

The Krasnals' statement

Monkeys with white bananas

At the beginning of April we entered into correspondence with Christie's. We sent en masse emails with a picture of Whielki Krasnal entitled "My name is Sasnal". We were surprised to receive a rather ambiguous reply in which the writer informed that the picture we had enclosed was too new to appear at auction. We therefore began our correspondence, during the course of which we suggested a different picture – Whielki Krasnal - Untitled (Monkeys with white bananas), with an earlier date. The last email we received included an application form for the auction, already completed by the auction house, including the name Whielki Krasnal, the title of the picture and an estimate of 50,000-70,000 pounds. To the very end we were unsure whether we were involved in a practical joke. To us it seemed rather unlikely that one of the world's greatest auction houses could mistake a name so renowned in the art world as Wilhelm Sasnal; what struck us as equally nonsensical was the instantaneous acceptance of the pictures we sent in an attachment and the readiness with which they were accepted for auction. As mentioned previously, the only drawback of one of them was that it carried the incorrect date.

Apparently, there's nothing new in this – in today's art world it is not quality or artistic value that counts, but rather all that matters is getting the artist's name in circulation on the art scene, for various reasons and in various ways. Things take their own course: promotion, the art market, each driving the other on, feeding on the products served up. Nothing new, and yet to experience this personally, tangibly and plain to see is not merely unusual but extraordinary. But why is it such a powerful experience? Presumably, because it dispels all doubts, all vestiges of faith in any form of honesty and any appreciation of other values which may creep into the subconscious mind of the naïve artist, regardless of the control exercised over it. Artists who believe in honesty and the sensitivity of "opinion-leaders" should give themselves such a 'cold shower' from time to time. There's nothing happening here but a game. There's the starting line, matches, players, bonuses, missing your turn, victors, losers, and well, obviously those who are not taking part. And stupefaction may, for example, give the artist certain evidence for the awareness of being a victim, as Baudrillard analysed in his 1996 book "The Conspiracy of Art", which is not exactly a critics' favourite.

For us, the following extract is particularly apt to the situation we find ourselves in:

"That paranoia accompanying art means that the lack of any possible critical judgement remains amicable, necessitated by the friendly division of this nullity. This is the essence of the conspiracy of art and here hides its primal scene, altered by all that French polishing, vernissages, arrangements, exhibitions, restaurants, collections, donations and research, which may never find its solution in any of the known worlds, for it sheltered from the thought behind the curtain of distorted pictures. Another aspect to this duplicity due to the imagined nullity is - a contrario – forcing us all to give meaning and our trust to everything, on the pretext that it is impossible that it is nothing to such a degree, for there must be something behind it. Contemporary art utilises this type of uncertainty, the impossibility of delivering any sort of principled aesthetic judgement, counting on the fault of those who fail to see that there is nothing to understand. This is where the crime of revealing a secret lies. Essentially,

we may think that those who art does indeed hold in high esteem have in fact comprehended everything, since through their stupefaction they give evidence of their intuitive ability to comprehend: the awareness of being a victim of abuse of authority and that the rules of the game are hidden from them both exploits and cons them. In other words, art participates in the current criminal procedure of revealing the secret - (this involvement is not merely from the financial point of view, with regard to the market for art, but also by way of management of aesthetic values). And it is not just art that does so: politics, economics and information all utilise participation and the same ironic resignation on the part of "consumers".

Anyway, if the philosopher's view stems from the fact that he is weary of contemporary art, as the Polish journalist Dorota Jarecka puts it: "It is a pretentious diagnosis put forward by a hundred-year-old doctor from somewhere on the Danube who is bored with culture", then why is there such a notorious flow of evidence justifying 'the conspiracy of art'? We don't have to look far – from the most immediate Internet source of information – we won't find out much about this book in Polish. Because who would benefit from that theory? Those who set up another conspiracy of art? We, the Krasnals, after having had a few 'cold showers', ceased to believe that there is anything beyond. We don't believe in simulated ideas and overdeveloped concepts created by a network of renowned artists, art critics, curators; which are all justified by art collectors' purchases, participation in biennial exhibitions or 'prestigious' art fairs. Therefore our 'artistic expressions' are devoid of delusion, of sophisticated concepts, and they don't simulate justification in the form of new, valuable content.

The chief 'cold shower' was Wilhelm Sasnal, and therefore it still stirs us even now. Sasnal screamed right in our face that we are out of the game. Before then we hadn't even got involved in it, we were living in our own vision of artistic delusion. After this delusion was wiped out, we were in a way forced to take a look at the game – and we have to admit that we got drawn into it. We are learning more about it, discovering it, we express our impressions visually. The majority of observers might say that we are not discovering anything new. But we admit – we are not a walking encyclopaedia; we haven't got acquainted with all the fashionable philosophers of the day; we don't know by heart all the contexts into which artists are being put these days.

The fact that certain functions or no function has been attributed to art, and the fact that it has been described in various ways is all of no importance to us. If today we paint objects as simple as the trivial Big \$asnal, or Krytykant, with the anus as the focal point, this does not mean that we don't let ourselves experience things like rapture, aesthetic impressions, or even metaphysical ones, if we feel the need, contrary to the fact that these values have all been officially pronounced obsolete. In actual fact, until very recently we didn't realise that now it is forbidden to delight in anything. If not for a couple of texts we've read, we would still believe in something that is no longer there, something that only ignorant 'non-art-experts' believe in. Or maybe we'll get drawn into politics? Its relations with art in Poland are at least interesting, if not fascinating. There are no quotes from 'the conspiracy of art', however, it won't do without Zizek, Lacan, Ranciere or other left-wing names.

We are not able to foresee what else we'll discover – most probably it will be nothing new for the art audience, since they have seen everything already. Or maybe the novelty is all about discovering something that has already been discovered? Or maybe it's not about discoveries but rather the joy of quasi-discovery? If you want to have a good campaign, make sure you have plenty of anger and aggression. Let intuition lead us, as long as something is happening. We will even willingly engage in the conspiracy.

The Krasnals