

The objects in the 'Gold and lonely' series are gold-plated representations of the male erectile penis in its natural size. They are mounted on a variety of pedestals made primarily from materials and instruments sourced from DIY shops, creating a delicate balance between a caressing celebration of the penis' tenderness and the "hyper-masculine", even mocking nature of objects such as pickaxes, glue guns, chains, pipes and french spanners. I address the symbolism of the penis on many levels, including as a representation of strength, fertility or desire. At the same time, I try to break it out of the world of patriarchal, one-dimensional masculinity known, for example, from westerns and films with Schwarzenegger. It can be argued that just as the penis symbolised much, so too did much symbolise the penis. It seems that the very sight of the erection, the length, the tension, the struggle of the object against gravity, has a certain appealing value in itself. In ancient times, numerous cultures surrounded the male penis with veneration and care, often commemorating it: enlarging it, erecting monuments to it, or, on the contrary, making it into tiny, private amulets. Under Islam and Christianity, however, this kind of phallic worship was not viewed positively and was gradually exterminated. The culture that developed in connection with the Christianisation of Europe began to see the penis as a symbol of impurity. However, this was not always a universal marker. In the nineteenth century, Europeans' attitudes to nudity slowly began to change, starting with predatory attempts by men to immortalise female nudity. It seems that female nudes may have been more socially acceptable; in the context of male-dominated painting, portraying - in a sense admiring - another man may have been associated with the then pathologised homosexuality. However, just when it seemed that art would finally be ready to appreciate beautiful naked men and their penises in the salons in addition to beautiful women, the age of modernism arrived. The avant-garde changed everything in European art; it redefined what could and should not be created and, above all, why it should be created. Modernity, however, found no place for the natural; this coincided perhaps with the growing homophobia in society, but above all with the tendency to move away from the body in painting and to look towards abstraction, surrealism, a redefinition of reality. Paweł Leszkowicz beautifully describes this phenomenon as 'the new impersonal modernism of the 21st century'. Looking through this prism, I get the impression that in the museum tradition of European art, the erect penis outside Greek vases is more recent than Kandinsky's abstract compositions, and that the euphoric act of ejaculation is a subject so shocking that I saw it on canvas for the first time in a museum only last year, when I smuggled my painting there under my armpit as part of a performance. Work on Gold and lonely lasted from August 2023 to June 2024, during which time I was confronted by a series of unfortunate events that had a significant impact on my view of art as well as the realisation of the project. During the first two weeks of October 2023, I went through a break-up, my father's hospitalisation and sexual violence. Within a year I had made three unsuccessful attempts at therapy; from two, including one public one, I was very quickly discharged without any of my issues being resolved. To make matters worse, I was diagnosed with syphilis in March 2024, which several doctors failed to treat. As a result, I endured much of the work on Gold and Lonely in a state of immense physical and mental pain, insomnia, anxiety, aching and burning muscles and worsening depression. An indispensable part of the project is a publication with the same title, which is a kind of diary in which I put my thoughts accompanying me during the work. These are both texts of a somewhat research character and very private attempts at self-analysis and coming to terms with my current state, as well as all those that preceded it.