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Press enquiries:

Elena Pakhomova

[elena@calvert22.org](mailto:elena@calvert22.org)

+44 (0)207 613 2259

Ruxandra Connolly

[ruxandra@calvert22.org](mailto:ruxandra@calvert22.org)

+44 (0)203 651 2781



Calvert 22 Foundation  
presents:

## Family Values Polish Photography Now

25 May – 22 July 2018, Calvert 22 Space

**Press View:** Thursday 24 May, 5pm – 6pm

**Private View:** Thursday 24 May, 6pm – 9pm

#FamilyValues

*Family Values: Polish Photography Now* is a unique season of photography and events examining Polish visual culture from the second part of the 20th century and the current creative landscape of a nation with deep historical and emotional links to the UK. *Family Values* is part of Calvert 22 Foundation's 2018 endeavour to depict the evolution of societal and cultural change in the New East through photography.

At the centre of the season sits the first exhibition devoted to Polish photography in the UK, which amplifies themes of identity, home and family in the context of social and political change. Coinciding with the celebrations of the centenary of Polish independence in 2018, the project looks at the end of the Communist period in Poland as well as the contemporary art scene to explore how individual freedoms are found within the confines of the home, and how the domestic serves as a trope for the artistic exploration of different, darker questions concerning identity.

The exhibition is curated by **Kate Bush**.

Calvert 22 Foundation, 22 Calvert Avenue, London, UK, E2 7JP.

Calvert 22 Foundation is a registered charity no.1134939 and a company limited by guarantee no. 06941737

[calvert22.org](http://calvert22.org)

At its heart will be a presentation of the work of **Zofia Rydet** (1911 – 1997), a photographer much admired in Poland who is now coming to wide international prominence. Her work has never been seen in the UK.

In 1978, at the unusually advanced age of 67, Zofia Rydet embarked on a monumental project that was to consume her until she died: she set out to make a portrait of every person in Poland. Over the course of twenty years, she photographed 20,000 people at home, the pace of the project only limited at the end by her increasing physical frailty. The work is known as the *Sociological Record* (1978 – 1997). She broke her *Record* into various subcategories such as *TV Sets*, *Women on Doorsteps*, *Windows* and *Disappearing Professions* – and systematically photographed the family in all its parts and possible permutations: men, women, children, married couples, teenagers, grandparents, babies, multiple generations simultaneously, the elderly and the infirm.



Zofia Rydet, *People in interiors*, from the *Sociological Record*, Ostropa, Silesia, 1980 © Zofia Rydet Foundation

Zofia Rydet was fascinated by the way that the choices and decisions made in an interior space express an individual's psychology and creativity as well as their political and religious affiliations.

In the exhibition, images by Zofia Rydet will be presented alongside contemporary Polish artists exploring similar topics in their work. These include: Józef Robakowski, Aneta Grzeszykowska, Weronika Gęsicka, Aneta Bartos and Adam Palenta.

**Józef Robakowski** is an artist, filmmaker and, like Zofia Rydet, a leading figure of the late Communist-era avant-garde in Poland. His work *From My Window* (1978-2000) commenced in the same year as the *Sociological Record*, and was of equally long gestation. It was filmed over more than twenty years from the kitchen window of Robakowski's apartment in Łódź. Looking down onto the public square below, his camera spies on the daily activities of his neighbours and relations and records mass gatherings such as the annual May Day marches. This witty pseudo-documentary is literally 'homemade', and gives extraordinary insight into everyday life through dramatic political transition.

If Rydet and Robakowski's works celebrate, at the end of the Communist period, the individual freedoms to be found within the confines of the home, in a present-day Poland marked by increasing social and political conservatism, the domestic serves as a trope for the artistic exploration of different, darker, questions concerning identity.

**Aneta Grzeszykowska's** *Negative Book* consists of a sequence of self-portraits taken in family scenarios: at home, on holiday, at a child's birthday party, on a walk in the park. Using a curious hybrid of painting, performance and photography, the artist asks crucial questions about alienation, or the impossibility of securing one's identity within private and photographic space.

**Weronika Gęsicka's** clever surrealist montages in *Traces* likewise play with a tension between comfort and disturbance at the heart of the domestic. Working with found photographs — American stock photography from the 1950s and 1960s, an era in which family life is unfailingly portrayed as happy and bright — Gęsicka makes comedic manipulations in order to render the normal absurd. The family unit is revealed as a construct, faces are masks, and people become suddenly overwhelmed by their environments.

**Aneta Bartos's** *Family Portrait* is an unsettling series of photographs of the artist partially clad in underwear posing with her Speedo-wearing, bald, bodybuilder father. Set in pastoral Polish landscapes and interiors, the soft-focus, romantic feel of the photographs belies the disconcerting juxtaposition of father and daughter posing together for the camera, near naked and yet each seemingly oblivious to the other.

In another close examination of one family member by another, the director and cinematographer **Adam Palenta** has composed an unusual documentary titled *House on its Head*. He has montaged together snippets from the home movies that the celebrated architect, photographer and graphic designer Wojciech Zamecznik started making obsessively in the 1950s and 1960s. Set against the backdrop of everyday life in the Polish People's Republic, *House on its Head* allows us voyeuristic glimpses into Zamecznik's intense family life, especially his devotion and desire for his wife Hala. The film is also a remarkable tribute to the groundbreaking aesthetics of this radical post-war designer.

The exhibition will be complemented by a programme of events exploring the above mentioned topics further.

