

## Summary

In order to give references that are part of the sculpture's field, it is necessary to use the word form or forms. Through these terms we try to settle the material volume known as sculpture, but also other things as well, - some of them concrete, others really abstract. Our approach has to deal with the form. We cannot evaluate, nowadays, a work of art, as modest as it might be, if we do not take into consideration the evolution of the concept in aesthetics, especially in its evolution connected to the fine arts and we cannot drop out the meaning of this term that we find in the dictionary. But, as artists, is this dictionary definition convenient for us? Yes and no. It is not a question whether to infirm it or to contradict it. But there is something to be added to it. The form has to interest people. To be interesting and to cope with the viewer's investigation, to have something new and something old at the same time. A sort of *genus proximus* and a specific difference at the same time. Creativity has to decide on the percentage and has to unleash the receiver's reaction – an induced creativity. We can talk about success only if this "connection" is made. We have to deal with the active form as the experts in aesthetics have called it. The initial form has the tendency of keeping its identity, either we talk about the form that the artist has in mind while moulding, sketching or conceiving or about the form that it is a standard during various periods of the adventure called art. As an artist, I am convinced that man did not start by inventing forms, but by synthesize and recalling them, by mentally putting them into an ideographic form, giving it different sacred or artistic functions.

Among theorists I often quote from Henri Focillon because he is, in his approaches more clear, more compelling than his predecessors, whom he often synthesize. "Life acts essentially as a creator of forms" and "form is a way of life" – are his enunciations that captured our attention. They were exactly what we were looking for. Otherwise, the problem of art is discussed as an evolution of forms. He says, quoting Alain, that "materials have a certain destiny or, if we want, a certain formal vocation". Taking this path, a "voyage" in the world of forms is tempting and instructive at the same time. Where did we get where we are today, when an artist can consider himself fully prepared from a theoretical point of view?

We can say that nature is full of forms. Perhaps human fantasy did not get to surpass this spontaneous abundance. On the contrary, the expeditions made to the bottom of the oceans, to the deepest caves, to the world of insects and to the microuniverse that reveals itself through the most powerful microscopes assisted by the computer, show that these forms seem to multiply. Are the forms, as we find them in nature, eloquent? Have they an expressive loading, even if random? Or do they awake in us certain emotions that we can call artistic? And if the answer is yes, what is the root of such a complex and sophisticated perception? In *The Philosophy of Modern Art*, Herbert Read gives us an answer using its attractive style, more literary than scientific. Psycho – analysis' theories, not necessarily as we found them in Freud, more like they are developed by Jung, showed the presence, not only of the figurative symbols, but of archetypal forms coming from a more abstract category, in the human's psyche. For example, Jung demonstrated that along history the subconscious recurrently expressed itself through a formal print called *mandala*, a more or less complicated drawing that consists of quadripartite sections. Other forms and profiles are significant from a biological point of view. So, the world is full of eloquent, significant forms. When we speak about the form's genesis in art, we should probably start with the fact that forms do exist in nature and they constitute standards for the artistic object or imagination, having a big variety that competes with any creative fantasy. The standard of beauty does not escape nature. People having as a hobby roots as ready – made sculptures, or stones with bizzare shapes and beautiful colours, or fruits belonging to the *Lusus naturae* category, could say a lot about this topic. One talked about the natural fantastic (and so did Roger Caillois), but we can also talk about a natural expressionism, or can we not? Generally, nature does not senselessly complicate its forms. It makes them better using factors and rules that we can discover only after long observations and research. But these forms are part of an esthetics that somebody will write about someday, if it hadn't been already written.

The conviction that the substance has a formal vocation, its own life that has to be discovered, makes the artist's creation process to be a way to access nature, a way to approach its secret rythms. Between the artist's conscience, between everything that he gathered spiritually as a human being and the cosmic throb of the substance, lies the eye and the hand. Ernst Cassirer talks about the artist's eye, a constructive eye that discovers

the forms' dynamic life. I presented these things in a chapter called „The Form in the Imagination”. The centre of my discussion was a passage from Paul Valéry's *"Introduction in Leonardo da Vinci's Method"* saying that the artist prefers to keep the distance from the genesis of its work and that he prefers the independence each created form gains. He says that we are afraid that the origins were humble or somehow natural. Or, if few of the artists dare to confess the way they started a certain artistic enterprise (even a form from the fine arts point of view), even fewer dare "to find out" or to investigate this matter. In addition to his essay, he clearly says that „The effects of a work of art are never a simple consequence of its making conditions. On the contrary, we can say that a work of art's secret task is to propose to our imagination a less true creation".<sup>1</sup> So, that Leonardo that sees "drawings" on the walls' mould, he actually sees his own subconscious, his fantasy being stimulated by such an at hand element. Somewhere, further away, the author speaks about "the phenomenon of the mental image system", considering even the matter of empty and full to have a connection with the knowledge or the ignorance of this imaginative logic, about eliminating emotions in the search of the expression or of the form.

