

Severin's Choice: Ștefan Radu Crețu



Sensus Proprio by Ștefan Radu Crețu. Photos by 418 Contemporary Art Gallery, Bucharest, Romania

From Duchamp to the post-1989 Pegasus. An Essay on Sculpture as a Playful Game

Playfulness is a dimension overlooked in art, often neglected to the detriment of depth or tragic. It is a dimension which remains linked to an epoch of experiment and chance, and until Dada, it was unconceivable that art could be mocked at. The transition from conservatism to modernism was violent, and artists, these “enfants terribles” have explored with thirst and curiosity all that was not considered in the previous eras. As the 20th century was one of speed and of the great discoveries, the 21st century is, until now, auspiciously and selectively, an extension of a world of all possibilities. Fighting for freedom and rights has been refined, freedom of expression is, at least apparently, unlimited, and artists have everything at their disposal, from materials to ideas. Only filters and selections differ from the past.

In this carousel of all possibilities, Ștefan Radu Crețu has set his attention on several less explored topics and techniques – such as animals and electrical circuits – with unexpected outcomes such as a combination of linear drawing, three-dimensional volumes, synthetic fabrics brightly coloured, and rudimentary electrical circuits. Ștefan stood out so far with works bearing Latin titles inspired from the world of animals and insects, who invite non connoisseurs to open Zoology or Entomology dictionaries. Is it a bird, an animal? Or maybe an insect? This is what we may wonder, amazed in front of the plain shapes sharply cut, half abstract, superimposed to mysterious and heavy volumes. Or hydrodynamic shapes, suspended and mobile. The surprise of a technological field may engender initially some confusion and then a sort of endless interpretation. Like when you hear for the first time a foreign language and try to make sense to new sounds and associate them to something familiar. Even if you forget the title instantly, the image will remain in the memory for a long time. Monsters and fantastic creatures don't necessarily have a face not until we see a picture, and after seeing it, that's it!



The archetype will remain in the memory and all variations discovered lately will be compared instinctively with the prototype. For me, as I am not a connoisseur, *Coccinella nonpunctata* is firstly Ștefan Radu Crețu's work and only after it will turn into a ladybird, and this will be repeated with every work.

Kinetic art is rooted back in the Avant-garde and is synchronous with the progress of science and the insertion of the Dada spirit in the consciousness of

artists. Kinetic Art refers both to the illusion of movement, as well as to movement itself, generated voluntarily by circuits and electric impulse, which is the case of our artist. A precursor of Kinetic Art as optical illusion was Marcel Duchamp, with his famous painting *Nude descending a staircase* (1913), but the same expressive level is to be found also in the Italian futurists, active previously – such as Boccioni, Balla, Carra, who were interested in rendering speed and dispersion by using the means of painting. Later on, Alexander Calder, Jean Tinguely and Eduardo Paolozzi have also experimented the illusion of movement in their works.

Beyond the metaphysical connotation of movement in Visual Arts (which are considered, by definition, static), Kinetic Art has a purely physical, commensurable and dynamic dimension. Unlike the modern artists quoted above, Ștefan Radu Crețu doesn't work with the illusion of movement, but with movement itself. A further innovation and distance as compared to the consecrated sculpture. His works cannot be worshiped, embraced (they may sting!) and cannot be remembered the way we remember human things. The sphere becomes a labyrinth. Light in his works doesn't surround and hide, but dissects and misleads. The artist is an extension of his work, the portrait of a sportsman – inventor, redheaded and eccentric, who has learned mechanics while repairing his bike. And if Duchamp's bicycle wheel has changed the perception of art on the pedestal, Ștefan's Pegasus has turned his chisels into screwdrivers. "What goes around, comes around", as English say. The forced bracket is meant to highlight a specific peculiarity and not to create a pantheon of Kinetic Art. Undoubtedly, right now, in a few thousand different points on the globe, simultaneously, one boy is repairing his bicycle.

