

## Repetitions

'Repetitions' by Agnieszka Rożnowska is a project based on a basic module – the author's body. Reproduced hundreds of times and reduced to a simplified form without any details, in 'Repetitions' it has become not a self-portrait, but a pictogram. Personal theme is not involved here at all; the technique used by Rożnowska could be used to multiply any pattern. At the same time, the more duplicated image appears within the project, the further away it becomes from its designation. Paradoxically, 'Repetitions' are based on the body, and at the same time they detract strongly from it. By giving up telling her own story, Rożnowska achieves the effect of a universal project.

What appears to be a self-portrait has become its opposite in 'Repetitions'; the body, instead of gaining subjectivity, by multiplying and reducing the form to a simple graphic sign, becomes an object. This objectification of the body is even more evident in the positions taken by the artist. The backbreaking drops and challenging splits bring to mind more gymnastics or torture than the natural positions of the human body. Rożnowska models them as she wishes. For purely compositional reasons, she removes its parts, pushing them into uncomfortable poses. Even the work plane is manipulated; complementary diptychs are hung in the corners of exhibition halls. The impression of backbreaking exhaustion is intensified by the overlapping of two body layers; each character is featured twice, only as a mirror reflection. What is more, the graphics never show the features of the portrayed face, and it is the face that carries the individualism of the human body. As a result, Rożnowska creates a series of symmetrical figural compositions, which are far from being human figures. This obsession with body symmetry, about which Roland Barthes wrote in the context of fashion, is brought to extremes in 'Repetitions'.

By objectifying her own body, Rożnowska left only its top layer, a concise representation on the plane. Gradually she obliterated all anatomical details, leaving only 'shells', covers. This is an anticipation of another project shown at the 'Grafis' exhibition at Galeria XX1 in Warsaw (in May 2012). In the case of 'Repetitions' the medium used by the author is of particular significance. Graphics is a technique of many originals, enabling to obtain an infinite number of identical prints. In this project, the medium is important because its formal character defines the meaning. Hundreds of little different representations within 'Repetitions' were created mechanically, using a printing press. The images produced this way, like Andy Warhol's silkscreen portraits, lose their connection with the object being presented. Each is equally important, equally authentic, and equally close to/distant from its original.

Moreover, Rożnowska did not limit herself to printing on white sheets. Her silhouette, in various scales, appears on objects made of transparent foil, on cardboard cubes that can be freely combined and merged, on balloons. Again, it resembles a Pop Art reflection on the overproduction of an image. Today, in an uncontrolled way, reproductions of famous works of art, including self-portraits of the Pope of Pop, appear on countless objects; cups, pens, wallpapers, etc.

'Repetitions', a formally sterile project, designed to function in the white interior of the gallery, perversely refers to uncontrolled production of images.

Black-and-white, quite ascetic in terms of form series of graphics using a unified alphabet of forms, produced on a printing press. Nearly automatically it evokes associations with typography. The semi-abstract, semi-figurative compositions are strongly reminiscent of pictorial writing, still functioning in residual forms, e.g. in the Chinese alphabet. In this context one of the works in particular seems to be crucial. Small, white cubes printed with the contours of the artist's body were made available to the viewer. Modular elements can be assembled at will, each time creating a new composition.

'Repetitions' are like playing with a deck of cards; within a very narrow range of shapes an infinite number of patterns can be arranged. Again, the arms, legs and bodies, cleaned of details, resemble peaks, trellises, diamonds and heads, and whole figures of queens and jacks.

Looking for the philosophical roots of 'Repetitions', Agnieszka Rożnowska leads the viewer to the theory that gave rise to the Renaissance revolt. Her project can be read as a visual treaty on Epicureanism. On the one hand, it focuses on the body with which man achieves earthly, temporal happiness. Epicureanism bases its ethics on a hedonistic set of values. On the other hand, the project refers to how the philosopher understood the world, to atomism; the image of the portrayed person is composed of hundreds of representations with a common denominator. This is exactly how, through the stream of media images, we get to know the world today. The contemporary pictorial culture, to which the artist refers, unwittingly draws on these philosophical foundations. In 'Repetitions' Rożnowska combines these two seemingly so distant worlds.

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