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# The Signifier Cannot Be Detached from the Body

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The text is a proposal to analyse the film *Symphony of the Ursus Factory* from three different perspectives: performance studies, qualitative research, and participatory art. Departing from a quote by the director, Jaśmina Wójcik, where she reminisces about her first encounters with the former employees of the factory, the author focuses on the issue of embodied knowledge. Through discussing different moments of the film and its visual and audial strategy, the author also shows how theatricality mixes with documentality in the production. The author also refers to different events and activities from the nine-year-long Factory Ursus Project to show it as a long-term process grounded on different modes of participation and collaboration, without which the movie could not have been possible and which legitimates its artistic form.

Keywords: qualitative research; participatory art; performance studies; representation; Symphony of the Ursus Factory

*For Rafał*

"When they mentioned their work in our first conversations, they would often stand up and demonstrate it to me. After all, I had no idea what hubs and bergers were! I was absolutely speechless watching them. These people performed a kind of dance for me" (Wójcik, 2018). This is how Jaśmina

Wójcik recalls the interviews with former employees of the Ursus Tractor Plant, which gave her the idea for a film, *The Symphony of the Ursus Factory* (2018). The above brief quote is not a random choice: it recurs in the stories told about the film, including the numerous interviews with the director. It telegraphs the intersecting and overlapping perspectives that can be adopted to examine the project: qualitative research, performance studies and participatory art, all of which emphasize the question of representation.

## "when they mentioned their work, they would often stand up and demonstrate it to me"

Jaśmina Wójcik's interest in Ursus began with a casual walk she took with her friends around the disused factory site which led to her fascination with that space. The recollections of the director's father, an Ursus native, who liked to reminisce about the past glory of the district and the factory, was a factor too. In 2011 and in the nine nine that followed, together with Izabela Jasińska, Pat Kulka, Igor Stokfiszewski and Jakub Wróblewski, Wójcik engaged in a series of activities in the Ursus area,[1] including an audio tour of the factory grounds, during which excerpts from interviews with former Ursus employees were played; a screening on the walls of the former factory buildings of archival footage depicting life in the factory (2014); a parade in which tractor lovers from Poland drove their vehicles from the Palace of Culture in downtown Warsaw to Ursus (2014); neighbours' gatherings; the shooting of a short film entitled *Ursus Means Bear* (2015); the publication of excerpts from memories of former employees on the website of *Krytyka Polityczna*(2015); the development of a mobile app charting the history of the plant (2015). To celebrate the 40th anniversary of the 1976 worker strikes, Wójcik, her colleagues and the local authorities published a book

with memories of workers from that period,[2] and together with Ursus residents, they built, out of tractor parts sent in from across Poland, a memorial, *Tractor – Idea – Ursus*, which was unveiled in front of the Ursus district office (2016). They also spearheaded a campaign to buy the plant's historic collection from private owners and set up a museum in the district (which has not yet happened due to the lack of support from Warsaw authorities).

The first conversations with the former employees of the factory, referred to in the excerpt quoted at the beginning of this article, are not dissimilar to ethnographic or sociological fieldwork interviews. Researchers are familiar with the moment described by Wójcik in which an interview is no longer just a conversation as the information that needs to be conveyed cannot be verbalized. One needs to stand up and demonstrate. What I refer to here are corporeal practices, an embodied knowledge that can only be acquired and transmitted through performance, the kind of performance Wójcik was part of.

In this particular case, the situations in which physical action is called for reveal a key methodological and theoretical problem discussed in the context of qualitative research, a research methodology dating back to the first half of the 1970s (see, among others, Denzin, Lincoln, 2005; Jawłowska, 2008)[3]. Within its framework, "the social sciences and policy sciences and the humanities are drawing closer together in a mutual focus on an interpretative, qualitative approach to research and theory" (Denzin, Lincoln, 2005, p. 2). Researchers who have embraced this methodology hold that traditional social research, in its ambition to achieve (impossible) objectivity and be accorded equal status with the sciences, overlooked the fundamental reduction that occurs in the process of any field research – that

is, the fact of representing a multi-media cultural reality by a single medium – text (see Clifford, 1995). For this reason, among others, they challenge the "privilege of language-based ways of knowing" (Finley, 2005, p. 685) and experiment with various forms of representation.

