



Sergey Temerev and Anna Massinissa, Curator of the Fabriano inAcquarello Festival, sitting after the lecture in the vestibule of Oratorio della Carità in Fabriano Italy.

The five keys for a quality watercolor

Annotation

"The five keys for a quality watercolor" the theme of lecture, which was given by Sergey Temerev at Oratorio della Carità, Fabriano, Italy, on April 26, 2019. This lecture delivered in frame the "Lectures and Debate" part of the FabrianoInAcquarello festival 2019 program, which was include also the following lectures: "Watercolor grammar" by Vladimir Merchensky, and "What is Happening in the Art Materials Industry" by Laurin McCracken with Pierre Guidetti;

The mentioned at beginning lecture related to the trying of the explanation the problem of understanding and assessment the quality in the art of watercolor. That was explanation's attempt, related to intend going a bit out the limits of exceptionally the watercolor art, and to regard the possibility of quality assessment as such in contemporary art.

The causes, which was behind this conversation

Is the quality in watercolor art important for us today? What could be discussed here, when on an intuitive level, it looks more than understandable. I think each of those present could say: "Of course, this is completely understandable, and so what can we talk about here?" However, itself the idea of today's lecture and its theme arose not without reason. I think the topic is especially important for the conversation today, during the exhibition of 10th anniversary the Fabriano festival.

The important notice.

In these reasoning there are not trying to act strictly systematically. To do this, it would be necessary to touch upon a large data array, select examples with great attention and with strict adherence to the criteria, etc. In addition (and before all), could had necessary to formulate these criteria. Moreover, the formulated criteria should had be non-conflicting, without contradictions in their formulations.

The lecture it is rather an invitation to a joint search, to a joint reflection on quality relating to art, and criteria this quality. Of course, this about quality in relation to the art of watercolor.

Searching and checking for the criteria.

It was here, in the field of criteria and definitions, that problems and traps would await me. Indeed, today, during the existence of such a variety of visual arts, it is difficult to set not only the parameters for considering such a wide field of art. At the modern time, it is difficult to define even the concept of art. Therefore, I ask you to look at my speech as an attempt to find something important together, to find not only mutually acceptable quality criteria, but, first of all, mutually understandable words about the ways of such a search.

I, like many of you, do not have an education in the field of theory and history of art, and my activity, like of many of you, is not often associated with theoretical subjects. Theory operates with words describing reality, whatever it may be. We just try to find acceptable words to describe. Descriptions are only part of the reality, and we will try to find words to describe quality aspects in watercolor.

I, like you, are primarily a practitioner. I hope the things familiar to me, and I am sure, to many of us from the field of practice can help to find these right words. The words that can pretty clearly describe the results of this practice. Therefore, I hope that practical experience, yours and mine, will help us today. It is about an example of experience that could to discuss now.

Note: this is not the artist's experience, this is the viewer's experience, this is not the experience of painting, but the experience of critical selection. The thing could to done anyone, who did prepared an exhibition or was a member of the jury.

A little history or an attempt to find quality samples. Practice.

As I mentioned, the idea of this reasoning and conversation had a prehistory, and this background is important for the disclosure of the topic. Let this background will be like a bridge between the words, which already been spoken and wish will be spoken further. Between the words "quality", "criteria" and "practice".

Now is few words prehistory. The beginning of this story happened after the end of the Fabriano 2018 exhibition, at the time of the beginning of preparation for the new exhibition, but before the new selection of the applicants' works.

Curator of the FabrianoInAcquarello, Anna Massinissa asked the community's leaders to give several examples (at their discretion) of works from the catalog of the exhibition, which the leaders consider the quite high quality. If I remember correct, there were requested five works as the examples. We all expected a large number of samples would be collected. Expected that between they would have quite big and even huge difference of manner, style, etc., in comparison however, they all will have similarity. The similarity of quality. Expected the mutual criticism of the examples proposed by the leaders will make it possible to find the basic quality criteria acceptable to many.

It so happened that actually had presented only few these examples, but many opinions had expressed. That were predominantly the opinions about the difficulties developing mutually acceptable criteria. What can impresses one of us leaves the other indifferent.

At first, I was not an active participant in the discussion. But by wishing to answer the request I decided to update the impressions of the exhibition in my memory by looking at the catalog. Seems to me the meaning of the phrase I just said, "What impresses one of us, leaves the other indifferent," also set the line for the possibility of finding mutually acceptable.

