

Gábor Pogány

After the Words

Pondering the art of Ádám Gáll, both his painterly and graphic art, even the beginning is extraordinary for me. How could a pupil come out from under the hands of a master who used full-blooded painterly means, and approach things from the opposite direction: that of drawing, compositions based on refined drawings? This applies to the works of Gáll made in 1980s, too. What did he actually do after graduating at the Academy of Fine Arts? Well, he primarily drew. True, these early drawings were painterly compositions, as well, because colour had a significant role in pictorial shaping; but drawing continues to have a defining function throughout his later painting, too.

If there was anyone who attempted to express himself through line drawing in the 1970s and 1980s, he could not cut himself free from the memory of Béla Kondor. I believe I recognise the spirit of Kondor in certain drawings and heads by Ádám Gáll; and he certainly transposes some of the discoveries of this most important figure in 20th-century Hungarian art, and uses them completely independently in his art. He is a good constructor, a careful composer; his drawings and the drawing parts of his pictures are particularly noteworthy. However, drawing, if one approaches painting through drawing, he will sooner or later turn into its opposite: he will begin to forsake line, structure, geometric composition, and think in terms of colour, colour mood and surface.

These pictures, which represent an intermediary station, a transition to the later, more painterly mode of expression, attest that one can break with drawing in a way that retains it hidden. Let me mention the picture entitled *Re-nativity* which alludes to the wonderful invention of the renaissance painters with which, apart from central perspective, they could surpass the mediaeval painters: this was *sfumato*, “haziness”, with which they rendered perspective perceptible. Ádám Gáll dips his motifs in such a *sfumato*, which then takes possession of his pictures. The enigmatic greys become increasingly concentrated, elements of spectacle disappear; it is only facture that recalls where the picture originally started out from. This is how he himself writes about this:

“distress weaves
fraying twilight, –
– existence keeps awake –
the clench of blind-white expectations
loosens and like a knife flashes
instinct, spirit passes judgement. ”

The keyword is distress – in the pictures, too. The more we immerse ourselves in this haziness and distress, the more major parts of the world are lost; spectacle and reality will return only when “spirit passes judgement”. He has some pictures to which only the first two lines of the poem apply: the grey whirl remains within the painted surface; the picture seems to close, as though a veil of mist covered all things visible and interpretable, and the lack of spectacle becomes picture (*Dusk, Shades* and *Forsaking the Image*). And then, slowly, some references begin to appear or not disappear fully (*Wait, Falling Apart*). These patches, lines and colours assisting thought and the fantasy of sight have a carefully composed place in the surfaces of the pictures.

In the artistic activities of Ádám Gáll, shifts in time mean circulatory movement, as well. It is in this process that his poems fit into, which, in deploying visual poetic images, create an extraordinary relationship between the visual thought of the poems and the conceptual ideas of the pictures, and point out a logical sequence and the possible routes of further development.

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