



VICTOR HAGEA AMAZING!

WORLD OF ART







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AMAZING!



MÜLLERSCHE VOLKSBÜCHER MÜNCHEN 2006 DETAIL 12,5x19 IN. / 31,5x48 CM
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MÜLLERSCHE VOLKSBÜCHER MÜNCHEN 2006 ORIGINAL 12,5x19 IN. / 31,5x48 CM



AMAZING ART
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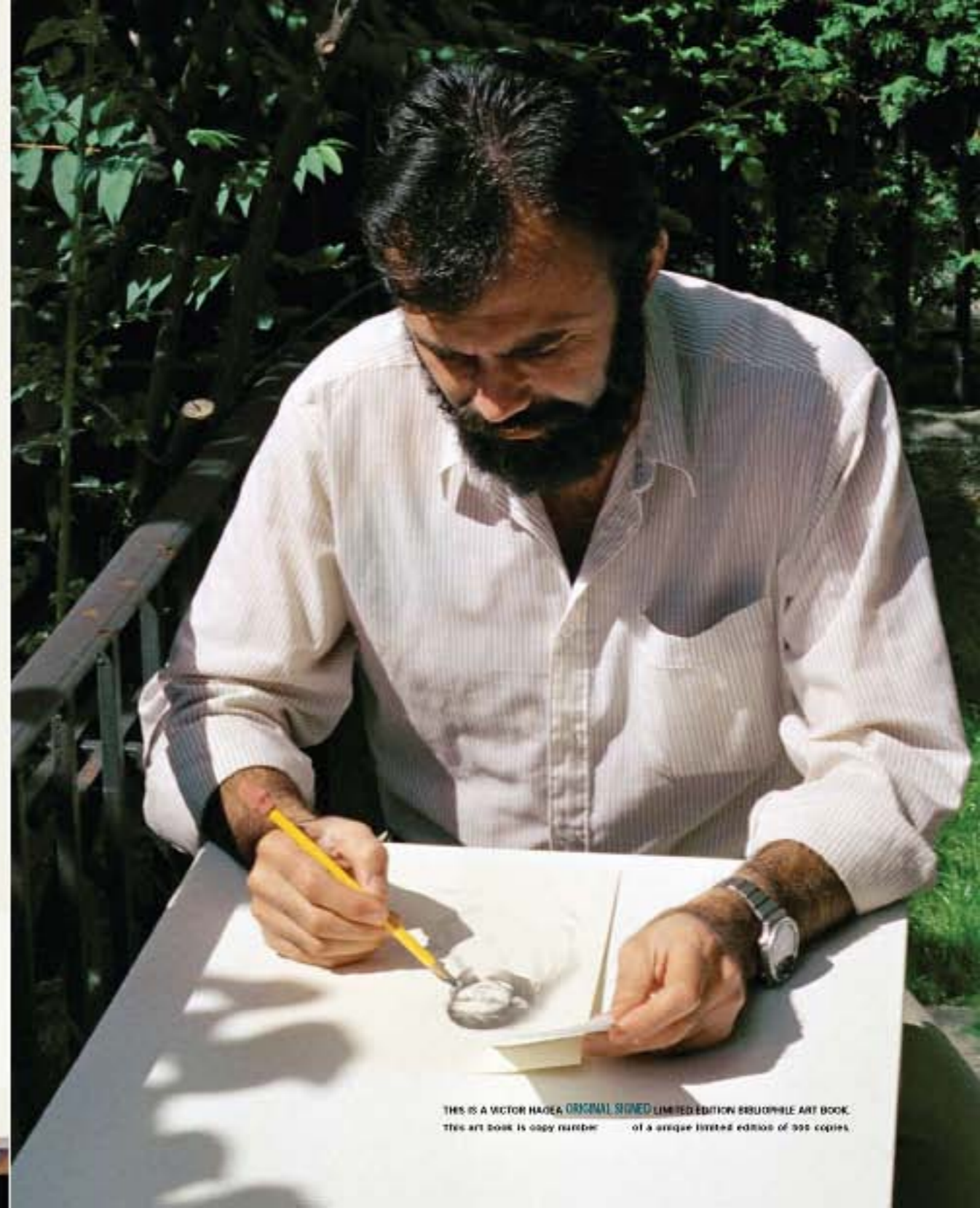
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VICTOR HAGEA



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PROTAGONISTS



Victor Hagea's painting is the proscenium of a strange theatre stage with costumed bodies, decorum, and the usual dramatic props. This is a masked show, a magic tableau vivant set up as a theatre of enchantment, whose director might be the artist himself, disguised (albeit unmasked). As a *sumiller de cortina* (the one invested to lift up the curtain), just like Nieto in *Las Meninas*, he directs the play back stage, represented in the background of the painting. There are however few other unmasked protagonists in the picture, like for example the nude. It is not clear whether she is involved in the performance, or is just mixing up in this dreamy stage space, but one of the masked protagonists seems to unwill/reveal theatrically her naked body. There is also the romantic couple in the foreground, which seems to be surprised at the point of withdrawal from the stage, perhaps for another play. As we shall see later, their "exit" seems to be a Romance.

The fact is that with his *Protagonists* Hagea reminds us something very important that we tend to forget all the time. This has something to do with the human condition. Victor Hagea takes us again into a deep ontological theme, which could be traced back to Plato. According to Plato, man has been originally constructed as a toy (*paignon*) for God, possibly as a plaything (*hos paignon*) or possibly with some more serious purpose. This is "the finest thing about him" (Plato, *Law I* 644 d-e). Therefore man must fall in with his role and make play as perfect as possible. One should not waste life on trifles, but make play as



1 PROTAGONISTS 1999 OIL ON CANVAS 251x230 IN. / 648x74 CM.

PROTAGONISTES 2005 HILDE SUR TOILE 251x230 IN. / 648x74 CM.
PROTAGONISTEN 2005 ÖL AUF LEINWAND 251x230 IN. / 648x74 CM.
PROTAGONISTI 2005 ULEI PE PANZA 251x230 IN. / 648x74 CM.

Hagea's Magic Theatre
-The World as Stage

ROMANCE



perfect as possible: "All of us, then, men and women alike, must fall in with our role and spend life in making our play as perfect as possible..." As a matter of fact man did so several times throughout time, playing more or less a good play, but the urge to return to play has been always powerful, and the artists have expressed it in various ways. Most evocative remains no doubt the Shakespearean line from the monologue of the melancholy Jacques about the world as a stage on which: "all the men and women merely players; They have their exits and their entrances."

But why are so fascinating these masked protagonists of Victor Hagea? What makes their apparition so intriguing? Their bodies, like über-marionettes, are larger than life, unfamiliar or, as Freud might say, "uncanny" (*unheimliche*), by contrast to the human body. But it is exactly this otherness of their body which makes them instrumental to bridge to the beyond, to inscribe mystery into the present. These bodies seem to be some proxies from another world, able to establish the contact with the invisible, making present the absent in a magic way. At once, in time and no time, there are bridging between here and there, between then and now. Signs of an epiphany, reminders of our beginnings, the players/protagonists of Victor Hagea have perhaps the function to keep alive the memory of the original play. We don't know exactly what they play, and what is the dramatic plot of their play; but no doubt the very play is the condition and the force of their ontological mode of being, and this is a constant challenge for mankind, which necessarily goes through imperfections and faults.



As for perfection and grace, such attributes seem to remain apparently exclusive for the über-marionette and the doll. This is so because they perfectly seem to imitate the innocence state of man in Paradise, now lost. This idea one could find at Rilke, Klee, Craig, and many other artists or thinkers. The point is that the fall brought man consciousness, which became the source of passions. Man is halfway between the unconscious puppet and an infinite knowing divinity; he is neither a "Gliedermann" nor "Gott." (Rilke) By contrast, the un-aware puppet is graceful because it reminds of a golden age, the original paradisiac state of man.

ROMANCE

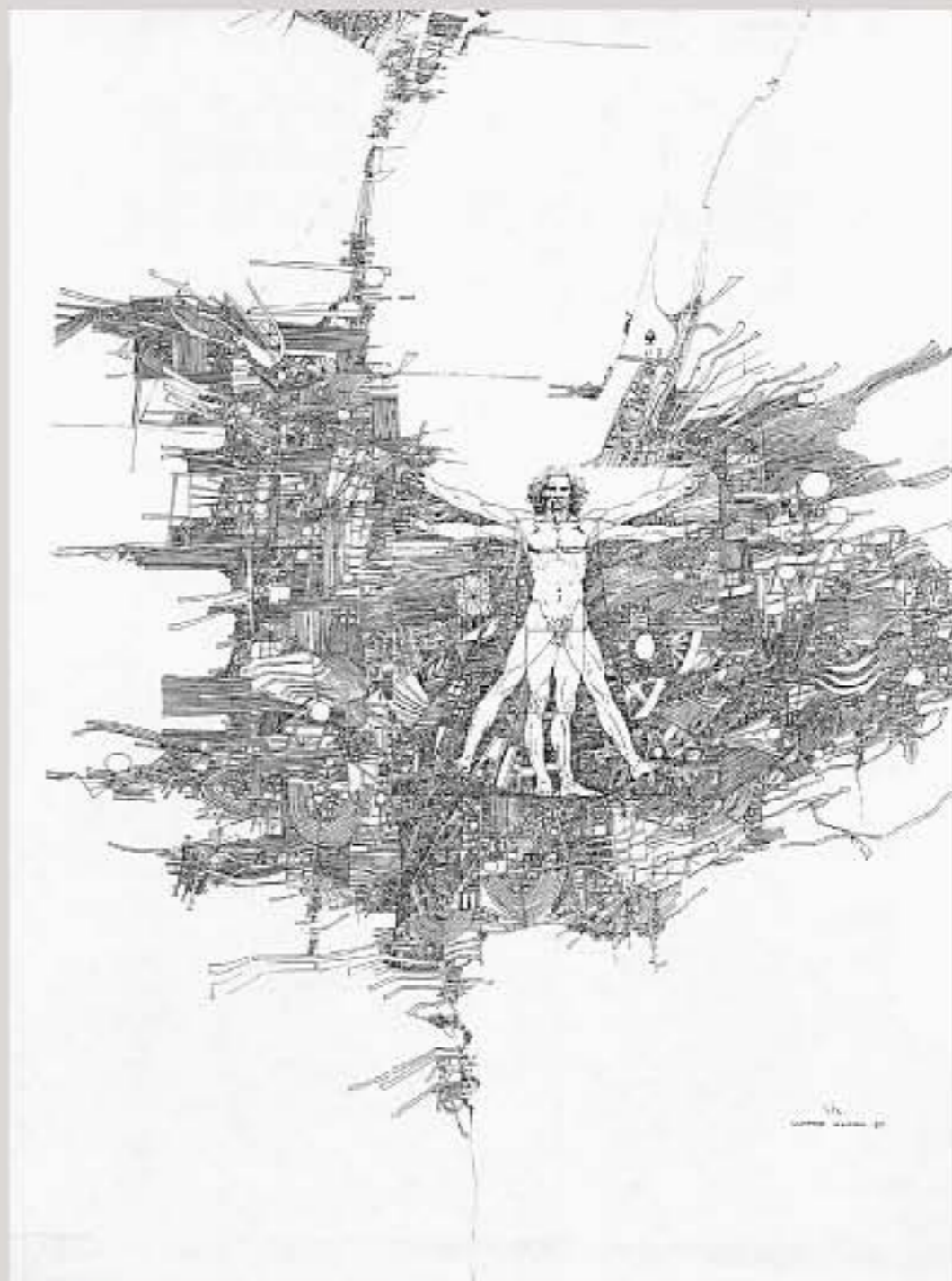
Victor Hagea's *Romance* brings close to the eye that sacrosanct graceful presence of the unaware doll. Both sublime and dominant in her appearance, she holds, as it were, the dice of fate, the cards, or, as Rilke might say, holding the keys back to Paradise. Apparently, a puppet is a thing, soulless matter. But for some artists, obviously for Hagea too, it was a special "thing." It has a special significance. Its close resemblance and dissimilarity with the human is disconcerting. It places the puppet in between realms. It introduces a paradox. The puppet is paradoxical. It could be "less-than-a-thing," says Rilke. On some occasions, "it" could be more than a human; she/he could hold a super-body. But it always seems to hide a secret. Perhaps, the secret of our origins: the human-pairagon, the companion of gods praised by Plato. Specifically for

