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# SOCIAL PROBLEMS REVEALED IN ART – THE BALKAN EXPRESSIONISM MOVEMENT<sup>1</sup>

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**Abstract:** *The article tries to get a grasp of the Balkan expressionism movement that emerges in nowadays society. As it gets through the society, the artists render in their works the reality of life focusing on the problems that arise in society. As they offer poignant data on the society, they strive to achieve art that is representative for the Balkan area. More than any other human being, the artist is imprint by the influence of his surroundings to which he manages to manifest in a dissociative manner. He is imposing himself in society by the liberty to keep in balance and sometimes pendent certain impressions and the capacity to impose new correlations. The Balkan Expressionism Movement is just at its beginning. Time will tell whether this artistic movement will impact universal art as the previous art movements did.*

**Keywords:** *Balkan expressionism movement, social problems, culture, art movement*

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## Introducing and Defining the Terms

The artists during all times were the witnesses of the times they lived in. Through their work they stressed the times they were living and immortalized it in their work. As a heritage to people, artists were striving to render in their work as much as possible the reality of their social world. As it happens, much of the art nowadays offer the reality, as it is perceived by a creator's eye. The contemporary problems of every age correspond, in some respects, to the reality in art.

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<sup>1</sup> This paper is made and published under the aegis of the Research Institute for Quality of Life, Romanian Academy as a part of programme co-funded by the European Union within the Operational Sectorial Programme for Human Resources Development through the project for Pluri and interdisciplinary in doctoral and post-doctoral programmes Project Code: POSDRU/159/1.5/S/141086

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The development of every society lies in the fact that we are constantly dealing with observation and it becomes imperiously necessary to wonder why a society developed in a certain way and why others shifted directions in their strive to deal with social issues. The human behaviour and individual emotions, basically all human manifestations, were transformed and conducted in a certain pathway due to self or extrinsic constrain.

Defining the term art we notice that “it derives from the Latin word *ars* (plural *artes*). The closest equivalent is in Greek *techne*. In English, “art” has similar meanings in all civilized languages, as *Kunst* is in German.” (Anghel, 2014: 25)

Civilization, as it is regarded nowadays, reached this stage due to the fact that people advanced in technology and communication. Civilization can be defined as doing whatever one desires so that the others are not disturbed.

Culture can be defined in many ways due to the fact that the usage of the word in too many common and frequent conversations led to the desire to define the concept in a systematic manner. It is an acknowledged fact that it is a set of principles that development of societal activities evolve. In other words, culture refers to the societal, behavioural and symbolic values that are mutually shared by the group members and based on these they interpret and enrich their experience and behaviour. Some researches regard culture as a set of principles that the entire activities of a society orbit around to. Culture is provided by “the total values and knowledge considered as being determined by a human community.” (Boteanu, 2010: 19)

Every culture has got recommended and forbidden methods to reach the accepted values. In other words, each culture has got accepted methods in order to reach cultural goals. The methods to reach cultural goals imply shared agreements about the way people are expected to react.

There are alternative approaches to examine cultural processes. One approach is by glancing to the way a culture is functioning from within. Using this approach we focus to comprehend human behaviour from their perspective. Another approach is to compare one culture to another. By this approach, predetermined categories are used in order to examine the selected particular features of the studied culture. Put simply, the goal is not to understand cultures as their members do but to determine how cultures can be compared with reference to a particular quality. This is not a new distinction as Sapir previously used it in 1925. The distinction is also made by the linguist K. L. Pike in *Communication and Culture* (1966) using the terms “emic” (describing the society or culture in terms of internal elements and functioning rather than in terms of any existing external scheme) and “etic” (relating to moral principles).

The artists communicate through their art as the artist reaches towards a performance that is not accessible to the common man i.e. the capacity to express himself and the others. On the other hand, the viewer/ reader manage to get into the inaccessible universe of the artwork and, therefore, succeed in feeling as belonging to the world. Arts are the humanity thesaurus of values. They arise from the ongoing spring of outstanding command in understanding human feelings, the way certain moments of existential possibilities are intuitively perceived in their outmost deep dwelling and

understanding when the most common petty interests of the confusing times settle with a composed serenity.

