

El texto estético en la creación de la pintura figurativa-fantástica

Esthetic text in fantastic –figurative painting creation

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Abstract

This article presents a part of the research proposal presented to Bunsei University of Arts, in Japan (Bunsei Geojutsu Daigaku), in order to fulfill part of the requirements for the degree of Doctor in Arts with major in Esthetics and Semiotics.

Esthetic text in fantastic-figurative painting creation is a research that sets up basic conceptual elements (required by the art and painting student) in painting and drawing practice, in order to structure creative process and art work production in a deep way. Supported on esthetic sign and symbolic-esthetic elements present at masters Fernando Botero and David Manzur's work; it determines basic principles of fantastic-figuration narrative establishing a plastic arts proposal in image creation or pictorial scene. In this way, artistic taste development, esthetic sense, and creative spirit growing are stimulated. It also makes possible the opening of a new research field and line in relationship to oil painting.

Key words: esthetic text, fantastic-figurative painting, creative process, artistic production, esthetic sign.

Resumen

Este artículo es parte de la propuesta de investigación presentada a la Universidad de Artes Bunsei, en Japón, como parte de los requerimientos para obtener el grado de Doctor en Artes, con énfasis en estética y semiótica.

El texto estético en la creación de la pintura figurativa-fantástica es una investigación que a partir del ejercicio de la pintura y el dibujo, establece los elementos conceptuales básicos, que requiere el estudiante de arte y pintura, para estructurar profundamente el proceso creativo y la producción artística de su obra. Fundamentada en el estudio del signo estético y los elementos estético-simbólicos presentes en la obra de los maestros Fernando Botero y David Manzur, determina los principios básicos de la narrativa de la figuración fantástica, estableciendo finalmente una propuesta plástica en la creación de la imagen o escena pictórica. Estimula de esta manera la maduración del gusto artístico, el refinamiento del sentido estético y el crecimiento de espíritu creativo del estudiante. Posibilita la apertura de un nuevo campo de investigación en cuanto a la creación de la pintura al óleo.

Palabras clave: texto estético, pintura figurativa-fantástica, proceso creativo, producción artística, signo estético.

The need for the study

The project done by the Colombian Ministry of Culture, in 2004, reunited the most important public and private institutions in the field of art and culture in Colombia. The results of this research, were published in *Plastic, contemporary art in Colombia*, a documental film. Through it, the social, political, and cultural context that has influenced deeply on the art development in the country is explained. It also teaches the ideology and philosophy in ten areas that have made up the plastic practice of Colombian artists along the last 30 years: conceptual art, painting and drawing, object art, public art, installations, art and photography, performance, video-art, electronic art, and artistic appropriations. It is after a careful analysis of this research that first questions about the present state of painting and drawing field in Colombia, arose.

First of all, The *Salon Nacional de Artistas*¹, and its regional versions, have been the traditional space of meeting between painting and public. For many people, it is the most important Colombian art institution; however, many others consider that its ways of participation and validation must be re-stated. The evaluation and participation philosophy is based on the contemporary idea that the painter-artist, (beyond the academic formation and the theoretic tools that lay foundations of his/her plastic practice) must focus his creative product towards the contextualization inside Colombian reality (that states violence as the new painting banner in our country).

The same idea has been given in technical schools and universities in Colombia. This, in my opinion, questions quality, methodologies and pedagogical strategies, as well as the contemporary ideology that liberates the painter from the technical mastery and the theoretical depth, limiting him/her to a purely expressive exercise.

Second, and as a consequence of the state described above, the arising of an artistic movement or style has not been noticed for more than twenty five years in Colombia; neither the birth of a really important young painters' group who represent the country in the international

¹ It is the most important event of plastic and visual arts exhibition in Colombia.

plastic arts world. This has done that specialized critics state that *painting has died in Colombia*; or that it is in process to disappear, and if it attempts to survive, it has to be reinvented².

Master Fernando Botero, interviewed during the *XIX Salon de artistas jóvenes*, (the XIX plastic arts exhibition of young artists in Colombia) in 1984, told about his experience as a jury: "One thinks the future of art is in Latin America, and I would like that it were in Colombia; it is sad to see the lack of creative spirit; it is an easy, flexible, and mediocre art. I think that making a big and expensive effort to show the public such mediocre things, and make them believe that that is art, does not have any justification. After the opening ceremony of his last art collection at the Museum of Modern Art (MOMA) in New York, in 2007, Botero expressed an idea that has been also the pretext for doing this research: *The future of painting in Colombia is in the retaking of figuration as a new expressive way, by the new generation of painters.*

Through this statement, it is expressed the need of generating new theoretical searches; new plastic, philosophical, aesthetic, academic proposals, and so on; in order to promote the ideological and conceptual evolution of painting in all its fields of action, but specially, on new painters' formation (painters and artists).