Rilke, the "wholeness" of the inanimate object comes from the absence of consciousness, which is the source of passions and torment. Therefore, the puppet or the doll could be called perfect, man is imperfect. But among perfect things, the doll was credited by Rilke with a quality more special, more absolute than that of other things, even the marionette. The marionette is nothing but fantasy, but the doll has none, and therefore so much "less than a thing." The doll is a "Being-less-than-a-thing," and it is this truth in its irrevocability that makes the secret of her absolute superiority. (Rainer Maria Rilke, *Sämtliche Werke*, Band VI, Frankfurt, 1966, p. 1069)

All this makes a great contrast to the romantic couple in the foreground. The passionless gaze and the impassible body of the puppet run in opposition to the tender feeling and passionate relation in which the couple is engaged. They look like the proto couple of Adam and Eve before their adventure in Paradise. The amniotic liquid seems to point out to some primordial waters, before creation, as water is the arché, according to Thales, the first element of creation. But the threatening appearance of water points out also to the deluge, or to some lethal drama, which relates also to the unconscious, which governs psychologically man's relationship with woman. There is an archetypal connection between water and its generative powers and woman, in which in a mysterious way creation and death are intertwined.

Nicoletta Isar

Copenhagen October 2008



FRAMES



Framing—Disframing the Body

Victor Hagea's *Frames* is a poetical vision on framing and dis-framing the body. But what kind of body we are speaking about? Dominant in the foreground is the hybrid body of the centaur: half-man, half-beast he is framed within the limits of his condition. Hands bound with a strong rope, stretched behind, he nostalgically turns his gaze backwards towards an invisible and impossible horizon, which he will never attain.

Above the composition, in a quite opposite attitude to this ethotic and irrational figure of the centaur, an antropomorphic kind of angel is ready to take off. Upright, winged arms amply open, but blindfolded eyes, she is however ready to fly. One may first ask the question why is so that the angels are always taking antropomorphic forms? Why are they dissimulations of human beings? Apparently, they take human form for some symbolic reason. Let us hear what Pseudo-Dionysius has to say on this matter: "But (the angels) are described in human form on account of (human) intelligence, and they have powers of sight directed upwards, and because (humans) have the upright ... form, and the ability to lead and command according to nature, (because humans live) the least according to sensation as opposed to the other powers that lead illogical lives, and (human nature) masters all of it by the strength of its spirit, and by the dominance of the logical knowledge, and according to the free and unfettered nature of (the human) soul." (*De Coelesti Hierarchia*, XV:3)



FRAMES 2005 OIL ON CANVAS 32X24 IN. / 82X61 CM

FRAMES 2005 OIL ON CANVAS 32X24 IN. / 82X61 CM
FRAMES 2005 OIL ON CANVAS 32X24 IN. / 82X61 CM
FRAMES 2005 OIL ON CANVAS 32X24 IN. / 82X61 CM

If this is true – and this is apparently a mystagogical (secret) knowledge – then we can interpret Victor Hagea's vision (itself a kind of mystagogical work in its own rights), as a vision of the antagonistic forces of the irrational (illogical) and the spiritual (angelic), which challenge the body to frame or, respectively, to dis-frame it. Simply put it, the irrational enchains, frames, and limits the body, whereas the spirit makes one free, it is the gift of fly, which makes one soar like a bird: "frei der Vogel in the Luft" (free as the bird in the air). Dramatic, spectacular in its visual appearance, the laminar fold engulfs the flying body of the angel, stressing once more its un-framing vital impetus ("élan vital"). The fold is a figure of the invisible anima, a visual sign and echo of the spiritual soul. It is precisely this force that breaks down the limit of the frame, dis-framing the body from the fetters of nature.

But why is it so that the anthropomorphic angel has blindfolded eyes? Unlike the centaur, she has free hands but is blindfolded. At first glance, one may think of the iconography of the justice, usually depicted this way. And it may be so that we have here in Hagea's *Frames* a combined symbolism of freedom and justice as two compound elements of the superior human condition, which derive one from the other one. The bandage over the angel's eyes alludes to the incorrupt justice and clear-sighted instance, which respects the rights of us all, and this is a condition of freedom as well.

Nicoletta Isar

Copenhagen 2nd October 2008

HEROES OF STUDIO



The studio as
hierophanic space



HEROES OF STUDIO 2006 OIL ON CANVAS 228x24 IN / 583x61 CM

HEROES OF STUDIO 2006 OIL ON CANVAS 228x24 IN / 583x61 CM
ATELIERSTUDEO 2006 OIL ON CANVAS 228x24 IN / 583x61 CM
VIA DE ATCHER 2006 OIL ON CANVAS 228x24 IN / 583x61 CM

The title of the painting points out to the personages inhabiting the artist's studio, in short, the models caught up in various hypostases and attitudes. One could see a model in flesh and bones, sitting, absorbed in a state of contemplative expectation of her creator; then, different statues, represented in stone (alabaster), or illusionistic depicted on the canvas placed on the easel. From this perspective, there is apparently nothing special about this studio, it is no different from any other painting studio. Yet this painting exemplary points out again to different modes of creation in pictorial representation – a theme recurrent throughout Hagea's work. This is how one should understand the presence of the bound statue of Marsyas in painting, depicted on the easel. This is a dramatic vision touching upon the origins and nature of creation. Marsyas is bound up and flayed by Apollo after his defeat in front of the god of music and poetry. By flaying Marsyas, Apollo, the winner of the contest, wanted to show that creation is a painful endeavour, which necessarily involves sacrifice. Hagea intensifies this perception by playing on the visual contrast between the free winged statue of Nike and the bound Marsyas. But there is definitely something more in the atmosphere, impossible to describe, like the air, or the perfume, which makes the studio even more dense in meaning. There is no wonder that about the so-called stone porus, resembling the marble Paros by its whiteness and its hardness, it was said that has the power to conserve intact the bodies. What we know about the marble of Paros is that it has itself the reputation to preserve admirably the incense. Therefore, one must not overlook that this vast studio, the recipient in which these heroic bodies evolve, is all made out of marble.

Different hystologic textures of marble pave the floor of the studio, and wrap around this magic recipient, which is the laboratory of artistic creation. If we follow the idea that each kind of marble has veins running through it, one may say that the impression of a veined marble (marmo macchiato) is nothing but a symptom of incarnation (macchiera della carne). The whole space of the studio looks like a vast open incarnated body, the sacrosanct temple, where the act of creation goes from gestation to revelation. Like the living flesh of the altar upon which the sacrifice is usually performed, this studio projects the same vision of hierophanic space where the artist himself silently performs his own sacrifice, in the likeness of the Abrahamic gesture. Like an enormous ampula, holding the incense or oil brought from the holy place, this space made out of a kind of porous stone keeps heroes immortal, turning them in a kind of reliques. Pale bodies, images of mineral luminosity, they are epiphanic signs of creation in its Apollonian instantiation. On the painter's easel, itself a sort of altar table in the likeness of the sacrosanct space of the studio, the image of Marsyas dominates as a metaphor of the creative labour. What Heroes of Studio actually wants to visually tell us is about the artistic credo of the artist, which is exemplary for the human race as a whole. This is about the struggle in which he is caught up by the dynamic forces of the Apollonian and of the Dionysian (Marsyas being a minister of Dionysus, the god of ecstasy) – the two divine models that he adopts in order to overcome his limited human condition.

Nicoletta Isar

25th October 2008

In his book *How to Destroy Painting*, devoted to the art of Caravaggio, the French philosopher Louis Marin discusses the contribution of interplay between light and shadow in the painterly transformation achieved by Caravaggio. Marin opens up his chapter "On Light, Shadow, and Narrative" with Mancini's words, an art collector and contemporary art critic of Caravaggio. Mancini shows how the play of light and shadow makes impossible the narrative in Caravaggio's painting. The light is so bright and the shadow so dark as to create a certain sense of depth in the painting, which makes the story impossible to unfold. For that reason, concludes Mancini, these procedures are not appropriate for the composition of a story, and the expression of emotion. Of course, this is the point of view of the art critic defending the principles of Classical representation. But according to Marin, what is at stake in Caravaggio's painting is what is at stake in all paintings. And it is exactly these procedures that led to the revolutionary shift performed by Caravaggio, "destroying" the representation. The question raised by Caravaggio in his art concerns the destruction of the painting in its Classical form, as well as the pleasure and jouissance the painting produces.



