

# SUMMARY

## II. The portrait in Antiquity

### 2.1. The mystery in the depth of the pyramid

In order to see and understand the beautiful growth of the face of humanity, the contemporary artist needs to roam, through initiative trips, the traces of anterior civilisations beginning with an essential halt of spiritual introversion in the first edifice, the pyramid within which the human spirit can be felt throbbing with life, waiting for the encounter with its creator through resurrection. This halt is therefore the means for thoroughly understanding the universal art and its countless emergences in time and space.

Quite from the beginning art was “*pure quality, without quantity*”, however, the production was done in pyramidal structure, *at the bottom [having] maximum quantity and minimum quality, at the top [having] maximum quality and minimum quantity*”<sup>1</sup>. Through all this journey, the artist was always seen as the interpret and exponent of collectivity, or even more, an emissary of a superior, divine power. “*Hence, throughout its history, art connected the realm of power and that of labour, thus contributing to the uniformity of the social organism.*”<sup>2</sup>

*The people’s desire to contemplate themselves through their own image is, apparently, one of the oldest, and the art of the individual portrait is one of the most universally encountered artistic activities of all times. However, its development is not continuous: despite its ability of reappearing in different forms, it also has some eclipses which are undoubtedly due to certain extra-artistic or even extra-technical obstacles.*<sup>3</sup>

The big portrait of Egyptian civilisation is configured and subordinated by the authority of religion, respectively by that of the Pharaoh causing a certain stillness,

---

<sup>1</sup> Giulio Carlo Argan, *Prefață*, în Mary Hollingsworth, „Arta în istoria umanității”, Editura Enciclopedia RAO, București, 2004, pp. 15-16, *our translation*

<sup>2</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 15-16, *our translation*

<sup>3</sup> Galliène și Pierre Francastel, *Portretul. Cincizeci de secole de umanism în pictură*, Editura Meridiane, București, 1973, p.10, *our translation*

austere sobriety, circumscribed by a line of an imposed canon from the insides of which the mystery appears; a mystery that is somehow meant to protect the secrets of several initiations addressed only to those that belonged to the dominant class, on a hierarchical principle. This hierarchy lies at the base of the construction of the Egyptian civilisation, but the main detail that stylistically and expressively dominates it is the eye from an elongated profile. The eye becomes thus the detail that symbolises the big Egyptian portrait, the calligraphy of a civilisation that up to the current century remains the object of research and of the discovery of the mystery hidden under the veil of the cosmic perfection of the pyramid.

Consequently, the pyramids of different dynasties are spaces of the genesis of the portrait, its expression being the proof for the passage of several beings from a material realm to the transcendental one. These prototypes are in fact not just physiognomic configurations, but also signs that are rendered abstract, possible access codes to a certain knowledge in the defining of perfection, as a ladder towards the symbolic face of purifying light, symbolised by the sign of the sun Ra. The pyramid could represent an anticipation of Plato's concept, that is: the interior of the pyramid being in fact that dark, humid and still cavern from which the soul tends to free itself.

In Akhenaton's time we witness a climax of Egyptian art both in sculpture and in painting, through the grace and aristocratic elegance that reaches the highest altitudes of aesthetic refinement in the entire Egyptian art thanks to the stylistic reconfiguration of the portraits towards a realistic execution, even though some historians claim they are slightly [caricatured](#), they are covered by a certain mystery from which a beauty of the Egyptian spirit appears through the refinement and elegance of treating details. This radical rupture from the artistic tradition has determined the appearance of a first sign of what animation means, as a tendency to represent some affective states of the subject of the portrait; in this sense, the so-called Amarna era left us a heritage of masterpieces that are able to resist even in this century on the easels of postmodernism. The portraits of Akhenaton and Nefertiti (his wife) are still benchmark. Through them, the latent naturalist tendencies of Egyptian art have emerged by means of a vision that transmits the expression of poetic reverie, of tenderness and contemplation, the two faces being expressed through a remarkable opposition between the **feminine beauty**, full of

serenity, sensual and chaste and the same time, surprising us with a covert codified smile that makes us think of Leonardo's Monalisa; and the **grave expression** lacking in serenity through less attractive features, trenching on caricature, by means of a rough treating of the anatomical details, surprising by force lines the male character.

The expression of the portrait is a piece of writing, a sum of hieroglyphic signs that describe the spirit and estates of a civilisation rapt in mysteries hidden for eternity in the pyramids.

The Egyptian codified physiognomy can represent a synthetic concentration of signs, symbols of communication through the attitudes o the shapes, generating a writing that is still, silent, dynamic and loud at the same time, of the contemplating eye, similar to the sphinx, the movement of the universe. The Sphinx being the true symbol that dominates the row of pyramids in Ghizeh, in the era of the old empire, represents the essence of the non-portrait, although its head bears the features of pharaoh Kefren who gave it its name in the new empire when the bas relief was replaced by painting. Thus, the portrait will find favourable conditions for existence.

In Egypt, the sculptor, regarded as a mason, not an artist, was known as [The-one-that keeps-things-alive](#). This can suggest the fact that, through their talent of seeing in depth, they had a substantial input in the materialisation of the idea of prolonging life through the idealisation of the face by transfiguring its expression. We can thus note the adapting capacity of the Egyptian artist, his ability to create within extremely rigid canons. Reflection upon posthumous life was a major concern of evolved civilisations, an essential problematic of mankind from the Egypt moment up to this century, offering us a gallery of portraits, by looking at which we rediscover expressions in a continuous movement and transformation that express the visible or hidden desire of man to find again a new land to assure his eternity.

The means of representing the face was initially conceived as an ideogram due to the fact that it was submitted to rules based on the frontal law and the sacerdotal statics or "immobilism", the fixedness o hieratic shapes that will signify that feeling of the sacred through the [life-death-transfiguration](#) relationship, a religious concept that gave birth to an artistic form of great height ordered by the genius of rhythm synthesis and the greatness covered in messages that are still hidden.

In conclusion, the Egyptian civilisation has in fact constituted a laboratory in which essential features of the conception about man and divinity have appeared and were crystallised in an original form, realised in techniques including sculpture, engraving, fresco, enamel, suggesting scholar plastic solving that denote a capacity of synthesising and clarifying the representation, offering a page of authentic modernity through a genuine symphony of silence. From the aroma of the Egyptian mystery several civilisations to come will draw their inspiration, continuing the analysis of the human face through a different stylistics.

