Wojciech Gilewicz
Cuboids
E22
Rockaway
Introduction

David A. Goldfarb

Wojciech Gilewicz is an artist based in Warsaw with a foot in New York and a penchant for travel throughout Europe and East Asia. His work – taking the forms of painting, installation, performance, interventions in public space, and video – focuses not so much on production of objects, as on the process of production and consumption of art. It highlights the fine line between the day job and the art world. It asks what makes an object “art” when it could easily be mistaken for something so mundane as to be beyond notice. It shifts the burden from the dissemination to the reception of a message, challenging the audience to recognize the artist at work and to identify the art in front of their noses.

This volume presents three video projects completed in 2015 – Cuboids, E22, and Rockaway – offers two new critical assessments of Wojciech Gilewicz’s work and one creative response. Sara Reisman of The Shelly and Donald Rubin Foundation, who has been a curator of public art in and for the City of New York, examines Gilewicz’s challenging of the boundaries of public space and its relation to private, intimate space in her essay, “Painting the Expanded Field.” Ela Bittencourt, a writer and film critic who divides her time between New York and São Paulo, reads the roles of performance and autobiography between the acts of painting and film making in her essay, “Disappearing Act: Two New Videos by Wojciech Gilewicz.” Todd Shalom might be seen as a poet who thinks like a visual artist, or alternately an artist who uses poetry as his medium, or whose influences come as much from the art world as from the literary tradition. His response here to E22 (2015) brings to the surface some of his own experience of the cultural and aural history of the East Gramercy block where Gilewicz’s intervention takes place.

In E22 Gilewicz records himself repeatedly painting a wall a different solid color on each occasion, in a location that is completely unrecognizable as an art space – a nondescript loading dock on East 22nd Street in Manhattan. At the same time he paints a series of canvasses assembled into blocks that mimic the form of the loading area, and he films his parallel painting in his atelier and on the street. His mother, Danuta Gilewicz, wonders what he is up to and why he is repainting the same canvases solid colors over and over again during a period of three years. His painting of the actual building seems to be of no consequence. He looks like he could be the building’s superintendent, painting the loading zone many times before he is confronted by the landlord, who doesn’t seem to know what to make of the action. This rough moment of recognition signals the end of the street performance. The action on the street can only take place when the artist is invisible, unrecognized like the quantum particle that is displaced at the instant it is measured, like the messiah who ceases to be the messiah at the moment at which he is named.

But the canvas blocks persist in his mother’s private space. She proposes that she can paint and repaint them as decorative objects in her own home, giving them their own meaning, amid the clutter of everyday life, beyond their connection to the building in Manhattan. Gilewicz deploys his mother alternately as a stand-in for himself and as an object of portraiture in Cuboids (2015) and Rockaway (2015). In the seeming simplicity of her existence she bears a certain similarity to the most famous mother in American art, that of James McNeill Whistler’s Arrangement in Grey and Black, No. 1, inspired by the minimalism of Japanese block printing, and yet as in the case of Anna McNeill Whistler, there is a very vibrant life force beneath the austere facade. Not unlike Ms Gilewicz, Ms Whistler traveled – from the American South to New York, and even to Russia when her husband, a prominent engineer, was offered a position designing the St. Petersburg-Moscow railway line. Ms Whistler had to develop a strong sense of self-reliance when her husband and three of their children died of illness in Russia, leaving her to raise offspring of considerable accomplishment despite her modest resources. Ms Gilewicz appears as the icon
of a European immigrant in America, but her son’s intimate portrait reveals an underlying dignity and complexity that may not be apparent from the label “immigrant.” Separated from her first husband, she reinvented herself in a new country, built a career, raised two successful children, and soldiered through the aftermath of hurricane Sandy on the Rockaway Peninsula of Queens, New York. Like Ms Whistler, she takes an active interest in her son’s art making, and Wojciech Gilewicz’s use of his mother as a character, an alter-ego perhaps, is a powerful tribute to her strength and contribution to the artist’s Polish-American identity. It is an acknowledgment of the kind of labor on which art rests. By the end of E22, she becomes not only a character but a visual figure, part of an arrangement of red and white that she has painted, a Polish immigrant eating her soup in front of a Polish flag, bottles of Kikkoman soy sauce she has painted, a Polish immigrant eating her soup in the confines of a children’s book, whereas Gilewicz’s paintings function as interventions within dynamic landscapes of the real world.

