

PÁLMA BABOS

Across time's dimensions

János Probstner

Our time is the age of creating virtual reality. Back in those magnificent periods of time defined by art historians as the different epochs of art – except perhaps during the very last of these periods – whoever wanted to see the vision of “The Last Judgement” surely had to go to a church. Let’s say that one lived in the age of the Renaissance in Rome – he had to go to the Sistine Chapel to take a look at the compelling painting by Michelangelo, so that through the overwhelming experience of catharsis he could face the supposed consequences of his acts and crimes.

Nowadays we do not even have to take a single step, we just sit in our room in front of one of those screens of our computerised world – which at the same time is the most fantastic invention of mankind, even capable of changing the quality of life – and the virtual “last judgement” will take place right before our very eyes, and what is more, it will seem to be absolutely credible.

Society – becoming atomised by the verisimilar omniscience of computers – is more and more deficient in spirituality, in such universal feelings as mutual responsibility – responsibility for each other and for nature sustaining us. Art – offering through catharsis the opportunity to be part of a mystery experienced in spiritual fellowship with a community – because of its undeniable vocation and commitment, is at the same time an attempt to keep these feelings alive. Sometimes this has a positive, sometimes a negative effect.

There are all those works of art that had been created over thousands of years by artists endowed with talents, who used their artistic gifts with passion and arduous work with the aim to

ILLUSTRATION -

- A detail of the exhibition *Idyll* at Gallery Museion No1. - Budapest - 2010





Photo - Mihály Borsos

enrapture their fellow men, but at the same time to warn them, too, of the flight of time, and to remind them of the importance of morality, values, moderation and justice – and it is amazing how these works of art are nowadays being compelled to retreat from the sphere of our attention, from the virtual world presented by computers, the clever machines of our days. Homo sapiens, however, was not born to live in a virtual reality – because he is in possession of consciousness and he has his aim in life.

Why is it so important for me to put these thoughts down in writing, on the occasion of this particular exhibition? Because – for me – the works of Pálma Babos represent a most important and unique feeling of catharsis, which is characteristic of our age; these works are tangible and aesthetic objects of permanent value, which take up the fight against the vision of mankind ceasing to exist, against the dramatic sensation of all man-made things coming to an end.

Ever since I can remember I have been meditating on the whys and wherefores of life, thus I have always been interested

in everything that was looking at things from the perspective of history, let that be literature, film or works of art. This is how I happened to come across the series “Life after People” broadcast late at night on History Channel. It was a horrifying experience, because in the virtual reality created on the screen, it was possible to see how the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel collapses at a time some 250 years after mankind ceased to exist, how the monumental fresco “The Last Judgment” – painted by Michelangelo for eternity – is destroyed and annihilated.

It might be peculiar, yet this sight – apart from the fact that it was terribly shocking – just filled me with horror, I was left there disheartened, hopeless and empty.

I do believe that not even in a virtual world will it ever be possible, I do believe that no built-in “chip” whatsoever will ever be able to create what a work of art created by man represents. Perhaps this is why, after having seen the film, one of the works of Pálma Babos came into my mind: the skyscraper constructed from thin slabs, calling forth the sight of a skeleton, conjuring up the idea of a tower depicting the silent destruction of the imposing engineering structures constructed by the human mind. In this work of art, on the level of imagination, there was enshrined what I have seen, but something else was there, too. In this work the very reality of devastation is presented as the integral part and the harmony of unity – unity that fits into order – thereby giving food for my thoughts in a positive way. It was something

similar to the poem “Une charogne” (Carrion) by Baudelaire, the poetic value of which made it possible for me as a young man to accept the philosophical aspect of the dreadfulness of death.

As far as my perception of the towers of Pálma Babos is concerned, what I see in them is the embodiment of man’s willpower stretched out right up to the skies, man’s wish opposing the finiteness of his existence, his striving after immortality. But I can feel that hidden in these works there is the awareness of fragility and impossibility, the eternally human dimension, the knowledge of finiteness in accordance with the laws of nature, and what is more, even the longing for spiritual survival. These works of art not only depict and visualize, but they carry meaningful content, embody the message of catharsis, force us to take sides, to have our own standpoint, too. Content and form are in perfect harmony.

This is by no means in contradiction with the artist’s own statements about herself, outlined in the booklet published on

ILLUSTRATIONS -

opposite page - **"Tower from the City"** - handbuilt - individual porcelain - 1380°C - 2007 Kecskemét
33 x 38 x 53 cm

right - **"Smoky Tower"** - handbuilt - individual glazed porcelain sculpture - with underglaze colouring - 2006 - 15 x 22 x 43 cm

the occasion of the exhibition. "The comprehensive title of the statues "Memories from the Future" raises the question whether there is a possibility that a theoretically existing event, which, however, never actually took place, can shape the present. This is travelling across time's dimensions."

Furthermore, in my opinion, she entered into the very spirit of art when she grasped the idea that even an object – that has yielded to the power of fire, and started sinking – can carry an important message. These collapsing towers represent at the same time the image of the terrible experience of horror. The negation of the rule of gravitation as it is enshrined in these collapsing towers seems to be unreal. It is a moment that has been captured, a fall frozen solid like ice. The message has the paralysing effect of catharsis. But then it is true that there are such moments in our lives, thus the work of art does carry the essence of reality and truth.

And she also believes: "Fortuity or chance event' – a notion, mathematics has difficulty to deal with, because it does not have rules, therefore no definition of it can be given – particularly hit my imagination." Yet, I think, what really hits her imagination is unconscious consciousness rather than fortuity. Her works are always well-weighed and considered, always reflect collected thoughts, the motifs assigned to be side by side are always very much in accordance with general rules, they depend upon each other, precondition one another, they are complementary to each other, and what is more, they are even of a narrative nature. Like the motifs on her beautiful bowls in the series under the title "Idyll" made in the Herend Porcelain Manufactory – motifs imitating broken surfaces and making the impression of a collage, which at the same time search for a possible way of the rebirth of tradition.

It is the task and also the obligation of the artist, who creates works of art of true and abiding value, to give answers to the issues which are of interest for her and are raised by the age she lives in, by formulating the answer in the way she understands or interprets those issues.

For mankind – now dragging the world with man's selfish activities into a tragedy that might occur in the near future – works of art calling attention and giving food for thought are especially needed. What is needed is works of art of high standard, and of aesthetically excellent quality. This is what the works of Pálma Babos represent for me.

János Probstner is the founding director of the International Ceramics Studio in Kecskemét, Hungary.



Photo - András Bozsó

Pálma Babos

I was born on 6 January 1961. I graduated from the Hungarian College of Applied Arts, my master was Imre Schrammel. Since 1993 I have been working with the De-Forma Group. 2008-2009 I had a job as Art Director at the Herend Porcelain Manufacture Co.Ltd. At present I work as a freelance artist in my own studio in Budaörs, Hungary.

PÁLMA BABOS

*Szamóca köz 1., Budaörs
H-2040 Hungary
Tel. +36 30 376 0383
palma@babospalma.hu
www.babospalma.hu*

