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Review of artistic, creative and teaching achievements
and the doctoral dissertation of Mr. Karol Krukowski
in connection with the procedure of activities in the doctoral process
in the field of fine arts, in the discipline of fine arts and art conservation
conducted by the Eugeniusz Geppert Academy of Fine Arts in Wrocław

Karol Krukowski, in his dissertation entitled *Pillory. Photography as the main structural element of the picture book* presents a perspective of person who had been graduate in field of photography in:

- The AFA College of Photography, Wrocław (Bachelor's degree)
- The Art Institute of University of Zielona Góra (Master's degree)
- University of Arts in Poznań (Teaching course).

Author is a versatile practitioner in the field of the medium of photography, the author of numerous publications and photographic projects; organizer of artistic activities as well as educator and lecturer (since 2004). He has done so far many exhibitions and art publications.

He is also a laureate of several awards and scholarships, including: Scholarship of the Lower Silesian Voivodeship and the Scholarship of the Minister of Culture and National Heritage.

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“Photography is our exorcism. Primitive society had its masks, while the bourgeois society had its mirrors. We have our pictures. „ (J. Baudrillard)

The book is a permanent material record of human thought, located on many pages, which testifies to the cultural heritage of man as an individual and as a community -a civilization.

The outer shape of the book is a marriage of book art and craftsmanship. An individual approach to the project at the level of aesthetic, material and technical dimensions is aimed at achieving stylistic consistency in terms of form and content. As a result, a beautiful and unique facility is created, an elite monument characterized by noble aesthetics.

Artist's book is a concept that was first used by Stefan Klim. This kind of book contains a specific type of narrative and is not a linear catalog of works. It combines a design work, an original statement, the effect of free expression.

As a form of a work and an object, a book is the result of a multi-stage process of creation, in which the author has direct control at the stage of design, selection of materials for printing and binding.

The art book very often questions the traditional assumptions and ways of making a classic book. As Dieter Roth says - in this case takes place "deconstruction of the classic form of the book". First of all, it is about playing, having fun, experimenting with content, form, structure and materials.

An art book is a space, a map, an area of freedom in showing the relationship between images and text. The format and layout of the book, as well as the mutual relations between the image and text, make it possible for the book to become a tool for the creative expression of the authors.

The format of the book, the specific order and the arrangement of the photos on the page, the specific sequence of images, the differentiation of the way of presentation and the size of the images, all this allows you to influence the relationship between individual images and text.

For many decades, various catalogs, albums, portfolios, photo books and picture books have been created expanded the language of visual communication.

As examples of more important photographic publications that built a new quality by constructing a visual narrative based on the medium of photography, one can mention the positions of such authors as: Anna Atkins, William Fox Talbot, Laszlo Moholy-Nagy, Shohachi Kimura, Yoshikazu Suzuki, William Klein, Robert Frank, Bill Brandt, Ed Ruscha, Eikoh Hosoe and Andy Warhol.

Nowadays, art books find their place in museum collections, private collections, are the subject of research in academic centers and as an important element of art festivals and fairs.

How does the doctoral thesis of Karol Krukowski fit into the above landscape?

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In his work author attempts to create a photographic narrative suspended between a document and a fiction, with references to the historical place and past events. He studies the relations between history and the present, image and text.

The subject of the study is the emblematic building located on the market square in Wrocław - the pillory. A place that has witnessed countless events throughout history.

Author refers to the historical context of this special place and builds his narrative in its shadows and lights.

Images (photographs) and text (words) mutually reinforce the message, complement and complete each other. They constitute an interesting example of symbiosis, intensify the narrative set in the context of this historical place filtered by sensitivity and present the author's perspective at the beginning of the third decade of the 21st Century.

The novelty aspect of this work is carried out on several levels and planes. The author has attempted to confront the medium of photography and text, and presents the narrative in the form of a publication. In this way, he took the art of photographic image and words to new level.

As a consequence of many photo sessions, characteristic and original shots of the main theme of the dissertation - the pillory in the city of Wrocław were created.

In various photographic conventions (documentary, reportage, street, staged photography) consistently implemented at different times of the year, day and night, during various events, human presence and his absence.

With great curiosity, he carefully observes, carries out the process of analysis and synthesis of the main theme of his work using the medium of image and word.

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Doctoral thesis - the level of artistic and theoretical processing

Practical work

As part of the practical work, Karol Krukowski has created an art book - picture book in the format 30 x 30 cm. The book is 40 pages long and has a hard cover.

