The Hungarian University of Fine Arts – Doctoral Department

PICTORIAL NARRATIVE IN THE FINE ARTS

DLA Dissertation

László László Révész

2010

Supervisor: Zoltán Tölg-Molnár, artist, retired professor emeritus

Consultant: Gábor Bora, esthetician

TABLE OF CONTENTS

"'I is an other' as Rimbaud[1] said and this obvious fact precedes any possible feeling of self-estrangement or alienation. Before being an other to oneself (which perhaps the self always is), I is an other to every other I. I am an other than every other I who is (who can say 'I am')."

-Jean Luc Nancy: The Ground of the Image (Fordham University Press, 2005, p. 100)

INTRODUCTION

The focus of my research has been the role of the pictorial narrator -- that is, the person who gives body to a story. This is the person who, on the one hand, carries within himself the narrative preconditions for the story about to be told and, on the other, prepares the way for something -- in our case, a work of fine art.

Although my own work as an artist cannot be described as having solely and exclusively dealt with narrative, it has throughout its various phases, technical approaches and genre shifts, more or less but consistently made use of the narrative platform.

My work can divided up into various little cycles and groups. The only obvious thing that connects these sets was, one, my narrative approach at the times in question and, two, *the collective code*. By collective code I mean mythology. By collective code and mythology I mean the secondary and mediated truth. Myth's driving force -- the locomotive that rides its rails, so to speak -- is the cinema. Even in our computer-dominated world, this happens, in my opinion, to still be very much the case.

At the same time, however, also characteristic of my work to date is the fact that I created indirect metaphors as a way to expressing myself as *precisely* as possible. This method, in turn, generates two allusions insomuch as the work is already built upon a secondary reality, and I top this fact off by adding yet another layer: a metaphor of my own making. To better illustrate this idea in this study, here too I find it necessary to resort to metaphors.

What follows are some of the metaphors I plan to use so as to better illustrate what I mean by the term *pictorial narrator*. The first metaphor is of the narrator as "witness", which stems from the fact that the artist had to have, at some point, taken something in from the world in order to later share it with others; that he has to be present in the world and observe the world around him in order to perform this function and that he has to be in the right position to perform this function. In addition, there has to be some kind of describable and ethically definable approach as well as some type of memory system involved which will enable him to express the work's content.

[1]In a letter dated mid-May, 1871, written from Charleville and addressed to Paul Demeny, Arthur Rimbaud wrote the following: "Je est un autre."

It's in this way that I came to my second metaphor: "memory" -- the memory at work in the narrator's body, and the unit his body and memory form. I imagine this "memory" to be an imaginary plane which stores all seen and experienced things. And inasmuch as I have accepted the idea that there -- alongside our conscience mechanisms -- exists such a plane within the body, the next step and our next metaphor becomes that of the system we employ when engaging in the creative act, that plane that comes into being whenever we create. This "memory plane", as I understand it, rather than projecting onto the painting point-blank, first establishes a mediatory plane which I call a "floor plan". It's on this (still temporal) plane and within this metaphor that the diagram, that the entire choreography of the oeuvre, is to be found.

I then came to realize that these phenomena which I have chosen to call *planes* also contain various dimensions which communicate with each other in the form of dimension transfers. I call these "dimension jumps", and one of the most important elements involved here is the fact that the person performing these so-called jumps is privy to limited (and therefore *theoretically supplementable*) information. On closer inspection of the present (which is generally considered to be the here and now), I venture to call it "the post-postmedial period". A teacher of mine once characterized his students with the following, very simple, words: "Everybody has a story."[2] Not a story in the everyday sense of the word but rather in the way the narrative is styled and elevated: its ability to surpass the banal.

In my opinion, the fact that "personal stories" exist alongside those of the collective and accepted myths -- the appreciation of the fact that the other also has a story (a personal story) to tell and that by paying attention to it they (the story carriers: the viewers and the artists both) can participate in something other than their own anecdotes -- is a crucial point here. What arises then, as a result of this, is a dialogue of equal importance. When there is equality among myriad existing stories -- in other words, a lack of hierarchy -- the attention devoted to the other story takes on primary importance. The pictorial telling, of course, lasts longer than the time it takes for us to *take the picture in*. This time stretch that accompanies the admission process is one of the painting's mechanisms.

Contemporary visual code is such that the bulk of today's mythological stories are no longer determined by the director of the work but rather by the work's design, and are no longer driven by emotional, cathartic and moral elements. It is almost common knowledge now that the mythological story, that modern mythology, is based on the audiovisual code of the movies. Lev Manovich, who approaches this transition to a "design cinema" from a purely technological standpoint, compares it to the Velvet Revolution. In his book, *Software Takes Command*[3], he describes software's takeover of traditional cinematic roles as both a revolutionary and quasi-invisible process.

With regard to the uniqueness of the hero, Cesare Pietroiusti does, on the contrary, offer an explanation. In his Commentary Project[4] of 2005, Pietroiusti provides us with comments on a concert video taken of Mina, the Italian pop star, in the 1960s. Analyzing the diva and her performance at the San Remo Festival, he declares that Mina does not at all conform to present-day standards, to the popular image of the woman today. Her asymmetricality is simultaneously realistic and eccentric. She represents the type of person who appeals by way of personal charm, via a personal mystique as opposed to the canned variety that is run through the media factory of our age. In contrast, today's successful performers are those who can hold their own in photo shop -- who can be easily

manipulated by software to comply with consumerist standards and expectations. Pietroiusti argues that it was precisely Mina's irregularity that granted her diva status at the time and that the whole concept of "diva" (now a *product*) has radically changed since. Today's heroes (and these include divas) are no ordinary heroes but rather marketing archetypes, to boot. In addition to being personages that we can relate to, they must also possess the ability to change our consumer and shopping habits and other identity features. Manovich and Pietroiusti, albeit from different starting points, both arrive at the same conclusion about this change -- that the role of software and software-generated design have gained pertinence over that of the director and that this fact has also gone so far as to transform the very definition of "hero".

