



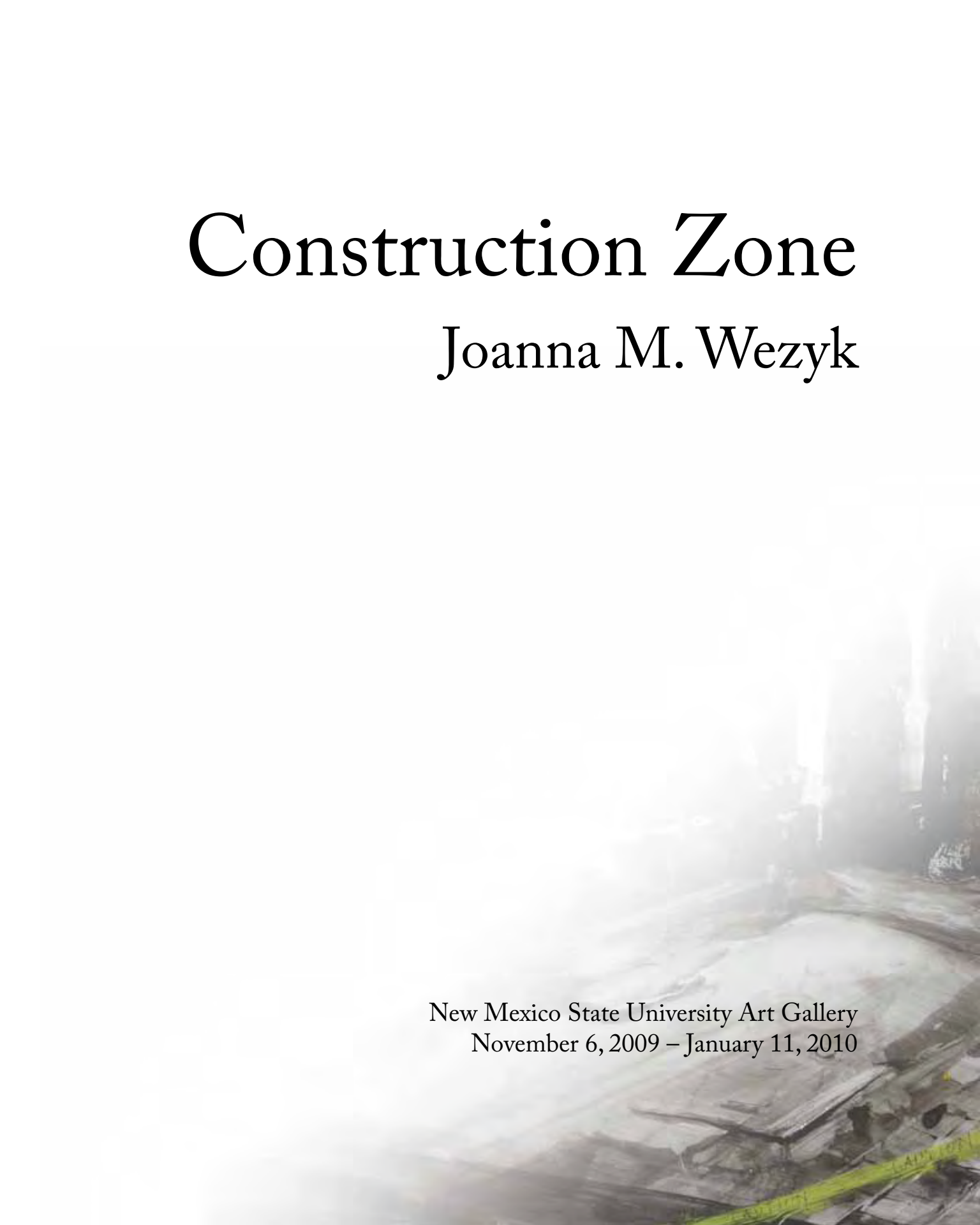
Construction Zone

Joanna M. Wezyk

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New Mexico State University Art Gallery
November 6, 2009 – January 11, 2010



Joanna M. Wezyk

Born 1966, Krakow, Poland
Lives in New Jersey and works in New York City
Adjunct Professor
 School of Visual and Performing Arts
 Kean University, New Jersey
Art Instructor
 The Center for Visual Arts of New Jersey
 Summit, NJ

