

Esej

Essay

ĐURO SEDER

Redoviti član Hrvatske akademije znanosti i umjetnosti

ĐURO SEDER

Fellow of the Croatian Academy of Sciences and Arts

Nemogućnost i mogućnost slike

The Impossibility and Possibility of Painting

Autor u prvom dijelu eseja – NEMOGUĆNOST SLIKE meditira o neodoljivom iskušenju nalaženja granične mogućnosti slikarstva i sagledavanja nemogućnosti slike. Nakon saznanja i da su čovjek i stvari izgubile svoje razloge da budu naslikane, zaključuje da je čovjekov trag prisutan u svakom gubljenju: od euforične čulnosti do samozatajnog vakuma U drugom dijelu – MOGUĆNOST SLIKE – autor se vraća radosti slikanja i poručuje: glasam za slikarstvo koje bi značilo jednu afirmativnu i spontanu MOGUĆNOST SLIKE danas, skeptičnoj i defetističkoj NEMOGUĆNOSTI SLIKE usprkos.

Ključne riječi: nemogućnost i mogućnost slike.

In the first part of his essay – THE IMPOSSIBILITY OF PAINTING – the author meditates on the irresistible experience of finding the fringe possibilities of painting and comprehending the impossibilities of painting. After the realisation that there is no longer a reason to paint either man or things, it is concluded that man's trace is present in every loss: from euphoric sensuality to the self-denying vacuum. In the second part of the essay – THE POSSIBILITY OF PAINTING – the author returns to the joys of painting, stating: I vote for painting that means the affirmative and spontaneous POSSIBILITY OF PAINTING today, in spite of the sceptical and defeatist IMPOSSIBILITY OF PAINTING.

Key words: impossibilities and possibilities of painting.

*Blagost poželjeh.
Otvore se vrata
veče bez pozdrava ude
bez darova.
Mrtvi brat.*

*I wished for kindness.
The door opened
the evening entered with no greeting
with no gifts.
A dead brother.*

Premda bilješke slikara, ove rečenice ne žele govoriti o svijetu oblika. Ima pozvanijih koji to čine sustavno. Neiscrpnosti oblika uzvraćaju neiscrpnosti objašnjenja. Ovdje je riječ o onom intimnom što prethodi činu, o pozadini jednog pokušaja slikarstva. Nevažne kao zapis o tom pokušaju, ove bilješke svjedoče tek o udjelu u zajedničkom iskustvu famozne „krize“. Od nje, napokon, i svaka pustolovina.

Događalo se sve, zapravo, rubom slikarstva.

U početku bijaše opčinjenost; sretna žed.

Potom, stvari su neprimjetno počele gubiti težinu. Stvari su zaboravile razloge da budu za sliku. Kao da je svijet zastao negdje na pola puta do slikarskog stakla. Neočekivani razdor ušuljao se između ruke i platna. Sve glasnije prazno ispriječilo se pred očima. To isto prazno privlačilo je.

Zapisao sam: Propadanje „motiva“ u bezvrijednost. Osnovno osjećanje bijede. Nedostatnost vidljive predmetnosti da podnese sebe u slici; svoje predstavljanje. Neopisiva efemernost bilo kojeg „stvarnog“ kao preteksta za sliku. Do gađenja...

Zapisao sam: Sve vrste praznih prostora... Nije me šupljine, ogoljela mjesta, fragmenti bez imena. Zamagljena stakla što ne uzvraćaju lik, što šutnjom traju. Sve bezimeno, sve posvema ispražnjeno. – Jedna jedina uzbudljiva vizija SLIKE: bezbojna ploča, ne bijela, ne određeno crna, dimljivo nejasna, bez „sadržaja“, s jedinom stvarnošću sebe same, teške, s jedinom „temom“ bez dna svoje gluhoće. Nešto kao „totalna“ slika, nemoguća uostalom, što bi podnijela svu spriječenost i svu slutnju svijeta...

Iskusivši prvu jalovost, zabilježio sam: Ono „preko“ ili „iza“ slikarstva ništi razloge slikarstva. „Ništa“ jede sliku. Je li moguće oblikovati Ništa?

