

BOGDAN KONOPKA

Strains of Light

FEBRUARY 18 TO APRIL 30, 2022

OPENING ON FEBRUARY 17 FROM 6 TO 9 PM



© Bogdan Konopka / Courtesy Les Douches la Galerie, Paris

For its first solo exhibition of Bogdan Konopka's work, Les Douches la Galerie presents a selection of photographs that reflect both his signature subjects and his masterful use of the medium. Taken between 1993 and 2017, these images evoke the power of nature and the movement of water, as well as the effects of time on deserted places. Shot with a view camera and then contact printed, his photographs are revealed in small format and in delicate shades of gray. Since 2021, Les Douches la Galerie has represented the work of Bogdan Konopka, in continuity and in full agreement with the Françoise Paviot Gallery, which has defended his work for over twenty years.

Les Douches la Galerie

5, rue Legouvé 75010 Paris

01 78 94 03 00 | lesdoucheslagalerie.com

The many lives of Bogdan Konopka

PRESS RELEASE

In the city of Wrocław, in Poland, where Bogdan Konopka (1953-2019) was born, you cannot escape History. Seventy percent of the city was destroyed, a city which at first belonged to the kingdom of Poland, before becoming a part of the Duchy of Silesia, then of Bohemia. It was under Habsburg administration then became Prussian and then Polish once again.

As a child, from the window of his apartment, Konopka saw the Nazi architecture of the Gestapo's erstwhile headquarters that had become the seat of the Communist Party. On his way to school, he would brush against the Prussian walls. Even then he felt 'the weight of History, written by the alliances of which he is a victim, not a citizen'.

Later on, he would be saddened to see that his native country was 'an immeasurable charnel house, its lands a vast burial mound, fertilised by the blood and bodies of warriors, soldiers and innocent victims'.

Bogdan Konopka has lived several lives: a student in photo-chemistry, director of the photo lab at a polytechnic, lock keeper on the Oder canal, member of an underground conceptual movement... He also joined Solidarity against Poland's authoritarian communism, which he fought through performances. He describes the tanks in the streets, the curfews, his own arrest and internment in the army as a 'purge to digest reality'.

In 1988, he fell in love with Jacqueline and followed her to France where they settled down, first in Angers, then in Paris, which welcomed him to the Cité Internationale des Arts, on the banks of the Seine, and later on Montmartre, before eventually affording him an artist's studio in Montparnasse. Before being championed by Françoise Morin, at Douches la Galerie, his work was shown and supported by Françoise Paviot for twenty-five years.

SMALL CONTACT PRINTS TO SAVOUR UP CLOSE.

Never far from his home country where he taught, exhibited and spent several months each year, he developed a stylistic unity magnified by technical know-how in the dark room that allowed him to be completely free in his creations. Going against the grain of trends, he favoured the small black and white analogue format with velvety greys that smack of timelessness, and that can only be appreciated up close. These prints by Konopka bring to mind 'a couple making love, because there is no air between the negative and the paper'.

He has thought and written a great deal about his passion, which is to reveal light. And in order to do that, he must tame the half-light and translate it onto a print. Isn't darkness, which erases all contrasts, which requires the greatest subtlety between what is still discernible and what is disappearing, the inseparable companion of light?

In his search for unity between physical and mental space, water – from a mountain spring to the great blue Danube – also becomes the source of inspiration. A means, perhaps, of 'demonstrating the illusion of ordinary visual perception, of imagining other perspectives'. Water is so exuberant, so alive that he addresses it many times, giving back to a river the shots it allowed him to make. Then, with a large format camera on the banks of a Swiss river, he produces a contact print, which makes for timeless images.

He knew it takes courage and honesty to stare truth in the face when you dive into the darkest recesses of your soul. He said, 'Seeing more than what is on display, entering a sort of trance where your gaze pierces the surface of things, is accomplished over time, without a flash, and causes suffering'.

He knew there are 'ways of photographing that allow one to go beyond the glance and the hunt for lightning. It's enough, for example, to screw the camera to a tripod, to look carefully, to wait, not to give up. If there is something we identify with, or that touches or moves us in what we are looking at, we can then be certain that we have a chance to take an interesting photo', he said.

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AS THE TARKOVSKY QUARTET PLAYS

Bogdan is everywhere. In the post-Shoah void and silence, he gets lost on the barely-visible paths of his country, searching for forgotten cemeteries, Jewish graves where, despite everything, there are still tangible traces of the presence of the absent.

