

Hungarian University of Fine Arts—DLA programme

Theses of DLA dissertation

Opportunities for Creating Illusion of Space in Sculpting

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„There is no such thing as reality of objects. Everything that seems to be exterior is the self-creation of a non-conscious creature. The world is not a place but a condition. And this condition is the magic, the Maya.”

Béla Hamvas: Arkhai

My initial assumption is that illusion, in some form, is existent in nearly all artwork. My dissertation deals with three major areas:

- In part one, types of illusion are covered, from nature-based mimesis to senses beyond three dimensions in relation to thought-evoking genres and artworks. I primarily systematise commonly known illusion-evoking art instruments and natural phenomena. Starting out from these, I will investigate phenomena delivering insight into worlds beyond the third dimension, or at least, by means of fine art, creating sensations that go beyond commonly known dimensions. I will start with mimesis, as the best-known illusion. Then, I will move from the renaissance perspective through trompe-l'oeil effects to the mesmerising illusion-making of op-art, and then, I will delineate the illusion-making opportunities of abstract art.

- Part two deals with illusions on the level of thought and sense, the layout of Maya and biocentrism as well as related contemporary tendencies and artworks. I will set out the characteristics of space, distance, matter and time. I will search for connections between anamorphosis, pareidolia, absurd perspective, absurd hologram and spirituality as well as illusions on the level of thought and sense.

- In part three, among other things, I will present my own artistic activity, the antecedents of the masterwork, its conceptual background and connections to contemporary art.

Having examined spatial illusion-making, I arrived at presenting the most simple illusion-makings as well as artworks that evoke the illusion of the world beyond the third dimension, i.e., picture phenomena beyond the third dimension. For a long time, this world beyond the third dimension has exclusively belonged to the domain and ideology. According to the present state of science and based on more and more experiments, it can be stated that there is a world beyond the material world, and, in fact, this material world is not like we thought it to be either. In this respect, the most radical theory known by me is the theory of biocentrism that claims that life is the foundation of the material world coming into existence and not vice versa. I am convinced that the world beyond the third dimension can be pictured by means of sculpting and, based on several examples, I will demonstrate how this is possible.

In my dissertation, I will refer to several examples coming from painting to support my arguments, although my dissertation is fundamentally about sculpting. The reason for this is that my major argument is connected to the mutual infiltrability between dimensions, among other things. A statue can also be understood as a picture with an infinite number of points of perspective. As a thought-inspiring example, we can mention the German expression "*Bildhauer*" meaning literally "picture carver".

The picture sensed by our two eyes is processed by our brains and is turned into spatial sight. Consequently, even if a spatial artwork is looked at in a standing position, it is seen in space. Our space experience will be even more intense if we do not settle for just a static kind of observation

but we move around the object, or, at least, we look at the artwork during movement. This way, the concept of time will be incorporated in the process of perceiving the artwork, considering that movement itself implies the sense of the time passing.

An important element of every statue is the transparent (or rather: invisible) space surrounding and confining the statue as well as its visible surroundings. In a traditional sense, sculpture used to exclusively be about artwork produced by shaping optically compact masses. However, in the 20th century, the relation between the statue and its surroundings underwent a significant change and in sculpture new materials and techniques appeared. Plexiglass and other transparent materials started to be used, Kinetic statues and other innovations were introduced. Several innovations were previously possible in painting only, which generally gives more scope for displaying fantasy—or they were not even possible in painting. Art history profoundly disproved Leonardo's claims about sculpture: "[...] it does not make bright and transparent bodies, for example veiled shapes in order to make the colour of the nude body shine through the veil; nor does it create colourful little pebbles underneath the surface of transparent water." Since then, all this has become possible. And what is possible will become reality sooner or later, if it has not already.

In a well-known picture of Arcimboldo's, we can see a human face in armour, wearing a helmet. Turning the picture around and looking at it more closely, we can discern two hands lifting up the lid of a pot containing roast pork and chicken with a lemon slice on it. In my opinion, hidden dimensions are often composed this way: in the beginning they tend to show a chaotic and unrecognisable picture, then, as a consequence of a revelation, they turn out to be reality with crystal-clear logic.

György Jovánovics writes the following on mosaics located in Rome in the early Christian basilica Santa Maria Maggiore: "The golden colour intrudes the visual world of early Christendom where, for ancient artists, there were undefined zones between closed individual shapes and, for the ancient arts, there was a non-depictable uncertain air space. Bodonyi did not spell out what this was at that time, however, this would make his study even more valuable. He might not have registered what Riegl had said before: '...the space full of air, which makes certain external things appear separately for the naive sensual perception, is no material individual. On the contrary, it is the negation of matter, consequently just *nothing*'.¹ This nothing is *light*."²

In my opinion, this nothing, this light is a display of spiritual contents. This means not only the negation of matter, however, I can state with full confidence that the golden background itself is nothing but a display of the presence of the world beyond the third dimension. This is the cosmic, ethereal background of depicted figures.

