

The ascetic dimension in the *Bird on Far Away Branch* series

Ascesis

The author perceived the creation of the ***Bird on Far Away Branch*** series of drawing paintings as a form of an ascetic-therapeutic type of work (or play) and wanted it to be a proposal for those who would like to try some or all of its techniques and objectives. So much so that he doesn't know what this series consists more of: actual works or the way they were created. Maybe because the author is not sure if the real work of art is the work of art.

We spend the bigger part of our life chasing the substitutes offered by our brain and our ego exiled from the ***heart of time***. Work in its true nature can be defined as the movement of return to the ***heart of our body*** and the ***heart of time***. This is the ascetic therapeutic dimension of work and is its festive essence.

Painting is a type of work as well, that can function therapeutically very effectively. In a way so, that through the creation of things we create ourselves creatively.

matter

Before the actual beginning of the work the author bought a beautiful Canadian hard cover notebook where he noted down everything that caught his attention, provoking a sense of wonder. Experiences, things that he was told by holy men or children or read in books, magazines or serial boxes were catalogued in a careful calligraphic manner, in random just as they came to him each with a number. The even pages were left blank so when he reached the end he started to go backwards starting from one again and ended the notebook again with the same number of entries. He didn't know exactly what he was doing, nor did he know the significance if any, of the things that intrigued him. He just copied everything as they were with a sense he was accumulating a treasure, the way he collected plastic spoons he acquired from traveling with Olympic airlines when he was a child. But as soon as he would write something down he would completely forget about it. When this process was completed he was ready to paint.

The return to the ***heart of our body*** maybe it would be good to point out does not mean a rejection of the brain senses but has to do with coordination; a balanced use of all the senses that consist ourselves, either conscious or unconscious.

It is now scientifically proven that the heart is a type of brain, and that the heart is a type of brain very different from the brain of the head. The heart doesn't need the mediation of form to translate reality for it. It is what most of the great traditions refer to as the ear of the spirit, or more correctly the hand that caresses it. A preiconomachic mural at the monastery of Latomou in Thessalonica depicts a prophet having his sacred vision of the Glory of

Christ with his hands to his ears. Nicos Gabriel Pentzikis has said the he is *caressing his vision* (since cerebral senses like touch, flavor and smell are closer to the **materialistic nature of spirit** and are more akin to heart awareness). This depiction could be a referring to the scientific perception of the dual nature of matter as well: as particle (touch) and wave (hearing) that interchange the same way there is an interchange of the Son with the perceived as fire or dove Parakletos, according to Divine Economy.

weaving time

With the incentive of his spiritual guide, the work began each day, at the same time. He doesn't know exactly why. He didn't explain it to him. Perhaps in order to have a steady rhythm and create a habit that can cut through the unexpected drawbacks of everyday life. The writer however added a rule to himself to complete the process in one hour. If for any reason the work was not completed, he would sign the date and accept it as the fruit of labour of the day. If he worked on it another day he would sign the second date as well.

He wanted to escape the tendency painting has towards *canned* results, and weave into the drawings the element of time he named the **dynamic present**. Again science through the idea that time is a circular rhythm pattern with fractal qualities, is starting to agree with the way many spiritual traditions perceive time. One aspect of this is that every **present** can be the fulfillment of all time, and that there is a qualitative dimension to each present that effects the events taking place in it

repetition

It started off as a facility so that he didn't have to agonizingly search in the last moment each day for an object to draw and ultimately miss his appointment. What he did was, he chose to draw the objects that happened to be on the living room table, which because of co-tenants, had a *life* of its own. Consequently he worked on the same subject every day, but at the same time it wasn't. Very soon he realised the ascetic therapeutic function of this repetition.

The brain has difficulty with steady stimuli, so with the use of repetition we can detour from the ego and its artistic habits, detouring from the brain. Habits have to do with the past. The heart of time is the present and encounters happen in the heart. So with the habit of repetition we overcome habits to connect in clarity.

obedience

Beyond this choice of the table, the writer chose as an exercise of *obedience*, neither to remove nor to add anything to the things that would happen to wait for him on the table. The co-tenants knew this rule of his and

sometimes as a proposal, sometimes as a teaser, would place various objects. One of them was his brother Nicos that liked to place roles of toilet paper.