## 2.2. The Cretan and Tyrrhene profile, a feature of life

Another civilisation, another point of view, a breath of fresh air with Egyptian plastic remains is suggested to us in our climb towards the defining of the portrait. It has always been the case that after a period that has reached a severe scholar, there appears the need of escaping to a type of freedom that is not constraint by any canon, important being in this sense the fragments kept in the Cnossos Palace, through the animated profiles of certain different ladies-in-waiting in an impressionistic approach. The Cretan man, different in ideology than the mystery of the Egyptian pyramids does not feel the need of a religious type of art, but he prefers a laic and semi-laic art.

The typology of “plastic writing” of the Cretan works indicates the tendency of a change of thought and of the organizing of the society, characterized by the free and friendly spirit. The Cretan plastic concept of *palatin* suggests an extremely liberal and pictorial approach in which the decorativism encountered in Egyptian art gives in to the face expression, surprising the movement and interior tremble of the man. This change of conception has generated the profile of the portrait that was reborn and it developed in Etruria *at a certain distance from the big centre of Greek culture whose religious ideas have contributed to the birth of the metaphysical feeling, influence that is exerted upon shape, modelling it in a sense that is closer to reality than to the scholar Asian or Egyptian styling.*<sup>4</sup>

---

<sup>4</sup> Galienne and Pierre Francastel, *Portretul...*, p. 31; our translation

### 2.3. “Man, a general idea stripped of clothes and circumstances”

We thus assist to a moment of rebirth determined by the necessity of overpassing an artistic “current” that has reached saturation as was the art of pre-existent civilisation, an issue we find again in any plastic form of expression in which creation is no longer caused, but it is endlessly perpetuated, in an opaque series, gradually losing its expressive force and also its significance.

If in Egypt art was constrained in a severe canon that had to represent as effectively as possible the superior authority of the Pharaoh, through the new artistic – ideatic of the Ancient Greek thought, a new rational man appears, a man who is freed from the mystical -religious conception, preoccupied with the beautiful harmony of the body detached from the calcification and contemplation in the most splendid movement of the desire to live differently. Thus, the Greek artists basically assumed the plastic language of the big Egyptian creative workshop, which was stopped at a certain point, from where they borrowed continued and fathomed, through new rules, the ideal of the supreme beauty that crosses the profile of a civilisation that would inspire the artists of the Roman, Byzantine, Renaissance and contemporary civilisations in their endless search for the proportion of the soul.

Towards the end of the 4<sup>th</sup> century, after Praxiteles, through Alexander the Great’ “dare”, a new concept is born, that of the man-individual, materialised by Lysippus, who focalises his attention upon the registering of the physiognomic track, with the purpose of defining as close to reality as possible, the human character thus marking an essential moment, that of the portrait, which will become a permanent, fascinating and ever-changing preoccupation of the worldly artists.

If during this incursion in Ancient Greek art, culminating with the apogee of the Hellenistic period, the essence of the Greek artists’ research together with that of the philosophers’ was to offer a eulogy to the bodily beauty or perfection, as a progressive research that gave birth to the individualised portrait, in the next half of our study we will note a radical alteration of the angle from which man will be regarded, generated by the creeping in the late Classicism of a new issue: the dualism which will replace the Greek monoecism, thus opening a new horizon that is fundamental in the

evolution of the portraitist creation, the horizon of expressing the contrast between soul and matter.

The introductory expression of this new conception obviously appears in the late Hellenistic art and for this, the most eloquent example could be represented by the Pergam Altar where we make note of the breaking in the balance between body and soul due to the expressionistic approach of the portraits, as a first outcry of the man who had been held back for so many centuries in an apparent harmony that will give birth to a new vision, of the man through the dualist doctrine of Neo-Platonism in the late Antiquity.

Through the man's tendency towards ideal perfection, looking for the harmony between the soul and the body, the beauty of the forms and the kindness of the soul, „Kalokagathia”, the idea of what tendency towards portraying meant is now lost, but we anticipate three essential periods that have contributed to the appearance of the portrait: the Fayum moment (Greek-Roman art) that foreshadows the spiritualisation; Roman ephigees and busts in which all nuance of spiritualisation disappears, the emphasis being on individualisation-look-alike and culminating with the supremacy of light over darkness, of the soul over the body, through the concept of khatarsis-cleansing-separation from the body, moment that defines the finalising of the study period (Antiquity) and the beginning of the consolidation period (Middle-Ages).

The portrait is the starting point towards contemporaneity through the representation of the instability and fragility of the contrast between the profane and the sacred, two states, two attitudes that find themselves in a representative symbiosis of the passage between Antiquity, Christianity and the 20<sup>th</sup>-21<sup>st</sup> centuries, an idea that I am trying to insert in the ideatic and imagistic structure of my research, in this field or, more poetically, about the fascination of the world that is hidden beyond the man's look.

#### 2.4. The Fayum portraits as windows to modernity

The Fayum moment in the Greek-Roman art constitutes a remarkable artistic proceeding in whose details we need to look carefully both contemporary plastic artists and the sacred art artists because we can draw at least two essences of the representation of man that are intertwined: fragile and sensual feminine beauty in contrast with the brute masculine one, and at the same time the presence through the expressivity of the eyes, the inner beauty of the soul. This moment will and it has to represent the essential and probably unique point when the sacred and the profane started a dialogue as an excellent reconciliation between the two attitudes resulting in what Art means.

*The mummies in Fayum offer the unique example, o a meeting that is apparently impossible, between a human project and a divine intervention. Here was the meeting between the gods of the sky and the human imperfection of women and men from a town that had never met such a sky, nor such an abyss. The result is surprising as it reveals both a form of artistic piety and resigned impiety: as if this was about the form itself, the essence of existence, the intolerable and its irresistible absence.*<sup>5</sup>

#### 2.5. The cult o personality – the Roman portrait

The expression of the portrait, in a continuous change, used to be and it still is in contemporaneity, determined by the surrounding reality, serious social crises of economic downfall, political distress, the lack of ethics and of morals, events that determine the tendency to escape in search of support, thus the looks on the faces in Fayum, although they pertain to Antiquity, display the expression of the contemporary man.

The Latins did not have a civilisation prior to the Greek one. And if they have a tradition, this cannot be other than the one left to them by the Tyrrhenes which they had conquered but also inherited. The Tyrrhene culture, very orientalisised at its origin, succumbs in front of the Hellenist contamination. The Romans on the other hand, get their inspiration directly from the Greek source and they do this to such an extent that

---

<sup>5</sup> Translation after Giorgio Manganelli, *Les portraits du Fayum. Les visages de l'éternité*, Art FMR, prefață de Lidia Soroni Mazzolani, Franco Maria Ricci Editore, tradus în franceză de J.P. Garrido, Milano, 1991, pp. 182-190

the almost limit themselves to copying the Greek masterpieces without trying to create an original conception.

