



PÉCSI
TUDOMÁNYEGYETEM
University of Pécs

Doctoral School of Art Faculty

Dávid Hegyvári

Truth seeking art

The unity of cognition, creation and acting

Theses

Supervisor: Dr. habil. Csaba Hegyi DLA, associate professor

2024

Research method

The concept of truth usually decides professionals, because often it is accompanied by a worldview. Our present world holds and allows many different views side by side. However, art has always served a common purpose, which is why I believe it is timely to raise the question: What is truth in art?

Art can be related to many branches of science, it is diverse, complex and interrelated. It is not only concerned with the knowledge of appearances and laws, but also with the knowledge of man. My research methodology involved a study of the relevant literature and parallel studio work exploring the possibilities of polysemy.

While studying the writings of St. Thomas Aquinas, I ask myself the question. How does the trio: beautiful, good and true apply to the creative work of the artist? Among the philosophies of cognition, Hans-Georg Gadamer's Truth and Method was the most influential, through which I became interested in the formation of meaning, the interpretation of the image and its correspondence with the concept of reality. By paralleling verbal and visual thinking, I started paying attention to the interpretation and interpretability of the image. I had to redefine the concept of reality through the literature of visual representation. I then examined the polysemy in the world of paintings - which I represent - that operate with fictional and real elements, how they differ from works that use universal symbols.

Topic of the research

The main question appearing in my topic is how art or paintings represent the truth and what we mean by this: the truth of art. Science and art are both concerned with human knowledge, the question is how the artistic individual's creation of the world contains it. The artwork, in our case the painting, is a way of knowing the world and ourselves in it. Visual language is a major determinant of human thinking. The artwork is more than an ethical or communicative message. We can experience instinctive things through it, religious experiences, but we can also experience it as a reflection of reality. The image is a representation of something, but painting uses the image by giving it substance through its imagination. For this reason, no artists look at a subject in the same way.

The paradigm changes of the twentieth century have brought about major shifts in the way we think about art. Alongside a plurality of genres, intellectual aspirations have become more diverse. This not only gave freedom, but also set limits to artists. With the appearance of ready-made works, it became unclear what did truly belong to art. The image and imagery of reality changed. The question is: what is the relationship between the image (created by the artist) and the truth? I have searched for answers from several directions.

Results of the research

Reality and truth in creation

It is difficult when we want to undertake a critical analysis of an artwork. It does not always have a narrative content, but it can be interpreted in a meaningful way if it is treated in the

right context, if one knows its art-historical context and the circumstances in which it was created. In some cases, the pictorial signs are coded in a particular way. In my examples, I discuss mainly these cases. That is why I will talk about three founders of classical abstract art (Mondrian, Malevich, Kandinsky). Also about artists whose art was inspired by invention to produce forms in which individual signs are used (Georg Baselitz, Gérard Garouste, Enzo Chucci). Through them, we can understand that the real and fictive elements that appear in works of art can both serve the truth of the image. By observing the logic behind them, we can arrive at not one but several results. We find traditional and non-traditional meanings of the symbols. If we look at Malevich ' s Black Square as an icon, we can see in it a universe without light, but we can also see it as an expression of nothingness. Figurative and non-figurative paintings are also present meanings, I mean transtendental things. Realism, surrealism and all of the realism styles also want to depict the world authentically, realistically. But the representation of something appears differently in everyone's mind. The painting of hyper-realism has this potential because although it enhances detail to give a realistic experience, the same image is captured in the viewer as an individual. Painting can also present us virtuality and reality.

Symbolism and visual metaphor

In addition to the neo-expressionist and transavant-garde artists, I have also investigated the use of fictional imagery in the painting of István Farkas. He places his motifs in an interesting context. These objects inspired by his travels. The spatial structure of his paintings of the 1930s becomes symbolic, creating a world of spectres similar to that of Giorgio di Chirico. The formality of his pictorial elements takes us away from the concreteness of the work and into a metaphysical world. By deforming space, he links the real with the imaginary. It creates a feeling of tension in the viewer and this feeling is heightened by the unusualness of its colours. His reds, tending towards bordo, are paired with greenish blues, accompanied by colourless greys and blacks in his painting Red Table (1931). The colour of the sky is quite different from that of natural phenomena. The harmony of the forms and the colours creates it surreal. He paints sightless figures in barren landscapes.

First origin, beauty and truth

"The idea of a duplicated world, divided into a sensual and a supersensual world, is the philosophy of Neoplatonism. It derives all manifestations of physical existence from spiritual reality. This is also the view of beauty, that the beauty manifested in the sensible world can be explained by the beauty of the soul and the intellect."¹ Beauty is inherent in the creation of the world. The interconnection of the ideas of truth and beauty can be seen in this. It varies from culture to culture as to what is considered in a given region to be the primordial basis of all that exists what gives the world its essential essence. However, the symbolism of top-down progress is common to all religions and philosophies. Art that springs from tradition respects this mystery and does not try to solve the birth of the world with new rationales. It uses archetypes to show the stories and the relevance of recurring motifs in history. Gábor Roskó's Minjan (1993-2003) consists of small sculptures of Old Testament characters,

¹ Dissertation, p. 15.

showing the effects of the historical burden of the Holocaust on present generations. Are these works anthropomorphizing the animal world or rather animalizing the human world? This is not the main question posed by the interpretation of the sculpture group, but it is the enigmatic way in which he shapes meaning. His works are willfully confusing, and we cannot necessarily decode them fully even with a knowledge of the subject.

