



Dijana Tomik Radevska

*Seven Deadly Sins, December, 2010*

## ETHICS BEFORE AESTHETICS

“The poor always wants something, the rich wants more and the greedy wants everything.”

Seneca

The most recent project by Dijana Tomič Radevska, titled “Seven deadly sins”, is not intended to resuscitate the religious aspects of this theme deriving from the Old Testament. In effect, she appropriates both the title and the topic, as if they were archetypes or leitmotifs which - by way of new inflections and quotations sourced from one of the old masters - appear to be persistently present in her graphical alphabet. The personal residues of everyday critical observations represent a starting point for artist’s approach to the question of man’s ethical essence, as it may be grasped in the local and global social and political context of today.

Hence, we could perceive these latest prints by Tomič Radevska as a project conveying certain confession, as an internal spiritual purification and inception of her (aesth)et(h)ical liberation. Here, the motifs extracted from the “Cardinal Sins” are systematized in seven distinct narratives which are multiplied in different ways and, in stylistic terms, reach across the figurative and associative to the entirely abstract presentations. This cycle could also be interpreted as a moral breviary of sorts that the artist is using to prompt us about the dilapidated ethical practices of behaving and interacting.

The works at display are made using a time-honored procedure - the woodcut - while the printing itself involves regular graphic art paper sheets, as well as rice paper and tracing paper. There is a particular challenge for both, the artist and the spectator in dealing with the very transparency and tenderness of the rice paper and tracing paper sheets as the means of choice in deliberating over the seven variants of the earlier mentioned motifs. Actually, those transparent materials are coincidentally making a symbolic reference to the frail bodily and to the resilient, incorrigibly sinful essence of man. Further inspection and interpretation of the narrative structure at hand implies and exposes our own inner distorted image wherein like in a mirror, we may see ourselves as spiritually mutilated her(et)ical beings but also as beings which are eventually capable of personal self-criticism, self-teaching and self-improvement.

By way of bastardization and partial quotations, reused quotations and shifts in the inflection, Tomič Radevska is attempting to partly merge her somewhat idiosyncratic enunciation with the voice that her collocator Peter Breughel once had employed in the namesake cycle of prints. As we have pointed out above, this kind of trans-historical dialogue with Breughel’s copper-plate engravings (“Tower of Babylon”, “Big Fish Eat Little Fish”, “Sloth”, “Lust” ...), is reassigned by Tomič Radevska to the contemporary context where in her everyday experiences (similarly to her counterpart from the times past) she discerns and undergoes, in one way or another, the profound degenerative changes in ethical principles.

Applying the incisive linear deposits and condensed motifs, the artist is portraying a labyrinth of differently crossbred combinations. Her rendering of the subject is purposely imprecise in technical terms, inept, primitive and robust in the implementation and featuring a rather reduced palette in the vein of an aesthetics of the ugly, aimed at underlining and enhancing the chaotic depressing picture of the concept in general.



Invidia, woodcut on rice paper, 40x120cm



*Lustful Stories, woodcut on transparent paper*

Making the matrices, carving and plowing the cherry plates and putting them on display along with the prints as sculptures or reliefs is intended to represent the process containing the generative principle of moral corruption. Playing about with the rotating single or multiple printing plates, repeatedly manipulating several stamps on a single sheet of paper, the artist enlivens the dynamics of the inner rhythms, while at the same time makes the narrative structure denser. She opts for the tactics of visible-invisible details which are preciously arranged at different planes. By setting up a cadence of alternating averse and reverse positions of the printing plates (inside and outside of the prints), the artist creates a kaleidoscope out of greed, vanity, sloth, gluttony, wrath, lust and envy - thus, creating and imparting the sentiment of an utter inability of ethical healing of men.

Hence we may conclude that Tomik-Radevska's integral ethical discourse is referred back to herself, as much as it is addressed to us and our complicity because "we all are responsible for everything, while I myself am more responsible than the others" (Dostoevsky). This distant echo bounces off among the prints and printing plates which are making up that everlasting weave of forsaken virtues of ethical convention - it is a call for auto-immunization, a call for resisting that endless circling in the orbit of the immorality. Although this may sound as a lone voice in the desert, it is addressed to ourselves, not only for our individual, but also for our social salvation.



*Anger, flat print, woodcut*