Krystian Truth Czaplicki: **Interview related to the exhibition Optimised Fables about a Good Life**

Questions: Daniela and Linda Dostálková, Marek Pokorný

Translation: Kateřina Danielová

Krystian Truth Czaplicki answers questions about a good life, well-being and the conflicts this topic causes.

The artist participates in the exhibition Optimised Fables about a Good Life **(22/9/2022–1/1/2023)** at PLATO.

"There is probably no one who has no free time. The office is not a permanent retreat and Sundays have become an institution. In these glorious hours of leisure, therefore, everyone should in principle have the opportunity to wake up to real boredom. But even if people do not want to do anything, something happens to them: the world makes sure that they do not find themselves." (Henri Lefebvre, Critique of Everyday Life, 2014). How do you navigate yourselves in so-called free time?

I think encountering real boredom is crucial in the creative process, because it lets your brain wander in unsuspected directions. Extreme sports are also great stimuli. For 6 years now I've been a climbing enthusiast, so much of my free time is spent at the local climbing wall, where I also teach individual classes and climbing sections.

The tool of the exhibition, which we offer as a kind of supportive element, is the genre of the fables. It is a narrative that somewhat mechanically instructs and provides guidance for the good life, usually in an attempt to impose the truisms and virtues of a given social order on the reader. The identification of man with the animal and his apparent domination over it naturally offers a number of critical and unanswered questions. Who subjugates whom or what, who cares for whom, and above all who is

defined here as an independent subject, are all subject to scrutiny. Could you empathize with some form of fable? Who or what would be its main protagonists?

When I was a child, my mother often read me tales by Hans Christian Andersen. I am named after him. I am very fond of the tale The Emperor's New Clothes.

Is your everyday routine and healthy living constantly chased by unhealthy rituals? If so, could you name some?

I'm a perfectionist and, unfortunately, I often get unnecessarily upset about details that are of no importance.

American cultural theorist Lauren Berlant's book Cruel Optimism is about living within crisis, and about the destruction of our collective genres of what a 'life' is. Lauren Berlant's signature phrase 'cruel optimism' explains further: "when something you desire is actually an obstacle to your flourishing". Berlant argued, where the tools we depend on to achieve 'the good life' — a safety net, job security, the meritocracy, even 'durable intimacy' in our romantic lives — have degenerated into 'fantasies' that bear "less and less relation to how people can live". How the desire for a certain idea of "the good life of the 20th century, the postwar period" (or the belief that if one works hard enough or meets certain conditions, one can achieve it) often prevents people from taking the steps necessary to protect their own interests; to imagine a different possible future. Are you willing to reveal your personal unachievable fantasies of the good life?

I am happy with my life.

Do we choose our lifestyle, or are we chosen by it?

Probably both.

Nowadays privacy means staying offline. Is Screen Time something you can fully control?

Yes, because I'm not on social media, but I like to browse through skateboarding and snowboarding videos via my fiancée's Instagram. Sometimes I also take pictures and prepare posts for her. If you don't do it too often, it is stimulating.

The renowned German art theorist Isabelle Graw (In Another World: Notes, 2014-2017) claims: "one of the conditions of neoliberalism is that the market encroaches on areas that were previously considered 'private' and protected from its evaluative logic — such as the body, health, social relations — making these areas also subject to economic optimization. Thus, even our most intimate lives — our hobbies, relationships, bodies — become essentially cost centers. If we fail to optimize them, we feel disadvantaged. Thus well-being replaces morality, but far from energizing us, it creates its own tyranny. Indeed, when self-improvement becomes the goal, narcissism becomes a disease. Are you working effectively, making enough money, eating right, exercising enough? Are you optimizing yourself?"

It all seems very natural to me, I don't limit myself, I try to do what evolves me and makes me and my family happy.

Free activity stands quite consciously outside of 'ordinary' life as something 'unserious' but at the same time immersive, without temporal and spatial boundaries — and above all without the vision of profit. Since artistic work is often mistakenly perceived as a free activity, do you actually spend your free time doing something other than work?

Yes, mainly climbing and reading books, admittedly most books are about art.

Do you ever have a compulsive need to run away from your own work ethics, schemas, visuality, form, way of communicating, i.e. in general, what you have set as your own rules?

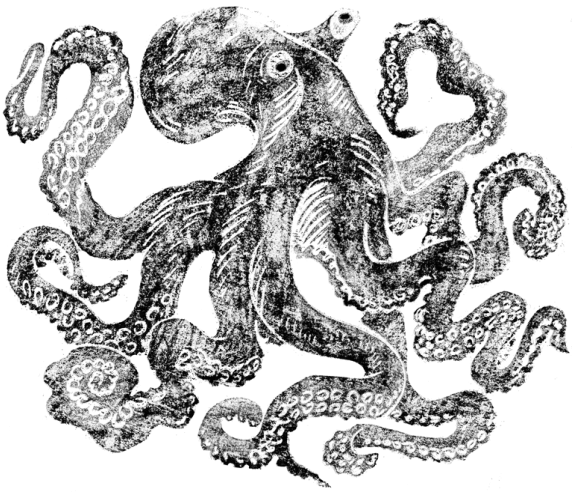
Not compulsive. But I have made shifts in other directions in my work several times in the last sixteen years. It's not easy but it definitely broadens your horizons and refreshes the way you think.

In a moment that we have all indicators that the Planet is going to collapse: Do you feel any conflict linked to your decisions that are intertwined with the production of artworks and environmental issues?

No, since 2017 I have consciously created no more than 2–3 sculptures a year.

Wellbeing seems so self-evidently good that it escapes scrutiny, enabling it to slide from useful tool to expectation; of ourselves and of others. In fact, wellbeing has taken the place of morality. Instead of working to improve the world, we work to improve ourselves. What kind of wellbeing activities of the future can you predict?

If you are unhappy, you will not fix the world, but if you are happy then you have a chance. It seems to me that sports and hobbies that one really enjoys will always be the means to well-being.

Photo: Martin Polák, PLATO

Krystian Truth Czaplicki, born in **1984** in Europe.