*The double influence and Italic-Tyrrhene reflects again the Roman portrait: the preoccupation to idealise the moral traits, but also the realist tradition. In the 1<sup>st</sup> century B.C., the facial feature like the fine lines, are emphasised in order to point out the physical severity of the citizen such as age, apparently guaranteeing good morals and the governing capacity> an exterior naturalism supposed to ascertain the civic quality of the model.*”<sup>6</sup>

The premise of the new concept leaning towards individualisation is due to two fundamental reasons that entirely condition the existence of the portrait or the tendency towards portrayal emphasised by Galliene and Pierre Francastel, that is: [the idea of overcoming death and the idea of efficiently exercising the imperial function.](#) <sup>7</sup> The desire arises of remaining in eternity, fact that generates an approach of the physiognomy that is closer to reality, which implies the study of the facial features that had the purpose to emphasise the age of the dignitary (preoccupation that is inspired by Hellenism), as well as the emphasising of the character of “every soul in turns” (a preoccupation of Tyrrhene art) submitted to the Roman naturalism.

Starting from the republican period, the role of the deferential sculptures and of the sculptors was that of spreading principles and fundamental values, the portrait, branching from the Greek idealisation, emphasises the expression of realistic facial features that had to convey the symbolic representation of authority (*autoritas*), of the presence of dignity (*dignitas*) and of the sovereign’s heroism, idea that followed Alexander the Great’ model.

The Roman bust gallery, including expressions of the dignitaries and their wives, of the philosophers, that were once displayed in the public place and which are now to be found in museums around the world, exhibited on modern pedestals as historical and aesthetical testimonies of the human existence, constitute a permanent dialogue o the contemporary artist as a window opened by inspiration towards new interpretations of the existing world that is lacking in ideals. In the growth of the human

---

<sup>6</sup> Claude Frontisi, *Istoria Vizuală a Artei*, traducere de Alina Dimitriu, Liliana Filimon, Denisa Mateescu, Eitura Enciclopedia RAO, București, 2007, p. 51, *our translation*

<sup>7</sup> Galliene and Pierre Francastel, *Portretul ...*, p. 37, *our translation*

face's beauty, Roman Antiquity that meant an essential contribution as fundament in the Byzantine concept, and in the Renaissance offering solutions for plastic construction in what attitude is concerned, the concern to differentiate fragility, elegance, the sensuality of a woman's expression in contrast with the harshness, sobriety and authority of the masculine figure, common being the attitude of dignity, an inexistent essence nowadays.

The coin as a material value, because of having inscribed on it faces of the dignitaries and their wives, became an artistic and historical value, that reveals a gallery of physiognomies in which we can trace the feminine beauty filled with gentleness, sensibility, sensuality and spiritualised in later times, next to which, in a natural contrast, the harsh, proud, self-confident face appears, representing manhood.

The Roman portrait, in its growth, can be analysed as a construction synthesis through a single portrait that is filled with idealism at the beginning and then with naturalism after which matter starts being carefully modelled with extra care for the concretising of the personality; afterwards, thanks to dualism, by approaching the more accentuated physiognomy, inner states are exteriorised up to the moment when enlarged eyes suggest maximum tension tending towards contemplation, the most eloquent being for this the imposing portrait of Constantine the Great, which embodies the passage towards transfigured faces.

### **III. The portrait in the Byzantium world**

#### **3.1. The inner beauty in the Byzantium light – from Art to decadent mannerism**

The premises of the apparition and of the configuration of the iconic face, until the moment when it was crystallised as ideal image of divinity, representing not a bodily beauty, but one outside the body which increase from the darkness of the substance, transformed into light, were owed to the communication between philosophy, religion and art, meditation through which the word became an image of the world.

I will insist on the clarification of a problem of various styles which derived from an important centre, that of Constantinople, which delivered throughout the empire models of representing the archetype, but what stood as a victory from the artists side was the fact that they kept the essence of the canon readjusting it to the spirit of

each people. We see the same Pantocrator in Daphni, Cefalù, Mon Reale, Saint Sofia, Pammakaristos, Sinai, Boiana (Jesus Christ the Everghet), Studenica, Novgorod (Teofan the Greek) we do not observe at all a stereotype, but on the contrary, a surprising variety of unique and very original interpretations, which we will not meet from the late Palaeological period, when the masters overshadowed their epigones, constantly copying a special expression without realising that they profane, through technicality, the creation of an anonymous master and more than that, distance themselves from the archetype.

In the late Antiquity, because of the big social problems of economical fall, political unrest, the human being enters a state of crisis, looking for a new fulcrum, generating his escape from the rational to the extra-terrestrial, in “over-sensibility”, like a possible repression, in the fight with himself, thus realising the passage from the sensual classic Expressionistic appearance exteriorised towards the interiorised one.

The breaking of the equilibrium between body and soul is consciously lifted to the rank of artistic principle. *In all these portraits, the soul wants to go to the extra-sensible world and seems to want to emancipate from the material coat which covers it and slows its striving to reach the heights. From this fight with the body a cruel conflict is born which confers to the image a dark expression. A characteristic of late antiquity art, a concept which constituted in the formation and crystallisation of the Byzantine styling, this dualism remaining typical in the representation of the human being, but the “dark” expression specific to the debut of dualism, was eliminated through the subordination of the body to the soul.*<sup>8</sup>

The most eloquent portraits in which we can observe the breaking of the equilibrium between body and soul are the masterpiece from Fayum, in which, although sensuality remained, the idea of frontal and sobriety arises and it culminates with the attention focused on the oversized eyes expressing an estate of spiritual discomfort and at the same time contemplative and spiritualised, through these faces we anticipate the iconographic transfiguration. This moment of high artistic quality will be met again in the 6<sup>th</sup> century in a different space of reference, that is Mount Sinai, Saint Catherine Monastery, Egypt, rephrased as a Byzantine archetype through an extremely liberal pictorial approach, the stress being laid on the face expression and the hands framed by a

---

<sup>8</sup> V.Lazarev, *Istoria Artei Bizantine*, Volumul I, Editura Meridiane, București, 1980, p. 87, *our translation*

simple and well-thought draping, discreetly suggesting what is beyond. That is why I think that for revitalising iconographic art we have to regard these moments as high class reference points that need to constitute models to follow and not objects to reproduce *ad-literam*. Because in the Byzantine art, the iconographic masterpieces appeared due to the fact that artists mastered the anatomical drawing (Antique inheritance), minutely analysing the details, the proportion of the whole as opposed to the portrait and the hands, through laborious studies. If the manual sketches had been preserved, we would surely discover tens of proposals behind this light, up to the moment when the artist felt he found the most appropriate expression to represent the archetype.

