

The Alternative Official?

KwieKulik's Studio of Activities, Documentation and Propagation as a State-Financed Performative Archive under Real Socialism

Tomasz Załuski

Pracownia Działań Dokumentacji i Upowszechniania (PDDiU)—the Studio of Activities, Documentation and Propagation—was an authored, private, alternative artistic gallery formed and run by Przemysław Kwiek and Zofia Kulik, who lived and worked together as the KwieKulik duo in the 1970s and 1980s in socialist Poland.¹ PDDiU became—and today is widely known as—an exercise in artistic self-organization, self-documentation and self-historicization; an unofficial archive operating beyond established institutional systems. In the 1970s, it was housed in KwieKulik's private apartment in Warsaw (fig. 8.1), and since the mid-1980s, it has been stored in Kulik's house in the nearby Łomianki. However, what the artists really wanted to create was a formalized art-and-research agency, which would work under the auspices of, or be part of, a state institution. Therefore, I would like to focus not so much on the actual activity of PDDiU as an authored neo-avant-garde gallery, but on the project, program and potential of PDDiU as a state-financed performative archive within an official institution. My text is not an exercise in counterfactual history but rather in what I am tempted to call a “potential history”: a history of what actually happened but only in the form of a potentiality. In addition, going beyond the highly indeterminate opposition of “official” vs “unofficial,” I will try to interpret the generative concept of PDDiU in terms

1 For a comprehensive account of KwieKulik's artistic practice, see Łukasz Ronduda and Georg Schöllhammer, eds., *Zofia Kulik & Przemysław Kwiek*, trans. Marcin Wawrzyńczak et al (Warsaw: Museum of Modern Art; Wrocław: BWA Wrocław Galleries of Contemporary Art; Vienna: Kontakt; Warsaw: KwieKulik Archive, 2012).

of the “alternative official.” Basically, this term is supposed to show the embeddedness or active participation of experimental artists in the mechanisms of state art system under “real” or “actually existing socialism.” But it is also, more generally, meant to enable yet another step in the ongoing process of shifting the historiography of East European art of that period from the dominant political history paradigm—with its simplistic models of totalitarianism or post-totalitarianism, as well as a specter of a “dissident art” that still implicitly (mis)shapes our approaches to the art from the socialist bloc—towards the interpretative framework of socialist modernizations, complex and ambivalent as they were in their social, economic, political and cultural aspects. Accordingly, I will argue that behind the concept of PDDiU was an attempt to create a modernized institution of art production and propagation, aimed at social and cultural modernization, and that such an attempt needs to be analyzed not only within the context of new experimental artistic tendencies of the 1970s, but also in relation to structural changes to the official state art system in People’s Republic of Poland and state policies of cultural propagation.

A Drive for Institutionalization

The 1970s artistic practices of self-documenting, self-archiving and self-historicizing were part of what could be generally called the neo-avant-garde culture of self-determination. Polish artists, just like their neo-avant-garde colleagues elsewhere, wanted to produce, present, interpret, evaluate and propagate their art in their own terms and on their own terms. They were afraid that the existing state art infrastructures (galleries and museums; the Union of Polish Visual Artists with its sections dedicated to traditional artistic disciplines and media; exhibition commissioners, art critics and art historians, etc.) were not capable of recognizing the specificity of new experimental art, or were simply not willing to do so (for reasons of intra-milieu tensions and competition, a general cultural policy of the central government, etc.) and could misconstrue, misrepresent, and undervalue its ideas and practices. In effect, they not only preserved documents and testimonies of artistic life but also used their growing archives to produce their own narratives on this new art. Nevertheless, these self-produced archives and self-narrated histories of the neo-avant-garde were meant to be introduced into the mainstream institutional circuit. In art historical discourse it has become customary to set

Figure 8.1: Documentation slide show at the Studio of Activities, Documentation and Propagation (PDDiU), KwieKulik's private apartment in Warsaw, 1976. From left: Andrzej Partum, Jiří Kondrata, Ivan Vacík, Paweł Kwiek, Maksymilian Dobromierz, Przemysław Kwiek.



