





Many years ago I ran a film club at St Martins School of Art with two fellow fine art students. Our programme was exciting Central European films, Having two projectors at our disposal, we offered no stop cinema, a film would always be running during college hours. I designed

Although our club was popular we had our critics. They accused us of being elitist and my posters were thought to be obscure: I designer. We felt isolated, out on a limb.

library Linadvertently found an ally graphics magazines I discovered the work of Roman Cieslewicz. I was looking at layouts, works that were forceful and could see a connection with Max Ernst, although Cieslewicz applied collage with a and the visual symbol was intelligent, often confidence and allayed my sense of

In one of the magazines I found his address. I wrote to him expressing my enthusiasm for his work, with the vague hope that he may reply. After several form of a heavy parcel containing exhibition catalogues and a charming letter. It marked the beginning of a long, if sporadic correspondence I received many

When in January 1973 Cieslewicz had a major retrospective at the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam I persuaded a to review the show. I was overwhelmed by the scale of the exhibition. How could a graphic designer in his early forties fill several large rooms of a major European high standard? Not knowing anyone at the private view. I focused my attention on the ork. The only person I recognized was the of his collages entitled "Changement de artist himself. He was elegantly dressed in surrounded by a coterie of cultural dignitaries and arty types. I took some photographs and eventually found a moment to introduce myself. He suggested him at a suggested hour in front of the giant poster for the film I 'Attentat in the central room of the exhibition.

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excited and a little nervous. I waited for a long time, walking around studying the xhibits. An hour passed. Then as it was approaching two hours, Cieslewicz rushed me for lunch. I could sense he was flustered, surprised by my patience, half expecting me not to be there. I, on the other hand, was surprised to being taker for lunch to an elegant restaurant. He ordered an exquisite French wine and we talked. I had no tape recorder and didn't absorbed his aura.

climate of much of his work, the nocturnal themes. We had similar literary interests and talked about the powerful and magical properties of photography. Although I probed him about the influences of surrealism, he preferred to talk about mass reproduction and the communicative and inherently ephemeral ualities of graphic design. The fact that he spent much creative energy designing nagazines such as *Elle* and *Vogue* only to see them in the dustbins of Paris shortly after publication gave him a perverse pleasure. I asked him why he didn't design more film posters such as the one for 'Attentat, it being one of the highlights of the retrospective, His reply was enigmatic: - Because he designed such a poster, the French film distributors would not

crossed paths in Paris where I was part of a team making a documentary on him for Polish Television. It was difficult pinning him down. His first wife, the sculptor Alina Szapocznikow was gravely ill and he had to Journalists and film makers can be annoyingly persistent, and when I learned of Alina Szapocznikow's death I felt pangs of quilt

We finished the film by finding the elusive designer in Warsaw overse exhibition at the Poster Museum in Wilanow He had little time to spare so we museum floor and conducted a short interview. As he spoke he started to walk museum curators. He dismissed their concern by emphasizing the ephemeral nature of posters, a theme he often

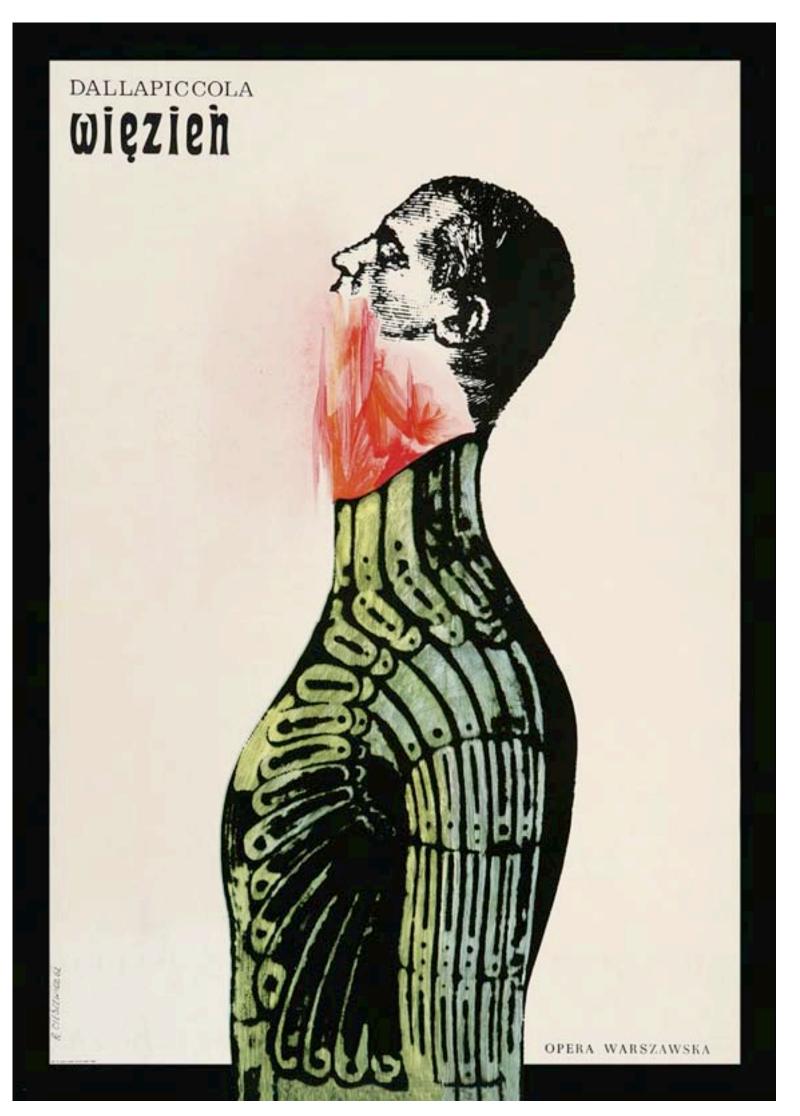
He was delighted when I told him that I had won a scholarship to study poster design under professor Henryk Tomaszewski at the Warsaw Academy of Fine Arts, stating study the subject. Later, as I attempted to sent me a letter of recommendation to present to several publishers. It opened since. This altruistic sharing of knowledge and professional contacts with the younger generation would explain his success as a teacher at L'Ecole Nationale des Arts Ecole Superieure d'Art Graphique (Paris). In the late 1990's, a few years after his death, I was an external examiner at ESAG and could still feel his presence in the work of

