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Thesis summary

# EXPRESSIONISM TODAY

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## **Thesis summary**

Our rushing age, full of tensions, forces us to cling to our unique gloomy aesthetic beliefs, which lead us from chaos to transcendence.

Swinging hectically from one pole to the other is an obvious form of extremism, as Barry Goldwater said: “extremism in defense of liberty is no vice at all” - extreme states require extreme measures – this equilibrium was accomplished in general during history. Human intellect, if feasible, is an important ingredient in life experience.

In art, as in personal attitude, whatever is taken to the extreme in any direction, while strongly showing its expressive position, also reveals and exaggerates its inherent weakness. The weakness of expressionism, being at its extreme limit, is that it could also degenerate into the loss of form, through the expression of pain and disorder, which we are afraid of, that we will be led by, without hope of redemption, being unsettled in the deep, disturbed, anarchic, primitive of the existence we need to rise above or in a significant way to integrate into the fabric of our everyday life.

Mainly negative manifestations of expressionism can be seen in nature: volcanoes, earthquakes, storms, diseases and death; while in humans: clearly anger, rage, emotional violence, crime and war. Besides these strong extremes, expressionism contains, as well, the mystery of life, universe and man.

Expressionism provides an outlet and a revelation of our being - the human feeling, loving, hating the uncivilized side – which must have its role in our existence. In an over-reactive, the contemporary affected by puritan, which, firstly because of the need for safety and for the sake of efficiency on several levels, denies the basis of our primitive nature, restricting the sensation, while expressionism becomes a personal and social relaxation of the pressure to explode, without which it will not survive completely.

European Expressionism appears on stage as an antidote to the dehumanizing malformations being tested by art and over-rational art. While there are various forms of expressionism, that existed long before the appearance of Europeans, regardless of the reasons for the psychological need, aesthetic comfort or financial aspect, are the Germans and the Italians who brought a modern design in the foreground.

Taking into account the characteristics of a possible national expressionism, probably it is the Italians with their emotional openness, expressivity and the vastness of gestures, which, in addition to their religious beliefs, inspired Renaissance and Baroque paintings. On the other hand, the German rationality, the desire for details, planning and control can be seen as compensated by an intensity of an underground, wave, passionate... the grandeur in Beethoven, the fanaticism and evil in Hitler.

The positive side of European Expressionism reminds us that if we let ourselves be recklessly carried downstream by the current of status- quo, we are in danger of losing or distortion our humanity. In an era driven by rationalism that leads to a degree of dehumanization the expressionists say that the feeling is of uttermost importance.

Georg Baselitz with his figures upside down reminds us that we, as well as our world looks very much like this. Sandro Chia, Francesco Clemente și Enzo Cucchi also talk about a war through rough, stylized images which are out of everyday existence, becoming mythic by this move, trying to reconnect us with the deepest levels of our being. Anselm Kiefer's violent landscapes painted with straw suggest a desire to regain a kind of a connection with the revivifying Earth and living things.

On the negative side, the view of Europeans is filled with sadistic or even masochistic violence, with horror and despair. Nowadays this attitude is certainly rather legitimate than earlier, but it is also true that the repetitive aesthetic screams will not change the living conditions, especially when these are similar to the aesthetics derived from the Europeans. In these conditions, the art of neo- expressionists somehow increases the mental burden of modern man, already overwhelmed by the unrelenting spirit of mediocrity and decay.

The decline of contemporary art as a unit - both in aesthetics and content - even if it does not intend to be a warning or a way to social decadence, it follows its path. We know it especially from the mementos of daily news about disasters, as a personal experience.

What could be more appropriate and useful for human survival nowadays is an art which tries to put the pieces of life together, which encourages without diluting or diminishing the realities of life - which includes both beauty and ugliness, truth and falsehood, good and evil - and does this with a deep content at a high aesthetic level.

In terms of style, we are actually tricked into the trap of the aesthetics of time with former contents. Expressionist contemporary art seems to be a hybrid of German expressionism from the 20<sup>th</sup> century, of the American Abstract- Expressionism from the 1950s and a clear contribution of the Neo- Expressionism from the 80s'. The essence lies rather in the search of a common, acceptable link, than in the revelation of original perspectives or in their importance in the contemporary art.

