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Depths

In order to grasp the works of *Ádám Gáll* made in the some five-year period after the turn of the millennium, we have to highlight and discuss a few concepts.

The first and probably most important one – one determining the art of *Ádám Gáll* as whole – is decay, bearing and expressing the whole array of connotations of mortality, destruction, the gradual and slow annihilation according to the laws of nature. We are somewhere midway in the process: things have disintegrated, they have lost their original shapes, some details can still be recognised, but what has happened is irretrievable; new and unknown qualities have appeared. Our only faint hope is that destruction has not gone its way, because otherwise nothing would be left, no prey would remain for us. We still have some requisites, and, though tragic and disastrous, we still have our living and present memories. We can still refer to things.

The other important concept or phenomenon characterising this group of works is looming or filtering through, meaning faint and dim appearance, surfacing or arising; being shrouded in some refined gloom and elusiveness. We may refer to the fantastic sensitivity in the whites filtering through the blacks, the lights submerging in greyness, the flatnesses; we may recall the eruptive explosion, the rapid growth and unfolding of things, and the hidden impediments. Tension still pulsates somewhere in the depths. And, in respect of this collection of works shrouded in the intimations of decay, lingering, filtering through, we cannot avoid the concept of picture and panel painting, which originally meant paint applied to a wooden panel or canvas to be hung on a wall. In a period of generic dissolution and transformation, the spread of newer and newer means of expression, the elevation of various media to the rank of art, art form or genre, *Ádám Gáll* has retained traditional format and size: his method using regular, usually perpendicular or horizontal rectangular picture planes to be placed on wall surfaces that provide room for pictorial happenings, indeed continues a classical, thousand-year-old tradition. However, his works represent a radical break with the tradition of painted picture; his compositions reject the methods of depiction, representation and expression, and open a new sphere, the domain of embodying and transfiguring. The transformation of picture planes into structured or, better, moulded pictorial fields wallowing in materiality and thus verisimilitude, as well as the amplifying of plastic effects can be derived from the use of material or shaping material; instead of applying paint to the canvas with a brush, *Ádám Gáll* builds up his compositions, or, destroys what he built up, with the use of materials that have

an accentuated materiality: the materials he uses are perlite coating, sandstone-powder foam, pulp made of ground paper and glue, sand and earth, and water soluble-pigments. The materials that make up and embody the picture form layers upon one another only to be undone, chiselled, scraped and scrubbed until they reveal their essence of decay.

In the light of the regular and figural pictures *Ádám Gáll* produced in 1990s, the new, plastic creative method deriving from his particular use of material meant a radical step, a significant change that fits in precisely well with the neo-avant-garde artistic tendencies starting in the last third of the 20th century that retained but also renewed the traditional pictorial framework, and which has had an arguably significant and forceful Hungarian counterpart, as evidenced by the work of *László Paizs*, *Gábor Záborszky*, *Zoltán Tölg-Molnár*, *László Kovács*, *János Dréher*, *István Birkás*, and *Péter Újházi*.

Ádám Gáll's works bearing both abstraction and the verisimilitude of the wall motifs formally have the characteristic features of abstract expressionism, Tachisme and gestural painting: his relief-like pictures are filled with turbulent emotions and affections, and are based on an interplay of colouristic spots inconceivably melting into and conjecturally arising from one another. It is only with the major reservations that we can use the expressions "whirling spots" and "colouristic effects" for characterising *Gáll*'s art: greys increasingly gaining ground in his work, colours are driven into the background. Even the greys, blacks and whites do not unfold fully: they are present in a highly restrained, latent manner. The damping down of colour comes to life not by itself but also by way of the ravaging, breaking up, fracturing, genuinely chiaroscuro relations and effects of the surfaces. Scratched and scrubbed, craters and wounds in the surface reflect both conscious and accidental acts; the timid attempts at leaving marks and natural pulverisation attest to futility. Though crystallising into some sort of memories of form, the motif-like spots, stripes, cracks, traces, ruins once-upon-a-time structures do not reveal their essences, origins and meanings: everything is conjectural, uncertainty saturates everything, the danger of drowning in the waves of unsparingly flowing time renders everything unstable. Once in a while, a more massive structure seems to surface, or a sign might seem to crystallise offering a sort of fixed point; but then all seems to be overwhelmed by the rule of decay. This loosing out to gloom, this hollowness, this characteristic blurring of the precise outline and essence of things, this unremitting state of deprivation, this indefinability is what makes the works of *Ádám Gáll* with their atmosphere filled with infinite sorrow, anxiety and tension, their substance and the sensibility dominating the compositions – live. Looking at and experiencing these works mirroring decay, ruin and mortality and arousing the intent to overcome decay, ruin

and mortality, we are granted an opportunity to face extraordinarily precise pictorial and plastic impressions of our being and conditions revealing both tragic depths and transcendental beauty. Here we stand in the midst of these works holding out little hope in an autumn frayed into hopelessness, and we can hardly do otherwise.

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