



Paweł Książek



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Poelzig VS. Poelzig

front and back cover: *Poelzig VS. Poelzig 06*, 2010, oil on canvas 150x150 cm

third page: *The Architect*, 2010, c-prints, 20x25 cm

Paweł Książek's project *Poelzig VS. Poelzig* is the second series following *Silent Utopia*, which is based on the ideas connecting cinema produced during the inter war years and modernist architecture. His goal is to track the connections between cinema and reality and the discovery of modernism's forgotten traces.

The starting point for the project *Poelzig VS. Poelzig* is the horror film *Black Cat* (1934) directed by Edgar Ulmer and the work of one of Germany's famous architects, Hans Poelzig. The inspiration for the project is the similarity of Hans Poelzig's name and that of the central character of the film *Black Cat* – Hjalmar Poelzig – which is played by the brilliant actor Boris Karloff. This similarity is not coincidental. The film *Black Cat* is a loose interpretation of the novel by Edgar Allan Poe with the same name. Whilst on their honeymoon in Hungary, a newly married couple visit a modernist villa built and owned by the devil-like Austrian architect, Hjalmar Poelzig. Behind the modernist façade the owner hides a dark secret and a sexual obsession: he celebrates occult rituals and in the basement he hides a collection of beautiful women's bodies that appear to float in glass coffins. The architecture plays a key role in the film. The inspiration for the brilliant scenography was the Bauhaus school building, and we can easily find echoes of Le Corbusier's projects (*Villa Savoy*) or Hans Poelzig's villas in *Weissenhofsiedlung, Stuttgart* (1927) there too.

For Paweł Książek the architecture connects these two worlds – the fictive (film) and the real – together, and most significantly, becomes the point of convergence. Based on archival photographs and films he finds shared motifs, which he in turn connects in collage format and brings to the canvas. In the space of Hans Poelzig's most famous realisations, he writes in the protagonists of the film: on one photograph of the stairwell of the *Haus des Rundfunks* in Berlin (designed by Hans Poelzig) he replaces the stairwell with those stairs that lead to Hjalmar Poelzig's basement. In another, Hjalmar Poelzig's room connects with the foyer of the *Capitol* cinema in Berlin. In his series of photographs Książek also manipulates details: in the film still we are shown a door, however the artist replaces the door handle with one from the *Haus des Rundfunks*. On the walls of Hjalmar Poelzig's bedroom, he places the genuine architectural sketches of Hans Poelzig.

Of significant interest is the use of occult threads and motifs. According to Hans Poelzig's biographers, the architect wanted to be recognised as demonic: „*Within me live many spirits and devils, if that is what people wish to call them. Only the hatred of God is creative and calls forth something new in people*” he writes in a letter to his wife Marlene Moeschke. The onscreen relationship between Hjalmar Poelzig and Dr. Vitus Werdegast (the psychiatrist suffering from a phobia of cats played by Béla Lugosi) reminds one of the relationship between Faust and Mefistofeles. One can consequently come to the conclusion that the fictive relationships between the central protagonists are an echo of his personal relationships with Hans Poelzig and the director Edgar Ulmer (Ulmer knew Hans Poelzig very well; they met on the set of the film *Golem*, for which Poelzig designed the scenography). This is underscored by the film's soundtrack, in which the director used, amongst others, the famous *Faustian Piano Sonata in B Minor* by Franz Liszt.

Based on reality and film fiction, Książek builds a hypothetical vision of an alternative world that considers the extent to which the architecture of the twentieth century merges with mass culture and to what level it is embodied in society. Equally significant is that Paweł Książek is first and foremost a painter that has worked up his own highly recognisable style and the project *Poelzig VS. Poelzig* is the inspiration for his paintings. A painting is for him the final element of a complex multi level search. The whole process of testing and selecting motifs and pursuing „material evidence” on the basis of historical links is nothing less than a pretext for a good painting.



Poelzig VS. Poelzig 05, 2010, oil on canvas, 150x160 cm



Poelzig VS. Poelzig 02, 2009, oil on canvas, 100x120 cm



Poelzig VS. Poelzig 03, 2009, oil on canvas, 100x120 cm



The Architect, 2010, c-prints, set of 10, 20x25 cm each



Poelzig VS. Poelzig 04, 2010, oil on canvas, 130x150 cm

Paweł Książek

Born 1973 in Andrychów, lives and works in Kraków, Poland.

Solo exhibitions (selection):

- 2010 *Poelzig VS. Poelzig*, ŻAK | BRANICKA gallery, Berlin, DE
- 2009 *Silent Utopia*, Art Stations Foundation, Poznań, PL
Silent Utopia, Art Basel Statements, Basel, CH
Paweł Książek, Salzburger Kunstverein, Salzburg, AT
- 2008 *Sets*, Bunkier Sztuki, Kraków, PL
- 2007 *Africanized Honey Bees*, Żak Gallery, Berlin, DE
- 2006 *KRK*, Potocka Gallery, Kraków, PL
- 2005 *1967-1995?*, Pies Gallery, Poznań, PL
The Last is The darkest, The Last Is Real, Kunstbuero, Vienna, AT

Group exhibitions (selection):

- 2009 *Menschenbilder 1620/2009, Zeitgenössische Bildnisse Begegnen Alten Niederländischen Portraits*, Museum Abtei Liesborn, Wadersloh-Liesborn, DE
- 2008 *Something must break*, OFF Festival, Mysłowice, PL
OK! Wyspiański, National Museum, Kraków, PL
- 2007 *Don't try this at home*, Centre for Contemporary Art, Warszawa, PL
Day After, CK Zamek, Poznań, PL
Re(co)nnaissance of painting, GCK, Katowice, PL
- 2006 *New Tendencies in Painting*, BWA, Bydgoszcz, PL
Soleil Noir, Depression and Society, Salzburger Kunstverein, Salzburg, AT

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