European expressionism, having strong dadaistic and surrealistic tones, is also linked to the attitude of punk current, which has a lively artistic and musical culture – a phenomenon of extreme and simple violence, with childish, primitive behavior – an obvious attempt and a desperation we resort to, in order to re- affirm the primitive nature of our being (in a deformed way through which it highlights its repression against conventional technology). Contemporary art is characterized by eclecticism. An original, powerful art, which can free us from our bondage, from the status quo, has not been found yet.

Obsessive negativities of our time through our attitude towards life, ourselves, art and other symbols, are essentially created in a destructive way, so that it accepts praises too. By adopting disease and negativity, we will refuse to recognize what will be beneficial for us. We cling to our pain and limits, being in danger of becoming masochists, unless we start to hold our head up and say: There is a better way of life and art.” and one must make an effort to find it.

Expressionism is one of the most expansive phenomena of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and of early 21<sup>st</sup> century. In a strange way, along its history of over a hundred years, it lost neither its emotional intensity nor its ability to disturb the viewer's soul. We believe that we are dealing with expressionist events even in the early stages of modernism, but the affirmation and the culmination of this type of artistic feeling bursts forth in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, corresponding with the anguish of a rootless society, which is in search of new spiritual values and is shrouded by uncertainties. It is interesting how expressionism manages to cross two almost contradictory artistic categories - modernism and postmodernism, thus becoming a ”bridge” (or why not a new ”bridge” - *Brücke*) between two traditions, between past (as modernism belongs undoubtedly to the past) and present (as it is difficult to find a historical term which could project us beyond postmodernism)

The scientific research, Expressionism today, lists all the poses expressionism passed through during the 20<sup>th</sup> century, from the first decade towards the turn of the millennium. The most striking feature of expressionism is its actuality; it is reborn and it reinvents itself, just as humans, it adapts itself to the changing social circumstances, as let us not forget, beyond the artistic element that determines it from a formal point of view, expressionism remains a social manifesto. From this point of view, if we would look at expressionism through the light of philosophy, we could consider it as part of the existentialist movement; a tragic existentialism, a confession in images of a truth that is too terrible to be told or described by elegant literary lucubration. The origins of expressionism, just as those of the movement itself, are full of drama and the *Scream* by Munch seems to be a prophetic symbol of modern society's decline. Wars, political failures, extremism or consumer society emptied from any report of the authentic feeling, are just a few of the premises of expressionism's general evolution. These are joined by individual feeling that can get on its own turn, through reference to the general, to the proportion of a universal catastrophe.

The thesis is opened by the chapter Genesis and evolution of Expressionism, through a look on the fate of expressionism during the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, that despite its avant-garde nature, can be called the "classical" phase of expressionism. Brücke and the *Blaue Reiter* remain two reference points of this period. Emblematic and well organized with an incisive program they managed to secure themselves a steady position on the stage of modern art.

Expressionism, appeared at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century on German territories, abandons seductive grace and superfluous ornaments, promoting a violent expression of emotions, movement and supports a deep social criticism. The artistic attitude identifies itself on a certain level with the social and it draws its essence rather from this extra aesthetic reality of social nature. Schönberg defines two types of attitudes that complete one another and fulfill the being of the artist. On one hand he reminds of the attitude of those who expose themselves to any type of emotions, of those who let the aesthetic phenomenon live by itself in order to later extrapolate this state with the domain of the rational within the frames of interior thinking and reflection. This type of dissociation between the attitudes of those dedicated to the act of aesthetic feeling and those who convert the impression acquired from reality into aesthetic feelings and reflexive attitude, that originates from the first type of attitude but in order to subsist needs to suspend it, appears delimited in Nicolai Hartmann's

famous Aesthetics which declares that “aesthetic dedication is fundamentally different from that of the philosophical knowledge that approaches it by taking it as an object. Aesthetic attitude in general does not mark the attitude of the aesthetician. The first one is and remains the attitude of the one who contemplates and creates artistically, while the second one is the attitude of the philosopher.”<sup>1</sup>

When talking about expressionist aesthetics it is generally accepted that it starts from a reconsideration of the category of ugliness and that in the expressionist art the ugly has the power to polarize all other categories and subordinate them, these being reducible to the ugly. Such a concept is limited the same way as the ugly too is tried to be identified with the musical dissonance and the violence of the colors applied to the canvas, with the strange and unpredictable character of the condition expressed through expressionist art. This would mean that a great segment of art, which during its stylistic periods refers to such procedures, to be repudiated. When the term expressionism is used to describe the German expressionism, it obtains specific cultural-historic meanings. The general meaning of the word corresponds to the artistic auto-expression based on the relying on the own perceptions, personality and interests of the artist within the process of painting or production of a work of art. The distinction between this general notion of expression and the expressionist art remains questionable both for modern art and contemporary art.