These are a painter's notes, but they are not an attempt to deal with the world of forms. Better writers are already doing this, systematically matching the inexhaustible number of forms with equally inexhaustible interpretations. My notes record those most intimate things preceding the act, the background of an attempt to paint. Unimportant as a record of the attempt in itself, they testify to my participation in the general and notorious “crisis”. Which, after all, was the source of the adventure.

It all happened, in fact, on the borderlines of painting.

At the beginning was the fascination; the happy thirst.

Then, things gradually began losing weight. Things forgot the reasons to be in a painting. The world seemed to be arrested halfway between painter and easel. An unexpected discord crept between the hand and the canvas. Emptiness glared at me with ever-greater insistency. But this very emptiness attracted me.

I wrote: “The decline of the ‘motif’ into worthlessness. A general sense of ‘misery’.

The inability of visible objects to carry the burden of their presence in the painting, of their representation. The indescribable precariousness of all ‘reality’ used as a pretext for painting. And so on, ad nauseam...”

I wrote: “All kinds of empty spaces... Dumb cavities, bare areas, nameless fragments. Opaque glass surfaces giving no reflection, enduring in silence. All anonymous, all completely emptied out. - One single exciting vision of PAINTING: a colourless

Kompozicija, 1961.

Composition, 1961





Kompozicija, 1964.

Composition, 1964

Radikalnost unutrašnjeg stava plaćao sam cijenom slikarstva. Crno mi preostade jedinom bojom (koja to nije). Crnim sam gasio suvišno. Mučno bijaše, jer suvišnim postade gotovo sve. Jedva bi spašen poneki svjetliji trag. Trag čega? Sav napor se trošio (apsurdan uostalom) u dohvatanju te mukline, te prazne razjapljenosti iza stvari. Događahu se hibridne, zamučene slike. A svjetlo se zdvojno i nesigurno htjelo potvrditi u njima.

Kazati – pretpostavlja riječ. Naslikati, oblikovati, makar i „ništa“ – svagda pretpostavlja oblik. Ne radi se ovdje o tome što ne bijah, čini se, dorastao zadatku. Pišem o neodoljivom iskušenju granične mogućnosti slikarstva. Želio sam je.

Prekoračiti granicu. Iskusio sam poraz. Ne, nema bestjelesna tijela. Ni bezoblična oblićja. Zalog djela je oblik. Malevičev kvadrat! Slikanje osjećanja odsutnosti stvari! Još uvijek, možda, najradikalnija slika...

Uz „spacijalizam“ Lucija Fontane – oduvijek mi je nekud smetao „pozitivistički“ prizvuk termina koji bi da odredi ovo slikarstvo. Kao da Fontanin rez kroz površinu platna nije ništa drugo do prodor iz dvodimenzionalne plohe u trodimenzionalni stvarni prostor oko slike. Dopuštam, termin „spacijalizam“ poklapa se s fizičkom činjenicom prodora u prostor. U meni se, međutim, neprestano nešto opiralo ovom odviše izvanjskom određenju njegova djela. Doživljavao samo naime Fontanino slikarstvo na bitno drugoj razini. Poimao sam ga prije svega kao „NEMOGUĆNOST SLIKE“:

Kad svi razlozi za sliku bjehu iscrpljeni, kad se svijet nemoćan po tko zna koji put približio slici i uzmakao ne izdržavši svoju ništavnost; kad se prazno već posve otkrilo na platnu koje još očekuje – jedna tragična volja potvrđuje se činom, u biti negativnim. Slika se sama odlučuje na samouništenje, jer neće i ne može više biti Slika. Platno je rasparano. Filički i doslovce. Rez ili pukotina ostaju odsada kao dvostruko svjedočenje. Istodobno kao

plate, neither white, nor definitely black, smokily blurred, with no ‘content’, possessing only the difficult reality of its own existence, with one single ‘theme’: the abyss of its own void. Something like a ‘total’ painting, an impossibility, of course, which could bear all the impediments and presentiments of this world...”

After the first sterilities, I noted: “What is ‘beyond’ or ‘behind’ painting destroys, cancels the reasons for painting. ‘The Void’ is devouring the image. Is it possible to give shape to the Void?”