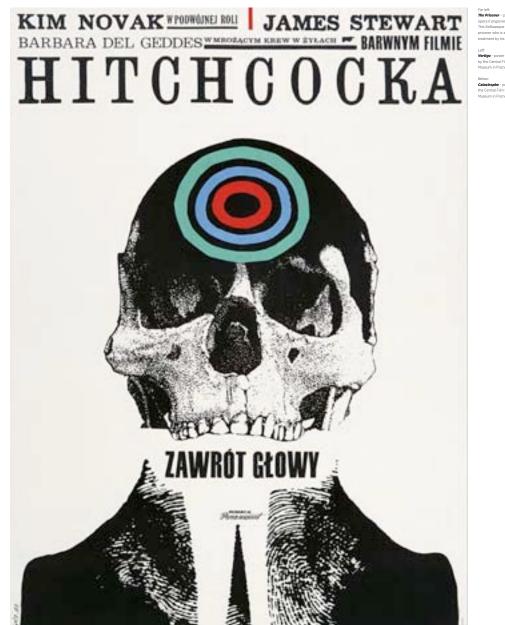
climat" at Chelsea School of Art. My wife for dinner. Everyone wanted to talk to him about art and design. He was more interested in seeing our children and was plainly impressed by their cut out figure of artists, Brothers Quay asked him to sign a noster for them. He looked at them, took out a felt pen and taking the poster drew a little bridge with the brothers crossing it. he wrote: Bridge Over The River Quay, and his signature. Elated, the brothers uttered -Thank you, master." To which Cieslewicz replied- "Master... Jaki tam master?

a serious stroke. Thanks to his second wife, and increased his output, concentrating on ideological subject matter. During his convalescence he watched the news on TV and devoured newspapers and this inspired encapsulated in publications such as PAS DE NOUVELLES...BONNES NOUVELLES

The last time I saw him was in 1994 at his major retrospective which traveled from the Pompidou Centre in Paris to the the hotel bar, he was sitting at a table with the graphic artist and film maker Jan Lenica and animator Daniel Szczechura. The threesome were dressed in black pole red wine and smoking. I was under the impression that I was having an audience with the mafia. At the end of his private view, to great public applause Romek was chair, walking stick in hand. The king of graphic design









Far left:

The Prisoner – poster promoting a performance of Dal opera II projecniero, 1962. (National Museum in Poznari). This Kafkaesque opera composed in 1948 features a po

Left: Vertigo - poster promoting Alfred Hitchcock's film and publish by the Central Film Distributor (CWF), Warsaw, 1963. (National Museum in Poznań).

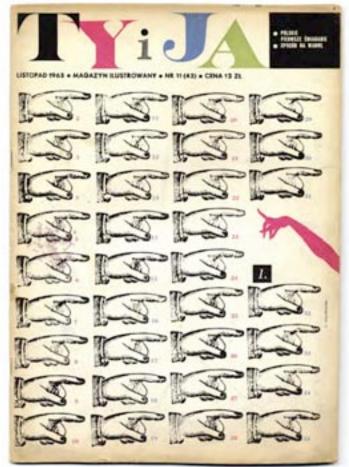
Below: Catastrophe - poster promoting a Hungarian film publish the Central Film Distributor (CWF), Warsaw, 1961. (Nations

> Roman Cieślewicz once called Poland the 'Plakatodr'om' (poster-drome) _ the largest testing ground of the poster in Europe.' Whilst posters went into decline in much of Western Europe after 1945, in the People's Republic of Poland they continued to enjoy high status and the attention of creative artists and designers. Images commissioned to announce new films and theatre performances were relatively free of official propaganda or the need to deliver ticket-buying audiences. Whilst film posters in the West were often vehicles for Hollywood stars, for instance, designers in Poland could promote the same movies with personal, even idiosyncratic, symbols.

