

ABSTRACT

In the PhD paper “LETTERPRESS PRINTING – BOUNDARIES AND PERSPECTIVES IN THE CONTEMPORARY ART” we conduct an analysis of the letterpress printing evolution in view of revealing the boundaries of this engraving technique – boundaries established by the functions it acquired throughout the history – as well as the perspective which this way of artistic expression implies in terms of the contemporary artistic creation. Starting from a series of questions – can the engraving techniques still represent, nowadays, an efficient means of contemporary artistic expression, due to their inclusion in the “visual communication” field, respectively their perception as simple mass communication instruments (*mass-media*)? What is the connection between the traditional engraving techniques and the modern and contemporary techniques? How did the first survive compared to the incredible technical and technological development of the last century and a half? – the main stake of our approach is to illustrate that the perspectives, respectively the potentialities of the letterpress printing in general and of the wood engraving in particular, are far from being exhausted, the task of the contemporary artist – illustrator being especially to identify and exploit them.

In order to analyze the evolution of letterpress printing in its entire complexity – from the technical, esthetical and functional perspective – we structured our approach on four large chapters: THE HISTORICAL EVOLUTION OF LETTERPRESS PRINTING (chapter II), THE LETTERPRESS PRINTING IN ILLUSTRATION (chapter III), THE LETTERPRESS PRINTING AND THE POSTER (chapter IV) and THE LETTERPRESS PRINTING – A CONTEMPORARY ARTISTIC ENVIRONMENT (chapter V). In the last two chapters of the thesis – chapters VI and VII called EXPOSITIONAL PROJECTS I AND EXPOSITIONAL PROJECTS II we provided practical examples from the series of expositional projects “Intimistique”, “Sharing”, “Dessin live Playing around in Hermannstadt”, “Reconversion”, on one hand, and “52m² under the ceiling”, “Alice no longer lives here”, “Olympus”, “Olympiad”, on the other hand, various usage possibilities of letterpress printing in the contemporary art and the adaptation of the traditional techniques to the new image printing and processing

technologies. In these expositional projects, we tried to cover, from the technical and esthetical point of view, the issues and directions analyzed in the previous chapters, namely the boundaries and the perspectives experienced by the letterpress printing and especially by the wood engraving up to this point.

Throughout the four large chapters mentioned above, the evolution of the letterpress printing is analyzed starting from the relation of the text with the image in connection with which the particularities of each historical state experienced by the letterpress printing are developing. We focused on the profound relation between the image and the text, establishing as landmarks two types of image, the narrative image and the symbolical image, which we analyzed from the esthetical and conceptual point of view. In addition, our interest was focused on the evolution and changes occurred throughout the centuries within the traditional relief printing techniques, techniques used in order to execute the book illustration, the wordless graphic novel, the comic, the poster, as well as on the new forms which these artistic expression environments encountered in the direct relation with the computer and digital printing techniques, transformations determined by the changes which took place in the historical, social and cultural field.

From the methodological point of view, our approach is structured from a triple perspective: technical, esthetical and functional. Thus, the inclusion and understanding the evolution of the letterpress printing from the technical perspective represents a first level of our research. The second level of our analysis includes the investigation of the esthetical valences of this technique connected to the subjects approached by the engraver artists throughout time. The third level of the research on the letterpress printing is focused on the functions it acquired: privileged means in the execution of book illustration and poster. The three levels of analysis coalesce to the extent where the three dimensions of the letterpress printing considered – technical, esthetical and functional – are interdependent.