Totally, the catalog of Fabriano 2018 contained about 1400 watercolors. Among them, I found so many watercolors that I liked that it became clear to me: to choose from this amount only five things means to lost many the best works out wise the limits of so thin choice. Among the watercolors, I liked were works of various genres: figurative works, landscapes, still life, and works that I could hardly relate to a particular genre.

There were works saturated in color and tone, and, conversely, tender. Since I was repeatedly try to choose, and it was difficult, I did asked to myself a number of questions. Further I will call these questions, and now I would like to present the result. From the thousand and four hundred watercolors was selected forty-one works. Indeed, maybe a bit too much, but that was reach palette of watercolor art that was really impressive.

The questions or deconstruction experience, finding the important and the minor

Trying to choose from a thousand four hundred works of a small number of suitable quality (on my opinion), I started to thinking about the choice's criteria problem.

This moment I understood I see the similar issues of my students at the Stieglitz Academy, where I have honor to teach for a long time. When the students, starting work on a task, look at analogues - the works of other authors on similar topics, they should to collect the mostly suitable, and I have the questions' set, as the help for them. I do not remember for what reason the questions' set did formulated, but this set works. I ask them to formulate when viewing each artist's work, which they see:

1. Do I like it? If so, why the respond appeared in my mind.
2. What exactly and by what exactly way do I like it? What are the details, or the overall structure, color, tone, etc., what exactly is attracts.
3. By what way did the artist made the impression on me? What are the specifics, novelty, what equipment, and material?
4. What are the means by which I could go this way? Do I see them? Do I really have the tricks, tools which that I managed to recognize?
5. Would I want to achieve a similar result in my task? If yes, what is the way to achieve what is missing?

Probably will be no wonder if in relation these questions I will brought quote from the Chinese philosopher "If you ask a right question, then you already know half the answer." Each previous question of the above causes the next question, and so on until the end. The first (and partly the last) of them is directed rather to an intuitive answer, the rest imply attention, analysis and mental deconstruction of the material, style, manner, etc. what the viewer is inspecting.

It is clear that, having made the first selection, I have already begun to answer the first question. However, there were no tasks other than assessment (and additionally, an understanding of

how I make this assessment) before me and in case the last question I did not intend to repeat the path of the authors of the viewed watercolors. In addition, my questions for students addressed to future artists of tectonic arts, or more precisely to artists of decorative art. Recently, the truth is likely, as in many other places, it is becoming increasingly difficult for us to separate decorative art and art objects in the works of our students. Our Academy has long been a smithy of artists of contemporary art (which happens to be extremely radical).

However, any kind of art, for all its specificity, is still included in the general field of art, as such. Watercolor is no exception. I think a lot related to tectonic arts, is fully applicable to the visual arts. Let us look carefully. What are these questions about? What exactly can help determine the quality criteria of watercolor? The questions I have mentioned concern several things.

1. Recognition of the purpose, intentions of the author. Determining whether these goals meet the goals of the viewer. This definition of where his attention is directed to, what in the world, real or ideal attracts him, what exactly compels him to concentrate his (and our attention) precisely on what he shows us, on what the ray of attention directs - like a ray of light.
2. The definition of the main things in the creation, which will be the viewer. An attempt to distinguish between the main and the non-main in the work, the recognition of this main. And here we are We find ourselves at the point where the artist's ability to show us the most important thing and the ability of the viewer to recognize it. It is useful to us further. Attempt to compare with other works, the uniqueness and specificity of the plan, the ability to recognize the author's idea in a number of other works.
3. Review of compositional and technical means, novelty or tradition, possession of equipment, material, and professional techniques.

Thus, in the above-mentioned questions, apart from the general direction of the artistic intention, - composition, technique of performance, materials used, there are collected things concerning relating to the artist's tools, and, of course, his skills. This is closer to the goal here you can already choose acceptable things. However remain the several unnamed things that can make difficult and distort the finding the necessary criteria. In this respect we should not shy away from the goal - attempts to determine most widely acceptable criteria for the quality of watercolors.

Contemporary art and art tradition. Experience finding common.

Here we have to take a small side step, again distract and, perhaps, look again at a number of remarkable works collected from the Fabriano 2018 catalog. Once again, I must to say that this is exactly my individual choice, in this respect the choice certainly not protected by criticism. However, this choice was made in an attempt to overcome the framework of my individual sympathies for a particular style, manner, moreover, for the art of tradition or modern art in a narrower sense.

