

Jarosław Lubiak: Tics of Reality

Agnieszka Kalinowska sets her focus on details, details that may perhaps appear irrelevant or not entirely worthy of attention. This may be a result of the negligible character of the locations in which her subjects are set or the types of people she refers to in her works.

The inconspicuous details Kalinowska calls attention to, as she draws them out and processes them through her individual practice, ultimately demonstrates how the most stirring tics of reality can dwell in the most unexpected situations.

The hands of the artist transform the details of reality into tics, revealing their almost incidental and intrusive character. This is what happens when a strand of hay or a string becomes a material used to manifest details from the world around her (boarded-up windows, slabs of eternit, barriers and fences, extinguished neon signs). Other times the artist creates situations through films, in which slight gestures, expressions and seemingly banal statements from her protagonists reveal significant aspects of the mechanisms of social interaction (such as in *Well...that is what everybody thinks about us*, 2005, and *Doormen*, 2007).

At the same time the work of Agnieszka Kalinowska is not limited to picking up and exposing these details. It's not just about presenting the symptoms as that would be limited to symptomology – intriguing perhaps, but vacuous still. Her work is about much more – about what can best be described through a paradoxical concept: the hermeneutics of symptoms. Along with these revelations comes a striving to understand, a delving into the mechanisms that produce these particular tics within reality, and even a sense of empathy for these issues and the people who fall prey to these social mechanisms. The artist herself speaks of places and people that belong to no one.

Her most recent film *Tłumik* (*Silencer*, 2011) is an example of the hermeneutics of symptoms. Kalinowska invited young people – two young women and two young men – who reside in centres for behavioural rehabilitation or resocialisation. The film isn't based on any screenplay, the artist met with her subjects and spoke with them, yet she also set up certain situations, such as inviting these young people to a fancy restaurant where they were left to carry on a banal and rather forced chat. Shifting her subjects from the rigors of the everyday into circumstances that are seemingly more comforting – and yet proving otherwise – brings about the sorts of details that later prove substantial. In the process of editing the film, the artist provides certain ways of interpreting these symptoms.

The hermeneutic process is conducted at two points: first during the preparations prior to filming – in conversation with her subjects and establishing a rapport with them – and then at the point of editing the material, composing it into a film that is to serve as a narrative of ways in which a subject functions within the mechanisms of the social construct. The incisive understanding achieved by Kalinowska is possible through her empathy for her protagonists, sensitivity for their experience in the situation they find themselves in (both in their everyday lives and, in particular, at the restaurant). Thanks to this sensitivity, significant details are revealed.

An extension (albeit a slightly subversive one) of this hermeneutic processing of symptoms is a series of workshops organised by the artist. Kalinowska founds their effectiveness on a staging that is based on dressing her participants up in white suits, covering up even their faces. Once again her subjects are young people from youth detention and rehabilitation centres, individuals who are faced with a certain level of rigour on a daily basis. Masking their individualism is meant to reveal certain symptoms, liberating gestures and involuntary responses to the degree that leads to a contraction with regard to the controls set by an external will. This allows for an experimental survey of how the tics of reality can easily slip out of the grips that control them.

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