Art reinvention was a topic also discussed by the philosopher Jan Murkarovsky (and also by the Prague school, Czech structuralism, and Russian formalism) in his book *Writings on art aesthetics and semiotics*. There, he expresses the second idea that has inspired my interest on this research:

Art reinvention brings forth a communication increase, which is the signifying of what aesthetics is; which crashes, unavoidably, with symbolic order socially normalized. . In this sense, Mukarovsky's *esthetic rule* is not guaranty of socialization and respect of symbolic and collective order; but, in fact, it is an experimental field in which esthetic significance forces and goes beyond the limits of symbolic communication socially

² *Plástica, arte contemporáneo en Colombia*. (2004) Documental done by the Colombian Ministry of culture. Section 2: art is not as it is painted. Painting and drawing.

normalized. This art characteristic is an esthetic symbolic mechanism that generates evolution³.

Due to my experience in Colombia (as an industrial designer, a painter-artist, a university teacher) and in Japan (as a graduate student of specialization in design technical schools and Master studies in art universities) I have been growing the idea of deepening on the aesthetic-semiotic research, as basic part of painting and product design creative process. My academic background in Japan has completely convinced me that painting, design, and the other related disciplines' evolution is only possible, if student's academic formation promotes high standards of knowledge and technical mastering, and also deep theoretical and conceptual knowledge handling. That is the unique way to reach a great creative spirit that let it go beyond its own boundaries.

That is why the signifying processes of what is aesthetic in Botero's and Manzur's art work, and the proposal on creative strategy in pictorial image have emerged as the present research object of study. Of course, I wish the results from this study were a great contribution for basic formation of new generations of Colombian artists and painters; favoring their artistic taste development, aesthetic sense refining, and the greating of creative spirit, elements founding and justifying, ontologically, this research on painting creative process.

The scarce plastic arts proposals supported on symbolic esthetics study (from the artist-painter's point of view) is the main idea that structures and makes sense to the present survey. So, a plastic arts proposal will be generated, letting us open new research ways, in very little explored fields, such as artistic creative process and esthetic text in contemporary painting in Colombia.

Objectives

General objective

To set up basic conceptual elements (required by the art painting student) based on fantastic figurative painting practice, in order to

³Jan Mukarovsky. (1975) *Escritos de estética y semiótica del arte*. Editorial Gustavo Gili, S.A. Philosophical speech presentation which states issues concerned with esthetics and semiotics in the art work, pp. 9-30. According to this book's translator, semiology deals with the description of different systems of non linguistic signs, such as figurative arts, film, and theatre among other (pp.41,42). Mukarovsky is based on Pierce's idea (who defines signs, icons, and symbols, as real elements of semiology). Therefore, the word *semiology* will be used to refer to pictorial image communication processes, in this research study.

structure the creative process and plastic arts production of student's art work.

Specific objectives

- To determine symbolic-esthetic elements that conform fantastic figuration narrative in Botero and Manzur's art work, studying the principles of their semantic potentiality.
- To analyze color and geometry as esthetic sign carrier elements in both Botero and Manzur's art work.
- To build up, from these conceptual elements, an aesthetic means able to translate them into plastic elements that configure the pictorial image of the fantastic figurative art work.
- To build up a plastic arts proposal in fantastic figurative pictorial scene creation, based on the study of Botero and Manzur's art work.