Lights and Shadows

Light and shadow are powerful means of destruction and resurrection of painting. They destroy the mere re-presentation of a story, in order to bring forth the unique moment of life of creation in its utmost presence, in which painting shows its power as presentation. Light and shadow provide that unique pleasure of the contemplation of the moment, in which painting comes forth as sacrosanct instant. In short, this binomial opposition turns painting into a moment of presence, a presentation, radically distinct from mere re-presentation. A presentation is a story without story, because it does not properly narrate about something else, but in which painting itself voices its own story in the present. This is called the pregnant moment of painting, in which the contribution of light and shadow is capital, in their encounter suspending all time, history, and story. This is the instance in which art overcomes time, making image pregnant with meaning in a continuous present tense.

Victor Hagea's painting *Lights and Shadows* shares in many ways the same artistic credo as Caravaggio. His poetic of image holds that radical and passionate aura. It brings forth in this painting a Venetian drama, which is a drama without a particular narrative, but the suspension in time of a magic momentum. This is the moment when lights meets shadows to create a universe of erosion, mystery and mist – an erotic space of dissolution. Hagea's *Light and Shadows* is the instantiation of painting as a poetical state of mind, the immediate presentation of the inspiring lofty moment in which the hieroglyph-like body of the woman curves her silhouette in the air, as if eroded by the atmospheric mist. Yet she seems to dwell so firmly on the squared cube, the only solid object in the picture, albeit a phantasm of perception, a sublime illusionistic encounter between sharp light and deep shadow. The visual game of craft Hagea is playing is a finely tuned, verging on magical touch of brush.

Nicoletta Isar

25th October 2008





1551/2017 HAGEA: SHIRT TITLE: 3'10"X4' IN. /130X106 CM.
 OCH ALISCHWÄSTE: SHIRT OL. AIR: LEINWAND: 3'10"X4' IN. /130X106 CM.
 HÄHNLE: 2007 SKEL PE: BANZA: 3'10"X4' IN. /130X106 CM.

7 THE CHOSEN ONE 2007 OIL ON CANVAS 5'1X4' IN. /130X106 CM.

BAROQUE VISION

Fold upon fold, fold after fold, the endless coiling of the fold in the soul that goes on to infinity – this is the characteristic of the Baroque. According to the contemporary French philosopher, Gilles Deleuze, the Baroque is a state of soul not just a historical momentum per se. The Baroque endlessly creates – like a melody – twists and turns, folds in the soul. And in return, resonant like a sounding box, the soul renders audible the inaudible, the movements from far below, the coils of matter and the folds in the soul.

*If this is the Baroque, then Victor Hagea's vision with his folded universe is Baroque by excellence. It is the very instantiation in the visible of that ineffable flexion of ever turbulent motion in the soul. A world consistently to be unveiled! There is always a veiled body in the painting, a sky wrapped in a turbulent curtain. There is something primordial about this vast, overwhelming spectacular curtained universe: the theatrum mundi of Hagea's visions. I will try to discover it in small steps and installments (the body, the animate naked or costumed flesh, the soul, the inanimate matter/the things/tes), following its natural un-folding. Therefore, perhaps, the most appropriate mode of seeing of this vision seems to be Deleuze's folding-unfolding fold: "I am forever unfolding between two folds, and if to perceive means to unfold, then I am forever perceiving within the folds." (G. Deleuze, *The Fold*, 93) And of course, everything must begin with the Thread – the thread*



Of Folds, Body, and Res

of Ariadne – out of which this paradoxical reality, the tiny interstice of his canvases, is weaved out, which the French so beautifully reflects in the word-play *voile-toile*.^[1]

The *Chosen One* (2001) is, among folds, the impersonation of the Fold, matter which reveals its *parlant* texture in a way that testifies how fold could become power, how texturology becomes logology. This crying out of the fold, engulfed by the force beneath, performs the imperative eligibility of the One. This might be briefly the meaning of such perplex vision of soteriologic hands coming out from a lanunar flow of the heavenly curtain. The overwhelming vision of a faceless breath incarnated by the purple curtain is a reversed persona (the face). It turns face (a noun, a presence) into an action, the un-negotiable verb of possession expressed by the cramped hands – the venous folds of the veins.

The folds are in the soul like the veins in the marble, says also Deleuze; the same image is applied to the soul and to the marble, it is why the folds are like the veins. Sometimes the veins are the twisted coils of matter; sometimes the veins are the innate ideas in the soul. Matter is marble and soul is marble, and they both partake of the same substance whose curvature extends according to the fluidity of matter and the elasticity of the bodies. Such is the curve of the female melodic body in the *Dream* (2001), mused by the *Sinuuous* line of Beauty, which once was (still is) a joy forever for William Hogarth (1697-1764).

Essentially pliable, arched by the “elastic force” of the invisible psyche, her body emerges in the visible as a hypnotic reflection of some compressive force which works on matter. Matter coiling inwardly into the shells spread around her bed, echoing inaudibly the deep sound of the deep sea heart only by her in a swift unfolding dream. Curtains of waters, waves of iridescent golden light, mute cascades dripping in the folds. A vision of primeval anima made out of the most ineffable substance of dream, water, and soul – the primordial matter of negative femininity. We recognize the Leibnizian horizon of bodies that once inspired Deleuze meditating upon flexible or elastic bodies coherent in their folds. But neither Leibniz nor Deleuze has directly inspired Hagea’s vision, yet they both attest through their philosophical thinking the paradigmatic nature of the Baroque fold, the enduring power of this vision beyond time. The fold is the paradigm which secretly informs the artistic inspiration in time and beyond time, and this should be so because the fold is in the soul. Hagea’s poetics of serpentine bodies is a refreshing vision, indeed, particularly after the discontent with the abject bodies, the exquisite corps of postmodernity. What Hagea does is to put in a new perspective the figurative tradition, and struggle for the wakening of the gods. He wants by all means to recuperate the original splendour of human anatomy in its sacrosanct and mysterious origination. Yet his gods and goddesses, marble-like or elastic flesh, are mostly in a dormant state, like the “sleeping waters” ^[2] of the primordial chaos.



1. DREAM 2001 OIL ON CANVAS 40X33 IN. / 100X85 CM.

100% 2001 100% OIL ON CANVAS 40X33 IN. / 100X85 CM.
 100% 2001 OIL ON CANVAS 40X33 IN. / 100X85 CM.
 100% 2001 OIL ON CANVAS 40X33 IN. / 100X85 CM.

To understand Hagea's ontology of the body one must turn to his *Genesis*. Out of the thread of the "golden chain" (*auræa catena*) of Homer (*Iliad*, the eighth book) our fate is frailly suspended and framed. The drama of Creation/Genesis is the drama of waking out from the state of white statuary innocence to a fleshly presence. This is a spectacular burst out, an act of epiphany and pure revelation, which makes the carcass of the inanimate body of the statue crack down. It is out of the vitality of the curtain again, with its flesh-skin symbolism, that the body reveals its whole splendour. The subtle, translucent body is a prolongation of the flamed curtain, which animates upwardly the body with its strong vitalism. It animates and gives *anima* (soul) to the body, as folds are in the soul (*anima*) (Deleuze, 23). But the soul is itself a higher point of another nature, "the point of inflection," with some phenomenological affinity with the cosmic *clinamen* (inclination) of Michel Serres describing his turbulent cosmos in *status nascendi*, which has some affinity with Derrida's "clîn d'bymen" in the flow of primordial rhythms. From this perspective, *Genesis* appears as the instantiation of the feminine Soul in its cosmogenetic state, which is a rise upwardly, as well as a fall, an inclination, indeed, "une chute rythmée", or "une cadence inclinée." (Derrida, "La Double Séance," *La Dissémination*, 293) This gives perhaps the figure a sort of yearning air, the faculty of longing, which reflects an inner struggle typical for the airy imagination described by Gaston Bachelard in his *Air and Dreams* (1988), but also taken up long ago, in 1499, by Poliphilo's erotic phantasy, *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili* (*The Strife of Love in a Dream*).

Genesis – with her open mouth – has some kind of voice, although inaudible, a primordial bliss perhaps, which is the grain that constitutes *materia prima* of voice, which proffers the first scream, the primal utterance. There is truly no body and soul as such without a voice, says Aristotle, because there is no soul without a voice. As Aristotle points out in his *De anima*, "Voice is a kind of sound characteristic of what has soul in it; nothing that is without soul utters voice." *Genesis* is a vocal epiphany, as much as it is a visual apparition. Her voice echoes the sonorous body, splendid in its visual completion – and thus is the end of Creation, the fulfilment of *Genesis*! The frame cuts off this vision, framing the dream in a shot of moment infringing its anachronicity.

But the fold seems to affect all kinds of material, the woods, the waters, papers, fabrics, living tissues, which makes the fold "a form of expression," "Gestaltung," "the genetic element or the line of infinite inflexion." (Deleuze) All this is visually present in most of Hagea's painting; moreover, in his most fascinating and intriguing tin foils, brazen silver-plates, and metaline pliable surfaces of endless squared folded sheets, such as in the *Unveiling*, *Chilean Wine*, *Forgotten Things*, *Italian Project*, which makes yet again the pliable fold an exemplary form of exploring the region of things, the subcutaneous tissue in the anatomy of *res*. To this vision I will now turn.

Nicoletta Isar,
Copenhagen, 12th April 2008



T. GENESIS 2003 OIL ON CANVAS 40X33 IN. / 100X85 CM

GENESE 2003 OIL SUO TAVOLA 100X85 CM / 100X85 CM
 GENESE 2003 OIL SUO TAVOLA 100X85 CM / 100X85 CM
 GENESE 2003 OIL SUO TAVOLA 100X85 CM / 100X85 CM

One thing must be said from the beginning. Victor Hagea has a kind of conflicting and inimical relation with time, more exactly, with the Chrono(s)-logical Time. This adversity towards chronological time could be described as some state of mind and being in the world. Shortly, it is a matter of either, to be possessed by Time, or to possess it. In Hagea's ontology, the human condition unfolds between these two states of being: the condition of "man under Time" and of "man subjugating Time" or "time being subjugated by Man." Time is a "relative matter" anyways, confessed the artist in one of our philosophical chats, to which I will further refer. "If I am outside time – he said – I am the Master of Time: I find myself in the Absolute. One must by all means remain outside time and not allow to be possessed by it. Then, one is free."

