

Peter Panyoczki at Bath Street Gallery  
Parnell Auckland (2.Dec. till 19.Dec. 2009)

## Nature Morte – Still Life

### A brief statement

The literal translation from French “Nature Morte”, is “dead nature”, and is the equivalent of “Still Life”, wherein - *still alive* - might reverberate. An interesting pair of oppositions.

This ancient theme in the history of art, often contained religious and allegorical symbolism, relating to the objects depicted, has not lost its fascination. On the contrary, contemplating the inanimate, the neglected details of everyday life’s objects reveal surprising beauty.

The allegoric and symbolic aspects of nature have grown into my work during quite some time. The natural processes, the traces they leave behind in time, their growth and decay, help to express and understand our own condition. According to an old religious and philosophic concept, which reaches into the more recent theory of Semiotics by Charles Sanders Peirce, the universe is a “book”. Unfortunately we seem to have lost the ability, not only to read ourselves, but also the nature and the world surrounding us. We have lost the key to decipher them. Nevertheless, if we contemplate nature or one of its aspects, our glance is not innocent. Our perception is constantly “subtitled” and superimposed with an associative monologue of what we know of the perceived object. As a constant murmur of the “stream of consciousness”.

In this group of work I try to reveal these very aspects. I use 3 different code systems:

- the transformed imprint of the light on our retina, i.e. a realistic representation of an object (e.g. an apple, an egg, a banana)
- an English text, which is superimposed over the image
- a text in Braille, the code system for the blind, which is set on top of the former two layers

There are also 2 strings of a “narration” in this set of works. One is a brief leap over a long period in art history, reaching from the ancient use of material to the digital and changes in styles, depending which “glasses” we are wearing to see our world. Each viewpoint has its own set of (aesthetic) rules.

The second string shows e.g. in 3 steps (triptychs) a movement from the ideal to the real, from the whole to its fragment, from the perfect to the imperfect. These steps are exemplified by their respective images and overlaying texts, excerpts from religious-mythological sources, from philosophy and literature. The works involving matter (stones, cement, oxides) in their techniques, translate Maori creation myths into Braille, as a quest for the origins of all things. Another couple of works contain a wonderful poem in Braille on “time” by T.S. Eliot (“Four Quartets”).

Allegorically I have attempted the impossible, as an expression of my personal hope maybe, to create a kind of a Rosetta Stone, that ancient Egyptian artefact and “key stone”, which was instrumental in decoding of Egyptian hieroglyphic writing. Only this time, to find a clue in reading our world.