> Commissions were given to "licensed" members of the 'Polish Poster School', a loose alliance of modernist designers. Although censorship and compromise were built into this system, graphic designers like Henryk Tomaszewski and Tadeusz Trepkowski were not drudges working to decree. Cieślewicz belonged to the second generation of the Polish Poster School. He began his career in the mid 1950s when communist censorship was being relaxed and experimentation welcomed. Within a few years he established a reputation for extraordinary surreal images, often making

Often complex and elusive, Cieślewicz's designs asked the viewer to look and think. Interviewed in 1978 he said 'a poster is an idea. This is what matters. An idea can excite, can be intriguing ... It was Marcel Duchamp who said "an image which does not provoke is unworthy" and he was right. We are surrounded by images. We are hit by tens of thousands of advertisements every day. We may or may not accept them. The image is not neutral. It cannot be. It must shout, it must intrigue, it must do something which enables us to think'.



















Women's League, an offshoot of the official Polish United Worker's Party. This would hardly seem an auspicious context for an hands of young writers and designers including Cieślewicz, its first art director, Ty i Ja became a remarkably free-thinking publication. They ignored the Cold War division of Europe, frequently featuring the work of Paris fashion designers, West German novelists and British photographers on its pages. When the Soviet Union was discussed, it was not in terms of fawning testimony characteristic of much of the rest of the Polish press. The magazine's editors were far more revolution offered by the Soviet artistic avant-garde of the 1920s than any 'official' Soviet artist of the day.

balance between fascination with the spectacle of the consumer society *and* its critique. This was in fact the position of many Polish intellectuals in the 1960s: left nevertheless, attracted to the forbidder pleasures of the consumer society. *Ty i Ja* was full of advertisements, often designed by Cieślewicz, for products which were Nevertheless, advertising was 'needed' by the magazine. It was a demonstration of its understanding of the pulse of international modernity.

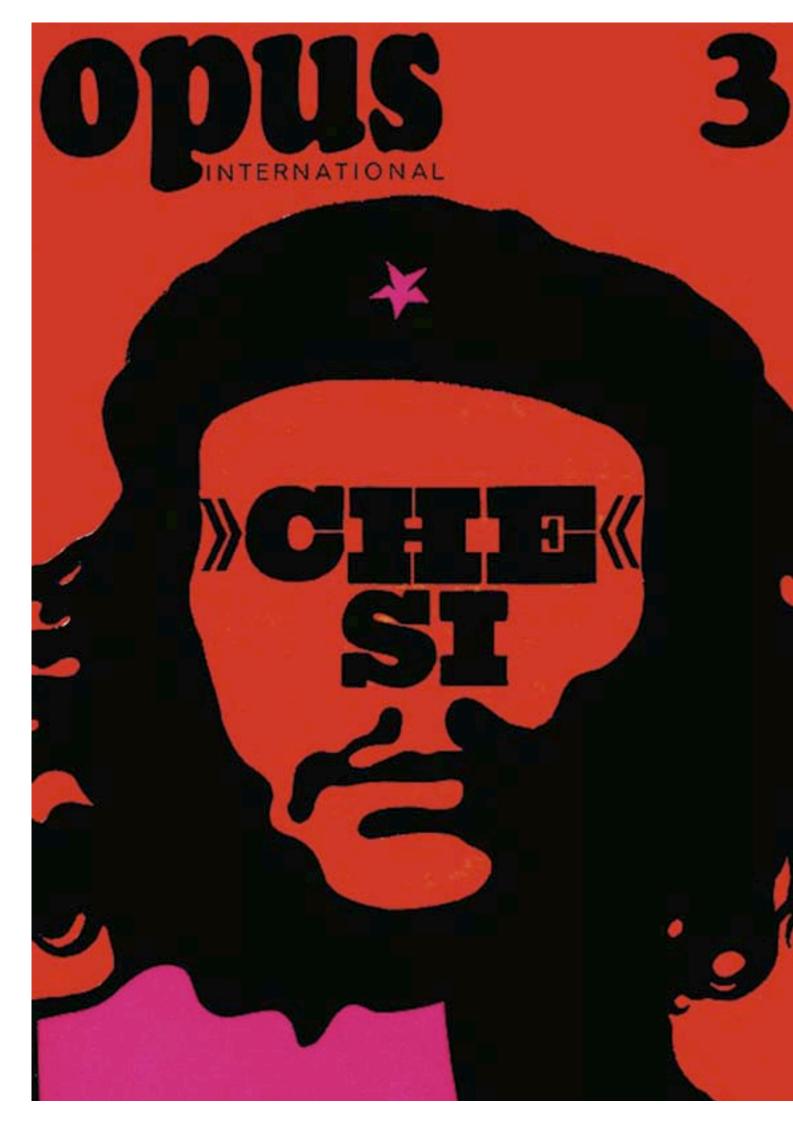
Under Cieślewicz's art direction, the magazine had a remarkably idiosyncratic character. He folded a stream of printers' devices and illustrations from nineteenth into its pages, creating strangely vertiginous spreads that undermined its modernity. Victorian cyclists would wheel across pages decorated with distorted and blown-up printers' ornaments. The magazine's fashion spreads were 'borrowed' from the pages of French *Elle* and *Vogue* and then obscured by butterflies' wings or irreverent doodles.



