

Elevated Pictures

The Painting of Tamás Kopasz

The painting of Tamás Kopasz is interpreted by many people and in many ways—as normally the artworks of famous artists.¹ Analytical, systematic, synoptic, funny writings or essays written in friendly ways deal with his artworks and creative activity. In the field of the growing oeuvre the fast multiplying texts create a more and more consistent structure, a kind of text-packing. The following writing can be determined as a typographical co-note, lingering beside the pattern of the spectacular “packaging”, the decorative rule of which is not so important, rather it attracts the attention on several directions.

Fortunately, Tamás Kopasz is more interested in the experience of the act of painting and in the strange painting procedure of a canvas than the current and fashionable art topics and trends. “I create not because somebody needs it”² – the artist says. It means that he doesn’t seek for professional recognition. Tamás Kopasz concentrates on painting. Moreover, the latter quotation can be misunderstood if it is compared with his paintings which have only been skimmed. In this case one can draw a false conclusion: “Only the paint meets your will [...] the painter himself does not have any say”.³ However, Kopasz’s art is not the interesting re-enactment of abstract expressionism,⁴ nor he focuses on spontaneity nor on consummation of the paint’s own will. For him the canvas is not an “arena-battlefield” yet (Rosenberg), where the picture is becoming an action,⁵ rather –playing with words– turning back,⁶ or re-interpreting the process, he turns the action into picture. Perfect timing is a crucial part of this process.

Kopasz creates his artworks during “ecstatically”⁷ experienced act of painting,⁸ with other words, the painting born between the starting and finishing moments of a unique state of creating.⁹ The painter should recognize these two moments and should allow to “get carried away”,¹⁰ i. e. the mental awareness of recognition combines with passivity of self-giving. The artist however is not only a passive “user” of that ecstatic state¹¹ he is rather its transformer as he has to harmonize the external force of rapture with the inner force of consciousness and the inherent possibilities in spontaneity. The state of ecstasy lasts until then, it should be upheld until the picture is not ready and it has to be ready while the ecstatic state holds, i. e. it

¹ See the bibliography: <http://www.kopaszamas.hu/eletrajz.html> (last download: 15 March 2015) and Nagy T., Katalin.: *Kopasz Tamás*. Budapest, Hungary, 2009.

² http://mutermek.com/festeszeti_grafika/kopasz-tamas/ (Last download: 15 March 2015)

³ Danto, Arthur C.: *The Transfiguration of the Commonplace*

⁴ The fact of re-enactment...

⁵ Rosenberg, Harold: *The American Action Painters*. *Art News*, 1952, December. 22. „At a certain moment the canvas began to appear to one American painter after another as an arena in which to act—rather than as a space in which to reproduce, re-design, analyze or “express” an object, actual or imagined. What was to go on the canvas was not a picture but an event.”

⁶ In this case “turning back” does not mean nor reconstruction, nor re-mythologizing.

⁷ The ecstasy couldn’t be determined exactly, it is impossible to measure and control. (All of these belong to its essence.) Hamvas makes the difference between the flash-like and the effective ecstasy. With this last, with the „controlled ecstasy” could be identify artistic empathy, because in this case much more layer of meaning can be revealed in his paintings. Béla Hamvas writes the following on the theme of ecstasy: Hamvas, Béla: <http://hamvasbela.org/szavak/extazis.html> (Last download: 15 March 2015.)

⁸ http://mutermek.com/festeszeti_grafika/kopasz-tamas/ (Last download: 15 March 2015.)

⁹ The first and last moment of painting does not have high importance in connection to the content, when the artist doesn’t work in an ecstatic state.

¹⁰ We have to mention that the furor-ecstasy-enthusiasm (not in meaning of Hamvas) refers to the image and aesthetics of genius artist, although the furor keeps its own „classical characteristic” as well.

¹¹ The full control would question the reality and necessity of the ecstasy.

is sustainable.¹² The “floating interest...,”¹³ allows joining and seeing through all of them. This floating interest isn't the effect of harmonizing the self-conscious and the nonconscious, rather attached to the focused ecstasy. Thanks to this interest, Ventos says, we are able to listen out and inner simultaneously, excluding the codes and symbols of our convictions and belief. “...”¹⁴

Kopasz does not prepare any precise plan, he does not work out his paintings with the help of sketches. When the process of painting starts, he would not know yet, what will happen. He cannot foresee, because he could not foresee, how the painting will develop, or, thinking it further, he could not know whether there will be a (“ready”) painting as there is no visible, planned aim or assurance that the process of creation ends successfully. We can only hope that!

Fear and stress of blind flying, for Kopasz, is not a paralyzing feeling, rather it is a psychical tuning. We can say that the fear¹⁵ takes part in controlling the artist. In the midst of work –as a unique “self-controlled signal transmitter”– it reminds him incessantly that there is a risk of interrupting the blessedness in any time. So then, at the end, it helps him to concentrate more and more on the intensive and attentive empathy of ecstatic state. The strangling excitement of the not planned, not known development of the image and the precise finishing, in other words, induces psychical and emotional tension between the euphoric happiness of the birth of the picture. If the two end values come closer to each other, thus, the process of equalization would start up, the quick heart-beat of the paintings would slow down and turn into mechanical and monotonous knocking. It is important to emphasize all of these because the art of Kopasz should be defined in contrast to the art, giving meaning to the applying sign of motoric movement as critical painting.¹⁶