The price of my radical position was painting itself. Black was left as the only colour (which it is not). I used blackness to erase all that was superfluous. When almost all became superfluous a feeling of nausea set in. Only a few flickers of light could be salvaged. Representing what? All my efforts (absurd in any case) centred on the attempt to grasp that hollowness, that gaping emptiness behind things. Hybrid, opaque paintings came out of this. In them, desperate and insecure, light tried to affirm its existence.

To say posits the existence of words. To paint, to model, even when presenting “nothing” always posits the existence of form. Although this was probably a task beyond my capacity, I felt an irresistible temptation to reach the farthest limits of painting. That was my desire. To cross the border. I experienced defeat. No, weightless bodies do not exist. Nor do formless forms. Form is the price of the work. Malevich’s square! To paint the feeling of the absence of things! Still, perhaps, the most radical painting!

A propos Lucio Fontana’s “spatiality” - I was always somehow dissatisfied with the “positivist” echoes of this term used to describe this kind of painting. As if Fontana’s cut through the surface was nothing but the passage from the two-dimensional plane to the real three-dimensional space outside the painting. True, the term “spatialism”

Zraka, 1965-1967.

Beam, 1965-1967



znamen, potvrda, i kao negacija tradicionalne slike. I još (u neizvjesnom je i zebnja i srh mogućnosti) kao OTVOR u... U koji prostor? U prostor čega? Tu nas Fontana napušta. Ipak, podvig je učinjen. Fontana ga iznova poduzima, premda ne dopire dalje od ponavljanja istog čina. Slika je žrtvovana, ali je osvojen dosluh s neomeđenim. S mogućim. Ne može slikar reći kuda vodi put, niti to njegove pukotine znaju. Njegovo je tek da svjedoči. I cijelo to slikarstvo ukazuje mi se većma jednim radikalnim moralnim činom, negoli nekakvim traženjem novih „prostornih“ odnosa.

Malo sam vidio Fontaninih originala, gledao sam ga iz reprodukcija. Sjećam se stoga živo jedne slike, nevelika formata, izložene jednom u Zagrebu. Nije bilo oštih ureza u platno. Bijaše to jedna potpuno perforirana slika. Usred zlatne površine zjapila je golema rupa (gotovo dvije trećine slike) kružnog obrisa, iskrzanih, nepravilnih rubova. Bila je naprosto rupa. Ni izrezana ni pomno obrađena, nego ostavljena sa svim ožiljcima brutalnog udara-proboja. Preostala površina oko otvora bijaše, rekoh, ZLATNA. – Još jednom mi se potvrdilo insuficijentno značenje riječi „spacijalizam“ u svom ograničenom pozitivnom određenju „prostornosti“. Drugo se zbivalo u toj slici. Bez sumnje je ovdje zlatno imalo simbolički naboj. Mene se „svetost“ toga zlata dojmila tragično. A sam otvor, rupa – kao svjesno poricanje slike, nemogućnost toga svetog. Da, očajnički prodor u fizičko stvarno. Ili ni u šta? Za mene naglasak ostaje na riječi „očajnički“.

Zatim još njegovi papiri, vidjeh ih u Ljubljani, posvemašnje bjeline i proparani, valjda čavlom. Vertikalne ugrobotine, besmislene po sebi, jednako jaka djelovanja.

Ovo je posve subjektivna interpretacija Fontanina djela. Bez pretenzija i mimo stručnosti. Zabilješke uz jedno slikarstvo, doživljeno u nutarnjem suglasju s vlastitom pozicijom duha.

seems to cover the physical fact of penetrating space. However, something inside me always resisted this definition of his work – it was too external. I experienced Fontana's painting as something placed on an entirely different level. I saw it as expressing primarily the "IMPOSSIBILITY OF PAINTING".

