Curatorial Studies, Bard College, and it will be my pleasure to moderate the talk today. And I'm honored to introduce Joanna Warsza, an independent, or should I say interdependent curator, writer and program director of CuratorLab at Konstfack University of Arts, in Stockholm, a fellow curatorial school in Sweden. Born in Warsaw, Poland, Joanna currently lives and works in Berlin. Joanna's projects inhabit spaces beyond the traditional white cube, exploring contemporary art's ability to partake in social and political processes. She was the artistic director of Public Art Munich in 2018, the curator of Public Program for Manifesta Ten in St. Petersburg, 2014, the curator of the Georgian Pavilion at the 55th Venice Biennale, 2013, and an associate curator of the 7th Berlin Biennale, 2012. In spring 2020, together with Övül Ö. Durmuşoğlu, she initiated "Die Balkone," a series of art events in windows and balconies of Prenzlauer Berg, which is a neighborhood in Berlin. Also with Övül, Joanna curated, the third and the fourth Autostrada Biennale in Kosovo.

[04:10.95]
Most recently, Joanna has been appointed as a co-curator of the Polish Pavilion at the 59th Venice Biennale, presenting the work of Romani-Polish artist Małgorzata Mirga-Tas. What I find particularly remarkable about Joanna's work is the ability to navigate nuance and complex social histories with an astounding sensitivity and insight. Working in the wake of service, imperialism, contemporary urban gentrification, the long crisis of colonialism and neoliberal capitalism, Joanna Warsza's cultural practice centers the experiences of dialogue, community and interdependence. Well, Joanna, welcome and thank you so much for being here with us today. Despite the time difference, I'm very glad that we have the chance to host a fellow Eastern European curator during this politically challenging and difficult time of the Russian aggression against Ukraine. I'd like to add that there will be time for questions after Joanna's presentation, so please feel free to drop your questions in the chat, or you're welcome to unmute yourself and

ask your question directly when the time comes after the presentation. So without further ado, I'll pass it to you. Joanna, I know you have a PowerPoint presentation to share with us, so let's do that.

[05:36.57] **JOANNA WARSZA**
Thank you, Dominica and Lauren and Casey and everyone at CCS Bard, where I actually had a pleasure to speak back in 2013. And it's a good sign to myself, I have to say, that when you're invited almost ten years later. It means maybe you have something to add. But actually, apart from this, I want to say that as many of us, of course it feels strange to do business as usual and to do a presentation in those times of distress and those times of conflict and war. And you spoke Dominica about Soviet imperialism, and exactly, we are living it, and very much living it here in Eastern Europe, in Berlin and Poland. The border is between Ukraine and Poland. And actually, I have to say I see that Alevtina Kakhidze, who is an amazing Ukrainian artist, and I will also mention her in my presentation, she's also with us, and maybe we can later use this occasion also to ask you, Alevtina, how is it in Kiev? And to talk to you directly. I think it would be wonderful if it's possible.

[06:52.41]
It's true, I have a PowerPoint but I will do my best not just to enumerate projects. Of course we have to exchange art. It's a language that we want to exchange with each other. But rather than exchanging just projects, I would rather maybe share few notions that have been recurring in my interest and in work and in a certain obsessiveness. So I thought, okay, let's look at this obsession and try to unpack it somehow. So let me share my screen. You can see it, right?

[07:37.96]
2 March 2022. Actually the annexation of Crimea started 1 March 2014, which was the first aggression of Russia on Ukraine. And in a way, when you ask some colleagues from Ukraine about the war, of course now the situation is much more dramatic. However, they would sometimes tell you that the war started then and it has been ongoing in

some sense. So now it's an escalation of the conflict that was somehow dormant and ongoing. And back then, in 2014, I was actually in Russia together with Alevtina and Kristina Norman, Ukrainian and Russian artists, and with the program we were doing, with the public program for Manifesto Ten, we had a dilemma which today, we would not have a dilemma of what to do because there is no place for art in these circumstances. But back then the dilemma was to whether to engage or disengage. And we decided to address the annexation of Crimea. So in some way, to continue, but not to continue undisturbed. To change the program in relation to the political events.

