

Finally let us say what is obvious: the work of this painter, so rich, fascinating and profound, whose perfection and visions are at times breathtaking, is made up of anxieties, loneliness and the consciousness of nonentity. For when someone has the courage to enter the depths of existence where we are haunted by phantoms, he will find before him the images of Plenitude and Emptiness. Few people are given access to this position. It exists beyond time and space, for it only appears in the place and at the moment that it chooses for its confidants. To these few Bekinski belongs.

He is in the habit of telling two stories with a similar gist. One is taken from "Don Quixote", the other from Kafka's "Trial". In the first Don Quixote makes a cardboard helmet and strikes it with his sword to test its resistance. Of course the helmet falls to pieces. The knight never tests his helmet again. The second story is the one which the priest tells to Josef K. in the famous scene at the end of the "Trial". It is about a man who waits at the gates of the Law and of the guardian who prevents him from entering. When the man dies after waiting, all his life in vain, he learns that this gate was meant for him alone, and that now it will be forever closed. These two stories have the same moral. They describe the fragility of life and the power of death. They represent the illusion man nourishes about his own existence. Since Nothingness awaits us behind every door and life is but a Great Waiting Room, an Unfulfilled Hope, all that remains for us to do is to patiently wait before the gates of the Law until death comes, and to produce useless things like cardboard helmets. Hence to create art is to conceal the horror of death, by making a Beautiful Mask which keeps the artist from falling into madness.

"Painting keeps me enclosed in a well-ordered zone of obvious affairs. The consciousness that all I do is of no importance, that I could just as well raise parrots or lie down and stare at the ceiling, does not hinder me in my daily efforts to become more perfect, it does not stop me being irritated when someone damages one of my paintings, and it does not prevent me constructing solid frames which will make my painting last. ...Or making cardboard helmets."

Knowing that the feeling of absurdity and of nothingness is always present in the consciousness of the painter, no one will be surprised at what he paints. For he only paints what the Other World represents in This World. If man is submerged in nothingness, as Sartre wrote, and if women give birth on tombstones, as Beckett put it, then it all comes down to one thing: One should give birth on tombstones at least for the sake of having something to put into those tombs.

by Tadeusz Nyczek
(Adapted by Piotr Dmochowski)