

AS FAR AWAY AS HOME

PARIS TO WARSAW



RANDOM~INSTITUTE

The idea is simple. *As far away as home: Paris to Warsaw* is a curatorial initiative featuring *Nummer veertien, home* (2012), an ambitious video by Dutch artist Guido van der Werve. Even though van der Werve's videos have been shown in heavyweight art institutions around the world – or perhaps exactly for that reason – the project deliberately took place beyond museum walls.

A traveling curatorial initiative unfolded over the course of ten days, as the project's curators road tripped from Paris to Warsaw. While traveling from village to village, the curators collaborated with local volunteer hosts and staged a series of intimate home screenings of Guido van der Werve's video work *Nummer veertien, home* (2012).

These informal showings were designed to be a response to the video's integral theme of *the home*, a concept that the artist demonstrates is at once fluid and static. The private screenings thus called direct attention to a variety of places of living and additionally made the case for the relevance of art in both the home and the viewers' personal lives.

Upon arrival in Warsaw, the curators purposefully refrained from screening the video in the institutional framework and instead hosted a public dinner. Guests, together with the curators, discussed the effects of the video's absence that evening, as well as the audiences' reactions during the earlier living room screenings.

Ultimately, the work found its own sort of home in the memories of the home viewers and the dinner guests alike.

Artist

Guido van der Werve

Curators

Sandino Scheidegger & Luca Müller

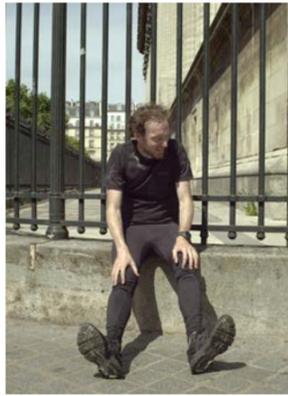
As far away as home was conceived in October 2014 at the invitation of Kunstverein Zurich (Nico Ruffo & Nele Dechmann) and the Centre for Contemporary Art Ujazdowski Castle. It has been supported by Swiss Arts Council Pro Helvetia, Warsaw City Council, and Kultur Stadt Zürich.

Thanks

Photography by Juliette Chrétien (Paris)
Editing by Lindsey Cash (New York)
Luhring Augustine Gallery (New York)



Movie still, *Nummer veertien, home* (2012)



Movie stills, *Nummer veertien, home* (2012)

ART WORK NUMMER VEERTIEN, HOME (2012)

Film synopsis

Guido van der Werve is a thrillingly idiosyncratic artist. With his most ambitious work, *Nummer veertien, home* (2012), he once again lives up to his reputation. Here, his intention is decided: he aims to take the viewer—and the art making process—on a journey that goes as far as his own vigor allows. Van der Werve is seen proving his enormous strength on screen, as he travels further and faster than we could ever imagine, even conquering the most surreal of feats.

1,700 kilometers

In the open sequence, the Dutch artist is pictured playing piano in Warsaw's Church of the Holy Cross, incongruously dressed in a wetsuit and goggles and moments away from embarking upon a heroic solo triathlon. Van der Werve's intent is grand and romantic, as his enormous undertaking consists of traversing some 1,700 kilometers between the Polish and French capitals—by running, swimming and cycling—in tribute to the great composer Frédéric Chopin, whose body is buried in Paris and heart is interred in Warsaw.

The audience subsequently witnesses van der Werve's travels, as he swims with rivers, bikes along country roads and runs through village centers. In so doing, the artist simultaneously repeats Chopin's original trip from Poland to France (he was part of Poland's Great Emigration), as well as reverses the journey of the composer's sister, who honored Chopin's last wishes by smuggling his heart out of France and returning it to their homeland.

As the legend goes, Chopin originally carried with him on his journey a silver cup of dirt from birthplace, thereby keeping his home close at hand. Van der Werve, too, carries a silver cup of dirt from great composer's birthplace (he is pictured stopping there en route), and this time he brings home to Chopin's resting place in Père Lachaise cemetery.

