

HAWROT/MARKUL FROM FASHION TO ART

A patient is looking at an ink blot. He describes what he sees and a therapist evaluates his answers. This now famous personality test was invented by Hermann Rorschach in 1921. It proves that outside we will see the same world that we have inside. Rorschach was a psychologist but also a drawing teacher and a person sensitive to visual stimuli. He was convinced that our brain not only observes reality but also continuously generates symbols, interprets and develops. This statement is essential not only for psychology but also abstract art which was born in the same epoch as his test.

Joanna Hawrot together with the artist Angelika Markul and the gallery owner Marta Kołakowska decided to check what the Rorschach test placed in the area of art and fashion will tell us about ourselves today. In her works, Markul explores the spaces of nature and the elements that seem abstract to us – oceans, glaciers, waterfalls, microcosm of insects, inside of the earth, deserts – so that we can see our humanity through them. She watches an underwater monument by the Japanese Yonaguni Island, uses a telescope in an observatory in the Atacama Desert, descends into a mine in Naica, in Mexico, observes the nature returning to the area of Chernobyl. Her audiovisual and sculpture installations highlight the repressed, subconscious; she works in us, develops our perception of the world.

One of her works, “My Nature”, is an arranged composition of plants – green blots resembling tropical forest. Its title on the one hand alludes to nature and biology and on the other hand – to human nature. Inner and outer world, nature and culture combine mysteriously, and art builds bridges between them.

There is also our outfit between us, our body and the world, nature and culture. It is a tool used to investigate our identity but also a cultural method of defending our true nature from being recognized. The tradition of the Rorschach tests derives from ancient Greek theatre where the actors put on masks called “personas”. Later, this persona began to metaphorically denote a social role. Today such masks, personas, are our clothes. Thus, fashion is like the Rorschach test – everyone will see something different in it, though we are all looking at the same thing. In what we wear and in what others wear, we will see only what we can read or what someone allows us to see. Our clothes are not basically matter but a subject of interpretation.

This is what Joanna Hawrot’s collection, to which the prints in the form of blots as from the Rorschach test were created by Angelika Markul, tells about. It shows us that fashion is not a simple set of trends but an area for investigation of identity, or even metaphysics. This time, kimono-like outfits, characteristic of the Japanese minimalism which inspires Hawrot, are strongly associated with the mysterious, psychoanalytically interpreted film “Picnic at Hanging Rock”, in which schoolgirls discover their femininity and sexuality. They are white, romantic blouses with puffs and bows, trailing pants, dresses with yokes and narrow cuffs of roomy sleeves. “Innocent” light canvas is covered with disturbing blots. Blue, red. The colours associated with nature, elements, primary colours that strongly affect our senses.

Blots and stains on clothes seem disturbing to us both for practical and symbolic reasons: a stain means shame, something that we should hide. In the Hawrot/Markul collection, what is repressed and embarrassing returns. The designer proves that fashion can become a tool for an in-depth analysis of our imagination, our fears, impulses, desires. It can become a source of deep cognition which it is so often and unfairly denied.

Clothes from the Hawrot/Markul collection will be presented in September in the Leto Gallery in Warsaw, under the supervision of Marta Kołakowska. It will be both a fashion show and an artistic performance. Each of the project co-creators went beyond her own artistic boundaries in order to meet in a joint study of human nature.

In a world overloaded with information, fashion based on the art of abstraction and psychology gives us a chance to reflect, widens our imagination. We are invited not only to wear it but also to co-create it – in Hawrot’s collection we will see what we have in our heads. It will be not only our clothes but also our mirror.

