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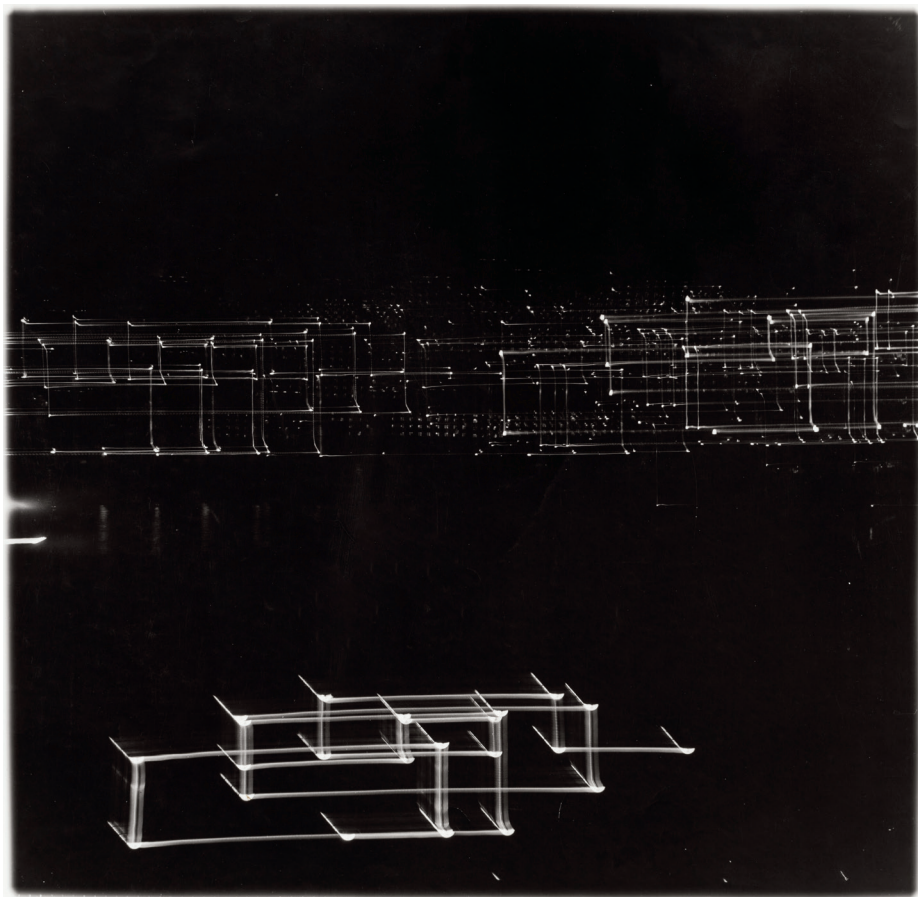
SCHOOL OF SEEING: THE CITY

Herbst Palace Museum
A branch of the
Muzeum Sztuki in Łódź



In these “serious times,” I can confidently recommend walking [...] I suggest to anyone who wishes to learn this art, or [...] not to unlearn it: now and then, get off a stop before your destination [...] There is a secret idler in all of us, who sometimes wants to forget his tiresome motives and move around for no reason at all. And if he succeeds [...] the street [...] becomes a waking dream. Shop windows are no longer brash displays, but landscapes [...]

Franz Hessel, “Von den schwierigen Kunst spazieren zu gehen” (1932), in idem, *Sämtliche Werke in fünf Bänden*, trans. Marcin Wawrzyńczak, Bd. 5, Hamburg: Igel Verlag, 2013, 75.



Antoni Mikołajczyk, *Scores of the Cities* – Cologne, 1985

By introducing a school of seeing, we open up a space for reflection on the urban landscape. Rather than a portrait of a single place, the images gathered in the exhibition form constellations that reveal different aspects of the urban experience. They are accompanied by the voices of writers, poets, philosophers, and painters for whom the city was a source of inspiration. One of the figures guiding this narrative is the flâneur—a key presence in nineteenth-century urban culture. The exhibition takes a work by Antoni Mikołajczyk as its point of departure. This artist moved through the city with a camera set to a long exposure time. In the photograph, he recorded traces of glowing streetlamps and car headlights. The image does not depict a night street or sources of light in a realistic way; rather, it captures the relationship between space, time, and human presence. It is precisely these aspects—ways of recording, experiencing, and understanding—that the exhibition seeks to explore.

Now I am certain that everyone will agree with my definition of man: a featherless, two-legged animal, clad in an overcoat, smoking a cigar and idly roaming the streets [...] With a surfeit of elegance, our gadabout tucks his cane, hand and all, into his pocket [...]

