

THE INDIFFERENCE OF THE CALM LANDSCAPE

The paintings of Jacek Świągulski shift from realism to abstractionism, from concrete landscapes to their essence. The panoramas of The Himalayas, Bieszczady Mountains, The Kraków-Częstochowa Upland or the riverine town of Nieszawa are somehow similar. Or maybe the artist himself searches in them for the same beauty, the same rhythm of lines, shapes and colors. His observation welds unique sensitivity to the indifferent and calm landscape that does not seek for applause or attention.

Nothing in those artworks screams or trembles. Nothing demands attention. Yet their calmness shatters aesthetic norms. Świągulski registers the uncanny but liberating feeling that the world is complete without us. The uncompromising nature of the paintings would not be possible without the calculated acceptance of human irrelevance.

We never see things as they are, we only see what we see. Despite the fact that modern culture values individuality, it is not a special quality. No one can escape it. Our experiences of the world are individual and always channeled through our senses. We lack as Szymborska wrote in her poem *Conversation With A Stone* — “the sense of taking part”. The poet states that the access to other beings is a result of the need to satisfy one's curiosity. It is incorrect. If we remain in our singular circle of life, convinced of its greatest value, we suffer loneliness and the eruption of senses. We are singular but ironically insufficient.

Świągulski's works reflect on the tension between the fragile and compact world of “I” and everything that is beyond, outside of it, what “I” tries to observe or capture. Those bare, simplified landscapes remind us that not that much depends on us. The perfectly arranged panoramas need no green architects. They do not need grand talents or a sublime audience. Beauty does not have to be chased or created. It exists, only if we allow it. The awareness of this fact can be soothing. Loneliness is transformed into existence in the world. In those paintings the “I” usually remains outside of the frame and becomes a gaze melting into the landscape.

This perspective can be unsettling such as those statements which claim that “our being” is fragile and unnecessary. As Lao Tsy said “the heavens are ruthless”. Our pleasures and sorrows are not the center of the Universe. The artist introduces a similar perspective. He numbs emotions. His canvases evoke the feeling of aloofness, sometimes giving us a hint of smile. They lack ecstasy and enchantment of both a potential viewer and the artist. Rather, they prioritize the total immersion in the presented landscape to discover something that goes beyond the human experience. To discover the beautiful and indifferent landscape which does not belong to us.

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