From the perspective of their historical research, performance studies scholars such as Rebecca Schneider and Diana Taylor point out that "the preponderance of writing in Western epistemologies" (Taylor, 2003, p. 16) is due to the high position of knowledge that can take material form, become a document, be archived (see Schneider, 2011, p. 23). In her book with the telling title *The Archive and the Repertoire: Performing Cultural Memory in the Americas*, Taylor sets out to reclaim space for the knowledge excluded by the archive – that is, for the repertoire. "The repertoire … enacts embodied memory-performances, gestures, orality, movement, dance, singing – in short, all those acts usually thought of as ephemeral, non-reproducible knowledge" (Taylor, 2003, p. 20).

*Symphony* does offer a reproduction – what Wójcik saw during the interviews was included in the film. At one point we see former workers arriving at the site of the abandoned factories from all corners of the district as if they were returning to work after a very long hiatus. They locate their former workplaces in the crumbling buildings and perform the actions they used to perform every day as part of their jobs while making noises to imitate the sounds of the machines they used to work at. Past events are performatively repeated, but the repetition does not resemble most of contemporary Polish reenactments, which tend to reconstruct momentous historical events, mainly military operations. Instead, it deals with everyday life and the sphere of labour. Besides, it is not the type of repetition that emphasizes faithfulness to the original. On the one hand, many of the former

employees make a considerable effort to perform their actions exactly where they performed them in the past. A man carefully climbs a pile of rubble and approaches a wall that used to be in the middle of the building as testified by the remnants of the oil-paint dado. Close to the wall, which has broken fittings or equipment jutting out of it, he makes the motions of switching on machines and moving things around. On the other hand, the workers perform their actions without the carefully reproduced props and costumes of historical reconstructions. Theirs are barebone actions performed "in the air", without the objects they were originally associated with – writing without a typewriter or driving and shifting gears without a car. Standing on a rough patch of land rutted by construction vehicles, bent in half, a woman, makes the motions of moving something from one place to another, fully dedicated to her task. The people do not "work" in their work clothes but are all dressed up. One man even has a medal pinned to the collar of his jacket.

The filming of the performance unfolding in *Symphony* is questionable both for the performance studies tradition underpinned by the dogma of the performance's ephemerality and the impossibility of repeating or recording it (see Schechner, 1985, p. 50; Phelan, 1993, p. 146) and for the stance critical of that tradition taken by Schneider and Taylor. Taylor's distinction between two types of knowledge and its storage, the archive and the repertoire, is founded on the assumption that performance is repeteable, but also on the notion that it is clearly distinct from any material recording. "The live performance can never be captured or transmitted through the archive", the researcher argues. "A video of a performance, though it often comes to replace the performance as a *thing* in itself (the video is part of the archive; what it represents is part of the repertoire)" (Taylor, 2003, p. 20). Schneider argues against this approach, demonstrating that Taylor, in seeking to legitimize the repertoire as another kind of archive, actually succumbs to the

logic and order of the latter, while failing to notice its performativity (see Schneider, 2011, p. 108). Elsewhere, however, Schneider notes that the recording of oral transmissions or other practices of saving the immaterial lead to "the loss of a different approach to saving" (see Schneider, 2011, p. 101). She thus shares Taylor's belief that "embodied and performed acts generate, record, and transmit knowledge" (Taylor, 2003, pp. 20–1). Both researchers acknowledge the medial efficiency of performance. Being a proper mode of preservation itself, performance needs no other recording.

It is important to realize, however, what is reenacted in *Symphony*. The reenactment is mostly a repetition of the physical actions that the workers performed in their workplaces many years ago, but it is also a repetition of their first meetings with the director, and, as it will later turn out, of other similar situations in the past and in the future. The reenactment in the film is thus a part of a series of repeated performances. It also has the hallmarks of performative repetitions of this type, which are "always reconstructive, always incomplete, never in thrall to the singular or self-same origin" (Schneider, 2011, p. 100). It is capable of coming back multiple times, of moving between the repertoire and the archive, in different variants and at different times. It thus provides evidence for the central thesis of Rebecca Schneider, who has waged a long-standing battle within her discipline, arguing that "performance does not disappear" (Schneider, 2011, p. 130), as the classics claim, but remains.

