

## Analytical summary

**The education of the visual perception.** In our thesis we have tried to offer an analytical structure of the significance of the imaginary, analyzed especially in the fantastic species/gender, and to identify the characteristic features, forms and mutations the fantastic imagery has suffered along the artistic history. We started from the premise that there is a difference in attitude and performance between the natural and the artistic view and, as a consequence, different images, representations and meanings of the same world result from it. The artistic view is not natural and general; it must be practiced as it requires a certain education in order to adopt comprehensive, analytical observation, even a revealing one of the world of forms. According to this premise that does not ask for further explanations, we believe that arts history is a process in which new representation ways and forms of artistic perception simultaneously develop, which endows the eye with the dignity of an autonomous vehicle, present along the entire surface of the history of the imaginary. The aim of the education of the visual perception is to acquire the performance to see “what does not exist” in the concrete reality, to see the world of significant forms from which all works, styles and forms of arts take shape.

The visual perception is at the same time an exercise of perception and a means of comprehension, so that the premise we started from is this: *we do not see what exists; we see what we understand and how we understand*. To a great extent, the arts history becomes the movement of accommodating the artistic representation to the forms of visual perception, which contain intuitions, imaginary projections and semantic meanings.

**The systemic vision of the imaginary.** We have tried to see the imaginary as a system in which species of mythology, religion, science and literature coexist, because all these cultural adaptations, specific to human activities communicate between in the historical plan, they interfere, influence and reciprocally determine in a continuous circuit of the human mind as Ioan Petru Culianu demonstrated in some of his major studies. We cannot dissociate the forms of the imaginary, although we must understand each of them in its particular morphology. In the system that contains them, various species of the

imaginary reciprocally influence: a theoretical theory such as The Heliocentric System, The theory of Relativity, The Infinitesimal Calculus, and The Theory of Fractals modify the artistic imagery and even the representation forms. For example, cubism is the direct successor of non-Euclidean geometries, without which it could not have been understood. It is even more obvious the fact that the mythological and the poetic imaginary influence plastic arts, basically painting and sculpture, and that great moments, works and representations of the figurative arts are illustrations of the poetic mythological imagery. It is the reason why we have studied the metamorphoses of the imagery in a permanent rapport with philosophical and scientific theories, mythology, the biblical one included. Let's call this the *systemic vision of the imaginary world*, and to acknowledge once again the necessity of contrastive, interdisciplinary approaches that we have tried to analyze.

The world of the visual perception is offered by the eye, being the optic composition of the medium exposed to the eye. In a simple way we can appreciate that we can never see things in themselves; we can only see their aspects reflected by the eye. We see the visible of things, not the things as such; just in the same way in which when we want to know them we only have access to their cognizance, not to the inner essence. Therefore, the image is the *speculative* aspect of the eye, the “*rest*” of its meeting with the surrounding objects highlighted.

**Forms of representation; semantic meanings; alphabet of the imaginary.** The systemic vision must not be mistaken for a complete or exhaustive approach, which would prove impossible, given the complexity and the vastity of forms of representation. Even in the selection we have chosen especially for the fantastic imaginary, we find the pattern of systemic circuit as the forms of representation are at the same time and to the same degree forms of understanding and semantic meanings (Francastel's thesis). The artistic imagery does not reproduce, but creates forms, it does not simply illustrate the significance offered by mythology, literature or other narrations, but it creates new meanings. Hence, we have considered Francastel's thesis as strong and very well argued; according to it the language of arts is different from the abstract one and its meanings are new, which asks for the need of considering arts as the main nucleus which generates the cultural imaginary of historical epochs.

The imaginary is not determined as existence by the rules of artistic creation and certain types of image exist spontaneously, they appear in the individual or collective imaginary without any intentions of creating meaning and without being guided by an artistic project. But only the forms of human creation, especially arts, literature and mythology transform the diverse spontaneous images in a cultural imaginary, or in a spiritual grammar that serves the individuals' or communities' need to make sense. The strength or the value these carry is not inherent, but a consequence of the passion and the credit human sensibility and thinking has endowed them with. In simpler words, *the images have that strength that we give and the value with which we ask them to serve us*. Because of this, an alphabet of imagery, an imago logy and a civilization of image have been created.

