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## LAZAR VOZAREVIĆ: “ICONISATION” OF THE MODERN PAINTING\*\*

**ABSTRACT:** The history of modern art chronicles several examples of the reinterpretation and incorporation of elements of medieval visual culture into the works of Serbian authors who were active in the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. This discourse includes paintings by Lazar Vozarević (1925–1968), an artist who made a significant contribution to the emancipation of formal-linguistic aspects and elaboration of the structure of modern painting, taking inspiration from the iconography, morphology and metaphysical substance of the icons and frescos from the Middle Ages. The focus of the analysis presented in this article is on Vozarević’s creative process of “iconisation” of the modern painting, i.e. the implementation of trans-semiotic referencing, with elements of inclusion of historical templates in figurative and abstract works created between 1955 and 1968. Special attention is given to symbolic characteristics of non-Euclidean space, amorphous matter, geometric form, mystical light, and pure colour, which gave Vozarević’s Art Informel and Post-Art-Informel works a sublime character and the aura of a modern icon. These are non-traditionalist interpretations, paraphrases of mediaeval icons/frescoes that articulate contemporary artistic speech and anticipate the creative method immanent to the postmodern epoch.

**KEYWORDS:** Lazar Vozarević, modern painting, mediaeval heritage, reinterpretation, Serbia, 20<sup>th</sup> century.

The relation between the past and the present, i.e. the issue of overcoming tradition and introducing innovation, is a moment that left a fundamental mark on 20<sup>th</sup> century Serbian and Yugoslav art. The history of modern painting records several attempts of revitalisation and incorporation of elements of mediaeval visual culture in the works of Serbian authors who were active after 1945.<sup>1</sup> This problem discourse also encompasses the works of Lazar Vozarević (Sremska Mitrovica 1925 – Belgrade 1968), an artist who made

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<sup>1</sup> For more on this issue see Трифунувич 1969: 39–52.

a significant contribution to the emancipation of the formal-linguistic aspect and elaboration of the structure of the modern painting, taking inspiration from the iconography, morphology and metaphysical substance of mediaeval icons and frescos. His method belongs to the non-traditionalist interpretations of the past, articulating contemporary artistic speech and anticipating the creative method immanent to the postmodern epoch.

Vozarević expressed his affinity for mediaeval artistic heritage and ethnographic tradition during his studies at the Belgrade Academy of Fine Arts (1943–1948), with initial encouragement coming from his teachers Milo Milunović and Jaroslav Kratina (MARKUŠ 1986: 8), who at the time were involved in the conservation of Serbian mediaeval frescos and icons (ПРОДАНОВИЋ, АРБУТИНА 2012: 60, 86). After the Second World War and the establishment of the communist order, any focus on the ethnic past and religion was undesirable and ideologically unacceptable in the atheist and unitarist Yugoslav society. However, the political split with the Cominform (the USSR and the countries of people's democracy) in 1948 lead to a reversal in the attitudes of the Yugoslav authorities regarding the politically denounced artistic heritage of the Middle Ages, and its ideological rehabilitation stemmed from the pragmatic objectives of Josip Broz Tito's regime. This was a strategic manoeuvre by the authorities, aimed at the international affirmation of the liberality and emancipation of the Yugoslav order and its autonomous position in relation to other communist regimes in Eastern Europe. *The Exhibition of Mediaeval Art of the Yugoslav Peoples* opened in 1950 at the Palais de Chaillot in Paris, and subsequently toured other Western European cities, representing an important moment in the process of reconstruction of the national and confessional identities of various ethnic groups, which had been erased during the postwar period by the internationalism of the communist ideology (ПЕРИШИЋ 2008: 371). The introduction in the exhibition's catalogue was penned by Miroslav Krleža, a Croatian author who held high-ranking positions in the Yugoslav art system and was one of the creators of the cultural policy during the socialist epoch. Advocating for the destalinisation of the Yugoslav art and culture, he put forward a new conceptual and aesthetic construct based on the synthesis of the formal solutions of the pre-war "Parisian school" and the "politically correct" elements of the cultural past with a local provenance, i.e. specific designations of geographic areas, national history, spiritual tradition, and artistic heritage.<sup>2</sup> In line with the "Krležian concept of art", starting in the 1950s, it was possible to cite mediaeval tradition in contemporary artwork, whose development featured the search for the "authentically Yugoslav" artistic paradigm.<sup>3</sup>

Vozarević's appearance on the art scene, as part of The Group of Eleven Artists (1951), coincides with these events and the rise of the Institute for Byzantine Studies of the Serbian

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<sup>2</sup> See Информација: „Крлежијанство” – надреализам – социјална литература 1963; МАРКОВИЋ 1996: 395, 421.