Another day, he's by the Gap, on the banks of a river, another time in the old mines of the Nord Pas-de-Calais,

by his diaspora. He is in a forest, at the root of the Loire, or climbing the steps of Notre Dame. He photographs Paris, its Grand Palais, the lowered blinds of its shop windows and displays, the Grands Moulins, la Halle wheat exchange, the Centre National de la Danse de Pantin, l'Odéon, but also Pingyao, Shanghai, in China, the Beijing opera under construction. In each city he captures 'the heritage of nothing', landscapes elsewhere, but also humans and automobiles. He taught at the Vevey photo school, wrote for a newspaper, did editing, made a book.

In his home country nowadays he's pictured lighted by the red light of his lab, in the process of making prints, each of which contains 'the shadow of its creator and of his time', in the process of experimenting, to the strains of Couperin's Tenebrae Readings, which lasts exactly the time necessary to develop a negative.

His volumes of Cioran, Bachelard, Michaux, Bouvier, Perec, translated into Polish, wait for him on their shelves, like prints of his colleagues and friends, his guitar, pickled mushrooms brought back from the Polish forest, good Swiss tomme that Jacqueline brought back, all while the Tarkovsky Quartet plays on and on endlessly in his studio...

Magali Jauffret

Art critic

Strains of Light

IMAGES

Bogdan Konopka

Carleton sur mer, 22.09.2014

Contact print on Foma matte baryta paper,
printed by the artist

Signed by the artist, titled, dated and artist's
copyright on verso

Print size: 7 7/8 x 6 1/4 inches

© Bogdan Konopka / Courtesy Les Douches la
Galerie, Paris

N° Inv. BK2104076



Bogdan Konopka

Grande Vallée, Gaspésie, Québec, 28.09.2014

Contact print on Foma matte baryta paper,
printed by the artist

Signed by the artist, titled, dated and artist's
copyright on verso

Print size: 7 7/8 x 6 1/4 inches

© Bogdan Konopka / Courtesy Les Douches la
Galerie, Paris

N° Inv. BK2104059



Bogdan Konopka

Manche d'Épée, Canada, 27.09.2014

Contact print on Foma matte baryta paper,
printed by the artist

Signed by the artist, titled, dated and artist's
copyright on verso

Print size: 7 7/8 x 6 1/4 inches

© Bogdan Konopka / Courtesy Les Douches la
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N° Inv. BK2104066



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Strains of Light

IMAGES

Bogdan Konopka

Paris, 16 rue de Vaugirard, 13.03.2016

Contact print on Foma matte baryta paper,
printed by the artist

Signed by the artist, titled, dated and artist's
copyright on verso

Print size: 7 7/8 x 6 1/4 inches

© Bogdan Konopka / Courtesy Les Douches la
Galerie, Paris

N° Inv. BK2104054



Bogdan Konopka

Percé, Gaspésie, Québec, 29.09.2014

Contact print on Foma matte baryta paper,
printed by the artist

Signed by the artist, titled, dated and artist's
copyright on verso

Print size: 7 7/8 x 6 1/4 inches

© Bogdan Konopka / Courtesy Les Douches la
Galerie, Paris

N° Inv. BK2104049



Bogdan Konopka

Polska, 02.06.2011

Contact print on Foma matte baryta paper,
printed by the artist

Signed by the artist, titled, dated and artist's
copyright on verso

Print size: 7 7/8 x 6 1/4 inches

© Bogdan Konopka / Courtesy Les Douches la
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N° Inv. BK2104003



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IMAGES

Bogdan Konopka

Riau du Gros Mont, Suisse, 07.06.1993

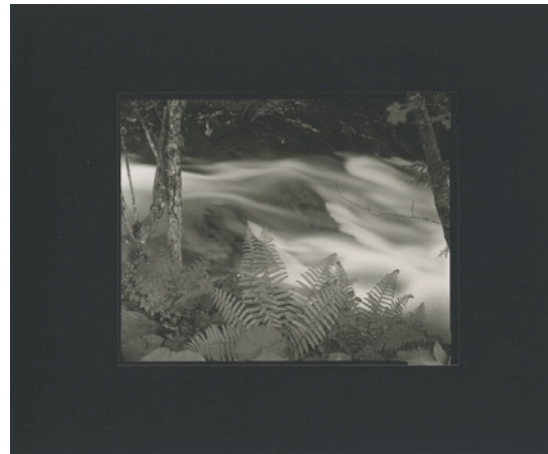
Contact print on Foma matte baryta paper,
printed by the artist