*

We often encounter commonly accepted but exaggerated or overgeneralized definitions and explanations regarding the narrative arts.[5] Such shallowness is primarily due to a misunderstanding, for these half-baked descriptions tend to confuse the fine arts with illustration and visual communication, gag art, comics and similar cultural phenomena which often don fine arts robes of and employ fine arts speech. The situation is complicated even further by the fact that a great deal of the "bonafide" works of fine art deliberately let themselves gets mixed up in the same laundry as the cultural phenomena listed above and thus become impossible to separate.

With regard to my own work and research and for the purpose of this study I have narrowed the pictorial narrative styles down to three basic and easily understandable types:

1. The simultaneous skene narrative

2. The developing narrative

3. The synoptic narrative.[6]

The definitive naming of these three types are employed with the sole aim of making it easier for the reader to distinguish between these and the other existing types of narrative and not their explication or analysis. What the three have in common is the fact that none of them employ story editing (montage) -- in other words, don't use the sequential language of film but rather express everything in *one picture*.

1. THE STORY AND ITS VEHICLE: THE BODY AS MEMORY

(An explication of Jerzy Grotowski's ideas, based on his writings dating from 1965 to 1969)[7]

It's a commonly held view that a fundamental pillar of non-traditional society is the individual. These individuals, these independent identities, take part in all sorts of religious, social and cultural groups and yet we guard them over the long term and refuse to lose them regardless of any communal ties we might have or the types of activities we might be involved in. Our affiliations, cultural and consumer customs, our families and our world views don't force us to stop thinking of ourselves as unique and incomparable persons and personalities. In Jerzy Grotowski's writings dating from 1965 to 1969 we find the expression "Tower of Babel man". Our first exposure to the term is the following: "The Tower of Babel didn't only originate from every type of traditional community…every man himself is the Tower of Babel based on the fact that, deep within him, he lacks a unified value system." Later he writes: "…And then there's our life suddenly – surrounded by myriad social milieus -- family and colleagues, the odd but practical convictions of the work place -- even though our real aspirations and beliefs remain, mysteriously, bedded down deep inside."[8] That is to say that non-traditional society is capable of producing a musical score for any and every situation that arises! Though this "sheet music"[9] is, for the most part, fixed, just how it is played depends on the individual. I believe this to be the instant when the individual's story is born. It's from this moment on that the details of the particular score become apparent -- what it has to offer the particular individuals in their particular societal and cultural roles at the particular era in question -- although a part of the inner, Babelic story remains incomprehensible and often lost in shadow.

I believe that Grotowski's other two explanations also help us to better understand the narrator's "role". The first one goes as follows: "*Respicio* -- this Latin word expresses respect for the world around it, which is the real task of the witness. The witness is not there to emphasize his own pitiful role…"[10] (As to the role of this word, *respicio*, I wish to note the following: the event recorded in the painting -- even at the moment of its calling forth -- would, theoretically, deflect and even crush the "witness" were he not versed beforehand as to the proper comportment of a witness, that is to say, equipped with *respicio*. Grotowski would employ relentless psychological training techniques designed to automatize his actors, to make them incapable of consciously remembering anything. He wanted them to shine because, in his own words: "The soul must shine through the flesh.").[11]

The second essential point derives from something Grotowski wrote with regard to a theatrical (i.e. *expressive*) exercise of his: "The authentic reaction begins in the body…" And he goes on to explain: "…It's not that the body must have a memory, for the body itself *is* memory." [12] The above observation brings two artistic facets simultaneously to light:

A. The pictorial narrator as the carrier of the story he has to tell; the narrator's body as an interpretive vehicle.

B. The work's "characters" appear in expressive instances.

The following anecdote helps further illustrate these ideas. In his teaching days, Oskar Kokoschka decided to stir up one of his less motivated classes by going over to the model when the students weren't looking and quietly telling him to pretend that he was dead. He wanted him to collapse on the floor and stay in that position. When the model had done this, the artist rushed over and listened for his heartbeat. To the shock of his pupils, he announced that the man was dead. A little while later the model stood up and reassumed his former position, and Kokoschka instructed his class: 'Now draw him as though you were aware that he was alive and not dead.'"[13]

Kokoschka's shocking and theatrical gesture also builds on the authentic reaction of memory, for he believed that by contrasting death with life -- by using the memory to recall the "sudden death" and juxtapose it with life -- the subject of the drawing would appear more alive than ever, would achieve that so-called *moment of expression* better than it could have otherwise.

To apply Grotowski's theory to the fine arts: it's the equivalent of projecting a 3-D (or perhaps even 4-D) system onto a 2-D (or perhaps 3-D) system. We have now entered the world of geometric transposition. A multi-dimensional world is scaled down a smaller one. A sphere is projected onto the plane as a circle or an ellipsis. Theoretically speaking, the two dimensions can't communicate with each other. The two-dimensional can, however, be transposed back onto the third-dimensional world. On the other hand, the particular genres within which I have worked (first and foremost the reductionist media of painting and drawing, but also to a certain extent with video and performance) -- that is to say, the most common platforms for art content -- closely resemble the geometric phenomena mentioned above. By a reductive system I mean the limits of visual arts media. For instance, if I complete a drawing or painting of the seaside, the viewer will not be able to hear the ripple of the water, and whenever I make a video, I shut out the third dimension. My reason for bringing Grotowski's ideas into a discussion on pictorial narrative is due to the fact that his Tower of Babel Man's communicative and artistic schemata so well describe the very same problem with the present. Following the *pictorial turn*[14], the number of "outer" and "inner" monologues, rather than decreasing, considerably increased. To quote Robert Smithson: "The language of the artists and critics…becomes paradigmatic reflections in a looking-glass babel…a monstrous 'museum' constructed out of multi-faceted surfaces that refer not to one subject but to many subjects…"[15]

