
Adam Organisty / Still-life at the Academy of Fine Arts in Krakow today

The paper refers to an essay by Józef Czapski dedicated to still-life (*Rzeczy nieżywe i bez ruchu / Unanimated and motionless things*), in which he discusses an exhibition and a book by Charles Sterling *Still Life Painting. From Antiquity to the 20th Century*, and enthuses at the same time over a chance of painting this “ideal motif”, which appears to be for him just a disinterested painterly exercise. The purport of the text evokes recommendations of the members of Komitet Paryski [Parisian Committee], of which Czapski was a co-founder. Is his artistic attitude and to what extent still present in the milieu, in which this outstanding author was shaping his artistic views? Is it still popular among pedagogues and students of the Academy of Fine Arts in Krakow? Is it possible to trace references to the legacy of Krakow Colourism in the paintings by Grzegorz Bednarski, Jarosław Kawiński, Roman Łaciak, Janusz Matuszewski, Mirosław Sikorski, Edyta Sobieraj or Zbigniew Sprycha? First of all the alumni of the Colourist ateliers, run years ago by Professors Jan Szancenbach (1928–1998) and Juliusz Joniak (b. 1925), have been asked this question. Another issue is a general question: what is the aim of painting still-lives today?

The search for senses, contemplativeness or an attempt at approaching the reality by means of painting argue with the role anticipated for a still-life by the Colourists. The paintings by the contemporary artists from Krakow seem to be closer to Czapski’s reflection written down in his books than still-lives painted by him. These latter ones appear to be “solutions” of compositional values of a picture or seem to be sketchy and quick painted, hence it is difficult to see symbolic or contemplative character in them. What seems to be close to the Polish Colourists’ attitude is the fact that not all of the present Krakow pedagogues replied to the question in writing. Actually, the majority of the artists chose to present their paintings. Undoubtedly they outstand with their sophisticated technique (*métier*), sensitivity to the sound of colours, so important for the national painting legacy.

Moreover, the paper has been supposed to refer to a still-life at the Academy “today”, as it has been expressed in the title. It has turned out that this avant-garde paradigm has no significance in painting of the article’s main characters. The majority of their pictures have been produced in cycles for at least a few years. Therefore, the word “today” included in the title, should be understood as a long period of arduous work over a still-life.