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The seventh run of the Large Format Symposium

At the beginning of July, the Valtice castle, in Břeclav region, held the seventh run of the International Painting symposium Large Format. Again, it was organized by the Association of Visual Artists and Theoreticians of South-Eastern Moravia and financially supported with the grant from the Foundation Czech Art Fund. The main organizer and the good spirit of the venue was Mr. Jan Pospíšil, a painter, who, being a wilful fellow, managed to muster the event again.

With a bit of exaggeration we may say that his original idea arose from the true meaning of the Greek word "Symposion", which means a witty, bright dialogue during and after a feast, rather than from a goal to trace strictly the contemporary trends, the art streams or to put ahead some binding topics for each year of the symposium.

The Valtice symposium gives its participants a possibility of free creative work in the amazingly beautiful space of the horse riding hall of the castle, the basic painting utensils and above all the large format of the canvas or board which is a challenge for each of them. And then it is up to them to cope with it.

The specific character of this art event is positively influenced by so-called genius loci, which is the inspiring region of the Lednice-Valtice region and above all the "studio" of the horse riding hall in the castle. Mr. Mikoláš Axmann, who has participated at the symposium twice so far, expressed his feelings very truthfully: "The Large Format is predominantly the huge white ceiling of the horse riding hall. It is here for us to compare our exerted but trifle gestures with its largeness."

Despite the absence of art theorists or an art jury, Mr. Jan Pospíšil has been able to address individual artists and to attract them to come, however different their artistic views, approaches, and characters are. They come and they adapt to the symposium needs, and they can create in the common space with a rarely seen tolerance and be happy there.

The choice of artists depends on the artistic level of their creative work sent in advance in a portfolio, and the good choice is then proved by the results of all the annual meetings.

This year it has been 9 artists, 5 from the Czech Republic, 3 from Slovakia and 1 from Hungary.

Unlike last year, when the participants used also different media to create their works, this year of the symposium has been typical for "classical painting". As a matter of fact, the Slovak participants Veronika Rónaiová, Eva Ploczek-Lazuri and Róbert Makar gathered under the ideological banner "Indivisual", making a defence of the prestige of the classical grand pictorials their credo.

Veronika Rónaiová deals with a classical figural painting. Her topic of a loss of an individuality and an estrangement is expressed by four figures of adolescent boys with faces intentionally blurred by means of a TV raster. The title of her work is www.markíza-krimi.sk.

A Rónaiová's colleague, Eva Ploczek-Lazuri was inspired by the baroque sculptures at the Valtice castle. Her picture shows fragments of human bodies floating in the "lentils world" of a neon colouring.

Robert Makar's work is called "Reality - Illusion - Abstraction". His painting expands out not only by adding the third dimension (= he inserted a 3D yellow object into the picture), but also by an irregular shape of the whole picture. He also admits

being influenced by architectonic items (cornices, stucco decorations) which surrounded him when he was working there.

A Hungarian artist Csaba Szegedy created a playful geometrical work with a telling title "The Communicating Vessels". It consists of four parts, which can be joined in various ways and at the same time link up well, making a new composition.

Galina Egerová from the town of Litvínov created a work which is difficult to overlook because of its tormenting appealing. In the picture "Dictator" with the size of 12 square meters she created a frightening vision of a human being losing his/her human conscience and thus missing the human face which turns him/her into a dangerous and unpredictable creature.

The work of Vladimír Franz bears similar suggestiveness. The title is "Prometheus on Holiday", and the subtitle is "A Fetish Altar". It is a pity that it was not possible to keep all its versions as it went from the beginning to the final shape of the work.

On the contrary, the youngest participant of the symposium, a fresh graduate from the College of Fine Art, Prague, Patrik Hábl created a lyrical triptych in the given space. By means of horizontal stripes he separated conventionalized elements using delicate hues and the canvas structure.

Mikoláš Axman followed up with his last year's large scale monotype and again he created a respectable large size work. This year's "duotype" called "A Cottage" is a joint print of two painted and then damped pieces of canvas, that means two positives, which resulted in two pieces of canvas with plentiful tonal values and structures.

Jan Pospíšil dealt with the contrast of two worlds, creating an expressionist work on a large canvas called "A Dragon-fly". In his picture called "Tonny and Mary", he depicts an ambivalent relationship between two people, using irony and a grotesque hyperbole.

These ten pictures - the output of this year's symposium - done in a close dialogue with the unique space of the horse riding hall are a proof that the Valtice symposium is a real open workshop which helps to precise the views on the contemporary art from a very unusual angle.

If these works are given a chance to communicate with public, the symposium will fulfill all demands to become a prestigious art event not only in the narrow circle of artists and theorists but also in the general public.