

ARTISTS OF TODAY

Though still relatively young, Ovidiu Avram is an artist who has discovered his own way, a way where he is preceded by few and accompanied by even fewer. What distinguishes Ovidiu Avram from the other contemporary artists is his predominantly symbolic language. The artist created his own language working on pre-existent elements, most of them, belonging to the wide field of esoteric doctrines. In fact, Ovidiu Avram has been thoroughly studying alchemy treatises, Cabala writings, astrology, gnosis, etc., for a long time. Beyond any doubt, all these esoteric systems have a common feature, which does explain the artist's constant attraction for them. Overall, they all start from some archaic initiation scenarios. These scenarios tell us about the difficult test the spirit is submitted to. They deal with suffering and death, as a necessary process of renewal, transformation and re-birth in a nobler and perfect stasis. For Ovidiu Avram, the thorough study of esoteric doctrines has meant both acquiring and functions akin to an initiation rite. Ovidiu Avram's plastic language is essentially symbolic and it is not always completely intelligible to the random looker. Consequently, Ovidiu Avram's work demands a considerable hermeneutic effort, an effort to decipher and interpret plastic symbols and signs. This program could be a good beginning for this effort. The first example, I shall insist upon, is borrowed from a painting (The Hermit), from the cycle inspired by the Tarot. There are three colored spots, each one inscribed in a triangle in the left bottom side of the painting. They are: an aquamarine spot, a white one and a red one. These signs refer to a system of chromatic symbols from alchemy. They are in connection with the theory about "the four phases of matter transmutation". In Hellenistic alchemic writings, they were called: melansis (meaning black), leukansis (namely, white), xanthosis (or yellow) and iosis (or red). In the alchemic treatises from the Middle Ages, words borrowed from Latin (nigredo, albedo, citrinitas and rubedo) are used for these chromatic symbols. In alchemic treatises, these four symbols (which Ovidiu Avram reduces to three) name the four phases that matter, natural substances go through, in a fulfilling process broadly observing the initiation scenario about the God's suffering, death and rebirth. Thus, nigredo is associated with putrefaction, decay of matter, i.e. death. Albedo (namely white) is a transition. The third phase (citrinitas, the yellow one) is a transition one. That is why, probably, Ovidiu Avram thought it better to do without it. During the last phase (rubedo, red) matter reaches its fulfillment. It is turned into gold. In alchemy, the active element of gold is considered to be red. Ovidiu Avram made only two modifications of the traditional symbols. He has turned nigredo (black) into aquamarine and reduced the four transmutation phases to only three. This short program does not allow me to insist on other symbols as well. I shall only say that they are taken from the Cabala ("the Tree of Life" symbol, for instance), or from Astrology (the astral symbols

Venus, Mars or Saturn, which are very frequent in Ovidiu Avram's paintings), or from gnosis (with its powerful dualism: matter spirit). One singles out Ovidiu Avram among the other contemporary artists for the symbolic of his creation. However, he is surprisingly close to a very well-known contemporary Romanian writer, Mircea Eliade, whose fiction has similar sources. Ovidiu Avram is an artist obsessed rather with spiritual significances than the sensitive appearance of this world. His painting does not only want to attract the looker, but also to transform him. Beyond any doubt, it is not commercial art. Nevertheless, it is true art of the highest relevance.

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