Requiem in three movements and twelve acts

Van der Werve's exploits are extravagantly accompanied by both a requiem of his own composing, as well as interspersed images of the artist in daring, farfetched circumstances—he walks before the viewer while on fire and is lifted by crane up and over his childhood home.

At other points, the history of Alexander the Great's voyage from Macedonia to his place of death in Babylon is presented in parallel to the artist's triathlon. In these ways, the artist contrasts the seriousness of his tribute with fascinating histories and impressive stunts. In the end, the dramatic score comes to a decrescendo as van der Werve is pictured simply yet melancholically at the completion of his triathlon and in front of Chopin's Parisian grave.

Heading home again

As far away as home continued the cyclical movement between the two capitals. Where first it was Chopin and then his heart that made the journey, and finally, it is the artist, followed by his work.

All journeys necessarily call to mind a personal notion of home. While this idea might at times seem stable and permanent, it is also susceptible to continued revision and interpretation. Human perception of home will probably always levitate between reality and fiction, just as van der Werve moves seamlessly between the possible and the impossible.

Community engagement

Of utmost importance to van der Werve's video is the incorporation of local musicians, with whom he collaborated on the recording of his score. *As far away as home* responded directly to this element of community engagement—and even took it one step further—by screening the film in the intimacy of homes along the route. Whereas the film is typically shown in high-definition and projected on large screens, this curatorial approach disregards traditional screening parameters. The curators simply opted to play the video on the technical equipment that existed in the hosts' homes, be it a TV, computer or other device.



Movie still, *Nummer veertien, home* (2012)

JOURNEY

Paris – Warsaw

Everything begins with a conversation

Now more than ever, our world is mobilized. Movement and travel are fast-paced, but art remains remarkably stationary and largely enclosed in museums. *As far away as home* operated under the contention that art reflects the lives of everyone, and it should likewise be experienced in environments relevant to daily experience. In this case, van der Werve's video is viewed within the familiarity of homes and hotels, spaces explicitly void of museum and gallery sterility.