*The head in which the expressive capacity of the soul is concentrated, it becomes the dominating element of the figure, the body received a totally secondary importance; lacking in weight, it got lost under the refined folds of the garments, whose linear rhythm had an abstract, irrational print.*<sup>9</sup>

The Byzantine artistic creation had its moments of growth when picturality, movement, liberality, proportion, the study of nature and the values of Antiquity were dominating, and they added vigour to the expression; but when the conservatory spirit of the metropolitan society suggests the following of certain pattern and their perpetuation, a severe and ascetic form appears in which the predominant features are dry, lifeless linearism, the colour scheme loses the Impressionistic nuances and it becomes more compact, the relation between the face, hands and draping becomes equal, phenomenon that I.D. Ștefănescu called “byzantinianing”=[servile copying of anterior models](#). From the two orientations that oscillated, the first remarkable one, that expresses the spiritual through an artistic picturesque and elevated interpretation; and the second one being harsh and scholastic, finally, the latter shut the gates of creation through the “triumph” of isichasm<sup>10</sup> (late palaeologist art), isichasm that marks the beginning of the artistic decadence in “favour of keeping unaltered” the archetype. But, like El Greco who gave a new life to the tired archetype, Teofan the Greek, who was formed at the school of Constantinople, managed to bring back the look from Fayum, going back to the Alexandrine source of inspiration and proving once again that the climax of art was

---

<sup>9</sup> V. Lazarev, *Istoria...*, p. 76, *our traslation*

<sup>10</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 36-38, *our traslation*

due to the continuous overcoming of an imposed canon. This makes the difference between a master like Teofan the Greek and simple painters like Teofan the Cretan.

The authority of the erminias has closed both in the past and in the current century the sacred contemporary creation, remaining as a fundamental etalon for the “masters” with no talent that are not aware of the fact that by copying a face the message is lost and the archetypal authenticity is estranged, deforming the idea of inner=spiritual beauty.

The study suggested by I.D. Ștefănescu shows the essential fact that both in donor portraits and in the iconographic prototypes, there is a certain individualisation that makes the difference between one face and the other, being not only a representation of a character, but much more, an expression of a psychological state, of an inner state that is due to the study of human physiognomy as fundament for the genesis of interpretation of the indefinite depth beyond the look.

### 3.2. Spiritualised “Portraits” in the vision of an Expressionist: Teofan the Greek

Teofan’s emphasised sense of the pictorial comes from the Constantinopolitan painting of the palaeology of the first half of the 14<sup>th</sup> century when, by returning to Antiquity, and the study of Alexandrine manuscripts heavy with Hellenistic reminiscences, the iconography is revived for a short period of time. As a reference of this bright moment, we have the Constantinopolitan masterpieces in Kahriyé Djami, where we see portrait studies in the true sense of the word, from which the force of the drawing that is felt and understood appears, by means of an approach that is monumental and minute at the same time, each bearing its own individuality, having in common the deep essence of spirituality. Teofan took this moment, not in order to imitate, but quite on the contrary, to reinterpret the expressions through his own personality diminishing the realisation process to a minimum in favour of maximum expression.

### 3.3. Reflection on the necessity of renewing the vision of conservatory Byzantine art

Only the great masters endowed with a refined artistic sense, a solid plastic culture and an expressive drawing have had the capacity to overcome the limits without altering the meaning, this detaching themselves from the modest workers tributary to outdated patterns and recipes they endlessly copy with the satisfaction they follow the tradition without realising the fact that they are alienating themselves from the authentic icon!

It is easy to observe that a plastic image, be it an icon or a landscape, by the copying itself loses its message and results in a beautiful work at most, but without life, it is just a surface covered in colours.

Unfortunately in this century as well, in the sacred art the danger appeared of a stronger and stronger mannerism, a close relative with amateurism, due to the lack of culture and the icon masters' incapacity to understand the depth of the art of writing freely in a space that is only apparently limited. Each liturgical space that is newly painted has to constitute in the end an example that speaks the new speech of the images or the updated mirror of the Tradition of the Orthodox Church, an *Orthodox Confession of Faith plastically expressed*.<sup>11</sup>

There is therefore for the artist a distinct, very important moment that is very much expected with humility and nervousness each time he dares to bring the Word to life and give It a shape, in order to make sure he does not leave on his easel a face with merely aesthetic qualities; this moment is no other than the one of the revealing divine inspiration. By revealing divine inspiration, we have to understand the power to discover the moment and place in which the angel guides the artist's pen, writing by himself, not in colours but in light. This "light" gave birth to the well known "ACHEROPOIETAI", works "that were not done by human hands" through which the artists have discovered the perfect face in creation considered to be a reference point for the iconographers. All they have to do is follow it, and by no means to copy it endlessly, so as, by reaching an artistic, spiritual level to be able to create through each work a new icon, so perfect that it

---

<sup>11</sup> *Părintele Arsenie Boca. Biserica de la Drăgănescu. <<Capela Sixtină>> a Ortodoxiei Românești. „O smerită mărturisire ortodoxă de credință exprimată plastic”, Editura Deva, Deva, 2005, p. 1, our translation*

covers us all in its limitless look, and us, its contemplators to feel like being in reality in front of **a face that was not done by human hands**.

“The complete face” as reference point for the iconographers, is nothing other than the Iconic Christi representation, updated and always renewed that does not assume an alienation from the prototype but the entrance in the depth of expression. In this sense, I dare repeat His Eminence Archbishop and Metropolitan Bartolomeu Anania’s advice, who answered my question on the possibility to create within the limits of the canons: “*Christ has to be represented in the light of the current century*”, in the present, not the past, advice that relieved me from under certain prejudices imposed by certain masters that do not dare research, dig the depths to discover the spring of the water of life that gives wisdom because *the love o beauty satisfies and fills us with joy*<sup>12</sup>.

A programme of recreating and renewing the plastic language in the sacred register is mandatory through the actions of the artists with vision to save the few liturgic spaces from the invasion of the so-called „authorised masters” with medium studies that only paint for material reasons, without having the responsibility o what they leave behind. There are actually two extremities: the so-called beautiful painting through which some masters destroy countless churches through fade images and obsolescent finishing or daring actions blamed on the artistic sense, that exaggerate to such an extent that they turn into a buffoonish expressionism, that is the mannerism and easel painting applied to the walls.

It is enough to look at and analyse the bunch of field flowers on a blue background, that is the monasteries in Moldova where we find the most beautiful miniature files in a pastel chromatic key, the personalised expression of each face, the natural movement, the immaterial character and depth of figurative representations, the purest traditionally Romanian Byzantine style, from which we need to draw our inspiration in order to preserve the Romanian spirituality and identity.