In a broad sense, we are all modern artists. We are all working right now, in the 21st century, but the necessary division is available to our understanding when we say "artist of traditional art" or "artist of modern art". Here we have a number of works by contemporary authors. Some of them are artists working within the framework of traditional art, some of the authors work in a manner that does not include direct representation, and focuses their attention (and therefore our attention, the attention of the viewer) only on color, tonal contrasts, concentrating the main

attention on a separate, decorative color value, etc. They seem to me no less interesting, I see beauty in them. About beauty a bit later, there will be a separate part of my reasoning.

So, we have two lines of work, works in the line with the tradition and the works that are not fundamentally pictorial in their nature. Can we consider them together? Can we judge them together? Could we find something in common in these two lines of work? This question, among other things, set the start and tone for the discussion. After all, sometimes, when the works, which are outside the direct visualization, faces a low assessment, sounds the words that this is "innovation", which means that criteria that apply to traditional art are not applicable to such works. In such cases I say that a hundred years ago, Malevich, Kandinsky, Rothko - were definitely a novelty. But for more than a hundred years, this style has become just another branch of the tradition.

One hundred years is enough time for the works that initiated abstractionism, cubism and other areas to become examples of tradition for their followers. It seems the non-visual, no-realistic art, including the wide range of the water-based painting today is also a tradition, and it is also opposed to part of today's directions of contemporary art. For example some directions of conceptual art, that rejecting not only realistic creation, but often all the visual depicting. We all know well the directions of contemporary art which uses only casual objects, or only the descriptions of the things.

My answer is: I see in these two mentioned lines of art the general. I can apply to these works the same questions, that about which it has already been said. This also will work. I'd like to ask:

1. What is the purpose of the author? What is his attention directed to?
2. How does he focus the viewer's attention?
3. Can we recognize the main thing that is in this work?
4. how does he achieve impressions, and so on and so forth?
5. one can even ask oneself such a special question, specifically especially in regards works without the directly depicting style: could I go this way?

Contemporary art and art tradition. Attitude to beauty

I mentioned things that can impede my route to the goal, that is, to search for acceptable quality criteria. I mentioned one of them when I said the existing division into "traditional" and "modern" art. I also said that my individual sympathies inevitably highlight my choice. There is another thing that can obscure understanding, in relation (partially) to the previous item, but has its own specifics. This could not define easily, but I hope the reasoning will become clearer, if to say a couple of aphorisms. I mean the attitude to beauty. In my understanding, you can take only two positions in relation to such a category of description of the world as beauty.

1. You can be sure of beauty's real existence. This attitude also implies some attitude to the Absolute (for a person who is confident in its existence). Such a position presupposes the existence of the standard, the idea of the beautiful. In the past, the basis for the growth of mastery was think: "Comprehending the creation, I comprehending the Creator".

2. The opposite view assumes that beauty is relative, beauty for someone is not beauty for another, is not correlated with the immutable, is not absolute. And since it is not an indispensable attribute, then art could do without it. The directions of the movement in this case will be for example the sincerity of the experience, the search for identity, etc.

What is the difference, including in relation to our topic? The difference at the basic level can be based on the accepting or refusing the depicting, on wide range from the realistic depicting up to abstract. For the rebuke that the artwork is not quite like nature sample, the answer often comes as "I see by that way". Similarly often we hear rebuke to photo-realist with words "It only nature, where is artist?" or "That is artist in the role of printer, isn't it?" Seems to me here the good case to ask oneself again about the goal of the own art.

I myself truly believe in the real existence of beauty. The fact of this existence is for me is based not only the visual wealth of the world, but also one thing from the field of mathematics, which is called the Divine Section. This thing is unique, knowable, manifests itself in various phenomena of the world, and most importantly, it is a fundamental thing. In general, I am a realist not because I write in a realistic manner, no. As in a dispute between European theologians of the Middle Ages, realists with nominalists, I am a realist, because I am confident in the real existence of beauty as one of the basic parameters of our world. That happened so, the visual and plastic arts now do appeal to absolute rarely. The art have long abandoned this mostly, and I'd could say just almost completely. That is, now it is difficultly to quite seriously repeat words about the unity of beauty of form, beauty of an idea, and beauty of expression. What to do? Consensus could not to be achieved, really? The mutually acceptable criteria not founded. What is the beautiful to one is the terrible to another? However, I think, there is a way to consideration, which is capable of producing a result.

