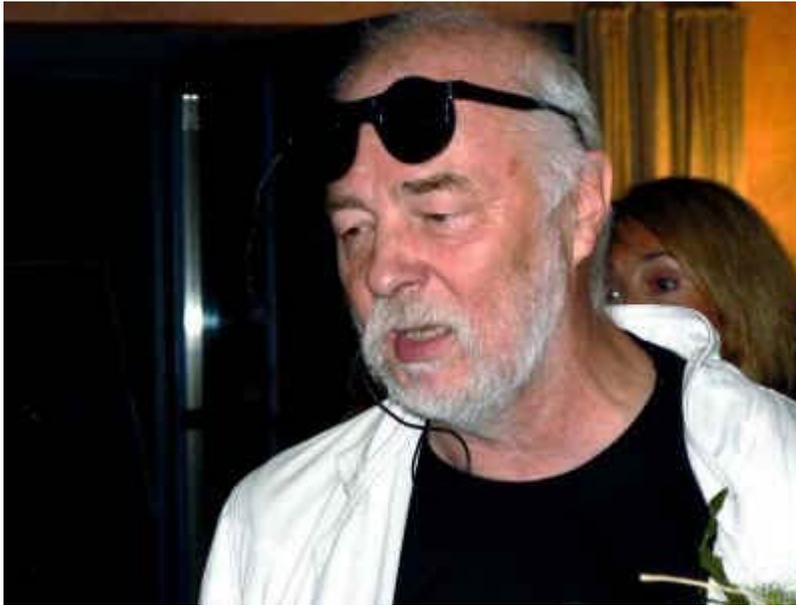


Wojciech Bruszewski



Wojciech Bruszewski is a professional photographer and film maker. He graduated from the faculty of camera operating and film directing at the Łódź Film School. He has lectured at the Fine Arts Academy in Poznań, at the Nicolaus Copernicus University of Toruń, and currently – at the Higher School of Art and Design in Łódź.

As an artist, he has been involved with the *avant-garde*. In the 70s, he took part in the international movement *Structural Cinema*. The most important manifestation of that movement was the series of exhibitions *Film as Film*. The first showing took place in Germany: in Cologne, Stuttgart, Essen and Berlin; and the second – in 1978 in London.

Wojciech Bruszewski is the pioneer of video art in Poland. As a film maker and video maker, he participated in prestigious art exhibitions such as *Documenta 6* and *Documenta 8* in Kassel, or in *Presences Polonaises* in the Pompidou Centre in Paris.

In 1980, he received the stipend from DAAD in West Berlin. By that token, he joined the list of the artistic international elite. It is worth mentioning that Witold Gombrowicz was the first Pole to be granted the DAAD stipend (Ford's Stipend). Poles invited to Berlin include: Zbigniew Herbert, Adam Zagajewski, Roman Opałka, Jarosław Kozłowski, Ryszard Waśko and Ryszard Kapuściński. In 1980, Kazimierz Brandys represented Polish literature; Bogusław Schaefer – contemporary music, and Wojciech Bruszewski – visual art.

In 2005, Wojciech Bruszewski wrote *The Photographer*, a panorama of the historic events of the 20th century, written with a light touch and wry wit, with a focus on the lives of the artistic bohemians on both sides of the Berlin wall.

More about the author can be found at www.voytek.pl
www.fotograf.fm



Last year, I read the completed manuscript of Wojciech Bruszewski's book *The Photographer*. The inter-disciplinary artist has turned writer. Until then, I had only read the theory papers and artistic manifestoes written by Bruszewski for the *Grupa Warsztat* (*Workshop Group*). The *Photographer* has nothing in common with art theory. It is a panorama of the historic events of the 20th century, written with a light touch and wry wit, with a focus on the lives of the artistic bohemians on both sides of the Berlin wall.

The most important settings are Poland and Germany. The most important towns – West Berlin and its mirror reflection, Wrocław. A significant location is the collective farm Rapture in the east of Poland. One of the sub-plots which takes place in 19th century America, focuses on the protagonist Eadweard Muybridge, a photographer and an inventor.

Although *The Photographer* of the title resembles the author, this is not an autobiographical novel. The author interweaves the events which he has witnessed with facts which are imaginary, however plausible they may appear. He adds fictitious details to the scene of the signing of the surrender of Hitler's Germany. The Congress of Intellectuals in Wrocław in 1948 he supplements with an account of Pablo Picasso's drunken escapade in Sepolno. He allows Helmut Schmidt, the ex-Chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany, to be humiliated on air, in a Polish TV studio, by a fictitious talk-show star, Róża.

The Photographer is in reality a mock photographic representation of a generation and its times. It begins in the middle of the 20th century and ends with Poland's accession to the European Union.

Wojciech Bruszewski uses cinematic means of expression in literature. He treats time as a film strip. He freely cuts it up into pieces, running each sub-plot independently. His professional knowledge enables him to acquaint the reader with the technical inventions which have led to the electronic media civilisation. Describing the unusual role played today by TV and radio journalists, he explains, in passing, the technical mechanisms and the secrets of TV transmission. The reader discovers, for instance, the existence of the Time Machine and its *modus operandi*. Eadweard Muybridge's experiment – the well-known series of photographs of a galloping horse – is a creation of a new world.

On the 15th June 1878, one second was cut into 24 frames. From that moment, we have been participating in a dynamic reality of moving pictures. Bruszewski relates that seminal moment through the prism of the personal experience of Muybridge. He spins a melodramatic tale of love and betrayal ending in a crime of passion. But that was reality, not fiction. Eadweard Muybridge really did shoot the lover of his wife, Flora. Such is the perversity of the author. It is not only when reading *The Photographer* that one is aware of the fluid borderline between fact and fiction. Such uncertainty is part and parcel of the civilisation of moving pictures, which legitimises fiction with an objective photographic record.

Maria Kornatowska

is a lecturer at the Łódź Film School. She is a film critic and theoretician. She is the author of an award-winning monography about Federico Fellini.

She has recently published *Reflections When Putting on Make-up*, a book about New York