

ends with the early works of Schönberg. His preferences continue into the 20th century, but they concern only those composers who refer to the tendencies of the past. His favourite composers are Wagner, Mahler, Brahms, Richard Strauss, Bruckner, Tanelkowsk», Scriabine, Sibelius, Ketiwicz, Franck and Schmitt and, among the contemporaries. Honegger, Shostakovich, Hindemith, Frank Martin. He also listens to "Pop" music when it is based on a "heavy" rhythm and on "soul". His collection of records is inexhaustible and includes several thousands of items, some of them unique.

The analogy between music and painting constitutes another, though indirect proof of the quasi-abstract (despite the screen of figurative accessories) nature of Beksinski's art. Since the "meaning" does not mean anything, since the artist can change all the elements that go to make up a painting and replace them with others, there is nothing to stop us seeing a red sky as a red spot rather than interpreting it as a city supposedly on fire.

Beksinski derives intense pleasure from the collection of his own paintings. He likes to surround himself with his paintings. He covers the walls of his studio with them as if with wallpaper, he places them in the remaining rooms and hangs them in the hall. After a time he forgets their faults and finds it agreeable to live in a familiar world filled with what he calls "his pets".

Those who search for meaning in the paintings of Beksinski readily charge the artist with a taste for cruelty. Those skinned bodies, skeletons and grave-yards, closed eyes and pierced skulls appear to them as the scenery of a "theatre of horror". They blame the artist for practicing the art of facile shock. And yet the artist is right when he retorts that a dream does not hurt that it is not cruel. He feels a deep revulsion at the sight of misery, humiliation and death: "I hate books and anything concerning the Occupation. With me it is a rule not to watch Japanese films, for I feel sick just at the sight of harakiri," he says in one of his interviews. What he paints and how he does it "results neither from cruelty nor from a desire to impress the public ... For me a painting is something very far from reality ... It conveys an imaginary reality. A dream can be frightening but it is not cruel as a photographic document can be. There are probably people who associate blood in a painting with blood flowing from a wound. Perhaps I'm deviating from the rule, professionally speaking, but I can swear with absolute responsibility for my words that for me it is only the question of well or badly applied paint that dominates my paintings and nothing more."

This declaration is not surprising if one remembers Beksinski's attitude towards photography, which he had once practiced. Even then he did not present reality as it is. He rather created another reality which he filled with elaborate images, more artificial than realistic. Of course painting offers richer possibilities of transforming reality or creating a new one. Hence we should not doubt Beksinski's words when he affirms that the "theatre of horrors" puts on its plays in the imagination of the spectators and has nothing to do with the intentions of the artist. However no one can help it alas, and people will continue to be afraid of dreams, just as they will always be terrified by images of death, whether they see it in photographs of dead soldiers or in the form of a red stain on a stretched canvas. The battle against "literary" interpretations of Beksinski's paintings is often reminiscent of Don Quixote tilting against windmills.

It is true that his art contains an atmosphere of impending death, of extreme moments, the lambency of states close to destruction .. Something akin to a subcutaneous cancer gnaws the landscape, the people and the bodies. Hence Beksinski's tendency towards modernism and secession is not surprising. The decadence expressed in the paintings of Moreau, Beardsley or Boudin is in a way close to the spirit of his creations.

Nevertheless, Beksinski is that rare thing, a remarkably lucid man. He is conscious of the dangers of a pure and simple return to the