
Anna Markowska / "The epoch has ended" – Czapski regarding new Polish painting in the 1980s

"Save painting!" – Czapski wrote in a rather dramatic manner to Rafał Jabłonka in 1985, after he had seen Dwurnik's pictures at the Biennale de Paris. In his letter to the well-known *marchand* he expressed also his belief that the epoch of struggle for the so-called painterly painting (named by Czapski "*peinture peinture*") ended. For Czapski it is a finished period of Cézanne and the time of École de Paris.

Despite Czapski's dramatic lamentation, the thesis I am about to submit is surely of a conciliatory (though slightly provocative) character: Czapski is quite close to Dwurnik after all. They are both Nikifor's great admirers, they both combine text with image, they sometimes come up with a similar mood in their paintings with often enough same topics and last but not least, they both search for localness of some kind. Furthermore, Czapski makes corrections in Dwurnik's works in a similar way he was once corrected by the Kapists. Still the Parisian artist does not paint following the Kapist rules, he even chooses other subjects: tired people on the metro, elderly, fat and ugly women over a wine glass; he captures scenes in a café, a gallery or a backyard truly, deeply and in an existential way; he paints baggage trolleys, bar interiors, local trains with weary passengers. Therefore, we may present a thesis that old Czapski, paradoxically, could have become a master for young generations of Polish painters, if he did not give rise to a strong – but not necessarily sincere when we confront it with the painting from Maisons-Laffitte – indignation. As it was rather Czapski's subliming belief what did not appeal to the young Polish painters: for them it was not the road to salvation but to restrictions and lack of freedom. What Czapski has in common with the youth it is foremost his talent know-how. Hence it is probably not art itself but this unbearable, uncritical aura around his painting what made the young artists turn their backs from him. And one of the most talented painters of the 1980s, Marek Sobczyk, opposed to an outburst of admiration with his bitter comment: "It's not being brave to paint one's whole life in an undefined style of the first five or fifteen years of our century". Dwurnik – as an artist in a generation gap between the debutants of the 1980s and the old Kapist – seems to be in this approach a rejected *ego* of Czapski. They do not share the world views: what is to be done with the reality, to which they are both so extremely sensitive. Czapski wants to put a spell on it at any price: as he knows that life in the repelled world is corroded by inanity. Still living in the enchanted world – though it has a sense deriving from the hierarchy of belief – is acutely hurting: as we never grow up to reach the ideal.

Confrontation between Czapski and Dwurnik is therefore fundamental. In view of it, it is worth posing a question about Modernist preparation of Czapski's painting legacy: does it really serve the artist, as – quite possibly, Czapski's fantastic *Diaries*, which combine text and image breezily, are more inspiring visually than his canvases, unfortunately it is difficult to show *Diaries* in a Modernist white cube. Perhaps another glimpse at Czapski, free from any Modernist conditioning, is – paradoxically – a chance to have a look at Czapski as a totally different artist.