Back on the practical side of things, contemporary man with his Babelic powers of concentration can be compared to what in computer language is known as a *multi-tasking* system. This diffusion, this parallel state of concentration, should be understood when confronted with that expressive gesture of a character or figure in any given painting today. Grotowski uses what he calls "body memory" for the purpose of this new type of observation. He bids us to accept his idea of body memory as a means to dealing with this phenomenon. Historically speaking, narrative painters have always made the most of this tool, toying with the various positioning of their models in order to find the most expressive gesture. One rather extreme example of this is that of the Hungarian painter János Fadrusz mounting himself to a cross in order to get a better idea of what Jesus must have suffered -- a very interesting approach for someone from his era. [16]

In today's world, however, according to Grotowski's value system ("The witness is not there to emphasize his own pitiful role..."), this is no longer enough. The "witness" must now occupy a new position, must be able to find and realize a new duality. He needs this dichotomy in order to get our new understanding of the term "artist" across, and whose nature is described in part by this Robert Smithson quote: "In the illusory babels of language, an artist might advance specifically to...intoxicate himself in dizzying syntaxes, seeking odd intersections of meaning, strange corridors of history, unexpected echoes, unknown humors..."[17]

The second component of the artist's duality is what Gilbert and George repeatedly refer to as "a complete outsider". It is their utmost conviction that the artist must stand totally outside the system and have no ideological memberships. The artist's job is to deal with *the whole*, with what's *human*, with *everything,* and in order to do this he must be *simple* -- not, in other words, see and have us see life through the lenses of an ideology.[18]

Smithson scrubbed the classic image of the artist as self-destructive bohemian and replaced it with one that might, at the very worst, suffer a bad case of dizzying syntaxes. Gilbert and George, for their part, deprive the artist of any ideological pigeonhole whatsoever.[19] In other words, the witness is still no longer just an observer or the bystander of an event but rather the bearer of a memory cell stored on his own body. This segment, this memory block, cannot, however, be compared to a closed, keyed-in and fixed batch of information; because it stems from the body and not from the

mind, it should be regarded, rather, as an instinctually movable and quickly accessible swarm of data. This means that some stages of the "subconscious" act of painting involve this device and that the painter resorts to this rapidly-accessible device when creating his characters, background and objects.

There is an aphorism of Paul Valery that Maurice Merleau-Ponty was fond of quoting: "The painter brings in his own body."[20] The artist's job -- that is, where he chooses to place a particular blot, color or line -- is a personal affair, a private dance, so to speak. In this space, the painterly hand is moved both by the subconscious mind and the memory. This is the space inhabited by the creative process, that zone in which the painter is free to roam around. When discussing the painter's body, Merleau-Ponty begins with the artist's eye and only then begins to talk about his body as a whole. It's interesting to note that the philosopher also juxtaposes painters with actors, saying: "…The painter and the actor's mimicry is not just some tool I borrow from the real world in order to hold up prosaic things, to have visible prosaic things to show the audience. The imaginary is much nearer than that being that it is the real-life diagram contained in the body – its very fabric, its flesh-and-blood side.[21]

In addition to the diagram analogy (something I will continue to make reference to in this study), I believe that another essential question pertains to the storage of experience. As Grotowski and Merleau-Ponty spoke of the body and memory-storage, Leonardo da Vinci writes: "…In every object we discover…that unique manner that runs through its entire being…a kind of wavy line, which functions like a creative axis…"[22] This description does a fine job of illustrating the storage of things observed, that is the body's recording of observed scenes (i.e. a character), the recording of associations.

This mechanism -- in other words, the way in which "bodily" information comes into being -- can be compared to the Fourier Transform or, rather, how I would like to interpret it in this particular case. As a deeper understanding of this theory requires a strong grounding in physics and math, I will try to narrow this analogy down to pertaining solely to that information which is captured by the camera, to information connected to vision and fantasy. Any type of camera -- be it thermal, mechanical, electrical, or digital -- stores information in some way. A picture-displaying system is made up of various parts and at the time of recording an image, more information is recorded than that merely concerning the spectacle. This occurs spontaneously and is the nature of the mechanism…sometimes as a result of the events that take place while the picture is being recorded, sometimes due to the relationship between the lens and the mapping out of the image. Leonardo's idea can, just as the mathematical proposition, be understood to mean the sum of sine waves containing the image's information. In other words, at the time the picture is "taken", a stratum composed of such sine waves comes into being, and this so-called stratum is independent from the device that is used to capture the image. It is at this point that the Fourier Transform can be applied. Because the stored information is an agglomeration of sine waves and these waves can be defined in mathematical terms, the opportunity for correction and change presents itself here. In some cases, invisible or poorly visible objects and characters can be depicted in this fashion. The Fourier Transform theory can also be applied in other ways -- this is one of the basic rules of pictorial manipulation. In this particular study, however, I use the Fourier theory simply as a metaphor.[23]

To better understand this analogy, I feel it necessary to point again to the phenomenon of the memory plane on which, within which, instantly-recorded experiences are stored. Such information -- not unlike the mechanical process at work when a photo is snapped -- "knows more" than we might consciously suspect, and this surplus knowledge shows up indirectly in the painting.

2. REDUCTION AND DIMENSION-JUMPING

2.1 Introduction

In all the cases of pictorial narrative that I have researched and in all three types of narration listed in Section One, time is represented within a two-dimensional system. Such works are not predicated on any *time-specific* dramaturgical or audience-directed method. The viewer is exposed to an essential image that speaks to him of some event -- an event whose story and details only begin to become clear to him (that is, if he is even interested in going that far) on much closer analysis. I do not, in my own work, portray original stories, that is to say I believe that it's possible to have a pictorial narrative without giving the viewer a full account of those stories. Moreover, I apply the following restriction: I only deal with the genuine witness, with the original narrator of my postmedial work. Before I describe this problem in more detail, however, I would like to mention some things that should help shed light on this subject. This will include some aspects of my history with performance art as well as my journey from performance art to painting.