**The body and the environment; apriorism of light.** The origin of images and their variety are to be found in the way their own body relates to the environment. The body is the laboratory of the imaginary which feeds from the perceptive experience and from the sensible intuition. The five senses - hear, see, smell, taste, feel – as well as the kinaesthetic reflexes (gestures) are permanent instruments to create images, as diverse as the sensorial impressions, reciprocally inconvertible, although there is collaboration between some in the formula of synaesthesiaes. The creation of images, in the largest accepted term, starts with the sight; it is up to the eye's performances. But the eye only separate the external reflexes of the things made visible by a shiny medium, which it later transmits to the brain. At the brain level, the image is transformed, firstly as a duplicate or analogous of the shape of the perceived object, which can later suffer processes of adjustment, deformation or metamorphosis in the speculative ray of resembling-non-resembling, accurate-inaccurate relationship. Neither can be omitted the physic-chemical processes in the brain activity during the transformation of the visual perception in mental image, which makes it even more difficult to determine the representative character of the image in rapport with the object. In other words, the degree of deformation, the alterations the image suffers since the eye extracts it from the surface of the object until transmitted by conscience as pure form. Also, we must not neglect the contribution memory brings, the support that makes possible the creation and conservation of any mental data; be them impressions, images and thoughts.

The content of the visual image is determined by the sensory activity of the sight, the brain activity, and in a decisive way, the light which we must now consider as form of aesthetic sensibility in the Kantian apriorism version. Without the external one, that is *a priori*, we could represent nothing. Consequently, the decisive role the forms of Kantian *a priori* sensibility have in composing the image of the world in space and time should be given to the shiny environment. That apriorism of the light allows representation to create separate images, forms, figures and to order them according to various intentions of knowledge and art. Or, we can claim that plastic art means aesthetic-expressive creations of the shiny environment, with the shapes and colors playing the role of shadows of this transcendental light.

**The image as ‘similitudo’.** Analyzed from the perspective of the condition of existence or, from a philosophic point of view, of their ontological consistence, the natural thing and its image have different reality degrees. While the thing or the object has a primary condition and it is subject independent as it preexists its contact, the image is a derived existence, consecutive to the contact with objects and totally dependent on the operations of imagination. Then, the object has a substantially consistent nature, mass, weight, physical- chemical composition, as well as a specific place in the system of reality, correlated with the other objects, things, states. In Cartesian terms, it is a *res extensa*. The image, on the other hand hasn't got material substrate, mass, weight, physical- chemical composition, or a place in the system of reality. As simple *similitudo*, that is relief of our imagination it exists only its character of ideality. It is true that this can have at a later stage, through the artistic creation, as correspondent a material assembly – fresco, painting, icon etc.-, but these do not depend on the intrinsic image, but on the artistic praxis as Moulound called the vision's consecration in work. We can remember, as compensation of the image its second character, the infinite expressive-stylistic wealth, without which art would have kept its status as a copy of nature, a simple mirroring.

**The image as *phainomenon*.** Not a few times has the speculative image been considered as delusive, ill-omen, deceptive, inconsistent. Plato gave it only a status of pure appearance (*phainomenon*) without any other quality, meant to delude reason with the simulacrum it creates. More radical than Plato, his commentator six centuries later,

Plotin believed that the delusion of the mirror comes from the fact that it seems to contain everything, when, in fact, it has nothing. Only the One, absolute principle, has reality, and the concrete material its emanations project is as deceiving and inconsistent as the mirror. Still in Wunenburger's opinion, it is not the impurity or the imprecision of the speculative image that gives the mirror the imperfect object character, but its opposite, the accuracy excess of the image. As the mirror reflects objects with such accuracy that it answers to them in perfect images, it creates confusion, easily replacing the object with its representation. Hence, its delusive nature and strength derives. Nevertheless, the mirror has an enormous advantage: the facility of mirroring its own body, especially of the face, directly inaccessible. The strangeness of himself as his double, as the Other. He can objectify and analyze himself with all the severity he analyzes other objects. The philosophical complex of reflection, a common element in the Occidental tradition has its origin in the relationship with the mirror.

Not only has the reflexive character of conciseness found in the mirror a very expressive metaphor. At a more profound level, in theological plan, God reflects the ideal forms of the world in His Wisdom or Mind that plays the role of the mirror. Jakob Bohme considered that Devine Wisdom is a potential form in which the ideal patterns of all creatures are printed with the help of the creative Verb, which God firstly reflects upon, than gives them physical bodies. The plastic dynamic of the Verb is maintained by divine imagination, which offers to the process artistic character. Before creating the world, God wants it and this pure wish becomes the mirror in which God sees His creating value. The forms generated in God's pure wish, although with the character of speculative images, exist in the most concrete way. Their influence happens both in the plan of physical reality, which they permanently "animate", and in the artists' imagination. What is considered to be the creative inspiration is explained by the magic influence of divine wish's forms upon artist's imagination. This influence informs and gives creative energy the artist uses and, in this way, some of the divine wish's plan is reflected the work of art.