The art of Kopasz underlines the idea, which seems to be not too important for contemporary art, or, often directly unnecessary, thematizing the relation between picture size, mode of representation and topic. In the case of gesture paintings, due to the fact that they do not open windows to another illusory reality, and because of the paint traces refer to non- recognizable elements of reality, the quality of gestures (their intensity, direction, colour, dimension) and proportion is perceived and appreciated mainly – disproportion between gesture and painting surface. The dimension of the painting table – and sometimes its form – controls the gesture. The gesture, either uses up the available surface, or leaves it untouched, acts on the size of painting surface, but the gesture can be realized because of the so called overgrowing on the surface essentially. Between gesture and surface exists a strong connection. In most cases the surface size has meaning, when the canvas choice i. e. the exact setting of the playing field of the gesture-gestures, anticipates the painting. The dominance of the canvas size can be unmade so that the painter does not consider the size of the painting surface as fixed size, he rather marks afterwards, then he underlines a detail and it will be

¹² It means that during the ecstatic painting the painter harmonizes not the subconscious with some kind of conscious willing. Furthermore, we have to add, that “the spontaneity itself doesn't create any conceptuality” Hauser Arnold: *A művészettörténet filozófiája*. Budapest, Gondolat, 1978, 304.

¹³ Ventós; Xavier Rubert de: *Why philosophize?* Budapest, Typotext, 2008. 157-158.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Since the reason of fear is nameable and understandable, thus it is more correct to speak about fear and not about distress. The distress, which can be feel or suppose when we look at Kopasz's paintings is more about the own feelings of the viewer and not the reflection of the artist's emotional experience.

¹⁶ Although it does not ensue from the opposition, that his art should connect to the abstract expressionism. But it is inadvisable to think that it functions as a starting point for Kopasz. If we suppose the similarity, Kopasz's painting would inherit some disordering paradox of abstract expressionism. Except that the paintings of Kopasz would be considered from the point of view of abstract expressionism, then, meanly, his painting's value would be less appreciated. Apropos of abstract expressionism arises its theoretical background, which at first evolved as a discussion Greenberg vs. Rosenberg. (And which expands sooner or later in the direction of political and religious questions.) It would be well advised as far as possible to separate the art of Kopasz from this.

named as a completed artwork. The dimensions do not belong to the ambitious post-works, completing the ecstatic works, but, incontestably, it is a conscious, closing intervention.

On the canvases of Kopasz carefully chosen details of endless diffusing, colour and stripe structures with immeasurable size can be seen. On the picture cuts fragment images of the chaos of dissipation exist, which is capable to work as "leading field",¹⁷ able to "Show the man and the sensible phenomena taking place in the soul of the conflict; and thus into the generation and demonstrate a change".¹⁸ Therefore the underlined details (the paintings) do not carry the spontaneous action's sign of rugged self-expression and they do not show the coloured fragmented trails of wandering, but, instead, they became elevated detail-pictures of reality, which could be experienced through disciplined ecstasy.

The essence of "elevation" is that it does not interpret, it "does not tell the story, nor describe, it simply shows off [...] the elevated [...] stands instead of other thing: on the first level it interprets the subjective atmosphere, on the second level the cosmic approach, the presentiment of".¹⁹ It is worth noting and correlating Kopasz's art to the artistic approach and process of Middle Eastern painting and poetry because with help of these can be the specific characteristic of his paintings and their metaphoric character understood. As the above mentioned poetic and visual representations due to the elevating character,²⁰ the metaphoric feature is rather implied than conscious. The "implied metaphor" does not want to be a (real) metaphor and "behave" as a metaphor, the passivity belongs to its essence.²¹ But all of these can be noticed not only in the Middle Eastern art. Similar "elevated pictures" can be found over the revealing,²² behind in the Western art,²³ e. g. in a Bach's motet or in a Zurbarán's painting and, of course, many other earlier and older artwork could be mentioned.

Kopasz, without any comment, elevates the revealed pictures. While he adheres to the meaning, he gives up the representation of those objects,²⁴ which could mediate them, more precisely, he puts the "elevated" unconscious metaphors created during the ecstatic painting in place of the objects which are able to function as object's residuums.²⁵ He presumes, that he can assign to a concrete painting adherent strongly to the meaning, an artistic atmosphere and sense which "not only to stand in the imaging of the subjective imagination of it."²⁶ To harmonize all these means and create a painting is a true success!

(Endre Lisányi)

¹⁷ Formula of quantum theory is used by Lützel in his pretty book about abstract pictures. The leading field works out the horizon of experience. *Abstract Painting Meaning and Boundary*, by Heinrich Lützel

¹⁸ *Lützel*; Heinrich: *Abstract painting*

¹⁹ Miklós Pál: *A zen és a művészet*. Budapest, Magvető, 1978. 101-128.

²⁰ And because of the „floating attention”!

²¹ Use of presumed and concrete metaphors allow several artistic motivation and goals. If we interpret pictures of Kopasz as concrete (or if not „presumed”) metaphors, we would confine his painting toward the category of „international academism” (see Molnár Sándor: „Nemzetközi akadémizmus” Kelet-Európában. *Új Művészet*, 1997, május-június, 25.) and ambush of self-repeating.

²² But not irrespective of it!

²³ Naturally not in all works.

²⁴ In this case colour stripes and paintbrush signs on the canvases has to be interpreted as „artefacts” - considering the meaning of several artworks, on which first of all inform us the title of the work.

²⁵ With this type, there may be valid only works with [...] they know that in the world of sensual and intellectual, or spiritual world, are analogous aspects between the perceived image drawings and reports are kindred spirits.” Sedlmayr; Hans: *The idols of modern art*. Budapest, Thought, 1960, 42 p.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 40.