Ludwik Huart, *Fizjologia wiercipięty*,
Warsaw: S.H. Mersbach, 1843, 13.



Józef Sebald, *Portrait of a Man*, 19th/20th c.



Piotr Tomczyk, *Self-Portrait*, 1972

The *flâneur* is as much a figure as a phenomenon. Initially a pejorative epithet, the *flâneur* was seen as a shady character, a drifter, even a criminal—or, at best, someone wasting time gazing at shop windows. Not everyone could afford to *flâner*, i.e. to stroll aimlessly through the city. Over time, however, the *flâneur* came to be regarded as an artist, an aesthete, a sensitive and critical observer. What others consider ordinary or trivial acquires deeper meaning for him. The literature on the subject associates the *flâneur* with a wide range of figures: the dandy (who, unlike the *flâneur*, remains focused on himself and the cultivation of his own image); the photographer (the images the *flâneur* apprehends pass through him and disappear, whereas the photographer periodically selects and preserves fragments of reality); Asmodeus (a demon in novels who tears off roofs and peers into private homes—both he and the *flâneur* embody dreams of invisibility); as well as the physiognomist, poet, painter, detective, journalist, sociologist, collector, film director, and finally the psychogeographer (whose lack of a destination allows him to discover new places and attend to the emotions evoked by his surroundings). The *flâneur* observes emerging phenomena and critically responds to them in order to better understand the processes unfolding around him. He wanders through arcades and boulevards, peers through windows, enters courtyards, and records what is disappearing. He reads the city. He has been compared to “a kaleidoscope endowed with consciousness.” Many writers, philosophers, and sociologists have evoked the figure of the *flâneur*, among them Charles Baudelaire, Edgar Allan Poe, Honoré de Balzac, Charles Dickens, Siegfried Kracauer, Georg Simmel, and Franz Hessel. In broader reflections on culture, however, the *flâneur* emerged most prominently in the early twentieth century through the essays of Walter Benjamin.

[...] avoid wandering about with a woman [...]
For women do not understand gadabouting.

Ludwik Huart, *Fizjologia wiercipięty*,
op. cit., 128–129.



Bruno Schulz, *Revolution in the City*, 1922

The *flâneur* is most often imagined as male. This understanding of strolling and experiencing urban space was shaped, among other things, by the division between the public sphere, associated with men, and the private sphere, considered more appropriate for women. As a result, a woman entering public space became less a subject of observation than its object. This made it difficult for her to become an invisible passer-by (unfortunately, we cannot speak of this entirely in the past tense). A woman was expected to move through the city with a purpose and without unnecessary delay—preferably accompanied. Behavior departing from the accepted norms exposed her to criticism. Maria Bashkirtseff, a painter living in the second half of the nineteenth century, wrote:

What I long for is the freedom of a solitary walk: to go wherever I please, to turn around, to sit on benches [...], to stop before the windows of art shops, to enter churches or museums [...]

Dziennik, translated by Helena Duninówna, Warsaw: Czytelnik, 1967, 405.

As late as 1927, Virginia Woolf observed that, whenever struck by the urge to wander the streets, one must first find a pretext:

Really I must buy a pencil.

Virginia Woolf, "Street Haunting: A London Adventure," *The Yale Review*, vol. 18, no. 1, October 1927.

In this context, the anthropologist Ulf Hannerz spoke of "role-discriminating attributes." Among these, he included gender, as well as age and ethnicity.

In fact, photography first comes into its own as an extension of the eye of the middle-class *flâneur*, whose sensibility was so accurately charted by Baudelaire. The photographer is an armed version of the solitary walker reconnoitering, stalking, cruising the urban inferno, the voyeuristic stroller who discovers the city as a landscape of voluptuous extremes. Adept of the joys of watching, connoisseur of empathy, the *flâneur* finds the world “picturesque.”

Susan Sontag, *On Photography* (1973),
New York: Rosetta Books, 2005, 42–43.



Leopold Buczkowski, *Untitled*, from the series *Photographs from London, Paris, and Vienna*, 1957–61, donated by Agnieszka Wood and Tadeusz Buczkowski

The street about me roared with a
deafening sound.
Tall, slender, in heavy mourning, majestic grief,
A woman passed, with a glittering hand
Raising, swinging the hem and flounces of
her skirt;
[...]
Elsewhere, far, far from here! too late!
never perhaps!
For I know not where you fled, you know
not where I go,
O you whom I would have loved, O you
who knew it!