2.1. Diagram of the Intermezzo

In connection with the performance period of my life, I can very much relate to the following quote from Oskar Schlemmer's diary: "I battle with two different souls alive within me. One of them is that of the painter or, rather, the philosopher-artist and the other belongs to the theater. Truth be told, I have both an ethical soul and an aesthetic soul."[24]

In a 1928 production entitled "Chorus of Masks" -- an interpretation of his own 1923 painting, ,,*Tischgesellschaft*", Schlemmer reconstructs the grotesque bacchanalia depicted in the painting using masked actors. In his diary, he describes the three main characters as "the infinitely long one", "the fantastically short one", and "the nobly dressed one". According to RoseLee Goldberg[25], this performance differs from Schlemmer's later ones in that it creates the same kind of spatial illusion native to his paintings. One of the main reasons for the geometric positioning (or floor plan) of the characters is the creation of pictorial narrative. Due to this geometrical positioning, regardless of the time period represented in the painting, the work will always be present to me. I wish to cite one last analogy related to this theme, one from what Goldberg dubs the *mimetic* age, namely a comment made by Nicolas Poussin with regard to his 1679 painting, "The Israelites Gathering Manna in the Desert". In Exodus 16, the Jews begin griping to Moses and Aaron about their hunger. In a letter to his patron, Paul Freart de Chantelou, Poussin emotionally compares his depiction to that of the Bible's. While the Bible fails to mention any emotions, Poussin writes of wonder, sighing, compassion, charity and consolation. Such feelings are inserted into the scene by the artist. In another letter, he describes this act as inventive: the painter doesn't transfer the words to the canvas or try to illustrate them. What he does is invent characters whose actions portray their emotions and in this way become narrative. With the creation of these characters, Poussin anticipates Rodin's multiplicative methods.[26]

Ever since Rosalind E. Krauss's *The Originality of the Avant-Garde and Other Modernist Myths*[27], it's common knowledge that Auguste Rodin frequently (and especially in his later works) used models with vastly different personalities for one and the same sculpture. This method is clearly evident in his "The Three Shades" (1904) and in "The Three Nymphs", which he was later to work into "The Gates of Hell". Rodin's private secretary, Rainer Maria Rilke, in his book about the sculptor,

interestingly uses such expressions as “bodies that listen like faces” and “an army of bodies” to describe this throng of multifunctional figures.[28]

Poussin, to prepare for his paintings, used a special maquette box (a “*grande machine”*) in which he placed prefabricated wax figurines. To better illustrate the significance of a “floor plan” as proof of the pictorial narrative’s existence, I would like to cite the contemporary artist, Matt Mullican, as an example. Since the 1970s, Mullican has enacted performances and the like while under hypnosis. Among his numerous works, there is one reoccurring aspect in particular that interests me and that is the fact that prior to every one of his shows and while under hypnosis, the artist applies tape to the stage to mark off certain areas. Such markings dictate the range of motion to be allowed during the presentation.

It was my belief at one time that performance art was a window to fully viewing the closed story portrayed in any given painting. It represented “open” as opposed to “pent-up” time and was a kind of exercise or method for displaying the work’s other dimension. This other dimension is time -- the element possessed by all *time-based media*[29], that is to say the artist enacts a performance of the story he wishes to tell and then removes the time element. This type of exercise is no mere replay of events but rather the projection of ingrained memory into time and space. Two important things come into being during such a performance: an agglomeration of thought similar to virtual interface and, what is more important, an event diagram (what I have been calling a *floor plan*) is created. The aim of this diagram is to project the event which is recorded in the body of the “witness” into space and from there immediately onto the ground plane or level. And it is now that another plane of this kind comes into existence, one which is invisible but contains all or at least the most essential parameters of the story. The pictorial narrator (no longer just a body memory user by this point) now prepares a sketch of the picture, that is, a floor plan in the spirit of Grotowski’s music score, and it is in this dimension that the spectacular embedment of memory takes place.

With regard to dimensional shifts, I believe that despite the expansion or contraction of space or the change of coordinates, certain memory buffers take part in the recording whose metacommunicational content is of equal importance to both the artist and the viewer. In other words, even if I can’t see this content (e.g. because my x-dimensional universe doesn’t allow me to perceive that x+1 dimensional universe) I still manage to receive *input* from that other, seemingly imperceptible realm.

Marcel Duchamp, who thought of our world as an idealized, in other words, fourth-dimensional, imprint of a mould, asserted the following: “…Every three-dimensional object that we lay eyes on is the projection of an unknown fourth-dimensional…” Elsewhere he vouches for the existence of a dichotomy which he calls the *original* and the *illusory*. The object’s real form exists in the fourth dimension; what we perceive is merely its projection into a third-dimensional world. He supposed that many versions of the illusory object are possible just as with a mould, an anamorphosis, a projection or shadow. Two premier Duchamp scholars, Jean Clair and Octavio Paz, call these theories neoplatonic. I have my own neoplatonic metaphor, that of the cave, except that in my version of Plato’s most famous allegory, the slaves aren’t all chained in a single direction but revolve rapidly around an axis. They too, for safety precautions, are chained down, and while they spin around, they see two pictures -- one of reality and the other a mediated version of reality. Among the images, which quickly replace each other, is darkness and it is not very likely that the slaves can differentiate between them. But it occurs to me that we are perhaps capable of comprehending the original and the illusory at one and the same time, a process which I call

"friction", and that it is this friction that enables us to speak of and make use of the original and the illusory.

