



SAMLET SPLITTET VIRKELIGHED UNITED DIVIDED REALITY

Article from the review KUNST OG BORGER: October 2003

UNITED DIVIDED REALITY

Date & Place: June 2003 Henrik Kampmann Gallery, Gothersgade, Copenhagen

This was the first exhibition of my paintings on structures in relief. The separated surfaces have a depth of up to 2.5 cm, and there are sometimes empty spaces dispersed among them allowing one to see the surfaces below (the wall) as part of the work itself. Comparing this work with my previous work may be disconcerting for many; while being illusory or intimidating for others. As one visitor commented: “When you can paint with such virtuosity, why destroy the works by fragmenting them?”

If I had been present when that comment was made, I would very probably have desperately tried to help my works to answer that person's question. I would have endeavoured to explain WHY. However, as always, I would have stated first the fact that any answers are to be found within the works themselves. There is really no need of any verbal explanations. At the same time, I would have commented that speaking about paintings is like eating soup with a knife or seeking the darkness with a torch.

I would now like to offer a series of fragments of text that together form a unity and a counterpoint:

- A. I love painting and I believe in painting. I believe that one can still bring something new to painting, both in the abstract and realistic fields and more specifically in the encounter between both. Despite the fact that an influential majority have written off realism in painting and believe it is a dead end, I think that painting can still offer much more than video or installations, for example, will ever be able to provide.
- B. My works are entirely paintings. I love paintings that show the marks of human contact; touched, stroked, rubbed, scrubbed, crushed, etc. That is something that I pined for during my experiments with photography in previous phases (and which I normally miss in other visual media such as video and cinema).
- C. Both in painting and our everyday life, the ability to perceive known reality as abstraction and abstraction as reality is an evident condition of our experience.
- D. What happens on the canvas is an encounter between both expressions that guide the eyes within and beyond the painting, which influences the sensory experience from a point 180° within the canvas. I have called this means of expression *Introspective Naturalism*: which implies using our external sense of reality as a mirror of our inner state.
 - 1. Any type of perception of the outside world, within the limits of our bodies, is always mixed with a reality established in our “interior”: our state of mind, memories, drowsiness, wakefulness, vivid images, our agitation after an argument, the images burned onto our minds eye in negative after we have been dazzled by the sun, flashbacks, feeling cold or hot, etc.
 - 2. At the same time, our perception (or at least mine) is not only related to our inner and outer limits. Our attention slides imperceptibly from our interior to our exterior, or from our exterior to our inner self. Sometimes we are “focused” on one, other times we “waver” between the two, while at other times the transition is drastic, as if the line between before and after were cut with a knife. These moments of change are important for me and are central to my work.

3. The various transparent layers of colour normally follow a progression beginning with yellow, orange and red, followed by green and ending in blue, violet and black. Layer upon layer upon layer, determining the light. This might appear to be following the logic of J.W. von Goethe's Theory of Colour (2) (to which I also subscribe): "Yellow and red are darkened light, while blue is illuminated obscurity". In fact, it is a method that I taught myself and is a result of hundreds of days of painting watercolours in the open air, observing and monitoring the light: the light, the colours and their changes.
 4. The experience of a unifying force that, through the eyes, insists on reaching a unified perspective, as well as a lineal perspective, in the classical sense. The ability to perceive this unifying movement despite all of the divisions/fragmentations/breaks, changes of texture, modulations of colour, variations of light or interruptions from empty space (the immaterial) is important for the work. Personally, I like to see this unifying energy as an expression of a phenomenon of a religious nature.
- I. Music continuously uses the "immaterial", that is to say, "silence" as an active element. Sculpture uses the "immaterial" in the shape of empty spaces. Painting can do the same thing. There are already existing examples in the work of Lucio Fontana, Joan Miró, or Josep Guinovart.
 - II. It would be tempting, inspired by John Cage's famous work 4' & 33", to put a label on an empty wall with the title "Structured Holes, 2005" "Collective Property". In an exhibition, such a work would exist to underline the fact that the living consciousness of a spectator always fills and refills whatever space there is within a visual field, in the same way that a person who can hear can seldom truly hear silence. As, indeed, is the case of the listener experiencing that work by John Cage, no instrument is played but sound is heard (and to cap it all, in three movements).
 - III. Turning to Elgar's Enigma Variations (where the original theme is never heard) could it be legitimate to ask: "what is the original piece?" Amid the disparate parts of a painting, where can one find the true perception of external reality? Does it make any sense looking for it?
 - IV. In my working process there is a fascinating balance, which absorbs me totally, between improvisation and composition. This is in parallel with the balance between improvisation, interpretation and composition that there is in all of the music I listen to. I feel at ease trying to be both composer and soloist in the same process.
- I like the fact that outlines waver, something that can be better appreciated close up - very close up. It is as if the friction between the "molecules" of an element of a painting gives rise to a kind of phantom between the outline and the interior of the different and varied layers of paint. It is like when a musician, through his or her playing, projects harmonies into the air.
 - The way in which the different pieces of wood covered with canvas are found at various depths in space within the painting is, frequently, an extension of the division, layer upon layer, that already exists in my painting method. This involves the use of dozens of different transparent layers of paint on the different parts of the work which occasionally allow the initial layers to show through. In other words, it is quite common to be able to appreciate all of the layers, thus revealing, in some way, the entire process behind the painting. There is a clear parallel here with the vertical or harmonic dimension of music; the fact that several tones can be heard at the same time on different frequencies.
 - What is it that continues and/or is perceived as something which wishes to continue when, for example, sixteen different fragments are perceived as a unified whole despite the fact that they are apparently aimed in different directions.
 - The relief configured by the wood covered with canvas is nearly always created first, without thinking about it or without having a concrete idea at the time. It is therefore normally a complicated process, rather than one driven by motivation, or more correctly the "motive" finds the structure "empty", or rather "open", but perceives the encounter as something almost miraculous; as the moment in which "chance" coincidences between the structure of the relief and an exact composition appear to become far too "random" and take on an inevitability. As if they have fallen in love...