ALMINE RECH

Zbigniew Rogalski
Air

May 25 — Jul 21, 2007 | Paris

Almine Rech Gallery has the pleasure to announce the forthcoming personal exhibition of Zbigniew Rogalski. A series of unpublished works by the artist will be held at the gallery ground floor from May 25th until July 21st, 2007

In the past decades a swinging movement has drawn alternately painting from shadow to light on the international art scene. Present day contemporary art favours the emergence of a great number of painters, often identified with national schools of art, e.g. American, German or Polish.
Zbigniew Rogalski is a Polish painter whose distinctive original research has already brought forth a remarkable corpus of works interweaving, in a very appealing manner, a delicate sense of narration and formal research, resulting in the figurative bareness of film aesthetics.
The Polish artistic creation was particularly rich in the twentieth Century. Although it often evolved outside the country's frontiers, it is almost certain that the complex History of Poland at that time was the seminal ground of its artists'genuinely original vision.

The message of Zbigniew Rogalski's paintings is an existential need of art doubled with a metaphysical questioning about life itself. The outcome of this approach is a painterly vision interweaved with an acute perception of reality, the meaning of which expresses the reciprocal alienation or exclusion of object and subject, of objectivity and subjectivity.

Extracts of articles :
« In an early but memorable film by Roman Polanski, Knife in the water (1961), there is a scene in which a character, lying on the deck of a yacht, observes the peak of the mast with his left and right eye alternatively. Naturally, the picture skips. This simple trick is just one among many exercises which make one aware of the fact that our optical system is not a neutral instrument. Using it – similarly to the use of a camera or a movie camera – one can easily manipulate the image of reality. A famous drawing used at the time by Gombrich in his Art and Illusion, that can be seen as either a duck or a rabbit, depicts the nature of this psychophysiological phenomenon from another point of view.

Maturity of Zbigniew Rogalski's painting and one's understanding of it starts at this very point. The point of becoming aware thatthere exists no single visually perceptible image of reality. Rogalski deliberately seeks out ambiguous views. To use a comparison from his own paintings – he focuses on the surface of a mirror, instead of the reflection ; not on the events behind the window, but the surface of the window itself. What is more, as the artist seems to suggest, the things that take place there become even more interesting if we project on them – on equal rights – the images generated or summoned by imagination, movie stills and photographs. This is what Rogalski seems to need painting for : creating visual illusions in which authentic sights are interwoven with visions of reality processed by consciousness and intellect. Associations with movies are most welcome, as we are dealing with painting which records a reality that is both carefully directed and keeps the viewer in excitement. »

Lukasz Gorczyca, 'Looking, sliding and reflecting observations on Zbigniew Rogalski's paintings', in Zbigniew Rogalski, Private Spring, ed. Kunstverein Göttingen, Germany, 2005.

« Sometimes the most interesting stories can be told with a single image. There are some directors, and they're not the worst, who structure an entire film around five or six key shots. Zbigniew Rogalski has a knack for finding such single motifs with outreach. They are visual plots that require neither lead-in nor closure, but, with a signification technology of their own, they disrupt the orderly functioning of the individual's receptors like a mirage or an electronic flash. Many of his pictures create in the mind's eye of the viewer a suggestible imaginative space for him to conjoncture what might happen before or after on the temporal axis of the picture. [...] As recently as a decade ago narratives in art, especially in painting were as inconceivable as a German Pope or class struggle rhetoric from the SPD (German Social-Democratic Party). An astounding shift in acceptability has taken place here, and it is only partly explicable in terms of fashion cycles. Narrative was equated with illustrative, and this in turn led to a serious acceptability deficit. The present consensual enjoyment of narrative can only be explained, if at all, with convoluted and multi-layered explications. One could try saying that with the vast amount of video art in the style of the author-film in the Nineties (Aija-Liisa Ahtila, Pipilotti Rist, Rodney Graham, Stan Douglas...) personal narrative styles, coupled with media-formats that had not yet been worked to death, began to unfold their conventional, but refreshingly direct potential in an atractive way. By this roundabout route, old and venerable surfaces could be revamped and brought into play again with fresh narrative techniques.
In the meantime, possibly erroneous assessments of the Western avant-garde (and its politics) continue to be bandied about quite openly. Clement Greenberg's maxim "Stretched canvas is only possible as an object in itself" is one example of an individual dynamic that constantly radicalises itself. As a consequence of Greenberg's overvalued requierements, all pictures definitively became/are becoming objects. So one media format was liquidated by diktat and ascribed and allotted to another artistic genre. [...] So it seems appropriate at this time for the practice of image-making that has been discredited in this fashion to be given another chance to test its possible potential once more. »

Gunter Reski, ‘In the Sweatwater of the pictorial document’, in Zbigniew Rogalski, Private Spring, ed. Kunstverein Göttingen, Germany, 2005.