The artists, we are all responsible in front of God for every word through the image that we leave behind because from this the others will discover and that is why God does not endow everyone with the gift of painting, and precisely for this reason He watches over the endowed ones and the latter has the duty and responsibility to gradually

---

<sup>12</sup> Michael Quenot, *Icoana Fereastră spre absolut*, Editura Enciclopedică, București, 1993, p. 10

progress, step by step, colour over colour, until he is capable to share it with the others, but being very careful not to guide them on a narrow path because a certain lack of creativity.

#### 3.4. The reintegration of sacred art in the universal context of debating on the modern and contemporary art. Preamble

My personal interest in what concerns the feeling for the discovery of interior icon that come through the look of the face of humanity, has its origins in childhood when I used to search impressed and perplexed at the same time the means in which you compare the chiaroscuro, “the moon takes different physiognomies” from one moment to the other, in a permanent change, an observation due later on to the visual education received at the Academy which was mainly focused on avoiding stereotypes and favouring the discovery of borderless creation outside canon, the essence being the communication force of the image.

Due to the inevitable applied visual communications with reference artists in plastic and sacred art that offered me, through original approaches, essential reference points on what the sense for art meant; a sense that gathers people in a communion of peace.

*The renewal of sacred art has a special place in the French art of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The request addressed to Chagall in 1956 to intervene in a work done in a baptiserium is the proof of a remarkable evolution expressed within the Church, evolution that has marked the radical change of vision in what concerns the conception and decoration of cult spaces. This movement is marked, quite from its origins, by the return to the spiritual universe.*<sup>13</sup>

A change of a concept that is already used up, enclosed in insurmountable norms, can be thought again by appealing to the opinion and the most authorised influence of the creator with innovative spirit and a deep spiritual feeling, reanalysing the expression of the „celestial beings” as souls silhouetted through the shade whose proportion is given by the presence of light, oscillating according to the intensity of light.

---

<sup>13</sup> Rodica Zdrenghia, *Intervenții ale artiștilor în spații de cult în Franța secolului XX*, Teză de Doctorat, UAD, Cluj-Napoca, 2006, p. 4, our translation

Thus we will not only prefigure the portraits, gestures trapped in a heavy and geometrised clothe but shadows from which the glow of inner halo vibrates, opening to the man that enters a state of contemplation a window towards the new church with walls cleaned of impurities, pure and aired, filled with the restless movement of the colourful winds of the Seraphim. Such a capacity to surpass the “normal”, the Neo-Byzantine mannerism marks an audacious and sometimes heroic will, an undefeatable creative impulse that does not need to have another purpose than the re-evaluation of a devalued sacred art.

In the case of sacred art that only registers timid attempts to remodel its language and even those are smothered by the traditionalist barriers and their followers; this has made for this phylum to remain unaltered for so many centuries, this being an unacceptable regress that generated this to be excluded from the debates of contemporary artists, making it a phenomenon detached from what Art meant. There is only one solution to this: the attempt to overcome the “routine” by redrawing and archetype freed from the technical adagios that cancel the clarity and purity of the beauty beyond the look. This means creating a constructive dialogue between Artists, people of culture and theologians with humanist perspectives:

*A new path is opened to religious painting and through Gustave Moreau's activity, the master of the “Belles Artes School “ in Paris. [...]He looks to offer to the viewer a strong impression, above the representation of the things. Beyond the appearances a new ideal world is expressed, favouring the expression of affective states – dream, mystery, Matisse, Rouault, Desvallières, Gustave Moreau's students, guided to create their works with sensitivity and intelligence.*

The exhaustion of a society, especially like the current one, has to challenge the artist who has to return through his art to a synthesis of the means of expression, inserting the spiritual element as a symbol of the return to the “ethical and moral vertical”, thus building, through original visions, the symbolic expression of the man in search of the lost identity.

Art is the space that ties man to the sacred, an antechamber of spiritual preparation in which he clears his look through windows behind which the soul of the creator, the artist, can breathe.

*I want an art of balance, of purity, which does not worry or puzzle, I want or the tired, worried, exhausted man to enjoy silence and rest in front of my painting.*<sup>14</sup>

### 3.5. Steps of ecumenism through art

*The real artist is recognised through his ability of painting depth,*<sup>15</sup> said James Mc. Neill Whistler, a researcher that did not paint icons as such, but through his portraits he managed to surprise the silent icon of people.

“Little Rose of Lyme Regis” expresses the beauty and inner cleanliness of the child, it sends us to the purity of the angels, and so an inspired artist can build an archangel face calling on the Byzantine style, becoming a “live” icon.

Artists with sensitivity, by merely drawing crossed lines, the shape of a Seraphim’s wings, with a piece of coal on a white canvas, will manage to represent the deepest synthesis of the Divine Face, an expression that entirely surpasses the representation of a docile iconographer that keeps repeating a standard model.

In the Orthodox East the new approaches are almost inexistent, the first cause being the rejection of this proposal due to the strong conservatism of those who “from lack of vision” support the stoical preservation of a traditionalist means of expression, of a “Byzantianism” that is already tired and not in agreement with actuality, preferring a monotonous painting in the happiest of the cases, where the attention to the portraits is substituted with technical dressing through garments and ornaments.

The contemporary man feels the need to See in a different light a communication space with divinity. Because of this the artist does not have to stop at the old iconographic programmes in the erminias but also not to detach himself from them, but to try rephrase them through a new reinterpretation. Such a rephrasing through the involvement of some artists with absolutely innovative concepts of substance, next to a high aesthetic effect, could have another effect, (the condition of the artist as missionary), that of attracting the contemporary man closer to church, of having a dialogue by means of the painting’s beauty, the church thus becoming a place of cultural interest, addressing to a larger category of people.

---

<sup>14</sup> Neag Rădulescu, *Henry Matisse*, Editura Meridiane, București, 1970, p. 5

<sup>15</sup> *Mari Pictori. Viața, sursele de inspirație și opera*, Nr. 12: James Mc. Neill Whistler, Editor: Publishing Service SRL., București, 2000, p. 27, *our translation*

*Some scholar theologians refuse to see the iconographer as a theologian through image, as if this would diminish their personal position. Or, the rediscovery needed by the profound sense of the Liturgy cannot be separated by a rediscovery of the sense of the icon. In my opinion, the theologian through image has a strong means of expression that reaches beyond the words.*<sup>16</sup>

The iconographic programme that I suggest through the project called “Ecumenism through art”, a chapel localised in an original space, the Cluj-Napoca International Airport, is based on the studies of sacred art as well as those of visual arts, that have meant a sum of the conclusion from the communication with classic iconographers as well as Teofan the Greek, Andrei Rubliov, modernists like Grigorie Krug, Arsenie Boca, Tonitza, Marco Rupnik, Sorin Dumitrescu, Nicolai Ozolin, artists that have brought new concepts to the sacred art of the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries, as well as artists that through original artistic means have touched the deepest spiritual profundities, that is: El Greco, Rembrandt, Van Goch, Paul Gauguin, Matisse, Paul Seruisier, March Chagall, Rouault, Desvallières, Gustave Moreau, Alberto Giacometti. In fact, both in the personal creation in the field of sacred art, as well as in the visual arts, the two distinct research lines, but the interference between them results in the face of the contemporary man that expresses spirituality, a state that is looking for a new settlement. This is why, artists interested in the spiritual beauty have to create these new settlements both through interventions in ecclesiastic spaces, and through paintings that will be appreciated in the antechambers of the Church.