When all the reasons for painting were exhausted, after the world approached painting for the n^{th} time, and gave up, incapable of sustaining its own nothingness; when emptiness was fully revealed on the canvas which still seemed to expect something - this tragic fact was confirmed by an act that was essentially negative. The painting chose self-destruction because it would not and could not be a painting any more. Thus the canvas is torn - physically and literally. The cut or crack remain as a double testimonial: a sign that both affirms and denies traditional painting. And also (uncertainty bringing both anxiety and the thrill of other possibilities) as an OPENING into... Into what space? Into the space of what? Here Fontana abandons us. And yet, the feat has taken place. Fontana resumes the attempt, but does not go further than a mere repetition of the same feat. The painting has been sacrificed, but there has been contact with the unlimited. The possible. The painter cannot say where the path is leading him, and his cracks do not know it either. He can only testify. All this appears to me to be a radical moral act rather than a way of finding new "spatial" relations.

I have seen few of Fontana's originals. I saw mostly reproductions. I remember very vividly one painting, rather small in size, exhibited in Zagreb on some occasion. There were no sharp cuts on the canvas, but the entire painting was perforated. In the centre of its golden surface there was an enormous hole (covering nearly two thirds of the painting) of rounded contours, with frayed, jagged edges. It was simply a hole. Neither cut with scissors nor carefully trimmed, but left with all the scars of a brutal stroke and rift. As I said, the canvas sur-

„Postoje tri momenta u modernoj umjetnosti“ – piše Danijel Dragojević – „koja mi se čine tragičnima i na koja se vjerojatno odnosi moja nelagoda. Poslije kojih osjećam da na površini slike ne mogu ostati i smiriti se. Za mene tri tragična događaja jesu ova. Prvi je kad je početkom 19. stoljeća u klasicizmu Krist sišao sa slike i umjetnosti inače. Drugi je kada je, već u našem stoljeću, sa slike sišao čovjek, a treći je kada je, bez čovjeka i Krista i ikakva objekta, umjetnost okrenula leđa čovjeku.“ Stvari su dakle izgubile svoje razloge da budu za sliku. Njihov silazak sa slike pjesnik doživljava tragično. – Pa ipak, nije umjetnost okrenula leđa čovjeku. Umjetnost je najvjernije njegovo još ipak, još uvijek. Nego su ruke čovjeka zatečene u praznom svojoj geste, zastale u nemoći da djelotvorno potvrde jučerašnju vjeru. Ne znaju ruke što bi s komadićima svojega svijeta, do jučer tako izvjesnoga, danas u krhotinama. Prejaki je vihor na djelu, same ga ruke pokrenuše, sada u zgranutosti ruka ne pozna ruku, nada se plaši nade...

Nije čovjek sišao sa slike. Njegov je trag prisutan u svakom gubljenju. U bezbroju slikarskih svjedočenja, od euforične čulnosti do samozatajnog vakuuma – trag je prisutnosti čovjekove.

Dakako, harmonična cjelovitost čovjeka i njegova svijeta iščezla je. Iz slikarstva također. Malo je vjerojatno da će je kompjutori ponovno sastaviti za umjetnost, ako je čovjek ne bude pronašao za sebe i svoj svijet. Tu rečenica pjesnika Dragojevića pogađa tragičnu srž. Otud valjda osjećanje spriječenosti, tjeskobe, bezvrijednosti. Otud i slikarstvo, koje je oduvijek značilo ljudima radost prepoznavanja, najčišći dodir ruke i oblika, navlači bezbroj obrazina. U svakoj je nešto od čovjeka, nijedna ne kazuje cijelog. Svakoj istinskoj umjetnosti imanentna je etičnost. I ne može ona biti drugačija nego što jest. Iskustvom svojeg svijeta, dodirujući njegovo „prazno“, umjetnost iskušava svoje međe. To traženje je njezin čin danas. A jedini mogući uzmak je onaj u prostor djela.

rounding the hole was GOLDEN. Here it was not enough to use the term “spatialism” in its limited positive “spatial” sense. Something else was going on in that painting. Undoubtedly the gold had a symbolic force. The “sacred” quality of this gold struck me as tragic. And the aperture itself, the hole - seemed a conscious denial of the painting, of its sacredness.

Yes, this was a desperate break into physical reality. Or into nothingness? For me the accent remains on the word “desperate”.

Then his work on paper, I saw these papers in Ljubljana, entirely white and torn, probably with a nail. Vertical scratches, meaningless in themselves, yet making a strong impact.