SUIDE DE LA FRANCE MYSTÉRIEUSE

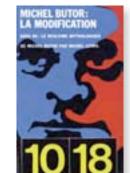
When Cieslewicz moved to France in 1963, he was commissioned to produce illustrations for books and magazines. One key work was a complete alphabet for this gazetteer of ghosts, historic crimes and myths published by Claude Tchou in 1964.

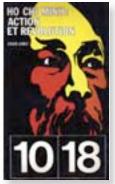
In the collages marking sections in the book, he brought architectural structures and inanimate objects to 'life' with human limbs and organs. In this regard, Cieślewicz's designs tapped into a long tradition of seeing human bodies in letters that can be traced back to the sixteenth century. His letters were also indebted to surrealist Max Ernst's enigmatic collage works of the 1930s such as Une semaine de bonté (A Week of Kindness, 1934).





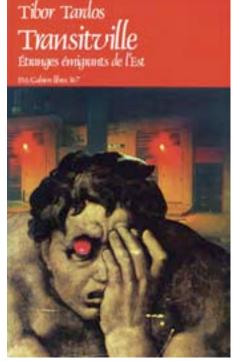












DIRECTOR \triangleleft $\overline{\triangleleft}$ ш Cuba and the Soviet Union in the 1920s. Ш

In 1963 Cieślewicz moved to Paris, embarking on an impressive career in periodical publishing and advertising. After working on Elie, Vogue and other glossy titles, he was made art director of MAFIA, the celebrated advertising agency established by Denise Fayolle and Maime Arnodin in 1969. Working with photographers like Guy Bourdin and Helmut Newton, Cieślewicz operated as a 'service optique' for corporations and commercial chains. and commercial chains. The late 1960s were angry years in France when student radicals took to the streets in an attempt to drive the country to revolution. On the left, consumerism was identified as the chief enemy. Cieślewicz was not untouched by these arguments. He worked for left-wing publishers like 10/18

under Christian Bourgeois producing iconic cover-images of *gauchiste* heroes like Lenin and Ho Chi Minh, the leader of the Viet Cong in Vietnam. Cieślewicz designed the layout and ten powerful covers for the art magazine Opus, first published by Georges Fall in Paris in 1967, on the eve of the turmoil. Although by no means as revolutionary as the shrill by no means as revolutionary as the shrill Maoist and anarchist voices, Opus was nevertheless infected with radicalism. Its writers protested against the 'Alice in Wonderland' world of advertising and celebrated the vibrant life of contemporary

In the 1970s Cieślewicz became a freelance illustrator and designer. Commercialism remained, however, a necessary compromise. 'I work for institutions which those who have no money."

This poster produced by Cieślewicz in 1967 has become an iconic image in the history of the People's Republic of Poland. Designed to promote a new performance of Adam Mickiewicz's nineteenth century poetic drama, Forefather's Eve (Dziady), Cieślewicz's design captures the simmering frustration with Soviet control over Poland. The central motif seems to be a desiccated landscape or a figure with a hole where a heart might be. In its mirrored composition, Raoul-Jean Moulin found a 'hallucinatory symmetry.' symmetry.'

symmetry."

Dziady opened in the National Theatre in November 1967. It had been programmed to mark the fiftest hanniversary of the October Revolution in Russia. The play's references to dull-witted bureaucrats and Tsarist despotism were in tune with Lenin's attack on imperial repression. But the Polish audience read the performance as allegory for the present. They jeered the imperial characters and applauded anti-Russian sentiment. The early closure of the play in late January 1968 – allegedly at the request of the Russian Embassy - was the trigger for loud calls for freedom of speech. The Writters' Union drafted a motion criticizing this act of censorship and, ultimately, the legitimacy of the Soviet-backed authorities. Warsaw University students marched through the city and strung banners across the city-centre campus objecting to Soviet Interference in Polish life. In fighting for Mickiewicz's play they declared, we are fighting for independence and freedom and the democratic traditions of our country'.

