

ROMANIAN LANDSCAPE PAINTING IN ART MUSEUM OF IAȘI

Summary

Key words: landscape, oil painting, art history, art genre in its own right, art movement

This paper describes the journey of landscape painting in art history, a journey which begins with first mentions of landscape painting and culminates with modern interpretations of this art genre.

This paper identified a number of representatives of landscape art, which emerged and developed in European art, as well as in the Romanian space. The first two chapters deal with how the landscape became an art genre in its own right in European and Romanian art.

Chapter I: Short account of landscape painting as an artistic genre in its own right

Art history shows one's tendency for converting objective reality into artwork. Nature becomes essential to art as an existential background. Even if nature has been glorified as an art subject for a long time, it was a slow journey for landscape art to be in its own right, which began with the Renaissance. Gradually, landscape art is perceived differently, no longer as a simple background of portraits, but as the subject of artwork itself.

Along with impressionism, landscape art evolved and brought innovations, then avant-garde movement highlighted inner emotions, overshadowing the landscape as a subject.

Chapter II: Landscape as an artistic genre in Romanian painting

Modern Romanian art was influenced by French art. One of the first Romanian landscape painters, Theodor Aman, pursued his art studies in France. Grigorescu and Andreescu walked on his footsteps. The latter came in contact with Barbizon School, and succeeded in turning the landscape into a well-represented art genre. The same subject, nature, is treated by Grigorescu and Andreescu very differently, regarding the attitude and the emotional investment.

Modern Romanian art usually portrays nature in a realistic or sometimes optimistic manner, using appropriate colors. At the beginning, the prevailing theme in the landscape art was beautiful picturesque landscape and idealization of rural inspiration.

The visual language of landscape painting has gotten changed by the Balcic school, which made significant contributions. Later, the urban landscape painting is converted and transformed by the

artist's sensibility. Elements of modernity are added in a subtle connection with the natural elements.

Chapter III: Analysis of Romanian landscape painting in the Art Museum of Iași

The next chapter, „Analysis of Romanian landscape painting in the Art Museum of Iași”, debates landscape art from three points of view: the work of landscape painters in Iași, characteristics of rural landscape, landscape art painted by women.

Landscape art is well-represented in the Art Museum of Iași, as it holds approximately 350 works by more than 50 painters, created from the beginning of 1830 until present.

Listing the landscape art creators of Iași in the Art Museum, we acknowledged the existence of many types of landscape art: landscape in pure form, where there are only natural elements, landscape-composition, landscape-view, marine landscape, city landscape, rural landscape.

Landscape painting in the Art Museum of Iași displays a journey of landscape art as an art genre. This journey begins with landscape in the easel painting, then the art of first graduates of Fine Arts School, then the landscape in interwar and postwar period, to how landscape is manifesting now. This journey marks the most important moments in the Romanian landscape art, as it evolves from its first manifestations, as a background of portraits (Giovanni Schiavoni, who painted in Iași), to being a genre in its own right (beginning with Ludovic Stawski). Later, with Nicolae Grigorescu's outdoor painting, landscape art secured its spot as an art genre.

With the inauguration of Fine Arts School of Iași, landscape art makes significant development. This progress is visible especially when the first graduates brought the influence of modish art movements from big European cities, where they would extend their artistic studies. Fine Arts School of Iași finally embraced outdoor painting after a phase of academic strictness. The first who managed to paint in that innovative way was Emanoil Bardasare.

Interwar avant-garde movement impacted the Fine Arts School of Bucharest more than the landscape painters of Iași. We consider the art of Iași a spiritual product of this city, as its geographical location gives a certain poetry, and it is the visible result of an integrative evolution, as a result of interference with international art movements.

Romanian art was influenced by artwork created by Grigorescu, Andreescu and Luchian. Ștefan Dimitrescu and Nicolae Tonitza brought some major innovations to the Fine Arts School of Iași, which were made under the influence of the master leaders and the influence of European art.

There are some influences we can distinguish in landscape art of Iași: impressionism in Mihai Cămăruț's work, expressionism in the work of Nicolae Tonitza and Corneliu Baba, cubism in the work of Ștefan Dimitrescu and Nicolae Constantin. Moreover, the analysis of contemporary landscape art of Iași revealed the tendency to assimilate modern influence and combine it with myths, Romanian folk motifs, in an original way (the work of E. Șt. Boușcă or Dimitrie Gavrilean).

Our research has shown that there are many artists who painted landscapes before the first Fine Arts School in Iași was inaugurated (1860) and their artwork is little known. Even after the inauguration of the two main Fine Arts School in Iași (1860) and Bucharest (1864), landscape art was not mainstream, it was rarely practiced or placed as background for different compositions.

