

Commentary by panelist Dominique Nahas

I had the privilege of sitting with my delightful colleagues Richard Brilliant, Linda Norden, James McCorkle, and Włodzimierz Książek on January 28, 2010 in what turned out to be a well-attended event filled with lively discussions centering on Włodzimierz undeniably compelling paintings. This event took place at the residence of the Consulate General of Poland, the resplendent De Lamar Mansion on 37th Street and Madison Avenue in New York City.

I am on the record for stating in print that his paintings are among the most important abstractions of our time. I stand by that assessment. During the panel I wanted to respond to the interpretations made by several of the panelists by agreeing with some of their remarks and disagreeing with others as I wanted to make clear my thoughts in regards to my appreciation of Włodzimierz's vision.

I emphasized that the paintings that comprise Książek's oeuvre are clearly not made to fulfill academic modalities and that they resist interpretation to a great degree for several reasons. Importantly, these works are vital because internal contradictions energize them. That being so, the works are beyond the logical and while they participate in the regime of opticality they are also resistant essentially to this regime because of their haptic quality, the quality of eye-touch, and their somatic qualities—that is their skin like qualities. The contrasts in the work that I mentioned were: materialization vs. dematerialization, precariousness/fragility vs. sumptuousness/fullness, mark-making through incremental layering vs. obliteration/removal/effacing, the avowal of “hand-work” (the “laying-on of hands”) to produce a Benjaminian ‘auratic’ quality vs. a deferral of the hand through their self-constructed look. I noted as part of my remarks the fleeting, intangible moods that the paintings were subject to, the quality of insistence that pervades the work through the repetition aspect of the work.

I also noted how strongly they resonated (being muscular and built-up) while also emanating with a feeling of fragility and loss. I agreed with the respondents at the panel that the quality of transition, the theme of transit was an essential one as the eye is forced to circulate around in and through the paintings and their crevasses and recesses. I did not agree with Dr. Brilliant that the works of Włodzimierz Książek are fundamentally about perception but instead are bearing down on the primacy of sensation as developed by Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari as they have noted that sensations incarnate the event which leads to perception. Sensation according to Deleuze opens at the threshold of sense, at those moments prior to when a subject discovers the meaning of something and occurs prior to the realization that one is a perceiving subject in relation to a perceived object.

Sensation, then, takes place before cognition, and precludes the intellectual process entirely by circumventing it. This core “animal-thing” is what is produced in and by the works of Książek—which is why they strike us so strongly, sensorially-speaking. It is this interpretation of sensation that I wanted to stress in spite of Dr. Brilliant's assertion that sensation is part of perception.

Grossly speaking, that is so. But I was referring to another order, a substrate of being that is anterior (pace Deleuze) to perception itself. I also during the panel raised the issue of and the validity of the haptic in Ksiazek's work as it is the main vehicle of apprehension, not the optic (out of which perception is perhaps organized). I also tried to pinpoint the phenomenological substance of the work of Ksiazek and tried to tie in the Cézanne impulse in the work as it bears down on origins and settings and mindsets (historical/archeological etc) while disavowing these triggers which are released by the artist's memory as he as Cézanne traces his "small sensations" that themselves are trying to re-organize the "landscape" before him (in Ksiazek's work the landscape is of course and internalized/imbedded/embodyed ones). I mentioned that while Cézanne has his landscape of which he trying to record the essence of landscape while allowing it to be what it is outside of his authorial grasp Ksiazek has his own "motif" that the is after that has no direct analogy to Cézanne's other than the fact that Ksiazek, as Cézanne, is connected to forces, cosmic forces, that are outside of his control and out of reach yet which still energize the work.

There are several kinds of bodies that are interred, that co-inhabit and co-exist if uneasily in Ksiazek's work. I read an excerpt from the Visible and the Invisible by Maurice Merleau-Ponty in which he describes the flesh as a new type of being, a being by porosity, pregnancy or generality and he before whom the horizon opens, is caught up and is included within it is body and the distances participate in one same corporeity or visibility in general, which rises between them and it and even beyond the horizon, beneath his skin, unto the depths of being. A pre-conceptual intertwining of the flesh of the body and the flesh of the world makes possible a communication of embodied self and embodied world this inter-corporeity is rendered perceptible in works of art. In doing so I tried to capture the essence of Włodzimierz Ksiazek's work (and world) which, in essence, is drawn about through the energetics of becoming and of emergence rather than those of resolution and stasis.

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New York City
February 5, 2010