

*Everything that was directly lived has moved away into a representation.*¹
Guy Debord, *The Society of the Spectacle*

Grafis is an exhibition that goes into perfect symbiosis with the architecture of the XX1 gallery. Anna Klimczak and Agnieszka Rożnowska used the massive windows overlooking the street and incorporated them into the project space. Thereby it became a formal and narrative part of the exhibition. Two artists from Poznań used, among other things, windows that mediate between the outside and the inside, and exploited them as a medium of statement about the contemporary forms of communication.

The composition of *Grafis* has two symmetrical parts. Their relations with each other are complicated. On the formal level, the artists created a sharp contrast (open vs. closed, bright vs. dark, real vs. projected). Whereas, on the narrative level, the works complete each other perfectly, creating a consistent and harmonious dialogue.

Rożnowska's graphics, contrasting with the white cube of the gallery, loom in the windows even on the pavement in front of the gallery. Seemingly, they are accessible even from the outside but in reality, even at close range, they do not reveal the true meaning of the labyrinthine forms. The strategy chosen by the artist can be compared to one described by George Simmel: "(...) enormously enhances her attractiveness if she shows her consent as an almost immediate possibility but is ultimately not serious about it. Her behavior swings back and forth between "yes" and "no" without stopping at either. She playfully exhibits the pure and simple form of erotic decisions and manages to embody their polar opposites in a perfectly consistent behavior: its decisive, well- understood content, that would commit her to one of the two opposites, does not even enter."² Exposing works in a way that they are (seemingly) easily accessible to the eye is deliberate. Rożnowska plays with the convention of Walter Benjamin's flaneur, who watches life through the windows of shopping arcades. Contemporary communication is based on mediation, careful guarding of the access to the "source," which might not even exist. The Taken out of context series successfully defies the carefree gaze of the spectator, who is confused by the information chaos. The artist herself considers the relations with her art to be "an act of choice", resignation from all the subplots. There is only the viewer and the work. When the viewer, tempted all around, manages to separate themselves from the world and focus on the graphics, they can finally see the thing, which was so disturbing only a while ago - a tangle of white, recurrent lines and unreadable dark pictograms tiring the mind of the consumer, who is used to a simple and thoughtless message of the contemporary culture. Rożnowska's works are a symbol of modern culture made of numerous overlapping

¹ Guy Debord, *The Society of the Spectacle*, 1967

² George Simmel, *Sociology*, 1964

layers. Although they overlap, they can not exist separately. In spite of the apparent chaos, the arrangements created by the artists also have the inner harmony of composition, they are internally complete. The black window frames precisely correspond to the contours of her works. They are like palimpsests - words removed from the parchment that come back to life under the influence of light. The seemingly abstract forms, after close examination, start to compose in sewing patterns of clothes. The further into the gallery, the more intense the composition and the more unclear the message becomes. Something that surrounds us every day changes into a complicated arabesque of geometrical forms in Roźnowska's works. One of the basic functions of clothing is communicating the owner's identity, his/her social and material status. Clothes are our second skin. Roźnowska "performed the autopsy" - she eviscerated them from their owner's identity, subjected to analysis. Used in the Taken out of context series they are... torn out of context. The last stadium resembles a drawing of a schizophrenic who compulsively writes down the forms he remembers. The bright, white gallery space, where the precisely drawn shapes are presented, has something in common with the clinical cleanliness of the doctor's office.

Anna Klimczak chose an exact opposite strategy. The essence of her work is a projection of a performance documentation on a TV screen. The artist hid it well from the sight of the passers-by. What Roźnowska exposed to the voyeuristic glances of people looking into the gallery, Klimczak closed in a box in an aviary, which was placed in the gallery space. This colorful, moving picture looks there like a bird imprisoned in a cage. This light, almost openwork construction reminds of the architecture of Japan. The artist has often traveled to that country and seems to be well aware of its laws of proxemics. The arranged structure creates the "space between" rather than serves some particular utilitarian goals. "In Japan people perceive the space entirely differently. When we talk and think about the space, we usually think about an empty spot between the objects. In the West, people have learnt to perceive and react to arrangements of objects and to treat the space as basically *empty*. Japanese approach contrasts with ours - they are used to attach significance to spaces - the spaces are perceived with their shapes and structures, they are defined as the *ma*."³

Klimczak's installation is an emanation of *ma*, the space between, divided into the pavement level separated by glass, the interior of the gallery surrounding the object and its heart, where the work is projected. What Roźnowska showed in her graphics and drawings, Klimczak built in the XX1 space. Reaching the essence of the work requires concentration, intensive intellectual work and hacking through the next initiation phases. A girl in a dark Japanese forest (2008) is a documentation of a performance made several years ago in Japan. We see photos of a female showing pieces of paper with single words, written on them, to a public gathered behind the glass of a big window. The words do not compose into a logical meaning. They are pieces of the whole taken out of context.

³ Edward T. Hall, *The Hidden Dimension*, 1966

The viewer is concentrated on a girl contrasting with the rich greenery but there is no meaning behind it. The viewer avid for “hard facts” will get disappointed. Klimczak gradually builds up the tension, guides us through the next levels of the mystery hidden in the Japanese house, only to leave the spectator without an answer. Who is the person between the trees? What is she trying to tell us? Anna Klimczak builds a chinese box story that can never reach its end. Like in the Baudrillard’s *Seduction*, she tempts and makes promises but does not keep any of them.

The perception of the modern culture as a structure of overlapping layers and longing for the direct communication constitute a clasp fastening both works together. The simple, pictograph forms of Roźnowska and the luxuriant story of Klimczak are a critical comment on the information noise. The situation of a viewer confronted with this project is easiest to describe using Italo Calvino’s words. Even he seems to be helpless: I have yet to explain what part the indirect imaginary has in this gulf of the fantastic, by which I mean the images supplied by culture, whether this be mass culture or any other kind of tradition. This leads to another question: What will be the future of the individual imagination in what is usually called the “civilization of the image”? Will the power of evoking images of things that are not here continue to develop in a human race increasingly inundated by a flood of prefabricated images? (...) The memory is littered with bits and pieces of images, like a rubbish dump, and it is more and more unlikely that any one from among so many will succeed in standing out.⁴

⁴ Italo Calvino, *Six Memos for the Next Millennium*, 1988