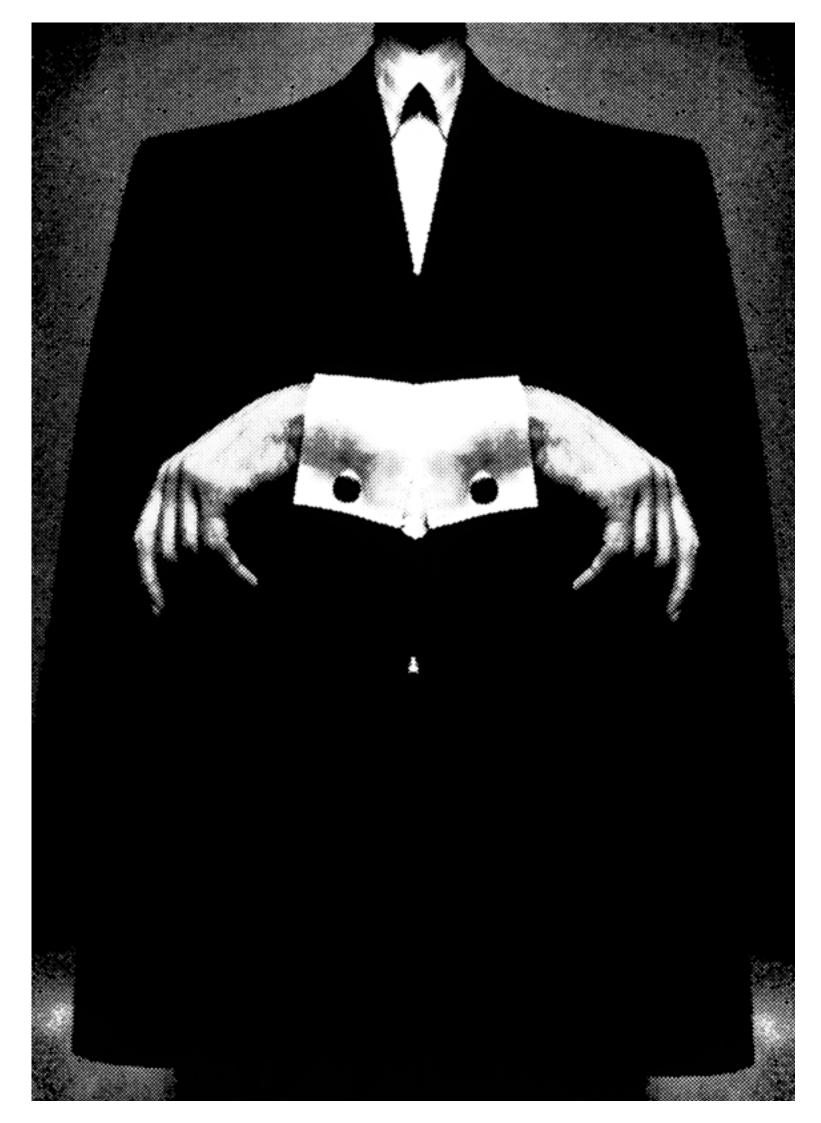
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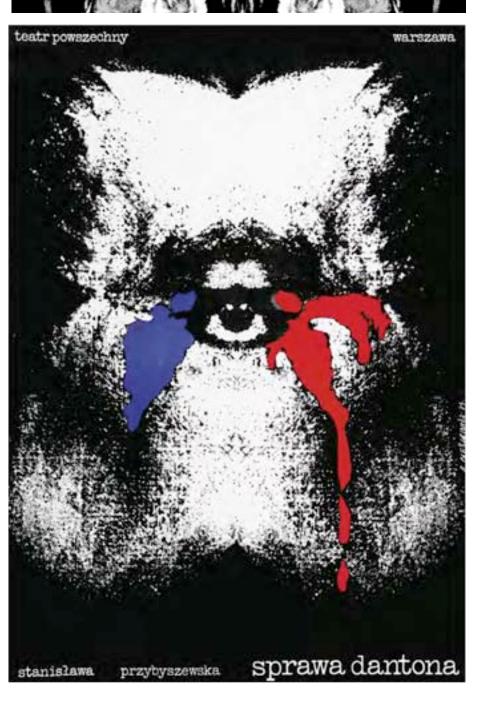
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With the temperature high, the authorities repressed writers, students and university lecturers. Hundreds of helmeted militiamen were drafted in to subdue the university with truncheons and tear-gas. This period of high tension has come to be known as the 'March events.'







