

The Traditional Village, Mould of Romanian Art

The exhibition proposes to return to the original roots in an evocation of the traditional village seems as a spiritual mould of Romanian art.

The genuine art of folk craftsmen, combining in an intimate mix the useful and the beautiful, also proves the continuity of the Romanians on their lands.

It is true, its ritual symbolic function got lost in time, and the same goes for the utilitarian one, in most of the cases. Yet, the folk art is still alive, due to its aesthetic function.

The essentialized geometric shapes and motifs, the chromatic vitality, the amazing capacity to spontaneously define, through simplifying lines, beings and things, a native tendency to animate surfaces using rhythms, preserving unaltered the unity and expressiveness of the ensemble, are aesthetic arguments in front of which the sensibility of modern man cannot stay still. Although in the folk art the form-function and form-tradition relations limit the possibilities of renewing the language, acquisitions have continuously appeared in this field. Yet, they have been integrated only after they suffered the merciless selection of time and only once they were accepted by the community they were destined to. Skillfully and with dedication carried out, these daily usage items echoing the faraway Neolithic, the Daco-Romanian epoch or the Byzance, are testimonies of the Romanians' capacity to synthesize various influences on the fundamental mould of folk civilization. These aesthetic reference points deeply fixed in the Romanian conscience are sublimated in the cult art.

In the works of Nicolae Grigorescu, the painter who definitively reoriented Romanian art, the great «rhapsoder» of Romanian lands, the village becomes the fundamental source of creation. The tradition he inaugurated will be subsequently continued and enriched by Ștefan Luchian, Nicolae Tonitza, Gheorghe Petrașcu etc.

Deliberately different from the festive character quite often cultivated up to ostentation by the uninspired imitators of Grigorescu's painting, Camil Ressu imposed in the Romanian art a new vision meant to communicate the dramatic dimension of life, accepted since always with dignity and firmness by the Romanian peasant. By its art, we become the witnesses of a creative act of synthesis within which classical, realistic principles coexist with the intentionally naive deformations as well as with the decorativism invested with symbolic valences suggested by the folk painting. The artist thought that, in order to achieve its own aesthetic features, Romanian art needed to go back to the «sources», to the tradition, folk art being to his eyes the key element in finding out genuine aesthetic formulas, able to produce an authentic renewal (Ressu's Manifest Program in 1910).

Strictly delimited from the sămănătorist idylism, his vision imposed in the Romanian art a new typical image of the peasant, a vigorous and lasting perception able to produce new hypostases of the archetypal dimension of the Romanian peasant, as it happened in the works of Ștefan Dimitrescu and Dimitrie Ghiață.

Like Ressu, Corneliu Baba was the one who explored the depth of human soul, evoking in "Resting in the Field", as well as in his "Suppers", the dramatic dimension of rural life.

The direct successors of the school of Iași, whose mentors were Octav Băncilă, Ștefan Dimitrescu and Nicolae Tonitza, artists such as Mihai Cămaruț, Costache Agafitei, Petru Hârtopeanu, Victor Mihailescu-Craiu, Călin Alupi, Nicolae Popa, Otto Briese etc approached nature as a reality at the human scale, without showing any ambition of being "in the spirit of time". They gave, by the force of their talent, brightness to the simplicity and spiritual viability to the tradition of these places.

A special evolution, in a manner visibly contaminated by the modern spirit, is the one of artists such as Dan Hatmanu, Adrian Podoleanu, Corneliu Ionescu, Val Gheorghiu, Liviu Suhar, Nicolae Matyus, Mircea Ispir, Ioan Gânju, Valeriu Gonceariuc, Dimitrie Gavrillean. In their creations, they develop a new direction of the art of Iași, within which the real is transformed by the genuine coat of symbols.

The comparative method which was used enabled the link between the objects themselves and between folk art and the cultured art regarded on the whole.

This was made without altering the uniqueness of the exhibits.

In the opinion of the museographs (curators) Aurel Istrati (The Art Museum) and Marcel Lutić (the Ethnographical Museum) the exhibition best promoted the patrimony of the two museums.