Painting The Expanded Field

Sara Reisman

Wojciech Gilewicz’s artwork is best described as painting in the expanded field. My first encounter with his artwork was in the form of a video titled TR Warszawa (2005) which documents his process of painting a large scale replica of the foyer wall in the Tatr Rozmaitości in Warsaw. Gilewicz paints what is behind the canvas onto the canvas, so that the image of the wall blends into the surrounding architectural details of a nearby column and molding adjacent to the painting. Focusing on the unremarkable details of the foyer wall, within the site of the theater itself, Gilewicz’s canvas becomes seamlessly integrated with the interior architecture of the theater lobby. Just as the painting begins to disappear into its surroundings, he rotates the canvas away from its initial position. A contrasting, surreal painting suddenly appears in relation to its context, producing a distorted view of the lobby wall. Gilewicz’s repositioning of this image of the wall and existing architecture reveals how much of an illusion painting is, as well as the illusionistic power of art in general.

In addition to integrating with its surroundings, Gilewicz’s artwork synthesizes painting, performance, and video into a single act. TR Warszawa dismantles painting from the conventions of its assumed position, installed vertically on the wall, and situates the process into an immediate form that is both site-specific and temporal. TR Warszawa also transforms the process of painting, which is usually done in the privacy of a studio, into a public act first witnessed as a live performance and later viewed as a video. This notion of actively bringing art into public life is integral to much of Gilewicz’s artwork.

In 1955, American illustrator Crockett Johnson introduced a character in his book Harold and the Purple Crayon (which would become a series of children’s books). A four-year-old boy named Harold creates the world by drawing it with a purple crayon. The book charts a journey that is based on his desires: he wants to take a walk in the moonlight, but there’s no moon, so he draws it. He has nowhere to walk so he creates a path. Gilewicz’s Revitalizations (2007) function similarly, in that he repaints the deteriorated and broken details of outdoor public spaces, along the surfaces of the built environment, to give them the appearance of restoration, making the world look like he thinks it should. Like Harold, Gilewicz creates what he wants to see, but Harold’s worldly drawings take place within the confines of a children’s book, whereas Gilewicz’s paintings function as interventions within dynamic landscapes of the real world.

Making his way across the globe, Gilewicz has cosmically restored public works in places as far flung as Bat Yam in Israel, Shanghai, Sanok and Wroclaw in Poland, Ivano-Frankivsk in the Ukraine, Paris, Taipei in Taiwan, and New York City, engaging with the distinctly different urban contexts and aesthetic textures of each city. Identifying locations of decay, where paint is peeling away from the facade of a building, where masonry has begun to crumble, and graffiti can be reinterpreted as abstract painting, Gilewicz assumes the role of a maintenance worker who is simply doing his job, touching up the surfaces of the built environment with his paintbrush. These actions have been carried out in numerous museums and public spaces drawing attention to the dysfunctional nature of larger institutional and physical systems in which art and artifact are shown, as well as the spaces where public life is carried out: in the street, the temporary structures used in transportation management, public squares and parks, telephone booths, construction fences, and the platforms of public transit. Making subtle, unauthorized improvements to public spaces, Gilewicz’s artistic interventions call into question how differently artistic labor and so-called functional labor are appreciated in society. An artist’s work is never fully understood by its public, and is often questioned and dismissed as frivolous, unnecessary even, yet an artist playing the role of maintenance worker is taken at face value, someone performing a legitimate service for the public good. That Gilewicz’s performances are less problematic than the

* Daniel E Sutherland, “Think You Know Whistler’s Mother? Think Again.” Newsweek. 11 July 2015. Also see the Detroit Institute of Art’s page, http://www.dia.org/exhibitions/whistlersite/grey.htm
role of the artist highlights a lack of appreciation for art, and even public art. Here I’m writing from an American bias, where artists and cultural producers are often pressured to demonstrate art’s usefulness, giving it a secondary function in order for it to be understood as having real value. It is especially interesting that Gilewicz fuses something useless — art making, and more specifically, abstract painting — with what appears to be a useful endeavor, making improvements to public space.

In 2009, Gilewicz repainted sections of a grafﬁti-covered monument commemorating the 1961 First Summit of the Non-Aligned Movement which convened countries that attempted to remain neutral during the Cold War. Obelisk (2009) involved restoring a commemorative obelisk located in a park in Belgrade, Serbia. Gilewicz’s restoration consisted of restoring the surface with faux-ﬁnished marble paintings on canvas. These panels did not cover the entire obelisk, leaving sections that were still marked by spray painted tags. His panels partially obscured the vandalized marble base, revealing some of the public’s previous interaction with the memorial. While Gilewicz’s work onsite was not questioned by authorities or the public using the park, his work resulted in confusion about why the piece wasn’t properly maintained. In effect, his repair work generated a more complicated awareness of this public structure. Why was it not cleaned fulﬁlly? Why wasn’t it properly maintained? While Gilewicz’s artwork has been linked to American-born maintenance artist Mierle Laderman Ukeles (who has spent nearly 40 years as an artist-in-residence with New York City’s Department of Sanitation), he has never worked in direct collaboration with the city government or management, nor has he sought permission from local authorities to stage these public interventions that at times might be understood by authorities as renegade and illegal as vul-
dalism or grafﬁti.

