

# THE FREE LUNCH

**GOTTFRIED HELNWEIN**


on conformity and  
moral collapse

**MONICA AYIEKO**

on shaping minds and  
eating insects

**FLORIAN CRAMER**

on eco-guilt and  
systemic masochism



**THE  
ENTROPY  
ISSUE**

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CK THE HALLS WITH BOUGHS OF HOLLY. BUT 'TIS NO SYSTEM TO BE JOLLY FAST AWAY OLD STRUCTURES PASS. NEW IDEAS WE PITCH EN MASSE



# REVOLUTION, LIFE, AND DEATH

Entropy applies to social conflicts and natural systems, and the works of Joanna Rajkowska go right to those points. Christian Smetana tells us why.



Joanna Rajkowska is editing a film with special mason bees as the main characters. She prepared a beautiful German dollhouse from the 1960s to shelter the bees. Not only were all rooms furnished, but miniature editions of important works of art—from Marcel Duchamp to Man Ray, from Robert Smithson to Katarzyna Kobro—decorated the walls. This art made the house as much a miniature museum as a bee colony. In addition, the bees had lectures on each work. Captured on film, during two weeks in April, are the imaginary remains of human civilization in a world inhabited only by insects.

In Warsaw, Poland, in the real world still inhabited by people, few works of art are as deeply rooted in everyday life as Rajkowska's *Greetings from Jerusalem Avenue*. Eighteen years ago, Joanna created this piece, an unusual memorial with an artificial

palm tree as its pivotal point, at one of Warsaw's central intersections on Jerusalem Avenue. Sensitive and powerful, humorous and dignified, the work visualizes the loss of people, their feelings, thoughts, culture, and knowledge, reminding us of the murder of Jewish Poles.

The piece also offers today's Poles a stage for a better future. As I spoke with Joanna, hundreds of thousands of Poles demonstrated against a reactionary abortion law and the right-wing, populist PIS government. Many protests centered on *Greetings from Jerusalem Avenue*. But the protest has spread throughout the country. Simultaneously, Europe reacted to the second COVID-19 wave with new, comprehensive lockdown measures.

Joanna says, "The palm tree stands, right now, in the center of protests,

like it has been the center of protest during the last eighteen years in Warsaw. I think people got used to saying something, using the palm tree. During the revolution in Ukraine, the revolution in Belarus, the nurses' strike, or the current protest against the government, it's like endless declaration, manifestation, and articulations mostly of a political nature. I always treated this project as an open frame people fill in. This is unchanging. What's fascinating to me is that the tree changes its meaning in the context of a given situation. Every time something important happens, the palm tree gives a different response. It's a different stage than it was in 2005 or 2011. It's changing like a chameleon. I like that people use it, and I think the young generation doesn't realize it's an art project. That's the biggest victory I can imagine, when the author is forgotten. Because I don't see art as an expression of the



self or any kind of individual therapy.

"As they rebuild this part of Jerusalem Avenue, we at the Museum of Modern Art in Warsaw are thinking about turning the palm-tree island into a free-speech stage."

In Regent's Park, London, *The Hatchling*, Joanna's new work, has found its way into people's everyday lives. An oversized egg laid in the meadow invites touching and hugging. New life grows inside. You can hear it.

"I try to make people forget themselves," says Joanna. "Even if I use intimate subject matter, like motherhood, disease, or the body, I don't do it because of myself. I do it because what matters is social energy or planetary issues. I want people to feel that something is bigger than them, than us. There's a bigger issue. We're

part of something else. We are a little screw in this fantastic machinery. So, the egg, *The Hatchling*, works to make you realize you are just an atom in this Spinozan universe. We're all part of a huge substance. The egg is a tool to experience this on different levels. It vibrates. It gives you sound. You can hug it and become a kind of part of the shell."

Rajkowska's works speak about the meaning of autonomous, free action, about the power of life, and about the interaction of systems coexisting on this planet. Against that background, Joanna had something to say about the pandemic.

"People won't change a lot. This pandemic is probably the first one, and it will reduce the population. That's my dark hope. Many of my friends are in the hospital, and I don't want anybody

to die. Still, it's true that there are too many of us. I know it's unpopular to say, but everybody knows that there are too many of us on this planet.

"The immediate and ultimate change from COVID will be that we have to invest in healthcare. First and foremost. And then, if healthcare gets the focus, it might help to change a lot of structures. Social structures will change. How public funds are used will change a lot. And we know, our biggest enemies are global corporations. I hope and think that there's the chance that global government could be the result of realizing how important healthcare systems are and how to react to global pandemics. Maybe at the end of all this, a global government will arise that can face the challenges of global issues, like emissions and the warming of the planet." ■



PHOTOS: JOANNA RAJKOWSKA, ROB JAWORSKI

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**"If power was an illusion, wasn't weakness necessarily one also?"**

LOIS MCMASTER BUJOLD

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#### JOANNA RAJKOWSKA

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IS AN ARTIST BASED IN WARSAW AND LONDON. A VERSATILE CREATOR, RAJKOWSKA IS BEST KNOWN FOR HER WORK IN PUBLIC SPACES, WHERE SHE USES REAL-LIFE SITUATIONS, ENERGIES, ORGANISMS, AND MATERIALS TO CONSTRUCT SITES, INSTALLATIONS, AND EPHEMERAL ACTIONS. SHE UTILIZES ELEMENTS AS DIVERSE AS PLANTS, BUILDINGS, FOUND OBJECTS, WATER, AND SMOKE. DEFAMILIARIZING AND RELATING ARE HER OPERATING DEVICES. SHE ALSO HAS AN INTEREST IN THE LIMITATIONS AND THE LIMITING OF HUMAN ACTIVITIES, MULTIPLICITY OF AGENCIES, AND HUMAN AND NONHUMAN RELATIONS. HER ARTWORK HAS BEEN PRESENTED IN THE UK, GERMANY, POLAND, FRANCE, SWITZERLAND, BRAZIL, SWEDEN, THE USA, BULGARIA, PALESTINE, INDIA, JAPAN, TURKEY, AND KENYA, AMONG OTHER PLACES.

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SEE MORE AT [JOANNA.RAJKOWSKA.COM](http://JOANNA.RAJKOWSKA.COM)

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THE HATCHLING  
2019, FRIEZE SCULPTURE, L'ETRANGERE GALLERY, REGENTS  
PARK, LONDON, JOANNA RAJKOWSKA

PHOTO: JUSTYNA SCHEURING