Courtesy the of Kulik-KwieKulik Foundation.

up a dichotomy between “official” and “unofficial” art or artistic culture when discussing experimental art practices from socialist Central and Eastern Europe, but in the case of 1970s Poland, this opposition is hardly operative.² I propose to replace it with the conceptual pair of “mainstream” and “alternative,” where the former stands for conservative and moderate, and the latter

² Even though socio-political, economic and cultural conditions of 1970s Poland were, in certain respects, different from those in other countries of Central and Eastern Europe, such as Czechoslovakia, GDR, Hungary or Romania, I do not argue here for any “Polish exceptionalism” as regards the inoperativity of the opposition official/unofficial and the need to introduce concepts like the “alternative official.” On the contrary, I think that the latter concept—or other concepts that would go beyond the official/unofficial opposition—might prove useful when applied to cases like Jiří Valoch’s organizational and curatorial initiatives at Brno House of Arts and elsewhere, galleries of Students’ Cultural Centers in Yugoslavia or the Béla Balázs Studio in Budapest, to name just a few.

for experimental and modernizing. Mainstream and alternative artistic circuits were not separated from and opposed to each other, but co-existed in complex interrelationships as parts of the same socialist state art system. The neo-avant-garde used different administrative opportunities (mainly student and municipal or regional culture centers, etc.) to develop and expand an alternative circuit of the so-called “authored art galleries”; but also hoped and tried, with some success, to introduce their art, archives and self-narrations into the mainstream art circuit and in this way to transform and modernize it. These hopes and attempts at modernizing existing art institutions—or even creating new experimental ones from scratch—were legitimized by a new project of socialist modernization which was announced at the beginning of the 1970s by authorities of the Polish United Workers’ Party as Poland’s own “third way.”

It was precisely at that time that KwieKulik started to pursue the idea of institutionalizing ephemeral art production, documentation and propagation. Between 1971 and 1973, they were trying to carve out their own space at different institutions. They made efforts to gain employment at the Academy of Fine Arts in Warsaw and establish an interdepartmental studio there, which was to invent new ways of organizing student work and co-operation, in order to set the direction for reforming and modernizing higher arts education in general.³ Together with Jan Stanisław Wojciechowski and Paweł Kwiek, the duo also made a proposal to the state TV station in Warsaw. They wanted to create a studio which would document, in video, ephemeral artistic activities across the whole country, build an archive of such materials to be used in various TV programs, and develop unconventional methods of editing documentary footage with TV equipment.⁴ Both the academy and the TV studios were conceived of here as experimental laboratories aimed at producing new practical knowledge and expertise. Due to this, the distribution of documentation and theoretical accounts of their activities in the form of presentations, projections, screenings, periodicals and books was also envisioned.

However, in social terms, the most radical project was to use a gallery space, part of the Sigma Club at the University of Warsaw, as an Experi-

3 Zofia Kulik, Przemysław Kwiek, handwritten notes, August 1, 1971, and the beginning of 1973, KwieKulik archive.

4 Zofia Kulik, Przemysław Kwiek, Jan Stanisław Wojciechowski, Paweł Kwiek, proposal for a TV production submitted to state TV station in Warsaw (unpublished manuscript in Polish, March 20, 1972, KwieKulik archive).

tal Center for Developing Methods and Forms of Creative Activities in the Youth Milieus, or, in another version, Experimental Center for Propagating Art. It was to be established under the auspices of the Union of Polish Students, which would provide the funding. Together with Jan Stanisław Wojciechowski, Wiktor Gutt, and Waldemar Raniszewski, KwieKulik imagined an art research and social education center which would reform the very praxis of institutional art production and propagation. Evoking the idea of the scientific-technical revolution and new methods of work organization, they boldly claimed their right to revise "all existing forms and arrangements in the sphere of culture and art"⁵ and opted for modernization of institutions that propagate artistic culture. The imagined experimental "center" was to invent and develop alternative models of institutional practice to be implemented elsewhere. The models would not only be derived bottom-up from process-based artistic activities, and therefore better adjusted to their specificity, but they were also to be more effective in terms of audience engagement than traditional methods of cultural propagation. The main forms of new art propagation were to be direct, personal contacts with artists, extending from dialogues with them to the possibility of participation in their creative activities. Such an approach involved an expanded anthropological and sociological concept of art. The activities would be thematically linked to current social affairs and would generally focus on the question of human personality and the possibility of one's self-realization within existing conditions. This would entail using existing forms of human relationships and creating new ones as elements of artistic activities, the participants in which would be "revealing themselves" thanks to their "being-in-common with one another."⁶ KwieKulik planned to make trips to different locations across the country, enter various professional, social and class groups, perform artistic activities themselves as well as participate in other artists' actions, and finally, make and present documentation of all workings, which would be taking place under the auspices of their "center." The documentation was to be used in further art production and propagation activities and therefore it would form a performative, self-expanding archive.