In spite of these revitalizations not being permitted by authorities, Gilewicz has faced little resist ance from authorities. In late 2008 and early 2009 he created a series of public interventions called In Practice as part of an exhibition by the same name at SculptureCenter, a contemporary art space in Long Island City, Queens. At the same time, Gilewicz had been making paintings of these found, collaged paintings of the New York City subway system. Within the subways, both elevated and underground, the walls are lined with framed surfaces for print advertise ments. Periodically, shredded layers of previously displayed posters, which are pasted to the framed surface on the subway platform wall, are stripped away for new advertisements. The peeled away layers leave behind what often reads as a kind of Ab stract Expressionist painting, sometimes familiar, in the vein of Jasper Johns, Jackson Pollock, or Robert Rauschenberg, whose encaustic paintings, paint drippings, and assemblages bear a striking resemblance to found surfaces in contemporary urban spaces. Gilewicz created a series of paintings that bridged an Ab-Ex sensibility with signs of American patriotism in popular culture and politics, painting the stars and stripes within one of these advertising frames. For his project In Practice, Gilewicz approached surfaces of the built environment beneath an overpass near SculptureCenter’s building, a dead zone where the Department of Transportation stored construction materials and barricades, and cars were stealthily parked in an underutilized cul-de-sac. Nearby, Gilewicz extended his oil paintings onto the surfaces of pay telephone booths, which, like the subway, also house print advertisements (in the case of the phone booths they are usually light-boxes).

These oil paintings were subtle improvements of what was already there, replicas of the orange and white stripes found on barriers used to keep vehicular trafﬁc at bay, and the silver surfaces of outdoor stainless steel phone-booth kiosks. What has become increasingly compelling about Gilewicz’s artwork is the way in which it signals obsolescence of common structures of public life. Take the phone booths that were part of his commission with SculptureCenter. As a result of cellular technology, many of these phone booths don’t exist anymore, and those that remain are often shelters without telephones. This forecasting of the diminishing value and respect for the built environment also applies to the monument in Belgrade where Gilewicz made a partial repair, its partialness made more apparent in a three-dimensional obelisk installed in the constructed natural landscape of a park. How long will the meaning of this monument — a symbol to the Non-Aligned Movement — be understood by the community that surrounds it? Does it have a place within the social media that invisibly ﬁlls public spaces today? In this way, Gilewicz’s Obelisk became a temporary memorial to the damages incurred by the monument, and the In Practice installations functioned to quietly highlight and commemorate the changes underway in Long Island City, which has recently transformed from mixed-use commercial buildings and artist studios to a landscape populated by corporate architecture and luxury condominiums.

An important, and at times confounding, aspect of Gilewicz’s outdoor interventions is the way in which they reinforce the broken windows theory, a criminological theory used by the New York City Police Department in the 1980s in an attempt reduce criminal activity. The phrase “broken windows” was coined by James Q. Wilson and George L. Kelling in an article in The Atlantic Monthly in March 1982. At the time, New York City was recovering from a ﬁnancial crisis and many of the city’s public spaces, including the subways, were in disrepair. Kelling went on to co-author (with Catharine Coles) the book Fixing Broken Windows: Restoring Order and Reducing Crime in Our Communities (1996), which examined the conditions in which crimes are committed, how the appearance of public space contributes to its true safety, and how seemingly superﬁcial infractions, like littering, tagging, and broken windows, lead to more crime and vandalism. The theory was applied to the subway system, which New Yorkers had come to fear, when in 1985 Kelling was hired as a consultant by the city’s Metro Transit Authority to guide a cleanup process that focused on removing and in many cases painting over grafﬁti in the subway system in an effort that lasted until 1990. Around the same time, in 1986, the Transit Authority established its Arts for Transit program and began commissioning artists to create permanent works of art as part of capital improvements, following the guidelines of the city’s Percent for Art program in which a percent of construction costs are allocated to an artist commission. Unlike these ofﬁcial commissions which integrate decorative tile, paving designs, mosaics, cast bronze reliefs, and on occasion, artist-designed lighting, Gilewicz’s success in blending in as he transforms decay and trash into his own artistic gesture may be the result of municipalities internalizing the broken windows theory which has in many cities led to more substantial revitalization, and, ultimately, gentriﬁcation.