Charles Baudelaire, "To a Passer-By," in *The Flowers of Evil*,
trans. William Aggeler, Fresno, CA: Academy Library Guild, 1954.



Leopold Buczkowski, Untitled, from the series *Photographs from London, Paris, and Vienna*, 1957–61, donated by Agnieszka Wood and Tadeusz Buczkowski

For the *flâneur*, almost anything has the potential to set the imagination in motion. An architectural detail, an event caught out of the corner of one eye, or a passerby encountered in the street may all become points of departure. One of the more expansive chapters in the urban book he reads consists of advertising columns and shop windows, which turn into self-contained worlds. In *The Physiology of Marriage*, Honoré de Balzac wrote that wandering is a veritable gastronomy of the eye, though there are few perceptive physiognomists or sufficiently sensitive music lovers. Virginia Woolf noted an important aspect:

The eye is not a miner [...] It floats us smoothly down a stream; resting, pausing, the brain sleeps perhaps as it looks. [...] We are in danger of digging deeper than the eye approves [...] Let us dally a little longer, be content still with surfaces only—the glossy brilliance of the motor omnibuses; the carnal splendor of the butchers' shops [...]

Virginia Woolf, "Street Haunting: A London Adventure," op. cit.

Photography could penetrate reality more deeply than the human eye. The Surrealists believed this and used it to record images inaccessible to human perception. Reflecting on the existence of the surreal, they focused on images within images or mirror reflections that complicated the photographed object, thus undermining its unambiguous nature. One act that allows for shedding the masks worn in everyday life and adopting a different perspective is walking.

We are no longer quite ourselves. [...] we shed the self our friends know us by [...]

Virginia Woolf, "Street Haunting: A London Adventure," op. cit.



Leopold Buczkowski, *Untitled*, from the series *Photographs from London, Paris, and Vienna*, 1957–61, donated by Agnieszka Wood and Tadeusz Buczkowski



Aleksander Krzywobłocki, *Portrait of Ms Halina Hornung*, 1930

The flâneur is the priest of the genius loci. This nondescript pedestrian, with a cleric's dignity and a detective's nose [...] Only a man in whom the new [...] announces its presence so clearly, can cast a glance so original, so untimely, at that which has just become old.

Walter Benjamin, "The Flâneur's Return," in Franz Hessel, *Walking in Berlin: A Flâneur in the Capital*, trans. Amanda DeMarco, Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2017, XVI–XVII

The concept of *genius loci*, translated as the "spirit of a place"—a protective force, something that gives a particular space its unique atmosphere—derives from mythology and refers to the Roman *genius*, a spirit that enters a man at the moment of birth and leaves him at death, watching over him throughout his life. The spirit of a place is tied to its identity, shaped by both material factors (such as architecture and elements of nature) and immaterial ones (such as history, collective memory, and tradition). Equally important in this context is the notion of a *sense of place*. A *genius loci* often proves elusive; it is difficult to define precisely what makes a place unique. The senses, however, may help us grasp it. In *Letters from the Lower City*, Jerzy Giedroyc wrote that every neighborhood has its own smell, that brick houses smell different from wooden ones surrounded by trees.



Jan Buthak, *University: Weather Vane from 1697*, 1919

And yet nothing of us will remain in this world;
only photography will preserve our memory
[...] We shall leave to those who come after
us [...] all the delight of studying our cities,
our streets animated by people and carriages,
our faces, clothing, the movement of crowds
and ceremonies—in a word, our life, whose
study will become an inexhaustible source of
pleasure and instruction.

Marcin Olszyński, "Półwiekowy okres istnienia fotografii," *Kłosa: czasopismo
ilustrowane, tygodniowe, poświęcone literaturze, nauce i sztuce*, 1889,
vol. 48, no. 1,237.



Stefan Kielsznia, Lublin-Podzamcze, Krawiecka Street, 1938

Benjamin chose the Paris arcades [...] as the prototype of the promenade that the modern city offers to its strollers. It was here [...] that patterns of behavior emerged which would become characteristic of life in the modern city; it was here that the stroller learned to treat the world as a theater, the street as a stage, passersby as unwitting actors, himself as the director of plays without prologues or resolutions, and life as a game.

Zygmunt Bauman, *Dwa szkice o moralności ponowoczesnej*
[Two Essays on Postmodern Morality], Warsaw: Instytut Kultury, 1994, 22.



