



STUDIO 22 OPEN GALLERY

# The PALIMPSEST

# KRZYSZTOF OILS

MAY 15 TO JUNE 20, 2010



## ENCOUNTERS

AN ARTICLE BY - ALEXA HALEY

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OILS: PAINTINGS BY KRZYSZTOF DONIEWSKI  
AN ARTICLE BY ALEXA HALEY

HERE IS AN ELUSIVENESS AND UNAPPROACHABLE DENSITY, AN OBSCURITY ABOUT THE GENESIS OF A WORK OF ART THAT MAKES IT ONE OF THE SEVEN WONDERS OF THE WORLD. This is true for the artist as much as for the “consumer” of art – that innocent bystander caught up in the act of witnessing the miracle of a birth. As for many artists, for Krzysztof the process of that genesis is something of a mystery, experienced as much from within as from without, from the sidelines, odd as that may sound. Watching the emerging forms spilling out of the canvas with their own daunting vitality and their vigorous logic and self-assertion is a process, an event akin to that of watching the sun rise: an event as inevitable as day, as reliable, but as distant and unfathomable as it is beautiful. It has an autonomy that seems to leave all human effort behind as ineffectual and insignificant. The intellect, the will, the self, caught up in its orbits and movements, is eclipsed by something so immense that only the subconscious layering mind has any chance of approaching the field with an inkling of sure footing, and that tentative at best, always open, always evolving.

Once the initial structure and interplay of lines is laid down on the white canvas – here a fluid upward rush of branches rising out of a space yet to emerge in its plasticity and singularity – the moment of revelation begins for the artist. That sweep of space – empty to the rest of us – takes over and begins to mold its contents like a mass of clay, plastic, encircling, generating. And what emerges out of the canvas, what builds itself out of a space that is rising like a wave and pumping with an energy all its own are shapes and forms that are not under the “control” of a human mind, a human will, but reveal themselves as life forms that breathe and pulse, endure independently of any human intervention. And yet the

evidence of that “control”, that mastery is apparent in every canvas hanging on the walls of Studio 22. To anyone who allows his mind even casually to roam the spaces created by those seemingly innocuous objects we call paintings, the impression is the same: the consistency of Krzysztof’s techniques is immediately visible and strikingly so. The



cohesive sweep of his vision in its balance and precision, the range of his means and effects, the astounding sophistication of techniques is what generates that delicious sensation of being in the presence of a pulsing world of color, form and space, light and texture, and of a moment that breathes. “What can six apples not be?” Virginia Woolf wrote in her diary in 1918 after an initial impression of a recent acquisition of Maynard Keynes’: Cezanne’s Pommies. Indeed.

As I developed my relationship to those living canvases on Saturday evening, strolling through the room, I asked Krzysztof about his work. And the resulting exchange was worth reflecting on, chewing over, even noting down, since it offers a glimpse into that mysterious process. My decision to write about it is motivated by the desire to share the intense pleasure of reliving a birthing experience. I hope my personal recollections of our discussion do justice to the complexity of that experience and convey something that will simulate the ride for others.

Imagine yourself standing in front of that composition in whites and greys swerving into blue, [Dahlias]. Your eye drifts over the series of images – the waves of whites rolling over the canvas and morphing, differentiating into subtler tones, here with a strong outline stroke, there with a bleeding nebulous sweep of background tints, undertones, projecting movement and that tenuous quality of the momentary glimpse. But the basic theme of white asserts itself all clustering against a structure of lines, geometric but organic, the branches posing in the vase. At the base, a skirt of grey tones carving out a space around the leaves, like a surf carving out blue against an eroding shoreline.

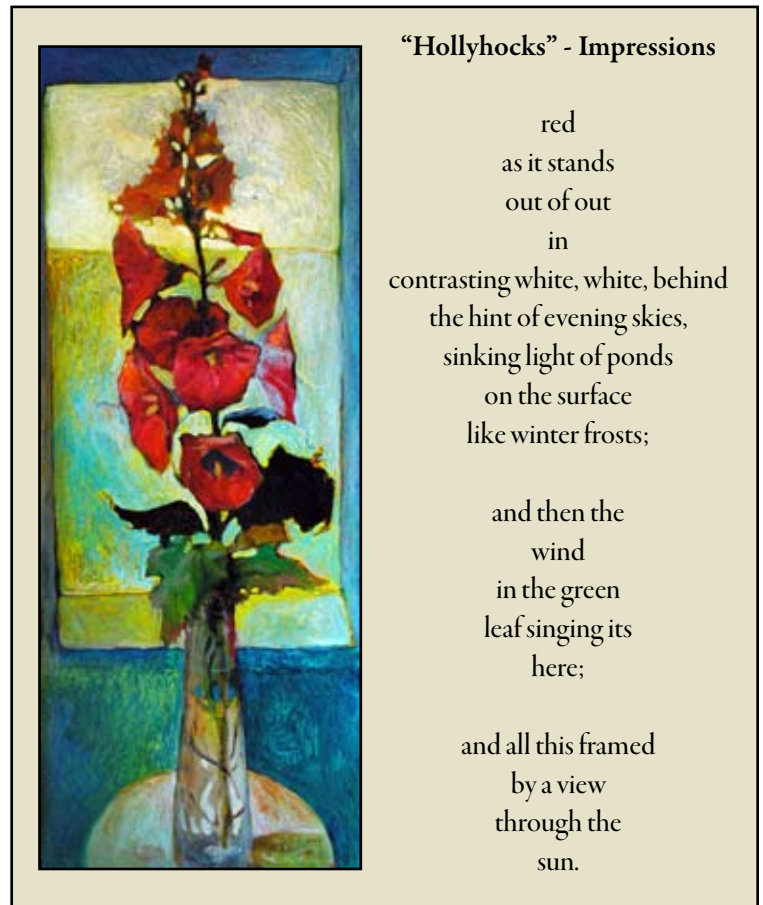
The leaves are generous, large not flimsy, but the greens furtive, edged away by ambient light, movement, a sense of the peripheral. The greys of the background impose themselves. Form is lost to something else, but remains articulated in rushed glimpses.