EDUCATION

2008 M.F.A., School of Visual Arts, New York
2006 M.A. in Fine Arts Teaching, Kean
 University, Union, New Jersey
1990 B.F.A., M.A. in Graphic Arts from
 Akademia Sztuk Pieknych, Krakow, Poland

AWARDS AND RESIDENCIES

2008 The School of Visual Arts-Paula Rhodes
 Memorial Award for Exceptional
 Achievement in Fine Arts
2008 Joan Mitchell Foundation nominee
2008 Artists and Writers Educational and
 Development Foundation Grant Recipient
2007 Dedalus Foundation Fellowship nominee
2006 Summer Residency Program, School of
 Visual Arts, New York

SELECTED SOLO EXHIBITIONS

2009 New Mexico State University Art
 Galleries, Las Cruces, NM
2008 Tina Kim Gallery, New York
2005 Plus Gallery, Brooklyn, New York
2004 Polonaise Fine Art Gallery, Woodstock, VT

SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS

2009 "Joanna M Wezyk; Slawomir Elsner,
 Martin Manning," Kukje Gallery, Seoul,
 South Korea
2009 "I Stepped Into the Room," Tina Kim
 Gallery, New York
2009 Faculty Show, James Howell Gallery, Kean
 University, Union, New Jersey
2009 "Police 90" Krolikarnia, National Museum,
 Warszawa, Poland
2008 "Chinoiserie and Other Follies," Thomas
 Hunter Project Space at Hunter College,
 New York
2008 "Cenacle: Reverie Refurbishing Revelry
 and Vice Versa," SVA Gallery, New York
2008 "Animal," SVA Thesis Exhibition, SVA
 Gallery, New York
2008 "Fresh," C.A.M. Galeri, Istanbul, Turkey
2006 Benefit Auction, White Box, Robert Miller
 Gallery, New York
2006 Faculty Show, James Howell Gallery, Kean
 University, Union, New Jersey
2006 Visual Center of New Jersey, Summit,
 New Jersey

PUBLIC COLLECTIONS

Library of Congress, Washington, DC
Polish Art Museum, Chicago, IL
Museum Archidiecezjalne, Krakow, Poland
American Center for Polish Arts, Washington, DC
Polish Institute of Arts and Science, New York, NY

Construction Zone: Joanna M. Wezyk

Joanna Wezyk grew to adulthood in Krakow, Poland during the Soviet era, and came to the United States in her late twenties. This exhibition focuses on her paintings of the interiors of Catholic churches in Poland and France, in which the traditional imagery of faith is contrasted to modernity and timeless values are placed in dialogue with contemporary politics.

Slanting rays of light from leaded-glass windows catch the swelling forms of hand-wrought spiral column and carved pulpit from the seventeenth century, but then our eye notes construction site “caution” tape or a dangling electrical cable, and we are brought swiftly into the twenty-first. For Wezyk, the renovation activity represented by worksite equipment (including the startling image of a “cherry picker” in front of a crucifix) serves as metaphor for both the “New Poland” that is arising with membership in the European Union, and the rejuvenation of the Church in post-communist Poland.

The restoration of Catholic churches in major cities testifies to the resurgence of faith in Poland; in some areas, newer churches have been built to accommodate larger congregations, and the old churches, including some depicted here (Debno, Rabka, Sworne Gaci), have been removed to outdoor history muse-

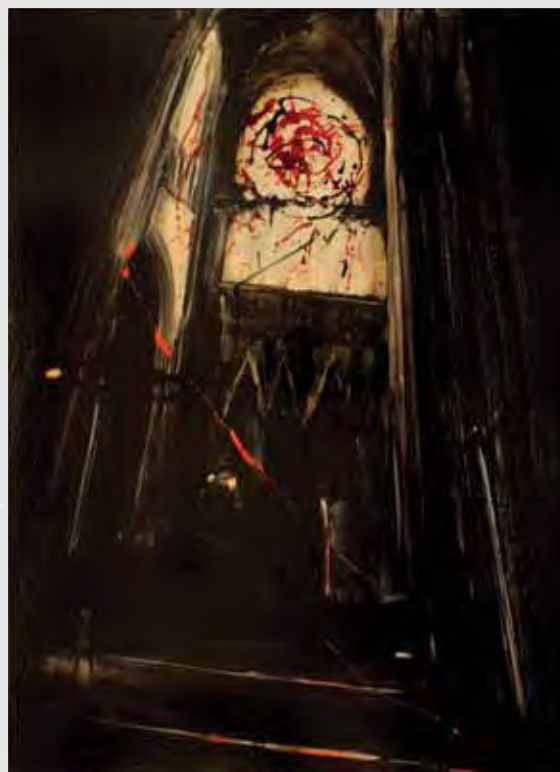
ums, where they have new functions and new audiences. People will pray – there is an altar – but services are no longer held there. These buildings are being renovated to preserve the history of the Church in Poland, but Wezyk wants the viewer to see the “cherry picker” (a device for lifting) as a mechanical analogue to spiritual elevation.