Message

You can look at any artwork not only as a thing that is exist. You can look at it along together with the look of its creator. What is this complex. What we could to see this way? At this place of the reasoning, there is possibly to ask following. What is a work of art, if not the message? Yes, probably, any artwork is expression of its author, is message. It can be addressed to the Universe, to the Almighty, to unlimited circle of recipients, including each one, including each self. Moreover, what is creation, if it not an act of self-presentation. Eventually, the message as self-presentation could express only the most important, only the main expression: "Here I am..."

The artist says: "It's (the beauty, the scary, the important, - the necessary could be emphasized) here, where my look focuse, look on here!" He can look at the beauty of the world, he can look into the dark depths of the soul. Nevertheless, his exclamation is rang out. Could had it been received? Each message has properties. It can be long or short, terrible, joyful, readable, unreadable, etc. But it must produce some result, somehow act on its recipient. Otherwise, it does not reach the goal. Here is the place that should to consider. To consider the "quality criteria" of the work, as the properties of the artist's message. In addition, if you look at a work from this point of view, then the oppositions mentioned above do not disappear, of course, but they cease to be of such great importance.

The artwork as the message should be at least the recognizable as message. We know, the pictures-riddles are exist, but the artistic message must be different from other things of the

world. If the author assumes the response of viewer, the empathy of viewer, then his message should have the ability to cause these emotions. And here I come back to the questions that can be asked before a work of art, in this case, the art of watercolor, if perceiving it as a message.

The five keys.

1. The choice of the theme and subject of the artwork, the significance this theme and subject. In the threshold limit, it is the common humankind significance the subject or theme;
2. The ways of focusing the viewer's attention;
3. The compositional system of the work , its specificity, novelty, other parameters ;
4. The tonal and color system of artwork;
5. The picturesque, graphic, drawing skills and / or other technical skills;

The last point regarding directly and exactly watercolor art is compliance with the properties of the watercolor as the art material to the idea and its realization.

Coming to an final

So. Here is could be a good place to try to summarize the today performance. We considered the possibilities of determining the quality criteria that each of us has. The possibilities that follow from our practice as artists. Which do not require an extraordinary level of erudition, but require quite a lot thing. These are attention, openness in the awareness of their art in relation to the existing field of results and achievements of art, both other artists and their own. This honesty in setting goals and objectives in work, as in own work, and work colleagues.

It was about the questions, which the author can ask himself, looking at the work created by him, and which the viewer can ask, being in front of this work. The questions that help the search for quality criteria were concentrated in five points or keys, which mentioned at the beginning of the lecture. There is, of course, another important one. An important key that helps unlock everything. It is simple to call it, but it is much more difficult to give him a systematic definition. This key opens many things, I will not say about everything, no. If someone expects the words about talent, I will not say this word in the framework of this conversation. Talent is a gift from the Almighty, or heaven, or if to say completely neutrally - of the universe. We are talking here about the achievable things. About the things, that could being achieve easier or more difficult. I could to say "harmony." You can lower the level a bit, and say "compliance", and I will accorded, because for me, the conformity of the path and achievements on this path is a sign of wisdom.

For all the five keys of quality in watercolor is the most important the compliance. The compliance of the chosen goal with the chosen subject, correspondence of the main thing in the work to the ways in which the author focuses our attention on this main thing. The compliance of innovations or the unusual ways of work to the general structure of the composition. The correspondence of the depth of elaboration, the correspondence of the materials and tools, painting and drawing skills of the author. As it did say that the search for quality criteria is possible, and the criteria could be reasonably applied, if we consider the artwork not only in itself, not only as a thing, as is. That is possible, if we consider a work as a message, as a unit of information that could leads us to the artist's thoughts, bring us the understanding, to which area of the real or ideal world the author leads us with the intention to share his experience. Of course, we could had not to feel nothing, but the case we must return to the problem of the

quality of the message. If we can to consider any created work, as a self-presentation of the author, we should be ready to hear the voice at any our conduct is: "That is it! I want to show it" This may sound like: "Here I am Lord!" It could contain any name explicitly, or not contain, but it is in any case a cry addressed to the World. Each of us with our creativity initiates such a flow of exclamations.

I'd like to wish all of us to make our voices were distinguishable, so that our messages were not only heard, but also been understood. I'd like to wish our message can not only be obtained by whomever on any case, but also caused a response. I wish us luck to ours messages would have been comprehended. Let not only our works form a color fields, let the voices of our artworks form not chaos, but watercolor music, sounding for the Universe. |

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