The Art Museum of Iași has an important collection of inter-war paintings, fact that helped us determine the sources of interwar Romanian art: the echoes of European art and modern reinterpretation of folk traditions. In postwar period, a number of artists proved their talent in landscape art.

The second part of the third chapter investigates the rural landscape found in the Art Museum of Iași. As aforementioned, Romanian landscape in its own right is introduced later, so rural landscape as visual subject turns up in a certain social, political and ideological context.

The traditional countryside was frequently idealized (Aman, Grigorescu), and seldom presented realistically (Luchian, Băncilă, Ressu), or presented through traditional and folkloric outlook (Ion Grigore sau Dimitrie Gavrilean).

Exploring the rural landscape in Romanian painting in the Art Museum of Iași, we concluded that landscape became self-sufficient, as Nicolae Grigorescu started painting his landscapes outdoors.

The avant-garde movement influenced Romanian painters. Rural landscape exposes the influence of impressionism in the work of Nicolae Dărăscu and Mihai Cămăruț, or the influence of expressionism in the work of N. Tonitza and Octav Băncilă.

In our research, we noticed an important number of landscape paintings created by women, who had a major impact on Romanian art. Therefore, the last part we approached in the third chapter is the analysis of women's art. Women's art began in interwar period and continued through postwar, as the social and historic conditions made their affirmation possible. An important role for their affirmation had the female art groups from interwar based on guild solidarity.

In the first decades of the 20th century, women experience acceptance in European art studies. The first Romanian female painters flourished and developed their artistic skills outside the country, in private schools or workshops in Western countries (München, Paris, Liege).

After their studies in the Western countries, women had to make a name for themselves in Romania, in a small, sexist art world, controlled by men. Associations for promoting women's art were very helpful for them. Cecilia Cuțescu Storck established „Women Painter's Association” („Women Painter and Sculptor's Association”) in 1916, which operated through 1927. Its main objective was setting up exhibitions and defending professional and moral rights of its members.

Other associations were „The female circle” and „Small Female Entante” (1938), that managed to alter, to some extent, the public's taste for women's art, that indicates the emancipation of female artists. Women's artwork got displayed in galleries in Romania and purchased by collectors.

Landscape art of interwar period was greatly used by women, they operated on many types of landscape: urban landscape, seaside landscape, mountain landscape, and we found all of them in the studied artwork. In the postwar period, landscape art turned into a propaganda tool. The favorite type of landscape of that period was industrial landscape, which showed the big building sites and constructions of socialist society (Iulia Hălăucescu, Simona Chintilă). The other landscape artworks by women in the Art Museum of Iași from postwar period are following two main directions of work, the one initiated by Corneliu Baba and the other one by Alexandru Ciucurencu. Other women maintained the prewar course, and others trialed modern formulas, for syncing with Western art. There are modern art movements in parallel with traditional figurative art, and women try and gradually experiment the modern avant-garde visual language.

Chapter IV: Landscape in own art creation – Personal contributions

The presented artworks are merely at the beginner's level in the landscape art, and they are conceived and based on the personal preference for a subject. This is the fourth chapter of our research and the subject of an art exhibition along with the public presentation. On a general view, the exhibition is heterogenous, but the landscape is the unifying motif. However, in this diverse group of artworks, we can discern three main branches: urban landscape, where the buildings hint a static imprint, the natural landscape, connected to seasons and finally, atmosphere landscape, that deliver a dreaming feeling.

On a conceptual level, the personal collection of landscape art is based on the theme of untainted nature, the spot where no human presence can be found. The natural scenery of specific seasons is found with its beautiful characteristics and wide areas of vegetation. Unaltered nature is found in atmosphere landscape, as well, where the landscape's purity is presented in a magical way.

Sources of inspiration were plentiful: nature itself, artwork of famous landscape painters, original or altered photographs and personal fantasy. Therefore, the themes of personal art collection were natural scenery (of different seasons), atmosphere scenery, urban landscapes featuring buildings.

With regards to technique, choices were made based on personal experience. First option was using acrylics, as I had worked a lot with them in the past. However, famous painters' artworks showed me the diversity of impressive effects that oil painting and watercolor have, so I was brave enough to use them for the first time in the workshop. Thus, I learned and gained some experience from using these two techniques, and I created some of my landscape paintings with them. Although I have a personal preference for strong, pure, intense colors, I managed to tone it down and sometimes embrace a more pale and varied color palette.

In conclusion, the personal artworks can be considered a personal creed of landscape creation.