## "hubs and bergers"

At one point in the film, we see people take their vintage tractors out of sheds and garages across Poland and set off towards Ursus. These "homecomings" are filmed in a spectacular fashion – in wide shots, from

above, with landscapes in the background. There is no commentary. The only sounds that can be heard are those of the engines and the regular beat of a single sound. When the tractors reach the former factory grounds, they assemble into a formation and perform a kind of choreography intended not only to cover the distance but also to demonstrate their power and grandeur. The vehicles enter the factory yard where the former employees, dressed up and holding pennants with embroidered factory symbols, stand motionless, waiting. The encounter between the people and the machines is emotional. Some of the employees approach the tractors. They smile, touch and stroke the vehicles, one woman even kisses the burnished metal. What follows is spectacular aerial footage of a pre-planned show of tractors encircling the assembled crowd, which brings to mind a parade of vehicles at some official ceremony. The film culminates in a still night scene, lit by the tractors' headlights. The protagonists are filmed up close, sitting behind the wheels of their vehicles and then the camera pans back to show the tractors together before the image cuts out.

In each symphony, the tempo changes in successive sections. A similar variability is present in *The Symphony of the Ursus Factory* as its segments and themes are marked by different temporalities. The film begins with black-and-white footage from the factory's heyday which shows workers assembling vehicles, participating in mass gatherings in the factory buildings, celebrating the birth of the millionth tractor and leaving the factory after work. Then we see the other protagonists, the former workers, as they go about their daily routines, preparing a meal, riding a bicycle, driving a car, while their voices can be heard offscreen, recounting their memories.

> "I was responsible for all core-making machines and other core

processing units: the moulding machine, the melting furnace and the doghouse. I wanted to work, prove myself, do things, because I had grown up working."

"I was strong. I was the first and only woman working with the bergers. The only woman who could handle that sort of work."

"I worked fifty years as a driver, but I didn't even break a side mirror. I didn't have a single accident. I should get a medal."

"You didn't have to take sandwiches, there was a cafeteria, there was soup, meat chunks for the soup, there was milk, there was soda. Anything you wanted. Package holidays, for children too, one in the summer and one in the winter. They paid and everyone was happy."

"Noise levels at the hammers were 80 decibels and we got no earmuffs. People were going deaf, they worked very hard, sweated, got sick, but we had a clinic and the doctors would help."

"The sheer scale of it was terrifying, a few thousand people in one building, three shifts. Some heavy machinery, big and small. You didn't know where to enter and how to leave. There was dust, smoke, foundry coke gas, rumbling hammers, tons of smoke."

"I remember us standing and watching as it went under the hammer, when it was all being destroyed. A factory that used to give people bread, a livelihood."

> “This is how all factories in Poland were carried off. They were making democracy for those in power, not for us, the working class.”

This segment of the film is an observational documentary – the camera follows the protagonists, we can hear nothing but their voices. From time to time, however, there are disruptions, which gradually escalate. They include the reenactments and silent stills with protagonists frozen in different situations, individually and in groups. In one of the stills, workers wait for the arrival of the tractors, in another, we see the company band, frozen, standing front of a pile of earth and a factory stack, instruments in hand, trumpets, saxophones and trombones raised to their lips. Because of the stillness and the fact that the people face the camera, these scenes are not unlike photographs. Gradually, the documentary mode becomes diluted, the protagonists’ voices pass into silence, the narrative gives way to music and images. The final scenes of *Symphony* are purely visual.

Playing with the documentary mode results in symphony-like tempo changes. The film interweaves an array of temporal registers: the now of 2018 and the historical events “quoted” in the newsreels, recounted or evoked by performative reenactments. Another variant are the scenes at the end of the film, which take place neither in the past nor in the present, but can hardly be viewed as flashforewards. The shifts between the different registers are marked by stills which slow down the pace of the film from time to time.

