

University of Art and Design Cluj-Napoca

Visual Arts Department

Summary of Doctoral Thesis

The avatars of the painting.

Complexity, ambivalence and doubt in today`s painting

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The doctoral thesis entitled “Avatars of painting. Complexity, Ambivalence and Doubt in Contemporary Painting” aims to trace the norms and values of the existing or outdated contemporary painting and to bring an outstanding pictorial direction in the current artistic context. The present approach is based on scientific research, aiming to combine a logical and coherent structure (argument as introduction, theoretical exposition in three major chapters) and an annex chapter on personal contribution to painting. The present approach is based on scientific research, tending to combine a logical and coherent structure (argument as introduction, theoretical exposition in three major chapters) and an annex chapter on personal contribution to painting.

The space leads to visual experiences gained through our participation. A special interest emerged from the memory of industrial landscapes, and the characteristic ways of pictoriality, in this project, start from the evocative meditations on this type of space. I could talk about a phenomenology of space in relation to that of spatialized time, referring here to the temporal characteristics of events: continuity, succession, duration, simultaneity, which in the surreal pictorial formed hypostases of the events of such industrial frameworks. Taken as a simple structure of existential and architectural space, with the characteristic geometry, these images always imply a location or a direction. One dimension aims at the vertical transcendence, if it is still valid in the current context, and the world of human actions is directed by a horizontal line. Thus, our emotional experience arise a variety of spaces.

The theme of the industrial landscape in painting, current in the contemporary artistic context, was approached from the perspective of the artist found between the social, political and cultural landmarks conferred by the showcases of Ceausescu's architectural nationalism. This landscape, built in concrete, invokes the national specificity reconstructed from propaganda, formulating today a current and different affinity and artistic expression, whose themes are not under the influence of beauty. The documentation of the research project starts from a series of photographs of some industrial spaces and is extended in exploitations of the hypostatic staticity or of the hypostatic within the filmic space. In his essay on cinematic poetry, "Sealed Time", Andrei Tarkovsky spoke about the density of time in the frame, understanding by this the emotional intensity and the semantic richness of the represented world.

The present paper aims to reach, through the three existing chapters, certain concepts related to the structure of spatiality, related to the existential data, but also to existentiality; to the various forms of the spatiality of vision through spirituality and the ideality it entails being related to the human self, and the last chapter brings into discussion the contemporary pictorial space. The thesis entitled “Avatars of painting. Complexity, ambivalence and doubt in contemporary painting” marks the connection between the perceptual space (with references to the existing industrial landscapes in our country), the spaces of vision (brings into question the industrial landscape at the border of the sacred space, the idea of fullness-emptiness, the trajectory of space from vacuum to occupational, the space of the human self in the profane industrial landscape or the image of the human presence through the traces of its inhabitation,) and the pictorial space as an autonomous form of existence (here I refer to the manifestation of the pictorial between contemporaneity and temporality painting, and to personal contribution to painting, at the end mentioning short theses related to contemporary art).

The introduction of the paper explains the complexity and vastness of the topic in general. Starting from the argumentation of the choice of the topic and the predilections towards this subject, as a research benchmark for this paper I set the landscape- as a complex research space. From this perspective, I tried to outline the different elements and levels characteristic of the existential space by reflecting it in various fields. Comparing the approach of landscape in painting, recorded in the History of Arts more strongly in the apogee of Renaissance painting, or more perfected with the development of oil painting, part of the paper will try to suggest the correspondences between perceptual and pictorial space. The recognition of the determining role of the Impressionist and Post-Impressionist current in the artistic processes of the twentieth century is noteworthy, that later, with the strengthening of the figurativeness of contemporary art, the value of the landscape is determined by other perspectives assigned to the work. I mention that the historical study of landscape art is not in itself a centre of interest, but I tried to make an analysis of the concepts and methodology of approaching the landscape located in certain periods, relating the pictorial treatment of landscape to the notion of “mimesis”.