A series of debates will be presented in collaboration with **Dr Urszula Chowaniec** at the **UCL School of Slavonic and Eastern European Studies (SSEES)**:

- as part of the conference *Impacts of Gender Discourse on Polish Politics, Society & Culture* by SSEES, Calvert 22 Foundation will host a discussion on gender in Polish post-war and contemporary art;
- later in the summer *The Politics of Art: Does Aesthetics Have a Past?* will look at the contemporary artistic discourse in Poland as well as within the Polish diaspora in the UK in the light of Brexit.

*Family Values: Polish Photography Now* is part of the **UCL Festival of Culture 2018** (4 – 8 June 2018).

The full events programme will be announced later this spring.

### ***Family Values: Polish Photography Now***

Calvert 22 Foundation

25 May – 22 July 2018

**Press Preview:** Thursday 24 May, 5pm – 6pm, Calvert 22 Space

**Private View:** Thursday 24 May, 6pm – 9pm, Calvert 22 Space

Exhibition open to the public:

Wed – Sun, 12pm – 6pm

Free entry

22 Calvert Avenue

London E2 7JP

UK

## Notes to Editors

*Family Values: Polish Photography Now* is organised in co-operation with the Adam Mickiewicz Institute operating under the Culture.pl brand as part of POLSKA 100, the international cultural programme accompanying the centenary of Poland regaining independence.

The project is financed by the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage of the Republic of Poland as part of the multi-annual programme NIEPODLEGŁA 2017–2021.

The *Family Values* exhibition is curated by Kate Bush, curator and critic specialising in contemporary art and photography. Kate is Adjunct Curator of Photography at Tate Britain. She was most recently Head of Photography at the Science Museum Group, including the Science Museum in London and National Media Museum in Bradford. In 2014 Kate curated *Close and Far*, a show on historical and contemporary Russian photography at Calvert 22 Foundation.

## About Calvert 22 Foundation

Calvert 22 Foundation celebrates the culture and creativity of the New East – Eastern Europe, the Balkans, Russia and Central Asia – enriching perceptions of the region and furthering international understanding.

Calvert 22 Foundation is a not-for profit organisation committed to dialogue and discovery, to the development of international creative networks, and to the role of learning and education as the basis for knowledge sharing and institutional exchange.

The foundation's activities include:

**Calvert 22 Space** – the London headquarters of the foundation that hosts seasonal programmes, events, talks and screenings for a first-hand experience of the contemporary culture and creativity of the New East

**The Calvert Journal** – an online magazine of New East contemporary culture, including art, film, architecture, design and avant-garde culture

**The Calvert Forum** – a think tank for the New East, focused on research and policy for the creative industries

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Zofia Rydet, *People in interiors*, from the *Sociological Record*, Gešice, Kielce Voivodeship, 1979 © Zofia Rydet Foundation



Zofia Rydet, *People in interiors*, from the *Sociological Record*, Chochołów, Podhale Region, 1982 © Zofia Rydet Foundation

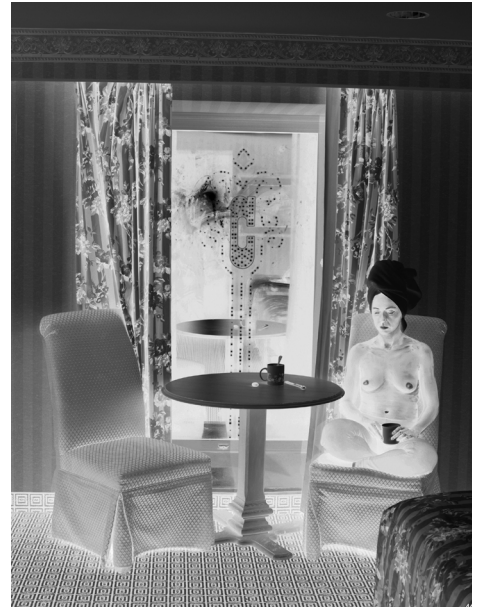


Zofia Rydet, *People in interiors*, from the *Sociological Record*, Ostropa, Silesia, 1978 © Zofia Rydet Foundation





Aneta Grzeszykowska, *Negative Book #23*, 2012-2013. Courtesy of Raster Gallery, Warsaw



Aneta Grzeszykowska, *Negative Book #46*, 2012-2013. Courtesy of Raster Gallery, Warsaw



Aneta Bartos, *Lody*, 2017



Aneta Bartos, *Scythe*, 2016





Weronika Gęsicka, Untitled #14 from the *Traces* series. Courtesy the artist and Jednostka Gallery



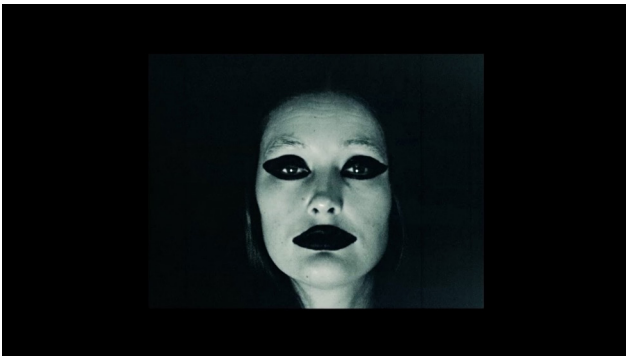
Weronika Gęsicka, Untitled #40 from the *Traces* series.  
Courtesy the artist and Jednostka Gallery



Weronika Gęsicka, Untitled #18 from the *Traces* series.  
Courtesy the artist and Jednostka Gallery



Józef Robakowski, *From My Window* 1978-1999 (film still) 16 mm/video, 20 min © the artist, courtesy ŻAK I BRANICKA



*House in its head*, director&scenarist Adam Palenta, footage from Wojciech Zamecznik archive, production Archeology of Photography Foundation © A. Palenta / J&S Zamecznik / Archeology of Photography Foundation