There is not one single painting in Hagea's creation that is not ontologically implicated. Creation is for him a mode of personal ontological clarification. But the painting *The Children of Chronos* seems to touch upon a most crucial aspect with existential relevance for the artist. It contains his credo as an artist, as a man-artist in the world. His credo carries inevitably the fear against anything that might threaten his freedom

THE CHILDREN OF CHRONOS



The Sunset of God-Time

as artist, and prevent his encounter with the Absolute. Although very personal in its origins and its expression, the painting has some universal value to convey: it concerns the humanity as a whole. Let us look at the image.

The image is focused upon a body placed in the foreground and at the centre of the painting, around which everything revolves. This is an anthropological vision, the usual projection of human imagination upon gods or concepts in Greek mythology, which often takes the shape of human appearance. This superb body, sculpture-like, is however slightly ambiguous in its lower part, placed as if between realms – human and divine. He possibly personifies Chronos – judging after the clock mounted upon his plexus. It is nevertheless a human vision of that cosmological fervor before time, being and creation, the moment before Time itself got killed. Commenting on this remote event in the history of the cosmos, Hagea exclaimed rhetorically: "This is a huge metaphor." The metaphor is contained in the very unfolding of the story, whose end is the triumph of the timeless (and fate-less) god/Zeus on the expense of the collapse of Time, that is, Chronos. I have the strong feeling that this very dramatic moment – the sunset of Time – is depicted in the image. This sunset is not a mere reflection of some

contrejour light effect, but the cause of the ontological inclination (clinament) of the cosmos due to this radical change. There is an almost imperceptible pensive sadness in the air, carried by the melancholy pose of Chronos, and by the penumbra of his face. His dark Saturnian prosopon ("face" in Greek) is coloured by the black-bile of his fallen condition. Hagea's Chronos is no doubt a tragic and rather gloomy figure, and tragic is any human being who may fall under the trap of Chronos' misleading temporality. Therefore, man must fight chronological time; one must escape from the spell of temporal transience and move on to the ocean of eternity. That eternity is out of reach in the image, only discretely suggested in the background horizon. The space of our chronological drama, that is to say, its topos, has a specific substance that allows shadow to be cast on the ground, on the face, in the air. We may call this a "chronotop" – the suitable ambient space for the chronological time where the penumbra weaves its melancholy poetics of transience. By contrast, no shadow could be found in the space of the Absolute but clear light. Serenity could not project shadow anywhere there simply because the bodies have a different substance, which is beyond matter, beyond time.

Chronos is, one might speculate, the personification of the "chronological man," a body machine governed by the God-time and its infernal machinery. This might be also visualized in the image. But there is no doubt that we are in a dramatic setting in the picture, and this is obvious from the joints of the puppet-like body of our hero, and the strings falling out from some undisclosed source. This might be an allusion to the primal condition of human being described by Plato in his dialogue The Laws. The secret of our origins is according to Plato that the human was conceived as a kind of puppet, to be a companion of gods. The fact that man has been constructed as a toy (paignion) for God, possibly as a plaything (hōs paignion), or possibly with some more serious purpose, is "the finest thing about him:" "We may imagine that each of us living creatures is a puppet made by gods, possibly as a plaything (hōs paignion) or possibly with some more serious purpose. That, indeed, is more than we can tell, but one thing is certain. These interior states are, so to say, the cords, or strings, by which we are worked; they are opposed

to one another, and pull us with opposite tensions in the direction of opposite actions, and therein lies the division of virtue from vice." (Plato, Laws I 644d-e).

And thus, the choice of man in his original performative nature is two-folded: man could become god-like through his sublime play (dance), or remain a mere plaything in the hands of the God-puppeteer moving the strings of fate. According to Plato, one should choose the serious play and not waste life on trifles. One must celebrate the gift given by the gods and make play as perfect as possible: "All of us, then, men and women alike, must fall in with our role and spend life in making our play as perfect as possible..."

On a long term, the deep meaning of The Children of Chronos touches exactly upon this ontological free choice open to man. But for Victor Hagea, freedom has an uncompromising dimension. In his own words, freedom is a state of mind and "being outside the chronological time," "zen-like, by which man in his finite form can communicate with the infinite (the Absolute)."

Nicoletta Isar,
Copenhagen, 12th April 2008



THE CHILDREN OF CHRONOS 2002 OIL ON CANVAS 80X121X4 IN / 70X98X5 CM

LES ENFANTS DE CHRONOS 2002 HUILE SUR TOILE 80X121X4 IN / 70X98X5 CM
REPRODUCTION 2010 OIL AND LEADENWARE 40X30X4 IN / 101X76X10 CM
COPIE LES ENFANTS DE CHRONOS 2002 HUILE PE FAÏENCE 40X30X4 IN / 101X76X10 CM

There is also, among those stills, *Rebus* – an intriguing vision of a woman whose body is almost entirely covered by a squared folded impenetrable metal. The image behind the strange shield could only be guessed, as in a rebus. Like in the *Unveiling*, the screen disguising the woman's body in *Rebus* opens up sporadically in some windows torn in the metal, to display esoteric symbols. Their meaning is no doubt significant – like everything Hagea does. But I must insist on the metapictorial effect of the image because this seems to be also part of the artist's project. Again, Hagea plays with visibilities and invisibilities.

We may agree that the main discourse or, the text of the picture, is the woman's body, the eternal sacrosanct mystery. The split meta-pictures in the windows are no doubt attempts to penetrate this ineffable enigma. They are meta-pictures, or para-texts, like in *paralergon*. Let us come close to this important term. *Paragon* is what is added to the work (*ergon*), and according to some interpretations, it is what might be in conflict with it. As Derrida puts it, "*parergon* is against, next to and extra to the *ergon*, the work done." In Hagea's opus (*ergon*), these *parergonal* images are presumably some visual glossing around and about that impenetrable vision, which could only be contemplated as in a mirror, placed in a kind of *mis en abîme*. Indeed,

PICTORIAL TURN. THE AFTER-LIFE OF THE STILL



Rebus as Paragon



1. **REBUS** 2008 OIL ON CANVAS 80X111 IN. / 200X80 CM.

00110 2008 HELL, SUN TOLS, 482271 IN. / 200X80 CM.
00110 2008 EL, 8107 LEHWARD, 480271 IN. / 200X80 CM.
00110 2008 EL, 101 IN. / 200X80 CM.

VICTOR
HAGEA

in spite of the figurality and the visibility of the meta-pictures, the meaning of ergon remains undisclosed, it is a mere rebus essentially obscure. But as Derrida (La vérité en peinture, Paris, 1978, 63) argues, parergon is not totally lost. From a specific exterior point, it touches and cooperates within the operation. Neither completely exterior to the main discourse, not simply within it, it is a vision which we, the spectators, must accommodate alongside.

We may also read Hagea's perplexing picture with J. Hillis Miller's deconstructivist theory (Deconstruction and Criticism, New York, 1979, 219), where para is a "double antithetical prefix," signifying at once proximity and distance, interiority and exteriority. Para- is a "permeable membrane" connecting inside and outside, placing the outside in, and the inside out, dividing and joining them. And this might be, after all, the very nature of this picture, a reflection of wit and grace of the artist, which enchants us, and once again seduces our soul. This is such a game (conceito in Spanish Baroque) in which we let ourselves be engaged.

Nicoletta Isar
Copenhagen 2008



STILL LIFE WITH BLACK POT 2008 OIL ON CANVAS 14X17 IN. / 34X44 CM

MAKING MONTE AVEC POT 2008 HUILE SUR PAPIER 14X17 IN. / 34X44 CM
STILLLEVEN MET SCHWARTZBLAUW BORD 2008 OLIE OP LEINWAND 14X17 IN. / 34X44 CM
BUCINA STERCA CU CAMA NEAGRA 2008 ULE PE PEZETA 14X17 IN. / 34X44 CM

HAGEA 2008

The "painting within a painting" seems to be a favourite theme for Victor Hagea. It was present in the metapictorial vision of the *Unveiling*, and in *Rebus*, which I have already discussed. But it resurfaces again in a series of stills, like *Forgotten Things*, *Chilean Wine*, or even in *Italian Project*. It consistently takes the shape of a puzzling item, a piece of paper torn, severed, or broken, and then pinned down on the background of the painting. Formally, this is a visual quotation we recognize from the Dutch Masters, which the artist welcomes in his paintings. What is the effect of such encounter will be the theme of my further reflection. But first, let us rehearse the original meaning of this puzzling detail, which Hagea seems to love very much.

The piece of paper belongs to a large family of images, like scrolls, cartellinos, and even skin-like rolled canvases, present in the 17th c. Stills. They have been all perceived as metaphors of the picture representation, in general, but they all send to a deeper meaning, the vision of painting as skin. Why is it so, and from where does it come such eccentric idea?

The idea of canvas as a skin stretched upon the frame of the painting, just as the skin is wrapped around the human body, is an old metaphor in the history of images. The story behind this metaphor is Marsyas myth reporting the contest between Marsyas, the god of music, and Apollo, the god of poetry. Behind the

THE MEMORY OF PICTURE OR PAINTING AS PALIMPSEST



Of forgotten and
resurrected things

fable stands the symbolic contest between poetry and music, the confrontation between the Apollonian and the Dionysian, which results in the flaying of Marsyas. The message of this pathetic vision is pregnant with meaning in that which concerns the origins and nature of creation. By flaying Marsyas, Apollo, the winner of the contest, wanted to show that creation is a painful endeavour, one which involves sacrifice. But he wanted to teach also "the proper way to skin the Fable," that is, to discover the hidden meaning which stands behind the surface, and this is the strategy of any exegetical interpretation.

The peeling off canvas as if one would flay out skin resurfaces in Mannerism as a powerful vision, particularly cultivated by such artists like Michelangelo, but is present also in the epochal work of the anatomist Vesalius, which gave the first description of the human body in his *De humanis corpore fabrica* (1543). This visual scheme pops out again in still-life genre, but this time turns the anatomical into a playful game: paper scrolls and cartellinos become skin metaphors, glossing around the transient epidermis of things in representation. They are no doubt good subjects to display the excellence of pictorial skill. The image comes back in the imagination of the Surrealist painters. I think, it might be fair to say that Hagea's painting could be placed in-between these two streams. The artist is no doubt deeply concerned with the drama of his time, but in his stills he emphatically points out to the past, like in the title of his painting – *Forgotten things*. We are almost sure that the "forgotten things"

are the exquisite res of the Old Dutch Masters. He is obviously much indebted to them, at least in formal terms. He wants to rescue from oblivion the forgotten things, to resurrect them, to reconstruct, or rather to "deconstruct" their trajectory, not so much the technique, but their spirit. The Italian project is an exemplary piece in that respect; it is also a research project of the artist himself. He deliberately juxtaposes Raffaello di Bartolomeo known as Raffaellino Del Garbo's sketch of hands (1470-1512) to Caravaggio's hands in his "Calling of Saint Matthews" (1599-1600), trying to follow in time the development of this pattern of representation, breaking through the chronological time. He shows how the imaginary operates beyond time on the level of memory, carrying out the forms, and bringing them back as epiphanic signs. And this is exactly how the metapictorial works.

