

ANNA SOBOLEWSKA P H O T O G R A P H Y

SUBJECTIVE
BITTERSWEET IMAGE OF
POP CULTURE
YEARS 2011-2021

A few words about the "Lolpop" project

In 2011, my daughter comes into the world. After the stage of teething and sensory toys, it is time for her to make her own choices of her favourite toys. The shelves are filled with slime, squishies, Lego creations, unicorns, flamingos and... the pink colour in all its forms!

In the meantime, the so-called Chinese shopping centres have already settled for good in many Polish cities, and Aliexpress, a Chinese sales service, is emerging on-line. This is where these toys, such as slime, pop-its and squishy, and everything that is "kawaii" or cute start their careers.

Meanwhile, the shelves of the so-called chain stores, in the children's departments for girls, turn pink and sparkle with a pastel rainbow. Clothes, toys, accessories and decorations are full of unicorns, flamingos and pastel rainbow. With time, these fashionable motifs go much further beyond the shelves of children's stores and enter the world of adults, becoming known as so-called cult motifs. This is particularly reflected in social media, where everything related to current pop culture can be found.

I take a closer look at those products of mass culture that both irritate and fascinate me at the same time. I ask myself: are these the symbols that define the time in which I live? A time of plastic, disposable gloves, social media, beauty apps and filters, a time of pastel rainbows and single-sex Lego bricks? The reflection on these trends leads me to create a collection in 2019 of the most distinctive, and most eye-catching, pop culture phenomena of 2011-2021. However, I am not planning a documentary but a creation. I am creating a world that, on the surface, appears to be a joyful game, a colourful and pretty picture. But let's not be fooled - it is first and foremost a packaging - an illusion behind which there is a hidden story about you and me - about us living in the 21st century.

Anna Sobolewska

Born in 1981. She comes from the town of Milicz. Anna studied art history at the University of Wrocław, cultural management at the University of Economics in Wrocław and photography and advertising at the two-year Creo Study in Wrocław. Her day-to-day life is based in Milicz, where she conducts workshops in artistic photography "PhotoAmateur". In 2017, she created her first non-commercial artistic project called Explore. Another project called Hydro-Projekt premiered in 2019. "Lol pop" is the artist's third major project in a row.

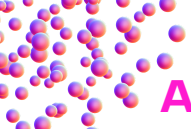
Technical data

The exhibition consists of 20 large-format photographs measuring 70x100 cm. Photographs are displayed in pairs - as diptychs, i.e. there are 10 diptychs with dimensions of 140x100 cm. All photographs are framed in black. Each pair of photographs is accompanied by a description. The description is in A3 print but can be prepared in a different form - if the exhibition curator has another vision. The descriptions can be found on the following pages of this presentation.

The exhibition is accompanied by an installation - a pyramid made of pale pink latex gloves. If the gallery does not have space for the installation, it is possible to do without it. A video recording of the installation in the field was produced for the project. The exhibition is intended for indoor display only.

Contact

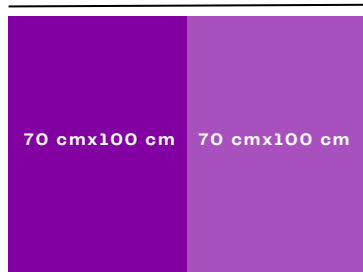
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ANNA SOBOLEWSKA

PHOTOGRAPHY

140 cm



work sets

1 SELFIE



2 MEDIA NEW GENERATION



3 PASTE LOVE



4 SLIME



5 UNICORN / RAINBOW / POP IT



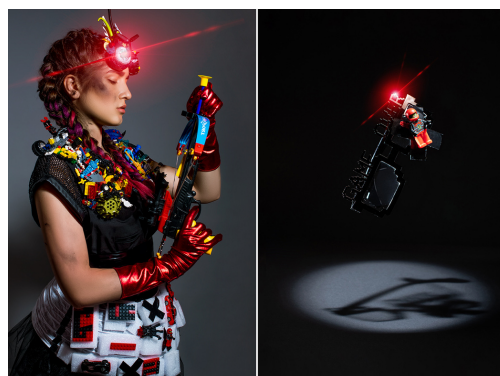
6 FLAMINGO



7 PANDEMIC



8 GAME IS OVER



9 SQUISHY KAWAII



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ANNA SOBOLEWSKA

PHOTOGRAPHY

www.annasobolewskaphotography.com

DESCRIPTIONS ACCOMPANYING DIPTYCHS



Slime

Slime is a special plastic mass, usually coloured, shimmering in different shades, stretching between the fingers, sticky but not dirty. Slimes can vary not only in colour, but also in texture and additions, such as glitter or polystyrene balls.

