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One Sentence

Michał Budny Zywica,
Saarlandmuseum, Moderne Galerie,
Walther König, Köln, 2015

The work of Michał Budny is based on keenly simple statements, therefore I would like to express myself in one sentence, even if it will not be a short sentence, because I would like to retain something of the directness of his form of expression, which has prepossessed me from the beginning, from the moment we met for the first time, when Michał stopped by the gallery with a black plastic portfolio in his arm filled with abstract collages made from various types of paper, new and used, colorful and already faded, with graduated shades of white and wholly yellowed, which we looked at by spreading them on the floor, and it was not an especially exuberant encounter, but for me so unexpected and astounding that we immediately agreed to meet again in a couple of months, and once again, and in this rhythm we arrived in the fall of the following year, when Michał came again with a series of new works, and at that time they were the first spatial objects, made of cardboard scraps, surprising inas-much as their simplicity and at the same time handmade complexity, that we decided together, on the spot, that we wanted to exhibit them – so did Michał's debut exhibition at the Gallery Raster come to pass, at which point the exhibition came to be – as I captured it in the accompanying leaflet – *bookbinder reconstructions of objects and forms, taken from immediate environment of the contemporary human (postcards, advertisements, cell phones, discmans etc.), small, light objects, made from cardboard and various types of, often yellowed, papers, gripping through the nobleness and the reluctance of the nearly abstract form* – all of them possessed in themselves something like a soul, namely they referred to the imperfectness of interpersonal communication, because they were unfinished letters, dummies of Nokia's most popular phone model back then and faded display panels, everything in a small room, painted gray specifically for the occasion, because, even back then, the relationship of the objects to the room was already essential to Michał, and soon it should reveal itself as crucial, this became clear as the next, larger in scale objects came into being, light despite their large size, sort of bereft of mass, but complex on the semantic level, objects which – as I related previously – *describe phenomena, states of things and emotions, which are difficult to weigh or measure, like the rain or the voice, they appear exceptionally close, homely, lending a form and a meaning to what we previously considered empty space around*

Seite / page 94
Tenement house, 2007,
Pappe, Farbe /
cardboard, paint,
49 cm×43 cm×43 cm

us, and in fact some of them are literally an attempt to reconstruct a fragment of the space, for instance "Light" – a 1:1 recreation of a shaft of light observed one morning in the artist's room – in this unpretentious and poetic manner, still working first and foremost with cardboard, Michał described the subjective experience of time and place, with reference to his connectedness with the space as subject and medium of his work, while light remained the theme and title, to which he returned in one of his next exhibitions, which we worked on together in 2009, that consisted of a series of objects which could be described as *formally exquisite studies, circling on the concepts of uncovering, covering, hiding, enlightening and... painting*, but again concerning the question of interpersonal communication, as in *Idiot's Mask* – the figure of deceit, the concealment of the genuine face in shadow – works, characterized by their own emotional intelligence, which at the same time begin a dialog with the tradition of modern art (including painting), focusing on formal analyses: of form, of sight, of light, and do so in a refreshing manner as a result of Michał's use of an anti-academic, "domestic" artist's workshop, and the creation of nearly ephemeral forms, based on a wholly unorthodox use of materials at hand such as: paper, old cardboard, paint, finished objects, fragments of his own, older works, water, honey, or even... dance, which was presented as a video projection in the exhibition, as a recording of a short choreography developed on behalf of Budny by French dancer Gilles Guillain, which completed the composition of the exhibition, diverse like never before in regard to forms and materials, consisting of works invoking the impression that they were made from nothing, appeared unexpectedly and out of nowhere, with a materiality which was yet more apparent than hitherto, they functioned on the basis of short bursts of thoughts and matter, immateriality appears to be their very nature, and the form they took a temporary exhibition hybrid, and it was then that Budny's distinctive, warm minimalism finally manifested, his loyalty toward the basic principle of this genre – to reach completeness of form and meaning in the most reserved way possible, even if through the seemingly random folding of a sheet of packaging paper, and in these simplest, handmade gestures, in the simplest statements, single sentences contain the whole secret and – for life, indispensable – light, about which Michał back then formulated one

of his outstanding short sentences: "Light is like blood", which imprinted on me and clarified what essential meaning imagination and linguistic intuition have in his work, the uncovering of the nature of things and the naming of emotional conditions also in single words, which I noted for the next exhibition *Resin* (Żywica), writing: *One says, in the beginning was the word, and if one abandons metaphysical bloat, one can apply this rule also to Michał Budny's chosen method, because the beginning of work on further works and projects is often constituted by a word or a concept, to which the artist subsequently discovers a material or spatial equivalent* – and in this case, in which the object of the action was the architectural space of our new gallery, Budny decided, based on the word resin, which to him means the essence of life, which builds its layers up organically and is full of odor, for an action *in situ*, in which he reworked layer after layer and variant after variant of the exhibition for a week, and experimented with different materials, trying to announce his own presence as organically and modestly as possible, which ultimately assumed the shape of an unusual wall installation, of an unusual curtain made of various paint and plaster layers, of foil and tape, which brought the dead wall surfaces to life and brought out the architecture and the natural aura of the interior of the room already there, it took on various forms, depending on the time of day, the weather and the light, as Budny also introduced the element of time into this slightly unreal situation – the sequenced layers of materials applied to the wall hinted at a series of events – perhaps something occurred here in the past, something else may still occur, while the wall's exposed imperfections and its dents naturally became part of the artist's demonstration and of the history uncovered by him, whose nature was close to the thought which accompanied the artist from the beginning, the profound character of his works, namely, that they concern human presence, becoming a vehicle in a way that is less and less illustrative and more and more engrossing to the observer, which touches and strengthens our sensitivity for the architectural environment we came across, so that it creates a unified environment in which the observer does not find simple footholds nor obvious objects to contemplate because everything comes to pass – as in the title of one of Budny's exhibitions – *Between*, between word and matter, in the space of the gallery and in the head of the observer.