Hagea takes up the *Vanitas* theme established already in 17th c., but turns it into a postmodern existentialist reflection upon life, death, and the vanity of things. Indeed, an unmistakable sense of impermanence dominates the pictures. Thus, his little broken pieces of paper are like old reliques coming from the past, forgotten things, and found again, fragile bodies of butterflies from a lost memory. They are mnemonic signs, visions of painting as memory, lost and recovered again. Hagea's painting is at once, a *memento mori* and a sublime gesture to resist oblivion. Because oblivion and remembering are the two facets of the same coin, or rather say, of the same squared painting. Within its surface, the invisible hand of the artist meets the eye of the viewer,



CHOSE ABANDONATE 2005 PINK, SUB COLE 290X17 IN / 728X43 CM
 DERLIESSENE LUNIS 2005 OL. KUT I EINWAND 290X17 IN / 728X43 CM
 SUOBI ABANDONATE 2005 OLII PE PANZA 290X17 IN / 728X43 CM

FORGOTTEN THINGS 2005 OIL ON CANVAS 290X17 IN / 728X43 CM



STILL LIFE WITH CHILEAN WINE 2004 OIL ON CANVAS 57X18 IN / 140X46 CM

HETLIB PROTTI 2004 VINO CHILENO 2004 OLIO SU TAVOLA E 57X18 IN / 140X46 CM
 STILLLEBEN MIT CHILENISCHEM WEIN 2004 ÖL AUF LEINWAND 57X18 IN / 140X46 CM
 NATURALI E ENTICA DO VIN CHILEAN 2004 OLII PE PANZA 57X18 IN / 140X46 CM



ITALIAN PROJECT 2006 OIL ON CANVAS 27X27 IN / 70X70 CM.

PROJET ITALIEN 2006 HUILE SUR TOILE 27X27 IN / 70X70 CM.
 ITALIENSCHES PROJEKT 2003 ÖL AUF LEINWAND 27X27 IN / 70X70 CM.
 PROJET ITALIAN 2003 HUILE PE PANNEAU 27X27 IN / 70X70 CM.

UNVEILING 2003 OIL ON CANVAS 31X23 IN / 82X61 CM.

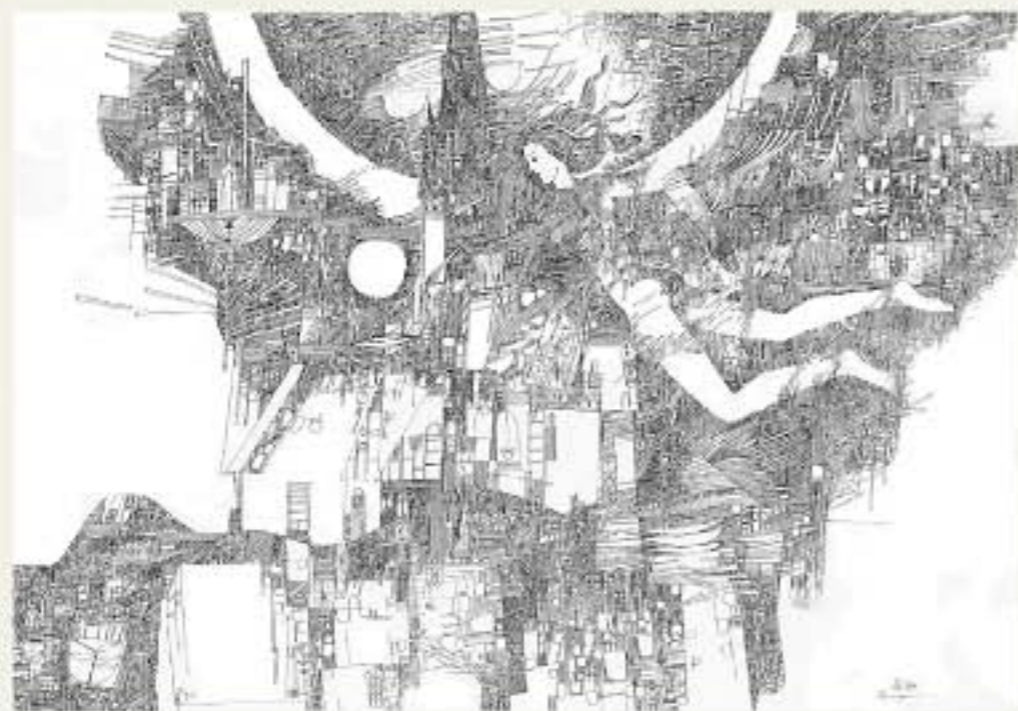
DEVÈLÈVMENT 2003 HUILE SUR TOILE 31X23 IN / 82X61 CM.
 ENTVEILING 2003 ÖL AUF LEINWAND 31X23 IN / 82X61 CM.
 DEVELEIRE 2003 HUILE PE PANNEAU 31X23 IN / 82X61 CM.

brushing the painting surface in worship and pure amazement at the painter's skill. We may call this, the moment of paradoxality of painting. The paradox derives from this impossible association between that which is impermanent, and that which is made now permanent. Durably contained in matter, almost solidified like a gem, the forgotten things seem as if inscribed in immanence, as well as in eternity. At the same time, the piece of paper, fragile in its appearance, faded out by time, points out dramatically to the thin layer of matter which is the sole reality of the thing, behind which there is nothing. No hidden meaning, no architect, or palimpsest, is expected to be revealed.

The most pregnant meaning resists any flaying. And this is so, because the same eternal aporia seems to hunt the human condition: the play of memory. Man is under the power of dices, no matter where the metro ticket might take him, no matter how glorious his hand-made creation is, as long as the shadow casts even upon the most exquisite deep-blue vase. This is inexorably the sign of transience, and the reflection of our mortal condition, namely, to forget and to constantly remember things. Here, Hagea meets Magritte's *La condition humaine*, a vision of impermanence of the world, a mere epidermic and fragile surface.

Nicoletta Isar

14th September 2008



LA NUIT 1907 DRESSIN À LA PLUME 12X17 IN. / 31X44 CM
 DIE NACHT 1907 ZEICHNUNG 12X17 IN. / 31X44 CM
 NOCTURNE 1907 DESIGN IN PEN/12X17 IN. / 31X44 CM

1 THE NIGHT 1907 PEN DRAWING 12X17 IN. / 31X44 CM



1 PYRAMID OF EPHEMERAL ENCOUNTERS 2004 OIL ON CANVAS 24X32 IN. / 61X82 CM
 PYRAMIDE DES RENCONTRES ÉPHÉMÈRES 2004 HUILE SUR TOILE 24X32 IN. / 61X82 CM
 PYRAMIDE DER FLÜCHTIGEN BEGEGNUNGEN 2004 ÖL AUF LEINWAND 24X32 IN. / 61X82 CM
 PIRAMIDA INTALMIRIORE SPREŠE 2004 ULJE NA PLOŠI 24X32 IN. / 61X82 CM



SUMMER CLOUDS

*"The world was beautiful before it became real," said Bachelard in his *L'air et les songes. Essai sur l'imagination du mouvement*. In the airy imagination of Bachelard, the blue sky is equally unreal as it is impalpable; it has the dreamy substance of the blue gaze. We believe that we look at the blue sky, says Bachelard, but suddenly the blue sky looks back at us. This exclusive metaphorical vision, Bachelard borrows from the poet Paul Eluard and his poem book "Donner à voir." "Donner à voir" is a poetical line that may help us come close to Hagea's own vision of painting as a phenomenological "showing" (donner à voir) – the vision of the phenomena of blue sky and summer clouds.*



*Inspired by Eluard, but also by Hölderlin and Mallarmé, in his chapter "Le ciel bleu" from *L'air et les songes* Bachelard elaborates on the airy imagination and the process of coming to being of poetical vision. The vision of the airy dreamer (rêveur aérien) is such that it has the purity of an instant poetical vision (donnée immédiate de la conscience poétique). Gazing at the blue sky, the poet (Eluard) grasps immediately its original matter (la matière première). This return to the origins has also the effect of "presencing" of the act of vision. "Qu'est-ce que le bleu?" "Le bleu est l'obscurité devenue visible." Bachelard intently changes the past tense into the present tense because, he thinks, there is no past in*

The "dawn" of the painting or painting as phenomenology



the region of the imagination. He writes: "Le bleu est l'obscurité devenant visible." Vision comes to being instantly, letting it appear to the eye, but at the same time it erases the borders between night and day, between obscurity and diaphaneity, in a dynamic of "awakening." This is the phenomenology of vision, the movement of coming to being of the visible according to Bachelard. The blue sky is by excellence a permanent vision of the dawn – the break of day. "Le ciel bleu est une aurore permanente."

Summer clouds is in that respect this vision of the dawn's early light – the Aurora – embodied allegorically by this splendid body Venus-like, coming out into being from the airy and sonorous substance of air, tuned from the coiling shell. Blue eyes turned back to the dreamer, indeed, she is an airy figure herself of airy imagination. It is only by living this mirage of the dawn's early hour, experiencing this permanent awakening (l'éveil), says Bachelard, that we can understand the paradoxical movement of an immobile sky. As Eluard says, "Il n'y a pas de couleur

immobile." The blue sky has by definition the movement of an awakening. Vision of the blue sky is paradoxical, it seems as if it is the space where there is nothing more to imagine, but when the airy imagination is animated the background becomes active. In its most dreamy and dynamic form, the imagination finds there the elements of a Gestalttheorie at work to reveal the universe. As Bachelard says, "The clouds help us to dream of transformation." The clouds are the day's zoomorphism as the constellations are the night's zoomorphism. They are the aerial imagination of the soul of the things of the world. They show how things are constantly moving, changing, and transforming. Such are Victor Hagea's Summer Clouds – a phantasmatic vision, permanent aurore made out herself of airy clouds. This vision has also much in common with Mallarmé's Azur, as well as with Hölderlin's pure and sacred air out of which the seasons and weather descent. To make an image is to let image appear (donner à voir), come to being, where vision itself is a constant and dreamy "awakening."

