

J O A C H I M F R O E S E

Od końca lat 90. śmierć była dominującym tematem prac Joachima Froese, Niemca urodzonego w Kanadzie, który w 1991 wyemigrował do Australii. Jego seria *Rhopography* (1999-2003) ukazuje martwe natury jako tableaux vivants, gdzie martwe insekty oraz starzejące się owoce występują w zastępstwie ludzi.

Życie, jednakże, zostało usunięte z tej serii, której inspiracją było XVII-wieczne malarstwo flamandzkie. W serii *Species* (2005) Froese podjął temat religijnej alegorii w malarstwie renesansowym. Śmierć stała się motywem bardziej zakamuflowanym, zrównoważonym, poprzez wykorzystanie zabawek córki Froese'a z czasów jej dzieciństwa.

W *Written in the past*, jego ostatnim projekcie, śmierć z alegorycznej staje się osobista z powodu ostatnich wydarzeń w życiu Froese'a. W rozważaniach na temat tej serii, cytuje on Simone de Beauvoir: „Nie możemy arbitralnie wymyślać projektów dla samych siebie: one muszą być napisane przez przeszłość.” Froese stwierdza, iż fotografie niemal same się tworzą, w sposób automatyczny i niemal pozbawiony ingerencji, jako że koncept oraz rozmieszczenie obiektów podczas fotografowania były dopracowane w najdrobniejszym szczególe. *Written in the past* dla Froese stanowi swego rodzaju katharsis, jako że zagłębiał się on w doświadczenia z przeszłości i odnalazł symboliczną wartość w garście przedmiotów posiadających fizyczne i emocjonalne powiązania z jego dzieciństwem oraz zmarłą matką.

Ta seria charakteryzuje się również kilkoma zauważalnymi zmianami

stylistycznymi. Selenowane odbitki srebrne ustępują miejsca cyfrowym kolorowym wydrukom. Choć Photoshop stanowi kuszące narzędzie do obróbki tych obrazów, to jednak Froese wykorzystuje je jedynie do podstawowych kwestii, tak jak stosuje triki w swych pieczołowicie obrabianych czarno-białych pracach. Studyjny „krajobraz” przekształcił w wodoodporną drewnianą deskę, złowrogo unoszącą się w atramentowo czarnej próżni.

Kompozycje Froese cechuje orientalna aura. Oczywiście jest ona wzmocniona przez wykorzystanie biało-niebieskiej chińskiej porcelany oraz ryżu – oczywistych wizualnych wskaźników, które są również przepojone konotacjami z domatorstwem i globalnym przemieszczaniem się ludzi. Jednak prawdziwy azjatycki charakter ujawniony zostaje poprzez ustawienie przedmiotów. Fotografie te łączą styl barokowych martwych natur oraz orientalnej wrażliwości. Proste, oszczędne kompozycje z obiektami harmonijnie wyważonymi łączą się z innymi przedmiotami umieszczonymi niebezpiecznie blisko krawędzi pustki. Samotna podstawka doniczki balansuje na krawędzi, tak jak jej odpowiednik po lewej stronie zdjęcia, być może uchwycony na negatywie tuż przed upadkiem.

Co więcej, akcja nie jest jedynie implikowana, ale uchwycona – Froese przekracza granice nieruchomości unoszącego się kawałka drewna, a trzask migawki subtelnie więzi ruch, a co za tym idzie, również upływ czasu. Ryż sypie się z góry, a grawitacja przyciąga go do ziemi i poza kadr. Ostatnie tomy encyklopedii spadają ze swojego miejsca, kartki z krzyżówkami zdają się ześlizgiwać ze sceny. Koperty są w stałym ruchu. Deska Froese'a stanowi jedyne miejsce, do którego ludzie, czas, wspomnienia i wydarzenia dążą i mijają, zawsze w ruchu, nigdy statyczni i nieprzywiązani do platformy, która Froese'owi służy jako arena życia ze wszystkimi zawiłościami.