You can buy them in a store or make them yourself at home. Slime is the hit of the year in Poland 2018 and one of the most popular toys in the world, gaining dizzying popularity on social media including YouTube.

In 2018, warnings about the harmfulness of slime were given by, among others, the consumer organisation "Which", the safety agency "ANSES", the Community Rapid Information System "RAPEX". Out of a dozen of 'slimes' tested, as many as eight contained excessive amounts of boron, causing skin irritation, diarrhoea, vomiting and cramps. As reported, Slime can also impair the developing reproductive system.

From 2020, a new trend has been observed on YouTube channels, where popular Youtubers encourage you to create slime yourself. There are many recipes for "home-made slime" on-line, but the most popular ones are: fluffy slime, foam slime, jiggly slime, butter slime and water slime

MEDIA NEW GENERATION

"They don't know any other world than one in which the currency that buys peer acceptance is likes and hearts, and exclusion from a group is as simple as clicking on an app."

quote from the movie „The Social Dilemma” (2020 r.)

According to the Hootsuite report (as of January 2021), a statistical Pole (aged 16-64) spends 6 hours 44 minutes a day on the Internet, including 2 hours on social media. The most popular social networking site in Poland in 2021 is YouTube, used by 92.8% of users. Facebook (89.2%) and Instagram (60.6%) also rank very high.



SELFIE

2017 sees the creation of FaceApp, an app where, using artificial intelligence, a photographed face can be rejuvenated or aged, beautify and even change gender.

According to analytics firm App Annie, the app from July 2017 to July 2019 was downloaded 73.2 million times and earned \$11.6 million.

A report by the American journal "Journal of the American Medical Association Facial Plastic Surgery", published in December 2018, suggests that face-altering filters may contribute to the development of a body image disorder (dysmorphophobia).

On August 2, 2018, JAMA Facial Plastic Surgery describes a new phenomenon called "Snapchat Dysmorphia" - a new generation of dysmorphophobia. In a 2018 survey conducted by the American Academy of Facial Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery Facial Reconstructive Surgery (AAFPRS), as many as 55 per cent of doctors reported that they get patients who want to look like they are in an embellished selfie*. "Patients choose to have plastic surgery to look like a filter selfie, with fuller lips, bigger eyes and a thinner nose."

Selfie - a type of self-portrait photography, usually taken by hand or on the selfie stick of a digital camera, camcorder or mobile phone. The photograph usually shows oneself (in this case, the person taking the photo) or the reflection of that person in the mirror. Selfies are related to social media (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram) because they are most often placed there. A selfie can also present a group of people, where one of them takes a photo using an image recorder (e.g. a telephone). Such selfies are referred to as 'group selfies'.

FLAMINGO

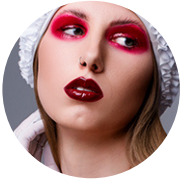
As reported in June 2019, the Simple Stylish Makes website: "If you like to follow fashion and follow the latest trends, get interested in flamingos!"

From 2016 to 2020, flamingo is an unflagging trend in pop culture. Clothes, shoes, handbags, jewellery, gadgets, textiles, decorations, party themes.... they can be found literally everywhere. The pink flamingo is also a hot trend of the three summer seasons on Instagram. In the summer of 2017, 2018 and 2019, inflatable flamingos became a real hit. According to Allani Trends - almost one in two Instagram users now has a photo with a pink companion in their gallery. (June 2017) In turn, the Glamour portal reports that inflatable flamingos have become so popular that mainstream supermarkets are introducing them to their offer. Some time ago, you could buy an inflatable flamingo in Biedronka, and now you can find it in Lidl. (June 2018)

In October 2019, the portal zeberka.pl writes about a new trend on Instagram, the so-called "Flamingo pose" - is a new trend loved by celebrities! The pose involves characteristically (modelled on the flamingo) lifting one leg and bending it at the knee, while the other leg remains straight.

"For the effect to be successful, it's a good idea to practice keeping your balance beforehand, at least for the time of the shot."





PANDEMIC

"The new restrictions related to trade and isolation have been introduced, among others, by obligation to shop in disposable gloves to limit the spread of the coronavirus. So stores provide them to customers. The problem is that customers, after leaving the shops, are found to be throwing these gloves away wherever they can imagine. It is enough to go to any larger store to see an unpleasant view. Gloves litter car parks, lawns, streets and pavements."

