

E X A M I N A T I O N O F T H E H E A R T

In my doctoral thesis I deal with a problem, called here "Examination of the heart". Following the track, I have associated doctoral thesis with a physician (colloquially: a doctor) and the doctor with a check-up (medical examination). That is how "Examination of the heart" came into being.

1. GENESIS.

An introduction and inspiration to the idea of my thesis was a film and a series of pictures, entitled "Little macabresque" (macabre and grotesque combined together) that is the slaughter of the stuffed toys". The project was carried out within the confines of "The sacred and the profane" theme. In general, the matter consists in a brutal ripping of the stuffed toys, supported by a film documentation. This is an entirely bloodless action. The victims here are not very serious. Then, recorded video tape has been complemented by special pictures – a kind of tapestry - obtained through sewing the stuffed toys' remains on canvas cloth.

In „Little macabresque" the toy represents the sacred of a child and the child is someone whom undoubtedly everyone used to be or even happens to be up to now. The stuffed toy is a friend and a playmate. It is treated personally. The child talks to it, cuddles, dresses or undresses it or the other way round. The child will not allow to hurt, destroy or throw its friend out. That stuffed, plush object undergoes an operation performed by myself – profanation. In the brutal and ruthless way it has been cut up and destroyed. Hands pull its skin off – fur, throw out its guts – wadding, in order to arrange and sew these elements on a colourful canvas in the end. The aim of this act is to create new quality, from destruction right up to reconstruction. To desecrate in order to reveal the sacred, an icon put up on the wall.

That desecration is a nervous and ruthless procedure in time with the psychedelic - trance music. It absorbs and hypnotizes at the same time, although it is not a pleasant experience. It forms a contrast. The recorded video is alarming and aggressive, it even exposes some kind of evil. These pictures are obtained through elements sewn on the canvas but also there is a three-dimensional object – "The stool arranged from a reindeer". It makes a decorative, tranquil maybe even nice and pleasing impression. Very soft and plush, furry and chubby. Completion of the entirety has been created throughout oil paintings with subtitles. These are utterances and also impressions of a child after accidental watching the video film clips. A spontaneous reaction, explicit garrulity. Utmost associations and thoughts, swinging moods, lack of an emotional balance. Making an effort of reconciliation with the "sad" fact.

2. ANATOMY

When it happened that all has been destroyed and it was possible to reach the center – the

interior, smash it all up and cut into pieces, then came the moment of reflection. After the destruction there is time for something constructive. So, hey, go ahead! Go on! Maybe something more humane...? While I am right in the guts, that is in the very centre, so it seems that there must be something here. Something that strikes almost as a clock's tick-tock. It determines the most ideal rhythm. I did not hit on the idea myself but an anatomical atlas got into my hands. It turned out that the thing I have been looking for is the heart. That is just what captured my actions, began to appear in my subsequent paintings.

Foetus growing up in the maternal womb very strongly preserves its reaction to the mother's heart-beating (imprint). A new-born infant reacts calmly to that sound just after its birth, in the outside world. What is more, its mother instinctively and unconsciously holds the baby on her left hand, closer to her heart. The baby does not cry so much and easier falls asleep. Rocking and lulling the baby in this rhythm is by far much effective. The sound of heart-beating is also a very strong calming stimulus in most cases of children as well as adults. It resembles encoded beating of that *great heart*. *Quite an interesting thing is that after analysing 466 paintings of Madonna with the Child, coming from various historical periods, looking even several hundred years backwards, as many as 373 from among these paintings depict the child kept near or sucking the left maternal breast^{A7}.*

It seems very likely that such imprint brought about location of feelings and love in the heart, not in the head. Also music is not deprived of reference to the heart. The music rhythm and tempo seem to refer to its beating, aptly appealing to the listener (authors of music hits are surely aware of this fact). Even names of popular music genres e.g. rock music (Eng. "rocking music") or beat music (Eng. "striking music") suggest connection between music and the heart.

3. THE PUN.

Initially I associated the word „heart” with its ending i.e. art. Art from the heart, art for the heart, black art (black magic). Feelings and ambiguity – that is something that I am especially interested in, concerning art. A painting should convey its own meaning and message, it cannot be indifferent, it has to have some kind of humane element. Obviously it cannot overwhelm with its deathly seriousness because it heavily burdens the painting, making it unbearable. That means impossible to look at it but we should keep in mind that paintings are mainly for people. They should be, I still hope so.... Ambiguity, that is not straightly speaking but using twisted ways, through various signs, signals, code words.