2.3. Gesamtkunstwerk and the Postmedial

For a deeper understanding of the dimension-reduction system I believe we have to bear in mind the following: when deciphering between genres we always begin with golden age of that particular style and that some form of primitive art existed/exists. A work of art coexists with space and time, a picture, a voice, a movement, hypnosis and dramaturgy and interactivity. Genres, on the other hand, with their intense focus on a scant number of factors (i.e. on only space and light) are in and of themselves uncoordinated and inept as if their creators had suffered from some kind of sensory handicap. Da Vinci expresses more or less the same thing in his famous quote: "If you call painting dumb poetry, the painter may call poetry blind painting."[30] That is, reduction has a way of saying: *Fine, okay, I'll draw these damn boundary lines but every genre is still nonetheless part and parcel of the bigger picture, of Gesamtkunstwerk!* Gesamtkunstwerk has, up till now, served as a revival of an illusionary past, according to which there exists and existed a society and a societal rite capable of fusing the individual with itself. Bazon Brock, among others, begs to differ with this view, pointing to the social-cohesive role of universal artwork as untenable. As the one-liner first paragraph in his essay, *Der Hang zum Gesamtkunstwerk*, so eloquently puts it: ,,Gesamtkunstwerk, Totalkunst, und Totalitarismus". Later on in the essay, he adds three other words: knowledge, will and thought, which, he argues, cannot all three be projected onto the same work.[31] The postmedial artist in the post-universal art world he inhabits is forced, alas, to live side-by-side with the mass media. At least that is the going myth; in reality, the interaction afforded by the mass media is merely one great big show. Mass media is a giant, a monolith which the individual is powerless to critique. The mass media (or, in Guy Debord's words, "the spectacle") is hypnotic and manipulative and, to quote from the Debord film: "The spectacle presents itself as something enormously positive."[32]

If we regard the previously-mentioned "friction" as a viable option, I believe such a method would be capable of releasing that energy which society is currently trying to unleash, thwart or, for all I know, monopolize on during its forced cohabitation period with the mass media.

The late phase of the mass media, in which we are still living, is built *around* that trinity of "knowledge, will and thought". And it is built *on* basically two fundamentals: the personal computer (or, as Alan Kay so precisely tags it: a "personal dynamic media"[33]) and its close relative, the Internet-accessible and Internet-independent database. Theoretically, at least, this particular age is not particularly characterized by hypnotic manipulation. Hybridity, coexistence, parallelism, quick response time, and decentralization are its quintessential ingredients.

Our desktops exist on a plane where data, spectacle, and sound work to create the illusion (a reality in the end) that our opportunities have suddenly become more democratic. To take Plato's allegory again and bring it up to date, than we might say that instead of just one cave (i.e. a movie or TV "cave", for example) we have multiple caves in the form of simultaneously opened desktop windows. Consumer, recipient, social, entertainment-seeking and creative activities are present at the same time and even interconnect. That is, the creative narrator in question here, this personal medium user can, at the time of universal reception, while still in the processing phase, use or configure a plane so deliberate and conscious that, in comparison with its enormous size, cannot be analyzed on a step-by-step basis but processed only by way of a software system. In order to process

this vast human mind-blowing amount of information, diagrams capable of filtering out the connections and deductions are needed. Take for example an artist who wishes to examine some ordinary little news item but on a creatively conscious level and that he believes that in order to do so he must reach outside of his own culturally subjective world. He wants to see the ethnic (i.e. the historical, geographical and cultural) factors involved. He decides that the best way to do this is to study photographs and everything the database has to offer him with regard to statistical, anthropological and historical findings of the group in question. It goes, of course, without saying that the number of *pics* we are talking about here is in the millions and that that amount of data has no way of being displayed on a single monitor. It could be that he tries to make a sampling out of it, although this would require a super monitor connected to at least 100 or 150 other monitors like the Calit2's HIPerSpace owned by the visual arts department at UC San Diego[34]. Even if he were to manage to score a position at said university, he would still be in need of a prerequisite, a viewpoint and a concept. Working with such large (or even smaller) amounts of data and regardless of its level of development, the artist must of necessity make use of "loan memory", i.e. do without personal experience. Peter Doig, who works from a much smaller archive, expresses a desire to use photographs as a tool just as painters had done back when photography was just invented.[35]

In addition to the fact that his above intention contradicts the above-mentioned personal approach, Doig (who, in my opinion, is more of an observational artist than a pictorial narrator) longs to kick free not only of large pictorial databases but also of the current level that technical devices now occupy. What he wants is to conjure up the desired moment, to put it at our service.

In contrast to Doig, who is a late postmedial artist, the *post*-postmedial painter, the pictorial storyteller, collects related narrative material into smaller heaps or groups and refrains from using any form of cinematic or fine art montage or segmentation during the arrangement process. It is not uncommon in this preliminary phase for late postmedial artists to preoccupy themselves with the nostalgic and with the golden alternative world of everyday. Lóránd Hegyi uses the words "fragile", "fields of empathy", the "quotidian", and "micro narratives" to describe this phenomenon.[36] On the contrary, post-postmedial artists avoid all forms of utopian technique. They don't mix and match media; media coexist side-by-side without interacting and in contrast to traditional narrative styles, there is no point of "diversion" here; in other words, the various juxtaposed works do not dictate, do not "tell a story". This allows for an authentic blend of "respicio" and the personal. Such works are in and of themselves valid apart from their information layers or batches. Their authenticity is also proven by their personalness, so that the conditions necessary for an unbiased judgment are there.