Mimesis is an idea about art, which appeared in Plato and Aristotle, who considered art to be an imitation. It was later generalized to all the arts, these being seen as imitations of the real but also as forms related to the unreal by their specific nature. Plato speaks of this concept claiming

that mimesis is "an imitation of imitation." Later, he develops the idea that art is a creator of illusions, not just imitations. Of course, one of the most common clichés is related to the imitation of art towards life or rather towards the environment. Having a definite face, the image is destined to appear, so the formal adequacy to the model taken by the artist and the realistic fidelity adopted can arise various artistic practices today. If Plato's philosophy of image has served throughout history as a reference for "mimesis" reflections, today's art requires conceptual retreats, reformulation and intervention, transforming and shaping what we call real space. Finding from this a metaphysics of resemblance and repetition, but in another form, snatching the form of a reality, the mimesis is thus formed as a duplicate in another sensitive space, even under another image. The sensitive space that this act of mimesis entails starts to the imaginary destination subject to gaze. The detached from the subject gaze, or as it would be said, through it, but which obliges the viewer to a contemplation through which pieces of the pre-existing surreal of his experience are imprinted in the personal imaginary, giving rise to correlations between art and real space.

Jean-Jacques Wunenburger's conception of the issue of the image brings to the fore its importance as an object of reflection. The problem of mimesis, as a form called to become an image, highlights the image-copy comparison with that of the subject. The form, through the image, is thus called to exist for the second time. As of people it can be said that they produce works. Created as a copy or as a more or less similar image, this image exists through its duplicity. It also maintains a minimal distinction from the primary or pre-existing reality. And when we talk about pre-existing reality through ideas, values, divinities, they have the characteristic of images formed by doubles. Their physical impalpation defines their status. In this sense, Wunenburger explains very well the image that has a mythical substratum: "Precisely the experience of a similar double (above mentioned as double images) is at the mythical origin of the image. In the Greek tradition, the enigma of the image is often associated with Apelles' painting which, through a few traces left by his hand in the matter, makes the very form of Aphrodite appear. For Sextus Empiricus, the resemblance appears in the painting even when it is not expected: "One day, while painting a picture and wanting to represent a foaming horse, he angrily gave up and threw on the painting the sponge with which he was wiping his brush, which had the effect of leaving a trace of colour that resembled the horse foam." Since then, the discourse on image has not ceased to question this confusing property of the image that allows it to reproduce something, to give a reply

to reality, being at the same time something other than the real, or even the absence of an obvious resemblance.”

We are surrounded by things that we did not create and that have a different structure from ours. We recreated them in the imagination, with the imprint of our moods. We therefore have an existing reality, one mentally reproduced in the form of the imaginary but also born from experiences related to a real, fashioning in the form of memory, but also a reality related to their own creativity and to the work of art as a form of autonomous existence.

The subchapter *The dissolution of communism and the strengthening of figurativeness in art*, briefly presents the type of figurative developed in art, especially in painting, located somewhere between hyperrealism and photorealism, which would be reflected in the eastern area, in societies whose consequence was a totalitarian regime. On the flip side, the socialist realism of the West will enter the contemporary market as a current together with the phenomenon of globalization. The different forms of the figurative assigned their norms to a contemporary painting by the simple fact that their way of approaching the present was contemporary.

A special interest is also the *Space of Otherness. Mutual Influences Between the Two Planes: One of The Narration Space and One of the Narrated Space*, an important subchapter with a very current theme. The term otherness, closely related to that of identity, is a concept that is formed through speculative thinking. “Although opposed, the two notions have the same subject in mind: things are the same and at the same time different; defining the subject of identity which can be its own subject, and “otherness” another, of its own identity, simultaneously accepting the organicity of that whole composed of the differentiation of the same truth.” (Constantin Deheleanu).

I will not insist on juxtaposing the terms otherness / identity, although there have been sufficient reflections from Plato to Levi-Strauss or Carl Gustav Jung, but I will try to go through the premises of a territorial otherness by joining Gottlob Frege's remark on identity that said that it cannot be defined because any definition is, in fact, an identity. What is interesting and supports a somehow similar behavior, but in the sphere of biogeographic surreal or territory, so to speak, is the act of transgression. Transgression, through the very form of including a territory, excludes what lies outside the delimited area. It therefore possesses this edge which is in a permanent

transgression by a duplicated force - that of the interior to the outside and vice versa; or that of the marginal to the central area, inside to outside, etc. What is certain is that this delimitation entails a permanent state of taking possession of a territory. Therefore we can talk about territorial otherness, starting from the idea that such a space undergoes a permanent change, always being under the appearance facet.

