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KRIZ CRUZ

P A I N T I N G



“The work of Izdebski-Cruz joins this dialogue with the art of Michelangelo (and to some extent Raphael, as well), but unlike the vast majority of adaptations of his Adam and Sapientia/Eve, he turns to genuinely Renaissance thinking about the work of art as an entity filled with lofty ideological content. Only two artists from Poland have approached Michelangelo in this way—in the eighteenth century, Smuglewicz in his painting for the altar at a church in Krzyżanowice, where we can see a kind of adaptation of *The Creation of Adam*, and at the turn of the twentieth century, Wyspiański in his adaptation of God the Creator in the stained glass of the Franciscan church in Kraków. In Wyspiański, there is a strong echo of Michelangelo’s famous *terribilità*, missing in Izdebski-Cruz, whose reflex is one of finding the ‘sweetness’ of human features, here named Wisdom.”

Jerzy Miziolek, Warsaw University, 2013

“I like admiring someone who is able to say more about this journey which I am not able or do not want to express. Krzysztof Izdebski-Cruz ranks among such artists. That he has had to act almost in the underground for many years is the sing of our time. In the thicket of media claptrap, it is difficult to find one's way to this true, bright clearing lit by the afternoon sun.”

Pawel Huelle - writer, Gdańsk 2005

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Self-portrait with a Rose. 2005, sansfix, crayon conté, 35 x 25 cm

KRIZ CRUZ

PAINTING



The Great Nude Exhibition, New York, 2010

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B I O G R A P H Y

Krzysztof Izdebski-Cruz is a contemporary artist with a painterly technique that is highly respectful of tradition. He paints in oil and pastel. The works that he creates have a direct link to the technical tradition of Renaissance painting. His subjects, meanwhile, are most often classical, allegorical, and sometimes also symbolic. His paintings are systematically in dialogue, then, with the works of his historical predecessors; often his part in these conversations is polemical, frequently including, as well, elements of irony.

Izdebski-Cruz numbers among the New Old Masters (a term first coined by Donald Kuspit in his book *The End of Art*, Cambridge University Press, 2004).



Eutropius. 2010-2011, pastel on paper, 50 x 70 cm

Krzysztof Izdebski-Cruz signs his paintings in mirror writing using the artistic pseudonym **Kriz Cruz**. The artist was to forge his pseudonym from the conjunction between the first two letters of his own first and last names (Kr+Iz) with the Spanish maiden name of his mother, Cruz. He dates his works 100 years prior to the actual dates of their completion, thereby symbolically omitting the past century, which he asserts was a lost century for art. Into selected paintings he introduces signpost-inscriptions in an organic way, as left-handed mirror writing.





M a r c i n K o ł p a n o w i c z



THE ENVOY OF MR. PINGO

On a silver platter, surrounded by a wreath of plump pears, juicy grapes, downy peaches, glistening apples, and silkily matte hazelnuts, there lies a male head. It is pale, and blood is beginning to congeal at the base of the vessel. The eyes are closed, the mouth is set with the corners of the lips drawn ever so slightly downwards. The hair is ruffled, as though the person placing the head on the platter had just been carrying it by the hair. The painting could be called *Self-Portrait of a Severed Head*—for Krzysztof Izdebski-Cruz has painted himself in this piece.

