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The Form, the Style and Human Body in Marek Szczęsny's painting

Forma, styl i ludzkie ciało w malarstwie Marka Szczęsneho

Abstract

The article focuses on the work of Marek Szczęsny. The author presents the basic features of the work of a painter from Toruń NCU. Marek Szczęsny is an artist and painter associated with the University of Warmia and Mazury in Olsztyn. In his work, he starts from searching for a motif, aiming at a synthesis of elements of magic realism and metaphorical painting. Paying attention to the relationship between painting and drawing, the article aims to say that the artist develops an individual style in the process of working on the form, and that the expression of artistic maturity is the lack of overloading and balancing the plans. The richness of the language of Marek Szczęsny's painting finds its justification in the conscious shaping of the balance of representation and theme, as well as intellectual and emotional control of the humanistic dimensions of the work.

Keywords: Marek Szczęsny, painting, human body, style, form, creative process

Upon the completion of studies in Toruń and Florence, Marek Szczęsny took up employment in Olsztyn, first in his own art studio in 1999, then in the department of drawing and painting of his own design, sharing creative work with artistic pedagogy at the Faculty of Fine Arts of the University of Warmia and Mazury in Olsztyn¹. The greatest influence on his creativity, however, was his apprenticeship at his father's studio, where he learnt the practical and diligent approach to drawing and painting. His

¹ *Gesty, znaki, symbole. Uniwersytet Warmińsko-Mazurski, Wydział Sztuki, Instytut Sztuk Pięknych*, ed. P. Obarek, Olsztyn 2010, s. 58.

studies at the studio of prof. Zygmunt Kotlarczyk can be called a period of ‘out-painting’, in which he created works of free composition and contrasting colours; it must be noted that he was taken under the wing of prof. Janusz Kaczmarek and prof. Kiejstut Bereźnicki, whose care and advice gave him a good command of painting theory.



1. Marek Szczęsny, *Mózg i biusty*, rysunek tuszami na papierze, 70x100cm (2019)

At the onset of his own career, he created works which, no matter how realistic, were markedly vivid in action and deep in colour. Over the years, his painting was determined by the search for the motive, which would become his signature style.

My analysis of his creative approach may be assisted by remarks made by one art critic, who referred directly to Marek Szczęsny's works. “In view of what is going on in contemporary painting, it is hard to find universal canons of form or expression. Even the most basic question, like realistic or abstract, remains to be studied and considered by each artist personally”². It seems that these words must be taken very seriously as the artistic personality of the painter in question wanders between the magical realism and metaphorical painting. Marek Szczęsny is known not only as an abstract painter, but also as an author of many figurative pieces, interested in the

² B. Denga, *Plomień, żar, popiół*, BWA Olsztyn, 2006.

expression and communication of the work of art, and the stylistic structure of the artistic statement. An interesting artistic expression were the works establishing links



2. Marek Szczęsny, *Akt cytrynowy*, olej na płótnie, 75x55 cm (2016)

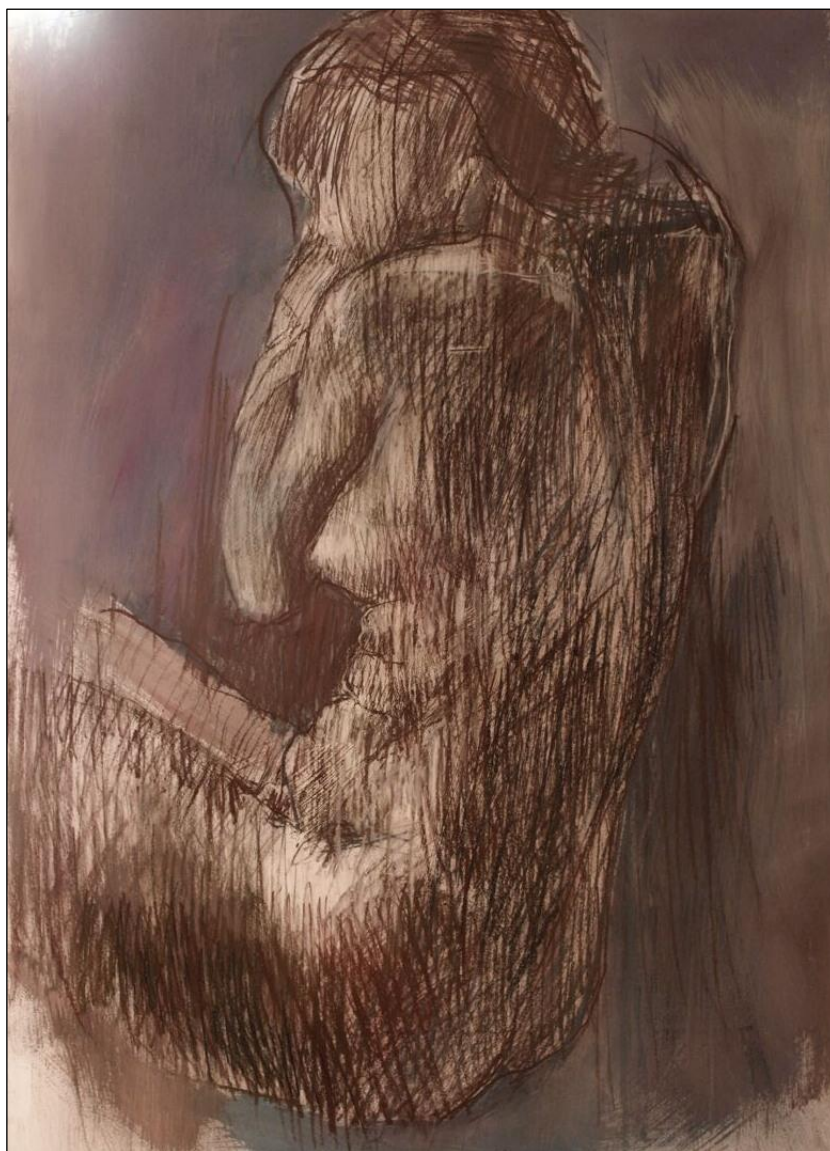
with other fields of art. The abstract figures connected with the idea of music referred to the symphonic alignment of colours³.