Więcej prac Joachima Froese'a zobaczyć można na stronie www.joachimfroese.com. Jest reprezentowany przez Jan Manton Art, Brisbane, Australia

Joachim Froese, *Rhopography*, Dom Fotografii, Liptowski Mikulas, Słowacja, 21.06-09.09.2007







are temporary, makeshift constructions. Also little cut trees decorating altars are ephemeral being. Thus, everything that refers to sacrum appears fleeting and built upon the solid substance of everyday life. Yet, these current matters which

prove real values, whereas seemingly the most solid elements last only because of the inertia. Photography is in a particular way predestined to preserve transient phenomena and thus it picks out real preferences or tendencies of changes.

Gordon Craig

Joachim Froese

Since the late 1990s death has been an underlying theme in the work of Joachim Froese, a Canadian-born German who migrated to Australia in 1991. His *Rhology* series (1999-2003) presents still lifes as *tableaux vivants*, with dead insects and aging fruit in lieu of people.

Life, however, was noticeably removed from this series, which found inspiration in 17th century Flemish painting. In *Species* (2005) Froese tackled the subject of religious allegory in Renaissance painting. Death was a more latent, underlying feature, offset by the playfulness of Froese's use of toys from his daughter's childhood.

In *Written in the past*, his most recent body of work, death shifts from allegorical to personal as a result of recent events in Froese's life. In consideration of the series, he cites Simone de Beauvoir: "We cannot arbitrarily invent projects for ourselves: they have to be written in the past as requirements."¹ Froese states that the photographs almost created themselves, so automatic and unmediated was the work's concept as it developed, and the placement of objects during shooting.² *Written in the past* has been a cathartic process for Froese as he delved through a lifetime's memory and found its symbolic form in a handful of objects possessing physical and emotional connections to his childhood and his late mother.

The series also marks several noticeable stylistic shifts. Selenium-toned silver gelatin makes way for digital colour prints. While Photoshop would have been a tempting aide to mediate these images, Froese reserved it for the most basic of interventions in the same manner that he utilises dodging and burning in his meticulously hand-printed black and white work. The studio 'landscape' has transformed into a plank of weathered timber, floating ominously in an inky-black void.

Froese's compositions possess an Oriental aura. Of course this is reinforced by his use of old blue-and-white-ware china and rice; obvious visual clues that are also imbued with connotations of domesticity and the global shifting of people. The real Asian character, though, is suggested through Froese's placement of objects. The photographs take the style of baroque still life combined with an oriental sensibility. Simple, sparse compositions with objects harmonically balanced are combined with other subjects sitting precari-

ously close to the edge of the void. An isolated terracotta pot-plant saucer teeters on the verge of falling, as does its 'complete' counterpart to left of the image, perhaps captured on film before their slip into oblivion.

Moreover, action is not merely implied but captured – Froese surpasses the constraints of the stillness of the floating block of timber and the click of the shutter to subtly capture movement, and in doing so evokes the passage of time. Rice falls from above as gravity draws it down and out of the frame. The last volumes of an encyclopaedia drop away from their unified set, crossword pages gather on and seem to slip from the scene. Aerogram envelopes are in constant transit. Froese's timber plank operates as a singular place to which people, time, memories and events pass in and around, always moving, never static and not bound to the platform that serves as Froese's arena of life in all its intricacies.

He is represented by Jan Manton Art, Brisbane

¹ *Artist's statement, March 2007. Available online: www.joachimfroese.com*

² *Author's conversation with the artist, 7 March 2007.*

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Ireneusz Zjezdźka

Pawel Kula's epicentre

The seeing problem is a theme very often moves by artists which also in a very special way touches the essence of photographic medium. Its range is usually different and appears with a changing intensity in separate moments of life.

It is not about perception process but more about sensitisation for things. Eva Rubinstein's photography is an example of that, she said: „I stopped to take pho-

tographs. It was more than 6 years ago. I suddenly stopped see: I can see that I don't react for things, which were very important before. The longer man lives

the more different feels live, has to react differently, the values are different"¹ Pawel Kula has been constantly searching borders of possibility of representation in photography for couple of years. He mainly examines connections between sight and memory. Comparatively often uses a family album drawing out childhood photographs,