The problem

Based on the research *Plastic: contemporary art in Colombia*, and specifically about its painting and drawing section, I have determined the *Contemporary painting true state* in Colombia, according to the following items:

- Contemporary painting in Colombia is not a free plastic exercise; it is coerced and quite influenced by ideologies emerged from conceptual art during 1960 decade. The idea of *concept-image* as aesthetic text creative principle has become into a cliché⁴ fashion. Consequently, the artistic product (painting) shows, in general, a very poor creative spirit; a partial lack of knowledge about painting, representation techniques, plastic expression, and a very poor theoretical and philosophical support. Therefore this produces a painting that, because of its provincial character and low quality, does not last neither transcend in time.
- It is a monothematic painting, that finds in the recurrence of topics (such as the third world condition, violence, inequity, social degradation, prostitution, homosexuality, pornography, historical

⁴ **cliché** (taken from French) it is referred to a sentence, expression, action, or idea that has been used excessively, to the point that it has lost the pretended strength or novelty.

documents and urban chronicles) a means for justifying the lack of theoretical depth in the aesthetic-semiotic treatment of the image in the art work. Therefore it is common to find repeated paintings (in museums, galleries, and art exhibition halls, in general) that pretending to be *conceptual, modern, or contemporary art*, become a boring art that does not cause emotion, transmit, impact, and does not evolve. This has led to the “Colombian Kitch boom”, proposing the new aesthetics of what is vulgar, crude, of bad taste, but not as a theoretically and philosophically studied text, but instead as a simple expressive and plastic accident.

- According to specialized critic⁵, painting presents a saturation process in its expressive means. We even find, for example, the old cliché known as neoclassic Kitch. Finally, this type of works are painted and sold as simple elements for home decoration, not getting their true ontological dimension, neither as plastic exercises of high artistic value.
- The painting searches for a “Colombianity (or Colombiannes)”, identity character; but art students can’t go on thinking that the third world problematic (in the human and social field) is the expression of *being Colombian*. Therefore, this only one side of our identity; position that has to be rebated and discussed by the art theorists.

Paradoxically, I found in the same documental research, the ideology that exalts and gives a high sense and structure to the plastic exercise in today’s painting. However, most of figurative and abstract painters seem to obviate or ignore it, since their artistic product does reflect so. The most relevant items of what I have defined *The theoretical state of contemporary painting in Colombia*, are stated as follows:

- Art theorists, artists, teachers, critics, and researchers agree that XXI century Colombian painting should assume a new aesthetic

⁵ Cited in *Plastic, contemporary art in Colombia (2004) institutional documental done by the Colombian Culture Ministry*, section 2: Art is not as it is painted. Painting and drawing. Contemporary Colombian Formalistic critic. Artists: Beatriz González, Victor Languinet. Critics and curators: Carmen María Jaramillo. Museum of modern art of Bogotá Colombia. José Roca, Esteban Jaramillo, Luis Fernando Pradilla, Alberto Sierra, Alonso Garcés, and Alberto Casas, Dinners Galery director, Bogotá, Colombia.

challenge; generating spaces to theories and studies that examine boundaries and plastic painting language. The new artistic narrative must be opened to meaning changes resulted from new time notions, metaphoric allusions, fantastic worlds and metalanguages that, through pictorial images, become a more dynamic concept, converting into an imaginary chronicle of thought, soul, and the painter-artist reality.

- The new text in Colombian painting must keep open to new and multiple meanings, appropriating popular imagery or universal art, in order to be recreated, resignified, or simply recontextualized; looking for destroying the preconceived ideas that an spectator can have of what can be or not and / or signifying art, painting, and beauty.
- The painter artist must become an organizer of culture building models, a compiler of memories, and must understand his practice as a form of thought. Therefore, painting through images is a track or footprint of our culture, idiosyncrasy, identity and history. With this ideological frame and the contact with magic, fantasy, mysticism, mystery, costumbrism⁶, myths, rituals, and religiosity, all of them, unique characteristics of our culture. The painter artist will construct symbolic relationships net that could generate new plastic readings and representations of reality, looking for time transcendence as a last objective. So, this must be the pretext for creative art research and for new painting and art theory proposals.

As a consequence, there is evidence that painting future and evolution in our country is in the search and experimentation of theoretical strategies that let theory in arts and expressive practice interaction. Therefore, it can be deduced clearly that it is in the academic, technical and university formation, where the problematic described above is born. The plastic and conceptual tools given to the art and painting student, only offer them to get some satisfactory technical and expressive level, and acceptable theoretical depth.

⁶ The term *Costumbrism* will be used in this study to refer to the writing of customs and novels of manners

But they are farther than providing a deep pictorial image design related to aesthetic meaning and symbolic potentiality. This impedes the continuous signal productivity and the esthetic rule break up culturally accepted; therefore, painting does not evolve, neither finds the means to re-invent itself. If a student does not know this fundamental principles and cannot articulate them plastically in the creative work of a painting series, creative capacity and semantic potential that offers deep knowledge of image are reduced, inevitably, to thematic recurrence and stylistic fashions, closing completely the space to the multiple and unheard possibilities in figurative expression of pictorial language.