5 Paweł Freisler, Zofia Kulik, Przemysław Kwiek, application submitted to the Culture Committee of Polish Students' Association (unpublished manuscript in Polish, February 14, 1972, KwieKulik archive). The text was subsequently reprinted and made public in *Notatnik Robotnika Sztuki*, no. 1 (January–March 1972), unnumbered pages.

6 Freisler et al., application.

Loops

When none of these projects met with approval and could be implemented, KwieKulik turned to other options. During the following years, they created three projects of PDDiU as an official institutional agency. Two of them were prepared in 1974, and the third one in 1977. The earlier two were based on experiences that KwieKulik had been gathering in their actual performative and archival practice since the end of the 1960s. They were more audience-oriented and they treated art as an experiment in social and cultural modernization, which was in line not only with the avant-garde idea of art as a medium of social change but also with official state policies of culture propagation as a means of social advancement. The third project, reflecting the shift that had taken place in KwieKulik's practice after 1974, focused entirely on artistic and art institutional issues.

In 1972, the Fund for Visual Arts Development was established as a program meant to provide state patronage and financial support for projects in the field of artistic culture. It was a means of developing and modernizing the state art system in Poland and was to introduce decentralization in funding and decision-making but also give more control over the system to the Union of Polish Visual Artists. In 1974 the board of the fund, which was dominated by prominent members of the union, announced its first call for applications. The fund was supposed to provide conditions for facilitating artistic creation and also help cultural and social education institutions with propagating art. It could also commission research work and the creation of program on art propagation from institutions and individuals. A promoted form of propagating—in fact, the only one available for grass-root artistic initiatives—was the establishment of an art gallery.⁷

In March 1974, KwieKulik applied to the board of the fund with their proposal of taking up “research on the theory and praxis of all types of documented activities, participatory and non-participatory.”⁸ They wanted to be given three-year funding for “performing necessary experiments and their analysis.”⁹ They also undertook to prepare annual presentations as a form of

7 “Fundusz Rozwoju Twórczości Plastycznej,” *Informator Związku Polskich Artystów Plastyków* 23, no. 3 (March 1975): 2–8.

8 Zofia Kulik, Przemysław Kwiek, Proposal for the board of the Fund for Visual Arts Development, (unpublished manuscript in Polish, March 9, 1974, KwieKulik archive).

9 Kulik and Kwiek, Proposal for the board.

reporting on the development of the project. Its final product would be a two-volume book in Polish and English *Sztuka działań—The Art of Activities*. Volume I would feature texts and volume II—images. A rough draft listed the following areas to be included in the book:

1. Activity as an exposed creative process;
2. Types of activities;
3. Techniques of registration (documentation) of activities;
4. Impact of activities on different social groups;
5. History of the Art of Activities movement in Poland;
6. Index of names of artists doing activities;
7. List of activities realized to date.¹⁰

In order to complete such an ambitious art-and-research task, KwieKulik needed an institutional supply base. They proposed, as a temporary measure, to give this base the form of an official “authored gallery.” Such a gallery was to support and “integrate artists who perform activities by giving them access to accommodation facilities and technical resources as well as to an archive with documentation materials and a library they all could use together.”¹¹ Activities conducted by invited artists would be documented by KwieKulik, and later used to prepare edited narrative projections and screenings for four types of audiences: political, cultural and educational activists; scientists; school pupils and university students; artists and art historians. The gallery would also document the workings of other art centers and spread information about the development of process-based art activities across the country and abroad. Finally, it would share its experience and expertise with the Union of Polish Visual Artists and art high schools and academies in Poland, advising them on the specificity of performing and documenting the art of activities. Since the authored gallery format was only a temporary measure, it was soon, after an initial development stage of three years, to be transformed in a department or section of a state institution.

