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site-specific project by Petar Nakov at Sarieva / Gallery, Plovdiv

Text: Ivaylo Avramov

Petar Nakov is an artist working in a specific direction in which sculpture is not a material with density, nor a volume shaped by light and shadow, but rather a woven texture that constructs space. The artist defines his work through interaction with the floor, walls, and ceiling of an interior space. His conceptual approach is related to the structure that builds volume, rather than to the volume itself. He does not partition space in a way that would restrict it or hinder the viewer's observation and movement, but instead works with the depth of the space itself. In the work he presents, the armature structure is the main conceptual and narrative device. The armature is not iron, but a metaphor related to the first Bulgarian alphabet – the Glagolitic script – which today exists in a state of museographic conservation¹. After so many years, it is precisely the latent life of Glagolitic that interests the artist. Its historical antiquity, practical non-utilitarianism, and contemporary marginalization give him reason to employ its visual-spatial categorization, reviving the contexts of metamodernity.

In the paradox of his concept, at one and the same time the script is both a structure and a description of structure. A non-tautological closed system is formed, in which the building element of the structure is the most frequently repeated modular sign from the Glagolitic script. In Japanese printmaking, the word appears within the field of the image, yet it is not the image itself. The same can be observed in Egyptian relief – where the image and the hieroglyphs around it are in narrative contact, but positioned within two different functional-visual formats. In both cases, these texts are needed to clarify the event being depicted.

In a different way, in the artist's work, Glagolitic becomes the primary cause of form-generation, without seeking auxiliary means from the depiction of nature. Moreover, in his case, the character of the sign acts through geometry, proportion, and relation, while simultaneously determining the construction of space. In its existential characteristic, the cube is a modular element that either creates perspective or denies it, turning toward the viewer to provoke their senses as they move their gaze through the structure and attempt to assemble the logic of the depicted. According to the artist, the structure presented has a specific connection to the landscape in icons, often depicted through a cubic, stepped, terraced rock formation in the background terrain. The work includes two interconnected objects—a spatial and a two-dimensional drawing—which are in a dialogical relationship.

¹ *"The Glagolitic script is a unique spiritual creation—it is inherently dual in nature: one of its poles is its completed internal letter-sound structure, the selection and crystallization of its 38 letter-sounds, while the other, opposite pole is its external graphic form—the drawing of its letter-signs. Due to the lack of sufficient unity among the various Glagolitic letter forms, even to this day there is no established standard printed typeface. The letter-signs could not be refined, which contributes to the strengthening of the peculiar, spiritually whimsical graphic character of Glagolitic. This clearly speaks of its rapid and dynamic invention by St. Cyril, rather than a slow and prolonged development, as is the case with its phonetic structure. At the same time, however, with its distinctly individual and highly original visual rhythm in its letter-sign forms, Glagolitic itself testifies to an exceptionally refined artistic taste and a deep sensitivity to visual exoticism, born and seen through the eye of Byzantinism. In 863, the high Byzantine authority set the urgent task of creating an alphabet difficult to write and read for the Moravians, regardless of whether they themselves demanded originality and distinction from other alphabets such as Greek or Latin. It is precisely to an exceptional genius like St. Cyril that it would fall, more than to anyone else, to create the extraordinary 'exotic' visual charm of Glagolitic, because it is most justified to say that his spirit possessed not only the strength but also the ability to draw from the wisdom of science and to gather the honey of the most refined arts of Byzantine beauty."*
Dr. Tacho Tanev, *Talks on the Bulgarian Alphabets*, Eco Print, Sofia, 2003.