Signed by the artist, titled, dated and artist's
copyright on verso

Print size: 7 7/8 x 6 1/4 inches

© Bogdan Konopka / Courtesy Les Douches la
Galerie, Paris

N° Inv. BK2104073



Bogdan Konopka

Suisse, 03.10.1993

Contact print on Foma matte baryta paper,
printed by the artist

Signed by the artist, titled, dated and artist's
copyright on verso

Print size: 7 7/8 x 6 1/4 inches

© Bogdan Konopka / Courtesy Les Douches la
Galerie, Paris

N° Inv. BK2201018



Bogdan Konopka

Szczyrk, 02.06.2011

Contact print on Foma matte baryta paper,
printed by the artist

Signed by the artist, titled, dated and artist's
copyright on verso

Print size: 7 7/8 x 6 1/4 inches

© Bogdan Konopka / Courtesy Les Douches la
Galerie, Paris

N° Inv. BK2201029



Bogdan Konopka

ABOUT

SOLO SHOWS (SELECTION 2010-2022)

- 2021 «Leçons de ténèbres», Galerie BWA, Rzeszow, (PL)
«Sur mon chemin», Centre culturel André Malraux, Nancy
«Leçon de lumière», Repaire Urbain, Angers
«Un conte polonais», Fotofestival Lodz(PL)
- 2020 «Chine, l'empire du gris», Festival du Regard, Cergy-Pontoise
«Leçons de ténèbres», Centre d'art Stara Kopalnia, Walbrzych
«A polish fairy tale», Muzeum Kraszewski, Dresden
- 2019 «Rezonans», Centre d'art Stara Kopalnia, Walbrzych, Pologne
«Un conte polonais», Festival Chroniques Nomades, Auxerre
«Infinity room», Galerie Art Lab, EPFL Lausanne
«Un conte polonais», Tisseurs d'images, Parc du Prieuré, Beaucouzé
«Leçons de Ténèbres», Vintage Photo Festival, Bygdoszcz, Pologne
«France through the eye of Bogdan Konopka», French May, The Hive Spring, Hong-Kong
- 2018 "Leçons de ténèbres", galerie Leica 6x7, Varsovie, Pologne
"Small is beautiful. Contact print stories", 1839 Contemporary Gallery, Taipei, Taiwan
"Un conte polonais", Galerie Folia, Paris, France
- 2017 "Paris en gris", Galerie Stara Kopalnia, centrum Nauki i Sztuki, Walbrzych, Pologne
"@éveil", hôtel Jules & Jim, Paris, France
"Géométrie dans l'espace", Topographie de l'Art, Paris, France
"ŚLEPE ŚCIANY", Galeria Entropia, Wrocław, Pologne
- 2016 "La robe", Festival du Regard, Saint-Germain-en-Laye, France
"From West to East", Festival de Tianshui, Chine
"Fotografia", Galerie Korytarz, Jelenia Gora, Pologne
"SMALL IS BEAUTIFUL", OFOTO Gallery, Shanghai, Chine
- 2015 « La ville invisible 1990-2015 », Festival l'Oeil Urbain, Corbeil-Essonnes, France
« Infiniment grand infiniment petit », Rencontres internationales de la photographie de Gaspésie, Québec
« Traces, 1918-2013 », Dom Slovakia, Gorlice, Pologne
- 2014 « Paris-Wrocław », Galerie d'art contemporain BWA, Kielce, Pologne
« Résidences », Chapelle de l'Hôpital Général, Clermont-Ferrand, France
« Fotografia », performance, Galeria Entropia, Wrocław, Pologne
- 2013 « La prison du Château du Roy », collection automne-hiver, Musée Henri Martin, Cahors, France
« La Bibliothèque polonaise de Paris », 1993-2012, Paris, France
« Chine, l'empire du gris », Biennale Urbi & Orbi, Sedan, France

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ABOUT

- 2012 « Le temps des lucioles », Mois de la photo, Hôtel de Sauroy, Paris, France
« Ineffabilis », Musée de Bydgoszcz, Pologne
« Ineffabilis, part II », Galerie du Roi doré, Paris, France
- 2011 « Rezonans », Festival Transphotographiques Lille, France
« Ineffabilis », Glaz Gallery, Moscou, Russie
« Mala retrospektiva 1986-2010 », Fotoartfestival, Bielsko-Biala, Pologne
« Résonances », Espace Van Gogh, Arles, France
« Reconnaissances », Espace Quai 1, Vevey, Suisse
- 2010 « Chine, l'empire du gris », Centre d'art Manggha, Cracovie, Pologne
« Fotogenia Cisy », Galerie Refleksy, Varsovie, Pologne
« Subjectiv », Wrzesnia, Musée de Wresznia, Pologne
« Beauté mortelle », Galerie du théâtre La Passerelle, Gap, France

