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Review of the doctoral dissertation of Ms Magdalena Parfieniuk, entitled *Chroma haze - subjective perception of colour*, drawn up in connection with a doctoral degree conferment procedure initiated by the Artistic Discipline Council of the Eugeniusz Geppert Academy of Art and Design in Wrocław.

Introduction

Images born in the minds of people endowed with above-average imagination would be as much as a figment if it were not for the possibility of visualising them. This possibility is offered by the gift of creativity, which usually goes hand in hand with the vision born in the head. The reasons for the images appearing in people's minds are desirable and speak for their uniqueness, because they are most often absolutely autonomous and thoroughly unique. What distinguishes them, in fact, only among people with a creative sense of visual articulation, is the form in which artists are able to dress their phantasmagorias, scenes from waking dreams, frames from films projected under their eyelids. Images created in this way are recorded on paper, transferred onto canvas, into public space, onto stage movement, and sounds produced by musical instruments. They stand in opposition to a number of phenomena in visual arts which refer to reality directly or to its interpretation through what is visible and tangible. The reasons why artists create and what content or motifs they take up in their art, have remained unchanged for centuries. In the constantly evolving world of fine arts, after all, narrowed down to achieving goals the essence of which is to create an image enclosed in a frame of any background (also giving the possibility of exposing it in a space other than the interior) the objective is for artists to reveal and visualise what is personal. The plurality of goals denotes their entire spectrum. Depending on the person practising art, their experiences, character, culture, personality, sensitivity, gender, state of health, disposition, but in my personal opinion above all on

what Ernst Cassirer calls the two-dimensional symbolic form of the object and the subject, artists think, identify and name the world in a unique way. This is due to their energy, intuition and, finally, manual skills, which we colloquially and commonly call talent. The category of this last condition sine qua non perceptualizing, according to Cassirer, the final shape of the vision (that is revealing unknown dimensions of reality to the artist and eventually to the viewer) has been recently marginalised in favour of the categories of intellect, concept, science above aesthetics. Personally, I am of the opinion that a fully democratic society (unfortunately Poland no longer is such a society), guided by the doctrine of cultural pluralism, should treat multi paradigms in visual arts as the basis of generally understood freedom and civic freedom, not to mention artistic freedom.

I have absolutely no ideological issues in mind here, because considering them while writing this review would be a pointless waste of time. To put it illustratively, I am mainly talking about not prioritising the superiority of installations of a political, journalistic and sociological provenance over outstandingly painted flowers in a vase in the public debate and the debate among people responsible for cultural management in Poland.

About the PhD student and her artistic attitude.

Ms Magdalena Parfieniuk, born in 1991 in Zamość, has not paid much attention to floral phenomena in her painting, though a multitude of floral and plant motives, as well as phenomena from the world of fauna and flora, even if not enormous, is certainly observable with the naked eye. I think that Ms Parfieniuk simply wants it to be that way. The absolutely deliberate matter of visualising phenomena that can be named with words seems to be crucial for her. The artist does not hide or run away from the primarily intuitive but also therapeutic character of her work. I will not devote too much attention here to the reasons why the artist finds relief from the effects of a medical diagnosis in the creative process, because this is too intimate for me. On the other hand, I find other values in this painting that are much more interesting for me. In her authentic doctoral dissertation, though I dare say at times too naïve and lacking an academic tone, Ms Magdalena Parfieniuk devotes much attention to her inspirations and artists who have influenced not only her art, but also her life. The connotations of the young artist's paintings with the works by Henri Rousseau, Krzysztof Skarbek or Frida Kahlo are obvious and can be

discovered in a flash by anyone interested in painting. That is why the artist's focus on this aspect impoverishes other more significant objectives of the written dissertation. What is missing is an effective cultural and anthropological analysis; instead we get reporting truisms that sound a bit like the content of school essays. Fortunately, however, the shortcomings resulting from a rather chaotic stream-of-consciousness structure, lacking logic sometimes, and the excessive stylistic flippancy of the written work are compensated for by her painting.

I therefore turn a blind eye to the lack of writing fluency and to authentic naivety in the content of the dissertation. However, I notice and do not remain indifferent to the insufficient academic character of the dissertation, predisposing Ms Parfieniuk, who is applying for a doctoral degree. In her theoretical dissertation she concentrates a lot on the structure of the eye, the science of colour (there are many references to Adam Zausznica). Ms Magdalena Parfieniuk writes about the theory of vision, visual perception (unfortunately, for reasons unclear to me, there are no references to Arnheim and Strzemiński), and she bases her argument on the theories by Young-Helmholtz, Henri Pieron, Sergey Kravkov, and describes the Purkinje effect. Kandinski and Johannes Itten are also mentioned. Concluding this thread, I believe that the author of beautiful paintings has trivialised the thorough theoretical analysis, leaving the reader unsatisfied and sometimes confused.

