

Justyna Napiórkowska, gallerist, „Secrets of Wood”, ARTeon/ Recommendations, 11/2004. Translation from Polish to English by Maria Apanowicz.

Secrets of Wood

The way of life and art has led Jan de Weryha-Wysoczański along the Hansa route. From Gdańsk, where he studied in 1970-1976 at the Sculpture Department of Fine Arts Academy, we went to Hamburg. This route was once covered by ships carrying wood from the Polish noblemen republic to the west of Europe. Wood has appeared to be both the fetish and a basic object of artistic pursuits of this contemporary sculptor. In October his works could be seen in Orońsko and in the Wilson Shaft Gallery in Katowice. To see Jan de Weryha-Wysoczański's works is not enough. You should also touch them, stroke the intricate wooden constructions. The artist first conducts de-construction so that later on in the peace and quiet of his Hamburg studio he could build new wooden forms, having charred, scorched, planed particular elements. In this way, huge wooden spatial tablets are made. They seem to be crude, but in fact they are subtle and refined. The smoothness of the wooden surfaces neighbours with some roughness, there begin to reveal the shades of colour and the subtle play of colours of the combined pieces of wood. The wooden blocks are arranged into various configurations. Initially, a viewer may wonder on the semantics of the wooden cromlech. But it is not the meaning that matters here, but the mysterious and ephemeral moment of 'a certain collaboration' when the artist and nature from which he draws, co-operate during the creative process. Nature provides the material – crude and beautiful in its crudity, and an artist – using a chisel, axe or burner – processes this material just like a jeweller revealing the brilliant beauty of the diamond. Weryha uncovers the secrets of wood inherent in the richness of colours of varnish and the arrangement of scraps. During the careful arrangement of the wooden material he impresses his stamp on it, individualizes and refines it – transforming it into a work of art. Is this minimalism? No. Conceptualism? Of course not. De Weryha-Wysoczański's art is far beyond these definitions, too sterile and too limiting for it. This art is on the one hand too primitive, and on the other hand – perverse and sophisticated, it becomes the artist's homage to nature, somewhere on the frontier of aesthetics and religion.

Justyna Napiórkowska

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