

## **Interview with Dan Badea by Simona Nastac Bucharest, November 2005**

Dan Badea's work needs a second look. This is because it is not pure enough to conquer at first glance, seducing instead over time and through repeated encounters. The work requires a certain degree of exploration before its logic and effect can be fully understood, namely the controlled echo between the real and the imaginary – in other words, the poetry.

**Simona Nastac:** There have been many discussions lately about the revival of painting. Is painting dead? Is this a real issue? Do you feel a crisis in this respect?

**Dan Badea:** Personally, I have not perceived the disappearance of painting or a crisis due to the emergence of other contemporary forms of art making. Painting cannot die. I saw an exhibition by Anselm Kiefer in Belgium. The layers of colours were very thick. This shows that there are multiple interventions and returns which may complete the work as time goes on. You look differently at your own work after a while and you can reconsider it. The work is alive, it reflects your inner anxiety, and it permanently metamorphoses and acquires new dimensions, because painting is not perfect and finished like photography. Painting keeps a great degree of mystery.

**S.N.** How does it feel to be an artist in Romania in 2005?

**D.B.** An artist can work anywhere. I think belonging to certain organizations in the field it is a false issue in Romania. However beneficial this could be, what really matters is what your work expresses and offers to the local and international audience, no matter where you come from, as the cultural borders are more and more fluid and permeable.

**S.N.** Tell me something about your work and the creation process. How do you construct the visual discourse? What prevails, the creative impulse or the rational, the concept?

**D.B.** My painting is direct and expressionistic. I use unmediated reality and my own experience of it, as I am quite circumspect about painting that is filtered through fashion 'sweet' norms. I prefer painting with substance, nerve and thick paint. For me this means poetry.

**S.N.** As far as I know, you sometimes use old photographs and newspaper cuttings that you work over or use as a collage. How do they communicate with your painting, conceptually and visually? Could we speak about this as being about restoring memory or it is just a formal experiment?

**D.B.** I work with old cuttings and photographs in different ways according to specific purposes. For instance, for a work called "Possible Diary", I used an old notebook each drawing or colour reflecting a different day and mood. Old documents are more expressive than plain white paper and can be used as base for sketching. This is what I would call, indeed, formal experiment. But, as you rightly pointed out, here is also another dimension to this practice. The old photographs can be oversized, torn, painted or abstracted in many ways, re-composed by insertions of actual images or fragments of figurative painting as if for a virtual scrap book archiving various units of memory and experience. I am interested in reviving and painting all these as subversive advertisements for immaterial things such as memory, love, the sublime, paradise, death, as they are more and more overlooked by the growth of 'creative industries' that serve the orthodoxies of the institution, the market and the state. It is, after all, an attempt at resistance and critique.

**S.N.** You visited Belgium for the first time last year, when Mie Lefever invited you as an artist in residence. How has your practice been influenced by the contact with Belgian art, artists, museums and galleries?

**D.B.** I met several Belgian artists: Philippe Vandenberg, Mario de Brabandere, Bart Baele. I worked a while in Philippe's studio, in Gent, and this experience had a great influence on my practice. I saw works by Marlene Dumas, Luc Tuymans, Wim Delvoye, Bill Viola, Anish

Kapoor, a show by Penk, I visited De Pont Gallery and several art museums. This all impressed and influenced me one way or another but, in the end, humble and apparently insignificant things, profoundly human, like a beggar with the same apple every day, had the same relevance to my lifelong commitment to PAINTING.

**S.N.** And what do you hope for in next ten years?

**D.B.** An essential zing and order in my work, new paintings to work on, to be able to show to a broader audience and my own studio. I am confident that a lot of good things are about to come, as the current show is only the beginning. To quote Mae West: 'Too much of a good thing is wonderful'.

**Simona Nastac is an art critic and freelance curator. Lives and works in Bucharest and London**