Time spend together

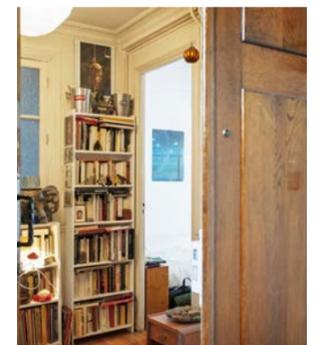
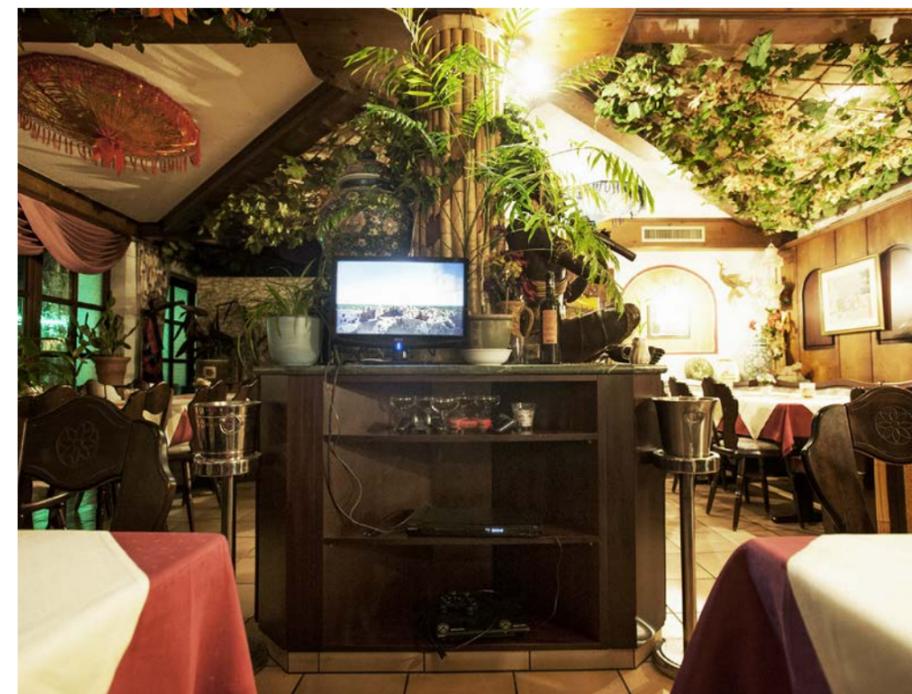
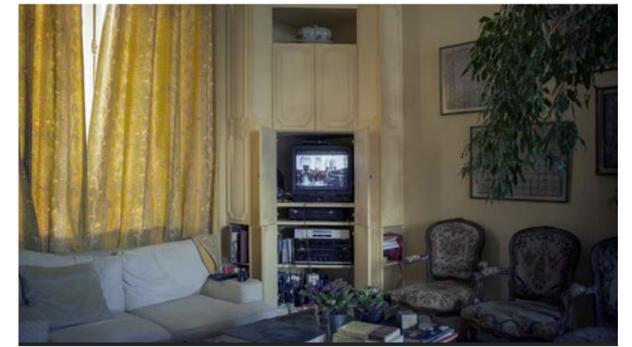
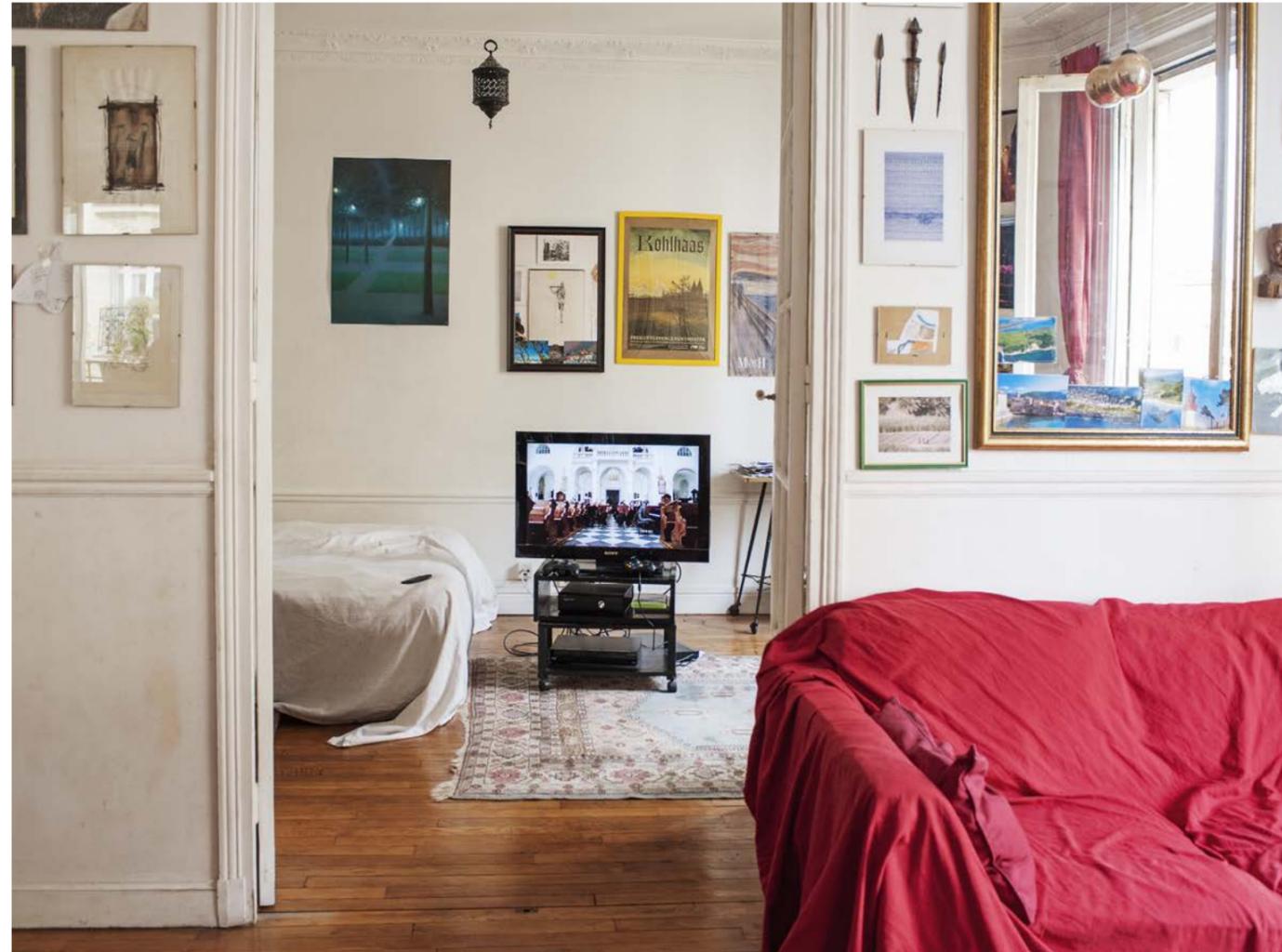
The roving aspect of this curatorial initiative has also been democratic: it enabled improbable audiences to view van der Werve's work and thus overcame the rather insular nature of today's art world. The initiative was not about changing the situation of the people exposed to a work of art and it is irrespective of whether or not art holds such power, as the curators doubt that this is the task of art in the first place.

