

RESUME

The present research conducted within the framework of the doctoral thesis entitled *Facets of love in contemporary painting* starts, on the one hand, from personal concerns as an artist and on the other hand, the analysis of forms under the theme of love and its different faces manifests itself in the context of contemporary art. Interest on the theme starts from the presumption that love is a form of crowning of human existence that offers refuge to a man in face of the tumultuous existence. Love is the point of reference that gives us balance, makes us dream, that initiates us in the search of itself, in order to understand ourselves.

Primordial force, placed at the origin of the Universe, love was always attributed the ability to exceed the human condition in order to bring the great mysteries of existence. Through love, man goes above and beyond the isolation in the Universe, loving we do not only commit the simple act of sharing ourselves to another being, but we resize the world, deepening more and more in our individuality. Omnipresent throughout the entire history of creation, the theme of love can be found in Visual Arts, literature, or music in various forms. Constantly under the auspices of transformation of ages, of historical contexts changes, of stylistic rules, of social change by electing their own customs and moral codes, feelings have always retained the same value. The contemporary society we live, speaks often about love, with the belief that this would be the point and culmination of any meaning in life giving it the justification and fulfillment of everything.

According to Xenia Osthelder, in *Sexualia from Prehistory to Cyberspace*, every generation has its own style/ conduct to love, their own way of interpretations of love and eroticism, own way of perceiving the body sexuality. In this work we aimed to highlight how the perception of love has been influenced by changing the ratio between soul and body. In the Occidental society a society of overconsumption, the body and soul identifies itself with sexuality, glorifying its supremacy by omnipresence in all artistic media, in popular culture, in TV commercials and magazines, expanding the privacy to the public domain.

At present, according to Aurel Codoban, the signs register has changed, privacy and corporality sphere are extended, while the notion of privacy is redefined by the body transformation into an 'object' and its marketing. By marketing the body, and its body experiences, it comes to mind the question: how is it possible to talk about the soul without

speaking in the same time about the body? In contemporary society, sexuality has become its own sign, it is no longer masked, it represents itself. The validation of sexuality as a sign, occurs in the context of bodily communication. This type of speech gives the value of 'true love' to sexuality. Everything becomes more experimental, less a priori, there is a form of love, the lover serves as a development partner and sexual exercises. Sexuality is denied its mystery, becoming a simple skill that must be learned. This sexual permissiveness, gives sexuality a social status of form of socialization, commercializing/ selling the body by turning sex into a merchandise. This speech has affected the perception of the eternity proposed by the love-passion type, in which the idea of eternal love, happily ever after, is redefined. The image of love, considered the equivalent of an eternal relationship, is altered, losing its mystery, is gradually losing the character a priori, transcendental. The vision of love proposed by the society of overconsumption is to perceive it as a substitute for moral debt, while its place was taken by pleasure.

Love as social and cultural practice brings into attention the body, because the body is the main way a soul reveals itself to another, so the body becomes a simulacrum of the soul. In the traditional sense, love proposed looking for the soulmate, that completes and fulfills the one in order to form a whole. We can extend this statement at the body pair level, the other complementary-I, conferring completion and identification with the Absolute. Referring us to the approach of the new generations, they have replaced in the present the unity with the difference and diversity, as if the body would be the one that transmits all the feelings and not the soul. At present, the sensations felt by the body prevail the feelings, the soul.

In the present research we aimed aspects of perceiving the body as a soul simulacrum and as a transmitter of contemporary artists emotions, of their own intimacy, sexuality and sincerity. This thesis is structured in four chapters, in addition to the introduction and conclusions. The research opens the debate by presenting the key terms of this paper, we recorded in the first chapter general questions relating to the forms that love embodied in various myths and famous legends.

A key moment that we consider definitive in describing the theme of love is the myth of Eros in Greek philosophy. In Greek philosophy there are four terms that define the types of love: eros (passionate love), philia (brotherly love), storge (familial love) and agape (selfless love). Eros is considered to be equivalent with excruciating love, underlying love relationships within the couple. Eros is not only the relationship of love between two people who become objects of desire for each other; it's also about eternal love, primordial love. To

illustrate the kinds of love present in Greek philosophy we recorded the myth of Eros birth, in the work of Plato, *Symposium*. Plato gives us a sense of the symbolic meaning of love. He gradually reveals the kinds of love, in the dialogues of his characters, referring to the love given by tradition, earthly and heavenly love, love-giving balance and harmony, love present in comedies or love felt by a young man in love. Plato associated Eros with good and the beauty, love being beauty creator_ in its strive to acquire good for eternity.

The typology of love has reported at different historical periods, all peoples of the world have experienced the cult of love, representing it through different depictions of deities.