As shown in the sub-chapter entitled *Brücke*, in case of the members of this group their works of art have been described as “expressionist” based on obvious reasons. First of all, the artists aspired during the creation of their work to the communication of a direct emotion or sentiment. Second, the creations of the *Brücke* artists are identified by art critics and historians as “expressionist” due to their make. Reporting to these two aspects leads to the analysis of two significant works of the period which approach the dominant themes of the German expressionist painting, namely the human figure and the landscape, *Sitzende Kind* by Erich Heckel and *Lehmgrube* by Ludwig Kirchner, both unanimously accepted as examples of expressionist painting. The first point aims for the artistic intention, the capacity of the creator to express a direct emotion, a quality less evident in these paintings. The second point constitutes the main reason behind the labeling of the two paintings as expressionist. Brute

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<sup>1</sup> Hartmann Nicolai, *Estetica*, Bucharest, Universe Publishing, 1974, p.3

and unfinished brushing and strong colors are present in both. The result is the distortion of objects and the undeniable presence of tension between the discomfort of the presented image and the visible touches on the works.

Contemporary academics have emphasized a lack of competence related to this painting style, considering it a raw, unfinished technique. As for the ulterior definition of some works as expressionist, this morphological particularity had the function of a differentiation criterion. The attraction of the Brücke group towards the primitive is the source of a large number of interpretations, both theoretic as well as among the ranks of the painters during the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The images that appear before the First World War seem to consolidate the theory of a centralized nature in the expressionist opposition with the contemporary world. At the same time, especially in the works of Kirchner, in some of the images that associate the presentation of the woman with that of nature, different directions are presented, distinguishable through critical analysis. The deliberate and sophisticated association of the urban with tribal, “primitive” images, and the masculine nudity joined to that of the feminine contribute to this shuffle of the conventions, to the creation of an ambivalent painting, concentrating our attention to the presentation problems of the image, as well as on the modern association of an object being accused of “primitiveness”.

Those presented in the sub-chapter Blaue Reiter were revolutionaries rather from an aesthetic point of view. Expressionism has pushed to the limits the use of aesthetic liberty in the moment when it surrendered itself to abstract painting, proclaiming the liberty of presentation. The aesthetic liberty has been a symbol of emotional liberty, the liberty to express one’s emotions, in a sort of a therapeutic way, trying to find the hidden emotions as well. The Blaue Reiter artists aspired to a spiritual liberty aiming for a vast conscience and the benefic sentiment of being a completely integrated self. They are less preoccupied by the difference between the unhealthy urban environment and the health giving landscape, being interested in the transcendent aspect of both environments, regarding both the visual dynamics and idealism.

Probably, the lack of feminine sex represents the supreme scope of the group. It is a sublimate art that struggles to be sublime and present the sublime, rather than preoccupy itself with sexual anxiety.

Symbolic oppositions were aesthetically inherent for the second large expressionist German group too, the Blaue Reiter that was born in Munich in 1911. The group from Munich supports the central thesis of Kandinsky about art, such as the autonomy of the expressiveness of the color and line, but also the idea of abstraction as a spiritual transcendence of reality. One of the fundamental beliefs regarding the scope and function of art was the anxiety towards the problem of art as vehicle for ideology and a means of addressing in conformity with the complexity of the modern world. The artists of the group saw their art as a means of healing from the moral and spiritual badness of the contemporary civilization, brought without precedent to society, political, cultural and technological changes of that era. The Blaue Reiter was based on the idea that creativity should be expressive, subjective and intuitive. The central figure of the group, Kandinsky described what he called the spiritual in art: “When religion, science and morality are shaken, the last two by the strong hands of Nietzsche, then external support is in danger of falling, man turns his view from the exterior towards himself”.<sup>2</sup>

The first half of a century of expressionism is characterized through a crescendo of the negative emotion; from themes like the relationship between the nude and the landscape or the search for a new “spirituality”, we are lead towards the horrors of the war and the devastated image of an apocalyptic world, in which a physically and emotionally dismembered society still lives.

