

5. FORM AND METAMORPHOSIS EMBEDDED WITHIN THE PLASTIC COMPOSITION OF GRAPHIC, SCULPTURAL AND ARCHITECTURAL LANGUAGE IN SCENOGRAPHY

Cosmin Mihai Iateşen²⁴⁸

Abstract: *The syncretic character of arts gained momentum especially in the second half of the XXth century through the diversification and the transmutation that started from the first decades of the regarded century. The plastic correspondances between graphics, painting, architecture and scenography originate from the relation between the perception of volume and becoming of some shape concept's space, from sketch up to props and setting. One can represent volume in plastic arts in a large and diverse variety of possibilities, all the more so in which sculpture is regarded. The elements of language, such as the dot, the line, the spot and the shape, complete their expressivity through the plastic language's value, plastic rhythm, chromatic expressiveness through dominance, contrast and harmony. Through that which signifies or symbolize a representation in a specific context of the composition. According to the sculpting creators and theorists the sculpture disposes of a richer potential of expression than the painting or the graphics. This may be because the sculpture has a certain force generated by a tridimensional configuration while it's volume regenerates. The plastic image that is embraced on in ronde-bosse, attaches and conveys the content of ideas and the piece of art's aesthetic value in scenography, more evidently, through its style (functional or spiritual, according to the century's overview). By amplifying the vibes and the atmosphere of the century's through architecture (where the volume, the surface and the design coordinate with the science and the art) and through the style of the costumes (outliving time and space) one can create the perfect circumstances for the action this is suggested to the characters whichever these may be either in the theatre, cinematography or television.*

Key words: *shape, metamorphosis, graphic, sculptural, painting, architectural, scenography*

The plastic correspondences between graphics, painting, architecture and scenography originate in the perception of volume as a space of genesis for concepts related to form, sketch up to props and setting. Publius Ovidius Naso (43 î. Hr. – 17 d. Hr.) the Latin poet writer, affirmed in *Ars Amandi*, II, 113: *Forma bonum fragile est* (lat) – *Beauty is an ephemeral gift*. In his ethos, the form comprises a certain type of beauty, the emotion produced during the contemplation of art. The dreadful vision from Dali's universe is created from substance, metamorphosed in terrestrial symbols and originating in objects (time related – the watch), zoomorphism (the apocalyptic stallions or the elephants of *St. Anton's Temptation*) or anthropomorphism (*Narcis' Metamorphosis*, 1937 and the monstrous creatures from *The Premonition of Civil War*, 1937).

The elements of its pictorial compositions distort and decompose themselves. The destructive echoes of medieval art are seen within the terrifying universe, specific to the morphology of creation belonging to Jeronimus Bosch. In the 20th century art, there is a constant relationship of contiguity between archetypal forms, their connotations from traditional environments to virtual space, manifested as a projected result of the technological progress. Many forms of art coexist today within the globalization context, due to a diversification of the expression tools of the artistic language, which the creators

²⁴⁸ Assistant PhD, "George Enescu" University of Arts from Iași of Romania, iatecos@yahoo.com

apply within the human relationships. New creative solutions arise within the endless way of seeking the absolute truth in our existence, through the interaction between the vivid and amorphous form. The syncretic character of arts increased in proportion within the second half of the past century, through the diversification and transformation produced in the sphere of languages. In the artistic field, the originality of form is obtained by associating diverse expression ways throughout different fields. Artistic syncretism is therefore based on nature, as a framework of manifestation for the human expression.

One of the paradoxes of the artist's condition is that *he does not really know what he has to do after he finishes his artwork*²⁴⁹. This is a consequence of him detaching from reality, of des-humanization of art from postmodern era. Under the rational, objective veil and the exact sciences confronted with his ethos and reasoning, the artist who does not know what he does is not a true creator²⁵⁰. Our Universe²⁵¹ of artistic activity is composed of spaces and forms that depict it. According to the idea that the *form is the visual aspect* of creatures, objects and natural phenomena²⁵² everything surrounding us has a form. Thus, the substance is taking very diverse forms. Everything embedded in micro and macro cosmos has a form.