Next we recorded some early forms of deification of love in the guise of prehistoric statues of female with exaggerated sexuality forms; in the Babylonian civilization the goddess Inanna called Ishtar; in the civilization of Ancient Egypt the goddess Isis, in Ancient Greece Cupid and Venus. The pattern of these deities borrows representations of human existence, they arose as a symbol of personification of human emotions, the intimate unrest, elevating these experiences to the mystical level. Symbolic images. those deities, became a source of inspiration for artists and a pretext for the artwork. By deification of these mythological figures, is emphasized the triumph of love as an irresistible force, that you can not oppose it, overcoming yourself.

The theme of love was a source of inspiration for many myths and legends since the beginning of humanity, they captured various positions / sides of love, such as the perpetual search of soulmate, unfulfilled love, the passionate love, devouring. In this research we considered a number of myths concerning the image of love, it can be passionate, vulgar, platonic, mystic, irresponsible, stormy, been always based on the desire for unity in order to access the divine.

Androgyne myth, which is based on the search of the soulmate, is also found in the biblical story of Adam and Eve. The love triangle, the representation of adultery in conjugal relations is found in mythology in case of couple Venus and Mars surprised by Vulcan. The myth of love which must overcome various obstacles in order to be fulfilled is illustrated by Amor and Psyche. Searing love, prohibited love, which can not be accomplished is illustrated in the myth of Tristan and Isolde and Romeo and Juliet. Love placed above life and death is outlined in Dante Alighieri's work, *The Divine Comedy*, in which Dante places the image of the loved one in the garden of Paradise, mystifying her image. Also literature gives us two stories deemed critical in defining the image of the seducer, that of Don Juan and Cassanova.

The theme of Love was closely related to the idea of beauty and sensuality of the body throughout art's history. In the second chapter of this paper, we aimed to analyze the body from the soul's perspective, as a receptacle of emotions that artists have transformed into their artistic creations.

We will record issues related to the body, from the representation of Ancient Greece, as beauty ideal, to that of the Middle Ages depicted under the auspices of the rules of the Church perceived closely related to sin and sex offenses, to that of modernity, subject to deconstruction and of the contemporary era, of sexualization. According to Alain Corbin, erotization of the contemporary body is based on the concept of narcissism, the incessant desire to have a perfect body, with the consequence of transforming the body into an object of contemplation and investigation. Considering the transformations that the new technologies have brought in contemporary society, together with disinhibition of the bodies, and the emergence of pornography, we will aim to illustrate how the body has morphed from an object of art into an artistic medium.

The body becomes the medium of expression of innermost impulses of life and mean of reference for artists. With the early twentieth century, in the context of removing inhibitions and public display of the female body, the sexuality of the body will be a revived, whose effects will also reflect on private life. Using the artist's body as the subject of art in the 60's it is due to subjectivity and problematic of capitalism, which required individuals to submit to mandatory such as production, consumption and order in a society based on the idea of convenience and changing. This type of capitalism relationship is based on the relationship between body and self, the simulacrum established in the relationship of the two.

We will present how certain artists, using contemporary practices, performance, photography, painting, video and sculpture, relate in terms of privacy, from the point of their own identity and feelings with ideas like physicality, sexuality, eroticism and sensuality. In contemporary society intimate space become public space. If earlier sexuality was an issue to be hidden, now it is revealed in its various forms, adaptable and ever-changing. Body image, ubiquitous in searches of contemporary artists such as Cindy Sherman, Jenny Saville, Nan Goldin, Berlinde De Bruyckere, Pipilotti Rist, Jeff Koons, etc. is subject to changes and questions related to self in the context of social and private. The body becomes equal with the personal identity, expressing the sum of our beliefs and desires, the mark to which we refer in the attempt to understand, perceive us and our relationship with others.

Cindy Sherman ironically illustrates the constant effort of contemporary man to remain forever young and beautiful. Her own body becomes a tool in the artistic process of addressing stereotypes of feminism, sexuality and addiction, by interpreting various roles, such as the femme fatale, the seductive or the vulnerable woman. The artist transforms herself row on row in a multitude of characters, exploring her own body limits.

Nan Golding, by an approach which is marked by sensitivity, subjects to observation the hidden part of personal life through photography. The artists' work presents itself as a memorial of love for drug addicts or AIDS victims, for amorous abuse victims or for those who are in search of their own identity. The bodies in the photographs of Nan Golding, are described from the perspective of couple life, the artist is making a chronic of the balance of life in two, of sexual dependencies and of the autonomy of the individual in the context of the difficulty of rules and roles to fulfill in society.