At the genesis of artwork, the creative stage, one can find reasons in order to place arts at the top of value theories. They embed the most poignant verdicts over experience values. They form a corpus of confessions that were barely comprehended by those people who tried to grasp value using practical psychology of interpretation and abstract ethical aridity. If we were devoid of art, most of our experiences could not be compared, and being devoid of comparison we can hardly grasp the hope that comes when we need to choose the exceptionally good experiences of life. Therefore, we should not delude ourselves by assimilating an ordinary point of view that the life of every person is a novel, as the novel does not exist unless it is written. In other words, art is not what we live but what we can express in a transformed form. The simple experiences, as a very cold bath in a metal tub or chasing a train can be compared, in a certain proportion, without using complicated manners of words. But there are friends who know each other exceptionally well and succeed in comparing the rudimentary experiences in every day talk.

For most people, the subtle and obscure experiences cannot be communicated or described although the social conventions and the fear of loneliness might make us pretend is not so. The artist is that human being that can communicate better than our own life experiences. They render in art the most unique ways for such phenomena, as they were given a sensitive heart endowed with special discrimination. Our emotions serve us well, much of the time, by providing us with many kinds of enjoyment. Artists manage to express in art our outmost feelings. Somehow, they manage to render in art what the common man cannot name in real life. Art can be perceived as an emotional transfer from one mind to another. It is also true that in certain conditions the individual knowledge pass through similar experiences (such as adolescence, religious experiences, the loss of a loved one).

But the outmost gain following an experience is knowledge. Knowledge is indispensable to gain the outmost values. Art transfers knowledge when it meets the right recipient to fulfill. The effect of work art can be diverse from man to man. I remember the time when I visited the exhibition of impressionist painters at Musée d'Orsay in Paris. It was like floating while delighting my eyes in their painting. Whereas, the person I was with had not such a feeling at all. It is said that poetry has got the most complex and profound communication. I feel that painting can render the same communication.

More than any other human being, the artist is imprint by the influence of his surroundings to which he manages to manifest in a dissociative manner. He is imposing himself in society by the liberty to keep in balance and sometimes pendent certain impressions and the capacity to impose new correlations. For example, the poet can distinguish himself by the freedom, finesse and the order of connections accomplished amid his life experiences. This is a valuable asset that the artist possesses in order to communicate his work.

There may be times when the memory of an artist can be perceived more as a flaw rather than a quality as he manages to retain only that he can value through his art. The artist does not recollect an experience but, through his art, he manages to bring it to life again as an experience can be brought to life only if it gets the right stimuli. An artist cannot find peace easily. Even when he rests he still has got a spotlight on. An artist manages to organize facts, even though they might be confusing. The image of a borough, the reality of a working place can be chaotic and meaningless to a less disciplined eye, whereas for an artist these can represent an enormous source of inspiration.

The art movement that I shall focus on in this article is based on the expressionist movement that first occurred in Germany and Austria at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Expressionism in art is revealed by the practically universal indifference to colour theory, and as a Goethe puts it is a kind of “figured-bass system for painting, a total working theory, such as music offers”.

## Expressionism in Art

Expressionism is a “type of painting, sculpture or graphic art (also literature, cinema and dance) in which the artist tries through suggestive distortion of form, colour, space and other naturalistic qualities to destroy the external reality of a given situation and get its “truth” or emotional essence” (Myers, 1956:171) The expressionist art conveyed not a descriptive or visual but analytical and internal perspective in order to penetrate the form or subject so that the artist could lose himself in it and thus identifying with something greater or more powerful than himself. This type of art can be regarded as the artists’ projection in identifying with the vastness of God, nature, cities, animals or a simply peasant. The expressionist artists use a lot of colour and light in order to emphasize drama and to penetrate form in order to create emotional projection and a sensation of violence, in contrast with impressionist artist that used light and movement just for their own sake. In comparison with the descriptive and analytical criteria of impressionism and cubism, the expressionist movement is more emotive and soul searching.