Only once have Gilewicz’s public painting-performances garnered enough attention that he was questioned by an authority, whose identity was never really clear aside from the fact that he claimed to represent 310 East 22nd Street where Gilewicz voluntarily painted and repainted, in varied colors, sections of the concrete base of the building. The video, E22 (2015) which is named for this site, alternates between the location on 22nd Street in Manhattan, and the exterior and interior of a private house in Rockaway, where the artist’s mother lives. The video cuts between the two sites, where Gilewicz paints layers of color: yellow, green, beige, grey, lavender, and black. Both sites share similar forms – rectilinear sections at the base of each building – that Gilewicz chose to paint. On East 22nd Street, rectangular blocks form the base of unmarked building, flanking the loading docks and metal roll Gates common to commercial buildings in New York City. For the past ﬁfteen years, Gilewicz has painted similar rectangles along the periphery of the residential home (although these canvases are built in the same measurements as the architectural details in Manhattan they reference) as well as in other locations in New York City. Together, these alternating sites are continually transformed through the act of repeatedly painting over several years. On 22nd Street, Gilewicz was eventually approached by a man (who’s voice is heard in the video, but he is not seen).

“Can I ask you why you put that yellow?”

Gilewicz responds, “You don’t like it?”

Confused, the man asks, “Sorry!”
Gilewicz repeats the question, “You don’t like it?”

The man is silent.

Gilewicz continues, “You don’t like the yellow?”

The man asks, “Who gave you permission?”

Gilewicz responds, “Nobody.”

The man counters, “You know this is private property. This painting – ”

Gilewicz, “Yeah, yeah, I know.”

The man stands forward, “You’re aware. This is my building.”

In the end there are no real consequences, perhaps because public life in New York City is so very public, that it’s unclear how a building owner would respond to an unsolicited paint job. Would he file a police report? The conversation with the building owner eventually finds its way into Gilewicz’s video E22, a one-to-one dialogue that reveals the blurriness of property ownership, taste, and negotiation.

Gilewicz’s artwork is slippery in that it never fully restores. It is rarely done in accordance with laws and regulations of civic space, nor does it makes itself known in the way that art conceived for public reception does. Unlike Gilewicz’s other works – Revitalizations and Obelisk, among others – the surrogate figures of the plinths in Cuboids are not integrated, nor are they fixed in place. They reflect the placelessness of art, as well as the artist’s own anxieties about the precarious nature of life in Rockaway, and of his mother’s relocation from Poland to the United States. Rockaway, on the other hand, charts Gilewicz’s mother’s reflections on her uncertain future, following her at home, Gilewicz painting in his studio nearby, and the camera later takes the viewer to the Frieze Art Fair where Gilewicz’s mother observes what passes for art: detritus that is not so different from what remained in the recent hurricane’s wake. The video ends with a sanitation worker picking up the discarded paintings Gilewicz made earlier in the video. As the sanitation worker realizes that the artist’s camera is pointed at him through an upstairs window, he shimmies for Gilewicz’s benefit, dancing as he tosses each of the discarded paintings into the back of the garbage truck. Here the artwork comes full circle, from production to destruction, and becomes a story about loss and renewal.

Gilewicz’s practice is about expanding the scope of painting specifically and art generally into the realm of daily life, usually public and sometimes private. It is about testing public perception, quietly advocating for more active awareness of the surrounding visual world, and finding art in the concurrent decay and restoration of daily life. Gilewicz’s revitalizations question the very nature of art, dismantling it from the rarified, official spaces of culture to a much wider field that leads to the discovery that life itself is art.
your pocked yellow
canvas, a stand-in
and lean-on
leave all the lights
on paz, in key, 'N Sync
now grey – just when I was
waver on the rubbery warning
strip before the subway
gap – it’s ok. on such a winter’s day.
this light’s best for photographs and walking
by my first New York apartment
now & forever brown
I’d paint the town gown
a warm but not too humid spell of sweat
whose marks will have the final say
Disappearing Act: Two New Videos by Wojciech Gilewicz

Ela Bittencourt

“Destruction is also creation.” Marcel Duchamp

Video has been a steadfast ally for Wojciech Gilewicz, a Polish-born artist who splits his time between New York and Warsaw. Since his early work Gilewicz has used the camera to document his “hidden paintings,” i.e. canvases that he inserts into local environments and that imitate everyday objects. These paintings meld so perfectly with their surroundings, imitating trees, bushes, or city walls, that they become unnoticeable to passersby. Only in the act of removing them or, as Gilewicz did at Foksal in 2005, by moving the paintings from the garden to the interior of the gallery and hanging them on the wall, does Gilewicz call our attention to the fact that the canvases are autonomous works of art.

Gilewicz plays with the idea of verisimilitude: painting, like photography, can faithfully represent reality, while paradoxically remaining an artefact. By choosing the most classical of methods, oil painting, and making his canvases look like construction material or fragments of nature, Gilewicz questions the painting’s privileged status. At times, as in his latest work, he destroys the canvases at the end, as if the process and not the material object were his only aim. Yet this is not a mere negative commentary on art or the art world. Equally important is the way in which Gilewicz invites gallery and museum visitors, as well as random passersby in the street, to take part in his conceptual games.

