

ANNA ZORINA GALLERY

BORIS GROYS ART HISTORY OF VIOLENCE

We are accustomed to living in a disenchanted and designed world – the world of administration, technology, geographical maps, statistical data and abstract painting. In this world, almost all wild forms of life are already domesticated and put under control: tigers and lions live in national parks or in zoos. However, there remains suspicion that some strange, alien forms of life are concealed under the familiar surfaces of our world and cannot be totally suppressed. In the polytheistic myths of ancient cultures the rivers, woods and mountains became animated. And through this act of animation they became also dangerous and violent. In her art, Alina Blumis applies the same act of animation on the familiar images of our lifeless, soulless, administered world. As a result, the hidden energy of violence and aggression becomes revealed upon which those images owe their aura of tranquility and peaceful stability.

Indeed, when we look at the political map of the world, on which every country is presented by a certain geometrical form, we tend to forget that this form is always a result of bloody wars and oppression. In her series “Nation Unleashed” Alina reveals the “animal” energy of hate and aggression to which contemporary countries owe the shapes of their borders. She shows the peaceful surface of our world as camouflage concealing the violent fight for dominance. Of course as an artist of Belarusian origin, Alina cannot turn her eyes away from the eruptions of violence that currently take place in her region. However, long before these actual events took place, she was attentive to, what one can call, the political zoology of our contemporary world – the descent of national political symbols from mythical animals of the polytheistic past.

Alina’s disbelief in the surface characterizes her series “Bruises.” Images on their surface that look to be late examples of abstract expressionism become revealed as images that remain on human skin after a punch. Here again peaceful art for art’s sake suddenly turns into a document of physical violence and the fate of the body in the contemporary world. And in the series “Concrete Poems” familiar words that seem to be merely vehicles of ordinary communication begin to dissolve, revealing an abyss of the absurd hidden behind their grammatically correct surface.

Theodor Adorno famously said that to write poetry after Auschwitz is impossible. The appearance of the beautiful would only serve as a cover making us forget the cruel reality of our world. Many artists reacted to this challenge by making their artworks look as ugly as reality itself. However, in this way they missed the cruelty of the second degree – the cruelty of the aestheticizing cover-up. It is this cruelty of the second degree – the cruelty inherent to the artistic practice itself – that Alina makes her topic in a subtle and at the same time surprisingly direct and convincing way.