Since the human beginnings, drawing was a tool of communication, a bridge between civilizations, which – along the way – got a symbolic function. The artistic contemporaneity is a premise of symbols because of the analytic spirit. In drawing the soul of the image, the dots, the lines and the patches are creating an internal structure of the artwork from the first artistic touch. The Drawing²⁵³ represents the sine-qua-non premise. In the process of metamorphosis²⁵⁴ of the form²⁵⁵. Through a widely accepted convention and keeping the representative character, the focus is on the universal value and the inter-disciplinary role that the graphic representation involves in communication. From one era to another, the motivations of the artistic visions are changing, proving the necessity to transform experiences, specific to human nature in symbols. Sculpture expressively communicates through drawing,

²⁴⁹ Gheorghe Buş – The human experience, artistic image, visual-plastic creativity (complementary perspectives). Ed. Dacia, Cluj Napoca, 2003, apud Florin Maxa – Expressiona and language, apud René Passeron – The pictural opera and the functions of the appearance, Ed. Meridiane, 1982, op.cit., p.23

²⁵⁰ Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, Aesthetics lectures, Vol.1, Ed. Romanian Academy, 1966. Estetica

²⁵¹ Heinrich Lützel – Roads towards Arts, translated by Dorin Oancea, Ed. Meridiane, 1986, op.cit. p.149 – Our existence is assigned to a universe of distinct physical presences, in an unlimited variation, that we can perceive through our senses. All the physical corps perceptible through hearing or sight are defined as forms, and all the accomplishments in arts are extensively connected to the shape of the artwork and its completion.

²⁵² Arnheim, Rudolf, Arts and visual perception, Bucharest, 1979

²⁵³ The drawing – represents the organically integrated form in the image and visual representation, which serves as a fundament for all the extra-artistic fields, generally referring to visual communication - Bartoş, Mihály Jenő, Mural Arts, visual –artistic interferences, Ed. Artes, Iaşi, 2006, op. cit. p. 84.

²⁵⁴ The term of metamorphosis comes from Greek – meta – after, morphe – form, and defines a plastic expression mode, through changes of the standard form, without changing the substantial essence. (cf. www.dexonline.ro).

²⁵⁵ Generally accepted definitions of form: the external aspect of a physically determined presence; the lining or the profile; the lining of a certain physical presence, perceived through sight. Greeks use the term morphe – cover, opposed to eidos – idea.. (cf. www.dexonline.ro).

value, colour and material, adding the volume. The expression²⁵⁶ of metamorphosed forms within a composition, underline the significations that the artwork displays to the “reader” – a high -level understanding of the style of the era.

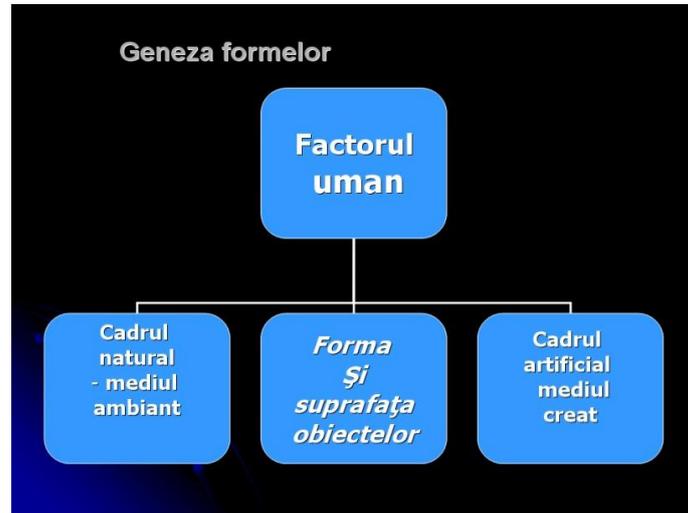


Fig. 1 Genesis of Forms – Cosmin Mihai Iatesen

A general understanding of the concept of form enhances a better delimitation of terminology. The ensemble of the elements able to visually signal any space presence, are designating the concept of form. Since we are born, we are surrounded by diverse forms/shapes, with a different aspect and different functionality, sometimes very similar to each other. The artistic activity begins with the contact between man and the visible world, on an enigmatic fundament, but to express an idea means to create a form²⁵⁷.