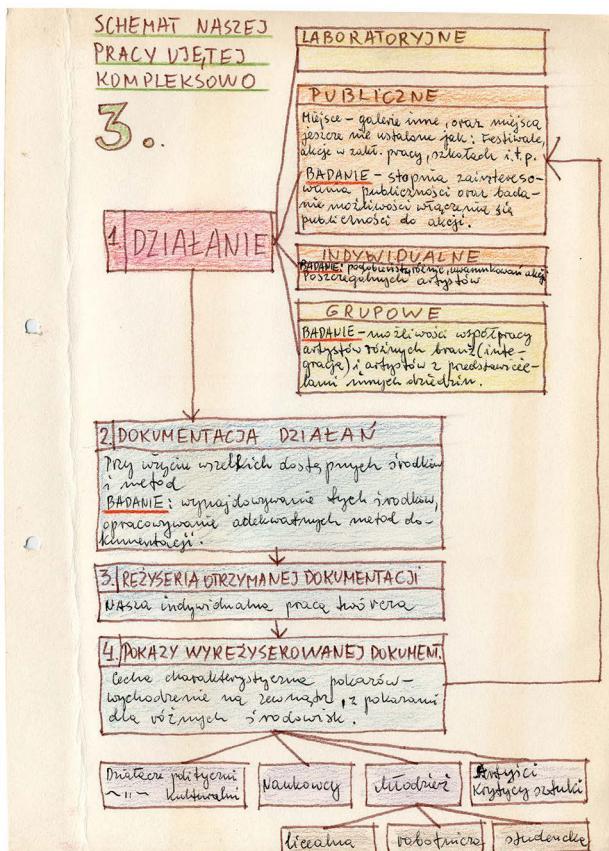
Another version of the same proposal was submitted to the Institute of Art of the Polish Academy of Sciences.¹² It was a complete scheme of work

¹⁰ Kulik and Kwiek, Proposal.

¹¹ Kulik and Kwiek, Proposal.

¹² Zofia Kulik, Przemysław Kwiek, “Do Instytutu Sztuki PAN” (unpublished manuscript, folder with handwriting and photographs of typed text pasted on the paper, 20 numbered pages and 18 unnumbered, April 1974, KwieKulik archive).

Figure 8.2: KwieKulik, flow chart of the work for the Studio of Activities, Documentation and Propagation (PDDiU), excerpt from the proposal for the Institute of Art of the Polish Academy of Sciences, 1975, and its English transcription.

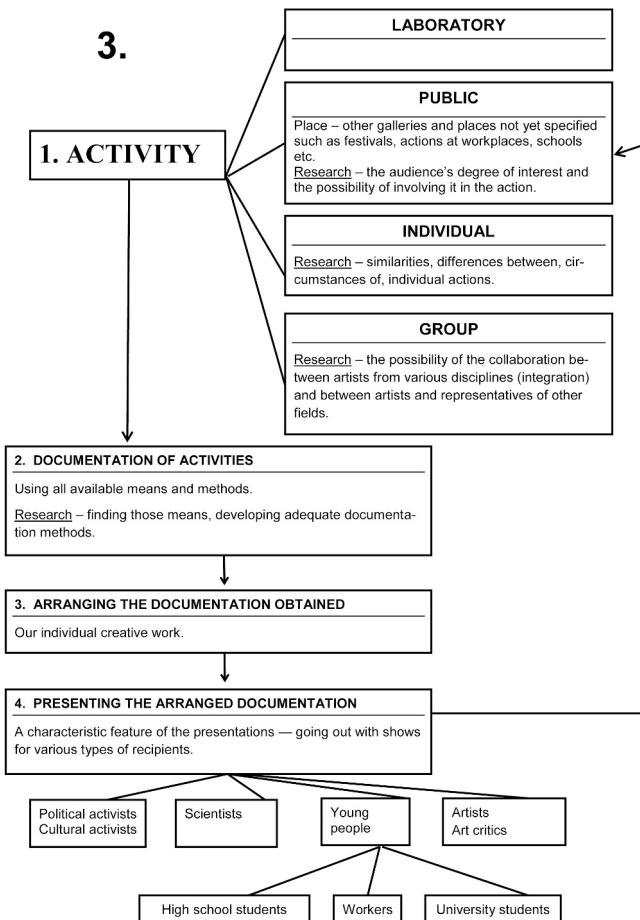


Courtesy of the Kulik-KwieKulik Foundation.

