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SUBSTITUTIONS – A Postmodern Suggestion of Image Configuration and Reading

Summary of the Ph.D thesis

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If we want to find the answers specific to the new, to understand the nowadays art we have to look back. The elaboration of the Ph.D thesis entitled **SUBSTITUTIONS – A Postmodern Suggestion of Image Configuration and Reading** (in painting) represented an opportunity to study thoroughly, to consolidate, to interpret the possibilities of approach and representation of the reality data, to simplify their plurality, to create and diversify the abstract language, also having as a purpose to change mentalities, the philosophy of the social and individual life.

The professional concerns related to finding new ways of configuring the image in personal creation often determined me to go back to the past in order to understand and assimilate the ancient masters' lesson. The impressive diversity of the plastic expressions registered in art history represented a substantial lesson in my seeking, in my formation. This research work offered me the motivation to resume the path covered in order to consolidate the personalized conception of my own creation. At the same time, it is an opportunity to go deeply into, to rediscover the way this information was received, processed and interpreted in order to merge with my own vision and to be transposed into workshop practise. It was necessary for many of the approaches of the pictorial macro universe to be resumed during the definition of my creative micro universe. Starting with the periods of experimentation of the figurative representations meaning to reproduce as closely as possible the fragments of reality in order to observe and study proportions, to understand aspects related to perspective, I have got through different stages and questions related to them, which have found their answer in time's art. The same thing happened when solving some problems related to image composition, form construction, its simplification and geometrization up to abstractization. Directly related to the level I was at a certain moment, I manifested my interest in a specific artistic issue correlated with the sensitivity compatible with certain painters. This way, I have lived the process of creation as going back in time, in the 20th century, due to the amazing diversity of the approach possibilities, of representation and simplification of the recognizable forms, of formation and diversification of the abstract language, representing the basis of my investigations. In my opinion, it is important to

know the art of the past. Only assimilating it we can transcend it, because the contemporary art has the same importance, and referring to it I can consolidate my personal style. Taking into account these three aspects I have structured my Ph. D thesis into three chapters:

Chapter I –***Romanian painting in the 20th century***

Chapter II –***Abstract configurations in Romanian painting***

Chapter III –***Modalities of configuring the image in one's own creation***

The first chapter of the thesis, ***Romanian painting in the 20th century***, as the title suggests it, proposes a short insight into the pictorial space of our country, into the complexity of the ideas tackled with, which imposed a series of subchapters that point out the beginning of modernity, the Romanian “historical” vanguard and the European context, representatives.

The mimetic representation, until the beginning of the 20th century, was an integrant part of plasticity, meaning that artistic emotion expresses through figurative and narrative. Little by little it is reached an independence of shape and colour, the forms of manifestation being innumerable. The periods of experimentation of figurative representations under the influence of various creative visions were followed by stages which had as a purpose to clarify the various problems related to the diversification of the palette, to the application of the complementary colours, to using pure colours, to construction problems, simplification of shapes going from geometrization to abstractization. Retrospectively looking at the Romanian artistic movement we may notice that the vanguard –unprecedented phenomenon, also had an important role with social and cultural implications at a national and international level. Pathfinder through new reformulations of the methods of plastic expression, by experimenting new techniques, it brought about the theoretization of the creative act. It is also remarkable its synchronism with the European artistic movement, offering to art some famous names – subject developed in the subchapters dedicated to the vanguard. The incursion made into the sequential stages of the development of Romanian painting -mentioning the artistic centres on the territory of our country, painting after World War II, the avatars of the communism, –postmodernism and contemporary art –reveals us the language

acquirements and the specific contribution to the cultural patrimony. The complexity of the theme implies a very extensive study impossible to exhaust. That is why I intend to point out the essential moments which determined new attitudes and aesthetic orientations in painting aiming at the revolution of shape and colour.

The nineteenth century anticipates and prepares the great changes which started in the plastic art at the beginning of the 20th century, from Western and Central Europe, their echoes being also experienced in the art of our country after a short lag. These aspects have been analyzed in the subchapter „Premises of a new aesthetic framework”. Scientific revolutions, demographic expansion, increase of the travelling speed are factors with major implications on human psychology. This way there appear major modifications of the perception of our environment, of time and space stimulating painters' imagination in favour of creation. So the combination of the various emotional elements becomes a characteristic, the art being oriented towards the problems of human existence. Invention of photography, its acknowledgment as an independent art, determines important changes in vision psychology and also a great influence on painting orientation and the succeeding of the artistic trends. While photography takes over the closest possible reproduction of the model, the work of art loses its utilitarian character and tends to find, by means of rigorous pictorial methods, new ways of expression. The painting becomes a composition, with its internal laws, support for multiple experimentations, registering in time various possibilities of configuration.

