

Tomáš Absolon is widely acknowledged as a notable representative of the young generation of non-figurative painters. He has been developing a highly individual pared-down visual idiom inspired by an intuitive perception of a wide scale of set patterns straddling the borderlines between mathematics, semiotics, and the wider culturally-related awareness of the “web” world. Absolon’s paintings are often at once multilayered and flat-surfaced, featuring in unspecified background and foreground sections differently conceived planary gestures or sharp lines which occasionally function as reminiscences of the aesthetic of poster art. In his turn, Jan Horčík has by now established himself as a relevant typographer contributing to the contemporary international graphic design scene an output of elegant and “luscious” typeface designs whose pursuit of refinement is deployed to equal degrees in the artist’s headline inscriptions and logo types, and in his various calligraphic and freely modified, sometimes experimental typeface forms.

Tomáš Absolon and Jan Horčík are by no means a stable, institutionalized creative tandem. Much rather, they share a particular type of sensitivity, way of thinking, and focus on similar phenomena entailing keen interest in exploring their potential, drawing on information from a common “library of inspirations.” This identical tuning has led them towards a creative dialogue between the domain of lettering and the medium of painting.

The key initiating factor of their work together has been their involvement in variously targeted probes into the character of visual culture in a wider social context (starting with the urban environment and its visual systems, and ending with poster graphic design), as well as into the nature of script as simultaneously a tool and an aesthetic object. In a determined context, script can be regarded as a platform for the demonstration and development of primal aesthetic principles. Script, viewed in terms of a specific design of a visual graphic system representing natural language, is the result of a process of construction of elementary lines and geometric shapes in mutual correlations and ratios, yielding an elaborate drawing composition of variously conceived glyph strokes (i.e., a specific graphic realization of an alphabet icon), and the “empty space” surrounding them. This type of composition can be defined by a whole scale of aesthetic terms (e.g., equilibrium, elegance, delicacy and the like), thereby becoming the subject of aesthetic evaluation. Moreover, this evaluation involves a set of criteria identical to those applied in evaluating works of visual art (i.e., categories such as line, colour, stroke, shape, composition and the like). The fields of typography and painting can thus be seen as two creative modes within the boundaries of a single common domain of visual, aesthetic formal qualities.

For its part, the project entitled PLAKAAT is focused on correlations between the formal properties of script and paint-

ing. The two artists’ inspirational flow here resembles a two-way trajectory where individual output impulses (a painting, a glyph, or an idea related to form or content) brought forth by one artist become the subject of a free re-interpretation and re-working by the other. To be sure, this relationship should not be seen as purely causal and retrospectively retraceable. The individual input data are more than anything else so many “impulses” motivating free creative action, much rather than anything like a strictly defined formal “model.”

Notwithstanding that, comparison of some of Tomáš Absolon’s paintings with Jan Horčík’s posters will indeed reveal the presence there of an interesting shift, a “jitter” that occurs along the vibrating lines of contact between the two interacting media. Contemporary typography is all but exclusively confined within the domain of digital graphic software devices which thus logically predetermining the character of glyphs, notably as regards their “vector” precision, ad infinitum, limitless repertory of stroke detail options, letter hatching and instroke patterns, and visual identity of their various executions all across the scale of available digital imaging devices. However, these two artists are much more concerned with an associated element of handcraft present in the process, entailing deflections of actual execution from the ideal model of a glyph – the point where a glyph slowly, gradually loses its status as a letter/grapheme (i.e., the seminal, indivisible element of written language), and becomes much rather a gesture, manifested either by drawing or painting, thereby assuming the autonomous character of an aesthetic sign that refers exclusively to itself and its formal execution. Some of Horčík’s “alphabets” in fact aim exactly in this direction, in that they concentrate on the material properties and practical execution of specific inscriptions (as exemplified by the *Joe182* typeface design inspired by wall inscriptions done with marker), and elaborate various calligraphic principles (as in the typeface *Oasis*), thereby introducing into the font repertory elements of handwriting. The subsequent spontaneous integration of Horčík’s glyphs into some of Absolon’s canvases ultimately brings this initial gesture to its painterly manifestation. Tomáš Absolon liberally transforms the original script into a purely pictorial composition meeting the structural standards and criteria of contemporary painting. Letter contours are thus washed out and the resulting pictorial symbolism oscillates around the borderline between denotation and its absence. The tension induced thereby then comes to serve as the key interpretational motif on the level of spectator perception: the viewer is invited to engage in a spontaneous gameplay with volatile meanings determined by the artwork’s visuality. The pivotal point of this whole process becomes the very sense of perceptual and intellectual enjoyment of this visual game.



IT'S BIG ZOO WAP FROM  
THE BANDO WITHOUT  
DINERO CAN'T GO