This is an entirely subjective interpretation of Fontana’s work. With no pretensions, no claim to expertise. Observations on someone else’s painting experienced in inner correspondence with one’s own Self.

Danijel Dragojevic wrote: “There are three moments in modern art which I consider to be tragic, and which are probably the cause of my unease. After which I feel I cannot stay with the surface of a painting and feel at peace. For me the three tragic events are the following. The first occurred when at the beginning of the nineteenth century, in the period of classicism, Christ stepped down from painting and art in general. The second happened in our century when painting was left without the human figure, and the third when, deprived of man, Christ and all objects, art turned its back on man...” Thus things forgot the reasons for being in a painting. Their descent from the paintings was a tragic event for the poet. – And yet, art did not turn its back on man. Art is still, in spite of everything, man’s most faithful companion. The problem is that man has been caught red-handed in the emptiness of gesture, unable to confirm yesterday’s faith. His hands are at a loss what to do

with the fragments of their world, so reliable for so long and now all broken into pieces. The hands are caught in a storm of their own making, and now are estranged and disconsolate, afraid to hope...

But man did not disappear from painting. His trace persists in every loss. Innumerable pictorial expressions, ranging from euphoric sensuousness to self-denying vacuum – bear the trace of his presence.

Certainly, the harmonious wholeness of man and his world has disappeared. From paintings and other things. It is rather improbable that art will regain it with the help of computers, if man has lost the capacity to recuperate it for himself and his world. The poet Danijel Dragojević has made a tragic point. From it comes that feeling of helplessness, anxiety, worthlessness. It is because of this that painting, which had always brought men the joy of recognition, the purest contact of the human hand with other forms, now puts on all these innumerable masks. Each of them has something of man, but not one of them presents him whole. The ethic quality is immanent to all true art. In this - art cannot change. Experiencing its world, touching its “void”, art is testing its limits. This search is its measure today. And there is no other space of retreat but the space of art.

*Gdje smo na ovom mjestu, braćo, ako nas ima
poslije uroka ljubavi koji preživjesmo.
Mjera gladi je poznata. Sve vatre iskušane.
Ona koja gori spašenim plamenom
imenuje stvari. Oprašta vrijeme.
Naše ruke u subim pregrštima
na njenoj lomači.
(1971).*

*Where are we at this point, brothers,
if we have survived the crucible of love.
The measure of hunger is known. All fires have been tested.
The one burning with a saved flame
names things. Forgives time.
Our hands in dry sheaves
on its pyre.
(1971).*

Prije dosta godina napisao sam (i objavio) u eseju „Nemogućnost slike“, između ostalog, i ove rečenice:

„Stvari su zaboravile razloge da budu za sliku. Kao da je svijet zastao negdje na pola puta do slikarskog stalka. Neočekivani razdor ušuljao se između ruke i platna. Sve glasnije prazno ispriječilo se pred očima...“ „Propadanje ‘motiva’ u bezvrijednost. Osnovno osjećanje bijede. Nedostatnost vidljive predmetnosti da podnese sebe u slici, svoje predstavljanje. Neopisiva efemernost bilo kojeg ‘stvarnog’ preteksta za sliku. Do gađenja...“

Several years ago in my essay *The Impossibility of Painting* I wrote the following sentences:

“Things forgot the reasons to be in a painting. The world seemed to be arrested halfway between painter and easel. An unexpected discord crept between the hand and the canvas. Emptiness glared at me with ever-greater insistency...”

“The decline of the ‘motif’ into worthlessness. A general sense of ‘misery’. The inability of visible objects to carry the burden of their presence in the painting, of their representation. The indescrib-

Susret, 1983. ulje/platno

Meeting, 1983, oil/canvas



„Jedna jedina uzbudljiva vizija slike: bezbojna ploča, ne bijela, ne određeno crna, dimljivo nejasna, bez ‘sadržaja’, s jedinom stvarnošću sebe same, teške, s jedinom ‘temom’ bezdana svoje gluhoće. Nešto kao ‘totalna’ slika, nemoguća uostalom, što bi podnijela svu spriječenost i svu slutnju svijeta...”