Intuition and imagination

Imagination is an essential thing in our minds that helps us to make sense of the world. A fiction can be a hypothetical event, through we can understand real events and phenomena. Creative art is therefore not about creating false images, but about reflecting on reality by using the possibilities of imagination. It is up to us to uncover and discover the secret of the work, which is in the imagined forms. The dreamlike images are formed by the surrealist vision of reality. We know that such an unrealistic combination of phenomena does not exist, yet they provide a lifelike experience. They have a narrative, and we can read scene-like events out of them. The motifs are portrayed with a realistic ambition, which raises the idea that the absurdities present a picture of the world from their backstory.

Periodically renewed events are constant themes in the art. Birth, fertility, disease, death, war, and so on inspire artists. Georg Baselitz's intuitive, transcendent paintings reveal a world that from the first moment you glimpse it, is arresting and speaks to these themes with elemental power. Looking at his oeuvre, I have come to the realisation that we do need to see the world in 'black and white'. The current problem is that you cannot say definitively that something is right or wrong. We can't be wise enough to judge everything in this way, but art teaches us to try to do so.

The constancy of beauty, good and truth

Art offers a world in which permanence is inherent. Paintings have a transient nature, the material does not stay in the same state forever, but restorers are able to preserve it for us for a long time, so that its spiritual value is passed on. An artwork is able to preserve the beauty of something, while in nature it fades away and is renewed. The concept of goodness, discussed above, is also a constant value in art, a primary consideration when judging a work of art. We cannot say that the time of art has passed. It is because it can be endowed with these everlasting concepts. And Karl Rosenkatz's *The Aesthetics of Ugliness* shows that the opposite of beauty can also become an aesthetic value through art. This transformation is equally present in abstraction-based and mimetic representation.

Reading the pictures

The reproductional function of the painting (for example portraying image) was marginalised with the arrival of the cameras. As a result, painterly gestures, the highly legible mark-making, became more strongly developed. But the intention to reproduce reality has not disappeared. The similarity between scientific and artistic invention is that phenomena are discovered, recognised and invented. The knowledge thus acquired seeks to get at the truth. The reality of the work of art conceals much of the reality of the world, but reveals parts of it.

It is up to the viewer of the artwork to add to them. Paintings can only represent the whole of reality in parts. "If we think solely in terms of experience, we can no more grasp the truth than we can grasp that something came from nothing. In this way, we may understand more of Attila József's phrase: "Reality is exist and it is real, and truth is not exist and it is true."²

Autonomy, authenticity and innovation

Can something be true if it is not authentic? Among the demands of innovation is the demand for authenticity. The reason why it is becoming increasingly difficult to present something individual and new is that, although there is the autonomy of the artist, there are many parallels between two artist who are going his own way. (Paralel means not similarity.) This is frequent in painting because the possibilities of using paint as a material have been explored in a very broad spectrum. The technical realisation depends on everything from the brush strokes, to the quality of the medium, to the consistency of the paint. The individual use of colour is still valid. A seemingly endless variation of colours can be created, but here too comparisons are often made. Individual style is therefore not specifically in the way the material is used, but in the uniqueness of the intellectual work. It is the construction of a motif world, its embedding in an individual environment, that defines the uniqueness of a contemporary painter. His works of art evolve along the lines of a consistent shaping of meaning, the creation of new symbols, the creation of an individual myth.

² Dissertation, p. 25.

Bibliography (selection)

- Cassirer, Ernst (1931) *Mythischer, ästhetischer und theoretischer Raum*. Stuttgart.
- Horváth Sándor (1924) *Aquinói Szent Tamás világnézete*, Szent István Társulat, Budapest.
- Földényi F. László (2010) *Képek előtt állni*, Kalligram Kiadó, Pozsony.
- Bálint Endre (1987) *Sorsomról van szó*, Magvető Kiadó, Budapest.
- Gadamer, Hans-Georg (1984) *Truth and Method*. Bloomsbury Academic. 2013.
- Gadamer, Hans-Georg (1995) *Kunst ohne Geschichte*. In. *Kunst und Kunstgeschichte heute*. München. Beck.
- Hamvas Béla – Kemény Katalin (1989) *Forradalom a művészetben*, Pannónia Könyvek, Pécs.
- Heidegger, Martin (1962) *Being and Time*. Translated by John Macquarrie & Edward Robinson.
- Iser, Wolfgang (1993) *The Fictive and the Imaginary*. Translated by Thomas Brook.
- Kandinszkij, Vaszilij (1914) *Concerning the Spiritual in Art*. Translated by Michael T. H. Sadler.
- Kant, Immanuel (1995) *Critique of Pure Reason*. Translated by Kemp Smith.
- Malevics, Kazimir (1986) *The World as Objectlessness*. Translated by Simon Baier.
- Maróth Miklós (1995) „Az újplatonikusok esztétikai nézeteiről”, in Tar Ibolya, Szőnyi György Endre (szerk.) *Ikonológia és műértelmezés 5.*, JATEPress Kiadó, Szeged
- Nelson Goodman (1968) *The sound of pictures*. In. *Languages of Art*. Indianapolis, New York, Kansas City.
- Rosenkatz, Karl (2011) *Aesthetic of Uglyness*. Translated by Sarah Haubner
- Tábor Béla (2003) „Szabó Lajosról”, in Tábor Béla *Személyiség és logosz. Bevezető és kommentárok a valóság őstörténetéhez*, Balassi Kiadó, Budapest.
- Werner, Hofmann (1969) *Turning Points in Twentieth-century Art*. Translated by Charles Kessler