

## ***Authenticity***

### ***Painting Ontologies and the Threatening Image***

#### Abstract

The artist is, primarily, a construction and we may even say an outcome, of their heritage, of the cultural context in which they emerge. What gives birth to them, simultaneously, confines up to a point their freedom. The context creates, and gives form to the artist, though, imposes them the way they should function, the guidelines of their activity. In addition to this and, particularly, after poststructuralism and after the linguistic revolution, subjectivity and individuality have been rigorously questioned, and instead of man being perceived as a conscious subject it is the linguistic subconscious that determines their every act. Has, through that, any notion or claim of authenticity and originality been cast away? Can the notion of authenticity still be questioned and researched in contemporary art discourse? As well as, how does the making of a rather gestural form of abstract painting become affected in what seems to be a threatening of the sovereignty of its maker?

The making of art comes along with a sense of repetition; instead of a *Tabula Rasa* there is a confrontation and an endeavour in dealing and being in a dialogue with the past and the spectres that come along with it. The past as both heritage and burden, and a repetition that is inevitable yet impossible as well; the work of art rooted in tradition, yet an ever changing one with a sense of its aura being constantly redefined. Formalism after semiotics, medium specificity and a sense of materiality that becomes questioned and explored; expanded forms of painting in an endeavour to trace their relationship and its continuity with the past, as well as with the present that hosts and witnesses that and is itself flexible and in a state of flux.

A coexistence of the work with the past and within the cultural context. And, a question about how seemingly traditional forms of art, such as painting, function in relation to their present; being, simultaneously, in an open dialogue with the past and the history of their medium, and the heritage that follows it. The matter here is not a case of medium specificity, it is rather a state of flux of the aesthetic function of the work and how this is intertwined with the conditions that surround its making; a relationship between the work and its ground, whatever this may be.

Authenticity is a charged notion that can often lead to misunderstandings due to the different ways it has been addressed and used in the past. It is a notion that has been linked to religion, spirituality or the pursuit of an essential underlying truth, and even to totalitarianism. The question on authenticity becomes a challenge about what can be regarded as *New* or a contribution to the already existing and about a form of making that can produce that. When not addressed beside any simplistic allegations on what is often regarded as original or handmade creation, the question on authenticity takes the character of a threefold matter; on the ***author-maker***, on ***his/her authority*** upon their act, and on how the ***act/making*** can be seen in contemporary art and practice, and, particularly, in painting.

What becomes fundamental in this process is the notion of the *Image* along with its function and the way it relates to both its maker and beholder. The image seems to take a much more active role than plainly having a passive stance as in a mere semiotic function; it moves beyond the role of a signifier and rather than just been looked at gains its own agency and gaze and looks back at the viewer. It takes, in this way, an emancipated form and becomes animated. Through the autonomy the image gains the making of it takes rather the form of an encounter with it, and the image, eventually, threatens the authority of its maker upon it.

The struggle of the artist to redefine his agency and role within the existence of the language of his medium and to utter an *individual logos* becomes proliferated through the constraints of the cultural and sociological context that surrounds him. A struggle that becomes further intensified in the recent years where a language that stems from a corporate or financial world seems to be dominating and to become implemented on any endeavor to find a personal language or voice; a multilayered hindrance that demands to be the centre of the artist's attention, condemning functions as daydreaming or wandering to be wasted time.