

THE IMPERFECT POWER PLAY

“Happiness is possible only when you stop running and cherish the present moment and who you are. Who you are is already a wonder; you don’t need to be someone else. You are a wonder of life.” (Thich Nhat Hanh, The Art of Power)

What does power mean? One of the simplest ways of defining the concept is using the ability of being in control. Are we ever in full control of our actions? No. Apparently we are, yet if we start looking carefully, we notice that always and ever there might be at least one percent of chance. Sometimes, some of us, most ambitious ones probably, want to play with chance, inviting chance and seducing it, maybe in order to have at least a momentary feeling of winning over it. Most of the times power is used having the meaning of power over the other: gaining prestige, honor and reputation are some of the most frequent forms of power over the other.



nature 4,2017

What does power have to do with paintings? It is possible for painting to present situations where power is involved as well as we can talk about the power which images themselves can have over the minds of the people that are forming the public. For example, the work Nature 4 (2017), of the artist Dragos Burlacu, has the power of showing us, right in the face, growing out of the frame, a classical representation of a *memento mori* in Western painting, yet, through its title, making it part of our daily connection with our environment, with nature. However complex and sophisticated interpretation or simple and straightforward, the simple and bold volumes painted with calm and quiet colors, make the painting somehow resistant to dictionary like meaning making while opening it to emotional understanding.

It has a poetry rather than a narrative that rules in and out the meanings of our impermanent world. Who can have access to this work? Anyone with a sharp enough intuitive sense.

The artist Olafur Eliasson said that the main responsibility of artists is to counteract the dryness of information through the physical and emotional charge of the artworks, in order to move them from thinking into doing. How can the artist move people from thinking towards doing, if people are running after prestige, honor and reputation?

When the artist is able to shift our focus from the desire of obtaining those possessions, their connected comfort, good reputation and praise towards the desire of bringing happiness to others.



life, 2016

It is not an easy task. But, in my view, such a mission is accomplished in the work Life (2016) where the abstract organic splashes of color are mingling with representational detail in order to suggest and present us the ambiguity and vulnerability of our life. The work is connected with the previous work Nature 4, through the energy, ambiguity and vulnerability intertwined in a way, which highlights the fluidity and impermanence of life again.

A third work that continues the same line is Dragos Burlacu's Self-portrait with butterflies (2017). The subject is the artist himself , painted dark, almost having the quality of a shadow, within a pastel-like interior context.



selfportrait with butterflies, 2017

The self-portrait is an interrogation of self , situated somewhere between thinking and doing, between doing and being. The audience cannot guess what was the actual, narrative of the situation the artist found himself in. Yet, we can sense the connection between introspection, inner work and creating the paintings. The action of painting depends on the quality of the being of the artist. It is not a cheap moralistic way, but taking into account the deep links between our doing and our being. The painting betrays, we can say, the being of the artist . Its quality depends on the inner fabric of ones transient, fluid self. Pretty much like depending on the quality of a butterfly's flight.

That is from my point of view the core and main reason of Dragos Burlacu's art of painting, shaping up with colors, forms, brush-strokes and emotions that space that is situated between doing and being. All his paintings from the body of work called *Catch and Release* are about that play. The grasping for power is complementary with the vulnerability of being, with its ambiguity and messiness. In other words, the artistic game involves exactly the opposite, transforming into power the being while catching and releasing the vulnerability of doing.



How did he get to this kind of play? You can follow the traces of doing and being, carefully looking at his trajectory of animals and human beings, who are changing through the power of color and brush strokes, lights and shadows. The color speaks on a continuous struggle of pain and happiness, sorrow and sensuality, where the blues and reds have to play their part on the stage of the painting. The painting speaks about the process of shaping a colored surface as much as about a being. It is nevertheless a trace common to all valuable works of art. The painting presents a body of work that speaks about vulnerability and power.

