

BIRTH OF/WITHIN THE LANDSCAPE

For several years, I have been following Jacek Świągulski's creative progress – once a promising painter, today – an intriguing mature artist. Some of his shows encouraged the reading of briefly outlined female forms with their newspaper tattoos, while others enticed the audience to contemplate landscapes. The artist's two favorite themes never coincided, however, as if there were two Jacek Świągulskis, or as if he was on an artistic *Got Talent* show trying to impress the jury with the versatility of his content. At one of his exhibition previews, I wondered what would happen if the two series were shown simultaneously on opposing walls of the same art gallery. That way they could reflect one another and discover – through the audience – any similarities and differences, affinity determined by their author.

Birth of/within the Landscape exhibition is an attempt to make this idea come true. The versatile space of Stacja Nowa Gdynia Gallery encourages such exhibition solutions. Monochromatic landscapes (picturesque by nature, combining acrylic with ink and pencil) – on the right, figurative paintings – on the left. As we pass through the center, we find ourselves in a room which (were it not for the sporting and catering surroundings) one might call a chapel – Family Chapel. Holy? Every loving family is sacred in a sense as it rises above the daily "lightness of being". On this show, quite notably, only two paintings entitled *A Family Episode* are vertical. One of them with its bright halos openly suggests references to religious motifs. Let us therefore make it the centre of a triptych whose side panels show a dance on the ellipsis of intimacy, where partners create one another. Pastoral bliss? Only at times, in those "golden moments". In others, their gestures miss each other, the halos scatter in a storm of luminous lines.

Since the release of the blockbuster, the adjective *Jurassic* has been associated with dinosaurs. A whole bestiary as exuberant as the wildlife from millions of years ago. Warm, shallow seas, land covered with jungle, gigantic coniferous trees, huge ferns – they're all in the past. Today, Jurassic landscape is made up of relicts and monadnocks, reminders of a distant past. Hills lined with stripes of mowed or blooming meadows, limestone rocks that attract beginner climbers, tree lines that enclose the horizon, subtle faults, roads and streams that transect the field of vision. The primordial nature solidified in mild hibernation is highlighted by the absence of humans or man-made objects. Świągulski shows a Jurassic Highland similar to dunes – maybe somewhere in his subconscious he has stored the images of warm, shallow seas and continents being formed. Despite the dynamic of diagonal lines, these painting sketches soothe with their well-thought compositions. It is precisely their tamed, intuitive movement that links them to the figurative series. The landscape is resting after geological storms, just like a woman and a man embraced on a lazy afternoon.

And the dog? Perhaps it's just an element of the composition necessary to balance one of the sides (of the image)? Or maybe it is a modern family member in its own right? Or a theme that undermines the pathos of family sanctity? One thing is certain: while lying on the carpet at the feet of its masters, it reflects the blissful atmosphere, but also irritates at times when it encroaches on intimacy and must be bribed with treats to exit the picture.

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