

A "MASTER" OF HIS TIME UN „MAESTRU” AL TIMPULUI SĂU UN « MAÎTRE » DE SON TEMPS

Ioan Darida & Dana Postolache

Marcel Brion describes in *Abstract Art* the two ways in which abstraction in painting emerges: a tension field which leads to pure abstraction, or the "schematization" of natural form triggered either by a psychological stimulus, or a necessity of artistic structure. Robert de Niro, Sr. turns a new page in modern art where the artistic discourse has its genesis in the second way of image production, and what confers his individuality is also an emergence of forms from fauve expressionism. Nevertheless, we are convinced that such a simplistic framing would badly prejudice Robert de Niro, Sr.'s artwork and also its reception and interpretation. Throughout his work, the artist articulates a personal syntax and morphology consisting of an arsenal of artistic means that he manages to keep to a minimum, at the advantage of clear expression even if, at times, it becomes coarse and laconic. Belonging to his time, the artist couldn't have missed experiencing the solar explosion of colors-impersonism and fauvism-or "opposition art" with its expressionist "cry". The artist's discourse retains something from the powerful echoes of these currents, but with a fine and infallible sense of selection, he synthesizes, with the sole purpose of being exact and incisive, of being himself. While with many artists, this selection seems to be made in frenzy, in the case of

Robert de Niro, Sr. we even discover a playful component, sensitive and delicate. The painter reveals "the image of his private being" in his every work, with an ease where the "pure and simple" comes first before applying any theory or resorting to the laws of chromatology, geometry or anatomy. Fresh, without retouches, with an intuition and obviously a profound understanding of the laws of reception, Robert de Niro, Sr. connects the elements of a personal artistic language without rehearsals, without artistic pleonasm or scholarly encryptions. The result of this approach is a fluent, emotional discourse, even uncomfortable at times, through its disarming economy of means. The „eloquence" of this way of expression descends precisely from this special „utterance" where, beyond vases, flowers, houses, chairs and trees (to be noticed that the "story" of the subject is not the focus), emotional states are being passed on to us as a result of a deep perception of the organicity of the outside and inside worlds. It is irrelevant to this volcanic interior voice whether the insightful "light on dark" is a yellow chair or a guitar, or if the "dark on light" is a row of houses or the red self-portrait. In order to make us feel with the same intensity as he does, it is much more important to find the expressive relation between "empty and full", between "vivid and dim", or between the tumultuous rhythm and the serenity of a pause. Thus, painting and literature are separated, a touchstone that many artists and especially consumers failed to pass. Robert de Niro, Sr.'s art is framed in the great gallery of the XXth century painting landmarks, due to its expressive simplicity. While using the specific means of painting, he nevertheless shows a refined visual culture and great openness to communication.

Josephine Baker, 1976
Ink wash on paper, 12 x 8 3/4 in.
"Estate of the Artist, Courtesy DC Moore Gallery, New York, New York"