**The relation of triple mirroring.** In order to understand art during the interval between the end of The Middle Ages and the end of the Renaissance it is important to understand the *relation of triple mirroring*, which can be summed up like this: God reflects Himself in His Spirit (the first mirroring); the speculative forms created in the

Divine Spirit reflect themselves in the artist's imagination (the second mirroring), forms that he does not perceive directly as given forms, but indirectly, when they are reflected in his own imagination (the third mirroring). The artist sees his own speculative images, which preserve formal and content analogies from God's speculative images. The most direct illustrations of this theory are to be found in religious and icon arts. Besides offering a transcendent fundament to art, theory also provides a way of eminent understanding of the works of art, in whose mirage we are challenged to seek for the suggestions of divine creative wish. The artist collaborates with God and continues through his creation the world's plastic genesis generated in the Divine Spirit.

**The theory of the interior design.** *Interior design* takes the role of the Sun attracting a kind of revealing movement, offering light to imagination and understanding, contributing to the shaping of the spiritual cosmos through analogical reflection. If we remember the above mentioned ideas, this *Design* is not a mere concept, be it even similar to the Platonian Good or to the Sun, but also an active spiritual instance whose best definition we found in the Scolastics' Intellect-agent. Zuccari's terms must be understood in their philosophical definition, which means that the *Design* must be seen as the transcendent source of the human spirit which feeds sciences and moral life at the same time. The conclusion is that the *Design* is the origin of Good at the level of facts and of beauty in the creative plan. The Platonic note is too obvious not to observe Zuccari's game in which the Good from Timaios is replaced by the *Design*, substitution possible only after the double transfiguration suffered by the supreme principle in Augustin's *interior Christ* and the Scolastics' *Intelect-Agent*.

**Imaginary as “*epica magna*”.** Indeed, in the companionship of image, we do not know what we see and how different the horizon it lures us from is. We must accept the game, to trust it in our way to a visible which is not contained by anything from our memory and to dive in a sea of suggestions untouched so far. The dialogue of the sight with the image happens under the sign of uncertainty and the menace of a denial. We do not know what the image wants from us, how it wants to be perceived or whether our rapport with it is corrupted by a false perspective or an inadequate way of translating it in representation. Seeing it is not enough; it must be also imagined. In other words, we see the image imagining it and we reward it completely when our spirit is filled with their

suggestion, letting it germinate. In the consequence of the germinating process, if it really happens, we find indeed another reality and from a *different* perspective from that which is offered to direct sight.

From the perspective in which images create a vocabulary of the imaginary which will later analogically communicate the same way in which words communicate the text, we can talk - as Gilbert Durand does - about an imaginary system which is to elaborate perspectives and new visible realities. In relationship with nature, the system of the imaginary is consolidated in the same manner as organic interdependent relationships do. The images agglutinate in complex structures which function as visual expression, and the sum of all possible associations form a kind of imaginary *epica magna*. The net that binds images gives each the possibility to guide towards a meaning which it creates only in collaboration with all the others. The way words are meaningful in the already understood and assumed linguistic system, the same way images communicate in a system of the imaginary.

**The prophetic character of the image.** We must insist on “*the meaning of the future*” Jean Burgos refers to. It is extremely interesting what we can describe as semantic consistence of the imaginary, on one hand, and the incomplete, dynamic character of a viewer’s perception. Without determining any misunderstanding, we can use the term of the image’s “*prophetic character*”. Something from what the image can and wants to communicate always remains incomprehensible, the way a part of light whose too intense shininess asks for eyes’ adaptation or, the way a too dense shadow projected on the dark wall of imagination which it cannot differentiate from in order to have its profile perceived. What allows the image to be seen comes from a future, yet untouched by the viewer, or transmits farther than it is able to reach. The future of intuition, of assimilation and slow metamorphoses of proximity power lures the viewer in the sphere of the image’s contents, it attracts his imagination in the net of the already created relationships in the imaginary system and it drives him towards that undefined which is the ultimate secret, the image revealed without a rest.

The most adequate vision of the image follows *the path of prophetic aspiration* towards a *last future* of complete illumination. The future illumination of the image corresponds here to that future meaning the author endows the poetic text with and, in a

more radical sense, but still too vague as intuition is concerned, to the "*book that will become*" Maurice Blanchot referred to when analyzing Mallarme's poems. The time of the image and of the imagery is not identical to the one of the natural phenomenon, like the time of literature is a different one. If Gaston Bachelard's theory according to which image is one of human being's fundamental specific phenomena is true, then the mysterious, profound bond it creates between man and an always untouched future is one of the most profound confirmations of this truth.