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which wants to recall after many years, playing the same scenes with the same people.² New pictures (cycles Home archives. Photopeutic adventures, 2000 and Meetings, 2005), were inspired by photos taking by a father and should show us that the similarity of places, people and frames, which is after long time apparent (although these are still the same people and places, they are unlike) and come back to see past reality is delusive...The *Epitcentre* project broadens an investigatory range over the seeing problem one step further, coming up to close eyes symbolic, which has special meaning in culture. In photography (which is the way of seeing itself) a photo with a person with closed eyes is considered as unsuccessful. Children close their eyes to let others to hide during the play. We close our eyes with different emotions– the bad , when the bad news got us, or if we do not want to see blood (curtain), but in pleasure as well. We dream with closed eyes, although at once we can „see“ different reality. Closed eyes sensitise other senses– it is easier to smell for instance. Closing eyes gesture is with us when our life gets the end...

Pawel Kula took a portraits' series of people in places connected with them– in their houses or work. They were put in atypical situation and were asked to pose with closed eyes, putting them for a second on the edge of worlds– seen and well known in subconscious– even eyelids let through some light (espe-

cially long waves). It is difficult to say what pictures or emotions people saw during short exposure. John Bergers wrote that " the man becomes aware of himself, returning look".³ Whether closing eyes in front of the camera is a try to loose this consciousness for a moment? It is possible that the title of this series has come from that, because the epicentre in the geological dictionary means a place situated sheer in the shortest distance from the source of earthquake. In its area it causes the biggest destruction. Pawel Kula talks about some kind of psychical discomfort (a peeper position) while taking these special portraits– might it be also that the lack of reciprocal look causes a braek in our own consciousness?

Regarding the seeing question a very important person for Polish photography can not be omitted– Jerzy Lewczyński, especially his work *I open and close my eyes* from 1986. It is a multiplied portrait of an older lady holding a lily, probably taken in front of her house, so similar to Kula– in place connected with a photographed person. In the left raw woman's images with opened eyes becoming darker and darker, starting from the white surface from the bottom. In the right one– the woman with closed eyes and photographs are getting dark form the top to the bottom to the completely black picture. This work is an apotheosis of seeing, life and vanishing. Analyzing this work

Daria Kofacka

Gravity or a Lesson in the History of Art

Bas Jan Ader's Staged Falls

In April and May this year, we could see the first retrospective of a Dutch artist Bas Jan Ader entitled „Fall“ at the Basel's Kunsthalle. His works encompass six years. In 1975 Ader disappeared with no trace on the Atlantic. This disappearance had grave consequences on the reception of his art but, let us not go forward too much.

Bas Jan Ader was born in a Dutch town of Winschoten in 1942. His father was shot dead by the Nazis for rendering help

to Jews during the war. The work „Untitled (Sweden), 1971“ alludes to this fact. It is the projection of two coloured dia-

Marek Janczyk mentioned that: "We have to live and remember each moment before our eyes will be closed, remembering that what is inevitable: one day we will shut our eyes forever. In this way, in that single work pondering on human life and death is connected with the feeling that without a full engagement of our sensitivity even photographic abilities of cognition will reach its limit sooner or later."⁴

It is true because the examining instrument which photography might be has quite a lot limits. Anyway we should appreciate the tries of recognition our consciousness undertaking on the way of such brave steps, as Pawel Kula takes...

Pawel Kula (1976) graduated in photography from Academy of Fine Art in Poznan (2004). He does photographic workshops and activities for children in photography and animated cartoons. Coauthor of Solaris project(2000-2002), whose participants followed the sun way with pinholes cameras. He lives in Poznan.

¹ *The voice without words, Bogdan Konopka speaks with Eva Rubinstien, Format 24/25. Wroclaw, 1997.*

² *ser: Pawel Kula, Home archives, Photopeutic adventures, Kwartalnik Fotografia, 12/2003*

³ *John Berger, About seeing, Aletheia Foundation, Warsaw 1999, translation: Slawomir Sikora*

⁴ *Jerzy Lewczyński, Archeology of photography, Works from 1941-2005, KROPKA Publishing house, Wrzesnia 2005*

positives of a forest, projected parallel to each other, looking identical at first glance. The difference between them is a few trees missing in one of them and the almost unnoticeable fall of a man (BJA), who initially stands (the left slide), then lies (the right slide), consequently disappearing from the field of vision. Such a discrete reduction marks the