Nicoletta Isar

4th October 2008

WINDOW



Window is a spectacular vision unveiled by a huge reflective metallic curtain, which occupies half of the picture plan. Paradoxical in its unusual appearance, this metallic silk curtain opens up the picture's stage like a dream. The vision is the other half of the picture, but one could say that the whole picture is the window in which a Venetian vista is revealed. Here is the usual romantic bridge crossing those Venetian "calle," as if crossing the time, the gondola. But what really catches the eye like a magnet is the enigmatic body of the lady in crimson in the foreground – a rubicund vision amplified and reverberated in the reflective squares of the folded curtain. Carmine highlights pierce the metal, intensifying the magic view of this passionate body. Indeed, her sanguine dress evokes the whole pathos which makes her gaze languish, her lips move with sensual desire. She holds at bay the Venetian passion, she is a figure of love, death, and fluid desire.

It might be interesting to note also that in this dreamy and spectacular composition, the reflective surface of the metallic curtain meets the liquid of the canal – as if in a chimerical vision. It is in this cone of vision and encounter between these two

A Crimson Vision



impossibilities that the lady's body seems to originate, herself a liquefied erotic vision. Like a nymph, her enigmatic body comes out from the waters. Masked by a black lace, half sfumatto, her face emerges from the mist of the canal, making her apparition even more mysterious. Venice is no doubt the most enigmatic place, a magic space, indeed, where any place becomes the stage for a pathetic drama. This drama is eminently visual, where the gaze must be disguised, in order to be then turned inside out. Therefore, the mysterious apparition in the foreground is - in the artist's view - nothing else, but the inner projection of the viewer himself, in an act of contemplative meditation, transported in time, and waiting for a poetic epiphany.

Nicoletta Isar
25th October 2008

THE WINDOW OF HEAVEN



Painting the Flight -
Of Dream, Air and
Imagination

WINDUW 2004 OIL ON CANVAS 32X24 IN. / 82X61 CM
FENEYER 2004 OIL ON CANVAS 32X24 IN. / 82X61 CM
FENEYER 2004 OIL ON CANVAS 32X24 IN. / 82X61 CM
VEREASTRA 2004 OIL ON CANVAS 32X24 IN. / 82X61 CM

Victor Hagea's painting *The Window Of Heaven* (2005) shows a most puzzling ascending body in slow motion and dramatic raccourci – almost like a bird. This makes one think that the painting is about the flight towards Heaven. This dreamy, pneumatic body, wrapped like an angle in its opaline, iridescent folds, places us unmistakably beyond any physics – straight into a meta-physical realm.

What is the nature of this space? What is the substance of such body? Which body could defy gravitation with the grace of an angel? These are of course rhetorical questions, but real challenges for the artist, in which dream, air and imagination are at work in the making of image. Air and dream are for Gaston Bachelard, the French philosopher, the paradoxical matter of imagination, and the nature and spiritual dimension of the soul. It is perhaps here that Victor Hagea's vision should be inscribed: in the imaginative aspiration of man towards the flight – *le vol* – which has never deserted its inner most soul since the fall. The dream of flight is the archetypal image of the soul in its ascensional motion and desire to overcome the loss of wings.

But as Bachelard writes: "I will therefore, postulate as a principle that in the dream world we do not fly because we have wings; rather, we think we have wings because we have flown. Wings are a consequence. The principle of oneiric flight goes deeper. Dynamic aerial imagination must rediscover this principle." (*Air and Dreams*)

The Window Of Heaven is about coming to terms with these matters, and the painting itself is also about being or not-being winged. The image is an intense meditation upon the fall which apparently left mankind wingless. This is emphatically expressed in the painting in the juxtaposition between the winged goddess Nike, and the wingless human hand holding the ephemeral laurel of victory. Human being is a dreamy being, constantly aiming towards the beyond, searching to cross the threshold (window/gate) to Heaven, and eventually regain the original imponderable body, which matches the substance of air in paradise.

Among elements, in Bachelard's material imagination, air concerns most the soul's motion. According to him, the nature of soul is motion. And it is precisely this airy motion which mystically seems to move upwardly the body. Rather than moving itself by itself, the body is being moved, as if being carried out by the aspiration of the soul, the soul's attraction to God. At the same time, an invisible force seems to pull it upwards – God's breath pulling on the soul. This vision brings to mind the powerful image at the ends of times: "Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up (pulled up with force; Greek *harpagmai*) together with them in the clouds to meet God in the air (Thessalonians 4.17)

Nicoletta Isar

25th September 2008



THE CINDERELLA



The Translucent Ashes of Postmodern Dystopia

The Cinderella is the latest vision of Victor Hagea - the iconic reflection of our dystopia, where dystopia (from the Greek dys = illness; topos = space) is the reflection of our postmodern condition. Briefly described, the dystopic vision is, at once, the grace and the dread we encounter by being confronted with our hopeless impossibility to become free. This perception is so overwhelming, and so powerfully contained in the majestic iconography of the image. It comes out from the very paradox of the representation. The sublime body of the Cinderella is paradoxically imprisoned into her translucent, yet iron-like, crystal palace. The female body has some exquisitely unreal beauty, placed into the exquisitely glorious space - a translucent vision that no brush might be able to catch in its immaterial substance. Yet nothing proved impossible so far for Victor Hagea's masterly hand. Cinderella is the latest stage in Hagea's creation, in terms of both, thinking, as well as of making the image. It is a philosophical meditation on human condition, brought into the visible by his magic hand. One could devote a whole chapter to the study of Hagea's metaphysical technicality of image, in which the magic touch makes matter instantly be transfigured under his brush. Indeed, Hagea's pictorial skills reach here, in the Cinderella, its utmost expression by attempting to depict the un-depictable. But he not only attempts, but he graciously succeeds to visualize that which



1. THE CASTLE OF CINDERELLA 2007-08 OIL ON CANVAS 62X47 IN. / 160X120 CM. LE CHATEAU DE CINDERELLA 2007-08 HUILE SUR TOILE 62X47 IN. / 160X120 CM. CASTLE OF CINDERELLA 2007-08 OIL ON CANVAS 62X47 IN. / 160X120 CM. CASTLE OF CINDERELLA 2007-08 OIL ON CANVAS 62X47 IN. / 160X120 CM.

only indirectly - by oblique reflection - could be brought back into the visible: the reflexion of the transparency. Indeed, the Cinderella is the story of the reflected Transparent Wall, which ineffably and tragically outlines our dystopic world; the trace marking out dramatically the limits of our mortal condition; finally, it makes us aware of the advent of the Apocalypse of these latest days. In short, it shows the last consequences of our choice made after the expulsion from Paradise, and our technological "accomplishments" as post-lapsarian beings. In a conspicuous way, the transparent paradisiacal space has been apparently exchanged with this exquisite palace in which body itself becomes breathless. This feeling is viscerally expressed in the image. Only by looking at the image, Hagea makes us feel with intensity in our own lungs that syncope of respiration. Vision becomes breathless, indeed. By empathy, his dystopia becomes our breathless dystopia. One can only contemplate in full awe the vision of the remains of the postmodern condition of the Cinderella - the cendres (the ashes), indeed, of our burned human condition.

Nicoletta Isar
25th September 2008

SURFACE AND DECOY, THE PAINTING AS SEDUCTION



Few thoughts around
and about Hagea's
imagery

There is a virtual dimension at stake in the image, a kind of spatiality there, of which William Gibson might say that "There's no there there." The surface of the paint is so virtual as it makes all boundaries permeable: see there, in the painting "Dream" (2001), "The Tissue of Ariadne" (2002), or in "Genesis" (2003), how walls collapse into marine weaves or linen folds, but no contour can delimit the specificity of such things. Their physicality is denied, transformed, and transfigured. They are neither objects, nor atmospheric phenomena, objects become ineffable phenomena and phenomena receive a magic substantiality in a world in which the trace of their crafting is skilfully hidden. There is no trace of difference. The fluidity of such world makes it problematic to define the kind of spatiality we are in. It is like a dream space, a vision, a space of interval or in-betweenness that allows things to cohabit and to exist side by side in their irrationality. But the true nature of such hyper-real space we might never get to know. Anyways, Hagea is not present there to tell. I mean, the physicality of his body and hand. The Master has erased totally his masterful hand, there is only the interstice of his body, that is, the vast surface of his burning imagination. The interface of his imagination is projected inside out on the surface of these hallucinatory visions. It fills up completely the surface of paintings, as well as of the space beyond, crossing out the frame, spilling into the space of the spectator.

There is a quite strong perception of the will of the painter to engage his viewers in his hypnotic visions, to make them acknowledge the paradoxality of their ground, to engage them in a kind of delightful visual

lust from which one cannot escape. The transparent screen of this kind of conceit-like image, a medium of deception, as well as fascination, acts as a surface with its own depths in which one can inscribe oneself and erase one's own traces at once. No one is finally there in the paint, neither the artist nor his viewers, although, in a most conspicuous way, they are all right there. Yet Hagea's vision is not the kind of a mere optical illusion, neither is it a pure decoy, a Baroque deceit of some historical extraction. Rather, it is the reality of our own deep hyper-reality, which he forces us to acknowledge and cultivate - it is the space of creative imagination.

SUBTLE BODIES: The Soul in the Veil

Surface and decoy - this is the seductive and playful nature of Hagea's canvases. A reality consistently to be unveiled! There is always a veiled body in the painting, a sky wrapped in a turbulent curtain, even the perplexic image of some soteriologic hands coming out from a laminar flow of a heavenly curtain! There is something primordial about this vast, overwhelming spectacular curtained universe: the *theatrum mundi* of Hagea's visions. The proper viewing of this vision is that of Deleuze's folding-unfolding: "I am forever unfolding between two folds, and if to perceive means to unfold, then I am forever perceiving within the folds." (G. Deleuze, *The Fold*, 93) And of course, everything must begin with the Thread - the thread

of Ariadne – out of which this paradoxical reality, the tiny interstice of his canvases, is weaved out, which the French so beautifully reflects in the word-play *voile-toile*.

