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Introduction

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SENSES OF SIGHT

TOWARDS A MULTISENSORIAL APPROACH OF THE IMAGE

ESSAYS IN HONOR OF VICTOR I. STOICHITA

«L'ERMA» di BRETSCHNEIDER

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Inside front cover: Pedro Stoichita, Victor, 2012, scratchboard, 23 cm x 19,5 cm,
after a photo by Joaquin Berchez

Inside back cover: Pedro Stoichita, Ana, 2013, scratchboard, 17,5cm x 23 cm,
after a photo by Joaquin Berchez

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INTRODUCTION

“What is the meaning of this appeal to the sense of smell in the context of the description? An immediate answer contains a thinly veiled compliment to the painter’s skill so great – we are made to understand – that it succeeds in suggesting an olfactory sensation by visual means [...]. A second answer more closely connected to the issues of *ekphrasis* rhetorics, is suggested by the following sentence: ‘But listen carefully; for along with my description of the garden the fragrance of the apples also will come to you.’ Such an incitement looks rather like a program. What is at stake this time, is the talent of the orator; he is put forward as the rare capacity of transmitting, by the means of word and sound, the most ineffable of all sensations, the sensation of fragrance and perfume.

A first playful but necessary question (‘How to smell a painting?’), will necessarily draw an ambivalent answer, depending on one’s point of view: One might ‘feel/smell’ a painting by ‘seeing’ it or by ‘listening’ carefully to its skillfully elaborated description. However, one thing is certain – the smell that may emanate from the one or the other way of proceeding will be neither the smell of turpentine nor the smell of oil!”

This quote extracted from Victor I. Stoichita’s article “How to Taste a Painting” and originally intended to explicit the different modalities of the viewer’s experience of painting may be considered as emblematic of his plural and polysemous methodology. The following anthology of essays in honor of Victor gathered under the title *Senses of Sights: Towards a Multisensorial Approach of the Image* intends to pay tribute to the interdisciplinary, trans-historical and trans-cultural aspects of his researches in art history. This book aims to underline Victor’s diverse educational and professional path that started in Romania and ran through Italy, France, Germany to finally reach Switzerland.

This *Grand Tour* contributed to the rich palette of his numerous interests and writings. Its diversity is purposely reflected in this publication. The varied contributions of his friends and colleagues result from these multiple geographical and methodological origins. They attest to the opened and all-embracing perspective constituting the backbone of Victor's critical pattern. This multifaceted collection of texts written by authors coming from the Far East to the West is here published in English for editorial coherence.

Territoriality and topography are among the notions questioned in the following articles. From Italy to the moon, from Renaissance to the 20th century, from Romania to Spain, borders and frontiers are transgressed. These infringements nurture the idea of otherness manifested through the concept of identity, the topic of the double and the image of the other. Reflection upon the medium is also at stake investigating not only painting but also textile, urbanism, sculpture, gardens, etc. All sensory faculties are requested to participate in what could be called a rhetoric feast of the senses celebrating sight, gaze, voyeurism, visual perception, and their absence.

We would like to gratefully thank the late Dr. Ambros Boner and the Boner Stiftung für Kunst und Kultur, the Rectorate of the University of Fribourg (Switzerland), the Chair of Early Modern Art History of the University of Zurich. Our gratitude also goes to the editorial team of L'Erma di Bretschneider, in particular Elena Montani and Rossella Corcione. Our thanks once again to all contributors who made this project possible as well as to Lilian Daum, Marie Gyger and Patricia Bently who assisted us with great support.

From the very start, this publication has enjoyed the unconditional support of Anna Maria. Pedro honored us with two magnificent portraits which constitute the alpha and omega of the book.

For our professor

HENRI DE RIEDMATTEN, NICOLAS GALLEY
JEAN-FRANÇOIS CORPATAUX, VALENTIN NUSSBAUM