2.4. Reduction and the Theoretical Plane

It is my conviction that one of the most definitive aspects of pictorial narrative is the connection between the various planes and the degree of reduction involved. Throughout the course of my teaching career (which has primarily consisted of the instruction of technical and time-based applications and genres as well as motion graphics) I have made frequent use of the phrase "reductive dramaturgy". By this I was not referring to a particular genre but rather to the particular emphases, abstractions and stresses central to any work. It's possible to jam-pack a picture or composition or, on the contrary, to portray something in the most minimalistic of ways. "Reductive dramaturgy" as I mean it is a cliché. It personifies the "less is more" platitude and it is my hope that it will inspire students to act accordingly. "Less is more" most often refers to the conscious creative process, though for me -- both in the course of my teaching and painting -- I make an effort to focus

on the unconscious side of things as well. Too many painters spend too much of their time acting like paint machines. The plane -- that holy picture plane[37], i.e. the canvas which he touches and scratches and paints -- starts, after a time, to "behave" differently than your average blotched-up surface. The canvas starts to act differently because the painter himself has started to act differently, has, to put it simply, entered a state of euphoria. Though it's true that some of this may be due to the fact that the sheer rhythm and monotony involved in the act of painting has put him into a partially subconscious trance, this is more or less mechanical and really only serves as a vehicle to the so-called euphoric state. Of the many texts written about automatic painting, I wish to mention only one, that of Manuel Frara's 2010 Slovenian lecture. Frara showed how Jackson Pollack's automatic and self-hypnosis-induced works -- how the minutest details of the patterns to be found in his so-called panoramic and horizontal paintings -- are, in fact, mathematical fractals (Pollock happened to anticipate Mandelbrot and fractal geometry by a decade).[38]

The birth of a painting takes place in stages, ones which can also be divided into conscious and automatic phases, as it goes without saying that significant expressions, decisions and results come about during the automatic phases as well. In addition, I'd like to describe a phase that has little to do with either the conscious or the automatic. I call this the theoretical plane. Albrecht Dürer had two famous theories, one contained in his 1525 aquarelle, "Dream Vision", and the other belonging to the description of that painting. Modern viewers are reminded, on sight of it, of the flood or tsunami brought about by an atomic explosion.[39] The second thesis has to do with a geometric problem, namely of polyhedral division. According to Dürer, every type of polyhedron can be truncated along its edge in such a way that all its sections can be unfolded on a single plane and to form a single polygon.[40] Such theories are common in the scientific world. Perhaps the most famous of these is the 16th century "Fermat's Last Theorem", which would only be proven four centuries later. Another example stems from an anonymous letter entitled "Euclid, Newton and Einstein" featured in the February 12, 1920 issue of *Nature*. In this letter the author praises one Dr. Edwin A. Abbott's 1884 popular science book, *Flatland*, about the possible interchange between the second and third dimensions.

Instead of a descending sphere "[the Flatlanders'] experience will be that of a circular obstacle gradually expanding or growing, and then contracting, and they will attribute to *growth in time* what the external observer in three dimensions assigns to motion in the third dimension. If there is motion of our three-dimensional space relative to the fourth dimension, all the changes we experience and assign to the flow of time will be due simply to this movement, the whole of the future as well as the past always existing in the fourth dimension."

In one of his addresses, Clerk Maxwell, a contemporary of Abbott, humorously responds to this question in verse form:

"March on, symbolic host! with step sublime,
Up to the flaming bounds of Space and Time!
There pause, until by Dickenson depicted,
In two dimensions, we the form may trace
Of him whose soul, too large for vulgar space
In n *dimensions flourished unrestricted."*[41]

Art theory exists on a similar level, a level in which its innate anthropomorphic consciousness crosses paths with another, less or more dimensional world. In other words, both the journey between existing and imaginary planes and dimensions is one of the determining factors of the pictorial narrative. This is not to imply, however, that the learnable and exercisable phases of the creative process are unimportant but that they are to general to be of interest to our topic.

Flatland's fictional inhabitants inhabit a two-dimensional, flat world above which exists the more than two-dimensional realm of time. When confronted with the third dimension, when the sphere descends on Flatland, its population is unable to perceive it: they wrongly perceive the movement of the sphere to be a stationary expanding and contracting.

The pictorial narrator, who inhabits a world which is at least 4-dimensional, employs a technique which I call "time casting". I've borrowed this expression from the lost-wax casting technique used in bronze sculpture making, a process in which the mould is destroyed at the time the final sculpture is produced.

Exactly what kinds of phases does the narrative process undergo? First, the narrator must lose all time dimensionality while building up his narrative. He is the "witness" whose "respicio" fills up the whole of the story and who carries the memory of that story within his own body. This is where the dynamic data batches are prepared. From this information a diagram or "floor plan" is formed at the latent, or hidden, ground level, and it's from here that the story is played out, that the narrator projects his story onto the pictorial plane. To do this, however, he will still be in need of the memory stored in his body as it will be essential to his production and imbuement of his characters and the various details of his painting. Body memory exists on two planes and about one third of its content gets projected onto the pictorial plane. In addition, another diagram is formed, that of the painter's "dance", i.e. his movements while painting. This "dance" takes place in all three dimensions while the artist transmits, in an indirect way, information coming from the two auxiliary planes. To use another analogy, the painter is like a DJ who synchronizes the information stored on his numerous LPs, who mixes extracts of various albums in order to create his new sound.

3. DIVERSION

3.1. Introduction

Another essential point, I believe, is the similarity between the latent information contained in pictorial narrative and the narrative employed by the time-based media (what I call "the tip of the iceberg" narrative). I mean that the information received by the viewer of a time-based production is only as much as the creator wishes to give him. The creator, on the other hand, must know a great deal more than his audience in order to tell his tale and, among other things, present the viewer with logical and consistent information and enable him, if necessary, to fill in the narrative blanks. Another important element with regard to time-based media is that we can sense where the story is heading, though the way by which we come to the conclusion -- the way in which the creator rations out the information, diverts us and hides certain details from us -- is his right and the sign and source of his hypnotic powers.