**The organic character of the image.** The organic character of the pictorial image claims that the elements it is compounded of to be seen in their relationships, coughed in the net that leads them to a unitary meaning, which confirms the existence of internal reason that organizes the whole. The form of the painting or the pictorial image is the unity that binds all the present components, that is form of a plastic universe, not the sum of detailed forms of the composing parts. In a painting, considered in its organic structure, what is important is the whole – what contains its significances and value - not only its parts'. It is only this whole that contains the "truth" of the work, to whose correct intuition all "*signifying forms*" from the composition lead. Far from the whole, the forms of pictorial image lose their signifying consistence as the organs of a living body cannot function normally. Only the participation to unity reflects upon parts the signifying field where they are endowed with particular sense too, with shades in a syntony of the organic painting. Once this syntony is achieved, it establishes a direct resonance with the viewer through sensibility, a-perception and aesthetic intuition, thus creating a kind of link between the organic character of the living body with the aesthetic organism.

**Figural concepts; syntactic of forms.** Form-significance solidarity in the composition of artistic work must be added a plus of stability so that the intuition or comprehension of that meaning does not oscillate in definitively much from one observer to the other, from one period to another. In other words, it is necessary that the artistic form is associated an essential meaningful content which differences of subjective appreciation, inherent as they are, do not affect it. Contrary, if each observer would associate the same artistic form with a different meaning, the indicated solidarity would be lost and, along with it, even the cultural importance of the work. Sustained by such arguments, Moulound operates with the so-called "*figural concepts*" whose aim is to

guarantee the stability of the significance of artistically represented forms, so that these express similar contents for various observers from different epochs. The abstract role concepts have in philosophy and science, of comprehensible constants for the realities whose essence they express, must exist in figural concepts when elaborating the artistic comprehension and then, later, when transmitting this in the inter-subjective, inter-generational and intercultural environment. The difference between the way of appreciating forms as pure expressions of imagination and as figural concepts gives us the opportunity, in the second situation to understand their quality of transmitters of generic intuitive intelligence, and not of simple metaphors of an artist's sensibility.

The artist situates himself on an active position, constructive in this universe, populating it with his forms and, within some limits, changing it, while the public, any possible subject, assumes the passive role from the perspective of his contribution to the formal universe, but an active role from the one of intuitive- comprehensive projection upon the artistic forms reactivated at the figural concept. This role allows intuition to take from the artistic object the pure visual shape and to transform it in the content of signifying, or the comprehensible form created in the cognitive experience. The artistic perception is, in all its moments, a cognitive process, although sensitive intuition is always prevailing.

Pictorial forms function syntactically in the metaphorical language, caught in relationship not at all capricious or arbitrary, but similar to those between the chemical elements in molecules or between the lines in the composition of geometrical figures. In such rigorous structures, though based on imagination, the spirit can move attracted by the tension of an intuitive nucleus. From the simple perception of visible forms, respecting the syntax in which are fixated, the spirit oriented towards their understanding reaches such a communicable universality, basically accessible to any adequate intuition. From this perspective, Moulound refers to a unified ideal world created by the artistic composition, different from the abstract ideality of philosophy, mathematics or science, and even more consistent because it is an ideality of the *visible world*. For the unity at the basis of creating culture and civilization, the integrated unity of the ideal forms is essential, which offers them equivalent values to reason, mythology, science and art. The effort to formalize and permanently unify human being's sensibility, understanding and

vision places the artistic production among the most important phenomena of man's historical self-creation.

**The figurative field.** If we try to analyze human history from the aesthetic experience, it is easy to sustain that for any type of society, correlatively to its level of development and complexity, there is a visual environment in which can be found the sum of its representations and a figurative field where all artistic productions of the imagery's creators objectify. We, here, adopt the meaning given by Pierre Francastel to the figurative, that any "*elaborated concrete*" already corresponding to the artist's intentional decoupage and that finds and identical or resembling, real or possible correspondence in the experience field of external world. Firstly, the figurative differentiates itself from the abstract – which is the product of abstractive imagination or a pure construct – and from the fantastic, the product of imaginary creation from which beings, actions and relationship we do not meet in our concrete experience come.

If the visual environment is correlative to the perceptive experience, it contains everything that can be seen in the multitude of possible perspectives, the figurative field has a more limited and culturally determined one, representing those forms created and imposed by the epoch's artists, or the aesthetic imaginary design in a given time and place. A figurative field creates in a common rhythm, but with different grip, a system of representation and one of significance. The differences are determined by the different manner in which the two gestures – signifier and signifying – act upon the collective conscience. The imagery is more easily shaped and stirred than in the sphere of comprehension, of ideatic understanding, fact which sometimes allows differences and non-synchronizations between signifier and signifying to happen. At first, we see the works of art, but we are not sure that we understand them completely. To achieve this performance it is sometimes necessary that man's rapports with existence be recreated, to create new accommodations in our relationship with existence in order to understand from the newly acquired perspectives the message of some works of art.