In our attempts to present the plastic creations in a coherent, authentic form, we notice a permanent substitution, interference, transfer of languages which may lead to new and various plastic reformulations. After the insight into the interferences between the figurative and the abstract, the shapes of the daily reality have been interpreted until they became elements of the composition with purely plastic features. A shape may be expressive and full of significations even if it does not describe something specific of the environment. So, chapter II, ***Abstract configurations in Romanian painting*** proposes a summary starting with the semantic definition of abstractionism, pointing out the appearance of photography as a revelator of a new visual concept, up to the analysis of

the artistic phenomenon as a whole. Then, as a parallel to the first chapter, I analyzed what happened in the world during the same period, from the currents which anticipated the impressionism to the new conceptual approaches in painting. After a long period when the plasticity of a painting was supported by the narrative and the figurative, gradually, new attitudes and aesthetic orientations led to the conclusion that the painting may have the same plastic qualities without being necessary for the image to have correspondence in the real world. I focused on the way the abstract art has been experimented in the world to be able to return then on the territory of our country and to make a compressed analytical incursion into the world without objects of Romanian painters.

During this travel through time, in order to consolidate a personal style, I noticed that, to a certain extent, I have covered a similar path. Starting with the presentation of the figurative composition repertory as close as possible to reality, I have gone through different stages until understanding that nature reproduction doesn't always mean representing the visible as it appears, but grasping the essence of things and understanding nature's guiding laws, which structure it. The last chapter, that is chapter III -***Modalities of configuring the image in one's own creation***, may be considered a guide for reading the image, an indispensable intermediary for a good reception, understanding, interpretation.

The analysis of the stages covered for the configuration of the painting entitled „Noi” (Us), introduces us, step by step, in the intimacy of the painting in order to discern the ways the plastic space is organized in and the ideatic framework which suggested the idea. The account of the aspects related to the execution technique, the ways of transformation of natural structures into artistic structures is developed in the subchapter *Secrets of a painting*.

I have noticed that in the pictorial space, many of the basic chromatic composition principles registered a certain constancy. The constructive system of the plastic space essentially has as a foundation certain types of composition which did not lose their validity in time. In the multitude and variety of the ways of plastic expression the colours are based on the same theoretical principles. The new attitudes and aesthetic orientations cannot radically detach from this operative, co-ordinating nucleus.

Analysing this aspect, I have come to understand the transformations produced in time, as a result of the substitution of the elements of plastic language within the perimeter of these eternal principles.

On the other hand, analyzing the evolution towards the purifying of the shape I have noticed a logical and unavoidable path, each stage having a well determined role, the reformulation of the plastic speech always having in view the examples of the past in order to overcome them. The meditations on these matters have generated the idea to experiment a plastic exercise, which was new to me. Starting from a particular personal work previously executed, entailing various substitutions I have tried to give birth to a new work, which in its turn should become a source of inspiration for the next work. In the end, all these works became independent works, with aesthetic individualizing implications, without any glimpse of this inciting game I was drawn into. The works executed in this ideatic context were presented to the public a few years ago, the exhibition having the generic title „Substitutions”. On this occasion but also other times, I could notice the way my paintings were perceived. The dialogue with my visitors reinforced my conviction that generally speaking a work of art is perceived and judged in a direct relation with a series of factors which define the human structure. The degree of culture, of education, the hereditary features influence the potential of understanding. The way of configuration of the visual representations, being in a perpetual change, makes the receiver get constantly involved into the informing process, deciphering and reading the signs specific to the art language. In this respect, I have also included in the last two subchapters some observations or personal opinions related to the reading of a work of art. A few fragments of a series of articles and critical notes published in newspapers and magazines at the exhibition of my works in public spaces exemplify how the creation was received by the specialized public.

Conclusions

Period of emancipation and effervescence, the 20th century includes multiple transformations, unprecedented in art history. The compressed incursion in the plastic Romanian space revealed the Romanian painters' effort

to keep up with the innovations generated by the revolution of shape and colour at European level. Characterized by a large opening to different and multiple styles, to the art of all times, the postmodern art reveals itself through a multitude of stylistic ramifications. The artist of this period focuses on the modern experience but by means of new and various plastic reformulations, he aspires to transcend it without definitely annihilating it. In fact, among the multitude of tendencies it is possible to bring about the vanguardist principles of breaking off and continuous innovation. In this situation, nothing remains but to witness a permanent and repeating substitution, interference, language transfer, which will melt into new authentic configurations.

In the attempts of presenting the plastic creations in a coherent, authentic form, I noticed a permanent raise for discussion of the plastic language. After the insight into the interferences between the figurative and the abstract, the shapes of the daily reality have been interpreted until they became elements of the composition with purely plastic features.

The various and innovating plastic reformulations orient the act of artistic creation towards other forms of action, according to some new value categories, this way imposing a different approach of the *reading* of the works of art. For this reason, the receiver will still feel a certain difficulty to assimilate, to interpret because he is subjected to a constant effort of information, of deciphering the signs specific to art language. Art is meant to educate, to open people's soul and reason for a good reception and interpretation; it sets one thinking, it invites to mediation, it raises questions and it gives answers. The one who looks at a work of art has to understand that it is not just a comfortable delight without any intellectual effort. Its reading does not confine to the simple joy of discovering some recognizable shapes and it should not be received directly related to the subject or the narrative. The true value of a work of art is given by the harmonious co-operation of the modalities of plastic expression by whose means the idea, the subject is transposed and by the opening it has to the possibilities of interpretation.

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