of PDDiU as a new department at the institute. It involved performing activities, documenting them, editing and, finally, showing the edited documentation to the four aforementioned types of audiences, plus workers. All projects undertaken were to be experiments in developing new types of artis-

Figure 8.3: The English transcription of the flow chart.

SCHEMATICS OF OUR WORK AS A WHOLE



Courtesy of the Kulik-KwieKulik Foundation.

tic activities and their documentation, as well as testing the possibilities of artistic co-operation and audience involvement. All new types of activities were to be analyzed, elaborated on and prepared for large-scale institutional implementation. This research-oriented aspect of the whole project was also stressed by the fact that the scheme took on the form of an algorithm and

was presented as a flow chart. (fig. 8.2–3) Drawing inspiration from the scientific-technical revolution, KwieKulik used here models provided by praxeology and cybernetics. The algorithm not only formalized the artists' activities but also gave them the form of a loop or, more precisely, cybernetic-like feedback loop. Public shows of edited documentation could themselves be a form of public activity and would involve audience participation. As such, they could become new artistic experiments, in which case they would entail new ways of documenting, produce new documentary materials to be edited and shown in public, and so on; it was here that the logic of the performative archive found its most explicit expression. In terms of further propagation of their research, KwieKulik wanted to publish the above-mentioned two-volume bilingual book, have their archival photographic documentation printed in the form of exhibition displays and organize several audio-visual performances based on edited archival documentation. They planned to create the scripts of these performances as well as copies of audio-visual elements and material props used in them so that they could be re-enacted by other people.¹³

Despite evaluations of the project, which were largely positive, KwieKulik did not manage to get state funding in 1974. They kept trying until 1977, when they re-applied to the Institute of Art with a modified concept of PDDiU. This time they concentrated on the most pressing artistic and institutional issues, forgoing the question of social participation. They wanted to get funding for the next three years, during which time they were supposed to be working through and sorting out the archive they had been building since the late 1960s as well as documenting current artistic activities. The duo planned to use their flat, which served as the actual PDDiU premises, and, in a typically (over)ambitious fashion, prepare there thirty individual and sixteen group meetings of artists who worked in the field of process-based activities, six thematic exhibitions and twenty-eight audio-visual shows which were to propagate the movement of the art of activities. They also wanted to publish, in Polish and English, three brochures with written documentation and the theory of the art of activities, a catalog of the above-mentioned exhibitions and shows, and a summary of the whole project with proposals on how ephemeral art should be methodically documented. These modernizing proposals were to be imple-

13 Kulik and Kwiek, *Do Instytutu Sztuki PAN*.

mented by art institutions.¹⁴ Unfortunately, the artists, again, did not manage to obtain funding. The same thing happened yet another time at the beginning of the 1980s, when they were applying in vain to several different state institutions in Warsaw with a reduced version of the last PDDiU project. Given this, the notion of “loops,” which I have used as the title of this subchapter, refers not only to the cybernetic-like feedback structure of PDDiU archive but also to KwieKulik’s going-in-circles while wrestling with bureaucracy and conflicting interests of different agents within the state art system.

Competing Modernizations

The question remains why KwieKulik did not succeed in their efforts to establish PDDiU as an alternative-yet-official state-financed institution that was to develop models of modernizing artistic, social and institutional practice. The reasons for this were complex and overdetermined but one factor might have played a decisive role. The Polish state art system in 1970s, acting in line with protocols of party and central government policy, was generally directed towards social and institutional “modernization.” The Union of Polish Visual Artists put forward its own program of conservative or moderate modernization, which included, for example, the concept of art as a means of designing and “humanization” of industrial and urban spaces, and the idea of establishing new institutions dedicated to the presentation and documentation of “contemporary visual arts,” the term being understood as encompassing all current artistic production.¹⁵

