

Authenticity in the Act of Painting

Abstract

The artist is, primarily, a construction and we may even say an outcome, of his/her heritage, of the cultural context in which he emerges. What gives birth to him, simultaneously, confines up to a point his freedom. The context creates, and gives form to the artist, though, imposes him the way he should function, the guidelines of his activity. In addition to that 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 his 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?

Such questionings revolve around notions of authenticity, authorship and originality, and focus on whether authenticity can be addressed in the absence of any *tabula rasa* or of any alleged original creation. Authenticity is addressed, in most cases, through a misleading manner and becomes a notion surrounded by myths, jargons and prejudices that render it obsolete. It becomes charged and a synonym of an inner deeper truth, of a quest for spirituality, or even, of religious and totalitarian doctrines, and such approaches should be reconsidered and seen through a contemporary context and without the preconceptions of past eras. What becomes a necessity, in this regard, is how these matters can be analyzed, broadened, and seen besides any given stereotype of the past. This leads to matters that are related to the making of art besides any simplistic allegations on original creation, but rather, to how one relates to what pre-exists and how this becomes both a heritage and a burden. It leads to the challenge of what can be regarded as *New* or as a contribution to the already existing, and to a form of making that is in accordance with it and besides any simplistic allegations. Authenticity becomes thus a question on the *author-maker*, on his/her *authority* upon their act, and on how can the *act/making* 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 in a semiotic discourse, it moves besides the function of a signifier and rather than been looked at gains its own agency and gaze and looks back at the viewer. It takes, in this way, an emancipated form, it becomes animated; claims its autonomy and the making of it takes rather the form of an encounter with it. Thus, through its autonomy, the image, eventually, threatens the authority of its maker upon it. And, through that, an obscure and very interesting triangle becomes evident having on its corners the notions of authenticity, image and autonomy; the relations of which are fundamental in regard to questions on art practice or, more in particular, on the act of painting.