<sup>3</sup> This is a stylistically heterogeneous, lexically emancipated, highly aesthetised, yet ideologically neutral artistic discourse or "socialist modernism", which was established as mainstream on the Yugoslav stage during the 1950s. The "modern traditionalism" of The Group of Six Artists and the December Group's "socialist aestheticism" (TRIFUNOVIĆ 1982: 10–13; MERENIK 2010: 68) were its main manifestations in Serbian painting (DENEGRİ 2007: 362–367, 374–375).

Academy of Sciences and Arts or so-called "Belgrade Byzantine School", led by historian George Ostrogorsky, as well as of the predominantly mediievally-oriented Art History Chair at the University of Belgrade Faculty of Philosophy, headed by Svetozar Radojčić (ПЕРИШИЋ 2008: 80–81). This was backed by systemic study of Serbian mediaeval monuments in situ, with participation by and collaboration with experts in the conservation and restauration of icons and frescos, which included Vozarević's colleague and friend Aleksandar Tomašević.<sup>4</sup> From that moment on, "being contemporary and remaining connected to the Byzantine visual arts" (according to ПАВЛОВИЋ 2009: 430) became the main creative principle that Vozarević would adhere to in developing his own artistic identity and authentic visual discourse. Even though he fostered different approaches in this continuous reliance on historical memory, he never abandoned this tendency to give his own seal of authenticity to his interpretation of the Middle Ages, through the explicit and implicit referencing.

The early approach, articulated during Vozarević's involvement with The December Group (1955–1960), features conscious assimilation and creative elaboration of the substantive and formal aspects of mediaeval icons and frescoes, with more or less recognisable references to concrete historical templates. This figurative visual discourse is based on the synthesis of Pablo Picasso's Post-Cubist stylistics and elements of Byzantine sacral painting, which are reflected not only in the thematic, iconographic and morphological aspects, but also in the structure of the scene and its atmosphere. The dominant motifs are that of the mother and the child, as a thematic and iconographic reference to the mediaeval icons of the Virgin Mary and the Child Jesus, multigure compositions Lamentation of Christ or *Pietà* (Fig. 1), with clearly decipherable references to the fresco paintings from the monasteries of Nazeri (12<sup>th</sup> century) and Sopoćani (13<sup>th</sup> century), as well as individual and dual pseudo-portraits of Serbian mediaeval rulers (*Simonida I* and *Simonida II*, 1959). These are reinterpretations of Mariological, Christological and historical themes, which are transposed from the mediaeval icons and frescoes to a highly modernist painting through a stylistically hybrid lexicon. The structure of these scenes is based on two-dimensionality and linearism, which are characteristic of the Byzantine frescoes from the Comnenian period (11<sup>th</sup>–12<sup>th</sup> century),<sup>5</sup> as well as the Post-Cubist geometrisation of shapes. Equally expressive and synthetic, Vozarević's graphism does not have a descriptive function but is used for the rhythmical differentiation and intersection of planes. The compositions appear balanced and compact, and the perspective depiction of anthropomorphic shapes resembles those of the mediaeval orthogonal projection. Stereotypical and synthetised,

<sup>4</sup> From 1953 to 1962 Tomašević worked at as a conservator at the Yugoslav Federal Institute for the Protection of Cultural Monuments. In addition to being of similar age, he and Vozarević also shared the same collectors passion for ethnographic objects and an affinity towards the medieval artistic heritage, which represented a common grounds for the articulation of their conceptually related, but formally distinct idioms (ПРОДАНОВИЋ 2016: 179–186; ТОМИЋ 2016: 156, 158, 160), both during the later 1950s, when they belonged to The December Group, and later periods (ПРОТИЋ 1970: 458–460; МЕРЕНИК 2010: 107–114).

<sup>5</sup> For more on the stylist characteristics of Byzantine painting during the Comnenian period see KAZHDAN, WHARTON EPSTEIN 1990; CORMACK 2000; OUSTERHOU 2001: 133–150; SEKULES 2001; ЛАЗАРЕВ 2004.