14 Zofia Kulik, Przemysław Kwiek, “Harmonogram działalności od maja 77 do czerwca 80 r.” (unpublished manuscript, April 8, 1977, KwieKulik archive). The handwritten draft of this schedule shows even more ambitious plans, which included publishing a quarterly information bulletin in Polish and English; conducting domestic and foreign correspondence as a means of propagating one’s own art and seeking international co-operation; systematic documentation of the activities by selected groups of artists; self-education—improving foreign languages skills; and finally, tracking domestic and foreign literature on the art of activities—Zofia Kulik, Przemysław Kwiek, remarks for the meeting at the Institute of Art (unpublished manuscript in Polish, handwritten notes, March 31, 1977, KwieKulik archive).

15 These and other issues which were parts of the union’s modernization program (e.g. pension insurances for artists, increasing the number of artists’ studios in different cities around the country, reduction of tax on works sold abroad, rules for appointing and executing commissions, etc.) were widely covered through the 1970s in the two

It seems that the program was partly based on appropriation of certain progressive ideas, concepts and grass-root initiatives developed by Polish experimental art milieus at the turn of the 1960s and 1970s, and on giving them much more moderate forms. The union appeared, for example, to be trying to intercept the very concept of “the authored gallery,” take over the management and funding of already existing authored galleries and create new ones that would not only present all current art production, including more traditional media and styles, but also function as commercial spaces where artists could sell their works.¹⁶ A similar situation can be seen with the idea of creating a center responsible for art documentation and information. KwieKulik were not the first, nor the only one among experimental art milieus in Poland to create a project proposing such an agency. An earlier attempt to implement a similar—but less radical—idea was made by art critic Jerzy Ludwiński, who established the Center for Art Documentation in 1972 in Wrocław and, together with Zbigniew Makarewicz, managed to run it for a year.¹⁷ By the mid-1970s, the union had intercepted the idea of creating an art documentation and information center, modified it to include and promote more moderate and conservative artistic practices and put it high on its agenda. The union clearly wanted to oversee the process of establishing the institution and shape its program.

However, the Ministry of Culture and Art, formally responsible for new investments in the institutional field of art, apparently had its own interests in establishing and controlling such an institution. In 1974, during the 14th Congress of the Union of Polish Visual Artists in Lublin, the delegates

journals published by the union: *Biuletyn Związku Polskich Artystów Plastyków* (in 1974 renamed as *Biuletyn Rady Artystycznej Związku Polskich Artystów Plastyków*) and *Informator Zarządu Głównego Związku Polskich Artystów Plastyków*.

16 See Maciej Gutowski, “Wystawy i galerie,” *Biuletyn Rady Artystycznej ZPAP* 117, no. 4 (1974): 15–8.

17 The Center for Art Documentation was opened as a first step towards establishing a more complex art institution called the Center of Artistic Research, an experimental space for art practices, documentation, information and propagation. Unfortunately, it was never created. See Jerzy Ludwiński, “Center for Artistic Research: Program,” [1971] in *Notes from the Future of Art: Selected Writings of Jerzy Ludwiński*, trans. Katarzyna Bojarska et al, ed. Magdalena Ziółkowska (Eindhoven: Van Abbemuseum, Veenman Publishers, 2008): 132–137; Zbigniew Makarewicz, “Polish Art in the West: Jerzy Ludwiński in Wrocław,” in *Jerzy Ludwiński: Filling the Blanks = Wypełniając puste pola*, exhibition catalog, ed. Piotr Lisowski, Katarzyna Radomska (Toruń: Center of Contemporary Art Znaki Czasu, 2011): 82–3.

demanded that the ministry should establish a “national center for contemporary visual art documentation and information.”¹⁸ The next year, at the 5th Session of the Artistic Board of the Union of Polish Visual Artists, where various proposals for such centers were presented, a representative of the ministry clearly stated that there were no budget plans to create such a national center until the end of the decade.¹⁹ At the same time, she did not rule out the possibility of funding smaller projects of that kind. In the following years, the union were trying to establish just such a small documentation center as part of different existing institutions. However, like KwieKulik, they also failed.