According to the information mentioned up to this point, our paper is structured in the following manner. In chapter II, called “The historical evolution of letterpress printing”, we proposed, in a first stage, a review of the main stages experienced by this technique throughout the history, considered from the geographical perspective: East and West. This overview helped us to circumscribe – historically and geographically – the object of our analysis. On a second moment, we inventoried all the types of techniques subsumed to the letterpress printing, the purpose being to create a complete image on the practices of the traditional letterpress printing

and the technical innovations of relief printing, and subsequently to focus exclusively on the European space. From the letterpress printing to the digital printing, we identified the printing processes derived from the letterpress printing and the innovations which are developed and introduced by the practitioner – the engraving artist – in his printing and multiplication practice, technological path which constantly aimed the development of methods to serve the necessities of the context where they express: efficiency, rapidity, quality, quantity and lower production costs. The printing with wood plates – Templates – Mobile characters – Intaglio – Typographies – Rotational press – Lithography – Zincography – Flexography – Printing through semitones – Color printing techniques – Mimeograph – Serigraphy – “Spirit” Duplicator Machine – Photo printing – Matrix Impression and the Digital Printing are the landmarks of the technical evolution which we aimed and analyzed in order to understand the evolution of the printing practice, thus shaping a coherent and justified discourse in terms of the boundaries and perspectives of the relief printing technique.

Then we reconstructed the evolution path of the printing forms, focusing in the next stage on the wood engraving technique, considering this technique as being the most important and generating innovations, within the context of the letterpress printing and the engraving in general, throughout the centuries of practice. Thus, we analyzed the thematic areas and the technical innovations generated by practicing the wood engraving in Europe throughout the 15th – 17th centuries. Within this context, we investigated the first relief printings executed in the 15th century, as well as the Block Book, and then we focused on the evolution of the letterpress printing throughout the 16th and 17th centuries. Taking into consideration the creation of a clear and unaltered image of this foundation period of the letterpress printing, we analyzed the three fundamental aspects, the technical, esthetical and functional aspect mentioned since the beginning, this time setting as landmark the path experienced by the “Letterpress printing in modernity and contemporaneity”. Subchapter II.4.1. “Thomas Bewick and the modern methods of relief printing” represented the first analysis stage of the letterpress printing in modernity. We selected Thomas Bewick as landmark for this stage because his wood engraving technique was aimed on printing books in relatively large editions – a new aspect for this period – this being able to correlate the illustrations with the text, both being printed on the same page. Then, we analyzed the technical development approach of the wood engraving, practiced by Bewick, practice which was based on white lines networks, the “white-line” technique (*white*

line style of engraving). The evolutionary path of the letterpress printing involved as technical and esthetical innovation stage the “William Blake’s engraving”, which includes spectacular mixings of techniques which imply wood, metal engraving and manually pictorial interventions which generate new esthetical formulations, and, later on, functional formulations, in the perspectives experienced by the letterpress engraving in the contemporary art.

The relief printing techniques were increasingly used not only to execute the book illustrations, but also as an information means of the general public about various current events, the wood engraved illustrations starting to populate the newspapers and magazines. Consecutively, in subchapter II.4.3, “Written press”, we analyzed the interdependency between the technical, esthetical and functional aspects of relief printing technique in terms of its usage as an information means of the general public about various events, the wood engraved illustrations becoming a visual expression form specific to the newspapers and magazines. We analyzed the modern social and cultural context dominated by the poverty and illiteracy issues and conditionings at the esthetical and functional level which the relief printing technique, the wood engraving, experience within the ambitious pursuit to respond to the requirements of the public, but also to raise the quality standards of the information transmitted. Thus we analyzed the evolution of the periodicals from the Great Britain and France, establishing as landmark the first illustrated weekly journal executed in the wood engraving, *The Illustrated London News*, an ambitious project executed by Herbert Ingram and which provides a new dimension to the newspaper through the manner in which it presented the information.

In subchapter II.4.4. “Photographic technique”, technique which determines the “end of the industrial printing era of relief printing on wood support”, we included the aspects experienced by the letterpress printing from the technical and esthetical point of view through the interference with the photographic technique, as well as the new alternatives which the photography provides in the execution of illustrated images. In this case we focused our attention on the wood engraving technique with landmark the end of the 19th century, moment which marked more than 50 years of practice and experiment of relief engraving. Thus we analyzed the photography as a supporting technological process in the practice of the artist who uses the wood engraving technique, the photography replacing the drawing within the context where the exigencies of the critics and the competition significantly increased in terms of the production of illustrated and printed images in the newspapers and magazines.