Far left: Prince - screen print 1973. (National Museum in Pr

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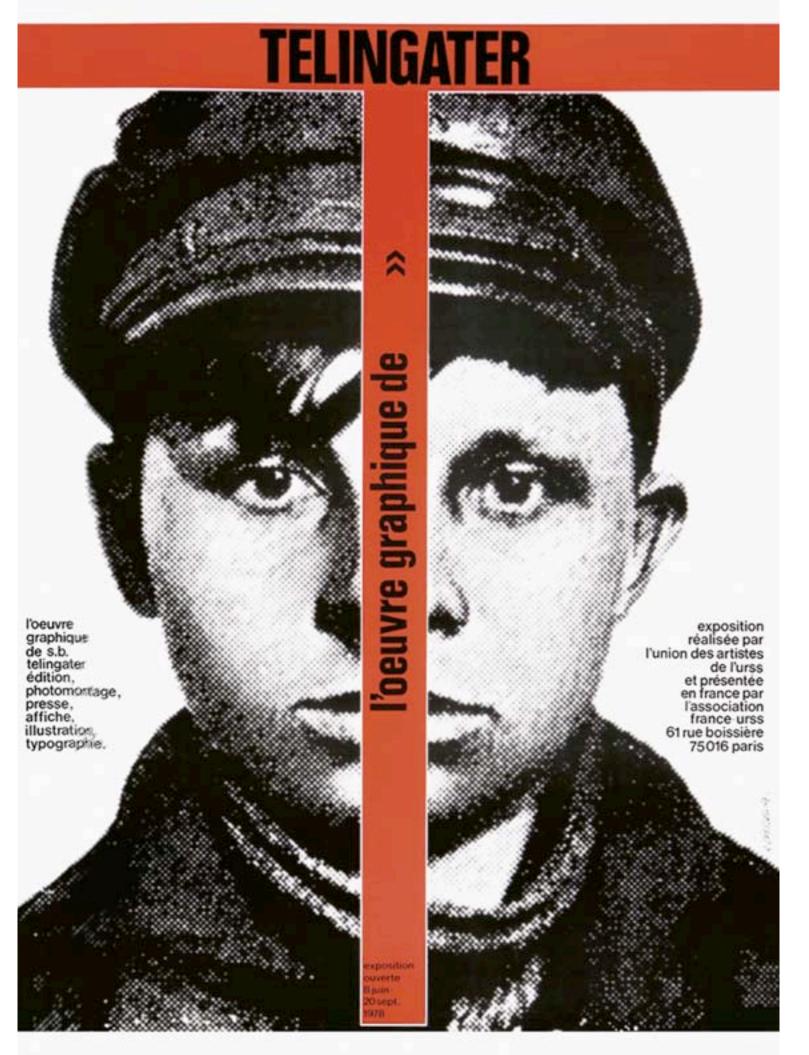
Ceres Franco - screen print, 1974. This image features part of portrait of 'Madame Moitessier' Jacques-Auguste-Dominque

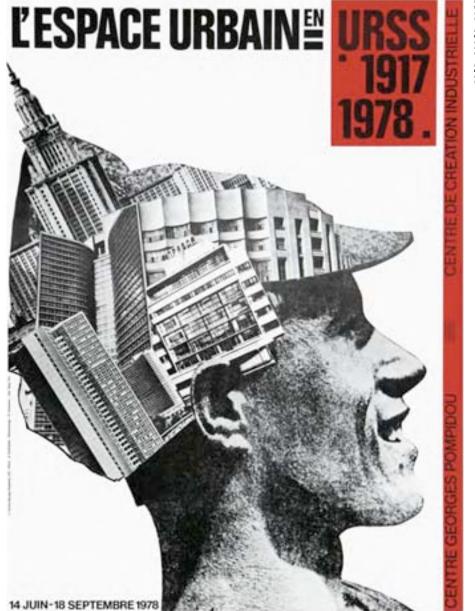
The Danton Affair - poster promoting Stanis@wa Przybyszewska's play performed by the Teatr Powszec Warsaw, 1974. (National Museum in Poznań)

Around 1970 Cieślewicz started producing what have been called 'centred collages' (collages centres). These screen-prints emerged from his interest in doubled images and in the aesthetics of the copy (evident in his famous Dziady poster of 1967). Working with lines of symmetry, he composed mirror images in which bodies seem to form strange headless outlines or familiar faces take on the appearance of the Cyclops. What is missing or obscured is as significant as what is visible.

Reworking photographs and works of art as prints, Cleslewicz sought to delay perception. He used rasters to dissolve familiar images into dots. The thick inexorable blackness of the ink suggests deep shadows. For critic Urszula Czartoryska, Cleslewicz 'obliterates a picture's readability' through these techniques, to encourage a new kind of attention on the part of his audience

Always a recycler, Cleslewicz often reworked these black and white experiments in print into designs for posters and magazine covers. Produced in the first half of the 1970s, at the time when Cleslewicz's wife, the sculptor Alina Szapocznikow (1926-1973), was unsuccessfully fighting cancer, these mirror images constitute the darkest body of work in his career.





