



Colouring the Grey – State of Mind

Artists: Radu Belcin, Dragoş Burlacu, Francisc Chiuariu, Ana Maria Micu, Cătălin Petrişor, Flavia Pitiş, Bogdan Raţa şi Aurel Tar

Curator: Cosmin Năsui

Project manager: Oana Ioniţă

Organiser: Nasui Private Collection & Gallery

Project supported by Romanian Cultural Institute Tel Aviv

Artists House Tel Aviv

Alharizi 9, Tel Aviv, Israel

Opening: November 24, 2011, 20.00

Exhibition: November 24 – December 18, 2011

Schedule

Mon-Thurs 10:00 - 13:00, 17:00 - 19:00

Fri 10:00 - 13:00

Satur 11:00 - 14:00

Transition identity

“Colouring the Grey – The Second Wave of Romanian Emerging Contemporary Artists” curatorial project, first presented within “Special Projects” section of the Moscow Biennale of Contemporary Art 2011, opens a series of exhibitions by bringing forward the Romanian emergent artists in international cultural spaces. The following destination of the project, Tel Aviv (November-December 2011), will witness an approach which aims at getting deeper into a particular conceptual aspect of the project: “State of Mind”.

This new exhibition, “Colouring the Grey – State of Mind”, illustrates an overview on the East-European identity in transition. The concept of the unified, lost, regained and redesigned identity defines new specific features of the Romanian contemporary art after more than 20 years of transition. Just as the present colours of the public buildings and blocks of flats, so do the states of mind begin to escape the grey area of indefiniteness and confusions. The transition naturally generates the mental state of grey, which is coloured now by precise ideas and clear concepts, being “purified” by colours within the current context.

The communist regime favoured the formation of a working class identity created by levelling other social categories. Most of the times, the consequences of this imposed social structure destroyed any means of expressing one’s personality.

These identity leaps in recent history generated several “sacrificing generations” in the 70s, 80s and 90s, which faced the realities and the problems of a permanently delayed present and a perpetually unscheduled future. The reality was always somewhere else and people used to relate to successful Western models, that were already obsolete by the time they reached the Romanian audience. When reaching maturity, each “sacrificing generation” became aware of the failure of the previous generations’ ideals and of its inability to reach its own.



Eastern Europe's identity is constructed by these sacrificing generations, which skipped various phases in order to fill in civilization gaps (cultural, economic etc.). These leaps led to uncertainties and always temporary definitions of both personal and group identities. A very good example for Romania during the Golden Age is the forced population migration from village to city, the migration from a rural community-based culture to an urban, industrial, "block of flats" type of culture.

The temporary identities became permanent and consequently generated multi-layered identity confusion. Formally, this process is expressed in post-2000 visual arts through the lack of portrait and through veiling the face features in figurative compositions. These artistic statements become specific to expressing identity in the Eastern present.

These complex aspects of the identity-related pursuit can be observed in the imagery of recent Romanian contemporary art: there are many artists – Adrian Ghenie, Mircea Suci, Francisc Chiuariu, Dragos Burlacu, Radu Belcin, Bogdan Rata, Mirela Moscu, Razvan Boar, Robert Fekete and others – whose works use the same mechanism of portraiture, by complete or partial removal of anatomical parts of the face. A portrait with no eyes, nose or mouth can render any image or individuality.

Neoromanticism

Stylistically, recent Romanian contemporary art has rediscovered its appetite for a form of Realism that is dressed up in the fashionable suit of the Neorealism. Somehow naturally residing in the vicinity of the historical binomial, the land of Neoromanticism is explored by artists like Radu Belcin and Flavia Pitis. Starting the quest from the expression of reality study, Belcin and Pitis explore the identities of the individual and of the present. The frame of such visual exploration is addressed in *chiaroscuro*. The delight of long shadows elongating in the background, the sparks of light, coming from the scenographically designed spot lights create the atmosphere that leads to a world of dreams or nightmares.

Radu Belcin crops the image of faces in "It's Cold beneath the Moon", "A Hand Full of Hands", removes the elements of portrait in "Illusion of a Day", "58 trees", "The Wish", hides the faces in "Perseverance", "Can We Play", "Evening Never Comes", "Blowing", "Hope Maker", "Impossible Dreamland", and "Full of Ideas". The faces of the depicted characters cannot be seen; therefore not only they remain anonymous, but they also introduce a surreal sense through the surrounding elements. However, there are works where the portrait acquires an identity, i.e. the works where Radu Belcin resorts to his own image, such as "Find Me where I'm Hiding", "Did You See My New Car".

Flavia Pitis is looking for an identity of the future generations. Children making adult-like gestures, such as those from the works "Reflection of a Thought", "Nothing but Blue Skies", "Just a Shadow", announce that the series of "sacrificing generations" continues the adventure of self-searching.

Ana Maria Micu artistically transposes a subtle revelation of self by complex compositions and imagery of exterior states typical to transition. "It will become and the greater the kick. or small pieces of sand", "conflict is violence. to have a will of iron", or "the question However no other version" are images of the spiritual relationships turned exterior using inner objects and intimate realities. This duality is specific to the recent works of Ana Maria Micu.



