UNIVERSITY OF ART AND DESIGN, CLUJ-NAPOCA

PhD Thesis in Fine Arts and Decorative Arts

Duality between two-dimensional and three-dimensional in painting

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Summary

What is, practically, the art of composing a picture? Is the perspective actually a determinant in creation? What solutions do modern artists find to suggest depth, if the traditional perspective is removed? Is there a duality between two-dimensional and three-dimensional in painting? These are a few questions that led me to investigate a rich set of systems of visual representation of space during the various historical periods in order for me to better understand why things happen in art the way they do, what rules and influences produce novelty in art.

Within my PhD. thesis I pursue the changes that occurred within the issue of space figuration modalities. The illusionist reproduction of reality used to be a true challenge for the artists and the time suggestion methods discovered throughout time, have brought evolution and major changes to the visual arts. The organization of space varies from one art style to another and from artist to artist. I wanted to find the ideal, generally valid system.

Although spatiality becomes a fundamental issue, which has suffered various modifications along the way, the perspective, (with its graphic procedures with the help of which we can represent with perfect accuracy on the two dimensional plan of the painting, the three dimensions of any volume in space) is still a science, a law for the accurate construction of reality also nowadays. The phenomenon has been and still is extensively investigated not only by the connected disciplines, but also by other fields.

The thesis' structure consists of four chapters and several subsections, supplemented by my personal creation, the technical literature used and a wide illustration index in order to properly support the assertions within the text. In the first three stages I wanted to research and to present, very briefly, various space artistic representation procedures and types of geometries invented starting with ancient Egypt until the modern, contemporary art, in order to present, in the end, new spatial dimensions in the personal creation obtained by authentic abstract means.

The first chapter of the thesis, entitled **Is perspective a determinant in creation?** presents the first methods of space artistic representation in Antiquity and the Middle Ages, which have contributed to the appearance of the Renaissance geometrical perspective. The simplest procedures of space representation, lacking a strong scientific nature, such as the Egyptian subjective-analytical representations, based on a hierarchical perspective or the axonometric paintings of stage scenery in Antiquity and the reverse perspective of the

Byzantium, followed by Giotto and Uccello's first images having a perspective nature, have emphasized the unique importance of the methods of reality integration in the flatness of the support panel. The expressiveness of these formulas with a naive nature have generated the appearance of perspective and of some new aesthetics, which have faithfully rendered the visual-artistic system of a new culture. Although the Fine Art in the old days had no aesthetic connotations, it used to have a much more important purpose, that of worshiping the supernatural forces.

The first original solutions of perspective adaptation at Fra Angelico, Masaccio, Mantegna or della Francesca bring within art the geometric rigor. And later on, during the Renaissance period, Brunelleschi, Leon Battista Alberti and Durer have brought their contribution so that the perspective could become a scientific structure, which solves the issue of rendering the object in three-dimensional on a two-dimensional surface. This chapter submits to investigation also the art of Leonardo da Vinci, an exceptional theorist and artist, who founded the aerial perspective and used for the first time the sfumato technique. His principles as well as his „le vedute", a seventeenth-century landscape genre, have led to new design changes and space representation in painting. Reality deformation and reality idealization introduced by the baroque and classic painting portend new space interpretations.

The next chapter submits to analysis the **effects of Cézanne's perspective and spatiality on modern art.** For each artistic current, the heritage of Cézanne meant something else. The Master of Aix introduced his own way of expressing space and a new vision. Within this chapter, the methods of Paul Cézanne are presented, methods that have been taken and rethought by the pioneers of modern painting, such as Matisse, the representatives of cubism Braque, Picasso and Gris, the futurists Boccioni, Russolo, Balla and Severinei or the surrealists Chirico, Magritte, Dalí, Miró, who have created a space with a deeply anti-perspective character. The artists of the twentieth century have created a new space that rejects the perspective as a unique method for the visual representation of space. Within the same current, different ways of approaching it can be found.

From the artists' desire of going beyond the conventional spatiality given by the linear perspective, an entire school will develop, which will use: points, lines, spots, contours and structures for the creation of a personal space, with its own elements, formally and conceptually suggestive, such as the lyrical and geometrical Abstractionism or the Informal. Thus, the mathematized space of the Renaissance perspective will be replaced with the psycho-physical space of modern times. The laws of physics lose their importance and other

factors are established, which have caused deep mutations upon the space suggesting modalities.

Chapter three presents **the perspective and spatiality within the illusionist art and the variety of the plastic space visual expressions within modern art**. Starting from the illusionist art of the ancient set designers, who set as their goal the creation of realistic representations that could give the visual illusion of certain three-dimensional objects on a two-dimensional surface, I have reached also the new types of space of the twentieth century, such as the Op-Art, the Pop-Art, the Fractals and the virtual spaces.

The illusionist painting resorted to different solutions and artistic effects such as *the anamorphosis, the raccourci and the Tromp l'oeil*, which reaches its peak during the Baroque period. The painters have resorted to these methods in order to extend the space beyond the physical limits of the rooms and to create an illusion of the continuity in the virtual space. Chapter three approaches the important changes that took place within the decorative system of the illusionist architecture and the easel painting. The methods of Mantegna, of the Caracci brothers, of Adereea Pozzo are remembered and, of course, the still life paintings of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, which were meant to fool the audience by means of the connection between reality and its image.