At the end of chapter II, namely in subchapter II.4.5. called “Contemporary relief printing technique” we took into consideration the different usage of the printing technique throughout the history and we synthesized the manner in which they served the necessities of the context in which they activated and at the same time we analyzed the path set in the contemporary context, from the perspective of the development of computer technique and the internet accessing system. Thus, we defined the track of printing in the contemporary context, connected to the digital environment – a new platform of promoting the talent and technique of the artists, as well as a reformulation form of images, which experience a new status.

After analyzing the evolution of the relief printing techniques, we approach their application area. Consecutively, in chapter III, “Letterpress printing and illustration”, we presented the evolution of the illustration setting as landmarks the usage contexts and the technical means through which it constitutes as image. Another important analysis plan is the illustration, which describes and interprets a text, respectively it constitutes as narrative or symbolic image. A first stage in mapping this vast territory, but with concrete landmarks and delimitations imposed in this case by the wood printing technique, consists in analyzing the path of wood engraving since the apparition of book illustration and up to its consecration, with time landmark the 15th – 18th centuries, as well as the development of book illustration in modernity and contemporaneousness. In order to establish a generous image of the phenomena and esthetical transformations experienced by the wood engraving technique in connection with the illustrated image, we extended the debate range to various manifestation areas. In order to accurately surprise the phenomenon, we identified the early manual printing techniques which were brought to life in the book illustration by artists such as William Morris, Henry Matisse, Georges Rouault, Pablo Picasso, Marc Chagall, Kent Rockwell, and many others. At this moment, the important illustrators, such as Aubrey Beardsley, Pyle Howard, and Vedder Elihu, understood and exploited the photomechanical processes extremely effective in the reproduction of works of arts. We also mention other great artists who stood out for the illustrations created and who exploited the narrative aspect of wood engraving: William Hogarth, Thomas Bewick, William Blake, Alexander Anderson, Robert Branston, John Thompson, George Cruikshank, George Wilmont Bonner, William Harvey, W.J. Linton, Halblot Knight "Phiz" Browne, Dante Gabriel Rossetti, Gustave Doré.

The development of the artistic book editing techniques and in particular, the wood engraving technique, also contributed to the explosion of the illustrations, and within this context we analyzed in a first stage, in chapter III.2.1, “Illustration as text interpretation environment”, the direction provided by interpretative wood engraving which created an extremely difficult style, as, in general, it served to the reproduction of works of art of famous painters. In this case, we focused on Timothy Cole, considered one of the most significant practitioners of interpretative wood engraving and who executed the most important and valuable copies of consecrated works. A next step in the evaluation of the manifestation context of the image in direct relation with the letterpress printing was directed on the romantic illustration in France, then the analysis focused on the English book illustration, paying an increased attention to the humoristic illustration. For the caricature, we analyzed the illustration developed by George Cruikshank and its relation with the texts of Charles Dickens and W.M. Thackeray, in this case identifying the specific character of the humoristic illustrations of Cruikshank and analyzing the sequence of the frames characterized by associations of ideas, texts, images which intercommunicate and which announce, to a large extent, a new aspect of the wood engraved images: the concept of progressive action.

Reaching this point of analysis of the evolution of letterpress printing in connection with the illustration, we extended our perspective by placing the accent on the concept of *Comic strip* – and analyzing the narration aspects in the engravings of Rodolphe Töpffer, Cham, Gustave Doré, and the forms experienced by the comic strips books. We identified the plastic language and the character of the comic strip book, starting from Töpffer who invented the concept of *literature in images*, continuing with Cham who created many of the technical and visual conventions we still encounter nowadays in the comic strip and ending with Doré who gave up the obsolete tradition of the illustrated image and thus he created a subversive environment of artistic expression, which was not subject to any rules, traditions, which will be maintain and which we will still encounter in the comic strip books.