Exercised obedience –like repetition- is a way of **non-identifying** with emotions and notions that the ego uses to give meaning to its self and to things. This non-identification leads to their objectification and subsequent abandonment. Because the *self* and *things* is one thing, and the meaning that the ego attaches to them is something else.

Euchi

We begin with the *Euchi* of the Christian Orthodox tradition. The writer perceives the cardiac *Euchi* as prayer through meditation and meditation through prayer.

The prayer aspect has to do with the act of invocation of the Other. It is an act of Eros and moves in the confines of separation and the polarities of existence. The invocation of the name is based on the notion, which has been scientifically proven as well, that names are connected on an energy quantum level, with the persons that carry this name. The goal of the prayer element is a state of clarity through a loving communion of Man and God.

The meditative element has to do with clarity. It is an act of our psychology in the dimension of transcendental unity. With this we exercise mainly: **Silence** that consists of the silencing of the internal mind chatter, the non-identification with the emotions and notions of the ego, which is termed **non-effort**, **compassion** that consists of a simultaneous ontological unconditional identification **and** relationship of things discerned, and **church initiation** that has to do with the consciousness that we are a miniature of the universe and part of the human family, and other things. The goal of the meditative element is the loving communion of Man and God through this state of clarity that makes the whole of our existence a living invocation.

protocol

After the Euchi, the writer made a spontaneous choice of colours of the ink he would use and the *colour* of the Line Texture and of the type of shapes and began to work without any preliminary sketches. The compositional method did not need such a thing and allowed him to have certainty without knowing the result.

Faith bridges the present with the future, the stair step with the rest of the staircase.

gesture

The variety of things that he found on the table every morning complemented the monotony of repetition. He worked in a state of serene vigilance. This state was expressed through the lines.

We usually either express our feelings or suppress them. Emotions are the counterfeit currency of the ego. In the ascetic therapeutic process we release them with non-identification for the sake of the breathtaking experience of the heart of time that combines all emotions.

words

Apart from the date the drawings were usually signed with the prefixed phrase ***by the hand of***. A rather misunderstood traditional phrase in the signature of icon painters, that has to do with non-identification.

Usually the drawing was accompanied with a list of things that had been pictured. To this list we sometimes had the infiltration of thoughts and feelings that had to do with the present. As with the pictorial part, there was no preliminary preparation done and had an improvisational character, weaving into the words the time element of the *dynamic present*.

In the beginning was the word. Giving meaning is an act of creation. Naming is an act of observation but an act of creation as well. The Greek word for poetry means creation. The ego creates passively through past creations its prison of pain. From the heart of time we view tradition with detachment and create anew, as servants of Love and masters of our world.

virtual

The work was done with rapidographs using colour inks. The surface was to be *coloured* only by the lines from the **Line Textures**. But colour doesn't exist only in the colour of the ink. Line Textures can be seen as having colour defined by the shapes the lines create. The *colour* of the Line Texture can take its name from the relations of form and colour first proposed by Vasili Kandinsky: Square = red, circle = blue, triangle = yellow. Thus sums of dense horizontal and vertical lines constitute a Line Texture in the *colour* red while the actual colour of the lines can be different.

In contemporary art there are two foundational objectives that have to do with creation and knowledge, respectively: *Language* and the *transcendence of language*. *Language* has to do with cerebral senses while *transcendence of language* has to do with the heart brain. Supremacism and Minimalism (which is the successor of the former in the U.S.A.) are some of the movements that had as their goal the *transcendence of language*, in a way, because of their activism, that was **ideological**. Because of its ascetic-therapeutic function, this series **tends towards** the *transcendence of language*, so not in an ideological way, since the goal is the harmonic cooperation of the two brains. Thus it is not an act of treason to perceive line textures as a concept of virtual texture and colour that enriches the painterly lexicon and a contribution to the *language* factor.

one = formless

Each line texture is common for the entire surface. This common Line texture is divided by the shapes of the things depicted. **Form tends to overwhelm texture**, just as **shapes overwhelm the glory of the plane as a unit**. So the shapes had to somehow become subservient to the common line texture even though that meant sometimes they would disappear from immediate perception. In the beginning this was done in a violent and harsh covering of the shapes with a line texture of a doodle. This later led to a quest for a more harmonious and natural way.