[08:51.19]
And in my presentation, since I have 45 minutes, I thought of like a grammar of sorts. So to present you some notions, some ideas based also on some writing and some projects and take approximately 15 minutes per each of them. And first of them is maybe something interesting in these terrible times, which is how does the discourse of the colonization actually function in Eastern Europe? That's the first horizon I want to share.

[09:27.00]
I recently wrote this essay.You can see on the right side this is from MoMA website. It was just published a month ago. "Eastern European Coloniality Without Colonies." So I will just read you a small part of it. But, basically it's an essay which tries to look how the notions which we know rather from the Western theory of colonization, the colonial practices, post-colonial practices— what does it mean, for example, in Soviet context, in a Central European context, in relation to the countries that don't have a colonial past as we understand it, with overseas slavery, but for example, serfdom and attachment to the land, which is another form, and how does the relation between West Europe and East Europe play out?

[10:19.09]
And I guess in the current conflict we can also think of those categories somehow. And I started this essay with a short observation of a Zoom call. I'll just read it shortly. "In endless

Zoom calls" —like the one we are in now— "One has to navigate the time zones. Setting your meeting to Central European time, you see many cities listed." You see like here, well here is is Helsinki, but usually Amsterdam, Stockholm, Rome but you never see Tirana or Warsaw, which are part of the Eastern bloc. So in a sense, Zoom is programmed through the Western focus, even if the time is Central European time. So you can already see that if somebody sits in Silicon Valley the chances are they only see Western Europe when they speak of Europe, and not really the whole of Europe. "So it's not only the giants in Silicon Valley who see Europe who see Europe through a Western prism but also many critical thinkers. What is the place of Eastern Europe in postcolonial and decolonial debates and in the larger colonial project? How to tackle this region that has been both oppressed, having endured centuries of serfdom, and an oppressor, aspiring to join the West in the colonization of Africa—and that today often cites postcolonial theory in its nationalist agenda?"

[11:44.47]
In a way, in some of these places you can observe what Ekaterina Degot calls "perverse decolonization." So, how the discourse of the colonization has been perverted. It is the case in Hungary, or right wing Hungary, right wing Poland. You read post colonial theory but actually the conclusion of it is not emancipation, it's not internationalism, but it's some kind of a perverse nationalistic rhetoric.

[12:19.17]
"Eastern Europe's historical and symbolic position as part of Europe but not exactly, and its relative absence in discourse equating Europe with Western Europe, complicates the asymmetry of the so-called Global North and Global South, to which some propose adding the Global East. As much as Europe's violent colonial mindset has been shared and embodied across the whole continent, its colonial past has not—because the fundamentals of it were first exercised locally, mostly in its semi-peripheral Eastern and Southern parts, which submitted to Western exploitation, and then perpetuated further. Thus Eastern Europe shares the condition of being complicit in the system of imperialism and colonization, while at the same time serving as a first training ground for its

implementation; in effect, it has been both racializing and racialized."

[13:16.44]
"The European critical spectrum calls for more in-depth analysis of a vernacular experience of the post-communist and post-socialist legacy across the eastern part of the continent, including, for example, the participation of ex-Yugoslav countries in the Non-Aligned Movement, the inner relations between the older and newer countries, such as the countries of former Soviet Union, and the long and complex coexistence with the Jewish and Roma populations."

[13:35.26]
So this is a map from 1918, and you can see the serfdom as it persisted in Eastern Europe. While West Europe had turned to mostly practicing colonization and slavery, the serfdom was a form of attachment to the land, and also in some sense, can be a comparable system of exploitation.