The collective character & common property

Dragos Burlacu perfected a manner of visual rendition, by which he simplifies narration and figurativeness in order to capture the emotion of the characters' relationships. Dragos Burlacu removes the details of portraits in "Royal Couple", "Erasing Light", "Unknown" or "The Colour is in the Shadow" so he would not divert the focus from the outlined beauty of the relationships intimately creating themselves beyond the physical presence of the characters.

The "Outdoor" project of **Francisc Chiurariu** selects a series of individuals captured in their daily journey. The collective character from all his compositions is composed of the various faces of walkers by. The street scene as recorded by Francisc Chiurariu represents the common collective space and the way it is assumed and used by pedestrians. Gradually, the characters' shadows and their place in the picture become more important and even replace their actual presence. Francisc Chiurariu draws attention upon the postmodern process of individual disintegration within the collective space.

Aurel Tar's work focuses on the details of globalization's cultural interactions and mixtures. Both the local identity and the multi-culturalism form the substance underlying Tar's artistic statement. In 2007 "ROU" series, Tar describes the Romanian identity using an element of the national costume specific to the geographical area of "Marginimea Sibiului" (the Outskirts of Sibiu). The artist placed the "clop" (ethnic hat) in the most surprising contexts in order to demonstrate its universality and authenticity as well: from racing pilot helmet to... a rugby balloon or the traditional helmet of the British policemen uniforms. In his recent series "Wonderful Outskirts", the frame is expanded and the works confront different cultural, geographical and historical identities by means of overlaying and juxtaposition. The innovative results are an equal match to those from the series of unexpected encounters of a "sewing-machine and an umbrella on an operating table". In Tar's case, the encounters are between Titian, Pre-Raphaelites and a Boeing aircraft.

Posthumanism & Post-genetic

Regarded in a global context, the East-European transition aligns to the global trajectory of the shift from post-industrial age to the informational age. The subject of this transition is familiar to East-European space, as it comes from the experience of recent past. The works of Catalin Petrisor and Bogdan Rata depict different aspects of the realities of a post-political, post-genetic, post-nuclear, post-crisis, post-oil world, which outrun these stages to the wonderful virtual realities.

Petrisor's art consists of combining pieces of reality, which create a new dimension of the image: the illusory space. In his pursuit, Catalin Petrisor starts from the strangeness of nature and uses painting as a method to authenticate reality.

"First day, Next Day", "Static Future" and "To heal a Wounded Surfer" are images of a possible post-human universe, defined by the absence of human faces. The Humanism and Posthumanism are placed face to face in the "First day, Next Day" work, where the icon of the geometric proportions of human ideal established by Leonardo da Vinci is the correspondent of a snow angel. In "To heal a Wounded Surfer", a dog is waiting for his master whose footsteps on the beach disappear in the sea. Near the dog, there is a tree log, whose growth rings represents the crown of the family tree of all species. The footsteps lead us to the symbols of another work, "Leap of Faith", which closes an earth-related evolution cycle of the human species.



The hybrid realism of **Bogdan Rata** reveals new genetic forms of human anatomy, in search of a new post-humanism. Based on a forgotten future, his work reproduces reminiscent “reality replicaes” in the virtual world of the “Blade Runner” movie. Rata multiplies fragments of the human body (fingers, ears etc.) and combines them in new life forms. The new creatures seem to be the results of weird experiments on human body, performed in an aesthetic laboratory. His sculptures are a remarkable interpretation of the fragment culture, recalling the ancient art studies. The materials he used (synthetic resin, car putty) are related to the final forms, without wearing the mark of their creator. The sculptures look as if they were created according to an industrial pattern by means of a mechanical process. This perfectionist technical approach challenges the meaning of individual personality in a climate of commercial uniformisation. Starting from self-portrait references, such as “Self to the Wall”, “Self”, Bogdan Rata aims at the always dual and paradoxical human condition of personality introversion (“In Yourself”) by its exteriorization.

The new curatorial exhibition project “Post Humanism”, opened at V-art Gallery, in Moscow, in October 2011, is both a diversion and a detachment from “Colouring the Grey – State of Mind”. “Post Humanism” is a precise reference to the humanity that becomes aware of its new possibilities, while artificial intelligence attains self-awareness.

The aesthetic trajectories of these artists have a major Eastern significance, because they come out of a “sacrificing generation” environment, after assuming it. Hence, the stages are skipped, the present is updated and the identities are formulated.

The exhibition is accompanied by a book. The album *Colouring the Grey – State of Mind* has 128 pages and contains the curatorial concept in Romanian, English and Hebrew, together with eight artists’ portfolios and artistic bios. The book is officially launched in Israel at the opening at Artists House Tel Aviv and in Romania within the Gaudeamus International Book Fair. It will be freely accessible in the national networks of book shops beginning with November 23, 2011.

A selection of the book is to be soon available here <http://www.cosminnasui.com/publications/>

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