The imagination saw the composition resemble the Cosmos in the beginnings of Creation as Forms come to emerge from the division of the waters of Genesis. The **newborn** forms since they have just come out from this sea of simplicity still have a certain formalistic kinship with it.

Love separates and joins as it is a bridge between discerning and unity consciousness. For this reason every act of artistic composition is by definition an act of love. This type of therapeutic composition however incorporates more of the element of unity. This unbalance though seeks the balance between the two brains through the balance of form and the texture of the unified plane.

frontal

This kinship of the shapes of the things depicted with the common Line texture in the bigger part of this series was sought after, in two ways.

First of all with the use of frontal forms. Frontal Forms are the forms that our senses perceive as aligned with the surface we paint on. Such are the circle, the square, arcs of circles, and orthogonal corners. With necessary caution, non frontal forms, were used as well: The oval, the parallelogram, and the trapezoid. The last one upside down with the small side looking downward in order to neutralize the intense dynamism it has in puncturing the surface and creating the illusion of depth.

The body is in the present as a living sculpture. The body of a painting is the plane it decorates thus the plane is the sculptural element of painting. From the point of view of a body that approaches a painting in which there is an illusion of depth, this illusion depicts a past that the body, blind, cannot feel, as the body exists in the present of sculptural reality.

Illusion of depth on the other hand is for the neurophysiologic inner space of imagination a reality. This reality is the virtual world of painting. This virtual world is the world of the soul that animates the body. The soul can travel beyond the present, in past and future.

With the Renaissance painting and sculpture were separated and with them the body and soul. When Being separates from the Spirit, then the Soul separates from the Body, after that Life separates from Being. The ascetic

process has to do with the **coordination** of Soul reality with that of body reality, of linear horizontal time with that of the vertical present.

The **heart of time** is a present that holds all the past and all the future, the now and always. In the **heart of time** painting and sculpture are inseparable.

identity

The second way of creating kinship of the shapes of the things depicted with the simplicity of the Line Texture is the use of the law of **Identicality** and/or **Resemblance** in the composition of the form *colour*. Again using the same correlations of form and colour that we used to identify the colour of Line Textures we could say that our goal was to compose a *monochrome* of forms. For example almost all forms, used for the depiction of things would be rectangles or circles or circular etc.

The third Law of composition the **Complementary** Law or Law of **Completeness** was seldom used since it is more related to the bipolar world.

This type of composition is more akin to the objectives of suprematism and minimalism: to go beyond language, beyond the brain awareness of differentiation and form, to the realm of spirit and heart awareness through compositions that use identity to exalt the tactual. Spirit is matter.

drawings paintings

Drawing elements are: The exclusive use of dots and lines. The fact that the white paper plain remains unaltered and shows through the gaps of the lines.

Painterly elements are: The use of color, the use of line textures, and the complete covering –even though spars and transparent- of the surface.

Drawing is probably more connected to the intellect and color to experience. The brain of the heart can intertwine senses the brain of the head considers opposite. We can meet as a whole with the whole of reality.

finito non finito

Drawing is also connected to the concept of non finito, maybe because they are an incomplete depiction of things or because they are often a preliminary part of a process in which we outline our objectives. A Colored shape on the other hand is more complete in information as the senses are concerned.

In the heart of time we live in faith as if our objective is already here. Despite the desire full of gratitude and despite the gratitude full of desire. Other than the cross of Salvation in Passion most of the sacred symbols depict the finito non finito, the dynamic present in the heart of time and body.

