

BLACK-WHITE-RED

Jacek Świągulski composed his exhibition as if he were a sophisticated perfumer. The ten paintings placed in a head note foreshow both the technique and the subject of other cycles, while at the same time they act as their subtle counterpoint. *A head likes connecting the sky with a neck*. A heart note (where commonly for most people feelings for their country are placed) consists of red and white series of paintings, a fundamental key to understanding the whole collection. They are entitled *Red and white* (feminine gender indicated in adjective suffixes in the Polish language) with an adequate index. What are the scents of the motherland? Perhaps tree notes, some flowers, skin... In a base note there are black and white works. An analogy can be drawn to the *Red and white* note, yet there is a different grammar gender used in the titles, no longer feminine. Each of those paintings is 'black and white', resembling a negative of an old TV screen or print.

What the artist applies in each painting as a vital composition element is text. Świągulski uses newspapers or printouts of rewritten texts, which after being glued to a canvas or board constitute the first layer of a painting. It is on this text layer that the artist paints, draws or scratches lines, spots of colour and texture creating a painting. He employs a wide variety of techniques and tools, oil paint, acrylic, pastels, ink and even sprays.

Random sets of words or just their pieces are visible through silhouettes of portrayed human figures. Texts chaos, information chaos – Świągulski acknowledges the truth, though not evident to all, that to a larger and larger extent we are composed of words, neither our own, nor the wisest ones, the words we are surrounded by, the words we absorb. It is only on this media print that we try to state something through our gestures, assuming a pose or individual expression. Yet, the newspaper in us remains conspicuous. We smell of newspaper.

The scent of printed pages. Mingled with the aroma of morning coffee and fresh bread rolls (right, in Poland there would rather be buns) yields sheer pleasure inaccessible to electronic newspaper advocates. Still, broadsheet newspapers are falling into oblivion. Size of the press is getting smaller and smaller. And so does their intellectual format. Once our life has moved to the Internet, what will be left of the press will be free advertisement leaflets distributed at bus stops. Not worth reading, could be just browsed in the search for intriguing accidental agglomeration of words. And then they can be glued to the board as ground.

Nevertheless, a word resists being reduced to the role of a merely graphic sign. Emerging from behind a paint it forces us to read. Out of habit we connect letters visible in the painting into words, we try to formulate some sentences. It is for that reason that the artist helps the chance, exposes some headlines from the pages he glues. Headings become painting subtitles, e.g. *We live twice*, *What do you need to go to the islands for?*, *Seven miracles*. Does the painter hand follow the text or does the well thought of silhouette decide on the choice of the quotations? In the creative painting process the impulses are likely to run both directions. Those paintings are constructed gradually, layer by layer, like traces of events on a memory plate.

Their common denominator is interest in human being, revealing the spiritual and mental condition of humanity living here and now. The artist employs a synthetically portrayed figure to construct an artistic metaphor. Not only does Świągulski's figurative art register 21st century human reality but it also adds a reflective and thoughtful commentary. It objects to thoughtless information consumption, superficiality, weak will and helplessness when faced with impulses coming from street. He creates in a spontaneous gesture an artistic story about straw-cover people, living meaningless lives, torpor and hopelessness, with heads filled with hay from newspapers. These are the posters representing our reality, palimpsests on poster pillars.

Jacek Świągulski has been painting female figures for many years, seeking in their postures and gestures the truth about human condition. The figures have become more and more simplified, synthetic, less straightforward. In his latest paintings feminine aspect is accentuated by an expressive red line which might reveal an outline of a leg and hip or suggest a streak of long hair. Or could that be whiff of perfume? Such hidden eroticism in presenting women contradicts a general tendency to blatant nudity in mass media world. Spiritual values are at a deeper layer. Common use 'merge layers' makes it more and more difficult to separate them. Similar to notes in richly composed perfumes. Imagining less and less, feeling less and less.

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