A redefining of sacred art of Byzantine origin means the detachment from the actual petrification due to mannerism and through the infinite repetition of certain patterns that are outdated by the actuality, what through copying they lacked in authentic sacred message, thus I dare claim the fact that to great extent church painting, iconography, books and cult object, even the furniture specific to the interiors, are governed by the sign of the artisanal, of exaggerated solemnity, all these are generated by the lack of education of the aesthetic sense, of the promotion of masters and not artists “with vision”. For “regenerating vision”, it is necessary to create an artist community that

---

<sup>16</sup> Michel Quenot, *Nevoia de icoană. De vorbă cu meşterul iconar Pavel Busalaev*, traducere de Măriuca şi Adrian Alexandrescu, Editura Σοφία, Bucureşti, 2006, p. 157, *our translation*

are interested in the true sense of the word by the role of art in the spaces: ecclesiastic and public. But this endeavour that is apparently impossible to come true, at least in the Romanian realm, could be materialised in a primal phase through the introduction in the educational curriculum of theological institutions of some courses based on the interferences between the sacred art and the plastic art, in a comparative presentation between the classic and the contemporary, a branched approach on traditional techniques applied on conventional and unconventional materials, decorative, compositional and pictorial stylistics and processes through the proposal of updated solutions of the iconographic programmes, as well as the communication with classic and contemporary artists concerned with the issue of the sacred.

The right measurement, equivalent with the traditionalism, is an imposing with no funding of a manner supported by the reason to preserve the sacred message unaltered, on the contrary, this fixation in an unmovable canon has stopped the natural evolution of art, fact that has generated the appearance of merely technical and not at all artistic representations, that go down to the kitsch. It is obvious that by promoting this “traditionalist” tendency, the one entering the church to contemplate, accepts the non-quality because he has no other comparing terms, considering that a good painting has to be exactly like the others and so the look, instead of being refreshed, it degenerates, contaminating his look with amorphous expressions, or the essence of sacred art is focalised towards the portrait-face and the portrait of the gestures that have the purpose of attracting, of including, and of determining the spiritual dialogue of man with divinity, as an immediate presence and not a very far one. The affirmation of immediate presence can send us to a plastic reflection that can certify the naturalism of renewal, that is the reconstruction and updating of the sacred authentic message materialised through expressions that are always new.

### 3.6. Transfigured face and miniature portrait

The manuscripts illustrated with miniatures have as origins the period when Christian art began, somewhere between the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> centuries and they had a fundamental part in the forming, crystallising and then the promotion of both the word and the image that accompanied the road in the Byzantine Empire, then imposing itself in

the occidental realms, afterwards determining important stylistic mutations in the Romanic and Gothic painting.

In comparison to the icon nowadays that is applied to wood, in which we only find the face of the saint many times cancelled by the “limitless” abundance of the gold leaf, in miniature, the ornament, the writing and the gold leaf, are judiciously placed, without excess, in order to bring to front the portrait (donor) and the transfigured face.

The study of the miniature is the fundament of the iconographer and not only his, because it involves both a knowledge of the techniques as well as what is essential, the precision of the drawing by the governing of the proportion, as representing a face that is a few millimetres big, needs a training of “the hand” and psychological focus that is extremely intense, a single deviation of the line might destroy the essence of the character. The face or portrait in this technique will be looked at from a short distance and this is why every detail has to be treated with maximum rigour and freedom at the same time.

## **IV. The classical portrait**

### **4.1. The portrait in the classical vision – The rebirth of the portrait -**

If the artist during the Byzantine period was constrained by rules that were more and more strictly imposed, that lead to a rigid expression, up to mannerism, the new boost generated by the humanist of the Renaissance, favours the reappearance of individualised portrait, prepared to be realised in a new light, re-valuing the art of the Greek-Roman antiquity, the artist heading his attention towards a rehabilitation of the concept about Beauty, using the antique wisdom adapted to Plotinus’ concept that claims that *Beauty beyond the senses that can be admired within the sensitive Beauty constitutes the true nature of Beauty.*<sup>17</sup>

The idea of re-finding man by means of easing the dialogue with divinity, motivates the entire gallery of religious paintings of Pre-Renaissance, Renaissance and Baroque, as a reconciliation of profane art with the sacred art through these opening

---

<sup>17</sup> Umberto Eco, *Istoria frumuseții*, traducere de Oana Sălișteanu, Editura RAO, București, 2005, p. 184, our translation

again the was towards the progress of art and the gradual liberation of the artist from imposed rules.

Both in Antiquity and in the Middles Ages and the Renaissance, the new artistic orientations that are configured as a materialisation of philosophic writings, artists working together with the philosophers, in the permanent search of inner glow.

The common feature of the Florentine profile, the Flemish and Venetian ones, is the tendency to narrate, especially through the feminine faces, profane or sacred, a certain sensuality (cancelled in the Byzantine art) that does not refer to the frivolous but it is penetrated by sobriety, as a beauty that wants to thrill and be contemplated from a perspective of the serenity of man as a creation of divinity.

Although the Florentines first preferred the profile, as a reflection to the series of medallion portraits of the Antiquity by enchaining the Flemish concept that turns the face towards the one who looks at it and inviting him to communication, the study of the profile remaining an essential step in the defining process of the human character, as a prior sketch of the physiognomic details, being an angle from which the essential features can be surprised. The motivation of the angle from which they looked at a physiognomy can be one that marked the trajectory of evolution of the portraying art up to the contemporary period, that is, each individual in a certain historical period, has to be seen from the position that characterises him the best, and placed in the space that represents him best, as well as the plastic treating, appropriate to the representation of inner state.