According to the searching of this art problem, and leading this research towards generating a conceptual plastic arts proposal of image or pictorial scene, which in certain way contributes to its solution, I have stated the following questions:

- Which are fundamental elements and principles that make up the poetics and narrative of fantastic figuration in Botero and Manzur's art work?
- Under which elements can narrative of figuration and its semantic potentiality be treated, in search of a pictorial language new expression in today's Colombian painting?
- Which plastic arts elements are necessary for the painting student to convert symbolic esthetic concepts into fantastic figurative painting and drawing?

Thesis and hypothesis

Esthetic sign production

Painting renewal is essentially a communicative process of semantic character. If the painter artist ignores the fundamental principles of this process, he closes both expressive and interpretative possibilities of his art work. This process can be done in the figurative orientation of painting, because of the following reasons:

- Figuration has explicit and narrative character, which gives the painter the capacity to mould identified situations, individuals and objects, therefore they have the possibility to be inscribed into some pictorial language that rebuilds a symbolically recognizable semantic social order.
- Abstraction, by its nature, is not recognizable; it is imprecise and ethereal, inscribing itself in a completely asemantic field, which does not allow some symbolic recognition by the spectator. It can propitiate painting evolution if their plastic traits emerge and make reference to figurative style. For example: as cubism preceding elements, it must be stood out the African sculpture influence, and impressionists' concepts and ideas from the beginning of XX Century (such as Georges Seurat and Paul Cezanne among others). From this point of view, the new painting is defined as an expression that, in itself, does not mean anything but it must be stated as a speech generated through culture; since man only gives artistic value to what he knows, and can make reference as image or symbol of his own daily life.

So, the figurative plastic practice can be defined in the following way:

The painter (under the general principles of the meaning of what is esthetic and the symbolic order socially ruled) should study the characteristics, values, and conditions that allow him to build a new language and a new narrative, organizing these factors in an esthetic means; so the artist should evaluate the most efficient strategy to communicate his idea by means of the pictorial image, and finally choose an expressive plastic resource with a polished technique that let him represent and contextualize it (in the exhibition space, if it were necessary) assuring, in this way, a great impact esthetic experience in spectator's perception and memory.

Creation of a new esthetic means that reinvent and rediscover Colombian daily life values, images, and symbols, and taking them to a new meaning level, would make possible the opening of new magic pictorial languages (full of life and color, dreams and fantasies) that permit the evolution in present Colombian painting.

Theoretical frame

Related literature

Among the most relevant research studies about this topic, sources that support the theoretical structure of this thesis work will be presented, as follows:

La semiótica en la obra de arte (2007) (Semiotics in art work) by JF Bhaszat, Valle University, Colombia: this is a book written in Spanish that describes artistic practices behavior and their ontological character from semiotic-esthetic approach. Art as a second language not natural has a communicative character that feeds from natural languages elements, such as words, syntax, morphology, code, and sign, among others. Painting takes, moreover, elements such as geometry, space, color, and so on, whose aim is to produce a pleasant esthetic experience in the spectator. The objectives of the book are: to try to limit the thresholds of artistic practice as inherent esthetic exercise; and to limit artistic text interpretations as to its semiotic implication.

Cuadernos de investigación. Patrones de color. Interpretación visual de los valores cromáticos regionales en Caldas-Colombia. (2007) Research notebooks. Color patterns. Visual interpretation of regional chromatic values in Caldas-Colombia) by Adriana Gómez Alzate, Caldas University, Colombia. The objective of this study is to analyze the coffee region color (Caldas-Colombia), first, as cultural expression conditioned by climatic and geographical characteristics, fauna and flora, architecture, and handcraft. Visual strength of color in natural environment and in the popular expression is the central thesis that takes this study to value Colombian chromatic richness behavior, as a fundamental tool in arts practice and visual design. Even though results were analyzed through specific color cards in digital programs and photographic samples along the region (as methodological contribution), these color guide patterns answer more to a technical quality than to a symbolic semantic analysis and its implication in the cultural esthetic imaginary of this Colombian region. The book is a contribution to esthetics and language of color in the cultural identity field in Colombia.

