

The Magazine of the Polish Academy of Sciences

No. 1 (41) 2014

Quarterly

ISSN 1731-7401

Edited by:

Polish Academy of Sciences

© Polska Akademia Nauk 2014

Editor Address:

Polish Academy of Sciences
Office for Popularizing and Promoting Science
PKiN, pl. Defilad 1, 00-901 Warsaw, Poland
e-mail: academia@pan.pl
www.academia.pan.pl

Subscription:

academia.prenumerata@pan.pl

Editorial Staff:

Jan Strelau
Editor-in-Chief

Anna Zawadzka
Deputy Editor
Humanities

Katarzyna Czamecka
Managing Editor

Agnieszka Kloch
Biomedical Sciences

Agnieszka Pollo
Mathematics, Physics,
Chemistry, Technology

Kinga Malecka
Earth Sciences

Daniel Sax
English Language Editor & Translator

Caroline Stupnicka
Translator

Paweł Adamów
Art Director

Scientific Council:

Chairman:
Michał Kleiber
President of the Polish Academy of Sciences

Aleksander Posem-Zieliński

Jerzy Duszyński

Henryk Szymczak

Lucjan Pawłowski

Jacek Zaremba

DTP by Studio J.PJ.

Printed by Edit Sp. z o.o.

The End of a Dream

We frequently think that conflicts are not something bad in and of themselves, that they can sometimes help matters. Within a given family, group, organization, or even country, conflict can bring various interests into focus, help views become articulated, open the way to negotiations and solutions. When it's all said and done, things might end up working better.

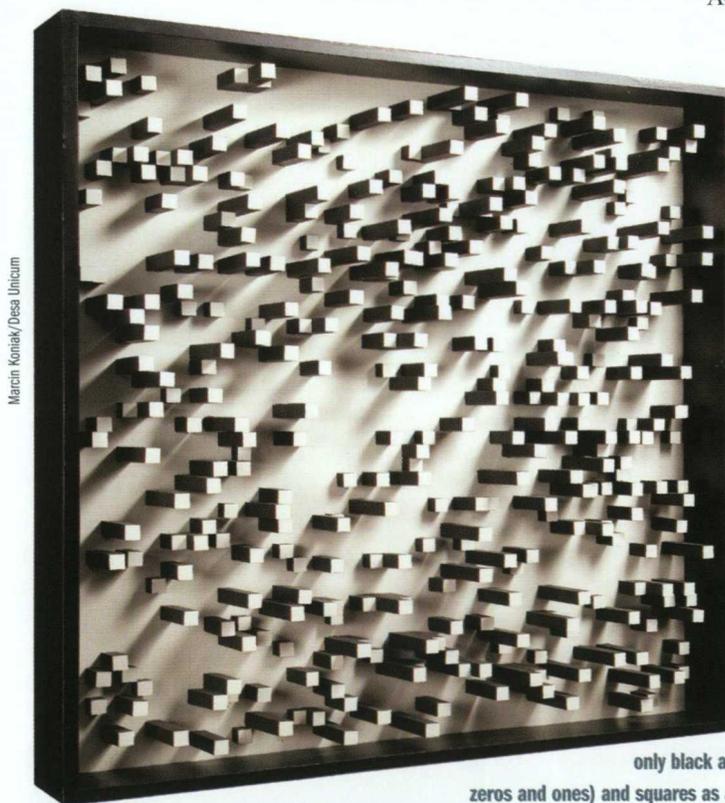
We also comfort ourselves with the notion that revolutions are a thing of the past, as liberal democracy has prevailed in the world. Francis Fukuyama wrote about this, even announcing the end of history.

But is it really true? This issue's article about genocide leaves no illusions: conflict and violence are always present, just under the surface. Schools and other institutions, and also popular culture, all serve to foster a person's identity as a citizen. But while creating the category "us" they automatically construct a category of "them." And "they" can threaten "us"... "Knowing humankind's propensity for destruction, we must harbor no illusion that we live in an era when our species' greatest crimes will never be repeated" – sociologist Lech Nijakowski writes.

As we were preparing this issue of Academia magazine, we were unable to tear ourselves away from the events in Ukraine. For a number of months now all eyes have been turned to the East, first with hope, now with anxiety. We know that no one can predict the outcome: the conflict is spilling over, repeatedly recovering momentum. In this context we are thinking about our neighbors, but also about ourselves.

No one is harboring any blissful illusions about the end of history. History always has been, and still is, a long series of conflicts.

ACADEMIA staff



Marcin Komiak/Dzesa Unicorn

"Area 184," 1974.

Ryszard Winiarski (1936–2006) studied at Warsaw's university of technology and fine arts academy. He created his first works in his series of "Attempted visual presentation of statistical distributions" in 1965. Initially he used

only black and white (corresponding to zeros and ones) and squares as a module in building compositions dictated by the laws of chance (arranged according to a die-throw or random selection). Later he composed three-dimensional objects somewhat reminiscent of architectural models of a modern city. On flat, rectangular, square, or rhomboid surfaces surrounded by tall and thin frame-boards, he engaged in games of illusory perspective. He is considered a precursor to constructivism.