To understand Hagea's ontology of the body one must turn to his Genesis. Out of the thread of the "golden chain" (*auræa catena*) of Homer (*Iliad*, the eighth book) our fate is frailly suspended and framed. The drama of Creation/Genesis is the drama of waking out from the state of white statuary innocence to a fleshly presence. This is a spectacular burst out, an act of pure revelation, which makes the carcass of the inanimate body of the statue crack down. It is out of the vitality of the curtain again, with its flesh-skin symbolism, that the body reveals its whole splendor. The subtle, translucent body is a prolongation of the flamed curtain, which animates upwardly the body with its strong vitalism. It animates and gives *anima* (soul) to the body, as folds are in the soul (*anima*) (Deleuze, 23). But the soul is itself a higher point of another nature, "the point of inflection," with some phenomenological affinity with the cosmic clinamen of Serres' turbulent cosmos in *status nascendi*, and with Derrida's "clin d'bymien" in the flow of *rhythmos*. From this perspective, Genesis appears as the utmost instantiation of the feminine Soul in its cosmogenetic state, which is a rise upwards, as well as a fall, an inclination, "une chute rythmée", or "une cadence inclinée." (Derrida, "La Double Séance," *La Dissémination*, 293) This gives perhaps the figure a sort of yearning air, the faculty of longing,

which reflects an inner struggle typical for the airy imagination described by Gaston Bachelard in his *Air and Dreams* (1988), but also to 1499 Poliphilo's erotic phantasy, *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili* (*The Strife of Love in a Dream*).

But there is truly no body and soul as such without a voice, says Aristotle, because there is no soul without a voice. As Aristotle points out in his *De anima*, "Voice is a kind of sound characteristic of what has soul in it; nothing that is without soul utters voice." Genesis – with her open mouth – has some kind of voice, although inaudible, a primordial hiss perhaps, which is the grain that constitutes voice, and proffers the first scream, the primal utterance. Genesis is a vocal epiphany, as much as it is a visual apparition. Her voice echoes the sonorous body, splendid in its visual completion – and this is the end of Creation, the fulfilment of Genesis!

After the discontent with the abject bodies and the exquisite corps of postmodernity, Hagea's poetics of subtle body is a refreshing vision. What Hagea does is put in a new perspective the figurative tradition, and struggle for the waking of the gods. He wants by all means to recuperate the original splendor of human anatomy in its mystical and sacrosanct origination. Yet his gods and goddesses are mostly in a dormant state, like the "sleeping waters" of the primordial chaos before genesis, longing to be woken up and start to unfold their dance.

Nicoletta Isar

16 September – 28 October 2007



1. THE TISSUE OF ARIADNE 2002 OIL ON CANVAS 40X33 IN. / 101X85 CM.

LE TISSU D'ARIADNE 2002 HUIE SUR TOILE 101X85 CM.
DAS GERÄTE DER ARIADNE 2002 ÖL AUF LEINWAND 40X33 CM.
PANCA ARVANITI 2002 ULE PE PÄNÄR ARCTIDIN / 101X85 CM.

VICTOR HAGEA: Born July 22, 1948, Lupeni (Hunedoara) Romania. **EDUCATION:** 1962-1967 Secondary School of Art, Târgu-Mures Romania 1973 Graduate of Academy of Art, Cluj Romania. Live and work in Fockenstein Str 17, 81539 München Germany. Email: vichagea@yahoo.de Homepage www.victor-hagea.de **EXHIBITIONS:** 1988, 1989, 1990 Salon des Indépendants, Grand Palais, Paris. 1996, 1997 1999 Salon des Indépendants, Espace Tour Eiffel Brantily, Paris. 2002, 2003 Salon d'Automne, Paris. 2001-2004 OPERA Gallery Paris, New York, Singapore, Miami, Hong Kong, Miami, Hong Kong, London, Venice, Monaco, Dubai. **ART FAIRS:** 04.27.-05.01.2005 Europ' ART, Palexpo, Genève, SWISS. 12.02.-12.06.2005 International Art Fair, Gent, Belgium. 2006 Art en Capital, Salon des Indépendants, Grand Palais, Paris. His works are included in major museum in Romania, corporate, public, and private collections in Europe, USA and China.

1 ENGLISCHER GARTEN MÜNCHEN 2000 DRAWING 119X16 IN./300X41,5 CM



ENGLISCHER GARTEN MÜNCHEN 2000 ZEICHNUNG 119X16 IN./300X41,5 CM
ENGLISCHER GARTEN MÜNCHEN 2000 ZEICHNUNG 119X16 IN./300X41,5 CM
ENGLISCHER GARTEN MÜNCHEN 2000 ZEICHNUNG 119X16 IN./300X41,5 CM



1 STILL LIFE WITH BLUE VASE 2008 OIL ON CANVAS 119X16 IN./29X37 CM

NATURE MORTE AVEC VASE BLEU 2008 HUILE SUR TOILE 119X16 IN./29X37 CM
STILLEBENSCHEN MIT BLAUER VASE 2008 ÖL AUF LEINWAND 119X16 IN./29X37 CM
NATURA MORTA CU VAZA ALBASTRU 2008 ULE PE PANA 119X16 IN./29X37 CM

NOVEMBER

A kind of Baroque drama seems to unfold in the last painting of Victor Hagea – “November.” Victor Hagea’s *Spiel* is apparently staged in the grain of the season, taking up the phenomenal dimension of the most negative of all seasons – No-ember. That we are merging into a theatrical space it is no doubt, particularly because of the ample rhetoric of bodies, but whether this is a Baroque *Trauerspiel* or not, it is yet unclear. At first sight, some visual dramatic conflicts are unfolding in the image. But the substance of this drama is so dense and round in its inspiration that cannot be totally grasped without the assistance of the artist himself.

He helps us understand why, almost in a Shakespearean manner, these personages emphatically turn this drama into a kind of *Life staging* – a rite de passage. The passage is from darkness into light (or rather, towards light), a slow process of ontological clarification from vagueness to en-light-enment. This is, according to the artist, the existential trajectory of being and becoming, eventually, the transformation of this fragile body of the mysterious lady heading off to a new horizon. She moves initiatically through *Life*, leaving behind the signs of temptations, their loud vociferation, allegorically embodied by the two parodic personages. They are, according to the artist, the “ironic consciousness of *Life*,” a reflection of a “torn consciousness.” This fracture in the *Spiel* might stand for the tragic, with some universal vocation, and for that matter, the experience could



Between a baroque
drama and a
postmodern rite de
passage

symbolically stand for the humanity as a whole. But one should rhetorically ask again: is this a *Trauerspiel*?

Trauerspiel, as its name suggests (*Trauer*: mourning, grief; *Spiel*: playing) was a most celebrated form of theatricality in Western Baroque, a state of mind and soul, associated with mourning and allegory, the melancholy absence – a theme memorably described by Walter Benjamin. But unlike the Baroque *Trauerspiel*, this particular drama of Hagea seems to head off towards a new goal, searching to get out from aporia of *Trauerspiel* – from the irredeemable melancholy mourning. Austere, almost ascetic in her physical appearance, the lady seems to grasp in the haziness of the horizon the redemptive light. And like in a dialectical dance she moves her body, almost ritually, into a new space and stasis – the repose of silence. If there is anything melancholic about her pose, then her *acaedia* is that change of mind (*metanoia*), which is a coming to terms with the past, acknowledging it, and transforming it. In full accord with her *metanoic* state of mind, the blackness of her silhouette contains the whole paradox of ascetic *metanoia*, that is, the fullness of nothingness. This we may call “the painting as negative theology.” And it is here that the spiritual thinking of Orient departs dramatically from the Western *Trauerspiel*.

Pictorially speaking, Victor Hagea’s “November” reflects profoundly his thinking. His painting is

very much about playing with subtle philosophical paradigms translated into paradoxical visualities. It is a play of dualities and instabilities, making the image a surface of witty entanglement between visibilities and invisibilities. Hagea’s “November” is twice a negation of sight: in the blind-folded eye, and in the meditative gaze of the black lady, turning away in a gesture of denial of vision. For this reason, Hagea’s “November” is a magical pictorial *Spiel* as well, a refined piece belonging to some kind of “aesthetics of ambiguity.” This is a challenging term, which has not yet quantified by art theory, as far as I know, but which might be occupied with phenomenal matters concerning visualities in-between and in-becoming, which escape fixed identifiable visual signs in the picture. Hagea’s drama depicts one of those phenomena of presence in-between and in-between, as the in anthropology of rite of passage, in which the subject is “in trial,” or en process (Julia Kristeva). To make it clear and concrete, this process is illustrated in the pictorial metamorphosis of the lady, slowly undertaken in the picture. The “amphibious form” (Buci Glucksmann) in the fold becomes the black silhouette in pose “*chagrin réfléchi*,” withdrawing gently from the front stage in a theatrical gesture. Her phenomenal motion through the picture is dramatic. It is a powerfully staged process. Between these two moments and two bodies there is the invisible yet thick phenomenological matter that fills up the entire picture of Victor Hagea. To fully experience it is to undergo oneself through a similar rite de passage. This is perhaps the most intriguing dimension of “November.”

Let us now conclude that the mysterious lady is the epitome of negation in the picture. She is No-venber. She makes visible, through her hieroglyph-like body, the mortal frailty of the human figure. But if she might have some affinities with Melancholy or November (which is said to be the season of impermanence and black bile, "la maladie de l'âme"), this drama is definitely not a Trauerspiel, neither is it a mere elemental drama of the fall, in its humid dissolution. Rather, it is the stage of playful visualities upon invisibilities, in which the season itself plays out its last glimpse before shadow takes over. As Christine Buci-Glucksmann, the theorist of the Baroque, might have said, the moment of passage from seeing to voice, "du voir à la voix," is a reflection of the ineffable "tragique de l'ombre." All this is experienced in the picture as a thrill, as an anticipation of things in their absolute stillness and silence of voice. And it is here indeed that the apophatic dimension of "No-venber" reveals itself: in the paradox of the oxymoron that is the fullness of absence. This is Victor Hagea's "November." For that matter, his Spiel radically contradicts the most celebrated negative poem of Thomas Hood, November.