As far away as home works from the point of view that interactions among strangers can have a lasting effect, be it via spending time together and encountering a work of art collectively or by beginning a conversation that might outlast any curatorial project.

Invading the private sphere

As far away as home challenged its collaborators to share their personal space and to do so in the name of art. Hosts therefore welcomed, in addition to friends and family, strangers (the curators) into their homes, and, more often than not, they did so without previous knowledge of van der Werve or his work. Presumably, they agreed to the project for reasons ranging from curiosity to a love of art to simple generosity.

Conversations that followed the screenings in the hosts' homes were not structured, but natural and open to all reactions and interpretations; ideally, the exercise was one wherein participants began to connect with one and other and sometimes even formed new friendships. As such, the art in this instance was not just the video, but the improvisation of human interaction.



Various places between Paris and Warsaw



24, rue de Mont-Cenis, Paris

Just as art tells its own story, so does every home's living room.



Daumierstr. 6, Leipzig

Beyond the art institution

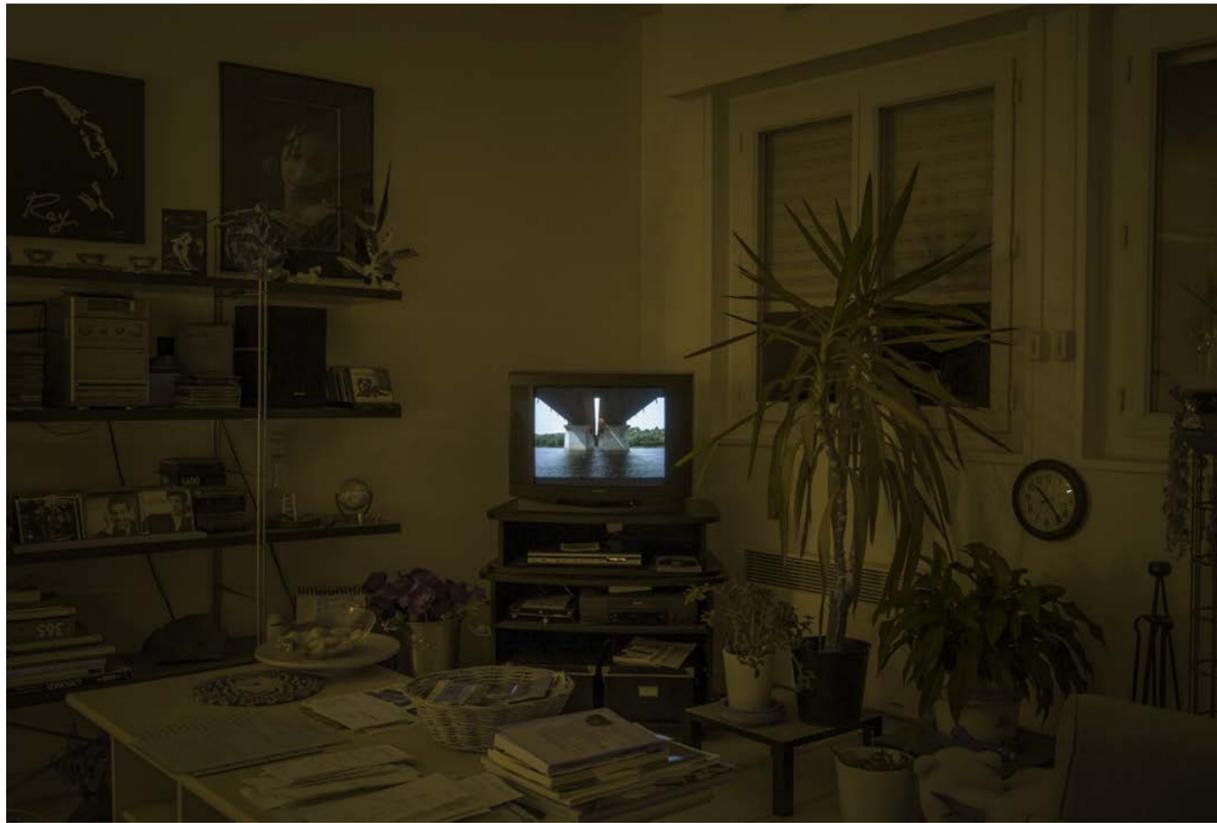
Today's art world is both highly institutionalized and extremely centralized, to the point that potential viewers, specifically those beyond museum and gallery walls, are easily excluded. These large audiences outnumber by far the small factions of art institution visitors.

Polyphonic Roles of Host and Viewers

As far away as home was designed to engage such sidelined audiences through its initiative to make an individual work of art—van der Werve's video—accessible and relevant beyond the institutional framework.

While the work of art was the center of curatorial research, the intimate screenings put the viewer center stage. Therefore, the viewer took on a dual and experimental role. On the one hand, he or she watched the video just as any other a regular viewer. On the other hand, participating hosts became more than just viewers—the hosts, in whose living rooms the audiences gathered, undoubtedly influenced their friends' and families' perception of the art.

We are all strangers,
aren't we?



3, Place Salvador Allende, Ay-Champagne



10 rue François Miron, Paris



Wertheimer Straße 2, 97828 Marktheidenfeld



Domek herbaciany, Parku Rzeźby



35 Rue Veron, Paris



ul. Kosciuszki 1, Słupca



10 rue François Miron, Paris



3, Place Salvador Allende, Ay-Champagne

One work. One route.
A myriad of people.



ul. Kosciuszki 1, Słupca

ABSENCE OF THE WORK

Reaching Warsaw

Upon arrival in Warsaw, the curators purposefully refrained from screening the video and instead hosted a public dinner. Guests, together with the curators, discussed the effects of the video's absence that evening, as well as the audiences' reactions during the earlier living room screenings.