All these measures challenge linear temporality, which is typical of most documentaries and indeed of most research. They suggest “that time may be touched, crossed, visited or revisited, that time is transitive and flexible, that time may recur in time, that time is not one – never only one” (Schneider,

2011, p. 30). They are best thought of as not merely film experiments but as attempts of distancing oneself from the dominant modes of doing history, and more broadly, from the characteristic Western attachment to originality and authenticity (cf. Schneider, 2011, p. 30).

## “I was absolutely speechless”

The abandonment of the documentary mode also entails a kind of disillusion – that is, it directs attention to the medium of film, revealing its existence and agency. After all, the repetitions, slow motion sequences and flashforwards do not pretend to be real events. They did not exist outside the film but now are visible because of their overtly creative, theatrical nature. At the same time, *Symphony* continues to be a documentary – its participants are real people, who take part in the film on their own behalf, whose faces, bodies, voices and memories we get to know from the beginning of the film, and it it set at a specific site – in the ruins of the former Ursus Plant. *Symphony* fuses the theatrical and the documentary (cf. Schneider, 2011, p. 29).

A similar duality is also seen in the audio and visual aspects of the film. The *Symphony* proper on the audio track comprises recordings of workers’ recreating the sounds of the old factory, music played by the factory band, recordings of tractor engines and sounds of one of the factories still operating in the Ursus grounds. It is therefore, in part, another reenactment, a devised piece – at once a document and a composition. The camera films the protagonists discreetly at the beginning but regularly breaks out of the documentary mode. The first time this happens is when, a few minutes into the film, the camera abruptly changes its point of view to soar high above a

protagonist riding her bicycle, a tiny speck moving through the neighbourhood. The disruptions of the documentary mode are usually achieved by moving the camera away from the subject to obtain wide angle shots. We see a man walking silently along the corridors of the former factory until he approaches a staircase where the stairs and wall end in mid-air. After the man stops at the top of the stairs, the camera pulls away to reveal the whole building and then the vast area in front of it. Through the broken wall we still see the man at the top of the stairs as he is turning into a little speck. At times, the movement of the camera slows down noticeably, as when it films the vacant post-industrial buildings in an almost contemplative way. These shots do not merely record events but ostensibly construct them.

The simultaneity of creation and documentation in many aspects of *Symphony* further complicates the distinction between action and recording, between repertoire and archive, which is fundamental to the performance studies tradition (cf. Schneider, 2011, pp. 154, 163, 168). This distinction derives from the above-mentioned ephemerality thesis, according to which "we are encouraged to think of performance as that which eludes capture because it occurs in time and so we are comfortable saying that a film or a photograph is a record of the live, but not itself the live that it captures (or fails to capture, if one accepts Richard Schechner's and Peggy Phelan's terms […])" (Schneider, 2011, p. 142). In *Symphony*, the overt theatricality invites life into the document, while the repetitions, slow motion sequences and flashforwards reveal the possibility of another temporality in which performance can repeatedly recur, even through mediation. *Symphony* eludes the established media and temporal distinctions – it is at once a performance and a document.

This “temporal and medial blurring or simultaneity” (Schneider, 2011, p. 168) is a challenge for audiences. It invites uncertainty, jolts viewers out of their viewing habits, and renders rational analysis insufficient. The tension between then and now, the looping of the real and the fantastic, and the intensified sensory impact achieved through the dominance of the audio and visual narrative demand an emotional response.

## “these people performed a kind of dance for me”

Unlike most such performances, the reenactments in *Symphony* do not evoke actions of others from the past, such as in reenactments of the Battle of Grunwald, in performative ethnography research (when situations observed during field studies are re-enacted; see Denzin, 2009, p. 583), or in the re-performances of Marina Abramovič’s work at her famous 2010 MoMA exhibition *The Artist Is Present*. In *Symphony*, the actions of labour in the deserted factory grounds are performed by the same people who performed them “originally”. Michel de Certeau’s words “the signifier cannot be detached from the individual or collective body” become strikingly literal here (de Certeau, 1988, p. 216), and allow us to see the empowering power of this type of performance. Taylor emphasizes that “the repertoire requires presence – people participate in the production and reproduction of knowledge by ‘being there’, being a part of the transmission. […] The repertoire both keeps and transforms choreographies of meaning” (Taylor, 2003, p. 20).

