



Art & Business June 2006

Adverts and Angels

Drawing inspiration from advertisements as well as the works of great predecessors like Martini, Fouquet and Velzaquez she is one of the most interesting painters of the new generation.

Ewa Białeczka's angels have escaped from the panels of Simone Martini and his contemporaries, the medieval Siennese masters. Her Madonnas and Marys are close relatives of Agnes Sorel, the mistress of King Charles VII, depicted by Jean Fouquet in *Madonna and Child*. Białeczka borrows from the French master not only the model's beauty and haughtiness but also the hosts of blue and purple angels surrounding her throne. The hieratism of Białeczka's paintings originates from Byzantine painting as well as its Siennese descendant. Where did such kinship come from? From Jerzy Nowosielski's studio at Cracow Academy of Fine Arts, which she graduated from. At first sight, the similarities between her and her tutor's works are invisible. However, when examined more closely, they reveal common sources of inspiration.

Her works are restrained, the depicted characters seem vulnerable and ethereal. They have slightly slanting eyes and curved mouths, as if they were moody or sleepy. Tender lines mark the draperies of their robes adding to their exceptional grace. Also from Siena Białeczka draws her decorativeness and attention to detail. Just as Panel painting her works are not concerned with space. Although she does not paint the background gold, she fills it with a uniform colour highlighting the importance of the presented characters as in the altarpieces she takes after. Her palette is cool, ascetic, often monochromatic, but the colour also carries a symbolic meaning.

Białeczka draws on the many centuries of cultural and artistic heritage both in formal terms and thematic aspects. She depicts the fall of Icarus or the abduction of Europe, and her interpretation of Velasquez's *Las Meninas* points not only to its original but also to the works of other artists who have taken on this theme, such as Tadeusz Kantor.

Białeczka's paintings astonish with their power of expression. The artist emphasizes that for her the most important aspect are emotions - hence the search of an adequate form of expressing them. Her latest series *Poparts* evokes them through multiplication, which orders the form precisely, geometrizes the space and adds a specific rhythm to the canvas but does not diminish their decorative aspects.

The characters in Białeczka's works are often depicted with comic strip speech bubbles. The artist associates them with the ever present world of media and advertising. She treats the works *TOP SECRET* and *re-RESERVED* as her own comment on commercialized reality. She admits that the advertisements imply the creation of n new works. At the same time, she refers to the speech bubbles with the term "banderoles" which strongly associated with medieval art, where saints, martyrs, and prophets communicated with the profanum by inscriptions or banderoles. Indeed, even while transforming something so contemporary as an advertisement, Białeczka subconsciously reaches for traditional forms, motives, and associations.

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