

Land Art Festival 2017

Road

Looking from above, as if it was a map, at the welcoming area where Landart Festival takes place, that is the Bug river area we will notice gentle river curves, fields, woods, houses here and there and – roads... There are many roads and we notice even more of them when we look from the distance. At first, there will be little paths in the woods, sandy roads across the fields, then asphalt roads, and finally main roads. Eventually – encompassing the space as if with a bird's eye – we will see just lines, grooves, thin threads like leaf veins looked at against the sun or rolling organic lines from an abstract painting.

The theme of this edition of the festival is not restricted to this picturesque and distant perspective. It is man we look for among these paths and roads as it is difficult to find another form which is so close to humanity. A road does not exist without people and people do not exist without a road. The relationship between men determines shapes in space, forms flexible lines accompanying the edges of woods, riverbanks and sometimes takes over the land, cuts aggressively into the soil, in contrast with the gentle stretches of the fields. A road is not an unambiguous phenomenon. In order to bring it to life man cuts down the trees, levels the ground and brings destruction. Sometimes in the course of it what was hidden in the ground gets revealed. It also happens the other way – for years men have trodden it gently with their own feet, leaving its right to nature to rule over it. Roads determine the character of a map-picture, mark tensions that emerge there.

However, let's go down to earth. Earth is extremely close to roads, its matter, grooves and gouges touched by your feet – in the past mostly bare ones, now perfectly protected by shoes. When we think about a road we usually envisage a characteristic, photographic frame with a vanishing point on the horizon which encourages us to walk far away till the very end (of a path, day, energy, life). Man's life is a journey – wrote (and sang) Edward Stachura, one of the great eulogists of roads and wildness. This metaphor seems banal, but it is worth to meditate on what is obvious, especially when we listen carefully to one of them, like the road in Babel Story. Heavy steps of hardworking people, light stamping of children's feet, uncertain steps of strangers, slow marching of the ones who will never come back, rhythmic steps of the soldiers of one of the other army...

Here, in Babel Story all steps resound particularly clearly. One would say they acquired many colours and meanings as the roads do not only get us closer (to reach somebody we need to tread a path) and take us away (our people leave to go to work, town and still further away...), but also mark barriers (it can be completely different even on its other side) and form centres (houses are built on both sides of the road, though the windows people

look at passers-by, it is where neighbours meet, enjoying the summer sun). If we managed to make the roads tell us their stories we would hear the complete chronology of time flowing through them.

If talking about a road we always mean a journey, it would be hard not to ask about its aim, meaning and destination. You can go away, but also come back – go to the roots. On the road we acquire experience and try to find ourselves. In the labyrinth of the roads we can get lost, fall by the wayside... A road is a great metaphor of a human fate, although it does not usually - and maybe that is why – help answering the most important questions. However, there is no doubt that following a road consciously we can find reconciliation.

Suggesting meditations on the road theme, we hope to continue the reflections of previous years, being convinced that the depth resides in simplicity. We encourage the artists to get immersed in the wilderness of the Bug river area, make active comments on the local map-picture, enter the paths marked by the lives of other people (of the once multi-cultural territory) and also follow their own paths, regardless of epochs, continents and artistic strategies.