

MRB / Miloš Rai Bazovský

Exhibited Artists: Miroir Noir (Miloš Kopták & Rai Escalé), Miloš Alexander Bazovský

Curator: Ivana Moncoľová

30. 1. – 25. 3. 2020

MRB / Miloš Rai Bazovský is a series of paintings on canvas which capture the changing landscape as time passes. The inspiration for the artistic duo Miloš Kopták & Rai Escalé (Miroir Noir) lies in the drawings by the late Slovak modernist Miloš Alexander Bazovský (1899 – 1968). They were freely inspired by Bazovský's drawings which reflected the gradually changing appearance of the landscape in the 1930s and the post-war land of 20th century Slovakia with its electrification and deforestation. MRB is the abbreviation used for the three artists M (Miloš), R (Rai), B (Bazovský) and is a reference to Bazovský's signature, which he often gave as the abbreviation of his whole name, M.A.B. (Miloš Alexander Bazovský).

In the current series exhibited in the Turiec Gallery in Martin, they present artworks created between 2017 and 2018. The latter are freely inspired by drawings of the Slovak painter Miloš A. Bazovský which can be found in the collections of Slovak museums and are not often presented in the context of Bazovský's work.

The principal theme of the MRB series, inspired by the drawings of painter Miloš Alexander Bazovský, is the landscape. While the source of inspiration is mainly Bazovský's monochrome drawings, the result is painting on canvas by Miloš Kopták and Rai Escalé. However, the motivation behind their creation is not primarily to quote, but rather to initiate further work. The contemplation of Bazovský's work is respectful, an attempt to complete the initiating drawing as a painting and give it a contemporary touch, whilst fully respecting Bazovský; to repeat the prism of a landscape changing through industrialisation, globalisation, that is the moment which was present at Bazovský's time as well as at the time of Miroir Noir's (Miloš Kopták and Rai Escalé) work.

Miroir Noir expresses a relationship to the landscape and to the process of painting itself. They paint what they are and the painting is part of their self-discovery, not only from the aspect of the cooperation between two artists, but also from the aspect of the application of paint, working with speed and in time, deciding, experimenting with the opportunities given by dark colouring, a fascination with the technique of painting to which the landscape theme is exceptionally suited and more relaxed. Bazovský's original study drawings, stripped of his traditional dark, earthy colours, reduced to a quick outline, a sketch which was not made into a painting, was a sufficiently strong impulse for the Miroir Noir couple to capitalise on the gesture of painting. The precision of the line, with the opportunity to reflect on their own paintings, independently of Bazovský's original work and colour, enabled them to use their own approaches to dark aesthetics, the painting technique, and the landscape's thematic shift towards the present day.

Miroir Noir look at landscape painting as did the French painter Gustave Courbet in the nineteenth century, when he gained for it recognition as a genre of equal value and a separate branch of painting (until his work and the presentation of his works as landscapes, it had held a low value in society). By gaining an equal status for the landscape genre, its painting was confirmed and accepted as an artist's technical discovery and experimentation, work with pastose pigments, urgent work with the surface texture which help construct an

image with a feeling for expression, spontaneity and drama, the negligence of the stroke as a strategy for the image's overall impression and a post-punk aesthetic tendency. In this sense, the landscape is perceived as the artistic work of painters, as a credible and authentic image of the person/ artist.

Miroir Noir is an artistic cooperation between the Slovak painter and illustrator Miloš Kopták (1969) and the Catalan artist Rai Escalé (1964). Their joint paintings are truly created together in Bratislava or Barcelona, where they meet at painters' retreats. After researching a joint theme, they each work on a different picture in one place; while they are working, they exchange their works and correct, criticise and check each other. As they say themselves, they also often hate each other when they work together, but it is during these moments of friction that perhaps their best works are born. During more than ten years of cooperation, they have learnt to communicate their joint theme as well as compromising with their artist's ego to the benefit of the final work. They build their themes together, and since they do not have a shared historical background of adolescence and life, they each bring something different: in their personal themes, in political themes, in the tradition of art history. For this reason, it is pleasing that the attention of the Catalan artist Rai Escalé was caught by the drawings left behind by Miloš A. Bazovský, even though he had had no information about them until the creation of this exhibition. When they exhibited in the Blokker gallery in Madrid, the El País daily newspaper devoted a long, two-page article to them, entitled "Baroque punk for art and four hands", which attracted visitors to the exhibition, as well as collectors from further afield (the newspaper is published in all Spanish-speaking countries).

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Ivana Moncoľová