

**Władysław Hasior – Daniel Rycharski**

***“I can tell you***

***about me about you”***

State Art Gallery in Sopot

January 27 – May 19, 2024

Curator: Julita Dembowska

Visual identification: Jakub de Barbaro

The exhibition in the National Art Gallery focuses on the PERSON and his/her surrounding world, the “dramatic quality” of which was noted and commented on by Władysław Hasior in his works; also, the world which suffers from the crisis of values, as pointed out by Daniel Rycharski. Thus, on the one hand, we have the narrator who wants to “awaken sensitivity to phenomena that have been degraded by our everyday lives” and tells us that pain, loneliness and guilt have been experienced by human beings for ages. On the other hand, there is the artist who raises issues such as social exclusion, lack of acceptance of otherness, the crisis of traditionally accepted moral norms and concepts, as well as the need for change and for taking the activist approach in face of contemporary issues. Both emphasise their origins, and their voices combine into a single story of human experience.

The exhibition at the State Art Gallery in Sopot is a unique opportunity to juxtapose and take a closer look at the two notable Polish artists. Inviting Daniel Rycharski to dialogue with Hasior was not accidental.

Historian and art critic Łukasz Gorczyca describes Hasior’s artistic activity as “related to the Polish post-war transformation; the way in which socialist modernisation clashes with a very traditional Catholic or post-feudal structure.” Similar voices can be heard in the discussion about Rycharski, although his reality is not the communist regime’s Poland but Poland of the post-transformation period – with expanding cities, but villages pushed to the margins. Hasior stresses that the change started after 1989; yet Poland’s accession to the EU was a far more important milestone and can be regarded as the definitive end of the Polish peasant culture based on small farms working for their own needs. Hasior takes note of new materials and changing aesthetics in Polish homes, while Rycharski wants to draw our attention to the impact that socio-political changes had on the lives of country people.

As it happens, both artists have excellent knowledge of the rituals, symbols and linguistic codes of the Polish village culture. Awareness of their own origins is certainly something they have in common; however, the most important aspect of their art is the focus on the PERSON and his/her fears, pain, weaknesses, but also memory of experiences accumulates throughout his/her life. They both create their art with the viewer in mind and want to contact the viewer and tell him/her specific stories to inspire reflection on the here and now.

Władysław Hasiór said: “For me, the reason for creation, the reason for making the sculpture, painting or music, is very important. (...) In my view, visual art operates primarily on the sense of sight, but its purpose is not to solve theoretical problems such as absolute form, but convey a specific message, specific emotions”; and also: “Signs that are apparent to all have existed among us for a long time. Sacredness is a term marked by religious connotations for many people, but in fact it has a deeply human meaning. An oath is also a sacred matter, just like a heartfelt handshake, or something that obliges one to be faithful and to defend an idea. For me, this is a fundamental term. And sacredness understood in this way lies at the foundation of art in general. It is hard to ignore the fact that we often associate sacred symbols with Christian symbolism: it is a matter of the cultural environment in which we have grown up for a long time. But I am not interested in derivative matter; what I care about are the most human values, the primal human substance contained in these symbols. They are carriers of profound humanistic, philosophical and poetic values.” Hasiór repeatedly explained not only his aesthetic choices, justifying the use of particular materials with a “professional need”, but also their sense. He believed that the purpose of art is to make one think, reflect and thus change reality.

Daniel Rycharski says: “I believe that the cross, if we want to take this symbol seriously, belongs to all those who want to refer to it in order to say something about the world they live in.” In another interview he notes: “If you tell people that avant-garde art can be a prayer, or that a prayer can take a form of avant-garde art, then the conservative part of our society may become more open to this situation. Contemporary art as such is often met with scepticism by the viewers. What we need is to connect our vocabularies”.

The approaches taken by each of the artists reveal the desire to develop a way of communicating with the viewer, of conveying their intentions and reminding him/her of important issues while utilising the patterns imprinted in our culture and something that Hasiór calls “private poetic capital”.

The works presented at the exhibition come from private and institutional collections. In Hasiór’s case, they are mostly assemblages and archival materials from the collection of the Tatra Museum in Zakopane. In addition to the objects borrowed from the gallery and from private individuals, visitors will be able to see new works by Daniel Rycharski created for this particular exhibition.

Co-organiser: The Dr. Tytus Chałubiński Tatra Museum in Zakopane

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