**The figure; visual environment.** According to Francastel's theory, arts language contains as much knowledge, message, experience as the literal language and history of culture can be configured at the same time studying the changes occurred in the forms of artistic expression. "*The figure*" is the constituent key element of plastic language, as

the word for spoken language. The figure takes a certain meaning from the figurative reality, separates it from the others to compose together a significant aesthetic assembly which is the figurative work of art. At the same time, the figure guides us in the maze of the imagery. A pictorial composition becomes a whole due to the relationship the artist establishes between figures, and in this way, the painting can be read, interpreted and understood as a text is. Still, arts language and the literal one are reciprocally irreducible. Each contains meanings and projections of man's experience in the world which he cannot translate or communicate at in a different register. In order to reach an understanding of cultural history both languages are essential, only the joint of their messages offering us an integrated meaningful field.

The dominant visual medium for an epoch, as well as its imagery composition are most accurately and expressively expressed in plastic artists' figurative compositions. Arts captures, shapes and stores the memory of the historic imagery, which we can later analyze, decipher and interpret the way archeologists do with ancient civilizations' discoveries or paleographers with old languages' writings. The importance of figurative creation of an epoch's imagery, revealing its sensibility, beliefs, manners and tastes is obvious and, in the plan of cultural effect, irreplaceable. Multiple artistic formulas' role is to establish new semantic species, for whose understanding attention and rigorous analyzes is required from the perspective of a philosophy of figurative reality that no other language can replace. From this perspective art is an originary language with the help of which it creates unique formulas of expression and specific visual mythologies.

As the imagery is a system that adopts configurations specific from one culture to another and from one period to another, works of art impose not only elements of the system of the epoch they belong to, but also particular aspects of this, from which something essential can be understood about the whole. A figurative composition metaphorically illustrates an epoch's imaginary system, but to a greater degree, the formula according to which it functions in the imagination of the individual creator who composes it. And while creating it, assuming on his own the task of organizing the imagery system, the artist imposes it.

**Convention of reality; the inadmissible fantastic.** To correctly understand the meaning of the fantastic, it is again necessary to make some terminological distinctions

and clarifications. We consider that the clarifications suggested by Roger Caillois are convincing and it is worthy to analyze. His idea is that we must judge a *world* respecting a reality *convention*. The coherence of the physical world is given by a convention of it, which insists on establishing the conditions in which it becomes possible, exists and happens. The convention can have a cosmological, physical, geometrical nature.

According to Roger Caillois, the most direct illustration of the happening of the fantastic is *the apparition*. Something unexpected and impossible can be seen. What intrigues about the apparition is the fact that, though impossible, it is still present. The kind universe of rules is assaulted by happenings that defy the rule. Something mysterious appears in spite of the belief that it is not possible, humiliating prejudices and dynamiting our knowledge. The apparition challenges the perceptive capacities, calls for contemplating something “from beyond”, it opens a window through which, from our dull universe, we suddenly see the perspective, something deep and impossible to understand. As it is impossible, the apparition imposes along with its presence, a new horizon of the reality that comes to enrich and vex at the same time, which must be assumed because it is, nonetheless, part of the game. In the rationally arranged horizon in which our explainable and predictable gestures happen, the apparition imposes the *inadmissible*. It appears when we do not expect it to, and we never do as its happening is improbable. That is why it intrigues, troubles and illuminates at the same time. The apparition brings along the understanding that there are “inadmissible” realities for our reason.

**The nocturnal fantastic; the terrific; hybrids.** Rene de Solier insists on the nocturnal abysmal, even infernal dimension of the fantastic universe. Adopting as his main thesis Manichaeism of the imagery, light- darkness, day-night, natural-non/natural duality, he analyzes creating an accurate and complex analytics of figures and situations we can generally meet in the imaginary world and especially in the fantastic art. The aspect of inner life corresponding to the fantastic’s dark forms is terror and anxiousness caused and maintained by figures, facts and creations of dark imaginary. If we agreed with the language psychoanalyzes uses, we would choose the common notion of unconscious, home of all demons and hideous hybrids which, once released and noticed, horrify us.

To a great extent, these terrific figures are metaphors of the invisible, signs of the unknown surrounding us out because of fear and fascination, terror and the desire to familiarize with at the same time. Imagination, representation and creation facilitate this familiarization with the unbearable.

Confused creatures, hybrids cannot be simple objects of our sight as our cultural prejudices claim their impossibility. If they still happen in the artistic imagery, this is possible due to the power and on behalf of the freedom imagination has to defy the conventional. Introducing in the sphere of possible creatures such elements that worry with their detachment and insolence they seem to look at us, the artist proclaims the confuse reality's right to existence, that is to enrich the species' catalogue with new figures, to which, since that moment, we must add meaning and expressiveness. However defying, hybrids exist as they are represented.

