

LAZAR LYUTAKOV

“Coming back from where you are going to”

For the current exhibition at Galerie Winiarczyk, Lyutakov has shifted from his earlier focus of ‘cultural readymades’ from his own Bulgarian background to examine other cultural contexts. The work entitled “Coming back from where you are going to” is framed within a museum style vitrine to [bracket] the objects to be read as fragile and therefore important. Lyutakov’s placement (or positioning) of the objects, supplies the new meaning of these ceramics, as objects more related to Decorative art or cultural anthropology, through their method of display the exchange–value and use–value of these objects has been re–assigned. In Marx’s critique of political economy, he stated that a thing can have use–value, without having value. This is the case whenever its utility to man is not due to labour... To become a commodity a product (or object) must be transferred to another, serving as a use–value by means of an exchange. Here under Lyutakov the ‘sign’ of the exotic is perhaps the best way to convert/ subvert the ‘exchange/use–value’ of an object especially within the inflated art market which needs exotic commodities for global expansion and consumption. Of course, these ceramics are not exotic [or particularly valuable]. What is actually presented are very common objects, though unique to Vietnam, these are generally considered the most basic tea service available at local Vietnamese markets.

With the pirating of intellectual property rights in Asia running rampant and the ability to copy anything from software to books to designer clothes, Vietnam is an interesting place to appropriate cultural artifacts, as they are one of the largest producers of counterfeit and pirated commercial products and goods. Perhaps “Coming back from where you are going to” which is a Bulgarian-saying, meaning ‘I have seen this before’ or ‘you are not telling me anything new’, is a poetic attempt to map this global glut of historical reference, cultural appropriation and intellectual piracy, moving beyond the emptied Post–Modernist referentiality to outright piracy. In the process, destabilizing the relationship between copy and original and thereby possibly creating new channels of production and distribution, which no longer questions the real and the unreal.

Finally, with the IKEA-isation of affordable design now available for a growing global middle class who desire ‘design quality’ objects at an affordable price, Lyutakov’s “Untitled (Lamps)” don’t look out of place in a modern home or office, yet these designs are based on a ‘how–to’ article from a Russian magazine on designing your own Modern–Style lamps out of cheap household materials made of mostly plastic. Much like Bulgaria and Vietnam, Russia is in a Post–Communist era which requires a growing Middle–class to expand its economy into an ideal Late–Capitalist Economy. In terms of traditional Modernist oppositions, such as high and low, perhaps we need to also consider the middle as (part of) the late Global Avant–garde.

(Text: Michael Hall, May 2008)