I još:

„Ono ‘preko’ ili ‘iza’ slikarstva ništi razloge slikarstva. ‘Ništa’ jede sliku...”

Autor ove izložbe prilično je dugo istrajavao na opisanim pozicijama. Kao slikar kretao se „rubnim područjima“: od „informela“ ranih šezdesetih godina, preko „crne faze“ monokromnih oblika, do „gorgonskog“ ozračja apsurdna i negacije.

able precariousness of all ‘reality’ used as a pretext for painting. And so on, ad nauseam...

One single exciting vision of PAINTING: a colourless plate, neither white, nor definitely black, smokily blurred, with no ‘content’, possessing only the difficult reality of its own existence, with one single ‘theme’: the abyss of its own void. Something like a ‘total’ painting, an impossibility, of course, which could bear all the impediments and presentiments of this world...”

And more:

“What is ‘beyond’ or ‘behind’ painting destroys, cancels the reasons for painting. ‘The Void’ is devouring the image...”

Nebesko rukovanje, 1991., ulje/platno

Heavenly Handshake, 1991, oil/canvas



Glave u profilu, ulje/platno
Heads in Profile, oil/canvas





Duro Seder: Nemogućnost i mogućnost slike / The Impossibility and Possibility of Painting

Prorok, 1997., ulje/platno

Prophet, 1997, oil/canvas



Proživljavajući avanturu umjetnosti svoga vremena i sudjelujući u njoj, stigao je od iskustva nulte točke slikarstva do osobnog obrata u volju slikanja. Naime: Negdje na samom početku bijaše općinjenost slikarstvom. Sretna žed. Njoj se vratih. Vratih se radosti slikanja.

Dosta mi je avangarde koja vodi u entropiju! Dosta mi je apsurdna! Dosta asketizma! Zamara me moderna racionalnost, koja broji vlastite „elementarne“ operacije. Sit sam „tautologije“, koja se boji da će izgubiti stvarnost ako se dokraja ne identifikira sa svojom početnom gestom... ili još gore: sa svojom fizičkom podlogom... a ne stiže dalje od prvog koraka.

Glasam za slikarstvo koje se ne boji sebe: intuicije, zamaha, nepredviđenosti. Koje se ne boji poticaja iz tradicije. Koje ne robuje čistunstvu i besmislenoj dosljednosti. Koje, ako hoće, bez grižnje savjesti uzima „figurativni motiv“ kao poetski pretekst slikanja. Za slikarstvo koje se ne stidi emocija. Koje oslobađa energiju. Koje voli bogatstvo kromatskog događanja. Koje voli magmu pigmenta...

Riječju:

Glasam za slikarstvo koje bi značilo jednu afirmativnu i spontanu **MOGUĆNOST SLIKE** danas, skeptičnoj i defetističkoj **NEMOGUĆNOSTI SLIKE** usprkos!

(1981.)

This artist stuck to such ideas for quite a long time. As a painter he moved in “borderline areas”: from “informel” in the early Sixties, through the “black phase” marked by monochrome presentation, to Gorgona’s world of absurdity and negation.

Living through and participating in the adventure of contemporary art, he reached point zero of painting, then experienced a personal revival of the will to paint. Because: Somewhere at the very beginning there was the fascination of painting. A happy thirst. I returned to it. I have returned to the joy of painting.

Because I’ve had enough of this avant-garde, which leads into entropy! I’ve had enough of the absurd! Enough of asceticism! I am fed up with “tautology”; the artists’ fear that they will lose reality if they do not identify completely with the initial gesture... or, even worse: with its physical basis... thus never going beyond the first step.

I vote for painting which is not afraid of itself – of intuition, drive, unpredictability. Which is not afraid of finding inspiration in tradition. Which is not a slave of purism and meaningless rigidity. Which, if it so wishes, will not feel guilty of taking a “figurative motif” as a poetic pretext for painting. I am for painting that is not afraid of emotion. Which liberates energies and likes rich chromatic events... Which loves thick pigments.

In a word:

I vote for painting that will offer an affirmative and spontaneous **POSSIBILITY OF PAINTING** today, in the teeth of all sceptical and defeatist notions of its **IMPOSSIBILITY!**

(1981.)