The heart – feelings. I hide them behind various schemes, patterns of embroideries. I have been searching multiple ways to express this theme. Surfing the Internet, rummaging among newspapers, books, albums. In folk art, in kitsch. All needed tools fall straight into my hands. Even literature I have been reading, that is Murakami's novels, is filled with heart-connected threads. My

4 7 D. Morris „Naked Ape, p. 94.

figures – characters are somewhere there involved with their hearts – feelings.

Somewhere between cardiovascular system and a kind of surrealistic reality. Here appears sentimental cupid – a pattern for the cross-stitch embroidery, willing to be “heartly” next to the schemes of a gentleman and a lady lost in the plane of the picture, isolated.

4. CHARACTERS.

My Another flash of insight, following the theme of the heart, were animals. Entangled in kitsch, banality and sentimentality, that is a deer, a swan and a dog. This is the trio of my characters, that is blind, lame and deaf as one might wish to say. A tragic set, it could not have been much worse. But they say “the end justifies the means” that is why I have decided to maltreat the trio. But maybe they have been torturing me... Non the less, the theme is as boundless as the sea up to the horizon.

The deer appears here on a flowery canvas like a mannequin with a ripped, bleeding heart. According to a Silesian cut-out coming from Allegro, he was accompanied by a hunter who, as it turned out, also owns a heart. Between both these hearts has occurred an interaction. Who is the hunter and who is the deer? Who is the perpetrator and who is the victim?

The swan literally relocated itself from a kitsch painting and has been drifting over the stained background, upon which I had earlier cleaned my paintbrushes. And that is how they complete each other.

The dog is bound up with a man. It symbolizes faithfulness. Gazing intently at his master like at a divine being, its protector and a breadwinner.

A doggy couple – so a white dog and a black dog. Necessarily in an auric frame. I have been trying to find out a humane element in the gaze. It is as though a silent man, seized with incapacity of communication, talking, expressing feelings. Personification of the dog.

5. KITCHEN TAPESTRIES AND FOLK EMBROIDERIES.

Kitchen tapestries and folk embroideries are subsequent concepts for another pictures. Popular proverbs and generic scenes or landscape are the main topics of these representations. Once, in the past put up on the kitchen wall in order to decorate and edify it at the same time. In this room guests were received and all family members enjoyed the company of each other in odd moments. That is why the hostess tried to decorate them as much as possible. They were used to protect cottages against bitter cold. They were pride in the housewife’s achievements. Undoubtedly, they are pretty and trashy at the same time. Amusing and optimistic. But these are important, commemorative objects. Such “prettiness” is particularly attractive. “It touches the heart”. These representations are extremely sincere, created straight from the very need of the heart, gratuitously as the whole folk art is. Ornamental and decorative, conventional and simple in their composition. Flowers, swans, cats reanimate themselves in subsequent pictures.

Here are chosen aphorisms embroidered on tapestry:

(He) loves, likes and respects.

Where love and harmony reigns, there happiness builds its nest.

Fresh water for refreshment.

Joy is happiness.

Cook well, I am not joking, than I will flirt with you.

6. MY MASTERS.

In the course of my searching I have met mainly surrealists. Figure number one is Rene Magritte, followed by Paul Delvaux. Works of both these artists have been accompanied by peculiar, specific climate of suspension between reality and something unreal. Supreme technique and amazing ideas. These two artists together with the sixteenth-century very controversial artist Giuseppe Arcimboldo with his marvellous paintings "The Earth" and "The Air". These are very courageous and innovative concepts, close to my quest. Here is kitsch and banality. I am not keen on matters of illusions. The most essential is an intention alone; designing of the human facsimile throughout animals. A deer, dog, monkey, birds etc. can be found in here. In this fellowship I have discovered absorbing me characters. Moreover, I started wondering about animal nature of a human being. I have regarded animals as symbolic and also aesthetic objects. This aspect is closely related to my problem, that is the heart – the feeling – an animal – an instinct.

7. ABUNDANCE OF SYMBOLS.

Feelings are attributed to the heart. This is the symbol of religion, kitsch of a stall, street, night club, naivety, feelings, love, despair. Heart pierced with an arrow, heart with flowers, heart with flame, heart with rays, heart with plunged swords. These pictures come and go, met somewhere there. It is often said: *my heart is breaking, my heart is bleeding, via the stomach to the heart, my heart, ducky, sweetie*. Battered heart, prick in the heart, cardiac infarction. The neon heart. As your heart dictates. Lonely Hearts Club.