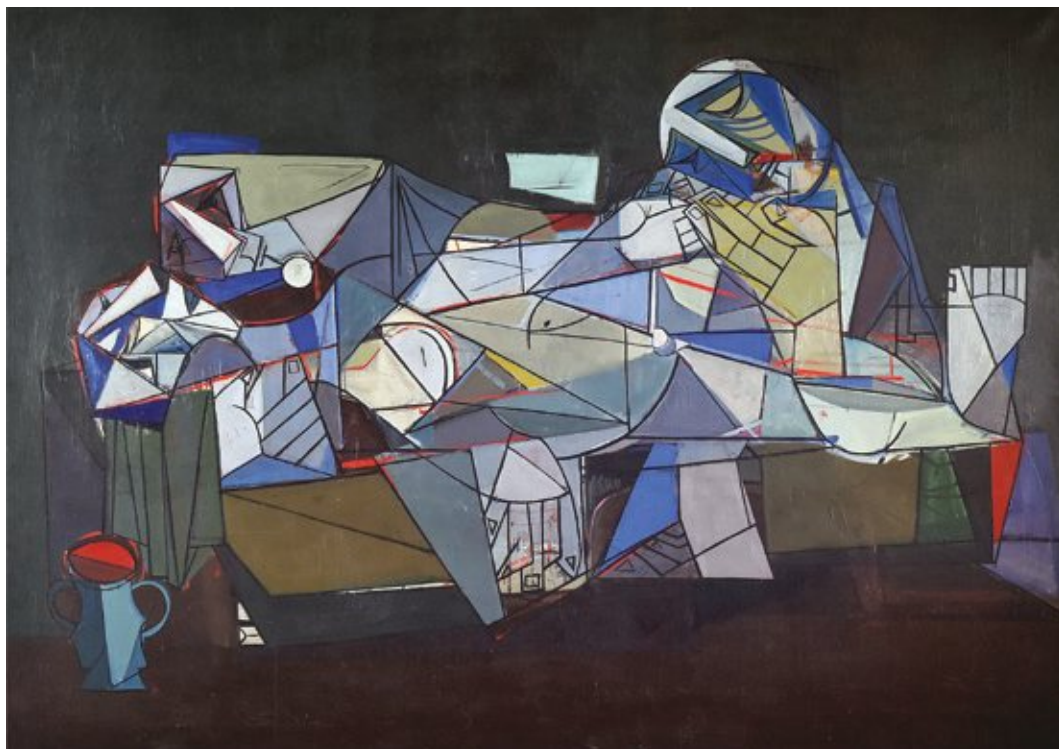


Fig. 1. Lazar Vozarević, Lamentation of Christ / *Pietà*, 1956, oil on canvas, 130 × 180 cm, Gallery of Matica Srpska, Novi Sad

human figures are placed on a neutral background, reduced to monumental signs or symbols through a complex system of lines. The muted colours, most commonly reduced to a dominant (bluish-grey or brownish) tone, emphasise the dramatic pathos, impression of hieraticity, and atmosphere of the atemporal sublimity of the scene. This was Vozarević's attempt to de-canonise and modernise the morphological aspect of the religious painting.

In the late 1950s, Vozarević's painted several multi-figure compositions with eschatological content: *Smrt velikog kockara* (The death of the great gambler, 1957), *Sećanje na prošlost* (Memory of the past, 1958), and *Obešeni* (Hanged, 1958), which reflect the deflection from the realistic form, the compositional focus, and the previously highlighted graphism. They are dominated by the "iconography of the end", explicitly through the topic of death, the ominous atmosphere, and the expressive colourist relations with hints of existentialistic pessimism (MARKUŠ 1986: 17–18). Regarding these paintings, Lazar Trifunović writes about the "modern danse macabre", detecting in their subtext the anxiety and sense of existential peril of their creator (1990: 187–188). Generally perceived as icons of the modern age, these paintings appear as metaphors of the suffering, tragic fates and tormented existence



Fig. 2. Lazar Vozarević, *Man in space*, 1960, mixed media, 205 × 300 cm, Gallery "Lazar Vozarević", Sremska Mitrovica

of the individual in contemporary civilization. This is confirmed by Vozarević's autobiographical statement:

I do not think about death. It is [...] part of my pessimistic conviction, and it consists of the inevitable doubt in today's world [...] the constantly tense situation makes the period in which I live have a specific reflection within me. Many things have led to me feeling the nothingness of life [...] I do not deny those who paint joy. It is beautiful but nothing more, nothing beyond that [...] I, however, do not strive for the beautiful, but for the substantial and visual truth that I carry within me (according to MIHAILOVIĆ 1959: 12).