The expressionist movement was primarily set in central Europe being a movement that started in Germany and Austria. “There are three basic types of expressionism: the Brücke formulation stemming from Van Gogh, African sculpture and Fauvism which resulted in distorted but still representational and tangible forms; the Blue Rider or abstract variety which stems more from Gauguin, Delaunay and folk art and results in a rhythmic, even musical expression in which form penetrates form and colour penetrates colour; and the Neue Sachlichkeit, or New Objectivity, which is representational but very intense in mood and clinical in detail. The Brücke artists include Kirchner, Nolde, Pechstein, Mueller, Schmidt-Rottluff; the blue rider groups gives us Marc, Kandinsky, Klee, Campendonk, Jawlensky and, in certain aspects, Feininger, among others; in the New Objectivity category are Otto Dix, George Grosz, the early Max Beckmann, and a number of lesser figures.” (Myers, 1956: 172)

Wilhelm Worringer was a historical figure whose works is mainly related to expressionism. He was born in the generation that would mature in the founding years

of Expressionism. His works indicate the fact that art had taken a new direction in the way it was conceived. As expected, his written work was promptly recognized by the contemporary art: “Recent developments in art make it very plain to me that my problem bears not only upon the historians who survey and evaluate the past but also on the new expressive goals of present-day artists.” Wilhelm Worringer had a subjective view of art founded on intuition and that led to his anticipation of presenting the changing of art due to the fact that artists have different aspirations than the rest of people. Worringer understood that abstract art in principle is art of the masses – as well as that modern man living bereft of a true sense of “world”. Modern man, like his primitive counterpart, realized “that the visible world in which we had been placed is the work of Maya, a conjuring act, an inessential figment of no duration, like a dream or a mirage; a veil about human consciousness, something about which it would be at once true and false to say that it is and yet is not.” (Kultermann, 1993: 203) Expressionism sought to express historical evolution as a multidimensional reality.

One of the most poignant painters for the expressionist movement is Kandinsky. He was an outstanding painter, teacher and theorist of non-objective art and mainly associated with the abstract site of the German expressionism known as The Blue Rider. In 1901 he wrote and in 1912 he published *Concerning the spiritual in Art*, which has become one of the most influential of all books in art.

## Social Problems in Art

By defining social problem, we mention the fact that it is a condition that:

1. Is widely regarded as undesirable or as a source of difficulties
2. Is caused by the actions or inactions of people or society
3. Affects or is thought to affect a large number of people (Farley, 1992: 3)

A social problem, to be regarded as such, must be widely recognised and regarded as undesirable. Public consciousness plays an important role in the definition of social problems. What actually emerges as a social problem depends not merely on scientific reality but on people’s awareness of a condition and their values concerning that situation.

The artist can find inspiration anywhere without feeling connected to proletariat or bourgeoisie, nobility of people from the outskirts of the society as they all are, from artist’s perspective, members of the same world, of an infinite universe filled with emotions and sensitivities.

As mentioned, artists also render the social reality of their times. The sensitivity of their work reveals social changes as they occur. The message art convey is send through the emotional state of the artist, his ideals and own judgment over the world. The artist possesses the required competencies in using a number of codes: alongside painting, the artist uses behavioural, societal codes as well as his own conceptions of the world. If the viewer is contemporary with the artist, the interpretation provides the required poignant signs that the artist conveys that set him in a certain art movement.

Disregarding that, it might feel meaningless. If the viewer is from another époque he realises that he beholds a different perception than of the artist, and the viewer becomes a critique based on a series of action control that imply setting art in its historic age. When considering art, one need to take into consideration the function it beholds. The colours used, the mixture of shades, settings could be the result of random hazard. Nonetheless, the message conveys different meanings according with the cultural background of each viewer. The process of artistic creation can be analysed by using a large diversity of materials, methods, presuppositions and purposes.