Fortunately, the doctoral student abundantly compensates for these shortcomings with her paintings and drawings.

Doctoral dissertation evaluation.

The doctoral dissertation by Ms Magdalena Parfieniuk, entitled *Chroma haze - subjective perception of colour*, places the author among people practising fine arts as one focused on the perception of the surrounding world in a universal, non-verbal way - through colours. Charm, trance, joy, constant movement, a whirlpool in which the chromatic scale is set in motion over and over again. The haze of colour - this is how the title of the thesis can be literally translated - gives a new beginning to creation, an infinite beginning of something new through the subjective impression of colour to which Ms Parfieniuk seems to be constantly subjected.

As for the content of the paintings, which in many cases escapes the frames of mysticism, occultism, the motif of dance macabre, passing away, Santa Muerte, the doctoral student

imposes on it her own, but also universal meanings focused on the trance psychedelia of colours and shapes. Lack of faith in the causative power of art and doubts expressed by valuing the rank of the practised profession in relation to other professions are the artist's ailment, which she tries to overcome, for instance, in the medium of drawing. Ms Magdalena Parfieniuk asks herself questions about how artists are perceived by others and how they come out in the eyes of the audience, the community.

This brings to mind self-confidence not yet fully formed and lack of faith in one's own abilities, but it should not come as a surprise. Such an attitude is closer to me than uninhibited self-confidence and a proud emanation of an overgrown ego, which can be surprising especially in the case of artists who just enter the world of art and its market. In addition to the outstanding set of oil paintings, an equally worthy supplement is the drawing series *Humdrum*, which consists of 16 works on paper. These are multi-coloured representations created with the use of promarkers, dealing with the generally understood banality, monotony, mundaneness, or, as the author concludes: nothing special. Colour explodes from the artist's paintings, attacking the viewer from everywhere, giving no chance for the eyes to rest. The canvases of the doctoral student send out streams of multicoloured awareness of the existence of an alternative to silence, nostalgia, greyness, colourlessness, transparency, blandness, bare bones. Despite the fact that there is a lot of taming of death, a lot of skeletons, corpses, luckily there are as many, or maybe even more, life-affirming motifs. Screamed by means of colour, so that there is no doubt that despite the inevitability of the end, the young artist wants to live, paint, enjoy and be happy, even if some people do not understand art and find it irrelevant to their happiness. In the paintings, often huge ones, we see animals without heads, but still alive. There is a full kaleidoscope of multiform multiplications, as if Ms Parfieniuk wanted to emphatically add point leaving no doubt as to what she means, even though sometimes she does not know it herself. Thus, we have symbols, visual signs, geometric and ornamental motifs which combine to form original emblems, logos of unnamed meanings. In these paintings, there are a lot of classical altar arrangements referring to historical paintings, and centrally located dominants, which result in the form of sizeable usurpers of new contents. There are also references to sacral painting, but more of the kind associated with Jerzy Nowosielski in Ms Parfieniuk's paintings. The vanitas motifs are tamed here with psychedelic, esoteric aesthetics close to the artistic message formulated by the Oneiron group in the 1960s.