Delimitating the meaning of the term through the vocabulary of art critiques help us underline the composure of language tools that build the external aspect of the artwork: colour, line, volume, etc, the result of the creation process, including the fundamental idea standing at the basis of creation. Following these linguistic and connotative explanations, the form dovetails with the creation itself. German dictionary bring several proofs for the idea that the concept of form generates the term of *gestalten*²⁵⁸, which means – the process of creating an artwork. The dissociations of the ways of expression have a structural feature, following analytical goals. The artistic form has more than one definitions, being widely accepted as a result of the artist’s perception. This can be unprompted or elaborated, symmetrical or asymmetrical, geometrical or three-dimensional. In *The Paradigms of arts and beauty, a historical and systemic perspective*, the aesthetician Constantin Aslan focuses on the complex history of form²⁵⁹ memorable from Wladislaw Tatarkiewicz in *The history of*

²⁵⁶ Expression – is the semantic role of lines, colour, sound, form and position, temperature, intensity and modulation, through which all these psychologically and intellectually congregate in a Bostan, Ilie – The dominant contrast in the drawing composition, Ed. Artes, Iași, 2007, op. cit. p. 2.

²⁵⁷ Lucian Raicu – Graphics and Visual between classic and modern, Ed. Paideea, Bucharest, 2002, op. cit. p. 42

²⁵⁸ Arts dictionary, Forms, Techniques and artistic styles,(vol. I and II), Ed. Meridiane, Bucharest, 1995, 1998 – coordinator-Mircea Popescu

²⁵⁹The Form –dating back to the ancient Greeks, is related to the concept of beauty. Its resistance in time since the romans’ era is reflected nowadays in many European languages: Italian, French, Spanish, Romanian,

the six notions. The Polish author delimited the following important aspects of form:

1. The form as a proportions system (resulted from Platon’s research – by respecting the measurements and Plotin – with harmony and shining form)
2. The form – as an external aspect, the colour (Le Corbusier, mentioning the importance of form and not of content)
3. Spatial form – the lining of objects (Giorgio Vasari – unifying the form with the drawing of a human body)
4. The substantial form (the essence) – or the form in the philosophical sense, Toma D’achino and Aristotel – entelechy – the state of completion.
5. The *a priori* form (after Kant, in the Critique of Pure Reasoning)
6. The metamorphosed shape (Umberto Eco in the forms of content. The Aesthetics of Ugliness and Beauty)

In my vision, the interior form of the creator’s spirit is an archetype, determined by a series of intrinsic and extrinsic factors connected to the artist and the act of creation. Along with the time, several concepts of form have been related to the space constituted within the characteristics of each era. Unilaterally, these conceptual delimitations can determine us to affirm that the external form is able to communicate or to support a compositional idea. This brings into discussion the total form, or the form resulted from a comprehensive understanding of its details. Apart from all the mundane aspects, which the form can inherit through the daily condition of humanity, this presents itself as a result of metamorphosed elaboration. This is a reflected in the symmetric disposure of the parts of the object, combining colours and the harmony of the “sounds”. Between the form and content we need to make the following distinction – the form is the lining and the content is the space that can be visually perceived, the substance, or material from which the form is modelled, with an attributed function and significance. The visual elements are the form components of the artwork, such as the line, form, the mass, the space, the dark and light colour nuances, texture, time, movement etc.