3. Marek Szczesny, *Akt brązowy*, rysunek sepią na papierze, 70x100 cm (2016)

As an artist tied to the palette for most of his creative life, he recently began to steer away from traditional painting and towards drawing. His own idea for art is to dexterously intertwine painting and drawing elements as a way to unravel beauty in art, which leads through the search of new artistic manners to present his own views. The author avoids the gloomy drama and savagery of contemporary art, resorting to the female world, where he refers to feelings and desire. As I am engaged with the world of contemporary art, I must admit that I am familiar with works of many artists from Croatia, Hungary, Italy and Poland which revolve around such topics, which is why Marek Szczesny drew my attention. In my view, his idea of art is so distinctive that it eludes the domain of the classic approach. It follows from the different way in which he tries to portray the human body as a medium of art.

³ *Muzyka obrazu. Kolekcja sztuki*, Filharmonia Warmińsko-Mazurska im. Felixa Nowowiejskiego w Olsztynie, Olsztyn 2011, p. 77.



4. Marek Szczęsny, *Dama*, rysunek sangwiną na papierze, 100x70cm (2018)

The other paths which I have encountered so far have looked at man as a subject, avoiding an emotional entanglement with the spiritual or motivational dimension of the model. I know that such an approach follows from years of artistic practise focused on the sketching of the model, seeking harmony in the human silhouette, and refers to the classic style of imaging. I know that faculties and academies of fine arts teach drawing, and hundreds, if not thousands of such works can be seen at exhibitions and artistic events, but Marek Szczęsny's approach is different, as he avoids declarations from the domain of anatomy and the history of art. What is it, then, that makes his manner of

work different? I have seen several of his exhibitions. At first, the set of the displayed works introduced me to a specific climate of female figures against an imaginary space. The background is neutral, which is why an erotic element pervades the picture. His art, though not entirely devoid of realistic observation, is characterized by the liberty in depicting the female figure. The models' bodies are marked with sketching effects, an attempt to arrest the light to try and capture the remains of reality. The drafts, which have obviously taken a lot of time to complete, complement each other at a glance. This mystery of perspective reveals even the temperature and complexion of the skin, whose shades of colour are intertwined with the tissue of ochre, sienna and sepia. As for the narrative, his works depict real women, but their aura transcends into the world of poetry and body lyricism.



5. Marek Szczęsny, *Akty czarne*, olej na płótnie, 140x190 cm (2017)

Marek Szczęsny skilfully elaborates the details and when we examine the inner layer of his works we encounter planes and structures of the figure which are often seen from a close perspective. His mindset and the following realizations are not easy to identify from the formal point of view or classify into a popular school or contemporary trend in art. The artist refers to the biological structure of man, at times even to his instincts, and his concepts arrive at the borders of acceptability; however, despite the realism of the characters, he does not breach the sphere of respect towards the woman.

His works are not easy to understand and interpret. They call for attention and focus; it must be noted that his language is rich in value nuances and an ambitious textural structure of the drawing.



6. Marek Szczesny, *Akt siena*, akryl na płótnie, 80x70 cm (2019)



7. Marek Szczęsny, *Akt czerwony*, akryl na papierze, 46x65 cm (2016)

Configurations of forms are closed in the matter of lines and strokes, which by themselves should bring satisfaction to even the most demanding recipients of art. The graphics of the drawings combined with the linear effects is a curious way of imaging; I see it as an attempt to find the style through perfecting the form. It is the artist's responsibility to elaborate on the creative process and control it intellectually, even if it regards such delicate matters as human emotions. This is why the works of Marek Szczęsny reveal an awareness of the theme and a humanistic structure as well as an own manner of imaging. I will again refer to the critical analysis of the current situations: "No trend, no fashion and no art market can help make the right decision. We no longer have a binding approach to the manner of imaging, which the artist could rely on until recently"⁴.

Nearly everything then, from the composition to the way of using the colour blotch or the organization of the second and third plan, is now a conscious decision. It is

⁴ B. Denga, op.cit.

a manifestation of artistic maturity when image overload is avoided and grey is used accurately to prevent the background from dominating the figure. What is also attractive about his works is the coherence in the approach to the subject in order not to exaggerate on romanticism or idealism.

Streszczenie

Omówienie poświęcone jest twórczości Maraka Szczęsnego. Autor przedstawia zasadnicze rysy twórczości malarza wywodzącego się z UMK w Toruniu. Marek Szczęsny jest artystą malarzem związanym z Uniwersytetem Warmińsko-Mazurskim w Olsztynie. W swej twórczości wychodzi od poszukiwania motywu, zmierzając do syntezy elementów realizmu magicznego i malarstwa metaforycznego. Zwracając uwagę na związki malarstwa z rysunkiem, artykuł zmierza do stwierdzenia, że artysta wypracowuje indywidualny styl w procesie pracy nad formą, a wyrazem artystycznej dojrzałości jest brak przeładowania i zbalansowanie planów. Bogactwo języka malarstwa Marka Szczęsnego znajduje uzasadnienie w świadomym kształtowaniu równowagi przedstawienia i tematu oraz intelektualna i emocjonalna kontrola humanistycznych wymiarów dzieła.

Słowa kluczowe: Marek Szczęsny, malarstwo, ciało, styl, forma, proces twórczy