Robert Mapplethorpe's work is focused on depictions of erotic nudes, male or female, flowers and portraits of celebrities. In his photographs, the body becomes a means of expressing sexuality and obsession with death anxiety.

Jenny Saville's bodies deconstruct stereotypes of beauty and eroticism related to the image of women, unrolling their natural beauty. Intimate portraits and overweight nudes, of large dimensions, offer an approach fraught with femininity and pictorial sensuality.

Pipilotti Rist's video installation present intimate issues, such as unfulfilled dreams, disillusionment, regrets or failed love stories, which the artist translates into a chain of images through a fantastic manner. The inspiration of her work is her own love experience, the emotional turmoil, and the vulnerability of women in search for the perfect love.

Starting from body imaging, the work of artist Berlinda Bruyckere tackles universal themes related to life and death, pain and suffering, love and compassion. Looking at the works of De Bruyckere, we are confronted to notice the shocking existence of the human body in various situations, while we become aware of ideas and emotions arising from our own memories and fears, but also from a universal, collective memory.

An important aspect in the evolution of body representation, which I noted below, is the appearance of pornographic image, with the encouraging of exhibitionism, the disclosure of privacy by modifying the boundaries between public and private space, as mentioned above. Pornography gives the viewer the privilege of seeing everything in exchange for a small fee, favoring practices like voyeurism. In case of this practice the censorship is removed,

everything is possible on the screen, the porn films gives you this promise, even if it is just a delusion of the unseen. According to Pascal Bruckner, by revealing these types of images are removed the last signs of shame. The artists were inspired by this practice, offering to their works the transgressive character attempting to remove the taboos of any kind, pornography becomes pretext of representations, nothing remains hidden from sight. In contemporary society, pornography treats sexuality, giving it a new form, presently we are witnessing a seduction to lovemaking, without involving the seduction game. The mind is subjugated to carnality, seduction prevails body and all that it implies. The body along with the explicit image becomes the main actor of this new type of discourse.

In this context has emerged the series of paintings 'Made in Heaven' of the artist Jeff Koons. In the paradise Jeff Koon presents us, pornography acquires aesthetic, sentimental and obscene meanings. 'Made in Heaven' series of works, it is a statement for the removal of guilt regarding our own sexuality. Jeff Koons removes the boundaries between art and personal life; with his wife, the two become the subject of his work, being surprised in various love poses. For Jeff Koons, eroticism offers a favorable territory in which elevated ideals are betrayed by physiological impulses, and in which beauty is trivialized.

In her works Betty Tompkins turns pornographic image into art. The pornographic image is only the fitting support for her artistic approach; in Betty Tompkins's works we find pictorial quality, self reporting, beauty and abstraction. By the subject and the technique adopted Tompkins opting to turn the explicated into an image worthy of becoming pictorial representation, giving importance and beauty.

In the third chapter we analyzed the artistic creation of a few contemporary painters, whom we consider important for their own artistic practice and giving us a personal vision on the theme in contemporary society and that present various sides of it; we shall consider the work of Cecily Brown, Erich Fisch, John Currin and David Salle.

The 80's brought to the fore the reaffirmation of painting as artistic genre, despite the previous decades, the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, announcing its death. Contemporary painting will make use of new media, of photography or film, in order to create pictorial image, while it will continue to relate to its predecessors. The report established with the past will be different from that the one of the previous avant-garde movements, capitalization will replace denial and cancellation. The Masters of Painting become the

reference model for contemporary painters. For example, John Currin's opera revives genre painting theme, specific to Old Masters in the Netherlands, managing to combine in his work traditional references with new pictorial means, in a powerful individual vision.

The contemporary artist's task is to manifest its personal vision of the world in a manner as intimate, making use of new media in search for its own artistic identity. In contemporary painting, image becomes a pretext for pictorial representation, it no longer questions the environmental issues, but focuses on its rough. Painters works become allegories of the artistic medium. Contemporary painters will use all means of new technologies, but also the traditional ones, of the most varied references, whether related to the works of predecessors or influence of the media and society in which he lives, to invite the viewer to decipher truths encapsulated in his own art.

Cecily Brown addresses topics such as sexuality, attraction, bodily, in a sensual manner that combines the figurative with the abstract through the technique of oil painting. In the British artists' paintings images of couples, bodies or fragments of it, appear to twist the blades of large surfaces in a representation which evokes a mixture of fantasies and memories. The viewer is incited, like a voyeur, to enter this erotic universe of opulence in which bodies are spots of color, leaving space for the imagination to decipher the images. Charged with eroticism, her paintings does not explain but suggest. Sexuality and the eroticism of the nudes representations find their echo in the use of a rich colorist, expressionist, and gestural. Cecily Brown, through her work evokes the instinct of human life itself, arousing emotions associated with passion, pleasure, tactile, in a unique feminine approach.