Janusz Maria Brzeski, *Grand Hotel*, ca. 1930, © Heir(s) of Janusz Maria Brzeski and Muzeum Sztuki, Łódź

The *flâneur*'s imagination was particularly stimulated by the arcades—cities within the city, worlds of commodities, phantasmagoria, myths, and illusion. A symbol of modernity! And also a refuge from the rain. It was here that a woman's stroll found greater social justification. France is considered the cradle of the arcade, and it was its capital, as Walter Benjamin wrote, giving rise to the attentive stroller. Benjamin devoted his unfinished work, *The Arcades Project*—a collection of reflections, notes, and quotations—to Paris and the birth of modernity. In one chapter, he cites writer and poet Théophile Gautier as saying that any work with "Paris" in its title is a guaranteed success. It is difficult to look at historical cities in popular culture without calling to mind the visual clichés of iconic landmarks. This canon began to take shape almost with the birth of photography, when one of its earliest purposes was to document and catalogue, following the ideal of exploring and understanding the world. A series of innovations—among them the introduction of the dry plate and the emergence of the portable camera, which allowed people to view their surroundings from new perspectives—meant that photography found ever broader applications.



Andrzej Strumiłło, *Artificial Woman*, 1980s

When the camera reaches such perfection that it simply becomes part of the human nervous system, photography becomes nothing more than an improved pencil or a high-speed paintbrush.

Stanisław Witkiewicz, *Dziwny człowiek*,
Lviv: Towarzystwo Wydawnicze, 1903, 60.

Ways of seeing and representing the world depend on the times in which we “look.” Particularly fascinating phenomena emerged in the interwar period. One creative challenge faced by avant-garde artists and photographers was to find forms of representation to match the ongoing transformations of civilization. Purely photographic means of expression were foregrounded. The camera-eye became an integral part of the photographer. Images bore witness to multiple points of view, corresponding to a modern, fragmented experience of reality. Photography could become a form of writing through which the photographer sought to shape consciousness. These phenomena, observed in the 1920s and 1930s, are referred to in Europe as the *New Photography* or *New Vision*. Among the most compelling subjects of interest was the urban world. Artists, together with philosophers and sociologists, turned their attention to the threats of modern civilization, such as dehumanization, the severing of ties with nature, the decline of interpersonal relations, and sensory overload. They became interested in the new demands of technological development, highly specialized division of labor, and its optimization—processes in which photography was also used, for example, in studying workers’ movements to increase efficiency.



Kazimierz Podsadecki, City: Mill of Life, 1929

The most heterogeneous temporal elements thus coexist in the city. If we step from an eighteenth-century house into one from the sixteenth century, we tumble down the slope of time. Right next door stands a Gothic church, and we sink to the depths. A few steps farther, we are in a street from out of the early years of Bismarck's rule [...] and once again climbing the mountain of time.

Ferdinand Lion, *Geschichte biologisch gesehen*, Zürich–Leipzig, 1935, 125–28, in Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, trans. Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin, Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1999, 435.



Julian Mioduszewski, *House of the Dukes of Masovia*, ca. 1930



Robert Walker, Warsaw, City Center, 2000–01 © Robert Walker and Muzeum Sztuki, Łódź

There is no single universal definition of the city that applies worldwide. The criteria depend on many factors. One is based on the degree of urbanization, which allows for comparisons between administrative units across countries, regardless of local legal traditions. In the context of the exhibition and our walks, we may highlight a reflection shared by Italo Calvino in *Invisible Cities*: a city is the relationship between space and the events of its past. It preserves its past like

the lines of a hand, written in the corners of the streets, the gratings of the windows, the banisters of the steps, the antennae of the lightning rods, the poles of the flags [...]

Italo Calvino, *Invisible Cities*, trans. William Weaver, New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1974.

What emerges is a dense network of meanings, over which personal narratives, historical commentary, and interpretations shaped by present needs are layered.

Every city has its own distinct face and its own beauty. There are no ugly cities. The outward appearance of a city—its layout, architectural style, its squares and street traffic—is a reflection of the city's aggregate soul.

Witold Wandurski, Karol Hiller, "Sztuki plastyczne w Łodzi,"
Głos Polski, 1922, no. 167.