The joyful life of skeletons and their plush mascot-like fellows spins and blends together with the juicy, sweet as a Haribo bear, cluttered world of leaves, stems and climber plants. Iris tonal transitions contrast with meticulously presented furry bodies of predatory cats, where the intricately woven texture of fur effectively isolates the characters' position from the background, as colour is the common denominator of everything, all over. Even in an X-rayed Godzilla belching out fire with a penetrating gaze, the identity of colour is like a red Coke can, yellow McDonald's arches, blue depression, or rainbow nonbinary identity. Parrots, monkeys, hydras, multi-headed cats function in the same way in these paintings. In this festival of colours the painting *Two Roses / Santa I* stands out. The atmosphere of dusk, a calmed colour palette, stretched on a lower contrast, slightly disturbed symmetry, characteristic of this cycle of paintings, a skull stripped of the original fear it could evoke, mocked with its plasticine character, like the Lego man in Zbigniew Libera's installation or the Jake and Dinos Chapman's diorama figures. Typography also appears in these paintings, as well as the antiqua of Latin sentences, single words which do not have a strictly aesthetic function. Another work that caught my eye is the large (150x150) *Koka Kabana I*. It features a discontented, but rather resigned to his fate, troglodyte monkey comfortably settled in the friendly environment of a fluorescent jungle. On the even larger (170x200) canvas *Monkey Waiting to Be Devoured by a Tiger*, the terror-stricken monkey, aware of the inevitable fact that it will be devoured by the tiger, takes on protective colours, blending into the feast of colours of the surrounding jungle. Fauna mixes and intertwines with flora offering a code of formal access to read one and the other. In *Santa II*, as large as the painting described above, we can see twisted fingers of a hand and an unholy face. The black hole in the place of the portrait is like a cut-out in a wooden stand where those wishing to fit into the body of someone else can at least be photographed putting their head into the relevant opening. In the set of paintings by Ms Magdalena Parfieniuk a yellow parrot observes all of this; above its head there is a graphic halo of a blessed animal in the process of beatification that has just begun. A heresy? No, just great painting.

Evaluation of artistic achievements popularising art.

The doctoral student participated in 24 group exhibitions between 2018 and 2021, the most important of which include:

1. "Promotions 2018" Review of young art, Art Gallery in Legnica, 2018

2. "Kraków Art Salon", Palace of Art, Kraków, 2018
3. "Gift of Wrocław", Great Armoury of the Academy of Fine Arts in Gdańsk, Gdańsk, 2019
4. "Weltschmerz" Drawing Triennial, Wrocław, BWA, 2019
5. Athens printmaking exhibition "Herbarium", Athens Printmaking Center, Etch Ink art space, Athens, Greece, 2019
6. "20x20", Christine X Art Gallery, Sielma, Malta, 2020
7. Drawing Connection, Lower Rowe Gallery, Department of Art&Art History, CoA+A, UNC Charlotte, the United States, 2020
8. 3 MTRS, the International Student Drawing Triennial, Rondo Sztuki, Katowice, Poland, 2020
9. #draw, International Student Drawing Exhibition Toruń, Wozownia Art Gallery, Toruń, 2020
10. Satellite Imaginery, TYPA Gallery, Kastani 48f Tartu, Estonia, 2020

2 solo shows of her works were organised:

1. "Cabaret of one artist", AG Gallery, Kraków, 2019
2. "Edgy conundrums", Ori Gallery, Berlin, 2020

She has conducted two curatorial projects:

1. ZENITHS curatorial project, 21.06-2.09.2019, Museum of Contemporary Art Wrocław
2. Hearts Monkeys Altars, 16.10 - 16.11.2020, Browar Mieszczkański, Wrocław

She participated in lectures, art workshops, and fairs:

1. Lecture entitled "Chroma Haze" during the Lanzarote Art Festival, 3.08.2019, Casa de la Cultura in Arrecife, Lanzarote, the Canary Islands, Spain
2. "Nówka Sztuka" art fair, 1-2.12.2018 Bunkier Sztuki, Kraków
3. "Art Fresh Festival", Art fair, 11.03.2019, Sheraton Hotel, Warsaw

She undertook artistic collaboration with the clothing brand Medicine Everyday Therapy, designing her own clothing collection in 2021.

She received the second prize in the "IMPET" painting competition in Wrocław in 2018 and twice a scholarship for the best doctoral students of the E. Geppert Academy of Art and Design in Wrocław, in 2019 and 2020.

This constitutes a balance of activity leaving no doubt that we are dealing with an artist who is dynamically developing, creatively active, exhibiting her works, and invited to cooperate with various entities and institutions.

This proves the attractiveness of Ms Magdalena Parfieniuk's artistic and didactic attitude, as well as her attitude towards popularising art.

Conclusion

Considering the artistic achievements and originality of Ms Magdalena Parfieniuk's doctoral dissertation entitled *Chroma haze - subjective perception of colour*, comprising the set of paintings, drawings and the written dissertation, despite certain doubts concerning the content and form of the latter, on the basis of an unambiguous high evaluation of the set of paintings and drawings, I conclude that the dissertation meets the requirements set out in Article 187 of the Act of 20 July 2018, the *Law on Higher Education and Science* (consolidated text: Journal of Laws of 2021, item 478, as amended) and I support the application for the conferment of the doctoral degree in the field of art, in the artistic discipline of fine art and art conservation to Ms Magdalena Parfieniuk.

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