



13. edycja | edition
Gdynia 2025

Baltic Mini Textile Gdynia

is a miniature textile competition initiated by local textile artist Aleksandra Bibrowicz-Sikorska and organised in Gdynia since 1993. Over thirty years, it has hosted artists from Europa, Asia, North and South America and Australia. This year, for the first time, Africa joins the fray. This means making a great dream come true, for Gdynia to play host to the world, becoming a true port of art. It makes the theme of this 13th edition of Baltic Mini Textile Gdynia, **COMMUNITY**, ring out all the stronger. The topic alludes, on the one hand, to the Polish Presidency of the European Union, and on the other, announces an important anniversary for Gdynia: its centenary of having gained municipal rights, which we will be celebrating on 10 February 2026. From a macro scale of continents, states and regions, to the micro scale of societies, groups and families, we want to join our artists in trying to grasp the phenomenon of human bonds.

To begin with, a few statistics: 294 works were sent in to the 13th Baltic Mini Textile Gdynia 2025. Submissions came from 178 artists from thirty-six countries. According to the contest regulations, the exhibition will present the fifty most interesting pieces, as selected by the jury. It is accompanied by a solo presentation of the work of Anna Więckowska-Kowalska, winner of the Mayor of the City of Gdynia Grand Prix of 2022.

This year's main theme, **COMMUNITY**, proved to be particularly inspiring. It touches every one of us. Like it or not, we are all part of a community, operating in a group. We are born part of a family, nation and place with which we identify and which contributes to shaping us. We grow surrounded by others: preschool and school groups, cliques of friends, packs of acquaintances. Over the years, we create

communities large and small in both our private and professional lives. Maintaining our individuality and drawing from diversity, we work in pairs, teams, groups of people joined by ideas and values, we create a society. Proposing works for this year's competition, the artists most often pointed to three community-building factors: convictions, biology and human interaction. This has allowed us to divide the exhibition into three themes: *Ties of Faith*, *Tissue Symbiosis* and *Embers*. These titles came from works appearing in the relevant sections.

WIEŹI WIARY / TIES OF FAITH

In the *Ties of Faith* section, we include works whose common denominator is tradition, in its broadest sense. Some of the artists, like Yu-Shan Guan of Taiwan, who created the section's titular piece, point to religion and its rituals as a thing that unites and connects. Through our deeply rooted beliefs, principles and values we come to resemble our ancestors, think similarly, draw from their experiences. The Absolute might not be God, but Nature. Creating a miniature from reindeer skin, Maaga Maarit points to the bond peculiar to the Saami, between the local people and these animals, rendered here in original and expressive crafts. In the other works in this section, we note subtle allusions to the writings of mystics (Persian Sufi prose) and works of art (Hans Memling's *Last Judgment*, the pictures of Gerhard Richter). Transferring painting to the medium of textiles allows us to rediscover it, to make creative extensions of it.

Respect for tradition does not mean we cannot look for innovative materials and techniques. Alongside the classically woven miniatures of Henryka

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Zaremba and the embroidery of Imke Blankemeyer, the artists decided to try out their own techniques and experiment with material. Ieva Krūmiņa used crushed PET bottles to create an open-work composition that is tear-resistant, with carefully cut-out and connected symbols, recalling votive offerings in a church. Monique Chmielewska-Lehman used transparent threads as the warp, which makes the yogis practising their asanas seem to float in the air. Senol Tatli and Anna Sottysiak, in turn, seem to use a mirror effect in their miniatures, revealing inaccessible interiors or placing the viewer in the middle of the work.

SYMBIOZA TKANEK / TISSUE SYMBIOSIS

The exhibition's second part encourages you to put aside your anthropocentric perspective and take a broader look. People and 'non-people', our animal cohorts, deserve equal respect. It is hard to speak of a true community without taking other life forms into account, or while plundering the planet's resources. In the end we are all part of life on Earth, a community of organisms, tissues and cells. Civilisation has introduced an artificial division between human culture and the biological world, separating us from nature, of which we are a part. We cannot see all our similarities with the naked eye. Some of the processes occurring in nature can only be seen under a microscope. Gabriele Schuller chose life-giving photosynthesis as the subject of her miniature. Nancy van Dijk, in turn, depicts society as a symbolic cloud, whose particles hold together, not letting the weaker ones drop away, but without taking away their individuality either.

Nature can teach us how to build communities that know how to co-operate, if we take a look at the lotus flower, root structures, or colonies of moss, polyps or mushrooms. Sometimes the artists' investigations take them deep into nature – literally. Nina Kruger uses dried plants in the weave of her miniature. Tanja Major uses mushrooms to produce the paper for her work. Joanna Rudzińska, for her part, who created the piece that gave the section its title, has woven bits of wood with thread from newspaper, allowing culture (press clippings) to merge symbiotically with nature.

What is on the other side? Anne Cardot, inspired by Arthur Rimbaud's 'After the Flood', shows the human proclivity for ignorance, to discard the truths of nature, to separate themselves from it. Yet it suffices to return to your childhood dreams, the innocence of youth. The original ties between human beings and nature are symbolised by the uterus, which the artist has put in a glass Petri dish, generally used for observing microorganisms.



ŻAR / EMBERS

Most of the artists used textiles to address the subject of social interaction. The theme is presented as 'Embers', after Ann Naustdal's work. This artist has composed a ring of burning coals on a navy-blue/black background. This minimalist work is an excellent symbol of community. We once gathered around the campfire, whose warmth and glow guaranteed the group a chance of survival. In Ann Naustdal's work, the fire is no longer burning, it barely smoulders and glows, through the application of metallic threads. This means we see the moment

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after a campfire, an accidental blaze or maybe a controlled scorching of a circumscribed area. Though our first association might be disaster and destruction, scorched earth also brings renewal and cleansing, a new beginning.

The same goes for how we function in the family, a group, the nation or a community of values. These are not easy relationships or simple choices. As a society, we have our strong suits and weaknesses. Sometimes 'homo homini lupus est', as Aleksandra Parol reminds us, and instead of lending a hand we prefer to turn our backs, as June Lee's miniature cleverly illustrates. No other word evokes as much warmth as 'home'. And yet it sometimes happens that a family is only happy in photographs, as Paulina Buźniak stresses. Then what remains? What binds us? The reflex of solidarity, traces of shared emotions, memories, a diary of bygone days.

Operating through contrast, the artists show not only community, but also breakdowns and divisions (Piotr Pandyra, Justyna Sołomianko). Others evoke loneliness (Anna Więckowska-Kowalska, Małgorzata Rusińska), or bring up the issue of migration (Alexandra Neacșu) or lost communities (Caren Garfen). This is an excellent manoeuvre, as sometimes absence helps us better understand what we yearn for.

'No one is a solitary island. We all know this. To no avail', wrote Kazimierz Wierzyński in his poem 'Vistula and Island'. He was alluding to a line by the poet John Donne, later reiterated by Ernest Hemingway in the novel 'For Whom the Bell Tolls', thinking about Poland in his day. And where do we stand today? Can we work together and co-operate for the good of the community? Or perhaps modern times belong to the individual? At the Gdynia City Museum exhibition, you'll find

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fifty works and responses to this question. Come join us and find out how textile artists understand the notion of community. What do they believe joins people? What divides them? A stroll through the exhibition is a many-sided tale of relationships, intimacy, special places and memories, and a keen diagnosis of today's society, woven into the compact medium of textile miniatures.

→ Anna Śliwa

EXHIBITION CURATOR