[13:59.97]
And there is one work, just as a footnote worth mentioning, that really interestingly describes this, and it's also connected with the conflict provoked by Russia, namely a war in Abkhazia, which is part of Georgia. Still one of these frozen zones on conflict. And, some of you might be familiar with the very popular fashion brands, top fashion brands, luxury brands called Vetements, or Balenciaga. Those brands have been founded by people who grew up in Abkhazia, in those conflicts, and by necessity and by the war necessity, they had to, for example, wear a jacket for five seasons because you cannot have a jacket every half a year. So you would grow into a jacket. So the jacket would be really enormous, really huge. And same with second hand items from Western Europe, such as DHL T- shirts that famously later, a couple of years ago, started to be an enormous hype in Western Europe, I guess in the US too.

[15:11.91]
In this piece that I'm showing a picture of, which is "Mission Accomplished," lecture

performance of Hito Steyerl, Milos Trakilović and Giorgio Gago Gagoshidze, from Georgia, you can see a really interesting analysis of some kind of perversion, of how Western Europe has appropriated this fashion of poverty from Eastern Europe and then gave it back to Eastern Europe. Because in Eastern Europe, of course, people do wear Balenciaga, or sell Balenciaga. The fashion is actually similar. But how it is rooted in this conflict, and then how for certain people it's just simply impossible to wear, because it brings these memories of the war and a permanent conflict and poverty. While in Soho House and other places in Berlin, this is exactly what you almost exclusively see, these kind of items. So that's one of the nuanced pieces I would recommend to look at this East and West Europe tension, that in this case exists in culture, memes and fashion. But this is again just an introduction to what I really wanted to mention, and what I wanted to mention is a project of Kristina Norman, who is an Estonian-Russian artist. And Estonia, as you know, is also one of the former republics of the Soviet Union, that gained independence post 89.

[16:38.43]
And back then, in St.Petersburg, together in collaboration with Alevtina Kakhidze, she came up with a very powerful, I find, project that maybe diagnoses something which we are now living in the news right now. This is the map of the public program. I will jump over it. Basically, what Kristina brought forward, is the revolution, the democratic revolution that Ukraine went through in the end of 2013, beginning 2014. So just before the annexation of Crimea, that was part of the chain of the events, Ukrainians took to the streets, and to the main square in the city of Kiev to stage a democratic revolution which was called Euromaidan, so pro-European revolution, and tried to — and successfully actually overthrow the corrupted pro-Russian government. This revolution was provoked by the fact that the Ukrainian government didn't agree to sign a collaboration with the European Union. It was not like yesterday, when we saw the demand to accession. It was too early for this. Now we have a feeling history is accelerating, but it was a sign of a government refusing to go in the line of approachment with EU. And that was somehow too much, a step too much, and this started first peaceful and then not only peaceful, pro-European revolution.

[18:20.70]
It's important maybe to remember about those events today, that it already cost the inhabitants of Ukraine and Kiev especially, so much. So when we were in St. Petersburg that was very much also in our mind. And one of the amazing one can say, what Elzbieta Matynia, a Polish sociologist based in New York, would call instances of "performative democracy" was this Christmas tree. So this is a Christmas tree that was in Maidan. The revolution started end of November, and the end of November was the time to put up a Christmas tree, the biggest Christmas tree in the city, in the country, and start to prepare it for the holiday season. But as you see, it has never been decorated.

[19:08.77]
I mean, it was decorated, but by something else. It was taken over by the protesters and it started to be shared as a kind of surface for these proto democratic messages. So this unfinished Christmas tree became one of the symbols of performative democracy, of the moment where the democracy of the system reinvents itself, and needs this kind of culture, meaningful symbols. So this was one of the images that was back then in the news.

[19:51.54]
And Alevtina was also telling about how democracies has been shared by different messages, so there was also this collective, like in Occupy movements, perhaps, kind of a sharing of the space of publicity, in a sense of publicizing some kind of a political message. And then, working in St. Petersburg, Kristina came up with this absolutely stunning, and yet evident parallel. She looked at how the Winter Palace, and the Hermitage in St. Petersburg main palace square looks like. And then she looked also at the Maidan Nezalezhnosti, the independence square in Kiev. And as you can see, there are parallels, architectural parallels, spatial parallels, the columns, the museums, the open squares. And the Winter Palace also has a Christmas tree in winter. But what Kristina proposed was actually to bring, in the middle of the summer, in July, an

unfinished Christmas tree in front of the Winter Palace, as a way of semiotic and symbolic overlapping of these two places, and potential revolutions. Because Palace Square is also a square where October Revolution started, for example, and the 1905 Revolution, and other important revolutions in history of Russia. And yet back in 2014 and today, I think we are in the moment where for Russian discourse, for putting his discourse, revolution is finished forever. So there is not a possibility of any revolution or dissent.

