

Paweł Nowicki

Krzysztof Ligęza - *Trees – Shadows – Dreaming*

Trees-Shadows-Dreaming, a solo exhibition of the photography of Krzysztof Ligęza¹ opened on 10th of January 2014 in the Karwacjans and Gladysz's Manor – the City Museum of Gorlice.

Krzysztof Ligęza's photographs, as we have seen in the Professor Włodzimierz Kunz exhibition room, are a result of careful observation of nature, an expression of delight and philosophical astonishment of the world. The wild nature in the artist's photography is a testament of truth about human existence in the cosmic universe, but the starting point of his search is Nature - *physis*. The drama of Ligęza's images is built using a romantic set of means of expression. We see some stone buildings, lightning tearing the sky, rushing rivers, a sea shore during the tide phase, wavy lines of a mown field. In turn, the trees associated with the ancient cult, photographed in infrared, show their amazing, ghostly outlines.

The interpretations by Krzysztof Ligęza resemble the points of view of the first philosophers – the pre-Socratics, for which as we know, there was no clear distinction between the animate and inanimate; and also questions nature – *physis* did not remain in opposition to the sphere, which today we call humanities. Thales and Heraclitus were not naive physicists by today's notion of science, but they faced the great mystery – the problem of human nature which appeared to them as bound up with the mystery of the cosmos. Flowing water, lightning, rocky coastlines, the unknown cause of the tides of the sea, aroused fear and surprise, as well as a sense of transience and the inevitability of death. The questions that we view separately today, the Greeks merged into one stream – *philosophia* – the source of the later science.

Perhaps the artist's earlier admiration of the writings of Stanisław Lem² corresponds with his creative attitude, in which he takes existential themes, starting from the image of the world of nature.

One of the questions that K. Ligęza asks concerns what the reality given to us in sense of perception really is. We know that the image of the world that we perceive in our daily experience, from the point of view of

1 Krzysztof Ligęza (b. 1979) – studied at the Pedagogical University of Krakow, Poland. His degree work was about literature of Stanisław Lem. He lives and works in Wyskitna, to which he came back from the United Kingdom, where he worked and lived for the last few years. The landscape is a favourite area of his creative activities. His works were presented during a few solo and group shows in Poland and the United Kingdom: *Presence among the absent* (Gorlice, 2013); *Land-scapes* (Kraków, 2012); *Biennial of the Mountain Photography* (Jelenia Góra, 2012); *Romantic* (Kraków, 2012); *The iconosphere of non-obviousness* (Rabka-Zdrój, 2011); *Landscape Photographer of the Year 2010* (London, 2010); *Wanderlust Travel Photo of the Year 2009* (London & Birmingham, 2010).

2 The great Polish writer, who in his works, filled by science-fiction repository, moves deeply humanistic issues. Scientific hypothesis was for Lem a material, part of the literary matter. Despite the author's outspoken rationalism, in his writings we can find places, where the naturalistic voice of the narrator weaves Gnostic or Kabbalistic threads, in the context of the SF hypotheses (e.g. *Professor Donda*; *Memoirs Found in a Bathtub* seems to be a travesty of Kafka's novels). The literary image built in such a way is an intertextual play with the reader. Philosophy served similar function in the works of Borges.

neuroscience is an illusion. The science confirmed the topic of investigation of Democritus about the so called secondary qualities. The content of visual experience, such as e.g. colour, is not inherent to things, but is the result of the work of our senses. The impression of red is a result of our eyes response to light waves of a certain length reflected on the object - an image which is a product of the brain, not an "objective" feature of the things of their own. There are also processes so fast that the eye does not register their different phases, while others are so slow that we do not recognize their movement³. This raises the question of whether the image which was made as a result of long exposure, or a picture which recorded an instantaneous moment of the process - in both cases, looking beyond the response of the human eye - is more "real" than our daily, familiar perception?

Thus, the photograph, which in a "mechanical" way captures what surrounds us, is the "print" of the world no less legitimate than the image generated by our natural perception. But what is the reality *an sich*? A photographic work entitled *Dolphin*, which represents a wave of the swollen White River, shows a shape resembling the back of the marine mammal. But what does the flowing water "really" look like? Under the microscope, it would be a swarm of molecules; in the image taken from a satellite we would probably see a gray ribbon looking like... a snake?

Many people think that the painter has more creative freedom when starting work on a white ground, putting the first patch, outlining the direction...The Photographer selects the "ready" element, "framing" the existing shape of the world. However, his work does not rely on a simple production of "prints". The art of photography reflects the selective and projective way of how our cognitive processes work – we always skip something and in relation to the background of what is actually irrelevant, we recognize a clear, fixed structure. Also – as we remember e.g. from Gestalt psychology – by starting with the fragments we "guess" a continuation – a form. So the subject that we see in the present *now*, arrives later in the halo of memories, also leans towards the future, and in the perspective of expectation and hope of a some sort of sequel, it exists whenever we summon it.

Do we start in our lives from a "clean slate" since the T=0 moment? After all, being already inside some story, thrown in context, we find targets recognized by others, or we encounter obstacles that we have to bypass or integrate into the content of our future life.

Observing the works exhibited in Gorlice it can be concluded that Krzysztof Ligęza is close to the baroque way of understanding art: cognitive anxiety, motifs of awake and dreaming. The Artist seems to penetrate that which is hidden beneath the surface of everyday experience; a shadow play, light drawing out from behind the unclosed door. In his works we can see references to the experiences of writers and

3 Clive S. Lewis in one of his books wrote that the angels live among us, but they move so fast that we are unable to notice them.

philosophers – Pedro Calderon de la Barca and his drama *Life is a dream*, *The Republic* of Plato along its famous cave motif and even *The Matrix* movie, indicating metaphors that suggest fictionality of the world as perceived by the senses. The Author by his works, seems to admit that today's popular aesthetics of the uncanny, which derives from Romantism, touch in him these strings of human sensitivity; and the areas of creative imagination, in which everything hidden, mysterious and dangerous is fascinating, and sometimes more interesting than the reality depicted in the light of day in the serenity of Renaissance symmetry ...

Paweł Nowicki

translation:

Sue Darville