Finally, at the turn of the 1970s and 1980s, the Ministry of Culture and Art made its own plan to create an institution that would be devoted to both exhibiting contemporary art and documenting it.²⁰ It was formally established under the name of the Center for Contemporary Art Ujazdowski Castle in 1981, but it did not really start to organize exhibitions until the late 1980s. On the other hand, as early as 1985, a section of the institution started to operate, which was called the Center for Information and Documentation of Contemporary Art.²¹ Its aim was to collect documents of artistic life, build an archive and a publicly accessible database with information about artists, works, art institutions, exhibitions, and other events, art history writing, criticism and journalism. It was also to pursue plans to establish an advanced, unified, countrywide computer system, which would not only be a database of archival documentation stored at the institution, but also operate as a metainformation system coordinating documentation databases created by other Polish art galleries, museums and research institutes. Due to economic, technical and

18 “XIV Zwyczajny Zjazd Delegatów ZPAP,” *Informator Związku Polskich Artystów Plastyków* 13, no. 4 (April 1972): 3.

19 Kwiek and Kulik had not been invited to the meeting but the representative of the ministry mentioned their project of the Studio of Activities, Documentation and Propagation during the discussion—see Elżbieta Zawistowska, “V sesja Rady Artystycznej ZPAP w Łodzi. Dyskusja,” *Buletyn Rady Artystycznej ZPAP* 120, no. 3 (1975): 24–5.

20 See Karol Sieniewicz, “Without the Proverbial Pomp and Circumstance: The Beginnings of the Center for Contemporary Art and the Cultural Policy of the State,” in *Rejected Heritage: Polish Art of the 1980s* (Warsaw: Museum of Modern Arts, 2011), 56–71.

21 In 1997, the section was renamed as the Center for Scientific Information and Documentation. It continued to operate until 2016, when it stopped collecting paper documents for the archive it had managed to build and, together with the library and multimedia collection, it formed a new unit at the institution called the Media Center.

organizational problems, the plans, put forward in 1986–87 and reformulated in 1991, were never realized.²²

The End of an Odyssey: Institutionalization of KwieKulik's Archive

After 1989, when the political transformation in Poland began, some major public art institutions in Poland started to turn to the ethos of the 1970s and 1980s alternative gallery movement, taking its specific mode of production and performance as the reference point for their new identity, exhibition policy and collection building strategy. One of the most prominent cases was the Centre for Contemporary Art Ujazdowski Castle, which under the directorship of Wojciech Krukowski attempted to institutionalize the ethos of the neo-avant-garde and the entire alternative gallery movement of the 1970s and 1980s, to take over its symbolic capital as its own “inheritance,” and become the depository and owner of the documentation of artistic ideas and activities it generated. Taking advantage of this policy, several attempts were made to involve the institution in preserving, working through, sorting out and presenting KwieKulik's archive but they were mostly unsuccessful. In early 1990s, the aforementioned section of the Ujazdowski Castle devoted to contemporary visual art documentation and information started to gather and, in some cases, buy artists' archives. Among those bought in 1991 was a documentation “album” prepared by Przemysław Kwiek and Zofia Kulik with photographs of their selected past activities as a duo. The institution also established a long-term program called Document Gallery, which, between 1991 and 1998, presented archival documents of Polish neo-avant-garde and post-neo-avant-garde artistic culture of the 1970s and 1980s. However, these were small displays of documentary materials that were located—both symbolically and spatially—on the fringe of the main exhibition program of the institution. The archives did not yet have the status of fully-fledged exhibition objects, which could exist alongside “proper” artworks, enter into a dialogue

22 More on the program of the Centre for Information and Documentation of Contemporary Art at the Ujazdowski Castle—see Tomasz Załuski, “Galeria Wschodnia—A Biography of the Place,” in *Galeria Wschodnia: Dokumenty 1984–2017 / Documents 1984–2017*, ed. Daniel Muzyczuk and Tomasz Załuski (Łódź: Fundacja In Search Of... and Muzeum Sztuki w Łodzi, 2019): 344–48.

with them, build their context, or even—replace them.²³ What could have contributed to changing this institutional habitus at the Ujazdowski Castle was a huge retrospective exhibition of KwieKulik's works and archive, curated by Jerzy Truszkowski, which the institution agreed to organize in 1997. Unfortunately, due to budget cuts, the show was called off. A final attempt was made in 2002, when a project of digitizing and historicizing the archive under the auspices of the Ujazdowski Castle was proposed by Zofia Kulik, but it was dropped by the institution before it really started.