Comprehending the truthfulness of the finality of one's own being and the inevitability of its defeat in the clash with the chaotic and lasting existence of the world forced Vozarević to leave a material trace of his physical existence and to conceive these works as a paraphrase of the mediaeval didactical scenes with the message "memento mori". The monumental painting *Čovek u prostoru* (*Man in space*, 1960, Fig. 2), is a metaphorical depiction of hell, devoid of narration and spatial and temporal coordinates, in which Vozarević



resorts to the more radical deconstruction of the facts of the subject reality. From the multilocal configuration of black matter enveloped in sheet metal and tacks, as symbols of the modern civilization, emerge the decomposed fragments of a human figure, barely recognisable and completely dehumanised. The muted light and translucent colours represent a symbolic trace or echo of man as a spiritual and corporal being. This is an image of the artist's descent into the dark hiatus of the *Self*, which loses its *raison d'être* in a world devoid of existing spiritual, ethical and existential mainstays. Articulated through the use of unartistic materials and nonstandard working procedures, this infernal scene, through its brutal expression resounds all the *horror* of man's being or Martin Heidegger's thesis about him being thrown into the world, where death is the only inevitability (according to ĐURIĆ 1970: 84–93). Formally and semantically, this painting represents the culmination and conclusion of one period, while also representing as the initial piece of the following Art Informel phase of Vozarević's work.

Convinced that “the artist cannot disregard contemporary demand [...] but should maintain individuality at any cost” (according to МАКСИМОВИЋ 1964: 19), in 1960 Vozarević opted for the language of radical Art Informel abstraction. In an effort for his works to not be mere imitation of existing Western European solutions, he shut himself in the studio at Staro Sajmište (the Old fairgrounds) in Belgrade, carrying out technological experiments like the alchemists of old, without abandoning the mediaeval origins in his articulation of Art Informel visual expression. The change in artistic paradigm led to a different approach in the treatment of the mediaeval artefact as the exemplar, which now became the subject of metalinguistic operation and processing. The new approach conceptualised the “other” or previous image that exists in the artist's unconscious in archetypal form, applying a discreet reference process. The methodology of building a visual ideogram is now based on the principle of trans-semiotic referencing with elements of inclusion, but the identification markings of the initial templates are imperceptible in the final result.<sup>6</sup> This is a specific kind of “inscribing”, which pays more attention to the visual symbolism and ontological aspect of the scene than the content's concrete statement. Even though Vozarević found inspiration in the tactile and erosive texture of frescoes and patinated surfaces of icons, ironware and suits of armour (MARKUŠ 1968: 15), he primarily aspired to the transposition of the idea, the spiritual experience of the historically sacred image, through the material structure of the Art Informel anti-painting. However, his process of “iconisation” implies not only the symbolism of the visual appearance of material components of the work of art, but also the potential transition from this appearance to the domain of the immaterial, spiritual and atemporal, which eludes the rational understanding and sensory experience. Yet, the need to suggest metaphorical meanings does not call into question the non-referentiality of the visual expression. This is why Vozarević focuses on the subliminal light that transcends new meanings and different interpretations of the Art Informel work. It is precisely because of such a visual template and the method of its transformation that

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<sup>6</sup> Such methodology is characteristic of Post-Modernist artists (ORAIC TOLIĆ 1990: 12–15).

Vozarević's Art Informel did not resemble any of the Western European matrices, even though it was based on the application of non-painting materials and procedures of destruction of matter and all form (DENEGRI i dr. 2020: 124).