Naturally, my next step was to talk about form as an artistic product. The human being's aesthetic sensibility is a human quality that corresponds with the formal element in art. Although it can be analyzed using rational terms such as measure, balance, rhythm and harmony, form is originally really intuitive; in the artists' authentic practice it isn't an intellectual product. It is more like directed and defined emotion and when we say that art is the *will of giving forms*, we don't have in mind an exclusively intellectual activity, but an instinctive one",<sup>2</sup> notes Herbert Read. This is why we can imagine the impact that primitive art (the African one) had upon the avant-garde artists. It was like a meeting with themselves, with their own subconscious, in danger of being suffocated under the speculative invention's pressure, but also under the pressure of directions, schools and other factors that determine each period's creation. We concentrated our work on the Brâncuși case, without forgetting though other creative spirits, such as Paul Klee and Henry Moore, engaged in the same approach of discovering our inner creative self in its

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<sup>1</sup> Valéry, Paul, *Introduction in Leonardo da Vinci's Method*, Ed. Meridiane, București, 1969, 23.

<sup>2</sup> Read, Herbert, *Art's Significance*, Ed. Meridiane, București, 1969, 32.

"primitive" simplicity; two famous cases of "returning to simplicity". We entered the mechanism of producing form, as understood by the experts in aesthetics and by theorists, by the artists themselves when they felt the need to confess, to become theorists. We tried to underline an agreement over this topic, an agreement that reaches us even today. There has to be a certain intentionality, from the part of the artist making or proposing it, and then from the part of the viewer that sees it and accepts it as an object with an artistic function, in order for an object (that is the form that it proposes) to be considered an object of art. God is a creator, but not an artist. Nature proposes, but does not possess. As a conclusion, the object has to satisfy certain exigencies and, as certain theorists say, it is evaluated using the rules of beauty or taste. This is why there's nothing surprising about the discussion getting sharp when Marcel Duchamp proposes the *ready-made* object as a work of art. „The result is that when there is no aesthetic judgement of value, no taste verdict, then there is no art, no aesthetic experience at all. It's as simple as it is",<sup>3</sup> says Clement Greenberg, quoted by Thierry de Duve in his work *Kant after Duchamp*, when Duchamp's *ready-made* will show the difference between art and nonart is conventional and "for sure not a lived difference". This is a change that will result in lots of written articles and documents and will provoke a reviewing of the aesthetic conception over what is art and what isn't.

If these works are generally valid, we felt the urge to get closer to sculpture, which appears in subsidiary all along this work. We tried to enter in the work's intimacy, thinking that during the process of creation the artist starts from an idea, an idea in terms of concept as well as in terms of project, but during "conceiving" the idea suffers lots of changes. To stiffen in the project, produces fakes and mannerism. In other words, during the execution, the concept, the project has to be submitted to the artist's life experience. A sculpture's surface, its structure and constitution are the result of the work's process. In the end it is the result of the artistic attitude. Any other treatment of the surface, with no formal intention, is as fake as an artistic process. It will only lead to an ennuing disagreement, easy to track down in its incapacity of dialogue with the viewer, which in this case, cannot invest the work with its own emotions.

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<sup>3</sup> Thierry, de Duve – *Kant after Duschamp*, Ed. Ideea Design & Print, Cluj 2001, 73.

Furthermore, I noted a few marks concerning the formal and ideas discourse in the works of some modern and contemporary artists, both classical ones and Romanian contemporary artists, well known and appreciated for the formal approach that interests us. Henry Moore is one of the artists, that makes the work of art regain the expressive force of the primitive art and another is, of course, Brâncuși. Moore said: "There are universal forms that we are subconsciously sensitive to and to which we respond if our conscience's control does not come between them".<sup>4</sup> From the beginning, Henry Moore was obsessed with two or three archetypal forms – the sitting figure, the mother and the child, the couple. It wasn't an explicit preoccupation, more an intimate, a subconscious one. But, we say that, Moore's constant preoccupation is not connected to the exterior appearance of the objects, but to the material's intimacy, to the substance's capabilities. "If his material is stone, he will research the stone's structure, its degree of hardness, the way it reacts with his chisel gab. He will try to find out how the stone reacted to the forces of nature, to wind and water, because in time these revealed the inner features of the stone. In the end, he will ask himself what form could he possibly realize from that stone he has in front of his eyes; and if the form is - let's say, a woman lying, he will imagine (and this is where his intuition and sensitivity comes in) how would a woman lying look like if her flesh and blood would be transposed in the stone in front of him, in the stone that has its own principles of form and structure. It might be possible, then, as usually happens with Moore's figures, that the woman's body appears as a range of hills. As a result, the sculpture is not a duplicate of the woman's shapes and qualities, but the significance's transposition from one material to another".<sup>5</sup>

