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opened Wednesday – Friday 3 – 7, Saturday 11 – 2

REVENGE ON REALISM

THE FICTITIOUS MOMENT IN CURRENT POLISH ART

Michal Budny, Igor Krenz, Zbigniew Libera, Bartek Materka, Mochalska & Blachut, Zbigniew Rogalski, Szymon Roginski

Curated by Severin Dünser in collaboration with Raster, Warsaw

In the course of the exhibition a catalogue is published.

Opening: Friday, March 4th 2005 at 7

Duration: March 4th – April 23rd 2005

Realism is a term used to refer to a realistic mode of representation which seeks to depict things the way they are, without anything illusionistic. In the era of reality TV series this appears to be a hopelessly idealistic endeavour. Reality seems to be democratized under the sway of the media. Advertising, too, contributes to this, being omnipresent on the streets of Warsaw. Having emerged only at the beginning of the 1990's, it was a new medium offering a new field of activity for creative individuals, including a number of artists. However, already in the 1960's there had been artists who worked with reality – artists such as Andrzej Partum, Jan Swidzinski, Anastazy Wisniewski, Leszek Przyjemski or the artist pair KwieKulik who had used »positive negation« to comment on reality. **Zbigniew Libera** has dedicated a piece to these artists, asking art critics to write texts on them. For this project he used the layout of large Polish papers, having the texts set and published (»Masters« series). In this way he was able to subvert the media, giving the artists presented in the articles the public space he felt they deserved. This exhibition also presented works from the »Positives« series in which he reconstructed photographs with a negative connotation and lent them positive meaning. He questioned what appeared to be photography's inherent objectivity by publishing these photographs in newspapers, reintroducing them to the flow of imagery.

Igor Krenz, too, works with the credibility of the medium, in this case, of video. He visually processes experimental setups. In "Fire is better than Scissors", for instance, he proves by empirical means that fire is more suited to triggering off a chain reaction, at the end of which a bottle is burst. Before our very eyes he lets balls and matchboxes disappear, and he does this in the same matter-of-fact way in which he demonstrates the likelihood of being able to catapult a stone into a can. With a wink he shows that the only the right side of the video image actually exists by letting the bottle burst on that side.

While Krenz caricatured the physical essence of things and thus also science and research, **Michal Budny** is interested in the very formal qualities of things, their entity. He translates the world of everyday things (cell phones, CD players, houses, ...) into artworks, using cheap material such as packaging paper. For his grave stone he uses packaging material from the socialist era to simulate the marbled surface. This is something every Polish person is able to understand, since this packaging

material was one of the few available in the system that existed at that time. In the piece »Snow« he reconstructs a snowbank, using the tracks made by a dog and by a motorcycle.

By contrast **Honorata Mochalska und Andrzej Blachut** are interested in the dissolution of the object. In the exhibition they present three small sculptures that resemble animals. Using photographs they tell short stories about their personalities, lending them something intrinsic which, in turn, relativizes their status as objects. Nevertheless, the figures oscillate between objecthood and subjectivity, holding the materiality and chromaticity of classical sculpture in suspense. In »Untitled« they reverse the game: the visitor to the exhibition is invited to stand on a pedestal and to assume the role of an object.

Mochalska and Blachut document the poses and presentations of people by means of photographs. While the audience is staging itself in their work, **Szymon Roginski** is interested in stylizing the environment. During his nightly drives through Polish regions he seeks out places and non-places, in which he waits for certain atmospheric moments. He photographs at night to make best use of light as an auratic element. His unrealistic scenarios are usually artificially illuminated – from his own car if necessary. The final product is atmospherically charged portraits of places on the fringes, which he describes himself as being apocalyptic landscapes, post-nuclear places from computer games.

For **Bartek Materka** photography remains too glued to the surface since he models his paintings more after graphic art. In Vienna he is showing a series of works in which he reflects the macrocosm of nature – just as his own perception of it which he reduces to a child-like, naïve interpretation of small details forming part of a larger whole. He shifts his fascination with organic aspects to architecture the structures of which he seeks to reveal by simplifying their representation in an earlier series. The canvas lies between proximity and distance as a meta-level. In another series he paints in structures consisting of numbers and letters from which he recomposes his imagery.

If, in Marterka, the essential of his stylistic diversity is to be found between the lines, one must really delve into **Zbigniew Rogalski's** painting. Here a parallel world emerges, which consists primarily of color. In between one can see the artist, filling this world with color, or a carpet being submerged in paint. And when he is not in the process of painting bank notes, he merges with his girlfriend to form a sort of ball (»Zbylina«). This tangle of body parts remains both figurative and abstract. The color stays aloof of the things constantly being reflected anew in Rogalski's works. In another series he refers to art history. Works shimmer dimly through a window that is fogged over. The artist seems to inscribed his approach to art, drawing letters on the glass with his finger. This time we assume his gaze and it becomes unclear which world lies on the other side of the picture – the only thing that is certain is that it gives us a glimpse of something that is, to quote the artist, "realer than reality".