The space and the industrial buildings have a sustainable aspect through the concrete or iron walls that delimit them, hence the idea of their timelessness. They escape time, their usefulness and the original message being changed today. There is both a change of meaning of the industrial space - of course they no longer function today as large factories of society; as well as changes in the industrial surreal that are born under the image of a maïdan. The power potential, related to the buildings of the former industrial plants is symbolically reborn in the central-marginal formula, opposite to the period in which they were made. If then there were spaces populated by people and evidence of the prosperous society that made them, today they are only abandoned spaces, located on the outskirts of cities, a kind of residual spaces, being abandoned. We thus have the image of a space that has lost its usefulness over time. It is that area that has a double limit, it is neither a natural nor an urban space but it has something of both. It is the urban waste of society or the underground place, a combination between the wild natural landscape and the industrial buildings in ruins. Among the traces of concrete and iron bars, the overgrown weeds hide on the round pits and ruins. The hostile nature of the landscape is ennobled also by some flowering plant bloomed with the help of the sun`s rays and the drops of water flowing through the broken ceiling of the buildings. This vague space is certainly not a secure area in its community sense, but it has the manifestation of a free space since it cannot be controlled. It is a maïdan and the maïdan is also a place of memory.

The consciousness of otherness in this case places the notion of human self on a different plan from the existential data. The self is placed in the surreal of the industrial landscape at a contemplative level, evading the permanent ordinary life in which it identifies daily. In this form, although it is an uninhabited space, the industrial landscape becomes a place of refuge for those „I”, „you”, or „we” the misunderstood of the society. The image of the industrial landscape now becomes the frontier that requalifies these empty spaces and proposes them as an aesthetic alternative.

In the case of these abandoned buildings, although they were once monuments with a specific image of the Romanian „working” people, today they become not so much a symbolic place of that bygone period, but an aesthetic of urban waste through which the subject "I" seeks its identity and its value in today's society. It is a transformation that no longer relates so much to the national specificity, but to the universal one. Like "this matrix space, high and indefinitely wavy, and endowed with the specific accents of a certain sense of destiny: the mioritic space" characteristic of Blaga is overcome by the effect of globalization, while forming an era of relativism. Thus, the doina, the field and the longing, specific elements of national identity are replaced by a culture of memory, characteristic of the South-Eastern Europe countries. We can therefore say that the space of otherness implies an inaccessibility related to the location, but also mental, social and cultural aspects. We can talk about the space of otherness only by referring to something or making a comparison through that something else. It is the space beyond, but it can also be from here. And the a priori influence makes him stand on one side or the other, to differentiate itself by things that distinguish "I" and "the other".

Chapter 2, entitled "The Ideal of Vision Spaces. Imaginary Plastics. Material Essences and Spiritual Essences in Pictorial Poetics" makes the transition to the speculative plan of the imaginary. In this approach, the issue of space located somewhere in the sphere of the imaginary, brings into question also folds of landscape memory and the changes that can occur incessantly by report to the reference object. Although the buildings of the large industrial plants, in their period of operation, were the mirror of the prosperity through work of the former dominant regime in the country, today they show more a space left by ruin. Empty but with energy potential. Peaceful but with a force that can go as far as violence. It is therewith full of affection. It is an inside and an outside. It is the symbolic reinvestment of me or of the other and the symbolic place of self reflection. Between order and disorder, all this emptiness evokes the abstract visual metaphor of the struggle of the ego, where the fragile is not only visual, but in fact can involve a symbolic form state. This space-time gives rise to over-meanings, which take part in the imaginary space and which are found through the expression of inner identity value.

