



acb Gallery, Budapest, VI. Király u. 76. / acb Attachment, Budapest, VI. Eötvös u. 2. / acb NA, Budapest, VI. Király u. 74.

Péter Szarka: *RGB Hypothesis*

acb Gallery

7 June, 2019 – 26 July, 2019

Vernissage: 6 June, 2019. 19:00-20:45

The exhibition casts new light on the works of Péter Szarka (1964) created in the 2000s using 3D modelling software. Highlighted by his participation at the São Paulo Biennial in 2004 and his solo exhibition at the Kunsthalle, Budapest in 2003, this phase in Szarka's oeuvre is already concluded, but his works are still as fresh today as two decades ago, when they were conceived. Moreover, the main elements of his artistic programme, namely the impersonality of artistic expression and the use of trash aesthetics have since come to shape the attitude of a younger generation of artists. "The things I am dealing with right now are in a no man's land." – Szarka stated in a 2002 interview. By today, the discourse of contemporary art has caught up with the trailblazing works of Szarka, which are still open to new reception and interpretation.

Péter Szarka became known as a founding member of the Újlak Group around the regime change in 1989, when he was making art that fused the genres of painting and installation. Szarka's identity as a painter has defined his entire career from the Újlak period up to the most recent times, when he prefers working with colourful plastics. Szarka defined his artistic programme in the 2000s as painting as well, even if in terms of technology or media he had distanced from the classical tools of painting, especially as the currently exhibited works were printed using photographic technique.

It is important to point out with regard to this exhibition that technology has never been the centre of Péter Szarka's aesthetic interest. Although these works may have been conceived from the fusion of the electronic ecstasy of the nineties, Szarka had never endeavoured to create visual prefigurations of a utopian future. The artworks of Szarka present a vision of the future which was already anachronistic 20 years ago. Szarka consciously played with the visual allusions of the 3D modelling software he used, which had given the impression of time capsules already in their own time, holding the image of an envisioned future. Confronting the past with an imaginary future has been one of the dominant queries of Szarka's art ever since.

The exhibition is constructed by the logic of an instinctive mini-retrospective, showcasing a number of works and series never before displayed, but without the claim of completeness. The gallery's foyer accommodates Szarka's earliest lambda prints of 3D renders, *Fear of the Blue Planet* 1.-2. (2001) and *Thaw* (2002). All three dystopian pieces show flashes of the evanescence of human civilisation through images of a ravaged cemetery and human skulls.

In the gallery space, pieces are displayed from such iconic series by Szarka as *Statues of Rebels* or *Politics and Tourism*. These are accompanied by pieces from the series *Cold Sun Statue Park*, which was represented at the São Paulo Biennial and other works, narrating an inextricably mysterious and absurd event in a powerful architectural framework. It is in relation to these works that the spectator can really perceive how the artist has increasingly objectified the human figure, to the point of displaying it as a metal statue. Metamorphosed into monuments, humans have also started to become a thing of the past in the Szarka universe.

Péter Szarka gave rise to enigmatic, coherent scenes in his series, with recurrent figures and locations. Repetition had an important role as this further emphasised the serial quality of the works. The digital glitches arising from the rudimentary character of early 3D modelling software often resulted in unexpectedly expressive pictorial effects in Szarka's prints; it was these low-tech software errors that had most inspired Szarka's painterly imagination. The use of software such as Bryce and Poser had one more important implication, namely that their functioning was based on the accurate simulation of lighting: for instance, shadows were cast by modelled terrain elements as in reality. This feature of the software encouraged the artist to have the images enlarged as digital photographic prints instead of inkjet prints.

Péter Szarka's 3D renders were first exhibited at his solo exhibition in 2003 at the acb Gallery, followed by two more exhibitions, *Thursday 13* and *I, Printer*. Szarka's most recent solo exhibition took place in 2017 at the Trafó Gallery, but he has also been exhibited at big institutions, such as the Kunsthalle, Budapest, the Institute of Contemporary Art, Dunaújváros, the Gallery of Szombathely, the Liget Gallery, the Ludwig Museum and the MODEM in Debrecen. Szarka has participated at the 2004 São Paulo Biennial and the group exhibition of the Schirn Kunsthalle in Frankfurt. With the Újlak Group, he had been exhibited at the Art in General, New York, the Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago and the Philadelphia Institute of Contemporary Art.