[21:39.19]
Revolution is something that was in the past, and can be put in forms of monuments, but not lived, not turned into this performative democratic opposition. So to bring this tree, was this kind of gesture, to bring a piece of Maidan to a square that has seen so many revolutions, and yet where the revolution is kind of petrified and impossible. And, obviously, it was a very subversive gesture too, because the discourse around this only appears later. You cannot tell from the beginning what you have in mind as an intention. And yet it's a place which you can make sure this makes it to the whole news. And it cannot be invisible, in some sense. It becomes, like in Maidan, a Christmas tree, only in December. In other moments of time, it stands for something else. And in this sense, here, it's built for the solidarity and coexistence between Russia and Ukraine. And also as a part of this artwork, this is the inauguration, this is the original tree, and this is also the tree. There was also this plane catastrophe. The plane was shot in 2014. So this is like a tribute to the plane.

[23:11.97]
Today we don't have time, but I'm very happy to share a link with you. The second part of this piece of Kristina was a film she made with Alevtina, featuring Alevtina. So Alevtina is an artist, an activist, who was very much active in Euromaidan in Kiev. And here she walks in the empty Palace Square as if it was Maidan. So she puts a mental map of what was by the column, what was by the museum. Because when you give directions, it's the same buildings, more or less. And how those topographies meet, in maybe an architectural sense, and how they don't meet in a political sense. And also

she speaks Russian. Her first language is Russian. She grew up in Donetsk, and also it's more subconscious in the film, what does this kind of identity mean, when you're Ukrainian, and yet your culture reference is Russian culture, and this is something also hard maybe to understand from outside, but very much one of the idiosyncrasies of this Eastern European identity. So maybe just a short quote from Kristina. "The aim was to try to break the dominant patterns about Maidan created in the propaganda war." Because in Russia, back then, the message was, like today, you cannot say the word "war." It's forbidden, as of yesterday.

[24:48.19]
Back then, Maidan was only presented as an uncontrolled uprising that is disrupting the country, and this narrative discourse continues. "The Russian propaganda machine depicts the Maidan events as the cause of the civil war in Ukraine." They were calling this civil war. "No one talks about the social issues behind Maidan. In my work, I used the idea of overlapping the photographies of two cities, by creating visual analogies, by adding a missing element"— Christmas tree— "I construct an imaginary of Maidan in the palace square. The work is made up of two parts a sculpture titled 'Souvenir,' and a video titled 'Iron Arch,' that provides the context. 'Souvenir' is a typical metal Christmas tree used by the city of St. Petersburg, and functions as a reference to the 45 meters structure set up by the city of Kiev in Maidan Square in November last year, that still stands there. And it's mid August right now. The story of the Christmas tree turned out to be quite revolutionary. It was appropriated by the protesters and [inaudible 00:25:54] with political posters, slogans and flags. The Christmas decorations from the tree were used to build the first barricade on Maidan. The video 'Iron Arch' features the artist Alevtina Kakhidze, from Kiev, who takes the viewer on a tour of Maidan while physically being in the palace square. And her memories of Kiev to visually similar objects on the square in St. Petersburg. The title 'Iron Arch' refers to the arch shaped monument near Maidan, built in 1982, to symbolize the friendship between the people of Russia and Ukraine. The equivalent of the arch of friendship of the palace square is a triumphal arch that glorifies only the victorious Russian army. The current political situation has stripped the moment of friendship between the two nations of its meaning, leaving only

a physical form devoid."