Now you step back and take in the whole. Something pulses through the piece. Each blossom, each leaf, each element of the visual bouquet is unique, concrete, completely individual, and yet the pulse emerges from the interplay of the whole. The thing breathes in a continuous pulse of resonance and self-reflexive play. What is missing here sets off a ripple of sensations there that is generative, building form, space, light, relationships that are uniquely determined and "real". This is how the artist works. It is there in front of our eyes, but how do we approach it? Where do we begin to describe it, how do we chart and register it. The mind's activity is so subtle and elusive as it processes the elements of the visual field. And yet, this is what we're after because precision and clarity of vision are not incompatible with a visceral sense of the sheer drama of the piece.

Why then, we ask again, is it that a reinforced outline is effective in one location and would not be in another? Why are fields of white applied effectively here without a surge of polluting undertones, background tints – blues and greys which insinuate themselves very deliberately into the white texture of the petals lower down? Why does the eye thirst for the ocre tones here but not there? The answer lies in the balance of composition, in the cohesion and logic of the forces at play and in the effective registration and initiation of visual processes. Background and foreground stand in a complex dynamic relationship to one another, a relationship which the artist constantly probes and plumbs. Fields of color pollute one another, set off relationships of harmony or tension which generate interesting effects – the effect of projecting space, a sense of three-dimensionality or of movement, or of changes in lighting. All this the mind processes, channels, enacts, and the artist is the invisible agent, the hand that plays so effortlessly on the sensitive instrument, the viewer's mind and perceptual mechanisms. And that is a many-layered, many-stringed instrument with a resonating chamber of some size!

Let's watch this in action in a striking example. The portrait of an African-American, perhaps a musician; his persona loomed behind the trio of bass, percussion, and key board that gave us that added kick to ride the waves of the moment as we strolled through the gallery. As Krzysztof pointed out to me, the livid red background sings its own tune. A flat panel of red that flares in your eye on the left of the head, a panel of pink on the other. The red is so uncompromising in its demands on the eye that the mind has to back off, making it appear flat and

giving the space on the right a sense of depth that the color alone could not carry. The pink appears luminous and subtle, but with a neon intensity – a contradiction of sorts. All this generated by the red on the left and the ensemble of dark foreground forms, including the deliberate distortion of the eyes. And the resulting effect is of a tremendous depth of space in that upper right panel of the canvas, a depth that almost lunges out at you. And this sense of vibrant space in turn acts on the features of the face, giving them a cohesion, a sense of movement and expression that seems to defy the almost collage-like technique of discrete, almost severed features. An apparent lack of cohesion generates cohesion in a space that vibrates, pulls and yanks, zooms and grabs. The ensemble generates the effect. The artist actively, almost surreptitiously works on the perceptual mechanisms of the mind. Form is generated, not imitated or mimicked. Space leaps out and builds its relations, introducing movement and play. And voila, you are in the presence of a world of form. Not an image. Not a framed artifact. Not a picture you can hang on your wall with your calendar. But a living, active thing that pulls you in and messes with you, the way life does. And does something with life, makes it do something that you never suspected it could: it throbs like a song. Let it!



**"Hollyhocks" - Impressions**

red  
as it stands  
out of out  
in  
contrasting white, white, behind  
the hint of evening skies,  
sinking light of ponds  
on the surface  
like winter frosts;  
  
and then the  
wind  
in the green  
leaf singing its  
here;  
  
and all this framed  
by a view  
through the  
sun.

SUMMERTIME IN THE OPEN GALLERY  
JULY 1ST TO AUGUST 22ND, 2010  
DRAWINGS

SUMMERTIME IN THE OPEN GALLERY  
A COFFEEHOUSE BAR WITH TALENTS AT PLAY  
IN THE SPOT

THIS FALL IN THE OPEN GALLERY  
BLENDERMAN  
PAINTINGS  
GORDON

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### THE PALIMPSEST

There is, in each man's heart,  
Chinese writing—  
A secret script, a cryptic language:  
The strange ideographs of the spirit,  
Scribbled over or half erased  
By the swift stenography of daily life.

No man can easily decipher this cordiscript,  
This blurred text corrupted by fears and follies;  
But now and then,  
Reading his own heart  
(So little studied, such fine reading matter!)  
He sees fragments of rubric shine through—  
Old words of truth and trouble  
Illuminated, red and gold.  
The study of this hidden language  
Is what I call  
Translating from the Chinese.

### ANNOUNCEMENT

My mind is closed pending repairs.  
After alterations are completed,  
Will reopen in these premises  
With a large line of plain and fancy goods.

*Here Ends This Complete Codex of Translations  
from the Chinese, Scrupulously Deciphered  
by Christopher Morley from the original  
cordiscript, and published by Double-  
day, Page & Company in the  
year of Grace 1927. And  
both publisher and  
author invoke hand-  
some generous  
blessing upon  
anyone who  
actually  
buys  
it.*

From TRANSLATIONS FROM THE CHINESE by Christopher Morley ©1927

JULY 1ST WE CELEBRATE OUR 4TH BIRTHDAY  
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