The French works have a somewhat different meaning. The Church was disestablished after the 1789 Revolution, and the nation that had been a bulwark of Catholicism in Europe became its first secular state. Gothic cathedrals were gutted and abandoned for much of the nineteenth century, to be restored and made into tourist attractions in the twentieth, becoming in the artist’s words, “decaying signifiers of centuries of use and functionality.” The presence of construction equipment in once-sacred spaces underscores not only the disrepair of the buildings, but of the culture for which they once stood. Wezyk sees a struggle in the European Union for spiritual renewal; she notes that as recent as 2007, there was heated debate on whether Christianity should be referenced in the EU constitution.

Wezyk’s painting technique derives from her printmaking experience. She begins by creating a detailed, realistic image, then removes

up to 80 percent of the surface with a rag or brush dipped in chemicals (much as one might on an etching plate) and “rebuilds” it from her imagination. This is most easily seen in works such as *Bliss* and *Sunlight at St. Sulpice*. The removal of material evokes both memories and how we selectively recall things, and sadness – the “dropping of tears” as the artist puts it. In this balance of painterly technique and narrative, Wezyk is erasing something from the past (Polish academicism?) and painting over it with the loose brushwork of the Abstract Expressionists, who she first encountered after arriving in the U. S. in the 1990s – a fitting process for an artist whose subject matter is the layering of history and whose artworks are palimpsests (construction zones) of memory.

Preston Thayer
Director



Rouen Cathedral Interior (Normandy, France)
2008

We gratefully acknowledge the assistance of Jaime Schwartz and Tina Kim Gallery, New York, for lending works to this exhibition.



Altar at Sieniawa with Yellow Mums
2006



Bliss
2008



Caution Tape (St. Merri, Paris)
2007



Construction Tape (Sworne Gaci, Poland)
2007



Blue Cherry Picker
2007



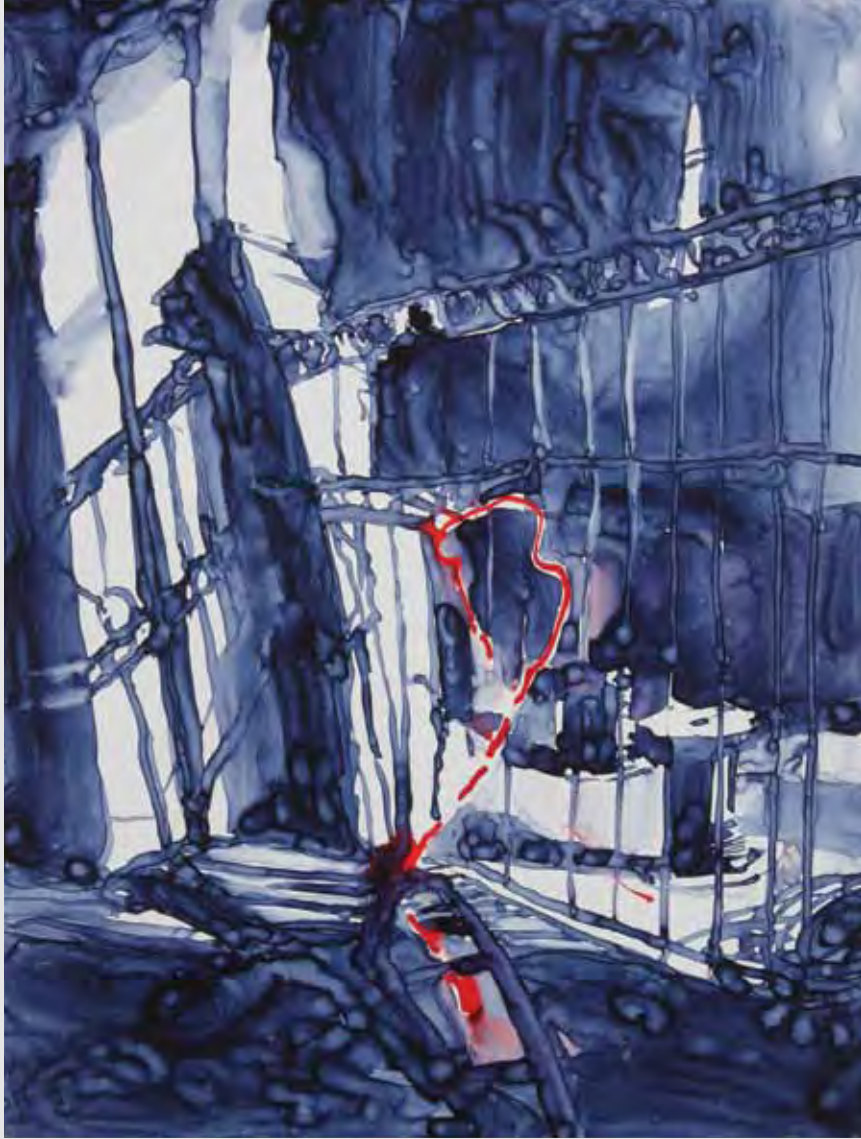
Rouen Cathedral Interior (Normandy, France)
2008