First of all, I tried to start from the notion of void, as a backup space. The subchapter „Void, Monument (ality), Memory. Transitions and Limits of the Theory of Spatiality”, brings into question the controversy of the constructivism of empty or full areas. Both the full and the void

describe first of all the trajectory of a space. A space that seeks to achieve a continuity by intertwining different planes, fluidizing the geometric construction. The multiple escape lines that compose antithetical directions, transform the immateriality of space into a landscape in full narrative. Both fullness and emptiness are ultimately determined by the liminal reflections of a force to create a reflective space through its very geometrization. On the other hand, geometrization of this kind generates openings delimiting spaces capable of absorbing or emitting pressures. What is certain is that they have a permanent resistance to force. I mentioned above about the act of transgression and the fact that the idea of defining a space is put in opposition to the notion of form. On the one hand, the position of the center towards the edge arises a permanent force and the contouring of the space by the norm also gives rise to its precariousness by the fact that what is in the marginal part of the demarcation, can always possess it. It is not about a full or empty space, but about breaking some boundaries that place them on one side or the other. At the same time, we can talk about the issue of space starting from the epiphany of the "center", as a different spatial location from the periphery. In this way, the space becomes a personal one because the need to center starts from the connection "I" in relation to "the others".

We should not limit ourselves only to linear or plane geometries, although there is a convention to construct in this way. We could say that from empty to full or vice versa, the multitude of drawn shapes make the connection between the different planes of perception. If the full expresses the organic expansion of a volume, the projection of a vacuum is constituted as a medium. Or we could say that the full puts limits on the inside and the empty on the outside. In either case, the antithetical ways of expressing space alternate according to another significant determinant, time. The densities built inside and outside of something, generate a transit condition with a temporary character. Thus, the trajectory of the vacuum movement towards the occupied spaces implies a different dimension of temporality. Simultaneously, it is a condition that underlies our human actions. The vacuum consequently acts in a spare space with an occupational character through the prism of the temporal character. At the same time, it has a capacity that flexes the inherent potential of a volume. From void to shape, the spatial extent has the determination of a transition space. Formulating the three above mentioned premises, I tried to approach formalizable and informalizable phenomena of industrial landscapes of this kind. The characteristic geometry, the combination of straight lines and distinct planes between full and empty, bring to the fore the

issue of the contemporary landscape through its very temporality. Although the void symbolizes an absence at first, rather than a thing in itself, reversed it turns into concrete forms.

The transition from a void to what we call form traverses a circuit that is always under the shadow of time. The frame-moments leave the impression of the freezing of time and its focus on the industrial images transposes the idea of the freezing in its own narrative. At the same time, certain alternations of spatiality accentuate the temporality of the landscapes. In this form, industrial constructions can evacuate their materiality, becoming communicating members between interior and exterior. The industrial landscape is represented more through the prism of the senses, becoming what we called as being a communicating space. In this way the geometrized space acquires a landscape condition, namely it disappears in the landscape of its own spatiality. This kind of spatiality does not formally delimit, but contributes to the construction of a dialogue environment between the form and the narrative of the pictorial. The catalyst landscape challenges the viewer to contemplate the fragility of the construction. The landscape is created primarily to give the viewer the feeling of entering another world. The gray character is specific to the place. Sometimes, however, a green oasis, even artificially green, is intentionally placed through simple ways. The geometrization of the perspective and of the panorama are furrowed by some areas of light, which gives the impression of some territories untouched by man. Thus, the landscape, as a reason, gives birth in the heart of the viewer to a form of research that by extension, more than what nature offers, is constituted in the whole existence. The filter of inner sensitivity always reaches through certain areas of light the possibility of soul fulfillment. The slightest vibration of light is rendered in the perspective between near and far, between illusion and light. The landscape is seen as a form of emergency and waiting. Its approach is beyond the real or imaginary construction where the frames overlap. This landscape involves an expectation, something that can happen but also the probability that it will not happen. Thought as a contemplative look, its form transforms materials into objects and spaces into territories.