La crítica de arte moderno en Colombia. Un proyecto formativo (2007) (Critic of modern art in Colombia. A formative project). Secretary of culture, office of the Major in Medellín, Colombia: under a deep methodological argumentation, this book does a revision of critical essays about plastic modernism and its theoretical achievements, in the new contemporary, formative, and pedagogical conception of criticism; it conceptualizes the formulation of a great artistic paradigm of modernism in Colombia. The analysis of these implications in the Colombian critics' work such as Casimiro Eiger, Marta Traba, and Walter Engel, among others, states the philosophical referents to which exercise is led. It expresses plurality in the creation modalities of the artistic sense, spectator's particularities, and public in general, that are the foundation for methodological and disciplinarian revolution of visual and cultural studies which characterize the new Colombian art. Artistic research led to the proposal of new plastic languages in art, such as this study, finds in this book theoretical support, and historical antecedents of Colombian plastic art work.

Estética y teoría de las artes (2004) (Arts esthetics and theory) by Friedrich Nietzsche: the artistic power of lie, illusion, and appearance are means by which esthetical appearance makes sense to human being's existence; the higher the artistic force grade is, the higher the symbolization, creation and interpretation level is. As explained by Nietzsche in this book: *artistic will power is man's fundamental capacity to create metaphors*. Creative act provides sense and value, being therefore the projection power of appearances, fables, creating metaphors, a human instinct that mainly makes man a fiction creator. Art and specifically painting have the capacity of representing images from different steps of symbolic worlds. The book provides an esthetical theory that supports conceptual exercise of contemporary figurative painting.

Cantos cuentos colombianos. Arte colombiano contemporáneo (2004) (Colombian songs and stories. Contemporary Colombian art) by Birgit Christensen. Germany. Symposium about Colombian culture in Zurich: Hans-Michel Herzog analyzes political, historical, and a socio cultural phenomena that have been marking esthetic traits and influences that become evident in relevant contemporary artists' work in European art context. He explains identity reflected on their art work narrative and

the interpretations each one of them experiences and expresses as a pretext of his conceptual exercise. He discovers the most outstanding traits of artist's creative richness that (in the traditions mixture and cultural fusions) are consolidated as the most relevant expression of Colombian plastic practice. The artist's dialogue with the world through refined artistic languages (which participates in great contemporary esthetic adventures) forms part of this book development. In short, the book provides a theoretical support for those research studies that look for deeply understanding of present art esthetic nature in Colombia.

Botero, la invención de una estética (2003): (*Botero, an esthetics invention*) by Santiago Londoño Velez, Villegas editores, Colombia the author discovers the esthetic imagery which structures Master Fernando Botero's work, through a careful historical and iconographic revision. He articulates what are private, personal, daily, politic, social, influences, and idiosyncrasy existed in the painter's life. His search not only leads to the essential characteristics which express the *colombianidad* (*Colombianity*)⁷ concept as identity, but also leads to the esthetic and symbolic values that have made Botero to become an international icon in the new figurative painting. An esthetics invention reflects on the Master's painting an original and personal plastic expression which defines his subjectivity as the ideal of Colombian painting. Theorists interested in contemporary esthetics will find important plastic concepts in this book.

Marta Traba. Textos escogidos (2002) (*Marta Traba's selected texts*) Editorial Nueva Biblioteca Colseguros de autores Colombianos: This book is a vast compilation of texts written by the art critic, Marta Traba. Under a sharp esthetic perspective and deep Colombian art history knowledge, she opens (before critic world's eyes) the doors of magic art (a fantastic and else's art that despises stylistic rules and mannerists ways); an art that centers itself in signal potentiality as artistic practice. She analyses characteristics, philosophical conscience, and esthetic achievements of contemporary plastic art, in a country with a continuous, undefined and anarchic cultural movement that search for new artistic values in painting, which reflect image lyric and poetic value, and Colombian painter's imagination. Further than providing a deep knowledge to research studies related with Colombian painting,

⁷ Colombiannes concept will be defined in the terms definition section.

this book defines a period and an artistic generation's being, identity and esthetics.