The event took place on October 14, 2013 at the former Porthos, ul. Marszałkowska 9/15, Warsaw



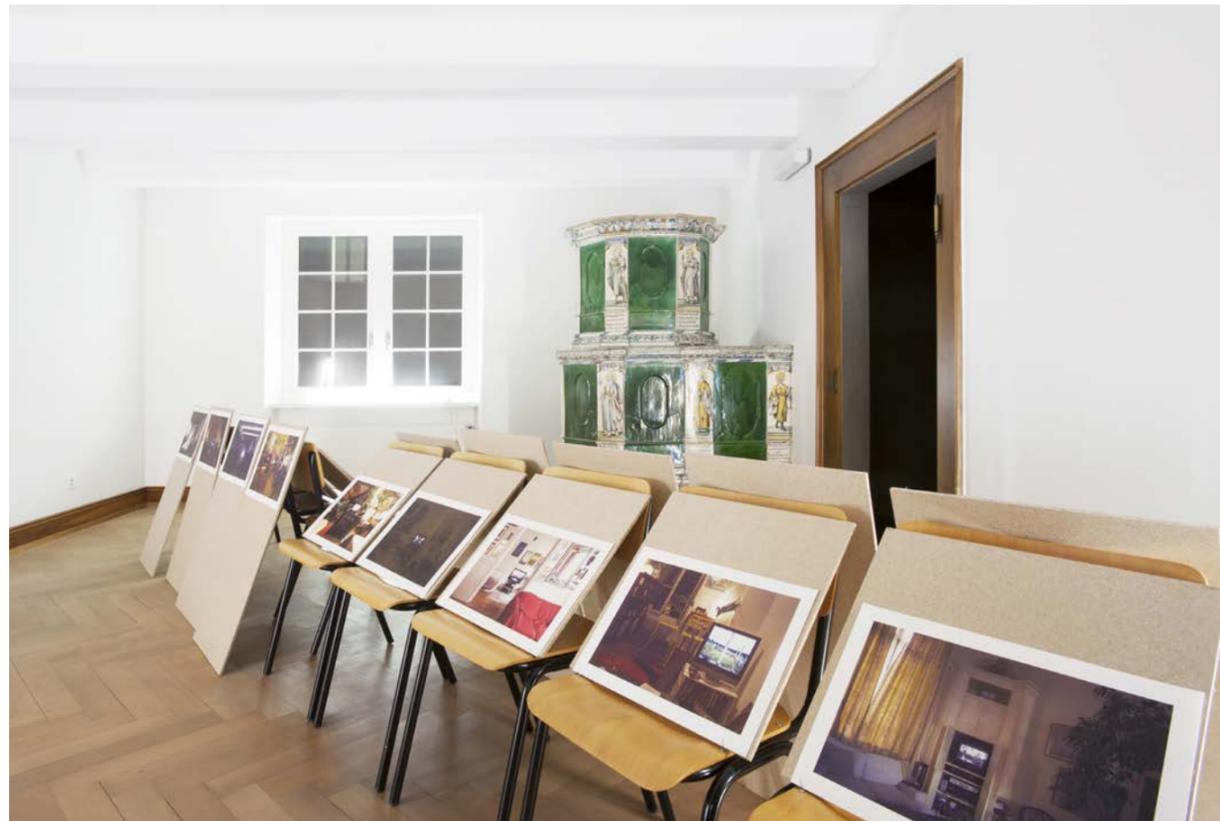
ul. Marszałkowska 9/15, Warsaw



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EXHIBITION

Learning from Warsaw



Room 1, Museum Bäregasse, Zürich

Learning from Warsaw

The curators' initial project *As far away as home* was to take an existing artwork out of the art world and reinsert it in a place central to its concerns (in this case that place was the *home*).

Same starting point

When invited by the Kunstverein Zurich to present *As Far Away As Home* also in an institutional framework, the curators refrained from screening Guido van der Werve's film (like in Warsaw), opting instead to exhibit documentary photographs of people watching the work and TV screens, which simply showed the first frame of van der Werve's film *Nummer veertien, home* (2012).