Erich Fischl's paintings tackles couple and sexuality in a realistic presentation of specific marital problems of the middle class in American society. The visual and psychological narration are important characteristics of his artistic approach. Fischl's paintings depict couple scenes from private life, intriguing the viewer to construct imaginary scenarios, giving the viewer the opportunity to exercise their natural reflex of contemplation of the story, the viewer has the role to fill the gaps missing from the submitted "puzzle". The theatrical plays an important role in the artistic approach of Fischl noted by the way the artist composes the scenarios, the choice of characters and objects to be painted. In the American artist's paintings, the body becomes an expression of human experience, perceived at physical and emotional level. Fischl's characters do not build false identities, do not use cosmetics, they are

presented to us as they are in everyday life. His nudes, wear the coat of psychological melancholy and alienation of contemporary man. Erich Fischl's painting become a chronicle of contemporary life from the investigation perspective of the sexuality multiple faces.

Currin's painting provides a blueprint of the contemporary society, a decadent and superficial society. The American artist painting combines beauty aesthetic with grotesque in lubricious representation of female characters or couples in various stages of life. Remarkable for its technical virtuosity, Currin's painting is inspired by a complex mix of culture and subculture, such as the oil paintings of Renaissance artists, American films, magazines illustrations of women from the 40s and pornographic images. Based on clichés, Currin's work is a work of contrasts, where his characters become a caricature of the society standards. The artist is pleased to face the viewer, providing an ironic vision of society by way of constructing his hybrid characters, whose body undergoes changes, with tapered waist, elongated limbs and enhanced sexuality insignia. Addressing the theme of eroticism, the artist uses as inspiration pornographic images in order to paint scenes that totally reveals details of human intercourse, leaving nothing to the imagination to be found. Deprived of the emotional, Currin's paintings are simple pretexts for the technique representation. John Currin's work illustrates diseases of contemporary society, in terms of fine middle class aesthetics, which serves as a package, is presented to us the ugliness hidden under it, with its false laughter, grotesque proportions and decaying bodies.

David Salle's painting is full of mystery, it brings an important contribution to post-modern sensibility, presenting the body as a symbol of human experiences of its existence from the perspective of sensuality and sexuality. Combining a number of references and sources of inspiration, using recurrent motifs such as female nude, boat, pottery the artist composes his images, like a conductor, on two or three registers recalling the specific technique of collage. Playing with joins of distinct images, the artist is interested in the logical network that establishes between two mutually exclusive environments, creating dissonance and disjunction in the case of juxtaposition of elements within the same painting. The process of composing simultaneous images arises organically, the things seem to succeed naturally, a representation implies on the next and so on, creating a rhythm like music. Loaded of theatrical, David Salle's paintings narrative factor is missing. The viewer is offered simple clues, but no intrigue of things, he has the role to find his own meanings and interpretations. The American painter uses the image of female nudes for turning them into pictorial pretext of

painting, they become evocation of a reality, of an image. Salle's painting offer us an erotic reality, a world of desire, affection and solitude, of adoration and contemplation.

In the last chapter, the fourth, we analyzed the stages of the own artistic approach and process, directly related to the theme and the concept behind the work. I mentioned in a structured way the projects I have achieved during this program of doctoral research in Visual Arts domain. It's about series of works that have as the central core the couple image, surprised in the form of snapshots of everyday life, in terms of my personal experience and view on love.

The body in contemporary art, be it about the artist's body or subject of his works, bears the load of human existence. Its beauty lies in the approach that the artists give us in their works, sincere, marked by vulnerability, and preciousness. By disinhibition sexuality and changing relationship between soul and body, the body prevails now the soul, the vision of love has changed. In modern times, sincere love is associated with the idea of spontaneity. The sentiment's privacy is reinvented, things that were considered taboo in the past become habits in nowadays life, proposing an alternative lifestyle. The bedroom intimacy is no longer attributed to the space of love, but attributed to the public space exhibition. There are many descriptions of sexual life, about how to have a thriving private life, sexuality becomes a sign of power. By the importance given to the artist interiority, is reintroduced the emotive side in the artistic creation. The content of the artwork becomes fundamental, themes such as love, eroticism, sexuality, become ways of reporting and defining of our own identity or a specification of contemporary society.

In my personal vision, dreams together with love, faith and art, offer human a safe place against the cruelty of historical existence, giving life the grace state of transcendence. Love does not consume man, but enhances, making him a better person. Through love, man turns and becomes fully "complete".