Filosofía de lo bello. Una reflexión sobre lo inconsciente en el arte (2001) (*Beauty philosophy. A reflection of what is unconscious in art*) by Eduard Von Hartman. The author analyses esthetic appearance and its subjective character, beauty metaphysics, and forms adopted by artistic beauty. The phenomenological complexity (of what is subjective in art) takes Hartman to question philosophical points of view, such as subjective idealism, transcendental realism, among others, in search of a dimensional explanation of phenomenon, defining in that way esthetic appearance and its elements, apparent esthetic feelings, and beauty status in the world (until getting beauty existence ways). Deeply and carefully, he analyses esthetic object and inherent state to beauty real existence, in each one of the arts (classifying them in their own value scale). Defining artistic creativity from unconscious depth, he reveals the paradigms of esthetic matter. This book is very important for any research type in the field of arts.

Colombian art. 3500 years of history (2001) by Santiago Londoño Vélez, Colombian Republic Bank collection: in this Colombian art summery, it is done both a historical and iconographical record, as well as an analysis of cultural and plastic inheritance, and the way this one takes stylistic forms through plastic practice in different periods. "Colombianity" as esthetic value, magic, fantasy of languages reinvented by painting, and symbology, has left (through image) a history record. These are the guidelines and foundations that suggest (the reader) the birth of a new esthetics in Colombian painting. This book can provide foundation to research works in the fields of esthetics, identity, culture, and symbology in painting field.

A través del espejo. Autoreflexión de la pintura (1998) (*Through the mirror. Self-reflection of painting*) by Carmen María Jaramillo, Bogotá Modern Art Museum: The contemporary painting artistic sample *Through the mirror*, questions, inspires a reflection, and opens a perspective to the new meaning of Colombian painting and plastic arts now a days. This work represents an analytical reflection about language achievements and representative and symbolic functions of pictorial vanguard in Colombia. Communicative relationships emerged from new (space, time, and image) notions are not only a creative tool, but have

become a knowledge object. This group of Colombian painters shows (through their art works) concepts such as the new use of artistic languages, or a new way of nonverbal communication⁸, expressive media hybridization, and boundaries definition of pictorial field. Sense making creation, knowledge building, and artistic and ideological influences are evident in the pictorial projects (that range from conceptual ones to those which express deep roots in our pictorial tradition). Research works about contemporary painting in Colombia will find in this book good iconographic, theoretical, and documentary support.

Tratado de semiótica general (1997) (General semiotics treatise) by Umberto Eco: The author presents two structural parts: the codes theory and the signal production theory. The first one divides sign in categories according to its function in verbal and nonverbal universe as a unit, sign, text, or ambiguous text. The second one explains the communicative device inherent to signs sequences which are combined in expressive sequences, messages, texts, and so on, in relationship to its function as linguistic code. Moreover, he presents image production paradigm as to an invented linguistic type and its articulation in sign functions sequences. This expression manipulation is useful as foundation for image esthetic operation in the art work (or esthetic text). Therefore, the final objective of this book is to present the limits and possibilities semiotics offers as referent or pretext in the research and development of new theories. Researchers in arts field as semiotic phenomenon will find theory exposed in this book quite useful.

Latin American art in the twentieth century (1996) by Edward Sullivan: the author classifies and describes (through historic and iconographic compilation) Latin American societies' folk and pictorial arts in the twentieth century. He analyzes artistic and cultural identity of each country, emphasizing on influences, styles, movements and artistic genres, and political sociocultural conditions that have influenced on the birth of figurative painting and image treatment as esthetic resource. This book provides an objective, deep, and critical vision of South and Central American painting, to all those researchers interested in the cultural, symbolic, and esthetic relationship as well as the influence on image as historical process.

⁸ Called *remantización* in Spanish, term that does not exist in English.

Cultura postmoderna. Introducción a las teorías de la contemporaneidad. (Postmodern culture. Introduction to contemporaneousness theories) (1996) by Steven Connor. The author describes the directive principles of postmodern debate, whose matter is developed from indetermination, opening, and multiplicity of discursive intellectual process, which multiplies exponentially critical options of western contemporary culture. In the same way, arts, architecture, film, literature, and music support their creative practice on the idea of an esthetics' radical instability and an art rediscovering as topic form and activity. Connor offers the reader different philosophical theories about contemporary culture, which are structured in a simulation phenomenon, and continuous images production, making that the symbol lose its relationship with reality becoming a simulated effect on it. Theorists and artists interested in analyzing or representing ideological dynamics of contemporary culture will find a great help here.