This frame marked the starting point for the project participants. Following it, the viewers and curators, who sat still next to each other and watched *Nummer veertien, home* (2012), shared their personal stories, experiences, and opinions. Likewise, the frame was presented in the room as a means of connecting the strangers converging here.

The exhibition took place at the Museum Bäregasse from Nov 7 – Dec 15, 2013. The exhibition was accompanied by a catalogue designed by Atlas Studio, which was honored with a Most Beautiful Swiss Books award. It was edited by Nele Dechmann, Nicola Ruffo, and Agnieszka Sosnowska.

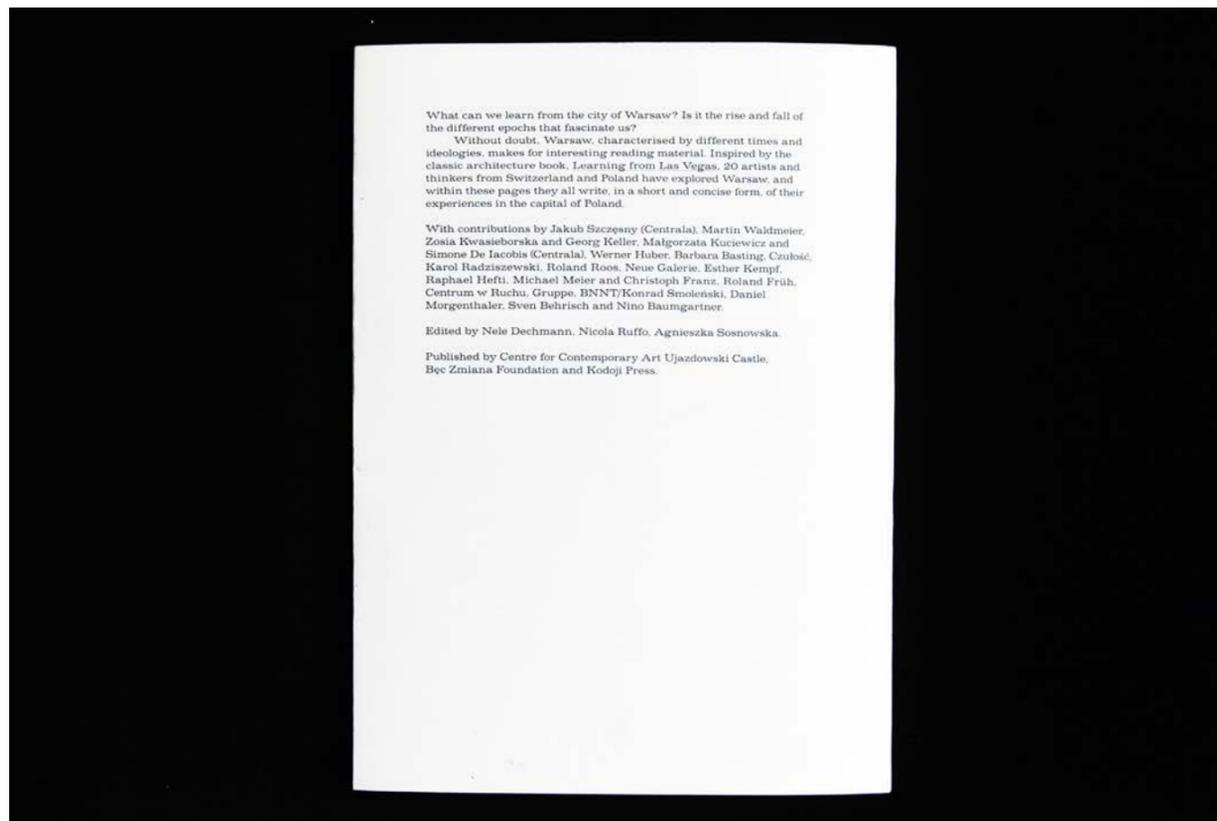
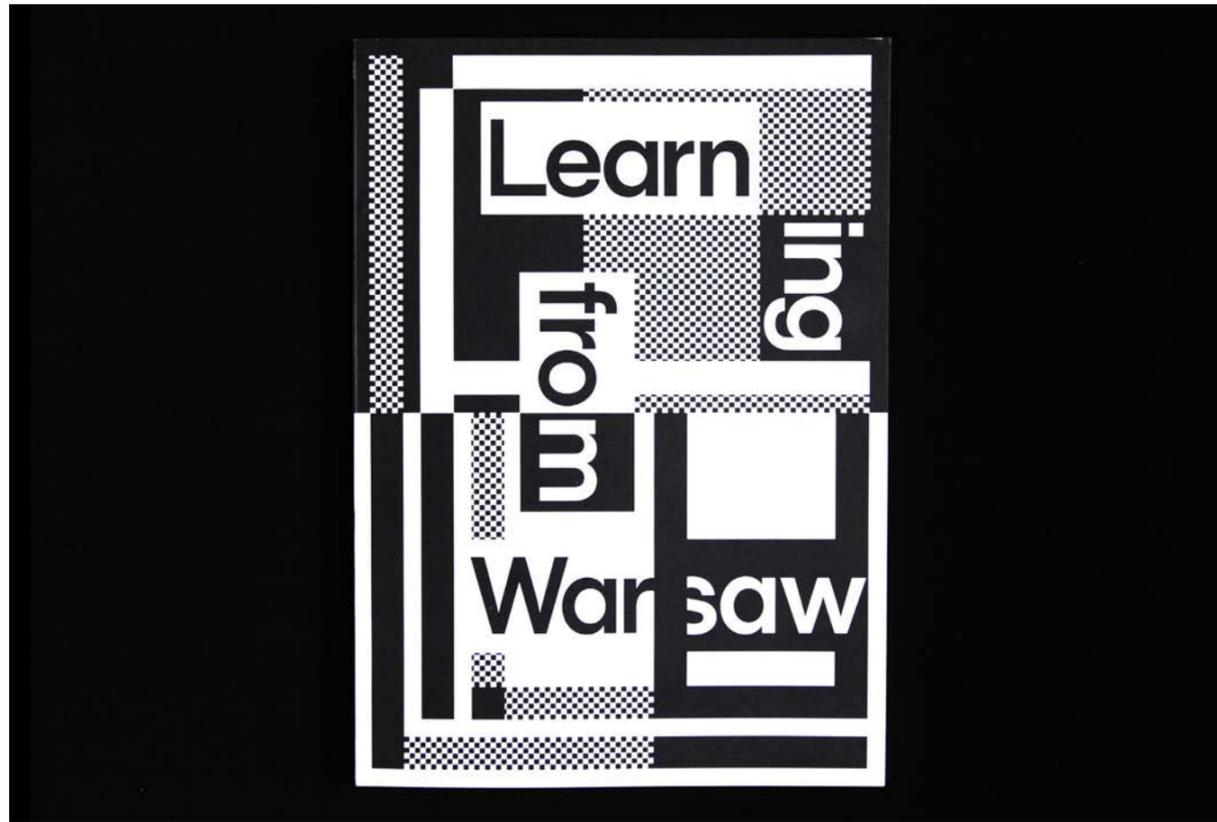
Home is where the art is.



Room 2, Museum Bäregasse, Zürich

PUBLICATION

Learning from Warsaw



Learning from Warsaw

The exhibition was accompanied by a catalogue designed by Atlas Studio, which was honored with a Most Beautiful Swiss Books award. It was edited by Nele Dechmann, Nicola Ruffo, and Agnieszka Sosnowska.





Somewhere in Zurich



R~I

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