Social problems are revealed in art by a series of artists, such as painters, writers, musicians etc. in order to get the feeling of belonging to the society.

Art work is the secret, profound message send by the artist to the social groups. As society tends to be right less, the artist has an eager desire to show the truth as it is really shown in reality. Art conveys life, in certain extent, a social reality that provides the natural, inner and subjective world of the individual and they create art imitations.

The artist is a member of the society and he enjoys a certain social position. In most cases, he is highly appreciated by the society and, moreover, is rewarded not only due to the fact that his works are purchased but also the respect that the society provides due to his art. The artist has got a certain public, even though it's hypothetical, regardless of some artist's perspective that they mainly work for themselves. Art existed in all times. Literature, mainly, has got a social function that cannot be regarded as being only individual.

The relation between art and the society is closely connected as art expresses the living society. The reflection of art is provided by the society changes, actions, behaviours. It can focus on situations that common people regard as trivial and vague. It is nonetheless understandable that art focuses on certain aspects of life, it depicts moments of life that made an impression on the author. Life seemed to be a constant source of inspiration for artists as they inevitably convey own life experience and conceptions. Therefore, it can be falsely assumed that he conveys the entire and exhaustive conception on life.

Some artists provide accurate data on their times in their work. In most social critique works they seem to mark the artist's awareness on certain precise social aspects, such as the situation of proletariat that, somehow, need to share a certain ideological attitude of the critique. Though, there isn't a mechanical connection between the artist's political and ideological convictions and its representation in art. That does not mean betrayal. The artist can manifest himself in different ways: melancholic, romantic, angry, sad etc.

In order to understand an artist, one needs to bear in mind his entire work, as well as the context that it emerged. Some details can be extracted from the biographical documents such as social background, attitude and ideology. Besides being an artist, he was also a citizen of a certain society and there might be documents to explain how the artist's position on society influenced his status.

A piece of art is not an isolated work and in order to recognise it, accurate research needs to be fulfilled in order to explain the causes and motives that explain it. The artist

lives in a certain world, in a ruled form society that requires obedience to certain values and habits. Also, the artist can be taught in different schools and different mentors that imprint his creativity. Moreover, the artist bears in mind the targeted public to whom his art is aimed at. As he does so, his thinking is taking into consideration the feedback received from his public.

Each of us is a quiescence of elements: family background, education, traditions, ancestral fears, convictions, attitudes, sensitivities and experiences. For some sunrise can only mean the beginning of new day. For an artist it might mean the battle between light and darkness where light conquered darkness. There is an ancestral battle between light and darkness, good and evil, beauty and ugliness, the man and the beast lying dormant inside of each of us. For some reason, sunset still make some of us nostalgic, even though we are quite aware that it would rise again the following day. But regardless, we still have feelings similar to the one who felt the loss of battle against darkness. These are mythological battles that, even though are a myth, still haunt us even though dressed in disguise clothes (the battle between the rural and urban, for example). And myths are no stories. Even if they were, their reality is stronger than the tangible things. Marcel Detienne argues “is it a language, the primary language, the childhood of humankind, the naivety of ignorance or the initial word? The earth song or the nature’s tragedy? The primitive and archaic discourse of the primitive societies?” (Detienne, 1997:10)

The cohesion does not come randomly; the material and spiritual life do not go along parallel with the society but are in constant conflict and contradiction. Contradiction – philosophical term – combined to the real present – reason accomplishment – represent the basic ontological basis of Hegel’s work. George Lukas argues that the poignant protuberance of the contradictive character of the present époque is just the highest peak of the dialectic discourse where the inorganic nature has emerged from biology and society. (Lukas, 1982:196)

Obviously, the common man and the artist live in the same milieu and get in contact with the same reality, though the perception is different. For the artistic talented man the eye is a criterion to make a difference, all another functions are common to the rest of us. The consciousness of the reality emerges and develops in the inner artist due to visual senses. Eyesight evolves to a self preserved reality form in order to depict perception notions and representations that conclude in an artistic action. The importance of eyesight is crucial for the painter that portrays reality in art.