The 50s’, analyzed in chapters six and seven, a period in which most of Europe still lay in ruins, bring a major change in the domain of expressionism- the New World, America will demonstrate its hegemony in art too trough the “launching” of abstract expressionism. Thanks to the critic Clement Greenberg, the movement and its representative will become notorious in a short time. As well as the German expressionism, abstract expressionism will have several facets- a gestural one, like in the drippings of Jackson Pollock, or meditative-melancholic with mystic accents in the “fields of colors” of Mark Rothko and the immense compositions of Barnett Newman. The work of the last two seem to be rather the continuation of the romantic expressionism of Friedrich, then the distortional work of expressionists working in Europe around the Second World War- Otto Dix and Max Beckmann. Another twenty years must pass before Germany, remembering the big “purification” of art and the

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<sup>2</sup> Wassily Kandinsky, *Concerning the Spiritual in Art* (1912)A. General, III. *Spiritual Turning-point*, cited Hugo Ball, John Elderfield, *Flight out of time: a Dada diary*, University of California Press, 1996, p. 223

expressionist paintings consumed by flames will have to courage to face its destiny and history.

Neo-expressionism, the second chapter of the thesis, is a presentation of the “return to painting” that influences the artistic scene beginning with the 1970s’ and becomes a predominant phenomenon of the 80s’. The most notable representatives of this so-called “retrograde” painting, who continue expressionism from where it was left at the end of the Second World War, were the members of the Italian Transavantgarde and German Neo-expressionism.

Transavantgarde deals mainly with the human psychic and the emotional side. The contribution of philosophy and postmodern aesthetics to these works of art consists of the reintroduction into discussion of relations established in all cultural domains between concepts like minor- major, international- local or central- peripheral. Probably the decisive contribution of the Italians in those formative years, after which each artist follows an individual course, consists of the decisive renewal of the graphical discourse about subjectivity. Transavantgarde discovers a language capable of talking again about the subject, about the passions and fantasies of the unconscious. Instead of the autobiographic and private moment, the young Italian artists include into their works the structural elements that characterize this new sensibility: oscillation between several languages, passion for the particular, provision and contradiction. The oscillation is also given by the transitional character of the style, without the association of the idea of continuity and stability. Differentiated languages are used, references are made to cultures far in time or noticeable in the immediate contemporariness. The surface of the works is transited by negative or personalized, ironic and dramatic images without defining anything irrevocably.

Avantgarde and modernism adopt artistic styles of the 19<sup>th</sup> century from the first expressionism to the lyrical abstraction, the Italian transavantgardists though create works of art in which certainties and utopias of the past are strictly re-examined. The evident irony comes to support the new image, both explicitly and implicitly. The explicit aspect comes from miniaturizing the presented element, from putting it into a relation with sensibility that does not dramatize, as it lacks historical energy. Taking into account the works with a theoretical position, especially the effective characteristic of the fie, Sandro Chia, Francesco

Clemente, Enzo Cucchi, Nicola De Maria and Mimmo Paladino, we can observe that that we are really dealing with a post-modern art.

The third subchapter is dedicated to German neoexpressionism that was aiming towards an art with a profound national character and important historical valences, an art of commemoration. As opposed to the Italian, the Germans are more incisive in their graphical discourse, but from a stylistic point of view it is difficult to find common points of their works of art other than the referencing of the past.

Their unaesthetic language, as in “the ugly painting” by Markus Lüpertz, superficial in the photo-paintings of Gerhard Richter, decadent and tragic in the compositions of Kiefer, or the “upside downs” in Georg Baselitz’s universe of creations will seize the stage of international art, promoting a “new spirit in painting”.

I attributed special importance to the dominant figure of Anselm Kiefer by going through the stages of his creation from the 70s’ into the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, with an analysis of his third exhibition between the 8<sup>th</sup> of November and 22<sup>nd</sup> of December in the Gagosian Gallery in New York, entitled Merkaba, or his works dating from 2006.

Neoexpressionist influences also started appearing in the American art, where this new artistic wave will get new valences through representative like Susan Rothenberg, David Salle, Eric Fischl or Julian Schnabel, but by far not as dramatic as the German neoexpressionism.

The last chapters of the thesis are dedicated to contemporary art and the way in which expressionism has marked it, to Romanian expressionism and personal creation.