The willingness to see reality anew is essential to these games. Gilewicz uses estrangement or initial shock to activate the communal space, and to make the reception of his artwork more participatory and reflexive. In 2005, for example, Gilewicz installed a fake wall (a canvas) in the foyer of TR Warszawa, a trompe l’œil all the more playful since it was placed inside a theater, which by definition is a space devoted to make-believe. The project lasted over a year. Other projects, such as Gilewicz’s residency in Shanghai where he produced a short video, Intrude, are more fleeting, Gilewicz is a performative painter, interested in permanence and indelibility, but also in unrepeatable actions and one-off gestures. In Intrude, for example, he paints in a fragment of a Chinese flag on an advertisement displayed in a busy commercial area, and later removes it, to the astonishment of the passersby. A sense of drama that permeates this work is palpable in the accompanying video. At other times, the effect is more somber. In Visitor, a video filmed in Seoul, Gilewicz follows homeless locals in their daily routines, but never blends in as if he himself were a failed disappearing painting. This deliberate failure then becomes a self-critique: Gilewicz as an artist is an empathizing observer of social ills, for which art offers no immediate remedy.

While Gilewicz may have started using video mainly to document installations and performative actions, the medium soon took on a life of its own. For someone as concerned with time and action, video is a natural extension of painting and photography. Video is photography in motion, and increasingly, thanks to technological advances, is further and further liberated from verisimilitude. One might say that film “paints” as much as it records. For someone as concerned with time and action, video is a perfect ally for an artist who, like Gilewicz, wishes to extend his practice to the city street allows Gilewicz to test viewers’ candid reactions to his surprising, playful antics. His approach is paradoxical: on one hand, the eponymous cuboids are empty vessels that possess no inherent meaning or purpose; on the other hand, they are ideal art objects, open to limitless interpretation. Thus, through his quirky, constant re-contextualizing of the cuboids, Gilewicz raises questions about art and art practice. At which point does a thing become art? And when exactly is a routine activity transformed into an artistic practice?

The other public context, this time during The IDEAS CITY Festival in 2015, Intrude, is more fleeting. Gilewicz subsequently dumps the cuboids into a pond, where they float like ethereal floes, and then places them against similarly looking cubes in an outdoor sculpture park. Do they now together form a new monumental sculpture? Or do they remain mere appendices, calling into question the arbitrary status granted to sculptural forms?

Gilewicz’s approach is paradoxical: On one hand, the eponymous cuboids are empty vessels that possess no inherent meaning or purpose; on the other hand, they are ideal art objects, open to limitless interpretation. Thus, through his quirky, constant re-contextualizing of the cuboids, Gilewicz raises questions about art and art practice. At which point does a thing become art? And when exactly is a routine activity transformed into an artistic practice? Such questions gain increasing urgency in Gilewicz’s work, often prompting him to look beyond traditional museum and gallery settings. Extending his practice to the city street allows Gilewicz to test viewers’ candid reactions to his surprising, permissible art, or to meditate on their non-interest. Recently, at the Infecting The City Festival, organized by the Africa Centre in Cape Town, Gilewicz staged painting interventions – at a public market, he executed and recorded splashes on pavement, juxtaposing his ephemeral urban markings with other forms of painting being displayed (i.e. body painting and paintings sold to tourists). In yet another public context, this time during The IDEAS CITY Festival in 2015, Invisible City, organized by the New Museum, New York, Gilewicz collected the waste left by the festival’s visitors. His performative action, RRRC: Reduce, Reuse, Recycle, Compost,
reminced invisible to spectators, and again raised the question of where a civic action or ordinary physical labor ends and an artistic practice begins.