The narrative landmarks set by the three artists mentioned above conditioned us to also surprise the usage of the narrative sequences in the wood engraving and the variety of subjects approached in the letterpress printing in the French media. We analyzed the practical aspect of the comic drawer who exploited at the maximum capacity the technical, artistic and stylistic

potential of wood engraved images as well as the challenging and offering visual communication environment provided by the illustrated press from the 19th century.

The wood engraving was mainly used to print and reproduce the images for 500 years. Thus, conditioned by this context, we synthesized the contemporary illustration as artistic product born along with the moment when the illustrators started to deviate from the traditional illustration methods using modern instruments and techniques to create the image, but permanently remaining connected to the landmarks of the basic technique, the traditional printing. Thus we presented the manner in which the contemporary illustration changed the working manner of the artists, the methods and formulas they used to create the illustrations and the types of subjects approached, but also the constant concern of the practitioners to revitalize the traditional illustration by the permanent reformulation of the wood relief engraving techniques – forcing the limits and seeking new solutions and formulas to approach the letterpress printing.

Up to the beginning of the 20th century, the book illustration was considered by certain artists one of the most profitable and rewarding areas of creation. The analysis of this vast field is difficult and it imposes the understanding of the multiple directions and techniques approached, as well as the development context. Due to the fast diversification of the themes approached in the illustration, the photomechanical printing methods appeared at the end of the 19th century, the artist being thus able to express in their works in the most audacious and innovative manners.

In subchapter III.3. “Illustration of “serious subjects””, we analyzed the evolution and variety of types of illustrations which dominated the literary texts under the form of caricatures, realistic interpretations of narrative scenes or visual satirical comments. In order to execute the illustrations, the engravers used the traditional techniques, drawing the images on the wood or metal support, but, most of the times, they directly involved, also executing the illustrator’s work. Throughout the next two decades, the artist books were influenced by the tendencies of the visual arts. From this point and up to present, the artist books continued to develop and the results were varied due to their indefinable nature.

In this context we analyzed William Blake approaching the concept of *artist book*, as he was the first artist who provided the illustrated book with a new evolutionary direction. The letterpress printing technique allowed Blake to print alone the poem books, as well as to illustrate

them with relief engravings on wood or metal support (relief etching), and finally to publish them without the direct involvement of an editor or of a publishing house.

At this point we have an overview of the illustrated books based on the case studies conducted with landmarks Cruikshank, Topffer, Cham and Doré, we noticed that they experienced radical changes, becoming increasingly encoded throughout time, but the malleability in shape provided them with the possibility of permanent reinvention.

Keeping as fundamental landmark in this context the concept of artist book, but also the technical innovations of the wood engraving in connection with the illustration we focused, in subchapter III.3.2, “Serial image and serious illustration in Gustave Doré’s engraving”, on the wood engraved illustration and its availability to respond to the requirements of the texts it accompanies and which, for Doré, it exceeds through the narrative imaginative and visual universe it contains. Extending the analysis, we paid a particular attention to the contribution provided by the Pre-Raphaelite artists to the evolution of book illustration.

Following the path experienced by the illustration and letterpress printing from the esthetical and functional perspective – in constant interdependency, we conducted in subchapter III.3.4, “Author book – new contemporary printing directions and techniques”, an analysis of the boundaries and perspectives experienced by the author book throughout the 20th century and its manifestation territory.

In subchapter III.4., “Engraving artist – another perspective on the evolution of relief engraving and narrative art”, we analyzed the context where, in parallel with the increasing popularity of the comic strip books, a new artistic genre appeared, the one of wordless graphic novel, which introduced the serial illustrations without text. The analysis focuses in subchapter III.4.1., “Modern graphic novel and book artist”, on the execution of certain case studies regarding the wordless novel and the approaches of the social subjects in this context in wood engraving. Such artists are Felix Vallotton, Frans Mazereel, Lynd Ward and Laurence Hyde, because, through their artistic approaches, the letterpress printing experienced new directions and forms of expression. The graphic novel implied even since its beginning a succession of correlated images which accompanied a text, but, as in most of the cases the text was absent, the wood engraved illustrations started to include complex and punctual narrative principles. Felix Vallotton, Frans Masereel, Lynd Ward, Laurence Hyde, and Thomas Ott explored in the wordless comic strip books the wood engraved illustrations, the narrative

sequences, and the spectacular nuances of senses, leaving room for the interpretations of the reader.