Contemporary art is in a state of confusion. Especially painting seems to be changing and evolving faster than ever before. Innovations succeed each other faster and faster; as they do not disappear as fast as they appeared, all are starting to pile up in a blend of styles, directions, tendencies and eccentric schools. The historical- artistic style, that has kept and keeps its identity through the multitude of modes, manners, frenzy, vices and mania, accompanies us and seems to be promising to stay for a while. In nowadays context, the duration of a historical- artistic style is understood to be the length of the period in which it is the main, dominant style, the period in which it can be considered to be the receptacle for the largest part of the important art produced within a certain method of expression and a given

cultural environment. This same period is the one in which young artists with the highest and most serious ambitions are attracted to the specified style.

Today everyone innovates freely in order to be shocking. At the same time it is being proven that not all art that is shocking is innovative or new. Even learning to be shocking, spectacular or disturbing has become something conventional, part of the self-confident good taste. A corollary to this is the awareness of the fact that the aspects, to which the recognition of most of the artistic innovations of the past one hundred years can be attributed, have been almost radically changed.

Nowadays art is not critical to itself anymore; there is no differentiation between abstract and figurative, as understood from the postmodern art which is not limited to determined styles, methods or artistic directions. As a reflection of this the problem of responsibility appears. Modern art has claimed an aesthetic immunity to free creation and criticism of conventions, complying with the aesthetics of the shock that it promoted.

In this way a new type of artist has appeared, indifferent to moral injunction and fails to recognise any other jurisdiction beside the specific rule of art. With the avanguard, the artist managed to obtain a seemingly unlimited freedom, being understood as an absolute immunity and immunity towards the public or the critics' judgement.<sup>3</sup> From this perspective the "world of art" appears as an isolated field autonomous in relation to collective rules. Artists develop their steps in full freedom beyond any constraints of knowledge or action, dropping even aesthetic judgments.<sup>4</sup>

Jean-Philippe Domecq denounces the idea of the untouchable or immune artist and awards to some of the contemporary artists the responsibility of the creativity crisis. Rainer Rochlitz considers that the autonomy of art does not mean a social reclusion but a proper logic.<sup>5</sup> In this way the irreducibility of the aesthetic field to knowledge, moral or political rules does not equal the absolute isolation of art. According to this position, affirming the autonomy of art does not mean putting into brackets the extra-artistic stakes but its transformation and re-

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<sup>3</sup> Nathalie Heinich, *Le triple jeu de l'art contemporain*, Paris: Les Editions du Minuit, 1998, pp. 158-159, 162-163, 166-167

<sup>4</sup> Nicolas Bourriaud, *La provocation dans l'art contemporain*, Beaux Arts, no.182, July, 1999, p. 72

<sup>5</sup> Rainer Rochlitz, *Subversion et subvention. Art contemporain et argumentation esthétique*, Paris: Gallimard, 1994, pp. 31-38, 84-85

evaluation with the help of the rules imposed by the artist. Otherwise, any political or philosophical pretension of art must be confronted with the demand of the artistic environment and Rochlitz makes efforts in order to legitimate again a set of aesthetic evaluation criteria, consensual and stable, in order to judge the contemporary art.<sup>6</sup>

Under these conditions, we can ask if something still remains from the idea of the artist's responsibility either as submission to aesthetic judgements or to what levels of autonomy would be limited by such a responsibility. Surely, there is the freedom of expression of the artist manifested by the freedom in the choice of form, material, size or colours used in his works.

The freedom of the artist is concomitant with responsibility. In case there is no more interaction between liberty and expression, there is nothing left, but vain aspiration, however, the so called "absolute immunity"<sup>7</sup>, rejected by so many artists, seems to be losing the main reason of art.

In Hilton Kramer's opinion the change that has brought about the Neoexpressionist style is "the style which is open to legal compensations, so that with the permanent negation of certain qualities it prepares the ground for victorious return to a last stage. What's not possible is the anticipation of an exact and previously defined style. It originates from a more profound and mysterious layer than the simple trend. What's in the core of every change of authentic style is the irritating sensation of loss, existential pain, a feeling that something absolutely vital for artistic life has entered a stage of atrophy, though the style aims to produce an immediate treatment for this sensational emptiness."<sup>8</sup>

Neo-expressionism has proved to be greatly appreciated by the large audience, by collectors and dealers, but at the same time it has received a great deal of criticism, mostly on the part of traditional art critics such as Robert Hughes, from the field of sensational theory conceived by Donald Judd, from Greenberg Clement and psychoanalyst Jacques- Marie-