In case of a golden mosaic, similar to glass mirror, in fact, the light coming from outside is reflected by the golden smoke silvering on the glass pieces. Consequently, the surface of gold, carrying the yellow colour in itself, does not really act as a colour but a lot more as a mirror. This is a different kind of mirroring than the one used by Anish Kapoor. However, its effect is similar in some respects, considering that while watching the surface of a moving golden mosaic the particular mosaic pieces

¹ Alois Riegl: A késő római iparművészet (Translated by Rajnai László), Bp. 1989, Corvina kiadó, 27.

² Jovánovics, György: Test és tér a szobrászatban. A magyar Szobrász Társaság és a Műcsarnok közös előadássorozatának dokumentációja / [published by Bordács Andrea] ; [in cooperation with Rényi András] ; [közread. Magyar Szobrász Társaság] ; [közread. Műcsarnok]:03,34

and surfaces change their colour because of their repeating mirror-like glistening. Thus, human eyes focus on coloured figures and the golden surfaces between them in different ways.

Anish Kapoor's distinguished achievement lays not in the plastic shaping of his works but in bringing the observer to a special state of consciousness. This state of consciousness questions reality experienced by our senses and the observer comes to be under the influence of the peculiar, transcendent effect of the sight. Standing in front of the mirror, its surface cannot be sensed because the picture of the mirror is a lot more intense and it thoroughly distracts our attention from the mirror surface. The mirror with its flat and even surface doubles the distance between the point of view and the mirror. This way, the mirror image is exactly twice as far away from us as the mirror. In case of a mirror with a curved surface, depending on the curvature of the mirror surface, this virtual distance can be more or less than that of the flat mirror. In this optical situation, human eyes become even more uncertain in terms of judging distance. The eyes focus on the mirror image behind the mirror. Since vision and observation are deceived by the mirror, the consciousness becomes uncertain too and, after some time, the surface of the statue itself disappears and only the world of the mirror image remains. Thus, the work becomes entirely non-material.

To me, there is a plain parallelism between the Maya conception and Anish Kapoor's art. Nevertheless, the Maya consciousness should be handled with caution. If we take the Maya consciousness seriously, which was recommended to me by Hamvas, defining will become totally fuzzy because everything is just illusion (delusion) with no difference in what we are talking about. Nonetheless, at this point the issue starts to become exciting. Why should we not make an attempt to regard the present everyday illusion surrounding us as a base and differentiate between further illusions? Anish Kapoor's works, with their reflecting surfaces, are perfect examples because the sculpture itself cannot be seen just the world reflected by it. Thus, the work is the distorted mirror image of the illusion, the material world turned upside down. The way the perspective of our surrounding becomes curved in the mirror image outstrips our common three-dimensional space perception. We perceive our usual reality and ourselves as a distorted illusion in which time passes differently—motion becomes faster or slower depending on the curvature of the mirror surface. It is through illusion that the illusory nature of the world becomes manifest. The mirror surface of the sculpture sharply cuts out a slice from reality and reproduces it in a twisted way: it seems to say, here you go, this is the material dimension and after some distortion we can hardly recognise it.

The Copenhagen experiment proved that the behaviour of matter depends on the observer's conscious presence. Measurement influences the measured value. What happens if this phenomenon is valid not only in the atomic sphere but in human, moreover, cosmic dimensions, if, with due care, events can be influenced even in cosmic dimensions?

According to Robert Lanza, there is no separate physics for atoms, human and cosmic dimensions. This way, the material world is in this, for us, familiar dimension nothing but a scene, a mask. At the present stage, we can take a peek out of the closed world of this dimension, however we cannot break out of it yet.

The paradoxical absurd space phenomenon, included in the absurd hologram, can be best represented by the series "Spring for Voltaire I.-II." by Attila Csáji. "The first piece of the series is an example of our customary rational space perception. In front of the Voltaire mask, we can see a spring that partly covers up the mask and casts a cloud on it. Thus, it creates a fairly traditional kind of a space. [...] The second piece shows the negative shape of the mask with a spring in front of its empty space. [...] The Voltaire head undergoes a change, it seems to belong to some fat cardinal.