Henry Moore brings his respects to Brâncuși: "From its gothic period, the European sculpture was rendered heavier with muscles and weeds – different exterior elements entirely hiding the form. It was Brâncuși's special mission to free us from this and to bring back to us the form's feeling. To accomplish this, he concentrated on very simple and direct forms in order to maintain a monocylindrical sculpture and to refine an almost precious and unique form". Henry Moore considers that it is time to surpass the

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<sup>4</sup> Read, Herbert - *A Concise History of Modern Sculpture*, Thames & Hudson, London, 1964, 176.

<sup>5</sup> Read, Herbert - *Art's Significance*, Ed. Meridiane, București, 1969, 168.

closing in a static form and to be more open through the relation and the mixing of more forms of different dimensions, sections and plans, in order to create a unique form.<sup>6</sup> This is where we find the difference between Brâncuși and Henry Moore, as two stages in the historical development in the art of sculpting. We gave Brâncuși more space, things being totally different with him. The primordial impulse, the pure enthusiasm are the dominants of Brâncuși's figures. His major lesson consists in integrating dynamism and living figures into the elementary volume. The expression of the pure form with no accidents on its surface is served by an austere will. Brâncuși had the vocation of simplicity as formation. This makes Constantin Noica, a philosopher of the subconscious expression, as he appears in some of his works, say that Brâncuși "sculpted germination and he also sculpted the state of sleeping, the raising and the perfection as an never ending caress of forms similar to the way stones are washed by water. He didn't represent flying, but the state of flying."<sup>7</sup> Noica's conclusion (who perceives the art's dimension with the philosopher's intuition) is that Brâncuși sculpted *long infinitives*. Following the same reasoning, Marcel Brion will go even further, using the critics and the art theorist's reasons and will say that in the Romanian sculptor's work the volume invents its own rules. „Brâncuși's entirely closed form creates a unique space, harmonious in itself, that distinguishes itself with a sensibility that also radiates intelligence, reason and a concordance with the universal rhythms, Brâncuși's closed form has almost a religious significance. It creates a sort of mystified volume, a sacred conception of the object. Going back to the original egg becomes an irresistible state of mind, beyond the symbol contained in the creation's sign.”<sup>8</sup> Talking about *going back to simplicity*, as it appears in Brâncuși's perspective, that is coming closer to the "real sense of the things", means from our perspective talking about returning to origins. To be closer to the "real sense of the things", the modern artist tries to get rid of everything that has been (and still is) a plus and an insignificant detail, simplifying, making a synthesis and struggling to give expression to his communication through form. This road of searching and discovering

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<sup>6</sup> Read, Herbert - *A Concise History of Modern Sculpture*, Thames & Hudson, London, 1964, 127.

<sup>7</sup> Noica, Constantin – *Cuvânt împreună despre rostirea românească*, Ed. Eminescu, 1987, 249.

<sup>8</sup> Brion, Marcel – *The Abstract Art*, Ed. Meridiane, București, 1972, 181.

the form is, most of the time, a road of the selfdiscovery. The form's essence and simplicity always leads to a metaphysic of the origins, to a collective nature of the primordial image, of the initial image, of the prototype. Facing a "simpler" form, the artist feels if he could identify himself with it or not, he has the possibility of an intuitive control. Although, there was a time when they were fashionable, artificial things are less and less welcome in the artist's work. Moreover, there is an obvious simplicity of the concept in the forms with complicated elements. We tried to show how reach can this simplicity be pointing out the reach presence of the archetypal images as they were madeout, from an oriental point of view, by Sergiu Al. George in his work *Archaic and Universal*. From the Indian mythical and ritual symbolism's perspective proposed by Sergiu Al. George, a surprising affinity of the leading forms (Egg, Column, Bird, Couple, the Gate) detaches. This gives coherence to Brâncuși's work. India offers the exceptional privilege to possess the same categories of images and a symbiosis of these similar to that in Brâncuși's work. Some of them are even identical, such as: Couple-Egg, Couple-Gate, Column-Couple, Column-Bird. As Andrei Pleșu observed, this is an opportunity to „... identify in any native feature an archaic validity with roots in the humanity's protohistory”.<sup>9</sup>