A similarly understood presence of “these people”, also factory workers, is the premise of one of the early concepts of participatory art in Poland – Witold Wandurski’s workers’ theatre. In keeping with Wandurski’s concept,

the community shapes the theatre not by changing the repertoire, but by bringing onto the stage its own actor, "who 'distorts' the theatre's tendencies in favour of the needs of the audience who elect the actor from their midst" (Wandurski, 1973, p. 322). According to Wandurski, empowerment occurs by seizing power in each performance, here and now, before the eyes of the audience, and consists in making overt, even ostantatious modifications to the text, meanings and acting style. When discussing the means by which the "distortion" was achieved, Wandurski mentions parody and caricature, which highten theatricality, and "the overdrive" (see Wandurski, 1973, p. 322), which implies a possible temporal dimension of the "distortion", both in terms of the dynamics of acting and indeed in terms of challenging realism. Wandurski thus links theatricality with regaining control, which for him has a political dimension.

Picking up on these ideas, it may be said that the overtly theatrical repetitions, slow motion sequences and flashforwards in *Symphony*, like the scenes of stillness in contemporary dance examined by André Lepecki, reveal "the possibility of one's agency within the controlling regimes of capital, subjectivity, labor and mobility" (Lepecki, 2006, p. 15). Through these formal features, the former factory workers "distort" linear time, and so interrupt and disrupt the course of history in order to regain a presence in it by establishing a grassroots, collective and affective version of history. This version sidelines the "official" history of the factory, full of dates and numbers, which tends to seen as nothing more than a contribution to the history of the collapse of Poland's large-scale industry after 1989, or more broadly, of Poland's political transformation. A few basic facts about the factory offered at the beginning of the film is all we get in the way of background information, which has been noticed by reviewers: "Anyone who wants to know the history of the monumental plant should do some extra

reading before or after the screening" (Bodziony, 2019), "These facts and narratives are not found in Jaśmina Wójcik's film" (Madejska, 2018). *Symphony* offers a change of scale and a shift of perspective. The factory as recalled by its former workers reveals itself as a formative experience and a space of everyday life. This version of the story provides insights into the factory as a cultural reality with a network of relations, a value system, knowledge and technology. This reality pivots around work, and it is only the presence of former workers that allows for a different angle than seeing the factory through the lens of the propaganda of the People's Republic of Poland or of post-transformation socio-economic analyses. In individual experience, work is associated with respect for the following: effort, joint action, production of useful objects.

The question of the presence of "these people" is also an important focus of the debate concerning traditional research in which community representatives took part as information providers, or "knowledge sources", only in the first part of the research, in the field. The later stages of the research process – compiling data, drawing conclusions, writing a report and its publication – occurred at a physical distance from the "field" and without the community's involvement, which meant losing control over representation in favour of the researcher. By engaging in a critique of this tradition, representatives of qualitative research seek to redefine research relationships so that community members are "no longer … subjects but instead" are "collaborators or even researchers" (Finley, 2005, p. 682, cf. Wyka, 2004). On the other hand, they wonder how "researchers 'write up' their understandings without 'othering' their research partners, exploiting them, leaving them voiceless" (Finley, 2005, p. 682). The strategies they experiment with include consulting research progress and findings with research participants, writing polyphonic narratives, constructing open

texts, and finally conducting research in the form of arts-based research, including, of course, performance-based research (see Finley, 2005, Alexander 2005, Madison 2005, and others). The intention is always to un-seal the research process to offer insights into its various stages, to hear the diverse voices of its participants and thus to trace the processes of knowledge collection and representation.