## **The History of Balkan Expressionism**

Although deeply rooted into the art history, the expressionism imposed itself in the first part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century by defining itself as a continuum of elementary art but also a liberating, anti-academic vision, and against the Greek classicism considered as being worn out. Among the countries where the trend manifested – Spain, Germany, France – being situated in the Western Europe were the ones that provided a greater interest to the trend either by cultivating or challenging it. (Dictionary of General Esthetics, 1972: 118)

Up to the present, the Balkan expressionism was mostly studied randomly, in spite of the fact that this part of Europe – south and east – by its specificity has the most to do with expressionism. The aesthetic principles were appreciated, analysed or challenged by artists and important theoreticians of art such as W. Kandinski, W. Worringer, L. Blaga a.s.o. The belief of this movement can be summarized such as:

1. The art is an expression of inner self, of subjective emotional tension
2. The values they aspire to are the absolute and the living without boundaries
3. Achieving synthetic forms by synthesis and abstraction
4. Interest for archaic cultures, for eccentric and attraction towards the primary experiences
5. Nonconformist social attitude, anti-bourgeois, pacifism (Nicolaeva, 1972: 120)

In order to get a sense of the Balkan artists, I will present just a few of their works:

## **Paul Hitter**

Born in 1982 in Bucharest. He had an early start as a painter as he started to paint at the age of five. He attended the high school in Bucharest. He leaves in München where he graduates from the University of Arts in 2011. In Germany, he develops his style that he called Balkan expressionism. He is inspired by the Balkan stories, music and the gypsies lifestyle. He has artwork exhibited in Germany, Italy, France, Czech Republic, and USA.

The paintings of the artist are similar to the medieval figures as the artist transforms the character in painting by using his character's attitude and the legend that stands behind his figure. His paintings are filled with symbols that require a specialised viewer to fully comprehend a painting. There is a story embedded in each of his paintings, a legend that is transformed in colours, patterns, symbols, texture, forms, and accurate details.

The characters used are notorious by their fame in society. He chooses characters with brave attitude that were known in their times due to the fact that they could not conform to the society they lived in and that made them extraordinary. Therefore, his characters are criminals, famous thieves, fierce rulers, witches, writers, a.s.o. the urban slangs are often used in his paintings and the letters used take form of a special writing that resembles the medieval writing.

We are taken into a world of violent and almost hysterical colours, the background tells a story of the character. One might feel as if the persona is ready to get out of the painting and join us for a glass of wine. The reality of expression leaves no person indifferent to Hitter's paintings. Hitter's work is poignant and bold. You either like or totally dislike his work, because it takes a certain type of viewer to get in tune with the vivacity of his works.

The artist is known for his passion in painting. He is dubbed "the painting machine" as he gets restless when faced the canvas. Under his hands, the canvas gets alive and is ready to tell the world a new story. We all like good stories and Paul Hitter is an



extremely good story teller using canvas, brushes and colours. And one cannot forget the story once it reveals itself while delving into the vivacity of the painting.

“Paul Hitter's work is a unique production. Indeed, his work is the result of a whole life combining the most diverse things that sum up perfectly thanks to the passion and the sense the painter puts in it. A childhood in the Romanian eighties, a true sensibility and understanding for the Gypsy cause, a genuine love for Balkan music and culture, the pride of Romanian origins, influenced by the orthodox icons he studied, folklore, disappointments towards the non-existing values of our modern society... offer a bitter-sweet colorful picturing of our world in his eyes.

Through mainly oil paintings, sometimes drawings, he's illustrating what he calls «Balkan Expressionism»: a mix of naive art, orthodox icons, contemporary art, street art and German expressionism and of course, of his most sincere beliefs.