## **4.2. Dialogue with important artists in the personal creation:**

### **4.2.1. A Byzantine artist converted to the live art: El Greco (Domenikos Theotokópoulos 1541-1614)**

I chose the dialogue with El Greco in order to find the possible answers to the question: Which are the permitted limits of an artist to move within a canon? Following the means in which he succeeded, obviously through the contact with the masters of contemporary Venetian Renaissance art of his time, where from the red shadow of Titian the faces of the people were detached revealing themselves through themselves and which he transposed in mystical poses, portraying their soul as a flame

that through its glow radiate the warmth of holiness, thus through the shades of light he managed to set free the cold and rigid shape of Byzantine art from technicality and mannerism (the so-called Cretan art), suggesting a new interpretation of the divine essence, fact that proves once more the overcoming of a canon and the infinite freedom within this.

If there had been no artists to continuously suggest updated “portraits of the soul”, then, there would have been no progress in art, and art would have been in a total lack of agreement cu man and society, in what El Greco is concerned, playing an essential part and the fact that destiny had him find the space in which he was adopted and then considered as the honorary artist of Spain, where he managed to value the essences of Byzantine tradition by transforming the conservatorist inexpressive decorativism in a vivid, cursive, solemn, pictorial in which from the entirety of the silhouette of shade the light flows upon as a waterfall, emphasising through the silence of the face the speech of the hands.

El Greco relit through a scrutinising plastic phrasing the set light of the Byzantium understanding the most profound concept of Plotinus that lies at the fundament of the configuration of the transfigured face, remaining as a reference that brought back to life a conventional means of expression.

#### 4.2.2. „MAN” in the Rembrandtian light: Rembrandt Harmenszoon van Rijn (1606-1669)

The Rembrandtian look that passes through all the portraits, it placed the man within sacred, homely or quotidian frames, it reflects a thorough introspection on the individual, bringing back to the actuality of its time that ethical and moral vertical suggested in the Greek Antiquity by Fideas, reviewed in the Middle Ages through the Byzantine spirituality as a column of light o the truth, an essence through which we, the contemporary artists, can reflect on finding an answer to the way in which we can reconfigure *the lost image of man*<sup>18</sup>.

The window that Rembrandt suggests is the portrait of man fighting with his soul, a battle of the contrasts waiting for “the hug between the Angel and Jacob”,

---

<sup>18</sup> Jutta Hammer, *Probleme privind definirea portretului*, în „Studia Universitatis Babeş-Bolyai”, Series Historia, Fasciculus 2, Cluj, 1971, p. 125, *our translation*

waiting for “the hug of the father and the lost son”, waiting for “the hug of the baby by the Righteous Simeon”, instances that can be repeated to infinity in the artistic creation, becoming each time a new challenge.

Like El Greco, the faces modelled by the inspired creator become shadows of possible saints whose halo are not around the head but is placed in a certain area of the face, in contrast with the other human area waiting to be united, the two thus cancelling each other, the imbalance that stops the growth in intensity of light. His portraits are built not through an analytical drawing like Dürer, but from a lyrical abstract construction in which the different lines are placed vigorously and precisely and they subtly suggest “the forte moment” when suddenly the face of the human soul appears clearly, shocking and deep from the depth of creation.

The Rembrandtian faces and especially his self-portraits are placed under the sign of direct confession, a confession covered in the silent mystery of the direct dialogue with divinity, placed in everyday enclosed or open spaces, mythological or sacred, from medallion sized portraits, busts, with hands or whole, with one figure or a collection of figures, the present the man in extreme situations, the man seen in the high society and the man in his martyred simplicity, to whom the peace of the soul was his utmost value shadowing over material values.

#### 4.2.3. The temptation of the infinite in the Rembrandtian work – practical and theoretical appliance – PROLOGUE

We entered the intimate workshops of the masters of painting in order to look for the right halo that covers a master of the sacred sounds and bringing his soul back to the present-day; finally we have discovered the light in a symphony of the destiny of a great artist who understood that darkness is only a form of light, Rembrandt, the master of chiaroscuro.

The inner portrait of the musician D. Cunțanu is treated by the process of the chiaroscuro that means the strange combination between the light and the dark, that is in musical terms “piano-forte”, means of placing together the silence with noise. It is a “crescendo” from the tones of dark, grave browns, to the high tonalities of golden yellow

that offers the face that note of sobriety and transcendentalism specific to the sacred spirit.

The profile of the musician also appears from the reconstruction we have done about Roman Melodul where everything begins from a white piece of paper we receive at birth from the Holy Mother of God through the angel, with the condition to leave traces of light that guides the steps of humans, this is the destiny of the creator!

In all the series of portraits realised through different technical processes I have tried to express in order to “be read” by the viewer man’s longing of God expressed through the notes of a score of the “Angels’ Voices”. Another interpretation in the technique of modelling is represented by a staging of the choir of humanity looking towards the sky in order to look for the One from which we were alienated by the loss of spiritual values and uniformity. The conductor has here the role of trying to express that state of purification through the meaning of the song.

## **V. The reconfiguration of the portrait in modern vision**

### **5.1. The missionary artist: Paul Gauguin (1848-1903)**

Gauguin, like El Greco, Rembrandt or Van Gogh, from interior feeling, with a mysterious faith, strived for justice and truth in a supreme concern the Man, falls under political or religious interests. The artist used to be and still has to be a free man, a knight of the light whose symbolic spade is his brush and the palette as a shield where he mixes the amorphous matter and it becomes life.

The self-portrait is an interior concern, a psychological introspection of the artist himself that introduced to us the reflection, not of his face, but of a state “found” in order to express as much clarity in his relation to an absent society that is lacking in humanity, a bourgeoisie reluctant to moral and spiritual values, attitude that motivates Gauguin’s “scream” in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, having a stronger and stronger echo in the confused society of our century when everything wears the sign of standardisation.

The inner rebellion is cumulated from a portrait to another, his run is not from the people, from the civilisation, but from the political and social system, he was

*against an era that cruelly allowed men, defenceless women or even children to be killed if they belonged to the commune.*<sup>19</sup>

These intense inner feelings, next to what is seen around, materialised through the reaction to scholastic art that did not suggest anything new, Gauguin rebuilt in order to detach himself from the classical representation of the portrait, avoiding the traditional paths of proportion, preferring the stability of the ephemeral, of the sudden, exaggerating in the styling of the physiognomic details, emphasising that symbolic look of the spirit and its destiny in relation to society but also to divinity, offering them especially through his self-portraits a complex image of the artist who is responsible of the art and the impact it will have both as an artistic creation and as a historical document attesting the ignorance the high society has towards people.

These notes, confessions of the artist, reflect the self-portrait of the few great artists that have considered, in spite of the encountered problems, that art is a maximum responsibility, a child's play taken very seriously in search for an answer to the question: "Where do we come from, who are we, where are we heading to?", these questions had as a fundament the way to Golgotha through which master Gauguin identified himself, the one who mysteriously kept his substrate of a man with faith in the spiritual values.