Fig. 2 Visual stimuluse’s scheme- adaptation from Mircea Miclea

A series of perception stimulus of form contribute to the organisation of the scenography space: the light, shadow, movement, colour, material. Physically, the light is understood as a phenomenon. From a creator's point of view, this has to be given a great importance, a sine-qua-non condition to reflect the artistic expression. It is the primary condition both to visual perception, but also to the content of painting, sculpture, graphics, tapestry, photography or cinematography. Thus, the wide range of expressing the volume is extremely wide and diverse, particularly in scenography.

The language elements, such as the dot, the line, the patch and form are combining their expressivity through the meaning of value, plastic rhythm. At the same time, they converge through the dominance of chromatic expressivity, contrast and harmony, through what they *symbolize as a representation*²⁶⁰ in a specific composition. *Choosing the most suitable elements of the approached theme, the scenography producer creates through repetition, along all the duration of the show, a specific state of beholder, driving him to the right reception of the message, of the artistic representation*²⁶¹.

Structuring the elements of an artwork so that they can form a balanced, homogenous assembly, able to convey the viewer the creator's idea and emotion represent the fundamental principles of the composition. By using the light, colour, form and movement, we can symbolically embed the unity of the human universe. The widely known scenography producer Ion Truica advises us to take into account the significance of the dominant forms when structuring the scenography space. He underlines the role of the vertical volumes (which bring stability and dominance to the artistic composition, suggesting order, aspiration, dominance, masculinity, morality and dignity), and the use of horizontal forms (suggesting calm, peace, equilibrium, feminism).

Moreover, there is one aspect which cannot be left aside within the composition of scenography – like the rough, rigid or aggressive feature of the oblique forms (*by working with the horizontal volumes, the space becomes active and dynamic*²⁶²). This is based on supporting the “dramatic” moments and their tension through ascendancy or lineage; the former is based on an impetuous background and the second based is related to a grave, tragic, heroic fundament.

The aesthetic function of the use of curves and counter curves convey a dark atmosphere, specific to the baroque style, driven by a unique dynamism, a complete freedom along with a specific undertone of the rococo style. Without doubt, the volumes are connected by architecture through a continuous plastic dialogue with its elements, and harmonized with the background using the light or chromatics. The final goal is to create a warm and dynamic ambiance, for action. Using the line, the value, volume and colour to create an artwork, we

²⁶⁰ Dan Covătaru, Symbol and object in sculpture, Ed. Artes, Iași, 2005

²⁶¹ Truică, Ion – Theory of scenography, , Ed. Junimea, Iași, 2003, op. cit. p. 17

²⁶² Ibidem, p. 19

need to respect the nature's rule, which is in itself impressive through its composition²⁶³.

The composition is the mean to organise and subordinate the expressive elements (in a unitary, homogenous, harmonious and indestructible rhythm) which includes a preoccupation for the selection, proportion, distribution and correlation of elements. The composition is not resumed to a simple sum of principles. This is aimed at creating a coherent unity for qualitative change. Its elements and constitutive parts are keeping their identity through an osmosis generated by an internal force, which is in turn represented by reciprocal attraction through contrast and metamorphosis, structuring the natural elements functionally and morphologically transformed in plastic elements. Stylistically, the specific expression ways become subjective conventions. According to this series of reasons, metamorphosis becomes an important condition within the compositional structuring. Compared to painting and graphics, sculpture has a wider expressive potential due to the force generated by the tri-dimensional configuration and the volume generated in space. The relief or *ronde-bosse* plastic image communicates through a more obvious suggestion power the content of ideas and the aesthetic value of the artwork in scenography, through its style (functional or spiritual, in accordance with the style of the era).

In the art of animation, the contiguity of the plastic language with the marionettes is widely related to movement (with the visual perception) and the space (where the real action of objects is developed on three coordinates: horizontal, vertical and in depth). The plastic space is characterized by three important features which can be distinctively understood. The notion of place (dot, position, zone or the space occupied by a static object) can relate both to the idea of space and surface. The surface is understood as the external part of an object or corp, the superficial layer.