The Head. 2007, oil on canvas, 50 x 70 cm



IN THE MILIEU OF THE NEW OLD MASTERS

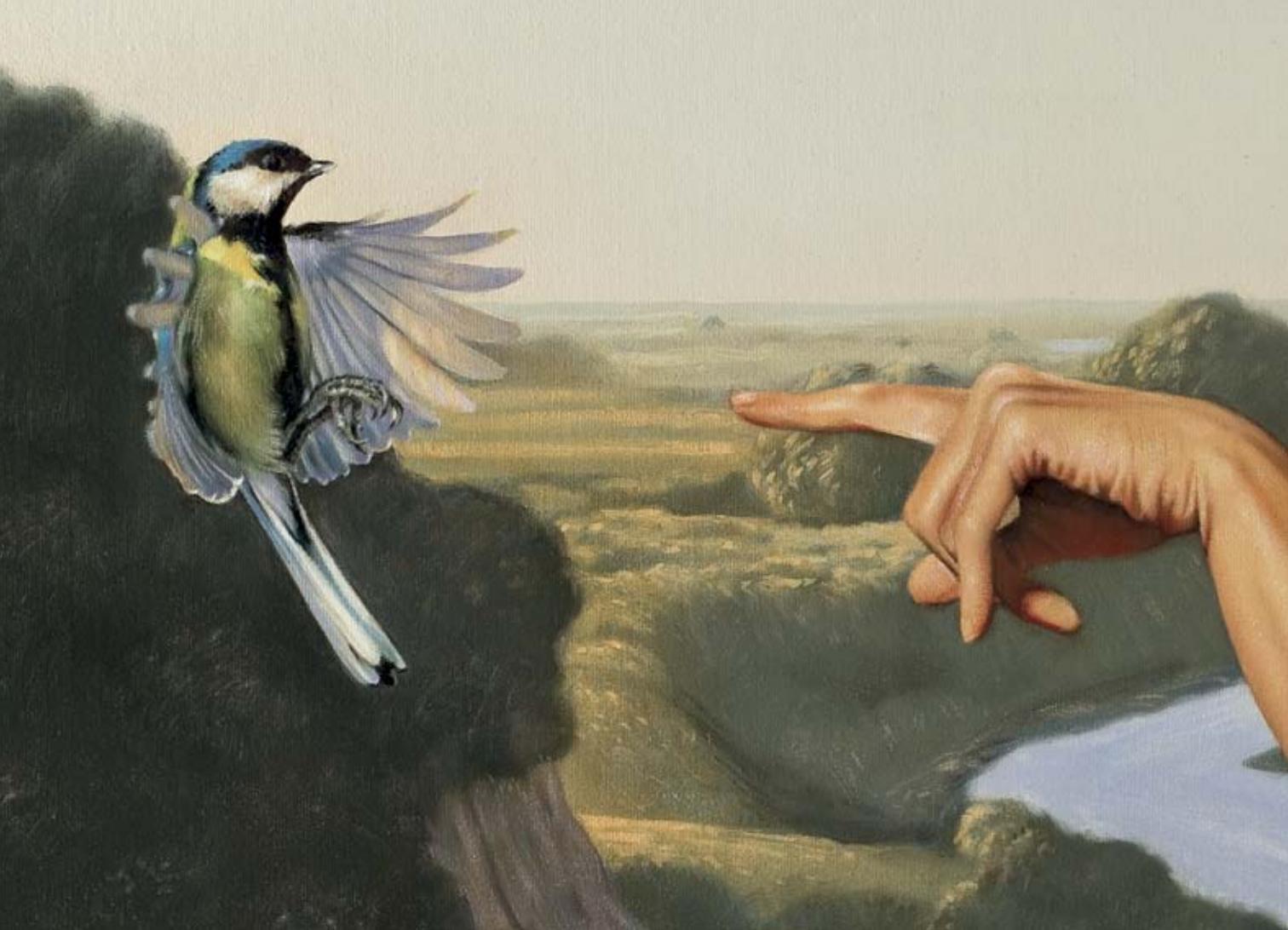
Michelangelo lent his own features to the contorted face that Saint Bartholomew holds out before him (along with the skin from a whole body) in the scene of the *Last Judgment* on the Sistine Chapel. Caravaggio portrayed himself in the severed head of Goliath held by David. Cristofano Allori used his own image while painting the head of Holofernes held by Judith. Each of these artists decided on making such a shocking self-portrait during moments of almost unbearable suffering in their lives. What made Izdebski-Cruz choose such a drastic form of self-representation?

When Izdebski was painting this picture, he was also going through quite a special period in his life. *The New Old Masters* exhibit at the National Museum in Gdańsk (Abbot's Palace in Oliwa), curated and conceived by distinguished American art critic Professor Donald Kuspit, which displayed paintings and sculptures by contemporary masters of figurative art, was just



Green is a Color. 2007, pastel on paper, 45 x 35 cm









history leads to a disastrous confusion of ideas in post-modern criticism and to the creation of a false pantheon of contemporary greatness. Cruz does not have a high opinion of it—he has his own hierarchy of values, which remains decidedly on the side of the classical categories of *kalokagathia*. So it is no wonder that his beliefs make him frequently “that commands us to get out to make a wry face draw out a sneer,” to quote Mr. Cogito once more, “even if for this the precious capital of the body the head must fall.”

