**Poland is the Guest of Honour at the Lausanne Comic Strip Festival**

**On 5 May 2025, BDFIL – Lausanne Comic Strip Festival begins, the largest Swiss event dedicated to the art of comics and graphic novels. Poland has been invited to participate in this year’s 19th edition of the festival as Guest of Honour, where it will present the exhibition “Poland, the Land of Stories”, exploring the history of Polish comics. The festival will also feature meetings with leading contemporary artists: Marzena Sowa, Joanna Karpowicz, Maria Rostocka, Katarzyna ‘Zavka’ Zawadka, Przemysław Truściński, Marcin Podolec, Wojciech Stefaniec, and Łukasz Wojciechowski.**

**One Hundred Years of Polish Comics – “Poland, the Land of Stories” Exhibition**

BDFIL, the international comics festival in Lausanne, is an annual event that draws large crowds of comic book enthusiasts. This year’s edition, marking the festival’s 20th anniversary, features a special programme including 13 exhibitions – some of them outdoors – as well as meetings with authors, conferences, and a comic book fair.

The guest of honour at this year’s festival is Poland, which will present a hundred years of its comic book art to an international audience through the exhibition “Poland, the Land of Stories”. The history of Polish comics is inseparably tied to the social and political transformations that have shaped the country’s reality – from the partitions in the 19th century, through the restoration of independence in 1918, the German occupation, and the communist regime, to its collapse in 1989. The exhibition will trace the evolution of Polish comics against the backdrop of major historical events, offering a broad context that invites a fresh perspective on this art form and its place within the European comics tradition.

The exhibition is divided into eight sections: Roots, Press, Propaganda, Collapse…, Zines and Reborn, Art Freedom and Children Comics, Power of Women, and Bright Future. Each section explores a specific period in Polish history, examining how political and social events shaped the development of comics, influenced artistic choices, and impacted reading and distribution practices.

Visitors will be taken back to the origins of Polish comics, starting with the publication of “Ogniem i mieczem, czyli przygody szalonego Grzesia” [“With Fire and Sword, or the Adventures of Crazy Grześ”] by Kamil Mackiewicz and Stanisław Wasylewski in the Lviv magazine “Szczutek”. They will also encounter the iconic series “Tytus, Romek i A’Tomek” [“Tytus, Romek and A’Tomek”] by Henryk Jerzy Chmielewski, which debuted in 1957 and was published until 2021, and delve into the underground comic scene of the 1990s, the so-called zines. The exhibition continues into the present day, highlighting key milestones such as the publication of “Marzi” by Marzena Sowa – a graphic novel about growing up in communist Poland – and Przemysław Truściński’s illustrations for “The Witcher”, a game that would soon captivate the world. Children’s comics also find their place here, represented by Tomasz Samojlik’s “Saga o Ryjówce” [“Saga of the Shrew”] and Marcin Podolec’s “Bajka” [“Tale”]. The exhibition will also give voice to the authors featured in the anthology “Polski Komiks Kobiecy” [“Polish Women’s Comic”], which highlights the growing significance of comics created by women. One notable example is “Koniec lipca” [“The End of July”] by Maria Rostocka – the first Polish comic to be nominated for an award at the Angoulême Festival. The historical overview of Polish comics will conclude with a forward-looking perspective, reflecting on the role of online distribution, the experimental dimensions of the medium, and the impact of independent publishers on its continued evolution. This will not only showcase the work of leading contemporary artists, but also draw attention to the distinctive ability of Polish comics to blend heritage with modernity.

**Comics Up Close – Conversations and Meetings with Polish Authors**

The festival will also host a series of discussions, meetings, and panels featuring contemporary Polish comic artists.

**Marzena Sowa**, author of the “Marzi” series, **Joanna Karpowicz**, known for her paintings featuring Anubis, and **Maria Rostocka**, author of the comic “Koniec lipca” [The End of July”], will explore the interplay between grand historical narratives and personal stories, moving along the boundary between autobiography and fiction. The conversation will be moderated by **Paweł Timofiejuk**, curator of the exhibition “Poland, the Land of Stories”. Together with comic book translator **Wojciech Birek** and the participating artists, they will reflect on the uniquely Polish phenomenon of the intimate and the political converging in the works of many artists.

In the panel “Bodies in Motion”, **Marcin Podolec** will join Maxime Schertenleib and Chloé Wary – both known for portraying footballers in their work – to discuss the role of realism in their comics. The conversation will address anatomical accuracy, the rules of the sports depicted, the selection of protagonists, and themes surrounding football. Special attention will be given to the portrayal of women in sport and questions of masculinity. How can artists challenge the male gaze and offer new perspectives within the world of football?

**Przemysław Truściński**, illustrator of “Andzia” and the artist behind Geralt’s image in the game “The Witcher”, will meet for the first time with Elk, author of the series “Les Chants du chaos”, to discuss the growing popularity of fantasy comics. Their conversation will also touch on Slavic influences, which are a distinctive feature in the work of both creators.

Architect **Łukasz Wojciechowski** will present his albums, designed like building plans using AutoCAD software. Drawing from the construction industry and his professional experience, Wojciechowski builds a unique graphic universe. His stories trace family roots and the trajectory of Eastern Europe, from the rise of Nazism and the Soviet regime to post-war reconstruction. Through stylistic experimentation and the interplay between technical drawing and comics, Wojciechowski will reflect on the role of the architect and the individual under totalitarian ideologies.

**The BDFIL Festival in Lausanne will take place from 5 to 18 May 2025. The presentation of Polish comic art is curated by Paweł Timofiejuk. It has been made possible through the collaboration of the Adam Mickiewicz Institute, the Polish Comics Association, the Polish Embassy in Switzerland, and the Swiss Embassy in Poland.**

**The Adam Mickiewicz Institute** **(AMI)** brings Polish culture to people around the world. Being a state institution, it creates lasting interest in Polish culture and art through strengthening the presence of Polish artists on the global stage. It initiates innovative projects, supports international cooperation and cultural exchanges. It promotes the work of both established and promising artists, showing the diversity and richness of our culture. The Adam Mickiewicz Institute is also responsible for the Culture.pl website, a comprehensive source of knowledge about Polish culture. More information: [www.iam.pl](http://www.iam.pl).

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