Producing hybrids is not something specific to a given period. The fantastic imagery has generated them everywhere, but from one space to another and from one epoch to another, these have adopted faces to fit the dominant sensibility of the collective imagery.

The way myths, religious ideas or dominant philosophies in certain epochs exist, there are dominant forms of sensibility, in agreement to which characteristic artistic figures are created. Medieval hybrids, the modern and the postmodern, although different in form, have the same essence: they are aggregations of darkness or collective fears. Even the automate, the golems express these constant fears man cannot exorcise himself and which he tries to control imagining them with different faces. Watching hybrids, we see what we refuse to accept about us when we try to see us in the mirror.

**The technical fantastic; totem-figures.** An interesting chapter of the morphology of the fantastic can be about what can be called the "*technical fantastic*". It is about images, representations, forms and even scenarios obtained through different tricks or natural deforming techniques or even creating artificial objects. We have discussed about the mutation Parmigiano's convex mirror determines. He is one of the many artists fascinated by mirrors who have bet on the speculative artistic character of the image. The magic mirrors or the perspectives these create are present in Velasquez's or Goya's works. We have taken into consideration in this sub-chapter any kind of image or representation created with a simple technique, or with the help of some mechanisms and

devices, or with composition techniques, as Arcimboldo uses. Images, forms of the fantastic are obtained as a result of using such procedures of distortion, alteration, anamorphoses or metamorphoses, illusions, aggregation or with composition techniques using unnatural contiguities.

Alike nature, the universe of forms is not fixed in exact figures, identical with themselves in the absolute, as, for example, geometric figures or numbers in mathematics (the closest to Platonic ideas' metaphysical nature) are. Discovering natural similarities and contiguities, Arcimboldo seems to be able to de- and re-compose in new forms the entire universe. These new forms are not alleatory; on the contrary, they have the status of augural figures. Although we did not find arguments for this idea in the studies analyzed so far, we consider that we have arguments to claim that the Italian artist's allegoric portraits are totems. The totem is the tutelary figure of a community which embodies the supreme value of its beliefs, or if we want, God.

Arcimboldo's figures do not have a religious prestige, they do not become cult objects, but they contain the sum of the attributes of a natural state, of an elementary universe. This figure formed by piles is, obviously, an allegory, but it may, at the same time, be considered a totem of the book which any community that encourages reading and studying may claim as being tutelary. The figures of seasons, of natural phenomena, of various clerks, of Vertumnus/Rudolf can also be considered totems. Were they simple figures or portraits, the harmony of the elements that compose them wouldn't claim for natural contiguities or strict selection. But the fact that these figures contain only those elements (creatures) that exist under the symbolic protection means, that they create together resembling species, and their unity is given by a Totem.

**Excesses, inversions, farces, caprices.** It is possible to create a certain fantastic register through excess, deformation, feigning some improbable games, which, still, though played by no one in the real world, are played in the artistic one. For example, the scenes represented by Francisco Goya in his *Caprices*, some of whom so grotesque that human societies can never reach that level, some simply paranoiac or morbid, with violently thickened features so that their effect shocks any viewer's mind and sensibility.

Split personalities, sexual inversions, transgressions, disguises, hermaphrodites, animal-people and people-animal mating in sinister jubilees compound Goya's register of

figures, engaged in a carnival of nothing, figures appeared from nowhere and somehow condemned to absurdly hop in small squares of smoke, to give a Homeric laughter in an empty universe in which the echoes of their own laughter scare them making them live in a tearing hurry in a world of darkness. Though there are carnival-like figures, masks have turned into faces. People cannot take their mask out, to abandon the role and to finally feel the pride to be humans again. Meanwhile they have turned into half-animal creatures, as in the images in the *Caprices*, they feel, behave, enjoy and have fun in the lunatics' hilarious style. Actually, the whole atmosphere of the *Caprices* presents an upside-down world, fact which probably hides the insolence of a truth said in puns: in fact, only if we change the perspective, can we see the real world. Consequently, this one, of caprices', is the real world. A terrifying truth if spoken in a clear voice for everyone would be.

**The fantastic as mythology; mutations; fractal compositions.** Not significantly far from the Eliadic meaning of mythology, we believe that we can extend it by attracting it in its semantic area of typically artistic founding activity and of the arts world. In simple words, a unique world, a universe comes into being through the creative gesture of an artist, and this universe has the on tic sufficiency, the epic structure and consistency necessary for existence in its large meaning. Moreover, certain artists have created in an explicit way civilization, societies, mythological creatures and situations, which preserve their full reality under the conditions and the convention of a possible world. In this world nature, objects' usefulness and place in their common state doesn't matter, the way the physical laws that help create a world's certain order and structure are not respected anymore. The artist takes the liberty to defy the rules of the real, replacing them with others that allow him to represent them as he sees, imagines and gives meaning to the world composed of structures and objects differently arranged in comparison with all natural rapports.