In subchapter III.5 “Postmodern graphic novel - Thomas Ott” we analyzed the perspectives which the narrative image and the letterpress printing experience through the cinematographic succession of the wood engraved sequential images, and in subchapter III.6 “Narrative image in the contemporary relief engraving Thomas Kilpper, Sebastian Speckmann, Claas Gutsche and Philipp Hennevogl” we identified the directions which the contemporary artists approach by revitalizing the methods and the visual language of 20th century engraving, taking, however, into consideration the technical and narrative landmarks of the classic engravers. These artists used the linoleum engraving environment to sustain in the traditional technique current subjects and to transpose them in original images, these establishing, at their turn, a distinct position in the relations with the photographic, cinematographic techniques and with the new artistic environments. We noticed the fact that both the printed work and its execution approach became extremely important elements for understanding the evolutionary path of the engraving and of the more or less narrative aspect.

In chapter IV. “Letterpress printing and the poster”, we analyzed the esthetical character of the poster and the important and varied changes it experienced, changes subordinated to the historical context and to various requirements to which the poster answered. In this case we analyzed the temporal perspective which provided the poster with the new valences and different types of reception, decoding from the public, as well as the technical execution path which the poster experienced since the first wood printing forms up to the digital, contemporary forms. A first stage of our analysis at this point was focused on the “Printing of posters in the relief printing technique” and afterwards on the “Text poster” and the transformations it experienced from the first forms executed through wood engraving and up to the ones executed through increasingly varied and automated techniques and methods, used in order to respond to the requirements of the customers, in order to be able to be printed in large draws, with low costs and within a very short timeframe. These new technologies used to execute and print the posters were identified and analyzed in subchapter IV.1.2. “Poster – modern printing techniques derived from relief engraving techniques”.

In the next stage of chapter IV we analyzed the “Character of the poster in the letterpress printing technique as a source of contemporary inspiration”, and in subchapter IV.3 we focused

on the “Visual impact of contemporary poster” in connection with the new artistic expression environments and with the current requirements to which it continuously adapts. Although its role is less significant nowadays than about 100 years ago, the poster continued to evolve, in connection with the computer and the internet, revolutionizing at the worldwide level the manner in which the communication takes place in the 21st century.

Chapter V. “Letterpress printing – a contemporary artistic environment” establishes the contemporary tendencies of the relief engraving, tendencies which experienced rapid modifications throughout the centuries through the changes and particular development processes of the engraving art. Thus, we focused our attention on the manifestation processes and directions of the relief engraving in its approach to “Acquire the status of independent artistic product”. We analyzed the artistic object in the independence proclamation process, as it recognized its identity and waited for its exterior recognition. All these processes seek their identity and their natural character by acquiring the liberty to be translated in the world of the esthetical and spiritual values. Thus, we think that it is justified to analyze the contemporary relief engraving and the concepts and forms its experiences throughout the 20th century, as in subchapter V.2 “Woodcut form of consecrated art”, thus proposing an argumentation in the favor of the art consecration phenomenon – phenomenon conditioned by the artists, by the innovating processes and by the constant reformulation of creative discourses and strategies, as well as by their reception means by the public. In none of the situations, either if we talk about the traditional engraving or about the mechanized engraving, the processes mentioned do not exclude, because a current visual discourse can be provided in both cases. Regardless of the means used, the current character of the message is the fundamental element. In our analysis, the accent is placed on the artistic object, namely on the result of the creation, as well as on the visual discourse of the engraving. The maintenance of this path is also sustained in direct connection with the public and with the museum, as well as with the directions of the art market.