From a plastic point of view, obtaining distinctive features from the surface, grinding, polishing and planning to get gloss, and shining are needed; referring to its texture, we can mention properties such as uniformity with a smooth, velvety aspect. Two dimensions delimit the elongation: width and length, prolongation, surface stretched in space. In scenography, the quality of material and the texture of the surfaces obtained manually or industrially, perceived with the help of light, conferring cant, shine, diaphanous effects by placing the character in the semi-darkness.

Not until long ago, the space has been characterized through three specific dimensions- width, length and height. The latest research qualifies it as four-dimensional. The fourth dimension, understood from Albert Einstein's theory of relativity, on the same principle underlined by Galileo Galilei. The mathematicians Henri Poincaré and Hermann Minkowski have introduced the concept of continuum and four dimensions. In order to create an optical illusion, there is a need of technique and magic and these, from a plastic point of view, are created by modifying the form through metamorphosis. To apply the process

²⁶³ Ilie Bostan, *The dominant contrast in the drawing composition*, Ed. Artes, Iasi, 2007, op.cit., p.13

of metamorphosis on the elements of plastic language in graphic, painting, or architecture, we need to take into account the aspect of space. Even from the beginning of humanity, the space²⁶⁴ was considered a wave of permanent interest in unfolding the daily activity. Referring to Aristotel and Descartes' definitions, the space is a corpus, the product of a mental act – the form of all the external phenomena or the subjective condition of sensibility. Further, the scheme below is a representation of different categories of space, constructed throughout sequent historical stages.

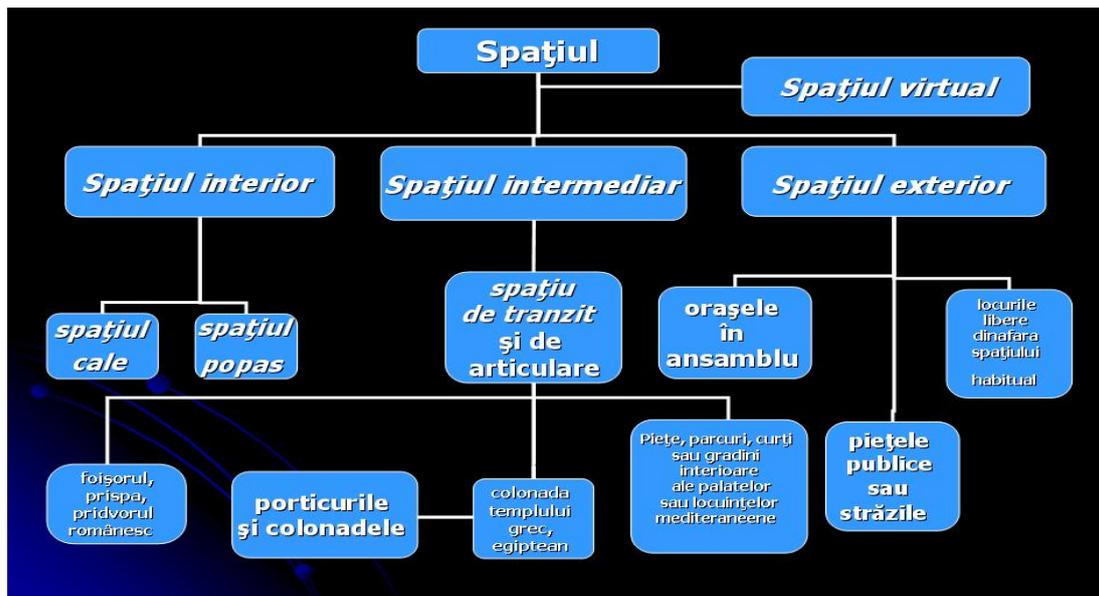


Fig. 3 Types of spaces constructed along the time (Cosmin - Mihai Iașeșen)

Scenography or the plastic composition of an animation show contributes to the reception or living again the past memories, with the hope that the public can retain the emotion produced by the actors and the visual elements represented on the scene. Remodelling a reality and sometimes a fantasy is related to the plastic image created by the scenography producer and it has a few dimensions within the dialogue with the public: it brings events closer to the human soul; it creates the awareness, and complete the satisfaction of going through them, unveiling the interior aspect of the spirit. Once the script has been understood by the scene producer, the artist brainstorms a series of plastic solutions that could bring out the forms – objects, gestures or conflicts, staged by their relevance and value within the producer's conception.