El actor social, un símbolo postmoderno (Social actor, a postmodern symbol) (1996) by Lizardo Alvaro Gongora Villabona, Industrial University of Santander, Colombia: This book is a collection of semiotics research works about Colombian contemporaneousness, and hidden relations that are present in the theatrical daily life (where visual images are venerated, and image is studied as a process inscribed into the materiality of a esthetic values system which is present in culture). The author proposes an analysis of symbolic system made up of the physical universe. A symbolic universe where language, myth, art, religion, rituals, and science constitute a net of reality figurations, whose anthological objective justifies the existence of human thought. Research works (on the field of semiotics thresholds applied to art and esthetic perception) will find in this book some tools for understanding contemporary man's subjective world.

Aproximación y comprensión del arte contemporáneo (Contemporary art approach and comprehension) (1994) by Victor Guédez, Venezuela: Under a strict philosophical analysis, and a precise methodological handling, Guedez proposes an integral approaching of socio cultural actor to conceptual reaches, ideology and contemporary art meaning. He goes through different items such as plastic arts tendencies, esthetic orientations, and technical and philosophical disciplines that make sense to nowadays artistic expression. Contemporary art's esthetic disposition

is described as an opening expression of a speech, of multiple proposals, which obeys to a plural reality; which inscribes it into an expressive series of synchronic character. In that way, he comes to the conclusion that art in our times is a widening of esthetic capacity and expressive sensitivity. This book supports research topics on the contemporary esthetics and its new ideological, artistic, and creative proposals, among others.

La era del signo: interpretación semiótica de la cultura (The signal age: Culture's semiotic analysis) (1990) by Dean MacCannell & Juliet Flower MacCannell, Indiana University, U.S.A: the authors focus themselves on the contemporary culture analysis and its semiotic mechanisms (both in cultural production and its effects on social reality). Explaining the nature of cultural forms from a continuous change dynamic, they propose the basic principles upon which modern culture complexity can be raised from a theoretical and methodological point of view. Theatre, language, behavior, rites, art, literature, and so on, are described in this book from the semiotics perspective (as a means to limit all human culture elements in the poetic, imaginative, figurative, or rhetoric part of human being. The author proves in this way, that signal can be demystified in its metaphoric relation (subject - object), when this one goes beyond imaginary limits and becomes reality. The analysis presented in this book provides new conceptual elements to art research works oriented to the search of new esthetic languages about modernity and its roots.

Escritos de estética y semiótica del arte (Writings about art esthetics and semiotics) (1997) Jan Mukarovsky: This book is a critic summery of esthetics and semiotics in arts theory. Art autonomy as semiotic organization, with an own functioning, studies the laws that integrate art in a general historical process. It is proposed that all esthetic field acts as units system with capacity to take information being able to be studied as linguistic sign; but because of its same dialectic character, the author studies this phenomenon in arts under the esthetic sign concept. Art reinvention causes an increment in communication (which is the meaning of what is esthetic that collides inevitably with symbolic order, socially standardized. This art character is a signal productivity mechanism which generates arts evolution. This study is done through

this book, and it is the spinal cord for any research attempting to deepen in the field of significance processes of contemporary art work.

Historia de seis ideas. Arte, belleza, forma, creatividad, mimesis, experiencia estética. History of six ideas. Art, beauty, form, creativity, mimesis, esthetic experience (1976) Wladislaw Tatarkiewicz: from a logic analytical conception, the author analyzes esthetic experience, limiting its nature in classes and the phenomena that structure esthetic experience. He presents both concepts and theory about beauty, and its concepts multiplicity, which become evident through philosophical manifestations, and esthetic representations of true as a principle, and reality as pretext in different periods of human history. Furthermore, he states the varied character of phenomena in esthetics and art. Parallels between philosophical ideas show ontological question about art and reality relationship, esthetic value and beauty conceptualization. So, semantic handling, deep analysis of esthetic problem, historical revisions, positions and concepts classifications, are the main characteristics of this treatise. Research work related to ontological character of art work, will find an important philosophical support here.

Academia y figuración realista (Realistic academy and figuration) (1975) Art Museum, National University of Colombia. This article presents a comparative pictorial sample between academicism art from the end of XIX century, and realistic figurative art that made up the modernist vanguard mat the end of 1960. Both styles origins, their deepest similarities and differences, plastic and conceptual ones are analyzed by the author. This short research study is just a historical referent that shows how figurative manifestations have always been immersed in Modern and contemporary plastic arts vanguards in Colombia. It is an interesting monograph work in history field and stylistic trends in painting in our country.