Every detail appears in a true way but in a negative shape. So, the spatial qualities of the plastic body alter, bringing some uncertainty into the space perception: the nose—and sometimes the eye-socket as well— sometimes seem to be convex but they are, in fact, concave. The relation between the spring and the head, however, still corresponds to our customary space perception.”

The third hologram has the same position. A peculiar quality of holograms is utilised here: if the emulsion side of the sheet is turned towards the observer, the shape appears in front of the sheet in the space and concave shapes become convex. The negative of the Voltaire head gains a positive shape again and in the space it can be seen in front of the sheet. During the taking of the picture, the spring was located nearer to the laser than the mask: the head was partly covered and cast a shadow over the negative mask. As soon as the emulsion side of the sheet was turned around a curious transformation took place: the spring came into the inner part of the head. However, its shade can be seen in front on the forehead and nose. At the same time, the nose, which is nearer to the observer, is covered by the spring located somewhat behind. If the observer makes a slight movement to the right or to the left, the mouth and the chin are covered. Diametrically opposed to our expectations concerning our space perception, the object in front is covered by the object behind. What is this about: Spatial impossibility or the anticipation of a new dimension?”³ At first, the picture created by the hologram is hardly different from the effect of the previously mentioned negative reliefs applied by Antal Illyés, István Kiss and Iván Szok, however, there is one difference: one of them in reality is indented, and the others just create the effect of indentation on the even surface, due to the qualities of the hologram. Nonetheless, Csáji Attila’s work presents a double twist compared to the others, considering that it realises a view which cannot be modelled in the three-dimension-reality known to us, using a laser hologram.

This is the objective reality that does not exist. What seems to be outside in the picture created by the hologram is, in fact, inside. If we believe in what we see on the hologram we can say: this is the self-delusion of a non-conscious being. As with Maya’s veil, the hologram shows the world not as a location but as a condition.

Robert Lanza’s theory of biocentrism turns our hitherto existing knowledge upside down by claiming the universe came about from life and not vice versa; this would replace the physical history of the origins of our earth by a biological one and replace the old physics by a new biology.

To me, Robert Lanza’s theory is interesting and important because it is about the very illusion defined by common convention as reality. By quoting Lanza’s thoughts I try to make plain that the “outer” world is by far not just that which can be processed by our perception.

According to biocentrism, *there is no such thing as objective reality*. Everything that seems to be exterior is the self-creation of a *non-conscious being* (according to Lanza’s *The animal mind*). “The world is not a location but a condition. And this condition is the magic, the Maya”. In Lanza’s words: “An ‘external’ reality, if it existed, would—by definition—have to exist in space. But this is meaningless, because space and time are not absolute realities but rather tools of the human and animal mind.”

According to Saint Augustine, “there was no time prior to Creation because time is a creation itself.” Hence, time is relative as well: it is part of the created world and no factor independent from the created world. There are quantum-mechanical experiments showing their final result having an

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Csáji, Attila (Körmendi Galéria Budapest ISBN 963 04 9150 8):73

impact on their middle phase in a retroactive way, meaning it can change the progress of time in reverse.

There is no doubt about time being an extraordinarily interesting thing. It is a system of changes. Theoretically, it is a linear process measured by a watch and designed by the calendar. However, we often discern certain things lasting an endlessly long time and other things just spinning away.

The Greeks called the smallest component of matter an atom. Science continuously searches for the components of matter and atom, the smallest particles, however, the matter constantly seems to slip out of the hands of science. They realised that matter is nothing but vibration in an intricate system. And the particles of matter are nothing but electromagnetic wave phenomena. If we continue to investigate the issue of magnetism we need to realise that matter is in fact of mental origin too.

Thus, what exists is not matter in the previously assumed form, but a vibration which is fundamentally of mental nature; it has been created by the mind and it is operated by the energy of the mind.

In Nicola Tesla's words: „If you want to find the secrets of the universe think in energy, frequency and vibration.”

What exists does, in fact, not exist and what does not exist exists very well. Material existence does not allow us to see reality, the purely mental things.

“...the Universe, the entire existence is not what it seems to be and how we perceive it with our senses: everything is just illusion, the swirl of delusive images: Maya, a Veil covering up reality. And if everything is different from what we think it is, then it is obvious that every idea is quite equally true and false—this way, everything is possible.”⁴

The veil of Maya presents a boundary for creatures like us that does not allow us to see more dimensions than we can perceive with our senses, but there is a human consciousness that is truly boundless. With our consciousness, with our mind, we can take a peek beyond the veil.

In fine arts, different dimensions can be represented in space among other things by creating a matterless effect. The most obvious transparent thing is the air itself. In case of perforated sculptures, air is part of the composition.