Red Cherry Picker (St. Merri, Paris)
2007



Rabka-Altar
2006



Behind the Gate (St. Merri, Paris)
2008



Caution Tape (Berdine Monastery)
2008



Reconstruction in Debno
2007



Sunlight at St. Sulpice (Paris)
2008



Noon at Benedictine Monastery
2008



Pulpit in Laser Light Vision
2008

JOANNA M. WEZYK
Works in the Exhibition

PAINTINGS

Altar at Sieniarwa with Yellow Mums
2006
Oil on wood
16 x 12 inches
40.6 x 30.5 cm

Baroque Sculpture (St. Ann Church, Krakow)
2007
Oil on linen
28 x 22 inches
71.1 x 55.9 cm

Bliss
2008
Oil on canvas
22 x 15 ½ inches
55.9 x 39.4 cm

Blue Cherry Picker
2007
Oil on linen
24 x 30 inches
61 x 76.2 cm

Caution Tape (St. Merri, Paris)
2007
Oil on canvas
24 x 18 inches
61 x 45.7 cm

Construction Tape (Sworne Gaci, Poland)
2007
Oil on canvas
16 x 12 inches
40.6 x 30.5 cm

Marquis de Sade bedroom
2009
Oil on canvas
24 x 18 inches
61 x 45.7 cm

Nightmare
2009
Oil on canvas
24 x 18 inches
61 x 45.7 cm

Paper Fly
2007
Oil on wood
36 x 24 inches
91.4 x 61 cm

Rabka-Altar
2006
Oil on wood
16 x 12 inches
40.6 x 30.5 cm

Reconstruction in Debno
2007
Oil on linen
16 x 20 inches
40.6 x 50.8 cm

Red Cherry Picker (St. Merri, Paris)
2007
Oil on linen
48 x 36 inches
121.9 x 91.4 cm

Room of Louise of Lorraine
2008
Oil on canvas
16 x 12 inches
40.6 x 30.5 cm

Rouen Cathedral Interior (Normandy, France)
2008
Oil on canvas
30 x 22 inches
76.2 x 55.9 cm

Royal Photoshop Light
2008
Oil on canvas
16 x 12 inches
40.6 x 30.5 cm

Somber Chenonceau
2008
Oil on canvas
18 x 14 inches
45.7 x 35.6 cm

Sunlight at St. Sulpice (Paris)
2008
Oil on wood
20 x 16 inches
50.8 x 40.6 cm

They Are Here
2009
Oil on canvas
18 x 14 inches
45.7 x 35.6 cm

Zubrzyca Bedroom
2009
Oil on canvas
18 x 14 inches
45.7 x 35.6 cm

DRAWINGS

Behind the Gate (St. Merri, Paris)
2008
Ink on yupo paper
12 x 9 inches
30.5 x 22.9 cm

Caution Tape (Berdine Monastery)
2008
Ink on yupo paper
12 ¾ x 9 ¾ inches
32.4 x 24.8 cm

Noon at Benedictine Monastery
2008
Ink on yupo paper
12 ¾ x 10 inches
32.4 x 25.4 cm

Pulpit in Laser Light Vision
2008
Ink on yupo paper
12 x 9 inches
30.5 x 22.9 cm

BACK COVER:
Light and Blood (St. Merri, Paris)
2007
(Not in exhibition)