[26:55.55]
That was an encounter, an attempt. And as I said at the beginning, we are in different situations today. This language of art would be exhausted. I mean, there is no place making artwork. Yet of course, in order to demilitarize our minds, demilitarize ourselves, of course we have to believe in the force of art. So that's why I share it with you, and show it to you, because it was an attempt of diagnosing what is in the air, and what has been in the air. Because clearly in those years in between, it has been cooking in some sense, right? And it has led to what we see now, and to the conflict we see now. So that's the end of my first chapter and those questions around decolonizing Eastern Europe and understanding, trying to understand, what Soviet imperialism, and both imperialism and modernism, has played out and still is at play in this part of Europe. I don't know if this is a good moment, but maybe Alevtina could actually share something with us now, since she's here, if she wants.

[28:12.99] **ALEVTINA KAKHIDZE**
Hello, can you hear me?

[28:15.99] **JOANNA WARSZA**
Yes.

[28:20.95] **ALEVTINA KAKHIDZE**
So I think it's very important to talk about Maidan in relation to everything that we are having in Ukraine at the moment. Of course, we haven't got war just now. It started in 2014, on April 13, but now, of course, this whole country is attacked. But since I was living with many thoughts about war and the whole world, I think it's absolutely fine to talk about art. Because if we don't believe in art, we don't believe in culture. People can just imagine their life without many, many centuries living with wars. I don't know, it's a hard question. I was thinking about this for eight years. Is it possible that we just imagine something, this kind of [inaudible 00:29:37] which Immanuel Kant wrote, in 18th

century, if we can imagine sustainable peace, if it's just possible, we can think about this. If we don't think about this, it doesn't matter. If we somehow resist war, and then in 70 years another war would start. I don't know. I think that people, or a human, it is so stark to experience. Not that you can read in books. I think we also should somehow invent how we can share experiences. Sometimes it's just not possible to share experiences. When I just read that some people, even in the West, they call it heroic that some Russian artists decided not to be exhibited at Venice. For me, it's really like a joke, talking about this. I understand for these certain people to refuse to take part in an exhibition, of course this is a sacrifice. But for me, it's really like not possible for many of Ukrainians just to keep all lives alive. But it's also, again about communication. Since I have decided to be in Ukraine, not to leave Ukraine, I also understood to talk about [inaudible 00:31:17] society, I mean, old Europe or old West. I received plenty of suggestions just to leave the country and come. People didn't ask me what I wanted, they just sent me a message— "Alevtina, please come to my room. It's really very nice." And I was pleased and thankful. But on the other hand, it's unfair because the whole country cannot leave, and my friends cannot host people who don't speak English, or my neighbors who don't have the experience I have. I speak english I have studied in the West.

[32:04.39]
But to do with the rest of people in Ukraine— all these suggestions for me to leave, it's so much of a tactical way of thinking about the problem. Not strategical. I just attempt to be for me in my house. Joanna, you know. How my house is beautiful. How my studio is beautiful. And this is the thing this again about communication. This is your lecture about the canonization. Not to come to me, and ask me as a knowledgeable person, since we already have this such a hard situation for eight years. It doesn't mean that I didn't become wisdom. I didn't become experienced. I didn't become thinking so many times about values. What I do have already and what I like to lose somehow, what is really some red marks for me. But of course I tried to be very polite, but also very honest with you, that, for me, it's like just trying to keep an even polite voice, not just to be kind of crazy and emotional, because what I was thinking was missed trying to think

what we can do together. Politicians, they actually mostly react that they do give a [inaudible 00:33:55] . It works, really because so many people in Ukraine really have this wish to resist and take weapons, and my husband also is checking our village each night with the hunting gun and this hunting gun appeared in our bedroom in April 2014.

