

When speaking about contemporary art, words such as “style,” “unity” and “generation” are unusable, for the contemporary, in its diversity, is indescribable. Sometime in the future it will be given a name, but not yet, not today. We need a certain distance from this ineffable whole, but that does not prohibit a certain approach to the individual and of course to more or less profile a personality. This exhibition at Galerie Caesar offers one such collection and example of contemporary artistic thinking.

The works of Jana Kasalová are original in their conception and perfect in their execution. Unity and harmony prevail throughout. I am not expressing anything revolutionary, just registering a personality and work which has continuity, anchored in the past and aiming at the future.

That is to say, we know that today’s theme was already contained in preceding works, in the artistic mythic maps, in the outlines of landscapes which have drawings of animals in them. Now their author compares them to a fable, the perfect literary fiction of the Argentinean writer Borges.

The current work of Jana Kasalová is on the theme of the unity of the human and animal worlds, weighing their relationship on the scales of art, drawing, photography, video and of course even literature, applying and transferring into artistic speech the ideas on the symbiosis and the connectivity of these creatures by the masters of philosophy Deleuze and Guattari, which in their book *A Thousand Plateaus* is described explicitly: “Becomings-animal are neither dreams nor

phantasies. They are perfectly real. But which reality is at issue here? For if becoming animal does not consist in playing animal or imitating an animal, it is clear that the human being does not “really” become an animal any more than the animal “really” becomes something else. Becoming produces nothing other than itself. We fall into a false alternative if we say that you either imitate or you are. What is real is the becoming itself, the block of becoming, not the supposedly fixed

terms through which that which becomes passes.”

What is polemicised here is the traditional concept and antagonism of the human and animal worlds, certainly as far as the idea of the superiority of Man above all Creation. Man is the master of Creation, it is said; without adding that he is also its eternal enemy and destroyer.

Animality has long been considered as something demonic. Not however for reformers. One should not forget St Francis, who created a beneficent world of brothers and sister out of that animality, where there was no soul which would not be excluded. Philosophers of modern times rather saw the imperfection of Man. Friedrich Nietzsche in his cardinal tome *Thus Spake Zarathustra* writes: “Would that ye were perfect—at least as animals! But to animals belongeth innocence.” In the majority however, as an insuperable antithesis, “human” was considered rational and “animal” as irrational.

Art was of course at the same time mixing the rational with the irrational. Beauty, as it were, redeemed this antithesis. Just as the much reworked mythological story *Beauty and the Beast* ends with a kiss, which breaks the magic spell of ugly animality.

For centuries artists have been blurring the border between the human and the animal, letting animals behave as humans and vice versa. They also have resolved possibilities of how to communicate with this other world and how to present it in its whole phenomenal corporeality.

In modern art, Joseph Beuys, at one of his events entitled *How to Explain Paintings to a Dead Hare*, held in his hands a dead animal and whispered things into its ear which nobody could hear. And finally a post-modern cynical postscript: Damien Hirst exhibits a sectioned calf

in formaldehyde as an art exhibit. It portrays animality as powerlessness and nakedness. But the opposite as well: the basis of artistic expression is revelation; i.e. honesty and candour, even to the point of self-destruction. To disturb the tranquility with the help of the unexpected and unprecedented. The philosophic language is clear, it speaks of essential innocence: Animals

look at us and we are naked before their gaze.

Thus in this sense it is possible to perceive the drawings, photography and videos of Jana Kasalová as visualisations of this theme and the conceptual whole, not only as an aestheticisation of a situation which still lies on the periphery of artistic interest.

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