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The text featured in  
*MIR* group show (2011)  
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Ewa Axelrad's photography installation is a work that requires the audience to meticulously decode the hints left for them by the artist. On a large lightbox situated in a not easily-accessible part of a darkened room there appears an object whose shape resembles a rock, irregular stone block; the photograph can be viewed only from a short distance.

The other element of the installation is a clove oil aroma, used as an anaesthetic in dentistry procedures. The work brings a myriad of unexpected and disturbing associations related to domesticity such as cleanliness, safety and the intimacy of physical contact.

\* *IS IT SAFE*, instalation 2011

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Curators' text  
accompanying the  
show

The exhibition refers to the legal term domestic peace (*mir domowy*). Although devoid of any emotional connotations, in fact it evokes, a little bit unexpectedly perhaps, literary associations: the cosy hearth and home, as well as idyllic family life, yet coupled with a sense of its impending end. *Mir domowy* as a legal term is used in Polish almost exclusively in negative context such as 'the breach of domestic peace' (*naruszenie miru domowego*), which, according to the Criminal Code, occurs when a person unlawfully and against our will trespasses on the area of our everyday domestic existence.

*MIR* is an exhibition about the house/home and the family who live there. Yet just like in the legal context, the eponymous term *mir* is used here in a perverted sense, as most works presented at the exhibition deal with all the unnerving, suffocating and oppressive things that are enclosed within the four walls of our homes. This is supposed to draw people's attention to the idea that a private space is free from any social control and as such transforms the dynamics of interpersonal relations. As far as the experiences of an individual are concerned, the exhibition emphasises how fascinating a state it is when a single unrestrained thought allows itself to descend deep into its own inner recesses, thus penetrating the areas of absolute freedom and provoking unexpected reactions.

The exhibition also points out the habits that human perception adheres to and the elements of architecture that yield to an immense array of psychological interpretations, and yet frequently escape our attention. This is why this exhibition discusses a range of themes which refer to how a contemporary human being functions in the context of the space that he or she inhabits. Hence it becomes apparent then that the exhibition revolves around the relation between psychology and architecture. *MIR* is all about the Interior, of a house, of a gallery, and, finally, of one's head. We are trying to decipher how the relationship between the house and the existence that dwells inside it really works, a relationship that has been constructed as a story within a story. The issue whether the universal experience of architecture is in any way reflected in the subjective moment of actually experiencing it is equally worth examining.

The idea behind the exhibition also takes into account the specific venue: the rooms in the Arsenal Gallery resemble the layout of a big apartment. Unlike in other galleries with one dominant space, the gallery in Białystok is more of a maze, which, on the one hand, makes it hard for the audience to move around freely, and on the other enables them to make startling discoveries. The map of the space is not even remotely obvious; it evolves constantly and inspires fresh interpretations every time the gallery visitor moves on to another room.

translated by Katarzyna Sawicka