About the notion of monumental in the sphere of the industrial landscape, it can be said that it is different from what is required by the greatness of the size of the construction. The issue of the monumental is emphasized in the present text from two possible directions of its

interpretation. One perspective is the one above mentioned, of an ample construction, and in a reverse direction, that of the commemorative space, which does not necessarily imply the idea of size in its characteristic. The monumental attribute is clearly underlined in the architecture of the industrial landscape of this kind and its intrinsic magnitude links the three common M's between monumentality, monument and memory. The clear dissociation between monumental and monument is done automatically when the latter tends to be a creation of an event meant to remain in the collective memory. A possible monument of the industrial landscape by evoking images from the communist period does not serve as a commemorative eulogy for that period. The clear distinction is made in the form of updating the subject of a past, under the clear pillars of presence. "The monument is the place of articulation of all places and of the communication of all events, a synthesis of the different spatial and temporal levels, an expression of its continuity and its will to resist the avatars of the present and the future" (Ciprian Mihali). Thus, the images of a past become a reason to remember not what happened then, but a current issue of approach. Not present eulogizes the past, but the past becomes the contemporary edifice in which the only valid landmark is given in front of the sense of presence. Of course that once we bring into discussion the temporality of a monument we refer to the memory that that industrial building has, but what I want to emphasize in this case is that these industrial buildings were not made for commemorative purposes, so we do not reduce them only to this. This junkspace becomes a living geographical space because it preserves the traces of its habitation, but it is simultaneously the expression that can give meaning to survival. Since escape time, by not dying, they preserve their durability but suffer changes of meaning. And the landmark that always remains visible is the materiality from which these structures are formed, so it can be said that the non-religious sacred is therefore composed of the metaphor of the materials existing in themselves.

Another important part in the ideality of the spaces of vision consists in trying to shape our sense of presence through the occupational void traveled by the creative (mental) path and manifested in the pictorial one itself. The attempt to build the space is made by shadow gradients or by light reflections. These can be as informative as the corners or planes that provide compositional perimeters. To this end, I entitled the next subchapter "About an Attempt to Build the Void." This is where personal intervention takes place through different methods of approaching space. A next step would be the transmission through painting of the force and

emergence that such spaces can have, followed at the same time by the recomposition of the plan of spatiality with that of the pictorial, trying different ways of their formation. As a result, this route starts from nothing and becomes something. Or it starts, at the level of the imaginary, from the mirroring of the real, forming later as an ideal space and place of formation of the qualitative essential through the artistic expression. We also discussed the idea of infinity, since in the space of the imaginary, by multiplying and subdividing spaces from the perceived reality, or more simply, our experience with it, is reduced to the realm of the practicable, through a permanentization of the unseen. The unseen lies in us, in ourselves, which would therewith deduce that the essential is within the individual. The only thing that betrays what we imagined as being an ideal space remains the detail, the detail through lines or color, through light or shadow, a reshaping through the virtuality of an ideal space. A detail that can suggest something or even nothing, presence by absence or emptiness by full. Yes, a space can be empty - in the sense of a space devoid of action by real human presence, but it can be full in the idea that the human self engages in the narrative of the displaced space, by engaging both in trying to dig up the memory of that empty space, as well as by finding a solution that brings a saving inner evolution so to speak. What comes to me is an attempt to exploit through these industrial landscapes something other than how painting and composition can become a way to anticipate and change the way to perceive the world and life. Where the attempt to evade the constraints of any scientific work makes the pictorial one even more valid. There is, consequently, another part of the world and outer space that belongs to things that we cannot understand, but only accept them as such. The latter require attention and sensitivity.

The meditative empty space is an open space. Its limits express the duality of space, that of constructing an inner void as a meditative space. In order to open to the outside, this space must first of all be contemplated and understood as such. Any aggressive attempt to penetrate it alienates him even more from the one who wants to know its form of existence, manifesting even a reaction of withdrawal in itself. At the same time, space refers to permanence and to the possibility of transcending the abstract through the possible different frames of thought. With some background ambiguity, the boundary between real and unreal is easily confused. We could attach to this meditative empty space the vision of the inner space, respectively of the outer one. The inner space, folded in the vision of the abstract as an analogous, archaic and organic one, forms frames around the center of interest, circumscribed in another common inner plane. These

attachments of different planes continuously evoke the possibility of change, the interior space being also mirrored in the manifestations of the extrovert.