Vozarević articulated the structure of Art Informel works in two ways, yielding typologically different results. The first type of Art Informel work was created by alternation of thick black paste (a mixture of sand, bitumen, resins, varnishes) and red-gold lazure, with subsequent interventions on it using acid, water and fire. The result is a chaotic visual field, devoid of a compositional focus, which flutters in an inharmonious rhythm, creating the illusion of eruptive spattering and the extension of the plastic event beyond the edges of the surface. Even though it is the instigator of sensory perception, through its connotative features, the raw matter becomes the mediator of the transition to the intuitive, imaginary, and transcendental. In this case it is the primary comprehensive matter that entails time in motion, at the moment of the Big Bang, when space and light are created. Space is conceived metaphysically, as a timeless continuum, and the emanation of light and the effect of the sfumato on black patina give these works a spiritual quality. The monumental dimensions and non-Euclidian concept of space are components that Vozarević uses to achieve an impression of ambientness and absorption effect, drawing the viewer into his immaterial orbit, while the sublime light and configuration of the amorphous matter arouse meditative, contemplative and emotional reflections to events outside the visual field. Interpreted through the Christian and existentialist worldview, the pieces *Enformel* (Art Informel, 1960), *Forma bez kraja* (Endless form, 1961), *Razorene forme* (Destroyed forms, 1961, Fig. 3), *U prostoru* (In space, 1961), and *Svetlost u formi* (Light in form, 1961) manifest themselves as metaphors of a Manichean struggle between good and evil, life and death, finality and eternity, man and the world. As a paraphrase of the mediaeval depiction of salvation, they



Fig. 3. Lazar Vozarević, *Destroyed forms*, 1961, mixed media, 201 × 112 cm, Gallery "Lazar Vozarević", Sremska Mitrovica



Fig. 4. Lazar Vozarević, Small painting, 1961, mixed media, 30 × 22 cm, Gallery "Lazar Vozarević", Sremska Mitrovica

transcend the idea of redemption through sacrifice, and the clashes between light and darkness are nothing other than the temptation of man's being in the world's menacing contradictory existence. Employing the destroyed form and structure of the Art Informel anti-painting to suggest the fragmented and instable structure of the contemporary world, at the second level of interpretation these pieces reveal the artist's doubt regarding the ruling political ideology which greatly insisted on man while in practice it annulled his individuality and spirituality.<sup>7</sup>

The second type of Art Informel pieces was created through the application of non-painting materials, with a consistent and inconsistent texture, on a wood foundation. Thick layers of black paste are applied over metal applications (sheet metal, nails, wires), then upholstery tacks are nailed in or pebbles are pressed in. Even though the traces of the structuring of the configurations are evident, these deviations from the Art Informel concept have not brought into

question the anti-aesthetics of the final result. Wiping away layers of dark emulsion brings to the surface "colourist shafts" of copper (red-gold) sheets and the glimmer of steel tacks, which evoke the effect of patinated metal bindings of mediaeval icons, books, and suits of armours. This is a series of works of smaller size, created in 1961 *Mala slika* (Small painting, Fig. 4), *Kompozicija II* (Composition II), *Kompaktne forme* (Compact forms), *Bez naziva* (Untitled), etc. which represent the most extreme solutions of Vozarević's Art Informel. Although the repertoire of plastic data in them is extremely nondescript and reduced, the narration stems from the matter with aggressive perceptive and haptic features, and not from referencing the iconographic plane of the template. The visual field is most often divided horizontally into two zones, into two formally, structurally and semantically different segments: neutral-spiritual and relief-material. The plastic event usually occurs in the lower segment: in *Crne forme* (Black forms, 1962) the fragments of copper sheets emerge from the thick layers of dark matter which is evocative of the floury erosive texture consisting

<sup>7</sup> For more on the formal aspects and critical connotations of the Belgrade Art Informel in principle and Vozarević's concept of the Art Informel anti-painting in particular, see KRULJAC 2021: 197–288, 313–335.



of layers of soot or wax on frescoes and icons, while in *Kompozicija II* the gold background is intersected by a black relief structure consisting of round pebbles, as a trans-semiotic reference to Byzantine mosaics. Stemming from the meditative conception of the modern painting, directly linked to its *genus loci*, these works oscillate between the pure state of matter and its evocative potentials. The visual field often seems "trapped" by the dark matter, as a prefiguration of the demise, hopelessness and senselessness of man's physical existence, but the "colourist shafts" create a space for the "final battle" and give rise to hope in his spiritual salvation.