8/4/20

<https://www.trojmiasto.pl/wiadomosci/Zuzyte-rekawiczki-zasmiecaja-ulice-i-trawniki-Grozi-za-to-mandat-n144132.html#tri>



Game is over

1958 is the year of the creation of the famous Lego System. The first minifigure made its debut in 1978. Initially, Lego created 40 variants of minifigures. Today they are available in over 8 thousand versions. Until 1989, all the figurines were smiling, it changed with the Lego Pirates series. Until 2004, all LEGO figures were yellow. In 2019, the manufacturer clearly divided its toys into those for boys and those for girls. In 2020, the Danish manufacturer declared to remove from its offer toys that perpetuate unfair stereotypes, regarding future careers, for example.

On June 1, 2021, Lego releases the first set of blocks in the colours of the LGBT + flag. The latest set (a project called 'We are all amazing'), features new character figurines in 11 colours, which together form a rainbow.

Figures are not assigned any specific gender.



PASTELove

Pastels are the colours that have taken over the world of design, architecture, hairdressing and widely understood sphere of beauty and lifestyle. The most popular shades are powder pink, baby blue, whitened yellow and the so-called Neo Mint.

From 2010 onwards, so-called millennial pink began to occupy a special place in this set. Millennial pink is a subtle, slightly pastel colour that is located somewhere between delicate pink, juicy peach and beige. The English name of this colour defines the entire Y generation (Millennials - people born in the years 1986-1994/1995). The Pantone Institute, calling this shade the colour of a whole generation, justified its choice by referring to the disappearance of differences between what is, from the cultural point of view, women's and men's.



Squishy Kawaii

A soft, fragrant toy made of polyurethane foam, which slowly returns to its original shape after being crushed. Produced in many different sizes and shapes such as animals, fruit and food items. The toy is also called kawaii squishy, where kawaii means "cute" in Japanese.

The toy, which comes from Japan, becomes available in the United States in spring 2017. In the following years, squishy is conquering the world, to which social media, especially YouTube and Instagram, contribute significantly. In Poland, they become a hit in the summer of 2018. They are cheap and sold at stalls and convenience stores in all tourist destinations.

On 31 August 2018, the Danish Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) issues an official announcement that clearly warns parents against squishies. It states that they contain carcinogens as well as chemicals that can lead to liver damage, respiratory problems, infertility, and eye irritation.

In 2018, squishies are withdrawn from the market in Denmark. This product in 2022 is still very popular and easily available in Poland.



UNICORN / Rainbow / pop it

Unicorn - a white horse with a rainbow mane and a golden horn associated with magic and uniqueness.

In January 2022, the hashtag #unicorn gained more than 15.8 million tags on Instagram. Pop stars such as Miley Cyrus, Ariana Grande and Lady Gaga undoubtedly contributed to the popularization of the unicorn. Miley Cyrus and Ariana Grande have appeared on and off the stage in unicorn costumes since 2015, and Lady Gaga produced the song "Highway Unicorn", in which she sings about a pony.

On June 17, 2015, The Unicode Consortium approved the unicorn head emoji as part of Unicode 8.0 under the name "Unicorn Face" and added it to Emoji 1.0. Since 2017, the unicorn and rainbow in pastel colours has taken hold for good in the world of fashion, design and cooking. On 1 April 2017 on the island of Luzon in the Philippines, Inflatable Island was created - a rainbow resort with inflatable unicorns and rainbow slides, where staff serve rainbow drinks and unicorn-inspired food.

In 2018, the American fashion designer Jeremy Scott presented in Milan the collection he designed for the spring/summer season for the Moschino brand. Its leading element was unicorns - characters from the My Little Pony cartoon, which models presented both on clothes and accessories.

The unicorn theme, due to its uniqueness and rainbow colour, is also used for various content related to the LGBT community (this trend has been present since the 70s and 80s of the twentieth century).

Popit - a dexterity toy, consisting of a silicone tray of usually bright colours, with popped bubbles. It comes in a variety of colours, shapes and sizes and has stress relieving properties. It gained popularity in the spring of 2021 thanks to influencers from the TikTok platform and YouTube.