GROUP SHOWS (SELECTION 2010-2022)

- 2022 «White & Black», Boogie Woogie photography, Hong Kong
- 2021 «Horizons», Galerie l'Oeil Vert, Paris
- 2019 "Terra Nostra – Le temps de l'Anthropocène", MUDO Musée de l'Oise, Beauvais, France
"Chroniques Nomades", Abbaye Saint-Germain, Auxerre, France
- 2018 "Intérieurs", galerie des Petits Carreaux, Saint-Briac, France
- 2017 "Géométrie dans l'espace", Espace Topographie de l'Art, Paris, France
"Tu sais ce qu'elle te dit... ma concierge ?!", MUba Eugène Leroy, Tourcoing, France
- 2016 "L'oeil du collectionneur. Neuf collections particulières strasbourgeoises", Musée d'Art Moderne et Contemporain, Strasbourg, France
- 2015 « Cadavres exquis », festival TIFF, Galeria BWA, Wroclaw, Pologne
« AIPAD show », galerie Esther Woerderhoff, Paris, France
« L'île Dumet (projection et montage sonore) », D'une rive à l'autre, Conservatoire du littoral, Rencontres d'Arles, France
- 2014 « Paris champ, hors champ », Bibliothèque Historique de la Ville de Paris, Mois de la Photo, France
« Paris-Pékin, les Français photographient la Chine », exposition itinérante : Pékin, Canton, Wuhan, Chine
« Un cercle n'est qu'un point dilaté », Galerie In Extremis, Strasbourg, France
« Le Paris des photographes », Mois de la photo à Paris, France
- 2013 « La France : tentative de portrait photographique », Musée de la photographie, Lishui, Pékin, Chine
« Je t'aime, moi non plus », MUBA, Tourcoing, France
« Entre présence et absence », centre culturel slovaque, Gorlice, Pologne

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ABOUT

- 2012 « A la lisière », Galerie AGART, Amilly, France
« L'enfant et la photographie », Galerie des bibliothèques, Paris, France
« L'objet photographique », Musée Bourdelle, Paris, France
« La photographie en France, 1950-2000 », Maison européenne de la photographie, Paris, France
« Le réel enchanté », Galerie du Roi doré, Paris, France
« L'arbre et le photographe », Galerie de l'école nationale supérieure des Beaux-Arts, Paris, France
- 2011 « Polonia, les Polonais en France depuis 1830 », Cité nationale de l'histoire de l'immigration, Paris, France
« Sur mesures », Musée Réattu, Arles, France
- 2010 « Réalité sans limite de temps », Mois de la photo, œuvres de la collection M.E.P, cité internationale des arts, Paris, France
« Un bestiaire fantastique », Box galerie, Bruxelles, Belgique

PUBLICATIONS

Bogdan Konopka. Un conte polonais, préface de Christian Caujolle, Éditions Delpire, 2018
Albumdisque 310 lunes, musique LO JO, Editions Harmonia Mundi 2014
La Bibliothèque polonaise de Paris, Małgorzata Grąbczewka, Jacek Dehnel, Editions Fine-Grain, 2013
Chine, l'empire du gris, Pierre Haski Editions Marval, 2007
Rezonans, Janine Ponty et de Jacqueline Konopka, Editions Filigranes, 2007
Beijing Opera, work in progress, Paul Andreu, Editions Kropka, 2006
Euroland, Françoise Paviot, Gilles Verneret, Editions Lieux-Dits 2004
De natura rerum, Krystof Rutkowski, Editions Kropka, 2004
Au-delà du visible, Jacqueline Konopka, éditions Auréoline 2003
Reconnaissances, William Ewing, Arno Rafael Minkinnen, Editions Images, Vevey, 2000
Paris en gris, Adam Zagajewski, Françoise Paviot, Elzbieta Lubowicz, édition bilingue de l'Université Marie Curie de Lublin, 2000, réédition 2002
L'île Dumet, Jean-Christian Fleury, Editions Marval, 1995

FILMOGRAPHY

Photographie, performance, Galerie Entropia, Wrocław, 2014, réal. Mariusz Jodko
Impressions, réal. Martine Tadié, 26mn, prod V.S, 2006
La ville invisible, réal. Jean-Louis Gonnet, prod. Arte, Coup d'Oeil, 2005

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Contact: Françoise Morin
+33 1 78 94 03 00
contact@lesdoucheslagalerie.com

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