It seems that the footage that follows *Symphony* proper, separated from it by the end credits, serves a similar function. The footage, which is perhaps the most documentary-like part, shows the preparations before filming – a voice workshop with Dominik Strycharski and a movement workshop with Rafał Urbacki, attended by former factory employees and others including Jaśmina Wójcik and Igor Stokfiszewski. The word "workshop", which is used to describe the nine months of sessions leading up to the creation of *Symphony*, is misleading. Judging from the footage, Strycharski and Urbacki did not teach the participants anything. Rather, the sessions were not unlike a field research situation in which artists-researchers collaborate with participants/information providers. They were neither interviews nor surveys. They resembled focus groups except that their medium was the body. Responding to questions asked by Strycharski and Urbacki, participants reminisce about their former work activities and use their voices to recreate the sounds of the machines they used to operate. We witness a transfer of knowledge directly from body to body (Schneider, 2011, p. 33) in reenactments of the kind we are already familiar with.

If we adopt a research perspective, we can view these sessions as a kind of research through collaboration, in which the community together with the researchers create a public presentation of the collected knowledge.

One should not be misled by the fact of placing workshop documentation

footage after the film credits, because it is more important than the bloopers sometimes included at the end of a film. The footage provides a different perspective and insight into a process, something many researchers seek in their own work.

Another perspective on *Symphony* is provided by the footage that has been made available by the producers but is not included in the film[4]. The making-of footage provides insight into the process at a different point in the production of *Symphony*. Of the materials discussed so far, it is the only one that includes comments on *Symphony* by the director, creators and former Ursus employees. It offers their views on what they think they are taking part in and why they're doing this:

> "There used to be industry in Ursus for almost a century and it seems very important to us that that industrial identity is somehow preserved" (Igor Stokfiszewski).

> "I wanted to appear in the film to preserve some of these memories, these remnants of Ursus." (Jerzy Dobrzyński). "This film is very much needed for young generations – those who worked at the plant pass [this] on." (Henryk Goździewski). "In some way it honours people, many of whom dedicated their lives to working at the plant" (Stefan Sobczak).

Evidently, the intention of the co-creators of *Symphony* is to document, to save from oblivion, to leave a material trace. In this brief report from the set, the comments quoted above are juxtaposed with footage of shooting scenes, in which the former factory workers assume the role of actors – they

perform the tasks set by the director, they act. Incidentally, speaking on the set, Dominik Strycharski draws attention to this involvement (2018). Thus the making-of footage reaffirms the role of simultaneity in the film, the simultaneity of creating and recording, of performing and documenting, or of documenting through performing.

Revealing the behind-the-scenes preparations for *Symphony*, the workshop footage and the footage from the set conclusively expose the film's creative character while legitimizing it, revealing that it is not only the product of the artistic imaginations of the filmmakers but can be traced back to a long process shaped by a number of different people. The footage makes it possible to reconstruct the method used during this process, which is analogous to *site-specific*activities in art, and to the fundamental tenets of grounded theory in social research, according to which "Theory emerges […] in the course of systematic field research from empirical data that relates directly to the observed part of social reality" (Konecki, 2009, p. XII). The idea is not to link in any way the activity/research with a specific site – here the Ursus community and the factory – but to "ground" in it the concepts, theses and artistic forms that emerge later. The words of the film's director quoted at the beginning of this article allow us to trace a line between her meetings with former factory workers during which they spontaneously demonstrated the actions they used to perform at the factory and a film in which they agreed to appear and re-perform these actions.

This is one of the numerous lines that connect *Symphony* with the various activities undertaken as part of the 9-year-long "Ursus Project" before and after the film was made. There is no simple causal relationship here. *Symphony*'s relationship to the project as a whole can hardly be taken for granted – it is not a documentary about the project and, contrary to some

accounts (see Bendyk, 2018) and the producer's description[5], it is not its summary. *Symphony*, which uses the medium of film, has become the most visible element of the project, but it should not obscure the wider constellation of which it is a part.

