L'EXPOSITION IMAGINAIRE

The booklet *L'Exposition Imaginaire* (published in the Netherlands in the eighties) and the related conference, obviously referred to the Malraux-ian concept "Musée Imaginaire" even in its name. In my opinion the exhibition titled Enigmas also has its roots in André Malraux's view of art, which spans eras while selecting subjectively. Even though in this case one cannot talk about a multitude of historical ages, the tableau of Hungarian painting has been fairly diverse since the symbolist-Art Nouveau efforts up to the present time. And now we have come to the question of how to justify the exhibition's concept. Every concept has its justification if its creator can reinforce an interesting leading idea with a series of suggestive works of art. And a selection based on a concept is always subjective, just like a private collection. As far as "seeing together" is concerned, it always results in the discovery of peculiar similarities between works of art that are different both in style and period. I see no point in analysing the details of the selection; the notion which gropes for the symbolist-surrealist-metaphysical-grotesque line in the Hungarian paintings of the last hundred years can clearly be seen.

We have to accept the truth of the Malraux-ian interpretation of time and the metamorphosis of meaning. Even the most strictly historical exhibition loses its original context in a new situation. In my opinion it is part of somebody's – a critic's, an art historian's, an exhibition organizer's – creative power to reveal new meanings and connections, be it based on an arbitrary concept. However, this is a subject under eternal dispute, which could only be justified by the result.

This subjective intersection should not be regarded as the absolute and nor should its opposite; however I am convinced that such an exhibition is a refreshing example. It would be interesting to look into the relationship between these more or less enchanted painters and the main trend of progressivity, international avant-garde if you please. I see only one difficulty: the system of co-ordinates, scale of values and points of comparison of Hungarian art in the 20th century have been documented neither at museum exhibitions nor in bibliographies. Lajos Németh's fundamental book was written more than 30 years ago and certain parts desperately need supplementing or revising.

The problems of collecting for a museum are more complex. A private collection, a private or a city museum may move in the direction of the "musée imaginaire", but a national institution must not. The task of creating a balance between sociological documentation, qualitative selection and representation of the main tendencies is delicate and difficult. Yet even large modern museums can bear the mark of the personal inclinations of a charismatic director (Alfred Barr Jr. and the MOMA in New York) or of a great collector (see the system of the Ludwig museums).

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