Nicoletta Isar,

Copenhagen, 4th September 2008



NOVEMBER 2007-08 OIL ON CANVAS 291x411x IN / 75x104 CM

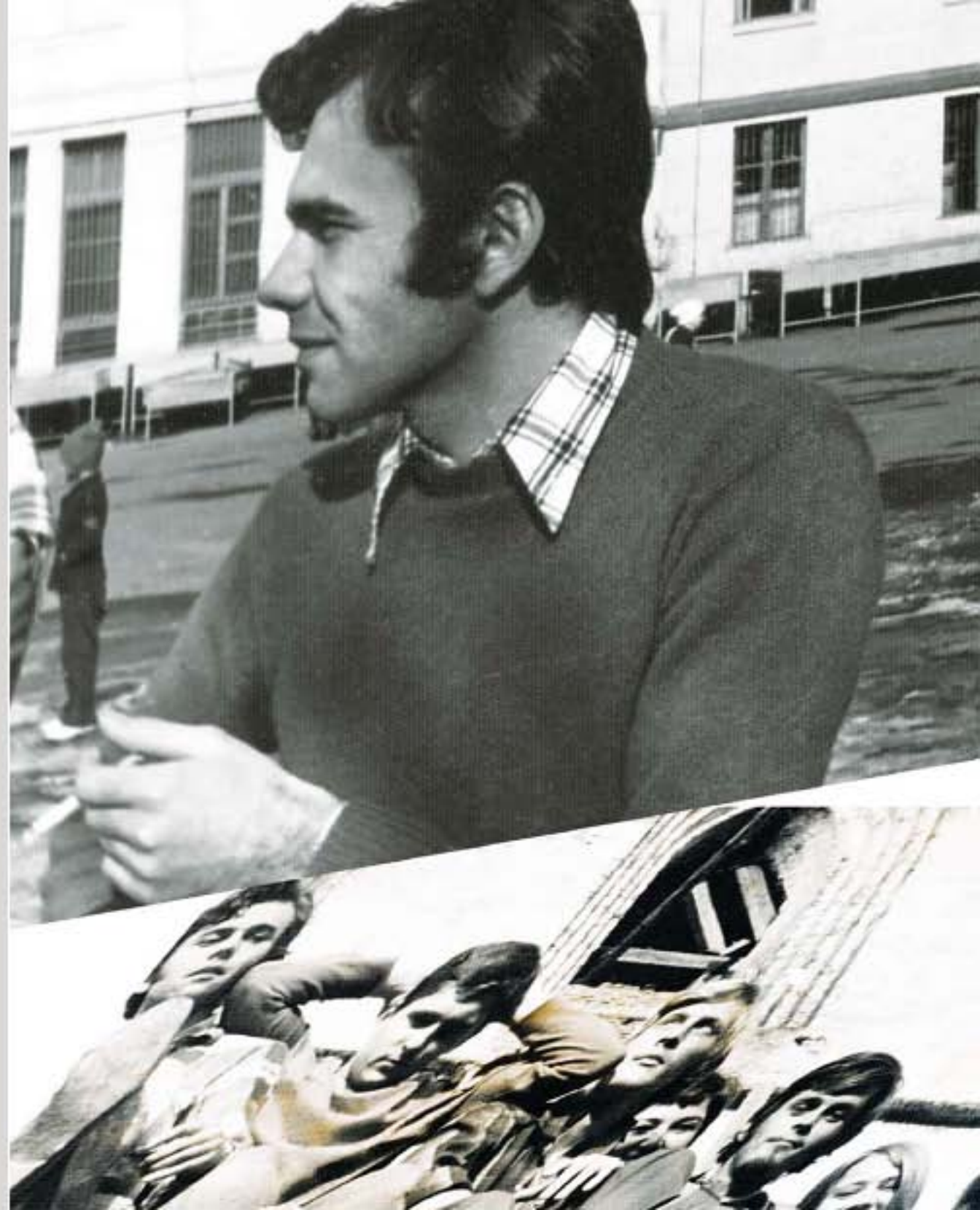
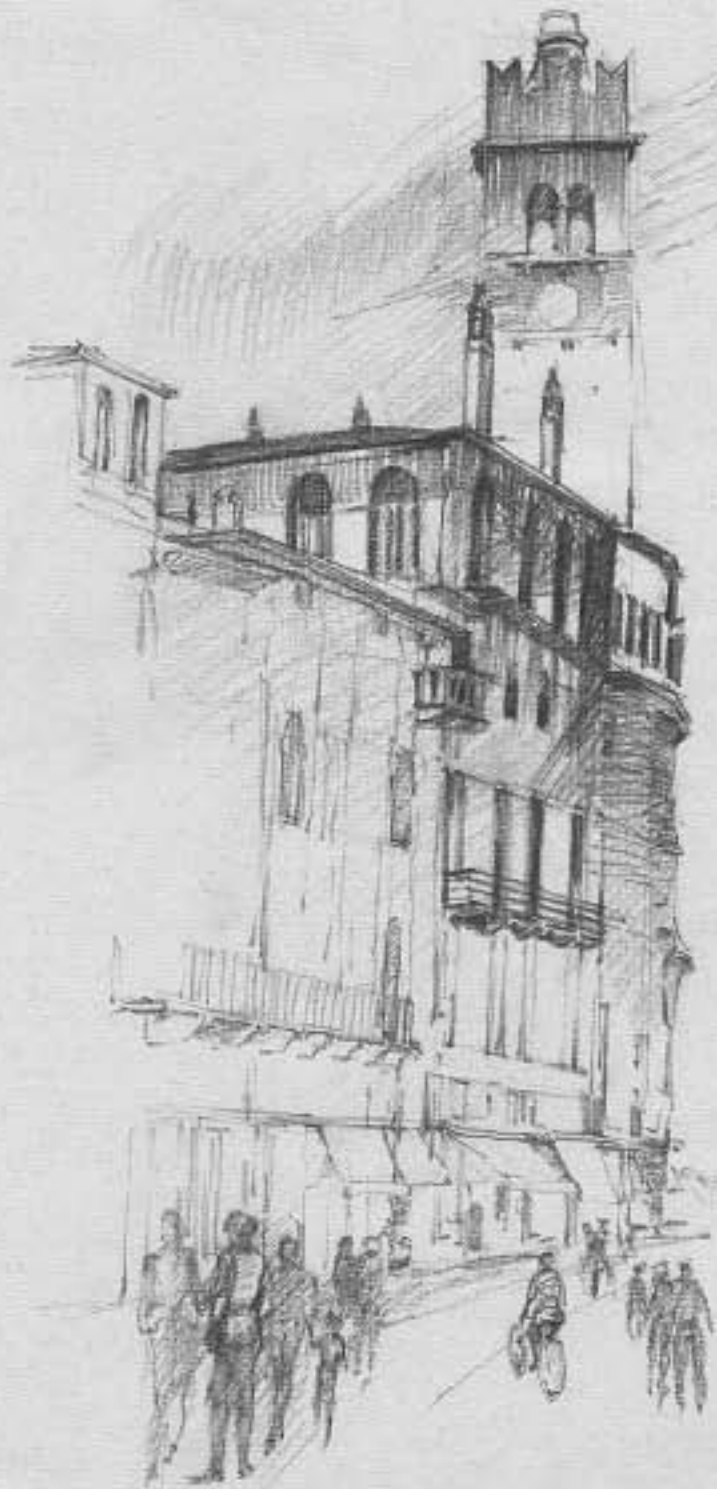
NOVEMBRE 2007-08 HUILE SUR TOILE 291x411x IN / 75x104 CM

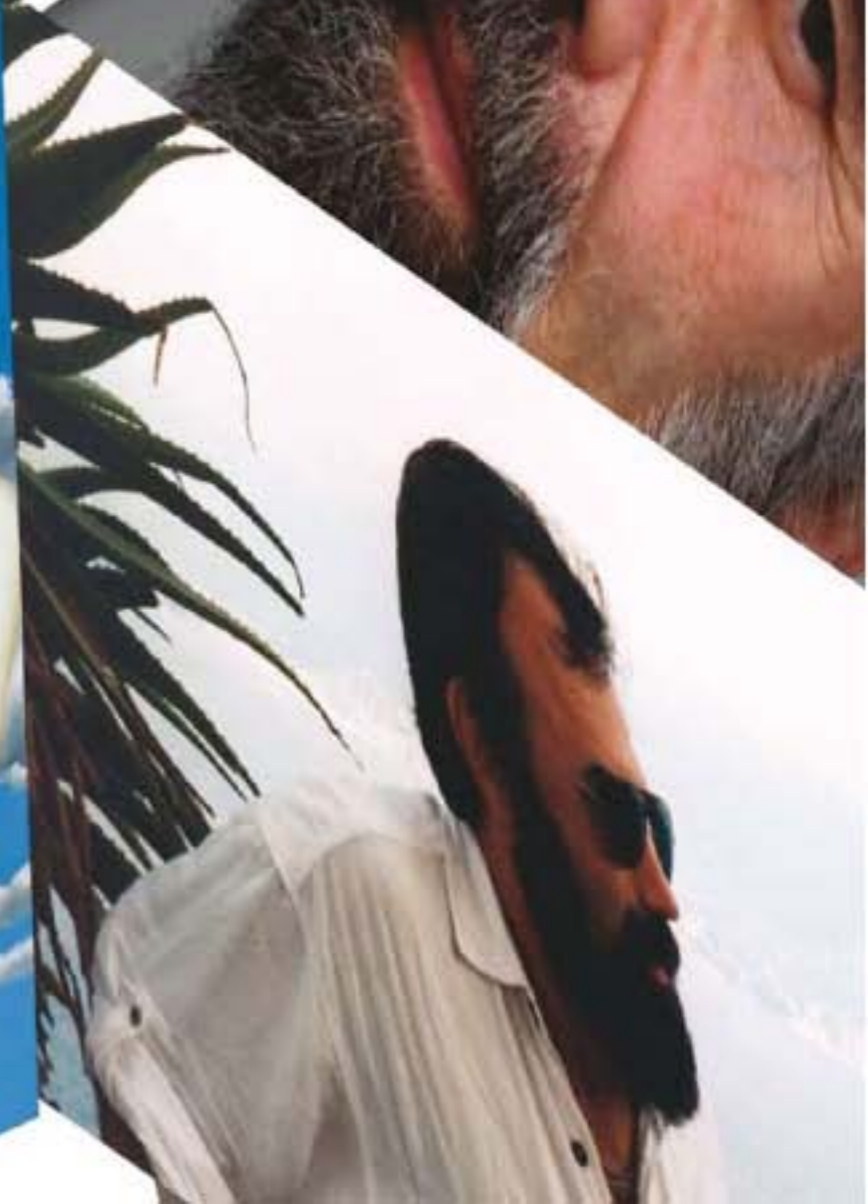
NOVEMBER 2007-08 ÖL AUF LEINWAND 291x411x IN / 75x104 CM

NOVEMBER 2007-08 ULEI PE PANZA 291x411x IN / 75x104 CM

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