Definition of terms

In order to provide clearness and comprehension about some terms that will be used through this work, concepts and definitions of them are listed as follows: theoretical contribution, colombianity, pictorial image design, Botero and Manzur's art work: conceptual and graphical delimitation, ideological and conceptual evolution, fantasy, fabulation,

fiction, artistic formation, cultural identity, idiosyncrasy, pictorial image, magic, poetics, creative process, art renewal, esthetic challenge, and identity value.

On the other hand, the following concepts have been grouped into a unique section, in this way:

Theoretical contribution: it is defined as a research study which sets up a group of ideological, esthetic, and symbolic properties, not only of descriptive character. In other words, it is not enough to describe Botero and Manzur's art work throughout the characteristics that build up their work, but it is important to analyze them from a critical point of view, in order to construct knowledge in the artistic painting field, and esthetic knowledge inherent to this plastic practice⁹

Fantastic figurative art¹⁰: esthetic expressions such as painting (among others) can be projected on what is allusive, recognizable, and in a mean between emotion and reason. This is a proper field of what is figurative. Then, a duality in this style is defined: first, the representative images that are openly linked with the subject, object, or event. On the second place, symbolic images that refer directly to a different meaning from what is picked up in its formal appearance. That is to say, a figuration of a reality meaning another one.

One of the accents of this figurative proposal is generated through the emphasis on some marvelous or dreaming vision of reality. This has, at the same time, an extravagant, unrefined and rude figures formulation. Or, on the other side, it can accent the dreaming, ludic, or satirical sense of composition. Botero's work is framed between what is critical and satiric; and Manzur's proposal is between what is fantastic and unusual.

For this research work, I have defined this term by joining figurative concept of symbolic character with the own characteristics of fantastic art. So, a specific referent is set up, that allows giving birth to an original esthetic proposal on the Colombian contemporary plastic arts field.

⁹ W. Tatarkiewicks. (1976) History of six ideas, Tecnos editor, pp. 29-38. Concept inspired on the phenomenology of esthetic comprehension.

¹⁰ Víctor Guédez. (1994) *Aproximación y comprensión del arte contemporáneo*. Ed Exlibris, p. 79-99.

Colombiannes: eventhough processes and cultural ways in the Colombian identity building seems not to follow any analyzable pattern, it is on esthetics relations (and more specifically on plastic appropriations and objectifications) where identity values are expressed. Using history and cultural memory as signaled vehicle, these values are expressed in different Colombian painters' art work. These imaginary worlds are converted into icons that, built up with elements received from different cultures, generate an unmistakable sign of Colombian being and feeling. But it is only in the way these expressions are produced, where some materiality can be pointed out as something purely Colombian. A clear example of that is the daily saying *Botero's fat men are Colombian*.

Pictorial image design: It is the planned organization of physical elements exiting in a painting, and the image composition principles, in search of the best possible representation of an idea. This concept takes us directly to one of the human being perceptive means, the vision sense, and the plastic elements also known as esthetic configuration elements. These two elements make up image visual language, which is expressed in an even two dimensional surface. These physical elements such as color, geometry, shape, and so on) recognized by vision, serve as communicative connection bridge between artist's subjective world (ideas, concepts, feelings, symbols, signs, etc) and the message receiver.

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Mi lugar de nacimiento fue Santa fe de Bogotá Colombia. Aunque desde niño sentí una fuerte inclinación hacia la música, pasión que cultivé hasta finales de mi adolescencia, serían el diseño industrial y la pintura al oleo las áreas en las que posteriormente desarrollaré mi actividad profesional e investigativa. Desde los primeros años de universidad me interesé por la estética, la semiótica y la metodología de investigación en diseño. Soy egresado de la *Pontificia universidad Javeriana*, Bogotá, donde además trabajé como docente. Realicé mis estudios de post-grado en ilustración con énfasis en medios digitales en la escuela *Tokyo design Senmon Gako*. Posteriormente curse la Maestría en arte y diseño en la Universidad de *Bunsei Geijutsu Daigaku*, donde terminaré mis estudios de Doctorado en arte plásticas con énfasis en la estética-simbólica aplicada al proceso creativo en arte y diseño. Actualmente estoy vinculado como docente en la Universidad del Bosque, en Bogotá, Colombia.