One subsection debates also the anamorphosis phenomenon, another optical illusion with the perspective's excessive effects, obtained by extending the drawings to the absurd and optically rectified from a fixed point. Although the artists resorted to this method ever since the Renaissance, we find it also in the particular art of Escher, but also in the contemporary mural painting, which uses the specifically anamorphic distortions in order to obtain the illusion of space continuity by merging reality with illusion. Among other things, the illusionist-optical procedures are presented as well, procedures that have been extensively used also by the representatives of the Op-Art movement by completely eliminating the perspective and the single watching angle with unique modalities of approaching space: la Vasarely, Bridget Riley, Yaacov Agam or Jesus Rafael Soto.

If in the Pop-Art the spatiality effects are obtained by introducing the three-dimensional objects and by combining genres and optical elements, in the contemporary art, the artistic approach and space conquering is rendered in a original and personal way. The subsection submits to analysis the variety of the visual expressions of the plastic space in the art of Yves Klein, Marc Rothko, Lucio Fontana, Francis Bacon, with the aspects that particularize them.

Within contemporary art, the Land-art, the Anti-Avant-garde movements have built a

specific world, with its own vision that led to the appearance of a new type of space. The new technologies of the twentieth century also predict other modalities of visual representation, such as: the virtual space, cultivated by the holographic art and the digital art in which the figurative space transforms into a space with a space-time dimension.

As a consequence, although the evocation of space in modern art is rarely rendered by traditional means, still, the depth illusion appears at each artistic current in a unique, authentic way by using certain expressivities, rhythm, form and color systems.

I have managed to demonstrate these trends most efficiently by **personal creation**, in chapter four, where personal non-figurative opinions become synthesis examples of the compositional organization, of using the value and chromatic reports of space.

I've come a long way until I have managed to liberate myself from any formal convention, to go beyond the conventional spatiality given by the geometric perspective and to reach a lyric abstractization through color, structure and technique quality. The cycles of works presented within this chapter submit to analysis different systems of space rendering in the personal painting.

Over time, a succession of events has caused small changes in the personal painting. In each subsection I present the stages that occurred in the personal creation and I underline the authentic methods that have generated new compositional structures and new spatial dimensions.

The created paintings, either unique or in cycles such as: *the Subjective Landscapes, the Nature Scraps, the Built Spaces, the Networks, the Impressions, the Small Happenings and the Constellations* have contributed to the deepening of the chosen theme and have presented the coordinates of an imagistic focused on the identity, variety and expressiveness of the plastic forms.

In the first subsection, I present de series of works entitled *Subjective Landscapes*, created between 2006 and 2007, in which the first attempts to render spatiality in the personal painting appear, from which I have removed the traditional means of space representation. I have limited to a subjective space and I have introduced, among other things: the texture gradient, the alternating of opaque, dense and transparent spaces or the dividing of compositions in three or more plans staggered towards the depth, - methods through which I have discovered important indicators of the depth.

Further, the series *Nature Scraps* of 2007 appear, another component of image: the writing, as a compositional element with spatializing effect. The graphologic fragments, beside the plastic and decorative effect, become signs with metaphoric meaning that

contribute by means of the expressive richness of the dense lines with a chromatic dedicated to the suggestion of barely perceptible stretching.

A subsection submits to analysis also the series Built Spaces, created between 2008 and 2010, where the geometrized elements have received a concentration and summarizing role of reality. The synthesized, geometrized forms juxtaposed in a non-illusionist context with the free gesture, shape the shards of urban panoramas with atmosphere vibrations. The plane surfaces, the degradation of the color range from dark to light, the relative size of elements, the adjacent or overlapping forms that suggest the forth-back relationship, cause, within works, o repercussion upon the space perception.

In the last part, a new universe of thinking and feeling is presented. Starting with 2011, I have diminished the rigor of the geometric forms and I have focused especially upon the new methods that confer specific value to the space. The organization of compositions based on principles and rules that should work as a substrate were important, but many times I let myself influenced by the spontaneity or expressiveness of some painting surfaces that, in most cases, have suggested the possible solutions of space. The unique works form the series finalized in this period, such as *the Networks, the Impressions, the Small Happenings* and *the Constellations* generate spatiality through the refined layering of color sections, of structures, through the network deformations, through valuing, at which contribute also the plastic signs undergoing crystallization.

As a result of some observation processes I became aware of the fact that the idea of structure is omnipresent in paintings and it distinguishes itself through a compositional autonomous and concentrated unity. The images projected on canvas from the inner sphere are subject to laws and algorithm of the space ordering. Although personal creation has passed through different stages, the joy of painting and the interest for color issues and their perspectivistic effect, the compositional solutions and the spatiality rendering by means of different methods remained, for me, the main concerns.

The theory had a powerful impact upon the works created in the last three years, but also the works have contributed to the theoretical clarification. Linkages of meaning and meanings accumulated during the research in different artistic genres and in my personal art, have resulted in the discovery and awareness of the different situations of spatialism and duality that exist between two and three dimensional in painting. The contemporary art fights spatiality, which balances between the affective intensity, different rhythms of pensulation and methods of rendering "reality". Nevertheless, even if gravity and the perspective disappear, still, the effect of depth and spatiality is not eliminated from the works.

Finally, I have reached also the conclusion that applying the well learned rules, the accuracy of constructions, the science are not enough for creating a masterpiece. Their rigidity must be attenuated through expressiveness, through the symbols that materialize, through hidden meanings, deep relationships that transform painting in a work of art. I believe that the good work, in time, does not „empty", does not become only a decor, instead, behind the appearances, it keeps a depth degree for the excitation of imagination.

As a consequence, I further state that there are no recipes, precise solutions for painting. The artist, at a certain point in time, overwrites all the rules and creates, guided by instinct.