[34:21.80]
So it's not really shocking. I'm sorry. Maybe I'm talking so much. I'd just like to say that I have this vision that it could be a real platform. I don't know when, I hope later, that we can talk how the table piece could be done as a vision. Or maybe or we should just accept that humans are monsters. That we can't live without war. They can't live without producing weapons. They can't live without using violence. Using opportunity to use pole position maybe the edges are not like plants. Just plants cannot run if there is some danger. They just rebuild themselves in a way that if you cut piece of salad, salad doesn't die. It's not like to cut head or half of body. So maybe we have to look at plants we are absolutely different than animals and human people, say. Just trying to be very honest with ourselves. I think and Ukraine is probably like an amazing position to be very, very close to all this Western civilization, with all philosophy, and we had read the same books as you, Joanna and the other people who are here. You can see [inaudible 00:36:17]

[36:17.75]
But from the other hand so in Ukraine we checked many concepts which are like very theoretical concepts theory, just theory. I mean as Ukrainians we paid such a high price in order to become people. This [inaudible 00:36:46] position. We really do know so much. We are living in such a hard situation for eight years, and having knowledge about conflicts and war. And, I just also must say that, it's not only one war that we have in Ukraine. Between Ukraine and Russia we have so many wars involved. Just because we are very close to the West. This is the difference.

[37:21.09] **DOMINICA TYLCZ**
Thank you so much, Alevtina, for speaking up. We really appreciate that and your

words are very, very powerful and appreciated. Thank you.

[37:33.91] **JOANNA WARSZA**
Thank you so much, Alevtina. Yes, I mean, it's strange to continue, but maybe I will jump over one project and try to give some hope, and to show something we keep working on now, which is the preparation of the Polish Pavilion in the Venice Biennial. It deals with some of the topics we discussed. Let me share this screen.

[38:20.19]
So the keywords here would be interdependence and nonviolence. And it is a Pavilion. Despite the right wing turn in Poland, although in the last days everything is changing. The country, all of a sudden, it's not as divided as it used to be. So, I don't know, maybe we will actually go into another. There is maybe some it's a high price, as you say, Alevtina, but maybe there is a change that we see also happening in terms of this division between the polarization of the right and the left and the center. But this is a project by a Roma Polish artist Małgorzata Mirga-Tas, who is an amazing, not only artist, but also a human being and activist, very much working and with turning the tide of stigmatization of Roma people in Europe.

[39:22.65]
And for some of you might know, this is the largest European minority in the European population. There are 12 million Roma people who inhabit mostly Eastern Europe, but also Western Europe. They have came from India in the 14th century. They have been very fast, the most racialized group, and many of them still live outside of the norms of the regular society. For many centuries they have been a nomadic population. It is not a nomadism that was fetishized by Pushkin or others, as a way of living a bohemian lifestyle. It has been forced upon them. Basically, in many countries, the law was that you can only stay in one place two weeks or more. So the nomadism has become like a condition of the permanent exile and escape. And Małgorzata Mirga-Tas lives in Southern Poland. This is some of her works. I will also read short fragments of an essay wrote for the catalog to present her work. So as you can see, it's kind of patchworks or

patterns.

[40:35.17]
'"You don't always need to present yourself as being a Roma artist,' an organizer of a large exhibition once remarked to Małgorzata Mirga-Tas. Indeed, she does not need to, however expressively chooses to. Why? Amid this fact, if her artwork sensibilities artistic and activist practices are clearly grounded in that culture and refer especially to Roma women. Her art is social and politically embedded, most importantly created from within a community that is otherwise tokenized and stigmatized. It is paraphrasing her way and her very popular nowadays, yet only recently truly applied concept of situated knowledges. A Roma situated art. This apparently innocent curatorial comment begs a plethora of important questions relevant to our times. Who has the right to speak for whom? How can the mechanism of exclusion and discrimination be dismantled? What is the place of Native art within the canon of contemporary art? What does minority feminism in traditional community look like? Can there be reciprocal [inaudible 00:41:37] and interdependency? And if so, how can the majority learn from the minority? Finally, can working on identity, especially one rooted in the experience of injustice, be an affirmative and emancipatory strategy rather than a reductionist and isolating one? And how?"

