

Andrzej Wirth

### **Ela's Book of Symbols Becomes Ela's Book of War**

Ela Wozniowska's cryptograms have, over the years, become the internationally recognisable trademark of the artist. They are her artistic invention, and they describe Ela's view of the world and of art in infinite variations of format, scale, colour and technique (from silhouettes to digital image processing).

When an author names his/her work, the title is often misleading: Ela's cryptograms are not at all cryptic. They can be recognised at first sight as a friendly universe of symbol-like Quarks, which interact playfully with one another. They symbolise elementary emotional attitudes and can mostly be interpreted as anthropomorphic or animalistic human beings.

In tables composed, in always new constellations, they can be "read" horizontally, vertically or perpendicularly. Ela's syntax only knows friendly "phrases", which are an expression of innocence, confidence, astonishment or grace. One feels drawn to a lyric and very feminine tune. Ela's universe is rather lyric than epic, her symbols are image carriers of a harmonious, intact world.

How long can such a hermetic, semantic utopia hold its own against the outside world? Ela's reaction to September 11 provides a remarkable answer. Without allowing the threat of the outside world to

penetrate the hermetic discourse of her art, the artist finds an ingenious solution: the external explosion which is not visible to the viewer leads to an implosion of her idyllic world of symbols.

The friendly symbols lose their coherence, falling out of their syntactic matrix. The stencils left by the silhouettes are convulsively twisted; the cut-out symbols fall, they sink and plummet into the darkness of the painted abyss. What remain are the empty spaces of the meaning, the burnt out eye sockets of the matrix, the shattered pixels.

Ela's twisted silhouette stencils are an obvious reminiscence of the burnt out aluminium frontal shells of the WTC towers in New York. Without leaving her esoteric ground, the artist illustrates the terror of our times as an apocalypse of symbols, as the burnt out locus of meaning, as the infinite death of the denomination. Ela's book of symbols has become Ela's book of war.

Andrzej Wirth, 2002