In subchapter V.3 “Printing techniques in the 20th century” we identified the tendencies experienced by the printing techniques in the contemporaneousness, currently became a central element in the activity of the artists and not just an adjacent, secondary, additional or reproductive process, as it was considered in the past. In order to understand all this context, we analyzed the new technologies which were rapidly adopted in the artistic printing process and the new artistic expression methods which replaced the traditional techniques, modified or

supplemented by the photocopy machine, facsimile and inkjet printers attached to computers. At the same time, we retraced the path of the artists who continued to explore the unexploited potential of the traditional methods, either if we talk about the printing on a completely different support than the traditional one, or by extending the dimensions of the printings to an innovative scale or simply considering the engraving in the sense of the extension of the common term of “print”.

The development and usage of New Media was considered beneficial for the extension of the perception of the printing, but equally a threat for the evolution of the engraving. Thus, the purpose of subchapter V.4. “From letterpress printing to New Media” is to identify and expose the expression possibilities which the usage of the traditional printing techniques continues to allow and their beneficial relation in connection with the digital technologies which will never replace the consecrated techniques, but on the contrary, they will extend the manifestation possibilities. In this context we analyzed the New Media phenomenon and the various visual expression channels preset and continuously reestablished, as well as the spectacular results with rank outside any conventional esthetical definition.

In subchapter V.4.1 “Forms of digital art” we focused on the character of the art which uses the digital technologies as available instruments to execute the traditional objets d’art – such as the photography, the printing, the sculpture, the music –as well as the art which uses these technologies as its actual environment, being exclusively produced, stored and presented in digital format and using its interactive or participative characteristics. The analysis of these two types of artistic manifestation which share some of the inherent characteristics of the digital technology was performed according to their various manifestations and esthetics. These two broad categories were not finally classified, but we intended to establish a preliminary outline of a territory which is hybrid through its nature. We established that although the definitions and categories can be useful in order to identify certain distinctive characteristics of an environment, they can also be dangerous due to the fact that they establish predefined boundaries in approaching and understanding a form of art, in particular when this is still under continuous evolution, as the digital art.

In subchapter V.4.2 “Digital art – marketable product” we assessed the perspectives of the letterpress printing in direct relation with the digital Art. We focused in particular on the analysis of the practices of the artist who focuses on the process of producing the oeuvre, being

aware of the fact that the perceptible result no longer depends on him, being conditioned by the reception of the public and by all the interconnected social and cultural aspects, as well as by the infrastructure of the art market and the tendencies which inevitably influence the evaluation of the artistic product.

In the last two chapters of the thesis VI. “Expositional projects I” and VII. “Expositional projects II”, we introduced aspects of the practical research in the letterpress printing field, an applied perspective of the issues indicated in the above mentioned chapters, an evaluation of the technical, esthetical and functional interferences, conducted by the contemporary artist and his position in terms of the interdependency of the relief printing contemporary techniques with the traditional techniques, the wood engraving and linoleum engraving. The practical research we developed at this point within the expositional projects “Intimistique”, “Sharing”, “Dessin live Playing around in Hermannstadt”, “Reconversion”, as well as in “52m² under the ceiling”, “Alice no longer lives here”, “Olympus”, “Olympiad”, exploited the concept of drawing, color and volume, in the letterpress printing technique, placing the accent on the narrative content of the image. The researches focused on the drawing as game of line, dot, spot, characters and their relation with the environment, the three-dimensional illusion in the two-dimensional figurative composition and the illusion of movement in the static composition. In these projects, we experienced the letterpress printing technique, the linoengraving and the woodcut, breaking the landmarks of the traditional dimension. We used the dye ink contemporary digital print and the laser engraving in wood, the drawing on graphical tablet and we also experienced the sculptural area of the forms engraved with the flex on the wood, exploiting the characteristic marks of the letterpress printing which the imprint of these forms leaves by printing on a flat surface. In each of these cases we took into consideration the specific character of the environment approached and we constantly had the drawing as landmark. Thus, we practically experienced the valences which the letterpress printing develops through the technical, esthetical and functional boundaries and perspectives acquired within the contemporary context permanently maintaining the traditional basis and the ability to adapt to the languages and techniques specific to the 20th century.