Paul Hitter is the ambassador of the mixed ethnicities found in the Balkans: Hungarian, Austrian, and Romanian. He was born in 1982 in Bucharest under the communist regime. While this period influenced the young generation of Romanians in a way they decided to cut all the bridges with their roots and culture, Paul kept the intensity of these days, changing into a powerful art, full of meanings and... celebrating the Balkan History and culture.

He went to several art schools where, among others, he achieved training in religious mural-painting, followed by studies at the Art Academy of München from which he graduated in 2011.

His first personal exhibition was at held at the Muzeul Țăranului Român in 2010 and was entitled “EXIL”. He then went to Italy with it, in Milano, then to France, in Marseille at the occasion of the Latcho Drom Festival, among others.

Faithful to his unconventional personality and art, Paul also innovated with unconventional exhibits. He appreciates when music and his work meet: being inspired by Balkan cultures and all it can include, a music band joining his visual art for the time of an evening is a full masterpiece, a travel to the authentic Balkan countries.” (Eugene Al Pann - <http://popartxpert.blogspot.ro/p/1-hitt.html>)

## Eugene Al Pann

He is a painter, illustrator, and curator. Born on 19 of June 1969 in Craiova, Romania. He attended the high school in Bucharest and he was privately tutored in painting. He attended the Faculty of Journalism at the University of Bucharest. In 1990, he founded the journal of culture and art entitled *Avanpost* and he was in charge of graphics and illustrations. Since 1995 he worked for various publishing houses as an illustrator. Since 1992 he exposed his paintings in various important art galleries in Bucharest (*Avanpost Galleries*). In 1995 he founded the *Saturnus* art gallery in Hamburg. In 1997 he moves into the USA, in Los Angeles where he continued his work in painting and art. He has art works exhibited in the following art collections: *ABB* Geneva, *Faye Grant*, *Warehouse Décor* Santa Monica – CA, *Ristorante Positano*, Beverly Hills – CA, *Faye Grant actress*, Los

Angeles; *Mr Fletcher Downey*, Los Angeles; City Hall in Bucharest, *KupurGalerie*, Gent, Belgium; *Fine Art Studios*, Santa Monica.

He is the most poignant representative of the Balkan expressionism. His painting is the most connected to the Balkan history. His works, which are grand in dimension, present the nostalgia of the inter-war expressionists, the cannons of the socialist realism, the unrelenting capitalism culminating in the complexity of Balkan expressionism.

## Matei Șerban

Born in 1968 in Bucharest. His works are appreciated worldwide. Some of his works have the mural classicism incorporated. They seem simple. The lines are accurate, decisive cuts. The faces painted by Matei Șerban are excessively humane, as the painter has the inner happiness of life. Young or old, women or men, they have the strength to look straight in the viewer's eyes. The characters of Matei Șerban live no drama, they are not melancholic, they do not explode of happiness, and the frame is an integrated part of existence. Through his paintings, the postmodernism and post-post-modernism can say farewell to the artistic space. Matei Șerban proves that the real art lies in unity, construction, beauty and subtle suggestions.

Matei Șerban is a well defined distinguished personality as he constantly strives to express his own feelings and emotions. He is in constant quest of finding the best story to portray in art. His paintings have a deep influence of the medieval and byzantine times and his characters and the figment of profound meditation on nature and human condition. He is a devoted artist as he has got the quality of being extremely thorough and careful on the graphics, form and rigorous artistic creation. His paintings are abundant in symbols with regards to human condition, divinity, refined deriving ideas, style and taste and diverse range of sources by denoting to a class of ancient philosophers who did not belong to any recognized school of thought but selected doctrines from various schools of thought. He is a self taught man, devoted to God and life. Due to his sensitivity, he manages to render in art his outmost hidden thoughts and feelings. One cannot be left indifferent to his work, as once you witness his creation, a strong desire to see more emerges. Delving into his work is like delving in a world filled with meaning and creation. Due to his intellectual drive, we can say that he follows Leonardo da Vinci's motto: „pittura è unacosamentale“.

