

Zbigniew Rogalski



The Vengeance of the Old Indian
2001, 180x220 cm



Untitled
2003

Painter, photographer and installation artist born in 1974 in Dąbrowa Białostocka. He has been considered a painter, or rather a director of paintings, as he moves with great ease both in the regions of painting and photography, mixing them and taking advantage of both disciplines.

In Zbigniew Rogalski's work reflections, after-images, film stills and photographs all overlap the image of reality, as if in a specially constructed optic machine which retains on the surface of the canvas the emotions and meanings which normally are no more permanent than a drawing on a steamed-up glass. A number of his works allude to the classic genres of painting, such as portrait or landscape. However, by interweaving different clichés and conventions of representation, Rogalski is led to surprisingly essential painterly solutions which make the tradition of this medium interesting anew. He succeeds in restoring a visionary element in painting and does so in a very suggestive

manner. In his paintings, Rogalski highlights perspective and, specifically, linear perspective. This, however, by no means indicates his works are technical drawings, but rather he takes on a painterly view, a landscape, if not for the fact that that what we have heard is a still nature - a representation of a papier-mâché model presenting a linear perspective. His paintings are, in a literal sense, entertaining, illusionistic, and contemplative. At the same time, they are "about something", adroitly subverting the ambiguity and metaphorical meaning of "perspective".

He is interested in optical fallacies - the lies that our eyes tell us. The series *Closer* depicts the doubled perception that we have of faces when we approach too near to them. Rogalski's self-referential canvases are as though glass panes behind which the artist himself stands. Rogalski's artistic perspective is a hyper-perspective - recognizing the templates that human mind imposes on itself in order to comprehend and see "something". Many of his works refer to the traditional categories and genres of painting, such as the portrait or the landscape, but with the added effect that comes of splicing various frames and conventions of representation, which leads the artist to some astonishingly essentialist painterly conclusions. The surface of the painting becomes a screen on which the obsessions, fears and revelations of our consciousness are projected. It is, above all, a method of painting for the imagination, which does not allow for the thoughtless consumption of the visual world, but instead leads us consistently towards issues that are resolute, yet evanescent. A vital element of Rogalski's imagination is his studies of the artifice of images and the methods of constructing illusions within them. Some of his projects draw their inspiration from works of music and film, yet an essential element of Rogalski's artistic practice is the collaboration with other artists, such as Michał Budny and Szymon Rogiński. In 1999 Rogalski earned a degree in painting under Professor Jerzy Kałucki at the **Poznań Academy of Fine Arts**, and in 2001 he won first prize in the Eugeniusz Geppert Painting Competition. Between 2000 and 2002 he worked together with Hubert Czerepok, a duo of photographers and video artist known as The Magisters. He is represented by **Galeria Raster**, and he lives and works in Warsaw.

Rogalski belongs to the generation of painters who debuted around 2000. He often paints series of works and his pictures often consist of multi-level narratives, leading some people to dub him the "image director." During and immediately after his studies, however, the most frequent motif in Rogalski's work was the act of painting itself. His canvases show the painter at work and speak to their own creation, not

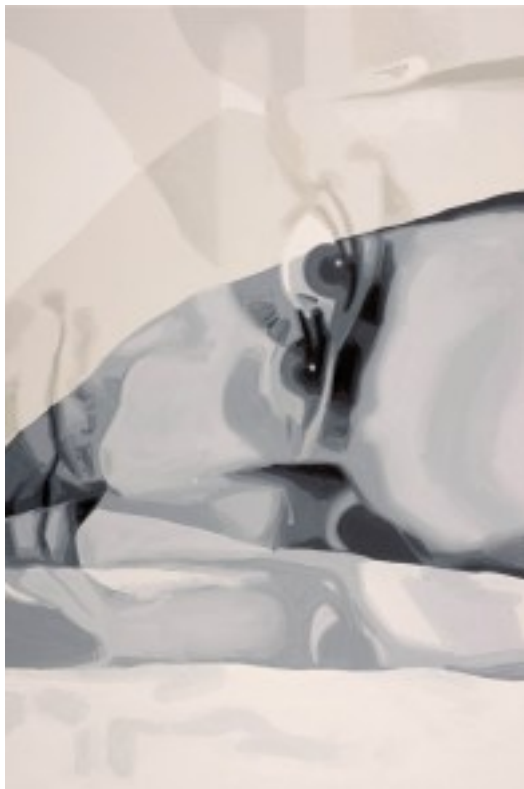
so much representing reality as revealing the process of making the representation. These pieces also often allude to the work of other painters as well. In the tradition of Jackson Pollock, Rogalski emphasises the gestures of the painter, and has actually made Pollock the subject of several of his pictures. In reference to Hans Namuth's photographs of Pollock splashing paint across a canvas spread on the floor, Rogalski painted a scene in which Pollock is being helped by another person (2000). He also portrayed himself painting Pollock (**Painting Jackson Pollock**, 2000). His early paintings utilise the well-known historical motif of the artist at the easel, but in Rogalski's case the picture showing him at work and the picture he is painting are identical. In one of the canvases, entitled **The Vengeance of the Old Indian** (2000), the artist, hit by an arrow, tries as his last gesture to paint a blue circle. In several pieces from 2003, Rogalski paints over the fragment of the canvas where he himself is represented, as if he could be annihilated in a couple of brushstrokes. Another frequent motif in his work is his own studio, in which he portrays himself (see **About a Neighbour's Death**, 2003; and **Self-Portrait Under a Canvas**, 2003). The theme of artistic creation sometimes appears in an ironic or even mocking context, as in the painting **Euro** (2003), showing the counterfeiting of euro banknotes.