[41:54.24]
What you can see here also in those patchworks is the method she's using. She says she's throwing a fabric into the painting. So she would use pieces of fabrics very often. Also very ecological. And it's not ecology made for ideology. It's an ecology rooted also in the vernacular culture she's coming from. Very often used clothes. So if she represents here, for example, her mother, or her sister, she will use the pieces of the skirt of the mother or a sister, or an earring, or a bracelet that she would also throw into the painting. And that's also a method for her, of how to build certain intimacy, how to become close with an artwork. So how can you build an intimacy with an artwork? And obviously it's only for her family in some sense, but still her family also has another approach to [inaudible 00:42:45] through this kind of building of intimacy and proximity.

[42:50.23]
Those are examples of the artworks. This is her outside her village on the right side, and me and Wojciech Szymański, who is an art historian from Krakow, who is a copywriter. And it's interesting also in terms of we are now among curators here. She has put us together. So we didn't know each other, we didn't work before, and obviously it feels strange when you have to work together on something. But I also realized there is so much power and asymmetry in the relation between curators and artists, it's usually the curator who has a say, and you might work with a friend or fellow curator, but it's rare that an artist tells you maybe you would make a good fit. And yeah, we are not best friends, but we are patchwork curators. We really bring completely different things to this mixture, and it's artist initiated. And that's really interesting in this relationship.

[43:38.71]
So the starting point of our Pavilion is this palazzo. It's a Zodiac palazzo. It's called Palazzo Schifanoia in Ferrara. Some people call it a walk-in Zodiac. So basically what you see here, it's twelve panels for twelve months, only seven of them are preserved. And this palato is a very important place for Aby Warburg, for the German Jewish historian. Aby Warburg, one of the crucial art historians, who, in this palazzo coined, term, "iconology." So how do you put images in context? How do you see them in the long migration? Those images here, many of them were not detected. So only when he started to study it in 1912, exactly 100 years ago, he would be the one who suddenly saw the influences of India, the Arab world, Persia, and detected how those images have traveled through different cultures. So as I quote him, "by extending the investigation to the East, I shall show the Zodiac sign's figures to be survivals of the astral images of the Greek [inaudible 00:44:49] .They are in fact symbols for the fixed stars. Although, over the centuries, in the wanderings through Asia Minor, Egypt, Mesopotamia, Arabia and Spain, they have lost the gracious clarity of outline."

[45:03.07]
And obviously Roma culture, even if it was a migratory culture stemming from India, like

many of these images, have not been mentioned by Warburg, even if his scope of research was very wide. So what we are trying to do is to recreate— we are inspired by this palazzo, and Małgorzata is recreating a textile version of that palazzo, a contemporary version, where omitted Roma culture is inscribed within European culture. I will show you, for example, one of the panels. This is month of March, because this is where Aries as a sign is starting, so soon, end of March. And this month is divided into three panels. The upper panel is Greek mythology. So here, in this case, it's Minerva with connected with April and March. In the middle belt, those undetected figures that Warburg was working on. In the lower belt, typical ego driven self-representation of the court, of the Renaissance court by the Duke of Warsaw, back then.

[46:23.71]
And this is our starting point. This is our studio in Zakopane, in southern Poland, where she lives in a former Hotel Imperial. Ironically. So I will just read you a little bit about this Hotel Imperial where we are working. "Hotel Imperial torn apart. For the preparations of the installation, we needed kilograms of fabric. This time they not only came from the wardrobes of the closed ones, but predominantly from the secondhand shops around the Zakopane and [inaudible 00:46:53] . Heaps of used clothes, shipped mostly from Western Europe and originating in Bangladesh, India and China, have been piling up on the floor of our temporary studio. It is located in the spatial dining hall of a historical and closed for renovation hotel in Zakopan, called Hotel Imperial. From those oceans of fabric, Mirga-Tas had cut fragments, and picked up patterns matching the unmatchable. She would then apply and sew them on the sketches made first on the untreated canvas, stitching odd parts into highly unlikely encounters. Over the time those bits and pieces formed into striking armatures of textile frescoes, representing twelve months of the year, each cut into three belts. The needle work is one of the basic techniques in artist's work."