In Cuboids, Gilewicz stresses the repetitiveness in his own work. Frame after frame, we see him transport, discard and reinstall the cubes, emphasizing physical labor over the exaltation of an artist creating in a studio. And although Gilewicz as filmmaker is in complete control, as actor he struggles with the cubes’ unwieldy sizes and weights. In this sense, Cuboids is a situation comedy, which in its inventiveness and humor harks back to Gilewicz’s earlier works (particularly his 2005 installation at Foksal Gallery or the video, Intrude). And while the idea that art is a matter of social convention is not explored earlier in works such as the photographic essay, Them (ongoing since 2002). In Them, Gilewicz created double self-portraits, evoking domesticity, sexuality and role-playing. This time, in Rockaway, Gilewicz is more interested in the interconnection between personal experience and art making, memory and materiality, than in memory itself. As in Cuboids, he emphasizes the objects’ physicality. In one scene, Gilewicz’s mother lays out her personal items – brushes, lipstick, nail polish – that she has rescued from the flood’s destruction, as T-shirts, blankets and other possessions air out on the lawn. Textures and vibrant colors of both the discarded domestic items and the paint predominate. At the same time, Gilewicz creates a tension between what is being discarded and what merits preservation, as well as between the personal and the abstract elements. In this sense, neither his video nor his mother’s comments are strictly illustrative, just as Gilewicz’s abstract paintings are not in strict correspondence to nature. The video does not reflect directly the mother’s journey either. Instead, in Rockaway, Gilewicz stages a double act. On one hand, he conveys skepticism towards art’s capacity to encapsulate personal trauma; this is stressed by his mistrust of facile narration, which might have given us a false impression that his mother’s disillusions can be easily distilled into a digestible form. Instead, art as abstraction stands at a remove from the lived experience. Yet paradoxically, it is this crucial remove—an act of overcoming or sublimation – that allows Gilewicz to create the video.

Unlike in Cuboids, Gilewicz remains off-screen in Rockaway, though his presence is strongly implied by the intimate tone of his mother’s testimony and by the shots that reveal both his and his mother’s hands applying paint to canvas, while their faces remain hidden. The painting activity alternates with the mother’s efforts to clear out the waste. As in Cuboids, there are parallels between the raw materials used in art and disposable waste, or refuse. We can note this particularly in one scene in which Gilewicz’s mother visits the Friere Art Fair in New York City and encounters some of the similar shapes and colors, not to mention objects that she might find in her own devastated yard. But this tension between the mundane object and art is pushed further, for even though the “poor materials” (felt or cardboard) have long been incorporated into the language of the visual arts, we may still ask to what extent they can truly convey the financial straits to which they allude. The “poor” art object is thus opposed to actual economic distress and marginalization in ways that cannot be easily resolved. This preoccupation with art’s relationship to reality – and its duty to redeem its appropriation of it – recalls some of Gilewicz’s earlier work, particularly his long-duration performance Residency Unlimited at an artist residency in Long Island City, Queens. Gilewicz hired himself out as a cleaner, an unskilled job often left to first-generation immigrants, in an art-studio space, unbeknownst to the artists creating artwork on its premises. In Rockaway, Gilewicz is also alluding to the double lives of artists, since for most, art does not bring financial rewards, and many artists engage in other work, from service industry to physical labor, to gain stability. It is often this stability, in turn, that makes their artistic practice possible. In this sense, what Gilewicz points to in Rockaway is the fact that to work in a studio in Rockaway is to be removed from the power centers of art located in New York’s Manhattan or, for the younger generations of artists, in Queens’ Long Island City or Brooklyn’s Williamsburg, Greenpoint or Bushwick. The location of Gilewicz’s studio in Rockaway epitomizes the economic marginalization that currently plagues artists in New York City. In an age of uncontrollable growth, widening income gaps and rapid gentrification, artists are being increasingly pushed out from the more desirable areas to the peripheries. Rockaway suggests an ultimate demarcation, though in reality artists looking for affordable studio space have long been moving out of New York City altogether – all this in spite of the rampant commercialization of art, its glamorization and skyrocketing art prices.

But Rockaway is also, and perhaps above all, a commentary on identity. The literal process of discarding and losing can be read as a metaphor of the immigrant experience, in which one’s home, culture and language are being lost, or exchanged, in hopes – in this case, frustrated – for improving one’s life. This is the one more openly tragic dimension of Gilewicz’s video, and it is not clear to what extent we can take consolation in art as a way of recovering some of this personal experience, thus redeeming the multiple losses and heartaches that Gilewicz’s mother endured. At the same time, however, Rockaway, even more than Cuboids, is a vision of persistence against all odds: Gilewicz casts his mother as a self-reliant, albeit frail, survivor, haunted by her painful journey.

In both videos, Gilewicz resists what he sees as a recent tendency in the visual arts towards narrativity, with visual artists increasingly using modes of production (cinematography, acting, editing and screenwriting) common to feature fiction films. In contrast, the deliberate crudeness of Gilewicz’s films evokes amateur video. His “no-budget cinema” offers a counter-balance to the increasing scaling-up of art production, and reflects his experience as an immigrant artist of modest means. In this, the humble, ubiquitous, economically viable digital video has proven an infinitely versatile, oftentimes playfully subversive, tool. For, in a way, Gilewicz reverses the scenario presented by some contemporary filmmakers, such as, for example, Filipino director Raya Martin and Canadian director-critic Mark Peranson in La ultima película (The last movie). Martin and Peranson reference the possibilities of amateur video, but mainly, often in apocalyptic fashion, bemoan the fragility and destructibility of film vis-à-vis canvas and paint. Gilewicz, in contrast, looks to film for a sense of permanence and continuity, leaving traces of his disappearances along the way.
List of Works / Spis prac:

**Cuboids**
Video (HD) / Wideo (HD)
2015
17 min 14 s
Edited by / Montaż Mirosław Szewczyk
Video stills on pages / Kadry wideo na stronach
9, 10, 11

**E22**
Video (HD) / Wideo (HD)
2015
14 min 32 s
Edited by / montaż Miroslaw Szewczyk
Video stills on pages / Kadry wideo na stronach
13, 14, 15

**Rockaway**
Video (HD) / Wideo (HD)
2015
17 min 43 s
Edited by / Montaż Mirosław Szewczyk
Video stills on pages / Kadry wideo na stronach
20, 21, 22
Wstęp

David A. Goldfarb

cię, tym bardziej widoczne, że dotyczącą trójwymiarowej obiektyw
stojącego w naturalnocy oraz krajającego miejskiego parku. Jak długo nie widzałem tego przedstawienia? Przenośność
zawierającego – pozostanie zrozumiałe dla miejscowej społeczności? Czy
zrozumieć, jak pozornie drobne naruszenia porządku, takie jak zaśmiecanie,
łagodzenie i zredukować przestępczość w naszych społecznościach, gdzie
potrzebny jest konsekwentny sposób na działanie. Czasem, jak w przypadku jego najnowszego projektu, płót-
cowe malowanie ulic szatę potem
brązu, pochłonął je w porządku.

Rodaków w oczy widoczny projekt Gilewica zatytułowany Cuboids, rozpoczęty w 2009 i ukończony w 2015 roku, można postrzegać
jak przykład na zielono w Art Omi, ośrodku pracy twórczej w stanie
New York, a także na jasnoniebiesko, żółto, brązowo i czerwono. Wideo kończy się ujęciem śmieciarza zbierając-
ich materiałów, usuwając je z pierwotnej lokalizacji (tak jak uczynił to Gilewicz w 2010 roku, gdy przeniósł płótna z Giovana i w Gdańsku w 2015 roku), a także przypadkowych przekształceń, do wzięcia udziału w swo-
ych konkretnych grach.