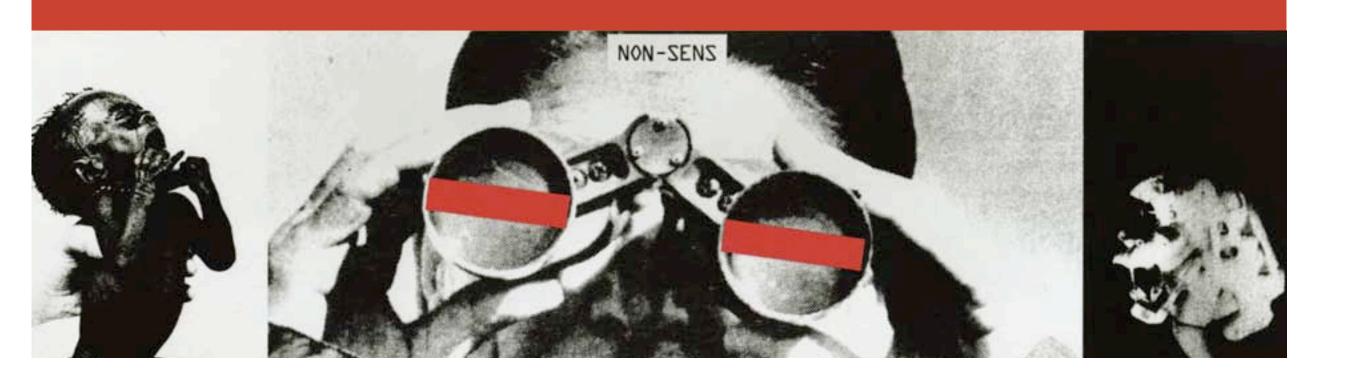
Rem Centre Georges Pompidou

collaboration with the Centre Georges Pompidou, the major art centre in the heart of Paris which was formally opened to the public in 1977. The early programm of exhibitions set out to explore the art of the European avant-garde of the claustrophobic world of communist Poland - proved remarkably skilled at

constructivism for the Centre's publicity of block lettering and dynamic compositio - in the manner of Alexander Rodchenko Europe. As a student, he had sought out avant-garde ('real communists' as he 1930' exhibition was, for instance, promoted with his clever typographic design which combined Cyrillic script and modern art were locked together in a tight grid. Making a union of East and West, this poster was – perhaps inadvertantly - a kind of autobiographical emblem. Whether Cieślewicz's facility with the language of Soviet design marked a commitment to the cause is another matter. According to Anna Grabowska-Konwent, 'Cieślewicz was lucky enough not to believe in ideologies and never worked for any system; on the

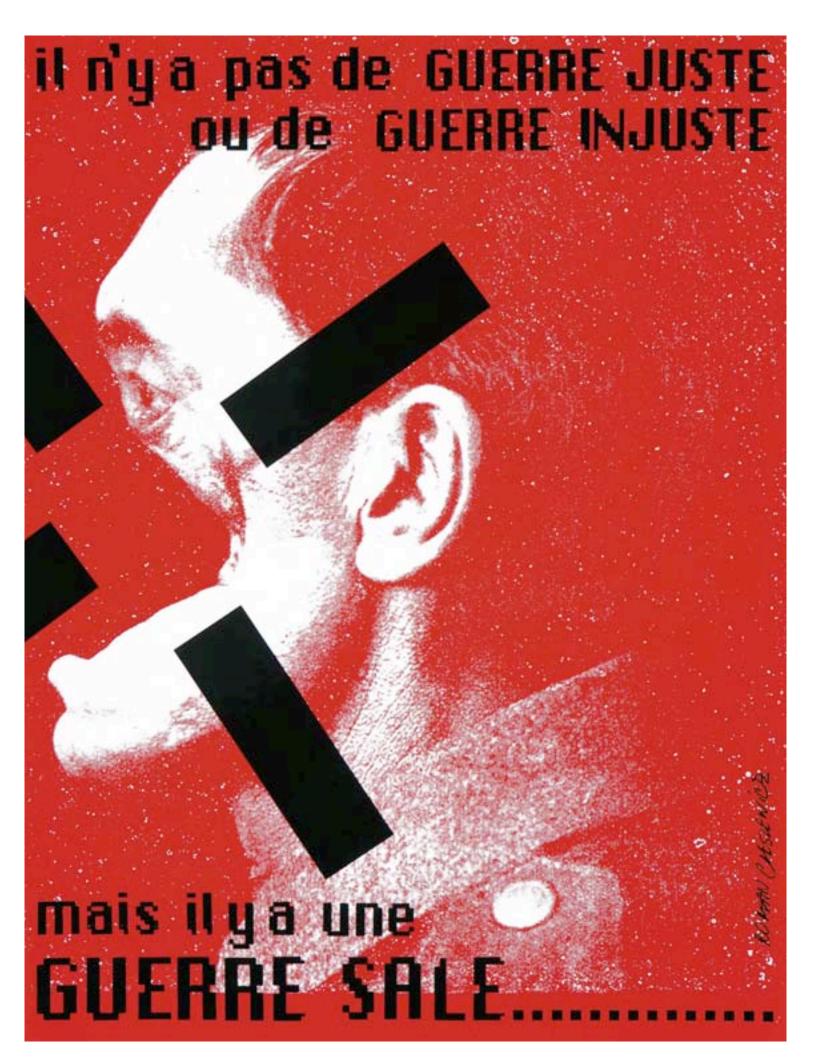






Cieślewicz often described his work as a form of visual journalism: 1 consider that journalism is the closest profession to me and I would be lost without them [journalists]. They without them [journalists]. They work of the care of the picture. Yet late in his career, Cieślewicz issued some powerful indictments of the news. A particularly important series was Pas de Nouvelles - Bonnes Nouvelles (No News is Good News), which appeared as a small format book designed to accompany his 1987 exhibition in the Jean Briance Gallery. Formed from carefully composed double page spreads, he employed little more than graphic contrasts of scale and tone to deliver a sharp critique of the moral economy of the mass media.