In animated theatre, the marionette is not the only one suggesting actions, intentions and feelings to the spectator; the setting and the stage props portray a particularly important role. The setting amplifies the dramatic action and depending on the context, it can bring out a character. *The formal compilation of arts operates with models that can be exclusively extracted from rationality*²⁶⁵.

²⁶⁴ The Space is defined as: The fundamental form taken by the substance, undetachable from its existence, having a continuous aspect with 3 dimensions which express the order and in which the objects and the processes are displayed simultaneously. (www.dexonline.ro).

²⁶⁵ Ailincăi Cornel – Ailincăi Cornel, Introduction in the visual language grammar, ed. Polirom, Iasi, 2010, p.38

Sometimes there is a harmonic relationship between the pure geometric approach – and the mimesis of nature – as a technical perspective in approaching the forms. Certain natural elements, plastically metamorphosed can be personified and contribute to the artistic reflection of a picture or – metaphorically- of the ensemble. The stage props has been not rightly considered a less important element of the theatrical show. In the art of animation theatre, the objects have an incredible power of suggestion, even when these are not animated, but only brought on the stage to limit a stage. This allows the artist to represent and perform with marionettes with a greater originality.

Creating and choosing the props is not down to the scenography producer only, but to a great extent to the stage production. Stage props have a remarkable role in the animated theatre, being able to suggest ideas and concepts to the same extent as the marionette. Through their metamorphosis, the compositional principle can start from a very simple props objects and be extended to the whole stage space. This is a the visual space combining elements of plastic language with the elements specific to the art of animation.

However, this process can only be understood by looking at the variable of volume. In scenography, the relationship between the costume and the setting has a very real significance. By using the contrasts (warm-cold, complementary or simultaneous) the creator exposes the costumes, which is distinctively observed against the furniture and the other objects. If the setting suggests the static ambience, the costumes are the chromatic, dynamic accents from the space of scenography²⁶⁶.

The Volume, as a result of the spatial unfolding of the assembly image, composed by an infinity of partially articulated images, is identified with a representation of the form in a two-dimensional plan, by representing it through different profiles consisted of light and shadows. By going through those stage by stage, previewing a statue becomes an impressive symphony in which each voice has its own song, but all of them come together in an organic unity, toward a new proportion. As it is widely observed, the concrete volume makes the difference between sculpture and other arts. *Sculpture was the first artistic occupation in the primitive era, [...] although archaeologists disagree on the matter*²⁶⁷. Volume is what makes the peculiarity of sculpture as an art, no matter of type – *ronde - bosse, tutto rondo* or a static corpus.

The artistic spirit is unlimited through the power of imagination (Petre Tutea). Albert Einstein affirmed that *imagination is much more important than knowledge* and John Muir stated that *the power of imagination makes us immortal*. The light effects and the meaningful deformations devolve from the thematic of space cognition. A deformation is a deviation from a specific form. *Through deformation, the form is still a form (eidos) but with a different aspect*

²⁶⁶ Truică, Ion - Theory of Scenography, Ed. Junimea, Iasi, 2003, op.cit. p.58

²⁶⁷ Ion Frunzetti, Frunzetti Ion, Pegas between jelly fish and Perseu – Vol.I, The Discord and reconciliation of sight with the world, Ed.Meridiane, Bucharest, 1985, op.cit. p.225 -226

(or the aspect meant to be)²⁶⁸. Therefore, by breaking the connection with the standard form, deformation becomes pronounced through the modification of volume or the surface of a material (Fig.4). A logical example, from mathematics and geometry can be given by the sequential process of re-shaping a square's four sides, bringing it to more complex forms – rectangles, parallelograms, rhombus.