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<sup>6</sup> R. Rochlitz, *Subvention et subversion*, pp. 38-43, cited, Pierre Bourdieu, *Les règles de l'art*, Paris: Ed. du Seuil, 1992, Thierry de Duve, *Essais datés 1. 1974-1986*

<sup>7</sup> Dan-Eugen Ratiu, *Art world: Immunity or accountability? The problem of responsibility and commitment to contemporary art*, JSRI, No.4, Spring 2003, p.13

<sup>8</sup> Michaud, Yves, *La crise de l'art contemporain : utopie, démocratie*, cited Daniel Soutif, Paris: Beaux Arts Magazine, No 155, April, 1997, p. 9

Emile- Lacan, representatives of formalism and modern tradition. Lacan sustains the idea that there might be a form of direct expression which overlaps the social strata and traditions.

Along with the end of Modernism the artistic creation is defined by the absence of stylistic unity that could be heightened to critical level and used as a basis for developing certain capabilities of identification. Therefore there is no possible direction of any telling tales. This is the reason why we can call it contemporary, simple and post- historic form of art. We have the sensation that the absence of certain directions is a characteristic of a new period, that Neo- expressionism has not been a direction, but the illusion of certain directions. The last 25 years has been a wonderful period of experimental productivity, without any narrative direction, so there were no criteria to exclude artists, years that finally turned into a norm.

Contemporary artists addressed themselves to programmes which no longer want to push the limits of art or aspiration in order to partake in the history of art, they would rather use art for personal or political reasons. Expressionist artists dispose the whole heritage of art so that they are able to work with it. First of all, the history of Avantgard left on the artists' disposition all the amazing possibilities that had been elaborated and forms which modernism itself struggled to suppress. The major artistic contribution of the 70s is the overtaking of images with strict meanings and fixed identities, giving at the same time new meanings and identities. Any image can be interpreted, which results in the fact that there is no more fixed perception and style.<sup>9</sup>

A controversial British group of painters who used the expressionist style co- founded in 1999 through Charles Thomson și Billy Childish, together with other eleven artists, such as Philip Absolon, Frances Castle, Sheila Clark, Eamon Everall, Ella Guru, Wolf Howard , Bill Lewis, Sanchia Lewis, Joe Machine, Sexton Ming, Charles Williams Stuckism that would become of global circulation. The original group formed by 13 artists has been expanding since 2008, now there are 183 groups in 44 countries. Grupul original format din treisprezece artiști se extinde, din noiembrie 2008, la 183 grupuri în 44 de țări. In the UK Paul Harvey (Newcastle), Jane Kelly (Acton), John Bourne (Wrexham), Mark D. (Nottingham), Abby Jackson (Oval), Edgeworth Johnstone (Muswell Hill Other), Annie Zamero (Crouch End), Jacqueline Jones (Cardiff), Jasmine Maddock (Merseyside), Rosa Prospero (Shepherds Bush),

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

internationally Elsa Dax (Paris). Terry Marks (New York)\* Peter Klint (Hamburg). Frank Schroeder (Munich). Richard Cronborg (Chicago), Carlos Camus (Chile), Alan Mancuso (Aix En Provence), John Geggie (Danish), Cedric Lenaers (Bruges), Pavel Lefterov (Sofia), Shelley Li (Shanghai). The members of the groups reject the sterile nature of conceptual art, such as Brit art, performing and installation, giving precise definition that it would be crucial if artistic were missing. Stuckist artists favour the return to qualities, such as figurative painting and expressive qualities of the painted material. The mostly debated declaration of their manifestation is “that artists who do not paint are no artists at all.” In a second form of manifestation they declare that their aim is to replace postmodernism with remodernism, a second spiritual period that is different from the religious, artistic, cultural and social ones.

Another contemporary group of painters who are considered to be expressionists is the Neue Leipziger Schule/ New School Leipzig that could be defined as the birthplace of young artists from Eastern Germany who founded themselves on the globalising values of the West. This had great impact upon the students of New School Leipzig so that they would develop new techniques in painting, one which uses a mixture of a greater “wildness” deriving from the techniques of Expressionism at the beginning of the 80s, graffiti, “chevalet” painting and by keeping the specific East- socialism of Germany that will characterize the pictures of the artists belonging to this school.

Chapter IV concentrates on the Romanian expressionist painting, presenting a range of artists belonging to the avant-garde and the 80's, insisting on the expressionist influence in their work of art.

