

GLADSTONE GALLERY

Romano, Gianni. "Interview with Victor Man." *Contemporary Magazine*. 2006. Issue 82, Volume XV. P 56-59.

1

Where do you live? A few biographical notes.

I live in Transylvania, a province of Romania, in a university city called Cluj-Napoca. It is a place that evokes the pleasure of time that doesn't necessarily have to be filled. I previously lived for some time in Israel, where you have a quite different relation towards time and memory.

2

Where do you travel most frequently?

All over the place although less in my own country, because I drive only my bicycle.. Travel was part of our expression of liberty after the collapse of communist regimes in Eastern Europe. However it still took a further twelve years to be allowed to travel in Europe without having to attend the endless lines at the European embassies. Things have changed quite a bit now.

3

Do these memories and feeling contribute to a sort of "eastern" attitude in your work?

Yes, I do feel "Eastern" in a certain way. Although there is now pressure to "integrate" with the West, to embrace the "Modern" and the "Contemporary", there is still a confrontation with the vestiges of our past because Eastern Europe faces a different set of circumstances. But perhaps this confrontation might be the ideal condition for having ideas and making art?

4

Your paintings change very much in subject and style. There must be a reason behind it.

Because I think style is limitative, I always had a kind of reaction against it, it sort of puts one in a place that prevents you from experiencing so many other things around, it pigeon-holes you. I don't want my work to have a specific style.

I rather let myself be constantly "surprised" by things around me, images which I empty of any kind of content (which is necessary so that I can formulate a new one), and use them as bricks in a building. They serve a purpose, which is beyond themselves.

5

Any theoretical reading of media today report they lack content, how come an artist

wants to empty his artworks of content?

I usually use images that are coming from the media, which are there in the media because of a certain specific significance. Emptying them means that I do not choose them for their worth but because of their representative potential as images, in order to construct a new content with them. If you want it is like a puzzle in which each work that arrives into the play (installation) reformulates itself and the whole context, creating a sort of terrain of turbulence. Where truth becomes a matter of clues. The context bestows meaning, and gives new possibilities for the image to be read in a very different way to the way it has been read initially. There is a sort of nihilism in that. Working against the image, and taking away the significance of it, means that nothing has a mark or position in the system anymore.

6

According to your answer I might then define your painting as "appropriation with a conceptual attitude". What would be your feed back?

Yes, you are right, because it operates most on the mental level in an attempt to illuminate certain specificities and bring them out only when in correspondence with other elements.

7

And yet, we are very far from the media-appropriated imagery of the 80's. The subjects of your paintings are quite unfashionable, very few of them are time-related. Why?

They are images derived more from what's out there in the back of your head. There is nothing glamorous about them, from the modesty of scale to the very grayish colors they contain, or black and white-the classic "dream" material. This has to do with something like the fading away of identity, as well as collective memory. They are works simultaneously traditional and concerned with the process of its own production. I operate with images that are essentially documentation, which are most of the time fashion-less, so they embody prevailing conditions of past and present.

8

How important are the titles for your paintings?

Although the appearance of the works is one of figurative tradition, they cannot be considered fully understood unless they are allowed to operate in their own *ensemble*. The reading of the work as a whole relays completely on the relational interaction, combining the field of vision with that of language. The wording is almost as important as the image itself.

But then again, sometimes instead of a title as a significant element, I just use another image or something else, which bestows meaning.

There are two technical curiosities I have concerning your artworks. Some of them seem quite worked out, like you spend a long time on different layers of paint. Also, the format very often changes, depending on what?

Because my work is most of the time a site-specific *assemblage*, looking at it is a physical act as well as a mental one. And since from the two-dimensional it expands to interlace with its environment, the physical characteristic of it is essential. When creating these *assemblages* each work has to find its own correct format in the context in which it finds itself. For this reason you will never find formal measurements of my paintings, because I never go to an art shop and pick up a stretcher which has a pre-established format.

I use wood boards, which I cut down to the size that the work requires to be in relation to the others. It is like trying to get the full potential from the chosen medium.

For me scale matters, but not in the way which overwhelms the viewer with a grand scale.

On the contrary, they are usually small format paintings, which normally don't go beyond 50 centimeters.

Sometimes I spend a long time on a single painting, which might take a month to complete. But in fact the work is there completed right from the beginning, from the very first hour. It is just that I keep repainting the same thing over and over again in a desperate attempt to eliminate everything in it that has to do with style or personality. I want them to be as impersonal as they can be. Sometimes I succeed that within an hour, but usually it takes a month.