

## **The Human Comedy**

Marcin Markowski / Szymon Szymankiewicz

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According to a dictionary definition, a poster is a piece of paper of at least A3 format, presented in a public space. It advertises or conveys political contents and informs about events. As a medium of communication it must have an impressive form, and quickly and easily communicate what, where and why.<sup>1</sup> Proponents of this view argue that everything has been already said about a poster, and its essence has been exhausted in the statement that 'a poster is a commercial printing of 100 cm x 70 cm.'<sup>2</sup> If we assumed that this conviction is accurate, this would mean that some poster artists do not create posters. Although their works resemble posters in terms of format or the brevity of message, they are separate forms because they apparently break away from the events they should herald. Going beyond the purely informative or advertising functions, they become autonomous in terms of both content and form. Their implied metaphorical potential demonstrates their 'otherness' and turns their ephemeral form into a universal message.

The works of Marcin Markowski and Szymon Szymankiewicz are perfect examples of this type of 'off-poster' or 'post-poster' creativity. The above-mentioned characteristics brings the creative activity of the two 'poster artists' closer to art and critical art in particular. This is determined by the unique symbolic potential of the works presented; this potential is deposited in a special method of constructing expressions, which consists in coding many hidden, often ambiguous contents. These

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. M. Erlhoff, T. Marshall, *Design Dictionary. Perspectives on Design Terminology*, Birkhauser Basel, Boston, Berlin 2008, p. 300.

<sup>2</sup> The definition has been quoted by Professor Mirosław Adamczyk.

contents, usually kept in a humorous or reflective tone, constitute a specific code of communication between the creators and the audience. Although the utility nature of some of these works draws the viewers' attention away from the visual contents of the rebuses that are hidden in them, after rejecting this conventional curtain, they smoothly enter a multi-level and multi-directional game of words and images.

The exhibition entitled 'The Human Comedy' presents dozens of graphic design projects and posters created by internationally renowned artists – Marcin Markowski and Szymon Szymankiewicz. The exhibition's title refers to the satirical nature of many works presented and the multiple aspects of human life they allude to. Their accumulation in the gallery Mała Scena UAP, evocative of the ancient motif of *horror vacui* (fear of empty space), is a deliberate arrangement trick aimed at highlighting the multitude of important, yet often grotesque issues faced by humanity.

Although the works differ distinctly from each other due to the unique styles of the artists – Marcin Markowski's works are more expressive and sometimes even resemble paintings, and Szymon Szymankiewicz often uses minimal signs – their common features are the clarity of communication, the lightness of representation and the insightful diagnosis of pictorial description.

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