3.2 “Reverse Casting”

Unlike with its literary counterpart, pictorial narration’s entire plot, *skene* and narrative are present in a single work. Although I don’t wish to compare the two art forms, their handling of latent information (for instance, time-based media narrative is primarily technical -- in the process of painting, the painter gets lost in or “absorbed” in the work), but I do think that there must be something in the work -- something that stems most likely from the non-technical side of it -- that goes into the painting and that makes it ‘’retraceable” in the Fourieresque sense of the word. As long as the Fourier Transform’s definition of the visible continues to include invisible elements, the duration of the story can be *reduced back*. In addition, it should be noted that imperceptible occurrences take place during the time that the story is taking place. The “witness” stores all of this in his body memory. The authenticity of the produced work (that is, that the “witness” makes no attempt to manipulate his audience) derives from the fact that certain unintended elements, thanks to the help of the spontaneous projection system mentioned above, end up in the final product. Let’s take Bruce Nauman’s sculpture, “A Cast of the Space under My Chair” (1963-1968), for example. The technique Nauman employed could be referred to as “reverse casting”. Nauman put a chair inside a cube. The parting line at the top of the cube is actually the underside of the chair; the lateral surfaces are as long as a chair’s legs; its base ends where the demarcations of the legs come to an end. The final form of the sculpture came about by Nauman pouring the sculpture’s material into the cube and then removing the strips and the chair. What makes the end result so interesting, in my opinion, is the minimalistic model, the metaphor I see in it of the “retraceability” theory I see in it, of that phenomenon I call “sensing”, i.e. the faint perception of something. This work also contains planes and a real and usable item with a history, as opposed to just some contemporary, conceptualist abstraction. Note, for instance, how the artist chose the words “my chair” instead of the colder “chair”. The time expressed in this work (the chair clearly has character and a history) forms a solid block, a single mass; it becomes a part of the space around it. There’s a work of Tamás Waliczky called “The Enemies” (1996), which depicts a figure’s movement, works as a kind of *time* sculpture or *crystal*.[42] It’s as if the very stages of the figure’s movements have been frozen in time and remain there to form a futuristic statuette. Nauman and Waliczky both ignore the story as such. Instead of presenting us with a story they just evoke one, give us the aura of the story. We don’t know about any of the story’s participants, about, for example, the concrete events connected with the chair. In such works, the maker is an observer rather than a witness, using his intuition and other unconscious elements. He accepts the story’s presence but the end result, which he is focused on, only takes place on a speculative and conscious level. It’s up to the audience to understand what took place; nothing else is required. In such works the artist is only interested in observation and the story is placed solely on a conscious plane.

3.3 Two Metaphors about a Metaphor

In addition to self-hypnosis and the “body memory”-based methods mentioned above, another tool which helps the artist get in touch with his inner child has to do with dimension-jumping. The movement between three, four or more dimensions takes place on a presentimental level because of the fact that the things that inhabit those dimensions contain barriers that restrict their detection. The “dimension traveler” has always to fill in the blanks, to project onto the canvas whatever happens to be missing.

In Roald Dahl's short story, "The Wish", a boy picks a scab off his leg and flings it across the room. It flies all the way to the end of it, and when the boy attempts to leave this room, he suddenly has the feeling that the rug he has to walk on is gigantic, bigger even than a tennis court. The rug is made up of three colors: red, black and yellow. The yellow is okay to walk on, is like an island, but the black, which is a river, is more problematic: poisonous snakes inhabit it. He must also do everything in his power to avoid stepping on the red parts, as these are really red-hot lumps of coal. He steps forward and is making good progress when the edge of his sandal comes within a centimeter of the black. Two snakes menacingly approach, get extremely close. The boy is surrounded by red and black and tries to retreat but to no avail. Suddenly, he looks down (always a big mistake in such situations) and the sight of the winding river does him in: he tries to balance himself with his arms but unsuccessfully: his bare hand plunges right into the deadly water.

In my opinion, this is one of the most accurate descriptions I've read of the projectional powers of the child's mind. Another reason for my relating this anecdote was the fact that the "floor plan", the diagram, depicted in it happens to be located in a rug. What occurs is quite similar to what Jean Clair, quoting Marcel Duchamp, calls skillfully finding a "communication sluice" among the various dimensions.[43]

The two dimensions, in all their colors and forms, open to the skillful; as Merleau-Ponty, quoting Cézanne, puts it: "Space shines."[44]

The main characters in *Flatland* also get to jump from the second to the third dimension. The protagonist, a two-dimensional being, doubts the existence of the third dimension. On encountering Sphere, he argues against its existence until the stranger, running low on counter-arguments, suddenly sweeps him up and away into his 3-D world. The two-dimensional hero then describes his new environment as follows: 'There was a darkness; then a dizzy, sickening sensation of sight that was not like seeing; I saw a Line that was no Line; Space that was not Space: I was myself, and not myself. When I could find voice, I shrieked aloud in agony, 'Either this is madness or it is Hell.' (...) I looked, and, behold, a new world! There stood before me, visibly incorporate, all that I had before inferred, conjectured, dreamed, of perfect Circular beauty."[45]

3.4. Fluctuat Nec Mergitur[46]

In this study I have dealt with only a minute aspect of the role of pictorial narrative in the visual arts -- that of the unconscious mind: the reduction of *action time* and the *replay* of time. It is my view that the pictorial narrator makes use of what (not scientifically speaking, of course) I call "body memory", a tool which, with the help of an intricate system, helps him to get his experiences out onto the canvas, to project them onto that plane where the creative act is accomplished.

In my analogies and examples I have made continual reference to the fact that many elements of the actor's, dancer's and even the DJ's modus operandi find their way into the pictorial narrator's work. Moreover, I believe that while this mechanism can be found in the work of other painters as well, the "sluicing" of various planes and dimensions belongs exclusively to the pictorial narrator whose job is not merely to observe and portray but also to bring people's attention to something which they can only sense but not see.

[2] The quote – characteristic of his remedial teaching methods -- belongs to Marcell Jankovics, who taught me animation and storyboard at the Hungarian University of Applied Arts.

