

Ulyana Gumeniuk (UK/UKR)

Artist Statement

One of the main driving factors behind my work has been an attempt to dissect the 'problem of understanding the world', including oneself and our knowledge, as a part of the world, and moreover that everything is connected to everything else no matter how tenuous or even invisible the link.

For me painting practice is the means by which to try and achieve this understanding. Painting in a sense then gives the opportunity of a type of 'out of body experience' via which the surface of the canvas becomes a workshop or laboratory for experience. The aim is not necessarily the end result, but the result is nevertheless the aim of an attempt to 'work things out' within the boundary of the canvas itself.

In his book "Proportion Science Philosophy and Architecture", Richard Padovan observes:" In order to know anything about the world, we have to discover regularities in it. These regularities can be explained, not by assuming they are inherent in nature and that nature impresses them on the mind but that they are inherent in the mind and the mind impresses them on nature." [1]

This observation reflects perfectly my point of departure and the construction of a work utilizing the many layers, of what I call "problem investigation" that comprise the basis for my paintings.

Through associative imagery my work investigates the tension between the private, inner world and personal experiences of the individual on the one hand, and the wider, social and cultural world of which that individual is a part, on the other. This is approached through a meshing of apparently highly traditional figurative painting with radically contemporary elements.

Using traditional oil painting techniques learnt in part through copying the works of artists such as Rubens, Velasquez, Duyster; these techniques are then filtered by a contemporary sensibility, manifest, for example, in a subtle undercutting of conventions of perspective, or in a modernist approach to working with colour which clashes productively with the force of traditional elements.

A further important aspect is the use of mathematical formulae which have come to exist as the expression of various cosmologies, in order to determine structural and underlying elements of the compositions. A perfect work of art (if that is achievable) is a conglomeration of all of these elements fitted, layered and stacked together coherently,

referencing one another in such a dynamic way as to create a new dimension, not so much a third dimension (from the two dimensional picture) but more an otherwise invisible dimension that transcends the boundary of the picture plane and comes together in the minds eye of the viewer.

I aim to execute a series of large scale paintings which in their making would follow a classical tradition of Historical painting.

It is known that Rubens took an active part in European political life where his allegorical paintings played an active role in negotiations as well as being a record of current political affairs.

Velásquez work was informed through 'academies' or informal groups that flourished in Seville in the 17th century where; " Poets, scholars, artists and men of letters would gather in his house and those of other eminent figures in the city to discuss questions of literary and artistic theory..." [2]

Through this set of new works I aim to analyze large-scale systems by examining the relationships and functions of the smallest constituent elements of such systems, which range from cultural practices, the family unit, class division or structure and work associated practices and their visual manifestations through the physical body and architecture. An examination of infrastructures particularly social, political and cultural phenomena would be key to this study; regarding the elements of infrastructures as "relational," not as independent entities.

The issues addressed through the execution of paintings would be an investigation of power relationships, current political social and economic relations and of the private and individual experience of them, for example: The representation of the body in a context of military economy, globalisation, fuel dependent economies and ecology, in a capitalist consumer driven society unwilling to change its direction or slow down.

Compositionally each layer will be developed as a geometrical structure based on classical mathematical notions/cosmologies and attempts to express the universe through mathematical formulae, also through a formalist approach of 20th century artists whilst also using contemporary associative imagery and rhythmic elements derived from visual observations and fieldwork.

Application of paint and execution of work as in the majority of my paintings would be based on traditional painting techniques influenced by 17th and 18th century painting. While most of my application of paint is tied up with representation of form I also use more spontaneous paint application, not dissimilar to the F. Bacons 'paint dubs' in order " to give viewers the impression of a calculated accident..., in order to create a further dimension of intensity, to distract them from the familiar motifs of a composition that he worked out to the last detail." [3]

By creating an image using this system with layers of visual information, allegory, metaphor and haphazard interconnection I hope to encourage viewers to spend time looking at the image and unfold various aspects of the theme, to go deeper in to investigating his or her own understanding of the subject.

1 R.Padovan , "Proportion, Science, Philosophy, Architecture".

2 National Gallery Catalog, " Velásquez"

3 "Francis Bacon and the Tradition of Art", Barbara Steffen, "Chance and the tradition of art in Francis Bacons work".