



Presentations

Re: WUWA by Maria Kiesner

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Maria Kiesner is famous for paintings presenting the People's Republic of Poland époque architecture, industrial structures, pre-war architecture or Katarzyna Kobro's sculptures. The life itself prompted her with the topic of a city – she was an eye witness of a terrorist attack in New York. The atmosphere of emptiness, silence and bringing the fast metropolis to a standstill became the motive of her diploma thesis which was awarded for searching for a new form of artistic expression. Architecture appeared again in Kiesner's creative activity in her series of industrial landscapes inspired by the 19th-century postcards. In her paintings she presented factories, chimneys and steelworks. Kiesner painted pictures by means of a classical egg technique which was mainly used in the Middle Ages. The author hit a hand-mixed paint against the objects symbolising the technological revolution. On the surface of canvas she left the paint trickling down and in this way she emphasised the role of passage of time. This method of shaping the painting surface came back in the Wrocław series. Following the tracks of antiquarian quests, Kiesner found travel magazines from the 1970s. The topic of empty city spaces illuminated by the specific, contrastive, side light came back. The postcards from the 1960s and 1970s, pre-war Warsaw views and the development of Saska Kępa constituted her subsequent inspirations. The first works devoted to sport structures, swimming pools, towers are created – a series called 'Warsaw Vedutes'. In the paintings belonging to the Wrocław series, Kiesner again 'discovers' classicism of modernism, she uses the best sources in Wrocław, namely, the structures of the Housing Estate WUWA.

I have been observing Maria Kiesner's creative activity for years. I am fascinated by her method of obtaining a clear form out of the chaos of cityscapes. Or the way she enlivens buildings from old photographs covered with dust and faded travel albums. I appreciate the fact that the main characters of her paintings are the objects themselves, while she stays in the background. However, her painting creation does not disappear from her paintings – they have this special type of tact that prevents her from artistic exhibitionism (if we were to look for her emotional attitude to the painted objects, we could



Fig. 1. Maria Kiesner, *Terrace* from cycle *Re: WUWA*, 140 × 110, 2010, acrylic on canvas

Il. 1. Maria Kiesner, *Balkon* z cyklu *Re: Wuwa*, 140 × 110, 2010, akryl/plótno

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Fig. 2. Maria Kiesner, *Entrance* from cycle Re: WUWA 150 × 110, 2010, acrylic on canvas

II. 2. Maria Kiesner, *Wejście* z cyklu Re: WUWA 150 × 110, 2010, akryl/plótno

perhaps find it in the fragments of flaming underpainting showing through here and there from under the top layer of paint. Kiesner can derive a lot from tradition – she has regard for the best ‘portraitists’ of architecture – Edward Hopper, David Hockney or Jacek Modzelewski. However, she quickly comes back to her own characteristic style and her paintings can be easily recognised. The choice of the topic itself has an impact on her style – a simple, modernist structure whose age of glamour has long been a thing of the past – expressive, however not dominating artistic gesture subject to the architectural form. We can see a sophisticated range of grey, beige, toned down green colours set against lively splashes of blue colours or orange accents. And the light – bright and constructive – because Kiesner builds the form of a building as well as a disturbing atmosphere of her works by means of this light.

As opposed to the previous paintings, in which monumental depictions of architecture dominated, the Wrocław series is characterised by the intimate atmosphere of the composition. From an objective observer’s and documentary writer’s view, Kiesner moves on



Fig. 5. Maria Kiesner, *Villa* from cycle Re: WUWA 110 × 80, 2010, acrylic on canvas

II. 5. Maria Kiesner, *Dom* z cyklu Re: WUWA, 110 × 80, 2010, akryl/plótno



Fig. 3. Maria Kiesner, *Sanatorium* from cycle Re: WUWA, 140 × 110, 2010, acrylic on canvas

II. 3. Maria Kiesner, *Sanatorium* z cyklu Re: WUWA, 140 × 110, 2010, akryl/plótno



Fig. 4. Maria Kiesner, *Hotel for single...* from cycle Re: WUWA 100 × 80, 2010, acrylic on canvas

II. 4. Maria Kiesner, *Dom samotnych* z cyklu Re: WUWA, 100 × 80, 2010, akryl/plótno

towards a subjective relation with architecture. A distance disappears. Wide panoramas give way to portraits



Fig. 6. Maria Kiesner, *Hotel for single...* from cycle Re: WUWA 110 × 80, 2010, acrylic on canvas

II. 6. Maria Kiesner, *Dom samotnych* z cyklu Re: WUWA, 110 × 80, 2010, akryl/plótno

of houses. Kiesner observes buildings at close range, presents fragments of forms, peers inside. On the basis of archival photographs she composes forgotten views of WUWA Estate, pays homage to innovative architectural solutions and brings to mind the authors of the design. Although the paintings are simple and determined in their formal aspect, they have intimate character of the observed fragments of the reality. Her previous works were characterized by a certain sort of austerity which was typical of monochromatic compositions. In the Wrocław series this austerity disappears, the palette of colours is enriched and the light becomes more natural and soft. Kiesner depicts architecture without people, but it is by no means empty. We do not deal here with sterile houses not lived in yet or melancholy of the aban-

doned ones. Kiesner paints the form of the house while its owners are temporarily away. There are not many traces of the inhabitants, however, we can feel their presence. A sensual atmosphere of Balcony and Deck Chair is a totally new face of Kiesner. The artist admires not only aesthetic values of the building but also its functionality. In the geometrical system of planes she discovers their purpose.

The artistic gesture of the author is at the same time a gesture of protection. The protection against oblivion and destruction. The protection of a simple architectural form against the excess of ornaments or richness of form. The protection against dirt: the author cleanses her buildings – she tears off unnecessary posters, advertisements, sign-boards – pity that only in paintings.

*Translated by
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Re: WUWA

Cykl obrazów Re: WUWA to dialog młodego pokolenia z klasyką modernizmu. Autorka prac, warszawska malarka Maria Kiesner, sięgnęła do najlepszych źródeł, które biją we Wrocławiu, do obiektów Wystawy Mieszkaniowej z 1929 r. Ideą cyklu jest ponowne „odkrycie” myśli modernistycznej, zwrócenie uwagi na bogactwo kulturalnego dziedzictwa Wrocławia, powrót do dobrych wzorów. Re: WUWA to hołd złożony nowatorskim rozwiązaniom sprzed lat. W odróżnieniu od dotychczasowych obrazów Kiesner, na których

dominowały monumentalne ujęcia architektury, cykl wrocławski charakteryzuje kameralność kompozycji. Z pozycji obiektywnego obserwatora i dokumentalisty, Kiesner przesuwają się w stronę subiektywnej relacji z architekturą. Znika dystans. Szerokie panoramy ustępują miejsca portretom domów. Kiesner przygląda się budynkom z bliska, ukazuje fragmenty brył, zagląda do wnętrza. Na podstawie archiwalnych fotografii komponuje zapomniane widoki osiedla WUWA, przywraca pamięć o twórcach projektu.

Key words: WUWA, painting, Kiesner

Słowa kluczowe: WUWA, malarstwo, Kiesner

