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ATTILA RICHARD

LUKACS

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With a humour that is sometimes abrasive, Attila Richard Lukacs portrays facets of contemporary society that highlight the deterioration and even the complete collapse of its moral and ideological structure.

Lukacs' work, which touches upon values born of an established tradition, is seductive. The artist is an observer, a utilizer who does not hesitate to borrow elements (compositions, characters, themes, etc.) from art history, particularly the nineteenth-century period (Blake, Delacroix, Manet, Courbet, etc.). Lukacs' technical skill, moreover, reinforces the effect of fascination, of attraction: the eye is encouraged to explore what seems, at first, to be a vision of paradise. His huge paintings are peopled with *life-size* (almost always) figures, thus establishing a *one-on-one* relationship with the viewer. The *ground*, that is to say the environment, often includes elements taken from nature (fauna and flora). But through his imagery – pieces of meat (first solo exhibition, held in Vancouver in 1983), soldiers, the skinheads of the current exhibition – the artist obliges the visitor to confront people, situations and sights that



H E A V E N

push him/her towards a far harsher reality. Forced to look into the rigged mirror the artist holds up, the individual is drawn into a realm that is somehow beyond the world of visual or aesthetic experience.

Between heaven and hell, from one painting to another, a certain continuity emerges. Perhaps this thread is woven by the irony that underlies the work (something seems to *jar*), as if we were perfectly aware that it cannot *really* be paradise. And there is the repetition – of characters, of poses, of objects, all manipulated like a language that is articulated in each canvas, accumulating and multiplying meanings, inexhaustibly. The monkey, for example, which represents the artist himself, symbolizing his individual *psyche*.

Judge in his own case, Lukacs reorganizes his social environment, which becomes simultaneously creative material and critical tool. Greedy for images, he devours everything he can lay his hands on (especially magazines), adding to his visual bank photographs he takes himself of models he happens upon more often than not by chance. Drawing on these limitless sources, the artist creates a series of situations that evoke either the means through which the

This Town, 1990. Oil on canvas. 389.8 x 608.8 cm. Coll.: MACM. Photo: Denis Farley

O R H E L L ?

values and ideologies of contemporary society are transmitted, or the weaknesses inherent to its structure and functioning. Each of the paintings thus becomes a metaphor for the gulf that exists between representation of the *ideal* on the one hand, and *reality* on the other. Like the characters he depicts, the social framework within which we live is rooted, Lukacs reminds us – despite apparent social harmony – in inequality, power politics and rivalry. This defect and its causes, which are structural, led the artist to create a work in which he transforms the iconography of Eden, replacing Adam and Eve by *Adam and Steve*. In spite of its humour, however, the practice of Attila Richard Lukacs takes the form of a bitter account, one that offers no alternative *model*. It is up to us to push the reflection further.

Attila Richard Lukacs' family fled Hungary in 1956. He was born in Edmonton, in 1962. After studying in Calgary, he enrolled at the Emily Carr College of Art and Design in Vancouver in 1983. Three years later he left for Germany. He presently lives and works in Berlin.

Z É O Z I G Z A G S



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This Town (detail), 1990.