## **VI. The portrait in the personal creation from a contemporary perspective**

### **6.1. The personalised and de-personalised man**

The occult tendencies of the 21<sup>st</sup> century aim for the denial of the soul, that is of the shadow that brightens our look through the knowledge of moral and spiritual values. Giving these values up means an absorption of the truth (of sight) by the power of covering the black that triggers a fall of the man in a black hole. Thus the face becomes a dense cold shadow from which vague reflexes appear and they are open as reminiscences of the face alienated from depths, the drawing of personality becoming after all a code

---

<sup>19</sup> Kuno Mittestädt, *Autoportretele lui Gauguin*, Editura Meridiane, București, 1972, p. 22, *our translation*

made of signs, numbers, etc. The dissolution down to the denial of the portrait is generated by the fact that man is no longer at the centre of concerns as a personality with an identity, but it is part of process of standardising the masses.

In the current context that is in full standardisation process with tendencies that do not aim at the balance of human society, the necessity appears of involving the artist as a reporter of the shrinking of the human face in contrast with the need for rehabilitation. It thus appears a new type of construction of the man as a symbol of a de-personalised knowledge in an artificial paradise of a degrading society.

Man becomes an undefined, interiorised, demoralising, manipulation shadow that is reduced to a simple piece on a chess board of mankind. This could be one of the physiognomic features of this epoch, prefiguring a new ethical and moral crisis of late Antiquity in a modern interpretation.

## 6.2. Re-circumscribing a human shadow in the contemporary light

The creative act implies all the essential steps from the first draw of the ovoid that through vertical and horizontal lines we discover the harmonious relation between the volumes and down to details as a process of construction in which the classical rule of the drawing is substituted, or only precisely adjusted, reconfigured according to the way in which the artist feels he should present himself (As a self-portrait), or how he should present the interior characters of the one portrayed. Like the Egyptians thought that the profile with the eye seen from the front was the most explicit angle to represent the message they desired, frontality for the Byzantines, the semi-profile for the Flemish and the Dutch, in a contemporary vision we need to find not necessarily a means of approaching this, but an angle from which to look at the human face in a permanent movement in the quotidian, contrasting spaces that determine configurations of this angle that are always new.

To surprise the ephemeral psychological states of the man like the movement of the shadow under the influence of the light, according to whose intensity it can change its proportion and shape, it means an infinite introspection, an impossible and fascinating game at the same time, of surprising and circumscribing through drawing a

stop frame that is changed from a millisecond to another. In fact, we follow that millisecond from the first line or trace of colour, no matter its style: realist, impressionist, expressions, fovist or even the abstract or the denial or the portrait, looking through a long period of waiting for a moment in which to surprise the essence that describes the personality behind the look.

Through the movement of the shadow and the light, the meeting and unification of the two is a recurrent, serial but unique dynamics, visually building this non-figurative dialogue, we permanently notice the way in which they configure themselves in shapes that change their proportion according to the intensity of the light, expressing the immaterial human spirit that, through a trace of coal or pastel, can become a portrait.

Man, in the current vision, is an apparently luminous shadow through which it is not the balance that appears (that beauty through glowing) but the dualism of Antiquity once again, the disagreement with ourselves, that battle of our shadow with the other shadows in a deaf dialogue of our inner face with the exterior one in search of an exit from the maze towards the discovery of the ethical and moral vertical.

If the shadow becomes coloured in the light, when light misses the expression of the human spiritual accuracy disappears, absorbed by the black that dilutes and even cancels any trait of any face that becomes an undefined negative, a negation of the portrait. Negative and positive, black and white, are actually two different antagonistic states of the man that is looking for his identity when the pure shadow (light) appears in the impure one (black) and grows in intensity, that interior contrast is dimmed and the features of the soul become more and more clear, and the lost face returns through the look.

The lack on interior light alters the interior face that becomes undefined not in the strict sense of the word but somehow widowed by that clarity given by the interior stability.

### 6.3. “Issues concerning the defining of the portrait”

There are in the construction of each portrait of a levelled process from that “concept” as mental step of the idea, a laborious processing of the data, that springs from the visual and psychological dialogue with the model. Therefore, the drawing is configured in a primal phase in the “subconsciousness of the artist” as a virtually sketched shadow of the circumscribed soul that waits its “embodiment”. The sketch of the shadow is to be afterwards reflected on the surface of a canvas or of another material, submitted to the game of lines and spots that gradually align themselves in search of a certain proportion that clearly defines the interior likelihood, following the angle, light and the space that is the most appropriate to the suggesting of this idea.

The artist presents the man by “explaining him”, with as much clarity as possible, going through all the drawers behind the look in search of the “hidden notes” that can testify the mysterious truth of the man, decoding him and discovering the authentic psychological realism.

The problem of discovery of ones own identity represents the sense of the searches on the way to humanity of the artist, in close relation to the social surrounding environment that determines as a result not the likelihood by close expression “of the corporal physiognomic type” but as a representation of the psychological state, bringing to light the character of the soul surprised in a certain moment of the ever-existing oscillation between the sacred and the profane.

Transposing the inner being by means of the self-portrait was and it still is a concern of the contemporary artist and a means of discovering his own “self” through a confession that emanates a “symphony of the destiny”, a “chant” dedicated to the ephemeral existence of mankind. The self-portrayal is a pretext of the artist to introduce himself as an actor in different parts, playing in different ways parts that have marked his own existence, thus becoming lived testimonies meant to live thorough eternity.

These autobiographies from a technical and stylistic point of view are also direct or indirect communications with the artists of the time whole ways of “seeing” constitute a biography perfect for following where we find all the typologies of the portrait from the simple one, with no description of an environment or an action, then the

portrait in the environment up to the portrait in action, their unique character being the way in which they reflect the reality of that particular epoch.

One of the visual elements that is present in the personal creations is the “lead thread” that is used in the first stage of the construction of the portrait in order to find the exact place of the volumes and the interaction between them, it also has a symbolic sense, indicating through its oscillation the search for the ethical and moral vertical of a society that is more and more alienated, but also the pendulum of the clock expressing that fourth dimension of the passing of time, of the presence of life.

The importance of the portrait is that of emanating messages that raise questions on the human contradictions caused by the political orientation that annihilates and reduces man to a simple piece manipulating and manipulated by those “kings, fools” of Corneliu Baba, an artist whose portraits used to ridicule in a refined way a degraded system of the communist society in which “the fascination of the chair” became a natural wish of the rules who represented models “to follow”.

To the question if there still is an ideal social model I will answer with the portrait of a great Man, father Valeriu Anania, whose words of great spiritual depth and permanent accuracy used to remodel the inner faces of people remaining a reference point whose voice still continues to be heard.