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The Degrees of Distancing

This artistic world was born and became fundamentally unified the moment it made its turn-about and take-off, breaking with school-bookish schemes, with representing and mapping the external and given world. If we want to follow the events, we should base ourselves on not the external chronological order and the external route signs, but the internal path the artistic career took.

This route, the pictures, did not start from without, and is attached not to spectacle, but to what went on within, to the memories and visions of a soul seeking itself, to what, filtered through it, has survived and can be called forth. "This world is mine in so far as it can be the poetry of my internal world," says Ádám Gáll in sort of profession of faith. This inward turn, this "un-realisation", makes his pictures be closer to poetry and music; it is no mere coincidence that picture and word, even if not equal in weight, are both present in his artistic activities.

Broadly speaking, he struggles with two fundamental problems: Is it possible to create a valid artistic mode of expression, a self-enclosed work of art? Does the modern self, which has become point-like, have any depth? Does personality, the soul, have an inner core that can appear, that can be the subject of a picture? What is at stake in this struggle is the exploration and demonstration of this internal quest, the art of intimateness, the Odyssey of spirit and form.

The melancholy of breaking away, of loss and distance is the basic tone of this recollecting and meditative art. It represents a turn away from the directness of the world, an entry into another world, which requires the suspension of all ready-made forms of knowledge.

It suspends consciousness and the orientation to the present and without, and brings into operation unconscious, involuntary memory and spontaneous creative forces. There are other, more primary mechanisms at work behind conscious relations and conventional meanings.

Stiff, self-absorbed, mysterious figures, gestures, connections, accidental details, the juxtaposed phases of a story convey a sense of sequence. Coming into being, dream-likeness and unchecked meanings assemble into a system of relations that stipulates its own rules, and enables a variety of things.

There is no unified convention of representation, no perspective; falling apart as such enters the pictures, becomes their subject matter. The unified space of the picture disintegrates.

Becoming happens to be contingent and irregular; it is but elements and fragments. If there be

any balance or unity possible, it must come into being by following this route to the end. Time embodying distance is represented by spaces, numerous planes piled upon each other in heaps of fragments, stories and fade-ins congealed into timelessness.

Let us pick out a group of pictures, which seem to fall into a kind of sequence. First in the row, we have pictures of remembrance and imagination as solace: the dreams of childhood and adolescence long gone yet conjuring the sweetest tastes, the astonishment of the senses at the world (*Memory Garden, Fancy*).

Youth realising its independence and forlornness rejects and blasts ready-made forms: all is in flux, falls apart; the elements whirl in a dizzy commotion in the pictures. We can observe this particularly in the three pictures of the series *Definitions*. Reaching the age of Christ, existential recognitions are formulated at general level: even the titles reflect a reckoning with the final givens of existence (*Requests to Stay On, Traversers, Wait, From the Other Side*).

Something similar to this “existential” sequence can be observed in the handling of material and form. If we scan the whole exhibition, we note it consists of drawings in chalk and paintings. The former ones are mostly figural; while the latter tend from figural to abstraction. If we approach them from the practical logic of the creative process, we can speak of a sort natural process of abstraction in respect of the material. The drawings in pencil and chalk represent the starting point; pastels, facile and airy in their materiality, shapes and spaces shaped by colour, mean the next level. Within the group of pastels, we see a whole gamut of complexity and abstraction, beginning with portrait-like, central-figure compositions through pictures representing relatively few relations to complex ones, and we finally have paintings forgoing objective content. In comparison, the heaviness, thickness, lumpiness of the paint implies increasing abstraction, enabling and necessitating a more forceful assertion of structure.

To focus on the picture entitled *The Degrees of Distancing*, instead of the traditional handling of material of oils (oil on canvas), the artist applies a heavier material, gypsum, on a wooden or canvas frame, and this will be the basis of formation. If thin silk paper is put on this material, the knots, wrinkles and rumples themselves create a facture, which, irrespective of fictional shaping, demonstrate a wealth of references and relations. With added layers of paint, the primary structure of modelling can be highlighted or deepened. Thus, the shaping of material is what directly shapes form; it is incarnation (*Incarnation in White*, as two later

pictures are entitled) taking place in the material, and thus meaning is even less voluntary and closed. The walls mean an end point where the constructing-creating movement becomes an object in its directness. The picture in its wholeness becomes metaphor, referring beyond itself.

It would be tempting to regard the wall paintings relinquishing figuration and fiction as the final point in linear development, but it would also be a short-circuited conclusion to draw. The logic outlined, however, is not linear, but is asserted in a circular process: in its renewing phases, the creative process repeatedly traverses and summarises the routes already covered. Figuration is not lost; abstraction does not invalidate it, but raises it to another level – as we have portraits, figural and non-figural pastels, as well as “walls” among his latest work. But without the means of expression achieved by the “walls”, the formation of the pastels, the portrait of *Conjured*, the faintly re-occurring figure of *Vanishing* or the non-figurative *Space Disintegration* would be quite different. The “walls”, however, continue to reflect, if not through direct narrative and figuration, by way of the impression of material shaping braced into form and meaning.

Ladányi Galéria, 6 September, 1996.