

## AGAINST THE TIDE ... ?

Not by Chance I decided to open my brief comment on the work of Jacek Świągulski work with this question. Such a trait is exhibited by both the author and his works. What does, however, "against the tide" mean and whether it may still be possible in today's era?

From a formal point of view, the author's work is located between tradition and innovation, naturalism and abstraction, everyday life and metaphysics. So it is between the trends. A dialogue with the work of Teresa Pałowska and Jerzy Nowosielski is visible (noticeable). The same preference for figurativeness, and at the same time a synthesis of material and immaterial, visible and invisible, everyday life and metaphysics. Awareness of connection with tradition is also present in the titles themselves: the cycles *Women, Madonnas, Graces, Sleeping Venus* or the triptych entitled "Danae's Fantasies". In the case of Jacek Świągulski, however, one should notice the consistency and courage resulting from the search for his own, original way of artistic expression.

It is impossible not to notice that the main topic on which the author focuses, is a woman. Sometimes with barely outlined shapes, sometimes in a hieratic or even unnatural pose. The painter uses the canon of a woman, or rather a human figure to show the complexity of her very nature. The form of a woman is also a pretext to launch a colour game of interactions. Each drawing or painting is a closed and carefully developed integrity which is also a part of the cycle. In this way, individual images become many women in a dialogue with each other, or one woman subjected to a constant transformation. In this way the proverbial Ovidius metamorphosis or "transformation of bodies into new shapes" becomes the favourite modus vivendi of the presented characters. Although the change is not the painter's greatest preoccupation it is, next to the category of identity, a dominant thematic area of his exploration.

Both Jacek Świągulski's drawings and paintings put the issue of identity in the centre of attention. However, it is not, as it might seem, limited to its feminine aspect. The focal point in the work of the author is always some division, a shade, so beautifully presented in "The Self-Portrait with a Shadow". Like majestic heroines of tragedies, the protagonists of the paintings seek to recognize their own fate. The 'division' category is for the self a kind of a mirror that emerges from visual identification with its own reflection. From the moment we meet our double, we can either love it or beat it. There is no third option. The self of the depicted women, as every self usually does, disagrees with the image. The self is always seen differently, from a side, from a distance, in a distorting mirror of communitas. Always hidden behind the mask of a persona.

In the main role (next to a woman) Jacek Świągulski casts colour itself, which is not only illustrating, but becomes expressive. We find here a strong spectrum of saturated red contrasting with cool blue, some other time quasi emerald or lapis lazuli. These canvases put the problem of being present at the centre, not just representation. And where it comes to being present, the sacred always arises. Perhaps so little present, and in the era of simulacra, the almost impossible category of making the sacred present, allows you to use the phrase 'against the tide' in the context of Jacek Świągulski's creation. The author does not give any convenient formulas. What he only seems to be saying is a statement of fact. I am just a painter, and here are my paintings. If you have a moment, have a look.

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