Around the year 2000, after distancing herself from KwieKulik's agenda and earning international recognition for her individual artistic career, Zofia Kulik engaged once again in working on the duo's archive and preparing its items for presentation. She began scanning slides, photographs, and paper documents from the archive and using them to make narrative sets: photographic installations, display boards and digital emulations of slide projections. She presented these archival materials at different art galleries or museums in Poland and abroad, as she wanted to intervene in an ongoing process of institutionalization and historicization of 1970s and 1980s Polish neo-avant-garde art. In this way, she countered certain official and canonical narratives with the story of the phenomenon as seen and rewritten from her own perspective, which was that of an insider, a witness and an "ambassador of the past." (fig. 8.4)

This continuous, long-term effort led to the active involvement of a few institutional subjects, including the Museum of Modern Art in Warsaw, which invested their financial, infrastructural and human capitals into the sorting out, digitization and presentation of a major part of the archive in the form of the monograph *KwieKulik: Zofia Kulik & Przemysław Kwiek*, published in 2012.²⁴ The museum also bought KwieKulik's original archival collection. Its items will be placed in the new building of the institution, which is currently (as of October 2020) under construction, and they will be presented there in a

23 In Poland the transformations that led to an institutional re-evaluation of the role of art documentation, artistic self-archivization, self-historicization and self-presentation practices, as well as artists' archives themselves, took place in the first and second decade of the twenty first century. These included the appearance of such phenomena as the "archival turn" in global contemporary art, new curatorial ideas and practices, especially contextual approaches to constructing exhibitions, and processes of institutional historicization of the 1970s and 1980s art.

24 Ronduda, *KwieKulik*.

Figure 8.4: Zofia Kulik, “Ambasadorowie przeszłości (Ambassadors of the Past): Made in GDR, USSR, Czechoslovakia and Poland,” 2006.



Digital photomontage, 210 × 81 cm. Courtesy of the Kulik-KwieKulik Foundation.

separate room as a permanent exhibition-installation authored by Zofia Kulik. In addition, digitized versions of all archival items will be made available online. But even as part of the museum collection, the archive is still considered a copyrighted artwork and it will retain some of its active and generative potential. Kulik and Kwiek will retain the right to use digital copies of all the archival items in order to make—and possibly sell, under the name of KwieKulik—double-dated new prints of documentary photographs or digital reconstructions of historical slide projections, as well as include the items into their respective current artistic production.²⁵

25 This strategy makes sure that the integrity of the original archive is preserved, while conforming strictly with the artistic ideas of KwieKulik and the way the duo used the archive. In the 1970s and 1980s, Kulik and Kwiek considered it as a “bank” from which they selected slides for their directed, narrative slide-shows. After the show, the slides were returned to the “bank” of archival materials. Contemporary digital technology

The potential commodification and economic exploitation of the archive stems from the fact that the ongoing archival work undertaken by Kulik requires constant financial outlays. Still, occasional sales of new editions of archival items cannot cover all the costs, as spending on the archive has significantly exceeded the proceeds it generates.²⁶ Therefore, the necessary funds come, to a large extent, from the sale of Kulik's solo works and from external public grants, raised by the Kulik-KwieKulik Foundation, an NGO started in 2016 and defined as a "continuation of the idea of the *Studio of Activities, Documentation and Propagation* as well as Zofia Kulik's long-time archival practice."²⁷ Its mission is not only to provide funds for the current work, research and education on the archive and its contents but also to provide for the future upkeep of Kulik's house in Łomianki and for turning this informal "living museum" into a formal institution dedicated to the work of Kulik and Kwiek. When this is accomplished, it will be a final symbolic testament to the artists' drive for self-determination and self-institutionalization.

makes it possible to preserve any visual narrative built on the basis of the KwieKulik archive materials as a discrete work.

26 Author's conversation with Zofia Kulik, February 2018.

27 KwieKulik Foundation website, accessed June 16, 2018, <http://kulikzofia.pl/o-fundacji/>

