

# ABOUT PLASTIC LANGUAGE TODAY

Theoretical  
article

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## Abstract

*We live in a mixture of images.*

*From all sides we are assaulted by various and disparate visual information.*

*The landmarks of contemporary art of a restless world are in constant motion and transformation. The border between the visual arts and information, especially for the new generations, is in a continuous confrontation.*

*The field of the arts, once elitist, being conditioned by the access to education and culture offered by a particular social standard and by the state of wealth, tends to expand and become more accessible to all social groups.*

*The images tend to become a subject of debate.*

*Along with the new millennium, increasing masses of people discover the cultural tourism, discover the existence of the art and populate the great museums of the world.*

## 1. The artistic form – vehicle of communication

The appetite for art seems to be constantly growing; a gratifying tendency, no doubt. Yet, at a closer look, the excitement of these new findings is not reassuring: visitors pass with a "daunting speed" (Cork R. and Farthing S., 2011) through the exhibition halls and museums, lingering too little in front of masterpieces. The act of artistic contemplation remains obscure to most of these visitors because it requires a time of reflection and an attitude of concentration of the artistic object. "An impatient look cannot replace an insightful look" (Cork, R., Farthing S., *Istoria artei. De la pictura rupestra la pictura urbana*. Ed. RAO, Bucuresti, 2011, pag.6).

The daily rhythm and also the hallucinatory speed with which the information flows nowadays transform the attention into an unwanted fugacity and induce a certain shallowness to the process of reception, which is improper to artistic communication. The artistic message is subtle, mysterious and it reveals itself only to those who are prepared to assimilate it.

A common explanation of this quick pilgrimage is that these works - classic or modern - can be understood immediately, only by looking at them; however, it is known that there are several levels of "reading" any work of art. A text insistently used during the Renaissance argues that what is received is done in accordance with the receiver's availability and education in the domain.

Yet the reader needs an exercise for inner self-discipline with the aim of transforming the meeting with the work of art into a celebration, into an opportunity for personal growth and enrichment. "The work of art can be seen as a visible manifestation of the momentum which implies a peculiar state of mind, an emotional intense feeling, through joy, confidence, boundlessness and sensitivity (Diaconescu M., *Prelegeri de estetica ortodoxiei*, 1996, pag.31).

In order to understand the way the complex texture of an artistic work generates broad meanings, symbolic joints and a huge potentiality of spiritual significance, we should, perhaps, before we deal with its *cultural content*, get closer to "what is seen", to the *artistic form*.

"Being always a form which signifies, the artistic form calls, imposes and supports the meaning; it generates and expresses meanings, it finds and expresses meanings, it produces and maintains the significance" (Iovan I., *Semantica limbajului vizual*, Ed. Anthropos, Timisoara, 2010, vol.II,pag.15).

The main contribution of the art form is that it is exercised at the level of the configuration, but the meaning of the work of art is given by the form and its expression.

We may consider the work of art as a complex communicative system, created by the interaction of different variables, each placed in relation to the others.

A work of art contains in itself a semantic complexity which emits sense and significance of an amplitude hard to define, with suggestions "from symbol, archetype, vision, myth or from concept, idea, expression up to vision and to mentality"

(Diaconescu, M., pag.31).

The artistic form, as part of what is seen in the work of art, as its perceptive aspect, by its shape and expression, contributes to the structure of the configuration..

In its turn, the configuration ( form and expression) is the cultural receiver of the cultural message of the work of art.

## 2. The artistic language at the present day

If we examine the various configuration solutions that artists have found and have experienced in their work over the time, we find that, more than once, in the actual creation of the work, the

conceptual content abusively asserts itself under a certain state of emergency, like a stream that invents its own ways of expression.

The artist's endeavors to invent new ways of artistic expression is catalyzed by his more or less intentional effort to amplify the conceptual content of his work or to enrich it with new meanings..

Due to the highly personalized character of the elements of artistic language used by the artist, even if the "props" of new works are generally the same (meaning being in a position to maintain contact with tradition), the end result appears as a new work, perfectly autonomous and original.

The artistic or visual discourse becomes a dynamic itinerary where the elements initially envisaged combine with random elements that may appear in the process, these being in a permanent process of "negotiating" with the artist himself.

These assertions can be validated by reporting to a vast area of pictorial image viewed from a historical perspective, as bearer of pronounced narrative constraints characteristic to classical artistic vision.

Viewed from a modern perspective, narrativity is one of the most unfavorable conditions of painting; to "illustrate" a fact or an event seems to deprive the painting of some of its self-determination.

"Deviations from the norm, "thickening" accentuation, deliberate disregard of harmonic laws, often serve to "amplify the force of persuasion of the artistic message" (Manescu, M., *Ordine si dezordine in retorica plastica*, curs U.N.A., Bucuresti, 2006, pag.22).