The black and white photographs were made with the use of an analog technique (chemical, silver photography). They have the format of a lying rectangle, are arranged in the form of spreads, the text is displayed in white fields, sometimes on the right and sometimes on the left side of the photo. In the picture book convention, the author tries to combine literary text with a photographic image. By using photography in a publication, in the context of the book's medium, it creates a visual illustration of the plot - a synthetic narrative expressed in a poetic form.

In his search, the author engages in a dialogue with the history, place and events having a broad historical context. Reminiscences of past facts as well as fiction and myths inspire him to reread, remix and create a new work. The work that is the subject of the dissertation, in the context specified by the author, can be treated artistically and creatively as subjective, original and unique.

It is an expressive artifact of the creation of a conscious and shaped creator. It is a visually elaborate vision referring to a special place in the landscape of the city of Wrocław. In this way, a poetic synthesis of image and word inspired by the pillory of Wrocław was created in the form of a book. The technique used in this project (analogue, chemical, silver photography) is a technique based on the photosensitivity of silver salts, which is characterized by high tonal quality and characteristic grain. It emphasizes such characteristic features as: the dexterity of the process and its physicality, the high degree of complexity and awareness of the workshop, the organic nature of the photosensitive matter, the physicality and durability of the image, uniqueness and elitism.

All these features are less and less consistent with the surrounding reality and the process of creating a photographic image of contemporary culture, which should be particularly emphasized and appreciated.

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Theoretical work

The layout of the dissertation is clear. The theoretical work consists of 75 pages and consists of 14 parts (Before, So far, Picture books, Genius loci, At the sources, Plague, Inspiration; Pillory, Wrocław pillory, Image and text, Pure photography and photographic conventions, Assumptions of implementation; Photographs that I invented, That is, About the staging; Idea and realization, After).

The author used compact publications as well as articles and works located on websites - over 30 books and internet sources in total. He used 61 footnotes, used 26 illustrations, thus completing the textual narrative.

In his work, author describes the issues of the process of creating an author's photographic publication with text. He characterizes the various stages of the process of creating, inspiration, searching for a theme, narrative method and proper relations between the image and the text. He discusses issues related to the conceptual process and the final process of combining photographic and textual material.

Remarks

Theoretical work raises some of my doubts. Conversations and interviews, other people's monologues constitute a significant part of the written work.

A significant part of the theoretical work is occupied by the author's conversations with other people: conversation 1 with Adam Sobota - pages 30-38, conversation 2 with Beata Rojek - pages 44-55, interview 3 with Krzysztof Solarewicz - pages 56-63.

In this case, they are not treated as an annex to the main part of the work, as is customary in academic studies. In this case, these conversations constitute the mainstream narrative of the dissertation.

In addition, I miss the development of a proper narrative deepening the topic of the dissertation - Pillory. Photography as the main structural element of the picture book.

The author hardly examines the broader and more general context and relationship of the medium of photography with the form of publication, various types of books, albums and works by different authors.

My personal dissatisfaction is caused by the lack of an analysis of examples of works by selected authors and the strategies used in the dissertation.

A doctoral dissertation should be a pretext for this type of extended research.

The author focuses mainly on his work, previously implemented projects, he refers to his previous projects and the work that is the subject of his doctorate. He creates a kind of making of his artistic work.

Summary

Comments on the theoretical part do not affect the overall - high value of the doctoral dissertation as a whole.

Practical work presents a high level of publication, an art book made of photographs and text.

I would like to stress that in a world filled with various media, giving us an excess of impressions, the author found a niche for himself in this complicated situation, which he successfully filled in his original way.

Conclusion

I confirm that the doctoral dissertation of Mr. Karol Krukowski - *Pillory. Photography as the main structural element of the picture book* is a description of the work and presents an original solution to an artistic problem. The selection and application of the literature on the subject are appropriate and sufficient.

The candidate demonstrates sufficient theoretical knowledge, conceptual workshop and great practical competences, as well as has a number of activities as an author, curator and popularizer in the field of photography.

The doctoral dissertation and the thesis prepared by Mr. Karol Krukowski, are characterized by a good knowledge of the subject, both on the theoretical and, above all, practical level.

The creative and artistic achievements, the doctoral dissertation and the work meet the conditions set out in Art. 13 sec. 1 of the Act on academic degrees and the academic title as well as on degrees and title in the field of art (as amended).

I hereby support the application to award Mr. Karol Krukowski with a PhD degree in fine arts in the discipline of fine arts and art conservation.



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