Kluczowym elementem tych gier jest chęć ujawnienia rzeczywisto-
osti, przede wszystkim rzeczywistości przyszłości, która nie ma czasu
być dostrzegana. Chociaż artysta z poczucie wykorzystywał wideo przede wszyst-
kim jako narzędzie do dotarcia do widza, pojawiało się też na ogólne wyobrażenie świata, jakim byłby tam, gdyby Gilewicz ma-
żującym obrazami tak dobrze wtapiają się w tło – drzewa, krzewy lub mury,
przez sztukę. Przykładem jest „Chico’s Crib” (1981), gdzie Gilewicz malował
na jednym z murów, usuniętych z budynku, a więcej wocusedzych
płótna, substytut twoje kostropate żółte
świątynię, odrywając ją od sterylnych przestrzeni instytucji kulturalnych,
by móc widzieć rzeczywistość, paradoksalnie, jak gdyby obiektywem
kamery było oczy artysty, podkreślając w ten sposób, że wszystko co otacza nas – od przestrzeni architektonicznej do przestrzeni naturalnej – jest rzeczywistością, a tym samym, że rzeczywistość jest zdolna do odbicia na nasze świadomość i do odkrywania sztuki
w samym świecie.
ściany – powierzchnie, które jeszcze przed chwilą nęciły czystym, artysty, a może nawet odrzucenie przez niego sprofesjonalizowanych, prostopadłościennych brył za dość komiczną ripostę suje proces twórczy. Pracę Gilewicza można interpretować na wiele sposobów. W jednej ze scen matka Gilewicza pokrywa ściany pędzelkami jaskrawoczerwoną farbą i zainstalowana na trawniku zużywa wówczas stwarza wrażenie unieruchomionych. Nie są już błahie lub nie- 28 rzeczywistości. Można rzec, że film w równym stopniu „maluje”, co też sprawia, że praca twórcza – w formie tego rodzaju działań, za sprawą celowo zachowanej surowości, praktyka Gilewicza budzą skojarzenia z filmami amatorskimi. Jego „kino ta pierwsza kula, która traci dom, kulturę i język lub porzuca je w zamian za nadzieje – w tym przypadku za nadzieje na Rockaway, to miejsce, które wyznacza ostateczną granicę tego prostego. Jednak film Rockaway jest takie, a więc może przede wszystkim wywodzić się z jego powodzenia, ale także z opuszczenia miejsca przeznaczenia – jak miłosęp, który utraczyć można poza sceną, w wiert w trudnej sytuacji wokół domu. Gilewicz zbierał malarskie interwencje – namiętnie i zaciekawiony chwilą, która zadziwia i uczucie, wywołane przez matkę, która dąży do uprzątnięcia domu. Podobnie jak w filmie gwałtowną animację. „Pokazane” imię artysty jest to z jednej strony puste skorupy, pozbawione wrodzonego znaczenia lub miejsca, lecz z drugiej to ideale obiektu sztuki o nie- ogniściętwa stylu nadany rzemieślnicznemu formowi. Postawa Gilewicza jest paradoksalna. Tytułowe prostopadłościę- ny z jednej strony skorupy, pozbawione wrodzonego znaczenia lub miejsca, lecz z drugiej to ideale obiektu sztuki o nie- ingratulacyjność w kwestii utrzymania nie- wychodzą ciekawym. Sztuka zaczęła od „przygód” – szczególnym przypadkiem futurystycznej narracji, które nigdy nie są „fotografii” sztuki, a zamiast pojawiać się w filmie jako inni artysty. Niedawno, na festiwalu Infecting the City, zorganizowanym przez działy przedmiotu nowego kontekstu, zbudowano wytwarzać filmowy z bytu, nie tylko w celu znalezienia „prawdziwych” lokalizacji. W twórczości Gilewicza są te żywe, pełne życia. Często to „niezależnie od tego, że nie jest lokatorem ani dom ownership in the form of practical actions, with the intentional and often also laughably absurd. Gilewicz udaje się „przeciwnikiem”, który odwraca bowiem w jakiś sposób scenariusz realizowany przez niego współczesnych twórców filmowych. W wielu filmach, jak Lipowski, czy też Redpath, reżyser Raya Martin i kanadyjski reżyser-krytyk Mark Peranson, którzy współczesnych twórców filmowych, takich jak filipiński reżyser, czy też pojawia cień i nieskończoność. 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WOJCIECH GILEWICZ was born in 1974 in Biłgoraj, Po-
land. He lives and works in Warsaw and New York. He is a painter, photo-
grapher and author of installations, performative actions and vi-
deo works. Drawing on his experience of the painting medium, he creates for-
mally varied works, which seek to investigate the boundaries of art and
space. In his recording of reality, Gilewicz remains loyal to the
painting tradition. Each frame registered by his camera becomes a
painting, the camera itself fluidly transforming into a means
of creating works of art that push the limits of
sensory perception. Gilewicz’s art provokes reflec-
tion on the mechanisms which govern perception and its cultural conditioning. The author actively colla-
borates with visitors when he presents both his works and in polemics about myths and stereotypes concerning the most
recent art, its reception and interpretation. Gilewicz takes on board
issues related to the role of painting in today’s world, the status of
the artist and artistic institution, and the relationship of art to
the circulation of art, as well as a society at large.
In 2009, the Centre for Contemporary Art Ujazdowski Castle in
Warsaw was the site of a solo exhibition titled WOJCIECH: Gilewicz’s work, presenting a series of photographic double self-portraits, a
project started in 2002, which continues to date.
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SAFA REISMAN is Artistic Director of the Shelley & Donald Rubin Foundation, which is focused on supporting artistic projects that
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True/False Film Festival in Columbia, Missouri, USA, as well as the
author of the accompanying monograph, Neither/Not: Chimeric Cine-
a, Poland, 1978–1998. As of 2013, she is on the selection commit-
tee for the It’s All True International Documentary Film Festival in
Paris. Between 2014 and 2015 she was a cultural producer at the
Paula’s project, which zakrępia na resztkę artystycznych wizualnych z całego świata. W 2013 roku otrzymała stypendium dla karuzali Małgorzata Viclę w Nagrodę Artystycznej Fellowship przyznawanej przez Foundation for a Civil Society.
TODD SHALOM works with text, sound and image to re-contextualize the body in space using vocabulary of the everyday. He is the founder and director of non-profit participatory walks organization, Elastic City. In this role, Todd leads his own walks, collaborates with artists to lead joint walks, and works with artists in a variety of disciplines to adapt their expertise to the participatory walk format. He often collaborates with performance artist/director Niegel Smith. Together, they conceive and stage interactive performances in public and private environments. Todd is also a ringleader of Willing Participant. Together, they conceive and stage interactive performances in public and private environments. Todd is also a ringleader of Willing Participant. Willing Participant whips up urgent poetic responses to crazy shit that happens. Todd is a member of the core faculty in Pratt Institute's new MFA in Writing. His work has been presented by organizations such as Abrons Art Center, Brooklyn Museum, The Invisible Dog, ISSUE Project Room, The Museum of Modern Art, The New Museum, P.S. 122 and Printed Matter. Todd is a graduate of the MFA Writing Program at California College of the Arts and also holds a B.S. in Business Administration from Boston University.