

ANDRAS KECSKES: THE GENESIS OF LANDSCAPE – THE ANALYSIS OF THE PICTORIAL INSTRUMENTS IN MODERN HUNGARIAN PAINTING

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2016

ABSTRACT

The fundamental aim of the essay is the discussion of the practical and theoretical problems of landscape representation from the painter's point of view, directed at the structural features of the creative process. In its focus are works of Hungarian painters in whose oeuvres the landscape is an emphatic motive. The frame of the essay is the genre of the landscape. After offering a definition and a brief historical overview of landscape representation, the text presents the instruments of painting and their expressive roles, which may carry extra meaning beyond descriptive genre painting that cannot be expressed on the conceptual level and is dependent on the artist's intentions.

Representation in painting is a complex process, based - besides pictorial thought and cultivated sight in an artistic sense - on the appropriate manipulation of material (traditionally, paint). The essay addresses the problematic of brushwork, the painter's gesture, which has an eminent role in the process of painting and is in close connection with the landscape and the methods of plastic and decorative presentation of its elements. What can give answers to the "how"-question from the perspective of the artist and the analytical-minded recipient is the point of contact

of pictorial theory and practice, based on an iconic conception of the picture.

In the essay this method treats the painting, besides as pictorial narrative, as a set of colours and patches ordered according to the concept of the painter, in which representation comes about through abstract basic units - colorful brush traces. The way the painter deploys these units (which also carry meanings of their own) becomes an integral part of the abstract meaning beyond representation.

The essay also discusses the colour use of modern landscape painting and its role in expression and in the shaping of space.

Our research, also relying on the items in the bibliography, demonstrates that individual creative methods and perspectives build up into one's own system as prefigured by what is seen and learnt. (Thus, it necessarily deals with the works of the exemplary modern French masters as well.) One of its most important results – which can be made use of in teaching as well – is supplementing the interpretation of pictures by the analysis of the structural processes of the "genesis" of the painting, which become an indispensable part of expression.

THESES

1.

The practical problem of landscape representation is always the pictorial mapping of the different elements of the scenery. These were schematized in different ways in different periods. These schemes can be acquired and serve as models. The process of painting a landscape is to a large degree dependent on the quantity and the quality of the pictorial tools pertinent to the topic, as well as the visual conventions of the given period.

2.

We can introduce an interpretative method into the study of landscapes focused on the application of pictorial instruments and the graphic character of presentation. The basis of this is the iconic conception of the picture, a methodology analyzing the processes of the formation of the picture that prioritizes perception over conceptualization.

3.

The instruments of painting can be broken down into basic constituents, from which a new system can be assembled. This provides an opportunity for education and learning, as well as developing an individual take on the representation of the elements of the landscape. It involves the presentation of the landscape and its constituents as a new whole, which enriches a part of nature by the element of expression.

4.

With the advent of impressionism, it became possible to work the surface of the painting as “pictorial texture”, indicating the homogeneity of the method of painting the motives. The role of the brushwork, the painter’s gesture becomes emphatic and individual solutions of working the material become significant.

5.

The painter’s gesture is one of the most important factors shaping the picture’s surface in the practical process of painting; beside this, however, it also has a role in the deeper layers of expression. It is the element that holds the composition together. The painter’s gesture is driven by the combination of knowledge – the totality of theoretical and practical learning – and instinct. The gesture changes according to the given period and the painter’s own time; changes in styles and painter’s gestures mutually influence each other. A gesture may lose its expressive power in a different system.

6.

Plastic and decorative representations are interpenetrable and interderivable in the process of painting through abstract pictorial basic units. Modern Hungarian painters have produced oeuvres in which the boundaries between strong plasticity (emphatic light and shadow; developing the picture based on traditional perspective) and planar, decorative representation.