The heart has substantial task. The right and the left ventricles of the heart, huge pump, muscle, place of electric phenomena. In conjunction with its end comes an end.

A heart transplant is a living organ of the deceased. Supposedly a man with the heart transplant can feel the presence of the donor...

That is possible and impossible to live without it. An artificial heart is a mechanism enabling existence. A heart on a pillow, heart in a showcase of church, gifts of the heart, thanks, symbols of gratitude. I devote my heart to you, you are in possession of me, you rule my soul. The heart as the location of the soul.

The heart as an ideal, something infinitely good, a spring.

With all my heart and soul. The heart has been associated with genuine intentions and lack of selfishness. What comes out of the heart, falls into heart.

The heart means human's feelings, thoughts and courage. A heart of an enemy used to be eaten

so as to acquire his merits and prevent his soul from Resurrection. Also, blood pulsating in the heart was referred to a man's soul.³⁷ In ancient Egypt heart was the only internal organ, which was not preserved in a funerary urn. It was left in a mummy, because further fate depended on the heart's weight. It was weighed during the Particular Judgment.

In alchemy the heart is the Sun in a human being and the brain has association with the Moon.

8. KITSCH. PLACEBO FOR MELANCHOLY.

There is something affectionate in kitsch. These motifs are familiar, verified and not strange. They can be associated with something. They recall meanings, arouse recollections. This is as a regression to childhood, to those smells, flavours. It was nicely and pleasantly as in a cosy cottage. Kitsch resides deep in each of us. It is as the collective subconscious, something primitive, irremovable. This may be the reason why is so much kitsch around.

Kitsch in pictures plays the role of a tool. It lures, implies something, whispers, seduces.

9. MULTITUDE OF MEANINGS.

There is some kind of multilayered worlds. They co-exist simultaneously, overlap, exert an influence. Reality interfere with fiction, borders fade away, one cannot be certain what is what. Dream and reality, the subconscious and consciousness.

That is not a plane and one-level, conventional symbolic representation. This is semantic space. As broad and boundless as the sea. This is the plane into depth. The symbols are mysterious. They mix banality with seriousness, lie with the truth, laughter with sadness. It is a kind of balancing. Configurations create climate not easy to decode, disturbing. And that is the thing. Decorative, patterned background arranges the space. Painting cannot be a plain of boredom spilling over the surroundings. Maybe it should have been irrational and preposterous to be able to hide and smuggle something. More hide than expose. I have been trying to identify myself with what I paint, even though I cannot completely explain it. Means, i.e. tools of the picture, the method of execution, the shape, colour are words, which the picture uses to appeal and transmit something.

10. PROBLEMS IN WORK.

In my doctoral thesis I have met some problems. The heart has many symbols and I must choose between this. Feelings are attributed to the heart but this is also symbols of religion, street and night club, love ect. On the other hand, the heart is a huge pomp. Muscle, place of electric phenomena. The heart as the location of the soul. The heart means human's feelings, things and courage. In alchemy the heart is the Sun.

I paint oil on canvas and I search different manners to express this theme. I paint like cross – stitch embroidery or like stencils on the wall. Sometimes like kitsch painting or a Silesian cut – out.

3 7 W. Kopalinski, „Dictionary of symbols”, s. 371

11. YOU WANT TO CONTINUE IN THE FUTURE.

This theme is interesting for me and it is close to me. I find many deferent ideas near heart. Following the theme I began to be interested in animals. They are as a silent man, sized with incapacity of communication , talking, expressing feelings. They are in kitsch, banality and sentimentality. That is a deer, a swan and a dog. The trio of my characters. A tragic set, it could not have been much worse. But they say “the end justifies the means” that is why I have decided to deal with this trio. The theme is as boundless as the sea up to the horizon. I want to use kitsch as a tool in pictures. These motif is familiar, verified and not strange. They can be associated with something. This is like a regression to childhood.

I want to connect the heart with folk embroideries. This are subsequent concepts for another pictures. I like these popular proverbs, generic scenes and landscapes. They are pretty and trashy. Such “prettiness” is particularly attractive. “It touches the heart”. These representations are extremely sincere, created straight from the very need of the heart. I like this ornamental and decorative, conventional and simple composition. Besides, here are animals too. There are swans and cats. Animals and folk art I connect with the heart.