[3] Lev Manovich: *Software Takes Command*, 2008, www.manovich.net
[4] Cesare Pietroiusti: *Commentary Project, Artist's Space*, 2005, www.youtube.com
[5] Wendy Steiner: *Pictures of Romance. Form against Context in Painting and Literature.* Chicago-London, University of Chicago Press, 1988, p.7-42.
[6]Wendy Steiner: *Narrativitás a festészetben*, p. 3. Translator: Orsolya Milián.
[7]Jerry Grotowski: *Színház és rituálé*, Kalligram, Bratislava, 1999, p.19: body memory; p.65: the Tower of Babel man; p.61: respicio. My first involvement with the interpretation and utilization of Grotowki's work began wtih a series of my performances in the early 1980s. Based on the performances of Józef Szajna which I'd seen at the Ernst Museum in Budapest, I began to take an interest in classical Japanese theater, including the No Theater as discussed in Tamás Vekerdy's book, *A színészi hatás eszközei - Zeami mester művei szerint*. It was around this time that Grotowski began to stretch his activities to beyond the "poor theater" and to extend his focus to work out his philosophy of the No theater. *See* Jason Arcari: Treasuring the Secret within Grotowski and the Power, 2010. Taylor & Francis.

[8] ibid. p.65
[9] In the 1960s, one of Grotowski's methods included using score-like documents designed by Delsartre to "fix scenes". Delsartre, who began his career as a composer, used scores to record actors' exact movements and positions on stage.
[10] One of Grotowski's foremost expectations for his actors was that they memorize the "layout plan" of the play they were to take part in. Participants were often asked to play with shut eyes. According to one of the attendants of his course on Voltaire in the summer of 1982, members were asked to run through a forest blind-folded.
[11] Jerzy Grotowski: *Színház és rituálé*, p.161.
[12] ibid. p.19
[13] From John Berger's essay, "Drawn to the Moment". John Berger: Sense of Sight, p.146, Pantheon Books, New York, 1986.
[14] J.T. Mitchell: *The Pictorial Turn*, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1994, p.11.
[15] Robert Smithson: Collected Writings, p.78.
[16] Sándor Hajnik: *Fadrusz János három levele* (Nyugat, 1921. Number 15).
[17] Robert Smithson, ibid. p.66.
[18] Lóránd Hegyi: *The Courage to be Alone*, Charta, Milano, 2004, p.33.
[19] idem
[20] Maurice Merleau-Ponty: ,,*A szem és a szellem*", 1960, in Fenomén és Mű, Kijárat Kiadó, 2002, p.53-77, translated by Györgyi Vajovich and Tamás Moldvay, p.55.
[21] ibid. p.57
[22] Leonard da Vinci: A festészetről, Corvina, Budapest, 1967, p.158.
[23] Francine Amon and Alfred Ducharme: Fourier Transform Techniques for Imaging Performance Evaluations of Thermal Imaging Cameras Used by the Fire Service. Steward, E.G.: Fourier Optics: An Introduction (1989). Saxby, G.: The Science of Imaging: An Introduction (2002).
[24] RoseLee Goldberg: Performance, Cox and Wyman, London, 1979, p.67.
[25] ibid. p.68-73
[26] Oscar Baetschmann: Nicholas Poussin: Dialectics of Painting, Reaktion Books, London, 1990, p.112-116.

[27] Rosalind Krauss: The Originality of the Avant-Garde and Other Modernist Myths, the MIT Press, Cambridge, 1986.
[28] ibid. p.151-157
[29] The phrase is taken from Rafael Diluzio's 2010 Artstay 8 lecture.
[30] Leonardo da Vinci*: A festészetről (Treatise on Painting)*, Corvina, Budapest, 1967, p.25.
[31] Bazon Brock: Der Hang zum Gesamtkunstwerk, Verlag: Sauerlander, Frankfurt, 1983, p.22.
[32] Guy Debord: Society of a Spectacle and Other Films, Rebel Press, London, 1992, p.65.
[33] Lev Manovich: Software Takes Command, 2008, www.manowich.net, p.76.
[34] www.manovich.net
[35] www.tate.org.uk
[36] Lóránd Hegyi: *Fields of Empathy*, Skira, Milano, 2009, p.25-27.
[37] Allan Kaprow: *Assemblage, Environments and Happenings*, H. N. Abrams; 1st edition (1966).
[38] Frara's illustrated lecture on the Teresa Griffith 1999 film, Jackson Pollack: Love and Death on Long Island.
[39] John Berger, in his essay, "The Deluge" (a somewhat false translation of the original German title), observes that the vision portrayed in Dürer's work is like looking out at the landscape through a wet window pane (i.e. *plane!*).
[40] Erwin Panofsky: The Life and Art of Albrecht Dürer, Princeton, 1955.
[41] William Garnett: Preface to the First Edition in Edwin A. Abbott's *Flatland*.
[42] Waliczky uses the term "time crystals" to express the time element in his work. www.waliczky.com.
[43] Clair, Jean: Marcel Duchamp, avagy a nagy fikció, Corvina, 1988, fordította: Déva Mária, p.40.
[44] Merleau-Ponty, Maurice: A szem és a szellem, in Fenomén és mű, Kijárat Kiadó, 2002, p. 53-77, fordította: Vajdajovich Györgyi és Moldvay Tamás, p.69.
[45] Edwin A. Abbott: *Flatland*, chapter 18.
[46] Han Rudolf Hauser's, the retired sea captain's, interview bears the same title as the Parisian motto meaning: *"She is tossed by the waves but does not sink".* The saying is still a common inscription on Parisian ships today. According to Hauser, if a ship gets caught in a storm -- instead of immediately resorting to technical help -- "it is the captain's duty to feel the ship under his feet. He should look at the waves and see what it is that the ship wants." In LITTLE: Conditions 2005-2008, forschungsgruppe_f, Verlag Silke Schreiber.
Grotowski's untitled last letter (1998, Pontederra, Italy) uses the phrase "under my feet" to describe a "higher connection" (under my feet – over my head). In "The Drama Review", 43,2 (162), Summer 1999.