

Kamilla SZÍJ

the same (yet not)

28 September – 5 November 2021

"ONE"

At her solo show at Vintage Galéria, Kamilla Szíj presents three large-scale silk screen prints and a work consisting of smaller prints, which she has made in the last year. The works, which are unique despite of the printing technique, were based on pencil drawings in case of the six separate sheets, and on four blocks of wood traditionally used for woodcuts in case of the other three works. The blocks were photographed, resulting that not only the carved lines, but also the organic pattern of the wood material appears on the works. The digital images were then exposed on silk screens with the use of photo emulsion. By printing the screens repeatedly next to each other according to a system of different variations, finally one monochrome work 4.5 meters wide, and two works 3 meters wide were executed. In case of the smaller sheets, created with the use of two colours, the screens were printed on top of each other according to a system in which the position of the lines printed in red is settled, while the position of the lines printed in black varies. Kamilla Szíj created the base of the works by putting modules together into a square shape, next she drew a line across them, and then she mixed the pieces and connected the median lines to each other. She repeated this process several times, resulting the branching lines occasionally connecting to each other at the edges of the units when the silk screens are printed next to each other in any arbitrary position.

"ONE – from another angle"

"The drawings are imprints of thoughts that come into my mind. (...) There are no messed up drawings, as I begin to work when the image is somehow already completed." – stated Kamilla Szíj in her DLA thesis. Thinking in and with images exists in the history of mankind, from the cave paintings and hieroglyphs, through illustrations of manuscripts encouraging medieval contemplation, to the present endeavours of data visualizations generated with computers. However, the works of Kamilla Szíj should not be considered as actual representations of thoughts, nor is it the task of the viewers to trace the patterns of thinking back to specific thoughts. When encountering the works, the recipients initially perceive an abstract structure and are compelled to find out what kind of organizing principle is the system based on, that perhaps seems chaotic at first sight. Searching among their own thoughts, the viewers create their own associations and the inner process of visual thinking, interpreting the subjective experience of mental images and answering the questions addressed to them by the work. However, they need to incorporate their point-like and partial observations into a cohesive whole in order to understand the relationship between things that are perceived apart in time and distant in space. Or in other words, they have to build up a meaningful totality from fragmented pieces. Although this encounter is elementally sensual, in addition to the experience of floating sometimes a conscious stop and a certain contemplative distance is required to achieve an appropriate perspective. As Kamilla Szíj states: "I offer a surface in which it is possible to wander freely."

"ONE – from another angle"

"The power of a country road is different when one is walking along it from when one is flying over it by airplane. (...) The airplane passenger sees only how the road pushes through the landscape, how it unfolds according to the same laws as the terrain surrounding it. Only he who walks the road on foot learns of the power it commands, and of how, from the very scenery that for the flier is only the unfurled plain, it calls forth distances, belvederes, clearings, prospects at each of its turns..." – wrote Walter Benjamin in 1928 in his book titled *One-Way Street*, containing pieces that are poetic and philosophical at the same time and often referred to as „Denkbilder” or so-called „thought-images”. Theodor W. Adorno dissected these aphoristic texts as follows: "... they are scribbled picture-puzzles, parabolic evocations of something that cannot be said in words. They do not want to stop conceptual thought so much as to shock through their enigmatic form and thereby get thought moving, because thought in its traditional conceptual form seems rigid, conventional, and outmoded. What cannot be proved in the customary style and yet is compelling – that is to spur on the spontaneity and energy of thought and, without being taken literally, to strike sparks through a kind of intellectual short-circuiting that casts a sudden light on the familiar and perhaps sets it on fire."

"ONE – from another angle"

Almost sixty years after the publication of this book, Kamilla Szíj moved to Frankfurt and began her studies at the Visual Communication Department of the Hochschule für Gestaltung in Offenbach am Main, where she became acquainted with the vividly surviving traditions of the Frankfurt School represented by Benjamin and Adorno. In the works and methods of both Kamilla Szíj and Walter Benjamin, the concept and the process of the wandering movement assigned to cognition is significant. As in the case of the introspective roaming described with poetic thought-images by Benjamin, we can wander from module to module on the branching routes and intersecting networks of thoughts when it comes to Kamilla Szíj's works. According to Benjamin, the process of thinking, which is necessary to understand space and time around us, can only be born through a walk that involves brief intermittent stops. To counterbalance the rapidly accelerating twentieth century metropolitan life, his method therefore includes taking breaks from the incessant vertiginous thoughts once in a while. In the case of Kamilla Szíj's works, the evocation of the recipient's thinking activity also lies in this consciously slowed down and drifting, but sometimes interrupted movement and space. Analogous to Benjamin's "passage technique" of creating intertwined interpretations in a figurative sense, Kamilla Szíj's method also offers further and further contact points and outspread transboundary connections. In the parts of the structures she creates, that are systems repeating their elements with variations, we can wander along the lines and occasionally get lost while thinking about the world around us.

Zsófia RÁTKAI

Literature: Theodor W. Adorno: Benjamin's »Einbahnstraße« (trans. Shiery Weber Nivholsen). In: *Notes to Literature – Vol. II*. Columbia University Press, New York, 1991, 323; Walter Benjamin: *One-Way Street and Other Writings* (trans. Edmund Jephcott and Kingsley Shorter). NLB, London, 1979, 50; Kamilla Szíj: *Drawing as thinking, process and method*. DLA thesis in Hungarian. The Hungarian University of Fine Arts, Budapest, 2016; Kamilla Szíj: *white hole*. Exhibition catalogue. Institute of Contemporary Art, Dunaújváros, 2018.

Kamilla Szíj created the screen prints with the help of Bence Zarubay and Heimo Wallner.

Kamilla SZÍJ (1957) visual artist. Kamilla Szíj is a significant representative of contemporary drawing in Hungary. Her work is centered around the line itself that forms the basis of drawing and graphics. In the beginning of her artistic practice Szíj created unique works using reproductive graphic techniques, applying her plates as modules, then later on she started creating drypoint drawings and pencil drawings. To realize her monochrome or multicolour works, Szíj reduces her tools and motifs to a minimum, and creates structures and systems from repetitive signs by excluding direct composition. Her first solo show was held in 1990 at the Óbuda Cellar Gallery, her further solo exhibitions were organised at the Budapest Gallery (2003), the Art Gallery Paks (2012) and at the Institute of Contemporary Art in Dunaújváros (2017), among others. In 2017, she obtained a DLA degree at the Hungarian University of Fine Arts, her works are consequently presented at both Hungarian and international exhibitions. Her works can be found in the collection of the Amt für Wissenschaft und Kunst (Frankfurt am Main), Bibliothek Alexandrina (Alexandria), Ludwig Museum - Museum of Contemporary Art (Budapest), Hungarian National Gallery (Budapest), Museum Ritter (Waldenbuch).

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Untitled, 2021
silkscreen print on paper, 150x300 cm

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Untitled, 2021
silkscreen print on paper, 150x450 cm

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Untitled, 2021
silkscreen print on paper, 150x300 cm

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Untitled, 2021
6 silkscreen prints on paper, 51,5x51,5 cm each