## Marina Obradovic

Born in France, with Yugoslavian origins. She studied Belle Arte in Paris, and she specialized in photography, painting, mural painting restoration, and decorations. In 2014, she had a joint exhibition with Paul Hitter where the artist Paul Hitter painted her photos. Their dual exhibition was a success, and this initiated her into the Balkan Expressionism. Her photos depict different portraits of people from Romania. She is mostly interested in the gypsy world and finds interesting themes in this colourful community. Her interests concern decors and her work with movie director Tony Gatlif (*Swing*) are mostly appreciated as she is the principal assistant on the set. Her

works are exhibited in different countries such as Italy, France, Belgium, Norway and Romania.

Her photographs are a parallel between two worlds: the image of youth and the image of elderly and the world of the last century and the world of the current century. The author favours the young diaphane faces in order to express the naïve and happiness, thus proving a great love for purity and adolescence.

There are strong colours that are abundant: such as ardent red. There are flowers in her photos, and they prove to be an excuse to fill in the space, either in close up shot or background. Her teenagers are at puberty, and one can hardly depict if they are boys or girls. There is something warm in her painting. It seems like the sun is about to burst, and it's similar to a spring morning, where everything seems to get to life: the grass, roads, and houses' roofs. All is enlightened and announces an apocalypse of the end. In general, she is not apocalyptic. On the contrary, she prefers the serenity. She is in love with white. Large spots of white express the sun and light, pureness and optimism.

In reality, her portraits are anthropologically Balkan i.e. they are Caucasian people between 10-20 years old. There is something interesting in the way family photos are mixed in collage – couples or members of the family. We might suggest the eternal family, the Balkan family as these types of photos can be found in pretty much every Balkan household: in Romania, Serbia, Montenegro, former Yugoslavia, etc.

It is crystal clear that she discovered this history of the Balkans starting from the memories that are present in every household of this Balkan space. What is interesting about her work is the lack of a thesis. She does not exaggerate or break the reality. She is not looking for a show at all costs. She does not drift into kitsch. She does not profane the history or the faces. She is a pure artist. She might be suspected of naivety, but her naivety is natural, is something that she looks for. It is not like the naïve painters that pretend they cannot paint and eventually what they paint is childlike.

At Marina Obradovic the faces are real, clean and contemporary to their life according with their lives and ideals. Their gaze is straightforward, serene; their smiles are as clear as spring mornings. There is remarkable joy in wanting to return over and over again to see her paintings/ photos. After a glimpse, the eye is eager to get back in order to analyse these faces with a classical allure such as a contemporary Madonna. There is a religious pattern that are a reminder of icons painted on glass from the Balkan area – a painting that wasn't practiced in other areas and, probably, is the creation of the painting studios that existed in the orthodox churches from Romania, Russia, Bulgaria, Serbia, Greece etc. The western monasteries have cultivated classicism. The eastern monasteries have cultivated naivety.

The Balkan expressionism has this feature of interpreting and discovering the past. Its premises is that beyond what we see, there is a reality and the reality is beyond what we see and in Marina's work there is a poignant feeling i.e. every photo requires to make a history of the person photographed, not of the photo it itself, although this should not be left aside as there is interesting to know where the photo was taken, why, what are the relations between the photographed people and members of the family. There is a

short story, if not an entire novel in every family photo. And there is also a challenge in every painting.

## The Balkan Conclusion

Expressionism Movement is just at its beginning. Time will tell whether this artistic movement will impact universal art as the previous art movements did.

The Balkan expressionism movement arose and is making the world aware that the artists from the Balkans are ought not to be forgotten or left aside. There is a culture that is in a continuous development without forgetting the tradition. There is a pure outcry: we are here; we are worthy!

The Balkan artists pride in the confidence they have in their creative ideas as they find their inspiration in the Balkan folklore, the surrounding stories in the urban areas. There is a story behind every Balkan expressionism painting and one can wonder if the world is prepared to witness the emergence of a new art that combines life in reality in such a way that it trespasses times and ages.

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