ALBERT RUBENS and ANDRÁS WOLSKY
"CONCRETE CONSTELLATION"

Opening speech by András Szöllősi-Nagy

Ani Molnár Gallery, Budapest,
3 May 2023

Let me start with a personal confession. When Ani Molnár asked me to say a few words at the opening of the joint exhibition "Concrete constellation" by Albert Rubens and András Wolsky, I hesitated for a few minutes whether I should do it, because I am slowly but surely slipping into the role of the over-acted old busker, which can be off-putting to all but the tender youth - who may still think of me as a maiden. On the other hand, there was the impulse that I could not give up my volunteer work as an advocate of concrete art, because firstly it wouldn't be elegant, and secondly, I can't help but fly high the flag of the new MOMÜ /Balatonfüred and OSAS, a flag of concrete art.

The title of an exhibition is good if it accurately captures the content of the works on display as a whole and is at least ambiguous. The title Concrete Constellation perfectly meets this objective. The word constellation actually means a conjunction of two planets, so it captures the art of the two artists exhibiting art with different basic positions but similar visual compositions. They are united in their creative thinking but differ in their methods and techniques. They are united in their commitment to geometric and/or concrete art, yet they differ in their methods. Two excellent artists, two generations, two countries - and yet: a common visual language, a language that describes space and its structure - its continuity or discontinuity. While Rubens does it from a deterministic basis, Wolsky does it from a statistical approach - both following Einstein's dictum: 'Keep things simple, but no simpler'.

What makes this exhibition as concrete and coherent as its title suggests? It is in its rationality, in its clarity, and in its visual optimism where we find the message that there is a way out of this messed-up world that politics has thoroughly screwed up at almost every level, almost everywhere. Let me say a few words on the underlying content, the relationship between art, science and new technologies, embedded in the context of the relevant achievements of the last hundred years. I hope to fit in the customary time frame of opening speeches, noting that anyone who speaks for more than ten minutes at an opening is capable of other vile things.

The relationship and history of the triumvirate of science, art and technology is not a recent one, since they were in fact united until the Renaissance. It was only after that that their proximity began to loosen and, since the Industrial Revolution, to essentially disintegrate, even if many have longed to create a new unity. The great discoveries of photography and early 20th century physics led to the need for a new synthesis. Hans Arp and El Lissitzky, just one hundred years ago, in the mid-twenties, reviewing the movements of the first years of twentieth-century art, concluded that constructivist "... artists look at the world through the prism of technology. ... Constructivism proves that mathematics equals art; no distinction can be made between a work of art and a

technical product". This exhibition is living proof of Arp and Lissitzky's vision - calculated beauty. Because that is what surrounds us here.

A few years after Arp and Lissitzky, the logical positivist philosopher Rudolf Carnap of the Wiener Kreise gave a talk to the Bauhaus students in Dessau entitled "Wissenschaft und Leben" and told them: "I deal with science, you deal with visible forms; these two are just two different aspects of one life". Although closely related, art is not an illustration of science. The inverted skewed symmetry is aptly summed up by Béla Julesz, who declared that 'science is the substitute for art'.

Albert Rubens is not an abstract artist, because he is not concerned with "leaving behind the unimportant", but with presenting a completely new concrete reality, and thus, by definition, he creates concrete works in the strict sense of Theo van Doesburg's meaning, where "The work cannot contain any natural form, sense or sentimentality. We want to exclude lyricism, dramatism, symbolism...". This reality does exist, but we have not noticed it. Namely, the 2D representation of different diagonals of a 3D cube or a slab of different thicknesses, leaving out the other parts, creates a new visual sign, which can in fact be transformed into each other, thus fulfilling the requirements of a visual language of sentences. A new concrete world is thus created from the simple 3D shape, the hexahedron, as a basic element of the language, following the dialectic of " it is there - it is not there ".

Another element of the constellation is András Wolsky - and chance. Art, and thus Wolsky, reflects the age in which it exists with its own particular means. It is certainly no coincidence, however, that the understanding of the role of probability in the description of fundamental physical phenomena and the representation of chance in art coincide very closely in time. The role of chance in the workings of the micro and macro world, and probability as such, appeared in theoretical physics as early as the beginning of the last century.

The physicist Gregory Chaitin's pertinent, albeit slightly cheeky, comment is intriguing:

"Probability is a fundamental but much debated idea in the physics of our century. When Einstein said that God does not play with dice, why did he say that? Because in subatomic physics, the possibility of determining the future is lost. The fundamental laws are mere statistics".

Wolsky follows Max Bense's information aesthetics established in the mid-sixties, namely that a random number generator ensures the "unpredictability" of a work of art, which is a feature of programmed art. The painter has a 'macro-aesthetic concept', but until the last detail is completed, he does not know what the 'micro-aesthetic' details will be - therein lies, to quote e, the 'elusive nature of surprise'. For Wolsky, the determinate structure (the macro-aesthetic concept), the Wolsky angles, and the stochastic (chance) effect as a blend of the micro-aesthetic component are at the heart of his visual research. It is important to note that for Wolsky, as for other algorithmic artists, chance is not a contingency, but a conscious part of, and a partner in, the process of image-making. He consciously employs chance and reflects on the time in

which it exists - recognising that in it, dynamic change and chance are substantive drivers.

Both stars of today's exhibition, or constellation, follow Abraham Moles' observation:

"Experimentation is the systematic exploration of possibilities that is fundamentally different from trial-and-error. ... Experimentation is an algorithmic task ...".

The processes of science and art are thus closely linked through experimentation. Traditional art follows the trial-and-error principle, as opposed to the consistency, repeatability and rigour of scientific experimentation. The visual research programme of Rubens and Wolsky is fundamentally different from the intuitive expression of the "spontaneous genius artist". Both artists are algorithmic, striving for completeness of their systems and offering new possibilities in the process of understanding the meaning of the image.

That's all for a light and brief introduction, in the hope that it will help you understand and absorb the messages of the exhibition.