Marcin Kołpanowicz, 2013

Marcin Kołpanowicz, painter, traveller, journalist. He works with publications such as *Poznaj Świat* (Meet the World), *Artysta i Sztuka* (The Artist and Art), and *Bliza* (Light House) as a columnist and contributor. He was born in 1963 in Kraków. He studied at the Academy of Fine Arts in Kraków, where he defended his undergraduate thesis in the Department of Painting in 1987. He has organized over 20 individual exhibitions both domestically and internationally. His art consists in oil and pastel paintings that combine an unfettered imagination with poetic metaphor and philosophical message.



Medusa. 2011, pastel on paper, dia. 50 cm

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KRIZ CRUZ / PAINTING

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ul. Armii Krajowej 86/3
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Essay:

Marcin Kołpanowicz

Biography:

Natalia Kruss

Cover quotes:

Ida Łotocka-Huelle
Jerzy Miziołek
Stefania Krzysztofowicz-Kozakowska
Łukasz Radwan
Donald B. Kuspit
Paweł Huelle

Translation & proof-reading:

Jennifer Croft

Photos:

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“But the miracle-worker Izdebski-Cruz does get down to the very core of things in his masterful way, reminding us of the magic and aesthetic function of art that has been displaced in contemporary culture.”

Ida Łotocka-Huelle - artist, Gdańsk 2013

“Krzysztof Izdebski-Cruz is in dialogue with traditional art, which requires of him not only technical perfection but also reference to its particular forms. In Polish art, he is a fan of Jacek Malczewski, which is clear among other places in the polyptych *Self-portrait from La Mancha with Fauns* from 2003, in which the artist is crowned by the goat horns Malczewski so loved. In 2010, he executed a work, unusual in its mood, entitled *Clouded*. This bust of a man with fantastic horns carries on a kind of dialogue with the backdrop of the composition, which is a transposition of the painting of the same name by Jacek Malczewski from 1893.”

Stefania Krzysztofowicz-Kozakowska, 2010

“In today’s day and age, characterized by mediocrity, plastic, and trash, Cruz’s paintings are like oxygen to the brain. They enliven, bring about joy, and simultaneously tell us about the world with uncommon foreshortening. And they give hope that if one day archeologists dig out our civilization from beneath the ruins, they will come across Cruz’s art. It will serve as evidence to them that the twentieth century—and the beginning of the twenty-first—were inhabited by not only homo-debilicus.”

Łukasz Radwan - journalist, Warszawa 2009



“Cruz’s *Self-portrait with Tongue*, 2003 harks back to Dutch and tenebrist models, but perhaps more to the point of the artist’s self-consciousness and self-assertion, it shows Cruz defiantly (and comically) sticking out his tongue at the world. There is a photograph of Einstein, also with tousled hair—but

white rather than dark—also disrespectfully sticking his tongue out at the viewer, indicating, among other things, that a person’s outer appearance is not always indicative of his inner reality and importance. The wit of the self-portrait is more conspicuous than the wit of *Sapientia*, 2003, but the irony involves the same declaration of independence from conventional opinion. One might say that Cruz is self-mocking as well as a society-mocking rebel.”

Donald B. Kuspit, Stony Brook, New York 2006

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Kriz Cruz is represented by:

Natalia Kruss

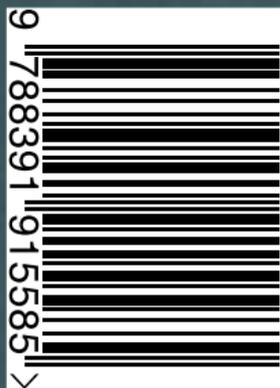
Armii Krajowej 86/3

81-844 Sopot, Poland

e-mail: kruss@cruz.art.pl

For more on the artist please see:

www.cruz.art.pl



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