In the Post-Art Informel phase, the origin of Vozarević's artistic imagination and search for the truth about himself was the domain of the otherworldly: esoterism, occultism, alchemy (ĐORĐEVIĆ 1985: s.p.), even though the dialogue with the mediaeval heritage remained paramount. Esoterism was the starting point for understanding the essence of one's own being, and alchemy served for the visualisation of the Jungian individualisation process or maturing of the personality, during which the man becomes the master of his *Alter Ego* or *Shadow*.<sup>8</sup> This is why esoterism and alchemy elements are incorporated into the symbolic process of "iconisation" of the abstract painting. The intersection of these different sources of inspiration led to the complete transformation of the mediaeval template, and the reference became an ontological and semantic principle in the conceptualisation of the scene. In other words, the reference relation trans-mutated from classic reinterpretation or paraphrasing of the historical exemplar into the aesthetic representation of its metaphysical aspect and symbolism using basic formal elements. It is detected in the conceptual aspect of the artwork, as a pretext, while it is only hinted in the iconic plane. The visual aspect of the artwork is based on the language of geometric abstraction, with highlighted relief, expressed gesture, intensive colour, and strong perceptive suggestiveness. The technical procedure is based on the application of different materials and forms of expression: from Art Informel and Post-Painterly Abstraction, to Minimal, Optical and Kinetic Art (ТИМОТИЈЕВИЋ 2012: 12–13). However, Vozarević's works are not tautologically conceived, depersonalised and mechanised objects with a minimalist or lumino-kinetic provenance, but are expressly personalised and imaginative artistic creations, equally meditative and speculative.

After 1963, when he introduced the geomorphic form as a new iconographic motif, Vozarević created geometric and gestural relief-painting, a linguistic and media hybrid, by applying then removing layers of colour matter and thick emulsions onto the solid foundation. The previously randomly and sporadically applied upholstery tacks are now organised into geometric figures. These are universal symbols (circle, ellipse, rectangle, square, triangle) or combinations of them (circle in rhomb, triangle in square, etc.), which can be found in the medieval ornamentation of suits of armour and ironware, monastery doors and facades, mosaics and frescoes (PROTIĆ 1969: s.p.; ПРОТИЋ 1970: 456–457). The discreet

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<sup>8</sup> The *Shadow* is an ambivalent archetypal figure that symbolises the negative identity of the person or the positive mental, emotional and creative potentials suppressed deep into the subconscious (JUNG i dr. 1987: 118, 160, 166, 168–169, 173, 175–176).



Fig. 5. Lazar Vozarević, Compact emulsion, 1967, mixed media, 170 × 100 cm, Gallery “Lazar Vozarević”, Sremska Mitrovica



Fig. 6. Lazar Vozarević, Elliptical circle, 1967, mixed media, 143 × 99 cm, Gallery “Lazar Vozarević”, Sremska Mitrovica

optokinetic effect is a consequence of the light emanation and slight alternations in the sizes of the metal tacks, as a manner of interlacing and intersection of geometric figures. The tendency to plastically, spatially and optically constitute the painting on the premises of a labile system with multiple focuses, is now programmatically articulated in several pieces, such as *Kompaktna emulzija* (Compact emulsion, 1967, Fig. 5) or *Pravilno Deljenje* (Correct division, 1968), which indicates Vozarević's search for the purpose of existence in the multitude of spatio-temporal points as a symbol of the contemporary epoch. On the other hand, pieces such as *Krug sa oranž linijom* (Circle with orange line, 1967) and *Elipsasti krug* (Elliptical circle, 1967, Fig. 6) sublimate the symbolic of the centre, square and equal-armed cross, and connote cyclical movement as a symbol of eternity or continuous course of time (MERENIK 2010: 114). The circular area symbolises the space of Vozarević's spiritual existence, and its centre refers to the point of his inner vista, while the square form represents the space of the artist's material and physical existence. In some cases, the author abandons

the convention of the orthogonal painting format and opts for the an elliptical, floral or cruciform form (Fig. 7), which historically functioned as archetypal symbols of absolute unity and integrity of the human being or as intermediaries between the spiritual and material worlds.<sup>9</sup> Vozarević also searches for a higher or "otherworldly" meaning in other motifs, such as the triangle or mandorla (Fig. 8), because he does not accept reductionism without symbolism, i.e. the absence of content in the abstract painting.

