



„Überwindung der Diktaturen – Dichter, Künstler und Schriftsteller in der Begegnung.“

Work Description Bucharest PINCZEHELYI, Sándor (1946)

Almost Thirty Years, 1973 – 2002
canvas, print, 2 x 140 x 100 cm

In 1972 I had a long conversation with one of my artist friends about the possibility of creating artworks, which would make it plain that they could only have been produced in Hungary, or in the Eastern Europe of the 1970s. It was almost a given that the five-point star, the sickle and the hammer would be the motifs to be used, as they were the most ubiquitous symbols at the time. My first attempts involved the star and the cobblestone; then, in 1973, I „picked up“ the sickle and the hammer. I showed them up, I raised them in front of my face, and I photographed myself with them in several series; then I transferred these photographs to silkscreen prints. These compositions revealed the isolation from the world and the crucifixion and the shackling of the gesture, in a way that rhymed with numerous art historical preliminaries. But even more importantly, through this act I tried to remove all the unnecessary political overtones that these symbols had acquired. I felt that I had to offload the ideological burden that these objects had collected and then to reinstate them in their fundamental role. A few years later many people thought that this gesture constituted one of the most powerful icons of that age and of Eastern European existence.

These compositions had several variants, with some versions executed in photography and some painted over. In the 1990s I made the so-called „double pictures“, which essentially juxtaposed my older works with a recent composition. I tried to find out how they reacted to each other. In 1999, I completed a „sickle and hammer“ series, where the two tools flew off, leaving behind their vacant spaces. These compositions reflect the constant movement of history and life, creating a new kind of inter-relationship.

My other work shown here was executed in 2002, repeating the pose originally used in the 1970s. The twenty-nine years that passed between taking the two photographs left deep marks on the lives of people in Hungary. Many things changed after the political transition, and people’s attention turned to new structures and new directions. The values became different, or perhaps we think differently about values. The gesture and the movement remained the same, but the two tools have fallen out of the tightly clutched hands, which are now frantically grasping the empty space. Perhaps one day the palms will open and the arms crossed in front of the chest will resemble the ancient gesture of greeting. The portrait shows the joys and the aggravations of the years passed, along with the physical changes, the hardships and the anxieties of the times, mixed with a touch of ironic sardonicism.

The twin pictures record the conditions both as they were then and as they are now, holding up a faithful mirror to the spectator.

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