

INTERPRETATIONS

Sincerity or a Pose?

"What Is Hidden in the Fundus? The Self/ Portrait at the Turn of 20th and 21st Century" the photography exhibition has presented transformations of the topic, and different approaches to its interpretation and realization.

Tomasz Sobieraj

A graduate from the Łódź University; a poet, prose writer, literary critic, photographer.

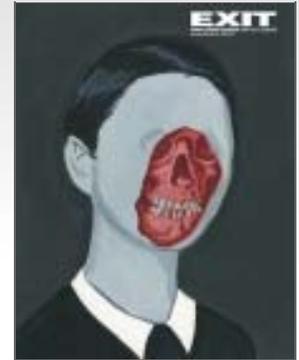


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KRZYSZTOF JURECKI, THE EXHIBITION CURATOR, has made a careful selection. He has invited artists representing various trends; starting with the ones who refer to the modernistic tradition through today fans of freely flowing forms and images.

In the text contained in the exhibition catalogue, K. Jurecki has made a division of tendencies dominant in self/ portrait, and accordingly assigned the artists. Late modernistic portrait includes the works presented in Toruń by Wacław Ropiecki, going back to the 70's and 80's of the former century (*A Self Therapeutic Session*), critical towards the reality and ironic; photographs by Artur Leończuk (*Poses, La Tour*) referring to the icon tradition, self-portraits by Witkacy and the 17th century painting; series by Tomasz Adam Fularski (*Behind the Concrete Curtain, Pride*) verging on the pictorial, staging, performance, and dreamy, symbolic self portraits by Katarzyna Karczmarz. Slightly erotic, documentary like photographs by Teresa Gierzyńska (*About Her*) can be positioned between feminism and female art; besides works by Gabriela Huk written into the structural feministic stream (*RE:shaped*) being yet another voice in a trendy discourse on sex trap; the series by Magdalena Samborska (*Skeleton of Identity*) referring to surrealism. Photo performance combining nightmares, return to childhood places and reflections on tangled up identities have been a specialty of Corinna Streitz, the only artist from outside Poland. Pastiche, as a form to transgress genre conventions, has been offered in eclectic works by Keymo who penetrated the area of eroticism and sexuality accompanied by violence, and photographs by Anna Andrzejewska who has moved in the direction of kitsch, ludic elements and gender photography. Rafał Karcz - fascinated with clubbing, nymphets, influenced by Polish modernistic tradition - has bordered on fine arts and photography.

What is the scope of the photographic portrait and self-portrait of today? The Toruń exhibition does not provide a complete answer to this question, since it illustrates only main directions, purposefully skipping authors who have already left their imprints on the history of photography. What is extremely significant, this presentation encourages a thought on the essence of self/ portrait, its transformations, search for new conventions, traps awaiting artists - as Krzysztof Jurecki has comprehensively described in the first part of the catalogue. The second part covers short statements on their works provided by the artists participating in the exhibition. So, one can only ask a question that seems elementary: what is the skill of making photographic portraits? Following painting and photographic traditions and their most acclaimed achievements, one can formulate a general thesis that it is about separating, liberating a character, cutting off his environment related umbilical cords, stripping a mask, making it a lonely, pure essence in order to conduct a psychological vivisection, and obtain a complex, overall picture of spiritual interior. This is very hard since every portrait - in a smaller or larger degree -



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The Meaning of Photography by
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reflects a self-portrait of the artist, interior qualities not only of the portrayed character, but also of the one who is making a portrait; it shows the conscious and unconscious of them both, deeply hidden in dark recesses of soul.

On the Toruń exhibition the above thesis have been met by deeply psychological, sincere, nearly exhibitionistic self-portraits by Katarzyna Karczmarz and eclectic in form and content, critical works by Keymo. The photographs showed by Tomasz Adam Fularski have been quite interesting, though more distanced from this portrait making philosophy: romantic, dark, referring to nigh dreams. Certainly, in spite of some statistical foundations, the above has been a subjective opinion of the one who has written these words. These, however, do not exclude other points of view, by the same token, being a starting point for a discussion.

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How to Describe the Existence
of Universe?

Krzysztof Jurecki

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