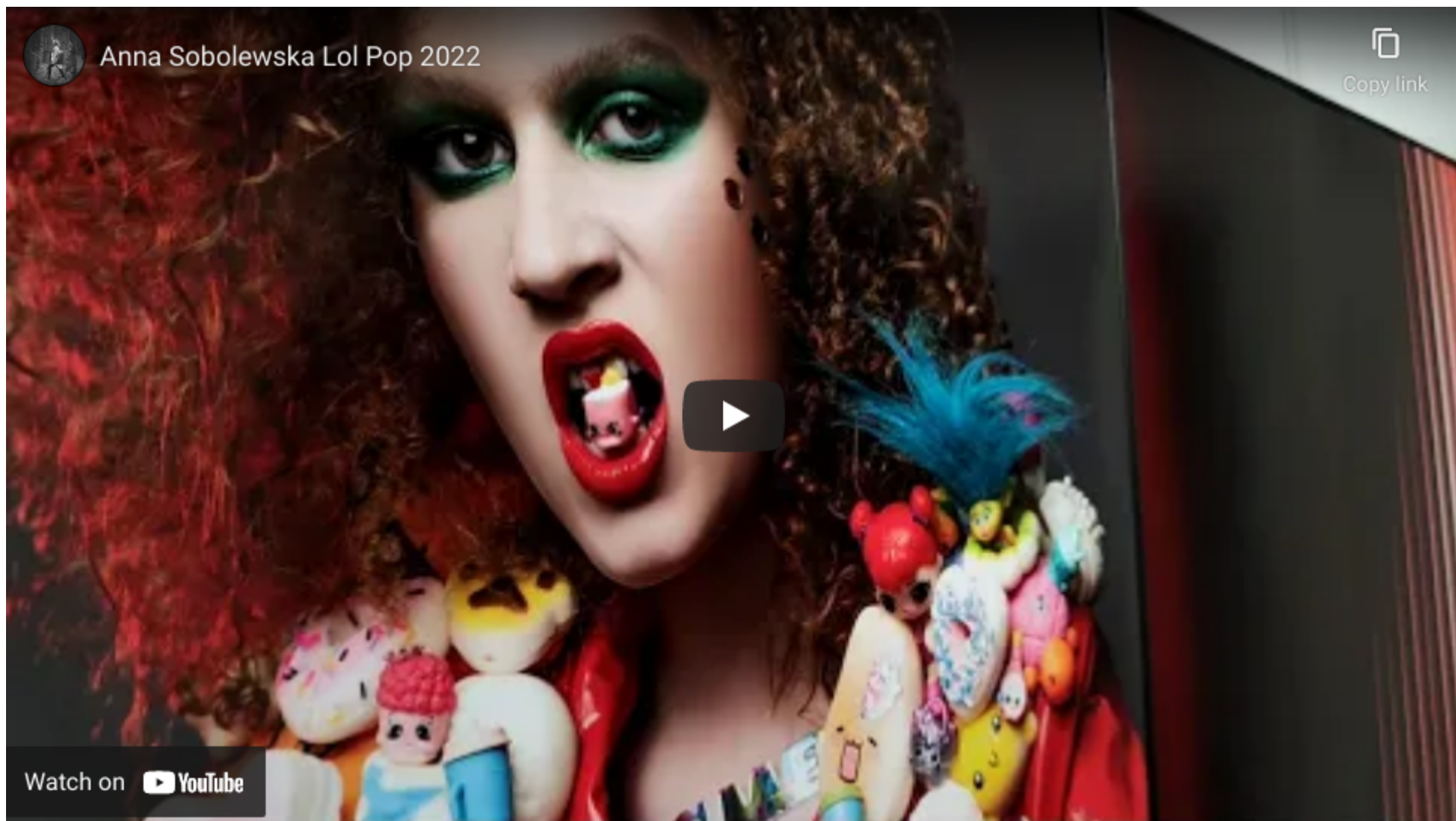
PLASTIC

According to the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF), over the past 65 years the production of plastic has increased from 2 million tonnes to 348 million tonnes per year.

In Europe alone, 58 million tonnes of plastic are produced annually, of which packaging accounts for 40 per cent of total plastic production. As much as 80 percent plastic in the oceans comes from land. It is released into the environment, including soil, rivers, seas and oceans.

According to the European Union directive, on July 3, 2021, disposable cutlery, plastic plates and straws, plastic packaging and ear swabs were to be removed from shops and restaurants throughout Europe.

From 2025, 25% of all PET bottles are to come from recycling, and by 2030 in 30%. By 2025, member states should ensure that 77 percent of plastic bottles were recycled, and in 2030 this figure is expected to reach 90%.



exhibition presentation

<https://youtu.be/CoGc04L7-wI>



video recording installation



<https://youtu.be/cov5jBQG3dc>

v i d e o r e c o r d i n g i n s t a l l a t i o n



Costs

The organizer covers the costs related to transporting the exhibition, promoting the exhibition in the media, and organizing the opening exhibition (the vernissage). Optionally, it provides accommodation with boarding for the artist for the time of the vernissage - after prior arrangement.

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