Simona VILĂU, August 2014

Ștefan Radu Crețu is represented by

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Stefan Radu Cretu



Stefan Radu Cretu was born in 1983, in Campina, Romania. He studied at the Art and Design University in Cluj and graduated from the Ceramic-glass-metal department in 2006. In 2005 he received an Erasmus grant for one year at the Fine Art Academy, Wroclaw, Poland. In 2008 he achieved his master degree in sculpture at the National University of Arts in Bucharest. In 2013 he became a PhD candidate in Visual Arts at the National University of Arts in Bucharest

The force that has in present times the greatest impact over people's lives is technology. Still the continued progress proved to be deceiving. It didn't always coincide with the real needs of the human individual. Progress has created a complex human being, with more material needs, a human being which is more interested by the artificial and the fruitless.

A complicated man, always disgruntled, less secure of himself, less free. He has renounced at that what is essential for him, to become an artificial being. This man is no longer the creator of technology, but one that is dependent and controlled by it. Stefan Cretu's works emphasizes this obsession with progress, this fusion between nature and technology that seems to be more and more the final goal of humankind. The evolution obsessed man makes many errors in his attempt to improve nature and sometimes these errors are carried away to the extreme. Our return to nature and its technologies doesn't mean that we are involving to a more primitive life style or that we are giving up progress in its entirety, but reflects more a suggestion for simplicity. This arcadian existence will give man a greater certainty, freeing him from the burden of the futile and absurd elements of everyday life.

Born on 26th of January 1983, Campina, Romania.

Education

2008 MA at National University of Art, Bucharest, Sculpture Department

2006 BA at University of Visual Arts and Design, Cluj Napoca, Ceramics-Metal-Glass Department

2005 Socrates Erasmus study mobility, Fine Arts Academy, Wroclaw, Poland

Exhibitions

2014 "Sensus Proprio", 418 Gallery, Bucharest, Romania (solo)

2013 "Disambiguation" Palatele Brâncovenesti, Galeria Cuhnia, Bucharest, Romania (solo)

2013 "Oestridae Dominant", "Proiect 1990", Piața Presei Libere, Bucharest (solo)

2013 "Workshop at the Danube VI", 418 Gallery, Bucharest, Romania (group)

2013 The Art of Living Pop-up Art Gallery, Bucharest, Romania (group)
2012 “Workshop at the Danube V”, 418 Gallery, Bucharest, Romania (group)
2012 “Paratarrasius Hibridus” 418 Gallery, Bucharest, Romania (solo)
2012 “ Workshop at the Danube IV”, 418 Gallery, Bucharest, Romania (group)
2010 “Lipsus”, Raku 25 Gallery, Sangeorz Bai, Romania (group)
2010 “Destination Moon”, Piedica’n talpa group, The Council Tower, Sibiu, Romania (group)
2009 “Formă și dialog”, Raku25 Gallery, Sângeorz Bai, Romania (group)
2009 “Poartă în casă / Gate in House”, Stadt und Kreisbibliothek Heinrich Heine, Schmalkalden, Germany (solo)
2007 “Fermoar/ Zip”, (sculpture), Rusciori Park, Rusciori (Sibiu) (solo)
2006 “Porțile cuvântului/ Gates of Word”, Fedes Hall (Irecson Institute), Bucharest (solo)

Symposia

2014 Workshop at the Danube VII, Cetate Romania
2013 Workshop at the Danube VI, Cetate Romania
2012 Workshop at the Danube V, Cetate, Romania
2011 Workshop at the Danube IV, Cetate, Romania
2011 European music and art festival, Mazieres de Touraine, France
2011 “Ars et Sequentia”, Culture Festival, Monchenholzhausen, Germany
2010 “Caravan of Culture”, Regionale !o, Festival of contemporary art, Austria
2009 ”Cisart”, Symposium of Contemporary Art, Cisnădie, Romania
2009 “Plastic Schmalkalden”, International art symposium, Schmalkalden, Germany
2007 “The Art of Culture”, International Symposium of Contemporary Art, Rusciori, Romania

Contact

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