The expositional project “Intimistique” is the first from the series of the experiments conducted throughout the PhD research, experiments which were focused on the de-contextualization and re-contextualization of the traditional technique of the letterpress printing.

The stake of the expositional project “Intimistique” is to associate the laser engraving with the dye ink digital printing, two contemporary printing techniques and to provide the printed, two-dimensional image with another analysis dimension beyond the traditional dimension. The digital printing under the proposed form is a casing, frame, a well founded pretext which hosts the actual work, the woodcut, an engraved matrix, a surface which incites from the tactile and visual point of view. The title *Intimistique* reflects a favorite preoccupation to make visible the influence of the exterior space on the interior space and the manner in which the two environments cohabit and are reasoning with the character surprised in various situations, in narrative frames transposed in 10 works printed on canvas with the dimension of 125X85 cm.

The installation “Sharing” represents an evaluation of the letterpress printing traditional technique. In the first stage we experienced the wood engraving in a two-dimensional and three-dimensional manner, the result consisting of a series of tools, rolls of different sizes and shapes which have incorporated, engraved on their faces a series of graphics characteristics to the traditional wood engraving, graphics which, printed on a flat surface, succeed in a repetitive, mechanical manner and which, through the cohabitation with the organic forms of the rolls, leave room for the randomness. Through these tools we experienced new technical and conceptual directions whose starting point is the letterpress printing reconverted to large movements, uncharacteristic to the wood engraving, and which allow new approaches of the work surfaces.

The aim of the entire approach consists in returning to the technique and technology of the traditional letterpress printing and its incorporation into an unconventional structure form which contains the information specific to the letterpress printing. The rolls, the actual sculptural objects, become the unconventional takeover and transmission means of the information with repetitive character, pattern, facilitating the printing approach of the structures on any kind of support and defying at the same time the exact and rigorous landmarks of the overlapping characteristic to the traditional printing. Within this project we evaluated, on one hand, the condition of the artistic product, result of the multiplication techniques, and on the other hand, the report of the public to the contemporary phenomenon of *sharing*, the public being encouraged to experience the reactions produced by the ink rolls on the canvas support present in the expositional space.

The project “Dessin live” tries to combine under the form of a video projection the mix between the traditional drawing and the digital drawing, under the form of a performance where,

at two different desks, the drawing artists succeed into an improvised drawing marathon. The theme *Battle* creates the context where the traditional drawing on paper support and the drawing on the graphical tablet built progressively and independently. The video projection of the drawings overlaps the two plastic forms into a cinematographic manner, providing the sensation of movement, animation of characters who are created into a dynamic and spectacular dialogue, by mixing the two plastic representation environments. The animation of the drawings is performed only through the live capitulation of the drawn frames and their projection and the two artists build the story, as well as the characters, in a spectacular and continuous adaptation to each other. The purpose of this approach aims to exploit the specific character and the multiple sides of the techniques and environments where the artist approaches the illustration, as well as the interdependencies between the traditional and digital reproduction of the serial images. The performance is accompanied by music, spontaneously composed according to the directions experiences by the projected image and the progressive evolution of the animation.

The project “Playing around in Hermannstadt is a wordless comic strip, with reduced dimensions, which focuses on the traditional representation landmarks of narrative sequences in drawing. Starting from the type of representation of the image in the wood engraving specific to the periodical publications at the end of the 18th centuries and the beginning of the 19th century, the drawing on graphical tablet is experienced, analyzing the plastic reactions of the image constructed into a contemporary representation environment. The character of the tools we have by accessing the digital environment proves to be in close connection with the plastic reactions and effects which the wood engraving technique provided since the first traditional experiments. Thus we can establish the close connection between the traditional printing techniques and the computer techniques, as well as the construction of the new representation environments which relay on the traditional approaches.

