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Alicja Kubicka „Pośpieszny odwrot / A hasty retreat”

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Koordynacja/ Coordination: Joanna Kustra

A Hasty Retreat

Before I encourage any sort of discussion I would like to express a concern that I possess no means to suitably form questions.

And that is, perhaps, the very foundation, the first and foremost reason for my painting.

What interests me most in painting was expressed by Francis Bacon in an interview led by David Sylvester; the artist asked rhetorically: "Can you analyse the difference, in fact, between paint which conveys directly and paint which conveys through illustration? [...] why some paint comes across directly onto the nervous system and other paint tells you the story in a long diatribe through the brain."¹

It is such an inconveniently capacious question, a "how does a joke work?" or "how does visual perception work?" type of question. Bacon admitted openly that he himself did not know entirely how it all works (and I, of course, have no idea either). Though, he did suggest with his artwork that the answer lies *within labour*, or to put it differently, that working is the answer. He also noted that a painting may depict something as well as convey a message - still, these are two very different things.

Loads of great literature on the topic
("- take it easy, I've got my whole life to read it";
"- so actually, there is not enough time.")

Painting - it is just one of the languages one can employ to search for answers. A medium convenient for me, incidentally more so than writing, for instance, or music, or anything else - neither better, nor worse. Whereas an exhibition - it is an opportunity to hear comments and opinions on my work, to see myself (along with paintings lurking from behind my back) reflected by those who have come to see. And with every such situation I get to experience, I learn more about how much one should say concerning what is displayed. The everyday practice of issuing sentences shows that the mind creates synopses similar to space-time tunnels in the universe; a story told many times is synthesized and retains only those elements which are absolutely vital

¹ „[...] Can you analyse the difference, in fact, between paint which conveys directly and paint which conveys through illustration? This is a very, very difficult problem to put into words. It is something to do with instinct. It's a very, very close and difficult thing to know why some paint comes across directly onto the nervous system and other paint tells you the story in a long diatribe through the brain. [...] an illustrational form tells you through the intelligence immediately what the form is about, whereas a non-illustrational form works first upon sensation and slowly leaks back into the fact" – David Sylvester, *The Brutality of Fact: Interviews with Francis Bacon*, wyd. Thames & Hudson, 2019.

for it to convey its sense - like in the case of a fairy tale. It is easiest, I suppose, to talk about art, about anything really, for two people of different nationalities using a language that is foreign to both of them; then the sense is contained within the weight of their clumsy accents, misused descriptors, forgotten vocabulary - in their *inaptness*.

Retreat from what?

Retreat means some sort of escape, backing away - yet here it is rather the result of a situation when after having pursued something alluring one comes close enough to see it in detail, and it occurs somewhat poor, average; one is disappointed and begins the retreat, hoping to remain out of the spotlight, safe to leave unnoticed.

Or: I turn back like one who has just noticed one's keys missing - retreating in the hope of finding the keys on the ground, following the exact same route back.

A military unit can retreat, if the commanding officer clearly sees that there are no chances of winning the battle.

Or like a peasant in a tale - suddenly convinced that he has found himself at a dragon's cave - feels the need to retreat; so he flees hastily back to the village, not even daring to look back.

As an artist I can identify myself with all these figures - the disappointed pursuer, the scatterbrained passer-by, the defeated army, the superstitious peasant. I - the creator - work with utter involvement and solemnity within the space of my paintings - important to me and a few other people I know; I tell tales by the rules of a narrative form, in accordance with its structural elements which had been used long before I was born.

All my fears, the whole despair and desperation, and passion, my victories and my wins, aspirations and boasts, my vanity and mishaps - all of it bares as much importance as any ventures and undertakings in the lives of gnomes described in the illustrated tales by Tony Wolf².

/I - a gnome - notice a giant, the giant notices me, a tragedy is taking place, a TRAGEDY!!; with arms spread open, screaming away, I am making a run for it, I am racing through the endless meadow, I am making a spectacle, lots of noise, children are crying, birds are taking off, badgers are observing concerned [...] / → a subtle rustle of paper, the page has been turned, that is the end of the drama, the next story begins

² Tony Wolf, *The Woodland Folk Meet the Gnomes*, Rand McNally; First American Edition (1984)