Władysław Grabowski, *Łódź. Workers' Housing Estate in Księży Młyn*, 1936

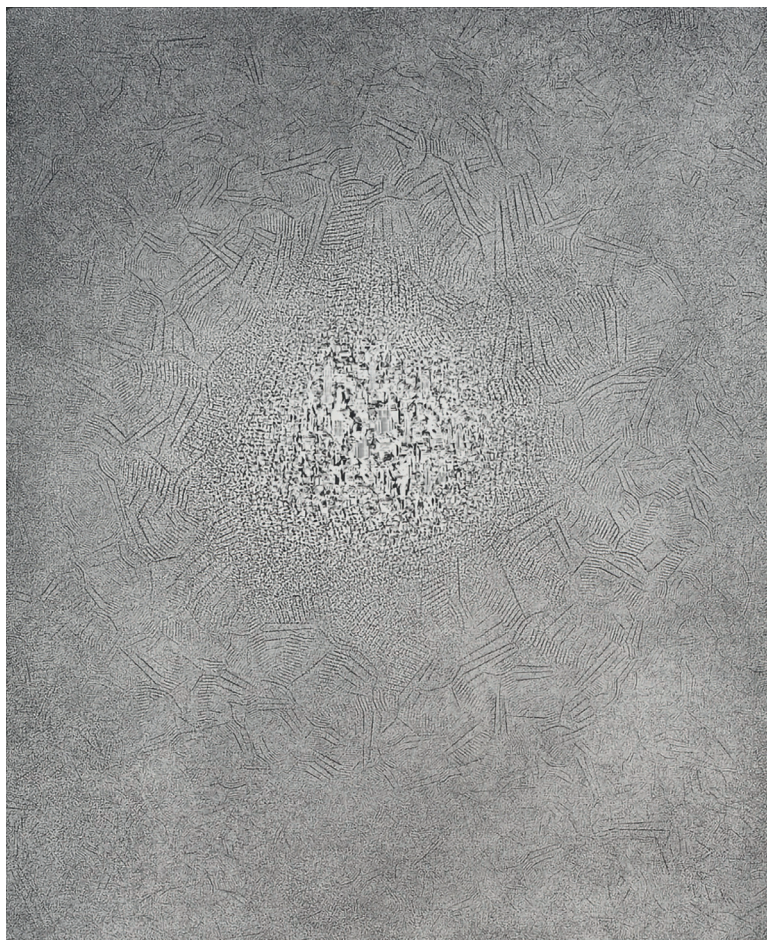
Łódź is a city of contrasts, of four cultures, a promised land. The Polish Manchester. A city of women. A city of *Lodzermensch* types. A city of transformation and its consequences. A city of nineteen rivers. A city of chimneys. It carries a whole range of associations and emotions. Łódź was granted city rights in 1423. However, its dynamic and spectacular growth began in 1821, when the Administrative Council of the Kingdom of Poland designated it as a suitable site for the establishment of a factory settlement. The city grew from almost nothing. In 1820 it had around 800 inhabitants, while in 1862 it already had 32,660 permanent residents. The main urban axis of industrial Łódź was Piotrkowska Street, around which two early settlements were planned: Nowe Miasto (New Town) and Łódka. In 1840, the New District was laid out, with its most important street, Główna (today Piłsudskiego Avenue), and Wodny Rynek (now Zwycięstwa Square). The water-and-factory estates of Księży Młyn, located to the south, were purchased in 1870 by Karl Wilhelm Scheibler. He soon began the construction of a spinning mill and a workers' colony. Over time, Księży Młyn became a self-sufficient entity—one of Łódź's cities within the city.



Tomasz Tomaszewski, *Sukkot Remnant*, Łódź, 1983–85

Visit your own city, stroll through your neighborhood, wander through the stone garden, where profession, duty, and habit lead you.

Franz Hessel, "Von den schwierigen Kunst spazieren zu gehen,"
op. cit., 76.



Roman Opalka, *The Flood from the Description of the World* series, 1968,
© Estate Roman Opalka and Muzeum Sztuki, Łódź

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A branch of the Muzeum Sztuki in Łódź
Przędzalniana 72, Łódź
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The exhibition is accompanied by a program of events.
More information: palac-herbsta.org.pl



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The first part of the paper discusses the importance of understanding the cultural context of the research. It highlights the need for researchers to be sensitive to the values and beliefs of the communities they are studying. This is particularly important in the field of education, where cultural differences can significantly impact learning outcomes. The paper then moves on to discuss the challenges of conducting research in culturally diverse settings. It notes that researchers often face difficulties in establishing rapport with participants and in interpreting their responses. To address these challenges, the paper suggests several strategies, including the use of local informants and the development of culturally appropriate research instruments. The final part of the paper discusses the importance of ethical considerations in cross-cultural research. It emphasizes the need for researchers to obtain informed consent from participants and to ensure that their research does not cause harm to the communities they are studying.

