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Eternal now. On Krzysztof Ligęza photography

When we look at a photograph for the first time, accustomed to stories, the criterion of meaning comes to mind and then the aesthetics. Starting from the perception of composition, we look at the image's structure, shapes, color, luminosity, having intuitive impression. But what decides on meaning in photography? Is it imposed by the photographer's work or by the eye and the viewer's head? Every photographer through his framing imposes his vision of the world exposing its selected fragment. After all he does not put the viewer into a hyper-realistic simulation of sensual reality, similar to a virtual tour in 3D. Nevertheless the viewer's relation with the object, which is being viewed, creates an interpretative mosaic multiplied by experience. The photographer is at the same time an observer, interpreter, writer and sometimes a translator.

The context of one of the Krzysztof Ligęza photographs, depicting the Moravian landscape in Czech Republic (*Jump*), is an event during the harvest: the broad fields are mowed by harvesters, leaving characteristic stripes. The chance, or bad luck, made the photographer a witness of an event, when one of the escaping roe deer fell under the harvester. It survived and the operator of the machine mercifully released it. But his colleague, after spotting the situation, ran in that direction, looked for an animal in field and spotted it. In that moment he jumped, next caught up the deer, broke its neck and took the prey with him.

Is this story significant in the reception of the photograph? The image itself depicts an abstract landscape with a human figure in a jump phase. In the context of aesthetics we can see undoubtedly an interesting arrangement of spots in the linear perspective (which has a long tradition by the way). Nevertheless, this photography takes on the power of meaning, revealing the problem of human placement in the world of nature. It freezes him as a being overcome by primal instinct, when laws of nature are opposed to mercy. The practical reaction of this man is clear: why a dying animal should suffer, when he can finish it, take it home and eat it. How much is compassion here, and how much of egoism? Photography stops this man in a situation of *now*, in a jump between *before* and *after*, emotion and reaction. This jump measures our humanity.

A person who exists in a world, even as in a theatre, can make a decision. In the same way the photographer, the more conscious he is, the more he sees, or can predict of what some scene can be, despite not knowing the future (sensing probability). The aesthetics, the joy of looking, is not enough in this photograph. Without reflection, we would be in the situation of a deer grazing on a harvesting field. A man (prone to violence, which stimulates can destroy him at the same time) has a consciousness (which is largely intuitive) that can become a tool, thanks to which he may ask himself of who is he.

These photographs go beyond the skeletons of convention, which, like a sufferer, can remind you that someone made some subject in this way and another photographer differently. Ligęza's photographs are very personal, having the sign of the individuality. The works gain freshness and, above all, honesty of expression which is far away from naivete. The

category of sublime is present there as well, aimed to addresses fundamental issues.

A bridge between reflection and consciousness is seen also in two photographs depicting the shadow of a child being thrown on a wooden door made of planks (*Padlock* and *Door of the Past*). So we see a black silhouette that has penetrated a gate locked on padlock. The shadow is able to look, where the viewer of photography is unable to – gone into the secret. Again, coincidence (partially caused by specific door) created a universal reference to introspection – an attempt to get to know the unknowable. The point is that in experiencing the revelation of consciousness, the subject can be lonely and doomed to the inability to tell about it to others. He remains alone. Only more aware, like the shadow from the second photograph, with a deeper density of black in part of the face (as applied mask), undertaking a further journey.

Archetypal themes like shadow, door, penetrating the secret, experience and perception open the possibility of many additions and interpretations. Thanks to them the “eternal now” animates the word written by light, photography, feeding the viewer's consciousness.