In the project *Reconversion* we tried to reformulate the volumes starting from their two-dimensional shape specific to relief engraving into three – dimensional, sculptural shape. The functions of the plastic language elements specific to linoengraving thus experience a new dimension within the context of the sculptural construction and they valorize new fluid aspects and also new stylistic formulas.

In the project "52 m² under the ceiling" the artist decides to invade the privacy of the people around him, trying to discover them and to discover himself through the images of their

homes. He tries to surprise the habitat, to immortalize it, to find value in simple things, outdated by time, in objects which do not cease to do their duty or which, tired, are resting because they are not thrown away. Objects which tell their story and enjoy encountering other and new “roommates”. Nothing is staged and does not force the natural. The world of things, of objects of all categories, colors and ages is left to crowd the space, to tell its story. The story of a presence – absence which animates each object, as in this space, suffocating crowded through the informational narrowness and density, the object is the main character, and its positioning in space creates a flabbergasted normality. The static image created lives through the dynamics of the objects, but also through the uncertain balance (something happened or is going to happen). In this space, the human is a presence – absence, as the feeling that someone is watching from outside is created. There is no room for anyone else in this entire agglomeration.

Within this project the artist attempted to transpose the frames of the photographically shot crowded room into relief engraving on linoleum, experiencing the traditional engraving and printing technique, as well as to force the woodcut boundaries through the introduction of the perspective and forcing the two-dimensional aspects through their breakdown and creation of three-dimensionality optical illusion. The 30 linoengravings executed for this project are a narrative exercise and a monochrome game where the modulated line, the spot and the dot seek their balance on the paper support with the dimension of 200X150 cm.

If the project “52m² under the ceiling” sought to create certain relationships and to discover the surrounding people, the expositional projects “Alice no longer lives here”, “Olympus” and “Olympiad” start from the premise of the relations which exist independently of the individual and which often prove to be generated by the people around and less by the individual. Within this context, the main issue is a personal reformulation, impossible to perform without an objective and overall analysis of the individual.

It is necessary to review a “personal archive”, to recollect and reconsider certain values from the esthetical point of view. The phenomenon can be seen as a reconsideration of a temporary state according to the previous moment. A return to childhood. From the artistic point of view, the image becomes a state of things which describes the necessity of the individual rediscovery. The photographic archiving reveals in extremely common and non-staged hypostases the representations of certain moments and states surprised from exterior. The artist accepts the images suggested by the people around him and he seeks to discover himself starting

from the premise that he is “at the first encounter with himself”! But this is no random encounter, but an encounter established by the others, the moment of the photographic immortalization. The 30 linoengravings, with the variable dimension of 200X150 cm respectively 100X70 cm proposed in this project mix the narrative images, the representation possibilities of the drawing on linoleum and the chromatic reactions resulted from the overlapping and printing on paper support of eight different relief engraved plates.

Subsequently, we consider that the purpose of our research – namely to map the boundaries and the perspectives of the letterpress printing – was reached. As already mentioned, we inventoried the boundaries of the letterpress printing established by the functions it acquired throughout the history, indicating, in exchange, the materials through which this engraving technique continues to reinvent itself. In terms of the contribution brought by this paper, we believe that it has the merit to beneficially combine the reflexive approach with the practical – artistic approach. Thus, the theoretical discourse built throughout the first four chapters substantiates the artistic discourse we articulated throughout the PhD research to the extent where the assumption of a systematical reflection – inherently limited – on a vast theme such as the one of the letterpress printing is justified through the artistic projects presented in the last two chapters of the thesis. We think that the theoretical reflection improved our artistic creation and we can only hope that our artistic approach will lead to a better understanding and appreciation of the current character of an ancient engraving technique, such as the letterpress printing.