The subchapter „The Interior Space Seen from the Outside vs. Gaston Bachelard's Outward / Inward Dialectic” has as its main feature the questioning of the determination of artistic creation through what has been accomplished as the final form of art, as well as the contemplative gaze that the self strives to debate. The formulation of all reflexive statements also determines the multiplication of the number of enigmas. In the form of alternative speech, which includes both doubt and indulgence, the inner space here supports the feelings of the artist's creation and its outer form is revealed through the so-called pictorial space. And to try to debate a theory of pictorial space, it would not be possible without the reference of the visible one. Between the pictorial and the visible space, as two ways of formal organization we can find analogies and similarities. Being quite difficult to give up any of them, these plans, although different, are always in correspondence with each other. In painting, we can say that art introduces into the phenomenology of colors a dimension of the ideal and the qualitative. Compared to the visible space, the pictorial space and more, its organization is established on an ideal plan of existence. With or without the external elements of connection, the artist always chooses to figure the individuality of things or to present something unreal. It can also be located in the middle between the two, not respecting the outline of things but introducing an appearance of speculative objectivity. The vocation of the image remains in the case of the arts, and of painting in particular, an intentional creation of images. Painting thus allocates a cumulation or an entire expressive force of images.

Drama of intimate geometry, the simplest image that Gaston Bachelard puts before us through his outside and inside dialectic, leads us to a space-being in which tension and anxiety certainly exist through image-spaces, seeing in them the manifestations of their causality. The whole force of the two opposite terms allocates an image concentrated in an intimate space as small as possible. In a vast game of space, we can see that many times, everything related to the simple determinations of space takes second place. Thus, returning its place to the space, the meditating being must be free in its thinking.

Light is the main element of this dynamic perceptual field. A contrasting place is formed in front of the heavy shades of gray. The purification of forms can be pleasantly felt in its light. In terms of void, the light can function as a revealing emptiness, the vacuum being materialized in its own dispersion. Becoming a method of informing the visible, the materiality and immateriality of space generates a state of introspection and reflection, as a manifestation of the sacred in the profane. The last subchapter in the second part of this thesis places "the industrial landscape at the border of the sacred landscape", as the name defines it. The hierophany of the distressing space, the empty space or „mysterium tremendum” are some of the topics covered in this subchapter. The elegant fusion of indigenous socialism and the references from Tarkovsky's films give rise to a thoroughly cleaned space. In the industrial landscape, materiality becomes the important landmark of the secular world. The construction processes of the non-religious sacred are composed of the metaphors of existing materials. The stone, the concrete or the piles of cement and iron structures produce synesthetic effects throughout the landscape. The use of gray and burnt shadow makes direct reference to the uninhabited vestige, building the calligram of the contemporary self found in a permanent paradox. All will end in the ashes, from there new threads of life will be reborn. The mirroring effects also support new and new life possibilities. Not only the action of involving the presence is resurrected by the geometrized space, but also the behavior that the human body can have in relation to a space of this kind. The viewer is able to descend underground, where darkness is predominant. This process suspends any spatial orientation and the sensation of pressure makes its immediate presence be felt. Beyond the evocative value of the industrial space, the feeling of pressure also induces an emotion, a fear to the one who goes through it. The direction of crossing the light is made in a unique way and the only oasis of hope becomes the cross section of a light slit that reflects on the concrete structure of the building. Concrete, iron and all heavy materials must become a sensitive presence. As heavy materials, they can suggest a concrete idea through the independence and symbolism of the material, but this representation becomes beyond a hard matter a means of expression that acquires a multitude of meanings.

Chapter 3 encompasses the sphere of pictorial space. Starting from personal reflections in painting, the project was born in a period of questions and turmoil and along the way I tried to channel the personal interpretation of these spaces in another direction, trying to propose a visual strategy in order to develop the artistic environmental action on the way in which the subject of

the landscape and the theme of the void, end up being built in a certain historical context. Therefore we can say that we operated with a decontextualization. A decontextualization of some images taken from a precise context, without the aim of the documentary recontextualization through images. I did not want to create a space, but the illusion of a space through which the paradoxical presence of man is negotiated. They are, so to speak, the states of intimacy and familiarity that our own gaze suspends in an attempt to surprise itself, and the inner self is marked by the carnal condition suspended in the void of its own materiality. The absence of man in painting and in the industrial landscape allows the accentuation of the human way of life. The territorial alteration seen from the human self to the outside offers a mysterious time aspect. It is as if the self closes in on itself, being suspended between the past and the future. The landscape always becomes one of probability, as much as the viewer decides to contemplate it, not just to look at it, confronting the instability and fragility of the environment. The geographical boundary of the spaces does not have the role of confronting the eye of the viewer. With a fluctuating geometry, the space and the viewer always change their position, decentralizing from the state of heavy materials and structures to the organic and visual balance of matter. Open to interpretation, the landscape covers a permanent desire to search for the self. At the same time, the characteristic elements of the void bring a reversible permanentization of the vacuum.