Further, we searched the initial essences through some tendencies to simplify the form in the work of various Romanian and foreign contemporary artists, such as: Émile Gilioli, Henri-Georges Adam, Berto Lardera, the Austrian Franz West, Jean-Mark Navez, Sabura Muraoka and Toshikatsu Endo, Shigeo Toya, George Apostu, Ilie Pavel, Napoleon Tiron, Ovidiu Maitec, Neculai Păduraru and Doru Covrig. Of course, there could have been more examples, but our approach would have been taking the same "road" to nowadays, in order to demonstrate that the formal and the ideas discourse, as two components of the artistic form, is conjugated with the simplification desideratum, not necessarily the form's simplification, although we think this is really happening, but the simplification of the existing connection between the artistic form – a result of the creative search, and the used material, in order to obtain a secret identity that is finally revealed in the work. In a book dedicated to the artistic simplicity's rediscovery (Hannes

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<sup>9</sup> Pleșu, Andrei – *Ochiul și lucrurile*, Ed. Meridiane, București, 1986, 76.

Böhringer – *In Search of Simplicity: a poetics*) the author says: "Since art doesn't imitate nature's forms and doesn't reproduce events from literature, history or mythology, since art works along with nature (Klee), that is it imitates the creative power of nature, it invents parallel worlds, art tries to become elementary, simple and primitive in order to build with simple elements a possible world. During classes at Bauhaus, Kandinski states, as a neoplatonic, that one has to start with the point. The point is the simplicity itself that can concentrate everything inside and, then, can develop everything from itself. By moving on a surface, the point becomes a line. The surface develops into a volume. The point -almost a nothing, it is the passage between nothing and being: the origin."<sup>10</sup>

As for myself, starting with my student years and right after graduating, I have been preoccupied with the expressive force of moulding and I have been fascinated by the clay's spontaneity. My attempts were directed towards a sort of small sized plastic art, in the figurative's area. My preoccupations today consist of an approach of going back to full and pure forms, sometimes interrupted by firm cuts, forming colourful structures that contrast with the simplicity of the big form. These forms, included in the initial form, make delfs of air that recross the volume. The material I am using is, generally, a combination of wood and iron, of vegetable and mineral. Wood is often kept captive in metal belts. Being in such belts, the full, durly volumes are meant to transmit an interior tension. Through patina given to iron, the sculpture – objects relieve an archaic atmosphere. These simple, "archaic", full of tension volumes give us the idea of a certain assumed primitiveness, although they also have postmodern connotations. The latent state defines the entire cycle of "arches". "The Grand Arch", an elongated piece of wood, full of tension, "offended", but in the same time protected by the corroded iron that surrounds it, carries on its curved part some elongated fingerprints and the traces of some powerful strokes. It is a hudge ancient weapon, standing still in the middle of its own interior tension – the end of a bracket, opened to illustrate a major event or an arch over time, but an arch full of accidents, cuts and erosions – traces of the object's own history.

The last 10 – 15 years represented in our own creation a return to the simple forms, to a sort of archaic *initial*. And we are not talking only about forms, but about a

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<sup>10</sup> Böhringer, Hannes – *În căutarea simplității: o poetică*, Ed. Ideea Design & Print, Cluj, 2001, pag. 28-29.

more complex and profound return. The used materials are now stone, wood and iron (metal?), the last two often *existing* together in the same *object*. As a matter of fact, these materials, in this combination, can be found in the tools of each peasant household, from ancient times till today. The theme, that dominates the works made of stone, is a result of my preoccupations connected with size and spatial illusion, with the majestic *beauty* of the stone. The idea of not diminishing the stone through a massive trimming or through a deep scabble, but visually increase it instead through concept, led us to a series of big size works, done during some symposiums: *Folding, Fold, The Square Sleeps*, etc.

It is more and more clear that the artistic stake often lies in this effort of simplicity, of finding the form beyond all the folds trying to hide it, to find an essential and primordial form (as we often called it along this theoretical approach). In the history of art we can identify a surprising return to simplicity inspired by objective factors. But when it's about one artist, why should we forget about the subjective factors? Aren't these closer to creation? Objective or subjective the return to simplicity always has something fascinating and essential, like a definition in itself.