Partisan's Death

2005, 130x180 cm

Rogalski is also interested in the phenomenon of other people's perceptions, and the scenes in his paintings depict not so much reality as the way it is perceived. In the series **Closer** (2006), the artist portrayed, in extreme close-up, the faces of figures lying on the ground. The images are blurred and out of focus, as if seen from too close a from distance. The series **Partisan's Death** (2005) shows a forest seen from the point of view of a person lying on the ground, the tree trunks forming concentric circle against the background of the sky. These grey, almost monochrome paintings are an attempt to capture the moment of death, the final look of the dying. **How She Sees the Moon** (2007) addresses the subject's defective vision, since the image of the moon is double.



Closer (Self-Portrait)

2006, 180x120cm, oil on canvas

Two other frequent motifs in Rogalski's paintings are mirror images and inscriptions made on steamed-up windows and mirrors, places where reality coexists with its own reflection (such as in the series **Heroes**, 2003-2005). In the piece **Björk** (2003), the image of the half-naked artist is reflected in a steamed-up bathroom mirror on which the name of the Icelandic singer has been finger-written. Other canvases contain the names of astronauts (like Gagarin, 2003) and philosophers, such as Fukuyama, Baudrillard and Zizek (in the series **Lifts**, 2005). In another



How She Sees the Moon

2007, 160x160 cm

series, **Private Spring** (2005), the interior of the artist's studio is reflected in the glass frames of photos of landscapes. The **Coffin Portraits** (2005), in turn, show a series of reflections in the sort of glassy photographs usually mounted on gravestones.



Private Spring
2005, 120x170 cm, oil on canvas



Coffin Portrait, NN
2005, 120x120 cm, oil on canvas

A number of Rogalski's paintings build on the associations evoked by random objects or everyday articles. This is the guiding principle of the series **Projects** (2003), showing simplified, schematic images of detached houses with huge tank cannons sticking out of their roofs. Sometimes it is the artist himself who constructs the analogy by arranging common objects into familiar patterns. In **Similar Pictures** (2003), for instance, these objects were the title sequences of major film studios like **Paramount Pictures** and **20th Century Fox**.

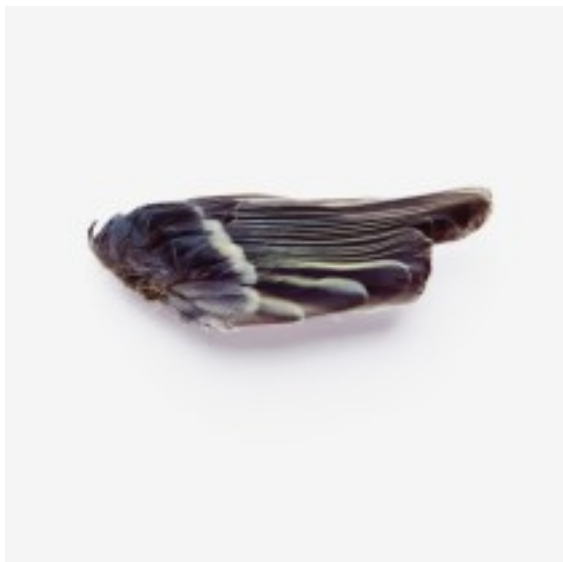


Similar Pictures (Paramount Pictures)
2003, 73x85 cm



Untitled (Heroes)
2003, 140x110 cm

Rogalski employed a similar strategy in **Projection** (2006), a collaboration with **Michał Budny** in which the two artists offered a somewhat ironic look at the history of the construction of a modern art museum in Warsaw. They created the suggestion of a video-installation, except that the "projectors" had been made out of cardboard by Budny, and the "projected images" had been painted by Rogalski. At first sight, the installation appeared to be the design of a modern architectural project; but in reality it was only cardboard models. Budny and Rogalski also participated in the group exhibition *Here a Change Occurs* at the Kordegarda in Warsaw in 2007, which dealt with the disappearance of modernist architecture from Warsaw's urban landscape. The artists designed a simple geometric portal that they wanted to place in front of the Kordegarda building as a modernistic symbol of the gallery's famous white cube, but the project was never carried out.



Air
2006, 160x160cm, photo series, c-print, aluminium, plexi



Projection
(with Michał Budny), 2006

Air (2007), a series of large-format photographs printed on aluminium under plexiglas. Collaborating with Andrzej Kruszewicz, chief ornithologist of the Warsaw Zoo, he photographed birds' wings and placed them on a neutral, white background, an allusion to death and transience. His 2009 series **Aquarium** not only portrays that which isn't there but also plays with traditions of abstract and modern art. The entirety of this geometry - the reflection within a reflection, the square within a square, the figure within a figure - is an artistic echo or hiccup of the image that the act of painting, through the recognition of the process of seeing, achieves. His 2011 series *Eye-tracking* is based on painterly collage, in which the artist takes blurry photographs and traces a pattern

in black paint upon them. The idea behind the work is to track the movement of the eyeball in looking at an object, a method often used in advertising. As the artist shared in an interview with Culture.pl, his inspiration for the work was the childhood discovery of porn in his father's drawer and the shock that ensued. "The way I track the eye movement is largely a fantasy on the subject of the chaotic movement of the eyes of a child looking at porn", explained Rogalski.



Cups
2000, 170x440 cm