Fig. 4 –The artistic forms elaborated in relation with stimulus of perception and space.
(C. - M. Iașeșen)

Using the concave and convex mirrors, the 16th century mannerists practiced anamorphosis (*ana* – greek- meaning). The anamorphosis are the direct result of the geometric process²⁶⁹ proving to be pure mathematics. The idea of modifying the dimensions of a rubber holder for painting by stretching it, was leading to not knowing the compositional elements represented. The most convincing examples are the ones represented by the advocate of these conceptions – Jurgis Baltrusaitis. His artwork – *Anamorphosis* – in which the painting of Hans Holbein – *The Ambassadors*- is recognised for the elasticity of the painting frame. Through anamorphosis, the stage prop elements can become characters, can transmit emotions, feelings and get new forms, both aesthetically (symbolically) or functionally (utilitarian).

The light and shadow are two visual components in the metamorphosis of the form, along plastic arts history. These incentives can be compared to the characters of a drama, who confront themselves telling the story. Relevant examples were found by Victor Ieronim Stoichita: Giorgio de Chirico – *The Mystery and melancholy of a street* – 1914 and William Rimmer, *The Shelter toward the target*, 1972²⁷⁰.

²⁶⁸ Mihai Pamfil, Pamfil Mihai, *The Aesthetic perception between returning and constitution*, Ed. Artes, Iasi, 2007, op.cit. p.206

²⁶⁹ Jurgis Baltrusaitis - *Anamorphosis*, edited. Ed.Meridiane, Bucharest, 1975, op.cit., p.5

²⁷⁰ Stoichita Victor Ieronim, *Short history of the shadow*, Ed. Humanitas, Bucharest, 2008, op.cit., p.5

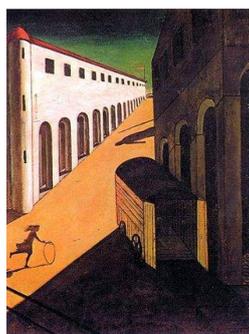


Fig. 5

Fig. 6

Fig. 7

Fig. 5 William Rimmer, *The Twilight of a day* 1869; Fig. 6 Giorgio de Chirico –*Mystery and melancholy of a street* 1914; Fig. 7 William Rimmer, *Shelter toward aim*, 1872.

In the stage space, the light and the shadow, as ways of visual expression in kinetic arts, as well as in painting and sculpture, have a functional feature of synthetizing the message perceived by the public, the receptor. Therefore, depending on the director's concept, the light is artificially driven, the effects are obtained by coordinating and mixing different lighting objects with traditional light sources – such as the candle, the torch, the lamp – leading to special expressive connotations. We can talk about a new stage producer, specialised in lighting design, and following the new technical possibilities dominated by the intervention of computer. This is accurately determining the intensity, trajectory or the position, the rhythm and the colour of the scenography composition. The unlimited variety that the domain of animation integrates proves that when communicating a meaning, anything is impossible. The metamorphosis of objects can always provide an added originality, in mirroring the transfigured reality, through the profoundness and novelty of the marionettes' space.

The amplification of feelings and the era's spirit through architecture (where volume, surface and plan are harmoniously combined at the confluence of science with art) with the costume elements (portraying the time and space) and create the setting of the characters' action in theatre, film or television. Throughout the important architectural elements for scenography, we can mention the windows, the door (under different forms, in which all the styles characterize the interior and the exterior of the buildings, with multiple significations). In addition, important place is given to the arcades (Romanic, Gothic, renescent or baroque) and the columns (which connect the spaces involved stylistically and functionally, as well as the stage movement; this proposes a solemn and monumental atmosphere, comprising a magnificence of each painting moment.

The artwork represents a bridge between the creator and the contemplator. It accumulates, metamorphoses, and generates emotions, through the interior levers of the human beings, of the cultural self. The states, feelings and attitudes often taken and transposed in scenography, along with the new expressivity and polyphony of the form – as a totality of expression ways and the content of the artwork.

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