I will mention contemporary works in which the air flow keeps objects in a floating state. Attila Csörgő's work entitled "How to construct an orange?" is like this. The floating based on balanced magnetism has a similar result in Szvet Tamás's works. In these works, gravitation is cancelled by invisible matter like flowing air or magnetism.

Antecedents of producing a masterwork

The same sculpture looks completely different in a closed space than outdoors. The moment a sculpture is put in a rectangular glass cabinet the space of the sculpture is changed by the cabinet—

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Baktay, Ervin: India művészete (Képzőművészeti Alap Kiadóvállalata, Budapest, 1958.):52

the cabinet has an effect on the work. The sculpture itself will be re-interpreted by not having been placed into a spacious place but into a rational system confined by rectangular transparent planes. The views of the sculpture are determined by the rectangular cuboid, that creates a front view, a side view, a rear view and a view from above. Due to the effect of the cabinet, the work does not appear to be direct anymore, it becomes "untouchable". At the same time, the work can be multiplied by the cabinet too and the endless reflections could lend the work an irrational depth.

I regard my work entitled "Trivio", made in Rome, as one of the most important stations. The title "Trivio" refers to a triple junction. The hexagonal prism, situated in the middle, is elongated in three directions in space by the three peripheral parts of the work. In these, the changes of light follow the slow spinning of the electric motor situated in the central element.

Traditionally, in sculpting illumination supports the light-shadow-phenomenon. However, from that moment on, when the sculpture has its own light source, and the light comes out of the work itself, the light-shadow-phenomenon in a traditional sense is out of the question.

On the one hand, the experience of space is created by the picture engraved on the individual glass plates and the spatial distances between them, on the other hand, the pictures themselves are often of a perspective nature giving an experience of space per se. Thirdly, the glass surface reflects the engraved picture, drawn with light, this way often generating a "never-ending corridor" effect—all these result in the dilatation of space illusion. The "never-ending corridor" effect is most apparent at the three peripheral parts because the last plate is not just glass but a mirror. This way, the illusory effect of the renaissance perspective can be multiplied via transparency and mirrors. When I place more perspective images behind each other on transparent surfaces more spaces appear through each other in a see-through way at the same time. Thus, I can evoke space perceptions which I probably would not be able to attain by other means in this clear-cut way. The even and slow turning of the motor controls the illumination of parts placed on the periphery. The motor and the switches can be seen in the middle. The light, going on and off, circulates on the three peripheral parts, expressing the clockwork nature of the world. The peripheral parts are controlled by the work from its inner structure out. This way, opening up cosmic perspectives.

Masterwork – Gates, Milan

In the last semester of the three-year DLA programme, I was a student of the Accademia di belle Arti di Brera in Milan. My work entitled "Gates" was made here.

In the case of my work "Gates", one might think of chaos at first sight until the observer focuses on the gates. In any case, the entire composition depicts the easily visible system with the regularity of an octagonal "crystal shape". The outer scratched glass plates of the work have their continuation in mirror plates that are held by a low and matt black mounting. The matt black is the nothing, the "medium" absorbing light, and the mirror reflects light and mirrors the observer looking at it. The glass means transparency on which the scratched line appears as a line drawn out of the exceptionally dispersing light. With these means, I strove to attain a "non-material" effect, as far as possible.

Once, strolling along on the main street of Milan, I looked through an open gate. Through the gate, on the other side of the richly decorated reception area of the building, I could see a courtyard, and across the courtyard another gate, through the gate another street and the gates on the other side of the street. This very moment incited in me a train of thought. It was not so much the well-wrought gates that fired my imagination but the entire system of connections, the way inner and

outer spaces alternate. The gates, besides being entrances and exits in a physical sense, often are boundaries or stations of momentous episodes of our fate. In a figurative sense, crossing the threshold frequently means more than simply going through an entrance or passage.

In this life, here and now, you make a certain choice, you pick a certain gate, but at the same time in a parallel universe your parallel self chooses another gate—this can repeat endlessly. With the gates, I tried to show time itself and its structure or, at least, make them perceptible in some way. The individual gates as phases, moments, epochs are situated next to each other and are visible at the same time as well. However, we can try to focus on the glass plates separately. Certain time layers remain hidden from us, we cannot see both the plates opposite us and the ones perpendicular to them simultaneously, but if we circle round and have a look at the work from a view at 90 degrees to the previous one, we can see the very plates that were out of sight before, from the opposite side of the statue, we can see the very images in reversed order to that we first saw. Time is symbolised by the glass plates as time slices. Thus, time layers can also be seen as frozen time slices too from the perspective of a mental creature standing above time.