THE ULTRA SOFT-NIHILISM OF GIA EDZGVERADZE

The Ludwig Museum Budapest possesses an early painting by the Georgian artist which was nearly sold to the Guggenheim Museum (via an absurd story related to the famous Sotheby's Auction in Moscow) but Professor Ludwig was quicker.

It is a huge painting called *Object*, 1987-88, showing an enormous pair of scissors with the usual drawing technique of Gia: black contour against a white background and with an unfinished sentence: *Time is time to....*

I did not know much about the artist until the De Appel produced a show with him, and until he appeared one day in our museum bringing a strange, exotic flower as a real Georgian "cavaliere".

In fact, we agreed on a Budapest exhibition already in 1996.

I saw him next at the Georgian Pavilion of the Venice Biennale in 1997. His life-size poster of him wearing mini-dress behind the organic installation of carrots was as humorous and ironic as it was lonely and sad: *"I am still young, full of strength to change something. But what to change?..."*

His exhibition was a real discovery for the art world, and there we witnessed the start of his international career.

The project for Budapest evolved into a complex, new installation involving some existing paintings within a new context, a series of video works as a new installation and new on-site drawings and texts on the wall surrounding a staircase clotheed in carrots. The carrot has a special importance for Gia as a phallic life-symbol (I was a bit suspicious as to whether it might derive from our common Soviet past, a famous Russian tale in the language books).

The other new element in the project was a bed with a live male person in it (a carefully selected, good-looking model) with a manifesto — a call for girls to jump in: *"Join me, we can have an art-baby..."*

For me the magic of Gia Edzgveradze's art is the mixture, or more precisely, the proportions of real and artificial elements, the fiction and the organic presence of objects. He is great storyteller and his heroes are monkeys, bears, flies and people with everyday failures.

We might also have a lesson of self-irony and heroic optimism watching his video works in which he is the main performer.

If his life-size photo in women's clothing was addressing melancholy, his videos permanently question the meaning of art, the profession and identity of the artist. I do feel to be emblematic that piece which was described by the artist as follows: «Naked man moving hands as wings and legs as swimming, shouting like a goose: "fuel, fuel..."»

Perhaps one day we can see some land in sight!

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