

*Stille. Magda Durda-Dmitruk**

We may define Eliška Bartek's work as an attempt to tame the expression of light in photography and art. Her recordings are mainly in black and white. This exhibition comprises two of Bartek's series. The first shows impressions of a journey to Abu Dhabi. Through long exposure and keeping her camera in motion, Bartek captures the fluid character of the megacity at the moments of arrival and departure from the airport. The second series consists of photographs taken without a camera. These very lyrical and poetical images show after-views of silhouettes juxtaposed with shadows of accidental interferences by daily life. In recording light and form or intuitive states of existence, Bartek stresses the character of ambiguous reality and how it passes on to either ambiguity or apparent nothingness. Through linear and geometric arrangements, originating from the intentional motion of the camera and static points of light, Bartek builds her own reality. Inspired by reality and simultaneously reaching beyond the reality image, the nature of Bartek's works is still recognizable, yet they present a new realm of being - the light structure in a space and its mirror image preserved in a photograph.

The artist's works relate to traditions in photography from her own country and abroad. She works in the spirit of Constructivist and Geometric Photography as well as Dada and Surrealism. Her pieces resemble Talbot's Photogenic Drawings - images of objects that were exposed to light on photosensitive paper, a technique frequently adopted by avant-garde artists in the inter-war period, such as Laszlo Moholy-Nagy and Christian Schad or Czechia's Jaromír Funke, František Drtikol, Jaroslav Rössler and Eugen Wikovský. These artists experimented with the effects of light, by placing objects and forms of different transparency on a photosensitive surface, which then was exposed to stable or movable light sources. Bartek's photographs also bring to mind experiments by late Polish artists: Antoni Mikolajczyk's Partytury Miast [Scores of Cities] from the 1980s, which show recordings of light waves and spatial situations; and also Henryk Stazewski's 9 strumieni kolorowego światła na niebie [9 streams of color light on the sky] (1970, Wrocław).

Both series share a fascination with the role of light in photography, appearing as a Demiurge giving form to the overwhelming world and its elements, thus creating artistic reality. They capture its characteristics - constant change, instability and momentariness. This light is not stopped by the surface of reality but reaches deeper, into materiality itself. Similarly our reception of Eliška Bartek's art does not end with simply enjoying the visual aspect.

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