

Hungarian Academy of Fine Arts
Doctoral School

Notes for the story of American Painting in the Eighties

DLA thesis

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Recent study through a relatively unusual approach the analysis of the Art world in the seventies and eighties. I was an active artist at the time as I am today, that is the reason for my diversion from the typical. However I don't think the facts what I am representing here are overly arbitrary.

I am writing specifically about the art life of Budapest and New York. I became familiar with the story of the American Painting in New York. American Painting is my focal point hence the title.

At the same token, it was unavoidable for me not to begin with my own story and the currents of the Hungarian Art in the Seventies. I left Hungary in 1979 to begin a new life in America.

As a citizen, my participation is a valid paradigm in the American art life and it doesn't matter whether or not my observations are imperfect. The untold reason is clear: American Art is the Art of the immigrants as the United States is a society of the immigrants. It is considerable that I *immigrated* from the Hungarian conceptualism to American Painting figuratively speaking. Perhaps it was accidental, it could have happened the other way around.

In this study, I analyze very unique events of the art hoping some day this will inspire researchers and artists; they will draw their own conclusions.

One of my hypothesis: Conceptualism was necessary for painters to reestablish the social relevance of the Painting, in the late seventies.

We all know (or knew) Walter Benjamin's famous statement about loosing the Aura of the Painting, in the age of reproduction. That is to say we have to find the way to satisfy our creative urge somewhere else. Artists -in their flight- discovered great many new territories. Some of them never returned to painting some of them never bothered to try. The discoveries attracted many artists from different fields, and soon we found seemingly endless possibilities to describe our world. But, then in 1980 something happened to the artistic climate. Suddenly, pictorial problems popped up dramatically, unexpectedly. Art became the way of life in the eighties, a rare moment in History. Existence and emotions condensed into Paintings. A simple picture made with oil on canvas resembled a time bomb ready to explode.

Since 1986 the art world has calmed down, today painting is somewhat floating between different forms of visual arts. Nevertheless painting regained not only a lot of respect, but also some of the "lost aura".

Yet we must say Painters are strange producers of the Void; such an idea is not recognized by Society at large, and there is no advantage of it. Art is not as simple as Nature with art we keep on complicating things, its Fun!

Brief contents of the chapters:

- I. Introduction: contemporary roll of the artistic Ego; meaning of the Democracy in Art; roll of the Criticism.
- II. Years of conceptualism: art life in Budapest in the 70's; notes about Rose-circles and the contemporary art movements; confrontation and conformism.
- III. Paint it Black: the drama of the New Painting; American traditions of Painting; problems of the practice manufacturing Statements; privatization in Art.
- IV. David Salle visibly: representations of consumerism in the works of D.S.; multiplication versus chief work; domesticated sexuality in D.S.'s works; roll of Pornography and the Grotesque; Julian Schnabel; pictorial way of art, picturesque Life.
- V. Cinematism: impact of the Movie in the works of D.S and J.S.; social realism according to Komar and Melamid; problems with the theory of Montage; artist jokes; return to the traditions.
- VI. Mystical Journey: Premature End of the Eighties; Jean Michael Basquiat; racism in Art.
- VII. Beginning of the Computer Galaxy: suspended Painting; searching for new expressions, commercial solutions in visual Art; trial and error in new computer media; movement of the New Wave died down.
- VIII. Painting quieted down in order of...: appearance of new sculptural ideas; feminist approach, Kiki Smith; Anthropology by Jeff Koons, Ray Charles and Paul McCharty; sexuality in the works of J.K.; Clear anthropological representation of a Family by Ray Charles.
- IX. Extensions: different notes, cultural and historical references to extend the meaning of the previous chapters; offering some direct translations.
- X. Bibliography