

The Board of the Polish Section of AICA disapproves of the proposed candidate and once again calls for a fair competition for the position of the Director of Zachęta National Gallery of Art. Only a transparent competition will allow an in-depth analysis of the achievements of potential candidates. Occupying such an important post in the network of cultural institutions in Poland requires comprehensive knowledge and know-how, as well as a network of contacts, which, in our opinion, Mr Janusz Janowski does not possess.

Thanks to the resilient efforts of the previous directors as well as the excellent – and continually growing – team, the Zachęta National Gallery of Art is an internationally recognized institution and, for years, it has been setting standards of professionalism in Poland in the field of art production, educational activities, collection management and audience development (which is directly proven by the number of visitors). This is why we are strongly opposed to the appointment of a director of the institution in question without a transparent competition or, for that matter, without even making the proposal of the candidate designated by the Minister public. In addition, we would like to raise some important objections to the presented candidature.

(1) In our opinion, Dr Janusz Janowski has not proven sufficient curatorial and organisational experience to manage a large and important institution with international ambitions, such as Zachęta. The numerous exhibitions which he lists in his biography have been, for the most part, minor in scale. His resumé lacks events that would be noticed by critics and audiences nationwide, as well as projects that would correspond to Zachęta's endeavours, at least in terms of organisational scale and budget requirements.

(2) The aforementioned lack of experience in the realisation of large-scale artistic projects is compounded by the lack of proven predisposition to manage a team of such scale and specificity as Zachęta's team. Dr Janowski is a member and long-term president of ZPAP (Association of Polish Artists and Designers); he has also been in charge of the Association's exhibition organs. However, their organisational structure is drastically different from that of the National Gallery of Art. It therefore seems reasonable to fear that Dr Janowski will fail to maintain control over the Warsaw institution, thus repeating the mistakes of Professor Jerzy Miziołek, who took over as director of the National Museum in Warsaw in 2018 without adequate competences. Working at ZPAP imposes completely different challenges than managing the National Gallery of Art, which, in addition to organising exhibitions, coordinates such important undertakings as the grant programmes of the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage in Poland or competitions for the realisation of exhibitions at the Polish Pavilion in Venice. The functions which Dr Janowski held so far in public cultural institutions of a similar scale were only of an advisory or prestigious nature.

(3) The candidate has no experience in managing contemporary art collections.

(4) Considering the international standing of Zachęta, we believe that excellent knowledge of contemporary art and an extensive network of international contacts should be the minimum requirements for a candidate for the post of Director of Zachęta. In his texts and public appearances, however, the candidate displays a very superficial knowledge of recent art, both in Polish and global perspective. Despite holding a doctorate in art sciences, Mr Janowski has not listed any research publication in the Polish Scientific Bibliography.

Finally, it is worth mentioning the risk involved in appointing as director of Zachęta a person whose professional development was based primarily on union activity. The loosening of

relations between state-subsidised galleries (the so-called BWA – Bureaus of Artistic Exhibitions) and the Association of Polish Artists and Designers was one of the key elements of the cultural transformation after 1989. We consider their renewed rapprochement to be destructive. Although we appreciate the initiative of the Association in preparing the latest regulations concerning support for employees in the cultural sector, we would like to strongly emphasise the divergence of interests and functions of the National Gallery of Art and professional associations such as ZPAP. The director of the former should be guided in their work primarily by criteria of merit, the ongoing development of a strong team, the good name of the institution, as well as the general condition of culture in Poland. The decision to appoint Mr Janowski may lead to a situation in which Zachęta becomes an institution associated with one group of artists, unrepresentative of Polish art in recent decades.

For the reasons mentioned above, we believe that Mr Janowski does not fulfil the requirements necessary to hold the position of director of Zachęta. It should be taken over by a person with a more developed organisational and curatorial track record, with experience predisposing them to manage a large collection of contemporary art and a dynamic team; a person with extensive international contacts and, last but not least, with a good reputation among different artistic circles and audiences. Failure to do so will inevitably lead to the marginalisation of a cultural institution that has established a high reputation and influence both nationally and internationally.