The visual field in these works does not contain any trace of figurative subject of icons, but due to manner of realization, as well as the serious appearance and solemn impression, it possesses certain features of a sacred picture. These features and meanings are owed primary to the metaphysical energy of the colour and tone, whose appearance gives Vozarević's Post-Art-Informel art an aura of precious sacral objects. This is why red, gold-ochre, white and black do not represent a mere formal choice, but the pretext for building a non-narrative enigma with complex symbolic meaning. The "transmutation into spiritual gold" – which is the ultimate aspiration but is never achieved – is the metaphor for the personal maturation process or achievement of the superior being within oneself, endowed with the ability to comprehend one's own existence (TREBJEŠANIN 2008: 263–264, 384–387). Since this is a cognitive process, Vozarević's expressive language is intentionally abstract, and the chromatic spectrum is constricted. Analogous to Carl Gustav Jung's



Fig. 7. Lazar Vozarević, Cross / Circles, 1967, mixed media, 72 × 76 cm, Gallery "Lazar Vozarević", Sremska Mitrovica



Fig. 8. Lazar Vozarević, Projection, 1963, mixed media, 130 × 95 cm, Gallery "Lazar Vozarević", Sremska Mitrovica

<sup>9</sup> For more details, see TREBJEŠANIN 2008: 77–78, 87–88, 91–92, 98–99, 106–107, 227, 229–230, 233, 239–240, 295, 356–358, 419–420, 460.

psychoanalytical theory, the confrontation with one's own *Shadow* or intuition of the unconscious aspect of the personality corresponds to the alchemic term *Nigredo* (blackness), which indices the process of differentiation of dead and amorphous matter; the awakening of the *Shadow* or perception of the unconscious is equivalent to *Albedo* (whiteness), the process of cleansing and revitalisation of matter; the cognition of the *Shadow* or revelation of the unconscious is the correspondent of *Citrinitas* (yellowness) or matter in the prenatal stage; while *Rubedo* (redness) corresponds to the reintegration of the *Shadow* into the personality, i.e. achieving completeness – the final stage in the transformation of matter and its rebirth at a higher level (JUNG et al. 1987: 254; TREBJEŠANIN 2008: 19, 21, 23, 288–289, 356). Precisely this multiplication and compounding of meaning classifies Vozarević's Post-Art-Informel works as *erudite art*.

The appropriation of lasting and existing, but non-material aspects of the historically sacred painting and its transposition into the modern icon represent the essence of Vozarević's creative endeavour, in which the artist demonstrates the preoccupation with his own ontological enigma, as well as the possibility of spiritualising the contemporary man through the art that he created. Paving the way for the development of new models of visual expression, characteristic of the post-modern era, his works from the Art Informel and Post-Art-Informel phase show that medieval heritage existed in 20<sup>th</sup>-century Serbian art as a problematically vital and ethically incentivising starting point in the articulation of abstract painting with concentrated historical and symbolical meaning.

Translated by Vuk Tošić

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## ЛАЗАР ВОЗАРЕВИЋ: „ИКОНИЗАЦИЈА” МОДЕРНЕ СЛИКЕ

### Резиме

Однос прошлости и савремености, тј. питање превазилажења традиције и увођења иновације јесу моменти који су суштински обележили српску и југословенску уметност XX века. Историја модерне уметности бележи више примера реинтерпретирања и инкорпорирања елемената медијевалне визуелне културе у стваралаштву српских аутора активних после 1945. Том дискурсу припада и сликарство Лазара Возаревића (1925–1968), уметника који је дао значајан допринос еманципацији формално-језичког аспекта и елаборацији структуре модерне слике инспиришући се иконографијом, морфологијом и метафизичком супстанцијом средњовековног иконописа и живописа. У овом тексту тежиште анализе усмерено је на креативни поступак „иконизације” модерне слике, односно на примену метода трансесмиотичке цитатности са елементима инклузије историјског предлошка у фигуративним и апстрактним делима настајалим у периоду 1955–1968, којима је у српској уметности антиципиран постмодернизам. Возаревићев поступак „иконизације” подразумевао је не само симболику визуелне појавности материјалних чинилаца уметничког дела већ и потенцијал да се из те појавности пређе у област нематеријалног и генеришу атемпорални, онтолошки и метафизички аспекти, који измичу рационалном поимању и чулном искуству. Посебна пажња посвећена је симболичким својствима неевклидовског простора, аморфне материје, геометријске форме, сублимне светлости и чисте боје, који су Возаревићевим енформелним и постенформелним делима дали сублимни карактер и ауру модерне иконе. Реч је о извантрадиционалистичким интерпретацијама, парафразама средњовековне иконе/фреске, у оквиру којих се артикулишу савремени уметнички говор и апстрактни визуелни исказ концентрисаних повесних и симболичких значења.

Кључне речи: Лазар Возаревић, модерно сликарство, средњовековно наслеђе, реинтерпретација, Србија, XX век.