"The Ursus Project" has an extended, processual, multifocal structure, which, whether intended from the start or not, should be seen as a strategy developed through practice. Suzanne Lacy has worked in this mode for years, initiating participatory projects with groups and communities. This strategy is well-illustrated by Lacy's project that shared a similar theme and mediality with "The Ursus Project", which ran from 2015 to 2017 in Brierfield, North West England[6]. "The Circle and the Square" explores the demise of the textile industry in the region, which led, among other things, to a severing of ties between the South-Asian-heritage and white communities who used to work together. At the core of the project were conversations with members of these communities, which often involved singing, a practice important to both groups. Many activities took place in a cavernous, empty, post-industrial building to which former workers returned in order to sing together songs from various traditions and to attend a dinner for five hundred people, the largest gathering at the site since its closure. In the same building, Lacy and her collaborators created a spectacular exhibition from the materials they had collected. The exhibition included a multi-channel video installation featuring memories of dozens of former workers, a presentation of other materials and objects created during the project, as well as project documentation.

The strategies of public projects such as "The Ursus Project" and "The Circle and the Square" envisage the initiation of a long-term process, whose parts differ in scale, in their openness to the outside and in their use of media,

enabling various kinds of participation and commitment. Projects of this type involve real-life situations such as navigating diverse institutional frameworks and ongoing negotiations with local authorities, organizations and communities. They take place at the interface of art, research and activism.

Lacy describes the Brierfield project as a "localised critical inquiry into race, work, and capitalism" (2017). If you replace the word "race" with "class", the same words can be used to describe the activities of "The Ursus Project". The initiative is one of the few arts and community projects exploring the history of the rise and fall of huge industrial plants in post-war Poland; a history that has been repressed because of the way it was exploited by the propaganda of the People's Republic of Poland on the one hand, and due to the failure to acknowledge it in the affirmative narrative of Poland's political transformation on the other hand. It seems that "The Ursus Project", more than Lacy's work, tends more towards commemoration, "identity preservation", but the way the repressed theme is handled and the forms it takes has a critical edge. It is political in a Rancièrean sense, as it interferes with the way reality is perceived (see Rancière, 2007), but also at the level of urban politics, as a civic attempt to initiate discussion about this part of Warsaw. As such, it met with the passivity and resistance of the local government which at the same time invested in the housing estates that were being developed at the former factory sites, promoting Ursus as a modern location. Under pressure from local authorities, the *Tractor – Idea – Ursus* memorial was removed from the neighbourhood on February 27, 2021, and the act of bidding farewell to it became a symbolic event marking Jaśmina Wójcik's and her collaborators' leaving the site. The memorial tractor was handed over to the Open-Air Museum in Łochowice, run by village head Jacek Grzywacz, who had been involved with "The Ursus

Project" for several years. "A Ursus resident, Stefan Sobczak, was named the continuator of efforts designed to commemorate the Factory. He was presented with a symbolic squawk-horn which he used to invite everyone to attend the Second Rally of Historic Tractors" (Gorzkowska, 2021). The conclusion of the project changes the meaning of *The Symphony of the Ursus Factory*, which becomes even more a trace of the project but can also become more autonomous. Its performative and documentary function, however, stays the same – *Symphony* is an action that remains.

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## Footnotes

1. Knowledge about the project is dispersed. The primary sources are the project's Facebook page and a variety of publications on the *Krytyka Polityczna* website, and the website of *Krytyka Polityczna*'s Institute for Advanced Study, with which the project has been affiliated since 2016 as "The Ursus Programme".
2. See *Ursus. To tutaj wszystko się zaczęło*, ed. Jaśmina Wójcik, Ośrodek Kultury „Arsus", Warsaw, 2016.
3. The foremost forum for researchers who embrace qualitative research, which presents latest research is *The Sage Handbook of Qualitative Research*. In 1994–2017, five updated editions of *The Sage Handbook* were published, all edited by Norman K. Denzin and Yvonna

S. Lincoln.
4. See *Symphony of the Ursus Factory_making of*, https://vimeo.com/238380530, accessed 1 March 2021.
5. The words "*Symphony* is a summary of five years of artistic and research work" recurs in many online descriptions of the film, I assume it comes from the producer's publicity material. See information about the film on filmweb.pl, vod.pl and filmpolski.pl.
6. Information about the project has been obtained from: https://www.suzannelacy.com/, https://www.art-agenda.com/announcements/184620/suzanne-lacythe-circle-…, accessed 1 March 2021.

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