The fantastic imagery, based on new forms of sensibility and mind came into being taking advantage of religious feeling's secularization, no longer locked in dogma of the church, biblical mythology or sacred art. Technology, for example, or geometry will be sources from which mythological visions can derive the way in previous epochs' infernos' or paradise's geographies were. The sources of new artistic mythologies exist

either in the epoch's imagery, or in artists' subconscious, freed from the rich nocturnal ceremonies of the dream, or in those divine inspiration states specific for creation.

Philosophy, science and psychoanalysis maintained a very complex and stimulating spiritual field, in which artists found both thematic source and theoretic legitimacy for their own types of creation.

For the newest artists of the fantastic, Mandelbrot's theory of fractals can be as inspiring as psychoanalyses, theory of relativity or Marxism were at the beginning of the century. Without these, last century's art would be impossible to understand. We are probably not wrong stating that cubism practiced a kind of fractal vision on the real it rendered in plastic compositions a few decades before the theory itself was formalized. Figures broken in pieces and recomposed in an apparently bizarre and capricious way still indicate the fact that natural forms are de and re-composed according to theories of the imaginary that defy the laws of life and physical world.

Fractal objects are realities whose forms appear after aggregation of indefinite original elements, identifiable with the shapes of classic geometry. Out of their combination any figure can result as, by altering the aggregation rules, any deformation, metamorphoses, change in the already formed figures can occur. A fantastic of fractals exists, of course, and it is both fascinating and inspiring for artists.

**Post-modern imagery; the aleatory.** How could art evolve after modernism's end? Postmodernism didn't evolve much. It needed a new content and forms, but it didn't return to classicism, to romanticism or to traditional realism. As it happened in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, the world of art was receptive to external influences and inspired from the intellectual and cultural end of the 60s and 70s. It absorbed the mundane of existentialism's absurd universe, the positivist reductionism's failure and the New Socialist Left's wing failure. It connected to the theories of Thomas Kuhn's, Michel Foucault's and Jaques Derrida's and inspired from their antirealism abstract themes and the strong anti Occidental culture orientation.

The need to introduce in a field of the common intelligible all these productions of modern and postmodern art and many others we couldn't remember here asks for a concept, a thesis that we can use when referring to all these when we are using them. Or we find ourselves in the superficial perplexity of those who see, but do not know what

they see because they do not understand. Maybe even more than traditional art, the modern and postmodern one contains its own theory and can be understood together with its self-interpretation in which she came into being. Thierry de Duve supports our need to have systemized what seems impossible to systemize, postmodern art suggesting the notion of “*aleatory*”.

At least since Duchamp’s readymade experiments appeared (1913, 1915, 1916) and the Dadaists, the relationship between the arts production and the significance one is lost. Although the term may cause panic for anyone who wants to integrate arts in an intelligible cultural aria, defined by expressiveness, meanings, and systematically coherent, along with Dadaism, artists create anarchy, that is they introduce and maintain such a radical principle of undermining that, eventually, it destroys even the very basis of what they do. In the end, anarchy is self-devouring; it can leave nothing consistent behind.

Classic artists’ concern was exactly to create certain meanings of their art and to offer to the viewer all the information necessary for understanding. Now, the artist is neither uninterested in the way he will be understood, nor does he consider that what he does needs to be understood, offering to the shock, gratuity and improvisation the freedom to transmit any semantic illusion or not to offer anything else beyond itself. Arts’ understanding does not depend on a historical or aesthetic comprehension. In fact, breaking with tradition, annulling all representations and understanding rules needs demolishing the arts history itself, reconsidering creation from its original status of unprecedented work, of act with no grounds and, from an excessively ludic spirit, with no purpose. Art’s only purpose is to produce the act from which it comes, above which there is no transcendence of any meaning, beyond which neither archive, nor museum, nor history of creating gestures exists.

The world of Dadaism composes and decomposes in the same gesture, annulling both its reason and end. It is a world of the aleatory and changes. In a world which lacks reason and meaning, the artist can do anything. Where is no reason, transcendence or meaning, everything is allowed in terms of behaviorism or at the level of artistic creation. It is almost a slogan of the Dadaists that postmodernist artists will consecrate as: “*do whatever comes to your mind*”, “everything is allowed”.

