

Dariusz Romanowski - Turbulent expression 1



Studies of expression here, are referred as finished works executed with acrylic heightened with white, on paper (cream or white) or canvas. The term study in the present case, is not a preliminary sketch or drawing.

Our purpose is to confront five selected mastered studies issued from the same corpus (close to a hundred pages presenting various scales of heads of expression of old women). In doing so, we consider them as major events of a drama. The selected studies present an interrupted metamorphosis, proper to each study interpreted as a snapshot of non completion of action. Therefore, we consider the means used by the artist to articulate emotion(s) using motion itself, and emphasize key features with dramatic sequenced motion without implying Le Brun's range of expressions but rather his own interpretation.

Turbulence is tangible with thwarted forms but leads to a silent dilution of features. Heads come out from nowhere and return to nothingness. Turbulence of expression in the first selected studies, show a scaling emotion (momentum) opposing the dilution process of the last two studies in our selection. The contrast is startling, but the common point lies in the purity of expression obtained in some cases, with no pentimento or rather violent one(s).

The artist is not relying on artificial device to produce expression. Unlike the masters of the Renaissance, such as Durer or Da Vinci, the expressive heads are not meant to give birth to a comprehensive classification of emotions, or a repertoire of figures, although they could have been. The studies are swiftly executed with a toothbrush which investigates the human face potentiality for expression and its rising emergences. Each image produced acts like a quantifier measuring the degree of emotion. In fact, in order to fully grasp the scaling, the observer needs to observe simultaneously several works.

Perspective and proportions are suspended and in brackets, while the ordinary toothbrush captures and then releases a nascent emotion with meandering propagation being endlessly

questioned by the artist, unconcerned to memorize it. The first three studies presented do assign conflictual emotion(s). No basic emotions can be discerned with certainty, such as joy, fear or anger. Facial expressions are not exaggerated like the grotesque heads of Da Vinci but are the striking consequence of inner trouble, possibly the trouble of soul. The observer sees, feels and hears facial sonority, but does not alter its predicament as he is engulfed in the dramatic stream of motion, and is granted the ability to read partial and upset lines, spots and dots. Denser areas of tone are coupled to sharp or subtle gradations and variations between light and shade, not immune to disappearance.

Indeed, poignant faces with contracted, or loose or displaced features, appeal to our humanity and its frailness, but remain aloof in their dramatic soliloquy, as the observer is not provided the ability to change their fate. Remindful of Aristotle's belief that the inner self of a human being could be deciphered by its facial features which are correlated to further studies on physiognomy.

The complete studies are simply, the expression of a tormented character consumed by inner contrary forces; the haunting faces are carved in motion (facial action) with quivering and salient features (stigmas and perturbations) sentenced to erasure. The erasure is no more than a predestined prelude to non being. Disfigurement speaks for inner torment which is recursive in a different fashion every time, presenting a fluctuating abruptness of contour ending. The protruding eyes of the first study recedes in the other studies, till they are no longer perceptible, and worse banished in the fourth and fifth studies.

In both cases, the observer witnesses an inner torment expressed with contracted facial features resulting into a varying deformation. In the last selected studies, the turbulence gives precedence to anonymity and its incompressible flow. Silence has replaced turbulence, but motion still prevails this time, with order and composure since the tormented faces have now repudiated resistance.

The artist goes therefore from an upset state to a non-being representational state. Both states are instantaneous despite the fact that in reality the process does require some time which remains undetermined here.

The cessation of resistance is manifested by bent heads in both studies, revealing their growing anonymity. The repudiation allows faces to loosen their features which become less discernible, and motion becomes propitious for erasure to take place. The repeated black and white thin lines are a negation of a former state. They assess the power and the dynamic force of non-being which can not be overcome.

Eyes do not stare, noses do not breathe, and mouths do not usher out words. Faces have lost their contour lines that are replaced by irresistible void.

With the last study, erasure is more advanced, as the former close parallel lines of the fourth study declare a break in their former solidarity. The once close parallel lines rain on the deformed materiality, abandoning its facial status, in favor of void's sovereignty.

Agitated motion is being swallowed by a regulated and relentless motion.

By Sylvie Samani