Moreover, the process of transmitting personal artistic feelings through artistic images involves the artist's spiritual forces in all their complexity. From the simplest concrete visual sign addressed to the viewer through sensorial way, triggering thus emotional states, memories, etc. to complex plastic - artistic representations filled with ineffability, able in its

ambiguity to reach deep universes, the visual image acts immediately and directly on the viewer.

The impact of the visual language is more impressive than that of the word because unlike this one, it works directly, beyond the language barrier.

Based on the experience of one of the senses, from a symphony of shapes, colors or lines, the artistic creation awakes the whole human being. A deep contemplation of a work of art determines, through resonance, the activating of all nervous centers.

Unlike the univoque communication "through simple, current information with a single meaning, the artistic vibration is awakened by surprise, when we discover that the message can have several meanings, arousing associations of ideas and emotions, awakening different personal reactions to each viewer" (Nanu A., *Vezi? Comunicarea prin imagine*, Ed. Vizual, Bucuresti, 2001, pag.14).

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Thus the matter is extremely important when it comes to the artistic work, including paintings.

Artists always feel the challenge of the matter, so they never stop from the process of technical experimentation of different materials in an attempt to create new languages, able to respond to the ever changing demands of the epoch.

Throughout history, the final target of the technical research in media, instruments and materials is strictly related to the intention of communication and expression of the author; it is also related to the epoch when the work is created.

New and unusual languages complete the repertoire of original forms devised by the modern artist who, in his creative labor, is incessantly looking for new means of expression.

A modern art product, being a part of the technological culture of our times, can become a new linguistic element; it can, thus, influence, on one hand, the creative artistic process; on the other hand, it can determine certain reactions of the viewer who is anchored in the perspective of a traditional artistic vision.

First of all, the work of art becomes a real and tangible object – with the exception of the virtual creations / media.

When we look at a work of art, it is exactly the visual information related to the nature of the materials processed for its conception that allows us to assign its true significance to that artistic object.

In the creative artistic process, the materials end up being ennobled by a tangible concreteness; either the physical form of the form of art is built through the idea, or, alternatively or simultaneously, the message of the work is diversified according to the amplitude and power of expression of the configuration.

It is necessary to begin with drawing some essential elements of the work of art, as they are the lever that triggers the whole process of transmission / reception in artistic communication.

According to what Ioan Iovan claimed in his book *Semantica limbajului visual*, "the work of art is an object, develops a language, makes use of contents, installs a communication, has a style of its own and embodies an artistic value " (Iovan, Ioan, *Semantica limbajului visual*, Edit. Anthropos, Timisoara, 2010, vol.I, pag.24).

In exploring the language of the visual arts, we can identify a specific **morphology** - including references to plastic elements which can be *two-dimensional*, in the case of the image (with reference to painting / graphics / mural and decorative art), and *three-dimensional* in the case of the volume (sculpture) and also for the *masses* (concerning the architecture).

The almost infinite complexity of the combinations, of the relationships between

the elements of the art language actually make up the reinforcing structure of the work, which is considered to be the **syntax** of the art of work.

By discerning these levels, we go through an "initiatory path" that leads us to the expressive level of the artistic creation, to its cultural contents, to the deeply interwoven meanings of the work, those "invested" and experienced by the artist.

Through expression the inner state specific to the creative process comes to the surface, becomes visible and likely to be communicated, while through shape, (configuration), the inner tensions are uncovered, giving themselves to the viewer's contemplation and empathetic feeling.

In other words, to be decoded, the artistic form implies the existence of three levels:

- identity, which gives the sense;
- configuration, from which the meanings can be detached
- expression, through which we can penetrate the possible significance.

This is where intervenes our own ability to interpret the conventions which are specific to different languages, depending on a variety of objective and subjective factors (cultural level, open-mindedness, sensitivity, willingness, desire for knowledge, desire for self-improvement, etc.).

We must not forget the fact that a work of art will always be a unique and unrepeatable testimony of a creative act and that it occurs in a particular, well-defined socio-cultural context.

### 3. Conclusions

Each historical period has its own culture, while the art is an accurate means of reflecting it.

As for the ability to communicate through art, it can become an exercise that trains and gradually reveal the depths of the soul and mind, of total vibration, of

amplification and harmonization of feelings.

Gradually, the artistic languages of the last century and a half have declared their autonomy at the level of the means of expression as opposed to the traditional vision of the motivation; since the great mass of the contemporaries do not comfortably lecture the work as they do not find their familiar world in the painting, a gap between the artist and audience has inevitably occurred.

The new ways to configure the picture is set up as a system of conventions, a sort of *encoded language*, which requires an effort of specific self-training of the viewer.

Besides, the technological development in the dissemination of the image from the end of the nineteenth century till nowadays, has allowed and even has imposed the emancipation of the visual language, completely releasing the painting from the servitudes of reproducing the real.

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