The last chapter of the thesis is dedicated to the personal creation and its constitutive elements, after analysing the two series of my works *Body* and *Disaster* that I consider to be representative for my artistic work.

The themes used deal with the major topics of the German expressionists from the beginning of the last century: the naked woman, the landscape and the search for a personal space representation. The images represent a personal vision of these topics. In the works of art the accent falls from impression -which are the starting-point, though,- on expression, the expressed communication of the emotion.

The first series of compositions entitled *Body*, is an attempt to revive the figuration promoted by the German neoexpressionists from the beginning of the 80s'. The transmission

of life's tragic sense, the realization of the own suffering through the light of feminism in the 70s' are aligned among the ideas transmitted by the compositions. The finding of the existential sense that the German expressionists are looking for, is transformed into a search for the essence that merges into a complex language transmitted with the help of some expressive elements belonging to an own record of feelings and interpretation of the human universe, to a particular aesthetic experience. The lines of strength, contrasts and tensions complete each other.

Considered object of the drama, the body was, from the beginning of the cultural reaction to calling and signs of the world, one of the most fascinating realities, and continues, beyond the iconoclastic crisis and balance of symmetry, the fragility and power, simplicity of beauty grafted on both functionality and formal gratuitousness, and labyrinthine intimacy with its whole metaphoric and direct investment, linked to the vital course of procreation and degradation, suffering and death.

In the centre of the traditional European discourse about human figure stands an expression which has a symbolic meaning, but which founded on different functionalities, expresses an ideal perfection in which the anthropomorphous sign is installed as a universal module between seduction and the longing for the sacred. The contemporary artists deal with the tragedy and the risk of inner and outer existence.

The selection dedicated to the exploration of the human body, presented in this set of works deals with most of these semantic values, using the antropomorf sign in expressionist discourses, which leads to a relevant perspective upon the types of Romanian expressionism fed by lyrical abstraction, hyperrealism, Christian iconography, decoration, feminist engagement, the voluptuousness of the sensual and pure pictorial substantiality.

The voluminous set of works "Body" blends the graphic expression, which is embodied in anonymous, but powerful silhouettes. The cycle invites to meditation about the biological and cultural presence of humans, which explores its mystery in an awkward plasticity of the human bodies, as an effect resulting from the use of the human despair as a really sensitive echo-texture. The cromatics is generally sobre, dominated by vivid grey colours and a strong contrast between clear- obscure, the dynamics of the compositions is underlined by lines of diagonal powers. The works were born of a personal desire to communicate a kind of reaction towards a spiritual state, fact that could introduce the

compositions, according to this point of view, to the expressionism of Munch and those from Brücke.

The expressive image could be considered as its own reaction towards the subject. The atmosphere obtained through the dramatic clear-obscure , forms, shapes, colour and texture is created in order to raise emotion. Lightning is purely to offer a dramatic effect to the images together with the central focus given by the figure of the works, in close connection with the calm, silent areas of the background. The techniques used for the composition is a mixture: coal, pigments, lotion, oil all applied on rough texture of a rectangular shape. The contrast as well results from the modeling of the creams / paint together with tough textures and flat surfaces.

The second part of the work analyses the theme of the landscape. The source of inspiration is the tragic event that the people of Satu Mare had to face in 1970, the flood. The chromatics is gloomy, emphasized by vivid greys towards warmer tones. The compositions contain elements that describe this apocalyptic landscape/image. The purpose of this series is to express the proper state of mind, provoked by that tragic event, producing a mixture of those characteristic features of the external world with inner emotions .The result is a typical expressionist presentation .In this way the figurative becomes a tool which could be manipulated as you wish, transformed according to its own patterns .The paintings of this series have a special dynamics which offers from the very beginning that tactility which is necessary for the acuity of the visual material in an uncensored brushing

The constant presence of expressionism in the art of the last century, but also its valences recognizable in the previous centuries, have the power to convince us that we are dealing with a major and first class artistic manifestation. Beyond the domain of painting, the term expressionism can also be found in sculpture, literature, music, theatre and cinema. It is as if, deprived from the narrow space of the confessionary through the abolition of Christian tradition, the individual exposes his sins, individual or general, through the means specific for these arts. Probably this is exactly the role of expressionist art, to replace confession and offer a propagation space for the desperate scream of the modern, then later postmodern human. Our most hidden secrets and fears live through art; we got rid of them and our creations will carry their weight.