**Art as a good; life as merchandise.** The principle more or less explicitly adopted by postmodernist artists is that of circumstantial manifestation of the creative will. The artist abandons himself to the impulse and, ignoring everything he knows about art and an amnesic through method, he takes from the form what it wants to show, though it resembles nothing familiar and allows nothing to be understood. More than whenever, the object that results from the creative act is self-sufficient at an ontological level. It does not express, it does not symbolize, it does not say anything else except that it has got presence, it enjoys its being, and this being is wrapped in itself as a thing self-sufficient, but mystery-emptied. Because everything is allowed, any of the results is art, an advantage which is taken by its own generosity. When art comes out of anything and when any product can be called art, the difference between these products disappears and death of art occurs or, as Groys said, we have art as a mere capital or market object. From this moment, what we call work of art exists only under the rules dictated by the capitalist system, and competition in terms of price and release on the market is agreed upon by the agents of the capital.

Therefore, artists, writers, art creators of any kind are evaluated and valued by the profit their work makes, not just for themselves, but for the entire marketing nets. In fewer words, to be a good artist is similar to selling high. The price determines the artistic value, decides on the tops, and leads creators' destinies. Who does not sell, is not included in books and has no evaluation because the aesthetic has been subordinated to pecuniary. Critics' role, who would evaluate and certify the aesthetic value for classic art with efforts of comprehension and cultural argumentation, was taken by the commercial nets in which dealers sell art as any other merchandise.

It is just the difference in quality between ordinary merchandise and work of art that makes the significant difference between their value of use and, strictly correlated, the possessors' value of self-use. Ordinary merchandise is bought out of personal taste reasons, while works of art are bought, most commonly, out of public taste reasons, that is because others like or want them and acquiring them brings a sort of public appreciation. The relationship with such merchandise becomes a form of social hedonism, and the acquisition is part of a ceremony of public self-praise.

**Capital and public image; death of art.** Choosing certain merchandise, we occupy a place in the public image and we want a favorable position in its taste, to become us ourselves “chosen merchandise”. Our own life becomes an image in the others’ eyes, which, in a very generous way, means work of art. We belong to the others’ imaginary through our social position and through the way we are chosen, given a high status. Because the main quality of a product is to circulate, what becomes important to us is to change in the message, that is an element in public communication, and to enter the collective imaginary circuit via means of transmitting the image. Our value as image has the equivalent of the merchandise on communication market; it is built and put up on auction by the others in a continuous negotiation, inertly following the avatars created by others’ belief, opinion and sayings about us.

The circuit suddenly followed by modern capitalist civilization was as following: at first we transformed the work of art into merchandise, then we granted it with value of symbolic use and, finally, we aimed at giving our life such a value. In this way the lives in the public imagery circuit has the status of works of art – celebrity is *life as a work of art*. Winning and practicing celebrity becomes itself a pecuniary value because of the expensive economic and marketing strategies around it. Moreover, the purpose is to sell the image as well as possible. In fewer words, celebrity is the most profitable image that we use to be better paid in what we do, even in what we are. No matter what we do, if we are famous, it is well paid, and if we are anonymous our works do not have the same selling value. Sometimes it is not at all paid. Therefore, artist’s performance, tastes, gestures are guided by the public taste which maintains celebrity and consist of, though unsystematically, marketing strategies – the creator must include his promo in the very message of the work. Or, the artist does not offer his work with the message “*contemplate*”, but with this one: “*buy*”.

Works, gestures, and finally, his own image must be on the capital market, must play a role here in order to have the existence acknowledged. The artist’s relationship with the public is regulated in economic terms as its image is of merchandise. Testing the public taste and finding new markets in order to expand sales of the own image, the one printed as effigy in his own works or gestures, becomes main preoccupation. The real art market is, at this moment, the communication market and the most convincing messages,

the real works of art. These messages have a better promo, satisfying the statistic demand. Once it becomes an element of statistics on the medial market, both the work and artist's life are obviously reduced to something abstract. We consider that only Kasimir Malevici with his black square had the colossal intuition of this evolution of the the destiny the work of art has, and along with it, the artist's being. The work of art, together with the artist's life, are absorbed by the black background of static indistinctiveness the market operates with. The black square is the artistic metaphor of the evolution registered by occidental art and the conclusion for what happened to the artistic and social imagery during the last century.

Art's dissolution is not its ultimate destiny. Its representation depends on the intrinsic creativity, which, if placed in a dialectic scheme, announces new approaches in art, its resurrection from ash. As God's death is just the crises of a concept – the Absolute – the death of art configured in Malevici's painting stands for the impossibility to operate with the Figure. But, as Franastel said, each epoch creates its own figures which are elements of the imaginary language it can be represented by, imposing its defining semantic sphere. In this way, although its death has been announced, art is always on the point of coming into being.