[47:42.66]
"The needle with its magic power as Louis Bourgeois headed, is used to repair the damage. It's a claim to forgiveness. It's also a restorative tool used to repair guilt, hate,

abandonment, hostility, destruction of one's work, self inflicted damage. It's never aggressive, it's not a pain. The artist's needlework performs both the literal rehabilitation and recovery of those tons of garments, as well as the symbolic repair of the relationship between marginalized Roma people, with the fabric of the European society. Often it doesn't fit and it doesn't have to. Stitches remain visible."

[48:22.27]
So that's also the artist. And she works with four seamstresses, I think you'll say in English, on this installation, which is actually not so many people. It's really hard and super elaborate, as you can imagine, work at the moment. And just maybe to introduce how we are working on it, that's one of the months. Actually this is the month I showed you before. This is March. So again there are three belts. It's very much the Palazzo. It's picture palace, we call it. But what is exchanged here is that the upper belt is a voyage of what one could say, from appropriation to cultural appreciation because she's using one of the earliest representation of Roma culture in art history, which are, as you can guess, derogatory.

[49:23.75]
And she is making their own version of those scenes depicted. So she's using this source material and makes her own version in the middle belt, these mysterious characters have been replaced by affective archive of her stories. So different women that she's representing. I will just read it short from me. "In the recent years, Mirga-Tas has created many artworks about important women in her life, creating an affective archive of the Roma herstory. The middle band of the pavilion is a narrow turquoise blue velvet stripe where the re-enchantment occurs with the help of feminine power, astrology and the symbol of tarot cards. The female [inaudible 00:50:04] consists of portraits of Roma woman who have inspired Mirga-Tas in her life and work. The new Zodiac and stars include artist [inaudible 00:50:12] activist Nicoleta Bitu, scholar Ethel Brooks, actually American, not Roma— US American. Singer Esma, Holocaust survivor and activist Krystyna Gil, community organizer [inaudible 00:50:24], curator Tímea Junghaus, musician [inaudible 00:50:28], Małgorzata's mother [inaudible 00:50:30] and

Grandmother [inaudible 00:50:31], poet Teresa Mirga, politician [inaudible 00:50:33], silversmith and actress Rosa Taikon, and her sister and writer Katarina Taikon, among others."

[50:44.07] **DOMINICA TYLCZ**
Let me interject, because I want to save some time for questions and those two projects that you talked about are very powerful, and I think they do connect very beautifully, in the sense of talking about how common experience and creating points of encounter can be seen as not only artistic methodologies, but also tools for social healing and recovery. So if there's something that you would like to quickly add, and maybe we can move to questions, that would be great.

[51:25.530] **JOANNA WARSZA**
Yeah, just maybe those two notions I mentioned. So one of them is feminist minority, which is important, I guess, for us, for this nonviolent struggles and a change. That feminist minority is a notion of Ethel Brooks, of the Roma US scholar who is speaking about how a feminism from within communities can change men and women, and all involved. And this is very much present in this.

[51:52.45]
And the second is this metaphor of interdependence. Obviously it's drawn from Judith Butler's book— how we are born into the condition of radical dependency. And yet patriarchal culture made us believe that we are independent while actually we are [inaudible 00:52:10] and how if we start to think about ourselves in the interdependent manner, we could potentially think differently about the whole paradigm of how life is constructed. Right? So that's very much present, also in the materiality of this work, because all these things that fit and don't fit together. When I was writing the text, I also understood how many metaphors in the language come from the textile manner, the patchwork family, the thread of life, the threat of detachment, the web of life. I mean, you name it. There's so much vocabulary in how this is woven together, how it's put together, and it's very, very much present in her work. So in these sorrow times, some

kind of horizon of building affirmative structures, and building some kind of another worldview that art might perhaps enable, at least a little bit.

[53:07.05] **DOMINICA TYLCZ**
Yeah. Thank you so much. That was beautiful. I think you sort of responded to what I wanted to ask you. So maybe I will just open the conversation, and I encourage everyone to unmute themselves, or maybe drop their questions in the chat. Whatever feels comfortable for you. Yes, thank you.

[53:37.09]
Question and answer session not transcribed.