

ARTUR ŻMIJEWSKI

Review by Bisham Dass

It is said that no artist can ever portray the model world we live in. It can never be one hundred percent true to the ideal, imperfect reality as we know it. His best works will only be variable. Indeed, give one hundred artists a subject to replicate and one hundred versions will result. Try as he may, the artist even with his arsenal of state-of-the-art equipment in harmony with his best impressionist ability is still unable to achieve the ideal world in its absolute. This is because his best abilities are still governed by his brain that works in accordance with the imperfect world and so his works shall also be imperfect, and the artist suddenly realises that he is a prisoner of an inevitable paradox. But there was one Polish artist known as Artur Żmijewski who realised he was also a prisoner of something else – stark reality.

When you enter gallery 1, you enter a different world, or rather twenty different worlds. While the room is bare the walls are not. Twenty small screens shout back at the traveller simultaneously from every direction and perspective one can discover. But they are not shouting in vain, but rather telling a story. Stories of peace, power, politics, religion, struggles and triumphs all rush towards the viewer, each beating with their own tempo. Although each story is so very different, amazingly enough they are all harmonised into one sound; one melody that encircles around one main theme; humanity. Every heart has a story to tell, but not all are willing to tell it. Żmijewski's heart has many stories he is willing to tell, and in this gallery we hear at least twenty. Twenty stories that celebrate human life – and death.

In Gallery 1 – Democracies

Do you remember that time so long ago?

Gallery 2 probes this question into the mind of the observer as he makes his way across the stage. *Our Songbook* directs this question to the Polish Jews who immigrated to Israel during the time of the Second World War. Now, they struggle to revisit times long past in the eye of their minds as they recall their

songs of love, patriotic songs and the song of their homeland – the national anthem. But how do they feel about their very own lyrics and melodies, and even their home language after so long – their once cherished ways now abandoned by distance and time; only the viewer can synchronise with and truly understand what has taken place. But each individual is his own story and his experiences are unique.

The *Selected works Series* portrays this well. The screens are set out just like lone individuals. A single display, a chair and a headset set up in a lone corner of the room helps to set the mood – the distresses of the displayed individual. The screens are presented in groups, but being in their own distinct areas brings to our understanding that although these people interact with others, they are focused upon their own personal lives. Ranging from a street cleaner in Sicily to a cashier in a Polish supermarket, we eventually get the idea that they all experience the same kind of pain, struggles and hardships. Surely these lifestyles will leave an imprint on their mind and they definitely will remember *that time so long ago*, although it is almost certain they would much rather forget it – a conflict they will have to live with for the rest of their lives.

However, *Them* presents a different kind of conflict. This is a conflict of patriotic views, when four groups are brought together to represent their idea of Poland by conceptualising a banner. And so they too are forced to think back. But it seems that everyone lives in their own reality as the results are shockingly different and chaos is soon born in the midst of utter confusion.

In Gallery 2 – Our Songbook ~ Selected Works Series ~ Them

Gallery 3 probes even deeper into the selected individual's personal mind and we finally see them for who they truly are. No longer are people interviewed moving as a group but rather the artist chose to settle into the depths of their minds and we can finally appreciate uniqueness for what it truly is. Amazing stories from flashbacks and beliefs to the observation of a holy journey tell stories unaltered, straight from the heart. And maybe, just maybe we can finally begin to perceive imperfect reality for what it truly is.

*In Gallery 3 – Itzik ~ Pilgrimage ~ Lisa ~ 80064 ~Two Monuments ~
Repetition*

Artur Żmijewski has brought the reality of this imperfect world into a kaleidoscope of human experiences, and like any other artist he too did it with colour, mood, perspective and skill. Just like a painting on the wall, a picture that tells a thousand words - so too did he bring forth words of experiences, wisdom and age. Just like the aura of feeling that the ominous tone of a painting of an alien landscape brings us, so also was the power of mood and emotion that cried out from behind each individual screen. And just as a unique painting lives on in the minds of countless individuals, so too will the exceptional works of Artur Żmijewski.

It is said that no artist can ever portray the model world we live in. It can never be one hundred percent true to the ideal, imperfect reality as we know it. But that is not altogether true. Artur Żmijewski did.

Żmijewski's work is on view at Cornerhouse until 10 January 2010.

Bisham Dass is from the republic of Trinidad and Tobago. He has been working with Cornerhouse as an Engagement Intern since August 2009. While currently pursuing his studies, he has developed a keen passion for the arts and has been involved in a wide range of projects over the last few months. This review of Artur Zmijewski's solo show is his latest work and it is with his sincere hope that you will enjoy it and all future presentations Cornerhouse has to offer.