The subchapter "The Actuality of Painting between Contemporaneity and co-temporality" brings to the fore the dialogue between the great movements, groups, or artists from modernity to the present vs. contemporary painting. I did not do a study related to a classification of artists from contemporary art, as I brought to the fore themes and subjects from the works of artists related to certain current social currents (as a trend), discovering painting between figurative, non-figurative or abstract -painting and at the same time placing it under the sign of relativity.

Figurative painting was without doubt one of the most widespread areas of technical research of the artist. Since antiquity, formulas have been sought to achieve the representation of the figurative as correctly as possible in relation to reality, later in the Renaissance this defining factor reaching a peak by rendering a reality as natural as possible and introducing perspective in painting. Although it may complement an earlier style, art is made with the contempt of a previous period. Here is how the derivations of Impressionism and the modernist movement gave rise to the idea of "the reality of the representative factor (not represented), in other words the

quality, texture, material used" (E. Cirlot) prevails over its faithful rendering. So we can make the transition to abstract painting, not necessarily being part of it entirely. It is possible to speak of Derrain as a figurative painter, but at the same time he leads to Cubism by emphasizing plans and volumes. But the way in which a painter breaks so decidedly from the traditional figurative art, along with the renunciation of perspective-based representation, is under the cubist foundation of Picasso, Braque and Juan Gris. And perhaps in a more comprehensive sense of cubism we can join Francis Picabia, Marcel Duchamp, Marie Laurencin, Maria Blanchard, or Lyonel Feininger, the first two of them heading for the Dada spirit. The anti-artistic manifestations of the Dada group but also the anti-war manifestations do nothing but ignore any rule that aimed at the sensitivity of artistic expression, adopting a nihilistic attitude that militated, better said, for the expression of nonsense. Picabia's lyrical painting and Duchamp's readymade are found in the sphere of the abstract with valences in the ironic symbolism, characteristic of the object art or the non-art object proposed by the latter. The figurative painting was without a doubt perhaps one of the most widespread areas of technical research of the artist. Since antiquity, formulas have been sought to achieve the representation of the figurative as correctly as possible in relation to reality, later in the Renaissance this defining factor reaching a peak by rendering a reality as natural as possible and introducing perspective in painting. Although it may complement an earlier style, art is made with the contempt of a previous period. Here is how the derivations of Impressionism and the modernist movement give birth to the idea of "the reality of the representative factor (not represented), in other words the quality, texture, material used" (E. Cirlot) prevails over its faithful rendering. So we can make the transition to abstract painting, not necessarily part of it at all. It is possible to speak of Derrain as a figurative painter, but at the same time he leads to Cubism by emphasizing plans and volumes. But the way in which a painter breaks so decisively with traditional figurative art, along with the renunciation of perspective-based representation, is under the cubist foundation of Picasso, Braque and Juan Gris. And perhaps in a more comprehensive sense of Cubism we can join Francis Picabia, Marcel Duchamp, Marie Laurencin, Maria Blanchard, or Lyonel Feininger, the first two of them heading for the Dada spirit. The anti-artistic manifestations of the Dada group but also the anti-war manifestations do nothing but ignore any rule that aimed at the sensitivity of artistic expression, adopting a nihilistic attitude that militated better for the expression of nonsense. Picabia's lyrical painting and Duchamp's "readymade" are found in the sphere of the abstract

with valences in the ironic symbolism, characteristic of the object art or non-art object that the latter proposes.