I created the entire series called Pas de Nouvelles - Bonnes Nouvelles - during my stay in hospital when I watched TV and followed the news' Cieslewicz recalled. I noted down image after image. I drew scenes, which later I cut out from the press, took photographs of them and then enlarged and combined them'. Combining grainy news photographs with short epigrams, Cieslewicz pointed to the violence of images.







Dirty War ..., a poster produced for the Centre nternational Contre La Guerre, Verdun, 1994. (Nation

Left:
Illustrations for Anatol France's 1912 novel, Les dieux ont
solf, published as a special edition in 1989 by the Imprimerie

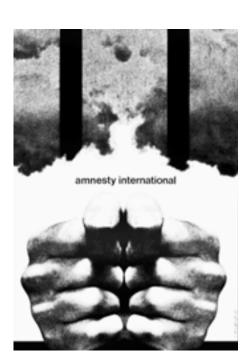
Below: Amnesty International – poster promoting the human rights Non-governmental Organisation, New York,











DIGNITY OF THE INDIVIDUAL

When Cieślewicz died in 1996, he had worked on both sides of the Cold War divide; he had explored the dreamworld of surrealism as well as the party lines of constructivism; and he had worked for media corporations and for partisan publishers. Nevertheless, long threads c be traced through his work. Perhaps the most consistent trope is that of the brok body. The first image in this publication, his 1962 poster for Luigi Dallapiccola's Kafkaesque opera, The Prisoner', featur a figure whose tragic fate is clear from the outpouring of crimson paint which issues from his broken neck.

To commemorate the bicentenary of the French Revolution in 1989, Cieślewicz was commissioned by the Imprimerie nationale, the official printing works of the French government, to illustrate a special edition of Anatol France's 1912 novel, Les dieux ont soif (The Gods are Thirsty). His illustrations contrast bucolic scenes from eighteenth century paintings with photographic records of the terrible facial injuries endured by First World War combatants. The French Revolution – the mythic foundation of the république – is provocatively connected to the pointlessness of the battles of the Somme and Marne. What drew Cieślewicz's attention – whether in Warsaw in 1960 or Parsi in 1990 – was not the quixotic appeal of 'Revolution' but the dignity of the

ROMAN CIEŚLEWICZ

1948-55 student at the Kraków Academy of Fine Art. moves to Warsaw where he receives commissions from the Art and Graphic Publisher (Wydawnictwo Artystyczno 1957 designs exhibition pavilion at the 1959-63 made art director of *Ty i Ja*. leaves Poland for Germany and Italy before

arriving in Paris in the autumn. 1964-66 works as an illustrator and layout designer role he held until 1969). During these years he is also commissioned by many French

publishers including Julliard, Tschou and J.J. Pauvert. He also makes contacts with Roland Topor, Fernand Arrabal and other members of the Panique group. commissioned to design Opus magazine by

1967 made art director of Maïmé Arnodin.

Fayolle, International Associés (MAFIA), Paris, responsible for publicity and works on a series of screen prints

sometimes called 'Symmetrical Figures starts teaching at École Nationale Supérieure des Arts Décoratifs in Paris and then in 1975 at École Supérieure d'Arts throughout the rest of his life.

commissioned by the state publishing house in Poland to illustrate an edition of Anne Radcliffe's The Mysteries of Udolpho Pompidou in Paris.

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BIBLIOGRAPHY/ACKNOWL

commences the *Change of Climate* series of 'photocollages' and issues the first issue of Kamikaze with Christian Bourgois.

> (No News is Good News) series of photomontages which are exhibited at the

commissioned to design various posters. publications and a public illumination of the Assemblée Nationale in Paris to commemorate the bicentenary of the

second issue of Kamikaze (the third dies in Paris.

Acknowledgements

'Roman Cieślewicz' at the Royal College of Art (July 16th - August 7th 2010) has been organised by the Polish Cultural Institute and the Adam Mickiewicz Institute as part of POLSKA! YEAR - an exciting series of events celebrating Polish culture in the UK.
The exhibition has been curated by David Klimowski and Jeff Willis in conjunction with the Adam Mickiewicz Institute and the Polish Cultural Institute. It has been designed by Luke Gould, Michael Lum and Maya Stocks. This exhibition features works from the collections of the National Museum in Poznań given by Chantal Petit-Cieślewicz. All images in this publication © ADAGP, Paris

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and DACS, London 2010.

POLSKA! YEAR visit: www.PolskaYear.pl For more information about Adam Mickiewicz Institute visit: www.Culture.pl Institute visit: www.PolishCulture.org.uk

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