From the spatialism of the works of Fontana, Jean Fautrier, Jean Dubuffet with his special mixtures of resin, sand, pebbles, coal and rubber; Wols, Bernard Schulze, Wilhelm Wessel, at Hispanic schools where we remember artists like Antoni Tapies, Modesto Cuixart, Antonio Saurra as a representative of action painting in Madrid, Rafael Canogar, Luis Feito, or Manolo Millares, joining artists from the European space such as Alberto Burri, Lazlo Fugedy, Horia Damian, Joroslaw Serpan, Ruth Franckern, Karel Appel, Mattia Moreni or Enrico Donati. And at the same time, mentioning a continuation of informal painting, manifested by post-informalism, which proposes artists like Enrico Castellani, Dadamaino or Piero Manzoni, or to serial abstractionism accompanied by illusion specific to Vasarely, while later on more and more artists introduce neon lights in painted geometric shapes forming also sculptures-installations from them. Also in the field of kinetic art is the art of the Brazilian Almir Da Silva Mavignier, the Dutch Jan Schoonhoven or the Argentines Martha Boto and Hugo Demarco whose works manifest issues about colour and movement by integrating repetitive geometric shapes.

Spatialism vs. informalism, the issue of light-color specific to Rothko, pop culture and the development of graffiti art better known as street art are some of the topics of this conclusive chapter that encompasses the term of contemporary art / painting. From the Bauhaus School to the current artistic environment that includes also the digital space, the artist's pressure to work simultaneously with the need of the art market, or more recently to "fabricate" a painting / drawing with the help of robots (the case of conceptual artist Leonel Moura) are some of the topics debated in this chapter through the directions that the contemporary art supports, always included in the relative terms.

Virtual reality also entered the museum. The palace in Tokyo inaugurated in early 2015 a space dedicated to this new environment, a year later also Switzerland establishes MuDA (Museum of Digital Art) in Zurich. Although it can be a solution for mass tourism, it puts the viewer in front of new and parallel worlds. Nicolas Thepot proposes in such spaces a 360-degree painting cycle, related to the obsession of Claude Monet's waterlilies, which is nothing but a sensory exploitation in which the visitor is placed in the point and place of creation of the artist. In fact, in 2015 DiMoDa was founded, Digital Museum of Digital Art, a platform where you can

digitally browse well-known works of art but also temporary exhibitions. And in Paris there is Atelier des Lumieres, a space also dedicated to digital art, where Van Gogh's painting was proposed as a subject of night landscape, on a musical background.

A return to figurative painting and more, combining those recurring themes born in society as ecological, feminism, minority, transgender, etc., contemporary painting allocates space to all possibilities, both abstract and figurative. From the real illusion of photorealistic painting (G. Richter, Borremans, Vija Celmins) to the more defined brushstrokes that incorporate the epic paintings of Yan Pei-Ming or the figurative "alla prima" specific to Tuymans or Marlene Dumas. Raedecker's obscure landscapes, images of courtyards, plants, bungalows, which are in fact familiar objects alongside night tones, in which the interior and exterior reminiscent of the landscape are combined with a narrative in which the strange makes its presence be felt. Neo Rauch vs Peter Doig, or John Currin and his works which are between the renaissance treatment and the limit of kitsch, moving to the area of Afro artists (Chris Ofili, Hurvin Anderson, Lynette Yiadom-Boakye, Toyin Ojih Odutola) and other trendy artists forms the subjects of this conclusive subchapter from the contemporary space. In fact, this subchapter allocates one last place, as a conclusion of what a contemporary painting (with all the meanings it implies) should contain to Kiefer's works that produce an impact both in size and juggling, in the most serious way, of the sensations that his pictorial expression constantly debates.

In conclusion, or rather drawing some conclusions about the spectrum of contemporary art, the last chapter, the shortest in fact, formulates "short theses on contemporary art", while opening the permanent possibility of denying them or to constantly formulate new and new statements regarding what we call art. One of the current artistic theories places art somewhere between the artifact and the work as a production of something, meaning the inclusion of both the action of creation materialized in the form of an art object, or the artifact that might otherwise be missing. With Duchamp's ready-made, the equivalence of another object with an original conceptual proposal as an artistic artifact transposes art into an always open way of existing. And since it is permanently linked to its open character, it can be said that everything is art. More recently, we are our own artists with the self as a work of art. We wear masks, we transform our

appearance or our bodies according to the existing beauty trends. This is where the somatic aesthetics of man is born. Art no longer means just an artifact, but can be a current lifestyle.